

# La Malinche, Feminist Prototype

Cordelia Candelaria

"If there is one villainess in Mexican history, she is Malintzin. She was to become the ethnic traitress supreme."<sup>[1]</sup> Such is one version of the popular view of Malintzin or Doña Marina, as she was christened by Cortés' *padres*, or La Malinche, as she came to be known among the Aztecs. Indeed, in the current reevaluation of pre-Columbian culture among many Chicanos, La Malinche remains one of the few indigenous figures in the Conquest of Mexico to be viewed with contempt.

[La Malinche] was to become infamous in the history of Mexico. Not only did she turn her back on her own people, she joined the white men and became assimilated, serving as their guide and interpreter and generally assisting in the conquest. She was the first Mexican-American.<sup>[2]</sup>

Fortunately, Chicana writers and scholars have begun to correct such distortions. Nevertheless, even Moctezuma—the Aztec ruler most directly responsible for the ease of Spanish takeover—receives generally sympathetic understanding from American historians, past and present,<sup>[3]</sup> although he capitulated to the Spaniards prematurely.<sup>[4]</sup>

Over the years La Malinche has been the subject of biographical, fictional, and symbolic interpretation written in many different languages. Biographical accounts include Mariano Somonte's *Doña Marina*, "La Malinche," and Bernal Díaz del Castillo's "Malintzin Tenépal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective." Fictional treatments include Margaret Shedd's *Malinche and Cortés*; Octavio Paz's chapter, "The Sons of La Malinche" in *Labyrinth of Solitude*

exemplifies the symbolic approach. To some extent each interpretation, though emphasizing one approach, has blurred its particular treatment by incorporating elements of the others, sometimes in random fashion. Paz's discussion, for example, depends on certain important aspects of her historical background, while Díaz's investigation attempts to flesh out an incomplete biographical record with hypotheses and speculations deriving from modern psychology and pre-Columbian mysticism. These treatments provide fascinating reading and insight into La Malinche, the Conquest, and the concept of New World multiculturalism called *mez-tizaje*. Nevertheless, such commingling of approaches, of fact and speculation, sometimes limits the clearest understanding of the subject.

To learn as much as possible about the real La Malinche, the historical figure involved in the Conquest, requires careful development through two distinct investigative phases: (1) biographical reconstruction according to relevant primary sources, and (2) reconstruction of place, time, and ambience from relevant primary sources and sound secondary observations. Moreover, to comprehend La Malinche's impact on, and continuing significance to her culture and cultural descendants, a third phase is suggested: the analysis and interpretation of La Malinche as a cultural symbol. This third stage requires developing a symbolic synthesis from relevant literary and philosophical studies of this astonishingly important woman. This latter stage should clearly derive from incontrovertible evidence gathered in the first two stages to demonstrate that the symbol arises inevitably, not artificially, from the historical personage.

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*Cordelia Candelaria teaches at the University of Colorado in the Department of English and the Chicano Studies Program. She also serves as a trustee of the New World Foundation, a member of the Danforth Foundation Advisory Council, an advisor to the Council on Foundations, and a director of the National Council of La Raza. Mother of one son, a sophomore at the University of Denver, she is married to a cattle rancher. She received her doctorate in English from Notre Dame University.*

## 2 FRONTIERS

In accordance with this three-part model, the first two sections of this study provide fresh review of La Malinche's life, her service to Hernan Cortés, and her role in the Conquest of Mexico. In addition, the third part of this investigation will seek to describe the nature of La Malinche, the symbol that has emerged as a palpable reality within Mexican (and, to some extent, within Chicano) consciousness.

It is useful to examine *la conquista* with as much detachment as possible. In essence, it was a series of events whose overall effect contributed to what is now a permanent reality. The actual Conquest was an extraordinary military feat with the typical results of such "victories." There was the destruction of a way of life, in this case the destruction of a pre-Columbian civilization of apparently considerable achievement; the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of native peoples; and the subjugation and enslavement of the survivors.

On the other hand, the dictatorial regime of Moctezuma that ruled Anáhuac (i.e., the area surrounding what is now Mexico City) was plagued with severe internal problems. At the time of the Spanish invasion, discontent was pervasive among the various native tribes because of the extensive Aztec taxation on goods and services, including human lives for religious sacrifice. The increase in human sacrifices under Moctezuma's tyranny made him and the Aztecs feared and hated in Anáhuac, particularly in remoter regions whose tenuous link to Tenochtitlan (present day Mexico City) was only tax-related.[5] In all fairness, it should be stated that the excesses of Moctezuma's regime simply culminated the tyrannical direction that the empire had taken under the influence of Tlacaélel, a previous leader. Thus Moctezuma invited rebellion by continuing policies which had led to disharmony and disunity among the native tribes. Further, his extreme vacillation, stemming from his mysticism, made him ineffective as a leader. His indecisiveness in dealing with Cortés gave the Spaniards many political and military advantages.[6] We must, therefore, conclude that the Mexican Empire under Moctezuma was extremely vulnerable to internal destruction and that this vulnerability greatly strengthened Cortés' external effort.

Born around 1502 in Coatzacoalcos, a pre-Columbian Mexican province, La Malinche is believed to have originally been named Malinal after "Malinalli," the day of her birth, as was the custom at that time.[7] As daughter of an Aztec *cacique*, or chief, she was a member of a privileged, educated class. This fact probably helps to explain her later ability to serve the first New World *conquistadores* so brilliantly.[8] After her father's death and her mother's remarriage, Malinal was given away by her mother who sought to gain control of her daughter's inheritance for a son by her second husband.[9] A feature of Malinal's banishment from the Aztecs was her mother's compulsion to hold a cenotaphic burial (i.e., a mock funeral) to explain her daughter's disappearance.[10] This is noteworthy because it indicates that custom did not condone the banishment of children, even girls.

Malinal was given to itinerant traders who eventually sold her to the ruling *cacique* of Tabasco, a province situated on the Yucatán coast. She lived in Tabasco until Cortés arrived there in 1519.[11] Because of her background in these widely separated provinces, Malinal knew both Nahuátl, the language of the Aztecs, and the Mayan dialects of her adopted people, the natives of Tabasco. As history demonstrates, her polyglot abilities, later to include Castilian Spanish, became the immediate reason for her singular role as Cortés' companion.

After his takeover of Tabasco, and in keeping with age-old historic traditions, Cortés received from the *cacique* a gift of twenty maidens to serve as domestic labor for the warrior-adventurers.[12] Malinal was part of the group. Probably because of its similarity to her native name, she was christened "Marina" by the Spaniards and soon distinguished herself enough "to earn" from her captors the Spanish title of respect, *doña*. In fact, one Spanish historian asserts that her aristocratic bearing was such that within a month of the Spaniard's arrival, she was accorded the treatment that a *cacica* by birth might expect.[13] Similar homage was paid her by her compatriots who addressed her with the standard honorific title, *-tzin*, appended to their pronunciation of the European name, thus, Malintzin. The emergence of "Malinche" from Malintzin appears to be a solely linguistic phenomenon.

To fully appreciate La Malinche's role in the Conquest of Mexico it is appropriate to consider at this point the indigenous life patterns and customs in Mexico prior to European entry. What is known of the native people and their culture comes primarily from the work of dedicated Franciscan scholars like Olmos, Motolinía, and particularly Sahagún who is responsible for the *Florentine Codex* upon which most pre-Columbian scholarship rests. Each of these historians (or early anthropologists) gained access to reliable, firsthand information about pre-Columbian life which they described meticulously in several works. With regard to the subject at hand, three areas of that life hold particular relevance: the basis of the social order, the role of religion in it, and the place of women in society.

The Aztec social order was built upon a class system that became increasingly defined and rigid as the tribe gained mastery over other tribes in the region. Originally organized according to clans (*calpulli*) with somewhat democratic internal lines of responsibility and power, the emergence of a central ruling class soon led to new divisions. The nobility (*pipiltin*) became the wealthiest and most powerful while the commoners (*macehualtin*) performed the labors needed to sustain the new order. Eventually the *pipiltin* developed its own class strata with the highest and smallest level providing the emperors. Conformity to this system was achieved by the populace's native obedience to custom and also by fear—human sacrifices were quite numerous.

Such a social order, especially in a pre-literate society, historically parallels a strictly followed religious system. That was true for the Aztecs who perceived

sovereignty and religion as one.[14] “Habits of obedience, discipline, and conformity were manifest and constituted an unwritten code of morals and justice,” and these habits were reinforced by “a code powerfully sanctioned by [religious] faith and by fear of punishment.”[15]

In keeping with traditional biological determinism, women in Aztec society were barred from most occupations and activities guaranteed their male counterparts, and even in the smallest daily activity women were under strict discipline throughout their lives. On the other hand, daughters of the nobility received educations. Property rights were maintained through the mother’s side.[16] Nevertheless, Aztec society was decidedly androcentric. At birth, for example, boys were presented with a spear and a shield, while girls were immediately provided with brooms and spinning wheels.[17] Women and girls were sexually exploited, especially among the *pipiltin*,[18] a phenomenon not unique to this culture. In addition, among the tribes of that time war was a solely masculine occupation. Not surprisingly most native languages employed a single word for “male” and for “warrior.”[19]

Clearly outside this cultural mold, La Malinche later often accompanied Cortés to the center of battle, and several surviving codices depict her carrying a shield. Furthermore, although women in pre-Columbian Mexico were not public figures, La Malinche’s services to the Spaniards brought her conspicuously to the heart of the most pressing political issue facing Moctezuma’s commonwealth: how to handle the “supermen”—Cortés and his party. Accordingly, the Emperor’s Nahuátl title, *Uei Tlatoani*, signifying “He Who May Speak,” indicates that he alone was the supreme mouthpiece of and for his people and their deities. In this context, La Malinche’s full significance as “*la lengua de los dioses*” (the tongue of the gods, that is, the Spaniards), as her compatriots called her, is magnified considerably. Despite this significance, however, La Malinche was a product of the indigenous culture with its strengths as well as its classist and religiously intense constraints. That she performed as extraordinarily well as she did attests both to her commanding character and to the compelling needs the Spaniards had of her services.

La Malinche’s facile learning of Castilian Spanish, her familiarity with the country, and her insight into the native customs and habits quickly made her indispensable to Cortés whom she attended, even in battle, throughout his incursion into the heartland of Mexico. Her service to the Spaniards began as interpreter but rapidly became much more involved and substantively challenging. Even after the siege and capture of Tenochtitlan (the capital of Moctezuma’s empire) and after Cortés’ Spanish wife joined him, La Malinche remained his translator and advisor. As Somonte observes following one of his lengthy citations of Díaz’s praises, “this demonstrates that Doña Marina’s work, from the first, was not limited to relaying messages to Cortés, since the *mot juste* required seizing every initiative to persuade and capture the will of the Indians.”[20]

Although sources vary regarding the number and gender of Cortés’ heirs, La Malinche bore him his first son, Martín.[21] Their relationship has also been said to have spawned a new race, both literally and symbolically. The victorious Cortés’ departure from New Spain in 1527 signals the end of La Malinche’s public history. Except for brief mention regarding land assigned to her by the Conqueror, her subsequent life and her circumstances at death are open to conjecture. Suffice it to say here that archival documents containing the sworn testimony of her contemporaries indicate that La Malinche died in 1527 or 1528 at the probable age of twenty-five.[22] The likely cause of death was smallpox which struck Mexico in epidemic proportions during that period.

This brief summary of what little we know of La Malinche was compiled from accounts written by firsthand participants in the events and from later sources relying on the earlier documents. Of these we get a varying assessment of her role. Considered together they support the conclusion that her paramount value to the Spaniards was not merely linguistic, for her interpreting went beyond translating from idiom to idiom, though that was difficult enough given the foreignness of the respective tongues. She was an interpreter/liaison who served as a guide to the region, as an advisor on native customs and beliefs, and as a competent strategist. It appears that her least significant role to Cortés was that most often expected of women: her function as his mistress.

Although space limitations preclude a full account of firsthand descriptions of the Conquest—all demonstrating La Malinche’s crucial role in it—a brief summary will illustrate the nature and extent of her contributions. Moreover, to appreciate the challenges she faced, Cortés’ own accomplishments will first be reviewed.

He and his men landed on the coast of Yucatán in the spring, probably March, of 1519. The capture of Tenochtitlan was completed by August of 1520. In less than one and one-half years, Cortés had managed to journey to the Aztec capital across unfamiliar and extremely rugged terrain replete with hostile native tribes. In that time he also managed to ally his small army with several tribes, notably in Texcoco, Tlaxcala, and Cempoala. Their help was indispensable in the defeat of Moctezuma and eventually, Cuauhtemotzin. These encounters signalled the ultimate Aztec downfall.

Through La Malinche, “*la lengua*,” Cortés was able to communicate two essential messages to the natives they encountered during their inland trek. The *indios* were persuaded first that the Europeans could release them from their subjection to the Aztecs, and, second, that the appearance of the white men was divinely fated and foreshadowed the inevitable conquest of Mexico. “Doña Marina did not limit herself to being an interpreter only, but rather a collaborator involved in speaking to and discussing with the *caciques*; and with her brilliant mind, persuasion and dialogue were facilitated [for the Spaniards].”[23]

Through La Malinche, the liaison to the natives, Cortés and his men and allies were saved from total

## 4 FRONTIERS

destruction as they traveled. Upon their arrival in Tlaxcala, for example, her astute observations led her to uncover an indigenous conspiracy against Cortés. Through her he was able to use that discovery as a means of intimidating the people of Tlaxcala into an alliance.[24] Similarly, nearing Cholula, the imposing capital of an important province, La Malinche's friendship with an old woman allowed her to learn of the well-planned, well-prepared attack Moctezuma was about to launch there against the invaders. Armed with this information Cortés decided to change his plans and to circumvent Cholula before proceeding directly to Tenochtitlan. The change astonished the natives and further persuaded them of the Spaniards' mystical powers.[25] On these and other occasions, La Malinche's presence made the decisive difference between life or death.

Because of La Malinche, the advisor, Cortés survived the tragedy of the famous "Noche Triste" when he and his men were forced out of the Aztec capital. Injured and ill, the Conqueror was saved by La Malinche's ministrations. More than that, while he was febrile she was forced to join his assistants in making decisions regarding their subsequent plans. As Somonte puts it, "Doña Marina was involved in all these negotiations and her activities did not cease until the conquest of the great Tenochtitlan was realized." [26] Accordingly, her eloquent discretion in addressing the Aztec Emperor on behalf of Cortés had been viewed as contributing to the latter's successes in a way that prevented the loss of even greater numbers of lives.[27] Each of these instances, and many others, depended on La Malinche's understanding of the *indios* coupled with her insight into the minds and will of the conquerors.

Three of the important early accounts of the Conquest merit closer scrutiny here. Composed by Cortés himself, by one of his soldiers, and by a descendant of one of the Conqueror's native allies, these three chronicles offer probing insight into the minds and motivations of these particular writers. They also allow the twentieth-century student access into their eras and respective cultures. Of prime importance to the present study is their interpretation of La Malinche and her role in the Conquest.

In the first, Cortés' *Cartas de Relación (Five Letters of Relation to the Emperor Charles V)*, she is mentioned briefly twice.[28] In the Second *Carta* Cortés alludes to her in passing as "the interpreter whom I have, an Indian woman of this country." [29] In the Fifth *Carta* he writes:

I answered him [a native *cacique*] that I was the captain of whom the people had spoken as having fought with them in their country, of which he might assure himself from the interpreter with whom he was speaking, who is Marina whom I have always had with me since she was presented to me with twenty other women. She explained everything to him and how I had conquered Mexico, and told him of all the countries I had subjected and placed under the Empire of Your Majesty.[30]

In his lengthy epistolary report from the field, these

are the sole written references to her during all the time he spent in Mexico. What we must bear in mind, however, is that these letters to the King were written in hopes of securing their author royal favor, prestige, wealth, and, eventually, a royal appointment as governor of New Spain. Thus Cortés' *Cartas* are understandably self-serving and one-sided, factors which account for his relegation of La Malinche's valuable service to these passing references. What is more, propriety argued against the married adventurer's presenting a fuller, forthright account of his high regard for his comely interpreter/mistress.[31]

Of prime importance, moreover, are the recorded examples of Cortés' esteem for La Malinche apart from the understandable, if lamentably chauvinistic, failure to acknowledge a "heathen consort" in letters to the Sovereign. First, Cortés named their illegitimate son after his own father, Don Martín, an act of considerable magnitude among the custom-oriented Europeans of that time.[32] Second, he assigned several partitions of land to her during his administration of Mexico.[33] That too was an important deed since she was not a member of the Spanish ruling class which was automatically entitled to property ownership in post-Conquest New Spain. Finally, before returning to Spain, Cortés arranged a proper marriage for her with one of his soldiers, Don Juan Jaramillo, a Spanish nobleman:[34]

Her marriage to Jaramillo is the explanation and truth of that [cultural] marriage; it tells of a merging path, social and religious, to the Spanish [way of life], and this undoubtedly was the honor and highest esteem which a Spaniard like Cortés could have offered. The conquest and colonization of America by Spain pointed the way to the merging of the New World to the Christian culture of Europe; Marina's wedding to a Spanish gentleman had exactly the same import.[35]

Thus, although his *Cartas* minimize her presence and value to him during the momentous Conquest, Cortés evidenced his high regard for her through documented deeds of weighty, lasting significance.

A second important early account of the Conquest *Obras Historicas* (historical writings), was written by Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, the descendant of Cortés' most important ally, the *cacique* of Texcoco, Ixtlilxochitl the Elder. Alva, as he is called by historians, wrote his chronicle from a substantial body of native documents. Strangely, in the *Obra* dealing with the "coming of the Spaniards and the beginning of evangelical law"—Account 13, as it has come to be called—Alva scarcely mentions La Malinche at all. Since he purports to present the native allies' version, his reduction of the interpreter's role is unusual. She was clearly a native ally and the codices he was using show her prominently at the Conqueror's side.[36] Alva does stress, however, her influence in converting the natives to Catholicism.

Marina, the tongue, was charged with establishing the Christian faith [among the *indios*], speaking at the same time of the King of Spain. In a very few days she learned Castilian, which excused Cortés from a good deal of

work and which seemed almost like a miracle and was very important in the conversion of the natives and the promulgation of our blessed Catholic faith.[37]

In battle and in negotiations with Moctezuma, as well as with other indigenous officials, La Malinche appears actively engaged in the landmark events of her time, yet Alva largely overlooks her presence. With remarkable efficacy, then, this native-born, post-Columbian scholar minimizes one of the key figures of the Conquest. Alva's careful delimiting of La Malinche's important role leads to a threefold conclusion. He was, first, primarily concerned with establishing a record of the value of his namesake. Ixtlilxochitl the Elder, and the people of Texcoco in assisting the Spaniards. Neither Cortés' *Cartas*, nor Gómara's loyally slanted, pro-Cortés *Historia*, nor later Spanish versions gave proper acknowledgment of the indigenous help Cortés received and without which his efforts would have failed;[38] Alva simply wanted to correct the annals written by the conquerors.[39] Second, he was intent on documenting the extent of his countrymen's suffering at the hands of the Spaniards through a history presenting the Mexican view of the Conquest. His damaging description and assessment of what occurred account for the fact that his *Obras* were not published until the eighteenth century,[40] though they were written two centuries earlier.

It appears to me, finally, that Alva was perhaps unwilling or incapable of adjusting to the anomaly of a female's crucial role in molding the otherwise male-shaped events. In the pre-Columbian Mesoamerican culture, as in the European, men and women rigidly adhered to sex roles and class types. As discussed earlier, La Malinche's central role in the history of the region was exceptional for women of that period. Perhaps Alva, in writing of his people's role in *la conquista*, was simply reacting against the Spaniards' ultimate blasphemy: allowing a woman into a male-dominated public sphere.

The firsthand account that is generally regarded as the most extensive and accurate of the early Spanish histories is Bernal Díaz del Castillo's narrative, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*. Though written long after his New World service to Cortés, his work is generally conceded to have few factual errors of any consequence. Díaz wrote his *Historia verdadera* to correct the distortions in the chronicle written by Gómara, who wrote about events in which he had not participated. Gómara's information source was largely his *compadre*, Cortés, whose self-serving narratives have been discussed above.

It was Díaz who introduced La Malinche's greatness to the world.

Before telling about the great Moctezuma and his famous City of Mexico and the Mexicans, I wish to give some account of Doña Marina, who from her childhood had been the mistress and *Cacica* of towns and vassals.[41]

Díaz unequivocally credits La Malinche's knowledge of

the languages, of the native customs, of the country, as well as her loyalty, bravery, and intelligence as being inestimably valuable to the *conquistadores*.

As Doña Marina proved herself such an excellent woman and good interpreter throughout the wars in New Spain, Tlaxcala and Mexico (as I shall show later on) Cortés always took her with him. . . . Doña Marina was a person of the greatest importance and was obeyed without question by the Indians throughout New Spain. . . . This was the great beginning of our conquests and thus, thanks be to God, things prospered with us. I have made a point of explaining this matter, because without the help of Doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain.[42]

As William Prescott persuasively demonstrates, Cortés' ability to communicate fully with the natives enabled him to acquire allies, a "weapon" earlier prospective conquerors had sorely lacked.[43]

After reviewing the Conquest and La Malinche's role in it, and in view of the negative comments about her cited at the beginning of this study, the question of her loyalties requires consideration. Was she a traitor to her people? Was she a treasonous puppet of the Spaniards? Should she be praised or condemned?

To attempt an objective response to these questions requires a reexamination of her situation at the time of the Spaniards' arrival in Mexico. She became interpreter to Cortés when she was quite young, probably under seventeen. At thirty-five Cortés was already an established success in the West Indies where he held a modest office and estate.[44] Additionally, Cortés has been acclaimed as a man of great intelligence, military acumen, and intense tenacity; some compare his incursion into Mexico with the feats of Alexander and Caesar.[45] To suggest that a young woman could have thwarted the singleminded fervor of such a leader's intentions seems grossly naive. Even to hint that La Malinche could have misled the Spaniards and secretly aided the Aztecs indicates incredible ingenuousness, for, as discussed above, most tribes and their *caciques* loathed Moctezuma's dictatorship. This view also overlooks the inevitability of European conquest—they had the muskets and horses—once gold had been discovered in the New World.

In addition, as a product of the culture, La Malinche was subject to the same mysticism that enveloped Moctezuma. If the great Emperor himself was uncertain about the (im)mortality of the white men, surely La Malinche experienced the same uncertainty. She may have seen herself as a divinely selected participant in a most fateful destiny. Moreover, born female in a rigidly role-conscious society, La Malinche was bred to serve and to obey. She would have brought shame to the *cacique* of Tabasco and to her adopted people, had she not obeyed and served as best she could. And finally, the fact that La Malinche had been betrayed by her mother and sold into slavery cannot be overlooked as a factor in a more complete interpretation and understanding of this remarkable woman. In this context, Valdéz's interpretation quoted earlier that "she turn[ed] her back on her own people, she joined the white men

and become assimilated," becomes little more than weak slander.[46] What else could this outcast from the Aztecs, "her own people," have done?

The harsh view of La Malinche also ignores the apparent widespread respect accorded her by the natives. That she was called "Malintzin," a term of honor, may be attributed to her service to the awe-inspiring *conquistadores*. Nevertheless, her own personal qualities must have been impressive for she is prominently drawn in the native codices where she appears expressive, strong, and forceful. The Mexicans even named a volcano and several other geographical sites after her. As one writer puts it, "she was adored by the Aztecs." [47]

To summarize, La Malinche played a major role in Cortés' conquest. Without her as interpreter/guide/advisor he might not have been *the* Conqueror of the Aztecs: her discovery of the Cholula conspiracy against the Spaniards saved them from defeat and massacre, for instance.[48] Nevertheless, she does *not* deserve blame for the destruction of the Aztec Empire. This distinction needs stressing. Internally, the Empire's destruction had already begun during Moctezuma's reign and even earlier, and externally, destruction was assured when the first bar of gold crossed the Atlantic in Columbus' ship.

The fascinating story of this remarkable sixteenth-century woman might be read as an account of the prototypical Chicana feminist. La Malinche embodies those personal characteristics—such as intelligence, initiative, adaptability, and leadership—which are most often associated with Mexican-American women unfettered by traditional restraints against activist public achievement. By adapting to the historical circumstances thrust upon her, she defied traditional social expectations of a woman's role. Accordingly, the exigent demands placed on her allowed La Malinche's astonishing native abilities to surface. While her twentieth-century cultural heirs might wish that *she* had become the liberator and led the fight against the European invaders, the abuse of her people by the Aztec rulers would have required that she also lead a rebellion against Moctezuma's regime. Such fantasies and speculations should not be allowed to obscure La Malinche's singular place in history.

## NOTES

A very abbreviated version of this article appeared in *Agenda*, 8, No. 1 (1977), pages 21-22. The original, full-length version will be included in *Chicanas, A Collection of Essays*, co-edited by Julian Samora and Cordelia Candelaria, forthcoming from the University of Notre Dame Press.

1. T. R. Fehrenbach, *Fire and Blood: A History of Mexico* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 131.

2. Luis Valdéz, "La Conquista de Méjico," *Actos y el Teatro Campesino* (Fresno, Calif.: Cucaracha, 1971), p. 58.

3. William H. Prescott, *Mexico and the Life of the Conqueror Fernando Cortés* (New York: Peter F. Collier, 1842), Volume I, pp. 431-36; Hernan (Fernando) Cortés, *Cartas de relación de la conquista de Méjico (His Five Letters of Relation to the Emperor*

*Charles V*), trans. and ed. Francis A. MacNutt (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark, 1908), p. 187n; Fehrenbach, pp. 93-101.

4. R. C. Padden, *The Hummingbird and the Hawk: Conquest and Sovereignty in the Valley of Mexico, 1503-1541* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1967), pp. 124-26.

5. Fehrenbach, pp. 90-101.

6. Prescott, p. 221.

7. Mariano G. Somonte, *Doña Marina, "La Malinche"* (México: n.p., 1969), pp. 55-57, 135; citations from Somonte's work were translated by Cordelia Candelaria. Another source states that her family name was Tenépal. See: Gutierre Tibón, *Diccionario etimológico comparado de nombres propios de persona* (México: Tallares de Editorial Fournier, 1956), p. 380.

8. Somonte, p. 135; see also Padden, p. 226, for a discussion of *cacicazgo*.

9. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España (The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico)*, trans. A. P. Maudsley, ed. Genaro García (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1956), pp. 66-67.

10. Díaz, p. 66.

11. Díaz, p. 64.

12. Díaz, p. 66.

13. Salvador Madariaga, as quoted in Somonte, pp. 16-17.

14. Padden, p. vii.

15. Justo Sierra, *The Political Evolution of the Mexican People*, trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1969), p. 36.

16. Padden, pp. 20-21.

17. Fehrenbach, pp. 87-90.

18. Padden, pp. 16, 229, 250.

19. Fehrenbach, p. 8.

20. Somonte, p. 23.

21. Somonte, p. 169.

22. *Probanza*, cited in Somonte, pp. 137-44. Like Prescott, Gustavo Rodriguez, another historian of this subject, persists in giving a later date as La Malinche's time of death. Somonte's reassessment of the evidence strongly favors the view that she died from smallpox before 1530. See Gustavo A. Rodriguez, *Doña Marina* (México: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1935), pp. 64-65.

23. Somonte, p. 24.

24. Somonte, pp. 25-26.

25. Somonte, pp. 28-31.

26. Somonte, p. 43.

27. Somonte, pp. 50-51.

28. Cortés. In his fine study of La Malinche, Somonte errs in writing that Cortés "only mentioned his extraordinary collaborator once" (Somonte, p. viii).

29. Cortés, I, p. 217.

30. Cortés, II, p. 273.

31. Cortés, pp. v-vi. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *Obras históricas (Ally of Cortés, Account 13)*, trans. and ed. Douglass K. Ballentine (El Paso, Texas: Texas Western Press, 1969), p. 125.

32. Prescott, Volume II, p. 334.

33. Prescott, Volume II, p. 333.

34. Prescott, Volume II, p. 333.

35. Hilda Krüger, as quoted in Somonte, p. 113.

36. See Alva, *passim*. See also: Miguel León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Beacon, 1962).

37. Alva, as quoted in Somonte, p. 181.

38. See: Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia de la conquista de México*, ed. Joaquín Ramírez Cabanas (México: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1943), *passim*.

39. Alva, p. xi; p. 124.

40. Prescott, Volume I, pp. 40-41n.

41. Díaz, p. 66.

42. Díaz, pp. 67-68.

43. Prescott, Volume I, p. 245, et *passim*.

44. Cortés, pp. 8-24.

45. Cortés, p. 30; Sierra, pp. 53-62.

46. In a conversation with me in 1976, at Idaho State University, playwright Luis Valdéz acknowledged that his characterization of Doña Marina was historically invalid.

47. Sierra, p. 55.

48. Díaz, pp. 176-77.