SELECTED REFERENCES, IN ENGLISH,
ON THE ETHNOLOGY OF THE INDIANS OF
MEXICO, CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

This bibliography provides selected references to the current English language literature on the ethnology of the Indians of Mexico, Central America, and South America. Leads for further research will be found in Section 1. Publications listed are not available from the Smithsonian Institution. Copies may be seen in larger libraries or obtained through interlibrary loan. Publications on the historical ethnology of the Aztecs, Mayas, Incas and others at the time of the European conquest can be found in the Smithsonian bibliography “Selected References on the Archeology of Mesoamerica, Central America, and South America.”

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Section I. Handbooks and Bibliographic Guides

Handbook of Latin American Studies. (Prepared in the Hispanic Foundation in the Library of Congress by a number of scholars.) Volumes 113, Harvard Univ. Press, 1935-1945; vols. 14, Univ. of Florida Press, 1947.) Prepared cooperatively by over 50 leading humanities and social science specialists, this selective bibliography of current publications is a standard research tool. After volume 13, odd numbered volumes deal with the social sciences, including anthropology, archeology, and art; even numbered volumes deal with the humanities. Each section of references within the volume is compiled, annotated and introduced by a specialist in the field.

A 16 volume set covering in detail all aspects of Mesoamerican anthropology, including archeology and physical anthropology. Several volumes deal specifically with ethnohistory:


Divided into three sections, Mexico, Central America, and South America. Contributions to each detail the complex problems of cultural change in modernizing Latin America.

An anthropological reader on rural life in Latin America, the cultural groups, economic and agricultural patterns, social organizations, and changing world view. Extensive bibliography.

Selected readings on contemporary indigenous cultures of South America (excluding the Andean area). Selections organized under headings such as Relationships to Natural Resources; Relationships with the Supernatural; and Reactions to Encroachment From Outside.

Bibliographic guide to South American ethnographic material arranged under tribal names.

Good introduction to Latin American anthropology designed to give a general understanding of the temporal, spatial, and cultural setting of the area. Includes sections on the preColumbian, colonial, and modern urban periods. A good bibliography at the end of each chapter.


Summary of all aspects of South American anthropology, including archeology, with food illustrations and bibliography. Many sections now outofdate.


A description of South American Indian cultures, including hunters and gatherers, theocratic chiefdoms, farmers, pastoralists, and nomads, with an interpretation of how these various cultures developed. Many maps and pictures included.

### Section II: Mexico and Central America


An indepth examination of the demon, h?ik al, as related in the Tzotzil legends and ritual. Comparisons are made between this Tzotzil batdemon, and other similar demons or spooks of Mexico and Central American legends.


those of the technological society have compelled them to synthesize traditional Mayo culture and society with recent economic and sociopolitical conditions in southern Sonora.


Diaz, May N. *Tonalá: Conservatism, Responsibility, Authority in a Mexican Town*. Univ. of California Press, 1970. The cultural traits of a small community of peasants and potters are described. The author’s concern is how the Tonalá community is affected by its proximity to an urban industrialized center, Guadalajara, in west central Mexico, while at the same time it preserves its traditional way of life.


A description of San Pedro Chenalhó, its people, customs and beliefs. Interviews with the author’s primary informant, Manual Arias Sohom, are followed by an analysis of his view of the world.


Deals primarily with the world view and social organization of a Zapotec town of peasant farmers in Oaxaca, Mexico. The socialpsychological analysis describes the interrelationship of the folk beliefs and practices with the underlying world view, which helps the people adjust to a different environment.

Keeler, Clyde E. *Cuna Indian Art, the Culture and Craft of Panama’s San Blas Islanders.* Exposition Press, 1969.

All forms of Cuna art, including body painting, carving, beadwork, children’s art, and weaving are examined in light of their secular or religious importance. Well illustrated with many color plates.


Laughlin, Robert M. *Of Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax: Sundries From Zinacantan.* (Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, no. 25.) Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980.

“The Book is filled with the varieties of human experience and expression as they are seen and felt by two Mayan Indians from Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico...” The first part consists of the two collaborators’ impressions of their first visits to the United States, the second part of both fictional and nonfictional descriptions of Zinacantec life. The book contains the original Tzotzil texts as well as sensitive English translations.


An interesting, wellwritten discussion of Zinacantec tales followed by stories, 173 in all, related by eight male informants and one female informant. English translations are set side by side with the original texts.


A marvelous collection of 260 dreams as told by eleven Zinacantecs in whose culture dreams play a paramount role in predicting the future and representing the true experiences of the individual’s soul. The author’s introduction to Zinacantán dreams is followed by a description of the eleven dreamers and their dreams.


A deeper look at one of the *Five Families* (see below). Each member of the family tells his/her own life story, producing a heart rending account of life in a Mexico City slum.

“Glimpses of daily life in five ordinary Mexican families, on five perfectly ordinary days.” One of several important books by Oscar Lewis contributing to the controversial “culture of poverty” thesis.


A discussion of a Mexican peasant village’s social structure, family life, church, and school, and their interaction with the broader social units of the municipio, nation, and world. Comparisons are made between this study of 19431947 and Robert Redfield’s earlier 1926 Tepoztlán research.


An ethnographic account of several Indian groups of Northern Mexico written by a late 19th century explorer.


Relying primarily on the interpretations of one informant, a shaman-priest, and verbatim texts, the author examines the peyote hunt rituals and the deermaizepeyote symbols to reveal how they give meaning to Huichol life in Mexico.


Pennington, Campbell W. *The Tepehuan of Chihuahua: Their Material Culture*. Books on Demand, 1969.

A study of the material culture of the little known Tepehuan Indians who live in scattered settlements in an in-hospital environment in Mexico. The Tepehuan have maintained their cultural integrity while, at the same time, making full use of significant European introductions.
Pennington, Campbell W. *The Tarahumar of Mexico: Their Environment and Material Culture*. Books on Demand, 1963.

Explores the material culture of the Tarahumar of Chihuahua in northwestern Mexico. Through field data, archival materials, and archeological reports, the author describes how the material culture of these semiagricultural people has developed since the 1600's and how they utilized their environment in the 1950's when the study was done.


Comparative study of four contemporary communities, a tribal village, a peasant village, a town, and a city. Redfield theorizes that the less isolated and more heterogeneous societies are more secular and individualistic while also characterized by greater social disorganization.


A classic study of a Mexican peasant village, noting the traditional folk patterns, and the changes brought on by urban influence.


Intensively explores eight themes in Maya art, among them being royalty, bloodletting, and other aspects of religion. Includes sections on the Maya calendar and hieroglyphics. Well-illustrated with many photographs, and a list of suggested books for further reading.


Study done in the 1960s of deviance and witchcraft in a traditional Mesoamerican village community. The
author demonstrates that deviance is primarily a sociological, not psychological, phenomenon created by social groups.


Spicer, Edward H. *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1933-60*. Textbook Publishers, 2003. The Indians of the greater Southwest (including a large area of northern Mexico) and their response to the encroachment of western civilization provides the theme of this major and detailed work. The author discusses the experience of each major Indian group of this region.


Wilson, Carter. *A Green Tree and a Dry Tree.* Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1995.
*A novel about a native uprising in Chiapas over a century ago which foreshadowed the current indigenous revolution.*


*Reviews the environmental features of Mesoamerica, the development of civilizations, and the cultural changes following the Spanish conquests and colonization, i.e., the growth of haciendas, the decline of Indian communities, and the growth of the mestizo class.*


*An indepth socialcultural study of an indigenous people in Michoacán, Mexico. Work focuses on the cultural and historical background, presentday social structure, community leadership, religious life, outside contacts, self identity, and socioeconomic development.*

**Section III. South America**


*Well written account of the Quechua Indians of Peru.*


*Details the religious, political, and social life of this Amazonian people, and emphasizes the importance of intertribal warfare to their existence.*

*This interesting, well written work briefly discusses the complicated coexistence of Indian tribes in Tinga National Park, followed by the Villas Boas brothers’ account of their attempt to contact the KreenAkoré, a fierce tribe that avoids contact with both Brazilians and other Indians.*


The author’s interpretation of his relationship as a man and anthropologist with the people he studies, the Panare Indians of Venezuelan Guiana, from his fieldwork in 1967-1969.

An examination of the Panare Indians of Venezuelan Guiana, focusing on the collective philosophy of their culture.

Description of Mapuche culture, noting the traditional aspects that have survived contact and conquest, and their adaptations to current economic, social, and political environments.

A comprehensive reader on the indigenous people of South America, with sectional headings such as Subsistence and Ecology, Social Changes, Language, and Religion.


An indepth though very readable examination of one of the betterknown tribes in South America. The author attempts to explain the logical basis of the headhunting practices in economic, social, and religious terms.


A classic, easily read description of the Siriono, a hunting and gathering people of eastern Bolivia. The author details their physical environment, technology, religion, and social and political organization.

Hopper, Janice H., ed. *Indians of Brazil in the 20th Century*. Institute for Cross Cultural Research, 1973. Selected readings on contemporary Brazilian Indian groups, their geographic location, tribal numbers, and current status within the national society.


Margolis, Maxine L. *The Moving Frontier: Social and Economic Change in a Southern Brazilian Community*. (Latin American Monographs: ser. 2, no. 11.) Books on Demand, 1973. Scholarly work on the social and economic change in the southern Brazilian community of Ouro Verde. Topics discussed include the changing agricultural ecology, social class and mobility.
An ethnographic study done in the 1950s and 1960s of a Brazilian society, which was only beginning to establish peaceful relations with the outside world. The Introduction offers insight into the personal experiences of doing fieldwork.

Informal account of anthropological fieldwork among the Sherente and Shavante in Brazil.

Excellent discussion of Amazonian Indian groups from the perspective of cultural ecology, relating social, economic, and religious patterns to the significance of environmental adaptation. Includes a brief look at the modern destruction of the Amazon region.

This older work details social and cultural patterns of over 20 tribal groups of eastern Bolivia and western Mato Grosso. Topics discussed include: tribal division and history, subsistence, religion, transportation, and clothing. Extensive bibliography of older references.

Analysis of the processes of change in the economy and social structure of the Mundurucu of Brazil from early contact in the 1700’s.

Based on their research in the 1950’s, the authors examine the importance of women in the Mundurucu Indian culture of Brazil, emphasizing their role in social change.


A study of the use of narcotics among the Tukano Indians and the drugs’ significance in shamanistic rituals, native beliefs, and art forms. Includes a glossary and an extensive bibliography.

The author and his Desana informant examine the physical environs, cultural patterns, and related cosmologies of this lowland group. Topics discussed include creation myths and man’s relations with the supernatural and natural worlds.


Following a short discussion of the nine tribes examined, the author provides comments on the daily life of the Indians as shown in the 129 superb pictures.


An easily read account of the Sharanahua Indians of the Peruvian Amazon region. The author discusses their traditional life and environment as well as the changes they face as Peruvian settlers move into their lowlands on the Purus River.

A summary reader on the Amazon region, its economic history, geography, Indian and nonIndian residents, ecology, and the effects of change and development.

A brief overview of a Brazilian society slowly merging into Brazilian rural life with over 300 years of contact with outside cultures. The social, political, economic, and religious life are discussed.


A discussion of the Quichua Indians’ versatile adaptations to the national policies of economic development and social integration, allowing them to maintain a great degree of their ethnicity. A glossary and good bibliography included.


Description of four contemporary societies (Yanomama, Warao, Makiritare, and Goajiro) which represent four types of adaptation: hunting, fishing, horticulture, and cattle herding in Venezuela.
