Desperately Seeking Motecuhzoma

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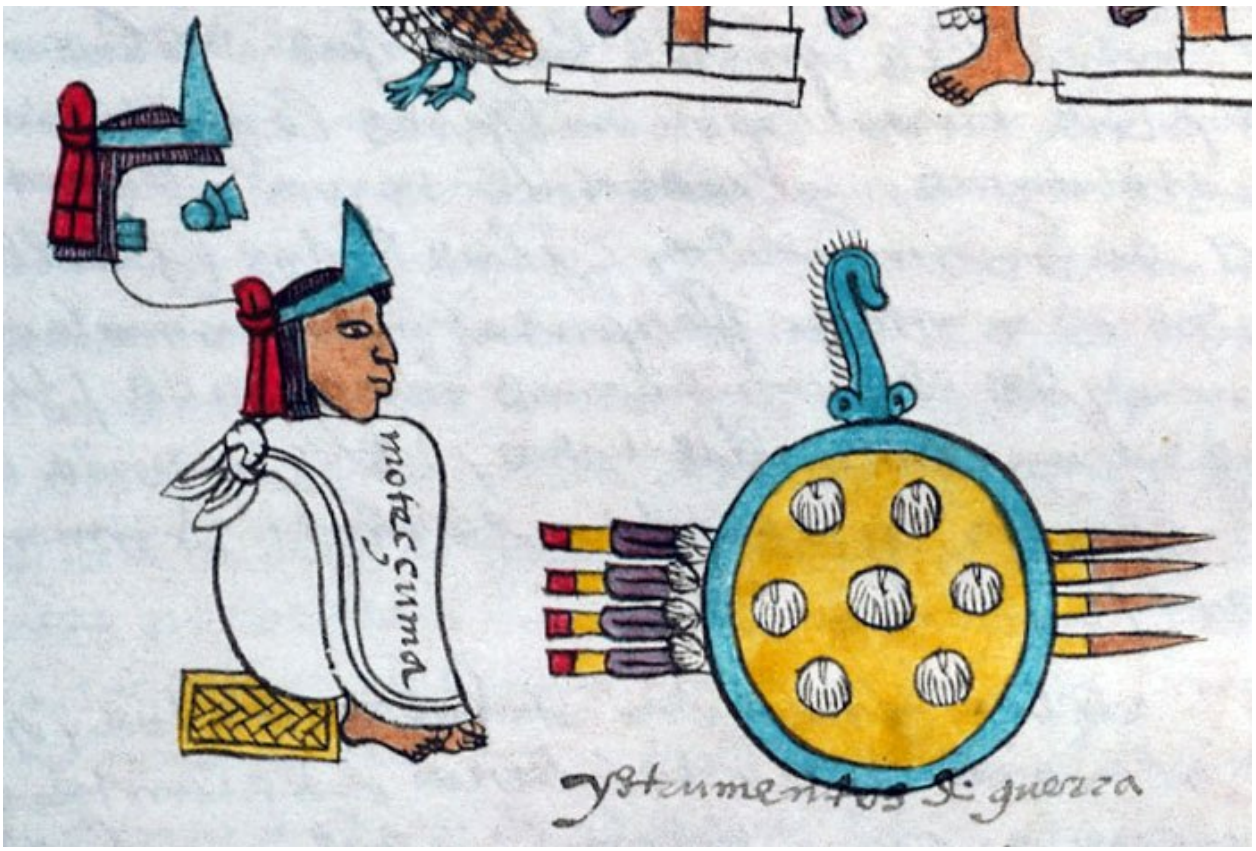

Folio 15v of the Codex Mendoza (16th century). Depicts the rule and conquests of Moctezuma II.

Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken.

– From Jane Austen's, Emma (1815)

Motecuhzoma II, the last emperor of the Mexica, left no personal account of his life or his thoughts. Any hope at a legacy for Motecuhzoma vanished without a trace in that funeral pyre depicted in the Florentine Codex.[1] There is no shortage of depictions of Motecuhzoma as being a pitiful, gullible, or permissive ruler. These depictions can be found from a variety of sources ranging from the indigenous to the Spanish. We are left to wonder who Motecuhzoma really was, not only as a man but also as the last ruler of the

Mexica. The accounts that survive leave the modern historian wanting. It must then be conceded that, although no information from Motecuhzoma himself exists, what does exist must be utilized to formulate a clearer image of Motecuhzoma. Was Motecuhzoma a worthy and formidable leader or was he a "blockhead" as the Florentine Codex so eloquently concludes?[2]

For instance, the bias of the Tlatelolca, the Nahua scribes of the Florentine Codex, is clear as they describe Motecuhzoma as a scapegoat.[3] We then have Bernal Diaz Del Castillo either suffering from a lack of imagination or relying heavily on the word "powerful" to describe Motecuhzoma throughout his, "True History of the Conquest." Somewhere between these contradictory positions lies the "truth." Somewhere between these extremes lies the evidence that we need to find Motecuhzoma.

Nietzsche reminds us that, "There are no facts, only interpretations." We must consider all options and all analyses of Motecuhzoma not as "facts" but as interpretations. Historians must deconstruct, decipher, and possibly discredit the persistent myth of this specific tlatoani: Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin. The elusive "truth" shall remain elusive, as will the concept that we have or can approximate a "fact." We can, however, provide a distinctively different interpretation that may have been missed altogether or never considered. Despite the fact that these varying texts have been taken at face value for so long, and considering that they never attempt to obfuscate their intentions, it may be possible to find Motecuhzoma. In other words, the real Motecuhzoma may be hiding in plain sight.

The Motecuhzoma that is hiding in plain sight might be the Motecuhzoma that, when discovered, might change the legacy of the last true Mexica Emperor. The intent is to show that Motecuhzoma was not a pathetic, credulous, and permissive ruler as both natives and Spanish sources have depicted him since the middle of the 16th century. Motecuhzoma could be faulted with overestimating his own prowess and influence, as well as underestimating the Spanish both in military might and influence over the natives. It could also be reasonable to consider that Motecuhzoma was exercising his learned skills as a warrior, strategist, and politician to serve his people. This essay will enter into historical conversation some questions and raise some reasonable doubt as to the veracity of the tenacious misrepresentation of Motecuhzoma.

The Sources

As of this writing, there are no available sources of Motecuhzoma from his own hand or from his own court. What are available, however, are Nahuatl, Spanish, and pictorial sources. These sources are not without fault and by no means could be considered by any reasonable reader to be definitive, especially in regards to depictions of actions and people. With these surviving histories, as with any other historical documents, one must consider the biases that might have come into play as motivations for these writings. These sources include, but are not limited to Bernal Diaz Del Castillo, the Lienzo de Tlaxcala, and Sahagún's Florentine Codex.

All of these primary sources, it could be argued, had scores to settle or sought beneficences from the prevailing power. Without question, these accounts are important to establishing historical events and how they played out. The value and insight these sources provide are unquestionable. They should, however, not be taken at face value. Of course, not all of the information contained in these accounts is biased and not all of the motivations are less than sincere. Moreover, lack of fidelity does not necessarily warrant the complete dismissal and exclusion of any given text. On the contrary, these provide an insight into what is being occulted on purpose. An approximation of truth might be found in these omissions. As with the occultation comes the prominence, or magnification, of certain qualities. Primary sources, especially when they deal with a specific individual, are guilty of both negatively and positively magnifying that individual's character.

The Spanish Source

Take for instance Bernal Diaz Del Castillo who uses the word *powerful* 71 times in, "The True History of the Conquest of New Spain." Diaz employs the adjective to describe Motecuhzoma a staggering 30 times (that's 42% of its use reserved for Motecuhzoma).[4] In contrast he only uses the word twice when he refers to Carlos V, the King of Spain.[5] What are we to make of this exaggeration? Are we or are we not to consider Motecuhzoma a powerful and sovereign lord after reading this account by Diaz? What was Diaz's motivation?

Bernal Diaz, it should be recalled, wrote his memoirs almost thirty years post-conquest. He is known to have touched-up and edited his account as a response to Francisco Lopez de Gomara's account of the conquest (Gomara served Hernán Cortes as a chaplain during the conquest). Diaz, upset with how the conquest had been represented and how it did not properly credit the

soldiers who fought under Cortes, edited and added to his account of the events that took place when these two cultures collided. Bernal Diaz's account should not be discounted. It provides an insight into many battles and many details of the war that would not have been witnessed by Cortes or his chaplain. It does, however, remind us that this was a game of correspondence being played at the expense, unfortunately, of Motecuhzoma's legacy. On the one hand we have a powerful lord, to quote Diaz, yet he is remembered for being less than powerful. Was Diaz describing the power of both, the conqueror and the conquered?

It appears that Diaz was mostly concerned with giving due credit to the Spanish foot soldiers for their sacrifices during the conquest; an honor he might have perceived was being not being bestowed. We are left with Diaz's account of Motecuhzoma being a powerful sovereign lord. Diaz's principal interest in rewriting his previous account was the recognition for his own valor on the field of battle. His interest in making Motecuhzoma seem larger than life is expected. He thereby aggrandizes himself by repetitively calling attention to Motecuhzoma's power.

The Spanish perspective, although important, might only tell a fraction of the story. The Spanish storyteller and all his biases might fix and project his story through a single lens. It is then reasonable to expect a native source to provide a more detailed and accurate account of Motecuhzoma than that of a foreign, combatant, foot soldier. The field of battle portrayed in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala (LDT), on the other hand, is an account of the conquest from an indigenous source and so the expectation would be that it would conform to the Diaz version of who Motecuhzoma was or provide an alternate reality. Instead we find very little on Motecuhzoma at all. How is it possible that Diaz considers the Mexica ruler to be so powerful, while the Tlaxcalan barely acknowledge Motecuhzoma? Let's consider the source of the Lienzo de Tlaxcala.

The Indigenous Source

What is the Lienzo de Tlaxcala (LDT)? It is a prime example of a native perspective of the conquest of Mesoamerica by Cortes and the Spaniards. The Tlaxcalan created the original work in 1552. Unfortunately the original has been lost but what remains was cobbled together from a variety of sources and it is thought to be a close facsimile to the original work. The available digital copy is a composite of these images from fragments that have been pieced together from a lithograph created in 1892.[6] One must use caution when attempting to determine with steadfast accuracy that a particular analysis is based on an interpretation for which its providence is suspect. The issue rests

on the fact that the original is lost and an assessment and interpretation must be made with a grain of salt. One must guard against the hubris to declare that an ultimate truth has been achieved. One must remember that the shoulders we stand on might not belong to giants but to midgets. Keeping that in mind it is safe to proceed to the interpretation of particular frames from the LDT.

First one must remember that the LDT is told from the Tlaxcalan perspective. This is demonstrated quickly by the fact that the LDT begins the story of the conquest in Tlaxcala. We are decidedly reading an account from a native perspective. The Tlaxcalan will be telling this story and this story is undoubtedly meant to place the Tlaxcalan in a particular light. The entire enterprise of creating the LDT to begin with can be seen as the Tlaxcalan's *probanza de merito* or proof of merit.[7] The purpose of this particular *probanza* was to demonstrate to the King of Spain the events and the extraordinary role that the Tlaxcalan played in the conquest. The LDT is not meant to show how well the Spaniards fought but how willingly and courageously the Tlaxcalan fought alongside the Spaniards. The secondary purpose would be to show the other natives in a less-than-honorable light. The point of explaining all of this is to remind the reader that the Tlaxcalan have every reason to denigrate the memory of Motecuhzoma. The question is how far they will go to show their contempt for Motecuhzoma.

The LDT in all of its pictorial representations leave the historian, for lack of a better term, disappointed. It seems Motecuhzoma's involvement has been minimized completely and quite at odds with the size and grandeur expected for such a pervasive historical figure. The belittlement of Motecuhzoma is clear when noting the number of times he is depicted in the LDT. In total there are eighty-seven frames that make up this chronicle from the indigenous perspective. Out of the eighty-seven frames there are only two that deal with Motecuhzoma: frames 11 and 15. This is odd considering what we know from Diaz and his description of Motecuhzoma. Considering what we know about the LDT and its purpose as a *probanza*, it should come as no surprise that the Tlaxcalan would mitigate Motecuhzoma and the role he played.

In frame 11 of the LDT we are introduced to Motecuhzoma. He is having a casual meeting with Malintzin serving as translator for Cortes. Motecuhzoma is shown, interestingly enough, in what could be considered customary regalia fit for a king. But upon closer inspection, what he is wearing is a headband—but not a typical headband. He is wearing a Tlaxcalan headband. Although this is outside the scope of this conversation, this depiction alone of Motecuhzoma in a neighboring altepetl's traditional headband is worthy of

further study.[8] Suffice to say, for the purposes of this essay, Motecuhzoma in any other headband, other than that associated with Motecuhzoma and Tenochtitlan makes the point for us. While this is an indigenous source that was produced within a relatively short time following the events illustrated, it is not a credible source for illuminating our path to finding the true identity of Motecuhzoma. This leaves us with only one other option.

The Hybrid Source

If the Spanish conquistador was a little too over-powering (forgive the pun), and the Lienzo de Tlaxcala was lacking depth and range on the subject of Motecuhzoma, what if a confluence was available? Enter the Florentine Codex. The Florentine Codex represents three distinctive texts – the native Nahuatl, the Spanish, and the pictorial – that "were produced by different men at various stages in the evolution of the work, begun in the 1550s and completed in 1579."[9] The order in which this was produced points to the Nahuatl being commissioned, followed by the Spanish and then the pictorial to follow. This is evident in the fact that the Spanish will reference the Nahuatl, but not the other way around.[10] The idea of the pictorial being added after the alphabetic Nahuatl and the Spanish seems obvious when considering that the overwhelming majority of the images are located in the Spanish column and not in the Nahuatl column.[11] By these considerations, it might be easy to conclude that we are on the right path to finding the enigmatic Motecuhzoma. Our hopes now rest in the hands of the Franciscan monk who some claim pioneered the field of ethnographies and who is considered by many to be the first anthropologist – Bernardino de Sahagún.[12]

The oft-quoted and studied arsenal of information compiled and edited by Sahagún fills 12 volumes with themes ranging from botany and theology to the epic narrative of the Conquest of Mexico.[13] Sahagún's hybrid contains three distinct languages and somewhere between these three languages we might be able to assemble another layer to the elusive Motecuhzoma. The Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble version of the Florentine Codex contains all three of these languages. Of note, and one that should not be lost on those seeking an authentic experience of this oeuvre, is that the illustrations are treated as a separate language. In fact the illustrations are not displayed alongside the alphabetic text. Instead the pictographs are located in a different section of Book XII. This has the distinctive ability to make the study at once accessible and laborious. This makes it difficult to decipher the subtle differences between the three languages. James Lockhart emphasized the importance of being able to study the Nahuatl, the Spanish and the pictorial and so his translation contains a better approximation to their original

location alongside the alphabetic texts.[14] Sahagún translation from the Nahuatl to Spanish, bridges the gap of language and understanding to provide an account that is, for this conversation, authentic to a point. It must be remembered that Diaz wrote his account to clarify a perceived misconception of events. Too, the Lienzo de Tlaxcala was written as a *probanza*. Lastly, the Florentine Codex was written by native Nahuatl-speaking survivors of the conquest, under the guidance and tutelage of a Franciscan monk.

To not acknowledge this Christian bias would be disingenuous. This concern with authenticity and the availability of an alphabetic/pictorial account of the Conquest of Mexico should shed light on a better understanding of Motecuhzoma. The Christian perspective appears to be focused more on how the native peoples responded to omens and superstitions as is evident at the beginning of Book XII of the Florentine Codex. This "climate of fear" existed prior to the arrival of the Spanish, yet it was contingent on the existing belief system.[15] Through the description of fantastic celestial events and even more incredible oceanic manifestations of god-induced torments, these were Christian-influenced narrations that the Nahua were now professing. Nothing betrays the bias more than how Nahua authors, and by extension Sahagún's translation, depict Motecuhzoma as a naive leader who believes in false gods. This belief in false gods, specifically the return of Quetzalcoatl, in whom Motecuhzoma might have momentarily presumed Cortes to be, fits the Lockhartian position that Motecuhzoma was merely a scapegoat for the survivors of the conquest. The indigenous authors used these as justifications for his treatment of Motecuhzoma and heralded in the concept of a superior religious belief at the expense of a defeated, misaligned ruler. Yet despite these depictions and despite this bias we are given further details of Motecuhzoma. It is the closer study of the this hybrid account that we can begin piecing together a clearer version of Motecuhzoma.

The Myth-Representations

Motecuhzoma has been depicted as a powerful leader, as an unimportant leader, and as a superstitious leader. The amalgamation of these qualities allows us to see how the myth of Motecuhzoma might have come about and retained such persistence for almost five hundred years. From the alphabetic prose and the pictorial efforts of the Florentine Codex to the eyewitness accounts of Spanish and Tlaxcalan, we are treated to the accumulation of these divergent and contradictory impressions to form a lasting image. These impressions are to be engaged, as they might have been understood in the middle of the 16th century. It was an easy feat to paint Motecuhzoma with such

broad strokes as though he were a proto-impressionist portraiture, as it shall be shown.

The depiction of Motecuhzoma as an idolater and a superstitious sycophant make sense when put in the perspective of these sources. The concept that stands out readily for us is the idea that Motecuhzoma believed that Hernán Cortes was the embodiment of Quetzalcoatl. We could quickly dismiss this argument as just a case of Double Mistaken Identity, but to do that would leave out the justification of this myth.[16] This misunderstanding can clearly be seen in the work of Bernal Diaz del Castillo as he recalls how the peoples of Quiahuitzlan react when Cortes advises them to not pay the tribute owed to Motecuhzoma:

"[…] such great things could not have been done by men, but only by teules, which sometimes mean gods, sometimes demons, here in the former sense; which was the reason they termed us teules, from that moment; and I beg the reader to observe, that whenever in future I speak of teules in affairs relating to us, that we are meant thereby."[17]

According to the rest of the Diaz opus (it tends to be repetitious) it was clear that the native population strongly held that the only way the Spaniards could have possibly possessed the fortitude required to standup to Motecuhzoma would be that they be "gods."

In the Lienzo de Tlaxcala, however, it is not explicitly clear that there were any such ideas formed that the Spaniards were seen as gods. Considering that the Tlaxcalan were busy attempting to find favor with the King of Spain with this writ of merit it is not surprising that this would not be so obvious. Yet it is possibly encoded within the pictorial depictions of events. It seems a difficult task considering the Tlaxcalan are quick to side with the Spaniards early on. The use of "teules," as Diaz employed is not as easy to ascertain and so, it is possible this might have only been a construct of the Spanish and not truly reflective of the indigenous population of New Spain. This then leaves us with the Florentine Codex to put this concept to the test.

Bernardino de Sahagún and his legion of Nahua informants do not disappoint. Book XII of the Florentine Codex begins with omens and portents of evil. After spending eleven books on botany and ceremonies the narrative of the Conquest of Mexico begins with overtly religious themes. The tone is set. These native people are superstitious and misguided. Their gullibility and pagan-like beliefs, from a 16th century Christian perspective, motivate the story telling. It doesn't take long for Sahagún and his Nahuatl writers to draw out

the fact that the indigenous find the Spaniards superior, especially the indigenous associated with Motecuhzoma. Motecuhzoma sends a convoy of magicians, wizards, and sorcerers, in what appears to be an attempt to strike fear into the hearts of the Spanish. The scene describes how emissaries from Motecuhzoma arrive with blood-drenched food for the Spaniards. The Spaniards filled with disgust (not fear) send away the emissaries along with their food. They report immediately to Motecuhzoma that they "are not their equals; we are as nothing."[18]

There are echoes of Diaz in these scenes from the Florentine Codex. The idea that the natives are "nothing," let alone "equals," plays to the "teules" concept that the Spanish were so brazenly flaunting. Sahagún, of course, is only translating the events as remembered by his native-language scribes, yet it is hard to imagine that these scribes learned to write a new language in a vacuum. Under the guidance of Sahagún and other Franciscan monks/teachers, these Nahua scribes were unquestionably exposed to a bevy of European-style writing and spoken languages (Latin and Spanish), and art. This of course on top of the religious indoctrination they were surely being subjected to. It is difficult to assess the profundity and magnitude that was produced by the collision of these different theological points of view on the scribes and on the artists that were rendering these works. What are not difficult to assess are the effects that the Double Mistaken Identity have made not only on the Spanish, but on native peoples as well. Further study might even conclude that there exists what could be called Triple Mistaken Identity.[19]Notwithstanding, it seems evident that Motecuhzoma's legacy has taken a beating and it might not be a warranted beating. Is it possible that the Nahua understood elements, but were incapable of correcting the Spanish monks? Was it just easier to keep things as they were and just assume that the natives believed that the Spaniards were gods? Is it possible that it all comes down to the misunderstanding of huehuetlatolli?

The *Teotl* Delusion

Huehuetlatolli is the language of the elders, the statesman, and the politicos. It is also the language of the sacred. Huehuetlatolli was the language used for ceremonies such as childbirth and the crowning of a new king. It served a variety of purposes but this was the rhetorical style of the Nahuatl-speaking peoples of Mesoamerica. It also served the elders as the way to communicate to the young the merits of a good life as well as things to avoid that would cause harm. The reason for explaining this is simple. This rhetorical style might not be as easily translated from the Nahuatl to the Spanish as one might imagine. It would be like trying to translate a pun-

dependent joke from English to Swahili. You might be able to approximate the words, but it would be impossible to expect the Swahili speaker to return to his friends with a certifiably funny joke. Would this apply to the Nahuatl term for god? An expert in Mesoamerican languages and culture might be able to assist in this search for Motecuhzoma.

Guilhem Olivier is a full-time researcher at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and a prolific author on the topic of deities, royalty, and of huehuetlatolli. Of interest is Olivier's current emphasis of research: huehuetlatolli. Olivier recently presented his current, unpublished work, at a Florentine Codex conference held at UCLA where he discussed the use and definition of the word *teotl*and the Iberianized version "teules."[20] Olivier suggest that not only does the word *teotl* not mean what Diaz thought it meant, it didn't mean that to the native Nahuatl speakers either.

Diaz had been convinced that the meaning of the word *teotl* (or as he used it teules) was god or gods. Olivier, in dissecting Books I – III of the Florentine Codex, noticed something about the world *teotl* and how it was being used. He argues that *teotl*, as used by the native-speakers, meant simply: extraordinary. There was no divination involved. The assignment of god/gods was an immediate misunderstanding applied either through translation or as a way to exploit and perverse the opportunities as they presented themselves to the Spaniards.

Olivier also discovered that *teotl* could also be used negatively or positively depending on the context, and that it could also be used to describe the ocean, water, or sky. This of course instantly deflates the idea that the natives considered the Spaniards as anything other than fair skinned, bearded foreigners and not as gods at all. Furthermore, *teotl* could be seen as being a force of good or a force of evil. Olivier postulates that the use of the huehuetlatolli, or misuse and mistranslation, is key to understanding this delusion the Spaniards were under. The broad applications for the term *teotl* in Nahuatl would surely have dispelled Bernal Diaz's *teotl*delusion. This then begs the question: did Motecuhzoma believe Cortes to be a god? If Motecuhzoma did not believe Cortes to be a god at all, would the actions attributed to him tell a different story?

Motecuhzoma Found

Concentrating on the hybrid source, a handful of events stand out that if considered from a different point of view might change the perception of Motecuhzoma that has been perpetuated since the middle of the 16th century.

It must be conceded that there exists an apriori assumption of Motecuhzoma's personal character and motivations in the Florentine Codex. As a result of the huehuetlatolli findings by Olivier it is proposed that the Motecuhzoma narrative be perceived more sympathetically. One event in particular illustrates the a priori assumption of Motecuhzoma's character.

While Motecuhzoma was waiting for a response from the delegation he had sent to meet Cortes, Sahagún's Nahua sources describe Motecuhzoma's state of mind. The event takes place in Chapter 6 of Book XII and tells us that Motecuhzoma "enjoyed no sleep or food" while his delegation was heading back from Cortes.[21] Motecuhzoma seems to have isolated himself so it is not clear how anyone would have been able to report on his mental condition. This however, could be read differently.

This isolation would be consistent with someone that is deliberating and strategizing and wants zero interruptions. The Nahuatl also add that Motecuhzoma "no longer found anything tasteful, enjoyable or amusing."[22] Again, this could also describe a general who might be strategizing and meditating a prudent military course of action should this foreign landing party be intent on challenging Motecuhzoma's authority.

Regardless, this report of Motecuhzoma's mental well being begs the question as to why Motecuhzoma would be worried about anything prior to *knowing* anything specific about these particular Spaniards. (Of note, Cortes was not the first Spaniard to make contact with the indigenous people of Mesoamerica. The previous conquistadors/through Hernández de Córdoba, in 1517, and then Juan de Grijalva in 1518.) The emissaries had not yet returned and it was unlikely that news would have reached Motecuhzoma any earlier.

And, if the argument could be made that Motecuhzoma had sent a set of spies after his emissaries to simply observe that his orders had been followed and they had secretly returned to report to Moctezuma what they had seen, it would only serve to bolster the notion that this was an attempt by Moctezuma to manipulate his people through stoic silence.[23] Instead we are asked by Sahagún to accept, without question, that Motecuhzoma was afraid. This seems unlikely considering the fear that preceded Motecuhzoma throughout his vast collection of altepetls. The order of events here betrays the premeditation on the part of both the native-language scribes and that of Sahagún. One other detail from this same event is troubling if we were to just accept this account at face value.

At the end of the chapter, prior to hearing the full report from his emissaries, Motecuhzoma kills two captives and then sprinkles the blood of the two dead captives onto the emissaries. Sahagún closes by telling us that this had been done because the emissaries had "seen, gazed on the countenances of, and spoken to the gods."[24] Although there is no evidence of these captives being anything other than prisoners, the proximity to the action leads one to consider the potential that they were the spies Motecuhzoma would have sent ahead of his emissaries. The return of the Spanish would justify the need for Motecuhzoma to employ spies. Therefore it is being proposed that these two captives are in fact two of Motecuhzoma spies. The emissaries, presumably, witness the death of the spies. Motecuhzoma, to further make his point, performs a sanguineous shower onto the emissaries. The deaths are carried out in dramatic silence. The blood speckling could serve to threaten the emissaries against speaking about any of this to anyone. Motecuhzoma making use of huehuetlatolli selects a more ceremonial location, Coacalco, not his residence to perform these acts. Coacalco was a temple in Tenochtitlan where Motecuhzoma would take captive the gods of vanquished cities.[25] Sacrificing these spies at the temple where Motecuhzoma holds other gods captive seems more consistent with the character of Motecuhzoma than with the version of Motecuhzoma we are being force-fed to believe by Sahagún. Perhaps the real Motecuhzoma had been hiding in plain sight.

The last point that will be made in this essay that contends the opposite of what is depicted in the Florentine Codex concerns Chapter 8 and the second round of delegates sent by Motecuhzoma to the Spaniards. Motecuhzoma sends "bad people, soothsayers, and witches" to attempt to subdue the Spaniards.[26] Curiously, he also sends out elders and strong warriors to meet the nutritional needs of Cortes as well.[27] Why would Motecuhzoma send out two sets of delegates on two contradictory missions? Was this a sign that Motecuhzoma was mentally slipping? It is being proposed that these two sets of groups sent to Cortes had a different set of orders. It is reasonable to assume that Motecuhzoma had been a mature and successful strategist. He must have been if we are to believe he conquered many altepetls. This does not come about as a fluke or just a lucky streak. After nineteen years of abundant prosperity, why would Motecuhzoma change his historically successful strategy?[28] He wouldn't. It is being proposed that Motecuhzoma sent the supernatural team to distract the Spaniards while the elders and warriors took inventory of the number of soldiers the Spanish had. If we believe that Motecuhzoma would not want to know what he was up against, we would be diminishing a ruler worthy of an empire. Motecuhzoma reigned over a kingdom and this did not happen without strategies, political maneuverings, and force: three things the Florentine Codex attempts to eradicate but

cannot. Sahagún and his Nahua informants attempt to cloud the events under different pretenses.

As stated earlier, lack of fidelity should not be cause for complete dismissal from the annals of history. The inclusion of all texts is of utmost importance. The audaciousness of history and the tenacity of historians are maintained by entering the conversation armed with knowledge, wit, and enough creativity to be dangerous. This essay is far from being the final word on who the true Motecuhzoma was, but it should move the conversation along and allow others who possess greater knowledge, capacity, and experience to conclude that sometimes you *can* find what you are looking for if you look hard enough.

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Footnotes

[1] Arthur J.O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, trans., *Florentine Codex. General History of Things of New Spain*, (Published by The School of American Research and the University of Utah 1975). Frames 82 and 86.

[2] Ibid., 65.

[3] James Lockhart, *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1993. 17-19.

[4] Bernal Diaz del Castillo, The Memoirs of the Conquistador Bernal Diaz del Castillo, Vol.1, Written by Himself Containing a True and Full Account of the Discovery and Conquest of Mexico and New Spain. trans., John Ingram Lockhart. 1844. This is available via the Gutenberg Project website, accessed May 11, 2015, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32474/32474-h/32474-h.htm

[5] Ibid.

[6] "Lienzo de Tlaxcala." Explore Mesolore, accessed on May 11, 2015, http://www.mesolore.org/viewer/view/2/Lienzo-de-Tlaxcala#.

[7] Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 12-14.

[8] "Lienzo de Tlaxcala."

[9] Kevin Terracino, "Reading between the Lines in Book XII", (paper presented at Visual and Textual Dialogues in Colonial Mexico and Europe: The Florentine Codex, Los Angeles, California, April 17-18, 2015).

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Florentine Codex. 40.

[13] Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Conquest of New Spain, 1585 Revision. Translation by Howard F. Cline. Introduction and notes by S.L. Cline. Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press 1989. It is known that Sahagún had written a Spanish-friendly version of Book XII in 1585. This was made as a response to the growing concerns and fear that there might have been too much emphasis on the indigenous narrative and that this emphasis might lead to a potential empowerment movement among the native population. Since the Books I-XI deal mostly with native beliefs, botany, and other topics Book XII served as a potential ignition point as it existed and might have needed rewriting.

[14] Terracino, "Reading Between the Lines."

[15] Sara Cohen, "How the Aztecs Appraised Montezuma", The History Teacher, Vol. 5, No. 3 (March, 1972), 21-30, accessed May 3, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/491417

[16] Lockhart, James. *Of Things of the Indies: Essays Old and New in Early Latin American History*. (Stanford, California. Stanford University Press. 1999), 99.

[17] Diaz. 110.

[18] Florentine Codex. 23.

[19] Triple Mistaken Identity might take place when Double Mistaken Identity (DMI) is acted upon without knowledge and a third perspective is introduced that negates one of the existing identities. It might be a course of study that shows that some of the Nahuatl scribes and even the pictorialist had become so Christianized that they were afraid to speak against their new God since being indoctrinated. It could be argued that the fear of hell might have been enough for them to make sure that they depicted the unsavoriness of the predecessors in such a light that it changes meaning and that huehuetlatolli is lost. This new interpretation might make the information even more difficult to hold down to a single conclusive position. This is just an idea that could be fleshed through further studies on this topic.

[20] Olivier, Guilhem. "Teotl, Ixiptla, and Diablo: Indigenous and Christian Conceptions of the God's of the Florentine Codex of Bernardino de Sahagún and His Nahuatl Informants" (paper presented at Visual and Textual Dialogues in Colonial Mexico and Europe: The Florentine Codex, Los Angeles, California, April 17-18, 2015).

[21] Florentine Codex, 17.

[22] Lockhart, 1993: 76.

[23] Duran, Fray Diego. The History of the Indies of New Spain. Translated, with notes by Doris Heyden and Fernando Horcasitas. Introduction by Ignacio Bernal (Orion Press. New York. 1964.)

[24] Lockhart, 1993: 78.

[25] David Carrasco*, "City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization* " (Beacon Press, Boston, Mass. 1999), 45.

[26] Lockhart, 1993: 82.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón, 1579-1660. "*Codex Chimalpahin: Society and Politics in Mexico Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Texcoco, Culhuacan, and other Nahua Altepetl in Central Mexico*". Edited and translated by Arthur J.O. Anderson and Susan Schroeder Norman, Oklahoma. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.) 55.

Photograph

Folio 15v of the Codex Mendoza (16th century). Depicts the rule and conquests of Moctezuma II. 16th century.