

# TLAXCALA'S RECEPTION OF THE CONQUISTADORS, 1519





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This painting depicts Malintzin translating a meeting between Xicoténcatl I and Cortés that resulted in an alliance that would lead to the downfall of the Aztec Empire. Conquistadors, Tlaxcalan nobles, and gifts for Cortés surround them. The Native Kingdom of Tlaxcala created this around 1530-40 and sent it to the Spanish Crown as part of a request seeking exemption from taxes given the aid they had offered the conquerors in 1519-21.

### DISPELLING CONQUEST MYTHS

1. Native allies—like the Tlaxcalans—and disease toppled the Aztec confederacy, not European technological & cultural 'superiority'.
2. Conquerors were not exceptional in their colonization approaches. They deployed practices developed since the early 1400s.
3. Spanish colonization was not a done deal with the Aztecs' fall. It was a long process, with some Native groups never submitting.



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**HERNÁN CORTÉS** was a Spanish conqueror who led an unsanctioned expedition into mainland Mexico that resulted in the fall of the Aztec confederacy. During his incursion, he expanded his force with Native allies, formally claiming land for Spain to later justify his unofficial actions.

Despite flouting orders, the Crown rewarded him with the Governorship of New Spain and the Marquisate of the Valley of Oaxaca.

**CONQUISTADORS** were not "Spanish soldiers" acting on royal orders, but feudal lords led by self-interest. Often depicted as "White Spaniards," a few of these men were of African descent, and most did not consider themselves 'Spanish'—they were Castilian, Galician, or Flemish, among other regional European identities. In Cortés' band, there was even a Franciscan friar-priest.



**MALINTZIN**, or Malinche, was Cortés' Nahuatl interpreter—and critical in the Spanish-Native negotiations that led to the overthrow of the Aztec. Being a slave, the Mayan gifted her to Cortés at a young age in 1519. Accounts note her diplomatic & linguistic skills in making allies out of enemies.

Becoming Doña Marina in post-conquest colonial society, she gave birth to Martín Cortés, who embodied the *mestizo* identity.

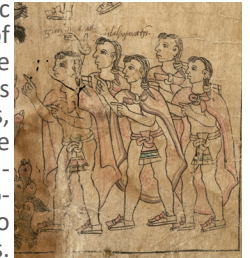
**INDIGENOUS WOMEN** in the Tlaxcalan story emerge as potential political and cultural bridges between the Native confederacy and the Europeans. Tlaxcala's rulers offered their daughters in marriage to cement the alliance. They also gifted other Native women as chattel to attend to Cortés and his men, much like the Chontal Mayan had done with Malintzin in Potonchán earlier.



**XICOTÉNCATL I** was the Tlaxcalan *tlahtoani*, or ruler, of the Tizatlán city-state. He allied the Tlaxcalan confederacy with Cortés' affront, which also included Cempoala's Totonacs. Although his son and leader of the warriors, Xicoténcatl II, opposed the alliance, he sided with the Tlaxcalan

*tlahtoani* Maxixcatzin, head of the Ocotelolco city-state who favored it. Unwillingly, his son led the Tlaxcalans into Tenochtitlan.

**TLAXCALAN NATIVES** belonged to a confederacy of city-states—Tepeticpac, Ocotelolco, Tizatlán, and Quiahuiztlan—near modern-day Tlaxcala. Rebuffing conquest efforts from the Aztec (also an alliance of city-states), they were autonomous. They, as other Native groups, were not naive to the intentions of the conquerors, and rulers took the opportunity to further their interests.



1540	1539	1st printing press established in the Americas
	1537	Pope proclaims humanity of Natives
1535	APRIL	1st Viceroy of New Spain arrives
	1533	Fr. Zumárraga becomes 1st Bishop of Mexico
1530	1531	Mexico's Royal Court justices replaced due to corruption
	1528	Cortés returns to Spain to address fraud accusations
1525	1527	Mexico's Royal Court established to curb Cortés' power
	1523	Malintzin's son, Martín Cortés, is born
	1522	Cortés becomes 1st Governor of New Spain
1520	1521	Cortés & allies conquer Tenochtitlan
		Cuahtémoc becomes Aztec ruler
	NOV.	Cortés & allies enter Tenochtitlan & arrest Moctezuma II (dies soon after)
	OCT.	Cortés & Tlaxcalans massacre Cholula natives
	SEPT.	Tlaxcalans fight, then join Cortés
	JULY	Cortés founds Veracruz & sinks ships
	JUNE	Totonacs in Cempoala join Cortés
	MAR.	Maya give Malintzin to Cortés
	FEB.	Cortés defies Velázquez & leaves Cuba for Mexico
1519		
	1518	Velázquez grants & revokes Cortés' charter to explore Mexico
	1517	Hernández leads Yucatán expedition
1515		
	1512	Burgos Laws forbid Native abuse
1510	1511	1st Royal Court & Catholic Diocese established in Santo Domingo
	1509	Ponce de León appointed 1st Governor of Puerto Rico
	1507	Earliest recorded smallpox epidemic in Americas
1505		
	1504	Cortés arrives in Santo Domingo
	1503	Encomienda labor system enacted
	1502	Moctezuma II becomes Aztec ruler
	1501	Isabella declares Natives royal vassals
1500		
	1498	Columbus' last expedition to the Americas
	1496	Portugal expels non-Christians
1495		
	1493	Pope grants Spain spiritual authority over lands west of Azores Islands
	1492	Islamic Granada falls to Catholic Spain
1490		Columbus first lands in the Americas