

Special Commentary

A Reevaluation of the Authenticity of Fray Diego de Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*

Matthew Restall, *Pennsylvania State University*

John F. Chuchiak IV, *Southwest Missouri State University*

Abstract. This article analyzes the appearance and content of the surviving archival manuscript of the *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, ascribed to Fray Diego de Landa (1524–79), the most prominent of the first generation of Franciscan friars in the Spanish colony of Yucatán. This analysis is placed in the context of the way in which published editions of the work have been treated and used since the manuscript's rediscovery in the 1860s. The authors argue that such treatment has been based on a misconception of the nature of the *Relación*, suggesting that this important manuscript be viewed very differently by scholars.

Between being written in a Spanish monastery and being discovered in a Madrid archive, Fray Diego de Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* apparently gathered dust for three centuries.¹ Since its discovery and first publication—a partial French edition of 1864—the *Relación* or “Account of the things of Yucatán” has become one of the most widely read and oft-cited pieces of literature to come out of colonial Latin America, second only, perhaps, to the Florentine Codex. Landa's text has become a standard reference for students of Franciscan history, of the history of religious conversion, of colonial Mexican history, of the history of Yucatán, and above all of Maya history; the *Relación* is so ubiquitous a reference for Mayanists as to have virtually a biblical status.

The purpose of this article is to give all those scholars pause for thought. For Landa's text is not what it has commonly been taken to be. Indeed, the Franciscan friar never wrote a book called *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*; put another way, the *Relación* as it is known and used today was not written by Landa.

A Brief History of Landa

A native of the small Spanish town of Cifuentes, the young Fray Diego de Landa first landed in the newly founded colonial province of Yucatán full of missionary zeal in the company of Fray Luis de Villalpando. The year was 1549, just seven years after the founding of the colonial capital of Mérida. The conquistador-settlers controlled but a corner of the peninsula and still numbered in the hundreds. Fewer still were Franciscan friars; Landa had little more than a dozen colleagues to accompany him in his proselytizing endeavors among a native people who would prove to be fiercely recalcitrant. By all accounts, Landa was one of the most driven and energetic of the Franciscans, devoting himself for over a decade to the creation of a Yucatec church in the form of a network of convents, village churches, and converted Maya parishioners.² By 1561 he had become head of the order in the province.

The following year, however, Landa's career took a less felicitous turn—as did the Maya experience of Franciscan missionary methods. Frustrated and angered by evidence of “idolatrous” activities in the region of Maní, where the dominant dynasty of the Xiu had more or less collaborated in the imposition of colonial rule, Landa instituted a violent campaign of extirpation. Within a few months as many as four thousand Maya men and women had been questioned under torture, hundreds had died at the hands of their interrogators, dozens had committed suicide, hundreds ritually and publicly punished and humiliated, all as the campaign spread menacingly across the colony. Then, to the relief of Mayas and Spanish settlers alike, Yucatán's first bishop (Fray Francisco de Toral) finally reached the colony and the campaign was halted (Scholes and Roys 1938; Scholes and Adams 1938; González Cicero 1978; Clendinnen 1987: 57–102; Tedlock 1993; Timmer 1997; Restall 1998: 14–15, 33, 151–68).

By 1563 Landa was back in Spain, under a cloud of accusations of improper action and eager to defend himself. The *Relación*, which according to a passage in the text itself was penned in 1566, has been viewed by some scholars as an important part of that defense. Others have seen it as an act of contrition and restitution for the wrongs done to the Mayas in the summer of 1562. Another suggestion is that Landa wrote the book as “part and product of his recruiting campaign” to attract more Franciscan volunteers to Yucatán, on the assumption that he would be vindicated and allowed to return (Blom 1936: 110; Gates 1937: iii–iv; Pérez Martínez 1938: 34–36; Clendinnen 1987: 108–9, 116–7; Restall 1998: 146; Coe 1999: 101). These proposals as to motive all have merit and in addition are mutually compatible, but—as we shall argue below—they are complicated by the fact that the *Relación* is not what most scholars have taken it to be.

If Landa did assume that he would be vindicated, he was right, for in 1573 he returned to Yucatán as its second bishop, continuing his efforts to strengthen the church with little compromise until his death in 1579. The Spanish colony in the peninsula would outlive Landa by almost two and a half centuries, while to this day the Roman Catholic Church, still based in the cathedral in Mérida where Landa worked, is arguably as significant an institution in Yucatán as it ever was. Yet Landa remains better known—certainly more infamous—than any of the bishops who have succeeded him. His legacy is complex, contradictory, and controversial and is unlikely to become any less so in the near future.

A Brief History of Landa's *Relación*

Central to Landa's legacy are his writings. This is true, at least, for the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, as his work appears to have been lost or ignored in the intervening years. When Landa returned to Yucatán in 1573 he either brought with him a copy of what he had written in Spain in the 1560s or rewrote that material and added more to it during the 1570s. Our suspicion is that when he died in 1579 he left in Mérida's Franciscan convent a vast manuscript containing much of what he had written over the previous three decades.³ References to this *recopilación* begin right after Landa's death and continue for about a century.

The earliest example is found in the response from the *encomendero* (holder of a grant of native communities) of the villages of Tabi and Chuhuhub to the great questionnaires sent out from Madrid in the 1570s, usually referred to as the *relaciones geográficas*. Dated January 1581, this report cites four sources for its historical and geographical information: the 1576 cosmography of Francisco Dominguez (about whom we shall speculate further below); a *relación* by the Franciscan friar Gaspar de Najera, a work supposedly lost but possibly in Spain; the assistance of Gaspar Antonio Chi, a Maya nobleman who enjoyed a long career as a prominent notary, interpreter, assistant to the first bishops, and political figure until his death around 1610; and a "*recopilación* which the most reverend don Diego de Landa, who was bishop of these provinces, made of this land."⁴

This work is mentioned, and sometimes clearly used as a source, by Yucatán's Franciscan historians, or chroniclers, during the succeeding century. For example, Fray Bernardo de Lizana, writing in 1633, drew information from Landa on Maya religion and the spiritual conquest, also mentioning that many Franciscans and others had written about Landa, his life, and his written works (Lizana 1893 [1633]: 169). By 1694, however, Fray Francisco de Ayeta, who might be expected to mention the great *recopilación* as did his predecessors, cites only Landa's since lost *Arte y gramá-*

tica. In the final decades of the century the larger work was presumably either lost or taken to Spain. If the latter was the case, it was very possibly Fray Diego López de Cogolludo who took it. Cogolludo penned most of his massive *Historia de Yucatán* (later published as *Los tres siglos de dominación española in Yucatán*) in the peninsula itself, beginning in the 1650s, and then finished it in Madrid, where it was published in 1688. He appears to draw from Landa either directly or indirectly (through Fray Bernardo de Lizana, for example), both from passages recognizable to us as they ended up in what we know as Landa's *Relación*, and from what was very likely the recopilación cited by others.⁵ Whether Cogolludo made copies of portions of the recopilación before he left Yucatán, or whether he simply transported the entire work from Mérida to Madrid, he may have been—according to the written evidence currently available—the last person to use Landa's putative magnum opus. An additional piece of the puzzle from the late seventeenth century is the fact that part of the surviving manuscript of the *Relación* is written in handwriting of the period—the earliest hand in the manuscript, in fact—suggesting that part of the *Relación* was probably created at this time, and possibly a complete early version of it was compiled then.

Whether or not the writings left by Landa upon his death in Mérida were removed to Spain a century later, there remained in Madrid all along a copy of Landa's work or a separate manuscript of his. This is clear from the fact that several authors who never set foot in Yucatán consulted Landa's work in the decades after his death. One was Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1726–30), whose *Historia general* was first published in Madrid in 1601–15 and who used writings left behind in Spain in 1571 by Landa. Another was Fray Antonio de Daza, whose *Cronica general de nuestro padre San Francisco y su apostolica Orden* was first published in Valladolid, Spain, in 1611. Daza consulted, at first- or secondhand, Landa's written accounts of his own activities—a smattering of which survive in the *Relación*—and he cites Landa as an exemplary Franciscan in the New World.

To summarize the early colonial evidence, therefore: after his death in 1579, Landa left copies of his writings both in Spain and in Mérida, Yucatán; the largest version of his work was very possibly a great recopilación, kept in Mérida's Franciscan convent until the late seventeenth century, when it was either lost or taken to Spain; the *Relación* we know was not one of these surviving works but was compiled from an unknown combination or selection of them in Spain, at the very earliest in some early form in the later seventeenth century.

Meanwhile, almost two centuries passed in which no direct references were made in surviving published works to the original writings of Landa.

Table 1. Pieces of the Puzzle, Part 1: Identifying the Manuscript Segments That Constitute Landa's *Relación*

Hand	Folios in Original Ms.	Conventional Date of "Chapters"	Hand
1	18-45	XXIII-XLI	Seventeenth century
	1-17	I-XXIII	
	46-50	XLI-XLII	
	59-67	XLVIII-LII	
1a	23, 24 (marginalia)		
1b	34-44 (calendrical inserts)		
1c	4, 5 (textual inserts)		
1d	47, 49 (drawings)		
1e	67-68 (maps)		
2	50-59	XLIII-XLVIII	Late seventeenth/ eighteenth century
2a	56 (paragraph headings)		

His manuscripts were not entirely ignored, however, as during this time the *Relación* as we know it was compiled (the evidence of this process from within the manuscript itself shall be discussed later in this article). The point to be emphasized here is that the image presented by Inga Clendinnen of the Franciscan sitting down to write his book in 1566 is misleading.⁶ Landa did not write the *Relación* as we know it in 1566 and leave it on the shelf in Madrid until its discovery three centuries later by the eccentric French antiquarian Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg (1864).⁷ What Brasseur de Bourbourg found in Madrid's Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia in 1861 was a manuscript written by different hands at different times and put together between the late seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries (see Tables 1 and 2 and the discussion of "hands" below).

Brasseur de Bourbourg immediately saw the value of the manuscript and published part of it for the very first time in a French edition of 1864. Yet although he recognized the different hands on the manuscript, he assumed that these were simply those of different copyists working from a more or less identical original, single, coherent work written by Landa (Tozzer 1941: vii).

Brasseur de Bourbourg's assumptions were destined to become part of the *Relación* itself. At first, the reaction of the scholarly world to the 1864 French edition of part of the manuscript was slow, as the disciplines

Table 2. Pieces of the Puzzle, Part 2: Sequencing the Manuscript Segments That Constitute Landa's *Relación*

Bound Sequence of Folios in Original Ms.	Sequence of Folios in Brasseur Edition	Sequence of Folios in Tozzer and Conventional "Chapter" Editions (Gates, Garibay, etc.)
18-45, 1-17, 46-68	1-49, 58, 63	1-68

and fields that would come to embrace Landa's work were still in their infancy. In 1884 the first Spanish edition appeared, edited by Juan de Dios de Rada y Delgado, but it was influenced by Brasseur de Bourbourg's edition and lacked any notations. Its flaws were repeated in another Spanish edition included in a multivolume presentation of primary sources (CDI 1900). Landa's *Relación* may have been considered important enough to include in the 1900 collection, but it was effectively lost among the hundreds of other sources contained therein.

In fact, it was not until well into the next century, over fifty years after Brasseur de Bourbourg's discovery, that Landa's *Relación* saw genuine and sustained scholarly interest and an accompanying spate of editions in various languages. Yet still Brasseur de Bourbourg's legacy persisted. Another French version was published in 1928-9, but as all four of the earliest editions included only part of the manuscript unearthed by Brasseur de Bourbourg, the full body of that manuscript and its length remained unknown and unavailable. Furthermore, he had organized the text into chapters, whose titles he had created and which would be repeated in almost every future edition as though they were Landa's own. As a result the historiographical foundations were laid for an ambiguous grasp among interested scholars of the true nature of the Real Academia manuscript.

The situation was only partially rectified in the years 1937-1941, the most concentrated period of interest in Landa's work ever (matched perhaps by early-seventeenth-century attention and renewed interest in the mid-1970s). In 1937 came not only the first English edition of the *Relación* but also the first edition of the full Real Academia manuscript—edited by William Gates (1937: xiv), who offered virtually no notes and little commentary, remarking in passing that "the original manuscript of Landa's Relation has long disappeared . . . [and] must have been materially longer. The copy we have is a shortened transcript." Although this edition was published in limited numbers by Gates's own press in Baltimore, it was reprinted in 1978 by Dover, who have kept it in print ever since; it is today the only English version in print and is probably the single most widely

read version of Landa's work. Thus Gates's assumption of the textual integrity of the *Relación*, and his use and extension of Brasseur de Bourbourg's chapters and division of the work into two "parts," is more significant than Gates could have imagined. The following year (1938) saw two Spanish editions, the first by José E. Rosado Escalante and Favila Ontiveros (the editors) and Alfredo Barrera Vásquez (author of the introduction), and the second by Hector Pérez Martínez. All these editors, also following Brasseur de Bourbourg, observed that the surviving manuscript was incomplete, but they otherwise accepted it as a single work produced by Landa in 1566.

This run of Landa publications climaxed in 1941 with Alfred Tozzer's edition, the first and only truly scholarly presentation of the manuscript, with footnotes greatly outnumbering in words the translated text itself. Tozzer removed Brasseur de Bourbourg's chapter headings and commented in his brief introduction on the nature of the Real Academia manuscript, mentioning some of the irregular features further discussed in this article below and describing the efforts by France Scholes to find in Spain "the original or another version" of the *Relación*. However, Tozzer never elaborated upon the implications of the nature of the manuscript, as though its features were a curiosity that did not undermine its integrity—the latter reinforced by his presentation of a single, unbroken translated text. A few further comments on the manuscript's irregularities are buried in the voluminous footnotes.

Recently the scholarly utility of Tozzer's translation has been called into question. His declared method certainly seems problematic. In short, he used a team of assistants, with the base translation made by Charles Bowditch from Brasseur de Bourbourg's French translation and "then corrected" with the Rada y Delgado and Brasseur de Bourbourg transcriptions of the Spanish original, and further "corrections and emendations" stemming from suggestions by five other contributors, including Tozzer, with only Eleanor Adams apparently looking at the original manuscript (Tozzer 1941: ix). Tozzer also seems to have relied heavily on Jean Genet's 1928–9 French edition both for his translation and notes. No doubt as a result of all this, Michael Coe (1999: 283) recently dismissed Tozzer's English version as "unreliable, since it is based on a French translation of the Spanish." Indeed, comparing Tozzer's and Gates's versions to the original manuscript, the fallibility of Tozzer's method becomes clear; some passages are better glossed by Gates, despite Tozzer's (1941: x) damning of Gates's translation as "a free one."⁸

Still, Tozzer's edition was a major achievement. Yet even if one accepts that Tozzer made enough of the Real Academia's appearance and nature, and produced a close enough translation, his edition soon went out of print.

For three and a half decades Landa and his work returned to being an obscure scholarly curiosity. The reasons for this are no doubt many and not central to our concerns here, but one contributing factor was probably the political climate in Mexico, as a form of *indigenismo* became incorporated into the institutionalization of the revolution, exposing figures like Landa more to dismissive conquistador/inquisitor stereotypes than real scholarly investigation. Another was the failure of the Carnegie Institute's endeavors in Yucatán to ignite a continuation of scholarly investigation into the peninsula's history after the Carnegie ceased its sponsorship (which declined in the 1950s and was terminated in 1958; Coe 1999: 130). Related to this was the fact that Ralph Roys, the Carnegie-related figure who wrote the most on sixteenth-century Yucatán, never held a university post and thus never created a school of students to continue his work. Yet another may have been the role played by Eric Thompson in stifling the development of Maya epigraphy during these decades, as Coe (1999: 123–44) has argued. A fifth and final factor may be the further development of the study of colonial Latin American history in the early and mid-twentieth century, with its emphasis on political events, major institutions, and, eventually, social history as based on demography.

The relevance of all these factors is supported by their changing situations in the 1970s, which was when interest in Landa and his *Relación* returned. In that decade the Partido Revolucionario Institucional–built system in Mexico entered a crisis of legitimacy. A new generation of anthropologists returned to the work of Roys and his Carnegie-sponsored colleagues in order to build upon it, while colonial Latin American historiography took a dramatic turn toward new social and cultural topics and concomitant methodologies. Finally, in 1975, Thompson died. Within a few years Maya epigraphy experienced a series of breakthroughs that would lead to the decipherment of most Maya hieroglyphs by the early 1990s, an extraordinarily rapid development, considering that scholars had been working on “breaking the code” for two centuries (*ibid.*). Landa's relevance to epigraphic history is of course his inclusion of an apparent rosetta stone to Maya writing, what he called an “A, B, C” of glyphic signs with phonetic values. This Maya “alphabet” had been created by Landa, or one of his colleagues, by asking a Maya informant how to write in glyphs each Spanish “letter,” which of course the informant heard as a syllable, according to Castilian pronunciation. The false alphabet produced as a result was just about right and wrong enough to confuse generations of would-be epigraphers—whose task was made all the tougher by the woeful quality of published reproductions of the glyphs, a problem not clearly outlined until fairly recently (Stuart 1988). But it also contained the phonetic clues that

enabled epigraphers, no longer hampered after 1975 by Thompson's overbearing domination of the field, to decipher the glyphs (Gates 1937: 83; Coe 1999: 104–5, 193–258).

In the year of Thompson's death, a new English edition of Landa's *Relación* appeared, the third to date. Edited by the British scholar Anthony Pagden, it did not remain in print, but it compared well to Tozzer and Gates and brought renewed attention to the *Relación*, contributing to Dover's decision to pick up Gates's version a few years later. Meanwhile, a more easily acquired Spanish version of the text, an edition from the prolific Mexican press Porrúa that had come out earlier (Garibay K. 1959), went back into print. Interest in Landa and his work persisted during the 1980s and 1990s: Maya epigraphy and Maya studies in general became a veritable industry (see Coe 1999); the Yucatec events of 1562 were treated to a well-received study by Inga Clendinnen (1987), which stimulated ongoing interest (e.g., Tedlock 1993; Restall 1998: 144–68); colonial Yucatán in general received more attention than it had since Roys's day (Farriss 1984; Jones 1989; Patch 1993; Quezada 1993; Restall 1997; Thompson 1999; and many articles by Manuela Cristina García Bernal building on her monographs of 1972 and 1978); and a reappraisal of the spiritual conquest eventually turned to Yucatán (Chuchiak 2000). As a result, Landa's *Relación* has never been so read and so frequently cited.

A Reevaluation of the *Relación*

Despite the favorable climate for the use of the *Relación* in the past twenty-five years, however, the standard Spanish version of reference has been Angel Maria Garibay K.'s (1959) Porrúa edition, with its unreliable transcription and lack of notes or extensive introduction. Meanwhile, the only widely available English edition has been the unadorned Gates version, with the now very rare Tozzer the standard edition of scholarly reference; Pagden tends to be ignored, somewhat unjustly. Furthermore, not a single one of the many editions of the work adequately reproduced the drawings and illustrations, which have either been partially omitted or poorly redrawn—as clearly demonstrated by George Stuart (1988) with respect to the glyphs. As Stuart (*ibid.*: 27) remarks, “None of the existing editions of Landa's *Relación* fulfills all the needs of the scholar seeking the total context of the original manuscript” (emphases his). These circumstances inspired us to produce a new edition of the *Relación*, and having made a provisional translation from the Porrúa edition, we determined in the summer of 2000 to consult the original manuscript in the Real Academia de la Historia.

When we saw this manuscript, we were stunned. The irregularities of

the manuscript mentioned in passing by some other scholars (e.g., Barrera Vasquez in Rosado Escalante et al. 1938: vii; Tozzer 1941: viii; Stuart 1988: 23; Coe 1999: 104) are not only immediately apparent, but it is clear upon first reading of the document that their implications are far more serious than has been realized. These irregularities fall into six categories.

First, the inscription on the title page indicates that the manuscript we have is not the entire manuscript that Landa must have written. It reads:

Relacion de las cosas de Yucatán sa-
cada de lo que escrivio el padre fray
Diego de Landa de la orden de S^t Fran-
cisco—
[Account of the things of Yucatán taken
from that which the padre fray
Diego de Landa of the Order of Saint Francis
wrote]

A little below this and to the side is written:

Esta aqui otra relacion de las
cosas de la china
[There is here another account of the
things of China]

Those whose attention was drawn to this title page (from editors of the manuscript such as Tozzer and Gates to commentators such as Coe) have tended to take this as evidence that Landa wrote a longer work called the *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, from which the extant manuscript is an excerpt or set of excerpts. This assumption, we suggest, is only partly correct. First, the inscription does not state that this is an excerpt from a work of Landa's titled *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, only that the excerpt is in substance, and not necessarily by title, an "account of the things of Yucatán" taken from a body of writings by Landa. Second, there is no evidence or indication that the inscription goes with all the material in the manuscript, which, as we have mentioned already, was written in different hands and different times. Third, the reference to "another account" and *la china*, "China," or "the Far East," strongly suggests that the copyists were part of the large-scale effort by the Royal Academy of History to write a comprehensive history of the Philippines and Spanish activities elsewhere in East Asia—an effort mandated by Royal Cedula in the eighteenth century.⁹ Our supposition is therefore that in the course of collecting reports by Franciscans on mission activities going back into the sixteenth century, a notary or historian's assistant confused a late seventeenth cen-

tury copy of some Landa material with other relaciones by Franciscans and mistakenly placed it among the source reports for this project. In this way the Landa manuscript may have been taken from where it had been sitting since the seventeenth century, perhaps within the royal archives in Simancas, and later—when it became useful to royal historians in the eighteenth century—deposited in the library of the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid (where Brasseur de Bourbourg found it).¹⁰

The second irregular feature of the manuscript is its multiple hands. Not one but two principal compilers created the *Relación*, with the assistance of an uncertain number of additional copyists and illustrators (see Table 1).

The third feature is related to the second, being the different types of paper used. The only one of these that carries a recognizably dated watermark is the paper used by the compiler we have called Hand 2 in Table 1 and is dated to the later colonial period, when the transcription and construction of this third part of the *Relación* was thus carried out.

The fourth feature of the manuscript is its disjunctive style. This is apparent from published editions but is highlighted by the coincidence of the most blatant breaks in narrative and topic with shifts in hand, paper, and the inclusion of small gaps between sections in some parts of the manuscript. There are also several abrupt breaks between folios as well as mismatched folios out of order. Previous scholarly editions addressed few or none of these inherent structural problems. Moreover, previous editors attempted to “patch up” the manuscript in order to make sense out of several sections but failed to bring overall coherence to the manuscript.

For example, on three pages (folios 50 and 56r–v) these gaps are filled with headings that read, respectively:

Porque cofas hazian otros sacrificios los Yndios.

[For which things the Indians made other sacrifices]

Parrapho VII: de la manera d/ay de ferpientes y otros animales ponçoñofos.

[Paragraph 7: of how there are serpents and other poisonous animals]

Parrapho VIII: de las auejas y su miel y cera.

[Paragraph 8: of the bees and their honey and wax].

The second two of these headings are either written by a different hand or written in a different handwriting styled by the same compiler copying out the material before and after them. Either way, the creation of these

headings and their orthography—an imitation of print, with such features as unjoined letters and initial “s” resembling an “f” without a truncated horizontal stroke—was a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century convention used in the preparation of a manuscript for publication (an example is Lizana’s abovementioned 1633 *Historia*, republished in facsimile in 1893). This means that some part of Landa’s work, perhaps his entire recopilación, was not only prepared for publication with this scribal “typesetting,” but part or all of it may have been actually typeset. It is also possible that the work was published. Although one would expect at least one subsequent reference to such a publication, even if no copies survived, a local press in Spain might have produced a dozen or so copies, with a trace of them waiting to be discovered in an obscure Iberian archive. The fact that there are notations at the foot of some of the manuscript pages, letters and symbols that could be printers’ marks, further suggests the small but tantalizing possibility that the copyists were working from a printed edition of Landa’s recopilación.

In Brasseur de Bourbourg’s organization of the manuscript he found, he dubs these two headed sections chapters 46 and 47, not 7 and 8, but uses the original headings. The fact that all but three of the headings in Brasseur de Bourbourg’s edition (and, following him, almost all other editions) are invented by him, with only these three in the original manuscript, is never made clear—let alone the implications of their styling and numbering. (An additional clue as to the organized nature of the larger work or works is found at the end, when the text refers the reader to “Chapter CI” and “Chapter LXXXIX,” neither of which, in number or topic, are in Landa’s manuscript.)

Indeed, it is also possible that the section of the *Relación* from which “paragraph 7” and “paragraph 8” come was not written by Landa at all. The evidence for this is threefold. First, this would explain why this section of the book was “typeset” and yet there is no other evidence of a Landa publication. Second, this explains why the section is on a topic unrelated to the rest of the *Relación*, namely the natural history of Yucatán. Third, the larger body of historical evidence on Landa’s life—his letters and the commentary about him by contemporaries—confirms a passionate interest in Maya history and culture, the spiritual conquest, and the topics of the rest of the *Relación* but no interest at all in natural history. If Landa did not write this part of the manuscript, who did? One good candidate is Francisco Dominguez, a contemporary of Landa’s who spent time in Yucatán, who wrote on such matters in the peninsula, and whose 1576 cosmography was one of the sources mentioned above for the answers to the relaciones geográficas questionnaires filled out in the colony in 1579–81.

The fifth feature of the manuscript is the order of its sections. The various portions of it have been bound in a manner that seems not to pay attention to narrative or thematic order; as Tables 1 and 2 indicate, the manuscript has not been bound according to the numbering sequence of the folios. A “correct” sequence of sections is not made apparent either by reading the manuscript as it is bound nor by reading it according to the sequence of its folios. Brasseur de Bourbourg did the latter—reorganized the manuscript according to its sequence of folios (but not with respect to the whole document, as he only published part of it)—and others have followed him. There are two remaining problems, however. One is that, as mentioned above, this resulting text still lacks narrative and thematic coherence. The other is that it is not certain that the folio numbers were on the manuscript when Brasseur de Bourbourg found it; it is possible that, having reorganized the text in a way that seemed logical to him, Brasseur de Bourbourg then numbered the folios himself. The *Relación* as it is known in print is therefore a somewhat arbitrary sequence of sections that are in the manuscript bound in a different and likewise arbitrary manner.

Conclusion

The sum of all these irregularities is this. The manuscript of the *Relación* that is the source for all editions and readings of it is an arbitrary collection by three or four compilers, probably made at different times but all after Landa's death, of excerpts from what may have been either a larger multi-volume work of Landa's (possibly already “typeset” for publication) or a collection of writings by Landa that did not comprise anything we might grant the integrity of a book (the very definition of a *recopilación*).

Portions of the manuscript may not have originally been written by Landa. It is also possible that the compilers were unwittingly or without concern drawing from Landa's papers, meaning both writings by him and writings by his informants and contemporaries that were collected by him. Among such shadow authors could be Francisco Dominguez, Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, Gaspar Antonio Chi, all mentioned above. Chi is a good candidate for such a role because he was the nobleman son of a Maya priest-scribe and was educated by Franciscans and prominent in early colonial Yucatán as an interpreter, among other things. We know from other sources that Chi was both extremely well versed in Yucatec history (Maya and Spanish) and very close to Landa in the years before the Franciscan's return to Spain. The similarities between some of Chi's writings and passages in the *Relación* have been taken as proof of his influence (Restall 1998: 144–68), but one must wonder now whether they are not proof of more

than that. Another possible shadow author of parts of Landa's *Relación* is fray Gaspar de Najera, a contemporary of Landa's, a speaker of Yucatec Maya, and the author of a similar *relación*, long lost.

Therefore, just as we can no longer be so certain that what we read in the *Relación* was all Landa had to say on a topic (for example, his blithe dismissal of the events of 1562 can no longer be read as that, as the compilers may have chosen to skip over lengthy passages discussing that year), so also can we no longer be certain that every word is Landa's.

Does all this mean that the *Relación* is not authentic, a fake? The short answer is no; it is not a fake. The long answer is that the *Relación* that is so widely read and cited is not the authentic, coherent work it is taken to be—and that may never have existed. Its lack of overall textual integrity means that the work cannot be treated as an authentic window onto Landa's thoughts and feelings of the 1560s. We must thus view as speculative and ill-supported, albeit eloquent and tempting, Clendinnen's (1987: 119) description of the *Relación* as "a tender remembrance of beloved things past" that, while "a very odd document" that we have in "defective form," possibly contains "allusions, omissions and emphases which could reveal something of Landa's tacit response to the terrible events of 1562." Furthermore, even if the *Relación* is viewed not as a whole but as a source on specific and isolated topics, scholars cannot take for granted the authorship and dating of particular passages—let alone the reliability of published editions, as detailed above.

But the *Relación* as a complex and messy compilation, one that should be handled as gingerly as, say, one of the colonial Maya compilations known as the *Books of Chilam Balam*, is nevertheless an authentic product of lost or as-yet-undiscovered late-sixteenth-century observations and writings by Landa (or by Landa and his contemporaries). As such, it remains an invaluable primary source on sixteenth-century Yucatán and on Maya civilization.

Notes

- 1 At least part of the manuscript, or the work upon which it is based, appears to have been written by Fray Diego de Landa while he served as Maestro de Novicios at the Spanish Franciscan convent of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo. For information on Landa's activities at that convent, see Lizana 1995: 186; also see Ayeta 1694: 22r.
- 2 The Franciscan chronicler Diego López de Cogolludo (1867–8 [1654]: book 5, chap. 14) wrote a hagiographic account of Landa's activities in his massive seventeenth-century history of Yucatán. Also see the discussion of Cogolludo's coverage in Clendinnen 1987: 68. More information on the Franciscan order

and Landa's role as a missionary among the Maya is found in González Cicero 1978. For a more recent interpretation of the Franciscan role in the "spiritual conquest" and conversion of the Yucatec Maya, see Chuchiak 2000.

- 3 The work of a Spanish chronicler in Mexico City offers an interesting clue as to Landa's writings in the 1570s. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar began work in the capital in 1560 on a history of New Spain and, because he had become a ubiquitous presence at the viceregal court by the time Landa visited in 1576–7, he almost certainly would have met the Yucatec bishop. The similarities between parts of Landa's *Relación* and Cervantes de Salazar's *Crónica de la Nueva España* suggest that the two actually exchanged written drafts of their work, meaning that Landa brought copies of his writings with him to Mexico City and that he was still putting his recopilación together in the final years of his life. The chief scholar of Cervantes de Salazar's work is Agustín Millares Carlo (1946, 1958, 1986).
- 4 Pero Garcia, the *encomendero* of the Maya towns of Tabi and Chunhuhub, wrote that information concerning the province could be found in the "Recopilación que el reverendísimo don Diego de Landa, Obispo que fue de estas provincias hizo de esta tierra." In other words, he does not claim to have seen the manuscript, only that it exists. See Garza 1983. For brief reference to Najera's activity with Maya leaders in Yucatán, circa 1580, see Restall 1998: 153–4; for discussion of Chi, including translations of all his contributions to the relaciones geográficas, see Restall 1998: 144–50 and in press. For other biographical information concerning Chi and his role as an assistant to Landa and as a coauthor of the relaciones, see Jakeman 1952; Strecker and Artieda 1978; Hillerkuss 1993; and Karttunen 1994: 84–114, 308.
- 5 The possibility that Cogolludo drew from Landa via Lizana is made likely by the fact that Cogolludo makes no direct reference to a Landa recopilación, only to lesser writings (e.g., Cogolludo 1867–8: 157); presumably on these grounds, Ignacio Rubio Mañé, in his introduction to Cogolludo, states that Cogolludo had no knowledge of Landa's work (*ibid.*: xlv). Both references pointed out by Paul Sullivan, personal communication.
- 6 "After the committee had entered its judgement, in the quiet of a Spanish monastery, he wrote his *Relación*" (Clendinnen 1987: 125).
- 7 Tozzer's (1941: vii) version of this assumption, for example, is that Landa wrote a longer version of the *Relación* in 1566 in Spain, took it to Yucatán with him in 1573, later sent copies to Spain and that one of these copies awaited Brasseur de Bourbourg's 1861 discovery.
- 8 It would be tedious to list all the passages that we feel Tozzer, Gates, and others have misunderstood Landa and such passages are indicated in the notes to our edition of the *Relación* in progress (Restall and Chuchiak n.d.), so suffice to mention a brief selection of the many such moments. Tozzer (1941: 19) translates *vivieron sin mujeres muy honestamente*, in so-called Chapter v (Garibay K. 1959: 12, checked against the manuscript, as are all quotes in this note), as "their wives lived honestly" instead of "they lived decently without women." In Chapter xvii (Garibay K. 1959: 29–30) Landa tells of friars being sent to Yucatán with the approval of the Montejos, *los cuales edificaron un monasterio en Mérida*; the text means that the friars built the monastery, but both Tozzer (1941: 69) and Gates (1937: 27) attribute the act to the Montejos. Tozzer (1941: 73) glosses a reference in Chapter xviii (Garibay K. 1959: 31) to *los sacerdotes* as "the secu-

- lar clergy,” when the reference is clearly to the Maya priests, the *ah kinob*. In Chapter xx (Garibay K. 1959: 34) Tozzer (1941: 86) misreads *temor* as *amor*, so that “love” appears in his translation instead of “fear,” and both he and Gates (1937: 32) gloss *allende* as “away from” and “beyond” (Tozzer 1941: 87) instead of “in addition to” or “besides,” again changing the meaning of a sentence.
- 9 On the missionary connections between Spain, Mexico, and East Asia, see Trejo 1946, Schütte 1971, and Gómez Canedo 1976.
 - 10 The official creation of the Real Academia de la Historia occurred by royal order of King Philip V on 18 April 1738 (see Alberola Fioravanti 1995: 13). In a second decree dated 1744, the same king gave the academy the official duties of serving as the only official chronicler general [cronista general] and chronicler of the Indies (see Altolaguirre 1920: 449–52). Starting in that year, the official historians who constituted the Royal Academy began to collect and compile a library of materials from other royal archives so that they could write complete histories of the Indies. No doubt during this period (post 1744) they collected or came across Landa’s manuscript (or the known copy made from it). The Royal Academy was housed first in the Royal Library (1744–85) and then later in a house on the Plaza Mayor of Madrid (1785–1871). It was therefore not until 1871 that the Royal Academy came to be housed in its present location, where the Landa manuscript is now held; it was in the academy’s previous location on the Plaza Mayor where Brasseur de Bourbourg supposedly “discovered” Landa’s manuscript in 1861. For a more detailed history of the Royal Academy, see Nava Rodríguez 1987: 127–55.

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