

AP U. S. History Summer Reading 2023



The AP U. S. History summer assignment is to read

several works in preparation for our opening discussion of the history of the Americas from 1491 to 1607. You will be reading excerpts from a secondary source on American Indians prior to contact and the Spanish, French, and Dutch explorations in the Americas as well as primary sources concerning the Spanish settlement of the Americas. These works allow us to delve into this time period with greater depth when classes begin in the fall.

Your first reading is Part I (Encounters) of *American Colonies* by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Alan Taylor. Your second reading is a packet of primary sources on Spanish settlement. Read these sources carefully; you will have an exam on this reading on the second day of school. This exam will count for roughly 10% of your first semester grade.

Study questions to guide your reading follow. These questions are to encourage you to reflect upon broader themes and assist you in critically analyzing the text. They will greatly aid you in preparing for the exam if answered thoughtfully and independently. You may turn in your handwritten study guide preparation for extra credit on the first day of school. I will return them by the end of the day to help with studying.

A reminder that Advanced Placement U. S. History is a college-level survey class; therefore, students are expected to accept the intellectual challenges that come with the course. Every student is expected to complete the assigned text and prepare their own analysis of the reading. On the exam, depth of analysis and a strong use of evidence will be the keys to success. Superficial answers lacking either analytical depth or supporting evidence from the texts will be graded accordingly.

I look forward to working with you next year. If you have any questions about your reading over the summer, please e-mail me at jcollins@bmchs.org. I hope you have a great summer and enjoy your reading!

American Colonies Reading Guide

Part I: Encounters

Chapter 1: Natives, 13,000 B. C. - A. D. 1492

Migration

How and why did people first move to the Americas (according to existing evidence)?

What impact did the first settlers (the so-called “Paleo Indians”) have on the environment of the Americas? What impact did the environment have on them?

Horticulture

How did the spread of maize cultivation support economic development, settlement, advanced irrigation, and social diversification among societies?



Hohokan and Anasazi/Mound Builders

How was the diversity of Native American life related to climate and environmental diversity?

Beliefs

Compare and contrast Native American and European culture on the eve of contact.

Chapter 2: Colonizers, 1400-1800

Europe

What changes in European life and culture aided exploration?

How did changes in Europe provide both motives and means for exploration?

Columbus

How does the myth of Christopher Columbus’s voyage conflict with the historical reality?

Who were the European predecessors of Columbus? Why were these voyages a “dead end”?

What was the significance of the Treaty of Tordesillas?

Hispaniola/Epidemics/Food/Ecological Imperialism

Explain (with great depth) how the exchanging peoples, animals, plants, diseases, and ideas shaped **both** North American and European societies.

What is meant by the term *ecological imperialism*?

Chapter 3: New Spain, 1500-1600

What was the “Black Legend” and, in your estimation, how deserved was this reputation?

Conquests

What motivated the Spanish movement to the Aztec empire? What advantages did the Spanish possess in their wars against the Aztecs?

Conquistadores

What was the *adelantado* system?

What were the themes of Spanish emigrants to the New World?

How did the Spanish use the *encomienda* system?

What was the *requerimiento* system?

Consolidation

Describe the role and tactics of missionary friars in Spanish settlements. How successful were conversion attempts in the Spanish colonies?

How did Mexicans understand the Spanish conquest?

Colonists

What was the *Casta* system and what does it illustrate about Spanish rule?

Empire

What role did the political leadership of Spain exercise over its new empire?

Gold and Silver

What role precious metals played in Spanish expansion?

How did the newfound wealth of the Spanish prove to be a “mixed blessing”?

Chapter 4: The Spanish Frontier, 1530-1700

Compare the Spanish frontier to the core region of Spanish control. How was Northern New Spain similar to and different from the heart of the Spanish empire?

How and why did Florida become the focus of New Spain?

What was the role of the mission system in New Mexico?

What was the Pueblo Revolt? What was its significance?

Chapter 5: Canada and Iroquoia, 1500-1600

How did the French colonies differ from the Spanish colonies? The Dutch colonies?

How were the two American Indian groups of the area culturally different from one another? Why was the fur trade critical to the economic development of New France?

How did the fur trade change Indian culture?

Who were the *Five Nations* and what is significant about their presence in the region?

What was the role of disease in French expansion efforts?

What were the *mourning wars*? What was their significance?

How did French conversion efforts differ from Spanish conversion efforts?

What is meant by describing the French and American Indian relationship as one of *mutual dependency*?

Primary Sources Reading Guide

What were the Europeans' first impressions of the new lands and their inhabitants? How did this differ over time?

How did the American Indians respond to the Europeans and their culture? How do the Europeans interpret these responses?

How did extended contact with Native Americans foster debate among European leaders about how non-Europeans should be treated?

AP U. S. History
Summer Reading 2023
Primary Sources: Spanish Settlement

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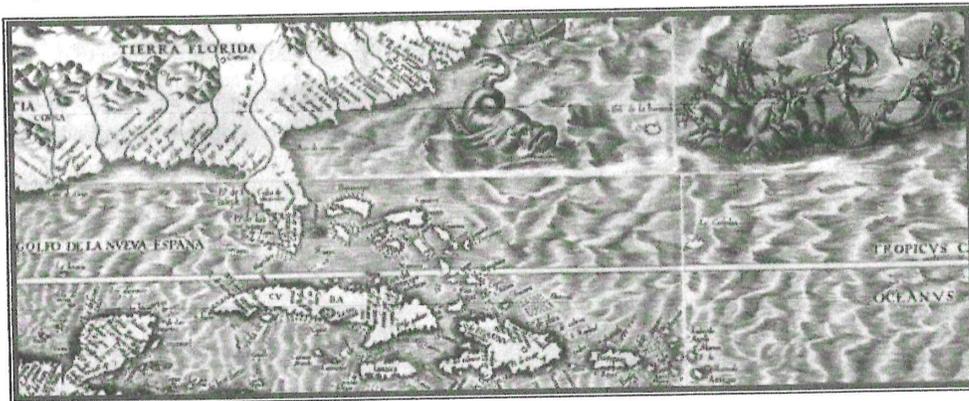
- Letter of Christopher Columbus on His First Voyage to America (1493)* pages 1-5
A letter from Christopher Columbus to Luis de Santangel, Treasurer of Aragon, who had funded much of Columbus's voyage. In the letter, he provides a brief account of the lands and peoples that he encountered.
- A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies, Bartolome de las Casas (1542)* pages 6-11
An account of Spanish settlement in the New World by the Spanish Dominican friar Bartolome de las Casas.
- Valladolid Debate, Juan Gines Sepulveda (1550)* page 12
An account of Spanish settlement in the New World by Spanish philosopher Juan Gines Sepulveda.
- Mexica (Aztec) and Tlaxcala Accounts of the Spanish Conquest (1555-1578)* pages 13-23
Native American accounts of the Spanish conquest of Mexico.

I heard from other Indians I had already taken that this land was an island, and thus followed the eastern coast for one hundred and seven leagues³ until I came to the end of it. From that point I saw another isle to the eastward, at eighteen leagues³ distance, to which I gave the name of Hispaniola.⁴ I went thither and followed its northern coast to the east, as I had done in Juana, one hundred and seventy-eight leagues eastward, as in Juana. This island, like all the others, is most extensive. It has many ports along the seacoast excelling any in Christendom — and many fine, large, flowing rivers. The land there is elevated, with many mountains and peaks incomparably higher than in the centre isle. They are most beautiful, of a thousand varied forms, accessible, and full of trees of endless varieties, so high that they seem to touch the sky, and I have been told that they never lose their foliage. I saw them as green and lovely as trees are in Spain in the month of May. Some of them were covered with blossoms, some with fruit, and some in other conditions, according to their kind. The nightingale and other small birds of a thousand kinds were singing in the month of November when I was there. There were palm trees of six or eight varieties, the graceful peculiarities of each one of them being worthy of admiration as are the other trees, fruits and grasses. There are wonderful pine woods, and very extensive ranges of meadow land. There is honey, and there are many kinds of birds, and a great variety of fruits. Inland there are numerous mines of metals and innumerable people.

Hispaniola is a marvel. Its hills and mountains, fine plains and open country, are rich and fertile for planting and for pasturage, and for building towns and villages. The seaports there are incredibly fine, as also the magnificent rivers, most of which bear gold. The trees, fruits and grasses differ widely from those in Juana. There are many spices and vast mines of gold and other metals in this island. They have no iron, nor steel, nor weapons, nor are they fit for them, because although they are well-made men of commanding stature, they appear extraordinarily timid. The only arms [weapons] they have are sticks of cane, cut when in seed with a sharpened stick at the end, and they are afraid to use these. Often I have sent two or three men ashore to some town to converse with them, and the natives came out in great numbers, and as soon as they saw our men arrive, fled without a moment's delay although I protected them from all injury.

“Hispaniola is a marvel.”

At every point where I landed and succeeded in talking to them, I gave them some of everything I had — cloth and many other things — without receiving anything in return, but they are a hopelessly timid people. It is true that since they have gained more confidence and are losing this fear, they are so unsuspecting and so generous with what they possess, that no one who had not seen it would believe it. They never refuse anything that is asked for. They even offer it themselves, and show so much love that they would give their very hearts. Whether it be anything of great or small value, with any trifle of



³ The Spanish league was about 2.6 miles.

⁴ “C de SPANOLA” on the Gutiérrez map above (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic).

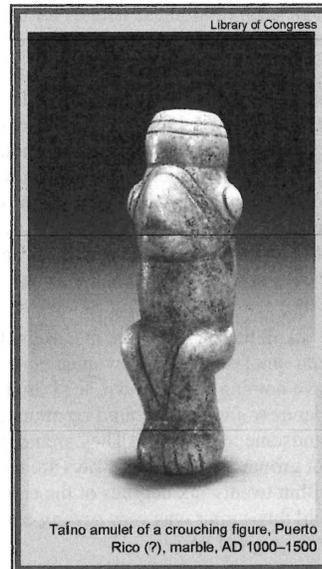
whatever kind, they are satisfied. I forbade worthless things being given to them, such as bits of broken bowls, pieces of glass, and old straps, although they were as much pleased to get them as if they were the finest jewels in the world. One sailor was found to have got for a leathern strap, gold of the weight of two and a half castellanos, and others for even more worthless things much more; while for a new *blancas* they would give all they had, were it two or three castellanos of pure gold or an arroba or two of spun cotton.⁵ Even bits of the broken hoops of wine casks they accepted, and gave in return what they had, like fools, and it seemed wrong to me. I forbade it, and gave a thousand good and pretty things that I had to win their love and to induce them to become Christians, and to love and serve their Highnesses and the whole Castilian nation, and help to get for us things they have in abundance, which are necessary to us.

They have no religion nor idolatry, except that they all believe power and goodness to be in heaven. They firmly believed that I, with my ships and men, came from heaven, and with this idea I have been received everywhere, since they lost fear of me. They are, however, far from being ignorant. They are most ingenious men, and navigate these seas in a wonderful way and describe everything well, but they never before saw people wearing clothes, nor vessels like ours. Directly I reached the Indies in the first isle I discovered, I took by force some of the natives, that from them we might gain some information of what there was in these parts; and so it was that we immediately understood each other, either by words or signs. They are still with me and still believe that I come from heaven. They were the first to declare this wherever I went, and the others ran from house to house, and to the towns around, crying out, "Come! come! and see the men from heaven!" Then all, both men and women, as soon as they were reassured about us, came, both small and great, all bringing something to eat and to drink, which they presented with marvelous kindness.

In these isles there are a great many canoes, something like rowing boats, of all sizes, and most of them are larger than an eighteen-oared galley. They are not so broad, as they are made of a single plank, but a galley could not keep up with them in rowing, because they go with incredible speed, and with these they row about among all these islands, which are innumerable, and carry on their commerce. I have seen some of these canoes with seventy and eighty men in them, and each had an oar. In all the islands I observed little difference in the appearance of the people, or in their habits and language, except that they understand each other, which is remarkable. Therefore I hope that their Highnesses will decide upon the conversion of these people to our holy faith, to which they seem much inclined.

I have already stated how I sailed one hundred and seven leagues along the seacoast of Juana [Cuba] in a straight line from west to east. I can therefore assert that this island is larger than England and Scotland together, since beyond these one hundred and seven leagues there remained at the west point two provinces where I did not go, one of which they call Avan, the home of men with tails. These provinces are computed to be fifty or sixty leagues in length, as far as can be gathered from the Indians with me, who are acquainted with all these islands. This other, Hispaniola, is larger in circumference than all Spain from Catalonia to Fuentarabia in Biscay, since upon one of its four sides I sailed one hundred and eighty-eight leagues from west to east. This is worth having, and must on no account be given up. I have taken

⁵ *Blanca*: Spanish copper coin. *Castellano*: Spanish gold coin. *Arroba*: Spanish unit of weight, app. 25 pounds.



“They firmly believed that I, with my ships and men, came from heaven”

possession of all these islands for their Highnesses, and all may be more extensive than I know or can say, and I hold them for their Highnesses, who can command them as absolutely as the kingdoms of Castile.

In Hispaniola, in the most convenient place, most accessible for the gold mines and all commerce with the mainland on this side or with that of the great Khan on the other,⁶ with which there would be great trade and profit, I have taken possession of a large town, which I have named the City of Navidad.⁷ I began fortifications there which should be completed by this time, and I have left in it men enough to hold it, with arms, artillery, and provisions for more than a year; and a boat with a master seaman skilled in the arts necessary to make others. I am so friendly with the king of that country that he was proud to call me his brother and hold me as such. Even should he change his mind and wish to quarrel with my men, neither he nor his subjects know what arms are nor wear clothes, as I have said. They are the most timid people in the world, so that only the men remaining there could destroy the whole region, and run no risk if they know how to behave themselves properly.

In all these islands the men seem to be satisfied with one wife, except they allow as many as twenty to their chief or king. The women appear to me to work harder than the men, and so far as I can hear they have nothing of their own, for I think I perceived that what one had others shared, especially food. In the islands so far I have found no monsters, as some expected, but, on the contrary, they are people of very handsome appearance. They are not black as in Guinea, though their hair is straight and coarse, as it does not grow where the sun's rays are too ardent. And in truth the sun has extreme power here, since it is within twenty-six degrees of the equinoctial line [equator]. In these islands there are mountains where the cold this winter was very severe, but the people endure it from habit, and with the aid of the meat they eat with very hot spices.

As for monsters,⁸ I have found no trace of them except at the point in the second isle as one enters the Indies, which is inhabited by a people considered in all the isles as most ferocious, who eat human flesh. They possess many canoes, with which they overrun all the isles of India [West Indies], stealing and seizing all they can. They are not worse looking than the others, except that they wear their hair long like women, and use bows and arrows of the same cane, with a sharp stick at the end for want lack of iron,⁹ of which they have none. They are ferocious compared to these other races, who are extremely cowardly, but I only hear this from the others. They are said to make treaties of marriage with the women in the first isle to be met with coming from Spain to the Indies, where there are no men. These women have no feminine occupation, but use bows and arrows of cane like those before mentioned, and cover and arm themselves with plates of copper, of which they have a great quantity. Another island, I am told, is larger than Hispaniola, where the natives have no hair, and where there is countless gold; and from them all I bring Indians to testify to this.¹⁰

To speak, in conclusion, only of what has been done during this hurried voyage, their Highnesses will see that I can

“their Highnesses will see that I can give them as much gold as they desire”

give them as much gold as they desire, if they will give me a little assistance, spices, cotton, as much as their Highnesses may command to be shipped, and mastic¹¹ as much as their Highnesses choose to send for, which until now has only been found in Greece, in the isle of Chios, and the Signoria can get its own price for it; as much lign-aloe¹² as they command to be shipped, and as many slaves as they choose to send for, all heathens. I think I have found rhubarb and cinnamon. Many other things of value will be discovered by the men I left behind me, as I stayed nowhere when the wind allowed me to pursue my

⁶ *Kahn*: Mongol ruler of China.

⁷ On the north coast of present-day Haiti.

⁸ Many Europeans, including Columbus, predicted that “monstrous races” existed in the unexplored world, including dog-headed men.

⁹ I.e., due to the lack of iron.

¹⁰ Columbus took

¹¹ *Mastic*: valuable resin from a species of gum tree, used in food and medicine at the time.

¹² *Lign-aloe*: another tree resin.

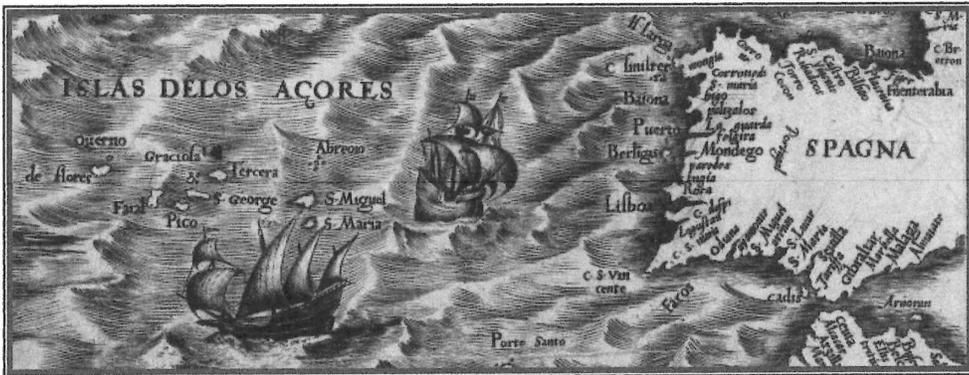
voyage, except in the City of Navidad, which I left fortified and safe. Indeed, I might have accomplished much more, had the crews served me as they ought to have done.

The eternal and almighty God, our Lord, it is Who gives to all who walk in His way, victory over things apparently impossible, and in this case signally so, because although these lands had been imagined and talked of before they were seen, most men listened incredulously to what was thought to be but an idle tale. But our Redeemer has given victory to our most illustrious King and Queen, and to their kingdoms rendered famous by this glorious event, at which all Christendom should rejoice, celebrating it with great festivities and solemn Thanksgivings to the Holy Trinity, with fervent prayers for the high distinction that will accrue to them from turning so many peoples to our holy faith; and also from the temporal benefits that not only Spain but all Christian nations will obtain. Thus I record what has happened in a brief note written on board the *Caravel*, off the Canary Isles, on the 15th of February, 1493.

Yours to command,
THE ADMIRAL.

Postscript within the letter

Since writing the above, being in the Sea of Castile, so much wind arose south southeast, that I was forced to lighten the vessels, to run into this port of Lisbon to-day which was the most extraordinary thing in the world, from whence I resolved to write to their Highnesses. In all the Indies I always found the temperature like that of May. Where I went in thirty-three days I returned in twenty-eight, except that these gales have detained me fourteen days, knocking about in this sea. Here all seamen say that there has never been so rough a winter, nor so many vessels lost. Done the 14th day of March.



Primary Source 5.7 and 14.4

BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS, A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INDIES (1542)¹

Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566) traveled to the New World in 1502 and took part in the conquest of Cuba. He made a fortune as a slave-holding landowner (encomendero). Ordained a priest in 1512, he began to see the horrors of Spanish rule, freeing his slaves and devoting the rest of his life to fighting for humane treatment of the native peoples. His effort to build an ideal Christian community for natives failed. As a Dominican friar, Las Casas relentlessly denounced colonial exploitation and praised the docility, innocence, and kindness of the natives. He rejected claims of European cultural superiority, described native customs sympathetically, deemed many of their customs and institutions legitimate, and concluded (on the basis of his Christian belief) that "all mankind is one." Convinced that the natives were highly receptive to the Church's teachings, and insisting they were loyal to royal authority, he urged King Charles I (r. 1516–56) and his son, Philip II (1556–98), to outlaw colonial oppression. Indeed, his Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies contributed to the adoption of the New Laws of 1542, which severely restricted the power of encomenderos. (Anger by the ruling elite caused their lax enforcement and partial repeal in 1545.) Thanks to his crusade for justice, Las Casas has been acclaimed as a founder of international law and a defender of native peoples. Because his works depicted the Spanish colonists as beastly and practically inhuman they also gave rise to the "Black Legend" of Spanish barbarianism.

The Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies was aimed more at advancing a cause than establishing historical truth. It exaggerates statistical magnitudes, in the manner of ancient and early modern chroniclers. It portrays the natives as passive victims, when in fact alliances with them often made the Spanish conquests possible. It deploys language ("cruel Tygers, Wolves and Lions") normally reserved for Muslim conquerors: the Ottoman Turks had been advancing furiously into the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. He also does not seem aware that most of the natives who perished after contact with Europeans died from disease and not combat or murder. Still, the text is of enormous importance for shedding light on a potent and highly fruitful impulse of self-criticism within Western culture.

For the full text online, click [here](#). For a freely accessible audio recording of the text, click [here](#). For an excellent introductory essay accompanying a recent translation,² click [here](#).

America was discovered and found out Ann. Dom. 1492, . . . And such a multitude of People inhabits these Countries, that it seems as if the Omnipotent God has Assembled and Convocated the major part of Mankind in this part of the World.

Now this infinite multitude of Men are by the Creation of God innocently simple, altogether void of and averse to all manner of Craft, Subtlety and Malice, and most Obedient and Loyal Subjects to their Native Sovereigns; and behave themselves very patiently, submissively and quietly towards the Spaniards, to whom they are subservient and subject;

¹ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (London: R. Hewson, 1689), <<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/20321/pg20321.html>>.

² Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. and trans. Nigel Griffin (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

so that finally they live without the least thirst after revenge, laying aside all litigiousness, Commotion and hatred.

This is a most tender and effeminate people, and so imbecile and unequal-balanced temper, that they are altogether incapable of hard labour, and in few years, by one Distemper or other soon expire,³ . . . This Nation is very Necessitous and Indigent, Masters of very slender Possessions, and consequently, neither Haughty, nor Ambitious. They are parsimonious in their Diet, as the Holy Fathers were in their frugal life in the Desert, known by the name of Eremites.⁴ They go naked, having no other Covering but what conceals their Pudends⁵ from publick sight. An hairy Plad, or loose Coat, about an Ell,⁶ or a coarse woven Cloth at most two Ells long serves them for the warmest Winter Garment. They lye on a coarse Rug or Matt, and those that have the most plentiful Estate or Fortunes, the better sort, use Net-work, knotted at the four corners in lieu of Beds, which the Inhabitants of the Island of Hispaniola, in their own proper Idiom, term Hammacks. The Men are pregnant and docible.⁷ The natives tractable, and capable of Morality or Goodness, very apt to receive the instill'd principles of Catholick Religion; nor are they averse to Civility and good Manners, being not so much discompos'd by variety of Obstructions, as the rest of Mankind; . . . And to conclude, I my self have heard the Spaniards themselves (who dare not assume the Confidence to deny the good Nature praedominant in them) declare, that there was nothing wanting in them for the acquisition of Eternal Beatitude, but the sole Knowledge and Understanding of the Deity.

The Spaniards first assaulted the innocent Sheep, so qualified by the Almighty, as is premention'd, like most cruel Tygers, Wolves and Lions hunger-starv'd, studying nothing, for the space of Forty Years, after their first landing, but the Massacre of these Wretches, whom they have so inhumanely and barbarously butcher'd and harass'd with several kinds of Torments, never before known, or heard (of which you shall have some account in the following Discourse) that of Three Millions of Persons, which lived in Hispaniola itself, there is at present but the inconsiderable remnant of scarce Three Hundred. Nay the Isle of Cuba, which extends as far, as Valledolid in Spain is distant from Rome, lies now uncultivated, like a Desert, and intomb'd in its own Ruins. . . .

As to the firm land, we are certainly satisfied, and assur'd, that the Spaniards by their barbarous and execrable Actions have absolutely depopulated Ten Kingdoms, of greater extent than all Spain, together with the Kingdoms of Arragon and Portugal, that is to say, above One Thousand Miles, which now lye wasted and desolate, and are absolutely ruined, when as formerly no other Country whatsoever was more populous. Nay we dare boldly affirm, that during the Forty Years space, wherein they exercised their sanguinary and detestable Tyranny in these Regions, above Twelve Millions (computing Men, Women, and Children) have undeservedly perished; nor do I conceive that I should deviate from the Truth by saying that above Fifty Millions in all paid their last Debt to Nature.

Those that arriv'd at these Islands from the remotest parts of Spain, and who pride themselves in the Name of Christians, steer'd two courses principally, in order to the

³ Die.

⁴ Hermits.

⁵ Pudenda are genitals.

⁶ Roughly 20 inches.

⁷ Easily taught or managed.

Extirpation, and Exterminating of this People from the face of the Earth. The first whereof was raising an unjust, sanguinolent, cruel War. The other, by putting them to death, who hitherto, thirsted after their Liberty . . .

Now the ultimate end and scope that incited the Spaniards to endeavor the Extirpation and Desolation of this People, was Gold only; that thereby growing opulent in a short time, they might arrive at once at such Degrees and Dignities, as were no wayes consistent with their Persons.

Finally, in one word, their Ambition and Avarice, than which the heart of Man never entertained greater, and the vast Wealth of those Regions; the Humility and Patience of the Inhabitants (which made their approach to these Lands more facill and easie) did much promote the business: Whom they so despicably contemned, that they treated them (I speak of things which I was an Eye Witness of, without the least fallacy) not as Beasts, which I cordially wished they would, but as the most abject dung and filth of the Earth. . .

OF THE ISLAND HISPANIOLA.

In this Isle, which, as we have said, the Spaniards first attempted, the bloody slaughter and destruction of Men first began: for they violently forced away Women and Children to make them Slaves, and ill-treated them, consuming and wasting their Food, which they had purchased with great sweat, toil, . . . and one individual Spaniard consumed more Victuals⁸ in one day, than would serve to maintain Three Families a Month, every one consisting of Ten Persons. Now being oppressed by such evil usage, and afflicted with such greate Torments and violent Entertainment⁹ they began to understand that such Men as those had not their Mission from Heaven; and therefore some of them conceal'd their Provisions and others to their Wives and Children in lurking holes, but some, to avoid the obdurate and dreadful temper of such a Nation, sought their Refuge on the craggy tops of Mountains; for the Spaniards did not only entertain them with Cuffs, Blows, and wicked Cudgelling, but laid violent hands also on the Governours of Cities; and this arriv'd at length to that height of Temerity and Impudence, that a certain Captain was so audacious as abuse the Consort of the most puissant King of the whole Isle. From which time they began to consider by what wayes and means they might expel the Spaniards out of their Country, and immediately took up Arms. But, good God, what Arms, do you imagine? Namely such, both Offensive and Defensive, as resemble Reeds wherewith Boys sport with one another, more than Manly Arms and Weapons.

Which the Spaniards no sooner perceived, but they, mounted on generous Steeds, well weapon'd with Lances and Swords, begin to exercise their bloody Butcheries and Strategems, and overrunning their Cities and Towns, spar'd no Age, or Sex, nay not so much as Women with Child, but ripping up their Bellies, tore them alive in pieces. They laid Wagers among themselves, who should with a Sword at one blow cut, or divide a Man in two; or which of them should decollate or behead a Man, with the greatest dexterity; nay farther, which should sheath his Sword in the Bowels of a Man with the quickest dispatch and expedition.

⁸ Food.

⁹ Treatment.

They snatcht young Babes from the Mothers Breasts, and then dasht out the brains of those innocents against the Rocks; others they cast into Rivers scoffing and jeering them, and call'd upon their Bodies when falling with derision, the true testimony of their Cruelty, to come to them, and inhumanely exposing others to their Merciless Swords, together with the Mothers that gave them Life.

They erected certain Gibbets,¹⁰ large, but low made, so that their feet almost reacht the ground, every one of which was so order'd as to bear Thirteen Persons in Honour and Reverence (as they said blasphemously) of our Redeemer and his Twelve Apostles, under which they made a Fire to burn them to Ashes whilst hanging on them: But those they intended to preserve alive, they dismiss'd, their Hands half cut, and still hanging by the Skin,

The Lords and Persons of Noble Extract were usually expos'd to this kind of Death; they order'd Gridirons to be placed and supported with wooden Forks, and putting a small Fire under them, these miserable Wretches by degrees and with loud Shreiks and exquisite Torments, at last Expir'd.

...

OF THE KINGDOMS CONTAINED IN HISPANIOLA.

...

. . . I adde farther, that I really believe, and am satisfied by certain undeniable conjectures, that at the very juncture of time, when all these outrages were committed in this Isle, the Indians were not so much guilty of one single mortal sin of Commission against the Spaniards, that might deserve from any Man revenge or require satisfaction. And as for those sins, the punishment whereof God hath reserved to himself, as the immoderate desire of Revenge, Hatred, Envy or inward rancor of Spirit, to which they might be transported against such Capital Enemies as the Spaniards were, I judge that very few of them can justly be accused of them; for their impetuosity and vigor I speak experimentally, was inferior to that of Children of ten or twelve years of age: and this I can assure you, that the Indians had ever a just cause of raising War against the Spaniards, and the Spaniards on the contrary never raised a just was against them, but what was more injurious and groundless than any undertaken by the worst of Tyrants. All which I affirm of all their other Transactions and passages in America.

...

OF THE ISLE OF CUBA.

In the Year of our Lord 1511. They passed over to Cuba, which contains as much ground in length as there is distance between Valledolid and Rome, well furnished with large and stately Provinces and very populous, against whom they proceeded with no more humanity and Clemency, or indeed to speak truth with greater Savageness and Brutality. Several memorable Transactions worthy observation, passed in this Island. A certain Cacic¹¹ a potent Peer,¹² named Hathney, who not long before fled Hispaniola to Cuba for Refuge from Death, or Captivity during Life; and understanding by certain Indians that the

¹⁰ Gallows for hanging people to death.

¹¹ A form of the native term for "leader."

¹² A high aristocrat in England; by extension, a Cuban nobleman.

Spaniards intended to steer their course thither, made this Oration to all his People Assembled together.

You are not ignorant that there is a rumor spread abroad among us of the Spaniards Arrival, and are sensible by woeful experience how such and such (naming them)¹³ and Hayti (so they term Hispaniola in their own language) with their Inhabitants have been treated by them, that they design to visit us with equal intentions of committing such acts as they have hitherto been guilty of. But do you not know the cause and reason of their coming? We are altogether ignorant of it, they replied, but sufficiently satisfied that they are cruelly and wickedly inclined: Then thus, he said, they adore a certain Covetous Deity, whose cravings are not to be satisfied by a few moderate offerings, but they may answer his Adoration and Worship, demand many unreasonable things of us, and use their utmost endeavors to subjugate and afterwards murder us. Then taking up a Cask or Cabinet near at hand, full of Gold and Gems, he proceeded in this manner: This is the Spaniards' God, . . .

When the Spaniards first touched this Island, this Cacic, who was thoroughly acquainted with them, did avoid and shun them as much as in him lay, and defended himself by force of Arms, wherever he met with them, but at length being taken he was burnt alive, . . . Now being bound to the post, in order of his Execution a certain Holy Monk of the Franciscan Order, discours'd with him concerning God and the Articles of our Faith, which he never heard of before, and which might be satisfactory and advantagious to him, considering the small time allow'd him by the Executioner, promising him Eternal Glory and Repose, if he truly believ'd them, or other wise Everlasting Torments. After that Hathney had been silently pensive sometime, he askt the Monk whether the Spaniards also were admitted into Heaven, and he answering that the Gates of Heaven were open to all that were Good and Godly, the Cacic replied without further consideration, that he would rather go to Hell then Heaven, for fear he should cohabit in the same Mansion with so Sanguinary and Bloody a Nation. . . .

...

A certain Person here in the same Isle constituted to exercise a kind of Royal Power, hapned to have Three Hundred Indians fall to his share, of which in Three Months, through excessive labour, One Hundred and Sixty were destroy'd, insomuch that in a short space there remained but a tenth part alive, namely Thirty, but when the number was doubled, they all perisht at the same rate, and all that were bestow'd upon him lost their lives, till at length he paid his last Debt to Nature and the Devil.

...

OF THE CONTINENT.

In the Year 1514, a certain unhappy Governour Landed on the firm Land or Continent, a most bloody Tyrant, destitute of all Mercy and Prudence, the Instrument of God's Wrath, with a Resolution to people these parts with Spaniards; and although some Tyrants had touched here before him, and Cruelty hurried them into the other World by several wayes of Slaughter, yet they came no farther than to the Sea Coast, where they

¹³ Inhabitants of Hispaniola.

committed podigious Thefts and Robberies, but this Person exceeded all that ever dwelt in other Islands, though execrable and profligate Villains: for he did not only ravage and depopulate the Sea-Coast, but buried the largest Regions and most ample Kingdoms in their own Ruins, sending Thousands to Hell by his Butcheries. . . .

This Ruler, with his Complices found out new inventions to rack, torment, force and extort Gold from the Indians. One of his Captains in a certain Excursion undertaken by the Command of his Gouverneur to make Depredations, destroy'd Forty Thousand Persons and better exposing them to the edge of the Sword, Fire, Dogs and variety of Torments; of all which a Religious Man of the Order of St. Francis, Franciscus de S. Romano, who was then present was an Eye-Witness.

Great and Injurious was the blindness of those praesided over the Indians; as to the Conversion and Salvation of this People: for they denyed in Effect what they in their flourishing Discourse pretended to, and declar'd with their Tongue what they contradicted in their Heart; for it came to this pass, that the Indians should be commanded on the penalty of a bloody War, Death, and perpetual Bondage, to embrace the Christian Faith, and submit to the Obedience of the Spanish King; as if the Son of God, who suffered Death for the Redemption of all Mankind, had enacted a Law, when he pronounced these words, Go and teach all Nations that Infidels, living peaceably and quietly in their Hereditary Native Country, should be impos'd upon pain of Confiscation of all their Chattels,¹⁴ Lands, Liberty, Wives, Children, and Death itself, without any precedent instruction to Confess and Acknowledge the true God, and subject themselves to a King, whom they never saw, or heard mention'd before; and whose Messengers behav'd themselves toward them with such Inhumanity and Cruelty as they had done hitherto. . . .

...

Among all those flagitious¹⁵ Acts committed by this Governour while he rul'd this Kingdom, or by his Consent and Permission this must by no means be omitted: A certain Casic, bestowing on him a Gift, voluntarily, or (which is more probably) induced thereunto by Fear, about the weight of Nine Thousand Crowns, but the Spaniards not satisfied with so fast a Sum of Money, sieze him, fix him to a Pole; extended his Feet, which being mov'd near the Fire, they demanded a larger Sum; the Casic overcome with Torments, sending home, procur'd Three Thousand more to be brought and presented to them: But the Spaniards, adding new Torments to new Rage and Fury, when they found he would confer no more upon them, which was because he could not, or otherwise because he would not, they expos'd him for so long to that Torture, till by degrees of heat the Marrow gusht out of the Soles of his Feet, and so he dyed; Thus they often murder'd the Lords and Nobles which such Torments to Extort the Gold from them.

...

¹⁴ Livestock.

¹⁵ Shamefully wicked.

VALLADOLID DEBATE

Juan Gines Sepulveda

Now compare these [Spanish] traits of prudence, intelligence, magnanimity, moderation, humanity, and religion with the qualities of these little men (hombrecillos) in whom you will scarcely find even vestiges of humanity; who not only are devoid of learning but do not even have a written language; who preserve no monuments of their history, aside from some vague and obscure reminiscence of past events, represented by means of certain paintings; and who have no written laws but only barbaric customs and institutions. And if we are to speak of virtues, what moderation or mildness can you expect of men who are given to all kinds of intemperance and wicked lusts, and who eat human flesh?

And do not believe that before the coming of the Christians they lived in that peaceful reign of Saturn that the poets describe; on the contrary, they waged continuous and ferocious war against each other, with such fury that they considered a victory hardly worth while if they did not glut their monstrous hunger with the flesh of their enemies, a ferocity all the more repellent since it was not joined to the invincible valor of the Scythians, who also ate human flesh. For the rest, these Indians are so cowardly that they almost run at the sight of our soldiers, and frequently thousands of them have fled like women before a very few Spaniards, numbering less than a hundred....

Could one give more convincing proof of the superiority of some men to others in intelligence, spirit, and valor, and of the fact that such people are slaves by nature? For although some of them display a certain talent for craftsmanship this is not proof of human intelligence, for we know that animals, birds, and spiders do certain work that no human industry can completely imitate. And as regards the mode of life of the inhabitants of New Spain and the province of Mexico, I have already said that they are considered the most civilized of all. They themselves boast of their public institutions, for they have cities constructed in an orderly fashion, and kings, not hereditary but elected by popular vote; and they carry on commerce among themselves in the manner of civilized people.

But see how they deceive themselves and how much I disagree with their opinion, for in these same institutions I see proof on the contrary of the rudeness, the barbarism, and the inherently slavish nature of these people. For the possession of habitations, of a fairly rational mode of life and of a kind of commerce is something that natural necessity itself induces, and only serves to prove that they are not bears or monkeys and are not completely devoid of reason. But on the other hand, they have no private property in their state, and they cannot dispose of or bequeath to their heirs their houses or fields, since they are all in the power of their lords, whom they improperly call kings, at whose pleasure, rather than to their own freedom. And the fact they do all this in a voluntary and spontaneous manner and are not constrained by force of arms is certain proof of the servile and abased spirit of these barbarians....

Such, in sum, are the disposition and customs of these little men—barbarous, uncivilized, and inhumane; and we know that they were like this before the coming of the Spaniards. We have not yet spoken of their impious religion and of the wicked sacrifices in which they worshiped the devil as their God, believing that they could offer no better tribute than human hearts.... How can we doubt that these peoples, so uncivilized, so barbarous, contaminated with so many infidelities and vices, have been justly conquered by such an excellent, pious, and just king as the late Ferdinand the Catholic, and the present Emperor Charles, and by a nation that is most humane and excels in every kind of virtue?



Attack of the Spanish on the Mixtón town of Nochistlan, 1541, in Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, ca. 1581-1584

MEXICA (AZTEC) & TLAXCALA ACCOUNTS OF THE SPANISH CONQUEST, 1500s

Miguel León-Portilla, a Mexican anthropologist compiled native accounts of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, publishing them in *Visión de los Vencidos* (*Vision of the Vanquished*, 1959) to present a chronological account from the perspective of the Indians of Mexico, including the Mexica (Aztec) and the Tlaxcala.

Adapted from the *Cronica Mexicana*, accounts compiled by Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc, the grandson of Motecuhzoma, ca. 1578

Motecuhzoma summoned the chief officials of all the villages. He told them to search their villages for magicians and to bring him any they found. The officials returned with a number of these wizards, who were announced and then brought into the king's presence. They knelt before him, and with one knee to the floor, and did him the greatest reverence. He asked them: "Have you not seen strange omens in the sky or on the earth? In the cases under the earth, or in the lakes and streams? A weeping woman, or strange men? Visions, or phantasms, or other such things?" But the magicians had not seen any of the omens that Motecuhzoma sought to understand, and therefore could not advise him. . . .

"What can we say? The future has already been determined and decreed in heaven, and Motecuhzoma will behold and suffer a great mystery which must come to pass in his land. If our king wishes to know more about it, he will know soon enough, for it comes swiftly. This is what we predict, since he demands that we speak, and since it must surely take place, he can only wait for it." . . .

A few days later a *macehual* [common man] came to the city from Mictlancauhtla. No one had sent him, none of the officials; he came of his own accord. He went directly to the palace of Motecuhzoma and said to him: "Our lord and king, forgive my boldness. I am from Mictlancauhtla. When I went to the shore of the great sea, there was a mountain range or small mountain floating in the midst of the water, and moving here and there without touching the shore. My lord, we have never seen the like of this, although we guard the coast and are always on watch." . . .

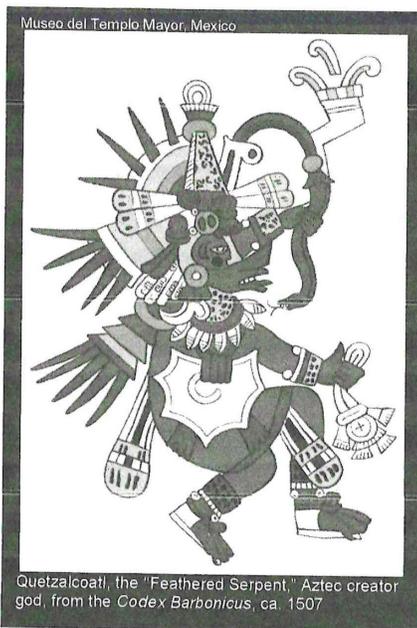
Excerpted, and images and asterisked footnotes added, by the National Humanities Center, 2006: www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm. In Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (translated from the Nahuatl into Spanish by Angel Maria Garibay K.; English translation by Lysander Kemp), Beacon Press, 1962, pp. 14-16, 22-31, 33-34, 38-49. Reproduced by permission. Originally published in Spanish as *Visión de los Vencidos: Relaciones indígenas de la Conquista* [*Vision of the Vanquished: Indigenous Accounts of the Conquest*], Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1959. Complete image credits at www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm.

Adapted from the *Codex Florentino*, accounts compiled by the Benedictine priest Bernardino de Sahagún, with drawings by Indian and mestizo artists, compiled ca. 1555, publ. 1585

Moteczuhzoma then gave orders to Pinotl of Cuctlaxtlan and to other officials. He said to them: "Give out this order: a watch is to be kept along all the shores at Nauhltla, Tuztlan, Mictlancauhltla, wherever the strangers appear." The officials left at once and gave orders for the watch to be kept. . . .

The year 13-Rabbit now approached its end. And when it was about to end, they appeared, they were seen again. The report of their coming was brought to Moteczuhzoma, who immediately sent out messengers. It was as if he thought the new arrival was our prince Quetzalcoatl.*

This is what he felt in his heart: *He has appeared! He has come back! He will come here, to the place of his throne and canopy, for that is what he promised when he departed!*



Moteczuhzoma sent five messengers to greet the strangers and to bring them gifts. . . He said to them: "Come forward, my Jaguar Knights, come forward. It is said that our lord has returned to this land. Go to meet him. Go to hear him. Listen well to what he tells you; listen and remember."

Moteczuhzoma also said to the messengers: "Here is what you are to bring our lord. This is the treasure of Quetzalcoatl." This treasure was the god's finery: a serpent mask inlaid with turquoise, a decoration for the breast made of quetzal feathers [tropical bird], a collar woven in the petatillo style with a gold disk in the center, and a shield decorated with gold and mother-of-pearl and bordered with quetzal feathers with a pendant of the same feathers. . . .

Moteczuhzoma also gave them the finery of Tezcatlipoca [chief god of the pantheon]. This finery was: a helmet in the shape of a cone, yellow with gold and set with many stars, a number of earrings adorned with little gold bells, a fringed and painted vest with feathers as delicate as foam and a blue cloak known as

"the ringing bell," which reached to the ears and was fastened with a knot. . . .

[The list of items to be presented to the returned Quetzalcoatl continues. It includes jewelry and symbols of royalty symbols such as a feather head-dress, golden shield, a turquoise-inlaid wand, and a stone-decorated staff.]

These were the many kinds of adornments that were known as "divine adornments." They were placed in the possession of the messengers to be taken as gifts of welcome along with many other objects, such as a golden snail shell and a golden diadem. All these objects were packed into great baskets; they were loaded into panniers for the long journey.

Then Moteczuhzoma gave the messengers his final orders. He said to them: "Go now, without delay. Do reverence to our lord the god. Say to him: 'Your deputy, Moteczuhzoma, has sent us to you. Here are the presents with which he welcomes you home to Mexico.'"

* *Quetzalcoatl*: the Aztec creator god.

When they arrived at the shore of the sea, they were taken in canoes to Xicalanco. They placed the baskets in the same canoes in which they rode, in order to keep them under their personal vigilance. From Xicalanco they followed the coast until they sighted the ships of the strangers.

When they came up to the ships, the strangers asked them: "Who are you? Where are you from?"
"We have come from the City of Mexico."¹

The strangers said: "You may have come from there, or you may not have. Perhaps you are only inventing it. Perhaps you are mocking us." But their hearts were convinced; they were satisfied in their hearts. They lowered a hook from the bow of the ship, and then a ladder, and the messengers came aboard.

One by one they did reverence to Cortés by touching the ground before him with their lips. They said to him: "If the god will deign to hear us, your deputy Motecuhzoma has sent us to render you homage. He has the City of Mexico in his care. He says: 'The god is weary.'"

Then they arrayed the Captain in the finery they had brought him as presents. With great care they fastened the turquoise mask in place, the mask of the god with its crossband of quetzal feathers. A golden earring hung down on either side of this mask. They dressed him in the decorated vest and the collar woven in the petatillo style — the collar of *chalchihuites*, with a disk of gold in the center. . . . Finally they set before him the pair of black sandals. As for the other objects of divine finery, they only laid them out for him to see.

The Captain asked them: "And is this all? Is this your gift of welcome? Is this how you greet people?"

They replied: "This is all, our lord. This is what we have brought you."

Then the Captain gave orders, and the messengers were chained by the feet and by the neck. When this had been done, the great cannon was fired off. The messengers lost their senses and fainted away. They fell down side by side and lay where they had fallen. But the Spaniards quickly revived them: they lifted them up, gave them wine to drink and then offered them food.

The Captain said to them: "I have heard that the Mexicans are very great warriors, very brave and terrible. If a Mexican is fighting alone, he knows how to retreat, turn back, rush forward and conquer, even if his opponents are ten or even twenty. But my heart is not convinced. I want to see it for myself. I want to find out if you are truly that strong and brave."

Then he gave them swords, spears and leather shields. He said: "It will take place very early, at daybreak. We are going to fight each other in pairs, and in this way we will learn the truth. We will see who falls to the ground!"



Mexica (Aztec) pendant in the shape of a warrior holding a serpent-headed spearthrower, a shield, darts, and a banner, cast gold-silver-copper alloy, ca. 1450-1500

¹ "The Spaniards and the messengers could communicate because Cortés had brought with him La Malinche and Jeronimo de Aguilar. La Malinche was a native of the Gulf coast who spoke both Nahuatl and Mayan. She joined the Spaniards (who called her Doña Marina) of her own free will and served them faithfully as interpreter throughout the Conquest. Aguilar was a Spaniard who had been shipwrecked in Yucatan in 1511 during a voyage from Darien [isthmus of Panama] to Hispaniola. By the time Cortés ransomed him from the natives eight years later, he spoke Mayan fluently. La Malinche translated the Nahuatl of the messengers into Mayan for Aguilar, who then translated it into Spanish for the conquistadors." [León-Portillo, *The Broken Spears*, 1962, p. 31]

They said to the Captain: "Our lord, we were not sent here for this by your deputy Motecuhzoma! We have come on an exclusive mission, to offer you rest and repose and to bring you presents. What the lord desires is not within our warrant. If we were to do this, it might anger Motecuhzoma, and he would surely put us to death."

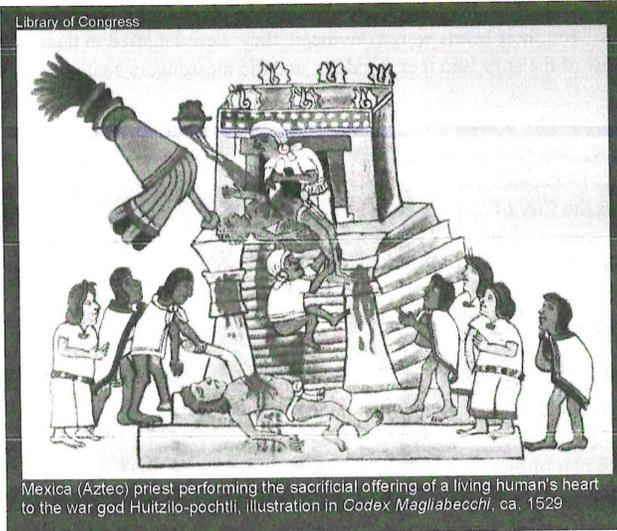
The Captain replied: "No, it must take place. I want to see for myself, because even in Castile they

say you are famous as brave warriors. Therefore, eat an early meal. I will eat too. Good cheer!"

With these words he sent them away from the ship. They were scarcely into their canoes when they began to paddle furiously. Some of them even paddled with their hands, so fierce was the anxiety burning in their souls. They said to each other: "My captains, paddle with all your might! Faster, faster! Nothing must happen to us here! Nothing must happen . . . !" [ellipsis in original]

They arrived in great haste at Xicalanco, took a hurried meal there, and then pressed on until they came to Tecpantlayacac.

From there they rushed ahead and



Mexica (Aztec) priest performing the sacrificial offering of a living human's heart to the war god Huitzilopochtli, illustration in *Codex Magliabecchi*, ca. 1529

arrived in Cuertlaxtlan. As on the previous journey, they stopped there to rest. When they were about to depart, the village official said to them: "Rest for at least a day! At least catch your breath!"

They said: "No, we must keep on! We must report to our king, Motecuhzoma. We will tell him what we have seen, and it is a terrifying thing. Nothing like it has even been seen before!" Then they left in great haste and continued to the City of Mexico. They entered the city at night, in the middle of the night. . . .

The messengers went to the House of the Serpent, and Motecuhzoma arrived. The two captives [ordered by Motecuhzoma to be brought from the prison] were then sacrificed before his eyes: their breasts were torn open, and the messengers were sprinkled with their blood. This was done because the messengers had completed a difficult mission: they had seen the gods, their eyes had looked on their faces. They had even conversed with the gods!

When the sacrifice was finished, the messengers reported to the king. They told him how they had made the journey, and what they had seen, and what food the strangers ate. Motecuhzoma was astonished and terrified by their report, and the description of the strangers' food astonished him above all else.

[below]

He was also terrified to learn how the cannon roared, how its noise resounded, how it caused one to faint and grow deaf. The messengers told him: "A thing like a ball of stone comes out of its entrails: it comes out shooting sparks and raining fire. The smoke that comes out with it has a pestilent odor, like that of rotten mud. This odor penetrates even to the brain and causes the greatest discomfort. If the cannon is aimed against a mountain, the mountain splits and cracks open. If it is aimed against a tree, it shatters the tree into splinters. This is a most unnatural sight, as if the tree had exploded from within."

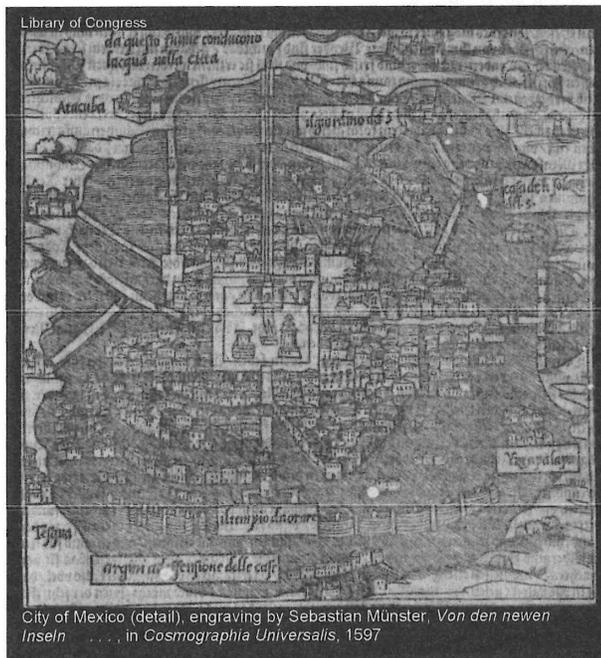
The messengers also said: "Their trappings and arms are all made of iron. They dress in iron and wear iron casques on their heads. Their swords are iron; their bows are iron; their shields are iron; their spears are iron. Their deer carry them on their backs wherever they wish to go. These deer, our lord, are as tall as the roof of a house.

"The strangers' bodies are completely covered, so that only their faces can be seen. Their skin is white, as if it were made of lime. They have yellow hair, though some of them have black. Their beards are long and yellow, and their moustaches are also yellow. Their hair is curly, with very fine stands.

"As for their food, it is like human food. It is large and white, and not heavy. It is something like straw, but with the taste of a cornstalk, of the pith of a cornstalk. It is a little sweet, as if it were flavored with honey; it tastes of honey, it is sweet-tasting food.

"Their dogs are enormous, with flat ears and long, dangling tongues. The color of their eyes is a burning yellow; their eyes flash fire and shoot off sparks. Their bellies are hollow, their flanks long and narrow. They are tireless and very powerful. They bound here and there, panting, with their tongues hanging out. And they are spotted like an ocelot."

When Motecuhzoma heard this report, he was filled with terror. It was as if his heart had fainted, as if it had shriveled. It was as if he were conquered by despair. . . .



It was at this time that Motecuhzoma sent out a deputation. He sent out his most gifted men, his prophets and wizards, as many as he could gather. He also sent out his noblest and bravest warriors. They had to take their provisions with them on the journey: live hens [small native fowl] and hens' eggs and tortillas. They also took whatever the strangers might request, or whatever might please them.

Motecuhzoma also sent captives to be sacrificed, because the strangers might wish to drink their blood. The envoys sacrificed these captives in the presence of the strangers, but when the white men saw this done, they were filled with disgust and loathing. They spat on the ground, or wiped away their tears, or closed their eyes and shook their heads in abhorrence. They refused to eat the food that was

sprinkled with blood, because it reeked of it; it sickened them, as if the blood had rotted.

Motecuhzoma ordered the sacrifice because he took the Spaniards to be gods; he believed in them and worshiped them as deities. That is why they were called "Gods who have come from heaven." As for the Negroes [who attended the Spaniards], they were called "soiled gods."

Then the strangers ate the tortillas, the eggs and the hens, and fruit of every variety: guavas, avocados, prickly pears and the many other kinds that grow here. There was food for the “deer” also: reed shoots and green grasses.

Motecuhzoma had sent the magicians to learn what sort of people the strangers might be, but they were also to see if they could work some charm against them, or do them some mischief. They might be able to direct a harmful wind against them, or cause them to break out in sores, or injure them in some way. Or they might be able to repeat some enchanted word, over and over, that would cause them to fall sick, or die, or return to their own land.

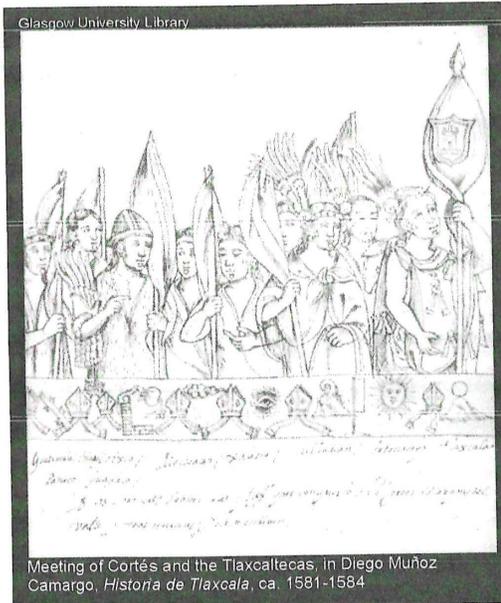
The magicians carried out their mission against the Spaniards, but they failed completely. They could not harm them in any way whatever.

Therefore they hastened back to the city, to tell Motecuhzoma what the strangers were like and how invulnerable they were. They said to him: “Our lord, we are no match for them: we are mere nothings!” Motecuhzoma at once gave out orders: he commanded the officials and all the chiefs and captains, under the threat of death, to take the utmost pains to learn what the strangers needed and to provide it.

When the Spaniards left their ships and began to march here and were at last on the way, they were served and attended as they came and great honors were done them. They marched forward under protection, and everything possible was done to please them. . . .

At last they came. At last they began to march towards us.

A man from Cempoala, who was known as the Tlacochealcatl [Chief of the House of Arrows], was the first official to welcome them as they entered our lands and cities. This man spoke Nahuatl. He



showed them the best routes and the shortest ways; he guided and advised them, traveling at the head of the party.

When they came to Tecoaac, in the land of the Tlaxcaltecas, they found it was inhabited by Otomies.² The Otomies came out to meet them in battle array; they greeted the strangers with their shields.

But the strangers conquered the Otomies of Tecoaac; they utterly destroyed them. They divided their ranks, fired the cannons at them, attacked them with their swords and shot them with their crossbows. Not just a few, but all of them, perished in the battle.

And when the Tecoaac had been defeated, the Tlaxcaltecas soon heard the news; they learned what had taken place there. They felt premonitions of death: terror overwhelmed them, and they were filled with foreboding.

Therefore the chiefs assembled; the captains met together in a council. They talked about what had happened, and said: “What shall

we do? Shall we go out to meet them? The Otomi is a brave warrior, but he was helpless against them: they scorned him as a mere nothing! They destroyed the poor *macehual* with a look, with a glance of their

² “One of the tribes that had settled in the Valley of Mexico (and elsewhere) long before the arrival of the Aztecs.” [León-Portillo, p. 49]

eyes! We should go over to their side: we should make friends with them and be their allies. If not, they will destroy us too" [ellipsis in original]

Therefore the lords of Tlaxcala went out to meet them, bringing many things to eat: hens and hens' eggs and the finest tortillas. They said to the strangers: "Our lords, you are weary."

The strangers replied: "Where do you live?" Where are you from?"

They said: "We are from Tlaxcala. You have come here, you have entered our land. We are from Tlaxcala; our city is the City of the Eagle, Tlaxcala." (For in ancient times it was called Texcala, and its people were known as Texcaltecas.³)

Then they guided them to the city; they brought them there and invited them to enter. They paid them great honors, attended to their every want, joined with them as allies and even gave them their daughters.

The Spaniards asked: "Where is the City of Mexico? Is it far from here?"

They said: "No, it is not far, it is only a three-day march. And it is a great city. The Aztecs are very brave. They are great warriors and conquerors and have defeated their neighbors on every side."

At this time the Tlaxcaltecas were enemies of Cholula. They feared the Cholultecas; they envied and cursed them; their souls burned with hatred for the people of Cholula. This is why they bought certain rumors to Cortés, so that he would destroy them. They said to him: "Cholula is our enemy. It is an evil city. The people are as brave as the Aztecs and they are the Aztecs' friends."

When the Spaniards heard this, they marched against Cholula. They were guided and accompanied by the Tlaxcaltecas and the chiefs from Cempoala, and they all marched in battle array.⁴



When they arrived, the Tlaxcaltecas and the men of Cholula called to each other and shouted greetings. An assembly was held in the courtyard of the god, but when they had all gathered together, the entrances were closed, so that there was no way of escaping.

Then the sudden slaughter began: knife strokes, and sword strokes, and death. The people of Cholula had not foreseen it, had not suspected it. They faced the Spaniards without weapons, without their swords or their shields. The cause of the slaughter was treachery. They died blindly, without knowing why, because of the lies of the Tlaxcaltecas.

And when this had taken place, word of it was brought to Motecuhzoma. The messengers came and departed, journeying back and forth between Tenochtitlán and Cholula. The common people were terrified by the news; they could do nothing but tremble with fright. It was as if the earth trembled beneath them, or as if the world were spinning before their eyes, as it spins during a fit of vertigo" [ellipsis in original]

When the massacre at Cholula was complete, the strangers set out again toward the City of Mexico. They came in battle array, as conquerors, and the dust rose in

³ "Texcala: "Where there are many rocks." The Aztecs explained the origin of the word Tlaxcala in this way, but to the Tlaxcaltecas it means "where there were corn tortillas." [León-Portillo, p. 49]

⁴ "This was customary and therefore roused no suspicion among the Cholultecas." [León-Portillo, p. 49]

whirlwinds on the roads. Their spears glinted in the sun, and their pennons [pointed banners] fluttered like bats. They made a loud clamor as they marched, for their coats of mail and their weapons clashed and rattled. Some of them were dressed in glistening iron from head to foot; they terrified everyone who saw them.

Their dogs came with them, running ahead of the column. They raised their muzzles high; they lifted their muzzles to the wind. They raced on before with saliva dripping from their jaws.

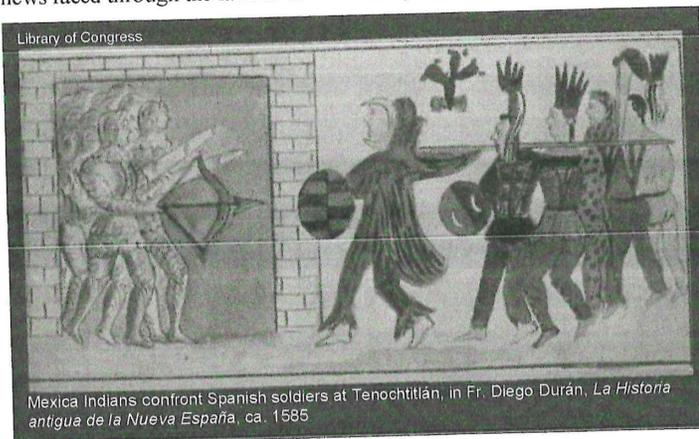
Adapted from *Historia de Tlaxcala*, accounts compiled by Diego Muñoz Camargo, 1585

From this time forward, the Spaniards had no other purpose than to raise soldiers against the Culhuas Mexicanos [Aztecs]. They did this within a very short time, so as to give them no opportunity to form an alliance with the Tlaxcaltecas. And to avoid bad thoughts, as well as other new incidents and proposals, Cortés saw to it that his new friends and confederates did not leave his side, using his wits as always, as an astute leader, to take advantage of a favorable situation.

When the ranks were formed, the Spanish troops and the Tlaxcaltecas marched out in good military order, with many important and famous captains, all skilled in warfare according to their ancient customs and practices. These captains were Piltecutli, Acxoxecatli, Tecpanecatli, Cahuecahua, Cocomitecutli, Quauhtotohua, Textlipitl and many others; but because they were so many, with such a variety of names, the others are not set down here, only the most outstanding, who were always loyal to Cortés until the end of his conquest.

The first invasion took place at Cholula, which was governed and ruled by two lords, Tlaquiach and Tlalchiac (for the lords who succeeded to that command were always known by those names, which mean “Lord of what is above” and “Lord of what is below”).

Once they entered the province of Cholula, the Spaniards quickly destroyed that city because of the great provocations given by its inhabitants. So many Cholultecas were killed in this invasion that the news raced through the land as far as the City of Mexico. There it caused the most horrible fright and



consternation, for it was also known that the Tlaxcaltecas had allied themselves with the “gods” (as the Spaniards were called in all parts of this New World, for want of another name).

The Cholultecas had placed such confidence in their idol Quetzalcoatl that they believed no human power could defeat or harm them. They thought they would be able to

vanquish us in a very short time — first, because the Spaniards were so few, and second, because the Tlaxcaltecas had brought them against Cholula by deceit. Their faith in the idol was so complete that they believed it would ravage their enemies with the fire and thunder of heaven, and drown them in a vast flood of water.

This is what they believed, and they proclaimed it in loud voices: "Let the strangers come! We will see if they are so powerful! Our god Quetzalcoatl is here with us, and they can never defeat him. Let them come, the weaklings: we are waiting to see them, and we laugh at their stupid delusions. They are fools or madmen if they trust in these sodomites from Tlaxcala, who are nothing but their women. And let the hirelings come, too: they have sold themselves in their terror. Look at the scum of Tlaxcala, the cowards of Tlaxcala, the guilty ones! They were conquered by the City of Mexico, and now they bring strangers to defend them! How could you change so soon? How could you put yourselves into the hands of these foreign savages? Oh, you frightened beggars, you have lost the immortal glory that was won by your heroes, who sprang from the pure blood of the ancient Teochichimecas, the founders of your nation. What will become of you, you traitors? We are waiting, and you will see how our god Quetzalcoatl punishes his foes!"

They shouted these and other similar insults, because they believed that the enemy would surely be consumed by bolts of fire which would fall from heaven, and that great rivers of water would pour from the temples of their idols to drown both the Tlaxcaltecas and the Spanish soldiers. This caused the Tlaxcaltecas no little fear and concern, for they believed that all would happen as the Cholultecas predicted, and the priests of the temple of Quetzalcoatl proclaimed it at the top of their voices.

But when the Tlaxcaltecas heard the Spaniards call out to St. James, and saw them burn the temples and hurl the idols to the ground, profaning them with great zeal and determination, and when they also saw that the idols were powerless, that no flames fell and no rivers poured out — then they understood the deception and knew it was all falsehoods and lies.

Thus encouraged, they grew so brave that the slaughter and havoc increased beyond imagining. Our friends also became well aware of the Spaniards' courage; they never again plotted any crimes, but were guided by the divine order, which was to serve Our Lord by conquering this land and rescuing it from the power of the devil.



Memorial service in honor of a dead chieftain, in *Codex Magliabecchi*, ca. 1530

Before the battle began, the city of Tlaxcala sent messengers and ambassadors to Cholula to ask for peace and to say that they were marching not against the Cholultecas but against the Culhuas, or Culhuacanenses Mexicanos. (They were called Culhuas, it is said, because they had come from the region of Culhuacan in the West; and Mexicanos, because the city which they founded and made supreme was called Mexico.) The envoys told the Cholultecas that they were marching under the command of Cortés and that they

came desiring peace. They said that the people of Cholula should fear no harm from the bearded strangers, for these were a very great and noble people who only sought their friendship. Thus they begged the Cholultecas as friends to receive the strangers in peace, because they would be well used by them and suffer no ill treatment, but they also warned them not to anger the white men, for they were a

very warlike, daring and valiant people, who carried superior weapons made of white metal. They said this because there was no iron among the natives, only copper.

They also said that the strangers brought arms which could shoot fire, and wild animals on leashes; that they were dressed and shod in iron, and had powerful crossbows, and lions and ounces so ferocious that they ate people (meaning the fierce greyhounds and mastiffs which the Spaniards had brought with them); and that against this might the Cholultecas could not prevail, or even defend themselves, if they angered the "gods" and did not surrender peacefully, as they should do to avoid greater harm. And they counseled them as friends to act in this manner.

But the Cholultecas paid no attention to these words, preferring to die rather than surrender. Rejecting the good counsel of the Tlaxcaltecas, they flayed the face of Pahlahuatzin, the ambassador, a man of great repute and valor. They did the same to his arms, which they flayed to the elbows, and they cut his hands at the wrists so that they dangled. In this cruel fashion, they sent him away, saying: "Go back, and tell the Tlaxcaltecas and those other beggars, or gods, or whatever they are, that this is how we invite them to come. This is the answer we send them."

The ambassador returned in great agony, victim of an outrage that caused much horror and grief in the republic, because he was one of the worthiest and most handsome men of this land. He died in the service of his homeland and republic, where his fame is eternal among his people, who keep his memory alive in their songs and sayings.

The Tlaxcaltecas were enraged at this inhuman treatment of Patlahuatzin. They took such unthinkable cruelty as a great affront, since all ambassadors were traditionally respected and honored by foreign kings and lords, to whom they reported the treaties, wars and other events that took place in these provinces and kingdoms. Therefore they said to Cortés: "Most valiant lord, we wish to accompany you, in order to seek vengeance against Cholula for its insolent wickedness, and to conquer and destroy that city and its province. A people so obstinate and vicious, so evil and tyrannous, should not remain alive. And if there were no other cause than this, they would deserve eternal punishment, for they have not thanked us for our good counsel, but have scorned and despised us because of our love for you."

The valiant Cortés answered them with a stern face: "Have no fear. I promise you revenge." And he kept this promise, waging a cruel war in which vast multitudes were slaughtered, as is recorded in the chronicles.

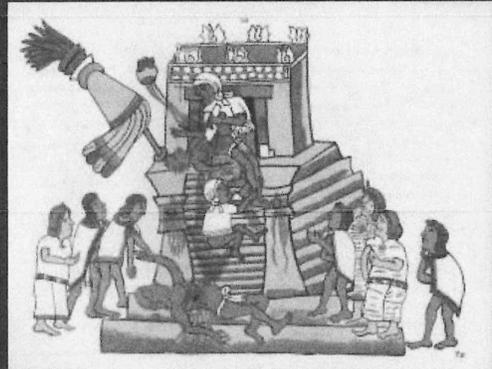
The Cholultecas said that their foes would all be drowned by their idol Quetzalcoatl. This was the most venerated idol among the many that were worshipped in this land, and its temple at Cholula was considered a shrine of the gods. They said that when the crust was scraped from a portion of the limed surface of the temple, water gushed out. To save themselves from drowning, they sacrificed children of two or three years of age and mixed their blood with lime to make a kind of cement with which to stop up the springs and fountains. They said that if they were ever in danger during a war with the white gods and the Tlaxcaltecas, they would break open all the mortared surfaces, from which a flood of water would pour forth to drown their enemies. And when they saw how hard pressed they were, they set to work.

But none of their expectations was fulfilled, and they lost all hope. Of those who died in the battle of Cholula, the greater number hurled themselves from the temple pyramid in their despair and they also hurled the idol of Quetzalcoatl headfirst from the pyramid, for this form of suicide had always been a custom among them. They were as rebellious and contemptuous as any stiff-necked, ungovernable people, and it was their custom to die in a manner contrary to that of other nations — that is, to die headlong. In the end, the greater part of them died in despair, by killing themselves.



Quetzalcoatl

Codex Magliabecchi, ca. 1530



Ritual human sacrifice

When the battle of Cholula was finished, the Cholultecas understood and believed that the God of the white men, who were His most powerful sons, was more potent than their own. Our friends the Tlaxcaltecas, seeing themselves in the very thick of that battle and massacre, called upon St. James the Apostle, shouting his name in loud voices: "Santiago!" And from that day to this, when they are in some difficulty or danger, the Tlaxcaltecas invoke the saint. . . .

When Cholula had been stormed and destroyed, and a great host of people killed and plundered, our armies marched forward again, causing terror wherever they went, until the news of the destruction spread through the whole land. The people were astonished to hear such strange reports, and to learn how the Cholultecas were defeated and slain in so short a time, and how their idol Quetzalcoatl had not served them in any way.

