

Moctezuma Xocoyotl, the emperor of the Mexica at the time of the Spanish conquest, gave birth to nineteen children during his lifetime.¹ Most of his offspring perished during the conquest of Tenochtitlan, but three of his children, Isabel, Pedro, and Leonor, survived, were baptized, married Spaniards, and produced offspring. Moctezuma's grandchildren and great-grandchildren have been the subject of very few scholarly studies. Donald Chipman has written the most extensive study about these descendants, but like most scholars who discuss the Moctezumas in the colonial period, Chipman presents a somewhat inaccurate depiction of the lives of these children. Predominantly, the historiography regarding the Moctezumas in New Spain has portrayed these people as examples of *mestizaje*, that is, the ideal mixing of indigenous and Spanish lineages that “bridged the worlds of Spaniard and Indian.”² They have been referred to as “pioneers of mestizaje”³ and it has been claimed that Spaniards living in New Spain looked to these children to set an example of hispanisation for the indigenous population.⁴ This portrayal of the Moctezuma family in colonial New Spain is inaccurate in both its representation of how colonial society perceived the Moctezumas as well as how the Moctezumas perceived themselves. In his essay, “Colonialism and Postcolonialism as (Latin) American Mirages,” J. Jorge Klor de Alva explains that the narrative of mestizaje is a

¹ Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin. *Codex Chimalpahin: Society and Politics in Mexico Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Texcoco, Culhuacan, and other Nahua Altepetl in Central Mexico : the Nahuatl and Spanish Aannals and Accounts Collected and Recorded by Don Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin*. Vol. 1. Arthur J.O Anderson and Susan Schroeder, Eds. and Trans (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997) 159.

² Donald Chipman. “Isabel Moctezuma: Pioneer of Mestizaje” in *People and Issues in Latin American History, the Colonial Experience*. 2nd ed. Eds. Lewis Hanke and Jane M. Rausch (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000) 288.

³ Chipman, “Isabel Moctezuma: Pioneer of Mestizaje.”

⁴ Donald Chipman. *Moctezuma's Children: Aztec Royalty under Spanish Rule, 1520-1700* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005) 63.

myth that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, its application by scholars to the colonial period is anachronistic and revisionist.⁵

Using archival documents from the Archivos general de Indias in Seville relating to the Moctezuma family in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early-eighteenth centuries, as well as the historic accounts from the indigenous annalist Chimalpahin, this paper will challenge the prevalent conceptions about the Moctezumas. It is my thesis that members of the Moctezuma family were not perceived of as examples of mestizaje in colonial society. In fact, they were thought of as Spaniards. Additionally, through an examination of early colonial conceptions of hybridity and lineage, this paper will explore how and why it is that the Moctezumas assumed this Spanish identity.

In an essay about conceptions of hybridity in Latin America, Carmen Bernard explains that in colonial Latin America, the hybrid existed as the product of two unequal parts.⁶ Bernard looks at the perceptions of Catholic intermarriage with Moors and Jews in sixteenth century Spain to explain why this concept of hybridity existed in New Spain. As in Spain, in the Spanish colonies the marriage of a Spaniard to a non-Catholic implied an act of disloyalty and even duplicity towards God and the king. As a result, the offspring of this unequal union elicited distrust and a lack of confidence regarding his or her loyalty to the church and crown.⁷

⁵ J. Jorge Klor de Alva. "Colonialism and Postcolonialism as (Latin) American Mirages," *Colonial Latin American Review* (Vol. 1, Nos. 1-2, 1992) 7.

⁶ Carmen Bernard. "Los híbridos en Hispanoamérica: un enfoque antropológico de un proceso histórico" in *Lógica mestiza en América*. Eds. Guillaume Boccara and Sylvia Galindo (Temuco: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, 2000) 63.

⁷ Bernard, "Los híbridos en Hispanoamérica," 65.

The second generation Moctezumas never elicited such a response from Spaniards in New Spain. Although they were the product of indigenous and Spanish unions, they were not hybrids in terms of the contemporary definition of the concept. The two lineages from which the Moctezumas in the colonial period were born were not considered unequal. Moctezuma's children and grandchildren were married to elite members of Spanish and New Spanish society. Many of the female descendants married conquistadors and men who were involved in the 'pacification of the Indians.' For example, Isabel Moctezuma gave birth to the daughter of Hernán Cortés, named Leonor Cortés Moctezuma, and bore many more offspring from her marriages to Pedro Gallego de Andrada and Juan Cano de Saavedra, both of whom were conquistadors who served under Cortés. Leonor Cortés Moctezuma went on to marry Juan de Tolosa, the conqueror of Zacatecas who also discovered the silver mines in that town. Her daughter, Leonor Cortés Tolosa Moctezuma, married Cristóbal de Zaldívar who was Captain General under viceroy Luis de Valasco and is credited with the pacification of the Chichimecas.⁸ The male Moctezumas in the colonial period were also married to elite Spanish women. While Pedro Moctezuma never married a Spanish woman, his son Diego Luis Moctezuma, who was born out of Pedro's union with Catalina Quiasuchitl, a descendant of the ruler of Tula, married Francisca de la Cueva y Valenzuela. Diego moved to Spain where Doña Francisca, the granddaughter of the Duke of Alburquerque, had been a lady-in-waiting to the queen.⁹

⁸ AGI, Patronato 80, N.5, R.1, fol. 1

⁹ Chipman, *Moctezuma's Children*, 95.

The progeny of all these unions descended from two noble bloodlines: Moctezuma's and the conquistadors' and other members of the Spanish nobility. The combination of these bloodlines represented the unification of two great empires. Although the noble status of the conquistadors was largely a construction of Hernan Cortes, who, like the other conquistadors, was of relatively low social status in Spain, in New Spain a new nobility emerged and those associated with the conquest or the colonization of New Spain took on a noble status.¹⁰ In the colonial period, Moctezuma was exalted as a noble emperor. In the 1530s, Charles V officially recognised Moctezuma's status as the emperor of the Aztecs when he allowed Moctezuma's son, Pedro, to have thirty-two gold crowns on his coat of arms, representing the thirty-two kingdoms controlled by Moctezuma before the conquest.¹¹ Because the Spaniards understood Moctezuma to have royal status, the necessary quality of a mestizo in which one part of the hybrid is of higher status and of better quality than the other, does not hold true for the Moctezuma descendants. Accordingly, a marriage between one of Moctezuma's descendants and a Spaniard, even a nobleman or woman, would not have signified a betrayal of the crown. In an essay about marriage in seventeenth-century Guadalajara, Thomas Calvo explains that, for Spaniards, marriage was viewed as a means of preserving a family's ethnic virtues and the privileges that came with that virtuous status.¹² As such, in an ideal marriage union, one would not marry someone of lower ethnic status. By accepting the unions between Spanish nobility and the Moctezuma descendants, the Spanish in New Spain were

¹⁰ Josefina Muriel. *Conventos de monjas en la Nueva España*. (Mexico D.F.: Editorial Jus Mexico, 1995) 91.

¹¹ Chipman, *Moctezuma's Children*, 85, 121.

¹² Thoman Calvo. "The Warmth of the Hearth: Seventeenth-Century Guadalajara Families" in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*. Ed. Asunción Lavrin. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 289.

implying that they viewed the Moctezumas to possess equivalent ethnic virtues to the Spaniards.

There is evidence that this unique dual patrimony of the Moctezuma descendants, that is, their noble lineage on both maternal and paternal sides, was an important factor in shaping the perception of the Moctezumas in colonial society. An example of this is found in a document from 1591 about the *méritos* of María Cano Moctezuma, in which her husband, Gonzalo de Salazar, defends his wife's right to inherit the *encomienda* of Tacuba and its tribute towns over her uncle, Juan Cano Moctezuma. In order to provide evidence of María's *calidad*, Gonzalo is certain to emphasise not only her connection to Moctezuma, but highlights her Moctezuma lineage in conjunction with her links to the conquistador class.¹³ Similarly, in a document from 1593 drafted at the insistence of Juan Cortés Tolosa Moctezuma in which he details the *méritos y servicios* of his father, Juan discusses his *calidad* and that of his siblings. He does so as justification for his receipt of money from the crown in order to pay off the debts of his father. To establish *calidad*, Juan emphasises that he and his siblings are both the grandchildren of Cortes, the first Marques del Valle, and the greatgrandchildren of Moctezuma, “señor natural que fue desta tierra.”¹⁴

In addition to frequent mention of their dual patrimony, archival documents regarding the Moctezumas in sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth-century New Spain make reference to these children's pure blood. Throughout the colonial period, New Spanish

¹³ AGI, Patronato, 245, R.13, fol.1

¹⁴ AGI, Patronato,80,N.5,R.1, fol..3

society was virtually obsessed with measuring one's level of *calidad*, a person's degree of pure Spanish blood. Only those who had descended from old Christians with no trace of Moorish, Jewish, African, or indigenous blood were considered to have *pura sangre*. It is noteworthy, then, that throughout colonial society, Moctezuma's descendants, who clearly had indigenous ancestry, were referred to as having pure blood. In a *relación de méritos y servicios* written in 1727 about José Augdelo Cano Moctezuma, a sixth-generation descendant of Isabel Moctezuma, each parent and grandparent of José is listed, all the way back to the great-grandson of Isabel. The document emphasises that José and all his ancestors are descendants of the first conquistadors and direct descendants of the emperor Moctezuma. Furthermore, the document goes on to say that José and his family are all known hidalgos with blood that is completely pure, and limpio de toda mala raza.¹⁵ Therefore, despite José and his ancestors' indigenous lineage, it was commonly accepted that they had pure blood. This deviation from the standard colonial definition of *pura raza* is resolved by recognising that Moctezuma's indigenous blood was considered to be of the same quality as Spanish blood and so the progeny of Isabel Moctezuma and her husband, Juan Cano, were considered to be Spanish, not mestizos.

The lifestyle of the Moctezumas in New Spain also reflected their status as Spaniards in colonial society. Many lived amongst Spaniards in places to which non-Spaniards would have had no access. The Convento de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción was founded in 1540 by fray Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of New Spain. It was initially established as a convent for indigenous women, but never fulfilled this role. Instead, the convent developed a strict policy regarding which type of woman was allowed to enter,

¹⁵ AGI, Indiferente, 143, N.12. fol.6

and admitted only *peninsulares* and *criollas*.¹⁶ In 1553, Isabel and Catalina Cano Moctezuma entered the convent. Chipman credits the admittance of Isabel and Catalina to the fact that the convent made concessions for these two mestiza women.¹⁷ He concludes that because Isabel and Catalina were the granddaughters of Moctezuma and daughters of Isabel, they had favoured status and were allowed into the convent despite their mestizo status in the colonial racial hierarchy. This analysis overlooks the importance of Isabel and Catalina's conquistador father, Juan Cano, in determining their status in colonial society and so overlooks the fact that these women were not considered to be mestizas by those running the convent. As such, it is not at all surprising that they were treated as Spanish women and admitted into Nuestra Señora de la Concepción.

Not only did colonial society perceive the Moctezumas to be Spaniards with pure blood, but the Moctezumas must have thought of themselves in the same manner. In their writing of wills, petitions, and royal *cédulas* they exhibited no recognition of the fact that they had indigenous blood. In fact, in certain cases, the Moctezumas demonstrated hostility towards the indigenous people. For example, Gonzalo Cano Moctezuma, Isabel Moctezuma's son, served with Hernán Cortés in the conquest of the Mixteca. According to the archival document detailing Gonzalo's *méritos* in which he petitions for a reward for having served as a captain during the Mixteca mission, Gonzalo sought out the Marqués del Valle after learning about his intention to conquer the Mixteca.¹⁸ In a similar exhibition of the Moctezumas' disassociation from their indigenous ancestry, Pedro de Andrada, grandson of Isabel Moctezuma, married Lucía de Penas. Doña Lucía

¹⁶ Chipman, *Moctezuma's Children*, 68.

¹⁷ Chipman, *Moctezuma's Children*, 68.

¹⁸ AGI, Patronato, 245, R.10, fol. 5

was the daughter of Juan de Penas who was known to be an exploiter of indigenous labor.¹⁹ The depiction presented by scholars of the colonial Moctezumas as pioneers of mestizaje who established a bridge between the worlds of the Spaniards and indigenous people is entirely inconsistent with reality, in which the Moctezumas became conquistadors and engaged in indigenous exploitation.

It is interesting to note that the Moctezuma descendants discussed above who lived in colonial society as Spaniards were not the only descendants of Moctezuma Xocoyotl who lived in New Spain. According to Hernán Cortés' letters to Charles V, Moctezuma asked Cortés to be the guardian of his three children, Isabel, Pedro, and Leonor. To honour this request, which many scholars doubt actually happened, Cortés ensured that the three entered into marriage unions with elite Spaniards and granted them various encomiendas. There were, however, other children of Moctezuma who survived the conquest but who go unnoticed when one relies solely on the archival documents produced by and regarding Isabel, Pedro, Leonor and their descendants. By using the early seventeenth-century accounts of the Nahuatl annalist Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, one is able to study the lives of these other colonial Moctezumas. Through this study, the difference between the social perception of the two groups of Moctezuma children becomes manifest, as does the reason for this marked distinction. Based on Chimalpahin's records, of Moctezuma's nineteen children, the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth, all girls whose names are unknown, survived the conquest of Tenochtitlan and married indigenous noblemen.²⁰ Moctezuma's nineteenth and final child, a girl named Francisca,

¹⁹ Chimalpahin, *Codex Chimalpahin*, Vol. 2, p.82.

²⁰ Chimalpahin, *Codex Chimalpahin*, vol.1, 161.

married Diego Huanitzin. According to Chimalpahin, Diego was a nobleman who was the ruler of Tenochtitlan from 1539 until 1541, when he died.²¹ Francisca and Diego had four children.²² These marriage unions indicate that there was a continuity of old family alliances amongst this group of Moctezuma's descendents. Although there is evidence of subtle pre-Hispanic continuity amongst the Moctezumas who were absorbed into Spanish society, such as the fact that at times they continued to write in Nahuatl,²³ the pre-Hispanic continuities that were evident amongst the Moctezumas who were not part of Spanish society are much more conspicuous.

This lesser-known group of Moctezuma children grew up in New Spain, but unlike their cousins, there is no evidence of them in any of the archival records. For example, in the documents that seek to prove the *mérito* or *calidad* of the Moctezuma descendants by listing the members of their noble ancestral line, these five children are noticeably absent. The only exception to this is don Hernando de Alvarado Teçocomoctzin, who was a well known historian and author of the annals of Tlatelolco. The absence of the other children from the collection of archival documents relating to the Moctezuma patrimony can be explained in part by the fact that they were never involved in the inheritance debates that concerned their cousins, since Cortés did not grant their parents the encomiendas and tribute entitlements that he offered Moctezuma's other surviving children. However, the fact that these children were never referred to by their relatives as part of the Moctezuma lineage in official documents suggests that these members of the family held a different

²¹ Chimalpahin, *Codex Chimalpahin*, vol.1, 171.

²² Chimalpahin, *Codex Chimalpahin*, vol.1, 165.

²³ Arthur J. O. Anderson, Frances Berdan, and James Lockhart, Eds. *Beyond the Codices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 205.

status in colonial society. The most glaring difference between these five children and those of Isabel, Pedro, and Leonor, is that they were not the product of and did not enter into marriages with conquistadors and elite Spaniards. As such, these children did not symbolise a union between noble Spanish and noble indigenous bloodlines. While they did possess the royal Moctezuma blood and were indigenous nobility, they lacked the dual patrimony that their cousins represented and which allowed Isabel, Pedro, and Leonor's descendants to be regarded as Spaniards by colonial society. The gap between the social status of the two sets of Moctezuma descendants, those who married conquistadors and their ilk, and those who married other members of the indigenous nobility, puts into perspective just how important and symbolic the union between the Moctezumas and Spaniards was in colonial society.

The way that scholars have chosen to represent the children of Moctezuma Xocoyotl in the first generations after the conquest of Tenochtitlan has led to an inaccurate understanding of these descendants, their lifestyle, their place in colonial society, and their perceptions of their own status. Presenting these members of the Moctezuma family as the first mestizos who formed a bridge between the Spanish and indigenous worlds in colonial society, pioneering the process of mestizaje and paving the way for the emergence of a new mestizo race, anachronistically employs a trope to the early colonial period that was only developed during the struggle for independence. Archival evidence and other primary sources indicate that Moctezuma's descendants were considered to be *limpia de mala raza* and to have the same ethnic virtue as the Spaniards. Their status as Spaniards was secured by the early colonial perception of Moctezuma Xocoyotl.

Immediately after the conquest of Tenochtitlan, Moctezuma was exalted by the Spaniards and presented as a noble emperor. Because of his noble blood, the marriage unions between his children and the conquistadors and other noble Spaniards were considered to have been between people of equivalent status. Contemporary thinking about hybrids was such that a mestizo was the product of two unequal parts. Because the Moctezuma descendants were not the progeny of such a union, they would not have identified as mestizos nor would they have been considered mestizos by the rest of society. The fact that only those descendants of Moctezuma who married Spaniards were assigned this status in colonial society emphasises the symbolic significance of the union of Spanish and Indigenous ancestry that these descendants represented. This dual patrimony did not establish Moctezuma's descendants as pioneers of mestizaje, but allowed them to leave their indigenous ancestry behind, at least on the surface, and become members of elite Spanish society.

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