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NAHUA NEWSLETTER NEWS

Welcome to issue number 37 of the Nahua Newsletter, published biannually as a service to readers with an interest in the culture, language, and history of the Nahua and other indigenous groups in Middle America. Once again controversy strikes in our pages as Jerome Offner takes issue with Mike Smith's comment in NN 36 regarding the historical accuracy of myths and oral narratives. The debate began as an exchange between H. B. Nicholson and Michel Graulich in earlier issues of the NN (numbers 33 and 34). The question of whether myths are a source of historical facts or whether it is possible to separate fact from fiction is important to scholars. In the pages that follow, you can read the views of two important participants in the debate. You will also find news items, a book review, and a directory update.

We wish to alert readers to an error that appeared in the printed version of NN 36 sent out by mail last fall. The review of Dioses, héroes y demonios: Avatares en la mitología mesoamericana by Félix Baéz-Jorge was mistakenly attributed to María Rodríguez-Shadow. In fact, the review was written by María Teresa Rodríguez. She is research professor (titular A) at the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS), Unidad Golfo, Xalapa, Veracruz. The mistaken attribution of the book review has been corrected in the Web archive. We sincerely regret this editorial error.

Please visit the Web archive of past issues of the NN. All previous issues are available at the site beginning with number 1, February 1986, when founder Brad Huber was editor. Web versions of the NN lack only the illustrations found in the paper editions mailed to subscribers. The site is located at <http://www.ipfw.edu/soca/Nahua.htm>. We have been alerted to the fact that some of the French text in past issues of the NN needs further editing. It is possible that errors were introduced while the pages were being scanned. Please be assured that we will work on problems as they are detected; kindly send any corrections to my attention.

The NN is one of those rare publications that is sent free of charge and is self-supporting. Costs of printing and mailing are paid from donations sent by readers. We do receive clerical help from the secretary of the Department of Anthropology of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. We also have a special account through the University's financial services. Other than these areas of support, the NN is completely self-sustaining. If you would like to make a contribution, please send checks or money orders made out to Nahua Newsletter made out to the address below. All money goes to offset expenses of production and mailing of the publication. There are no administrative costs.

Please take advantage of the NN to let other professionals and students know about your activities. The NN now has over 400 readers in 15 different countries and is designed to make it easy to let others

know what you are up to. Send news, announcements, or queries to the address below. Controversial opinions are particularly welcome. If the message is more than a line or two, please send the text as an e-mail attachment or on diskette in WordPerfect or MS Word.

Please send all communications and donations to:

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[Illustrations have been removed in the version posted at <http://www.ipfw.edu/soca/Nahua.htm>]

NEWS ITEMS

1. Frank Lipp writes this note in response to a call in a previous issue to answer criticisms that the work of Franciscan cleric Bernardino de Sahagún is basically a Spanish document that contains little or no information of ethnographic value on the Aztecs. He writes, "Sahagún was remarkably innovative and refreshingly modern in his Florentine Codex. The penetration of a foreign culture by means of texts generated by the natives themselves pioneered by Sahagún was the paramount ethnographic method used by Boas and his students. On the other hand, there was no attention paid by Sahagún in his texts to Aztec hydraulic systems, engineering, and architecture — a sad lacuna."

2. Longtime NN reader and supporter George Foster sent an interesting and newsworthy Christmas card last December filling us in on the latest news. George Foster is a name known to all Mesoamericanists as one of the great anthropological masters whose work has revolutionized our understanding of cultural processes in the region. His long-term research and numerous publications are models that few have been able to duplicate. He is retired from the Department of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley and he recently observed his 90th birthday. His wife of 64 years, Mary LeCron Foster, died two years ago but despite the loss, George continues his characteristic optimism and leads

a very active life. He recently traveled to Europe and is planning a trip to Tzintzuntzan, the community in Michoacan that he and his wife have studied since 1945. Although he suffers some physical ailments, George is in excellent shape in all the ways that count.

3. Johannes Neurath has kindly forwarded a copy of his new book on the Huichol. It is entitled Las fiestas de la casa grande: Procesos rituales, cosmovisión y estructura social en una comunidad huichola. México: CONACULTA, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Universidad de Guadalajara, 2002. Pp. 379. ISBN 970-18-7457-9. Following is the table of contents:

- Chapter 1 — Procesos rituales y reproducción cultural
- Chapter 2 — El gran nayar
- Chapter 3 — El complejo mitote del gran nayar
- Chapter 4 — Del reino solar a las comunidades indígenas actuales
- Chapter 5 — Tuapurie, el triángulo estructural de la organización ceremonial
- Chapter 6 — Las fiestas del xiriki
- Chapter 7 — La casa grande, iniciación y cosmovisión
- Chapter 8 — Las fiestas del tukipa I: Hikuri neixa
- Chapter 9 — Las fiestas del tukipa II: Namawita neixa
- Chapter 10 — Las fiestas del tukipa III: Tatei neixa
- Chapter 11 — Las fiestas del la cabecera
- Chapter 12 — Conclusiones

4. Berthold Riese writes to announce publication of his recently published work Crónica Mexicayotl: Die Chronik des Mexikanertums des Alonso Franco, des Hernando de Alvarado Tezozomoc un des Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin. Aztekischer Text ins Deutsche übersetzt und erläutert. Collectanea Instituti Anthropos, vol 44. Sankt Augustin: Academiz Verlag, 2004. ISBN 3-89665-271-0.

5. Cindy Hull, a longtime reader of the NN, has published a book on her more than twenty years of ethnographic research in the Maya community of Yaxbe. The book is entitled Katun: A Twenty-Year Journey with the Maya. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, George Spindler, series ed., Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2004. Pp. 190 ISBN 0-534-61290-3. This is an excellent study based on long-term research and it is designed for use in the classroom. Following is the table of contents:

Part I The Maya of Northwest Yucatán: Historical and Economic Context

- Chapter 1 — The katun with the Yucatec Maya
- Chapter 2 — The Historical Context
- Chapter 3 — The Economy of Yaxbe, 1976-1989

Part II Yaxbe: The Social Context

- Chapter 4 — Village Life: Resilience and Change, 1976-1998
- Chapter 5 — The Political Structure of Yaxbe, 1976-1998
- Chapter 6 — Mayan and Catholic Roots in Yaxbe
- Chapter 7 — A Religion for Business and One for Sunday: The Seventh Day Adventists

Part III Henequen's Last Gasp: The Death of the King of Henequen

Chapter 8 — The Ashes of the Henequen Ejido
 Chapter 9 — Mayan Women: Beyond the Stereotypes
 Chapter 10 — From Tortillas to Bread

Epilogue Return to Yaxbe, 2001

6. David Robichaux has sent the NN a copy of his recently edited volume entitled El matrimonio en mesoamérica ayer y hoy: Unas miradas antropológicas. México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2003. Pp. 362. ISBN 968-859-503-9. From the back cover:

"El presente libro, primero de la serie "Unas miradas antropológicas," es uno de los productos del seminario "Familia y Parentesco en México: Unas miradas antropológicas" que se celebró el 11 y 12 de febrero de 1998 en la Universidad Iberoamericana-Ciudad de México. El seminario se realizó como parte del proyecto de intercambio de investigadores "Enfoques franceses en el estudio de la familia" llevado a cabo en 1997 y 1998 bajo un convenio CONACYT-CNRS con la participación de Martine Segalen y David Robichaux. A partir de una mesa temática de dicho seminario, se han reunido en el presente volumen trabajos de investigadores mexicanos, franceses y estadounidenses que versan sobre diferentes aspectos del matrimonio, desde cuestiones teológicas en el período del contacto entre la civilización europea y la mesoamericana, hasta los ritos y las prácticas de la formación de la unión y las relaciones de pareja entre los pueblos de la tradición cultural mesoamericana del México de hoy. Los artículos . . . proporcionan al lector que se interesa por los pueblos indígenas de México diversas miradas sobre el tema basadas en su larga experiencia de investigación en el campo y los archivos." Índice:

Introducción: El matrimonio en mesoamérica ayer y hoy, David Robichaux

Prácticas, creencias y costumbres matrimoniales en la época colonial

Capítulo 1 — Teología de matrimonio, derecho canónico y prácticas misioneras en el México del siglo XVI por Pierre Ragon

Capítulo 2 — El matrimonio indio frente al matrimonio español (siglo XVI al XVIII) por Danièle Dehouve

Capítulo 3 — La segunda mujer entre los nahuas por Danièle Dehouve

Capítulo 4 — Parentesco y matrimonio en la sociedad tarasca prehispánica por Lourdes Kuthy

Ritos y prácticas en la formación de la unión

Capítulo 5 — El ritual de petición matrimonial entre los amuzgos: Arreglo de relaciones interfamiliares, Victor M. Franco Pelotier

Capítulo 6 — Relaciones de intercambio en el matrimonio mesoamericano: El caso de los nahuas del Alto Balsas de Guerrero, Catharine Good Eshelman

Capítulo 7 — La sal de la vida: Las bodas, una forma de reciprocidad e intercambio en la costa chica de Guerrero por Haydée Quiroz Malca

Capítulo 8 — La formación de la pareja en la Tlaxcala rural y el origen de las uniones consuetudinarias en la mesoamérica contemporánea: Un análisis etnográfico y etnohistórico por David Robichaux

Capítulo 9 — ¿Por qué se roba la novia?: Las razones de una costumbre negada pero viva por Marina Goloubinoff

Capítulo 10 — Los múltiples significados de robarse la muchacha: El robo del la novia en un

pueblo de migrantes del estado de Puebla por María Eugenia d'Aubeterre Buznego

Relaciones de pareja y roles de género

Capítulo 11 — Respetar y confiar: Ideología de género versus comportamiento en una sociedad post nahua por Eileen M. Mulhare

Capítulo 12 — De por qué los hombres soportan los "cuernos": Género y moral sexual en familias campesinas por Rosío Córdova Plaza

Capítulo 13 — La pareja, su discurso y su actual cotidiano en un pueblo de migrantes de la mixteca por Dubravka Mindek

Capítulo 14 — Formación y disolución de matrimonio indígena: Una revisión crítica por Dubravka Mindek

7. Anath Ariel de Vidas alerts NN readers to her new book El Trueno ya no vive aquí: Representación de la marginalidad y construcción de la identidad teenek (Huasteca veracruzana, México). México, D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos, Instituto de Investigación para Desarrollo, San Luis Potosí: El Colegio de San Luis, 2003. Pp. 578. ISBN 968-496-405-6. Resumen del libro:

"A través del examen de las realidades y concepciones del mundo y del microcosmos teenek frente a las de la sociedad global, se trata de desarrollar paralelamente un estudio etnográfico de una comunidad teenek al norte de Veracruz y un planteamiento teórico acerca del problema fundamental de la elaboración de una identidad étnica.

"Las profundas desigualdades que oponen a los mestizos-ganaderos del norte de Veracruz y a los indígenas-campesinos presentan una clave de lectura de esta sociedad local y explican, en gran medida, la firme percepción de identidad de los teenek.

"Pero no es el único factor; la aprehensión complementaria de las categorías culturales indígenas de la alteridad se obtiene esencialmente a través del análisis de las prácticas cotidianas, de las representaciones autóctonas de la tradición, del parentesco, de la territorialidad, de la organización social y, fundamentalmente, de la relación teenek con la naturaleza y con lo sobrenatural, lo cual arroja luz sobre el universo sincrético teenek, su organización espacial y social, en el cual descansa la distinción que hacen entre 'Ellos' y los 'Nosotros.'

"Este libro revela como es adquirida, transmitida y constantemente reinterpretada la percepción diferenciada del Sí y como se construye la teoría teenek de la diferencia social." Índice:

Primera parte: Tiempos y espacios huastecos

Capítulo 1 — El universo teenek

Capítulo 2 — El paisaje social y natural en Tantoyuca

Capítulo 3 — La alianza teenek

Capítulo 4 — Un problema de límites

Secunda parte: Mensajes del inframundo

Capítulo 5 — La realidad de los Baatsik'

Capítulo 6 — La etiología teenek

Capítulo 7 — Teenek y Baatsik': Los términos de la convivencia

Tercera parte: Entre la tierra y el cielo
 Capítulo 8 — El infierno son los otros
 Capítulo 9 — El espacio de la memoria
 Conclusión

8. Marc Thouvenot (xolotl@imagnet.fr) has written to inform readers about recent publications that are available from SUP-INFOR. He writes, "Le envío la lista de las últimas publicaciones que se pueden encontrar, y telecargar gratuitamente, en el sitio de las Ediciones Sup-Infor. Quizas es algo que puede interesar sus lectores." The following publications, and more, can be viewed online at the Sup-Infor Web site at <http://www.sup-infor.com/>:

Dictionnaires pictographiques: "Matricula de Huexotzinco: Huexotzinco." Carmen Herrera y Marc Thouvenot. Coedición: CONACULTA, INAH, Sup-Infor, 2004.

"Matricula de Huexotzinco: Tlatenco." Marc Thouvenot y Carmen Herrera, 2004.

Etudes: "Quetzalcoatl y el espejismo de Tollan." Michel Graulich, 2003.

Texte espagnol concernant le nahuatl: "Veitia: BNF no. 215." Version de Eric Roulet, 2003.

Programmes: "Chachalaca: Analyseur morphologique du nahuatl." Marc Thouvenot avec la collaboration de Sybille de Pury. Avec les dictionnaires BNF 362; Paléographie, Sybille de Pury; et les éléments de grammaire d'Alexis Wimmer, 2003.

"POHUA-TLACHIA." Nouvelle version. Marc Thouvenot, 2004.

"TEMOA." Marc Thouvenot avec la collaboration de Paul Fisher, 2002.

Dictionnaires: "Dictionnaire de la langue nahuatl classique." Alexis Wimmer, 2003.

Textes nahuatl: "Primeros Memoriales." Version de Marc Eisinger, 2001.

"CF INDEX: Index lexical du texte nahuatl du Codex de Florence." Marc Eisinger, 1994.

"P311A: Crónica Mexicayotl." BNF no. 311. Paléographie, Marc Thouvenot, 1992.

"P041A: COZCATZIN, Codex." BNF no. 41-45. Paléographie, José Rubén Romero Galván, 1995.

"P385A: Telleriano-Remensis, Codex." BNF no. 385. Paléographie, Eloïse Quiñones Keber avec la collaboration de Michel Besson, 1995.

"3CHIMAL: Troisième Relation de Chimalpahin." BNF no. 74. Paléographie, Jacqueline de Durand-Forest avec la collaboration de Marc Thouvenot, 1990.

"P312A: Codex Chimalpopoca: Annales de Cuauhtitlan." BNF no. 312. Paléographie, Marc

Thouvenot, 1992.

"P312B: Codex Chimalpopoca: Leyenda de los Soles." BNF no. 312. Paléographie, Marc Thouvenot, 1990.

Dictionnaires: "Dictionnaire espagnol-nahuatl." BNF no. 362. Paléographie, Sybille de Pury Toumi, 2001.

"Dictionnaire nahuatl-espagnol," à partir du BNF no. 362. Sybille de Pury Toumi avec la collaboration de Marc Thouvenot, 2001.

"Dictionnaire espagnol-nahuatl," à partir du BNF no. 362. Sybille de Pury Toumi avec la collaboration de Marc Thouvenot, 2001.

Etudes: "Codex Xolotl. Etude d'une des composantes de son écriture: Les glyphes. Dictionnaire des éléments constitutifs des glyphes." Marc Thouvenot, 2001.

9. Most subscribers know that the NN is being read by a number of indigenous prisoners in the state of California. These men are often discovering their cultural and linguistic heritage and seeking help in obtaining sources. Following are two requests:

Luis Muratalla requests material in Spanish on the history of indigenous Mexico. If you have texts with which you would be willing to part, please write to him: Luis Muratalla, #J-06678, C-5-215, Pelican Bay State Prison, P.O. Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95532-7500.

Alejandro de la Loya is a Sierra Tarahumara (Rarámuri) and requests any information on this group from readers of the NN. He can be reached at the following address: Alejandro de la Loya, Salinas Valley State Prison, C-3-107, P.O. Box 1050, Soledad, CA 93960-1050.

10. Jorge Franco writes: "I just received my first issue of the NN. I really enjoyed reading this issue and I want to say thank you very much. I was wondering if there was any information or insight on when the months start in the xiuhtlapohualli? I am sending an example of how the 2003-2004 calendar would be according to Alfonso Caso's breakdown. I want to ask readers if this is correct. All of the dates and signs correlate with Barry Orr's computer program and with Bruce Scofield's books." Please write with any information: Jorge Franco, #D-46556, Pelican Bay State Prison, C-5-110, P.O. Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95532.

11. It is with great sadness that we report the recent deaths of three loyal subscribers: Paul Jean Provost, Mary Richie Key, and Luis Reyes García. We will sincerely miss them and their contributions to the field. Following are two brief obituaries; the third one will appear in the next NN issue:

Paul Jean Provost, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW), died unexpectedly on December 24, 2003, following a brief illness. He was 58 years old. He came to IPFW in 1974 and was instrumental in founding the Department of Anthropology. He was a cultural anthropologist who conducted ethnographic field research among the Nahua of Mexico, the Shipibo of the Peruvian Amazon, and the Aborigines of Australia. Paul's research interests included medical anthropology, psychological anthropology, cross-cultural theology, and comparative moral structures. Paul will be remembered by his many students as a fascinating lecturer who took a personal interest in their education. Among many achievements, he founded and advised the Anthropology Club — one of the most enduring and successful student-focused initiatives on the campus. Paul edited several issues of the NN while the permanent editor was in the field and so readers own him a vote of thanks for insuring continuity of publication. Contributions are being accepted for a permanent scholarship fund in his name. — Contributed by Alan R. Sandstrom

Mary Ritchie Key, 79, died on September 5, 2003, after an illness of several months. She was chair of the Program in Linguistics at the University of California Irvine from 1969-1971 and her research involved indigenous languages of Mexico and South America. She is the author of numerous articles and eleven books. One of her latest projects was work on an Intercontinental Dictionary Series, a computerized lexicon for non-European languages. She edited the first several volumes of the planned series and enlisted scholars from all over the world to work on the project. She named her successor so that the work can continue. Following World War II, she married Harold Key and the couple joined the Wycliffe Bible Translators, a Christian missionary group. They first worked on Nahuatl outside of Puebla and then moved to Bolivia in 1954. They returned to the United States in 1962 where Mary adapted to the charged social atmosphere of the times. Her husband had a harder time adapting to the 1960s and they divorced in 1964. In 1976, she married engineer Audley E. Patton, who died in 1996. — Information taken from an obituary by Mary Rourke from the Los Angeles Times, September 22, 2003

BOOK REVIEWS

Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State: The Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago, eds. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998. Pp. vi+404. \$74.95 (cloth). ISBN 0822322021. \$24.95 (paper). ISBN 0822322188.

The historical record is full of voids, various points where peoples are silenced. Historians are attempting to fill those voids by expanding their studies to include traditionally ignored actors, along with the social history of those marginalized by the state. Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State is one such attempt. The work expands the scope of traditional political and economic history by giving voice to laboring peoples. The result is an inclusionary history that complements perspectives from dominant and subordinate groups and contributes to a more holistic view of the region covered. It also suggests a possible reevaluation of the customary macro-history of the nation-state. The

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a formative period for nations and national economies in Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean. Developments in that period continue to affect the region. These essays endeavor to amplify the more traditional general and impersonal history of this period by analyzing gender and ethnicity. They also address processes of everyday resistance and compliance, and the construction of ideological and cultural systems.

This collection of essays on Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean might at first appear to be a disjointed assortment of studies with no unifying theme. The reader focusing on each separate chapter might get the feeling of being randomly moved from one nation and region to another. The author of each chapter presents research on worker and peasant culture, identity, consciousness, and resistance for a particular region. But taken as a whole, this edited volume is really a statement on the current status of historical research. It is a study in the methodology for conducting social history. In the end, it is a study of the power of the state and its interaction with marginalized peoples in general.

History from below is in part a study of the power used by the state and the responses to this power from those who are socially marginal. When historians focus on state power and its impact on people, they reveal the complex interactions that are often produced. Each chapter in this volume deals with the interaction between laboring peoples and those they labor for or are subject to. Aldo Lauria-Santiago's work on coffee and capitalism in El Salvador reveals that the ladino peasantry had multiple responses to the rise of agrarian capitalism. The response by the peasantry to political-economic change shows that even the most well-defined social boundaries and power relationships are to some degree permeable and negotiable. Similarly, Barry Carr's research on Cuban sugar production demonstrates why employers failed to wield effective power over the workers. Workers were aware that labor was scarce and that they could always move when conditions became intolerable. In this context, they took advantage of "very real opportunities for maneuver and negotiation" (p. 281). Conversely, Patricia Alvarenga's chapter on auxiliary forces in El Salvador reveals the potential power of the state to oppress people and insure their cooperation. Depending on the context, peasants and laborers can be subjects of, and agents for, state power. The chapter by Aviva Chomsky on the laborers and small landholders in the mining communities of Costa Rica points to another manifestation of state power, namely, the large companies that can become an arm of the government. Often the mining company with its monopoly of "legitimate violence" was allowed almost unbridled physical, economic, and ideological control of its workforce. Yet, even in this repressive environment people protested and engaged in "everyday resistance," according to Chomsky.

The state has at hand many methods of social control, which are not limited to violence. Despite the potential to do so, state power is rarely used to oppress people totally. As marginalized people struggled for a voice in the official discourse of the nation during this period, the power of the state and the people's responses to that power took multiple forms. As Jeffrey L. Gould notes, "What historiography has overlooked is the flexibility the regime displayed when confronted with diverse forms of indigenous resistance" (p. 59). This flexibility is dependent on the ability of the state to choose multiple forms of repressive power. There is variance in the langue and parole of the power of the state over time, as indicated in its varied responses to resistance.

The state possesses the power to write its own history and to develop a national myth — both strategies to deal with resistance. Writing about Honduras, Darío Euraque points out that the creation of national myth can eliminate complete categories of people and condense all ethnicities (p. 152), a point echoed by Gould in his research on myth in Nicaragua. The suppression of ethnicity by the state and its power to use ethnic identity to its own ends can be achieved by controlling the language of racial

discourse. In a region where ethnicity is mapped onto nation, language, class, and social position, it has been used as a social marker both historically and in contemporary society. However, Cindy Forster's work on revolution and campesino labor in Guatemala indicates the fluidity of such categories and boundaries. In comparing the coffee and banana zones, this author raises questions about the official interpretation of revolution, and the grass-roots nature of national change. Race and class identity were reforged during the revolution as peasant organizations fomented national upheaval. The benefit of illuminating history from below is evident in this chapter.

Richard L. Turtis's work on agrarian reform in Trujillo's Dominican Republic is perhaps the best example in this collection of the advantages of focusing on marginalized peoples in history. In his chapter, the violence of the Trujillo regime is seen through a different lens, providing evidence that there was some method to the dictator's madness. The Dominican state under Trujillo did not rely on repression alone, but in return for production and support, provided some degree of protection and aid to peasants. Agrarian reform was an expression of state power that gained the political support of a landholding peasantry and increased productivity.

As history is illuminated by means of complementary studies from above and below, it is important to note that because marginalized populations were previously silenced does not make them infallible, or even necessarily victims. They, too, are actors with choices and had the power to manipulate the situation even in an oppressive context. The inclusion of Eileen J. Findlay's essay on free love and domesticity in working-class feminism in Puerto Rico is a welcome addition to the collection. It not only contributes to issues of gender and related social change in labor movements but it also clarifies the silencing that can occur within minority groups.

In writing revisionist social history, historians can be limited by the nature of their research. The processes of history have long left silent the peoples who are being studied in works such as the one under review. One can reanalyze the archives and official documents and find data, as Julie A. Charlip does with her study of coffee farmers and debt in Nicaragua. Another example is Turtis' essay, which makes use of official documents and oral histories. Other research topics suffer from a lack of official documentation. The use of oral histories has its limitations, yet they can contain historical data. In the introduction, the editors state that they will employ "discourse and cultural analysis to seek a culturally sophisticated and nonreductionist class analysis" (p. 2). However, without the data, how do we engage in discourse? We need the documentation of the actors who have been excluded from history. We need the history of marginalized peoples without history who have managed to manipulate and negotiate with the power of the state. This resistance was often unnoticed due the sophistication of the resister. So, how do we project into the past what was possible in terms of resistance, to explore what life was like outside of the official discourse? The incorporation of multiple, cross-referenced sources is a start. Yet there will always be history out there that is undocumented and lost.

In the conclusion, Lowell Gudmundson and Francisco A. Scarano call for the more extensive use of folklore in historical research. They define folklore as "collective knowledge of songs, riddles, stories, popular expressions" (p. 341). This is perhaps a logical extension of historical data that mirrors the expansive social history being researched here. The archives do not contain the complete history of the mass of people but to an extent it resides in their folklore. To find it, we must go to where their history is. Attempts to expand the historical record by restricting research to sources that intentionally limit or completely exclude whole segments of the population seem futile. Expanding historical research must be done with caution and the realization that folklore has its own set of limitations and can be just as problematic as other forms of data. A concern is that this type of research will become less empirical.

However, the call to expand viable data is not a call to lower scholarly expectations. In post-revolutionary Cuba, for example, the state's official use of folklore placed it outside of history in a space between fiction and non-fiction. The intention should not be to create a division within the field of history between proponents and opponents of folklore as data. The intention should be, as it is in this collection of essays, to provide a holistic history for a region, utilizing all available sources. Folklore should be used to complement other available data. The historian should go where the history is.

William Breuning
University of Chicago

COMMENTARY

"Aztec Historiography: A View from Texcoco"

by
Jerome Offner
Houston, Texas

Michael Smith (NN 36(2003):31-36) seeks suggestions through the Nahua Newsletter for his upcoming article in a Dumbarton Oaks publication. What does Smith want us to do and why? Having discovered that a Mesopotamian historian recommended that the "Sumerian King List" "should be forever banished from reconstruction of early Mesopotamian history," Smith offers "a similar recommendation for the pre-Aztlán episodes in Aztec native history (and perhaps for the Aztlán story too . . .)." Thus he proclaims something like banishment for an unspecified list of sources.

How did he arrive at such a formulation and how can it be improved? Some textual analysis on the eight paragraphs of his brief communication will help determine what happened in it. To begin with, Smith imprecisely characterizes the content of Aztec historiography. He describes "Aztec native history" as "an oral genre" but goes on to add that it "employed painted books as mnemonic devices to aid the historian or scribe in their recitation" and mentions "some form of written historical records" in the next sentence. Although some older works by H. B. Nicholson and Edward Calnek are cited in support of this position (altogether over sixty pages of works are cited without specific page references), it is instructive to review H. B. Nicholson's remarks on pictorial historical materials in two recent editions of this newsletter (see NN 33, "Commentary," eighth to last paragraph) to understand the current position of at least one of the authorities cited. Smith then goes on to compare this (far from only) oral genre to oral traditions involving virtually no written or pictorial support. This is an understandable failing; the particular nature of Mesoamerican historical materials and practices and how they can be compared productively to other areas has remained largely unaddressed by Mesoamericanists. Indeed, many of these problems involving the varied nature of the sources of indigenous history caused great concern and frustration among students of Aztec history in the first century of colonization. Because Smith has offered an initial attempt at analyzing these difficult problems, it is important to explore them further.

What was happening in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century regarding indigenous transmission of history? We can learn from a struggling bicultural ethnographer, fluent in Nahuatl, who

knew the local Aztec ruling families and who was intimately acquainted with Aztec pictorials in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries and who worked with the remaining people capable of interpreting parts of them. Ixtlilxochitl [Fernando de Alva] (1975:I, 285) speaks directly about his reconstruction of Toltec history from various sources. He reports his regret that he has been only able to report one hundred out of a thousand parts of what happened in the past, for a variety of reasons. The last reason is especially interesting: "por haberles quemado al principio sus historias, que esta ha sido la principal causa de su olvido" ("because their histories were burned at the beginning [of Spanish colonization], that this has been the principal cause of their forgetting"). In instructive contrast to Ixtlilxochitl, but with interesting parallels to Smith, Fray Juan de Torquemada, the cultural outsider, writing in the same period and with wide access to pictorial sources, voices his frustrations over trying to provide an exact chronology while dealing with so much spoken history ("cantares") (Torquemada 1975: I:258). He did not relate the spoken history to the pictorial sources as successfully as did Ixtlilxochitl, and not surprisingly, his historical interpretation is often less accurate than Ixtlilxochitl's (see Offner 1979 for specific examples; also Offner 1993:67). Nevertheless, he was rightly convinced he was producing expert and useful history.

There is a further narrowing of concept by Smith that bears mention. The various Aztec "polities" kept many forms of written historical records to do far more than merely "verify the legitimacy of their kings." (We also do not know for certain that only the state kept written historical records, but we do know of the Archivo Real de Texcoco to begin with.) Ixtlilxochitl catalogues the types of documents with which he worked for us when he begins his Sumaria Relación (1975:I, 527-28) by describing annals, genealogies, land registers, maps of territories of cities, provinces, cities and places, books of laws, rites and ceremonies, priestly books for religious indoctrination, observance of festivals for gods, and calendars. Books of philosophy or science are also mentioned along with "cantos" ("songs") that were taught in conjunction with the histories and books of science/philosophy. In a testimony of support from the town officials of San Salvador Quatlacincó in the Otumba area (1975:I, 517-18) a pictorial history of the Toltecs is specifically mentioned (see also 1975:I, 49, no. 4; 58, nos. 104 and 105), along with a document that is almost certainly the well-known Codex Xolotl. Given the great mass of scholarship on these items by linguists, ethnohistorians, historians, and art historians, there is no chance of denying the existence of a broad range of such documents in pre-Colonial times. It is also vital to note that Ixtlilxochitl was living in a society savaged by the Spanish, intimidated by the Inquisition, and devastated by disease for nearly a century. Circumstances for the transmission of history could hardly have been more difficult in earlier times, particularly if the many scattered city-states of the past are taken into consideration.

Abundant evidence demonstrates that a well-entrenched mechanism existed in Mesoamerica for the transmission of historical and other information through pictorial and spoken means over long stretches of time. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century reports of the Toltecs emanate from this mechanism, no less than Aztec and other indigenous history. (Recently, Mayan epigraphers, with their new interest in scribes, have begun to zero in on aspects of the mechanism in their part of Mesoamerica.) It would seem a more worthy task to understand and assess systematically the nature of the mechanism and its accuracy and durability than to dismiss it out of hand based on some limited and not entirely comparable information from other situations.

When dealing with the Techioloyan manuscripts, Smith, again without specific page references for citations, does not mention that they date to the seventeenth century at least, far after and in a far different context from that in which the most important Aztec pictorials were produced. In addition,

Frances Karttunen (1998:433), a leading authority on Nahuatl and pictorials, cites Stephanie Wood, Smith's own authority, as pointing out that "many were produced in the seventeenth century and are so patently not what they purport to be that when communities sought to enter them as evidence in legal proceedings, they were simply rejected." Karttunen, citing Smith's own authority, continues: "Why would communities invest in documents that would not stand up in court? As Wood and Lockhart both contend, these documents had an internal function in their communities: preserving and sometimes inventing legendary history in support of corporate identity, local political factions, and claims to status. I think presentation of such documents in court was more or less incidental; they were a response to external pressure on communities to produce something they did not have" (Karttunen 1998:434).

Susan Gillespie's book (1989) is cited by Smith. At the time of its publication, it constituted a wake-up call for Tenochcan historians and was persuasive in many areas. Her approach, however, could not successfully confront the existence and content of the Texcocan historiographic traditions, especially the Codex Xolotl.¹ These historiographic traditions are sui generis in many respects, were not successfully deconstructed by Susan Gillespie, and have been subjected to unwarranted criticism for decades by others without being adequately studied, analyzed, and presented. Taking potshots at the numerous Tenochcan migration narratives is child's play, but taking on the enormous complexity of the Codex Xolotl and its satellite sources has been too much for anyone to attempt. Indeed, Charles Dibble's (1951) pioneering study of this work, successfully demonstrating for the first time the benefits of recombining separated pictorial and textual sources in our era, still needs a worthy successor. The careful inclusion of the Texcocan historiographic traditions into the ongoing struggle to understand Mesoamerican history would give us all a surer look into the past.

Smith additionally narrows the scope of his inquiry into Aztec historical documents to an either/or question of potential for "credible historical reconstruction." This does not do justice to the wider range of issues involved in their creation, transmission, and meaning. The Texcocan concepts of history, and certainly the institutions that produced what gets called Texcocan history, were of a rather broader nature than an academic departmentalized view of history (see below).

Joseph Miller's (1980) sixty-one page introduction is also cited without specific page references in support of the argument for banishment. In fact and in complete contrast, Miller provides an excellent and persuasive manifesto for recovering historical meaning from (even exclusively) oral histories — certainly highly recommended reading for Mesoamericanists. At the end of a brief digression into Incan ethnohistory, he says, with interesting parallels to Torquemada but more to Smith: "The historian, unlike the anthropologist, is not discouraged by the failure of the sources to present her or him with finished, sound history at the superficial cognitive level. Rather the document provides an opportunity to separate the elements of which it is composed and to criticize it in such a way as to turn up indicators of past times, 'past signs' in the terminology of some modern French historians, that he or she can combine with other sources to infer something about times gone by." In addition, Smith's characterizations of Toltec myths as "creation" and "origin" myths appear incorrect, because Miller describes another kind of myth, "Comprehensive Charter Myths" in a way that fits them much better (see Miller 1980:43; this type of myth is regarded as containing considerable historical information).² And, of course, Mesoamerican historiography was not only oral.

Distortions in lists and genealogies of rulers are no surprise to any Aztec historiographer, or to any ethnographer dealing with kinship systems from the time of Lewis Henry Morgan. Editing of genealogies for a wide variety of reasons is a seemingly universal human practice and the realization that

fifty-two year rules for kings are not likely accurate goes far back before my passing mention of it, along with other related scribal standardizations some two decades ago (e.g., Offner 1983:19-20,49-50). It seems more productive to go the step beyond faultfinding, claimed destruction, and rejection to understanding.

Most disturbing and insupportable is the claim that "the Aztec native histories fit right into the patterns" that have as an important feature "the rapid creation of lengthy historical records to help establish local legitimacy." A work such as the Codex Xolotl does far more than establish Texcocan legitimacy; indeed, parts of it, both in pictorial form and as reported in Ixtlilxochitl and Torquemada actually constitute evidence against Texcocan legitimacy. The Codex Xolotl, which we may reasonably assume was not unique in history and which may well be representative of the kind of documents Itzcoatl did not have destroyed, is a contemporaneous indigenous distillation of and guide to political and ethnic geography, warfare, and military strategy, diplomacy, statecraft, and other strategic planning. When comparing this pictorial document and its concordance and discordance with other pictorial and written sources, it is obvious that no human being or group of human beings could have rapidly concocted this document and its contents — it unquestionably presents data from pre-Colonial pictorial and spoken historical sources. Coupled with the related written explanations in Ixtlilxochitl and Torquemada and other minor documents (as noted above, the remnants of the oral performances linked to the pictorial as they survived into the early seventeenth century)³, it is perhaps the central, and certainly the most under-utilized document of pre-colonial Mesoamerican political thought. The surviving Codex Xolotl deals only with the aftermath of Toltec history, ends at the beginning of the Triple Alliance, and simply cannot be a part of a "rapid creation of lengthy historical records to help establish local legitimacy." Its original subject matter stands largely alone in time, after the Toltecs and well before the Spaniards' arrival.

It also has to be mentioned that in contrast to the observation summarized from David Henige's work that "oral political history does not preserve reliable chronological information for more than a century prior to the transcription of the oral tradition," Miller, dealing with exclusively oral traditions in twentieth century Africa including the king lists of Buganda, states that "what began as historical descriptions become highly structured narratives after three hundred years or so" (1980:22-23). Miller notes that this can be a shorter process under certain conditions, but goes on to make note of some "oral historical records, highly stylized and sometimes fragmentary, that reach back to the early sixteenth century or before" (Vansina is cited in a related footnote; it is no wonder Prem's (1999) king lists are so concordant).

Also interesting is Smith's rush to embrace the dismissal of king lists because in the case of Sumer, a king list is "full of ideological and propagandistic elements deriving from its specific context of production long after the time of the kings listed." (This interesting document can be seen in authoritative translation at <http://www-etcs1.orient.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr211.htm>.) Like any historian, I have long approached every document I encounter, ancient or modern, as just such a rich and informative creation. Piotr Michalowski is ready to banish the document but it remains of interest to many others and unarguably helped greatly in the process of Mesopotamian historiography. If only we had more such candidates for banishment in Mesoamerica. Clearly, these overlays of meaning are a problem, but it is good to have such problems to work on — they help illuminate the richness of the Mesoamerican historiographic process.

What comes through by the end of Smith's comments is a certain impatience with the data — a common condition among Mesoamericanists demanding answers that are not yet apparent. Yes, even

in the twenty-first century, it is still true that our methods in Aztec studies are not yet so determinative that we should expect to decipher the problem Smith confronts or even to decide whether or not a problem can be deciphered by our successors. There can be no substitute for intimate acquaintance with the indigenous languages and the original documents involved, as well as hard labor for many years at actual productive iconographic trial and error and analysis. Reading some Spanish language sources and some English and Spanish translations of some indigenous language sources and some current analyses of some of them is not going to be enough to do the job and is certainly not enough to tell others there is no job to be done.

It is easy to sense and sympathize with Smith's frustration at the task he must deal with for his *Dumbarton Oaks* publication — the data set is one of the most demanding and complicated knots in Mesoamerican studies. Nevertheless, it is scientific method rigorously applied to the actual facts at hand that is the appropriate response, not a retreat into nihilism grounded in flawed arguments arising from some not so comparable cases or from others' work incompletely reported. Certainly, the Aztec histories contain many errors, but this does not render them without value. Intimations of the shapes of answers will come through no one person; the problem is far too massive.

Also unfortunate is Smith's assertion that "the creation of an objective record of actual historical events with precise chronological accuracy was not a goal of the indigenous historical traditions" Leaving aside the clear existence of the many examples of chronological concordance (and indeed discordance) among the various Aztec sources, what could this "objective record of actual historical events" be? Is this objective record a table of events with maps that would allow archaeologists to calibrate the limited material remains they survey on the turbulent and deeply disturbed surface of the Valley of Mexico or Central Mexico or in the small sum total of excavation pits they might oversee during a lifetime? If a sequence of events is desired, the very simple and abstract *Codice en Cruz* may serve. Or perhaps only such objective things as the stock market figures reported daily in our newspapers, or perhaps the white pages or lists of zip and area codes can qualify. No society has written, writes, or will write an "objective record of actual historical events." One has only to examine the very diverse points of view in newspapers and magazines, or the works of modern historians or indeed the long history of Mesoamericanists trying to write Aztec history accurately to see the sterility of this concept.⁴ Pre-colonial Aztec historiographers — certainly those involved with Texcocan sources — were doing their best to preserve and transmit what they judged to be vital information for a variety of practical uses in their dynamic and contentious world, much as is done by many throughout the world today.

Banishment of Mesoamerican evidence, such as the pictorial peregrinations, would have led to fewer studies by Rudolf van Zantwijk (1963, 1965, 1966, and others) who has used these documents to provide brilliant, authentic insights into Tenochcan cultural history. Also lost would have been the still underappreciated work by Gordon Brotherston (1995; see especially chapter six) who has built bridges between and sewn back together many scarcely studied pictorials in the Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Oaxaca regions while revealing their considerable political and historical content.⁵

What we are after is what we can get, not an "objective history" — no one gets that — but the richness of cultural history and the concomitant burden to present it as fully and as accurately as possible, where all evidence is welcome for evaluation and no evidence is worthy of banishment or dismissal by people of our increasingly impatient era. Banishment diminishes the Aztecs and diminishes us all. Instead, much patient but fascinating work awaits those interested, because the devil remains, and

always will remain, in the details.

Notes

1. Susan Gillespie's book could be faulted for being too one-sided and focused overly on destruction, but she was merely striking a balance against decades of earlier, weaker research. She has now assembled a formidable armament for historical destruction (see, for example, Gillespie's syllabus at <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/sgillesp/history/6930sylnativehist.htm>) but has also moved on to more constructive, productive uses of her approach (Gillespie 1998; cf. Offner 1983:88-97; 1993:66).
2. Comprehensive charter myths are described as "Composed of cliché-centered narrative episodes, each bearing on a historical process or event; tendency to aggregate all episodes in a single period of 'origins'; chronological content depends on elaboration of systems of epochs (kings' reigns, etc.). Scope congruent with dimensions of largest recent political unit." (Note that many of these words have specialized meanings elucidated in the Joseph Miller's article).
3. Ongoing coordinated analysis of the Codex Xolotl, Ixtlilxochitl, Torquemada, and some other minor sources indicates that the published texts of Texcocan history emanate from at least six major types of sources: (1) pictorial documents; (2) spoken/sung pieces clearly tied to pictorial documents; (3) spoken/sung pieces arising from dance presentations of battle exploits (e.g., Offner 1993:67-68) or similar events; (4) historical allusions in not explicitly historical "poetic" works; (5) spoken/sung pieces that show distinct signs of being related to a now lost pictorial; and (6) sixteenth- and seventeenth-century inept descriptions of the content of now lost pictorials; these last can entail the interesting exercise of recreating pictorials from such descriptions along with sources mentioned above in 1-5.
4. Contemplate the nouns and verbs in such a simple sentence as "The Soviet Union (or The United States) invaded and conquered Afghanistan."
5. Not all early Mesoamerican history is "Toltec" flavored, particularly in the Puebla area.

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REPLY

Reply by
Michael E. Smith
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I apologize to Jerome Offner and other readers of the Nahua Newsletter for the lack of clarity in my paper, "Comments on the Historicity of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, Tollan, and the Toltecs" (appearing in NN 36(2003):31-36). It was not my intention at all to denigrate the usefulness or value of Aztec native historical sources. This body of material, quite diverse in format and content (as Offner points out), is of the highest importance for scholarship on a wide range of issues for both pre-Hispanic and Colonial Mexico. My point was much narrower: the Nahua historical tradition is unlikely to contain reliable information about "Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, Tollan, and the Toltecs." It should be obvious that comparative sources like the Sumerian king list, Danish heroic history, or African origin myths say nothing direct about the historical value of Aztec sources. My main point was that in a case like the Toltec narratives of central Mexico — where data are fragmentary, ideologically charged, and difficult to work with — comparative cases might shed light on the likelihood that reliable historical information can be reconstructed from such early accounts. My thinking was that if scholars like H. B. Nicholson and Michel Graulich cannot resolve this issue to everybody's satisfaction, then any new source of ideas would be welcome to the debate. On this very limited theme, Offner's paper has little to say.

My views of the historical usefulness of Aztec native historical sources for events after the Aztlan migrations are probably quite close to Offner's. In a variety of publications over the years I have

made extensive use of these sources in research on a number of economic, political, and social themes (see sources in the bibliography in Smith 2003). I do regret the doubts I expressed in note 1 to my paper about the historicity of the Aztlan migrations. After promoting the historical validity of this episode of Aztec native history for two decades (Smith 1984; 2003:34-37), I was dismayed at the linguistic evidence for an earlier entry of Nahuatl into central Mexico. But this just means that the historical reality was much more complicated than the simple and tidy model I had advocated. Indeed, recent historiographic scholarship on the Aztlan migrations (Castañeda de la Paz 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Navarrete 1998, 1999, 2000) has provided this theme with far stronger empirical support.

Much of Offner's paper focuses on the high quality of native historical sources from Texcoco. He is entirely correct on this point. Indeed, this is one reason I singled out Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl as a key historical source in my book, *The Aztecs* (Smith 2003:17-18). Offner is probably correct in labeling the *Codex Xolotl* as one of the most under-utilized native sources in central Mexico. It would benefit Aztec studies greatly if someone could publish a reasonably priced edition of this document (and perhaps other related documents like the *Mapa Quinatzin*) to make it more easily available to scholars and students.

In summary, my remarks in the article discussed by Offner were far narrower than his comments suggest, and I apologize for not being clearer about my scope and views. I am highly skeptical about the historical validity of the Aztecs' views of the Toltecs, but I remain quite enthusiastic about the value of post-Toltec native historical accounts. I am an archaeologist, not a historian, but I do use these accounts extensively in my research. In terms of historiography, I am certainly not in the same league as Nicholson, Graulich, or Offner, three of the leading scholars of Aztec native history. As an anthropologist, however, I appreciate the value of the comparative method, and I hope that my brief consideration of comparative cases of oral political history might help advance scholarship on Aztec native history. My remarks were not meant to be "a retreat into nihilism," but rather a modest contribution to critical debate on an important theme of Aztec history.

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RESPONSE

"History and Archaeology In Cooperation?"

by

Jerome Offner
Houston, Texas

The plain-sense meaning of Michael Smith's comments remains, notwithstanding his reinterpretation of his own remarks and retrenchment of position. With his misreading, misapplication, and misreporting of historiographic commentaries and sources made evident, Smith persists twice more in opining that the "Nahua historical tradition is unlikely to contain reliable information about Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, Tollan, and the Toltecs" and that he remains "highly skeptical about the historical validity of the Aztecs' view of the Toltecs."

Over the past two decades, it has become fashionable among some archaeologists to attack written sources while touting the ability of archaeological methods to determine better what really happened. Because potsherds rarely speak and skeletal remains are informants of limited scope, and particularly because of the very low benefit/cost ratio implicit in the nature of archaeological methods, this research strategy has not produced the anticipated results and cannot go it alone. It is time for archaeologists and other scholars to cease the easy criticisms of the superficial faults in the written sources and instead foster the long-overdue basic research in these texts and their archaeological context to increase understanding of Mesoamerican culture history.

Historiographic questions, as with most questions, are rarely simple "either/or" concerns. Typically, it proves useful to keep a number of positions in mind at the same time, while assigning and reassigning higher or lower orders of probability to them as understanding increases. For this reason, until the matter is resolved, it will prove more productive to adopt a working position akin to H. B. Nicholson's that the Toltec reports contain both mythical and historical information than to declare peremptorily that they include only mythical data. Archaeologists, through research designs including, among other concerns, testable hypotheses regarding the geographic and chronological distribution of similar material remains, can have much to say on these matters.

Finally, Texcocan studies have indeed largely taken a back seat to Tenochcan studies. The lack of modern, high-density color publication of the principal pictorial documents (e.g., Xolotl, Quinatzin, Plotzin), largely in the hands of the French, is quite remarkable. A team study of Texcocan history is certainly a worthy goal, along with the digitization of the texts of Ixtlilxochitl and Torquemada. The city has much to teach us. Fifteenth-century Texcoco had to protect its interests in the Valley of Mexico but was far more interested in the lands to the east. To a large degree, the rise of Texcoco, on the backs of

Coatlinchan and Huexotla and their rise in turn on their forebears', can be seen as the manifestation of the complex interactions of commercial and economic interests, forces and histories embracing the Valley of Mexico, parts of Hidalgo and Puebla through the Veracruz coastal lowlands. Similar complexities may well stretch back to Teotihuacan times and earlier — the Gulf Coast was likely the first partner in that city's rise to economic prominence. Texcoco's eventual succession to, development and wielding of the information transmitted from these patterns may help explain the Aztecs' view of Texcoco as the most sophisticated and wisest of the Aztec cities. Perhaps an archaeologist can eschew spending time criticizing written sources and instead research and interpret the already existing archaeological evidence to the east of Texcoco down to Veracruz to help illuminate the Toltec reports in Ixtlilxochitl and other sources. Perhaps plans could be made to investigate the reports archaeologically on the ground. There is much lost history in this key region and, given our current distribution of data, archaeological research has great potential in recapturing a valuable portion of it.

ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS ISSUE

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[Illustrations have been removed in the version posted at <http://www.ipfw.edu/soca/Nahua.htm>]

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