**Conference of the Influential: Montezuma II**

**INTRO** (not in role) \* **bolded** **words** reflect HTCs

Montezuma II was the 9th emperor and the army commander of the Aztec empire from 1502-1520. (embedded citation) **[[1]](#footnote-2)** He reigned primarily over Tenochtitlan, the capital of the empire with a population of approximately 300 000 people.**[[2]](#footnote-3)** At its peak, Tenochtitlan was a powerful region, having formed the Triple Alliance with the cities of Texcoco and Tlacopan, through which they solicited tribute from local governments of conquered regions.**[[3]](#footnote-4)** The city was also a significant political, economic, and religious centre— with complex infrastructures, palaces for rulers, an intricate system for growing and importing food from the mainland, a trading centre (*tlateloc*o) brimming with 60 000 to 80 000 people, and a ceremonial religious area (*teocalli*) at the centre of the city where priests performed sacrifices to please the gods.**[[4]](#footnote-5)** Considering the **perspective**, the importance of religion to the Aztec empire, it was reasonable that, when Hernan Cortes, the Spanish conquistador, arrived with 600 men, crossbows, horses, and guns,**[[5]](#footnote-6)** he may have been **perceived** by Montezuma as Quetzalcoatl, the ancient god of wind, rain and creation.**[[6]](#footnote-7)** **Consequently,** Montezuma welcomed Cortes, meeting him peacefully, in 1519**[[7]](#footnote-8)**. In spite of the initial diplomacy, over the span of three years, the Spanish mistreated and imprisoned Montezuma,**[[8]](#footnote-9)** exploited the Aztec people through forced labour (*encomienda*), and made them susceptible to deadly diseases such as typhus, smallpox and measles.**[[9]](#footnote-10)** Furthermore, the neighbouring cities— over which the Aztec ruled— possessed **underlying** resentment due to the tribute system run by the Triple Alliance and **as a result,** formed alliances with the Spanish. At the end of a period of three years, Montezuma had been killed and the Spanish had successfully conquered the Aztec Empire.**[[10]](#footnote-11)**

**RESOLUTION** (in role)

I submit to this conference that the greatest problem facing the Aztecs is the systemic enslavement and mistreatment of our people, and the exploitation of our land, as a **result** of the presence of the Spanish, in whom we once placed our trust.

**EXPLANATION** (in role) \* yellow highlights = primary source evidence incorporated

The Spanish have directly undermined my power and influence through their torment, abuse and exploitation of the Aztec people and our great systems; for this reason, it remains the greatest problem of the Aztec empire. In our first interaction, I placed my trust in Hernan Cortes as I **perceived** him asQuetzalcoatl; I said to him, “ 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!” **[[11]](#footnote-12)** to which he replied, “Tell Motecuhzoma 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. All him the we love him well and that our hearts are contented.” **[[12]](#footnote-13)** Through this blatant deception by the Spanish, my authority was undermined. **As a result,** when Cortes was found not to be a divinity, I was berated by my subordinates and portrayed to the Aztec as a foolish and naive leader, who had misplaced his trust.**[[13]](#footnote-14)** Furthermore, the Spanish have also formed alliances with the neighbouring cities over which we once ruled in the Triple Alliance.**[[14]](#footnote-15)** They have undermined our authority in these regions as well, **thus** disrupting our ability to harvest tribute and sacrifices from these regions, and significantly reducing the power we possessed over these cities.

Secondly, as a leader, with enough agency to command the building of entire religious centres and the religious sacrificing of people from neighbouring regions who have been conquered,**[[15]](#footnote-16)** I must condemn the blatant religious disrespect brought by the Spanish. In our first interaction, Cortes acted as though he was Quetzalcoatl, the god of creation,**[[16]](#footnote-17)** explaining that he had “ come to (our) house in Mexico as friends (and presumably gods).” **[[17]](#footnote-18)** He posed falsely, and mockingly as one of our divinities, to whom we owe everything,**[[18]](#footnote-19)** to advance his own causes. As a highly religious leader, who has, thus far, done everything in his authority to honour our gods, I must condemn this blatant mockery. Additionally, the Spanish, since their arrival, have attempted to convert the Aztecs to Christianity, destroyed our religious buildings and built thousands of their own churches through forced native labour.**[[19]](#footnote-20)** This presents a threat to our existing religion, and must be addressed. Also, **as a result** of the formation of alliances with neighbouring regions by the Spanish, the amount of human sacrifices, that we were once able to solicit from conquered regions, has been significantly reduced. Without these sacrifices, we are unable to repay our gods and receive their blessings.**[[20]](#footnote-21)** Given my position and influence over the people of the Aztec empire, I must speak out and address the issue of the Spanish and their disrespect for our religion.

Finally, the Spanish people’s deplorable actions, of taking our land and enslaving our people through the corrupt system of *encomienda,* must be condemned, because it has systemically been **causing** the destruction of our culture and **contributing to** the decline of our empire. As even Las Casas, a Spanish friar, has explained, the Spanish have come to“outrage, slay, afflict, torment, ” **[[21]](#footnote-22)** and force heavy labor upon our people, so that “they are so weak and complaisant, they are less able to endure heavy labour and soon die of no matter what malady/ illness.” **[[22]](#footnote-23)** The Spanish are threatening the **stability and traditions** of our empire and of our civilization, by killing our people, destroying our land, **disrupting** our power systems, mocking our religion and ruining my **legacy** as a leader whose goal is to protect, **influence** and control the region. It is for this reason that their presence is my greatest concern for the empire.

**The Gathering of the Powerless: Peasant Woman in Europe (1450-1500)**

**INTRO** (not in role)

Medieval peasant women in Europe generally followed two paths in society: marriage and motherhood, or religion and nunnery.**[[23]](#footnote-24)** For those who chose the former, their lives consisted of domestic responsibilities such as childcare, cooking, tending livestock and less frequently, helping to farm crops during busy harvest seasons.**[[24]](#footnote-25)** While they had several responsibilities within the household, women, particularly peasant women, who were widowed or unmarried, held little to no standing in society. The extremely sacred society most definitely **contributed** to this treatment and the portrayal of women.**[[25]](#footnote-26)** Several Biblical texts, such as Apostle Paul’s writings, emphasized men’s dominance over women, while others, such as the story of creation, portrayed Eve as the perpetrator of Original Sin and woman as inherently evil and serpent-like, as she tempted Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, resulting in man’s expulsion from paradise**[[26]](#footnote-27)**.

These **long-term, underlying causes and beliefs**, combined with the Papal Bull issued in 1484, validating the belief of witchcraft as a condemnable offence**[[27]](#footnote-28)**, **catalyzed** the belief of several peasant women to be witches, and ultimately fuelled their persecution during the inquisition. In fact, it is estimated that the inquisition targeting witches killed 50 000 to 80 000 people between 1450 and 1750, 80% of which were women.**[[28]](#footnote-29)** (should include Malleus Maleficarum)

**RESOLUTION** (in role)

I submit to this conference that the greatest problem facing peasant women in Europe is that we are **viewed** as inherently wicked and evil, **causing** us to be the target of inquisitors.

**EXPLANATION** (in role)

**Because** we peasant women are viewed as inherently evil, we have become the victim of inquisitors. This is the greatest issue facing peasant women, firstly, because the reason for which we are being targeted is unjust and baseless. The belief of women’s wickedness is the **result** of how the Bible **portrays** women, and not our own actual beliefs and actions. We are unjustly blamed for the Eve’s sin which caused man to be expelled from paradise,[[29]](#footnote-30) **contributing to** the belief that women are “more bitter than death.” [[30]](#footnote-31) We are also blamed for men’s desires, and downfalls as it is propagated, that “men are caught not only through their carnal desires when they see and hear women” and that our “face is burning wind, and their (our) voice the hissing of serpents: they (we) also cast wicked spells on countless men and animals.” [[31]](#footnote-32) In addition to being blamed for Eve’s sin, and the temptation and downfalls of men, we are also accused of being sinful, devious and unholy. Inquisitors have said that “Wherefore her voice is like the song of sirens, who with their sweet melody entire the passers-by and kill them. For they kill them by emptying their purses, consuming their strength and causing them to forsake God.” [[32]](#footnote-33) It is unjust that we are being accused of sins where there exist none and that we are, as a **result**, being punished or accused, of being unfaithful to the Lord. There is no way in which these accusations, that all women are evil and wicked, can be proven—in fact it was not until the Pope issued an official announcement against witchcraft,[[33]](#footnote-34) that many Christians even began to believe in witchcraft and that the hunt for witches was **catalyzed**. Yet, this message is continuously being spread by the powerful inquisitors.

Furthermore, the false portrayal of peasant women is unjust and problematic because it only targets those who do not have the agency or authority to defend themselves, such as outsiders in the community and poor women whose responsibilities do no extend beyond the household.[[34]](#footnote-35) We women, many of whom are widowed and have little means[[35]](#footnote-36) for defence in trials, are being attacked and accused of witchcraft possibly by people of higher classes whose accusations may be **provoked** simply by quarrel.[[36]](#footnote-37) There is no way of knowing if we are being targeting by those in power, simply because of their **opinions** ofresentment or vengeance. Once we are accused, we will almost always be convicted and condemned because there is no method of defending ourselves.[[37]](#footnote-38)

Finally, the portrayal of women as evil, and the **subsequent** inquisition for witches is unjust and problematic because it disrupts and ruins the households of peasant women. It is known that childbirth, one of our only duties as women in society, is an extremely dangerous and a potentially fatal procedure. **For years**, however, the midwives in our villages have used their practical wisdom to help us deliver babies and perform emergency baptisms.[[38]](#footnote-39) Since the inquisition has started, this **tradition** has been **interrupted** as these midwives have been killed or condemned of witchcraft **because** they have unique knowledge.[[39]](#footnote-40) **Thus**, several women, and their infants have died in childbirth. The inquisition has also prevented us from taking care of household responsibilities. Those women who have been tried and accused of witchcraft leave their families without domestic care. As it is the women who care for children, cook, clean the house, tend livestock and help their husbands or fathers in harvest,[[40]](#footnote-41) without them, the **traditional** household is in disorder, the **structure and stability** of the home is demolished, and their families are left without motherly and wifely care. Thus, the greatest issue facing us peasant women is the false portrayal and blame of women propagated by the powerful, which **motivates** unjust attacks on those without agency and **leads to** the destruction of the **traditional** household.

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