

# ***Collision of Magic, Myth and Ambition***

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## **Overview**

This unit is centered on the Conquest of the Spaniards over the Aztecs and other Mexican tribes during the initial invasion of Hernán Cortés in 1519. It gives credit, not to the valiant explorers with their mammoth beast-of-burden animals, nor their state-of-the-art weaponry and armor, but to an incredible string of coincidences along with the current cultural beliefs shaped by religious standards. How the conquest was accomplished doesn't lie in the flawless training of the well-disciplined troops, although fighting and battle strategy were their profession. Given their superior weaponry, leadership, and battle skills, how confident were they of victory? They were still confronting a nation whose capital city was considerably larger than anything in all of Europe plus an endless supply of warriors raised on zeal and bravery. The Spaniards were warned by coastal tribes that what they would encounter in central Mexico was a "war machine", the antithesis of the island tribes. Certainly the Spaniards' sheer numbers would not have been enough. They landed in Veracruz (present day) with only 550 men battling an opposing Aztec force of thousands upon thousands familiar with the terrain, weather conditions, language, local traditions, rituals, and belief system. Such an advantage should have marked surefire and swift defeat for the Spaniards – but it didn't. The research presented here is pushed along the avenue of legend and how that affected the Indians' approach to the Spaniards and the consequences.

## **Rationale**

This study is rooted in myth. As explained in a literature textbook (Elements of Literature), myths are stories that explain the forces of life and man's questioning attempts to understand them. Henri and H. A. Frankfort say this about the myth, "The imagery of myth is...by no means allegory. It is nothing less than a carefully chosen cloak for abstract thought. It represents the form in which the experience has become conscious (Markham viii)." They have two functions; to give meaning to the world, how did it start, when will it end, and to justify the existing

social system. Mythologies present explanations as to how things are. The lexicology of the word myth is from the Greek “mythos” meaning story. The Nahuatl myths shared among Mexica tribes are full of historical explanations intertwined with religious demands. Cortés played on these strengths and weaknesses. He counted on the Aztec supporting their belief system to the end. Both cultures were willing to sacrifice everything. Without supporting their culture and religious doctrine, the Aztec social structure would collapse. Cortés had already risked his reputation and outstripped the authority given him to enter the interior of the country claiming land, searching for gold, and establishing settlement and missions.

The ability of man to support a belief system nourished by expectations of the gods that rule his life is an amazing feat of human genius and creativity. A society connects to the world through its religious beliefs and practices which give meaning and purpose to existence. Each society crafts those tenets to which he loyally molds his life and tenaciously supports in the face of counter ideals proselytized by other societies. We judge, ridicule, and burlesque what is intimate in another culture because we are outside observers, lacking ownership and the sense of identity connected to our ancestors. Thus antics of Greek and Roman gods and their relationship with man becomes fodder for storybooks and movies. They exist for our entertainment, devoid of the reality that they could dictate men’s lives. Should the artistic license be reversed and another culture refer to our religious stories as mythology, we indignantly scream. This story of Mexico is about man’s life interwoven with his religious practices that shaped his past, commanded his present and warned of his future. Legends with religious overtones carry powerful messages and dictate how people respond to outside influences. For the Aztecs menacing influences threatened their lifestyle, government, social structures, and their religion Herein is discussed the importance of a single myth, that of the return of Quetzalcoatl. Historian Irene Nicholson calls this myth of the plumed serpent dazzling in beauty and pronounces it the complete fairy tale (77). For all the apparent differences between the Mexican religious and native life and the Christian European, the cataclysmic collision of the two revealed some unusual similarities, hopefully opening a window of understanding.

After Christopher Columbus’ search for a westward passage to India, the 16th century conquistador, Hernán Cortés, added his own spin to the tale of conquest. To understand the story it is important to know what shaped this public notary-turned-novice explorer.

### **Hernán Cortés**

Cortés was born in Spain in 1485. His father was a captain in the King’s service. The impressionable child was greatly impacted by two events in the year 1492; the final victory of the Christians over the Moors and Columbus’

unimaginable claim in the New World. The seeds of ambition and appetite for power were sown. The discovery of America opened new horizons for the dreams of adventurous young boys. The Spanish kingdom was expanding through Europe. History seemed to be on the fast track and Cortés was eager to join it.

Young Cortés studied two years of law but returned home uninspired. Set for adventure, he signed on to be a soldier but was badly injured in a love tryst gone awry. Healing from the severe beating, he watched the other recruits depart without him. Stifled in his small hometown, he traveled to Valencia on the Mediterranean coast to book passage to Italy, making another attempt to pursue his dream of a professional soldier. The stories he heard in the seaport's numerous taverns were captivating, old sea captains rambled about the riches in India and soldiers bragged about their victories on the battlefield. He found his calling. He was going to the New World, a young frontier boasting of endless opportunity - and gold

### **Life in the New World**

He was only 18 years old when he arrived in Hispaniola, the Caribbean island. Although impatient to begin his gold quest, he established himself as a notary public in the office of Diego Velasquez.

Columbus wrote of uncontrollable desires. He called it “the most excellent thing” and went on to write that one desiring it “goes as far as to thrust souls into paradise!” (Benitez 19) “The search for gold was still, nearly a century after its first discovery, the transcending motive impelling Europeans across the Atlantic waters, heedless of suffering and risk...” These are the words of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, the first official Spanish historian of the conquest taken from Kirkpatrick Sale's book *The Conquest of Paradise* (232). Yet the islands where the Spaniards first created their cities, had limited deposits, disappointing many illusioned prospectors. The natives did not understand the propensity of their obsession.

By 1517 New World mining was fully operational. Natives were used as slave and despite disappointing levels of production, the mines still served to create rich Spaniards in the industry. For the adventurer, jobs in New Spain were plentiful. Land was free for the taking, giving no concern to the native residents. Deeds awarding nobles slaves for their use or for trade were called *encomiendas*, and readily acquired. Their only obligation was to Christianize them.

### **Pre-Cortés Exploration**

In 1517 one hundred ten impatient men were awaiting legal mining permits from Diego Velásquez, now governor of Cuba. Frustrated with red tape, they pooled their money and resources and chartered three ships to search for new lands and opportunity. A rich nobleman, Francisco Fernández de Córdoba, captained their expedition. Velasquez himself had funded one of the ships, expecting a profitable return on his investment. Antón Alaminos, who had sailed on Columbus' fourth and last voyage was one of the pilots. He was ambitious and eager to explore areas Columbus had by-passed. Fernández de Córdoba sailed westward with ships filled with beads, food items, corn, olive oil, wine and pigs, all for bartering for pearls and gold (Benítez 41).

Off the Maya coast they saw a colossal city on white sand beaches. Assuming the triangular buildings dotting the coastline to be mosques and pagodas they were convinced they had reached the Far East, but they were, in fact, Maya temples. Pulling into the bay, they displayed signs indicating they came in peace. Indian canoes circled round the large ships then returned without boarding. Armed with fifteen crossbows and ten firelocks they went ashore at the invitation of the Indians but were caught in a hail of arrows. Fifteen soldiers fell immediately as the Spaniards sprung into combat. They were victorious, but found their opponents far more competent in battle than the islanders.

Reconnaissance of the Yucatán coast continued. Alaminos insisted the peninsula was an island. The day travel was taking a toll on the men. Water was in short supply because the ships were old and the barrels were leaking the drinking water. The sun was intense and together with their diet of manioc bread and salt pork, the crew suffered from an insatiable thirst. They had no choice but to land and replenish their water supply at the next coastal village. Their barrels were cautiously filled from wells as a disconcerted crowd gathered on the beach. The unwelcomed Spaniards replenished their water supply and quickly set sail. They had every right to be cautious; so did the Indians.

One encounter after another found them at odds with the natives. With an exhausted crew, they limped into the town of Champotón, the very city where legend teaches that the Plumed Serpent god Quetzalcoatl departed from his people. The excitement of exploring and conquering had been outweighed by the struggle for survival. They needed fresh water and their artillery needed attention. On shore they were approached by warriors with colored face paint who wanted to know if they traveled in from the east. The soldiers responded they had, from where the sun rises. These were two very ominous answers. Quetzacoatl was expected to return from the east and he is known to be associated with Venus, the morning star, which disappears as the sun rises.

The Indians monitored every action of the Spaniards, attacking, severely wounding the captain. Half of all the soldiers died and many wounded. Two were

taken captive by the Maya to be sacrificed. Those that were able escaped to the ships, but with limited manpower, they were no longer able to man three ships. They scuttled one at sea and began the search for fresh water to treat wounds and a haven to attend to the flooded bilges and torn sails damaged from a storm at sea. Alaminos was blamed for the mishap but also relied on to replace a delirious captain. Thinking he could find safe haven quickly in Florida, he headed the ships northward, but there again, encountered hostile Indians and had to launch a defense. They made no further delay and headed for Havana. An expedition that saw one hundred ten men depart for adventure limped back into the Havana port with fifty-seven dead, including, within a few days, the captain.

On this voyage the Spaniards had their first introduction to Quetzacoatl, and the Aztecs to the bearded ones prompting questions that if this could be the fulfillment of the prophecy. It seemed too coincidental. Champtón was the very city Quetzalcoatl from which set out to sea and where he was predicted to return. The connection to Quetzacoatl so far had been a negative one for the Spaniards. These Indians were not eager for his return, perhaps because they had already received word about how other tribes had fared when he appeared on their shores. What was clear, these “floating mountains” and the people who lived on them were not welcome in their land.

Bernal Díaz de Castillo, a conquistador/historian who accompanied several important voyages during the age of Exploration in the New World, gives firsthand accounts of Cortés’ exploits in Mexico. He leaves an invaluable legacy of his version of the truth in what the Spaniards accomplished in the New World, frequently refuting accounts left by others. He has left a record of the expedition captained by Juan de Grijalva. The Spaniards had learned from the Indians that quilted garments offered good protection from arrows and included them and cannons on Grijalva’s trip. The ship came across the River Tobasco and boats were launched to explore it. Upstream an Indian ambush was organized and more canoes monitored the ship in the lagoon. Julian and Melchorejo, the two Indians trained to be translators, attempted to negotiate a peace, but the Indians refused to give homage to a king they did not know when they had not left their own territory. A truce allowed the Spaniards to leave. They did encounter friendlier tribes further up the coast that were curious about them and treated them to banquets. Conditions on the boat were agonizing for the men who had to eat sour bread and deal with mosquitos in their sleep. Various skirmishes with Indians had killed thirty five men and left several more wounded. Although well-accepted by most of the men, Grijalva was tested by Pedro Alvarado who resented the inexperienced captain. The commission had come to him as Velasquez’s relative. Upon returning to Cuba, the conquistador gave a scathing report destroying the career of the young captain accusing him of incompetence and missed opportunities for settlements, one of their prime objectives.

It would take a stronger man like Cortes, who had made a name for himself as a very loyal and brave soldier fighting the island Indians, to direct the energies of Alvarado. This time Velásquez thought better of naming a relative captain. He had previous work experience with the younger Cortés, and they had become brothers-in-law, marrying Spanish sisters, but there was no love lost between them as the one argued about Cortés' lack of devotion to his wife and the other about Velásquez's government's dealings of nepotism, avarice and other unlawful practices for profit. The latter bent to public sentiment and commissioned Cortés despite his lack of sailing history. A last minute attempt to disgrace Cortés and wrangle the expedition away from him was unsuccessful as the conniving conquistador had anticipated such a maneuver and had solidified his relationships with important people whom Velásquez dared not cross. He had resolved many obstacles any several of which should have detoured from the fame of conquest that he eventually claimed. The prior expeditions had introduced the white man to the Mexican people. This one opened the door for a man of Cortés' ambition to walk into the world which the Indians already believed to be their destiny.

### **Cortés Appointed Captain**

Hernán Cortés set sail on February 10, 1519 with eleven ships and five hundred eight soldiers, additional sailors and pilots and artillerymen and three priests. Two very important additions that were to confound the fighting natives were the sixteen horses and ten cannons. Fifteenth century invention of firearms had changed the face of warfare in Europe. To the Indians they must be gods. Who else could use such frightening, noisy weapons? Many of Velásquez's relatives were on board with the intent of establishing trading partnerships. Officially the task was multifaceted, reconnaissance of the Mexican coast, claim cities for the King of Spain and Christianize the heathens. In return for submission to the king, they would receive royal protection and be expected to pay an annual tribute. All this would be explained in Spanish and recorded by an official notary.

Cortés had been given the assignment to rescue six Christians shipwrecked, stranded and now held prisoner by the Maya in Cozumel. Landing on the island, he used Melchorejo to interpret with the chiefs who greeted them on the beach. There was news of the bearded white "gods" but the Maya did not claim them as their own and used them as slaves. A message was written to be delivered to them giving them eight days to make their way to the ship. When after that time no word was received, Cortés sailed off, admitting failure for this first task. What was to happen next had a major impact on the direction of his future. One of the ships in the envoy that carried the bread was sinking. Just a few hours out, the command was given to return to Cozumel. This miraculous turn of events set the course for the encounter with Jerónimo de Aguilar, who, sitting in a canoe, began speaking disjointed Spanish. He was an ordained priest who had

after eight years learned the Maya language and come to provide half the invaluable interpretative skills for communication that Cortés desperately needed to achieve his ambition.

Cortés' adventures continued on westward from the Yucatan coast, confronting tribes with overpowering weaponry and his secret tool the Indians called gods on hornless deer, for although they knew well the deer, they had never seen the horse and complete with rider it presented intimidating, fierce image. Remembering the beating Grijalva suffered at the hands of the canoe Indians in Tabasco, Cortes found revenge in strategy that sent land troops to surround the city while small ships laden with cannons rowed upriver for a water assault. Cortés was eager to prove himself in battle command and the men were eager to be the avengers. Eight hundred Maya were killed in battle. It had been a confederation of tribes, and in the end Cortes had his first allies in Tabasco and Fray Bartolomé his first converts. In response to the gold, they had told him to go west, in Cholula. When he set sail again he was presented with a gift of twenty maidens. One of them was Malinche, the other half and the genius of the two interpreters. She displayed that Her education, confidence and diplomacy enhanced her language skills, added to the fierce loyalty she beheld for Cortes gave him the fortune for success in the New World that he could never have logically expected.

Montezuma's emissaries were accompanied by artists who painted the scenes of what transpired on a paper type fabric similar to Egyptian papyrus. This is also how they preserved their laws and history, being extensions of an oral tradition. The artwork would be carefully explained to Montezuma, indicating who the characters represented and which were the leaders in command. Tendile informed Cortés that although his emperor was eager to meet the great Charles V, he would not grant an audience to a subordinate, but promised Cortés a quantity of precious gems for his king. The conqueror exhorted that as the official diplomat, he was commanded by King Carlos V to personally carry his message to Moctezuma and such a request could not be rejected. He implored at length and finally the messenger agreed to again make the long journey over the mountains, across jungles, rivers and valleys to lodge his request a second time but stated that he had no hope that Montezuma's reply would be any different.

Upon Tendile's return a third time he repeated the rejection but softened Cortés's disappointment by presenting him with the gems. Although Cortés was eager to meet Moctezuma in his anticipation for glory and to subdue a mighty people, the beauty and obvious value of the stones impressed the conqueror and confirmed that he was in the midst of a very rich land. He could not contain his enthusiasm and announced to his men that someday soon they would be visiting the emperor and see these riches. The excitement spread among the men, who begged not to delay. After many months aboard ship going from landing to

landing, they had become disappointed that no settlements such as had been promised them had yet been founded and no spoils of conquered people divided among them. They were prepared to confront any native force and rallied to press onward to Tenochtitlán.

Within a few days, the Indians that had been camped around the Spaniards' tents mysteriously disappeared during the night. The impatience of the men was now even more apparent with not even a trail to follow. Not all in the camp had the same goals for the voyage. The party was splintering into rival factions with the only thing in common being their eagerness to depart and pursue their original expectations. The contingent of Velásquez's family and friends had come only for the wealth. They wanted to establish trading alliances and reminded Cortes that Velásquez did not appoint him the Governor-General to found settlements. Men who left secure homes in Cuba were dismayed with Mexico and wanted to return home. The bread had molded, the mosquitoes were insufferable, and the heat intolerable. Having lost thirty-five men affected their combat readiness. Cortés still had no plan for how to pursue his ambitious dream of conquering Mexico, but he would soon discover a weakness within the strong Aztec exterior that would allow him to formulate just such a strategy.

Amidst this strife and dissension, the sentries posted around camp escorted five native Totonacs to Cortés. To show their submission they prostrated before him and began to speak but neither Aguilar nor Doña Marina could translate, but she showed more resourcefulness by applying her Aztec language. Two were able to respond to her, thus developed the important link for Cortés. She translated the Nahuatl into Maya which Aguilar spoke back to Cortés in Spanish. They were seeking aid because their village could no longer bear the burden of the high Aztec taxes and other injustices. Unsure if they were before gods or men, they had heard of the powerful victories. Their chief was willing to ally with them if they could solve the dilemma of his people. Cortés realized this was the wedge he needed to crack the Aztecs, by unifying the fear and hatred of what must be hundreds of tribes. And he soon learned how to even these tribes one against the other to keep them in line. The messengers were sent back to their chief bearing gifts from the white men, with the promise that they would speak with the chief.

With the exception of the Velásquez contingent who demanded an immediate return to the islands, Cortés' clear plan of action re-instilled confidence in the men. Outwardly he agreed to return knowing that the momentum had swung back into his favor and the men would beg him to remain. His scheme included confidantes exciting the men about declaring their present location a settlement. With these rumors flying around the encampment, the men refused to strike the camp and load supplies. They chastised Cortés for submitting to the nobles and proposed that he be proclaimed Supreme Justice, having shown exemplary leadership in battle. He modestly declined their gracious offer then enjoyed the

protests as they insisted he accept, which he did. By founding a settlement he was now under the authority of the king and no longer Diego Velásquez, thereby sidestepping what he had done in previous ventures, claiming the glory and riches for himself.

The settlement of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz was officially the first city in Mexico but would not last. Wind and shifting sands demolished the structures they left, but having achieved his purposes, it did not concern him. Now Cortés was ready to swing into action, free of the controls that had restricted him. The vessels sailed and troops marched, arriving in Cempoala, the capital of 80,000 Totonacs. Their chief, a very fat man known as “El Gordo” bemoaned the violation of their women and the abduction their virgins, young men, and children for sacrificial victims or slaves. Cortés replied that “He came to right injustices and wrongs. It was his mission to protect the weak and castigate the evil, to prevent the sacrifices of the innocent and the cult of idols, those living images of devils” (Benítez 121).

A courier informed them that five of Montezuma’s tax collectors had arrived in the city angry that the Totonacs were entertaining the white strangers with gifts of gold which belonged to the Emperor and was only his to give. They demanded twenty slaves to assuage the anger of the gods for this misdeed. Although he was distressed, he dared not show any resistance, and feigned. Doña Marina informed Cortés of the proceedings, who told the chief to lock the collectors up for their audacity. Doing so meant the extermination of his people. But Cortés insisted, thus beginning to weave his web. The chief reasoned that it was safer to be on the side of the white men than to annoy them and lose their support. He had the five men jailed. That night Cortes secretly released two of the Aztecs, chastising the mortified chief the next morning for their escape. With the excuse that he wanted the remaining men well guarded, he took them in chains to the ship, but released them further down the coast. Everything went according to plan as the grateful men reported this to Moctezuma, who was furious with the Totonacs but indebted to the Spaniards. Gifts of gratitude were dispatched to him.

Traversing the lands between the coast and the central highlands, Cortés was able to settle disputes between small tribes, gathering a sizeable confederation of tribes eager to see the fall of the Aztecs. His power and protection provided the unifying base even when there was dissension among them. This generated feelings of loyalty on behalf of the lesser tribes who had always been the weaker in battle and defense. To prove their gratitude they were willing to march to the Aztec capital, something that would have seemed certain disaster months earlier.

In Cempoala fires blazed on the uppermost part of the temples and the stench of disintegrating flesh permeated the area at the pyramids where dried

blood was caked to the stone steps. Cortés explained to the Fat One that if they were to be friends as he had offered, the Indians must abandon human sacrifice. It was an abomination to the one true God who would not tolerate the idols they worshipped. In anger and hysteria, the chief explained that their very lives depended on their worship and honor of these gods who brought them the sun every morning and the rain to nourish the plants and food. Cortés was emphatic that their gods had to be destroyed. Agitated, Indian warriors drew their bows, but the captain threatened death if one arrow should fly. Doña María spoke to the chiefs explaining there was really no choice if they expected to be rewarded with lands to govern in the new order. Failure would leave them at the mercy of Moctezuma. The Fat One relinquished his protection of the temples as he wailed about the doom of mankind and watched the troops destroy hundreds of idols. The Indians had expected the earth to explode from vengeful gods. Since nothing had changed, they concluded that they had been deceived by the gods, and celebrated their delivery from idolatry by embracing a new religion. On the following day the temples were scrubbed clean and dedicated to the Christ as the cross and an image of the Virgin were hung inside.

Cortés and his troops left Cempoala on August 16, 1519 enroute to Tenochtitlán with 13,000 Totonac warriors added to his force. New converts had given them added conviction, believing that their mission was God-directed. Cortés had burned the ships in Veracruz to prevent retreat at a time when many were disheartened. Now they were committed to the endeavor and invigorated with adventure and an awareness of history in the making. As the Indians had no beasts of burdens, they themselves served to transport the heavy artillery and supplies of the conquerors.

High on the plateaus movement was much easier with wide open spaces. Here the advanced crew for the troops met an Indian ambush and although they succeeded in surviving the assault, warning was given that the closer they marched to Tenochtitlán, the fiercer the fighting tactics became. On Sept. 2, an envoy of Cempoalans approached Tlaxcala with words of peace to entice them to join the crusade of Cortés. They were ill-received and jailed, but managed to escape and reported back to the captain. An attacking army approached the Spaniards, bravely led in battle by their fierce general Xicotécatl, son of the chief. After a full day's fighting, the exhausted Spaniards withdrew for rest, but the Cempoalans sought revenge on this tribe who had been their enemy, setting fire to their houses. The Tlaxcalan's cries of revenge could have undermined Cortés' eventual plan to ally their fighting force, a plan that had worked well for him to that point. A peace offering was sent to the general, but Xicotécatl responded that he would be glad to "make peace with their flesh, and honor the gods with their hearts" (158).

The Spaniards were incensed and prepared for what they expected to be the toughest part of the conflict. Weapons were cleansed and oiled and the priests

heard a lot of young men's confessions. Bernal Diaz estimated that the general's army was as large as 50,000 warriors Xicoténcatl was convinced that the white men were not gods since they devoured food just as any man did. Convinced that their lineage must be through the sun their super powers would end with nightfall, allowing for an easy victory. But the thinking was erroneous as the Spaniards, though surprised, slept battle ready with weapons at hand. It was the Tlaxcalans that were thrust into confusion and tried to make their retreat across the plain during a moonlit night. Not only had the sun not been a factor, but the moon came into play on behalf of the enemy strangers. The Spanish troops though triumphant, suffered heavy losses and the effects of the cold from the high altitudes. Discouragement again became a factor as they tried to hang onto the idea that God had a mission for them. Three friars were accompanying them in the name of Christianity. "[Cortés] believed he...[had] the right of dominion over any and all Indians..." (Baldwin 94)." He was disgusted with the sacrificial offerings made at Moctezuma's command. In this regard, Cortés and Quetzalcoatl were in agreement.

## **Cholula**

One last bastion of Aztec loyalty remained, Cholula. It was a thriving city of 15,000 inhabitants nearly on the doorstep of Tenochtitlán and was the religious center for Quetzalcoatl with the largest pyramid in the world at 177 feet. For his greatest power play over their god, Cortés chose Cholula for his deadliest strike. According to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, it was unprovoked, but Cortés used an attack on a patrol troop as the excuse to launch his assault. Calling a meeting of all Indian leadership in the temple courtyard, he made a farewell speech and announced he was departing for Tenochtitlán, but once assembled, the doors were locked. It was an intentional display of power meant to grip the citizens of Tenochtitlán with fear, as word would quickly spread. The Spaniards slit the throats of 6,000 Indians in two hours as a warning to Moctezuma. Laurette Sejourne's book *Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico* gives this native account, "They seized all the patio gates so that none might go out and others entered with arms and began to kill those that were at the feast, and they cut off the hands and heads of those who played instruments...and caused very great slaughter. As the news spread to the city, they gave voice, crying 'To arms, to arms.' And with voices came a great crowd of people, all armed, and they began to fight the Spaniards" (2).

The Cholutecas had ignored the warnings of their messenger-friends from Tlaxcala who arrived ahead of Cortes. The bearded strangers only wanted friendship and were not to be crossed. If provoked, they avenged with mighty wrath. They were confident that their god Quetzalcoatl would protect them, and reasoned that the Spaniards were few in number and could not survive the thunder, fire and floods that he would send. "We laugh at their stupid delusions

(Leon-Portilla 44).” As it turned out, they were shocked with their vulnerability. As for the Spaniards, they were soldiers, trained in warfare and how to kill. For all their abhorrence of native human sacrifice, they had little difficulty shedding blood in Cholula.

In this drama of historical proportions, we must meet the players to understand the scenes in which their roles were enacted.

## **Quetzalcoatl**

Hernán Cortés was the man of ambition, capitalizing on the Indians’ belief that he might be a god. Although he always credited his power to the Christian God, by his connection as the spokesperson of that power source, the identity was transferred to him. The god in whose guise he benefited was Quetzalcoatl, the most powerful god of the Mexican and Central American religions not for physical power or magic, but because he permeated all facets of daily living. The founder of nauhuatl culture. “...just as our era began with Christianity, so that of the Aztec and their predecessors began approximately at the same time with Quetzalcoatl. His image the plumed serpent, had for Pre-Columbian people the same evocative force as has the Crucifix for Christianity” (Sejourné 25).

Known as the Plumed Serpent or bird snake, he was chief god of the Toltecs, a people predating the Aztecs. Wise, humble and longsuffering, incapable of being hurtful to others, attributes that strike a similarity to Christ in whose name Cortés proselytized (and conquered and colonized). A very spiritual god of high morals and humility He is known as the savior for having saved mankind from extinction the day the sun stood still. He was opposed to human sacrifice, “Found in the Codex Chimalpópoca ‘he would never agree because he loves his vassals Toltecs’”(Nicholson 77). Given his temperament and traits, Sejourné considers honoring him with death a betrayal. She calls this a system of “aggressive imperialism.” He took the physical form of an old man with a long flowing white beard, quite unusual for a people who themselves had neither long beards nor light skin. He frequently was seen wearing a conical cap, similar to what the Spanish soldier wore. Confusion with Cortés was understandable. Additionally, Quetzalcoatl wore black robes adorned with white crosses, a very powerful symbol not for Indians, but to the Christians, especially since their priests wore the same.

Because of his special fondness for man, he was the featured god in one of the creation myths. As the wind, established an environment for man to survive by blowing water away from the earth (another Christ-like parallel with a variation of the flood story), drying the land. There are various forms of the creation myth. One mentioned by Markham describes a challenge put to him by the god of the underworld. Before he could resurrect humanity, he had to make

music out of a solid trumpet shell which was impossible since a chamber is needed for sound to resonate. He connived with worms to gnaw an opening into the center for the bees that flew inside and fluttered their wings producing a sustained tone. Quetzalcoatl was triumphant and was reluctantly given one long bone. But the god changed his mind and raced after him. In haste Quetzalcoatl flew off dropping the bone which broke in many pieces. He gathered them together, ground them into flour and made dough. Quetzalcoatl slit his penis, sprinkling blood on the mixture. Other gods then followed suit. In four days man was begot and in four more his woman partner.

Quetzalcoatl was a gentle god who brought love to the world. He wanted to teach man to live in balance and happiness and established order through laws and the calendar. For self-sufficiency, he gave them corn, and showed them how to cultivate plants and vegetables and to take pride in their accomplishments. They learned to weave, create music, carve wood and fashion precious stones and metals like gold and silver. The Toltecs, whose name meant “artists,” were renown craftsmen. He was a free spirit, but could not escape the power of his twin brother Tezcatlipoca. The two were the protagonists in the legend that most affected the changing landscape and culture of Mexico.

### **Tezcatlipoca, God of the Smoking Mirrors**

In folklore there are many different character-types fulfilling different roles and purposes. One of them is the “trickster”. Tezcatlipoca was of this sort, sometimes likeable, but often mean-spirited. Tricksters can be man or god-like. In Jane Yolen’s book Favorite Folktales From Around the World, she states that “they play tricks out to the end. And sometimes it is an awful and bloody ending” (127). For his twin brother, it turned out to be. Another group of folktale characters are shapeshifters, those who can change into different people or animal forms to suit their needs of the moment. Tezcatlipoca had the ability to do this as well, as demonstrated in executing the demise of Quetzalcoatl. He was known to reside in dark places. His smoking mirrors showed unclear pictures of the truth and defined his persona. The mirrors were of a dark tint, made of reflecting obsidian glass. Staring into them induced a trance, allowing seers to view the future and make predictions. Unlike Quetzalcoatl who inhabited men’s hearts, taught them the ways of civilized living and spiritual connection, Tezcatlipoca was uninvolved, affecting their lives in unpredictable ways from the fringes of society.

He was the god of duality, reaching the greatest good and provoking the greatest turmoil, the cause of disorder and war and known for creating racial conflict. He was the evening moon and yet in contrast, was associated with the extremes of the sun. Nothing survives without the sun, but if the sun is too intense it will die. The sun ripens the harvest but also is responsible for the drought which kills the crops.

Although they were twins, Tezcatlipoca was the antithesis of Quetzalcoatl. Where Quetzalcoatl was called the Precious Twin, Tezcatlipoca was referred to as the shadow god, the dark god, god of the night, devious, impulsive. He was energized by warfare and conflict. In this regard he led the Aztecs well. Jealous of Quetzalcoatl and his harmonious society of Tula, he destroyed him by the following:

1. As a handsome young stranger, Tezcatlipoca entered Tula and seduced two of Quetzalcoatl's nieces, the daughters of the king. This allowed vice to enter the kingdom, creating a disregard for law.
2. During important festival days, he gathered the people to him teaching them song and dance. Once under his spell, he lured them to the outskirts of town to a bridge. Under the weight of all the people, the bridge broke dashing many of them to their death on the stones below.
3. He showed the people a magic dancing puppet. As more and more pushed in to see it, many were suffocated.
4. He confessed his deception and faked remorse convincing them to stone him for his negligence. They agreed and upon his death he created such a stench that many more were fatally overcome from toxic fumes and pestilence from the decaying body.
5. The Toltecs dragged his body outside of town and abandoned it where he miraculously regenerated.

Tezcatlipoca was very handsome with eternal youth. His yearly festival required the sacrifice of the most handsome youth in the area. The boy had to be physically nearly perfect and very handsome or in other words, as much like Tezca as possible. He would be groomed for a solid year, receiving special treatment, adornment, and instruction on how to fulfill his obligation with dignity and honor. When passing in public he was accompanied by dignitaries and the people bowed in reverence. Before the festival he would marry four beautiful maidens for a pleasurable final month. A procession of priests would escort him to the waters edge where he would be shuttled by boat out to the temple on the lake. The flute given him for comfort and music was broken in symbolism of the end of life. The priests would lay him out across a marble stone where one would take a sharp volcanic knife and plunge into his chest to extract the heart. It would then be offered up to the gods, first to the sun in gratefulness for its daily appearance, then thrown down to the feet of the god's statue. Falling on their knees, the people would raise their voices, incantations imploring the god's divine mercy. The festival expressed the fleeting happiness of life, "cuyas más brillantes alegrías terminan con frecuencia en el infortunio" (Iturburu 59) [whose greatest happiness often ends in misfortune].

## **Doña Marina / Malinche**

She was born on the day Ce Malinalli (one, grass of sorrow), predicting she would live a life always in opposition to war. She partly fulfilled her destiny, turning against the culture of the warring Aztecs and their god Tezcatlipoca, but strangely uniting with and protecting the interests of the conquering Spaniards at the cost of her own people. For this her name has spawned a new meaning in Mexican culture. To be malinchista is to prefer foreign cultures to one's own heritage. One explanation could be the conversion to Christianity and her desire to promote salvation. Another could have been the realization of her political worth in a movement that she sensed to be supremely important. Her father was the chief of her tribe. When he died, her mother married a younger cacique (chief). They produced a son and Malinche was seen as a threat to his ascendancy to the throne. She was sold to traders in town and delivered during the night so they could claim that she had died overnight. Traded then to Aztec allied tribes where she learned Nahuatl, a key piece to the puzzle that built the new face of Mexico.

The beautiful Malinche's royal upbringing, included a good education. A skillful translator, she was also an eloquent speaker and a savvy negotiator. She communicated with a commanding presence, cultivating respect. She adopted Christianity with religious fervor, grateful to have been rescued from her false gods. She seemed fortunate to be selected to execute an important role of serving a powerful leader and executed her role with efficiency and loyalty. Up through the siege of Tenochtitlán, she was considered inseparable from Cortés who wrote to the King that without her, he would not have been able to claim new lands for Spain. But after securing the conquest, Cortés began to consider his future and an heir with an Indian would be socially frowned upon. Besides, he already had a Spanish wife he abandoned in Cuba. Thus he never recognized the son he had with Malinche but to provide for them, he bribed a Spanish noble to marry her in 1524. Theirs was not a happy union.

## **Moctezuma**

Also known in American culture as Montezuma, was the emperor of the Aztec nation. More than the political leader, he was also a trained priest. Part of his duties were the astrological observations to be made at sunrise, sunset and midnight. Changes in the skies and the progression of the planets were charted daily and predictions affecting the future were recorded. This experience and his knowledge of the Quetzalcoatl legend may have influenced his decisions in ways another leader would not have considered. Moctezuma knew that in his lifetime there would be only one opportunity for the much heralded return of the god Quetzalcoatl. He knew that many people longed for this messianic fulfillment. He also knew that it accompanied the destruction of the Aztec kingdom. Yet there was more. Coincidentally, this character in the final act was born on a day sacred

to Quetzalcoatl, who was the main god of the Toltecs, his ancestors. He therefore owed respect to this god as well as to Tezcatlipoca, the leader of the Aztecs who had seen them through tumultuous times and led them successfully into battle. Every fifty-two years the Year One, Ce Acatl (One Reed) and the day Ciconau Ehecatl (Nine Wind) which is the birthday of Quetzalcoatl coincide, beginning the new cycle. He searched the heavens for answers as he imagined the pull of allegiance between the two gods. A series of ominous indicators revealed the exceptional times in which he ruled. He had no choice but to accept that the returning god was at hand. Visions of his own aunt dressed the stage in an ambience of unavoidable destiny. His aunt fell into a trance. When she awoke she warned her nephew about men clothed in black garments riding hornless deer, marching across Mexico burning villages and hunting people right into Tenochtitlán. She saw Moctezuma's body lying lifeless on the ground with the city in flames. Moctezuma knew it was a premonition of the return of Quetzalcoatl but remained loyal to Tezcatlipoca who had unfailingly guided the Aztecs. Hoping that a show of strength would entice a compromise, he would await the proper moment according to astrological indicators to assail the invaders. That moment came in Cholula.

The emperor enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle. He had three thousand guards assigned to the palace and over two hundred personal servants attending to his every need. Each day he bathed and was adorned in new clothes four different times, never was anything worn twice. Discarded apparel was passed on to nobles or claimed by the servants themselves. Keeping him stylish created plenty of work for tailors as well as other artisans crafting his accessories of exotic feathers, gems, and fabric into rings, bracelets, necklaces and head gear. In the evening he was entertained by musicians, buffoons, and storytellers, lodging the performers in special neighborhoods. This was not a cheap expense and added to the need to continually add vassals to bring in tributes. "He was at once both the ruler who had revived the glories of the Toltec Empire [an ancestor], and the leader of the Aztec nation whose patron god was the terrible being responsible for the fall of the Toltecs" (Burland/Forman 110).

## **Aztecs**

These Indians were the last arrivals of Mexicas (x pronounced like sh) to the Mexican Valley. They were nomadic and guided under the powerful legend that settlement would come when they found "the chosen land", similar to the Christian story of Moses and the Israelites. They were destined to wander, searching for the sign of an eagle perched upon a cactus devouring a snake dangling from its claws. This was accomplished in 1325 in the Mexican Valley on Lake Texcoco. Descended from a branch of the Toltecs whose civilization preceded the Aztecs, they lived in a society of strict social structure, ruled by a severe penal code.

In addition to other Aztec related tribes, the kingdom consisted of allied tribes and vassal tribes connected by dominance and tributes; some willingly, most by force. They relied heavily on these tribes to supply daily needs (Moctezuma was particularly wantonly) and fulfill sacrificial quotas. For the Aztec, war was a duty. It allowed the strongest tribes to establish order and control. Fallen warriors considered it their destiny and an honorable sacrifice for the gods, especially Tezcatlipoca, who always led them to weaker tribes to dominate, fulfilling his promise to expand their empire to include all of Anahuac from one ocean to the other. This was finally achieved in the year 1508, only a decade before the Spaniards invasion stripped it away. In this respect, Cortés and Moctezuma had the same imperialistic ambition.

Aztec children were trained in the ways of battle. Boys were never coddled as they needed to adapt to hardships and to exert their bodies. By seventeen years old, they were to enter five years of military duty. On the battlefield they would be outfitted with a 20" shield sporting dangling tassels to swipe away incoming darts and arrows. Their spear blades would be notched with sharp obsidian flakes to make jagged cuts. They wielded a 20" wooden baton with finger rings for gripping the handle. One end of it could insert into the spear giving a longer projection. In their other hand they had a 30" wooden club with grooved sides filled with obsidian flakes that could gouge chunks of flesh. The Aztec intent was never to kill the opponent, but to render him harmless to allow capture for sacrificial candidates. Although these tested weapons had little impact on the Spaniards, they were still successful with various tribes that accompanied them.

### **Tenochtitlán**

Mexico City was raised on the rubble of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán, which was built on the swampy lake Texcoco. Nestled into the central highland mountains of the fertile Valley of México, it was built on five lakes in an area called Anáhuac ("near the water"). The city of 300,000 inhabitants had a circumference of nine miles, with canals in all directions, called the Mexican Venice by the Spaniards. Bernal's description included "we were astonished... it seemed like an enchanted vision" (Lunenfeld 165). Cortés writes that it was a splendor beyond words, especially Moctezuma's palace. He did not think better masonry skills could be found anywhere, then added "[I] consider this people to be barbaric and so far from the knowledge of God and community with other nations possessed of reason, it is an admirable thing to see what they have in all things" (6). Sejourne on the other hand, contradicts Cortés deduction of a barbaric society and believes he was overly influenced by their gruesome sacrificial rites in contrast to his Christian orientation of penance and the sacrament of baptism. She

believes they were very spiritually rich as expressed in their documents and wonderfully written poetry.

The city had three main causeways. The pathways were wide, allowing Cortés and his men to advance in troop formation ten to twelve abreast on horseback when they entered the city in grand procession on the southern causeway. The longest was from the north, and the third was in the west, would become famous for the hasty retreat of “Noche Triste” (Night of Sorrows). To counter danger, the Aztecs had constructed raised bridges to create easy targets. The system might have worked had the mentality of their emperor not disabled the alarm. Convinced that the unwelcomed strangers might truly be gods, he never launched the defense.

### **Sacrifices**

Irene Nicholson, in her book Mexican and Central American Mythology writes that the Aztec’s blood ritual was “licensed homicide” (6). Theirs was a world “instinctive and emotional rather than logical [and was] intertwined with gods with an acceptance of constant change and a philosophy of life that was determined by the cosmos” (6). Poet, philosopher Octavio Paz expressed “If for the Spaniards, the Conquest was a deed, for the Indians it was a rite, a human representation of a cosmic catastrophe. Constant purification of Aztec society was attained through human sacrifice of the best specimens. A connection to Christianity is Christ’s sacrifice on the cross by the enemy. Quetzalcoatl was a humble, long-suffering god who loved the people and saved them from destruction when the sun stood still. He is called Christ-like. Other connections to Christ are his love for his people, his teaching ways, and his promise to return to re-establish the kingdom.

Human sacrifice had not always been a part of the Aztec practice. Giving tribute to the gods began with nature offerings; flowers, butterflies and birds. Humans were only introduced three or four centuries preceding the conquest. Priests attributed their autosacrificial rites to the creation myth as well as the need for man’s blood. With death just another dimension of life, hastening it allowed one to continue the journey. Giving glory to the gods was considered the greatest privilege man, woman, or child could receive. But scholars find little notation that the nobles, priests or royal families personally engaged in this honor saving it for others. One of the biggest ironies; Quetzalcoatl who abhorred the practice, had thousands sacrificed in his name to protect the Aztecs from the Spanish invasion. “The Aztec nobles were never themselves impatient to achieve the solar glory in whose name they were slaughtering humanity. Their lust for life equaled their desire for power... everything points to the conclusion that the Aztec lords, although brought up in the doctrine of Quetzalcoatl, which taught men that inner performance and spiritual sacrifice were supreme goals had come to think of ritual

slaughter only as a political necessity” (Sejourné 35). She states it was supporting an ambitious plan of conquest.

Slaves who could entertain the nobles with dance and music were adorned for special festivals. On the fourth day, braziers were filled with copal incense to receive the hearts freshly cut from the victims, the smoke rising to the gods. A line of potential victims at the base of the pyramid, fed toxic mushrooms and pulque to dull the senses. A wooden yoke was placed over the chest and throat cutting off the air supply and muffling screams. Compassion for the individuals was forgotten in this “system of terror” (14). Dried, blackened blood stained the walls of the temple creating an evil stench according to Sahagún. Sacrificial rites occurred the first day of each month. In the first month children were killed and offered to the god of water. The first day of the second month slaves were flayed in honor of the feast of Totec. Flaying was important because it released the essence of the person inside which was far more important than the outside covering. The fifth month was the feast of Tezcatlipoca described earlier as the youth selected for his unblemished body. The sacrifices progress through an eighteen month cycle. Civil liberties did not exist in the Aztec world. Life was bound with rules and order, dictating expected behavior. Deviations were rare and had the same ending without the honor.

One of the most important sacrificial rites of the year was to the Sun. The god had to be fed with the deified hearts of thousands of human offerings or he would become angry and punish all of them, but if properly nourished, life would continue as normal. Victims who were aware of their “cosmic mission” were prepared to fulfill this honor with dignity, submission, and worthiness. Their hearts were to be purified before the god could accept their offerings. Depending on the year, weather, calamities, and the point in the lunar or the religious calendar, sacrifices could number between twenty and fifty thousand. Documented in Aztec chronicles, their last great observance to Huizilopochtli, the Hummingbird and god of war, seventy thousand prisoners of war were interned over several years for the special sacrifice. Their procession was two miles long and it took several days to complete the rite. Ally to Moctezuma, King Netzahualcoyotl of Tezcoco by the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century was denouncing the usefulness of human sacrifice as a religious tool.

## **Religion**

Their unit of time was the solar year. Their calendar was divided into eighteen months of twenty days, leaving five “nefastos” or unlucky days at the end of the year. This was a time of uneasiness with normal activities suspended. No legal transactions, children kept indoors to avoid disappearance, and pregnant mothers took great care to not have their fetuses marked by evil spirits.

For the Aztec all life is connected. Natural phenomena is accompanied by a spiritual essence and is unified to everything else through a Life Force. All matter has a spirit. Though they are separate, yet are they connected. Just as life is connected to death which must come first. From death is the cosmos created anew. Priests looked to the heavens to understand the destiny of man. Astronomical happenings were charted and divined to reveal the future. There was another important time calculation, the lunar calendar. This was composed of just thirteen days and dictated the observance schedule of many religious ceremonies. Every fifty-two years the two calendars coincided. This had monumental impact and cause for special alert and celebration. It was a time of potential cataclysm.

The Aztec's believed they were living under the warmth, protection and nourishment of the fifth sun, meaning that in four previous eras, the sun had chosen not to bless them and had disintegrated, destroying mankind and all life. To guarantee the continued blessing of the sun god, excessive sacrifices were conducted to feed the god with human blood. "man has no other aim on earth but to feed the Sun with his own blood; without which the sun will die of exhaustion" (Sejourné 14). The alternative was eternal darkness with the destruction of man and the earth spinning into chaos. There was great anxiety on the last day of the five days in the fifty-two day cycle. Hearth and temple fires were doused awaiting the passing of the Pleiades over its zenith at midnight. As soon as that happened, a runner was dispatched from the temple to announce to all the success of the sacrifices and the pleasure of the sun god to shine again. "Al llegar la medianoche, cuando la constelación de las Pleyades estaba en el cenit, el sacrificador hundía su puñal de roca en el pecho de la víctima y trataba, inmediatamente, de encender el fuego trotando dos maderas sobre el cuerpo sangrante del sacrificado" (Iturburu 72). [Soon after midnight, when the constellation Pleiades reached its zenith, a sharp blade was thrust into the victim to expose the heart and immediately using wood to set it ablaze, symbolizing renewed light for the next sun cycle.] As soon as the temple fires were reignited from the victim, the crowds' joyful shouts added to the excitement. The next thirteen days would be filled with celebration and renewal. Houses would be restored, cleaned and painted.

### **Signs of the end**

Venus was the most important of all the planets and the symbol of Quetzalcoatl. In 1508 Moctezuma kept vigil over a small black speck moving across the face of the sun. This was the planet Venus. It would not be that close to the sun for another 300 years. The polar opposites of Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl continued even as related to Venus. While Quetzalcoatl was the protector that rescued the planet to return her each morning to the sky, Tezcatlipoca was the manifestation of the evening star where who pushed the sun into the land of

darkness. During that time he brought about misfortune. The people were reluctant to go out at night under the light of Venus.

In the Footsteps of Cortés, Fernando Benitez writes about the telling of tales, “The story is not lost in the air- it then begins a new existence and grows fruitful in the souls which it has fertilized” (3). This is the nature of storytelling as a form of entertainment. The listener is sanctioned to re-tell the tale with revisions, keeping the basic story line alive. But in the case of post-Columbian history of Mexico, stories were more than a form of entertainment. They were intertwined with their religion and their civil code. Their tales gave purpose and explanation to life. Through their images, the storyteller passes on social and moral guides to their audience as did the priests preserving man’s inner-sanctum and stated religious tenets through god-related tales. For the Aztecs, those tales became myths falling on very fertile ears eager to please the gods or at least not to offend them. Such an approach to living colors the way in which humanity reacts to situations, be they natural or man-created. This set the stage for Cortés’ entrance on the scene.

Recorded in Aztec pictorials are several references to fear-inducing natural phenomena that they interpreted as messages from the gods or at the very least, ominous predictions of the future. There are various references in the codices about these signs, the first one observed ten years before the arrival of the Spaniards. Shooting stars sparking tails of flames and comets visible for nearly a full year were so unusual that at first sight the Indians wailed and beat their palms against their mouths, behavior for expressing fear. Most disturbing was the instantaneous combustion in the temple of their most powerful god, Huitzilopochtli. Close inspection could find no reason for the incendiary. Dowsing the fires with water aggravated the flames. Was this god unhappy with them? Yet another god’s temple burned to the ground for inexplicable reasons. Sacrifices were increased to assuage the gods. Another occurrence was a fierce wind on the lake, making the water “boil”. The lake level rose, sweeping away flooded houses battered by high pounding waves.

People heard the weeping of La Llorona (one who mourns), mythological Mother of Mexico who cried for the welfare of her children. She warned them to leave the city but sobbed that there was nowhere safe to escape. Fisherman talked about strange catches in their nets, a bird that had a transparent mirror in the middle of its head. Moctezuma inspected it. When he looked into the smoky mirror, he saw a vision of his warriors fighting a foreign enemy that sat upon large deer as they attacked his well-trained army. He conferred with his seers, but they were unable to see the image. Another omen came in a dream where Moctezuma saw a human with two heads which he interpreted as meaning other beings were coming to inhabit the earth and the reign of the Aztecs would be over. In addition, the allied tribe of Tlaxcala had observed disturbing signs of

their own that they shared with Moctezuma. Such were the times, a people on edge with strange occurrences and chiefs who despite maintaining constant vigil with their seers and magicians could arrive at no definitive explanation. It was an unsettling atmosphere in which the Spaniards made their arrival and added yet one more appearance of something foreign to their culture. Vassals carried word to Moctezuma of giant canoes on the seas borne closer with white wings. They carried “deformed people” (so they must have appeared in armor)– another connection to Quetzalcoatl who left the shores with dwarfs and invalids in his company. These first appearances of Spaniards turned out to be trading vessels, the harbinger of a greater invasion.

### **Legend**

Quetzalcoatl’s journey of purification led him to the eastern coast, where the Morning Star would announce the arrival of the sun and a new day. He set himself adrift on a raft made of serpents, which under the intense sun burst into flames. The fire consumed his body and the ashes of his heart were recorded rising heavenward. It was the point of spiritual enlightenment as Quetzalcoatl was “called forth,” leaving the promise to return in Ce Acatl (One Reed). This is another similarity to Christianity as Christ was called “back to the father” with the promise to return to gather his loyal believers at a later time. Legend promised an era of greater peace and justice, but first he had to win back the kingdom. The belief is cemented in the promise of a gruesome and horrific battle, similar to what the conquest must have been like for the natives.

Sentries stationed on the eastern shores were alert for the return of the god. It was possible that by wearing the mask of Cortés, Quetzalcoatl would be capable of ruthlessness to fulfill the prophecy and overthrow the Aztec kingdom and all their gods. The black-robed Christian priests looked similar to Quetzalcoatl’s priests. Their messages of peace, though accompanied by battle-ready soldiers, fit into the expectations assigned to the god’s spokesmen. In conversion, the natives adapted to Christian ways imagining the celebration for Quetzalcoatl’s return to be a cleansing of old evil ways. Quetzalcoatl’s manifestation of the wind would help blow these evils from them and all those who worshipped Tezcatlipoca, giving them new hope. True belief in the Mexican myth might conclude that Quetzalcoatl did, in fact, return in the guise of a conqueror and all the Spanish power, fulfilling the long-awaited prophecy of a united Mexico.

### **The magic**

A commoner arrived from the coast with the first news of floating towers. Moctezuma asked his head jailer to bring the wizards out of confinement so he might discuss the news from the coast. Another messenger brought news of floating mountains across the water. Unusual people with light skin lived on them.

They had long beards but short hair, only to ear level. In distress, Moctezuma sent ambassadors laden with gifts for the new arrivals. It seemed clear that it must be Quetzalcoatl returning with his Toltec people. He wanted to welcome him back and request that he be given his natural life as emperor before the god reclaimed the throne in Tenochtitlán.

Moctezuma sent out the word to chiefs of all his allies. He wanted a conference with their wizards to analyze the omens. As shamans are mediators of the visible and invisible worlds, he had to rely on their expertise to direct his kingdom. “We must go deeply into ourselves to supply those things that are hidden deep in the well of the past” (Markham 6) expresses their view of the mysteries of life. Moctezuma was a very religious emperor. Despite his haughtiness and greed, he accepted the belief that the gods were in control and his power lasted only as long as he had their approval.

Realizing the severity of Moctezuma’s request, the magicians came but refused to make predictions and were jailed for their insubordination. The next day the jailer again spoke to the wizards so that they might have another chance to discuss the omens. In this Aztec account the magicians answered, “What can we say? The future has already been determined and decreed in heaven, and Motecuhzoma will behold and suffer a great mystery which must come to pass in his land. If our king wishes to know more about it, he will know soon enough, for it comes swiftly. This is what we predict, since he demands that we speak, and since it must surely take place, he can only wait for it” (Leon-Portilla 14). Moctezuma also wanted to know if anyone had reported hearing Cihuacoatl (“La llorna”). Legend says that when things are to happen, she is the first to announce it through her weeping. But there were no such reports.

Nezahualpilli, King of Tezcoco, was an Aztec ally. Concerned with signs his own wizards were relating to him, he discussed with Moctezuma the inevitability of the fall of the Aztecs. Moctezuma refused to acknowledge such a possibility. Incensed that the proud emperor would not take his words seriously, the king wagered his entire kingdom on a ballgame. The two rulers faced each other in the Aztec version of using the body to direct a rubber ball through a small stone hoop attached to the wall of the ball court. It was the best three out of five with Moctezuma winning the first two. But Nezahualpilli rebounded with the next three wins, preserving his kingdom but convinced that all was not well for the empire. Moctezuma was now burdened with another piece of the ominous puzzle. But how would these intruders come? Across the land, sea or from the heavens, he had no way to prepare for all of them. Moctezuma wanted to know how the intruders would come; across the land, sea or from the heavens. He needed to prepare for them. According to Alfredo Lopen Austin, the man that Quetzalcoatl and the other gods created under the 5<sup>th</sup> sun were meant to be the center of life and the cosmos. In his book *The Human Body*

and Ideology, man is fashioned at a time when the five points of the earthly plane converged in equilibrium, therefore it was expected that all the qualities from that convergence would be simulated into the human being. Man was at the center of the four quadrants and additionally in the center of the cosmos, a very balanced point of the universe. Man would endure until the end of a sun cycle in which he would be devoured by celestial monsters. Earthquakes would follow. "The world must end forever when the structures which confer sense, meaning order on reality no longer apply" (Markham 130). Moctezuma had reason to be concerned. Seismic and volcanic activity had increased, the calendars were concluding their 52 year juncture, and light skinned beings had landed on his shores in the locale where legend states Quetzalcoatl and his Toltec servants would return. Was this prophecy being fulfilled? And was another prophecy at hand, the beasts from heaven? According to legend, these were signs of the end. The last five days of any year are unlucky ones, but when this coincides with the end of the two calendars, the foreboding is intense. Priests on constant vigil watching the skies for astrological change. The star Aldebaran was especially important. Once its movement past the zenith in the night sky, the fires could be lit to announce the successful passing of danger. This alone was the sign that the sun god had been appeased and would welcome another day in a new cycle.

The steward returned with news that the cells were empty. Fearing dereliction of duty, he accepted full responsibility, protecting his jailers who had served faithfully. There was no explanation for the disappearance of the wizards. If punishment was required, he alone should be cut into little pieces, but he added that wizards can disappear or even fly out of the jail. Moctezuma was furious that they had deserted him and contacted their chiefs demanding retribution. Their wives and children were to be sacrificed and their homes destroyed down to their very foundations. There are accounts that such was done and their families hanged.

Moctezuma had a visit from another fisherman from the coast. He gave further reports of strange sightings, mountains floating out in the sea. The man was imprisoned to keep him at court and the head jailer was admonished to watch him carefully. Moctezuma then sent out an investigative team to gather the facts from the coast. The emissaries interviewed the people and also documented for themselves the actions of the visitors; drifting in small boats to fish with rods, nets and lines. They returned with the same description of the men that the commoners had reported. Now Moctezuma had no recourse but to believe his own men. He asked to again see the latest envoy from the coast, but when the jailer went to the cell, again it was empty.

History recorded by the Aztec in their pictorial style is their version of the truth. As you read through their accounts, one must discern where fact and myth may share a fine line. Symbols and signs held immense power. Woven through

the fabric of their reality is the belief that magic and fantastical occurrences are fact. Gods are superhuman and their strengths and actions should never be doubted. Appearances and disappearances become natural phenomena because some god wills it. Fact or fantasy, it is the world as they understood it.

### **Cortés meets Moctezuma**

“...among both Indians and Spaniards there were only two men who could read the future. They were Cortes the conqueror – by way of his acute political talent; and Moctezuma, the conquered – by the less direct but not less infallible way of his religious intuition” (Benitez 122). After eighty-three days enroute, the Spanish army made their entrance into the city of Tenochtitlán and Cortés finally achieve his audience with the emperor Moctezuma. He was accompanied by several courtiers with one at each side supporting his outstretched arms. Cortés dismounted to greet and embrace him, but he was quickly pushed away by the body guards. The emperor’s demeanor was contrite. Author Neil Baldwin includes several revealing quotes from Aztec writings presenting the moment. Montezuma’s months and years struggling to interpret the signs said “I have gazed into the Unknown and have seen you coming out of the clouds, out of the mists... You have come back to us. You have come down from the sky” (103). The Spaniards “must truly be the men about whom his ancestors had long ago prophesied, saying that they would come from the direction of the sunrise to rule over these lands.” Moctezuma lifted his clothing to expose his bare body saying “See that I am of flesh and blood like you and other men, and I am mortal and substantial” (Baldwin 102), words that Christ also spoke to his disciples. “the journey has tired you, but now you have arrived on the earth. You have come to your city, Mexico. You have come here to sit on your throne, to sit under its canopy. I have been taking care of things for you...”

For Cortés’ shrewd ability to seize the moment, the Aztec prophecies were propitious. “He knew that Mexica respect was traditionally conferred upon anyone who claimed to be an ambassador. He was aware of the superstitions that preceded his arrival, by now knew the Plumed Serpent tale and ‘the expected return of the bearded lords from the direction of the sunrise.’ Alfonso Reyes’ analysis of Cortés says he “turns instantly cold and moves his chess piece coldly. He shuts his eyes, steels his soul, and thinks only of his advantage. The realm of action, or rather the realm of the brain, banishes contemplation. The spirit of conquest assumes full sway” (102).

The Spaniards moved into the palaces and temples. As Cortés wrote home to the king, Moctezuma was held prisoner inside his own quarters to prevent the plotting of any rebellion. All his treasures and gold storehouses were seized. After five months, Cortés was summoned to give explanation to charges of command disobedience. The yearly festival to the Aztec’s prime god Huitzilopochtli was

fast approaching. Montezuma had received permission for the celebration which would occur during Cortés absence. Young warriors in festival dress processed into the temple patio to honor the god in dance. The ecstasy of the celebration with dancing, singing and chanting must have been unnerving for the Spaniards who closed off the hallways to the patio and began attacking the defenseless Indians. The grief and rage prompted an immediate retaliation from the Aztecs. They besieged the royal palace prohibiting any to take food or supplies into the Spaniards. Any who tried was hacked down as a traitor. Cortés returned with additional men to find the city under siege and commanded the cannons be fired. Moctezuma was shown to his people to calm them, but distrustful of his allegiances, it is said that he was stoned by them. Other sources state the cause of his death as unknown or by the Spaniards. By the seventh day Cortés was not able to restore order and realized they would have to abandon the city. Escaping in the night along with their Tlaxcalteca allies, they crossed the canals with portable bridges. On the fourth canal they were ambushed by the Aztecs and trapped on the causeway with a very narrow route for escape. Many Spaniards threw themselves into the canal to flee the Aztec onslaught. Many loaded down with gold bars drowned. Only one-quarter of the army managed to survive to the Indian village of Tlacopan where they were given refuge. The horrific night for the Spaniards is known as La Noche Triste (Night of Sorrows). The Aztecs rejoiced that they had finally triumphed over the Spaniards. They could not imagine they would ever return. They set about restoring order and a governing council.

A less determined conquistador might have moved on to new territory had they been confronted with the obstacles of Cortés. He had to retreat from Tenochtitlán, where he lost most of his fighting brigade, all the heavy artillery into the lake, much of the small arms, and several of the horses, plus demoralized troops. He gathered together new Indian converts by convincing them they would have a chance to turn the tables on the Aztecs. Just one year later he had renewed his strength and arsenal.

### **Siege of Tenochtitlán**

The last chapter in Cortés' quest for dominance met the greatest challenge. He had gathered a group of 300,000 Indian allies through one technique or another, but still had a fierce enemy in the Aztecs and the Tlaxcalans. Both Indian and Spanish accounts of the eighty day siege depict it as a brutal contest of wits, bravery and skill. The natives were defending their entire world while the Spaniards fought to expand theirs. Learning from the ill-fated Night of Sorrow the previous year, the Spaniards had built boats using sails that had been stored on the coast before setting their original ships afire. Disassembled piece by piece they were transported to Lake Texcoco on the outskirts of Tenochtitlán. Cortés was determined to dominate the lake on this second entry. Cannons and catapults were

rolled up to the causeways and although the Indians had built sturdy walls to block passage, they were no match for continued barrage of cannonballs which were also used against clusters of canoes. This strategy was new to the Aztecs, but they quickly learned that such weapons cannot be directed. Cannonballs only advance in a straight line and can be avoided by ducking to the ground or zig-zagging to the side. Catapults which did not carry the fear associated with the noise of the cannonball, were still an imposing weapon, but far less accurate.

As the walls on the causeway began to fall, the Indians would retreat into houses in which they cut a narrow opening in the back wall to provide an escape route, one just wide enough for a native, but not a Spaniard on horseback. The invader now had no patience for the people and hoped for an expedient victory, leveling structures as they advanced. The population of Tenochtitlán was panicked. Women joined the fighting. The noises, smoke, and horrors they witnessed were unlike anything they had experienced in their lifetime. Those that still believed the light-skinned beings were gods, fled the doomed city hoping to avoid his wrath. Some became the victims of war mentality and were sliced down by over-zealous soldiers. Others rubbed mud onto their faces and desperately dressed in tatters, hoping to be ignored by soldiers who were immodestly searching refugees' bodies in search of hidden gold.

The freshwater pipelines running from Chapultepec to Tenochtitlán were severed. Adding to their state of starvation, the Aztecs were now without fresh water with only brine from the lake. Cannon assaults destroyed stone walls, and Indian brigades threw the rubble into the lake to expand the causeway. This allowed the cannons and catapults to advance toward the city. As the assault progressed, families fled from their homes to the city while the Spaniards closed in. With Montezuma now dead, leadership had ceded to Cuahtemoc, his nephew, a fierce defender of Aztec lands. Special Quetzalcoatl regalia worn into battle was believed to hold special powers and deliver his people. It did not have the expected result. Cuahtemoc realized the futility of the struggle and surrendered. He begged to preserve his dignity and handed Cortés his dagger asking to be slain. "I have done everything in my power to save my kingdom from your hands. Since fortune has been against me, I now beg you to take my life" (Leon-Portilla 123). He was incarcerated instead. Sixty thousand warriors surrendered. In a move to rationalize his victory to the natives, Cortés announced to his allies that he had prevailed over the Aztec leader who had subjected them and they would now find liberty.

Death to the Indian came in acts of war, hunger, and white man-diseases, and by attack from robbers on the town escape routes. Young men, women and children were abducted and enslaved and otherwise used for pleasure. Surviving Nahuatl manuscripts describe days filled with much confusion and horror. The waters were filled with men. People that could escape reunited outside of the city

on high ground but were left without food and provisions and protection from the cold and constant rain. There was a sense of foreboding and doom. Sahagún's translators record that the conquerors came upon them and searched in "...most secret parts of their bodies and in all places, and they unwound the skirts of women, felt everywhere with their hands, searched in the mouth, the ears, the breasts, and hair... In a year 3-House, the city fell (300,000), so we scattered, in the month when the flowers change, on a day of the sign I-Snake" (Sejourné 4).

After surrender of Cuauhtemoc, Tenochtitlán was razed with temples dismantled for the building materials of creating a new city. With control of the city and empire, Cortés focused on his greed for gold. He demanded the what had been left behind during the fateful Night of Sorrows. The lords complained to him that the soldiers had sacked their temples and storage houses as they exited the city. What they didn't manage to take was lost in the waterway. Cortés showed no mercy until all remaining gold bars were brought to him. Atrocities were rampant. The feet of warriors were seared in an effort to extract information and servant boys were branded on the cheek or lips. What was not committed in the name of the crown, was done by avenging tribes fueled from years of Aztec domination and brutality. By the end of the five day siege, nearly the entire Aztec nobility had been slain. Cortés had succeeded in marching into the heartland using the identity of Quetzalcoatl, the great civilizer, as his ticket to uncontested passage. Yet the Aztecs believed evolution was in all things, and with so many signs and coincidences, it was plausible that Quetzalcoatl himself had evolved into the Christian God.

## **Finale**

The Aztec civilization was relatively young, having arrived in the valley in 1325, but the legends of their creation and the prophecies of their annihilation, were a part of common lore, and therefore the indisputable path of the future. Man lives his life aware that death is an inseparable part of it. The Aztecs collectively accepted their fate. The exception was a small minority who refused to submit to the Spaniards. Most believed their destiny had been molded by the gods.

Our world is colored by our skills, talents, perceptions and understandings. But these perceptions are built around the experiences we have lived. It is said that we are the sum total of all our experiences, so we live and make choices based on how those have shaped us. Some we control but some seem to flow from an inner source that sweeps us away in the current of progress or destiny. It must have been that way for Moctezuma, for although he held together a vast empire of so many, he was snared in the currents of the times. An intelligent leader armed with the myths and expectations within his own culture, he was uneducated about the ambitious breed of European that lived for greed and manifest destiny and Christian conversion at all costs. Was he to blame first for indecision, then for

erroneous ones? With or without culpability, it was a weakness. Those he subjugated showed yet a different perspective. They became twice conquered, torn from one pole of a familiar culture, to another which was foreign, unrecognizable, and disdainful.

Contrary to art reflecting reality, I believe that reality or history was instead molded by the existing Indian culture. The legends and myths were so strong that they influenced the actions of the leading characters. As shown, the myths that haunted the monarch were not the only factor to open the door for the successful acquisition of the New World, but they presented the newcomers with an unexpected advantage. The conquest was inevitable - eventually. The introduction of artillery into the Spanish arsenal created a formidable foe, one that would have returned with larger armies, more weaponry, more horses. However, without the myth, I submit that Cortés could not have triumphed, despite the alliance of lesser tribes eager for the opportunity to escape Aztec domination and seek revenge. And yet, Moctezuma's world lived the philosophy of truth over permanence. Nothing was everlasting. Even the gods metamorphosed. They had ultimate faith in the cosmos which had given them undeniable signs of doom and change from which they could not be delivered. Despite their reluctance to go into the unknown future, it appears that the leadership of these tribes was willing to live out their philosophy of perpetual change. Perhaps Quetzalcoatl had learned shape shifting as well, returning to the homeland in the guise of a Spanish conquistador.

### **Objectives**

Children need to understand that there are many cultures and societies in the world that will have traditions and perspectives different from their own. Not only must they learn tolerance, but appreciation. A teacher has the opportunity to show them ways of valuing these differences while also looking for similarities that can bind them together. A child who learns to open his mind to possibilities will have a positive and diplomatic approach to life as an adult. In these times of globalization, acceptance will be an important commodity.

### **Strategies and Classroom Activities**

This unit is geared for upper elementary and middle school students. A variety of resources is employed to involve them in both active and passive learning, immersing them in an environment introducing them to art and music to have a better appreciation of the culture of the Indian society and a more enduring impact along with the historical lessons. The students will be studying cultures that will seem very unfamiliar to them. Student participation in a variety of activities will engage them in identifying aspects of the culture. Repetitive exposure will

cultivate the familiarity needed to appreciate what these ancient cultures respected and held sacred.

Below are listed many books to cover various aspects a teacher might want to introduce: history, folklore, crafts, coloring books, social/ethnic orientation even investigative activities. These can all be found on Amazon.com. Music is an excellent way to introduce the sounds and mood of Indian melodies and instruments. Playing folkloric Mexican music as the background for other activities keeps the immersion continuous. A bridge to span the old with the new can be found in the CD "Tree of Life", a Lila Down album that has both modern and traditional ancestral melodies. A book of plays includes a Mexican folkloric tale that would be a wonderful outlet for developing the creative talents. An historical video focuses on the Aztec and Maya ruins and is great for the visual concepts the students will develop. Two of the books discuss their style of playing ball. The students might like to try it out. The rules are really different!

#### 1. The Fifth Sun

This is a short storybook filled with marvelous illustrations based on the legends of the five suns. It gives needed background for the students to understand why the Aztecs felt indebted to the Fifth Sun. Although the gods' names are a challenge, the print is large and each chapter, only 2-3 pages, could be read by a student. I read one chapter a day to my students, giving them just a taste each time. This allows them time to absorb the importance of each day's story.

#### 2. A coloring Book of Incas, Aztecs, and Mayas published by Bellerophon Books

I have used this with great success in pair and small group coloring projects by taking the art forms (usually of gods or from their codices) and enlarging them with an opaque projector. Their pictures can now be many more times the size of the 8 ½ x 11 inch page allowing more than one to color at the same time. I used this as an activity to fill in when other work was done, keeping students directed and involved. They have the choice of style and color and share their work with the class when completed, telling a little about the importance of the god they chose, or the meaning of the symbol. The artwork is then displayed in the room adding ambience and ownership to the unit.

#### 3. Life in Ancient México Coloring Book by John Green

Another coloring book that shows scenes of Indian life, allowing the students to learn what daily living was about.

#### 4. Mexican Folk Art Coloring Book

Again, a coloring book that could enhance art displays within the classroom.

#### 5. Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan

This is a relatively modern story about a wealthy girl, Esperanza, whose father tragically dies and the family has to flee to the United States where Mamá gets work in a Mexican Labor Camp. Life becomes very complicated for the young girl who not only has to adapt to a new culture and language, but live on very meager means. I like this story because it teaches the children what hardships

there are for new immigrants but why they are willing to endure them when their lives of convenience in their own country suddenly turn hostile. This would be a great opportunity to utilize a Chalk Talk presenting the question What would they do if they were in Esperanza's shoes.

A chalk talk can be a great stimulator for discussion with certain rules:

- a. There is absolutely NO TALKING – everything is written.
- b. Once the question is thrown out to the students, the teacher's active involvement is over until the issue exhausts itself.
- c. There is no right or wrong answer, but opinions must be supported (“I think ... because...”).
- d. Students are to approach the chalkboard at will and express their opinion about the question by writing it then encircling it and drawing a link line either to the main question or to another comment to which they are responding.
- e. No student may write a second comment before everyone has made a trip to the board. I use tokens, one given to each person who drops it in a box when they approach the board.
- f. They cannot say “I agree” without qualifying it with an original statement as to why.

Interestingly, hesitant students will be encouraged by others to engage in the activity, especially when they are eager to make a second trip. Chalk Talks can be very motivating. Once rolling, the students do a good job covering an issue. Sighs, gasps, or interjections of agreement or disagreement enlivens the lesson, but occasionally the teacher may have to remind the class that everyone's opinions are valid. This form of discussion seems to be less threatening and I have found certain students more willing to participate. It has the added advantage of also allowing time to think while another is writing. The curiosity about what the student at the board is writing also keeps students better engaged.

6. La Mujer que Brillaba Más que el Sol, The Woman Who Outshone the Sun by Rohmer and Schechter

In both English and Spanish, this book is based on a Zapotec folktale is sure to capture the attention of students' imagination. Lucía is more beautiful than the sun and adored by all of nature. She comes to a village as a stranger and is mistreated by the villagers but loved by the river that rises from its bed to flow through her shiny hair. She delights in his friendship, combing out the fishes and otters from her hair. The villagers regret their treatment of her when the river deserts them and changes course. With a lot of fantastic imagery, the students learn about treating others respectfully even when they are different from them.

7. Rain Player by Wisniewski

Another story based on Maya folklore, this one is for the boys. The protagonist, Pik, challenges Chac, the rain god, to a game of ball “pok-a-tok”. If he wins the god will not bring the drought to his village that has been foretold. With the aid of his father and magic, the determined boy is victorious.

8. Musicians of the Sun – McDermott (Aladin Picture Books)

This book is geared for lower elementary but written in a way that appeals to older students as well. It tells the myth about the god Tezcatlipoca, Lord of the Night sending the Wind to bring the musicians from the Sun to earth so he can enjoy their joyful music. This would be interesting because it deals with two major gods important in the conquest of México, as discussed in the rationale of this unit. Quetzacoatl (Ehecatl) is the Wind.

9. The Sad Night – Mathews

This book for children is a slice of history focusing on the last victory the Aztecs had over the conquering Spaniards. It contains notes on Aztec symbols and their calendars.

10. How Would You Survive as an Aztec? – McDonald, Bergin & Salariya

Gear for upper elementary and middle schoolers, this book is appealing because it answers questions about daily life in the ancient Indian societies; What you would eat, How you would dress. It contains an interesting time line feature.

11. Aztec News – Philip Steele

This is another book on the ancient civilization geared for middle school. Its interest for children are the Aztec symbols, the calendar stone, and ads based on archeological information. Historical information is featured with headlines as current events even results of the ballgames. A lot of information is packed into this newspaper format. It is a good source for projects.

12. Montezuma and the Fall of the Aztecs – Kimmel

Historical information presenting an awareness of both Aztec and Spanish culture, focusing on the grandeur of Montezuma's court and the power of the Spanish.

13. Making Magic Windows – Carmen Lomas Garza

This craft book by renown artist Lomas Garza explains the process of cutting paper designs. I especially like this because "papel picado" is a traditional Mexican folk art and the students can get a sense of creating something authentic. Designs for folding and cutting tissue paper are included for all ages and abilities.

14. The Big Book About Thematic Plays – Tracey West

This book allows students to develop their dramatic flair. They are reproducible and easily staged and include The Woman Who Outshone the Sun described earlier.

15. Mayas, Incas, Aztecs Cooperative Learning Activities –

This is packed full of activities to delve into the unit including how to do your own archeological "dig" with everything all set up for notecards, organization and sorting through of relics – a neat classroom project to keep the students engaged. Other hands-on activities show how to make Aztec calendars, Maya books. A lot of information, maps, time lines, and even book links are included along with reproducible activity sheets.

**Cassette** – The book Esperanza Rising is available on cassette in a format that could be captivating for the students spread out over several days.

**Drama** – As noted above, a theatrical presentation of “The Woman Who Outshone the Sun” could be very memorable for the class, allowing students to be involved in various ways. This is a wonderful way to develop acting talent, stage presence, speaking mannerisms, and confidence.

**Video** – “Fall of the Aztec and Mayan Empires” brings their civilizations alive with computer generated scenes of how the big cities must have appeared. It includes the modern day visits to the ruins, showing students what remains of those empires and how they were discovered only last century. It is, however, helpful for students to have already been introduced to these two cultures through the unit before viewing the video.

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## **Appendix-Content Standards**

### Communication

3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.

### Arts and Humanities

3. All students relate various works from the visual and performing arts and literature to the historical and cultural context within which they were created.

### Citizenship

3. All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.
4. All students develop and defend a position on current issues, confronting the United States and other nations, conducting research, analyzing alternatives, organizing evidence and arguments, and making oral presentations.
5. All students demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating and cooperating with others.
7. All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.
8. All students demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations.