The great tributary empire of the Mexica—the people we call the Aztecs—established by nomadic Nahuatl-speaking, hunter-gatherer Chichimec tribes beginning in the late fourteenth century, came to dominate the cultural and economic life of the core of Late Postclassic Mesoamerica until the Spanish Conquest in 1521. In little more than 100 years, these inheritors of all that had gone before—notably the Highland Olmec, Teotihuacano, and Toltec civilizations of the Mexican Altiplano, and the Zapotec and Mixtec in Oaxaca to the southeast—forged powerful new artistic and architectural forms based on their own humble Chichimec traditions coupled with the ancient “civilized” arts. After their arrival in the Valley of México, the Aztecs began to explore abandoned ancient cities such as nearby Teotihuacán and the Toltec capital of Tula, borrowing and venerating these “classic” forms to create their unique archaized style, very much as Renaissance Europe emulated the antique Greco-Roman ideals to create new archaized Neoclassic traditions that we share to this day. The Aztec ideal of Tolteca-yotl embodied the finest arts and crafts in all media, from gold and precious stones to textiles and feather work derived from the Toltecs and Mixtecs, whom they emulated. Fine greenstones, jade, jaguar pelts, and the iridescent feathers of the Quetzal bird from the tropical forests to the east were highly prized and all of these and much more were brought in trade and tribute to the heart of the Aztec empire, enriching their island capital city of Tenochtitlán in Lake Texcoco within the Basin of México.

Mixtec culture, with its centers to the southeast in the state of Oaxaca, contributed significantly to what became the Aztec style. It was renowned through its extraordinarily skilled arts and crafts, not only exemplified by fine, brightly painted pottery, but also by exquisite lapidary work in jade and crystal, intricate inlaid mosaic creations, such as masks and shields, feather work often combined with textiles, and metallurgy in both hammered copper and cast gold. The Aztecs derived much of their fine arts style and skills, including narrative picture writing, from that artistic tradition along with their Tolteca-yotl ideals.

Working from this eclectic pan-Mesoamerican heritage, the Aztecs adapted earlier tactics for empire building, most likely from their Teotihuacán and Toltec predecessors. Elite Eagle and Jaguar warrior sodalities and professional merchants, who often also served as ambassadors and spies, were instrumental in establishing their networks of control. From the legendary founding of their first temple on marshy islands on the west side of Lake Texcoco in A.D. 1376, to the arrival of Hernán Cortés and his Conquistadors...
in 1519, México-Tenochtitlán had become such a splendid city that, according to the chronicles, it dazzled the Spaniards, exceeding anything they had seen in Spain or even in their dreams.

Certain territories, however, even ones in such close proximity as the Tlaxcallans just over the mountains to the east, were never subdued, thus supplying Cortés with sympathetic allies in his campaign. Ultimately, the Aztecs were overwhelmed not only by disease, steel weaponry, crossbows, and horses, but also by their own omens of an impending god-sent catastrophe in the fateful Conquest years of 1519–1521. A light-skinned, bearded charismatic ruler of the ancient Toltecs, who took the divine name of Quetzalcoatl, the “Feathered Serpent” and “Precious Twin,” was prophesied to return from the east in his birth year, “One Reed,” to begin a new era. According to ethnohistorical sources, Cortés was mistaken for this legendary divine lord, and it is one of the grand historical coincidences that 1519, the year the Spaniards were first sighted off the Veracruz coast, was a “One Reed” year, which recurs every fifty-two years. In less than two years after Cortés’s arrival at the southern causeway across the lake leading into the heart of the city—where Cortés met the ninth Aztec ruler, the ill-fated Montezuma II (Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin), who ruled from 1502 to 1520—Tenochtitlán was in utter ruin and the empire was no more. Nevertheless, the cultural legacy of the Aztecs lives on in the remnants of their brilliant arts and literature and in the hearts of their descendents, the Mexican people who take their name from the lowly Mexica tribes who founded a new civilization that fulfilled the legacy of more than three millennia of ancestral Mesoamerican cultures.

201. **Necklace with Nineteen Death’s Heads**


KISLAK PC 0135

These beads were probably carved from the solid apexes of conch shells. The stringing is modern, so we may not be positive that this set is complete. The style of each replicated death’s head is diagnostically Mixteca-Puebla style, as seen in carved stone and jade of that culture period throughout México: the sunken-pit eyes and the tooth row executed as split circles. Such Mixteca-Puebla style art is also closely related to the Late Post-Classic Aztec art of Central México. From the Tzompantli skull-racks often associated with ballgame decapitations to the Day of the Dead rites celebrated throughout much of México today, skull motifs in all Mesoamerican traditions carry the significance of life, rebirth, and renewal in a cosmology where the ancestors live on in the landscape and the world is renewed from the living Earth with the next generation. In the legendary Quiché Maya epic Popol Vuh, the decapitated head of Hun Hunahpu, the first father of corn, becomes the skull kernel of maize that impregnates the young maiden, Xquic, with the Hero Twins. The next crop of maize is thus reborn to carry on the cycle.

202. **Hollow Warrior with Feline Helmet**

Central Mexican Highlands. Mixtec culture, A.D. 1200–1500. Polychrome ceramic. Ht. 65 cm. (25 in.)

KISLAK PC 0048

Standing warrior with right arm poised as though to hold a spear or war banner. His head is encased in a naturalistic feline, possibly jaguar, helmet backed by an applied feather panache plaque. His eyes are surrounded by a twisted double-headed serpent, and his mouth is fanged like the jaguar or puma with his tongue protruding prominently. He wears a heavy composite probable shell necklace, simple knotted mantlAtl loin cloth, and fine beaded wristlets. Unfortunately, the feet are missing from this sculpture. Note that the hands are very realistically modeled. Post-fire paint adheres in overall whitewash and zones of red, yellow ocher, and blue. Vent holes are found at the sides of the waist.

203. **Large Bi-Conical Incense Burner**

Veracruz, México. Mixtec culture. Postclassic, A.D. 1200–1500. Red, blue, and white painted ceramic. Ht. 52.5 cm. (20 in.); Diam. 68.5 cm. (27 in.)

KISLAK PC 0200

Probably the most common form for a large Mesoamerican incense burner is this hourglass shape, designed for the copal and other incense mixtures to be consumed on embers in the upper container. These monumental burners were often placed on the upper platform of a pyramid in front of a temple. The continuous petal-shaped flanges projecting around the rim recall monumental Aztec clay incense burners in the Mexican National Museum, though the geometric iconography on this is presumably Mixtec. The overall dotted-circle motifs recall tie-dyed textile patterns. The front has an appliqué broad bow-tie motif with central braided knot. This, in turn, may be considered a butterfly motif, and a martial symbol. Between the bow’s broad tassels is a cross-shaped opening to the lower chamber.
204. Pair of Bi-Conical Effigy Incense Burners
Central Mexican Highlands. Mixtec culture.
Postclassic, A.D. 1200–1500.
Polychrome buff ceramic.
Hts. 96.5 cm. (38 in.) and 94 cm. (37 in.)
kislak pc 0133

These matched monumental censers, portraying warriors in high relief, were found together apparently serving as guardians at the entrance to a tomb. The hourglass forms are floored in the middle to hold the incense in the upper containers. Pairs of circular holes vent the lower sections. The red, blue, yellow, and white pigments are remarkably well preserved, considering that the colors were applied after the censers were fired. Typical for such incense burners, they have flat side flanges. The “frontal façade” crests are higher than the rims of the upper containers (which is not apparent in the illustration).

Applied to the front halves are standing warrior images, differing from one another in that the base colors are reversed: one with the mouth-surround, body, and kilt in blue, and the other with the same zones in red. Also, the composite necklaces on each are somewhat different. The protruding right hands hold feathered spear throwers, or atlatls, with their lower prongs missing, with the left hands (not actually modeled) holding small circular shields. Above the shields, strips of rough clay indicate that spears were also originally attached on that side. In the midriffs, above the flat kilts, serrated geometrical “butterfly” plaques are applied. The gaunt, open-mouthed heads are adorned with circular nose disks, large earflares, and elaborate composite headdresses. Painted decoration is outlined in black.

205. Mosaic Inlaid Earspool
Mexican Highlands. Mixtec culture.
Postclassic, A.D. 1200–1500.
Wood with facets of turquoise. 
Diam. 6.3 cm. (2½ in.)
kislak pc 0023

Mixtec and Aztec mosaics on wood have sometimes been preserved in dry highland caves. This single ear disk is inlaid with numerous tiny facets of green turquoise in a concentric circular pattern by means of an adhesive covering a thin wooden disk. In the center is a metallic bead. In addition, there is a convex pithy backing adhering to the wooden plaque. These Late Classic cultures apparently imported turquoise from the American Southwest.

206. Wind God Sculpture in Guise of A Winged Insect
Gray volcanic basalt. L. 34 cm. (13⅜ in.)
kislak pc 0130

A magnificently carved anthropomorphic sculpture—part god and part winged insect. The simian humanoid head has a long buccal mask, which is the symbol of the Aztec Wind God, Ehecatl, a manifestation of the Feathered Serpent, Quetzalcoatl. This rests on short anthropomorphic arms with long coiled fingers facing forward. The body is sculpted in exacting detail as a realistic winged insect, possibly a bee, whose cross-hatched wings are folded over the sides. The thorax is segmented above and below, with a stinger-like protuberance at the rear. The god’s head has bulbulous eye surrounds, the ears are indented, and three tassels extend from the nose over the protruding and parted lips. Tiny scrolls flank the rear corners. Two probable jade nose beads emerge from below the nostrils. Several fine examples in the mature Aztec style of full sculpture-in-the-round depictions of the Wind God, Ehecatl, in the form of a monkey, Ozomatli, are known with all of the definitive diagnostics. Therefore, it is most likely that this sculpture is indeed the Monkey Wind God manifestation in the form of a winged insect.

207. Stone Portrait Fragment
Central Mexican Highlands.
Aztec culture, A.D. 1400–1521.
Dark green serpentine.
Ht. 12.7 cm. (5 in.)
kislak pc 0192

Although a fragment, this is an Aztec masterpiece. Seemingly a mask, the highly polished facial area was actually cleaved from the head of a larger full sculpture. One must imagine the wondrous effect of this piece when it retained its inlays of colored shell, black jet, and/or blue-green turquoise. The larger zones prepared for inlay show the depressions to have been made with a reed drill. In addition, there is an unusual string-sawn, straight-line grid covering the face over the eyes and mouth.
Double curved bands cross the forehead to the cheeks. Square patches decorate the cheeks. Besides the mouth, the nose and chin were also originally inlaid.

208. Xipe-Totec Priest Wearing Flayed Human Skin
Central Mexican Highlands.
Aztec culture. Postclassic, A.D. 1400–1521.
Painted volcanic basalt.
Ht. 33.3 cm. (13 ¼ in.)
KISLAK PC 0025
This seated full-round stone figure, although not of monumental scale, is one of the finest Xipe Totec sculptures anywhere. With the characteristic realism of Aztec sculpture, it bears appropriately grim iconography, which is meticulously carved on the surface in low relief. The Mexican god Xipe Totec, “The Flayed One Our Lord,” is manifested first in Teotihuacán culture and continues in importance up to Aztec times. He represents a fertility cult requiring the sacrifice of specially chosen victims by removal of the heart and the flaying of the skin afterward. The cult priest donned the skin of the victim and wore it and danced in it for several days in spring festivals, notably the twenty-day month of Tlacaxipehualiztli. As with the shedding of the skins of snakes and toads in the spring, the Xipe sacrifices and impersonations provided “sympathetic magic” for the evocation of fertility and the renewal of life after death.

The exposed skin of the living priest is painted in red hematite, while the head and torso skin of the dead captive is painted yellow ocher. The lips of the priest’s parted mouth can be seen within the outer flayed facial skin. On the chest the gash left from the captive’s heart removal has been sewn shut. The back view depicts the elaborate knotting and tying of the gash. Unfortunately, small areas on the right side of the head and the left midsection are pitted and damaged. The wide gaps reveal the priest’s body underneath. Both the earlobes and the cupped hands of the priest are pierced in this sculpture, probably intended to hold ornaments and staffs or standards of other probably perishable materials.

209. Coiled Stone Rattlesnake with Day Sign
Central Mexican Highlands.
Aztec culture, A.D. 1400–1521.
Gray volcanic basalt.
Ht. 37.5 cm. (14 ¾ in.)
KISLAK PC 0199
Tightly coiled serpent sculptures—often carved from fine-grained stone and then polished—are one of the hallmarks of the Aztec sculptural corpus. Many of the monumental Aztec stone sculptures also have additional symbolic icons carved on their bases, apparently as offerings to the personified Earth deity, Tlaltecuhtli, as does this example. The expanded head of the rattlesnake rests on the top with its long fangs, forked tongue, and pitted eyes. The tail and stacked coils are carefully cross-hatched for the scales, and the rattle tail is tucked at the base. On the flat bottom is a realistic long-eared rabbit image next to a dotted circle representing the numeral “one.” Rabbit is the eighth of the twenty Aztec day signs. This specific day, One Rabbit, in the divinatory Tonalamatl, or 260-day calendar, may refer to the origin of the earth in Aztec mythology. Although it is most likely that this is the day One Rabbit that is being recorded, it remains possible that it refers to a year One Rabbit, a year that would recur every 52 years. (In some of the Aztec codices, year-bearer dates are found in circular rather than the usual square cartouches.) The year One Rabbit comes right before the year Two Reed, which marked the all-important Xiuhmolpilli (Binding of the Years) New Fire Ceremony for the Aztecs of Tenochtitlan. Coiled Fire Serpent sculptures are known to commemorate these great ritual years. Whether the day or the year One Rabbit is represented, this important monumental sculpture has a readable dedication or offering date that may be correlated with other dated records with future research.

210. Priest in Guise of Rain God Tlaloc
Central Mexican Highlands.
Aztec culture, A.D. 1400–1521.
Volcanic basalt with traces of red pigment. Ht. 60 cm. (23 in.)
KISLAK PC 0162
This sizable standing male stone figure wears the mask of Tlaloc, the preeminent Mexican God of Rain. Unfortunately, small areas on the right side of the head and the left midsection are sheared off, as well as the deity impersonator’s feet. He sports a diagnostic “pillbox” style cap, pleated bark-paper amacuzcalli fans at the back of the head, and two long overlapping flaps falling from the cap to the waist at the rear. He wears a simple knotted mantlal loin-cloth and holds a mask in his left hand. Both arms are bent tightly to the torso. The earplugs have serpent-head tassels.

The Tlaloc Rain-God visage typically has goggle-eyes and a series of fangs. Here the mask is ingeniously created entirely from two intertwined rattlesnakes. Their rattle tails can be seen in the forehead region, before the bodies continue down to coil around the eyes. They braid themselves in the nose area, and finally culminate at the mouth, below which two serpent heads in profile confront each other. Their fangs droop over the chin. In this unusual sculpture, the actual teeth are inlaid by means of a strip of incised white shell. The entire effect is intentionally awesome.
THE CONQUEST OF MÉXICO

HERNÁN CORTÉS AND HIS LETTERS TO CHARLES V

Hernán Cortés (1485–1546) is perhaps one of the most legendary and controversial figures in the annals of early modern European and American colonial history. His unforeseen conquest of México with a few hundred Spanish soldiers and thousands of indigenous allies became a paradigm of heroism, ingenuity, and, regrettably, atrocity, even in his own lifetime.* Dauntless, bold, with a seemingly inexhaustible energy and unswerving intent, Cortés managed to subdue the greatest military power in Mesoamerica at the time, whose tributary states extended from Central México to the Yucatán peninsula. Penned by Cortés himself, the Second and Third Letters to the Emperor Charles V narrate this colossal and violent conquest that would change the destiny of civilizations. Able to grapple with the immensity of their epic subject matter, the letters are consummate pieces of writing. Thus, besides their value as historical and testimonial documents, they are also powerful cultural texts still at the core of the Latin American imagination.

Before becoming a world-famous conquistador both celebrated and vilified by his contemporaries, Hernán Cortés was merely a shrewd colonist in Cuba, favored by the island’s governor, Diego Velázquez. After two failed expeditions to the Yucatán peninsula in which the Spaniards received news of an immensely rich inland civilization, a greedy Velázquez sought in 1518 royal license to organize a third expedition and appointed Cortés as its captain. In an unexpected flurry of activity, Cortés commenced buying ships, recruiting soldiers and sailors, storing food, getting firearms, and procuring lavish objects for exchange, all the

*In his Breveísima relación de la destrucción de Indias (1995 [1552]) Fray Bartolomé de las Casas accused Cortés of outright mass murder in the battle of Cholula and Tepeaca (104–115). Fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía, on the other hand, praises Cortés “for the courage he always showed, for the purpose of animating his men” (1951, 88). In his Historia eclesiástica indiana, Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta refers to Cortés as a providential figure, who opened the door of the New World for the missionaries and who was able to restore to the Church the souls that had been lost by Luther’s cause (1993 [1870], 174). It must be pointed out that both Motolinía and Mendieta’s histories were not published until the nineteenth century, after Mexican independence. It is also relevant to mention that the printing of Cortés’s five cartas de relación was prohibited in 1527 and that the first editions of the first three letters were burned in the public squares of Seville, Toledo, and Granada.
while sending Velázquez the bills. Angry at the high cost of the preparations and suspicious of Cortés’s solicitude, Velázquez ordered his captain arrested. But it was too late.

Cunning from the start, Cortés had befriended high-ranking officials, and even relatives of Velázquez, and was able to sail off to México with ships, sailors, soldiers, horses, and all. Cortés knew very well that, because of Velázquez’s powerful influence at court, he would be accused of alzamiento, the Spanish legal term for any rebellious act against the king’s law. Therefore, when Cortés sat down to write his Second Letter to Charles V, he was a fugitive from the law. In addition, he started to write shortly after having been expelled from Tenochtitlán and having lost more than half of his Spanish army to the Mexica during the la noche triste or Night of Sorrows. Thus, Cortés had a formidable rhetorical challenge in front of him. Through the linguistic powers of his letter, the fugitive captain had to convince the king of his unswerving loyalty in spite of more than one insubordinate act. He also had to persuade him that it was in His Majesty’s utmost interest to legitimize a controversial enterprise on the verge of failure, as well as to persuade him to provide material support in order to rescue it and put it back on track.

Although the second and third letters display Cortés’s mastery as rhetorician, it is the second that has higher stakes riding on an immediate response to its verbal powers. The Second Letter tells the story of great and strange events leading to the possession of an object of European desire by a hero of unfinishing resolve. But then, the precious object is lost. The burden of the text will be to convey to its royal addressee overwhelming images of the heroic, the marvelous, and the pathetic that should suspend the looming questions over the legitimacy of the hero and gather the necessary support for the retrieval of the supreme lost object, México-Tenochtitlán. The Third Letter, on the other hand, is a magnificent narrative about the gruesome destruction of the great city. Its rhetorical challenges are of a more elegiac nature since the coveted object is now gone forever and the horrific spectacle of death has chastened desire.

One way in which Cortés achieves a heroic effect in both letters is by following a strict chronological order in his narration. Although he wrote months after many of the narrated events took place, seldom does he anticipate what is coming or give any comment on what has been left behind. This temporal model meets the legalistic conventions of what the text claims to be, namely, a testimonial account or relación. The relación de hechos (report of acts) was a quasi-legal factual record, letter, or deposition, usually of witnessed events. Its origins harked back to medieval times (Merrim 1996, 61). It was a widely used genre by conquistadors, missionaries, and colonists in order to solicit from the king reward for services rendered. It frequently used a straightforward notarial rhetoric, in order to create the effect of objectivity and impartiality.*

The disjunction between the impassive tone, the uncitable, legalistic language of the relación, and the extreme danger of the narrated events confers on Cortés an epic dignity and aura. It is well known that for Aristotle the most important use of rhetoric was to find the most efficacious means of expression for a particular situation. In the case of a hero, it would be unworthy to appear too frantic about the extraordinary deeds undertaken. The dispassionate and temperate tone is thus the rhetorically appropriate one for a narration of feats by the hero himself. It confers upon him further glory because it dramatizes yet another conquest: that of the vanity and elation that formidable deeds would

At the same time Cortés also unabashedly adopts the convention of the epic genre as the letters tell the great deeds of a quasi-mythical hero who “performs superhuman exploits in battle or in marvellous voyages,” who is protected by the gods, and whose unprecedented feats change the course of nations and civilizations (Baldick 2004, 70). With an unmatched sense of heroic drama and suspense, Cortés narrates the events as if they were unfolding right in front of the reader’s eyes.

The tone of the two letters is quite temperate and restrained. Cortés as a narrator is usually cool, focused, and determined, showing the same self-control and clarity of mind in his writing as he suggests he showed in his actions. Cortés never doubts or hesitates for an instant during his military campaign, fraught with so much danger. He represents himself as able to foresee and plan for everything with an inexhaustible presence of mind, and as endowed with a privileged Christian faith in the bargain.

The initial battles against the Tlaxcalans, where Spaniards were overwhelmingly outnumbered by the natives, are narrated in a dispassionate, almost detached manner:

When night fell the enemy began to come down through two valleys, thinking that they were unobserved and could draw close to us the better to accomplish their purpose. But as I was well prepared when I saw them, it seemed to me that it would be disadvantageous to allow them to reach the camp for at night they would be unable to see the damage my people inflicted on them, and would be all the more intrepid. . . . Moreover, I was afraid that they might set fire to the camp, which would have been so disastrous that none of us would have escaped. I therefore determined to ride out to meet them with all the horsemen to frighten and scatter them so they would be unable to reach the camp. . . .

When we had rested somewhat, I went out another night, after inspecting the first watch, with a hundred foot soldiers, our Indian allies, and the horsemen; and one league from the camp five of the horses fell and would go no further. . . . And although all those who were with me in my company urged me to return, for it was an evil omen, I continued on my way secure in the belief that God is more powerful than Nature. (Cortés 1986, 61–62)

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produce in any other man. Finally, this dispassionate tone also allows Cortés to show his fealty to the king. As critics have argued, Cortés depicts himself in these letters as emptied of any personal ambition, purpose, or intention that may not fully coincide with the interests of the sovereign (Merrim 1986, 63). In a last turn of the screw, Cortés’s temperate tone shows off his strategic mastery as narrator, which mirrors his strategic mastery as conqueror of México.

The representation of México-Tenochtitlán is without doubt the culminating moment of the Second Letter. Cortés starts off with the size and geographic features of the province and then focuses on the lake in which the great city of Tenochtitlán sits, extending its three two-mile-long causeways into the mainland. He moves on to the market square of Tlatelolco, where all that was produced in the land was exchanged by more than sixty thousand people every day. The text then describes the tempered splendor of the house of the idols and Motecuhzoma’s superb palaces:

He also had another house . . . where there was a very beautiful garden with balconies over it, and the facings and flagstones were all of jasper and very well made…. There were also ten pools in which were kept all the many and varied kinds of water bird found in these parts, all of them domesticated. For the sea birds there were pools of salt water, and for the river fowl of fresh water…. Each species of bird was fed with the food which it eats when wild, so that those which eat fish were given fish and those which eat maize or smaller grain were likewise given those things…. There were three hundred men in charge of these birds who knew no other trade, as there were others who were skilled only in healing sick birds. (Cortés 1986, 109–110)

Finally, Cortés dwells on the service to the great tlatoani of México:

Touching Mutezuma’s service and all the admirable things that he deemed to be of esteem and prestige, there is so much to write that I certify to Your Majesty that I do not know where to begin, that I may finish recounting a part, for as I have already said, how much more greatness can there be than that a barbarian lord should have all the things to be found under the heavens in his domain, fashioned in gold and silver and jewels and feathers; and so realistic in gold and silver that no smith in the world could have done better, and in jewels so fine that no human judgment can be enough to understand with what instruments they were cut so perfectly. (Cortés 1986, 108)

Cortés’s description of the city and the things therein is considered by commentators to have no match in the chronicles of the Indies. The testimonial sharpness of Cortés’s discourse almost never falters. He displays an indefatigable mental energy to register a seemingly endless flow of details with utmost precision, while never losing sight of the larger picture.

Faced with Tenochtitlán, the supreme object of his desire, Cortés at times does, however, lose his reserve. This unshakable, almost infallible chronicler runs out of words to describe and understand some aspects of the magnificence of the city of México: “there is so much to write … I do not know where to begin,” “no human judgment can be enough to understand.” This loss of words as metaphor for the splendors of Tenochtitlán is then one of Cortés’s consummate linguistic performances. For one of the few things that Cortés is able to offer the prince at the time of writing is his discourse about the city. On the desire for possession this verbal artifact would arouse in its royal receptor hinged the legitimization of Cortés’s criminal actions, past and present, and of the possibility of recovering its unspeakable object, whose awful loss will also be represented vividly shortly after.

And, indeed, a few months later the Spaniards were forced to abandon Tenochtitlán. More than half the troops perished in the retreat. The language that narrates the fateful la noche triste, while preserving its usual testimonial sharpness, is appropriately punctured by the immensity of the loss. The tone of this section of the Second Letter is sober, but not dispassionate. Sticking to the testimonial formal-
ism of his account, Cortés offers images after image of the expelled Spaniards making their tortured way to Tlaxcala, conveying in this manner the enormous grief, humiliation, and even dishonor produced by the terrible loss of the great city of Tenochtitlán. The pathos of these images will be what justifies the horrific Spanish siege narrated in the last part of the Second Letter, and what will serve as a befitting prelude to the ungodly thrust forward of the Third.

As in the Second Letter, Cortés reconstructs, distorts, and erases events in the Third and is extremely careful in managing his image for the king. But the text draws more attention to its narrated events than to its rhetorical, mirroring effects. Because of the catastrophic nature of these events, the Third Letter has more of an elegiac, mournful tone than a triumphal or even dispassionate one. For in spite of the Spanish victory over the Mexica, the promised city of abundance of the Second Letter was lost forever and the human cost to win it may have been much too high, even for the implacable hero.

After the protocol of salutations to the king, Cortés starts the Third Letter by declaring to His Majesty his unshakable determination to subdue the Mexica:

I assured Your Majesty that until I had triumphed over my enemies I would not rest nor cease to direct my every effort toward that end, putting aside whatever dangers, hardships and expense I might have to face. (Cortés 1986, 161)

This statement anticipates what Cortés knows is the outcome of that effort and all the dangers and hardships that he faced. It articulates briefly but effectively the total focus that his determination entailed. Since the passage speaks about conducting the enterprise of war to the death, the statement also suggests motives ulterior to the mere acquisition of wealth and lands for His Majesty. To go back to retake Tenochtitlán was also a test of limits, a matter of civilizations: it entailed issues of honor, identity, blood, and religion.

The siege of México started on May 30, 1521. Cortés’s army consisted of approximately 800 Spaniards and 150,000 Indian friends from the provinces of Tlaxcala, Huejotzingo, Cholula, and Chalco. The Mexica and their principal allies, the Tlatelolca, had gathered approximately 300,000 men in Tenochtitlán as well as thousands of canoes to resist the siege (Martínez 1990, 317 and 320).

The war strategy was of fearful simplicity. The Spaniards would attack Tenochtitlán from each of its four causeways both by land and water. Cortés divided his men into four groups, each one settling its headquarters in towns close to the causeway entrances. Day in and day out they pushed their way into the city, in order to burn down as many houses and cause as much harm as possible until the Mexica surrendered or the city fell. Towards the end of the war, Cortés climbed with Pedro de Alvarado to a tower adjacent to the market of Tlatelolco. He realized that by then the Spaniards and their allies had seven-eighths of the city in ruins and under their control. His description of the demolished city—with survivors walking upon their dead amid the unbearable stench of the rotting bodies and with women and children drowning in fetid lakes amid multitudes of corpses—is overwhelming. It is the hallucination of an otherworldly human misery; it is a nightmare of mass destruction. If in the Second Letter the conquerors beheld a promised land in Tenochtitlán, at the end of the Third they see an unimagined vision of hell. The iron will of Cuauhtémoc, “the falling eagle,” to resist until the city of cities was almost completely destroyed is what ultimately dominates the text, not Cortés’s desire to possess it. For only when the Mexica ruler was finally taken prisoner—he did not surrender—did the war cease on the spot. The siege had lasted seventy-five days.

It is significant, however, that the Mexicas’ plight and resistance to the death are not represented by Cortés as the folly of barbarians the Spaniards had done well to subject. It is represented with dread: “So great was their suffering that it was beyond our understanding how they could endure it” (Cortés 1986, 263). Whether as a calculated narrative strategy or beyond the limits of rhetorical desire, the epic conquest of the most precious city on earth is represented in the Third Letter as having produced an extreme of human agony and destruction that the Judeo-Christian world had never witnessed or perpetrated until that moment.

If the Second Letter of Hernán Cortés is a triumph of rhetoric fueled by an all-consuming desire to recover the precious city, the Third Letter is a grand narrative that laments the city’s epic destruction. In both letters, Cortés shows himself to be a superb rhetorician, and both letters indeed helped to bring about the royal recognition that he sought: in 1521 reinforcements and a royal witness, and in October 1522 the cédula real or royal decree signed by the king naming Cortés governor and captain general of New Spain (even though this position was to be short lived).

But something of a much higher cultural import than Cortés’s personal rewards at court or his great literary talents are manifest in his well-written letters. They are enduring monuments to México-Tenochtitlán, the marvelous otherly object that held the key to the limits of European desire, but which would never again be possessed, or even seen, by a foreign power.

—Viviana Díaz Balsera
211. Cortés, Hernán, 1485–1547
Latin translation of Carta de relación, Letter 2
Præclara Ferdina[n] di Cortesi de noua maris oceani Hispania narratio sacratissimo, ac inuiissimo Carole Romanoru[m] Imperatori semper Augusto, Hispaniaru[m] &c. Norimberga: Fridericum Peypus, 1524.
Latin translation of Cortés’s second Carta de relación to Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. Riviere & Sons binding. Ex libris: Marvyn Carton; Ex libris: B. Mendel.
F1230.C883 1524M

212. Cortés, Hernán, 1485–1547
Autograph document: Grant of dowry to Doña Isabel Montezuma, eldest daughter of the Emperor Montezuma (1480?–1520), in her marriage to Alonso Grado. Copy made ca. 1750 in Valladolid, Spain, of original document dated June 27, 1526 in the Don Rafael Floranes library.
6 pages. In Spanish.
Kislak MS 1016

In this document, Cortés justifies a large dowry to Doña Isabel, the late Emperor Montezuma’s eldest daughter, when she married a nobleman of considerable standing in New Spain. Cortés recounts the importance of Montezuma’s aid to the Spanish during the conquest of México. Cortés, who served as guardian for Montezuma’s daughters and as Captain General of New Spain, was a generous trustee, granting Doña Isabel lands, several ranches, and Indian labor.

213. Cortés, Hernán, 1485–1547
Document, signed: Power of attorney appointing agents to act in his interest in a residencia hearing ordered by King Charles V as an investigation into his administration. Tenustitlan (Tenochtitlán), México, 1526.
2 pages. In Spanish.

Signature “Hernando Cortés” used only until 1529 (after which he signed as marques). Charles V’s appointed judge, Luis Ponce de Leon (not the explorer), died mysteriously soon after his arrival in México.
Kislak MS 193

214. Cortés, Hernán, 1485–1547
Document, signed: Order of payment to sailors Juan Montanez and Lorenzo Rodriguez for service on ships in the southern seas, January 5, 1528.
1 page. In Spanish.
In this document Cortés confirms that Francisco de Santa Cruz will receive 150 pesos of gold to be given and paid to the sailors Juan Montanez and Lorenzo Rodriguez.
Kislak MS 195

215. Cortés, Hernán, 1485–1547
[Latin translation of Cartas de relación, Letters 2 & 3]
De insulis nuper inuentis Ferdinandi Cortesii ad Carolum V. Rom. imputatorum narratione, cum alio quodam Petri Martyris ad Clementem VII. pontificem maximum consimilis argumenti libello. Coloniae: Melchioris Nouesiani, Arnoldi Birckman, 1532.
F1230.C883 1532L

216. Cortés, Hernán, 1485–1547
[German translation of Cartas de relación, Letters 2 & 3]
Ex libris: Samuel Latham Mitchell Barlow.
F1230.C883 1550G
ACCOUNTS OF THE CONQUEST OF MÉXICO

217. López de Gómara, Francisco, 1511–1564
[Italian translation of Historia general de las Indias. Hispania victrix.]
Historia delle nuove Indie Occidentali.
Venetia: Gioanuni Bonadio, 1564.
Ex libris: Washington Sewalli; Ex libris: Earl Ferrers;
Ex libris: Boies Penrose.
e141.g67

218. López de Gómara, Francisco, 1511–1564
[English translation of Crónica de la Nueva España]
The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India,
John Locke’s copy; his name in ink on the inside front cover and
his characteristic markings (last two numbers of date on t.p.
underlined, final page number overlined, and a few marginal
dates added in ink) and his signature “John Locke,” on front
pastedown; gilt arms of King and Lovelace (Locke’s descendants)
on covers.
f1230.g62

219. López de Gómara, Francisco, 1511–1564
[French translation of Crónica de la Nueva España]
Voyages et conquestes du capitaine Ferdinand Courtois,
First published in 1552 in Spain, Lopez de Gómara’s history is
one of the earliest synthetic accounts of the Spanish territories in
the New World. In addition to the deeds of the Spanish in México
and Peru, Lopez’s account treats the flora and fauna as well.
f1230.g63

220. Pérez de Arteaga, Isabel, 1500–1558
Autograph document: Depositions related to claim of encomienda
rights as legitimate daughter and first child of Juan Pérez de
Arteaga, a captain of Cortés, and his wife, Angelina Pérez, with
witness depositions by early settlers of New Spain. Puebla de los
Angeles (Puebla, México); México City, October 3–27, 1597.
16 pages. In Spanish.
kislak ms 219

This manuscript is one of the few known depositions relating
to a daughter of a conquistador, as Isabel’s father played
a part in the Conquest. Isabel Pérez was the widow of Diego
Román. Born and married in Puebla, she subsequently moved
to México City.

Isabel here presents evidence and depositions proving her
to be the legitimate daughter and first child of Juan Pérez de
Arteaga and Angelina Pérez, his legitimate wife. She is appar-
etly hoping to obtain from the king at least a portion, if not
all, of the encomienda, named Guatinchan, that Charles V had
given to her father.

In support of her case Isabel presents five witnesses who,
though not conquistadors themselves, were all early settlers
of New Spain, knew her father, and could testify as to what
was “public fame and knowledge” concerning Juan Pérez de
Arteaga, his wife, and his daughter. From their depositions
we learn that Sr. Pérez de Arteaga was one of Cortés’ captains,
was with Cortés from the first landing in Mexico, and took

Doña Marina as his mistress and teacher. Witness Alvaro
Cáceres states that Pérez de Arteaga “fue el primer espagñol
que entendio la lengua mexicana” (“was the first Spaniard to
understand the Mexican language”). All of this is indepen-
dently confirmed by Bernal Díaz del Castillo in Chapter 74 of
his Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva-España (which,
although written by 1597, the date of this manuscript, was not
published until 1632).

Because colonial-era Mexican women tended to remain
in the background, preferring to let their husbands, fathers,
or older brothers do their litigation for them with their
powers-of-attorney, information concerning them is most dif-
cult to obtain. While there are various monographs on the
sons of the conquistadors, very little is known or written con-
cerning the daughters, because of their infrequent appearance
in sixteenth-century manuscripts. Isabel Pérez, forced into the
open by her widowhood and by her need for money, through
this series of documents tells history about herself, her mar-
iage, her lifestyle, and her need to obtain further assistance
from the king. It is also quite clear that her hopes are pinned
on the achievements of her father and her brother-in-law. In
this regard, she is very similar to any son of a conquistador.

222.
221. Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, 1496–1584

Historia verdadera de la conquesta de la Nueva-España.
Madrid: Imprenta del Reyno, 1632.
This piece was written in response to López de Gómara’s laudatory biography of Cortés, in which El Marqués sometimes seems to have conquered the Aztec empire singlehandedly. The Historia verdadera tells the story of Díaz and his more humble comrades who risked their lives to conquer a new land.

222. Solís, Antonio de, 1610–1686

[English translation of Historia de la conquista de México]
The History of the Conquest of México by the Spaniards.

223. Solís, Antonio de, 1610–1686

[French translation of Historia delaconquistadeMéxico, poplacion, y progressos de la America Septentrional, conocida por el nombre de Nueva España]
Histoire de la conquête du Mexique, ou de la Nouvelle Espagne.
Paris: Compagnie des libraires, 1759.
2 volumes.

224. Muñoz Camargo, Diego, 1521–1599

Autograph manuscript, signed: Fragmentos de la Historia de Tlaxcala. Copy by M. Macedo. México City, October 29, 1852.
276 pages. In Spanish.

History of Tlaxcala from pre-Conquest to ca. 1560, circulated in manuscript and was not published until 1892. This copy was made and signed by Macedo in 1852 from a copy held by Mexican bibliophile Joaquín García Icazbalceta. Appears to be the Sir Thomas Phillipps copy (sold 1913, private Mexican ownership), or similar copy made by Macedo for the Territorial Deputation of Tlaxcala in 1852. Ex libris: Florencio Gavito.

225. Sahagún, Bernardino de, d. 1590

[Relación de la conquista de esta Nueva España, como la contaron los soldados indios que se hallaron presentes]
La aparición de Ntra. Señora de Guadalupe de México: Comprobada con la refutación del argumento negativo que presenta D. Juan Bautista Muñoz.
México: Ignacio Cumplido, 1840.

Sahagún’s Relación de la conquista de esta Nueva España narrates the conquest of México from the point of view of the conquered, using oral testimony of eyewitnesses and participants. Bustamante appends a commentary to each of Sahagún’s chapters, and in his Disertación guadalupana examines arguments for and against the Aparición and discusses the importance of Sahagún’s manuscript.

226. Durán, Diego, d. 1588?

3 volumes in 2. Plates from the Atlas bound in throughout the text. First printed edition of the mid-sixteenth-century manuscript. Ex libris: M. Porrua.
227. **TOVAR, JUAN DE, CA. 1546–CA. 1626**

Autograph manuscript, signed: Historia de México, with the Tovar calendar (of sacred/mythological Aztec events, ca. 1585). Transcribed (ca. 1862) by Elizabeth Lady Phillipps from the original in the library of Sir Thomas Phillipps.

Two parts bound in one: Part I: Historia de México by Tovar; Part II: Tovar calendar. 266 text pages, 51 figures, ink and watercolor on paper, captioned. In Spanish.

This nineteenth-century transcript was made (ca. 1862) by Elizabeth, Lady Phillipps, at Middle Hall from the original (Phillipps Ms. 26210, ca. 1585) that her husband, Sir Thomas Phillipps, probably acquired at Kingsborough sale (1840). The original is now in the John Carter Brown Library.

A Jesuit missionary in Mexico, Juan de Tovar entered the Jesuit order in 1572 and spent his life pursuing missionary work in Mexico. He was an expert in the Nahuatl language and collected pre-Columbian Aztec codices, conferring with natives about their meaning. Tovar’s studies resulted in Historia de la benda de los yndios apoblar a México (1582–1587), a multi-volume work on the history and culture of pre-Hispanic México.

“Historia de México” and the Tovar calendar were possibly based on a history of the Aztecs by the Dominican Diego Durán and contain an exchange of correspondence between Tovar and the Jesuit father José de Acosta concerning the composition of the manuscript; detailed information about the rites and ceremonies of the Aztecs; painted illustrations of Mexican scenes, Indian dances, and an elaborate comparison of the Aztec year with the Christian calendar. Although this study remained in manuscript form, Tovar’s fellow Jesuit José de Acosta used much of this material for his De natura novi orbis (1589) (see entries 463 and 464).

228. **MENDEZA, ANTONIO DE, 1492?–1552**


In Spanish.


Mendoza was the first viceroy of New Spain (1535–1550) and the third viceroy of Peru (1551–1552). In his prologue, the author says his intent in writing the book was “to conduct an investigation among these new Christians to determine what had been the nature of their beliefs, customs, and government.” The text contains numerous watercolor drawings depicting village life, religious ceremonies, and warfare among the Indians, and portrays several scenes of Indians practicing cannibalism. Although some ritual cannibalism did exist in México during the pre-Columbian period, it was much exaggerated by early chroniclers who relied on oral accounts told by Indians who had lived during the period before the Spanish settled México.
Francisco Antonio Lorenzana (1722–1804) compiled Historia de Nueva-España, one of the most lavishly illustrated works printed in the New World at the time and an important source for Latin American history. In addition to three of Cortés’s letters to Emperor Charles V (written between 1520 and 1523), the work includes an essay on the Viceroy of New Spain, an account of the Cortés and Ulloa explorations to Baja California, a section of engravings reproducing, for the first time, a pre-Conquest Nahuatl manuscript, and two maps: México showing the route of Cortés and Domingo del Castillo’s map of California from 1541 (the original has since disappeared).

There are thirty-one engravings from the “Matricula de Tributos,” a native codex painted in 1521 by an Aztec Indian artist, with added Spanish notations. Only fifteen original pre-Conquest pictorial books painted on bark paper or deerskins have survived: eleven Mixtec or Aztec and four Maya.

Aztec painted manuscripts are more rare than the Mixtec corpus from Oaxaca. This example is particularly important in that it reveals the economics of the Aztec empire, which itself had existed for only a little over a century before the Spanish Conquest. The Aztecs first pacified foreign territories through commercial trade, and after their submission, exacted tribute in merchandise and raw materials desired by the Aztec elite. This codex illustrates the precise tributes and the quantities of each, which were extracted from the new provinces on a regular basis like taxes. Each tribute page pertains to a particular conquered city or region in the “patchwork” Aztec empire.

The example selected is the page representing the Soconusco province—now the Pacific coast of Chiapas and western Guatemala—located a thousand miles southeast of Tenochtitlán. This tropical rain forest region was the most distant province acquired by the Aztecs, where they infringed on the Maya territory. Soconusco provided exotic tropical goods not available in the arid Mexican highlands. Illustrated on this tribute page are bundles of cacao beans, herbs, jaguar pelts, tropical birds, and fine feathers (such as the long green Quetzal plumes available only in Guatemalan highlands). Some of these luxury goods were used by Aztecs to manufacture sumptuous costumes and ornaments, while valuable cacao beans were employed as tangible currency, as well as pulverized for an elite beverage.

—Lee Allen Parsons
THE CONQUEST OF MÉXICO PAINTINGS IN THE KISLAK COLLECTION

The Conquest of México paintings are among the great highlights of the Kislak Collection. Significant both artistically and historically, the paintings are a bridge between the collection’s wealth of pre-Columbian objects and its extensive array of manuscripts, maps, and rare books from the period of exploration and the early colonial era.*

The eight magnificent canvases tell the story of the 1521 Spanish conquest of the native Aztec people. Beginning with The Entrance of Cortés into Tabasco, these images highlight battles between the Spanish and the Mexica, ceremonial encounters of the Spanish conquistador with the Aztec emperor Moctezuma, and other pivotal historic moments. The series ends with the dramatic Conquest of Tenochtitlán and The Capture of Cuauhtémoc, the last Aztec king.

The paintings sparkle with bright colors and touches of gold. Although they convey a largely idealized image of the Mexica and the Spanish, they have an impressive emotional range because of the facial expressions. These works are also distinctive for their ethnographic detail, especially the attention that they pay to the costumes and other finery worn by the Mexica. They are filled with weapons, animals, plants, ships, and cities.

The dark rich reds, the dramatic compositions, and the crowded atmosphere of these paintings owe much to the Baroque vocabulary found in contemporary works of art created in Italy and Spain. Paintings of successful battles, often including the surrender of the defeated party, were common in European art in the early modern period. In particular, they formed an essential part of princely self-fashioning, with military victories proclaiming the strength, authority, and even the moral superiority of the ruler. The Kislak Conquest of México paintings follow the traditional formula for seventeenth-century Spanish battle paintings in which large figures, often on horseback, are highlighted in the foreground, with fighting and other types of activities occurring in the middle ground and background. A well-known example of this type of image is Diego Velázquez’s Surrender of Breda (1635), which decorated the Hall of Reals in the Buen Retiro Palace of King Philip IV (1605–1665) (Brown 1986, 107–123). As is typical of such works, this painting is not limited to one moment from the narrative. Rather, a series of events are compressed onto a single canvas.

During most of the seventeenth century, the subject of the Conquest seems to have held relatively little interest for artists in Spain and its colonies, and the majority of visual production was given over to religious representation. This changed with the 1684 publication of Antonio de Solís’s Historia de la conquista de México, which told the story in “the form of a heroic drama” (Keen 1971, 176). Solís was the official chronicler of the king and a noted playwright, and the elegance of his work stimulated a new interest in the Conquest. Writing over 150 years after the Conquest began, Solís’s chronicle draws heavily on letters of Cortés, the eyewitness account recorded in Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s Historia Verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España (1632), as well as works by Francisco López de Gómara and Antonio de Herrera. The popularity of Solís’s book is testified to by the numerous Spanish editions that were published into the eighteenth century; translators throughout western Europe were eager to make the great actions of Cortés and elegant pen of Solís available to the widest possible audience, and his work also appeared in multiple English, French, and Italian editions.

Drawing on such published histories, workshops in colonial México produced individual representations, series of paintings, and especially folding screens (biombos) depicting events from the Conquest. Although the artists who created the Kislak Conquest of México paintings clearly used Díaz’s book as one of their primary sources, and even included his image in two of the paintings, in their theatrical style and high Baroque drama these paintings suggest the refined language of Solís (Cuadriello 1999; García Sáiz 1999; Brienen and Jackson 2003). The paintings are outstanding examples in this genre of history painting because of their early date, fine condition, and the skill of the artists involved. Painted in Mexico during the second half of the seventeenth century, the Kislak series is considered the earliest of the three complete cycles of paintings of the Conquest that still exist.

It seems probable that a member of New Spain’s Creole population, which included people of “pure” Spanish ancestry as well as those of mixed Spanish and indigenous descent, commissioned this series of paintings, perhaps intending them as a present for King Charles II (1661–1700). Inventories following the king’s death in 1700 record his interest in paintings of this subject. Works of art displaying scenes from the Conquest were also in the collections of high-ranking Spanish officials during this period, who may have wanted to claim a piece of the glory for themselves. In these Kislak paintings, Cortés the great leader shares the honor for the ultimate victory over the Aztecs with his captains, who are prominent figures within the narrative as it unfolds on the canvases. Unlike the Buen Retiro battle paintings created for Philip IV, the Conquest depicted in the Kislak series was not a contemporary event when the paintings were made, and images of it could not portray the brilliance of Charles II and his armies. Had the Kislak series joined the royal collection, as perhaps originally intended, the paintings could have contributed to the mythology surrounding the Spanish triumph in the New World and offered a strategic distraction from the less than impressive leadership of Charles II. For Creoles in México at the end of the seventeenth century, both the Spanish and the Mexica of the Aztec empire had already

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*Some of the following material was originally published in Jackson and Brienen, Visions of Empire: Picturing the Conquest in Colonial Mexico (Low Art Museum and Kislak Foundation, 2003). It is reproduced here by permission of the Kislak Foundation and the Lowe Art Museum.
become part of their ancestral mythology, so it was imperative for them to portray both groups with dignity. Scholarship remains divided as to whether these works of art could have served the cause of Creole nationalism in México, or whether their message is less ambiguously a celebration of the Spanish empire and its illustrious past.

Although determining an exact date for the creation of these works has proven difficult, it nonetheless seems clear that they were acquired by the Cholmley family in Britain some time around the end of the seventeenth century. Evidence regarding when and where the paintings were obtained is unfortunately limited to an entirely anecdotal account written in 1852 by Henrietta Strickland. She notes the family tradition that the paintings were acquired by Sir Hugh Cholmley, 4th Bt (1632–1688) while he served in Tangier, which was abandoned by the British in 1683. In a 1935 Country Life article, A. Oswald suggested that the paintings could alternatively have been obtained in 1669, when Sir Cholmley traveled in Spain and France. Nonetheless, it is important to note that most of the extant screens made in New Spain showing images from the Conquest date to the 1690s. The paintings were in the possession of the Cholmley family for more than three hundred years and hung in the British Embassy in México City from 1954 to 1999, when they were acquired at auction by the Jay I. Kislak Foundation.

Note on inscriptions and numbers: The paintings in this cycle include inscriptions and a numbering system designed to explain to viewers both who and what they are looking at. Over the last three centuries, these texts and numbers have been worn away and are now very difficult to read. In the following entries on the paintings, we gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Michael Schreffler and Dr. John Beusterien in making transcriptions of the Spanish texts on the paintings. Here we have attempted to preserve as much as possible the spelling and wording of the original captions, which are written in the Spanish of a semi-literate person in México in the second half of the seventeenth century.

—Rebecca Parker Brien with contributions from Margaret A. Jackson
230. The Entrance of Cortés into Tabasco
Second half of the seventeenth century. México.
Oil on canvas. 121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)
NB214.S.A45 C65 1750. 0001

Cartouche:
No 1
Entrán en Tabasco las nuestros por la punta de los palmas guiados de gerónimo de Aguilar y que hallaron entre los indios, los quales dieron sobre los españoles. [H]acen paz y son los primeros cristianos desta Nueva España.

Our entry into Tabasco through the point of the palms [a geographical location marked by palm trees, depicted in the middle ground on the left], led by Gerónimo de Aguilar, whom they found among the Indians that surrendered to the Spanish. They [the people of Tabasco] make peace and are the first Christians of New Spain.

Cortés’s first major conflict with indigenous Mexicans occurred as he and his men made their way toward the city of Tabasco. Although the Spanish were outnumbered, Cortés apparently used cannon and men on horseback to great effect and eventually won the battle. According to Spanish sources, the caciques, or indigenous leaders, of Tabasco then begged Cortés for forgiveness. More importantly, they gave Cortés and his men twenty women, one of whom was Malintzin, also known as Doña Marina or La Malinche. Malinche was a key player in Cortés’s ultimate victory over the Aztecs, because she spoke both Nahuatl, the primary language of the Aztec empire, and Maya. Another of Cortés’s translators, Gerónimo de Aguilar, a Spaniard who had been shipwrecked and lived among the Maya for many years, is also included here.

In the painting, the Spanish troops, most in full armor and on horseback, are engaged in a furious battle with the inhabitants of Tabasco. In contrast to the metal armor and rapiers of the Spanish, the native Mexicans wear elaborate and colorful feathered costumes and carry spears and maquilhuitl, wooden clubs inset with black, razor-sharp pieces of obsidian. The most prominent figure in the foreground is Cristóbal de Olid, one of Cortés’s captains. Mounted on a pale horse, he rises above the confusion of the battle with his rapier held high, about to deliver a deadly blow to one of the Indian leaders. Pedro de Alvarado and Gonzalo de Sandoval, both members of Cortés’s senior staff, are also represented here. In the background of the painting we see the baptism of Malinche with five other indigenous women in a small grove of trees. Cortés appears here as a witness to this event, not as a main figure in the battle. The European-looking fortress in the deep background represents Tabasco, which is described in contemporary accounts as a heavily fortified city.
231. The Arrival of Cortés at Veracruz and the Reception by Motecuhzoma’s Ambassadors
Second half of the seventeenth century, México.
Oil on canvas. 121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)

Hernán Cortés and his army began their march inland toward the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán from the coastal city of Veracruz, which Cortés founded in July 1519. Most of this painting depicts the show of military strength and prowess that Cortés ordered to impress the Mexica ambassadors, who were sent there by Motecuhzoma to meet him. The middle of the painting is filled with galloping horses, cannon fire, and Spanish soldiers in full armor. The effect of this display of military force and European technology is demonstrated by a group of indigenous men armed with bows and arrows on the right, who prostrate themselves. The massive ships docked in the harbor are decorated with red and white imperial flags, demonstrating a powerful Spanish presence. A gift exchange is depicted on the left of the painting, where the elaborately dressed Mexica ambassadors bring presents to Cortés, who is seated with Malinche and others around a banquet table. During an early restoration, most of Cortés’s figure was trimmed off of the canvas; only his hands and armor-clad knee are still visible. This painting is one of only two in the series to name Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1495–1583) among those present, although he is not actually pictured. (For reasons that are not entirely clear, the large rock directly off the coast is labeled “vernal” or “Bernal.”) Díaz was a soldier on Cortés’s Mexican expedition and an eyewitness to the events depicted in the paintings. His influential history of the Conquest, Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España (The True History of the Conquest of New Spain, published in 1632) was written to counteract what he considered to be the over-valorization of Cortés by other authors.
232. The Meeting of Cortés and Motecuhzoma
Second half of the seventeenth century. México.
Oil on canvas. 121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)
N8214.S.A45 605 1750. 0003

Cartouche:
Bolcande México No 3
Sale Cortes para [ayl?e?] de ictapalapa donde descubre villas y ciudades
en el agua y la calzada [derecha?] sale de México Moctezuma arrecierle
y le presenta una cadena que trae al cuello. Cortes le ba a echar los bra-
sos y le detiene por no usarse entre ellos [. . . hacer?] las andas 4 Reyes
que lo trae en hombros.
Volcano of México
Cortés leaves for [. . .] of Iztapalapa, where he encounters towns
and cities on the water and a paved roadway [to the right].
Motecuhzoma leaves México [Tenochtitlán] to receive him and he
presents him [Cortés] with a chain that he was wearing around
his neck. Cortés goes to embrace him but he is held back because
this is not the custom among them. Four kings [use?] the throne
platform, which they carry on their shoulders.
The first meeting between Cortés and Motecuhzoma, which
occurred on the shores of Lake Texcoco outside the capital city
of Tenochtitlán, was peaceful if socially awkward. Contem-
porary accounts state that Motecuhzoma wore rich clothing
and sandals. His lords or caciques carried a canopy for him to
stand under; it was decorated with green feathers, gold and
silver embroidery, and precious stones. Chieftains swept the
ground before him, while other dignitaries held out royal
mats so that Motecuhzoma’s golden sandals would not touch
the earth. The painter, who has followed these contemporary
accounts quite closely, depicts Cortés’s arrival at this scene of
refined theatrical spectacle. Cortés has dismounted from his
horse and he approaches Motecuhzoma with his arms opened
in a gesture of embrace, which the Mexica leader respectfully
rejects by raising his left hand.

Despite the painter’s attention to detail, Motecuhzoma’s
muscled and idealized body, dignified stance, full beard, aris-
tocratic nose, and even the golden sword he holds in his right
hand owe more to European ideas about how a king and an
Indian should be pictured than to ethnographic accuracy. In
addition, while the feather skirts worn by Motecuhzoma and
his court were part of the standard iconography for depicting
Indians, such skirts were not worn in México or anywhere
else in the Americas. The painter has paid great attention
to the clothing of Malinche, who stands besides Cortés as
one of the primary figures in this composition. A small yel-
low dot in the sky to the left of the volcano may represent a
comet that appeared in the sky over Tenochtitlán at this time.
According to some sources, its appearance contributed to
Motecuhzoma’s inability to address the Spanish threat effec-

tively, because it was interpreted as an omen of disaster.
233. The Death of Motecuhzoma at the Hands of His Own People

Second half of the seventeenth century. México.
Oil on canvas. 121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)
NR214.5.A45 C65 1750. 0004

Cartouche:
No 4
Viéndose cercados los españoles de[n]tro de las casas de México, hicieron asomar a Moctezuma a un terrado y desde allí los apasiguaba, pero un indio le tiro una pedrada y los demás indios lanzaron unas flechas de [[q]]ue murió. Pones fuego a los aposentos.

The Spanish, finding themselves trapped in the palace in México (Tenochtitlán), make Motecuhzoma appear on a roof terrace and from there he quieted them, but an Indian threw a stone and the rest launched arrows from which he died. They burn the rooms (perhaps of the temple in the background).

Upon the entrance of the Spanish and their allies into Tenochtitlán, Motecuhzoma put the palace Axayácatl at their disposal. After learning of an attack on his men left behind in Veracruz, Cortés took the Aztec king hostage. In May 1520, when Cortés was absent from the city, his men and their Tlaxcalan allies under the leadership of Pedro de Alvarado massacred a large number of the Mexica elite during an important religious festival and destroyed major cult figures in the Templo Mayor, the largest and most important ceremonial building in Tenochtitlán. Although the exact date of his death is unclear, at some point during this time Motecuhzoma appeared in public on the upper level of the palace Axayácatl in an attempt to ease the hostility of his people. What followed is a matter of some uncertainty; rocks were thrown and Motecuhzoma was hit, but the severity of the wound is unknown. Spanish accounts put the blame for his death squarely on a rock-throwing Mexica warrior, while Nahuatl accounts suggest that the injury was minor and that the Spanish instead killed Motecuhzoma in secret.

In the painting, Motecuhzoma stands in a precarious position on the edge of the wall on the roof of the palace, here depicted as a large, fortress-like structure. The Mexica leader, dressed in his traditional crown and finery, has not yet received his fatal blow and his facial expression suggests both empathy for the Spanish and concern for his people. In the foreground, Mexica warriors swarm angrily below on the street in front of the palace. Great attention has been paid to the costumes of these figures, especially those of the jaguar and eagle warriors, the highest-ranking soldiers in the Mexica military. A Mexica man wearing long red feathers in his hair and holding the fatal stone is depicted in the foreground, standing almost on the bottom edge of the canvas. The stone he clutches is about to be launched, adding tension to the scene. The billowing clouds of smoke in the background also create drama and may represent Spaniards setting fire to the idols from the Templo Mayor. The prominence of the priest standing next to Motecuhzoma is both a foreshadowing of the death of Motecuhzoma and a reminder of the importance of Christianity and conversion in New Spain. One recent scholar has pointed out the formal similarities between this composition and images of Jesus as “Ecce Homo” (Behold the Man) (García-Díaz 1999: 132–134). Based on the Gospel of John, images of this subject show Jesus standing on a balcony, looking sorrowfully down at a jeering crowd below. As in the biblical story, in this painting Motecuhzoma is denied and even struck down by his own people. Motecuhzoma, with his compassionate expression and inevitable death, becomes a Christ-like figure.
234. The Sad Night
Second half of the seventeenth century. México.
Oil on canvas.
121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)

Cartouche:
No 5
Salte Cortés de México con los suyo[s] a las 11 de la noche que habia oscuro y lluvioso [...]. los indí[es] y que an la puente que llevaban, llenose el foso de Alvarado de hombres, caballos y tlaxcalteca muertos van a los remedios donde se hacen fortalezas en el Cu.

Cortés and his men leave México at 11 on a dark and rainy night [...] the Indians follow them and they remove the bridge they [the Spanish] took with them. Alvarado’s hole (a hole in the causeway) was filled with dead men, horses, and Tlaxcalans. They go to the fortifications on the pyramid, where they regain their strength.

Following the death of Motecuhzoma and given the increasingly difficult situation of the Spanish, who remained trapped in the palace of Axayácatl in the center of Tenochtitlán, Cortés chose midnight on July 1, 1520, as the time for his retreat from the city. Spotted soon after leaving their stronghold, the Spanish and their allies were attacked by Mexica warriors. Although Cortés and most of the leaders of the Spanish contingent were able to escape to the mainland on makeshift bridges, hundreds of Spanish soldiers and thousands of Tlaxcalans died during what has come to be known as the la noche triste or sad night.

This spectacular nocturnal image highlights the Spanish participants in the battle, who are portrayed as noble men on horseback, imparting a curious sense of heroism to what was in fact a disastrous retreat. The foreground is dominated by three large figures on horseback, Cortés’s armour-clad captains, who ride off in opposite directions, providing a sense of drama and movement to the work, but also framing and drawing the viewer’s eye to the center of the painting. Here the much smaller figure of Cortés is shown seated on a rearing horse, brandishing his sword triumphantly over the chaos that surrounds him. In the deep background, Tenochtitlán is represented as a ghostly, abandoned city, rendered in a palette of greys and pale, smoky browns, distant and oddly disconnected from the furious battle that rages in front of it. In contrast, banners of red and lightning-like flashes of light and color give an eerie, almost sinister quality to the central battle scene. Evidence of treasure lost or left behind by the Spanish can be seen scattered on the ground in the form of small rectangular bars of yellow gold.
235. The Battle of Otumba
Second half of the seventeenth century. México.
Oil on canvas.
121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)
NB214.5.A45 C65 1750. 0006

Cartouche:

Gananles el estandarte R[cal] con que tuvieron una [calida?] batalla de que se [vieron?] los espanoles muy apretados, suceden este dia casos memorables en que se mstro al animo de Cortes y sus capitanes.

The Spanish capture the royal standard from them, with whom they had a [fierce] battle, in which the Spaniards found themselves in dire straits. This day, memorable events occurred in which Cortés and his men showed their bravery.

After the defeat of the Spaniards during the la noche triste, Cortés marched the survivors away from the city in the direction of Tlaxcala. During this flight from Tenochtitlán, Cortés took his men through the valley of Otumba. Here Cuitláhuac, the new Mexico leader of the Aztec empire and a brother of Motecuhzoma II, mounted a major battle against the invaders. The Europeans and their allies were both outnumbered and in a weakened condition and at the beginning of the battle the outcome did not look promising for them. With a small group of men, however, Cortés attacked and captured the main leaders of the Mexica army, who are pictured in the left foreground. Like most of the other indigenous soldiers in this painting, these five men are dressed in elaborate costumes. The leader on the left is clearly recognizable as a jaguar warrior. Surrounded by Spanish soldiers in armor on the left, the men face Cortés, whose wildly rearing horse threatens to trample them. Cortés holds a rapier to the chest of the man closest to him, who also clutches a rapier in his hand, presumably captured from the Spanish. The background of the painting gives way to furious fighting between the Spanish and the Mexica. Spanish histories of the Conquest emphasize the significance of this battle as a key turning point in the fortunes of the Spanish in México, who were then able to continue their journey to Tlaxcala, the home of Cortés’ most important allies, whence they were able to recover, regroup, enlist new men, and return to Tenochtitlán in December to continue the battle.
236. **The Conquest of Tenochtitlán**

Second half of the seventeenth century. México.
Oil on canvas.
121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)

Cartouche:
CONQUISTA DE MÉXICO POR CORTÉS. No 7.
Víltmo combate de México por Cortés y los suyos por las tres calcádas que van a México, y por la Laguna los vergantines a quien davan cruda guerra los indios. Gana Pedro de Alvarado el alto cu de guichilobos, y pone las banderas de Su Majestad.

**CONQUEST OF MEXICO BY CORTÉS. No. 7**
The final battle for México (Tenochtitlán) by Cortés and his men by way of the three roadways that lead to México and with the brigantines through the lagoon, which the Indians fought savagely. Pedro de Alvarado wins the pyramid of Guichilobos (Templo Mayor) and raises His Majesty’s flag.

The battle for Tenochtitlán between the Spanish under Cortés and the Mexica under the last Aztec leader Cuauhtémoc is more properly called a siege. Beginning in May of 1521, it lasted well into August of that year. As part of their battle preparation, the Spanish constructed a fleet of small maneuverable ships called brigantines, which would play a central role in their eventual victory. The brigantines, which could hold up to forty men, were outfitted with cannon and they allowed the Spanish to control the lake and blockade the city.

The painting attempts to distill all the excitement, bloodshed, and drama of the siege into a series of key moments. The background is dominated by the main pyramid of Tenochtitlán; the swirling forms of the three causeways and the aqueduct extending out from it almost give it the appearance of a starfish-like creature, curling up its legs in defense. The most prominent figure in the foreground is Cortés, who leads his Spanish armies on horseback across one of broadest of the causeways, which creates a dramatic diagonal into the city. He is shown in a confident manner, seated on a rearing horse with the baton of command held firmly in his left hand and a rapier held high in his right. A large number of fallen Mexica are pictured on the causeway under the rearing hooves of the Spaniards’ horses. In other parts of the canvas, Cortés’ most trusted captains also lead their troops towards the center of the city and the main temple compound with the pyramid in its center. Only five brigantines are visible on the lake, here and there defending the Spaniards from the Mexica in canoes. The Indian allies of the Spanish, pictured at the distant ends of the causeways, are not given a central role in the battle as depicted, although their contribution was vital to the success of the siege and they far outnumbered the European participants. Despite the ferocity of the battle, the success of Cortés and his armies has already been assured. Flames emerge from the main pyramid and a Spanish flag has been mounted on the roof of the shrine to Huitzilopochtli.
237. **The Capture of Cuauhtémoc**

Second half of the seventeenth century. México.

Oil on canvas.

121.9 × 198.1 cm. (48 × 78 in.)

**Cartouche:**

Sañén huýendo Guatemoc último Rey de México, con los suyos en canosas en que llevavan oro y plata y demas joyas. danles alcañes los vegañines. Y prendenle a [hora de] vespas de S. Hipólit, con que se concluyo el cerco de México en nombre de Su Majes[a]d.

Guatemoc (Cuauhtémoc), last king of Mexico (Tenochtitlán), flees with his men in canoes, in which they carry their gold and silver and other jewels. The brigantines reach them and arrest him at the hour of the vespers of S. Hipolito, after which the siege of México was concluded in the name of his majesty.

The Mexica noble Cuauhtémoc, whose name roughly translates to swooping or falling eagle, was the eleventh and last tlatoani of the Aztec empire. He ruled from December 1520, following the death of Cuitláhuac due to smallpox, to August 1521, when the city fell to the Spanish. Although Cuauhtémoc was apparently quite young, he was already known as a great warrior. In August, after much of Tenochtitlán had already been destroyed, Cuauhtémoc was captured as he fled the city in a canoe. The painting is dominated by a watery, boggy landscape filled with canoes and brigantines, which proudly fly red and white imperial flags. According to some accounts, Cuauhtémoc fled with fifty canoes, carrying his relatives, other Mexico nobles and especially his riches, and this is the version that we see depicted in this painting. In the foreground Cuauhtémoc, recognizable because of his feathered and jeweled finery and impressive headpiece, stands in his canoe between three Spaniards, one of whom looks like Cortés (on the left), although he was not in fact present for the capture. This moustached Spaniard, identified in written accounts as García de Holguín, the commander of a brigantine, stretches out his left arm to embrace the nobleman, although he also holds a rapier in his right hand. Although the artist of the paintings certainly never saw the individuals depicted in this work, there is a surprising degree of attention paid to the individual features of both Cuauhtémoc and his captors. Cuauhtémoc maintains his dignified composure despite the difficult circumstances, and his noble bearing is comparable to that of Motecuhzoma as he is pictured in the third painting of the series, when he met Cortés for the first time.
SOUTH AMERICA

238. **BRAUN, GEORG, 1540–1622**
Hogenberg, Franz, d. ca. 1590
Mexico, regia et celebris Hispaniae novae civitas; Cusco, regni Peru in novo orbe caput. [Cologne: T. Graminaeus for the authors and P. Galle at Antwerp, 1572?]
2 views on 1 sheet: ca. 30 × 50 cm. (11¾ × 19⅞ in.)
G4414.M6A3 1572 .m4
The sixteenth-century multi-volume publication, Civitates orbis terrarum, includes woodcut views of cities of the world. The image of Tenochtitlán (on the left) is clearly drawn from the Cortés map of 1524. Changes to the 1524 original include the introduction into the foreground of elegant human figures intended to represent the Mexica nobility of Tenochtitlán. This juxtaposition of human figures with city views, an innovation by Braun, is also found in the map of Cusco, capital of the Inca Empire. In the foreground on the right of this map, we find a highly dignified representation of an anonymous Inca king seated in a sedan chair carried by four servants. The debt that these figures owe to classical antiquity is shown not only in their idealized bodies and elegant poses, but also in the helmets and clothing worn by the king’s retinue of soldiers.

239. **Pizarro, Francisco, ca. 1475–1541**
Autograph document, signed: Response to a petition by conquistador Pedro del Barco. Cuzco, Perú, April 14, 1539.
2 pages, with docketing and witnesses. In Spanish.
Pedro del Barco’s petition (on the verso) requests inspections of encomiendas before instituting reforms regarding repartimientos. Pizarro’s rejection is counter-signed by Fray Vicente de Valverde, Bishop of Cuzco. Extremely rare rubric signature of Pizarro; signed “El Marques Pizarro.”
Kislak MS 208

240. **Cieza de León, Pedro de, 1518–1554**
[First part of Chronica del Perú]
Parte primera dela Chronic del Perú.
Seville: Martín de Montesdoca, 1553.
f3442.c557 1553
This first edition was the only Spanish edition of the Chronicle. Written in four parts, the first describes the geography of Peru.

241. **Zárate, Agustín de, b. 1514**
Historia del descubrimiento y conquista del Perú: Con las cosas naturales que señaladamente allí se hallan, y los sucesos que ha habido.
Anvers: Martin Nucio, 1555.
f3442.Z3H5 1555

242. **Llamosas, Lorenzo de las, ca. 1665–ca. 1705**
Manifiesto apologético, en que se tratan las principales materias del reino del Perú. [Madrid?: s.n.], 1692.
f3444.L7545M365 1692

243. **Alsedo y Herrera, Dionisio de, 1690–1777**
Compendio historico de la provincia: Partidos, ciudades, astilleros, ríos, y puerto de Guayaquil en las costas de la mar del sur.
Madrid: Manuel Fernandez, 1741.
f3741.G9A6 1741

In the encomienda system, conquistadors were granted land and trusteeship over the indigenous people who lived on that land. The encomenderos had the authority to tax the people under their care and to summon them for labor, but were not given judicial authority. The repartimiento de labor was the process by which the indigenous population of Spanish America and the Philippines was forced into low-paid or unpaid labor for a portion of each year on Spanish-owned farms, in mines and workshops, and on public projects.
BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS

Bartolomé de las Casas began his lifelong struggle for justice on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the Indies as a secular cleric after his conversion experience in 1514. Central to this struggle was his conviction that the principal reason for Spanish presence and settlement in the New World was the conversion of the indigenous population to Christianity. After becoming a Dominican friar in 1522, Las Casas continued to condemn injustices, propose reforms, and advocate peaceful evangelization methods as he lobbied for the cessation of harm inflicted on the indigenous peoples.

In 1540, Las Casas returned to Spain to personally inform Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain Charles V about the tragic and pitiful situation of the indigenous peoples due to the excesses of particular Spaniards in the Indies and due to the corruption of royal officials on both sides of the Atlantic. His reports to the emperor precipitated the establishment in 1542 of a special *junta*, whose task was to draft new legislation for the governance of the Spanish colonies in the New World as well as for the good treatment and preservation of the indigenous peoples.

One of Las Casas’s reports to the emperor and the junta was a voluminous *Memorial de remedios*. The *Memorial*, except for its eighth remedy, has been lost. However, during July and August of 1542 Las Casas wrote his “Parecer” (see entry 244), which he orally presented to the emperor and the junta (at their request) in early September of 1542. This manuscript was Las Casas’s culminating statement to advise the emperor and the junta of the major issues that they needed to address in the new ordinances: the indigenous peoples’ status as vassals of the Crown, the settlement of the Spaniards, the abolition of slavery, the character of conquests and of future discoveries, and the necessity of peaceful evangelization in word and deed. An example of Las Casas’s concentrated exposition of an issue is the following excerpt about the settlement of the Spaniards:

> The settlement and habitation of the Spaniards in the Indies is very necessary, as much for the conversion and good order of the Indies as for the sustenance of the state, and the dominion of Your Majesty and of the kings of Castile in the Indies. This settlement and habitation of the Spaniards in those said kingdoms and lands can be done very well and sustained without encomiendas or service of Indians—as the settlers did in all the other parts of the world without the service of the Indians—because it is not read in any Scripture that those who went to populate said new lands might tyrannize and oppress the peoples they found in them, and that they [the people] might serve them [the settlers] against their will and in prejudice [to] and [to the] detriment of their liberty and of their own lives and [those] of their women and children, but except for [their] being tyrants and fiends and robbers—as was Nembroth, and [their] oppressing men [sic] and as, up to now, has been and is being done in the Indies.

Las Casas delivered his “Parecer” at la última hora—as the emperor and the junta finalized the New Laws and Ordinances for the Indies. As such, this manuscript documents Las Casas’s enduring role throughout the drafting of the
New Laws, from his initial reports that precipitated the formation of the junta and their deliberations, through the secret phase of factional decision making, to the final draft of the New Laws. Accordingly, the “Parecer” demonstrates that indeed Las Casas “made” the New Laws.

After the promulgation and revision of the New Laws in 1542 and 1543, Las Casas returned to the Indies, where he used his new ecclesiastical position as Bishop of Chiapa and its canonical juridical power to attempt to enforce the New Laws and to develop a model diocese in one of the poorest regions of the New World.

Las Casas returned to Spain for the last time in May of 1547. Having resigned his bishopric in August of 1550, and having published his nine treatises in 1552–1553 (see entry 245), Las Casas continued his lifelong struggle for justice on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the Spanish colonies. His persistent uniformity of thought and endeavor, first noted by the nineteenth-century Spanish historian Antonio María Fabié, was the obvious product of his consistent juridical approach, his canonistic-philosophical-theological epistemology, his firsthand experiences, his tenacious commitment, and his deep-seated faith. At the time of his death on July 18, 1566, Bartolomé de las Casas had penned more than three hundred writings, including cartas, petitions, tratados, proposals, memoriales, and major works.

—David Orique

244. LAS CASAS, BARTOLOMÉ DE, 1484–1566

Autograph manuscript, signed: to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Parecer de fray Bartolomé de las Casas al emperador Carlos V y a la Junta de Valladolid. Valladolid, Spain, 1542.

5 pages. In Spanish.

Opinion of friar Bartolomé de las Casas to Emperor Charles V and to the Junta of Valladolid. From the collection of Abbé Augustín Fischer [chaplain of Ferdinand I (1503–1564), and chaplain and secretary of Maximilian II (1527–1576)]. Purchased in the early nineteenth century by Karl Hermann Berendt, in 1869 by Sir Thomas Phillipps, and subsequently by Pascual de Gayangos y Arce. Rediscovered in 1955.

KISLAK MS 192

This manuscript was orally presented to Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain and to the junta as they debated the fate of the Indians of the New World. In it Las Casas states, “In order that the Indians may be preserved in life and liberty there are no other means save that Your Majesty should incorporate them as your vassals in your royal crown.”

245. CASAS, BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS, 1484–1566

Nine tratados bound together:

Brevisima relación de la destruction de las Indias . . . Sevilla . . . , 1552.

Lo que se sigue es un pedazo [de] una carta y relacion que escribo cierto hombre . . . Sevilla, 1552.

Entre los remedios q dô fray Bartholomé de las Casas . . . para reformació de las Indias . . . Sevilla . . . , Jacome Cro[m]berger, . . . 1552.

Aquí se co[n]tienen unos asuntos y reglas para las confesores q[ue] oyeron confesiones delos Españolesque son o han fido en cargo a los yndios delas Indias del mar Oceano . . . Sevilla . . . Sebastián Trujillo . . . , 1552.

Aqui se co[n]tiene una disputa o controversia entre el Obispo de fray Bartholomé de las Casas o Casaus obispo q[ue] fue dela ciudad Real de Chiapa . . . y el doctor Gines de Sepulveda . . . Sevilla . . . , 1552.

Este es un tratado q[ue] el obispo de la ciudad Real de Chiapa dô fray Bartholomé de las Casas compuso por comision del Consejo Real delas Indias: sobre la materia de los yndios que se han hecho en ellas esclavos . . . Sevilla . . . Sebastián Trujillo . . . , 1552.

Aquí se co[n]tiene treinta proposiciones muy juridicas: en las gues sumaria y sucentamientos se toca muchas cosas pertinencietas como derecho q al iglesial y los principes christanome teinen o puede tener sobre los infeles de qual quer espeie que sean . . . Sevilla : En casa de Sebastiá[n] Trugill[i], 1552.

Principia queda[m] ex quibus procedum est in disputatione ad manifestadam et defendam justiciam Yndorum . . . Impressum Hispali : In edib[us] Sebastiá[n]i Trugilli, [1552?].


F1411.c25

Written between 1541 and 1552 and published in 1552 and 1553, the nine tratados in this collection contain some of the best of Bartolomé de las Casas’s juridical and theological thought. Las Casas published these treatises privately because he wished to distribute them gratuitously—especially among the friars leaving for the Indies. The tratados were published in Seville: Jácome Cromberger printed the first of the treatises, Entre los remedios, on August 17, 1552; Sebastián Trujillo printed the rest of the tratados between September 10, 1552, and January 8, 1553. They are frequently found bound together.
246. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[French translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Histoire admirable des horribles insolences, cruautés, & tyrannies exercées par les Espagnols en Indes Occidentales.
[Lyon?]: Gabriel Cartier, 1582.
F1411.C433

247. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[English translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
The Spanish Colonie, or, Brief Chronicle of the Acts and Gestes of the Spaniards in the West Indies, Called the Newe World.
F1411.C422

248. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[French translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Tyranies et cruautés des Espagnols perpetrees es Indes Occidentales, qu’on dit le Nouveau Monde.
Paris: Guillaume Julien, 1582.
F1411.C3154 1582

249. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[German translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Neue Welt: Warhaftige Anzeigung der hispanian Greuelichen abscheulichen und unmenschlichen Tyrannen, von ihnen inn den indiusischen Ländern: So gegen Nidergang der Sonnen gelegen, und die Neue Welt genent wird begangen.
[Germany?: s.n.], 1597.
F1411.C445

250. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Latin translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Narratio regionum indicarum per Hispanos quosdam devastatum verissima.
Francofurti: Theodori de Bry & Ioannis Saurii, 1598.
F1411.C462

251. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Latin translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Narratio regionum indicarum per Hispanos quosdam devastatum verissima.
Oppenheimii: Johan-Theod. de Bry, typis Hieronymi Galleri, 1614.
F1411.C463

252. [French translation of Spiegel der Spaensche tyrannye gheschiet in Nederlantd]
Le miroir de la cruelle, & horrible tyrannie espagnole perpetree au Pays Bas.
Amsterdam: Ian Evertss. Cloppenburg, 1620.
DH1187.C6

253. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Dutch translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Den spiegel der Spaaensche tierannij, geschiet in Westendien.
Amsterdam: Cornelis Lodewijcks vander Plasse, 1620.
F1411.C2519 1620

254. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Italian/Spanish translation of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Istoria ò breuissima relatione della distruttione dell’Indie Occidentali.
Venetia: Marco Ginammi, 1643. Bound together subsequent to publication.
F1411.C451

255. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Italian/Spanish edition of Este es un trataudo]
Il supplice schiavo indiano. Venetia: Marco Ginammi, 1636.
F1411.C458

256. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Italian/Spanish edition of Octavo remedio]
La libertà presta del supplice schiauo indiano. Venetia: Marco Ginammi, 1640.
F1411.C4517

257. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Italian/Spanish edition of Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Istoria ò breuissima relatione della distruttione dell’Indie Occidentali.
Venetia: Marco Ginammi, 1643. Ex libris: Kimbolton Castle.
Bound with: Casas, Bartolomé de las. Il supplice schiauo indiano. Venetia: Marco Ginammi, 1636; Casas, Bartolomé de las. La libertà presta del supplice schiauo indiano. Venetia: Marco Ginammi, 1640; Casas, Bartolomé de las. Conquist dell’Indie Occidentali.
Venetia: Marco Ginammi, 1644. Bound together subsequent to publication.
F1411.C4517

258. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Italian/Spanish edition of Aqui se contiene una disputa o controversia]
F1411.C4517

259. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
[Selections from Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias]
Las obras del Obispo d. Fray Bartolome de las Casas, o Casaus, obispo que fue de la ciudad real de Chiapa en las Indias, de la Orden de Santo Domingo: Impressa en Sevilla, en casa de Trugille, año 1552. Barcelona: Antonio Lacaualleria, 1646.
Six of the nine tracts first published and collectively known as Brevísima relación.
F1411.C26

This reprint of six tracts corresponds to the “Counterfeit” edition, of which copies are described with the imprint as
above. The arrangement of the tracts is different from that of the original edition, printed at Seuilla by Sebastian Trugillo, 1552.

260. Casas, Bartolomé de las, 1484–1566
Tears of the Indians: Being An Historical and true Account Of the Cruel Massacrers and Slaughters of Above Twenty Millions of innocent People; Committed by the Spaniards in the Islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica ... And made English by J. P. [John Philips].
F114.C424

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