

The Testaments of Culhuacan

Sarah Cline*

Over 400 years ago a devastating epidemic swept through central Mexico, killing tens of thousands of indigenous people. During that epidemic of 1576–82, sixty-five men and women in the relatively small, if famous, Nahuatl settlement of Culhuacan dictated their last wills and testaments to Nahuatl notaries. Many other Nahuatl settlements of the time have left substantial records in the native language, but Culhuacan is unique in that a solid corpus of wills, now known as The Testaments of Culhuacan, has survived from a period of only a year or two. This group of wills in Nahuatl has been a rich source of information on local-level processes from an indigenous perspective. It continues to inform our understanding of the impact of the Spanish presence on a single indigenous community while also demonstrating the resilience of Nahuatl culture.

History of the project. The Culhuacan collection of wills appeared seemingly out of nowhere, a completely new corpus of Nahuatl documentation previously unknown to the scholarly community. Sometime in the early 1970s, Dr. Ignacio Pérez Alonso brought the Culhuacan documents to Dr. Miguel León-Portilla, the doyen of Nahuatl studies in Mexico, and gave him permission to photocopy the documents before donating them to the Universidad Iberoamericana library in Mexico City.

Don Miguel published a description of the corpus, with some samples, in *Crónicas de Cultura Nahuatl* (León-Portilla 1976). Around that time, after I had passed my doctoral qualifying exams at UCLA, the expectation was that I would write my dissertation on the early sixteenth-century Cuernavaca census. Jim Lockhart, my director, having great respect for the extraordinary difficulty and recalcitrance of that material, and also seeing the magnitude of the project of publishing the entire Testaments of Culhuacan, went to León-Portilla with a proposal to which the latter readily agreed: that I would be furnished photocopies of the testaments, that I would gradually transcribe and provisionally translate them toward an edition by myself and León-Portilla, and that at the same time I would use them as the primary basis for a dissertation in ethnohistory.

I had no clear idea of what I was getting into, but the project sounded intriguing. My experience in Jim's paleography class made the task of transcribing the testaments appear a relatively straightforward process. I say that because sixteenth-century Nahuatl material hands are quite legible compared to the Spanish notaries' scribbles. But colonial Nahuatl presents its own challenges with its lack of divisions between what we consider words, capricious or absent punctuation, and standardized as well as idiosyncratic abbreviations. I can't remember which document I started with, but I do remember the process: write out the transcription as best I could by hand, type it on my portable electric typewriter, keeping at any one time my bundle of white-out (a revolutionary invention at the time!), I would send these provisional transcriptions to Jim and wait for the

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Testaments Of Culhuacan

Bryan Ryan



Testaments Of Culhuacan:

The Testaments of Culhuacan S. L. Cline, Miguel León Portilla, UCLA Latin American Center Publications (Firm), 1984

Testaments of Toluca Caterina Pizzigoni, 2007 Testaments written in their own language Nahuatl have been crucial for reconstructing the everyday life of the indigenous people of central Mexico after Spanish contact Those published to date have largely been from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries Testaments of Toluca presents a large body of Nahuatl wills 98 from 1652 to 1783 from an important valley not much studied thus greatly enlarging our perspective on the evolution of indigenous society and culture in central Mexico Each testament is transcribed translated and accompanied by a commentary on the testator's situation and on interesting terminology A substantial introductory study fully analyzes the testamentary genre as seen in this corpus a first and summarizes the content of the documents in realms such as gender kinship household and land Wills are very human documents and the apparatus draws out this aspect telling us much of local indigenous life in central Mexico in the third century after Spanish contact so that the book is of potential interest to a broad spectrum of readers **UCLA Historical Journal** ,1991 *Nahua Plant Knowledge and Chinampa Farming in the Basin of Mexico* Virginia S. Popper, 1995

Latin American Indian Literatures Journal ,1989 Palaces of the Ancient New World Susan Toby Evans, Joanne Pillsbury, 2004 Among the most sumptuous buildings of antiquity were royal palaces As in the Old World kings and nobles of ancient Mexico and Peru had luxurious administrative quarters in cities and exquisite pleasure palaces in the countryside This volume explores the great houses of the ancient New World from palaces of the Aztecs and Incas looted by the Spanish conquistadors to those lost high in the Andes and deep in the jungle This volume the first scholarly compendium of elite residences of the high cultures of the New World presents definitive descriptions and interpretations by leading scholars in the field Authoritative yet accessible this extensively illustrated book will serve as an important resource for anthropologists archaeologists and historians of art architecture and related disciplines *Economic Aspects of Prehispanic Highland Mexico* Barry L. Isaac, 1986

Latin America Jonathan Charles Brown, 2005 **Monthly Checklist of State Publications** Library of Congress. Exchange and Gift Division, 1985 June and Dec issues contain listings of periodicals **Indian Women and Catholic Mission in Mexico and Canada 1500-1700** Stephanie Klein, 2004

Sarape Textiles from Historic Mexico William Wroth, Zoe Annis Perkins, 1999 Language George Melville Bolling, Bernard Bloch, 1985 **Handbook of Latin American Studies** ,1991 Contains records describing books book chapters articles and conference papers published in the field of Latin American studies Coverage includes relevant books as well as over 800 social science and 550 humanities journals and volumes of conference proceedings Most records include abstracts with evaluations **The Slippery Earth** Louise M. Burkhart, 1989 **Anthropological Papers** ,1990

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Amy Turner Bushnell,1995 For review see Noble David Cook in The Hispanic American Historical Review HAHR vol 77 nr 2
May 1997 p 303 304 **Land and Politics in the Valley of Mexico** H. R. Harvey,1991 **The Book of Tributes** S. L.
Cline,1993

This book delves into Testaments Of Culhuacan. Testaments Of Culhuacan is an essential topic that needs to be grasped by everyone, from students and scholars to the general public. The book will furnish comprehensive and in-depth insights into Testaments Of Culhuacan, encompassing both the fundamentals and more intricate discussions.

1. This book is structured into several chapters, namely:
 - Chapter 1: Introduction to Testaments Of Culhuacan
 - Chapter 2: Essential Elements of Testaments Of Culhuacan
 - Chapter 3: Testaments Of Culhuacan in Everyday Life
 - Chapter 4: Testaments Of Culhuacan in Specific Contexts
 - Chapter 5: Conclusion
2. In chapter 1, the author will provide an overview of Testaments Of Culhuacan. The first chapter will explore what Testaments Of Culhuacan is, why Testaments Of Culhuacan is vital, and how to effectively learn about Testaments Of Culhuacan.
3. In chapter 2, this book will delve into the foundational concepts of Testaments Of Culhuacan. This chapter will elucidate the essential principles that must be understood to grasp Testaments Of Culhuacan in its entirety.
4. In chapter 3, the author will examine the practical applications of Testaments Of Culhuacan in daily life. This chapter will showcase real-world examples of how Testaments Of Culhuacan can be effectively utilized in everyday scenarios.
5. In chapter 4, the author will scrutinize the relevance of Testaments Of Culhuacan in specific contexts. This chapter will explore how Testaments Of Culhuacan is applied in specialized fields, such as education, business, and technology.
6. In chapter 5, the author will draw a conclusion about Testaments Of Culhuacan. The final chapter will summarize the key points that have been discussed throughout the book.

The book is crafted in an easy-to-understand language and is complemented by engaging illustrations. It is highly recommended for anyone seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of Testaments Of Culhuacan.

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