

# MACUILXOCHITL

(BORN 1453)

MACUILXOCHITL WAS A POETESS OF THE MEXICA (AZTEC) PEOPLE. BORN OR ADOPTED INTO A NOBLE FAMILY IN THE CITY OF TENOCHTITLAN, SHE WROTE THE FAMOUS *MACUILXOCHITZIN ICUIC* (SONG OF MACUILXOCHITL) ABOUT A VICTORY OVER THE MATLATZINCA AND OTOMI STATES.

"I raise my songs,  
I, Macuilxochitl,  
with these I gladden  
the Giver of Life,  
may the dance begin!"

MACUILXOCHITL, OR FIVE-FLOWER, MAY HAVE BEEN NAMED AFTER THE AZTEC DUAL-GENDERED GOD/GODDESS OF ART, SONG, AND DANCE, WHO HAD THE SAME NAME.

SHE GREW UP IN THE CITY OF TENOCHTITLAN DURING THE RULE OF THE GREAT KING AXAYACATZIN, WHO CONQUERED MANY NEIGHBORS. TRIBUTE FLOWED INTO TENOCHTITLAN FROM CONQUERED CITIES: FOOD, FEATHERS, PRECIOUS STONES, AND DECORATIVE ITEMS LIKE BUTTERFLY WINGS.

"Axayacatzin, you  
have conquered the  
city of Tlacatepec!  
There went to make  
forays your flowers,  
your butterflies.  
With this we rejoice."

AS A NOBLEWOMAN, SHE WITNESSED AXAYACATZIN PREPARE FOR WAR AGAINST THE MATLATZINCA AND OTOMI. SHE WROTE ABOUT HIS PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.

"He puts the eagle shields on the arms  
of the men, there where the war rages,  
in the middle of the plain."

"There in Xiquipilco was  
Axayacatl wounded  
in the leg by  
an Otomi."

"The Otomi was  
afraid, he said:

"Now truly they will kill me!  
Then he brought a piece of  
wood and a deerskin, with  
these he bowed before  
Axayacatl."

ALTHOUGH AXAYACATL WON  
THE BATTLE, HE WAS WOUNDED  
BY AN OTOMI WARRIOR, WHO  
WAS BROUGHT BEFORE HIM.

THE WARRIOR, THOUGH FEARFUL, BROUGHT TRIBUTE TO AXAYACATL. IN HER SONG, MACUILXOCHITL CONCLUDES BY TELLING US THAT THIS, AND THE PLEAS OF OTOMI WOMEN, LED THE KING TO SPARE THE WARRIOR.

WE DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT MACUILXOCHITL'S LATER LIFE, EXCEPT THAT SHE WAS ALSO THE MOTHER OF A PRINCE, CUAUHTLAPALTZIN. BUT HER EPIC SONG HELPS US UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE VALUES OF THE AZTEC STATE—SUCH AS MERCY—AND ILLUSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIBUTE IN BOTH THESE VALUES AND THE ECONOMY OF THE REGION.