

Mexica conquests, Castilian conquests

Castilian and native textual structures in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*

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Abstract: After the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the Mexica elites had to rethink their political role in the new society, which included rewriting their histories. One of the first colonial manuscripts containing Mexica histories was the *Codex Mendoza*, a document produced in 1541 by Mexica upon a request of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza. The purpose of this article is to analyze the *Codex Mendoza*'s first section and highlight how the genre of European chronicles was used to structure the alphabetic texts, which are interspersed with the pictorial texts of native origin. It is argued here that the pictorial texts were reduced to illustrations for the Castilian alphabetic texts which, in turn, describe a set of information very similar to what is found in Castilian chronicles. The arrangement of the *Codex Mendoza*'s history and its Castilian texts demonstrate that native peoples' pre-Hispanic submission to the Mexica have been projected forward in time, aiming at forming part of the Castilian domains appropriated after the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and the creation of the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

Keywords: Mexica; codices; chronicle.

Conquistas mexicas, conquistas castelhanas: estruturas textuais castelhanas e nativas na seção histórica do *Códice Mendoza*

Resumo: Após a conquista de México-Tenochtitlan, as elites mexicas tiveram de repensar seu papel na nova sociedade, o que incluiu reescrever suas histórias. Um dos primeiros manuscritos contendo histórias mexicas foi o Códice Mendoza, um documento produzido em 1541 por mexicas, a mando do vice-rei Antonio de Mendoza. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar a seção histórica do *Códice Mendoza* e mostrar como o gênero da crônica europeia foi usado para estruturar os textos alfabéticos, intercalando-se aos textos pictográficos de origem nativa. É argumentado, neste artigo, que os textos pictográficos foram reduzidos a ilustrações dos textos alfabéticos em castelhano que, por sua vez, descrevem conjuntos de informações muito similares às encontradas nas crônicas castelhanas. A organização da história do Códice Mendoza e seus textos em castelhano demonstram que a submissão dos povos nativos pré-hispânicos aos mexicas foi projetada de maneira automática, como parte dos domínios castelhanos alcançados após a conquista de México-Tenochtitlan e a criação do Vice-Reino da Nova Espanha.

Palavras-chave: Mexicas; códices, crônicas.

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Introduction

The first century after the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was a period of economic, political, and social changes for native peoples based on the Central Mexico. Particularly the Mexica² elites had to rethink their political role in the new society, which included their conversion to Christianity while trying to maintain their pre-Hispanic positions. This process has been intensified by the continuous conquest wars and mainly the epidemics. Building on this approach, scholars stated that 75% of the native population at the Central Mexico died during the first century after Tenochtitlan's conquest (LÓPEZ AUSTIN & LÓPEZ LUJÁN, 2001, p. 390; UBELAKER, 1992, p. 169-176).

Meanwhile, the Mexica elites had to rethink their histories as well once their native knowledge should be suitable to the Castilian-Christian new requirements. Among the variety of texts produced over the course of the sixteenth century, the tensions between native and European knowledge can be exemplified in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*.

The *Codex Mendoza* has been used by some scholars as a primary source to understand the pre-Hispanic period history and culture (QUÍÑONES KEBER, 2008, p. 175-192), despite its production nearly twenty years after the conquest of Mexican-Tenochtitlan. This interpretation projects into the pre-Hispanic past the style of glyphs and events registered in the colonial manuscript pictorial texts³. Other studies have as well focused on the preservation of traditional native forms and structures in the glyphic signs, however, pointing out the manuscripts' context of production and comparing those signs to pre-Hispanic codices from other Mesoamerican regions, or to other forms of pre-Hispanic material culture (ROBERTSON, 1959, p. 106). Thus, aside a possible parallel with pre-Hispanic materials, this essay discusses the probable purposes of the *Codex Mendoza's* production during the beginning of the colonial period.

² Accordingly to James Lockhart, I prefer *Mexica* instead of *Aztec* (LOCKHART, 1992, p. 1).

³ Miguel León-Portilla (1992) and Eduardo Natalino dos Santos (2009) use the concept *pictoglyphic* to emphasize the main characteristics of the Mixtec-Nahua writing system such as: the presence of ideographic, logographic and phonetic glyphs in composition with pictorial elements. The pictorial system is also called *tlacuillo* (*writing-painting*, in Nahuatl) by Karl Anton Nowotny (2005 [1961]) and Gordon Brotherston (1997).



This essay purposes an analysis of the historical section from this colonial Mexica manuscript by highlighting how the genre of European chronicles was used to structure the alphabetic texts⁴, which are interspersed with the pictorial texts of native origin. Although the *Codex Mendoza* presents pictorial texts similar to structures found in histories produced during the pre-Hispanic period by other Mesoamericans peoples, they are illustratively submitted to the Castilian texts structured as a chronicle. In the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*, this textual hierarchy seems to also translate the Castilian power over the Mexica: the empire conquered by Tenochtitlan during the pre-Hispanic period are thus presented as automatically appropriated through the Castilian conquest and integrated as a sort of "prehistory" to the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

The following section presents a general introduction to the *Codex Mendoza* in order to clarify its contexts of production, authors, and aims. Thereafter, the historical section of the manuscript will be analyzed in more detail to emphasize the centrality of the chronicle structure to the interplay of pictorial and alphabetic texts.

The *Codex Mendoza*

Also known as the *Códice Mendocino* and *La colección Mendoza*, the *Codex Mendoza* was created in 1541. It is a 71 folio manuscript (with 142 numbered pages, measuring 32.7 x 22.9 cm) of handcrafted European paper bound as an European-style book (GLASS & ROBERTSON, 1975, p. 160-161; NICHOLSON, 1992, p. 1-12). It is believed that *Codex Mendoza* might have been created upon a request of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza in order to send the document to Emperor Charles V. However, the codex was stolen by French privateers during its journey and passed from hand to hand through a number of collectors and scholars until its arrival at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, where it is kept today (ALCINA FRANCH, 1992, p. 108).

Throughout the period between *Codex Mendoza*'s robbery and its arrival in Oxford, the manuscript was published as part of Samuel Purchas (1625) and Athanasius Kircher's (1652-1654) universal histories (GLASS & ROBERTSON, 1975, p. 160-161; CAÑIZARES-ESGUERRA, 2001),

⁴ Following Eduardo Natalino dos Santos (2009), I use *alphabetic texts* to emphasize that it is possible to find also *pictorial texts* in the *Codex Mendoza*.



bringing up *Codex Mendoza*'s pictorial and alphabetic texts to the European literate audience. Although those scholars were not concerned about evaluating the veracity of native manuscripts, it can be assumed that the *Codex Mendoza* was beforehand used by Europeans as a source of native Mexica knowledge.

As for the writing, the manuscript employed both the alphabetic and the pictorial systems, to write Castilian texts and to depict Mixtec-Nahua glyphs, respectively. Indeed, the structure of the *Codex Mendoza* alternates alphabetic text folios in Castilian with pictorial folios which are, in turn, glossed with captions in Castilian or Nahuatl⁵. In 1941, Federico Gómez de Orozco proposed that upon the express request of the Viceroy, native author Francisco Gualpuyagualcal created the pictoglyphic pages as well as that the alphabetic texts in Castilian were written by a *nahuatlato*⁶ Juan González of the Cathedral of Mexico (ROBERTSON, 1959, p. 95-96).

Recently, Juan José Batalla Rosado (2007) argued that Francisco Gualpuyagualcal could have been one of the six *tlacuiloque* (or scribes) who had written the *Matrícula de Tributos*⁷, a manuscript that was used as basis for the tribute section of the *Codex Mendoza*. It should also be pointed out that although Juan González was a native Nahua, he was probably educated at the school of San José de los Naturales (founded in the late 1520s) or the college of Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco (founded in 1536). Both of these Franciscan schools had libraries with hundreds of titles on many subjects, including European history (MATHES, 1985). In other words, it can be assumed that native people like Juan González had access to European books as early as the 1520s, which would have been one way for someone like Juan González to learn about European genres of writing chronicles.

The *Codex Mendoza* is divided in three sections. The first section is historical for reporting the Mexica conquests from the foundation of their city or *altepetl*⁸ Mexico-Tenochtitlan up until the Castilian conquest in 1521; this section is divided into nine different periods according to the rulers in power. The second section is tributary or financial and presents a list of regions conquered by the Mexica (organized into provinces) as well as the tribute paid by each province to Mexico-

⁵ The Nahuatl language is mainly used to some nouns as onomastic and place signs.

⁶ *Nahuatlato* is an adjective which means one who speaks Nahuatl. It is also used for colonial translators who spoke Nahuatl and Castilian.

⁷ The *Matrícula de Tributos* is a Mexica tributary manuscript produced in the Pre-Hispanic period, probably in 1511-1519.

⁸ According to Pedro Carrasco (1996) the concept *altepetl* can designate a civic center or the territorial totality of the city and is, generally, identified as *pueblo*, in Castilian.



Tenochtitlan. Finally, the third section has been described as ethnographic for presenting descriptions of daily life among the Mexica during pre-Hispanic period (BERDAN & ANAWALT, 1997, p. XI-XIII).

The above-mentioned alternating structure is repeated in each of the three sections of the *Codex Mendoza*, presenting pairs of an alphabetic text folio in Castilian followed by a pictorial folio (Figure 1). Every pair of pages presents similar information, but the alphabetic text folio in Castilian is more detailed (especially for a European reader); in contrast, each pictorial folio has an illustrative function if compared to the corresponding pictorial folio. My arguments in the rest of this essay will focus on the first section of the codex, found on folios 1r to 16v.



Figure 1 - The folios of the *Codex Mendoza* alternate alphabetic texts in Castilian (left) and pictorial texts (right). Each one of the three groups corresponds to two folios taken from the three sections of the manuscript: 11v (alphabetic) and 12r (pictorial) from the historical section; 26v (alphabetic) and 27r (pictorial) from the tributary section; 59v (alphabetic) and 60r (pictorial) from the ethnographic section. Source: INAH, *Códice Mendoza*.

The historical section of *Codex Mendoza*: Mexica *xiuhamatl* and Castilian chronicle

Throughout pre-Hispanic times, the Mexica and other Mesoamericans peoples produced hundreds of different genres of codices dealing with a variety of topics, including manuscripts which we would call historical: the *xiuhamatl*, or book of years account (SANTOS, 2009, p. 79-80). Unfortunately, no pre-Hispanic Mexica codex survived the Castilian conquest. In the first phase of evangelization, conquerors and missionaries destroyed many manuscripts, paintings, and buildings which were associated to the cult of pre-Hispanic deities. For example, the native histories, according to missionaries, were full of mistakes and tricks of Satan, who acted as a false deity or leader. Furthermore, many manuscripts were destroyed or hidden by the peoples who had written them and consequently replaced by newly-written documents more suitable to the distinct circumstances of the colonial regime (NAVARRETE LINARES, 1998).

Regardless no pre-Hispanic Mexica historical codex had survived, some scholars (ROBERTSON, 1959; ESCALANTE GONZALBO, 2010) have established comparisons between the pictorial texts from the colonial Mexica historical tradition and pre-Hispanic Mixtec narratives about past events (written in the region of Oaxaca, currently about six hours southeast of Mexico City). These investigations revealed that the existence of formal connections among the two traditions of manuscripts regarding layout, color, and glyphic shapes. Based on that, the scholars highlighted resemblances of glyphs of the native calendar, toponyms, and personal names. Meanwhile, glyphs from post-Hispanic Central Mexico also have underwent slight transformations, or were combined with European traditions of landscape composition, perspective, and new forms of representing the human body (PASTRANA FLORES, 2011, p. 51-52).

Probably, the most important transformation was the introduction of the alphabetic writing, which led to a redesign of the pictorial texts in the native manuscripts along the course of the sixteenth century. The advent of the alphabet was accompanied by the European-style book, quite unlike the screenfold books made from long strips of animal skin or paper produced in the pre-Hispanic period (ROBERTSON, 1959). In spite of that, alphabetic texts produced by native people preserved information deriving from the native oral tradition and they introduced European content from oral and written traditions.



The *Codex Mendoza* exemplifies formal transformation that the Mexica codices have undergone in the beginning of the colonial period. Firstly, this manuscript's physical form was not made as a pre-Hispanic screenfold made of *amatl* paper, but it was done as a spine-bound European book with separated sheets of European paper. Robertson (1959) stated that this modification was crucial reading order changes and the manuscript organization itself. The introduction of alphabetic texts in the *Codex Mendoza* has been separated from the pictorial texts. It resulted in a repeating structure of pairs in which alphabetic text folios in Castilian alternated pictorial folios. Moreover, the information presented in the Castilian texts offer more than a partial reading of the pictorial texts or a description derived from native oral knowledge; these alphabetic texts are possibly structured by the European genre of the chronicle.

Figure 2 depicts all of the folios in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza* (folios 1r to 16v). Apart from the opening page of alphabetic writing, these were arranged in left/right pairs, which recreate how the manuscript would have looked to the reader when opened. Pictorial folios are usually followed by alphabetic folios, except for occasional blank folios (four, in total). The pictorial folios could be divided in nine groups, with one to three folios in length, each regarding one of the nine Mexica rulers as well as their respective governments and conquests. Ten sets of folios with texts in Castilian were interleaved to these nine sets of pictorial folios; each set of alphabetic folios has one or two folios in length. The first folio (recto and verso) introduces the historical section with brief explanations about the native calendar's structure and use in the pictorial folios.





Figure 2 – The historical section folios from the *Codex Mendoza* (folios 1r-16v). Source: INAH, *Códice Mendoza*.

The *Codex Mendoza*'s pictorial folios in general follow a standard structure, except for folio 2r (see Figure 3), which is the first one with pictorial texts. It represents a sequence of 51 years in the native calendar, which frames a cosmographic diagram of Mexico-Tenochtitlan with its toponymic glyph at the center (a cactus growing from a stone), on which is perched a giant eagle. The name Tenochtitlan is also situated below the cactus toponymic glyph. There are other details in this folio, such as plant glyphs, drawn structures of the Mexica city, humans labeled with pictorial glyphs and alphabetic glosses, and two representations of cities that were conquered by the Mexica (mentioned with both toponymic glyphs and alphabetic glosses).

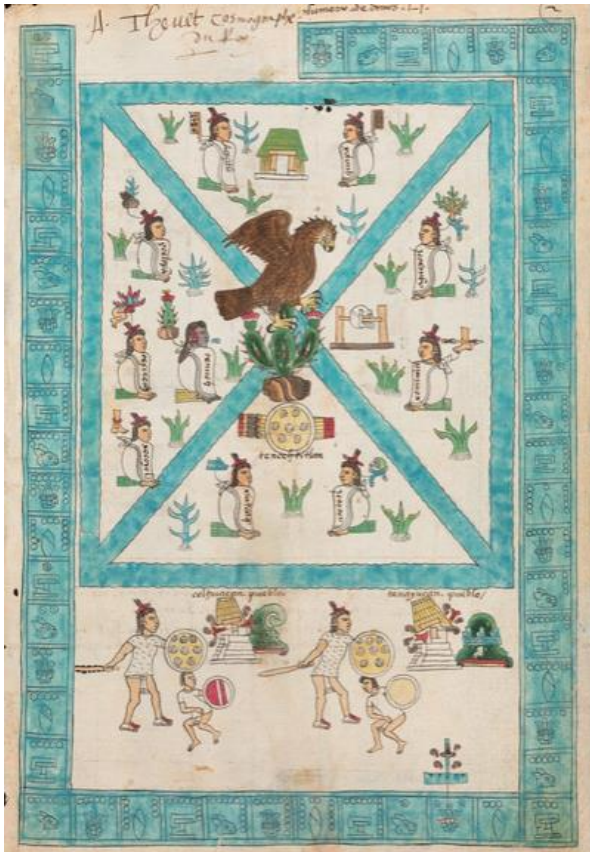


Figure 3 – Folio 2r from the *Codex Mendoza*: an exception to the patterned structure of the pictorial folios from the historical section of the manuscript. Source: INAH, *Códice Mendoza*.

Compared to other contemporaneous Mexica histories, the folio 2r from *Codex Mendoza* does not represent many details connected to Mexica deity Huitzilopochtli, who addressed to these people where to establish their city, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and construct his temple, after some rituals including human sacrifices. This also may be pointed out in the brief explanation in alphabetic text in folio 1r, which does not mention Huitzilopochtli, his orders and subsequent events reported, for example, in the *Codex Aubin*. Thus, it is possible to assert the information related to Mexica religiosity were suppressed during the production of *Codex Mendoza*, as much as happened to other histories produced by native peoples during the early colonial period. However, native historic traditions were not seen by Europeans with radical skepticism. Missionaries and Castilian authorities were willing to accept the veracity of native histories since openly religious content (viewed as *idolatrías*) were suppressed (NAVARRETE LINARES, 1998, p. 53-71).

In other words, pictorial texts from folio 2r seem to be illustrations to the alphabetic texts from folios 1r and 1v. Those two first folios tell us about the Mexica ancestors' migration and the foundation of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. They provide details of the landscape and natural resources available where the Mexica capital was established; some explanations about their capital city name is given too. These two alphabetic folios also listed the ten captains who elected Tenoch as City Lord – he was not a ruler recognized as *tlatoani*⁹ by the Mexica's neighbors. The final lines of this alphabetic introduction add statements about the native calendar, including the New Fire ceremony¹⁰, which is depicted in the pictorial folios. Finally, there is a pictorial thirteen-year sequence in folio 1v, which exemplifies part of the 52-year calendar cycle (known as *xiuhmolpilli*).

From folio 2v onwards, the pages of the first section of the *Codex Mendoza* present a standardized structure through which they narrate the successive governments of the nine tlatoani of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. As shown in Figure 4, the pictorial elements of this repeated structure are: A) representations of the years in the *xiuhmolpilli* cycle (an integral part of Mesoamerican calendar) for the years of governance of the ruler in question; B) a representation of the ruler and his name glyph; C) a war glyph, formed by a shield and arrows; D) topographical glyphs of conquered places, each associated with E) the glyph of a burning fallen temple. For some rulers, these lists of conquests (combining elements D and E) are so numerous that they take up a second or third folio. In Figure 4 (folio 12r), for example, elements D and E were repeated 14 times.

⁹ *Tlatoani*, in Nahuatl, means *who speaks well* and, consequently, ruler (SIMÉON, 1986, p. 674).

¹⁰ The New Fire ceremony was held by Mexica and other Mesoamerican peoples to celebrate the end and the beginning of the cycles of 52 years. In this occasion, all the town fires should be extinguished and sacrifices should be done. Then, the new fire was brought from the top of a mountain by a priest. This was a moment of worries, because these peoples believed their current world could be destroyed in the end of these cycles (SANTOS, 2009, p. 138; BERDAN & ANAWALT, 1996, p. 5-6).





Figure 4 – Basic elements of the rulership pages from the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*, using folio 12r. Source: INAH, *Códice Mendoza*.

In the example of folio 12r, element A represents five *xiuhmolpilli* years in a column on the left margin: 3 *tochtli* (3 rabbit), 4 *acatl* (4 reed), 5 *tecpatl* (5 flint), 6 *calli* (6 house), and 7 *tochtli* (7 rabbit). Although the total of represented years is mentioned, no Christian years were indicated with Arabic numbers¹¹. These *xiuhmolpilli* years were ordered in a column on the left margin – in other cases the row continues into the bottom of the page, and turns into a column-strip of years. Element B is an anthropomorphic representation of the ruler with indicative signs of power, such as the woven reed mat, the diadem, and the flowing speech glyph in front of his mouth, which means his role as the *speaker* (or, literally in Nahuatl, *tlatoani*). The ruler is also connected by a line to his name, which is represented by a leg covered with small dots, possibly representing bloodletting (from *teço*:

¹¹ As pointed out by Berdan & Anawalt (1996), there was some confusion here, because the glossed captions mentions six years, but only five years were represented.

bloodletter) (BERDAN & ANAWALT, 1997, p. 20); the ruler's name is also glossed alphabetically within his white clothes. The leathered shield and arrows (element C) are represented repeatedly throughout this section of the *Codex Mendoza* to indicate warfare or the conquest of places. Below the weapons glyph, there is a short alphabetic text in Castilian describing the meaning of the glyphs: “*esta rodela y flechas significan ynstrumentos con que conquistaron los pueblos contenidos en el circuito de esta plana*”¹². Element D presents different glyphs because it names each of the places conquered; it may represent ideographic, pictographic, and also phonetic glyphs compound together, and they are always connected by a line to the glyph of conquest. In addition, the places are also mentioned in Nahuatl and it is followed always by the abbreviation of “*pueblo*” (or town). Finally, as above-mentioned, element E is the glyph of a burning fallen temple, which means the place that is connected by a line to this glyph was conquered during the government of depicted ruler in the page. This element is repeated next to every topographical glyph that was represented in the pictorial pages of the *Codex Mendoza*'s historical section.

This analysis demonstrates that all elements are linked to glossed captions in Nahuatl (names) or in Castilian (explanations about what depicted images mean). This is the first evidence suggesting a subordination of pictorial texts to alphabetic texts, either in Nahuatl or Spanish, in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*. It should be also mentioned that the repetitions of the burning fallen temple glyph are redundant representations of conquests. The glyph of warfare (element C) already had such meaning and it has been represented more frequently in the Nahua histories than the burning fallen temple¹³. These glyph repetitions related to conquest were common in earlier Mixtec histories, as in the Eight Dear conquests in the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall*, and in the same Tizoc conquests depicted in the Mexica monument known as *Tizoc Stone*. These examples have depicted other glyphs to the conquest of places, but presenting the same type of repetition found in the burning fallen temples of the *Codex Mendoza*'s historical section. The repetition of glyphs seems to emphasize the amount of places under the ruler in order to magnify his power in those representations.

¹² “This disk and arrows meant warfare instruments, used to conquer the towns represented in the route of this page” (Translation mine). The glossed captions in Castilian vary in length to the element C, when depicted in the other eight cases. The most simplified type occurs four times with the words “warfare instruments” or “ynstrumentos de guerra” (folios 7v, 10r, 13r and 15v).

¹³ For instance, the *Codex Aubin* and the *Manuscript 40*.



Turning our focus to the alphabetic text folios in Castilian, it is possible to infer that they also present a certain patterned structure. Furthermore, the Castilian texts from those folios contain historical information which is not, however, represented on the pictorial folios. In general, the alphabetic texts found on folio 3r onwards are structured with the following elements: A) starting date in the Christian calendar; B) the new ruler's name; C) number of conquered peoples without their names (except the peoples mentioned in Acamapichtli (folio 3r) and Chimalpopoca (folio 5r) government; D) simple summary of the pictorial texts in the facing folio; E) comments about the ruler's marriage, offspring, bellicosity, titles received, and death; and F) total years of government¹⁴.

As an example of this structure, below I quote the Castilian alphabetic text from folio 11v, regarding Tizoc's government (Tiçoçicatzin). This text folio pair to folio 12r, analyzed in Figure 4. The core structural elements were indicated in the text by letters in square brackets.

[A] En el año de myll y quatroçientos y ochenta y Dos años en el dicho señorío de Mexico por fin y muerte de axayacaçi susçedio en el dicho señorío [B] tiçoçicatzin hermano del dicho axayacatzí y durante el tiempo de su señorío conquysto y gano por fuerça de armas [C] catorze pueblos [D] segun que susçesiuamente estan figurados y nonbrados. [E] Yten el dicho tiçoçicatzi fue por extremo valiente y belicoso en armas y antes que susçedyese en el dicho señorío hizo por su persona en las guerras cosas hazañosas de valentia por donde alcanço tomar ditado de tlacatecatl que tenyan por título de gran calidad y estado y era el punto de que en vacancio el dicho señorío el tal punto y grado susçedia luego en el dicho señorío lo qual ansi mysmo sus anteqesores hermanos atras contenydos y padre y aguelo tuyveron el mysmo curso del dicho titulo y ditado por donde subyeron a ser señores de Mexico. yten el dicho tiçoçicatzin por avtoridad y estado del dicho señorío tuvo muchas mugeres e hijos que en ellas obo y fue hombre graue y seuero en mandar y ser temydo e acatado de sus vasallos fue ansi mysmo aplicado e ynclinado a cosas buenas y virtuosas y buen Republicano e mando guardar y aprobar por buenas las leyes y fueros que sus anteqesores avyan cumplido y guardado desde en tyempo de Guegue Motecçuma y fue zeloso de punir y castigar los malos vicios y delitos que sus vasallos cometian y ansi la republica mexicana tuvo el tiempo de su vyda hordenada y byen Regida [F] fue el discurso de su vyda çinco años al fin de los quales murio y paso desta presente vida.¹⁵

¹⁴ Exceptionally, other elements are mentioned in some folios: G) the ruler's death year (Acamapichtli, folio 3r); H) the ruler's age when he died (Moctezuma Xocoyotzin, folio 15r); I) rebellions (Chalco, during Chimalpopoca's government, folio 5r); J) wars (against Tlatelolco, during Axayacatl's government, folio 9v); K) festivities (during Ahuizotl's government, folio 12v); and L) the operation of taxation (explained during Moctezuma Xocoyotzin's government, folio 15r).

¹⁵ [A] In the year 1482, [B] Tizoc succeeded to the lordship of Mexico on the death of his brother Axayacatl. And during his reign he conquered and took by force of arms [C] fourteen towns [D] drawn and named. [E] And the said Tizoc was extremely valiant and warlike in battle and before succeeding to the said lordship, he personally performed valiant deeds in the wars, for which he was awarded the title of *Tlacatecatl*. This title of high value and rank was the point and rank from which, in vacating said lordship, he succeeded to the said rulership, like his brother, father and grandfather before him, who took the same course and rose from that title to become lord of Mexico. And the said Tizoc, by authority and rank of the said lordship, had many wives and children by them. And he was a serious and severe ruler, and was feared and respected by his subjects. He was, at the same time, dedicated and inclined to good deeds, and was virtuous and a good governor. And he ordered to have preserved, and approved as laws and charters, that his predecessors had enlarged and preserved since the time of Motecuhzoma. And he zealously punished the vices and crimes that his subjects



In this example, sections A, B, C, D and F represent somewhat the content of the pictorial folios related to Tizoc's government previously analyzed in Figure 4. Section A mentions a Christian date without a correlation between native and Christian calendars; the names of *xiuhmolpilli* years were not mentioned. Section B presents, in that case, other information rather than simply the ruler's name – it is said Tizoc was Axayacatl's brother. Compared to the pictorial information from folio 12r, section C just mentions the total of conquered places, without its fourteen names. As mentioned before, section D indicates a connection between the alphabetic Castilian folio and the pictorial native folio. It can be inferred from the use of verbs “represented” or “*figurado*”. Thus, section D seems to be a second evidence of the illustration function that pictorial texts has to alphabetic texts in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*. Finally, section E is twice as long as the other sections combined and presents information with no visual parallel on the facing pictorial page, as comments about marriage, offspring, bellicosity, titles received, and the ruler's death.

All the differences analyzed exemplify the importance of the Castilian alphabetic texts in the first section of the *Codex Mendoza* by providing details of native oral traditions which accompanied the production of Mexica pictorial manuscripts texts during pre-Hispanic period; at the same time, it is possible to find content demanded by Castilian. Furthermore, the examination on both alphabetic and pictorial texts demonstrates the selection and hierarchy of information in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*. It means that some content should be important and detailed in the Castilian texts, as the comments of life's ruler (section E). In contrast, native information on calendar and names of conquered places could be simplified in a mention since pictorial texts have the function to illustrate and detail it. This hierarchy of information may indicate the Castilian texts subordinated the pictorial texts in the *Codex Mendoza*.

Some scholars, as Miguel León-Portilla (2012, p. 91-110), argues that the alphabetic texts in the pictorial native manuscripts could be a partial reading of pictorial content or additional information from what was registered in the pictorial text. On the other hand, Miguel Pastrana Flores and Silvia Limón Olvera (2011, p. 51-132) state that there are pictorial manuscripts with notes, and transcript manuscripts with pictography. Building on this approach, Pastrana defines the *Codex*

committed, and so during his reign the state of Mexico was well ordered and well governed. [F] He reigned five years, at the end of which he died and passed from this present life”. (BERDAN & ANAWALT, 1996).



Mendoza as a pictorial manuscript with notes in addition to affirming that the historical content of pictorial folios and Castilian text folios are the same (2011, p. 74).

Nevertheless, the analysis presented in this article seems to disagree with assumptions of both the groups of scholars. Firstly, the analysis demonstrated the presence of differences between the content of the pictorial and the Castilian texts in the *Codex Mendoza*; as a result, the histories are at least slightly different. Secondly, we suggested a possible hierarchy of the texts, which would imply a subordination of the pictorial texts by the Castilian texts. In other words, the *Codex Mendoza* could be defined as a transcript manuscript with pictography – and this statement would also agree with Leon Portilla's point of view.

However, the structure and prose of the alphabetic commentaries of the *Codex Mendoza* seem to parallel the structure and form of Castilian chronicles written in Iberia before the 1540s. In other words, the alphabetic texts in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza* combine information and structures of Mexica visual and oral history with the structures of Castilian written history. The tradition of Castilian chronicles has been deeply studied by Richard Kagan (2009), who presents an overview of the official history produced by Castilian royal chroniclers from medieval to early modern times. Based on the corpus studied by Kagan, I present two examples of Castilian chronicles written in the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, which contain information and structures similar to those in the Castilian text of the *Codex Mendoza*.

For instance, comments about marriage, offspring, bellicosity, titles received, and the ruler's moral appear in the *Crónica Latina de los Reyes de Castilla*, a manuscript probably written by Juan de Soria, Osma's bishop and chancellor of King Fernando III, in the early thirteenth century (CHARLO BREA, 1984):

El comienzo del reinado del rey Alfonso, el que después fue reconocido como emperador, hijo del conde Raimundo y de la reina Urraca, fue desdichado. Pero después gozó de mejor fortuna [...] gobernó en paz por mucho tiempo [...]. Su reino se enriqueció y amplió.¹⁶

Another example is from the *Crónica Incompleta de los Reyes Católicos*, anonymous manuscript produced between 1469 and 1476 (PUYOL, 1934). Using those elements listed above in

¹⁶ "The beginning of King Alfonso's reign, who afterwards was recognized as emperor, son of Count Raimundo and Queen Urraca, was unfortunate. But afterwards, he enjoyed better fortune [...] he ruled in peace for a long time [...]. His kingdom has enriched and enlarged." (Translation mine)

the *Codex Mendoza*'s structural formula, the beginning folios of the chronicle presents information similar to that found in elements A, B, C and E (indicated through the letters in the square brackets):

[B] Reynó el rey don Enrique quarto [A] a XXIII dias del em de julio, año del Señor de mill y quatrocientos y cinquenta y quatro años; del Reyno d'España setecientos y veynte y quatro; y de la postrimera vnion de los Reynos dosçientos y ochenta años. [E] Auia el rey don Enrrique treynta años quando reynó. [...] Este era de sus pueblos muy amado y de los grandes de su Reyno muy temido, y non solo de sus vasallos y naturales, mas de todos los Reynos comarcanos y avn lexanos [...]. Este fue tan rico de tesoros, perlas y piedras preciosas, que ninguno más rico em el tiempo de él em la grandeza del mundo hallauan. Este era el más poderoso de gentes que ningund rey de christianos avia. [...] [C] Visto su grand poder, se le dauan Reynos, y prouinçias y señoríos muy ricos, asi como Cataluña y Genoua y otras.¹⁷

These histories and examples above demonstrate how the Castilian chronicle tradition continued across the centuries with basic structural formulas; thus, it was possibly shared by Castilians to Nahuas, who used similar structures in the Castilian texts of the *Codex Mendoza*. Also, as above-mentioned, this manuscript was possibly written at the request of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the chronicle structure was demanded since the addressees, Charles V and his court were familiarized with this kind of document.

Furthermore, the second excerpt mentions virtues the king must have. It seems very similar to what was cited in the section E from the text of Tizoc's government. In the *Codex Mendoza*, the virtues of Mexica rulers were, for instance, being a good governor, feared, respected, and punisher of vices and crimes. These qualities were important firstly in the Castilian chronicles, which mentioned the king as beloved by his peoples, feared, rich, and the highest powerful ruler. In both the Castilian and Mexica histories, the virtues were important to legitimate the conquests into the narrative rhetoric¹⁸. Thus, in the *Codex Mendoza*, it possibly also served to recognize the Mexica conquests in the past as part of current Castilian domains on Viceroyalty of New Spain.

¹⁷ "[B] Don Enrique IV begin to reign [A] on July 24th, 1454 of Lord (since Jesus Christ was born); 724 years since the foundation of the kingdom of Spain; 280 years after the last union of kingdoms. [E] Don Enrique was 30 years old when he started his reign. [...] He was very beloved by his peoples and was greatly feared by the greatest men of his kingdom, and not only for his vassals and natives, but for all of the neighboring and distant kingdoms [...]. He was so rich with treasures, pearls and precious stones, than nobody richer could be found at those times in the world. His power over the people was the highest which any Christian king have had. [...] [C] Because of his great power, he received very rich kingdoms, provinces and lordships, such as Catalonia and Genoa, and others." (Translation mine)

¹⁸ One could argue those aspects would be related to the chivalric *ethos* that were brought to the New World by conquerors as Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, Gonzalo Quesada, and others (CANCINO, 2016). However, the *Codex Mendoza* does not present the rhetoric of suffering in the ruler's descriptions. Regardless of ruler's meritorious mentions, such as punisher of vices, it is not clear whether chivalric values influenced the texts of the *Codex Mendoza*.



On the other hand, it must be pointed out some differences of content types between the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza* and other contemporaneous Mexica histories, as the *Codex Vaticanus A* and the *Codex Aubin*. This comparison is taking into consideration only the period among the foundation of Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1325 and the arrival of Hernán Cortés in 1519. Before presenting the data from other manuscripts, it must be highlighted that the *Codex Mendoza*'s folios related to Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina's government (fls. 7v-8v) present the same type of information described in the folios related to Tizoc's government (Figure 5).



Figure 5 – Trio of folios (7v-8v) representing Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina's government. Source: INAH, *Códice Mendoza*.

The pictorial folios (7v and 8r) depict a total of 32 conquests¹⁹, while the Castilian folio (f8v) describes mainly the life's ruler, including marriage, offspring, bellicosity, titles received, and the ruler's death. Following the formula mentioned before (indicated through the letters in the square brackets), the sections of the Castilian text presented in the folio 8v are almost the same 11v (from Tizoc's government):

[A] En el año de myll y quaçientos [sic] y quarenta años en el dicho señorío de mexico por fin y muerte de yzcoatzi susçedio en el dicho señorío [B] guegue motecçuma hijo que fue de guçilyhuil señor que fue de mexico y durante el dicho señorío conquysto y gana por fuerça de armas [C] treynta y tres pueblos [D] segun que estan figurados en las planas de atras antes desta en el çircuyto de la figura del dicho guegue motecçuma [E] y avyendolos sujetado al

¹⁹ The conquest of Atotonilco was represented twice – the Castilian text mentions 33 conquests.



señorio de mexico le pagauan tributo reconociendo vasallaje este guegue motecçuma fue señor muy graue y seuro y aplicado a virtud y fue hombre de buen natural y juyzio y enemigo de viçios malos y por su buena ynclinaçion puso orden y leyes en su Republica yen todo sus vasallos de como avian de byuir so graues penas que para ello puso las quales mandaua executar sin remysion alguna al que las quebrantaua pero no fue cruel antes benino zeloso del byen y pro de sus vasallos no fue viçioso en mugeres. tuvo dos hijos fue muy tenplado en el beuer que jamas en el discurso de su vida no le sintieron en beodarse segun que los naturales yndios en general son ynclinados en extremo a la beodez antes al que tal hazia le mandaua corregir y castigar. y por su seueridad y buen enxemplo de su biuir rue temydo y respetado de sus vasallos todo [F] el discurso de su vida que fueron veynte y nueve años al cabo de los quales muryo y paso desta presente vida.²⁰

However, the *Codex Vaticanus A* and the *Codex Aubin* present information that was not described in the *Codex Mendoza* during Huehue Motecuhzoma's or Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina's government. These two manuscripts were produced in the second half of the sixteenth century²¹ and they are part of a *corpus* of nine colonial codices (including the *Codex Mendoza*), which have pictorial Mexica histories with or without alphabetic texts²². Differently from the first section of the *Codex Mendoza*, the history of the *Codex Vaticanus A* does not present alphabetic texts in almost all of the narrative. Also in contrast to the pattern of the *Codex Mendoza*, the *Codex Aubin* has both pictorial and alphabetic texts in Nahuatl on the same page.

In the *Codex Vaticanus A*, the government of Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina is represented through folio 76v to 79v (Figure 6). It is depicted the conquest of Chalco and Cuetlaxtlan, as the *Codex Mendoza* does, for example. However, besides the conquests, other events are represented under Huehue Motecuhzoma's government, such a snowstorm (folio 77r), earthquakes (folios 78r,

²⁰ "[A] In the year 1440, on the death of Itzcoatl, [B] Huehue Motecuhzoma succeeded to the said lordship of Mexico. He was the son of Huitzilihuitl, former lord of Mexico, and during his reign he conquered and won by force of arms [C] thirty-three towns, [D] which are drawn on the previous page around the figure of the said Huehue Motecuhzoma. [E] And having [been subdued] to the lordship of Mexico, they paid tribute, acknowledging vassalage. This Huehue Motecuhzoma was a very serious, severe, and virtuous lord, and was a man of good temper and judgment, and an enemy of evil. He imposed order and laws for the conduct of life in his land and on all his subjects, and imposed serious penalties for breaking the laws, ordering execution without pardon to any who broke them. But he was not cruel. He was kind to his subjects and jealous of their welfare. He was moderate with women, had two sons, and was very reserved in drinking; during his lifetime he was never affected by drunkenness, although the Indians generally are much inclined to drinking. He ordered offenders to be corrected and punished, and by his severity and good example, he was feared and respected by his subjects during [F] his entire lifetime, which was twenty-nine years, at the end of which he died and passed from this present life." (BERDAN & ANAWALT, 1996).

²¹ *Codex Vaticanus A* was produced in 1589, although this manuscript's history section has a lot of similarities to *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, dated to 1563 (ANDERS & JANSEN, 1996). *Codex Aubin* was produced between 1576 and 1608 (DIBBLE, 1963).

²² These codices are *Boturini (Tira de la Peregrinación)*, *Azcatitlan*, *Telleriano-Remensis*, *Vaticanus A*, *Aubin*, *Manuscrito 40*, *Manuscrito 85*, *Mexicanus* and *Mendoza*.



78v and 79v), and a sacrifice for the New Fire ceremony (folio 77v). Figure 7 shows examples of these three types of events.

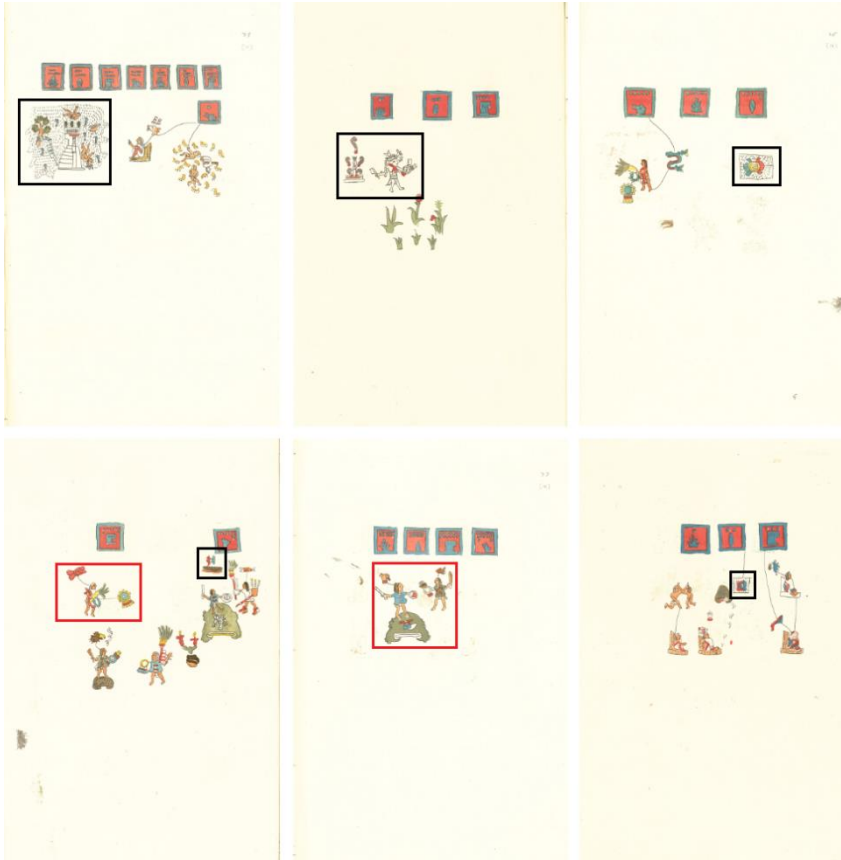
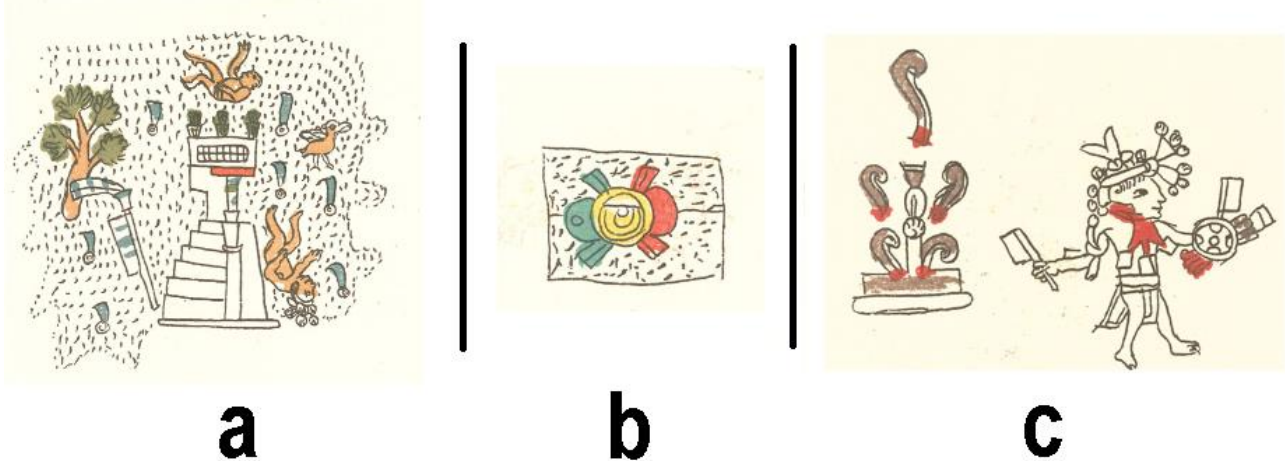


Figure 6 - Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina's government in the *Codex Vaticanus A*. Conquests were circled in red, and other events were circled in black. Source: FAMSI, *Codex Vaticanus 3738 A*.



a

b

c

Figure 7 – Detailed representations of a snowstorm (a - folio 77r), an earthquake (b - folio 78r), and a sacrifice for the New Fire ceremony (c - folio 77v) in the *Codex Vaticanus A*. Source: FAMSI, *Codex Vaticanus 3738 A*.

In the *Codex Aubin*, the Huehue Motecuhzoma's government is represented from folio 64 to 71 (Figure 8). Likewise the *Codex Mendoza* and the *Codex Vaticanus A*, the *Codex Aubin* also depicts the conquest of Chalco and Cuetlaxtlan (folios 69 and 70), but in the same period of Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina were mentioned by glyphs and texts in Nahuatl: two famines related to plague (folio 66) and rainstorm (folio 67), the New Fire ceremony (folio 67) and the plantation abundance (folio 68).

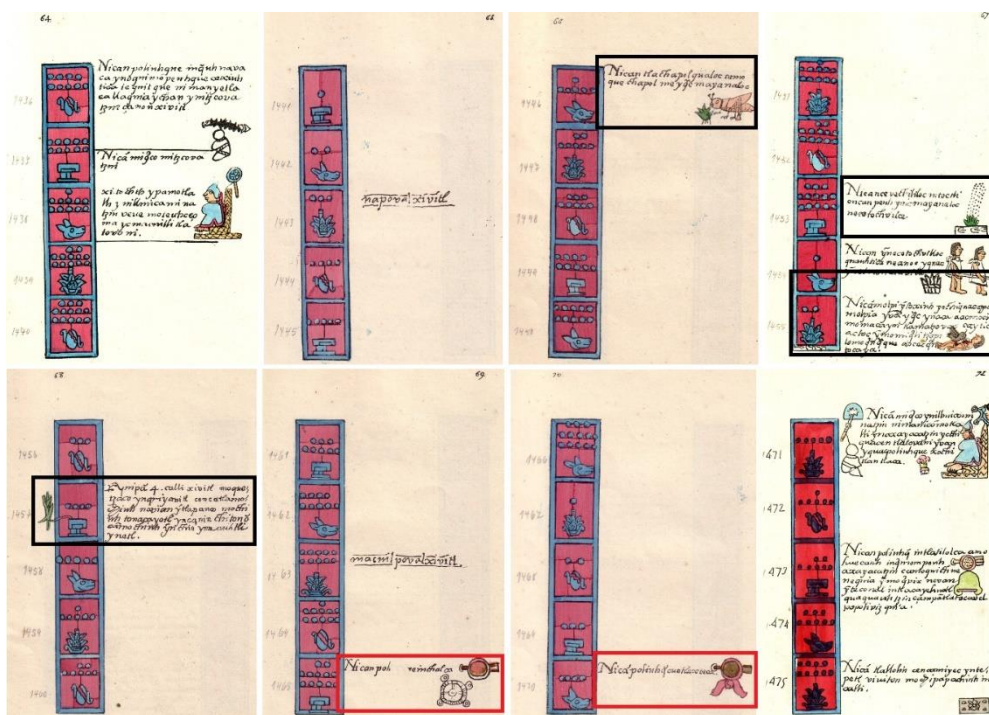


Figure 8 - Motecuhzoma Ilhuicamina's government in the *Codex Aubin*. Conquests were circled in red, and other events were circled in black. Source: DIBBLE, 1964.



Figure 9 – Detailed representations of plague (a - folio 66), rainstorm (b - folio 67), the New Fire ceremony (c - folio 67) and the plantation abundance (d - folio 68) in the *Codex Aubin*. Source: DIBBLE, 1964.

In other words, the examples quickly analyzed in the *Codex Vaticanus A* and the *Codex Aubin* evidence other types of events that are not described in the *Codex Mendoza*, such as ceremonies, sacrifices, earthquakes, plagues, storms, and plantation abundance. This suggests a significant centrality at enumerating the Mexica conquests in the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza*. Topics from the native historical traditions were suppressed or ignored in order to emphasize the pre-Hispanic Mexica victories that each ruler has had. Thus, since this manuscript was written upon the request of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, as afore-mentioned, it is possible to suggest that the most important information to be shown to Charles V was the extent of territories conquered by the Mexica and, after 1521, won to the Castilian Kingdom. Consequently, it could be inferred that the Castilian texts subordinated the pictorial texts in the *Codex Mendoza*.

Furthermore, another characteristic of *Codex Mendoza's* production must be highlighted. Frances Berdan and Patricia Anawalt (1997, p. XII) state that the pictorial texts folios would have been handcrafted first and subsequently alphabetic texts in Nahuatl would have been written and translated into Castilian. Finally, the Castilian texts were added to the manuscript as full-folio commentaries or glosses on pictorial folios. Therefore, although the alphabetic texts express native information from the oral tradition, we can assume the translation of Nahuatl knowledge into Castilian prose also implies the introduction of information that would be directly interesting to the Castilians themselves.

One example of information primarily interesting to the Castilians in these pages of the manuscript is the brief explanation regarding the operation of Mexica tribute taxation. It is written within the comments about Moctezuma Xocoyotzin's government related on folio 15r. This comment seems to be a glimpse of the next part of the manuscript. The second section of the *Codex Mendoza* begins in the folio 17r and its main issue is the operation of Mexica tribute during the pre-Hispanic period. Consequently, this section emphasizes the Mexica's economic potential subsequently taken over by the Castilians.

Another relevant fact to fully understand the narrative of Mexica power in the pictorial texts of the first section of the *Codex Mendoza* is the amount of toponymic glyphs representing the altepetl subjugated through Mexica's conquests: more than 200 named places are represented²³. Other pictorial Mexica histories handcrafted in the sixteenth century, such as codices *Vaticanus A*, *Telleriano-Remensis*, *Aubin*, and *Manuscrito 40* do not even present one sixth of the number of named places found in the *Mendoza*. Therefore, the sheer number of toponymic representations in the historical part of the *Codex Mendoza* reveals another aspect of Mexica history of extreme importance to the manuscript creators (and presumably patrons). These hundreds of place signs aimed to valorize quantitatively the Mexica pre-Hispanic conquests. These domains, in turn, became part of the empire of Charles V after the Castilian conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1521.

The sheer number of conquests depicted in this manuscript may also provide another example of how Castilian genres shaped the alphabetic sections of the *Codex Mendoza*: specifically the Chronicle of War (a historical genre popular in the 15th and 16th centuries). Among several examples, roughly contemporary to the *Codex Mendoza* may be mentioned *Las cuatro partes enteras de la Crónica de España que mando componer el Serenissimo rey don Alfonso llamado Sabio* (OCAMPO, 1541) and the *Coronica de nuestro invictissimo Emperador don Carlos Quinto* (SALAZAR, 1552). These warfare chronicles were often structured in sections that began with descriptive chapter headings or summaries. Thus, the Salazar's chronicle begins chapter XCII with the summary "*Como ciertos soldados trataron mal a vn alcayde y a su muger y hijas: y el castigo que se les dio*". Similarly, the text of section E (from the *Codex Mendoza*'s folio 11v) presents series of chapter-heading-style "Items", which summarizes key events in Tizoc's reign (for instance, "Yten el dich tiçoçicatzi...").

²³ In this list were included the *altepetl* re-conquered or subjugated by political alliances.

The last "item" concludes with a sentence that is resembling to Salazar's chapter XCII: "*y fue zeloso de punir y castigar los malos vicios y delitos que sus vasallos cometian*". Therefore, the Castilian appropriation of Mexica power can be seen in the subordination of pictorial texts to alphabetic texts in the *Codex Mendoza's* historical section. In other words, we can state native *xiuhamatl* was subordinated to the Castilian chronicle.

With the European invasion and takeover of the Mexica Empire, Mexica conquests automatically became Castilian conquests. This is literally expressed in the second part of the manuscript, which is a detailed description of the collected tributes from all *altepetl* conquered by the Mexica. Crucially, these pages in the *Codex Mendoza* were copied from another colonial, but earlier, separate tribute manuscript, the *Matrícula de Tributos*. Differently from the *Matrícula*, the reading order of the information on *Codex Mendoza's* folios was adapted to the European left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading order – as it was done in all the manuscript. It must be pointed out also that this detailed description was undoubtedly important to Castilian authorities because products made of gold, silver and precious stones were listed with its origin places. Although this was a pre-Hispanic list of tributes, it can be seen as a set of tributes that became part of the Castilian profit.

Finally, the third part of the manuscript, on Mexica daily life, presented customs of the pre-Hispanic period (the training of children, customs of marriage) that continued into the post-Hispanic present of the manuscript's creation. This part was not similar to any pre-Hispanic genre described by colonial native chroniclers as Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl (SANTOS, 2009, p. 79-80), unlike the first two sections of the *Codex Mendoza*. In sum, it is possible to suggest all the *Codex Mendoza* was a document written to certify the political, economic, and cultural potential of the Viceroyalty of New Spain to the Emperor Charles V – who in the end never even saw the manuscript since it was stolen by French privateers.

Indeed, the very last section of Castilian alphabetic texts in the historical section of manuscript underscores the importance of that first section of the *Codex Mendoza* for the construction of a political document representing the potentials of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. This excerpt, from one of the last lines of folio 15r, describes the Castilians arrival and the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. It moves from the death of Moctezuma II to the towns over which he ruled to the creation of the Viceroyalty of New Spain: "*luego en el año siguyente despues del falleçimyento de*



motecçuma se gano y paçifico por el marques del valle y sus consortes esta çibdad de mexico y otros pueblos comarcanos a el y ansi se fue ganando y paçificando esta nueva españa"²⁴.

Conclusion

This article sought to demonstrate that the *Codex Mendoza's* alphabetic texts in Castilian were possibly structured as a chronicle. Castilian texts subordinated the *xiuhamatl* structure and consequently pictorial native texts became illustrative and secondary. Compared to other colonial Mexica histories, the pictorial texts of the *Codex Mendoza* seem to recognize and validate Mexica history. Meanwhile, the massive number of toponymic representations in the historical part of the *Codex Mendoza* aimed to quantitatively value the Mexica pre-Hispanic conquests. Also, the virtues of Mexica rulers were mentioned in order to recognize the Mexica conquests in the past as part of current Castilian domains. In contrast, we observed that other histories, as *Codex Vaticanus A* and the *Codex Aubin*, evidence other types of events that are not described in the *Codex Mendoza*, such as ceremonies, sacrifices, earthquakes, plagues, storms, and plantation abundance. Possibly, such histories and those about the centuries of migratory sagas that generally lead up the foundation of Mexico-Tenochtitlan would have been less interesting to European readers. In sum, it is possible to suggest all the *Codex Mendoza* was a document written to certify the political, economic and cultural potential of the Viceroyalty of New Spain to the Emperor Charles V – who in the end never even saw the manuscript, since it was stolen by French privateers.

However, it does not mean that the Mexica involved in the manuscript writing did not play an important role while working for Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza and other Castilian authorities. Instead, Francisco Gualpuyagualcal and Juan González of the Cathedral of Mexico had both the native knowledge to produce a *xiuhamatl* following pre-Hispanic traditions, and the access to European chronicles brought to Mexico by missionaries of the schools of San José de los Naturales and Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco. Therefore, the native content of *Codex Mendoza* were adapted and subordinated to the Castilian chronicle, whilst preserving the native style of representations.

²⁴ "Then in the following year, after the death of Motecuhzoma, the Marqués del Valle and his companions won and pacified this city of Mexico and other neighboring towns. Thus was won and pacified this New Spain". (BERDAN & ANAWALT, 1997).



I have tried to show that although the historical section of the *Codex Mendoza* intersperses two types of texts, pictorial and alphabetic careful comparison reveals a structural and political hierarchy. The overall message of this hierarchy, by reducing the native pictorial text to secondary illustrations (especially from the point of view of a European reader), is that the Castilian alphabetic text constructs a narrative in which native peoples' pre-Hispanic submission to the Mexica is projected forward in time to form part of Castilian domains appropriated after the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and the creation of the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

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