

"Myths, Historical Error and the Problem of Sources during the Post- Conquest Era"

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"Mitos, corrupciones históricas y la problemática de las fuentes de post-conquista",

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Noted researcher Miguel Leon Portilla noted in the introduction to his edition of the *Huehuetlatolli* (the ancient word) that the next level of research must be in challenging the Post-Conquest Spanish sources relative to the Pre-Columbian culture and society. There are several obvious historical factors that are responsible for the biased writing by the Spanish colonial writers between 1492 and 1821: (1) In view of the medieval view of society that the Spanish wanted to retain, there is an intentional ploy to censure all materials that are associated with the Reformation (2) Spain will institute the *Sanctum Officium* (Holy Inquisition) to all who deviate from the Roman Catholic Church and (3) will pursue the concept of the *Ecclesia Universalis* or the idea of making the Roman Christian Church the universal church of the world. The religious and political implications to the new found land in the Americas are such that all Native-Americans are *a priori* heretics and since wars of conversion are compatible with the religious imperialism of the Universal Church concept, the religious fanaticism of the Spanish Crown and Roman Church will translate as a process of hegemony to all native peoples.

After 1550 in New Spain, all written material must be examined by the *Consejo de las Indias* and even by the Crown of Spain. Don Fernando de Alba de Ixlixocitl, a descendent of a Pre-Conquest Governing Head of Texkoko appears to be sensing the frustration of censorship and the altering of documents written by the survivors of the

Spanish assault. He notes: I have read many histories written by the Spanish of this nation and they are all quite different from the original history... instead of saying one thing,

they say another, some speaking with passion, other of industry while some relate fables invented in the language of the moment of these and other things... The Spanish do not understand very well our language or what our elders are really saying...."

Of the colonial writers, only a few were bold enough to point out the atrocities and the twisting of the facts. They include Fray Bartolome de las Casas, Fray Vitoria and Fray Montesinos. What have not been respected are the oral histories that have been passed on from father to son since the dictate was pronounced in 1521 by Kuautemok, last governing head of Metziko-

Tenochtitlan. After the new found sensitivity of the sixties in the U.S., scholars in Native-American Studies began to listen to the elders in the reservations. As a result there have been hundreds of publications and a new understanding of the Native-American mindset. Exemplary of this is *Black Elk Speaks* by Prof. Niehardt. In Mexico, there is still a prejudice to all things "Indian" and academicians as a whole have shunned the elders and their unique historical, cultural and metaphysical understanding of the Pre-Columbian world. This paper attempts to show the misinterpretations based on a Western Worldview as opposed to an autochthonous perspective. The research of Martinez-Paredes, and Seler are used to demonstrate the bias and misinterpretation. Additionally, the work of British scholar Nigel Davies and German Scholar Peter Hassler illustrate the contradictions and inventions by the Spanish. Among the invented modern myths of the Spanish regarding Aztec culture include the practice of human sacrifice and the eating of dogs. Moreover, passages in Aztec Náhuatl of the *Huehuetlatolli* are analyzed to show the misrepresentation of Native-American Thought while at the same time showing the Western / Christian paradigm that is employed.

In conclusion, the task of reconstructing the history, philosophy and the "religion"(metaphysics) of the Anahuakan cultures (Aztec Confederation) is ultimately important. It is important because of the imposition of a hegemonic process that discredited the invaded tribal nations changing their history, culture and "religion". Moreover, it is important because of the negativity that it instills into Mestizo culture that brings about an identity crisis. Finally, it is unquestionably important that all Mexicans, Chicanos and Mestizo-Americans understand the true history and philosophy of their ancestors so that they can begin a purification of culture as we enter the twenty first century.

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