

# New Mexico Historical Review

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Volume 37 | Number 2

Article 5

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4-1-1962

## Book Reviews

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### Recommended Citation

. "Book Reviews." *New Mexico Historical Review* 37, 2 (1962). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol37/iss2/5>

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## Book Reviews

*Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain.* By Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. Translated from the Aztec into English, with notes by Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J. O. Anderson. Santa Fe: The School of American Research and the University of Utah, 1961.

After having previously reviewed six of the twelve Books into which Sahagún's *General History* is divided, one might be expected to have run out of comments. But the renewed pleasure and stimulation are as keen now, on receiving Book Ten, as they were over a decade ago on first seeing Book One. There is no need to repeat here the data about the nature of the great scholarly enterprise which Dibble and Anderson have now brought through the tenth of its eventual thirteen units, since that material by now is familiar (this Review, Vol. XXIX, No. 2; Vol. XXX, No. 1; Vol. XXXI, No. 4; Vol. XXXIV, No. 1).

It is tempting to look in Book Ten for clues not only to Aztec mentality, but to the thinking habits of 16th century Spain as well, for in what Fray Bernardino de Sahagún seemingly considered a logical unit ("which treateth of the general history, in which are told the different virtues and vices which were of the body and of the soul, of whosoever practiced them") there are what seem to us to be three obviously very different sections.

Chapters First through Twenty-Sixth list characteristics considered good and bad in Aztecs filling a list of roles: first of kinship, then of age groupings, then of social class, then of occupation. The Twenty-Sixth Chapter "telleteth of the atole sellers, and the sellers of prepared chocolate, and the sellers of saltpeter;" and without any transition at all, the next and much longer chapter is "of the intestines, and of all the internal organs, and of all the external organs, [and] of the joints pertaining to men and pertaining to women." There

follows another long chapter about human ailments and Aztec treatments for them; but the final chapter, somewhat less extensive, shifts abruptly to descriptions and histories of "the various kinds of people . . . who came to cause the cities to be founded," listing fifteen more or less distinct ethnic groups of northern and central Mesoamerica.

To be sure, virtues and defects are listed as characteristic of these several peoples, thus creating a partial parallel with the first twenty-six chapters; but what are the virtues and vices in Aztec anatomical terminology, in ailments and treatments? There is no explicit suggestion that illnesses are associated with moral standards, and most of the anatomical terms are clearly neutral in such a regard. It may be that the role of virtue and vice in illness was too obvious to Sahagún (perhaps also to the Aztecs) to deserve mention.

Sahagún felt it necessary to suppress the totality of the long Twenty-Seventh Chapter in preparing his Spanish version of this Book; the title was translated, but instead of translating the long list of anatomical terms he wrote in Spanish a discussion (which ought to be a prime source for students of cultural dynamics) of the problems of early missionaries in Mexico. For this discussion he recurs to the theme of virtues and vices, comparing the state of affairs when he was writing (about 1570?) with that of pre-Conquest times, and attempting some analysis of causes of the conditions in both periods.

There are many places throughout his work when Sahagún either failed to translate all of his original Nahuatl version, as in the present case; or translating, added something to the Spanish which did not appear in the Nahuatl; or even, at times, seems to have changed a meaning in translating. When he decided, for what ever reason (the Aztec anatomical terms may well have been too exhaustive for presentation to churchmen less sophisticated than Sahagún), that the Aztec vision of the human body should not be translated for his readers in Spain, Sahagún of course told us something by implication about his own culture. His need

to conceal the Twenty-Seventh Chapter gave us, too, an essay in its place which is of great potential utility.

Together with the interesting suppression of the Twenty-Seventh Chapter must be considered the fact that Sahagún did not find it necessary to mince words in the repeated mentions and discussions of prostitutes, panders, and various sorts of perverts. The many 16th century illustrations of course are, as always, full of data—some obvious, some to be discovered only by search and analysis—about Aztec and Spanish elements in post-Conquest life and attitudes during the decades when these were being transformed from a raw mixture into a new way of life.

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JOHN PADDOCK

*Captive Mountain Waters: A Story of Pipelines and People.*

By Dorothy Jensen Neal. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1961. Pp. 103. Illustrations, maps and index. \$2.50.

This is an exceptional book. Its authenticity is impressive despite the lack of footnotes that are usually looked for to give authority to a text. It is a story of people and that most precious of all commodities in New Mexico, water. The style of writing is not that of a literary artist, but straightforward with a simplicity that keeps the reader always sensitive to the subject matter—enlivened occasionally with a touch of humor or a story that in itself reveals the time, place and the folks about whom the authoress writes. When a rancher tapped the railroad's wooden pipe line because he needed water, the leak was eventually discovered; but the rancher was quite willing to pay: "I don't have no money, but I got three hogs and nine kids. Take your pick."

The water came from the Rio Bonito. The people involved in the story raised log houses on their homesteads in the White and Sacramento Mountains or built towns in the des-

ert; served the railroad in its multiple needs; admired the rugged individual building a cattle empire; and envied the first comers, the Mescaleros, who were not fond of railroad men, or white men in general. The common thread that brought them into contact was the need for water, and the wooden pipe line held together by iron bands carried it from the mountain to the desert for steam engines, crops, and folks—and occasionally caused some one to get shot because the story began when men were toting six shooters.

The significance of water in the arid southwest is a commonplace bit of knowledge and has been dealt with in many a printed word, but this book makes it a human interest story because those who created the history of water development in the Tularosa Basin are also the prime sources of information. They illustrate Shakespeare's theory of the world as a stage. When drawing upon well-known major episodes in the history of New Mexico, such as the ruckus around Oliver Lee and Albert B. Fall's misstep, the authoress treats them adequately in relation to her story and no more; they were just people interested in water.

When the atomic bomb exploded at Trinity Site in 1945, it brought a revolution in the affairs of Alamogordo, originally a railroad and cattleman's town. The Federal Government needed water for Holloman Air Force base and had to tap the long used source, the mountain water brought to the desert—now including the underground flow.

Those born around the turn of the century should have a touch of nostalgia for the horse and buggy days when they see the several photographs. The descendants of the pioneers should rejoice at the record now available of their ancestors, and the informants should be pleased that their minds were induced to reveal knowledge based on having been there. And Judy, to whom the book is dedicated, should feel happy that she persuaded her mother to write a book rather than just an article on an old wooden pipeline.

Although a paper back publication that can sell for a low price, the manuscript attracted the talent of Carl Hertzog,

designer, and Bob Staggs artist who provided several black and white drawings.

F. D. R.

*Bahía: Ensenada and Its Bay.* By Thaddeus R. T. Brenton.  
Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1961. Pp. xiv, 158. \$5.50.

By focusing an understanding and sympathetic eye on one small corner of Mexico, and on the hearts of the Mexicans who live there, Mr. Brenton has succeeded in penetrating into the inner and hidden chambers of Mexican intimacy. His book is a catalog of affection for the people, and the land, and the sea of Mexico, yes, and the dust, and the mud, and the rain. There is an enthusiastic tenderness flowing through and pervading every page and every line that can only be qualified as youthful, and the reader wishes he could be so lucky when retirement comes to him.

The author speaks knowingly and fondly of the strange customs, the history and the oddments of Mexico. He bridges for us the cultural gap between the United States and Mexico, making it possible for the Mexican and the Gringo to shake hands across the many misunderstandings that have separated us.

The "Day of the Dead" with all its apparently morbid aspects does not appear quite so strange after Mr. Brenton explains it. Other religious practices, the bullfight, attitudes, appear more reasonable when he gives us their inner logic.

The chapter on the Mexican woman is magnificent in its insight. He says, rightly, I believe: "I believe her mind surpasses that of the Mexican man. In many ways the women of Mexico are like our *bahía*—they can take a bleak and gray negative mood, or they can scintillate in brilliance; they are omnipresent in quietude and submissiveness, or in turbulence to the danger-point; historically constituting a feature of the ages, they are actually dominant without fanfare."

Mexico affects citizens of the United States two ways mostly. There are those who fall in love with Mexico and refuse to see anything wrong with it. There are those who

hate it and can't find anything good in it. The former are maudlin and gushy. The latter are vitriolic. Neither one can be trusted.

Mr. Brenton does not belong to either group. He loves Mexico but is not blinded to its demerits. There is a healthy stream of satire throughout his book which sets off the weaknesses and foibles of the people, the government, and their ways. He criticizes with gentle humor and kindly tolerance. There is no condescending tone, no "higher than thou" attitude.

There is one major defect in his book: his constant use of Spanish in the corniest manner. "Twenty blocks from my *casa*." (p. 19) This sort of thing appears in almost every page. This may be considered cute or picturesque, but I found it most annoying. Every time a *casa* or an *olla* or a *ventana* came up I had the sensation of a pesky fly that just wouldn't let me enjoy my reading. There were also any number of errors in Spanish grammar, syntax, spelling, interpretation. Mr. Brenton would be ahead if he stuck to English.

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SABINE R. ULIBARRÍ

#### ERRATA

The item on The New Mexico Territory Assembly, 1852-1859, published in Notes and Documents, January, 1962 (vol. 37, no. 1) was submitted by Ralph A. Wooster, Lamar State College of Technology, Beaumont, Texas.

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