

Anonymous
Codex Florentino (1540-1585)
Aztec narration of Moctezuma meeting Cortés upon the
Spaniards' entrance into Mexico City (Tenochtitlán) (1)
November 8, 1519
Trans. William Little©

Motecuhzoma Comes Out to Greet Cortés

In this state of affairs, the Spaniards reached Xoloco. There they reached the end of their journey. That was their goal.

At that time Motecuhzoma (2) gets prepared, he dresses in his finery in order to go meet them. Also, the rest of the great princes, nobles, their magnates, their knights and courtiers. They are already on their way to meet those who are coming.

In great flat-bottomed boats they have placed the finest flowers: the crest flower, the heart flower. Above them in the middle stands the flower with the beautiful scent, and the sweet-smelling yellow one—the precious one. They are garlands, with bars that cross the men's chests.

Also, in the procession they are wearing golden necklaces with thick hanging beads, necklaces sewn with fine matting straw.

Then, there in Huitzillan, Motecuhzoma goes forward to meet them. Then he presents gifts to the captain, to the man who commands his people, and to those who have come to make war. He regales them with gifts, he places flowers around their necks, he gives them necklaces of flowers and large strings of flowers that cross their chests, he places garlands of flowers on their heads.

Quickly he places before him golden necklaces, every kind of gift as a sign of welcome.

Dialogue Between Motecuhzoma and Cortés

After Cortés had distributed necklaces to each Mexican, Cortés said to Motecuhzoma:

"I presume it is you? Is it really you? Is it true that you are Motecuhzoma?"

Motecuhzoma said to him:

"Yes, I am he."

He stands up immediately, he stands erect to receive him, he approaches and bows, lowering his head as much as he can. This is how he addresses him, he says this:

"Our lord, you are tired out, you have exhausted yourself, yet you have arrived in your land. You have arrived in your city, Mexico.

You have come here to sit under your canopy on your throne. Oh, it was saved for you for a short time; they preserved it for you, those who have gone away, your substitutes.

"The kings, lords Itzcoatzin, Motecuhzomatzin the Elder, Axayácatl, Tízoc, Ahuítzotl. Oh, for they kept it for you alone for a short time; they controlled the city of Mexico. On their back, under their mantle the common people were sheltered.

"Will they see, will they even find out about those they left behind, those who came after?

"Would that one of them were here to see this, to see with amazement what I myself now see coming to me?

"What I am seeing now, I the remnant, the survivor of your lords.

"No, it's not that I'm dreaming, I have not risen from a dream sleepily; I am not seeing this as in a dream, I am neither sleeping nor dreaming...

"It's that I've already seen you, it's that I've already seen your face with my own eyes!

"Five days ago, ten days ago I was in anguish, I was staring fixedly into the Region of Mystery.

"And you have come through the clouds, through the fog.

"Just as former kings had foretold for us, those who ruled, those who governed your city.

"That you would necessarily be installed on your seat, on your seat of honor, that you were about to come here.

"So, then, it is fulfilled: you have just arrived, with exhausting effort you have come.

"Come into your land, come and rest; take possession of your royal houses; refresh your body.

"Enter your land, oh lords of ours!"

When Motecuhzoma's address ended, Cortés had heard it, and Malintzin (3) translated it, she enabled him to understand it.

And as soon as he heard the meaning of Motecuhzoma's speech, he immediately responded through Malintzin's mouth. He said to him in a foreign tongue; he said this to him in a barbarous language:

"Be at ease, Motecuhzome, for you need have no fear. We love you very much. Our heart is quite satisfied today. We see your face, we hear you. We have wanted to see you for a long time."

And he added this:

"We already saw, we already arrived at your home in Mexico; so, therefore, you will be able to hear our words very calmly."

Then they took him by the hand, and proceeded to accompany him. They give him pats on the back. By this means they show their affection.

(1) This version is translated from the Spanish version found in *Visión de los vencidos*. México, D.F.: UNAM, 1992, 66-69. The original author was a Náhuat-speaking informant for Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590), the Spanish priest who collected many narratives such as this one in the sixteenth-century book known as the *Codex Florentino*. Sahagún was a Franciscan missionary to the Aztec/Mexica people. The *Florentine Codex*, is also known as *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (*General History of the Things of New Spain*). It contains twelve books created under the supervision of Sahagún during the years 1540 to 1585. It is a copy of original source materials that is now lost. The originals were records of interviews with indigenous people in Tlatelolco, Texcoco, and Tenochtitlán. The *Florentine Codex* is primarily in Nahuatl, written by trilingual Nahuatl, Spanish, and Latin Aztec students of Sahagún. The Nahuatl text is written on the right side of the codex. Sections of this text were translated into Spanish, and written in the left column. However, many sections were not translated and some were only summarized in their translation. In their place, the *Florentine Codex* has roughly 1,800 illustrations done by Aztec *tlacuilos* using European techniques. Some of the Spanish translation was censored or rewritten by Sahagún. The *Florentine Codex* is the major source of Aztec life in the years before 1519-21. A complete copy with all of the illustrations was published first in 1979.

(2) Motecuhzoma is the spelling the sixteenth-century Spanish used to approximate the name of Montezuma II. Contemporary Spanish says Moctezuma.

(3) For information about Malintzin (i.e., Doña Marina), see: => [Malinalli](#).