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## COMMENTARIES

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### I. COMMENTARY ON “MANY CONQUESTS”

“Conquest” once referred to the historical events described by Prescott, events that were in large part military and confined to the period 1519-21. It is true that Prescott, like others, dipped into the Aztec past at the beginning and sketched the subsequent career of Cortés at the end. But neither Prescott nor others saw this beginning and end as accomplishing more than the sounding out of a narrative. They were necessary in a formal sense for the reader’s understanding, but they were the parts about which Prescott himself had the most serious doubts, and they fell outside the self-contained dramatic entity. I agree with what Professor Phelan says concerning the romantic character of the sources, for they are obviously rich in the elements of romanticism, and equally obviously it was essentially these elements that inspired Prescott.

Consider what a change has come over the term “conquest”. The change began in the Spanish world in the 16th century, in the area of moral-judicial thought, and its rapid development resulted in an official discretion while the lesser conquests were still in progress. Prohibition of the term, and the substitution of euphemisms, made up one phase of the 16th century revision, and they suggest the degree to which a sensitive estate sought to interpret itself in the least controversial light. “Pacification”, a bland word compared with “conquest”, put the emphasis on another aspect, one incidentally that held very little interest for Prescott. To my knowledge the first extension of the conquest concept in a new direction occurred with the phrase “spiritual conquest”, according to which the military was subordinated to the religious, and the missionaries appeared as metaphorical soldiers engaged in Christian campaigns. Much more could be said about the uses of these terms in the 16th and 17th centuries, for they continued a verbal interplay of religion and militarism that is as old as Christianity itself, and they have relevance both to the “real” character of Spanish imperialism and to the very complex problem of its justification.

Professor Phelan’s paper, in its main subdivisions, carries the process of conquest expansion farther than I have seen it carried before, and it is to this feature that my commentary will be partly directed. Variants of conquest make up the successive themes. Demographic conquest, conquest of the conquerors, conquest of the vanquished, ideological conquest, philosophical conquest, spiritual conquest, bureaucratic conquest, “societal” conquest, economic conquest, and architectural conquest are put down here for us to ponder. Old-fashioned military conquest, incidentally, is still present, but it is diffused among other categories, and this fits both with

the subjective tone of the paper, to which Professor Phelan refers and which is one of its major strengths, and with the general trend of modern historical writing.

The demographic conquest is important, but to my mind it lacks the absolutely central position to which Professor Phelan assigns it. It is a "conquest", I suppose, in the sense that a dominant people deliberately as well as involuntarily became the effective "cause" of a sharp population decline, and in this sense it represents perhaps as legitimate a use of the term "conquest" as does any of the others. A methodological conquest, in the application of quantitative techniques, may also be implied. But it is worth questioning, if only to provoke the discussion that we all value, whether or not in fact the central issue of early Mexican colonial history is demographic. One might suspect so from the intensity of recent controversy. But substantive controversy, in this matter, has been limited to a small number of historians, the majority seemingly being willing to await consensus. With regard to numbers, my sympathies are where Professor Phelan's are, and where he says they are. But an interesting feature of the new demographic conclusions is that they can be accommodated within existing understandings of the history, a large part of which remains whether the population was large or small. Is population more "central" than conquest itself? This is perhaps a question without significance.

"Conquest" changes its meaning when one speaks of both the conquest of the conquerors and the conquest of the vanquished. With respect to our knowledge of the Indian, Professor Phelan is surely right that much recent research lies outside the limits of a paper on the 16th and 17th centuries. But much does not, and my own inclination would be to include the important codical and manuscript interpretations of recent years with reference to post-conquest 16th century life by Carrasco, Dibble, Galarza, Leander, and others. Some impressive gains have been made in this area, and the best scholars are meticulous workers deserving our recognition. They rarely write whole books or present bold comprehensive theories, but I wonder if the bold theories may not be receiving, in this paper, an attention that displaces some less "brilliant" but equally substantial contributions. For the record, as a commentator, I should like to add, in various areas of "conquest", names such as Jiménez Moreno, Romero de Terreros, Muriel, De la Torre, Berthe, Malagón, López de Meneses, Zambrand, Durand-Forest, De la Torre Villar, Millares Carlo, and Burrus. Clearly neither the main paper nor the comment can mention every worker in the vineyard, and it may be expected that the discussion will yield further relevant names. But I mention these as examples of persons whose work I admire and think important.

"Spiritual", "societal", "economic", and "architectural" are terms that fit the traditional sense of conquest better than do "ideological" and "philosophical", because they refer, at least in part, to further extensions of the domination of Spaniards over Indians. Ideological and philosophical conquests bear rather upon the historicist interpretation identified near the end of Professor Phelan's paper. With respect to ideological conquest, the meaning is not that Spaniards conquered Indians ideologically, as they did "spiritually" in the spiritual conquest. It is rather that subject

of ideological conquest embraces the clash of Spanish ideas that the real conquest engendered. The equivalent comment concerning "philosophical conquest" cannot however be supported, for "philosophical conquest" relates to problems of discovery, not of conquest, and my impression is that the conquest theme breaks down at this point. With respect to "architectural", the term appears narrow when we consider that other arts were also involved.

Leaving the excellent material of the further sub-headings for discussion, I conclude with an effort to point the discussion in a particular direction. Between the large synthesis and the detailed study, between historicism and quantification, it is of course true that the paper urges further work in all areas, and this is as it should be. But my own feel for the paper's emphasis is that historicism and synthesis receive a certain preference. The impression seems supported by the comments on Iglesia, Soustelle, Chevalier, and others, and by the statement that what our study of the bureaucracy principally needs is "a powerful injection of new theoretical constructs". It is perhaps relevant that one may understand Chevalier's major work not as "Gallic synthesis" but as a far-reaching scholarly inquiry into the subject of *Latifundia* during a defined period. I do not see so clearly as Professor Phelan does the "stimulating theoretical constructs" provided by French—or any other—historians in these studies. In any case, if this interpretation of the paper's emphasis is correct, I would rejoice with the opposite emphasis. My own sense of progress to date in Mexican history and of expectable progress in the future, is that theory still suffers from want of evidence, and that in improving our present position we should stress and bring to light the neglected data of our abundant archives.

## II. COMMENTARY ON "HISTORIOGRAFÍA NOVOHISPANA"

The seminar of Ramón Iglesia, which resulted in the publication *Estudios de historiografía de la Nueva España* in 1945, focussed its attention on post-conquest historians of conquest. Its members, presumably under instructions, were seeking defects in the conquest literature of the mid-sixteenth century and after, and with considerable enthusiasm and self-assurance they found what they sought. These later colonial interpreters of conquest were shown to have been slipshod and biased plagiarists, whose contributions to information on the conquest could be understood as limited at best.

Jorge Manrique's perceptive paper classifies the Iglesia studies as scientific, positivist history, and rightfully so. Partly in their defense I think it worth mentioning that the seminar members deliberately eschewed the perspective that Manrique adopts and develops, that their acknowledged concern was with the writers as historians of conquest, not as interpreters of their own time. Cervantes de Salazar, for example, appears wholly derivative in those portions of his work that deal with conquest, and it was precisely—and I shall add almost exclusively—to these portions that Díaz-Thome, in the interests of the seminar, directed his attention. The

students, in some instances, gleefully overstated their case. But within the limits set for them, their conclusions were more accurate than not.

If we locate the principal value of a piece of historical writing in the circumstance that it informs us of the historian's own time, the effect is to bring historical writing into conformity with all other writing, indeed all other expressions, of the period. It is to bring to light attributes of the work that the writer himself may only half-consciously have intended. It is to identify in historical writing the themes, ideas, feelings, and other qualities of the age that the positivist historian seeks to demote but that no writer can prevent himself from reflecting. Sooner or later, historians do seem to be interpreted in this way—as when the writings of Thucydides are connected with the development of Greek objective science, or when over a period the historical attitudes toward Caesar or toward Napoleon are demonstrated to have matched exactly the periods in which they appeared. Manrique's important achievement is to fit the post-conquest Mexican historians in their intellectual age, and he performs his task so skilfully that we are obliged to revise our understanding not only of the historians but of the age as well, seeing its tensions in a new perspective. The age cast light on the historians, and the historians in turn cast light on the age. By rejecting the misapplied positivist criteria, by turning the "defects" into usable qualities (p. 106), this paper raises us to a new level of understanding.

A commentator too is expected to make a contribution, and a commentator's natural reaction, when a subject is moved wholesale from the area of old *Wissenschaft* to the area of new *Geisteswissenschaft*, might be that the writer has gone too far, that he has protested too much. The charge would be difficult to sustain in the case of the present paper, distinguished as it is by an unusual equanimity of judgment. It might yet be added that even from a positivist point of view the writers examined in the *Iglesia seminar*—I think especially of Muñoz Camargo, Cervantes de Salazar, Durán, and Dorantes de Carranza—are informative sources for the post-conquest sixteenth century. In those portions of their works that deal with events from 1525 on, they are less vulnerable to the standard positivist accusations, and if one reads a little between the lines it becomes evident that the students of the *Iglesia seminar* understood this very well. For this period the historians became eye-witnesses, and they did not copy from one another, or from third parties, at least to the same degree. For this period they meet far more successfully the "classic criteria of scientific and positivist history" (p. 105). To the rehabilitation of their reputation that Manrique bases on non-positivist values might then be added a rehabilitation in old-fashioned scientific terms. To a person like myself, who has sought to collect simple data on the external events, the overt history of happening, in the post-conquest sixteenth century, these writings are informative sources, and they are informative for their explicit content quite apart from their nostalgia, their millenarianism, and the other qualities that this paper so convincingly exposes.