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<th>DOCUMENT 1</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
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| **First Meeting of Montezuma and Hernan Cortes**

The following account, written by an unknown Aztec chronicler, describes the first meeting of the Aztec ruler Montezuma and the Spanish leader Hernan Cortes. Their translator was Malinche, a young Indian woman who spoke the Mayan and Aztec languages and quickly learned Spanish.

When the Spaniards entered the Royal House, they placed Montezuma under guard and kept him under their vigilance... Other lords were permitted to depart.

In the morning the Spaniards told Montezuma what they needed in the way of supplies: tortillas, firewood and charcoal. Also: large clean cooking pots, water jars, pitchers, dishes, and other pottery. Montezuma ordered that it be sent to them. The chiefs who received this order were angry with the king and no longer revered or respected him. But they furnished the Spaniards with all the provisions they needed - food, beverages and water, and fodder for their horses...

When the Spaniards were installed in the palace they asked Montezuma about the city's resources and reserves and about the warriors' ensigns and shields. They questioned him closely and then demanded gold. Montezuma guided them to it. They surrounded him and crowded close with their weapons. He walked in the center, while they formed a circle around him. When they arrived at the treasure house called Teucalco, the riches of gold and feathers were brought out to them: ornaments made of quetzal feathers, richly worked shields, disks of gold, the necklaces of idols, gold nose plugs, gold greaves [leg armor] and bracelets and crowns.

The Spaniards immediately stripped the feathers from the gold shields and ensigns. They gathered all the gold into a great mound and set fire to everything else, regardless of its value. Then they melted down the gold into ingots. As for the precious green stones, they took only the best of them... the Spaniards searched through the whole treasure house, questioning and quarreling, and seized every object they thought was beautiful... Next they went to Montezuma's storehouse... where his personal treasures were kept. The Spaniards grinned like little beasts and patted each other with delight. They has entered a hall of treasures, it was as if they had arrived in Paradise. They searched everywhere and coveted everything... They seized these treasures as if they were their own, as if this plunder were merely a stroke of good luck.

The Mexicans were too frightened to approach... They shied away as if the Spaniards were wild beasts... Yet they did not abandon the Spaniards hunger and thirst. They brought them whatever they needed, but shook with fear as they did so.
Three halls are in this grand temple, which contain the principal idols; these are of wonderful extent and height, and admirable workmanship, adorned with figures sculptured in stone and wood; leading from the halls are chapels with very small doors. In these chapels are the images of idols, although, as I have before said, many of them are also found on the outside. In the place of these I put images of Our Lady and the Saints, which excited not a little feeling in Moctezuma and the inhabitants. He declared that if my proceedings were known throughout the country, the people would rise against me; for they believed that their idols bestowed on them all temporal good, and if they permitted them to be ill-treated, they would be angry and without their gifts, and by this means the people would be deprived of the fruits of the earth and perish with famine. I answered, through the interpreters, that they were deceived in expecting any favors from idols, the work of their own hands, formed of unclean things; and that they must learn there was but one God, the universal Lord of all, who had created the heavens and earth, and all things else, and had made them and us; that He was without beginning and immortal, and they were bound to adore and believe Him, and no other creature or thing.

I said everything to them I could to divert them from their idolatries, and draw them to a knowledge of God our Lord. Moctezuma replied, the others assenting to what he said, That they had already informed me they were not the originally of this country, but that their ancestors had immigrated to it many years ago; and they fully believed that after so long an absence from their native land, they might have fallen into some errors; that I having more recently arrived must know better than themselves what they ought to believe; and that if I would instruct them in these matters, and make them understand the true faith, they would follow my directions, as being for the best. Afterwards, Moctezuma and many of the principal citizens remained with me until I had removed the idols, purified the chapels, and placed the images in them, manifesting apparent pleasure; and I forbade them sacrificing human beings to their idols as they had been accustomed to do; because, besides being abhorrent in the sight of God, your sacred Majesty had prohibited it by law, and commanded to put to death whoever should take the life of another. Thus, from that time, they refrained from the practice, and during the whole period of my abode in that city, they were never seen to kill or sacrifice a human being.