

**Time, History, and Belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico.** By Ross Hassig. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001. xv + 220 pp., preface, acknowledgments, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)

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In this analytical tour de force, Ross Hassig confronts a Manichean characterization of Mexica civilization: that the conception of time among the Mexica was essentially cyclical, contrasting not only with the linear logic of the Julian and Gregorian calendars, but also with another Mesoamerican calendrical system featuring a unique starting point—that of the Maya. To this end, Hassig constructs a debate against a position that assumes an opposition between cyclical and linear systems, which leads to a general phrasing of his thesis: “My basic argument is that the Aztecs did not have a primarily cyclical notion of time and history; rather, they manipulated time by way of their calendar, for political purposes” (xiii).

This statement is the corollary to a complex series of arguments through which Hassig questions received notions about the rapport between Mexica political decisions, collective ritual ceremonies, and calendrical interpretation. First of all, Hassig provides an extensive description of the 260-day Mexica ritual calendar (*tonalpohualli*) and its four Year Bearers (House, Rabbit, Reed, and Flint), the 365-day solar cycle (*xihuitl*), and the 52-year cycle (*xiuhmolpilli*), complemented by a discussion of three poorly understood associated cycles—those of the thirteen Lords of the Day, the nine Lords of the Night, and the thirteen Voladores. This summation incorporates Hassig’s interpretation of essential primary sources, which include Late Postclassic iconographic records, pictorial sources—such as the Borbonicus, the Ixtlilxochitl, the Tonalamatl Aubin, the Vaticanus, and the Boturini—and narrative accounts composed between the early sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries by Toribio Motolinia, Diego Durán, Bernardino de Sahagún, Cristóbal del Castillo, Jacinto de la Serna, and other authors. After this summation, Hassig turns to Alfonso Caso’s influential thesis that a general correlation of Mesoamerican calendrical systems may be achieved by linking time units in the Mexica calendar with the corresponding units in other systems—Mixtec, Zapotec, Mixe-Zoque, Maya, or Purépecha. Although Hassig discusses a potential discrepancy in one of Caso’s correlations, he concludes that, due to the scant independent evidence on pre-Columbian calendrical correlations, it is impossible to refute or prove Caso’s thesis. Hassig then positions the rest of his analysis by turning the tables on Caso: instead of assuming the cross-cultural

uniformity of Mesoamerican calendars, he posits that one should expect divergence and seek to explain convergence.

Hassig then turns to three major cosmological modifications introduced by the Mexica: the change from a cosmological history of four Suns to a five-Sun history, the change from a nine-level to a thirteen-level celestial realm (*Topan*), and the shifting of the New Fire Ceremony—which signaled the passage into a new fifty-two-year cycle—from 1 Rabbit, its canonical year in the cycle, to the following year (2 Reed). How did these changes play out in terms of their impact on the various local calendrical systems encountered by the Mexica during their military expansion, which began in 1428? Hassig suggests that the local divergences in the insertion of intercalary days—the equivalent of leap year corrections—coupled with the necessity of collecting tribute for Tenochtitlan during four specific months may have led to the coexistence of two calendrical systems: one sponsored and controlled by Mexica specialists—which may support Caso's thesis about cross-cultural correlations—and an independent local system.

The pièce de résistance in Hassig's analysis is his interpretation of the shift of the Mexica New Fire ceremony. First of all, his analysis reviews the various contradictory statements in the sources regarding this ceremony's placement within the solar year. Although Sahagún and other sources state that it took place at the point marking the end of a fifty-two-year cycle and the beginning of a new cycle (February or March in our calendar), Sahagún also indicates that the ceremony took place as the Pleiades reached their zenith at midnight (early November in our calendar). A third contender is the depiction of an apparent New Fire ceremony occurring in the month of Panquetzalitzli in the Codex Borbonicus, which Hassig disputes. Hassig then turns to the received interpretation of this shift—based on the Telleriano-Remensis—which holds that the New Fire ceremony was moved from 1454 (1 Rabbit) to 1455 (2 Reed) because of a devastating famine in 1454, and also in order to shift the ceremony to Huitzilopochtli's birth date. He also observes that Chimalpahin states that this ceremony was held in 1455 atop Huixachtecatl Hill, south of Tenochtitlan. Hassig then incorporates these lines of evidence into an interpretation that characterizes the shift as a decision motivated by political expediency rather than by mere calendrical logic: (1) there probably was a formal New Fire ceremony held in 1454 at the end of the fifty-two-year cycle in the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan; (2) this ritual was followed by a New Fire "recapitulation" ceremony in 1455 at the recently conquered site of Huixachtecatl, perhaps during Panquetzalitzli; and (3) this shift was formalized by 1507 (2 Reed), as recorded in the Teocalli de la Guerra Sagrada and as suggested by the building of a new temple at Huixachtecatl.

This reinterpretation of the New Fire shift epitomizes Hassig's major contention, which is developed using other examples in the rest of the book: that an analysis of the Mexica calendrical system demonstrates the importance of distinguishing ideology-as-idiom—the logical or symbolic operation of a group of structuring principles—from ideology-as-action—the instantiation of these principles in specific historical contexts by ruling elites. Thus, the last three chapters of the book expand what is initially structured as a debate with specialists in Mesoamerican ethnohistory to a general discussion of methodological and historiographical issues in ethnohistory—ranging from an engagement with the Sahlins-Obeyesekere debate to an appraisal of the use of sources produced by colonial authors for the study of indigenous cultural categories. In a revealing metaphor, Hassig claims, “Just as particle physics has the Heisenberg uncertainty principle . . . so too does ethnohistory have an uncertainty principle” (53). In the end, this book stands as an unflinching and multifaceted analysis that refuses to dilute the complexity of Late Postclassic and early colonial time-keeping systems. It argues for a highly developed methodological acuity that furthers the productive interdigitation of historical and anthropological research.

**The Articulated Peasant: Household Economies in the Andes.** By Enrique Mayer. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002. xvi + 390 pp., preface, introduction, illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. \$31.00 paper.)

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This remarkable book does not easily invite comparison, but it will be instantly familiar to anyone who works in the Andes: a collection of papers by a Peruvian anthropologist whose work has virtually defined peasant studies in the region. Many of the articles were originally published in Spanish and are now made available in English, revised and updated, for the first time, which will delight graduate students faced with the daunting task of covering a vast literature. The chapters are exceptional for the time depth with which they analyze and portray the Andean peasantry, making the book of special interest to ethnohistorians. In this respect and others the collection shows the influence of Enrique Mayer's mentor at Cornell, John Murra; the volume, although primarily ethnographic and ethnological in focus, is reminiscent of Murra's *Formaciones económicas y políticas del mundo Andino* and is just as indispensable, being largely dedicated to showing the continued relevance of Murra's insights to understanding the contemporary Andean world.