
La investigación de Coralia Gutiérrez, elaborada a partir de una exhaustiva revisión documental y bibliográfica, pone bajo una lupa la región Puebla-Tlaxcala y el mundo obrero empresarial de las épocas del Porfiriato y la Revolución. El detallado análisis de las formas de organización empresarial, de su relación con un Estado complaciente y la conflictividad con el universo de los trabajadores, radicalizado primero por los magonistas y luego al calor de la Revolución, entreteje y estructura información que, hecha extensiva al conjunto del país, profundiza en un momento clave no sólo del proceso industrializador mexicano, sino de la formación de la clase obrera.

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JAMES KRIPPNER-MARTÍNEZ: *Rereading the Conquest: Power, Politics and the History of Early Colonial Michoacán, Mexico, 1521-1565.*
University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.

Fifteen years have passed since the publication of *Selected Subaltern Studies*, a groundbreaking book that initiated an entire field of thought and analysis: the deconstruction of history and historiography, and especially what “colonialism” has meant. Since Edward Said, Americanists such as José Rabasa and Jorge Klor de Alva, as well as a growing number of others, have chosen this road, leaning heavily on what has already been learned from the field of literary criticism and, more recently, from the “new” intellectual history, and combining this with the methodology of post-Structuralism. Their general tenet is re-reading the texts, the sources, the discourse, in order to ‘decipher’ the innermost encoded predispositions that might have prompted the diverse colonial authors and actors to structure their contemporaneous scene in accordance with their own wishful and biased thinking. An entire debate began on the viability of those methods, and much of it was echoed in two editions of the *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Obviously, as in any other discipline, there are good and bad studies, and this should be the only way to judge their value and choice. Nevertheless, what one often asks oneself is: does the particular method or tool chosen bring about an innovative approach, or is a fruitful outcome reached after reviewing the sources from a different angle?

For more than three decades, the theme of the conversion of the Indians to Christianity and the subsequent dialogue established between the newly converted and the missionaries enjoyed a prominent position in the forefront of early colonial Latin American social and cultural history. Based on primary

native and Spanish sources of the period, authors such as Inga Clendinnen, Louis Burkhart, Serge Gruzinski, and others, succeeded in deeply penetrating the complex mental battle waged by Indian elite members during the 1530s, '40s and '50s with regard to the decisive choice of whether to abandon their old ways and leave lingering beliefs behind. Relying upon parish records, priests' accounts, and indigenous narrations, social and cultural historians have examined the combination of clerical effectiveness, ideologically enforced tools of Church repression, and the scope of local resistance to change while providing explanations for the differences in missionary accomplishments in various areas in sixteenth-century New Spain. They have all greatly enhanced our understanding of what Christianization of the Nahuas, Otomi, and other major ethnic groups of Mexico was all about, as well as provided us with new pathways and new historian's tools to analyze highly dubious, both Nahua and Spanish narrations. I am not at all certain that a "deconstructionalist" approach to this particular theme, and the transformations that occurred across Mexico and other areas of the Americas, can surpass this rich product.

James Krippner-Martínez's present study is complex, and his rich discourse is delightful indeed. Following the path of other "post" critiques in Latin American studies, Krippner-Martínez proposes to "come to grips with the complexity and contextuality of thought, noting common patterns, as well as unique, historically situated contributions" (p. 175). He also chooses the long road of a bird's-eye-view of the transformations of historical representations during four entire centuries of writing. He thus takes us through a penetrating journey into the reinterpretation and symbolic depictions of a few of the leading colonial actors in the area of Michoacán, among them Nuño de Guzmán, the conqueror of this province, the Tzintzincha ruler Calzontzín, and Bishop Vasco de Quiroga. The author vividly and skillfully employs Todorov's and Rolena Adorno's earlier treatments of the "Other" by other conquerors and discoverers, in other situations in the New World, adapting them to the local scene in Michoacán.

The book begins with the earliest records of the first three decades of the sixteenth century. This was the famous trial and execution of Calzontzín by Nuño de Guzmán, in Michoacán in 1531, and the subsequent readings of this trial by the colonial authorities. Relying on France Scholes and E. Adams' transcription of the trial record, and on J. Benedict Warren and Enrique Florescano's historical studies of early colonial Michoacán, Krippner-Martínez reaches the conclusion that, "Reading this source 'against the grain' allows us to uncover multiple truths obscured or only partially reflected in the conqueror's account" (p. 34). However, his more solid conclusions here, as everywhere else, such as that indigenous resistance in Michoacán "involved a selective rather

than a complete rejection of colonial rule” (p. 19), are either too sporadic, uncontested or unmatched compared with what ethno-historians from Nancy Farriss, on the Maya, to James Lockhart, on the Nahuatl, have taught us to expect.

The second chapter examines the meanings and insinuations behind the co-authorship of the *Relación de Michoacán*, composed by a Franciscan friar and an Indian leader in 1541, probing deeply into how the earlier “foundation stories” of both Indian and Spanish testimonies of the conquest and subjection of Michoacán have evolved twenty years later. This chapter is the most solid of the entire book. Important assertions, for example that “the *Relación* also provided a version of the past that challenged the humiliation of the conquest in important ways” (p. 55), merit far more elaboration. The third chapter jumps forward to the contemporary figure of Vasco de Quiroga and his humanistic-scholastic commentaries, during the 1530s and ’40s, inspired by Thomas More’s *Utopia*, on how to place the Indians of the area under the tight tutelage of the colonial Church within the compounds of the village-hospitals. On chapter 4 there is yet another leap, this time to the late eighteenth-century, with a thorough treatment of Beaumont’s late Baroque *Crónica de Michoacán*. Here, the “other” is totally absent and the entire work is permeated with creole self-justification: “González has noted, accurately, that for the most part, Beaumont’s *Crónica* excludes the history and perspectives of the Indian peoples” (p. 140). This severe text is suffused with “an unintended subtext of indigenous resistance,” providing a wholesome justification for Spanish atrocities, as Krippner-Martínez rightly concludes (p. 148).

The fifth and last chapter of this book, *Remembering Tata Vasco*, explores the growth of popular and elite piety towards the mythological figure of Vasco de Quiroga in Michoacán, how he was conceived by the “people” and treated by historians, from the late nineteenth century up to the 1940s and the present. This chapter, however, as all the others, hardly or weakly tie together. At some point or other, the reader reaches the inevitable conclusion that the only unifying factor binding these texts is the methodology chosen by the author and the Michoacán scene. A final note, Krippner-Martínez’s unfulfilled attempt to revisit the realities behind the village-hospitals of Vasco de Quiroga might have been better served, perhaps, by supplementing his sources with material sought locally, in Michoacán, as well as that located in Mexico’s national archives.