

TLAXCALAN INDIANS IN NEW MEXICO

By Stanley A. Lucero, M.A.T.

Several years ago I saw this comment in The Spanish Archives of New Mexico, Volume One:

“The “*Britos*” were “*Tlascalan Indians.*” The “*Analco*” district surrounds the old chapel of San Miguel. “*Analco*” means, “*the other side of the river.*” (Twitchell, 1914, p. 36)

These few words have led me on a search to find out more about the Tlaxcalan Indians. On one of my few trips to New Mexico, I decided to go to Santa Fe to find the Analco district and to get more information from the museums about the Tlaxcalan Indians.



Figure 1 - Santa Fe Map showing San Miguel Chapel

I found the San Miguel Chapel in the middle of the Analco district next to the Brito house (the oldest house in Santa Fe). I went to several museums and found they had never heard of any Tlaxcalan Indians in Santa Fe. I finally found someone who remembered seeing an article. He went into the back rooms of the Division of Anthropology at the Museum Hills and brought me a copy of the article “Tlascalans in the Spanish Borderlands.” (Simmons, April 1964)

It seems that the existence of Tlaxcalan Indians in New Mexico is a controversial theory. However, I have found a few items of interest that have convinced me that some of our New Mexico ancestors are Tlaxcalans:

- ✓ They accompanied the Spaniards;
- ✓ They received concessions granted to them by the Spaniards;
- ✓ They were interested in turquoise;

✓ And they were weavers.

The Tlaxcalans accompanied the Spaniards and were granted concessions

So, first of all, who are the Tlaxcalans – Tlascalans - Tlaxcaltecas? They were a Pre-Columbian nation from Central Mexico that had never been conquered by the Aztecs. They spoke Nahuatl and lived in the area now called the state of Tlaxcala east of Mexico City. They allied themselves with Cortes to defeat the Aztecs in 1521.



Figure 2 - Contract between Spain & Tlaxcalan Indians in Mexico

Photo courtesy of Newberry Library, Chicago IL

“In 1521, the Tlaxcalans and Spanish defeated their common enemy, the Aztecs. In return, the Spanish awarded the Tlaxcalans special rights and privileges, and the Tlaxcalans supported Spanish efforts to integrate Indians farther north into the colonial system. By the late 16th century, they had established colonies as far north as New Mexico.” (Smithsonian)

The Tlaxcalans joined the Spaniards in the conquest of the Americas. Some went to Texas to San Juan Bautista near Eagle Pass and to the San Saba Mission, some went south to Central and South America, and some came to New Mexico. (TSHA)

Following Oñate’s battles with the New Mexico Indians and his infamous order to cut off one foot from each of the captured Indians (Perez de Villagra, 1992, p. xxxix), the San Gabriel del Yunque settlers split up into two factions. One of these factions has been called the “Loyalists.” I’ve often wondered what happened to those who disagreed with Oñate. Here we find that some of the Tlaxcalans escaped to the Zuni.

“Some of the natives that the Spaniards took with them as slaves and guides in their quest escaped, for example, the Tlascalans who were taken in by the Zuni in New Mexico.” (Rodriguez)

The “special rights and privileges” awarded to the Tlaxcalans include some important concessions of importance to the Analco district of Santa Fe. The Tlaxcalans would become hidalgos in the conquered lands, settle in their own barrios, bear arms and ride horses, be free from alcabala (sales tax) and sisa (excise tax), and no Spaniard could *“take or buy any solar [building house lot] within the Tlaxcalan districts.”* (Milford, 1995)

The Tlascalans also served as scouts for the Spanish in Texas as evidenced by this Texas Online comment. *“A Tlaxcalan was with Antonio de Espejo in Trans-Pecos Texas and New Mexico in 1582-1583. In 1688 a Tlaxcalan scout was sent by the governor of Coahuila to check on René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle's colony on the Texas coast, and this same Tlaxcalan reported the presence of Jean Jarry, a survivor of the La Salle expedition, among Coahuiltecan Indians near the Rio Grande.”* (TSHA) (Simmons, April 1964, p. 104)

The Chamuscado party that explored the upper Rio Grande in the 1580s may have had some Tlaxcalan scouts. *“The expedition named the district around Taos Nueva Tlascalala perhaps in honor of the homeland of one of its members.”* (Simmons, April 1964, p. 107)

Simmons also mentions Gregorio de Tlascalala with Antonio de Espejo in 1582. *“Antonio de Espejo on his sally into New Mexico in 1582 brought with him an Indian known as Gregorio de Tlascalala, a fine soldier who possessed the talent of carving new gunstocks for the Spaniard from the durable tornillo wood.”* (Simmons, April 1964, p. 108)

Another mention is made of a Tlaxcalan assistant to one of the Franciscans with Oñate. *“At least one of the Franciscans with Oñate, it is recorded, brought a Tlascalan assistant from the south, and others may have done likewise.”* (Simmons, April 1964, p. 108)

According to the essay “La Migración Tlaxcalteca Del Siglo XVI,” the Tlaxcalteca founded the Mission of San Antonio and the Villa de San Andrés in Texas and also Albuquerque, Analco, and Las Cruces in New Mexico. This provided a route to connect Mexico City to Nueva España via *“El Camino Real de Tierra Dentro.”* (Delgadillo Torres)

Turquoise

The Tlaxcalans accompanied Oñate in 1598 to San Gabriel del Yunque as soldiers and servants. The turquoise mines located at Cerro Chalchiquite near Santa Fe were mined by the Tlaxcalans. *“The testimony taken at San Gabriel on July 28, 1600, mentioned that a half dozen Spanish men had started mining in the Cerrillos Hills with the help of members of their households and "servants" (Tlascalans).”* (Milford, 1995)

In a website about the Cerrillos Turquoise mines the following comment is made about the name of the Cerro Chalchiquite. *“The early Spanish visitors to New Mexico did not value the mineral -*

- there is no "Cerro Turquesa" -- but their central-Mexico allies and fellow-travelers, primarily Nahuatl-speaking Tlascalans, esteemed turquoise above all other stones. Hence, we have inherited through the Spanish records the Tlascalan name for this 'turquoise hill'." (World Famous Cerrillos Turquoise)



Figure 3 - Rio Grande Blanket, Trampas, New Mexico, c 1870
International Folk Art Foundation

Weaving

The Tlaxcalans were also accomplished weavers. They adapted their cotton and plant fiber weaving techniques to weave the wool from the Spanish sheep. Today's New Mexico weavers follow in the footsteps of the Tlaxcalans.

"The creation of Saltillo-style textiles is attributed to the Tlaxcalans, indigenous people of central Mexico. Before Spanish contact in 1519, the Tlaxcalans wove sophisticated textiles on backstrap looms, relying on cotton and other plant fibers for their raw materials. Soon after contact, they began producing equally outstanding textiles using wool and treadle looms adopted from the Spanish." (Smithsonian)

The Rio Grande blanket produced by the New Mexico weavers has been attributed to Tlaxcalan origin.

"The Saltillo sarape was a finely woven textile, very expensive, and widely admired throughout Mexico. The weavers of the Rio Grande blanket adopted many of the motifs of the Saltillo sarape originated in the state of Coahuila, and was originally woven by Tlaxcalan Indians. The origins of the design are unclear; some think the motifs are Moorish, others claim Chinese. The serrate diamonds and figures are probably of Tlaxcalan origin." (Castro, 2000)

In 1807 the Santa Fe government asked Juan and Ignacio Bazán from Mexico City to come and teach weaving. *"The Bazáns are thought to have introduced designs and techniques developed by Tlascalan Indians in Saltillo, Mexico, to the weavers in communities surrounding Santa Fe."* (Stephenson, 2006)

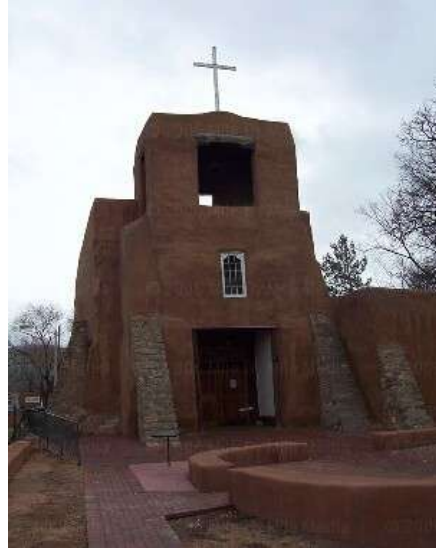


Figure 4 - San Miguel Church, Santa Fe, New Mexico

The Analco district and the San Miguel Chapel

The University of Arizona Library website lists 5 churches in ancient Santa Fe including “*The Church of San Miguel, first church erected, in the ward of Analco, and primarily intended for Indians, including the Tlascalans from Old Mexico.*” (University of Arizona Library)

The Church of San Miguel “*which claims to be the oldest place of worship in the United States, and as such is visited by thousands of tourists every year, is situated on the south side of the Santa Fé River, in what is always called in the old archives, the “Barrio de Analco”—the ward of Analco. “Analco” is an Aztec word which became incorporated into the Castilian of New Spain, meaning “on the other side” or “beyond the river.” On the map of Santa Fé made by Joseph de Urrutia about the year 1768, all this part of the town situated on the south side of the river, is marked “Pueblo or Ward of Analco, which owes its origin to the Tlascalans who accompanied the first Spaniards who came for the conquest of the kingdom.*” (University of Arizona Library)

The University of Arizona Library website also goes on to explain that “*it was more important to build a church for the Indians than for their own countrymen, and so these Tlascalan Indians took precedence in this matter, even of the Spanish officials themselves.*” (University of Arizona Library)

The barrio of Analco was formed when Oñate moved to Santa Fe in 1610.

“*Oñate brought with him 130 soldiers, many of whom traveled from Mexico with their wives and Indian servants. It is likely that Mexican Indians, both servants and soldiers, outnumbered the Spaniards. In 1610, when the capital villa of Santa Fe was built as the main population nucleus of the colony, a special barrio (district) was set aside for these Indian colonists, who were referred to as Tlaxcalan.*” (Swadesh, 1974, p. 12)

Malcom Ebright claims that the genízaros replaced the Tlascalan Indians in Analco and thus attributes Analco as the “*first Genízaro community.*” He goes on to say that “*During the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, the Pueblos burned the church of San Miguel and almost wiped out the Analco settlement on the first day of the revolt, unleashing particular fury there. This may have occurred due to Pueblo Indian jealousy over the special treatment the Spaniards accorded these Indians from New Spain, some of whom are said to have had Pueblo servants.*” (Ebright)

After the 1680 Pueblo Revolt the Tlaxcalans went with the Spaniards to Guadalupe del Paso and some of the Tlaxcalans returned in 1693 and helped rebuild the San Miguel Church. The question is “Who are the Tlaxcalans?”

The Britos

Let’s go back to Twitchell’s comment about “*the Britos were Tlascalan Indians.*” Here are Fray Angelico Chavez’s findings about the Britos. (Chavez, 1992)

On page 12 Fray Angelico Chavez speculates that the Britos might be “*descendants of the Indian slaves which Brito brought along.*”

On page 13 he states “*Juan Brito and his wife, Antonia Ursula Duran, had lived in Santa Fe before the Rebellion.*”

On pages 149-150 He states: “*Juan Deleon Brito, son of Juan Brito and Antonia Ursula Duran, had married Sebastiana Madrid at Guadalupe del Paso in 1692. At Santa Fe, on January 10, 1694, Brito, now a widower, married a Maria Granillo, of unknown parentage. He was a member of the Conquistadora Confraternity; he and a Diego Brito made adobes for the reconstruction of San Miguel Chapel in Santa Fe in 1720. ... Brito’s ancestral property was in the Analco section of Santa Fe.*”

On page 348 Chavez writes “*Juan De Leon Brito (NMF, 149, 150), Mexican Indian and “poblador” of Analco in Santa Fe, and his wife Maria de los Reyes Granillo.*”

In 1713 Juan de Leon Brito and his wife Maria Granillo sold their house: “*... to Juana de la Cruz, widow of Joseph de la Virgen. Santa Fe, November 25, 1713. Conveyance. Before Juan Garsia de la Rivas. Refers to a house standing in 1713 in the Barrio of Analco, Santa Fe.*” (Twitchell, 1914, p. 67)

Juana Gregoria Brito, daughter of Juan de Leon Brito and Maria de los Reyes Granillo married Juan de Arguello on 26 May 1715 in Santa Fe.

In 1751, Juan de Arguello “*led his sons-in-law and their families from Santa Fe to establish this lonely and dangerous new outpost.*” (Hillerman, 1993, p. 31) Trampas was settled by the original 12 families as a buffer town between the Spaniards and the Indians on what is now known as the “High Road to Taos.”

The Santo Thomas Apostol del Rio de las Trampas Land Grant was awarded by Governor Thomas Veléz Cachupín on July 1, 1751 to twelve families: Juan de Arguello, Juan José de Arguello, José de Aragón, Salvador Baca, Antonio Domínguez, Juan García, Eusebio Leyba, Luis Francisco Leyba, Vicente Lucero, Melchor Rodríguez, Pedro Felipe Rodríguez, and Ygnacio Vargas. (Arguello, 1994, p. 13) (Twitchell, 1914, pp. 289-293)

Remember the 1521 concessions that the Tlaxcalans were awarded by the Spaniards? (Milford, 1995) Note how they apply to the Britos and their descendants:

- ✓ *The Tlaxcalan settlers in the Chichimeca country [northern frontier] and their descendants shall be hidalgos in perpetuity, free from tributes, taxes (pecho and alcabala), and personal service for all time.*
- ✓ *They are not to be compelled to settle with Spaniards, but will be allowed to settle apart from them and have their own distinct district [barrios]. No Spaniard can take or buy any solar [building house lot] within the Tlaxcalan districts.*
- ✓ *The lands and estancias granted the individual Tlaxcalans and the community as a whole are never to be alienated because of nonoccupation.*
- ✓ *The markets in the new settlements shall be free, exempt from sales tax (alcabala), from excise taxes (sisa), and from any other form of taxation.*
- ✓ *The principals [chiefs and officers] of Tlaxcala who go to the new settlements, and their descendants, shall be permitted to carry arms and ride saddled horses without penalty.*

As you are doing your genealogy research, look for the soldiers and servants who live in the barrios outside of the Spanish settlements and you might find some Tlaxcalan ancestors.

For more information about me and my ancestors go to <http://www.lucrito.net/genealogy.html>.

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