

# THE NAHUA NEWSLETTER

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## NAHUA NEWSLETTER NEWS

Welcome to issue number 45 of the *Nahua Newsletter*. The *NN* started over 22 years ago to encourage communication among scholars and students who share an interest in Nahua culture, history, and language. The focus is on Nahuatl-speaking peoples but the scope of the newsletter has expanded to include topics broadly related to indigenous Mesoamerica. The *NN* is published in the service of its readers and we encourage you to participate by sending news of your work and interests. It pays to network and the *NN* makes it easy for beginners and seasoned scholars to stay in touch with one another. In the following pages you will find announcements, descriptions of some recent publications, and a directory update.

The *NN* has been highly successful throughout the years and readers have often expressed their satisfaction with the publication. We currently have over 400 subscribers living and working in 15 different countries and we add new readers with each issue. But like all similar publications the *NN* must adapt to the changing circumstances of our times. As long-time readers know, the *NN* is supported solely by donations from readers with occasional help from the Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) Department of Anthropology and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies program at Indiana University Bloomington. The major problem we face is that even as donations from readers remain steady, the costs of printing and mailing the *NN* have skyrocketed. Postal rates have increased significantly, particularly for overseas subscribers. The cost of paper has risen and so have IPFW's charges for printing each issue.

We have discussed the problem with many people and have concluded that we do not want to institute a subscription fee. Charging for the *NN* would contradict its main purpose of fostering free and easy exchange among readers. Additionally, collecting subscription fees would complicate record keeping. But it is imperative that we address the problem of rising costs.

We wish to announce a change in how the *NN* will be disseminated in the future. Beginning with issue number 46 (November 2008), we will no longer mail printed copies of the publication. We will instead continue to provide free online access to the *NN* at the following URL:

**<http://www.nahuanewsletter.org/>**

All of the earlier issues back to number 1 (February 1986) are archived at the *Nahua Newsletter* Web site where they have been freely available to readers for many years. Due to copyright restrictions, we are unable to highlight illustrations from recently published works in the online version. With that one exception, everything will remain exactly the same — the format will be identical, the newsletter will be published twice a year in November and February, and the purpose of the *NN* will carry on.

We hope that this new arrangement meets with the approval of our readers and that everyone will consult the online version of the *NN* on a regular basis. We are investigating the possibility of offering an RSS feed so that interested subscribers can sign up for an automatic alert when a new issue is posted. We also hope that readers will continue to send questions, announcements, news of research projects, and any other information of interest so that it can be published in future issues. We would also appreciate continuing to receive your donations so that we can cover the expenses of maintaining and enhancing the *NN* Web site. All contributions go towards making the newsletter more widely available.

Please send all communications by e-mail to sandstro@ipfw.edu, or by post to:

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## NEWS ITEMS

1. Long-time *NN* reader Frans Schryer of the University of Guelph sends the following update on his research on the Nahua from Guerrero: "In the past (1980's), I have done fieldwork in the Huasteca region, where I carried out a study of an uprising of Nahua. The main issue in that conflict was loss of access to land in a region heavily dependent on subsistence corn production. The focus of my research was the complex relationship between class and ethnicity and the impact of the expansion of modern cattle production as the main cause of violent conflict between poor Nahua corn producers and landowning cattle producers and commercial farmers, most of whom are mestizos. A secondary theme was severe competition among neighboring Nahua villages and factional disputes, and even class conflict, within larger Nahua communities. I touched on the topic of bilingual (Spanish-Nahuatl) education in Mexico and the role of bilingual school teachers.

"After a decade of research in another part of the world, I have started doing research in Mexico again, this time among Nahua of the Alto Balsas region of Guerrero. This region, where people speak a different version of Nahuatl than that spoken in the Huasteca, is well known for a successful struggle (1990-1992) against the building of a hydroelectric dam that would have flooded dozens of Nahua pueblos and indirectly affected many more villages.

"The Alto Balsas region is also well known for its craft production, including paintings on bark paper or *amates* sold to tourists and art galleries in North America, Europe, and Japan. What makes their craft production unique is that the Alto Balsas Nahua sell their work directly to both middle-class Mexicans and foreign visitors. Nahua artisan-vendors are found all over Mexico, including most resorts, beaches, and large cities. One theory is that their propensity for traveling and trading goes back to the colonial era, and probably earlier, when Nahua from this region traded salt produced on the Pacific coast to the highland regions of Mexico.

"Unfortunately, starting as early as 1990, the Nahua inhabitants of the Alto Balsas region have become increasingly dependent on working for wages in the United States, for the most part as undocumented workers. Even accomplished *amate* painters now work as illegal workers in a variety of sectors of the American economy.

"The focus of my ongoing research on the Alto Balsas Nahua is the impact of globalization on their home region, and their increasing presence throughout the United States, particularly in Texas and California. For example, in Houston, the Alto Balsas Nahua (a majority of whom are from the village of Ahuelican, Guerrero), work in big box stores and supermarkets, shelving and working in their warehouses — not exactly the typical scenario of indigenous Mexicans picking strawberries! These workers speak Nahuatl among themselves and with their relatives at home, through weekly phone calls. One man, who has spent most of the last fifteen years in Houston, is even giving classes in Nahuatl to a group of Americans of Mexican descent who want to learn the language of the Aztecs. His life story, recounted orally, was the source of inspiration and provided biographical details for an American writer of juvenile fiction.

"Another increasingly important theme in my study of the Alto Balsas Nahua is their presence in and impact on politics (particularly the global indigenous movement), the world of arts and crafts, the international labor market, and literature. I have discovered that, rather than being seen as a homogenous group, the Alto Balsas Nahua are not viewed or portrayed in the same manner in these different social fields.

"I started my new project around five years ago, but progress has been slow because of my university administrative and teaching duties. I see this research as a long-term project to which I will soon be able to pay more attention. Over the next couple of years I will provide short updates in the *NN*, in which I will talk about my findings and/or provide snapshots of different aspects of the history, culture, and livelihood strategies of this group of Nahuatl-speaking people."

Contact Frans Schryer by e-mail at [fschryer@uoguelph.ca](mailto:fschryer@uoguelph.ca), or by mail at the Department of Anthropology, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1 CANADA.

[The illustrations have been removed from the online version of the *Nahua Newsletter*.]

2. Here is a request to *NN* readers from a translation company: "My name is Virginia Wilkins and I represent Lionbridge Technologies as a language recruiter. While doing research on Latin American indigenous languages I came across your *Nahua Newsletter*. I am in search of speakers of indigenous Latin American languages who also speak English or Spanish. We at Lionbridge are the sole providers of interpreters for the United States government's Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ). We cover a little over 300 languages throughout the world and are looking to represent more, which brings me to you. It is hard to recruit speakers of Latin American indigenous languages because there are so few of them in the U.S.

"We are looking to hire any speakers of indigenous languages on a freelance or contractual basis — they are paid for the work they perform. With immigration reform a hot issue we have seen a huge influx of people in the immigration system and we hope to be able to help every person receive a fair trial when their day in court is upon them. If there is anyone that you can think of who may be able to serve as an interpreter for the U.S. government, I would appreciate any help in putting me in contact with them. Please keep in mind that a potential interpreter must meet these requirements:

- (1) Have a green card, valid work permit, or be a U.S. citizen
- (2) Speak fluent English or Spanish
- (3) Be 18 years of age or older

"These three are usually the deal breakers but I am hoping that you or your readers can point me in the right direction. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the address below. Also, if you would like to learn more about our company our respective links are listed below my contact information."

Please contact Virginia Wilkins, Recruiter, Lionbridge Federal, 1101 14th Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005 U.S.A. / by phone 202-741-4018 / by fax 202-289-4677 / or visit the Web site at <http://interpretation.lionbridge.com/>

3. Hugo García Valencia sends the following communique: "Ana María Alvarez Palma y yo estamos proponiendo un proyecto de estudio sobre la técnica en curva. Queremos pedirte insertar esta pequeña nota en the *Nahua Newsletter* en la que pedimos ayuda de conocedores para que nos indiquen si hay lienzos con esa técnica y si conocen material etnográfico con la misma." He continues:

"Ana María Alvarez Palma and Enrique Hugo García Valencia have started a project aimed at studying a special technique known as 'curve weaving' (see Christensen 1947; Weitlaner Johnson 1966). It basically consists of some weft threads turning into warp threads in colonial *lienzos*, or warp threads turning into weft threads in fabrics collected by ethnographers. Dr. Nicholas Johnson in 2000 mentions the existence of about ten *lienzos* which exhibit this technique, mainly from Oaxaca, Puebla, and Veracruz. Ethnographically, this technique is restricted to *quechqueme* from the Sierra de Puebla (Christensen 1947; Lechuga 1977) and recently we have described its use in Huastec *morrales* (Alvarez Palma and García Valencia, forthcoming). We would appreciate any help in identifying more objects exhibiting the same technique. Any information will be welcomed at hugogv44@hotmail.com or analvarez6@gmail.com."

#### References

- Christensen, Bodil. 1947. "Otomi looms and *quechquemitls* from San Pablito, State of Puebla and Santa Ana Hueytlalpan, State of Hidalgo, Mexico." *Notes on Middle American Archaeology and Ethnology* 5 (nos. 61-90):122-42.
- Lechuga, Ruth D. 1977. "El *quechquemitl* en la Sierra de Puebla." *Segunda mesa redonda de problemas antropológicos de la Sierra Norte de Puebla*. Cuetzalan: Centro de Estudios Historicos de la Sierra Norte del Estado de Puebla.
- Johnson, Nicholas. 2000. "Lienzos Made from Cloth Originally Woven for Other Uses." In *Códices y documentos sobre México: Tercer simposio internacional*. Constanza Vega Sosa, ed., pp. 575-94. Colección científica, 409. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.
- Weitlaner Johnson, Irmgard. 1966. "Análisis textil del lienzo de Ocotepc." In *Summa antropológica en homenaje a Roberto J. Weitlaner*. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Secretaría de Educación Pública.

4. The following books have been recently released by a wide variety of publishers. It is our pleasure to bring each work to the attention of *NN* readers, particularly this first one —

*Remembering Victoria: A Tragic Nahuat Love Story*. By James M. Taggart. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007. 192 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-292-71686-5. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-292-71687-2. See <http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/tagrem.html> for order information. Here is a description from the jacket:

"On October 15, 1983, a young mother of six was murdered while walking across her village of Huitzilán de Serdán, Mexico, with her infant son and one of her daughters. This woman, Victoria Bonilla, was among more than one hundred villagers who perished in violence that broke out soon after the Mexican army chopped down a cornfield that had been planted on an unused cattle pasture by forty Nahuat villagers.

"In this anthropological account, based on years of fieldwork in Huitzilán, James M. Taggart turns to Victoria's husband, Nacho Ángel Hernández, to try to understand how a community based on respect and cooperation descended into horrific violence and fratricide. When the army chopped down the cornfield at Talcuaco, the war that broke out resulted in the complete breakdown of the social and moral order of the community.

"At its heart, this is a tragic love story, chronicling Nacho's feelings for Victoria spanning their courtship, marriage, family life, and her death. Nacho delivered his *testimonio* to the author in Nahuat, making it one of the few autobiographical love stories told in an Amerindian language, and a very rare account of love among the indigenous people of Mesoamerica. There is almost nothing in the literature on how a man develops and changes his feelings for his wife over his lifetime. This study contributes to the anthropology of emotion by focusing on how the Nahuat attempt to express love through language and ritual."

Table of contents:

Preface	Chapter 7. Nahueh
Chapter 1. Introduction	Chapter 8. Love as Desire
Chapter 2. The Tragedy	Chapter 9. Wife as Sister
Chapter 3. Talcuaco	Chapter 10. Conclusions
Chapter 4. Fratricide	Notes
Chapter 5. "Rabbit and Coyote"	Works Cited
Chapter 6. Human Goodness	Index

5. Here is a magnificent new reference work, eight years in the making, with more than 1,000 illustrations (900 in color). The section dealing with Mesoamerican dress will be of particular interest to *NN* readers —

*The Worldwide History of Dress*. By Patricia Rieff Anawalt. London: Thames and Hudson, 2007. 608 pp. \$100.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-500-51363-7. See <http://thamesandhudson.com/> From the jacket:

"From Upper Paleolithic plant-fiber skirts, Ancient Egyptian linen shifts and Roman togas through Mongolian shamanic robes, Japanese kimonos and Indian saris to nineteenth-century Tyrolean dirndls, African ceremonial attire and Middle Eastern burqas, this remarkable book covers every notable geographical region, historical period and style of costume worldwide.

"All aspects of dress and accessories are discussed: basic men's and women's clothing, footwear, headgear, outerwear, jewelry, armor, special costumes, garment decoration and face and body modification. More than one thousand illustrations reveal the sheer range of global clothing traditions, using an astonishing variety of sources: vintage and modern-day photographs of people in local apparel, color plates of museum-quality artifacts on display or posed on mannequins, historical painting, miniatures, woodblock prints, statues, stone plaques, monumental carvings, friezes, murals, mosaics and pottery. There are diagrams that explain how garments are worn, line drawings that illustrate traditional motifs and designs and more than fifty specially commissioned maps.

"Brilliantly tracing influences from culture to culture, this *tour-de-force* journey across the globe includes descriptions of each region's population, geography and climate, allowing the reader to understand the development of an area's clothing customs. Complete with an extensive reference section, this treasure trove of information is a glorious celebration of ethnographic clothing and is destined to be the standard reference work on the subject."

Table of contents:

Preface

Introduction

1. The Middle East — The Ancient Near East — The Arabian Peninsula — The Eastern Mediterranean — The Iranian Plateau
2. Europe — Prehistoric Europe — Classical Europe — The European folk tradition
3. Central Asia — Mongolia — The Silk Road
4. East Asia — China — Korea — Japan
5. South Asia — India — The Himalayan Kingdoms
6. Southeast Asia — Mainland — Island
7. Oceania — Australia — Melanesia — Micronesia — Polynesia
8. North America — The Arctic — The Northwest Coast — The Woodlands — The Plains — The Southwest — Mesoamerica
9. South America — The Ancient Andes — The Present Andes — Amazonia — Patagonia
10. Africa — East Africa — South Africa — Central Africa — West Africa — North Africa

Notes

Bibliography

Glossary

Picture Credits

Acknowledgements

Index

5. This monumental work has been released by the publisher with an accompanying DVD that provides rare footage of a corn ritual among the Totonac of the Sierra de Puebla. An English translation is currently being prepared —

*Le Soleil-Dieu et le Christ: La christianisation des Indiens du Mexique vue de la Sierra de Puebla.* By Guy Stresser-Péan. Recherches Amériques latines. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005. 568 pp. ISBN 2-7475-7790-2 (paper). With DVD containing "Fête du maïs." ISBN 2-7475-8596-4 (DVD). See the publisher's Web site at <http://www.editions-harmattan.fr/> for order information. Description from the jacket:

"Après avoir exposé les conditions de l'évangélisation au XVIème siècle, l'auteur s'attache à retracer la vie actuelle des Indiens de la Sierra. Il dépeint l'ambiance de religiosité qui imprègne leur existence quotidienne et décrit les danses pratiquées depuis les temps les plus anciens, comme autant de prières adressées aux dieux. La danse du *Volador*, qui a conservé jusqu'à nos jours un caractère sacré, retient particulièrement l'attention de Guy Stresser-Péan.

"La société est encore dirigée par les Tlamatke (savants indigènes), qui consultent toujours le calendrier antique dans toutes les circonstances de la vie. Ils décident des dates favorables pour exécuter les cérémonies au cours desquelles sont sacrifiées des volailles dont le sang versé plaît aux dieux.

"Les guérisseurs décrivent un monde dont le héros culturel, *Quetzalcoatl-9 Vent*, esprit du dieu du maïs, est le précurseur du Christ. Ce sont les *Voladores* qui ont accompagné et aidé le Christ-Soleil dans sa première ascension au ciel. La Lune et plus encore le Soleil tiennent une place éminente dans les croyances, ce dernier étant assimilé à Jésus-Christ.

"Tandis que les Indiens du Haut Plateau Central semblent tout à fait convertis au christianisme, comme l'a démontré Robert Ricard, les Indiens de la Sierra de Puebla vivent un christianisme sincère mais teinté de paganisme."

Table of contents:

Remerciements

Préface

Chapitre I — La conversion au Christianisme des Indiens du Mexique central au XVème siècle

Chapitre II — De la conquête spirituelle à la gestion paroissiale dans le Mexique central de l'époque coloniale

Chapitre III — Une zone indigène trilingue et traditionaliste de la Sierra de Puebla

Chapitre IV — Introduction du Christianisme dans la Sierra Nord de Puebla

Chapitre V — Crises religieuses locales au XVIème et au XVIIème siècle

Chapitre VI — La sédition des Otomis de Tutotepec en 1766-1769

Chapitre VII — Traditions actuelles de la Sierra Nord de Puebla: Culte des montagnes, emploi d'oratoires ou maisons sacrées

Chapitre VIII — Tambours sacrés, *Teponaztli* et idoles des Indiens de la Sierra Nord de Puebla

Chapitre IX — Les fêtes de tradition indigène

Chapitre X — Éléments et accessoires des cérémonies indigènes traditionnelles

Chapitre XI — Les fêtes chrétiennes des villages de la Sierra de Puebla et leurs éléments rituels

Chapitre XII — Les danses d'origine préhispanique

Chapitre XIII — Les danses d'origine coloniale

Chapitre XIV — Les détenteurs du Savoir indigène

- Chapitre XV — Survivances du calendrier mésoaméricain dans la Sierra Nord de Puebla  
 Chapitre XVI — Croyances sur la formation et sur la fin du monde  
 Chapitre XVII — Cosmologie, le monde vu par les Indiens de la Sierra de Puebla  
 Chapitre XVIII — Les âmes des êtres et des choses  
 Chapitre XIX — Les êtres surnaturels dans les croyances et les pratiques religieuses des Indiens de la Sierra Nord de Puebla  
 Chapitre XX — La religion peu syncrétique des derniers Indiens Nahuas du Mexique central  
 Chapitre XXI — Syncrétisme dans la religion des Indiens actuels de la Sierra Nord de Puebla  
 Bibliographie

7. We are very pleased to announce this recent publication —

*Ethnic Identity in Nahua Mesoamerica: The View from Archaeology, Art History, Ethnohistory, and Contemporary Ethnography.* By Frances F. Berdan, John K. Chance, Alan R. Sandstrom, Barbara L. Stark, James M. Taggart, and Emily Umberger. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87480-917-6. See publisher's Web site at <http://www.uofupress.com/> Here is a summary:

This volume represents a multidisciplinary effort to trace changing patterns of ethnic identity among the Nahua beginning in the pre-Hispanic era, continuing through the colonial period and independence, to the people living today. Chapters are contributed by an archaeologist, two ethnohistorians, an art historian, and two ethnographers. The work illustrates the protean nature of ethnicity and how it changed over the centuries to meet the demands of the evolving social and cultural circumstances of the Nahua. The book shows how the softer Native American ethnic identity was often replaced by the harder version brought by the Spaniards. It also shows how people modified their definitions of ethnic identity to secure rights and privileges for themselves.

Table of contents:

- Chapter 1. Diachronic and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Mesoamerican Ethnicity, by Barbara L. Stark and John K. Chance  
 Chapter 2. Archaeology and Ethnicity in Postclassic Mesoamerica, by Barbara L. Stark  
 Chapter 3. Ethnicity and Other Identities in the Sculptures of Tenochtitlan, by Emily Umberger  
 Chapter 4. Concepts of Ethnicity and Class in Aztec-Period Mexico, by Frances F. Berdan  
 Chapter 5. Indigenous Ethnicity in Colonial Central Mexico, by John K. Chance  
 Chapter 6. Blood Sacrifice, Curing, and Ethnic Identity Among Contemporary Nahua of Northern Veracruz, Mexico, by Alan R. Sandstrom.  
 Chapter 7. Nahuatl Ethnicity in a Time of Conflict, by James M. Taggart.  
 Chapter 8. Some Finishing Thoughts and Unfinished Business, by Alan R. Sandstrom and Frances F. Berdan  
 Notes  
 References Cited  
 List of Authors  
 Index

## 8. Also of note —

*Testaments of Toluca*. Edited and translated with commentary and introductory study by Caterina Pizzigoni. Nahuatl studies series, no. 8. James Lockhart, series editor. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 2007. xvi + 250 pp. \$58.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-5607-5. See the publisher's Web site at <http://www.sup.org/> From the jacket:

"Testaments written in their own language, Nahuatl, have been crucial for reconstructing the everyday life of the indigenous people of central Mexico after Spanish contact. Those published to date have largely been from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. *Testaments of Toluca* presents a large body of Nahuatl wills (98) from 1652 to 1783 from an important valley not much studied, thus greatly enlarging our perspective on the evolution of indigenous society and culture in central Mexico. Each testament is transcribed, translated, and accompanied by a commentary on the testator's situation and on interesting terminology. A substantial introductory study fully analyzes the testamentary genre as seen in this corpus (a first) and summarizes the content of the documents in realms such as gender, kinship, household, and land. Wills are very human documents, and the apparatus draws out this aspect, telling us much about indigenous life in central Mexico in the third century after Spanish contact. All this makes the book of potential interest to a broad spectrum of readers."

Table of contents:

- List of Notaries in the Corpus
- List of Testaments in Clusters
- Acknowledgments
- Introductory Study
- Chapter 1. Characteristics of the Corpus
  - Chronology
  - Regional Distribution, Sociopolitical Organization, and Order
  - Gender
  - Clusters

## Chapter 2. The Wills and What They Tell Us

Preamble

Personal Names

Marital Status

Unit Names

Funeral Arrangements

Mass

Shroud

Burial

The Jerusalem Fund

Bells

Cofradías

Undocumented Aspects

Kinship Terms, The Order of Heirs, and Inheritance Patterns

Perorations

Houses and Saints

Land

Animals

Debts

The End of the Testament

Ending the Body of the Will

Executors

Witnesses

Officials

## Chapter 3. Language and Orthography

Phenomena of Contact with Spanish

Toluca Valley Nahuatl, Orthography, and Phonology

## Chapter 4. Notaries

Toluca Area

Calimaya/Tepemaxalco

## Chapter 5. Some Concluding Remarks

Glossary

Bibliography

9. This study will also be of interest to *NN* readers —

*Mexico, From Mestizo to Multicultural: National Identity and Recent Representations of the Conquest.* By Carrie C. Chorba. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007. 228 pp. \$69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8265-1538-4. \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8265-1539-1. See the publisher's Web site at <http://www.vanderbiltuniversitypress.com/> From the jacket:

"This is the first interdisciplinary study of literary, cinematic, and graphic images of Mexican national identity from the Quincentennial commemoration in 1992 to the turn of the millennium. The homogenizing, mestizophile national identity which pervaded Mexico throughout the past century had given way to official admission of Mexico's ethnic and linguistic diversity — or 'pluriculture.'"

Table of contents:

List of Illustrations

Acknowledgments

Chapter 1 — Issues of Nation, Identity, and History in Mexico

Chapter 2 — The Trauma of Mexico's Mestizo Origins

Chapter 3 — Moving toward Multiculturalism

Chapter 4 — The Interminable Conquest of Mexico

Chapter 5 — Concluding Remarks

Notes

Works Cited

Index

10. Originally published in Mexico as *Gobierno y Sociedad en Nueva Espana*, Ethelia Ruiz Medrano's seminal study is now available in an updated English version —

*Reshaping New Spain, Government and Private Interests in the Colonial Bureaucracy, 1531-1550*. By Ethelia Ruiz Medrano, translated by Julia Constantino and Pauline Marmasse. Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2006. 336 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 0-87081-814-7. See <http://www.ucolorado.com/> From the jacket:

"Drawing on extensive archival research, Ruiz examines the developing colonial institutions in Mexico and how they changed indigenous land ownership and labor laws to favor the new bureaucrats. This portrait of the emerging government in New Spain fills a critical niche in Latin American studies."

Table of contents:

List of Tables and Maps

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Chapter 1. The First Attempts at Royal Control Over the Territory: Policy of the Second Audiencia, 1531-1535

The Second Audiencia and Indian Jurisdiction

Justice Administration in Indian Affairs: The Centralization Process

Policy of the Second Audiencia: *Encomienda*

Policy of the Second Audiencia: *Corregimiento*

The Second Audiencia's Policy on Tribute

Policy of the Second Audiencia on Indian Labor

Notes

Chapter 2. Reshaping New Spain: The Policy of Viceroy Mendoza, 1535-1550

Viceroy Mendoza's Political Project: *Encomienda*

Viceroy Mendoza's Policy: *Corregimiento*

The Viceroy's Economic Activities

Notes

Chapter 3. A Royal Official as Entrepreneur: The Case of Oidor Lorenzo de Tejada

Twisting the Law: Appropriation of Indian Lands

Agricultural Ventures: Characteristics

Oidor Tejada's Trading Ventures

Indian Labor Used by Tejada in His Enterprises

Notes

Conclusions

Comments on the Source Material

Appendix

Glossary

Bibliography

Index

11. With the release in 2008 of volume 3 in the planned four-volume series, the *NN* is pleased to relay these publication details to readers —

*Nahuatl Theater, Volume 1: Death and Life in Colonial Nahua Mexico*. Edited by Barry D. Sell and Louise M. Burkhart, with the assistance of Gregory Spira; foreword by Miguel León-Portilla. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004. 320 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN: 978-0-8061-3633-2. See the publisher's Web site at <http://www.oupres.com/>

A summary description of the first volume appeared in *NN* number 38 (November 2004), p. 4. Here is the table of contents:

Foreword: Fernando Horcasitas (1924-1980) and Nahuatl Theater, by Miguel León-Portilla

Preface, Louise M. Burkhart and Barry D. Sell

Acknowledgments

Part 1. Essays

Nahuatl Plays in Context, by Barry D. Sell

Death and the Colonial Nahua, by Louise M. Burkhart

Nahuatl Catechistic Drama: New Translations, Old Preoccupations, by Daniel Mosquera

Instructing the Nahuas in Judeo-Christian Obedience: A *Neixcuitilli* and Four Sermon Pieces on the

Akedah, by Viviana Díaz Balsera

Part 2. Plays

Transcription Guidelines

The Three Kings

The Sacrifice of Isaac

Souls and Testamentary Executors

Final Judgment

How to Live on Earth

The Merchant

The Life of Don Sebastián

Appendixes

References

Index

*Nahuatl Theater, Volume 2: Our Lady of Guadalupe*. Edited by Barry D. Sell, Louise M. Burkhart, and Stafford Poole. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. 228 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN: 978-0-8061-3794-0. From the jacket:

"The foundation legend of the Mexican devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of the most appealing and beloved of all religious stories. In this volume, editors Barry D. Sell, Louise M. Burkhart, and Stafford Poole present the only known colonial Nahuatl-language dramas based on the Virgin of Guadalupe story: the Dialogue of the Apparition of the Virgin Saint Mary of Guadalupe, an anonymous work from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, and *The Mexican Portent*, authored by creole priest Joseph Pérez de la Fuente in the early eighteenth century. The plays, never before published in English translation, are vital works in the history of the Guadalupe devotion, for they show how her story was presented to native people at a time when it was not universally known.

"Faithful transcriptions and translations of the plays are accompanied here by introductory essays by Poole and Burkhart and by three additional previously unpublished Guadalupan texts in Nahuatl."

Table of contents:

Acknowledgments

Part 1. Essays

Introduction: The Virgin of Guadalupe in Two Nahuatl Dramas, by Stafford Poole

Juan Diego's World: The Representation of Social Relations in the Guadalupan Dramas, by Louise Burkhart

Part 2. The Plays

Transcription Guidelines

Dialogue on the Apparition of the Virgin Saint Mary of Guadalupe

The Wonder of Mexico

Part 3. Song, Sermon, and Prayer

Introduction

Song to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexican Verse

Sermon

Prayer to the Mother of God in Mexican Language

References

Index

*Nahuatl Theater, Volume 3: Spanish Golden Age Drama in Mexican Translation.* Edited by Barry D. Sell, Louise M. Burkhart, Elizabeth R. Wright, with contributions from Daniel Mosquera and John Bierhorst; foreword by John Frederick Schwaller. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. 432 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN: 978-0-8061-3878-7. From the jacket:

"European religious drama adapted for an Aztec audience.

"Don Bartolomé de Alva was a mestizo who rose within New Spain's ecclesiastical hierarchy when people of indigenous heritage were routinely excluded from the priesthood. In 1640 and 1641 he translated several theatrical pieces from Spanish into Nahuatl, yet this prodigious accomplishment remained virtually unknown for centuries.

"Nahuatl Theater, Volume 3 presents for the first time in English the complete dramatic works of Alva, the only known plays from Spain's Golden Age adapted into the lively world of Nahuatl-language theater. Alva's translations — "The Great Theater of the World," "The Animal Prophet and the Fortunate Patricide," "The Mother of the Best," and a farcical intermezzo — represent ambitious attempts to add complex, Baroque dramatic pieces by such literary giants as Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderón de la Barca to the repertory of Nahuatl theater, otherwise dominated by sober one-act religious plays grounded in medieval tradition. The Spanish sources and Alva's Nahuatl, set on facing pages with their English translations, show how Alva "Mexicanized" the plays by incorporating Nahuatl linguistic conventions and referencing local symbolism and social life. In their introductory essays, the editors offer contextual and interpretive information that provides an entrée into this rich material.

"As the only known adaptations of these theatrical works into a Native American language, these plays stand as fine literature in their own right."

Table of contents:

Foreword, by John Frederick Schwaller

Preface

Acknowledgments

Part 1. Essays

A Dramatic Diaspora: Spanish Theater and Its Mexican Interpretation, by Elizabeth R. Wright

Two Eminent and Classical Authors of the Discipline: Father Horacio Carocho, S.J., and Don Bartolomé de Alva, Nahuatl Scholars of New Spain, by Barry D. Sell

Nahuatl Baroque: How Alva Mexicanized the Spanish Dramas, by Louise M. Burkhart

Part 2. Plays

Transcription Guidelines

The Great Theater of the World

Intermezzo

The Animal Prophet and the Fortunate Patricide

The Mother of the Best

References

Index

12. And this final work is aimed at a juvenile audience —

*Birth of the Fifth Sun and Other Mesoamerican Tales*. By Jo Harper. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2008. 120 pp. \$17.95 (cloth), ISBN 13:978-0-89672-625-3. See <http://www.ttup.ttu.edu/> for this description:

"Many of these seventeen short tales deriving from Mesoamerican mythology are traditional and have traveled through time among the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Central America. A few are contemporary and seem to originate with Nahuatl-speaking descendants of the Aztecs. All of them, however, grace the pages here in lively fashion for young readers nine and up.

"Many middle schools include Aztec and Mayan myths in their curricula, but the selection is narrow, the sources scattered, and the stories themselves usually undeveloped, even fragmentary. Most of the stories are found only in scholarly works far beyond the grasp of young readers. Now, enlarging upon the mythology that frames the decision making of her young adult hero and heroine in *Delfino's Journey* and *Teresa's Journey*, Jo Harper fleshes out tales of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca for fourth through sixth graders. Young readers will also meet the Jaguar Sun, the Snake Woman, and the Pepper Man.

"To be as faithful as possible to the pre-Colombian, Mesoamerican worldview and humor of the original tales, Harper consulted closely with indigenous Nahuatl speakers and cultural anthropologists, yet her delivery has all the freshness and polish of a practiced storyteller who knows her audience. Here then for young readers and their teachers is an engaging introduction to Mesoamerican mythology and to an oral tradition worth preserving well beyond the classroom."

Table of contents:

Acknowledgments

Nahuatl Names and Words

Part One

Birth of the Fifth Sun

Who Will Be the People?

Corn Mountain

Who Can Teach the People?

Music is Born

Quetzalcoatl Falls

Tesca Shows His Power

Master Log

The Pepper Man

Tesca's Music

Part Two

The Thunder Spirits' New Cook

The Buzzard Husband

Rafael Outsmarts the Nahual

Lalito and the Nahual

The Devil's Cave

The Possum's Tale

The Chioconejo Rabbit and the Coyote

Other Tellings

Sources

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

*Las mujeres en Mesoamérica prehispánica.* Edited by María J. Rodríguez-Shadow. Mesa de Estudios de Género, 3rd, Mexico City, 2003; Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, Mesa Redonda, Jalapa Enríquez, 2004. 278 pp. Toluca: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, 2007. ISBN 9688359769; ISBN (13) 9789688359761.

Se trata de una compilación de 10 artículos en los que se analizan distintos aspectos de lo femenino en el México Precolombino en distintas áreas geográficas y en diferentes horizontes históricos, que para su presentación se dividieron en tres áreas: una sección introductoria, otra dedicada al área maya, la zona de Oaxaca y la cultura mexicana.

El primer trabajo que reseño es el de Walburga Wiesheu: "Jerarquía de género y organización de la producción." Ahí la autora hace una revisión de lo que han sido los trabajos de género sobre todo enfocados a la producción. Esta arqueóloga rechaza la opinión, por androcéntrica, de que en la época prehispánica hubiera una esfera pública y otra privada, donde las mujeres estaban confinadas a la privada y los hombres participaban en la esfera pública.

La autora postula que en el México prehispánico los textiles eran producidos esencialmente por medio de ocupaciones de medio tiempo al interior de las unidades domésticas, tanto por mujeres de la elite como por la población común, mediante una organización económica dual, en la que se realizaban una serie de actividades productivas paralelas, ello quizá debido a que las instituciones centrales aún no lograban controlar y administrar directamente la producción especializada de determinados bienes utilitarios y de valor (Wiesheu 2007: 44).

El siguiente trabajo es el de María J. Rodríguez-Shadow "Las relaciones de género en México prehispánico," como lo indica el título, es una visión global de la condición femenina y las relaciones de género en época prehispánica iniciando en la etapa lítica, transitando hacia el Formativo o Preclásico, el periodo Clásico y el Posclásico. La autora pone el acento en la participación de las mujeres en las actividades básicas de subsistencia en cada una de estas etapas, mostrando la importancia y lo esencial de la contribución femenina a la producción y la reproducción social de las comunidades precortesianas.

La segunda sección del libro está dedicada al área maya con 4 trabajos. El primero de ellos es el de Beatriz Barba de Piña Chán, "Las deidades femeninas de la creación Quiché." Aquí la autora toma como base el texto del Popol Vuh para describirnos las relaciones entre las deidades femeninas y masculinas, y a partir de ahí, entender las relaciones humanas entre ambos sexos.

El siguiente capítulo se debe a Pía Moya Honores, intitulado "Atributos y connotaciones de las figuras mayas, desde algunas imágenes clásicas y posclásicas." En este trabajo, mediante una discusión bien estructurada, se evalúan una buena cantidad de representaciones de figuras femeninas mayas en códices, vasos y estelas entre otros. La autora apunta que la ambivalencia y dualidad de las deidades mayas da cabida a dioses celestes y a la vez terrestres; masculinos y a la vez femeninos, lo que se interpreta como que los mayas no establecieron una dicotomía tajante entre lo femenino y lo masculino como si fueran categorías cerradas, más bien lo que hubo fue una coexistencia, una complementación en una sola figura. La autora concluye mencionando cómo la luna misma, tuvo una diversidad de atributos y parece haber tenido un aspecto masculino y femenino entre ciertos grupos mayas. Los géneros no eran antagonicos, sino que se integraban y combinaban en una misma figura.

El siguiente capítulo es el de Antonio Benavides, y lleva por título "Las mujeres mayas prehispánicas." En este trabajo, Benavides nos presenta de manera por demás detallada, las deidades mayas femeninas, que como antes habíamos mencionado para el trabajo de la Dra. Beatriz Barba, aparecen como parejas de sus contrapartes masculinas. Apunta el autor que "es gracias a las múltiples labores que llevan a cabo las mujeres mayas, la mayoría de las veces no reconocida, que se han preservado los valores culturales como el idioma, la cosmovisión, la herbolaria, la gastronomía rural y los trajes que ellas portan".

El último trabajo de esta sección es el de Marcos Noe Pool Cab y Héctor Hernández Álvarez, y tiene por título "Las relaciones de género en un grupo doméstico de las planicies yucatecas." Los autores se basan en el trabajo arqueológico llevado a cabo en el sitio llamado Periférico-Cholul, cercano a la ciudad de Mérida y correspondiente al periodo Clásico. En la estructura excavada, analizaron 22 esqueletos, 9 mujeres y 13 varones. Después de un análisis de los contextos funerarios de los individuos recuperados, los autores llegan a la conclusión de que se trata por un lado de un grupo de alto estatus, relacionado con actividades de administración y religión. Los varones recuperados tenían mayor ofrenda con lo que se deduce que tenían una mayor jerarquía.

Otra sección del libro está dedicada a Oaxaca. El primer capítulo es de Ernesto González Licón "Estado y sociedad: estudio de género en el Valle de Oaxaca." En este ensayo se presenta una interpretación de los cambios de roles entre un género y otro a través del tiempo. Se hace un estudio diacrónico de las condiciones de desigualdad social que enfrenta la población de Monte Albán desde el Formativo Tardío y hasta el Clásico Tardío. En este artículo se presenta un modelo teórico y metodológico concreto que es después comprobado con indicadores arqueológicos y que puede ser aplicado a otras investigaciones de género y desigualdad social.

El siguiente capítulo es el de Meaghan Peuramaki-Brown "El género en las urnas funerarias zapotecas." Aquí la autora hace un análisis de 43 urnas, basada en las publicaciones de Frank Boos sobre las colecciones del Museo Real de Ontario, Canadá; el museo nacional del Smithsonian en Estados Unidos, y el museo de la Universidad de la Américas en Mitla con las colecciones Frissell y Leigh. Se analiza el vestuario de algunas urnas asignando ciertas prendas a un género y a otro, lo mismo se hace con el peinado. Termina el trabajo planteando la posibilidad de considerar las urnas de los llamados "acompañantes" como un tercer género.

La sección de trabajos sobre la Cultura Mexica, inicia con el de Nicolás Balutet "La condena de los 'transgresores' de la identidad masculina: Un ejemplo de misoginia mesoamericana." Es este un interesante ensayo que retoma de las fuentes documentales cercanas a la conquista española, el tratamiento que se le daba a los vencidos en las batallas: feminizándolos o vistiéndolos con prendas femeninas. El autor menciona con acierto que ello refleja la feminidad como vector de sumisión, de humillación y burla. Igual trato recibían aquellos hombres que no demostraban valor y entereza en la guerra. En la segunda parte de este ensayo hace una revisión de la idea que tenían los mexicas acerca de la homosexualidad y de la manera como castigaban de manera distinta al que asumía una actitud activa del que era pasivo.

Le sigue el trabajo de Cecilia Klein, "Una nueva interpretación de la escultura de Coatlicue" quien interpreta algunos de los elementos iconográficos de esta escultura mexica y los de otras que aparentemente fueron hechas por el mismo artesano y que debieron exhibirse juntas y muy cercanas al Templo Mayor. El argumento central de este ensayo es que Coatlicue fue "una importante diosa creadora, junto con otras deidades femeninas, quienes en el pasado dieron su vida para dar luz y energía al quinto y presente Sol".

El último trabajo de este grupo y es de Miriam López Hernández "Los teotipos en la construcción de la feminidad mexica." La autora define teotipo como el modelo soberano y eterno que sirve de ejemplar al

entendimiento y a la voluntad de los humanos; en otras palabras la imitación de los dioses por parte de los seres humanos. También agrega que desde esta perspectiva, "el panteón mexica, fue usado por el Estado para ejercer control económico, político y social. Con la manipulación de este modelo, el comportamiento de diosas y otros modelos de comportamiento celestial, les fueron conferidos a las mujeres sus posibles destinos mientras que al mismo tiempo subordinaban la condición femenina y beneficiaban el poder masculino. De este modo, argumenta la autora, la construcción misma de las identidades sociales eran definidas y condicionadas por la simbología del panteón mexica, reproducido y aprendido mediante representaciones escultóricas y pictóricas entre otras. Se trata de un ensayo bien fundamentado y que invita a la reflexión.

Para concluir, no me resta sino recomendar ampliamente este libro. Los temas abarcan una gran variedad de planteamientos teóricos, metodologías, aspectos, temáticas, regiones y periodos cronológicos. Aun siendo un libro dedicado al estudio del género desde la investigación arqueológica, la variedad de temas convierten a este libro en un verdadero manual de consulta obligada para trabajos posteriores en diferentes regiones de nuestro país y a lo largo de diferentes horizontes históricos. Estoy convencido que los estudios de género, donde se discuta, evalúe y compare de manera igualitaria, objetiva y desapasionada los roles desempeñados tanto por hombres como por mujeres, aportará nuevas perspectivas de análisis e interpretación de las sociedades pasadas. No hay libro o compilación que pretenda tener la última palabra, y muy por el contrario, esta obra tiene como objetivo fundamental, propiciar la reflexión y el intercambio de ideas entre especialistas y también entre gente interesada en el estudio de las diferentes maneras como hombres y mujeres han establecido distintas formas de convivencia a través del tiempo en distintas regiones y lugares del planeta.

Dr. Ernesto González Licón  
Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia

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**ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS ISSUE**

Illustrations in this issue of the *Nahua Newsletter* are taken from *Iconografía mexicana VII, Atributos de las deidades femeninas: Homenaje a la maestra Noemí Castillo Tejero*. Edited by Beatriz Barba Ahuatzin y Alicia Blanco Padilla. Colección científica, 511. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2007. ISBN (13) 978-968-03-0239-0.

[The illustrations have been removed from the online version of the *Nahua Newsletter*.]

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