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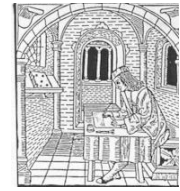


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The *Codex of Tlaxcala*: Indigenous Petitions and the Discourse of Heterarchy

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As the colony of Nueva España (New Spain) emerged, the indigenous Tlaxcalans, who had supported Cortés in the defeat of the Mexica-Tenochca and their allies, developed detailed narratives to document their participation in the colonial endeavor. These newest and most fervent Spanish colonial subjects accompanied explorations and eventually were pressed into relocation to establish colonial settlements in areas where the indigenous population was not as supportive of the European settlements. Tlaxcalans accompanied expeditions to Central America, the Pacific coast, northward along the Gulf Coast and to the northwest into what is today the US Southwest, including the ill-fated and extremely controversial trip by Vásquez de Coronado to “Cíbola” or “Quivira.” In the sixteenth century, Tlaxcalan families would be relocated to establish colonies in San Luis Potosí, Saltillo and Santa Fe.

This study will examine the narrative known as the *Codex of Tlaxcala*, an extensive pictorial description of Tlaxcalan participation in the new colonial order, as it documents Tlaxcalan efforts in various campaigns from the fall of Tenochtitlan up to the siege of Cíbola/Quivira. As a theoretical framework, this argument will use the concept of “heterarchy.” This concept, as defined by sociologist David Stark, offers a useful lens through which to examine indigenous narratives and the political structure of central Mexico in the years immediately following the conquest of Tenochtitlan. Stark has coined the term *heterarchy* to discuss the organizational forms that emerge when an entity—whether a business, a government, a community—promotes constructive organizational reflexivity as it finds solutions to respond to a significant stress or crisis—devastation after war or natural disaster, for example. Stark is looking for self-

awareness and critical auto-examination as the entity learns to redefine and recombine resources based upon the resultant new reality.

Because I put organizational innovation front and center, I argue that, in addition to the diversity of organizations within a population, adaptability is promoted by the *organization of diversity* within an enterprise. Organizational diversity is most likely to yield its fullest evolutionary potential when different organizational principles co-exist in an active rivalry within the firm. By rivalry, I do not refer to competing camps and factions, but to co-existing logics and frames of action. The organization of diversity is an active and sustained engagement in which there is more than one way to organize, label, interpret, and evaluate the same or similar activity. Rivalry fosters cross-fertilization. It increases the possibilities of long-term adaptability by better search, “better,” not because it is more consistent or elegant or coherent, but precisely because the complexity that it promotes and the lack of simple coherence that it tolerates increase the diversity of options. The challenge of the organization of diversity is to find solutions that promote constructive organizational reflexivity, or the ability to redefine and recombine resources. I call the emergent organizational forms with these properties *heterarchies*.

Stark’s primary focus is organizational innovation, and he maintains that this manifestation of flexibility and adaptability results in multiple ways to organize, label, interpret, and evaluate the same or similar activity. Organizations that can attain and sustain this type of innovation are usually most successful in navigating the disaster and emerging in a situation of hegemony. Sociologist David Stark uses the term “heterarchy” to describe the organizational innovations, adaptability of groups, diversification strategies, and coexisting logics of frames and actions that emerge in groups or organizations that successfully navigate a traumatic event (6).

While Stark has used his framework to examine post-war Kosovo and post-911 New York City, I am interested in looking for evidence of this multiplicity of frames and sustained approaches to cultivating hegemony among the Amerindian communities of post-Tenochtitlan, certainly an event that forced the rethinking of power structures and hegemony for the many distinct Amerindian groups who survived the initial devastation.

By examining several texts composed by the Tlaxcalans, Cortés’s allies in the conquest, frames emerge that are substantially different from Tzvetan Todorov’s analysis that would have us understand that the “cyclical-thinking” Amerindians were unable to process what was happening to them as the “linear-thinking” Europeans pushed further and further into the Americas. While Todorov cites “documentary evidence” of this lack of ability to incorporate new contexts for the arrival of western forces, he does not actually use indigenous-produced texts and he does not examine any of the Amerindian cultures that were enemies of the Mexica-Tenochca. Despite many critics addressing this issue, including Jose Rabasa and Deborah Root, scholars continue to perceive Amerindian cultures as monolithic, static, and somehow inferior in discursive ability to Europeans based upon a methodology of not exploring Amerindian discourse, despite many

accessible and fascinating analyses by scholars in Mexico, France, England, and the United States.

Todorov highlights Cortés's ability to adapt and to innovate in order to succeed in his endeavors. He contrasts this with Moctecuzoma's inability to do those types of processes, thus resulting in the fall of Tenochtitlan. What Todorov does not factor in is the participation of the Tlaxcalans, who actually encourage Cortés against their own enemies—first the Cholulteca and then the Mexica-Tenochca. The participation of the Tlaxcalans ultimately results in a successful overthrow of the entire Aztec empire. In the power vacuum left by toppling the empire, the Tlaxcalans (along with other Amerindian groups) adapt and begin to demand—and receive—hegemony and the rights and privileges offered them for their support of Cortés. If we use Stark's model, it becomes clear that some Amerindians were aware of multiple and co-existing frames of logic in their interpretations of reality in colonial Mexico and that they found ways to innovate, to compete for hegemony and to be successful in colonial enterprises.

The Tlaxcalans reported their participation in the conquest in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and in the manuscript identified by Gordon Brotherston as the "Codex of Tlaxcala." Brotherston and Ana Gallegos identified this manuscript as a late sixteenth-century version of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* (117). The manuscript accompanies a signed version of the *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala* (1585) by mestizo historian and landowner, Diego Muñoz Camargo, the son of Diego Muñoz Camargo, the conquistador, and Juana de Navarra, a noblewoman from Tlaxcala (Reyes García 13-14). The two documents are bound into a 29 x 21 centimeter volume and they are catalogued as Ms. 242 [U.3.15] in the Hunterian Museum Library Collection at the University of Glasgow. René Acuña published a partial facsimile edition of the *Descripción* without the images in 1981 and a critical edition with the images under the title *Relación geográfica de Tlaxcala* in 1984. This edition was reissued in 2000 as the *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala*. In 1998 Luis Reyes García published a facsimile edition of a related manuscript found in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.

The images bound with the narrative have been adapted from the original *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*. My work *Saints and Warriors: Tlaxcalan Perspectives on the Conquest of Tenochtitlan* examines the Tlaxcalan narratives, especially the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, which detail Tlaxcalan participation in the fall of Tenochtitlan. The *Codex of Tlaxcala* images expand in detail the participation of the Tlaxcalans in colonial enterprises "post-lienzo." In examining the images of Tlaxcalan participation in explorations throughout the Americas, many of the dynamics outlined by Stark begin to emerge.

I am interested in the documentation of Tlaxcalan participation in the entrada of Cíbola, which is the very last image in the *Codex of Tlaxcala*. This is a unique representation that offers testimony to the power of the Tlaxcalans to

adapt and to use multiple interpretations of similar events and co-existing frames of representation. That the Tlaxcalans included their efforts in Cíbola indicates that they were aware of the controversy surrounding the enterprise and that they also felt it politically important to assert their testimony in the case.

Following the fall of Tenochtitlan, the Tlaxcalans were especially interested in recovering the rights and privileges bestowed upon them by Cortés. Tlaxcalan narratives use the strategy of reporting their service to this conquistador and their good comportment. As the enterprise of the colony begins to exhibit conflicts between various conquistadors, the Tlaxcalans continue to assert their assistance to various explorers on expeditions throughout the region. In fact, the *Codex of Tlaxcala* offers forty more battles from expeditions after those contained in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*. As controversy swirls in the 1530's and early 1540's, especially between Cortés and his rival Nuño de Guzmán, the Tlaxcalans move from a petition about what was promised by Cortés to a wider, more encompassing narrative about how they fit within the new political order.

It is important to remember that the European colonial processes were not carried out on a *tabla rasa*...they had to build their new order to incorporate Amerindians who had survived the conquest as well as settlers coming from various places. Local groups with the knowledge of how to survive in the Americas played important roles in the success of the colonial endeavor. Amerindians who wished to participate had to adapt and to innovate to make sure that their new rulers comprehended their communication strategies. Narratives had to be innovative and had to adjust to shifting political and cultural changes to assure a successful communication. As Cortés fell from favor with the Spanish crown in the 1540's, the treatment of Cortés's efforts becomes less important, and other persuasive issues emerged. By 1585 the actual campaigns to various parts of the Americas were more important than some aspects of Cortés's interactions with the Tlaxcalans. Not surprisingly, the Tlaxcalan narratives shifted focus from the early reports (ca. 1530's) about their good service to Cortés and his captains to latter accounts (ca. 1580's) focusing on Tlaxcalan efforts themselves as good and productive citizens of the colony. By examining the context of the representation of Tlaxcalan participation, we can begin to understand how and why multiple frames of logic fit together in the quest for Tlaxcalan hegemony.

In the narrative structures of the *Codex of Tlaxcala*, the Tlaxcalan authors took great care to communicate their situation to multiple audiences. First, they understood very well that communicating their commitment to the religious authorities was vital to colonial success. Second, they sought to remain neutral in the face of shifting favor and rivalries among various conquistadores. And third, they had a "home" audience where they communicated similar information in very different frames. For the church authorities the message becomes: "We are good Catholics and good Christians, we are taking care of the business of

eliminating 'pagan practices' on our own," for the secular authorities the message they develop is: "we are good servants in the campaign to 'civilize' New Spain and New Galicia, despite political agendas and rivalries." And for the home audience the Tlaxcalans communicate: "We can adapt to reflect a specific change in power structure and we continue to be Tlaxcalans."

As part of their construction of the enemy and "infidel" forces, the Tlaxcalans framed their narratives very specifically to reflect an emerging awareness of Aristotle's laws of natural slavery and the concepts of civilization and barbarism, as well as a keen interest in political situations in Europe. The Tlaxcalans are cognizant of the roles and attitudes of various ethnic and linguistic Amerindian groups and their participation in the colonial power structure for or against the European forces. They seem to be aware of regional politics and the conflicts between Cortés and other conquistadors over territory along the Pacific coast, and, in addition, they are specifically concerned with the situation in Europe as the Ottoman Empire continues to threaten European strongholds.

In the *Codex of Tlaxcala*, after a series of images showing the physical nature of Tlaxcala, another series of images document the presence of Franciscan friars baptizing the various inhabitants the region and persecuting pagan practices. Following this, an image illustrates that Tlaxcalan authorities have accepted responsibility as Christian leaders by illustrating themselves punishing those who seek to "revert" to "demonic" practices. Instead of the friars performing the punishment, Tlaxcalan functionaries cut the hair of several Tlaxcalans accused of playing the ancient game of patcholi. One of the participants is hanged, as the equipment of the game is burned beneath him. Other "diabolical" gear is burned in the center as the Tlaxcalans express their commitment to behave as good Christians in the new political order.



Figure 1: Amerindian functionaries punishing Tlaxcalans who engaged in "pagan" practices.

In another image, the compiler/ artist depicts figures from ten provinces conquered by Cortés. The artist shows each as a standard-bearer and beneath each figure, an indication of the toponym of the province and the written name of each can be identified. Beside seven of the toponyms, a bishop's miter with lappets indicates those that are dioceses, although no European or religious figures are included in this assertion of Amerindian power. This is an interesting configuration reminding the audience that despite the conquest by the Europeans, the subjects are Amerindian and they are "in charge" in a responsible, Christian manner. This reminds us that once most groups were conquered, they did have to participate in the subsequent power structure in some manner. This image shows us that they did claim their roles (at least rhetorically) as leaders in the new order.



Figure 2: Amerindian Bishoprics of New Spain

Another image illustrates the Tlaxcalan participation in the conquest of Culhuacan in the service of Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, one of Cortés's most successful and most despised rivals. Interestingly, throughout the 1530's, Cortés and Nuño de Guzmán wield power and engage in fierce political rivalries. The images from the *Codex of Tlaxcala* offer a neutral record of Tlaxcalan participation throughout Mesoamerica stretching northward into the Zuni Pueblo cultures and southward to the Hibüeras (Honduras). The record narrates Tlaxcalan conquests with Pedro de Alvarado to Guatemala, and with other explorers and conquistadors. The final image in the *Codex of Tlaxcala* represents the Tlaxcalan version of Marcos de Niza and Vázquez de Coronado's ill-fated visit to Cibola.

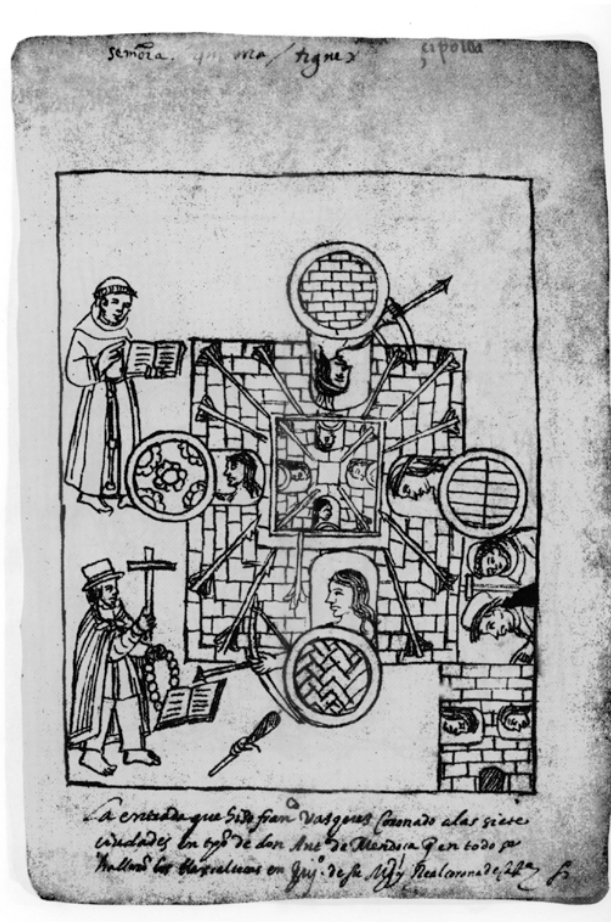


Figure 3: Entrada into Cíbola by Vásquez de Coronado

In 1539, Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza sent Fray Marcos de Niza with the African guide Estevanico to search for “Cíbola.” Marcos de Niza had recently returned from Peru where shortly after his report, rich mines were discovered, so the viceroy was hopeful that Marcos de Niza would be successful in finding the Seven Cities of Gold of whisper and fable. Estevanico was a survivor of the failed expedition to Florida led by Cortés’s rival Pánfilo Narváez in 1528. Fellow survivor Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca wrote of their shipwreck and the plight of the four survivors after they were found in Nueva Galicia in 1536. Although Cabeza de Vaca reported the extreme poverty of the people with whom he came into contact, his “Naufragios” stimulated interest in searching for the legendary Cíbola. At the same time as Marcos de Niza’s expedition, the viceroy’s rival Cortés undertook a maritime expedition northward into what is now known as the Sea of Cortés. Mendoza sent Fray Marcos de Niza, accompanied by Estevanico, to investigate in attempt to claim the cities before his rival Cortés was able to do so.

In the extant narrative by Fray Marcos de Niza, the priest reported the death of Estevanico at the hands of the inhabitants of Cíbola (one of seven Zuni

settlements in what is present-day New Mexico). Estevanico was sent ahead as a scout with several hundred Amerindians (probably many Tlaxcalans). He and his party were shot with arrows according to a survivor of the attack. The Amerindian guides refused to go on to Cíbola and at one point threatened to kill the Franciscan. Fray Marcos persuaded them to take him into visual range of the city where he claimed it for Spain and the expedition returned to Mexico. When Fray Marcos published his report on his expedition to Cíbola, Cortés accused him of falsifying his data and of merely using information that the marquis had given the Franciscan and insinuated that Fray Marcos did not actually go there (*Adorno Cabeza de Vaca* 3:125-127).

The viceroy sent Fray Marcos on another expedition to claim Cíbola, this time led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. The expedition left Mexico in 1540 and returned in 1542, defeated by the Zuni, who failed to submit to Coronado's rhetoric, driving the m from the area in a rain of arrows. Why do the Tlaxcalans include an image representing this embarrassing disaster? Interestingly, while the forty scenes preceding Cíbola in the codex are labeled "Battles," the gloss of this image calls the interaction and "entrada" (entry). The gloss claims that the Coronado expedition entered into the city in service to the Viceroy:

La entrada que hizo Fran[cis]co Vasquez Coronado a las siete ciudades en epoca de don Antonio de Mendoça q[ue] en todo se hallaron los tlaxcaltecas en servicio [?] de su muy real corona de España [?] (folio 317r; the entrance that Francisco Vázquez Coronado made into the seven cities in the time of Sir Antonio de Mendoza in all of which the Tlaxcalans were found in service to your very royal crown of Spain).

Another interesting aspect is the use of Mesoamerican representational tropes including the plan-view quincunx representation of the city and the presence of arrows that may (probably) represent the angry Zuni response to the expedition's demands. This is a representational technique characteristic of pre-Hispanic documents and early colonial indigenous narratives, but it is not present in the other images in the codex. Why, in 1583—more than forty years after the event—are the Tlaxcalans interested in commemorating this "non-victory" in an "archaic" representational style?

In the image of the defeat of the Culhuacanos, the Tlaxcalans have not opted for the quincunx style of representation. They have, however, represented the denizens of Culhuacan as Chichimecs by their use of arrows and by their



Figure 4: Culhuacanos conquered by Nuño de Guzmán

limited clothing. The Culhuacanos are naked except for loincloths. The lack of clothing is an identifiable mark of a Chichimec group. Another technique often used to identify Chichimecs is their use of bows and arrows as their weapons. While in this defeat we do not see the bows, the arrows flying through the scene support Culhuacano status as Chichimecs. In pre-Hispanic narratives, equilibrium between Chichimec and Toltec qualities was celebrated. In the discussion of Cíbola, we find that the concept of Chichimec has taken on a new dimension.

As expeditions crossed through the Americas, the rhetoric of natural slavery became a checklist for explorers in determining the potential for success of various colonial enterprises. One of the most frequently cited characteristics in the records of explorations was whether the new communities “covered their shame.” Nakedness is an indication in Aristotle’s taxonomy of “less-civilized groups” and their “natural” status as those who could/ should be enslaved, opened the doors for conversion as well as the justification for establishing *encomiendas* in those areas. This concept was exploited by the missionary enterprise to justify their efforts in converting the Amerindian groups as well as by the entrepreneurs like Cortés and Nuño de Guzmán. In fact, differing attitudes on how Amerindian subjects were to be treated dominated the rhetoric of the conquest in civil as well as religious debates. These debates were not unknown

to the Amerindians themselves as the Tlaxcalan narratives indicate to us. At the same time, some of the Reconquest rhetoric that spurred Christian forces to drive entire Muslim and Jewish communities from Spain reinvigorated as the Turks threatened Europe from the east. Tlaxcalan narratives indicate that they also were aware of these events.

For Tlaxcalans in the 1580's, both the Turks and the Chichimecs deserve to be conquered by the "Christian" and "civilized" forces in which they participate. As the Tlaxcalans attempt to reconcile rhetorically European and Amerindian concepts of "other" they become fused in a fascinating hybrid representation. I believe that this is what is happening in the Tlaxcalans' representation of Cíbola. Like the Culhuacanos, the Tlaxcalan narrators mark the inhabitants of Cíbola as "barbarians" or "Chichimecs."

We must look at the context of the images to better understand this frame for the Tlaxcalans, and the *Descripción de Tlaxcala* gives us a clue, but we must be careful not to credit the entire narrative to one author. Because the images of the *Codex of Tlaxcala* accompany the *Descripción de Tlaxcala* manuscript edited by Diego Muñoz Camargo, it could be possible that this mestizo historian also compiled the images. Walter Mignolo establishes that Muñoz Camargo was responding to the request of the Spanish government in the compilation of the *Relaciones geográficas*. Although Muñoz Camargo did wish to portray Tlaxcala in a favorable light, his interests and involvement in the production of the *Relaciones geográficas* also stemmed from an interest in improving the Tlaxcalan political situation to better support his commercial endeavors. He mestizo chronicler was also involved in sheep ranching and the very lucrative production of cochineal dye (Mignolo 451-484). Muñoz Camargo's answers to the questions posed in the *Relación geográfica* included staunch professions of the Catholic faith and the condemnation of "heretical" activities and pagan customs practiced by the native populations.

Muñoz Camargo, although mestizo, continually separated himself from the Amerindians by referring to indigenous Tlaxcalans in the third person plural "they" and "them" in his narratives. The glossator of the images uses first person to explain the images. If Muñoz Camargo prepared the folios illustrating the various campaigns in which the Tlaxcalans aided the Spaniards, we would also expect a distancing from the indigenous account would be expected in the glosses of the images, yet the glosses from some of the folios, in contrast, indicate an affiliation between the glossator and the participants in the campaigns:

La batalla que hubieron los n[uest]ros con los aculhuaques mexicanos, y donde hubo la gran victoria HER[NAN]DO CORTÉS contra ellos... The battle that our warriors had with the Aculhuacan Mexicans, and where there was the great victory of Hernando Cortés against them... (folio 264r), *my translation*.

The voice in the glosses is definitely Amerindian, and it seems unlikely that Muñoz Camargo would have referred to the Tlaxcalan warriors in an inclusive manner here since he does not do so in any of his other writings. Therefore, we can be fairly certain that he was not the original artist of the images. He must have known of them, although instances occur in the *Descripción* that are contradicted in the images. On the other hand, the images do reflect a preoccupation with the Tlaxcalan socio-political situation during the second half of the sixteenth-century. A passage in the *Descripción de la ciudad* offers an intriguing frame for Tlaxcalan perceptions of the historical importance of Cíbola and the connections it might have to how the Tlaxcalans were constructing their version of the accounts of the conquest, the actual colonial situation and their pre-Hispanic history. In the *Descripción de la ciudad* chapter on pre-Hispanic warfare, Muñoz de Camargo discusses the evolution of Tlaxcalan warfare:

Este era el modo de sus peleas y combates, con tiros de piedras y saetas y dardos, hasta que venían a las manos, y a los porrazos y macanazos, y con las espadas de pedernal, que daban mortales heridas y cuchilladas; aunque el día de hoy no han quedado más armas de arcos y flechas, los cuales usan los chichimecas y toda la nueva tierra de Cibola, Tiguez, Quibira y Sonora y las demas provincias que llamaron de las Siete Ciudades que fue la entrada que hizo FRANCISCO VASQUES DE CORONADO, y toda la tierra que llamaban de la Florida; los cuales arcos y flechas es la más terrible arma que las gentes bárbaras pueden usar. Y ésta debido de ser la primera y más antigua arma que hubo en el mundo, y la que los primeros hombres homicidas inventaron, que tan cruel y mortal daño hace y ha hecho; y así lo usan los turcos desde su origen hasta estos nuestros tiempos, y también se lee que la usaron los griegos y los troyanos; por donde se debe colegir que no debió de ser en solas estas naciones habitadoras deste nuevo mundo. (139 this was the nature of their fighting and combat, with stone-throwing, and darts and arrows, even coming from their hands, and pummeling and club beating, and with flint swords that wielded mortal wounds and slashes; although currently none of these remain except bows and arrows, those that the Chichimecs use and all the new lands of Cibola, Tiguez, Quibira and Sonora and the other provinces that are called the Seven Cities where FRANCISCO VASQUES DE CORONADO made an excursion, and all the land that is called Florida, the bows and arrows are the most terrible weapons that barbarous people use. And, since they are the first and most ancient weapons that there are in the world, and that the earliest homicidal men invented, that cause and have caused such cruel and mortal injury, and such as the Turks use since their origin and into our times, and also we read that the Greeks and the Trojans used them.)

As we can see, the ideas of city-dwelling “civilized” and nomadic “barbarous” groups exists in both European and Amerindian cultures in the colonial discourse. In pre-Hispanic times, while the use of “Chichimec” weapons would have been noted for this Zuni Pueblo, the term Chichimec did not represent an infidel, just one part of a balance between military prowess of nomadic groups (*chichimeca*) and sedentary life of agrarian societies in the Valley of Mexico (*tolteca*). The Tlaxcalans have taken a dichotomy of balance and adapted it to inform their understanding and application of Aristotle’s laws of natural slavery. In addition, the religious element of infidel has been added. One

could never claim that either the Ottoman Empire or Zuni pueblos were “uncivilized” in examining their material culture; it becomes the role as “infidel” for using barbarian implements of war that condemns the two in the rhetoric of defeat. In the images with the *Codex of Tlaxcala*, the expedition to Cíbola is the only event that is a failure. At the same time, its inclusion actually expresses a polemic where the Tlaxcalans attempt to link Cíbola to the barbarian Chichimecs who, like the Turks, represent an infidel aggressor.

Nevertheless, the Turkish threat is felt and explored for audiences at home in Tlaxcala, too. Another Tlaxcalan narrative offers a fascinating frame of reference to the conflict. At the same moment that conquistadores are exploring the Americas, in Europe, Charles V is facing Suleiman the Magnificent of who conquered Rhodes in 1522 and is marching through Hungary for Vienna. This conflict is not unnoticed in the Americas and artistic activities in Tlaxcala indicate an awareness of global politics as well as a possible critique of Cortés as a leader.

In an expansive celebration of Corpus Cristi in the new city of Tlaxcala, the Amerindians, under the direction of Motolinia stage the futuristic drama celebrating the (Christian) Conquest of Jerusalem, with Tlaxcalans and their allies helping to liberate the Holy Land from the infidel Turks. Roland Baumann discusses Tlaxcalan theatre as an expression of their autonomy in the colonial era: “Through ‘Franciscan’ drama the Tlaxcalan nobles were able to express their ethnic pride and their ‘vision of the conquest’” (150). Therefore, “when the Indians of Tlaxcala participated in mass performances conceived by the friars, they were not the mere subjects of [conversion] experiments, but learned how to use them for their own purposes” (140). As Stark has identified, we begin to see multiple interpretations of the same events and multiple “versions” of the colonial reality.

Not only were the Tlaxcalans keeping track of events in Europe, they were especially aware of events happening in Tenochtitlan both in pre- and post-conquest times. When Mexica groups in the colonial capital staged a theatrical portrayal of the futuristic “Conquest of Rhodes” in which the Mexica under Cortés retake the city from the Turks who had conquered it in 1522, the Tlaxcalans stage a response. The Tlaxcalans dramatize the portentous retaking of Jerusalem from the Turks in an impressive demonstration of “one-upping” their historical rivals as well.

The drama took place in the plaza of the city of Tlaxcala on June 5, 1539, in honor of the peace agreement between Charles V and Francis I signed on July 18, 1538. The “Conquest of Jerusalem” presents the fictional taking of the Holy City by Spanish and American armies, aided by the papal court, Charles V, and the French and Hungarian Monarchs, Saint Michael, Santiago, and Saint Hippolytus. The pro-Spanish forces included native actors portraying soldiers from Castile, Leon, Toledo, Aragon, Galicia, Granada, Viscaya, Navarre,

Germany, Rome, and other parts of Italy. In charge of the American forces, another Tlaxcalan noble played Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza leading soldiers from Tlaxcala, Tenochtitlan, the Huasteca region, Cempoala, the Mixteca region, Texcoco, Peru, the Caribbean, the Tarascan region, and Guatemala. The armies represent an extremely inclusive list of any possible participants with an attention to their geographical areas.

The opposition, equally inclusive, consisted of armies from Galilee, Samaria, Damascus, Syria, and Turkey, who were captained by another native actor playing Cortés as the grand sultan of Babylon and tetrarch of Jerusalem, with Pedro de Alvarado by his side. In the *Codex of Tlaxcala* the portrayal of Cortés corresponds to the treatment of a victorious military captain. Mesoamerican military conflicts, though dedicated to divine patrons, also revolved around the concept of balance and equilibrium.

While the perception of holy enemies existed in conjunction with the idea that one or the other would be stronger at one time to justify victory or defeat on a given day, the concept of an infidel that was to be eliminated because of a divine superiority was unknown until the arrival of Catholicism. In fact, deities of defeated groups were incorporated into the pantheon of the Aztec empire, ensuring a “divine blessing” on the new order. This treatment of Cortés is certainly ambiguous and unique. It may reflect suggestions by Motolinia, but it certainly reflects a moment in which the Tlaxcalan leaders sanctioned a co-existing logic and a diversity of narrative frame for the events related to Tlaxcalan hegemony and Amerindian constructions of the new political order in post-conquest New Spain.

With regard to the conflicts between Cortés and Fray Marcos de Niza, Motolinía was involved at least marginally in the controversy over Cíbola in the mid-1530's. As a Franciscan, it is also quite possible that he opposed Cortés's position that Franciscan Fray Marcos de Niza had fabricated his story about visiting the legendary seven cities. Perhaps it was Motolinía's suggestion that Cortés and his aide Pedro de Alvarado would lead the Turkish and Moorish armies in the defense of Jerusalem. This rather bizarre casting would serve Motolinía's political message and would make the representation all the more entertaining for him. However, how would the Tlaxcalans have received this message? It appears that they, too, had a political stake in the representation. Mesoamerican military conflicts, though dedicated to divine patrons, also revolved around the concept of balance and equilibrium.

Especially in the ritual *xochiyaoyotl* (Flowery Wars), the warriors captured for sacrifice were to be of the highest caliber to assure that the offering would please the divinities. In addition, the cosmic order depended upon a balance achieved between Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl. While the perception of holy enemies existed in conjunction with the idea that one or the other would be stronger at one time to justify victory or defeat on a given day, the concept of an

infidel that was to be eliminated because of a divine superiority was unknown. While Motolinía perhaps desired to castigate Cortés for his attacks on Franciscan exploration and evangelization attempts, the Tlaxcalans understood that a divine struggle could have shifting alliances. It was not absurd for them that Cortés would be the leader of divine opposition after leading them to victory. Shifting alliances often made enemies out of allies in Mesoamerica. Like the Europeans, however, the Tlaxcalans were much more comfortable with local ethnic identities than with those of their allies as the details of the drama indicate.

In the “Conquest of Rhodes” at Tenochtitlan, Cortés plays the role of conquering hero saving the city from the infidel invaders, but his role in the Tlaxcalan representation, he is the commander of the infidel armies. While we cannot be sure of the motivation for this casting, without any doubt we can state that based upon the various narratives detailing Tlaxcalan efforts in the colony of New Spain, the Amerindian groups are able to examine and construct multiple meanings and interpretations of events, they are able to incorporate new details and new narratives into their accounts and they are innovative in their attempts to survive and to succeed in the new colonial order as characteristic of Stark’s “heterarchical” response.

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