

## **Reconsideration on "Flowery War" in Pre-Hispanic Mexico.**

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Before the Spanish conquest in the 16th century, the Aztecs had developed a highly elaborate urban civilization in the lake region of the Mexican high plateau, in which successive urban centers flourished, including Teotihuacan (200–750 A. D.), Tula (900–1150 A. D.) and the Aztecs' capital, Tenochtitlan (1325–1521 A. D.). It was not until the 13th century that the Aztecs appeared as one of numerous immigrant groups from the northern part of the region. Within a few centuries, however, the Aztecs grew into the most prominent group and dominated a large part of Mesoamerica.

One of the scholarly topics in previous Mesoamerican studies is the Aztec "Flowery War," which many scholars have considered as a key to understand necessary relationships between the Aztecs' political, economic prosperity and their military affairs. According to the scholars, it is an institutional war, held with Aztecs' rival city-states such as Tlaxcala and Cholula whose strongholds were (today's) the State of Puebla. It is also said that the war did not have an enlargement of the empire for its object, but an acquisition of prisoners for the ritual of human sacrifice which was very popular at the time. While a new opinion has been proposed recently, by which the origin of this curious custom can be attributed to the Chalco, its fundamental understanding has not changed yet. What is common in the former investigators is that they all regard the "flowery war" as an institutional activity, and try to clarify its origin or its legitimate (original) forms. In other words, they understand the "flowery war" as if it were baseball or wrestling.

A closer examination of primary and secondary sources will show, however, such an understanding is not supportable anymore. Now, I propose that

the discussion should not be on the origin nor the legitimate forms of what is called “flowery war,” but on a context in which a given war has been described as “flowery.” To begin with, a war necessarily have varied dimensions, and it allows a political, economic, social, cultural, and religious explanations, and my point is that when a war is called “flowery” in Aztec tradition, it is suggesting its transcendental and religious aspect. To prove the point I will utilize the 16 th centuries’ written documents, such as Sahagun’s Florentine Codex, Tezozomoc’s *Cronica Mexicana*, Duran’s *Historia*, etc. These materials will show how the previous understandings are insufficient and problematic. In the last chapter, I examine series of the Nahuatl poems, edited by Garibay, which will help us to understand a symbolic meaning of the word “flower,” used in the context of war.

In the last analysis, it will be shown that a war for the Aztecs was not only a secular activity, but it could contain a symbolic, transcendental and sacred element described “flowery.”