

THE WAR OF CONQUEST

THE WAR OF CONQUEST

How It Was Waged Here in Mexico

*The Aztecs' Own Story
As Given to Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún,
Rendered into Modern English by*

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and
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ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS: Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J. O. Anderson are two of the world's leading scholars of the Aztec language and culture. They are co-translators of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's *General History of the Things of New Spain*, published in thirteen parts by the School of American Research and the University of Utah, available from the University of Utah Press.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATIONS: The illustrations and the selected paragraphs in Nahuatl are reproduced from a microfilm secured in 1938 by the School of American Research from the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Italy, of Sahagún's *General History of the Things of New Spain* manuscript. The illustrations, published here for the first time, are the work of sixteenth-century Aztec artists, and the Nahuatl paragraphs demonstrate the penmanship of Sahagún's native scribes. Permission to reproduce this material was granted by the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana and the School of American Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

ABOUT THE MAPS: The two maps and their embellishments were drawn by Arthur J. O. Anderson, and are based on details from Sahagún's original manuscript and other native codices.

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INTRODUCTION

If the present native Indian account was set down in writing in about 1555, as seems likely, it was recorded just twenty-four or twenty-five years after the conquest of the Aztec nation had occurred. Though written record of the defeat of the Aztecs had taken form in song as early as 1524 and in narrative as early as 1528, the present account is the longest early, consistent, and fairly broad one that we have.

We owe its existence to the tireless effort and search for knowledge about the Aztecs of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, one of the first Franciscan missionaries in Mexico. Casting about for means of complete and enduring conversion of the natives, he conceived and developed the theory that the priests would be more certain of success in their work if they knew, first, the total way of the Indians' former life they were changing and, second, the language the natives spoke — which the missionaries would have to master thoroughly. So, with the help of natives by the 1540s educated to reproduce in our alphabet the sounds of their own language and to read, write, and speak Spanish (and also Latin), Sahagún adopted the method of visiting and studying ancient native life in three centers in or about what is now Mexico City and, in each, winning the confidence of a dozen or so old men with experience and long memories, who answered his questions using the old picture writing, which the old men explained to the young literate Indians, who then wrote down the information in Aztec. The thirty or so years that followed were largely devoted to going over, comparing, arranging and rearranging, and writing up in final form what Sahagún and his young men had learned from the old ones who had been alive and young before the Spaniards came to conquer them.

Four hundred years ago Sahagún devised the method we have described. It is much like what a scientist of today would do as a matter of course.

Sahagún asked mainly about the Indians' old pre-Christian religious beliefs and rites, but he also got a descriptive picture so complete that his work is really a kind of encyclopaedia, in twelve "Books," which we call the *General History of the Things of New Spain*. In its most complete manuscript it is known as the *Florentine Codex*, because the original is in Florence, Italy. A bilingual work — a column in the Aztec language and another in Spanish

on each page — it is, from the Spanish version, the ultimate source of all the Spanish Sahagún *Historias* printed since 1829. The Spanish column is not an exact translation of the native Nahuatl or Aztec; often it is rather a paraphrase. Translations of parts of the Aztec have appeared during the last eighty years or so, but ours of the entire *Florentine Codex* native text, concluded in 1969, is the first complete such translation of the work as a whole.

In some ways, one of the most original ideas Sahagún had in his work was getting from old Aztecs who were there before 1519–1521 their own account of the coming of the Spaniards and of defeat at their hands. This story forms the twelfth and last Book of the *General History*. Though it is a part of the total publication of the *General History or Florentine Codex*, it is so vivid and moving a story that we have reworked our English translation for this edition. The language is modernized but without changing the flavor of the native account; the original forty-one chapters have been reorganized into nine without altering the order of telling the events; there has been some condensing of wordy or repetitious passages; the point of view has been made more definitely Aztec. Nothing has been left out of the narrative. We have omitted our notes to the *Florentine Codex*; on controversial matters of translation the reader may refer to our original edition, which includes the Aztec text and is fully annotated. In this edition we include only a few explanatory notes, generally avoiding the controversies. Sahagún's account breaks off in the middle of a conference between Cortés and captured Indian leaders; we have not attempted to complete it, though we have added a brief epilogue.

* * *

We cannot and do not claim that the Aztec account is accurate and dispassionate. It is, naturally, incomplete and partisan. It is less complete than Bernal Díaz del Castillo's account and the one that emerges from Hernán Cortés's dispatches to King Charles I of Spain (who was also the Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire of those days); but in our judgment the Aztec account is no more partisan than either Bernal Díaz's or Hernán Cortés's. It is a sad story — one which, we think, shows remarkably little resentment toward Cortés and his followers. Wars are won or lost; the Aztecs lost this one — one which they never really had a chance of winning.

As to the accuracy of the account, the main features of the long struggle are there as the Aztecs saw (or were told) and remembered them. So, for example, a great deal of what happened is telescoped or told as if with a foreshortened perspective. The story begins with Grijalva's expedition, leaving out Francisco Hernández's earlier one, the details of Cortés's landing are

omitted (we have the impression of there being only one ship in his fleet), and it took much longer than indicated in the Aztec account for Cortés and his men to reach the Valley of Mexico; the fighting against the Otomí settlements under Tlaxcallan rule took weeks and was more than a matter of "the batting of an eyelash"; Moctezuma was not captured immediately upon the entrance of the Spaniards into Tenochtitlan but about a week later. The reader can compare standard texts or, besides the Cortés and Bernal Díaz versions, other accounts of the time or a little later. Those by Aguilar, Cervantes de Salazar, López de Gómara, the anonymous conqueror, and others are one-sided but present a military situation more in keeping with our understanding of it than the native accounts are.

For reference and comparison we include our rough chronology of the events of the conquest followed by a summary of the only consistent chronology to be found in our native account.

CHART I

ROUGH CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO ACCORDING TO STANDARD SOURCES

February, 1519	Departure of Cortés from Cuba. Arrival in Cozumel; finding of Aguilar.
March	Arrival in Tabasco; finding of Marina.
April	Arrival in Veracruz.
May	Founding of the Villa Rica de Veracruz. Burning of Cortés's ships.
August	Start of the march inland. Winning over of Cempoalla.*
September	Arrival in Tlaxcallan territory. Series of military engagements; winning over of Tlaxcalla.
October	Moctezuma's invitation to Cortés to proceed to Tenochtitlan. The Cholula massacre.
November	Moctezuma's reception of Cortés in Tenochtitlan. Cortés's capture of Moctezuma.
April, 1520	Cortés's defeat of Pánfilo de Narváez. Alvarado's massacre of Mexicans in Tenochtitlan. Death of Moctezuma.

June	Flight of Spaniards from Tenochtitlan. Retreat of Spaniards to Tlaxcalla. Smallpox epidemic.
Fall of 1520	Capture of Texcoco (base for assembling Cortés's brigantines.)
December	Cortés's preparations for attack.
December, 1520– May, 1521	Encirclement of Mexico (capture of towns about the lake.)
May, 1521	Start of siege of Mexico.
August	End of siege of Mexico.

* The pronunciation of Aztec words: Generally speaking, vowels are pronounced as in Spanish or Italian: *a* as in *fAther*; *e* as in *bEt*; *i* as in *machIne*; *o* as in *bOre*; *u* as in *rUe*.

Consonants are generally pronounced as in English or as we are accustomed to hearing them in Spanish or Italian. Note, however, some special cases: *h*: usually not pronounced; *ll*: as in English or Italian (not as in Spanish); *qu*: like *k* before *e* and *i* (*quemid*: *kemitt*; *quilit*: *kilit*), otherwise *kw* (*qualli*: *kwalli*); *u*: sometimes used consonantly, like English *w*, as in the name *Coyoueuetzin* (*Coyowewetzin*); *x*: like English *sh* (*Xoloco*: *Sholoco*); *z*: like English *ss* (*Tizoc*: *Tissoc*).

The stress is almost invariably on the next-to-last syllable.

CHART 2

AZTEC CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONQUEST AS RECORDED IN CHAPTER V, PAGE 61, AND CHAPTER VI, PAGES 63–64, OF THE PRESENT ACCOUNT

Note: The solar year was divided into eighteen twenty-day periods (360 days) plus five final "empty" days (making 365 days). Corresponding Christian calendar dates are based on Alfonso Caso's calculations, which are generally accepted. The Aztec text accidentally omits three of the month names, and occasional discrepancies may be noted.

Quecholli (Oct. 12–31, 1519). Entrance of the Spaniards on ceremonial calendar day One Wind, "the day before the tenth of the month Quecholli." (The year was named One Reed.)

Panquetzalitzli (Nov. 1–20, 1519)

Atemoztli (Nov. 21–Dec. 10, 1519)

Tititl (Dec. 11–30, 1519)

Izcalli (Dec. 31, 1519–Jan. 19, 1520)

Nemontemi (the five "empty" days, Jan. 20–24, 1520)

Atl caualo (Jan. 25–Feb. 13, 1520)

Tlacaxipeualiztli (Feb. 14–Mar. 5, 1520)

Tozoztontli (Mar. 6–25)

Uei tozoztli (Mar. 26–Apr. 14, 1520)

Toxcatl (Apr. 15–May 4, 1520). Massacre in Tenochtitlan.

Etzalqualiztli (May 5–24, 1520)

Tecuilhuitontli (May 25–June 13, 1520). Escape of the Spaniards. "If all the days completed are added up, they come to two hundred and thirty-five. They had been our friends one hundred and ninety-five days. They had been our enemies forty days."

Uei tecuilhuitl (June 14–July 3, 1520). Resumption of the observance of the ancient feast day of this month noted.

Tlaxochimaco (July 4–23, 1520)

Xocotl uetzi (July 24–Aug. 12, 1520)

Ochpaniztli (Aug. 13–Sept. 1, 1520)

Teotl eco (Sept. 2–21, 1520)

Tepeilhuitl (Sept. 22–Oct. 11)

Quecholli (Oct. 12–31, 1520)

Panquetzalitzli (Nov. 1–20, 1520). "The pestilence . . . was diminishing."

Atemoztli (Nov. 21–Dec. 10, 1520)

Tititl (Dec. 11–30, 1520)

Izcalli (Dec. 31, 1520–Jan. 19, 1521). The Spaniards "were approaching from the direction of Quauhuitlan."

Nemontemi (Jan. 20–24, 1521)

Atl caualo (Jan. 25–Feb. 13, 1521)

Tlacaxipeualiztli (Feb. 14–Mar. 5, 1521)

Tozoztontli (Mar. 6–25, 1521)

Uei tozoztli (Mar. 26–Apr. 14, 1521)

Toxcatl (Apr. 15–May 4, 1521). The Spaniards "held consultations, councils of war, about us."

Etzalqualiztli (May 5–24, 1521)

Tecuilhuitontli (May 25–June 13, 1521). It was "a year since the Spaniards had died in the Tolteca canal."

* * *

Year Three House, ceremonial calendar day One Serpent: ". . . the shields were laid down. . ."

Neither the natives of the New World nor the conquering Spaniards had any understanding of each other's civilization — from the ideals that motivated peaceful and gracious acts down to practical matters such as why and how war was waged.

As to warring: the Spaniards, fresh from successfully unifying Spain on the defeat and expulsion of the Moslems in 1492, were seasoned fighters accounted as the best-trained practitioners of the art of war as it was waged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Armies, with armor, bows, crossbows, spears, halberds, swords, arquebuses, primitive cannon, horses, and so on, contended against each other more or less as they do now to win battles, territory, booty, renown, and eventual material reward for king, leader, and humbler participant. A great many conquistadores, members of a usually penurious minor nobility, had come to the New World and continued to arrive — young, active, ambitious to carve out for themselves high status with wealth and equality with or a degree of independence from upper Spanish officialdom, whether in the New World or the Old. Practices had been established whereby new lands and their populations were claimed for the king following legal formulae; records were kept of the expedition's moves and acts; a priest or priests usually formed an important part of the personnel.

Above all, the conquistador, like the European of his and our times, fought to win the battle, the campaign, the war, and the benefits he expected from victory. There still remained from medieval times, however, vestiges of chivalrous ideals, which in some ways can interestingly be compared with the Aztec ideal of a warrior's life.

To a degree such may also have been Mesoamerican goals in fighting. Battles, campaigns, wars were won and benefits gained. But at the time of the conquest, and perhaps for centuries before, the war situation was highly colored, often completely dominated, by each warrior's need personally to take live prisoners to enhance his status and to serve the gods. This matter will be touched upon later; here we need only draw attention to the many times the taking of captives is stressed in the native account. Indeed, the taking of prisoners mitigated many a defeat.

* * *

Some two or three hundred years after the collapse, about a thousand years ago, of a "Classic" period of developing civilization which from our perspective looks like a long, relatively peaceful growth of Mesoamerican centers under what appears to have been priestly rule, control of events in central Mexico was taken over by much more warlike newcomers. These were

the Toltecs, fighters and expansionists despite their being associated with the reputedly peace-loving Quetzalcoatl. They disappeared in their turn and, beginning about A.D. 1200, other barbarous and varied strangers from northerly parts took their place. These were the Chichimecs — the name could mean "dog people" — among the latest of whom were the Aztecs. After humiliations and vicissitudes, this tribe settled a cluster of unattractive islands in a corner of the connected lakes then covering most of the Valley of Mexico. Traditions set this event at about the year 1325. By the middle 1400s they had become the dominant population (allied with the people of Texcoco and Tlacopan, now Tacuba) not only in central Mexico but in extensive regions to the east, south, and west.

By a process of taking over the existing highly developed civilization and adapting it where necessary to their specialties, they represented a way of life in some ways more complex and in some ways simpler than that of their predecessors. It was basically agricultural and at the same time extremely warlike. In the island capital, Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City, the main pyramid in the central temple area was topped by two temples, one dedicated to Tlaloc, the rain and vegetation god, the other to Huitzilopochtli, the sun-war god. Of the two, the war god's temple was taller; and, in fact, the status of the successful warrior was infinitely higher than that of the agricultural worker (essential though he was) and indeed superior to all other callings except possibly the priesthood — though priest and warrior were so often the same as to make distinctions and generalizations uneasy. The social system provided, in any case, a strictly maintained class system — roughly noble and common, with a lower level, or levels, that ranged from a generally not too onerous form of serfdom to a generally mild form of slavery. This system was complicated by the recognition of many gradations of status. For instance: Traveling merchants, largely because so useful in warring preparations and aftermath, were almost nobility *per se*, and certain craftsmen like metal-smiths, lapidaries, and feather artists were almost equal in status to the merchants. Besides, such factors as success in war, the priesthood, long-distance trade, and craftsmanship could and did constantly provide the upper classes with new members, stringent though the rules of society were.

War can be said to have kept the Aztec system going. Religion required it: The hearts and blood of sacrificial victims nourished the sun and other gods and kept the universe in working order. Social status required it: The successful individual thus rose in rank and importance, and continued success maintained the status for him and for his sons if they too could measure up. The success, expansion, and wealth of the state required it as well. The relation-

ships between religious beliefs and practices, warriors' success, and one's position in society were indissoluble. The warrior must bring home living captives for the sacrifices; and he joined the sun in the most magnificent of heavens if he died in war or on the sacrificial stone. Because the normal glorious end for all men was death in battle or on the sacrificial stone, women had their chance: as sacrifices or, if dead in childbirth, regarded as warriors killed in battle in the act of taking a captive for the god.

We emphasize these aspects of Aztec life because we think the Aztecs did so too, and because their way of thinking and acting in war was among the reasons they lost to the Spaniards when theoretically, though perhaps only temporarily, they could have won. There were other reasons for their defeat, of course, the importance of which is hard to assess. One was the general expectation, held more widely than just by the Aztecs and their allies, that Quetzalcoatl (godly ruler of the Toltecs), who had been forced to leave, sailing eastward in a boat formed of interlaced snakes, would eventually return to claim his due. He had so stated as he departed. How, therefore, should Cortés and his Spaniards, who in many ways seemed to fulfill that promise, be treated? This was a dilemma confronting the Aztecs. And there were the practical reasons: Spanish armor, horses, wheels, gunpowder, crossbows, boats, and so on. But perhaps it was as much as anything the difference in playing the game that lost it for the Aztecs: the Spanish attacks without elaborate warnings and their tactics and strategy aimed at winning the engagement and ultimately the war and complete control of all the population versus the Aztec tactics and strategy based primarily on the taking of live captives.

There was more than war and agriculture to the life of the Aztecs. They are known for the massive architecture of their public buildings and their equally massive sculpture and sculptural effects, but they were just as capable in the arts requiring great skill on a reduced scale — pottery, lapidary work, metal work, feather art, etc. There were many beautiful aspects to their religious, philosophical, and literary achievements that we often forget to take into account. These were perpetuated largely by word of mouth from one generation to the next; but with their system of pictorial writing (which had its awkward features) they could also keep records covering a wide variety of subject matter. To these is related a lively sense of time-measurement by means of (1) an eighteen-month system of twenty days each plus five "empty" days, (2) a ceremonial two-hundred-and-sixty-day calendar resulting from the mathematical combination of thirteen numbers with twenty day signs, and (3) the interplay of these two calendar systems by which the starting points

of each corresponded in such a way that every fifty-two years the people completed a full "bundle" of years and started a new fifty-two-year cycle. Though many of their treatments of disease depended upon certain services to the gods and were thought to hang upon the gods' whims, many cures were soundly based on knowledge of the properties of herbs, knowledge of anatomy, and proven surgical practices. These last the Spaniards appreciated often enough after an engagement with the Aztecs. Though our knowledge of their housing, at least for the middle to upper classes, is limited — that of the commoner who worked the fields probably remained little changed up to modern times — it is quite possible that the noble, merchant, commoner, and even the inferior classes on the whole may have lived better and more comfortably than did their contemporary counterparts in Europe.

But there are many sources of information on Aztec civilization in general to which the reader may refer for an abundance of detailed information. One of the most stirring descriptions of Tenochtitlan or Mexico City just before its destruction forms a part of Cortés's second dispatch to Charles V. The following is a broad translation of Cortés's remarks. Starting with the relatively flat Valley of Mexico, he says:

... in said plain are two lakes which almost fill it. . . . One of these two lakes is of fresh water and the other, which is larger, is salty. . . . From one lake to another and among the cities and other settlements which are about said lakes, communication is by means of canoes, . . . with no need of going overland. . . .

This great city of [Tenochtitlan] is built in the salt lake. From any direction one may wish to enter, the city is two leagues from the shore. It has four entrances, each an artificial causeway two short lance lengths in width. The city is about the same size as Seville or Córdoba. Its main streets are very wide and straight. Some of these and all the others are half solid roadway and half canal for canoe traffic. All the streets are open at intervals where canals join. But in all these gaps, some of which are very broad, there are bridges made of great, wide, shaped, close-set beams. On many of these ten horses could walk abreast. . . .

This city has many open squares where markets and trade are continuous. One of the plazas is twice the size of that of Salamanca; it has a portico all the way around, where daily more than sixty thousand people meet to buy and sell all kinds of goods. . . . Each sort is sold in its own street, with no other kind of goods intruding, and in all of this the people maintain excellent order. They sell everything by the piece or by measure, . . . I have never seen them sell anything by weight. In this great plaza there is a large building like a court house where always are seated perhaps

ten or twelve judges who try all the market place cases and questions which arise there and have the guilty punished. . . .

In this city's various quarters there are many temple groups or buildings for their idols, of beautiful architecture. In the main areas the priestly cult personnel reside permanently. For them, besides the buildings for the idols, good quarters are provided. All these priests dress in black, and they never cut nor comb their hair from the time they enter the priesthood until they leave it. All the sons of the principal people, lords as well as respected commoners, remain in these religious establishments, costumed like the priests, from the age of seven or eight until they are released in order to marry — more usually the older ones who are to inherit property than the others. . . . Among the temple areas there is one, the greatest, which cannot be adequately described in words. It is so large that in its precincts, which are surrounded by a wall, there could well lie a settlement of five hundred. Inside this area, about its edges, are fine buildings with large halls and corridors where lodge the priests who are there. There are at least forty pyramids, very tall and well made; the largest has fifty steps leading up to the main body of the pyramid. The principal pyramid is taller than the Seville cathedral's tower. The stone masonry and the woodwork are equally good; they could nowhere be bettered. All the stone work inside the temples where they keep the idols is sculptured and plaster-roofed, and the woodwork is all carved in relief and painted with pictures of monsters and other figures and designs. All these pyramids are burial places for the lords, and each temple is dedicated to its idol, which they worship.

There are three halls within this great temple area in which are the principal idols, of marvelous size, height, and varied design, whether sculptured in stone or in wood. Within these halls are other chapels with very small entrances; they are completely dark. In them are only the priests, though not all of them, and the images of the gods, though, as I have said, there are many outside. . . .

There are many beautiful, large houses in this city, . . . for all the lords of the land, Moctezuma's vassals, have their houses here and reside in them part of the year. Besides, there are many rich citizens who also have very good houses. All of them have, besides good, large quarters, very fine flower gardens of various sorts, in houses of both high and low quality.

Along one of the causeways to the city are two conduits made of mortar, each two paces wide and almost two yards high. Through one of them flows a stream of good, fresh water as thick as a man's body, which reaches the center of the city. Everyone uses and drinks it. The other conduit is empty; when they wish to clean the one, they let the other take the flow of water. The water has to cross the city's salty canals over the bridges; it passes across in open conduits as thick as a bull and as long as the bridge. Thus the whole city is supplied. They deliver the water for sale along all the streets in canoes; when a canoe comes under a bridge where

there is an open conduit, men fill the canoes from above and are paid for their work.

At each entrance to the city and at every place where canoes unload, where most of the food reaches the city, there are huts for guards who keep a certain proportion of all that enters. . . .

In all the markets and public places . . . there daily gather many workers and experts in all the crafts awaiting anyone who may hire them by the day. In dress and activities the people of this city exhibit higher quality than those of other provinces and cities, for as the ruler Moctezuma has always been in the city with all his vassal lords, it has accumulated higher quality and polish in all things. . . . The people's activities and behavior are on almost as high a level as in Spain, and as well organized and orderly. Considering that these people are barbarous, lacking knowledge of God and communication with other civilized nations, it is remarkable to see all that they have. . . .

Such was Cortés's eye-witness impression in 1519 of the city he was to destroy almost two years later. Now follows the Aztec account of the calamity.

The War of Conquest
How It Was Waged Here in Mexico



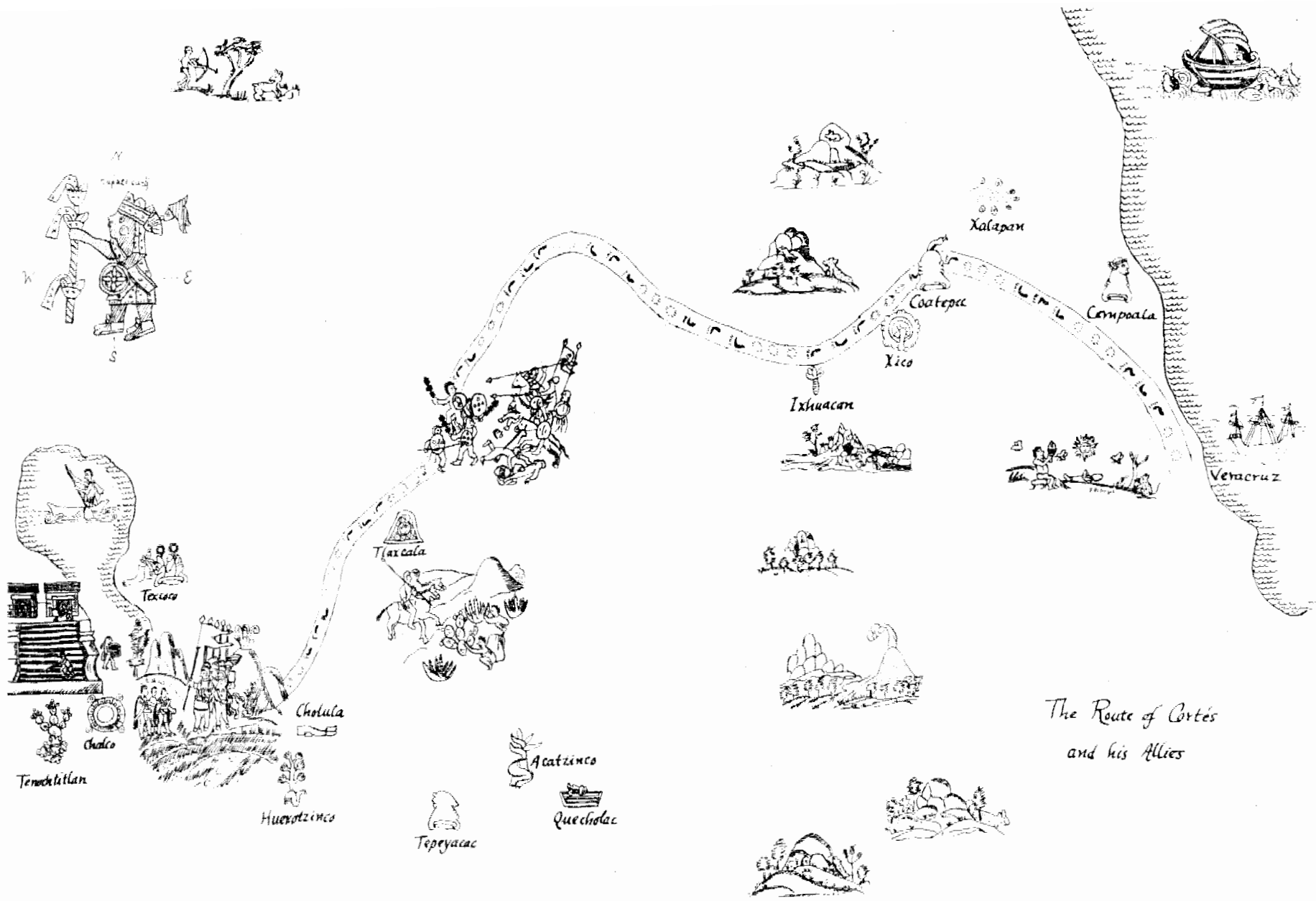
TO THE READER

by

Fc. Bernardino de Sahagún

Although many have written of the conquest of this New Spain in Spanish, according to the account of those who conquered it, I desired to write it in the Mexican language, not so much to derive certain truths from the account of the very Indians who took part in the conquest, as to record the language of warfare and the weapons which the natives use in it, in order that the terms and proper modes of expression for speaking on this subject in the Mexican language can be derived therefrom. To this may be added that those who were conquered knew and gave an account of many things which transpired among them during the war, of which those who conquered them were unaware. For these reasons, it seems to me, to have written this history, which was written at a time when those who took part in the very conquest were alive, has not been a superfluous task. And those who gave this account were principal persons of good judgment, and it is believed they told all the truth.





The Route of Cortés
and his Allies

PRELUDE OF EVIL SIGNS

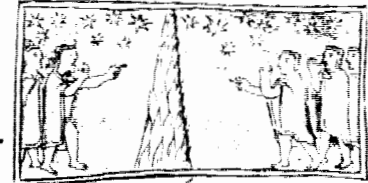
EVEN BEFORE the Spaniards landed in New Spain, omens foretold their coming. These began ten years before the Conquest.

First, every night there arose a sign like a tongue of fire, like a flame. Pointed and wide-based, it pierced the heavens to their mid-point, their very heart. All night, off to the east, it looked as if day had dawned. Then the sun arose and destroyed it.

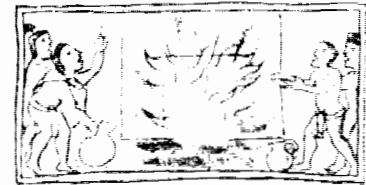
This went on for a year—the year of Twelve House.¹

Every time the sign appeared, there was shouting. The men yelled, striking the palms of their hands against their mouths.² They were afraid and could think of nothing else.

Next, quite of its own accord, at Itepeyoc, at Tlacateccan,³ Uitzilopochtli's temple burst into flame. No man could have set it; it burned of itself. When first seen, its squared, wooden columns were on fire and puffs of flame exploded from it as the flames ate all the beams. There was a great outcry. Priests called, "Hurry, Mexicans! Fight the



Incce capitulo unca mstua
in nez, in mstac in macholl'vot
in tehavid, in aiamo val'kui
cy'anoles, in nican halli ipan,
maiamano izama'hoia in nica
E'aneque



There arose a sign like a tongue of fire.

Quite of its own accord, Uitzilopochtli's temple burst into flame.

¹The names of the Aztec years were derived from a series of four year signs—Rabbit, Reed, Flint, and House—combined with a series of thirteen numbers, e.g., One Rabbit, Two Reed, Three Flint, Four House, Five Rabbit, etc. A cycle of fifty-two years resulted from combining the two series.

²This would produce an ululant, pulsating shriek. It seems to have been a common war cry.

³Itepeyoc was that part of the temple of Uitzilopochtli where his image was formed; Tlacateccan is synonymous with Tlacateco, alternative name for the temple of Uitzilopochtli.



fire! Bring water!" But the more water they threw on, the higher the flames flared. Nothing helped. It all went up.

Then lightning struck the straw roof of Tzonmulco, the temple of the old fire god Xiuhtecutli. This happened during not a storm but a mere sprinkle with just a summer flash -- not even a thunder clap. Hence it was a sign of evil.

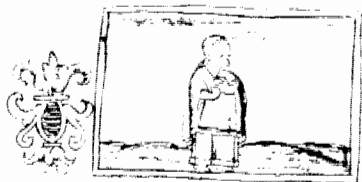
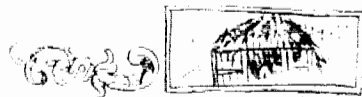
Other signs followed. In full light one late afternoon a comet appeared, bursting into three heads. It hurtled from west to east scattering sparks like glowing coals and leaving a long tail. Men raised a great shout when they saw it, for there was a rattling sound; a sound as of shell rattles spread everywhere.

Then the waters of the lake boiled up, crackling, and welled upward, far enough to melt adobes and tumble houses on the island. The day was still; there was no wind.

And often, in the dark of the night, a woman was heard moving, weeping. She would pace about wailing, "My dear children, we have to go! Where can I take you?"

One morning -- this was the seventh sign -- the fishing-folk while snaring birds came upon one like a brown crane with features so ominous that they took it where Moctezuma was meditating in the Tlilan calmecatl.¹ Its crest was like a round mirror pierced in the center like one a god might use to look into the future. There Moctezuma peered, to see the heavens -- the stars -- the fire drill constellation. He was first startled, and then terrified, as he saw, a little beyond, what looked like fighting men

¹ Tlilan calmecatl was the black dwelling place of the priests.



Lightning struck the straw roof of Tzonmulco.

In full light a comet appeared.

A woman was heard moving, weeping.

Its crest was like a round mirror pierced in the center.



Thistle-people -- single-bodied but two-headed appeared.



massed, like conquerors in war array, riding the backs of deer. He summoned his wise men. "Can you tell me," he asked, "what is the meaning of what I have just seen there, like fighters marching massed?" But when they looked, they saw nothing. They could give him no answer.

Finally, thistle-people -- single-bodied but two-headed -- often appeared. As often as anybody found one he took it to Moctezuma. As soon as he looked at one it would vanish.

Prodigies like these foretold the coming of the Spaniards years before they came.

THE LANDINGS

ONLY ONE vessel came, to begin with.¹ As the Spaniards sailed along the shore, they were reported. The high steward of Cuetlaxtlan, a man called Pinotl, went there himself to see. He took four witnesses: Yaoztzin, steward of Mictlanquauhtla; Teocinyaotl, steward of Teocinyocan; and Cuitlaltitoc and Tentlil, who were underlings, guides. They went to look, to spy, to size the strangers up. But as a precaution they decided to offer them a gift of precious capes,² the sort reserved exclusively for Moctezuma, his prerogative alone, which none else might wear.

Pinotl had said, "Our lives would be worth little if we were to deceive Moctezuma. Therefore we must go and look, so that we can truthfully report to him." So they got sea coast people to paddle them out to the Spaniards. Drawing near enough to see them and be seen, they went through motions at the prows of the boats as if kissing



¹ This refers to Juan de Grijalva's arrival at Isla de los Sacrificios, an island in the present-day Veracruz. He arrived in 1518.

² These were unique because of materials used, ornamentation (feathers, fringes, etc.), color, design woven in, etc.

the earth. For they thought Quetzalcoatl must at last have come back in that vessel.³

The Spaniards, through interpreters, called out to them, "Who are you? Where from?"

"We have come from Mexico."

"Are you indeed Mexicans? What then is the name of your ruler?"

"O lords," the Mexicans answered, "his name is Moctezuma."

And in his name they gave the Spaniards the gifts they had carried out — precious capes with the sign of the sun, with blue knotted work, with figures of jars, with eagle down, with snake heads, with Quetzalcoatl's wind jewel, with the turkey blood design, with the whirlpool or the smoking mirror design. . . . All these they gave the Spaniards. In return they accepted necklaces of blue and yellow which looked like amber, and they wondered greatly at these beads.

Then the Spaniards dismissed them. "Go," they said. "We go back to Spain but shall soon return."

So the Spaniards sailed away whence they came, the Mexican officials waiting ashore until they had left and then setting forth to

³ According to one account, that in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, Quetzalcoatl, upon reaching the sea shore in his flight from Tula, cast himself into a funeral pyre, his heart becoming the morning star. The account Sahagún gives in the third Book of the *General History* is that he sailed eastward on a raft of intertwined snakes. It was assured he would return from the east to resume his rule.

Mexico. Day and night they sped inland to warn Moctezuma, to inform him of the truth of what had happened and of the exchange of gifts.

Arriving, they said, "O lord, O noble young man, be merciful to us. Hear what we have seen and what we have done there where your old men watch the sea for you.

"We went out into the water to see our lords the gods. We gave them all your capes which we had with us. Here are the lordly things they gave us.



"They said to us, 'If you came from Mexico, then give these to the ruler Moctezuma, so that he may recognize us when we return.'"

So they gave Moctezuma a complete account of their meeting and speaking with the Spaniards in the sea.

Moctezuma answered, "You have traveled far; you are tired. Rest. What you have shown me is to remain secret. Let no one speak of it. This has been between you and me only."

He then commanded Pinotl and the others, "See that the shoreline is constantly watched everywhere — at Nauhtlan, at Toztlan, at Mictlanquauh-tla; wherever the strangers may land."

And the stewards then left to see that the command was carried out.

Meanwhile Moctezuma called together his most trusted lords, his deputy Tlilpoton-

qui, the high warriors Quappiaztzin and Quetzalaztatzin, and the high judge Ecatenpatiltzin, to inform them, and he showed them the beads brought by the stewards.

"Now that we have gaped over these fine turquoises," he said, "let them be well guarded. Let the keepers watch them well, for if they lose even one piece, I shall take from them their houses, their children, their wives."

Time passed, so that the year of Twelve Flint Knife was followed by its companion, Thirteen Rabbit. And when the year Thirteen Rabbit was about to complete its term,⁴ then Spaniards again sailed along the shoreline. They landed. The stewards again sped to inform Moctezuma. And Moctezuma acted; for he thought, as everyone else did, that it surely was Quetzalcoatl who had returned, as he had said he would when he set out eastward long ago, to resume the rulership from which he had been driven.

Moctezuma then chose five to represent him and go to meet the Spaniards. He commissioned the lordly priest Yoalli ichan with personages from Tepoztlan, from Tizatlan, from Ueuetlan, from Uicamecatlan. He said to them, "Come, you jaguar warriors!⁵ We are told that our lord Quetzalcoatl has finally landed. Go to meet him; listen to him carefully; repeat to me faithfully what he says. These are the gifts you will take him."

⁴ The year Thirteen Rabbit ended January 24, 1519; the following year, One Reed, began January 25, 1519. Cortés arrived at the port of San Juan de Ulúa on Holy Thursday, 1519.

⁵ The successful Aztec was almost invariably a successful warrior. If unusually so, various high ranks or orders (like "jaguar") were open to him.

The gifts were four complete sets of gods' array.⁶

The first array was that of Quetzalcoatl. It consisted of a snake mask in turquoise mosaic; a quetzal-feather, fan-shaped head ornament; a plaited jadeite neckband in which nestled a disc of gold; a shield with bands of gold, or of gold and seashells, criss-crossed, with quetzal feathers and a quetzal flag at its lower edge; a turquoise-mosaic-backed mirror with quetzal feathers for the small of the back; more neckbands of jadeite and golden shells; a turquoise spear thrower, all turquoise with a snake-head ornament; and black "obsidian" sandals.

Second, they assembled an array suitable for the god Tezcatlipoca — a gold-starred feather headdress; earplugs like golden shells; a necklace of seashells; a breast ornament, itself and its fringe sewn with seashells; a sleeveless jerkin with design, eyeleted border, and feathered edging; a mosaic mirror for the small of the back; golden shells to ornament the calves of the legs; and white sandals.

Third was the god Tlaloc's array. His characteristic heron feather headdress was made entirely of quetzal feathers, under a band of shells crossing another of gold. He had snake-head earplugs of jadeite; a sleeveless jerkin with a design in jadeite; a neck ornament consisting of plaited jadeite and a disc of gold; a mirror for the small of the back; rattles; a cape with an edging of red rings; golden shell-like ornaments for the

⁶ Since it was thought that gods had arrived, array no doubt considered appropriate to them was selected. Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca, and Tlaloc were among the very highest gods.

ankles; and a turquoise mosaic staff designed like a snake.

Finally there was again Quetzalcoatl's finery.⁷ It consisted of a peaked jaguar skin cap with pheasant plumes and, at its tip, a large jadeite stone; earplugs of turquoise mosaic with pendant golden seashells; a plaited jadeite neckband set off by a golden disc; a red-bordered cape; golden shell ornaments for the ankles; a shield in which a golden circle was centered and from whose lower edge hung quetzal feathers and a banner; the wind god's curved, hooked staff sown with white jadeite stars; and white "foam" sandals.

These were some of the godly array entrusted to Moctezuma's emissaries. There were other gifts of greeting — a golden, shell-shaped headdress with parrot feathers hanging; a golden conical cap; and so on. They filled baskets with these things and readied the wooden frames with which the burden-carriers carried loads upon their backs.

And Moctezuma told his five messengers, "Set out! Hurry! Give our prayers to the lord, the god Quetzalcoatl. Say to him, 'Your deputy governor Moctezuma has sent us; here are his gifts to you, for you have come to occupy Moctezuma's poor home here in Mexico.'"

The emissaries reached the shore; the sea-coast people paddled them across to Xicalanco; then they again took to the boats,



⁷ Listing Quetzalcoatl's array twice may have been an error by Sahagún's informant or copyist.

heaping all the gifts about them. Taking off, they went toward the Spaniards' vessel.

Seeing them, the Spaniards through their interpreters called out, "Who are you? Where from?"

"We come from Mexico, over there."

"Maybe so, maybe not. You may just be fugitives. You may just pretend. You may be making fools of us," the Spaniards answered.

But when they were finally reassured, convinced, they caught the prows of the boats with iron poles, drew them up to the vessel, and let down a ladder. Then the Mexicans climbed up, carrying the godly array as a gift of greeting. Each one went through the motions of kissing the earth before Cortés.

"May it please the god to hear. His deputy governor, Moctezuma, who rules Mexico for him, prays to him and says, 'The god has traveled far; he is tired.'"

Then they dressed Cortés in the array of Quetzalcoatl: in the turquoise mosaic snake mask with the head fan of quetzal feathers and with the jadeite snake-head earplugs suspended from it; the sleeveless jerkin; the plaited jadeite neckband with the golden disc resting in its midst. On the small of his back they put the mirror; over his shoulders they bound the cape; about the calf of his leg they arranged the jadeite band with the golden shells. And on his arm they laid the shield with bands of gold and shells criss-crossed and with outspread quetzal feathers on the lower rim and a quetzal feather flag. In front of him they laid the black "obsidian" sandals.

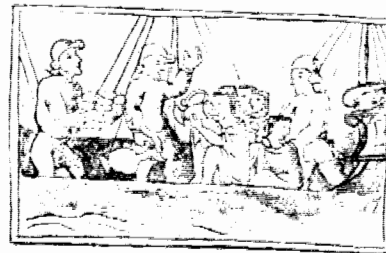
The other three sets of godly array they arranged in order before him.

*Inje maccojlli caputis vnam mpha
in dem machicob, myquac stia man
mofcuzuma in vmpa allacque inja
cabo dar heruanis vates.*



The Mexicans climbed up, carrying the godly array as a gift of greeting.

The Spaniards put irons about their necks; they fettered them.



Then they shot off the gun.

The Spaniards revived them with a drink of wine, and made them eat some food.

"Are these all your gifts of greeting, all your gifts for coming before me?" asked Cortés through interpreters, after all this had been done.

"These are all the things we have brought," they answered.

Then Cortés ordered them to be bound. The Spaniards put irons about their necks; they fettered them. Then they shot off the great lombard gun. At this, Moctezuma's emissaries fainted dead away—fell—knew no more, until the Spaniards sat each one up, revived them with a drink of wine, and made them eat some food.

After all this, Cortés said to them, "Listen. I have long since heard it said that Mexicans are very strong, very brave, great conquerors. One Mexican can put to flight, overcome, turn back even ten, even twenty of his foes. I now wish to be convinced; I wish to see you do it; I wish to test how strong, how powerful you are." Distributing leather shields, iron swords, iron lances, he continued, "And tomorrow, just before sunrise, we shall test each other; we shall fight each other on equal terms. Then we shall know who is better."

"But—may it please the lord to hear," they answered, "—the lord's deputy governor Moctezuma did not tell us to do that. He told us only to greet our lord on his behalf. If we were to do as our lord says, would Moctezuma not be angry? Would he not kill us?"

"No, for I will it to be. I wish to see, to test your abilities. For it is well known in Spain that you are very strong, very brave. Eat before dawn, as I shall. Prepare yourselves."

Cortés and the Spaniards then let them climb down to their boats.

They paddled off furiously, each one as hard as he could. Some paddled with their hands, so as to flee as fast as they could. They said to one another, "Warriors! All your strength, now! Row hard, lest something evil befall us!"



They sped first back to Xicalanco, resting there no more than to restore their strength quickly to press on to Tecpan tlaxacac and then to Cuertaxtlan.

The Cuertaxtlan people said, "Rest here, if only for a day; gather your strength!"

But the emissaries answered, "No, we shall hurry on. We must warn Moctezuma; we must report what we saw, which has filled us with terror. The like has never been seen. Surely you would not expect that you be told of it before Moctezuma?"

So they hastened on, reaching Mexico deep in the night.



Meanwhile Moctezuma had been unable to rest, to sleep, to eat. He would speak to no one. He seemed to be in great torment. He sighed. He felt weak. He could enjoy nothing.

"What will happen now?" he kept asking. "Who will be lord as I have been until now? My heart is burning as if dipped in chili sauce. Where can we go, O lord?"

Then the five emissaries arrived. "Even if he is asleep," they told the guards, "wake him. Tell him that those he sent to the sea have returned."

But Moctezuma said, "I shall not hear them in this place. Have them go to the Coacalli building." Further he commanded, "Have two captives covered with chalk."⁹

So the messengers went to the Coacalli, the house of snakes.

Moctezuma came later. In front of the messengers, the captives were killed — their hearts torn out, their blood sprinkled over



the messengers; for they had gone into great danger; they had looked into the very faces of the gods; they had even spoken to them.

After this they reported to Moctezuma all the wonders they had seen, and they showed him samples of the food the Spaniards ate.

⁹The Coacalli, the house of snakes, was a reception hall for visiting dignitaries and rulers, friendly or unfriendly to the Mexicans.

¹⁰Slaves and captives were covered with chalk and down feathers prior to sacrifice.

Moctezuma was shocked, terrified by what he heard. He was much puzzled by the food, but what made him almost faint away was the telling of how the great lombard gun, at the Spaniards' command, expelled the shot which thundered as it went off. The noise weakened one, dizzied one. Something like a stone came out of it in a shower of fire and sparks. The smoke was foul; it had a sickening, fetid smell. And the shot, which struck a mountain, knocked it to bits — dissolved it. It reduced a tree to sawdust — the tree disappeared as if they had blown it away.

And as to their war gear, it was all iron. They were iron. Their head pieces were of iron. Their swords, their crossbows, their shields, their lances were of iron.¹¹

The animals they rode — they looked like deer — were as high as roof tops.

They covered their bodies completely, all except their faces.

They were very white. Their eyes were like chalk. Their hair — on some it was yellow, on some it was black. They wore long beards; they were yellow, too. And there were some black-skinned ones with kinky hair.

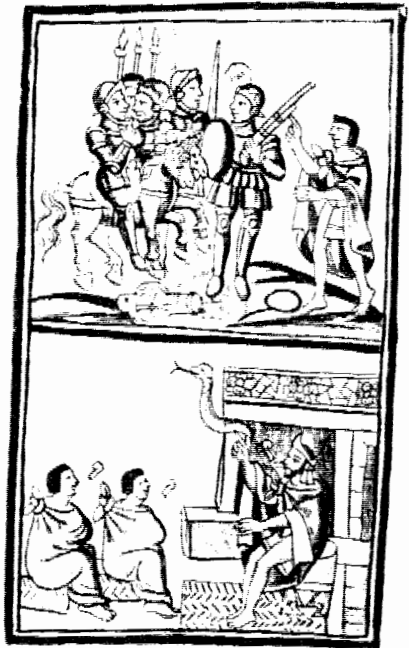
What they ate was like what Aztecs ate during periods of fasting; it was large, it was white, it was lighter than tortillas; it was spongy like the inside of corn stalks; it tasted as if it had been made of a flour of corn stalks; it was sweetish.

Their dogs were huge. Their ears were folded over; their jaws dragged; their eyes

¹¹The Aztecs saw little distinction between copper and iron. Iron was sometimes called "black copper."

blazed yellow, fiery yellow. They were thin — their ribs showed. They were big. They were restless, moving about panting, tongues hanging. They were spotted or varicolored like jaguars.¹²

When Moctezuma was told all this, he was terror-struck. He felt faint. His heart failed him.



As to their war gear, it was all of iron. Moctezuma was told all this.

¹²The dogs would have been mastiffs, hounds, probably other hunting dogs. They were evidently more terrifying in appearance than the native breeds of dog.

THE MARCH ON MEXICO

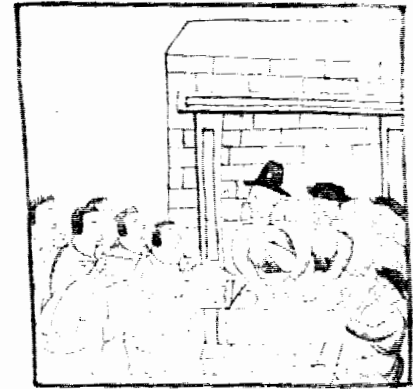
NEVERTHELESS, Moctezuma then again sent emissaries, this time all the doers of evil he could gather - magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers. With them he sent the old men and the warriors necessary to requisition all the food the Spaniards would need, the turkeys, the eggs, the best white tortillas, everything necessary. The elders and fighting men were to care well for them.

Likewise he sent a contingent of captives, so that his men might be prepared in case the supposed gods required human blood to drink. And the emissaries indeed so thought, themselves. But the sacrifice nauseated the Spaniards. They shut their eyes tight; they shook their heads. For Moctezuma's men had soaked the food in blood before offering it to them; it revolted them, sickened them, so much did it reek of blood.

But Moctezuma had provided for this because, as he assumed them to be gods, he was worshipping them as gods. So were the Mexicans. They called these Spaniards "gods come from the heavens"; the Mexicans thought they were all gods, including the black ones, whom they called the dusky gods.

In due course the Spaniards ate; they had white tortillas, degraigned corn, eggs, turkey, various kinds of sweet potato, manioc, avocado, acacia beans, and *jicama*, and ended with a choice of custard apple, mamey, sapota, plum, jobo, guava, *cuajilote*, *tejo-*

*Isic chieret capitulo: vncan mxtua
in q. scrijti. et loati mxtuazana. quipuf
oa mxtuazana. et mxtuazana. et mxtuazana.
et mxtuazana. et mxtuazana. et mxtuazana.
et mxtuazana. et mxtuazana. et mxtuazana.
et mxtuazana. et mxtuazana. et mxtuazana.*



In due course the Spaniards ate.



cote, American cherry, blackberry, prickly pear, and *patavaya*. Fodder was provided the deer—horses—which the Spaniards rode; stuff called *pipillo* and *tlachcaztl*.

As for the magicians, wizards, sorcerers, and soothsayers, Moctezuma had sent them just in case they might size up the Spaniards differently and be able to use their arts against them—cast a spell over them, blow them away, enchant them, throw stones at them, with wizards' words say an incantation over them—anything that might sicken them, kill them, or turn them back. They fulfilled their charge; they tried their skill on the Spaniards; but what they did had no effect whatsoever. They were powerless.

These men then returned to report to Moctezuma. "We are not as strong as they," was what they said as they described the Spaniards to him. "We are nothing compared to them."

Therefore Moctezuma strictly commanded the stewards, the lords, the elders, on pain of death to have at hand everything the Spaniards might need. Thus, when they had landed, as they progressed inland along the road, they were well provided for; they were treated with esteem. Completely in these emissaries' hands they started out with great ease. Everything was done for their comfort.



In Moctezuma's capital there was apprehension, sorrow, on this indication of the Spaniards' power. Shocked, terrified, Moc-

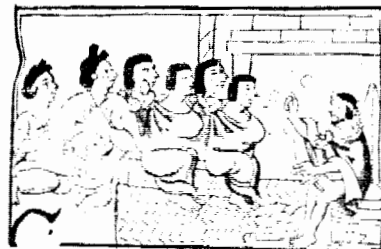
tezuma himself wept in the distress he felt for his city.

Everyone was in terror; everyone was astounded, afflicted. Many huddled in groups, wept in foreboding for their own fates and those of their friends. Others, dejected, hung their heads. Some groups exchanged tearful greetings; others tried mutual encouragement. Fathers would run their hands over their small boys' hair and, smoothing it, say, "Woe, my beloved sons! How can what we fear be happening in your time?" Mothers, too: "My beloved sons, how can you live through what is in store for you?"

Then word came which pierced Moctezuma's heart: that a woman of our own race was bringing the Spaniards toward Mexico, was interpreting for them, a woman named Marina.¹ She came from Tetipac. The Spaniards had come upon her on the coast. It was at just this time that Moctezuma's emissaries began leaving the Spaniards alone. Those who had been procuring their food, who had been easing their way, just went off, just turned their backs on them.

And at about this time the Spaniards' questions about Moctezuma became urgent. "What kind of man is he? Young? Mature? Old? Advanced in years? Well preserved? Doddering? Is he white-headed?" To these

¹ On the banks of the Grijalva River, near the present town of Tabasco, the Spaniards fought and overcame the native forces. Numbered among the twenty native women given to the Spaniards was Marina, also known as La Malinche and later as Doña Marina. Born in the town of Painala, in the province of Coatzacoalcos, she had been sold to Mexican traders of Niclanco and subsequently to Tabasco traders. Speaking Maya and Nahuatl, she quickly learned Spanish and became Cortés's interpreter.



Many huddled in groups, wept in foreboding.

A woman of our own race was bringing the Spaniards toward Mexico, a woman named Marina.

He turned the matter over, deciding to look for a likely cave.

questions of the gods—the Spaniards—the reply had been, "He is in his maturity. He is not fat; rather, he is slender, spare, thin."

But when Moctezuma learned that they inquired about him in this way, that they sought him, that these men, these gods, intended to look upon his face, his heart was afflicted with great apprehension. He tried to make plans to leave, to flee, to take himself hence, to hide himself, to seek a refuge from the gods. He turned the matter over in his mind for a long time, first deciding to look for a likely cave and then discussing the question with those to whom he could unburden himself, in whom he could confide. Among them were some who told him what they knew. "There are those," they said, "who know where the region of the dead is, the house of the sun, the realm of the god Tlaloc, the house of corn." Decide where you would go.

It was to the house of corn that it was generally decided he should go. But he could not. There was no place where he could hide himself. No longer had he the time or energy. He could not bring to reality the words of the soothsayers who had promised him his refuge. They had only pretended, had only apparently taken vengeance on him for something.

Moctezuma could only wait for the Spaniards, could only show resolution. He

² Mictlan, the region of the dead, Tonatlilichan, the house of the sun, Tlalocan, the realm of the rain god Tlaloc, are abodes of the dead as determined by one's deeds or the manner of his death. Cimicuic, the house of corn, was believed to be a paradise to the west presided over by Huehuacatl, the Father ruler. It was generally thought to be a cave in the vicinity of Chapultepec.

quieted, he controlled himself; he made himself submit to whatever was in store for him. So he left his proper dwelling, the great palace, so that the gods — the Spaniards — could occupy it, and moved to the palace he had originally occupied as a prince.



The Spaniards, pressing inland meanwhile to go through the city of Cempoalla, had with them a previously captured man known to have been a high warrior.³ He was now interpreting for them and guiding them, since he knew the roads and could keep them on the right ones.

Thus they came to reach a place called Tecoaac, held by people of the Otomí tribe subject to the city of Tlaxcalla. Here the men of Tecoaac resisted; they came out with their weapons. But the Spaniards completely routed them. They trampled them down; they shot them down with their guns; they riddled them with the bolts of their cross-bows. They annihilated them, not just a few but a great many.

When Tecoaac perished, the news made the Tlaxcallans beside themselves with fear. They lost courage; they gave way to wonder, to terror, until they gathered themselves together and, at a meeting of the rulers, took counsel, weighed the news among themselves, and discussed what to do.

³ The native *tlacochoalcatl* (a high military official) had been taken in the earlier Grijalva expedition and Cortés had brought him along.

"How shall we act?" some asked. "Shall we meet with them?"

Others said, "The Otomís are great warriors, great fighters, yet the Spaniards thought nothing of them. They were as nothing. In no time, with but the batting of an eyelash, they annihilated our vassals."

"The only thing to do," advised still others, "is to submit to these men, to befriend them, to reconcile ourselves to them. Otherwise, sad would be the fate of the common folk."

This argument prevailed. The rulers of Tlaxcalla went to meet the Spaniards with food offerings of turkey, eggs, fine white tortillas — the tortillas of lords.

"You have tired yourselves, O our lords," they said.

The Spaniards asked, "Where is your home? Where are you from?"

"We are Tlaxcallans," they answered. "You have tired yourselves. You have come to your poor home, Quauhtlaxcalla."



The rulers of Tlaxcalla went to meet the Spaniards with food offerings.

(Thus they called it — Eagle-Tlaxcalla — though in former times it had been known as Texcalla — Cragland — and its people were Texcallans.)

The Tlaxcallans led the Spaniards to the city, to their palace. They made much of them, gave them whatever they needed, waited upon them, and comforted them with their daughters.

The Spaniards, however, kept asking them "Where is Mexico? What is it like? Is it far?"

"From here it is not far," was the answer; "it is a matter of perhaps only three days' march. It is a very splendid place; the Mexicans are strong, brave, conquering people. You find them everywhere."

Now the Tlaxcallans had long been enemies of the people of Cholula. They disliked, hated, detested them; they would have nothing to do with them. Hoping to do them harm, they inflamed the Spaniards against them, saying, "They are very evil, these enemies of ours. Cholula is as powerful as Mexico. Cholula is friendly to Mexico."

Therefore the Spaniards at once went to Cholula, taking the Tlaxcallans and the Cempoallans with them all in war array. They arrived; they entered Cholula. Then there arose from the Spaniards a cry summoning all the noblemen, lords, war leaders, warriors, and common folk; and when they had crowded into the temple courtyard, then the Spaniards and their allies blocked the entrances and every exit.

There followed a butchery of stabbing, beating, killing of the unsuspecting Cholulans armed with no bows and arrows, protected by no shields, unable to contend

against the Spaniards. So with no warning they were treacherously, deceitfully slain. The Tlaxcallans had induced the Spaniards to do this.

What had happened was reported quickly to Moctezuma: his messengers, who had just arrived, departed fleeing back to him. They did not remain long to learn all the details. The effect upon the people of Mexico, however, was immediate; they often rose in tumults, alarmed as by an earthquake, as if there were a constant reeling of the face of the earth. They were terrified.

After death came to Cholula, the Spaniards resumed their marching order to advance upon Mexico. They assembled in their accustomed groups, a multitude, raising a great dust. The iron of their lances and their halberds glistened from afar; the shimmer of their swords was as of a sinuous water course. Their iron breast and back pieces, their helmets clanked. Some came completely encased in iron — as if turned to iron, gleaming, resounding from afar. And ahead of them, preceding them, ran their dogs, panting, with foam continually dripping from their muzzles.

All this stunned the people, terrified them, filled them with fear, with dread.



It was at this juncture that Moctezuma sent a company of noblemen, with magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers, and priests to meet Cortés at Quauhatecac, a point between the peaks of Iztac ciuatl and Popocatepetl.

The noblemen and court officials were led by Tziuacpopocatzin, to whom Moctezuma had entrusted a quantity of streamers of gold and of precious feathers, and necklaces of gold. These they were charged to give to Cortés and his men.

When they had delivered these gifts, the Spaniards appeared to be much gladdened, contented, delighted. They seized upon the gold as if they were monkeys, their faces gleaming. For clearly their thirst for gold was insatiable; they starved for it; they lusted for it; they wanted to stuff themselves with it as if they were pigs. So they went about fingering, taking up the streamers of gold, moving them back and forth, grabbing them to themselves, babbling, talking gibberish among themselves.

Then they noted Tziuacpopocatzin.

"Is that one Moctezuma?" they secretly asked the Tlaxcallans and Cempoallans who were watching among them.

"Not he, O our lords," they replied. "That one is Tziuacpopocatzin. Moctezuma merely deputized him."

So the Spaniards turned to him. "Are you Moctezuma?" they asked through the interpreters.

"I am your deputy governor," he said. "I am Moctezuma."

"Go away," they answered. "Why lie to us? What do you take us for? You cannot fool us. Moctezuma is in Mexico. He will



Moctezuma sent a company of noblemen, with magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers, and priests to meet Cortés.

The magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers, and priests went to inform Moctezuma.

not be able to hide from us. There is nowhere he can take refuge from us — unless he is a bird. Can he fly? Can he burrow underground? We shall find him. We cannot fail to look into his face, to listen to the words which come from his lips."

Thus they held Moctezuma to scorn. Thus another meeting, another gift-giving, came to naught. Thus they could continue to despise Moctezuma. They at once pressed on, along the road direct to Mexico.

Meanwhile, the other part of the company sent by Moctezuma, the magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers, and priests, had come up, performed, and been equally unsuccessful. Nowhere in anything could they prevail; nowhere in anything could they make a show against the Spaniards.

On the road they met one who was as if drunk. As they came up to him, they could make nothing of him. He was arrayed like one from Chalco; he seemed to be drunk, inebriated; he was bound about the chest with eight grass ropes. He met them in front of the advancing Spanish column.

He flared up against them.



"What do you think you can still do with them?" he asked. "What more do you want? What does Moctezuma still hope to gain? Has he still not come to his senses? Is he beside himself with fear? He has sinned. He has deserted the people — he has destroyed them. On his account their heads are broken, they are enveloped in the wrappings of the dead, they are made fun of, laughed at!"

When they had seen this prodigy and heard him speak, the magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers, and priests began to pay attention to him. But it was to no purpose. To no avail did they humbly pray to him. In vain they quickly set up his watching place, his earthen mound, his bed of straw. He ignored it all. What they had done, earthen mound and all, was for nothing.

He abused them. He said, "Why have you come here? It has been to no purpose. Nevermore will Mexico exist; it is already lost forever. Go away. It is there no longer. Turn around; look at what is to happen to Mexico — what is immediately in store!"

They turned to look. In the distance they could see all the temples, all the buildings of the administrative areas, all the higher educational buildings, all the houses as if in flames; and it looked as if already there were street fighting.

When the magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers and priests saw this, their hearts sank. They could no longer speak clearly; their words stuck in their throats.

They said to one another, "This is something we ought never to have looked at; it was a sight Moctezuma should have seen. For it is not just anybody who has

accosted us; it is the youth himself, the god Tezcatlipoca!"

And when they realized who he was, the god vanished; they saw him no more.

No farther did the magicians, wizards, sorcerers, soothsayers, and priests go; right there they turned back; they went to inform Moctezuma. Eventually they joined Tziuacpopocatzin and those who had been of his company. And when they all arrived in Mexico, they reported the things that had happened, the things they had seen.

When he learned of these events, Moctezuma could only bow his head. He could only sit with head hanging. For a long time he sat dejected, not speaking aloud, as if he had lost hope.

He could only at last say to them, "What now, my warriors? We have come to the end. We have taken our medicine. Is there anywhere a mountain we can run away to and climb? But we are Mexicans; can the Mexican state maintain its accustomed glory? Evil is the fate of the poor old men and women, of the babes in arms. Where can they go? What is now to be done? Where can we go? We have now taken our medicine, whatever it is."



Moctezuma now had the road, the highway, blocked off in a last attempt to deflect the Spaniards from Mexico. The fork which led direct to Mexico he had planted with maguey, with century plant; he let them see the other road, which would take them to Texcoco. But they knew that it was only a



They could see all the temples, all the buildings as if in flames.



Moctezuma had the road blocked, planted with maguey.

false wall of maguey. They heeded it only to take it up; they kicked each plant aside; far away did they cast them.

Then at Amaquemecan they slept. Then they continued; they marched direct along the road until they came to Cuitlauac, where next they slept. As they had already spoken to the rulers of Chalco, gaining their submission, there they likewise spoke to the rulers of the floating garden provinces, Xochimilco, Cuitlauac, and Mizquic. And the rulers of the floating gardens people also forthwith submitted to them.

Satisfied here, the Spaniards moved on and stopped at Itztapalapan, where once more they had the rulers brought together before them, those known as the Four Lords, lords of Itztapalapan, of Mexicatzenco, of Colhuacan, and of Uitzilopochco. Just as they had addressed the rulers of the floating gardens people, just so did they with these, making them respond in the same way. They, too, quietly and peacefully submitted.

And Moctezuma did nothing; he commanded no war, no strife against them. No one was to resist them in battle. He only commanded that they be cared for, that all be done for them.

And on this, Mexico lay as if stunned, silent. None went out of doors. Mothers kept their children in. The roads were clear — wide open, deserted, as if it were early morning. None even crossed the roads. People entered their houses there preoccupying themselves only with their afflictions. "So be it," the common folk said. "Let us be accursed. What more can be done? We are bound to die, we are already bound to perish. Yes, we can only await death."



The Spaniards once more had the rulers brought before them.



So now the host started to move, ready to converge on Mexico itself. The Spaniards put on their war gear; they girt on, bound on their battle dress. They arranged their horses; they disposed them in rows, placed them in line.

This was their order of march.

Four horsemen led; they made up the vanguard. They led, continuously turning about, continuously wheeling around, facing the onlooking people, peering hither and thither, watching every side, scanning all areas between the groups of houses, looking up to the roof terraces, their dogs scrambling ahead, sniffing each object, panting — continually panting.



Four horsemen led; they made up the vanguard. They led, turning about, wheeling around, peering hither and thither.

Alone marched the bearer of the standard.

Alone marched the bearer of the standard. He carried it upon his shoulder, continually shaking it, making it circle and toss from side to side. It came continually stiffening in the wind, rising like a warrior, twisting and raising itself, twisting and filling itself out.

Then followed the bearers of iron swords, each sword flashing as the men went by. On their shoulders they bore shields — wooden shields, leather shields.

Next came a second file of horsemen each in a quilted cotton cuirass, each with leather shield and iron lance, each with an iron sword hanging at the horse's neck. Each had little bells; they all jingled by with a shattering jangle. The horses — they looked like deer — neighed and whinnied. They were all sweating; water fell from their bodies; large flecks of foam, like soap suds, flew from their mouths to the ground. Their hooves beat the dirt as they advanced, pounding, sounding like stones cast at us, piercing holes which appeared, each one separately, as each hoof lifted, as each hind leg and each foreleg stamped.

The third group consisted of men with iron crossbows resting on their arms. They went testing, wielding them as they marched, though some just rested them on their shoulders. At their sides or under their arms hung their quivers, each one filled, crammed with bolts. They had quilted cotton armor reaching to the knees — very thick armor, firmly sewn, exceedingly dense, thick, close-woven. The same quilted armor protected their heads, each one topped with precious feathers, all dividing and outspread.

Fourth rode more horsemen, arrayed like those just described.

Fifth marched a group of arquebusiers. Some bore their arquebuses on their shoulders, some carried them extended. When, later, they came to enter the great palace assigned the Spaniards, the ruler's great residence, they fired them, fired them repeatedly. Each one exploded, crackled, thundered as it discharged, as it disgorged its charge. Smoke spread, suffused, massed over, and darkened the ground. It spread all over, its fetid smell stupefying us, robbing us of our senses.

At the very last of this column, directing from behind, came the commander, Cortés, just like our highest warrior — the ruler, the director of battles. Surrounding him closely were those he knew, his brave warriors, his device-bearers, his attendants; those who were like our shorn-hair or our Otomí order of warriors; the intrepid ones; the main support, the soul, the foundation of the state.



Next came a second file of horsemen each in a quilted cotton cuirass, each with leather shield and iron lance.

The horses neighed and whinnied; they were all sweating.

The third group consisted of men with crossbows.





Following the commander came those of the enemy cities — Tepoztlan, Tlaxcalla, Tlilihquitepec, Huexotzinco — each man arrayed for war in his quilted cotton armor, with his shield, with his bow. Each one's quiver bulged with arrows, some barbed, some obsidian-pointed, some blunted. Bent-kneed the men pranced whooping, shrieking as they struck hand against mouth, singing the Tocuillan song, bobbing their heads.

And with them mingled the carriers with baggage and rations on their backs in carrying frames, cages, baskets, bundles secured by tumplines. Some dragged the great lombard guns on their wooden wheels, singing as they forced them on.



Some just rested them on their shoulders.

They had quilted cotton armor reaching to the knees.

Fifth marched a group of arquebusiers.



At the very last came the commander, Cortés.

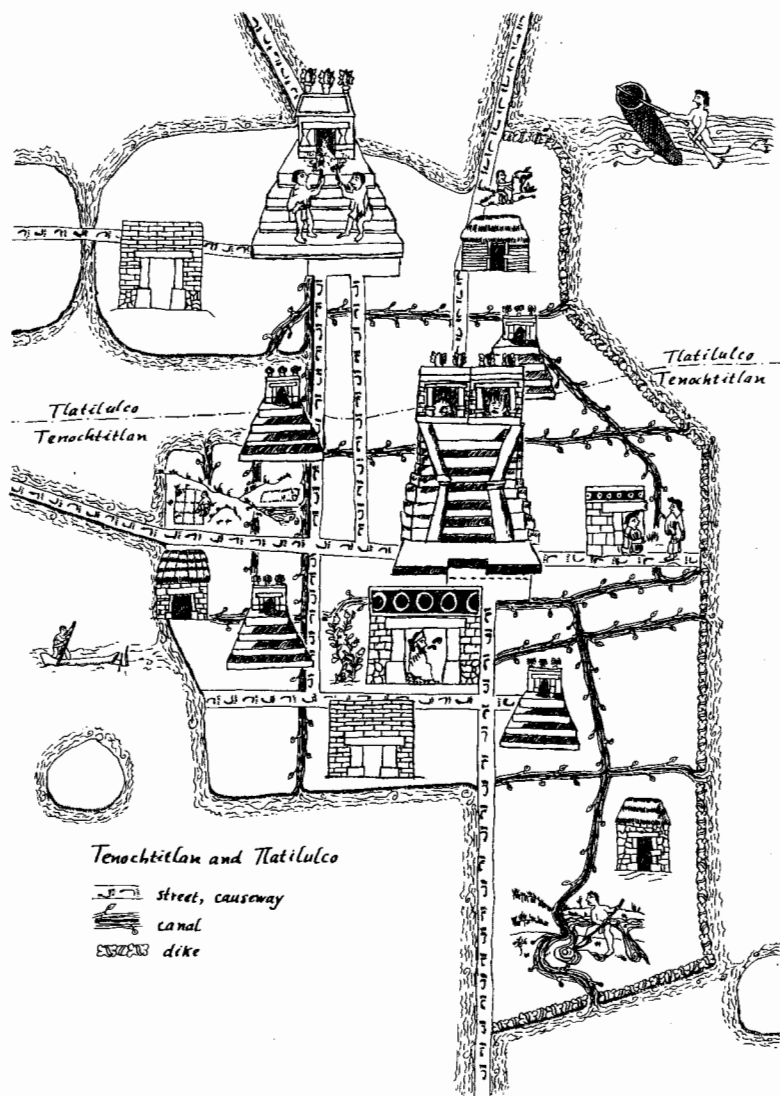
Following the commander came those of the enemy cities.



And with them mingled the carriers with baggage and rations on their backs.

Some dragged the great lombard guns on their wooden wheels.





THE CAPTURE AND DEATH
OF MOCTEZUMA

Now Moctezuma peacefully, docilely, himself went to meet the Spaniards at Xoloco, at Uitzillan, the strategic point on the causeway from the mainland. He and a number of great lords and princes had arrayed themselves formally for the event. They went carrying gourd vases of helianthus and talauma surrounding popcorn flowers, yellow tobacco flowers, and cacao blossoms, as well as wreaths and garlands. Also they carried necklaces of gold, necklaces with pendants, and plaited neck bands.

There at Xoloco Moctezuma gave gifts to Cortés, the commander of the host. He gave him flowers; he decked him with necklaces. He had more golden necklaces laid out before him, all kinds of them, as gifts of greeting. He hung necklaces on some of Cortés's officers.

Then Cortés addressed Moctezuma: "Is this indeed you? Are you not Moctezuma?"

"Yes," Moctezuma answered; "I am he."

On this, he rose, to stand facing Cortés. He bowed deeply, drew him close, and stood firmly. Then he said,

"O our lord, you have tired yourself; you are weary. At last you have come to earth; you have come to govern your city of Mexico, to take your position of authority, which for a short time I have been keeping and guarding for you. Your former deputy governors have departed — the rulers Itzcoatl, Moctezuma the Elder, Axayacatl, Tizoc,

*Injic axxtalli oac papitudo: vncā
nitra in quoniam Motecoma par
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Auitzotl, who also had come to keep watch, to govern the city of Mexico for you a short time ago and keep your people under their protection. Do the former rulers know what is happening in their absence? O that any of them might see, might wonder at what has befallen me — at what I am seeing now that they have gone. For I cannot be dreaming.

"For some time now have I been afflicted; I have gazed at the clouds, the mists, out of which you have come. And now this has come to pass. The departed rulers said as they left us that you would revisit your city, would return to your position of authority, and now it has so happened. You have come; you have tired yourself; you are weary. Rest yourself. Go into your palace; rest. Peace be with our lords."