ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF SPANIARDS IN THE MEXICAN MANUSCRIPT PAINTINGS

*The Spaniards as a distinct other?*

by

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Introduction

The purpose of this work is to show the image of the Spanish conquerors that the Indians re-constructed in their codices when they depicted the military conquest. Did the Indians view the Spaniards as a distinct other? As gods? As superior men? As barbarians? As equals? The first part of this project is an overview of what is the concept of the Other. It is followed by a discussion of how three scholars, Baudot (1990), León Portilla (1961), and Lockhart (1993) have characterized the relationship between Spaniards and Indians in the light of such a concept. The last part is an analysis of pictures from different codices, but mostly from the Book XII of the Florentine Codex1, to see whether the images reflect an Indian vision of the Spaniards as distinct others. The purpose is to show that the written text favors Indian vision of Spaniards as distinctly others, either gods or barbarians, whereas the images favor Indian vision of Spaniards as equals who were superior only in one aspect: technology.

According to Todorov, the Other is a psychic configuration. The Other is that "specific social group to which we do not belong" (Todorov, 1992: 3). Therefore, the conception of the Other opposes the conception of self; in other words, alterity opposes identification. Otherness happens inside society - "...women for men, the rich for the poor, the mad for the 'normal'..." (: 3)- or between societies from different places and

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1 According to Lockhart, the most important Nahua account of the Conquest is Book XII of the General History of the Things of New Spain, known as the Florentine Codex, written under the supervision of Sahagún (Lockhart, 1993: 1). Although it was "...put on paper about 1578-1579, Book Twelve is thought to have been first drafted about 1555" (: 27). Sahagún had determined the topics and the organization, and he had trained his informants. Thus, there is a great European influence; however, "indigenous ideas, frameworks, and imperatives" also played a fundamental role (: 28). Lockhart states that Sahagún respected Indian authorship; as a consequence, Book XII is a very authentic indigenous version of the Conquest (: 30).
cultures: “...outsiders whose language and customs I do not understand, so foreign that in extreme instances I am reluctant to admit they belong to the same species as my own...” (: 3). Contact between different civilizations forces each culture to analyze the identity of the Other, as well as its own identity in relation with this Other. One of the most important confrontations between two different cultures was the Conquest of Mexico.

In Visión de los vencidos, León Portilla points out that most of the studies about the Conquest privilege European texts such as Cortes’ accounts. Therefore, they perpetuate the reactions and reflections of the Spaniards’, and later of Europeans’ in general, towards the Indians. Therefore, he voices the need of an analysis of the Indians’ thoughts about the Spaniards.

...¿Qué pensaron los indios al ver llegar a sus costas y pueblos a los descubridores y conquistadores? ¿Cuáles fueron sus primeras actitudes? ¿Qué sentido dieron a su lucha? ¿Cómo concibieron su propia derrota?... (LEÓN PORTILLA, 1961: IX).

León Portilla presents an anthology of Nahuatl Indian texts and paintings that show Indians’ vision of the Spaniards, the Conquest, and the fall of their empire. In this way he intends to reconstruct “la visión de los vencidos” (: XIII-XIV). Nevertheless, he limits the significance of the Aztecs’ paintings to that of illustrations.

In The Conquest of Mexico, Gruzinski categorizes the images of Mexican manuscript paintings in a different manner. He recognizes that like alphabetic writing, they were used “...to express highly complex concepts and to handle the most abstract notions and the most imaginary constructions...” (Gruzinski, 1993: 12). Furthermore, he succeeds in recognizing elements of signification, such as page make-up, scale, position, orientation, etc. (: 12). Thus, Gruzinski proposes to analyze images in their full scale of meaning: “...the ‘paintings’ [...] also have a visual dimension that has sometimes been
underestimated. The ‘paintings’ are images as much as texts, and demand to be treated as images [...] they should be seen as perceptual as much as conceptual...” (: 13). To Gruzinski, signs as meaningful as those used by Europeans make up the codices (: 12).

According to Gruzinski, the most important obstacle to analyze indigenous material like annals, codices, documents written in indigenous languages, oral accounts transcribed in trial records is “...to break through the Western European filter...” (: 4). To do so, one needs to understand the complexity of the interaction between the two cultures and the two voices, a complexity made up by borrowings, assimilation, distortion, misunderstanding, appropriation, alienation, and political and social underlying motivation (: 3). This confrontation between Spanish and Indian imagery implied both the construction and deconstruction of identities. Gruzinski focuses his study on the vision of the Indians, in order to overcome the Eurocentrism that has characterized most of the previous works (: 3). And yet, like León Portilla, although he recognizes the importance and worth of codices, he states that there aren’t sufficient tools to interpret them (: 5).

In the third international symposium of codices and documents about Mexico (Mexico City, 2000), Stephanie Wood, from the University of Oregon, presented a paper about the Indian image of Spaniards as depicted in the codices: “¿El otro otro? Interpretando imágenes y descripciones de españoles en los códices y textos indígenas.” In this text, Stephanie Wood retakes Torodov’s concept of the Other and puts forth a methodology to analyze it through images. She presents it in the form of questions. Some of these can be applied to the objective of this paper, and thus, they will be retaken. The main concern is whether Spaniards were represented as distinct others: unknown or
frightful beings, monsters, deities, grotesque or disproportionate, specially strong or beautiful (Wood, 2000: 189-190). To solve this dilemma it is useful to distinguish if there is a similarity between the representation of Spaniards and Non-nahua Indians, to find out whether there was a distinction between a ‘European Other’ and an ‘Indian Other’ (: 189). Another approach to the same issue is whether there was a difference in the portrayal of Indian and Spanish enemies, in other words whether the method to depict Spaniards was the same the Indians used to depict themselves: “Do the Spaniards sit, talk, order, and gesticulate like Indian principals?” (: 189. The translation is mine). The next inquiry is to find out if the position and size of Spaniards’ representations reveal them as superior or central: were they always portrayed as colonizers? Were they always presented commanding things? (: 190). The final question relates to a comparison between the description of Spaniards in the texts and the images of them in the codices, in order to discover if there is or isn’t a similarity between them.

Spaniards as distinct others

In the book México y los albores del discurso colonial, Georges Baudot states that the Indians visualized the Spaniards as distinct others. He uses three ideas to support his argument: the concept that Aztecs had of foreigners and of different humanities, and the way they pictured the end of their world. Based on Durán’s Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra (1967. Porrúa. Tomo II, p. 233), Baudot affirms that the Aztecs distinguished two kinds of foreigners. Those who could be offered to the gods in sacrifice because they came from important cities close to Tenochtitlan (Tlaxcala, Huexotzinco, Cholula, Atlixco, Tliliuhquitepec, and Tecoac) constituted the first category (Baudot, 1990: 19). According to Baudot, Sahagún explained that Aztecs designated this
group with the word ‘touenyo’. Etymologically, this word comes from ‘to’, which means ‘our’; ‘uentli’, ‘offering’, and the suffix ‘yotl’ which refers to a quality of abstraction. Then, ‘touenyo’ means “our offering par excellence” (: 19. The translation is mine). Consequently, foreigner is that who can be offered and sacrificed to the gods. The second category of foreigners identified by Baudot consists on those who were not agreeable to the gods because they lived far away, had an unintelligible language, and were barbarians (: 19-20).

Later on, Baudot explains that the Aztecs did have a notion of other humanities, that is, of different kinds of human beings. Nevertheless, this conception was located in time not in space. The Aztecs divided their history in five periods of time, each one possessing a different sun and different men. The gods had destroyed the first four suns, and the Aztecs were living in the last period, the fifth sun (: 21-22). On the other hand, the Aztecs considered the sea as the boundary of the human world. The deities lived in holy dwellings beyond the sea.

To the east, Tlalocan, Tlaloc’s paradise; to the north, Mictlan, Mictlantecuhlti’s realm and the zone of infernal powers, the place of the dead; to the west Tamoanchan, the place of origin, […], and finally to the south, Uitztlampa, the region of spines and Huitzilopochtli’s triumphant sun… (: 23-24. The translation is mine).

The universe also spread upwards in thirteen heavens and downwards in nine hells, spaces also inhabited by gods (: 24). The Spaniards came from beyond the seas, hence, according to Baudot, the only possible manner for the Aztecs of inserting them into their cosmovision was to consider them as deities or supernaturals (: 30).

The fifth sun, known as ‘nahui ollin’ (four movement), was destined to be destroyed by an earthquake. Baudot used Diego Muñoz Camargo’s account to argument
that the Indians considered the destruction and the conquest of Tenochtitlan as the
catastrophe that marked the end of the fifth sun (25). Based on Garibay’s edition (1965,
p. 69) of Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas in Teogonía e historia de los
mexicanos, Baudot explains that the apparition of the tzitzimimeh — “goddesses shaped as
horrible human skeletons” (23) — would precede the earthquake that was supposed to
destroy the Aztec’s world. Therefore, Baudot asks whether the indigenous accounts
contain any visual, imaginary, conceptual or semantic image or reference that identify the
Spanish conquerors with the tzitzimimeh (25). Then he retakes the account of Diego
Durán that narrates how ancient painters from Malinalco depicted the Spaniards to show
the pictures to Moctezuma. The pictures represented the conquerors as monsters. Thus,
Baudot affirms “that the Europeans were perceived, and more or less recognized, like
beings who came from a completely unfamiliar and baffling place” (26. The translation
is mine).

Although Baudot doesn’t find any specific reference of the Spaniards as
tzitzimimeh, he states that all the representations of the Spaniards made by the Indians
had a magic, religious character (26). According to Baudot, “the magical connotation of
the first images shows the inability of the discourse to conceptualize what their eyes saw
and of the intellect to understand” (26. The translation is mine). To sustain the
argument, he quotes Muñoz Camargo’s account of the impression boats caused to the
Aztecs. The Indians didn’t know what boats were, for they had never seen them before,
so they thought boats were ‘divine’ (26). He also writes that “The physical appearance

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2 Gruzinisi (1993) has the same opinion as Baudot: “...The Indians believed at first that they recognized
in Cortés the god Quetzalcoatl returned from the distant Orient, surrounded with other gods, or else they
discovered in the friars the incarnation of the monstrous tzitzimimeh, the creatures of their
‘apocalypse’...” (Gruzinisi, 1993: 184).
of the Europeans, their weapons, their tools” bewildered the Indians, and they tried
desperately “to identify them through analogy and assimilation” (: 27. The translation is
mine). This time he quotes the description of Moctezuma’s reaction to gunfire in the
chapter seven of Book XII. He also uses the description of European armor in the
Florentine Codex to sustain that the Indians viewed Spaniards as “extraterrestrial, not
human, but steel robots” (: 27. The translation is mine). Baudot affirms that other Indian
texts confirm this vision (: 28)\(^3\), such as the Annals of Cuauhtitlan, Codex Vaticanus
A, and Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s account (: 30)\(^4\). On the other hand, he also uses a Spanish text,
Columbus’ journal, to demonstrate that the Indians considered the Europeans to be gods
(: 29). Therefore, Baudot uses written texts to prove that the Aztecs distinguished the
Spaniards as others, completely different to themselves.

In the book Visión de los Vencidos, León Portilla had made an analogous reading
of indigenous texts. He used diverse sources to recreate this vision. The first were two
songs written in 1523 and 1524 by Aztecs who survived the defeat. The second source
was an anonymous account of Tlateloco written in 1528. Next, León Portilla used the
testimonies of Sahagún’s informants (1585). Other sources were shorter accounts, like
texts from Codex Aubin (1576), Codex Ramírez (last third of the 16\(^{th}\) century), annals
from Azcapotzalco, Mexico and Tlatelolco, as well as fragments of the histories written
by Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc and Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón
Chimalpahin (1528-1612). Finally, León Portilla includes testimonies of the Indian allies

\(^3\) “Esta dificultad de los amerindios por representar y figurar a los españoles en un primer tiempo va
atestiguada por muchísimos otros textos amerindios relativos a la conquista” (Baudot, 1990: 28. The
underlining is mine).

\(^4\) “Tanto en los textos del Código Florentino, de los Anales de Cuauhtitlán, del Códice Vaticano A, como
en los de la obra de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl encontramos material más que suficiente para comprender la
elaboración de esta confusión, dictada ante todo por la incomprehensión y el asombro ante la presencia del
Otro”. (: 30. The underlining is mine).
of Cortés, such as *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* (middle of the 16th century), *Historia de Tlaxcala* by Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Historia Chichimeca*, and *XIII relación* by Fernando de Alva Ixtlixóchitl (beginning of the 17th century). He also utilized Mexican manuscript paintings, such as *Codex Florentino*, *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, *Codex Aubin*, and *Codex Ramírez*. However, León Portilla used pictures from these codices as illustrations, limiting the significance of the Aztec’s paintings. Furthermore, he privileged written texts over pictographic ones, and thus reinforced the Western conception that restricted history to the knowledge transmitted by texts written alphabetically.

After analyzing written native accounts of the Conquest, León Portilla concluded that the Aztecs viewed the Spaniards as a distinct Other. At first, the Indians considered the Spaniards like Quetzalcoatl and his gods. However, after observing their greed for gold and after the massacre of Cholula, the Indians judged them to be barbarians (León Portilla, 1961: XXVI).

León Portilla cites several sources to sustain his ideas. According to him, the text inserted in *Códice Ramírez* indicates that the Indians of Texcoco adored the Spaniards because they thought they were the sons of the god of the sun (: 60). He also quotes Motolinía’s account, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España* (1541). In it, Motolinía explained that the Indians called the Spaniards ‘teteuh’ which meant gods (: XV). Later, based on Alvarado Tezozomoc’s *Crónica mexicana*, León Portilla stated that Moctezuma considered Cortés and the Spaniards as Quetzalcoatl and other deities (: 13). In chapters CVI and CVII of his account, Tezozomoc described the presents that Moctezuma’s messengers took to the men who had come in ‘mountains’ or ‘towers’ that floated in the sea. Those presents were made of the finest materials that existed in the land (gold and
feathers); they were presents worthy of great lords. When Moctezuma sent them, he referred to the Spaniards as ‘his grandfathers’ and ‘grandmothers’, in other words, his supernatural ancestors (: 19). The excerpt of Book XII of the Florentine Codex that León Portilla includes narrates the same episode. Moctezuma thought the new comer was Quetzalcoatl (,: 21). Therefore, he offered the Spanish soldiers the accoutrements of this god (,: 22); he also offered the Spaniards Tezcatlipoca’s (: 23), Tlalocan Tecuhtli’s, and Ehecatl’s accoutrements (,: 24). Moctezuma told his messengers to address the Spaniards as our lords, the gods (,: 25). When the messengers came back to Moctezuma, he offered them human sacrifice because they had seen and spoken to the gods (,: 30). In chapters eight and nine, Moctezuma adored and paid homage to the Spaniards with human sacrifice (,: 34). According to León Portilla the attitude of Moctezuma is the same as that of the rest of the Indians. They are terrorized at ‘the gods’ who came from the sea (,: 34); they consider them to be superior, and thus they exclaim: “¡No somos sus contendientes iguales, somos como unas nadas!” (,: 36. We are not their rivals, we are like nothing!)  

León Portilla points out that the text of the Florentine Codex “indicates why the conquerors were considered ‘gods’. Before ‘inventing’ an image that explained the presence of the foreigners, the Indians applied to them the old myth of Quetzalcoatl’s return in a process of self-projection” (,: 33).

León Portilla points out the contrast between the Indian initial conception of the Spaniards as gods and the description they make of the Spaniards when they receive gold presents from Moctezuma: “Se les puso risueña la cara... como si fueran monos levantaban el oro... como unos puercoezos hambrientos ansiaban el oro...” (,: 52. They smiled...like monkeys, they grabbed the gold...like hungry pigs they coveted gold). After

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5 Translations from León Portilla’s book are mine.
being considered as gods, Spaniards ended up perceived as monkeys and pigs. Later on, León Portilla stresses again Spanish greed. After the Conquest was over, Cortés required all the Mexican lords to give him their gold, and he even tormented them (: 126).

León Portilla qualified the Spaniards as cruel and treacherous because of the massacres and killings they perpetrated. In the foreword of his book, he chose three extracts. The first is the description of the Toxcatl’s massacre found in Book XII of the Florentine Codex. It is a very detailed and vivid report of the killing. The second is a description of horses, also from Sahagún, and the last is from the Manuscrito de Tlatelolco of 1528. The latter tells the story of three indigenous priests who turned themselves in to the Spaniards, and were then killed by Spanish mastiffs (: XXIV). The first and the last extracts reveal a reading that emphasizes the cruelty of the conquerors, while the second points out the character of monstrosity applied to horses (: XXIV-XXVI). Later on, when he describes the Toxcatl’s massacre, León Portilla uses words that reveal a moral judgment (: 75-76). He qualifies the Spaniards’ actions as treacherous, mean and wicked, a verdict that is entirely absent when he describes how the Aztecs captured and sacrificed some Spaniards during the last battle. León Portilla constructs a representation of Spaniards as barbarians whose actions almost reach monstrosity. The problem is that one can confuse León Portilla’s own conception of the Spaniards with that of the Indians, and this might have been very different.

**Spaniards as other humans**

Lockhart’s point of view is opposite to Baudot’s and León Portilla’s. According to him the Aztecs didn’t make the distinction of New Woriders versus Old Woriders. They represented the Spaniards and their allies as ‘our enemies’, ‘toyahuacan’. Both
belonged to the same classification. Thus, Indians did not distinguish Spaniards as such (Lockhart, 1993: 14). Ethnic differentiation was not usual, but when it happened, the Indians mentioned “the Spaniards and the individual altepetl groups” (p. 14). Belonging to a specific altepetl categorized indigenous people, and this manner of categorization later embraced the Spaniards. Lockhart states that a concept of ‘other’ did not exist among the Indians. The members of one’s altepetl were ‘we’, while those outside were ‘they’.7

The Spaniards coming on the scene are viewed as one more such group. Their altepetl is Caxtiilán and they are Caxtilteca [...] In other words, the Spaniards did not have the effect of creating a polarization between the indigenous inhabitants and the intruders. The Nahua continued to see the world as they had before, divided between the altepetl group and all outsiders, be they indigenous or Spaniards. (p. 21)

Each altepetl had friends and enemies among the other altepetls. When the Spaniards came, they were just another player (p. 14). Therefore, in the Indian annals there is no moral judgment against the Spaniards. The Indians described massacres and executions of Aztec rulers “with a sense of shock and deep imprint; but the tagwords usually employed in modern descriptions, ‘cruel’ and the like, are entirely absent” (p. 15). Spanish actions were merely ‘notable events’ just as those of the Indians -“in the Florentine Codex, the capture, sacrifice, dismemberment, and display of several Spaniards” (p. 15)-. In fact, the vision towards Spanish Indian allies shows more moral

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6 Although Lockhart comments that there is not an exact translation for the word, he defines it as follows: “...literally, ‘water(s) and mountain(s),’ a territorial metaphor for any sovereign state but especially for the local ethnic states of central Mexico, which might be compared with ancient Greek city-states with respect to their range in size...” (Lockhart, 1993: 22).

7 ‘The so-called ‘other’ hardly figures in this picture. The Nahua simply do not recognize any new ‘other’. Their most basic, frequently used means of categorizing human groups is ‘we’ and ‘they’. In most contexts, ‘we’ are the individual altepetl group and ‘they’ are all other humans, imagined as other altepetl groups.’ (p. 21).
evaluation. Nevertheless, according to Lockhart that might be due to the genre used. In the annals, events had to be straightforward (: 15).

On the other hand, the Indians applied hierarchy to categorize the Spaniards. They distinguished Cortés as the Spanish leader, and they also distinguished Pedro de Alvarado and one Rodrigo de Castañeda, but they considered the rest as “an unanalyzed corporate entity, as though they were a single altepetl grouping instead of containing among themselves the equivalent of many altepetl” (: 19).

Furthermore, Lockhart questions the assumption that Nahuas viewed the Spaniards as gods. First he states that Spanish accounts are unreliable because Spaniards “were creating a myth for their own purposes, and it is clear that their comprehension of Nahua culture was limited” (: 19). Then he adds that the only reference to “the well-aired notion of Cortés being imagined to have been the god Quetzalcoatl returning” (: 20) is found in the first part of Book XII of the Florentine Codex, and he considers that section apocryphal: “it is a late reconstruction, seriously at odds with the pragmatism seen everywhere else in the narrative corpus, in those portions which by every indication were much closer to tradition actually handed down from the time of the events” (: 18). He uses the portrayal of Moctezuma to sustain his idea. According to him, the perception of Moctezuma as a weak character who accepted the Spaniards’ superiority is probably the vision of later generations who blamed Moctezuma of the Conquest. Other documents, the Tlalocan Manuscript and the Codex Aubin, show only that Moctezuma was not

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8 Brotherston affirms that the Spaniards and their supporters put forth “the legend of Cortes as the returning white god” (Brotherston, 1995: 28). Yet he also states that “Cortes enters local annals at a highly significant moment, in the feast of Quechollitl of the year 1 Reed (November 1519). The year name was also that of a monarch of highland Tula, who had been driven to exile and death in the east in the ninth century” (: 27).
popular (: 19). Consequently, Lockhart rejects that the first part of Book XII shows the
accurate reaction of Moctezuma and of Indians towards the Spaniards.

Lockhart emphasizes that Nahuatl texts about the Conquest were written by a later
generation. This 1540's generation believed that their predecessors, the generation of
1519-1521, had referred to the Spaniards as gods (: 19-20). However, he explains that
even if the word 'teotl' was used, it cannot be equaled to the western conception of 'god'.
The word was used to identify deities, but "the human and the divine interpenetrated
extensively among the Nahuas" (: 20). Ancestors and former leaders became their
altepetl gods; priests impersonated supernaturals, and during rituals, god impersonators
were considered and honored as deities, and later they were sacrificed. According to
Lockhart, even if one accepts that the Indians qualified the Spaniards as gods, that shows
that the Indians inserted them into their own vision of the world, overcoming the idea of
radical distinctness (: 20). Nevertheless, Lockhart favors the idea that Indians viewed
Spaniards as other humans, 'formidable adversaries', but still humans:

To me, the overall, unspoken Mexica perspective on the Spaniards
that arises from a reading of this corpus is that they were formidable
adversaries who wanted much the same thing as the Mexica themselves.
This is the rationale for opposing them. (: 15)

This assumption is the one that defines Lockhart's reading of Book XII of the
Florentine Codex. According to him, the narration of this codex is visual and episodic;
thus, the story is presented as "a series of snapshots of individual scenes" (: 7). The
Indians were carefully writing down their observation. They were detailed and realistic
which shows an "outside vision", a certain detachment. This 'objective' perspective,
devoid of judgment shows that they considered "their opponents, much like themselves"
To exemplify, he describes the way Indians reacted to guns and crossbows (chapter thirty):

...when the Mexica had been able to see and judge how the guns hit, or the iron bolts, they no longer went straight but moved back and forth, going from one side to the other, zigzagging. Also, when they saw that the big gun was about to go off, everyone hit the ground, spread out on the ground, crouched down... (: 8)

Lockhart points out that the Indians observed how the European weapons worked and developed defensive tactics similar to those used in Europe (: 8). Consequently, Lockhart placed Indians and Spaniards in a situation of ‘equality’. Like Baudot and León Portilla, Lockhart bases his analysis on indigenous written texts, yet he comes to a different conclusion. According to him, Indians viewed Spaniards merely like other humans.

Analysis of the images in the Mexican manuscript paintings

In contrast with Baudot’s and León Portilla’s assumptions, the depictions of Spaniards made by Indians in the codices do not show them as deities or as monsters. In other words, from these images one can suppose that Spaniards were not seen as a distinct other, but as fellow men. At first, the Indian painters paid attention to unfamiliar things like clothing, beards, steel weapons, ships, horses, tables, boxes, banners, armors, religion (Boone, 2000: 229 and Wood, 2000: 174). Later on, these elements became “The features that characterize the Spaniards as a distinct people for the Aztecs” (Boone, 2000: 229). Spaniards were, then, seen as foreign, but not superior. That is evident in their portrayal as authorities and as warriors.

The representation of Spanish authorities in the codices is important because it shows that the Indians accepted and respected them. In fact, the Indians considered
Spanish authorities of high level as *tlahloque* (Wood, 2000: 184). According to Wood, "The Spaniard was a respected man of high authority, a person with the power to benefit the Indian leaders and the Indian community in general" (: 176). Boone follows the same line when she states that after the conquest, Spaniards were seen "as collaborators and leaders" (Boone, 2000: 229). Signs that formerly distinguished Indian lords are applied to Spanish lords, as one can see in the representation of Cortés found in the *Tira de Tepechpan* 159 (: 233. See Fig. 1). The "armchair with a curved frame" replaces the "woven mat or throne" (: 232, 46). Speech scrolls, which formerly identified "speakers or tlatoanis" (: 46), now identify Cortés. The staff and his signaling finger are two other indigenous signs for power (Wood, 2000: 170). Furthermore, Cortés, along with the monk and the bishop, is painted black "sign of priestly status" (Boone, 2000: 232).

While Spanish authorities were respected, "colonizers of a lesser class were not" (Wood, 2000: 184). Hence in the Book XII10 of the *Florentine Codex* (See Figs. 2 and 3), Cortés is the central figure. His size contrasts with that of the rest of the Spaniards and of the Indians. He is much bigger than both of them. In picture 13 (see Fig. 3), he is presented in the action of making a command. Cortés is above the Indians and the Spaniards because he is the authority; however, the Spanish soldiers are presented as equals to the Indians. They are to the side of Cortés; they are the same size as the Indians, and they obey his commands.

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9 The *Tira* was painted in 1596, and it covers the years 1298 to 1596 (Wauchop, ed., 1975).
10 Other parts of this codex show the Mexican pictographic style, but to represent the Conquest, Sahagún’s scribes could not use pre-Columbian iconography. This was not a pre-Hispanic war; therefore, the painters had to invent images. Furthermore, the native painters were familiar with European war iconography. So, in the codex they represented "troop movements, the charge of horses and lances, the flutter of flags, aerial views of battle, infantry ranks, cavalry squadrons" (Gruziniski, 1992: 48). One of the native elements used was place signs.
In the codices, the Indian nobility is represented next to the Spanish authorities. In this manner, both are equaled. Chapter LXXVII of Codex Durán\textsuperscript{11} (See Fig. 4) corroborates this point. This painting shows \textit{"Cortés at Texcoco on the east shore of the lake, where he went to finish construction of the fleet that would enable him to attack Mexico-Tenochtitlan from the water"} (Gruzinski, 1992: 50). The center of the image is occupied by a group of four Indians and one Spaniard who are building the boats. A group of Spanish soldiers observes them from the left side of the picture. The submission of the Indians is evident. They are leaning over the boats working, but so is the Spaniard. Again we see this level of equality between Indians and Spaniards: both submit to the authority's control. Cortés is standing in front of the soldiers, and he signals the Spaniard in a gesture of power. The indigenous ruler, who wears a \textit{xihuitzolli} and an elaborate \textit{tilmatl}, symbols of rulership (Boone, 2000: 46), located to the right of the Indians, points to them in a gesture of authority analogous to that of Cortés. Just as low class Indians are equal to low class Spaniards, Indian rulers are as powerful as Spanish ones. Furthermore, in this picture, each maintains power over his people.

There are two images, one in the \textit{Codex Tlatelolco},\textsuperscript{12} the other, in the \textit{Lienzo de Tlaxcala},\textsuperscript{13} which also depict the relationship between Indian and Spanish rulers. In the representation of the beginning of the construction of Mexico City Cathedral in 1562, found in the \textit{Codex Tlatelolco} (See Fig. 5), \textit{"The archbishop of Mexico City is seated on a bench with Viceroy Luis de Velasco. Opposite them are the lords of Tlatelolco,}

\textsuperscript{11} This “manuscript with pictures inspired in native traditions” was written between 1579 and 1581 in the Valley of Mexico (Wauchope, ed., 1975: 126).
\textsuperscript{12} This codex was painted in 1565 (Wauchope, ed. 1975: 212).
\textsuperscript{13} The \textit{Lienzo de Tlaxcala} was painted by local artists between 1550 and 1556. Its aim was to present the importance of the Tlaxcaltecs in the outcome of the Conquest, in order to preserve the privileges that the Spaniards had granted them in gratitude for the Indian alliance. The viceroy of Mexico, Luis de Velasco, commissioned it. It was done “across a piece of cotton over seven meters long and two-and-a-half meters high” (Gruzinski, 1992: 40). It narrates the Conquest in 87 tableaux.
Tenochtitlan, Tlacopan and Texcoco" (Gruzinski, 1992: 140). Spanish civil and religious authorities occupy the center of the page; they are bigger than the depictions of Indian rulers, and furthermore, they are above them. Therefore, even if the Indian rulers are acknowledged, they are below Spanish power. The *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* opens with a picture that shows "the Spanish in the center and the Tlaxcalans to the side" (See Fig. 6). The image is built around a nucleus which all of the human figures face. It consists on "the city's coat of arms with a double headed Hapsburg eagle and its pre-Hispanic symbol" (: 40). Under the crown icon, there is a hill with a Church façade, and under this, a huge cross is being raised. The picture shows the order of colonial society. The Crown and the Church are located in the center, and "the Spanish authorities who successively governed New Spain" flank them (: 40). The houses of Tlaxcala occupy the four corners. They are represented in a graphing organization. In each cell, there is a simplified indigenous symbol for house, under which there is an Indian represented in profile. The small size of "the lords' and their marginal location give an idea of their place in colonial society. However, under each set of cells, a line of Indian rulers contrasts this idea, for even though they are to the sides of the image, their figures are much bigger than those of colonial authorities. They are not sitting down in the chair that symbolizes power, and instead of the ruling staff they hold fans, while Spaniards are sitting on chairs and pointing their fingers, indigenous symbols for power. Yet, their clothing is much more sumptuous and it is individualized, each lord wears a distinctive *tilmatl*, while the Spaniards' attire is austere and standardized. Hence, codices reflect the complexity, the ambiguity, and the inconsistency that characterized the relationship between Indian and Spanish authorities.
According to Wood, the Mexican manuscript paintings show the conquerors in a way that is not striking. Sometimes a Spanish soldier is fighting against an Indian, and both seem equally strong (Wood, 2000: 166). In some pictures, Indians seem more powerful. They occupy more space and they are painted with colors, while the Spaniards are cornered and monochrome (166). Nevertheless, in some images, the Spaniards are presented as superior. The perception of superiority is produced by the contrast between the Spaniards' clothes and weapons (armor, sword, spear, crossbow, and horses) and the Indians' 'nakedness', which made them vulnerable (168).

The Codex Telleriano-Remensis14 and the Codex Vaticanus Latinus15 depict the Conquest using an indigenous manner of representation. In Codex Vaticanus Latinus, 3738, Pl. 134 (See Fig. 7), the number of dead Spaniards is pictured with banners united to a 'naked-white-bearded-dead' figure. Therefore, the image of Spaniards is treated in the same way as that of Indians. Spaniards have a different appearance but they can die and be naked too. Even though the conqueror rides a horse and brandishes his sword menacingly, there is an Indian warrior facing him upright. His elaborated costume makes him look as impressive as the Spaniard. Spaniards on foot are presented fighting one to one with Indians. Thus, the picture shows an equality foundation.

"The Mexican Counterattack" presented in Chapter LXXVI of the Codex Durán (See Fig. 8) shows the Aztecs' reaction after the massacre perpetrated by Alvarado in the Templo Mayor. This image is impressive, for even though the Spaniards are wearing armors, using rifles and crossbows, while Indians are wearing cotton and feather costumes, and using spears and shields, the Spaniards are cornered inside the palace. The

14 This codex was painted between 1562 and 1563 in the Valley of Mexico. Along with Codex Rios, Codex Telleriano-Remensis is a copy of the lost Codex Huitzilopochtli (Wauchope, ed. 1975: 202).
15 Codex Vaticanus Latinus was painted between 1566 and 1589 (Gruzinski, 1992: 233).
Aztec warriors occupy most of the space and they present themselves as the menacing force.

The equality between Indian and Spanish warriors is very evident in the illustrations of Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*. One of the first images (See Fig. 9) shows "Spaniards on the march from Itztapalapan to Tenochtitlan" (Sahagún, 1975). A group of Indian warriors, Spanish allies, is found between two contingents of horseless Spanish soldiers. Although the Indians are located in the top right corner, the profusion caused by their tufts, their shields, their feathered suits, even the sword that one of them is brandishing, make them almost as central as the first Spanish group. Picture 72 (See Fig. 10) shows the Aztecs' counterattack after Alvarado's massacre, the same theme of Chapter LXXVI in the *Codex Durán*. In the *Florentine Codex* the Aztec warrior dominates the scene, while a falling Spaniard fills the background. Three pictures (See Figs. 11, 12, and 13) represent the battle that preceded Spaniards' flee from Tenochtitlan during 'La Noche Triste'. In these pictures, Aztec warriors are more powerful than their Spanish enemies. In picture 91 (See Fig. 11), the former come from both sides of the water (up and bottom part of the picture whose landscape is presented in the two dimensional manner characteristic of Indian painting), and they surround the escaping Spaniards and their allies. In picture 92 (See Fig. 12), horses, spears, Spaniards and Indians mingle in a confusing twirl. Finally, in picture 93 (See Fig. 13), the Aztecs are advancing, throwing forward their bodies, their shields and their spears, while the Spaniards are retreating, for their horses are facing the direction opposite the Indians. The

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16 After Alvarado massacred many Indians during the Toxcatl celebration, the Aztecs counterattacked. When Cortés came back from Veraacrúz after defeating Pánfilo de Narváez, he found a very powerful Aztec force, and that night he had to flee from Tenochtitlan with his soldiers and allies. Thus this event was called 'La Noche Triste'.

images of the Spaniards' final attack of Tenochtitlan are very dramatic. Although the Spaniards dominate for the most part, there are some images that demonstrate Indians as equal adversaries. Without their horses, Spaniards are in the same level as Indians, as is shown in pictures 128 and 132 (See Figs. 14 and 15). And yet, in picture 133 (See Fig. 16), Aztec warriors face and brandish their spears towards the Spaniards, even though the latter are riding horses. In the same manner, in picture 138 (See Fig. 17), two Indians confront a Spanish boat.\(^{17}\)

Although there are many images that present the Indians' vulnerability and their fear towards the Spaniards, the codices do not adjudicate Spanish victory to the Spaniards' 'superiority'. In their paintings, the Indians accounted two elements for their defeat: technology and treason. The pictographic representation of the Conquest in the *Florentine Codex* demonstrates the technological superiority of the Spaniards: horses,\(^{18}\) brigantines, rifles, armors, swords, steel shields, canyons.\(^{19}\) Picture 14 (See Fig. 18) depicts the initial contact between Moctezuma's messengers and Cortés. After the Indians have gone to Cortés' ship and offered him some presents, the Spaniards bind them (See Fig. 3) and shoot their fire guns (See Fig. 18). The Indians fall to the side of the boat. Their limp bodies reflect their shock, a shock caused by the machine more than by the men. On the other hand, the battle scenes of pictures 98 and 110 (See Figs. 19 and 20) reflect the Indians' defenselessness against horses and spears. The Indians' bodies lie cut

\(^{17}\) In all the scenes about the war, only one figure stands out among the Indians and the Spaniards, that of Tzilacatzin. In pictures 131, 135, 136 and 137, his size outstands that of the Spaniards. Furthermore, in the last three images, he appears as a magical figure, for he wears three disguises.

\(^{18}\) Dogs were used as weapons too: "...as the Cuauhquechollan Lienzo and other documents testify, savaging Indians with mastiffs having been a form of intimidation practiced by the Spaniards already in Cuba and the Caribbean islands..." (Brotherston, 1995: 27).

\(^{19}\) Disease also played a decisive role: "...native annals report disease as the single factor that worked most to European advantage, eliminating whole populations and their leaders on a scale never known before..." (c. 27).
in pieces below the Spaniards. In illustration 120 (See Fig. 21), brigantines with firing
crenations surround the island of Tenochtitlan. The might of technology is overpowering,
even if the number of Indians attacking the Spaniards is superior (See Fig. 22). Thus,
codex images show that for the Indians, technology was a decisive factor in the
Conquest.20

Treason is the other element that defines Spanish victory. The Lienzo de
Tlaxcala, for example, presents Cholula’s massacre (See Fig. 23). On one hand the
Spaniards are presented as superior to the Cholultecs. There are two fully clothed
Spaniards who brandish their spears. One wears an armor, a big shield and a sword,
while the other rides a horse. On the other hand, the Cholultecs are naked, and their
bodies are cut in pieces. However, the Tlaxcaltecs depicted in the image are shown as
equals to the Spaniards. There are two lords at the top right. They wear elaborate cloaks,
headdresses and sandals. In the middle of the picture, behind the armored Spaniard, a
Tlaxcaltec warrior faces a Cholultec in a defying manner. He wears a full body suit, a
simple headdress, and he brandishes a shield and a club. The Tlaxcaltec warrior is
bigger, and he is in a straight upward position, whereas the Cholultec warrior is bending
his knee. Behind the Spaniard and the horse, there is an Indian woman. She is standing
up and signaling towards the pyramid in a gesture of power, maybe command.

20 The Cantares Mexicanos, a collection of Nahuatl poetry, also reflect such vision:

armed with metal
they wreck the city
they wreck the Mexica nation

[tepoztlahuiceque
quixixinia atlon yan tepetl
quixixinia Mexicayotl]

(Brotherston, 1995: 26).
Tlaxcaltecs are as powerful as Spaniards. Together, they defeat the Cholultecs. Both of them are presented as traitors.

One of treason’s high points is the massacre at Toxcatl’s celebration. This was the most important indigenous celebration. It was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli. Toxcatl’s celebration took place when Cortés had gone to Veracruz to fight Pánfilo de Narváez. When the festivity was at its summit, the Spaniards, commanded by Pedro Alvarado, slaughtered the Indians (: 75). Chapter LXXV of Codex Durán (See Fig. 24) presents this killing. The scene is painted in a two-dimensional space that shows how the Indians were trapped. Arched walls surround the square where the celebration took place. In each wall there is an opening. Spaniards entered through each of these openings and attacked the Indians gathered at the center of the square. The ‘teponaztli’\(^{21}\) and the ‘huehueltl’\(^{22}\) at the middle of the picture stress the peaceful and festive atmosphere of the Indians’ celebration. In this scene, Indians are not attacking, but passively being cut and killed, while the Spaniards brandish their weapons, slay and kill Indians.\(^{23}\) This ‘treacherous nature’ could confirm León Portilla’s assumption of the Spaniards seen as barbaric, and thus as a distinct other. However, it is not so, for the Indian allies share the same cruelty, and they are pictured as humans. The text of chapter thirteen of Book XII of the Florentine Codex describes Spaniards as pigs because of their greed towards gold, yet in the corresponding illustrations (See Figs. 25 and 26), the Indian allies are also looting the treasure. Even in senselessness, Indians and Spaniards are equals.

\(^{21}\) Percussion instrument made from a hollow trunk.  
\(^{22}\) Indigenous drum made with a tree trunk covered with hide.  
\(^{23}\) In the Book XII of the Florentine Codex, the cruelest images are also related to Toxcatl’s massacre (pictures 67, 68, and 69).
The epitome of treason but also of equality is Cortés' "ally and interpreter Malintzin or La Malinche, today a major symbol in Mexican consciousness" (Brotherston, 1995: 33). In the Ninth Chapter of Book XII of the Florentine Codex, the Indians acknowledge the presence of Malintzin:

And it was told, declared, shown, announced, made known to Moctezuma, it was fixed in his heart, that a woman from among us people here brought them here; she interpreted for them. Her name was Marina. Her home was Teticpac. There on the coast they had first come to take her. (Sahagún, 1975: 25).

The text of the Florentine Codex indicates Malintzin's role in the Conquest: she interpreted for the Spaniards. However, the pictures of this codex bestow her more importance. Malintzin appears in six pictures of Book XII. She is always located between the Indians and the Spaniards, next or behind Cortés. Malinche is Cortés means of communication with the Aztecs (pictures 1, 22, 44, and 51) as well as with the conqueror's Indian allies (pictures 94 and 101). In this respect, Todorov and Baudot point out that Malintzin was much more than an interpreter. Todorov quotes Bernal Díaz del Castillo: "Cortés could not understand the Indians without her" (Todorov, 1992: 101). He also uses the pictures in the Florentine Codex to state that the Indians recognized the importance that Malinche had in the Conquest:

The Indians, too, regard her as much more than an interpreter; all accounts mention her frequently, and she is present in every image. The Florentine Codex illustration of the first encounter between Cortés and Montezuma is quite characteristic in this regard: the two military leaders occupy the margins of the image, dominated by the central figure of La Malinche (101). (See Fig. 28).

Baudot goes further than that. He points out that while Cortés led the military attack, Malintzin was in charge of the cultural and political communication that preceded or followed it. According to Baudot, she led the Conquest, for she possessed the
information needed to persuade or to intimidate (Baudot, 1988: 296). Although Baudot affirmed that both Cortés and Malintzin constructed the political discourse that gave way to the Conquest (: 294-295), he conferred more importance to her role, for she was the “...possessor of the political and narrative discourse that founded the conquest and that represented the crucial word of the most important mediator; the one who through the Word created the development of historical events...” (: 290. The translation is mine).

Baudot’s interpretation of the Florentine Codex images confirms his ideas:

No one will be surprised by the central role she plays in the iconography of the Conquest, for instance in the Florentine Codex or the Lienzo de Tlaxcala. In the most meaningful scenes, Indians and Spaniards appear in the margins of the picture, in an attitude of expectation; while in the center, standing out in the fictitious space of the image, in the precise heart of representation, Malintzin utters the word (: 296-297. The translation is mine).

Even though speech scrolls often characterize Malintzin’s depiction in the Florentine Codex, that is not enough to accept Baudot’s assertions of Malintzin as the endower of the Word, or as the founder or co-founder of the Conquest discourse. However, one cannot deny that in the Book XII of the Florentine Codex, the Indians depicted Malintzin as Cortés equal. In some pictures, she gesticulates with authority; in others, speech scrolls come forth from her mouth. Furthermore, in images 22 and 44 (See Figs. 27 and 28) she is the central figure. In the first one, the exaggerated size of her arm and hand make her authoritative gesture stronger than that of Cortés. In the second, her figure overshadows that of Moctezuma, even though the Aztec emperor wears his

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24 Baudot states that in many indigenous texts about the Conquest, Cortés is named ‘Capitán Malinche’ (Baudot, 1988: 295-296). Even Spaniards began to identify him as such. Bernal Díaz del Castillo gives an account of this fact: “...llamaban a Cortés Malinche, y así lo nombraré yo de aquí en adelante, Malinche, en todas las pláticas que tuviéramos con cualesquier indios así de esta provincia (de Tlaxcala) como de la ciudad de México, y no lo nombraré Cortés sino en parte que convenga...” (: 296).
imperial *tilmatl*. On the other hand, in this picture one can hardly differentiate Cortés from the rest of the Spaniards.

The representation of Malinche and the Tlaxcaltecs demonstrates that there is no difference in the portrayal of Indian and Spanish enemies. The method to depict the Spaniards was the same the natives used to picture themselves. The Spaniards sit, talk, order, and gesticulate like Indian principals. The Indians represented Malinche and the Tlaxcaltecs as enemies as powerful as the Spaniards. Consequently their image in the codices is closer to Lockhart’s assumptions than to Baudot’s and León Portilla’s. Like the Tlaxcaltecs, Cortés and his soldiers are depicted as members of another *altepetl*. And both are as courageous as the Aztecs.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper to show that the written texts favor Indian vision of Spaniards as distinctly others, either gods or barbarians, whereas the images favor Indian vision of Spaniards as equals was not entirely accomplished. Baudot, León Portilla and Lockhart reconstructed the ‘Indian vision of the Spaniards’ using indigenous written texts, and they came up with different conclusions. Baudot stated that the Indians viewed Spaniards as gods. León Portilla retook this idea, but he added that after regarding the Spaniards’ greed and cruelty, the Indians might have considered the Spaniards as barbarians. Both experts coincide in the idea of the Spaniards seen as distinct others. Lockhart contests this suggestion, and he affirms that it is very probable that the Indians viewed the Spaniards as equals. However, at the end, Baudot, León Portilla and Lockhart coincide. If the Indians considered Spaniards as gods, it was because it was the way they fitted best in the indigenous cosmovision, and thus it is not at all striking.
The problem is that to accept León Portilla’s assertion that the Spaniards were considered as ‘hated colonizers’ indicates that the Indians identified themselves as victims, abused and submitted (Wood, 2000: 176). Was that how they viewed themselves and, therefore, how they viewed the Spaniards? Although Lockhart does not think so, he recognizes that it is impossible to know with certainty, for all indigenous accounts of the conquest were written at least twenty years after it was over. It is true that all the texts about the Conquest are post-colonial, hence, it is difficult to break through the Spanish filter, but it is also unfair to deny the voice of the natives. Even though they were probably writing to a Spanish audience, it is very likely that they found ways to express their own point of view. Although they were imbedded in a European culture, they were still the descendants of the participants of the Conquest, and they still preserved a great deal of their culture.

To recognize that the images of the codices are as significant as the texts and as rich in content can help solve the dilemma. Since images were linked to the indigenous former manner of representing the world, they might not only complement the texts, but also convey a different meaning. The analysis of the representation of the Spaniards in the codices gives way to the following conclusions:

- Natives depicted Indian authorities having the same status as Spanish ones, and low class Indians, as low class Spaniards.
- In the depiction of battleship, Indians are depicted as equal adversaries to Spaniards, sometimes even as superior.
- In their paintings, the Indians accounted two elements for their defeat: technology and treason.
- Technology was the only Spanish superiority accepted by the Indians.
- Treason was not an action restricted to the Spaniards, for the Tlaxcaltecs and La Malinche also betrayed the Aztecs (if their actions can be considered as treason).
- As a conclusion, the image of the Spaniards is treated in the same way as that of the Indians.
Indigenous written texts about the Conquest lead to multiple interpretations of the Indians' vision of the Spaniards, whereas the images of the codices do not present them as distinct others. Therefore, the analysis of the Mexican manuscript paintings can contribute significantly to the reconstruction of *la visión de los vencidos*.
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