

RESEÑAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

Diego Durán. *Book of the gods and rites and the ancient calendar*, translated and edited by Fernando Horcasitas and Doris Heyden, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1971 xxiv+502 p. 8 color and 55 monochrome plates, 1 map.

"Scribble, scribble, scribble" was the remark, usually considered inane, with which some Hanoverian duke greeted Gibbon. I am not sure that it was inane. I have never waded through the interminable *Decline and Fall*, but I have the impression Gibbon was a sour creature. No doubt he was careful of his facts and interpretations, but dull as ditch water precisely because he seems never to have dipped his plume in an inkwell filled with the milk of human kindness. The Dominicans—at least in Protestant eyes—have a reputation somewhat like Gibbon's—too intellectual to be humanitarian—perhaps because of their founder's part in the Albigensian campaign and the Order's association with the Holy Office. Even Las Casas, one feels, wrote his defence of the Indians primarily to attack his enemies. He harped on his love of the Indians in a way we associate with a left-wing tum-thumper—Love with a capital L. But was there real affection? Diego Durán O.P. clearly loved the Indians with all his heart and soul.

Durán was no intellectual. As the translators remark, his spelling was atrocious even for the sixteenth century, and his punctuation worse. He was too honest and too outspoken for his own good. On the other hand, he had the inestimable assets of having grown up in Mexico, of speaking Nahuatl like a native, and of enjoying a good "natter" with any Indian he chanced to meet on a journey or when engaged in his priestly duties. There are dozens of instances in which valuable ethnological information was thus obtained (note for example his account of patolli). He was essentially a tolerant man (except to his fellow priests), and although he condemned relapses into paganism, one feels he would have echoed the opinions of the missionary Bishop of Bompopo in Douglas' *South Wind* of his incorrigible back-sliding

flock: "How they attached themselves to his heart, those black fellows . . . the Bulanga were the worst of the lot. Not fit to be talked about. And yet, somehow or other, one could not help liking them."

It is just because loving kindness and tolerance governed his life and his writing that Durán is a superb chronicler of Indian ceremony and religion. Another benefit, from our point of view, of Durán's writings is the information he gives on rites and practices in regions distant from Tenochtitlan, notably in what is now Morelos and the area from Texcoco southward. For instance, we have detailed material on the cult of Camaxtli, which finds no place in the writings of Sahagún precisely because Camaxtli was not worshipped—at least under that name—in Tenochtitlan.

The present work has a delightful introductory chapter on the life and times of Fray Diego with charming sketches of the Mexico City of around 1550 as seen through his eyes as a child and, then, as it would have appeared to him twenty-five years later. Perhaps on one such trip to the city he came upon Miles Philips, young ship's boy of the Hawkins fleet, who before being brought to trial had the freedom of the buildings of the Holy Office and surely, too, of the Dominican friary, across the way, where Durán would have lodged. That brings me to a very minor criticism: the editors invariably call friars and friaries, monks and monasteries. Diego would have made a poor monk; had he been one, he could not have written this book.

The many informative footnotes of the translators are a very useful asset.

The color plates and half-tones are a vast improvement on the engravings of the 1867-80 edition; they have a quality of depth lacking in the latter and the faces are far more in Indian style. The excellent index is another improvement of inestimable value. As always, the University of Oklahoma Press has produced a very handsome volume. The historical part of Durán's work was published in English in 1964 by the present translators.

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Benjamin Keen. *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1971, xviii+666 p., ilustraciones y mapas.

Aportación en el campo de la historia de las ideas es esta obra de