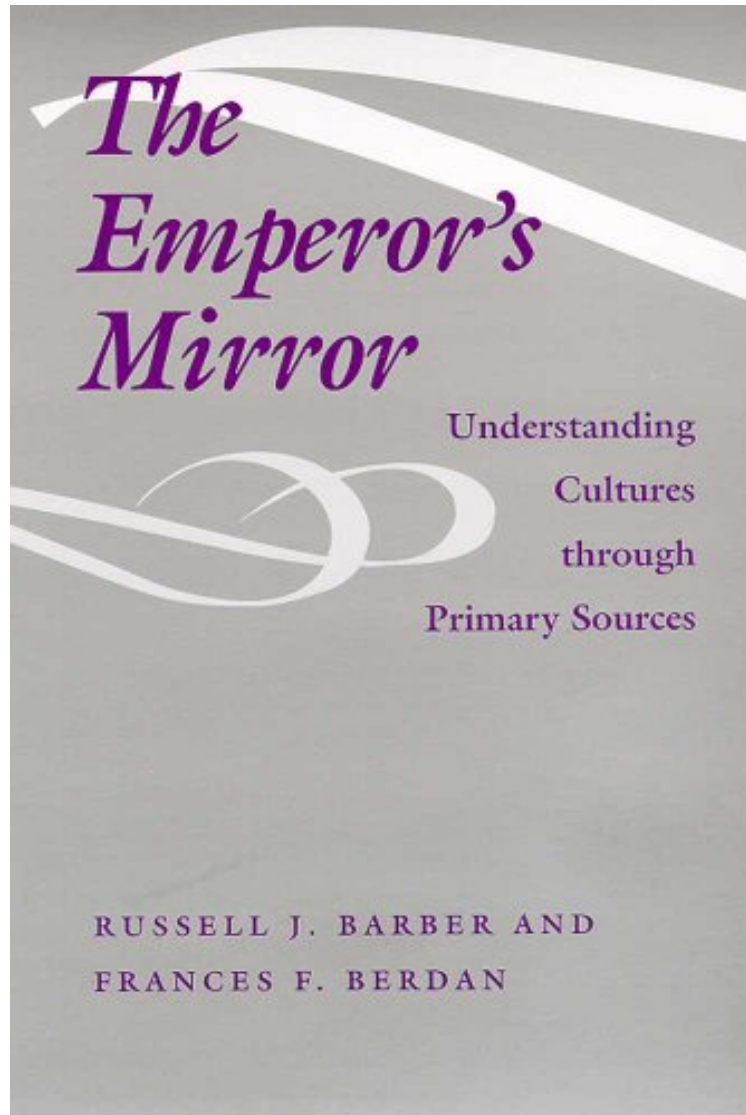


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The Emperor's Mirror: Understanding Cultures through Primary Sources

Russell Barber, Frances Berdan
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Russell Barber, Frances Berdan : The Emperor's Mirror: Understanding Cultures through Primary Sources before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Emperor's Mirror: Understanding Cultures through Primary Sources:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Best of The Field? By Armando J. Marti Without any doubt this is the best book about ethnohistory, however there are few books or even articles in this field of study. The authors

recognized this situation and decided to try to address this problem. Their discussion of the evolution of the concept of ethnohistory is the best part of the book. I must make it clear that this is a good piece of work and I recommend it both as a textbook (its original purpose) and as a reference for those interested in the field.

Russell J. Barber and Frances F. Berdan have created the ultimate guide for anyone doing cross-cultural and/or document-driven research. Presenting the essentials of primary-source methodology, *The Emperor's Mirror* includes nine chapters on paleography, calendrics, source and quantitative analysis, and the visual interpretation of artifacts such as pictographs, illustrations, and maps. As an introduction to ethnohistory, this book clearly defines terminology and provides practical and accessible examples, effectively integrating the concerns of historians and anthropologists as well as addressing the needs of anyone using primary sources for research in any academic field. A leading theme throughout the book is the importance of a researcher's awareness of the inherent biases of documents while doing research on another culture. Documents are the result of people interpreting reality through the filter of their own experience, personality, and culture. Barber and Berdan's reality mediation model shows students how to analyze documents to detect the implicit biases or subtexts inherent in primary-source materials. Students and scholars working with primary sources will particularly appreciate the case studies that Barber and Berdan use to illustrate the practical implications of using each methodology. These case studies not only apply method to actual research but also are fascinating in their own right: they range from a discussion of the debate over Tupinamba cannibalism to the illustration of Nahuatl, Spanish, and hybrid place names of Tlaxcala, Mexico.

"A clearly written, methodological introduction to ethnohistory, aimed at the advanced undergraduate and beginning graduate student. It may well be the first such textbook on the market, a reflection of a growing interest in ethnohistorical research." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* "A book that is vital to the enterprise of defining ethnohistory . . . The authors not only ably define a proposed field and method, they also make some vital points regarding the critical interpretation of written documents and other sources. . . . The instructor who plans to use this book will be pleased with the level of detail and the large number of case studies from a variety of contexts." *Ethnohistory* "A must for every ethnohistorian's library, whether current practitioner or student." Dane Morrison, Salem State College