the myth of Ce Acatl Topiltzin, creating thus an effective model of sanctified rulership
that spread throughout Mesoamerica in the Post-Classic era. Paradoxically, this model of
cyclical authority ended up playing a crucial role in the fall of Mexico, when the invading
Spaniards were assimilated to the eschatological destiny of Tollan. Even later on, in the
colonial era, spontaneous men-gods would repeatedly rise to contest the imposition of
Spanish hegemony. Indeed, the author sees in the man-god a social agent of continuing
relevance, able to spontaneously summon the indigenous modes of divine authority to
continually threaten the established social order. While López Austin’s *The Myth of
Quetzalcoatl* is a masterful synthesis of Mesoamerican scholarship, the scope and com-
plexity of its material will prove perhaps too daunting for the casual reader. For all those
truly interested in the intricate enchantments of Mesoamerican history, however, the
book remains indispensable.

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*Texcoco: Prehispanic and Colonial Perspectives.* Edited by JONGSOO LEE and GALEN
Notes. Bibliographies. Index. xii, 276 pp. Cloth, $70.00.

This book brings together the work of 12 scholars on the important central Mexican city-
state (or *altepetl*) of Texcoco. It is well known to historians of pre-Hispanic and colonial
Mexico as one of the three *altepeme* comprising the famed Aztec Triple Alliance.
Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, Texcoco, populated by the Acolhua ethnic
group, joined with Tacubaya (ethnic Tepanec) and Tenochtitlan (ethnic Mexica). The
Mexica eclipsed their partners from the outset and would have continued to do so in the
historical record had it not been for two extraordinary Acolhua elites, don Antonio
Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin (who ruled Texcoco from 1540 to 1545) and don Fernando de
Alva Ixtlilxochitl (ca. 1578–1650). Their contributions to the historical record were many
and offer the most serious bulwark against total Mexica historiographical dominance.
Don Antonio likely commissioned a spate of pictographic manuscripts (Codex Xolotl,
Mapa Quinatzin, Mapa Tlotzin, and the Oztoticpac Lands Map), giving voice to a
Texcoco-centric history; his descendant, Alva Ixtlilxochitl, inherited the trove and used it
to write glorious histories of the family kingdom in Spanish. (The Mexica had their own
competitive bard, don Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc [ca. 1520/30–ca. 1609], but Alva
Ixtlilxochitl’s soaring prose won the Muse’s prize.) In addition, the spectacular 1539
burning at the stake of don Carlos Ometochtzin, a Texcoco noble who rejected Spanish
rule, gave the altepetl its very own apostate or martyr, depending on your view.

The work of the contributing authors falls roughly into three categories, all of them
aligned with trends in current scholarship: rethinking the relationships between Texcoco
and other Valley altepeme, charting the response of Texcocan elites to the Hapsburg
imperium, and redefining the hybrid nature of Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s works. (Not captured
by this schema is Barbara J. Williams and Janice K. Pierce’s excellent synopsis of

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mensuration used in Acolhua maps, revealing once again that Acolhua land survey sciences were far ahead of their time.) A notable chapter in the first group is the one by Jongsoo Lee, who takes up the famed Triple Alliance, whose members have long been understood to have “shared political power as well as tribute,” albeit in uneven measure (p. 70). Instead, he argues that the altepeme of the Valley of Mexico were enmeshed in two kinds of networks, both controlled from Tenochtitlan. There, the Mexica used a tribute network to reward their partners in successful military campaigns with land and allocations of tribute, and employed a network of regional political centers to “facilitat[e] military campaigns, public works, and other imperial activities” (p. 71). This reading demotes Texcoco to one of these centers. Camilla Townsend also takes up micropolitics, to argue that much of the conflict that erupted among elites in the conquest era was the result of pre-Hispanic polygyny. Altepetl leaders sought (or were given) brides who were the sisters of the rulers of other altepeme as a way of cementing alliances, with disastrous results for the next generation: the competing allegiances of their multiethnic sons fed fratricidal hatred that boiled over into civil wars. Lori Diel’s chapter revisits the Mapa Quinatzin to argue that the hierarchy it pictured between Texcoco and “subject” lords was more imagined than realized. Among the second group is Bradley Benton’s chapter on don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin’s savvy in adapting to the new colonial order. Notable in the third group of essays is Amber Brian’s nuanced reading of the relationship of the nativist Alva Ixtlixochitl, who took up the banner of family history, with his brother Bartolomé, who did not, being best known for his translations of Spanish Golden Age plays into Nahuatl. Exposing the complexities of indigenous literary productions, Brian’s essay pairs nicely with Leisa Kauffmann’s analysis of Alva Ixtlixochitl’s careful interweaving of two cultural systems, particularly in his account of his ancestor Nezahualcocoyotl.

But the sum is often not as good as the parts. A firmer editorial hand was called for: frequent citations of the same works made chapter bibliographies repetitive; a host of variant spellings (including of Texcoco) was distracting; and a unified volume bibliography was lacking (and with it the expectation that contributors would stick to a single edition of key sources), as was a map to show frequently mentioned places and a genealogy of all the Texcoco elites discussed. Given that the pictographic manuscripts are the enduring legacy of indigenous intellectuals, it is a pity that those included are poorly reproduced.

This said, taken together the chapters present a strong range of perspectives from across disciplines, from both established and emerging scholars, and do much to bring the history of Texcoco, and the accomplishments of its intellectuals, out from the shadows of Tenochtitlan and into its own light.

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