

CORTÉS AFTER THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO:  
CONSTRUCTING LEGACY IN NEW SPAIN

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Abstract: This dissertation examines an important yet woefully understudied aspect of Hernán Cortés after the conquest of Mexico. The Marquisate of the Valley of Oaxaca was carefully constructed during his lifetime to be his lasting legacy in New Spain. The goal of this dissertation is to reexamine published primary sources in light of this new argument and integrate unknown archival material to trace the development of a lasting legacy by Cortés and his direct heirs in Spanish colonial Mexico. Part one looks at Cortés's life after the conquest of Mexico, giving particular attention to the themes of fame and honor and how these ideas guided his actions. The importance of land and property in and after the conquest is also highlighted. Part two is an examination of the marquisate, discussing the key features of the various landholdings and also their importance to the legacy Cortés sought to construct. This analysis is extended into the second and third generation of the marquisate, an aspect of Cortés's legacy mostly ignored by scholars, to trace the success or failure of various developments. In looking at Cortés and the marquisate in its entirety (as compared to regional studies), it becomes clear that the marquisate was more important to Cortés than previous historical literature indicates, as it was directly tied to his desire to construct a legacy in New Spain as well as his ideas of fame and honor. Cortés utilized the marquisate not only for economic gain, but for political and social goals as well. Through showing that Cortés was devoted to the development and growth of his marquisate, this research highlights the legacy Cortés sought to construct in Mexico, and the impression he hoped to make on Mexico beyond the conquest. Cortés controlled the largest estate in New Spain, and how he and his heirs managed that land would fundamentally shape New Spain and the history of Mexico.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A poor boy of lower nobility from Extremadura, Spain, Cortés arrived in the New World with nothing; fifteen years later, he was a prominent landowner and wealthy citizen of Cuba, working directly under the governor, Diego Velásquez. Having already achieved a level of success in the Indies greater than most Spanish settlers, Cortés was nonetheless not satisfied. He knew very little about Mexico or what it might contain, but he was so confident in his belief that better things awaited him that he drove himself into debt and ruined his relationship with Velásquez to fund the expedition. When Velásquez tried to stop him, Cortés reportedly told him, “I beg your pardon, but these things are better done than thought about.”<sup>1</sup>

John H. Elliott explains that a key feature of Spanish conquistadors was their “capacity for infinite wonder at the strange world unfolding before their eyes, interpreting its mysteries as much from their store of imagination as from their past experience.”<sup>2</sup> Conquistadors drew on this imagination and cast themselves as the main characters in

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<sup>1</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, Andrée M. Collard, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 228-229.

<sup>2</sup> John H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 64.

their own heroic tales. This power of imagination was later captured in Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605). The titular character is a country gentleman so obsessed with medieval tales of chivalry that his imagination leads him to believe he is a knight-errant, destined to wander the countryside and make a name for himself while ridding the world of evil. In arguably the best known scene, Don Quixote mistakes several windmills for giants and proclaims his intent to vanquish them, achieving wealth and glory in the process. He explains, "Chance has conducted our affairs even better than we could either wish or hope for; look there, friend Sancho, and behold thirty or forty outrageous giants, with whom I intend to engage in battle, and put every soul of them to death, so that we may begin to enrich ourselves with their spoils; for, it is a meritorious warfare, and serviceable both to God and man." When his companion Sancho Panza realizes Don Quixote's mistake he pleads that he not attack them, asserting, "I would your lordship would take notice that those you see yonder are no giants, but windmills; and what seem arms to you, are sails; which being turned with the wind, make the mill-stone work." With equal incredulity, Don Quixote responds, "It seems very plain that you are but a novice in adventures."<sup>3</sup>

Cervantes captures an ethos that would have been familiar to Hernán Cortés, who in 1519 set off from the Spanish island of Fernandina, known today as Cuba, for the eastern coast of Mexico.<sup>4</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas's description of Cortés's departure from Cuba follows in line with the action and ambition that characterized the life of the

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<sup>3</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *The Adventures of Don Quixote de la Mancha*, Tobias Smollett, trans. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986), 62.

<sup>4</sup> There is evidence that Cervantes was familiar with Cortés and the conquest of Mexico. In chapter eight of the volume two of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes mentions the actions of Cortés in the New World in a discussion between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza on the issue of the quest for fame. (Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, 467; Mary Malcolm Gaylord, "Don Quixote's New World of Language," *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 84.

conquistador.<sup>5</sup> Using whatever resources at his disposal, many times during his life he demonstrated the willingness to sacrifice his previous achievements for the prospect of something greater. From his education as a young man to his status as Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, Cortés consistently acted as though his greatest achievement lay ahead. Aware of the image he spent his life trying to create, Cortés espoused the notion once again, to borrow dialogue from Don Quixote, “I know who I am, and who I may be if I choose.”<sup>6</sup> Like Don Quixote, Cortés was drawn to the idealism of fame and glory, not only by medieval tales but by real events during in his lifetime. In this dissertation I will explore the effort by Cortés and his successors, both during his lifetime and after his death, to construct a lasting legacy. Part one will explore his life, highlighting his efforts to obtain honor and fame. This includes not only his narrative of the conquest, but also the events in his life after the conquest. To Cortés, honor and fame were inseparable from New Spain. Part two will explore how he and his successors managed his legacy through the administration of his marquisate. Cortés saw in his estates numerous economic opportunities as he sought to contribute to the development of New Spain and

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<sup>5</sup> All three of the contemporary accounts of Cortés’s departure from Fernandina are different. In Francisco López de Gómara’s version, relating the story from Cortés himself, he stated that Velásquez would not speak to Cortés. (Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by his Secretary Francisco López de Gómara*, Lesley Byrd Simpson, ed. (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1964), 21.) Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a soldier accompanying Cortés to Mexico who, unlike Las Casas and López de Gómara, was present at the encounter, asserted that Cortés and Velásquez parted amicably. (Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, A.P. Maudslay, trans. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1956), 34.) Whether or not the exchange happened as Las Casas reported, it reveals an important aspect of Cortés’ reputation.

<sup>6</sup> Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, 50. The above quotation is a common abridgement. The actual quotation is: “I know very well who I am, and that it is possible for me to be not only those whom I have mentioned, but also the whole twelve peers of France, and even the nine worthies, seeing that my achievements will excel, not only those of each of them singly, but even the exploits of them all joined together.” For more information on the self-conscious process of shaping identity during the Renaissance, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.)



in the process elevate his social and political status. The legacy of Cortés is strongly tied to the marquisate, through which he made a lasting impression on the history of Mexico.

As a child Cortés (1485-1547) was exposed to the final acts of the centuries-long struggle of Christian Spain against the Islamic Moors known as the Reconquista. He also witnessed the onset of the Italian Wars between King Ferdinand and the kings of France. Cortés had family members who fought in both of these conflicts. The idea of fighting for one's faith and kingdom was one strongly implanted in Cortés's mind at an early age, as was the idea of fame and honor acquired by notable figures of these wars.<sup>7</sup>

### **Historiography and Sources of Conquest**

Cortés is primarily remembered for the conquest of Mexico, so one might believe his ambitions lay in combat and success in warfare. According to a firsthand account of the conquest by one of his soldiers, Cortés was said to have been very capable on the battlefield. Other than his military ability, however, there is no indication that he sought glory specifically through warfare. Previous to the conquest of Mexico, he had only limited experience with fighting in the Spanish Indies, and in his life he was wounded many times in battle. In his own account of the conquest, he consistently used peaceful means to achieve his objectives before he resorted to fighting. His life before 1519 was spent primarily as a notary and secretary. His knowledge of law and literature is apparent in many of his writings. Just as he did not seem to be wholly interested in warfare, he was likewise disinterested in governmental service to the Crown. After becoming

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<sup>7</sup> Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortés, and the Fall of Old Mexico* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 17-23.

governor of what he named “New Spain of the Ocean Sea,” he took an interest in building a Spanish infrastructure in Mexico, but he left his office for an expedition to Honduras just three years after conquest.<sup>8</sup> Wealth did not particularly interest him either, although he did enjoy it. His personal chronicler, Francisco López de Gómara, wrote that Cortés “spent liberally on war, women, friends, and fancies, which got him the name of new-rich.”<sup>9</sup> Despite this, after receiving the largest royal grant of land in New Spain in 1529, he directed his efforts and finances to the exploration of the South Seas, or Pacific Ocean. Cortés, it seems, was first and foremost an explorer and conqueror - the quintessential Spanish conquistador.

Spanish conquistadors, while limited in number, were able to achieve monumental accomplishments despite the odds against them. Cortés overcame the Aztec Empire with six hundred soldiers and sixteen horses, while Francisco Pizarro defeated the Incan Empire with one hundred and eighty men and thirty-seven horses. While impressive feats, one must not forget the thousands of natives that fought with them. John Elliott characterizes the typical conquistador: the overwhelming majority of them were Castilian, and largely from Andalusia and Extremadura; they were frontiersmen accustomed to hardship at times; they were single men with military experience or, as in the case of Cortés, surrounded by a military environment through family or region; they were also largely younger sons of lesser nobility, who, without entail, had very little personal wealth but a strong desire to prove themselves. Militaristically and legally

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<sup>8</sup> Hernán Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, Anthony Pagden, trans. and ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 158. Cortés wrote to the emperor Charles V in late 1520, “From all I have seen and understood touching the similarity between his land and that of Spain, in its fertility and great size and the cold and many other things, it seemed to me that the most suitable name for it was New Spain of the Ocean Sea, and so in Your Majesty’s name I called it that.”

<sup>9</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 409.

minded, most conquistadors were well-organized, which accounted for their success in combat and their ability to manage conquered lands. A key feature of conquistadors, as Elliott explains, was the power of their imagination to interpret the amazing events that unfolded before their eyes in whatever manner they could.<sup>10</sup> Emboldened by their imagination through literary tales of chivalry and actual Spanish war heroes, conquistadors endured much and sacrificed much in the New World. Cortés himself respected the tenacity of his companions. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a soldier who served under Cortés during the conquest, explained: “He expressed much praise of his captains and comrades who were present with him in the capture and conquest of Mexico, saying that they went there to suffer hunger and hardships and wherever he should call them he could perform heroic deeds with them, and that when wounded and enveloped in rags they never ceased fighting and capturing every city or fortress, although they might chance to lose their lives in the act.”<sup>11</sup> Historian Irving A. Leonard wrote, “To be young in the Hispanic Peninsula during this period of human experience was to have faith in the impossible. An enormously enlarged world teemed with possibilities...Life had a zest and an irresistible allure.”<sup>12</sup> Conquistadors were those at the forefront of possibility.

The willingness to endure hardship and risk one’s life would not have occurred without a cause. What did conquistadors fight for? Díaz del Castillo concisely explained his point of view, asserting, “We came here to serve God and the king, and also to get rich.”<sup>13</sup> The ideas of service to God and acquiring wealth proved to be opposing forces, a

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<sup>10</sup> John Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 63-64.

<sup>11</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1964), 513.

<sup>12</sup> Irving A. Leonard, Introduction to Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Díaz del Castillo, quoted in Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 65. This quote is sometimes shortened to omit the king, stating, “We came here to serve God and to get rich,” as is in the case of Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish*

point most notably pointed out by Las Casas: “The aim which Christ and the pope seek and ought to seek in the Indies – and which the Christian Kings of Castile should likewise strive for – is that the natives of those regions shall hear the faith preached in order that they may be saved. And the means to effect this end are not to rob, to scandalize, to capture or destroy them, or to lay waste their lands, for this would cause the infidels to abominate our faith.”<sup>14</sup> Cortés demonstrated he was of the same opinion in early 1519. Before reaching mainland Mexico, Cortés’s men landed on Cozumel and seized goods and gold from the natives. When Cortés arrived on the island shortly after, he admonished his crew. Díaz del Castillo wrote, “He reprimanded Pedro de Alvarado severely, and told him that we should never pacify the country in that way by robbing the natives of their property.”<sup>15</sup> Although Cortés would become very wealthy in the conquest of Mexico, throughout his life he was careful to not steal outright from the native population. For example, in his will he requested that his estate be evaluated based on agreements with the natives, and if he held land that did not belong to him it should be returned to its rightful owner along with any profits that came from the property.<sup>16</sup> For other conquistadors, their objective was more clearly personal gain. When a friar protested Francisco Pizarro’s treatment of the Incas of Peru, urging him to focus on spreading Christianity, he is said to have replied, “I have not come for any such reason. I have come to take away from them their gold.”<sup>17</sup> The conflicting motives of Christian

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*Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 2002), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas, quoted in Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, 41.

<sup>16</sup> Hernán Cortés, *Postrera voluntad y testamento de Hernando Cortés, Marques del Valle*, G.R.G. Conway, ed. (Mexico: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1940), 36-37.

<sup>17</sup> Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice*, 7.

missionary work and obtaining personal wealth led to practices and policies unique to the conquest of the Americas.

Bringing Christianity to new lands, becoming wealthy, and serving one's sovereign brought an individual fame and honor, very important aspects of the conquistador identity. The typical conquistador had very little to lose but a great deal to gain; this applies not only to material wealth but reputation as well. Rank and status in society were determined by wealth and property, and the acquisition of both was a possible outcome of conquest.<sup>18</sup> Within the context of Spanish society, honor could be defined as "the respect and accompanying homage that a man deserves and receives because of his personal qualities, lineage, power, or wealth."<sup>19</sup> Fame or renown could be attained by anyone who held an honorable profession or through such activities as warfare or statecraft. Coming from a poor family (in a sparsely populated farming region of Spain in the small town of Medellín in Extremadura), Cortés, like any young *hidalgo* of Castile, would have peered up at Medellín Castle on the hill overlooking the town and aspired to make a name for himself by obtaining a noble title, acquiring vassals, and gaining widespread respect and admiration. In medieval Spain, a noble title and the notoriety that came with it was obtained through war with the Moors; Medellín Castle itself was built during the Reconquista by the military order of Santiago after the town was captured from the Moors in the thirteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Fueling the imagination of

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<sup>18</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 65

<sup>19</sup> Hugo Nutini, *The Wages of Conquest: The Mexican Aristocracy in the Context of Western Aristocracies* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 192. For more on the role of honor in Spanish society, see Scott K. Taylor, *Honor and Violence in Golden Age Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Hugh Thomas, *Rivers of Gold: The Rise of the Spanish Empire, from Columbus to Magellan* (New York: Random House, 2003), 479; Oliver D. Washburn, *Castles in Spain* (Mexico: La Impresora Azteca, 1957), 165.

Cortés and other conquistadors in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century were tales of medieval and contemporary war heroes who were able to acquire the glory they desired. While the war against the Moors in Spain ended in 1492, that desire for social acclaim did not; whether it was military service in the Italian Wars or settlement in the New World, fame and honor continued to be a driving force for men like Cortés (members of the lower nobility) as they sought to become nobility of higher stature.

While the motivation of fame and honor were foremost in the minds of Spaniards struggling for social recognition, these concepts were not limited to status. Spanish conquistadors also believed that gaining earthly fame could lead to greater glory in heaven. Cortés viewed the conquest as a holy war: “as Christians we were obliged to wage war against the enemies of our Faith; and thereby we would win glory in the next world, and, in this, greater honor and renown than any generation before our time.”<sup>21</sup> In the context of sixteenth-century Spain, where justifications of the conquests included both temporal, legal justifications and the religious motivation of spreading Christianity, it is not difficult to see how the concept of glory might also span both realms in the mind of Cortés and others.<sup>22</sup> The idea of conquest as a spiritual act also provides insight into why conquistadors consistently risked their lives: they believed in the righteousness of their cause. If a conquistador were to die, the act of dying in battle for his faith would bring him glory in heaven; if he survived, successful in battle, he could take newly-gained wealth back to a society that bestowed honor and fame upon those with wealth

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<sup>21</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 63.

<sup>22</sup> Mariano Picón-Salas, *A Cultural History of Spanish America: From Conquest to Independence* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1971), 34-35.

and power.<sup>23</sup> While there was much more to the life of a conquistador than success on the battlefield, historical study of conquistadors has largely focused on this militaristic aspect, perhaps with no one more so than Cortés.

The various qualities of the conquistadors made them highly adaptable to any situation in which they found themselves. Cortés was a capable military leader, but he was also just as comfortable in other roles; whether leading an expedition through the jungles of Honduras or socializing at the court of Emperor Charles V, Cortés carried himself with confidence and determination. He was also keenly aware of the image he was constructing. Following the fall of Tenochtitlán until his death in 1547, Cortés actively continued to shape his legacy through administration of his marquisate and expeditions of discovery and conquest. A large part of his life in New Spain included the development of his large estate as the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca. Not only was it the largest private landholding in New Spain during his life, it was passed down to his heirs until Mexican independence in 1821. Despite the various roles Cortés played in his lifetime, his efforts as a settler and landowner in New Spain have been largely overshadowed by the conquest that created such opportunities. Cortés did not spend his life after the fall of Tenochtitlán idly but rather he actively searched for his next source of fame and honor. While he was never able to find that next great thing, he remained involved in the development of New Spain. Through this process, his legacy and memory came to include more than just his best-known exploit. The marquisate of Hernán Cortés did not have as profound an impact on Mexico as its conquest, but it is,

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<sup>23</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 65-66.

nonetheless, an important aspect of Cortés's legacy that merits more attention and historical study.

There has been a great deal written about Hernán Cortés over the centuries, but the study of the conquistador is by no means complete. The first printed account of the conquest of Mexico came shortly after the conquest itself – in Cortés's own words. His *Cartas de relación* to Emperor Charles V, published in Seville beginning in 1522 by printer Jacobo Cromberger, became accepted as official accounts of the conquest.<sup>24</sup> The work is a *relación*, an official report authenticated by a notary; as a legal document, its primary purpose was to relate accurately an event to the Crown. Nevertheless, in control of his own narrative, Cortés portrayed himself in the most positive light possible. He highlighted glorious and honorable actions, emphasizes his service to the emperor, and characterizes shortcomings and failures as the interference of agents working against his noble cause.<sup>25</sup> This interweaving of fact and fiction led to a ban on the publication of the *cartas* in Spanish lands in 1527. They were found to be injurious to the reputations of others involved, specifically Pánfilo de Narváez.<sup>26</sup> From just a few years after conquest,

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<sup>24</sup> On this subject, see Anthony Pagden, translator's introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, lviii; A copy of Cortés's first letter of relation, which references at the beginning of his second letter, has never been found. Cromberger published the second letter in 1522, the third in 1523, and the fourth in 1525. Cortés's fifth letter of relation focused on his Honduras expedition and was not published. For more information on the Cromberger printing family, see Clive Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Printing and Merchant Dynasty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). While the first printing press in Mexico was established in 1534-1536 by Esteban Martin, the first commercial printing press in Mexico was established by the Crombergers in 1539. (Henry Lepidus, "The History of Mexican Journalism," *The University of Missouri Bulletin*, vol. 29, no.4 (January, 1928), 7; Carlos Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 20, no. 4 (November, 1940), 673-675.)

<sup>25</sup> Beatriz Aracil Varón, "Hernán Cortés en sus 'Cartas de Relación': la configuración literaria del héroe," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2009), 751-752.

<sup>26</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, Beatriz Arteaga Garza and Guadalupe Perez San Vicente, eds. (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1949), 95-96; Marcel Bataillon, "Hernán Cortés: autor prohibido," *Libro jubilar de Alfonso Reyes* (Mexico: Dirección General de Difusión Cultural, 1956), 77-82; Pagden, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, lviii. The royal decree sent to Narváez, who was at the time governor of Rio de la Palmas y la Florida, stated, "mandamos que ningún librero ni impresor, ni otra persona, imprimiese ni tuviese ciertas



heavy censorship of works about Cortés and his actions affected their availability in Spain. Outside Spain, publication of the letters continued.

Among the first to portray the conquest in a negative light was Bartolomé de las Casas in his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (written in 1542, published in 1552). This work became the most popular basis for the Black Legend of Spanish-American history.<sup>27</sup> The history of the conquest of Mexico changed over time, and with it the reputation of Cortés. For this reason, it is imperative that any historiographical study of Hernán Cortés take into account the strong and overarching impact of the “Black Legend,” a term coined by Julián Juderías in his 1914 book *La Leyenda Negra*.<sup>28</sup> Generally defined, the Black Legend is “a careful distortion of the history of a people, by their enemies, to better fight it. As monstrous a distortion possible, in order to achieve the desired result: the moral condemnation of the people, whose supremacy must be fought in every way possible.”<sup>29</sup> The legend stems from many sources from the fifteenth century onward: political enemies of the vast Spanish Habsburg empire, including France, Britain, The Netherlands, Italy, and Germany; Protestant groups in opposition to Catholic Spain across Europe; economic competitors of Spain, particularly involving the New World; finally, Enlightenment scholars attempting to understand the Spanish loss of hegemony in Europe after the sixteenth

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cartas y relaciones que Hernando Cortés nos habia enviado de las cosas acaecidas en la Nueva España, porque dizque era en perjuicio vuestro.” (*Cedulario Cortesiano*, 96)

<sup>27</sup> Philip Wayne Powell, *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), 23.

<sup>28</sup> Julián Juderías, *La leyenda negra: studios acerca del concepto de España en el extranjero*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1960), 29. Juderías defined the Black Legend as an “atmosphere created by the fantastic accounts of Spain which have been published in almost all countries; the grotesque descriptions which are forever made of the character of Spaniards as individuals and collectively; the negation, or, at least, the systematic ignorance of whatever is favorable and worthy of honor in the various manifestations of culture and art; the accusations which are always being launched against Spain.” Translation in Powell, *Tree of Hate*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro, *La leyenda negra* (Madrid: Akal, 1997), 5.

century. The Black Legend is most commonly seen in the denigration of Spanish conquest and colonization of the Americas, of which Bartolomé de las Casas's attacks on Spanish practices in America are the primary source.<sup>30</sup> Spanish conquistadors were painted as "Indian killers" and gold-seeking monsters without understanding the full context of such a large and difficult endeavor as the conquest and colonization of the New World. Until the nineteenth century, the most common perspective of Cortés came through the lens of the Black Legend.<sup>31</sup>

For the present study, the most important impact of the Black Legend on the study of Cortés is that it so closely associated him with the conquest of Mexico that most historians focus on this part of his life at the expense of all others. This discussion centers upon the goals of Cortés in the New World weighed against the means he used to achieve them. In other words, which is more important: what he accomplished, or how he accomplished it? While this avenue of study has provided valuable insight into the life of the conquistador, it is incomplete. Cortés spent the two and a half decades after the conquest of Mexico working for other achievements. While he was largely unsuccessful in these activities, they are nonetheless important to understand the motives that drove such an important figure in the history of Mexico.

Las Casas, like Cortés, had been among the first settlers of Cuba, but unlike Cortés he became an advocate for rights of the Indians after witnessing their mistreatment and exploitation. He later became a Dominican friar and devoted his life to the protection of Native Americans against Spanish brutality. He traveled to many parts of Spanish

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<sup>30</sup> Powell, *Tree of Hate*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Powell, *Tree of Hate*, 17;73.

America to observe and reform Spanish practices.<sup>32</sup> His account described many Spanish atrocities against the natives, the decimation of native populations, and what measures should be taken to elevate Indians from servitude. He asserted that his purpose in writing the account was to save Spain from God's retribution for the crimes against Native Americans: "I do not wish to see my county destroyed as a divine punishment for sins against the honor of God and the true Faith."<sup>33</sup> Like Cortés's letters, Las Casas's work is a *relación*. In this sense, like Cortés, Las Casas intended not only to relate a narrative of events but also to persuade the reader of his point of view. It was a petition for justice. While not focused solely on Cortés, he portrayed the conquistador in the most negative light. Describing Cortés and his men as "evil," Las Casas summarized the conquest by stating that "it would be impracticable to compile a complete dossier of all the atrocities, foul murders, and other barbarities they committed, and any such account would be so lengthy it would prove impossible for the reader to take in."<sup>34</sup> Las Casas's calls for reform were influential in the New Laws of 1542, aimed at protecting the Indians, and Philip II's *Ordinances Concerning New Discoveries of 1573*, where the term "conquest" officially was to be replaced with "pacification."<sup>35</sup> The defamation of Cortés to emphasize national morality had royal support as both Charles V and Philip II sought to rehabilitate the image of the Spanish colonization of America as portrayed by Las Casas.

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<sup>32</sup> Anthony Pagden, introduction to Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), xviii-xxxix.

<sup>33</sup> Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, 127.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>35</sup> Pagden, introduction to Las Casas, *Destruction of the Indies*, xxvii; Elizabeth Ann Harper John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 10; Richard Flint, *No Settlement, No Conquest: A History of the Coronado Entrada* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 226.

An attempt to elevate the reputation of Cortés was published in 1552, the same year as Las Casas's *Relación*. Francisco López de Gómara worked closely with Cortés at the end of the conquistador's life to record a detailed record of Cortés's life and exploits in the New World.<sup>36</sup> *Historia de la conquista de México* was the first work to introduce information on the conquest of Mexico that was not in Cortés's letters, and it was the first book published solely on the conquest of Mexico.<sup>37</sup> López de Gómara never went to the Americas, so his knowledge of the conquest came primarily from Cortés; for this reason it is largely a narrative of Cortés's heroism and victory over innumerable adversities. He also collected testimonies from other eyewitnesses to the events described in his work.<sup>38</sup> Despite his extremely positive portrayal of Cortés, López de Gómara editorialized on many of the actions undertaken by Cortés and others, criticizing their morality and judgment.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Las Casas sharply criticized López de Gómara for his acceptance of Cortés as a truthful authority on the events of the conquest. Las Casas also disagreed with López de Gómara's assertion that war and conquest were a necessary part of the process of converting Indians.<sup>40</sup> Another criticism came from Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a conquistador who served under Cortés in the conquest of Mexico and later expeditions. Díaz del Castillo attacked López de Gómara for his unwavering admiration for Cortés and how this sentiment altered the truth of events recorded in his book. It is

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<sup>36</sup> Cristián Roa de la Carrera, "Francisco López de Gómara and *La Conquista de México*," *Chimalpahin's Conquest: A Nahuatl Historian's Rewriting of Francisco López de Gómara's La Conquista de México*, Susan Schroeder, et al., eds. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 37.

<sup>37</sup> Ramón Iglesia, *Cronistas e historiadores de la conquista de México: el ciclo de Hernán Cortés* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1942), 97.

<sup>38</sup> Roa de la Carrera, "Francisco López de Gómara and *La Conquista de México*," 39.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. One example is López de Gómara's criticism of Cortés involved the conquistador's torture of Cuauhtemoc, the last *tlatoani*, or ruler, of Tenochtitlan in order to discover the location of Moctezuma's treasure. Gómara asserts that Cortés acted out of greed and cruelty.

<sup>40</sup> Lesley Byrd Simpson, introduction to López de Gómara, *Cortés*, xvi; Cristián Roa de la Carrera, *Histories of Infamy: Francisco López de Gómara and the Ethics of Spanish Imperialism* (Boulder, CO: The University Press of Colorado, 2005), 226.

possible that López de Gómara's work was the catalyst for Díaz del Castillo to write his own version of the conquest.<sup>41</sup> For reasons likely tied to Las Casas's influence in the court of Philip II, a royal decree in November 1553 banned the publication of López de Gómara's book in Spain.<sup>42</sup>

Díaz del Castillo's *The History of the Conquest in Mexico* became the definitive first-hand account of the conquest. Like López de Gómara's work, the narrative does not end with the conquest but follows Cortés's life afterward. Written in the 1560s in Guatemala, where Díaz del Castillo served as governor for his service in the conquest, it was sent to Spain; due to the controversial nature of its subject, it was not published until 1632.<sup>43</sup> During the interim, however, it was frequently cited by scholars, indicating that the manuscript was available for research in the decades before its publication.<sup>44</sup> After publication, the book was very popular, going through five editions in Spain during the seventeenth century.<sup>45</sup> Díaz del Castillo had been a soldier, not a chronicler, so his writing style was unique. The language was simple. It was detailed and descriptive, but dramatic as well. It also presented information without judgment or political tone. The role that Cortés played in the conquest was not one akin to a literary hero; he was merely

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<sup>41</sup> Irving A. Leonard, introduction to Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, xvi.

<sup>42</sup> Roa de la Carrera, "Francisco López de Gómara and La Conquista de México," 42. There are two primary reasons put forth as to the reason for the prohibition. It is possible that something in the book was deemed harmful to the reputation of the Crown, or to the reputation of someone involved.

<sup>43</sup> Leonard, introduction to Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, xvi.

<sup>44</sup> Genaro Garcia, editor's introduction to Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, xix. Antonio de Herrera quotes Bernal Díaz many times in his *Historia General de los hechos de los castellanos en la Islas i [sic] Tierra Firme de Mar Oceano*, first published in Madrid in 1601; Friar Juan de Torquemada also refers to Bernal Díaz's work in *Los Veinte i [sic] un libros rituales y Monarchia Indiana*, published in 1615; and Antonio de Leon Pinelo cites the work in *Epitome de la Biblioteca Oriental i [sic] Occidental, Nautica, y Geografica*, published in Madrid in 1629.

<sup>45</sup> The book was published in 1632 by Friar Alonso Remón for the purpose of emphasizing missionary work and positive aspects of Spanish settlement in Mexico. As such, it was heavily edited. An original copy of the manuscript was not published until the twentieth century. (Genaro Garcia, editor's introduction to Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, xx-xxii.)

a leader who carried out plans approved by his men.<sup>46</sup> Because Díaz del Castillo's account appeared to have no other agenda than to give a true account of the conquest the best he remembered it, the work is considered to be the most complete and truthful first-hand history of the conquest of Mexico.<sup>47</sup>

After the middle of the sixteenth century, Cortés's name was inextricably tied to the conquest, viewed through the Black Legend as a morally bankrupt period of Spanish history. As a result, few historians studied the life of Cortés until the nineteenth century. Las Casas's characterization of Spanish rule in the New World was upheld not only by Europeans perpetuating the Black Legend but also by Spaniards attempting to defend their country against the legend by emphasizing the morality of Las Casas over the brutality of conquest and colonization.<sup>48</sup> In this process, Cortés remained an example against which Spanish historians fought. It was not until the nineteenth century, when Mexico won its independence from Spain, that scholarly interest in the conquest of Mexico and Cortés was renewed.

The Black Legend brings many difficulties to the historical study of Cortés. In Spanish history, this perspective led historians to emphasize Spanish figures such as Las Casas, exceptions to such a negative national reputation. This left Cortés primarily as a figure against whom these pious, benevolent Spaniards fought. Even today there is little acknowledgment of Cortés's accomplishments in Spain. There is a statue of Cortés in his hometown of Medellín, but other than that little more than a plaque in front of an empty

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<sup>46</sup> Simpson, introduction to López de Gómara, *Cortés*, xviii.

<sup>47</sup> R.B. Cunninghame Graham, *Bernal Díaz del Castillo* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1915), viii.

<sup>48</sup> Powell, *Tree of Hate*, 14-21.

lot indicating the location of his childhood home exists.<sup>49</sup> In Mexican history, the cultural movement of “*indigenismo*,” or emphasis upon Indian American over Spanish heritage, creates a historical atmosphere in which Aztec leaders were the heroes and conquistadors such as Cortés were the villains. The discovery of Cortés’s remains in 1946, after having been hidden in the 1820s shortly after Mexican independence, sparked an effort to locate the bones of the last leader of Aztec resistance, Cuauhtémoc.<sup>50</sup> The *Palacio de Cortés*, which still stands in Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos, houses a 1930 mural by Diego Rivera on the history of Morelos. It depicts Cortés as “an emaciated, hunchbacked, syphilitic, and degenerate man, with a sword pointed at indigenous people who are offering him a tribute of gold.”<sup>51</sup> While more objective histories have been written about Cortés since the nineteenth century, the Black Legend remains a powerful force in early modern Spanish history.

Modern historiography takes a more balanced view of Cortés. Arguably the most important study on early Spanish Mexico written in the nineteenth century was William H. Prescott’s *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843). His three-volume work was the first significant English-language study of the subject. Prescott took a pro-Spanish perspective, adopting a romantic view of Spanish imperialism. Prescott approached Spain from the perspective of a comparison with the United States, and he saw in both “an enlightened leadership, sound government, national will, and the dynamism

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<sup>49</sup> Anna Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortes* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), 27. The house reportedly remained until it was damaged in 1804 by Napoleon’s forces.

<sup>50</sup> Powell, *Tree of Hate*, 116.

<sup>51</sup> Manuel Aguilar-Moreno and Erika Cabrera, *Diego Rivera: A Biography* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011), 45; 86.

necessary for monumental achievement.”<sup>52</sup> Prescott was not immune to the effects of the Black Legend, however; he pointed to two major flaws in Spain: Catholicism and absolute monarchy. Nevertheless, his tolerant attitude toward Cortés in the narrative of conquest was criticized in the United States for being too sympathetic to Catholicism.<sup>53</sup> Prescott saw in Cortés many heroic qualities: intelligence, ambition, consistency, courage, and leadership.<sup>54</sup>

Prescott’s scholarship led to renewed interest in Cortés in the late nineteenth century. British historian Arthur Helps published a biography of Cortés in 1871, taking a perspective of the conquistador similar to that of Prescott: “He was a man who loved good government, and did his work, according to his lights, thoroughly.”<sup>55</sup> There were also at this time efforts to organize and publish documents from various archives in Spain relating to the discovery, conquest, and settlement of the Americas. Two notable figures of this endeavor were Mexican historian Joaquín García Icazbalceta (1824-1804) and Spanish historian Pascual de Gayangos y Arce (1809-1897).<sup>56</sup>

In the twentieth century, arguably the most important work on Cortés is Spanish historian Salvador de Madariaga’s *Hernán Cortés: Conqueror of Mexico* (1941).

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<sup>52</sup> Richard L. Kagan, *Spain in America: The Origins of Hispanism in the United States* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 2002), 251; Richard L. Kagan, “Prescott’s Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain,” *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 327.

<sup>53</sup> Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1994), 51-53; Kagan, *Spain in America*, 251.

<sup>54</sup> David Levin, “History as Romantic Art: Structure, Characterization, and Style in the Conquest of Mexico,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 39, no. 1 (February, 1959), 36; Inga Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’: Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico,” *Representations*, no. 33 (Winter, 1991), 66.

<sup>55</sup> Arthur Helps, *The Life of Hernando Cortés* (London: G. Bell, 1896), vii.

<sup>56</sup> See Manuel Guillermo Martínez, *Don Joaquín García Icazbalceta: su lugar en historiografía Mexicana* (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1950); C. Harvey Gardiner, “Prescott’s Most Indispensable Aide: Pascual de Gayangos,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 39, no. 1 (February, 1959), 81-115.



Madariaga's biography made use of extensive research in Spanish archives as well as printed materials to create the most detailed historical account of Cortés's life to date. Madariaga sought to address the lingering anti-Cortés sentiment in Mexico by portraying Cortés as a tragically misunderstood character.<sup>57</sup> Writing during Francisco Franco's absolutist regime in Spain, Madariaga also emphasized the individualism of popular figures in Spanish history.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, the author devoted less than a hundred pages to Cortés's life after the conquest, with only a few paragraphs focused on the marquise.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, there has been an emphasis on the collection and organization of primary materials relating to Cortés. In 1949, Beatriz Arteaga Garza and Guadalupe Pérez San Vicente published *Cedulario Cortesiano*, a collection of royal decrees relating to Cortés. In 1963, *Hernán Cortés: Cartas y Documentos* was published.<sup>59</sup> In 1986, Anthony Pagden translated and edited the most complete versions of Cortés's *cartas* found in European archives.<sup>60</sup> Finally, in the early 1990s, José Luis Martínez published a four-volume collection of Cortés documents, *Documentos cortesianos*.<sup>61</sup>

Cortés is no less a controversial figure today than he was in his lifetime, and modern studies approach the conquistador from many perspectives; new light is constantly being shed on the life and times of Cortés. Innumerable studies of early colonial Mexico include analyses of the infamous conquistador. These range from

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<sup>57</sup> Salvador de Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés: Conqueror of Mexico* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 485; Salvador de Madariaga, *Morning without Noon: Memoirs* (London: Saxon House, 1974), 156.

<sup>58</sup> Norman P. Sacks, "Salvador de Madariaga's Liberal Response in the United States," *Hispania*, vol. 66, no. 1 (March, 1983), 127-129.

<sup>59</sup> Hernán Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Cartas y Documentos* (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1963).

<sup>60</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*.

<sup>61</sup> Hernán Cortés, *Documentos cortesianos*, José Luis Martínez, ed. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990-1992).

military, political, or economic studies to cultural or social histories. Tzvetan Todorov's *La Conquête de Amérique* (1982) is one such example. It is an examination of the social and cultural interaction of different peoples. In this context, Todorov describes Cortés as a highly skilled communicator and improviser; to Todorov he represents why Europeans so easily dominated the Americans.<sup>62</sup> On the more archival, research-oriented end of the spectrum, British historian Hugh Thomas published *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortés, and the Fall of Old Mexico*, utilizing the century and a half of research since the time of Prescott to create a highly detailed history of the conquest. Thomas's research brought to light more details about Cortés's early life. The popularity of such a historical figure as Cortés makes the compilation of a comprehensive historiography an arduous task, one this study cannot claim to complete. Nonetheless, every effort has been made to present as many perspectives and interpretations on the subject matter as possible.

### **Historiography and Sources Post-Conquest**

Notwithstanding the movement beyond the literature of the Black Legend to archival research, the current scholarship still largely falls within the well-established paradigm of the conquest of Mexico. Few historians examine Cortés's life after conquest. Even fewer follow the family of the great figure after his death in 1547. Cortés's legacy is not only tied to his achievements, but also to his estate in Mexico. Through the laws of primogeniture, the title of Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca and the large amount of land given to Cortés by Emperor Charles V were passed down to the first

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<sup>62</sup> Anthony Pagden, introduction to Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), ix-xii.

born child for the entire span of colonial Mexico. An examination of the development of this land and other aspects of this title is important in demonstrating Cortés's legacy not simply as a conqueror but as a founding member of a Spanish colonial society that existed for nearly three centuries and framed the history of Mexico.

The lands of the marquisate spread across southern Mexico; few of these regions are contiguous. The emperor allowed Cortés to choose the lands of his estate not on the basis of geography, but their prospects for development and wealth. As a result, most scholarly research into the marquisate is limited to regional studies. The marquisate included areas of land around Cuernavaca in the modern state of Morelos; portions of the Oaxaca region, including Tehuantepec; Charo in the state of Michoacán; Tuxtla and Cotaxtla in Veracruz; Toluca in the state of Mexico; and Coyoacán, today a part of Mexico City. Research into the marquisate as a whole has not been widely conducted. In 1969, Mexican historian Bernardo García Martínez published his book, *El Marquesado del Valle: tres siglos de régimen señorial en Nueva España*, which stands as the principal piece of scholarship that examines the history and legacy of the noble title, looking at the disparate lands as a whole under the control of the marquis. At just over 150 pages, this book gives an overview of three centuries of history of the title and the lands thereof.<sup>63</sup> The vast majority of information in the book is superficial; certain areas of the marquis's holdings are restricted to a single paragraph. García Martínez acknowledges the need for further study into the marquisate, asserting, "Most biographers of Cortés have dealt very little with the actions of the *Extremeño* after the end of his main conquest. It is this part of his life most important to this study, and we regret not being able to

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<sup>63</sup> Bernardo García Martínez, *El marquesado del valle: tres siglos de régimen señorial en Nueva España* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1969).

continue the investigation further. We can, however, take some essential features of his actions.”<sup>64</sup> A number of regional and local studies written since the appearance of García Martínez’s book can provide a much deeper understanding of aspects of the Marquesado del Valle. Ward Barrett’s *The Sugar Hacienda of the Marqueses del Valle* (1970) and G. Michael Riley’s *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos, 1522-1547* (1973) are two such examples.<sup>65</sup> García Martínez employs several published collections of primary materials, but his use of archived collections is limited to the *Archivo General de la Nación* (AGN) and archives at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM). While these works provide a good overview of the materials, more research is needed to understand further these facets of the life and legacy of Cortés.

Virtually all research into the marquisate to this point has taken place in Mexico, either in the archive of the *Hospital de Jesús*, founded by Cortés in 1527 in Mexico City, the AGN, and many local and state archives.<sup>66</sup> Very little has been done with original sources that through various methods have found their way to the United States. While thorough research has been conducted in many well-known U.S. collections, some archives have been largely unavailable or overlooked by Latin American historians. One such collection is held by the Gilcrease Museum of the Americas in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This museum houses an archive of two hundred and seventy-five catalog entries totaling 25,780 manuscript pages concerning Mexican history dating from 1512 to 1857, the vast

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Ward Barrett, *The Sugar Hacienda of the Marqueses del Valle* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1970); G. Michael Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos, 1522-1547* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1973).

<sup>66</sup> The archive of the Hospital de Jesús is part of the AGN.

majority of which are unpublished.<sup>67</sup> The core of the collection is the Conway Papers, named after G.R.G. Conway, the man who assembled many of these documents before Thomas Gilcrease purchased them in the 1950s.

George Robert Graham Conway was born in Southampton, England, on April 28, 1873, and studied civil engineering at Hartley University in Southampton. For many years he was engaged in various construction projects in and around England, but his principal work was in Aberdeen, Scotland.<sup>68</sup> He moved to Mexico in 1907 when he was appointed chief engineer of the Monterrey Railway, Light, and Power Company. He did not remain in Mexico long, however, as he moved to Vancouver, Canada, just three years later to become chief engineer of the British Columbia Railway Company. In 1916, he returned to Mexico as managing director of the Mexican Light and Power Company, a Canadian enterprise that owned and operated a large hydroelectric plant near the town of Pachuca, Hidalgo, supplying power to the surrounding communities and mines, as well as the cities of Puebla and the capital, Mexico City. He retired from the company in 1947 and took up residence in Cuernavaca, the colonial center of Cortés's estate.<sup>69</sup>

Conway was quite active as an amateur historian. Over the course of his life in Mexico, he devoted time and a considerable amount of money to locating and publishing rare materials and manuscripts pertaining to Mexico's colonial history.<sup>70</sup> His primary interest was the collection and study of sixteenth-century Englishmen who suffered at the hands of the Spanish. Later he broadened his interests to include Jews who came before

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<sup>67</sup> Clevy Lloyd Strout, *A Catalog of Hispanic Documents in the Thomas Gilcrease Institute* (Tulsa, OK: The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, 1962), iii.

<sup>68</sup> Henry R. Wagner, "George Robert Graham Conway," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3 (September, 1951), 278.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>70</sup> Aside from manuscripts Conway also collected engravings, maps, and illustrations.

the Inquisition and the conquest of Mexico by Hernán Cortés.<sup>71</sup> His contributions to early California history led him to become a member of the California Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society. In 1940 became a member of the Cortés Society, largely due to his efforts to translate and publish Cortés's last will and testament.<sup>72</sup>

Following his retirement in 1947, Conway continued to collect rare historical materials for the short remainder of his life. He died in Mexico City from a heart attack on May 20, 1951. At the time of his death, he possessed only a part of the significant manuscript collection that he had acquired over the years.<sup>73</sup> During the 1940s, he donated significant portions of his collection, mainly the documents pertaining to English marine merchants, to three institutions: Cambridge University, the University of Aberdeen, and the United States Library of Congress.

The collection at Cambridge University is the largest portion of Conway's philanthropy. It contains the majority of the Conway manuscripts of English trials, while the two other institutions received only transcripts. The collection of eighty-one documents is primarily made up of accounts of Englishmen on trial in Mexico and trials of the Mexican Inquisition, but other documents such as trial transcripts are also included. Conway's decision to donate to Cambridge was most likely taken before 1946 at the suggestion of an unknown lecturer in the university's Spanish Department that it would be a good place for the papers to be preserved and made available to scholars. In

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<sup>71</sup> Schafer Williams, "The G.R.G. Conway Collection in the Library of Congress: A Checklist," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 35, no. 3 (August, 1955), 386.

<sup>72</sup> Wagner, "George Robert Graham Conway," 278-279. Conway was also a prolific writer, publishing *The Voyages of John Hawkins, 1563-1568* (1925), *An Englishman and the Mexican Inquisition* (1927), *The Rare Travels of Job Hortrop* (1928), *Hernando Alonso, A Jewish Conquistador with Cortés in Mexico* (1931), *Antonio de Espejo, as a Familiar of the Mexican Inquisition, 1572* (1931), and *Friar Francisco Naranjo and the Old University of Mexico* (1939).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-280.

1946 Conway sent the university his published works; thereafter, he sent documents.<sup>74</sup> The second largest collection that Conway donated is held at the Library of Congress. It contains nearly sixty volumes, only a few of which are copies of those at Cambridge. Conway's contribution to the Library of Congress began as early as 1926, when he sent a copy of his first published work.<sup>75</sup> Conway's decision to leave part of his collection to the University of Aberdeen most likely stemmed from his fondness for the area developed while he was working as a young engineer. While it is unclear when he made this donation, it contained little unique material. Of the 41 volumes listed, only seven do not also exist at Cambridge and in the Library of Congress.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, all of the documents in the collection are listed as transcripts or facsimiles.<sup>77</sup>

The Conway Collection at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is unique in several respects. Forming the largest portion of the Gilcrease collection at 125 volumes and spanning several thousand pages, it mainly focuses on the early history of New Spain. More importantly, it was the part of Conway's collection that he did not publish or distribute. *The National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections* states that Thomas Gilcrease purchased the collection from Conway's widow around 1953-1955. While Conway sent transcripts and translations to the other institutions, the Gilcrease collection contains the original documents that he acquired during his time in Mexico. Around a dozen documents from this particular collection exist in other Conway collections as copies. The Tulsa collection also differs from the others in its subject

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<sup>74</sup> J. Street, "The G.R.G. Conway Collection in Cambridge University Library: A Checklist," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 37, no. 1 (February, 1957), 60-63.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, "The G.R.G. Conway Collection in the Library of Congress: A Checklist," 386.

<sup>76</sup> Street, "The G.R.G. Conway Collection in Cambridge University Library: A Checklist," 64.

<sup>77</sup> A.P. Thornton, "The G.R.G. Conway Manuscript Collection in the Library of the University of Aberdeen," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 36, no. 3 (August, 1956), 345-347.

matter. There are copies of some materials found in Tulsa in the other institutions, but the Gilcrease collection has no documents about the trials of Englishmen, the majority of which can be found at Cambridge, with transcripts in the other libraries. With so many similarities in the Conway collections at the Library of Congress, Cambridge, and the University of Aberdeen, the manuscripts at the Gilcrease remain relatively unknown, probably due to the location of the collection and the nature of the museum, which until 2008 was not associated with a research university. Despite its recent partnership with the University of Tulsa, the library and archives of the Gilcrease are not currently available to search digitally.<sup>78</sup>

Cataloged in 1960 and 1961 by Dr. Clevy Strout, a professor of Spanish at the University of Tulsa, an inventory was privately published by the museum, and copies were sent to several research institutions in the United States. The Conway papers represent the first 125 catalog folders of manuscripts, but many of the volumes contain multiple documents. Strout retained Conway's original arrangement, but other than the grouping of similar topics together there is little formal organization.

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<sup>78</sup> Anne Morand, Kevin Smith, and Daniel C. Swan, *Treasures of the Gilcrease* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 10-11, 154. While many of the manuscript collections in the Gilcrease came from manuscript dealers and other collectors, the museum history specifically states that the Conway collection was purchased directly from the Conway estate for an unknown amount. Thomas Gilcrease was a successful businessman who emerged from the Great Depression better off than most due largely to his involvement in rich oil fields in Texas and Oklahoma. In 1949, he moved his large personal collection of Americana from San Antonio, Texas, to Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was interested in the history of the native peoples of America. Raised in the Creek Indian territory, he sought to give back to the area by building a world-class museum to display the cultural heritage of the region. His interests were not limited to the boundaries of the United States, however. In the early 1950s, Gilcrease set out to expand his library by purchasing individual documents and collections from manuscript and antique dealers. His interest in Hispanic documents began when he acquired the original accounts of Christopher Columbus's voyages written by his son, Diego Columbus. He also purchased documents relating to Hernando de Soto. In fact, the Hispanic Documents Collection at the Gilcrease contains not only the Conway papers, but another 150 volumes of documents relating to the history of Mexico as well.



Approximately half of the cataloged folders concern the Inquisition in Mexico from 1573 to the beginning of the nineteenth century, with a majority of the documents from the first half of the seventeenth century. They mostly deal with trials for crimes ranging from blasphemy to witchcraft, but they also contain instructions from the Office of the Inquisition to priests and applications for the position of Familiar in the Inquisition.

The collection also contains many folders on exploration. There are a few reports from priests concerning Indian-Spanish relations. Reports and diaries kept on trips to different ports, as well as to trading posts can also be found. Several documents in the collection concern exploration and business in California. There are a couple of documents that describe travels through areas of Texas and New Mexico as well. Church administration makes up approximately a dozen folders of the collection. It contains diaries of priests, reports from remote missions, paperwork to establish new missions, and correspondence from several Spanish kings to bishops in Tlaxcala, Michoacán, and Puebla. There are folders relating to several confraternities, including the missionary and expedition reports. Folder C-116, "Third book of the religious history of the province of Mexico," is a religious history of Mexico written in 1608 for the Dominican Order. A few manuscripts also deal with the sale of land or goods, and there is a collection of various lawsuits.

The remainder of the collection, around 20 folders, concerns Hernán Cortés and his estate. Many of these relate to lawsuits involving Cortés himself, who spent much of his post-conquest years embroiled in court cases concerning the distribution of land and money in Mexico. Transcripts and some translations of a small number of these lawsuits exist in the other Conway collections. The rest of the documents concern lawsuits

regarding the Cortés family, documents related to Cortés's exploration of California, and day-to-day business records related to the Cortés estate, including reports from mines, payroll receipts, and reports on taxes.

Apart from Dr. Strout's project to catalog the contents of the collection, surprisingly little work has been done with the documents. Ivie Cadenhead, Jr., a professor of history at the University of Tulsa in the 1950s and 1960s, published the list of documents in the Conway collection at the Gilcrease in response to articles in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* that detailed the contents of the other Conway document depositories. Cadenhead's work focused on nineteenth-century Mexican history, and, therefore, he made little personal use of the material in the collection itself. He did, however, use a few manuscripts to publish an article about the mining operations around the town of Tehuantepec under the control of Cortés.<sup>79</sup> In the early 1990s, Dr. Cida Chase, a professor of Spanish at Oklahoma State University, conducted research into the organization of the collection, as well as to whether these documents existed in archives elsewhere. Her goal was to create an updated bibliography of the collection, provide more information on each catalog entry, and indicate corresponding avenues of research. Dr. Chase did not limit her research to the Conway collection, and her interest focused on territory that became part of the United States.<sup>80</sup> While I have found an occasional reference to the collection in history articles, I have concluded that the

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<sup>79</sup> Ivie Cadenhead, Jr., "Mining Operations of Cortes in Tehuantepec, 1538-1547," *The Americas*, vol. 16, no.3 (January, 1960), 283-287.

<sup>80</sup> Cida S. Chase, research proposal, Gilcrease Museum. The Gilcrease has a copy of Dr. Chase's research proposal, which describes in detail the plan to build upon Dr. Strout's catalog by providing more information on each entry, as well as providing information on where the manuscripts might exist in other archival collections. To my knowledge, this project was not completed. Dr. Chase also published an article in the *Gilcrease Journal* describing the historical context and content of the Hispanic Documents Collection. (Cida S. Chase, "The Hispanic Legacy at the Gilcrease Museum," *Gilcrease Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Summer 2001), 51-61.)

majority of the scholarly work on the Conway collection has been conducted by language scholars, not historians, and that many of the folders that concern Cortés and his family have not been studied at all.<sup>81</sup>

While there are many documents in the Gilcrease archive that can be used to study Hernán Cortés and his descendants, not all of the material is fully described in Strout's catalog. Catalog entry C-98 was given the title "Documents of many types relating to the family of Fernando Cortés and to his hereditary estate in Mexico, the Marquisate of the Valley."<sup>82</sup> It is a bound collection of approximately 50 items totaling over 630 pages, concerning all manner of subjects relating to the marquisate. There are inheritance records, court cases, land surveys, census records, tribute records, royal documents or cédulas, and documents relating to specific towns and pueblos. This information covers the period from the 1530s to the late eighteenth century. Many of the items concern the first four Marquises: Hernán Cortés (r. 1529-1547), Martín Cortés (r. 1547-1589), Fernando Cortés (r. 1589-1602), and Pedro Cortés (r. 1602-1629). There are also many royal cédulas that span much of the seventeenth century, down to the ninth *marquesa* in the 1690s, Juana Pignatelli de Aragón. This collection is comprised of legal documents that record significant and decisive events in the history of the marquisate. While these unpublished documents do not provide a comprehensive look at the marquisate, they do contribute new information to its study.

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<sup>81</sup> A document on the preparation of one of Cortés's ships for a California expedition is used in Harry Kelsey, "Mapping the California Coast: The Voyages of Discovery, 1533-1543," *Arizona and the West*, vol. 26, no. 4 (Winter, 1984), 307-324.

<sup>82</sup> Strout, *A Catalog of Hispanic Documents*, 47.

While the entirety of catalog entry C-98 promises valuable insight into the entire history of the marquisate, for the present study I have limited the focus to the first 100 years of the marquisate, spanning the history of the marquisate under Cortés, his son Martín, and his two grandsons, Francisco and Pedro, the last direct male descendants. In his final letter to the emperor in 1544, Cortés expressed concern over his legacy, stating the many legal delays kept him away from his home and his wife; he only had one legitimate son, and this troubled him. He asserted, “If daughters succeed, memory is lost.”<sup>83</sup> Cortés believed his reputation would continue to develop long after his death, yet it largely failed to do so in the way he hoped. Many of the unrealized goals of Cortés’s legacy are due to shortcomings in the administrations of his direct successors.

This dissertation will utilize published primary sources and unpublished archival sources to examine how Cortés’s legacy was constructed in his lifetime and those of his direct descendants. Part one will explore his life after conquest, giving particular attention to how his reputation, both in Spain and New Spain, was shaped by his own actions and those of others. The conquest of Mexico was the centerpiece of his accomplishments, but it is clear from his later exploits and in his own words that he did not want it be his only great achievement. There was still a need for conquerors in the New World, but Cortés’s legacy was strongly connected with Mexico. The adaptability of conquistadors played as important a role in their transition to settlers as it did in the conquest of Mexico. Following the conquest, and for the remainder of his life in Mexico, Cortés’s ambition drove him to spend his fortune, lead new expeditions, and chase the

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<sup>83</sup> Hernan Cortés, “Carta-memorial de Hernán Cortés al emperador. De Valladolid, á 3 de Febrero de 1544,” *Cartas y relaciones de Hernan Cortés al Emperador Carlos V*, ed. Pascual de Gayangos (Paris: Imprenta Central de los Ferro-Carriles, 1866), 571.

glory he believed was due to him. In New Spain, Cortés understood that no accomplishment would garner fame without the approval and appreciation of the Crown. With this understanding, Cortés was constantly mindful of the narrative he created by his actions; the image and reputation he attempted to cultivate was as important a factor in the glory he sought as the success of his actions. Conquest, or any other activity he could undertake to garner fame, would mean nothing without it.

With the conquest of Mexico, the interests of Cortés and Mexico became one in the same. As he wrested control of the land away from Montezuma and other chieftains, wealth and adulation would only come to him with successful utilization of the land in Spanish hands. Even after he was removed as governor of Mexico, he was given the largest estate in New Spain; his reputation continued to be tied to the development of the land. In his expeditions of conquest he also sought to contribute to the geographical growth of Mexico. Cortés acted largely in self-interest throughout much of his life, but in many aspects, these actions were also for the benefit of New Spain. In his final letter to the emperor, from Valladolid in February 1544, Cortés asserts he must return to Mexico to clear his account with God with what little life he has left.<sup>84</sup> A Spaniard in Spain, a few days travel from his place of birth, Cortés sought to return to New Spain to set his affairs in order. Mexico was not simply an object of power to Cortés; it became his home.

Part two will examine the lands of the Cortés estate after his death, drawing on secondary studies and utilizing original sources from the Gilcrease Museum. Emperor

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<sup>84</sup> Cortés, "Carta-memorial," *Cartas y relaciones*, 571. "...y volverme he á mi casa, porque no tengo ya edad para andar por mesones, sino para recojerme á aclarar mi cuenta con Dios, pues la tengo larga, y poca vida para dar los descargos, y será mejor perder la hacienda quel anima."

Charles V rewarded Cortés with large tracts of land in New Spain. Chosen by Cortés himself, they were among the most fruitful and profitable regions of southern Mexico. Managing such a large and important estate with not only the reputation but the responsibilities of Cortés was not easy, and how the marquisate developed is an important factor in assessing the impact he made on New Spain. Upon Cortés's death of in 1547, the marquisate went to his only legitimate son, Martín Cortés. The marquisate spanned from the Gulf Coast near Veracruz to the Pacific Ocean at Tehuantepec and included not only much of the Oaxaca valley but large tracts of land around Mexico City. This was a tremendous responsibility placed on Martín, an obligation compounded by the fact that in 1547 Martín was only a boy of fifteen. Recognizing this, López de Gómara dedicated his 1552 *Historia de la conquista de México* to Martín stating,

To no one, my Lord, could I dedicate *The Conquest of Mexico* more fittingly than to you Illustrious Lordship, son of the conqueror, to the end that along with your patrimony you may inherit its history. In the first instance you have wealth; in the second, fame, for honor and riches here go hand in hand. At the same time your inheritance obligates you to emulate the deeds of your father, Hernán Cortés, and to spend well what he left you. It is no less praiseworthy or virtuous, or perhaps laborious, to retain one's wealth than to increase it. Thus one's honor is sustained; and it was to conserve and perpetuate honor that entails were invented, for it is certain that estates diminish with many divisions thereof, and that with their diminution nobility and glory are lessened and even brought to an end. Late or soon, entails and kingdoms must all come to an end, as do all things that had a beginning, either because of failure of the succession, or because

of war, in which a change of masters always occurs. But history endures much longer than an estate. The more it ages, therefore, the more it is esteemed.<sup>85</sup>

López de Gómara's words capture an important aspect of Martín's inheritance: not only did Martín become the second marquis, he was also now responsible for the reputation on which the marquisate was based. López de Gómara understood that the successful development of the marquisate in the hands of Cortés's heirs was critical to the legacy of Cortés. Cortés himself understood this as well; in his will, he calls for Martín to be instructed in the management of the estate until he turns twenty five, stating, "during the interim, let him not withdraw from or evade the guardianship and control, so that, until he complete the said age his property and estate may be the more advantageously increased, and administered, and all that I direct and dispose by this testament may be the better and more quickly complied with."<sup>86</sup> What was good for Martín and the marquisate was also good for the memory of Cortés.

The marquisate, while largely ignored by historians, is an important component of the study of Cortés and Mexico. With the lands of the marquisate, the narrative of his impact on Mexico can no longer be intertwined with the fiction incorporated into previous exploits such as the conquest; the development of the marquisate is a component of his memory less obscured by any opinion about his character. I will trace the development of the estate into the two generations of the family after Cortés, spanning the first hundred years of the marquisate. How Cortés developed his lands reveals much

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<sup>85</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 3.

<sup>86</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 45. Translation in Hernán Cortés, *Fernando Cortes: His Five Letters of Relation to the Emperor Charles V*, Francis Augustus MacNutt, ed. and trans. (Glorieta, NM: The Rio Grande Press, 1977), 96.

about his plans for himself and New Spain, but how his son and his grandsons managed the estate also reveals much about Cortés's legacy. Many of the long-term plans he made near the end of his life were never carried out for various reasons, and his heirs themselves were no strangers to controversy. For better or worse, the importance of Cortés in New Spain was a large part of the lives of his direct male descendants, and they were not only influenced by the memory of the conquistador but influenced it themselves as well.

In this dissertation, for the first time, the life and legacy of Cortés will be examined together to address two critical questions regarding not only Cortés but the history of colonial Mexico. What was the role of fame and honor? How did the marquisate affect the history of Mexico? In addressing these questions, it is possible to sketch the construction of the legacy and memory of one of the most important figures in the history of early colonial Mexico. The legacy of Hernán Cortés did not evolve in the manner he sought; nonetheless, his goal of exercising continued influence in the development of New Spain was realized.



## PART ONE: HERNÁN CORTÉS AND NEW SPAIN

### CHAPTER II

#### FAME AND HONOR IN THE NEW WORLD

In Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia de la Conquista de la Nueva España*, a firsthand account of the conquest and life of Hernán Cortés written as a response to the 1552 work *History of the Conquest of Mexico* by chronicler Francisco López de Gómara, the author explains why he refers to the infamous conquistador in the manner he does:

I wish to state before going on with my story why I am so concise in all I write, and, in mentioning Cortés, I have not called him and will not call him Don Hernando Cortés, nor by other titles of Marquis or Captain, but only plainly Cortés. The reason of this is because he himself preferred to be called simply Cortés, for this name of Cortés was as highly considered and esteemed throughout Castile as that of Julius Caesar or Pompey was in the time of the Romans, or in our times we hold that of Gonzalo [F]ernández, surnamed 'The Great Captain,' or among the Carthaginians that of Hannibal, or of that valiant and never vanquished

gentleman Diego García de Paredes.<sup>87</sup>

It is not surprising that Cortés would want to be known by his surname alone. He very well may have read Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, and he was certainly familiar with the actions of Spanish armies.<sup>88</sup> He was the son of Martín Cortés de Monroy and Catalina Pizarro Altamirano. Martín had been a soldier, first fighting in the campaign of his cousin, Alonso de Monroy, the *Clavero* of the Order of Alcántara, against Queen Isabella in the War of Castilian Succession, and then later serving Isabella in the battles for Granada.<sup>89</sup> Alonso de Monroy was described in Cortés's time as a very skilled soldier

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<sup>87</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 476-477; Leonard, introduction to Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, xvi. Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1492-1585) had been a soldier under Cortés during the conquest of Mexico, and thereafter lived in New Spain and Guatemala on lands allotted to him for his military service. Francisco López de Gómara (1511-1566) was a chronicler that had never been to New Spain; rather, he had become the personal chaplain of Cortés around 1540 during Cortés's stay in Spain from 1540 until his death in 1547. *History of the Conquest of Mexico* was first published in 1552. Díaz del Castillo had already begun writing his account at this time, but, as Irving Leonard states, it is generally accepted that Díaz del Castillo began assembling his account sometime in the 1550s to address inaccuracies in López de Gómara's work. Díaz del Castillo sent the work to Spain sometime in the 1570s, but it was not published until 1632, nearly fifty years after his death. Díaz del Castillo was not the only critic of López de Gómara at the time. The book was initially suppressed by Prince Philip (later Philip II of Spain) for its cold treatment of his father, Emperor Charles V. This action was possibly spurred on by Bartolomé de las Casas, who wrote, "López de Gómara, a secular priest, who wrote the history of Cortés, and who, after Cortés was made a marquis, lived with him in Castile, who was never in the Indies, and who wrote nothing but what Cortés himself told him to write, fabricated many stories in Cortés's favor which are manifestly false." (Simpson, introduction to López de Gómara, *Cortés*, xv-xvi.) Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba (1453-1515), "The Great Captain," was a Spanish general during the conquest of Grenada in 1492, bringing an end to the *Reconquista*, and during the Italian Wars. For more information on "The Great Captain," see Mary Pucell, *The Great Captain: Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba* (New York: Doubleday, 1962); José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec, *El Gran Capitán: retrato de un época* (Barcelona: Península Ediciones, 2002). Diego García de Paredes (1466-1530) was a soldier under Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba called the "Samson of Extremadura" for his heroism on the battlefield. He had a son also named Diego García de Paredes who founded many cities in Venezuela. For more information on Diego García de Paredes, see Miguel Muñoz de San Pedro, *Diego García de Paredes: Hércules y Sansón de España* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1946); Antonio Sánchez-Jiménez, *El Sansón de Extremadura: Diego García de Paredes en la literatura Española del Siglo XVI* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2006).

<sup>88</sup> There were approximately ten printed editions of Caesar's *Gallic Wars* in Latin in the fifteenth century, and nearly forty editions in various languages in the sixteenth century. An edition was printed in Toledo in 1498. Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 45; Frederick John Norton, *Printing in Spain, 1501-1520* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 49.

<sup>89</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 20; Thomas, *Conquest*, 117-118; Luis Suárez Fernández, *Los Reyes Católicos: la conquista del Trono* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1989), 147.

and one who “compelled fortune to follow him.”<sup>90</sup> Cortés’s uncle, Pedro de Monroy, and his mother’s cousin, Gonzalo Pizarro (father of the conqueror of Peru), would serve under “The Great Captain” in Italy in 1501.<sup>91</sup> From his early life, Cortés was surrounded by the great exploits of military men.

Cortés was a *hidalgo*, the lowest level of nobility in Spain. This rank had tax-exempt status but usually carried no title. This is likely the reason that López de Gómara, in explaining Cortés’s lineage, does not refer to his father Martín as “Don.”<sup>92</sup> Bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas described Martín as a “rather poor and an old Christian,” referring to his *limpieza de sangre*, “and, as they say, a hidalgo.”<sup>93</sup> Most likely the illegitimate son of Rodrigo de Monroy, the inheritance of the *hidalguía* was nonetheless possible.<sup>94</sup> In 1525, when Cortés petitioned to become a member of the Order of Santiago, an investigation into his nobility was undertaken, and witnesses testified to his pure lineage.<sup>95</sup> The nobility through Cortés’s mother’s line, on the other hand, was much apparent. Descended from the two noble houses of Pizarro and Altamirano of Trujillo, forty miles north of Medellín, she was from a long line of *hidalgos*. Her father, Diego Alfon Altamirano, was a notary in the service of the Countess of Medellín.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Alonso Maldonado, *Hechos del maestre de Alcántara, Don Alonso de Monroy* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1935), 24; José Manuel Nieto Soria, *La monarquía como conflicto en la corona Castellano-Leonesa (c. 1230-1504)* (Madrid: Silex Ediciones, 2006), 470.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 125.

<sup>92</sup> Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 478-479; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 20.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 119.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 119. “Any hidalgo could grant a bastard son *hidalguía* if he guaranteed him a minimum of five hundred sueldos: a modest sum.” The Monroys descended from the Rodriguez de Varillas family, from Salamanca.

<sup>95</sup> Manuel Romero de Terreros, *Hernán Cortés: sus hijos y nietos, caballeros de los ordenes militares* (Mexico: Antigua Librería Robredo de J. Porrúa e Hijos, 1944), 8.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 120. Thomas states that the Pizarro and Altamirano families were rivals in Trujillo, and suggests this as the reason Cortés’s grandparents, one from each house, moved to nearby Medellín.

Cortés never wrote much about his childhood, but it could not have been bereft of the atmosphere one would expect of a future conquistador. Extremadura had been the center of Roman Lusitania. The capital of Extremadura, Mérida, where villas, a bridge, and the remains of a Roman theater can be found, is only twenty miles from Medellín, which itself was founded by its namesake, Roman general Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius, in the first century BC. The road to Medellín was the primary Roman route northeast to Valladolid.<sup>97</sup> The town of Medellín lies in center of a fertile valley, surrounding a hill topped with a castle. In 1229 this castle was promised by King Alfonso IX of León to the Order of Santiago, whenever it could be recovered from the Moors, which happened in 1235.<sup>98</sup> In the fifteenth century, the town was on the boundary of the lands controlled by the Orders of Santiago and Alcántara. At time of Cortés birth in 1484, the castle was in the hands of the Countess of Medellín, Beatriz Pacheco, the illegitimate daughter of Juan Pacheco (1419-1474), the Marquis of Villena and close advisor to King Henry IV of Castile.<sup>99</sup> This made her an advocate for Joanna of Castile to take control of the throne after Henry's death, leaving the region a contested area in the War of Spanish Succession and accounting for earlier military activity of Cortés's father. Surrounding Cortés as a boy were the traces of both distant and recent struggles for supremacy.

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<sup>97</sup> Richard Lee Marks, *Cortés: The Great Adventurer and the Fate of Aztec Mexico* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 5; Thomas, *Conquest*, 118.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "The Foundation of the Order of Alcántara, 1176-1218," *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 47, no. 4 (January, 1962), 483.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 120-121; Elizabeth Lehfeldt, "Enrique IV, King of Castile (b. 1425, r. 1454-74)," in *The Late Medieval Age of Crisis and Renewal, 1300-1500: A Biographical Dictionary*, Clayton J. Drees, ed. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 143-144. For more information on Henry IV and Pacheco, see Townsend Miller, *The Castles and the Crown: Spain, 1451-1555*, (New York: Coward-McCann, 1963); Townsend Miller, *Henry IV of Castile, 1425-1474*, (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1972); Nancy F. Marino, *Don Juan Pacheco: Wealth and Power in Late Medieval Spain*, (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006).

Medellín was, into the late fifteenth century, a multicultural town. In the two hundred and fifty years from its reconquest to Cortés's birth, the Christians were the settlers in an Islamic and Jewish land, and much of this diverse population remained. The Jewish population of the town numbered around two hundred and fifty people, about 10% of a town of around 2,500 residents. What little wealth the town had was based on agriculture, mainly wheat and flax; coexistence was peaceful.<sup>100</sup> The first great events to occur during the young life of Cortés came in January 1492, when Ferdinand and Isabella entered Granada, taken from the Moors after nearly eight centuries.<sup>101</sup> The Reconquest was followed in March by a royal decree giving the Jews in Spain three options: conversion to Christianity, exile, or death.<sup>102</sup> This anti-Semitism was the next logical step of the "Catholic Monarchs," – a title given to them by Pope Alexander VI in 1494 – but there was also another purpose. The kingdoms of Castile and Aragon had been united only in 1479 with the marriage of the two monarchs, and there was a need for homogeneity and an establishment of the Spanish identity. For towns like Medellín, which for centuries had built an identity of different faiths, the impact was quite large. Most of the Jewish residents left the town for Portugal.<sup>103</sup> An already small town became smaller; all the while the world around them was changing in profound ways.

Cortés wrote very little about his childhood, so it is not possible to know for sure what impact these events had on him. The lasting effects of the year of 1492, however, would have certainly remained as Cortés grew into adulthood. At a local level, the

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<sup>100</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 120-122.

<sup>101</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 45. Shortly after their January entry into Granada, the Catholic Monarchs met with Christopher Columbus in the Christian camp town of Santa Fe, six miles outside of Granada, approving his voyage westward. His three vessels set sail from the port town of Palos on 3 August, and departed from the Canary Islands on 6 September. Land (The Bahamas) was sighted on 12 October.

<sup>102</sup> R. Trevor Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain, 1501-1621*, New York: Harper, 1961), 11.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 122.

emigration of approximately 10% of a population would leave some kind of impression, not to mention the cultural heritage left behind. More generally, though, the events of 1492 served to stoke the fires of the Spanish heroic spirit. The end of the *Reconquista* had arrived, bringing with it affirmation of the divine blessings the Spanish felt guided their actions. Such was this belief that the crusader mentality continued past Granada to the northern coast of Africa. Furthermore, word of Columbus's discovery of the Indies sparked much in the imaginations of the people of Spain. In the centuries-long struggle for Andalusia, Spaniards accepted religious war as their destiny. Reconquest was bolstered by the crusading image of St. James, who was said to appear and lead men into battle, affirming the holy nature of the Reconquest.<sup>104</sup> Having just achieved success in their own country, the Spanish interpreted the discovery as God's reward, as well as their next challenge. This mentality would have been self-evident in 1490s Medellín, not only because of the changes brought by the Jewish expulsion but also by the fact that many of the men who accompanied Columbus, and subsequently went to the New World, were from Extremadura; at least one, Luis Hernández Portocarrero, was from Medellín.<sup>105</sup> Cortés lived in an age of great events; the larger the action, the greater the glory.

Cortés, like most Spaniards of this time, grew up in the shadow of hero-soldiers. He might have learned the basics of warfare from his father, a life-long soldier. He presumably learned to ride a horse from him as well; horsemanship was a common part of *hidalguía* life, even though it is not clear if Martín could even afford a horse.<sup>106</sup> Early

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<sup>104</sup> Emilio Choy, "De Santiago Matamoros a Santiago Mataindios," in *Antropología e historia*, Emilio Choy, ed., (Lima: Universidad de San Marcos, 1985), 341-342; Javier Domínguez García, "Santiago Mataindios: la continuación de un discurso medieval en la Nueva España," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2006), 33-34.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 122.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 117; 665n10.

on, however, it appeared that this military life was not for Cortés. Later in life he tells his chronicler that he was very sick as a child, many times near death. He attributed his survival to his wet nurse, María de Esteban of Oliva. Cortés relates that she offered masses and prayers to St. Peter; for this reason, Cortés adopted St. Peter as his personal advocate for much of his life.<sup>107</sup>

Possibly due to his childhood frailty, he was sent to school at Salamanca at the age of fourteen. He studied at the university for approximately two years, but this time proved to be formative. Throughout his life, many attributed his intelligence to these studies. Bartolomé de las Casas, who knew Cortés, attributed his early success on the island of Cuba to the fact that he spoke Latin and was a bachelor of law.<sup>108</sup> Díaz del Castillo, who knew him more closely, wrote, “He was a Latin scholar, and I heard was a Bachelor of Law, and when he spoke to learned persons or Latin scholars, he responded to what they said in Latin.”<sup>109</sup> Despite the assertion of Las Casas and Díaz del Castillo that Cortés was a bachelor of law, that he graduated is unlikely, given the time he spent in his studies. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, who wrote *Crónica de la Nueva España* in 1567 based on the accounts of Cortés and López de Gómara, concluded that Cortés left his studies prematurely, owing to chronic illness.<sup>110</sup> A different account, by chronicler

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<sup>107</sup> Francisco López de Gómara, *La conquista de México* (Barcelona, Spain: Biblioteca Clásica Españoles, 1888), 1.

<sup>108</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, (Madrid: Miguel Ginesta, 1876), 11. “Cortés le hacia ventaja en ser latino, solamente porque habia estudiando leyes en Salamanca y era en ellas Bachiller.”

<sup>109</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 515. “Era latino, y oi decir que era bachiller en leyes, y cuando hablaba con letrados o hombres Latinos, respondia a lo que le decian en Latin.”

<sup>110</sup> Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, *Crónica de Nueva España*, (Barcelona: Linkgua Ediciones, 2008), 126-127. Salazar (1514?-1575) was a student at Salamanca and professor at the University of Osuna before becoming rector at the University of Mexico around 1551. Salazar dedicated many of his earlier works to Cortés, including the continuation of Pérez de Oliva’s *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre*, published in his *Obras* in 1546; this work started the legend that Cortés burned his ships after arrival in Mexico, and compared the conquistador to Alexander the Great and Caesar. (Catherine Larson, “Cervantes de Salazar, Francisco,” *Dictionary of the Literature of the Iberian Peninsula*, vol. 1, Germán Bleiberg, Maureen Ihrle,

Juan Suárez de Peralta, son of Cortés's brother-in-law, states that Cortés did not study at Salamanca, but spent over a year working in a notary's office in Valladolid and learning the profession.<sup>111</sup> There is no actual record of Cortés having attended the University of Salamanca, but this does not mean that Cortés could not have attended classes there. In the 1525 investigations into Cortés's nobility, one Diego López of Medellín testified that he studied at Salamanca with Cortés, and the two had spoken often.<sup>112</sup>

Whatever his education, in his writings Cortés demonstrates some knowledge of Latin. This knowledge may have come from his experience as a notary, first in Seville and then in Hispaniola. It was quite popular in this time to cite classical quotations as evidence of a humanist education. Fernando de Rojas, author of *La Celestina* (1499), combines medieval literary tradition with Renaissance and classical influences.<sup>113</sup> One of Cortés's favorite quotes, "Fortune favors the brave" ("*Fortes Fortuna adiuvat*"), came originally from Terence's play *Phormio*. In his second letter to Emperor Charles V following the conquest of Mexico, Cortés wrote about the poor relationship between the Mexica and the Tlaxcalans: "I am reminded of the evangelical authority that said, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.'"<sup>114</sup> This quotation is derived from scripture; specifically Mark 3:24 and Luke 11:17.

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and Janet Pérez, eds., (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 382-383; Glen Carman, *Rhetorical Conquests: Cortés, Gómara, and Renaissance Imperialism*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), 78.)

<sup>111</sup> Pagden, Introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xlii.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 123-124.

<sup>113</sup> Angel del Rio, *Historia de la literatura Española*, vol. 1, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), 183-184. Rojas was at Salamanca during Cortés's time there. (Thomas, *Conquest*, 124.)

<sup>114</sup> Hernan Cortés, *Despatches from Mexico* [sic], A. Grove Day, ed. (New York: American Book Company, 1935), 23; Hernan Cortés, *Hernando Cortés: Five Letters, 1519-1526* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1962), 53. "Omne regnum in se ipsum divisum desolivatur"



Cortés's limited use of Latin in his written works has raised questions about the depth of his knowledge. John Elliott wrote about Cortés's quote from scripture: "his one direct quotation from the Gospels is produced with such a flourish as to induce some skepticism as to whether he was capable of producing many more."<sup>115</sup> Hugh Thomas asserts that Cortés's classical and biblical allusions could have just as easily come from a book of proverbs available at the time.<sup>116</sup> In the same paragraph of his second letter to the emperor in which he quotes scripture, he also uses a Spanish proverb.<sup>117</sup> Arthur Helps points out Cortés's misspelling of *pæna peccati* in an account of the actions of his men as "*pena pecati*," asserting that Cortés was not as learned as his self-created image suggested. Helps wrote, "I have no doubt that Cortés delighted in the society of learned men as the first Napoleon did in that of scientific men; but converse with learned men could not occupy the mind or heart of either of these restless conquerors."<sup>118</sup> Regardless of his knowledge of language, the fact of the matter is that Cortés presented himself as a man of letters.

Cortés attitude toward learning was typical of the fifteenth-century Spanish nobility. There was a consistent preference of arms to letters, a position no doubt forged in the Reconquista. The Milanese humanist Peter Martyr observed in 1492, "since the days of the grandfathers and great-grandfathers, the young men of Spain have maintained the erroneous belief that the man who dedicates himself to letters is of little value, for they believe to this day that learning is an impediment to the military life which they

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<sup>115</sup> John Elliott, "The Mental World of Hernán Cortés," *Spain and its World, 1500-1700: Selected Essays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 29.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 124.

<sup>117</sup> Cortés, *Hernando Cortés*, 53; 382n10. "De monte sale quien el monte quema."

<sup>118</sup> Helps, *The Life of Hernando Cortés*, vol. 2, 291.

consider to be the only honorable pursuit.”<sup>119</sup> Both Martyr and Lucius Marineus Siculus were Italians teaching in turn-of-the-century Spain; both constantly criticized the “barbarism’ of Spanish education.<sup>120</sup> It is hardly surprising, then, that Cortés chose adventure over the classroom. One possibility was the war in Italy. In 1501, the year he returned home from school, a fleet of ships left for Italy carrying many of his relatives. Ultimately, however, Cortés chose the Indies, likely because he was related to Nicolás de Ovando, who led a fleet of ships to the Indies.<sup>121</sup>

Cortés did not make it to Ovando’s trans-Atlantic crossing. As Cortés related through López de Gómara, he injured himself one night in a fall from a garden wall during a visit to, or from, a married woman’s window. In convalescence he contracted an illness that kept him bedridden for a time. He appears to have once again considered war in Italy as an option, making the trip to Valencia. Instead, however, he travelled around Spain, “wandering idly.” López de Gómara stated that this youthful freedom lasted around a year, but it was possibly more. It is during this time that Cortés acquired skill as a notary, possibly in Valladolid, as chronicler Juan Suárez de Peralta recorded, and then for a short while in Seville.<sup>122</sup> Cortés once again decided to seek his future in the Indies

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<sup>119</sup> Peter Martyr, quoted in Pagden, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xliv.

<sup>120</sup> Nicholas G. Round, “Renaissance Culture and its Opponents in Fifteenth-Century Castile,” *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 57, no. 2 (April, 1962), 204-215.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 125-126. A fleet left Málaga in 1501 for Italy under the command of the “Great Captain.” On board were Gonzalo Pizarro, father of the conqueror of Peru and first cousin of Cortés’s mother, and Pedro de Monroy, Cortés’s uncle. The option Cortés chose was a planned 1502 expedition to the Indies under Frey Nicolás de Ovando, commander of the Order of Alcántara. He was from Extremadura, and a distant relative of the Cortés family. In addition, Ovando’s sister was married to close friend of the Cortés family, Medellín native Nuñez de Prado.

<sup>122</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, vol. 1, 2; Thomas, *Conquest*, 126-129.

and secured passage to the island of Hispaniola in 1504. Recent evidence, however, suggests that he may have taken this trip as late as 1506.<sup>123</sup>

Cortés was drawn to the Indies by the idea of “God, Gold, and Glory” that fueled Iberian expansion during this time. The idea of gold was foremost on Cortés’s mind when he arrived. López de Gómara related that Cortés believed he would be weighted down with gold simply by setting foot in the Indies. Once this expectation was dashed,

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<sup>123</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 9-10; Thomas, *Conquest*, 128-130. There is some scholarly debate about when Cortés arrived in the New World. López de Gómara states that Cortés’s voyage to Hispaniola took place in 1504. The ship, *Trinidad*, belonged to Alonso Quintero of Palos. Their passage was from San Lúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz, to La Gomera on the Canary Islands for supplies, and then to Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola. After a broken mast that forced the captain of the ship to return to the Canary Islands, and then later in the voyage going off course, land was spotted on Good Friday, and Hispaniola was found on Easter Sunday. This would place the disembarkation Spain at the beginning of 1504. In his book, *Conquest*, historian Hugh Thomas includes in his index an agreement between Cortés and ship owner Luis Fernández de Alvaro for passage to Santo Domingo, Hispaniola, dated August 1506 (Archivo de Protocolos, Seville: oficio iv, lib. Iv, 29 August 1506). Thomas suggests that Cortés planned to take Alvaro’s ship, but instead opted for Quintero’s. This would put Cortés in Spain two years longer than previously thought, and account for the time Cortés needed to train to be a notary. The details given by López de Gómara concerning Cortés’s actions on Hispaniola shortly after his arrival point to 1504 at the date of the arrival, but do not necessarily rule out a later one. López de Gómara states that the governor, Ovando, was not in the capital at the time of Cortés’s arrival. When the governor did return, Cortés stayed in Santo Domingo briefly before joining Diego Velasquez in a campaign against the rebellious natives in the provinces of *Aniguaiagua* and *Buacaiarina*, for which Ovando gave Cortés Indians and named notary of the town of Azúa. Ovando and his men were constantly fighting native rebellions during this time, and Diego Velasquez was active in *Hanyguayaba* and *Guaycayrina* around 1503-1504. The village of Azúa de Compostela was founded in the process. These rebellions were the result of the execution of the Indian leader Queen Anacoana at the hands of the Spanish. Bartolomé de Las Casas, however, in his *Historia de los Indios*, asserts that while the death of Queen Anacoana occurred around 1504, it was Ovando’s later actions that sparked a large-scale rebellion. Fearing an investigation of the death, he arranged a trial several months to a year after Queen Anacoana died. This attempt to justify the execution with a later trial was said by Las Casas to be the catalyst for the rebellion in the region of *Hanyguayaba*. He notes that *Guaycayrina* was not a separate province, but a misunderstanding of the geography. Las Casas does contradict himself, however. He states that the *post-hoc* trial occurred as a result of rumors that the new monarchs of Castile in early 1505, Philip and Juana, sought to replace Ovando with another governor. Yet he also states that Queen Isabella heard the news of the trial before her death (in November, 1504) and was aggrieved. If the latter is the case, then the trial and rebellion would have taken place in 1504, meaning Cortés could have taken part in them. If the former is the case, then the trial and rebellion would have taken place in 1505-1506, and it could be a stretch that Cortés arrived in late 1506 to play a role. In that scenario, he may well have been assigned notary to Azúa, but probably would not have taken part in the military action of Diego Velásquez in *Hanyguayaba* unless the rebellions continued over that time. It is also possible that Cortés told López de Gómara he fought under Diego Velásquez to add military experience before the conquest to his legacy. (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 9-11; Thomas, *Conquest*, 632, doc. 3; 669-670n86; Antonio del Monte y Tejada, *Historia de Santo Domingo*, vol. 1 (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Imprenta de García Hermanso, 1890), 26-28; David F. Marley, *Wars of the Americas: A Chronology of Armed Conflict in the New World, 1492 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1998), 7-8; Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 99-103.

Cortés expressed an interest in mining. A secretary of the governor, one Medina, told him that mining relied squarely on hard work and good luck. His best path forward was to register as a citizen to acquire a plot of land that he could cultivate. Cortés replied that he hoped not to stay in the Indies that long.<sup>124</sup>

With wealth the primary objective, the ideas of God and glory were not quite as prominent in Cortés's mind when he arrived in the New World. These aspects were, however, ingrained in all Spaniards. The Catholic faith was an integral part of Spanish life. The nearly eight-century long Christian re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula placed religion foremost in the minds of generations of Spanish. Yet, it was not a crusade of extermination; for centuries Christians had lived with Muslims and Jews in the same cities. Religious tolerance was actually quite considerable, given the roles that non-Christians could play in society. This close relationship, however, led Spanish Christians to cling tightly to their religious identity, constantly identifying and defining it, lest it be diminished. Spanish Christian faith was therefore strengthened in the minds of the Spanish through both war and coexistence with the Moors. This contradictory nature of religious identity, of peace and aggression, can also be seen in the Spanish New World.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Gómara, *La conquista de México*, vol. 1, 3; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 31-32; Las Casas provides more insight into the difficulty in making a profit on mining at this early point in Spanish history of the Americas. He records, "Since the mines were rich and new then, everyone wanted tools and cassava bread to be able to put more and more Indians to work. A pickaxe cost from 10 to 15 castellanos, a 2 to 3 pound crowbar cost 5, a hoe from 2 to 3 castellanos, 4,000 to 5,000 cassava plants cost 200, 300 more pesos. Those most eager to mine gold would spent 2,000 or 3,000 of their gold pesos for these things; and when asked to pay a third of their harvest, or rather, that of the Indians they oppressed, they would find themselves penniless. Thus they would sell for 10 pesos what they had bought for 50, and the more gold they found, the greater their loss." (Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 87.)

<sup>125</sup> Matthew Carr, *Blood and Faith: The Purging of Muslim Spain* (New York: New Press, 2009), 120. See also *Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Interaction and Change*, Mark D. Meyerson and Edward D. English, eds. (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002); Chris Lowney, *A*

Soon after the Reconquest Jews and Muslims were required to convert or leave Spain, creating a new problem. In such an atmosphere where purity of faith was emphasized, this incorporation of the recently converted was seen by many as a threat to destroy Spanish Christianity from within.<sup>126</sup> The solution was to regulate the Spanish faith through the tribunal known as the Inquisition. In Cortés's lifetime, an additional threat to Christianity would appear in the form of the Protestant Reformation. The questioning of Catholic dogma and practice posed much the same threat as the recently converted Christians, and non-Catholics were thought of in the same ways. With Europe in danger of religious strife, the Spanish stood as defenders of the faith: soldiers of God. Everywhere that Spanish armies fought - in Spain, the New World, Italy, the Netherlands and the rest of the empire - there was a significant religious aspect that moved them to action.

This militaristic faith, hardened over the centuries and confronting very specific challenges in Cortés's lifetime, created a uniquely Spanish perspective of sin. Many questioned how God could punish them for common sins when they had fought and suffered for Christianity. How could God abandon those who were always ready – and willing – to die for His cause? There existed the belief that this greater sacrifice superseded minor sins and that the Spanish had a special supply of grace for their hardship. This is not to say the Spanish disregarded sin; their faith was confirmed through the sacraments.<sup>127</sup> This Spanish faith, however, would at times gloss over

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*Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>127</sup> Osvaldo F. Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 54; Marcelin Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, Newton Branch, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford

smaller moral errors incompatible with Christianity in the process. Once again, this contradiction in faith was created through Spanish tradition, in what historian Marcelin Defourneaux described as “a basic irrationality in the Spanish spirit which has a peculiar quality that explains all contradictions.”<sup>128</sup>

Also of great importance in early modern Spanish society was the concept of honor. Like the development of Spanish religious views, the Iberian concept of honor stemmed from the Middle Ages. Alfonso X (r. 1252-1284), issued a code of laws known as the *Siete Partidas*. It addresses the issue of honor: “Honor means the repute which has been earned by his rank, by his noble deeds, and by the worthiness which is manifest in him...a man who has lost his good name, even through no fault of his own, is deprived of all worth and honor; better for him to be dead than alive.”<sup>129</sup> Honor was a measurement of personal worth, but at the same time a social measurement that could be affected by others. This made honor, like Spanish Catholicism, perceived as fragile and, therefore, something of which one should always be aware.

Historian Frank Henderson Stewart suggests honor, in historical context, be viewed as “the right to be treated as having a certain worth.”<sup>130</sup> In other words, honor is a right to be respected by others. On one side of this social relationship is the honorable one who is worthy of having honor bestowed upon him, while on the other side are those

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University Press, 1979), 28-32. See also Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain: 1523-1572*, Lesley Byrd Simpson, trans. (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1966.)

<sup>128</sup> Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 29.

<sup>129</sup> *Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio*, vol. 2 (Madrid: La Imprenta Real, 1807), 105; translation in Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 32.

<sup>130</sup> Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 21. Stewart’s main argument is that honor is a right rather than a right to a specific thing. In this sense it is similar to the idea of freedom.

whose social duty it is to give respect in whatever form custom dictates. This dual nature of honor makes it both a personal quality, one of individual worth and esteem, and a social quality, one of reputation and fame. Cortés was fully part of this ethos, as he once wrote to the emperor, “I am more ambitious of fame than wealth.”<sup>131</sup> The idea throughout the Christian world from the Middle Ages that men of noble birth should be out in the world doing courageous and heroic things satisfies both these qualities of honor: giving themselves a sense of worth while providing others the opportunity to give them respect.<sup>132</sup>

This concept of honor, codified in the *Siete Partidas*, had existed in Spain for centuries and was pervasive in all areas of Spanish life. The Reconquista gave generation after generation of Spaniards the opportunity to obtain honor. The completion of the Christian crusade for the Iberian Peninsula, along with the discovery of the New World, bestowed Spain and the Spanish with honor. As the sixteenth century progressed, the fight against both the Turks and the Protestants continued this tradition. In 1600, playwright Lope de Vega wrote *La Contienda de García de Paredes*, in which he captures the nature of this Spanish honor. Through the words of the war hero, Vega wrote, “I am García de Paredes... but it is enough to say ‘I am a Spaniard.’”<sup>133</sup> In Cortés’s lifetime, there was an imperative in the *hidalgo* class to contribute to this glorification of Spain; while noble, they had little else to contribute to the greatness of the kingdom beyond their actions. Going to battle for Spain, over time, became a rite of passage. This observation was evident to the Spanish: early seventeenth century

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<sup>131</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 455.

<sup>132</sup> Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 32; Stewart, *Honor*, 18-21.

<sup>133</sup> Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 32; David García Hernán, *La cultura de guerra y el teatro del Siglo del Oro* (Madrid: Serie Historia Moderna, 2006), 114-115.

archbishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza once noted “Oh, unhappy Spain the day she ceases to have enemies to stimulate her greatness!”<sup>134</sup>

The two-sided nature of the concept of honor, being both an inward esteem and outward expression, creates a contradiction not unlike Spanish Christianity: one may be honorable without actually having honor. Actions worthy of honor could supersede any deficiencies in personal character. In this sense, it was who one aspired to be – not who they actually were – that was important. In the same vein, one’s personal evaluation is not the active component of honor; whatever one thinks of oneself is of little importance when others think differently. As Lope de Vega wrote in his play *Las Comendadoras de Córdoba* (c. 1596-1598), “No man attains honor by himself, for it is in the gift of other men. A virtuous and well-deserving man need not attain to honor: so it is thus that honor stems from others, not oneself.”<sup>135</sup> Lope de Vega wrote many “honor plays” for this very reason. In his own words, found in *Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en este Tiempo*, “Cases of honor are best because they forcefully move all people.”<sup>136</sup> Moreover, the dual expression of honor leaves it to personal interpretation. As Stewart writes, a perceived threat to honor “blurs the distinction between *being* insulted and *feeling* insulted.”<sup>137</sup> The concept of honor itself becomes a difficult web of interpretation and verbal machinations in its movement from the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century.

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<sup>134</sup> Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, quoted in Vincente Palacio Atard, *Derrota, Agotamiento, Decadencia, en la España del Siglo XVII* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1966), 78; Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 29.

<sup>135</sup> Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 34; Steven Wagschal, *The Literature of Jealousy in the Age of Cervantes* (Columbia, MO: The University of Missouri Press, 2006), 27.

<sup>136</sup> Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 35; Wagschal, *The Literature of Jealousy*, 23.

<sup>137</sup> Stewart, *The Literature of Jealousy*, 18. Stewart discusses the faults of early twentieth-century criminal law professor Mortiz Liepmann’s “feeling of honor” versus his idea of honor as a right.



The intersection of these two key features of early modern Spanish life – defense of the Christian faith and the acquisition and maintenance of honor – came in the form of the symbol of Golden Age Spain: the *hidalgo*. Placed on the lowest level of nobility, the *hidalgo* by necessity had to be the most conscientious of all matters of respectability. *Hidalgos* did not have much land from which to draw wealth or prestige. They likewise did not have a presence at the royal court from which to draw favors. As Defourneaux writes, “his sole capital was his honor, inherited from ancestors who fought for their faith.”<sup>138</sup> This characterization is best known in the literary work of Miguel de Cervantes’s satire *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605). Inspired by tales of knights and chivalry, the titular character seeks to wander the land, righting wrongs and bringing justice to the world. Cervantes portrays Don Quixote as a man with a comfortable life before his mental lapse, spending his days hunting, fishing, reading books in Latin, and otherwise living a quiet life of devotion to God.<sup>139</sup>

The reality of the *hidalgo* status was often quite different. While some lower nobility did enjoy the same simple comforts as Don Quixote, the intersection of a noble title and near poverty was a major embarrassment to many. Poor *hidalgos* often left home to escape to the relative anonymity of larger cities; they would still be poor, and judged as such, but nobody would know they were nobility. The hero of a seventeenth century picaresque novel, *La Vida y Hechos de Estebanillo Gonzales* (1652), related, “My father was afflicted with a disgrace he passed on to his sons like original sin: he was a *hidalgo*, which is the same thing as being a poet, for few of them manage to escape

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<sup>138</sup> Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 40.

<sup>139</sup> Walter T. Pattinson, *Representative Spanish Authors*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 196-197; Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 41.

eternal poverty and ceaseless hunger. He possessed some title of nobility, so old that he no longer could decipher them, and which no one dared touched for fear of getting their fingers stained by the worn ribbons and scribbled parchments.”<sup>140</sup> Such was the stigma of the *hidalguía* that in early Spanish Peru the prominent citizens were reluctant to refer to themselves as such, even though up to a third could claim such heritage. Being a *hidalgo* meant so little for social status that it was easier to avoid it.<sup>141</sup>

Being a *hidalgo* in sixteenth-century Spain did not reflect the life of Don Quixote. What Cervantes described as “the subtle hunger of the *hidalgo*,” the personal quest for honor and glory that took them away from their homes, was less about abstract views about their place in society and more about the need simply to make a living suitable to their social level. Honor, defined in the *Siete Partidas* as reputation acquired by rank in society, was something *hidalgos* like Cortés no longer enjoyed. That outward expression of honor, renown, was something they needed to balance their internal esteem of nobility. The Indies provided an avenue for this quest. Seventeenth-century Spanish historian of the Yucatán, Friar Diego López de Cogolludo, wrote of the conquistadors: “among nobles the greatest interest is the glory that redounds to them [from their actions], and they hold the immortality of their fame to be the greatest prize.”<sup>142</sup> While steeped in the chivalrous tales of the Middle Ages, this notion was present in the minds of the conquistadors. Bernal Díaz del Castillo wrote that their exploits in the conquest were no

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<sup>140</sup> *Vida y hechos de Estebanillo Gonzales, hombre de buen humor* (Paris: Libreria Europea, 1847), 5; translation in Manuel Durán, *Luis de León* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 23-24; Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Spain in the Golden Age*, 41. The novel is written as an autobiography, but there is debate as to whether the character is based on a real person or is purely fictitious. For more information on this debate, see Richard Bjornson, “Estabanillo Gonzáles: The Clown’s Other Face,” *Hispania*, vol. 60, no. 3 (September, 1977), 436-442.

<sup>141</sup> James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532-1560: A Social History* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 38-39.

<sup>142</sup> Diego López de Cogolludo, translated in Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, 136.

less than what the medieval knights had accomplished, and Cortés himself wrote in a letter to his father in 1526, that “I hold it better to be rich in fame than in goods.”<sup>143</sup> This statement, however, might be called into question, given that it was the chance at wealth that drove Cortés to the New World.

As the notary of the settlement of Azúa for approximately six or seven years after his arrival on Hispaniola, Cortés lived there longer than anywhere else in the New World. He arrived in the Indies with nothing, and through his connections he gained a measure of social standing. This, however, appears to have been insufficient in his estimation; he did not come to the Indies to climb only partly the social ladder. There was no shortage of possibility for the glory that most Spaniards sought. In just a few years before Cortés’s arrival in Santo Domingo, Spanish sailors and explorers had identified and mapped roughly three thousand miles of the American coastline. Cortés felt that some of the fame to be gained in that part of the world belonged to him, whatever the cost. Chronicler Cervantes de Salazar relates how Cortés, while in Azúa, had a dream that supported his ideas:

He dreamt that suddenly, having shed his old poverty, he saw himself covered with rich cloth and served by many strangers who addressed him with words of great honor and praise... And although he was a wise man and a good Christian, and knew that credit should not be given to dreams, he was nonetheless very happy, because the dream had been very fitting with his own thoughts... He

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<sup>143</sup> Hernán Cortés, “Carta de 26 September, 1526,” *Cartas y otros documentos de Hernán Cortés*, Mariano Cuevas, ed. (Seville, Spain: F. Díaz, 1915), 29; Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, 136; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 448-449; Thomas, *Conquest*, 129. “Tengo por mayor ser rico de fama que de bienes.” Cortés wrote this as he was planning to travel to Spain to protest his removal from the office of governor. Of the importance of this trip, he wrote, “I wish His Majesty to know my services and loyalty more than to possess all the states and treasures of the world.”

later said to his friends with a new and unusual satisfaction that either he would dine to the sound of trumpets or perish on the gallows, and that now he knew his fortune and what the stars promised him.<sup>144</sup>

Cervantes de Salazar continues by asserting that Cortés was moved by the dream to draw a wheel with buckets, some full and some empty. This image of a wheel of fortune was one, as Elliott points out, familiar to Spaniards of the time. In Rojas's novel *La Celestina*, it is described in this form: "We are like pots in a water-wheel...one up, and another down; one full, and another empty. It is fortune's law that nothing can continue any long time in one and the same state of being."<sup>145</sup> Cortés, however, believed that it was possible to control fortune's wheel. Years later, after Mexico City had fallen to him and he turned his sights on Coyoacán, he adopted as a personal symbol a depiction of a man made of silver next to a fortune wheel with a hammer in one hand and a nail in the other. This image was accompanied with the motto, "I shall hammer in the nail when I when see no more to possess."<sup>146</sup> Perhaps the seeds of this idea can also be found within the lines of *La Celestina*: "It is knowing the times and seizing the opportunity which makes men prosperous."<sup>147</sup>

Seizing the opportunity, in 1511 Cortés left Azúa to join Diego Velásquez in the conquest of Cuba. Velásquez had been the lieutenant governor of Hispaniola and knew Cortés well. Cortés would serve as a clerk to the treasurer, Miguel de Pasamonte,

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<sup>144</sup> Elliott, "The Mental World of Hernán Cortés," 33-34; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 56.

<sup>145</sup> Elliott, "The Mental World of Hernán Cortés," 34.

<sup>146</sup> "Declaraciones de testigos en la pesquina secreta contra Hernando Cortés," *Colección de Documentos Ineditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista, y Organizacion de Americas y Oceanía*, vol. 26 (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel G. Hernandez, 1876), 424; Elliott, "The Mental World of Hernán Cortés," 34. These are witnesses testimonies in the 1529 *residencia* of Cortés.

<sup>147</sup> Elliott, "The Mental World of Hernán Cortés," 35.

ensuring the collection of the royal fifth.<sup>148</sup> Following the island conquest, Velásquez, as governor, entrusted Cortés with many functions of the office; he even served as Velásquez's personal secretary. Cortés was given an *encomienda*, with which he was successful in obtaining some wealth. Settling in Asunción de Baracoa, the first capital of Cuba, Cortés's prospects of dining to the sound of trumpets were one step closer.<sup>149</sup>

Cortés's ambition did not always work to his favor. In 1514, after leading a group of settlers who petitioned Governor Velásquez for a larger portion of Indians than they had been assigned, Cortés was not only dismissed from his position but also arrested. He would be pardoned for this transgression, but would fall out of favor with the governor again the next year over his relationship with a woman, Catalina Suárez, who became Cortés's first wife.<sup>150</sup> Cortés would re-establish his favor with the governor over time, and when the capital of the island was moved from Baracoa to Santiago, both men moved to the new city, and Cortés was named *alcalde*, chief magistrate, of the city. Slowly, with shrewd calculation, Cortés was climbing his way to greatness. After an account of near death where a boat Cortés was in capsized at night during a storm, forcing him to swim to safety guided only by a fire on shore, López de Gómara - in clear admiration - wrote, "It is by such adventures and roundabout means that excellent men make their way to the

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<sup>148</sup> From the Middle Ages in Castile, the royal interest on currency had been two-thirds. In the New World, however, in order to expedite the exploitation of the land, it was reduced. Between 1500 and 1504, it was lowered a number of times, finally to one fifth. This royal fifth, or *quinto*, was established by royal decree on 5 February, 1504, and remained in place until the eighteenth century. (Clarence Henry Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 277-278.)

<sup>149</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 133.

<sup>150</sup> Another *encomendero* in Cuba, Juan Suárez brought to the island his mother and his three sisters, who had been in Santo Domingo as ladies-in-waiting for Maria de Toledo, wife of Diego Colon, who replaced Ovando as governor of Hispaniola in 1509. Cortés courted Catalina, and promised to marry her. After he showed reluctance to do so, Catalina sued him to keep his promise. Velásquez sided with Catalina, as López de Gómara asserts, because Velásquez was attempting to court another sister, and wanted the family's favor. Cortés had no children with Catalina, and she died in 1522 in Coyoacán. (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 11-13; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 61-63; Thomas, *Conquest*, 134.)

goal of good fortune that awaits them.”<sup>151</sup> Near death experiences aside, Cortés’s time of roundabout means to good fortune was nearly over.

In 1517, Velásquez sent Francisco Hernández de Córdoba on an expedition to surrounding islands to enslave more Indians to work in Cuba. Caught in a storm, the expedition found itself off the coast of the Yucatán Peninsula in southern Mexico. After some trade with the natives on shore, the Spanish were attacked and suffered many casualties. Few of the men who left Cuba returned. Córdoba himself was badly injured in the escape and died from his wounds shortly after his return to the island. The first Spanish encounter with mainland Mexico had been a complete disaster; it did, however, present a promising opportunity. The expedition had brought back gold, and with it the possibility of more.

Velásquez organized another expedition as soon as possible, this time under the command of his nephew, Juan de Grijalva.<sup>152</sup> Grijalva’s expedition was successful, although there were clashes with the local Indians. The most important feature of Grijalva’s mission, however, was that it lasted several months, during which time

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<sup>151</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 14. Sometime between 1515 and 1518, Cortés accompanied Velásquez on an expedition against natives in western Cuba who were in revolt. Upon their return to the eastern side of the island by ship, Cortés boarded a canoe for the shore at Bocas de Bani to inspect his shepherds and mines at Baracoa.

<sup>152</sup> The presence of gold provided Velásquez with a lucrative opportunity, but he had no legal discourse to settle any new lands. The situation was further complicated by the changes taking place in Spain. In early 1516, King Ferdinand of Aragon died, and his grandson, Charles, was named king to rule alongside his mentally ill mother, Juana, who was the heir to the thrones of Castile and Aragon. Cardinal Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros ruled as regent over Spain until Charles I arrived in Spain from the Netherlands. For Velásquez, this change in the crown would extensively delay his request for permission to settle the new lands, creating an opportunity for someone else to establish a stronger connection to them. He had permission from Diego Columbus, but sought more substantial permission as to secure his claim. He obtained permission from three monks of St. Jerome who had been sent to Cuba by the Council of the Indies to investigate claims of mistreatment of the Indians. Their authority to approve such a mission was shaky at best; Velásquez sent a letter to Juan de Fonseca, the Bishop of Burgos, who was the president of the council and the uncle of his wife. (Marks, *Cortés*, 30; Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 147.)

Velásquez had no knowledge of its results. When one of the ships of the expedition returned under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, word came that Grijalva was unwilling to create a colony because most of the natives they encountered were warlike. Velásquez then decided to send another expedition to establish a colony that would sustain constant trade and give Velásquez a legal right to settle the land. How Cortés was chosen to lead this expedition is still unclear. He had no experience in such expeditions, and he likely did not have the money to fund it on his own. The best explanation is that Cortés made an arrangement with merchant Andrés de Duero and Amador de Lares, a royal treasurer, to use their wealth and influence to obtain the position for himself. Cortés, through López de Gómara, asserted that Velásquez convinced him to help fund the expedition because Velásquez was miserly. Whatever the arrangement, Duero and Lares convinced Velásquez to hand control over his largest expedition to a man with whom he had clashed in the past.<sup>153</sup> The ever-ambitious Cortés found the next step on his path to glory.

The decision by Velásquez to place Cortés in charge of the expedition put the two men at odds once again. Velásquez was ambitious, but after his conquest of Cuba seemed reluctant to play a direct role; he was content merely to organize the expeditions and take the credit. He simply may have been too old to lead the way. Born in 1460 in Cuéllar, southeast of Valladolid, he spent seventeen years as a soldier in Spain before going to the Indies. Cortés, on the other hand, was both ambitious and desirous of action. As Cortés prepared for expedition, gathering supplies and enlisting men, he began to accrue debt, raising the suspicions of Velásquez, who seems to have viewed the

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<sup>153</sup> Pagden, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xlvii; Marks, *Cortés*, 30-36; López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 14-19; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 75-84; Thomas, *Conquest*, 135-137.

expedition in a more cursory way, a superficial first establishment of a colony to lay claim to the land. To Cortés, it was the beginning of something much larger. The scale of Cortés's preparations alarmed Velásquez, and he began to doubt Cortés was the right person for the job. The governor's concerns only pushed Cortés to work harder to ready the expedition before it was cancelled. When Velásquez finally took actions to stop Cortés, Cortés disembarked from Santiago, incompletely supplied. He would stop at several ports across Cuba to take on supplies before heading westward. Accounts differ on the last exchange between Velásquez and Cortés. López de Gómara mentions nothing of a final exchange.<sup>154</sup> Díaz del Castillo claimed that the two embraced and parted amicably at the port, implying Velásquez continued to waver on Cortés's captaincy to the very end.<sup>155</sup> Las Casas employs a more dramatic scene. When Velásquez received word that Cortés was leaving, he rushed to the port, only to find Cortés already on a boat just offshore. Velásquez called to him, "Is this the way to take leave of me?" to which Cortés replied, "I beg your pardon, but these things are better done than thought about."<sup>156</sup> While the reality of this account may be questioned, it captures the mindset of Cortés as he left to seek his fortune. He used all of his wealth to fund the expedition. Going into debt likely soured his relationship with Velásquez, the person who had done the most for him in the Indies, and he risked the lives of hundreds of men, all for a chance at

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<sup>154</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 21. López de Gómara implies that the purpose of the expedition was principally to find Grijalva. When Grijalva returned to Cuba shortly before Cortés departed, Cortés explained that the expedition was now on his own authority, and any connection to, or orders from, Velásquez was to be dismissed. This claim is also made by the first bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga, who states that when Grijalva arrived, the purpose of Cortés's expedition was gone; since he was ready to go, however, he continued with his plans on the basis of the financial benefit, which would have benefitted Velásquez as well. (Thomas, *Conquest*, 672n52.)

<sup>155</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, 34.

<sup>156</sup> Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 228-229.



something more than what he had. It was a great gamble, but to Cortés his fortune was assured.

Velásquez continued to try to stop Cortés, sending messengers to the ports of Cuba to prevent Cortés from gaining access to supplies. Ironically, one of these messengers was actually persuaded to join Cortés's fleet.<sup>157</sup> Taken as a sign of Cortés's legendary persuasive ability, it is probably more characteristic of the reason most men were in Cuba (or the Indies) to begin with, and either the reason Velásquez waffled on the expedition or the reason he could not stop it. The governor continued to go back and forth on his opinion of Cortés, however. Days after Cortés left Santiago, Andrés de Tapia arrived in Santiago and informed the governor that he wished to go with Cortés. Velásquez said, "I do not know what Cortés's intentions are towards me, but I suspect bad, because he spent everything he had and is in debt. He has taken my officials into his service as if he were one of the lords of Spain."<sup>158</sup> Despite this, Velásquez told Tapia that he wished him to join Cortés, gave him money for supplies, and told him at what port Cortés was likely to be. Several months later, Velásquez wrote to an imperial official:

As you will have heard, I sent a fleet over eight months ago to the lands and islands newly discovered by me in the name of your Highness, in which in addition to all things necessary, I dispatched six hundred men, under the command of one Hernán Cortés, as seeming to me a prudent man, and one who had long been in my employ both as a friend and servant. As such I had always treated him with my own person and goods,...and on this account and for the

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<sup>157</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 146. The messenger's name was Pedro Laso.

<sup>158</sup> Morris, introduction to Cortés, *Hernando Cortés*, 148.

great experience which he very properly had from having seen my ways of dealing with Spaniards and natives in these parts as also for the confidence I had in him, it seemed to me that your Highness would be better served by him in the new lands than by another, notwithstanding that among the six hundred men I sent there were many noblemen of much better birth than he.<sup>159</sup>

While a way of taking credit for Cortés's expedition to an imperial official, Velásquez could not help but admire Cortés's boldness. He likely saw something of himself in Cortés. Velásquez had secured the governorship of Cuba by appealing directly to the king, going above Diego Columbus, who had given him permission for the conquest. It is possible that saw the same duplicity in his protégé.<sup>160</sup>

Cortés's affability and personality no doubt assisted him in the conquest. Díaz del Castillo gave countless examples of Cortés's ability to sway men to his way of thinking. Once word spread across Cuba that Velásquez sought to stop Cortés from leaving, Cortés not only convinced his own men to continue onward, but he also convinced the townspeople to continue to help him. At least one messenger from Velásquez to stop the expedition joined Cortés. The loyalty shown to Cortés was not simply the product of his persuasiveness. When one volunteer could not afford supplies for the expedition, Cortés

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<sup>159</sup> Morris, introduction to Cortés, *Hernando Cortés*, xxv-xxvi.

<sup>160</sup> López de Gómara asserts that this was a reason for Velásquez's hesitations to carry out the expedition, in addition to the return of Grijalva and his concern over the scale of the preparations. Las Casas comments on López de Gómara's assessment, stating that while Cortés's actions were similar to those of Velásquez in relation to Diego Columbus, the difference is one of scale: "As reprehensible though the ungratefulness may be, it does not compare with Cortés's rebellion. Cortés was running away with his master's fleet and costly property, was usurping his power by hanging those who opposed him – which is an act proper to tyrants – and in the end was to dishonor Velásquez as well as be the cause of his bankruptcy and death in bitterness and poverty." While considerably anti-Cortés, this inflated rhetoric demonstrates the variety of interpretations of Cortés's actions. (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 20; Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 229.)

cut off the golden tassels from his cloak in order to supply the man.<sup>161</sup> Díaz del Castillo also described Cortés leadership in other areas: “When we went with our fleet to Villa Rica and began to build a fort, the first to do his share and dig out earth for the foundation was Cortés. In battles, I always saw him enter them in close company with us...and he fought very well.”<sup>162</sup> Later in his life, in times when supplies were low – the Honduras expedition and in Baja California – he went hungry as everyone else.<sup>163</sup> Cortés was also calm and composed. Díaz del Castillo asserted, “sometimes when very angry he cried to the heavens, but he never said an ugly or injurious word to any captain or soldier. He was very long-suffering, for there were very inconsiderate soldiers who said many insolent things to him, and he did not answer them with anything arrogant or bad, even though there was reason to do so. The most he would say was ‘Be quiet,’ and ‘Go with God, and henceforward be more courteous in what you say, or it will cost you dearly.’”<sup>164</sup> Cortés did possess qualities that did not work in his favor. His determination for success often translated into stubbornness, particularly in military matters, an area with which he had little experience.<sup>165</sup> López de Gómara also stated that Cortés’s stubborn nature led him to have more lawsuits against him than was proper for a man of his status.<sup>166</sup> Despite

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<sup>161</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, 31-37. Alonzo Hernández Puertocarrero had no means of buying a horse. He was a native of Medellín.

<sup>162</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 516.

<sup>163</sup> Gómara, *Cortés*, 409.

<sup>164</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 515.

<sup>165</sup> Díaz del Castillo wrote, “He was very obstinate, especially about warlike matters, however much advice and persuasion we might offer to him about imprudent attacks and expeditions which he ordered us to undertake, such as when we marched around the great pueblos of the lakes, or on the rocky hills which they now call the ‘Peñoles del Marques.’ We told him that we could not climb up to the fortifications and rocky heights, but that we would keep them beleaguered, because of the many boulders which came bounding down hurdled at us from the top the fortress...yet still he contended against all of us, and we had to begin to ascend again and were in extreme danger, and eight soldiers were killed, and all the rest of us injured in the head and wounded, without accomplishing anything worth mentioning until we changed to other plans.” Díaz del Castillo also cited Cortés’s decision in the Honduras expedition to march straight into the land rather than travel along the coastline. (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 515.)

<sup>166</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 409.

his faults, he is described as a skilled horseman and good with arms on both horseback and foot. “Above all,” wrote Díaz del Castillo, “he had courage and spirit, and that matters most of all.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 514.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NARRATIVE OF CONQUEST

How Cortés presented the conquest of Mexico reveals much about the conquistador. As Anthony Pagden writes, “Cortés was certainly not the first conquistador to have composed a detailed account of his achievements. But none of the other *relaciones* which survive are anything more than perfunctory, usually disingenuous, accounts of services rendered. Cortés’s are also disingenuous, but they are never perfunctory.”<sup>168</sup> Cortés’s letters are much longer than other accounts of exploration, and they are written with more narrative structure. They were not simply lists of events, but intended to be literary works. They were also written as letters to Emperor Charles V. As such, Cortés was hoping not only to reach the highest level of society with his work, but also that it would become the royal or official account. This notion can also be seen in the level of detail with which Cortés recounted his actions. He recorded the names of everyone involved and everyone he encountered. He gave detailed descriptions of what he saw in Mexico and included the names of every place he visited. Cortés was, in a sense, following the procedure of creating an account of his actions, but these records were much more. Cortés wanted his letters to be the history of the conquest. To some

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<sup>168</sup> Pagden, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xlix.

extent, this is the case.<sup>169</sup>

Cortés wrote his letters of relation from the perspective of historical importance. He was so impressed with Mexico that he explained to the emperor, “One might call oneself the emperor of this kingdom with no less glory than of Germany.”<sup>170</sup> Comparison has been drawn between Cortés’s letters, particularly his second letter detailing the conquest of Tenochtitlán, with Julius Caesar’s Gallic Wars.<sup>171</sup> While there is no evidence of direct influence, echoes of the desire to become his own historian are certainly present.<sup>172</sup> Unlike Caesar, however, Cortés needed to justify his actions within the framework imperial Spain.<sup>173</sup> As such, he draws from his legal experience and his knowledge of the *Siete Partidas*. Historian Victor Frankl, in “Hernán Cortés y la tradición de las Siete Partidas,” demonstrates the strong presence of medieval Spanish law in Cortés’s letters. From Cortés’s defiance of Velásquez and establishment of Vera Cruz to his account of Montezuma’s speeches, the conquistador creates a fictional reconstruction of the events based on ideas found in the *Siete Partidas* and the legal and

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., xlix. Pagden states that there is no evidence that the emperor ever read Cortés’s letters himself. Charles V, at the time of the letters, was very busy with many pressing issues in Spain and elsewhere. Copies of the letters in the imperial library, where no other accounts of exploration or conquest can be found, does suggest the acknowledgment of their historical importance.

<sup>170</sup> Cortés, *Letters to Mexico*, 48.

<sup>171</sup> See Manuel Alcalá, *César y Cortés* (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1950); Manuel Alcalá, “César y Cortés frente al enemigo,” in *Actas del Primer Congreso Internacional sobre Hernán Cortés*, Alberto Navarro González, ed. (Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986), 17-26.

<sup>172</sup> Elliott, “The Mental World of Hernán Cortés,” 27; Dolores Clavero, “Algunas cosas de Hernán Cortés y México: una lectura humanista de la segunda Carta de Relación de Hernán Cortés,” *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Winter, 1996), 215.

<sup>173</sup> As Cortés had no official order to lead his men beyond exploration and trade, after establishing the town of Vera Cruz, the people of the town petitioned the Crown to grant Cortés the titles of captain and chief justice as to continue their exploration of the land. A letter written from Vera Cruz in 1519 by one of Cortés’s men states, “The representatives, inhabitants and citizens of this town have likewise asked us to entreat Your Majesties on their behalf to order and provide a decree and letters patent in favor of Hernando Cortés, captain and chief justice of Your Royal Highnesses, so that he may govern us with justice until this land is conquered and pacified.” (“The First Letter,” *Letters from Mexico*, 39.)

political tradition of Castile, along with the spiritual and ideological contributions of the *Reconquista*.<sup>174</sup>

While Cortés was writing a history, he also included fiction where it could advance his personal ambition. Beatriz Pastor Bodmer, in her book *Discurso Narrativo de la Conquista de América*, wrote, “When choosing the framework of documenting his personal and mythical conquest of Mexico, Cortés broke past the boundaries of ‘true history’ to the literary convention of a fundamentally fictional narrative.”<sup>175</sup> Historian Eulalia Guzmán published an annotated version of the first two letters of relation to demonstrate this fiction, in the process demonizing Cortés as a consummate liar and one who purposefully destroyed an entire civilization.<sup>176</sup> While Cortés was likely smoothing over controversial actions in some cases, his reconstruction of events also has other purposes.

Cortés’s control of the narrative allows him to portray his actions in the best possible light. The utilization of his knowledge of law is only one part of this control. In his narrative, Cortés portrays himself much like a literary hero, capable of triumph in everything from his confrontation with Velásquez (who is much more insidious in Cortés’s telling of his departure from Cuba) to his conquest of an empire in the name of Charles V. In addressing the letters directly to the emperor, and constantly reminding the

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<sup>174</sup> Victor Frankl, “Hernán Cortés y la tradición de las Siete Partidas,” *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 53/54 (June-December, 1962), 9-74; Elliott, “The Mental World of Hernán Cortés,” 36.

<sup>175</sup> Beatriz Pastor Bodmer, “Hernán Cortés: la ficcionalización de la conquista y la creación del modelo del conquistador,” *Discurso Narrativo de la Conquista de América* (Havana, Cuba: Casa de las Américas, 1983), 152.

<sup>176</sup> Eulalia Guzmán, *Relaciones de Hernán Cortés a Carlos V sobre la invasión de Anáhuac* (México: Libros Anáhuac, 1958); Guzmán has been criticized for her strong anti-Cortés position. One reviewer wrote, “Against the objectivity that should have presided, [the author] preferred to vent her personal inclinations, forgetting that passion and history cannot always be joined in a way that is reasonable, useful, and true.” Carlos Villegas, “Review of *Relaciones de Hernán Cortés a Carlos V sobre la invasión de Anáhuac* by Eulalia Guzmán,” *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 46 (December, 1958), 558-562.

emperor of his services rendered, Cortés portrays himself as a loyal medieval vassal. One possible model for such deference is medieval Spanish romance *Poema del Cid*. The oldest extant Spanish poem, it tells the story of a soldier in the *Reconquista*, dishonored and without resources, who overcomes hardship placed upon him by all sides and rises to prominence. The conquest is a main part of the story, but arguably of equal attention is the elevation of honor and status El Cid receives in his triumph.<sup>177</sup> It is not difficult to see how this would be a useful model for Cortés to emulate. As professor of Spanish Literature Beatriz Aracil Varón writes, “The moral, political, and military qualities of the Castilian hero, combined with his unwavering loyalty to his king, undoubtedly would be an important reference for Cortés.”<sup>178</sup> In addition, El Cid is also responsible for the trend of realism found in other pieces of Spanish literature, as well as Cortés’s letters. The battles, conquests, and scenes of everyday life are detailed in an almost historical fashion. The geography in the work is also highly descriptive.<sup>179</sup> Professor of Spanish Literature Jorge Checa has written about Cortés’s descriptions of locations and geography in his letters, citing such detail. This provides Cortés not only an aspect of authenticity and reality, but also a sense of authority – an important aspect of his appeal to the emperor for approval of his actions.<sup>180</sup>

At the same time that Cortés’s letters compare to medieval works in tone and style, they also reflect Renaissance ideas, particularly relating to Cortés’s own actions. In many respects, he portrays himself as highly skilled in war, politics, and governing –

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<sup>177</sup> Pattison, *Representative Spanish Authors*, vol. 1, 12.

<sup>178</sup> Aracil Varón, “Hernán Cortés en sus ‘Cartas de Relación’: la Configuración Literaria del Héroe,” 752.

<sup>179</sup> Pattison, *Representative Spanish Authors*, vol. 1, 11.

<sup>180</sup> Jorge Checa, “Cortés y el espacio de la conquista: la segunda Carta de Relación,” *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 111, no. 2 (March 1996), 187-217.



areas in which he was, in fact, quite capable. This well-rounded self-image, which could be seen as dangerous to the power of the crown in this new land, is often punctuated with humanizing problems, integrating a model of a Renaissance hero.<sup>181</sup> Cortés's men are frequently hampered by the basic problems of communication with the natives, lack of knowledge of the land, and lack of resources. He readily admits, and emphasizes, many situations in which the only way to solve his problems was to act beyond his powers as Captain General, asserting that he only did so as a representative of the authority of the emperor, an authority he dutifully executed in the line of service. One of the first great events, Cortés's appointment to Chief Justice and Captain General of the newly-formed village of Veracruz, clearly demonstrates both the limitations of his power and his abilities as a leader. Diego Velásquez ordered him to simply scout the area and conduct trade. These tasks completed, he had no authority even to form a settlement, much less govern one. He was, however, elected to these positions because of his leadership qualities.<sup>182</sup> In every situation, Cortés is careful to point out his own limitations, legal and otherwise, and cite his use of imperial authority to carry out his goals.

Cortés also employs a political philosophy of the Renaissance later summarized by Machiavelli. Although Cortés could not possibly have read *The Prince*, as it was not published until 1532, he nevertheless followed many of the underlying principles that Machiavelli systematized in his work. Tzvetan Todorov writes of the connection between Cortés and Machiavelli: "Cortés's behavior irresistibly suggests the almost

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<sup>181</sup> Aracil Varón, "Hernán Cortés en sus 'Cartas de Relación': la Configuración Literaria del Héroe," 749.

<sup>182</sup> Cortés's first letter to the emperor, which detailed the events including the founding of Vera Cruz, has yet to be found. There does exist, however, a letter written from Vera Cruz in July 1519 by an unknown author that covers the same events. It is possible that this author used Cortés's letter as a model his own. (J. Bayard Morris, introduction to Cortés, *Hernando Cortés*, xlii; Elliott, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xx.)

contemporary teachings of Machiavelli. No question of a direct influence, of course, but rather of the spirit of a period which is manifest in the latter's writings as in the former's actions."<sup>183</sup> Pastor Bodmer adds, "The capacity of Machiavelli's prince for analyzing concrete reality (on which the rational political philosophy of the Renaissance was based) is identical to that underlying the characterization of Cortés."<sup>184</sup> In the introduction to *Letters from Mexico*, John H. Elliott echoes this idea by pointing out that Cortés was well aware that any victory in Mexico would mean nothing without victory in the Spanish Court and that the entire presentation of his case through his letters had to be designed to present himself in the best possible light. Elliott also states, "[Montezuma] was in some respects the least dangerous of the enemies who Cortés had to face; he had more to fear from some of his own countrymen than from the emperor of the Mexica."<sup>185</sup> Through his constant demonstration of loyalty to the emperor and his consistent portrayal of his political competitors as self-interested and dangerous men, he secures for himself the governorship of the conquered lands.<sup>186</sup>

Where Cortés and Machiavelli diverge is on the issue of religion. Machiavelli's philosophy of political realism was based on the idea that Christianity and political

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<sup>183</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, 116. Todorov also points out that Cortés would have certainly been familiar with King Ferdinand, whom Machiavelli cites as an example in his work. Historian Arnold Hauser points out that Machiavelli did not invent "Machiavellism," but was rather a spokesman of this time. (Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art, vol. II: Renaissance, Mannerism, and Baroque*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 42.)

<sup>184</sup> Beatriz Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest: Spanish Accounts of the Discovery of America, 1492-1589* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 83.

<sup>185</sup> Elliott, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xii, xxxii.

<sup>186</sup> Pánfilo de Narváez and Diego Velásquez are described as such in Cortés's second letter, and his third letter contains a similar depiction of Cristóbal de Tapia, a royal inspector in Hispaniola sent to Mexico to intervene after Narvaez's defeat. Cortés's fourth letter contains unfavorable descriptions of the actions of, Juan de Garay, the governor of Jamaica, and Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, the Bishop of Burgos. (Elliott, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xxix-xxxii.)

principles should be separated.<sup>187</sup> Despite Cortés's political intelligence, this is not the case in his letters. Evident throughout the letters are references to the providential nature of his actions. At every step, Cortés is convinced that divine presence is on his side. In his second letter, Cortés wrote at one point, "As we were carrying the banner of the Cross and were fighting for our Faith in the services of Your Sacred Majesty in this Your Royal enterprise, God gave us such a victory that we killed many of them without ourselves receiving any hurt."<sup>188</sup> Similar statements appear frequently throughout the letter. The phrases he utilized in this providentialism – "it pleased God," "so much did our Lord help us," "it seemed that God was fighting for us," "the victory which God had been pleased to give us," "after having attended mass," – come out of the Spanish Reconquista.<sup>189</sup> Through these phrases Cortés overlaid the familiar theme of a holy war onto his battles against the natives of Mexico. Cortés, having been raised in the shadow of the centuries-long war against the Moors, was familiar with this frame of mind, and the language of Spanish literature and history lent itself to his descriptions of what was taking place. One example of this literary knowledge came in Cortés's account of a dangerous battle. Cortés explained that he heard one of his men describe him as a Pedro Carbonero, a semi-mythical hero of the Reconquista known for leading his men into extremely dangerous situations, and from one of which he did not return.<sup>190</sup> To reassure his men and improve morale, Cortés reminded them that "as Christians we were obliged to wage war against

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<sup>187</sup> Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, 83.

<sup>188</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 60.

<sup>189</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 60-63; Luis N. Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 56.

<sup>190</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 63; Pedro Carbonero was a legendary figure in the wars against Grenada in the fifteenth century. He is said to have led very dangerous missions, taking a very small number of men (often twelve) deep into enemy territory. He is also said to have died fighting a much larger Moorish army in one such situation. His bravery is celebrated in many Spanish poems and ballads, and he was also made the central figure in Lope de Vega's play *El Cordobés Valeroso Pedro Carbonero*. (Simpson, in López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 112n; Pagden, in Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 463n.)

the enemies of our Faith; and thereby we would win glory in the next world, and, in this, greater honor and renown than any generation before our time. They should observe that God was on our side, and to Him nothing is impossible.”<sup>191</sup> Throughout the letters, actions taken by Cortés and his men are credited solely to God. Knowledge is presented as God’s influence upon the group; each decision was divine inspiration. Within this providential framework, Cortés portrayed himself acting in obedience to God’s will, not for his own personal gain. Personal gain, however, was not inconsistent with God’s plan.

Cortés considered himself chosen by God to carry out holy works, but there also was the expectation that he would be temporally rewarded for his service. As governor, facing a Spanish-led rebellion in Central America, Cortés wrote, “I reasoned that nothing could be well done or directed save by the hands of the Creator and Mover of all things, and I therefore had Masses said and ordered processions and sacrifices, beseeching God to guide me in the path where I might serve him best.”<sup>192</sup> This service to God, however, would not be without personal gain. Throughout the expedition of conquest, Cortés maintained an expectation of glory and wealth. Historian Enrique Dussel explains that there existed in Spain a strong messianic consciousness he describes as “temporal messianism,” whereby the destiny of the state of the destiny of the Church were one in the same. Interestingly, while this idea can be traced back to early Christianity, it was particularly strong in Spain due to the influence of the Islamic system of the caliphate.

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<sup>191</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 63.

<sup>192</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 422.

While Cortés believed that his crusade would be rewarded in the afterlife, he also anticipated the Spanish crown would reward him as well.<sup>193</sup>

Cortés was not alone in his vision of the conquest as a crusade of Christians against infidels. Fray Toribio de Motolinía, one of the twelve Franciscans who arrived in Mexico in 1524 to establish a system to evangelize the natives, described Mexico before Cortés as a place of idolatry that greatly offended God. He describes Cortés's actions as "impeding and eradicating these and other abominations and sins and offenses against God and neighbor, and planting our Holy Catholic Faith, and raising up everywhere the cross of Christ and the confession of his holy name...Through this captain, God opened the door for us to preach the Holy Gospel, and for the Indians to reverence the holy sacraments and obey the ministers of the church."<sup>194</sup> In an act designed for the crusades, Pope Clement VII granted Cortés and his men bulls of indulgence for their holy conquest. The bull, issued 16 April 1529, while Cortés was in Spain to meet with Emperor Charles V, states, "Not sparing yourself hard work of any kind for many years, exposing your life to every danger, and finally fighting valiantly, you triumphed and won Western India, presently named Nueva España, for the yoke of Christ and obedience to the Holy Roman Church."<sup>195</sup> In these perspectives of the conquest, the most important aspect was the intention to bring Catholic Christianity to the New World. Shortly after the conquest, Cortés petitioned the emperor to send missionaries to carry out the work of evangelization. He requested that they be of the mendicant orders to avoid any

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<sup>193</sup> Enrique Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 38

<sup>194</sup> Fray Toribio de Motolinía, in Lino Gómez Canedo, *Evangelización y conquista: experiencia Franciscana en Hispaniamérica* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1977), 221; Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 57.

<sup>195</sup> Silvio Zavala, *Las instituciones jurídicas en la conquista de América* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1971), 349; Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 57.

corruption that might be found in the secular clergy and sought to make the church in New Spain an example to all others.<sup>196</sup>

The providential interpretation of Cortés was not without critics, however. The most notable of these was Bartolomé de las Casas. His accusation that Cortés acted maliciously against the innocent natives became the predominant interpretation. Las Casas wrote of Cortés's interaction with the Indians: "It worked in such a way that, if God had not chosen to enlighten a few through the preaching of good friars and against all human power and knowledge, all Indians would think, like the majority, that our God is evil, unjust and abominable, since he sent such iniquitous men to afflict and destroy them by means never heard of before."<sup>197</sup> As historian Luis Rivera points out, "Las Casas made the concept of 'conquest' cease to be synonymous with 'valor' and transformed it into a term of doubtful reputation."<sup>198</sup> When faced with the argument that providence was the reason for such catastrophic loss of life on the part of the natives and such great material gain on the part of the Spanish, Las Casas asserted, "The reason for this lies in the ignorance of the goal for which divine Providence meant the discovery of those peoples and those lands, which is none other, since we are mortal, than the conversion and salvation of those souls, to which end all temporal concerns must

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<sup>196</sup> Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 58. On the issue of mendicant orders, Cortés said, "Having bishops and other prelates they would still follow the custom which they have acquired, due to our sins, of disposing of the goods of the Church by wasting them on luxuries and on other vices or by leaving the right of succession to them to their children or relatives." He described the goal of plan later in the letter: "wherein, more than in all the churches in the world, God our Lord would be honored and served."

<sup>197</sup> Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 231.

<sup>198</sup> Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 58. Of the secular clergy, Cortés wrote, "Because if we have bishops and other dignitaries, they will only follow the customs which, for our sins, they pursue these days, of squandering the goods of the Church on pomp and ceremony, and other vices, and leaving entailed estates to their sons or kinsmen." Cortés explains how this would be a bad example for the converted natives to follow. (Cortés, *Letters From Mexico*, 333.)

necessarily be subordinated.”<sup>199</sup> Las Casas, too, thought divine guidance led to the discovery of the New World, but not in what followed.

After the conquest, during Cortés’s interim governorship, his letters to the emperor depict him as the ideal candidate for the position. In Pastor Bodmer’s comparison of Cortés to Machiavelli, she cites Machiavelli’s advice to those who assumed power through non-peaceful means: “It should be noted that a conqueror, after seizing power, must decide about all the injuries he needs to commit, and do them all at once, so as not to have to inflict punishments every day. Thus he will be able, by his restraint, to reassure men and win them over by benefitting them.”<sup>200</sup> In his description of the events that took place in Mexico, Cortés seamlessly transitioned from a warrior against infidels to that of a defender of the innocent. The natives he attacked so mercilessly were now under his protection. When Cuauhtémoc surrenders to Cortés, requesting the conqueror to kill him, Cortés refused, stating that it was his obligation to care for the people he conquered. Cortés had proven to both the natives and to the Spanish Crown that he was an able conquistador; he next needed to demonstrate to everyone he was a capable governor.<sup>201</sup>

Cortés presented his conquered land as one of justice and peace. He offers any native resistance the chance at surrender and peace rather than violence. When the lord of the Michoacán province asked for peace rather than war, Cortés wrote to the emperor, “their lord had heard that we were vassals of a great lord, and, if I would accept, he and his people wished to be his vassals also, and to hold us as their friends. I replied that we

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<sup>199</sup> Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 5.

<sup>200</sup> Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, 92;

<sup>201</sup> Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, 92.

were, in truth, all Your Majesty's vassals, and that their lord had been wise in wishing to become one also, for we were obliged to make war on those who did not."<sup>202</sup> Cortés was very successful on the battlefield, but he described it as his obligation rather than his passion; preference for a peace is a recurring theme throughout his letters.

Under Cortés's leadership, the groundwork was laid to transform Mexico into an ideal Spanish kingdom. Any shortcomings or problems that arose were blamed on those who sought to undermine Cortés's authority.<sup>203</sup> He redistributed land to his men for the purpose of settlement and development. Much of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán, had been destroyed in the conquest, so he worked to rebuild it. He settled new towns, not only around Lake Texcoco but also along the east coast and the route inland. He sent expeditions westward and founded towns on the Pacific coast as well. He established defensive structures and ordered the construction of arms and munitions workshops. He established a transportation network to all areas of Mexico that would serve military, communication, and trade purposes. He developed mining operations and improved extant ones. An imperial economy formed, and ships packed with goods and the royal share consistently arrived on the shores of Spain. Cortés worked with the Franciscans and other orders to convert the Indians to Christianity and establish churches and missions across New Spain. He also planned for further exploration to conquer new territories and expand New Spain. In Cortés's analysis of his own work, he was building a utopia of enterprise and Spanish glory.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 266.

<sup>203</sup> Near the end of his account of the conquest, Cortés wrote, "Velásquez's men have set me many traps and secretly caused many disturbances and quarrels." (Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 278.)

<sup>204</sup> Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, 93; Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 282-337.



Nearly all of these achievements, however, had been undertaken employing forced labor of the Indians. In his letters, however, this fact is glaringly absent, replaced instead with admiration of the native population. Cortés's efforts for peace after conquest were not the limit of the magnanimity he outwardly projected. To an extent he respected the level of civilization the natives enjoyed before Spanish arrival and complimented their intelligence. He explained to the emperor that they seemed perfectly capable of becoming citizens of any "civilized" country. Because of this, he struggled with the issue of Indian servitude, writing, "It seemed to me, therefore, a serious matter at this time to compel them to serve the Spaniards as the natives of the islands do."<sup>205</sup> In the end, however, he decided that without native labor the conquerors and Spanish settlers would not be able to maintain their lands. He also mentioned the payment due to all the conquerors for the conquest itself as a reason to use native labor to stimulate the nascent economy. He does propose a compromise on this issue: "to avoid enslaving these Indians, and at the same time to provide to Spaniards with their needs, it seemed to me that Your Majesty should command that from the income which belongs to Your Majesty here we should obtain assistance for the expenses and maintenance of the settlers."<sup>206</sup> Despite his uncertainty, and without formal consent, Cortés distributed the Indians to Spanish settlers. When word returned from Spain that he was forbidden to continue the use of the *encomienda* system, Cortés utilized the traditional Castilian idea of *obedezco pero no cumplo* ("I obey but I do not comply") to ignore the emperor's orders while still affirming his loyalty.<sup>207</sup> This distribution had already taken place, and Cortés did not

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<sup>205</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 279.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>207</sup> Lesley Byrd Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain: The Beginning of Spanish Mexico* (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1950), 60. For more information on the formula for obedience

want to reverse it. Rather, he responded to the emperor with a list of reasons why ending the practice would only result in disaster.<sup>208</sup> Despite his insistence on native servitude, he did take measures to regulate the treatment of the natives. The decimation of the native population on the islands weighed heavily on his mind as governor. In response to this concern, he enacted measures to regulate the working hours, working conditions, diet, and religious instruction of the natives held in *encomienda*.<sup>209</sup>

Aside from his lengthy rebuttal to the emperor's command, Cortés realized that it was necessary to reward his men in some fashion or they would have no reason to stay or follow orders. In addition, Cortés seemed convinced that he could, through his authority and experience, make the *encomienda* system function in a way that benefitted everyone involved. The crown officials also understood that the conquest had been privately

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without compliance, see Bartolomé Clavero, *derecho de los reinos* (Seville, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 1980), 125-130; Benjamín González Alonso, "La formula 'obedézcase, pero no se cumpla' en el derecho Castellano de la Baja Edad Media," *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 50 (1980), 469-487.

<sup>208</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 60-62. First, Cortés explained the settlers had no other means of sustaining their settlements without Indian service, forcing them to abandon New Spain. This would lead to the emperor losing this new and large part of his empire. Christianity would also lose all the souls of the Indians. Second, the *encomienda* system was better for the Indians than the alternative, which would be to allow them to return to their old practices of enslaving each other, with the possibility of it leading to sacrifice. Third, having lived on the islands for nearly twenty years, Cortés was well aware of the abuses and practices that decimated the native populations there, and he assured the emperor that such practices were disallowed. For example, he did not allow the Indians to be forcefully relocated to mines or plantations. Fourth, if the Indians were free from the *encomienda*, they would have no means to pay a tribute to the crown. They had no money, and could not effectively become part of the Spanish economic system. Here Cortés argues that it is in the best economic interest of the emperor. Fifth, he argues that if the natives were completely free, rebellion and lawlessness would run rampant. While having a great negative effect on many practices, management of this would require a large permanent force of royal troops, costing the Crown much of the profits from New Spain. Finally, Cortés argued that, in his estimation, one reason for the destruction of the native population on the islands had been the practice of granting *encomiendas* to the judiciary, men who shaped laws regarding native labor around their own selfish needs. Cortés forbade it in New Spain.

<sup>209</sup> Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, 94. Cortés signed a series of such ordinances in May 1524.

funded and that those involved must be compensated. They also understood that it would be a very difficult process to dismantle the practice given that it was already in place.<sup>210</sup>

The goal of Cortés in the development of New Spain was not only to demonstrate his leadership ability but also to make New Spain a self-sufficient colony, not simply an outpost to plunder, as the islands had been. Cortés saw firsthand through accomplishments of the large native population what New Spain was capable of becoming. By 1524, the capital, Tenochtitlán, was nearly completely rebuilt, leading Cortés to comment in his fourth letter to the emperor, “Your Sacred Majesty may be certain that in five years this city will be the most noble and populous city in the known world, and it will have the finest buildings.”<sup>211</sup> The earlier obsession with gold and other simple forms of material wealth, prevalent as the sole focus of Spanish operations in the New World from Columbus into settlement of the Antilles, was replaced in New Spain with an interest in land and settlement. Cities were developed by the Spanish across southern Mexico for the development of agriculture and trade. Cortés witnessed the near destruction of the Antilles and sought to create a more solid foundation in Mexico. During his time as governor, he appears to have accomplished much toward this goal.<sup>212</sup>

In the end, however, it is important to be reminded that Cortés sought to control his own narrative. His letters to the emperor were based, as Pastor Bodmer asserts, on “careful selection, reorganization, and re-elaboration of historical material designed to provide a fictional context within which everything their author did led to legitimate and

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<sup>210</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 63.

<sup>211</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 323.

<sup>212</sup> Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, 94.

undisputable success.”<sup>213</sup> Even his mistakes and instances of disobedience were presented in such a way as to contribute to the successful conquest and governance of Mexico. Through his knowledge of the history of law, he was able to present the conquest of Mexico in epic fashion while at the same time demonstrating the legality and obedience to the Crown in his actions. His use of description in his letters, at times so vivid as to be nearly cinematographic in nature, also presents him as an authority, not simply on Mexico itself but also as an authority on the reality he records; detail is used to bring truth to his account.<sup>214</sup>

The sense of authority Cortés brought to his accounts is bolstered by the portrayal of his actions and decisions much in the same as a literary hero; capable of success in nearly any situation, particularly when in danger, he portrayed himself as the right person for the task. While he faced difficulty, and ran into problems or personal shortcomings, his courage and indomitable spirit lifted him through hardship. Cortés’s narrative also demonstrated a keen political sense. This is quite apparent in the relation of his acts as governor; but even in his account of the conquest he depicted major setbacks as an attempt to undermine him, blaming those in the position most likely to stop him from achieving his goals and labeling them as self-interested and not as loyal to the Crown as he. At the same time, through his religious tone and providential language he repeatedly asserts God’s prominent role in his success. Throughout his letters to Charles V, Cortés makes it clear that God favored his actions. By framing the conquest in the same language as the Reconquista, he interprets the conquest as a holy war in which he is duty-

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<sup>213</sup> Pastor Bodmer, *The Armature of Conquest*, 116.

<sup>214</sup> Clavero, “Algunas cosas de Hernán Cortés y México,” 216; José Ferrer Canales, “La Segunda Carta de Cortés”, *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 4, no. 3 (January-March, 1955), 404-406.

bound to proceed. Finally, while acting as governor, he presents his experience in the New World as the basis for the development of New Spain in a manner that he believes will avoid the problems that plagued the Spanish Antilles. Overall, Cortés's letters serve as an exercise in authority and legitimization. He has risked everything in his expedition and succeeded, not only militarily but also politically in becoming governor of the emperor's largest territory. Despite this accomplishment, Cortés knew that his success in Mexico was only as significant as the reception in Spain. His *cartas de relación* presented his best case for such a positive acceptance by the emperor and his advisors.

Although Emperor Charles V had respect and appreciation for what Cortés accomplished in Mexico, apparent later in his naming Cortés as the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, the emperor nevertheless could not overlook serious problems in Cortés's leadership. The first issue was one of Cortés's status as a *hidalgo*. On 5 January, 1525, the emperor issued a royal order to acquire evidence of the noble lineage of the conqueror.<sup>215</sup> Next was Cortés's decision to go against the emperor on the subject of *encomienda*. Charles V was familiar with the issue, having reviewed the case against it. Its use in the islands had not only severely reduced the native population, but it was also a barrier to their conversion.<sup>216</sup> Court theologians concluded that the practice was contrary to the bulls of donation, which stated that the Spaniards were to "instruct the aforesaid

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<sup>215</sup> Juan Friede, "The Coat of Arms of Hernando Cortés," *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, vol. 26, no. 2 (April, 1969), 67. While Cortés was granted permission to bear a coat of arms on 7 March, 1525, the proceedings investigating noble lineage began on 6 June, 1525. Cortés's official rise to nobility took place on 6 July, 1529, when he was given his title of "Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca."

<sup>216</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 58.

inhabitants and residents in the Catholic faith and train them in good morals.”<sup>217</sup> The emperor wanted the Indians to be as free as any other Spanish vassals and for them to trade freely with Spaniards and other Indians. They were to be urged to discard their traditional practices, be introduced to Christianity (preferably by Mexican priests, a notable advance from the practices in the Antilles), and only if they resisted loyalty to the emperor should war be waged against them. While Cortés took the perspective of economic growth and development of New Spain, Charles V viewed the issue from a position of religion and statesmanship.<sup>218</sup> Cortés’s arguments for the use of *encomienda* may have been persuasive at the royal court. At the very least, there is no evidence that any immediate action was taken against him, and the practice was allowed to continue.<sup>219</sup>

The issue of the *encomienda*, however, was not the only troubling news to the emperor found in Cortés’s fourth letter. Following the conquest of Mexico, Cortés turned some of his attention to expansion. The focus of this was westward, to the Pacific Ocean, where many Indian groups resisted Spanish rule, and southward, into Central America. In 1523, Cortés sent Pedro de Alvarado to conquer Guatemala and Cristóbal de Olid to conquer Honduras. Either in imitation of Cortés’s defiance of Diego Velásquez, or convinced by Velásquez during a stop in Cuba for supplies, Olid conquered the land in the name of Velásquez, not Cortés. Bitter that one of his own men defected, but with his consistent political maneuvering, Cortés wrote to the emperor, “This seemed such an ugly business and such a great disservice to Your majesty that I can scarcely believe it; on the other hand, knowing the cunning which Diego Velásquez had always practiced against

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<sup>217</sup> Frances G. Davenport, *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), 77.

<sup>218</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 59.

<sup>219</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 66.

me to harm me and hinder my services, I do believe it.”<sup>220</sup> Cortés did not stop at defamation, however. He continued, “I shall discover the truth, and if it is so then I am of a mind to send for the aforementioned Diego Velásquez and arrest him and send him to Your Majesty.”<sup>221</sup> Going against the emperor using a medieval formula of obedience without compliance was bold, but to threaten the arrest of the governor of Cuba was far beyond Cortés’s reach as governor of New Spain. After hearing of Cortés’s statements, the emperor was forced to act. On 4 November, 1525, the emperor ordered Luis Ponce de Leon to serve as a *juez de residencia* to evaluate Cortés as governor.<sup>222</sup>

The expedition to Honduras was the biggest mistake Cortés made as governor. In late 1524, he decided to lead the expedition himself. He sent Francisco de las Casas to find Olid, but had not heard back from him in several months. For reasons that are not quite clear, Cortés decided that he should lead the next expedition.<sup>223</sup> Cortés himself attributed his decision to service to the emperor, writing in his fifth letter to Charles V, “it seemed to me that I had for a long time now lain idle and attempted no new thing in Your Majesty’s service...I determined to engage in some undertaking.”<sup>224</sup> Whatever the

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<sup>220</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 331.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>222</sup> “Instrucción a Luis Ponce de Leon, juez de residencia de la Nueva España, Nov. 4, 1525,” *Colección de Documentos Ineditos Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista, y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españoles de Ultramar*, vol. 9, 214-226; Elliott, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xxxiv; Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 63; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 444. For more information on Luis Ponce de Leon, see Manuel García Puraón, *México y sus gobernantes: biografías* (Mexico: M. Porrúa, 1964) and Fernando Orozco Linares, *Gobernantes de México: desde la época Prehispánica hasta nuestros días* (Mexico: Panorama Editorial, 1985).

<sup>223</sup> Díaz del Castillo wrote that Cortés regretted sending someone other than himself into such a dangerous situation (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 423); this interpretation was echoed by Elliott (Elliott, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xxxv.) Simpson, however, suggests that he may have been trying to avoid royal officials, or that he needed another act of conquest to impress the emperor (Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 64). Madariaga cites Cortés’s desire for adventure after serving a period as governor (Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 430-431).

<sup>224</sup> Cortés. *Letters from Mexico*, 339.

reason for his departure from New Spain, he would return nearly two years later no longer in charge of the land he risked everything to take.

When Cortés returned to Mexico via Vera Cruz in May 1526, much had changed, not only in New Spain but in Cortés as well. Throughout his numerous exploits to that point, the Honduras expedition was the closest he came to death. What he believed to be a much shorter endeavor became twenty months of aimlessly navigating thick forests, deep marshes, and jagged mountains. He lost many men, many more horses, and flirted with starvation on several occasions. Illness was also common among Cortés's party, which slowed the expedition further. When he finally arrived back in New Spain, he learned of the full extent of activities of the royal officials he left in charge in his absence, and their subsequent destruction of his reputation.<sup>225</sup>

The tone Cortés takes in his fifth letter to the emperor is much different than his previous four. Rather than presenting himself as victorious in spite of the odds, his account of the events takes a more somber tone. He depicts himself not as one overcoming obstacles but surviving them. At one point, after nearly running completely out of food, Cortés wrote, "I cannot describe what I felt on finding myself so helpless and almost beyond hope, believing that not one of us could escape alive but must all die of hunger. While thus perplexed, Our Lord God, who always undertakes to aid us in such necessities and, unworthy though I am, has so often assisted and succored me because I am engaged in the Royal service of Your Majesty."<sup>226</sup> Even with the political chaos in

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<sup>225</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 338-447. Cortés had received news from Mexico while camping on the eastern coast of Honduras through a merchant in the area, but did not know all that had taken place in Mexico during his absence.

<sup>226</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 390-391.



Mexico shortly after his return he takes a submissive role, explaining his delight at the arrival of Luis Ponce de León in early July 1526. While it was not good news the emperor sent a judge to evaluate the leadership in New Spain, Cortés was nonetheless relieved that he would not be solely responsible for repairing what had fallen apart in his absence.<sup>227</sup> Gone was the confident captain who led a few hundred men against thousands and the royal governor who openly disregarded an order from the emperor; in his place was a man who for the first time realized the limits of his ability.

It may be argued that Cortés understood the boundaries of his power before the Honduras expedition. It had taken three years for the emperor to acknowledge Cortés as governor, but even then four royal officials were sent to assist him. These unwanted advisors were the first of many to be sent to New Spain beginning in early 1524, and Cortés, accustomed to unchallenged command, possibly felt constrained. The Honduras expedition may well have been an opportunity to once again realize unquestioned authority.<sup>228</sup> His dislike of compromise made him a successful conquistador but a troublesome governor.

The success he hoped to gain from Honduras, however, bore no fruit. He had nothing to show for the time he spent away from Mexico City, all the while the government of New Spain fell apart. To make matters worse, rumors disparaging him spread not only through New Spain, but across the ocean to the royal court as well.

Cortés realized this, writing in the final paragraph of his fifth letter, “I can only say, for

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 434. He asserts that any punishments he brought against the lieutenant governors would be seen as personal revenge, owing to the fact that they destroyed his reputation through false accusations of misdeeds and keeping a larger share of goods than those sent to the emperor; his personal assets and even his palace had also been taken. He did, however, make his own assessment of their behavior, stating, “I could never have been so harsh that it would not have been less than they deserved.”

<sup>228</sup> Elliott, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xxxv.

my part, that even though I fall still further from Your Majesty's favor, I shall not cease to give my services, for it is not possible that Your Majesty should fail to recognize my services in time; but, even should this happen, I will be content with doing my duty and knowing that all the world knows of my services and the loyalty with which I perform them, and I want no other inheritance for my children save this."<sup>229</sup> The sincerity of this last statement can be questioned considering his request just a few paragraphs earlier to keep the lands he already possessed in New Spain in perpetuity, but this final message reveals something more about Cortés. While he searched for other avenues of success and glory, he understood that his legacy would remain largely tied to Mexico.

While in Honduras, trying to figure out how to cross a lake, he stated, "To advance was so difficult that no human intelligence could have devised a solution if God, who is the true remedy and succor to all who are afflicted and in need, had not provided it."<sup>230</sup> Cortés survived his expedition in Honduras, but by no means conquered it. The Providence that carried him to conquer Mexico seemed only to guide him out of the wilderness elsewhere. Seeking to reverse his ill-turned fortune, Cortés suggested that he still may be able to best serve the emperor in New Spain: "I am most certain that I will be able to inform Your Catholic Majesty of everything concerning this land [New Spain] and the Islands, too, so that they may be provided for in a manner that will greatly advance the service of Our Lord God and Your Majesty."<sup>231</sup> As Cortés himself stated, "no bad end can come from such a good beginning unless it be through the fault of us

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<sup>229</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 447.

<sup>230</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 359.

<sup>231</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 443.

who are in command.”<sup>232</sup> At one of the lowest points in his life after conquest, Cortés remained forward-thinking in his role in New Spain. Determined to fix his mistakes and restore his reputation with the crown, he first needed to address the events that unfolded in his absence.

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 424.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE COLLAPSE OF CORTÉS'S MEXICO

Cortés's decision to lead the expedition to Honduras was the most costly mistake of his governorship, not because of what happened in Honduras, but what happened in Mexico during his absence. Control of the government was left in many hands, all with different opinions of Cortés and how to run New Spain, and almost immediately they began to fight over seniority and power. Cortés's name was dragged into this, and accusations and rumors against the governor were numerous. His reputation in question, Cortés would have no other choice but to travel to Spain to clear his name with the emperor in person.

Immediately after naming Cortés governor and captain general of Mexico, the emperor also appointed four royal officials to assist in the government: Alonzo de Estrada<sup>233</sup> as treasurer, Gonzalo de Salazar as *factor* (business agent), Rodrigo de Albornoz<sup>234</sup> as *contador* (accountant), and Pedro Almíndez Chirino as *veedor* (inspector).

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<sup>233</sup> For more information on Estrada, see Victor Manuel López-Menchero Bendicho, "Alonso de Estrada: el Ciudadrealeño que llegó a ser gobernador de Nueva España en tiempos del Emperador Carlos V," *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2007). Estrada supposedly claimed to be the illegitimate child of King Ferdinand. (López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, vol. 1, 121.)

<sup>234</sup> For more information on Albornoz, see Silvano García Guiot, *Rodrigo de Albornoz, Contador Real de la Nueva España* (Mexico: Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, 1943).

These four men would oversee the financial aspects of New Spain.<sup>235</sup> When Cortés planned his expedition to the Honduras, these were the officials he left in power.

As Cortés made his final preparations for his expedition in October 1524, he made Estrada and Albornoz lieutenant-governors. Because these were royal officials whom he had not appointed himself, he also named a lawyer, Alonso Zuazo, the *Justicia Mayor* in charge of managing the justice system. He took Salazar and Chirino with him to serve as royal witnesses to his activities.<sup>236</sup> This arrangement did not work out, as almost immediately Estrada and Albornoz began to fight over seniority. Matters escalated when the two drew their swords over the minor issue of the appointment of a constable. The town council of the capital sent a letter to Cortés, asking him to intervene. Instead of returning, as was requested, he sent Salazar and Chirino back to govern with equal authority going to the four royal officials. He also gave Salazar and Chirino secret instructions that, if necessary, to remove Estrada and Albornoz from office and govern

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<sup>235</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 49-56. The cedula naming these four officials to their positions is dated October 15, 1522, four days after the cedula naming Cortés Governor and Captain-General of New Spain. The income from the new World was a vital part of its conquest and settlement, but there is also the need on the part of the emperor to ensure his direct control of this royal holding. Hugh Thomas points to the mistrust of Cortés held by the Council of the Indies as a cause of this infringement of power. (Thomas, *Conquest*, 574.) On a base level, however, there was also the need on the part of the emperor to not cede complete power over New Spain to another. New Spain, and all of Spanish America, for that matter, did not belong to Spain or Castile, but to the monarch of Castile. As Clarence H. Haring explains, “The first expedition of Columbus was authorized and financed by Queen Isabella, with profits going to herself and her heirs as the sovereigns of Castile. And from the outset the Indies were not, strictly speaking, Spanish. They were not even an integral part of the Castilian kingdom. Mexico and Peru were kingdoms, combined with the kingdoms of Spain under a common sovereign, bound to Spain only by the dynastic tie. They were not colonies, strictly speaking, although they were colonized by Spaniards. The king possessed not only the sovereign rights but the property rights; he was the absolute proprietor, the sole political head, of his American dominions. Every privilege and position, economic, political, or religious, came from him.” (Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America*, 7.) Cortés was made governor, with substantial power, but the emperor sought to create a system where Cortés could not rule independently from him. (Bailey W. Diffie, *Latin-American Civilization: Colonial Period* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Sons, 1947), 294.

<sup>236</sup> Hugh Thomas, *The Golden Empire: Spain, Charles V, and the Creation of America* (New York: Random House, 2010), 74. Zuazo was a friend of Cortés who had served as a judge in Santo Domingo and Cuba beginning around 1516. In 1524, he recently completed the *juicio de residencia* of Diego Velasquez in Cuba.

jointly with Zuazo. The political situation was deteriorating, and would only get worse the longer Cortés was absent.<sup>237</sup>

The events that unfold in Mexico City at this time are explained in detail by the bishop of Mexico, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, who was in the city while Cortés was gone<sup>238</sup> Salazar and Chirino had no intention of ruling jointly with the other two, and soon after their arrival at the capital they removed Estrada and Albornoz from power. Estrada and Albornoz gained knowledge of Cortés's principle order, however, and successfully petitioned Zuazo to return them to their positions. The government became divided into two factions: Salazar and Chirino against the reconciled Estrada and Albornoz. As both sides appealed to the public for support, social unrest grew, as Zumárraga explains: "many troubles and disorders ensued on account of this affair, and several times a civil war was on the verge of breaking out."<sup>239</sup>

Salazar began to garner the support of Rodrigo de Paz, the Chief Magistrate of Mexico City. He was the cousin of Cortés and managed Cortés's property in his absence.<sup>240</sup> With this ally, Salazar placed Estrada and Albornoz under arrest and persecuted any of their supporters. Zuazo was arrested and exiled to Cuba for restoring Estrada and Albornoz to power.<sup>241</sup> With Salazar and Chirino as the only two in charge, they began to rule as tyrants. According to Zumárraga they arrested and tortured Indian chiefs to extort gold and jewels from them, and redistributed Indian land to their strongest

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<sup>237</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 121.

<sup>238</sup> Juan de Zumárraga, "Fragment of a Letter from Bishop Zumárraga to Charles V," in Cortés, *Fernando Cortes*, 359. Zumárraga wrote a long report to the emperor on August 27, 1529, relating the events of the conquest and describing the condition of the country. Notable in this report is his recount of the events in Mexico during Cortés's expedition to Mexico.

<sup>239</sup> Zumárraga, in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 362.

<sup>240</sup> Thomas, *The Golden Empire*, 77.

<sup>241</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 121.

supporters. They spread a false report that Cortés and his party had been killed in Honduras, and threatened anyone who suggested otherwise. Acting on their rumor, they sacked Cortés's palace, searching for a hidden treasure they believed to exist. When Rodrigo de Paz protested, they arrested him. Upon this arrest of one of Cortés's relatives, a small uprising occurred. It was put down and Rodrigo de Paz, accused of inciting it, was hanged.<sup>242</sup>

As it was clear that nobody was governing on the side of Cortés, the bishop explained that the people of Mexico were once again divided into two groups: supporters of Salazar and Chirino and supporters of Cortés. Salazar began to arrest members of the latter group, and confiscated their properties. He also confiscated the property of those with Cortés in Honduras. Salazar, on his insistence of their deaths, urged the widows of those on the expedition to remarry; when one of them refused, he had her publicly beaten as a sorceress.<sup>243</sup> The goal of such acts was to exert as much power and influence over the people of New Spain, both Spaniard and native, as Cortés himself wielded.

The year 1525 was a chaotic one for Mexico. Cortés would not learn anything about the events until early 1526. Sometime in late 1525 or early 1526, Cortés arrived at Naco in the interior of Honduras and discovered that there were other settlers there. There had been a few attempts, both from the Caribbean Islands and from Panama, to settle the area. They had little supplies, and were starving. Cortés had four ships waiting for the end of his expedition at a port north of Naco that bears his name to this day. Upon learning about the settlers he sent the ships to Mexico, Cuba, Jamaica, and Hispaniola for

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<sup>242</sup> Zumárraga, in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 362.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 362-363.

supplies. All four had troubled voyages, but three of them arrived at their destinations.<sup>244</sup> This was the first word to the Spanish isles of Cortés's survival since he left New Spain, and his first opportunity to receive word of the management of Mexico.

It was from Cuba that Cortés learned of the events in Mexico. Zuazo, one of the men he left in charge of New Spain sent a letter to him on a supply ship, expressing his shock at Cortés's survival. The letter also informed Cortés of the actions taken by Salazar and Chirino to take power of New Spain. When he heard the news, Cortés debated on whether or not to return to Mexico himself or send word. He had not completed his expedition to his satisfaction, but this was a serious matter. He decided to go himself, but after the ship was brought back to the port three times for bad weather, Cortés accepted this as a sign from God that he should not go. Cortés wrote to the emperor, "I considered that God did not wish me to abandon that land."<sup>245</sup> Instead, he sent his page, Martin Dorantes, on the ship to take an official letter to Mexico stating that Cortés was alive and ordered Salazar and Chirino to be removed from office, replacing them with Francisco de las Casas. He also sent a number of Indian chieftains to verify that he was not dead as was claimed.<sup>246</sup>

Sending chieftains as witnesses reveals much about Cortés's view on the native populations. In his own account of the conquest, Cortés describes many events that

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<sup>244</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 146-147.

<sup>245</sup> Cortés, *Letters From Mexico*, 423.

<sup>246</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 123. Las Casas was a cousin of Cortés through the Pizarro line of the family. He, along with Rodrigo de Paz, had been chosen to deliver the October 22, 1522 decree that named Cortés Captain General of New Spain. They were much delayed in this, and did not arrive in Mexico until September 1523. He went with Olid to the Honduras, who, because of his ties to Cortés, held him as a prisoner upon his defection. He returned to New Spain after Cortés arrived in the area of Naco in 1525, but, again, his loyalty to Cortés made him a prisoner, this time under Salazar. In 1536 he acquired Yanhuitlan as an encomienda. Thomas, *Conquest*, 575,584; Robert Himmerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain, 1521-1555* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1991), 137.



demonstrate cruelty to the native population. Native histories also point to many occasions during and after conquest when Cortés and his men use unnecessary violence to achieve their goals.<sup>247</sup> As Cortés himself characterized the conquest in terms of a holy war, he did not view his actions as excessive. As has been discussed, these events have been popularly highlighted throughout history to characterize Cortés as a bloodthirsty and power-hungry conqueror. While Cortés does instate the *encomienda* system of native servitude after conquest, he also works with native leaders to ensure their protection. He explains to the emperor that he wants to prevent the same kind of exploitation and decimation of populations that occurred on the islands.<sup>248</sup> While Cortés's claims to have the best interest of the Indians at heart have been much debated by historians, his use of chieftains over Spaniards as official witnesses is evidence to the esteem which he held the native population.

Dorantes quietly arrived in Mexico City, and stayed at the monastery of St. Francis, where he learned from the friars that Las Casas had been placed under arrest by Salazar and sent to Spain as a prisoner. In his absence, Dorantes delivered Cortés's orders to Estrada and Albornoz, who organized Cortés's most influential adherents. Of this group, Estrada was elected as Cortés's lieutenant. Word spread that Cortés was alive quickly spread around the city. Salazar, who had been living in Cortés palace, surrounded it with cannons and pleaded with his followers not to abandon him.

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<sup>247</sup> See *Chimalpahin's Conquest: A Nahuatl Historian's Rewriting of Francisco López de Gómara's La conquista de México*, Susan Schroeder et al., ed. and trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Miguel León Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1962); Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, vol. 12, Arthur J.O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, eds. and trans. (Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 1982).

<sup>248</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 279-280.

In the official documents carried to Mexico by Dorantes, Cortés called for the removal of Salazar and Chirino. Chirino was out of the city, so Estrada organized an attack on Salazar.<sup>249</sup> Salazar had many armed men with him, but they abandoned him when they saw the approaching force. Salazar was captured and imprisoned. Zumárraga explains that Chirino escaped, but López de Gómara wrote that Chirino returned to the city when he heard the news that Cortés was alive, but hid in a convent in Tlaxcala when the resistance to Salazar rose. He was discovered, and imprisoned next to Salazar. López de Gómara even goes on to explain how a plot to free Salazar and Chirino was discovered and undermined.<sup>250</sup>

Zumárraga and Cortés (through López de Gómara) also disagree on what happened next. López de Gómara asserted that Estrada, along with Albornoz govern peacefully until Cortés's return. Zumárraga, on the other hand, explained that the two acted in greed and revenge, seizing property for themselves and starting legal proceedings against a number of people who had served Salazar and Chirino. Estrada even went so far as to have many executed for their actions.<sup>251</sup> As Zumárraga was in Mexico City during these events, his account is more credible.

Cortés left Honduras in late April 1526 and, after being forced by bad weather to stay in Cuba for a while, arrived back in New Spain in June. Once word of his return was

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<sup>249</sup> López de Gómara states that Chirino was besieging Coatlán, which was a Zapotec center in south-central Oaxaca. (López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 123; Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, revised ed. (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 187.)

<sup>250</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 124. The plot was to free Salazar and Chirino and have them lead a force against Estrada and Albornoz. The problem was that the only keys to the cells were held by Estrada. The leader of this group, whom López de Gómara identifies as Escobar, spoke with a locksmith from Seville about opening the cells without the keys. This locksmith, a supporter of Cortés, agreed to help, collected as much information about the plan as possible, and then turned what he discovered over to Estrada.

<sup>251</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 124-125.

widely known, he was warmly greeted in every town through which he passed. Estrada and Albornoz even left the capital to meet him on the road. When he arrived back in Mexico City, he stayed at the monastery of St. Francis. While he was there, he received word of the arrival of the lawyer Luis Ponce de Leon, sent to Mexico by the emperor to oversee a *juicio de residencia* of Cortés. The Cortés had only regained his governorship for a few days before it was once again taken away from him.<sup>252</sup>

While Cortés related to López de Gómara his surprise of his royal audit, it is difficult to believe this. In addition to his defiance of the emperor over the issue of *encomienda*, he also left his position for Honduras. Furthermore, there had been numerous complaints against him from various sources. Both López de Gómara and Díaz del Castillo point foremost at Pánfilo de Narváez, one of Cortés more influential detractors, who was at this time at the royal court defaming the governor.<sup>253</sup> López de Gómara also points to Juan de Ribera, a secretary and attorney of Cortés who had a falling out with his employer over a sum of money and began spreading rumors about him among the social elite in Spain.<sup>254</sup> While enemies such as Narváez and Ribera certainly contributed to the crown questioning Cortés, it is likely they took a secondary role to the chaotic events in Mexico during Cortés's absence. At various points, his lieutenant-governors sent false accusations against Cortés to the emperor to shore up their own political influence. There was also the rumor of his death. Both the emperor and the Council of the Indies had not heard from Cortés in so long, owing to the fact that he was in the Central American jungle, that they did not know what to believe. There were

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<sup>252</sup> Marks, *Cortés*, 301-303. Marks appears to use López de Gómara's account for this section.

<sup>253</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 154; Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 467.

<sup>254</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 154.

figures that came to Cortés defense; namely, Alvaro de Zúñiga, the Duke of Béjar, as Cortés was engaged to his niece, Juana. Nevertheless, it was decided that an official evaluation of the situation was in order, and Luis Ponce de Leon was chosen as its presiding judge.<sup>255</sup> If Cortés was truly surprised that the Crown wanted to evaluate his position, it would evidence to his ineptitude as governor.

As a loyal servant of the emperor, Cortés welcomed the judge and related his appreciation of the effort of the royal government to sort through the turmoil of the previous two years. The government of Mexico was in disarray, and Cortés's own estate had been redistributed by Salazar and Chirino. The idea of someone else cleaning up the mess may have been a great relief to Cortés, whose time in Central America had left him sick and exhausted. Cortés relates to the emperor his joy of hearing about Ponce de Leon's arrival, stating, "I had myself been so much injured and ill-treated, and my property so destroyed by these tyrants, that any judgment of mine might have been suspected of proceeding from passion."<sup>256</sup> Cortés initially thought the judge was royal assistance to his governorship, but once he learned the real purpose of Ponce de Leon's arrival, he continued to be gracious, stating, "In truth, I greatly rejoiced, not only for the immense favors Your Sacred Majesty has done me in desiring to be informed of my services and faults, but also for the graciousness with which Your Highness has been pleased to let me know through your letter Your Royal intentions to reward me."<sup>257</sup> While he was certainly attempted to ingratiate himself to the emperor, he may have been genuine in his relief.

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<sup>255</sup> Marks, *Cortés*, 303.

<sup>256</sup> Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 337.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

The Honduras expedition had taken a lot out of Cortés, so it is possible at that time he did not feel up to fixing the mess of the government of New Spain. It is also possible he no longer sought to be governor. After thanking the emperor for the investigation into his governorship, he proposed the emperor give him a donation of ten percent of his reported earnings in Mexico to live in Spain and serve as an advisor for New Spain in the royal court.<sup>258</sup> This is the only instance of Cortés expressing an interest in permanently returning to Spain. Whether Cortés desired retirement or he was simply doing his best to demonstrate his service to the emperor, this proposal seemed to have been abandoned shortly thereafter, as there is no evidence to it being discussed when Cortés held a series of meetings with the emperor in 1528 and 1529.

Cortés sent messengers and servants to Ponce de Leon on his way to Mexico City, but the judge refused them. Cortés explains that this was a relief, as the judge appeared to be objective. Ponce de Leon stayed at the monastery of St. Francis, where he also read aloud the orders of the emperor. Cortés and his officials graciously surrendered their power. Just a few weeks after the opening of the investigation, however, Ponce de Leon became ill, and died a few days later.<sup>259</sup> Before his death, he appointed Marcos de Aguilar to his position. Ponce de Leon had picked up Aguilar in Hispaniola, where the

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<sup>258</sup> Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 346. Cortés does not mention his actual income, but quotes a figure of two hundred million [currency not mentioned]. Based on this certainly inflated number, Cortés proposed a donation of twenty million from the emperor, along with a seat in his court.

<sup>259</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 157; Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 340; Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 472. Both López de Gómara and Díaz del Castillo mention Modorra as the cause of death. While the descriptions of this illness are too vague to properly identify it, it was a common illness amongst conquistadors and travelers to the New World. For study into the identity of Modorra, see Noble David Cook, "Sickness, Starvation, and Death in Early Hispaniola," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 32, no. 3 (Winter, 2002), 349-386. Both López de Gómara and Cortés also mention many of Ponce de Leon's fellow passengers becoming similarly ill, to the point where Cortés refers to it as nearly a plague.

latter had spent some time as a licentiate. Aguilar was elderly and infirm, however, and he lived only a few months longer than Ponce de Leon.<sup>260</sup>

In his final days, Aguilar named the royal treasurer, Alonso de Estrada, as his replacement as governor. The city council, made up mostly of pro-Cortés officials, appointed Cortés's friend Gonzalo de Sandoval as his co-governor.<sup>261</sup> This was Estrada's third time to govern Mexico, and his longest: nearly two years. This was not a peaceful time, however. Estrada was not a popular choice, as many in the city felt that Cortés should retake his place in the government. Cortés refused to disobey the emperor, and instead the city became divided into pro-Cortés and anti-Cortés factions.<sup>262</sup> Estrada quickly realized that he did not have the same level of support as Cortés, so he began to court the favor of Salazar and Chirino and their followers by proposing their release from their imprisonment. This escalated tensions, and Estrada, fearing Cortés might lead an uprising, exiled Cortés from Mexico City. Cortés complied, retreating to the remains of his estate in Coyoacán, just outside the city.

The situation appeared to be moving in a positive direction when Fray Julián Garcés arrived as the newly-appointed Bishop of Tlaxcala. After being informed on the tensions between Estrada and Cortés, he went to Mexico City to act a mediator, urging

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<sup>260</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 477. Díaz del Castillo described Aguilar as consumptive and covered in boils. He continues by stating that the old man lived off goats milk and suckling from a Castilian woman. "Los médicos mandaron que mamase a una mujer de Castellana, y con leche de cabras."

<sup>261</sup> A royal decree on August 23, 1527, gave Estrada sole authority in Mexico. (Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 25.) López de Gómara asserted that this was a result of the advice of Albornoz, who met with the Council of the Indies after returning to Spain after Ponce de Leon's death. (López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 158.)

<sup>262</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 158-159. There were rumors that circulated that accused Cortés of poisoning Ponce de Leon and even Aguilar. Furthermore, during the short time of the Ponce de Leon/Aguilar residencia, many had come forward in the investigation to make claims legal claims against Cortés for various things such as not receiving compensation for services or not receiving Indian tribute. These figures opposed Cortés regaining his position.

them to resolve their differences. Shortly after, however, orders were received from the emperor to release Salazar and Chirino from jail. With these two staunch opponents of Cortés freed and working with Estrada, Cortés knew any chance of reconciling with Estrada was over. Aside from leading a military takeover of Mexico City, which would certainly ruin his reputation with the Crown, his only option was to go to Spain, meet with the emperor, dispel the many rumors and accusations against him, and repair his tarnished reputation.<sup>263</sup> From the time of his return from Honduras in the summer of 1526 until his departure for Spain in late 1527, Cortés carried himself with patience and faith that his name would be cleared of any wrongdoing and that his actions would demonstrate both his loyalty to the emperor and his service to New Spain. When it was clear that this was not going to happen, like his expedition to Honduras, Cortés was determined to solve the problem in person, taking matters in his own hands.

During his time as governor, Cortés's biggest gamble in terms of his reputation was the decision to lead the expedition to Honduras. In his absence, his opponents were free to openly work against him in Mexico, and royal officials, whose appointment by the emperor led them to resent the leadership of the conquistador Cortés, used his absence to defame him and strip him of his properties. Even after his return in 1526, the deaths of Ponce de Leon and Aguilar once again allowed his enemies to point to perfidy. Cortés had lost his title of governor, along with the majority of his possessions, all to events that were not under his control; nonetheless, he was not an innocent victim. As governor, his primary focus was an economic system that best demonstrated his conquest as a financial boon to the emperor. The byproduct of this focus on revenue, the *encomienda*, also

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<sup>263</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 159.

greatly rewarded the soldiers who fought with him in the conquest. This left later settlers and officials with less desirable lands and positions in New Spain, creating a rift in the Spanish population of those who supported Cortés and those who resented his rule. The support of the soldiers left Cortés's opponents without recourse; so long as Cortés's leadership in New Spain was established, there was little to be done. His departure to Honduras, however, created an opportunity to exploit shortcomings in the governance of Mexico. Cortés proved to be a much more capable soldier than a governor.

More important than Cortés's shortcomings as governor of New Spain and the social, political, and economic chaos created by his opponents during his absence is the connection between Cortés and New Spain. Cortés had become a well-known figure in Spain through the conquest. His service to the Crown in bringing such a vast and rich land under the domain of the emperor had brought glory not only to a Spain in the shadow of the *Reconquista* but to himself as well. His letters to Charles V were published and read across Europe.<sup>264</sup> Despite receiving the fame and notoriety he desired, the founding of New Spain brought an end to the conquest; his greatest achievement was in the past. The imperative became settlement and development of Spanish political, social, and economic institutions, as well as the growth of Christianity in the New World. These issues were addressed by Cortés the governor, but flaws in his designs ultimately became his undoing as a political figure. Yet Cortés remained connected to the future of New Spain. By bringing into existence this Spanish realm, and by becoming the first to lead its European settlement, he also became responsible for its development, both during and after his time in power. Just as credit was given to him in

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<sup>264</sup> Pagden, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, lviii.



conquest, social and political problems in nascent New Spain were also attributed to him, warranted or not. As such, the fame that Cortés achieved in the conquest, and his reputation during the remainder of his life and through the centuries, hinged on the success of New Spain. Cortés was irreversibly connected with Mexico. This is best demonstrated in his Honduras expedition. Despite an expedition of conquest, an activity through which he was renowned, his reputation was undone through political unrest in Mexico City. Cortés fell from the height of his power nearly as quickly as he attained it; there was still a need for conquerors in the New World, but his legacy was already set on its path in Mexico. For the remainder of his life, and those of his heirs, the development of this legacy, as in the development of New Spain, held many obstacles.

## CHAPTER V

### CORTÉS BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

After receiving news that complaints about him had reached the emperor, and needed addressing, Cortés planned his trip to Spain sometime in the middle of 1527.<sup>265</sup> Around the same time he received news that his father, Martín Cortés, had died. After the proper obsequies in Mexico, Cortés prepared for the voyage to Spain. There were some difficulties in this, as the first servant sent to Vera Cruz to purchase the ships and supplies disappeared while crossing Lake Texcoco. His body was found on the shore a few days later the apparent victim of a robbery.<sup>266</sup> Nevertheless, Cortés managed to make the necessary arrangements before the end of 1527.

The crown was clearly still receiving constant reports from Cortés's detractors, despite his efforts. In 1527, before he set off himself, Cortés sent two agents, Pedro de Salazar and Fray Diego Altamirano, to Spain in an effort to explain his side and improve his position in court circles. This effort had failed, and the crown's suspicion of Cortés

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<sup>265</sup>Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 482-483. Cortés received letters from the President of the Indies, Don Garcia de Loaisa, and the Duke of Béjar, who had arranged the marriage of his niece, Doña Juana de Zúñiga, to Cortés.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid, 483. According to Díaz del Castillo, the majordomo was Pedro Ruiz de Esquivel, from Seville. He was crossing lake Texcoco with several bars of gold for the purchase of two ships and supplies with six native rowers. He was on his way to the Pueblo of Ayotzingo, which is where canoes usually disembarked, but he never arrived. Díaz del Castillo mentions some speculation about the fate of Esquivel, but Cortés was too focused on his plans for Spain to investigate further.

grew. A royal decree issued on 5 April 1528, ordered Cortés to return to Spain.<sup>267</sup> Much to the surprise of the royal Court, Cortés was already in Spain. After a forty-two day voyage, Cortés and his party had arrived at the town of Palos de la Frontera, on the southwest coast of Spain, in December 1527.<sup>268</sup> This was his first time back in Spain since he left at the age of nineteen in 1504. Cortes was held up in Palos, however, by the death of fellow conquistador Gonzalo de Sandoval who had traveled with him.<sup>269</sup> Cortés sought support in his appeal to the emperor, so in his preparations for Spain made it known that whoever wished to go to Castile with him would be able to travel for free. Sandoval was Cortés's youngest lieutenant during the conquest, and had recently served as co-governor of New Spain until his departure to Spain.<sup>270</sup> Cortés also brought along Andres de Tapia Motelchiuhtzin, the *cuauhtlotoani* of Tenochtitlán from 1525 to 1530.<sup>271</sup>

Upon his arrival, Cortés stayed at the Franciscan monastery of Santa Maria de la Rábida outside the town while he sent word to the emperor.<sup>272</sup> In spite of efforts by

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<sup>267</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 103-105.

<sup>268</sup> Díaz del Castillo did not accompany Cortés to Spain, so his narrative of the events in Spain is told second-hand.

<sup>269</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 483-484. According to Díaz del Castillo, Sandoval arrived at Palos sick, and was taken to the house of a rope maker. To infirm to get out of bed, the owner of the house, in the presence of Sandoval, took thirteen gold bars from Sandoval's belongings, all of his wealth, and fled to Portugal. He was buried in the cemetery of the monastery of La Rábida outside of the town.

<sup>270</sup> C. Harvey Gardiner, *The Constant Captain, Gonzalo de Sandoval* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), 15; 179. Sandoval was co-governor with Alonso de Estrada, who took over for Marcos de Aguilar after Aguilar's death in March, 1527.

<sup>271</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 483. Following the death of Montezuma in 1520, his brother Cuitlahuac, *tlatoani* of Ixtapalapa, was appointed to the same position in Tenochtitlán. He only ruled for a few months before succumbing to the epidemic of 1520. Montezuma's nephew and son-in-law, Cuauhtemoc, took over and was the one who surrendered to Cortés in 1521. He was killed by Cortés in Guatemala in 1525. Juan Velazquez Tlacotzin succeeded Cuauhtemoc, but died in Guatemala before the end of the expedition. Andres de Tapia Motelchiuhtzin then took over. As governor, Cortés had officially recognized the office of the *cihuacoatl*, in the government of Tenochtitlán. (Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964), 168; 172.)

<sup>272</sup> For more information on La Rábida, see Sebastian Garcia, *La Rábida, pórtico del Nuevo Mundo: síntesis historico-artística* (Madrid: Comunidad Franciscana del Convento de Santa Maria de la Rábida,

detractors to hurt his reputation, it appeared that he still had allies in Spain, as prominent court figures such as the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Count of Aguilar, and the Duke of Béjar spoke to Cortés's high reputation to the emperor, who issued a royal decree on May 28, 1528, prohibiting the disturbance, legal or otherwise, of Cortés property while he was in Spain. Each town that he passed through was also to show him every honor possible.<sup>273</sup> By order of the emperor, he was to be treated as the conqueror of Mexico, not its troubled and ill-reputed former governor.

The emperor was to leave Madrid in the spring of 1528 for Monzón in Aragon, which meant that Cortés would not be able to meet with the emperor until later in the year. This gave Cortés time to go to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Extremadura to hold novenas. At Guadalupe, Cortés met Doña Maria de Mendoza, the wife of Francisco de los Cobos, the Chief Commander of León and the Principal Secretary of State of the emperor.<sup>274</sup> Cortés wasted no time in charming the young woman with gifts and shows from the Indian dancers and jugglers he brought. She was so impressed with Cortés during his stay that, in addition to suggesting he marry her sister, she wrote to her husband begging him to ask the emperor to grant Cortés favors.<sup>275</sup> When Cortés arrived at the court of the emperor he would have one more ally, and perhaps his strongest.

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1992). The monastery has a strong connection with the new world because it was the place Christopher Columbus stayed in 1491-1492 while he was waiting for financial support from Ferdinand and Isabella.

<sup>273</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 484.

<sup>274</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 484. For more about Francisco de los Cobos, see Hayward Keniston, *Francisco de los Cobos: Secretary of the Emperor Charles V* (Pittsburgh, PA: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1960).

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 485.

Cortés arrived in Monzón sometime in late 1528, and was greeted by the Duke of Béjar and the Count of Aguilar, who told Cortés that the emperor was looking forward to the man who had brought so much to his empire.<sup>276</sup> When he met the emperor, he was joined by, among others, the Duke of Béjar, the Admiral of Castile, and Francisco de los Cobos, whom Díaz del Castillo described as “the most intimate to the emperor there was or has been in our times.”<sup>277</sup> Cortés began a series of conversations with the emperor that were held periodically from late 1528 until the emperor’s departure to Italy in July 1529. They spoke on many topics including the details of the conquest, his time as governor, his journey to the Honduras, colonial policies, the Church in New Spain, the education and conversion of the Indians, and the differences and problems between Cortés and the *audiencia*.<sup>278</sup> It was during these meetings that Cortés convinced the emperor of the need for the continued use of the *encomienda* system.<sup>279</sup> For Cortés, however, the most important topic was his own future in New Spain, his entire reason for coming to Spain.

The reward Cortés sought was to regain the governorship of Mexico, but those hopes were quickly dashed. A conquistador was no longer the leadership New Spain needed, despite Cortés’s insistence that his unique knowledge of New Spain was an invaluable prerequisite for the position. An *audiencia* had been placed in charge of New Spain, and although it failed to bring a stable government, from the beginning of these discussions the emperor was intent on having a second *audiencia* replace the first until a viceroyalty could be established. When Cortés expressed his desire to return to the

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<sup>276</sup> Prudencio de Sandoval, *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*, lib. 16 (Pamplona, Spain, 1634), 895; Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 485.

<sup>277</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 485. “El mas privado que hubo ni [ha] habido en nuestros tiempos del emperador.”

<sup>278</sup> Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos en las islas y tierra firme del Mar Oceano*, dec. 4, lib. 6 (Madrid, 1601), 105-107.

<sup>279</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 79.

office, he was denied this because the emperor felt that no conqueror should think that the governorship is due to them. The emperor pointed to King Ferdinand's similar policy regarding Christopher Columbus in the Indies and Gonzalo Hernandez de Cordoba, who conquered Naples.<sup>280</sup> A royal cedula in April 1528 informed Cortés that a second *audiencia* had been chosen to govern New Spain, all but ending his hopes of persuading the emperor otherwise. Cortés was promised that he would keep his title of captain-general of New Spain, with the addition of the same authority over the area known as the "Mar del Sur."<sup>281</sup> There was one glimmer of hope in this: should he find a previously undiscovered island or mainland in the South Sea, he would be given the title of governor and all other benefits usually given to discoverers.<sup>282</sup> This incentive likely appealed to Cortés. The prospect of realizing glory through conquest would play a large role in much of his actions throughout the 1530s and be closely connected, for better or worse, with the development of his marquisate.

With his hopes of governorship now dashed, Cortés nevertheless regained some of his earlier stature and wealth in New Spain. In April, the same month he maintained the captaincy-general, the emperor ordered the royal treasury to compensate Cortés for the great expense of sending an expedition to the Malaccas in 1527.<sup>283</sup> In a number of

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<sup>280</sup> López de Gómara, *La Conquista de Mexico*, 170. Simpson omits this part from his translation of López de Gómara (López de Gómara, Cortés, 391). Whether or not the emperor trusted Cortés is in question, but there was precedence on which to base his decision. This may have been an effort on the part of the emperor to avoid the issue of Cortés's reputation.

<sup>281</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 123-124.

<sup>282</sup> Herrera, *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos*, 107.

<sup>283</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 93-95; 122-123. López de Gómara is the primary source for this event. In June, 1526, the emperor ordered Cortés to send the fleet of ships he had at the port of Zacatula to search for the ship, *Trinidad*, one of Magellan's fleet, as well as Fray Garcia de Loaysa, Commander of the Order of St. John, who had gone to the Moluccas in search in it but had not returned. Cortés wrote back to the emperor that he would send his fleet out, or he would go himself, to oversee the search, if he would be permitted to conquer any land he would come across in the name of the emperor. Cortés argued that instead of obtaining spices through trade, the emperor would be able to say that they came from his vast empire. This

small acts of the next year, the emperor ordered the return of all of Cortés's property that had been confiscated and all fines made against Cortés by the *audiencia* and the Casa de Contratación.<sup>284</sup> The emperor even ordered consideration given to the compensation of the cost of the Honduras expedition.<sup>285</sup> Cortés was also offered a knighthood in the Order of St. James, but he never used the title.<sup>286</sup> In a letter he wrote to the emperor in 1544, he explained that he was disappointed he did not receive a commandership with the knighthood, which included an income.<sup>287</sup>

Cortés further increased his social standing in Spain in the Spring of 1529 with his marriage to Doña Juana Ramírez de Arellano de Zúñiga, the daughter of the Count of Aguilar and the niece of the Duke of Béjar. The marriage had been arranged by his late father, Martin Cortés. The arrangement had brought him powerful allies in the court of

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was approved, but Cortés was busy preparing for his trip to Spain. He sent three ships, loaded with men and guns to the Moluccas. They left Zihuatenejo on All Soul's Day in 1527, and was a complete disaster. When they reached the Spice Islands, they found that most of the crew of the ships they were looking for had been killed by unfriendly natives or Portuguese traders or sold into slavery in China. Poor sailing conditions and the declining state of the ships kept Cortés's crew there for nearly two years, and most of the crew died. Only a small percentage returned to Mexico. (López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 160-162. For Cortés's response to the emperor's request, see Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 350-351.)

<sup>284</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano* 140-141; 168-72; 175-189. *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 406-407; vol. 14, 395-440.

<sup>285</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 29; *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 396-403; vol. 13, 431-34; *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 164-168.

<sup>286</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 165. In medieval Spain there were four spiritual and military orders in Spain: Santiago (St. James), Calatrava, Montesa, and Alcántara. Their primary goal was the Reconquest of Spain from the Moors. The Order of Santiago was founded in 1170 and recognized by the pope in 1175, and was the largest order in Spain. Following the conquest, there was fear from the Crown that the economic and political strength of the orders would threaten that of the monarchy, so in 1499 King Ferdinand convinced pope to give him administration of the orders. This gave Emperor Charles V the ability to knight Cortés. This consolidation of power was continued in New Spain. According to historian Luis Weckmann, there were only 148 knights of the four orders in New Spain during the entire colonial period, and few of them had any political power. In 1500-1502, the governor of Santo Domingo, Francisco de Bobadilla, a commander in the Order of Calatrava, was successful in having a number of towns and lands in Hispaniola given to his order the Crown, but in 1527 Charles V reversed this decree and the lands reverted back to the crown. (Jan van Herwaarden, *Between St. James and Erasmus: Studies in Late-Medieval Religious Life: Devotions and Pilgrimages in the Netherlands* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 465; Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, 145.)

<sup>287</sup> Hernan Cortés, "Carta de Hernan Cortés al Emperador, de Valladolid, á 3 de Febrero de 1544," *Cartas y Relaciones de Hernan Cortés al Emperador Carlos V*, 568.

the emperor, but she was also a young and beautiful woman, and Cortés showered her with gifts, including five emeralds of such high quality that López de Gómara described the jealousy of the Empress Isabel.<sup>288</sup>

The culmination of months of social maneuvering and meetings with the emperor arrived in July 1529. On July 6, in two cédulas, or royal decrees, the emperor gave Cortés the title of Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca and granted him 23,000 Indian vassals in twenty-two pueblos in New Spain.<sup>289</sup> It is clear that Cortés carefully selected these lands, mostly from his previous holdings. He regained much of Coyoacán in the Valley of Mexico, the fertile valley of Toluca, major towns in Oaxaca, the settlements of Tehuantepec and Jalapa on the Pacific coast, and many areas on the Gulf coast around Veracruz. He also gained the area around Cuernavaca, which became the center of his holdings.<sup>290</sup> Cortés's acquisition of these territories was an important step in the development of his legacy in New Spain. No longer could his personal narrative be intertwined with fiction. The lands were real, and their development critical to Cortés's role as a settler of New Spain.

In addition to the land, the grants also contain other important features: the grant was perpetual and could be passed on to his heirs. This is something many *encomenderos* fruitlessly fought for in the sixteenth century. Cortés and his heirs also

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<sup>288</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 165-166. López de Gómara estimated the value of the five emeralds at 100,000 ducats. Each one was carved in a different shape, including a rose, a horn, a fish with gold for eyes, a bell with a pearl clapper, and a cup with a golden base. When he arrived at the royal court, Cortés received word that the empress wished to see them, and would ask for them, with the emperor buying them from Cortés. To keep the jewels, he sent them to Doña Juana before the marriage, offering his apologies to the empress, who was reportedly upset. They clearly very important to Cortés, as he would keep them in his possession. They were on his person when he lost them off the coast of Algiers in 1541 when his ship sank.

<sup>289</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>290</sup> "Real Cedula en que se Hace Merced a Hernan Cortés de Vientedós Pueblos y Veinte y Tres Mil Vasallos," in *Hernan Cortes: Cartas y Documentos*, 596-600.



had both criminal and civil jurisdictional powers in the lands. These rights were also quite rare in the grants of New Spain. As such, Cortés had full control over the natural resources of the areas, and could appoint local officials. These concessions made Cortés the most powerful colonist in New Spain over the largest estate.<sup>291</sup>

The perpetuity of Marquisate, along with the unprecedented power the marquis wielded, was a source of many disputes in the sixteenth century. The Council of the Indies did not make any grants similar to it and actively tried to pare down Cortés holdings. The central issue of contention on the part of the Council and the government of New Spain was the 23,000 vassals, or tributaries. It was suspected that Cortés had many more than that, but he would fight against any official census. In 1532, the second *audiencia* took 16 towns, totaling 29,619 tributaries away from the marquisate. Even so, an inventory of the number of tributaries from 1569 shows 60,903. Given the consistent decrease in the native population over the course of the sixteenth century, the original number of vassals under Cortés was most likely several times the number of 23,000 given to him in the cedula of July 1529.<sup>292</sup> Already given substantial power and the opportunity for great wealth by the emperor, Cortés likely had a greater level of wealth than was intended.

Compared to his holdings as governor, twenty-two pueblos and 23,000 vassals was certainly a disappointment to Cortés. He no longer collected tributes and labor services from Texcoco and Tlacopan, two of the three major centers of the Aztec Triple Alliance. Tzintzuntzan and other towns in the Tarascan State were also omitted from the

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<sup>291</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 30.

<sup>292</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 164-166.

list, as were the mining regions of Tlapa and Soconusco. He also held considerably less land in Oaxaca. Cortés still held the most land of any encomendero in New Spain, but it was only part of what he once had.<sup>293</sup>

Just a few days after receiving his marquisate from the emperor, Cortés continued his bid for more power. He sent a personal ambassador, Juan de Herrada, to Rome to meet with Pope Clement VII. His goal was to ask the pope to remit part of the tithes in his marquisate. Cortés sent with Herrada gifts of precious jewels and gold jewelry, as well as Indians who juggled sticks with their feet. The pope and his cardinals enjoyed the show and appreciated the gifts.<sup>294</sup> The pope granted Cortés a portion of the tithes in his lands, but in a decree on 31 October 1532, the *audiencia* forbade Cortés to collect them until they had established whether or not such an action interfered with royal patronage.<sup>295</sup> After deliberation, the *audiencia* concluded on 9 January 1533, that all patronage in New Spain belonged to the emperor, and forbade Cortés from making any appeals.<sup>296</sup>

After he received his title, the marquis began to overstay his welcome in Spain. Díaz del Castillo dove into court gossip to explain that once Cortés gained the title of Marquis, he began to give less attention to those who had helped him so much when he arrived in Spain. Resentment grew, and much of the influence that helped Cortés began to work against him. The emperor himself may have tired of Cortés; in response to yet another appeal from Cortés the emperor told him that New Spain was conquered by many

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<sup>293</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 29.

<sup>294</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 488. “Se holgaron a verlo.”

<sup>295</sup> *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 13, 237-241.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 241-250.

men, and they each deserved to have part of it. Cortés employed the Count of Nassau to ask the emperor one final time about the governorship, and the emperor told the count never to bring up the subject again, as Cortés had been given a greater income in Mexico than the count had in Spain. Díaz del Castillo speculated over the empress's disappointment over the emeralds, and the neglect of Maria de Mendoza, the wife of Francisco de los Cobos, but regardless of the situation, Cortés exhausted his goodwill in Spain.<sup>297</sup> At the end of 1529, the emperor travelled to Barcelona to sail to Italy. He was followed to the coast by many in the Spanish nobility, including Cortés, paying his respects and proving himself to be every bit as dignified as those around him. When the emperor embarked, Cortés began to plan his trip back to New Spain.<sup>298</sup>

He and his new wife departed for New Spain in the spring of 1530. He was eager to take possession of his marquisate, but he was also all too aware of the problems that arose in Mexico during his absence. As Madariaga illustrates, “grey-haired and saddened with many a disillusion, he was no longer sailing towards a virgin future, but towards a thorny present and stormy past.”<sup>299</sup> After a brief stay at the island of Hispaniola, he arrived at Veracruz in the middle of July 1530.

The most notable aspect of Cortés's return to Spain from 1527 to 1530 was his detachment from Spain itself. During his stay, he acted more as an envoy of a foreign country than one returning to his ancestral home. He enjoyed the life of a nobleman while he was there, and married into nobility, but expressed no great interest in maintaining that lifestyle. Unlike other conquistadors, such as the Pizarro brothers, who

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<sup>297</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 486-487.

<sup>298</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 487.

<sup>299</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 456.

purchased large amounts of land, buildings, and houses around their home of Trujillo to build their reputation, Cortés did not invest in his hometown of Medellín. In fact, he even gave his family's property in Medellín to his cousin, Juan Altamirano.<sup>300</sup> It is possible that Cortés did not wish to contend in the long-established social and political spheres of influence of Spain, but it is also possible that he had simply moved on to other paths of notoriety. Díaz del Castillo related a second-hand story of Cortés's time in Spain in which Cortés arrives to church late, taking a seat just two away from the emperor, where he had been invited to sit, much to the vexation of the Spanish nobility, who sat behind the emperor according to their status.<sup>301</sup> This honor had not come through being a courtier but a conquistador. Cortés was a Spaniard, but he was also a servant of the emperor, and he better equipped for this service in New Spain. Spain had been his home, but his home now was the place he risked everything to obtain, and in return provided him with the fame he desired: Mexico.

Cortés went to Spain to defend himself against the many complaints that were brought against him as governor of Mexico. Although he was unaware of it, the emperor had even demanded his presence to answer for them. He was at the lowest point in his life since the conquest. Yet, less than three years later, he was the Marques del Valle, with the largest landholding in New Spain. He was denied the governorship, and perhaps in over-reaching in his relationship with the emperor and the royal court he compromised the goodwill he would need in the future, but Cortés was still hopeful that he might yet regain the glory of the past.

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<sup>300</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 123.

<sup>301</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 486.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE END OF THE FRONTIER

Cortés left New Spain an exile from the capital, and while he returned as the *Marques del Valle*, his return was not much friendlier. Much had changed in his absence from Mexico, and still more change was on the horizon. The first *audiencia*, appointed as Cortés planned his trip to Spain in middle of 1527, would prove to be a failure, and a second was installed while Cortés was in Spain. Yet even the second *audiencia* was a temporary measure; both the emperor and his various councils believed that the appointment of a ruler who could personify the power and authority of the king would be best for New Spain, and they established a viceroyalty in 1535.

The development of a functional government in the New World was one of trial and error. As essentially the personal property of the monarchs, not an official part of the Spanish Empire, following traditional political structures proved to be difficult. Even if this was an option, the Catholic Monarchs would not have been interested in recreating the courts of Spain with which they constantly argued. Furthermore, the needs of a government in this new place were completely unknown at the onset; nothing was known about the New World with which to organize a governing structure. It was this lack of

understanding that Columbus was initially given complete control of Hispaniola, a precedent with which Cortés used to his advantage.

As soon as it was realized that the New World had a greater commercial importance than first realized, the Casa de Contratación was established in Seville in 1503 to manage commerce, shipping, and emigration to the Indies. This customs house was overseen by Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, the Bishop of Burgos who essentially developed Spanish overseas policy.<sup>302</sup> When Fonseca died in 1524, however, Charles V recognized the need for a new system because the situation in the New World had changed considerably. Cortés was the governor of New Spain, a vast area of land with millions of subjects. There was also the possibility of even more Spanish colonies in Central and South America. As a result, Charles V created the Council of the Indies in 1524. It was modeled after the structure of councils such as the Council of Castile, the Council of Aragon, and others over other Spanish territories. The council had complete administrative and judicial authority over the colonies of the Spanish colonies in America. It was directly subject to the crown; the king was the chief legislator, but, as Diffie points out, Charles V was so busy at this time with many affairs in Europe, it is quite likely the council created the legislation and the king either accepted or rejected. Diffie wrote of the council: “Inasmuch as it prepared the laws governing America, it was a legislature; inasmuch as it had original jurisdiction in other matters, it was a supreme court; and inasmuch as practically all acts nominally emanating from the King for the

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<sup>302</sup> Michael C. Meyer, William L. Sherman, and Susan M. Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 120. The choice of Fonseca as the head of the *Casa de Contratación* was due to his prior experience. In May 1493, shortly after Columbus’s return from his first voyage, Queen Isabella chose Fonseca, who was at that time the archdeacon of the Cathedral of Seville, the Queen’s chaplain, and a member of the Council of Castile, to manage the affairs of the New World. At his death in 1524, he had been the principle royal counselor to New World affairs, holding the position for just over thirty years. (Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America*, 102.)

administration of the Indies actually originated in the Council, it was an executive body.”<sup>303</sup> From the Casa de Contratación to the Council of the Indies, power was consolidated and brought more closely under the control of the emperor. As the chaos of the governance of New Spain developed in the middle of the 1520s, a similar process ensued.

Like the establishment of a royal council, the creation of the *audiencia* had its roots in Spanish political tradition. In Spain an *audiencia* was a law court comprised of *oidores*, or judges, designed to assist the monarch in the maintenance of royal authority. In the New World, however, the *audiencia* developed to have much wider powers than in Spain. The first *audiencia* was established in Hispaniola in the city of Santo Domingo in 1511, with jurisdiction over much of the Indian Islands. Its initial purpose was to eliminate the need to take legal issues such as lawsuits overseas to Spain, which greatly lengthened these issues and made governance difficult. Diego Columbus, son of Christopher Columbus, was governor and viceroy of the islands from 1509-1518, and was constantly testing the boundaries of his power through such lawsuits.<sup>304</sup> The difficulty the Spanish crown had with Diego Columbus might have been a contributing factor to the appointment of royal advisors to monitor Cortés’s control of New Spain. To balance the power of the governor, who, at least through 1515 had continued to assert his

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<sup>303</sup> Diffie, *Latin-American Civilization*, 296.

<sup>304</sup> Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America*, 15-19. Diego Columbus first petitioned King Ferdinand in 1505 for position of his father over the Indies in 1505. In 1508 he brought a suit against the royal council over his claim to a tenth of the royal revenues from the Indies, an amount agreed to Ferdinand at an earlier date. Around the same year, Diego filed a suit claiming to have jurisdiction over the mainland region of Veragua in Central America (Nicaragua and Costa Rica). The response from the royal council was vague, and Diego petitioned again in 1511 over the same issue. In 1512 Diego unsuccessfully filed suit over the control of the Isthmus of Panama.

right to absolute authority in the Indies, the panel of three judges in Santo Domingo were also given legislative and executive powers as well.

Amid the political instability brought about by Cortés's expedition to Honduras, the crown felt that a similar panel of judges would be necessary to counterbalance the sway Cortés and others held over the people while at the same time ensuring an orderly, functioning government.<sup>305</sup> There were numerous suits over properties, Indian tributes, and various other issues created by the government of Salazar and Chirino, and the *residencia* of Cortés could also be conducted by the *audiencia*. Accordingly, in December 1527 a five person panel was assembled for Mexico. Díaz del Castillo, who did not accompany Cortés to Spain and remained in Mexico during this time, describes this period in detail. The members of the *audiencia* were four lawyers: Francisco Maldonado of Salamanca, Alonso de Parada, who had lived in Cuba for some time, Diego Delgadillo of Granada, and Juan Ortiz de Matienzo of Biscay. Nuño de Guzmán, the governor of the New Spanish province of Pánuco (north of Mexico City on the gulf coast), was appointed president, and would serve as governor.<sup>306</sup> All five men arrived in Mexico City at the end of 1528, but Maldonado and Parada died shortly thereafter. The

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<sup>305</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 166. López de Gómara asserted the decision was one of monetary nature. He explained that while Pánfilo de Narváez was in Spain in 1527 he brought numerous complaints against Cortés. He swore that Cortés was withholding "as many bar of gold and silver as there were iron ingots in Biscay." When Cortés was in Castile, he was shown this testimony and remarked, "Long journeys, Long lies!"

<sup>306</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 489. For information on Guzmán during his time in Mexico, see Donald E. Chipman, Nuño de Guzmán and the Province of Pánuco in New Spain, 1518-1533 (Glendale, CA: The Arthur Clark Company, 1967). Pánuco was the Spanish province in northeastern Mexico on the gulf coast, including the northern part of the modern-day state of Vera Cruz and extending northward into Tamaulipas. For information on Guzmán's later life, see Donald E. Chipman, "The Will of Nuño de Guzmán: President, Governor, and Captain General of New Spain and Province of Pánuco, 1558," *The Americas*, vol. 35, no. 2 (October, 1978), 238-248.



first *audiencia*, therefore, would only be Guzmán and the lawyers Delgadillo and Matienzo.<sup>307</sup>

The period of the first *audiencia*, though based on a successful system, was a complete failure in that it created more disorder than it resolved. Guzmán, never having met Cortés, was nevertheless opposed to him and his supporters.<sup>308</sup> Díaz del Castillo, having been present at the arrival of the *audiencia*, attributes this to Salazar's influence on the president upon his arrival.<sup>309</sup> Zumárraga, however, points out that before he took his position as governor of Pánuco, he spent some time in Cuba, where Diego Velasquez and others there to turn Guzmán against Cortés.<sup>310</sup> Whatever the cause, with Cortés in Spain Guzmán used the power of the *audiencia* against any and all supporters of Cortés, mainly the *encomenderos* Cortés placed in power; by limiting the influence of those most loyal to Cortés, Guzmán and the *audiencia* could remove any remaining political influence the conquistador had left. *Encomiendas* were seized; officials were removed from their positions; supporters of Cortés were publicly beaten, and some executed. Although Cortés's holdings as governor were irrevocably confused when Salazar confiscated most of it, what Cortés had succeeded in reclaiming was seized by Guzmán.<sup>311</sup> Cortés's lawyer, Juan de Altamirano, who Cortés left to manage his affairs

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<sup>307</sup>Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 489. Díaz del Castillo joked that it was a very good thing that Cortés was in Spain at the time, or he would have been accused of killing them.

<sup>308</sup>Chipman, *Nuño de Guzmán*, 149-154. Guzmán's appointment as governor of Pánuco in 1525 was strongly opposed by supporters of Cortés, who, as governor of New Spain, held *de facto* control over the area. Guzmán arrested many members of this opposition, seizing property and even executing a number of Cortés's supporters. Guzmán's dislike of Cortés came at least partly from the popularity Cortés enjoyed by the settlers of New Spain at the expense of Guzmán.

<sup>309</sup>Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 489.

<sup>310</sup>Zumárraga, in Cortés, *Fernando Cortes*, 364-365. Because Guzmán's appointment to governor of Pánuco in 1525 also meant the division of Cortés's power, he also dealt with some resistance from supporters of the conquistador. This may have also soured his opinion of Cortés. (Chipman, *Nuño de Guzmán*, 146-147.)

<sup>311</sup>This was just a few months before Cortés's royal grant of the Marquesado.

while he was in Spain, was arrested and jailed.<sup>312</sup> Guzmán was not acting as a fair arbiter of justice, but as a tyrant.

It did not take long for Guzmán to acquire a number of influential detractors. Chief among them was Fray Juan de Zumárraga, the newly-appointed bishop of New Spain. Zumárraga claimed that shortly after arriving in Mexico that he learned that the native population of Pánuco had been destroyed by slave trafficking under Guzmán. As president of the *audiencia*, Zumárraga believed that Guzmán simply expanded his slave trafficking. While both of these claims appear to be based in truth, Zumárraga was unable to communicate these abuses of power to the Council of the Indies, because Guzmán had the bishop's mail intercepted before it left New Spain.<sup>313</sup> Díaz del Castillo went so far as to claim that Guzmán issued slave licenses under names of the deceased, and sold them for his own profit. While this, or many of the numerous other rumors repeated by Díaz del Castillo cannot be proven, they nonetheless could not help but reach Spain and attract the scrutiny of the crown.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 490. The arrest of Juan de Altamirano was warranted. As Díaz del Castillo related, while in a meeting with the *audiencia*, Gonzalo de Salazar makes a malicious and falsely accusatory speech against Cortés. Altamirano then asks the *audiencia* to dismiss the testimony of Salazar. When Salazar continues to disparage Cortés, the two get into an argument that escalates into Altamirano drawing a dagger on Salazar. Díaz del Castillo stated that Altamirano was arrested by Guzmán, Matienzo, and Delgadillo.

<sup>313</sup> Chipman, *Nuño de Guzmán*, 225-230. Chipman states that figures on Guzmán's slave trafficking found in many historical works, including an estimated fifteen hundred slaving licenses issued by Guzmán in less than eight months, is not much exaggerated. Guzmán continued issuing slaving licenses into September, 1529. Only in 1531 was Zumárraga able to present the testimony of the Alcalde Mayor of Vera Cruz stating that Guzmán ordered the seizure of Zumárraga's correspondence during this time.

<sup>314</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 492. Among his claims, Díaz del Castillo also asserted that Guzmán, Matienzo and Delgadillo spent more time gambling and drinking than in office, they frequently placed family members in lower offices, and they re-appropriated territory to court favor for themselves. Despite these activities, he described Guzmán in a favorable way, owing much to the fact that Guzmán treated the conquistadors quite well. It is likely he was intentionally courting these influential men to prevent powerful resistance.

So many complaints and charges against the *audiencia* reached the Council of the Indies in Spain in the first months of 1529 that the emperor, as early as March, decided to replace Guzmán and the two lawyers. Cortés, who had also heard from members of the royal court about the continued troubles in New Spain, received word from the emperor that a second *audiencia* had been chosen in April of that year.<sup>315</sup> The four judges were to be Vasco de Quiroga, a judge who served as a *juéz de residencia* in Spain, Alonso Maldonado to replace the deceased Francisco Maldonado, Francisco de Ceynos, and Juan de Salmerón to replace Matienzo and Delgadillo. Ceynos had worked for the Council of the Indies, and Ceynos had recently graduated from the University of Salamanca. After several candidates for president refused the position, the bishop of Santo Domingo, Sebastián Ramírez de Funleal was appointed. He was chosen because of his successful tenure as president of the *audiencia* of Hispaniola. They would not arrive in New Spain, however, until the end of 1530.<sup>316</sup> As the emperor was nearing his departure from Spain during the Spring of 1529, the task of creating the second *audiencia* largely fell to his wife, Isabel of Portugal. She selected the members carefully, with the assistance of the Bishop of Badajoz, making sure the errors of the first *audiencia* were not repeated.

The second *audiencia* was, from the start, a temporary situation. The main purpose of the panel was to fix the problems left in the wake of the first so that a viceroy could enter New Spain on favorable conditions. In fact, the appointment of a viceroy had been made before that of the second *audiencia*. Antonio de Mendoza, a member of one

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<sup>315</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 123-124.

<sup>316</sup> Arthur Scott Aiton, *Antonio de Mendoza: First Viceroy of New Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1927), 22-23.

of the older and more influential Spanish noble families, was chosen. He grew up exposed to frontier conditions in the southern Spanish province of Granada, where his father and brother ruled. He was a regular member of the royal court, with his ability and loyalty well known to the emperor and the queen. The most important factor in his appointment, however, was that he had no connections to New Spain, particularly the factional disputes that had taken place, ensuring his loyalty was foremost with to the crown. The queen inquired into Mendoza's interest in November 1529, and he accepted, but it would take a while for him to set his affairs in Spain in order. He would not be officially recognized as the Viceroy of New Spain until 17 April 1535.<sup>317</sup> This left the second *audiencia* four years to address the many political problems and disputes tearing New Spain apart.

As the Second *audiencia* would not arrive in Mexico until late 1530, and the viceroy until 1535, the political environment in which Cortés arrived in the summer of 1530 was still somewhat chaotic. He did not, however, have Nuño de Guzmán to contend with. In late summer or early fall of 1529, Guzmán turned his attention to the northwestern frontier of New Spain known as Jalisco. According to Díaz del Castillo, Guzmán received word from Spain that he was to be replaced, and assembled large force of soldiers to accompany him to conquer the area. Little was known about the area, and Guzmán hoped bringing new land under the control of the crown, as well as great wealth, would repair the reputation he earned as governor and president.<sup>318</sup> Guzmán did himself

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<sup>317</sup> Aiton, *Antonio de Mendoza*, 22; 34. The title of viceroy was not created to administer New Spain. In Spain, during the unification of Spain and the *Reconquista*, viceroys were appointed in each province to maintain tight control over the land. Viceroys oversaw the governorship of Galicia, Navarre, Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, and Majorca.

<sup>318</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 494.

no favors in this task, however, confiscating supplies and horses from many *encomenderos* and even removing ten thousand pesos from the royal treasury for the expedition.<sup>319</sup> Díaz del Castillo also pointed to the fact that his cruel treatment of the natives continued there, and was widely known both in Mexico and Spain.<sup>320</sup> Guzmán requested, and was granted the governorship of what the territory, which was called New Galicia. Despite this appointment, he was arrested in 1536 and sent to Spain for his involvement in the illegal trade of slaves and cruel treatment of the Indians.<sup>321</sup>

With Guzmán gone, Matienzo and Delgadillo, the *oidores*, administered New Spain. When Cortés arrived in Veracruz in July 1530, he was reportedly met by masses of Indians and Spaniards who decried the living conditions under the first *audiencia*. López de Gómara is not specific on this, simply stating that many were starving and had been financially ruined. It was clear that Cortés still had a number of supporters in Mexico. To calm the crowds, Cortés hired a town crier to announce Cortés as Captain-General of Spain. This act “twisted the noses of the *oidores*,” who, according to López de Gómara, attempted to disperse the crowd and support for Cortés by the threat of imprisonment. Shortly afterward, Cortés set off for Mexico City.<sup>322</sup>

López de Gómara stated that when Cortés arrived on the shore of Lake Texcoco to enter the city, he was met by a messenger of the *oidores* carrying an order to refuse

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<sup>319</sup> Chipman, *Nuño de Guzmán*, 231-232,

<sup>320</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 494-495.

<sup>321</sup> Chipman, *Nuño de Guzmán*, 236-250. The investigation of Guzmán that led to his arrest was initiated by the second *audiencia* of New Spain sometime in the middle of 1531, based on his use of the treasury to fund his expedition. The plan Guzmán was never able to realize was to unite Pánuco and New Galicia under his governance into a territory called “Greater Spain” that stretched from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico.

<sup>322</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 168-169. López de Gómara related that the *oidores* ordered all Spaniards and Indians to return to their towns or face harsh penalties, including death. He also stated that they considered arresting Cortés and returning him to Spain as a disturber of the peace, though it was most likely a rumor, as it is uncertain where López de Gómara could have received this information.

him entry to the city. Cortés sent back a message reminding them of his royally appointed positions and urged them not to give the people of the city a pretext for uprising. Shortly after, he was admitted into the city.<sup>323</sup> Díaz del Castillo, on the other hand, does not mention any of these events, briefly recounting these few days without any of the dramatic tension. He related that Cortés arrived in Veracruz to a large and warm welcome, supporting López de Gómara, but that Cortés was also welcomed in Mexico City warmly.<sup>324</sup> Despite which account is more accurate, both agree that after a brief stay in the Mexico City, Cortés and his wife went to Cuernavaca to survey his lands and direct the construction of his estate and permanent residence.

The second *audiencia* arrived in Mexico City at the end of 1530 and was immediately faced with the enormous task organizing and reforming the government of New Spain. In this process the *oidores* Matienzo and Delgadillo were tried and convicted misuse of their positions, and returned to Spain. The biggest step the *audiencia* took in this process was in Indian relations. The president of the *audiencia*, Fuenleal, was a bishop with experience in this subject from Santo Domingo, and the *audiencia* worked with Bishop Zumárraga to repair Spanish and Indian relations damaged during the time of Cortés's lieutenant governors and the first *audiencia*. Hospitals were created, as were colleges for the conversions Indians; new, more humane policies were created for Indian settlements; law enforcement was reformed to address claims of abuse. In these ways the

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>324</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 498.

second *audiencia* was able to strengthen royal control and settle social unrest among both the Spanish and Indian populations.<sup>325</sup>

There were problems for the *audiencia*, however. The higher level of scrutiny over the Spanish treatment of the Indians was unpopular with many Spaniards, who resisted many of the decisions of the *audiencia*. More than 150 Spanish residents of Mexico City left for Jalisco to live under the more relaxed policies of Nuño de Guzmán. There was also the issue of Cortés. He did not attempt to interfere with the operations of the government, but his presence, along with his popular following, hindered support for the *audiencia*. Cortés also fought with the *audiencia* over the inspection of his marquisate. The unprecedented power Cortés held in his lands came into conflict with that of the *audiencia*, particularly on the issue of evaluating the population of these lands to verify the tribute from them.<sup>326</sup>

In addition its great success in comparison to the first *audiencia*, the central feature of the second *audiencia* was its temporary nature. Their interim status was source of weakness, both from within and outside. Men like Cortés outwardly supported the *audiencia* as royal officials, but quietly ignored their decisions, waiting to address their grievances to the viceroy. The judges themselves were not completely dedicated to their task. They petitioned the crown for relief as early as 1532, when they were promised

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<sup>325</sup> Aiton, *Antonio de Mendoza*, 28.

<sup>326</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 498-499. Díaz del Castillo described the issue of tribute in the marquisate. The *audiencia* appointed an official, one Doctor Quesada, to assess the actual population of Cortés's lands to verify the number of 23,000 given to the marquis. This official counted the head of the house as one tributary, each son in the house as a tributary, and if any sons-in-law were in the house, each of them as one. Even male slaves, although without income, were counted at tributaries. At times, this amounted to ten to twelve tributaries per household. Cortés argued against this, asserting that there should be one tributary per household. The additional burden of tribute this put on each household is not known, but this system reduced the size of the *encomienda*. Cortés was unable to bring lawsuit, however. In defiance of the *audiencia*, he collected tribute according to his own system.

replacements. They faced an unruly and divided Spanish population, and a much larger population of Indian subjects, but still their time in office was an important step. It was precisely their disinterest that prevented them from being weighed down by factional disputes and administer royal policy to the letter. They were impartial adjudicators; possibly the first in the government of New Spain. As Aiton asserts, “The Second *audiencia* did more than assert and maintain royal supremacy. It started the Mexicans on the long and thorny path of white civilization.”<sup>327</sup> This path had enormous consequences for the conquistadors who viewed New Spain as a frontier. It was a frontier no longer, and figures such as Cortés struggled with this transition.

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<sup>327</sup> Aiton, *Antonio de Mendoza*, 28-30.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE LURE OF THE SOUTH SEA

Hernán Cortés, having returned from Spain in 1530 as the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, was not yet prepared to rest on this title alone and settle down into a life of landed gentry; especially not when there was the possibility of obtaining other titles and honors. Throughout his life, Cortés displayed optimism and ambition, and after 1530 he never lost hope of the possibility of recapturing the prestige and power earned with the conquest of Mexico. Although he had the responsibilities of the marquisate - the settlement of the land, the conversion and education of the natives, and the general administration of the largest landholding in New Spain - the level of greatness Cortés sought could not be achieved through administration alone. He appealed to retain the governorship of Mexico, but this was more for the power than the love of the job; his expedition to Honduras demonstrated his desire for adventure. Cortés was a conquistador, not an administrator. He had to do what he did best: explore and conquer. In 1529, the emperor named Cortés Captain-General not only of New Spain, but of the area known as the South Seas. His estate New Spain required his occasional attention,

but for much of the 1530s, Cortés sought fame farther westward.<sup>328</sup>

As early as late 1524, Cortés already had plans to explore the great body of water known as the South Seas. In his fourth *Carta de Relacion*, he relates a report of an island west of the Colima region solely inhabited by women. It was said that their island was very rich in pearls and gold. Eager to discover the truth to these claims, he assured the emperor, “I shall endeavor to learn the truth and give a full account of it to your majesty.”<sup>329</sup> The myth of such an island has its origins in the romantic tale *Las Sergas de Esplandian* (1510, Seville) by Spanish author Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, a continuation of the series *Amadis de Guala*.<sup>330</sup> The story is one of a Christian crusade to stop Persians and pagans from taking control of Constantinople. One of the last pagan groups to join the struggle against the Christians were the Amazons, women who came from an island, California, ruled by Queen Calafia. The island was only populated by women, and their weapons were made of gold.<sup>331</sup> The island itself was full of gold and precious stones. Indication that the conquistadors were familiar with these stories comes from Bernal Díaz, who, in 1519, when approaching the causeways that led to the city of Tenochtitlán for the first time, remarked “We were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments they tell of in the legend of *Amadis*, on account of the great towers and

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<sup>328</sup> The title Captain-General denoted the highest military rank. In many areas of the Spanish Empire, the title usually went to the viceroy, or possibly the president of the *audiencia*. The Captain-General was responsible for the pacification of uprisings and war with Indians on the frontiers. (Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America*, 78.)

<sup>329</sup> Cortés, *Hernando Cortés*, 253.

<sup>330</sup> Rodríguez de Montalvo is not of the author of the original *Amadis de Guala* stories, the presence of which can be traced to the fourteenth century. The earliest known publication date of *Amadis de Guala* is 1510. (For discussions on the origin of the *Amadis de Guala*, see A.K. Jameson, “Was there a French Original of the ‘Amadis de Guala?’,” *Modern Language Review*, vol. 28, no. 2 (April, 1933), 176-193; Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Sergas de esplandian de Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo: guía de lectura*, Emilio Sales Dasí, ed. (Alcalá de Henares, Spain: Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 1999), 7-9; *Amadis de Guala*, Helen Moore, ed., Anthony Munday, trans. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>331</sup> Seymour Schwartz, *The Mismapping of America* (Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press, 2008), 127-129. Schwartz also discusses the origin of the name California.

cues [temples] and buildings rising from the water, and all built of masonry.”<sup>332</sup> This was a story Cortés would have been familiar with as fiction, but after the conquest of such a great empire as the Aztecs, of which the Spanish knew nothing before, Cortés appeared open to any possibility.

Although Cortés did not need much encouragement, the decision to focus his attention on the Pacific Ocean was not entirely voluntary. As part of the agreement of his position of Captaincy-General, Cortés’s exploration of the South Seas was compulsory. The agreements had been made during Cortés’s visit to Spain in 1529, and it was on 27 October 1529, that the royal documents were granted by the empress. In the first document, Cortés was given sole permission to explore west of New Spain, and claim, in the name of the crown, any island or part of the mainland that had not been discovered. Furthermore, Cortés would become governor and chief constable for life of these areas. In the second document, the empress required Cortés to begin preparations for his exploration within two years.<sup>333</sup> The reason for this time constraint is not clear, but it is possible that the emperor wanted Cortés distracted or even out of New Spain during the coming transition to vice-regal rule.

The port town of Tehuantepec on the Pacific coast was part of Cortés’s marquisate; there he ordered the construction of ships. Cortés also ordered ships to be constructed at the port of Zihuatenejo, and purchased two more at Acapulco.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, 190.

<sup>333</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 214-218. The dates of these documents are erroneously given as 1531.

<sup>334</sup> Robert Ryal Miller, “Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California,” *California Historical Society*, vol. 53, no. 1 (Spring 1974), 6. The contemporary sources state that Cortés ordered ships to be built at Acapulco, but Miller shows that Cortés purchased the Acapulco ships from Juan Rodríguez de Villafuerte on November 4, 1531. (Hernán Cortés, *Escritos sueltos de Hernán Cortés: colección formada para servir de complemento a las “Cartas de Relación,”* (Mexico: Imprenta de I. Escalante, 1871), 291.)

Construction would take some time, as many parts had to be made on site or brought in from the Atlantic coast, or from Spain. The first two ships would not be ready until the middle of 1532, and Cortés divided his time between supervising these projects and the construction of his palace in Cuernavaca, which was to be the center of his marquisate.<sup>335</sup>

In early 1532, two ships were readied in Acapulco, and Cortés wasted no time in sending them off, either in May or June of that year.<sup>336</sup> Cortés appointed his cousin, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, as the commanders of the vessels, named the *San Miguel* and the *San Marcos*.<sup>337</sup> Cortés himself did not accompany the expedition. This was uncharacteristic of the explorer, but he had other matters to attend to. He was, at this time, still overseeing construction projects on his lands and regularly conferring with the *audiencia* over the issue of jurisdiction within the marquisate. Despite the appeal of adventure, Cortés realized the importance of settlement and development of his lands. He was also obligated, in his agreement with the emperor, to start the exploration of the Pacific no more than two years after his arrival back in New Spain. It is possible that this expedition was designed simply to meet this expectation. Whatever the reason for Cortés's decision to stay behind, it would prove to be a wise decision. Both ships ran aground on the western coast of New Spain; the *San Marcos* was broken up near the

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<sup>335</sup> Cortés put much of his money in the construction of his Pacific fleet. In Cuernavaca, the Indians supplied both the labor and materials necessary for the construction of his palace. Cortés accepted this as payment of tribute from the natives of Cuernavaca. Construction was completed in sometime in late 1531. (Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 41.)

<sup>336</sup> Díaz del Castillo stated that the ships sailed from the port in May (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 500), while López de Gómara placed the date of departure on Corpus Christi Day, June 30 (Gómara, Cortés, 397).

<sup>337</sup> López de Gómara listed the names of the principal crew members: Juan de Mazuela, treasurer; Alonso de Molina, veedor (inspector); Miguel Marroquino, military commander; Juan Ortiz de Cabex, chief constable; Melchor Fernández, pilot. (Gómara, *Cortés*, 397.)

mouth of the Fuerte River, and the *San Miguel* was driven ashore at Banderas Bay. All but three men were reportedly killed by natives.<sup>338</sup>

After receiving word of the expedition's fate, Cortés readied two more ships, recently completed at Tehuantepec. In October 1533, the ships *Concepción* and *San Lázaro* left the port under the command of Diego Becerra de Mendoza. Almost immediately (Gómara asserts the first night) the two ships were separated. Hernando de Grijalva, captain of the *San Lázaro*, sailed northwest in the hope of finding islands. He discovered the islands known as the Revillagigedo Islands, south of Baja California.<sup>339</sup> While unimportant at the time, this expedition is also noteworthy in that Grijalva records the first known description of a California sea lion, an animal he described as having the appearance of a monkey.<sup>340</sup> The *San Lázaro* returned to Mexico, landing at Acapulco in February, 1534.<sup>341</sup>

The flagship, *Concepción*, faced a far more violent fate. The pilot, Fortún Ximénez de Bertandoña, organized a mutiny and killed the captain Mendoza. The mutineers sailed westward until they arrived in a bay named Santa Cruz, today known as

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<sup>338</sup> Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 7. López de Gómara painted a more vivid picture of this expedition, but one likely heavily biased against Nuño de Guzmán. He asserted that the two ships were denied a landing at Jalisco, governed by Guzmán, to take on fresh water, which led to mutiny and the misfortune of both ships. López de Gómara even goes so far as to say that the violence of the natives was caused by Guzmán's mistreatment of them. (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 397.)

<sup>339</sup> Donald D. Brand, "Geographical Exploration by the Spaniards," in *The Pacific Basin: A History of its Geographical Exploration*, Herman R. Friis, ed. (New York: American Geographical Society, 1967), 128; 370. Grijalva is given credit primarily for the discovery of the island he named San Tomé, or Santo Tomás, but in his own account he discovered two islands. He named the second Isla de los Inocentes. Today these islands are known as San Benedicto and Socorro, respectively.

<sup>340</sup> Kelsey, "Mapping the California Coast: The Voyages of Discovery, 1533-1543," 308. "Along the way, the men saw a funny looking mammal with an upper body somewhat like that of a monkey. As the animal rose out of the water, it revealed an ugly face, stumpy arms, and even fingers. The brief report of the voyage included three drawings of this curious creature, both with and without scales and a fishtail, as the sailors did not see the animal's lower body."

<sup>341</sup> Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 7.

La Paz, Baja California. Nearly the entire crew of the ship was killed by the Guaycuras Indians. Four or five were able to escape and sail back to New Spain, but were arrested by an official of Guzmán. One of these men escaped, and word of the discovery, along with the information that the natives possessed pearls, made its way to Cortés.<sup>342</sup>

When Cortés received news of the discovery, complete with natives and pearls, he made the decision to personally lead the next expedition. He was aware that Guzmán also knew about the discovery, and petitioned the *audiencia*, who ordered Guzmán to return the seized ship and forbade him from going to the discovered land. When it became known throughout New Spain that Cortés himself was to lead the next expedition, volunteers flooded into Tehuantepec, where three ships had recently been completed. Díaz del Castillo explained that many believed Cortés's involvement meant a certainty of wealth, and many soldiers, including horsemen, musketeers, and crossbowmen, some of them married, volunteered. In all three hundred and twenty people, including the wives of the married men, jumped at the chance to colonize this new land.<sup>343</sup>

This news of a new land with natives who might possess riches seems to have arrived at a critical point for Cortés. In a letter to the Council of the Indies, Cortés explained that he was not optimistic about the outcome of further exploration of the waters to the west of New Spain. He noted that he made the decision to become a merchant. He wrote, "Being hesitant to follow up promptly this discovery [attempt]

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<sup>342</sup> Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 7. Santa Cruz was named by Cortés himself, who arrived there on 3 May 1535, the day of the Holy Cross.

<sup>343</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 501. "Y como en la Nueva España se supo que el marqués iba en persona, creyeron que era a cosa cierta y rica, y viniérole a server tantos soldados, asi de a caballo y otros arcabuceros y ballesteros, y entre ellos treinta y quarto casados, que se le juntaron, por todos dieron sobre trescientas veinte personas, con las mujeres casadas."

because of the bad luck of the two previous armadas...and for having left me overspent and even exhausted, I had decided to become a merchant, and with a ship that I had left and one being built, to send horses and other things to Peru and pay the debts I owed.”<sup>344</sup>

He continues to state that when he heard about Nuño de Guzmán’s efforts to hide the news of a discovery that could prove fruitful, he “decided to abandon the trade route, to speed up [construction of] some ships which I had in the shipyard, and to lift my skirts and go see this land.”<sup>345</sup>

The decision to give up exploration, and the fame that came with discovery, was out of character for Cortés. Given the risks of his previous acts of boldness, and the many losses therein, why would the uncertainty of this expedition sway him to give up his search for greatness and become a merchant? It is likely these sentiments were not genuine; rather, he wanted to illustrate the role of a humble servant of the crown fighting back against the actions of an unruly Guzmán. Cortés’s letter to the council does, however, demonstrate his statesmanship and sense of opportunity to ingratiate himself to the right company. Cortés’s next step appears to abandon this sense of humility.

Because of the overwhelming response of volunteers to his planned endeavor, Cortés could not transport so many people and the proper supplies on his three ships. He decided to pack the ships with ample supplies, and lead his army over land, to Chametla, a town in New Galicia on the same latitude as the Bay of Santa Cruz, to have the shortest

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<sup>344</sup> Hernan Cortés, “Carta de Hernan Cortés al president y oidores del Real Consejo de las Indias. De Calagua, á 8 de Febrero de 1535,” in *Cartas y Relaciones de Hernan Cortés*, 532. Translation from Miller, “Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California,” 8.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 532. The phrase “lifting my skirts” (“alzar mis faldas”) is an idiom for the act of lifting something to discover something else. In this context, Cortés is referring to exploring the land himself, not simply relying on a second-hand account. (Alberto Guzmán, *Lexicología Castellana; o sea, tratado sobre las palabras de nuestro idioma* (Santiago, Chile: Establecimiento Poligráfico Roma, 1897), 199.)

crossing. It is also likely that he wanted a direct confrontation with Guzmán. In late 1534, Cortés sent his three ships from Tehuantepec to rendezvous at the Port of Salagua, west of Colima in Manzanillo Bay.<sup>346</sup> Cortés then traveled over land, arriving in early 1535. The ships then left for Chametla to drop off the supplies then take the personnel to the new land.

As Cortés marched farther into Guzmán's territory, Guzmán sent an aide to tell Cortés that he must leave the government jurisdiction immediately, as he is there without permission of the governor. Cortés, demonstrating the legal training early in his life, responded that he would not obey Guzmán's command for several reasons. First, it was not drafted in a legitimate legal format. Second, "all the lands, provinces, kingdoms, dominions, and their seas and ports, are communal and free for all the vassals of his Majesty to travel and pass through, embark or navigate, which freedom no one can curtail without the express and special commission of his Majesty."<sup>347</sup> Cortés then mentioned that as Captain General of New Spain and the South Seas, he had permission to lead a military in any area of New Spain. Finally, Cortés cited his agreement with the emperor to explore the ocean west of New Spain, and informed Guzmán to the fact that failure to accommodate him in his expedition would be tantamount to defying the crown. Guzmán permitted Cortés passage through his territory and gave him assistance. Cortés even

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<sup>346</sup> Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 8. The ships were the *Santa Agueda*, the *Santo Tomás*, and the *San Lázaro*, Grijalva's ship. (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 399.) Cortés's prepared ample supplies for his expedition. In addition to packing food stores for several hundred people, including grains, meat, oil, wine, vinegar, he also assembled various items for barter, the supplies of three blacksmiths and their forges, two ship carpenters and their tools, and many more items. (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 501.)

<sup>347</sup> Cortés, *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 13, 452. Translation in Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 9.



stayed in Guzmán's home a few days; a symbolic defeat of his opponent.<sup>348</sup> Guzmán nonetheless continued to petition the government in Mexico City over the imposition, going so far as to accuse Cortés of mistreating the natives in area, likely to distract from the fact Guzmán was, at this time, under investigation for the same thing.<sup>349</sup>

Despite stormy weather and rough seas, Cortés and his party arrived in Baja California on 3 May 1535.<sup>350</sup> Based on his agreement 1529 agreement with the emperor, a week later, in a small, official ceremony, Cortés was announced governor of the land, whatever that might entail beyond the bay and port of Santa Cruz. Shortly thereafter, misfortune struck the expedition. The three ships had been sent to collect the supplies left at Chametla, and had returned once, but on the second trip only one returned. The other two had been shipwrecked on the coast of New Spain. The remaining ship was sent out to find and repair the other two; both were found, but only one was repaired. During this time, the slow acquisition of supplies left the Spanish starving. They were not able to barter with the natives because the Guaycuras Indians did not cultivate maize or any crop as in Mexico; they relied on hunting, foraging, and fishing, and had little supplies to

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<sup>348</sup> Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 9.

<sup>349</sup> James Krippner-Martínez, *Rereading the Conquest: Power, Politics, and the History of Early Colonial Michoacan, Mexico, 1521-1565* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 39.

<sup>350</sup> The date of this has been a point of historical contention, as López de Gómara originally recorded the date as the first of May, 1536 (López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 171). The date was changed in later editions to New Year's Day, 1536, which is the date given in Simpson's 1964 translation of López de Gómara (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 399.) Díaz del Castillo also gave the first of May, 1536 as the date, but hedges that statement by stating that it could have been 1537 (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 502.) Miller points this issue out, citing the actual date above on Cortés's 13 May correspondence to Cristóbal de Oñate from Santa Cruz. (Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 11.)

trade. By the time supply ships arrived back in California, many had died from starvation.<sup>351</sup>

The small colony carried on with periodic resupply ships arriving through 1535, but the conditions were bleak. Cortés sent men out to explore the land, but little is about their reports, other than they were able to acquire a few dozen burnt pearls from the natives (the Guaycuras heated oysters over a fire).<sup>352</sup> The land of riches Cortés was convinced existed in this place seemed to be only a legend. This was certainly a disappointment to Cortés, who had hoped to repeat his conquest of Mexico, but his thoughts on this are not known. He was distracted from the realities of his expedition with news of the arrival of Antonio de Mendoza, the first Viceroy of New Spain, in Mexico City in late 1535. Cortés was uncertain what a change in leadership might mean for his large landholdings and possessions in New Spain. In addition, Juana de Zúñiga, Cortés's wife had received no news of him in nearly a year, but received word of ships wrecked along the coast. She sent two ships to search for him, with a letter asking him to end his expedition and return home to his family. Included with Juana's letter was a letter from the viceroy, Mendoza, imploring him to return as well.<sup>353</sup>

In early 1536, Cortés and most of his followers returned to New Spain. Cortés left Francisco de Ulloa, a captain of one of the ships his Juana de Zúñiga sent, in command of the colony, with a few dozen men, some horses, and nearly a year of supplies. When Cortés returned to New Spain via Acapulco, he received a message from

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<sup>351</sup> Pablo L. Martinez, *A History of Lower California*, trans. by Ethel Duffy Turner (Mexico: Editorial Baja California, 1960), 78-79; Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 12-14.

<sup>352</sup> Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 12.

<sup>353</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 502-503.

the viceroy, with a copy of a letter from Francisco Pizarro, written to Pedro de Alvarado, the governor of Guatemala. In it Pizarro recorded that he and his men were besieged in Ciudad de los Reyes, or Lima, Peru, and desperately needed supplies. Cortés planned to send resupply ships to Ulloa when he returned to Tehuantepec, but instead he sent them to Pizarro.<sup>354</sup>

By the middle of 1536, Cortés sent a ship to collect the remaining colonists of the first Spanish California settlement and return to New Spain. In a letter to the emperor, he explained that the relatives of those remaining colonists appealed to the viceroy, who then asked Cortés to bring them home; he was only too happy to acquiesce to the crown's authority.<sup>355</sup> He had not found any land of value, but he had not given up. In a letter to the emperor in early 1537, he wrote, "As long as I live, I shall not cease to pursue my purpose."<sup>356</sup> In the same letter he announced he had six more ships ready to sail, and four more in construction. In September, 1538, he wrote to the Council of the Indies stating that he had nine ships ready to sail, but he did not have experienced pilots, and requested some be sent to New Spain.<sup>357</sup>

After a long delay caused by a lack of supplies and a last-minute change in captains, the final expedition left Tehuantepec in 1539.<sup>358</sup> Francisco de Ulloa was sent

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<sup>354</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 402. Pizarro sent copies of his letter to many Spanish governors. It is assumed Pedro de Alvarado then forwarded the letter to Mendoza in Mexico City.

<sup>355</sup> Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 14.

<sup>356</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 472.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.

<sup>358</sup> "Letter from Cortés to Diego de Guinea dealing with the preparations being made for Cortés's last voyage of exploration and discovery to the California coast," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 102, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; "Inventory of equipment and crew of the *Trinidad* while she was anchored at Tehuantepec, on 7 June 1539, before the start of the last exploration trip of Cortés to the California coast," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 103, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The original captain was Juan Castellón before Cortés ordered Ulloa to replace him.

with three ships to explore the coastline of land discovered years earlier. After arriving back at Santa Cruz, he crossed the Sea of Cortés, and traveled up the coast of New Spain.<sup>359</sup> After reaching the mouth of the Colorado River, which was named *Ancón de San Andres*, he sailed down the coast western coast of the sea, stopping at the island of Espiritu Santo, just outside the Bay of Santa Cruz. It is this island Ulloa calls California, a name which would come to encompass the entire region.<sup>360</sup> After sailing around the southern tip of the peninsula, *Cabo San Lucas*, Ulloa sails northward to *Cedros* Island. He continued to sail northward until he reached Baja Point, which he was unable to pass. To express his frustration, he names the location *Cabo del Engaño*. During the year this voyage exploration, Ulloa was repeatedly attacked by natives, and found nothing noteworthy to report the marquis. After nearly a decade, Cortés's desire to relive his days of exploration and conquest had not been realized. Discoveries had been made, but they were not the next chapter in his heroic tale. They had not been the size or scale of Mexico, Peru, or any other region. They also did not afford Cortés the opportunity for conquest. Of more practical importance, they had not contained any real level of wealth, and this was the issue that ultimately brought an end to his exploration.

The cost of nearly a decade of exploration on very unforgiving seas was great.

Cortés spent between two hundred and three hundred thousand gold coins from the income of his estate.<sup>361</sup> He sent many more ships and supplies than he anticipated, over

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<sup>359</sup> The Gulf of California, the body of water between mainland Mexico and Baja California, is called The Sea of Cortés by López de Gómara in his account of Ulloa's expedition. In Ulloa's account, and in the account of the public notary who accompanied Ulloa, it is called the Bermeja Sea (reddish, or vermilion). (Martinez, *A History of Lower California*, 83) López de Gómara acknowledged that some call it the Red Sea rather than the sea of Cortés. (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 403.)

<sup>360</sup> Kelsey, *Mapping the California Coast*, 311.

<sup>361</sup> López de Gómara gave the amount of two hundred thousand ducats, stating that this figure came from the accounts of Cortés. (López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 175.) Díaz del Castillo stated he heard

nearly a decade, but still failed to find the legendary island of gold and gems. This was not discouraging, however. Cortés still believed that such a place existed, and sought to continue to search. He and the Viceroy Mendoza enjoyed a friendly relationship, but the issue of continued exploration put them at odds.<sup>362</sup> Mendoza was likewise encouraged by the prospect of discovering a city of legendary wealth.<sup>363</sup> In late 1539, Mendoza invested in an expedition to the land known as Cibola, to the north. He chose as the leader of the expedition Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, who had been a part of the viceroy's retinue when he arrived in New Spain, and was appointed governor of New Galicia after the arrest of Nuño de Guzmán. Coronado's expedition left New Spain in February 1540.<sup>364</sup> Cortés asserted that it was his right to explore these lands under the royal grant made in 1529, while Mendoza claimed it as his right as viceroy.<sup>365</sup> The viceroy even went so far as to prohibit Cortés from sending out his ships in exploration.<sup>366</sup> On 25 May, the

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Cortés many times say that he spent three hundred thousand *pesos de oro* on the entire venture. (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 503.) It was common practice for explorers to fund expeditions themselves, as Cortés had done many times.

<sup>362</sup> Emperor Charles V had been at war with Francis I of France, but protracted war had left both their armies short on resources, and a continued war with each other distracted from The Turkish threat to Christian Europe. The pope arranged a truce between the two kingdoms in Nice on 18 June 1538. The two kings met at the southern French port of Aigues-Mortes a month later, on 15 July 1538. Francis warmly greeted Charles, and the two agreed to set aside differences. Unfortunately, this peace would last only a year. (Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 98.) To celebrate this peace, Viceroy Mendoza held festivals in Mexico City in the late summer of 1538. The most affluent and powerful men in the kingdom attended, and Cortés was a prominent figure at these festivals, even taking part in them. As Díaz del Castillo explained, Cortés and Mendoza became friends at this time. (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 503-507)

<sup>363</sup> William Brandon, *Quivira: Europeans in the Region of the Santa Fe Trail, 1540-1820* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1990), 23. In the 1530s, the reports of Incan gold, and the overwhelming wealth of Peru, were well known in Mexico City, as was the reports of the Narváez expedition to Florida in the late 1520s. The news of peoples to the far north conjured in the imaginations of many of the mythical seven cities of gold. Rumors soon connected this legend with a province to the north known as Cibola.

<sup>364</sup> Aiton, *Antonio de Mendoza*, 122. Mendoza and Coronado were joint investors in the expedition. There was no reported royal funding. Mendoza contributed over 85,000 silver pesos, or 54%, while Coronado contributed 71,000 silver pesos, or 46%. (Shirley Cushing Flint, "The Financing and Provisioning of the Coronado Expedition," in *The Coronado Expedition from the Distance of 460 Years*, Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, eds. (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 44-45.)

<sup>365</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 175.

<sup>366</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 274-278. The royal cedula required the removal of an embargo placed on Cortés's ships, sent to the viceroy. An identical order was sent to the *audiencia*.

Council of the Indies ruled that the viceroy's right to discovery was held above all others.<sup>367</sup> Cortés, without options, once again decided his only course of action was to petition the emperor in person. Cortés had to wait a couple of months to amass the gold for his trip, but he departed New Spain in the spring of 1540. It was the last time he would see the land that had so dramatically altered the course of his life.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Aiton, *Antonio de Mendoza*, 122-124. In November, 1540, Mendoza also made an arrangement with Pedro de Alvarado, former officer under Cortés and governor of the Honduras and Guatemala, to share any profits made from exploration in the Pacific. This practically removed Cortés as competition for exploration.

<sup>368</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 507-508. Díaz del Castillo added that Cortés had outstanding lawsuits to settle against Nuño de Guzmán for his interference during the voyages of exploration in the early 1530s. Cortés also was involved in a lawsuit over the government of New Spain conducting a count of his vassals, an act Cortés argued it did not have the right to do. Cortés asked Díaz del Castillo to accompany him to Spain, as Díaz del Castillo had legal issues to contend with as well. Traveling ahead of Cortés, he noted that the marquis was trying to save up enough money.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONQUISTADOR TO COURTIER

Spain was a different place from what it had been during Cortés's visit ten years earlier. Over the course of the 1520s, the importation of treasure from the New World was slow to change the Spanish economy in any significant way.<sup>369</sup> Over the course of the 1530s, however, the economy was changing dramatically, and with it Spanish society. The southern region of Andalusia experienced a population growth as people sought to make their fortune through the exchange of goods between the old world and new. Northern Spaniards began to move southward, tilting the population balance from the north to the south, in what Elliot amusingly refers to as, "in a sense the final phase of the Reconquista."<sup>370</sup> Seville had one of the largest population booms of the sixteenth century. Land cultivation increased dramatically in southern Spain, as did textile production. A merchant who was able to sell their goods in America might expect an

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<sup>369</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 184-186. Elliott explains the difficulty in assessing New World imports during this time is twofold: measuring the stimulus to the Spanish economy and determining inflation based on the import of American silver. Nevertheless, the total imports from 1526-1530, in ducats, was 1,246,124, compared to a total of 1,191,836 from 1516-1520. Both of these figures, however, are lower than the period of 1511-1515, before the Conquest of Mexico (1,434,664.)

<sup>370</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 187. The total for imports from 1536-1540 was 4,725,470 ducats, nearly four times the amount from a decade previous.

increase in profit over selling goods in Seville by as much as 166%.<sup>371</sup> The cities in ports were also flooded with foreign merchants from across Europe. While many in New Spain dreamt of legendary cities of fabulous wealth somewhere on the frontier, many Europeans found it in southern Spain.<sup>372</sup>

The changing social landscape of Spain aside, Charles V was quite busy with a number of pressing issues. In fact, he was not even in Spain when Cortés arrived in the middle of 1540.<sup>373</sup> The emperor was in Flanders, where he was planning to travel to Italy to lead a fleet on an attack on Algiers.<sup>374</sup> This was just the latest issue to weigh heavily on the conscience of Charles, however. In April, 1539, Charles's wife, the Empress Isabel of Portugal became sick and died on 1 May.<sup>375</sup> The emperor and his wife were very close, and Charles trusted her completely, serving as his regent when he was out of Spain. A few months later, in November, Charles left Spain at the head of an army to Ghent, where political and religious tensions with the emperor had led to revolt. The revolt was put down rather quickly, but Charles stayed to ensure order. By the summer of 1541, the emperor was on his way to southern Italy, where his navy would depart for Algiers. He would not leave Italy until October 1541.<sup>376</sup>

When Cortés arrived in Spain, the emperor had left three men in charge: Don Juan Tabera, the Archbishop of Toledo, as regent; Don Francisco de los Cobos, the emperor's

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<sup>371</sup> Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 66.

<sup>372</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 186-187.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 164. Of the 39 years Charles reigned as king of Spain, he spent fewer than 16 years in Spain.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 54. Attacks on European ships by North African pirates, and vice versa, were common at this time. This greatly interrupted commerce between Spain and Italy, which as described above, was increasing during this time. Charles decided to take the prominent port of Algiers.

<sup>375</sup> Prudencio de Sandoval, *Segunda parte de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*, lib. 24 (Valladolid, Spain, 1606), 331.

<sup>376</sup> Sandoval, *Segunda parte de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*, 339-340; Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 99. Charles marched through France in late 1539, with permission of Francis I of France, as part of the peace agreement between the two;



personal secretary, was left in charge of state affairs; and the Archbishop of Seville, García de Loaysa, was in control of Indian affairs. These were the men to which Cortés would plead his case.<sup>377</sup> Díaz del Castillo explained that Cortés was well received by this royal council. He was greeted warmly outside the city of Madrid, and invited to stay in the house of a prominent Spanish military officer during his time in the city. When he attended the meetings of the Council of the Indies, he was personally invited to sit with the magistrates.<sup>378</sup> Unfortunately for Cortés, this was the extent of the generosity shown to him.

It was to this group that Cortés related the many misfortunes and actions against him in the previous years. He spoke of the personal fortune spent in on behalf of the crown in exploration; the audits of his lands and vassals, given to him by the emperor; the disagreements with the viceroy over rights of discovery; and the criminal actions of Nuño de Guzmán. Cortés did his best to present himself as a humble servant of the emperor who had been wronged at every turn. His repeated pleas were in vain. The council had no interest in taking any action with these sensitive issues without Charles V. Cortés would have to wait for the return of the emperor.<sup>379</sup>

Cortés was not well versed in patience, and he decided to join the emperor's attack of Algiers. Stirred either by his sense of adventure or the hope that he might garner favor with the Charles, or both, his name appeared on a list of noblemen present on a fleet sent from Spain in the middle of 1541 to Majorca to meet the Emperor's Italian

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<sup>377</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 475.

<sup>378</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 508.

<sup>379</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 475-476. Díaz del Castillo explained that Cortés was forbidden by the council to return to New Spain until the emperor had ruled on his issues, but this has not been verified with another source. (Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 508.)

fleet, under the command of Andrea Doria.<sup>380</sup> The fleet set sail in October. The emperor expected the conquest of Algiers to be a short one, owing to his negotiations with the governor of the city, Hassan Aga.<sup>381</sup> The fleet of 65 galleys and 450 other boats, carrying around 24,000 troops, reached the North African coast on 21 October 1541. Making landfall on 24 October, the troops began their march to Algiers. The next day, however, tragedy struck when a storm destroyed many of the fleet's ships, and drove many more ashore.<sup>382</sup> Cortés, who was on the galley *Esperanza*, was able to escape the ship as it sank, but at the price of his possessions, including his most prized possessions: the carved emeralds he flaunted during his previous return to Spain.<sup>383</sup> The admiral of the fleet, Doria, was able to save many ships, and took them to Cape Matifou, on the opposite side of the Bay of Algiers.<sup>384</sup>

López de Gómara explained that while Cortés was deeply saddened by the loss of his emeralds, among other jewels and possessions, he was even more grieved when he was not invited to the council of war that followed.<sup>385</sup> The emperor and his advisors determined that the only course of action was the immediate return to Europe. In a desperate attempt to redeem himself more than the situation, Cortés pleaded in vain to be left in charge of a small army to finish the conquest of Algiers. Madariaga writes, "He felt certain that the situation could be retrieved; he proposed to those who would consent

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<sup>380</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 476.

<sup>381</sup> Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 99. October is a stormy season in the Mediterranean, and many of his officers protested the timing, but Charles's decision to sail at that time was predicated on his assumption that his forces would not have to fight for the city. He had been in contact with Hassan Aga, who was governing Algiers as the lieutenant of Keireddin Barbarossa. The arrangements made left the emperor with the impression that should he appear at Algiers with a large military force, the city would capitulate. Upon the arrival of imperial forces at Algiers, however, Aga refused to surrender.

<sup>382</sup> Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 100.

<sup>383</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 176. López de Gómara stated that he accompanied Cortés to Algiers.

<sup>384</sup> Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 100.

<sup>385</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 176.

to listen to him that the emperor should re-embark leaving him in command, and he pledged himself to win Algiers. ‘They would not listen to him, and it is even said that there some who laughed at him.’<sup>386</sup> The defeat at Algiers cost the emperor a great deal, and Cortés had suffered as well.<sup>387</sup> He was no longer respected as a conqueror of an empire, but an adventurer past his prime. The honor and respect he spent his life attempting to achieve was clearly his no longer. To make the situation worse, his emeralds, though not without significant monetary value, were precious to him because they served as tangible proof of his greatness as a conquistador; unique items that only a man of his exploits could possess. Instead, they lay hopelessly lost in the mud of the Mediterranean.

Cortés returned to Spain a diminished man, but he managed to maintain his ambitious resolve, which was necessary, as he had to present himself in a number of lawsuits and petitions to the emperor. As Cortés could not monopolize the time of the court, this process dragged on for years. His efforts, however, would be in vain, as Charles tended to side with his viceroy in New Spain or previous decisions. Cortés failed to sway the emperor to his opinions. The emperor clearly believed that he had done more than enough to reward Cortés by elevating him beyond his station in life, and grew tired

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<sup>386</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 477; Prudencio Sandoval, *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*, lib. 25, par. 12 (Antwerp, Belgium: Geronimo Verdussen, 1681), 306. “no le quisieron oír, y aun dicen que hubo algunos que hicieron burla del”

<sup>387</sup> Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 102. Charles V did not turn much of his attention to North Africa during the rest of his lifetime. He was instead kept busy with France and the rise of Protestantism within the empire. As a result, Spanish and imperial holdings in the Mediterranean steadily declined. In 1551, the Knights of St. John were forced to surrender Tripoli to Turkish forces. The Algerian port towns of Béjaia, Ténès, and Dellys were lost soon after, as was Peñól de Vélez de la Gomera off the Moroccan coast. At Charles death in 1558, Tunis was still held by the Spanish, but they would surrender it to Ottoman forces in 1574.

of the old man dogging him at court. Cortés followed the court, staying in monasteries, castles, and inns.<sup>388</sup> He adopted the lifestyle of a courtier.

Madariaga records what this life consisted of for Cortés, in a dreary recount of the daily cycle of a courtier from an unknown writer,

At court, we eat by weight, drink by measure, sleep without rest, and live with so much leisure, that every dot of time is ticked off by a dot of the clock; yet, though our time is so well measured, our life is so empty that we mistake death for life, unlike you [the rustic] whose life is death. At twelve I go to bed and at eight I rise; I transact business till eleven; from eleven to twelve I dine; from twelve till one I pass the time with fools and gossips, or in fruitless talk; from one to three I have my siesta; from three to six I transact business; from six till eight I haunt the court or go walking round the valleys; and from eight to ten I dine and rest; from ten to twelve I am idle and hold conversations, and from twelve on I sleep, as I said, accompanied rather by ambition and greed, or by fear and mischief than by quietness and contentment.<sup>389</sup>

Such a life would not have been satisfying to Cortés. He was growing old, and likely believed this was time wasted that could be put toward restoring his reputation and securing his legacy.

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<sup>388</sup> Marks, *Cortés*, 332.

<sup>389</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 480. The quote is from a letter to Charles dated 18 March, 1543, in *Dialogos de la preparacion de la muerte, dictados por el Ilustrissimo y Reuerendissimo Señor Do Pedro de Navarra Obispo 9 ed Comenge y del consejo supremo del Christianissimo Rey de Francia* (Toulouse, 1565). Madariaga alludes to the possibility of Cortés writing the passage, as this was a topic of conversation at one of Cortés's hosted academic meetings.

Despite his disappointment, Cortés does not become embittered towards the emperor. In Cortés's papers, he consistently demonstrates a gratitude and reverence for Charles V, as Madariaga states, "made up of genuine attachment and loyalty but battered and bruised by a desolate experience."<sup>390</sup> Madariaga even goes so far as to provide examples of this affection. In 1533, on the subject of his removal as governor of New Spain years earlier, Cortés wrote, "His majesty was pleased to send Luis Ponce de León to sit in residence over him, a thing which it is not customary to do to captains and conquerors of new lands."<sup>391</sup> In this passage it is difficult to gauge Cortés's attitude toward Charles V. Madariaga asserts that the tone is personal, expressing Cortés was hurt by the emperor's actions. While this interpretation certainly has merit, one could also easily see in these words resentment, or anger. Cortés's true feelings about the emperor and, specifically, the emperor's treatment of him, are ultimately difficult to understand, as Cortés was well versed in the language of courtly deference.

Whatever his earlier feelings, by 1544, in his last letter to the emperor, it was clear Cortés was exhausted and frustrated by his situation in Spain. He had been consistently rebuffed by the emperor, whom Cortés felt had grown ungrateful of his accomplishments, and either did not have or wish to expend the energy to carry on the fruitless tasks he left New Spain for four years earlier. He wrote to the emperor one final time, from Valladolid on 3 February 1544, in one final effort to convince the emperor to see things his way, and to bring what he considered justice to so many of the issues that plagued him. It was his last chance to restore his reputation, to bring him back to the

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<sup>390</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 479.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

esteem he enjoyed in the past. In a way, it was also Cortés offering the emperor the same: a chance to do what was right, in Cortés's estimation.

He began his letter with a summary of his hardship,

I thought that having labored in my youth, it would so profit me that in my old age I might have ease and rest. And now it is forty years that I have been occupied in not sleeping, in eating ill, and sometimes eating neither well nor ill, in bearing armor, in placing my person in danger, in spending my estate and my life, all in the service of God, bringing sheep into his fold, which were very remote from our hemisphere, unknown, and whose names are not written in our writings. Also, increasing and making broad the name and patrimony of my king; gaining for him, and bringing under his yoke and royal scepter many and very great kingdoms of many barbarous nations, all won by my own person, and at my own expense, without being assisted in anything; on the contrary, being much overhindered by many jealous and envious persons, who, like leeches, have been filled to bursting with my blood.<sup>392</sup>

Cortés explained that he has always been satisfied with what the emperor has done regarding his treatment. The emperor has been very generous, giving him many rewards and honors. With thinly-veiled humility, Cortés explains, that the honors were so great, in fact, that they outweighed his accomplishments, and he refused them. The problem, he continues, is that the land given to him, the rewards the emperor bestowed

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<sup>392</sup> Cortés, "Carta-memorial," *Cartas y Relaciones*, 567. Translation in Helps, *The Life of Hernando Cortés*, 286.

upon Cortés, have been repeatedly threatened by others. In other words, his *residencia* goes against the will of the emperor, who wished for Cortés to control it.

The second half of the letter contained a plea for relief. He asserts that his problems have rendered his rewards fruitless, and he has had no luck in dealing with the royal prosecutors, “which has been, and is, more difficult than winning the land of the enemies.”<sup>393</sup> “So,” he continues, “I am content for having done my duty, and not for personal gain, but I am unable to find rest in my old age, working until death, and, should it please God, this should not go forward after my lifetime, for he who has to work so hard to defend his body cannot help but offend his soul.”<sup>394</sup> He describes himself as old, poor, and in debt, and far away from his home. “I must leave...and return home, as I am no longer the age to go about in inns; but should withdraw myself to make my account clear with God, since it is a large one that I have, and little life is left to me to clear my conscience. It will be better for me to lose my estate than my soul.”<sup>395</sup> He asks the emperor for judgment without any further delays.

Cortés’s letter contains a mixture of logical appeal and emotional plea for mercy, and this makes it unique among Cortés’s letters. The tone is one of a defeated man. The honor and fame he spent so long trying to obtain finally seemed unlikely. His actions had not yielded their intended acclaim, and he was not healthy enough for further adventure. His plea was not answered, as Charles was unable to offer a quick response, as was

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<sup>393</sup> Cortés, “Carta-memorial,” *Cartas y Relaciones*, 569. “que ha sido y es mas dificultoso que ganar la tierra de los enemigos.”

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 569. “Así que, mi trabajo aprovechó para mi contentamiento de haber hecho el deber, y no para conseguir el efecto dél, pues no solo no se me siguió reposo á la vejez, mas trabajo hasta la muerte, y pluguiese á Dios que no pasase adelante, sino que con la corporeal se acabase, y no se estendiese á la perpétua, porque quien tanto trabajo tiene en defender el cuerpo no puede dejar de ofendar al anima.”

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 571. Translation in Helps, *The Life of Hernando Cortés*, 288-289.

requested. The emperor left Spain once again in May 1543 for war against France and Guelders, after which he was engaged in the opening of the council of Trent.<sup>396</sup> He would not return to Spain until his abdication in 1556.<sup>397</sup>

Despite his insistence that he return to New Spain in his 1544 letter, Cortés remained in Spain for the next three years. Commensurate to his new-found priorities, Cortés sought to enhance his reputation as a man of knowledge instead of seek glory through adventure. During this time, he created an informal academy, hosting meetings of scholars and theologians to discuss important topics of the day. Among the more prestigious names of those who attended were Cardinal Poggio, the papal nuncio, Domenico Pastorelli, the Archbishop of Cagliari, and Don Antonio Peralta, Marquis of Falces, whose son would later become the third viceroy of New Spain. Pedro de Navarra, who would later become the Bishop of Comenge, recorded these discussions. The topics ranged from the worldly to the spiritual, including, “Of the Eternity of the Soul,” “Of the Difference between Speaking and Writing,” “What Kind of Man the Prince’s Chronicler should be,” “Of the Difference between Rustic and Noble Life,” and “The Way in which Every Good Christian should Make Ready to Die Well.”<sup>398</sup> Even after his surrender of ambition, Cortés surrounded himself with prestigious men in the hope that he could be counted among them.

As Madariaga keenly points out, the last subject on the topic of death was one likely foremost in Cortés’s thoughts. His health was deteriorating in early 1547. He left

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<sup>396</sup> Edward Armstrong, *The Emperor Charles V*, vol. 2 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1902), 76.

<sup>397</sup> Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 164.

<sup>398</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 482.



Valladolid for Seville, intending to return to New Spain, but fell ill.<sup>399</sup> Retreating to the town of Castilleja de la Cuesta outside of Seville to get away from the business of the city, he dictated his will on 12 October 1547.<sup>400</sup> He died there on 2 December 1547, at the age of 63.

Cortés's remains, to match his life, have had a troubled history. After a ceremony and procession, his body was first interred in the chapel of the Duke of Medina Sidonia in the monastery of San Isidoro del Campo, in Santiponce, a village outside Seville near the place of his death. Three years later, when the Duke needed the space, his body was moved to another location in the monastery. In 1566, his remains were taken to New Spain, where he was interred in the same place as his mother, the Franciscan monastery in Texcoco, until 1629. In that year, Pedro Cortés, the fourth Marquis, died, and it was decided to bury the entire family in the Franciscan Monastery in Mexico City. This was delayed for several years, however. In the meantime, Cortés's body stayed in the main room of the viceroy's palace. His body was moved to a different location within the same church in 1716 due to reconstruction. In 1794, the remains were moved to the fifth and final location: the church of *Jesus Nazareno* in Mexico City. In 1823 and in 1836, during the turbulent time following the independence of Mexico, the remains were hidden, discovered, and hidden again. Cortés remains were disturbed one final time, in 1947, when they were removed, documented, and reinterred in the chapel of the *Hospital de Jesús* in Mexico City.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> López de Gómara describes Cortés's illness as one of diarrhea and indigestion. (López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 176.)

<sup>400</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 513; Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 483.

<sup>401</sup> Francisco de la Maza, "Los restos de Hernán Cortés", *Cuadernos Americanos*, vol. 32 (Mexico, 1947), 153-174

## CHAPTER IX

### LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

The last will and testament of Hernán Cortés has been long available to historians but not widely studied. A version was found in archive of the *Hospital de Jesús* in Mexico City in 1803, which led to a variety of publications throughout the nineteenth century. It was not until 1925 that a version with a codicil, dating to 1602, was found in the National Archives of Mexico. Two years later, in 1927, the original was found in the *Archivo del Protocolo* in Seville. The most frequently cited among historians today is the 1940 publication by G.R.G. Conway, based on the Castilian original. The best, or possibly only, English version of the will is contained in the 1908 *Letters of Cortés*, by Francis A. MacNutt, and is based on the inexact nineteenth century versions.<sup>402</sup> My analysis is based on Conway's publication of the will in modernized Castilian.

Scholarship on the will has likewise been sparse. The contemporary chroniclers of the conquistador's life, Francisco López de Gómara and Bernal Díaz del Castillo, mention it only in passing. López de Gómara, who was with Cortés in the final months of Cortés's life, mentioned little more than instructions to build a school and a nunnery

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<sup>402</sup> Conway, introduction to Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 9-10. Conway includes a more comprehensive review of the publication of the will in this introduction.

in Coyoacán.<sup>403</sup> Díaz del Castillo mentioned the same plans, adding the instructions to build a hospital and a college. Díaz del Castillo wrote, “What he instructed in the will I do not know, but I feel since he was wise and had much time for it, because he was old, he would make it with much consideration.”<sup>404</sup>

Modern biographies also tend to mention the will in passing. Madariaga, the most comprehensive biographer of Cortés in the twentieth century, devotes nearly five hundred pages to the life of Cortés, but summarizes his will in a single paragraph stating simply that it reflected Cortés’s three preoccupations: his family, New Spain, and his soul.<sup>405</sup> Bernardo García Martínez’s *El Marquesado del Valle* (1969) does not discuss the will. A 1977 reprint of MacNutt’s 1908 translations of Cortés’s letters omits the will entirely. The most consideration given to the document is in Richard Lee Mark’s 1993 biography of Cortés, devoting a little over a page to its description. Cortés’s last will and testament explores his motivations and priorities at the end of his life, yet it has not been of much interest to Cortés biographers.

With only slight deviation, Cortés’s will fits a *pro forma* style of its day. Carlos Eire, in *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, discusses in detail the creation and structure of wills in Spain from the time of Cortés to the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>406</sup> While the conquistador’s will was not cited in Eire’s research, it fits perfectly in his observations. Wills of this time first contained

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<sup>403</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 177.

<sup>404</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 514.

<sup>405</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 483.

<sup>406</sup> Carlos Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth Century Spain*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.), 55. Eire utilizes a sample of 436 wills, evenly distributed by decade from the 1520s to the 1590s. This study also divides Madrid’s history into a period before it was a capital city and after.

opening statements which were designed to identify the testator before God, declare their belief, and invoke the divine to come to their aid. In the opening invocation, Cortés's will states, "In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are three persons and one, only, and true God Whom I hold, believe, and confess to be my true God and Redeemer, and of the most glorious and fortunate Virgin His Blessed Mother, our Lady and Advocate."<sup>407</sup> Eire found that this Trinitarian confession was the second most used opening.<sup>408</sup> The inclusion of the Virgin Mary was less common, but as Cortés's patron saint, this is to be expected. Cortés even wore a gold necklace with a pendant of the Virgin Mary on it.<sup>409</sup>

After the invocation, the testator is identified not only by name but by titles, honors, profession, or familial relationships. Cortés's will states, "Let all who see this testament know that I, Don Fernando Cortés, Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, Captain General of New Spain and the South Sea for the Cæsarian Majesty of the Emperor Charles, fifth of his name, my sovereign Prince and Lord..."<sup>410</sup> While it is not surprising that Cortés would take the opportunity to give his full title, it is interesting that he would give nearly equal time to honoring Charles V. This kind of ingratiating was common in Cortés's writings, but it is not mentioned by Eire as something typically found in wills.

After all, the will was not designed to address any temporal power.

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<sup>407</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 17. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 77.

<sup>408</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 63; 68. The most commonly used invocation was the short "In Dei Nomine, Amen." The use of the term "advocate" is an interesting one, as it is a request for an intercessor. As Eire points out, this reveals much about the Spanish view of death as a moment of judgment, with heaven being a court of sorts for the dispensation of divine justice. It was a reflection of the worldly system of justice in Spain, something which Cortés was familiar with, but also the social order of the monarchy, and the need for a closer connection to the highest power. Mary was amongst the most common saints called on to be an advocate.

<sup>409</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 515. "Tenia por su muy abogada a la Virgen Maria, Nuestra Señora, la cual todos los fieles cristianos la debemos tener por nuestra intercesora y abogada."

<sup>410</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 17. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 77.

Keeping in mind the idea of a celestial court, there are a number of possibilities for this. Cortés may have been attempting to temper his own worldly ambition by highlighting his service to the emperor. This would be akin to calling Charles as a witness on behalf of Cortés in his divine judgment. In the same vein, this might be an opportunity to closely associate himself with the emperor in the heavenly realm, something he was unable to do to his own satisfaction on earth. Cortés might also have simply sought to reaffirm his service and deference to the emperor, despite his disappointment with the emperor's actions in the years preceding Cortés's death. Whatever the reason, Cortés felt it of utmost importance to avow his service to the emperor.

Also included in the identification portion of the introduction of the will was an indication of health, usually as either "healthy" or "sick."<sup>411</sup> Cortés, who was ill, described his situation as "being ill, but in such free and sound judgment in which it has pleased God to endow me..."<sup>412</sup> While it was not common to describe the type of malady, a statement to the testator's mental clarity was important. As Eire points out, wills were mostly for those close to death, often on their deathbeds, and it was important to confirm that they accepted this. Eire explains, "A willing acceptance of disease and death had long been considered to be a 'proper' Christian attitude. Resignation to one's fate as willed by God and as accepted through ceremonial phrasing was the mark of a good death."<sup>413</sup> There is also more practical importance to this particular phrasing. If the will gave the impression that Cortés was not thinking clearly, the entire document might

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<sup>411</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 64.

<sup>412</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 17. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 77.

<sup>413</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 66-67.

be put into question legally. With as much land and personal wealth as Cortés had to tend to in his will, and to a wide range of family and friends, this would have been disastrous.

Following the identification of the testator, the preamble briefly describes the purpose of the will's creation and what it should accomplish. Eire divides this section into four parts: the supplication, containing a plea for mercy and assistance at death; a meditation on death, or acceptance of death; a meditation on judgment, dealing with the fear of death; finally, a profession of faith. Cortés's will does not follow this pattern completely. For instance, there is no supplication. This is perhaps due to his lengthy invocation, in which he names the Virgin Mary as his advocate, but it may also be simply due to the style of the notary. While there was a common format, individual notaries did not always follow it precisely. There is both a meditation on death and judgment, however. Cortés asserted, "Fearing death, as is natural to every creature, and desiring to prepare myself against such time as it may please God to call me hence..."<sup>414</sup> Eire states that almost every will in his study included a single *pro forma* line on the meditation of death, reading, "Nothing is more certain in life than death, and nothing more uncertain than its hour."<sup>415</sup> It is likely that this is simply difference in the style of the notary, as Cortés indicated his uncertainty of when his death would occur. His ruminations of his fear of death, however, does fit in precisely with the standard formula. This fear was mostly caused by the unpredictability of death, even on one's deathbed. As it was crucial to be completely compared to face judgment immediately following death, it was

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<sup>414</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 17. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 77.

<sup>415</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 73.

important account for one's fear or anxiety leading up to death.<sup>416</sup> As for the profession of faith, this too is absent from Cortés's preamble. Like the supplication, however, it can be found in the invocation.

In the opening to Cortés's will, there is some deviation from the norm, but little that can be identified as well beyond the range of the influence of the notary. The creation of official documents, the trade of the notary (*escribano*), was highly regulated. It was the responsibility of the notary to ensure that his documents followed specific guidelines. Despite this, standards did vary. While it was common practice for notaries to learn their trade through apprenticeships, gaining formal experience, some purchased their positions without proper experience. Although there were guide books even the least-experienced notary could follow, there was still variation.<sup>417</sup> Unfortunately, little is known about the notary for Cortés's will, Garcia de Huerta.<sup>418</sup>

Following the introduction, which offers up the soul to heaven, the next standard part of a sixteenth-century Spanish will was what to do with the body, the last earthly remains of the testator. Tending to the body after death was seen as an important in that while the soul was believed to have departed the body at death, it would once again reside there after the Resurrection. In this sense there was a connection between the body and soul after death, and plans had to be made for both. This connection can be better

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<sup>416</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 75-77.

<sup>417</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 35. Three guides for notaries in the sixteenth century were F. Díaz de Toledo's *Las notas del Relator* (Valladolid, 1493), H. Díaz de Valdapeña's *Summa de notas copiosas* (Toledo, 1543), and Lorenzo de Niebla's *Suma del estilo de escribanos* (Seville, 1565); There was also a similar guide book for official accounting records, such as Diego del Castillo's *Tratado de Cuentas* (1522). (Patti A. Mills, "The Probative Capacity of Accounts in Early Modern Spain," *The Accounting Historians Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Spring, 1987), 96.)

<sup>418</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 15. Huerta's name is given in the notarial introduction to the will, along with Melchor de Portes, a notary of Seville responsible for entering it into the official records.

understood through the words of Fray Juan Bernal, who, during the 1598 funeral services for King Philip II, said, “God has purgatory for the soul, where one purges and pays for their sins, but the body also has a purgatory, which is the grave.”<sup>419</sup> Bernal concludes that if all souls need cleansing, then bodies, the mortal tether of the soul, needed just as much, if not more. This creates a complex vision of the role of the body. While it was not technically essential for existence, the soul taking that honor, it was important to some extent. Nevertheless, it was imperative to make sure arrangements were made for the body after death.

Cortés requested that, should he die in Spain, his body be interred in the closest parish church to where he died. His body should then be taken, preferably in under ten years, to New Spain, to be interred in the Franciscan monastery in Coyoacán of which he ordered the construction later in his will.<sup>420</sup> In the sixteenth century, the only acceptable burial place for a good Christian was on consecrated ground. There were very few outdoor cemeteries in Spain at this time, as they posed a problem for the Church in that it was more difficult to control the burial customs, particularly in areas with high Jewish and Muslim populations. This led to burial spaces within churches to become cramped, with transfers common.<sup>421</sup> Cortés was afforded his first request, being interred with the family of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, in whose house he died, until the space was needed. He was not, however, moved to New Spain in under ten years. It would take nearly twenty years, and he was not buried in his requested church until 1629.<sup>422</sup> The

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<sup>419</sup> Juan de Bernal, in Francisco Ariño, *Sucesos de Sevilla de 1592 a 1604* (Seville, Imprenta y Librería Española y Extranjera de Rafael Tarascó y Lassa, 1873), 533-534; Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 84-87.

<sup>420</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 17-18. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 77.

<sup>421</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 91-99.

<sup>422</sup> Maza, “Los restos de Hernán Cortés,” 154-158.



next most common request in early modern Spanish wills was a specific burial dress, but Cortés does not discuss this in his will.<sup>423</sup>

Despite the commonplace assertion in the introduction to Spanish wills that nothing was more certain in life than death, death was by no means an equalizing force in society. Whatever the state of the spirit, in the physical realm there were those with and without wealth. Following the arrangements for the body came the preparations for a funeral service. In these preparations, the size and scope of the service make important social statements about wealth, rank, and social importance.<sup>424</sup> These statements were very important to Cortés. Nevertheless, funeral services were not exclusively the design of social affluence; they were also an intercessory act, or series of acts, made on behalf of the deceased in their passage to the afterlife.<sup>425</sup>

There was an established format for funeral processions. The body was placed at the center of the procession. In front were the clergy, marching behind a cross that led the procession. Behind the clergy, but still ahead of the body, were the confraternities, responsible for performing acts of charity and other obsequies. Behind the body were the mourners; the family, friends, and any others who mourned the deceased. With this group were either the poor or orphans, who were paid to join the funeral cortege.<sup>426</sup>

Cortés procession was typical to the time. He requested the clergy and the religious orders to lead his procession, as was custom, with orders that the executors of

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<sup>423</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 105. The most popular dress requested was the habit of the Franciscan Order, requested by 59% of testators in the 1540s. As Cortés was a very closely connected to the Franciscan Order, this was likely what was used.

<sup>424</sup> Sharon Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 7; Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 114.

<sup>425</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 115.

<sup>426</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 122.

his will provide alms to the orders afterward. Likewise in tradition, he requests fifty poor men to be given gowns and hoods of grey cloth to march in the funeral procession, carrying torches, after which they will each be given one *real*. The detail of grey gowns and hoods was common, although colors could vary, and sometimes candles were requested instead of larger torches, but these details were not unusual.

The number of poor Cortés asked for is much higher than the usual requests, and this was possibly to make up for the fact that Cortés's family was in New Spain, except for his son Martin, and would not be in the procession. Another possibility was this was an opportunity to demonstrate social prestige. Requesting the participation of the poor went beyond charity; it demonstrated wealth and patronage. While Cortés did have an interest during his visits to Spain to demonstrate the wealth he acquired in the New World, he was more interested in being acknowledged as one of high status.<sup>427</sup> He appears to have achieved some level of it as well. Díaz del Castillo briefly related what he learned about the funeral, stating, "They carried his body to bury it with the great pomp and concourse of clergy, with the great grief of many gentlemen of Seville." It appears that, at least in the reports in New Spain of the funeral, Spanish noblemen sought to mourn the loss of one of their own.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 143-145. The payment of one *real* per person was typical, but the number Cortés requested, 50, was not. It was a growing custom over the sixteenth century; only four percent of wills in the 1520s requested the poor participate, but by the 1570s 61% of wills included the provision. In the 1520s, only three percent requested more than six people, and in the 1570s this number had grown to 30%. Even so, six poor persons was the typical request. Any requests for more than six usually attached some significance to the number; twelve for the number of apostles, or thirty for the number of years Jesus spent on earth. Cortés's request of 50 was atypical.

<sup>428</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 513. Díaz del Castillo went to Spain in 1540 with Cortés, but returned to New Spain shortly thereafter. He uses the term *caballeros* to explain who attended Cortés's funeral.

With the arrangements for the body made, Spanish wills next focused on the state of the soul immediately after death. This included devotions that were meant to assist the soul's passage through purgatory to heaven. Prayers, vigils, and masses often began at the funeral itself, but continued after burial as directed in the will. These *obras pias* were actually required by law to be included in a will, giving valuable insight in the Spanish perception of death and the afterlife. As the soul would live on eternally, the church could continue to have an effect on its status in the afterlife. Therefore, arrangements had to be made with the church in this process and the church had to be duly compensated in recognition. This highlights the idea in the wills in Eire's research of death not as an end, but as a transitional event, revealing the close connection the Spanish saw between life and the afterlife.<sup>429</sup>

The most common of these pious works arranged for by the testator of a will were masses to be said. Mass, representing the redemptive work of Jesus, was thought to apply directly to the reduction of divine penalty. It could be offered not only to the living, but to the deceased, a belief re-affirmed at the Council of Trent. As a repeatable action, it could also be quantified by someone creating a will.<sup>430</sup> Mass was the best method of helping one's soul after death, and could be said not only for one's own soul, but for others as well – a Christian duty to help others.

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<sup>429</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 168-169. Eire makes a very important point about the language used in these devotions. In sixteenth-century wills, they were referred to as *obras pias* or *sacrificios pios*. In English, they are commonly referred to as "pious bequests." The English form implies a gift, while the Spanish terms indicate a service. The continuity of life and the soul after death was so matter-of-fact that arrangements had to be made to acknowledge the work of the church.

<sup>430</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 170-176; In session 22 of the Council of Trent, Chapter 2 states, "The Sacrifice of mass is propitiatory for both the living and the dead." (*The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, James Waterworth, ed. (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 154-155. This is a reprint of an 1848 publication.

Rather than putting his wealth into ensuring as many masses for himself as possible, Cortés used the opportunity to assist others. His will reads, “I direct that on the same day of my funeral, if it should take place before midday, and otherwise on the day following, all the masses possible shall be said in all the churches and monasteries of the said city of town or place of my death; and besides these masses, five thousand more shall be said on successive days in the following manner: one thousand for the souls in purgatory, two thousand for the souls of those who lost their lives serving under me in the discoveries and conquests which I made in New Spain, and the two remaining thousand for the souls of towards whom I have obligations of which I am ignorant or forgetful.”<sup>431</sup>

While the number of masses to be said is much higher than the average will, it is the focus on others that is the most unusual. As Eire asserts, most testators are focused primarily on their own soul. After securing masses for oneself, one would then turn to helping others. Eire writes, “Everyone took on the task of offering masses for the dead, and they also passed on a similar duty to the living. In this system, one took on the burdens of others but simultaneously became a burden for someone else.”<sup>432</sup> This was not necessarily seen as charity, but simply a fact of life in sixteenth-century Spain.

Cortés, as a military leader and explorer, however, showed a specific responsibility to those who lost their lives under his command; acknowledging the sacrifice of others in his successes.

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<sup>431</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 19. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 78.

<sup>432</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 177; 211. The average number of masses requested in the 1520s was ninety, but by the 1590s that number had jumped to 777. Eire discusses potential reasons for this, including the connection between the price of masses and the inflationary economy of the price Revolution in Spain over the sixteenth century.

Among the pious works included in a will was charity. Almsgiving and charity were seen as redemptive acts. As such, the dispensation of one's wealth in a will was seen as helping the soul on its way to heaven. Cortés took this opportunity not only for charity, which he hoped will make up for issues weighing on his conscience, but also to extend his role in New Spain. His will stated, "I declare that since Almighty God Our Lord saw fit to advance and favor me in the discovery and conquest of New Spain, and I have always received from His merciful hand very great favors and mercies, both in my victories over the enemies of His Holy Catholic Service, and in the pacification and settlement of those kingdoms, from which I hope great service may accrue to God our Lord, I order that the following works be undertaken in grateful recognition of those said favors and mercies, and also to discharge and satisfy my conscience for whatsoever faults or burdens may lie thereon, but of which my memory no longer takes account to enable me to specify them."<sup>433</sup> Cortés acknowledged the charity as form of compensation for his transgressions, but also appeared to offer up his conquest of Mexico as a form of good works.

In his charitable acts, Cortés is primarily occupied with the subject with which he occupied the later part of his life: the building and improvement of New Spain. Among the first instructions for charity given in his name was the completion of the construction of a hospital, called, Our Lady of Conception, to be built in Mexico City.<sup>434</sup> He ordered

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<sup>433</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 22.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20. His first act of charity in the will was to grant his personal servants, and those of his son, six months of pay, with food and drink stipends, regardless of whether they stay in the service of son, Don Martín; it is unclear when the hospital was founded, but it was likely sometime in the 1520s. Originally named *Hospital de la Purísima Concepción de la Nuestra Señora*, the name was changed to *Hospital de Jesus Nazareno* in the seventeenth century. In late sixteenth century it was referred to as the *Hospital del Marques*. (Nurria Arranz Lara, *Instituciones de derecho Indiano en la Nueva España* (Mexico: Universidad de Quintana Roo, 2000), 75.) For more information on the history of the *Hospital de Jesus*,

the rents from shops and houses he owns in Mexico city go to the cost of construction and, following construction, its administration. In addition, he endowed the hospital with plots of land in the city, to do with whatever necessary. He also ordered that three hundred thousand *fanegas* of wheat from his lands be supplied to the hospital.<sup>435</sup>

In addition to the hospital, Cortés also directed a college to be built in Coyoacán for “students of theology and canon law; that there may be learned persons to officiate in the churches, and to train and instruct the natives in our Holy Catholic Faith.”<sup>436</sup> Cortés does not state in his will where in Coyoacán this college was to be built, or with what funds, asserting that should he not leave instructions, it will be the responsibility of his successor. With similarly vague instructions, he orders a monastery of nuns be built in Coyoacán, which he orders to be final resting place of his remains and those of his family. These two institutions were never built, owing largely to the financial problems of the estate in the decades after Cortés’s death, but also possibly due to the ambiguous and unplanned nature in which these items appear in his will.<sup>437</sup> He does suggest that the income spent on the construction of the hospital be spent on the college and monastery following the completion of the hospital, and gives specific details on how this money could be divided to the benefit of both causes, but this was never executed to Cortés’s wishes.

Cortés was ambitious in his attempt to secure a safe and quick passage of soul to heaven. From the arrangements of thousands of masses to be said, to the orders to

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see Eduardo Báez Macías, *El edificio del Hospital de Jesús: historia y documentos sobre su construcción* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1982).

<sup>435</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 20-24.

<sup>436</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 23. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 81.

<sup>437</sup> Barrett, *The Sugar Hacienda of the Marqueses del Valle*, 13.

construct charitable institutions in New Spain (their completion notwithstanding), he spared no expense. This is not surprising, given the stakes. There are, however, indications of intent other than salvation. Despite laws spanning from the twelfth century prohibiting the donation of more than a fifth of one's estate to charity in a will, in the sixteenth century the opposite, or donation of the minimum required by law, was the most common. Cortés, on the other hand, was intent on leaving a lasting impression. The nobility and the wealthy did tend to give more to charity, but the trend of increasing almsgiving well beyond the minimum donations were the results of the Tridentine reforms following Cortés's death.<sup>438</sup> Rather than donate directly to an ecclesiastical organization, or to another charitable service, Cortés ordered them to be built in his memory. Even on his deathbed, Cortés was trying to maintain his hand in the shaping of New Spain.

With the body and the soul of Cortés cared for, the next section of the will addressed what assets he left behind: his estate. Cortés controlled the largest estate in New Spain, but the process of entailment made simple work of the transfer of its ownership. His legitimate son and heir, Martín Cortés, would become the second marquis, and inherit all that came with it. There were, however, many more issues to address, and much more family to support.

The first act of division of Cortés wealth was to ensure his wife, Juana de Zúñiga, was paid her dowry of ten thousand ducats.<sup>439</sup> Early modern Spain, stemming from medieval practices in Spain and Italy, had a very strong sense of protecting women's

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<sup>438</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 232-240.

<sup>439</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 29.

property. Securing inheritances and dowries was foremost among this; even nuns were capable of securing their promised material possessions for the convent.<sup>440</sup> After a marriage, the husband had the right to use the dowry as he saw fit, but must plan for restitution of it in his will or upon the dissolution of the marriage.<sup>441</sup> Cortés understood this, stating, “Though I received and used [the ten thousand ducats], they belong to her.”<sup>442</sup>

In addition to his wife, Doña Juana de Zúñiga, Cortés left behind four legitimate children.<sup>443</sup> Martín, the only legitimate son, inherited the marquisate. Maria, the eldest daughter, married Luis de Quiñones, Conde de Luna. Catalina, the middle daughter, died in Seville unmarried sometime after her father’s funeral. The youngest daughter, Juana, married Don Fernando Enríquez de Ribera, the Duke of Alcalá and Marquis of Tarifa.<sup>444</sup>

The will established the dowries for Cortés’s daughters. In the last year of his life, Cortés arranged for his eldest daughter, Maria, to marry Don Alvaro Pérez Osorio, the son of Don Pedro Alvarez Osorio, the Marquis of Astorga. The agreed-upon dowry was one hundred thousand ducats, of which Cortés had already paid twenty thousand. He ordered the remainder to be paid in full.<sup>445</sup> This marriage would not occur, however, and Maria Cortés would later marry Luis de Quiñones, Conde de Luna.<sup>446</sup> For his other two

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<sup>440</sup> Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 104; Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, “Convents as Litigants: Dowry and Inheritance Disputes in Early-Modern Spain,” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 33, no. 3 (Spring, 2000), 645-648; Asunción Lavrin and Edith Couturier, “Dowries and Wills: A View of Women’s Socioeconomic Role in Colonial Guadalajara and Puebla, 1640-1790,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 59, no. 2 (May, 1979), 282.

<sup>441</sup> Lavrin and Couturier, “Dowries and Wills,” 282.

<sup>442</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 29.

<sup>443</sup> Conway, in Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 89. Cortés had six total children with Juana de Zúñiga, but two died in infancy.

<sup>444</sup> Conway, in Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 89. The three girls were born in the period of 1533 to 1536.

<sup>445</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 29-30; Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 513.

<sup>446</sup> Conway, in Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 89; López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 176.



legitimate daughters, Catalina and Juana, he set a dowry of fifty thousand ducats each, provided the marriage is approved by their mother as well as their brother, Martín.<sup>447</sup> As their dowry involved only money, and not property, it is possible Cortés wished his daughters to marry Spanish nobility, rather than in New Spain, as he had no land in Spain to dower.

Before his marriage to Juana de Zúñiga, Cortés had five natural (illegitimate) children, all with different women. Díaz del Castillo stated that Cortés was “addicted to women in excess.”<sup>448</sup> With Leonor Pizarro, A Cuban woman, Cortés had Catalina Pizarro his oldest child, who was born during Cortés’s time in Cuba, around 1514-1515.<sup>449</sup> The first son to be named Martin, Martin Cortés, son of Marina or Malinche, the translator, was born in 1522.<sup>450</sup> Luís Cortés, son of a Spanish woman named Elvira de Hermosillo, was born around 1525.<sup>451</sup> Leonor Cortés Montezuma, daughter of Tecuichpotzin (baptized Isabel Montezuma), was born around 1527.<sup>452</sup> Not much is known of the fifth child, Maria, other than her mother was an Indian and she possibly had some sort of physical deformity.<sup>453</sup> Pope Clement VII legitimized Martin, Luis, and Catalina at the time Cortés sent an envoy to Rome in 1529.<sup>454</sup>

Cortés also cared for his natural children in his will. Martín and Luis, his older sons, were to be given an annual pension of one thousand ducats, provided their income

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<sup>447</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 30-31.

<sup>448</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 517.

<sup>449</sup> Thomas, *Conquest*, 770n53.

<sup>450</sup> Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortés*, ix.

<sup>451</sup> Ricardo Herren, *Doña Marina, La Malinche* (Mexico: Planeta Mexicana, 1993), 131; José Ignacio Rubio Mañé, *El virreinato II, expansión y defensa, primera parte* (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1983), 11n14.

<sup>452</sup> Donald Chipman, *Moctezuma’s Children: Aztec Royalty under Spanish Rule, 1520-1700* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 2005), 51.

<sup>453</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 514.

<sup>454</sup> Thomas, *The Golden Empire*, 139, 590n11

was low. To be eligible for this allowance, they had to recognize and respect their younger half-brother, Martín, as the head of the family. “Should either show disobedience or disrespect...they shall lose the benefits and substance they receive, and shall be considered as strangers to my house and my children.”<sup>455</sup> Cortés was aware of the problems his extended parentage might cause to his estate, and sought a safeguard against them.

Cortés’ oldest daughter, Catalina Pizarro, whom he named after his mother, was given land and livestock as a dowry. Cortés stated in his will that he designated the tribute of the town of Chinantla, and a number of ranches in that area, to her benefit when she arrived in Mexico, presumably from Cuba, sometime in the 1520s. He profited from this property in the following years, however, and ordered that this income revert to her. In addition to the property, certain debts owed to Cortés for business involving said livestock, totaling over six thousand gold pesos, were to be paid to Catalina. This dowry was to be turned over to Catalina’s stepfather and husband of Leonor Pizarro, Juan de Salcedo. Cortés asked that his successor help choose a husband for Catalina, “as appropriate to the honor of this house and the honor of Doña Catalina.”<sup>456</sup> Cortés’s other two natural daughters, Leonor and Maria, were given dowries of ten thousand ducats each, or, should they become nuns, receive sixty thousand maravedis annually. Leonor would go to marry Juan de Tolosa, a Basque merchant and mine owner in Zacatecas.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 31. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 87.

<sup>456</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 32-34.

<sup>457</sup> Himmerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain*, 147; Thomas, *Conquest*, 628; P.J. Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico: Zacatecas, 1546-1700* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 13-14.

Following the arrangements for his family, Cortés turned to ensuring all matters to do with his estate were in proper order. He instructed his heirs to continue to petition the royal crown for compensation for expenses made on behalf of the crown. These were issues he had been unsuccessful in resolving in his lifetime.<sup>458</sup> He also called for all his debts, in New Spain and Spain, to be paid. He requested an examination of his accounting books in New Spain to determine whether or not workers on his estate have been properly compensated. Cortés instructed “[the workers] be paid as the books of the administration show to be just.”<sup>459</sup> This reflects the language of a formal legal audit; Cortés likely hoped an internal inspection would prevent the viceroyalty of New Spain from doing so.<sup>460</sup>

On a similar note, Cortés requested the same evaluation be undertaken with the tribute paid to him by the Indians of his estate. He stated, “His Majesty granted me the towns, places, and lands of the estate I have and own in New Spain, with all the rents, rights, tributes, and contributions...exactly as the former rulers used to receive before the conquest. I have used all diligence to verify said rents, tributes, rights, and contributions which those rulers enjoyed.”<sup>461</sup> Cortés asserted that if he took more than what was due to him, it be returned. This also applied to land developed as part of his estate.

This issue appears to have led Cortés to examine his conscious regarding Spanish-Indian relations. He raised the issue of the morality of slavery, saying, “As there have

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<sup>458</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 36. Cortés specifically mentioned armadas sent to the spice islands (Moluccas) and Honduras in the 1520s.

<sup>459</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 35.

<sup>460</sup> Patti Mills, “Financial Reporting and Stewardship Accounting in Sixteenth-Century Spain,” *The Accounting Historians Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Fall 1986), 73. According the *Tratado de Cuentas*, a 1522 treatise on accounting by Diego del Castillo, an auditor served to “investigate the truth of what is received and justly spent.”

<sup>461</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 36-37; Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 91.

been many doubts and opinions as to whether it is permitted with a good conscience to hold the natives as slaves, whether captives of war or by purchase, and up until now this has not been determined, I direct my son and successor Don Martín, and those who may follow him, to use all diligence to settle this point for the peace of my conscience and their own.”<sup>462</sup> The debate over the nature of slavery in the New World started almost immediately after Spanish arrival. From the time the Portuguese began enslaving Africans from the western coast of Africa before Columbus into the early years of Spanish colonization of the islands of the western Atlantic, a popular opinion was that of Aristotle’s idea of natural slavery. Aristotle explained in *Politics* that part of mankind is meant to be slaves in the service of the other. Many Spanish believed the Indians to be among those people.<sup>463</sup> The most vocal opponent of this idea and advocate for Indian rights was Bartholomew de las Casas, who argued that Aristotle’s ideas had to be tempered with those of the Catholic faith.<sup>464</sup> Las Casas argued against slavery, among many other harsh treatments used by the Spanish, beginning in 1516 in his *Memorial de Remedios para las Indias* and culminating in his infamous *Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, written in 1542. Las Casas played no small part in the New Laws (1542), which placed much tighter restrictions on Spanish treatment of American natives.<sup>465</sup> While Cortés was more than willing to extend the traditional social structures of pre-conquest Mexico, it seems that at the end of his life, the arguments of Las Casas and others had some affect.

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<sup>462</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 37. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 91.

<sup>463</sup> Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (London, Hollis & Carter, 1959), 12-13.

<sup>464</sup> Mauricio Beuchot, *Los fundamentos de los derechos humanos en Bartolomé de las Casas* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1994), 31.

<sup>465</sup> Daniel Castro, *Another Face of Empire: Bartolomé de las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 7-8; Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America*, 87-91.

Following Cortés's ruminations on slavery, his will turned again to charity. Rather than the charity earlier in his will that was more general and, one might argue, self-aggrandizing, he rewarded servants in his household for their service. This section not only delivers insight on the daily aspects of noble Spanish life, but demonstrates Cortés's respect of those who served him – an affection no doubt cultivated as a military leader. He offered his wife's maid, Elvira de Hermosa, twenty thousand maravedis a year if she stayed in the service of the family, or two hundred thousand if she decided to terminate her employment.<sup>466</sup> Likewise, he offered his wife's duenna, Maria de Torres, fifteen thousand maravedis annually, or a one hundred thousand maravedi severance. He gave thirty thousand maravedis "as a marriage portion to a girl, who is, and has been since childhood, a servant in my household and who is said to be a child of one Francisco Barco, born in Tehuantepec."<sup>467</sup> He asked his son and heir, Martín to retain the services of his page, Pedro de Astorga, his valet, Antonio Galvarro, and Melchor de Mojica, whom Cortés refers to in his will as both his personal secretary and accountant. He also gave thirty ducats to his butler, Geronimo de Andrada.

Cortés was also mindful of those who cared for him during his failing health in the months before his death. The valet Pedro de Astorga was also to be given thirty ducats for caring for Cortés in his illness. Fifty ducats were ordered to go to Juan Quintanilla, who travelled with Cortés from Valladolid to Seville in the middle of 1547 to assist him during his illness. In the same vein, he directed one hundred ducats be given

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<sup>466</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 39. Cortés states that Elvira de Hermosa is the daughter of Luis de Hermosa, citizen of Avila. He is demonstrating her Spanish lineage, but for the modern reader it is important to distinguish her from Elvira de Hermosilla, the mother of Cortés's son Luis, who was of Spanish origin but from Trujillo. (Himmerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain*, 147.)

<sup>467</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 40-42. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 94.

to the hospital of Amor de Dios in Seville in addition to the traditional alms for their treatment of him on his deathbed. While it is unclear his role, Diego González, from Medellín but living in Seville, was to be given a black robe, stockings, a doublet, a cap, and twenty ducats, “because of the devotion he has shown, and does show, to my family.”<sup>468</sup>

Cortés also showed the same consideration for extended family close to his household. He stated that his cousin, Juan Altamirano, who served as his household administrator, should keep his position as long as he desires. Cortés even gave one hundred maravedis to each of Juan Altamirano’s daughters for dowry. Another cousin, Cecilia Vasquez Altamirano, was given one thousand maravedis a year, regardless of whether or not she stays with the family. Cortés also established dowries for two daughters of his wife: Doñas Beatriz and Luisa.<sup>469</sup>

Finally, Cortés recognized his legitimate son Martín as the heir to his title and estate. Unclear on process, Cortés wrote, “If it be necessary, I do now renew the institution of the entail in Don Martín...as my universal heir, successor to all my properties, goods, landed estates, and rights, and whatever else I may possess outside the said entail.”<sup>470</sup> There were, however, strings attached. Martín was barely over fifteen years old, so Cortés ordered Martín’s marquisate to be administered by the executors of his will in New Spain until his son is twenty five years of age. The executors were his wife, Juana de Zúñiga, and his cousin and administrator, Juan Altamirano. Also, until

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<sup>468</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 41-43. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 94.

<sup>469</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 39-40. The dowry of Luisa is set at two hundred thousand maravedis, while that of Beatriz is only one hundred thousand. It is unclear the age or lineage of these daughters.

<sup>470</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 46. As stated above, Cortés secured the right to entailment of his property during his 1529 meetings with the emperor.

Martín was twenty five, he would be limited to an annual income of twelve thousand ducats. Martín also had no choice in the matter. Cortés wrote, “During the interim, let him not withdraw from or evade the guardianship or control.”<sup>471</sup>

With this in mind, Cortés wrote, “As the towns, properties, engineering works, mines, and other works belonging to my estate, to which, after my death, the said Don Martín, my son, will succeed, are divided and scattered through different provinces of new Spain, distant from one another, it is necessary that I, as one who knows by experience what is necessary, should indicate persons capable of carrying on the administration.”<sup>472</sup> Cortés knew that his successors, particularly his son Martín, faced a difficult task in maintaining his estate. From the time Cortés acquired the marquisate, he had to fight to keep it together. He faced lawsuits and audits from the government of New Spain, lawsuits from the Indians on his estates, and lawsuits from other conquistadors with opposing claims to land. Moreover, Cortés had diverted his attention to further exploration rather than building up his estate. This also came at a considerable personal expense. In what time Cortés did devote to his estate, his attention was given to many forms of development of his land; aside from notable examples such as mining and sugar production, he was largely unsuccessful. “Your Lordship was not born to be a merchant,” one of his agents wrote to him in 1539.<sup>473</sup> He had obtained great wealth from his estates, and the rents and incomes from his estate would remain profitable after his death, but he also understood how easily it could be lost. Shortly after his death, his executors in Spain discovered that Cortés had sold many of his personal belongings in

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<sup>471</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 45. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 96.

<sup>472</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 45. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 96-97.

<sup>473</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 465.

Spain just three months before his death, likely to cover many of the expenses listed in his will.<sup>474</sup> Cortés was a wealthy man, but unlike the Spanish nobility he tried to emulate, his wealth was tied up in his land in New Spain. The future of his family, and the lasting memory of his accomplishments, came down to the future of the marquisate.

The final part of Cortés's will, or any will of this time, was to name executors – those whose duty it was to enact all the will requests. As much of the will was designed to relieve the testator from purgatory, the choice of executors to ensure the proper actions were undertaken was extremely important. The most common number of executors was two or three. According to Vanegas's *Agonia*, it was best to have at least one priest and one married man of wealth to serve.<sup>475</sup> As Cortés had affairs to settle both in Spain and in New Spain, he chose executors for each. In Spain he selected the duke of Medina Sidonia, the marquis of Astorga, and the Count of Aguilar; all three married men of wealth. In New Spain he chose four executors: his wife, Juana de Zúñiga; the bishop of Mexico City, Fray Juan de Zumárraga; Father Domingo de Betanzos, of the Order of St. Dominic; finally, his cousin and administrator Juan Altamirano.<sup>476</sup> Cortés's selection of executors, whom he trusted to carry out his requests, is not too surprising. In Spain, he selected his most powerful and respected friends. In New Spain, he chose both family

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<sup>474</sup> Glaire D. Anderson and Mariam Rosser-Owen, *Revisiting al-Andalus: Perspectives on the Material Culture of Islamic Iberia and Beyond* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2007), 219; Martínez, in Cortés, *Documentos Cortesianos*, vol. 4, 358-363. In exchange for around six thousand ducats, Cortés sold forty-six objects to merchant Giacomo Boti, including gold and silver pieces, devotional items, and furniture, including beds.

<sup>475</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 39.

<sup>476</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 46-47.



that would oversee the future of his marquisate and clergy to oversee his charitable works.<sup>477</sup>

Cortés's will is a classic example of a sixteenth-century Spanish testament. Complicated by issues spread across two continents, Cortés nonetheless demonstrates the purpose of a will as placing one's soul on the way to salvation. Through his invocation, funeral services, and charity, Cortés follows the best prescribed process of unburdening his soul. Even the disposition of one's earthly property and belongings had a spiritual benefit; dissolving all connections with the world.<sup>478</sup> Madariaga wrote that the will, "reveals his three chief preoccupations: his family; New Spain; his conscience and the salvation of his soul."<sup>479</sup> While these are certainly the primary features of his will, they do not necessarily reflect Cortés's preoccupations. They were, essentially, topics his will was supposed to cover. In reading the will, one can confirm Cortés's determination to conduct himself as the highest nobility would. One can also learn of his charity, and how

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<sup>477</sup> Cortés's selection of Father Betanzos is interesting because there is no evidence that Cortés and Betanzos had a close relationship. Cortés primarily worked with the Franciscan order. Betanzos and Zumárraga were close friends, and so Cortés likely knew him through the bishop. Betanzos had been in New World since around 1515, when he joined the Dominican order on Hispaniola. He served as the head of the Inquisition in New Spain from 1526 to 1536, and also established the Dominican order in Guatemala. He is best known, however, for his opinions on the Indians. During his life, he asserted that the Indians could never become Christians, comparing them to parrots, echoing the words taught to them. He viewed them as children who could not intellectually advance, and advocated taking their properties away. Betanzos famously wrote that in the not too long after his time travelers would come to New Spain and ask what color the Indians had been. Despite this, he spent much of his life in new Spain organizing missions and working toward conversion and education of the Indians. He would later change his opinion, regretting his earlier positions. He died in 1549 in Valladolid, just two years after Cortés. John F. Chuchiak IV, introduction to *The Inquisition in New Spain, 1536-1820: A Documentary History*, John F. Chuchiak IV, ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 9; Lewis Hanke, "Pope Paul III and the American Indians," *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 30, no. 2 (April, 1937), 84; Arthur Helps, *The Spanish Conquest in America and its Relation to the History of Slavery and to the Government of the Colonies* (London, John W. Parker and Son, 1857), 406-407; Martin Nesvig, *Forgotten Franciscans: Writings from an Inquisitional Theorist, a Heretic, and an Inquisitional Deputy* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 20n6; José Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 125; Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 138-139.

<sup>478</sup> Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 23,37.

<sup>479</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 483.

he viewed his relationships, both personal and professional. It is also clear to Cortés how important it was that his legacy in New Spain be continued through the efforts of his family. One cannot, however, learn much about how he viewed his life from the perspective of approaching death.

For perhaps a better insight into Cortés's perspective at the time of his death, López de Gómara offered a brief funeral verse ascribed to Martín Cortés: "Father, whose fortune an ungrateful world undeserving shared, whose valor enriched our age, rest now in eternal peace."<sup>480</sup> This line, supposedly given by a fifteen or sixteen year old boy, might reflect the opinions of a teenager who spent the final years of his father's life with him in Spain, attempting to resolve many of the issues and problems that the conquistador's life's work brought him. It could also simply be López de Gómara editorializing on the tragedies that befell his close friend in the later years of his life. It may, however, be a reflection of the parting thoughts of Cortés, who throughout his life sought greatness, and achieved greatness, but died without the respect and accolade he felt he deserved. Whatever his views on the impediments to glory in his life, it is clear through his last will and testament that Cortés at the end of his life was still shaping his legacy, not only for the afterlife but also for the future of New Spain.

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<sup>480</sup> López de Gómara, *La conquista de México*, 177. Translation in López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 409.

## PART TWO: THE MARQUISATE: THE FIRST 100 YEARS

### CHAPTER X

#### THE GEOGRAPHY OF CONQUEST

Henry Kamen argued that the conquest of Mexico was never finished, and perhaps not a conquest at all, as the conquistadors under Cortés did not, nor were they capable of, subjugating the entire American population.<sup>481</sup> The conquistadors subsumed the indigenous political system, creating an effective control of Mexico, but their actual power was slight and tenuous. Kamen asserted that this issue was not even remedied by time: “well over two centuries after the period of alleged conquest, and long after cartographers had drawn up maps in which the virtual totality of America was depicted as being ‘Spanish’, Spaniards in reality controlled only a tiny part of the continent.”<sup>482</sup> A complete and total “conquest” of Mexico may never have been fully realized, but the idea of power over the land was a component of the Spanish imagination that Kamen’s

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<sup>481</sup> Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 96. “The so-called ‘conquest’ of the Americas was never completed.”

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

metaphorical cartographers envisioned when they drew up their maps.<sup>483</sup> The overseas empire of Spain was not acquired solely by the features that typify the word “conquest” – war and the subjugation of peoples – but by the settlement of land, the principle measure of power. Territorial constructions were important symbols of conquest, whether real or imagined. The great estates of Mexico that have come to characterize colonial New Spain were created through this drive for power and control through property. Land was the currency of conquest, and based on this criterion in the sixteenth century there was no single person wealthier than Hernán Cortés, Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca.

The colonial period of Mexico revolved around the control and use of land. Beginning immediately after conquest, land was taken away from Indians by the Spanish; after this initial stage, Spaniards took land away from other Spaniards. Farmers and cattlemen strove to mark out for themselves ever-expanding plots of land to exploit for their own personal gain.<sup>484</sup> For any particular parcel of land, it is often quite difficult to trace ownership and use through the centuries. While numerous economic, political, social, and cultural studies have been done on the various regions of Mexico from the sixteenth century onward, the diversity of the land held by Cortés and his family, both geographically and historically, is a primary reason so little work has been done on the Cortés marquisate as a whole. These lands also share little in cultural, political, and economic history. In pre-conquest Mexico, these regions were populated by different cultural groups, and had little common history other than their subjugation by the Aztecs.

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<sup>483</sup> For information on the use of fiction and imagination in Renaissance cartography, see Frank Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World: The Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery* (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>484</sup> Francois Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico: The Great Hacienda*, Alvin Eustis, trans. (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1970), 2.

Time is also a factor in the historiography of the marquisate. During the Spanish colonial period, the marquisate continually changed; some areas were added to the marquisate, while others removed. Furthermore, little is known about the heirs of the marquisate, and what is known indicates little interest in constructing a larger or more powerful marquisate. Martín enjoyed a courtly lifestyle the marquisate could not offer, and his son and heir Fernando never left Spain to see his inheritance in person. On the other hand, the fourth marquis, Pedro, worked diligently to restore the marquisate and increase its holdings. While these issues raise difficulties in the study of the estate, understanding the role these lands played in Cortés's mark on the history of Mexico is imperative. From the conception of the marquisate by Cortés to the early development of commercial and industrial ventures, the study of the marquisate can provide valuable insight into the legacy Cortés sought to construct in New Spain after conquest. While Cortés as marquis had no hope of regaining political power, he was determined to make his impression on Mexico through largely economic means. Furthermore, this impression can be traced through his heirs. In creating an entailment for the estate, Cortés believed his heirs would continue to shape his legacy. López de Gómara conjured this idea in the administration of the estate when he stated, "It is no less praiseworthy or virtuous, or perhaps laborious, to retain one's wealth than to increase it. Thus one's honor is sustained; and it was to conserve and perpetuate honor that entails were invented."<sup>485</sup> This study aims to explore the difference between the ideas Cortés had for his legacy and historical reality.

Management and development of the Cortés marquisate was no easy task. In the 1529 grant, Cortés was given control over the towns, villages, and Indian population of

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<sup>485</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 3.

twenty two regions – the largest personal landholding in New Spain.<sup>486</sup> These lands were not contiguous; they were chosen by Cortés for their production of goods and level of tribute, and were spread across the Aztec world. These lands included urban centers, coastal regions, fertile river valleys, mountains, and plains. They also varied greatly on how they were utilized. In his lifetime, Cortés initiated development of many industries, including the mining of metals, sugar mills, wine grapes, cattle ranching, cotton, wood harvesting, shipbuilding, and silk production.<sup>487</sup>

The marquisate was an example of that imagination of conquest described by Kamen. It was a European institution implemented in New Spain to project a Spanish sense of order and power in Mexico. It was part of a process to import Spanish society, religion, and justice to discourage indigenous tradition. Traditional American practices were not completely extinguished, however; many were used to the advantage of the Spanish settlers, and Cortés implemented many of these with the marquisate. In the 1529 grant, Cortés was given control of the towns, villages, and population of twenty two regions. Most of these lands had been part of the spoils Cortés afforded himself after conquest, during his time as governor. Where did Spanish knowledge of land and territorial divisions come from? Cortés and his men did not conquer a land of uncivilized natives; rather, they conquered an empire managed with as much complexity as any in Europe. Political and economic systems were already in place, and the Spanish cleverly assumed political control.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.

<sup>487</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 464.

<sup>488</sup> Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 32-33.

Cortés's understanding of geography must be placed on a larger context of European discovery. The discovery of the New World was the most significant result of the "Age of Discovery," a period of deepened European interest in understanding the world as a whole and making commercial connections with distant lands.<sup>489</sup> This search for knowledge and commerce also led to the development of European cartography on a large scale. The intellectual curiosity of the Renaissance and the demands of exploration met to create a context for understanding space in a way that broke from medieval tradition.<sup>490</sup> Through maps and woodcuts, Europeans created images and gained knowledge about their cities, countries, and the larger world.

A necessity of exploration, the development of early modern cartography quickly moved beyond geography to incorporate political and economic aspects. This was largely influenced by the rediscovery and 1475 of Ptolemy's *Geography*, a second-century treatise on mapmaking, wherein Ptolemy distinguished between chorographic and geographic maps.<sup>491</sup> Chorographic maps depicted towns or regions from a specific vantage point, while geographic maps represent only the general features of land and settlement. While the former became used to demonstrate the status of a town through the depiction of its buildings, the latter became used as a powerful instrument for marking boundaries of kingdoms and empires.<sup>492</sup> In 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas established

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<sup>489</sup> See John Horace Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration, and Settlement, 1400 to 1650* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1981).

<sup>490</sup> Medieval cartography and concepts of space often incorporated philosophical and religious contexts. For more information, see Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed their World* (London: British Library, 1997); *Medieval Practices of Space*, Barbara Hanawalt and Michal Kobińska, eds. (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

<sup>491</sup> Barbara Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3-4.

<sup>492</sup> Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, 3-4; David B. Paxman, *Voyage into Language: Space and the Linguistic Encounter, 1500-1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2003), 28.

the border between Spanish and Portuguese interests in the Atlantic Ocean simply by drawing a line on a map; from the very beginning of Spanish settlement of America, cartography was an important tool of empire.<sup>493</sup> The connection between mapmaking and power in Spain reached its pinnacle under Philip II, who ordered a detailed survey of all Spanish lands called the *Relaciones Geográficas* (1579-1585). These were questionnaires concerning not only geography but human settlement.<sup>494</sup> Through a greater degree of knowledge about the land and the organization of people, more effective rule and management of resources could be established.

The use of cartography as an instrument of empire was firmly established in Mexico at the time of Cortés's arrival. When Cortés met with Montezuma, he inquired about inland waterways, to have greater access to his ships. Montezuma did not know, but ordered his men to draw a map of the coast for Cortés, with all its rivers and coves.<sup>495</sup> Likewise, when Cortés embarked on his Honduras expedition in 1524, in Tabasco natives drew him a map of the entire Yucatan region.<sup>496</sup> Pre-Colombian maps served a variety of purposes: to show tribal migrations and conquests; to define trade routes and types of production in areas; to indicate territories belonging to chieftains, and specific tributes from regions; finally, to record the history of dominion over a region in pictorial form. These maps were created by *tlacuiloque* (*tlacuilo* in the singular), or pictorial draftsmen, among the most educated in Indian society.<sup>497</sup> The political, economic, and social

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<sup>493</sup> Ricardo Padrón, *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>494</sup> Manuel María Marzal, *Historia de la antropología indigenista: México y Perú* (Barcelona: Editorial Anthropos, 1993), 143-146; Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, 1-2; Padrón, *The Spacious Word*, 8

<sup>495</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 94.

<sup>496</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 340.

<sup>497</sup> C.A. Burland, "The Map as a Vehicle of Mexican History," *Imago Mundi*, vol. 15 (1960), 11-18; Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 181. Few pre-conquest maps exist today, but some exist in the



structures of Mesoamerican society were recorded in picture form, and maps were integral pieces of this culture. When the Spanish arrived, they simply adopted these methods and inserted themselves into the political and economic systems.

Scholars have demonstrated how from the beginning of Spanish rule in Mexico, Spanish maps were based on Indian models. Barbara Mundy's examination of the Nuremburg map of Tenochtitlán (named for the place it is held), first published in Spain in 1524 with Cortés's *cartas*, demonstrates numerous ways the map was influenced by indigenous cartography.<sup>498</sup> The *tlacuiloque* drew the attention of the friars of the mendicant orders, who were also of the literate intellectual class. Not long after conquest, the exchange of information between friars and *tlacuiloque* began to produce cross-cultural works, with maps and all the information they contain among them.<sup>499</sup> The Florentine Codex, or *Historia Universal de las Cosas de Nueva España*, written by Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún in the late sixteenth century, is the most notable example of collaborative work.<sup>500</sup>

In early Spanish maps of Mexico, the Indian influence is apparent: they were often recorded on traditional native media, such as fig-bark paper or hide; texts were written in both Nahuatl and Spanish; measures of distance were often recorded in *quahuilitl*, Aztec units of length; detailed information such as types of crops were often

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codices Zouche-Nuttall and Vindobonensis. For more information, see Robert Lloyd Williams, *The Complete Codex Zouche-Nuttall: Mixtec Lineage Histories and Political Biographies* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 2013); Jill Leslie Furst, *Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus I: A Commentary* (Albany, NY: The Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, 1978).

<sup>498</sup> Barbara E. Mundy, "Mapping the Aztec Capital: The 1524 Nuremburg Map of Tenochtitlán, its Sources and Meanings," *Imago Mundi*, vol. 50 (1998), 11-33.

<sup>499</sup> Barbara E. Mundy, "Hybrid Space," *Mapping Latin America*, Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 52. For more information on the interaction between missionaries and Indians, see Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*.

<sup>500</sup> See Luis Nicolau D'Olivera, *Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590)* (Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 1987).

recorded in pictographic form. Many of these early maps may have been drawn by a *tlacuiloque* employed by Spanish landholders.<sup>501</sup> The map of Tenochtitlán sent to Europe by Cortés was likely drawn by a native of the city, or copied from extant map, due to the fact that much of the city was destroyed in 1521 during the conquest.<sup>502</sup> In a similar vein, Spanish settlers used established areas of dominion in the creation of *encomiendas*; the numerous native states became the basic units of Spanish land settlement.<sup>503</sup> Cortés's twenty-two regions of the marquisate, named in the royal grant, are examples of this. The fact that they bear Nahuatl names also indicates pre-established settlement and definition of these regions.

While Spanish understanding of the geography of Mexico was taken largely from pre-existing knowledge, as were the political and economic boundaries that made up Spanish estates, the aspect of Spanish colonization that least resembled native rule was the organization of cities. To the Spanish Crown, the cities and towns were the building blocks of empire. By 1580, there were an estimated 240 Spanish municipalities in America.<sup>504</sup> As centers of regional administration, they were the instruments through which uncontrolled land was tamed. The planning of Spanish cities in the New World demonstrated this orderly conquest and vision.<sup>505</sup> At the center of the town was the plaza, a staple of European civic design from ancient times; they were meeting places, markets, locations for festivals and celebrations, both religious and national, and home to

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<sup>501</sup> Barbara Mundy, "Litigating Land," *Mapping Latin America*, Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds. (Chicago, IL: the University of Chicago Press, 2011), 56-59.

<sup>502</sup> Mundy, "Mapping the Aztec Capital," 11.

<sup>503</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 4.

<sup>504</sup> Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>505</sup> Richard Kagan, "Projecting Order," *Mapping Latin America*, Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds. (Chicago, IL: the University of Chicago Press, 2011), 46-47.

the most important buildings. This was not much different from the Aztecs, who also understood the roles that plazas played in an urban setting, using them for many of the same reasons as Europeans.<sup>506</sup> As the focal point of the town, the plaza was the location of the church, symbolic of the town's new Christian identity.<sup>507</sup> From the plaza the urban development was organized in a grid pattern. Scholarly debate on the purpose of this checkerboard design continues, but when urban construction of Spanish cities and towns was formalized in 1573 when Philip II issued the *Royal Ordinance concerning the Laying Out of New Towns*, it was explained as a matter of convenience.<sup>508</sup> With the town designed as a series of blocks (*cuadras*), each was divided into house lots (*solares*) and given to Spanish settlers according to rank and function.<sup>509</sup> The design of urban centers took little account of the surrounding environment; the focus was solely on the demonstration of order and power in Spanish settlement. In this process of concentration on cities, indigenous territorial boundaries often survived.

One aspect of Spanish civic design in America that differed from a traditional European model was fortification. In his fifteenth-century work *De re Aedificatoria* (On

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<sup>506</sup> Frances Frei Berdan, *Aztec Imperial Strategies* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1996), 68; Robert S. Santley, *The Prehistory of the Tuxtlas* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 179; Fernando Nuñez, "The Interaction of Space and Place: The Mexican Mixture," *Space and Place in the Mexican Landscape: The Evolution of a Colonial City*, Malcolm Quantrill, ed. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 40. See also Setha M. Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 2000).

<sup>507</sup> Mundy, "Hybrid Space," 53.

<sup>508</sup> Zeilia Nuttall, "Royal Ordinances Concerning the Laying Out of New Towns," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 5, no. 2 (May, 1922), 249-254. The checkerboard or grid pattern of civic design is most commonly seen as having no significance other than practicality. For a discussion of this and medieval antecedents, see George Kubler, "Mexican Urbanism in the Sixteenth Century," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 24, no. 2 (June, 1942), 166-167. Another interpretation is that the grid pattern forms the shape a cross which serves as a sanctification of the town or city. (Zachary Wingerd, "Symbol of Alliance, Conquest, and Hegemony: The Image of the Cross in Colonial Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Arlington, 2008), 96.) Other explanations include the desire to resemble Jerusalem, or to follow specific medieval or Renaissance precedents such as the work of Roman architect Vitruvius. (Kagan, "Projecting Order," 47-48.)

<sup>509</sup> Kagan, "Projecting Order," 47; Nuttall, "Royal Ordinances," 250-251.

the Art of Building), Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) wrote that a city without walls was “defenselessly naked.”<sup>510</sup> Walls provided much more than defense: they were places where taxes were collected on goods entering cities; city gates were closed in instances of plague; city walls indicated the boundaries of municipal authority; walls also served as powerful symbols of wealth and grandeur. Given the importance of walls surrounding a European city in the Renaissance, why did Spaniards abandon the tradition in New Spain? Again, there is the possibility of native influence: walled cities were not a part of Mesoamerican culture.<sup>511</sup> Another possible explanation is a symbolic expression of the missionary goals of Spanish colonization. Churches were the centers of towns (and often the origins of them), and the lack of city walls may have been an effort to prevent unnecessary boundaries to conversion. Interestingly, churches were often fortified with crenellations and other “defensive” structures. While previously thought to be an effort to defend the focus of a town rather than the periphery, newer studies suggest defensive architecture in religious structures were more symbolic of a “spiritual conquest” rather than practical defense.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Richard Kagan, “A World without Walls: City and Town in Colonial Spanish America,” *City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective*, James D. Tracy, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117; Leon Battista Alberti, quoted in Caspar Pearson, *Humanism and the Urban World: Leon Battista Alberti and the Renaissance City* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 44. *De re Aedificatoria* was a ten-volume work written in the 1440s and 1450s; his commentary on city walls appears in book four.

<sup>511</sup> Kagan, “A World without Walls,” 118. There existed hill fortresses around Tlaxcala, and the gates to the causeways leading to Tenochtitlán were fortified, but the concept of a walled-in city was not present in Indian society. Walls as defensive structures did exist, however. In his second letter of relation, Cortés described a large stone wall, nine feet in height, that stretched across a valley near Tlaxcala to defend against Aztec invaders. (Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 57.) For more information, see Ross Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>512</sup> Kubler, “Mexican Urbanism in the Sixteenth Century,” 167; Clara Bargellini, “Representations of Conversion: Sixteenth-Century Architecture in New Spain,” *The Word Made Image: Religion, Art, and Architecture in Spain and Spanish America, 1500-1600* (Boston, MA: Gardner Museum, 1998), 91; For more information on religious architecture in the sixteenth century, see Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*; John Frederick Schwaller, *The Church and Clergy in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion: Religious*

On the level of civic design in terms of Spanish expression of power were claims to mining.<sup>513</sup> The exploitation of mines was the fastest route to wealth in the Americas, and the primary source of income for the Crown. Mining also led to growth in New Spain, both geographically and economically. Where mines were found to be rich in ore towns were constructed with all the buildings and settlers therein. This increase in population, along with the construction of such towns, increased the demand for other goods. The principle Spanish interest in mining in Mexico was gold.<sup>514</sup> Cortés included gold mines in Tehuantepec as part of his marquisate, but the lode of these mines decreased steadily in his lifetime.<sup>515</sup> In the decades after conquest gold was found to be less plentiful in Mexico than silver, which became the staple of Spanish American mining. The majority of silver mining operations in Mexico, however, tended to be west and north of Mexico City where Cortés did not own land. The mining of silver became so large an industry that new laws concerning the discovery, claim, proprietorship, and operation of mines had to be drawn in 1550 by Viceroy Mendoza. Mining operations were further advanced by the implementation of the amalgamation process of using mercury to extract silver, introduced in New Spain by Bartolomé de Medina in the Pachuca mines in 1556.<sup>516</sup> One of the most prolific mining regions in the Americas is

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*Architecture and Indian Artisans in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 2001); Serge Gruzinski, *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Blade Runner* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); David Tavárez, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>513</sup> A sizeable bibliography of the study of mining in the Americas can be found in Peter Bakewell, "Mining in Colonial Spanish America," *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Leslie Bethell, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78-82.

<sup>514</sup> Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America*, 261.

<sup>515</sup> Jean-Pierre Berthe, "Las Minas de oro del Marqués del Valle en Tehuantepec," *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 8, no. 1 (July-Sept., 1958), 122-131; Cadenhead, "Some Mining Operations of Cortés in Tehuantepec," 283-287.

<sup>516</sup> Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America*, 262-263. Viceroy Toledo of Peru introduced new laws concerning mining in 1574, a few years after the amalgamation process was introduced in South America.

Potosí in central Bolivia. Here one can see the role that the concept of land ownership and power clearly represented in sixteenth century cartography. Along with a geographic map showing the locations of mines in relation to towns set up for Indian workers – an important aspect of property ownership and claim – a chorographic map also shows a mine in the background with rock crushing and smelting operations in the foreground: a demonstration of the scope and production of the mine.<sup>517</sup> Success in mining was not guaranteed; while some became extremely wealthy from mining many others failed. Banks that specialized in loans to miners flourished in Mexico City in the sixteenth century.<sup>518</sup> With such a strong connection between the land and economy mining remained a key feature of Spanish industry over the time span of colonial Mexico.

As civic design largely followed European tradition, political administration and management also followed Spanish norms. Like sixteenth-century cartography there are also traces of Indian influence. The smallest political unit in pre-Columbian Mexico was the *calpulli*, the leaders of a clan or group of families living in a particular area. This group chose a leader, the *tlatoani*.<sup>519</sup> This is strikingly similar to the medieval Spanish model of municipal government. Each town in Spain had a town council, the *cabildo*, who elected a head known as the *alcalde mayor* (from the Arabic *al-qadi*, or judge).<sup>520</sup> Each municipal government had a number of *alcaldes* and *regidores*, or municipal officials. While the primary job of the *cabildo* was political administration, *alcaldes* also served as civil and criminal judges.<sup>521</sup> In Mesoamerica, these local governments not only

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<sup>517</sup> Peter Bakewell, "Mining Mountains," *Mapping Latin America*, Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds. (Chicago, IL: the University of Chicago Press, 2011), 61-62.

<sup>518</sup> Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America*, 263-264.

<sup>519</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 4.

<sup>520</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 270.

<sup>521</sup> Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 166-167.

exerted influence over an urban area, but into the countryside, creating individual states or regions of control. These regions varied in size, power, and independence. One of the most powerful of these groups was the Mexica, or Aztecs, whose leader became the *huetlatoani*, akin to a king over the various realms.<sup>522</sup> Due to the congruency of political systems, the Spanish overlaid theirs onto the extant one, either taking the highest positions outright or instructing the Indians in those positions.

Although the Spanish system of government would not have been completely unfamiliar to the Indians, there were differences. After the conquest in 1521, as governor Cortés chose the *encomienda* as a means of Spanish control and settlement of the land against the wishes of the emperor. Used on the islands of the Spanish Indies, the *encomienda* originated in Spain during the *Reconquista* as a system of temporary patriarchy; it was both a system of reward for military success and a means of resettlement of formerly Muslim lands.<sup>523</sup> *Encomenderos* were permitted to collect tribute from the population, much like the *tlatoani*. The principle unit of the *encomienda* was the regional state, and each given a capital city called the *cabecera*. The Crown was against the practice of *encomienda* because of the detriment to the Indian populations on Hispaniola and other islands, and forbade Cortés to use it; Cortés insisted upon its usage, and employed an “obedience but not compliance” policy on the issue. Beginning with the second *audiencia* in 1530, the practice of issuing *encomiendas* was brought to an end. When a position of *encomendero* was vacated through death or legal issues, their *encomienda* was dissolved and the land defaulted to the crown. In their place were

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<sup>522</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 4-5.

<sup>523</sup> Robert S. Chamberlain, *Castilian Backgrounds of the Repartimiento-Encomienda* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institute, 1939), 19-20.

installed *corregimientos*, regional administrations not unlike counties, with government-appointed *repartimientos* replacing land management. Within the *corregimientos* were *cabildos* for every town made up of *alcaldes* and *regidores*; Spanish terms for positions that existed in both worlds.<sup>524</sup> Names changed (the *calpixque*, or tribute-taker, became the *corregidor*) but the political system in Mexico did not change dramatically.<sup>525</sup> Indians commonly held municipal positions, and Cortés gave prominent Indians such as the children of Montezuma their own *encomiendas*.<sup>526</sup>

Cortés paid his conquistadors not in gold but in land. This also lent itself to the immediate development of New Spain under Spanish ideas of political and economic order. When Cortés distributed land to the soldiers of the conquest, he kept the largest and most fruitful regions for himself. By 1524 Cortés was collecting nearly 43,000 *pesos de oro* per year in tribute from his various holdings, more than any other *encomendero*.<sup>527</sup> While much of the control over these territories was stripped from him during and after the years of his Honduras expedition and the first *audiencia*, he regained control over much of it in his 1529 royal grant of the marquisate. The marquisate was made up of vast tracts of land he previously claimed, but he no longer controlled Texcoco and Tlacopan, two of the three major cities of the Aztec world; Tzintzuntzan, and other towns in the Tarascan State; Tlapa, and its surrounding mining districts; and regions in the Oaxaca and Soconusco areas. Nevertheless, the twenty two districts of the marquisate still made up the largest personal landholding in New Spain.

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<sup>524</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 60; Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 82.

<sup>525</sup> Gerhard, *A guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 5.

<sup>526</sup> Lucas Alamán, *Disertaciones sobre la historia de la Republica Mexicana [sic], desde la época de la conquista que los Españoles hicieron hasta la independencia*, vol. 1 (Mexico: Imprenta de D. José Mariano Lara, 1844), 177; Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 167.

<sup>527</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 20-21; 110-11.



Aside from its size, the Cortés marquisate was unique in many other respects. In addition to his vassalage and complete control over the “mountains, meadows, pastures, water both running and standing,” Cortés was also given civil and criminal jurisdiction in the marquisate and held the right to appointment to municipal positions.<sup>528</sup> These were rights not given to other landowners, and would become strong points of contention with the viceroyalty.<sup>529</sup> Cortés also received from the pope permission to nominate priests in the marquisate, but this was soon revoked by the crown as an infringement on royal rights.<sup>530</sup> In 1535, the marquisate was formed into a *mayorazgo*, or entailed estate, so that it could be passed on to his heirs and successors in perpetuity.<sup>531</sup> It was a true fiefdom in the medieval tradition. Lesley Byrd Simpson described it as “an anachronism and an anomaly, and, after the initial allowing of it, the Council of the Indies made no more such grants in New Spain and bent its talents to whittling down the extravagant claims of the *Marqués*.”<sup>532</sup> Cortés took care to position himself capable of influencing the development of New Spain. Protecting the rights in the original grant of the marquisate became a chief responsibility of Cortés and his heirs.

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<sup>528</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.

<sup>529</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 30.

<sup>530</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 10.

<sup>531</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 164; Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 30; Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, 373.

<sup>532</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 164.

## CHAPTER XI

### IN THE SHADOW OF THE CONQUISTADOR

Cortés worked his way from very little to become the conqueror of Mexico and the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca; even then he was not satisfied with his legacy, struggling in his life after conquest to add to his list of accomplishments. The heirs of the marquisate did not have the same humble beginning, which probably led to a diminished sense of appreciation for their namesake's efforts. Aware of their special status in New Spain, the immediate heirs of Cortés utilized their status as marquis in different ways but never with the same ambition as Cortés himself. Martín, the only legitimate son of the conquistador, was less interested in the marquisate than he was the social status and the wealth it brought him in Spain and Mexico City. Fernando, the eldest son of Martín, likewise enjoyed the income of the marquisate, but never bothered to leave Spain to see it. Pedro, the youngest son of Martín and the last direct male heir of the marquisate, put the most effort into building the marquisate, but not without complications and legal problems that limited the scope of his efforts. In the first hundred years of the marquisate the Cortés name became no less controversial in New Spain, but the estate nevertheless continued to be an important part of the early colonial history. An overview of Cortés's heirs, therefore, provides an important contribution to Spanish colonial history.

In his dedication of the history of the conquest to Martín Cortés, López de Gómara wrote, “History endures much longer than an estate, because friends are never lacking to keep it fresh, nor do wars interrupt it. The more it ages, therefore, the more it is esteemed.”<sup>533</sup> In this passage, López de Gómara sought to encourage young Martín to focus on the honor of the title and estate, not the wealth it provided, much like Cortés himself had done. While it is clear that López de Gómara understood that Martín would be contributing to the historical narrative of Hernán Cortés, it is less clear whether Martín himself understood that concept. Cortés had two sons named Martín, and it was the second, the son of Juana de Zúñiga, who became the second *Marques del Valle* at the age of fifteen upon his father’s death in 1547.<sup>534</sup> He traveled to Spain with Cortés in 1540 to be placed in the court of the Prince Philip, where he remained until 1562. He was present at the marriage of Philip to Queen Mary of England in July 1554, and is said to have been present at the Battle of San Quentin in 1557.<sup>535</sup> Back in Spain, he married his niece, Doña Ana Ramirez de Arellano and they had their first son, Fernando, who later became the third marquis.<sup>536</sup> In 1562, for unknown reasons, Martín decided to return to New Spain to manage the affairs of the marquisate. He left Fernando in Spain, and his second

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<sup>533</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 3.

<sup>534</sup> The elder son of Cortés named Martín was the son of the native translator, Doña Marina, or *La Malinche*.

<sup>535</sup> Lucas Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán* (Mexico: Impresa de V. Agueros, 1900), 160-161; Fernando Benítez, *The Century after Cortés*, Joan MacLean, trans. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 173; Lesley Byrd Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 130; Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortés*, 102. In an English military treatise published in 1602, *Honor Military and Civil*, a jousting tournament to celebrate the marriage between Queen Mary and King Philip of Spain was held in late 1554. The “marquesse de valle” was noted to have made a grand entrance onto the field, but did not win. (William Segar, *Honor Military, and Civil, Contained in Four Books*, Vol. 3 (1602), 204.

<sup>536</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 161; Alamán places the marriage after Martín’s return from the war in Northern France, which would be somewhere between 1558 and 1562. Luis de Salazar y Castro, in his study of the historical genealogy on the house of De Lara, asserts that their marriage took place on 24 February 1548, when Martín was approximately sixteen. (Luis de Salazar y Castro, *Historia genealógica de la casa De Lara* (Valladolid: Editorial Maxtor, 2010), 22.) (reprint of 1696 original)

son, Jerónimo Cortés, was born not long after their arrival in Mexico. Jerónimo was born in late 1562 in Campeche and later joined the Order of the Knights of Alcántara, becoming one of only sixteen knights of the order in New Spain during the entire colonial period.<sup>537</sup>

Although Martín had not been in New Spain since he was a child, his arrival in Mexico City in early 1563 was celebrated. After the middle of the sixteenth century, Spanish settlement in many regions began to increase dramatically. Grants, both pastoral and agricultural began to infringe on Indian lands. This created anxiety within Indian populations. At the same time, the Spanish populations were also concerned about government influence. Government regulation of settlement tightened along with the population growth, and the increased number of grants reduced the size of each individual grant.<sup>538</sup> Martín's most important asset was his surname. Despite his long absence from New Spain, as son of the conqueror he was an important figure in the *criollo* class, or native-born Spaniards. *Criollos* were the second-generation landowners, and many of them were dissatisfied with government regulation encroaching on their families' original grants.<sup>539</sup> Furthermore, having been raised in the court of Charles V and Philip II, he projected the sophistication and power the *criollos* desired.

The unfortunate side of Martín's privileged upbringing was that he was, as Simpson described him, "full of arrogance and ostentation."<sup>540</sup> Rather than settle on the estate in Cuernavaca, he made his home in Mexico City, surrounding himself with a court

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<sup>537</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 161; Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, 121; 146.

<sup>538</sup> Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 279.

<sup>539</sup> Shirley Cushing Flint, *No Mere Shadows: Faces of Widowhood in Early Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 2013), 112.

<sup>540</sup> Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 130.

of the most influential second-generation landowners in New Spain. He spent lavishly, living a lifestyle akin to his time in the royal courts. Because of his name alone many *criollos* looked up to him as a natural leader, as did Indians who revered his father. His popularity fostered a relationship with the second viceroy, Luís de Velasco, but that soon soured after Martín overstepped his authority.<sup>541</sup> When the royal *licenciado* Jerónimo de Valderrama was sent to New Spain in 1563 to investigate an issue between the viceroy and the *audiencia*, Martín courted the favor of the inspector against the viceroy. Mexico City became divided into two factions: those who supported Viceroy Velasco and those who favored Martín Cortés. When the viceroy died in July 1564, there was little impeding Martín's influence, and a plan was formed to take over the government and install Martín at its head.<sup>542</sup> This resulted in one of the major political events in sixteenth-century New Spain.

Several aspects of the Spanish empire created the opportunity and establishment of plan for a coup of the government of New Spain. The death of the viceroy was important, as it would take some time to find and establish a replacement. The favor of the royal official Valderrama also worked in Martín's favor. Due to the continued and exhaustive wars in Europe, Spain had few resources or superfluous troops to send to Mexico; the Spanish treasury was empty. The *audiencia* in New Spain was also seen as

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<sup>541</sup> María Justina Sarabia Viejo, *Don Luís de Velasco, virrey de Nueva España, 1550-1564* (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1978), 469-470. Martín insisted on appearing first at public events, removing any semblance of courtly deference, and in his personal business he began using a silver seal, much like the king, with the inscription "martinus cortesus primus huius nominis dux marchio secundus." Its use was prohibited by Velasco.

<sup>542</sup> Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 131. For more information on Jerónimo de Valderrama, see Jerónimo Valderrama, *Cartas del licenciado Jerónimo Valderrama y otros documentos sobre su visita al gobierno de Nueva España, 1563-1565* (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1961); Marc Simmons, *The Career of Jerónimo de Valderrama, Visitor-General to New Spain, 1563-1565* (M.A. thesis, The University of New Mexico, 1960).

not strong enough to support the government without the power of a viceroy.<sup>543</sup> The plan for the coup was led by the two sons of the Gil González de Avila, one of the conquistadors under Cortés. Alonso and Gil González de Avila had inherited their father's *encomienda* of Cuautitlán and collected an annual tribute large enough to support a lavish lifestyle with the company of Martín. The plan involved taking over the city council building, the treasury, and the armory of Mexico City, killing anyone who opposed them, and then moving onto to urban centers outside the city consolidating their power. When all of New Spain was under their control, Martín would be proclaimed king.<sup>544</sup> This takeover of New Spain, however, was stopped before the plan could be carried out. Such a large plan required a large number of volunteers, and word of mouth ultimately spread to the *audiencia*. As the government of New Spain investigated these claims, the flamboyant luxury and sumptuous lifestyle continued unabashed. After hearing testimony from several witnesses, arrest warrants were issued on 16 July 1566 for many of the leaders of the plan, including the Avila brothers, Martín Cortés, and his brothers Martín (son of Doña Marina) and Luis Cortés.<sup>545</sup>

Lucas Alamán related a different story of how the plot was uncovered. He stated that on 30 June 1566, during a grand celebration of the baptism of Martín's twins, Pedro and Juana, the celebratory mood and drink led Martín to place a golden cup on his head like a crown and publicly denounce the *Audiencia*.<sup>546</sup> This was immediately brought to the attention of government officials, who launched an investigation. Whether or not this

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<sup>543</sup> Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 131.

<sup>544</sup> Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 131-132.

<sup>545</sup> Flint, *No Mere Shadows*, 113.

<sup>546</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 163; Luís González Obregon, *Semblanza de Martín Cortés* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 67-68.

dramatic incident occurred, it followed in line with Martín's character in New Spain. Like his father, major turning points in his life are obscured by legend and dramatic storytelling. Whatever the process, the conspiracy was uncovered, and many prominent members of society in New Spain were arrested. After a trial, the Avila brothers were convicted of treason and beheaded on 3 October 1566. The execution of such two notable figures shocked the community, and the *Audiencia* delayed the trials of the others. When the third viceroy, Gastón de Peralta, arrived in New Spain in late 1566, he believed the plot to be much less serious, and insisted the other conspirators be sent to Spain for trial. As Simpson asserts, however, the viceroy's correspondence to Spain explaining the situation was intercepted in Vera Cruz by agents of the *Audiencia* and replaced by a more scandalous retelling. Philip II responded to the exaggerated news by sending Alonso de Muñoz, a strict judge, to New Spain to oversee the trials.<sup>547</sup>

Arriving in Mexico City in late 1567, Muñoz began a draconian series of trials aimed at completely eliminating any form of resistance to royal authority. As Simpson colorfully illustrates, "His ferocious sadism thrived on blood. For six dreadful months his minions, operating in secrecy, entered the homes and seized the persons of all whom the breath of suspicion touched. The prisons of the capital were immediately crowded to suffocation with his victims, and more and more prisons had to be built, airless dungeons for which a century afterward bore the hated name of Muñoz. Scaffolds were erected and the headsman's axe dripped with the bluest blood of New Spain, until it began to seem

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<sup>547</sup> Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 133-134. Luis Cortés was close to being executed, as he was specifically mentioned in the plans of the coup as the figure responsible to rushing to Vera Cruz during the takeover to prevent word from leaving New Spain. The viceroy's arrival, and decision to move the investigation to Spain, spared Luis's life.

that Muñoz intended to wipe out the whole class of *encomenderos*.<sup>548</sup> Viceroy Peralta had been removed from power for his neglect to handle the issue, and was to return to Spain to explain his actions; Muñoz's power was unchecked. It was only after multiple complaints from citizens of New Spain reached the Crown that Muñoz was dismissed and ordered back to Spain in late 1568.<sup>549</sup>

Martín was safely in Spain during this time, having left to present his case to Philip himself after the viceroy's initial decision. His brothers remained in New Spain, and the other Martín Cortés (son of Doña Marina) was tortured, and reportedly one of the very few who refused to give up names of any conspirators.<sup>550</sup> Martín was acquitted of his charge of treason, as there was not enough evidence to convict him. The nature of his role in the conspiracy that surrounded him is not fully understood.<sup>551</sup> The marquisate had been sequestered by Muñoz sometime in 1567, and it was restored to him in 1569 with limited administrative rights. Martín did not go without punishment, however: he was fined 50,000 ducats, and ordered to give a 100,000 ducat loan to the king to discourage disloyalty. He was also permanently exiled from Mexico, although he did eventually regain limited control of the marquisate. He lived the rest of life in Spain, dying in Madrid on 13 August 1589.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 134.

<sup>549</sup> Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 135-136.; Rubio Mañé, *El virreinato*, 16-19. Peralta was exonerated of any crime. Muñoz was severely reprimanded by Philip II, and was found dead shortly thereafter. For more information on Alonso de Muñoz, see Ignacio Rodríguez Galván, *Muñoz, visatador de México* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995).

<sup>550</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 166;

<sup>551</sup> See Shirley Cushing Flint, "Treason or Travesty: The Martín Cortés Conspiracy Reexamined," *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, vol. 39, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 23-44.

<sup>552</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 166-167; Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 136. Chevalier incorrectly gives the date of the sequestration of the marquisate as 1566-1567. (Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 131)



Unlike his father, Martín Cortés enjoyed the life of a courtier. Having spent much of life in the court of Philip II, this is not surprising. Even in New Spain Martín sought to reproduce that comfortable lifestyle, running afoul of Philip in the process. Nevertheless he was like his father in that he sought a higher station in life; his ambition for power led him into another chapter of the history of Mexico centered on the name Cortés. Cortés had also been approached with a plan of taking over the government of New Spain in 1526 after his return from the Honduras expedition, but he refused on the grounds of service to the crown.<sup>553</sup> Raised in the shadow of the conquest by the men who carried it out, the second generation *encomenderos*, the *criollos*, had been instilled with a spirit of conquest and the honor of accomplishment. Unfortunately, there was little left to conquer, and they were raised as administrators of estates, not soldiers. Instead, they were left with the Martín Cortés Conspiracy of 1566. Martín would have been familiar with López de Gómara's dedication to him, which read, "your inheritance obligates you to emulate the deeds of your father, Hernán Cortés," but he certainly did not heed the following line: "It is no less praiseworthy or virtuous, or perhaps laborious, to retain one's wealth than to increase it."<sup>554</sup> He paid López de Gómara 500 ducats as patronage for the creation of *The History of the Conquest of Mexio*, but failed to take the advice López de Gómara offered.<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>553</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 446.

<sup>554</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 3.

<sup>555</sup> Francisco López de Gómara, "Letter from Francisco López de Gómara stating that Don Martín Cortés owes him 500 Ducats, written from Spain, 1553," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 105-1, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Martín Cortés, "Letter from Martín Cortés to Pedro de Ahumada authorizing the payment to Francisco López de Gómara of 500 Ducats, 1553," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 105-2, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Martín Cortés was also like his father in that the administration of the marquisate was not his highest priority. In Cortés's will, he commanded that Martín "not withdraw from or evade the guardianship and control, so that, until he complete the [age of 25] his property and estate may be the more advantageously increased, and administered, and all that I direct and dispose by this testament may be the better and more quickly complied with," yet Martín did not return to New Spain until fifteen years after his father's death, living in the court of Philip II.<sup>556</sup> His mother, Juana de Zúñiga, and Cortés's family licentiate Juan de Altamirano served as administrators over the estate in his absence, in accord with Hernán Cortés's will.<sup>557</sup> Despite the apparent balk at Cortés's will, there is evidence that Martín did take steps to carry out certain clauses: in 1562 he secured the money necessary to pay the dowries of his three sisters by selling the Cortés Palace in Mexico City to the Crown (which had been in use for some time as the residence of the viceroys.)<sup>558</sup> Amid the complexities of imperial bureaucracy, because the palace was part of the entailed marquisate, Philip II had to first give Martín permission to break the palace from the estate before he could buy it from the marquis; even through escheatments, confiscations, and dismantling, the original grant to Cortés was respected.<sup>559</sup> Although Martín did not follow his father's wishes exactly, he did make an effort to manage the marquisate.

Martín attempted to expand the marquisate by purchasing Indian lands east of Cuernavaca, and appealed to the government for grants of *estancias* in sparsely populated

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<sup>556</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 45. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 96.

<sup>557</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 46. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 98.

<sup>558</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 161; Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 33-34. The site of Cortés's palace in Mexico City was the previous location of Montezuma's "New Houses," and the current site of the *Palacio Nacional*. For more information, see Efraín Castro Morales, *Palacio Nacional de México: historia de su arquitectura* (Mexico: Museo Mexicano, 2003).

<sup>559</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 161.

areas around the marquisate.<sup>560</sup> Around 1564, he sued for the rights to Matalcinco de Charo, on the grounds that it was named in Cortés's 1529 grant. Despite the fact that there were two locations named Matalcinco, one of which was in Toluca and long recognized as part of the marquisate, Martín won and Matalcingo de Charo in northeast Michoacán became part of the marquisate.<sup>561</sup> Martín was unable to keep the entire marquisate together, however. Before returning to New Spain, in the 1560 confirmation of the Cortés grant to Martín, the second marquis would retain all the rights of the original grant on the condition that the town and port of Tehuantepec revert to the Crown.<sup>562</sup> The town and surrounding *estancias* of Xalapa del Marqués in the Tehuantepec region remained in the marquisate.<sup>563</sup> Under Martín Cortés the marquisate did not flourish, but it did not remain stagnant or diminish either. As vice-regal influence over land management increased in the late sixteenth century, Martín took steps to retain and even slightly increase the size of the marquisate.

When Martín died in August 1589 the marquisate passed to his eldest son, Fernando Cortés, named after his grandfather.<sup>564</sup> Martín assured his son's inheritance shortly before his death: in 1558, he requested a copy of Cortés's 1535 establishment of entailment be sent to him from Mexico.<sup>565</sup> Born in 1560 in Spain, Fernando was only a

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<sup>560</sup> Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 130.

<sup>561</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 106-107.

<sup>562</sup> "Confirmation of the Grant of the Marquesado del Valle, 1560," *The Harkness Collection in the Library of Congress*, J. Benedict Warren, trans. (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1974), 239.

<sup>563</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 264-265.

<sup>564</sup> Lanyon, *The New World of Martín Cortés*, 126. This was not the first such homage: Martín's brother, the elder Martín Cortés, also named his first born son Fernando.

<sup>565</sup> "Unpublished Document, 3 November 1586," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; "Unpublished Document, 2 November 1586," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. "Unpublished Document, 3 November 1586" is a 1586 copy of Cortés's 1535 declaration of entailment. "Unpublished Document, 2 November 1586" is an acknowledgment of Martín Cortés's request that a copy of the entailment be sent to him in Spain. The nearly fifty documents

couple of years old when he was left behind with family at the time his parents left for New Spain in 1562. After he became the third marquis, he had no inclination to travel to Mexico to see his lands. In 1593 he was granted the full rights of the marquisate that had been restricted when Martín was exiled. Rather than appointing administrators from Mexico, as was the case in the first two marquises, he appointed officials from Spain and sent them to the estate in Mexico.<sup>566</sup> That same year he married Doña Mencia de la Cerda, daughter of Pedro Fernandez de Cabrera y Bobadilla, the Count of Chinchón. Doña Mencia had been a lady-in-waiting of the *Infanta* Isabel Clara Eugenia, and the count was a close advisor of Philip II. These royal connections likely helped Fernando reclaim full administration of the marquisate.<sup>567</sup> As marquis, Fernando did little to expand his inheritance. Chevalier asserted, “happy to be reinstated his rights, the third marquis ventured nothing.”<sup>568</sup> Fernando died in Madrid in early 1602, after just thirteen years as marquis; only nine of those with full rights. Having been raised in Spain, left by his parents when they departed for Mexico, Fernando had little connection to New Spain or the legacy of his grandfather. He was a courtier, connected to some of the most influential families of Spain; this is something Cortés sought for his successors, but not at the expense of all he worked for in the New World.

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contained in listing number 98 are cataloged as a whole and not individually. For this reason, the date of each document is listed.

<sup>566</sup> Baltasar Dorantes de Carranza, *Sumaria relación de las cosas de la Nueva España* (Mexico: Impresa de Museo Nacional, 1902), 101 (reprint of 1604 manuscript); Rebecca Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacán: Nahuatl-Spanish Relations in Central Mexico, 1519-1650* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 72.

<sup>567</sup> Gabriel Lasso de la Vega, *Elegios en loor del los tres famosos varones Don Jayme Rey de Aragon, Don Fernando Cortés Marques del Valle, y Don Alvaro de Bazan Marques de Santacruz* (Zaragoza, Spain: Alonso Rodríguez, 1601), 53; Alonso Fernandez, *Historia y anales de la ciudad y obispado de Plasencia* (Madrid: Juan Gonzalez, 1627), 212; Salazar y Castro, *Historia genealógica*, 395; Ricardo Mateos Sáinz de Medrano, *Nobleza oblige: una historia íntima de la aristocracia española* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2006), 220-223; Luís Fernandez Martín, “Hernán Cortés y su familia en Valladolid,” *Hernán Cortés: hombre de empresa* (Valladolid: Asociación Española de Americanistas, 1990), 336-337.

<sup>568</sup> Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 131.

After the death of Fernando, the next in line was the middle brother, Jerónimo. Unfortunately, Jerónimo died in succession in 1601, just a year before Fernando.<sup>569</sup> The marquisate fell to the third brother, Pedro. Born in Mexico City in 1566 along with his twin sister, the celebration of Pedro's baptism was the event that led to the uncovering of the conspiracy to take over Mexico in the name of his father Martín, according to Alamán.<sup>570</sup> While an unlikely heir as the third son of Martín Cortés, Pedro was the best suited to inherit the marquisate. He was raised in the marquisate under the care of his grandmother, Juana de Zúñiga, who also funded his studies in Spain at Ocaña. When his father Martín died and the eldest brother Fernando inherited the marquisate, Pedro was left a desk and a collection of books. When Pedro inherited the marquisate in 1602, he was employed as a *fiscal* of the *Consejo de Órdenes* and was also a knight of the Order of Santiago, as his father and grandfather had been.<sup>571</sup> To ensure succession of the marquisate, he married Doña Ana de la Cerda y Latiloya, sister of the Count of Montalban, and moved to New Spain.<sup>572</sup>

The political and economic environment favored Pedro's management of the marquisate at the turn of the seventeenth century. Philip II was no longer on the throne, leaving control of Spain in the less strict hands of Philip III. Spain's financial problems also created an environment of relative freedom for the landowners in New Spain. The land of the marquisate had suffered from the years of neglect by the two previous

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<sup>569</sup> For more information on Jerónimo, see Luís Fernandez Martín, "Hernán Cortés y su familia en Valladolid," 340-342.

<sup>570</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 163.

<sup>571</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 167-168.

<sup>572</sup> Alonso López, *Nobiliario genealógico de los reyes y títulos de España* (Madrid: Luís Sanchez, 1622), 182; Luís Cabrera de Cordoba, *Relaciones de la cosas sucedidas en la córte de España, desde 1599 hasta 1614* (Madrid: Imprenta de J. Martín Alegria, 1857), 163. Pedro's wife is also sometimes listed as Ana Pacheco de la Cerda. (Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 170; Conway, in Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 90.)

marquises; among the first actions taken by Pedro was a complete survey and evaluation of the land of the marquisate. The most suitable lands were utilized by the marquis, either for agriculture or cattle and sheep grazing. Rather than develop the lands that were not directly used by the enterprises of the estate, Pedro found it more convenient to sell or rent large tracts of land.<sup>573</sup>

To Pedro Cortés, Fourth Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, the marquisate was too large to manage effectively. Large areas remained unutilized. To remedy this while simultaneously generating revenue he began to sell the rights to use plots of land and *estancias* at public auctions. He also rented out plots of land, issuing formal title deeds and perpetual leases.<sup>574</sup> Pedro continued these practices during his entire tenure as marquis. By avoiding the foundation of towns and villages that would become entangled in the controversial issue of the civil and criminal jurisdiction enjoyed by the marquises, he ushered in unprecedented development of the marquisate while increasing its revenue. As Chevalier asserted, “Pedro Cortés had turned the marquisate into one immense domain, whose land was directly exploited by him, leased to Spanish *hidalgos*, or worked by his Indian vassals and tributaries.”<sup>575</sup> Pedro also protected the interests of the marquisate from the viceroyalty. When a viceroy made a grant of land that fell within the marquisate, Pedro formally protested to the king. Some of the Spaniards that received such grants made arrangements to pay Pedro an annual rent. So long as the marquisate benefited financially, and its political autonomy was upheld, there was no issue.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 170; Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 132.

<sup>574</sup> Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 132. Chevalier provides an example of the format of these leases. The rented lands were uninhabited, undeveloped, and did not interfere with Indian lands.

<sup>575</sup> Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 132-133.

<sup>576</sup> Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 132-133.

While the numerous leases and transactions would appear to divide and diminish the influence of the marquisate, the opposite is the case. Pedro never relinquished the rights to land; the leases were for the rights to utilize land. Rather than weaken the marquisate, Pedro strengthened it by allowing for the development of otherwise vacant land that was not being used by the marquisate's other enterprises, profiting from the process. While an astute business practice, it was not without controversy. Charges were brought against Pedro by the *Audiencia* for overstepping his rights as marquis. The prosecutor argued that Pedro only had the rights of jurisdiction and the collection of tribute, not the right to make leases and other contracts for his lands. Furthermore, his acquisition of vacant lands near the marquisate, either from diminished Indian populations or a death without an heir – a practice undertaken by both Martín and Pedro – interfered with the Crown's right to assume control of those lands, despite the fact that they had been granted to Pedro by the government of New Spain. The suit was brought against Pedro in 1610, and in 1612 it went before the Council of Indies, which ruled that the marquis could not receive grants of vacant lands. Litigation continued over the course of years, and in 1627 the council ruled that Pedro could not distribute any unoccupied land, including those on the marquisate. An appeal filed would not be rejected until 1634, but it did not matter; Pedro died in January 1629. He left no heir, so the marquisate went to the daughter of his twin sister Juana, Estefanía Carrillo de Mendoza y Cortés, the duchess of Terranova. Both Estefanía and her daughter and successor, Juana de Aragón Carrillo de Mendoza y Cortés, duchess of Monteleone, lived in Spain, with little interest in the operations of the marquisate. The Cortés lands in New Spain once more fell to the management of its administrators and into a period of decline.

Pedro was the last of the male line of Hernán Cortés (having lasted only three generations.)<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Alamán, *Obras de Lucas Alamán*, 170; Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 132-134.



## CHAPTER XII

### A LEGACY OF LAND

The early heirs of Cortés each played a role in shaping the Cortés legacy in New Spain, but it is impossible to understand the scope of their actions, much less the actions of Cortés, without first understanding the marquisate itself. In July 1529, Cortés received a grant of twenty-two towns and villages that would make up his marquisate. This included the countryside around these towns, including all natural resources. In all, one estimate places the size of the marquisate at 11,550 square kilometers.<sup>578</sup> It was an unprecedented grant in its size but also power, as it gave Cortés civil and criminal jurisdiction; no other royal grant of land in New Spain before or after conceded so much to one individual. Despite this, it was not what Cortés set out to accomplish in his voyage to Spain; he did not see the grant of land in New Spain as a fitting reward for the person who brought all of New Spain under the control of the Crown. He served as governor, and as governor he worked diligently to both govern to the best of his abilities and expand the holdings of the emperor in America. For his efforts he was removed from office, his possessions confiscated, and he was exiled from the capital city he sought to make the most impressive in the world. In Spain to appeal his unfortunate situation, he

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<sup>578</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 161.

sought to recover his title of governor, only to be given a new title: Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca. In spite of the unique nature of his grant, Cortés was likely disappointed with what seemed like a consolation prize.

The Crown was not unjustified in its treatment of Cortés. Rumors, reports, and testimonies over Cortés's governance constantly arrived in Spain; whether legitimate or rumor, they could not be ignored. Cortés also had enormous sway over both the Spanish and Indian populations. The loyalty of the population of New Spain belonged first to Cortés and then the Crown, a political imbalance that was viewed as dangerous to many in Spain, including Charles V. Cortés was also not trained to be a governor; qualified royal officials had been sent to New Spain to assist him. Cortés also seemed incapable of suppressing the spirit of individualism that had led to his successes in the first place: he defied royal orders prohibiting him from installing the *encomienda* system in Mexico, and left his office in the hands of the royal officials to lead an expedition in Honduras. When Cortés arrived in Spain in the late 1520s to petition the emperor, Charles V had no intention of restoring the conquistador as governor of New Spain, and the only one who could not see that was Cortés himself. His ambition reached far beyond the social and political systems of the day.

As Cortés was wont to do, however, he tried to make the best of the situation in which he found himself. He attempted to use the marquisate to establish a system of commercial trade, but was met with mixed success at times, leading one of his agents to write to him, "Your Lordship was not born to be a merchant."<sup>579</sup> Undaunted, Cortés used income from the marquisate to continue the adventure and exploration that defined him.

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<sup>579</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 465.

He also realized the potential of the marquisate as an instrument to shape his legacy in Mexico; he was no longer governor, but he could still shape the future of New Spain. On 9 January 1535, he set up a *mayorazgo*, or entailment through primogeniture, that the emperor granted him through decree on 27 July 1529.<sup>580</sup> So long as the marquisate remained intact, it could be an influence on the development of New Spain under the name of Cortés. Cortés attempted to organize some of this influence in his will through instructions to build a monastery, a college, and a hospital, even including directions for how these projects were to be funded.<sup>581</sup> In many regions, his projects of commercial and industrial development were incomplete, or capable of being expanded. Although many of these instructions and opportunities were never fully realized by his heirs, they nonetheless demonstrate his belief in the power of his estate to shape his legacy.

García Martínez, in his book *El marquesado del valle*, suggested that Cortés was less interested in the marquisate than he was with continuing his role as a conquistador. He wrote, “If we speak of Cortés not as an adventurer but a true conquistador, who mixed his own interests with that of the state, the marquisate, or what would become the marquisate, did not arise as randomly chosen territory or because of infatuation with the land, but was conceived as an attempt to serve his intention to always ‘go beyond’. In fact, the marquisate seems to have been originally thought of by Cortés not as dominion but as an enterprise of economic exploitation and of expansion into the Pacific, whose operation was a secondary matter.”<sup>582</sup> It is not difficult to see this perspective. Cortés

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<sup>580</sup> Hernán Cortés, “Escritura de mayorazgo y mejoría, vínculo y mayoría otorgada por Don Hernando Cortés, Marqués del Valle, en favor de sus descendientes, Colima de Enero de 1535,” *Cartas y otros documentos de Hernán Cortés*, 151-170.

<sup>581</sup> Cortés, *Postretera voluntad*, 22-25.

<sup>582</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 42.

chose the lands that made up his marquisate for the strategic economic advantages they offered: Coyoacán and Oaxaca for wheat; Matalcinco and Toluca for livestock; Cuernavaca and Tuxtla for sugar production; finally, Tehuantepec for mining and naval exploration. In addition, Cortés devoted much of his life as the marquis to exploration of the Pacific Ocean rather than management of the marquisate. It is important to realize, however, that economic exploitation of the land was the intention of Cortés and the other conquistadors and settlers regardless of the objective, and that Cortés's expeditions outside of Mexico had more complex objectives than simple conquest.

After the conquest, Cortés became the governor to oversee the development of New Spain. This position included not only the administration of Spanish settlement and management of Spanish-Indian relations, but also economic gain. Most Spanish enterprises in the Americas were for economic gain; exploitation of the land does not fall into the exclusive realm of a "true conquistador." On the nature of his post-conquest expeditions, when Cortés set off for Honduras, he was not "going beyond," or simply moving on the next adventure, as García Martínez implies, but attempting to expand New Spain. Cortés's exploration of the Pacific was not only undertaken at the request of the emperor but not even what he sought to do. He returned to Spain in the late 1520s to appeal to the emperor to be renamed the governor of Mexico; this is not the goal of someone purely interested in conquest. Cortés did not even lead the first expeditions along the Pacific coast, instead remaining on his estate to supervise its development. Cortés did use the marquisate to fund exploration, but he was also aware of the importance that Mexico played in his fame and success. In line with the providential tone in his *cartas de relación*, Cortés viewed his conquest and leadership in New Spain as

God's plan for him and his role in the service of the emperor.<sup>583</sup> In a temporal sense, the Honduras expedition and the resultant chaos in Mexico City in the 1520s demonstrated to Cortés that his fame and social standing was strongly connected with the prosperity of New Spain.<sup>584</sup> His reputation not only with the Spanish settlers but the Indians of New Spain was so great that when he left Mexico City, there were fears of rebellion.<sup>585</sup> To “go beyond” that, to simply move on, likely never crossed his mind. Cortés was very ambitious in his lifetime, and that ambition at times extended beyond the boundaries of New Spain. This does not, however, indicate that New Spain was simply a stepping stone to other enterprises. In fact, an examination of the marquisate provides many examples of Cortés's long-term investment and interest in New Spain.

The examination of how Cortés sought to shape his image requires a look at his marquisate. It was not the highest priority in his later life, or that of the second and third marquises, but it nevertheless stood as Cortés's most valuable asset, his means to securing whatever end. His reputation as the conqueror of Mexico only carried him so far in his life as to acquire the marquisate in the eyes of the emperor and many in Spain. After becoming a marquis, as stability reigned in Mexico, there was little need for conquerors. While he remained a popular figure in New Spain, it was through his continued activity as Captain General and the Marquis of the Valley that he retained

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<sup>583</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 336. “As it is my duty to make the best arrangements I am able for the colonization of this land, and so that the natives and the Spanish settlers may maintain themselves and prosper, and Our Holy Catholic Faith take root; and as Your Majesty graciously entrusted me with these matters, and Our Lord God was pleased to provide the means by which I might come to the notice of Your Majesty and under the Your Highness's Imperial Yoke,…”

<sup>584</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 443. On stating his intention to go to Spain to speak with the emperor in person, Cortés asks the emperor, “If Your Highness is not pleased to grant me this favor or finds it inopportune to maintain me in those kingdoms so that I may serve as I desire, I beg Your Highness to permit me to retain all that I now possess in this land...granting it to me in perpetuity for myself and my heirs, so that I shall not arrive in Spain begging for alms.”

<sup>585</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 273;429-437.

public support. At the end of his life, frustrated and defeated in nearly every endeavor since conquest, Cortés wrote to the emperor, “Not only have I no repose in my old age, but I foresee labor and trouble until my death.”<sup>586</sup> Though defeated in tone, he was nevertheless not finished in his work. Arthur Helps, writing about the deflated spirit of Cortés in Spain in the 1540s, mused, “We live, to a great measure, upon success; and there is no knowing the agony that an unvarying course of ill-success causes to a sanguine and powerful mind which feels that, if only such and such small obstacles were removed out of its way, it could again shine forth with all its pristine brightness.”<sup>587</sup> What Cortés wanted most after being named marquis was to reclaim the fame and prestige of his conquest years by any means. Regardless of the life Cortés imagined for himself, or how he would be remembered, his land in Mexico was not an insignificant factor in that vision. Whether he was the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca or simply an *encomendero*, Cortés understood that settlement and development were the next steps for New Spain, and for that reason his actions in those endeavors deserve our attention.

In organizing a discussion of the various parts of the marquisate, problems arise. The twenty-two towns and villages given to Cortés – Coyoacán, Tacubaya, Matalcinco, Toluca, Calimaya, Cuernavaca, Guastepec, Yecapixtla, Yautepec, Tepuztlan, Oaxaca, Cuilapa, Etlá, Tecuilabacoya, Tehuantepec, Xalapa, Ultatepec, Atroyestan, Cotaxtla, Tuxtla, Tepeaca, and Ixcaltan – presents a daunting list to sort through. Fortunately, a number of these are *cabeceras*, or head towns, while others are minor villages, allowing for a more structured organization and discussion. Furthermore, the regions as listed in the original grant follow a geographic pattern: starting in Coyoacán outside of Mexico

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<sup>586</sup> Cortés, *Carta-memorial*, 569.; Translation in Helps, *The Life of Hernando Cortés*, 288.

<sup>587</sup> Helps, *The Life of Hernando Cortés*, 292.

City, the marquisate is traced westward, turning southeast through Cuernavaca and Oaxaca to Tehuantepec on the southern coast, and then northward to Veracruz. García Martínez arranges the marquisate into seven regions: Coyoacán, Cuernavaca, “Las Cuatro Villas Marquesanas,” Tuxtla and Cotaxtla, Toluca, Charo Matalcinco, and Jalapa de Tehuantepec.<sup>588</sup> This arrangement, as the author explains, was made largely on the grounds of their importance to the marquisate. I have chosen to divide the marquisate into six regions while also following the geographic organization Cortés implemented in 1529. The six regions discussed here are Coyoacán, The Matalcino Valley, Cuernavaca, Oaxaca, Tehuantepec, and finally Veracruz.

The unpublished documents at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, are primarily focused on the regions of Cuernavaca and Tehuantepec; for this reason, these sections will explore various aspects of the marquisate in much greater detail. Many of the issues discussed in these documents are regional in nature but have implications for administration and management of the marquisate as a whole. I have chosen to include cursory examinations of the other regions to maintain the emphasis of size and influence of the marquisate in colonial Mexico. Cortés’s development of the marquisate was strategic, based on the whole; while many enterprises can be found in all the regions, there are specific roles that each region plays based on resources and opportunity. As such, it is imperative to maintain a discussion of the marquisate in its entirety. In the examination of Cortés’s impact on the development of colonial Mexico, or the impact he sought to make, the smaller or less successful regions of the marquisate are just as important as the prominent areas. In the organization of the marquisate, Cortés chose

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<sup>588</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, vii.

these lands specifically, and an exploration of the motivations behind these decisions may provide insight into the memory of himself he sought to construct.

The location of one town specifically named in the original grant of the marquisate, Atroyestan, is uncertain.<sup>589</sup> In López de Gómara's work shortly after Cortés's death, the name changed to Atloixtan.<sup>590</sup> In Martín Cortés's 1560 confirmation of the grant of the marquisate, it was listed as Atroyatlan.<sup>591</sup> Gerhard suggested it might be Otatitlán, a village in the southwest corner of the modern state of Veracruz, but cites the Carvajal family as its *encomenderos* in the sixteenth century.<sup>592</sup> García Martínez suggested it was a dependent town of the Oaxaca region, but this was based on his misidentification of the previous town on the list, Utlatepec, as a misspelling of Ixtaltepec.<sup>593</sup> Other sources have incorrectly listed it as other locations such as Atlpoyecan, a town Cortés had nothing to do with other than granting it to another conquistador.<sup>594</sup> Based on its position in the grant between the regions of Tehuantepec and Cortés's lands in Veracruz, the location is likely a part of one of these two. There are a number of possibilities, but they will not be addressed in the present work.

On the murky subject of population, I will examine population trends where available. The calculation of population in the sixteenth century relies on tax records,

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<sup>589</sup> Rather than rely on the spelling of proper place names in original documents, I have made an effort to present them in their modern form. Spelling varies not only over time but source to source, so it is imperative some form of standardization be applied. I will provide the reader with original spelling variations, however, as well as the modern Mexican state of the towns for reference.

<sup>590</sup> López de Gómara, *Historia de las conquistas de México*, 165. In Simpson's translation, he listed the name as Atloxtán. (López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 391.)

<sup>591</sup> "Confirmation of the Grant of the Marquesado del Valle, 1560," 215.

<sup>592</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the The Historical Geography of New Spain*, 86:341.

<sup>593</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 52.

<sup>594</sup> Sarabia Viejo, *Don Luis de Velasco*, 350.



audits, and tithing records, not total population.<sup>595</sup> This leaves historians with the task of extrapolating population figures based on the nature of Spanish tribute and tax systems and family life in New Spain. The debate over native population trends in early Spanish Mexico is ongoing, with estimates of total population and population decrease in the sixteenth century varying by as much as tens of millions. To make the task of calculating population more difficult, tax records are sparse, incomplete, and often contradictory, requiring speculation as to their totality. An analysis of various population studies of Mexico at the time of discovery and into the sixteenth century was undertaken by Robert McCaa, who identified three demographic schools: catastrophists, moderates, and minimalists. Catastrophists place the scale of “demographic disaster” as high over ninety percent, with a native population at the time of contact in the tens of millions. Into the sixteenth century, catastrophists placed the Indian population anywhere from twenty to thirty million, decreasing sharply over the century due to conditions of Spanish rule. These dramatic demographics are best represented by the work of Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah.<sup>596</sup> Moderates assert demographic change of fifty to eighty percent; this school maintains Indian losses in the millions. Minimalists perceive the loss of Indian life at European contact and through the sixteenth century as low as a quarter. A notable proponent of this perspective is Angel Rosenblat.<sup>597</sup> In analysis of possible Indian populations in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this study will utilize Rosenblat’s minimalist perspective on population to provide a low estimate of Indian

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<sup>595</sup> Sherburne F. Cook and Lesley Byrd Simpson, *The Population of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century* (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1948), 3-9.

<sup>596</sup> Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah, *The Indian Population of Central Mexico, 1531-1610* (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1960).

<sup>597</sup> Angel Rosenblat, *La población de América en 1492: viejos y nuevos calculos* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1967).

populations on the marquisate, acknowledging that the demographics may be much higher.<sup>598</sup>

Cortés's grant specifically gave him 23,000 vassals, but the number from the onset was likely much higher than that. Simpson examined this issue, demonstrating that when the second *Audiencia* audited the marquisate in 1532, just three years after the creation of the marquisate, under the suspicion of having more than the allotted 23,000 subjects, it removed 16 villages and nearly 30,000 subjects. Nonetheless, when the records of the marquisate were seized by the government in 1569 on account of the Martín Cortés conspiracy, the records indicated a population in excess of 60,000 subjects.<sup>599</sup> While a contentious issue between Cortés and the government of New Spain in the sixteenth century, the marquisate was likely never close to being within its 23,000 limit. From an economic perspective, it was in the best interest of the Cortés estate that true population figures be as opaque as possible, given the rather low limit in the grant of the marquisate. Nonetheless, records from various sources do provide a general trend, allowing historians to establish a loose approximation.

The nature of political and religious organization in the marquisate has been largely omitted from this study, as they typically followed standard colonial patterns that have been exhaustively studied elsewhere. While Cortés had unprecedented power on his estate, he did not deviate from proscribed structures or processes, save appointments were made by a private owner rather than the government. Each district or jurisdiction of a

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<sup>598</sup> Robert McCaa, "The Peopling of Mexico from Origins to Revolution," *A Population History of North America*, Michael R. Haines and Richard H. Steckel, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 252-258.

<sup>599</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 164-167.

particular region had a governor known as an *alcalde mayor* or a *corregidor*. They had judicial and legislative authority, but it was limited depending on the region. Under the governor was a town council, known as a *cabildo* or *ayuntamiento*. Indian towns also had appointed governors; *caciques* were usually from the ruling class, and tasked with collecting tribute, organizing labor and the use of land, and minor judicial and legislative issues. The men who sat in council under the *cacique* were the *principales*, also from the traditional ruling class. Cortés and his heirs used this model of municipal government throughout the colonial period.<sup>600</sup>

Above local and municipal government was the overall administration of the marquisate. Cortés did not name a governor of the marquisate but rather an “administrator,” his cousin, Juan Altamirano. Altamirano served in this position until 1550, when Pedro de Ahumada Sámano took over his responsibilities as *gobernador del marquesado*. Sámano had been an ambitious explorer before becoming governor of the marquisate and never lost that appetite for adventure. He served as a captain against an Indian rebellion in 1561, and he also searched for mines on the frontier north of Mexico City.<sup>601</sup> After Sámano, the position went first to Juan Altamirano’s son and then his grandson, Hernán Gutiérrez Altamirano and Juan Altamirano, respectively. While serving as administrators and governors, the Altamirano family also maintained

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<sup>600</sup> Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 166-193; James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 47-52; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 10-17; Meyer, Sherman, and Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., 136-137.

<sup>601</sup> Phillip Wayne Powell, *Soldiers, Indians, and Silver: The Northward Advance of New Spain, 1550-1600* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1969), 75; 247n7; Carlos Sempat Assadourian, *Zacatecas: conquista y transformación de la frontera en el siglo XVI: minas de plata, guerra, y evangelización* (Mexico: El Colegio del México, 2008), 336-337. See also Phillip Wayne Powell, *La guerra Chichimeca* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1977).

*encomiendas* south of Toluca.<sup>602</sup> Under Fernando Cortés, and through Pedro's tenure as marquis, six different governors were appointed, each one holding their position for just a few years.<sup>603</sup> While Fernando appointed officials from Spain, Pedro likely employed citizens of New Spain.<sup>604</sup> While the marquis could make decisions on any issue, it was the administrators that supervised the day-to-day operations of the marquisate.

### Coyoacán

Coyoacán, which today makes up the southwest region of Mexico City, was in the sixteenth century on the shore of Lake Texcoco. It was an important urban center, ruled by the Tepanecs, one of the three Nahuatl cultures that formed the Aztec Triple Alliance.<sup>605</sup> It was first seen by Cortés and his men in 1519 in their first visit to the region around the capital. Despite this, it was not well described by the Spanish. Cortés, in his second letter to the emperor, merely mentioned that the chief of the city gave him some gold and other goods.<sup>606</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo goes only as far to say the city was on level ground, which is why they chose it as a place to camp.<sup>607</sup> Although second-hand information, López de Gómara describes Coyoacán as a city of six thousand houses and many temples and towers, with a thriving salt industry.<sup>608</sup> During the siege of

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<sup>602</sup> Himmerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain*, 118.

<sup>603</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 162.

<sup>604</sup> Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacán*, 72.

<sup>605</sup> For more information on the Tepanecs, see Carlos Santamarina Novillo, *El sistema de dominación Azteca: el imperio Tepaneca* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2006).

<sup>606</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 82.

<sup>607</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 298.

<sup>608</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 138.

Tenochtitlán, natives abandoned Coyoacán, leaving it to the Spanish.<sup>609</sup> After the Aztec capital was finally captured in 1521, it was largely in ruins, and Coyoacán became the center of Cortés' rule while Mexico City was rebuilt as a Spanish capital.<sup>610</sup> Cortés wrote his third letter to the emperor detailing the conquest in Coyoacán.<sup>611</sup>

When reconstruction of Mexico City was finished in 1524, Cortés kept Coyoacán as his personal fief. Included in this were the *cabeceras* of Coyoacán and Tacubaya, along with numerous small towns and villages. While the ownership of these lands were taken away from Cortés during the interim governments of the late 1520s, this region was restored to him in his 1529 grant, making up the first two of his twenty-two named towns ("Cuynacan" and "Atlacavoye").<sup>612</sup> In the first few years of Coyoacán as part of the marquisate, its geography changed somewhat. In a separate 1529 grant, the emperor gave two small hilled islands, Xico and Tepepulco, on Lakes Chalco and Texcoco, to Cortés, for hunting.<sup>613</sup> In his 1532 petition to the Council of the Indies over the audit of his lands on the part of the second *Audiencia*, Cortés claimed the settlements of Texcalyacac, Ocelotepec, Atlapulco, Xalatlaco, and Capoloac as part of the marquisate, but they had been distributed to other settlers.<sup>614</sup> After these early alterations, Coyoacán became a stable region of the marquisate, estimated at approximately 550 square kilometers by García Martínez.<sup>615</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 202.

<sup>610</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 100.

<sup>611</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 281.

<sup>612</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-136.

<sup>614</sup> Cortés, *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 560. Ocelotepec was held by Alonso de Villanueva, Atlapulco and Xalatlaco by *comendador* Leonel de Cervantes, and Capoloac by Isabel Montezuma (Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 270-271).

<sup>615</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 161.

Coyoacán was extremely important settlement for the Spanish, not only during the conquest but afterward as well. Being among the earliest locations of Spanish settlement, the physical layout of the city was among the first to be reconstructed in the Spanish image of a city. Civil and ecclesiastical buildings were constructed, and its proximity to the capital also aided in its growth. Agriculturally, the region had abundant fresh water, fertile plains suitable for growing wheat and European fruit trees, and highland areas that offered trees for fuel and construction materials as well as land for livestock grazing. As Rebecca Horn states, “by the mid-sixteenth century Spanish farms dotted the region, supplying Mexico City with fruits and vegetables as well as such staples as wheat and corn.”<sup>616</sup>

Spanish settlement in the central valley of Mexico around Lake Texcoco was on a large scale in the sixteenth century. By 1620, Spanish activities in the valley included approximately 620 square kilometers of cattle and sheep grazing, nearly two thousand farms, and 60 mills. This is compared to Indian activity of around 110 square kilometers of cattle and sheep grazing, 150 farms, and five mills.<sup>617</sup> On the marquisate in Coyoacán, there was a higher population density of Spaniards due to the early Spanish development of the area, which caused friction between the marquisate and the government of Mexico City over land and water rights in the region. Despite these tensions, the Spanish population of the region grew to as much as twenty percent of the population as late as the 1790s; it was, therefore, a relatively small issue in terms of the agricultural production

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<sup>616</sup> Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacán*, 10-11.

<sup>617</sup> Lesley Byrd Simpson, *Exploitation of Land in Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century* (Los Angeles, The University of California Press, 1952), 55.

of the marquisate for much of its history.<sup>618</sup> Tribute records at various points in the history of the marquisate provide a better glimpse into the Indian population. An estimate based on the census taken at the sequestration of the estate after Martín's arrest in 1567 places the Indian population at approximately 23,610; but based on the population estimates of Angel Rosenblat, it could have been as high as 35,415.<sup>619</sup> The Indian population dropped steadily over the sixteenth century; figures taken in 1620, under Pedro Cortés, demonstrate a population of less than half of the 1567 count. This led to an increasing Spanish population in the region, but the movement of Spaniards into the Coyoacán area was also a result of native industry in the area.

Nahua production in Coyoacán before conquest was varied because of the large marketplace nearby Tenochtitlán provided. Aside from the main subsistence crop of maize, natives of Coyoacán produced dozens of crops and manufactured goods.<sup>620</sup> In the decades following conquest, most Nahuas remained in their communities under *encomienda*; as such, their traditional diversity in manufacture remained. With such specialization in the production of goods, many natives in the region were skilled workers rather than subsistence farmers. Much of Coyoacán and Tacubaya was forested, and the region was known for its wood products and woodworkers. Beginning shortly after conquest and carrying on through much of the sixteenth century, construction projects in

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<sup>618</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 101.

<sup>619</sup> Angel Rosenblat, *La población de América en 1492*; García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 163-167; García Martínez takes the base number of tributaries given on the official audit, 5902.5, and multiplies that number by 4 (to accommodate an average number of a household) to reach 23,601. Based on Rosenblat's conclusions on sixteenth-century population, the actual population could have been as high as one and a half times the figures given in census records, reaching over 35,000.

<sup>620</sup> Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacán*, 86-88. Listed from Spanish records of Nahua production in the region were foods (chile, fish, meat, salt, tamale, lake scum, chia, maize-gruel, *chimalatl*, cacao), utensils and furnishings (candles, pine torches, mats, canes, spindles, warping frames, baskets, brooms, clay vessels, obsidian blades, griddles, stew pots, tumplines, mortar and pestle), clothing (sandals, collars, cloth borders, maguey garments, rabbit hair), and other miscellaneous items (lime, wood, medicinal herbs, hides, cigars, tobacco, smoking tubes, feathers, metal, dyes, clay bells, clay dye).

Mexico City strongly leaned on both Coyoacán lumber and skilled workers. Volcanic stone was from Coyoacán, and local masons were extensively employed in the construction in the capital city. The reconstruction of Mexico City was initiated by Cortés, with his *encomienda* supplying the materials. Over the course of the sixteenth century, as the *encomienda* system was replaced by the *repartimiento*, native labor was no longer the monopoly of the *encomenderos*, but available to any Spaniard who needed to hire unskilled labor. As the unskilled native population in the region was quite small, many Spaniards moved into the area to work on the haciendas and the Spanish population of Coyoacán outnumbered the native population by the time of the marquisate of Pedro Cortés.<sup>621</sup>

Cortés's utilization of the land around Coyoacán included agriculture and raising livestock, but wheat is one specific crop tied to this region of the marquisate. In his will, Cortés specifies wheat production on a specific range of land outside the city of Coyoacán as the source of income from which his heirs were to pay for the construction of Our Lady of Conception Hospital in Mexico City. Cortés claimed this area of the marquisate produced three hundred *fanegas* of wheat annually, the equivalent of approximately 450,000 bushels.<sup>622</sup> With production rates in the sixteenth century at approximately one bushel per acre of land, the area specified by Cortés would have been no larger than two square kilometers, a small part of Cortés's lands around Coyoacán.<sup>623</sup>

Cortés initiated no large-scale enterprises in Coyoacán, instead maintaining smaller farm

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<sup>621</sup> Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacán*, 88-90.

<sup>622</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 24. "Y ten por que asimismo en la dich Doctacion dije y me obligue a dar al dicho hospital tierras cerca de la ciudad de Mexico, donde pudiese coger hasta trecientas fanegas de trigo..." MacNutt, in his translation, incorrectly lists the production at three hundred thousand *fanegas*, which would take nearly four times the amount of land than the entire Coyoacán region of the marquisate. (Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 82)

<sup>623</sup> Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 323.



and cattle-grazing plots. This may be correlated to the continuity of Indian communities in the region, but, as Horn points out, Cortés may have been reluctant to invest too much in land so close to the central government of New Spain. He instead concentrated his larger projects in regions farther away from Mexico City. As such, most profit from the Coyoacán region of the marquisate came directly from Indian tribute.<sup>624</sup>

Indian tribute from Coyoacán was near the top of the list in the audit of the marquisate after the arrest of Martín Cortés, making the region one of the most profitable of the marquisate. By the end of the sixteenth century, when population figures were beginning to drop dramatically, Coyoacán had the third highest number of tributaries in the marquisate.<sup>625</sup> Contributing to this was the political stability, relatively high Indian population, and land arability. Apart from losing five towns in 1532, the Coyoacán under the marquisate did not change geographically during the colonial period. High initial Indian populations in the valley of Mexico also ensured a consistently high population in comparison to other regions of the marquisate. Finally, the fertility of the land in the valley, recognized by the earliest Americans long before the arrival of Cortés, ensured a consistent profit for Cortés and his heirs. Coyoacán's status as a principle Spanish settlement and its proximity to the capital also ensured it would remain an important part of the development of Mexico. Cortés recognized this: Coyoacán was to be to the location of both the college and monastery he ordered built in his will. In this, Cortés sought a continued and lasting role in the development of New Spain. He also sought to make Coyoacán not only his final resting place but that of his entire family as well. In

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<sup>624</sup> Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacán*, 168.

<sup>625</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 165-166. Coyoacán had the fifth highest number of tributaries.

his will he directs, “In my village of Coyoacán I designate as the place of my burial and of my successors, in the chapel of the said monastery, where no other person be buried save for my legitimate descendants.”<sup>626</sup> By creating a chapel for the exclusive burial of the Cortés family, he hoped to create an indelible impression of his influence. While Cuernavaca was the administrative and economic center of the marquisate, Coyoacán, just outside of Mexico City, was to be the center of Cortés’s legacy in Mexico. Unfortunately for Cortés, these plans never came to fruition; neither the college nor monastery was ever built. Coyoacán only served to help pay for the courtly lifestyles of Martín and Fernando before passing to Pedro Cortés, who did little to change what was still a prosperous region providing a steady income.

### **The Matalcinco Valley**

Toluca, the capital of the modern Mexican state of Mexico, sits in what was called the Matalcinco Valley in the sixteenth century. Today it is most frequently referred to as the Toluca Valley. In the grant of the marquisate, the region of Matalcinco is listed, as is Toluca, along with Calimaya, a town south of Toluca.<sup>627</sup> Cortés assigned this region to himself shortly after the conquest, but, as was the case with most of his self-assigned property, it was confiscated and re-assigned numerous times during his absences from Mexico. Even after receiving this region in the 1529 grant, legal problems severely limited the size of marquisate to little more than the town of Toluca; the second *audiencia* retained the rest for the crown that gave it to Cortés. Despite extensive

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<sup>626</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 22-23.

<sup>627</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 330,

litigation in the 1530s, Cortés was unable to claim six villas in this region he believed to be covered in his grant: Calimaya, Tepemachalco, Cinacantepec, Metepec, Tlacotepec, and Tlalchichilpa.<sup>628</sup> This region of the marquisate, more than any other, demonstrated the effort taken by the government of New Spain to limit the influence of Cortés and the marquisate.

Before European contact, the Matalcinco Valley was first occupied by the Mazahuas and the Otomies, and later conquered by the Nahuas. The Mazahuas and Otomies arrived in the region around the eighth century, with the Otomi Indians becoming the larger and more powerful of the two. These tribes lived a very simple or more primitive way of life than most other groups in central Mexico, making their homes in the mountains surrounding the Matalcinco valley. This isolation afforded them the survival of their ways of life: in the sixteenth century, the Otomi were the only major Indian group in central Mexico who spoke a non-Nahuatl language. For this reason, most Nahuatl-speaking Indians looked down upon them, as did the Spanish; Cortés simply described them as “mountain people.” Nevertheless, they did establish a lasting culture in the region, centered in the religious and political center of Calixtlahuacan near present-day Toluca.<sup>629</sup> The Matlatzinca, the name given to the people of the region who spoke the Chichimec language of the Mazahuas and Otomies, were conquered by the Nahuas in

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<sup>628</sup> Cortés, *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 560; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 330. The villas are listed with their modern spelling, taken from Gerhard rather than Cortés.

<sup>629</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 221; Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 10; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 330; Alicja Iwanska, *Purgatory and Utopia: A Mazahua Indian Village of Mexico* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 19-20. See also: James Dow, *The Otomi of the Northern Sierra del Puebla, Mexico: An Ethnographic Outline* (East Lansing, MI: Latin American Studies Center, University of Michigan, 1975). Gibson offers an example of the low esteem in which the Otomi were held: in colonial times, the three grades of *pulque* were fine, ordinary, and Otomi.

1474.<sup>630</sup> The Spanish conquered the region in the summer of 1521, when Cortés sent Gonzalo de Sandoval to the Matalcinco Valley after the Otomies asked for assistance, claiming mistreatment at the hands of their masters. Hostilities lasted only a few days, with the result of the Otomies and the Nahuas both agreeing to become vassals of the Spanish Crown.<sup>631</sup>

Cortés as governor assigned this region to himself for the purpose of raising livestock, including cattle, sheep, and pigs.<sup>632</sup> The valley lies at a high elevation, stretching from the Nevado de Toluca Mountain and running northwest along the Río Lerma. At the river, the elevation of the valley is approximately 2500 meters, making frost an impediment to agriculture.<sup>633</sup> Nevertheless, the soil of the valley was quite fertile, and the Matlazincas had a long tradition of farming in the region, growing maize, beans, and sesame, crops that could be dried and stored for times when the weather was not cooperative with agriculture.<sup>634</sup> According to Alonso de Zorita, a *licenciado* in Guatemala in the middle of the sixteenth century who wrote about life in the New World, Cortés required from the Indians a tribute of maize and also sent many to work in the reconstruction of Mexico City in the 1520s. Cortés also sent Toluca Valley natives to

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<sup>630</sup>Noemí Quezada, *Los Matlatzincas: época prehispánica y época colonial hasta 1560* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1996), 46-47. See also: René García Castro, *Indios, territorio, y poder en la provincia Matlazincas: la negociación del espacio político de los pueblos Otomianos, siglos XV-XVII* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, El Colegio Mexiquense, 1999).

<sup>631</sup>Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 244-247.

<sup>632</sup>Cortés, "Carta de Hernán Cortés a su padre don Martín Cortés," *Hernán Cortés: Cartas y Documentos*, 471.

<sup>633</sup>Frances Frei Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza* (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1997), 67.

<sup>634</sup>Alonso de Zorita, *Life and Labor in Ancient Mexico: The Brief Summary Relation of the Lords of New Spain*, Benjamin Keen, trans. (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 264. For more information on Alonso de Zorita, see Ralph H. Vigil, "Alonso de Zorita: Early and Last Years," *The Americas*, vol. 32, no. 4 (April, 1976), 501-513.

work in various mines.<sup>635</sup> As it appears that Cortés was mainly interested in the Toluca Valley for livestock, it is not surprising that the Indians of the valley were largely used as a workforce for projects elsewhere. The native population of Toluca was larger than that of Coyoacán but without the range of skills and trades.<sup>636</sup> In the 1567 census, 27,796 natives lived in Toluca, but this number fell dramatically over the first hundred years of the marquisate; the population was only 8,830 in 1620.<sup>637</sup> There was an epidemic in Toluca from 1576-1581 that dramatically reduced the population, and numbers never increased to those of the 1560s.<sup>638</sup>

Much like that of Cortés, Spanish interest in the region was primarily for livestock, but the scale of this is unclear. Simpson estimates Spanish livestock in the valley to be around 36,000 head of cattle, 306,000 head of sheep, and 500 horses in the sixteenth century.<sup>639</sup> A government document from 1555, however, asserts over 150,000 head of cattle and mares in the region. Yet another document, from the middle of the century, cites 10,000 head of cattle and 1,000 mares in the vicinity of Toluca.<sup>640</sup> The two largest *estancias* of the marquisate, Atenco and San Mateo, were only a very small part of

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid., 267-268. Zorita lists Tletiztlac, Taxco, and Tzultepec as locations of mines Toluca Valley Indians were sent. It is possible that Tletiztlac referred to Tletixtlaca in the modern state of Hidalgo, northeast of Mexico City. In the sixteenth century, this town was a dependency of the nearby city of Otumba. After the conquest, Cortés made himself *encomendero* of Otumba, but it was not included in his 1529 grant of the marquisate. Nevertheless, part of the tributes from Otumba were assigned to Cortés for several years afterward. Despite this, Tletiztlac was likely Tlaxitlac de Cabrera (Talistaca), in Antequera. This was a silver mining center in Cortés's grant of the Oaxaca region. Taxco (Tasco), southwest of Cuernavaca, was the site of tin deposits that Cortés ordered mined in the early 1520s. Sometime in the early 1530s the region and its rich mines were turned over to the crown. Tzultepec (Zultepec) was a silver mining region southwest of Toluca, but there is no evidence that Cortés ever controlled this area. (Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 49-51; 67; 208; 252; 267-268).

<sup>636</sup> Toluca Valley Indians did make some cloth and leather goods. (Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 67.

<sup>637</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 166.

<sup>638</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 331.

<sup>639</sup> Simpson, *Exploitation of Land*, 53.

<sup>640</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 140.

this total.<sup>641</sup> In 1568, a government audit of Atenco listed the *estancia* as holding 10,000 head of sheep, with annual revenue of 1,821 pesos de oro.<sup>642</sup> While livestock figures remain murky, what is clear is that in the middle of the sixteenth century many Spaniards moved to Toluca to set up *estancias*. By the end of the century, there was a large non-native population. The lands that Cortés believed to be included in his grant were divided into *corregimientos* and distributed to various Spanish families. Toluca became a center of Spanish residence and, as such, a center of Spanish-Indian relations.<sup>643</sup>

While the dominion of the marquisate around Toluca was greatly diminished by the government of New Spain early on, it nonetheless remained a consistent source of income for the marquis. Cortés controlled approximately four hundred and fifty square kilometers of land around Toluca.<sup>644</sup> The number of tributaries from Toluca alone made up forty percent of tribute of the greater region Cortés attempted to claim after the 1529 grant.<sup>645</sup> In addition, Martín Cortés used the vague nature of the grant to add territory to the marquisate. Matalcinco was the name of the region that included Toluca and Calimaya, the two villas on the list, but was not a town itself. When Martín arrived in New Spain, he brought a suit to claim the town of Charo Matalcinco in the northeast region of Michoacán. This was far outside any region ever claimed by Cortés. The royal prosecutor accurately argued that there were two Matalcincos, and the one the Cortés

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<sup>641</sup> San Mateo was taken from the marquisate by the crown in 1575 (Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 330).

<sup>642</sup> Guadalupe Yolanda Zamudio Espinosa, *Tierra y sociedad en el Valle de Toluca, siglo XVI* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, 2001), 82.

<sup>643</sup> Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 47. See also María del Pilar Iracheta Cenecorta, *Tierra y operaciones comerciales en el Valle de Toluca, 1580-1645* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Toluca, 1982).

<sup>644</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 161.

<sup>645</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 165. Toluca had 4,964 tributaries, while Metepec, Tepemachalco, Calimaya, Cinacantepec, and Tlacotepec had a combined 7,397 tributaries.

grant refers to was the Matalcinco Valley containing Toluca. The judges ruled in favor of the marquis, however, and Charo Matalcinco became an isolated part of the marquisate in Michoacán. The marquisate continued to appoint town officials there until the early nineteenth century.<sup>646</sup>

The Toluca Valley region of the marquisate stands largely as an example of the measures taken to limit Cortés's impact on viceregal New Spain. While Cortés retained the center, Toluca, and *estancias* in the environs of the villa, he was unable to claim Calimaya and much of the Matalcinco Valley listed in his imperial grant. He petitioned the *Audiencia*, "I ask the president and judges of the royal court to return to me and reinstate me as in possession of the towns and subjects stripped from me, without cause, as granted to me by His Royal Majesty."<sup>647</sup> The *audiencia* wrote a letter to the emperor on the matter, explaining that Cortés was seeking to establish a feudal lordship over large territories, which would cause too great a problem in census taking and taxation.<sup>648</sup> The judges appeared to have no ill will against Cortés; they were simply trying to pave the way for viceregal control over a collection of loosely connected grants and territories. In the end, Cortés's petition was dismissed rather than ruled upon. Cortés would have been upset, but he had no recourse. As Madariaga succinctly states, "It was not merely a matter of right and wrong; it was a sense of the incoherence of things which placed a

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<sup>646</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 106-107.

<sup>647</sup> Cortés, *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 556.

<sup>648</sup> Testimony resulting from the inquiry into the marquisate by the *Audiencia* can be found in "Testimonio de una informacion hecha en México por el Presidente y Oidores [sic] de aquella Audiencia, sobre el modo de contar los 23,000 indios, vasallos del Marqués del Valle de que el Rey le habia hecho merced," *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 16, 548-555. The explanation of the decisions of the *Audiencia* are found in "Relacion dada por los oidores de la nueva Audiencia de Nueva España, para noticia de Su Magestad acerca de los vasallos del Marqués del Valle," *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 14, 329-347.

chief man in a subordinate place.”<sup>649</sup> New Spain was rapidly changing politically, and Cortés struggled to control his impression upon the place he had done so much to establish.

In terms of the marquisate as a whole, Toluca did not play a major role in the plans of Cortés or his heirs. It merely existed as another source of income for the marquis. There was little difference in development the marquisate and that of surrounding regions controlled by the crown.<sup>650</sup> Toluca is, however, another example of the strategy of Cortés in shaping his marquisate. Like Coyoacán, Toluca was a residential and commercial center. The high population offered not only an economic and political advantage, but positioned Cortés as a significant figure in terms of social relations as well. Trade centers like Toluca drew in populations of Spanish and Indian alike, although one might argue that the high esteem in which Cortés was held by natives and settlers played a factor as well, or the security afforded by Cortés as Captain-General. While at times Cortés was capable of unmistakable cruelty against Indian resistance or rebellions, he was also capable of tolerance. Relating his conversation to the lord of the Indians of the Toluca valley who first resisted Spanish arrival, he wrote to the emperor, “[I told] them how I always welcomed those who offered themselves as Your Majesty’s vassals.”<sup>651</sup> With Cortés as the marquis over so many centers of Spanish-Indian relations, his role as a mediator in the social strata of New Spain is indelible.

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<sup>649</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 464.

<sup>650</sup> Caterina Pizzigoni, *The Life Within: Local Indigenous Society in Mexico’s Toluca Valley, 1650-1800* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 11.

<sup>651</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 246.



## Cuernavaca

Cuernavaca was the center of the marquisate not only in terms of geography but development and administration as well. It was a perfect location for Cortés to establish his permanent residence. The region is mostly a fertile valley created by the Ajusco volcano to the north and the Popocatepetl volcano to the east.<sup>652</sup> The region is also a watershed fed by the Balsas River system. With high annual rainfall and a temperate climate, it is an ideal place for agriculture.<sup>653</sup> Unsurprisingly, these ideal conditions were utilized by early Americans, who settled in the area approximately eight thousand years ago.<sup>654</sup> The area continued to be one of dense settlement in pre-Columbian times, and at the time of conquest Cuernavaca was a major trade center and the region held other *cabecera* towns of Tepuztlán, Yautepec, Guastepec, and Yecapixtla. In the grant of the marquisate, Cortés was careful to include these four towns along with Cuernavaca in order to take over complete tribute and economic systems. In no other region of his marquisate listed in the grant was Cortés so specific: nearly a quarter of the list of twenty-two towns and villages in the grant are the lands around Cuernavaca.<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Both volcanoes are still active. Popocatepetl was first explored by the Spanish in 1519, which Cortés relates in his second *carta*. Cortés explained, "From one [the mountains], which is the higher, there appears often both by day and by night a great cloud of smoke as big as a house which goes straight as an arrow up into the clouds, and seems to come out with such force that even though there are very strong winds on top of the mountain they cannot turn it." Cortés sent small expeditions up the volcano in 1519 and 1520 or 1521. It was briefly used as a source of sulphur before regular supply ships from Spain could be established. (Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 77-78; 279.) Popocatepetl remains very active today, disrupting air travel as recently as July 2013. (Olga R. Rodríguez, "U.S. Airlines Cancel Mexico Flights Due to Volcano," *Associated Press*, 4 July 2013. Accessed 15 July 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/us-airlines-cancel-mexico-flights-due-volcano>.)

<sup>653</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 94.

<sup>654</sup> See Florencia Müller, *Historia antigua del Valle de Morelos* (Mexico: Escuela Nacional de Antropología y Historia, 1949).

<sup>655</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.

The region around Cuernavaca had long been a highly desirable region to control. It was settled by two groups, the Nahuatl-speaking Tlalhuicas and Xochimilcas, sometime around A.D. 1200, but evidence of older settlements, including those of the Olmecs, is abundant. Archaeological evidence shows that during the late classical age of Mexico (A.D. 650-900) a thriving cotton industry was already well-established, as was a trade system with people in regions such as Oaxaca, Veracruz, Guerrero, and Michoacán.<sup>656</sup> As this was prized land, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Tlalhuicans and Xochimilcas spent much of their time at war with neighbors and between themselves. At the end of the fourteenth century, The Indians of the valley began sending an annual tribute of cotton to invaders from north of the Ajusco and Popocatepetl mountains; first the Tepenecs, beginning in 1395, and later the Aztecs in 1429. The Aztecs worked hard to secure the region as one of their most valued holdings, as it is possible that Montezuma I (r. 1440-1469) took a Tlalhuica princess as one of his brides.<sup>657</sup> Montezuma II, who ruled at the time of Spanish conquest, had a country palace in Cuernavaca; it was razed and Cortés's palace was built on its spot.<sup>658</sup> Guastepec was also the site of lush imperial gardens, which Cortés visited during his expedition of conquest of the area. He related, "reaching Oaxtepec [sic]...at ten in the morning...we were all quartered in a chief's country house amid the most beautiful and refreshing gardens ever seen. They are two leagues round about and through the middle of them runs a pleasant stream. There are summer houses spaced out at distances of two

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<sup>656</sup> Robert Haskett, *Visions of Paradise: Primordial Titles and Mesoamerican History in Cuernavaca* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 60-65; Meyer, Sherman, and Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., 12. See also: Michael E. Smith and Kenneth G. Hirth, "The Development of Prehispanic Cotton-Spinning Technology in Western Morelos, Mexico," *Journal of Field Archaeology*, vol. 15, no. 3 (Autumn, 1988), 349-358.

<sup>657</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 4.

<sup>658</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 5.

crossbow shots, and very bright flower beds, a great many trees with various fruits, and many herbs and sweet-smelling flowers. Certainly the elegance and magnificence of this garden make a remarkable sight.”<sup>659</sup> Cortés certainly understood the importance of the land, the industry, and the dense population of people in the area around Cuernavaca, but the luxury of palaces and gardens likely made a lasting impression on Cortés. A brief description of the garden appears in López de Gómara’s work; at the end of his life, in relating the conquest to López de Gómara, Cortés possibly took the time between descriptions of battles to explain the beauty of a royal garden.<sup>660</sup>

Cortés made the region ruled by Cuernavaca his own fiefdom shortly after conquest. In an examination of the region, there is little question as to why he did so. The mundane name “Cuernavaca,” or “cow’s horn,” was not given for any quality of the place itself, but was a distortion of the native name Cuauhnáhuac, meaning “near the forest.” Few early colonial descriptions of the town exist; Cortés mentions it very little, describing in its conquest that its natural landscape made it a difficult location to attack.<sup>661</sup> In 1586, traveler Fray Antonio de Ciudad Real wrote that Cuernavaca was a large city surrounded by fertile lands that produced a multitude of fruits and other goods; the entire region was watered by numerous rivers and streams.<sup>662</sup> Writing around the

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<sup>659</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 196.

<sup>660</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 258. It is possible that López de Gómara read a published version of Cortés third *carta de relación*, but his description includes different details about the garden, including its size and the fact that it was surrounded by a wall. López de Gómara did include literary embellishments in his work, but it is unlikely he had any motivation to change the details of a location he mentions in passing.

<sup>661</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 197.

<sup>662</sup> Antonio de Ciudad Real, *Tratado curioso de las grandezas de la Nueva España*, vol. 1, Josefina García Quintana and Victor M. Castillo Farreras, eds. (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1993), 123; Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 27. Fray Antonio de Ciudad Real was the secretary of Fray Alonso Ponce, the commissary general of the Franciscan order in New Spain. Ponce and Ciudad Real traveled around Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua between 1584 and 1589, visiting nearly two hundred Franciscan convents. Ciudad kept a daily journal of their travels, offering insight not only into ecclesiastical matters of the day but also descriptions of the places and experiences in their travels. (Max

same time as Ciudad Real, Dominican friar and ethnographer Diego Durán wrote *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*, in which he said of Cuernavaca: “This is certainly one of the most beautiful and pleasant lands in the world, and if it were not for the great heat here it would be another Garden of Eden. There are delightful springs, abundant rivers full of fish, the freshest of woods, and orchards of many kinds of fruit, many of them native to Mexico and others to Spain, which supply all the neighboring cities with this fruit. [The Marquesado] is full of a thousand different fragrant flowers and is very rich in cotton.”<sup>663</sup> As for the town itself, Cortés transformed it to include everything he needed. As it was to be the centerpiece of his marquisate, beginning in 1531 he ordered the construction of his palace on top of the ruins of the former palace of the ruler of Cuauhnáhuac. He also built mills, stables, corrals, workshops, and storage buildings for the various crops grown in the countryside.<sup>664</sup> Beginning in 1525, the Franciscans founded the monastery Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Cuauhnahuac, which was only the order’s fifth house in New Spain.<sup>665</sup> Cuernavaca was to be not only an administrative and economic center, but a religious one as well.

The subject towns of Guastepec, Yecapixtla, Yautepec, and Teputzlán also received the mills, stables, and other buildings and facilities you would find in any center of agricultural production. Other mendicant orders moved into the region, establishing houses in the region. In Guastepec, the Dominican order built Santo Domingo Guastepec

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Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 2000), 153.)

<sup>663</sup> Diego Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, Doris Heyden, ed. and trans. (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>664</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 49-50.

<sup>665</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 101. Unlike typical Spanish city construction, Cortés’s palace and the monastery did overlook the same plaza. The natural topography of the town is uneven, and centralized construction was impossible. The church was built on the previous site of an indigenous temple some distance away from the palace.

in 1528. The Augustinians did not arrive in New Spain until 1533, many years after the Franciscans and Dominicans had taken their evangelizing missions to large portions of Mexico. Nevertheless, the order did spread southward, establishing San Juan Bautista Yautepec in 1535 as they went.<sup>666</sup> Dominican houses later spread from Guastepec to Yautepec with Asunción Yautepec (c.1550) and Tepuztlán with Natividad Tepuztlán (c. 1556).<sup>667</sup> Outside of the towns, Indian villages were scattered, but Spanish-formed native settlements created in the middle of the sixteenth century organized the population.<sup>668</sup>

The Cuernavaca region was one of the largest regions of the marquisate. At approximately 4,100 square kilometers, it was second in size only to Tuxtla and Cotaxtla, but far and away the most populous region.<sup>669</sup> In an official inspection of the region in 1551, it was estimated that there were approximately 32,500 tributaries of the marquisate.<sup>670</sup> This is very likely an overestimate; figures in the 1560s are dramatically lower than average population decline. A 1560 estimate listed 22,122 tributaries, and one in 1567 of 21,238. The government audit of Martín Cortés's marquisate after his arrest in that same year listed the Cuernavaca tributary number at a conspicuously high 44,781, a number García Martínez described as "without doubt overestimated."<sup>671</sup> Cook and

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<sup>666</sup> Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 72-73; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 96.

<sup>667</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 96.

<sup>668</sup> Juan José de la Cruz y Moya, *Historia de la santa y apostolica Provincia de Santiago de Predicadores de México en la Nueva España* (Mexico: M. Porrúa, 1954), 133.

<sup>669</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 161-166.

<sup>670</sup> See "Quesada to king, 1 Sep. 1551," AGI, Mexico, 68, as cited in Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 96-97. This figure includes estimations of 15,000 for Cuernavaca, 5,500 combined for Yautepec and Tepoztlan, 4,500 combined for Guastepec and Amilpas, and 5,000 for Yecapixtla and the Tlalnaguas. The judge also adds 6,000 to account for error. As Amilpas was not part of the marquisate, Gerhard subtracted 3,500. The Tlalnaguas were a group of villages in the "hot country" south of Yecapixtla. (Peter Gerhard, "A Method of Reconstructing pre-Columbian Political Boundaries in Central Mexico," *Journal de la Société de Américanistes*, vol. 59 (1970), 39.)

<sup>671</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 166; Cook and Simpson, *The Population of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century*, 5.

Simpson's work on total population in 1565 listed the regions of Cuernavaca and the other four towns with a population of approximately 120,000, rendering tributary figures around 30,000.<sup>672</sup> Borrowing from this earlier work, Simpson estimated just over 35,000 tributaries from 1560-1570.<sup>673</sup> As the work of Cook and Simpson falls between the two estimates from 1567, it may be considered an accurate representation. Two counts in 1570 and 1571 estimate 27,008 and 24,750 tributaries, respectively, following a steady population decline during this time. By 1620, late in the marquisate of Pedro Cortés, the figure had fallen to just over eight thousand tribute-paying heads of household.<sup>674</sup> In general figures, median estimates place the overall Indian population in the Cuernavaca region of the marquisate in the middle of the sixteenth century at approximately 100-140,000, declining steadily over the latter half of the century. By 1620, the native population fell to 32,336. In the first hundred years of the marquisate, the Cuernavaca region made up between thirty and forty percent of the overall Indian population of the marquisate.<sup>675</sup>

Just as the natives had long been attracted to the area, Spaniards sought to benefit from the fertile land. The Spanish population grew steadily over the sixteenth century, although there is scant data on actual figures. In 1568, Antonio de Ciudad Real remarked that there were a great number of both Indians and Spaniards living in the city of

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<sup>672</sup> Cook and Simpson, *The Population of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century*, 82-85. The populations given are as follows: 88,708 in Cuernavaca; 28,400 combined for Tepoztlan, Yautepec, and Yecapixtla; finally, 36,000 for Guastepec. The total population for these five areas is 120,708.

<sup>673</sup> Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, 165. Simpson's tribute figures for the period of 1560-1570 are taken directly from the 1567 census numbers, with the exception of Cuernavaca, which he changed from 27,300 to 18,200.

<sup>674</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 97; García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 166.

<sup>675</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 166.

Cuernavaca.<sup>676</sup> Many of these included various administrators of the Cortés estate as well as skilled workers of various trades. Many members of the Cortés family likewise called Cuernavaca home. While the Cortés palace had an assembly of approximately four hundred servants, it is unknown how many of these were from Spain; Cortés, however, mentioned a couple of these Spanish servants by name in his will.<sup>677</sup> Other Spaniards living in the region were renters of land, largely for the production of sugar.<sup>678</sup>

There also lived in Cuernavaca a population of African slaves. Slavery primarily focused on the industries of sugar and non-indigenous textile production, which expanded greatly in the latter half of the sixteenth century but was introduced into Mexico almost immediately after conquest. While textiles were largely produced in the area around Mexico City and northward, sugar production was largely focused in modern-day Morelos and Veracruz, much of it on the Cortés marquisate.<sup>679</sup> Cortés brought this commercial venture into Mexico from Cuba and with it an experienced labor force. Native labor was used in the sugar mills, but the mortality rate of Indians in the sixteenth century precluded exclusive utilization of native labor for sugar. The many labor-intensive steps of sugar production required trained and skilled workers, and a constant turnover of the labor force would result in inefficiency.<sup>680</sup> In 1549, at Cortés's sugar mill in Tlaltenango outside of Cuernavaca, there were 186 native workers and 80 African

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<sup>676</sup> Ciudad Real, *Tratado*, 123.

<sup>677</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 92-97; Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 39-40. Cortés described one of his wife's maids, Elvira de Hermosa, as a "citizen of Avila." He ordered a similar payment to another servant of his wife, Maria del Torres, without giving her place of origin.

<sup>678</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 92-97.

<sup>679</sup> Frank Proctor III, "Slave Rebellion and Liberty in Colonial Mexico," *Black Mexico*, Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall, eds. (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 23.

<sup>680</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1991), 62.

slaves.<sup>681</sup> In total, the Cortés estate owned as many as 1,600 slaves.<sup>682</sup> Among these slaves, men outnumbered women two to one, and the majority were between the ages of fifteen and forty; the slave population of the marquisate was designed for hard labor.<sup>683</sup> By 1570, an estimated 36,500 slaves had been imported from Africa into New Spain. By the end of the sixteenth century, those of African descent comprised the majority of the non-indigenous population in many areas of New Spain.<sup>684</sup> The utilization of African slave labor underscores the fact that Spanish settlement of Mexico was largely economically driven, with the marquisate a highly visible example.

The economic and commercial enterprises around Cuernavaca under Cortés were numerous. At approximately 4100 square kilometers of land, Cortés had plenty of room for diverse ventures and even experimentation.<sup>685</sup> The large native population also provided a tributary workforce. Riley lists the various endeavors: “laborers worked in Cortés’s grain, cotton, sugar cane, and hemp fields as well as in his vegetable gardens, vineyards, orchards, and date palm and mulberry groves. They also tended his livestock and labored in his grist and sugar mills, in his iron and leather shops and in his *obrajes* (textile factories).”<sup>686</sup> Indians also worked as servants, in construction, and as porters. Cortés sought to create in Cuernavaca one of the largest centers of production for all of New Spain.

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<sup>681</sup> Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1540-1640* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 21.

<sup>682</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 97.

<sup>683</sup> Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 64.

<sup>684</sup> Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*, 21-22.

<sup>685</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 161.

<sup>686</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 50.



The diversity of production directed by Cortés was not new to the area. Before the arrival of the Spanish, Aztec tribute from the Indians of Cuernavaca was mainly in the form of cotton textiles, but also included maize, beans, chia, sesame, and a variety of crafted goods; labor was also a common form of tribute from Cuernavaca.<sup>687</sup> After conquest, the tribute system was slow to change. The crafted goods of the pre-Columbian world were of no use to the Spaniards, so Cortés required a tribute mainly of maize and beans. Labor tribute also continued in the form of digging irrigation ditches, maintaining extant structures in the town, and transporting goods to Mexico City.<sup>688</sup> It was not until the grant of the marquisate that Cortés began to transform Cuernavaca.

Beginning in 1531, Cortés used Cuernavaca as a proving ground for many agricultural and economic experiments. As Madariaga asserts, “there is hardly any form of economic development to which he did not devote his personal attention.”<sup>689</sup> Some of these Cortés took over after seizing land based on his 1529 grant; such is the case with Tlalhuítongo, whose orchards of oranges, lemons, limes, and citron had been developed by Diego Ordaz.<sup>690</sup> Most of these developments, however, were the work of Cortés himself. Other areas around Cuernavaca were fields and orchards of pomegranates, quinces, figs, apples, grapes, pears, citrus, melons, dates, and the fruit of the zapote

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<sup>687</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 73-74. Crafted goods included warrior costumes, shields, pottery, and paper. Haskett asserts that Cuernavaca and Guastepec are the only recorded sources of finished paper for the Aztec empire. In terms of labor tribute, in the middle of the fifteenth century Cuernavaca provided labor for the construction of the royal palace as well as the Templo Mayor in Tenochtitlán.

<sup>688</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 49; Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 88-89.

<sup>689</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 464.

<sup>690</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 63. Diego de Ordaz was a conquistador who took part in the capture of Cuba in 1511 alongside Cortés, arrived in Mexico in 1519 with Cortés, and took part in the Honduras expedition. After the conquest of Mexico, Ordaz held different grants of land at different times; many of these grants were in the Morelos area. In the late 1520s and in Cortés’s imperial grant, towns including Tlalhuítongo, Huexocingo, and Calpan were claimed by Cortés from Ordaz. Ordaz became the governor of Cumaná (Venezuela) in 1531 but died unexpectedly in Spain in 1532. (Hammerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain*, 208)

tree.<sup>691</sup> Cuernavaca is also said to be the American origin of two goods not incorporated by Cortés. According to sixteenth century Franciscan missionary Toribio de Benavente Motolinía, the Franciscans in Cuernavaca were the first to plant date palms. In addition, ginger was supposedly first planted in the New World in the garden of Bernardino del Castillo, one of Cortés's estate administrators.<sup>692</sup>

The least successful experiment of Cortés was silk production. This was an industry Cortés early sought to try in the Americas, importing silk worms and mulberry trees as early as 1523. When he became a marquis, he planted numerous trees and attempted to raise silkworms in Yautepec. When this failed to yield any significant gains, in the spirit of a conquistador, he did not move on but ordered his administrator Juan de Altamirano to try it again. In 1544 and 1545, when Cortés was in Spain, 32,000 mulberry trees were planted outside Yautepec alongside silkworm houses. With such a large-scale attempt, records indicate some production, but it was short-lived: by 1549 the venture was once again a failure, with less than half of the trees usable.<sup>693</sup> Despite his best efforts, Cortés could not establish silk production on his estate.

It is interesting that Cortés doggedly pushed for silk production in Cuernavaca in spite of the many agricultural successes he enjoyed there. Cortés also attempted to make silk in Coyoacán and Oaxaca with little success.<sup>694</sup> While there is no doubt a thriving silk industry would be more lucrative than most other ventures, indicating profit-driven

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<sup>691</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 63.

<sup>692</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 117.

<sup>693</sup> Woodrow Borah, *Silk Raising in Colonial Mexico* (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1949), 19,51; Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 63; Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 117.

<sup>694</sup> Borah, *Silk Raising in Colonial Mexico*, 19;30; See also Careyn Patricia Armitage, "Silk Production and its Impact on Families and Communities in Oaxaca, Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., Iowa State University, 2008).

motives, it also required a large investment of time, money, land, and labor. Cortés was interested in more than just profit; he was interested in development. If he was purely interested in immediate income, surely that land would have been far more profitable by expanding one of the many proven crops. It may be telling that in the early 1540s, when Cortés arranged for the venture to once again be undertaken, he spent much of his time in academic and noble circles in Spain.<sup>695</sup> It is clear in his life he was never content simply being a landowner, but at the end of his life when that is essentially all he was, he strongly pushed to be a producer of a luxury item such as silk; perhaps in some way he was attempting to elevate economically his marquisate in the same way he sought socially to elevate himself. Viceroy Mendoza advocated the expansion of silk production in Mexico, so perhaps Cortés simply sought to not be upstaged.<sup>696</sup> Despite the failure of silk, another luxury item, sugar, was much more successful on the marquisate.

Sugar cane growing and sugar production was easily the most successful source of income for Cortés in the Cuernavaca region of his marquisate. It was so successful that the production of the region's two long-held staples of cotton and maize almost ceased altogether.<sup>697</sup> Sugar production required rich soil, plenty of irrigation, a semitropical climate, an abundance of wood for charcoal, and a large labor force, and Cortés found all these crucial pieces in two regions of the marquisate: Cuernavaca and Tuxtla.<sup>698</sup> Cortés first brought the industry to Mexico by establishing a mill in Tuxtla in 1522-1523, but the largest and most productive operation in the marquisate was in

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<sup>695</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 480-482.

<sup>696</sup> Aiton, *Antonio de Mendoza*, 112; Borah, *Silk Raising in Colonial Mexico*, 86.

<sup>697</sup> Michael E. Smith and Cynthia Heath-Smith, "Rural Economy in Late Post-Classic Morelos: An Archaeological Study," *Economies and Politics in the Aztec Realm*, Mary G. Hodge and Michael E. Smith, eds. (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1994), 327; Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 118.

<sup>698</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 64.

Cuernavaca. There were a number of mills in the Cuernavaca area, but the largest were at Atlacomulco, southeast of Cuernavaca, and Tlaltenango, north of the town on the road to Mexico City. Both of these mills were surrounded by acres of sugar cane fields.

The Atlacomulco mill was founded around 1530 by Antonio Serrano de Cardona, a conquistador who was assigned the Cuernavaca *encomienda* after it had been confiscated from Cortés in 1525.<sup>699</sup> When Cortés returned to New Spain in 1531, he recovered much of his land, but Atlacomulco and the large, water-powered mill remained the possession of Serrano de Cardona. Cortés attempted to convince Serrano de Cardona to abandon the area, with the result of a lawsuit against Cortés in the middle of 1531. The issue dragged on until 1534, when the Council of the Indies upheld the decision of the *audiencia* that ruled in favor of Serrano de Cardona. Despite winning his lawsuit, Serrano de Cardona later agreed to give Cortés a one-seventh interest in the mill. Friction continued, however, as the widow of Serrano de Cardona, Isabel de Ojeda, brought a lawsuit against the marquisate almost immediately after her husband died.<sup>700</sup> It is possible that Atlacomulco was finally acquired by the marquisate in 1620, as evidence suggests the land was sold, but the buyer is unknown.<sup>701</sup>

The third sugar mill in Mexico was constructed by Cortés around 1537 in Tlaltenango, north of Cuernavaca. Barrett succinctly summed up the location by flatly

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<sup>699</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 60. Originally Antonio de Villarroel, Serrano de Cardona arrived in Cuba around 1516, and accompanied Cortés in 1519 to Mexico. After traveling to Pánuco and Michoacán, presumably in military service, he was awarded the *encomienda* of Cuernavaca in 1525. After much of these lands were recovered by Cortés when he returned to New Spain in 1531, Serrano de Cardona retained some land in the area. (Hammerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain*, 263.)

<sup>700</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 64.

<sup>701</sup> Barrett, *The Sugar Hacienda of the Marqueses del Valle*, 29-30.

asserting, “Physically, the site lacks advantages.”<sup>702</sup> The land was not conducive to farming, with many ravines as deep as fifty to one hundred feet. This also made irrigation problematic, as did the fact that the closest source for irrigation was four kilometers away. Without a strong water supply, the mill could not be water powered like the one at Atlacomulco, but had to be animal powered. Cortés’s will to succeed won in the end, however. The large, two-story stone and mortar mill, surrounded by approximately six to seven hundred acres of sugar cane fields, became one of the largest sugar producing mills by the time of Cortés’s death in 1547. By the late 1530s, the mill produced approximately 125,000 pounds of sugar a year. Despite the disadvantages of the land, sugar production in the area was so great that a second mill just north of Tlaltenango was built at Axomulco.<sup>703</sup> Beginning in the early seventeenth century, the mills were administered by merchants who took a commission from profits. This attentive management oversaw a continued increase in production.<sup>704</sup>

The presence of sugar production in the marquisate brought with it a number of other professions and modes of production. Speaking on the use of reliable slave labor as opposed to Indian labor, Carroll wrote, “Grinding mills required sophisticated combinations of human, animal, or even more technologically complex water power to turn millstones and presses. Growers had to build and maintain ovens along with huge copper cauldrons, skimming tools, drying forms, and a whole series of winches and pulleys. These endeavors led to other trained occupations such as blacksmithing,

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>703</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 64; Barrett, *The Sugar Hacienda of the Marqueses del Valle*, 26-27.

<sup>704</sup> Luisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico’s Merchant Elite, 1590-1660: Silver, State, and Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 101.

carpentry, and pottery making. Finally, the estate needed carts and draught animals to transfer sugar from one stage of operation to the next. The fabrication, maintenance, and use of these items required a great deal of know-how.”<sup>705</sup> The development of the sugar industry also greatly increased the amount of firewood requested as Indian tribute.<sup>706</sup> In addition the numerous skilled professions that would have been a necessity of sugar production, Cortés also established a cane liquor distillery just outside of Tlaltenango, and briefly operated a winery.<sup>707</sup>

Sugar was by far the most profitable enterprise in the marquisate. Cuernavaca sugar was sent all over New Spain and Spain. It was not only the impetus for the widespread use of African slavery in Mexico, but the means to pay for it. A 1542 agreement shows that the marquisate purchased slaves through Genoese traders using sugar.<sup>708</sup> Profits from the sale of sugar also contributed to directions given in Cortés’s will. In his will Cortés ordered that the Hospital of Our Lady of Conception be built and maintained in Mexico City from the rents of his shops in the city.<sup>709</sup> The Cortés estate maintained a sugar store in Mexico City from the sixteenth century into the early nineteenth century, selling hundreds of thousands of pounds of sugar over the colonial period of Mexico. During this time, there were consistent payments to the hospital for its

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<sup>705</sup> Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 62.

<sup>706</sup> Cheryl English Martin, *Rural Society in Colonial Morelos*, Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1985), 13.

<sup>707</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 117.

<sup>708</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 65. The traders, Tomás de Marín and Leonardo Lomelín, accepted as payment sugar at the rate of 550 maravedis per 25 pounds of white sugar and lesser amounts for lower-grade sugar. The agreement was for a total of 500 slaves to be brought to Veracruz over a four year span. This contract was never fulfilled, and a lawsuit in the name of Martín Cortés against the traders appeared in 1548.

<sup>709</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 20-21.

maintenance and operation.<sup>710</sup> Sugar served not only as a centerpiece of the economic prosperity of the marquisate, but also in how Cortés sought to shape his legacy in Mexico.

Indian labor was utilized in all the fields of production on the marquisate. Whether in construction, agriculture, or industry, the comparatively high Indian population in the region made everything in the marquisate possible. Most of these were *encomienda* workers, performing tasks as tribute or payment of rent for their land. As previously discussed, African slaves were also used on the marquisate, particularly in the sugar industry. Also used were Indian slaves, taken as prisoners after resistance during conquest. In spite of many of them having specialized skills, they were often considered inferior to even African slaves. The overwhelming majority of these slaves were adults, meaning few if any of them were born to slave parents; they were enslaved for opposition to Spanish rule. The crown discouraged Indian enslavement, and continued legislation led to the decreased use of native slavery by the 1540s. By the middle of the century, there were no recorded Indian slaves working in the Tlaltenango mill, replaced instead with African slaves.<sup>711</sup>

Many of the Indian laborers on the marquisate received wages, even before the waning of the *encomienda* system. In the early 1530s, those wage earners were mostly skilled workers or those tending valuable livestock. One notable example of Cortés's paying Indians wages is the use of tamemes, or porters, although payment was mandated

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<sup>710</sup> Barrett, *The Sugar Hacienda of the Marqueses del Valle*, 22-23. Barrett gives the amount of rent to the hospital from the sugar store as sixty dollars in the 1590s, double that figure by the early eighteenth century, and 294 dollars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although Barrett does not go into detail about the conversion of these figures.

<sup>711</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 52-53.

rather than voluntary. Cortés used a large number of Indians in Morelos as porters, transporting the variety of goods produced there to Mexico City, provisions to mines, trade goods to waiting ships on the east coast, and supplies to the west coast to supply his Pacific exploration. In 1532, the second *audiencia*, acting on imperial orders, prohibited Cortés from using native porters. On appeal, the crown permitted the use of tamemes so long as they received wages. In the middle of the 1530s, Cortés employed as many as two thousand porters for the transportation of Cuernavaca goods. By the time of Cortés's death, most of the Indians on the marquisate likely received wages of some level, but actual figures for these are unknown at this time.<sup>712</sup>

With the marquisate so diverse in its geography, commercial enterprises, and labor systems, it was important that administration in the marquisate be as effective as possible. It was common for Indians to retain control of local government, and Cuernavaca was no exception.<sup>713</sup> This municipal administration largely consisted of *principales*, the upper-class Indians previously known as the *pipiltin*.<sup>714</sup> Cortés used *principales* in his local governments, a practice that continued after his death. In September 1550 a description of the responsibilities of the *principales* of Cuernavaca included managing the day-to-day business of the town, such as the collection of tribute, protecting the population and property of the estate, taking testimony in lawsuits, and managing the local civil and criminal courts. These *principales* maintained Nahuatl surnames and spoke only Nahuatl, requiring an interpreter for business with Spaniards.

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<sup>712</sup> Riley, *Fernando Cortés and the Marquesado in Morelos*, 50-51.

<sup>713</sup> Robert S. Haskett, "Indian Town Government in Colonial Cuernavaca: Persistence, Adaptation, and Change," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 67, no. 2 (May, 1987), 203.

<sup>714</sup> Gibson, *The Aztreacs Under Spanish Rule*, 155, 175. The *pipiltin* class consisted of the relatives or heirs of caciques or other leaders. Gibson asserts that "the recognition of the Indian upper classes was a practical expedient in early colonial administration."



They were responsible to Juan de Alcala, who was likely the *corregidor*.<sup>715</sup> Cuernavaca enjoyed a much longer tradition of Indian rule in municipal government in the colonial period than any other region.<sup>716</sup>

The influence of Cortés after his death can also be seen in other Spanish-Indian relations in Cuernavaca. The same month as the evaluation of municipal government, September 1550, the *audiencia* ordered estate administrator Bernardino del Castillo to pay the Indians of Cuernavaca 1,175 gold pesos for the use of land.<sup>717</sup> It is possible that this order of payment to the Indians was a result of an evaluation of the marquise ordered by Cortés in his will. In his order that his estate be evaluated to determine whether or not he took control of land not belonging to him, with wronged groups compensated, he dictated, “in the case of Bernardino del Castillo, my servant, to whom, in past years, I gave a piece of land, situated on the outskirts of Coyoacán, on which he built a sugar mill, I order that this be done should it appear that the land belong to third parties.”<sup>718</sup> There is no evidence Bernardino del Castillo used any land near Coyoacán, but he was the operator of a sugar mill outside of Cuernavaca at Amanalco.<sup>719</sup>

The sugar mill at Amanalco was a very contentious issue between the Spanish and the Indians in the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1542, a lawsuit was brought against

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<sup>715</sup> “Unpublished Document, 25 September 1550,” in “Documents of many types relating to the family of Fernando Cortés and to his hereditary estate in Mexico, the Marquesate [sic] of the valley,” Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>716</sup> Haskett, “*Indian Town Governement in Colonial Cuernavaca*,” 207.

<sup>717</sup> “Unpublished Document 25 September 1550”; “Unpublished Document, 10 September 1550,” in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The former makes a notorial reference to the ruling, which is given to Bernardino del Castillo. The latter is a copy of the ruling itself.

<sup>718</sup> Cortés, *Postrera voluntad*, 38; translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 91.

<sup>719</sup> “Unpublished Document, 1 August 1543,” in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Bernardino del Castillo by the Indians of Cuernavaca over water rights. The Indians claimed that water from a nearby spring was being completely diverted to the cane fields five times a week, leaving only two days a week for the watering of the Indian's fields. This lack of proper irrigation, the Indians claimed, caused harm to their crops. Bernardino del Castillo claimed that the water source was on his land, giving him the right to it under the stipulations of Cortés's marquisate, but he nevertheless shared it with the Indians. He accused the Indians of trying to take advantage of the irrigation system he created for sugar cane production. When the Indians showed the investigator a long since dried up river bed as proof of their claims, the ruling went against the Indians.<sup>720</sup> In 1543, Bernardino del Castillo accused the Indians of removing marker-stones that indicated the boundaries of Cortés's lease of land to his administrator. In the presence of a lawyer and a notary, Bernardino re-measured his land, three hundred by two hundred fathoms, and placed boundary stones in the corners so large the Indians could not move them.<sup>721</sup> The mill remained the focus of lawsuits even after Bernardino de Castillo's death: Bernardino's widow, Inés de Velasco, was sued by her daughter Isabel de Castillo and her husband, Antonio de Guadalajara, for rights to profits from the mill in the late 1560s.<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> "Unpublished Document, 13 September 1542," in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>721</sup> "Unpublished Document, 1 August 1543."

<sup>722</sup> "Unpublished Document, not dated," in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Inés de Velasco was the daughter of Francisco de Orduña, a conqueror present at the siege of Tenochtitlán in 1521. Orduña had been assigned the *encomiendas* of Yautepec and Tepuztlan in the late 1520s before Cortés reclaimed them in his 1529 grant. Orduña gave his daughter (one of six), Inés de Velasco part of the tribute from an *encomienda* that included Igualapa, Ometepec, and Suchistlaquaca, south of Mexico City. Very little is known about Antonio de Guadalajara. Hammerich y Valencia notes that he had been assigned the *encomienda* of Nexpa, east of Acapulco before it was reassigned in 1531; he may have been an original conqueror. It is likely the husband of Isabel de Castillo was another Antonio de Guadalajara, perhaps the son of the first. More

The strained relations caused by issues concerning the sugar mill at Amanalco sheds light on difficulties in Spanish-Indian relations. Land quantified the conquest; it became the primary measure of Cortés's greatest accomplishment. This land, however, was only one factor of life in New Spain. The social confluence of conquerors and conquered was a constant source of friction in sixteenth century Mexico. By the middle of the century, many Indian groups had found in the court system an avenue of recourse they previously did not have under the *encomienda* system.<sup>723</sup> As was the case with the removal of the boundary markers, however, others resorted to alternative methods that both physically and figuratively blurred the lines between Spanish and Indian life. While impossible to distinguish the difference between tacit support and simple obedience among the Indian population on the marquisate, it is clear through the utilization of the native population by Cortés and his heirs that larger issues of Spanish-Indian antagonism were few in number. Life on the marquisate, while showing symptoms of the greater social issues of the day, was largely stable and productive.

In examining the Cuernavaca region of the marquisate, it is not hard to see how Cortés sought to shape his life and legacy in New Spain. Agriculturally and industrially, there were few economic ventures in all of New Spain in which Cortés did not invest throughout the region. Fields of maize, beans, cotton, and a variety of other goods dotted the landscape, as did vineyards and orchards. Mulberry fields surrounded silkworm facilities just as sugar cane fields enveloped mills. Along with the various demands of agriculture, various workshops were established, as were stables for a multitude of

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research is needed on the subject. (Hammerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain*, 139, 167, 209.)

<sup>723</sup> Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 80.

livestock. With the large native population tending to this panoply of business, Cortés was able to ensure that every venture had the best chance of success – which most of them were. Using Indians as porters, and ships built within his marquisate, Cortés established a system of trade that spanned the entirety of the Spanish empire. Long established as a center of production, Cuernavaca not only provided Cortés the means to determine the economic influence he would have on New Spain but the financial means to explore additional paths to fame and honor.

The most lasting impression of the importance of Cuernavaca to Cortés is his palace in the center of the city. It is possible that construction began in the 1520s, shortly after Cortés first claimed the land, but construction began in earnest almost immediately after Cortés return to New Spain in 1531 with his grant of the marquisate.<sup>724</sup> It was designed after the Alcázar de Colón, the palace built by Diego Columbus in Santo Domingo, Hispaniola, during the time Cortés lived there before going to Cuba.<sup>725</sup> As construction continued throughout the 1530s, it became the primary home for Cortés and his wife, Juana de Zúñiga. It was the birthplace of his son, Martín, and his daughters. The Cortés family filled it with goods from around world in a manner fitting the highest level of society. In an inventory taken in 1549, after Cortés's death, twenty-two tapestries and hangings in gold and silk thread covered the walls. Other walls were said to have been lined with leather decorated with gold and silver. Floors were covered with

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<sup>724</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 92. Haskett asserts that construction began in 1526 when indigenous masons and carpenters were sent to Cuernavaca from various regions for construction. At that time, however, there were a variety of reparations being made to extant buildings in the town, as well as the construction of irrigation channels with stone and mortar walls; the presence of workers in Cuernavaca in 1526 is not a direct indication of the construction of the palace, particularly when Cortés was at the time in the process of completing his palace in Coyoacán.

<sup>725</sup> John McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches of Sixteenth-Century Mexico: Atrios, Posas, Open Chapels, and other Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 447; Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 92.

highly decorative rugs. Guests dined on gold and silver services. It was rumored to have held as many as four hundred servants. Viceroy Mendoza was a guest of the palace on at least one occasion before he and Cortés had a falling out over the issue of exploration.<sup>726</sup> Designed in the image of one of the most important structure in the Indies, decorated with the most lavish of decorations, and host to the most powerful figures in New Spain, with his palace Cortés sought to relate his power and prestige, not only to his contemporaries but far into the future. Today the palace is a museum where, among the Indian artifacts, one can find a mural by twentieth-century artist Diego Rivera depicting Cortés as a tyrant watching native laborers toil to their death in the sugar cane fields.<sup>727</sup> Fairly or unfairly, Cortés's efforts to be remembered were successful.

As the focus or capital of the vast marquisate, Cuernavaca remained important to Cortés's heirs. Central to their efforts was expansion. In 1559, Martín Cortés purchased land from the *principales* of Ahuehueva in what was certainly one of many such small additions.<sup>728</sup> While there is no evidence Martín took residence in Cuernavaca for any extended period of time after he returned to New Spain in 1563, preferring the social scene of Mexico City, he nevertheless directed an expansion and renovation of the palace. For most of Martín's tenure as marquis, however, he was constantly embroiled in lawsuits with the Indians of Cuernavaca over the familiar issues of land usurpation, water rights, and tribute and labor systems.<sup>729</sup> It was under the fourth marquis, Pedro Cortés, that the Cuernavaca region of the marquisate received the attention it had under Cortés.

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<sup>726</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 505; Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 92-93. Díaz del Castillo related that Cortés took it as a sign of grandeur that at one banquet he held at the palace a significant amount of silver was stolen by the guests.

<sup>727</sup> Aguilar-Moreno and Cabrera, *Diego Rivera*, 45; 86.

<sup>728</sup> Martin, *Rural Society in Colonial Morelos*, 15.

<sup>729</sup> Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 94, 205-206.

Rather than organize agriculture and business within the marquisate, as his grandfather had done, Pedro focused on the land itself. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the marquisate was more valuable as real estate than for what it produced. Pedro leased large tracts of land to settlers for farms and ranches, collecting rents while maintaining the traditional rights of the marquisate. Some land was sold outright. This approach also led him to make claims to unutilized land around the marquisate to increase its size and income. The decreasing Indian population over the latter half of the sixteenth century left tracts of land vacant, unable to be used by anyone. Some of these lands were on the marquisate, apportioned to Indians as required in the grant of the marquisate in 1529. When a royal prosecutor brought suit against Pedro in 1610 on the grounds that he overstepped his rights as marquis in selling lands that did not belong to him, Pedro lost. On appeal to the Council of the Indies, the issue was not ruled on until 1627, at which time Pedro was forced to abandon his claims.<sup>730</sup> During that seventeen-year battle, Pedro continued to expand the operable size of the marquisate through the acquisition or utilization of unoccupied land. In 1619, Pedro laid claim to six ranches outside Tepuztlán.<sup>731</sup> By 1623 he also claimed abandoned Indian pueblos in the area, including

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<sup>730</sup> “Unpublished Document, 2 May 1693,” in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 132-133. “Unpublished Document, 2 May 1693” is a summary of the lawsuits brought against Pedro Cortés over the issue of claims to abandoned land. It is not bound with the collection of documents that make up catalog number 98 in the Gilcrease Museum archive, but has been cataloged with these documents because of the similar subject matter.

<sup>731</sup> “Unpublished Document, 5 March 1619,” in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; “Unpublished Document, August 1619,” in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Nexpa, Tlatenchi, and Ixtla.<sup>732</sup> Nearing a century from the establishment of the marquisate, Cuernavaca remained a crucial source of income to the Cortés family.

From the time when the region was known as Cuauhnáhuac to the time of the marquisate Cuernavaca was a land of beauty and abundance. It was a place where Aztec rulers built palaces and gardens to retreat from the burdens of the capital city. Cortés envisioned much the same; his own palace was fit for royalty. There is no doubt that Cortés saw in Cuernavaca what the Aztec rulers saw, and for the same reasons. Greater than its beauty was the fertility of the soil, making it a crucial region on which to exert direct control. Cortés's claim to Cuernavaca not long after conquest was strategic; its economic importance was clear, but the Indian population of the region also made it particularly important. Cortés conquered not only land but people as well, and Cuernavaca was a shining example of what Mexico had to offer Spain in both cases. In line with the Aztec rulers, dominion over Cuernavaca was only appropriate for a conqueror and governor. When Cortés was no longer the governor, but simply the marquis, Cuernavaca played no less of an economic role. While just one segment of the marquisate, Cuernavaca stood out as a primary force of economic influence in a New Spain in which Cortés no longer had direct political control. Furthermore, it allowed him the means to continue his search for the next thing to elevate his status. Cortés's struggle to regain relevance in the eyes of the Charles V and many Spaniards was what drove the final twenty years of his life, and for nearly all of that time Cuernavaca stood as the means by which he could pursue those goals.

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<sup>732</sup> "Unpublished Document, 16 December 1619," in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; "Unpublished Document, 5 March 1623," in Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 98, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Ixtla is listed as "Ystoluca."

## Oaxaca

Just as Cuernavaca was the political and economic center of the marquisate, Oaxaca was the geographic center. With Cuernavaca to the northwest, Tuxtla to the northeast, and Tehuantepec to the southeast, the Valley of Oaxaca served before and after conquest as a strategic center of trade in southern Mexico. While geography turned the region into a trade center, its flat, accessible landscape made it an agricultural center, and the surrounding mountains also gave the region abundant mineral deposits. In short, Cortés's claim to Oaxaca made perfect strategic sense; economically, the region contained extant production and distribution. Yet the title Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca is somewhat of a misnomer. While Cortés very likely envisioned himself controlling the entirety of the valley, the reality was quite the opposite. In his grant of the marquisate, four towns are mentioned by name: Oaxaca, Cuilapa, Etlá, and Tecuilabacoya.<sup>733</sup> Although Cortés would attempt to claim that these *cabeceras* had many subject towns, his dominion over the region would be largely limited to these four towns, known primarily as the *Cuatro Villas del Marquesado*.<sup>734</sup> The economic opportunities offered by the region appealed not only to Cortés but to many settlers as well, and even the crown, making the valley one of the most carved-up and divided areas in New Spain. In the process, Cortés's claim to the region was greatly diminished, leaving his title of Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca largely symbolic.

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<sup>733</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.

<sup>734</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 137.



Today the state of Oaxaca is one of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse regions of Mexico. The indigenous population can be divided into fifteen linguistic groups, with numerous regional dialects. The history of conquest in this region is a factor in this diversity, but geography plays a principal role.<sup>735</sup> Among the earliest settlers of the valley of Oaxaca were the Zapotecs, who dominated the region until the arrival of the Mixtecs from the west around the tenth century.<sup>736</sup> By the end of the fifteenth century the region was under Aztec control.<sup>737</sup> Lying entirely in tropical climate, the Oaxaca region spans the cool, dryer highland region of the Mixteca Alta to the warm, humid lowlands of the south Pacific coast. The majority of the region consists of the Sierra Madre mountain ranges surrounding valleys that today still serve as fruitful agricultural locations.<sup>738</sup> The most densely populated area of the highland Oaxaca region was along the basins of two rivers: Atoyac and Verde. Both rivers flow southward to the Pacific coast.<sup>739</sup> While it has been traditionally suggested that pre-Hispanic settlement patterns were solely based on these agricultural opportunities, more recent studies have shown that social and political factors also played a significant role, suggesting a long history of Zapotec imperial rule in the region.<sup>740</sup> There are three principal valleys that make up the Oaxaca

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<sup>735</sup> John K. Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), 9.

<sup>736</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 48. For information on the Zapotecs, see Joyce Marcus, *Zapotec Civilization: How Urban Society Developed in Mexico's Oaxaca Valley* (New York, Thames and Hudson, 1996). For information on the Mixtecs, see Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>737</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 48. Aztec conquest occurred in the reign of Aztec *Tlatoani* Ahuítzotl (r. 1486-1502).

<sup>738</sup> Arthur A. Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos: Ancient Peoples of Southern Mexico* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 36-37.

<sup>739</sup> Arthur A. Joyce, "Formative Period Social Change in the Lower Rio Verde Valley, Oaxaca, Mexico," *Latin American Antiquity*, vol. 2, no. 2 (June, 1991); Deborah L. Nichols and Christopher A. Pool, *The Oxford Handbook of Mesoamerican Archaeology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 231-232.

<sup>740</sup> Anne V.T. Kirkby, *The Use of Land and Water Resources in the Past and Present Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1973); Linda Nicholas et al., "Prehispanic

valley region: ETLA, Tlacolula, and Zumatlán; these valleys connect to form a “Y” shape.<sup>741</sup> At the intersection of these three valleys lies Monte Albán, a Zapotec town founded as early as 500 B.C that served as an economic and political center for hundreds of years. Over this time it also served as a trade center, defensive fortification, and religious site. Just a few miles to the northeast of Monte Albán sat a village that, when the Aztecs arrived in the fifteenth century, was named Huaxyacac. They fortified the village, making it a crucial point along their trade route to the Pacific Ocean. Called Oaxaca by the Spanish, to Cortés it was very early seen as a crucial strategic location of conquest and control.<sup>742</sup>

The Spanish first arrived in the Oaxaca region in late 1521, shortly after the conquest of the Aztec capital. Cortés heard about riches to be found in the south, but control of the region was also important to further exploration along the Pacific coast. He sent Francisco de Orozco with an army to pacify the region, which he accomplished in early 1522. Although the Mixtecs in the area had received word of the Spanish invasion, and had prepared themselves accordingly, superior Spanish tactics and technology brought an end to fighting within weeks. Witnessing firsthand the opportunity the fertile

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Colonization of the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico,” *Human Ecology*, vol. 14, no. 2 (June, 1986). In her work, Kirkby utilized both historical and contemporary settlement patterns to conclude that human settlement in the region was based on the location of prime agricultural land. Nicholas et al. demonstrated that economic and social factors played role as well, as the best agricultural regions did not always have the longest history of settlement, suggesting strong political forces at work in Oaxaca from the earliest periods of settlement. For more research into Zapotec imperial strategy, see Robert N. Zeitlin, “The Isthmus and the Valley of Oaxaca: Questions about Zapotec Imperialism in Formative Period Mesoamerica,” *American Antiquity*, vol. 55, no. 2 (April, 1990).

<sup>741</sup> Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 9.

<sup>742</sup> Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 2-3; Manlio Barbosa-Cano, “Huaxyacac: Aztec Military Base on the Imperial Frontier,” in *Economies and Politics in the Aztec Realm*, Mary G. Hodge and Michael E. Smith, eds. (Austin: TX: The University of Texas Press, 1994), 389; Joyce Marcus, “How Monte Albán Represented Itself,” *The Art of Urbanism: How Mesoamerican Kingdoms Represented Themselves in Architecture and Imagery*, William Leonard Fash and Leonardo López Luján, eds. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2009), 95; Nichols and Pool, *The Oxford Handbook of Mesoamerican Archaeology*, 236.

land offered, Orozco suggested to Cortés that the region be settled immediately to secure it from any further rebellion. Cortés ordered Orozco to march further south to pacify and settle the town of Tututepec near the Pacific coast. Cortés wrote that the natives on the coast were hostile to the Spanish encroachment and posed a threat to Spaniards and friendly Indians in the region.<sup>743</sup> Chance, however, asserts that Cortés understood the economic importance of the Oaxaca valley and ordered Orozco to Tututepec so he could claim it for himself.<sup>744</sup> At the same time Cortés ordered Orozco to Tututepec, he also sent Pedro de Alvarado to the town at the head of an army Zapotecs from Tehuantepec. Tututepec was conquered in 1522 and renamed Segura de la Frontera. The Spanish soldiers-turned-colonists did not care for the warm, humid climate of the coast and returned to the Oaxaca valley to settle.<sup>745</sup>

Whether Chance's assertion of greed on the part of Cortés is accurate or not, Cortés did claim the valley of Oaxaca as his personal *encomienda* not long after, but he encountered trouble in the form of land claims by the soldiers he ordered out of the area. This was the beginning of Cortés's difficulties in establishing personal control over the region. As governor, he attempted to remove the settlers from the region, but was unable to do so before his expedition to Honduras. While he was in Honduras, his political detractors, Chirino and Salazar, when they took control of the government of New Spain, encouraged further settlement of the region; the town of Oaxaca reached a Spanish population high enough to obtain formal municipality status from the crown, ending Cortés's claim to the town. The area further slipped from Cortés's hands during the reign

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<sup>743</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 268-269.

<sup>744</sup> Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 31.

<sup>745</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 301; Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 31; Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos*, 3.

of Nuño de Guzmán as president of the first *audiencia* when Cortés was in Spain. Guzmán decreed that all *encomenderos* in the valley had to take residence in Oaxaca and ordered the Spanish community to organize as a formal holding of the crown under the name Antequera. When Cortés returned to New Spain as marquis in 1531, his claim to Oaxaca, despite the imperial grant, was far from assured.<sup>746</sup>

Cortés sought control over the entire valley of Oaxaca in his 1529 grant of the marquisate. Knowing the difficulties he faced with the Spanish settlement in the area, it is possible that his title of Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca was an effort on his part to accentuate his claim. Although the grant named only the four towns of Oaxaca, Cuilapa, Etlá, and Tecuilabacoya, Cortés claimed in 1532 that the four towns had thirteen subject towns that spanned much of the land across the three main valleys.<sup>747</sup> The second *audiencia* ruled against Cortés's claim to these subject villages. Furthermore, in response to a petition from a *procurador* of Antequera, in 1533 the emperor issued a decree that clarified Cortés's original grant: the jurisdiction of the marquisate was limited to only the four towns listed in his grant. While Antequera was originally named Oaxaca, Cortés could only claim the Indian village outside Antequera.<sup>748</sup> The Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca only held a portion of his titular land.

While Cortés's landholding in the Oaxaca valley was greatly diminished by numerous agents between 1522 and 1533, leaving him the territory of four towns, he nevertheless retained approximately 1,500 square kilometers of land in the valley. This

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<sup>746</sup> Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 31-36.

<sup>747</sup> Cortés, *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 560; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 49. The thirteen pueblos Cortés listed include: Talistaca, Macuilsuchil, Cimatlan, Tepecimatlan, Ocotlan, Tlacochoaguaya, los Peñoles, Huexolotlan, Cuyotepec, Teozapotlan, Mitla, Tlacolula, and Zapotlan.

<sup>748</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 238-240; Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 37.

included areas of dense Indian population, giving Cortés dominion over an estimated twenty percent of the Indian population of the entire valley. The town of Oaxaca, the native settlement outside Antequera, had small subject villages in the countryside, and Cortés encouraged Indian settlement in the area. Chance asserts that Cortés sought to envelope Antequera to prevent the expansion of other Spanish interests in the area, a claim that merits further study. After the conquest of the region, many Mixtec populations were rounded up and resettled in Cuilapa, making it one of the largest towns in Oaxaca in the sixteenth century. Both ETLA and Tecuilabacoya were sites of pre-Hispanic regional markets and as such had a considerable native population.<sup>749</sup> While the marquisate in Oaxaca was greatly diminished from Cortés's original vision, it nevertheless retained a measure of influence and economic viability.

Due to the limited nature of the marquisate in Oaxaca, and the competition for land, Cortés and his heirs mostly limited their interest in the region to the collection of Indian tribute.<sup>750</sup> This is not surprising, considering that Oaxaca had the second highest Indian population of the regions of the marquisate after Cuernavaca. Records from 1567 show somewhere between eleven and twelve thousand tributaries, placing the overall Indian population of the Oaxaca marquisate near fifty thousand. This figure made up approximately a quarter of the Indian population of the entire marquisate at that time. The majority of these fifty thousand were displaced Mixtecs living in Cuilapa; ETLA and Tecuilabacoya had mixed Zapotec and Mixtec communities, and Oaxaca was comprised primarily of Nahuatl speakers, most of whom were brought to the region by the Spanish or followed the Spanish as skilled craftsmen. Population figures in the *cuatro villas* take

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<sup>749</sup> Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 22, 37-38.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

the predictable downward turn in the late sixteenth century: less than eight thousand by 1571, and under five thousand by the end of the century. In 1620, nearing the end of Pedro's marquisate, there were just over three thousand tributaries in Oaxaca. Population figures are uniquely difficult to calculate for Oaxaca; rather than concentrating the Indians into large villas, Cortés scattered the population into small settlements, frustrating efforts to obtain an accurate census. Gerhard suggests, likely accurately, that Cortés did this to claim as much land in the area as possible and to prevent Antequera and its Spanish *vecinos* from acquiring more land.<sup>751</sup>

Despite Indian tribute being the primary source of income for the Oaxaca marquisate, Cortés nevertheless attempted small business ventures in the region. The staple crops of the valley were the traditional Indian products: maize, beans, squash, and peppers. Some land of the marquisate was also devoted to wheat production. While this type of farming is largely subsistence-based, the regional markets in Etlá and Tecuilabacoya suggest some level of commercial activity. As Chance explains, the Indians of the valley were less technologically advanced than the peoples of the Valley of Mexico; metalworking and other crafts in the region were much less sophisticated than in other regions, making the Mixtecs and Zapotecs primarily farm laborers. A number of ranches in the marquisate raised cattle, horses, goats, and sheep. The marquisate was a very important source of produce and meat to Antequera in the middle of the sixteenth

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<sup>751</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 166; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 90.

century, but by the 1570s the ranches were rented out, and livestock numbers decreased.<sup>752</sup>

Less successful were the industrial projects in the marquisate. Cortés attempted silk production in Oaxaca by planting mulberry trees in ETLA. As was the case with his silk industry in Cuernavaca, production in Oaxaca completely failed by 1550. A wheat mill outside ETLA operated on the estate for much of the sixteenth century, but it was sold in 1591. Even less successful was a tannery in Antequera that had ceased production by the 1570s. The marquisate's principal form of investment in Oaxaca in the late sixteenth century came in the form of loans to the citizens of Antequera.<sup>753</sup> It is likely that waning interest in commercial and industrial development in Oaxaca on the part of Cortés and his heirs had more to do with their success in other parts of the marquisate than local competition or governmental restrictions. For several years during the 1540s and 1550s, the marquisate held a virtual monopoly on the meat supply to Antequera.<sup>754</sup> Rather than foster what few commercial successes were to be had in the marquisate in Oaxaca, attention turned elsewhere, to more profitable regions.

On the whole, after Cortés attempted and failed to control the entire valley throughout the 1520s, the attention he gave to the region was cursory. He utilized land, established villages, installed commercial systems, and upheld the political and religious obligations of manorial rule. But all this was merely installed, not developed. The Valley of Oaxaca was one of the most contested regions of jurisdiction and property

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<sup>752</sup> William B. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 113; Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 23, 38.

<sup>753</sup> Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca*, 113-114; Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 38-39.

<sup>754</sup> Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca*, 113.

rights in all of Mexico, and Cortés was quickly removed from this particular arena. There were, figuratively if not literally, greener pastures elsewhere. Despite the problems he faced, the lack of effort on the part of Cortés and heirs to influence the development of Oaxaca may be the most important aspect of Cortés's legacy in the region. Chance notes, "From all this it is clear that the Marquesado was never in any real sense a threat to Antequera. But it is also clear that it impeded the city's growth in two important ways: it severely restricted the number of towns available for distribution in encomienda to city vecinos, and it limited the amount of land available for municipal commons and pasture."<sup>755</sup> With such a large portion of the Oaxaca valley Indians living on a marquisate that was simply maintained rather than actively in development, it may be argued that the neglect of the region by Cortés and his heirs contributed to the continuation of Indian practices and beliefs. Anthropologist Arthur A. Joyce states, "The research of ethnographers and linguists who study the indigenous peoples of present-day Oaxaca shows that, despite the profound disruptions of the Spanish Conquest, pre-Hispanic traditions and social memories continue to shape the lives and understandings of indigenous communities."<sup>756</sup> The small actions taken by Cortés to limit the scope of Antequera and its Spanish residents – surrounding Antequera with Indian settlements, dividing the Indian population into smaller villages to occupy more land, maintaining traditional agriculture and markets – limited Spanish influence in the area and contributed to the survival of native culture. Cortés's role in this should not be overstated; this effect was not by design. The idea that Cortés in some form contributed to the preservation of Indian culture and society is interesting, however, as it goes against the popularly held

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<sup>755</sup> Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 39.

<sup>756</sup> Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos*, 5.



image of him as a conqueror and destroyer of Indian culture and adds a new dimension to his legacy in Mexico. The Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca may not have controlled the entire valley, but his impact on the region may still be felt to this day.

### **Tehuantepec**

Tehuantepec is a province in southeastern Oaxaca on the Pacific Ocean that held great appeal for Cortés from first contact. On a 1521 expedition to search for a waterway that connected the Atlantic Ocean to the Southern Sea, Gonzalo de Sandoval encountered the Zapotec religious and trade center of Tehuantepec. The Zapotecs peacefully offered themselves as subjects of the Spanish emperor and gave gifts that offered clues to the natural resources of the area. Cortés wrote, “[A chieftain of Tehuantepec] made me a gift of gold ornaments, jewelry, and articles of featherwork, all of which I handed over to Your Majesty’s treasurer.”<sup>757</sup> Sandoval did not find the strait he was looking for, but Cortés found in Tehuantepec a rich source of precious metals and a center for Pacific Ocean exploration and trade. Claiming much of the region for himself not long after, Tehuantepec, along with the towns of Jalapa [del Marqués] and Ultepec, are listed on the 1529 grant of the marquisate.<sup>758</sup> Cortés immediately constructed a shipyard and prepared for Pacific exploration. Tehuantepec remained an important aspect of Cortés’s economic and exploratory ventures during his lifetime, but the presence of a privately-owned port in New Spain proved too much for the crown; through an agreement with

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<sup>757</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 270.

<sup>758</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.

Martín Cortés in 1560 Tehuantepec was escheated just three years later. For the remainder of the colonial period, the marquisate held very little territory in the region.<sup>759</sup>

The region sits in the middle of an isthmus known as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Stretching through the modern states of Veracruz and Oaxaca, the isthmus separates the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by only 125 miles. Constituting the largest break in the Sierra Madre mountain range, this lowland pass drops to approximately two hundred feet above sea level. The region is largely a flat plain covered in river systems feeding into lagoons along the coasts. Until the opening of the Panama Canal in the early twentieth century, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was the primary route of the transoceanic movement of goods.<sup>760</sup> Gulf Coast Indians had long established commerce to the interior using the Coatzacoalcos River; running from a town on the Gulf Coast with the same name to the town of Utlatepec north of Tehuantepec, Gulf Coast trade extended far into the Oaxaca and Chiapas region.<sup>761</sup> Sandoval encountered this trade system in a 1521 expedition in search of a strait to connect the two oceans. Realizing the potential of the Coatzacoalcos River, he followed it northward to the gulf, renaming the coastal town of Coatzacoalcos as Espíritu Santo.<sup>762</sup> While Cortés continued to search for a waterway into 1522 and

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<sup>759</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 264-265.

<sup>760</sup> Edmund Otis Hovey, "The Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Tehuantepec National Railway," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, vol. 39, no. 2 (1907), 78-80; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 264.

<sup>761</sup> Lorenzo Ochoa Salas and Olaf Jaime Riverón, "The Cultural Mosaic of the Gulf Coast during the Prehispanic Period," *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, Alan R. Sandstrom and Enrique Hugo Garcia Valencia, eds. (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2005), 23. See also René R. Gadacz, *Pre-Spanish Commerce in the Gulf Coast Lowlands of Mexico* (Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Western Publishers, 1979).

<sup>762</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 300; Miles Percy DuVal, *Cadiz to Cathay: The Story of the Long Struggle for a Waterway across the American Isthmus* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1940), 3-4; John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra: Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Oaxaca* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 16; Alfredo Delgado Calderón, "The Ethnohistory of Southern Veracruz," *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, Alan R. Sandstrom and Enrique Hugo Garcia Valencia, eds. (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2005), 50.; Thomas, *Conquest*, 556.

1523 on behalf of the emperor, he did understand the importance of this isthmian trade system; he not only claimed the region of Tehuantepec, including the town of Ultatepec on the Coatzacoalcos River, for himself in 1524, he also passed through the region himself on his way to Honduras in the same year.<sup>763</sup> The town of Espíritu Santo, which is in the Guazacualco region of the modern-day state of Tabasco, served for much of the sixteenth century as a base for Spanish expeditions and military activity due to the mobility afforded by the river system that stretched far into inland Oaxaca.<sup>764</sup>

The Indians of Tehuantepec did not resist the Spanish when they arrived in the area in 1521. Smaller groups such as Huave and Zoque also put up little resistance. The Zapotec Indian ruler of Tehuantepec was an enemy of the hostile Mixtecs of the region, centered at Tututepec to the west. It was from the Indians of Tehuantepec that the Spanish learned of the riches of Tututepec. Cortés also reported that Montezuma had told him that the Tututepec region was one of the sources of Aztec gold.<sup>765</sup> Tututepec was a difficult area for the Spanish to hold, with constant rebellion; also, as earlier noted, Spanish settlers preferred the cooler weather of the Oaxacan highlands to the humid coast. When Cortés assigned himself land on the coast, therefore, it was Tehuantepec, not only because of the accord with the coastal Zapotecs but also the other opportunities that it provided.<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 339.

<sup>764</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 267; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 137-138, 264.

<sup>765</sup> Cortés, *Letters to Mexico*, 93; Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 16; Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos*, 2.

<sup>766</sup> Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos*, 3.

The Tehuantepec region of the marquisate, as listed in the 1529 grant, names the three head towns of Tehuantepec, Utlatepec, and Jalapa del Marqués.<sup>767</sup> While Cortés had a design in mind for each of these areas, the Indian population was not one of the most significant factors. Tehuantepec, as a capital city of the region, was the most populated; its native tribute was a considerable source of income in the early years of the marquisate. It was a political and religious center with an estimated population of twenty to twenty-five thousand at the time the Spanish arrived in Mexico. While much of the Zapotec city lies buried beneath the modern-day city, archaeological evidence cites neighborhoods with hundreds of houses.<sup>768</sup> This estimate, however, might be low; in 1550 there were an estimated 6,250 tributaries in Tehuantepec and its subject villages, placing the population near twenty-five thousand in the middle of the sixteenth century. From the middle of the century, however, the population began to decline: 5,500 tributaries in 1563, 3,800 in 1570, and fewer than 2,500 by the 1620s.<sup>769</sup> Cortés's commercial interests in the region led to many construction and mining projects, and this native population provided the labor to accomplish those ends. Because Tehuantepec was escheated to the crown in 1563, the marquisate's interest in the region fell to Jalapa del Marqués and Utlatepec. Because of the loss of Tehuantepec, Utlatepec was claimed as a dependency of Jalapa del Marqués well into the seventeenth century; while population figures for Utlatepec remain unclear, it is possible that tributary reports for Jalapa del Marqués include those of Utlatepec. Regardless of the situation, these were not densely populated regions. While the 1580 work *Relaciones geográficas* asserted

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<sup>767</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.

<sup>768</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 137-138, 266; Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos*, 278.

<sup>769</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 137-138, 266.

that Jalapa once had four thousand tributaries, by the middle of the century there were fewer than 1,500. In the 1560s and 1570s there were fewer than a thousand, and by 1620 less than four hundred. In the first hundred years of the marquisate, the Indian population in this area decreased by nearly ninety percent. Jalapa del Marqués was primarily a rural ranching area, so there was no need for a large population. While death is undoubtedly a factor in this population decrease, urbanization was also likely involved.<sup>770</sup> What is clear, however, is that with the exception of Tehuantepec itself Cortés's economic interests in the region were not based on Indian tribute.

What Cortés saw foremost in Tehuantepec was access to the Pacific Ocean. Construction of shipyards began in the late 1520s for the purpose of exploration, but the location of the shipyards is unclear.<sup>771</sup> Contemporary reports assert that the ships were launched from the Laguna Superior, which is fed by a number of rivers; according to historian Max Moorhead, it was customary at that time to launch ships from the mouths of rivers.<sup>772</sup> One possible location, Moorhead and others asserted, is the mouth of the Chimalapa River, known today as Espíritu Santo River flowing southward into the east side of the lagoon. The region had an abundance of timber for construction, and the headwaters of the Chimalapa were approximately fifty kilometers from those of the Coatzacoalcos, where shipbuilding supplies were brought from the Gulf Coast.<sup>773</sup> This

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<sup>770</sup> García Martínez, *El Marques del Valle*, 166; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 378-379; Laura Machuca Gallegos, *Comercio de sal y redes de poder en Tehuantepec durante la época colonial* (Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2007), 80.

<sup>771</sup> C. Harvey Gardiner, "Tempest in Tehuantepec, 1529: Local Events in Imperial Perspective," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 35, no. 1 (February, 1955), 1-13.

<sup>772</sup> Max L. Moorhead, "Hernán Cortés and the Tehuantepec Passage," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 29, no. 3 (August, 1949), 376.

<sup>773</sup> Moorhead, "Hernán Cortés and the Tehuantepec Passage," 376; Miller, "Cortés and the First Attempt to Colonize California," 5; Donald Brand, "The Development of Pacific Coast Ports during the Spanish

location does not, however, coincide with Cortés's vague description of his isthmian commercial route. Cortés, writing from his port of Santiago near the town of Tehuantepec, on the Tehuantepec River, asserted that goods were shipped on water from Vera Cruz to within twenty leagues of his location.<sup>774</sup> Based on this distance, the closest route would be to Utlatepec, less than forty leagues (approximately two hundred kilometers) away from Tehuantepec. Tamemes were known to have been employed to carry goods between Utlatepec and Tehuantepec.<sup>775</sup> Shipwrights were also hired from the Gulf Coast, and Indian labor tribute was also used for the construction of the shipyards and the ships themselves.<sup>776</sup> Cortés also had a shipyard built at the mouth of the Tehuantepec River.<sup>777</sup> These construction projects not only facilitated Pacific exploration but also established a commercial connection for Cortés between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

In addition to maritime enterprises, Tehuantepec was also a location for mining operations, specifically gold. Records show that in 1534 a portion of Indian tribute came in the form of gold dust. In the 1530s Cortés established a number of mines in the region; by 1540 there were hundreds of Indians and slaves working in gold mines. A

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Colonial Period in Mexico," *Urbanization and the Pacific World, 1500-1900*, Lionel Frost, ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 78.

<sup>774</sup> Hernán Cortés, "Carta de Hernán Cortés, marqués del Valle, a su pariente y procurador *ad litem* el licenciado Francisco Núñez, de Puerto de Santiago en la Mar del Sur, 20 de Junio de 1533," in Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: cartas y documentos*, 107-121.

<sup>775</sup> Laura Machuca Gallegos, "El Marquesado de Valle en Tehuantepec, México (1522-1563)," *América bajo los Austrias: economía, cultura, y sociedad*, Héctor Noejovich, ed. (Lima, Peru: Fondo Editorial de Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru, 2001), 122.

<sup>776</sup> Hernán Cortés, "Cuenta de lo que ha gastado el Marqués del Valle con los oficiales y marineros y gente de guerra del armada que salió a descubrir en el Mar del Sur, desde el puerto de Santiago, en 29 de Octubre de 1533," in Colección de *documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 298-313. Judith Francis Zeitlin, *Cultural Politics in Colonial Tehuantepec: Community and State among the Isthmus Zapotec, 1500-1750* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 94, 97.

<sup>777</sup> Fernando B. Sandoval, "El astillero de carbon en Tehuantepec, 1535-1566," *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación*, vol. 21 (January-March, 1950), 1-21.

detailed study of the mining operations in Tehuantepec was undertaken by Jean-Pierre Berthe and supplemented by Ivie Cadenhead using documents from the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Gold dust was taken from the mines to Tehuantepec twice a year to be weighed, with production and labor figures available from the late 1530s to 1550. These figures show that gold production declined over this time period, as did the number of slaves used in the mines. The requirement to pay wages to workers in the 1540s also cut into profits, raising the question of how profitable the mines were toward the end of the marquisate's control over Tehuantepec. Nevertheless, the amount of tribute paid to the marquisate by Tehuantepec rivaled that of the *cuatro villas* of the Oaxaca Valley with a lower Indian population.<sup>778</sup>

Other commercial and tributary activities around Tehuantepec addressed the ever-present need for food: agriculture and ranching. With a large workforce of slaves and Indians working in the shipyards and mines, there was a constant need for supplies. Guazontlán (San Mateo del Mar today) on the coast and Itzactepec (San Francisco del Mar) on the smaller of the two lagoons were fishing communities and as such were required to provide regular tributes of fish and shrimp. The village of Tepeguazontlán was charged with delivering regular shipments of lime to the nearby mines; other areas

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<sup>778</sup> Berthe, "Las minas de oro del Marqués del valle en Tehuantepec," 122-131; Cadenhead, "Some Mining Operations of Cortés in Tehuantepec, 1538-1547," 283-287; "Inventory of things which Juan de Toledo delivered to Pedro de Alcala in the name of his Lordship," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 104-1, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; "Report of the gold which was taken from the mines of Tehuantepec, along with the slaves of the marquis," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 104-2, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; "Report of the weighing of the gold from the mines of Mora-Posada and its division into thirteen squads for shipment," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 104-3, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

primarily produced lumber or pitch to the industrial efforts.<sup>779</sup> Tehuantepec was also a center for the production of salt. *Salinas*, or salt works, were under the control of the Zapotecs, who kept records of their tributes and commercial deals with merchants. Trading salt for copper tools, gold, jewels, cloth, and animal skins, it thrived as a traditional industry in colonial New Spain. Tehuantepec was the primary source of salt for the entire Oaxaca region.<sup>780</sup> Other traditional forms of production that remained after Spanish colonization included corn, beans, *chiles*, textiles, tools, *achiote*, *pataste*, vanilla, and cacao.<sup>781</sup> The diversity of production in Tehuantepec rivaled that of Cuernavaca in the marquisate.

After shipbuilding and mining, the most important business in Tehuantepec was the raising of livestock. Ranching not only contributed to the supply of food to a large workforce but was also highly profitable. Livestock breeding also did not pull workers away from the industrial ventures, and the environment was ideal, as Zeitlin asserts: “In the southern isthmus, the warm arid climate and scrubby leguminous vegetation of the coastal plain were well suited to cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, sheep, and goats. Cortés seized hold of the region’s potential early and decisively.”<sup>782</sup> Cortés’s administrators also

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<sup>779</sup> Judith Francis Zeitlin, “Ranchers and Indians on the Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec: Economic Change and Indigenuos Survival in Colonial Mexico,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 69, no. 1 (February, 1989), 34; Zeitlin, *Cultural Politics in Colonial Tehuantepec*, 97-98.

<sup>780</sup> Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca*, 16; Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca*, 22; Zeitlin, *Cultural Politics in Colonial Tehuantepec*, 80.

<sup>781</sup> Lolita Gutiérrez Brockington, *The Leverage of Labor: Managing the Cortés Haciendas in Tehuantepec, 1588-1688* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 6; Zeitlin, “Ranchers and Indians on the Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec,” 51; Zeitlin, *Cultural Politics in Colonial Tehuantepec*, 80. *Achiote* is a flower that produces seeds used in creating yellow and orange dyes. *Pataste* is a gourd found in the tropical regions of the Americas.

<sup>782</sup> Zeitlin, “Ranchers and Indians on the Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec,” 35.



raised livestock in Tehuantepec and conducted business directly with Cortés.<sup>783</sup>

Tehuantepec *estancias* held thousands of head of sheep and hundreds of cattle, horses, and donkeys. Ranching grew so rapidly that slaves were used for much of the labor.

Between Cortés's death in 1547 and the escheatment of Tehuantepec in 1563, when both shipbuilding and mining were waning in the region, raising livestock became the most profitable venture in this region of the marquisate. Surpluses were sold at various markets, including Oaxaca, Guatemala, and even Peru. Ranching continued to be the principle economy in the region well into the seventeenth century. Indian communities submitted requests to raise livestock, and Spanish landowners bought up land surrounding the marquisate. Even the Dominican order had an interest in Tehuantepec livestock, as it was their primary source of tithes. By 1609 the livestock industry was so large in Tehuantepec that a *mesta*, or rancher's association, was established. Although Tehuantepec was only a part of the marquisate for just over thirty years, the impact that Cortés had on the region lasted much longer.<sup>784</sup>

The areas that remained part of the marquisate, namely Utlatepec and Jalapa del Marqués, were primarily used for livestock. Utlatepec, which was included in the grant of the marquisate primarily because of its location on the headwaters of the Coatzacoalcos River, became a center for the tanning of animal hides. Hides were taken

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<sup>783</sup> "Letter from Cortés to Diego de Guinea giving him instructions concerning a cattle company between Cortés and Juan de Toledo, 1538" Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 100, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

<sup>784</sup> William H. Dusenberry, *The Mexican Mesta: The Administration of Ranching in Colonial Mexico* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1963), 50; Gutiérrez Brockington, *The Leverage of Labor*, 8-11; Zeitlin, "Ranchers and Indians on the Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec," 36; "Inventory of things which Juan de Toledo delivered to Pedro de Alcala in the name of his Lordship;" "Report of the weighing of the gold from the mines of Mora-Posada and its division into thirteen squads for shipment." The documents included in catalog number 104-1 include incomplete livestock inventories as well as a report on slaves working on *estancias*. 104-3 also contains a livestock inventory.

to Utlatepec, where, using salt from Tehuantepec, they were soaked in brine, dried, and made into finished products before they were put on canoes to be taken to Veracruz. From there they went either to Mexico City or to Spain. The sale of animal hides from Utlatepec was highly profitable in the sixteenth century.<sup>785</sup> Jalapa del Marqués was principally a livestock center from the time Cortés took control of the area. A dry, hilly region, the geography and climate made it an ideal location for sprawling ranches. The low Indian population was also a large factor in the availability of land, but the correlation between the native population and livestock remains unclear. Lesley Byrd Simpson drew a comparison of increasing ranching activity in areas with declining Indian populations in the late sixteenth century, asserting that vacant Indian lands created the opportunity for the expansion of grazing lands.<sup>786</sup> In the case of Jalapa del Marqués, however, the low Indian population may have precipitated the cattle industry. While the Indian population of the area was in decline over the sixteenth century, rebellions by Zapotecs and Mixtecs in the region in the years following Spanish arrival may have left the population drastically lower than its pre-conquest population, either through fatalities in war or forced relocation. Disease may have also been a factor, or possibly territorial disputes between the Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Huave in the region before the arrival of the Spanish.<sup>787</sup> The Dominican order built only one convent in the town to serve the entire region because the population was so low.<sup>788</sup> Whatever the cause, the result was that

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<sup>785</sup> Gutiérrez Brockington, *The Leverage of Labor*, 49-50.

<sup>786</sup> Simpson, *Exploitation of Land in Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century*, 1-2.

<sup>787</sup> Paola García Souza, "Entre la lluvia y la sequía: procesos simbólicos y ciclos naturales de los Huaves de San Mateo del Mar," *Religiosidad popular: México, Cuba*, Noemí Quezada, ed. (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 2004), 121; García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 166; Gutiérrez Brockington, *The Leverage of Labor*, 13, 116, 139; Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos*, 279-281.

<sup>788</sup> Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 72.

Jalapa del Marqués, much like Toluca, existed as a constant source of income on the marquisate through the raising of livestock for much of the history of the marquisate.

While the Spanish political structure of the Tehuantepec region of the marquisate was not much different from any other, as was in the case of Oaxaca, the diversity of the economic activities of the Indian population allowed for the survival of indigenous culture. This, in turn, facilitated the continued influence of the Zapotec lord, christened Don Juan Cortés.<sup>789</sup> Don Juan undoubtedly benefitted from the Spanish conquest of his Mixtec enemies to the west and was compliant with Cortés's demand of tribute, despite Tehuantepec's having been a largely independent region. In 1526, Cortés sent Francisco Maldonado to the region to manage the *encomienda* and supervise the construction of the shipyards.<sup>790</sup> During Cortés's absence from New Spain in 1529, the first *audiencia* sought to disrupt his operations in Tehuantepec and decided to conduct a *residencia* over the region. They chose as the inspector conquistador and shipbuilder Martín López, who, despite having served under Cortés in the conquest of Mexico may have had a falling out with him over compensation for the ships used in the final siege of the Aztec capital.<sup>791</sup> Maldonado and López clashed over issues of jurisdiction and control; eventually their

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<sup>789</sup> The indigenous name of Don Juan Cortés was Bichana Lachi in Zapotec or Cosijopi in Nahuatl. He was the son of the previous Zapotec lord and the Aztec princess Cosijoeza, daughter of Ahuízotl. His Zapotec-Aztec parentage may have been a factor in the region's autonomy from the Aztec empire. (Zeitlin, "Ranchers and Indians on the Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec," 34; Zeitlin, *Cultural Politics in Colonial Tehuantepec*, 95; Judith Francis Zeitlin, "Recordando a los reyes: el lienzo de Guevea y el discurso histórico de la época colonial," *Escritura Zapoteca: 2,500 años de historia*, María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi, ed. (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, 2003), 265-304.

<sup>790</sup> Francisco Maldonado (d. ca. 1548) was one of Cortés's captains during the conquest. In addition to serving as an administrator under Cortés, he was also an *encomendero* over a substantial amount of land in Oaxaca. (Himmerich y Valencia, *The Encomenderos of New Spain*, 187-188).

<sup>791</sup> C. Harvey Gardiner, *Martín López: Conquistador Citizen of Mexico* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1958), 83-84; "Suit filed by Martín López against Hernán Cortés concerning the payment for construction of the brigantines used in the final successful assault on Mexico City," Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 96, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

disagreements led to a lawsuit. Gardiner describes the entire event in his 1955 article “Tempest in Tehuantepec, 1529: Local Events in Imperial Perspective.”<sup>792</sup> After Cortés returned as marquis, he named Spaniards as the *principales*, not Indians, as he had in other regions. This may possibly have been due to the early antagonism on the part of the government of New Spain. When Cortés appointed Juan de Toledo as the *Alcalde Mayor* of Tehuantepec in 1538, however, Toledo restored Don Juan Cortés to power, managing Indian labor and the collection of tribute. He remained in power until his death around 1562, just before Tehuantepec was placed under royal control.<sup>793</sup> Zeitlin suggests that Don Juan’s continued political importance was critical to the survival of Zapotec culture, stating, “The special status granted the Tehuantepec ruler as a loyal and willing vassal of Charles V carried with it the additional privileges of local political autonomy that, while not unchallenged during Cosijopi’s lifetime, clearly enhanced Zapotec sociopolitical adaptability. Here, unlike the experiences of Indian societies that had been subjugated by force, native institutions had time to adjust gradually to the impact of colonial rule.”<sup>794</sup> Certainly, peaceful relations from the onset of Spanish presence on the Pacific coast were critical to the transition to Spanish rule, preventing aggressive attempts at pacification and social and religious conversion. Don Juan Cortés’s continued political status allowed the Tehuantepec Indians to adjust to the profound changes brought by Spanish conquest

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<sup>792</sup> Gardiner, “Tempest in Tehuantepec, 1529: Local Events in Imperial Perspective,” 1-13; “Suit brought by Francisco Maldonado against Martín López,” Hispanic Documents Collection, no. 90, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma. In his article, Gardiner utilized a transcript found in the Conway Collection of the University of Cambridge, acknowledging that he could not locate the original. The original from which the transcription was made is in the Gilcrease Museum. It is divided into three parts, and Gardiner only cites parts one and three. Further research is needed into the original document to possibly shed further light onto the 1529 events in Tehuantepec (Gardiner, “Tempest in Tehuantepec, 1529: Local Events in Imperial Perspective,” 6n8.)

<sup>793</sup> Zeitlin, “Ranchers and Indians on the Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec,” 34; Zeitlin, *Cultural Politics in Colonial Tehuantepec*, 95; Michel R. Oudijk, “The Zapotec City-State,” *A Comparative Study of Six City-State Cultures*, Mogens Herman Hansen, ed. (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2002), 76.

<sup>794</sup> Zeitlin, “Ranchers and Indians on the Southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec,” 34.

while at the same time retaining traditional ways of life. A significant factor in the survival of Tehuantepec culture was the economic prosperity of the region under the control of the marquisate. So long as there was economic gain, there was little need for significant change. Arthur Joyce offers insight into this Spanish-Indian dynamic:

The Spanish Conquest of Mesoamerica is often portrayed as a profound historical rupture disconnecting indigenous peoples from the pre-Hispanic history and culture. The colonial history of Mesoamerica is viewed as driven by forces beyond the control of indigenous people, such as disease and the religious, social, and economic changes imposed by the Spanish colonial authorities. Yet recent studies increasingly recognize indigenous people as active players in colonial history and show that important continuities exist from the pre-Hispanic past up to the present day. Although Native Americans were at a disadvantage, especially due to the devastation suffered because of epidemics, indigenous people creatively incorporated elements of European culture into daily practice and at times actively resisted Spanish authorities.<sup>795</sup>

Artist Miguel Covarrubias, while traveling in Tehuantepec in the middle of the twentieth century, described various social, cultural, civic, and political characteristics of modern Tehuantepec whose roots can be traced to Zapotec culture.<sup>796</sup> It is impossible to give Cortés much credit for this; political administration over this region of the marquisate was perfunctory. Tehuantepec does stand, however, as an example of the

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<sup>795</sup> Joyce, *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos*, 3.

<sup>796</sup> Miguel Covarrubias, *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 150-154.

active role many native groups played in the transition into sixteenth-century Spanish colonial life.

While Tehuantepec was counted among the realms of the marquisate for only a short time after the death of Cortés, it is not difficult to see the opportunities the land afforded and the contribution the region offered Cortés and his estate. In the design of the marquisate, Cortés chose land strategically, and Tehuantepec played a prominent role. The largely peaceful relationship with the natives of the isthmus ensured a stable region, which was important for one so distant from his capital in Cuernavaca. The native population also constituted a large workforce for his numerous business opportunities. The isthmus itself, along with the Coatzacoalcos River, proved to be the best route of for transoceanic trade; control of Utlatepec and Tehuantepec gave Cortés control over the Pacific half of this process. The lagoons on the coast provided more peaceful waters to build shipyards and develop a shipping industry. These ships would not only serve in the transoceanic trade but also for continued westward exploration. A privately-owned port was a tremendous step in continued power and influence in New Spain. The region also contained mines; while Cortés was involved in mining in many other regions, he was primarily an investor in mines not on his lands. Finally, the diversity of indigenous agriculture and industry, along with the introduction of a large-scale livestock industry, not only made Tehuantepec largely self-sufficient in terms of supplies but it also provided yet another avenue of income in the land that remained part of the marquisate after 1563. The commercial value of these holdings is also apparent. Martín Cortés, in his expansion of the marquisate by acquiring abandoned lands, reacquired some land

around Tehuantepec for raising livestock.<sup>797</sup> Economically, Tehuantepec was a fruitful and important part of the marquisate.

In the economic successes of Tehuantepec, one can see many ways in which Cortés thought about his role in the future of Mexico. Tehuantepec was important to the legacy he attempted to construct. Industries such as salt production and animal hides demonstrate that Cortés sought to be a primary supplier of specific goods in New Spain and possibly overseas. He also sought to use Tehuantepec to raise his status with the emperor. Emperor Charles V sought a strait to connect the two oceans to foster regular trade with the Spice Islands. Before any such waterway could be found, Cortés claimed as his own the next best thing in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In doing so, Cortés sought to place himself in the center of one of the emperor's primary projects.<sup>798</sup> This not only presented Cortés with the possibility of making himself very wealthy but also to become an integral part of Spanish international trade. While not as prestigious as the governorship of New Spain, control over trade would nonetheless make him indispensable to the emperor. This political importance is also echoed in the idea of Tehuantepec as the center of Pacific exploration. Cortés made an agreement with the crown to explore the Southern Seas, with him becoming governor of any lands he should discover.<sup>799</sup> Rather than conclude that Cortés sought to move beyond New Spain, as suggested by García Martínez, one cannot discount the possibility that Cortés sought to increase his influence in Mexico. His title, Captain General of New Spain and the Southern Seas, was a military title, but also it was superficially honorific; becoming the

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<sup>797</sup> Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 130.

<sup>798</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 267.

<sup>799</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 214-218.

governor of land on the Southern Seas would give Cortés political power as well. The governorship of overseas lands could also bring new significance to his marquisate as well through expanded overseas connections. Cortés was a man of multifaceted aspirations, and Tehuantepec served as a crossroads for many of these ambitions.

### Veracruz

The land in New Spain most familiar to Cortés, the region around Veracruz on the Gulf Coast, constituted the last of the lands granted to him by the emperor in 1529. As was the case with Oaxaca, Cortés early on attempted to claim the entire region for himself, only to be constantly undermined by claims from Spaniards who also understood the economic importance of the region. Situated on familiar Spanish routes between Mexico City and gulf ports to Spain, the region not only offered access to major markets but fertile valleys and an abundance of irrigation through numerous river systems. Confiscated from Cortés in the many changes in leadership in New Spain in the late 1520s, Cortés re-secured the regions of Cotaxtla, Tuxtla, and Ixcaltlan [La Rinconada] in the 1529 grant of the marquisate.<sup>800</sup> Further restricted by the second *audiencia* in 1532, he claimed three limited regions of the total land he sought. Developed in much the same ways as other regions of the marquisate, including the establishment of a sugar mill in Tepeaca, this eastern region was nonetheless not a priority of Cortés during his lifetime; the lands from Cuernavaca through Oaxaca to Tehuantepec garnered most of his attention, on his way to the Southern Sea. His heirs also did not pay much attention to

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<sup>800</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 127.



the region, mostly renting out land for farms and ranches.<sup>801</sup> While an important region in terms of Cortés and the conquest, it played only a minor role in his marquisate.

Located in the central region of the modern state of Veracruz, the easternmost region of the marquisate was conquered by the Aztecs in the late fifteenth century. Most Indians spoke some form of Nahuatl, but there remained some diversity in the many regional languages and dialects.<sup>802</sup> This region was divided into three large provinces: Cuauhtochco in the north, Cuetlaxtlan in the center, and Tochtepec or Tuxtepec in the south. Before the arrival of the Spanish, Cuetlaxtlan and Tuxtepec had large populations spread along the river systems that fed into the gulf; they also paid a significant amount of tribute to the Aztecs in the form of agricultural goods, cotton, and textiles. Cortés claimed the latter two regions by name in his 1529 grant: Cotaxtla, the Hispanicized version of Cuetlaxtlan, was listed as “Quetasta,” while Tuxtla was listed as “Tluislatepeca,” or Tuxtepec. “Tluislatepeca” is most commonly understood by scholars as referring to two locations: Tuxtla and Tepeaca. Cortés did not name Cuauhtochco, instead naming Ixcaltan, a village to the east of the capital, closer to the coast. Cuauhtochco had a more rugged terrain, with many of its towns established as fortification points in the foothills of the mountains in the western part of the region. The Aztec tribute was also much lower than Tuxtla and Cotaxtla as a result, making it a less desirable location for an *encomienda*. Ixcaltan, renamed La Rinconada by the Spanish, was closer to the coast, near Cempoala. Cortés likely travelled through Ixcaltan after

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<sup>801</sup> Delgado Calderón, “The Ethnohistory of Southern Veracruz,” *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, 50.

<sup>802</sup> Delgado Calderón, “The Ethnohistory of Southern Veracruz,” *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, 47-49. See also Agustín García Márquez, *Los Aztecas en el centro de Veracruz* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005.)

departing from Cempoala on the 1519 march to Tenochtitlán, so he was familiar with the area.<sup>803</sup>

Cortés' lands in Veracruz were confiscated by the various governments of New Spain during his Honduras expedition, but unlike his other claimed territories he was able to maintain possession as he prepared for his return to Spain in 1528. It was after his return from Spain as marquis, however, that this region of the marquisate was pared down. Villages on the sea, and ports in Tuxtla, were deemed property of the crown, and the boundaries of the estate around Cotaxtla and La Rinconada were minimized by the second *audiencia*.<sup>804</sup> Cortés unsuccessfully claimed eleven subject villages of Cotaxtla in 1532 that were distributed to other settlers.<sup>805</sup> Following his failed attempt to bring his landholdings in Veracruz to the level he originally claimed after conquest, the boundaries of the marquisate around La Rinconada and Cotaxtla were limited to little more than the countryside surrounding the two towns. He managed to retain much of Tuxtla, however, a large amount of land. Despite its constant reduction in size, the Veracruz region of

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<sup>803</sup> Manuel B. Trens, *Historia de Veracruz*, vol. 2 (Mexico: Jalapa-Enriquez, 1947), 43; Cedulaario *Cortesiano*, 127; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 340; Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 112-124; Pedro Carrasco Pizana, *The Tenocha Empire of Ancient Mexico: The Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlán, Tetzaco, and Tlacopan* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 351-357, 378-379. The division of Tluislatepeca into two regions stems from the name of the region, Tuxtla, and the presence of a village three or four leagues outside of the capital, Santiago Tuxtla, named Tepeaca. Tepeaca was the site of the first sugar mill in Mexico, built sometime in the 1520s. In his 1532 petition to the second *audiencia* concerning the land restrictions placed in his estate, he lists Tuxtla and Tepeaca as two separate *cabeceras*. Dividing Tuxtepec into the two separate grants of Tuxtla and Tepeaca brings the total number of towns listed to twenty-two, the commonly held figure among scholars.

<sup>804</sup> Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 340-341.

<sup>805</sup> Cortés, *Colección de documentos ineditos*, vol. 12, 561. Cortés named Tezivca, Uzpicha, Mitangutlan, Alzuzuacan, Tacostalpa, Amatlan, Putla, Ixmatablaca, tapaniquita, Citalupa, and Xalitulco as subject to Cotaxtla.

the marquisate was an estimated 4,300 square kilometers, making it the largest region of the Cortés estate, edging out Cuernavaca.<sup>806</sup>

Despite the amount of land Cortés claimed in Veracruz, the Indian population was quite low. The amount of tribute the Aztecs required of the region, combined with accounts of the conquistadors, suggest the region was densely populated before the arrival of the Spanish.<sup>807</sup> As the region of first contact, however, it was from the beginning subject to the diseases and plagues that arrived in the wake of the Spanish. The early epidemics of the 1520s and 1530s dramatically reduced the population of Veracruz, and it did not recover under the conditions of the *encomienda* system. By 1560, there were approximately two thousand tributaries in the marquisate, with 1,200 in Tuxtla and 800 combined in Cotaxtla and La Rinconada. This was roughly the same number as Coyoacán at the time despite having nearly eightfold the land. The 1560s brought another plague to the region, decimating the population once again. Over half the tributaries of Tuxtla were lost, and Cotaxtla and La Rinconada were left with 24 and 100, respectively. By 1571 the count was down to 400 tributaries for the entire region of the marquisate. At the end of the fourth marquisate under Pedro Cortés in the 1620s, the number had risen only slightly to just over six hundred tributaries. While figures from the first half of the sixteenth century are not clear, from the 1560s onward the marquisate in Veracruz claimed fewer than ten thousand Indians. Tribute records for the seventeenth

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<sup>806</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 161.

<sup>807</sup> Francisco de Aguilar, *Relación breve de la conquista de la Nueva España*, Federico Gómez de Orozco, ed. (Mexico: Porrúa, 1954), 88; Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 112-124.

and eighteenth centuries show only slow increases; the native population in these areas likely never rose to over ten thousand until the nineteenth century.<sup>808</sup>

While the Indian population in the region was low, it was the economic opportunity that attracted Cortés and many other conquistadors and settlers to the region. Proximity to the gulf ensured constant trade with Spain and the Indies, and a variety of goods and materials could be found there. In Cotaxtla, on his march to Tenochtitlán in 1519, he was given many valuable gifts by the Indians there, as recounted in López de Gómara, who wrote,

The governor soon appeared with rich and beautiful presents: many mantles and garments of white and colored cotton, embroidered in their fashion; many plumes and gorgeous feathers; many objects made of gold and feathers, richly and handsomely worked; a quantity of jewels and pieces of gold and silver; two thin disks, one of silver weighing 52 marks, representing the moon, the other of gold weighing 100 marks, representing the sun, with many decorations and animals carved upon it in relief, a very beautiful thing. The disks measured as much as ten palms in diameter and thirty in circumference, and were probably worth 20,000 ducats, or even a little more.<sup>809</sup>

In his second letter to the emperor in early 1522, Cortés relates the findings of the first expedition into Tuxtepec: “The others went to a province called [Tuxtepec], where there is gold, and there they were shown other rivers from which they also brought

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<sup>808</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 166-167; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 342.

<sup>809</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 59.

samples of gold.”<sup>810</sup> With the abundance of gold, silver, and other goods shown to the conquistadors in Veracruz, it is not difficult to understand Cortés’s motives in trying to secure the region as his own.

In addition to the gold and silver so plentiful it could be found in the riverbeds, the Indians of the coastal region also produced a number of agricultural goods and textiles that likely factored into the tribute to the marquisate. According to the *Codex Mendoza*, the tribute given to the Aztecs from the coastal region included turquoise, amber, crystal, rubber, cacao, raw cotton and cotton garments, and many different colors of feathers from tropical birds. Gold and silver, however, was the primary form of payment.<sup>811</sup> In addition to the labor required in the extraction and production of goods, Cortés arranged tribute in other products such as maize, turkeys, salt, eggs, fish, *chiles*, and cotton. As in every other region of the marquisate, there was also ample land set aside for livestock.<sup>812</sup> While the amount of tribute collected directly correlated with Indian population, meaning it was quite low, it is nevertheless important to understand the opportunity rather than the reality in terms of Cortés’s inclusion of this region in the establishment of the marquisate.

Just as in Cuernavaca, Cortés established a sugar industry in the Veracruz region. As has been mentioned, in the 1520s Cortés built the first sugar mill in Mexico in Tuxtla, just outside Santiago Tuxtla at a place called Tepeaca (or Coanapa) on the Tepengo River. He planted sugar cane brought from Cuba, where he had experience in sugar

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<sup>810</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 93.

<sup>811</sup> Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 112-124.

<sup>812</sup> Andrew Slutyer, *Colonialism and Landscape: Postcolonial Theory and Applications* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 90-91; Delgado Calderón, “The Ethnohistory of Southern Veracruz,” *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, 50.

production from his time living there. In the 1530s and 1540s, Cortés expanded his sugar operation in Veracruz, erecting mills around San Andrés Tuxtla, Cotaxtla, and La Rinconada.<sup>813</sup> Other Spanish settlers also built sugar mills in Veracruz: Don Rodrigo de Albornoz established a sugar plantation in Cempoala in 1535, and Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza owned a large plantation outside the town of Orizaba.<sup>814</sup> This thriving sugar industry, among others, taxed the natural resources of their respective areas, particularly water systems, and required hard physical labor from the Indian populations; while disease remained the leading cause of death among Indians, these factors likely contributed to the rapidly diminishing Indian population of the region in Veracruz. To keep up with the demand for labor, African slaves were brought to the region almost as soon as the first mills were established. Cortés himself likely used slaves at Tepeaca before 1530 and incorporated slave labor into his San Andrés Tuxtla mill in 1534. Over the Spanish colonial period, tens of thousands of slaves were brought to Mexico to fulfill a variety of roles in many industries. In Veracruz, owing largely to sugar production, high populations of slaves led to high populations of Creoles, or American-born Africans; while Indian populations were decreasing, Creole numbers were rising. Working alongside Indians in fields, stables, mines, and mills, the confluence of American,

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<sup>813</sup> Fernando B. Sandoval, *La industria del azúcar en Nueva España* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1951), 24; J. P. Darch, *Drained Field Agriculture in Central and South America* (Oxford, UK: British Archaeological Reports, 1983), 81; Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 62-63; Beatriz Sharrer Tamm, *Azúcar y trabajo: tecnología de los siglos XVII y XVIII en el actual Estado de Morelos* (Mexico: CIESAS, Instituto Cultural de Morelos, 1997), 14; Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*, 20; Delgado Calderón, "The Ethnohistory of Southern Veracruz," *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, 50.

<sup>814</sup> Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 63.

African, and European cultures left an indelible mark on the culture of the Veracruz region.<sup>815</sup>

Cortés saw in Tuxtla and the other pieces of the marquisate in Veracruz a fertile region that promised limitless wealth in everything from gold and silver to maize and beans. Instead Cortés found himself severely limited in his control over the region, and stymied by a decimated native population. Based on the number of tribute-paying Indians over the sixteenth century, income from this region was lower than nearly every other region of the marquisate despite being the largest part of the estate in area. While Cortés established many sugar mills in the region that were profitable, over time these too began to wane in their economic significance. By the 1560s, the income of the sugar mill outside Tuxtla at Tepeaca was only half of that of the mill in Tlaltenango outside Cuernavaca.<sup>816</sup> There is little evidence that Cortés's heirs gave much attention to the Veracruz marquisate, likely due to the small Indian population. Instead, they simply rented out lands to other Spanish settlers for farms and ranches in the vacant valley plains.

In developing the marquisate as it was granted him in the 1529, Cortés was prospecting, seeking out areas that might yield him the most wealth and power. A few of these regions he may have never seen, or visited briefly in the course of conquest or other brief expeditions. Apart from Mexico City and its environs, Veracruz was the region Cortés was most familiar with in New Spain, and its inclusion in the grant of the

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<sup>815</sup> Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 63; Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*, 20; Delgado Calderón, "The Ethnohistory of Southern Veracruz," *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, 50; Enrique Hugo García Valencía, "The American Mediterranean," *Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico*, Alan R. Sandstrom and Enrique Hugo García Valencia, eds. (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2005), 100-113.

<sup>816</sup> Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 130.

marquisate demonstrated his conviction of its economic potential. In fact, Veracruz demonstrated this potential throughout the colonial period in the hands of hundreds of settlers and businessmen throughout the region. For Cortés, however, the region appears to have been a bust; it was profitable in his lifetime, but not as much as other parts of his estate. Under his heirs, income continued to decrease until it was little more than a part of the marquisate in name only until the population began to rise in the early eighteenth century.<sup>817</sup> It is uncertain what, if any, actions were taken by Martín and Pedro Cortés to develop the area, but it is clear that Veracruz never became the profitable region Cortés thought it would be.

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<sup>817</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquésado del Valle*, 166-167



## CHAPTER XIII

## CONCLUSION

John H. Elliott, writing about Cortés, mused, “So many books and articles have been devoted to the life and career of Hernán Cortés that it may well seem presumptuous to add to their number.”<sup>818</sup> Elliott follows this caveat by explaining that while the study of Cortés might not be the most ground-breaking endeavor, it is still an important one. Citing recent research, Elliott asserted, “Although these historians approach Cortés from very different standpoints, they have all shown how much can still be learnt about him from an examination of his writings, and how much remains to be discovered before we shall be able to see him in the round – not only as a military leader, but also as a colonist and an entrepreneur, and as an unusually astute politician with a remarkable gift for putting old ideas into new use in the unprecedented situation in which he found himself in Mexico.”<sup>819</sup> There are two areas of study, however, that require more work and that this dissertation addressed: disentangling the myth others constructed of Cortés from his desired legacy and tracing his legacy through his estate.

The picture historians painted of Cortés over the centuries is one blurred by time,

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<sup>818</sup> Elliott, “The Mental World of Hernán Cortés,” *Spain and its World*, 27.

<sup>819</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. The four historians cited by Elliott are Richard Konezke, Viktor Frankl, Manuel Alcalá, and Eulalia Guzmán.

place, and motivation. Firsthand accounts of Cortés and the conquest sought to either vilify or commend him. In the case of his *Cartas de relación* and López de Gómara's work, Cortés shaped his imprint on history himself. Even conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo's recollection of the conquest, a response to López de Gómara's work and widely considered to be the most accurate account, nonetheless demonstrates reverence for Cortés; Díaz del Castillo compared Cortés to Julius Caesar and highlighted the bravery and leadership of his captain.<sup>820</sup> Alternatively, Bartolomé de las Casas, in his effort to reconcile the activity of his beloved Spain with the deplorable treatment of the American Indians, portrayed Cortés as a prime example of the selfishness and evil from which all condemnable practices in Spanish America sprang. Thus, the Black Legend of Spain manifested not from the enemies of the kingdom but one of its own subjects. Scholars have studied and debated the life of Cortés from these two sides of the issue for over four centuries.

Between the sixteenth century and today, these two opposing constructions of Cortés largely settled on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean. From the perspective of Spanish history and colonialism, popularized by historians such as William H. Prescott beginning the nineteenth century, Cortés is most commonly seen as an ambitious, intelligent, and pragmatic military leader and governor. From the perspective of Mexican history, Cortés is often portrayed as a bloodthirsty and avaricious conquistador who conquered rich and complex societies and brutally enforced a European way of life all in the name of elevating his own status. Born out of the Mexican independence movement, anti-colonial sentiment in Mexico drew inspiration from the barbarous depictions of

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<sup>820</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 476-477.

conquest, with Cortés as a primary villain. His remains in Mexico City had to be hidden to keep angry mobs from desecrating them.<sup>821</sup> This fiercely negative image of Cortés permeated American culture into the twentieth century; it is found in various media of popular culture, including everything from Diego Rivera's murals to American folk singer Neil Young's 1975 song "Cortez the Killer," which was banned in Spain.<sup>822</sup> In his 1941 biography of Cortés, Salvador de Madariaga, a Spanish historian whose praise of Cortés at times bordered on hagiographic, lamented the memory of Cortés in Mexico:

Could [Cortés] guess that, in the depths of races and nations, there lie hidden oceans of instincts, emotions, obscure memories, and that he was preparing for New Spain centuries of mental and moral storms? Could he guess that a day would come when his ashes, buried by his express desire in New Spain, would have to be protected by secrecy from the infuriated crowds of the nation he had founded, turned into a frenzy of self-negation against the man to whose vision they owed their existence? That Mexico would erect a statue to Cuauhtemoc, less to honor Cuauhtemoc than to insult him? That a painter of that race he did so much to ennoble and liberate would one day smear the walls of his own house in Cuernavaca with so-called scenes of the conquest distorted by a prejudice of which the painter himself is innocent since it comes from the racial depths? Cortés, great in his achievement, was greater still in that his tragic life is a fit symbol of the tragedy of man on earth.<sup>823</sup>

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<sup>821</sup> Maza, "Los Restos de Hernán Cortés", 153-174

<sup>822</sup> Ray B. Browne and Pat Browne, *The Guide to United States Popular Culture* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 2001), 946.

<sup>823</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 485-486.

The division of historical perspective of Cortés is not as cut-and-dry as to form separate Spanish and Mexican histories; scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have come to diverse conclusions. While a hyperbolic view of both sides, Madariaga's passage nonetheless demonstrates both ends of the spectrum of Cortés's legacy that has survived the centuries. What began in the sixteenth century as a heavily censored and controlled image of Cortés has only been further obscured by time.

There have been efforts, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, to set aside popular images of Cortés and study the historical context of his life. This approach has largely come through the research and publication of documents from archives in both Spain and in Mexico. The collection of royal decrees pertaining to Cortés by Arteaga Garza and Pérez San Vicente, the two compilations of Cortés documents by Mariano Cuevas and Hernández Sánchez-Barba, and the multi-volume collection of Cortés documents by Luis Martínez are notable endeavors. Narrative works such as Hugh Thomas's *Conquest* also utilize considerable archival study to provide an account of Cortés's life and actions with as much detail as possible. Unpublished documents from the Gilcrease Museum, utilized in this dissertation, have brought to light new information about the administration and development of the marquisate. Examinations of the *Cartas de relación* by scholars such as those Elliott referenced from different fields of historical study have also shed new light on the life of the conquistador. While it is difficult to ascertain whether these academic efforts have tempered popular images of Cortés, into the twenty-first century there has been a greater effort to re-evaluate Cortés's life in historical context. As Elliot asserts, however, there is much work to be done.

Regardless of time or place, it is impossible to separate the conquistador from conquest. Cortés himself saw to this, and not only through his own accounts in the *Cartas* but also his last will and testament as examined in chapters two and eight. His coat of arms, designed in 1525, was divided into four quarters: the two-headed Habsburg eagle; three crowns to represent the three Indian lords Cortés conquered (Montezuma, Cuitlahuáztin, and Cuauhtémoc); a lion symbolizing force and valor; finally, the city of Tenochtitlán. A chain secured by a padlock borders these quadrants; on this chain are seven heads, representing the Indian chiefs on the shores of Lake Texcoco that Cortés conquered.<sup>824</sup> Cortés rightly understood the conquest as his greatest accomplishment, and so have historians; the vast majority of research into the life of Cortés focuses on the conquest, at times to the detriment of the study of Cortés himself. Some biographies end with the fall of Tenochtitlán, as if Cortés did not live for another twenty-six years; others focus so much on the conquest that the latter decades of his life appear as summaries a few paragraphs in length. It is impossible to remove the conquest of Mexico from the study of Cortés, and it would not be in any way constructive to try. The myopic historical concentration on conquest in the rich and complex life of Cortés, however, is a pitfall that has yet to be overcome. Looking at Cortés purely as a conquistador ignores other aspects of his life and contributions to the development of New Spain.

Cortés understood something that many detractors or historians of the conquest have failed to comprehend or express: while the conquest was the most important event in Cortés's life by a profound measure, it was not the last event of his life or the only one by which his legacy could be evaluated. As discussed in chapter one, Cortés grew up

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<sup>824</sup> Friede, "The Coat of Arms of Hernando Cortés," 67.

in a time when boldness and strong notions of honor flourished in Spain. In the Reconquest and the Italian Wars, bravery and courage were rewarded with fame; in Columbus's voyage, boldness led to a great achievement. Like the medieval tales of chivalry, success could not be possible without trial, but for the stout-hearted it was all but assured. A child of the farmlands of Extremadura, Cortés knew little of the outside world when he arrived on the shore of Hispaniola in 1504, but he was nonetheless confident in his chances of success. Having no experience in battle, he participated in the conquest of Cuba in 1511 and received rewards for his service under Diego Velásquez. Likewise, in his infamous expedition to Mexico, Cortés knew nothing about what lie ahead of him. In this example more than any, one can see the forward-thinking nature of Cortés. He chased what he believed to be his fate with such doggedness that he took his past accomplishments or present situation into account less than the possibilities that lie ahead. In the contemporary literary work *La Celestina*, author Fernando de Rojas wrote, "When one door closes, fortune often opens another."<sup>825</sup> In his early life Cortés was prone to closing the doors himself to see which new ones opened, but later in his life they needed no help in closing. When the final door opened by conquest had been shut in his face, namely the governorship of New Spain, others opened, and Cortés moved on, following what he accepted as his fate. He could acquire fame and honor in many ways, and Cortés was intent on exploring all of them.

As discussed in chapter two, within the narrative of conquest itself one can find currents of thought and indications that Cortés looked beyond the conquest to future opportunities in Mexico. Being a conquistador meant more than simple military action.

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<sup>825</sup> Fernando de Rojas, *Celestina*, Margaret Sayers Peden, trans. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 203.

In addition to success in warfare, these figures were also responsible for recording the events as they transpired. This meant interpreting the (at times) amazing events that took place in a form that others could understand. To accomplish this, conquistadors had to be legally-minded; Cortés demonstrated some knowledge of medieval Castilian law. They also had to be effective communicators. Not only emboldened by literary and historical tales of chivalry and war, figures such as Cortés found in these works convenient templates to frame their own experiences. Conquistadors above all else had to have a cause; to risk one's life for a living required more than simple financial gain. Cortés proclaimed his service to the emperor and Divine Providence. There was financial gain to be had, however, but not only in plunder from conquest. Rich as Mexico was, its wealth was not in immediately extractable valuables but lay largely in land and labor. In his letters to the emperor, Cortés demonstrated a keen interest in the land, describing its features at times in cartographic detail. He recorded the goods that could be found in different regions and indicated areas ripe for further development. This natural curiosity, combined with the knowledge of the land he gained from Aztec records, instilled in Cortés a sense of opportunity he was always wont to seize. As governor, distributing *encomiendas*, he did so by reserving many of the best lands for himself. While he would be governor only for a brief time, he nonetheless understood that land was the prime commodity of New Spain. As we saw in chapter four, after conquest, as marquis, he would still be able to exert some influence on the future of the land he claimed for Spain. Of the many qualities necessary for a conquistador, ambition was paramount, and it was just as present in Cortés after conquest as before.

In the two biggest failures of his post-conquest career, the Honduras expedition and the exploration of the Pacific Ocean, Cortés maintained an awareness of the connection between his legacy and the land of New Spain as discussed in chapters three and six, respectively. Cortés asserted his intention regarding Honduras was to bring the area under the authority of New Spain, but the motivation behind his decision to lead the second expedition himself remains unclear. What then transpired, however, proved it to be perhaps the biggest mistake of his life. He not only nearly died in the jungles of Honduras, but while he was away royal officials also worked to undo much of the power structure Cortés designed for himself in Mexico City. Questionable decision-making and the political chaos of an absentee governor all but ended his leadership of New Spain. In his fifth *carta de relación*, written in October 1525, Cortés expressed his realization of the blunder he made and made one request of the emperor: “I beg your highness to permit me to retain all that I now possess in this land or what my representatives will ask of Your Majesty in my name, granting it to me in perpetuity for myself and my heirs.”<sup>826</sup> As discussed in chapter three, Cortés had yet to relinquish his hope of continued leadership in New Spain, but the desire to secure his land was his priority. This plea, and his request for an entailment of said land, indicate Cortés viewed the ownership of land in New Spain as the focus of his legacy. The realization of this plan came in 1529 when he met with the emperor in Spain regarding his continued role in New Spain; as Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca he would have more land than any other single landowner.

The enterprise that consumed much of Cortés’s time, money, and effort in the 1530s, the exploration of the Pacific Ocean, coincided with the early development of his

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<sup>826</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 443.



estate. He was restrained by time in his exploration of the ocean, having made an agreement with the emperor to begin the process of building ships within two years.<sup>827</sup> In 1532, the construction of his palace in Cuernavaca took place while ships were being constructed at Acapulco and Tehuantepec. His first son with Doña Juana de Zúñiga, Martín, was also born at this time. Cortés divided his time between family, estate, and his obligations to the emperor. He spent time in Acapulco to supervise ship construction.<sup>828</sup> In late 1532 he also went to Tehuantepec and, according to Cortés's own correspondence, lived in a common hut on the beach to supervise the construction of his ships in that harbor.<sup>829</sup> During much of this time, however, he lived with his family in Cuernavaca. He did not personally lead the first two attempts at coastal exploration, opting instead to devote his efforts to estate administration. His personal involvement in the exploration came only when the expeditions were hindered by weather, poor leadership, and the interference of Nuño de Guzmán. It is not known for sure why Cortés left his Pacific voyages of discovery to his subordinates, but it is likely that the development of the marquisate was a higher priority. The year 1532, when the first two of his ships were sent to explore western coast of New Spain, was also the year the *audiencia* removed many pieces of land from the marquisate. Before he went to Tehuantepec to supervise ship construction in late 1532, in October of that year he was in Mexico City petitioning for the reclamation of the confiscated lands. He could send able captains to explore in his stead and fulfill his imperial obligations, but his estates required his foremost attention. In his contract with the emperor, it was stipulated that Cortés would become governor of any land he conquered and be entitled to a portion of the

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<sup>827</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 214-218.

<sup>828</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 397.

<sup>829</sup> Moorhead, "Hernán Cortés and the Tehuantepec Passage," 373.

wealth it contained. Given these favorable conditions, why would the conquistador not put his full effort behind this endeavor? López de Gómara, writing about the shipyard at Tehuantepec, offers some insight into the issue: “[Cortés] always kept many men there building ships in order to fulfill his agreement with the emperor; also, because he thought he might discover rich lands and islands with them.”<sup>830</sup> Ever the opportunist, Cortés never forgot the terms of his agreement. The financial aspect, however, seemed to be an afterthought. The possibility that Cortés might find wealth and power over some distant land was likely not as enticing as it might have been earlier in his life because he already had such an opportunity in the marquisate. Moreover, the marquisate was in New Spain, the land of his greatest accomplishments. It is clear in his actions that he was not willing to move on from Mexico so easily.

At the end of his life, Cortés traveled to Spain, seen by many in the Spanish nobility as an aged conquistador-adventurer unable to accept his own limitations or mortality. This is also how he appears in many history books. Hoping to meet with Charles V over disagreements between himself and Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza over financial issues and exploration rights, Cortés attempted to participate in the siege of Algiers, only to be laughed at by the Spanish soldiers.<sup>831</sup> As we saw in chapter seven, the reality, however, was that Cortés sought solutions to some of his most complex and important problems. His exploration off the Pacific coast of New Spain lasted nearly a decade and was largely fruitless. Undertaken at great cost to himself, Cortés sought some compensation for an enterprise that came at the request of the emperor; he was also still

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<sup>830</sup> López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 398-399.

<sup>831</sup> Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 507-508; Sandoval, *Historia de la vida y hechos del Emperador Carlos V*, 306.

embroiled in legal battles with the government of New Spain, however, over issues pertaining to the size and power of his marquisate. In his direct appeal to Charles V, Cortés sought to put all these matters behind him and focus on the issues of his estate. In the siege of Algiers, Cortés likely attempted simply to court favor with the emperor rather than relive his conquistador days. In 1542, Cortés wrote the emperor, “I am content for having done my duty, and not for personal gain, but I am unable to find rest in my old age. I must leave...and return home, as I am no longer the age to go about in inns; but should withdraw myself to make my account clear with God, since it is a large one that I have, and little life is left to me to clear my conscience. It will be better for me to lose my estate than my soul.”<sup>832</sup> Cortés’s words no longer rang with the confidence and power of his *Cartas de relación*. Rather, they take on the tone of resignation. Devoutly religious, Cortés was concerned about preparing spiritually for the end of his life, but through his last will and testament it is evident that both his estate and legacy in New Spain were also at the forefront on his mind.

Despite the unique and colorful life Cortés led, we saw in chapter eight that his last will and testament does not deviate much from the standard of the day. The main difference is that it is much longer than a typical will as Cortés had more assets to account for than most. That Cortés devoted so much effort to the description of how his affairs should be handled after his death reveals much about his awareness of how his legacy developed in his lifetime and how it could be shaped afterward. His will is concerned not only with the spiritual but with the temporal; Cortés had plans for both worlds, and in both the marquisate played a primary role. He laid out plans for a

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<sup>832</sup> Hernan Cortés, “Carta-memorial de Hernan Cortés al Emperador,” 571. Translation in Helps, *The Life of Hernando Cortés*, 288-289.

monastery and a college in Coyoacán, furthering both his pious works and his personal impression on New Spain. In addition to these new projects, he described plans to improve upon the extant hospital in Mexico City. Cortés believed he could shape his memory in New Spain for generations, and the method he chose was using profits from his estate for charity. That some of the directives in his will were carried out and others were not is a shortcoming of his heirs. These plans, nevertheless, demonstrate Cortés's awareness of his ability to shape his reputation after his death and his efforts to do so.

As we have seen in another effort to manage his image, in his will Cortés questioned the use of Indian slavery. He wrote, "There have been many doubts and opinions as to whether it is permitted with a good conscious to hold the natives as slaves, whether captives of war or by purchase, and up until now this has not been determined, I direct my son and successor, Don Martín, and those who may follow him, to use all diligence to settle this point for the peace of my conscience and their own."<sup>833</sup> While this does not absolve Cortés of the use of slavery or other forms of mistreatment of the Native Americans, it does indicate that Cortés did so out of convention rather than malice. Slavery had been used in the Spanish Indies, and Cortés himself explained to the emperor the crucial importance of native labor in the installation of the *encomienda* system.<sup>834</sup> While the New Laws of 1542 had condemned native enslavement, Cortés appeared to be reacting more to a shift in moral attitude than legal practice, indicating both his awareness of and desire to conform to popular opinion. Again, Cortés displayed an effort to maintain control over his legacy in New Spain. His will not only sought to unburden his soul in death but also guide the memory of himself for the living.

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<sup>833</sup> Cortés, *Postrema voluntad*, 37. Translation in Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 91.

<sup>834</sup> Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, 279-280.

The life of Hernán Cortés was one driven by his ambition and his indefatigable spirit. In the many eventful episodes of his life, he was driven by things as simple as material wealth to more complex ideas of honor and fame. The conquest of Mexico brought him so much of nearly everything he sought that it overshadowed every other event in his life, and it continues to do so in history books written nearly five centuries later. The motivational trinity of “God, gold, and glory” is hoisted as the standard of this conquest, and appropriately so. The missionary aspect of conquest was born of the Reconquest and taken to the Americas on the heels of Columbus. The desire for wealth was behind Columbus’s expedition in the first place, and glory came through the success in achieving the first two goals. Yet, at the heart of all three of these standards is one aspect that is often overlooked: land. The defeat and subjugation of the American peoples was crucial to the success of the Spanish, but control of the land made possible everything from missionary work to the accumulation of wealth. Conquistadors gained glory through military success, but retained that glory only when land was won. Cortés understood the importance of the land just as the Aztecs had; it was from indigenous knowledge and records that Cortés gained much of his understanding of New Spain. He distributed land to soldiers as payment for their role in the conquest and kept many of the best areas for himself. Long established in Europe, the ownership or control of land dictated social, economic, and political status and influence. To sixteenth-century Spanish conquistadors, land meant power. For many of these men, Cortés included, such power was something with which they had limited experience but greatly desired. As demonstrated in chapter nine, conquest was as much about land as it was God, glory, and gold.

As already noted, in 1529, Emperor Charles V granted Cortés his title of marquis and expansive territories, bringing to an end any hope Cortés of maintaining his leadership in New Spain. “The very qualities that brought him success as a conqueror – audacity, independence of thought, and imagination – were anathema to the centralized bureaucracy of an absolute monarchy. And there were too many disturbing and unanswered questions about his past actions.”<sup>835</sup> Truth blended with fiction to discredit him, and his own boldness of character got in the way. Furthermore, during the political chaos in Mexico City in the late 1520s, much of his wealth was confiscated and redistributed. With the determination that carried him through life, however, Cortés played an active role in shaping the next chapter of his life in the creation of the marquisate.

The marquisate was assembled from the lands Cortés originally claimed after conquest. Although the situation for Cortés had drastically changed, this land remained at the core of his actions. Cortés did not concentrate his efforts on elevating his status in Spain, but rather in New Spain. Unlike Francisco Pizarro, conqueror of Peru, Cortés did not purchase land in Spain in a direct effort to increase his status there.<sup>836</sup> Cortés did not even order his remains to be interred in Spain. In his life after conquest, when Cortés needed to rebuild his reputation and wealth, he chose to do so in New Spain. This is not to say Cortés focused on restoring fame and honor exclusively through his estate; by his marriage to Juana de Zúñiga he married into a powerful noble family, increasing his own prestige in Spain in the process. Nor was he uninterested in larger world affairs: writing

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<sup>835</sup> Meyer, Sherman, and Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., 123.

<sup>836</sup> Rafael Váron Gabai, *Francisco Pizarro and his Brothers: The Illusion of Power in Sixteenth-Century Peru* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 6. Francisco and his brother Hernando enlarged family property in their hometown of Trujillo and purchased large pastures in surrounding towns.

to one of his lawyers in Spain, Francisco Núñez, Cortés requested updates on a variety of subjects, insisting, “I should like to receive news as full as possible of the Empress’s household and changes in court people, and the affairs of the realm, and news about Portugal, and the frontier, and about France and England and of Luther and of the Council [of Trent], and of His Majesty’s arrival [in Spain] and about the Turk and the Pope, and the Signiories, and of Italy, and those of his officers who may be replaced, and grants of commanderships and dignities, and whenever else there is new of this quality, let me know at long length.”<sup>837</sup> In this courtly lifestyle of title and importance, Cortés’s boundless imagination clearly led him to envision great things for himself. In demonstration of both worldly awareness and a lifetime conviction that his greatest accomplishments lie ahead of him, he nonetheless opted for a future as a landowner and administrator in New Spain. Why would an infamously adventurous figure such as Cortés choose what seemed such a mundane path? In this question one finds the significance of the study of the marquisate: Cortés, ever willing to gamble everything at a chance of a better future, saw in his marquisate his best possible opportunities. His reputation, and with it his notions of fame and honor, was too connected with New Spain to move on. He was aware he could not rebuild his legacy without it. Cortés would shape his image alongside the land that created it; as New Spain adapted to change and developed, so, too, would Cortés.

In the overview of the marquisate one can identify the importance of any one region to Cortés. Many parts of the estate were highly populated regions bustling with

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<sup>837</sup> Hernán Cortés, “Carta de Hernán Cortés, marqués del valle, a su pariente y procurador *ad litem* el licenciado Francisco Nuñez, México 25 de junio de 1532,” in Cortés, *Cartas y otros documentos de Hernán Cortés*, 69; translation in Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 465.

indigenous agriculture and production. Other parts were covered in fertile valleys and plains that invited expansive agricultural projects, while others hinted at a wealth of natural resources below the surface. Some regions were valued less because of what was on the land than where the land was located. Cortés did not choose his lands in New Spain on a single criterion but on a set of interconnected ideas of a larger economic network. In other words, Cortés did not just target what he felt were the most profitable lands but those he felt best fit into an overall economic strategy. What exactly this plan, or set of plans, was has yet to be fully explored, but it is clear that the study of the marquisate is an integral part of the legacy Cortés sought to construct.

Several patterns emerge in this study of the marquisate. For one, Cortés chose regions where Spanish presence met little or no resistance. In areas such as Toluca, Cuernavaca, and Oaxaca, native hostility to the Spanish was brief; in areas such as Tehuantepec or the Veracruz region, the attitude of the Indians might be described as inviting. It is not difficult to understand the advantages of such areas; healthy relationships with local indigenous groups will create stable, productive regions. It was common practice for natives to hold positions in municipal government to create a continuity of leadership, and native labor was the crux of the Spanish utilization of land. There was also the consideration of facilitating Spanish missionary work. The best opportunity for success came in areas where Spanish-Indian relations were not strained. Another consistent aspect of the marquisate across the diverse regions is the proximity of his holdings to trade routes, central markets, and ports. This, too, is a concept easily understood in terms of economic efficiency. Goods from Veracruz area could either be sent to Mexico City or placed on ships to Spain. Both Oaxaca and Cuernavaca were



highly populated regions of pre-Hispanic Mexico because of their location on a major trade route running south from Mexico City; Coyoacán was also a part of this southern trade system. Tehuantepec not only lent itself to Pacific ventures, but through isthmian trade the region was also ideal for trans-oceanic movement of goods. The Matalcinco Valley, while not directly on a trade route, enjoys proximity to Mexico City; the cattle industry around Toluca was a major supplier to the capital.

Each region of the marquisate also contributed something unique to the whole. While Cortés engaged in similar enterprises across the regions, each piece of the estate developed in a way that lent itself to a specific economic system. Coyoacán, with its large Indian population and diverse production, became a major supplier of goods and labor to Mexico City. Cortés no longer had political power in the capital, but through Coyoacán he was strongly tied to the city economically. Likewise, the Matalcinco Valley was located west of Mexico City and a prime grazing land, reinforcing Cortés's economic interests in Mexico City. Cuernavaca was not far from the capital, but was a trade center in itself. It was also such a large and fertile region that Cortés found success in most of the agricultural and industrial options he explored. In Cuernavaca more than anywhere else, Cortés found success in sugar production. The Oaxaca first described to Cortés was one of diverse opportunities and assured wealth. This vision was not exclusive to Cortés, however, and competition for land in Oaxaca greatly diminished his control in the area. Nevertheless, the persistence of native crops and goods, in addition to local markets, carried the traditional way of life in Oaxaca into modern times. The importance of access to both the Gulf Coast and the Pacific Ocean that Tehuantepec provided has been explained, but Cortés also found in the region ample grazing lands and deposits of

precious metals. Finally, Cortés viewed the western coastal region of Veracruz, like Oaxaca, as a fruitful region of diverse economic opportunities. Again, like Oaxaca, what Cortés hoped for in these regions did not become reality for various reasons, chief among them the decimated Indian population. A sugar industry there barely survived the sixteenth century, and native crops such as cotton remained the standard form of production in the region. While not all of Cortés’s plans for his marquisate were realized, the complex composition and design of the estate, along with the diversity of its development, demonstrates a sincere effort on his part to utilize the marquisate as a major part of his post-conquest legacy.

The exact goal of Cortés in the development of his legacy is unclear. The conquest of Mexico was the height of his success in terms of fame, honor, and wealth. Once these things began to slip away, he did not appear to have a plan for their recovery any more than he understood how he got them in the first place. As he reportedly said to Velásquez in 1519 when leaving Cuba for Mexico, “these things are better done than thought about.”<sup>838</sup> Cortés did not seem to have one specific goal in mind, he had many. His activities pulled him in so many directions that one gets the impression that Cortés himself did not have a plan, save for the notion that if he tried as many enterprises as possible, he might once again stumble into great success. He sought to remain governor of New Spain, or even become viceroy, but he also sought further conquest and exploration. He later divided his time between exploration and administering his marquisate and spent the final seven years of his life in Spain holding court with nobles and scholars while trying to solve some of his financial and legal problems. Though

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<sup>838</sup> Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 228-229.

forceful in his actions, Cortés did not seem to have direction. Even the great diversity of crops and forms of production in which he invested can be seen as an effort to guard himself against any single failure. In his early years, Cortés exhibited the will and ambition to succeed; in his later years, it was fear of failure that drove his actions. Though he demonstrated historical awareness and direct attempts to shape his legacy, he was never again able to write his own narrative as he did in conquest. Regardless of Cortés's personal goals and whether or not he achieved them, his marquissate played a substantial role in his life after conquest. Although they did not develop the way he intended in many cases the change brought to these regions of New Spain under Cortés and his heirs played a significant but understudied role in Mexican history.

The development of the marquissate was clearly important to Cortés in his lifetime. He created an entailment to preserve it in perpetuity for his heirs, so he obviously felt it was important to the continued well-being of his family and his own memory in New Spain. As has been discussed, however, there was little indication that his heirs understood it as an important part of the family legacy. Cortés's marquissate remained intact over the entirety of the Spanish colonial era, but after the sixteenth century its development remained stagnant, maintained over the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries until Mexican independence. Why, then, is it important to examine the frustrated legacy of Cortés? Regardless of the fruition of his imagination, Cortés's ideas surrounding honor and fame guided his actions. Despite the image of Cortés today, the marquissate nonetheless existed throughout the entire colonial period, influencing the economic, social, and cultural aspects of those lands for nearly four centuries. The importance of its construction and utilization should not be diminished

because of the controversial nature of its first marquis. While based on interpretations of the conquest, the vilification of Cortés that exists today in Mexico is not a direct result of anything Cortés or his heirs accomplished but a modern construct, a product of anti-Spanish, anti-colonial sentiment surrounding Mexico's war for independence and compounded by the *indigenista* movement of the Mexican Revolution. A culturally Spanish people shaped anti-Spanish views around the idea of the usurpation of native civilization and culture, and there is no figure held more responsible for this than Hernán Cortés. While many of these negative portrayals of Cortés are not entirely based in historical research, they nevertheless frustrate objective study. Scholarship into the life of the conquistador has been taking place since the nineteenth century, but the sensitive and often controversial nature of the material has rendered it a difficult path for historians to tread. The conquest of Mexico has been exhaustively studied over the years, and will undoubtedly continue to be studied, but the profound importance of that event and Cortés's contentious legacy have overshadowed other areas of his life, creating a dearth in context and depth in historical study. This is something this dissertation seeks to address.

In these other areas of his life, particularly in his life after conquest, there is much to learn, not only about Cortés himself but colonial New Spain. In examining the impression Cortés made on the history of Mexico, one must begin with how Cortés himself viewed the formation of this legacy. Cortés lived a life of determination and resourcefulness, yet despite his assertion, "I am more ambitious of fame than wealth," he would spend his final years without much of either.<sup>839</sup> John Elliott mused, "He had

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<sup>839</sup> Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés*, 455.

played the game according to the rules, but these had been laid down by the Spanish Crown. And Cortés, who had devoted such time and thought to their study, had overlooked the most important fact of all: that those who devise the rules are likely, in the last round, to win the match.”<sup>840</sup> One might easily say the same about Cortés’s role in the history of Mexico. That Cortés lost the game, however, does not diminish the importance of how he played it. Regardless of whether or not the legacy of Cortés evolved in the manner he sought, his actions shaped the settlement and development of early colonial Mexico. Cortés sought to make a lasting impact on the land he conquered in the name of Emperor Charles V and Spain, and while not in any way he could have imagined, he did exactly that.

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<sup>840</sup> Elliott, introduction to Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, xxxvi-xxxvii.

## APPENDIX 1: THE GRANTS OF THE MARQUISATE<sup>841</sup>

1. Cédula de Carlos V y la reina Juana, en que le hacen merced a Hernán Cortés de 22 pueblos y 23,000 vasallos. Barcelona, 6 de Julio de 1529.

Don Carlos por la Divina Clemencia Emperador Semper Augusto Rey de Alemania, Doña Juana su Madre y el mismo Don Carlos, por la gracia de Dios Reyes de Castilla, de León, de Aragón, de las do Sicilias, de Jerusalem, de Navarra, de Granada, de Toledo, de Valencia, de Galicia, de Mallorca, de Sevilla, de Cerdeña, de Córdoba, de Córcega, de Murcia, de Jaen, de los Algarbes, de Algecira, de Gibraltar, de las islas Canarias, de las Indias, Islas y Tierra firme del Mar Oceano; Condes de Barcelona y señores de Vizcaya, y de Molina, Duques de Athenas y Neopatria Condes de Rosellon, de Cerdania, Marqués de Oristan y de Gociano: Archiduques de Austria, Duques de Borgoña y de Bravante, Condes de Flandres y del Triol etc. – Por quanto Vos Don Fernando Cortés Nuestro Gobernador y Capitán General de la Nueva España, por nos server el año pasado de mil quinientos y diez y ocho años, con nuestra licencia fuistes desde la isla Fernandina llamada Cuba, con una armada a descubrir la Nueva España de que teniades noticia. E con la Gracia de Nuestro Señor y con Buena industria de vuestra persona descubristes la dicha Nueva España en que se incluyen muchas provincias y tierras y las pacificastes y pusistes todo debajo de Nuestro Señorío y corona Real é asi lo estan agora lo cual somos ciertos que ha sido con muchos y grandes trabajos y peligros de vuestra persona y no habemos tenido de vos por muy bien servidos en ello; y acatando los grandes provechos que de vuestros servicios ha redundado ansi para el servicio de Nuestro Señor y aumento de Nuestra Santa Fee Católica que en las dichas tierras que están sin conocimiento ni fee se ha plantado con el acrecentamiento de ello ha redundado a nuestra corona Real destos reinos y los trabajos que en ella habéis pasado y a fidelidad y obediencia conque siempre nos habéis servido como bueno y fiel servidor y vasallo nuestro, según somos ciertos y certificados. Y porque a los reyes es justa y loable cosa hacer Mercedes y honrar a aquellos que bien y lealmente los sirven porque todos se esfuercen a hacer lo mismo y porque es razón que de lo susodicho queda perpetua memoria y porque los dichos vuestros servicios sean satisfechos y otros tomen ejemplo de nos server bien y fielmente, e acatando que a los Reyes e Principes es propia cosa honrar y sublimar y hacer gracias y mercedes a su súbditos y naturales especialmente a aquellos que bien y fielmente los sirven e aman su servicio. Por la presente vos hacemos merced, gracia e donación pura,

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<sup>841</sup> *Cedulario Cortesiano*, 125-135. The documents have not been modified from their original versions.

perfecta y no revocable que es otra entre vivos para agora e para siempre jamas de las villas e pueblos de Cuynacan, Atlacavoje, Matalcingo, Toluca, Calimaya, Cuernavaca, Guastepeque, Acapistla, Yautepeque, Tepistlan, Guaxaca, Cuyulapa, Etlantequila, Vacoa, Teguatepeque, Jalapa, Utlatepeque, Atroyestan, Equetasta, Tluistlatepeca, Izcalpan, que son en la dicha Nueva España hasta en numero de veinte y tres mil vasallos y jurisdicción Civil y Criminal alta y baja mero mixto Imperio e rentas y oficios y pechos e derechos, y montes y prados y pastos e aguas Corrientes, estantes y manantes y con todas las otras cosas que nos tuviéremos y lleváremos y nos perteneciere y de que podamos y debamos gozar y llevar en las tierras que para nuestra Corona Real se señalaren en la dicha Nueva España; y con todo lo otro al señorío de las dichas villas y pueblos de suso declaradas perteneciente en cualquier manera y para que todo ello sea vuestro y de vuestros herederos y subcesores y de aquel o aquellos que de vos o de ellos o hobieren titulo o causa razón. E para que los podáis y puedan vender, dar o donar e trocar e cambiar, e enajenar e hacer de ello y en ello todo lo que quisiéredes y por bien tuviéredes como de cosa vuestra propia libre e quieta e desembargada habida por justo e derecho titulo reteniendo como retenemos en nos y para nos e para los Reyes que después de nos reinaren en estos nuestros Reinos, la Soberanía de Nuestra Justicia Real. E que las apelaciones que de vos o de vuestro Alcalde mayor que en las dichas Villas y Pueblos hobiere vaya ante Nos e ante los de nuestro consejo e oidores de las nuestras Audiencias e Chancillerias y que nos hagamos y mandemos hacer Justicia en ellas cada vez que nos fuere pedido e viéremos que cumpla a nuestro servicio de la mandar hacer. E que no podades vos, ni vuestros herederos e subcesores hacer ni edificar de nuevo fortalezas algunas en los dichos pueblos y sus tierras e terminus sin nuestra licencia y especial mandado. E tenemos asimismo para nos y para los Reyes que después de nos vinieren: los mineros y encerramientos de oro y plata, y de otros cualesquier metals e las salinas que hobiere en las dichas tierras y que corra allí nuestra moneda e de los Reyes que despues que nos reinaren e todas las otras cosas que andan con el señorío Real y no se pueden ni deben de separar ni apartar. E conque obedezcáis y acojáis en las dichas villas y pueblos a nos e a los Reyes que despues de nos subdieren en estos dichos nuestros reinos cada vez que allí llegaremos de noche o de día, en lo alto y bajo, airado o pagados con pocos e con muchos: e que hagades [sic] dende Guerra y por cada y cuando vos lo mandáredes o enviaremos a mandar e vos damos poder cumplido para que en vuestra propia autoridad podreis entrar y apprehender e continuar la posicion de los dichos pueblos, en cuanto toca a los dichos veinte y tres mil vasallos con lo que en ellos hobiere e terminus e jurisdicciones e rentas y pechos y otras cosas que a nos nos pertenecieran y de que podamos y debamos gozar en las dichas tierras que para nos fuesen señaladas segun dicho es, lo haber y llevar para vos y para los dichos vuestros herederos y subcesores como dicho eis con las limitaciones y excepciones y condiciones de suso declaradas y con tanto que si hobiéredes de enajenar los dichos veinte y tres mil vasallos no sea con iglesia ni monasterio, ni con persona de orden ni de religion, ni de fuera de dichos nuestros reinos, e señoríos sin nuestra licencia y expreso mandado ni los podáis vender a otras personas sin requerir a nos e a los Reyes que después de nos vinieren para que si los quisieremos tanto por tanto lo podamos hacer y que a los que en qualquier manera hobieron los dichos veinte y tres mil vasallos y lugares pasen las excepciones y limitaciones susodichas y no en otro manera. E por la presentedesde hoy dia de la fecha de nuestra carta en adelante para siempre jamás, vos apoderamos en los dichos pueblos

hasta en el numero de veinte y tres mil vasallos con sus aldeas y vasallos, jurisdicciones y rentas y pechos y dineros, terminus y cosas suso dichas, según de la manera que dicho eis y Os damos la posesión señorío y propiedad de todo ello si y segun que a nos pertenece para vos y para vuestros herederos y subcesores con las limitaciones y excepciones suso contenidas e vos constituimos por verdadero señor de todo ello e por esta vuestra carta o su traslado signado de escribano public mandamus a los Consejos, Justicia y regidores, caballeros, escuderos, oficiales, e homes buenos de todos los dichos pueblos e sus tierras que luego que con ella fueren requeridos sin apelación ni dilación alguna vos hayan y reciban y tengan por señor y poseedor de las dichas villas y pueblos e cosa suso dichas e vos apoderen en todo ello a vuestra voluntad e presten la obediencia e reverencia que como su señor de ellas vos es debida e vos deben dar y prestart e vos den e entreguen las casas de la justicia Civil e Criminal de las dichas villas e pueblos de suso declarados e usen con vos y con los que vuestro poder hobieren en los oficios de justicia e jurisdicción de ellas e vos acudan e respondan con las rentas e pechos, e dineros, e cosas suso dichas de que como dicho es en las tierras e pueblos que para nuestra Corona Real fuere señalado en la dicha tierra nos pertenecieren y de que podamos y debamos gozar y no a otro alguno y mandamus al Ilustrisimo Principe don Felipe nuestro muy caro y muy amado hijo y nieto y a los Infantes, perlados, Duques, Marqueses, Condes, Maestres de las ordenes, ricos homes, e a los del nuestro consejo e oidores de las nuestras audiencias, alcaldes e alguaciles de la nuestra casa e corte e chancilleria. E a los priores e comendadores, subcomendadores, alcaldes de los castillos e casas Fuertes y llanas. E a todos los consejos, justicias, regidores, caballeros, escuderos, oficiales e homes buenos de todas las ciudades, villas y lugares destos dichos nuestros Reynos, e señorios, e de la dicha Nueva España, Indias y Tierra firme de la mar Océano ansi a los que agora son, como a los que serán de aqui adelante e a cada uno e cualquier de ellos que nos cumplan y guarden y hagan guardar y cumplir esta dicha merced y donación que nos asi vos hacemos en todo e por todo según de que en ella se contiene e contra el tenor e forma de ella vos no vayan e pasen ni a los dichos vuestros herederos ni subcesores en tiempo alguno ni por alguna manera lo qual todo queremos e mandamus que asi se haga e cumpla no embargante cualesquier leyes, e ordenamientos, pragmáticas sanciones de estos dichos nuestros reynos e señoríos que en contrario de estos sean o ser puedan, con las cuales y con cada una de ellas de nuestro propio motu, e cierta ciencia, e poderio Real absolute habiéndolas aqui por insertas e incomparables dispensamos, e las abrogamos, e derogamos quanto a esto toca e atañe, quedando en su fuerza e vigor para en las otras cosas adelante dada en Barcelona a seis dias del mes de Julio de mil quinientos veintinueve años. – Yo el rey

2. Cédula de Carlos V a Hernán Cortés, en que le hace merced del titulo de Marqués del Valle. Barcelona, 6 de Julio de 1529.

Don Carlos por la Divina Clemencia Emperador semper augustus, Rey de Alemania, Doña Juana su Madre y el mismo Don Carlos por la Gracia de Dios, Reyes de Castilla, de León, de Aragón, de las dos Sicilias, de Jerusalem, de Navarra, de Granada, de Toledo, de Valencia, de Galicia, de Mallorca, de Sevilla, de Cerdeña, de Córdoba, de Córcega, de Murcia, de Jahen, de los Algarbes, de Algecira, de Gibraltar, de las islas de las Canarias,



é de las Indias, Islas y tierra firme del mar Océano; Condes de Barcelona, é señores de Vizcaya y de Molina, Duques de Athenas e de Neopatria; Condes de Rosellón e de Cerdania, Marqueses de Oristán e de Gociano, Archduques de Austria, Duque de Borgoña é de Brabante; Condes de Flandres y de Tirol, etc. Por cuanto vos por una nuestra carta firmada de mí el Rey, habemos hecho merced a vos Don Hernando Cortés Nuestro Gobernador, el Capitán General de la Nueva España de veinte y tres mil vasallos en la Nueva España que vos descubristéis e poblastéis: señaladamente en ciertos pueblos de valle de Oaxaca que es en la dicha Nueva España, y en otras partes de ella, como mas largo en la provision de ello vos mandamus dar se contiene. Por ende acatando los muchos y señalados servicios que habéis hecho a los Católicos Reyes Nuestros Señores Padres é abuelos, que hayan santa Gloria, e a nos especialmente en el descubrimiento y población de la dicha Nueva España de que Dios Nuestro Señor haseido tan servido, é la Corona Real de estos nuestros pueblos acrecentada y a lo que esperamos é tenemos por cierto que nos haréis de aqui adelante continuando vuestra fidelidad y lealtad; he tenido respect a vuestra persona e a los dichos vuestros servicios, e por mas honrar y sublimar; e porque de vos e vuestros servicios quede mas perpetua memoria, e porque vos e vuestros subcesores seáis mas honrados e sublimados tenemos por bien y es nuestra merced e voluntad, que agora e de aquí adelante vos podáis llamar y firmar e intitular e vos llaméis e intituléis Marques de Valle que agora se llamaba Oaxaca, como en la dicha merced va nombrado: e por la presente vos hacemos e intitulamos Marques del dicho Valle llamado Oaxaca, e por esta nuestra carta mandamus al Ilustrísimo Príncipe Don Felipe nuestro muy caro y muy amado hijo e nieto, e a todos los infants, Duques, Marqueses, Perlados, Condes, Ricos homes, maestros de la órdenes, Priores, Comendadores, Subcomendadores, Alcaldes de los castillos e casas Fuertes e llanas e a los del nuestro Consejo, Presidente e Oidores de las nuestras audiencia e cancellerías de estos reinos, e de la dicha Nueva España Alcaldes, alguaciles de la nuestra casa e corte e concillerías, e a todos los consejos, corregidores, asistentes, gobernadores de otras cualesquier justicias y personas de cualquier estado preeminencia, condición o dignidad que sean nuestros vasallos, súbditos y naturales de estos nuestros reinos y de la Indias, Islas y Tierra Firme de Mar Océano asi a los que agora son, como a los que serán de aquí adelante, e a cada uno e cualquier de ellos, que vos hayan y tengan e llamen *Marqués* del dicho Valle de Oaxaca. E vos guarden e hagan guardar todas las honras, gracias, mercedes, franquezas e libertades, preeminencias, ceremonias e otras cosas que por razón de ser Marqués debéis haber y gozar e vos deben ser guardadas de todo bien e cumplidamente, en guisa que vos non mengüe ende cosa alguna. E los unos ni los otros no fagades ni Fagan ende al por alguna manera sopena de la nuestra merced e diez mil maravedis para la nuestra cámara, a cada uno e cualquier de ellos por quién fincare de lo asi facer e cumplir. – Dada en la ciudad de Barcelona a seis días del mes de Julio, año del nacimiento de Nuestro Salvador Jesucristo de mil e quinientos e veinte y nueve años. – Yo el rey. – Yo, Francisco de los Cobos. Secretario de sus Católicas y Cesáreas Majestades, la fice escrebir por su mandado. – Registrada Francisco de Bridiesca. – Frater G. Episcopus Oxomensis. – El licenciado de la Corte. – El doctor Beltrán. – Registrada Francisco de Bribiesca.

## APPENDIX 2: SPANISH MONEY AT THE TIME OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO<sup>842</sup>

Many denominations of Spanish coinage existed in the early sixteenth century, including gold, silver, and copper coins. There were no formal guidelines of usage, leading to a wide variety of practices in records. The basic unit of currency was the *maravedí*, a copper coin that became the standard for basic transactions. The most common silver currency was the *real* while the most common gold coin was the *ducat*. One silver *real* was worth 34 *maravedís*, and one gold ducat was worth 11 *reals*, or 375 *maravedís*. Other gold coins in the sixteenth century were the *corona* or *escudo*, the *peso de oro*, and the *castellano*.

The rates are as follows:

1 *real* = 34 *maravedís*

1 *corona* or *escudo* = 330 *maravedís*

1 ducat = 375 *maravedís*

1 *peso de oro* = 450 *maravedís*

1 *castellano* = 485 *maravedís*

1 ducat = 11 *reals*

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<sup>842</sup> Davies, *The Golden Century of Spain*, 295-296; Thomas, *Conquest*, 621.

### APPENDIX 3: TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF THE MARQUISATE

Each of the twenty two towns named in the 1529 grant to Cortés represented not only those towns but the surrounding villages. This list was compiled by García Martínez in *El Marquesado de Valle* to create the most comprehensive understanding of the geography of the marquisate to date. The capital, or *cabecera*, of each region is indicated.

#### **Coyoacán**

|                           |                       |                      |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Acopilco                  | San Ángel             | Santa Cruz           |
| Actipan                   | San Bartolomé         | Tlacoquemecatl       |
| Becerra                   | Ameyalco              | Santa Lucía          |
| Coapa                     | San Bernabé Tepetipac | Santa María Nonoalco |
| Coyoacán (cabecera)       | San Borja             | Santa Rosa Sochiac   |
| La Asunción Tlacopac      | San Francisco         | Santa Úrsula Tochico |
| La Candelaria             | San Isidro de Arenal  | Santo Tomás Ajusco   |
| La Cañada                 | San Jerónimo          | Tacubaya             |
| La Magdalena Contreras    | San Juan de Dios      | Tizapán              |
| Los Reyes                 | San Mateo Churubusco  | Xoco                 |
| Magdalena                 | San Mateo Tlaltenango |                      |
| Mixoac                    | San Nicolás Totolapa  |                      |
| Padierna                  | San Pablo Chimalpan   |                      |
| San Agustín de las Cuevas | San Pedro Cuajimalpa  |                      |
| San Andrés Totoltepec     | San Sebastián Axotla  |                      |
|                           | Santa Cruz Atoyac     |                      |

**Toluca**

|                        |                                  |                       |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Capultitlán            | San Antonio<br>Cacalomacán       | San Mateo Oztzaticpac |
| Calixtlahuaca          | San Buenaventura                 | San Pablo Autopan     |
| La Puerta              | San Jerónimo                     | San Pedro Totoltepec  |
| San Andrés Cuexcotilla | San José de Toluca<br>(cabecera) | Santa Ana Tepaltitlán |
| San Antonio Buenavista |                                  | Santa Cruz            |

**Charo Matalcinco**

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| Patamboro                   |
| San Guillermo Cicio         |
| San Miguel Charo (cabecera) |
| San Rita                    |

**Cuernavaca**

|                       |                                |                                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Acatlipa              | Huitzilac                      | San Carlos                      |
| Alpuyeca              | Ixtla                          | San Diego Atlihuayán            |
| Amacuzac              | Jalostoc                       | San Esteban Tetelpa             |
| Amazongo              | Jaltitlán                      | San Francisco<br>Ahuehuetzingo  |
| Atlacomulco           | Jantetelco                     | San Francisco Coatlán<br>de Río |
| Atlamamulco           | Jiutepec                       | San Francisco Miacatlán         |
| Atotonilco            | Jonacatepec                    | San Francisco Tetecala          |
| Ayoxochiapan          | Oacalco                        | San Gabriel<br>Amacuitlapilco   |
| Barreto               | Oaxtepec                       | San Gaspar                      |
| Coatetelco            | Pantitlán                      | San Gaspar Tetela               |
| Cuauchichinola        | Pueblo Nuevo                   | San José Ocotepec               |
| Cuernavaca (cabecera) | San Agustín Tetlama            | San Juan                        |
| Chiconcuac            | San Agustín Xochitlán          | San Juan Panchimalco            |
| Chisco                | San Andrés                     |                                 |
| Huatecalco            | San Buenaventura<br>Guaxomulco |                                 |

|                                  |                                 |                         |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| San Lorenzo Chamilpa             | Santa María Amatlán             | Tejalpa                 |
| San Lucas Mazatepec              | Santa María Magdalena Tlalistac | Temilpa                 |
| San Marcos Tlayacac              | Santa María Pazulco             | Temoac                  |
| San Martín Tepaltzingo           | Santa María Temimilcingo        | Tenango                 |
| San Matías Chalcatzingo          | Santa María Tlatenchi           | Tenextepango            |
| San Miguel Atlacahualoya         | Santa María Zahuatlán           | Tequesquitengo          |
| San Miguel Cuautla               | Santiago                        | Texcala                 |
| San Miguel Chapultepec           | Santiago Amayuca                | Tezoyuca                |
| San Miguel Huajintlán            | Santiago Mesquemecan            | Tlaltenango             |
| San Miguel Jojutla               | Santo Domingo Ocotlán           | Tocumán                 |
| San Miguel Tlaltizapán           | Santo Domingo Tepoztlán         | Xochimancas             |
| San Nicolás                      | Santo Domingo Tlaquiltenango    | Xochitepec              |
| San Nicolás Ahuatepec            | Santo Tomás Huitzililla         | Yautepec                |
| San Sebastián Achichipico        | Santo Tomás Tetelilla           | Yecapixtla              |
| San Sebastián Cuentepec          | Tecajec                         | Zcualpan                |
| Santa Catarina Zacatepec         | Tehuixtla                       |                         |
| <b><u>Oaxaca</u></b>             |                                 |                         |
| La Asunción Etlá                 | San Antonio Abad de la Cal      | San Juan Chilteca       |
| La Soledad Etlá                  | San Gabriel Etlá                | San Lucas Tlanichico    |
| Natividad Etlá                   | San Isidro                      | San Martín Mexicapa     |
| Nazareno Etlá                    | San Jacinto de la Amilpas       | San Matías Xalatlaco    |
| Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Etlá | San Juan Bautista Guelanche     | San Miguel de las Peras |
| San Agustín de la Juntas         | San Juan Chapultepec            | San Miguel Etlá         |
| San Agustín Etlá                 |                                 | San Nicolás             |
|                                  |                                 | San Pablo de la Raya    |

|                        |                               |                             |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| San Pablo Etna         | Santa Cruz Trapiche           | Santa María Chichihualtepec |
| San Pedro Apóstol Etna | Santa Cruz Xoxocotlán         | Santiago Cuilapa            |
| San Pedro Ixtlahuaca   | Santa María Azompa            | Santiago Etna               |
| San Raimundo Jalpa     | Santa María Etna              | Santo Domingo Etna          |
| San Sebastián Etna     | Santa María Oaxaca (cabecera) |                             |
| Santa Ana Tlapacoya    |                               |                             |
| Santa Cruz             |                               |                             |

**Tehuantepec**

|                        |                             |                                      |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Chimalapa              | San Mateo del Mar           | Santo Domingo Tehuantepec (cabecera) |
| Guichicovi             | Santa María Asunción Jalapa | Tequistlán                           |
| La Asunción Ixtaltepec | Santa María Petalpa         | Utlatepec                            |
| Lachitoba              |                             |                                      |

**Veracruz**

|                       |             |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Acpango               | El Vigía    | Olapa                               |
| Arroyo de Cañas       | Espinal     | Olapilla                            |
| Ayoxinapan            | Guajilote   | Otapa                               |
| Bebedero              | Guatotlapa  | Piedra Hincada                      |
| Boca de Alonso Lázaro | Guayopa     | Potrerrillo                         |
| Boca de San Miguel    | Hueyapan    | Saltabarranca                       |
| Boca de Teponaguasapa | Juan Roque  | San Andrés Cotaxtla                 |
| Capilla Alta          | La Lima     | San Andrés Tuxtla                   |
| Catemaco              | Las Ánimas  | San Diego                           |
| Ceiba                 | Mazacapa    | San Juan de la Rinconada (Ixcalpan) |
| Cerro Colorado        | Mesón       | San Simón                           |
| Cruz de Vidaña        | Mono Blanco | Sanatepec                           |
| Chacalapa             | Mono Prieto | Santiago Tuxtla (cabecera)          |
| El Burro              | Naranjal    |                                     |

Santo Tomás Apasapa

Siquipilinga

Tecomate

Tepeca

Tetenca

Tlapacoyan

Tlapaloyan

Totoltepec

Zapotitlán

Zara

APPENDIX 4: ADMINISTRATORS OF THE MARQUISATE: THE FIRST 100 YEARS<sup>843</sup>

| Marquisate Administrator    | Year |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Juan de Altamirano          | 1529 |
| Pedro de Ahumada            | 1554 |
| Hernán Gutiérrez Altamirano | 1587 |
| Juan de Altamirano          | 1594 |
| Martín de Santa Cruz        | 1597 |
| Gerónimo Leardo             | 1604 |
| Cristóbal de Molina y Pisa  | 1612 |
| Luís Carrillo y Alarcón     | 1618 |
| Martín López de Arenchi     | 1620 |
| Luís Carrillo y Alarcón     | 1628 |

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<sup>843</sup> García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle*, 162.



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