

Myth of the Flower Wars between the Mexica Triple Alliance and the Tlaxcalan alliance

The idea appears to have originated from the Mexica themselves, and Moctezuma, who insisted that the Mexica could have eliminated the Tlaxcalans if they really wanted to, but that they simply wanted to train their young soldiers, and have sacrifices for their temples. This idea seems much easier for the Mexica leadership, than admitting that their armies were getting defeated in battle!

The Triple Alliance army was not acting as if it was intentionally allowing a hostile power to survive near its own borders:

The Battle of Atlixco (around 1503) saw 100,000 Triple Alliance soldiers march against the city of Huexotzinco (an ally of the Tlaxcalans); more than 40,000 (combined?) died in this battle.

Probably in 1506, the next major battle against Huexotzinco saw 8000-10,000 Triple Alliance deaths; when Moctezuma heard the reports of this battle, he “wept bitterly and complained about the gods.”

A later battle was mentioned, after which the Triple Alliance force was exhausted until an emergency levy of soldiers was brought in, to continue the fighting.

Another battle took place after this, in which “half the men [from Tenochtitlan] had died and the other half had been captured.” After this, Moctezuma was so furious with his commanding officers that he stripped them of their insignia and revoked their luxury privileges.

There may have been some such arrangement between the Triple Alliance, and that led by Tlaxcala (why else would people have believed this and repeated the story), but this could not be the explanation for most of the fighting between the two alliances, nor does it support the idea that the Aztecs never wanted to kill anyone in battle, but primarily fought battles to keep them alive. When Aztec soldiers were getting killed in battle, and occasionally defeated, they had no problem with killing enemy soldiers—lots of them. Of course, captives would be sacrificed in their temples, but this does not mean that they never tried to kill anyone!