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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Pathfinders in the North Pacific. By Marius Barbeau. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd. and The Ryerson Press, 1958. Pp. viii, 235. Bibliography and index. \$5.00.

The "Pathfinders" alluded to in the title of this book are, for the most part, the early-day fur traders—the Russians, English, Spanish, and Americans. The first 100 pages discuss, principally, the beginnings and the character of the sea otter trade. The pages are interesting but undistinguished from many other published accounts, at least so far as sources are concerned. This record of pathfinding activities in Pacific Northwest waters is, and necessarily so, pieced together from the published accounts on the voyages of Bering, Coxe, Cook, Marchand, La Perouse, Mearns, and others. These chapters add little that is new except that excerpts quoted from the original narratives are more numerous and longer than those found in most comparable accounts.

The new and fresh portion of this book begins with Chapter V, "Sea Otter Chase," and an examination of the notes at the end of the book explains the reason for this sudden shift from something old to something new and delightfully fresh. In place of bibliographical notes appears this sentence: "Traditional recollections of the North Pacific Coast Indians, collected at first hand by the author." Mr. Barbeau points out that stories and recollections of the fur trade still persist among Indian elders, and these have been gleaned for the purpose of describing incidents in the sea otter trade never before revealed. Chapter VI, "All Hands Scrimshawing," is, as the author points out, a reduced version of an article published in *The American Neptune*, also by Mr. Barbeau. Even though the transition from the sea otter chase to scrimshawing is abrupt, this account of whalers' sentimental carvings—a unique form of folk art—is enlightening.

In the final chapters of his book Mr. Barbeau returns to the fur trade, especially the land trade in what is today Brit-

ish Columbia and Alaska. While not based exclusively upon anthropological sources, there is throughout the last half of the book a refreshing mixture of Indian lore and narrative history based on the more prosaic records of such Hudson's Bay men as Dr. John McLoughlin and Sir George Simpson.

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Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain. By Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. Translated from the Aztec into English, with notes by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble. Santa Fe: The School of American Research and the University of Utah, 1957. Books 4 and 5, in one volume.

In recent months there has been a notable sharpening of our picture of the Aztecs, along with indications that the near future will bring further significant improvements.¹ Unfortunately, the image we have of the Mesoamerican civilized tradition as a whole is not very much clarified by new work on the Aztecs, for they were sharply atypical in important ways. But this same powerful individuality makes them worthy of study for their own sake, no matter how little they may be representative of the larger tradition which came to an end with them.

No other source equals the great History of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún as a firsthand account of a functioning Mesoamerican society. In quantity and in quality, its data far surpass those of the other chronicles. It is our great misfortune that all the Mesoamerican peoples did not have chroniclers like Sahagún: our pictures of them will have to be

1. Caso, Alfonso. "Los barrios antiguos de Tenochtitlan y Tlatelolco." *Memorias de la Academia Mexicana de la Historia*, Tomo XV, No. 1. México, 1956.

———. *El pueblo del sol*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953.

Garibay K., Angel María. *Historia de la literatura náhuatl*. 2 vols. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1953-1954.

León-Portilla, Miguel. *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes*. México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1956.

Paddock, John. "Notes on Vaillant's *Aztecs of Mexico*." *Antología MCC 1956*. México: Mexico City College, 1956.

Soustelle, Jacques. *La vie quotidienne des aztèques*. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1955.

———. *La vida cotidiana de los aztecas*. Traducción de Carlos Villegas. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956.

assembled laboriously from the prehispanic documents, from the relatively scanty Spanish chronicles, from the as yet almost untouched archives, and from archaeology.

There is a certain pleasing element of gentle competition between two important series of publications now becoming available in installments. Anderson and Dibble point out, with complete justification, that the Florentine Codex is the final and complete version of Sahagún's work; the members of the Mexican Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl, who have begun publication of Sahagún's earlier versions, claim with equal reason that their material is closer to the source. Fortunately we do not have to choose between the two series, for there is considerable material which appears in only one version or the other.

Sahagún gathered groups of elder Indian informants and guided his Indian secretaries in writing down what the elders had to say about many aspects of pre-Conquest life, especially in Aztec Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco and in the nearby and closely related area of Tetzoco. The scribes, who were younger Indians trained in church schools to write in Spanish and Latin as well as in Náhuatl, wrote this material down as it was given, in Náhuatl. Sahagún reworked it over a period of many years. In his final text, finished when he was a very old man, he added a parallel Spanish version which is usually slightly more concise than the Náhuatl, but which occasionally includes additional materials. This Spanish version has been published several times, the most important edition being the latest one;² but the original notes in Náhuatl and the reworkings of them in the same language have been published only in fragments, translated into various European languages.

The School of American Research has now issued eight of the twelve Books into which Sahagún divided the final text of his History. These handsome volumes have the Náhuatl version in parallel columns with a scrupulous English translation of it. And in Mexico, the Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl has published two of a promised long series

2. Sahagún, Fray Bernardino de. *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*. Garibay K., Angel María, editor. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1956. 4 vols.

of works of quite similar kind.³ In these, the earlier versions of Sahagún's materials are appearing with the original Náhuatl and an authoritative Spanish translation of it on opposing pages. The first in the new Mexican series, by Miguel León-Portilla, includes a comment on

" . . . the most recent enterprise of publishing the Náhuatl text of the Florentine Codex, with a translation into English by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, who work under the sponsorship of the School of American Research, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the University of Utah. Dedicated ardently to this task since nearly ten years ago, they have published now the Náhuatl text of Books 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 12. The correct reading of the Náhuatl text, together with the care taken to offer the reader the most faithful English version which is possible, makes of this still incomplete edition a valuable instrument. . . . "*

The most recent issue in the Florentine Codex series places Books 4 and 5 together in a single volume. Book 4 is titled *The Soothsayers*, and Book Five deals with *The Omens*. In Book 4, Sahagún records the destiny which the soothsayers predicted for those born on each of the 260 days of the ritual calendar.

There are revealing sketches of what the character of a successful Aztec man was, and of an admirable woman; the unlucky days produce for us terrible portraits of those who were never socialized, and lived only to serve as horrible examples. The day of the god who ruled over the merchants brings us a speech that the older members of the family make to a young man about to face the imposing rigors of his first trading expedition. There is a striking note of masochism and somatonia in their advice to "Give thyself completely to the torment; enter into it; deliver thyself to it with all thy force. . . ." (Probably travel was less difficult for people on friendlier missions than those of the Aztec merchants.)

The day of the god Two Rabbit, who reigned over alco-

3. León-Portilla, Miguel. *Ritos, sacerdotes y atavíos de los dioses*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Historia: Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl, 1958.

Garibay K., Ángel María. *Veinte himnos sacros nahuas*. *Ibid.*, 1958.

* Reviewer's translation.

holic drink, was of course one which brought a drunkard's destiny to those born on it. All sorts of drunkards are described for us, and their behavior is notably modern.

Between the lines, we can read of the gulf between Aztec ideal culture and the real thing. To be sacrificed was to become a god; it was a great honor granted through a very holy rite. But we find that those born on certain unlucky days would be captured, or sold into slavery, and then sacrificed. One of a number of ghastly ends would be theirs. (A rich man might send out to the market and buy a slave to be sacrificed just as he would buy a quail for the same purpose.) Execution was a prescribed punishment for several crimes, and it is clear that the distinction between sacrifice and execution was getting very blurred for the Aztecs, in spite of all their prating about the honor of dying on the altar.

As always and everywhere, there was hope for those born on the many unlucky days. First of all, their baptism was customarily delayed until the next good day (according to the seer's advice). Moreover, the faithful carrying out of many penances and a good life often prevented the fulfillment of the baleful forecasts. The soothsayers themselves, of course, were the beneficiaries of the system, since they had to be consulted at every turn for the determination of calendrical causes of ill fortune and the prescription of remedial measures—the measures recommended, strangely enough, usually involved still another service for which the seer would have to be paid.

So emphatic are the predictions of the character of those born on most days that one wonders if the predictions themselves may not have been a significant factor in forming that character in many cases. There are quotations such as one referring to "the fearful ones . . . who were not of rugged day signs . . ." in which this unpleasant possibility is quite apparent.

Like the previous issues, Books 4 and 5 are a rich source of the most unexpected nuggets for all sorts of students of man and society.

The Texas-Santa Fé Pioneers. By Noel M. Loomis. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, [c. 1958]. Pp. xviii, 329. \$5.

This volume, number twenty-five in the American Exploration and Travel Series, is the first attempt by Mr. Loomis, who specializes in Western fiction, to try his hand at fact. Dealing with the Texas-Santa Fé Expedition of 1841, the author poses two rhetorical questions: Was the expedition a "wild-goose affair" or an attempt to solve Texan financial problems, and, was a military conquest of Mexican territory intended?

After seven unexplained weeks of preparation, the expedition of about 320 men got under way, with William G. Cooke as chief civilian commissioner to the New Mexicans, and General Hugh McLeod as military commander. Some eight or twelve merchants, together with their employees and fourteen wagons of merchandise, constituted the trading element.

The "Pioneers," as they styled themselves, marched northward and westward through buffalo country toward the Llano Estacado. Feasting royally on beef (brought along on the hoof), the party threw away the coarser portions of their meat, ignored the buffalo, and sent an officer back for more cattle. They would soon wish for something as edible as a prairie dog. In a march punctuated by stampedes and prairie fires, false trails and famine, the group, now divided into two parties, one led by Cooke and John S. Sutton, the other by McLeod, crossed the Llano. Weak with hunger and the rigors of their march, Cooke sent Captain William P. Lewis ahead to negotiate with the Mexican officials for food and supplies. Arriving at Anton Chico, New Mexico, the Sutton-Cooke Party was surrounded and forced to surrender. The Texans did this willingly, on the word of Captain Lewis that they would be allowed to trade with the Santa Féans if they would give up their arms. Instead, the Texans were imprisoned and hustled off in the direction of Mexico City.

Meanwhile, General McLeod, advancing across the Llano by a slightly different route, received word through several

guides that Cooke was sending provisions. McLeod ordered his men to destroy all baggage and wagons not necessary to their existence, and follow their guides to Santa Fe. Believing they would be allowed to keep their property and be treated as prisoners of war, the Texans were taken into custody by the Mexican authorities, who forced them to sign a capitulation. They, too, were marched southward without ever seeing Santa Fe.

The balance of the work is taken up with an examination of Loomis' thesis: that the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition was really not bent on conquest, but was primarily interested in trade. Early in the book (p. 7), Loomis gravely states that around 1840 foreign goods were flowing into the Santa Fe and Chihuahua areas at the rate of \$3.5 millions per year, part from Independence, Missouri, and the rest from the Mexican west coast [*sic*] ports, notably Guaymas. From the latter point British traders supposedly shipped mountains of goods over seven hundred miles of rocky trails to Chihuahua. (In citing Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies* later [p. 167], Loomis indicates that \$5 millions covered imports into all of northern Mexico.) The author seemingly ignores the disparity of Gregg's estimate that in 1843, the year in which the Santa Fe Trade reached its greatest volume, only \$450,000 worth of goods moved from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe. Of that, \$300,000 worth was shipped south to Chihuahua.

There was little northward movement of foreign goods before the opening of the Santa Fe Trail in 1822, and certainly less after the introduction of cheaper United States goods. There is evidence furthermore, that the Missouri merchants had saturated the New Mexican market by the 1830's (according to a 1958 University of Oklahoma imprint, Max Moorhead's *New Mexico's Royal Road*). Nevertheless, in 1839 Lamar had advocated the opening of a trail across Texas to Santa Fe in order to provide a trade route for merchandise from Havana, Cuba. The goods presumably would move from there to northern Mexico. The author notes elsewhere, however, that a route was opened from Austin diagonally south-

westward to Chihuahua, and cites a traveler's opinion that "the North Americans have begun to prefer the much shorter journey by Texas [to Chihuahua] to the Missouri route." Yet he uses this to substantiate his own statement, "The evidence seems to support the idea, then, that the attempt to establish a trade route across Texas [to Santa Fe] was a good, hard-headed business venture that might have meant a great deal to Texas" (p. 168). Even allowing a wide margin of gullibility among the merchants, this is believable only if the author intended the word "hard-headed" in its literal sense.

With reference to the implied secondary purpose of the expedition, political control of New Mexico east of the Rio Grande, Loomis calls attention to the Texan claim based on the Treaty of Velasco, in which Mexican General Santa Anna acknowledged the existence of Texas, "not to extend beyond the Río Bravo del Norte." While the author admits that "at no time was the Rio Grande actually agreed upon as the boundary," Santa Anna did not protest the Texan claim for five years, [hence] Texas might well feel a legitimate claim. Loomis, following this argument *ad silencio*, points out that General Stephen W. Kearny claimed the Rio Grande as the boundary of American occupation in New Mexico in 1846 on the basis of the United States' annexation of Texas the prior year; further, that the U. S. subsequently paid ten million dollars to Texas to quiet its title to New Mexico. The author ignores the fact that Texas was annexed subject to adjudication of all boundary questions. The fact that Texas received money ignores the political background of this transaction, and is no evidence the U. S. believed the Texan claim "reasonably justified."

The author cites several sources to indicate that New Mexico was in a state of unrest at the time of the Expedition, and perhaps ripe for a change of sovereignty. Therefore, he feels, Texan President Lamar had no reason to expect opposition [although the Santa Feans had not responded to his invitation the year before!]. He reiterates that "the expedition's intent was not military conquest," yet cites Lamar's order, "Upon entering the city of Santa fé [*sic*], your first

object will be, to endeavor to get into your hands all the public property . . . you will try all gentle means before resorting to force . . ." (p. 169).

Perhaps anticipating questions on this point, the author indicates that Lamar was directing this order against Governor Armijo and his followers, rather than the people of New Mexico [who were the ostensible owners of that "public property"?], and implies that Lamar was altruistically seeking to rescue the New Mexicans from their oppressors. Loomis portrays Armijo as an "avid propagandist" who incited his people against the Texans, but uses as evidence only the words of W. W. H. Davis, whose *El Gringo*, published in 1857, is by no means the definitive work on early nineteenth century New Mexico. Further, of the two examples he uses, neither deals with the Texans. One piece of Armijo's propaganda (of questionable authenticity) was used in his internal *coup* against Governor Perez; and the other, legitimately calling the people to arms against the invader, had reference to General Kearny's occupation of the Province.

Loomis cannot understand why New Mexicans had any animosity toward Texas in the first place (if there was any, he blames it on propaganda), and why it persisted for another hundred years. He does not mention the marauding bands of Warfield, McDaniel, and Snively, who were commissioned by Texas in 1842-43 to harry the Santa Fe Trade; he ignores the attempts of Spruce Baird in 1848 and Robert Neighbors in 1850 to organize New Mexico as part of Texas (years after the American occupation), and he avoids completely any hint of Texan attitudes toward Mexicans, whether citizens of their native land or of the United States.

He defends the size and character of the Santa Fe Expedition (8-12 merchants, 14 wagons, about 240 soldiers, and 70 other employees and hangers-on) by saying that it was "customary" for the Santa Fe Trail caravans to be large and have many fighting men to defend them against the Indians. As evidence, he cites four convoys—in 1829, 1834, and two in 1843—when escorts of U. S. dragoons were provided. Had he looked further into the reports (contained in Fred S. Perrine, "Military Escorts on the Santa Fe Trail," *NMHR*, II, 175-

193, 269-304; III, 265-300) he would have discovered that these were the *only* instances in the history of the Santa Fe Trade, and only the last one actually entered Mexican territory.

Ultimately, there is the question of whether the captured men should or should not have been treated as prisoners-of-war. There is, of course, no satisfactory answer to this, for Mexico had not recognized the independence of Texas, despite the fact that other nations, including the United States, had. Whatever their status, Loomis is on safer ground in describing the unnecessary cruelty which the men suffered. Yet he undoubtedly saw, but does not quote from the letter of Waddy Thompson, the U. S. Minister to Mexico, to Secretary of State Daniel Webster, dated April 29, 1842, in which Thompson reported that with very few exceptions the prisoners were treated kindly. Loomis does quote Webster's prior letter to Thompson (April 5, 1842), asking to have Mexico treat all the men as prisoners of war, but seems to pass over those passages which indicate that Webster also saw sufficient justification in the entire affair to demand only the release of non-combatants who were American citizens.

The book takes up many lesser but interesting questions, such as, was Captain Lewis a traitor? Was the guide, Juan Carlos, really a spy and informer for Armijo? Did George Wilkins Kendall (upon whose *Narrative* Loomis depends for most of his story) really have a passport?

On the credit side, Mr. Loomis evidently spent many hours collating various rosters of the Expedition, and choosing pertinent data from previously translated and selected Mexican archival transcriptions. The book is provided with an excellent set of maps, numerous appendices, and a comprehensive index. Much work still needs to be done, however, in resolving the acknowledged duplications in his composite roster (as well as such unacknowledged ones as "Beall, H." [p. 204] and "Horace, Bealle" [p. 225]). There are a number of "typos": among them, "Castle Coloran" (pp. 259-260) should be "Casa Colorada," and so appears on p. 278. "Limiter" (p. 263) should be "Lemitar," and "Juan Antonio Martin," the "second judge of the second department of Taos,"

(p. 267) was really Juan Antonio Martínez, the *alcalde* of that pueblo. "Juan Raphael Ortíz" (p. 268) should have his middle name spelled with an "f" instead of a "ph" to conform to Spanish usage, and the French ship *Atalantique* was really the *Atlantique*. "Placquemine" (p. 260) should be "Plaque-mines." Note 1 on page 54 probably belongs on page 51, following Note 24.

This is an entertaining book, as most of Mr. Loomis' novels are, but his theses are unconvincing and his methods are Procrustean. The author falls into the "devil" theory of history when he opines that the prisoners "had no way of knowing that the expedition, ignominious as its end then seemed, would in a few years bring on the Mexican War . . ." (p. x), and apparently considers Mexican debts, California, and the rest of the Southwest of no consequence in the Mexican War. According to Loomis, "the final outcome of the Texas-Mexican trouble added to the United States almost one million square miles . . . Who is to say that the juvenile, blundering efforts of the Texan-Santa Fé Pioneers were wasted?" (p. 189). We would.

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