

The Europeanization of Indigenous Tradition: Inventing Classical Wise Men in Prehispanic Mexico

Authors : Jongsoo Lee

Abstract : From the beginning of the conquest, the Spanish missionaries promoted indigenous intellectuality to prove that indigenous people were capable of receiving Christian doctrine. To prove indigenous intellectuality, Spanish missionaries focused on the highly advanced and complex level of indigenous political, religious, moral, artistic, and cultural practices. In this context, they frequently compared the Aztecs with European gentiles such as Greeks and Romans. In the chronicles of the Spanish missionaries such as Bernardino de Sahagún, indigenous wise men (tlamatinime) appear as clear evidence of indigenous civility and capability. As the pagan Greek and Roman philosophers, orators, rhetoricians, theologians, and physicians known as wise men in European history were responsible for the advanced level of social systems, some Spanish missionaries tried to identify those types of people, tlamatinime, in Aztec society. This paper examines how the Spanish colonizers invented European-style wise men in Prehispanic Mexico.

Keywords : Aztec, indigenous tradition, prehispanic Mexico, wise men

Conference Title : ICHHSS 2017 : International Conference on Humanities, Human and Social Sciences

Conference Location : Vancouver, Canada

Conference Dates : August 07-08, 2017