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*The Work of
Bernardino de Sahagún
Pioneer Ethnographer of
Sixteenth-Century Aztec Mexico*

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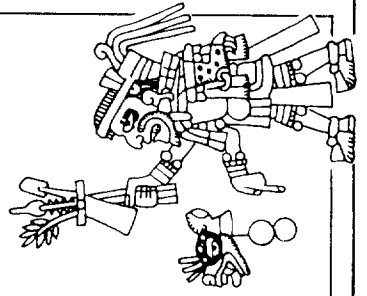
J. Jorge Klor de Alva, H. B. Nicholson
and Eloise Quiñones Keber

Studies on Culture and Society

Volume 2

Institute for Mesoamerican Studies
The University at Albany
State University of New York

Distributed by
University of Texas Press



9.31-52

9711 - 808 215

publish it, but also why he fails to mention the *Colloquios* in the prologue that precedes the *Psalmodia christiana*, even though both the viceroy, El Conde de Coruña, and the religious examiner, Dr. Ortiz de Hinojosa, praise the *Colloquios* by name and give their permission for its publication (García Icazbalceta 1954:322-323). Consequently, the failure of the *Colloquios* project marked the end of the effect on Sahagún's work of his misguided introduction to ethnography and set him firmly on the road to doing, for the first time anywhere, ethnography that we can understand as modern for self-consciously aiming (to the extent then possible) to objectively, comprehensively, and systematically understand and record the world of others on their own terms.

REVISIONIST CONQUEST HISTORY: SAHAGUN'S REVISED BOOK XII

S.L. Cline

University of California, Santa Barbara

Fr^y Bernardino de Sahagún is responsible for two histories of the conquest of Mexico. One account comprises Book XII of his magnum opus, *The General History of the Things of New Spain*, finished by 1579 (Nicolaï d'Oliver and Cline 1973:197), known as the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún 1979a). In 1585 Sahagún completed a second manuscript on the Conquest entitled, "Account of the Conquest of New Spain, as the Indian Soldiers who were Present Told It" (Bustamante 1840; Sahagún 1585).¹ The two accounts differ substantially in point of view, emphasis, and tone. The 1579 version presents the Conquest principally from the Tlatelolcan perspective with virtually no intervention in the narrative by Sahagún. The revised version of 1585 is, I suggest, clearly shaped by Sahagún himself. It is a paean of praise to Hernán Cortés and a justification of the Spanish victory. Sahagún's motivation for revising his account of the Conquest and the substance of those revisions are the subject of this study.

Why did Sahagún significantly change his narrative of the Conquest? Sahagún himself said that in the first version "certain mistakes were made, namely that some things were improperly included in the narrative of the conquest while others were improperly left out" (Sahagún 1585: "To the reader").² Sahagún does not name an agent for these defects. Many modern scholars, including Wigberto Jiménez Moreno (Sahagún 1938:IV:9), believe that the account in the *Florentine Codex* was composed, not merely copied, by Indians. In contrast, in the 1585 revision, it seems clear that Sahagún himself took command of the text. Since he was old and in ill health, he could no longer write, but with a native aide, identified as Agustín de la Fuente,³ he revised both the Nahuatl and the Spanish texts (Cline 1969:136).

Sahagún does not explicitly say what was omitted from the 1579 account. However, a comparison of the two versions (to follow in some detail below) indicates that the 1585 revision includes specifics about the role of Cortés, casting his actions in a favorable light, while drawing on non-Tlatelolcan native sources, as well as on Spanish informants.

Scholars have examined the two versions, but have not seriously grappled with Sahagún's reasons for the revision. Jiménez Moreno (Sahagún 1938:IV:8) noted that considerable time had elapsed between Sahagún's collection of the original information and the revision, during which his thinking and judgment could have changed. However, Jiménez Moreno did not elaborate on what might have motivated Sahagún's change in perspective. Howard F. Cline

(1969:135-136) believed that Sahagún revised the Conquest history "for intellectual rather than political reasons." However, Cline did not probe the question further.

In contrast to Howard Cline's view, I contend that Sahagún revised his account of the Conquest primarily for political reasons. The revised version can be seen as a polemic, stressing the importance of Cortés, the Conquest, and the Franciscan order. At issue for Sahagún was his vision of the Church in New Spain and its mission toward the Indians. Implicitly, he was defending the work of the early Franciscans, arguing for its continuation, and attempting to counter pressure both inside and outside his order to abandon the early mendicant position on the "spiritual conquest." I also argue that Sahagún's decision to revise was not due to change in his own assessment of the Conquest, but that he broke his editorial silence with the presentation of his own view, which was consistent with early Franciscans' conception of Cortés and the Conquest. To understand these arguments, it is necessary to delve into the relevant conflicts of the sixteenth century and their effects on Sahagún.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CONFLICTS

The political struggles of the sixteenth century were intense and multifaceted, products of changing colonial conditions. There were disputes between the Crown and the conquerors, between the regular and secular clergies, among the mendicant orders, and within the Franciscan order itself. For most of his life, Sahagún largely avoided direct participation in these conflicts, but in the late sixteenth century when he was an old man, he was drawn in.

The evolution of the conflicts is closely tied to the general development of New Spain. In the first generation, the conquerors and the early mendicant orders (Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans, and others) established the initial power structure of the colony. Many conquerors became *encomenderos* who were awarded the labor and tribute of particular groups of Indians. The mendicants, as opposed to the secular clergy, were given the task of converting the Indians to Christianity. Thus, initially the conquerors and regular clergy had a virtual monopoly on the Indians. For these Spaniards the early years were a golden age. However, the growth of the colony saw the influx of Spaniards who had not shared in the benefits of the first generation. The later settlers sought to secure their own place in the colony, ultimately curtailing the privileges of the first generation. The Crown moved fairly quickly to restrict the *encomenderos*, undercutting their attempt to establish an independent seigneurial class in the New World. It was somewhat less quick to undermine the powers of the regular clergy; nonetheless, this too came about. Under the rule of Charles V (1516-1556), the mendicants were given virtually free rein with the Indians; however, under Philip II (1556-1598), their powers decreased in favor of the secular clergy.

In New Spain, the conflict between the regular clergy and the secular clergy

was longstanding. Even though there were rivalries in the early sixteenth century among the orders, they were united in their belief that Christianization should remain in their hands and not the secular clergy's. The mendicants also agreed that indoctrination of the Indians should be in the native languages. In their view, Indians should be under the control of the mendicants, remaining separate from Spanish society, which would corrupt and exploit them (Phelan 1970:59-60). The secular clergy, a more integral part of secular society, sought to decrease the power of the regular clergy. The seculars wanted control over the Indians, who, through the tithe, would be the source of their maintenance. In general, the seculars eschewed learning Indian languages, although for most of the sixteenth century, Crown policy mandated preaching in them.¹

Since Christian indoctrination in the native languages was an integral part of the early mendicant program, almost immediately the friars undertook compilation of dictionaries and the composition of other texts to aid the religious in learning Nahuatl, the most important language for Central Mexico. Nahuatl confessional manuals, sermons, and other texts used to convey the Christian message were composed. Friars' knowledge of native religious beliefs was recognized by many as necessary for effective evangelization. Many friars preached to the Indians in the native languages and thereby made much headway in bringing about what appeared to be true Christianization.

By the mid-sixteenth century the mendicants' and conquerors' dominant position was challenged. Their power was curbed by the establishment of civil government and an episcopal hierarchy. This hierarchy challenged the mendicants' role as parish priests of the Indians. The growth in numbers of secular clergy and the precipitous decline of the Indian population made it possible for Indians to be served by secular clerics rather than friars. The Crown's preference for the secular clergy was indicated in 1574, with the Ordenanza de Patronazgo, which expressly limited the work of the regular clergy (Gibson 1966:77).

In the late sixteenth century, the mood changed even within the Franciscan order, and there were intense factional struggles. The conflict should be seen as generational, although previously it has been cast as a creole-peninsular struggle (Cline n.d.; Morales 1973:63-67). The explanation of the conflict on generational grounds fits the evidence concerning the composition of the factions. The factions consisted of pro-Indianist early Franciscans, peninsular in origin, but sharing the experience of the first efforts at conversions; and, on the other side, many later arriving peninsular Franciscans and creoles, born in the colony and more closely linked to secular society. The secular clergy, Franciscan creoles, and later arriving Franciscans, represented the mature colonial viewpoint and did not share the pioneering spirit of the early Franciscans.

The positions of the two factions were phrased in terms of differing perceptions of the role of the Church regarding the Indians. The Indianists favored the establishment of an independent church in New Spain, under the control of the Indianist friars through the authority of an independent vicery. This idea is most visible in the work of Gerónimo de Mendieta, whose millenarian and

apocalyptic vision of the Indian Church in New Spain has been treated in depth by John Ledyd Phelan (1970). Georges Baudot (1974b:178) argues that this same vision prompted Sahagún in his last years to participate actively in Franciscan politics. The anti-Indianists framed their argument against the Indian Church in terms of the failure of the early Franciscans' efforts at evangelization. The anti-Indianists saw idolatry flourishing among the Indians despite the friars' many years of work. This argument was a means by which to oppose the extraordinary social, economic, and institutional role that the early friars had assumed as parish priests to the Indians. The Indianists wanted a continuation of that role.

SAHAGÚN'S ACCOUNTS OF THE CONQUEST

By the mid-sixteenth century, Sahagún was collecting information in Nahuatl about Nahuatl culture, especially that dealing with religion and moral values. Around 1558, the Franciscan provincial, Fray Francisco Toral, ordered Sahagún to "write in the Mexican language all that which may seem useful for the indoctrination, culture, and religious conversion to Christianity among the natives of New Spain, to aid the workers and missionaries toward their indoctrination" (Sahagún 1950-1982:Introductory Volume:53). Sahagún's most important work was the *General History of the Things of New Spain*, twelve books of parallel texts in Spanish and Nahuatl, with illustrations by natives. Not surprisingly, many of the books dealt with native religion. However, several concerned social organization and one treated "earthly things," what used to be called natural history. The final volume, Book XII, was an account of the Conquest from the point of view of the defeated natives. Book XII is the only extended chronicle of historical events in the whole *General History*.

Why did Sahagún originally compile a history of the Conquest? He addresses this question directly both in the *Florentine Codex* and in the 1585 revision. In the earlier version of the Conquest, he avers that his reason was linguistic.

I desired to write [the history] in the Mexican language, not so much to derive certain truths from the very Indians who took part in the Conquest, as to record the language of warfare and the weapons which the natives use in it, in order that the terms and proper modes of expression for speaking on this subject in the Mexican language can be derived therefrom [Sahagún 1950-1982: Introductory Volume:101].

By characterizing the chronicle as a linguistic tool, Sahagún could present material that was potentially controversial. He does note, however, that the natives "knew and gave an account of many things which transpired among them during the war of which those who conquered them were unaware" (Sahagún 1950-1982:Introductory Volume:101).

In a broad sense, the Conquest narrative does fit into the overall purpose of the *General History*. That work was written to help the friars in their efforts to

convert the Indians by providing information on native modes of thought and practice. The conquest of 1519-1521, with its aftermath, was the major political phenomenon of the age, bringing about fundamental changes in the natives' lives. The defeated natives' history of these events would give further insight into their culture, especially since their religion played an important role.

Sahagún doubtless had curiosity about all aspects of the Conquest, for it was a crucial religious and political event for the Spaniards as well. Like his fellow Franciscans, Sahagún interpreted the discovery and conquest of Mexico in religious terms. This is clear in the address to the reader in the 1585 revision (and in the 1564 *Colloquios*), but not in the *Florentine Codex* of 1579. The statement in the 1585 revision that "Many were the miracles which were performed in the conquest of this land" (Sahagún 1585:prologue) is closely echoed in the 1564 *Colloquios* (Sahagún 1949:49-50). Many early mendicants "discouraged the development of an atmosphere in which a host of miracles might flourish" (Phelan 1970:51). A number of Franciscans, including Sahagún, were suspicious of the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. However, the Conquest itself was described by some Franciscans as miraculous. Sahagún's special interest in the Conquest is evident in that he wrote two separate accounts of it.

Sahagún began collecting information on the Conquest early in his career, during a lengthy period of residence (1542-1558) in Tlatelolco (Nicolaou d'Oliver and Cline 1973:187). Not later than 1555, and perhaps as early as 1547 (Nicolaou d'Oliver and Cline 1973:192), he had elicited information from surviving native participants. When Sahagún completed his revised account of the Conquest in 1585, he noted in his address "To the reader" that "this manuscript was written . . . over thirty years ago." In the relevant Spanish text of the *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún said that "this history . . . was written at a time when those who took part in the very Conquest were alive" (Sahagún 1950-1982:Introductory Volume:101). The *Florentine Codex* describes who the informants were, "And those who gave this account [were] principal persons of good judgment, and it is believed they told all the truth" (Sahagún 1950-1982:Introductory Volume:101). In the 1585 revision, Sahagún provides more details on the informants. "Those who helped write it were prominent elders, well versed in all matters, relating not only to idolatry but to government and its offices, who were present in the war when this city [Tlatelolco] was conquered" (Sahagún 1585:"To the reader"). The strong Tlatelolcan bias in the text of the *Florentine Codex* suggests that most of the informants were from there (López Austin 1974b:147-148). A Tlatelolcan bias also exists in the 1585 revision, but it is modified by Spanish and Tlaxcalan perspectives.

Sahagún, preferring both the form and content of the 1585 revision, discusses both aspects in his address "To the reader." Because of its proposed use as a linguistic tool, the revision was written in three columns. The first column was the Nahuatl account from the native informants, "just as unpolished as the elders related it and as it is written among the other books [of the *General History*]." The second was a correction of the first, composed to aid friars

attempting to learn Nahuatl grammar and vocabulary. The third was in Spanish, "based on the revisions in the second column." Sahagún stressed the importance of the changes in the 1585 revision, "Those who have this narrative only in the Mexican language should know that many things are revised in this version, which has three columns on every page." The earlier account in the *Florentine Codex* consisted of the Nahuatl text, a Spanish paraphrase, and a number of native illustrations. The 1585 revision seems to have had no pictorial content, and, unfortunately, Sahagún does not comment on the subject. The omission of the illustrations may not have been a loss in his view.⁵

The accounts differ stylistically. The prose in the 1585 revision is more elegant and literary. According to Howard F. Cline (1969:128) it is "even to the point of imitating classical historians by placing long and solemn discourse on the lips of Cortés." Wigberto Jiménez Moreno (Sahagún 1938:IV:8) believed the Spanish account in the *Florentine Codex* to be "simpler, less worked over, and closer to the Nahuatl text," while in the 1585 revision Sahagún was more concerned with polishing the text "to give it a more literary form."

More important than the differences in form and style between the *Florentine Codex* and the 1585 revision are the divergences in content. On the surface, there is considerable similarity between the two manuscripts: in both, chapters have essentially the same subject matter, often with the same or similar descriptions of events. We can only conclude that Sahagún had a complete draft of the earlier version from which to work. However, unlike the earlier manuscript, where events are narrated from the defeated Indians' point of view, using exclusively native sources, and with virtually no intervention from Sahagún, the 1585 revision can only be described as Sahagún's own interpretation of the Conquest. It includes data from sources other than his Tlaxelotlan informants, a good deal of material from the Tlaxcalan perspective (the Spaniards' most important allies), and information from fellow Franciscans. For example, Sahagún notes that "This we learned from some of the Spaniards who were in this battle. After they took the habit of San Francisco, I, Fr. Bernardino de [S]ahagún, heard this account, here recorded" (Sahagún 1585:chap. 27). The addition of this Spanish focus belies the subtitle of the account of the Conquest "as the Indian soldiers who were present told it."

In the 1585 revision, there are a number of major departures from the earlier version. There is a long prologue that places the Conquest in a Christian context.⁶ In addition, there is a completely new chapter recapitulating the Conquest from the Spaniards' point of view and justifying their actions. However, throughout the manuscript there is a difference in perspective from the earlier version, focusing on the Spaniards' role and, in particular, that of Cortés. In the *Florentine Codex*, the account gives descriptions of collective actions of the Spaniards, while the 1585 revision emphasizes and praises the role of Cortés. The change in focus can be attributed to the first account being written by the defeated Indians, who had no reason to highlight the Spanish

leader's role, and the second account being written by Sahagún, who had particular political ends to achieve in spotlighting Cortés.

Sahagún's emphasis on Cortés is understandable and typical of the early Franciscan interpretation of the conqueror's role. As the first order to arrive in New Spain, invited by Cortés in 1524 (Cortés 1971:334),⁷ the Franciscans were closely associated with him. In a famous letter to Charles V, written in 1555 by Fray Toribio de Benavente or Motolinia, Cortés and his deeds are praised at length, concluding with the following passage.

Through this captain, God opened the door for us to preach his holy gospel, and it was he who caused the Indians to revere the holy sacraments, and respect the ministers of the church. Since he is now deceased, I have gone to this length to defend his life in some measure.⁸

In writing the history of the Franciscan effort in New Spain, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, Gerónimo de Mendieta (1971) stresses the parallels between Cortés and Moses. It was through the Indians' conversion to Christianity that they would be led out of bondage. Cortés had greatly facilitated that, first, by the Conquest, and second, by inviting and welcoming the Franciscans to New Spain in 1524 (Phelan 1970:32-33). Sahagún had precisely the same terms of reference in his identification with Cortés.⁹

In the prologue to the 1585 revision, Sahagún argues that Cortés was an instrument of God's plan to bring Christianity to the Indians.¹⁰ The Conquest was necessary to open the way for the Catholic Church.

For this very great and very important enterprise our Lord God considered it proper that the most valiant Captain, don Hernando Cortés, open the way and demolish the wall with which this heathenness was surrounded and immured. In his presence and by his means our Lord God performed many miracles in the conquest of this land, where the door was opened so that preachers of the Holy Gospel might enter to preach the Catholic Faith to this very miserable people [Sahagún 1585:prologue].

In the 1579 *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún's own opinions are expressed in sections clearly separate from the main text, such as prologues of addresses to the reader (see Dibble's essay, this volume). Interestingly, only on two occasions in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex* does Sahagún make such interjections. The first consists of his remarks "To the reader," discussed above, and the second, to be discussed further below, is a note from the "author" (Sahagún 1979a:12:80v-81). Significantly, this note is a sympathetic treatment of Cortés.

In contrast to the *Florentine Codex*, the 1585 revision of Book XII has numerous remarks within the main narrative by Sahagún: clarifications, judgments, justifications, and speculations. These are not merely stylistic changes, as alluded to above, but a significant departure from the usual form of the *General History*.

Sahagún added materials from Spanish sources. And although the 1585 revision utilizes information gleaned previously from his Indian sources, making the earlier and later accounts roughly parallel, the addition of the Spanish sources dramatically changes the perspective. An example of the use of information from the Spaniards is the following passage. "The courage of don H. Cortés, valiant leader of the conquest of this land, was shown in that he had all the ships unloaded, and then scuttled, to deprive his soldiers all possibility for turning back from this conquest" (Sahagún 1585:chap. 10). In the corresponding place in the *Florentine Codex*, there is a discussion concerning Motecuhzoma and the omens foretelling the Conquest (Sahagún 1979a:12:14v-15). While the *Florentine Codex* has a Tlatelolcan bias, the 1585 revision contains sympathetic references to Cortés's Tlaxcalan allies. Cortés is reported saying, "Tell them [the Tlaxcalans] that all those who are present here are my brothers and all their subjects are my children. All their enemies, are my enemies, and I will wreak vengeance on them" (Sahagún 1585:chap. 11).

Sahagún made a number of important additions to the 1585 revision. He gives a justification for the Spaniards' looting of Motecuhzoma's treasure, a fuller account of the so-called Alvarado massacre, and assigns culpability for Motecuhzoma's death. And most importantly, Sahagún justifies the entire Spanish Conquest. Concerning the looting of the treasure, Sahagún says:

Many times captains permit a lesser damage in order not to incur a greater one. And so, Captain don Hernando Cortés permitted his soldiers to sack the royal houses of Mexico, and the private houses of Motecuhzoma, in order not to bring upon himself the ill will and anger of his soldiers [Sahagún 1585:chap. 18].

A turning point in the Conquest was the massacre of unarmed Indians ordered by Pedro de Alvarado, who had been left in charge when Cortés was away from Tenochtitlan. In addition to the testimony found in the *Florentine Codex*, Sahagún included native materials on the massacre, probably the *Anales de Tlatelolco*, perhaps written as early as 1528 (Berlin 1948; Cline 1969:128). Sahagún judged the Spaniards' actions, saying: "The greatest evil that one can do to another is to take his life, [when he, the victim], is in mortal sin. This evil the Spaniards did to the Mexican Indians" (Sahagún 1585:chap. 20). In a speech attributed to Cortés, Sahagún absolves Alvarado from blame for the massacre and makes the Mexica themselves the culprits.

I [Cortés] found that during my absence you had plotted to kill all those whom I had left behind, both Spaniards and Indians, during this festival. When the captain [Alvarado] and the Spaniards found out about it for certain, they forestalled it by doing what they did, and rightly so [Sahagún 1585:chap. 31].

The speeches of Cortés are among the most elegant prose in the 1585 revision. But more importantly, they are the means by which Sahagún deliberately injects the Spanish viewpoint into the chronicle. This is perhaps the most

profound way in which Sahagún, expressing his own judgments and opinions, revised the earlier account. Only on one occasion in the *Florentine Codex* does Sahagún express his own opinion about Cortés. Typically, it comes as a clearly defined digression from "the author." The entire passage reads:

From the things said above, it clearly appears how much Captain d. Hernando Cortés temporized and pretended with these Mexicans in order not to destroy them totally or finish killing them. Because as is said above, they [the Spaniards] were able many times to finish destroying [the Mexicans] and he did not do so, hoping always that they would surrender, so that they would not be totally destroyed [Sahagún 1979a:12:80v-81].

This short digression in the *Florentine Codex* is not comparable to the lengthy and sympathetic treatment Cortés is accorded in the 1585 revision.

Through another speech by Cortés, Sahagún addresses a crucial aspect of the Conquest: who killed Motecuhzoma? In the earlier version no blame is assigned: it is merely reported that "the Mexicans found Motecuhzoma and the governor of Tlatelolco dead, tossed outside the royal houses" (Sahagún 1979a:12:39v). However, in the 1585 revision Sahagún makes contradictory statements about blame. First, the Spaniards are held responsible. The title for chapter 23 is "Concerning how Motecuhzoma and the lord of Tlatelolco, or Texcoco, were killed and thrown outside the stronghold of the Spaniards, and found dead." More details are given in the main text of the chapter. "The first [thing] that they [the Spaniards] did was to strangle all the nobles whom they held prisoner, and threw them dead outside the fort" (Sahagún 1585:chap. 23). Placing this blame on the Spaniards is more consistent with Indian views on culpability. Most native accounts hold them responsible, while the Spanish hold the opposite view.¹¹ Sahagún seems to be following the native viewpoint in the narrative of events. Significantly, however, he places in the mouth of Cortés a speech flatly stating that the Mexica were to blame.

You also blame us for the death of Motecuhzoma, and this is not true, because before I returned from the coast he went out on the rooftop at the command of don Pedro de Alvarado, to order the Mexicans to stop fighting. Although they [the Spaniards] were shielding and guarding him, not only did you refuse to obey him, but you dishonored him and us, the Spaniards. You threw stones at him in such fashion that you wounded him. He died from the stoning which he received from you [Sahagún 1585:chap. 31].

Which account should we believe? Was Sahagún able to maintain contradictory opinions about the matter? Why was he not content to leave the matter unresolved, as he had in the earlier version? In general, I suggest that the speeches by Cortés should be interpreted as Sahagún's judgment on the subject. However, I also suggest that Sahagún might have initially presented the Indian viewpoint on this (though it had not been done in the earlier version)

precisely in order to refute it via Cortés's speech.

The most important message that these speeches convey is the justification for the Conquest. Early on in the narrative, when Cortés first meets the Mexica, he explains why he had made an alliance with the Tlaxcalans.

[The Tlaxcalans] complained to us that you Mexicans cause them great grievances and great damages and wage wars upon them continuously, so that they do not enjoy peace or safety of their persons, lands, and properties, but instead you always impose great burdens on them. Having heard this, my fellow Spaniards and I, together with them, have come here to your city to learn from them and from you who is to blame for these damages and disturbances, in order to put an end to them, so that you may live in peace, and conduct yourselves as brothers and neighbors [Sahagún 1585:chap. 17].

The peaceful solution was not achieved. In the same speech, which justified the Alvarado massacre and the death of Motecuhzoma, Cortés justified the entire Conquest.

All these things and many others I do not mention, you have done against us like idolatrous and cruel people, devoid of all justice and humanity. Therefore we come to avenge our grievances and overthrow the idolatrous enemies of God, who do not observe the law of neighborliness or humanity with their fellow creatures [Sahagún 1585:chap. 31].

The 1585 revision compared with the *Florentine Codex* places a much greater emphasis on the role of Cortés, which is consistent with the Franciscan identification with the conqueror. In the prologue to the 1585 revision (which has no equivalent in the *Florentine Codex*), Cortés is portrayed as the instrument of God's will. More importantly, in the main text of the revised narrative, there are numerous examples of the emphasis on Cortés. One passage from the *Florentine Codex* simply states, "The Spaniards left Ixtapalapa all prepared for war" (Sahagún 1979a:12:21v). The corresponding passage in the 1585 revision notes that, "Captain don H. Cortés with his Spaniards concluded and decided to enter the city of Mexico with flags flying, armed for war" (Sahagún 1585:chap. 15). When the Spaniards massacred unarmed Indians on the feast of Huitzilopochtli, which led to open hostilities, the *Florentine Codex* merely says, "Concerning how the war between the Mexicans and the Spaniards began in Mexico" (Sahagún 1979a:12:34). In the 1585 revision, however, Sahagún makes a point of affirming that the events were *not* the fault of Cortés in the chapter titled "How hatred and war between the Spaniards and the Mexicans broke out in the absence of Captain, don Hernando Cortés, according to the Spaniards' account" (Sahagún 1585:chap. 21). Finally, the 1585 revision ends by stressing the political role of Cortés, in particular, the linkage between him and the Franciscan order.

Captain and governor don H. Cortés wrote the emperor a letter, in which he requested that preachers of the Catholic faith and Franciscan friars be sent to these parts to preach the law of God to this idolatrous Indian people and convert them to the Catholic faith of the Holy Roman Church. . . . The [friars] in this land, under the auspices of the emperor himself, came before the governor, don Hernando Cortés, in the year 1525 [sic].¹² [signed] Fray Bernardino de Sahagún [Sahagún 1585:chap. 42].

This is a spiritual (and political) note on which to end the 1585 revision. The *Florentine Codex*, on the other hand, concludes on a materialistic note, with the Spaniards' search for the lost treasure of Motecuhzoma (Sahagún 1979a:12:84v-87).

A final difference between the *Florentine Codex* and the 1585 revision is Sahagún's signature to the revised version.¹³ Book XII of the *Florentine Codex* was hurriedly copied and sent to Spain, so quickly done that there was no time to complete the illustrations. Perhaps this can account for the lack of Sahagún's signature. However, Sahagún's signing of the 1585 revision is consistent with his personally taking charge of the narrative.

SAHAGÚN'S FINAL YEARS

The years between the completion of the *Florentine Codex* in 1579 and the revision of 1585 were marked by an intensification of the struggle within the Franciscan order. Creole Franciscans and members of the order who arrived later in the century were at odds with the vision and goals of the early Franciscans. The order was sharply divided and bitter factional warfare was waged.

The struggle relates directly to Sahagún's work and the course it took in the 1580s. We know quite a bit about the course of that work, since he discusses his projects (and the difficulties in realizing them) in digressions in the *Florentine Codex*.¹⁴ As noted previously, even before 1555, Sahagún had begun collecting texts for the history of the Conquest. It is quite likely that Sahagún had sought out official support for his ongoing effort. When Toral (the Franciscan provincial who had authorized Sahagún's activities) resigned from his post, he was replaced in succession by sympathetic provincials, Fray Francisco de Bustamante and Fray Miguel Navarro. However, Fray Alonso de Escalona, the replacement in 1570 for Navarro, was hostile to those supporting the techniques of the early Franciscans. For the next five years, until the appointment of the sympathetic Rodrigo de Sequera, Sahagún's work was under attack by the head of his order (on this whole episode, see Baudot's essay, this volume).

By 1569 Sahagún had completed the Nahuatl version of the *General History*, but the paraphrase to Spanish and the column for the additional linguistic notes were not done, "for lack of aid and help" (Sahagún 1950-1982:Introductory Volume:51). Sahagún's appeal for aid to his religious chapter was not granted,

supposedly for lack of funds. In fact, the decision reflected Escalona's hostility. Sahagún was allowed to copy the manuscripts himself, but since he was over seventy at the time, and had a "trembling of the hand" (Sahagún 1950-1982: Introductory Volume:56), in effect, he could no longer work. In 1570 Sahagún directed appeals to the Council of the Indies and to Pope Pius V for funds. The pope seems to have ignored him. However, Sahagún's appeal to the president of the Council of the Indies, don Juan de Ovando, which was carried by Gerónimo de Mendieta and the outgoing provincial, Navarro, was successful. Escalona was enraged that Sahagún had gone over his head and ordered that Sahagún's manuscripts be dispersed throughout New Spain for a period of about five years (Nicolau d'Olwer and Cline 1973:193; Anderson 1982:36).

Not until 1575, with the appointment of Fray Rodrigo de Sequera as general commissary of the Franciscans, did Sahagún again receive funds for scribes who could complete the *General History* (see Baudot's essay, this volume). Even as two copies of the *General History* were being made in the late 1570s, policy in Spain shifted again. Ovando, the sympathetic president of the Council of the Indies, died in 1575. After his death the council no longer supported the friars' work in native languages. The Holy Office of the Inquisition and the Council of the Indies issued a series of orders forbidding work in those languages. For so long as he was in New Spain, Sequera was able to shield Sahagún from the effects of orders to cease work and have the manuscripts confiscated. The Franciscan Sequera joined with the heads of the Dominican and Augustinian orders in petitioning for a reversal of the policy proscribing works in native languages. They argued that these manuscripts were for use solely by the religious and thus could not lead to the maintenance of idolatry. The Inquisition relented in 1581 (Cline n.d.). Sequera returned to Spain in early 1580, taking with him the second complete copy of the *General History*. As of 1585 Sahagún did not know what had happened to either copy of the *General History*.¹⁵

The final years of Sahagún's life saw him directly embroiled in the power struggle within the Franciscan order (García Icazbalceta 1954:332-333; Baudot 1974b; Anderson 1982f:37-38).¹⁶ In 1584, with the arrival of anti-Indianist Fray Alonso Ponce as commissary of the order, the pro-Indianists mustered their forces to prevent him from assuming office. Sahagún actively participated in the politics of his order, joining in the effort to oust Ponce and briefly assuming the office of commissary general himself in 1586 (Baudot 1974b:166). He also continued to work on native language manuscripts. The final years of Sahagún's life have been characterized as "disappointing" (Nicolau d'Olwer and Cline 1973:188). Nonetheless, the aged Franciscan produced a number of major works, including the 1585 revision of the Conquest narrative.

I suggest that the changes in the 1585 revision are the product of a climate increasingly hostile to the early Franciscans. Sahagún no longer had the luxury of presenting a "pure" version of the Conquest, solely from the natives' reports. The 1585 revision is not, as Sahagún avows, an impersonal narrative to aid the reader in learning Nahuatl. It is designed to persuade the

reader of the importance of the military conquest of New Spain led by Cortés and the contribution of the Franciscan order to the spiritual conquest. Sahagún is implicitly calling for the continuation of the early Franciscans' role in indoctrinating the Indians.

Georges Baudot notes (1974b:184) that the subjects Sahagún continued to study after the *General History* was completed were "narrow and exclusive. He paid attention only to the rescue and reelaboration of research on the most notable and spectacular aspects of the pre-Hispanic religion."¹⁷ These were the *Calendario Mexicano*, *Latino y Castellano* and the *Arte Adivinatoria*, both valuable texts for the continuing Franciscan campaign to identify and eradicate idolatrous native practices. However, Sahagún's continued work on the history of the Conquest is also significant. It is an important part of his campaign to shore up the Indianist position. It is the only nonreligious text that Sahagún is known to have continued working on after the orders confiscating his manuscripts were given.

The 1585 revision is an important part of the Sahaguntine corpus. In it, Sahagún made significant changes in the narrative, encompassing both style and substance. The revision is an important narrative of historical events, but its role in the struggles of the Indianist faction of the Franciscans against those who viewed their mandate and methods as outdated is crucial to understanding why Sahagún wrote it. To reiterate, I argue that Sahagún revised his Conquest narrative for political rather than intellectual reasons.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. I would like to thank the editors of the volume for the many helpful comments on an early draft of this paper. Thanks also go to Peter Body-Bowman for unraveling some of the linguistic peculiarities of the 1585 text. Any errors of fact or interpretation are, of course, my own.

I dedicate this work to my parents, Howard F. Cline (1915-1971) and Mary W. Cline (1917-1987).

END NOTES

¹ The actual title of the Bustamante publication (1840) is quite elaborate. The original manuscript from which the printed text was derived is lost. Luis Leal (1955, 1956) and Cline (1969) discuss the publication history of the 1585 revision. A subsequent development is the discovery in the Boston Public Library of a nineteenth-century copy of the 1585 revision. It varies from the printed Bustamante text; it is also from a lost original manuscript. Before his death in 1971, Howard F. Cline (Sahagún 1985) prepared a translation of the Boston Public Library manuscript. My introduction to his published translation recapitulates its publication history and includes the transcription of the Boston Public Library manuscript, along with notes comparing the Bustamante and Boston Public Library texts, and notes comparing the 1585 revision to the *Florentine Codex*, Book XII.

² All translations are from the Cline (Sahagún 1585) edition, cited by section or chapter number.

³ H.F. Cline assembled considerable data on the Indian scribes, consultants, and aides of Sahagún, including Agustín de la Fuente. In an unpublished manuscript, Cline indicates that de la Fuente was long lived, being born in the early sixteenth century and dying in 1610. "He had been a dramatist, translator, printer, and general corrector of whatever

work was printed in Nahuatl in the city of Mexico. De la Fuente worked with a number of Franciscans. Although Sahagún does not mention him explicitly, de la Fuente is identified by Garibay as one of Sahagún's aides. After service with Sahagún, de la Fuente worked with fray Pedro de Oroz until the latter died in 1596. De la Fuente then worked with fray Juan Bautista. Bautista characterized de la Fuente as 'one of the best and most educated scribes that there has been in this Indian nation.' Vetancurt characterized de la Fuente as 'the most elegant scribe that could be found'. . . . He added that de la Fuente could 'with his pen draw a picture with such skill that it appeared to be printed' (Cline n.d.).

⁴In 1550 Charles V ordered that all Indians *leuán* Castilian and become Hispanicized (*Recopilación de leyes* 1943:II:193 [Lib. VI, tit. I, ley 18]). The regular clergy "obeyed but did not execute" this order (Phelan 1970:87). The policy was reversed by Philip II in 1565. A series of *cédulas* was issued, mandating that religious personnel be competent in the Indian languages. However, periodic promulgation of the same ordinances suggest they were more honored in the breach. See *Recopilación de leyes* (1943), I, 44-45 (Lib. I, tit. VI, ley 29); I, 45 (Lib. I, tit. VI, ley 30); I, 132 (Lib. I, tit. XV, ley 6); I, 204 (Lib. I, tit. XXII, ley 46); I, 206 (Lib. I, tit. XII, ley 56).

⁵The only extant versions of the manuscript are copies, but Sahagún's description of the manuscript never mentions pictorial content.

⁶Sahagún (1949:49-50) also stressed the Christianizing aspect of the Conquest in the *Colloquios* of 1564. My thanks to J. Jorge Klor de Alva for bringing this to my attention.

⁷The Franciscans had, in fact, left for New Spain before Cortés's letter was even written (Ricard 1966:21), but nonetheless, it is important to understand the connection of the order with the conqueror. Cortés actually invited both the Dominicans and the Franciscans (Corrós 1971:334), but the Franciscans arrived first.

⁸This translation is by Lockhart and Ote (1976:246-247). For the original Spanish text see Motolinía (1971:423).

⁹In the *Colloquios* of 1564 Sahagún (1949:49-50) also discusses the role of Cortés.

¹⁰The prologue from the 1585 revision has been included in editions of the earlier version of the *General History* such as those of Acosta Saignes (Sahagún 1946) and Garibay K. (Sahagún 1956) (Cline 1971:241). Such mixing of materials from two distinct manuscripts is unfortunate. The prologue to the 1585 revision is an integral part of the manuscript, setting out the intellectual framework for the second account. It is at odds with the whole tenor of the earlier text.

¹¹Anderson and Dibble (Sahagún 1950-1982:XII:65) discuss differing views on the death of Motecuhzoma.

¹²The invitation was in 1524. Both Bustamante (1840:236) and the Boston Public Library versions of the 1585 revision give 1525. It is difficult to say whether the errors were due to copyists or to Sahagún.

¹³Vetancurt (1971:138-139) claimed to have the original manuscript signed by Sahagún. The copy in the Boston Public Library, as well as the 1840 Bustamante publication, have Sahagún's name as the final words.

¹⁴See, especially, the prologue to Book II, but other material in the *Florentine Codex* also discusses stages of the project (Sahagún 1950-1982:Introductory Volume).

¹⁵The first copy seems to have disappeared. Sequera's silence on the fate of the second copy of the *General History* may have saved it from confiscation or destruction (Baudot 1977:483-484).

¹⁶Baudot's article includes a number of complete transcriptions of the sixteenth-century records concerning this matter.

¹⁷Baudot specifically speaks of the period 1584-1585, but he is discussing the period after the completion of the *General History*. To finish all the work attributed to the year 1585, Sahagún had to have been working on the manuscripts previous to that time.

PART THREE

The Sahaguntine Corpus as Ethnography