

in 1982, it describes the system of *terraje* or *arrendamiento* as it emerged on haciendas in New Granada during the eighteenth century. Tenants usually offered a combination of money, labor, and produce to rent small parcels of land, usually no larger than one or two hectares. Such arrangements permitted landowners to secure a labor force with a minimum cash expenditure, while spreading both the risks of uncertain harvests and the costs of developing new lands.

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BACKGROUND

The Aztec Kings: The Construction of Rulership in Mexican History. By SUSAN D. GILLESPIE. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988. Preface. Introduction. Maps. Illustrations. Tables. Figures. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xli, 272. \$35.00.

This remarkable book should mark the beginning of a new era in the study of the Aztec dynastic "histories" compiled in the approximately two centuries after the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán in 1519. Its central thesis is that Aztec dynastic history must not be seen, as it usually has been, either as a mythicized rendering of actual historical events or as allegories reflective of indigenous ideology. Rather, the diverse accounts should be viewed as the efforts of many groups and individuals to gradually render the early colonial present comprehensible to themselves by constructing appropriate versions of the past. In this effort, European notions of linear time and historical veracity were both foreign and inconsequential, and the indigenous Mesoamerican concepts of cosmology and cyclical time were central. Thus, for example, the relationships between Cortés and Motecuhzoma and Motecuhzoma's daughters become structurally equivalent to an earlier intermingling of "immigrant" Mexica and "indigenous" Toltec elites.

A major contribution of this work is a demonstration that the Aztecs make much more sense when they are compared with other societies than when they are considered in isolation: many other complex societies have traditional "histories" with themes generically very similar to those of the Aztecs. These similarities are seen as products of common structural problems in which the relationships between gods, rulers, and the ruled must be ordered and validated. This richly documented and forcefully argued book makes it abundantly clear that anthropologists and historians should pay much more attention to what Aztec "history" has to say about structural principles.

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