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Chapter 9

Mythologies of Conquest

Demystifying Amerindian Warfare and European Triumphalism in the Americas

Rubén G. Mendoza and Shari R. Harder

Abstract Despite centuries of scholarship regarding Amerindian warfare, both academic and public narratives that address the European conquest of the Americas privilege the absolute and total conquest and subjugation of the American Indian. As such, the legitimate Amerindian role in the conquest of the New World empires has entered the fray, and this in large part is due to the academy's failure to consider more fully the role of Indian militias and allies, or *indios amigos*. In those contexts where Indian militias are discussed, their role is generally treated as cursory, or in the case of Mexican nationalist narratives, as an utter betrayal of Amerindian self-determination. In an effort to reassert the role of the Amerindian warrior in assuring self-autonomy and assuring self-autonomy and defense against European forces throughout the Americas, this essay will address three primary themes. First, we introduce that pervasive mythology of conquest that reifies the wholesale destruction of the Amerindian past, and one defined solely in terms of its relevance to European triumphalism, and Amerindian subjugation, subordination, and cultural annihilation or extinction. Second, we address the implications of an ascendant body of new and revisionist scholarship that clearly chronicles and privileges the pervasive role of Amerindian militias and allied indigenous kingdoms in the authentic conquest of the Americas. Finally, we review a select sampling of those military engagements in which Amerindian forces won decisive military contests against European belligerents in the Americas. Ultimately, we contend that prevailing public and scholarly narratives

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that seek to pacify the Amerindian past are in effect predominantly Eurocentric creations that continue to tout an Amerindian past borne of little more than collective martyrology over substance and historical authenticity.

I have fought beside these Indians and I have seen their loyalty and the great service that they have done for Your Majesty...they have fought and suffered along beside us, and many a Spanish soldier owes them his life...I can say in all honesty that without them we would never have conquered this land.

Francisco de Bracamonte, 1576¹

The point is that it is not merely a question of military science, topography, relative numerical strength, or racial declension. These may be significant particulars, but a war of survival between two ethnic groups implies a conflict of total cultures.

Robert Padden, 1957²

Introduction

Today, Zultépec, Tlatelolco, Cantonac, Teotihuacán, and related Mesoamerican sites vie with the Peruvian sites of Huaca de la Luna, Moche, Huarmey, and the Southwest US sites of Polacca Wash, Sacred Ridge, Sleeping Ute Mountain, and Chaco in current debates regarding the nature and extent of war and social violence in the pre-Hispanic New World (Fox 1978; Ferguson and Whitehead 1991; Schaafsma 2000; Benson and Cook 2001; Chacon and Mendoza 2007a, b; Chacon and Dye 2007; Bustard 2008). Those who espouse the “myth of war” fervently question the evidence for precontact warfare, social violence, and cannibalism in the Americas (Nichols and Crown 2008; Wilcox 2009). Those who seek to advance the “myth of peace” take the aforementioned archaeological sites to constitute the vanguard of an emerging new *corpus* of incontrovertible bioarchaeological and forensic evidence for universal patterns of social violence in human societies at best, and racialized patterns of aboriginal savagery and brutality in pre-European contexts at the very worst (Turner and Turner 1995, 1999; Milner 2005; Bender 2009; Potter and Chuiпка 2010). Fueling the highly contentious debates of the day are those patterns of perspectivism (borne of cultural chauvinism, nationalism, *indigenismo*, racialization, and dehumanization) that continue to polarize investigators, community scholars, and indigenous nation communities; thereby serving to undermine the potential for crafting a new interpretive framework for understanding the rich cultural and social tapestry that constitutes the peopling of the New World (Conrad and Demarest 1984; LeBlanc 1997; Restall 2003; Bender 2009). Recent studies of social violence in the Americas increasingly illustrate that the unvarnished interpretation of such patterns necessarily serves to advance culturally divergent and anthropologically nuanced perspectives, and thereby, contrasting interpretive frameworks and messages

¹ Cited from Matthew and Oudijk 2007, p. 175.

² Padden 1957.

regarding aboriginal resistance and self-determination in the face of conflict, struggle, aggression, and emerging state-level technologies of terror and social control in the Fourth World (Harner 1984; Yupanqui 2005; Matthew and Oudijk 2007; Mendoza 2007a, b; Restall and Asselbergs 2008; Gwynne 2010).

Archaeology and Denial

Given the stakes and stakeholders in question, how then does one negotiate the profound morass of competing epistemological constructs, and pedagogies of denial and subordination, that necessarily arise in postcolonial contexts and the interpretive milieu engendered thereof? The purpose of this essay is to review in brief the growing body of evidence for aboriginal warfare and social violence, particularly as this pertains to that modicum of effective engagement culminating in Amerindian victories against European forces in the American hemisphere. As a descendant and heir to the fortunes, and profound misfortunes, of his Mexican Indian forbearers of that region variously identified with *Aztlán*, *La Gran Chichimeca*, northern New Spain, the *Pimeria Alta/Baja*, and the US–Mexican borderlands, Mendoza readily acknowledges the long-term and persistent denigration and subordination of the Amerindian community, and thereby, his forbearers.³ Despite new age and other recent academic efforts to pacify the Amerindian past, we contend that what applies on a universal human scale (particularly in so far as patterns of war and social violence are concerned) necessarily applies in the American hemisphere within those contexts where corollary social, economic, political, and/or environmental conditions constitute the mitigating circumstances under consideration (Fig. 9.1).

With that said, we now turn to a consideration of said conundrum from the perspective of a particularly problematic Mesoamerican archaeological site that serves to document both a momentous Amerindian victory over European forces, and at the same time, a particularly egregious example of Amerindian social violence in the American hemisphere. Our purpose here is to address how it is that one such

³As such, we find it ironic that Mendoza's work as an archaeologist of the precolonial Mesoamerican world and his investigations into the indigenous past of the California missions in particular pose persistent challenges borne of a veritable conundrum of contradictory and conflict-ridden interactions with both his heritage and profession. In an attempt to advance the science of archaeology, Mendoza has recurrently had to accommodate many a compromise so as to remain true to his profession, while at the same time maintaining a respectful and honorable relationship with the memory and reality of his ancestors and their descendants. With a lifetime devoted to studying the evidence for why it was that the classical civilizations of Mesoamerica collapsed, and why the polities of the postclassical era in particular sought the dark and foreboding path of internecine warfare and otherwise bellicose ideologies, Mendoza finds it increasingly difficult to accept that Mesoamerica and the Americas more generally were ever the bastions of civility and peaceable kingdoms that today some contend constitute the truth of this most remote past. Despite the evidence, Mendoza continues to find it necessary to respond to critics and detractors who continue to question his motives for addressing the question of Amerindian social violence, particularly as some of those with whom he is most concerned were in effect his ancestors.



Fig. 9.1 Muralist Diego Rivera's (b. 1886-d. 1957) depiction of Hernán Cortés at war with the Mexica Aztec. In the foreground, a Tlaxcalan Indian ally brandishes a steel sword in murals painted by Rivera in the Palacio Nacional, Mexico City. Rivera's project at the Palacio Nacional spanned the period from 1929 to 1935. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2005

victory has morphed into the makings of a nationalistic debate over the nature and extent of aboriginal resistance to the onslaught of the European invasion. We then follow with a consideration of the growing body of evidence for Amerindian victories that problematized the full realization of the European ideal for the colonial era; and by so doing, launch a reconsideration of Amerindian warfare and European triumphalism in the Americas. As such, we begin with a preliminary discussion and assessment of the site of Tecuaque, Tlaxcala, Mexico, and then move to a consideration of the largely obscure history of Amerindian victories that necessarily stymied or derailed European incursions in the Americas.

The Archaeology of Violence

Since these “preterit-agentive” nouns have the same form as the verbs that they are historically derived from..., “tecuahqueh” may be interpreted as either (1) a verb: “they ate someone” or (2) a noun: “people-eaters”.

R. Joe Campbell, 2006

We begin this perusal of the archaeology of violence in the Americas with R. Joe Campbell's efforts to contextualize the linguistic identity and apparent social implications of the toponym or town name and phenomenon identified with *Tecuaque*. Also known as Zultépec, Tlaxcala, Mexico, the town was renamed (and the populace annihilated) on the orders of Hernán Cortés de Monroy y Pizarro (c. 1485 – 2 December 1547) after the now infamous mass sacrifice of Spanish commander Pánfilo de Narváez's army of porters and support personal who were ambushed and captured by Texcocan forces in 1520 (Díaz del Castillo 1963). The aftermath of the incident in question appropriately enough led to the renaming of the town after the apparent sacrifice and cannibalization of the Spanish caravan in retaliation for the murder of a Texcocan warlord. Excavated by INAH archaeologist Enrique Martínez Vargas (1993, 2003), the site has come to represent for the Mexican people a clear-cut example of indigenous resistance and victory in the face of the Spanish onslaught, and that despite the fact that the forensic evidence unequivocally demonstrates that the majority of the 550 European, mulatto, mestizo, Maya, and Caribbean men and women who supported the caravan were ritually sacrificed, dismembered, and in part cannibalized, in retaliation for the murder of Cacamatzin, Lord of Texcoco.

The recovery of the remains of a *tzompantli* skull rack replete with European, afro-mestizo, and other non-indigenous crania, as well as those temporo-parietal perforations so often reserved for enemy kills destined for the skull racks of Tenochtitlan, also makes clear that as early as 1520 the Mexica Aztec and their allies had no qualms about killing these enemy aliens or combatants. The ritualized killing of the 550 captives took place over the course of a 9-month period extending from June 1520 through March 1521. Where the archaeological evidence alone is concerned, some 10,000 specimens have been recovered in association with some 400 burials since studied by an interdisciplinary team of investigators during an 18-year period of investigation (Martínez 1993, 2003). Such findings nevertheless fly in the face of traditional Mexican lore and early Spanish accounts that portrayed the Spanish as invulnerable in large part due to Amerindian perceptions that the Spanish were in effect gods who could not be killed. *Tecuaque* was, as such, a revelation for the Mexica of that time, as well as for the Mexican people of today who yearn to placate that modicum of ambiguity identified with the conquest of the indigenous past (Fig. 9.2).

Where Mexican and Chicano nationalism and scholarly objectivism are concerned, the site of Zultépec (aka: Tecuaque) poses an interesting conundrum, or perhaps more appropriately, double entendre, particularly if we consider arguments from the standpoint of perspectivism that would have us believe that “many possible conceptual schemes, or perspectives...determine any possible judgment of truth or value that we may make,” thereby implying “that no way of seeing the world can be taken as definitively ‘true’”.⁴ Clearly, perspectivism, or the premise that all ideation

⁴ Wikipedia contributors, “Perspectivism,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Perspectivism&oldid=328935594> (accessed December 1, 2009).



Fig. 9.2 European, Afro-mestizo, and both male and female crania constituted the remains of the *tzompanili* – skull banner or skull rack – of Zultépec, Mexico. Note perforations in the temporo-parietal area of each cranium depicted. Said perforations were fashioned so as to permit the skewering of the heads upon the horizontal members of the skull rack shortly after the decapitation of each victim. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2007

or conceptual schemes or perspectives are necessarily defined in terms of contextual, or cultural and subjective, frameworks of analysis and observation, is at work in mediating the message and messenger in this instance.

Tecuaque

The site of *Tecuaque* or *Zultépec* (Sultepec) lies in western Tlaxcala and its strategic highland location provided a significant crossroads for highland trade. Ironically, the site's 1968 UNESCO World Heritage listing acknowledges that the prime importance of the site is that it effectively constitutes one of the few sites where material evidence of the earliest Amerindian and European contact has been documented both historically and archaeologically. Given this fact, nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List in this instance was apparently predicated on the fact that the site met three of the top four "cultural" selection criteria, including that the site must "exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental

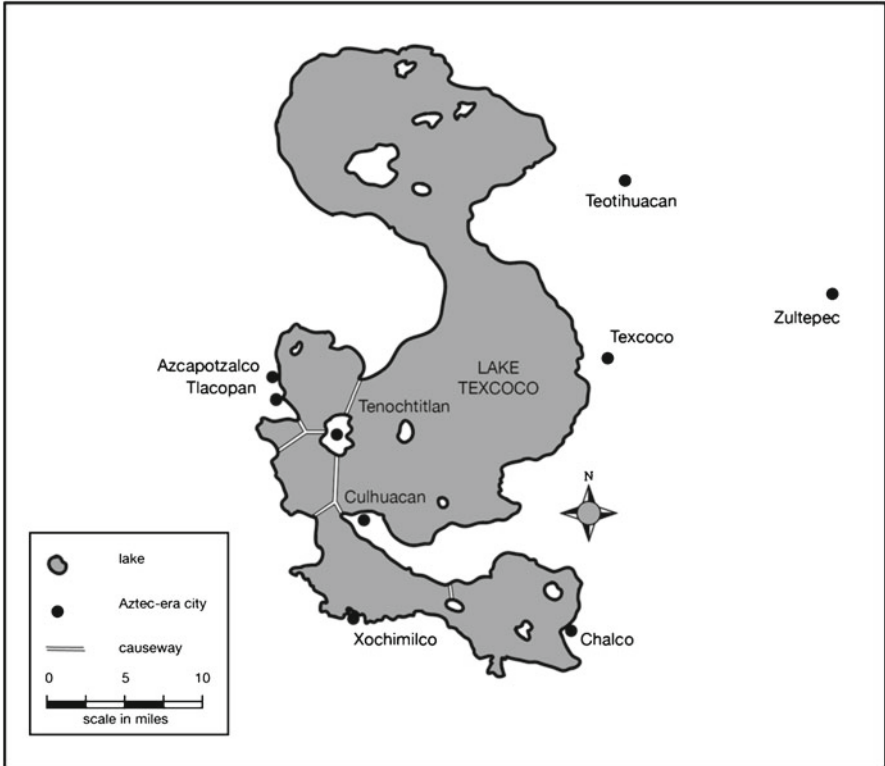


Fig. 9.3 The site of Zultepec lay just east of the shallow lakes of the Basin of Mexico, including that of Texcoco, and the island city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital. Note the system of causeways that once connected Tenochtitlan to the mainland. The cities and regions of Azcapotzalco, Xochimilco, and Chalco all constituted conquered tributaries of the Aztec Empire; and ultimately, each, in its turn, formed an alliance with Hernán Cortés in the conquest of the Aztec Triple Alliance. Map drafted by Emily H. Nisbet, 2011

arts, town-planning or landscape design” (Criteria ii); the site must “bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared” (Criteria iii); and finally, the site must constitute “an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates...significant stage(s) in human history” (Criteria iv) (Fig. 9.3).⁵

While the distinctive architectural tradition of the site of Tecuaque is clearly the focus of the UNESCO World Heritage List nomination, one other point of distinction emphasized in the nomination has much to do with the documented recovery of

⁵ UNESCO, “The Criteria for Selection,” UNESCO World Heritage, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria> (accessed December 1, 2009).

European fauna from first contact contexts, as well as the “ratified” ethnic diversity identified during archaeological investigations. According to the site description from the UNESCO World Heritage List (UNESCO 2002, 2005),

From June 1520 to March 1521, this settlement played a very important role during the contact between two races and the conquest of Tenochtitlan. During this period the members of a caravan integrated by Europeans, Africans, mulattos, Tainos and mestizos, together with their indigenous allies that were moving from the Gulf to the great Tenochtitlan were captured and sacrificed; the first domestic animals brought into the continent were also traveling with them. This event was recorded in several Spanish chronicles and in indigenous sources of the XVI century. During the exploration of the ancient settlement of Teoacaque, material evidence of the historical events recorded on such sources was found, and with the help of specialists such as physical anthropologists and archaeo-zoologists the presence of an ethnic diversity and of European fauna is ratified.

The whole of the World Heritage description remains bereft of any allusion to cannibalism, although human sacrifice is indicated. While the dated nature of the description necessarily plays a role in the paucity of details specific to the nature of the interaction, it is clear that the description was crafted to minimize or exclude specific reference to what became of the European, African, *afromestizo*, *Taino*, and mestizo captives taken by Texcocan forces at the site of Tecuaque in June 1520. By contrast, recent media reports of the carnage and cannibalism, as well as the subsequent mutilation of the captives are now touted as central to the site’s importance. Interestingly, despite nationalistic sentiments to the contrary, which typically arise among Mexican and Chicano nationalists and devotees of the neo-Mexica movement in California and the West (Mendoza 2001), in this instance the Mexican press has taken to portraying the annihilation of the European, *afromestizo*, and Amerindian contingent of ill-fated *conquistadores* and their allies as an act of self-determination and active resistance to the European invasion. International media coverage of recent findings from Tecuaque has generated a variety of responses that either affirm the theme of Amerindian resistance, or condemn the reports as illegitimate or misguided. According to Tecuaque project director and INAH archaeologist Enrique Martínez, “This is the first place that has so much evidence there was resistance to the conquest... It shows it wasn’t all submission. There was a fight”.⁶ Such statements necessarily serve to acknowledge that the conquest of the Americas continues to be perceived in the popular media as a veritable triumph of the will, as in the will of the European over the Amerindian. Zultépec-Tecuaque, therefore, is taken as a counterpoint to the belief that the American Indian chose submission and subjugation over annihilation.

By contrast, others celebrate the violation of the Spanish invaders and their women, and extol the virtues of such a wondrous victory. In one such reaction

⁶ Bremer, Catherine, “Grisly Aztec Saga Reconstructed: Archaeologists find remains that back up tale of ritual massacre,” MSNBC.com, reported August 23, 2006. Cited from <http://www.freelists.org/post/ppi/ppiindia-Archaeologists-find-remains-that-back-up-tale-of-ritual-massacre> (accessed December 1, 2009).

posted to the *Imago* blog, the Tecuaque massacre was captured in a particularly detailed fictional narrative based on period accounts; and this in turn resulted in responses that varied considerably from celebration to condemnation. In this instance, one reaction posted on 29 December 2007 argued that “*Matemos a todos los piojosos y culturalmente inferiores para hacer de este mundo un lugar mejor*” [Translation: “We killed all of the lice-ridden and cultural inferiors to make a better world”]. Another post to the same blog on 4 September 2009 makes clear that the aforementioned diatribe remains very much alive with respect to Tecuaque, and in this latter instance takes shape in the following commentary: “*Y FUERON COMIDOS POR PARTE DE UN RITO CEREMONIAL, PARA OBTENER EL PODER PARA COMBATIR A NUESTROS ENEMIGOS, COSAS COMO USTEDES INCULTOS NUNCA ENTENDERIAN*” [Translation: “And they were eaten as part of a ceremonial ritual, to obtain the power to combat our enemies, things that you who are uncultured never understand”].⁷

According to an August 2, 2006, report by *La Jornada*, human remains recovered from the site revealed the presence of *Táinos*, Spaniards, male and female Africans and *mulatos*, *mestizos*, *tabasqueños*, *mayas*, *tonacos*, *tlaxcaltecas*, as well as 4- and 5-year-old children, and an 18–20-year-old pregnant woman and others who were similarly dispatched and subsequently dismembered and cannibalized. One particularly inflammatory white nationalist website reacted to early reports of the inherent and early cultural diversity of those captives sacrificed at Tecuaque by exclaiming that “the numbers involved and the degree of mongrelization over that short a time period don’t quite add up. There’s something not kosher there.”⁸ Other respondents to the *New Nation News* blog then proceeded to argue that because the Spanish had been conquered by the “darkies” (i.e., Moors), they were therefore all that more accustomed to coupling with Africans to produce *afro-mestizos*. In this latter instance the cultural diversity represented by the victims of the Tecuaque massacre thereby provides yet another essentialized perspective, and thereby, justification for a preexisting ideological framework; mainly, one true to the *New Nation News* website’s “Minority and Migrant Crime” orientation. Ironically, despite such white supremacist perspectives, the message conveyed by the international media in this instance is that “the discovery proves some Aztecs did resist the conquistadors led by explorer Hernan Cortes [*sic*], even though history books say most welcomed the white-skinned horsemen in the belief they were returning Aztec gods” (*New Nation Forums*, 2009). Despite white nationalist perspectives to the contrary, Zultépec-Tecuaque presents a particularly well documented resource, not to mention a veritable conundrum of mixed messages and conflict-ridden metaphors, regarding issues such as ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, mestizaje, afro-mestizo origins, eurocentrism, Amerindian warfare and beliefs

⁷ Blog posts, “Imago: De La Crisalidad Surge El Imago,” Posts of 28 December 2007 through 4 September, 2009. <http://arsimago.blogspot.com/2007/12/tecuaque.html> (accessed December 1, 2009).

⁸ Blog post, “New Nation News Reporters Newsroom,” Post of 20 November 2006. <http://www.newnation.vg/forums/showthread.php?t=94003> (accessed December 1, 2009).



Fig. 9.4 Diego Rivera's murals highlight the brutality and corruption of the Spanish conquest and its colonial legacy, clearly a central theme of that brand of Mexican nationalism touted since the drafting of the Constitution of 1917. In an effort to embrace the indigenous past, Mexican nationalism touted collective martyrology as the new Mexican ethos. In so doing, the Mexican Indian was repatriated into the national dialog as a hapless victim and martyr of European aggression. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2005

regarding the invasion, and ultimately, indigenous resistance and triumph that anticipated the full-fledged biological and cultural wars that set the stage for the collapse of New World empires (Fig. 9.4).

The importance of Zultépec-Tecuaque in the development of a nuanced analysis of the archaeology of violence in the American hemisphere remains to be seen. Nevertheless, Zultépec-Tecuaque affords a particularly compelling case study in text-based and forensic approaches to the archaeology of violence in Mesoamerica and will undoubtedly provoke the reassessment of a trove of corollary examples ranging from the bone beds of Tlatelolco to the carnage of Cantonac and beyond (Chacon and Dye 2007). Despite extant evidence for cannibalism and human sacrifice, not to mention the deployment of technologies of terror such as that of the *tzompantli* skull rack erected at Zultépec-Tecuaque, the site is nevertheless taken to constitute a prime example of aboriginal resistance and stealth at a time when the myth of European invincibility continues to bolster public perceptions of the conquest, and the Amerindian will and/or ability to resist said conquest. In the final analysis, Zultépec-Tecuaque has come to represent to some a clear-cut case of Amerindian resistance and victory in the face of the European invasion, and has thereby spurred us to undertake this review of American Indian victories over

European forces of the sixteenth century and beyond. Until scholars more fully address the countless battles that produced Amerindian victories over European forces, we will be left to the vagaries of perpetuating the myth of European tactical and technological superiority. Despite decisive indigenous victories at battles such as the Little Big Horn River, Montana, or Quigaltam, Mississippi; Cerro Mixton, Zacatecas, or Zultépec-Tecuaque and Tenochtitlan, Mexico; Cuzco, Peru; Arauco, Chile; Logroño and Sevilla de Oro, Ecuador; and Santa Fe, New Mexico, to name a few, European triumphalism continues to dominate the literature. Ironically, Amerindian military victories in each of the aforementioned regions were ultimately countermanded not by the superiority of European tactical know-how or weaponry, but rather by the catastrophic spread of European disease and the herculean military efforts of Indian conquistadors and other allied indigenous forces, conscripts, and auxiliaries, who similarly sought the subjugation and/or destruction of rival New World states and empires.

The Myth of European Invincibility

With the publication of Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History*, a new world of interpretations, conceptual realignments, and legions of critical reassessments regarding indigenous communities was opened to anthropological and historical scrutiny. The revisionist reassessments in question necessarily forced a reconsideration of the role of indigenous agency in those outcomes typically defined almost wholly in terms of the European conquest of the Americas. More recently, Matthew Restall's *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* has drawn into the equation a conundrum of considerations that further challenge the long-standing myth of European invincibility in those wars that culminated with the European conquest of the Americas. According to Restall (2003), seven myths dominate the conquest narrative, and these are all predominantly centered on the role and tactics of Hernán Cortés in the conquest of the Aztec Empire.

Mythic Constructs

According to Restall, the Spanish conquest of the Aztec by those forces commanded by Hernán Cortés signals the advent of eurocentric legends that tout European invincibility over the American Indian in the conquest of the New World. Central features of the legend are those that speak to the military genius of Hernán Cortés de Monroy y Pizarro and the deployment of superior European armaments and technologies in the conquest of an indigenous empire led by a superstitious and ineffectual indigenous authority. The downfall of Moctezuma and the rise of Cortés were characterized in such accounts as having been orchestrated by way of the manipulation of the credulous and superstitious emperor and his followers. As such, according to Restall (2003: xv), "Cortés became the archetypal conquistador, and he remains so today." Restall's *The Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* in turn reveals



Fig. 9.5 An essential element of the mythology of conquest is that which touts the preordained and fatalistic histories of the Mexican Indian. Justification for the destruction of the Indies is framed within the reformulation of the legend of Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent or Precious Twin. Diego Rivera's depiction in the Palacio Nacional portrays the deity as the bearded white god of Spanish lore. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2005

the dominant role played by both West African and indigenous allies in the conquest of the Americas. He in turn challenges the notion that the majority of the conquistadors were Spanish soldiers and that their Amerindian foes saw them as gods and/or supernaturals, when the reality was far more complex in that “the conquistadors were far more varied in their identities, occupations, and motivations” (Restall 2003: xviii). Ultimately, the conquest and colonization of the Americas are generally portrayed as having been affected rapidly and decisively, whereas, the reality would appear to indicate a protracted and incomplete process of conquest, colonization, and conversion. A number of recent treatments, including that of James Sandos (2008), make clear that the process of indigenous conversion, not to mention acculturation, was in effect far from complete well into the nineteenth century in the Spanish colonial missions of Alta California for instance (Fig. 9.5).

While those central tenets identified with the myths of the Spanish Conquest proclaim the outright conquest and complete subjugation of native societies, it is clear from the archaeology, ethnohistory, and anthropology of these same societies that they, in fact, “displayed resilience, adaptability, ongoing vitality, a heterogeneity of response to outside interference, and even a capacity to invert the impact of conquest and turn calamity into opportunity” (Restall 2003: xviii). In effect, indigenous history and native adaptation have been invested with a level of agency not



Fig. 9.6 Despite other nationalistic themes in those fresco murals rendered by Diego Rivera in the Palacio Nacional, one recurrent theme in all depictions of Spanish warfare is that of the key role of indigenous allies or Indian militias. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2005

typical of either the conquest narratives or many of those second-hand accounts and scholarly treatments crafted since.

Interestingly, while most historians continue to tout the inherent superiority of European weaponry and military formations at war with the indigenous populations of the Americas, it would appear that such narratives fail to take into account the history of European warfare. In reality, many of the key technological changes generally attributed to European “forces” in the Americas did not make their initial appearance until the latter half of the sixteenth century. In the wake of the conquest of both the Aztec and Inca empires in 1521 and 1534, respectively, “the numbers of men at arms grew dramatically in the sixteenth century... [and]...by 1710 there were 1.3 million Europeans at arms” (Restall 2003: 32). The deployment of volley fired techniques, the invention of the musket, and the fabrication of faster more formidable and efficient battleships were among those innovations that accrued in the period identified with the latter half of the sixteenth century and thereby, well after the fall of the major New World empires. Moreover, Restall (2003: 32) makes clear that the more formidable professionalized armies implied by the sixteenth century conquests of the native empires did not in fact appear until well into the seventeenth century, when “the European states, Spain included, achieved the level of centralization and institutionalization [necessary] to be able to field forces in which the majority of men were trained, salaried, permanent, veteran soldiers with uniforms and standard-issue weapons” (Restall 2003: 32) (Fig. 9.6).

Where the culture of war is concerned, we are reminded by Restall (2003: 32, 144–145) that clear distinctions existed between formal military conventions used by European forces versus those engaged by Amerindian warriors. First, it must be remembered that sixteenth century Spanish forces often consisted of little more than soldiers of fortune and mercenaries led into the theaters of war under the direction of such leaders as Hernán Cortés de Monroy y Pizarro and Francisco Pizarro y González. As such, strict military conventions utilized in European contexts were often dispensed with in favor of those tactics characterized by Spanish captain Bernardo de Vargas Machuca as necessary in order to defeat Amerindian forces. Therefore, he espoused that “linear formations, hierarchical units, and permanent garrisons be abandoned in favor of small, covert fighting units dedicated to search-and-destroy missions carried out over several years” (Restall 2003: 32). In effect, Bernardo de Vargas Machuca’s book *The Armed Forces and Description of the Indies* published in 1599 touted the efficacy of asymmetrical combat tactics, and thereby guerrilla warfare (cf., Vargas Machuca 2008). Given that the Spanish and other European forces were typically outnumbered by the indigenous populations against whom they fought, guerrilla warfare more often than not served as the *modus operandi* of European tactics in the Americas. As a matter of course, indigenous populations were essentially dependent on agricultural pursuits, and were as such bound to the land in a way that the Spanish were not, particularly where urban populations were concerned. In the precontact era, Mesoamerican warfare was typically undertaken in the dry season so as to accommodate the agricultural year spanning the period between the vernal equinox and its autumnal counterpart (ca. March 21–September 21, North America).⁹ Moreover, it would appear that conventional patterns of pre-Columbian warfare entailed the ongoing or active integration of enemy fighting forces vanquished in earlier wars. This latter pattern, made apparent in both contact and colonial era sources (Asselbergs 2004; Matthew and Oudijk 2007; Chimalpahin 2010), entailed the conscription of fighting forces from among vassal states conquered in earlier conflicts. This pattern was apparently fueled by the urgent need by vassal states to reconcile with their patrons, and other more formidable rivals and conquering armies. A secondary consideration stemmed from the desire of individual warriors, their captains, and whole legions from within the vassal state to seek advancement within the ranks of their patron’s armies, and that despite their newfound status as vassals or conscripts. Ultimately, the preexisting pattern served the Spanish quite well in their recruitment and conscription of indigenous allies who joined them in the conquests of both Tenochtitlan and Cuzco, respectively.

⁹This is mirrored in the period after the autumnal equinox with growing seasons for the Southern Hemisphere spanning November through March in Brazil, for instance.

Indian Conquistadores

While much has been made of those traditional, read inflexible and inferior, battle conventions utilized by Amerindian forces, Restall (2003: 144) minimizes the decisive role played by such factors. Mexica prebattle ceremonies and the taking of captives for ritual execution as opposed to battlefield kills, among other conventions, are often cited as cultural mores of war that handicapped the Aztec response to the Spanish invasion. While such practices clearly presented limitations, Restall argues that disease, native disunity and intertribal conflict, and metal weaponry proved the most decisive factors in the fall of the indigenous empires of the Americas. According to Oudijk and Restall (2007: 42), historians have come to see the “Castilian experience in Spain, the Canaries, and the Caribbean in the decades, even centuries, before the invasion of Mexico” as having tempered emerging strategies employed by the Spanish in their conquest of the New World empires.

By contrast, the works of Asselbergs (2004), Matthew and Oudijk (2007), and Restall and Asselbergs (2008) clarify the decisive role played by native allies and auxiliaries in the so-called Spanish conquest of the New World. Oudijk and Restall (2007: 42) in fact argue that “the history of Spanish conquests in Mesoamerica is marked by strategies and mechanisms that imitated those used in pre-conquest Mesoamerica – an imitation stemming from and symptomizing the extensive role played by native allies in these conquests.” Furthermore, one could argue that many of the earliest institutions established by the Spanish for the colonial control of both Mesoamerican and Peruvian peoples were, in fact, modeled on extant indigenous institutions. Examples cited by Oudijk and Restall (2007: 42) include multicentric alliance formations such as that of the Aztec Triple Alliance, sequential conquests, military strategies centered on extant trade routes, and an incentives system based on the bestowing of lordships and the granting of lands to those partaking in such alliances (Fig. 9.7).

Where alliance formation is concerned, it should be noted that allied warriors were typically integrated into the ranks of conquering armies, but nevertheless remained semiautonomous; as had been the custom from the earliest of times. According to Oudijk and Restall (2007: 42), “each section had its own captain, its own banner, and its own internal organization and as such represented its own community or *barrio*.” Where pre-Columbian systems of rewards and incentives are concerned, warlords often granted land titles and estates to allied war captains, as was the case in the earliest campaigns undertaken by the Mexica against other Basin rivals such as that of Azcapotzalco (Durán 1967: 82). In the aftermath of the siege on Azcapotzalco, for instance, “eight of the nobles, including *Tlacaelel*, were singled out for significant land grants reminiscent of the later Spanish colonial system of *encomiendas*, or its corollary, the labour tax of the Spanish *repartimiento* (or by extension, the Inca *mit'a*) by which Spanish noblemen were granted native workers or trustees as part of a system of reward for the *conquistadores* based on a labour tax” (Mendoza 2011: 31).¹⁰

¹⁰ Mendoza (2011) remains an unpublished manuscript as of this writing, and therefore those page numbers noted refer to the unpublished typescript.



Fig. 9.7 The initial Spanish entry or *entrada* into New Mexico has been commemorated in a variety of ways, not the least of which celebrates this event as a joint venture between the Spanish and their Indian allies, or *indios amigos*. This represents but one portion of a larger public sculpture installed near the Albuquerque Museum of Art. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2006

Ultimately, it is clear from a variety of sources that precontact mechanisms of conquest, subordination, and domination were maintained through the course of the colonial era (Oudijk and Restall 2007: 57). The conscription of allied warriors served to maintain the pre-Columbian pattern of conquest interaction, and as a result, thousands of central highland Mexican Nahua, Zapoteca, and Mixteca warriors were recruited for wars in Guatemala and the Yucatan, while central Guatemalan Kaqchikel were in turn allied with the Spanish in the defeat of the K'iche'. Significant numbers of these allied armies or Indian conquistadors, in turn, colonized areas of Guatemala and established *Mexicano* towns with colonial charters, thereby leading Matthew (2007: 111–12) to conclude that “the conquest of Central America was, from the beginning, a joint Spanish-Mesoamerican venture: planned, coordinated, guided, and fought by thousands of Nahua, Zapoteca and Mixteca and a few hundred Spaniards, in the name of their home altepetl, the Mesoamerican gods who aided them, Christianity, and the Spanish Crown.”

Amerindian Warfare

While Mexican nationalists hearken to the Texcocan victory over Spanish forces at Zultépec, and for the American Indian those of the Little Bighorn or the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, as exemplars of Amerindian victories over European and American forces, the documentary record makes clear that both Indian conquistadors and native militias tallied many decisive and logistically significant victories over European and American forces. Even in those contexts in which the Spanish are counted as the ultimate victors, it is clear that Indian conquistadors and conscripts, or the “forgotten allies” (cf., Chuchiak 2007: 176), tipped the balance in favor of the Europeans over the indigenous populations in each of the affected areas, and thereby made possible what David Carrasco (cf., Asselbergs 2004: xii) has deemed the “joint conquest” of the Americas. Whether addressing the siege of Cuzco, Peru, or that of Tenochtitlan, Mexico, clear indicators of sophisticated and strategically significant Amerindian strategies, tactics, and weaponry provide a picture that further serves to contest prevailing myths of Amerindian vulnerability and European invincibility.

While not intended as an exhaustive treatment, the following synopsis of Amerindian forms of resistance, sophisticated battle tactics, and victories over European and American forces will address the essential elements of those tactically and strategically significant engagements for which documentary evidence is available. We begin this discussion with two Amerindian empires whose numerical superiority and agrarian-based urban configurations ultimately proved their undoing, particularly given the intervention of hundreds of thousands of rival Indian auxiliaries who formed coalitions with extant European forces (Fig. 9.8).

The Siege of Tenochtitlan

Of those epic battles chronicled in the annals of world military history, that identified with the siege of Mexico-Tenochtitlan stands out as legendary. Though many Mexican grade school children have heard the tale of the *Noche Triste*, or Sad Night, in which Cortés took flight from Tenochtitlan in the wake of the death of the Aztec Emperor Moctezuma; seldom is the ferocity and strategy of the Aztec defense of their homeland fully elucidated. According to the accounts of that time, under the cover of darkness on June 30/July 1, 1520, Hernán Cortés and his force of Spanish *conquistadores* and Indian auxiliaries attempted to flee the city after the looting of some eight tons of gold, silver, and gems from Moctezuma’s treasury. On that night, the Spanish suffered one of their greatest military defeats at the hands of the Aztec, and in so doing, Cortés saw the loss of the bulk of his army, estimated at over 600 Spanish troops and thousands of Indian allies (Robinson 2004: 53). The harrowing escape of the Spanish and their Indian auxiliaries from Tenochtitlan was only made possible by virtue of the alliance and safe haven provided by the peoples of Tlaxcala.



Fig. 9.8 Map of culture areas of the Americas cited with respect to tribal territories and groups, including the Seminole of the Southeast US, Comanche of the Southern Plains, Pueblos of the Southwest US, Chalca and Mexica of Highland Mexico, Tlaxcalan of Tlaxcala, Quiche Maya of the Guatemalan Highlands, the Sierra and Shuar or Jívaro of the Amazon Basin and Ecuadorean highlands, the Quechua and or Inca of the Cuzco region of the Andean Cordillera, and the Arauco or Mapuche of the Araucanía/BioBío regions of Chile and Argentina. Map drafted by Emily H. Nisbet, 2011

Were it not for the alliance had between Cortés and the Tlaxcalteca, the Spanish would have been annihilated, and Cortés rendered little more than a footnote in the Age of Exploration. Moreover, while the *Noche Triste* has long been upheld by Mexican nationalists as evidence of the heroic struggles of the Aztec people to

defend their homeland, the reality is that many more such losses awaited the Spanish in their efforts to vanquish the Aztec empire (de Fuentes 1993).

The siege of Mexico, which began in earnest on September 26, 1520, initially saw Cortés at the head of a combined Spanish and Tlaxcalan force consisting of a reinforced European contingent conjoined with 10,000 Tlaxcalan auxiliaries. Soon Cortés and a sizeable army of Indian conquistadors encircled and subjugated towns on the margins of Lake Texcoco in preparing a blockade of the mainland, and thereby readying for the assault on the Aztec capitol. These preparations were coordinated with the equivalent of a naval assault in which Spanish brigantines constructed by Tlaxcaltecan Indian auxiliaries were ported to the shores of Lake Texcoco and the prefabricated vessels reassembled for launch in the final assault. Drawing on Indian allies called forth by a network of messengers, Cortés and the original Tlaxcalan forces were soon joined by another 50,000 Tlaxcalan warriors chanting, “Castile! Castile! Tlaxcala! Tlaxcala!” (Robinson 2004: 57). As the blockade grew, the over 60,000 Tlaxcalan warriors supporting the blockade were joined by an additional 25,000 Tlaxcalans from Tacuba, 20,000 Indian auxiliaries from Coyoacán, and another 30,000 Indian auxiliaries from Itzapalapa, for a total cohort of over 135,000 Indian *conquistadores*.

After a series of setbacks occasioned by the ferocity of the Aztec defense of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, in July of 1521 Cortés renewed the offensive against the Aztec with the commanding support of 900 Spanish soldiers and some 150,000 Indian allies (Robinson 2004: 60). According to Chimalpahin’s revision of Francisco López de Gómara’s *La conquista de México* (Chimalpahin 2010: 321), Cortés ultimately conducted the final siege of Mexico-Tenochtitlan in the company of 200,000 Indian allies largely recruited by the Chalca enemies of the Aztec Empire.¹¹ Clearly, the conquest of the Aztec Empire was largely an Indian conquest affected by a force comprised almost wholly of Indian conquistadors and auxiliaries. Given the fact that the projected population of Mexico-Tenochtitlan stood at between 200,000 and 350,000 citizens residing on an expanded island of 13.5 km² (Smith 2005), the effective blockade and encirclement of the island city by the enemies of the empire were complete; and clearly, the enemy force confronting the defenders of Tenochtitlan, overwhelming.

Ironically, the greatest challenge facing Hernán Cortés in the final siege of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was his inability to stanch the desire of the Tlaxcalan forces to exact revenge on the Aztec by way of a war that soon evolved into a campaign of genocide undertaken by the Indian militias; more often than not the avowed mortal enemies of the Aztec. According to Robinson (2004: 60), “whatever the atrocities for which the Castilians may be blamed in the five centuries since the Conquest, their acts paled in comparison to those of their Tlaxcalan allies. Centuries of hate

¹¹ The Chalca constitute those peoples identified with the southern Basin community of Chalco, which at the time of the “Spanish” conquest had long been a tributary of the Aztec Empire. Soundly defeated by the Aztec under the rule of Moctezuma I, the peoples of Chalco readily allied themselves with the Spanish in order to throw off the oppressive tribute demands of the Aztec.



Fig. 9.9 Initiated in 1957, the public murals of Desiderio Hernández Xochitiotzin (b. 1922-d. 2007) portray the history of the Tlaxcalan and Spanish alliance, and do so within the halls of the Palacio de Gobierno of Tlaxcala, Tlaxcala, Mexico. This portion of the panoramic history of Tlaxcala depicts the granting of a Spanish province (by royal decree in 1545) to the Tlaxcalan people who allied themselves with Hernán Cortés in the conquest and subjugation of the Aztec Empire. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 1990

and the basic viciousness of Mesoamerican warfare combined in a violence that appalled even Cortés himself.” Ultimately, Hernán Cortés documented his frustration with his respective inability to prevent the wholesale slaughter of the Aztec populace by acknowledging that “[W]e had more trouble in preventing our allies from killing with such cruelty than we had in fighting the enemy. For no race, however savage, has ever practiced such fierce and unnatural cruelty as the natives of these parts” (Cortés 1971; cf., Robinson 2004: 60). In his efforts to stop the killings, Cortés “posted Spaniards in every street, so that when the people began to come out [to surrender] they might prevent our allies from killing those wretched people, whose number was uncountable” (Cortés 1971; cf., Robinson 2004: 60). Despite these precautions, Cortés nevertheless tallied the slaughter of 15,000 Aztec civilians on a single day in the closing days of the siege. For Cortés and the Spanish, suffering the excesses and tolerating the profound cultural disparities that clearly separated this marriage of convenience were a small price to pay for assuring the survival of the “European” conquest of the sophisticated and powerful Amerindian empires of the day (Fig. 9.9).



Fig. 9.10 The long-standing Peruvian use of shock weapons, such as ground stone, copper, and bronze mace heads and bola or sling weapons, proved a formidable challenge to the Spanish and their Indian allies. This cranium from the collections of the San Diego Museum of Man bears direct evidence for the lethal nature of spiked and ground stone mace heads and related weaponry. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2008

The Siege of Cuzco

Despite the fall of the Inca Empire to Francisco Pizarro y González (d. 26 June 1951) with the capture of Cuzco on November 15, 1533, it soon became apparent that the Spanish failed to fully consolidate their gains despite their control and manipulation of Emperor Manco Inca Yupanqui. Using the ploy that he would acquire a large gold statue for Pizarro, Manco Inca undertook secret meetings with those under his command (Cieza de León 1998: 447). Noting discord among the Spanish occupation forces in Cuzco, Manco Inca determined that it would be an opportune time to strike. According to Cieza de León (1998: 449), “the Indians did not retreat after Hernando Pizarro had retreated to Cuzco; instead, so many came that those participating in that siege reached two hundred thousand. In the defense there were no more than 170 Castilians and up to 1,000 natives who fought in their company, of whom many were yanacunas.” The high priest Villac Umu led Manco Inca’s forces in the capture of the fortress at Cuzco. With some 200,000 warriors in the vanguard, the Spanish were forced into the *plaza*, and thereby into the open, where they were encamped in tents. Inca forces soon overran the Spanish position by virtue of a rain of stone projectiles hurled into the plaza and at the Spanish with slings and bolas, as well as with hardwood javelins launched with deadly accuracy thereby forcing the Spanish to retreat into two palaces (Fig. 9.10).

In their efforts to reduce the tactical advantage held by the Spanish cavalry, the Inca deployed the use of *ayllus* or *bolas*, which consisted of a “type of rope made of sheep’s tendons with three strands on each one a stone, and with these they ensnared and bound the horses and the horsemen” (Cieza de León 1998: 450). The Inca use of the sling or *huaraca* in turn proved an effective long-range weapon, capable of hurling small stones to a distance of 30 yards with a good degree of lethal accuracy (Koch 2007: 175; Mendoza 2003). Where hand to hand combat was concerned, the Inca deployed a shock weapon consisting of a spiked copper, bronze, or ground stone mace affixed to the end of a wooden club. To this array of weapons were included bows and arrows, and the double-edged hardwood *macana* (Koch 2007: 175;). The Inca similarly made use of trenches and hastily dug pits in order to impede the charge of the mounted cavalry; and to the dismay of the Spanish it soon became apparent that the Inca were keen observers of Spanish military tactics, and soon deployed these with like effectiveness. According to Koch (2007: 175), “many of the natives took to brandishing Spanish weapons taken from those they had killed and some, including Manco, even learned to ride the horses they had captured.” Similar such observations among the Mapuche or Arauco of Chile, and the Comanche of North America acknowledge that native forces were clearly adept at mobilizing about the use of adopted military technologies and tactics used by the enemy.

Perhaps the most decisive dimension of the Inca assault on the Spanish positions came by way of a rain of firestones in the form of *bolas* wrapped in cotton and set aflame. According to Koch (2007: 175), “the massive army assembled by Manco launched a furious and full scale attack. Heated stones were wrapped in cotton and catapulted by slings into the city, a number of which landed on thatched roofs and, as intended, quickly ignited a brilliant burst of fire. The flames spread swiftly from one building to another and before long the entire city was engulfed in fire and smoke.” In this way, the Spanish were deprived of refuge and any tactical advantage borne of cavalry and weaponry, and were thereby forced in flight to seek sanctuary in the palace of Viracocha (Koch 2007: 175). Despite the fact that the whole of the city of Cuzco burned out of control, the palace within which the Spanish sought refuge did not burn and this by virtue of the efforts of the Spaniards’ Indian allies who had taken the precaution of dousing the otherwise flammable *ichu* grass-covered roofs with water. According to Koch (2007: 176), they took refuge in the palace of Viracocha, and the Temple of the Sun and that of the Virgins were spared the firestorm.

The numerical superiority of the Inca forces proved both overwhelming and frightening to the Spanish and their thousands of Indian allies. And, like the Aztec before them in the Valley of Mexico, those Spaniards captured in battle by the Inca were beheaded and “their severed and still bloody heads were thrown into the streets of the city in an effort to strike terror into the hearts of their enemy” (Koch 2007: 177). In addition to the psychological terror that ensued, the Incas used tried and true battlefield tactics to gain the advantage from the outset of the siege, and sought the high ground of the massive terraced hillside fortress of Sacsahuaman. Moreover, Inca organizational skills and tactics, and their deployment of squadrons of well-equipped and regimented warriors wielding slings, bows, clubs, javelins, and *macanas*

proved a formidable bulwark in the onslaught. Ironically, Manco Inca's siege of nearly 1 year's duration was interrupted after 5 months as the result of the necessity to release his forces to their agricultural obligations. Unlike the small and mobile contingents of Spanish whose forces required little in the way of supplies, Inca numerical superiority ultimately proved a logistical flaw in the maintenance of forces drawn from within an agrarian-based society. This latter fact would prove detrimental, and over the long term catastrophic, to the ultimate success of indigenous imperial forces in both Peru and Mesoamerica alike. With the death of Manco Inca and the fall of Cuzco to the Spanish, the colonial era was launched within the context of what would prove to be the initiation of centuries of resistance to Spanish rule by the Inca and other Andean peoples.

The Battles of La Florida

The sixteenth century accounts of Rodrigo Rangel effectively bring to life both the intensity and ferocity with which those peoples today identified with the Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole of Florida, and the Southeastern US complicated and redirected Spanish imperial designs on the region. In his capacity as personal secretary to Hernando de Soto, Rangel sought to recount the expeditionary and military exploits of the ill-fated conquistador and his soldiers. Any thorough reading of the *La Florida* accounts serves to clarify the ultimate costs and overall tally of battlefield losses and catastrophic setbacks sustained time and again by Hernando de Soto's expedition of 1539–1541 (Bourne 1904: 196–197).

The Spanish force, which first made landfall on May 30, 1539, was from the outset pounced upon and diminished by a seemingly unending volley of allied Amerindian war parties or battle squadrons. Through a seemingly incessant series of attacks and skirmishes, the resistance and offensive tactics unleashed on the Spanish by the peoples of *La Florida* wore heavily upon the might of the force under Hernando de Soto's command. Amerindian resistance ultimately forced the rout of the Spanish in the wake of the systematic burning and destruction of their supply stores, the blockade of their vessels, and the growing casualty counts that ultimately signaled the retrenchment of the expedition and its original designs on *La Florida*. Amerindian towns of the region were systematically, and thereby, deliberately, abandoned as but one aspect of a broader battle plan laid out in anticipation of the Spanish advance and, as noted by Rangel, "so soon as the Christians appeared in sight of land, they were decried, and all along on the coast many smokes were seen to rise, which the Indians make to warn one another" (Bourne 1904: 22). Such tactics deprived the Spanish of a central point of departure from which to launch a decisive attack on the Amerindian defenders of the region. And, so it was that they suffered the slings and arrows of countless attacks along the entirety of that route prepared by the Indians for the many ambushes and traps into which the Spanish fell time and again.

Clearly, Rangel's accounts provide a useful point of departure for assessing the technical range and tactical sophistication with which the ancestral Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole executed the defense of their homeland in the face of the Spanish *entrada* of that time; and in so doing serves to elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of their campaign against the Spanish (Bourne 1904). Our review of one such engagement recounted by Rangel, and summarized below, is strictly intended to highlight some of the more ostentatious and apparent dimensions of those formations, tactics, and strategies that ultimately forced the flight, and ultimate failure, of the de Soto expedition from *La Florida*.

From the outset, Spanish tactics and technologies were rendered useless in the face of Amerindian resistance. At the battle of *Quigaltam*, for instance, Chief *Huhasene*, acting under the authority of the *Cacique* of *Quigaltam*, launched a formidable flotilla of 100 sizeable war canoes in an onslaught of water-borne skirmishes against Spanish brigantines under the command of Hernando de Soto. Each war canoe in the Amerindian flotilla bore "60–70 persons...those of the principal men having awnings, and themselves wearing white and coloured plumes, for distinction" (Bourne 1904: 196). The flotilla effectively intercepted and formed a blockade of the river just beyond the village of *Guachoya* that stanchied the advance of seven formidably armed brigantines bearing 322 Spanish soldiers. Despite a preemptive strike by the Spanish that culminated with the plundering and destruction of a village on the outskirts of *Quigaltam*, the armed Amerindian flotilla effectively blocked passage of the Spanish brigantines. In order to minimize the potential effect of Spanish crossbow fire, the *Cacique* of *Quigaltam* positioned himself at a distance from the brigantines intended to buffer his vantage point from Spanish projectiles, and then dispatched emissaries to meet the commander of the Spanish brigantines. Apparently, the Spanish were to suspect, in retrospect, that the emissaries dispatched only risked a meeting with the Spanish in a ruse intended to discern the "character of the vessels, and the weapons that we [the Spanish] use" (Bourne 1904: 196). Given the opportunity to board a Spanish brigantine, one of those emissaries received by Hernando de Soto and his party proceeded to commend and complement the commander, and the Spanish thereby took the overtures to indicate that the *Cacique* of *Quigaltam* would bow to Spanish authority. Despite initial appearances to the contrary, the Amerindian emissaries in question soon made clear their intentions. Upon returning to their *cacique*, the warriors of the flotilla proceeded to menace the soldiers of the Spanish force and soon thereafter, an army of canoe-borne archers unleashed a rain of projectiles on the fleet of brigantines that forced their retrenchment and retreat. Both shore-based and canoe-borne warriors inflicted their deadly volleys on the brigantines for days on end, and through the course of an incessant series of daylight and nightly attacks managed to wear down their Spanish adversaries. In one of many attacks so noted by Rangel, over 100 Spanish soldiers sustained more than 700 projectile wounds, and Hernando de Soto alone survived seven potentially lethal projectile borne injuries (cf., Bourne 1904: 196). The onslaught so dispirited and exhausted the Spanish that they soon turned to a consideration of options centered on a proposed (hasty) retreat and return to New Spain. In the final analysis, Hernando de Soto's failure to act fully and expeditiously upon such

considerations proved fatal to both his command and the very survival of his expeditionary force.

In a recent assessment, Mendoza (2011) has reviewed those tactical and strategic dimensions made apparent in the Rangel accounts of the battle of Quigaltam. Essentially, these have been acknowledged to have included the battlefield presence of (a) chiefly elites and insignia clearly key to the maintenance of the command structure of the Indian armada; (b) the deployment of tactics intended to introduce deception, disclaimers, and overtures of submission, messengers, and sentries; (c) technologies of intimidation and inspiration based on the use of war cries and/or chants, and drumming; (d) the maintenance of protective buffer zones intended to neutralize the effectiveness of projectiles launched by rivals; (e) bifurcated canoe formations; (f) coordinated water and land-based flanking maneuvers; (g) the deployment of canoe-borne encirclement of the opposing force; and (h) sustained and strategically effective projectile fire. Clearly, the *Cacique* of *Quigaltam* had at his immediate disposal vast numbers of professionally outfitted and battle-savvy warriors who wielded a sophisticated array of indigenous field tactics, including a strategy of flotilla-based water-borne warfare, coordinated land and riverine battle tactics, and both projectile and shock force weaponry. Ultimately, this constellation of both offensive and defensive tactics and strategies played a decisive role in Spanish losses at *Quigaltam*, and that despite the presumed superiority of European armor, military organization, and watercraft.

The Pueblo Revolt

The US Southwest provides a particularly compelling example of just how some historians and anthropologists, or advocates for descendant (indigenous) communities, have conspired to pacify the Amerindian past and that despite a formidable body of evidence that serves to contravene the myth of war. Nowhere is this fact more evident than with the now substantial body of scholarship concerned with the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the decisive outcomes of which resulted in the wholesale destruction and depopulation of the early intrusive Spanish colonial settlements of seventeenth century New Mexico (Kessell 2008: 119–148). As such, the revolt is significant for what it says about the ability of the putatively acephalous (moiety or bifurcated lineage) political system of the Rio Grande Pueblos to coordinate and unite an ephemeral multiplicity confederation of towns, encompassing some 17,000 people, and that for the expressed purpose of waging war on the oppressive Spanish colonial enterprise of that time in human history (Knaut 1997; Wilcox 2009).

Despite the recurrent formation of such militarized confederations of Amerindian peoples from throughout the Americas, the Pueblo Revolt is nevertheless characterized as an isolated, and thereby unusual, incident provoked by the oppressive demands of Spanish colonial administrators and religious (Wilcox 2009). At the same time, the Pueblo Revolt is upheld as one of the most successful Amerindian rebellions of all time, particularly given the effective tactical and strategic initiatives

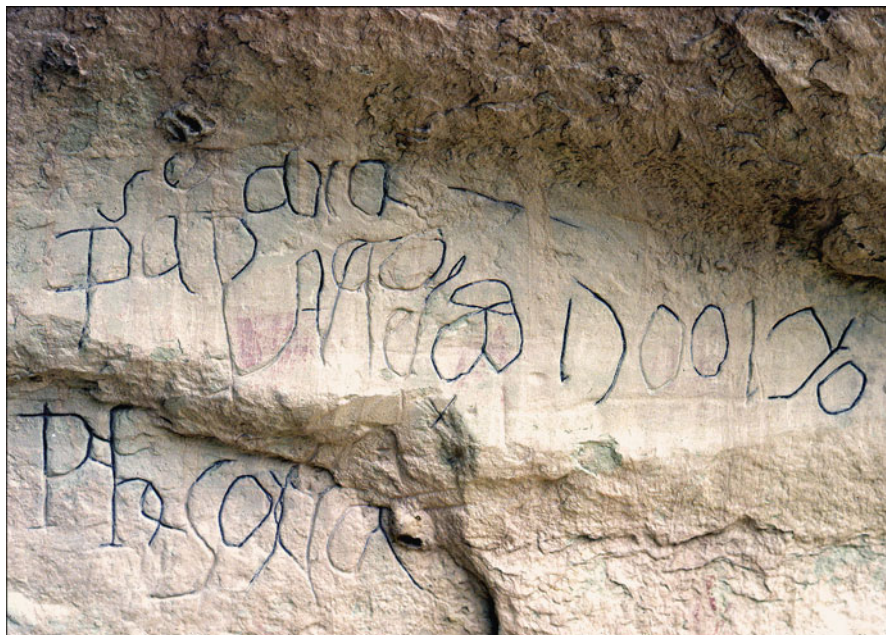


Fig. 9.11 The ancestral Pueblo site of El Morro, *A'ts'ina*, or Inscription Rock, bears centuries of intaglios and graffiti left by the many visitors to this significant crossroad of western New Mexico. The oldest known European inscription at El Morro National Monument was that left by Juan de Oñate in 1605. In this instance, the inscription serves to document the return of the Spanish to the land of the Pueblos in the wake of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, which culminated with the effective expulsion of the Spanish that spanned the period extending through 1692. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 1981

set in motion by a people often characterized by outsiders as otherwise peaceable and nonviolent. Despite years of conflict with both Athapaskan and Plains Indian raiders, as well as factional disputes within and between Pueblos known to have resulted in the fissioning of extant communities (Kessell 2008: 148); the pueblos initially sought to maintain peaceable relations with the Spanish. Both the missionaries and the colonists of the region nevertheless sought to suppress some of the most fundamental and traditional dimensions of the Pueblo lifeway, particularly those identified with the kiva societies and its corollary katchina (or ancestral spirit) cult. Ultimately, the arrest and punishment of some 47 Pueblo medicine men by the then Governor Juan Francisco Treviño prompted *Popé* (Po'Pay), one of those punished for practicing the healing arts (and thereby perpetuating native religious traditions), to act decisively in coordinating the revolt (Fig. 9.11).

In what clearly demonstrates a long-standing pattern of active, albeit largely clandestine, resistance to the demands of their Spanish overlords, the Pueblos ultimately found it necessary to coordinate a massive multi-Pueblo uprising. The incessant labor demands of the seventeenth century *encomenderos* (or Spanish landlords) of New Mexico ultimately underlay the growing resentment of the Pueblos toward

the Spanish, and this played a significant role in fomenting the rebellion that took the form of the Pueblo Revolt of August 1680. Nevertheless, a host of mitigating factors that afflicted both the Pueblos and the Spanish colonies only served to heighten tensions, and thereby precipitate the makings of the revolt (Kessell 2008: 97). Among these were a prolonged drought-induced famine, the introduction of European disease, the disruption of traditional Puebloan trade networks, an escalation of Athapaskan or Apache raids on the Puebloan, and the continued persecution of those who sought to maintain the observance of traditional Puebloan customs and beliefs (Knaut 1997; Schaafsma 2000). Not the least of those concerns noted time and again centered on the efforts of the Spanish Catholic friars to extirpate the *katchina* or *katsina* cult and its corollary *kiva* societies.

While environmental and social challenges of the mid- to late seventeenth century clearly served to exacerbate tensions between the Pueblos and the Spanish, intracommunity and inter-Pueblo factionalism saw the escalation of the growing crises on the Río Grande. Despite the extant factionalism, the revolt was launched after a series of *juntas*, or tribal council meetings, were convened by representatives of each of those communities allied for that purpose. In order to coordinate the revolt, *Popé* dispatched messengers to each of the Pueblos of northern New Mexico, and in so doing, called upon each community to revolt under the threat of death and/or the destruction of their respective communities. Messengers were dispatched with knotted deerskins in their possession so as to indicate to other Pueblo leaders the number of days, indicated by two such knots for 2 days, remaining prior to the launch of the main revolt (Knaut 1997: 10). The ultimate objective of the rebellion was the systematic and thorough annihilation of the Spanish, and given its mandate, and effectiveness, thereby proceeded with such haste that the Spanish were caught unawares, and soon overwhelmed (Knaut 1997).

In rapid succession, each Puebloan town revolted, and in effect, the Pueblos systematically dispossessed all surviving Spaniards of access to horses, weapons, and supplies. They similarly disrupted or destroyed access to crucial water sources for each Spanish settlement and town laid siege through the course of the months of August and September of 1680. Despite overwhelming force, and the attendant scale of violence visited upon the Spanish, *Popé* nevertheless offered Governor Antonio de Otermín a choice. Go to war and risk total annihilation, or “abandon the kingdom.” Otermín’s response was to register in the form of a painted red cross for war, or a white cross for surrender and retreat (Knaut 1997: 10). The Spanish survivors under Governor Otermín opted for the latter. In what proved a momentous and humiliating exodus from Santa Fe and the beleaguered Río Grande valley, the Governor’s departure was met by jeers and taunts from the many Pueblos along the route. Moreover, the Spanish exodus was heralded by each Pueblo by way of smoke signals in a fashion long thought to have characterized ancestral Pueblo way stations, signal towers, and other forms of conflict-related interregional communications (Knaut 1997; Kessell 2008). Ultimately, the Pueblo Revolt effectively succeeded in stanching the Spanish colonial venture within the Kingdom of New Mexico for a period of some 12 years, and, while acts of suppression and violence

would recur for some years thereafter, in the final analysis the Pueblos won a host of concessions, not the least of which was the survival of their ancestral way of life and belief.

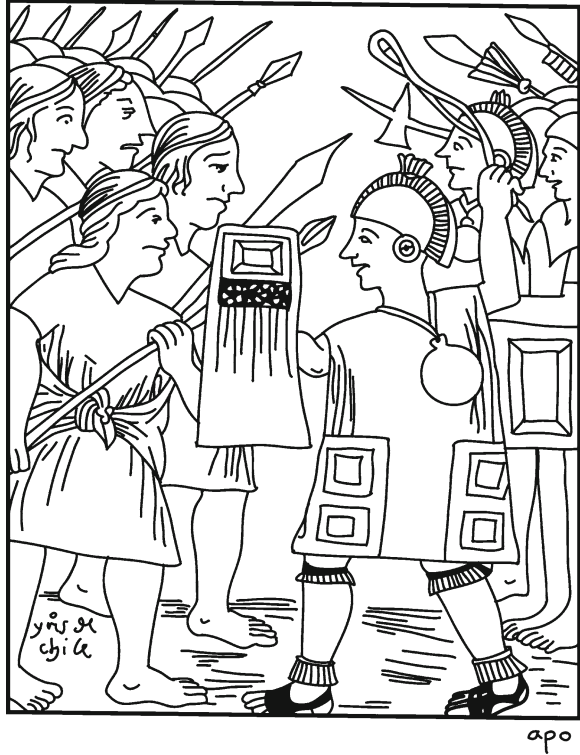
The War of Arauco

Perhaps one of the most compelling dramas in the history of Amerindian warfare, and resistance to colonial domination, may be found in the guise of the Mapuche peoples of the Araucanía and Biobío regions of present day Chile and Argentina (Cruz 2010). In perhaps what constitutes the longest running war ever documented in the history of human conflict, the Mapuche, and their Huilliche, Pehuenche, and Picunche cousins, staved off, and repeatedly crushed the Spanish advance for well over 350 years. Though accounts vary with respect to the casualties attributed to the war in question, Spanish losses have been placed at over 40,000 Spanish, and 60,000 Indian auxiliaries, with Mapuche losses during this same period encompassing 100,000 souls. The onset of hostilities identified with the War of Arauco has provisionally been defined in terms of the battle of Reynogüelén in 1536. The documented onset of Mapuche resistance, however, began with the founding of the Spanish town of Concepción by Pedro de Valdivia in 1550 (Padden 1974: 331). The founding of Concepción posed a direct threat to the Mapuche, and thereby galvanized the resistance.

Ultimately, the Araucanian War in turn has been defined as one in which the Spanish suffered the most catastrophic losses ever recorded in engagements with Amerindian warriors anywhere in the Americas. As a result, the Mapuche peoples maintained their independence until the modern Chilean military of the late nineteenth century effectively occupied Araucanía in the period after 1861 through 1883. In effect, the War of Arauco would set the Biobío River as the line demarcation dividing Mapuche territory from that of European encroachment. Ironically, during the Wars of Independence against Spain, the Mapuche allied themselves with the royals so as to guarantee the integrity of hard-won treaties had with the Spanish Empire prior to the onset of hostilities with the insurgents (Padden 1974).

Significantly, a century of scholarship continues to ponder the question of why it was that the Mapuche succeeded where Amerindian empires – both Mesoamerican and Peruvian – failed to halt the advance of the Spanish and other European powers. Robert Padden's (1957) "Cultural Change and Military Resistance in Araucanian Chile, 1550–1730," provides a thoroughgoing assessment of those dimensions of both Mapuche military tactics and cultural stratagems deemed central to Amerindian victory in the War of Arauco. Among those explanations proffered to date by historians attempting to account for Spanish losses, Padden (1974: 328–29) cites "numerical superiority of the Indians," the "overly long lines of supply from Peru," "chronic lack of viceregal interest," the Araucanian propensity for emulating "Spanish forms and techniques of war," and finally, "the forest because it hampered

Fig. 9.12 The Mapuche maintained a centuries-long aversion to the encroachment of imperial and colonial ventures, initially in wars fought against the Inca Empire, and for the next three and a half centuries in wars and rebellions that effectively staved off Spanish encroachment in the Araucanía/Biobío regions of South America. In this depiction, the Mapuche confront and battle the Inca, who don imperial battle regalia (here depicted on the right-hand portion of the illustration). After Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, circa 1615; Copy illustration by Emily H. Nisbet, 2011



the functions of the Spanish cavalry.” In sum, historians appear bewildered and unable to account affectively for why it was that the Mapuche managed to fend off Spanish advances over the course of 350 years of imperial aggression. Clearly, cultural change played a significant role in Mapuche military victories, and Padden (1957, 1974) argues that many of those explanations advanced to account for the phenomenon in question are based on traditionalist constructs and a static model of Mapuche culture that fails to account for culture change, acculturation, and the role of agency in the ability of indigenous communities to respond to aggression from without. Ironically, the catastrophic consequences of Mapuche military victories play a key role in why it is that few European accounts of Mapuche traditional lifeways in the earliest periods of Amerindian and European contact survived the conflagration of the War of Arauco (Fig. 9.12).

Interestingly, many of the earliest rationalizations advanced by the Spanish to account for Mapuche victories ultimately hinge on a failure of military strategies that had in effect worked in many other areas of the Americas. To argue, as (Padden 1974: 329) has noted, that Spanish losses were the result of the numerical superiority of indigenous forces, for instance, flies in the face of battlefield tactics identified with Spanish victories in both Mesoamerica and Peru. According to (Padden 1974: 329), “at no time was it normal for Spanish forces to outnumber the enemy anywhere in the Indies.” In fact, in the War of Arauco, catastrophic losses by both the

Spanish and particularly their Indian auxiliaries were sizeable – a fact that highlights the critical import of Indian conquistadors in Spanish victories there and elsewhere. Moreover, what such explanations fail to account for are the many other decisive contests for which Mapuche victories have been claimed; and these, according to Padden, indicate that the Mapuche had become the “superior strategists.” Improvements in weaponry sufficient so as to “offset the Spanish advantages of gunpowder and horse,” and the development of “a creed for life which made resistance both possible and meaningful,” arguably played key roles in the Mapuche military response to the Spanish (Padden 1974: 329).

Initial contact with the Mapuche has been characterized as one of complacency and compliance on the part of the Mapuche, particularly as this pertains to tribute and labor demands emanating from the earliest colonial settlements of the region. The establishment of the town of Concepción, and the large-landed estates, or *encomiendas*, dramatically changed the dynamics of Spanish-Indian relations, particularly with the introduction of enforced Indian servitude. With the town of Concepción serving as the base for Spanish military control of the region and the growing frequency of Spanish expeditions and incursions into Mapuche territory, the Arauco resistance was bolstered, and a state of war emerged between the parties in question. Padden’s (1974) systematic assessment of the War of Arauco, and the tactical brilliance of Mapuche leaders such as *Latauro*, is one founded not on the basis of an essentialized perspective dependent on the role of tradition but, rather, on the Mapuche propensity for change and adaptation, and decisive military stratagems (Padden 1974: 330).

According to Padden (1974: 330), “the strength with which the Araucanians resisted Spanish domination was derived not from a constancy of their cultural forms, but from the ability to change them. It seems valid, therefore, to view the sources of the later colonial period as indication of what Araucanian culture *became* under the stress of the long Spanish war rather than as evidence of what it was before the conquest.” He goes on to argue that Araucanian cultural development was channelized to accommodate only “those arts, which had a survival value,” and ultimately, these were predicated on those hostile forces that threatened Mapuche culture; mainly military, political, and religious pressures from without (Padden 1974: 330–31). In sum, the Mapuche and their Araucanian brethren conjured corresponding forms to meet each new threat with a formidable response following on the designs of the Spanish and other hostiles.

Whereas the Araucanian peoples were often characterized in period accounts as constituting the equivalent of decentralized kinship groups with little to no evidence for pan-regional institutional forms; the ability of the Mapuche to call up sizable cadres of warriors in short order, and over vast regions, clearly argues for something akin to the segmentary state formations or heterarchies of Highland central Mexico and Guatemala (Carmack 1973; Fox 1978, 1987; Southall 1988; Fowler 1989; Mendoza 1992; Kowalewski et al. 2008). While (Padden 1974: 331) contends that the so-called Araucanian *allaregua* (Olaverría 1852: 20), consisting of nine individual *levos* or *reguas* – i.e., “clusters of dwellings” – very likely reflects a form

of semi-centralization arising as a consequence of direct interaction with the Spanish; it should be noted that such sociopolitical configurations have been noted from a host of other conquest interaction networks documented from throughout the Americas.

According to Southall (1988: 52), the Segmentary State is “one in which the spheres of ritual suzerainty and political sovereignty do not coincide. The former extends widely towards a flexible, changing periphery”. For the latter, political sovereignty is confined to the central, core domain. Southall (1988: 52) contends that “such sociopolitical groupings typically conjure descriptions that emphasize the informal, amorphous, and or otherwise rudimentary character of the political formation generally interpreted in terms of perceived real or fictive ‘kinship’ groupings when considered at face value.” We contend that it was precisely this ability to mobilize continuously and organically, and only as needed in order to stave off threats from beyond the group, that such political mobilizations proved so decisive in staving off the imperial advance of both Amerindian and European empires in the Americas.

Despite indications to the contrary, Padden (1974: 334–35) has identified two primary forces believed at work in the “skilled and effective” response launched by the Araucanian militias. These, he concludes, centered on what he terms the “geographical particularism” of the Araucanian homeland, and those countervailing forces spawned by the presence of the enemy force that necessitated what could be deemed the rapid mobilization of a pan-Araucanian military authority. Interestingly, the evolution of the Araucanian politico-military authority remained organic, and thereby an asymmetrical military formation not amenable to definition or usurpation. In effect, like Don Quixote wielding weapons against imaginary foes, Spanish forces found themselves fighting a phantom force readily capable of manifesting thousands of battle-hardened warriors on a moment’s notice. In the end, Araucanian militias came to be associated with “*el estado*”; however, the original meaning in this instance was intended to identify the land base held by Pedro de Valdivia in the form of an *encomienda*. Within a generation, the catastrophic losses suffered by the Spanish under the Araucanian onslaught would come to imbue “*el estado*” with a sociopolitical and military connotation not originally intended (Padden 1974: 335) (Fig. 9.13).

Mimesis and the Art of War

It is most important to understand that the motive for Araucanian observation of Spanish cultural forms was not to emulate them and thereby raise the level of their own, but to discover Spanish weaknesses and to mobilize Araucanian strength for forceful opposition.

Robert Padden (1974: 332)

Fig. 9.13 Photograph of the Cacique Pincén, one of the last Mapuche leaders to resist the encroachment of neighboring state-level societies of the Araucanía/Biobío regions of South America. Argentinian postcard photo, 1902: Courtesy Wikipedia Commons, public domain: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Argentina_Mapuche_Cacique_Pincen.jpg



Araucanian resistance to the earliest Spanish incursions into their homeland proved futile, particularly given the host of losses sustained by the Arauco at the hands of the Spanish during the span of a 4-year period ending in 1553. The Araucanian defeat and execution of Governor Valdivia in 1553, and the escalation of the War of Arauco, lend credence to Padden's (1974: 331) belief that the period during which the Mapuche essentially lay down their arms effectively constitutes a period of Araucanian maturation. Initial forays against the Spanish, as well as Mapuche servitude within the *encomienda* system, permitted the Araucanian people's time to reflect, observe, and assess the threat at hand. The Araucanian propensity for co-opting introduced cultural norms, and utilizing them against those who introduced such forms in the first place proved invaluable where military tactics, strategy, and organization were concerned.

Within little more than a generation, the Araucanian warrior adopted the horse into a growing repertoire of military tactics, and their observations of daily life in the Spanish communities of Concepción, Valdivia, Villa Rica, and Imperial, provided the essential basis for tactical decisions based on countering Spanish social and religious customs and traditions, government structures, and military organization. Indian auxiliaries, as well as Spanish “deserters” (Encina 1940: c. 2, p. 306; cf., Padden 1974: 332) and clerical renegades (González de Nájera 1889: 117–122; cf. Padden 1974: 332), in turn, provided an active source of intelligence and related information critical to the development of Araucanian offensive and defensive strategies and technologies.

The fluctuating fortunes of both the Araucanians and the Spanish during the War of Arauco took the form of an oscillating frontier of pacification, alliance formation, and conflict, which, according to Padden (1974: 331–32), promoted a pattern of continuous interaction; and thereby, information exchange between the Spanish and their Araucanian rivals. Ironically, the labor demands of the agrarian economy that ultimately permitted Francisco Pizarro y González to prevail over Manco Inca’s rebellion of 1536 invariably played havoc with the Spanish once they too found it necessary to redirect men and materials to the seasonal demands of the agricultural cycle. In this instance, however, this served to restrict military action to the summer months, and as such, “during harvest time and winter both Indians and Spaniards tended to refrain from active combat, holding what had been gained and preparing for summer campaigns” Padden (1974: 331–32).

As per Padden (1974: 332) assessment of Araucanian observations of Spanish cultural forms, it is clear that the Araucanian people soon discerned Spanish vulnerabilities that they readily exploited. From the outset, the Araucanians noted the Spanish prerequisite for the pacification of tribal populations so that they might devote themselves to expanding upon critically important mining and agricultural pursuits as opposed to the escalation of military expenditures. This proved a fundamental weakness as the Spanish were limited by their numbers and by the extent of supply lines from Peru. The critical need for Indian labor in turn required “total pacification” of the affected population. However, in order to affect a total pacification of the Arauco, the Spanish would need to topple any central authority specific to the Araucanian homeland. This proved particularly problematic as the Araucanian people demonstrated no clear-cut central authority amenable to usurpation or compromise. Interestingly, similar such patterns of military mobilization characterized the Jívaro of the Amazon basin, who, according to Spanish accounts, were touted to have maintained no centralized form of government (Harner 1984).

As argued elsewhere in this treatment, these sociopolitical patterns identified with the segmentary state or lineages are well documented from state-level Mesoamerican polities that apparently exhibited no commanding central authority. Societies such as those of the Tlaxcalteca, Mixteca, and K’iche’ have since been redefined in terms of their heterarchical sociopolitical structures which made it

nearly impossible for the imperial powers of the day to usurp any rival form of central authority (Fox 1987; Mendoza 1992).¹²

The invisibility of a commanding central authority ultimately prompted the Spanish, not to mention their Inca forbears, to repeatedly launch attacks on the Araucanian peoples in an effort to garner a decisive win over Araucanian sociopolitical and military infrastructure. This need on the part of the Spanish to seek a definitive battle that could change the tide of Araucanian resistance repeatedly led the Spaniards to seek battles with the Arauco. Ironically, the Arauco used this fact to strategic advantage to lure the Spanish into unwinnable battles and ambushes. Not only did the Araucanians select the sites for military engagements with the Spanish, they did so with an eye to those areas where the terrain could be used to strategic advantage. Such areas included sites that effectively neutralized the tactical advantage of cavalry and the use of horses in battlefield contexts. According to Padden (1974: 333), “upon arrival the Spaniards found themselves outmanned and outmaneuvered and so were frequently forced to flee for their lives, leaving baggage trains in the hands of the enemy.” Araucanian tactics included the deployment of snares attached to long poles used to both dismount and impale Spanish cavalry soldiers. Moreover, while there are those who would argue that the Araucanian warrior drew a tactical advantage from the adoption of Spanish weapons, the fact of the matter was that the warriors of Arauco retained their traditional arsenal, including the bow and arrow, the long lance, spears, and long clubs with weighted heads; and this in addition to the sling whose lethal effectiveness was proven time and again (Marmolejo 1862: 44–49; Olaverria 1852: 33–34; González de Nájera 1889: 95–98; cf., Padden 1974: 333).

Despite a clear strategic and tactical value to the Spanish, the introduction of the horse ultimately proved a critical vulnerability to the colonial enterprise. As a result of conflict and capture, not to mention “peacetime thievery,” by 1594 Araucanian forces could well command cavalry charges consisting of several hundred mounted horsemen. Padden (1974: 333–34) nevertheless argues that the adoption of the horse by the Araucanian militias clearly served only as a source of auxiliary support. Despite their newfound equestrian-based mobility – which (coupled with their innovation and development of an “extremely light saddle”) permitted Araucanian warriors to launch attacks over distances exceeding 30 miles in a single night, basic Araucanian strategies for fighting the Spanish continued to rely on foot soldiers whose aim was to first dismount and encircle Spanish cavalry in elaborately planned and executed maneuvers.

¹² For their part, the Tlaxcala, who are among the best known for the formulation of such a sociopolitical formation, repeatedly scored victories and sustained a long-term pattern of resistance, against the Mexica Aztec who were intent on vanquishing the kingdoms of Tlaxcala. So effective was the Tlaxcalan sociopolitical response in question that in one noteworthy engagement (had just prior to the arrival of the Spanish), Moctezuma suffered one of the most humiliating defeats of his tenure at the hands of the people in question. After decades of conflict with the Mexica, the Tlaxcalan peoples ultimately joined forces with the Spanish in their joint conquest of the Aztec capital of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and that despite the near total encirclement of the region of Tlaxcala by the Aztec Empire.

Drawing on a strategy that entailed encirclement of enemy forces by way of concentric rings of warriors bearing shock weapons, Araucanian warriors were well versed at literally running down mounted horsemen on foot in an effort to wear down both the mount and its rider (Marmolejo 1862: 40–43; cf. Padden 1974: 333–334). By 1611, the Arauco had surpassed their European counterparts with a cavalry that, by virtue of its mobility and devastating effectiveness, was far superior to that of the Spanish and this to the considerable consternation of the Spanish elite, who “piqued as well at the sight of barbarous savages riding horses with an air of equality. In answer to Spanish resentment the Indians pledged never to quit their war for freedom and their horses to enter serfdom on foot” (González de Nájera 1889: 107–110; Xaraquemada 1852: 239; García Ramón 1952: 267; cf., Padden 1974: 334). It is no surprise, therefore, that “in little more than a generation the animal from which the Indians had once fled in terror had been incorporated into their culture transforming it into a factor of defiant military power, dedicated to the eradication of Spanish culture” (Padden 1974: 334).

The Jívaro Uprising of 1599

While few would presume to believe that the peoples of the Amazon basin and Ecuadorian highlands passively acquiesced to European encroachment, the documentary record makes clear the extent to which such groups as the *Jívaro*, *Macas*, and *Huamboyas* effectively countered such efforts by way of decisive military action (Harner 1984). Not only were many of these efforts decisive, particularly in the wake of a number of retaliatory strikes, the aftermath effectively reduced the presence of Spanish populations within indigenous territories identified with the aforementioned groups. So effective was the Jívaro onslaught that the period extending from 1599 through to the middle of the nineteenth century was marked by only intermittent and hostile contact with outsiders. Accordingly, virtually all military incursions and missionary activities on the part of the whites ended disastrously during the aforementioned period, and in one of the few so-called friendly exchanges had between the Jívaro and the Spanish in 1767, missionaries were offered gifts which according to Harner (1984: 25–26) “included the skulls of Spaniards, who [had] apparently been killed earlier by the Jívaro.” From 1599 to 1870, only the white settlement of Macas maintained any degree of proximity to the lands of the Jívaro, and despite ongoing conflict to 1837 between the people of Macas and the Jívaro, extending through 1837, peaceful trade relations between the two emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. In this way, the interior Jívaro, despite their relative isolation, continued to obtain steel cutting tools, weapons, and ammunition *sans* direct interaction or contact with the Spaniards and other outsiders (Harner 1984: 39).

So as to contextualize the extent to which Amerindian peoples in the foregoing region stanchd the encroachment of European settlers in tribal territories, we are reminded of the advance of indigenous forces on the Spanish settlements of Logroño

and Sevilla del Oro, Ecuador; and by extension, the wholesale destruction of the European populations in question. According to Harner (1984: 20), the Jívaro chief-tain *Quirruba* (i.e., *Kirupasa?* or “Big Frog”) determined that his people would not submit to Spanish authority as had the *Macas* and *Huamboyas*. Undertaking a clandestine operation replete with secret meetings and emissaries, a constellation of messengers, intelligence gathering, and the assignment of war captains tasked with the destruction of the aforementioned towns and ultimately, the coordinated delivery of a massive *coup de grace* by which *Quirruba* and the Jívaro launched a furious assault on the town of Logroño and its 12,000 inhabitants in 1599. At the head of 20,000 warriors, *Quirruba* orchestrated the coordinated encirclement of the town and its population, and attacked at midnight as the Spaniards slept.

Taking possession of the house of the Governor, Harner (1984: 21) recounts how it was that the Governor’s party was killed, and the Governor taken captive and informed by *Quirruba* and his entourage that “it was now time for him to receive the tax of gold which he had ordered prepared.” Harner (1984: 21) then recounts specifically how the so-called tax of gold was administered thereby setting the stage for the use of the sort of psychological warfare that would come to define centuries of European reticence to engage with the Jívaro:

They stripped him completely naked, tied his hands and feet; and while some amused themselves with him, delivering a thousand castigations and jests, the others set up a large forge in the courtyard, where they melted the gold. When it was ready in the crucibles, they opened his mouth with a bone, saying that they wanted to see if for once he had enough gold. They poured it little by little, and then forced it down with another bone; and bursting his bowels with the torture, all raised a clamor and laughter.

This was orchestrated in concert with the burning and destruction of virtually every quarter of the city. The effective encirclement of Logroño was maintained through the course of the following day, and as the looting, destruction, and killing ensued, warriors were dispatched to other nearby Spanish towns so as to see through their destruction as well. Nevertheless, despite a spirited, albeit chaotic, defense of the city, the Spanish were soon overwhelmed, and despite the best efforts of royal officials, the city’s defenses collapsed in chaotic disarray. In the midst of the Logroño’s destruction, Spaniards fleeing the Jívaro assault on the town of Huamboya entered the town, but soon fled at learning that the Jívaro intended to annihilate the Spanish that very night (Harner 1984: 23). Emboldened, the Spanish renewed their efforts to halt the Jívaro advance on Sevilla de Oro, and despite an initial success garnered from the many volleys that brought down scores of Jívaro warriors the Jívaro regrouped and daring lances ultimately forced the Spanish to retreat to the margins of the city and its defensive trench line (Harner 1984: 23–24). Soon, however, the Jívaro breached the town’s defenses, and by way of fierce hand-to-hand combat thousands were killed. Where the capital of Sevilla del Oro is concerned, fewer than a quarter of the nearly 25,000 inhabitants survived the onslaught and the majority of these were women and children (Harner 1984: 24–25).

In the final analysis, the ultimate consequence of the *coup de grace* administered the governor, not to mention the total devastation of the towns of Logroño and

Sevilla del Oro, Ecuador, surfaced in the guise of more than 30,000 Spanish dead. The collapse of the government of Macas, and the ruin and destruction of the territory of Yaguarzongo, and thereby, those identified with Jaén, Loja, and Quijos, soon ensued (Harner 1984: 25). More importantly, however, the fear, discord, and social unrest introduced into the remaining Spanish settlements of the region played a decisive role in stanching the Spanish advance. Despite the occasional encroachment of missionaries and other settlers on the margins of the Jívaro homeland, it was not until 1941 that Jívaro-white relations were once again thrown into disarray as the result of a bloody attack by the Ecuadorian military that resulted in the deaths of scores of Ecuadorians and Jívaro (Harner 1984).

Interestingly, as a result of the immediate threat in question, all affected Jívaro communities “rapidly called a truce among themselves and made secret plans to conduct a coordinated revolt at the first sign of a general attack...[and]...elaborate strategic plans and tactical assignments were agreed upon by the leading warriors of the normally feuding neighborhoods” (Harner 1984: 33). The mobilization in question has led Harner to conclude that the sociopolitical dynamics and logistical mechanics advanced for this “emergency alliance” were in effect the very same that made possible the coordinated destruction of the Spanish communities of Logroño and Sevilla del Oro in 1599. Past is prologue, and clearly in this instance, the same constellation of social and political technologies and weaponry that enabled the Jívaro to expel the Spaniards from the frontier at the end of the sixteenth century were still at work in the mid-twentieth century configuration of the Amerindian communities in question.

Conclusions

All other narratives about war too easily fall prey to the allure and seductiveness of violence, as well as the attraction of the godlike power that comes with the license to kill with impunity.

Chris Hedges, 2005: 1

Today, a new corpus of adjectives has surfaced from within period chronicles to describe the active military role played by indigenous communities and protagonists in rolling back the European advance, or in facilitating the conquest of the Indian Empires of the Americas. Whether defined as Indian *conquistadores*, Mapuche militias, Indian scouts and trackers, or Araucanian and Comanche Indian cavalry, it is increasingly clear that an emerging scholarship now acknowledges the decisive and critical role played by Amerindian resistance and warfare in the so-called European conquest of the Americas. Throughout the Americas, Indian militias, cavalries, and foot soldiers wreaked havoc on European forces intent on vanquishing the vast frontiers of those regions now rightly deemed the consequence of empire. In the wake of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado’s momentous expedition into the northern frontier of 1540–1542; the Caxcanes launched a massive counter-attack against the Spanish in northwestern New Spain (Rabasa 2000). The so-called

Mixtón War so decimated colonial ventures in the north and proved costly to the Viceroyalty of New Spain that some 60 years would pass before the Spanish would venture into what is today the American Southwest. In the book *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History*, S. C. Gwynne (2010) chronicles the decisive role played by the Comanche in redirecting the course of American history especially as this pertains to the westward movement. In effect, the Comanche succeeded in “rolling back civilization’s advance...only on a much larger scale” (Gwynne 2010: 4). Ironically, despite the fact that “American” history and Amerindian resistance are generally deemed *non sequiturs*, Gwynne’s (2010) insightful assessments paint an unusually nuanced history of a people largely regarded as little more than vanquished hostiles. He concludes that the Comanche “were so masterful at war and so skilled with their arrows and lances that they stopped the northern drive of colonial Spain from Mexico and halted the French expansion westward from Louisiana” (Gwynne 2010: 4). In the end, Comanche resistance slowed and ultimately rolled back the American westward movement for nearly four decades and necessitated the creation of the Texas Rangers and the development of the six-gun specifically introduced to stop the Comanche. Continuing revelations of this sort will clearly force a reconsideration of Amerindian agency and warfare in the writing of a broader and more nuanced American history in which the American Indian is more fully acknowledged as an active agent of change in the historical transformation of the colonial and postcolonial New World (Figs. 9.14 and 9.15).

Postscript

Given the emerging interpretive frameworks at hand, how then do we assess what constitutes the passive construction of Amerindian history? Rather than a portrait of a people painted as the hapless victims of European imperialism, it is clear that Amerindian resistance, rebellion, and/or alliance formation were formulated on the basis of self-interest, “negative opportunism,”¹³ cultural accommodation, and/or military stratagems. Therefore, our ethical consideration of Amerindian warfare necessarily requires a reconsideration of those adjectives and descriptors that continue to essentialize and pacify the indigenous past in a paternalistic and ingenuous fashion. For instance, Ferguson and Whitehead’s (1991) usage of the concept of “ethnic soldiering” – to account for indigenous mercenaries and/or auxiliaries in the employ of European armies – only serves to promote the characterization of

¹³ Timothy Snyder (2010) employs the concept of “negative opportunism” to account for how it is that a people beset by competing enemies are prone to align themselves with what they perceive to be the “lesser of two evils.” Clearly, when faced with the voracious tributary and sacrificial demands of the Aztec Empire, the Spanish alliance likely appeared an optimal choice.



Fig. 9.14 In his efforts to commemorate the Mexican Independence movement, which launched a decade-long struggle to oust the Spanish from Mexico, the architect Juan O’Gorman (b. 1905-d. 1982) focused attention on the central role of both Mexican Indians and Afro-mestizos in the revolt. In this portion of the O’Gorman mural, the parish priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla leads a sizeable Indian militia against the Spanish Empire in 1810. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 1983

indigenous participation in the conquest as constituting little more than a subsidiary, and thereby subordinate (and for that matter, treacherous) role by virtue of comparison with their European counterparts. From our perspective, “ethnic soldiering” clearly falls short as a conceptual framework for acknowledging the formidable contributions of those native warriors who either repelled or allied themselves with agents of the European invasion of the Americas.

We believe, therefore, that our exploration of Amerindian warfare and European triumphalism in the Americas necessarily serves to force a reconsideration of those otherwise sophisticated indigenous military strategies, tactics, and technologies used to curtail, redirect, or crush the course of European colonial ventures in the New World. Concomitantly, we contend that that genre of revisionist scholarship that only serves to minimize and otherwise diminish the native role in the conquest of America’s indigenous empires is in effect suspect by its very nature particularly given the substantive and substantial body of evidence that countermands the role of Amerindian warfare while at the same time touting the validation of European triumphalism. The ethical quandary in question is only exacerbated when the academy and, by default, the public embrace an otherwise essentialized, and thereby caricatured, recapitulation of the American Indian as little more than the helpless prey,

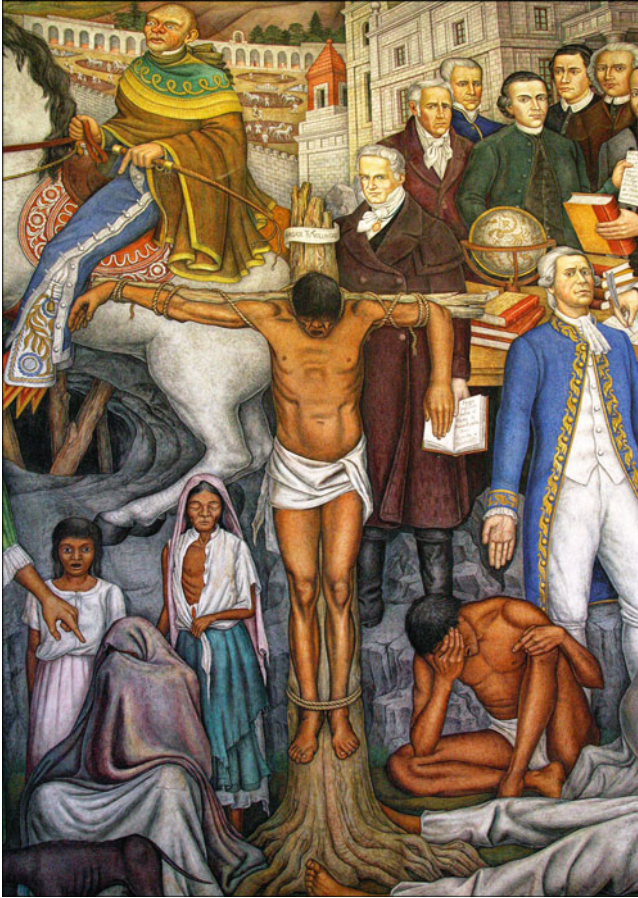


Fig. 9.15 The brutality and violence visited upon Mexican indigenous communities (through the course of the three centuries of the colonial enterprise) remain a common theme in public art and lore. Juan O’Gorman ultimately sought to depict the martyrdom of the Mexican Indian with the words “*Hagase Tu Voluntad*,” or “Thy Will Be Done,” inscribed over the lifeless body of the crucified Indian martyr portrayed in this mural from Chapultepec Castle. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 1983

and passive victims, of European imperial aggression. We believe, therefore, that by its very nature, the pacification of the Amerindian past only serves to fuel what Timothy Snyder (2010) refers to in another very different context as the emergence and elaboration of a “collective martyrology” for the Bloodlands of Eastern Europe. After all, it is far easier to identify with the victim, than with the perpetrator and his or her collaborators. Ultimately, there exists an inherent danger in promoting a collective martyrology within and beyond Amerindian communities, particularly given the fact that therein lays the potential for the makings of a form of “martyrological imperialism” in which the real victims fall prey to the untenable and vacuous

rewriting of the past. In sum, contrary to prevailing anthropological and historical paradigms and assessments that portray Amerindian societies as static, sociopolitically vulnerable, and superstitious, we in effect find that a dynamic pattern of innovation, accommodation, and asymmetrical military formations on the part of both Indian militias and their allied European counterparts, was clearly at work in determining the course of those military contests had in this veritable and cataclysmic cultural war of the worlds.

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