

AGNIESZKA BRYLAK, PH.D.



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Specialisation: history, cultural anthropology

Research interests:

Mesoamerica, history, culture and religion of the Nahua, Nahuatl language, cultural performances, humor and laughter, concept of deity, cultural contact, digital humanities, decolonial thought

Academic career:

Dr Agnieszka Brylak is a Mesoamericanist specializing in the history, culture, and religion of the Nahua people in the pre-Hispanic and colonial periods. In 2008, she received her MA from the Institute of Iberian and Ibero-American Studies at the University of Warsaw with a thesis on Aztec ritual cuisine. In 2015, she earned her PhD from the Faculty of Modern Languages at the University of Warsaw, with a dissertation on Nahua theatrical performances. Her research is interdisciplinary—combining history, anthropology, philology, and religious studies—and focuses on performative aspects of culture and intercultural contact in 16th-century Mexico. She has led projects funded by the Polish National Science Centre (PRELUDIUM, SONATA) and participated in research supported by FNP, NCN, and the NEH. She has held research fellowships in Spain and the United States. She currently leads the “TEOTL” project (ERC Starting Grant 2022), dedicated to the principal religious category in pre-Hispanic Nahua thought.

Research projects:

- 2023 – now – PI of the project “The concept of teotl: a complex approach to the principal religious category of pre-Hispanic Central Mexico”, ERC Starting Grant 2022 (project ID 101077790)

- 2020–2024 – Researcher in the project “Metaphors as a Key to the Worldview of Pre-Hispanic Nahua: An Interdisciplinary Study”, directed by Julia Madajczak (National Science Centre, OPUS 17)
- 2018–2021 – Researcher in the project “The Corpus Xolotl Project: Indigenous History and Performance in Aztec and Colonial Texcoco, Mexico”, directed by Benjamin Johnson from the University of Massachusetts Boston (National Endowment for the Humanities)
- Feb 2017 – Jul 2021 – Principal investigator of the project “Of Farces and Jesters. Humor and Laughter in Pre-Hispanic and Colonial Nahua Culture in Anthropological Perspective and in the Context of Contact with Spanish Culture (16th–17th centuries)” (National Science Centre, SONATA 11)
- Jun 2013 – Nov 2017 – Researcher in the project “Europe and America in Contact: A Multidisciplinary Study of Cross-Cultural Transfer in the New World Across Time”, directed by Justyna Olko (ERC Starting Grant)
- Dec 2011 – May 2014 – Principal investigator of the project “Pre-Hispanic Performances of the Nahua – Indigenous Theatrical Forms in the Light of Written Sources and Pictographic Manuscripts from Central Mexico” (National Science Centre, PRELUDIUM 1)
- Apr 2010 – May 2013 – Researcher in the project “Linguistic Encounters Between the Old and the New World: Language as a Medium of Cross-Cultural Communication in Early Colonial New Spain”, directed by Justyna Olko (Foundation for Polish Science, FOCUS)

Publications:

- *Humor and Laughter among the Pre-Hispanic Nahua: The Rabbit, the Navel and the Jester Ruler* (2026). Leiden: Brill. 10.1163/9789004745162
- “Las figuras cómicas del mono y de los portadores de pintura corporal negra entre los nahuas prehispánicos y su transformación en la época colonial” (2025), *Journal de la société des américanistes* 110 (1): 11-40. <https://doi.org/10.4000/12kic>

- Book review "*Mesoamerican Rituals and the Solar Cycle. New Perspectives on the Veintena Festivals*, Élodie Dupey García y Elena Mazzetto, eds. 2021. Nueva York, Berlin, Bruselas, Viena, Oxford, Varsovia: Peter Lang. 334 pp. ISBN 978-1-4331-7544-2" (2025), *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* 55 (1): 151-153.
- "Homo Ridens en los textos doctrinales franciscanos en náhuatl del periodo colonial temprano" (2024), *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 68: 81-113. <https://nahuatl.historicas.unam.mx/index.php/ecn/article/view/78282>.
- "Playfulness and humor in Nahua veintena festivals as attested in early colonial sources" (2023), *TRACE* 84: 31-59. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22134/trace.84.2023.865>
- "«Mary Magdalene was not like a dog». A seventeenth-century Guatemalan sermon in Nahuatl" (2023), Julia Madajczak and Agnieszka Brylak, *Korpus* 21. Vol. III, Núm. 7: 121-138. DOI: 10.22136/korpus21202393
- "Buffoons and sorcerers: witchcraft, entertainment, and evil professions in colonial sources on pre-Hispanic Nahuas" (2021), *Colonial Latin American Review*, 30:3, 342-360, DOI: 10.1080/10609164.2021.1947043.
- *Loans in Colonial and Modern Nahuatl. A Contextual Dictionary* (2020). Agnieszka Brylak, Julia Madajczak, Justyna Olko, John Sullivan. Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- "Hurtling off a Precipice, Falling into a River: A Nahuatl Metaphor and the Christian Concept of Sin" (2019). *Ethnohistory*. 66 (3): 489-513. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-7517904>
- "Some of Them Just Die Like Horses. Contact-Induced Changes in Peripheral Nahuatl of the Sixteenth-Century Petitions from Santiago de Guatemala" (2019). *Journal of Language Contact*. 12 (2): 344-377. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19552629-01202004>
- "Lawsuit brought by Juan Jiménez, Ocotelolco, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1560" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 85-90. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5876/9781607328346>.
- "Interrogation of Diego Xiuhnel, Tepeticpac, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1563". W" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 91-96.

- "Investigation regarding a murder, Aquetzalpan, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1564" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 97-102.
- "Land sale document, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1607/1608" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 103-107.
- "Land sale document, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1612" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 108-112.
- "Testament of María Toztecayatl, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1576/1600" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 144-149.
- "Petition concerning cultivated land presented by María Quetzalcocoztli, Ocotelolco, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1563" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 251-255.
- "Complaint of the Indigenous People from Huamuxtitlan against the Abuses of Local Authorities, Guerrero, 1580" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 256-265.
- "Account of the commissioning of an image of the Virgin Mary, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1600" (2018). In: *Dialogue with Europe, Dialogue with the Past. Colonial Nahua and Quechua Elites in Their Own Words*. Justyna Olko, John Sullivan and Jan Szemiński (eds.), Louisville, University Press of Colorado: 283-286.
- "Defending local autonomy and facing cultural trauma. A Nahua order against idolatry, Tlaxcala 1543" (2018). Justyna Olko and Agnieszka Brylak. *Hispanic American Historical Review*. 98 (4): 573-604. DOI: 10.1215/00182168-7160325.

- “Los espectáculos públicos como fondo de conflictos políticos entre las autoridades novohispanas, siglos XVI y XVII” (2018). *Hispanic Research Journal* 19 (3): 236-249. DOI: 10.1080/14682737.2018.1467853.
- “El autorretrato de las mujeres tlaxcaltecas dentro de la sociedad novohispana” (2017). In: *Escribir como mujer: ¿hacia una reescritura de la autoría?* Karolina Kumor, Aránzazu Calderón de la Puerta, Ana Garrido González and Katarzyna Moszczyńska-Dürst (eds.), Biblioteka Iberyjska-UW, Warszawa: 77-98.
- “Some remarks on teponazcuicatl of the pre-Hispanic Nahuas” (2016). *Ancient Mesoamerica* 27: 429-439. DOI:10.1017/S095653611600002X.
- “En busca del espectáculo prehispánico nahua en fiestas y representaciones teatrales coloniales” (2015). *Politeja. Politeja. Pismo Wydziału Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politycznych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*. 38 (6): 17-34. DOI: 10.12797/Politeja.12.2015.38.03.
- “Truhanería y sexualidad: Techalotl entre los nahuas prehispánicos” (2015). *Itinerarios* 21: 57-78.
- “El espectáculo y el recuerdo del pasado entre los nahuas” (2015). In: *Acerca de la (des)memoria y su construcción en Mesoamérica y Andes*. Clementina Battcock and Sergio Botta (coords.). México, Quivira: 278-319.
- “El gran teatro del mundo en el mundo sin teatro” (2014). In: *Del gran teatro del mundo al mundo del teatro. Homenaje a la profesora Urszula Aszyk*. Karolina Kumor and Katarzyna Moszczyńska-Dürst (eds.). Warszawa, Biblioteka Iberyjska: 137-147.
- “La cocina ritual azteca en el Códice Florentino: algunos tipos de comida” (2013). In: *Códices del centro de México. Análisis comparativos y estudios individuales*. Miguel Ángel Ruz Barrio and Juan José Batalla Rosado (coords.). Warszawa, Uniwersytet Warszawski-Wydział “Artes Liberales”: 331-357.
- “Rivalidad y ritual: agón en la religión nahua” (2011). In: *De dioses y hombres. Creencias y rituales mesoamericanos y sus supervivencias, Encuentros 2010*, vol. 5, Katarzyna Mikulska Dąbrowska and José Contel (coords.), Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego: 121-145.
- “La comida como forma de expresión artística en las fiestas religiosas nahuas” (2011). *Itinerarios*. 13: 225-243.

- “La comicidad en el teatro náhuatl a través de la óptica misionera” (2010). *Quaderni di THULE*. 32: 79-84.

Participation in research groups:

- Member of CEM+ (Centro de Estudios Mesoamericanos +)

Membership in international organizations:

- Member of the Directory Board of the Association of Nahuatl Scholars

Grants and awards:

- 2023 – First-degree Rector’s Award for professional achievements
- 2018–2021 – Ministry of Science and Higher Education Scholarship for Outstanding Young Scientists
- 2016 – START Scholarship, Foundation for Polish Science

Academic service and administrative roles:

- Deputy Director for Research at the Institute of Iberian and Ibero-American Studies, University of Warsaw (2024–2028)
- Member of the Scientific Council for the Discipline of History at the University of Warsaw
- Member of the Evaluation Committee for Academic Disciplines, Faculty of Modern Languages, University of Warsaw