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P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife  
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

## MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

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### MAPS.

THE maps for this work are the result of a laborious investigation by a skilful and competent hand. Humboldt's are the only maps of New Spain which can lay claim to the credit even of tolerable accuracy. They have been adopted as the basis of those for the present history; and an occasional deviation from them has been founded on a careful comparison with the verbal accounts of Gomara, Bernal Diaz, Clavigero, and, above all, of Cortés, illustrated by his meagre commentator, Lorenzana. Of these, Cortés is generally the most full and exact in his statement of distances, though it is to be regretted that he does not more frequently afford a hint as to the bearings of the places. As it is desirable to present the reader with a complete and unembarrassed view of the route of Cortés, the names of all other places than those which occur in this work have been discarded, while a considerable number have been now introduced which are not to be found on any previous chart. The position of these must necessarily be, in some degree, hypothetical; but, as it has been determined by a study of the narratives of contemporary historians, and by the measurement of distances, the result, probably, cannot in any instance be much out of the way. The ancient names have been retained, so as to present a map of the country as it was at the time of the Conquest.

### PORTRAIT PREFIXED TO VOLUME FIRST.

This engraving of Cortés was taken from a full-length portrait, presented to me by my friend Don Angel Calderon de la Barca, during his residence as minister to Mexico. It is a copy, and, as I am assured, a very faithful one, from the painting in the Hospital of Jesus. This painting is itself a copy from one taken, probably, a few years before the death of Cortés, on his last visit to Spain. What has become of the original is not known. That in Mexico was sent there by one of the family of Monteleone, descendants of the Conqueror, as appears from his arms, which the painter has introduced in a corner of the picture. This seems to be regarded by the family as the best portrait of the Conqueror, and a copy, like that in my possession, has been recently made for the present Duke of Monteleone in Italy. It has never before been engraved.

## PORTRAIT PREFIXED TO VOLUME SECOND.

The original portrait was said to have been painted by an artist named Maldonado, who came over to Mexico at the time of the Conquest. It belonged to the Counts of Miravalle, and, not many years since, came into the possession of Mr. Smith Wilcox, consul from the United States to Mexico. Of the authenticity of this portrait I have received opposite opinions, and these, too, from the most respectable sources in Mexico; the one representing it as undoubtedly genuine, the other regarding it as an ideal portrait, painted after the Conquest, to adorn the halls of the Counts of Miravalle, and to flatter their pride by the image of their royal progenitor. The countenance must be admitted to wear a tinge of soft and not unpleasing melancholy, quite in harmony with the fortunes of the unhappy monarch.

## PORTRAIT PREFIXED TO VOLUME THIRD.

This likeness of Cortés was originally engraved for that inquisitive scholar and industrious collector, Don Antonio Uguina, of Madrid, from what he considered the best portrait of Cortés. The original is, I am informed, the same portrait which now hangs in the Museo, among the series of viceroys, at Mexico. It must have been taken at a much earlier period of life than the portrait in the Hospital of Jesus, in which both the hair and beard are somewhat grizzled with years. The expression of the countenance, of a higher and more intellectual cast than the preceding, has a quiet, contemplative air, not to have been expected in one of the stirring character of Cortés.

## ARMS OF CORTÉS.

The stamp on the back of the work represents the arms granted by letters patent to Cortés by the Emperor Charles V., March 7, 1525. In the instrument, it is stated, that the double-headed eagle is given as the arms of the empire; the golden lion, in memory of the courage and constancy shown by Cortés in the conquest of Mexico; the three gold crowns indicate the three monarchs whom he successively opposed in the capital of Mexico; the city represents that capital; and the seven heads held together by a chain, on the border of the shield, denote so many Indian princes whom he subdued in the Valley.



MAP OF THE COUNTRY TRAVERSED BY THE SPANIARDS ON THEIR MARCH TO MEXICO.



Long. W. from Greenwich.

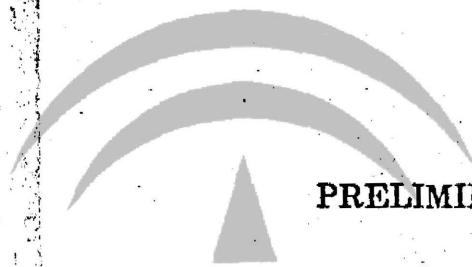
Morse & Tuttle Sc.

FOR PRESCOTT'S HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

**B O O K F I R S T .**

**I N T R O D U C T I O N .**

**P R E L I M I N A R Y V I E W O F T H E A Z T E C C I V I L I Z A T I O N .**



**JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA**

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife  
CONSEJERIA DE CULTURA

**V O L . I . 1**

# CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

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## BOOK I.

### INTRODUCTION.

#### VIEW OF THE AZTEC CIVILIZATION.

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### CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT MEXICO. — CLIMATE AND PRODUCTS. — PRIMITIVE RACES.  
— AZTEC EMPIRE.

OF all that extensive empire which once acknowledged the authority of Spain in the New World, no portion, for interest and importance, can be compared with Mexico; — and this equally, whether we consider the variety of its soil and climate; the inexhaustible stores of its mineral wealth; its scenery, grand and picturesque beyond example; the character of its ancient inhabitants, not only far surpassing in intelligence that of the other North American races, but reminding us, by their monuments, of the primitive civilization of Egypt and Hindostan; or lastly, the peculiar circumstances of its Conquest, adventurous and romantic as any legend devised by Norman or Italian bard of chivalry. It is the purpose of the present narrative to exhibit the

history of this Conquest, and that of the remarkable man by whom it was achieved.

But, in order that the reader may have a better understanding of the subject, it will be well, before entering on it, to take a general survey of the political and social institutions of the races who occupied the land at the time of its discovery.

The country of the ancient Mexicans, or Aztecs as they were called, formed but a very small part of the extensive territories comprehended in the modern republic of Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Its boundaries cannot be defined with certainty. They were much enlarged in the latter days of the empire, when they may be considered as reaching from about the eighteenth degree north, to the twenty-first, on the Atlantic; and from the fourteenth to the nineteenth, including a very narrow strip, on the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> In its greatest

<sup>1</sup> Extensive indeed, if we may trust Archbishop Lorenzana, who tells us, "It is doubtful if the country of New Spain does not border on *Tartary* and *Greenland*; — by the way of *California*, on the former, and by *New Mexico*, on the latter"! *Historia de Nueva España*, (México, 1770,) p. 38, nota.

<sup>2</sup> I have conformed to the limits fixed by *Clavigero*. He has, probably, examined the subject with more thoroughness and fidelity than most of his countrymen, who differ from him, and who assign a more liberal extent to the monarchy. (See his *Storia Antica del Messico*, (Cesena, 1780,) dissert. 7.) The *Abbé*, however, has not

informed his readers on what frail foundations his conclusions rest. The extent of the Aztec empire is to be gathered from the writings of historians since the arrival of the Spaniards, and from the picture-rolls of tribute paid by the conquered cities; both sources extremely vague and defective. See the MSS. of the *Mendoza* collection, in *Lord Kingsborough's* magnificent publication (*Antiquities of Mexico*, comprising *Facsimiles of Ancient Paintings and Hieroglyphics*, together with the *Monuments of New Spain*. London, 1830). The difficulty of the inquiry is much increased by the fact of the conquests having been made, as

breadth, it could not exceed five degrees and a half, dwindling, as it approached its south-eastern limits, to less than two. It covered, probably, less than sixteen thousand square leagues.<sup>3</sup> Yet such is the remarkable formation of this country, that, though not more than twice as large as New England, it presented every variety of climate, and was capable of yielding nearly every fruit, found between the equator and the Arctic circle.

All along the Atlantic, the country is bordered by a broad tract, called the *tierra caliente*, or hot region, which has the usual high temperature of equinoctial lands. Parched and sandy plains are intermingled with others, of exuberant fertility, almost impervious from thickets of aromatic shrubs and wild flowers, in the midst of which tower up trees of that

will be seen hereafter, by the united arms of three powers, so that it is not always easy to tell to which party they eventually belonged. The affair is involved in so much uncertainty, that Clavigero, notwithstanding the positive assertions in his text, has not ventured, in his map, to define the precise limits of the empire, either towards the north, where it mingles with the Tezcucan empire, or towards the south, where, indeed, he has fallen into the egregious blunder of asserting, that, while the Mexican territory reached to the fourteenth degree, it did not include any portion of Guatemala. (See tom. I. p. 29, and tom. IV. dissert. 7.) The Tezcucan chronicler, Ixtlilxochitl,

puts in a sturdy claim for the paramount empire of his own nation. *Historia Chichemeca*, MS., cap. 39, 53, et alibi.

<sup>3</sup> Eighteen to twenty thousand, according to Humboldt, who considers the Mexican territory to have been the same with that occupied by the modern intendancies of Mexico, Puebla, Vera Cruz, Oaxaca, and Valladolid. (*Essai Politique sur le Royaume de Nouvelle Espagne*, (Paris, 1825,) tom. I. p. 196.) This last, however, was all, or nearly all, included in the rival kingdom of Mechoacan, as he himself more correctly states in another part of his work. *Comp.* tom. II. p. 164.

magnificent growth which is found only within the tropics. In this wilderness of sweets lurks the fatal *malaria*, engendered, probably, by the decomposition of rank vegetable substances in a hot and humid soil. The season of the bilious fever, — *vómito*, as it is called, — which scourges these coasts, continues from the spring to the autumnal equinox, when it is checked by the cold winds that descend from Hudson's Bay. These winds in the winter season frequently freshen into tempests, and, sweeping down the Atlantic coast, and the winding Gulf of Mexico, burst with the fury of a hurricane on its unprotected shores, and on the neighbouring West India islands. Such are the mighty spells with which Nature has surrounded this land of enchantment, as if to guard the golden treasures locked up within its bosom. The genius and enterprise of man have proved more potent than her spells.

After passing some twenty leagues across this burning region, the traveller finds himself rising into a purer atmosphere. His limbs recover their elasticity. He breathes more freely, for his senses are not now oppressed by the sultry heats and intoxicating perfumes of the valley. The aspect of nature, too, has changed, and his eye no longer revels among the gay variety of colors with which the landscape was painted there. The vanilla, the indigo, and the flowering cacao-groves disappear as he advances. The sugar-cane and the glossy-leaved banana still accompany him; and, when he has ascended about four thousand feet, he sees in the unchanging verd-

ure, and the rich foliage of the liquid-amber tree, that he has reached the height where clouds and mists settle, in their passage from the Mexican Gulf. This is the region of perpetual humidity; but he welcomes it with pleasure, as announcing his escape from the influence of the deadly *vómito*.<sup>4</sup> He has entered the *tierra templada*, or temperate region, whose character resembles that of the temperate zone of the globe. The features of the scenery become grand, and even terrible. His road sweeps along the base of mighty mountains, once gleaming with volcanic fires, and still resplendent in their mantles of snow, which serve as beacons to the mariner, for many a league at sea. All around he beholds traces of their ancient combustion, as his road passes along vast tracts of lava, bristling in the innumerable fantastic forms into which the fiery torrent has been thrown by the obstacles in its career. Perhaps, at the same moment, as he casts his eye down some steep slope, or almost unfathomable ravine, on the margin of the road, he sees their depths glowing with the rich blooms and enamelled vegetation of the tropics. Such are the singular

<sup>4</sup> The traveller, who enters the country across the dreary sand-hills of Vera Cruz, will hardly recognise the truth of the above description. He must look for it in other parts of the *tierra caliente*. Of recent tourists, no one has given a more gorgeous picture of the impressions made on his senses by these sunny regions than Latrobe,

who came on shore at Tampico; (Rambler in Mexico, (New York, 1836,) chap. 1;) a traveller, it may be added, whose descriptions of man and nature, in our own country, where we can judge, are distinguished by a sobriety and fairness that entitle him to confidence in his delineation of other countries.

contrasts presented, at the same time, to the senses, in this picturesque region!

Still pressing upwards, the traveller mounts into other climates, favorable to other kinds of cultivation. The yellow maize, or Indian corn, as we usually call it, has continued to follow him up from the lowest level; but he now first sees fields of wheat, and the other European grains brought into the country by the Conquerors. Mingled with them, he views the plantations of the aloe or maguey (*agave Americana*), applied to such various and important uses by the Aztecs. The oaks now acquire a sturdier growth, and the dark forests of pine announce that he has entered the *tierra fria*, or cold region, — the third and last of the great natural terraces into which the country is divided. When he has climbed to the height of between seven and eight thousand feet, the weary traveller sets his foot on the summit of the Cordillera of the Andes, — the colossal range, that, after traversing South America and the Isthmus of Darien, spreads out, as it enters Mexico, into that vast sheet of table-land, which maintains an elevation of more than six thousand feet, for the distance of nearly two hundred leagues, until it gradually declines in the higher latitudes of the north.<sup>5</sup>

Across this mountain rampart a chain of volcanic

<sup>5</sup> This long extent of country varies in elevation from 5570 to 8856 feet, — equal to the height of the passes of Mount Cenis, or the Great St. Bernard. The table-land stretches still three hundred leagues further, before it declines to a level of 2624 feet. Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, tom. I. pp. 157, 255.



hills stretches, in a westerly direction, of still more stupendous dimensions, forming, indeed, some of the highest land on the globe. Their peaks, entering the limits of perpetual snow, diffuse a grateful coolness over the elevated *plateaus* below; for these last, though termed 'cold', enjoy a climate, the mean temperature of which is not lower than that of the central parts of Italy.<sup>6</sup> The air is exceedingly dry; the soil, though naturally good, is rarely clothed with the luxuriant vegetation of the lower regions. It frequently, indeed, has a parched and barren aspect, owing partly to the greater evaporation which takes place on these lofty plains, through the diminished pressure of the atmosphere; and partly, no doubt, to the want of trees to shelter the soil from the fierce influence of the summer sun. In the time of the Aztecs, the table-land was thickly covered with larch, oak, cypress, and other forest trees, the extraordinary dimensions of some of which, remaining to the present day, show that the curse of barrenness in later times is chargeable more on man than on nature. Indeed, the early Spaniards made as indiscriminate war on the forest as did our Puritan ancestors, though with much less reason. After once conquering the country, they had no lurking

<sup>6</sup> About 62° Fahrenheit, or 17° Réaumur. (Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, tom I. p. 273.) The more elevated plateaus of the table-land, as the Valley of Toluca, about 8500 feet above the sea, have a stern climate, in which the thermometer, during a great part of the day, rarely rises beyond 45° F. Idem, (*loc. cit.*) and Malte-Brun, (*Universal Geography*, Eng. Trans., book 83,) who is, indeed, in this part of his work, but an echo of the former writer.

ambush to fear from the submissive, semicivilized Indian, and were not, like our forefathers, obliged to keep watch and ward for a century. This spoliation of the ground, however, is said to have been pleasing to their imaginations, as it reminded them of the plains of their own Castile, — the table-land of Europe ;<sup>7</sup> where the nakedness of the landscape forms the burden of every traveller's lament, who visits that country.

Midway across the continent, somewhat nearer the Pacific than the Atlantic ocean, at an elevation of nearly seven thousand five hundred feet, is the celebrated Valley of Mexico. It is of an oval form, about sixty-seven leagues in circumference,<sup>8</sup> and is encompassed by a towering rampart of porphyritic rock, which nature seems to have provided, though ineffectually, to protect it from invasion.

The soil, once carpeted with a beautiful verdure, and thickly sprinkled with stately trees, is often bare,

<sup>7</sup> The elevation of the Castiles, according to the authority repeatedly cited, is about 350 toises, or 2100 feet above the ocean. (Humboldt's Dissertation, apud Laborde, *Itinéraire Descriptif de l'Espagne*, (Paris, 1827,) tom I. p. 5.) It is rare to find plains in Europe of so great a height.

<sup>8</sup> Archbishop Lorenzana estimates the circuit of the Valley at ninety leagues, correcting at the same time the statement of Cortés, which puts it at seventy, very near the truth, as appears from the re-

sult of M. de Humboldt's measurement, cited in the text. Its length is about eighteen leagues, by twelve and a half in breadth. (Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, tom. II. p. 29. — Lorenzana, *Hist. de Nueva España*, p. 101.) Humboldt's map of the Valley of Mexico forms the third in his "Atlas Géographique et Physique," and, like all the others in the collection, will be found of inestimable value to the traveller, the geologist, and the historian.

and, in many places, white with the incrustation of salts, caused by the draining of the waters. Five lakes are spread over the Valley, occupying one tenth of its surface.<sup>9</sup> On the opposite borders of the largest of these basins, much shrunk in its dimensions<sup>10</sup> since the days of the Aztecs, stood the cities of Mexico and Tezcucó, the capitals of the two most potent and flourishing states of Anahuac, whose history, with that of the mysterious races that preceded them in the country, exhibits some of the nearest approaches to civilization to be met with anciently on the North American continent.

Of these races the most conspicuous were the Toltecs. Advancing from a northerly direction, but from what region is uncertain, they entered the territory of Anahuac,<sup>11</sup> probably before the close of the

<sup>9</sup> Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, tom. II. pp. 29, 44-49.—Malte Brun, book 85. This latter geographer assigns only 6700 feet for the level of the Valley, contradicting himself, (comp. book 83,) or rather, Humboldt, to whose pages he helps himself, *plenis manibus*, somewhat too liberally, indeed, for the scanty references at the bottom of his page.

<sup>10</sup> Torquemada accounts, in part, for this diminution, by supposing, that, as God permitted the waters, which once covered the whole earth, to subside, after mankind had been nearly exterminated for their iniquities, so he allowed the waters of the Mexican lake to subside, in token of good-will and

reconciliation, after the idolatrous races of the land had been destroyed by the Spaniards! (*Monarchía Indiana*, (Madrid, 1723,) tom. I. p. 309.) Quite as probable, if not as orthodox an explanation, may be found in the active evaporation of these upper regions, and in the fact of an immense drain having been constructed, during the lifetime of the good father, to reduce the waters of the principal lake, and protect the capital from inundation.

<sup>11</sup> Anahuac, according to Humboldt, comprehended only the country between the 14th and 21st degrees of N. latitude. (*Essai Politique*, tom. I. p. 197.) According to Clavigero, it included nearly

seventh century. Of course, little can be gleaned, with certainty, respecting a people, whose written records have perished, and who are known to us only through the traditional legends of the nations that succeeded them.<sup>12</sup> By the general agreement of these, however, the Toltecs were well instructed in agriculture, and many of the most useful mechanic arts; were nice workers of metals; invented the complex arrangement of time adopted by the Aztecs; and, in short, were the true fountains of the civilization which distinguished this part of the continent

all since known as New Spain. (Stor. del Messico, tom. I. p. 27.) Veytia uses it, also, as synonymous with New Spain. (Historia Antigua de Méjico, (Méjico, 1836,) tom. I. cap. 12.) The first of these writers probably allows too little, as the latter do too much, for its boundaries. Ixtlilxochitl says it extended four hundred leagues south of the Otomie country. (Hist. Chichemeca, MS., cap. 73.) The word Anahúac signifies *near the water*. It was, probably, first applied to the country around the lakes in the Mexican Valley, and gradually extended to the remoter regions occupied by the Aztecs, and the other semicivilized races. Or, possibly, the name may have been intended, as Veytia suggests, (Hist. Antig., lib. 1, cap. 1,) to denote the land between the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific.

<sup>12</sup> Clavigero talks of Boturini's having written "on the faith of

the Toltec historians." (Stor. del Messico, tom. I. p. 128.) But that scholar does not pretend to have ever met with a Toltec manuscript, himself, and had heard of only one in the possession of Ixtlilxochitl. (See his *Idea de una Nueva Historia General de la América Septentrional*, (Madrid, 1746,) p. 110.) The latter writer tells us, that his account of the Toltec and Chichemec races was "derived from interpretation," (probably, of the Tezcucan paintings,) "and from the traditions of old men"; poor authority for events which had passed, centuries before. Indeed, he acknowledges that their narratives were so full of absurdity and falsehood, that he was obliged to reject nine-tenths of them. (See his *Relaciones*, MS., no. 5.) The cause of truth would not have suffered much, probably, if he had rejected nine-tenths of the remainder.

in later times.<sup>13</sup> They established their capital at Tula, north of the Mexican Valley, and the remains of extensive buildings were to be discerned there at the time of the Conquest.<sup>14</sup> The noble ruins of religious and other edifices, still to be seen in various parts of New Spain, are referred to this people, whose name, *Toltec*, has passed into a synonyme for *architect*.<sup>15</sup> Their shadowy history reminds us of those primitive races, who preceded the ancient Egyptians in the march of civilization; fragments of whose monuments, as they are seen at this day, incorporated with the buildings of the Egyptians themselves, give to these latter the appearance of almost modern constructions.<sup>16</sup>

After a period of four centuries, the Toltecs, who had extended their sway over the remotest borders of Anahuac,<sup>17</sup> having been greatly reduced, it is said, by famine, pestilence, and unsuccessful wars, disappeared from the land as silently and mysteriously as they had entered it. A few of them still lingered behind, but much the greater number, probably, spread over the region of Central America

<sup>13</sup> Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 2. — Idem, Relaciones, MS., no. 2. — Sahagun, Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España, (México, 1829,) lib. 10, cap. 29. — Veytia, Hist. Antig., lib. 1, cap. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva España, lib. 10, cap. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Idem, ubi supra. — Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 1, cap. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Description de l'Égypte, (Paris, 1809,) Antiquités, tom. I. cap. 1. Veytia has traced the migrations of the Toltecs with sufficient industry, scarcely rewarded by the necessarily doubtful credit of the results. Hist. Antig., lib. 2, cap. 21–33.

<sup>17</sup> Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 73.

and the neighbouring isles; and the traveller now speculates on the majestic ruins of Mitla and Palenque, as possibly the work of this extraordinary people.<sup>18</sup>

After the lapse of another hundred years, a numerous and rude tribe, called the Chichimecs, entered the deserted country from the regions of the far Northwest. They were speedily followed by other races, of higher civilization, perhaps of the same family with the Toltecs, whose language they appear to have spoken. The most noted of these were the Aztecs or Mexicans, and the Acolhuans. The latter, better known in later times by the name of Tezcucans, from their capital, Tezcuco,<sup>19</sup> on the eastern border of the Mexican lake, were peculiarly fitted, by their comparatively mild religion and manners, for receiving the tincture of civilization which could be derived from the few Toltecs that still remained in the country. This, in their turn, they communicated to the barbarous Chichimecs, a large portion of whom became amalgamated with the new settlers as one nation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Veytia, Hist. Antig., lib. 1, cap. 33. — Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 3. — Idem, Relaciones, MS., no. 4, 5. — Father Torquemada — perhaps misinterpreting the Tezcucan hieroglyphics — has accounted for this mysterious disappearance of the Toltecs, by such *fee-faw-fum* stories of giants and demons, as show his appetite for the marvellous was

fully equal to that of any of his calling. See his Monarch. Ind., lib. 1, cap. 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Tezcuco* signifies "place of detention"; as several of the tribes who successively occupied Anahuac were said to have halted some time at the spot. Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 10.

<sup>20</sup> The historian speaks, in one page, of the Chichimecs' burrow-

Availing themselves of the strength derived, not only from this increase of numbers, but from their own superior refinement, the Acolhuans gradually stretched their empire over the ruder tribes in the north; while their capital was filled with a numerous population, busily employed in many of the more useful and even elegant arts of a civilized community. In this palmy state, they were suddenly assaulted by a warlike neighbour, the Tepanecs, their own kindred, and inhabitants of the same valley as themselves. Their provinces were overrun, their armies beaten, their king assassinated, and the flourishing city of Tezcucó became the prize of the victor. From this abject condition the uncommon abilities of the young prince, Nezahualcoyotl, the rightful heir to the crown, backed by the efficient aid of his Mexican allies, at length, redeemed the state, and opened to it a new career of prosperity, even more brilliant than the former.<sup>21</sup>

The Mexicans, with whom our history is principally concerned, came, also, as we have seen, from the remote regions of the North,—the populous hive of nations in the New World, as it has been in the Old. They arrived on the borders of Anahuac, towards the beginning of the thirteenth century, some time after the occupation of the land by the kindred

ing in caves, or, at best, in cabins of straw;—and, in the next, talks gravely of their *señoras*, *infantas*, and *caballeros*! Ibid., cap. 9, et seq.—Veytia, Hist. Antig., lib. 2, cap. 1–10.—Camargo, Historia de Tlascala, MS.

<sup>21</sup> Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 9–20.—Veytia, Hist. Antig., lib. 2, cap. 29–54

racés. For a long time they did not establish themselves in any permanent residence; but continued shifting their quarters to different parts of the Mexican Valley, enduring all the casualties and hardships of a migratory life. On one occasion, they were enslaved by a more powerful tribe; but their ferocity soon made them formidable to their masters.<sup>22</sup> After a series of wanderings and adventures, which need not shrink from comparison with the most extravagant legends of the heroic ages of antiquity, they at length halted on the southwestern borders of the principal lake, in the year 1325. They there beheld, perched on the stem of a prickly pear, which shot out from the crevice of a rock that was washed by the waves, a royal eagle of extraordinary size and beauty, with a serpent in his talons, and his broad wings opened to the rising sun. They hailed the auspicious omen, announced by the oracle, as indicating the site of their future city, and laid its foundations by sinking piles into the shallows; for the low marshes were half buried under water. On these they erected their light fabrics of reeds and rushes; and sought a precarious subsistence from fishing, and from the wild fowl which frequented the waters, as well as from the cultivation of such simple vegetables as they could raise on their floating gardens. The place was called Tenochtitlan, in token of its miraculous origin, though only known

<sup>22</sup> These were the Colhuans, not Acolhuans, with whom Humboldt, and most writers since, have confounded them. See his *Essai Politique*, tom. I. p. 414; II. p. 37.



to Europeans by its other name of Mexico, derived from their war-god, Mexitli.<sup>23</sup> The legend of its foundation is still further commemorated by the device of the eagle and the cactus, which form the arms of the modern Mexican republic. Such were the humble beginnings of the Venice of the Western World.<sup>24</sup>

The forlorn condition of the new settlers was made still worse by domestic feuds. A part of the citizens seceded from the main body, and formed a separate community on the neighbouring marshes. Thus divided, it was long before they could aspire to the acquisition of territory on the main land. They gradually increased, however, in numbers, and

<sup>23</sup> Clavigero gives good reasons for preferring the etymology of Mexico above noticed, to various others. (See his *Stor. del Messico*, tom. I. p. 168, nota.) The name *Tenochtitlan* signifies *tunal* (a cactus) *on a stone*. *Esplicacion de la Col. de Mendoza*, apud *Antiq. of Mexico*, vol. IV.

<sup>24</sup> "Datur hæc venia antiquitati," says Livy, "ut, miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat." *Hist.*, Præf. — See, for the above paragraph, *Col. de Mendoza*, plate 1, apud *Antiq. of Mexico*, vol. I., — *Ixtlilxochitl*, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 10, — *Toribio*, *Historia de los Indios*, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8, — *Veytia*, *Hist. Antig.*, lib. 2, cap. 15. — Clavigero, after a laborious examination, assigns the following dates to some

of the prominent events noticed in the text. No two authorities agree on them; and this is not strange, considering that Clavigero — the most inquisitive of all — does not always agree with himself. (Compare his dates for the coming of the Acolhuans; tom. I. p. 147, and tom. IV. dissert. 2.) —

	A. D.
The Toltecs arrived in Anahuac . . .	648
They abandoned the country . . .	1051
The Chichimecs arrived . . . . .	1170
The Acolhuans arrived about . . . .	1200
The Mexicans reached Tula . . . .	1196
They founded Mexico . . . . .	1325

See his dissert. 2, sec. 12. In the last date, the one of most importance, he is confirmed by the learned Veytia, who differs from him in all the others. *Hist. Antig.*, lib. 2, cap. 15.

strengthened themselves yet more by various improvements in their polity and military discipline, while they established a reputation for courage as well as cruelty in war, which made their name terrible throughout the Valley. In the early part of the fifteenth century, nearly a hundred years from the foundation of the city, an event took place which created an entire revolution in the circumstances, and, to some extent, in the character of the Aztecs. This was the subversion of the Tezcucan monarchy by the Tepanecs, already noticed. When the oppressive conduct of the victors had at length aroused a spirit of resistance, its prince, Nezahualcoyotl, succeeded, after incredible perils and escapes, in mustering such a force, as, with the aid of the Mexicans, placed him on a level with his enemies. In two successive battles, these were defeated with great slaughter, their chief slain, and their territory, by one of those sudden reverses which characterize the wars of petty states, passed into the hands of the conquerors. It was awarded to Mexico, in return for its important services.

Then was formed that remarkable league, which, indeed, has no parallel in history. It was agreed between the states of Mexico, Tezcucan, and the neighbouring little kingdom of Tlacopan, that they should mutually support each other in their wars, offensive and defensive, and that, in the distribution of the spoil, one fifth should be assigned to Tlacopan, and the remainder be divided, in what proportions is uncertain, between the other powers. The

Tezcucan writers claim an equal share for their nation with the Aztecs. But this does not seem to be warranted by the immense increase of territory subsequently appropriated by the latter. And we may account for any advantage conceded to them by the treaty, on the supposition, that, however inferior they may have been originally, they were, at the time of making it, in a more prosperous condition than their allies, broken and dispirited by long oppression. What is more extraordinary than the treaty itself, however, is the fidelity with which it was maintained. During a century of uninterrupted warfare that ensued, no instance occurred where the parties quarrelled over the division of the spoil, which so often makes shipwreck of similar confederacies among civilized states.<sup>25</sup>

The allies for some time found sufficient occupation for their arms in their own valley; but they soon overleaped its rocky ramparts, and by the middle of the fifteenth century, under the first Montezuma,

<sup>25</sup> The loyal Tezcucan chronicler claims the supreme dignity for his own sovereign, if not the greatest share of the spoil, by this imperial compact. (Hist. Chich., cap. 32.) Torquemada, on the other hand, claims one half of all the conquered lands for Mexico. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 40.) All agree in assigning only one fifth to Tlacopan; and Veytia (Hist. Antig., lib. 3, cap. 3) and Zurita (Rapport sur les Différentes Classes de Chefs de la Nouvelle

Espagne, trad. de Ternaux, (Paris, 1840,) p. 11), both very competent critics, acquiesce in an equal division between the two principal states in the confederacy. An ode, still extant, of Nezahualcoyotl, in its Castilian version, bears testimony to the singular union of the three powers.

“solo se acordarán en las Naciones  
lo bien que gobernaron  
las tres Cabezas que el Imperio honraron.”

CANTARES DEL EMPERADOR  
NEZAHUALCOYOTL, MS.

had spread down the sides of the table-land to the borders of the Gulf of Mexico. Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, gave evidence of the public prosperity. Its frail tenements were supplanted by solid structures of stone and lime. Its population rapidly increased. Its old feuds were healed. The citizens who had seceded were again brought under a common government with the main body, and the quarter they occupied was permanently connected with the parent city; the dimensions of which, covering the same ground, were much larger than those of the modern capital of Mexico.<sup>26</sup>

Fortunately, the throne was filled by a succession of able princes, who knew how to profit by their enlarged resources and by the martial enthusiasm of the nation. Year after year saw them return, loaded with the spoils of conquered cities, and with throngs of devoted captives, to their capital. No state was able long to resist the accumulated strength of the confederates. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, just before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Aztec dominion reached across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and, under the bold and bloody Ahuitzotl, its arms had been carried far over the limits already noticed as defining its perma-

<sup>26</sup> See the plans of the ancient and modern capital, in Bullock's "Mexico," first edition. The original of the ancient map was obtained by that traveller from the collection of the unfortunate Bo-

turini; if, as seems probable, it is the one indicated on page 13 of his Catalogue, I find no warrant for Mr. Bullock's statement, that it was the same prepared for Cortés by the order of Montezuma.

ment territory, into the farthest corners of Guatemala and Nicaragua. This extent of empire, however limited in comparison with that of many other states, is truly wonderful, considering it as the acquisition of a people whose whole population and resources had so recently been comprised within the walls of their own petty city; and considering, moreover, that the conquered territory was thickly settled by various races, bred to arms like the Mexicans, and little inferior to them in social organization. The history of the Aztecs suggests some strong points of resemblance to that of the ancient Romans, not only in their military successes, but in the policy which led to them.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Clavigero, *Stor. del Messico*, tom. I. lib. 2.—Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, tom. I. lib. 2.—Boturini, *Idea*, p. 146.—Col. of Mendoza, Part I, and *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, apud *Antiq. of Mexico*, vols. I., VI.

Machiavelli has noticed it as one great cause of the military successes of the Romans, "that they associated themselves, in their

wars, with other states, as the principal"; and expresses his astonishment that a similar policy should not have been adopted by ambitious republics in later times. (See his *Discorsi sopra T. Livio*, lib. 2, cap. 4, apud *Opere* (Geneva, 1798).) This, as we have seen above, was the very course pursued by the Mexicans.

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The most important contribution, of late years, to the early history of Mexico is the *Historia Antigua* of the Lic. Don Mariano Veytia, published in the city of Mexico, in 1836. This scholar was born of an ancient and highly respectable family at Puebla, 1718. After finishing his academic education, he went to Spain, where he was kindly received at court. He afterwards visited several other countries of Europe, made himself acquainted with their languages, and returned home well stored with the fruits of a discriminating observation and

diligent study. The rest of his life he devoted to letters; especially to the illustration of the national history and antiquities. As the executor of the unfortunate Boturini, with whom he had contracted an intimacy in Madrid, he obtained access to his valuable collection of manuscripts in Mexico, and from them, and every other source which his position in society and his eminent character opened to him, he composed various works, none of which, however, except the one before us, has been admitted to the honors of the press. The time of his death is not given by his editor, but it was probably not later than 1780.

Veytia's history covers the whole period, from the first occupation of Anahuac to the middle of the fifteenth century, at which point his labors were unfortunately terminated by his death. In the early portion he has endeavoured to trace the migratory movements and historical annals of the principal races who entered the country. Every page bears testimony to the extent and fidelity of his researches; and, if we feel but moderate confidence in the results, the fault is not imputable to him, so much as to the dark and doubtful nature of the subject. As he descends to later ages, he is more occupied with the fortunes of the Tezucan than with those of the Aztec dynasty, which have been amply discussed by others of his countrymen. The premature close of his labors prevented him, probably, from giving that attention to the domestic institutions of the people he describes, to which they are entitled as the most important subject of inquiry to the historian. The deficiency has been supplied by his judicious editor, Ortega, from other sources. In the early part of his work, Veytia has explained the chronological system of the Aztecs, but, like most writers preceding the accurate Gama, with indifferent success. As a critic, he certainly ranks much higher than the annalists who preceded him; and, when his own religion is not involved, shows a discriminating judgment. When it is, he betrays a full measure of the credulity which still maintains its hold on too many even of the well informed of his countrymen. The editor of the work has given a very interesting letter from the Abbé Clavigero to Veytia, written when the former was a poor and humble exile, and in the tone of one addressing a person of high standing and literary eminence. Both were employed on the same subject. The writings of the poor Abbé, published again and again, and translated into various languages, have spread his fame throughout Europe; while the name of Veytia, whose works have been locked up in their primitive manuscript, is scarcely known beyond the boundaries of Mexico.