Introducing Tlalocan

TO BEGIN a journal at this time dedicated not to aeronautics nor to the restitution of the Holy Roman Empire is not an easy task, but it is one worth while. Civilized people are fighting for fewer clichés than anyone has ever fought for, in the long run, and one of their goals is to open again the jailed universities and publishing houses of Europe and Asia; but the manning of the guns to do this and the chemical factories has depopulated many of their own seminars and print shops. Yet what they do with the wrecked world afterward depends on what they know. A new scholarly journal is not, therefore, a thing inexplicable by the times, however distant its theme may appear to be.

Tlalocan is a Náhuatl word meaning the domain or kingdom of Tlaloc, the sometimes beneficent god of rain who makes vegetation prosper. It rimes with unbroken, not with Hoboken. Now that Tlaloc has long been relegated to the past, we hope that this new Tlalocan will be as happy a hunting ground for scholars as the old Tlalocan was for the Aztec nobles.

Tlalocan is called a journal of source materials on the native cultures of Mexico. By Mexico, however, we mean the whole area formerly embraced by New Spain, without any desire to offend patriots of neighboring states sliced off it. By source materials, we mean primarily unpublished materials from archives, the thousands of folios lying safely (and sometimes not so safely) in libraries and
private collections throughout the world, untouched by those who prefer to solve Mexico's past by a citation of Clavijero. But source materials may mean also bibliographies and indexes to manuscript or published materials, and we do not rule out the reprinting of scarce and fugitive items, which may briefly have seen circulation before. Aside from documents, such things as Bilderschichten — the ambiguously named "codices" — and other such pictorial records, whether carved on rock or bone or hammered in gold, are eligible.

What we are after are materials which will contribute to an understanding of the Zapotecs and appreciation of the Zapotec peoples who have been so often libeled, grotesquely romanticized, or ignored by even their own ashamed descendants. Agreeing with García Icazbalceta, we say: "Cada día echa mayores raíces en mi ánimo la convicción de que más se sirve a nuestra historia...con publicar documentos inéditos o muy raros, que con escribir obras originales, casi nunca exentas de deficiencias y de errores."

Thus the materials we present may be texts in native languages, sometimes of purely linguistic, sometimes of mythologico-historical interest, or they may be descriptions of wicked dances buried in the formulae of a proceso. They may be drawings off a vase. Tlalocan does not intend to become a vehicle for the publication of contemporary ethnographic or archeological reports, for there already exist numerous journals in these fields. Nor will it feature studies based upon groups of documents, unless these be discussions of documents Tlalocan has published. Notes, queries, and reviews of occasional books or journals, with no pretense to completeness, will also appear in its pages.

The editors of Tlalocan will give careful consideration to all contributions sent to The House of Tlaloc. All material published will be copyrighted for the protection of the various contributors, who may in the future use their own material published in Tlalocan in any way they wish, provided they give Tlalocan the credit for having first published it. The House of Tlaloc will make no other use of the material without the contributor's permission.

R. H. Barlow
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Cuentos y Leyendas de los Zapotecos

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THE ZAPOTEC GRAMMAR AND DICTIONARY OF JUAN DE CÓRDOBA

One of the major accomplishments of the Spanish missionaries to Mexico in the sixteenth century were the amazingly accurate grammars and dictionaries of the Indian languages that some of them wrote. Among these certainly the Arte en la Lengua Zapoteca and the Vocabulario en la Lengua Zapoteca by Juan de Córdoba, both published in 1578, must be considered as ranking with the very best. The Arte has been available since Nicolás León's reprint of 1866. The Vocabulario has only now (1942) been made available through the enterprise of Señor Wigberto Jiménez Moreno. All Zapotec students owe Señor Jiménez Moreno a deep debt of gratitude for this facsimile reproduction of this exceedingly rare book as well as for his valuable and scholarly introduction. Now that both the Arte and the Vocabulario are at our disposal, it should be possible to form some idea both of the character of the Zapotec language when first encountered by the Spaniards, its phonetic and its grammatical construction, as well as to understand the nature of the changes it has undergone since the sixteenth century.

The first question we naturally ask is What dialect do Córdoba's Arte and Vocabulario represent? The answer seems simple enough in terms of the present-day Zapotec. It is the Valle dialect. But what subdialect? Even today there are innumerable Valle subdialects. Was this true in Córdoba's time and, if so, was the line of demarcation between them the same that holds true today? In Córdoba's time, for instance, all nouns and verb stems ended in a vowel. That holds practically for no Valle dialect or subdialect today. Only in Tehuantepec and Serrano-Netzio is this true today.

This and other features, into which we cannot enter here, make it fairly clear that the Zapotec dialects, with the possible exception of that of Miahuatlán, were much closer in the sixteenth century than they are now. We should probably not be far from the facts then if we postulated only two major dialects for the Zapotec of the Conquistadores, one embracing all the Valle subdialects and including those of Tehuantepec, and the other, all those of the Sierra Juárez and Villa Alta. Nor, as I have just pointed out, must we make the contrast between these two dialects too sharp. For instance, the subdialects of the Talea cluster of pueblos or of the so-called Rinconada (Santa Cruz, San Pedro, Tepanzacoalco [?], etc., to the north and northwest of Istlán) are as close to the Valle as they are to the Sierra dialects. This greater approximation

1 I see no reason for abandoning the grouping of the present-day dialects that I gave in 1925 in my article "The Distribution and Phonetics of the Zapotec Dialects" in the Journal de la Société des Américanistes, N.S., Vol. XVII, 1925, pp. 26–36.

2 Not to be confused with the so-called Rincón.