TO

PROFESSOR MAX CRAWFORD

AND TO

JOHN
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Antipodean Australia can seem very remote from Mesoamerica and the centres of Aztec studies to the north. But as I sit at my typewriter facing south towards the penguins, I comfort myself that distance too has its advantages. At least it gives a long perspective.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR LITERARY MATERIAL AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Literary Material and Illustrations


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Galleries on Merseyside. The Spanish penetrate the main temple precinct of Tenochtitlan: Lienzo de Tlaxcala, by courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
NOTE ON NAHUATL

The Aztecs, or more properly the ‘Culhua Mexica’, together with most of the peoples of Central Mexico, spoke the language called Nahuatl. Names of places and persons as written here will no more than approximate complex Nahuatl sounds. Readers will notice variations in spellings between different scholars cited, but the variations are minor, and ought not impede understanding. I will call the ruler of Tenochtitlan ‘Moctezoma’, a most imperfect but recognizable approximation of the Nahuatl pronunciation. Nahuatl words will be italicized only for their first appearance. The accent, which commonly falls on the second-to-last syllable, will not be marked. Pluralizations will not follow Nahuatl practice, but our own.

The basic pronunciation rules are simple. Each vowel is given its full value. Single consonants have approximately the same values as in English, for example, as in ‘Cihuacoatl’, excepting the following:

- \( h \) is pronounced \( hw \) as in ‘Huitzilopochtli’
- \( qua, quo \) is pronounced \( kw \) as in ‘Etzalqualiztli’
- \( que, qui \) is pronounced \( k \), as in ‘Quetzalcoatl’, ‘Panquetzaliztli’, ‘Coyolxau(qh)ui’
- \( tl \) is pronounced like the English ‘atlas’, as in ‘Tlaxcala’, ‘Tlaloc’, ‘Tlatelolco’
- \( x \) is pronounced \( sh \), as in ‘Xipe Totec’, ‘Coyolxauqhuix’, ‘Xilonen’
- \( z \) is pronounced \( s \) as in ‘sat’.

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Map 2. Valley of Mexico.
The ancient masters were subtle, mysterious, profound, responsive.
The depth of their knowledge is unfathomable.
Because it is unfathomable,
All we can do is describe their appearance.
Watchful, like men crossing a winter stream.
Alert, like men aware of danger.
Yielding, like ice about to melt.
Simple, like uncarved blocks of wood.
Hollow, like caves.
Opaque, like muddy pools.

Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?

Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*