

Prologue

THE 1522 COLLECTIVE

Camilla Townsend

NO ONE HAD expected that the 500th anniversary of the Spanish conquest of Mexico—an event that brought smallpox and a host of other diseases to the New World for the first time—would be marked by another cataclysmic unleashing of microbes. Yet so it was. The shock of the COVID-19 pandemic led history graduate students at Rutgers University to relate to the past in unexpected ways. Being in the midst of a world crisis was not quite what they had thought it would be. It became clear to them that during and after every historical catastrophe, life went on for most people. Adults still needed to find food for the children; pre-existing rivalries and rages did not disappear or always temporarily diminish. Likewise, they confronted the reality that people's experiences of apocalyptic events depend to a great extent on their wealth and power, and that the more fortunate are often capable of responding with staggering coldness to the suffering of others. The students internalized on a deeper level than ever before that, in the midst of cataclysmic events, people do not know if the world will ever reconstitute itself according to the old patterns or not. And if not, people at first have little ability to envision the new world that will be born.

As the students talked about the past and wondered about the future, two doctoral candidates in the Rutgers History PhD program, Celso Mendoza and Josh Anthony, got in touch with me to say they had an idea. More than ever, they wanted to illuminate the days and years immediately after the Spaniards brought down the Aztec government. The leaders of Tenochtitlan (the Aztec capital) sued for peace in 1521. Celso and Josh wanted, they joked, to write a book about 1522. It had long been assumed that the decades after

the conquest were a sort of “black hole,” in the sense that Indigenous people did not begin to use the Roman alphabet to write in their own languages with any frequency until after about 1550. But Celso and Josh thought that if a collection of people worked together, each providing a bit of the picture, much might be accomplished.

They and their peers were also inspired by the political protests that shook the world in the summer of 2020. The following year, a piece was published by fellow Nahuatl scholar Justyna Olko encouraging Mesoamericanists to think in terms of deep changes that our work is a part of. In a group review of new books, Olko wrote, “These recent historical narratives are not only driven and shaped by solid research and sensitive imagination. They are also influenced by present-day concerns relating to various forms of violence, racism, social justice, and gender issues, as well as women’s and Indigenous people’s rights, advocacy and agency.” In short, she added, “while this scholarship recovers and helps us understand many neglected facets of the past, it is also about contemporary challenges and values, revealing that history *is* about the present.”⁴

During the academic year 2020–2021, Rutgers University classes remained remote as the world’s scientists rushed to create a vaccine. I communicated virtually with several of my students at Rutgers, and we established the “1522 collective,” each of us determined to use our knowledge of certain Nahuatl-language texts to fill in the picture of the early post-conquest decades in a responsible and sensitive way. We thought through what sources were available and how we might organize the work. We began the necessary translations. As soon as we were able, we met in person, in the early fall of 2021. At that day-long meeting, we considered who else was working intensively with very early Nahuatl sources, not only in this country, but also in Mexico and Europe. We invited a number of others to join us, and they accepted.

What became quite clear was that even though we are living in a world in which increasing numbers of Indigenous peoples are securing PhDs, very few of them presently study the early colonial era. In our 1522 collective, we found ourselves with only one Nahua person (Sandra Acocal), plus one Chicano of Indigenous heritage (Celso Mendoza). At the same time, we recognized that every scholarly conversation we had ever had with Indigenous colleagues at conferences and elsewhere had provided invaluable insight. Even if such a person were not in our immediate field, someone who had spent his or her whole life considering Indigenous experiences and perspectives was bound to see things in a light the rest of us often did not. Not wanting to produce yet

another book that had relatively little Indigenous input, we pondered possible solutions.

For a two-day conference in 2022, we planned for contributors to workshop their chapters; at the same time, we invited five Mexican Indigenous intellectuals of various backgrounds to comment on any aspect of the subject of conquest and its ramifications that they found interesting or important, comments that we would later turn into a joint response section or epilogue. Three of the participants were Nahuas: Abelardo de la Cruz (assistant professor of religious studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Eduardo de la Cruz (director of IDIEZ, Instituto de Docencia e Investigaciones Etnológicas de Zacatecas), and Baruc Martínez (professor at the Colegio de Morelos). One was Mixe: Yásnaya Aguilar (linguist); and one was O'dam: Selene Galindo (documentary filmmaker). The encounter was even more meaningful than we had hoped. The Indigenous visitors challenged the authors to rethink long-held assumptions and redirected several of the chapters along different paths. Their own contributions powerfully moved the conference participants. In the memorable phrasing of Josh Anthony, they brought not just their people's *huebuetlahtolli* (ancient words, or wisdom) but also their *yancuic tlahtolli* (new words). Ultimately, we all concluded that for the book, we wanted the contributions from these five Indigenous scholars to be woven in between the chapters, rather than being isolated in a separate section.

In the end, we think we have created a book that is itself a sort of modern *xiuhpohualli*. In the ancient Nahua genre, different speakers would each in turn step forward to give their perspective on a set of events. It was understood that only a collective set of voices could move a larger conversation forward. We wish to heed their teachings.

Introduction

NEW APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF THE EARLY POST-CONQUEST NAHUAS

Camilla Townsend

“TLANECI,” SAY THE Nahuas, to express that it is dawn. Translated literally, the phrase means “things are appearing.” Little by little, the outlines of the world appear out of the darkness. Looking backward, the earliest decades after the conquest of Mexico have been a period of obscurity. How can people today understand and relate to the experiences of Indigenous people from five centuries ago, who were suddenly forced to learn to live with powerful strangers from the other side of the world? Due to the paucity of reliable sources, it has been difficult to say. In recent years, scholars have made great strides in their work with Indigenous-language texts and their engagement with Indigenous concepts. What is the shape of the world that is beginning to appear out of the proverbial darkness?

The story of the conquest of Mexico has been told many times. A familiar narrative recounts the 1519 arrival of Hernando Cortés and his flotilla off the coast of today’s Veracruz and their daring expedition up into the mountains of central Mexico, where they had heard they would find a great capital city. They eventually reached the Mexica (or Aztec) metropolis of Tenochtitlan, and in 1521, after the arrival of more Spanish ships and the creation of alliances with many local peoples, they leveled most of the city and became the new lords of the land. In recent decades, historians have told a different kind of story, one acknowledging the central importance of the Spaniards’ Indigenous allies in the political and military drama. The people of Tlaxcala, who inhabited the valley just to the east of the Aztecs’ central basin, had long been the enemies of the Aztecs, and they elected to join the Spaniards very early on. After the victory over Tenochtitlan, the Spaniards pressed their allies to join

them in moving outward from the central basin at ever-lengthening distances. Gradually—over the course of nearly a century—they brought the whole of Mexico and Central America under subjection. Even then, Indigenous people continued to struggle against Spanish rule in direct and indirect ways.

Yet despite the attention paid to the stories of a conquest that in effect lasted for decades, the experience of life in this period has retained shadowy outlines. There is a relatively clear vision of Indigenous central Mexico before 1519: a world dominated by the Aztecs, with their towering pyramids and striking sculptures, brutal imperial warfare, and evocative poetry. In the 1600s another similarly vivid picture emerges, one of charming colonial cities surrounded by a largely peaceful countryside, where Indigenous farmers raised their crops and went to church. But how exactly did the Indigenous people who actually lived between about 1520 and about 1590 experience everyday life and negotiate these dramatic changes?

Scholars haven't known much about this because there is no traditional archive to consult. The Spaniards themselves were only just establishing their own record-keeping system in the New World, and it has been understood that absolutely no record was kept of what Indigenous people privately thought or talked about when alone. Before the conquest, the people of Mexico's three central valleys—most of whom were speakers of Nahuatl—had recorded events in the form of glyphic timelines that served as mnemonic devices, capable of eliciting a rich oral performance called a *xiuhpohualli* (yearly account). But those who could read the symbols died over the course of the 1500s, whether from European diseases or simply old age. Young people weren't versed in the iconography. (In the mid-1500s, an eager young man, keen to remember his people's history, tried in vain to understand a painted record. Eventually, he threw up his hands in frustration, saying, "And in that year a great many things happened."¹) At first, there wasn't anything available to replace the disappearing record-keeping system. A handful of Spanish friars began to teach a few students the basics of the Roman alphabet right after the war ended. It took years, however, for the teachers and their students to work out how to use that alphabet to represent Nahuatl sounds that did not exist in Spanish or Latin; it was even longer before enough Indigenous people had learned to use the system so expertly that they could teach it to others in the privacy of their own homes or before inhabitants of the Nahua world could use it regularly to record their own thoughts without Spanish supervision.² Only after the 1560s did plentiful sources written by Nahuas, for Nahuas, and in their own language come into existence.

One result of this information vacuum is that enthusiastic scholars and other commentators have had great liberty to make assumptions about what

Indigenous people were thinking or feeling. The conversation on the fate of the Indigenous after the conquest has thus varied considerably over time and space, and what a person knows—or believes that they know—greatly depends on generation, location, and degree of exposure to academic or public discussion. In recent times, the presumed scenario has generally been one of two extremes: either the Indigenous people were utterly brutalized and left with almost nothing from their old world, or they were so strong and resilient as to make it doubtful that they should even be called conquered.

In an effort to move away from the all-too-common practice of using other people's stories to prove whatever one wishes to prove, it is essential to try to consider what the Nahuas who lived through the world-altering events said about the matter. Are there presently enough tools at scholars' disposal to make this possible? This important question deserves a careful answer.

On Shifting Methodologies

In 1959, the great Mexican historian Miguel León-Portilla published *La visión de los vencidos* ("The Vision of the Vanquished"), a collection of Indigenous testimonies about the conquest drawn largely from sources written by Indigenous people working hand-in-hand with their friar-teachers.³ Coming in the wake of five centuries of relying solely upon Spanish accounts, the new perspectives found in the book took the world by storm, and the work was soon translated into at least a dozen languages. In English, the landmark work was called *The Broken Spears*. Its importance has been immeasurable, and it remains a pre-eminent classic to this day, assigned in classrooms around the world.

This book is titled *After the Broken Spears* because the phrase spoke to the authors' collective goals in two regards. First, we very literally wanted to explore what happened to the Nahuas in the weeks, months, and years that followed the war with the Spaniards. Who were "the Nahuas after the conquest"⁴ in the earliest, most inscrutable period? Second, we wished to challenge ourselves to proceed more carefully than hitherto in our study of whatever sources we do have at our disposal. In fact, "the broken spears" never existed: the text in question actually refers to "crushed bones." The piece is not actually a nostalgic warrior's lament, but rather a distraught memory of the hellish days of the struggle against European crossbows and cannons. A series of errors on the part of several people—translations based on assumptions, assumptions not challenged by placing the source in context—led to the invention of "the most famous line in Nahuatl."⁵ The phrase thus serves as a reminder to be more cautious and to try to do better by our subjects, using the

techniques we now have available. In short, we wished to push ourselves to find ways to think creatively, even imaginatively, about the extant sources, yet without ever being unfaithful to them or the world that produced them.

In recent times, scholars have been able to fine-tune what they mean when they say they are “studying Indigenous sources.” Originally, the phrase meant—just as it did for Miguel León-Portilla—that they were working with sources written in Nahuatl but generally prepared by Nahuas and Spaniards working together, with the Europeans generally providing the framework. Some of these sources were created within the schools and workshops operated by Franciscans and other friars. Others were created in the course of doing mundane legal business in the Spanish courts; they include such documents as wills, land transfers, and tax lists. These sources have enabled some marvelous scholarly work.⁶ Recently, there has been more interest in mining sources written by Nahuas, for Nahuas—that is, sources produced without regard to Spaniards or their values and expectations. Such scholars seek out, for instance, the old songs people still hummed under their breath, the old prayers they still remembered, and the traditional histories they wrote down and passed on.⁷ Such sources are rarer, and sometimes more difficult for outsiders to understand, but studying them is well worth the effort, as this book demonstrates.

In the past, careful studies of a few exceptional texts have offered some clues as to what Indigenous people thought and said among themselves, when no Spaniards were present. Sometime in the mid-1500s, for instance, a woman in the royal house of Texcoco, on the eastern side of the central basin, moaned to an old grandmother about the errant behavior of her eldest boy, “He runs howling and shouting as though he were a Chichimec.”⁸ The young woman used a term that broadly referred to the nomadic peoples of the north; she feared he knew nothing about the dignified ways of his immediate forebears, which she was apparently failing to teach him. But the old woman comforted her, saying that the child’s great-grandfather Ixtlilxochitl (a warrior prince remembered for his deeds during the conquest) had been just like that, and he turned out fine. As a tlatoani, a ruler, he had defended his people admirably in the early years after the war.⁹ This fascinating text survived because several different generations consciously chose to preserve it as a primer for teaching facets of sixteenth-century Nahuatl. In the late 1980s, famed Nahuatl scholars James Lockhart and Frances Karttunen published a critical edition. They called the text “the Bancroft Dialogues” (after the library where it was housed) and gave their book the perfect title: *The Art of Nahuatl Speech*. “The manuscript which we here publish in transcription and translation,” they explained

in their first sentence, “is such a superb example of so many important things that we have analyzed it and discussed the insights it provides at great length.”¹⁰

What even such valuable editions could not do for modern scholars, however, was provide an equally useful guide to the act of Nahuatl listening. Even where we have found statements made outside of the purview of the Spaniards, it has remained a challenge to process them in our heads as they would have been processed when they were uttered or written—that is, to recognize the shades of meaning embedded within them. The art of listening is not as easily taught as the art of speaking. There are no rules, like the rules of grammar, to be set forth in charts. One can learn from mentors; one can keep silent while reading; one can be patient; eventually, one can begin to make connections. “Don’t make assumptions too quickly,” James Lockhart once admonished me when I was young, in true Nahuatl style. “If you do, you will accidentally make things up.” It happens far too often, he warned me.

In an effort to help those who would come after him, Lockhart wrote an article about his practice. “Through a combination of close observation, imagination, the drawing of parallels and distinctions, and the exercise of memory, [my procedure] produces a wealth of reliable, often new, otherwise undiscoverable information.”¹¹ What he offered in the piece was a set of documents, with passage-by-passage commentary, but he did not outline any methodological precepts. Indeed, in the epigraph he quoted a colleague who said such things cannot be taught, only imparted.

This volume thus has a double agenda. On the one hand, it is about the search for sources on the early colonial period; on the other hand, it is about hearing more clearly those already known to exist. Granted, the latter art is not easily taught, but there are nevertheless certain principles that can be followed.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the crux of the matter is actually quite clear: reading a Nahuatl-language source in the most effective way involves grappling equally with both text and context. On one level, there is the knowledge of the language and the eye for detail that together yield an intimate knowledge of a particular text. On another level, exposure to dozens—even hundreds—of other, comparable texts allows a leap into the world in which this particular text was written. It is an imaginative leap in a certain sense since it is up to the researcher to draw together a background setting—but that setting must come from knowledge of dozens of other comparable pieces of evidence. A leap into someone else’s historical situation can only be made credibly by a person whose memory is replete with other highly relevant texts. It cannot be

a matter of personal preference; in that sense, the leap is not an imaginative act at all.

The danger of making things up is made worse by the fact that Indigenous people have largely been excluded from discussions about their own history. But as more Indigenous scholars enter the academy, the landscape is shifting. By centering their personal experiences and the collective knowledge of their communities, Indigenous scholars have challenged many of the supposed truths about their people's past. Their overall effect on the academy, however, has been more than just corrective. The study of older Nahuatl has benefited enormously from the active participation of native speakers of Nahuatl in linguistic research, and academic training in Nahuatl has changed as well. I learned Nahuatl from a fellow non-native speaker, where we focused only on reading older Nahuatl. Most of my peers had similar training. All my students, however, learned Nahuatl from native speakers who themselves are scholars, two of whom contributed to this book. They taught my students to read older Nahuatl at the same time as they taught them to read and speak their modern variant, and to understand their culture as it is currently practiced in their communities. In the field of history, Indigenous scholars have generously offered the rest of us a wealth of information and methodologies to understand the lives of their ancestors and asked us to consider how the scholarship produced can be usable for descendent communities. Collaborative intellectual projects between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, such as this book, allow us to write histories that are both more accurate and more just.

Readers who wish to participate in learning to make successful leaps into distant contexts will want to engage with the next section. Some, however, will be satisfied to leave that task to others. Those readers should skip forward to the end, and from there plunge into the chapters about life in the most confusing and dramatic period of the sixteenth century.

On Texts and Contexts

Over the years, Nahuatl-language texts have been pulled into service in such widely different ways that it is sometimes difficult for newcomers to the field to get their bearings. In the middle of the twentieth century, when such sources first burst upon the scholarly scene—largely thanks to the efforts of Miguel León-Portilla—many people in that liberalizing era were only too happy to learn of their existence and largely took them literally. In a book that is finely researched and highly analytical as regards the Spaniards, historian

Hugh Thomas turned the Indigenous into characters from something akin to a fantasy novel: “The magicians said firmly that they had seen nothing of this sort of [visions and phantasms]. They could give no advice. Montezuma told his majordomo: ‘Take away these scoundrels and lock them up in Cualco Prison. They shall talk to me tomorrow.’ It was done. Next day, Montezuma called for the majordomo and ordered him to ask the magicians again what they believed was going to happen: ‘Whether we are going to be struck down by sickness, by hunger, by locusts, by storms on the lake, or by droughts, and whether it will rain torrentially.’”¹² Needless to say, it did not take long for literary deconstructionists to explode this rather naïve treatment of the sources’ content. The pivotal work in this regard was Joyce Marcus’s *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth and History in Four Ancient Civilizations*.¹³ Sadly, before long, many and perhaps even most young scholars were assuming that Nahuatl-language sources should be understood if not as folk tales, then purely as propaganda, or as myopic, localized views of a given situation at best.¹⁴

Currently the scholarly world is experiencing a sea change. The best new work does not look for the ways in which a source is limited or propagandistic, but rather for the ways in which it is revealing. And if language is constitutive of culture, then there is a great deal to be revealed about the Nahua world’s inner workings. One example is to be found in a reading of the long lists of women’s names—and some men’s—that are often given in a *xiuhpohualli* after the resolution of a battle. The *Annals of Tlatelolco*, for instance, amid an avalanche of minutiae, conveys who is brought to which towns and who is sacrificed and who is not: “Huitzilihuitl, the Mexica king, was brought to Culhuacan, together with his daughter, Chimalaxochitzin. To Xochimilco were brought the priest Cimatecatl, and Texcacoahuacatl, and Tozpaxoch. To Matlatzinco were brought a number of women. To Cuauhnahuac were brought Cohuatzontli and some women. To Chalco were brought Huitziltecatl and some women. To Acolhuacan were brought women. To Xaltocan were brought Tepantzin and Tezcatlamiahualtzin, who escaped and did not die.”¹⁵ In an earlier era, a scholar might have been tempted to focus on the passage’s extreme localism, which seems to take the place of a broader assessment of power dynamics in the valley. Readers often ended up frustrated with the source itself, or retreated to boredom and expressed subtle condescension. But today another style of analysis recognizes that the history teller, in listing these women’s names and their fates—and knowing his world as well as he does—is offering a clear, evidence-based statement as to how badly his people had lost the war. (Had the loss been less cataclysmic, they would not all have

been divvied up.) The narrator is simply conveying this information in terms appropriate to his culture.

How can scholars train themselves to hear all that a source is trying to tell them? Perhaps there is no one-size-fits-all technique. But James Lockhart's promise as to what would be effective generally holds true: the key to hearing the cadence of the text is to transcribe every letter, then translate every word yourself, directly from the Nahuatl into your own first language. Wait several months, then go back and do it again. Do this even if a very fine scholar has already produced an excellent translation into some other European language, or even into your own. It will still be worth the time. Our knowledge of the language has improved of late. And more importantly, only when each and every subordinate clause has passed through your own neural pathways—not passively in the sense of recognition, but actively, in the sense of construction—are you likely to notice all that the writer was trying to express.

The results are always richly rewarding. You may find humor or irony you had not noticed before, or pain and anger you had not heard before. You may hear alliteration intended for a vocal performance. You will even begin to notice which grammatical register the speaker was using in different situations, and why. Most importantly, you will begin to notice which details are repeated most, which seem to have mattered most to the speakers. Don't look for what you want or hope to find, but only for what the writer wanted you to think about. In the words of Lockhart: "Read very, very closely, expecting anything and nothing."¹⁶

With regard to constructing a useful context, perhaps the most important notion is that not all sources are equal. This has been a truism since at least the time of the conquest-era Nahuas, yet it is often ignored. We understand that we are charged with creating a space in our mind that provides a context for a source we are reading, and we are tempted to rush to fill it with as much evidence as we can muster. But we cannot afford to take a grab-bag approach, allowing ourselves to include whatever comes to hand. If we do so, we find ourselves in danger of making things up. There will always be someone somewhere who said something at least close to what one *wishes* to have been the case. The temptation will be overwhelming to rely on that bit of context—no matter how wrong the speaker or writer may have been.

The pre-eminent elements of the context for a Nahuatl-language source are other Nahuatl-language sources produced under comparable conditions. The work of an Indigenous aide helping the friars belongs in the setting of other work done hand-in-hand with the Christians. Likewise, a source offering a glimpse of Nahuatl thinking in private belongs within the world of

sources produced without regard to the Spaniards, beyond their influence, even without their knowledge. Parts of the annals, most of the songs and prayers, and all pre-conquest material culture fit within this category.

It isn't that other sources will never be relevant. But in working with a range of Nahuatl sources, you are in effect constructing an archive, one not designed by the Spanish state or the Spanish church, and thus more vulnerable. You must understand this archive's implicit Record Groups and grasp all that it teaches you before you begin to overlay other sources created by other entities for other purposes. It is the only way to prevent the Nahuatl voice from being smothered and silenced. We would never take a single document from, say, the archive of the Inquisition and seek to understand it by reading it only in the context of a repository containing wills. No more should we assume that Spaniards who did not speak the language and/or knew little of the situation were well placed to illuminate a Nahuatl text.

When we do turn to admitting Spanish-style evidence into our chamber of contexts, we must move circumspectly, examining each source before making a separate decision about it. On the one hand are traditional archival sources, the paper trail created through ordinary life under the Spanish regime: land transfers, testaments, court cases. At the most local level, these will include Indigenous participation, and in their unselfconscious matter-of-factness, they will often be invaluable.¹⁷ On the other hand, there are purposeful, self-conscious statements made in Spanish about pre-conquest life or about Nahua thinking. Because they are generally in Spanish, or at least partly in Spanish, and written to please an audience educated in European ways, they have been easily accessible and thus highly appealing to scholars for many years. But they are deeply problematic—indeed, they are the origin of most of the misunderstandings existing in the field. They include a great range of types: Indigenous authors raised in the Indigenous world but writing in Spanish; projects authored by Indigenous and Spaniards working together; Spanish authors who lived in the Indigenous world at least part of the time; Spanish authors writing in Spanish with relatively little knowledge, despite their proximity. Only the latter are easily dismissible; the first three require careful consideration. Perhaps three examples will suffice to demonstrate the nature of the dangers and how best to approach them.

One example of an Indigenous man writing in Spanish, largely for a Spanish audience, is don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, an early seventeenth-century chronicler from a leading family of the Texcoco region. A fascinating figure, he was only one-quarter Indigenous in a genetic sense, and yet he spoke Nahuatl and thought of himself as a Nahua. A veritable scholar who did his

own research, he produced an impressive corpus over the course of his lifetime. His work offers valuable insights—as well as some sheer nonsense. Readers have tended to accept all his statements as equal, rather than thinking of him as a person whose work evolved as he passed through the stages of his life. Close study reveals that what he wrote as a younger man hewed closely to pictographic and old alphabetic sources he had at his disposal, whereas what he wrote as an older man demonstrated the influence of a friend he made at mid-life—namely, the Franciscan fray Juan de Torquemada. Over time, Ixtlilxochitl incorporated the burgeoning story of Quetzalcoatl (popular in Franciscan circles at the time) as a peace-loving god, and of Hernando Cortés having been mistaken for him, though both notions are false. Thus in the case of Ixtlilxochitl, as with anyone else, it is essential to pause and consider when in his career he wrote a particular statement and under what circumstances.¹⁸

The most famous and important instance of Indigenous scholars and a well-informed Spaniard working together would be the project now called the Florentine Codex. There can be no question that in certain segments, page after page of text came straight from the mouths of elders who had lived many years of their lives before the Europeans ever arrived; often they were speaking without even being prompted. In some ways this codex is the most illuminating text available for studying the precolonial Nahuas. Yet the editing by the brilliant fray Bernardino de Sahagún is ever-present.¹⁹ Often the nature of his influence is understood by scholars to have been subtle or slight, but sometimes it was anything but. For instance, in the earliest version of the story of Quetzalcoatl, written down by Sahagún's Indigenous aides in Tepepolco when they started their project in the 1550s, the narrative concerned a god, not a man. It immediately followed the stories of Tezcatlipoca and other divinities. But Sahagún loved the idea of Quetzalcoatl as a king who had traveled east and was predicted to return. He wrote in Spanish in the margins, "Here is the story of the one who was Quetzalcoatl, another Hercules, a great wizard, and of what happened when he left." Then he added periodic marginal summaries casting the immortal figure as a mortal hero. In the next stage of the project, these comments in Spanish were translated into Nahuatl and incorporated into the text (omitting only the reference to Hercules, which might have been a dead giveaway that a European was involved).²⁰ Even in the case of the Florentine Codex, we must ask ourselves if a particular topic is likely to have been one that Sahagún might have been tempted to manipulate and if what we are reading is truly in keeping with other Nahuatl-language statements.

The Spanish source upon which we have most often relied is the work of fray Diego Durán. In the 1540s, he arrived in Mexico from Seville. He was not yet seven years old (he tells us he lost his milk teeth in America²¹) and thus learned to speak Nahuatl fluently. The book he later wrote, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, is full of details that only someone who lived with Nahuas and spoke Nahuatl could have known. He describes the singing at funerals in a way no European would have, unless he had been there. He quotes formalized speeches in a way no European would have, unless he had heard them. He describes elements of history that only someone who had been exposed to recitations of a *xiuhpohualli* could have known. The book is in some ways invaluable. And yet at other moments, when the author is faced with situations he knows little about, he does not hesitate to fill in the missing pieces as he chooses. He says, for instance, that when Texcoco's king Nezahualpilli died, Moctezuma asked how many adult sons he had and was told "five." This on its own is hard to believe of a multi-decade polygamous ruler. But then the reader is told that Moctezuma simply chose which of the five he liked best (Quetzalacxoyatl), and the young man was crowned.²² There is a whiff of the truth here—the Mexica did interfere in all their neighbors' succession dramas—but the specific facts are wrong according to every other source. A civil war actually began over the question of the succession, a political phenomenon that Durán did not recognize, as he was wedded to the ideas of orderly transfers of power and legitimate heirs. Once again, we must always ask ourselves when we are reading if a particular subject is something that a young Spaniard growing up in the 1540s and 1550s was likely to have known much about, even if he lived in a Nahuatl-speaking community. In short, in relying on Spanish sources to build context, "caution" must be the watchword.

On the Possibility of Reading Backward in Time

With their belief in the importance of the number twenty, the conquest-era Nahuas would probably not have been surprised to learn that today there are only about that number of extant Nahuatl sources dating from the very earliest decades of the colony. There are some census materials, a few petitions, a handful of simple land transfers and wills, the *Actas* of Tlaxcala's Indigenous council, and the first Christian materials written together with the friars.

However, other sources that were copied down or printed in later years harbor much earlier texts within them, texts that have been, in a sense, hiding in plain sight. Lockhart observed many years ago, for instance, that it was

quite obvious that Alonso de Molina began to write entries for his dictionary in the early decades, even though the full version was not published until 1571. This is evident because so many of the terms included were no longer in use by 1570; they were only stop-gap terms invented when the Nahuas first came across a new entity and were later replaced by loanwords. (For instance, a cow was only a *quaquaauhe*, “one with horns,” for a brief period, before it became a *vaca*, but the original term appears in the dictionary.)²³ The surviving songs offer a comparable example: because certain stanzas of certain songs refer to Christian religious elements, it has been tempting to label the songs as sites of negotiation with Christian friars. But anyone who has spent significant time translating a wide and deep sample of the corpus knows that the grammatical structures, the metaphors, the very point of the vast majority of the songs could hardly be more profoundly pre-conquest in nature. Though they were written down in the 1570s, many elements of the lyrics had been repeated for years. “The eagle screams, the jaguar cries, and you, a red flamingo, fly from the field to the place unknown.” This is not inscrutable; a warrior has died a good death.²⁴

The most important such phenomenon are the annals, or *xiuhpohualli*, as the texts are numerous, varied, and long. The earliest history-writing projects were begun in the 1540s and 1550s, and copious material dates from the 1560s and 1570s. These materials, as well as materials copied in the seventeenth century by the Chalcan writer Chimalpahin and the Tlaxcalan don Juan Zapata, all contain segments that clearly had been passed down from earlier eras. In some cases the material was actually passed down verbatim, as memorized text. This was especially true of highly dramatic text recounting colorful or important interchanges. Writers who did not know one another recorded the story of their brave and beautiful Mexica foremother, Chimalaxochitzin, being denied clothing by her captor in the exact same words, for example.²⁵ In other cases older root material is recognizable not because it appears verbatim elsewhere, but because no one born and raised after generations of contact with the Spanish world would ever have thought to include it. When Chimalaxochitzin belligerently demands some chalk so that she can mark her own body for sacrifice, since her captors are too pusillanimous to have the stomach for it, it is safe to assume that the text was not composed in the early seventeenth century, even if that is when it was being copied out.²⁶

Accepting that many late sixteenth-century sources contain older material is far from the dreaded practice of “upstreaming.” There is no assumption that what the Nahuas did in the sixteenth century is the same as what they did in the eighteenth or the twentieth, merely a recognition that words had been

bandied about and passed on in the Nahua world long before they were written down; and beyond that, that when they were written down, segments might be copied and recopied for multiple generations. In sum, if such a story of Chimalaxochitzin could be told in the early 1600s, it was because it had been told in earlier decades, too. Of course there are comments and amendments that date from each manuscript's actual point of production. It is not always clear which is which, but it very often is. We have been so intent on demonstrating our own sophistication in recognizing both hybridity and cultural evolution in the mid-sixteenth century that we have failed to see clearly enough that certain genres valued fidelity and contained large swaths of older material.

An Overview

The scholars participating in this collective project together build a strong case for avoiding the divergent views that have held sway in recent decades—of either overwhelmed and victimized Indigenous, or of stalwart people who should not even be envisioned as having been conquered. In brief, the people who lived through the sixteenth century must be credited simultaneously for their suffering and their strength. There can be no question that there was suffering, both on the part of the Mexica who lost an empire, and on the part of many neighboring peoples who were pulled into the vortex of war and then found themselves required to transfer a greater share of their wealth to strangers than they ever had been asked to give before. At the same time, the people of central Mexico remained resourceful, and most of their towns remained vibrant; they retained their language and many of their cultural expectations. They had not lost all control of their lives, though they were no longer in control.

In the pages of this book, the Nahuas behave proactively and speak their minds. But what they say does not indicate that they felt their world remained unharmed. This was true not just in the old Aztec capital (where, as former rulers, the people had a lot to lose) but throughout the region. There are indications of profound social disruptions, visible in unseemly funerals, for instance, and uncharacteristic quarrels. There is a plaintiveness, even pain, present in the surviving songs and stories. Chiefly families worry explicitly about the loss of sovereignty, as they are forced to extract more tribute from their people, or pressure them more harshly to give up the old gods or else face the prospect of punishments meted out by Spaniards. Eventually, popular rage bursts forth in veritable shouting matches, while other people, daunted

by Spanish threats, pick up the burdens that the new overlords have foisted on them. Yet through it all, the Nahuas remained themselves, ready to take on the future. Their words show that they never lost their sense of humor, a cornerstone of survival. They were far from silenced.

Although this book is not based—and cannot be based—on a traditional, European-style archive, it is nevertheless authored by historians. It is thus organized around the chronology of the events themselves, rather than the uncertain timing of when each text was first set down on paper. Thus Moctezuma dies in the first chapter, and Mexica warriors sing of the battle they have just lost in the second. Chapters 3 through 6 cover community conflicts of the 1520s and 1530s, interspersed with actual dated documents from that era. The seventh chapter treats a movement started by a Nahua priest in the 1560s, and the eighth recounts the experiences of a Tlaxcalan man who, by then middle-aged, was forced in 1591 to join an expedition to northern Mexico. The last two chapters focus on old stories written down in the very early 1600s: unlike the others, these stories do not come from the mouths of people who were present when the events unfolded or would ever have claimed to have been. In these two closing cases, it is the fact that the old stories still circulated after so many decades that matters.

The invited commentaries written by Indigenous scholars (our *yancuic tlahuic*) form an intrinsic part of the construction, both underscoring the messages of the historical chapters and pushing them in new directions. These chapters follow a parallel numeration system in Nahuatl, beginning with *inic ce*, “the first,” and ending with *inic macuilli*, “the fifth.” This Nahuatl numeration is accompanied by a number of dots that correspond to the chapter number, in a style that approximates how scribes would indicate numbers in the days before alphabetic writing.²⁷

To open the book, Eduardo de la Cruz shares a poem written in Nahuatl about the connections maintained, lost, and potentially regained in Nahua culture and history. He asks us never to forget how much this matters. Chapters 1 and 2, written by Tara Malanga and Peter Sorensen, consider the events of the war of conquest in 1519–1521. They are followed by a history of the conquest written in Nahuatl by Baruc Martínez, which centers on his native community of Tláhuac and underscores traditional Nahua ways of seeing the past. Chapters 3 and 4, by Sandra Acocal and Barbara Mundy, both consider the decade after 1521 and the growing disruptions Spanish colonization brought to Nahua life. Selene Galindo’s essay then explores the ongoing effects of colonization on Indigenous communities in the Sierra de Nayar, where she was born. The internal divisions Selene discusses are also observed

in a much earlier moment, in Chapter 5, by Josh Anthony, which discusses the destruction of Nahua social bonds in the late 1530s, and in Chapter 6, by Justyna Olko, which considers the efforts made by leaders in the early 1540s to protect those same bonds.

The volume then moves beyond the more immediate aftershocks of 1521 to take stock of the longer-term effects of Spanish colonization. This shift is introduced by a speech given by Yasnaya Aguilar Gil, originally in Mixe, her native tongue, which connects the centuries-long campaign against Indigenous languages to struggles for Indigenous sovereignty today. Chapters 7 and 8, by Celso Mendoza and Travis Jeffres, examine dramatic transformations in Nahua relationships to religious authority, the environment, labor, and war, all visible by the second half of the sixteenth century. Yet despite these destructive changes, Nahua culture in many ways remained whole. In the final commentary, Abelardo de la Cruz casts a hopeful glance toward the future as he considers the ongoing Indigenous intellectual engagement with academia and the arts. The final two chapters likewise consider the work of Nahua intellectuals and storytellers, though they revolve around texts transcribed at the turn of the seventeenth century that immortalized oral accounts that had been circulating for many decades. Chapter 9, by Clio Isaacson, discusses how Nahuas in the colonial era remembered precolonial marital politics, and Chapter 10, by Camilla Townsend, treats a tall tale about the earliest days of Spanish rule that people told several generations later. Like Indigenous people today, these Nahua authors of early texts sought to make sense of events long past and to create stories relevant to their present and their future. They, too, were doing what they could even in the hardest of times to guarantee the survival of their people's culture and the memory of their complex experience.

Oxford University Press hosts a companion website for the volume:

www.oup.com/us/After the Broken Spears. The companion website includes Nahuatl summaries of each chapter so that native speakers of the language in Mexico (and elsewhere) can easily decide which parts of the book they might want to pursue. It also offers an interactive map, state-of-the-art facing-page translations of the book's Nahuatl sources into English, and additional supplementary materials requested by the authors.

Notes

FRONT MATTER

1. The word did not come out of thin air, however. In Mexica origin stories, they originate from a place in the far north called Aztlan, where they were known as Azteca. It was only after the Azteca migrated south, under the guidance of their deity Huitzilopochtli, that they took the name Mexica, to match that of their new home: Mexico Tenochtitlan. For more on these names, see the glossary that follows.
2. The most literal translation of the word is “one who customarily speaks.”
3. The exception is for *Inic ce* and *Inic ome*, written by Eduardo de la Cruz and Baruc Martínez, respectively, in which the Nahuatl and English appear side-by-side.
4. Justyna Olko, “Indigenous Agency, Historians’ Agendas, and Imagination in History Writing,” *Latin American Research Review* 5, no. 2 (2021): 500–11.

INTRODUCTION

1. Annals of Tecamachalco, entry for the year 1442, f. 2v. A nobleman named don Mateo Sánchez seems to have been working on this text in the 1550s. See Camilla Townsend, *Annals of Native America: How the Nahuas of Colonial Mexico Kept Their History Alive* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 100–13. For an introduction to the glyphs, such as the man was struggling to read, see Gordon Whittaker, *Deciphering Aztec Hieroglyphs: A Guide to Nahuatl Writing* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021).
2. An astute analysis of why some genres took root more easily than others in the Nahua community is found in Celso Mendoza, “Scribal Culture, Indigenous Modes and Nahuatl-Language Sources, 16th through 18th Centuries,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, ed. William Beezley Digital resource: [Oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory](https://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory).

3. León-Portilla relied mostly on the Florentine Codex, but also drew from Ixtlilxochitl and the Codex Ramírez (two Spanish-language texts) as well as one Nahuatl-language *xiuhpohualli*, the Annals of Tlatelolco. An explanation of each of these sources will appear later in the Introduction.
4. This phrase harkens to the upper title of James Lockhart's classic work, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).
5. John Schwaller, "Broken Spears or Broken Bones? The Evolution of the Most Famous Line in Nahuatl," *The Americas* 16 (2009): 241–52. The text comes from the Annals of Tlatelolco, probably the earliest authored surviving *xiuhpohualli*, or set of annals. The error was not the fault of one single person. Angel María Garibay, León-Portilla's mentor, did not take account of an "o," seeing "mitl" rather than "omitl." León-Portilla did not check the work himself, and so left the word with the meaning "arrow, projectile." In Spanish, he used the word "darda" rather than "flecha" as it fit with the elegy he was envisioning. Lysander Kemp, the translator of the book into English, did not consult any Nahuatl expert and turned "darda" into "spear."
6. See especially Lockhart's *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, a field-defining work. James Lockhart's many students pursued this path to great success. Sarah Cline (*Colonial Culhuacan, 1580–1600: A Social History of an Aztec Town* [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986]), Robert Haskett (*Indigenous Rulers: An Ethnohistory of Town Government in Colonial Cuernavaca* [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991]), and Rebecca Horn (*Postconquest Coyoacan: Nahua-Spanish Relations in Central Mexico, 1519–1650* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997]) studied politics and community in specific regions. Susan Schroeder launched the study of Nahuatl historical annals in this country with her work *Chimalpahin and the Kingdoms of Chalco* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991). Doris Namala later followed up with another study of Chimalpahin, and Leslie Offutt followed the Nahuas north when the Spaniards demanded that they help conquer frontier Indians. In a different vein, Stephanie Wood considered Indigenous memories and even metaphorical uses of the conquest over the *longue durée* of the entire colonial era, noting especially the rich visual sources embedded in Nahuatl texts (*Transcending Conquest: Nahua Views of Spanish Colonial Mexico* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003]). Meanwhile, other Lockhart students imbibed his methodology but then applied it in other arenas, beyond the world of the Nahuas. Matthew Restall considered the Maya peoples of Yucatán in several books, among them *The Maya World: Yucatec Culture and Society, 1550–1850* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), while Kevin Terraciano studied the Mixtec language and produced the monumental work *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Āndzahui History, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). The work of Louise Burkhart has been field-shaping as regards the study of the texts created by friars working together with Indigenous aides.
7. See, for instance, David Tavárez, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), and Townsend, *Annals of Native America*.

8. *Yuhquin ma' chīchīmēcatl motēnhuītectīuh tzātzātiuh in motlālōa*. (It literally says that he ran shouting and beating his lips, evoking the image of a little boy playing warrior.) Frances Karttunen and James Lockhart, eds., *The Art of Nahuatl Speech: The Bancroft Dialogues* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1987). The editors explain that this profoundly Nahua set of speeches was not really produced entirely outside of the orbit of the Spaniards. The Franciscans had a strong presence among the people of Texcoco. Someone in the Texcocan royal family named Pablo seems to have been in touch with a philologically minded Franciscan; he may even have been a former student of fray Bernardino de Sahagún. It was this man who transcribed these dialogues as a teaching tool. For a new edition of this valuable work, see Frances Karttunen and Camilla Townsend, eds., *How to be Grateful: an Aztec Guide to the Art of Gratitude* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2025).
9. For more on Texcocan politics, see Bradley Benton, *The Lords of Texcoco: The Transformation of Indigenous Rule in Postconquest Central Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
10. Karttunen and Lockhart, eds., *The Art of Nahuatl Speech*, 1.
11. James Lockhart, “Between the Lines,” in *Of Things of the Indies: Essays Old and New in Early Latin American History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 230. The epigraph quotes Amos Funkenstein: “What you call social history can’t be taught. Perhaps it can be imparted.” In a note, Lockhart said he was considering writing a book about methods but wasn’t sure he would ever get to it. He did not.
12. Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortés, and the Fall of Old Mexico* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 46.
13. Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Susan Gillespie’s work was also very important in this regard: *The Aztec Kings: The Construction of Rulership in Mexica History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989).
14. Interestingly, in this era, the same was not true of scholars of all texts in languages once derogated. Colleagues who study the Indian Ocean, for instance, remember that all they had to do for a time was present a text in the Arabic language for it to be assumed to be more accurate and illuminating than anything available in a European language. But Nahuatl had no politically powerful champions to guarantee that its sources took pride of place. For a comparison, see Camilla Townsend, “Breaking the Law of the Preservation of Energy of Historians,” introduction to AHR Forum, “Vernacular Ways of Knowing,” in *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (2018): 779–88.
15. *Annals of Tlatelolco*, Year 1 Rabbit, f. 8.
16. Lockhart, “Between the Lines,” 279.
17. For more on this, readers should consult Rebecca Horn and James Lockhart, “Mundane Documents in Nahuatl,” in *Sources and Methods for the Study of Postconquest Mesoamerican Ethnohistory* (e-book), ed. James Lockhart, Lisa Sousa, and Stephanie Wood (Eugene: Wired Humanities Project of the University of Oregon, 2010).

18. Camilla Townsend, “The Evolution of Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Scholarly Life,” Introduction to a Special Issue on Ixtlilxochitl, *Colonial Latin American Review* 23, no. 1 (2014): 1–17.
19. An excellent recent study of the codex is Jeanette Peterson and Kevin Terraciano, eds., *The Florentine Codex: An Encyclopedia of the Nahua World in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019).
20. Early drafts of material that ended up in the Florentine Codex are found in the “Códices matritenses del Real Palacio,” some of which is published in facsimile in Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Historia de las Cosas de Nueva España* (Madrid, Hauser y Menet, 1905–1907). The latter only ever published what he called volumes 6, 7, and 8; and often only volume 6, dubbed the “Primeros Memoriales,” is assumed to be early material, but most of it, it seems to me, has the markings of an early or preliminary draft. The marginal insertion in Spanish comparing Quetzalcoatl to Hercules is found in *Códices matritenses*, vol. 7, 215. We find the same material, minus the reference to Hercules, incorporated into the Nahuatl in Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles Dibble, trans. and eds., *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, 13 volumes (Santa Fe and Salt Lake City: School of American Research and University of Utah Press, 1951–1984), 3:13.
21. Fray Diego Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, ed. Doris Heyden (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1994), 15. Durán’s text shares substantial material with all the texts in the so-called “Crónica X” tradition, further complicating any faith we place in it.
22. *Ibid.*, 467.
23. Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, 263–83.
24. The most thorough analysis of the Cantares is Peter Bjørndahl Sørensen, “‘I Am a Singer, I Remember the Lords’: History in the Sixteenth-Century Aztec Cantares” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2022).
25. In the Codex Aubin, we find, “Yn uitzilliuitl yn ichpoch cenca quitlaocolti yn atle ma ytl ytech uetzia quilhui yn tlahtouani Ma ytlatzin xictlaocolli y nochpochtzin tlatouanie auh niman quilhui camo niçia çan iuh yaz.” And in the Codex Chimalpahin: “Auh in yehuatl yn huehue huitzilliuitl ynic quinhucaque yn ichpoch cenca quitlaocoltia yn atle ma ytlatzin ytech huetzia quilhuiaic yn tlatouani coxcoxtli yn huitzilliuitl tlahtouanie ma ytlahztzin xicmotlaocollili yn nochpochtzin auh niman quinanquilli quilhui camo niçia çan iuh yaz.” For published versions, see Charles Dibble, ed., *Historia de la nación mexicana: Códice de 1576* (Madrid: Ediciones José Porrúa Turanzas, 1963), 31–32; and don Domingo de San Antón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *Codex Chimalpahin*, ed. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Susan Schroeder (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 2:76.
26. We find this detail in Chimalpahin’s version (see note 25). Jorge Klor de Alva made a similar point about the number of years we should assume mid-sixteenth-century sources had existed as oral texts in his introduction to an edition of Miguel León-Portilla’s work marking the quincentennial anniversary of the arrival of Columbus

- in America. Jorge Klor de Alva, “Foreword” to Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).
27. Other scholars in our field have pursued similar structures. Of special note is Kelly S. McDonough, *The Learned Ones: Nahua Intellectuals in Postconquest Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), where the monograph’s main chapters are interspersed with essays authored by her Nahua collaborators. These chapters are entitled *tlen naman*, “the present.”

A FUNERAL FOR MOCTEZUMA, 1520

1. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, trans. Janet Burke and Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012), 189. Amadís de Gaula was a famous fictional knight of chivalric romances, well loved by the Spanish Conquistadors. He was also the favorite knight of Don Quixote, having traveled to lands that were exotic and magical. Today’s readers might think of this as a reference to something like the Chronicles of Narnia.
2. On the creation of the Codex Aubin, see Townsend, *Annals of Native America*, 65–70. The Aubin belongs to the genre of Nahua annals, more properly called *xiuhpohualli* or “year counts.” This was originally an oral tradition, where trained historians would recite their community’s chronological histories at public gatherings. After the conquest, young Nahuas trained in the use of the Latin alphabet began to transcribe the traditional *xiuhpohualli*, and compose new ones. The Codex Aubin, produced in the 1560s and 1570s, combines pictorial and alphabetic text to tell the history of Mexica of Tenochtitlan from their mythical migrations from Aztlan up to the author’s present day.
3. The following piece is based upon a segment of the “Codex Aubin” as found in James Lockhart, ed. and trans., *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 276–79. I have amended the translation only slightly. Original Nahuatl text:

niman yc òmocaltzacque In ipan calzauhcticatca Etzalqualiztli cempoaltica
ypā Etzalqualiztli yn ˙ valqz yn itlatol ỹ moteuhççoma quimilhui in tiachca-
van Tla q̄caquicā ỹ mexica ca ye òmilhuitl yn atle quiqua yn imaçavan yn
teteo otlatlan in tolcuextli yn q̄qualtia Auh un axcā ye ontetl yn comon-
tivetzi Auh inin ma oc moxonexaltican in tiachcavā ma amo tipoliuhi ca
ỹnezca yn tachcavā

Niman quitoque Ca ye qualli . Niman ye monavatia çan yoaltica in calla-
quia ỹ maçatlaqualli

Auh niman valla in capidān yquac in ye no chicomilhuitl ypan necallivac
ypan in yaque tlaxcallan in tecuilhuitontli yquac mic y moteuhççoma

Yn òmic niman quivalmamaltiḡ yn itoca apanecatl niman ompa quivicac in
vitzillan çcan ye ompan quivalentocaque ye no ye ompa quivicac ỹn ecatitlā çcan
ye ompa quivalmiminque ye no ye ompa quivicac in tecpantzincō çāno