

A COMMENT ON DATING THE "CRONICA X"

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A little over a quarter of a century has passed since Barlow (1945: 65 cf) proposed his theory that Diego Durán and Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc employed the same source, a manuscript written in Nahuatl, as the basis of their respective chronicles. Since the identification of this Nahuatl document is not known, Barlow assigned it the appropriate appellation, "Crónica X".¹ In an appendix to Barlow's article, Caso (1945: 82-3) suggested a composition date for this enigmatic treatise. Since Tovar had relied heavily upon Durán's chronicle for his second history—most popularly known as the *Códice Ramírez*—this work thus contained via Durán material from the "Crónica X". Caso sought to establish a composition date for the "Crónica X" by analyzing a correlation of the native and Christian calendars found in the *Códice Ramírez*. Citing references in the *Códice Ramírez* that the last day of the feast of *Toxcatl* fell on May 19, Caso concluded that this correlation could only have been made between 1536-9, thereby suggesting that the "Crónica X" was composed sometime during this three year period.

¹I have doubts that the "Crónica X" may have been, as Barlow suggests, a parent document for both Durán's *Historia* and Tezozomoc's *Crónica Mexicana*. While the many similarities in the two chronicles clearly indicate that a common source was consulted, textual variances are in my opinion too great to suggest derivation from a single written source. I propose that the common source used by Durán and Tezozomoc was a branch of Tenochca oral history (particularly characterized by its emphasis of the *Cihuacoatl*, Tlacaelel) which was put to writing on different occasions, Durán using one copy (his major source, which he called the "historia mexicana") and Tezozomoc, another (although he may have transcribed the oral version directly). I discuss the nature of Durán's and Tezozomoc's common source at greater length in my unpublished dissertation (Colston, 1973:57-63). While I am following Barlow's nomenclature in the present discussion, I am at the same time implying that "historia mexicana" should be substituted for "Crónica X" in every reference to Durán's major source.

Little time was to pass before Caso's hypothesis would be openly questioned. Bernal (1947: 130) referred directly to Durán's chronicle, noted Fray Diego's remark that the native date 4 *Ollin* fell on March 17 and December 2, and concluded that such a correlation could not have been made between 1520-80. These discrepancies of correlation/composition dates, one falling between 1536-9 and the other falling either before 1520 or after 1580, while shedding serious doubts on Caso's earlier hypothesis were, Bernal (1947: 131) notes, "totally impossible" to reconcile.²

Durán's *Historia de las Indias* is a compilation of three separate treatises, viz., the *Libro de los Ritos*, the *Calendario Antiguo*, and the *Historia*. While Fray Diego utilized the "Crónica X"—which he refers to as the "historia mexicana"—as the basis of one of his treatises, the *Historia*, there is very little likelihood that he employed that Nahuatl document for the composition of either the *Libro de los Ritos* or *Calendario Antiguo*. Judging from Durán's references, it appears that the "historia mexicana" was exclusively an historical treatise, containing a wealth of data on matters of warfare and statecraft relating to pre-Cortesian Tenochtitlan and for that reason was employed by Fray Diego as the foundation of his *Historia*. Durán is very explicit as to the sources he consulted for his *Libro de los Ritos* and *Calendario Antiguo*: individual Indian paintings, native codices "written" in glyphs, Indian and Spanish informants, and personal observations. However, there is not a single reference in these two treatises to the "historia mexicana", the treatise which he deemed to be the most credible of his sources. It would be expected that had he utilized the "historia mexicana" for the *Libro de los Ritos* and *Calendario Antiguo*, he would have cited it on at least one occasion if for no other reason than to underscore the reliability of his own scholarly efforts, a technique he employs in the *Historia*.

Since the comments of both Caso and Bernal are based on

²There is an additional element of confusion which Bernal illustrates in the two graphs accompanying his article (1947: 133-4). Whether due to his error or that of his sources, Durán believed the 365 day solar year began with the first day of the 260 divinatory cycle, 1 *Cipactli*, thus failing to recognize that the *xiuitl* permuted in complete independence of the *tonalpoualli*.

correlations which are not found in the *Historia*, it is therefore most certain that their remarks can in no way pertain to the "Crónica X". The correlation which Bernal cited appears in Durán's *Libro de los Ritos*³:

Esta fiesta [de *nauholin*] celebraban dos veces en el año; la primera, a diez y siete de marzo, y la segunda, era a dos días de diciembre. (Durán, 1967: I, 105)

While the correlation Caso analyzed appears in the *Códice Ramírez*, it is clear that this correlation had been copied by Tovar from Fray Diego's *Libro de los Ritos*:

Celebrábase la fiesta deste ídolo á diez y nueve de mayo, y era la cuarta fiesta de su calendario. En la víspera desta fiesta venian los señores al templo, y traian un vestido nuevo, conforme al del ídolo, el cual le ponian los sacerdotes quitándole las otras ropas, y guardábanlas en unas cajas con tanta reverencia como nosotros tratamos los ornamentos, y aun mas ... (Tovar, 1878: 105)

Celebrábase la solemnidad de este idolo a diez y nueve de mayo, según nuestros meses, y según las suyas, era la cuarta fiesta de su calendario, a la cual llamaban Toxcatl. Su celebración era muy solemne y tanto, que la que hemos relatado, ninguna ventaja le hacía.

La víspera de esta fiesta venían los señores al templo y traían un vestido nuevo, conforme a lo sobredicho, y entregabanlo a los sacerdotes, para que se lo pusiesen al idolo. El cual (vestido) recibido, iban luego, y vestíanselo, quitándole las ropas que tenía vestidas, las cuales guardaban de unas pectacas, con tanta reverencia como nosotros tratamos los ornamentos y más (Durán, 1967: I, 39)

A similar analysis undertaken by Caso and Bernal for the "Crónica X" based on correlations in the *Historia* can not be made since that treatise (as well as Tezozomoc's *Crónica Mexicana*) does not convey complete calendrical dates of the

Christian calendar (i.e., giving years but *sans* months and days) in instances where they could be correlated with the native calendar. But even if such an investigation could be conducted, it is doubtful that the conclusions would be entirely reliable. Addressing themselves to the problem of correlating native and Christian dates, Kubler and Gibson (1951: 21) remarked:

It suffices here to suggest that the *prima facie* evidence must be severely and arbitrarily manipulated in order to bring calendrical notation into approximate agreement with dates of composition, when these are known. Such manipulation may entail the selection of final rather than of initial days of Mexican months, the assumption of knowledge or lack of knowledge of the Gregorian change on the part of the writer in question, or the readjustment of a writer's sequence of months. ... To employ it [i.e., a system of corroborating dates] as a method for dating calendars whose origin and time of composition are unknown is clearly unacceptable.

What little can be discerned about the composition date of the "Crónica X" is to be gleaned from the remarks made by Durán on the nature of that Nahuatl document. Clearly the "Crónica X" (or "historia mexicana") was composed after the Conquest since Durán (1967: II, 175) tells us that it was written (*escrito*, therefore with Roman letters) in Nahuatl.⁴ Durán completed his detailed *Historia* in 1581, suggesting the probability that he began writing that treatise immediately or at least soon after he completed his *Calendario Antiguo* in 1579; the "Crónica X", then, would have been necessarily completed by 1579-81.

⁴In the 1967 (Garibay) edition of the Codex Durán, the *Libro de los Ritos* appears in I: 1-210, the *Calendario Antiguo* in I: 211-88, and the *Historia*, the entirety of II. In the 1867-80 (Ramírez) edition of the Codex Durán, as Bernal (1947: 129) notes, the date 4 *Ollin* appears in II: 155. However, this date as well as twelve others that Bernal (1947: 129-30) cites were *not* contained in the *Historia*, "en la parte escrita en 1581" (Bernal, 1947: 129). Rather, the thirteen native dates listed by Bernal appear in the *Libro de los Ritos* (II: 96-207 in the 1867-80 edition and I: 35-167 in the 1967 edition), completed by Durán in c. 1574-6. For

Fray Diego (1967: II, 546) also noted that the author of his major source was an Indian (*un indio*). Two explanations can be offered for this statement. Either Durán knew the author of the "Crónica X" to be an Indian or he assumed the author to be an Indian since the text of that document was written in Nahuatl. If the author of the "Crónica X" was an adolescent or adult Indian at the time of the Conquest, a functional knowledge of the Roman alphabet could have been conceivably mastered and the "Crónica X" written within one decade following the Conquest. If the author was an Indian child at the time of or born immediately after the Conquest, some twenty years at the very least would be required to develop the necessary literary skills and complete a voluminous history; the same period must be considered if the author was a mestizo born soon after the Conquest.⁵

This suggests that the earliest probable *terminus post quem* for the "Crónica X" was c. 1531 while the *terminus ante quem* fell no later than 1579-81. Establishing more exact composition dates can only be considered with the appearance of new evidence which must be found outside the pages of Durán's *Historia*.

the dating of this treatise, see the comments of Fernando Horcasitas and Doris Heyden (Durán, 1971: 41, fn. 95) and Beauvois (1885:120).

⁴Additionally, Durán (1967: II, 158) refers to translating (i.e., from Roman letters) the Nahuatl text of the *historia mexicana* to Castilian. Fray Diego (1967: I, 13) regarded the pre-hispanic "glyphs" as "unintelligible characters".

⁵I do not think it very probable that the author was a Spaniard who, like Sahagún, penned a history in Nahuatl. The preponderant emphasis on the accomplishments of Tlacaelel in Durán's *Historia* and Tezozomoc's *Crónica Mexicana* suggests to me that their common source was composed by an individual noticeably partisan to that Indian figure, most likely a descendant of Tlacaelel. While this individual may have been an Indian, there is a possibility that he may have been a mestizo who, while of some Spanish blood, identified with his Indian lineage. Certainly there is a well-known precedent here in the mestizo Ixtlilxóchitl's exaltation of his Indian forbear. For several discussions on the background of this descendant-historian, see Nicholson (1964: 1409), Dyckerhoff (1970: 29) and Colston (1973:175-6).

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RESUMEN

El autor comenta el posible autor y cronología de la *Crónica X*, fuente primaria mexicana, propuesta como hipótesis por Barlow en 1945. Sugiere que la fecha más probable para su composición caería entre los años de 1531 y 1579-1581.