

Primary Source: *Sierra Texupan Codex*

Introduction

The *Sierra Texupan Codex* is a pictographic manuscript - or handwritten book - compiled by indigenous writers and artists. It was used by Mixtec people in the town of Tuxupan, in the Oaxacan region of New Spain, to declare their income and expenses between 1551 and 1564. The manuscript is composed of 62 sheets of paper. It is bound in codex, that is, with pages attached to a spine, similar to a modern printed book. On the left side of each page are pictographs while on the right side is text in the language of government in the former Aztec Empire, Nahuatl, using the Latin alphabet used by the Spanish (and by most Europeans).



If you are familiar with Spanish, you might be able to recognize some Spanish words used here and there as well. The right most column includes costs either in Arabic numerals (like 1, 2, 3 4, etc.) or Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, etc.) and a symbol indicating the type of currency paid or received. This codex is one of the best sources of information on the local production of silk in New Spain. It makes frequent references to the silk industry, including hiring Spaniards as consultants for raising the silkworms, building houses for silkworms, paying people to tend to the worms, purchasing items needed for the industry, and selling the silk to Spanish buyers.

To view all 62 images of the manuscript, check out these sites:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/codex-sierra-texupan/wAHfIL-WL-zmg?hl=en>

http://www.bidilafagua.buap.mx:8180/dig/browse/book_cover.jsp?key=book_9c680a.xml&id=docs_patrim

The translations all come from Kevin Terraciano, *Codex Sierra: A Nahuatl-Mixtec Book of Accounts from Colonial Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021).

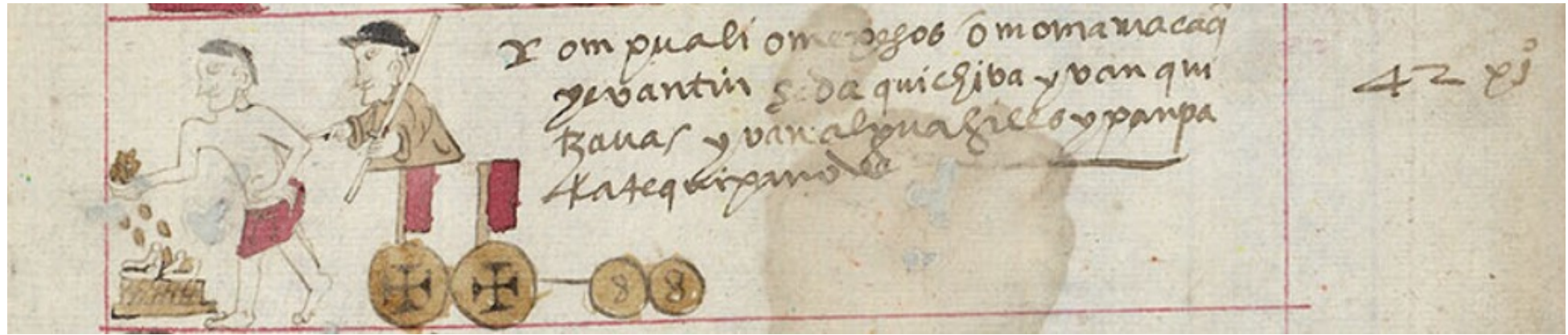


Discussion Questions:

- Who made these records and who were the targeted audiences?
- From these records, how was the production of silk in New Spain organized? Was it family based, community based, or church based?
- What can you tell about the relationships between native communities and the colonial society in the Viceroy of New Spain from this Codex?
- What comparison to do you see between what this source tells us about silk production in New Spain and what Pictures of Tilling and Weaving tell us about silk production in Ming China?

Plate 9:

*Silk Workers Feed
Mulberry Leaves to
Silkworms, 1553*



Translation of the text:

"42 pesos was distributed to those who make and spin (reel) silk and the alguaciles [colonial officials], for working."

Plate 37:

The Purchase of Silk
Seed, 1561



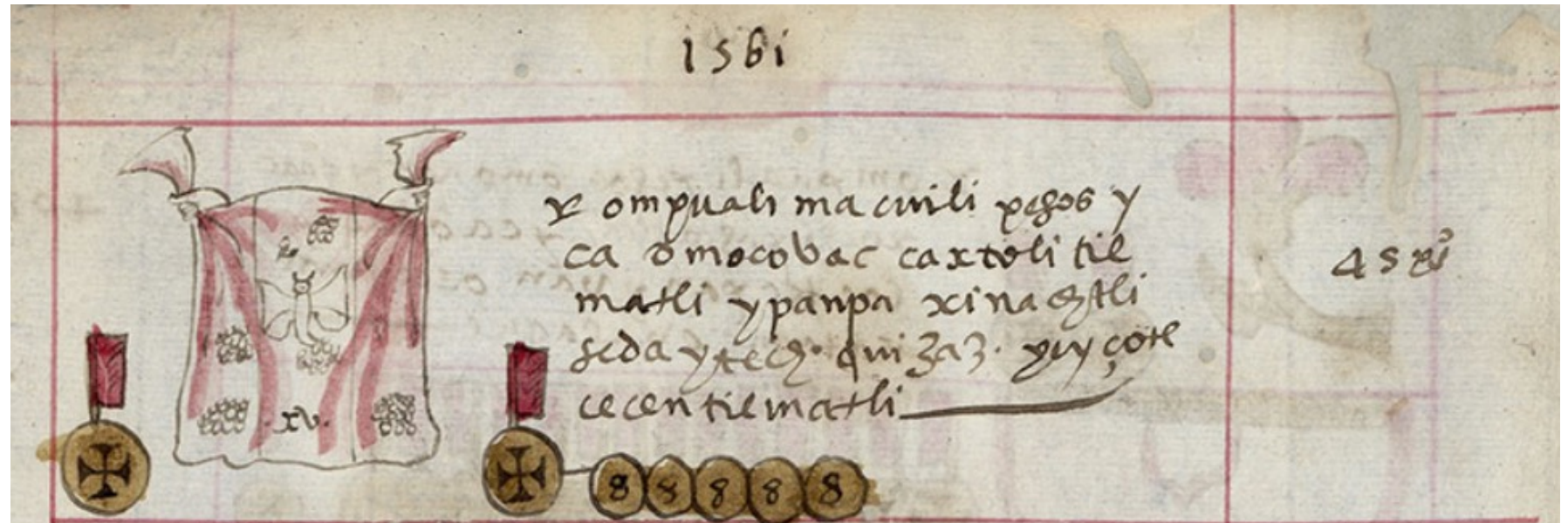
Translation of the texts:

"216 pesos handed was given to the lord, Juan de Villafañe, for eight pounds of silk grain [seeds] that was purchased from him. It was done for 27 pesos per pound."

"23 pesos was given [to the church] for one pound of tithe silk grain."

Plate 38:

*The Purchase of
Blankets and Silk
Seeds, 1561*

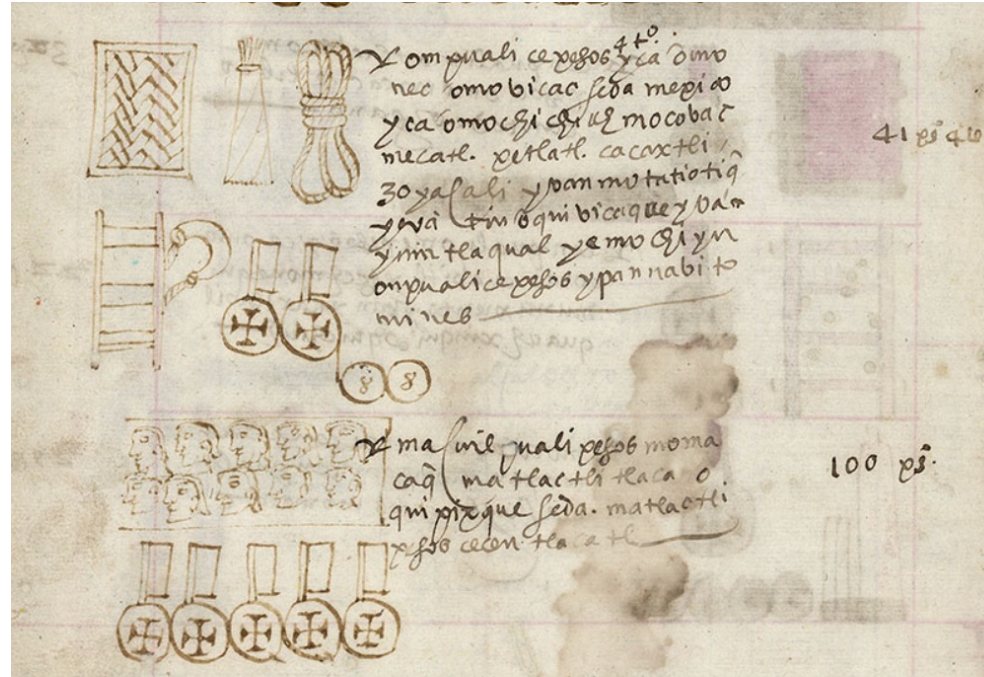


Translation of text:

"45 cloths were purchased for 45 pesos so that the silk grain [silk seeds] will hatch on them. Each cloth is [made of] three pieces."

Plate 44:

Wages, 1561



Translation of the text:

"41 person and 4 tomines [a type of silver coin] was needed when the silk was taken to Mexico [City]. So that it was done [in order to do it], rope, mats, packframes, and palm baskets were purchased. And those who carried it were guided. And for food. In all it is 41 pesos and 4 tomines."

"100 pesos was given to the people who guard the silk; 10 pesos for each person."

Plate 47:

Tithing and Selling the Crop, 1561



Translation of the text:

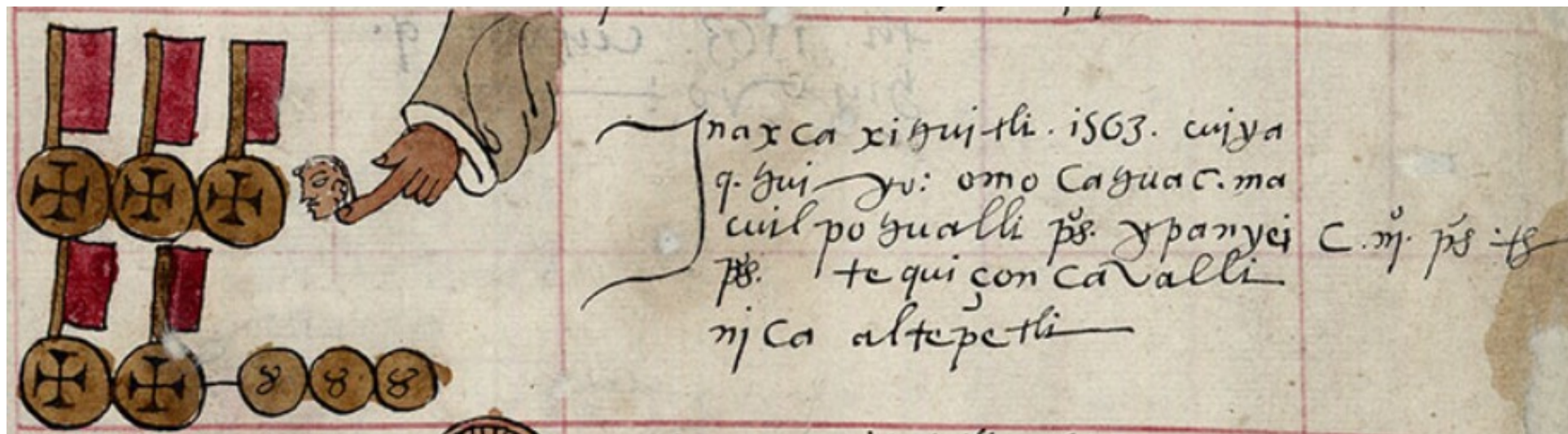
"In the year 1561, the (Mixtec) year 2 Flint 3 House (*cuiya gamao*)^[1], the silk was produced here in the altepetl.^[2] The tithe and a Spaniard's property were taken out, and what remained was the property of the altepetl. Ten pounds of silk were taken out and given to [the Spaniard], he sold it in Mexico. Six hundred and ninety pounds of silk, all the very property of this altepetl, was sold for 4 pesos and 4 tomines per pound. All the silver belongs to, is the property of, the altepetl: 3,105 pesos. All of it is the property of the altepetl. This year it produced."

^[1] This language refers to the Mixtec calendar system.

^[2] The local Mixtec community.

Plate 55:

Profits, 1563



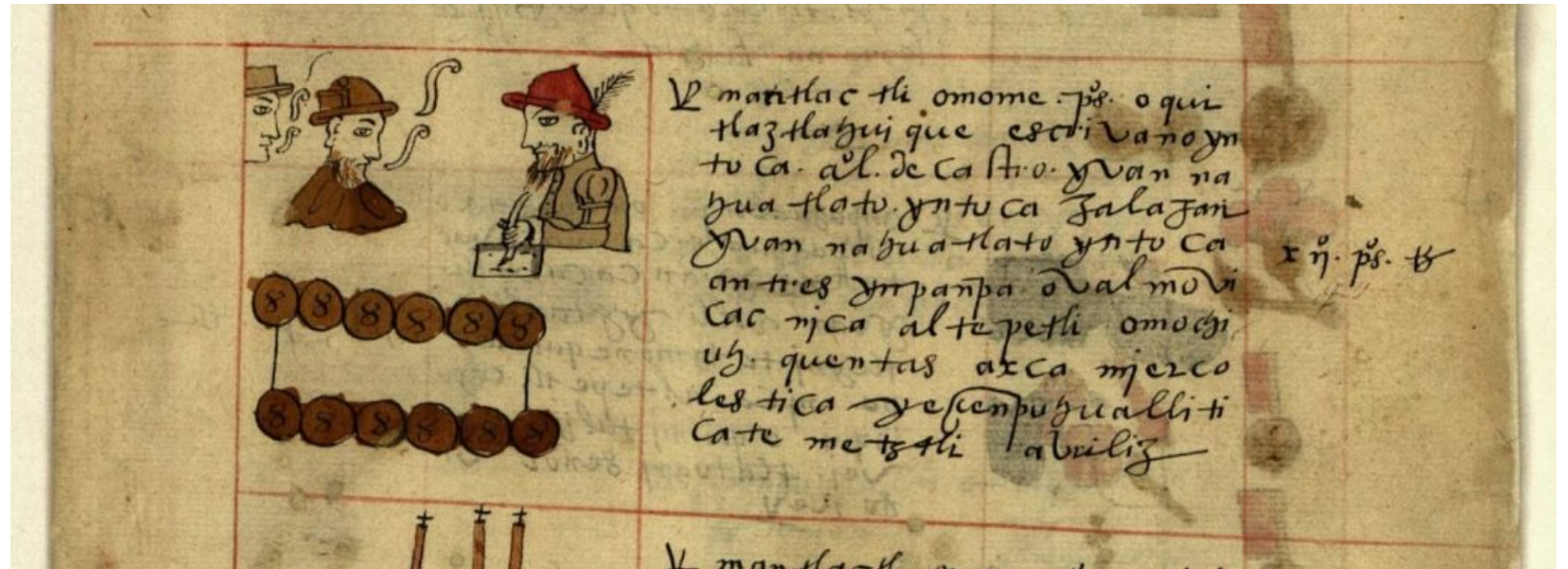
Translation of the text:

"Now in the year of 1563, the (Mixtec) year 5 Reed (cuiya quehuiyo), there remained 103 pesos of tribute surplus here in the alterpetl."^[1]

^[1] The depiction of a head being held by a hand indicates excess money. This symbol comes from Mixtec conventions that connect the word for surplus, "tequihoncavalli," with the image of a head

Plate 57:

Wages and
Transactions. 1563

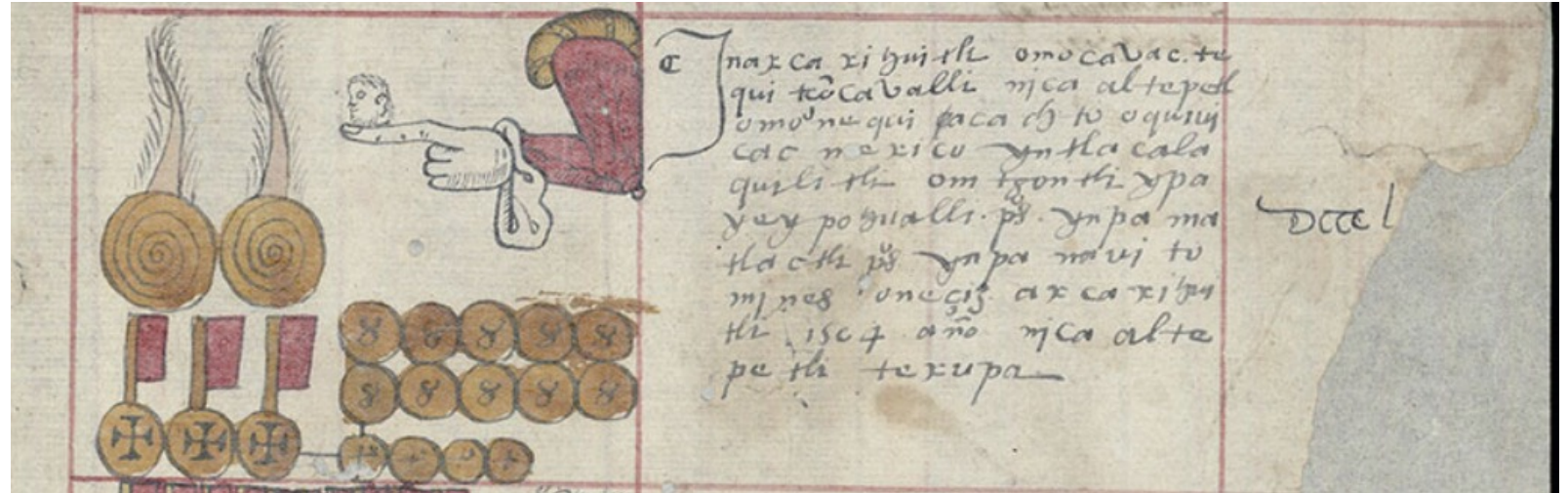


Translation of the text:

"They paid 12 pesos to the notary named Alonso de Castro and the interpreter named Salazar and the interpreter named Andrés because they came here to the altepetl [and] accounts were don't today, in Wednesday, twentieth [day of] the month [of] April."

Plate 61:

Incomes from Silk Raising, 1564



Translation of the text:

"Here in the altepetl of Texupa, in the year of Jesus Christ Our Savior's birth, 1564 years, 1564 year (año), the [Mixtec] year 6 Flint (cuiya ñuncuxi). The governor don Juan Bautista rules here in this year when the silk was produced. First the tithe was taken out, and the property of a Spaniard named Francisco Martin. 230 and a half pounds of silk that belongs to the altepetl remained. It is the property of the altepetl; some pounds were sold for the price of 5 pesos (per pound); and some [were sold] for the price of just 4 pesos. It yielded 1,067 pesos. It all enters the community chest in this year."