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From Incunabula to the Internet

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Simon McKeown
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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PRIVILEGES OF THE “OTHERS”: THE COATS OF ARMS GRANTED TO INDIGENOUS CONQUISTADORS*

MARÍA CASTAÑEDA DE LA PAZ
AND MIGUEL LUQUE-TALAVÁN

Until relatively recently, the image held of the conquest of Mexico was that it was effected by Spanish troops backed by a group of indigenous conquistadors from the city-state of Tlaxcala. In the traditional literature on the conquest this participation by the Tlaxcalteca has been justified and legitimated by their difficult political and military position, cornered as they were by the increasingly powerful Triple Alliance led by Tenochtitlan.¹ This historical view is changing, however, due to the efforts of a group of scholars which, using written and pictorial archival documents, has shown the fundamental role played by other indigenous groups besides the Tlaxcalteca.² This revisionist view of the so-called “Spanish” conquest is a collaborative effort of which the historiographical consequences are not yet entirely understood. It has become clear, nonetheless, that it is legitimate to ask whether the conquest of Mesoamerica was really a Spanish undertaking or rather an indigenous one. In following the process of conquest, a pattern of incorporating native troops into the allied armies emerged. As communities and regions were conquered, people from these very same areas allied themselves with the ever-growing army in which the relative number of Spaniards was increasingly small.³ In fact, once the city of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco was conquered, its people joined in subsequent conquests led by Spanish conquerors like Cortés, Alvarado, Sandoval and Viceroy Mendoza.⁴ They principally participated in conquests to the north of New Spain, but there are also reports of military campaigns to the regions of Guatemala and Honduras.
As irrefutable proof of the indigenous participation in these conquests, there exists a series of coats of arms granted by the Spanish crown to certain noblemen and their communities as a reward for their involvement in the aforementioned campaigns. The descendants of these indigenous conquistadors bear witness to this participation in letters to the king in which they reiterate the exploits of their forebears as well as their own service. Of course, such letters have to be analyzed with great care, for indigenous lords understood how to exaggerate, manipulate and alter history for their own benefit. For example, from the historical record it is known that during the siege of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco, Totoquihuatzli, ruler of the city of Tlacopan, fought on the side of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. Nonetheless, in numerous letters to the king, his son emphasizes the crucial help that Tlacopan provided for the Spaniards in the Noche Triste, when they were almost wiped out by the people and army of the two city-states.

In this essay we will apply an iconographic analysis to some of the finest examples of blazons granted to the indigenous nobility from central Mexico during the sixteenth century. This analysis shows how iconographic elements suggestive of the pre-Hispanic world fused with iconographic elements from European heraldry. Additionally, we look at each of the indigenous conquistadors’ contributions to the conquest in order to understand why the particular blazons were requested, how they were to be used, what they may have meant to the owners and, finally, the message these shields transmitted through their iconography.

First, we will analyze two shields that were granted to the Spanish conquistadors Juan Tirado (1527) and Fernando Burgueño (1531), as these can be regarded as precedents of the blazons that were requested later by the indigenous elite. This will be followed by analysis of the first indigenous examples, those of the Moctezuma family (1536) and Don Diego de San Francisco Tehuetzquititzin (1546), gobernador, or governor, of Tenochtitlan and descendant of the great pre-Hispanic rulers of that city. In this particular case it is important to note that the sketch of the shield made by Don Diego in his request still exists and therefore can be compared to that which was actually granted to him. The last two blazons are astonishing for their iconographic contents of an indigenous nature; these are the coats of arms of the town of Coyoacan (1561) and Don Antonio Cortés Totoquihuatzli, governor of Tlacopan (1564).
The Request for a Coat of Arms: Arguments, Interests and Particularities

The first group of people to ask for a coat of arms was, obviously, the Spanish conquistadors. In general, these were people from a humble background, with little education and profound Christian beliefs. Their main objective in New Spain was to obtain gold and glory; those who moved to the Indies during the sixteenth century continuously aspired to belong to the Spanish nobility. To obtain an *encomienda*, or the right to receive tribute in a certain territory, was one of the most coveted privileges among conquistadors; it bestowed opportunities to obtain the luxuries associated with high status in colonial society. But although having an *encomienda* carried social and economic importance and placed those who held them in the class of landlords, the title of *encomendero* did not confer nobility in the Indies. Those who sought a grant of a coat of arms were therefore motivated by considerations of prestige.

Among the honorary grants, those of coats of arms were most sought after by Spanish conquistadors as they perpetuated their exploits in the memory of their descendants and in the eyes of the wider world. The earliest known concessions of blazons were given to Juan de Burgos (12th April, 1527), Juan Tirado (12th April, 1527), Gutierre de Badajoz (15th November, 1527) and Fernando Burgueño (25th September, 1531). They were granted as a result of these men’s direct participation in the conquest and their pacification and settling of various places in the new Viceroyalty of New Spain.

The indigenous conquistadors, seeing the shields with which their Spanish brothers-in-arms were compensated for their efforts, rapidly began to write requests themselves. Unlike their Spanish counterparts, however, the indigenous petitioners were not from humble backgrounds at all. On the contrary, they belonged to the highest Mesoamerican nobility. As the allied army of Spanish and indigenous men swept through Mesoamerica, more and more indigenous troops joined it. This reflected a typical Mesoamerican pattern of joining the army by which one was conquered, and was based on the need to regain social and economic status. Just as one could lose land and privileges through war, one could also receive exemption from the obligations of tribute and personal service, and, of course, claim other land through conquest. However, once the conquests were over, these indigenous conquistadors, as they called themselves, became aware that a new reality was taking shape, with new rules and new ways of behaving. Soon, both town governments and individual elites alike familiarized
themselves with Spanish legal procedures, which resulted in a steady flow of wide-ranging petitions to the king and his council.

According to Gibson, in the case of the Tlaxcalteca, the grants were awarded because the indigenous lords personally asked for them.\textsuperscript{12} Without their petition, the crown would not have troubled to issue any. He also notes that these indigenous petitions were made possible by having an organized government and, above all, by having a solid knowledge of the Spanish forms of law on the part of the petitioners. Now, although there is little doubt about the shrewd ability of the Tlaxcalteca in using history in their petitions, it has recently become clear that in fact it was the Tenochca who first wrote petitions.\textsuperscript{13} Already in 1536 the members of the Moctezuma family related to the \textit{huey tlatoani}, or great lord, Moctezuma II obtained a coat of arms. From that moment on, petitions arrived at the Spanish court in a continuous stream, though the majority—like the Tlaxcaltec petitions—was written in the 1560s.

The indigenous conquistadors who wrote petitions for coats of arms presented their case on three basic issues: 1) that a certain lord or his town participated directly in the conquest, pacification, and settling of different places in New Spain. As such, and contrary to concessions to Spaniards, coats of arms were granted to both indigenous conquistador individuals and to towns; 2) that “indigenous nobles”, being true Christians, “facilitated the spread of Christianity and guided the preservation of its memory in drama, paintings, and texts”, which explains why so many shields contain biblical phrases and numerous Christian symbols;\textsuperscript{14} and 3) their noble descent. The second argument was not employed by Spanish conquistadors, since their Christian beliefs were not in doubt, and if they had already been noblemen with a coat of arms, they probably would have asked for an augmentation to their shields.

Now, it may be surprising to see the mechanisms of argumentation employed in these petitions. Letters, sometimes written in Latin, show the king the indigenous elite’s biblical and philosophical knowledge. In their discourses these elites and towns refer to their magnificent pre-contact past only to ask immediately for an exemption of tribute payments and the restitution of lands and communities that supposedly had been subject to them from time immemorial.

\textbf{The Iconography of the Coats of Arms}

Petitions for coats of arms varied widely. While some petitioners simply wrote a request and left it to the king to decide the kind of shield he would grant, others gave a detailed description as to what they wanted, sometimes
Privileges of the “Others”  

Given that the privilege of possessing a coat of arms implied little more than the right to show it in public, the crown was quite willing to fulfill the wishes expressed in the petitions. It has to be confessed that although an attempt has been made to analyze the symbols used in the shields discussed here—for which the accompanying royal grants have been of great value—in some of the New Spanish cases the meaning remains unclear. The use of European or Mesoamerican symbols seems rather capricious at times, often following aesthetic criteria instead of iconographical semiotics. However, there is little doubt that in order for the painter at the Spanish court to include Mesoamerican iconographic elements of which he obviously had no knowledge, it was necessary for the indigenous petitioners to send along a sketch. How else do we explain the perfect rendition of *macanas*, or indigenous swords, the attire of pre-Hispanic gods, or jaguars and eagles shouting “War!” in some of the blazons?!

It is important to note that the interest in coats of arms within indigenous societies was not something introduced by the Spaniards. Shields and banners were not unknown in Mesoamerica before the Spanish arrival. The shields of warriors, for example, showed “emblems indicating geographic origin, ethnic affiliation, and the like”. Indigenous warriors also carried a series of banners into war, as testified by the representations of the Cuauhquecholteca with such banners in the *Lienzo de Cuauhquechollan* as Asselbergs has pointed out. Similarly, the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* (1979) and the *Relación Geográfica de Tlaxcala* (1984) depict the Tlaxcaltec banners that were eventually incorporated into the European-style shields of the Tlaxcaltec nobility. Don Jerónimo del Águila (see below) also explicitly wanted to incorporate into his new blazon “the banners which I inherited from my ancestors”, while Don Antonio Cortés Totoquihuaztli asked for the inclusion of the shield that “they used to own”. Indeed, two distinct terms existed in pre-Hispanic times in order to distinguish the shields or banners of the lords from those of the community or *altepetl*: *tlatoctlauiztli* and *altepetlauiztli*, respectively.

In the colonial period the main objective of a petition for an *altepetlauiztli*, or shield of an *altepetl*, was the change of status from “town” to “city.” As Lockhart points out, the Spaniards primarily used the term *pueblo*, or town, to refer to larger settlements. This usage often coincided with the indigenous concept of *altepetl*, but it was also used for settlements that may have been a constituent part of an *altepetl*. However, in documents that were written in Nahuatl, the Aztec language, the term *pueblo* is very rarely used. So it seems that while the Spaniards never fully understood the structure of the indigenous *altepetl*, the indigenous population did
understand the Spanish distinction between a town and a city, using it for their own benefit and to distinguish themselves from other altepetl. As is confirmed by Haskett, the communities that had the right to possess a coat of arms were considered to be superior to those that did not. This explains why towns like Coyoacan and Tlacopan sought to obtain them.

While it is relatively easy to explain why the European coats of arms were adopted by the indigenous population, it is more difficult to explain how they obtained the format they have. The fact that colonial indigenous coats of arms do not always follow the rigid norms of European heraldic composition may be a reflection of a society that takes from another society that which it considers useful. From the perspective of European heraldry, the indigenous shields show deviations from European norms, like the use and combination of disparate elements (indigenous iconographic elements), alterations in the enamels (placing colour over colour or metal over metal), and the infrequent use of colour. Furthermore, contrary to European norms, we see the profuse use of so-called “compositions of vignettes” or realistic representations in the form of pictures. These aspects make the description of indigenous blazons according to European heraldry particularly difficult but more interesting from the point of view of Mesoamerican iconography.

Just as Spaniards asked for shields before the indigenous elite did, we first deal with two shields of Spanish conquistadors before analyzing the indigenous ones.

**Early Coats of Arms for Spanish Conquistadors**

One of the characteristics of the early blazons for Spanish conquistadors is the reference, often in the form of vignettes, to feats of war in which the petitioners took part during the conquests. These shields, therefore, contain some of the first examples of ethnography from the American continent. Juan Tirado’s and Fernando Burgueño’s blazons will serve as examples of this group.

**The Conquistador Juan Tirado**

After the Noche Triste, Juan Tirado took part in the conquest of the city of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco and of Almería or Nauhtla on the coast of Veracruz where he was wounded and lost his right hand. These feats were highly valued by the crown, and thus Juan Tirado received in encomienda the towns of Cuicatlan and Tututepec, both in present-day Oaxaca (Fig. 14.1). On 12th April, 1527 he was granted a coat of arms. According to the description, the shield shows three white stars with five yellow scallop
shells beneath them and, in the other part, the Lake of Mexico with two roads. As a banner, the shield shows a coloured Jerusalem cross and, in the border, five heads of indigenous noblemen who were captured and killed by Juan Tirado.\footnote{27}

As is the case with many shields granted in New Spain, not all elements can be interpreted. The meaning of the white stars is not exactly clear, but it may refer to the noble character of the owner of the shield. The scallop shells on the blazon are symbols that refer to the Way of St James (Camino de Santiago) the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela where the remains of St James, or Santiago, are buried.\footnote{28} The red cross is a Jerusalem cross or crusader’s cross, although the grant refers to it as a cross of the Holy Sepulchre. This is probably an attempt to equate the conquests of Mexico with the Crusades, which attempted to free Jerusalem from the Muslims. The waves in the third and fourth field are representative of the lake that surrounded Mexico-Tenochtitlan and the causeways that connected it to the mainland (although these have not been represented). What stands out though are five trophy heads of indigenous noblemen, identified as such by their lip and nose plugs and the earrings of the two heads in the bottom part. One is the head of a Huastec nobleman from the state of Veracruz, who can be recognized by his pierced nose. He is further identified by a red leather band on his head.

**Fernando Burgueño**

Fernando Burgueño witnessed the imprisonment and death of Moctezuma II and, like Juan Tirado, survived the *Noche Triste* to return and conquer the city of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco.\footnote{29} For this and other conquests he was granted an augmentation of his shield on 25th September, 1531 together with an *encomienda*. The grant does not provide information on Burgueño’s original shield, but it does specify why some of the changes were made (Fig. 14.2).\footnote{30}

The blazon is divided into four fields: the first shows a black eagle, the second an image of an indigenous *cacique* with a chain around his neck, the third field holds a castle, and the last an arm with a coloured arrow.\footnote{31} The grant explains that the eight heads in the border refer to some of the “indios” killed on the battlefield by Burgueño. Contrary to Juan Tirado’s shield, these heads do not show any kind of decorative elements that identify them as belonging to particular indigenous groups. The crest shows a closed helmet and an arm with a sword, signs of the effort and courage this conquistador showed in the conquest. The meaning of the eagle is not clear, but there can be little doubt that the *cacique* is none other than the
huey tlatoani Moctezuma II. Since Burgueño witnessed Moctezuma’s imprisonment and death, he most likely wanted to immortalize it on his shield. According to the historical record, Moctezuma II was taken as a prisoner to the palace of Axayacatl where the Spaniards were being lodged. Cortés then had to go to the coast, leaving Tenochtitlan in the hands of his captain Pedro de Alvarado. It was at this time that Alvarado decided to eliminate the indigenous elite, provoking the famous Noche Triste. Indigenous anger reached such a level that the Spaniards asked Moctezuma to go to the terrace of the palace in order to calm his people down. But during this attempt he was stoned, causing his death a few days later. No other document refers explicitly to Moctezuma being chained. It seems, therefore, that this 1531 shield is the first to represent the death of Moctezuma in this way. It was subsequently depicted on page 42 of the Relación geográfica de Tlaxcala from 1580 and again in the Códice Moctezuma, a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century document of the techialoyan genre, which shows Moctezuma with a rope around his neck.

The castle in the third field seems to be a reference to the kingdom of Castile. Although there are various representations of Mexico-Tenochtitlan as a castle, it is always surrounded by the waters of the lake. The arm with the coloured arrow may be related to one of Burgueño’s exploits in war. It may represent the arm of an indigenous warrior with an arrow, or the arm of Burgueño himself with a trophy of one of his enemies. It may also be a reference to the wounds caused to the Spanish conquistador’s arm by an indigenous warrior during the conquest.

The Coat of Arms of the Moctezuma Family

As we noted above, it is likely that the descendants of Moctezuma II, seeing the coats of arms granted to Spanish conquistadors, began to write petitions for such shields. Curiously, these early blazons are very European in their format and contents, while later coats of arms for the indigenous elite include elements of the pre-Hispanic pictographic tradition from central Mexico. For this reason it seems possible that in these early cases the king or his administrators decided which elements were to be incorporated.

Two of Moctezuma II’s relatives received coats of arms: Don Martín Cortés Moctezuma Nezahualtecolotzin, Moctezuma’s firstborn son, and Don Francisco de Alvarado Matlaccohuatzin, a first cousin of Don Martín (his father was a brother of Moctezuma II). Don Martín and Don Francisco both travelled to Spain in 1532 where they stayed for three years in order to “personally kiss your hands as Your Kings and natural lords”,
and to request, among other things, a coat of arms. These blazons were granted on 16th February, 1536.

With some minor variations, the shields are very similar, indicating that these were the blazons granted to the Moctezuma family generally. The royal grant states that Don Martin Nezahualtecolotzin received the coat of arms for the services of his father, who in the name of the crown of Castile conquered and pacified the provinces of New Spain and died in the process. His son Don Martin then continued his mission. If the history was not so well known, one might think that Moctezuma II had gone with Cortés to pacify the land that he controlled. Yet it is well known that this ruler was Cortés’s prisoner from the moment the Spaniards entered the city. Nothing is known of the feats of Don Martin, though the sources tell us that he was closely associated with the Spanish conquistadors and their world. López de Meneses has shown that Don Martin travelled to Spain for the first time in 1524, where he received religious training in the convent of Talavera de la Reina. Although it is unknown how long he stayed in Spain, we do know he went there again in 1532 when he married a Spanish woman. He returned to Mexico in 1536. Don Francisco on the other hand, travelled to Spain for the first time in 1527 and returned in 1530. He crossed the ocean again in 1532 to make his request for the coat of arms. Don Francisco received the grant for his noble descent and his participation in the conquest and pacification of New Spain, of which no further information is given.

As mentioned above, both shields are very similar. Don Martin’s (Fig. 14.3) depicts a black eagle crossed by two red bars. Inside the first bar are written the letters K and I with, according to the grant, a rose between them. The second bar contains the letter F with a rose on either side. These are the initials of Charles V (Karolus), his mother Juana (Iuana) and their son and grandson Philip II (Felipe). The meaning of the roses is unknown. The border reads “Ave Maria,” each letter alternating with waves, while the timbre represents a closed helmet with two black wings and a hand holding a device with the motto “In Domino confido” (I trust in God). Both texts are public manifestations of the “true” conversion of the person who bore the coat of arms. This was a crucial argument in the request for the shield.

In Don Francisco Matlaccohuatzin’s shield (Fig. 14.4), the same K and F appear but this time associated with a fleur de lis the meaning of which in this context is unknown. Neither is it clear why the eagle has changed colour from black to white. Another difference is the border, which contains two palm leaves and two red roses, again with no clear meaning. The timbre is very similar to that of Don Martin’s shield and shows a closed helmet with two black wings, but this time there is no device or motto.
There is a third blazon of the Moctezuma family, that of Don Pedro de Moctezuma (see footnote 28). However, this shield was not granted until 11th September, 1570, the day Don Pedro died. Sadly, we only have a black and white drawing made by Villar Villamil who does not give any information as to the whereabouts of the original. His drawing shows a coat of arms very similar to those of Don Martin and Don Francisco.

The Coat of Arms of Don Diego de San Francisco Tehuetzquititzin

Don Diego de San Francisco Tehuetzquititzin was the Tlatoani-governor of Tenochtitlan from 1541 to 1554. From 1532 onwards he took part in the conquest of Honduras with Cortés and later, coinciding with his inauguration in 1541, he participated in the pacification of New Galicia and in the well-known Mixton War with Viceroy Mendoza.

According to the chronicler Tezozomoc, the 1541 campaign was a continuation of pre-Hispanic patterns of enthronement. The phrase “he went to wash as a ruler” is given in the Nahuatl text as “motlatocapacato” and should be translated as “he washed himself as ruler of the land.” This is a reference to a ritual act that indigenous rulers, in this case Don Diego, performed upon taking office and consisted of going to war in order to take prisoners that were to be sacrificed. This is an extraordinary example of the pre-Hispanic motivations of indigenous nobles to participate in the conquest. Once indigenous nobles assimilated into the colonial way of life, this pattern of conduct inherited from their ancestors would abruptly disappear. Still, it is interesting to see how a term with such important pre-contact connotations persisted in a colonial document.
After Don Diego had been governing a number of years in Tenochtitlan, on 26th February, 1546, he wrote a probanza, or proof. Again, the main issue was his direct participation in the conquest with his people, his arms and his own horses, which he continued to make available to the king in case he needed them. According to this text, Don Diego left with Cortés on the two-and-a-half year conquest of Hibueras, or Honduras. Furthermore, he took part in campaigns to Pánuco and to put down its subsequent uprising, and to Xochipila where he was wounded and his son died. In addition to emphasizing his unconditional support in the conquests, Don Diego also thought it important to point out that he was a good Christian and of noble descent. A drawing of a coat of arms (Fig. 14.5) is included on the last page of Don Diego’s probanza (fol. 18r).

The Tenochtitlan ruler made sure to include the glyphic representation of the city, which, according to the description in the cédula, is represented by a stone (in the white and blue waters of the lake) from which a prickly pear cactus grows. These elements undoubtedly reflect the survival of Tenochca history in the memory of its nobility. This glyph was replaced in 1523 by a shield with prevailing Spanish heraldic elements granted to the city by Emperor Charles V. From that time on, the old Tenochtitlan—now called Mexico—was represented by a lion-flanked tower on top of an aqueduct and ten prickly pear fruits (tuna) along the border. This decision provoked continuous disagreement about the inclusion or exclusion of certain elements. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the water, the stone, the prickly pear cactus, and the eagle were used continuously in insignia and banners. They eventually reappeared in the Mexican flag in 1812, with the eagle representing Huitzilopochtli, the Mexica’s patron deity and an element seemingly disregarded by Don Diego. The eagle is not represented on top of the cactus in Don Diego’s shield, perhaps in order to avoid any suspicion of the continuation of pre-Hispanic religious practices.

An eagle and a castle are depicted in the fields situated above the Tenochtitlan place glyph. The shield also contains the name “Felipe” in reference to the Spanish monarch Philip II. The eagle and the castle alternate in the border. In Spanish heraldry, a castle generally accompanies a lion to symbolize Castile and León, the two kingdoms that supported the Spanish conquest. In this case, however, the lion has been replaced by an eagle. The displayed eagle, that is, with its wings elevated, is common in European heraldry, and although the shield contains a typical European eagle, the Tenochca likely interpreted this eagle as the patron god Huitzilopochtli—who is also represented by the sun—and would thus be a clear continuation of pre-Hispanic iconography. Don Diego may have
considered this a way to include the image of Huitzilopochtli in his coat of arms and explains why he did not include the eagle or the prickly pear cactus. In any case, the objective seems to have been to represent the two great kingdoms, Castile and Mexico-Tenochtitlan, though Don Diego naturally gave more importance to his own kingdom, depicting it as larger and in a central position.

For the feats indicated above and the arguments put forth, Don Diego was granted a coat of arms in Madrid on 23rd December, 1546. Surprisingly, the shield he received was very different in style from the one he included for consideration in his probanza (Fig. 14.6). The castle was eliminated from one of the fields, probably because the king did not like the idea of putting Tenochtitlan on the same level as the kingdom of Castile. The castles and eagles were also eliminated from the border and replaced by white stars, which may refer to Don Diego’s noble character.

The Coat of Arms of Don Antonio Cortés Totoquihuatzli of Tlacopan

Don Antonio Cortés was the son of Totoquihuatzli, ruler of the town of Tlacopan when Cortés arrived in 1519. He wrote a letter to Emperor Charles V on 6th January, 1552 in which he requested two coats of arms, one for himself and the other for his town. In order to persuade the emperor, Don Antonio stated that he was a descendant of the rulers that had always governed Tlacopan and, above all, that he and his father participated in the siege and conquest of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco. Impatient at having no word from Spain, Don Antonio wrote again to Charles V on 1st December, 1552 extolling even more his role in the conquest of Tenochtitlan and exalting that of his father Totoquihuatzli, who met Cortés when he arrived in his town. He goes so far as to point out that it was Totoquihuatzli who offered an alliance with Cortés, not the other way around, and even gives the very words spoken by his father. Still Don Antonio received no answer, and so he tried again years later when Philip II was in power using the very same arguments. He finally received a grant for the requested privileges in 1564, twelve years after his first letter.

Don Antonio’s blazon presents iconography related to war and religious conversion (Fig. 14.7). First, we shall discuss the central part of the shield, which is divided into six fields, followed by the border, divided into more sections. A large palace, identified as such by the small black circles in the lintel above the door, is represented in the first and fourth fields. Above it are three smaller houses crowned by a xiuhztolli, a royal diadem only worn by the tlatoque, or principal rulers. This is a reference to the cities of the
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Triple Alliance (Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan), and a reminder that Tlacopan was a member of this important pre-Hispanic alliance that controlled most of Mesoamerica at the time of the conquest. The second and third fields, though slightly different from each other, have a religious theme. The second field refers to the arrival of Christianity (represented by a globe) in the New World or “Mundo Menor.” The star can be viewed in both European and Mesoamerican terms; it may represent the light of faith brought by Catholicism, but it could also be Venus announcing the arrival of the sun indicating the beginning of a new era. The third field also deals with religion; a tlatoani with his xiuhuitzolli embraces the Catholic faith through baptism, represented by a naked torso in the water. This is probably don Antonio Cortés Totoquihuatzli, showing the king his acceptance of the new religion.

The fifth and sixth fields can be read thanks to a description by Don Jerónimo del Águila, a lord of Tlacopan, who in his request for a coat of arms also asked for the incorporation of a river of blood and fire and a river of blood and water. These rivers symbolize the Lagoon of Primordial Blood, a mythical place of origin. As Don Jerónimo affirmed in his petition, these were “the banners that I inherited from my ancestors.” The fifth field contains representations of flames, but there is no sign of blood. Similarly, only the water appears in the sixth field while the blood is again left out. The fact that both coats of arms from Tlacopan contain these elements suggests that such elements existed in the local historical tradition. Places of origin, as elements of local identity, are also present in the coats of arms of Tzintzuntzan where Chicomoztoc, or Seven Caves, the Chichimec place of origin, is represented.

The glyph of the city is represented in the central field of the upper part of the shield (second field). It is comprised of a hill (the altepetl), a tree with water flowing from its roots, a flaming lion embracing a tree, and some flowers. The meaning of the flaming lion embracing the tree is unclear, although according to European norms it is associated with force and power. Its position on top of the hill with water flowing from its roots, and consequently from within the hill, may symbolize a primordial tree. Even though there are only two, the flowers must be a reference to the pre-Hispanic glyph of Tlacopan, which consists of three tlacotl, a kind of flower. The fields on either side of the toponym (first and third fields) express military conquest with representations of the two main military orders in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, that of the Eagle and the Jaguar. In this case they are both shouting “War!” using the pre-Hispanic convention of atl tlachinolli or “water-burned land”, which is clearly represented by the colour blue for water and red for fire. The eagle is depicted on top of a
precious hill. It can be qualified as “precious” because of the shape of the elements in the eagle’s claws, which appear to be precious stones (called xihuitl in Nahuatl), typically turquoise. This interpretation is corroborated by the stones’ blue colour and the presence of a bunch of green grass or leaves, since the word for “grass” in Nahuatl is homophonous (xihuitl). The jaguar, identified by its spots, stands next to a steep hill with a burning temple on top. In Mesoamerican pictography a burning temple is a common convention for the conquest of a town (see for example the Codex Mendoza 1991). The building, or tecpan, to its right may allude to Tlacopan.

The fourth and fifth fields show arrows and a shield or chimalli. However, this is not just any shield, but rather one associated with the god Xipe Totec as can be corroborated by fol. 30r of the Codex Magliabechiano and fol. 12r of the Codex Tudela. These codices depict the feast of tlacaxipehualiztli, associated with Xipe Totec, during which warriors carry shields that are the same in colour and decorative design (Fig. 14.8). Furthermore, the pink colour of the coat of arms also seems to be related to this deity. Since Xipe was also incorporated into the shield of the city of Tlacopan, it is probable that this deity was protector of the ruling lineage and of the altepetl. The sixth and seventh fields depict shells and the eighth field contains a hill with a double peak and a macana, or indigenous sword, on top. This weapon, like the chimalli and the arrows, may be related to Don Diego’s feats of war during the conquest.

The meaning of the shells is unknown, as is the motto “Águila pequeño Blanca”, or “Small white eagle”, which is held precisely by an eagle that tops the shield.

The Coat of Arms of Coyoacan

The coat of arms of Coyoacan was granted after a petition by its governor, Don Juan de Guzmán Itztololinqui the Younger, and was signed in Madrid on 24th June, 1561. The term “the Younger” indicates that Don Juan was a son of Don Juan de Guzmán Itztololinqui. In order to distinguish between the two men, the colonial documents refer to them as “the Younger” for the son and “the Elder” for the father.

We do not have the transcription of the royal cédula that accompanied the blazon and in which the petition is argued and justified. However, the other examples of such petitions, like those of Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan, make clear that the central argument was always the participation of the town and/or its lords in the conquest of Tenochtitlan. Furthermore, a 1536 petition by Don Juan de Guzmán Itztololinqui the Elder enumerates the sacrifices he had made in order to conquer, pacify, and colonize Mesoamerica. This document includes the testimony of Don Juan and
three witnesses, who all corroborate the services rendered to the Spaniards by Quauhpopocatl, father of Don Juan de Guzmán the Elder. Quauhpopocatl received Cortés and his men by order of Moctezuma II. He supposedly guided Cortés to Mexico-Tenochtitlan, protecting him and his men against all the towns that sought to wage war against them. Quauhpopocatl furthermore claims to have been of crucial importance in the escape from Tenochtitlan during the Noche Triste. Finally, in the conquest of Hibueras, another son of Quauhpopocatl accompanied Cortés and brought 400 warriors with him, all of whom died during the campaign.

At present, two identical coats of arms of Coyoacan are known to exist, though with stylistic variations. The first is incorporated into a legal file from Coyoacan that does not mention the shield (Fig. 14.9), while the second is accompanied by a royal grant (Fig. 14.10). The shield from Coyoacan combines clear Hispanic iconographic elements of a religious nature with those of indigenous traditions of war, two of the main arguments in the concession of privileges. Three aspects of the shield merit attention. First, in the coyote’s headdress, converted into a lion in the second shield from Coyoacan, we recognize the pre-Hispanic god Otontecuhtli in the form of paper butterflies. Such iconography is similar to that used in relation to the feast of Xocotl Huetzi or “falling fruits”, which links it to Otontecuhtli (Fig. 14.11). This deity guided the Tepanec people, and thus also the Coyoaque, during their migration before settling in the Valley of Mexico. It seems probable that Otontecuhtli was taken as the patron god once Coyoacan was founded, and it was consequently important to incorporate him iconographically into the shield. The deity is represented here to show the Chichimec origin of the Tepaneca and their association with war and conquest. Prisoners of war would be sacrificed to Otontecuhtli by throwing them into a fire, then taking them out before they died in order to remove their hearts.

The inner part of the shield is characterized by a combination of both sacred and bellicose elements. In the first and fourth fields the Dominican cross stands out in clear allusion to the Dominican Order that founded a house in Coyoacan. The cross rises from the mouth of a coyote, the animal from which the city took its name (coyotl). This could symbolize the installation and acceptance of the Catholic religion in the city. However, the cross is also a decorative element of the chimalli or shield that is accompanied by arrows. According to pre-Hispanic iconography the shield and arrows must be read as symbols of war. In our opinion, it is an allusion to the conquests undertaken by Coyoacan while accompanying the Spaniards. For lack of information, it is not possible to interpret the
symbolism of the other fields of the shield, which depict a jaguar and a coyote embracing a tree.

The coat of arms of Coyoacan includes another element of symbolic value used frequently in the shields: a bow and arrows. Many of the elements used in the shields concern the indigenous concepts of “Chichimec” and “Toltec”. Chichimec descent is associated with groups coming from the north—nomads and hunters—which explains the depiction of the bow and arrows if a particular group wanted to show such descent. However, sedentary groups that lived in cities developed art and writing, and other cultural forms: that is, they were civilized, calling themselves Toltecs. They claimed to have come from Tollan, the centre of civilization, and were heirs to the tradition of Quetzalcoatl, the great Mesoamerican cultural hero. These two concepts may seem to us to be opposites, but in fact they were not to the peoples living in pre-Hispanic central Mexico. Many who claimed Chichimec descent became imbued with culture and civilization and acquired a double identity that, depending on the goal of a specific document or time in which they lived, could be used in either way. At a time of conquest like the first half of the sixteenth century, the Chichimec values were of great importance. They were not only associated with the hunt and nomadic living, but also, and maybe particularly, with warring peoples who were respected and feared.  

Conclusions

In many ways the Conquest of Mexico was possible due to the massive participation of indigenous conquistadors and the continuation of pre-Hispanic patterns of war and conduct. Part of this conduct was the presumption that after the battles were over, the participants would receive privileges, land and people to work it. However, after the conquests and as time passed, indigenous conquistadors became aware that what they had expected to receive was not forthcoming. At the same time they saw how their Tenochea neighbours received striking coats of arms from the Spanish crown, which were similar to those granted to their brothers-in-arms, the Spanish conquistadors. Soon enough they learned the ins and outs of the Spanish legal system, how to write petitions, and the mechanisms of argumentation. In these petitions the indigenous conquistadors emphasized their noble descent, their true conversion to Christianity, the greatness of their people and city-states and, above all, the crucial importance of their participation in the conquest of New Spain.

But what did it mean to them to have a European-style coat of arms? Why did they incorporate particular iconographic elements into their
shields? It seems that with their newly obtained *tlatocatlahuiztli*, or “shields of the lineage”, the indigenous nobility tried to put themselves on par with the Spanish conquistadors and, as such, enjoy the same benefits. But they probably also wanted to hold a coat of arms because it implied a social privilege through which the king, the new authority in Mesoamerica and New Spain, recognized indigenous nobility. Furthermore, in the petitions for the *altepetlahuiztli*, or “shields of the *altepetl*”, one perceives a “battle of prestige” between one *altepetl* and another, particularly between neighbours. Indigenous society understood perfectly well the distinction Spanish society made between a city and a town and, thus, obtaining this elevated status in relation to one’s neighbouring communities was an important catalyst for the production of petitions in the colonial era.

In regard to the iconographic elements that were chosen by the *cabildo* to be included in their coats of arms, it is evident that these had great value for the petitioners and their towns, but, more importantly, their symbolic meanings continued to be recognized by the indigenous population. It must therefore be concluded that the iconographic elements that were to be incorporated into the shields were carefully chosen and did not at all represent some vague, meaningless memory. If correct, these observations would suggest that coats of arms contained both obvious and subliminal messages for the indigenous population. It should be remembered that shields were placed on façades of houses and shown in public ceremonies. The people would not only regard coats of arms as recognition by the Spanish crown of the legitimacy of the indigenous lords and their feats in the conquest, but they would recognize the ancient symbols boosting the identity of their *altepetl*. This explains the inclusion of the attributes of Otontecuhtli, the patron deity of Coyoacan, in its shield, or the *chimalli* related with Xipe and the representation of the Lagoon of Primordial Blood in that of Tlacopan.

It can only be supposed that the Spaniards were not aware of what these symbols meant to the Mesoamerican towns and people, otherwise it would have been unlikely that they would have allowed them to be used in this way. Nonetheless, in order to obtain their particular objectives the indigenous nobility combined arguments of their crucial participation in the conquest with their true conversion to Christianity. Chichimec war elements associated with brave warriors appear alongside elements of European religious iconography.

The indigenous coats of arms are the results of societies that took from one world or the other what was necessary to reach their goals. These shields show that the indigenous people did not reject their ancient roots, but rather embraced the new ones introduced by the Spanish arrival and
merged them to give rise to the Indo-Hispanic society that characterized New Spain.

Fig. 14.1. The coat of arms of the conquistador Juan Tirado. Courtesy of the Archivo Ducal de Alba.
Fig. 14.2. The coat of arms of Fernando Bugueño. Courtesy of the Archivo Ducal de Alba.
Fig. 14.3. Coat of arms of Don Martin Nezahualtecolotzin. Courtesy of the Archivo Ducal de Alba.
Fig. 14.4. Coat of arms of Don Francisco Matlacohuatzin. Courtesy of the Archivo Ducal de Alba.
Fig. 14.5. Coat of arms of Don Diego Tehuetzquititzin. Courtesy of the Archivo General de Indias.
Fig. 14.6. Coat of arms of Don Diego Tehuetzquititzin. Courtesy of the Archivo Ducal de Alba.
Fig. 14.7. Coat of arms of Don Antonio Totoquihuaztli. Courtesy of the Archivo Ducal de Alba.
Fig. 14.8. Shield of Xipe. *Codex Tudela*, fol. 12r. Courtesy of the Museo de América, Madrid.
Fig. 14.9. Coat of arms of Coyoacan. Courtesy of the Archivo General de Indias.
Fig. 14.10. Coat of arms of Coyoacan. Courtesy of the Archivo Ducal de Alba.
Fig. 14.11. The feast of Xocotl Huetzi. Codex Tudelo, fol. 20r. Courtesy of the Museo de América, Madrid.
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Fig. 14.12. Map of the region with position of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco territories.

Notes

* We want to thank Michel Oudijk for his translation of this article and Brad Benton for further corrections. The following abbreviations are observed in the notes: Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Seville; AGI, Audiencia de México 204, N.20; AGI, Audiencia de México, 95, exp. 24; AGI, Mapas y planos, Escudos, 202; Archivo Ducal de Alba (ADA), Madrid; ADA, Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 1; ADA, Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 5; ADA, Carpeta 238, legajo 2, doc. 19; ADA, Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 21; ADA, Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 50; ADA, Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 74.

1 In the sixteenth century the territory that today constitutes Mexico was largely controlled by the so-called Triple Alliance that was formed by the city-states of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlacopan (see the map).

2 Restall 1998 documents Mayan participation in the conquest of Yucatan, while in 2003 he deconstructs the “history” of the conquest. Asselbergs 2004, particularly Chapter 5, demonstrates the important role of the Quauhquecholteca in the conquest of Guatemala. Matthew and Oudijk (2007) offer a collection of essays demonstrating the essential and structural role of the indigenous conquistadors. Castañeda de la Paz and Luque-Talaván (in press) deal with the participation of the Tepaneca in various campaigns in different parts of Mesoamerica for which they received coats of arms. Oudijk and Restall 2008 evaluate the role of Don Gonzalo Mazatzin Moctezuma in the conquest of Southern Puebla and the Mixteca.

The city-states of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco were both “Mexica” since they lived on the island called Mexico. At the time of the Spanish arrival these twin cities formed what was in many ways one city although they continued to be autonomous. It is illustrative that the final battle of Tenochtitlan was in fact fought in Tlatelolco with a Mexica army led by a ruler of Tenochca and Tlatelolca descent.

We use the terms coat of arms, blazon, and shield as synonyms.

For example, various letters of different native groups (Xochimilca, Tlacopaneca, Tenochca, Azcapotzalca, etc.) have been published which affirm their participation in the process of the conquest (Pérez-Rocha and Tena 2000).

The shield granted to Don Diego has been published before (Castañeda de la Paz 2009, 140-143), but on that occasion I had not yet found the probanza or proof that was presented with the request. This text explains in great detail the exploits of this conquistador as well as the design of the blazon that was requested. This material is published here for the first time.

The blazon of the city of Tlacopan has been published before (Castañeda de la Paz 2009, 135-138), but not the one granted to its ruler Don Antonio which is published here for the first time.

The majority of the settlers came from a poor economic background, which was probably one of the main motives for crossing the Atlantic to the Americas (Lafaye 1970, 19; Levillier 1919, xii- lxv).

Konetzke 1951, 352-353; Konetzke 1984, Vol. 2, 171. Larios Martín 1958, (17-20) also maintains this opinion, while Cadenas Allende 1986, (67-75); and Lira Montt 1977, (81) maintain that the title ennobled the holder and his descendants.

For a detailed analysis see Asselbergs 2004, 95-99, 106-112. As the author explains, these groups often did not have any choice but to participate due to Spanish pressure. See Barlow 1989, 419-440 for the documents in the AGN-HJ about the Tenochca distribution of lands in the Valley of Toluca, and that of the Tlatelolca during the reign of Axayacatl. Durán 1995, Vol. 1, Chapter 9, 129-130; Chapter 11, 151; Chapter 13, 165 refer to distributions in Azcapotzalco, Coyoacan and Xochimilco during the reign of Itzcotlat.


Gibson 1991, (159-160) has shown that the Tlaxcalteca travelled to Spain very soon after the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. There is, however, no register of any grants for coats of arms issued to the nobility at this early time, which is not to say that they were not given. For example, on 22nd April, 1535 the king granted Tlaxcala the title of “Loyal City” together with a blazon.

See Wood 2003, 4.

Sanchíz Ochoa 1976, 51, 58.

The crown was always suspicious of the intentions of the conquistadors to gain noble status as they tried to put themselves on a level with the nobility in Spain. The king feared the creation of a noble class of conquistadors in a region so far away which might endanger the interests of the crown (Céspedes del Castillo 1997, Vol. 2, 23-30). It is important to remember that apart from some very rare
exceptions, a coat of arms did not constitute proof of nobility, and its possession
was not restricted to those with noble status. For a discussion of this matter, see
Cadenas y Vicent 1969, Letter A, 8, and 5-12.

17 Based on Gibson’s analysis (Gibson 1991, 161-163) it can be deduced that four
copies existed of each coat of arms: 1) the sketch made by the painter of the
cabildo which would serve as a model for the painter of the royal court; 2) the
painter of the court’s coat of arms, which would be incorporated into the royal
cédula; 3) the copy that this same painter would make to be kept in Spain; and 4)
the copy the cabildo would make. This explains why on various occasions
different representations of the same coat of arms with slight variations exist in
different repositories. See also Castañeda de la Paz 2009, 128-129.

18 Haskett 2005, 222.

19 Asselbergs 2004, 118-121.


21 See Pérez-Rocha and Tena 2000, 288, 162.

22 Tlatocatlauiztli designates the “armas de caualleros” or “armas o insignias de
grandes señores”, and altepetlauiztli are “armas de ciudad” (Molina 2001, fols.
140v, 13v, 4r). See also the word tlahuiztli in the Códice Florentino (1979, Book
8, fol. 54r) about when these recognitions were given to indigenous lords. I would
like to thank Michael Swanton for this important information.


25 Despite this, Coyoacan received the title of “villa”, a term applied only to
settlements of Spaniards. And although the status of villa was less than that of
city, it was greater than that of pueblo. Coyoacan received the title of villa
because it is the place where the Spaniards first established their council before
moving to Tenochtitlan.

26 ADA (Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 74, fol. 1r).

27 ADA (Carpeta 238, legajo 2, doc. 74, fol. 1v–2r). The text of the grant was
published in Paz y Meliá 1892, 127, no. 2.

28 See http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camino_de_Santiago

29 ADA, (Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 5, fol. 1r).

30 ADA (Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 5, fols. 1r–1v). The text was published by Paz y
Meliá 1892, 97, lám. XLVIII, no. 2).

31 The term cacique originates in the Antilles and was used to refer to the nobility
throughout the Americas during the colonial period.

32 Sahagún 2000, Book 12, Chapters 19-21, (1193-1196) is the only source that
mentions Moctezuma II’s meddling during Cortés’ absence from Mexico-
Tenochtitlan. See also Cortés 1992, 79 and the accounts of the conquistadors
Bernardino Vázquez de Tapia 1988, (145); Francisco de Aguilar 1988, (189, 191)
and Bernal Díaz del Castillo 1992, Chapter 126, 253. For an analysis of the
contradictory accounts in the historical sources about the imprisonment and death
of Moctezuma, see the excellent work in Graulich 2001. As he notes (5-7), the
testimonies of various Spanish conquistadors who were eyewitneses to events
coincide in the essential issues and tend to favour stoning as the cause of death.
Other sources, particularly those written by the conquered and their protectors the friars, “are discouragingly contradictory”.

The *Techialoyans* are mixed documents in that they combine pictographs and written texts in Nahuatl. They are characterized by a uniform style and kind of letter and were produced at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century.


“[…] personalmente a […] nos besar las manos como a v[uest]ros Reyes y señores naturales […]”, ADA (Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 50, fol. 1r y doc. 21, fol. 1r).

See Paz y Mélia 1892, 267.


Once back, he was poisoned “because of envy” (*Crónica Mexicayotl* 1992, 151).

Chimalpahin 1998, 183. On this trip Don Francisco went with Don Pedro Moctezuma, another son of Moctezuma II and half-brother of Don Martin.

Paz y Mélia 1892, 256.

ADA (Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 50, fol. 1r-1v.). See also Paz y Mélia 1892, 267-268, no. 4.

ADA (Carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 21, fol. 1r). See also Paz y Mélia 1892, 256, no. 4.

Villar Villamil 1933, cédula 141.

Don Diego was not a descendant of Moctezuma but of Tizoc, a Mexica ruler of a different branch of the ruling family. His father was Tezcatlipocatzin (*Crónica Mexicayotl* 1992, 171-172).

Concerning his conquest with Cortés, see AGI (Audiencia de México, 95, 24, fol. 209v). The document was also transcribed in Pérez Rocha and Tena 2000, 100; for information on his campaign with Mendoza, see Chimalpahin, Séptima Relación 1998, 201; the *Crónica Mexicayotl* 1992, (172) specifies that he went to Xochipillan.

I would like to thank Michael Swanton for the English translation. The emphasis is mine.

This observation was made by Reyes García in his commentary on the *Anales de Juan Bautista* 2001, 155, footnote 48. He further states that once the Spanish system had been installed, this act of inauguration was substituted by the payment of the expenses of the tree that was used in the ritual of the *voladores*. See Sahagún 2000, Book 8, Chapter 18, paragraphs 3 and 5, (773-775), for a description of the ritual of enthronement and the related necessity of going to war to take prisoners.

(AGI, Audiencia de México 204, N.20).

AGI, Audiencia de Mexico 204, N. 20, fol. 13v). The information about this participation can be found in questions 9, 10 and 11, which were confirmed by all the witnesses (AGI, Audiencia de Mexico, 204, N.20, fol. 3r-3v).

AGI (Audiencia de Mexico, *ibidem*, fols. 2r-3v, 18r).
According to these accounts, the city of Tenochtitlan had to be founded where the Mexica, on their migration in search of the place predestined by their patron god Huitzilopochtli, would encounter an eagle on top of a prickly pear cactus growing out of a stone. An abundant bibliography exists on the theme of the foundation of Tenochtitlan. See, among others, Duverger 1987, 364-368; Graulich 1990, 258-262; Castañeda de la Paz 2005a, 129-134; and Castañeda de la Paz 2005b, Vol. 2, 31-42.

Regarding this coat of arms and its poor reception among the indigenous and Spanish population, see Florescano 1998, (37-50), who states that, in order to improve its reception while not offending the Spanish king, the shield was adorned with indigenous iconography. The indigenous iconography eventually became more prominent than the Spanish iconography, and, in 1642 this representation of the shield was prohibited. By 1663, however, the prohibition was largely ignored.

See Alberro 1997, 393-414 and the illustration in Codex Osuna 1976, fol. 8r.

Haskett agrees with such an identification and adds that the eagle, “as ‘king of birds,’ represented politician supremacy”: see Haskett 2005, 233. In his discussion of the coats of arms in the Lienzo de Patzcuaro and that of Tzintzuntzan, Roskamp points out that the eagle “was a highly venerated animal in Central Mexico and generally associated with the sun or other deities”: see Roskamp 2001, 14, figs. 2-3.

The coat of arms given to Tlacopan was published and analyzed in Castañeda de la Paz 2009, 143-147.

67 See fol. 5v in Codex Mendoza 1991, 16. The name Tlacopan comes from the Nahuatl word tlacotl, “rod, stick, stalk, thin stick” and the relational noun -pan, “above, on top of”: see Molina 2001, fol. 116r.

68 Xihuitl or xiuitl means “precious stone” in Nahuatl, and by extension “precious”. The homophonous xihuitl means “year, comet, turquoise, herb”, and is apparently functioning as a phonetic complement to clarify the previous interpretation: see Molina 2001, fol. 159v.

69 The blazon of the town of Tlacopan also includes these arrows but the shield was replaced by a face. Given the similarity between both coats of arms, it seems likely that the face is that of Xipe Totec.

70 See Batalla 2002, 175-176, figs. 16 and 17. Thanks are due to Guilhem Olivier for confirming this identification.

71 As mentioned in the introduction, it was quite normal for conquistadors to include their weapons in their coats of arms. Such is the case for the indigenous conquistador Don Jerónimo del Aguil, who includes in his blazon his actual shield decorated with the five wounds of Christ and the lance and sword he used to destroy temples and places of “idolatry”: see Pérez Rocha and Tena, 2000, 288; and Castañeda de la Paz 2009, 144-145.

72 The shells belong to the family of Olividae and more precisely to that of the Oliva kinsmen. I would like to thank Dr Adrián Velázquez (Museo del Templo Mayor, INAH) and the biologist Norma Valentín (Subdirección de Laboratorios y Apoyo Académico, INAH) for this information and Leonardo López Luján for putting me in contact with both scholars.

73 ADA, carpeta 238, legajo 2, doc. 1.

74 The document was published in Pérez-Rocha and Tena 2000, 103-122. See also in the same work Genealogy No. 10 in relation to Coyoacan.

75 The first is in the ADA (carpeta 238, leg. 2, doc. 1), and the second in the AGI (Mapas y planos, Escudos, 202).

76 See Garibay 1979, 40-41. Although he calls the god Ocotecutli, modern investigations have shown that it really is Otontecuhtli. Regarding the feast of Xocotl Uetzin see Durán 1995, Vol. 2, Chapter 12, 125-130; Codex Borbonico 1991, 28; Graulich 1999, 409-422. See the commentary by Noguez on the Tira de Tepechpan 1996, Vol. 1, (79-80) for a reference to a number of people with this attire.

77 This information has been confirmed by Berenice Alcántara (personal communication).

78 These themes are dealt with more fully in Castañeda de la Paz 2005a, 135-142. See also Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca 1989, (158-159) where the Cholulteca look for Chichimec warriors to help them expel the allies of the Olmeca-Xicalanca from Cholula.

79 Matthew and Oudijk 2008.