



Images of Moctezuma and his symbols of power

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NUMEROUS DIRECT and indirect historical accounts agree that by the time of his death in 1520, Moctezuma was a grown man, but it is still not clear whether he was fifty-two years old, as some believe, or whether he was still in his forties. He is repeatedly described as being a person of medium height, of slender build and with a long, thin beard,¹ which coincides with European-style images of him in the Mendoza and Florentine codices (figs 19 and 71).² The soldier Bernal Díaz del Castillo recalls him as being:

... of good height and well proportioned, slender and spare of flesh, not very swarthy, but of the natural colour and shade of an Indian. He did not wear his hair long, but so as just to cover his ears, his scanty black beard was well shaped and thin. His face was somewhat long, but cheerful, and he had good eyes and showed in his appearance and manner both tenderness and when necessary, gravity.³

Friar Francisco de Aguilar completes the picture by describing Moctezuma's character as well as his physical appearance:

The king and lord was of medium height and slender build, with a large head and somewhat flat nostrils. He was very astute, discerning and prudent, learned and capable, but also harsh and irascible, and very firm in his speech.⁴

Fig. 23
Detail of the Hackmack Box, showing Moctezuma II performing self-sacrifice by drawing blood from his earlobe with a bone perforator (see cat. 58). Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg.



Fig. 24 above left
Moctezuma I supervising the sculpting of his own image at Chapultepec Hill, Mexico City. From the Codex Durán, fol. 91v. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

Fig. 25 above
Surviving details of Moctezuma II's image carved in relief in the bedrock at the foot of Chapultepec Hill, Mexico City.

None of these traits are apparent in the indigenous-style images of Moctezuma, simply because the Mexica did not practise the art of portraiture before the arrival of the Europeans. In indigenous sculptures and paintings it is easy to recognize the rulers of Tenochtitlan by their costume, regalia and context; however it is impossible for us to distinguish between them based on their faces or gestures, as they were all portrayed conventionally and in a stereotyped manner. The Mexica artists obviously made each one different, but they did this through the use of onomastic or name-glyph complexes that gave expression to the heads of the characters represented.⁵

In the case of Moctezuma II, the *xiuhuitzolli* – a royal diadem in gold covered with turquoise mosaic – was used as the main glyphic element, as his name meant ‘He Who Grows Angry [like a] Lord’. The *xiuhuitzolli* was shown in profile, with its characteristic blue triangular silhouette, as well as two red thongs used to knot the diadem to the nape of the neck. When it was part of an onomastic complex it was usually accompanied by one or more complementary glyphic elements, including a straight and well-cut head of hair; a nose piece (*yacaxihuitl*), an ear-spool (*xiuhnacochtli*) and/or a stepped pectoral (a pendant worn by warriors) also in turquoise; a double speech scroll, sometimes in the form of a *teotl-tlachinolli* war glyph (‘divine water and bonfire’); feathers or parallel strips, associated with penitence and fasting, known as ‘fasting cords’. However, the *xiuhuitzolli* glyphic complex is problematic as it is also used (although not on their heads) to identify Moctezuma I (reigned 1440–69), Tenochtitlan’s main military leaders, and also royal judges.

In Mexica sculptural art there is a small group of monuments and another of ritual objects with the *xiuhuitzolli* glyph complex. Given the problems of identification, it is still being debated whether the former were commissioned during Moctezuma II’s reign (1502–20), and whether the latter group were part of the sovereign’s prized

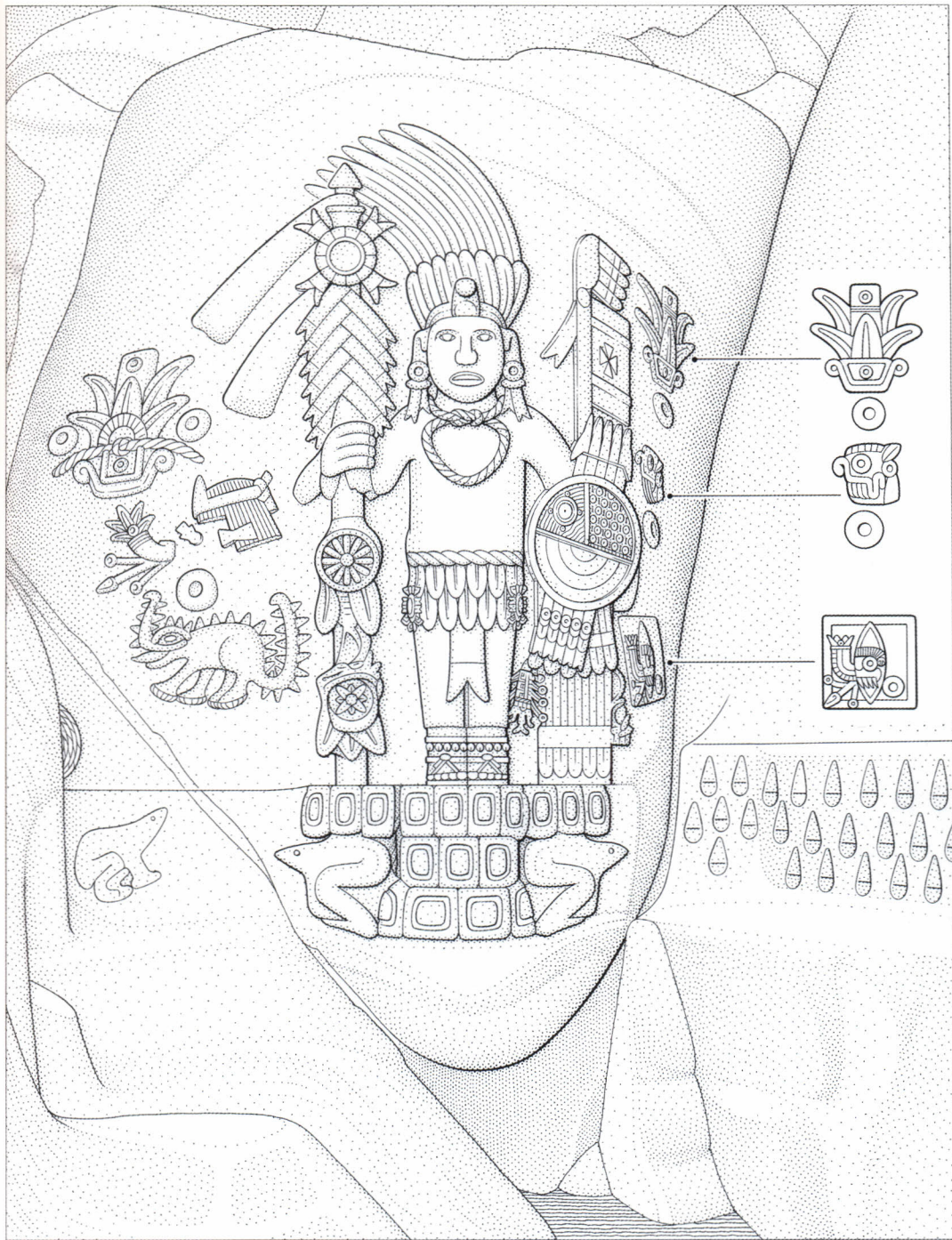


Fig. 26
Hypothetical reconstruction of the sculpted relief at Chapultepec Hill showing Moctezuma II dressed as Xipe Totec. This reconstruction is based on careful examination of surviving details of the sculpture and also draws on representations of Xipe Totec in codices.

possessions. The most interesting monument, and that which offers fewest doubts as to its origin, is the half-relief found at Chapultepec Hill in modern-day Mexico City.⁶ Descriptions in the historic sources of the sixteenth century tell us that the Mexica sovereigns had their effigies sculpted in the andesite outcrops at the base of this hill. The custom seems to date back to the era of Moctezuma I. Although the reliefs were badly damaged in the eighteenth century on the orders of the viceregal government, enough remains for us to be able to see that the best-conserved figure, at 1.35 metres high, shows Moctezuma II. He is shown at full-length, standing erect and facing forwards, and has insignia of Xipe Totec,⁷ a Mesoamerican god of war. As well as the aforementioned



Fig. 27
The figure of Moctezuma II, identified by his name glyph. A detail from the *Teocalli* of Sacred Warfare (see cat. 78). Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.

onomastic glyph complex, calendrical signs that specialists have linked to the most important events in his life accompany the portrait: 1 Reed (1467, the possible year of his birth), 1 Crocodile (the day of his coronation, see cat. 14) and 2 Reed with a knotted rope (the last New Fire ceremony, held in 1507; see p. 140).

A similar effigy, though much smaller in size, is the so-called *Teocalli* of Sacred Warfare (fig. 27).⁸ This is also of indisputable origin. Here, Moctezuma and Huitzilopochtli, the patron god of the Mexica, did penance before the sun and the earth. The ruler appears in full-length and in profile, attired in the typical priest's garb and carrying his auto-sacrifice bloodletting instruments. He is wearing a feline skin, as well as the feather headdress known as a *cozoyahualolli*, a Chichimeca emblem that connects him to the first rulers of the dynasty. The image of Moctezuma, again wearing his priestly attire, was also sculpted on the famous box in the Hackmack collection (cat. 58). This is a tiny two-piece quadrangular receptacle that may have been used to hold his blood and instruments of penitence.⁹ On one side of the box we see him seated, perforating an earlobe and turning his back on his onomastic glyph. The presence of symbols and dates relating to the creator-god

Quetzalcoatl underline Moctezuma's power and devotion, whilst the date 1 Crocodile, carved on the back of the box, refers back yet again to his coronation ceremony.

Other sculptures linked to Moctezuma

Although they do not bear the standardized effigy of a *tlatoani*, other stone ritual objects have the glyph complex of the *xiuhuitzolli* accompanied by calendrical dates that fall within the reign of Moctezuma. Two of these are quadrangular basalt boxes: one has the date 6 Reed (1511) (cat. 16)¹⁰ and the other 11 Flint Knife (1516) (cat. 15).¹¹ A further sculpture, although in green stone and free standing, shows a beautiful fire serpent; again, on the base is a relief with the royal diadem and the 2 Reed with a knotted rope that probably corresponds to the final celebration of the New Fire ceremony (cat. 76).¹² The Sun Stone (fig. 28) could also be included within this small group of sculptures as it bears the *xiuhuitzolli*.¹³ According to some researchers this monument was sculpted in 1512.¹⁴

Other images that appear to recall crucial moments in Moctezuma's life also survive, although they lack the sovereign's onomastic glyph complex. On the so-called 'Metro Block' (cat. 56), a seated figure in priest's garments and set against a background of human

Fig. 28
The Sun Stone, a monument commissioned by Moctezuma II. At its centre is the frontal face of a deity with clawed limbs embedded within the *Ollin* symbol that represents the present era or Sun. (see also fig. 1). Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.



hearts draws blood from his chest, arms and legs in an act of penitence.¹⁵ There are three revealing dates on the different faces of this block: 10 Rabbit (1502), the year – according to many sources – when Moctezuma II was enthroned; 2 Reed, the year of the last New Fire ceremony; and 1 Deer, the day on which new-born noble children were believed destined to become rulers. Another interesting example is the monument in Amecameca, carved on a large rock in the foothills of the Iztaccihuatl volcano to the south-east of Mexico City.¹⁶ This shows a scene where an individual burns an incense ladle alongside a large brazier, as well as the aforementioned year of 10 Rabbit and the trecena of 1 Crocodile. The final example is the Stone of the Five Suns (cat. 14),¹⁷ a basalt coronation stone that was named after the presence on its main face of the calendrical names of the five Mexica cosmic ages (4 Jaguar, 4 Wind, 4 Rain, 4 Water and 4 Movement). To these dates were added the day 1 Crocodile and the year 11 Reed (1503), the latter being mentioned by certain sources as the year Moctezuma was enthroned. In this case it is clear how official Mexica art combined mythological and historical dates, placing dynastic events within the legitimizing frame of reference of the cosmic ages.

The priestly insignia

From the moment they were chosen, Mexica rulers were expected to prove their faith by offering the gods their own blood and the aromatic smoke of copal resin. This involved a process of separation and withdrawal that started at the bottom of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan.¹⁸ The ruler-elect, wearing nothing but a *maxtlatl* (loincloth), was conducted to the summit of the pyramid by the allied kings of Tetzcoaco and Tlacopan and two of his officers. On arrival at the Huitzilopochtli sanctuary he paid reverence to the image of the god. The supreme priest then dyed his body black to indicate his temporary status as a penitent, sprinkled him with sacred water in the same manner in which he would scatter the ashes of the rulers and his family members during their funerals, and clothed him in a mantle adorned with skulls and cross-bones symbolizing his ritual death.

The supreme priest then handed over the insignia of penitence. These consisted of a *xicolli*, a short, fringed and sleeveless jacket tied in the front; a *yeitecomatl*, a gourd that hung down the back on red thongs and contained powdered tobacco that was chewed for its energizing and narcotic qualities; a *copalxiquipilli* bag to hold the copal resin; a *tlēmaitl* or ceramic incense ladle in the form of a fire serpent; a pair of bone auto-sacrifice bloodletters; and blue sandals known as *xiuhcactli*. Once the ruler had burnt incense before the image of Huitzilopochtli, he listened to an exhortation in which his position was reaffirmed and recommendations made on his future role. When this finished, he descended to the foot of the pyramid where the dignitaries awaited him to pay him reverence and present him with gifts as a sign of obedience. The ruler then made his way to the building known as *Tlacatecco*, which has been identified with the archaeological site known as the House of the Eagles.¹⁹ Here he carried out his ablutions, fasting and physical mortification for four days and four nights. Finally, he retired to his palace to prepare for his investiture and coronation ceremony.

This ritual sequence symbolized the initiation death of the recently elected

tlatoani in its entirety, marking the radical modification of his religious and social status. The ruler was attired similarly on the occasion of other important events in his life during which he also made offerings of copal resin and blood. Such events included the death of his first captive; before setting out to war; after a military victory; as an act of submission to the god of a conquering city; and in festivities such as that of the day 4 Movement, devoted to the solar cult.

The symbols of political power

The aim of the coronation ceremony was to install the new sovereign so that he could begin his duties. The most important Mesoamerican symbols of royal power, the mat and throne (*in petlatl, in icpalli*), played an essential part in the proceedings as they embodied the material expression of the concepts of dignity and authority.²⁰ The mat was usually used as the base of the throne. In the case of the first three rulers of Tenochtitlan, the latter was a simple *tolicpalli* or bundle of reeds, which identified them as lords of Chichimeca origin who were still subordinate to Azcapotzalco's reign. By contrast, when succeeding rulers became independent they gained the right to be seated on a *tepotzo-icpalli*, a high-backed throne made from woven reeds and adorned with jaguar skins.

Images of Acamapichtli, Huitzilihuitl and Chimalpopoca, rulers of Tenochtitlan before the war of independence of 1428–30, show them wearing on their heads a *cozoyahualolli* – a feather headdress connected to the Chichimeca past.²¹ In contrast, their successors boasted the royal diadem or *xiuhuitzolli*,²² a word that can be translated as a ‘pointed turquoise thing’ and which appears to represent schematically the tail of the *xiuhcoatl* or fire serpent. The *xiuhuitzolli* has its most ancient roots in the Olmec era, during the so-called Middle Preclassic period. Many authors have studied the iconographic sequence that takes the sign of the diadem as its starting point and moves on to the sign of the year,

as well as the symbolic link where the diadem, turquoise, time and rain are strongly associated with political power. We know that the *xiuhuitzolli* was used by the rulers of Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Tetzaco and many provinces in the empire, but never by the enemy lords of Tlaxcala. In Tenochtitlan it was also worn by the *teteuhtin* (lords),²³ senior military leaders and by warriors who had died in battle. The fire priests and gods such as Xiuhtecuhtli, Tonacatecuhtli, Mictlantecuhtli, Tonatiuh, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli and Chalmecatecuhtli also used it as a symbol.

The new sovereign's septum was pierced at the investiture using a jaguar bone, and a tubular nose ornament known as a *xiuhyacamil* was put in place. The Mixtecs performed this ritual on a sacrificial stone, symbolizing the sovereign's death ritual.²⁴ In addition, in the case of the Mexica ruler, he was dressed in the *xiuhtlalpilli tilmahtli*, a blue cotton tie-dyed net cape embellished with turquoise stones. This cape was usually edged with a *tenixyo* border (‘eyes on the edge’). This was one of the most prestigious motifs of the iconography of power. Other

Fig. 29
Moctezuma II dressed as the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli during the Izcalli festival. From the Codex Borbonicus, fol. 23. Palais Bourbon, Paris.



symbols bestowed on him for the occasion included a pair of gold sandals, a shield and a sword-club, and a bundle of darts that symbolized his judicial power.

The *xiuhuitzolli* and other turquoise ornaments directly connected the sovereigns with the ancient god of fire Xiuhtecuhtli, the mother and father of all deities that resided in the centre of the universe. This relationship can be understood when we take into account that this god, along with Tezcatlipoca, was the protector of royalty.²⁵ The sovereign evoked Xiuhtecuhtli in his acceptance speech after being chosen,²⁶ paid him special homage during his enthroning ceremony²⁷ and personified him in the Izcalli ceremony, which celebrated new growth (fig. 29).²⁸

Warrior emblems

The *tlatoani* embodied the Mexica ideal of bravery. His main task was to feed the sun and earth with human blood, using arms to take captives for sacrifice. After he was chosen to be ruler he therefore beseeched Tezcatlipoca, the god of fate and destiny, to support him in war: 'Also, concede him, let him experience, send him to the midst of the desert, to the centre of the desert, to the field of battle. May he know the home of the sun...'²⁹ In other words, the *tlatoani* was expected to be present time and time again at military confrontations, resulting in his definitive journey to 'the home of the sun' (*in tonatiuh ichan*), the final destination of warriors killed in battle or sacrificed on the sacrificial stone. Following this logic, at the enthroning ceremony the ruler was compared to a fearsome beast (*tecuaní*, 'eater of people'), armed with powerful claws and sharp teeth.³⁰ The eagle and the jaguar were the most powerful predators in ancient Mexico and these animals were therefore kept as protectors of the main military order of the Mexica: the *cuauhtli ocelotl*.

Like any other distinguished member of the Tenochtitlan nobility, Moctezuma had received an education that included learning the arts of war and the correct handling of arms. A later anecdote that was probably apocryphal presents him as a boy, playing at war in the role of a great general and punishing one of his young friends for being a coward.³¹ Whether or not this happened, we know that Moctezuma took part in several military campaigns during his youth, accompanying experienced warriors who showed him how to take prisoners. Other witnesses specify that over the course of time he obtained the prestigious title of *cuachic* (shorn one); this was granted to those who had captured several enemies, especially brave warriors from the Valley of Puebla. Díaz del Castillo also tells us that Moctezuma had been the victor in three different hand-to-hand fights.³²

As supreme chief of the army, the *tlatoani* wore special garments and rich insignia during battles to distinguish him from the other generals. The indigenous informants of the sixteenth-century chronicler, Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, left us with a long list of headdresses, capes, emblems and exclusive arms



Fig. 30
Gold labret in the form of an eagle head. Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Madama, Turin, 2.2 × 5.4 × 4.7 cm.

Fig. 31
King Nezahualcoyotl from
Tetzaco wearing a gold labret
in the form of an eagle head.
From the Codex Ixtlilxochitl, fol.
106r, Bibliothèque Nationale
de France, Paris.



of the sovereigns. These items included the 'costly red spoonbill headdress set off with gold, having very many quetzal feathers flaring from it'; 'a red shirt, made of red spoonbill feathers decorated with flint knives fashioned of gold'; 'a necklace of round, large, green stone and fine turquoise combined'; 'the wooden sword provided with obsidian blades set in a groove at its edges'; and 'a shield covered with blue cotinga feathers with a disc of gold in the center'.³³ Other historical documents describe or illustrate a wide variety of royal shields. A splendid surviving example, decorated with feathers and gold leaf, depicts a feathered blue coyote from the mouth of which emerges the Mexica glyph for war.³⁴

Another ornament of war is the gold labret in the form of an eagle's head. Several examples have been preserved and are now on view in museums in Europe and the United States (fig. 30).³⁵ The labret also appears in the Codex Ixtlilxochitl in the beautiful image of Nezahualcoyotl (fig. 31).³¹ Here we see the poet-king of Tetzaco in his dress uniform,

brandishing an obsidian-edged sword and a shield with rich feather mosaics. On his back he carries a small blue war drum that he used to order his army to attack the enemy with violence or start to withdraw. Significantly, at the end of the sixteenth century, whilst staying in Tetzco, the Spanish protomedico Francisco de Hernández declared that the city still had, 'with immense religious respect', the shield, flags, flutes, drum, arms and other ornaments that the old Aculhua sovereigns used both in war and in their dances.³⁷

The warrior rulers habitually dressed like gods. For example, in the Codex Vaticanus A, in which the Mexica conquest over Toluca and Xaltepec is depicted, Moctezuma is dressed as Xipe Totec, as on the Chapultepec rocks mentioned previously (pp. 80–81).³⁸ Traditionally, the first captive taken in the field of battle was sacrificed and his cadaver skinned. The *tlatoani* put on this skin, thereby frightening away rivals. In other images of Mexica art, the rulers are shown holding their enemies by the hair, an ancient gesture of capture that was widespread across the whole of Mesoamerica. On the so-called Tizoc Stone (fig. 11) and the Stone of the Old Arzobispado,³⁹ several scenes portray the ruler in this pose and displaying insignia of Huitzilopochtli, Tezcatlipoca and Xiuhtecuhtli. His adversaries, in a position of submission, are dressed in the trappings of the patron gods of their respective cities. The toponymic or place glyphs of these cities are found at the top of the scene. In other words, the Mexica rulers, like the sovereigns of Mesopotamia or ancient Egypt, embody their whole army defeating their enemies.

The privileges of palace life

Besides his religious, political and military duties, Moctezuma was required to coordinate the tasks of the central administration and impart justice in matters of state. Starting first thing in the morning, he gave instructions of all kinds, examined lists of tributes and spoke to provincial lords who lived in the royal palace. He also spent a good part of the day dealing with disputes and petitions. The complainants usually presented codices to the judges to support their arguments, a practice that would continue throughout the colonial period. The judges summarized the cases and expressed their opinions to the ruler, who proclaimed the final sentences. On these occasions, everybody apart from governors of allied kingdoms had to approach Moctezuma barefoot. By the same token, visitors had to change their elegant cotton robes for humble maguey-fibre mantles, and when addressing the sovereign, they had to look submissively at the floor. Many Indians informed the Spanish that nobody had ever seen Moctezuma's face.

In their chronicles, the conquistadors marvelled at the abundance and refinement of the dishes that made up what was later dubbed 'Montezuma's Dinner'.⁴⁰ According to Díaz del Castillo:

... they daily cooked more than three hundred dishes, fowls, turkeys, pheasants, native partridges, quail, tame and wild ducks, venison, wild boar, reed birds and pigeons and hares and rabbits, and many sorts of birds and other things that are bred in this country, and they are so numerous that I cannot finish naming them in a hurry.⁴¹

Fig. 32
A noblewoman preparing a
foaming brew of chocolate. From
the Codex Tudela, fol. 3r. Museo
de America, Madrid.



Hernán Cortés's soldier goes on to describe how 'four very beautiful women' washed Moctezuma's hands before eating whilst he remained seated before a low table covered with white cloths. They served him the food on polychrome ceramic plates made in the city of Cholula, and he was accompanied by four elder chieftains who ate standing at his side. After the meal, Moctezuma smoked tobacco with liquid amber in a painted pipe and was entertained by singers, dancers, buffoons, dwarves and hunchbacks.

Chocolate was the royal beverage par excellence, meaning that it was off limits for the commoners. After toasting and milling the cacao beans, the drink was prepared by adding water and beating it rapidly with gold, silver or wooden spoons, and then poured from a height to produce a foamy solution (fig. 32). Served cold and sometimes mixed with milled corn, aromatic spices or honey, the chocolate was presented to Moctezuma in fine gold cups

at lunch and dinner. One source states that during the funeral rites of Moctezuma's father, Axayacatl, several cups were placed before the statue of the deceased.⁴² Another exclusive privilege of kings and nobles was to enjoy the fragrance of flowers. We know that Moctezuma liked to be seen holding a bouquet of flowers, which symbolized fire and its unequalled power over the earth. Xochipilli, the 'Prince of Flowers', was another of the deities that protected the nobility. During the annual Toxcatl celebrations, a young warrior was chosen to personify the god Tezcatlipoca for one year. This youth, selected for his physical beauty and capacity for eloquent speech, moved freely through the streets of the city smoking tobacco and smelling flowers, thereby impersonating both gods and sovereigns.⁴³

Moctezuma was said to be a great enthusiast of hunting. Before the arrival of the Europeans, he often led expeditions dressed as Mixcoatl, the god of hunting, and handed out generous rewards to those who had captured or killed prey. Whilst in captivity under Cortés's orders, Moctezuma was given safe conduct to go hunting outside of Tenochtitlan accompanied by a large group of Spanish guards and three thousand Tlaxcaltec warriors. On his return he 'gave gifts to them all and made them many concessions',⁴⁴ as though continuing to play the role of the great distributor of wealth from his time of freedom. It is unlikely, however, that he wore the insignia of Mixcoatl during this final excursion.

In the same vein, historical sources point out that Moctezuma was a good shot with a blowgun, another important symbol of the nobility.⁴⁵ The king is described hunting birds and rabbits by the lake or in the woods, orchards and gardens of Cuauhnahuac and Huaxtepec, towns in the modern-day state of Morelos. In the allied city of Tetzaco, large rocks with holes filled with water were placed in the royal gardens to attract birds, so that the kings



Fig. 33
Mexica lords smoking tobacco and smelling flowers. From the Florentine Codex, Book 9, fol. 28v. Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence.

Fig. 34
Mexica lords playing the ball game
tlachtli in an H-shaped ball court.
From the Florentine Codex, Book
8, fol. 42v. Biblioteca Medicea
Laurenziana, Florence.



could entertain themselves shooting them with their blowguns from the palace windows. In his famous letters, *Cartas de relación*, Cortés refers to a dozen splendid blowguns, painted with motifs of birds, trees and flowers, presented by Moctezuma as gifts for the king of Spain. Because of the blowgun's association with the sun god, one of the deities identified with the ruler, this no doubt represented a worthy gift for an emperor of Charles V's high status.

Another royal pastime was a ball game known as *tlachtli* (fig. 34) in which two or more players, protected by a wide leather belt, struck a heavy rubber ball with their hips. Spectators bet all kinds of 'costly goods: golden necklaces, greenstone, fine turquoise, slaves, precious capes, valuable breech clouts, cultivated fields, houses, arm bands of quetzal feathers, duck feather capes, bales of cacao.' Moctezuma and Nezahualpilli, the ruler of Tetzaco, apparently came face to face in a game that was to have an ominous outcome. Nezahualpilli, who was famous for being able to predict the future, announced to the Mexica sovereign that foreigners would arrive who would lay both of their respective kingdoms to waste. To prove it, Nezahualpilli did not hesitate in betting his kingdom in exchange for three turkeys. Although Moctezuma started off in the lead, Nezahualpilli ended up the winner, proving that his predictions were correct.⁴⁶ Tellingly, sources tell us of other games between gods or between rulers, which symbolized the passing from one era to another and the alternating reigns of deities and emperors.

The obsidian mirror was an instrument that was closely linked to royalty. Several examples survive, including the mirror belonging to the famous English mathematician, astronomer and astrologer John Dee (1527–1608), who was an adviser to Queen Elizabeth I.⁴⁷ In ancient Mexico, such mirrors had a significant divinatory role and were widely used to reveal men's destiny. The mirror was also a symbol of the royal power granted by Tezcatlipoca, 'lord of the smoking mirror'. Mexica rulers owned an obsidian mirror with two faces: on one side it was said that the ruler saw the behaviour of his subjects in its surface; on the other side, the subjects saw their own reflection, thus revealing a close interdependence.⁴⁸ However, the mirror was to reveal to Moctezuma the ill-fated destiny of his empire. One day, some fishermen took to the palace a remarkable 'bird of ashen hue like a crane' with a mirror on its head. In the mirror Moctezuma saw a starry sky followed by a group of warriors riding on the backs of deer, presumably, the Spanish on horseback. However, even as he fearfully consulted his astrologers, the vision melted away....⁴⁹

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Authored by native, *mestizo* and Spanish chroniclers. Among these early chroniclers are: Hernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, author of the *Cronica mexicáyotl*, Cristóbal del Castillo, author of the *Historia de la venida de los mexicanos*, and the indigenous authors of the Codex Boturini and the Codex Azcatitlan.
- 2 Aztlan is sometimes depicted graphically (for example in the Codex Aubin in the British Museum) as an 'archetypal' island or ancestral place in a 'world ocean' with four 'house' glyphs marking the cardinal directions.
- 3 The name Tenochca applied to the citizens of Tenochtitlan itself.
- 4 Family documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, located in the Archivo de Indias in Seville, spell the name either as 'Moteçuma' or 'Motezuma'. Nahuatl scholars prefer 'Motechuhzoma' or 'Moteuczoma' and it is perhaps most correctly pronounced in Nahuatl phonemes as mo – teuc – tzo(n) – ma. They note that much of the early confusion stems from the inability in Spanish to capture some of the sounds of Nahuatl, as well as other difficulties of translation and comprehension. Problems occur in the orthographic transcription of his name into Spanish phonemes, especially crossovers between 'u' and 'ó', and the spirant consonant-vowel combination that appears in the middle part of his name, yielding both – teuhc – and – tecuh – in the sources.
- 5 Other variations include Motecuma, Moteczuzoma or Motecuçoma (Motechuhzoma).
- 6 Following Moctezuma's death Cuitlahuac governed for 80 days only to die of smallpox and Cuauhtemoc, who relinquished independence on 13 August 1521, was later killed in Hibuemas.

Chapter 1 Family histories

- 1 In the native Mexica Nahuatl language this term defines the highest political authority. 'Speaker or great lord' (Molina 1970, p. 140v); 'He who speaks well; hence, great lord, prince, ruler' (Siméon 1977, p. 674).
- 2 Muriá 1973, pp. 141–43.
- 3 The versions of events that is most widely accepted among historians specializing in the history of the Mexica people, and that on which the present account is based, is that by Francisco Javier Clavijero in his *Ancient History of Mexico* published in 1781–82.
- 4 Alvarado Tezozómoc 1949, p. 25.
- 5 Brotherston 1995, pp. 46–47.
- 6 Códice Boturini 1964; Barlow 1949.
- 7 Caso 1927, p. 10. In fig. 3, as in the Codex Boturini, a rectangular block can be seen in the upper section, which we assume corresponds to the location of the deity.
- 8 Alvarado Tezozómoc 1949, pp. 15–16, took his account from Alonso Franco, a *mestizo* who died in 1602. Franco not only claimed that Moctezuma ruled as king in Aztlan New

Mexico, but also that he had two sons: the eldest was destined to govern the Huastecos, and the youngest, Chalchiuhtlatonac, instructed his people to leave Aztlan and embark on their migration.

- 9 Chimalpáhin 1998, p. 85, even affirms that the chieftain Moctezuma who ruled in Aztlan also held the position of *huey tlatoani*.
- 10 These are described as three men, Cuauhcoatl, Apanecatl and Tezcacoatl, and a woman, Chimalma. Chimalpáhin 1998, p. 183.
- 11 Chimalpáhin 1998, pp. 329–31. The chronicler of Chalco-Amecamecan noted that 'on the death of Tozcuecuetxli, who led the Mexica for forty years ... the chieftain Huehue Huitzilihuitl ruled as the first *tlatoani* of the Mexica.'
- 12 Chimalpáhin 1998, p. 161. Chimalpáhin claims that he was the first *tlatoani* of the Mexica, even though officially, in the sequence of governors of Tenochtitlan, he links this investiture with Acamapichtli.
- 13 Chimalpáhin 1998, p. 361.
- 14 Códice Boturini 1964. In the lower section of plate 20, sexual union is expressed graphically with the image of the couple guiding a final journey through their footprints.
- 15 Durán 1995, pp. 84–87. This episode describes the confrontation between the Culhua under the leadership of Achitometl and the Mexica, following the sacrifice of Achitometl's daughter by the Mexica.
- 16 In the pictographs of this symbolic scene, a bird sometimes replaces the snake; see fol. 25v of the Codex Aubin. Lehmann and Kutscher 1981, p. 240.
- 17 *Anales de Tlatelolco* 1948, p. 51. According to the Tlatelolca, this happened the other way round; after the foundation of this city, Tenoch founded Tenochtitlan on an adjacent island.
- 18 Durán 1995, vol. I, p. 99. '...fearing his kingdom would be left without an heir, the councillors took his advice and determined that each of them should give him one of their daughters, for him to have as his wives, to bear him heirs to his kingdom and successors.'
- 19 A crown, mitre or diadem adorned with precious stones. Siméon 1997, p. 770.
- 20 A crown, similar to a mitre, used for coronations. It was tall and ended in a point in the middle of the forehead; the back section hung down the neck. Siméon 1997, p. 126.
- 21 Sahagún 1993, fols 53r–52r. Significantly, after Cuauhtemoc, the last *tlatoani*, the five governors who ruled over the conquered Mexica were depicted without a headdress, crown or nose-plug and with only a simple mantle, although they were still represented on the *icpalli*.
- 22 Washington 1983, p. 23.
- 23 Xaltocan, Tultitlan, Cuauhtitlan, Chalco, Tulantzingo, Otompan and Acolman.
- 24 Brundage 1982, pp. 61–64.
- 25 London 2002, p. 51. Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, the director of the Templo Mayor excavations, associates the calendar date with the year 1390.

- 26 Davies 1992, pp. 58–63.
- 27 Brundage 1982, pp. 106–07. Tlacoachcalatl, Tlacatecatl, Ezuauacatl and Tlillancalqui (Durán 1995, vol. I, pp. 152–53).
- 28 Sahagún 1977, vol. III, p. 209.
- 29 London 2002, p. 51.
- 30 London 2002, p. 51.
- 31 Durán 1995, vol. I, pp. 155–63.
- 32 Brundage 1982, p. 128.
- 33 Previously, the 52-year ceremony had been held in year 1 Rabbit, but since this sign was now considered unlucky, it was moved to year 2 Reed.
- 34 London 2002, pp. 48–55.
- 35 London 2002, pp. 51–52.
- 36 London 2002, pp. 52–53.
- 37 London 2002, p. 53.
- 38 Brundage 1982, p. 190.
- 39 Chavero 1958, pp. 774–76.
- 40 Chavero 1958, pp. 774–76.
- 41 Davies 1980, p. 158.
- 42 London 2002, p. 455, no. 223.
- 43 London 2002, pp. 53–54.

Chapter 2 The coronation of Moctezuma II

- 1 Central and southern Mexico including the Gulf Coast and Yucatan Peninsula, Guatemala and parts of El Salvador and Honduras.
- 2 Durán 1951, pp. 411–12.
- 3 The term *Tlacoachcalatl* corresponds to a high-level officer of the Mexica army.
- 4 Alvarado Tezozómoc 1980, pp. 572–73.
- 5 Durán 1951.
- 6 Durán 1951, p. 430.
- 7 *Casas Nuevas de Moctezuma*.
- 8 Cortés (undated), pp. 207–08.
- 9 Díaz del Castillo 1944, vol. I, p. 279.
- 10 Díaz del Castillo 1944, vol. I, pp. 276–77.
- 11 *Códice Mendoza* 1980.
- 12 Sahagún 1956, vol. II, p. 312.

Chapter 3 Images of Moctezuma and his symbols of power

- 1 Alvarado Tezozómoc 1944, pp. 408–09; Fernández de Oviedo 1946, p. 23; López de Gómara 1943, vol. I, p. 213; Alva Ixtlilxóchitl 1985, vol. II, p. 230.
- 2 Codex Mendoza 1992, vol. 3, fol. 69r; Codex Florentino 1979, Book 12, 26r–26v, 36r–36v, 40v.
- 3 Díaz del Castillo 1983, p. 248.
- 4 Aguilar 1977, p. 81.
- 5 Marcus 1992, pp. 191–96. A glyph is a sign or figure used in the Central Mexican writing system.
- 6 Nicholson 1961; Umberger 1981, pp. 147–51.
- 7 See Alvarado Tezozómoc 1944, pp. 408–09.
- 8 Museo Nacional de Antropología, inv. 10-0081548. See Caso 1927, p. 42; Graulich 1994, pp. 196–98; Olko 2005, pp. 361–62.
- 9 Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde und Vorgeschichte, inv. B.3763. See Gutiérrez Solana 1983, pp. 41–45; Washington 1983, pp. 64–66.
- 10 Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, cat. IV Ca 26921a-b. See Gutiérrez Solana 1983, pp. 54–55.
- 11 Museo Nacional de Antropología, cat. 11-3132.

- See Gutiérrez Solana 1983, pp. 51–54.
- 12 Dumbarton Oaks, cat. B.69.AS. See Gutiérrez Solana 1983, pp. 53–54.
 - 13 Museo Nacional de Antropología, inv. 10-0001123. See Umberger 1981, p. 199.
 - 14 See Beyer 1965.
 - 15 Museo Nacional de Antropología, inv. 10-0116583. See Klein 1987, pp. 324–31.
 - 16 López Luján 2009.
 - 17 Art Institute of Chicago, cat. 1990.21. See Washington 1983, pp. 41–42.
 - 18 Broda 1978, pp. 226–33, 251–54; Townsend 1987, pp. 390–405; Graulich 1994, pp. 68–96; López Luján 2006, vol. I, pp. 281–86; Olivier 2008, pp. 78–81.
 - 19 See López Luján 2006.
 - 20 See Obregón and Concepción 1985, pp. 32–39; Olko 2005, pp. 320–23.
 - 21 These leaders also wore a jaguar, coyote or wolf skin, or a coffee-coloured mantle.
 - 22 Noguez 1975; Obregón Rodríguez 1985, pp. 40–49; Olko 2005, pp. 113–36.
 - 23 The glyph of the diadem is read phonetically as *tecuhli* or lord.
 - 24 See Olivier 2008b.
 - 25 Heyden 1972; Sullivan 1980.
 - 26 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 6, p. 41.
 - 27 Durán 1984, vol. 2, p. 400.
 - 28 On plate 23 of the Codex Borbonicus, 1991, we see a figure dressed as Xiuhtecuhtli accompanied by the footnote: ‘*Moctezuma q’ salia cō los ornamentos de el dios mayor.*’
 - 29 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 6, pp. 19–20.
 - 30 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 6, p. 53.
 - 31 Suárez de Peralta 1949, pp. 57–58.
 - 32 Díaz del Castillo 1983, p. 377.
 - 33 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 8, pp. 33–35.
 - 34 Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, cat. 43-380.
 - 35 Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, cat. 59.989; Museo Civico di Arte Antica, Turin, cat. 732; The Saint Louis Art Museum, 1978, cat. 275.
 - 36 Codex Ixtlilxóchitl 1996, fol. 106r.
 - 37 Hernández 1986, p. 133.
 - 38 Codex Vaticanus A.3738. 1996, fol. 85v.
 - 39 These are two very similar cylindrical monoliths which were used during the gladiator sacrifices in the Tlacaxipehualiztli festival, an annual rite signifying renewal. Both stones were found in the centre of Mexico City.
 - 40 Morgan 1876.
 - 41 Díaz del Castillo 1983, p. 249.
 - 42 See Durand-Forest 1967.
 - 43 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 2, pp. 66–77; Olivier 2008, pp. 193–230.
 - 44 Cervantes de Salazar 1985, p. 334.
 - 45 See Lesbre 2008.
 - 46 Torquemada 1975–83, vol. 1, pp. 291–92; Alva Ixtlilxóchitl 1985, vol. 2, pp. 181–82.
 - 47 See Tait 1967. British Museum, London, M&ME 1966.10.1.1.
 - 48 Olivier 2008, pp. 240–68.
 - 49 Sahagún 1950–82, vol. 8, pp. 18–19.

Chapter 4 Moctezuma and the renewal of nature

- 1 Zantwijk 1963.
- 2 Matos Moctezuma 1988.
- 3 Sahagún 1950–82, Book 1, p. 9.

- 4 Sahagún 1950–82, Book 1, pp. 13–38.
- 5 Sahagún 1950–82, Book 6, pp. 44–45.
- 6 Townsend 1992 and Nicholson 2003.
- 7 Durán 1971, p. 156.
- 8 Durán 1971, pp. 157–58.
- 9 Durán 1971, pp. 160–65.
- 10 Elson and Smith 2001.
- 11 Sahagún 1950–82, Book 7, p. 4.
- 12 Sahagún 1950–82, Book 7, p. 6.

Chapter 5 Moctezuma’s military and economic rule

- 1 Durán 1992, pp. 405.
- 2 Berdan *et al.* 1996, pp. 127, 148.
- 3 Durán 1992, pp. 477–81.
- 4 Hernández 1959, vol. I, p. 304; Coe and Coe 1996, p. 81.
- 5 Sahagún 1950–82, Book 10, p. 65.
- 6 Coe and Coe 1996, p. 22.
- 7 Anderson *et al.* 1976, pp. 208–13.
- 8 Berdan and Anawalt 1992, vol. 3, fol. 64r and *passim*.

Chapter 6 The overthrow of Moctezuma and his empire

- 1 León-Portilla 1962, p. 13.
- 2 Lockhart 1993, pp. 6, 18–19.
- 3 Fernández-Armesto 1992.
- 4 Gillespie 2008; Magaloni-Kerpel 2008.
- 5 Lockhart 1993, pp. 76–78.
- 6 See Carrasco 2000. For the evolution of the Quetzalcoatl myth, see Gillespie 1989, pp. 226–30.
- 8 Lockhart 1993, pp. 19–20; Clendinnen 1990, p. 93.
- 9 Todorov 1984.
- 10 Clendinnen 1990, p. 95.
- 11 Hassig 1994, p. 77.
- 12 León-Portilla 1962, p. 61.
- 13 Thomas 1993, p. 278.
- 14 López de Gómara 1964, p. 142.
- 15 Elliott 1989; Cortés 1986, pp. 467–69.
- 16 Thomas 1993, p. 307.
- 17 López de Gómara 1964, p. 143.
- 18 Cortés 1986, p. 48.
- 19 Gillespie 2008, p. 51.
- 20 Díaz del Castillo 1963, p. 294.
- 21 Durán 1964, p. 305.
- 22 See Chipman 2005.

Chapter 7 The rebirth of ancient Mexico

- 1 Paz 1990, p. 4.
- 2 Paz 1970, pp. 110–18.
- 3 The indispensable source remains Icazbalceta 1954, *passim*.
- 4 Benavente 1971, p. 31; see also León-Portilla 2003, pp. 117–43.
- 5 Gruzinski 1992, pp. 141–69; Martínez 1982, *passim*.
- 6 López de Gómara 1979, pp. 361–67. For a succinct discussion of Las Casas see Brading 1991, pp. 59–101.
- 8 Acosta 1962, pp. 215–17, 230–35, 324–30, 373–77.
- 9 Torquemada 1975–83. Vol. 7 consists of editorial commentary and analysis of sources.
- 10 Alva Ixtlilxóchitl 1975, vol. II, p. 137.
- 11 Torquemada 1975–83 on Moctezuma II, vol. I

pp. 267–72, 282–85; on Tetzco, vol. I, pp. 164–68, 230–40; on Cortés, vol. II, pp. 9–10, 39, 326–40.

- 12 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 202–17.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 408–21.
- 14 Solís y Rivadeneira 1838, pp. 171–75, 307–08, 457.
- 15 Sigüenza y Góngora 1960, pp. 230, 341–46, 350–53.
- 16 On Kircher see Evans 1979, pp. 433–42.
- 17 See Gerbi 1973, *passim*; Pauw 1771, vol. I, p. xii; vol. II, pp. 183–205.
- 18 Buffon 1747, vol. VII, pp. 27, 39.
- 19 Raynal 1798, see vol. II, p. 381, where Moctezuma is described as ‘sunk in a state of effeminacy and indolence’; on Mexico City see vol. II, p. 398.
- 20 Robertson 1788, vol. III, pp. 176–77, 198, 386–88.
- 21 Clavijero 1964, pp. xviii, xxi, xxx. See also Ronan 1977, *passim*.
- 22 Clavijero 1964, pp. 86, 152–53, 426–31.
- 23 *Ibid.*, see his Third, Fourth and Fifth Dissertations, pp. 454–524.
- 24 León y Gama 1978, unpaginated introduction.
- 25 Lemoine Villacaña 1965, pp. 368–69.
- 26 Tena Ramírez 1967, pp. 31–35.
- 27 Prescott n.d., pp. 21, 33, 52, 91, 103, 223.
- 28 Prescott 1970, pp. 657–99.
- 29 Ramírez 2001. On Ramírez see Krauze 2005, pp. 63–74.
- 30 Orozco y Berra 1960, vol. I, p. 86; vol. II, pp. 426–30; vol. IV, pp. 366–82.
- 31 Martínez Assad 2005, pp. 33–39; Tenorio-Trillo 1996.
- 32 Riva Palacio 1884–89. Chavero asserted that the Nahuas descended from Basques who had migrated from Europe via Atlantis, whereas the Mayas and Otomis derived from Chinese migration. See vol. I, pp. 62–73.
- 33 Gamio 1916, pp. 6–8, 12. Gamio 1922, vol. I, pp. xvii–ix.
- 34 Gamio 1922, vol. I, pp. 546–48; vol. II, pp. 448–70. See also Brading 1988.
- 35 Gamio 1916, pp. 40–47, 50; Fernández 1972, pp. 495–526.
- 36 Paz 1970, pp. 140–48.

Chapter 8 Rethinking Moctezuma

- 1 Frías 1900, 1st series, nos 12, 17 and 28.
- 2 Frías and Martínez 1925.
- 3 See further Martínez 1988 and Rueda Smithers 1993.
- 4 Ce Acatl was the sacred calendar name of Quetzalcoatl.
- 5 Uchmany 1972, p. 12.
- 6 León-Portilla 1961, pp. 122ff.
- 7 López Austin 1973, pp. 178–81.
- 8 López Austin 1973, pp. 178–81.
- 9 Carpentier 1975, p. 11.
- 10 Noguez 1996.

Epilogue

- 1 López Luján, 2005, 2006; Chávez Balderas, 2007.
- 2 Matos Moctezuma and López Luján, 2007; López Luján, 2009.

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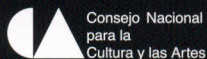
AZTEC

RULER

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Half title: Moctezuma's name glyph from the Codex Mendoza (detail of fig. 52)
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Opposite: tripod plate (see cat. 55)
p. 9: Moctezuma travels to meet Cortés (detail of cat. 111).

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