

theory is amenable to Peru, but rather when Peru and those who invented Peru will be read as theory and theorists. What *Peru in Theory* tells us is that we are not quite there yet.

The ambiguous title and its elephant aside, this volume has a wealth of insights to offer to those interested in an empirical discussion of social science theory in not-yet-national scenarios of the kind often associated with countries like Peru. All the chapters are well written and clearly engage in insightful ways a particular problem of the new Peru. Many of these chapters could stand alone as contributions in their own right. In most cases, the ideas of the particular theorist at hand are confirmed to be useful with one or two noteworthy caveats, and in some cases the theories are partially rejected or revised. What becomes clear is that all the selected theorists (from Tocqueville to Butler) are within certain limits useful and now, perhaps, acceptable for thinking about Peru. We should not be surprised, of course, since that is the point of theory and indeed of social science. That this could also be the point of Peru, however, is not yet understood to be the case and one suspects never will be as long as Peru is prefigured as the historicist elephant in the room of theory.

MARK THURNER, University of London

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## Colonial Period

*Dancing the New World: Aztecs, Spaniards, and the Choreography of Conquest.* By PAUL A. SCOLIERI. Latin American and Caribbean Arts and Culture. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013. Plates. Maps. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 205 pp. Cloth, \$55.00.

The conquest of Mesoamerica has long been and continues to be an alluring subject of historical and interdisciplinary inquiry. Indeed, much work has emerged in the last few decades that has significantly enhanced—and at times radically transformed—our understanding of this fascinating and foundational episode in transatlantic history. This shift in conquest historiography—often referred to as the New Conquest History—is characterized by, among other things, the revisiting and rereading of long-familiar published primary sources, the recentering of native peoples and their perspectives and interpretations in our historical narratives, and a disregard for traditional disciplinary boundaries. Paul Scolieri's *Dancing the New World* accomplishes all these objectives and is an excellent addition both to conquest scholarship and to the cultural history of colonial Mexico.

Scolieri's aim is to use dance as a “lens into the broader ‘encounter’ between Europeans and Indians in the New World,” specifically sixteenth-century central Mexico (p. 1). Through writings about dance, Scolieri sees an opportunity not only to enrich our understanding of Nahua performance but also to explore the “political unconscious” of sixteenth-century Iberia (p. 2). Scolieri demonstrates that texts about dance reflect important political, theological, and epistemological debates among Spaniards (whether

native peoples are noble or savage, what the best methods of conversion were, and what happened in the past and how one knows it) in addition to elusive ethnographic information on pre-Hispanic and colonial-era dance in the Americas. This is a book that blurs the line between conventional definitions of history and performance and challenges us to answer one of Scolieri's central questions: "When does choreography (the writing of dance) become historiography (the writing of history), and vice versa?" (p. 151).

The work is divided into five chapters, which proceed chronologically. Scolieri begins in the Caribbean with Europeans' first encounters with the peoples of Hispaniola and Europeans' descriptions of native dances. The "song-dances" of Hispaniola achieved some fame in sixteenth-century Europe through the writings of explorers such as Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci, who called them *areítos*. The explorers' writings about the *areítos*—which tended, in general, to create what Scolieri calls a "discourse of wonder" around native peoples—serve as a benchmark against which to measure later accounts of dance in central Mexico (p. 27).

The book then moves the reader to central Mexico to examine writings on dance by two famed missionary ethnographers of the Nahuas, Motolinia (Fray Toribio de Benavente) and Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. Scolieri argues that Motolinia rejected the Caribbean discourse of wonder and instead used descriptions of Nahuatl dancers to portray them as penitent Christian native commoners, ready to be received into the Catholic Church and the Spanish empire. Sahagún and his Nahuatl collaborators, meanwhile, were understandably less concerned with either wonder or penitence and instead attempted an exhaustive description of the intricacies of Nahuatl dance in the context of the feasts of the pre-Hispanic solar calendar. Scolieri's treatment of Sahagún's work deserves special comment, as it is both masterful and enthralling. And this has to be one of the most enlightening and satisfying discussions of Nahuatl human sacrifice currently in print.

The book then takes on—through the lens of dance—one of the more controversial episodes in the conquest narrative: the Toxcatl massacre. While Scolieri gets us no closer to the truth of what happened that night, he has nonetheless produced a very patient analysis of dance and dancers in the various and often contradictory sources for this episode to reveal "the range of competing and complementary meanings that conquistadors, chroniclers, missionaries, and natives brought to and drew from the massacre" (p. 122). The book concludes with a look at the colonial period. Drawing on the colonial-era writings of Diego Durán, José de Acosta, and Andrés Pérez de Ribas, Scolieri explores the degree to which native peoples retained control of their dancing in the context of forced Christianization.

This is a clearly written work that will appeal to a variety of readers, from the sixteenth-century Mexicanist to the upper-level undergraduate student. A great strength of this book is Scolieri's primary source analysis. While he does not make much use of the kind of mundane archival material that many historians so esteem, he reevaluates the canon of published sources—by conquistadores and chroniclers, missionaries and missionized—to great effect. Happily, excerpts of many of these accounts are included in translation in a series of ten appendixes. Scolieri also draws on an abundance of pictorial

sources produced by both Europeans and natives, and the University of Texas Press's characteristic care and attention to publishing copious and high-quality images of these sources is gratifying. Indeed, Scolieri's interdisciplinarity is another of the book's strengths; the fields of dance and performance studies, art history, ethnography, and history come together seamlessly in this very fine contribution to conquest historiography.

BRADLEY BENTON, North Dakota State University

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*Fronterización del espacio hacia el norte de la Nueva España.* By CECILIA SHERIDAN PRIETO. Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social / Editorial Mora, 2015. Plates. Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 342 pp. Paper.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Viceroyalty of New Spain sought to extend its influence into a northern region beyond the bounds of the old Mexica empire. Yet the lands and peoples described in early sources as the Gran Chichimeca remain poorly understood to this day, the term itself betraying colonial writers' ignorance of ethnographic reality. The challenges of studying the indigenous peoples of the north are familiar to most Mexican historians. Even the apparently simple goal of describing the locations and boundaries of ethnic and political communities proves exceedingly complex in practice. Northern Indian nations were highly mobile and their social boundaries porous; subsistence was precarious, disease rampant, and violence ubiquitous. The documentary record is thin, both because northern peoples lacked literacy and because most literate observers were largely ignorant of conditions outside colonial settlements.

In *Fronterización del espacio hacia el norte de la Nueva España*, Cecilia Sheridan Prieto confronts all these problems head-on. She addresses our fragmentary understanding of the period and the region in two ways: by deconstructing colonial notions about northern Indians, and by using archival records to achieve a more accurate description of the region's demography. Both approaches are valuable, but as is usually the case, the latter proves more difficult than the former. According to Sheridan, the very notion of "frontier" is a distorting lens, one imposed on the environment by settler populations who brought their own notions about civilization and barbarism to bear on the people of the north. Thus, the first order of business is to *desfronterizar*—or "unfrontierize"—our story about northern New Spain in order to describe northern peoples not as characters in a European drama but as human beings in their own right. This is important work, but also very difficult.

The project embodies years of archival work, but with a noticeable concentration on the northeastern frontier and with the richest material drawn from Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Texas. The book does not provide a comprehensive treatment of the north, but it does show us how such a thing may be accomplished over time. Sheridan includes several short case studies that map the dispersion and mobility of five northern peoples: the Acoclames, Alazapas, Cabezas, Mescaleros, and Tobosos. She provides narrative explanations and color maps as well as detailed archival references in