

Bernal Díaz attempts to justify the conquest by extolling indigenous artistry and industry. The materials on Doña Marina/Malintzin reveal how a number of native people positioned themselves to benefit economically from the change in regime. As examples of the kinds of documents produced by indigenous peoples after the fall of the Mexica Empire, we include selections from the *Codex Mendoza*, *Relaciones geográficas*, the *Mapa Uppsala*, and the *Huejotzingo Census*. These sources illustrate how Indigenous peoples adapted new skills like the command of alphabetic writing for their own communal and personal interests, as well as to shape the memory of the events of the fall of Tenochtitlan and Spanish colonization. The chapter ends with two variant versions of the death of Cuauhtémoc, offering Nahua (from the *Codex Chimalpahin*) and Maya perspectives, which demonstrate the selective and creative nature of writing history.

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BERNAL DÍAZ

From *The True History of the
Conquest of New Spain*

While Bernal Díaz was often candid about his desire for wealth and women, he like many other conquistadors sought to justify his actions by his role in the spreading of Christianity. In this passage he reviews the impact of the conquest on everyday life and praises Indians for their acquisition of European culture. From his description, little appears of the continuation of Indigenous traditions and beliefs or the oppression of the colonial regime.

After getting rid of the idolatries and all the evil vices they practiced, it pleased our Lord god that with his holy aid and with the good fortunes and the holy Christianity of our most Christian Emperor Don Carlos . . . there were baptized, after we conquered the country, all,

both men and women, and children who have since been born, whose souls formerly went, lost, to the Infernal regions. Now there are many and good monks of [the order of] Señor San Francisco and of Santo Domingo and of other Orders, who go among the pueblos preaching, and, when a child is of the age our holy Mother Church of Rome ordains, they baptize it.

Furthermore, through the holy sermons preached, the Holy Gospel is firmly planted in their hearts, and they go to Confession every year, and some of them, who have most knowledge of our holy faith, receive the Sacrament. In addition to this they have their Churches richly adorned with altars and all pertaining to the holy divine worship, with crosses and candlesticks and wax tapers and chalice and patens and silver plates, some large and some small, and censers all worked in silver. . . .

There is another good thing they do [namely] that both men, women and children, who are of the age to learn them, know all the holy prayers in their own languages and are obliged to know them. They have other good customs about their holy Christianity, that when they pass near a sacred altar or Cross they bow their heads with humility, bend their knees, and say the prayer "Our Father," which we Conquistadores have taught them, and they place lighted wax candles before the holy altars and crosses, for formerly they did not know how to use wax in making candles. . . .

Let us get on, and state how most of the Indian natives of these lands have successfully learned all the trades that there are among us in Castile, and have their shops of the trades, and artisans, and gain a living by it. There are gold and silver smiths, both of chased and of hollow work, and they are very excellent craftsman, also lapidaries and painters. Carvers also do most beautiful work with their delicate burins of iron, especially in carving jades, and in them depict all the phases of the holy passion of our Lord Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ, such that, if one had not seen them, one would never believe that Indians had done. It seems in my judgment that the most renowned painter, such as was Apelles in ancient times, or in our times a certain Berruguete and Michaelangelo . . . , could not emulate with their most skilful pencils the works of art in jade, nor the reliquaries, which are executed by three Mexican Indian craftsmen of that trade, named Andrés de Aquino, Juan de la Cruz, and El Crespillo. In addition to this nearly all the sons of Chieftains are usually grammarians, and would have become expert, if the holy synod had not commanded them to abandon that which the very reverend Archbishop of Mexico had ordered to be done.

Many sons of Chieftains know how to read and write, and to compose books of plainchant, and there are craftsmen in weaving satin and taffeta and making woolen cloth. . . . They are carders, wool combers, and weavers in the same manner as there are in Segovia and in Cuenca, and others are hat makers and soap makers. There are only two crafts they have not been able to undertake, although they have tried: these are to make glass, and to become druggists, but I believe them to be so intelligent that they will acquire them very well. Some of them are surgeons and herbalists. They understand conjuring and working puppets and make very good guitars, indeed they were craftsmen by nature before we came to New Spain. Now they breed cattle of all sorts, and break in oxen, and plough the land, and sow wheat, and thresh harvest, and sell it, and make bread and biscuit, and they have planted their lands and hereditaments with all the trees and fruits which we have brought from Spain, and sell the fruit which they produce. They have planted so many trees that, because the peaches are not good for the health, and the banana plantations give them too much shade, they have cut and are cutting down many of them and putting in quinces and apples and pears, which they hold in higher esteem.

Let us go on, and I will speak of the laws which we have shown them how to guard and execute, and how every year they are to choose the Alcaldes ordinaries and Regidores, Notaries, Alguacils, Fiscals, and Mayordomos, and have their municipal houses (Cabildos) where they meet two days in the week, and they place doorkeepers in them, and give judgment and order debts to be paid which are owed by one to another. For some criminal acts they flog and chastise, and if it is for a death or something atrocious they remit it [the case] to the Governors, if there is no Royal Audiencia. According to what people, who know very well, have told me, in Tlaxcala, Texcoco, Cholula, Oaxaca and Tepeaca and in other great cities, when the Indians hold Court (Cabildo), Macebearers with gilt maces precede those who are Governors and Alcaldes (the same as the Viceroy of New Spain take with them), and justice is done with as much propriety and authority as among ourselves, and they appreciate and desire to know much of the laws of the kingdom.

In addition to this, many of the Caciques are rich, and possess horses, and bring good saddles with trappings, and ride abroad through the cities and towns and places where they are going for amusement, or of which they are natives, and bring Indians and

pages to accompany them. In some pueblos, they even play at tilting with reeds and have bull fights, and they tilt at the ring, especially on Corpus Christi day or the day of San Juan or Señor Santiago . . . [M]any of them are horsemen, especially in a pueblo named Chiapa of the Indians, and, even those who are not Caciques, nearly all of them own horses, and some own herds of mares and mules, and use them to bring in firewood and maize and lime and other things of the kind which they sell in the Plazas, and many of them are carriers in the same way as we have in our Castile.

Not to waste more words, they carry on all trades very perfectly—and even know how to weave tapestry cloths.

I will stop talking further on this subject and will tell of many other grandeurs which, through us, there have been and still are in New Spain.

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*From the Proof of the Faithful Service of Doña Marina
(Malintzin) during the Conquest of New Spain*

In 1542, Doña Marina's daughter María Jaramillo and her husband Luis de Quesada initiated a judicial inquest in Mexico City regarding Malintzin's role in the fall of Tenochtitlan. This legal effort included gathering testimonies of numerous people who had known Doña Marina and witnessed her considerable political influence. The couple sought to garner validation from the crown of her social stature for their own economic ends, primarily to secure a greater share of Doña Marina's property, which included an encomienda grant of Indian laborers and tribute from the town of Xilotepec. Doña Marina's husband (and María's father) Juan Jaramillo had disapproved of the marriage to Luis de Quesada and punished the couple by restricting their share of the estate in his will.

Translation by T. Seijas. "Información de los méritos y servicios de doña Marina [Malintzin], india, mujer de Juan Jaramillo, que auxilió a Hernán Cortés y a su gente en la conquista de México, dándoles noticias fidedignas de lo que observaba dentro de la población, a fin de que les sirviese de gobierno." Archive of the Indies [AGI], Patronato 56 N.3 R.4 f.13, 34v.