



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Friday 3 December 2021 – Afternoon

GCSE (9–1) History B (Schools History Project)

J411/82 Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535

Time allowed: 1 hour



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer Questions 1 and 2, and **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **40**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

Aztecs and the Spanish Conquest, 1519–1535

Answer Questions 1 and 2.

- 1 What can **Source A** tell us about the reasons for the fall of Tenochtitlan to the Spanish in 1521? Use the source and your own knowledge to support your answer. [7]

Source A

'History of the Indies of New Spain' written by Friar Diego Duran in 1581. Duran was Spanish and a Dominican friar.

Cortes built ships that could enter Tenochtitlan by way of the lake. This decision was a wise one because the city was surrounded by canals in which horses were of no use.

The greatest enemy of the people in Tenochtitlan was hunger and the impossibility of acquiring food supplies. Some of the soldiers from nearby provinces fled the city and returned to their lands, leaving the King alone with the Aztecs. These were few and were weak from starvation. The march of the Spanish and their allies on the city began. The soldiers from Tlaxcala, Huexotzinco and Cholula were well equipped. They were to fight against the people who had subjected them. They knew that if they failed their future would be everlasting and cruel misery. The Indians claim they saw St James, the glorious patron saint of Spain, in the fiercest of the battles when the Spaniards were losing. At that moment he appeared, helping the Spaniards to win.

- 2 How useful are **Source B** and **Interpretations C** and **D** for a historian studying the massacre at Cholula in 1519? In your answer, refer to the source and two interpretations as well as your own knowledge. [15]

Source B

From the 'General History of the Things of New Spain', written by Bernardino da Sahagun, a Franciscan friar, between 1558 and 1585. He and his students collected evidence by interviewing Indians.

At this time the Tlaxcalans feared and hated the people of Cholula. This is why they brought rumours to Cortés, so that he would destroy them. They said to him 'Cholula is our enemy. It is an evil city.' When the Spaniards heard this, they marched against Cholula. They were guided by the Tlaxcalans. When they arrived, the Tlaxcalans and the men of Cholula shouted friendly greetings to each other. When the Cholulan leaders were assembled in the courtyard the Spaniards closed the entrances so that there was no way of escaping. Then the slaughter began: knife and swords stroke, and death. The people of Cholula had not suspected it. They faced the Spaniards without weapons. The cause of the slaughter was betrayal.

Interpretation C

A painting by the Mexican artist Felix Parra, from around 1877. It is called 'Episodes of the Conquest: Massacre of Cholula'.

**Interpretation D**

From 'Aztecs and Conquistadores' by historians John Pohl and Charles M Robinson, 2005.

Cortés reported that the Aztecs told Cortés he could wait in Cholula to see if Moctezuma would receive him. The Tlaxcalans were against the idea. Moctezuma, they said, had sent troops to strengthen the garrison at Cholula. Cortés, believing what the Tlaxcalans had told him, was suspicious. He summoned the Cholulan leaders to the courtyard. Several were interrogated and confessed to the trap. Cortés gave a signal and the slaughter began. The Spaniards then went from house to house, hunting down and killing any warrior.

The Aztec account is different. The Aztecs claimed the massacre was provoked by the Tlaxcalans, and make no mention of a plot by the Cholulans. This is unlikely however, because Cortés preferred diplomacy, with armed conflict as a last resort.

Turn over for Questions 3 and 4

Answer **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4.

- 3* 'Tenochtitlan was the most important part of the Aztec empire in 1519.'
How far do you agree? [18]
- 4* How far do you agree that the encomienda system was a failure? [18]

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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