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James Lockhard, ed and trans., *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*

Leslie S. Offutt

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We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico. Edited and translated by James Lockhart. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. xiii + 335 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.)

In *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*, James Lockhart utilizes a new "philosophy of translation" that "emphasize[s] pragmatics, the intended sense and effect, over a literal rendering," allowing insight into the "mental world, the attitudes and concepts, of those who produce texts instead of the facts and artifacts the texts appear to describe" (pp. 2-3). This approach has grounded his studies of the Nahuas for the last twenty years, finding its fullest manifestation in his prize-winning *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). The publication of *We People Here*, a collection of original materials transcribed and translated by the author, allows the reader to grasp more fully the richness of the indigenous sources he has utilized in his scholarship.

Lockhart divides his work into three parts (Introduction, Texts and Translations, Commentary) with the last section linked by notes to the preceding Texts and Translations section. By far the longest text included here is Book Twelve of the *Florentine Codex*, impressively presented in its Nahuatl

original (as transcribed from Arthur J. O. Anderson's and Charles Dibble's 1975 revised edition of Book Twelve), with Lockhart's translation arrayed beside it, and on the preceding page Sahagun's Spanish version and Lockhart's English translation of it. The volume also includes extracts from the *Annals of Tlatelolco*, the *Codex Aubin*, the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, fragments from the *Annals of Quauhtitlan*, and a letter from the municipal council of the indigenous town of Huejotzingo. These latter works are presented in their transcribed Nahuatl with English translations.

Every reader will find something of interest here. For the student of the Nahuatl language, the translations offer fresh interpretation based on Lockhart's extensive work over the years with different types of sources. For the historian, Lockhart's introductory chapter reconceptualizes the first generation after contact, challenging the conventional picture of a world turned upside down. This reconceptualization, while it comes as no surprise to those who have followed his work over the years, is perhaps Lockhart's most significant point, set here as it is against the sources themselves. Rather than a "people shocked out of its senses, amazed, bewildered, overwhelmed, benumbed by the intruders, paralyzed, fate-ridden, prepared for imminent doom and disappearance" (p. 5), Lockhart finds in the materials included here a people going about their business, admittedly with Spaniards in their midst, but defining that presence, and their actions, in terms familiar to their own culture. Even in Book Twelve of the *Florentine Codex*, which leads off the translation section, and which has provided so many of the images that have contributed to the stereotype, Lockhart finds ample evidence that "the Nahuas continued to see the world as they had before, divided between the altepetl group and all outsiders, be they indigenous or Spaniards" (p. 21).

Scholars have long been concerned with the difficulty of finding an authentic indigenous voice, filtered as it is in colonial Nahuatl documentation through a system of Spanish-style record keeping in alphabetized Nahuatl, and with much of the indigenous writing done under the direction of the Franciscans. Lockhart acknowledges that, as regards the *Florentine Codex* at least, Sahagun "gave the impetus, trained the writers, and in the broadest lines determined the topics and overall organization," but he argues persuasively that "much room remains for an indigenous role, for indigenous ideas, frameworks, and imperatives" (p. 28). "The Nahuatl of Book Twelve," Lockhart concludes, "gives evidence of being an authentic expression of indigenous people, above all of Tlatelolco, containing lore and attitudes both from the time of the events and from the time of composition (1555 and thereafter). Signs of active intervention by Sahagun are minimal" (pp. 33-34). Strong continuities with pre-Hispanic oral tradition are evident in the other selections included in *We People Here*. In short, Lockhart argues, much remained of the indigenous world in the period following the arrival of the Spanish—a sense

of self in relation to others, the style of presentation of the story, the traditional oratory, the latter rendered among the samples here most vividly in the letter from the council of Huejotzingo.

Few scholars have contributed more to defining an approach to the study of a particular Latin American region than James Lockhart. As Charles Gibson's *Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964) defined the field some three decades ago, Lockhart's *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, its companion volume *Nahuas and Spaniards: Postconquest Central Mexican History and Philology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), and now *We People Here* have established the standard by which subsequent ethnohistorical studies of Central Mexico will be judged.

Leslie S. Offutt
Department of History
Vassar College