concerning this matter, so describe it and hold it to be, by the eclipses of the moon and by other demonstrations made from east to west, as well as from the elevation of the pole star from north to south. Now, as I have already said, I have seen so great irregularity that, as a result, I have been led to hold this concerning the world, and I find that it is not round as they describe it, but that it is the shape of a pear which is everywhere very round except where the stalk is, for there it is very prominent, or that it is like a very round ball, and on one part of it is placed something like a woman's nipple, and that this part, where this protuberance is found, is the highest and nearest to the sky, and it is beneath the equinoctial line and in this Ocean sea at the end of the East. I call that "the end of the East," where end all the land and islands.

* * *

Holy Scripture testifies that Our Lord made the earthly paradise and in it placed the tree of life, and from it issues a fountain from which flow four of the chief rivers of this world, the Ganges in India, the Tigris and Euphrates in * * *, which cut through a mountain range and form Mesopotamia and flow into Persia, and the Nile which rises in Ethiopia and enters the sea at Alexandria.

I do not find and I have never found any writing of the Romans or of the Greeks which gives definitely the position in the world of the earthly paradise, nor have I seen it in any world map, placed with authority based upon proof. Some placed it there where are the sources of the Nile in Ethiopia, but others traversed all these lands and found no similarity to it in the climate or in elevation towards the sky, to make it comprehensible that it was there, nor that the rising waters of the deluge had reached that place, &c [etc.]. Some Gentiles wished to show by arguments that it was in the Fortunate islands, which are the Canaries, &c. St. Isidore [of Seville] and Bede and [Walafridus] Strabo and the Master of Scholastic History [Petrus Comestor] and St. Ambrose and [Duns] Scotus and

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CITATION: *The Four Voyages of Columbus*, translated and edited by Cecil Jane. Originally published by the Hakluyt Society.

all the learned theologians agree that the earthly paradise is in the East, &c.

I have already said that which I hold concerning this hemisphere and its shape, and I believe that if I were to pass beneath the equinoctial line, then, arriving there at the highest point, I should find an even more temperate climate and difference in the stars and waters. Not that I believe that to the summit of the extreme point is navigable, or water, or that it is possible to ascend there, for I believe that the earthly paradise is there and to it, save by the will of God, no man can come.

Questions

1. What sources of geographic knowledge does Columbus draw on in this text? How does he decide among them?
2. Columbus does not believe that anyone can sail to the earthly paradise. Why do you think he discusses it in the context of navigation?
3. What does this document suggest to you about faith and reason in Columbus's thinking?

The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico (1519)

The Broken Spears is a Spanish translation of several accounts in Nahuatl of the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs in 1519. (A more accurate translation would actually be "The Broken Bones.") The earliest of these accounts seems to have been written in 1528, nine years after Cortés landed at Veracruz and seven years after the Aztec capital at Tenochtitlán fell.

The arrival of the Spanish on the coast led to intense debates about how to deal with them. Aztec society was far from united; in fact, indigenous allies were of great help to the vastly outnumbered Spanish. There was also disagreement over who the Spanish were. As this passage shows, some people thought Cortés was the fulfillment of a prophecy about an ancient god who would return to rule someday. In the passage just before this (not reprinted here), Emperor Moctezuma decides—against the will of

many of his advisers—to welcome him as such. Spelling has been updated in the following excerpt to reflect modern orthography.

When Moctezuma had given necklaces to each one, Cortés asked him: "Are you Moctezuma? Are you the king? Is it true that you are the king Moctezuma?"

And the king said: "Yes, I am Moctezuma." Then he stood up to welcome Cortés; he came forward, bowed his head low and addressed him in these words: "Our lord, you are weary. The journey has tired you, but now you have arrived on the earth. You have come to your city, Mexico. You have come here to sit on your throne, to sit under its canopy.

"The kings who have gone before, your representatives, guarded it and preserved it for your coming. The kings Itzcoatl, Moctezuma the Elder, Axayacatl, Tizoc and Ahuitzol ruled for you in the City of Mexico. The people were protected by their swords and sheltered by their shields.

"Do the kings know the destiny of those they left behind, their posterity? If only they are watching! If only they can see what I see!

"No, it is not a dream. I am not walking in my sleep. I am not seeing you in my dreams. * * * I have seen you at last! I have met you face to face! I was in agony for five days, for ten days, with my eyes fixed on the Region of the Mystery. And now you have come out of the clouds and mists to sit on your throne again.

"This was foretold by the kings who governed your city, and now it has taken place. You have come back to us; you have come down from the sky. Rest now, and take possession of your royal houses. Welcome to your land, my lords!"

When Moctezuma had finished, La Malinche [a native woman who served as Cortés's translator, adviser, and mistress] translated his address into Spanish so that the Captain could understand it.

CITATION: *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, edited by Miguel Leon-Portilla (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 64–69, 71–73.

Cortés replied in his strange and savage tongue, speaking first to La Malinche: "Tell Moctezuma that we are his friends. There is nothing to fear. We have wanted to see him for a long time, and now we have seen his face and heard his words. Tell him that we love him well and that our hearts are contented."

Then he said to Moctezuma: "We have come to your house in Mexico as friends. There is nothing to fear."

La Malinche translated this speech and the Spaniards grasped Moctezuma's hands and patted his back to show their affection for him.

ATTITUDES OF THE SPANIARDS AND THE NATIVE LORDS

The Spaniards examined everything they saw. They dismounted from their horses, and mounted them again, and dismounted again, so as not to miss anything of interest.

* * *

When Moctezuma was imprisoned, they [the chiefs and princes who served him] all went into hiding. They ran away to hide and treacherously abandoned him!

THE SPANIARDS TAKE POSSESSION OF THE CITY

When the Spaniards entered the Royal House, they placed Moctezuma under guard and kept him under their vigilance. They also placed a guard over Itzcuauhtzin, but the other lords were permitted to depart.

Then the Spaniards fired one of their cannons, and this caused great confusion in the city. The people scattered in every direction; they fled without rhyme or reason; they ran off as if they were being pursued. It was as if they had eaten the mushrooms that confuse the mind, or had seen some dreadful apparition. They were all overcome by terror, as if their hearts had fainted. And when night fell, the panic spread through the city and their fears would not let them sleep.

In the morning the Spaniards told Moctezuma what they needed in the way of supplies: tortillas, fried chickens, hens' eggs, pure water, firewood and charcoal. Also: large, clean cooking pots, water

jars, pitchers, dishes and other pottery. Moctezuma 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 the horses.

The Spaniards Reveal Their Greed

When the Spaniards were installed in the palace, they asked Moctezuma about the city's resources and reserves and the warriors' ensigns and shields. They questioned him closely and then demanded gold.

Moctezuma 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 the idols, gold nose plugs, gold greaves 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 rest were snatched up by the Tlaxcaltecas. The Spaniards searched through the whole treasure house, questioning and quarreling, and seized every object they thought was beautiful.

The Seizure of Moctezuma's Treasures

Next they went to Moctezuma's storehouse, in the place called Totocalco [Place of the Palace of the Birds], where his personal treasures were kept. The Spaniards grinned like little beasts and patted each other with delight.

When they entered the hall of treasures, it was as if they had arrived in Paradise. They searched everywhere and coveted everything; they were slaves to their own greed. * * *

La Malinche called the nobles together. She climbed up to the palace roof and cried: "Mexicanos, come forward! The Spaniards need your help! Bring them food and pure water. They are tired and hungry; they are almost fainting from exhaustion! Why do you not come forward? Are you angry with them?"

The Mexicans were too frightened to approach. They were crushed by terror and would not risk coming forward. They shied away as if the Spaniards were wild beasts, as if the hour were midnight on the blackest night of the year. Yet they did not abandon the Spaniards to hunger and thirst. They brought them whatever they needed, but shook with fear as they did so. They delivered the supplies to the Spaniards with trembling hands, then turned and hurried away.

* * *

The Preparations for the Fiesta

The Aztecs begged permission of their king to hold the fiesta of Huitzilopochtli. The Spaniards wanted to see this fiesta to learn how it was celebrated. A delegation of the celebrants came to the palace where Moctezuma was a prisoner, and when their spokesman asked his permission, he granted it to them.

As soon as the delegation returned, the women began to grind seeds of the chicalote. These women had fasted for a whole year. They ground the seeds in the patio of the temple.

The Spaniards came out of the palace together, dressed in armor and carrying their weapons with them. They stalked among the women and looked at them one by one; they stared into the faces of the women who were grinding seeds. After this cold inspection, they went back into the palace. It is said that they planned to kill the celebrants if the men entered the patio.

The Statue of Huitzilopochtli

On the evening before the fiesta of Toxcatl, the celebrants began to model a statue of Huitzilopochtli. They gave it such a human appearance that it seemed the body of a living man. Yet they made

the statue with nothing but a paste made of the ground seeds of the chicalote, which they shaped over an armature of sticks.

When the statue was finished, they dressed it in rich feathers, and they painted crossbars over and under its eyes. They also clipped on its earrings of turquoise mosaic; these were in the shape of serpents, with gold rings hanging from them. Its nose plug, in the shape of an arrow, was made of gold and was inlaid with fine stones.

They placed the magic headdress of hummingbird feathers on its head. They also adorned it with an *anecuyotl*, which was a belt made of feathers, with a cone at the back. Then they hung around its neck an ornament of yellow parrot feathers, fringed like the locks of a young boy. Over this they put its nettle-leaf cape, which was painted black and decorated with five clusters of eagle feathers.

Next they wrapped it in its cloak, which was painted with skulls and bones, and over this they fastened its vest. The vest was painted with dismembered human parts: skulls, ears, hearts, intestines, torsos, breasts, hands and feet. They also put on its *maxtlatl*, or loincloth, which was decorated with images of dissevered limbs and fringed with amate paper. This *maxtlatl* was painted with vertical stripes of bright blue.

* * *

Finally, they put the wristbands on its arms. These bands, made of coyote skin, were fringed with paper cut into little strips.

The Beginning of the Fiesta

Early the next morning, the statue's face was uncovered by those who had been chosen for that ceremony. They gathered in front of the idol in single file and offered it gifts of food, such as round seedcakes or perhaps human flesh. But they did not carry it up to its temple on top of the pyramid.

All the young warriors were eager for the fiesta to begin. They had sworn to dance and sing with all their hearts, so that the Spaniards would marvel at the beauty of the rituals.

Questions

1. What are the Spanish interested in? What does the narrator conclude from this?
2. What do you learn about Aztec society and culture from this passage?
3. What things seem to upset the narrator most about these events? How can you tell?

Arana Xajilá, Plague in Central America (1519–1560)

The Cakchiquels were one of four related indigenous groups living in part of what is today Guatemala. The following excerpt comes from a history of the tribe—*Annals of the Cakchiquels*—written by four members, including Arana Xajilá, also known as Francisco Hernández (c. 1502–c. 1581). We know very little of the history of the text; it was written in the Cakchiquel language and gives firsthand accounts of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century events (the last one in 1621). It was first discovered in the archives of a Guatemalan convent in 1844. It appears to have been part of a complaint filed in a lawsuit, but we do not know what the suit was about or what points this history was intended to prove.

Some of the events recorded go back to about 1380. From today's perspective we might assume that the Spanish conquest would be the most important event recorded in the chronicle, but the authors place much greater emphasis on a bloody revolt against the Cakchiquel rulers (who had recently conquered various other tribes) in 1495–1496. In fact, this event looms so large in the story that all subsequent events are dated with reference to it (so that 1519–1520, for instance, is the twenty-fifth year after the revolt). The plague, which forms the focus of this excerpt, reached the Cakchiquel in 1519, about five years before the Spanish themselves did.

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127. In the course of the [twenty-]fifth year [1519] the pestilence began, O my children. First there was a cough, then the blood was corrupted, and the urine became yellow. The number of deaths at