

THE NAHUA NEWSLETTER

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NAHUA NEWSLETTER NEWS

Welcome to issue number 39 of the Nahua Newsletter. The purpose of the publication is to provide a friendly and accessible entryway into study of the culture, history, and language of the Nahua and other indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. We are multidisciplinary and international in scope. We publish reviews and commentaries in English, Spanish, French, and Nahuatl. Our intent is to create a sense of community among scholars, students, and others with an interest in the magnificent world of the peoples and cultures of Mesoamerica. Not surprisingly we count a number of indigenous people among our readers, many of whom seek information about their heritage and the names of additional published sources that they may consult. It is a privilege to provide a service to the very people whose cultures are the focus of our research.

In this issue, we present news items, announcements of new publications, an obituary of William Madsen, and a comment by Jerome Offner on the controversy recorded in the past two issues surrounding the historicity of myth. We are delighted to publish news of publications, information on your current research interests, or questions for other readers. It pays to let others know what you are doing so please make use of the NN.

The NN is sent to more than 420 people in 15 different countries. It is also available in several of the world's libraries and can be freely accessed online at <http://www.ipfw.edu/soca/nahua.htm>. It serves a targeted audience who shares your interests and expertise. Please send announcements, questions, news items, or commentary to the address below. If the text is more than a few lines, send it on a diskette saved in Word Perfect or MS Word, or as an e-mail attachment to sandstro@ipfw.edu. This practice saves work and insures accuracy.

[The illustrations have been removed in the version posted at <http://www.ipfw.edu/soca/Nahua.htm>]

Every few years we publish a complete directory of the people and institutions receiving the NN. We have included an updated directory as a supplement to this issue so that readers have a list of current addresses to facilitate communication with each other. If you see errors in the information provided, please send us a note and we will make corrections.

We are proud that the NN has been published for nineteen and one-half years without interruption. We are self sustaining based on voluntary donations from readers. If you would like to contribute to our efforts, please send a check made out to "The Nahua Newsletter" and mail it to the address below. All money is used to pay printing and mailing costs. There is no administrative overhead.

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NEWS ITEMS

1. Leonardo López Luján sends news about his new book to be published in 2005, La Casa de las Águilas: Un ejemplo de la arquitectura sacra de Tenochtitlan, 2 vols., México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica; Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia; Harvard University. From the author:

"Sinopsis de la obra: La Casa de las Águilas fue un escenario sacro fundamental en la vida religiosa de Tenochtitlan, la capital del imperio mexica. Este edificio, construido y ampliado tres veces a lo largo del siglo XV, se distingue no sólo por sus grandes dimensiones y su contigüidad al Templo Mayor, sino también por el inusitado estilo arcaizante 'neotolteca' de su decoración.

"Entre 1980 y 1997, la Casa de las Águilas fue objeto de tres largas temporadas de excavación, emprendidas por el Proyecto Templo Mayor del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. La rica información arqueológica entonces recuperada sirve de base a esta investigación, así como un abundante acervo documental compuesto por pictografías, fuentes escritas en caracteres latinos y estudios etnográficos modernos.

"En esta investigación se emprende un análisis exhaustivo de la Casa de las Águilas, explorando sus características formales, técnicas, cronológicas, espaciales y estilísticas. Se examinan igualmente los materiales arqueológicos exhumados, haciendo énfasis en sus aspectos biológicos, tecnológicos, económicos y simbólicos. La última sección está consagrada al problema de las funciones y el significado religioso del edificio, combinándose evidencias de muy diversa naturaleza: el contexto urbano, la composición química de los pisos, la estructura de los espacios arquitectónicos y el estilo de relieves y pinturas murales. Finalmente, se confrontan los datos arqueológicos e históricos para identificar la Casa de las Águilas con uno de los edificios del Recinto Sagrado descritos en las fuentes.

"Éste es el estudio arqueológico e histórico más detallado sobre la arquitectura sacra de la civilización mexica y de los pueblos contemporáneos del México Central. Es producto de ocho años de trabajo

ininterrumpido, el cual fue apoyado por varias instituciones nacionales y extranjeras: el Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, la Asociación de Amigos del Templo Mayor, el Moses Mesoamerican Archive and Research Project (University of Colorado at Boulder/Princeton University), la University of Texas at Austin, la University of Missouri y la Université de Paris.

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2. Christopher Lutz sends the following publication announcement: Florine G. L. Asselbergs. 2004. Conquered Conquistadors: The Lienzo de Quauhquecholla: A Nahua Vision of the Conquest of Guatemala. CNWS Publications, 131. Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2004. Pp. 312. ISBN 90-5789-097-6.

"The Spanish conquest of Mesoamerica is one of those major events in human history that radically changed the world. This episode of history is well studied, however, mostly from a European point of view. The story of the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica is yet to become properly understood. This book focuses on one of these indigenous stories, that of the Nahua community of Quauhquechollan, the modern San Martín Huaquechula in Puebla, Mexico. The Quauhquecholteca, who had allied with the Spaniards in 1520 and participated in their campaigns of conquest as co-conquistadors, recorded their vision of events in a large pictographic painting, the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan.

"The Lienzo de Quauhquechollan presents a large number of Spanish-Quauhquecholteca conquests in a geographical setting. Until a few years ago, this map was thought to depict Central Mexico. The present study, however, shows that a much larger territory is concerned, including large parts of what is now Guatemala. The author found that the document deals with a 1527-1529 campaign of conquest into Guatemala under the banner of the Spaniard Jorge de Alvarado. With this discovery, the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan has not only become one of the very few early sixteenth-century sources on Jorge de Alvarado's conquests in the late 1520s, but also the first geographical map of Guatemala known to us today, and even more interestingly, a unique source on the way in which Central Mexican conquistadors experienced and represented the conquest of what is now Guatemala.

"This book focuses on the decipherment of the pictographic contents of the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan, considering the events depicted in their historical, socio-political, and ideological contexts. The author investigates the rhetoric of the document and seeks to understand the world of its creators, thereby making the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan accessible and fit for use as a historical source."

The price is \$30.00 excluding postage and handling costs. Purchasers from abroad pay an additional sum of \$7.00 to cover bank fees. Payment by VISA card (only) is possible. (Please give your card details including CVC code.) The volume can be purchased by ordering the book from the address given below. Please clearly state your name and address, and the words 'Asselbergs.1311.' The book will be sent together with the invoice. Write to: Publications Research School CNWS, Universiteit Leiden, Nonnensteeg 1-3, PO Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands. E-mail cnws@let.leidenuniv.nl. Fax +31(0)715272939. For the full catalogue of CNWS Publications, please consult <http://www.cnwspublications.com>.

3. H. E. M. Braakhuis sent a copy of a recent publication entitled "Xbalanque's Canoe: The Origin of Poison in Q'eqchi'-Mayan Hummingbird Myth." *Anthropos* 100(2005):173-191.

4. We wish to announce the following books that may be of interest to NN readers:

Hablar de otros: Miradas y voces del mundo tepehua. Por David Lagunas. Prólogo de James W. Dow. México, D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, 2004. ISBN 970-722-322-7.

"Los tepehuas constituyen uno de esos ejemplos paradigmáticos de culturas que no han sido objeto de una investigación continua por parte de las ciencias sociales, lo cual posibilita una apertura a un tratamiento novedoso y, en cierto modo, arriesgado. Subyacente está el problema de la creatividad: hablar de una cosa conocida que no da ninguna sorpresa por su universalidad y estandarización, por su escasa "relevancia cultural" — se dice: son indígenas pobres y marginados —. Frente a esta actitud de indiferencia, cuando no de menosprecio, que elimina el diálogo y pretende controlar el conocimiento de otras culturas, este texto se interesa en la variedad, la amenidad y la creatividad de una cultura que no es perfectamente inteligible a los ojos del antropólogo, pero que implica una definición positiva de la antropología: la no eliminación de posibilidades — como sí implicaba la modernidad en nombre de una razón universal.

"En el texto se recrea un diálogo, una polifonía, expresiones diferentes al unísono, que reflejan los modos de compartir el surplus autorial con otros protagonistas en una trama; pueden apreciarse personajes con lógicas opuestas y confrontadas que desconciertan al lector, así como múltiples posiciones para el antropólogo. Cuando un novelista crea una obra, la figura de la novela se hace tan fuerte que su personalidad construye la novela. Del mismo modo, el antropólogo trata con sujetos y, en ocasiones, se deja arrastrar por ellos. Don José — el curandero —, Don Julio — el activista político — y Doña Margarita — la campesina — son los protagonistas y las figuras principales de este texto, la tentativa del cual es proponer la existencia de otros modelos diferentes al nuestro, pero que también tienen sentido. La disciplina antropológica, y esta obra en particular, acepta el desafío dialógico "entendiendo" y abriéndose a las palabras de los otros."

Primera, segunda, cuarta, quinta y sexta relaciones de las diferentes historias originales. Por Chimalpain Cuauhtlehuanitzin, Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón. Presentación de Silvia Limón. Edición de Josefina García Quintana, Silvia Limón, Miguel Pastrana y Victor M. Castillo F. Serie Cultura Náhuatl, Fuentes 11. México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2003. ISBN 970-32-0629-8.

"Esta edición de Primera, segunda, cuarta, quinta y sexta relaciones de Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpain Cuauhtlehuanitzin, historiador chalca del siglo XVII, incluye el texto náhuatl y su traducción al español debidamente anotados, así como un glosario y bibliografía. La preparación del material estuvo a cargo del Taller de Estudio y Traducción de Textos Nahuas del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, conformado por investigadores de diversas dependencias de la UNAM.

"La temática de estos documentos es variada. En la primera y segunda relaciones el autor introduce a la población indígena dentro del esquema providencialista de la historia occidental cristiana. La cuarta, la quinta y la sexta relaciones, escritas en forma de anales, proporcionan información sobre diferentes pueblos, aunque los actores centrales son los totolimpaneca amaquemeque, de quienes refiere su historia desde su origen en el año 50 hasta 1613. En estos manuscritos Chimalpain logra delinear un claro perfil de la dinámica histórica de la región, presentando, en algunos casos, diferentes versiones de los acontecimientos."

Séptima relación de las Diferentes histoires originales. Por Chimalpain Cuauhtlehuantzin, Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón. Introducción, paleografía, traducción, notas, índice temático y onomástico y apéndices por Josefina García Quintana. México. Serie Cultura Náhuatl, Fuentes 12. México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2003. ISBN 970-32-0453-8.

"Esta relación de Chimalpain, séptima de las Diferentes histoires originales, trata de los tlacochoalcas en buena parte del texto, pero la temática de la obra comprende muchos asuntos más: relata hechos acaecidos en el ámbito de los diversos grupos de la región chalca, así como en el de mexicas, tetzcoanos y tepanecas, entre otros. Además, escrita en forma de anales, el autor introduce, a partir del año 1519, temas como el advenimiento del cristianismo, la evangelización, la imposición forzada del tributo o la sucesión de los señores indígenas con su poder disminuido; asimismo, Chimalpain deja constancia de temblores, sequías, inundaciones, hambrunas y enfermedades ocurridas en el transcurso del largo periodo que abarca la obra. Esta Séptima relación incluye el texto náhuatl y su correspondiente traducción al español, ambos anotados; un índice onomástico y temático; un apéndice en el que se señalan las coincidencias con el Memorial breve, la tercera, la quinta y la sexta relaciones de este cronista, y una bibliografía alusiva."

Alcohol in Ancient Mexico. By Henry J. Bruman. Foreword by Peter Furst. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000. ISBN 0-87480-658-5.

"The art of distillation arrived in Mexico with the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. But well before that time native skills and available resources had contributed to a well-developed tradition of intoxicating beverages, many of which are still produced and consumed.

"In the 1930s Henry Bruman visited various Mexican and Central American Indian tribes to reconstruct the variety and extent of these ancient traditions. He discerned five distinct areas defined by the culturally most significant beverages, all superimposed over the great mescal wine region. Within these five areas he noted wines from cactus, cactus fruit, cornstalks, and mesquite pods, beer from sprouted maize, and fermented sap from pulque agaves.

"Outside the mescal region he observed widespread consumption in the Yucatan of a wine made from fermented honey and balché bark, plus lesser-known beverages in other regions. He also observed the frequent inclusion in the fermentation process of alkaloid-bearing ingredients such as peyote and tobacco, plants whose roots or bark contain saponins — which act as cardiac poisons — and even poisons from certain toads!

"Alcohol in Ancient Mexico describes in detail the various plants and processes used to make such beverages, their prevalence, and their significance for local culture. It also considers the relative absence of alcoholic drink in the southwestern United States, the introduction of stills following the Spanish conquest, and possible sources for the introduction of coconut wine.

"Previously unpublished, the research presented here retains its relevance today, and the photographs offer a fascinating glimpse at a tradition world that has now almost vanished."

L'épreuve Fleurie: Symboliques du genre dans la littérature des Nahuatl du Mexique préhispanique. Par Dominique Raby. Préface de Miguel León-Portilla. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003. ISBN 2-7475-5452-X.

"La littérature florissante et la religion fastueuse des Nahuatl (ou Aztèques) du Mexique préhispanique sont aujourd'hui bien connues. Mais, au sein de cette société plurielle, tous se rallient à une même idéologie?"

"L'auteur jette un nouveau regard sur la littérature nahuatl ancienne et souligne la diversité des voix qui émanent des mythes, poèmes, sortilèges et hymnes religieux qui nous sont parvenus. En présentant les hauts faits des divinités qui régissent l'amour et le mariage, l'analyse révèle comment chacun — prêtres, guérisseuses, sages-femmes, sorciers, prostituées rituelles ou encore princesse de sang royal — a son mot à dire sur ce que signifient le féminin et le masculin.

"À travers l'exemple nahuatl, ce livre explore la question de l'apport des femmes dans l'élaboration de toute symbolique du genre.

5. We recently learned of the death of William Madsen and include the following obituary that appeared in the Santa Barbara News-Press on December 30, 2003.

MADSEN, William

December 26, 1920-December 24, 2003

William Madsen, retired University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) professor of anthropology, died of lung cancer on Christmas evening at his Santa Barbara home with his family at his side. He was a campus favorite whose class on "Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft" packed Campbell Hall.

Bill lived such an adventurous life that a friend called him "the real Indiana Jones."

Born in Shanghai, China, he grew up in Manila, Philippine Islands, where he attended the American School. His father was president of the Pacific Commercial Company and survived internment in a Japanese prison camp during World War II. From 1941 to 1943, Bill served with the American Field Service attached to Tahitian Free French Troops and the British Eighth Army in North Africa.

After the war, he went to Harvard and graduated from Stanford where he met Claudia, his bride-to-be. Married in Santa Barbara in 1946, they honeymooned in Acapulco and studied anthropology at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología and Mexico City College. On a field trip, they photographed the Totonac Indian dance of Los Voladores and published a Travel Magazine story about the Flying Pole Dance.

Bill earned his Ph.D. in anthropology at UC Berkeley where he won a Viking Fund Fellowship to study the Nahuatl Indian village of San Francisco Tecospa. Flying diapers out of their station wagon, the Madsens took their baby, Karen, to Mexico for two years of field work which was the basis for Bill's first book titled The Virgin's Children: Life in an Aztec Village Today, and his Ph.D. thesis on "Christo-Paganism: A Study of Mexican Religious Syncretism."

He dedicated his book to his children, Karen and Christopher.

At a time of job shortage for anthropologists, Bill won a teaching position at the University of Texas in Austin where he was director of the Institute of Latin American Studies and the Hidalgo Project, a three-year study of Mexican-American culture in South Texas. His book on The Mexican-Americans of South Texas was published by Holt-Rinehart in 1964. He was also elected president of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociales in Monterrey, Mexico.

In 1962-1963 Bill was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. The following year, he was a research associate at the Stanford Institute for the Study of Human Problems.

On one of the happiest days of his life, Bill received a job offer from the UCSB Department of Anthropology. All through the Texas years, he had driven his family to Santa Barbara to visit Claudia's parents and he loved this beautiful beach town. In 1967, he began his 25-year career at UCSB which ended with his first stroke.

Bill was a loving husband and father who told children Dr. Doolittle stories and gave them puppies, kittens, birds, turtles, and snakes for pets. He had a magical way of communicating with children and animals.

Bill's motto was "Live one day at a time and make it a masterpiece."

And that's what he did by enriching the lives of so many people.

He is survived by Claudia, his wife of 57 years; his daughter, Karen Zwicke; his son, Christopher Madsen; his grandsons, Sean and Chris; his son-in-law, Phil; and his love bird, Evita. At his request, no services will be held. On their summer vacation, his family will scatter his ashes off the coast of Kona Village.

COMMENTARY"A Skeptical View of 'Zetetics'"

by

Jerome Offner
Houston, Texas

"No foundation, anywhere. Whole world. No foundation. All the way down the line."
— From "Arab" in William Saroyan's The Time of Your Life, October, 25, 1939.

One of recent history's small puzzles is David Henige's (2004) failure to present himself well in his forays out of Africa (see Provan 2003; Dobyns 1999; Wilson 1998; Hudson, et al. 1994). A part of the puzzle is his ideology with its arguments that, as aptly summarized by Iain Provan (2003:413), quoting the empiricist philosopher George Berkeley, "admit of no answer and produce no conviction." Consider Provan's deft exposure of the "unstable foundation" of his "zetetic" philosophical position: "Henige more resembles ancient Pyrrhus than ancient Pyrrhon [an early figure in skepticism][1]; for the sceptic's argumentative 'victories' are too costly to be worth the winning (Pyrrhic victories indeed), and the arguments that produce them 'prove' too much to be taken seriously" (2003:413,434-38). That adherents to ideologies are in the end people of faith is perhaps an indication that the universe is not without a sense of humor or of irony. Ideologies simplify reality so that adherents "know" the answers to problems before the facts are known or without the facts having to be established. Henige's highly selective use of skepticism (Provan 2003:432-38; Hudson, et al. 1994:727) essentially asks for belief in his ideology to exclude evidence throughout the world as well as in Mesoamerica before it is understood.

At least as important as the flawed philosophy is the burden of proving that Henige takes on to disprove. One of several examples of this is the onus Henige (2004:18) assumes to characterize Aztec historiography as an "oral genre" and to dictate, negatively, the circumstances of the production of predecessors to the Codex Xolotl and most other such documents. This is another example of his too-frequent reliance on the weakest of historiographical arguments — the "argument from absence." Indeed, he tries to transform the "argument from absence" into a predictive "argument for absence"; see also Hudson, et al. (1994:717,724,726,727) and Provan (2003:432) for comments on Henige's problematic use of arguments from absence and related claims of absent evidence. In any event, the pressing question has not been for a long time when oral history remnants leave off and contemporaneous historical reporting begins in the Xolotl and its predecessors. Investigation has gone beyond that to such matters as the isomorphism of Xolotl's reported actions with the commercial and political interests of the city of Atzacapatzalco and how the Codex Xolotl interdigitates with the sources related to that city, which although alphabetized are also unarguably based on indigenous pictorial sources (Miguel León-Portilla 1992:3-18). The point is that the circumstances of composition of the Codex Xolotl, its predecessors and indeed the historical sources of other cities remain a matter of research and not "zetetic" belief.

Another piece of the puzzle is Henige's thoroughgoing substantive ignorance. His criticisms of work in Mesoamerica ineptly re-travel misshapen ranges of well-covered ground or evanesce for lack of substance. One aspect of this ignorance is exposed as he loses his "zetetic" cannon in a sentence beginning with paternalistic religious idiom assuring me that there is "every chance" (2004:19) of denying a wide variety of pre-Conquest documents.[2] Henige need only read articles 22 and 23 in Volume 14 of the Handbook of Middle American Indians, especially the pre-Conquest pictorial manuscript census items from the Mixteca and from Puebla (14, 27, 33, 72, 79, 118, 185, 240, 384, 395). It is well known that emigrants from these regions are depicted by their descendants in the Codex Xolotl and Mapa Quinatzin arriving at Texcoco early

on to serve as scribes. If he persists in his denial, he can read Elizabeth Boone's (1998:150-54) and Miguel León-Portilla's (1992:3-18; 2003) convincing presentations of evidence for the existence of a wide variety of pre-Conquest Nahuatl "books" (these authors' term), deny them, and then deny a long list of other archaeologists, art historians, and historians. Against this mass of evidence, Henige offers mere "zetetic" belief — there is "every chance" the books cannot exist. Henige's "every chance" is — in the light of reality — no chance, as originally stated. It can be recalled that adherents to one faith burned most of these books in the mid-sixteenth century; now a proponent of another, far simpler ideology seeks to deny them existence again.

The Spanish colonial engagement with native documentation and orality was then indeed different from Henige's portrayal of contact situations in other parts of the world (see León-Portilla 1992:15 and 2003). There were long periods of historical literacy in Mesoamerica among the Nahuatl and a number of other groups including the Mixtec and Maya, part of the well-entrenched mechanism for the transmission of historical data of which Mesoamericanists have long been aware and that needs no reference. (Henige can start by actually reading a few of the items in my original References Cited (Offner 2004:17-18). One of the latest developments is the ongoing debate among Michael Coe, Steven Houston, John Justeson, and Terrence Kaufman over the decipherment of the Epi-Olmec or Isthmian script). What is "apocalyptic," not to mention damaging to a proper understanding of Mesoamerican historiography in this situation, is only Henige's ignorance coupled with the "predictive" canons of "zetetics."

In addition, we know quite a bit about pre-Conquest historiography because there was and is a great deal of it. Henige can read the works of Alfonso Caso, Nicholson, and Brotherston to begin understanding the pre- and post-Conquest documents and their contents and methods. Further, Edmundo O'Gorman (Ixtililxochitl 1975) and others have explored the motivations of Alva de Ixtililxochitl in great depth for many years. They are far more complex than Henige's hackneyed guesses.

Another aspect of substantive ignorance is exposed as Henige shows no awareness of or appreciation for the several cycles of investigation and re-appraisal that Mesoamerican historiography has already passed through. Susan Gillespie said more, better in 1989. Henige would be dismayed at the expertise and accomplishment in this area, as he would be puzzled at the practitioners' persistent centrality — it is likely that there are more Mesoamerican historians interested in pre-Conquest affairs than at any time in the past. Still another aspect of his ignorance of the discipline's history is his presumption of naiveté or incompetence on the part of Mesoamericanists. The astonishing admonition to this audience that there are deceptions ("thousands — no exaggeration") in historical materials devolves into self-parody. The historical telescoping evident in Henige's comments, generated largely by ignorance, is noteworthy; apparently we are all just beginning our research and are prone to the most basic of errors from which he can — having arrived in the nick of time — preserve us.

Another fragment of this curious puzzle is the extent to which the "zetetic" methodology is pursued. Henige sees the discrediting of targeted set historical pieces as an end and as an end point; he fails to see the historical information gained by or merely left over from processes of deconstruction that open additional doorways into the past. The recent process of decipherment, evaluation and reevaluation of the growing body of historical Classic Maya texts serves as an example accessible to non-specialists. The histories of Classic Maya political units will never be known in great detail and in many respects we do not know them as well as we thought we did immediately after initial decipherments, but we are better off for what we now know because such knowledge informs choices for archaeological, linguistic, cultural, and other research. Provan (2003:432) points out Henige's inconsistent and undisciplined use of skepticism which he identifies as (necessarily) "selective" skepticism. Such problems lead to all manner of self-contradictions in his work that

others have pointed out (see Dobyns 1999; Hudson, et al. 1994:733-34; Wilson 1998:292; Provan 2003:430-31,436).][3]

There are other small bits of the puzzle. Henige again (see Provan 2003:413,415,417-19,421,429; Dobyns 1999; Hudson, et al. 1994:722,727) evinces a need to recalibrate his reading and writing skills to understand and fairly represent the work of others — it is hell when "the sources" can talk back and what are at best his misunderstandings reflect adversely on his methods and results with sources that cannot. Henige's negativism needs balance with constructive, synthetic work, although this is difficult with so little area knowledge.

An emerging issue and final piece of the puzzle is Henige's old-style Western hegemonic rhetoric and discourse.[4] For example, his reference to historiographic "undergrowth" and "detritus" (Henige 2004:19) in an area with a number of pre-Conquest works or works with clear roots in the pre-Conquest era, as well as the works of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century indigenous historians writing pre-Conquest histories, is unfortunately most easily read as denigration of indigenous historical traditions, histories, and historiographies. As to who "us" may be and what "our goals" obstructed by said "detritus" and "undergrowth" may be, I can only echo Provan (2003:417): "I frankly do not know who these 'we' are." Nor do I accept the proffered "reality." Additionally, it should be pointed out that Henige's standard litany of vetitive and prescriptive strictures concerning historical traditions and materials may well be unnecessarily destructive of the history of indigenous peoples — "'victories'... too costly to be worth the winning."[5]

In Mesoamerica, most historical traditions are tied to still-substantial living populations. And what of the Africans who watch with increasing consternation those elements of the Western academic enterprise claiming destruction of their history? Consider Atieno Odhiambo's (2004) mature overview of African historiography, including his thoughtful and articulate call for an African historiography, in contrast to Henige's partisan, single-cycle portrayal of what Henige would like the field to resemble.[6] Hindus, both inside and outside India, have in recent years been able to claim the standing and resources to contest Western representations of their history and culture [7] and there have been strong recent similar stirrings among the Maya.[8] It is their history too — to say the least. Peoples are coming to claim their histories and broader sea changes than in Henige's judgmental enclave are well underway. The matter of who has been giving a sop to Cerberus figures to take on a number of new dimensions.[9]

Despite David Henige's standard dismal prognosis, there are many happy with what they are finding as there are many who are continuing to understand the considerable sum of what there is to be understood in the Mesoamerican historical traditions, making appropriate comments on the problems and difficulties along the way. The facile carping can be left to others so disposed or so limited. I have no doubt which approach has already proven and will prove more worthy of its subject. In the end, Henige has predictably accomplished nothing more than adding quite feebly to the surplus of "easy criticisms of the superficial faults of the written sources" (2004:19). I remain more than skeptical of this historian, with his ignorance of histories and too fervent and selectively mustered notion of skepticism.

Notes

1. Henige was at the time styling himself a "Pyrrhonian," a role that Iain Provan convincingly assumes instead.
2. Compare Henry Dobyn's (1999:753) comment: "Henige's criticism is sprinkled with untrue assertions stated with godlike certitude."

3. "Henige resorts to precisely the methods he belabors others for using" (Dobyns 1999:753). "What Henige chooses not to doubt is instructive" (Hudson, et al. 1994:727).
4. Provan (2003:436) considers him to be in the style of a nineteenth-century historian.
5. Compare his very peculiar antagonistic engagement with the Melungeon cultural movement: "Scholars such as Henige have actually discouraged the quest [for 'a scholarly history of the Melungeons'] by treating the topic with derision and contempt" (Wilson 1998:288).
6. See Odhiambo's (2004:4-8; 30-32) mentions of early and oral history.
7. See Rajiv Malhotra's introduction to these controversies in his "Washington Post and Hinduphobia," available at <http://www.sulekha.com/expressions/column.asp?cid=305924>, which has been accessed more than 11,000 times in its first ten months online. Certainly, there is by now no need for further impetus to polarization. A December 2004 article by Amy M. Braverman, "The Interpretation of Gods." University of Chicago Magazine 97(2), provides an academic perspective on related matters; available online at <http://magazine.uchicago.edu/0412/features/index.shtml>.
8. One entry point into this Maya renaissance ("Towards a More Ethical Mayanist Archaeology") is available at <http://ethical.arts.ubc.ca/>.
9. The reference is to the Aeneid Book 6, line 417ff and again provides the opportunity to call researchers' attention to the potential of comparing ancient Mediterranean underworld journeys to the Mesoamerican journeys including that undertaken by one aspect of Quetzalcoatl. Cerberus, a multi- (usually only three-) headed, serpent-tailed dog-like creature, was charged with keeping the living out of and the dead in the underworld. The Trojan proto-Roman hero Aeneas, assisted by the Sibyl, distracts and renders unconscious Cerberus with a drugged honey-cake in order to gain entrance to the underworld. The Odyssey's Book 11, with its description of the underworld, is also of interest. Tufts University's Project Perseus is a good source for such ancient Mediterranean texts, available at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_Greco-Roman.html in both English and the original languages. Myth records wrestling and abduction (Hercules) as well as music (Orpheus) as alternate methods of subduing Cerberus.

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ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS ISSUE

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[The illustrations have been removed in the version posted at <http://www.ipfw.edu/soca/Nahua.htm>]