

**LOST WORLDS AND FORSAKEN TRIBES:
The Fantasy Heritage of Indian Identity and Mexica-Chicano Nationalism
on the California Central Coast**

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“Transculturation...implies a cultural interaction that forces us to consider the
Important role played by marginal or colonized peoples in the production of
discourses about them.” Daniel Cooper Alarcon (1997:XV)

EXCEPT FROM DR. MENDOZA'S PRESENTATION IN WASHINGTON D.C., DECEMBER, 2001

...Case Study 2: Neo-Mexica Discourse as Social Action

One other dimension of the neo-nativist or neo-Mexica reformation movement centers on the use of revisionist visions of Mexica Aztec culture to see through social action and activist discourse. In this case, those individuals interviewed and or otherwise encountered as a result of this research specifically employed the newfound revisionist histories of the Mexica Aztec to foment a discourse structured to modeling behavior among Chicano and other Latino and Latina youth.

One individual who “discovered” Quetzalcoatl in much the same way that born-again Christians “found” or “discovered” Jesus, taught himself the Nahuatl language and has adopted the quasi-legal surname of Mazatzin from the word Mazatl for deer – a day in the Mexica Aztec calendar. Mazatzin has since devoted much of the past ten years of his life to “cleaning up my act” and providing the neo-Mexica model as a point of discourse for affecting change in disaffected youth populations and clique and gang cohorts. Mazatzin now travels the state of California seeking out at risk youth who will consider his spiritual message of Aztec revivalism. In much the same way that the previous case study on personal discourse rendered the outlines of a personal spiritual transformation replete with Aztec prayers, tattoos, ceremonialism, and both public and clandestine meetings, Mazatzin has drawn from the Aztec discourse on death and human sacrifice a revisionist discourse for a message on life’s most precious essence...rebirth and renewal in all things large and small.

During the spring semester of 2001 I invited Mazatzin to speak before my Aztec Civilization class. His topic was the spiritual and eternal message of the Tonalamatl or Sacred Almanac or zodiac of the Mexica Aztec people. Needless to say, Mazatzin’s presentation was awesome in its detail, ritual and his articulate and studied use of the Aztec language. To open the class, Mazatzin engaged the entire class of thirty students in a Nahuatl language prayer with copal incense devoted to acknowledging the four directions. In additions, many of the artifacts used by Mazatzin were admixtures of Aztec origin and North American Indian ceremonial instruments. Upon concluding his presentation, Mazatzin offered up a bevy of printed color Aztec calendars, zodiac star charts, and related paraphernalia for interpreting one’s respective fate according to the Mexica Aztec system of calculating one’s own fate based on the stars.

Ultimately, Case Study 2 is not untypical of those emerging “elder” or self-taught or self-professed neo-Mexica spiritual guides so often referred to by those in the throes of articulating a personal discourse on neo-Mexica identity. Clearly, this latter engagement with Indianness is born of personal and collective discovery by individuals whose acknowledgment of their Indianness serves as a powerful dynamic for individual transformation at the level of personal belief, values, and cultural transactions in both individual and collective contexts.

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