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Bierhorst, John, History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca

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those of the Hakluyts, López de Gómara, Peter Martyr, Humphrey Gilbert, Thomas Harriott, and dozens of others) in a successful effort to contextualize their sometimes confused geographic conclusions into a unified, comprehensive analysis. Hoffman's meticulous approach in this regard may be seen in his close analysis of Alonso de Chaves's rudder log and related documents as sources from which he extrapolates the present-day location of Ayllón's colonies along the South Atlantic coast. It can therefore be said that Hoffman's study of the sixteenth-century colonial Southeast must be classed as a monumental *tour de force* which provides the first comprehensive analysis of Spain's role in the region from the 1520s to the 1580s.

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History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca. Translated from the Nahuatl by John Bierhorst. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992. viii + 238 pp. Notes, concordance, subject guide, references. \$35.00 cloth.)

The Nahuatl document, *Codex Chimalpopoca*, contains two important texts from colonial Mexico: *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, dated 1570, and *Leyenda de los Soles*, a much shorter work, dated 1558. Working from a photographic facsimile published by Primo F. Velázquez in 1945, Bierhorst has provided us with a scholarly, annotated translation of this codex, which was supposedly named after the nineteenth-century scholar who attempted to translate it, Faustino Galicia Chimalpopoca.

Cuauhtitlan was reputed to be the fourth most important city in the Mexicas' empire; however, their annals are not simply about their own history, but about the Valley of Mexico, as based on records from other cities. The time frame of the codex extends from the primordial exit of Chichimecs from Chicomoztoc (Seven Cave Place), dated by the native author as 635 A.D., to the reign of Moteuczomatzin the younger, and the list of gifts sent to him by the Spaniards. In between are the migration to the Valley of Mexico, innumerable wars, boundary

disputes, the juggling of alliances, and the turbulent associations with the Tepanecs and Acolhuas leading to Mexica hegemony.

Although a great deal of attention is paid to the succession of rulers and year-counts—the Nahuas' fascination with the precariousness of time—there are also marvelous stories about Nezahualcoyotl (the poet-king of Tetzaco), the origin of the lords of the skull racks, the scandalous sex life of Moquihuix, and, of course, the premier hero of all of Mesoamerica, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. Here in poignant detail is the story of how a pious ruler-priest, identified with the god Quetzalcoatl, is a founder of Toltec culture in Tollan, but is ruined by sorcerers who favor human sacrifice. This particular story with extensive notes and commentary was earlier published by John Bierhorst in *Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1974).

Important myths in *Leyenda de los Soles* include the most complete versions of the four suns, a flood story, the creation of humans and the discovery of food by Quetzalcoatl, and the birth of the fifth sun. The story is told of the final collapse of Tollan under Huemac's leadership.

Although Bierhorst calls his version a "free translation," it is not free in the sense of what a poetic translation might be like; rather, he produces a careful, almost prosaic, basic text which is apparently faithful to the original Nahuatl version. As with his other major Nahuatl translation, *Cantares Mexicanos* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), it will be up to poets to discover the lyrical intentions of the oral tradition which must underlie portions of the Nahuatl written texts, especially where myths and poems are specifically indicated. The Nahuatl text of this codex is published separately as a companion volume, *Codex Chimalpopoca: The Text in Nahuatl with a Glossary and Grammatical Notes*.

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