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Article in *Journal of anthropological research* · October 2003

DOI: 10.1086/jar.59.3.3631516

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**Bernardino de Sahagún: First Anthropologist.** *Miguel León-Portilla*. trans. by Mauricio J. Mixco. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002, 324 pp. \$29.95, cloth.

For more than forty years, Miguel León-Portilla has devoted his professional career to the study and exegesis of the works of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590), publishing translations, commentaries, and analyses of his work. The present publication is in the nature of a biography of the great Franciscan scholar, though there is as much or more attention paid to the progress of Sahagún's research as there is to the narrative of his life.

The author maintains that this biography is different from his 1987 *Bernardino de Sahagún* (Madrid: Historia 16 y Quorum). It begins with a review of the critical assessments, both positive and negative, of Sahagún's accomplishments, followed by a quick review of other scholars' contributions on the Franciscan scholar and his work and then by an exploration of the Renaissance milieu in which Sahagún was reared and educated (1499–1529). The body of the book deals with Sahagún's experiences in New Spain as a missionary friar, his growing interest in the traditional beliefs and practices of the native Nahuatl population, and his continuing endeavors to document those traditions (1529–1580). The penultimate chapter covers how at the end of his life, Sahagún unwillingly became embroiled in colonial and clerical political controversy (1580–1590). In the conclusion, León-Portilla assesses the legacy left us by Bernardino de Sahagún and his monumental body of research.

Sahagún's critics range from the early friars who opposed his work in principle to the recent work of Walden Brown, who accuses him of constructing an internally consistent model of Nahua knowledge that is unrelated to real world data. Regardless of the critics, scholars have drawn extensively on Sahagún almost from the beginning, and four biographies of the pioneering Franciscan were published in the twentieth century, including the one cited above.

In the second decade of the sixteenth century, Bernardino entered the University of Salamanca, where he was exposed to the humanistic ideas of the Salamanca School, including an emphasis on scholarly languages, Erasmist influences from Holland, and reformist movements within the Franciscan order. By the early 1520s he entered the Franciscan order and in 1529 sailed for New Spain as one of twenty friars charged with spreading the Gospel and converting the native population to Christianity.

Encountering discord and violence among the Spaniards and abuse and exploitation of the indigenous population, Sahagún felt it was necessary to separate the Indians from the Spanish in order to guide the natives to a pure Christianity devoid of greed and envy. He became convinced that in order to "cure" the Indians of their idolatry, one must first acquire a complete understanding of their traditional beliefs and practices. But he was also interested in documenting the subtleties of the Nahuatl language and in recording as much as possible of the culture and history of the Mexican people. Although never flagging in his original missionary objectives, he did in time come to appreciate and even admire the

culture and knowledge of his consultants, determining to preserve as complete a record as possible.

Thus began his lifelong work. This was facilitated by his assignment in 1536 to teach at the College of Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco, where he trained his students as collaborators in his research. He identified several indigenous elders who could speak with authority about their customs, history, and traditions. Working in Nahuatl, he began his investigations with a lengthy questionnaire that was frequently supplemented with protracted *parlamentos* (dialogues and speeches) by the elders; he also drew data from Nahuatl codices. Over the next forty-five years, Sahagún constantly revised, expanded, and rewrote the material, repeatedly checking with the consultants for accuracy. His goal was both to preserve the native testimonies in Nahuatl and to make the content of the work accessible to those unfamiliar with the language. Ultimately, his preoccupation with native knowledge came under suspicion by his superiors, and at times he was ordered to turn over his collection of data and manuscripts or to send them to Spain. But he somehow managed to retain copies of some of the work and thus continued to perfect it.

His productivity was impressive, including a set of sermons in Nahuatl for the Sundays and feast days of the year, a collection of native literary and religious texts (the *Huehuetlatolli*), a book of Christian hymns in Nahuatl, calendrical studies, linguistic studies, a book of daily devotional exercises, the native perspective on the Spanish Conquest, and multiple versions of his "general history." This latter culminated with the monumental *Florentine Codex*, in which the extended Nahuatl manuscript, supplemented with native drawings, is summarized more briefly in parallel Spanish narrative.

In the final chapter of this work, León-Portilla assesses Sahagún's scholarly legacy. He was the first modern scholar to construct a systematic research methodology, including preparation of a questionnaire, working within the native language, adapting to the native method of transmitting knowledge, and continually revising his materials by submitting them to critical review by experienced natives. Throughout he remained flexible in collecting information, giving his consultants free reign when necessary. Beyond his scholarly goals, he tried to enlighten those who disparaged and abused the Indians, hoping to encourage greater appreciation for their knowledge and accomplishments. While many of the early European explorers, conquistadors, and missionaries recorded anthropological data, there can be no dispute that Sahagún was the most systematic and enduring.

Because of the several versions prepared at different periods throughout Sahagún's life, his corpus of work is scattered in Spain, Italy, and Mexico. Although much has now been translated and published, there is still no Spanish translation of the Nahuatl text for the *Florentine Codex* (the English translation was published in twelve volumes by Anderson and Dibble, 1950–1982), nor has anyone compared and reconciled the texts from the several different versions of this study.

This book is not always easy to read, as León-Portilla tends to digress at length

on background or ancillary topics. It is generally well printed, although there are occasional annoying typographical errors. Plates illustrating Sahagún's Spanish origins, places where he served in Mexico, and pages from some of his manuscripts and publications are spaced throughout the book, providing visual substance for some of the narrative. The Bibliography includes a list of published works by Sahagún, other documents that were consulted, and books and articles published about him. It would have been helpful had León-Portillo also included a definitive listing of all known manuscripts by Sahagún and their current locations.

This book would be attractive for those interested in Sahagún or early Mexican colonial history. For those wanting to learn more about Nahuatl life, culture, and history, there are better sources, including the *Florentine Codex* or some of Sahagún's other works edited by Angel María Garibay K. or León-Portillo himself.

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***Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes.* Mary Weismantel.**  
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, 326 pp. \$60.00, cloth; \$22.50, paper.

Mary Weismantel's *Cholas and Pishtacos* is a brilliantly conceived and skillfully crafted work. Her unique approach to understanding race and sex in the Andes combines her own personal insights with ethnographic tales from throughout the region, with historical and travelers' accounts, with photographic images, and with song lyrics, poetry, and references from literature. Even more novel is her application of Freud and Bertolt Brecht to the analysis. Perhaps this work can be seen to epitomize many of the "alternatives" that adherents of postmodernism have suggested would improve the anthropological project, although it is likely that few authors would be able to render an account with the skill that Weismantel brings to this ethnographic exploration.

With this creative format, Weismantel attempts to demonstrate the extent to which Andean life and society must be seen through the lens of "race" in order to understand nuanced social symbols and discourses in the region. This comes as a corrective to previous tendencies in Andean studies to treat race as a byproduct of ethnicity or class, rather than as an operative force in its own right. Using many colorful and detailed ethnographic and literary examples, Weismantel illuminates the binary nature of Andean society as a reflection of the contrast between "Indian" and "white." Although many authors have identified intermediate, overlapping categories or have chosen to utilize frameworks based upon criteria other than race, the discussion presented here suggests that these treatments have not only overlooked the underlying binary logic of Andean social life but have also ignored the racial content of existing social symbols and interactions—and it is precisely that content which Weismantel finds to be provocative.