

and only on rare occasions, are admitted to war consultations. Hence it follows that those who aspire to be cultured frown upon war and would prefer the lowest rank in the philosophical order

to the highest in the military, realizing that the Philosophers far excel military leaders in the good will and the respect of the people and in opportunities of acquiring wealth.

1. What is the relationship between emperor and magistrate in Ricci's account of Chinese administration?
2. What characteristics of Chinese government does Ricci most admire?
3. What is the role of the Choli and the Zauli?
4. Why did Ricci write the *Journal*? Who was his intended audience?
5. Do you think that Ricci's description of Chinese government is accurate?

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Bernal Díaz

The True History of the Conquest of New Spain

(1552–1568)

Bernal Díaz del Castillo (ca. 1492–1581) was one of the soldiers who accompanied Hernán Cortés on the conquest of the Aztecs. Díaz left Spain for the New World at the age of 18 and had explored both Cuba and the Yucatan peninsula before he joined the Cortés expedition. After the conquest of Mexico, Díaz accompanied Cortés on his unsuccessful expedition into Honduras. He remained in Central America for most of his life, settling in what is now Guatemala, where his papers, including the manuscript copy of his *True History*, remain.

Díaz wrote *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* to refute what he regarded as inaccurate accounts of the conquest. Although he was an eyewitness and participant, his history was not written until many years later, and was undoubtedly colored by his polemical purpose. Nevertheless, his description of Tenochtitlán, capital of Montezuma's empire, remains compelling.

As we had already been in Mexico for four days and none of us had left our quarters except to go to the houses and gardens, Cortés told us it would be a good idea to go to the main plaza and see the great temple of their Uichilobos. . . .

Many of Montezuma's chiefs were sent to accompany us, and when we arrived at the great square we were struck by the throngs of people and the amount of merchandise they displayed, at the efficiency and administration of everything.

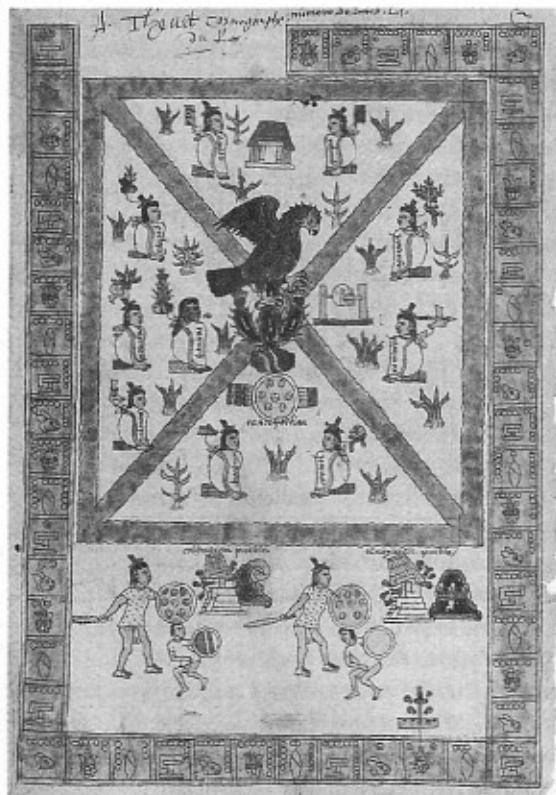
The chiefs who accompanied us showed us how each kind of merchandise was kept separate and had its place marked out. Let us start with

the dealers in gold, silver, and precious stones, feathers, cloth, and embroidered goods, and other merchandise in the form of men and women to be sold as slaves. There were as many here as the Negroes brought from Guinea by the Portuguese. Some were tied to long poles with collars around their necks so they couldn't escape, and others were left free. Then there were merchants who sold homespun clothing, cotton, and thread, and others who sold cacao, so that one could see every sort of goods that is to be found in all of New Spain, set out the way it's done where I come from, Medina del Campo, during fair time. . . .

I wonder why I waste all these words in telling what they sold in that great square, for I shall never finish describing everything in detail. But I must mention the paper, which is called *amal*, the little pipes scented with liquidambar and filled with tobacco, and the yellow ointments and other things of the same sort, all sold separately. Cochineal was sold under the arcades, and herbs and many other kinds of goods. There were buildings where three judges sat, and magistrates who inspected the merchandise. . . . I wish I could get through with telling all the things they sold there, but only to finish looking and inquiring about everything in that great square filled with people would have taken two days, and then you wouldn't have seen everything.

When we climbed to the top of the great *cu* there was a kind of platform, with huge stones where they put the poor Indians to be sacrificed, and an image like a dragon and other evil figures, with a great deal of blood that had been shed that day. Montezuma, accompanied by two priests, came out from an oratory dedicated to the worship of his cursed idols at the top of the *cu*, and said with great deference toward all of us, "You must be tired, Señor Malinche, after climbing up this great temple of ours."

Through our interpreters, who went with us, Cortés replied that neither he nor the rest of us ever got tired from anything. Then Montezuma



"The Founding of Tenochtitlán." The first two Aztec conquests, Colhuacan and Tenayucan, are depicted at the bottom of the drawing.

took him by the hand and bade him look at his great city and at all the other cities rising from the water, and the many towns around the lake; and if he had not seen the market place well, he said, he could see it from here much better.

There we stood looking, for that large and evil temple was so high that it towered over everything. From there we could see all three of the causeways that led into Mexico: the road from Iztapalapa, by which we had entered four days earlier; the Tacuba road, by which we fled the night of our great rout; and the road from Tepeaquilla.

We saw the fresh water that came from Chalultepec, which supplied the city, and the bridges on the three causeways, built at certain intervals so the water could go from one part of the lake to another, and a multitude of canoes, some arriving with provisions and others leaving with merchandise. We saw that every house in this great city and in the others built on the water could be reached only by wooden drawbridges or by canoe. We saw temples built like towers and fortresses in these cities, all white-washed; it was a sight to see. We could look down on the flat-roofed houses and other little towers and temples like fortresses along the causeways.

After taking a good look and considering all that we had seen, we looked again at the great square and the throngs of people, some buying and others selling. The buzzing of their voices could be heard more than a league away. There were soldiers among us who had been in many parts of the world, in Constantinople and Rome and all over Italy, who said that they had never before seen a market place so large and so well laid out, and so filled with people.

Then Cortés said to Montezuma, through Doña Marina, "Your Highness is indeed a great prince, and it has delighted us to see your cities. Now that we are here in your temple, will you show us your gods?"

Montezuma replied that he would first have to consult with his priests. After he had spoken with them, he bade us enter a small tower room,

a kind of hall where there were two altars with very richly painted planks on the ceiling. On each altar there were two giant figures, their bodies very tall and stout. The first one, to the right, they said was Uichilobos, their god of war. It had a very broad face with monstrous, horrible eyes, and the whole body was covered with precious stones, gold, and pearls that were stuck on with a paste they make in this country out of roots. The body was circled with great snakes made of gold and precious stones, and in one hand he held a bow and in the other some arrows. A small idol standing by him they said was his page; he held a short lance and a shield rich with gold and precious stones. Around the neck of Uichilobos were silver Indian faces and things that we took to be the hearts of these Indians, made of gold and decorated with many precious blue stones. There were braziers with copal incense, and they were burning in them the hearts of three Indians they had sacrificed that day. All the walls and floor were black with crusted blood, and the whole place stank.

To the left stood another great figure, the height of Uichilobos, with the face of a bear and glittering eyes made of their mirrors, which they call *tezcal*. It was decorated with precious stones the same as Uichilobos, for they said that the two were brothers. This Tezcatepuca was the god of hell and had charge of the souls of the Mexicans. His body was girded with figures like little devils, with snakelike tails. The walls were so crusted with blood and the floor was so bathed in it that in the slaughterhouses of Castile there was no such stink. They had offered to this idol five hearts from the day's sacrifices.

In the highest part of the *cu* there was another recess, the wood of which was very richly carved, where there was another figure, half man and half lizard, covered with precious stones and with a mantle over half of it. They said that its body was filled with all the seeds there are in all the world. It was the god of sowing and ripening, but I do not remember its name. Everything was covered with blood, the walls as well as the altar, and it stank so much that we couldn't get out fast enough.

Our captain said to Montezuma, half laughingly, "Lord Montezuma, I do not understand how such a great prince and wise man as yourself can have failed to come to the conclusion that these idols of yours are not gods, but evil things—devils is the term for them. So that you and your priests may see it clearly, do me a favor: Let us put a cross on top of this tower, and in one part of these oratories, where your Uichilobos and Tezcatapuca are, we will set up an image of Our Lady [an image that Montezuma had already seen], and you will see how afraid of it these idols that have deceived you are."

The two priests with Montezuma looked hostile, and Montezuma replied with annoyance, "Señor Malinche, if I had thought that you

would so insult my gods, I would not have shown them to you. We think they are very good, for they give us health, water, good seedtimes and weather, and all the victories we desire. We must worship and make sacrifices to them. Please do not say another word to their dishonor."

When our captain heard this and saw how changed Montezuma was, he didn't argue with him any more, but smiled and said, "It is time for Your Highness and ourselves to go."

Montezuma agreed, but he said that before he left he had to pray and make certain offerings to atone for the great sin he had committed in permitting us to climb the great *cu* and see his gods, and for being the cause of the dishonor that we had done them by speaking ill of them.

1. What impressed Díaz most about the city? Is his list of the merchandise he saw for sale random or ordered?
2. Why does Díaz describe the Aztec gods as devils?
3. How does the fact that the Aztecs sacrificed humans color Díaz's account of their religion?
4. Who do you have more sympathy for, Cortés or Montezuma? How does Díaz manipulate your sympathies?

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An Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico

(1528)

There are several surviving accounts of the conquest of Mexico written by indigenous tribesmen. They tell the story of the fall of Tenochtitlán and the suffering of the tribesmen who defended it. One of these accounts is cast