

Mexica (Aztec) Society: 1325-1519

- 1325:
 - Mexica people arrived from the north, settled on Tenochtitlan
 - for 100 years they were subject to the Tecpanecs of Azcapotzalco
- 1426:
 - war broke out between the Tecpanecs and the Mexicas
- 1430:
 - Mexica won complete independence
- 1426-40:
 - Itzcoatl ruled Mexica people, initiated era of changes and conquests.
- 1440-69:
 - Moctezuma Ilhuicamina ("the Elder") consolidated power of the Mexica
 - next 4 rulers [Axayacatl (1469-81), Tizoc (1481-5), Ahuitzotl (1486-1502) and Motecuzoma II (1502-20)] continued to extend Aztec rule through military or economic subjugation

Mexica Social Organization:

- *pipiltin*:
 - headed by upper nobility or *tlazo pipiltin*, who in turn chose *huey tlatoani*
 - controlled education, paid no tribute, filled important admin. positions
 - warriors and some administrators were allowed to enter the nobility
- *macehualtin*:
 - worked the land and lived in communities called *calpulli*
 - urban dwellers, however, also worked as artisans, artists and merchants and took advantage of the social mobility made possible by the importance of trade in the growing economy
- Tenochtitlan:
 - center of a large, complex political and socio-economic conglomerate
 - subjected groups paid tribute, "protected" commercial routes, supplied human sacrifices, were forced to speak Nahuatl when in Tenochtitlan; those who resisted were forced to fight the ritual "Flower Wars" to supply victims for sacrifice

Hernan Cortés: birth to 1520

- Early life:
 - born in 1484 (?) in Extremadura
 - father, Martín Cortés de Monroy, was an *hidalgo*, or a petty nobleman and a
- Education:
 - extent of his education is a point for
 - may have attended the University of Salamanca at the age of 14, and received a degree in Law and a rudimentary knowledge of Latin
 - best way for an *hidalgo* to improve his lot in Spanish society during the early 1500's was as a soldier
- 1504:
 - Cortés set sail for the West Indies, landing in Hispaniola and worked as a notary for 5 or 6 years.
- 1511:
 - fought under Diego Velázquez in the conquest of Cuba and Velázquez became governor of Cuba; Cortés became his secretary
- 1514:
 - Cortés married Catalina Suárez Marcaida and moved to the town of Baracoa
- Nov. 1518:
 - asked by Velázquez to lead an exploratory expedition to the Mexican mainland (Yucatán); instructed by Velázquez to
 - 1) look for the fleet of a previous expedition
 - 2) to rescue any Christian captives and
 - 3) to explore and trade.
 - Velázquez did not, however, give Cortés permission to conquer or settle.
- Spring 1519:
 - without giving prior notice, Cortés set sail for Yucatán
- Apr. 22, 1519:
 - expedition reached the Yucatán.
- October 1520:
 - Cortés wrote his "Second Letter from Mexico," on the eve of his second advance into the city of Texmititan, or Tenochtitlan.

Diego Velazquez' expeditions to the mainland

- 1517: the first expedition to Yucatán, led by of Hernández de Córdoba.
- 1518: the second expedition, led by Juan de Grijalva.
- 1519: the third expedition, led by Cortés

Transition in Spain

- 1504: Queen Isabella died.
- 1516: King Ferdinand died
- 1517: Charles V, grandson of Isabella and Ferdinand, arrived from Flanders to claim his Spanish inheritance. This transition of power resulted in an upheaval in the Spanish court, a purge of officials who had previously governed Spain and the Indies, and a return to favor of many others, including a close ally of Velázquez, Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, the bishop of Burgos, his wife's uncle.