

REEXAMINING NEZAHUALCÓYOTL'S TEXCOCO:  
POLITICS, CONQUESTS AND LAW<sup>1</sup>

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Colonial chroniclers of pre-Hispanic Mexico paid special attention to Nezahualcóyotl and praised him as a prudent and sage king who established one of the most elaborate, civilized, and efficient political and legal systems in pre-Hispanic times. The Texcocan chronicler, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, played a decisive role in creating this image of Nezahualcóyotl by recording his councils, his tribute collection system, his efficient and egalitarian legal system, his love of artisans and poets, and his rejection of human sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> Based on these highly civilized and developed systems, Ixtlilxóchitl insists that Nezahualcóyotl's Texcoco served not only as a model city in the valley, but also as a clear contrast to the Mexicas' Tenochtitlan, which was only interested in conquering neighboring nations and practicing barbarous human sacrifice.

Following Ixtlilxóchitl's perspective, later chroniclers and historians have also focused on Nezahualcóyotl and his city-state of Texcoco. The sixteenth-century Spanish chronicler, Juan de Torquemada, records that "A estos dos reyes [Nezahualcóyotl and Nezahualpilli], más que a los otros sus antepasados, estimaron, y tuvieron, en mucho, los de México, por su mucha prudencia, y buen gobierno, y por la mucha antigüedad de su señorío, y los tenían como por padres."<sup>3</sup> In the eighteenth century, Francisco Javier Clavijero describes Texcoco as the Athens of Anáhuac because he believed that under Nezahualcóyotl and his successor, Nezahualpilli, Texcoco maintained a more advanced cul-

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Gordon Brotherston for reading and commenting on previous drafts of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, *Obras históricas*, Edmundo O'Gorman (ed.), 2 v., México, UNAM, 1972. The last two images of Nezahualcóyotl as a patron of the arts and as an opponent of the practice of human sacrifice will be examined in detail elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup> Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquía indiana*, Miguel León-Portilla (ed.), 3 v., México, Porrúa, 1975, v. 2, p. 354.

ture than any other nation in the valley.<sup>4</sup> In the nineteenth century, William H. Prescott also compares Nezahualcōyotl with Solomon and David because, according to this historian, Nezahualcōyotl developed a highly civilized culture, and promoted a peaceful religious practice in the barbarous cultural environment where the Mexicas dominated and propagated a militaristic ideology.<sup>5</sup>

These images have appeared repeatedly in historiography throughout the twentieth century. All the modern scholars who have studied Nezahualcōyotl, such as Francis Gillmor,<sup>6</sup> José María Vigil,<sup>7</sup> Miguel León-Portilla,<sup>8</sup> Jerome A. Offner,<sup>9</sup> José Luis Martínez,<sup>10</sup> and many others, bring into relief the peaceful and civilized image of Nezahualcōyotl as well as his anti-Mexican ideology. All of these images, however, are based on the prefabricated contrast between the civilized and peaceful Nezahualcōyotl of Texcoco and the more powerful but barbarous Mexicas of Tenochtitlan. Comparing Nezahualcōyotl to Solomon or David, the wisest kings as described in the Bible, automatically places him in a position superior to the Mexican rulers. Moreover, the association between Texcoco and Athens suggests that Tenochtitlan corresponds to Rome, thereby reinforcing Texcoco's cultural superiority. In this way, Nezahualcōyotl and Texcoco have consistently been represented in terms of their differences from, and their cultural and intellectual superiority over, the more barbarous Mexican kings and their city of Tenochtitlan. It may come as no surprise that this contrast between Texcoco and Tenochtitlan originated in the work of colonial indigenous chroniclers from Texcoco. Texcocan chroniclers insist that their accounts are based on previous pictorial and alphabetic texts. If we examine these original texts in detail, however, we find that they do not support the arguments made by the later Texcocan sources. Rather, these texts demonstrate not only Nezahualcōyotl's close rela-

<sup>4</sup> Francisco Javier Clavijero, *Historia antigua de México*, México, Editorial Porrúa, 1991, p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> William Hickling Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, New York, The Modern Library, p. 93-117.

<sup>6</sup> Frances Gillmor, *Flute of the Smoking Mirror, a Portrait of Nezahualcoyotl, Poet-King of the Aztecs*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> José María Vigil, *Nezahualcōyotl, el rey poeta*, México, Ediciones de Andrea, 1957.

<sup>8</sup> Miguel León-Portilla, *Los antiguos mexicanos a través de sus crónicas y cantares*, 12<sup>a</sup> ed., México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996, p. 78-146; *Nezahualcōyotl: poesía y pensamiento*, Texcoco, Gobierno del Estado de México, 1972.

<sup>9</sup> Jerome A. Offner, *Law and Politics in Aztec Texcoco*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> José Luis Martínez, *Nezahualcōyotl: Vida y obra*, 7<sup>a</sup> ed., México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996.

tionship and his many conquests with the Mexican kings, but also the similarities of political, artistic, and legal systems between Texcoco and Tenochtitlan.

*Establishment of Nezahualcōyotl as ruler of Texcoco*

Nezahualcōyotl was born in 1 Rabbit (1402) and his full name was Nezahualcōyotl Acolmiztli (hungry or fasting coyote, arm of a lion).<sup>11</sup> In 4 Rabbit (1418), when he was only 15 years old, his father Huehue Ixtlilxōchitl was assassinated by the Tepanecas. After the assassination of his father, the Tepanec kings, Tezozōmoc, and his successor, Maxtla, pursued Nezahualcōyotl because he was the legitimate heir of Texcoco. His legendary tale, which includes frequent escapes from his enemies and endeavors to reconstruct his lost city, appears in the *Códice Xólotl*<sup>12</sup> and alphabetic texts such as the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan*<sup>13</sup> and Ixtlilxōchitl's works. The latter chronicler records in detail Nezahualcōyotl's life under the Tepanec kings' persecution. Nezahualcōyotl fled to Tlaxcala and spent a couple of years there. Then he went to live in Tenochtitlan, thanks to his Mexican aunts who bribed the Tepanec king Tezozōmoc.<sup>14</sup> Nezahualcōyotl's residence in Tenochtitlan is an important stage in his life because it suggests that he was partially raised and educated as a Mexica. He arrived in the Mexican city when he was 17 years old and he stayed in Tenochtitlan more than 10 years, from 6 Flint (1420) until he re-conquered Texcoco in 4 Reed (1431). It is clear that Nezahualcōyotl was at the age when the Mexican young men began to study at school, Calmecac. According to the *Codex Mendoza*, the Mexican father took his son to the Calmecac when he was 15 years old.<sup>15</sup> During the years of his residence in Tenochtitlan,

<sup>11</sup> Víctor M. Castillo Farreras reconstructs the life of Nezahualcōyotl by collecting all the pictorial descriptions available in the codices (*Nezahualcōyotl: Crónica y pinturas de su tiempo*, Texcoco, Gobierno de Estado de México, 1972). Because of its early publication, this book does not contain recently published codices, but it is a seminal study that provides access to almost every pictographic source on Nezahualcōyotl and his times.

<sup>12</sup> *Códice Xólotl*, Charles Dibble (ed.), México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> *Annals of Cuauhtitlan*, in *History and Mythology of the Aztecs*, trans. John Bierhorst, Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Nezahualcōyotl's mother was Matlacihuatzin, a daughter of the second Mexican king Hutzilhuhtl and sister of the second and fourth rulers, Chimalpopoca and Itzcōatl. This close genealogical relationship explains Nezahualcōyotl's stay of over a decade in Tenochtitlan.

<sup>15</sup> *Codex Mendoza*, Francis F. Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt (eds.), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992, f. 60v.

Nezahualcōyotl was exposed to the Mexican education system. This was an important experience for Nezahualcōyotl that would influence his reconstruction of Texcoco following Tenochtitlan as a model city.<sup>16</sup>

After the Tepanec emperor Tezozómoc died in 13 Reed (1427), his successor, Maxtla, broke the Tepanec alliance with the Mexicas by killing the Mexican king Chimalpopoca and the Tlatelolcan king Tlacateotzin. He also attempted to subjugate their cities Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. When the desperate Mexican king Itzcóatl was about to surrender to the Tepanecas, the famous general Tlacaélel convinced the Mexicas to fight against them. The Mexican military power was obviously weaker than that of the Tepanecas and they needed allies. Thus, the Mexicas sent their ambassadors to request aid from Huexotzinco and Tlaxcala, but at the same time the Tepanecas also tried to ally with these nations. In this critical situation, Nezahualcōyotl played an important diplomatic role in convincing these two nations to fight against the Tepanecas.<sup>17</sup> The allied nations finally defeated Azcapotzalco in 1 Flint (1428). Ixtlilxóchitl insists that Nezahualcōyotl played a pivotal role in destroying Azcapotzalco not only through his diplomatic efforts but also with his own troops in battle. For Ixtlilxóchitl, then, Nezahualcōyotl saved the Mexicas from the Azcapotzalcan tyranny. Although it is obvious that the Mexicas could not have overthrown the Tepanec empire without the Tlaxcalan and Huexotzincan military aid brought by Nezahualcōyotl, it is unlikely that Nezahualcōyotl could have led a large force of his own in the conquest of Azcapotzalco because, as Nigel Davies points out, at that time the young Nezahualcōyotl was a refugee in Tenochtitlan and would not have had his own troops.<sup>18</sup>

Even after his victory against the Azcapotzalcas, Nezahualcōyotl had to stay in Tenochtitlan because the ruler in Texcoco who had been installed by Tezozómoc, the Azcapotzalcan king, refused to recognize him. Moreover, all the former leading cities in the eastern valley such as Coatlichan, Huexotla, and Coatepec claimed their independence.

<sup>16</sup> Alfredo Chavero points out that Nezahualcōyotl, “[d]e familia mexicana y educado en México, había estado en esta ciudad todavía cuatro años más, del 1427 al 1431, después de que recobró su señorío. Natural fue que llevase a Tetzcuco la misma organización civil y religiosa de los mexicanos. Por eso su templo mayor, como el de México, estaba dedicado a Tláloc y a Huitzilopochtli dios esencialmente mexicano. Así la antigua ideología chichimeca que poco a poco se había ido modificando con la inmigración de pueblos extraños, desapareció por completo bajo Nezahualcōyotl, y se sustituyó por la cultura y costumbres de México” (qtd. in Ixtlilxóchitl, v. 2, p. 99).

<sup>17</sup> *Annals of Cuauhtitlan*, p. 95-97.

<sup>18</sup> Nigel Davies, *The Aztec Empire: The Toltec Resurgence*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1987, p. 34.

As a result of this situation, he was crowned by the Mexican ruler Itzcóatl in Tenochtitlan in 4 Reed (1431) and stayed in Tenochtitlan trying to recover his lost city, Texcoco. When Nezahualcóyotl was finally able to overthrow the usurpers of his nation, the city of Texcoco was almost completely destroyed because of frequent wars and the exodus of many leaders: “todo se había trocado, y aún decaecido, mucha parte, las buenas costumbres, y leyes sanas, con que vivían.”<sup>19</sup> In this desperate situation, it was the Mexicas who helped Nezahualcóyotl, as the *Anales de Tlatelolco* record:

En el año 4 Acatl Nezahualcoyotzin se sentó como soberano, entonces comenzó y fundó el gobierno, el reinado en Acolhuacan. Fueron Quaquahtlatouatzin e Itzcouatzin quienes lo instalaron como soberano en Acolhuacan. Cuando ellos lo hubieron instalado, vinieron los viejos mexica reuniendo a los acolhuaque que se habían dispersado. Pasaron 4 años hasta que estuvieron reunidos nuevamente. Cuando Nezahualcoyotzin hubo sido instalado como soberano, fueron los mexica quienes le ayudaron erigiéndole las casas.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, when Nezahualcóyotl moved to Texcoco from Tenochtitlan in 6 House (1433), he asked the Mexicas to send him government officials and priests:

Nezahualcoyotzin mandó a ciertos mensajeros que fuesen a México, que trujesen algunos oficiales de todos los oficios para Tezcucu, los cuales, sabiendo la voluntad de Nezahualcoyotzin, fueron muchos, y les dieron tierras en que viviesen, y luego mandó que se hiciese una casa grande para sus ídolos y hiciesen, lo cual luego se puso por obra, y se hizo un cu y una casa mayor que ninguna de cuantas hasta entonces se hecho.<sup>21</sup>

Nezahualcóyotl restored a political and religious system in Texcoco with the help of the Mexicas. According to Ixtlilxóchitl, in addition to government officials and priests, Nezahualcóyotl needed some artisans from Tenochtitlan as well as other subjected cities: “Y asimismo, para ilustrar más a la ciudad de Tetzcuco, pidió a su tío [Itzcóatl] le diese cantidad de oficiales de todas las artes mecánicas, que trajo a la ciudad de Tetzcuco con otros que sacó de la ciudad y reino de Azcapotzalco, y

<sup>19</sup> Torquemada, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 146.

<sup>20</sup> *Anales de Tlatelolco*, translation of Robert Barlow, México, Antigua Librería Robredo, 1948, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> Ixtlilxóchitl, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 379.

la de Xochimilco y otras partes.”<sup>22</sup> This means that Nezahualcōyotl’s Texcoco as a state began with systems similar to those of Tenochtitlan in terms of politics, religion, and arts. Nezahualcōyotl himself voluntarily tried to introduce Mexican traditions in his city, Texcoco.

*Nezahualcōyotl as a Warrior King*

Like other Mexican kings, Nezahualcōyotl was a great conqueror throughout his life. Around the time he was inaugurated as the ruler of Texcoco in the early 1430s, Nezahualcōyotl’s Texcoco, Itzcōatl’s Tenochtitlan, and Totoquihuaztli’s Tlacopan reached an agreement to establish the Triple Alliance. Ixtlilxōchitl records that Nezahualcōyotl conquered Tenochtitlan and proposed the alliance.<sup>23</sup> He also provides a Náhuatl song to prove Nezahualcōyotl’s leadership in this endeavor:

...un canto antiguo que llaman Xopanauicatl, [...], lo cantan los naturales en sus fiestas y convites, ser las tres cabezas de la Nueva España los reyes de México, Tetzco y Tlacopan que dice así: “canconicuilonican que on in talticpac conmahuicotitihuya a Tliantépetl Mexico nican Acolihuacan Nezahualcoyotzin Motecuhzomatzin, Tlacopan on in Totoquihuatzin Yeneli ai con piaco inipetlícpal intéotl a Ipalnemoani, etcétera” que significa conforme a su verdadero sentido: “Dejaron memoria en el universo los que ilustraron el imperio de Mexico y aquí en Acolihuacan, los reyes Nezahualcoyotzin, Moteucuhzomatzin, y en Tlacopan Totoquihuatzin: de verdad que será impresa, eternizada vuestra memoria (por lo bien que juzgasteis y registeis) en el trono y tribunal de dios criador de todas las cosas etcétera.”<sup>24</sup>

This song suggests Texcocan leadership in the Triple Alliance because the three rulers got together in Acolhuacan, that is, Texcoco. John Bierhorst, however, reconstructs the original Náhuatl phrase and demonstrates that Ixtlilxōchitl deliberately modified his translation to support his claim:

Zan conicuilotehuaque on in talticpac. Conmahuizzotitihui a atl o yan tepetl Mexico nican Acolihuacan Nezahualcoyotzin, Moteuczomatzin, Tlacopan on in Totoquihuatzin. Ye nelli a in ipetl in teotl a Ipalnemohuani, etc.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, v. 2, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, v. 2, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, v. 2, p. 83.

[They went away having painted oh! This earth. They went away having glorified this city of Mexico, they, Acolhuacan's Nezahualcoyotl, Montezuma, and Totoquihuaztli of oh! Tlacopan. Truly they came to guard the mat and throne of the spirit Life Giver, etc.]<sup>25</sup>

According to Bierhorst, Ixtlilxóchitl mistranslates the phrase *atl tepetl Mexico nican* (here in Mexico) as “aquí en Acolihuacan” in order to place the head of the Triple Alliance in Texcoco rather than in Mexico-Tenochtitlan. In contrast to Ixtlilxóchitl, many chroniclers such as Fray Diego Durán record that this alliance was led by the Mexican king Itzcóatl.<sup>26</sup> Durán's claim is more probable than that of Ixtlilxóchitl because as a newly inaugurated ruler, Nezahualcóyotl would not have had enough military power to conquer Tenochtitlan; moreover, it was the Mexicas who established him as a ruler.<sup>27</sup> Records suggest that there was a military conflict between Nezahualcóyotl and Moctezuma, but this was merely a mock war, for Nezahualcóyotl himself burned the temple with the consent of Huehue Moctezuma.<sup>28</sup>

Nezahualcóyotl's alliance with the Mexicas was a significant point in the development of Texcocan history: It gave them an edge over other competing Acolhuacan cities such as Huexotla and Coatlichan.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the alliance of Nezahualcóyotl caused severe con-

<sup>25</sup> John Bierhorst, “Introduction,” *Cantares Mexicanos*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1985, p. 116.

<sup>26</sup> Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*, Ángel María Garibay K. (ed.), 2 v., México, Porrúa, 1967, v. 2, p. 122.

<sup>27</sup> Many bibliographers and even historians who rely primarily on Ixtlilxóchitl's chronicles still describe the political supremacy of Texcoco over Tenochtitlan. The Mexican military, however, was obviously more powerful than that of the Texcocas. Davies explains clearly the power relationship between these two cities (*op. cit.*, p. 42-47). See also Pedro Carrasco, *The Tenochca Empire of Ancient Mexico: the Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlan, Tetzaco, and Tlacopan*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1999, p. 30; p. 437.

<sup>28</sup> Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, *Crónica mexicana / Códice Ramírez*, Manuel Orozco y Berra (ed.), México, Porrúa, 1975, p. 283-284; Diego Durán, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 127-129.

<sup>29</sup> The major Texcocan sources such as the *Mapa Tlotzin*, the *Mapa Quinatzin*, the *Códice Xólotl*, and Ixtlilxóchitl's works show that Texcoco had been the political center of the Acolhuacan cities before Nezahualcóyotl's reign, but Susan Spitzer demonstrates that Texcoco was not in a dominant position but was rather an independent city like its neighboring cities. She also argues that these sources served as political propaganda to legitimize Nezahualcóyotl's conquests of his neighboring cities with the Mexicas (“El equilibrio entre la veracidad histórica y el propósito en los códices de Texcoco,” *Códices y Documentos sobre México: Tercer Simposio Internacional*, Coordinator Constanza Vega Sosa, México, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2000, p. 617-631). Robert Barlow also argues that Texcoco was a small city, and that during Nezahualcóyotl's rule it could have replaced Coatlichan as the most powerful city of Acolhuacan (“Resumen analítico de unos anales históricos de la nación mexicana,” *Anales de Tlatelolco*, trans. Robert Barlow, México, Antigua Librería Robredo, 1949, p. xx).

flict among the Texcocan: Some Texcocan leaders and even Nezahualcōyotl's sister objected to the alliance because the Mexicas had played an important role in the destruction of Texcoco in the Tepanec war. These dissenters fled to Huexotzinco and Tlaxcala with their followers when Nezahualcōyotl came to rule Texcoco.<sup>30</sup>

The Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan conducted many conquests. During his reign, Nezahualcōyotl participated in military expeditions with the Mexican kings Itzcōatl, Huehue Moctezuma, and Axayácatl, and the Tlacopan king Totoquihuaztli. Nezahualcōyotl helped these kings conquer many major cities such as Coatlichan, Huexotla, Coatepec, Xochimilco, Chalco, Cuauhtitlan, and Cuitlahuac in the valley, as well as Cuauhnauc, Xilotepec, Tulan, Tlachco, Coixtlahuacan, and Tochpan outside of the valley. The chroniclers of the *Relaciones geográficas* confirm that Nezahualcōyotl conquered Coatepec, Acolman, Teotihuacan, and Cempoala with the Mexican ruler Huehue Moctezuma.<sup>31</sup>

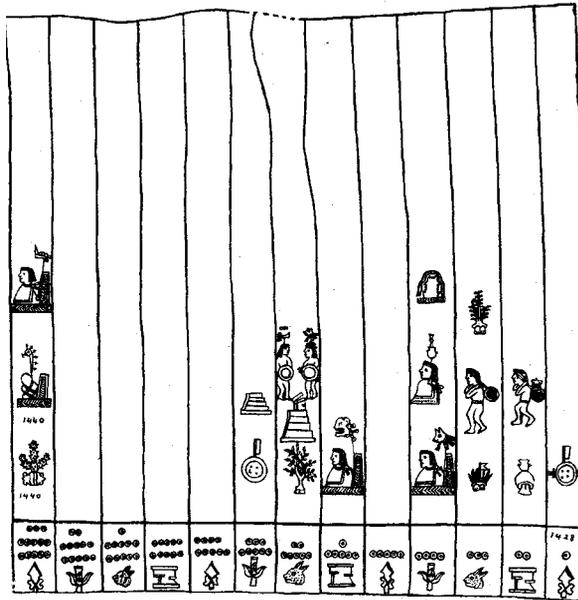
Some pictorial sources also record Nezahualcōyotl's conquests with the Mexican kings. The *Codex en Cruz*, one of the Texcocan sources, confirms Nezahualcōyotl's relationship with the Mexicas.<sup>32</sup> According to Charles Dibble's interpretation, it shows one of the military expeditions Nezahualcōyotl conducted with the Mexicas (Figure 1). Above the year 7 Rabbit is a *quahuítl* (tree) with *tlantli* (teeth) at the base, which represents Cuauhtitlan. Above Cuauhtitlan is a temple in a state of partial collapse, an image that always indicates a conquest in indigenous codices. Two warriors, each with an obsidian sword and a shield, stand above. The one to the right is Nezahualcōyotl, who is identified by his glyph, the head of a coyote with a collar. The other is Huehue Moctezuma, with his glyph, a turquoise diadem and a nose ornament. The glyphic content of Figure 1 demonstrates that Nezahualcōyotl and Huehue Moctezuma were engaged in the conquest of Cuauhtitlan during the year 7 Rabbit (1434). In addition, the Mexican text, the *Codex Azcatitlan*, also depicts Nezahualcōyotl's conquest of Tulantzinco.<sup>33</sup> In the middle of the plate (Figure 2), there appear three distinct glyphs that correspond to Nezahualcōyotl, *Tulantzinco* (place founded on tules),

<sup>30</sup> Ixtlilxóchitl, *op. cit.*, v.1, p. 379.

<sup>31</sup> *Relaciones geográficas del siglo XVI: México*, René Acuña (ed.), 10 v., México, UNAM, 1982-88. Coatepec, v. 6, p. 143; Acolman, v. 6, p. 226; Teotihuacan, v. 6, p. 234-235; Cempoala, v. 6, p. 75-76.

<sup>32</sup> *Codex en Cruz*, Ed. Charles Dibble, 2 v., Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1981, v. 1, p. 13-12.

<sup>33</sup> *Codex Azcatitlan*, Ed. Robert H. Barlow, 2 v., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1995, p. 112.

Figure 1. *Codex en Cruz*

and *Chimalli* (shield). According to Barlow's interpretation, Nezahualcōyotl conquered Tulantzinco, which is actually in the state of Hidalgo. This description verifies Nezahualcōyotl's close relationship with the Mexicas. In indigenous pictorial historiography, the *tlacuilo* (painter-scribe) normally focuses on the history of his own city or nation, minimizing the history of other cities. In this plate, the *tlacuilo* of the Mexican codex, the *Codex Azcatitlan*, places particular emphasis on Nezahualcōyotl, that is, the Mexican *tlacuilo* clearly considers Nezahualcōyotl's conquest as a part of Mexican history. One of the Chalcan songs also depicts the conquest of the Triple Alliance over Chalco. The defeated Chalcas describe Nezahualcōyotl's participation in the conquest as a member of the Alliance: "Among the rushes you sing, O Montezuma, O Nezahualcōyotl, Alas! You destroy the realm: you ruin Chalco here on earth. Alas, may your hearts be grieving!";<sup>34</sup> "Multiple eagles and jaguars, multiple Mexicans, Acolhuans, and Tepanecs, do the Chalcan become."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs*, Trans. John Bierhorst, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1985, p. 239.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 241.

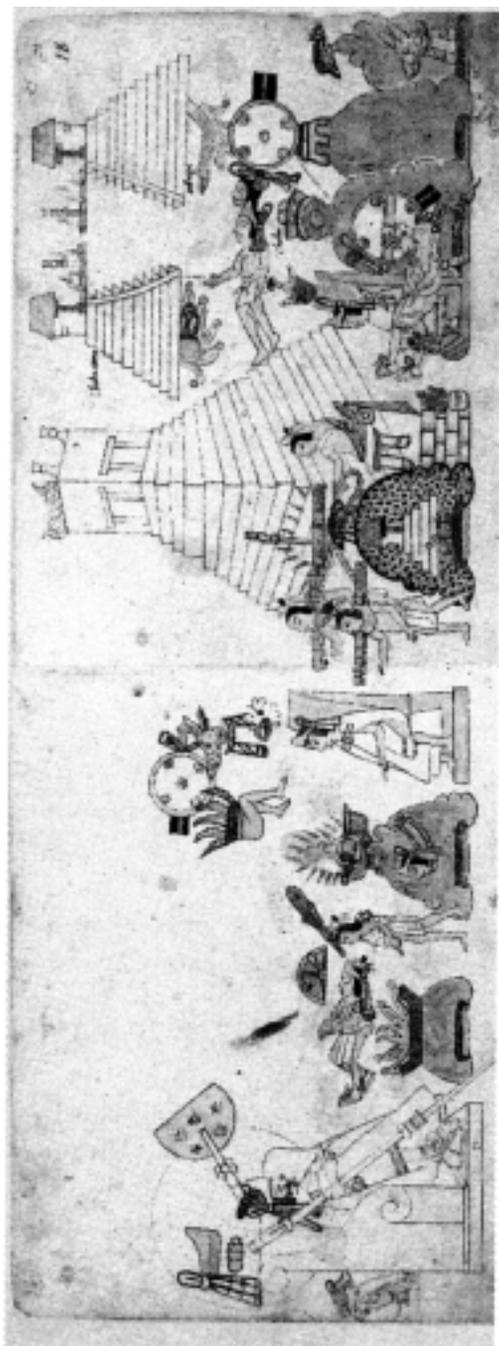


Figure 2. *Codex Azcatitlan*

Some of the Texcocan pictorial sources record Nezahualcóyotl's conquests of neighboring cities and other remote regions. The *Codex en Cruz* depicts Nezahualcóyotl's subjugation of Tepetlaóztoc (Figure 1). In the column of the year 4 Reed (1431), Nezahualcóyotl is seated on the authority mat and above him appears a person, Cocopin, whose glyph consists of a *comitl* (olla) with a *mitl* (arrow). Above him is a place glyph containing an *oztotl* (cave) and a *petlatl* (reed mat) lined with *tetl* (rock), which refers to Tepetlaóztoc.<sup>36</sup> This column records that Nezahualcóyotl appointed Cocopin as a ruler of Tepetlaóztoc.<sup>37</sup> Another Texcocan source, the *Códice de Xicotepec*, depicts Nezahualcóyotl's conquest of Xicotepec.<sup>38</sup> Between 1438 and 1443, Nezahualcóyotl and his son Cipactli (Caiman) arrived at Xicotepec (Bumblebee Hill), and around 1444 Nezahualcóyotl returned to Xicotepec and participated in the battle (Figure 3). In the middle of the image, Nezahualcóyotl and his son Cipactli are conducting the battle with *chimalli* (shield) and *Maccuahuitl* (obsidian knife). They and their allies were able to conquer Xicotepec by capturing local leaders. All these conquests that Nezahualcóyotl carried out with and without the Mexicas demonstrate that he was no less a warrior than the Mexican kings.

From the beginning to the end of his reign, Nezahualcóyotl participated in many conquests with his Mexican uncle kings. Through his alliance with the Mexicas, Nezahualcóyotl was able to receive many benefits from these conquests. The Mexican chronicler Alvarado Tezozómoc states that Nezahualcóyotl was the Mexican kings' favorite among the kings of the neighboring cities. Every time the Mexicas planned a military expedition, royal funeral, or inauguration, it was Nezahualcóyotl who was notified first and who gladly participated in these events.<sup>39</sup> Durán also records that:

El cual [Nezahualcóyotl], demás de ser pariente muy cercano de los reyes de México, fue muy favorable a los de la nación mexicana y muy amigo de ellos, que muy pocos o ninguno, le igualaron, ni hicieron

<sup>36</sup> *Codex en Cruz*, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 12-13.

<sup>37</sup> According to Gordon Brotherston, this event is also recorded from the point of view of the conquered of Tepetlaóztoc. By focusing on the abrupt change of Cocopin's clothing and authority mat depicted in the *Códice de Tepetlaóztoc*, Brotherston explains Nezahualcóyotl's influence in this region (*Painted Books from Mexico*, London, British Museum, 1995, p. 67). See also the *Códice de Tepetlaóztoc*, Perla Valle (ed.), México, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1992.

<sup>38</sup> *Códice de Xicotepec*, Guy Stresser-Pean (ed.), Trans. Araceli Méndez, México, Gobierno del Estado de Puebla, 1995.

<sup>39</sup> Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, *Crónica mexicana / Códice Ramírez*, Manuel Orozco y Berra (ed.), México, Porrúa, 1975.

ventaja, según los capítulos siguientes adelante lo dirán; la manera y modo que tuvo para perpetuar la confederación y amistad de los mexicanos, y buscando modos para hacerlo, sin que se entendiese de las demás naciones.<sup>40</sup>

Nezahualcōyotl was a great warrior king who was able to expand the old Texcocan geographical frontier from the inside of the valley to the gulf coast. Almost all of his conquests and political triumphs, however, were made possible only through his close kinship and political alliance with the Mexicas. The peaceful image of Nezahualcōyotl in contrast to the Mexican warrior kings was a clear invention of Texcocan chroniclers. In fact, several Mexican sources as well as those from Texcoco and other regions confirm both his close relationship and his collaboration with the Mexican kings in many military campaigns.

*Nezahualcōyotl's Government: Tribute System and Councils*

While Texcoco was getting larger and larger by expanding its territories through conquest, Nezahualcōyotl tried to reform the existing governing systems, such as councils and legal procedures. Ixtlilxōchitl insists that Nezahualcōyotl's ruling system was the best that the New World had ever had:

Esta división y repartición de tierra de los pueblos y lugares del reino del Tetzcuco se hizo también en el de México y Tlacopan, porque los otros reyes y cabezas del imperio fueron siempre admitiendo sus leyes y modo de gobierno, por parecerles ser el mejor que hasta entonces se había tenido; y así, lo que se trata y describe del reino de Tetzcuco, se entiende ser lo mismo el de México y Tlacopan, pues las pinturas, historias y cantos que sigo siempre comienzan por lo de Tetzcuco, y lo mismo hace la pintura de los padrones y tributos reales que hubo en esta Nueva España en tiempo de su infidelidad (...) <sup>41</sup>

This claim is unquestionably doubtful, not only because Texcoco had no experience in governing many colonies before Nezahualcōyotl's reign, but also because his restoration of Texcoco relied heavily on the

<sup>40</sup> Durán, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>41</sup> See Ixtlilxōchitl, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 92. Note also that modern scholars such as Martínez, who accepts political supremacy of Tenochtitlan over Texcoco, still argue that Texcoco maintained more advanced administrative, educational, cultural, and artistic institutions (*op. cit.*, p. 52-53).

Mexicas politically as well as culturally. Moreover, Nezahualcōyotl's Texcoco controlled considerably fewer colonies than did the Mexicas during the Triple Alliance. Thus, the ruling system introduced by Nezahualcōyotl in Texcoco seems to have come from Tenochtitlan, which was itself a continuation of the system of the previous Azcapotzalcan empire that the Mexicas had emulated.

Ixtlilxōchitl records the way tribute collected from subjugated cities was distributed among the three kings. According to him, there were cities that belonged exclusively to each of the kings as well as those that they shared. Each king collected the tribute for himself from his own province, and they divided it from the shared.<sup>42</sup> Nezahualcōyotl, who conquered many nations with the Mexicas, possessed very few colonies exclusively. According to the *Mapa Quinatzin*, there are thirteen cities assigned to maintain the Texcocan court, which suggests that they were under the control of Nezahualcōyotl.<sup>43</sup> Below Nezahualcōyotl and Nezahualpilli on leaf 2 appear the rulers of thirteen cities that Nezahualcōyotl established. These cities include Otompan, Huexotla, Coatlichan, Chimalhuacan, Tepetlaóztoc, Chiautla, Tenzonyocan, Acolman, Tepechpan, Chiconauhtla, Tulantzinco, Cuauhchinango, and Xicotepec. But if we compare this list with the record of tribute in the *Codex Mendoza*, we find that many of these major cities, like Tepechpan, Coatlichan (Acolhuacan), Tepetlaóztoc, and Tulantzinco also paid tribute to the Mexicas. In addition, the *Codex Mendoza* shows that Otompan was conquered by Huitzil̄huītl. The chroniclers of Acolman and Chiconauhtla in the *Relaciones geográficas* also record that Acolman was conquered by Huehue Moctezuma and Nezahualcōyotl and that Chiconauhtla was subdued by Huehue Moctezuma.<sup>44</sup> Thus, more than half of the cities that the *Mapa Quinatzin* reports as the exclusive domain of Nezahualcōyotl were also within Tenochtitlan's political boundary.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, v. 2, p.108. Pedro Carrasco calls this phenomenon "the intermingling of territories" and shows that it began with the establishment of the Triple Alliance (*op. cit.*, p. 34).

<sup>43</sup> "Mapa Quinatzin, cuadro histórico de la civilización de Tetzcuco," *Anales del Museo Nacional de México*, tomo III, México, Imprenta de Ignacio Escalante, 1886, p. 321-368.

<sup>44</sup> *Relaciones geográficas del siglo XVI: México, op. cit.*, Acolman, v. 6, p. 226; Chiconauhtla, v. 6, p. 235.

<sup>45</sup> Carrasco examines the tributaries of each king in the domains of each of the Triple Alliance cities, and shows that Nezahualcōyotl also had some tributaries in Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan domains. Carrasco also demonstrates that Acolman, Tepechpan, Cempoala, Tepetlaóztoc, and Tizayucan were tributaries of Tenochtitlan (*op. cit.*, p. 114-116). He even insists that the Tecciztlan area, which includes Acolman, Tepechpan and Teotihuacan, paid tribute exclusively to Tenochtitlan (*ibidem*, p. 117-118).

Ixtlilxóchitl also records how Nezahualcóyotl dealt with the tribute he gained through his conquests with the Triple Alliance. He left his portion of the tribute in Tenochtitlan, rather than bringing it to his city of Texcoco:

(...) las rentas que eran de la parte del rey Nezahualcóyotl se guardaban en la ciudad de México en sus palacios antiguos, con las que premiaba a todos los señores de su señorío, sus hijos, deudos y otras personas beneméritas *por mano de los señores mexicanos*, para que justificadamente a cada uno se le diese lo que por sus virtudes merecía: éste fue el principal intento de que sus rentas (las que tenía de la partición con los otros dos reyes) se guardasen en la ciudad de México.<sup>46</sup>

This record is significant in understanding Nezahualcóyotl's political situation because it provides further evidence of his close relationship with the Mexicas. It also shows that to some extent Nezahualcóyotl was not in a position to control even his portion of tribute because his tribute was distributed "por mano de los señores mexicanos."

Pomar and Ixtlilxóchitl record that there were several councils in Texcoco. Pomar describes two: the councils of justice and war. The council of justice was in charge of practicing laws, and the council of war, *Tequihuacalli*, dealt with all necessary works for the war.<sup>47</sup> Ixtlilxóchitl describes four councils that Nezahualcóyotl established in Texcoco: the councils of government, music, war, and hacienda.<sup>48</sup> The council of government dealt with government officials, the nobles, and the commoners. The council of music was in charge of poets and astrologers, and the third council dealt with war. The last council took care of the tribute that came to Texcoco from the subjugated cities. It controlled the *mayordomos* (tribute collectors) and the merchants in Texcoco. Both chroniclers seem to describe the same two councils: Pomar's councils of war and justice seem to coincide with Ixtlilxóchitl's council of government; and they both include a council of war, although the terms for its leader differ —Tlacocheatl in Pomar and Hueytlacoxcatl in Ixtlilxóchitl. Both chroniclers confirm, however, that the chiefs of each of these four councils were genealogically close to the king, usually either his brothers or sons.

<sup>46</sup> Ixtlilxóchitl, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 108; emphasis added.

<sup>47</sup> Juan Bautista de Pomar, *Relación de Juan Bautista de Pomar in Poesía Náhuatl*, v. 1, Ángel María Garibay (ed.), México, UNAM, 1993, p. 182-187.

<sup>48</sup> Ixtlilxóchitl, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 406-407.

This system seems to have existed also in Tenochtitlan, though earlier than in Texcoco. According to Durán, the Mexican rulers Itzcóatl and Tlacáélel reformed the Mexican government by assigning official titles and distributing the cities to their brothers and generals according to their contribution after the Tepanec war.<sup>49</sup> Itzcóatl established four new titles: Tlacoachcalcatl, Tlacatecatl, Ezhuahuacatl, and Tlillancalqui. Durán provides only the names of the titles, but they appear very similar to the system in Texcoco in that the official immediately subordinate to the king is Tlacoachcalcatl and is in charge of the council of war just as in Texcoco. Moreover, Durán reports that the Mexicas already had a sophisticated social and political system in which existed “condes, duques, marqueses, alcaldes de corte, corregidores, alcaldes, regidores, cónsules, alguaciles, oficiales reales, embajadores.”<sup>50</sup> This is an important reform in Mexican history in that the Mexicas began to prepare their political and social systems to accommodate larger territories, that is, a new empire.

This ruling system, however, actually came from the Mexicas' former master, the Tepanec empire. After the victory against the Acolhuacan cities, the Tepanec ruler Tezozómoc introduced this system by distributing the administrative responsibility for the conquered city to his sons and grandsons. In addition, he must have developed the system to facilitate tribute collection. Pomar records that it was Tezozómoc who established the first empire in central Mexico and imposed order:

Las demás guerras y conquistas que tenían, antes de que los españoles viniesen, eran pocas, porque como se ha dicho, tenían toda la tierra casi sujeta, salvo a Michoacán [...] Pero todo el resto de esta Nueva España, hasta cerca de Guatemala, tenían llano y sujeto. La orden que tuvieron para ello, en que se fundó su señorío, fue que Tezozomocli, señor de Azcapotzalco, con mucho poder que tuvo y el largo tiempo que vivió, y la suerte que le favoreció, se enseñoreó antiguamente de casi toda la tierra.<sup>51</sup>

The Mexicas who experienced and practiced the imperial system of the Tepanec empire under Tezozómoc reintroduced or reformed it for their new empire. As a political partner of Tenochtitlan, Nezahualcóyotl requested from his uncle, Itzcóatl, the aid of Mexican governmental officials in reestablishing order in Texcoco. Thus, the

<sup>49</sup> Durán, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 103-104. See also Tezozómoc, *op. cit.*, p. 267-271.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, v. 2, p. 104.

<sup>51</sup> Pomar, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

Texcocan chroniclers' claim that their system of government was the best in New Spain and was imitated by the Mexicas stems from the desire to represent their city as more civilized and therefore different from the barbarous Mexicas of Tenochtitlan.

*Nezahualcōyotl's Legal System: Laws and Punishments*<sup>52</sup>

The most impressive achievements of Nezahualcōyotl presented by the Texcocan chroniclers Pomar and Ixtlilxōchitl were legislative in nature. Pomar does not mention Nezahualcōyotl, but it is easily inferred that the "reyes" in the following quote refers to Nezahualcōyotl and his son Nezahualpilli:

Las leyes y ordenanzas y buenas costumbres y modo de vivir que generalmente se guardaban en toda la tierra procedían de esta ciudad. Porque los reyes de ella procuraban siempre que fuesen tales cuales se ha dicho y por ellas se gobernaban las demás tierras y provincias sujetas a México y Tacuba. Y comúnmente se decía que en esta ciudad tenían el archivo de sus Consejos, leyes y ordenanzas y que en ellas les eran enseñados para vivir honesta y políticamente y no como bestias.<sup>53</sup>

Ixtlilxōchitl, who always claims that the Texcocan legal system was the most civilized, insists that the other two kings of Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan followed Nezahualcōyotl's laws and governmental system.<sup>54</sup> Ixtlilxōchitl records that Nezahualcōyotl established 80 laws and that he was strict in carrying them out.<sup>55</sup> Among these laws, the chronicler

<sup>52</sup> There has been significant research on this topic. Robert Barlow discovered and commented on leaf 3 of the *Mapa Quinatzin* (*Fuentes y estudios sobre el México indígena*, v. 5, p. 261-276). Jerome Offner conducted comprehensive and detailed research on the Texcocan legal system based on Texcocan sources (*Law and Politics in Aztec Texcoco*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983). Offner's work, however, is misleading because his uncritical reliance on Texcocan sources such as Ixtlilxōchitl leads him to start with the argument that the Texcocan legal system was the most civilized among indigenous people in pre-Hispanic México, very different from that of Tenochtitlan. More recently, Luz María Mohar B. demonstrates similarities between the Mexican and Texcocan legal systems by comparing leaf 3 of the *Mapa Quinatzin* and the behavior chapter of the *Codex Mendoza* ("Los delitos y castigos entre acolhuas y mexicas. Comparación de dos documentos." *Códices y documentos sobre México, Tercer Simposio Internacional*, Coordinator Constanza Vega Sosa, México, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2000, p. 227-242).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 194.

<sup>54</sup> See note 52.

<sup>55</sup> Ixtlilxōchitl, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 385, p. 405-406; v. 2, p. 101-102.

deals with major crimes and their punishments such as treason against the king, adultery, robbery, superstition, misuse of inherited properties, homicide, homosexuality, alcohol abuse, and military misconduct. In addition, his alphabetic texts are supported by a pictorial source, the *Mapa Quinatzin*. The majority of the crimes and punishments that appear in Ixtlilxóchitl's texts are clearly depicted in leaf 3 of this map.<sup>56</sup> A comparison between the description of the crimes and punishments and the third part of the map reveals that the alphabetic texts are exact transcriptions/translations of the map. Regarding adultery, the *Mapa Quinatzin* describes three types of adultery and their punishments. According to Ixtlilxóchitl's interpretation, adulterers were flattened by a large and heavy stone, or were stoned in the *tianguis* (market); or if the adulterers had killed their spouses, then the male was burned to death and the female was hanged. The *Mapa Quinatzin* depicts three types of robbery: According to Ixtlilxóchitl, the thief was hanged because of his misconduct. If a man stole a package from a woman in the marketplace, or he stole from a *petlacalli* (woven box), or he broke into a house at night and stole, then he would be hanged. The *Mapa Quinatzin* provides an information about a noble son's misconduct: The good son takes care of things, while the bad son is lazy, adulterous, and thieving. Ixtlilxóchitl briefly records that if a noble son misused the wealth or property of his parents, he was sentenced to death by hanging. Based on his reading of the *Mapa Quinatzin*, therefore, Ixtlilxóchitl sees Nezahualcóyotl as the greatest lawmaker in all of Anáhuac. This claim, however, is rooted in a misinterpretation of Texcocan sources motivated by a desire to portray the city in a more "civilized" way.

The first chronicler who extensively records the indigenous legal system is Fray Toribio de Benavente o Motolinía. This Spanish chronicler also recognizes Nezahualcóyotl and his son Nezahualpilli's contribution to the Texcocan legal system. Motolinía emphasizes the role of Nezahualcóyotl and his son Nezahualpilli in the administration of good government. They were so expert and fair in terms of enacting laws and enforcing them that even the Mexican kings sent legal cases to Texcoco: "[...] de México remitían y enviaban a Tezcucó muchos pleitos para que allí se determinasen y sentenciasen; siempre, empero, la audiencia de México tuvo sobre preeminencia en las cosas de la guerra, y allí se determinaban."<sup>57</sup> This chronicler deals with almost

<sup>56</sup> Robert H. Barlow, *Fuentes y estudios sobre el México indígena*, v. 5, México, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1994, p. 261-276.

<sup>57</sup> Toribio de Benavente, Motolinía, *Memoriales o Libro de las cosas de la Nueva España y de los naturales de ella*, Edmundo O'Gorman (ed.), México, UNAM, 1971, p. 353.

the same crimes and punishments that Ixtlilxóchitl examines in his texts, and seems to support Ixtlilxóchitl's argument. Motolinía, however, clearly states that the Texcocan legal system was not different from but instead similar to that of two other cities, Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan. One of the reasons that Motolinía focuses only on the Texcocan area is simply because he lived there, and because —according to him— information about indigenous society was much more abundant in Texcoco.<sup>58</sup> Another Spanish chronicler, Torquemada, presents a synthesis of all the offenses and the punishments mentioned by the previous chroniclers. Torquemada provides the most extensive information on indigenous legal practice. He deals with basically the same crimes and punishments, though in more detail than Ixtlilxóchitl and Motolinía, but nowhere does he mention that the legal practice in Anáhuac originated from Texcoco or that Nezahualcóyotl was a legislator. Rather, Torquemada states that these laws and punishments were widely practiced in New Spain.<sup>59</sup>

In the Mexican tradition, the *Crónica mexicana* records ten commandments of Huitzilopochtli that include two crimes and their punishments similar to those of Texcoco: 1) adultery was prohibited, and the adulterers were hanged, stoned, or beaten to death; and 2) thieves were hanged or enslaved depending on the type of robbery.<sup>60</sup> Another Mexican source, *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, records in extensive detail the legal practices of Tenochtitlan.<sup>61</sup> They are divided into two parts: *leyes en la guerra* and *leyes en sus tianguis o mercados*. The first part deals with laws similar to those that Ixtlilxóchitl included in Nezahualcóyotl's military code: disobedient soldiers and those who stole captives were killed in the Mexican tradition and were either hanged or beheaded in the Texcocan tradition. Many offenses and punishments in the second part reflect those mentioned in Ixtlilxóchitl's works: 1) if a noble son sold the property of his father, he was killed secretly by suffocating; 2) those who stole in the tianguis were killed with rocks or hanged; 3) adulterers were stoned to death; 4) drunkards were hanged; 5) incest was prohibited and the incestuous were hanged; 6) homosexuals were hanged. The crimes and punishments that Ixtlilxóchitl deals with are almost identical to those in this

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 352-353.

<sup>59</sup> Torquemada, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 377-385. See also Agustín de Vetancurt, *Teatro mexicano*, México, Editorial Porrúa, 1971, p. 89-92.

<sup>60</sup> Tezozómoc, *op. cit.*, p. 102-103.

<sup>61</sup> *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* in *Teogonía e historia de los mexicanos*, Ángel María Garibay (ed.), México, Porrúa, 1965, p. 73-76.

Mexican source, that is, adultery, robbery, incest, homosexuals, and military code.

The particular parallel between the behavior chapter of the *Codex Mendoza* and the third part of the *Mapa Quinatzin* also helps us to see the similarities in dealing with crimes and punishments in Texcoco and Tenochtitlan.<sup>62</sup> The codex describes how to instruct youth: the major-domo teaches them not to be idle because idleness leads them to be vagabonds, ball players, thieves, and gamblers.<sup>63</sup> This is a similar description to that of the bad son and the good son that appears in the *Mapa Quinatzin*. The codex also depicts the punishments for some acts of misconduct according to the laws and customs in Tenochtitlan.<sup>64</sup> If a young man or woman is drunken with pulque, he or she should die, according to the laws. Thieves and adulterers were killed by stoning.

All of the offenses and punishments mentioned in both the Texcocan and Mexican sources demonstrate the many similarities between these two cities. Although some chroniclers, including Ixtlilxóchitl and Pomar, insist that Tenochtitlan imitated the Texcocan legal system, these similarities should be understood in the continuity of the larger Mesoamerican tradition rather than in the tradition of a particular city-state such as Tenochtitlan or Texcoco. According to Gordon Brotherston, the good or bad qualities of many human activities had already been established, were inculcated in Mesoamerican culture, and were depicted in various religious texts.<sup>65</sup> Based on the *Codex Borgia* from Cholula or Tlaxcala and the *Codex Fejérváry* from the Mixtec area, Brotherston shows that drinking pulque, stealing, and adultery were clearly described as bad behaviors, as opposed to good behaviors such as producing maize. These codices do not describe the punishments for the offenses, but as the scribes distinguished the bad from the good behaviors, there must have been punishments appropriate to each.

There is another good reason to challenge the image of Nezahualcóyotl as a lawmaker. The pictorial source that Ixtlilxóchitl used for his chronicles, leaf 3 of *Mapa Quinatzin*, shows no indication of Nezahualcóyotl as a lawmaker. Ixtlilxóchitl based his arguments solely on the top right of the first column of the leaf, where the glyphs of Nezahualcóyotl and his son Nezahualpilli were depicted above the house where a judge is sitting. Other than these glyphs, there is no other appearance of Nezahualcóyotl in the leaf. Thus, the appearance

<sup>62</sup> Barlow, *op. cit.*, p. 263; Mohar B., *op. cit.*, p. 227-242.

<sup>63</sup> *Codex Mendoza*, f. 70r.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 71r.

<sup>65</sup> Brotherston, *op. cit.*, p. 140-142.

of the glyphs of Nezahualcōyotl and Nezahualpilli do not guarantee their authorship of the laws. It only suggests that all the depicted crimes and punishments were conducted during the reigns of these kings. For instance, the map depicts how the three nations of the Triple Alliance began the war against a rebellious ruler (Figure 4). According to Jerome A. Offner, under Ixtlilxóchitl's reading of the map, first the Mexican ambassadors from Tenochtitlan on the top left (a) were sent to the ruler in the center of the Figure (f).<sup>66</sup> The Mexicas did not talk to the ruler, but rather to the elders—*huehuetzin* (d) and *ilamatzin* (e)—of the city, and tried to subjugate them peacefully. If they did not agree, then the Texcocan ambassadors (b) were sent with war equipment to intimidate the ruler. If the ruler still did not surrender to the Triple Alliance, then finally the Tlacopan ambassadors (c) were sent to talk to the eagle soldiers (g) and the jaguar soldiers (h) of the ruler. If all these efforts failed, then the ruler was captured and killed as depicted in (i). Ixtlilxóchitl included this Triple Alliance war procedure as one of the “ochenta leyes que estableció Nezahualcoyotzin y cómo las mandó guardar.”<sup>67</sup> Ixtlilxóchitl's claim that Nezahualcōyotl established this law, however, is hardly justifiable. As shown before, the Mexicas normally planned war and notified their allies, the Texcocas and the Tlacapanecas. This means that the Mexicas took the initiative in conducting wars and they established this practice among the nations of the Triple Alliance. At the end of seventeenth century, Fray Agustín de Vetancurt includes this Triple Alliance practice of waging war in his description of Mexican traditions.<sup>68</sup> Again, the laws described in the *Mapa Quinatzin* were not made by Nezahualcōyotl, but were applied in his city as well as in neighboring cities.

The claim that Nezahualcōyotl made many laws is incorrect; rather, the king seems to have reestablished the laws that Texcoco had lost as a result of the interruption of the Tepanec invasion. Nezahualcōyotl introduced or imported from the Mexicas many preexisting laws and a legal system as a way of reconstructing and rebuilding his city. Thus, he may have been an important legislator and legal system builder in Texcocan history, but not in all of Anáhuac. The use of Nezahualcōyotl as a symbol of Aztec law is the result of the misinterpretation of indigenous pictorial sources.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Barlow's modern interpretation of this figure was ambiguous and incorrect. See his errors in Offner, *op. cit.*, p. 73-74.

<sup>67</sup> Offner, *op. cit.*, p. 71-75. Ixtlilxóchitl, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 101-105.

<sup>68</sup> Agustín de Vetancurt, *op. cit.*, p. 57-58.



*Conclusion*

Nezahualcōyotl was a great ruler in Texcocan history because he not only restored his lost nation, but also expanded Texcocan territory far beyond the area his ancestors had ruled. With the help of the Mexicas and the alliance with them, Nezahualcōyotl was able to quickly make his nation second only to Tenochtitlan. As a rebuildler of the city-state, his efforts were key to restoring and maintaining Texcocan social, political, and religious order. Texcocan chroniclers in the colonial period record Nezahualcōyotl's achievements in detail. But they also exaggerate his local accomplishments in Texcoco as a great governor and restorer of order by representing him as an influential figure in the history of the entire valley of Anáhuac. Furthermore, influenced by their European monastic education, these chroniclers attempted to transform their national hero into a peaceful, wise king quite different from his Mexican allies, suppressing his close relationship with the Mexicas. The chroniclers learned this perspective from the European colonizers, who always blamed the Mexicas for their religious practices in order to justify the conquest. The colonizers supplied the colonized with a mentality such that the latter now saw their culture from the perspective of the former. Some Spanish chroniclers welcomed and even enforced the Europeanized image of Nezahualcōyotl, and later historians followed them without challenging the perspective that derived from this colonial situation.