

The Portrayal of Indigenous Women in the Chronicles of Bartolomé de Las Casas and Bernal Díaz del Castillo

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Image by Teresa Finney from the HairPin

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Research Questions

What is the role of indigenous women during the colonization of the Americas as portrayed in *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* and *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*?

How does the treatment of women compare in these two works?

Purpose of the Study

To better understand the role that indigenous women played during colonization, as well as compare the way in which Las Casas and Díaz del Castillo portrayed the role of indigenous women in their chronicles



Anacaona: poeme dramatique, en vers, en trois actes (1941) de F. Burr-Reynaud y Dominique Hippolyte.

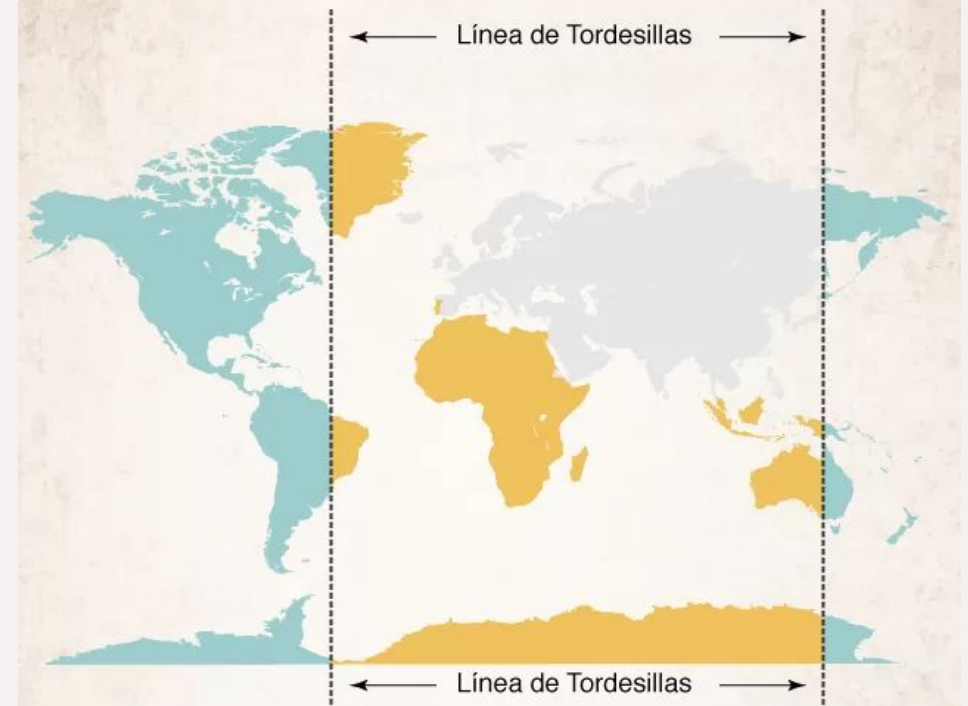
Historical Context

- The Era of Exploration
- Alexandrine Bulls (1493)
- Catholic Royals
- Treaty of Tordesillas

Mapa del mundo tras el Tratado de Tordesillas

Cómo los dos imperios se repartieron el territorio en 1494.

■ España ■ Portugal



Fuente: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal

BBC

Image by Cecilia Tombesi from BBC

Literary Analysis

The Chronicle and Its Function

- Literary genre
- Hybrid - literature and journalism
- Real-time narration
- chronicles of the Indies
- European male point of view

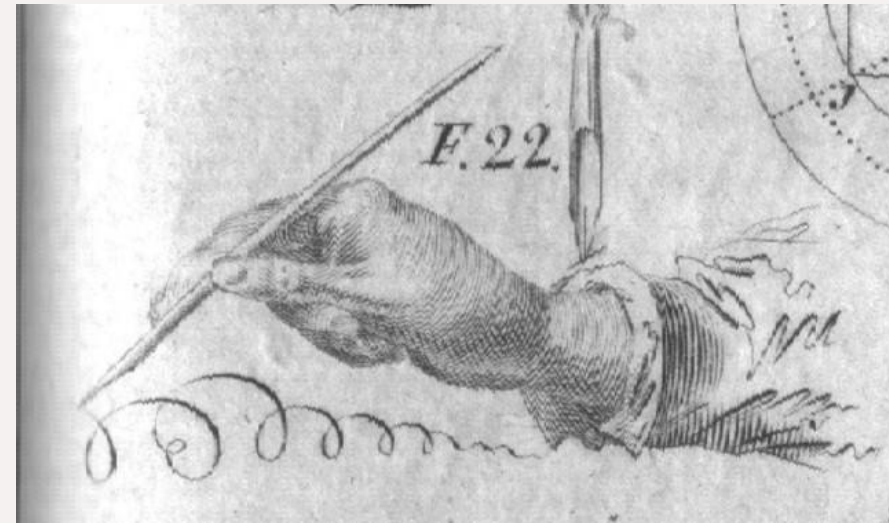


Image by Sonia Medina of timetoast

Literary Analysis

Role of the Indigenous Woman

- Defined by those who have documented her throughout chronicles in history
- Defined by the tasks she fulfilled: slave, soldier, translator, and lover (Karam and Moore)
- Although she is omitted from historical chronicles, we have examples of powerful women



Image by HuffPost México from Twitter

Literary Analysis

The Treatment of the Indigenous Woman

- Has suffered psychologically and physically
- Represents the promise of survival, prosperity and success (Murphree)
- “The women experienced the greatest loss” (Abrahamson 67, our translation).

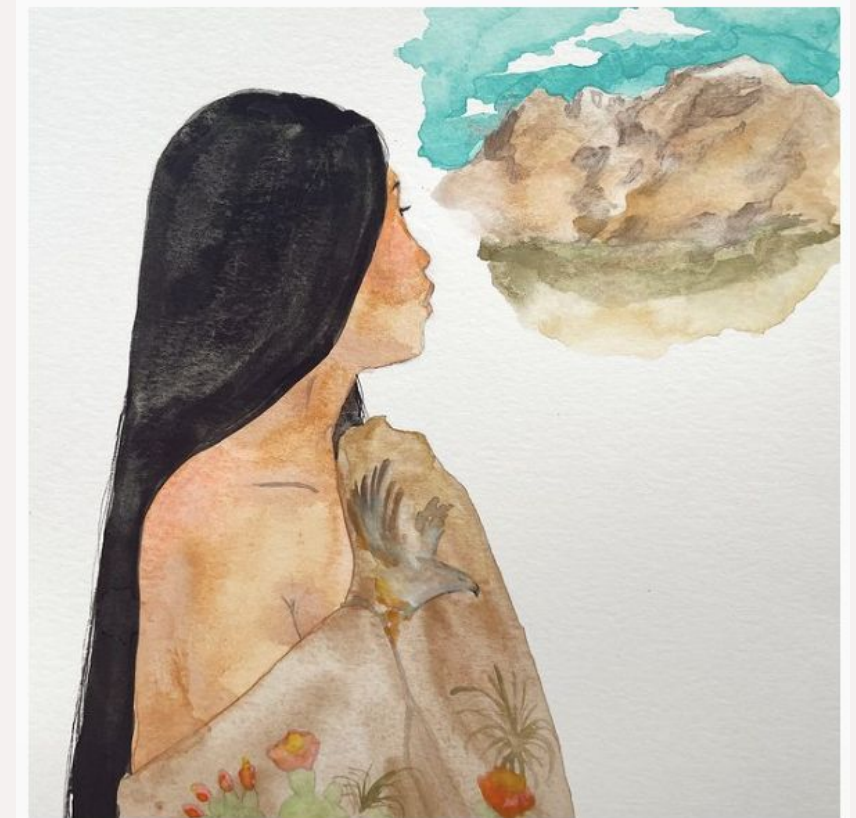


Image by alymcknight from Instagram

Methodology

- *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* by Bartolomé de Las Casas

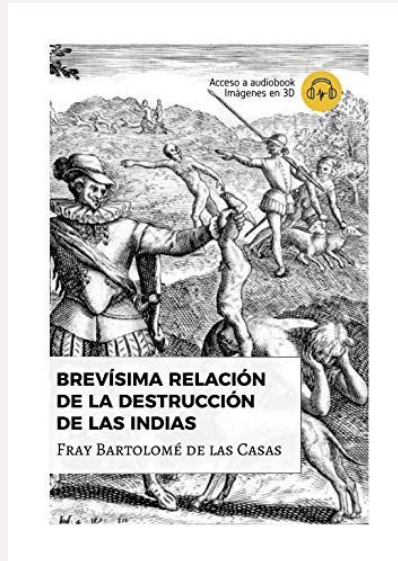


Image from Amazon

Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España by Bernal Díaz del Castillo



Image from Wikipedia

Analysis- Purpose of the Chronicle of Bartolomé de Las Casas

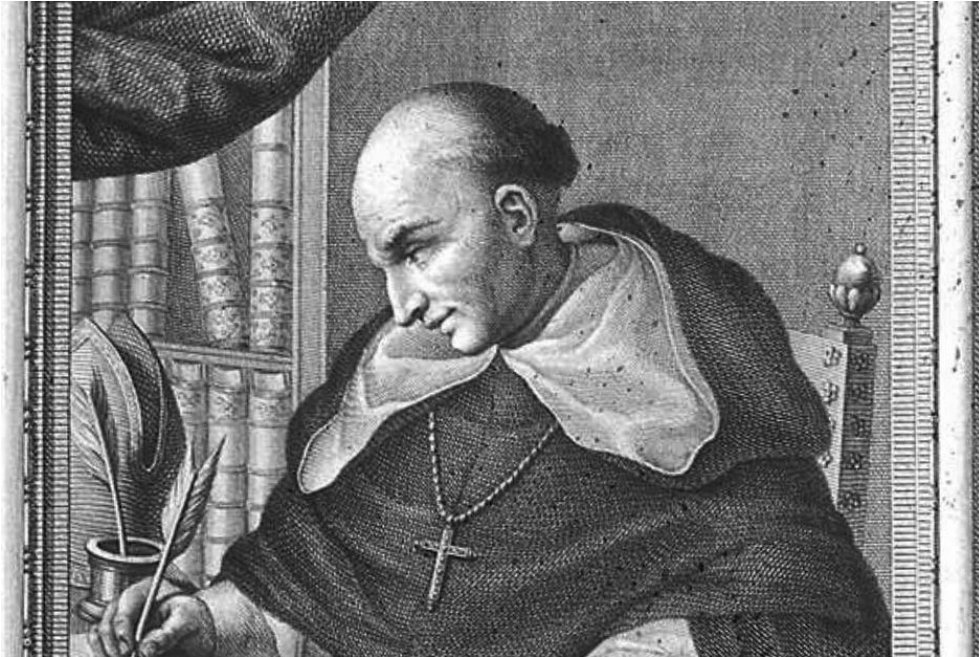


Image by Real Academia de la Historia

- *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*
- Published chronicle in 1552
- Intent to persuade Felipe II to react in response to the mistreatment and abuse of the indigenous population
- Included all parts of the Indies from the years 1501-1542

“

“They have killed and depopulated everything without mercy and fear of God that if the King does not hinder their infernal works, there will be no man left alive” (Las Casas 89, our translation).

“Lo hayan todo muerto y despoblado tan sin piedad y temor de Dios y del Rey que digan que si en breve Su Majestad no estorba aquellas infernales obras no quedará hombre vivo ninguno” (Las Casas 89).

Las Casas and the Indigenous Woman

- Las Casas mentions two caciques who were hanged and a reference to the “sick woman” (Las Casas 53)
- The roles these women played during the events of the conquest demonstrate the strength and respect owed to them
- Emphasizes the generalization of indigenous women, which are represented as peaceful, humble and meek, but they were lost in oppression, death, and destruction

Analysis

La historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España by Bernal Díaz del Castillo

- Author
 - Accompanying soldier to Hernán Cortés during the conquest of Mexico (1519)
- Purpose of Chronicle
 - Acknowledgement and reward for his participation



Image from fineartamerica

Analysis

La historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España

by Bernal Díaz del Castillo

- Portrayal of the indigenous woman
 - Interpreter
 - Medium of alliances
 - Domestic laborer
 - Slave



Image by Ramón Canto at La Salle University Digital Commons

“

. . . stating how doña Marina, being a woman of this earth, made such a viril effort, that although hearing daily of how we were to be killed and our flesh eaten seasoned with pepper, and having witnessed our close demise in past battles, and our present state of injury and ache, never did we see weakness in her, but an effort greater than that of a woman.

. . . digamos como doña Marina, con ser mujer de la tierra, qué esfuerzo tan varonil tenía, que con oír cada día que nos habían de matar y comer nuestras carnes con ají, y habernos visto cercados en las batallas pasadas, y que ahora todos estábamos heridos y dolientes, jamás vimos flaqueza en ella, sino muy mayor esfuerzo que de mujer (Del Castillo 91).

Conclusion

The role of the indigenous woman during the colonization of the Americas is portrayed in both chronicles by the following:

- The indigenous woman is defined by the positions and tasks she completed such as a domestic laborer, translator, and as a slave.
 - Las Casas portrayed the indigenous woman as multifaceted.
 - Díaz del Castillo portrayed her as essential in the conquest.

Conclusion Cont'd

The treatment of women differs in both chronicles:

- Las Casas emphasizes the horrors of colonization the indigenous women suffered such as being burned alive and psychological damage.
- Díaz del Castillo states that her treatment depends on whether she has a positive position like a translator or if she is captured during war, then she is mistreated

Limitations & Future Investigations

- Limitations
 - Masculine Perspective
 - Absence of Indigenous Perspective
 - Lack of sufficient representation in prior studies
- Future investigations
 - Advances in female inclusivity within the catholic church
 - Role of indigenous women within their society during the time of colonization

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Image by Admin from Alternare

Questions?

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