

CULTURAL DIALOGUES:
Recent Trends in Mesoamerican Ethnohistory

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- RITUALES AGRICOLAS Y OTRAS COSTUMBRES GUERRERENSES (SIGLOS XVI–XX)*. Compiled by Marcos Matías Alonso. (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1994. Pp. 181.)
- PRESTAR Y PEDIR PRESTADO: RELACIONES SOCIALES Y CREDITO EN MEXICO DEL SIGLO XVI AL XX*. Edited by Marie-Noëlle Chamoux, Danièle Dehouve, Cécile Gouy-Gilbert, and Marielle Pepin Lehalleur. (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1993. Pp. 248.)
- ENTRE EL CAIMAN Y EL JAGUAR: LOS PUEBLOS INDIOS DE GUERRERO*. By Danièle Dehouve. (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1994. Pp. 210.)
- AGRICULTURA INDIGENA: PASADO Y PRESENTE*. Edited by Teresa Rojas Rabiela. (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, SEP, 1994. Pp. 397)
- SEMILLAS DE INDUSTRIA: TRANSFORMACIONES DE LA TECNOLOGIA INDIGENA EN LAS AMERICAS*. Edited by Mario Humberto Ruz. (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social and the Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies, Smithsonian Institution, 1994. Pp. 266.)
- CACIQUES AND THEIR PEOPLE: A VOLUME IN HONOR OF RONALD SPORES*. Edited by Joyce Marcus and Judith Francis Zeitlin. (Ann Arbor: Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1994. Pp. 300. \$26.00 paper.)

When Fray Bernardino de Sahagún set out to compile his *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, he assembled the flower of the surviving Mexica nobility in Tlatelolco, the great Aztec marketplace converted into a Franciscan convent. Sahagún taught them to write their Nahuatl language in Latin script and spent three decades (1555 to 1585) laboriously copying and preserving their collective testimonies and recollections. The

volumes of written text (in Nahuatl and Spanish) making up the *Codex Florentino* conserve not only the descriptive accounts of the Spanish Conquest and life and culture before the arrival of Hernán Cortés but also the historical tradition of the *tlacuilo*, “he who writes by painting,” the keeper of memories and signs.¹ Contemporary anthropologists, linguists, literati, and historians are maintaining that tradition by incorporating received wisdom and opening new paths for studying the complexities of Mesoamerican culture in an increasingly collective and cross-disciplinary enterprise. Five of the six works to be reviewed here resulted from symposia that brought together diverse groups of scholars—Mexican, North American, and European—and covered a wide range of topics and historical periods. The kind of research they represent makes it difficult to construct a single overview of recent trends in Mesoamerican studies and Mexican historiography. Rather, they point to converging fields of study that are dialogic and collaborative, fields capable of absorbing descriptive ethnographies, factual analyses, and textual interpretations.

Agricultural Foundations

Agricultura indígena: Pasado y presente, edited by Teresa Rojas Rabiela, presents seventeen case studies preceded by the editor’s general presentation and two commentaries by Brigitte Boehm de Lameiras and María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi. This work is the published volume (reprinted in 1994) of the First Colloquium on Indigenous Agriculture: Past and Present, organized by the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) in 1986. CIESAS structured this colloquium to build on earlier syntheses of ethnohistorical and ecological research on regional agricultural development during the preconquest and early contact periods. The collection’s chronological dimensions are ambitious, reaching back in time to pre-Hispanic agricultural practices recovered through archaeology and extending to present-day indigenous peasant societies. Equally impressive are the multidisciplinary research projects that contributed to the colloquium. History, anthropology (with its subfields of archaeology and ethnography), geography, ecology, botany, and agronomy are all represented in the diverse studies included in this volume.

1. Enrique Escalona, *Tlacuilo* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1989), prologue by Arturo Azuela, 9; Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Codex Florentino*, edited by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso (Madrid: 1905); *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, por fray Bernardino de Sahagún, translated and edited by Angel María Garibay, 4 vols.; *General History of the Things of New Spain*, books I–IX, XII, translated and edited by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1950–1982); Michael Mathes, *Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco: La primera biblioteca académica de las Américas* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1982), “Presentación,” by Miguel León-Portilla, 7–10.

The temporal sweep of *Agricultura indígena*, covering at least three millennia, is uneven in surveying the historical periods following European contact. The first five contributions deal with pre-Hispanic agricultural systems and are followed by nine essays on ecological and agronomic change during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including two analyses of Nahua codices focusing on their agricultural and ethnobotanical content. The final four presentations concern contemporary indigenous practices in the Mixteca Alta, the basin of Lake Pátzcuaro, the Yucatán Peninsula, and the ethnic region of Totonacapan, which covers portions of the modern states of Veracruz and Puebla. One finds no articles on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a critical period of change linked to commercial agriculture that bridged the early colonial era and the ethnographic present. This absence may reflect a somewhat narrow definition of “indigenous agriculture” and the fact that Mexican rural history, richly developed for this intermediate period, has focused more on hacienda studies and relations between Indian communities and landed estates than on indigenous agriculture.²

The geographic extension of *Agricultura indígena* is limited to the approximate boundaries of ancient Mesoamerica, including contributions on the southeastern provinces of Oaxaca, Veracruz, and the lowland Maya of the Yucatán as well as on the western province of Michoacán. The collection includes no presentations, however, on Mexico’s vast territories north of the Tarascan cultural area. This omission is surprising in view of the archaeological and ethnohistorical literature and the persistence of indigenous agricultural systems in the northern and northwestern regions defined geographically by the Sierra Madre Occidental and the riverine basins that flow east and west of the great continental divide.³

2. See, for example, William B. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972); David Brading, *Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío: León, 1680–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Eric Van Young, *Hacienda and Market in Eighteenth-Century Mexico: The Rural Economy of the Guadalajara Region, 1675–1820* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981); “Mexican Rural History since Chevalier: The Historiography of the Colonial Hacienda,” *LARR* 18, no. 3 (1983):5–61; Claude Morin, *Michoacán en la Nueva España del siglo XVIII: Crecimiento y desigualdad en una economía colonial* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1979); Herbert J. Nickel, *Morfología social de la hacienda mexicana* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988); and Agueda Jiménez Pelayo, *Haciendas y comunidades indígenas en el sur de Zacatecas* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1989). Two recent influential works that focus more directly on the internal life of indigenous agrarian communities are Bernardo García Martínez, *Los pueblos de la sierra: El poder y el espacio entre los indios del norte de Puebla hasta 1700* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1987); and Marcelo Carmagnani, *El regreso de los dioses: El proceso de reconstitución de la identidad étnica en Oaxaca, siglos XVII y XVIII* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988).

3. William E. Doolittle, *Canal Irrigation in Prehistoric Mexico: The Sequence of Technological Change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); *Oasis in the Gran Chichimeca: Pre-Hispanic Occupance in the Valley of Sonora, Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988);

These lacunae notwithstanding, the intellectual exchange captured in *Agricultura indígena: Pasado y presente* reflects the creative organization of the CIESAS colloquium that brought together established scholars and students at different stages of graduate work. An additional virtue of this collective effort emerges from the contributors' concerns with issues relating to both applied and basic research. In light of Mexico's recent political and economic crises, highlighted by the peasant-Indian movement of Chiapas, the issue of the survival of indigenous agricultural systems is now transcending academia to challenge current decisions on national policy.

The centrality of agriculture in the complexity of Mesoamerican cultural development from the Early Formative to the Classic and Post-Classic periods goes without saying. Against this background, the archaeological contributions to *Agricultura indígena* question the conventional view of a causal relation between population growth and technological innovation, advanced by Esther Boserup in the 1950s and applied to the Valley of Mexico by William Sanders, and qualify the importance ascribed to hydraulic works in explaining the rise of city-states and hierarchical polities. In this vein, Linda Manzanilla offers a new interpretation of the physical evidence of raised fields and drainage systems; Maricarmen Serra Puche challenges Sanders's reading of the significance of intensive agricultural methods; and Lorenzo Ochoa raises similar questions concerning the agricultural basis for the Mayan civilization of the Yucatán. Angel García Cook and Leonor Merino Carrión focus critically on the archaeological tradition of Puebla-Tlaxcala that spans more than four thousand years of settled village life by examining three variables over time: the environment, population growth and distribution, and cultural systems. García Cook and Merino Carrión place the development of intensive agriculture based on the material evidence of raised fields and *chinampas* (lacustrine gardens) in the context of ecological and anthropological change, taking into account the political and religious dimensions of culture as well as the economic conditions for agricultural development.

Jorge Angulo, reviewing long-term archaeological excavations at Chalcatzingo (Morelos) carried out by an interdisciplinary team of researchers from the University of Illinois and the Instituto Nacional de

Charles Di Peso, *Casas Grandes, a Fallen Trading Center of the Gran Chichimeca* (Dragon: Amerind Foundation, 1974); Carroll L. Riley, *The Frontier People: The Greater Southwest in the Protohistoric Period* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Susan Deeds, "Land Tenure Patterns in Northern New Spain," *The Americas* 41, no. 4 (1985):446–61; José Cuello, "El mito de la hacienda colonial en el norte de México," in *Empresarios, indios y estado: Perfil de la economía mexicana (siglo XVIII)*, compiled by A. Ouweneel and C. Torales (Amsterdam: Centro de Estudios y Documentación Latinoamericana, 1988), 186–205; and Cynthia Radding, "Población, tierra y la persistencia de comunidad en la Provincia de Sonora, 1750–1800," *Historia Mexicana* 41, no. 4 (1992):551–78.

Antropología e Historia, argues for the antiquity and importance of stoneworks dating from roughly B.C. 1100 to B.C. 500, built by organized communities to channel rainwater and avoid hillside erosion. Angulo describes canals and dams associated with zoomorphic figures representative of ceremonies performed to bring on life-giving rains. The interpretation that Angulo presents is that the physical evidence at Chalcatzingo constitutes “a natural hydraulic system” modified by human intervention, a system he has classified as “the king’s *axayotl* (drainage-cistern)” (p. 91).

Barbara Williams’s essay on the production and consumption of maize turns readers’ attention to peasant agriculture on the eve of Spanish Conquest. Williams employs careful textual and graphic analyses of two codices (*Santa María Asunción* and *Vergara*) to formulate several important hypotheses that link together peasant household production and the tribute demands generated by the Aztec Empire. She addresses basic questions of consumption, household subsistence, and surplus extraction. Her microanalysis takes into account the measurements, shapes, and soil types of household plots registered in the codices and combines Nahuatl nomenclature with direct field observations to categorize different kinds of soil. Williams’s findings reveal significant contrasts between deficits and surpluses of maize production across households, underscoring the social implications of inequality among the Nahua peasantry before the conquest.

The case studies dealing with the early colonial period illustrate the problems historians encounter when using familiar colonial documents to highlight changes in peasant agricultural practices. It is important to analyze the textual content as well as the institutional context of the documents in light of the purposes for which they were written, such as to establish levels of tribute collection or to substantiate village claims to disputed territories. Sergio Navarrete Pellicer, writing on the transformations of the indigenous economy of sixteenth-century Michoacán, reviews the standard themes of native population decline, *encomienda*, tribute, and *repartimiento*. Emphasizing the entrepreneurial nature of tribute collection by *corregidores* and *encomenderos*, he then turns to the issues that impinged most directly on indigenous agriculture: land tenure and the introduction of new crops. Ignacio Gutiérrez Ruvalcaba orients the reader to the dramatic ecological contrasts of the Provincia de Metztlán in the Sierra Madre Oriental (now part of the modern states of Veracruz and Hidalgo). Following Boserup’s hypothesis concerning the importance of population growth for agricultural development, Gutiérrez examines the rates of population decline following the conquest in specific *cabeceras*. He questions the supposed abandonment of marginal lands in the wake of falling population levels and asserts that Metztlán peasants established a system of complementarity among different geographic subregions and ecological floors in response to natural conditions and the political demands made on them by their colonial overlords.

Juan Manuel Pérez Zeballos presents a horizontal comparison of eight colonial “provinces,” each consisting of numerous towns located in Veracruz, Guerrero, and the Valley of Mexico. His material focuses on a narrow time period (1599 to 1604), while providing a regional overview of the impact of Spanish *reducciones* on the survival of indigenous communities and agricultural systems. Pérez Zeballos stresses geographic contrasts within these provinces and the development of peasant subsistence strategies in accord with different ecological micro-environments. The long-term effects of *reducción*, tribute collection, and Spanish usurpation of productive land not only deprived native communities of essential resources but forced changes in their modes of horticulture and gathering and disrupted established kinship patterns that had defined ethnic identities. What the Indians lost was the variety of crops and forest products that had sustained their economy in the ecological mosaics constructed in their villages prior to conquest.

Jorge Silva Riquer examines ecological and demographic variables in sixteenth-century Nochixtlán (in the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca) and, like Gutiérrez Ruvalcaba, addresses the theoretical issues debated regarding the Boserupian hypotheses on population growth and agricultural production. Silva Riquer postulates a precipitous decline in the valley’s native population and a concomitant contraction of the territory effectively occupied. Yet peasant production intensified in this portion of the Mixteca Alta over the sixteenth century in response to the demands placed on Indian communities for surpluses to meet tribute payments and to market new crops and cattle. Silva Riquer concludes that demographic factors alone cannot account for changes in agricultural production and technology, formulating an argument that is empirically and theoretically revisionist.⁴

Sergio Quezada’s contribution on sixteenth-century Yucatán points out relations of interdependency between Maya peasant cultivation and Spanish agricultural enterprises. Quezada does not build directly on Lorenzo Ochoa’s contribution to this volume on preconquest Maya agriculture but includes ecological variables in his analysis. Quezada gleans evidence from the early colonial *Relaciones* to demonstrate that the Spaniards experienced difficulty in propagating Castilian grains and fruits in the Yucatán and thus “acculturated” to growing indigenous plants. Interdependency turned into exploitation as Spanish labor demands for cultivating and processing *añil* (indigo) intensified the burdens of *encomienda* and tribute collection. Although Quezada addresses some of the same issues raised by Nancy Farriss and Robert Patch concerning the survival of Maya communities under colonial rule, he does not engage re-

4. Silva cites Edward J. Nell, “Presión demográfica y métodos de cultivo: Una crítica de la teoría sin clases sociales,” *Historia y teoría económica* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1984), 158.

cent U.S. scholarship on the Yucatán.⁵ Taken together, these essays on the colonial period suggest fertile avenues for research in combining the variables drawn from historical demography, economics, and ecology on the long-term effects of *reducción*.

The four contemporary studies that conclude *Agricultura indígena* are substantive regional ethnographies. All address ecological issues related to differing landscapes and conditions for agricultural production, and their research methods incorporate indigenous terminology to distinguish among cultigens, soil types, and land forms. Esther Katz explores tropical mountainside agriculture in the Mixteca Alta, referring to agroecosystems in the plural to underscore the ecological contrasts found at different altitudes and the combined resources of cultivation, pastoralism, gathering, hunting, and fishing needed for peasant survival. Her discussion of the logic of peasant production in terrain that requires long fallows and presents the danger of soil erosion takes into account social as well as geographical factors. Although Katz does not address the issues raised for an earlier period by Jorge Silva Riquer on the relation between population growth or decline and production, that relation is implicit in her analysis of the peasants' shift from maize to coffee production, responding to market pressures, and in her description of their policultural planting methods under conditions of scarce arable lands.

Cristina Mapes, Víctor Toledo, Narciso Barrera, and Javier Caballero collaborated on long-term research on indigenous agriculture in the Basin of Lake Pátzcuaro (in Michoacán). Their contribution provides a detailed anthropological description of agricultural practices among peasant villagers that are characteristic of both "Indians" and "campesinos." Emphasizing the ecological variables of soil types, elevation, drainage, and access to water, Mapes et al. distinguish among different agricultural landscapes and systems of land tenure. Although their study takes into account archaeological work and earlier historical periods, it is basically a synchronic view of contemporary land-use patterns in the Pátzcuaro Basin. Their findings underscore contrasts in the size of peasant farming plots and increasing dependence on commercial fertilizers, which in combination with shortened fallow cycles has impoverished the soil. An intriguing point is the observation that certain ancient varieties of cultigens like the kokóc bean have fallen into disuse and have been maintained solely by the local women in their gardens.⁶

Efraím Hernández Xolocotzi, Luis Manuel Arias Reyes, and Lu-

5. Nancy Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Robert Patch, *Maya and Spaniard in Yucatán, 1648–1812* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

6. This situation was first recorded by renowned geographer Robert West in *Cultural Geography of the Modern Tarascan Area* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1948).

ciano Pool Novelo apply the concept of agro-ecosystems to their research on the sustainability of the traditional planting technique of *roza-tumba-quema* (slash-and-burn agriculture) in the Yucatán. They report observed experiments with traditional practices, modified by the use of herbicides and fertilizers. While emphasizing the ethnobotanical aspects of their project, they also take into account contemporary processes of social differentiation among the Mayan campesinos due to population growth, migration, and occupational shifts out of agriculture into urban labor and the professions. The authors' evaluation of the viability of *roza-tumba-quema* cultivation, based on the length of fallow periods, declining crop yields, and depleted soils, bears comparison with the growing literature on agro-ecosystems and shifting cultivation in the tropical zones of Central and South America, particularly in the greater Amazon Basin.⁷

Benjamín Ortiz Espejel carries some of these same themes into his research on the "agricultural landscapes of Totonacapan," an ethnic region spanning portions of the modern states of Veracruz and Puebla. Borrowing the concept of landscape (*paisaje, paysage, landschaft*) from European studies, Ortiz Espejel emphasizes the importance of delineating regional spaces and recognizing the social networks that comprise agrarian systems. This useful study is a model of agrarian research that takes into account ecological and ethnological parameters in constructing "agricultural landscapes." Despite the author's detailed exposition, however, the analytical step from descriptive landscapes to the political and conceptual implications of his argument is not fully developed.

Amerindian Technologies and Rituals

The published papers of the ambitious symposium *Semillas de Industria* link technology, broadly defined, to a number of analogous themes drawn from the current ethnohistorical lexicon of cultural identities, resistance, and indigenous survival. Sixteen historians and anthropologists gathered in Oaxtepec, Morelos, to discuss "the seeds of industry" in the fall of 1990, representing a wide spectrum of Americanists with regional specialities ranging from Mesoamerica to Central America and the Andes. The resulting book, *Semillas de industria: Transformaciones de la tecnología indígena en las Américas*, is not cohesive in its thematic and chronological coverage but presents theoretically challenging essays grouped under four headings: the moment of contact, the paradigms of development, spheres of change, and the historical dynamic of the contemporary problematic. The last topic spans two resounding policy statements fo-

7. See, for example, Emilio F. Moran, *Through Amazonian Eyes: The Human Ecology of Amazonian Populations* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993).

cused on the “rediscovery” of “Indians” as political actors following the cultural encounters of the Quincentenary. Stefano Varese employs the metaphor of “buried gods” (particularly the Andean Inkarrí) in terms of the rebirth of dismembered deities and felled ethnic leaders to underscore the capacity of splintered indigenous peoples to sustain different forms of resistance. Conversely, he warns against the dangers of “essentializing” Indian cultures.⁸

The contributions and commentaries of the first three headings cover related topics concerning ecology and demography, artisanry and metallurgy in pre- and post-conquest societies, and labor and technique in agriculture. Teresa Rojas Rabiela’s solid essay on peasant agriculture in Mesoamerica follows the paradigms established earlier by Alfred Crosby. Her detailed discussion of the probable ecological and economic impact of new crops, livestock, and tools on native subsistence land use and production in central Mexico concludes by affirming “a biological revolution” in the acceptance of Old World flora and fauna. But Rojas Rabiela questions the occurrence of a concomitant agricultural revolution, due to the continuity of ancient cropping practices that were modified but not substantially changed by European innovations. Her essay does not, however, place indigenous peasant agriculture in the broader context of expanding Spanish landholding and agricultural enterprises, nor does it address head-on the radical transformation of the landscape following the introduction of bovine herds, as Elinor Melville has argued cogently.⁹

Two thoughtful pieces by John Murra and Bernard Sheehan discuss European representations of Amerindian Others in terms of Native American technological achievements and the myth of “natural man.” Dorothy Hosler, June Nash, and Marie-Noëlle Chamoux each address different aspects of the development and diffusion of techniques in metallurgy, ceramics, agriculture, and weaving. These three contributors draw admirably on archaeological, historical, and ethnographic evidence to suggest the means and extent of the spread of knowledge of productive technologies in different regions of the Mesoamerican world. Chamoux organizes her essay around a structuralist differentiation between “open” (market) and “closed” (guild) models of artisanal production and technological control. The evidence presented does not support her conclusion that the open model prevailed among Mesoamerican artisans, however, pointing instead to a number of adaptive and selectively appropriating measures

8. Varese cites Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México profundo: Una civilización negada* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1987); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1979).

9. Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

that allowed peasant producers to maintain a flexible stance vis-à-vis the colonial market.

Marta Turok and Walter Morris Jr. remind readers that industry is not limited to the “industrial revolution” of steam power in the Western world. They sketch a broad definition of industry as “a complex of material operations carried out for the obtention, transformation, or transport of natural products” that in turn supports a three-way linkage among the degrees of technical development, the division of labor, and the productive potential of a given people or society. Turok and Morris focus specifically on the long-term development of Maya weaving techniques and their social and cosmological significance. Using the terms *urdimbre* (warp) and *trama* (woof) literally and metaphorically, they weave a fascinating argument concerning the gendered transformation of textile production following European conquest and the brave resistance of Maya women through the ritual purification that precedes their work and the symbolic designs that adorn their textiles.

Rituales agrícolas y otras costumbres guerrerenses addresses similar themes of cultural reproduction as a compilation of sixteen short essays presenting different accounts of religious rituals related to agriculture, fertility, healing, and marriage that have been observed among the Nahuatl, Mixtec, and Tlapanec peoples of southern Mexico (in the modern state of Guerrero). The first two selections by Fray Juan de Grijalva¹⁰ and by Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón¹¹ are primary sources that recount magical rituals observed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which the Spaniards either persecuted as idolatries or discounted as superstition. Ruiz de Alarcón's *Tratado* is cited amply by Danièle Dehouve in her ethnohistory of the colonial Indian peoples of Guerrero, *Entre el caimán y el jaguar*.

The remaining contributions to *Rituales agrícolas* represent ethnographic observations of various rituals in particular localities or clusters of pueblos in different parts of Guerrero. Nearly all the pieces in this compilation were published previously, including Jena Schultze's “Plegaria tlapaneca” (1938), Pedro Carrasco's “Quetzalcóatl, dios de Coatepec de los Costales, Guerrero” (1945), Alejandro Paucic's “Algunas observaciones acerca de la religión de los mixtecos guerrerenses” (1951), Robert Weitlaner's field notes from the 1940s on the ceremony of “lifting the shadow” (1961), and contributions by Donaciano Gutiérrez and Alberto Salazar Hernández (both published in 1985). Ramón Calles Travieso apparently contributed an unpublished piece on the ceremony of Atltzatzilistli.

10. These selections were taken from the *Crónica de la orden N.P.S. Agustín en las provincias de la Nueva España en cuatro edades, desde el año de 1533 hasta el de 1592* (Mexico City: 1924).

11. Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón, *Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales desta Nueva España, 1629*, published in the *Anales del Museo Nacional de México* (1900).

In addition to assembling these classic pieces of Mexican ethnography, not easily accessible to contemporary students of the region, Alonso concludes the compilation with a selection from Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's study of Cuijla, a pueblo of African descent.¹² Although now twenty years old, this important study highlights the cultural and demographic presence of *negros* and *mulatos* in Mexico's multicolored ethnic mosaic. It also defines the concepts of *sombra* and *tono*. *Sombra* (shadow) is differentiated from the Christian notion of soul, while *tono* alludes to the close association between humans and the animals they "acquire" shortly after birth, an idea that bears comparison with the indigenous belief in *nagual* (spiritism that joins animals and humans).

Five of the essays published in *Rituales agrícolas* describe different versions of the ritual known as "*petición de agua*" (praying for rain). Its popular fiesta and religious procession, which involves the entire community, strongly suggest the syncretic process of symbolic creation that is renewed and sustained by the indigenous and mixed populations of Guerrero. The two most solid contributions are María Teresa Sepúlveda's "*Petición de lluvia en Ostotempa*" and Mercedes Olivera's "*Huemitl de mayo en Zitlala*." Sepúlveda underscores the ambivalent meanings of the Sacred Cross derived over five centuries of syncretism among pre-Hispanic and Christian elements, while Olivera structures her essay around a respectful but innovative discussion of the standards of teaching and research that Paul Kirchhoff established for Mesoamerican anthropology.

A strong conceptual introduction would have made *Rituales agrícolas* more than a compilation of descriptive ethnographies and given it a new direction for exploring the meaning and production of symbols and the intersection of the material and ritual worlds. Alonso's introduction, based on a few textual citations from secondary publications of sixteenth-century Spanish primary sources, advances the idea of native resistance to Catholic impositions and argues for a strong continuity between the pre-Hispanic past and the ethnographic present. But his presentation fails to take into account the syncretic vision used by several of the contributors to interpret the rituals they witnessed. Nor does it provide the theoretical framework needed to show the linkages and digressions among the working assumptions of the various anthropologists represented and between their work and more recent analyses of language, culture, and colonialism that take into account the historical complexity and ambivalence of resistance and accommodation.¹³

12. See Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Cuijla: Esbozo etnográfico de un pueblo negro* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958). This work provides a bridge to Aguirre Beltrán's larger work, *Medicina y magia: El proceso de aculturación en el proceso colonial* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1963; reprinted 1980).

13. See, for example, James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992); J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "The Postcolonization of the (Latin) Amer-

Danièle Dehouve's study, *Entre el caimán y el jaguar: Los pueblos indios de Guerrero*, provides a historical foundation for the topical treatment of *guerrerense* ethnology presented in *Rituales agrícolas*. Her monograph is part of a fifteen-volume series, *Historia de los Pueblos Indígenas de México*, established to provide clear didactic texts on the ethnohistory of specific regions of Mexico, accompanied by illustrations and documentary addenda selected to offer the native "voices" of the indigenous nations studied in each volume. *Entre el caimán y el jaguar* amply fulfills this objective in focusing on the three centuries of colonial rule. Dehouve brings her considerable research in different archives, her knowledge of Nahuatl, and her own field experience in the region of Tlapa to this historical summary, which is further enriched by a generous selection of maps and illustrations.

The chapters lay out in sequence the economic changes that defined three separate regions within Guerrero and established an enduring pattern of Indo-Afro-Hispanic relations. Dehouve explains clearly the main geographic axes that ordered the historical experience of the peoples of Guerrero: the mining zone centering around Taxco, the route from Acapulco to Mexico City, and the commercial links between western Guerrero and Michoacán and between eastern Guerrero and Puebla. The Río Balsas area constituted a geographic and economic crossroads during the pre-Hispanic and colonial periods. In the world created by Spanish colonialism, command and market economies overlapped. Dehouve traces this process through the familiar institutions of tribute and repartimiento (referring to both the forced recruitment of labor and the coerced sale of merchandise) and highlights the historical significance of the *indios naborios*, men and women who left their communities and sought employment in Spanish enterprises. They provided the labor for the haciendas and ranchos that developed in tandem with the mining economy of Taxco. Their migrations along with the importation of African slaves changed the ethnic structure of Guerrero.

Economy and culture are intertwined in Dehouve's view of the evolution of Indian communities. Although the tripartite division of *caciques*, *principales* (nobles), and *indios tributarios* (commoners) provides some continuity between the preconquest and colonial orders, the struggles over land and internal governance marking the late colonial communities point to a new political context for the survival of native towns. Dehouve's inclusion of racial groups like the blacks and "*chinos*" (Filipinos) who were not indigenous to the area but were brought there by Iberian imperialism underscores the processual quality of culture and ethnicity. Moreover, this

ican Experience: A Reconsideration of 'Colonialism,' 'Postcolonialism,' and 'Mestizaje,'" in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, edited by G. Prakash (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 241–75.

case study of Guerrero illustrates the complex racial and social composition of subaltern classes throughout colonial New Spain.¹⁴ Dehouve's final chapter on religious syncretism, rituals, and symbolism draws together historical references and contemporary observations. Her discussion of specific rituals and beliefs like the *nagual* and "lifting the shadow" resonate with several contributions in *Rituales agrícolas*. In sum, this regional study integrates the economic, political, and cultural histories of the ethnically hybrid peoples of Guerrero. Possibly missing is the element of conflict implied in the narrative, aside from the discrete episodes of opposing land claims and denunciation of individuals before the Inquisition that are included in this account.

Credit in Colonial and Amerindian Economies

The simultaneous publication in French and Spanish of selected contributions to the multidisciplinary roundtable entitled "Rural Credit in Mesoamerica: Different Forms of Financing from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries," held in Paris in March 1995, marks a highly successful binational collaboration.¹⁵ *Prestar y pedir prestado: Relaciones sociales y créditos en México del siglo XVI al XX* brings together fourteen separate pieces of original research that analyze the quotidian practices and social values associated with credit—borrowing and lending—from the early colonial period to the present day. The contributors' geographic foci extend beyond the classical boundaries of Mesoamerica to include western Mexico, Puebla, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz. The temporal coverage is divided among three conventional subheadings: the colonial period (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. Four solid contributions by Danièle Dehouve, Jean Pierre Berthe, Gisela von Wobeser, and Thomas Calvo make up the first section. Two contributions by Sylvie Lecoïn and Odile Hoffmann underscore the linkages between nineteenth-century changes in credit and land-tenure systems in the second section. The third features eight pieces by Marielle Pepin Lehalleur, Jorge Durand, François Lartigue, Marie-Noëlle Chamoux, Cécile Gouy-Gilbert, and Marina Goloubinoff concerning contemporary credit practices that directly affect rural Mexicans, peasants and artisans alike. The third section brings to light "indigenous forms" of dependency and reciprocity coexisting with formal banking systems and governmental commercial outlets that have attempted to finance and market peasant production.

14. This theme is developed analytically for seventeenth-century Mexico City by R. Douglas Cope in *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

15. See *Preter et emprunter: Pratiques de crédit au Mexique* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de L'Homme, 1993).

Dehouve's "Introducción a la parte histórica" and Berthe's "Contribución a la historia del crédito en Nueva España" clarify a number of issues surrounding ecclesiastical credit in colonial Mexico. They define usury, a practice prohibited by canonical law, but tolerated in its dissimulated forms of *censo*, *depósito irregular*, *capellanía*, and *obra pía*. Berthe illustrates the web of indebtedness that bound different ecclesiastical orders together. While questioning whether the Catholic Church may have been "the agrarian bank" of New Spain, he acknowledges the close association between ecclesiastical credit and landed property.¹⁶ Wobeser examines these same themes but from the perspective of the estate owners in her piece on credit and commercial agriculture, an overview of the three colonial centuries. Both these contributors note a secular tendency toward greater use of "irregular deposits" (interest-bearing short-term loans) over the conventional "censos" during the later colonial period. Wobeser underscores the shift to private commercial *aviadores*, who lent merchandise, equipment, and money to hacendados against future payment, charging a conventional 5 percent interest for the time that the goods were advanced. Her analysis of the eighteenth-century crisis that burdened rural estates in New Spain suggests structural causes that included the chronic lack of coined money in New Spain and overlapping patterns of indebtedness that when added to the obligations of royal taxes and the tithe often led to foreclosure and public auction. Wobeser does not, however, link in this essay these issues surrounding credit practices with the structural conditions that constrained the rentability of highland Mexican haciendas: low productivity, inelastic markets, poor transportation, and an economy that was only partially monetized.

Thomas Calvo contrasts this view of rural indebtedness with his analysis of urban lending practices in seventeenth-century Guadalajara. Using anecdotal as well as quantitative evidence drawn from wills, testaments, and notarized dowries, Calvo questions whether the scarcity of money that so many contemporaries lamented (and modern historians have accepted) was absolute or relative. He points to substantial deposits of silver coin transferred from royal coffers to Guadalajara for salaries and to the fact that the inventoried properties of colonial officials included hoarded wealth in the form of silver bars and jewelry. Following the trail of rents and liens associated with censos, Calvo calculates global amounts of indebtedness on urban and rural properties to show that urban real estate accounted for a quarter of all recorded mortgages. Although he concludes that ecclesiastical institutions accounted for three-quarters of the

16. A. J. Bauer, *La iglesia en la economía de América Latina* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1986); and Enrique Florescano, "The Hacienda in New Spain," in *Colonial Spanish America*, edited by Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 250–85.

censos tabulated for the century, Calvo underscores the role played by individual clergymen-entrepreneurs and lay persons in shaping the credit markets of colonial Guadalajara, which extended throughout most of Nueva Galicia.

Dehouve's contribution to *Prestar y pedir prestado* calls attention to southern Mexico (the province of Chiautla in modern-day Guerrero) and the credit mechanisms that bound indigenous communities to the Spanish economy at the close of the colonial period. Her reflective treatment of Indian communities as sources of credit, in lending money "a censo" to neighboring haciendas, sheds new light on familiar questions and themes concerning the *cofradías* and *cajas de comunidad* and their involvement in the market. Commercial transactions entangled with the *repartimiento de mercancías* along with land rents and mortgages tied together merchants, *rancheros*, *caciques*, and Indian towns in a complex web of indebtedness. Dehouve's discussion of informal and sometimes contentious credit arrangements practiced among Indian families and individuals recalls Enrique Mayer's reconstruction of sixteenth-century peasant economy in Tangor (in Huánuco, Perú) and more broadly the ambitious compilation of studies on Andean economic ethnohistory edited by Olivia Harris, Brooke Larson, and Enrique Tandeter.¹⁷

These four essays clarify the meaning and application of terms commonly associated with colonial credit systems and illustrate the great variety of practices that preclude categorizing the archival evidence. The two contributions dealing with the nineteenth century by Lecoin and Hoffmann cover familiar material, dealing primarily with the emergence of *agiotistas* (speculators who offered short-term loans at high interest rates) and the close association between credit and land markets. This section of *Prestar y pedir prestado* is somewhat disappointing in that it does not elucidate the deterioration of colonial credit systems, demonstrably linked to ecclesiastical institutions and private merchants, prior to the reform legislation of 1856–1857 and the financial and technological changes that came with the regime of Porfirio Díaz. Hoffmann ends her piece on the highlands of Veracruz by asserting that the Revolution of 1910 brought a significant rupture with the past, resulting in the virtual disappearance of *rancheros* as a social class that mediated between peasants and businessmen in negotiating loans and mortgages.

The final section of *Prestar y pedir prestado*, covering official and unofficial credit systems that directly affect small producers, presents an array of ethnographic case studies. Pepin Lehalleur contrasts institutional

17. Enrique Mayer, "A Tribute to the Household: Domestic Economy and the *Encomienda* in Colonial Peru," in *Kinship Ideology and Practice in Latin America*, edited by R. T. Smith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); and *La participación indígena en los mercados surandinos*, edited by Olivia Harris, Brooke Larson, and Enrique Tandeter (La Paz: Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica y Social, 1987).

and informal credit strategies developed by *ejidatarios* in Tamaulipas, for example, while Gouy-Gilbert describes lending arrangements among artisans in Michoacán that construe “credit” as payment advanced against future work. The editors’ general conclusions stress the multiplicity of convergent credit systems and overturn an evolutionary view of credit systems as developing from “precapitalist” to “capitalist” modes of operation. They also emphasize the social function of lending and borrowing and the difficulty of measuring and qualifying the terms of payment in the “invisible” credit systems that bind peasant families and communities together but are not dissociated from the mercantilist and capitalist networks of the larger economy.

Mesoamerican Polities and Ecology

Caciques and Their People was compiled and edited by Joyce Marcus and Judith Francis Zeitlin as a tribute to Ronald Spores’s multifaceted work and his indelible influence on archaeology, ethnology, and ethnohistory. The editors’ introduction and the twelve substantive essays range from specific research findings to a discussion of archaeological theory and comparative ethnohistory across time and space. Centered in Mesoamerica, the locus of Spores’s creative research, this volume brings together the work of Mexican and U.S. scholars who are advancing the conceptual and empirical exploration of ecological, political, and social relations in late pre-Hispanic and colonial settings. The entire volume is richly illustrated with location maps, figures copied from stellae and codices, and colonial *planos*.

As is implied by the title *Caciques and Their People*, the leitmotif running through these contributions is the genesis and resiliency of social stratification in Amerindian societies. The hereditary *cacicazgo* or “community kingdom”—a “small, socially stratified state” as defined by Ronald Spores—provides the focal point of reflective essays on the Taíno, Nahuatl, Zapotec, and Mixtec peoples. Because the term *cacique* was carried from the Caribbean islands to Mesoamerica by the Iberian invaders, it is fitting that the history of these chiefdoms should provide a comparative framework for research on the cultural longevity of *cacicazgos* in both regions under the constraints of foreign imperialism: Aztec tribute demands and Spanish colonialism. The contributors to *Caciques and Their People* have drawn inferences about hierarchical relations within and among indigenous communities, using textual evidence of settlement size and distribution, irrigation systems, tribute networks, and family lineages and marital alliances that elevated the *caciques* and *principales* above the mass of peasant commoners.

A provocative essay on this theme is “The *Cacicazgo*, an Indigenous Design,” coauthored by Elsa Redmond and Charles Spencer. They ana-

lyze data for the Taíno chiefdoms of Hispaniola and for the Cuicatlán Cañada of the southern Mexican highlands (in Oaxaca). Redmond and Spencer raise the question of whether the widespread appearance of cacicazgos is merely a linguistic adaptation or in fact represents common political structures that upheld independent polities and in Mesoamerica outlived “the tributary domains of expansionist states” (p. 192). Their points of comparison between Cuicatlán and Hispaniola concern the territorial and demographic size of these cacicazgos and the web of social relations that perpetuated rule by chiefs. The evidence for the Taíno chiefdoms comes from the documents generated by the voyages of Columbus and by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. For the Cuicatec cacicazgos, Redmond and Spencer supplement archaeological data with descriptive material from the sixteenth-century *Relaciones geográficas*. Their methodology highlights an important research issue raised by Ronald Spores: the best “fit” between different kinds of evidence, both textual and material, to support historical ethnographies (see Marcus and Flannery’s “Tribute to Ronald Spores,” pp. 2–5).

John Monaghan points to the ecological basis of the strength of regional cacicazgos, adapting the notion of “vertical integration” commonly associated with Andean societies to micro-regional ecozones. Monaghan’s research foregrounds ecological complementarity and elite control of resources in the transitional zones of riverine *cañadas* (hollows) between the Mixteca Alta and the Mixteca de la Costa in Oaxaca. After delineating the geographic and climatic differences among these zones, he focuses on alternating growing cycles for maize, the most important subsistence crop for the highlands and the lowlands. Monaghan points out that political control over different ecological zones could be accomplished through tribute exactions or by direct claims to productive lands in different ecological floors. He argues that highland cacicazgos laid claim to cañada lands, which they defended militarily and maintained with labor allocations in pursuit of self-sufficiency. Monaghan draws on colonial references as well as contemporary observations to support his hypothesis concerning longstanding seasonal migration patterns that connect these ecozones and underlay current land disputes. He points to a kind of moral economy in which ritualized exchanges (*viko* or *fiesta*) and reciprocal obligations among households are equally or more important than market exchanges for assuring the redistribution of food (especially maize) in the Mixteca. Monaghan’s suggestive interpretation invites further clarification concerning the historicization or periodization of ecological complementarity and the changing social and political relationships between individual households and their respective cacicazgos as well as between elites and commoners.

María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi turns from ecology to cosmology in her brief contribution “Indigenous Mentality and Spanish Power.”

Romero Frizzi revisits the cultural encounter in sixteenth-century Oaxaca, focusing on indigenous responses to the Spanish Conquest. She argues that the conventional explanations for the Spaniards' relatively easy triumph in Oaxaca—technological superiority, internal divisions among the indigenous polities, and the Indians' lack of a conceptual framework for comprehending the enormity of the Iberian invasion—are not sufficient to come to terms with the historical record. Romero Frizzi asserts that the decisive factor was "the Indians' own idea of power" (p. 230). Her thesis rests on the durability of Oaxacan cacicazgos and the hierarchical structure of their belief systems. Native ideologies that upheld the Mixtec and Zapotec chiefdoms, endowing their lordships with divine attributes, were transferred to the Spaniards, thus promoting alliances between caciques and Spanish conquerors. Tribute payments and gift exchanges allowed the indigenous rulers to acquire the new material goods introduced by the Spaniards and to expand their insignia of authority. Metal tools, scissors, glass beads, and the like were not merely novel trade goods but status symbols imbued with religious significance that served to elevate the nobility above the commoners in the postconquest political order and to make public their association with the new conqueror-gods. Romero Frizzi builds her revisionist essay on evidence culled from the codices and litigation documents involving *encomenderos* and Indian communities. Her ideational approach to the conquest leads readers to ponder further the linkages between the religious and social continuities perceived in the lords' responses to the Spaniards and the demographic and economic changes that transformed the material basis for native polities in colonial Oaxaca.

These issues resurface in John Chance's "Indian Elites in Late-Colonial Mesoamerica," but through an altered temporal and geographic lens. Chance focuses on "the mature colonial setting of the eighteenth century," and by defining the subject of his inquiry as Indian elites, he makes explicit the changed and Hispanicized meaning of the word *cacique* and such Nahuatl counterparts as *teuctli* and *pilli* (pp. 45–46). Chance creates a typology of late-colonial Mesoamerican elites by comparing four regions and noting different scholarly approaches to the problem: Mayan political elites in the Yucatán, landholding caciques in the Valley of Oaxaca and the Mixteca Alta, the central Mexican plateau, and the Sierra Zapoteca of Oaxaca. Although the political and economic status of these elites differed in each area, Chance suggests several general trends. First, eighteenth-century cacicazgos were no longer the extended regional chieftaincies that early Spanish conquistadors encountered but village elites. Second, late-colonial terms for noble status, although altered in meaning, held deep significance for Indian communities and related specifically to different regional political economies. Chance's model cross-references varying degrees of market integration and levels of coercion, suggesting a

direct correlation between elite acculturation to Spanish societal norms and wealth and the “confrontational” or “dependent” character of caciques as political actors. The strength of Chance’s hypothesis is that it examines indigenous elites not as isolated entities but in the context of Spanish colonialism. Its weakness lies in the danger of oversimplifying what were complex social and cultural webs of conflict and accommodation between nobles and commoners, Spaniards and Indians.

The six works reviewed here represent diverse methodologies and approaches to Mesoamerican history and anthropology. A number of the contributions to these symposia are positivist and factual, using material evidence to defend or revise archaeological stratigraphy and to evaluate the technological and economic implications of material remains. Materialist concerns similarly dominate the contemporary ethnographies that emphasize demographic and ecological variables. On a complementary plane, the serious attention given to religious practices by historians and ethnographers alike underscores the multi-dimensionality of ethnic survival and draws on earlier scholarly traditions of textual interpretation. Although nearly all the contributors included in these collaborative publications support their presentations with theoretical frameworks, only a few engage specific theories critically, such as the correlation between population growth (or decline) and agricultural production associated with Esther Boserup or the problem of the origin and evolution of social inequalities observed historically in the cacicazgos of Mexico and the Caribbean. An important innovation for the creative use of theoretical paradigms is the interdisciplinary and cross-regional application of interpretive frameworks in the Andes and Mesoamerica, two regions that benefit from having rich historiographical and ethnographic literatures. It is to be hoped that both comparative and monographic research efforts will enhance the dialogue among the Americanists of different disciplinary and theoretical orientations in the spirit of the *tlacuilo*’s craft.