

WHY DID THE AZTECS CONVERT TO CATHOLICISM, FOLLOWING THE CONQUEST OF THE SPANIARDS IN 1521

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The Spaniards and the Aztecs were at war between 1519 and 1521. The Aztecs fought to preserve their traditions and their way of life while the Spaniards waged a spiritual crusade, hoping to win souls to their faith, land for the Spanish crown, and large amounts of gold. It was an unhappy circumstance in which the Aztecs were defeated by Hernan Cortes, leader of the invasion of the Aztec empire, and his men. The Spanish conquerors then began the gradual process of converting the Aztecs to Christianity. The question of some curiosity was why the Aztecs converted. There were three main theories as to why conversion took place. The first was the belief that the Aztecs suspected the conquistadores to be gods who were returning to claim their lands. The second theory was that the Aztecs were forced to convert to Christianity. And the last theory related to the process of osmosis, the belief that the Spanish missionaries took the Native religion and the Christian religion and blended the two together to easily convert the Aztecs. While these were three very different theories, there was no one theory that could satisfactorily be credited with the conversion of hundreds of thousands of Aztecs. It was the combination of all three that caused the eventual conversion of the Aztecs to Catholicism. In this essay, the three theories will be expressed in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. This will allow us to argue that there was not one factor that was the sole cause for the conversion of the Aztecs but that each theory played a contributing role to converting the Aztecs.

It is interesting to note, that while the theories are listed in order of oldest to most current historian consensus on the issue, they can also be examined in this order because they demonstrated the native reactions to the different phases of the Spanish invasion. The first phase was the invasion by Cortes. This initial reaction by the Aztecs was that of fear and not the most significant reason for conversion. The only explanation to deal with the shock with the arrival of the Spaniards was to believe that the Spaniards were Nahua deities. The second phase was when Montezuma denied Cortes' order to convert to

Catholicism. This immediate response was physical. In other words force was used to convert the Aztecs who were fighting back to preserve their traditions. This theory too was not as important in the conversion process in the long run. The last phase was the Aztec acceptance that the Spaniards were not going to be leaving. This reaction was more psychological in the sense that it was more convenient and easier for the Aztecs to accept then to feel completely defeated. In the long run this last phase has played a more substantial role in the conversion process.

Many of the early Spanish settlers and early historians credit the first theory, the legend of Quetzalcoatl¹, as the dominant factor in the conversion of the Aztecs. This is something one could expect since the Spanish settlers did not want to portray themselves as oppressors. There were also many native accounts that supported this theory. Many historians regarded the native sources as unreliable.² However, many of these native versions of the prelude and aftermath of the conquest were similar to the sources of the conquistadores. The native accounts were just as accurate and just as important to examine.

The native sources provided a lot of information with respect to the legend of Quetzalcoatl. According to this Aztec legend, in the year 1 Acatl, or the year 1519, the white bearded god, Quetzalcoatl, was to return from the east to reclaim his land. It just so happened that in the year 1519 (Good Friday, April 22, 1519)³ Hernan Cortes came to Tenochtitlán, the great city of the Aztecs.⁴ According to native accounts, with the appearance of bad omens and when the arrival of strangers was confirmed, Montezuma, the king of the Aztecs, ordered his men to find magicians to explain the evil occurrences. Montezuma spoke to many foreseers and no one could explain the omens and no one was able to give reasons for what was going to take place. It was only when a *macehual* (a common man) from another city, visited Montezuma that an explanation was provided. He told Montezuma about “a mountain range or small mountain floating in the midst of the water.”⁵ Later, reports of strange bearded light skinned- men on a floating mountain made Montezuma anxious.⁶ No where was it indicated that Montezuma thought the Spaniards were gods or that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl. Nevertheless, we cannot rule this out.

In many of the accounts of the Spaniards and the Aztecs the idea of Quetzalcoatl was evident.⁷ In the accounts of Bernal Diaz de Castillo, a Spanish soldier under the command of Cortes, wrote that Montezuma spoke to him and to the other Spaniards saying, “his ancestors in years long past had spoken, saying that men would come from where the sun rose to rule over these lands, and that we must be those men...”⁸ In other words, this was a confirmation that Montezuma believed Cortes and his men to be deities. This therefore also was

verification by the Spaniards that the Aztecs believed that Cortes and his men were deities.

In the *Florentine Codex*, a compilation of Aztec history told by the natives, compiled by Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, once Montezuma learned of these strangers and that they were near, he ordered the messengers to offer the finery of the gods' Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca.^{9 10} The messengers were sent to greet Cortes with these gifts. When the messengers neared the vessel they thought the appearance of Cortes resembled the description of Quetzalcoatl. When the messengers returned to Montezuma, they told him that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl. And so, Montezuma believed his messengers.¹¹ Eventually, Cortes and Montezuma met. When they did, Montezuma accepted that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl and Cortes played along. Montezuma told Cortes, "No, it is not a dream... And now you have come out of the clouds and mists to sit on your throne again.... Rest now, and take possession of your royal houses, Welcome to your land, my lords."¹² Cortes confirmed the native belief by saying that the natives were awaiting the king of Spain.¹³

At a gradual pace at first, Cortes started to gain control over Montezuma and the rest of the Aztec empire, by conveniently and opportunistically playing the role of Quetzalcoatl. After his first meeting with Montezuma, Cortes returned the following day to explain about the Christian faith. Montezuma said that he needed time to absorb all he had learned. In the meantime, there were many others who converted based on the belief that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl. As Hubert H. Bancroft wrote, "the conquered were only too eager to conform to the orders of their masters by tendering respect and obedience to the holy men."¹⁴ In other words, because some of the Aztecs believed Cortes was truly a god they obeyed and converted to Catholicism as Cortes instructed them to do so.¹⁵ This was known as "the year when the faith came."¹⁶

There was and still is a lot of criticism on this particular theory. Camilla Townsend stated in her article, *Burying the White Gods: New Perspective on the Conquest of Mexico*, the legend of Quetzalcoatl only surfaced when Sahagun edited the *Florentine Codex*. This meant that Sahagun created the resemblance between Quetzalcoatl and Cortes. If this was in fact true than this first theory is completely false. To further evaluate Townsend's argument, she believed the myth of Quetzalcoatl was of no significance to the native people at the time of the Spanish arrival.¹⁷ In further support of Townsend's position, J.H. Elliot also did not find the myth of Quetzalcoatl reliable. Elliot stated that there was no evidence to confirm any existence of

Quetzalcoatl and as Townsend stated, only appeared after the conquest.¹⁸ The problem with this theory was then how the Aztecs could explain the arrival of the strangers otherwise. In Elliot's case he wrote that the Aztecs thought Cortes was another god, Orchilobos and not Quetzalcoatl.¹⁹ While it was true that in some sources there was no direct mentioning of Quetzalcoatl but just of a god, it seemed more likely that it was Quetzalcoatl based on his popularity in many of the sources.²⁰

To further critique Townsend's and Elliot's argument, while it is true that Sahagun included the myth of Quetzalcoatl only after he edited the *Florentine Codex*, this does not dismiss the fact that the Aztecs believed in Quetzalcoatl. How else can Townsend then explain Cortes' letters that state that the Aztec people believed that he was Quetzalcoatl?²¹ Furthermore, through the evidence of archeological excavations, has also confirmed the argument that Quetzalcoatl indeed existed in the Aztec world prior to the invasion of the Conquistadores.²²

What is more, if Montezuma did not trust Cortes, why then did Montezuma not attack? He had hundreds of thousands of able men ready to fight and defeat the 600 or so men on the Spaniards' side in the first attempt. The only explanation as to why he was afraid of the Spaniards was because of religion.²³ In the back of his mind Montezuma had the story of Quetzalcoatl. He knew that these "gods" had the ability to take away his power.²⁴

To further support the above, how else could the Aztecs explain the arrival of these conquerors and the Spaniards in general? There were so many differences between the Aztecs and the Spaniards. The Spaniards had enormous ships, unusual attire, and more advanced technology. They also looked different and they spoke a different language. How could the Aztecs explain the arrival of these strangers? The only explanation was that the Spaniards were deities. And both native and Spanish writings confirm the belief in the Quetzalcoatl myth.

To sum up the first theory, unlike Elliot believed, there was ample amount of evidence to conclude that the Quetzalcoatl myth existed. The belief that Quetzalcoatl returned was real to many of the Aztec people. Because some of the Aztecs believed that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl they obeyed him and they converted to Catholicism.

The second theory, the idea that the Spaniards used force to convert the Aztecs, developed later. There was enough evidence in both Spanish and Aztec writings to confirm this theory as well. The Spaniards believed that their duty as

servants to God and to the Spanish crown was to convert the Aztecs to the Christian faith.²⁵ This concept was seen during a conversation between Cortes and Montezuma. To relate the second meeting of Cortes and Montezuma again, after Cortes became aware that Montezuma thought he was Quetzalcoatl, Cortes asked about converting Montezuma. Because Montezuma did not reply and since there was resistance by the Aztecs to convert, Cortes began to take power in his own hands. This resulted in the destruction of the Aztec idols and temples.²⁶

In Cortes' Second Letter to the Spanish king, Cortes wrote, "The most important of these idols, and the ones in whom they have most faith, I had taken from their places and thrown down the steps..."²⁷ Later in the same letter, Cortes wrote that the idols were taken away and the altars were cleared of the blood.²⁸ The idols were replaced with images of the Virgin Mary.²⁹ Hence, Cortes forcibly destroyed the religion of the Aztecs and tried to instill Christian images in order to convert the Aztecs.³⁰ When the Aztecs saw all their idols destroyed they wept and asked their gods for forgiveness.³¹ Not only did the Spaniards destroy the idols but the Franciscans did as well. The Franciscans claimed that they alone destroyed "more than five hundred temples and twenty thousand images within seven years."³² Bartoleme de Las Casas³³ wrote that the Spaniards had no right to come and convert the Aztecs. The Aztecs should have converted on their own free will. By coercing them to convert it was an abuse of a God-given Christian right.³⁴

What is more, if any of the Aztecs were to rebel against the destruction of their religious icons, the Spaniards were instructed to fight back.³⁵ Accordingly, the Aztecs rebelled and the Spaniards fought back. The Spaniards killed many of the kings and princes of neighboring cities.³⁶ As one native wrote to the king of Spain, "[The people of] many towns were forced and tortured, were hanged or burned, because they did not want to leave idolatry, and unwillingly they received the gospel and faith."³⁷ Out of fear, the Aztecs reluctantly saw no other way but to convert.

It was not only the Spaniards that destroyed the Aztec religion but Aztec youth as well. The Spanish missionaries kidnapped many of the Aztec children and they were brought up as Catholics.³⁸ The captured youths were easily won over by Christianity and they started a crusade of their own spanning from 1525 to 1531.³⁹ The youths, along with the Spaniards, participated in the destruction of idols and the temples.⁴⁰ Destroying the native religion was without a doubt an approach Cortes used to convert the Aztecs to Christianity and put the Aztec empire under Spain's control. The Spaniards had a great advantage over the Aztecs. They used their technology in order to force the conversion of the Aztec people. They were superior in this way to the Aztecs.⁴¹

Supporting this notion, the Spaniards found converting the Aztecs a necessity in order to obtain control and power over them. Cortes understood the need to Christianize the Aztecs for control. However, he converted the Aztecs by “insisting on conversion out of a strong sense of the need to legitimate conquest through crusade and implementing the true faith.”⁴² In other words, Cortes converted through the use of force. Besides the need to gain control of the area by Christianizing the people, Castillo wrote, “We came here to serve God and also to get rich.”⁴³ This further indicated that the Spaniards used force to convert the Aztecs in order to more quickly obtain wealth.⁴⁴

To further prove this theory, some towns were forced to observe Christian mass and kiss the cross of Christ which had no relevance to the Aztec people.⁴⁵ Another approach to converting was the baptizing of the women the Spaniards received. Women, who were given as gifts to Cortes, were forced to be baptized in order to be accepted.⁴⁶

The criticism of this theory was that the Aztecs were not forced but made to comprehend that the Aztecs religion was evil. Cortes wrote, “I made them understand...how deceived they were in placing their trust in those idols which they had made with their hands from unclean things.”⁴⁷ In other words, the Nahua religion was formed of idols that were wicked and the Spanish were only trying to help the Aztecs get rid of them. Others wrote that destruction was a necessity in order to save the Aztecs from the sinful idolatry and their evil worshipping practices.⁴⁸ This statement was one from an ethnocentric point of view. The Spaniards considered the native people inferior to their own.⁴⁹ This argument was created to justify the cruelty of the Spaniards towards the Aztecs. There was no evidence to show that no force was used to convert the Aztecs. As a matter of fact, the human sacrifices of the Aztecs “amounted to fewer native lives” wrote Las Casas, “than the Spaniards had sacrificed to their precious ‘goddess of greed’ every year since their conquests began.”⁵⁰

Over time, during the first half century of the conquest, an *encomienda* system was developed where the Spanish colonists were responsible to convert the Aztecs. This process of conversion was done through the use of force. It was believed that if the Aztec laborers were converted than they would obey the Spanish colonists.⁵¹

Cortes defeated the Aztecs and forced them to convert. The destruction of idols, temples, the kidnapping of the Aztec children, the killings of the nobility, and the practice of Christianity were forced for the most part on the Aztecs by the Spaniards. These approaches were the Spaniards way of who were

undermining the native religion and making Christianity triumphant. As Braden wrote, "thus was the conversion of the Indians of the new world begun."⁵² This meant that Cortes' coercive tactics put fear into the minds of the Aztecs to the point that the Aztecs no longer practiced their faith.⁵³ Therefore, with the destruction of the Aztec religion Cortes began the conversion of the Aztecs to Catholicism. This method of force, although effective, was not significant in the sense of creating and maintaining good Christian worship.

The last and most current theory was the belief that the Aztecs converted on the basis that Christianity was not much different from their own religion. There were many similarities between the two faiths. The Spaniards and the Aztecs both shared the cross as a religious symbol. The cross in Christianity was the symbol for redemption and in the Nahua religion it was the symbol for the rain god.⁵⁴ Both had a revered female religious figure. In Christianity the Virgin Mary and in the Aztec faith Tonantzin ("our mother") was a revered goddess of fertility of life (human and agriculture).⁵⁵ Other shared common religious practices were baptisms, confessions, communions, feast days, and fasting.⁵⁶

In further support of this last factor of conversion, many of the Aztecs were willing to convert after they became more aware of the Christian religion. The idea of baptism, as mentioned above, was also very appealing to the Aztecs. According to the Aztecs baptism was a way to purify one's soul.⁵⁷ Father Gante, a friar in the New World, wrote that "eight thousand, sometimes ten thousand, and even fourteen thousand persons in one day" were baptized.⁵⁸ The similarities and the advantages of converting gave the Aztecs little reservation on whether they should convert. It was an easier pill for the Aztecs to swallow than to acknowledge defeat and allow for the destruction of their entire culture.

Confession was a practice that the Aztecs were familiar with. If one committed a sin and they confessed that all would be forgiven.⁵⁹ However, if they repeated the same sin again than they would not be forgiven. The major difference between Aztec and Christian confessional practices was that the Aztecs generally confessed during times of crises rather than being a annual practice as is Christianity.⁶⁰

When the friars arrived to the Mesoamerican region, they found it a necessity to learn the native language and beliefs. In this way they could more easily associate with the native population. The friars believed that if the Aztec traditions, that were similar to the Christian traditions, were combined, it would seem more appealing for the Aztecs to convert.⁶¹ Accordingly, as referred to earlier, the friars began to learn the native language, Nahuatl, and study the

similarities of the religions. Consequently, translations of Aztec traditions were produced; similar to the volumes compiled by Sahagun. The similar practices were then combined and resulted as osmosis of the two religions. This combination of the two religions was later given the name of Nahua Christianity.⁶² “The native people interpreted Christianity in terms that were more or less compatible with their own cultures.”⁶³ “The native population continued to interpret elements as reflecting similar values or entities that they had known in Prehispanic days.”⁶⁴ In other words, they took what they considered fundamental Christian rites and still maintained the basic Nahua traditions.⁶⁵ There were Christian traditions which were rejected by some of the Aztecs and others that were adopted. The same was done with the Nahua faith. To further support this theory, the friars tried to create a sense of continuity by building churches over the previous locations of the temples. In other words, the locations of the worshipping structures were still in the same locality.⁶⁶ Despite the fact that the Aztecs were now Christians, under the understanding of the Spaniards, they did not stop worshipping their idols. The Aztec idols were instead incorporated into the Christian religion. Even “the Pope urged the Catholic Church in Mexico to be respectful of indigenous traditions and to incorporate them into religious ceremony when appropriate.”⁶⁷ For that reason many people now see the Christianity of the Aztecs as tainted by the Nahua faith in the Mesoamerican region.⁶⁸

This link between Aztec and Christian traditions may be best seen with the conversion of Juan Diego.⁶⁹ Juan Diego was born in 1474 and was an Aztec. He was baptized in 1524 and given the name we are familiar with today as Juan Diego. It has been told that on December 9, 1531 Juan Diego saw the Virgin Mary while walking to mass. This is therefore a further example of this idea of syncretism.⁷⁰

This final theory was not as well explored as the others’, yet it was of equal significance, if not more. Due to the similarities between the two religions it was easier to adapt and attract conversion amongst the natives instead of the Aztecs admitting to total defeat.

While all three theories on their own seem to be sole causes or reasons for the conversion of the Aztecs to Catholicism I cannot chose one theory as the singular reason why the Aztecs converted. I believe that the Aztecs did believe that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl. I also can understand Townsend’s argument which allows for some doubt to arise that Cortes was Quetzalcoatl. However, I believe that it is logical to believe in Quetzalcoatl’s existence for the fact that it explains how the Aztecs responded to the surprise of these newcomers, the Spaniards. Without a doubt, I also believe that the Spaniards used force to convert those

unwilling to on their own. The last theory, the idea of syncretism, I believe also plays a significant role in converting the Aztecs to Catholicism. The similarities between the two religions allowed for the Nahua Christianity to be created.⁷¹ It was a sort of an accord that was established in order to allow for the conversion to Catholic ideas.

This essay has argued that there was not one reason for the conversion of the Aztecs but a combination of factors (the three theories). The legend of Quetzalcoatl, the first theory to be credited for the conversion of the Aztecs did not by itself convert the entire Aztec population. The use of force, the second theory to be developed to account for the conversion of the Aztecs, most likely played a more significant role than the first. The last theory being the idea of osmosis, the current theory established to explain the conversion of the Aztecs and of developing importance to the conversion process, has a more significant and longer lasting effect than the first two theories had. Nevertheless, each theory was established to justify the reasons and the process of Aztec conversion to Catholicism following the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519. It is very unlikely that only one of the theories listed above could have solely been responsible for the conversion of hundreds of thousands of Aztecs. Each theory, whether the significance was major or minor, played an important role in converting the Aztecs.

The Spaniards and the Aztecs were at war between 1519 and 1521. The Aztecs fought to preserve their traditions and their way of life while the Spaniards waged a spiritual crusade, hoping to win souls to their faith, land for the Spanish crown, and large amounts of gold. It was an unhappy circumstance in which the Aztecs were defeated by Hernan Cortes, leader of the invasion of the Aztec empire, and his men. The Spanish conquerors then began the gradual process of converting the Aztecs to Christianity. The question of some curiosity was why the Aztecs converted. There were three main theories as to why conversion took place. The first was the belief that the Aztecs suspected the conquistadores to be gods who were returning to claim their lands. The second theory was that the Aztecs were forced to convert to Christianity. And the last theory related to the process of osmosis, the belief that the Spanish missionaries took the Native religion and the Christian religion and blended the two together to easily convert the Aztecs. The first phase was the invasion by Cortes. This initial reaction by the Aztecs was that of fear and not the most significant reason for conversion. The only explanation to deal with the shock with the arrival of the Spaniards was to believe that the Spaniards were Nahua deities. The second phase was when Montezuma denied Cortes' order to convert to Catholicism. This immediate response was physical. In other words force was used to convert the Aztecs who were fighting back to preserve their traditions.

This theory too was not as important in the conversion process in the long run. The last phase was the Aztec acceptance that the Spaniards were not going to be leaving. This reaction was more psychological in the sense that it was more convenient and easier for the Aztecs to accept than to feel completely defeated. In the long run this last phase has played a more substantial role in the conversion process.

While these were three very different theories, there was no one theory that could satisfactorily be credited with the conversion of hundreds of thousands of Aztecs. It was the combination of all three that caused the eventual conversion of the Aztecs to Catholicism. In this essay, the three theories will be expressed in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. This will allow us to argue that there was not one factor that was the sole cause for the conversion of the Aztecs but that each theory played a contributing role to converting the Aztecs.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Quetzalcoatl was one of the creators of the cosmos.

²Romanticists, those who in the time of Columbus believed that only Europeans were sophisticated. The Mesoamerican region was believed to have been influenced by outsiders, Europeans. This meant that what the Mesoamerican people achieved was not one their own but by the European presence.

Robert M. Carmack, Janine Gasco, Gary H. Gossen, *The Legacy of Mesoamerica: History and Culture of a Native American Civilization* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996), 22.

³Miguel Leon- Portilla, *The Broken Spears* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), xxv.

⁴Ignacio Bernal, *Mexico Before Cortez* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1973), 96-97.

⁵Portilla, 16.

⁶Ibid, 16-17.

⁷Braden, Smith, O'Gorman, Gruzinski, Carmack, Florescano, and Sahagun relate the arrival to Cortes as the arrival of Quetzalcoatl.

⁸Bernal Diaz de Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, Translated by A.P. Maudslay (Mexico City: Mexico Press, 1928), 283.

⁹Tezcatlipoca was one of the gods of war and hunting. Carmack, 115.

¹⁰Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, *Florentine Codex: General History of the things of New Spain Book 12*. Translated by Charles E. Dibble & Arthur J.O. Anderson (Utah: The University of Utah, 1951-1959), 11.

¹¹Sahagun, 9.

¹²Portilla, 64.

¹³Charles S. Braden, *Religious Aspects of the Conquest of Mexico* (New York: AMS Pres, Inc., 1966), 107.

¹⁴Hubert Howe Bancroft, Volume X History of Mexico Vol. II 1521-1600 (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Company, Publishers, 1883), 170.

¹⁵Ibid, 170.

¹⁶Ibid, 170.

¹⁷Camilla Townsend, "Burying the White Gods: New Perspectives on the Conquest of Mexico," *The American Historical Review*. 108 (3): 665.

¹⁸J.H. Elliot, *Cortes and Montezuma*. ed. Gilbert M. Joseph & Timothy J Henderson, "The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics" (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 105-106.

¹⁹Ibid, 107.

²⁰Braden, Smith, O'Gorman, Gruzinski, Carmack, Florescano, and Sahagun relate the arrival to Cortes as the arrival of Quetzalcoatl.

²¹David Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 48.

²²Ibid, 48.

²³Braden, 105.

²⁴Edmundo O' Gorman, *The Political Evolution of the Mexican People*, Translated by Charles Ramsdell (San Antonio: University of Texas Press, 1969), 56.

²⁵Carmack, 126.

²⁶Sahagun, 53.

²⁷Hernan Cortes, *Letter from Mexico*, Translated by Anthony Pagden, (New York: Yale University Press, 1986) 106.

²⁸The altars were used for sacrifices to the gods.

²⁹Ibid, 106.

³⁰Braden, 81.

³¹Castillo, 162.

³²Bancroft, 179.

³³A Spanish priest.

³⁴O'Gorman, 89.

³⁵Castillo, 161.

³⁶Portilla, 129.

³⁷Ibid, 157.

³⁸Stephanie Wood, *Transcending Conquest: Nahua Views of Spanish Colonial Mexico*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 99.

³⁹Ibid, 99.

⁴⁰Ibid, 100.

⁴¹Dirk R. Van Tuerenhout, *Understanding Ancient Civilizations: The Aztecs- New Perspectives* (California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2005), 267.

⁴²K. Liss, *Mexico Under Spain, 1521-1556*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 29.

⁴³Liss, 20.

⁴⁴O' Gorman, 56.

⁴⁵Castillo, 113.

⁴⁶Braden, 94.

⁴⁷Cortes, 106.

⁴⁸Braden, 95.

⁴⁹The inferior name put upon the natives later gave more reason to the Spaniards to enslave the natives. The Spaniards believed the enslavement would benefit the Aztecs by using the Spaniards as models of what kind of people they could become. It was not until later that the King of Spain forbade this form of enslavement, the encomienda system. In contradiction to the Spanish notion of inferiority towards the Aztecs, Francisco de Victoria, a priest, believed that the Aztecs were civilized people and were not irrational or mentally challenged people as these early Spanish settlers stated. Carmack, 132.

⁵⁰Carmack, 135.

⁵¹Van Tuerenhout, 267.

⁵²Braden, 82.

⁵³Bancroft, 179

⁵⁴Braden, 62.

⁵⁵Octavio Paz, *The Sons of La Malinche*. ed. Gilbert M. Joseph & Timothy J Henderson, "The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics" (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 24-25.

⁵⁶Braden, 61.

⁵⁷Bancroft, 175.

⁵⁸Ibid, 175.

⁵⁹Van Tuerenhout, 186.

⁶⁰Ibid, 273.

⁶¹Wood, 14.

⁶²Ibid, 14.

⁶³Ibid, 290.

⁶⁴Van Tuerenhout, 273.

⁶⁵Ibid, 290.

⁶⁶Michael E. Smith, *The Aztecs* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996), 287-288.

⁶⁷Van Tuerenhout, 275.

⁶⁸O'Gorman, 86.

⁶⁹Van Tuerenhout, 275.

⁷⁰Ibid, 275.

⁷¹Wood, 14.