



**Annals of Native America: How the Nahuas of Colonial Mexico Kept Their History Alive.** By Camilla Townsend. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 344 pages. \$35.00 cloth; \$23.99 electronic.

In *Annals of Native America*, Camilla Townsend examines *xiuhpohualli*, or “year counts.” While not the first book on the subject, Townsend’s examination of *xiuhpohualli* is a rich chronological study of multiple sets of annals written between the early sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries. Townsend reminds the reader that these annals have largely been dismissed as reflections of the “forced answers of the vanquished,” yet studied as a collection, they provide details that help us understand the complex historical contexts that gave rise to each colonial *xiuhpohualli*. Although the majority of annals were anonymously written (except Chimalpahin’s *ocho relaciones*, for example), Townsend’s study identifies the authors. As she illuminates the ability of colonial-taught Nahuas to maintain their histories and notes structural changes in their form, Townsend underscores the historical value of working with annals.

The author begins by describing the traditional structure of a *xiuhpohualli* and taking issue with its perceived “disorderly” construction. As they do not generally follow a linear chronology in retelling events, annals can appear disordered and confused, but reading multiple annals side-by-side reveals certain patterns. *Xiuhpohualli* begin with overviews of momentous events, followed by multiple retellings of those events. Then, reaching back in time, they list years and events from ancient times to the present. For some years the retelling of events is repeated, usually for occasions that a community considers momentous. Townsend points out, however, that this seeming repetition is actually a collection of Nahua community subgroups’ different perspectives of a single event, while even years with little or no descriptive information reveal that nothing occurred that was considered to be of communal importance.

Following European arrival, new generations of annal writers captured different and distinctive details in their histories. Townsend analyzes each generation’s rendition of preconquest history and also carefully examines the details of each annal’s contemporary history, finding that in the early sixteenth century, writers were men who remembered life, community, and politics before Spanish arrival and relied on their own memories to write their preconquest history. By the mid to late sixteenth century, writers increasingly rely on the memories of those parents, relatives, and community members alive during preconquest times in order to write that history, then list contemporary events. In the seventeenth century, writers are dependent on sixteenth-century annals and Spanish histories of conquest to reconstruct preconquest history before they turn to contemporary events. In addition, Townsend cross-references information in the annals from details in correspondence and other writings produced

by learned Nahuas as well as legal disputes over land and taxes. This painstaking examination leads to the significant contributions of her work.

Even as communities were disintegrating due to increasingly burdensome tribute demands from Spanish authorities, tithing demands for Church building and painting projects, the establishment of *congregaciones*, riots, and recurring epidemics, colonial-era annals attempted to adhere to preconquest *xiuhpohualli* construction by including multiple perspectives of an important event. Nonetheless *xiuhpohualli* transformed from communal histories reflecting the cellular nature of Nahua polities into histories more reflective of the historical context of the writer and his lineage. In the sixteenth century, for example, don Mateo Sánchez, the likely writer of the *Annals of Tecamachalco*, writes in the third person but features his own rise to *gobernador*, as well as his former teacher and friend *fray* Francisco de Toral's visits to the community. Don Mateo's annal also lists momentous events to the community, such as the devastating 1576 epidemic; it highlights the death of the still-young "doña Marta, spouse of Mateo Sánchez" (105).

Yearly entries in annals add detail to our already-rich history of Spanish-Native relations. These relations were not the same everywhere. Some annals emphasize mistrust, misunderstanding, and betrayal in certain years between Native peoples and Spaniards. Written by scribes from San Juan Moyotlan in Mexico City, the sixteenth-century *Annals of Juan Bautista* stress the momentous occasions of increased taxes and riots in the 1560s. For the first time an exorbitant head tax was to be imposed on the Natives of Mexico City. As the annal depicts, although friars were supposed to defend Natives, they either failed to grasp the gravity of the newly imposed taxes for the Natives or simply turned their backs on them. Neither did the Spanish court system provide much relief. Additionally, correspondence between friars and Native *pilli* (nobles) reveals that relations between friars and their charges were tense when they did not have a language in common. In his letters to don Mateo, *fray* Toral, who was well-liked by the Natives of Tecamachalco, described feeling "deaf and dumb" for not knowing the language of his Maya parishioners in Mérida, a gap which caused tension.

In the seventeenth century, more than a century after conquest, Native populations were becoming more hispanized and Nahua writers felt a growing concern to preserve Native history that motivated them to keep annals. Incorporating both Nahuatl annals and Spanish histories into his *ocho relaciones*, Chimalpahin specifically aimed to highlight the history of Chalco as well as honor the Native history in general as equally remarkable to that of Europeans. Similarly, Tlaxcalan historian Juan Buenaventura Zapata y Mendoza also was concerned with elevating the history of Tlaxcala and that of all Nahuas. He wrote from a sense of responsibility, as a member of the ruling class, or *tlatoque*, to speak for and preserve the history of the *titiotzin* ("we who are Indians," 196). Unlike his predecessors, Zapata chose to work exclusively with Nahuatl sources, for no one but Nahua *tlatoque* could maintain the history and intellectual life of Nahuas.

As a whole, the annals are also a reflection of the erudition of its writers. The writers were often bilingual (e.g., Nahuatl-Spanish) and sometimes multilingual (e.g., Nahuatl-Spanish-Latin) and well-versed in Christian philosophies and the histories of

the Old and New Worlds. Annal writers were not only educated in the Spanish ways of their friar-mentors, but also in the social, political, and economic dynamics of their communities through stories they heard from parents and family elders as well as their own memories and reading of other annals. Surviving Nahuatl and Spanish responses such as those from Pedro de San Buenaventura, the likely author of the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan*, to his former teacher, fray Bernardino de Sahagún, provide explanations on topics such as how preconquest calendric practices accounted for odd days, or *nemontemi* ("it belongs nowhere," 121), and offer insight into the intellectual exchange between educated Nahuas and friars.

Overall, *Annals of Native America* does not present the reader with groundbreaking ideas about Spanish-Native relations in colonial Mexican society. But that is not the point. Rather, Townsend's examination of the Nahua writers responsible for penning the annals as well as histories is an account of culture change. These rich case studies emphasize both the hispanization of Natives and their determination to remain Native, as each writer understood that to be in his contemporary context. Educated Nahua men continued the practice of *xiuhpohualli* well into the colonial era, manipulating the history to underscore their lineage, but most importantly to protect the *xiuhpohualli* itself, even as its structure changed from one generation to the next. As Townsend's introduction puts it, colonial-era Native history-tellers understood that "life on earth is fleeting, but in remembering the past and renewing promises to posterity, they could render aspects of it eternal" (1).

Margarita R. Ochoa

Loyola Marymount University

**Art for an Undivided Earth.** By Jessica L. Horton. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 312 pages. \$99.95 cloth; \$26.95 paper; \$15.31 electronic.

Anticolonial resistance ebbs and flows across generations, through various institutions, and across geographic spaces. While the general population may not think of the United States as a land of ongoing colonization, most people familiar with American Indian political struggles in the twentieth century are familiar with the efforts of activists to draw attention to the ongoing cultural colonization of the Americas, such as the American Indian Movement (AIM). While AIM often was lumped with other identity movements of the 1960s and 1970s, AIM was primarily a movement seeking to address the return of land, the redress of treaties, and equal treatment under the law; the spread of ethnic pride was more of an outcome of this anticolonial land movement than a specific goal. While many successes occurred in these areas, one of the most important consequences of AIM activism was an ethnic resurgence in American Indian identity, dance, and art. In the art world, resurgence brought to prominence many new artists with many competing voices. One might assume that the anticolonial message of the AIM generation would be lost within this new ethnic resurgence, or that the decline of the movement would be a decline of the message. In rich case studies of individual