

∞ INTER-AMERICAN NOTES ∞

OBITUARY

James Lockhart (1933–2014)

James Lockhart was arguably the most influential historian of Colonial Latin America of his generation. He died in California on January 17, surrounded by family members, at the age of 80. He is already, and will continue to be, enormously missed by his colleagues and many former students.

Jim was born in Huntington, West Virginia, where his parents were high school teachers. Latin was his favorite subject in school, and early on he showed a rare aptitude for language learning, one that would profoundly affect his career and those who would come to work with him. Even before he had finished his BA at West Virginia State, he joined the Army Signal Corps, who sent him to learn German, and then to Germany itself. It was his first immersion in another culture, as he recalled it, and he loved it—“even going German to a point.”

As a translator for the Army, handling such documents as letters crossing the Iron Curtain, his work broadly anticipated some of his later volumes of translated documents, all of them seminal examples of their genre—*Letters and People of the Spanish Indies* (1976), *Beyond the Codices* (1976), *The Art of Nahuatl Speech* (1987), *We People Here* (1993), and others. Back in the States, Jim completed his BA with an English major and German minor, contemplated whether to stay in German studies or take up his pen as a novelist, and ended up enrolling in the graduate program in comparative literature at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. At the time he was newly married to Mary Ann, a Wisconsin native; she survives him. He “became dissatisfied almost immediately,” finding the jargon of the discipline to be “gobbledygook,” as he famously put it later. What Jim wanted was a way to study “the truth about what actually happens, surface event by surface event ... to try to make sense of what happens, to see patterns in it.” He found that way through history, and eventually the study of early Peru, with John Phelan as his doctoral mentor.

Because one of Jim’s many eventual contributions to the field was his “three-stage theory” of culture contact, I cannot resist giving his career as a historian a three-stage summary. The first stage was his work on Peru, resulting in a dissertation and degree from Wisconsin in 1967, followed by two groundbreaking works of social history—

Spanish Peru, 1532–1560 (1968) and *The Men of Cajamarca* (1972). Here was history rooted deeply in mundane, notarial documents—Jim developed paleographic skills in the 1960s that remain unparalleled. He was concerned far less with institutions and numbers than with people, and his work was informed by a particular “textual sensitivity” (as he called it), a close attention to individuals and the terminology they used.

That impulse inspired the transition to stage two of his career: he wanted to study indigenous people in the ways that he had studied Spanish and Afro-Peruvians, concluding that he therefore needed “sources created by the people themselves, in their own language, revealing their outlook, their rhetoric, their genres of expression, the intimacies of their lives, above all their categories.” In these phrases (written later) were the seeds of the New Philology. Founded by Jim and his collaborators in the 1970s, then developed by him, his students, and other ethnohistorians over the next few decades, New Philology would emerge as the last half-century’s most significant and influential turn or school of study within the field of Colonial Latin American History. Because the sources that Jim needed were found among the Nahuas of central Mexico, he became a Mexicanist—and then one of the leading scholars in the world of the Nahuatl language and colonial Mexican history. The culmination of this stage of his career was the outstanding monograph *The Nahuas after the Conquest* (1992). It was a magnum opus in every sense, hefty and fine-grained, yet held aloft by an overarching understanding of cultural persistence and adaptation that forever changed how we see the indigenous experience in Spanish America.

During the long second stage of his career, Jim taught at UCLA, where he was a tenure-line faculty member from 1972 to 1995. He advised several generations of doctoral students at UCLA; dozens of them and their own graduate students (Jim’s many grandstudents) now populate History and other departments across the country. He even continued to mentor students and scholars throughout the third stage of his career. Despite retiring in 1995 and moving to a relatively remote Californian mountain cabin with Mary Ann, Jim continued to dig deeper into Nahuatl and Nahua history, producing a seemingly endless series of essays and collaborative editions of primary sources.

In his final months he was trying to complete several more of these, including a Spanish edition of his book *Nahuatl as Written*, a project that meant much to him. His passion for his work never faded, nor did the pleasure he took in studying with others. The weekly Nahuatl sessions he had hosted at his dining room table in Santa Monica for many years were succeeded by occasional sessions at the cabin, supplemented by lengthy correspondences by letter and email, and a tireless use of the Internet to develop collaborative projects.

For those of us who seldom saw him, it was comforting to think of Jim up in the mountains, not just continuing the work that he loved, but also enjoying hiking with Mary Ann in the spectacular countryside, honing his impressive skills as a woodworker (he built his own furniture), and playing the Renaissance music he loved on the seemingly unlimited variety of period instruments with which he was familiar.

A couple of months before Jim passed away, I set out to interview him for *The Americas*. We never got beyond preliminary emails. I had hoped to visit him at the cabin in Pine Mountain, but he told me that his health had become poor and that we needed to do the interview by email as soon as possible. He suggested we use as our launch pad a talk he gave at Emory in 1998, published the following year as the closing chapter to his essay collection *Of Things of the Indies* (from which I have quoted above). In what proved to be his final email to me, he implied he was not well enough to receive visitors (“really quite frail looking”). He then made some flattering remarks about a Mexican scholar, some less flattering remarks about a British scholar, and ended: “Well, if I’m up to gossip I must be feeling reasonably well, right? ‘Til next time.”

Some years ago, during a visit to the cabin, I was looking at the set of books that had been custom-bound for Jim in Mexico decades earlier. Among them was his own copy of *Men of Cajamarca*. Suddenly, in a fit of affection toward a former student—the kind of fit to which he was regularly prone—he gave it to me. He wrote an inscription, noting that the volume was to be mine “either indefinitely or for good.” That was classic Jim: precise, generous, reluctant to part with a treasure but keen for that same reason to do so. Jim could be exacting and contrary; if he could read this obituary, he would cover it in edits and corrections. But that was because, in the end, he always cared. Jim had a big heart and an extraordinary mind. He noticed, he took the trouble, and he cared. Our field is noticeably less full without him in it. So is the world.

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MATTHEW RESTALL

BOOKS IN BRIEF

The editorial office has received a number of edited volumes of articles and other general texts that will be of interest to our readership. These works tend to be less suitable for unified reviews than monographs, and thus a considerable backlog has developed. To introduce these volumes, we occasionally list in this section the publication information and tables of contents entries for those we have received. The volumes selected for this issue provide an overview of recent work in Music and Popular Culture and Literary Studies.

Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre. By Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. Pp. viii, 302. References. Index. \$89.95 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Introduction

Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste and Pablo Vila

Cumbia Music in Colombia: Origins, Transformations, and Evolution of a Coastal Music Genre

Leonardo D’Amico