

La escritura en el México antiguo. By LUZ MARÍA MOHAR BETANCOURT. Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 1990. Tables. Charts. Diagrams. lix, 367 pp. Paper.

La escritura en el México antiguo. Vol. 2. *Catálogo gráfico.* Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 1990. Tables. Charts. Diagrams. Photos. 225 pp. Paper.

Nahuas and Spaniards: Postconquest Central Mexican History and Philology. By JAMES LOCKHART. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991. Notes. Bibliography. xiii, 304 pp. Cloth. \$42.50.

Together these books reflect the ever-widening range of documentary materials that scholars of Nahua society in the first three centuries of contact have at their disposal, and they suggest innovative and productive avenues for analysis of those materials.

Luz María Mohar Betancourt, defining writing in its broadest sense, examines two early postconquest codices, the *Codex Mendocino* and the *Matricula de Tributos*, for what these pictographic sources reveal about preconquest and conquest-era Nahua culture. While some have argued that portions of the *Mendocino* are simply copies of the *Matricula*, Mohar's systematic comparison of the elements of each codex convinces her that these are two distinct sources. Her close reading allows her not only a knowledge of the information contained in each pictograph but of the internal logic of each as well.

Volume 2 is an indispensable companion to volume 1; there the pictographic elements are arranged side by side, and the text of volume 1 directs the reader to specific sections of volume 2 that illustrate the various points of the argument. The final two sections of volume 2 contain photographs of the individual pages of each source. The overall effect is impressive; Mohar contributes to a deeper appreciation of the sources themselves and their usefulness in increasing our knowledge of conquest-era life.

In some respects James Lockhart's work is the more traditional of the two, dealing as it does with written sources. What sets him apart is that those sources are written in Nahuatl, allowing a far more nuanced view of Nahua society than has been possible from reliance on Spanish-language sources alone. Lockhart has drawn together a number of his essays and articles published elsewhere over the course of the two decades he has devoted to the study of central Mexican Indians, in order to make more accessible to the scholarly public materials that, taken together, form a companion piece to his forthcoming study of postconquest Nahua society.

The four sections of the work—"Nahuas," "Nahuatl Philology," "Historiography," and "Spaniards"—are somewhat unevenly weighted, with the last section seeming less integral to the work as a whole. The two pieces included there, written some time ago, are more in the vein of Lockhart's early work with career biographies; and interesting though these pieces might be in detailing the lives of

individual Spaniards, the relationship to the Indian world in which these Spaniards lived and worked is less clearly articulated than it might be.

The remaining three sections are consistently strong. The section on Nahuas defines the field of indigenous history written from Indian-language sources, demonstrating their value in revealing the characteristics of indigenous life. The section on Nahuatl philology looks closely at indigenous texts, analyzing them not only for historical data but for more subtle indications of the internal dynamics of the communities themselves. Included in this section is a carefully crafted and balanced review of John Bierhorst's *Cantares mexicanos*, one that is sure to provoke discussion. The two chapters devoted to historiography are particularly valuable; in the first Lockhart assesses Charles Gibson's contributions to the field of Mexican ethnohistory, and in the second details the work of five younger scholars whom he considers to be on the cutting edge of Nahua and Nahuatl-language studies. Throughout, one cannot help but be impressed by Lockhart's meticulous scholarship; he has recognized the incomparable value of Nahuatl materials and presents clear proof of their usefulness. Mohar and Lockhart complement each other; bringing together their distinct sources deepens our knowledge of the indigenous world in the contact era.

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Indigenous Rulers: An Ethnohistory of Town Government in Colonial Cuernavaca. By ROBERT HASKETT. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991. Map. Tables. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 294 pp. Cloth, \$37.50. Paper, \$17.50.

This book studies Indian political structure in colonial Morelos through an analysis of officeholders, offices, and the nature of village government. The author argues that much of the area's preconquest political structure survived three centuries of colonialism with only minor modifications; that village governments were run by political elites of considerable durability and adaptability; and consequently that the political impact of colonialism on the native people was not nearly so disruptive as argued by Charles Gibson and others.

Although this book contributes to our knowledge of colonial Mexico, it has shortcomings. The author's knowledge of Spanish city government seems to be limited, and consequently he exaggerates the functional differences between Spanish and Indian cabildos. The book is also marred by vague tables and inaccurate use of accents (e.g., Yautepéc, *seménteras*). More serious, however, is Haskett's cursory treatment of demography, especially when this is the only cause of historical change mentioned in the book. Merely repeating that the Indian population declined in the sixteenth century, stagnated in the seventeenth, and expanded in the eighteenth is inadequate; precision is required. Similarly, in tables, the author