

INTRODUCTION: HISTORY AND TLAXILACALLI

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This is the story of how poor, everyday central Mexicans built and rebuilt autonomous communities over the course of four centuries and two empires. It is also the story of how these selfsame commoners constructed the unequal bonds of compulsion and difference that anchored these vigorous and often beloved communities. It is a story about certain face-to-face human networks, called *tlaxilacalli* in both singular and plural,¹ and about how such networks molded the shape of both the Aztec and Spanish rule.² Despite this influence, however, *tlaxilacalli* remain ignored; subordinated as they often were to wider political configurations and most often appearing unmarked—that is, noted by proper name only—in the sources. With care, however, the deeper stories of *tlaxilacalli* can be uncovered. This, in turn, lays bare a root-level history of autonomy and colonialism in central Mexico, told through the powerful and transformative *tlaxilacalli*.

The robustness of *tlaxilacalli* over the *longue durée* casts new and surprising light on the structures of empire in central Mexico, revealing a counterpoint of weakness and

¹ Classical Nahuatl does not distinguish between singular and plural for inanimate nouns like *tlaxilacalli*. See, for example, Michel Launey, *An Introduction to Classical Nahuatl*. Christopher Mckay, ed. and trans. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 21.

² Scholars have been working for decades on the etymology of “*tlaxilacalli*,” but no solution has yet been found. Because of the opacity of this term, some have preferred to refer to the autonomous local communities of the Aztec empire as “*calpolli*,” a partial cognate for “*tlaxilacalli*” with a cleaner Nahuatl derivation. Despite such historiographical and etymological advantages, this book uses “*tlaxilacalli*” for two reasons. First, as will be seen later in this introduction, “*calpolli*” and “*tlaxilacalli*” did not always mean the same thing, despite significant semantic overlap. In addition, “*tlaxilacalli*” appears much more frequently in the relevant sources, and has even achieved something approaching parity in scholarly usage. For example, even though James Lockhart follows scholarly convention of the time and uses the term “*calpolli*” in his monumental *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), he notes that “the word *calpolli* itself is much less common than *tlaxilacalli*” (p. 16). Nevertheless, in very particular situations—most frequently, when referring to secondary literature that prefers the term “*calpolli*”—this book on occasion continues the scholarly practice of conflating *tlaxilacalli* and *calpolli*.

fragmentation in the canonical histories of centralizing power in the region. Empires depended on the supple, responsive power of tlaxilacalli hierarchies—institutions they did not administer and only obliquely controlled—to subdue territories, produce surpluses, manage fragile ecosystems, and metabolize change. For their part, tlaxilacalli continued to act independent of both Aztec and Spanish rule, forging powerful communal ties that outlasted the empires such ties were created to serve.³ This bottom-up accretion of power explains the rapid and disarticulated growth of Aztec and Spanish imperialism and also the difficulties both powers had incorporating local tlaxilacalli into wider political constructions. Compared to other New World powers, the Aztec empire splintered too quickly for a simple “guns and germs” argument to obtain; the flexible nature of tlaxilacalli arrays is a key missing element. Indeed, Cortés’s multivalent armies began receiving tlaxilacalli tribute even before the Aztecs fell.⁴

³ In addition to tlaxilacalli, other terms also demand definitions at this early juncture: “Central Mexico,” “Aztec,” “Mexica,” “Spanish,” and “Hispanic.” “Central Mexico” is a generic term for northern Mesoamerica, roughly bounded by Oaxaca, Michoacan, La Gran Chichimeca, and the Atlantic Ocean. It references neither the imperial capital of Mexico-Tenochtitlan or the modern nation-state of Estados Unidos Mexicanos. “Aztec” is another particular term, for it only references the centralizing imperial power emanating out of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. This shopworn but effective term is preferable to other, more fashionable terms like “Mexica” or “Tenochca” precisely because of its artificial, and therefore non-ethnic, connotations: the realm of “Aztec Acolhuacan” makes more analytical sense than “Mexica Acolhuacan,” of misleading and ambiguous ethnic affiliation. “Mexica,” here refers to the ethnic group emanating from Mexico-Tenochtitlan. “Spanish” and “Hispanic” are two related but distinct terms. The former suggests a stronger connection to Spain, its people and administration, than the latter, which evokes the local, central Mexican transformations.

⁴ As recent “New Conquest” historiography has vigorously argued, facile generalizations are impossible for the interlacing wars of sixteenth-century Mesoamerica, which were fought by many sides. Nevertheless, the rapidity of the Aztecs’ two year fall (1519-21) remains a significant outlier. For comparison, the neighboring Purépecha state retained administrative independence for seven years after initial invasion (1522-29), followed by decades of guerrilla warfare. Western Yucatán took a full twenty years for various invading powers to subdue (1527-47), and the Inkas of Tawantinsuyu required forty (1532-72). Among many other works, a brief introduction to the broad “New Conquest” historiography could begin with Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003; and Susan Schroeder and David Cahill, eds. *The Conquest All Over Again: Nahuas and Zapotecs Thinking, Writing, and Painting Spanish Colonialism*. Sussex, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2009; along with Restall’s review article, “The New Conquest History” *History Compass* 10:2 (February 2012), pp. 151-160.

But it would be unfair to characterize tlaxilacalli as disloyal. Rather, the Aztec empire demanded constant local orchestration, and even self-aggrandizing elites knew it. Tlaxilacalli—too often translated and understood as simply “neighborhoods”—usually submitted to the authority of the sovereign local polity or *altepetl*, which then scaled up to autonomous mega-provinces (*huei altepetl*) and finally to the entire empire.⁵ At each level, submission was traded for autonomy, undercutting any attempt at direct centralizing rule.⁶ As the primary site where tributaries joined empires, tlaxilacalli anchored such imperial arrangements. These hierarchical communities, run by commoners administering and even compelling their commoner neighbors, were the very bedrock of empire. When they shifted, the entire arrangement shook.

AIMS OF THE BOOK

Pueblos within Pueblos intervenes in three major debates. First, by placing Aztec and Spanish colonial rule in rare comparative perspective, it unveils an uncanny symmetry between two Mexican empires frequently taken to be un-analyzably distinct

⁵ As will be seen in this introduction and throughout the book, tlaxilacalli were quite different from neighborhoods or Spanish barrios. As with the rare equivalence of “altepetl” and the Spanish “ciudad” in Nahuatl documentation, on exceptional occasions relevant sources do conflate “tlaxilacalli” and “barrio.” The earliest known example is from 1551, “yn tlacilacal bario Tlamimilolpa,” in Teresa Rojas Rabiela, Elsa Leticia Rea López, and Constantino Medina Lima, eds. *Vidas y bienes olvidados: Testamentos indígenas novohispanos*, vol. 2. Mexico City: CIESAS, 1999, pp. 92–93. Despite this single early citation, nearly all other mentions come from the later seventeenth century or afterward, as in the repeated switching between “we tlaxilacalli residents” (titlaxilacaleque) and “we barrio people” (tibarrio tlaca) in a 1691 document from Cuauhtepoztlan tlaxilacalli, Tepetlaoztoc. AGN, Tierras, vol. 1610, exp. 3, f. 10r.

As argued later in this book, an entire cycle of tlaxilacalli practice was nearing its end by the 1660s. Among other things, this occasioned a certain improvisational uptick in political terminology: “altepetl” ~ “ciudad”; “tlaxilacalli” ~ “barrio”; and the occasional use of such terms as “huicalli” (sujeto, “subject town”—cf. Archivo del Centro de Estudios Históricos y Sociales de Texcoco “Lorenzo Boturini Benaduci,” Documentos Nahuas de Tezcoco [hereafter ACEHST], doc. 28); fit into this pattern. At least in Acolhua sources, these trends never became prominent—and, indeed, are so faint that they only appear when dealing with a large and diverse documentary base.

⁶ Cf. Jerome Offner, *Law and Politics in Aztec Texcoco*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 284.

from each other. Both the Aztec Triple Alliance and the viceroyalty of New Spain flexed their colonial muscles in local administration, but proved paralyzingly disjointed at higher levels of imperial government. Pushing beyond standard approaches to both conquest and continuity, *Pueblos within Pueblos* shows how tlaxilacalli acted independent of imperial rule, reinforcing local ties even as they both bolstered and undermined centralizing alliances. In addition to explaining the rapid rise and fall of the Aztec empire, this focus also illuminates other episodes, such as the popular Mexico City uprisings of 1624 and 1692⁷ that provoked broad and long-lasting changes across New Spain.⁸ Built flexible from the start, local colonialism began well before Spaniards arrived in Mexico.

Second, the local focus of *Pueblos within Pueblos* makes tributary commoners (*macehualtin*) the protagonists of empire, even as it counters recurring scholarly tendencies to homogenize such groups.⁹ Specialists often invoke the modular nature of

⁷ For the 1624 uprising, see Gibran I. I. Bautista y Lugo, “Los indios y la rebelión de 1624 en la Ciudad de México” in Felipe Castro Gutiérrez, ed. *Los indios y las ciudades de Nueva España*. Mexico City, Mexico: UNAM, 2013, pp. 197-216; for 1692, see Natalia Silva Prada, *La política de una rebelión: los indígenas frente al tumulto de 1692 en la Ciudad de México*. Mexico City, Mexico: Colegio de México, 2007, especially pp. 602-4, 613. Following common historiographical conventions, both Bautista y Lugo and Silva Prada use the word “barrio” to describe tlaxilacalli. The regions of Guerrero and Tlaxcala also burned around the same time as the 1692 Mexico City uprising.

⁸ One such change was the inability of the ten viceroys succeeding the Marquis of Gelves (deposed in 1624) in restoring “order” to the regional administration of New Spain. On the weakness of viceroys in seventeenth-century New Spain, see Jonathan I. Israel, *Race, Class, and Politics in Colonial Mexico, 1610-1670*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1975. Earlier scholarship, including Israel, explained viceregal instability through a wider “Decline of Spain” thesis, but John Tutino (*Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011) forcibly decouples New Spain from economic reversals in Europe.

Another important outcome of the political crisis of 1624 was the inability of central administration to maintain Mexico City’s systems of water management, leading to the catastrophic and transformative flood of 1629. On this flood and its aftermath, see Vera Candiani, *Dreaming of Dry Land: Environmental Transformation in Colonial Mexico City*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.

⁹ Of course, there were more commoner groups beyond the tlaxilacalli. Afro-Mexicans and mestizo groups, for example, faced many of the same issues as tlaxilacalli. See, for example, R. Douglas Cope, *The limits of racial domination: plebeian society in colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*. Madison, WI: University of

Mesoamerican institutions but have rarely analyzed the constituent polities contributing to such arrays or questioned the implicit framework of such part-whole arrangements. More than “history from below” for its own sake, this book uncovers an ignored causal engine in Mexican history. As they made and remade their nested hierarchies of community and division, local tlaxilacalli built the very backbone of imperial power.¹⁰

Finally, this book brings the unexamined sinews of Aztec and Spanish imperialism to life for the first time, by connecting individuals and households to precise patterns of politics and landscape. Building up from the Acolhua codices Vergara and Asunción (produced ca. 1543-44, the earliest extant land surveys in the Americas), this project models the exact spatial array of tlaxilacalli forms: every commoner household,

Wisconsin Press, 1994. It is also likely that Afro-Mexicans and mestizo groups participated in indigenous central Mexican society to a greater extent than usually imagined, as was the case in both Guerrero and Yucatán. See, for example, Andrew Bryan Fisher, “Worlds in flux, identities in motion: A history of the Tierra Caliente of Guerrero, Mexico, 1521-1821” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2002); Ben Vinson III, and Matthew Restall, eds. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2009; and Matthew Restall, *The Black Middle: Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in colonial Yucatan*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

¹⁰ In recent years, scholars have turned with increased attention to tlaxilacalli, particularly to anchor their documentary analyses. The best of these deal extensively with tlaxilacalli, and even model their spatial array in wider altepetl. See Rebecca Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan: Nahuatl-Spanish Relations in Colonial Mexico, 1519-1650* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997) and Barbara E. Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015). Another important collection of work makes tlaxilacalli central to their explanatory arguments. See Luis Fernando Granados, “*Calpultin* decimonónicos: Aspectos nahuas de la cultura política de la ciudad de México,” in Cristina Sacristán and Pablo Piccato, eds., *Actores, espacios y debates en la historia de la esfera pública en la ciudad de México*. Mexico City, Mexico: Instituto Mora, 2005, pp. 41-66; Ángel Julián García Zambrano, “Zahuatlan el Viejo y Zahuatlan el nuevo: trasuntos del poblamiento y la geografía sagrada del altepetl de Yecapixtla” in Frederico Fernández Christlieb and Ángel Julián García Zambrano, eds. *Territorialidad y paisaje en el altepetl del siglo XVI*. Mexico City, Mexico: FCE, 2006; and Camilla Townsend, “Glimpsing Native American Historiography: The Cellular Principle in Sixteenth-Century Nahuatl Annals.” *Ethnohistory*, 56:4 (2009), pp. 625-650. Susan Schroeder’s *Chimalpahin and the Kingdoms of Chalco* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1991) also bears mention here: although it deals much more extensively with sub-altepetl “kingdoms” or *tlayacatl* (an administrative layer one rung up from tlaxilacalli, only found in the largest altepetl), its early attention to causal explanations below the altepetl level makes it an obligatory reference.

Pueblos within Pueblos broadens and deepens this work, harnessing the detailed specificity of Horn and Mundy to the explanatory power of Granados, García Zambrano, Townsend, and Schroeder—in order to create a tlaxilacalli-focused causal engine, firmly anchored to a wide documentary base.

every plot of land, every excluded ethnic group and starving widow.¹¹ This final intervention, an advance in both methodology and conceptualization, makes pre-Hispanic and colonial Mexican history at once more human and more precise, more representative and more generalizable.¹²

MARGINAL HISTORIES

Tlaxilacalli appear frequently in Aztec and Hispanic documents, but they are often relegated to the margins of official history. Imperial sources deliberately subsume autonomous and semi-autonomous actions to wider narratives, as in the case of Tlalcocomoco and Yopico, two tlaxilacalli that settled the area of Mexico-Tenochtitlan before that altepetl's official founding in 1325. Despite their influence on the ground from the beginning, Tlalcocomoco and Yopico appear as afterthoughts in Aztec histories

¹¹ Both of these documents were explicitly produced at the tlaxilacalli level. For specific mention of tlaxilacalli, see *Códice de Santa María Asunción*, Mexico City, Mexico: Biblioteca Nacional de México, Sala de Libros Raros, Ms. 1497bis, f. 11v. See also *Document cadastral ou codex Vergara*, Paris, France: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Mexicain (Hereafter BnF-MM), 37-39. Both of these have been recently published in excellent scholarly editions: Barbara J. Williams and H. R. Harvey, eds., *The Códice de Santa María Asunción: acsimile and commentary: households and lands in sixteenth-century Tepetlaoztoc*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997, and Barbara J. Williams and Frederic Hicks, eds., *El códice Vergara: Edición facsimilar con comentario*. Mexico City, Mexico: UNAM, 2011.

¹² Chapter two of this book outlines a methodology for connecting specific individuals to precise landforms. Other important close-in work on Aztec cadastral sources includes: Eike Hinz, Claudine Hartau, and Marie-Louise Heimann-Koenen, eds. *Aztekischer Zensus. Zuer indianischen Wirtschaft und Gessellschaft im Marquesado um 1540: Aus dem "Libro de Tributos" (Col. Ant. Ms. 551) im Archivo Histórico, Mexico*, 2 vols. Hanover, Germany: Verlag für Ethnologie, 1983; S. L. Cline, *The Book of Tributes: Early Sixteenth-century Nahuatl Censuses from Morelos*, Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latin American Center, 1993; Michael E. Smith, "Houses and the Settlement Hierarchy in Late Postclassic Morelos" in Robert S. Stanley and Kenneth G. Hirth, eds., *Prehispanic Domestic Units in Western Mesoamerica*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 1993, pp. 191-206; Thomas M. Whitmore and Barbara J. Williams, "Famine Vulnerability in the Contact-era Basin of Mexico: A Simulation." *Ancient Mesoamerica* 9 (1998), pp. 83-98; Mariano Cando Morales, *Tepetlaoztoc: Monografía municipal*. Toluca, Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de México, 1999.

Williams and Hicks, in their edition of the *Codex Vergara* (pp. 68-71), give a reconstruction of the sub-district (*altepetmaitl*) of Calla Tlaxoxiuhco in Chimalpan tlaxilacalli (Tepetlaoztoc altepetl), but they only site one individual in this array: the noble Pedro Tecihuauh de Castilla.

of the period. The well-known *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, for example, note that Mexica migrants “settled in Tlalcocomoco” forty-five years before Mexico-Tenochtitlan “began” and that “a few shacks”—that is, established commoner dwellings—were dotting the landscape before the altepetl’s official foundation. After this brief mention, however, the relation veers off to discuss rulers, their altepetl, and their wars, as Tlalcocomoco and Yopico fade from view.¹³

When not overwritten in official histories, tlaxilacalli were exoticized, standing as foils to centralizing power. This is particularly true in early treatments of Acolhua political and legal administration. The *Codex Xolotl*,¹⁴ for example, shows the Tetzcoca ruler Techotlalatzin sitting commandingly on his royal throne, head erect and weapon in hand, as he welcomes the tearful leaders of four migrant “Tolteca”¹⁵ tlaxilacalli to his growing capital. As the leaders bow their heads, Techotlalatzin emits rulerly speech scrolls, specifying the relationship of the new arrivals to the two tlaxilacalli already present in the altepetl, the long-standing and prominent communities of Tlailotlacan and Chimalpan (Fig. C).¹⁶

¹³ “2 calli ypan inyn xihuitl quimiquanique yn mexitin ynic oncan motlallico tlacocomocco yn tencopa yn colhuaque yquac tlatocati yn tziuhcatzín colhuacan . . . 8 tochtli ypan xihuitl ompeuh yn oncan mexico tenochtitlan çan oc quequezquitel xacalli quichihque yn mexiti çan nonohuian oncatca tolquauhtla yn motlallique” John Bierhorst, ed. and trans., *History and mythology of the Aztecs: the Codex Chimalpopoca*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1992, pp. 26, 31.

On the founding influence of the Tlacocomolco and Yopico tlaxilacalli, see Carlos Javier González González, *Xipe Tótec: Guerra y regeneración del maíz en la religión mexicana*. Mexico City, Mexico: FCE, 2011, p. 96. The author specifically mentions these entities as “calpolli,” the partial cognate for tlaxilacalli mentioned above in note 7.

¹⁴ *Codex Xolotl*, BnF-MM, 1-10.

¹⁵ The “Tolteca” glyph in the *Codex Xolotl*, designates polities and individuals using technologies not employed by Chichimeca, such as sedentary agriculture.

¹⁶ *Codex Xolotl*, f. 5. In his dissertation, Marc Thouvenot read these “house” glyphs as explicitly tlaxilacalli. See “Codex Xolotl. Étude d’une des composantes de son écriture: les glyphes. Dictionnaire des éléments constitutifs des glyphes.” Ph.D. diss., Paris, France: EHESS, 1987, pp. 660-70. However, in his

An exoticizing narrative continues with the later historian Fernando de Alva



Fig. C. New tlaxilacalli. Techotlalatzin welcomes four “Tolteca” tlaxilacalli—Mexicapan, Comuacan, Huitznahuac, and Tepanecapan—to the two already extant in Tetzcoac, Chimalpan and Tlaxitlacan. Also note the tlaxilacalli reshuffling at the bottom of this figure: the recently arrived Mexicapan and Comuacan were bundled with older tlaxilacalli, while Huitznahuac and Tepanecapan disappear. According to Alva Ixtlilxochitl, the four “Tolteca” tlaxilacalli did not simply arrive in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Ixtlilxochitl,¹⁷ who praises the tolerance the Acolhua ruler Techotlalatzin showed toward the four newly arrived “Tolteca” tlaxilacalli:

The love that Techotlalatzin had for the Tolteca nation was such that, not only did he allow them to live and settle among the Chichimeca [the ethnic majority in what would be come the Acolhua capital of Tetzcoac]; but he also gave them the power to make public sacrifices to their idols and dedicate their temples, which was something that his father Quinatzin had never consented or allowed.¹⁸

Tetzcoac as meek, submissive migrants. Rather, they bore prime responsibility for

newer *Tlachia* website (<tlachia.lib.unam.mx> [accessed 11/11/16]), he reads the glyphs as “calpolli.” See, for example, his notations for codes X.050.F.08, X.050.F.10, and X.050.F.12.

¹⁷ Although earlier scholarly generations frequently criticized the work of Alva Ixtlilxochitl, more systematic readings of both his errors and contributions have led to a recent re-valorization of his work. See in particular Amber Brian, *Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Native Archive and the Circulation of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016; and Galen Brokaw and Jongsoo Lee, eds. *Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and His Legacy*, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2015—especially the articles by Gordon Whittaker (“The Identities of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl,” pp. 29-76) and Jerome A. Offner (“Ixtlilxochitl's Ethnographic Encounter: Understanding the *Códex Xolotl* and Its Dependent Alphabetic Texts,” pp. 77-121).

¹⁸ “Era tan grande el amor que Techotlalatzin tenía a la nación tulteca, que no tan solamente les consintió vivir, y poblar entre los chichimecas, sino que también les dio facultad para hacer sacrificios públicos a sus ídolos y dedicar los templos, lo que no había consentido ni admitido su padre Quinatzin.” Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *Obras*, vol. 2, p. 35.

introducing fresh trade and political networks and new practices and technologies, as well as public human sacrifice, into the Acolhua realm.¹⁹

Tlaxilacalli could also appear as telling but easily-ignored details to primary narration. In 1521, for example, as Spanish and Tlaxcalteca armies pushed their way into the heart of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, a war leader from the Huitznahuac tlaxilacalli in Tlatelolco forced the Aztec army to keep fighting even when more prominent leaders were ready to surrender. The main priest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan had already declared his imperial deity's acquiescence to defeat—"Huitzilopochtli's command is that nothing happen"—but this message was rebuked by tlaxilacalli fighters: "In this way, they ignored him, and war began again. Tohueyo, the Huitznahuac general, faced them (the invaders) and made the war begin again."²⁰

If Aztec communication specialists²¹ purposefully marginalized most tlaxilacalli (except their own),²² a majority of Hispanic authors simply confused or ignored them. Judging by the widespread category errors between tlaxilacalli and altepetl—both of which were frequently described as “pueblos” in Hispanic sources—most Spanish administrators seem to have had little interest in the internal dynamics of central Mexican polities. Other Hispanic appellations—“neighborhood” (*barrio*) for tlaxilacalli and “city” (*ciudad* or *villa*) for altepetl, or “subject town” (*sujeto*) for the former and “head town”

¹⁹ Alva Ixtlilxochitl also notes that these new tlaxilacalli introduced the cults of two important Aztec deities into Acolhuacan, Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc.

²⁰ “Auh y yehuatl yn inauatil y Uitzilopochtli cayatle uetzi . . . Auh y ye yuhqui amo mouelcaque, ye no yc peuh y yaoyotl. Ça ye nono oc conixtito conpeualtito yaoyotl Uiznauac tiachcauh Toueyo.” *Anales de Tlatelolco*, Rafael Tena, ed. and trans., Mexico City, Mexico: CONACULTA, 2004, p. 116.

²¹ *Tlacuiloque* were more than simply scribes because they were also experts in verbal and performance-based communication. See Katarzyna Mikulska, *Tejiendo destinos: Un acercamiento al sistema de comunicación gráfica en los códices adivinatorios* (Zinacantepec, Mexico: El Colegio Mexiquense, 2015).

²² For an example of local favoritism among tlaxilacalli tlacuiloque, see below; pp. 13-14.

(*cabecera*) for the latter—distinguished between these two institutions but confused and flattened the dynamic relationship between them.²³

This conceptual disconnect, in turn, contributed to the increasing autonomy of *tlaxilacalli* during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the transformative 1624 uprising in Mexico City, for example, Spanish authorities blamed “neighborhood Indians” for organizing and executing the attack on the viceroy’s palace without knowing the mechanics of how such a *tlaxilacalli*-based attack could have unfolded.²⁴ The same administrative blindness crippled Spanish responses to the comparable 1692 revolt in



Mexico City, also directed against centralizing viceregal power.²⁵

Despite their profound influence over settlement, religion, and warfare—as well as other key imperial processes discussed later, such as taxation, ecological management, and landholding—*tlaxilacalli* have remained at the margins of central Mexican history. Once highlighted, however, they can easily be disentangled from totalizing narratives and stand on

Fig. D. A *tlaxilacalli* in addition to its preeminence as a source for Acolhua imperial their own. For example, in addition to its preeminence as a source for Acolhua imperial dynasty, Tlanahuacan (Tetzcoco). *Codex Xolotl*. Permission Bibliothèque nationale de France.

²³ The canonical 1571 bilingual dictionary of fray Alonso de Molina—*Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana*. Miguel León-Portilla, ed. Mexico City, Mexico: Porrúa, 1977—defines *tlaxilacalli* as “barrio” and *altepetl* as “pueblo, o rey.” The Spanish term *barrio* is taken as “*calpulli*. *tlaxilacalli*” and *ciudad* as “*vei-altepetl*.” Molina therefore accepts the equivalency of *tlaxilacalli* and neighborhood, but struggles to consistently define *altepetl*. See below, pp. 20-21, and also Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, p. 56.

²⁴ “indios del barrio” *Carta de la Ciudad de México, en que se hace relación a S.M. del suceso del tumulto del 15 de enero de 1624*, in Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia, ed. *Documentos relativos al tumulto de 1624*. Mexico City, Mexico: F. Escalante y Cía, 1855, vol. 2, p. 146

²⁵ See Silva Prada, *La política*, esp. pp. 385-410.

history, the *Codex Xolotl* subtly folds into its narration the dynastic histories of two tlaxilacalli of Tetzcoco, Tlailotlacan and Chimalpan. (See Figure D, left, for Tlailotlacan; and Figure 2D in Chapter Two for Chimalpan.)²⁶

Tlailotlacan's dynasty becomes particularly relevant here, for this tlaxilacalli specialized in the information arts, and this Tetzcoca community bore significant (and perhaps sole) responsibility for the creation of the *Codex Xolotl* itself.²⁷ Further, just south in neighboring Chalco, the incisive and prolific curator of central Mexican history, Domingo Chimalpahin, made a similar case regarding the regional pedigree of his home tlaxilacalli of Tlailotlacan, a relative and likely forebear of the one in Tetzcoco:

[This history] will never be lost, never forgotten. It will always be guarded; we will guard it. We, their children, grandchildren, and younger brothers; their great-great-grandchildren and great-grandchildren; we, their saliva and beards, their eyebrows and fingernails, their color and blood; we, the children of the Tlailotlaca. We who live and were born in the first tlaxilacalli, called Tlailotlacan palace (*tecpan*). It was precisely there, precisely there where they came to govern: all the beloved elders, the beloved Chichimeca *tlatoque* (rulers), the Tlailotlaca *tlatoque*, the Tlailotlaca lords (*teteuctin*). These words are called “what is kept in the Tlailotlacan *tecpan*.”²⁸

²⁶ In a forthcoming article, Jerome A. Offner describes the negotiation of nobles in Tlailotlacan and Chimalpan as they sought to fulfill both local (tlaxilacalli and tlacamecayotl) and regional (altepetl) responsibilities. Offner, “Apuntes sobre la plancha X del *Códice Xolotl*: cincuenta años más tarde” Agnieszka Brylak, trans., in Miguel Ángel Ruz Barrio and Juan José Batalla Rosado, eds. *Códices del Centro de México. Análisis comparativos y estudios individuales*, vol. 2. Warsaw, Poland: University of Warsaw (in press).

²⁷ The evidence for Tlailotlacan authorship consists in the *Xolotl*'s repeated interest in the local history of this tlaxilacalli (particularly dynastic history), combined with Tlailotlacan's longstanding connection with the information arts and sciences. See Offner, “Apuntes.” For a critical view on Tlailotlacan's pre-Aztec history see Eloise Quiñones Keber. “The Tlailotlaque in Acolhua pictorial histories: imitators or inventors?” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*. 84: 2 (1998) pp. 83-96.

²⁸ “Ayc polihuiz ayc ylcahuiz, mochipa pialoz, ticpiazque yn titepilhuan in titeixhuihuan in titeyccahuan in tetemintonhuan in tetepiptonhuan in titechichicahuan in titetentzonhuan in titeyxquamolhuan in titeteyztihuan, in titetlapallohuan in titehezçohuan, in titlayllotlacatepilhuan, in ipan otiyolome otitlacatque in ice tlaxilacalyacatl motenehua Tlayllotlacan Tecpan, y huel oncan catca y huel oncan omotlahtocatillico yn itzquintin in tlaçohuehuetque in tlaçotlahtoque chichimeca, in tlayllotlacattlahtoque in tlayllotlacateteuhctin, inin mitohua inin tlahtolli “Tlayllotlacan Tecpan pielli.” Domingo Chimalpahin, *Las ocho relaciones y el memorial de Colhuacan*, Rafael Tena, ed. and trans., vol. 2. Mexico City: CONACULTA, 1998, p. 272.

Such insistent tlaxilacalli-centered narrations dominate relevant sources. A recent study by Camilla Townsend found similar patterning in a broad range of important early sources, including the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, the *Codex Aubin*, the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan*, the *Annals of Tecamachalco*, and the *Annals of Juan Bautista*, in addition to a now-lost series of court documents from 1553. After noting the piecemeal, segmentary quality of all these sources, Townsend argues that the altepetl, as a contested and changing political project, required the constant accommodation of competing tlaxilacalli demands; which, in turn, produced the “disorderly” format of many early Mexican documents.²⁹ This model is useful and can be easily generalized. More than modular or even cellular, therefore, the relationship between tlaxilacalli and altepetl was chemical—the former acted as atoms (sometimes freely, more often arrayed in durable mixed forms); while the latter resembled complex molecules, open to profound change as their internal chemistries shifted. Community was multiple, not unitary, just as regional order emerged from local struggle and accommodation more than from command.

TLAXILACALLI AND ALTEPETL

Tlaxilacalli predated the Aztec empire and continued well through the Spanish, and scholars have intuited their importance for centuries. Despite this, they have also considered these core institutions too “imprecise” or “difficult” for close analysis.³⁰ There have been periodic efforts to schematize tlaxilacalli, but most have viewed these

²⁹ Townsend, “Glimpsing.”

³⁰ Frederic Hicks, “Labor Squads, Noble Houses, and Other Things Called ‘Barrios’ in Aztec Mexico.” *Nahua Newsletter* 49 (2010), p. 14; Caterina Pizzigoni, *The Life Within: Local Indigenous Society in Mexico's Toluca Valley, 1650-1800*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 9.

hierarchies from the imperial center, as nothing more than unitary and modular administrative building blocks. The diversity and agency of these institutions, together with their face-to-face communitarian orientation, fade when they are summarily classified as simple pieces of a larger whole: “subunits, “sub-communities,” “constituent parts,” “districts,” “barrios.”³¹ Although there is a certain utility to these descriptive translations, scholars have repeatedly identified serious issues with this approach because such explanatory shortcuts—just like the Spanish and Spanish-influenced sources on which they depend—conflate separate (and sometimes even mutually exclusive) central Mexican institutions.³²

The easy equivalency of *tlaxilacalli* and neighborhood can prove problematic, however, particularly regarding the relationship between part and whole. All of the terms identified above, from “subunit” to “neighborhood,” imply full dependency between dependent *tlaxilacalli* and all-encompassing *altepetl*—a perception confirmed in reigning interpretative paradigms that describe political order as a modular or cellular relationship between these two institutions. Such frameworks imply that one institution cannot exist without the other and, further, that one institution can explain the other: knowing the *altepetl*, one knows the *tlaxilacalli* as well.

³¹ Although he used both *tlaxilacalli* and *calpolli* in his classic *Nahuas After the Conquest*, James Lockhart also seems to have recognized a conceptual difficulty in defining these twinned institutions, using a panoply of other names as well, including all of the terms cited above (Cf., *Nahuas*, pp. 36, 50, 53, 56, 57, 61, 65, 122, 128, 147, 188, 196, 197, 219, 487, 490, 607, etc.) *The Nahuas* is much more precise in his treatment of *altepetl*. It is also careful to avoid the terms “ward,” which it uses as a subsection of a *tlaxilacalli*, and “neighborhood,” which (unlike *barrio*) it uses only in Hispanic contexts.

³² Regarding the troubles of an easy identification between *tlaxilacalli/calpolli* and neighborhood or *barrio*, see Hicks’s “Labor Squads,” cited above; as well as Luis Reyes García, Eustaquio Celestino Solís, Armando Valenica Ríos, Constantino Medina Luna, and Gregorio Guerrero Díaz, eds. *Documentos nauas de la ciudad de México del siglo XVI*. Mexico City, Mexico: AGN, 1996, pp. 21-67; and Eileen M. Mulhare, “Barrio Matters: Toward an Ethnology of Mesoamerican Customary Social Units” *Ethnology* 35:2 (Spring, 1996), pp. 93-106.

Nevertheless, there are significant problems with this assertion. First, generic terminology was not always stable, particularly over the multiple centuries and various empires addressed in this book. For example, after about 1680—that is, toward the end of this book’s chronology and even beyond—a number of important tlaxilacalli in Tetzaco began to refer to themselves as “altepetl,” despite the fact that they met few, if any, of the standard requisites for customary definitions of this term. Regardless, documents show Nexquipiac calling itself an “altepetl” in 1681, Tlailotlacan using the term in 1707, and Tepetitlan doing the same in 1759.³³

Despite frequent subordination to wider political structures, therefore, tlaxilacalli also asserted their independence with increasing force entering into the mature Hispanic period—indeed, Bernardo García Martínez estimates that fully two-thirds of eighteenth-century central Mexican “pueblos” had only recently separated themselves from larger political constraints.³⁴ Part of this owes simply to administrative lag on the part of Hispanic officials: García Martínez and Gustavo Martínez Mendoza note, for example, that Nexquipiac, Tlailotlacan, and Tepetitlan only appeared as independent *pueblos de por sí* in Spanish-language documentation from 1743, and then only partially. Even if they didn’t call themselves by this term, preferring perhaps “pueblos” or “altepetl,” tlaxilacalli showed themselves to be more insistently autonomous than ever.³⁵

³³ “ypan altepetl nexquipayac” ACEHST, doc. 28; “yn paniAltepetl Sta Ma tlaylotlaca” ACEHST, doc. 30; “Yn Nican ypa Altepetl Santa Ma purificacion tepetitlan” ACEHST, doc. 36.

³⁴ Bernardo García Martínez, “Pueblos de Indios, Pueblos de Castas: New Settlements and Traditional Corporate Organization in Eighteenth-Century New Spain,” in Arij Ouweneel and Simon Miller, eds. *The Indian Community of Colonial Mexico: Fifteen Essays on Land Tenure, Corporate Organizations, Ideology and Village Politics*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: CEDLA, 1990, p. 107

³⁵ Cf. Bernardo García Martínez and Gustavo Martínez Mendoza, *Señoríos, pueblos, y municipios: Banco preliminar de información*. CD-Rom. Mexico City, Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2012, pp. 1775, 2915,

PUEBLOS WITHIN PUEBLOS

Such transitions between *tlaxilacalli* and *altepetl* have frustrated scholars for decades, leading some to regret having used Nahuatl-based analytical categories at all.³⁶ As mentioned, category trouble has played a major role in dampening close analyses of *tlaxilacalli* and other key institutions. While “*altepetl*” could reference anything from a subordinate community to an entire nation (“the *altepetl* called Japan”), the *tlaxilacalli* enveloped equally multitudinous worlds.³⁷ Together with its pseudo-cognate cognate *calpolli*, the term “*tlaxilacalli*” could reference almost any facet of this core communal institution, including a territorial demarcation, a sacred local landscape, a band of settlers, an ethnic minority, a labor or tribute unit, a collective land endowment, a local political hierarchy, an army division, an Aztec temple, a Catholic parish, or even sub-divisions of these aforementioned roles and types.³⁸

2658. Despite this base-level independence in civil administration, these three continued to be ecclesiastically dependent on Atenco, Tetzaco, and Chiautla, respectively.

³⁶ Hicks, “Labor Squads,” p. 14.

³⁷ “*yn ipan altepetl ytocayocan xabon*” Domingo Chimalpahin, *Annals of His Time: Don Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin*, James Lockhart, Susan Schroeder, Doris Namala, eds. and trans. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 62.

³⁸ There has been extensive debate on the relationship between *tlaxilacalli* and *calpolli*, with much work left to do. See Pedro Carrasco and Johanna Broda, eds., *Estratificación social en la Mesoamérica prehispánica*. Mexico City, Mexico: INAH, 1976; Frederic Hicks, “Tetzaco in the Early 16th century: The State, the City and the ‘Calpolli.’” *American Ethnologist* 9:2 (1982), pp. 230-49; Rudolph Van Zantwijk, *The Aztec Arrangement: the Social History of Pre-Spanish Mexico*, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985; Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo, “La polémica sobre la organización de las comunidades de productores.” *Nueva Antropología*, 11:38 (1990), pp. 147-162; Lockhart, *Nahuas After the Conquest*; Pedro Carrasco, *Estructura político-territorial del imperio tenochca: La triple alianza de Tenochtitlan, Tetzaco y Tlacopan*. Mexico City, Mexico: FCE, 1996; Federico Fernández Christleib and Ángel Julián García Zambrano, eds., *Territorialidad y paisaje en el altepetl del siglo XVI*. Mexico City, Mexico: FCE, 2006; David M. Carballo “Advances in the Household Archaeology of Highland Mesoamerica” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 19 (2011), pp. 133–189; M. Charlotte Arnould, Linda R. Manzanilla and Michael E. Smith, eds. *The Neighborhood as a Social and Spatial Unit in Mesoamerican Cities*. Tucson, AZ: Arizona University Press, 2012.

Seen in a different light, however, the broad semantic field ceded to tlaxilacalli underscores their profound importance to the social and organizational life of central Mexico. Further, and much more pointedly, analytical problems such as category confusion only present themselves in the abstract. In the definitive scholarly edition of the *Codex Mendoza*, for example, the editors unintelligibly translated the imperial warrior



Fig. E. Huitznahuac soldier. *Codex Mendoza*, f. 67r. Permission of the Precourt Institute of Arts, Oxford University.

class Huitznahuatl, “Huitznahuac resident,” as “Thorn Speech”; and the judge Acatlyacapanecatl, “Acatl Yacapan resident” as “Lord of the Reed on the Nose.”³⁹ (See Figures E and G.) Both of these titles originally referenced attributes of specific tlaxilacalli, which were then generalized—perhaps similar to the expansion of the term “Hollywood” in recent times beyond its original Los Angeles-based referent. Such expansions seem to have been common in local practice: together with their use of general categories, central Mexicans

frequently operated in the concrete realm of proper names, opting for the vigorous and precise appellations of specific tlaxilacalli which then spread across wider conceptual planes.

A tlaxilacalli could bear any grammatically coherent name—many simply evoked the natural or built environment (Huitznahuac, “among the thorns”; Acatl Yacapan, “Facing the Reeds”; Apipilhuasco, “Near the Water Pipes”)—; but in practice, certain

³⁹ For “Thorn Speech” and “Lord of the Reed on the Nose” see Frances F. Berdan and Patricia Reiff Anawalt, eds. *The Essential Codex Mendoza*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997, p. 208n5, 220n17. In her recent article for *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*, “Las funciones rituales de los altos personajes mexicas” (vol. 45 [2013], pp. 42-43), Danièle Dehouve is particularly critical of these misreadings.

designations were repeated again and again across the landscape, exclusively referencing tlaxilacalli. Names could often come from shared historical experience, as in Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s comments regarding the migratory tlaxilacalli of Tlailotlacan that then fragmented and spread across central Mexico:

[The Acolhua ruler Quinatzin] gave [Tlailotlaque migrants] a place near Tetzco to settle, and the rest he divided between his *pueblos* (“altepetl”), giving each one lands to settle. From here comes the name of the pueblo (“tlaxilacalli”) and neighborhood of Tetzco, calling itself Tlailotlacan after its first settlers. And so it is for the other pueblos (“tlaxilacalli”) named Tlailotlacan within the pueblos (“altepetl”).⁴⁰

Though illustrative of the widespread replication of tlaxilacalli across Acolhuacan, Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s narration also belies some of the patent issues with many sources, especially the conflation of Spanish terms, such as “pueblos” (tlaxilacalli) and “pueblos” (altepetl). Context demands a separation, but on another level, Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s analysis makes sense: both tlaxilacalli and altepetl were definable human communities, and their relationships were often stable. Only the former, however, infiltrated the latter.

As noted, the imprecision of Spanish terms for tlaxilacalli and other important institutions has deterred the systematic study of these local communities. As in the Alva Ixtlilxochitl quote immediately above, context can often lead to a definitive answer, but the overlap remains considerable (Fig. F). Note, for example, that pueblo can denote anything between a tlaxilacalli and a huei altepetl:

Fig. F: Spanish Cognates of Nahuatl Institutions

<i>Local institution</i>	<i>Cognate; Molina 1571⁴¹ definition</i>	<i>Terms gleaned from other Molina entries</i>	<i>Terms in other relevant sources</i>
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⁴⁰ “le dió un lugar junto á Texcuco para que lo poblase, y á los demás repartió en sus pueblos, dando á cada uno tierras donde poblase; y de aquí tomó el nombre el pueblo y barrio de Texcuco, llamándose Tlailotlacan por sus primeros pobladores, y asimismo los demás pueblos que hay en los pueblos que se llaman Tlailotlacan.” Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *Obras históricas*, 2 vols. Alfredo Chavero, ed. Mexico City: Editorial Nacional, 1952, p. 124.

⁴¹ Definitions come from both the Nahuatl and Spanish sides of Molina’s *Vocabulario*.

huei altepetl	ciudad	ciudad	ciudad, provincia, reino, nación, pueblo
altepetl	pueblo, o rey	pueblo, cabecera, villa, ciudad, común, lo público o real	ciudad, pueblo, villa, cabecera, provincia, nación, gente
tlayacatl	---	barrio	parcialidad, sección, barrio
tlaxilacalli, calpolli	barrio	barrio, collación, cuadrilla	pueblo, barrio, villa, paraje, sujeto, gente, nación, estancia
altepemaitl ⁴²	aldea, o aldeano; comarca de pueblo	---	paraje, pago, sujeto, estancia, barrio
calli	casa	casa, familia	casa

Despite the multitude of terms listed above, the problem of Spanish imprecision can be solved through close attention to proper names. Indeed, the repetition of such names—that is, their projection across various altepetl—anchored the regional scheme of tlaxilacalli; and each word carried a specific, individual weight.⁴³ Although certain details did vary between one altepetl and another, patterns did form: names could denote religious devotion (Huitznahuac to Tezcatlipoca, Chimalpan to Huitzilopochtli)⁴⁴ ;

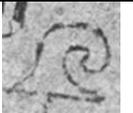
⁴² On the metaphysical meanings of altepemaitl, “hand of the altepetl,” see Jerome A. Offner, “Aztec Political Numerology and Human Sacrifice: The Ideological Ramifications of the Number Six” *Journal of Latin American Lore* 6:2 (1980), p. 212. For the semantic interpenetration of the “hand of the altepetl” between Nahuatl and Hñähñu, see David Charles Wright Carr, “La sociedad prehispánica en las lenguas náhuatl y otomí” *Acta Universitaria*, 18 (2008), p. 17. The Hñähñu term is *may’ehñini*, “the place of the hand of the realm.”

⁴³ For an early, if brief, commentary on the similarity of tlaxilacalli names across different central Mexican altepetl, see Van Zantwijk, *Aztec Arrangement*, p. 54. Also, Many of the names mentioned below also appear as named sections of the main Templo Mayor temple complex in Mexico Tenochtitlan’s ceremonial center; further suggesting the distinct connotations of each name, in addition to implying ties with the wider tlaxilacalli of the same name. On the names of these sections, see the *Florentine Codex*, vol. 1, book 2, beginning f. 109v. Available through the World Digital Library, <<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10096/view/1/338/>> (accessed 5/6/16). See also the scholarly edition by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, 2nd ed., vol. 2. Salt Lake City, UT: Utah University Press, 1981, pp. 179ff.

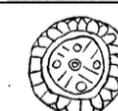
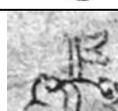
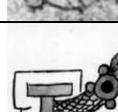
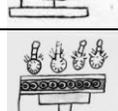
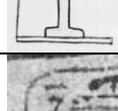
⁴⁴ Joining an illustration in Plate 10 of the *Codex Xolotl* (*Tlachia* code: X.101.L.25) with later commentary by Alva Ixtlilxochitl (*Obras*, pp. 178, 218), it becomes a likely conclusion that that Chimalpan also provided the head priest (*cihuacoatl*) for Tetzaco. See discussion in Ch. 2.

economic specialization (administrators and communication specialists in Tlailotlacan,⁴⁵ merchants in Acxotlan), or migratory processes (the Mexica in Mexicapan, Zapoteca in Zapotlan). They could reference founding mythologies, as in the case of the migrations of Tlacoachcalco and others from the seven caves of Chicomoztoc, or specific imperial histories, as in the prestige given to Oztoticpac as the site of the Acolhua ruler Nezahualcoyotl’s outlying palace complex. Figure G provides a brief schematic of some of these canonical names. It is by no means definitive, only listing tlaxilacalli names that repeated more than three times a basic bibliography of central Mexican spatial history:

Fig. G: Common Tlaxilacalli Names in Central Mexico

<i>Tlaxilacalli name</i>	<i>History, functions, affiliations (partial list)</i>	<i>Altepetl where active (partial list)</i>	<i>Glyph</i>
Acxotlan	Merchants; Quetzalcoatl	Huexotla, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Chalco, Coyoacan, Tlaxcala	
Chimalpan	Migrants from Mixteca; likely provided Tetzcoco’s head priest (<i>cihuacoatl</i>), Huitzilopochtli	Tetzcoco, Tepetlaoztoc, Coatlinchan, Chalco, Tlalmanalco, Tlacopan	
Cihuatecpan	Mythic origin in Chicomoztoc; Women’s organizations; Coatlicue	Tetzcoco, Otumba, Coatlinchan, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tacubaya	
Culhuacan	Mythic origin in Chicomoztoc; Mexica migrants; also the name of an important altepetl	Tetzcoco, Tepetlaoztoc, Coatlinchan	
Huitznahuac	Mythic origin in Chicomoztoc; Religious specialists; often associated with the south; Tezcatlipoca/ Huitzilopochtli	Tetzcoco, Tepetlaoztoc, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco	

⁴⁵ The semantic reach of Tlailotlacan is particularly broad. Its evocations of power and performative authority became so strong that a separate term “Tlailotlac” (resident of Tlailotlacan) became a generic term for “judge” or “lawgiver”; so, for instance, the head of Huitznahuac tlaxilacalli could be called “Huitznahuactlilotlac,” (“Huitznahuac judge”; lit. “resident of Tlailotlacan who lives in Huitznahuac”). Another telling example is that of Miguel Pochtecatlilotlac—Tlailotlac of the Pochteca—who was tried by fray Juan de Zumárraga’s Inquisition in 1539 for allegedly hiding “idols” from the Templo Mayor. See González Obregón, ed., *Procesos de indios idólatras y hechiceros*, pp. 115-139

Mexicapan	Mexica migrants; Huitzilopochtli	Tetzco, Huexotla, Coatlinchan, Tizayuca, Ozumba, Azcapotzalco	
Oztoticpac	Early settlement around Tetzco; site of imperial palace in Tetzco	Tetzco, Otumba, Teotihuacan	
Pochtlan	Long-distant traders; Yacateuctli	Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Azcapotzalco, Tepozotlan, Ozumba	
Tepanecapan	Affiliated with Tepaneca power: Azcapotzalco, then Tlacopan	Tetzco, Coatlinchan, Tlacopan, Azcapotzalco, Culhuacan	
Tetzcoahuac	Migrants from mythic Aztlan; Magnet school (<i>calmecac</i>)	Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Ecatepec, Iztapalapa, Colhuacan, Chalco, Tacubaya	
Tlacochealco	Mythic origin in Chicomoztoc; Armory	Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tlaxcala, Ozumba	
Tlailotlacan	Migrants from Mixteca; Administrators and Communication Specialists	Tetzco, Teotihuacan, Huexotla, Acolman, Chalco, Ozumba	
Yopico	Mythic origin in Chicomoztoc; Goldsmiths; Xipe Totec	Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tepetlaoztoc, Azcapotzalco, Chiconautla	
Zapotlan	Zapoteca; Xipe Totec; also the name of an altepetl	Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Chalco, Tulancingo	

Sources: Schroeder, *Chimalpahin and the Kingdoms*; Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan*; Hicks, "Tetzco in the 16th Century"; Mundy, *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*; *Codex Xolotl*; *Mapa de Coatlinchan*; *Memorial de los indios de Tepetlaoztoc*; Tlachia website (<http://tlachia.iib.unam.mx/>); Amoxcalli website (<http://amoxcalli.org.mx/>); Tetlacuilolli website (<http://www.tetlacuilolli.org.mx>); Antonio Peñafiel, *Nomenclatura geográfica de México*, vol. 2. Mexico City, Mexico: Secretaria de Fomento, 1897; González y González, *Xipe Totec*; *Codex Mendoza*; *Códice de los Señores de San Lorenzo Axotlan*

Owing precisely to this intense, face-to-face orientation, tlaxilacalli anchored local identity with an insistence lost to the altepetl. The jaggedly sovereign specificity of each altepetl demanded a unique name, while the intense collective identification of every tlaxilacalli produced shared cultural traits across wider regions. The Yopico tlaxilacalli, for example, structured collective life around its patron deity, Xipe Totec.

(See Fig. H.) “Our Lord the Flayed One,” also denominated Yopi, guided this tlaxilacalli’s mythic exit from Chicomoztoc and, as mentioned above, Yopico (together



Fig. H. Feast of Xipe Totec in Yopico
 Conductor to fire and change, this tlaxilacalli also specialized in the transformative arts of gold and silver-smithing. Given these distinctive signs and practices, it is not surprising that Yopico would also be seen as ethnically distinct from other nearby communities—separate, as all tlaxilacalli were, from their neighbors by specific patterns of lived collective experience.⁴⁶

AGENCY AND ACTION

From the very start, the productive local ethnicity of many tlaxilacalli posed significant challenges to consolidating imperial rule. During the Aztec period, a significant responsibility of upper administration in Mexico-Tenochtitlan consisted simply of managing inter-communal relationships, in making sure that each tlaxilacalli—or, as the capital populations grew, at least that each bundle of tlaxilacalli, each

⁴⁶ On Yopico, see González y González’s *Xipe Totec*. Regarding the “foreignness” of tlaxilacalli, see Van Zantwijk, *Aztec Arrangement*, pp. 16-21. On tlaxilacalli identity in the Hispanic period, see Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan*, pp. 20-23, 239-41, and elsewhere across this text.

tlayacatl—was properly represented in major functions.⁴⁷ Each *tlayacatl* bundle had its own separate ritual sections in the main ceremonial complex of Mexico-Tenochtitlan’s Templo Mayor; each bundle sent special judges to the main councils of law and war; each *tlayacatl* had its own warrior divisions that were sent into battle with separate



uniforms and insignia; each celebrated its own particular victories with ritual feasts, where only symbolic remains were sent to the ruling center. Aztec rulers also convened imperial councils of both law and war with named representatives from various *tlayacatl*: the *Codex Mendoza* includes one such tribunal from the *tlayacatl* of Moyotlan, where four *tlayacatl* judges (called *alcaldes* in the accompanying Spanish text) resolve disputes (See Fig. I.)⁴⁸

Fig. I. Tlayacatl judges in Moyotlan tlayacatl. The occasionally-mistranslated Acatlyacapanecatl is third from the top. *Codex Mendoza*, f. 68r. Permission of the Bodelian Library, Oxford University.

⁴⁷ On *tlayacatl*, see Lockhart, *Nahuas*, p. 21-28; Schroeder, *Chimalpahin and the Kingdoms*, pp. 131-136. Because *tlayacatl* grew out of *tlayacatl*, they occasionally also carried forward *tlayacatl* names. Tlailotlacan (Schroeder, p. 131) is one such example from Aztec-era Chalco.

⁴⁸ The *Mendoza* judges can be sited at Moyotlan by their *tlayacatl* affiliation, all of which fall into that particular *tlayacatl*: the Mixcoatlailotlac from Mixcoac, the Ezhuahuacatl from Yopico,; the Tequixquinhnacatl from Tequixquipan; and the Acatlyacapanecatl from one of the two subsections of Moyotlan called Acapan. Regarding this final location, Barbara Mundy’s extensive listing of *tlayacatl* in Mexico Tenochtitlan only lists names with Acatl for Moyotlan, both Acatlan. It is quite likely that Acatl Yacapan was the more complete name for one of these. Cf. Dehouve, “Las funciones rituales” and Mundy, “Place-Names,” in *Death*.

The various titles of *tlayacatl* warriors and judges repeat across the various historical and legal books (especially Book 8) the *Florentine Codex*, as well as in Durán and Tezozomoc. Additional sources include González y González, *Xipe Totec*, on feasts; Dehouve, “Las funciones rituales,” for religious representation; and, for the Templo Mayor, Aurélie Couvreur, “La description du Grand Temple de Mexico par Bernardino de Sahagún (Codex de Florence, annexe du Livre II)” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 88 (2002), pp. 9-46.

Every altepetl, therefore, carried within itself seeds of unfamiliarity and difference, in the multitudinous and diverse tlaxilacalli. This difference could be overt, as during the provocative and exclusionary celebrations staged by the long-distance merchants based in Pochtlan and various other trade-based tlaxilacalli such as Atlauhco and Tzonmolco, or covert, as when Nezahualcoyotl holed up in Tetzcoco's Poyauhtlan tlaxilacalli as a young fugitive, while at a later date his enemies hid out in the Tetzcoca tlaxilacalli of Chimalpan. During the Hispanic period, tlaxilacalli bundles also anchored oppositional political movements. In early Hispanic Mexico City, for instance, the tlayacatl of Santa María Cuepopan—center of the altepetl's Hñāhñu (Otomi) ethnic minority—staged a massive revolt in 1569 to repulse external meddling by the Archbishop Montúfar in local religious affairs. In their fractious diversity, tlaxilacalli structured both order and division in central Mexico.⁴⁹

Recent scholarship from across Mesoamerica has worked to come to terms with the fractious patterning of regional politics for various periods and situations. In certain key contexts such as the Aztec empire, a strict focus on the actions of the upper elite has broadened to consider the significant power wielded by commoners, who successfully pressed for important public goods such as monumental building, the bureaucratization of financial and legal structures, and the promotion of non-elites within imperial

⁴⁹ According to Book Nine of the *Florentine Codex* (pp. 12, 37 in the Dibble and Anderson edition), tlaxilacalli for long-distance trade included: Acxotlan, Ahuachtlan, Atlauhco, Itztoico, Pochtlan, Tepetitlan, and Tzonmolco. See also Lockhart, *Nahuas*, p. 192, for a thoughtful reflection on long-standing tlaxilacalli-based work identity. On Poyauhtlan and Chimalpan: Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *Obras*, pp. 187, 209. Chimalpan is well known and the “Plano Topográfico de Texcoco” (Bnf-MM, 107) shows that Poyauhtlan is a tlaxilacalli in Tetzcoco, as opposed to some other geographical or political form. On Cuepopan, see Mundy, *Death*, pp. 178ff.

hierarchies.⁵⁰ Rural commoners also maintained status vis-à-vis their urban counterparts, accessing the same domestic goods as other tributaries residing closer to the seats of imperial administration.⁵¹

This is not to say that elite politics were inconsequential; far from it. Indeed, the main contribution of recent theories of “collective action” lies in the dynamic interactions they posit between relatively stable elite centers and the assertive peripheries swarming around these centers. Up until now, these peripheries have mostly been understood in relation to their respective centers, and one of the aims of the present book is to provide a greater feel for the internal workings of “peripheral” tlaxilacalli, both independently of a referent altepetl and in relation to it.

For central Mexico, tlaxilacalli are key to understanding both collective action and imperial politics over centuries. Because of their robust constitutions, their diversity, and their changeable political rank, tlaxilacalli both anchored and metabolized nearly every imperial project in central Mexico between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries while simultaneously churning commoners through their own internal hierarchies. One episode from the early evangelization of Mexico is particularly illustrative of the improvisational power of local tlaxilacalli. The relation comes from fray Diego Durán, and is also illustrative for its offhanded conflation of tlaxilacalli and neighborhood:

⁵⁰ Cf. Richard E. Blanton and Lane Fargher, *Collective Action in the Formation of Pre-modern States*. New York: Springer, 2008; Lane Fargher, Verenice Heredia Espinosa, and Richard E. Blanton. “Alternative Pathways to Power in late Postclassic Highland Mesoamerica.” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 30 (2011), pp. 306–326; David M. Carballo, Paul Roscoe, and Gary M. Feinman. “Cooperation and Collective Action in the Cultural Evolution of Complex Societies” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 21:1 (2014), pp. 98-133.

⁵¹ For a comparison of “rural” and “urban” commoner consumption, see Michael E. Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals*, Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2008.

A very honored padre, zealous in the honor of God and doctrine, with whom I lived and in whose company I served, ordered that a cross be placed in all the neighborhoods (“tlaxilacalli”), so that people could go there to say doctrine. All of the neighborhoods placed their crosses except for one, which, as a more devoted people, wanted to press an advantage. They asked to be given license to build a chapel (*hermita*). It was granted, and also ordered that the name of the [patron] saint [of the chapel] be either St. Pablo or St. Agustín. They (the neighborhood spokespeople) said they would talk it over.

After fifteen days, they came back and said that they didn’t want either St. Pablo or St. Agustín; and, when asked which saint they wanted, they said St. Lucas. I, noticing the pleading and insistence with which they made their request, warned that there might be some evil afoot. I went to the calendar of their [Mesoamerican] idols and saw which feast and sign was the one where St. Lucas’s day fell. Knowing this, I went to the leader (*mandoncillo*) of that neighborhood and asked him what his name was and he told me Juan. I begged him to tell me the name he had from the old law, [given according to] the day he was born. He said *Calli*, which means house, and I saw clearly and manifestly that they requested St. Lucas’s day because it falls on the day and sign of the house. Even more, two days before is one of the great solemn feasts they had. Rebuking his duplicity and bad intentions in this way, I told him that that superstition was what was moving him and not the mortification of the cross He (Christ) carried when he lived or the great devotion you have for Him.⁵²

As is often the case with such sources, Durán’s relation obscures key details, but its detailed description of local agency compels attention. The Dominican friar describes tlaxilacalli as a key to early evangelization across a wide spatial and political plane, simultaneously highlighting both rapid compliance and assertive improvisation.

⁵² “Un Padre muy honrado y celoso de la honra de Dios y de la doctrina con quien yo vivía y en cuya compañía estaba mandó que en todos los barrios se pusiesen cruces para que allí saliesen á rezar la doctrina. Todos pusieron cruces execto un barrio que como gente mas devota se quiso aventajar y pidieron que se les diese licencia para edificar una hermita la cual les fué concedida y mandado que el nombre del Santo fuese S. Pablo ó S. Agustín ellos digeron que se hablarían. Después de la quince dias volvieron y dijeron que no querían á S. Pablo ni á S. Agustín pues preguntados que Santo querían digeron que á S. Lucas yo notando la petición y el ahinco con que la pedían advertí en que podía haber algún mal y fui al calendario de sus ídolos y miré que fiesta y signo era en el que caya San Lucas y considerado fuime al maudoncillo de aquel barrio y pregúntele como se llamaba y el respondiome que Juan. Rogué que me dijese el nombre que tenía de su ley antigua del dia en que había nacido y djome que en el signo de cally que quiere decir casa y vi clara y manifestamente pedir el dia de S. Lucas por razón de que cae en el dia y signo de la casa y aun por que dos dias antes es una de las grandes y solenes fiestas que ellos tenían y así reprehendiéndole su doblez y mala intención le digo que aquella supesticion le ha el movido y no la mortificación de la cruz que trujo mientras vivió ni la mucha devoción que le tienes.” Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y islas de la Tierra Firme*, vol. 2. Rosa Carnelo and José Rubén Romero, eds. Mexico City, Mexico: CONACULTA, 1995, pp. 242-43.

Improvisation operated across two levels, both within “St. Lucas” tlaxilacalli and outward toward the evangelizing friars, with the mandocillo Juan Calli mediating each. Although Durán presents this episode as a victory of missionary vigilance, in another light “St. Lucas” tlaxilacalli achieved their primary goal, that of building a chapel instead of a cross. Although names and feast schedules changed, these seem to have been secondary concerns to the tlaxilacalli, as evidenced by the two-week delay in answering the friars’ questions on these topics. Had name or date been a primary concern, “St. Lucas” would have included them in its initial proposal for the chapel.

Here, then, is something of a model of tlaxilacalli interaction with foreign powers (and, by definition, every outside power—from dynastic local ruler to missionary friar—was a foreign power): to begin, tlaxilacalli acted as institutional givens, pre-existing even if they were not planted in a given territory. Second, one side or the other (usually, but not always, the centralizing foreign power) demanded action. Tlaxilacalli then coordinated within and among themselves, usually within a cooperative and autonomous framework. The polities then took action, but almost always according to tlaxilacalli processes and schedules, producing significant divergences from the initial foreign demand. Both sides would then debate the meaning and details of the executed action, inventing precedents for future work. But this system could also stretch and fray, particularly during periods of crisis or when competing foreign powers fought amongst themselves for tlaxilacalli allegiance.⁵³

Following the shifting interactions between political centers and tlaxilacalli peripheries, this book offers a new periodization of local politics for the Basin of Mexico,

⁵³ On all central powers as “foreign” to local communities, see Pedro Pitarch, *La cara oculta del pliegue: Ensayos de antropología indígena*. Mexico City: Artes de Mexico, 2013, pp. 33-34.

based in the core northeastern region of Acolhuacan. A disjunctive break is almost always marked between the Aztec and Spanish periods, for reasons self-evident from an imperial perspective. Local administration, however, retained its logic even as other institutions hemorrhaged. Across multiple centuries, tlaxilacalli built separate arrangements with centralizing powers, kept archives of these proceedings, and then took legal or direct action when these arrangements were infringed—even across the watershed of foreign Spanish and Tlaxcalteca invasion. What emerges is an entire cycle of localized colonial administration—felt from the multitudinous periphery, not the mediating center. The cycle begins with the implementation of tlaxilacalli regimes around the Mesoamerican year One Flint (1272 CE)⁵⁴ and continues through the redefinition of these local communities after the population rebound of the mid-seventeenth century.⁵⁵

TRADITIONS AND SCHOLARS

Pueblos within Pueblos culminates a decade of research into the local articulation of imperial politics in Acolhuacan, the most eastern of the three realms constituting the Aztec Triple Alliance. Like all parties to this alliance, Acolhuacan predated the Aztec empire—solidifying through warfare, political marriage, and tlaxilacalli-based

⁵⁴ Evidence for a beginning in exactly 1272 is scarce outside of the *Codex Xolotl*, making the precise start date less precise than desirable. Given the lack of other candidates, however, this text uses the standard 1272 date.

⁵⁵ Although the transition from Aztec to Spanish rule remains a prime chronological anchor in central Mexican historiography, a shift from empires to local institutions does tend to reset basic parameters. See, for instance, Bernardo García Martínez, *Los pueblos de la sierra: el poder y el espacio entre los indios del norte de Puebla hasta 1700*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1987.

colonization regimes for over 150 years before adding its stitches in the years 1426-28 to the patchwork quilt of the emerging Aztec empire.⁵⁶

But even after this imperial pact, Acolhuacan asserted its distinctiveness: unlike the upswept topknot of Mexica warriors and rulers, Acolhua soldiers and



administrators customarily kept their hair loose—tied at the forehead by a broad white band.⁵⁷ (See Fig. J.) The Acolhua spoke with a different accent and produced different kinds of documents.⁵⁸ They passed separate laws and restricted Mexica consumer goods in their markets (pots, for example; see Figure K). As both imperial administrators and as

Fig. J. Acolhua and Mexica men's hairstyles. *Códice de Xicotepec*. Permission of Gobierno de Puebla

⁵⁶ In early sources, the first mention of “Acolhuacan” in a collective or geographic sense comes in plate two of the *Codex Xolotl* (Tlatchia code: X.020.C.15), in what later became known as the altepetl of Coatlinchan, or even Coatlinchan-Acolhuacan. As Acolhua power and territory grew, however, this term quickly broadened to its standard meaning, referring to the entire Acolhua realm.

⁵⁷ Acolhua women appear to have used hairstyles similar to their Mexica counterparts.

⁵⁸ Even the main historiographer of early Tlaxcala, Diego Muñoz Camargo, stated that the “Tetzcocan language” was more “courtly and polished”: “es tenuta la lengua . . . tezcucana por más cortesana y pulida.” *Historia de Tlaxcala*. ed. Alfredo Chavero, Mexico City: Secretaría de Fomento, 1892, p. 25. On Tetzcocan painting schools, see Donald Robinson, *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: The Metropolitan Schools* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959. In the nineteenth century, Francisco del Paso y Troncoso also noticed a difference in Nahuatl speech from Tetzco: “Los náuas de algunas regiones aspiran más que los de otras: donde los de Tlaxcala, por ejemplo, emiten la h aspirada, los de Tetzco dejan oír muchas veces el saltillo, y mutua mente se motejan, diciendo éstos de aquellos que hablan como serranos, y aquellos de los de Tetzco que son muy afectados en su habla. Pondré como ejemplos los pronombres nehuatl, téhuatl, yéhuatl, yo, tú, él, pronunciados en Tetzco mèuatl, tèuatl, yèuatl, con detención entre la primera sílaba y la segunda, como si se tratara de dos mono sílabos.” *Descripción, historia y exposición del códice pictórico de los antiguos Náuas que se conserva en la Biblioteca de la Cámara de diputados de Paris*. Florence, Italy: Salvador Landi, 1899, p. xxvii.

As part of a wider critique of Alfonso Lacadena’s arguments about Nahuatl writing patterns (cf., “Regional scribal traditions: Methodological implications for the decipherment of Nahuatl writing” *The PARI Journal* 8:4 [2008], pp. 1-22); Gordon Whittaker (“The Principles of Nahuatl Writing” *Göttinger Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft* 16 [2009], pp. 47-81) has challenged Lacadena’s assertion that Acolhua tlacuiloque wrote glyphs differently, presenting cases of “Acolhua”-style writing in other regions. Is it possible therefore that divergences presented themselves more in pronunciation and genre than in forms of glyphic writing.

tlaxilacalli-bound commoners—and, quite often in these commoner-on-commoner hierarchies, as both—the Acolhua remained askance of Mexico-Tenochtitlan.⁵⁹

Despite this marked distinctiveness, *Pueblos within Pueblos* asserts broad comparisons about both the Aztec and Spanish empires in central Mexico, comparisons deriving precisely from the exactitude and rigor of the Acolhua information tradition. Acolhua documents allow for the most complete reckoning of tlaxilacalli and their imperial, colonizing politics in northern Mesoamerica. Extant sources from other Mexican regions are almost as good—indeed, much of the advantage of Acolhua information specialists could simply derive from a greater documentary survival rate in the eastern backlands—but surviving Acolhua documents still set a gold standard in stitching together demographic, political, economic, agricultural, and territorial

⁵⁹ One interesting aspect of Acolhua regionalism is an inserted “n” in many mundane documents: “tlanlli” for “tlalli,” “pinlli” for “pilli,” etc. See, for example, CEHST docs. 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 16, 25, and 37. On warrior hair, see Guy Stresser-Péan, ed. *El Códice de Xicotepec: estudio e interpretación*. Puebla, Mexico: Gobierno del estado de Puebla, 1995, p. 43. (Under Mexica pressure, some outlying Acolhua altepetl did adopt Mexica hairstyles: Stresser-Péan, *Códice*, pp. 120ff. Although this codex shows Nezahualpilli wearing Mexica style hair, this is a rarity in Acolhua codices and could be attributed to Xicotepec’s large distance from the Acolhua capital.) On Acolhua noble fashion, see Justyna Olko, *Insignia of Rank in the Nahua World: From the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries*. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2013, pp. 222-242. For market separation, see Leah D. Minc, “Style and Substance: Evidence for Regionalism within the Aztec Market System.” *Latin American Antiquity*, 20:2 (June 2009), pp. 343-374; and Deborah Nichols, “Merchants and Merchandise: The Archaeology of Aztec Commerce at Otumba, Mexico” in Kenneth G. Hirth and Joanne Pillsbury, eds. *Merchants, Markets and Exchange in the Pre-Columbian World*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2013. The Acolhua tlacuilo tradition will be discussed later, in note 43.

Of course, in other aspects, Tetzaco did synchronize with Mexico-Tenochtitlan. For a Mexica-oriented reading of the Acolhua ruler Nezahualcoyotl, see Jongsoo Lee, *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl: Pre-Hispanic History, Religion, and Nahua Poetics*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008.

information.

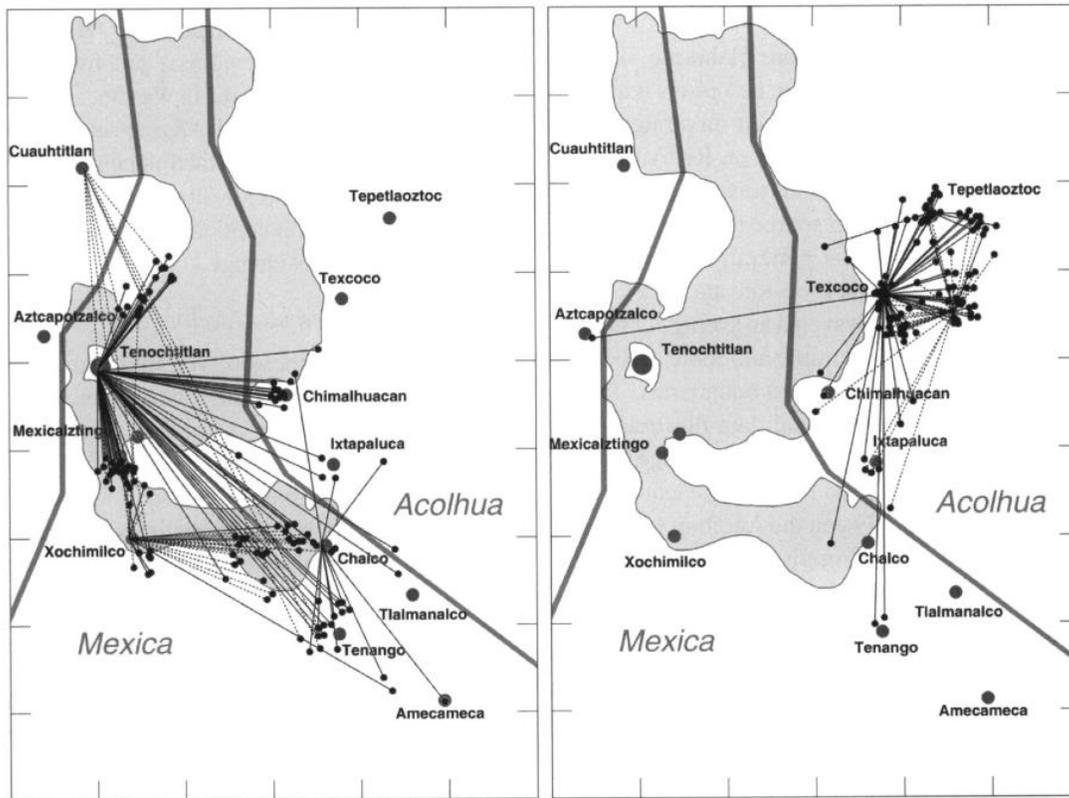


Fig. K: Separate ceramics markets of the Aztec empire. Minc, “Style and substance,” p. 363.

Even given these substantial strengths, other aspects of the Acolhua documentary record require further comment. Most pointedly, many of the arguments in this book (particularly those relating to pre-Hispanic eras) rely on documents created under Hispanic patronage, protection, or toleration. Although this context produced patent distortions—distortions that compounded as the documented events passed farther and farther into the distant past—recent scholarship has begun to create a systematic analytical framework for these early Hispanic sources, making them much more accessible for sustained historical research. Scholars have shown certain standardized patterns to Hispanic-era distortions, and also illuminated the wider social, political, and intellectual climate in which such documents were produced. They have elaborated the

conventions of various early Hispanic genres and catalogued the wider clutches of meaning evoked by once-cryptic symbols and phrases. Further, they have even been able to show the historical development of genre and writing conventions, allowing for change over considerable lengths of time—even across the watershed of Spanish invasion.⁶⁰

Tetzco archives burned at least twice during and after the fifteenth-century war for central Mexico. Even before the fall of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, invading Tlaxcalteca forces attacked imperial archives at the palace complex in the Tzillan (or Cillan) tlaxilacalli (sometimes also called Ahuehuetitlan, now known as Los Melones) of Tetzco. At some later time, local nobles also struck at their own personal collections, in fear of religious or political persecution. Decades after these purges, the loss still ached, as attested by the early Hispanic historiographer of Tetzco, Juan de Pomar:

⁶⁰ For the project at hand, some of the most important general works of critical methodology include three classics—Robinson, *Mexican Manuscript Painting*; H. B. Nicholson, “Pre-Hispanic Central Mexican Historiography,” in *Investigaciones contemporáneas sobre historia de México*. Mexico City, Mexico: UNAM, 1971, pp. 38–81; and Lockhart’s *Nahuas*, particularly the fine-grained work in chapters 8 and 9— together with a number of more recent works, including: Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in red and black: pictorial histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000; Townsend, “Glimpsing”; Eduardo de J. Douglas, *In the Palace of Nezahualcoyotl: Painting Manuscripts, Writing the Pre-Hispanic Past in Early Colonial Period Tetzco, Mexico*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010.; Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo, *Los códices mesoamericanos antes y después de la conquista española*. Mexico City, Mexico: FCE, 2010; Olko, *Insignia of rank*; and Amber Brian, *Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Native Archive and the Circulation of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016; in addition to numerous studies of individual documents, such as Lori Boornazian Diel, *Tira de Tepechpan: Negotiating Place under Aztec & Spanish Rule*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Additionally, much work (particularly by European scholars) occurs in journals, not monographs. Three of the most important scholars working in these fora are Juan José Batalla Rosado, Gordon Whittaker, and Patrick Lesbre. Representative articles include: Batalla Rosado, “Los Códices Mesoamericanos: problemática actual de su censo.” *Escritura Indígena en México*. Madrid, Spain: Cuadernos del Instituto de México en España, 1995, pp. 85-103; Batalla Rosado, “Las falsificaciones de códices mesoamericanos,” *Actas de Primer Congreso Internacional Escrituras Silenciadas en la época de Cervantes*. Alcalá de Henares, Spain: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 2005, pp. 363-385; Batalla Rosado, “The Scribes who Painted the *Matrícula de Tributos* and the *Codex Mendoza*” *Antient Mesoamerica* 18 (2007), pp. 31-51; Whittaker, “The Study of North Mesoamerican Place-Signs” *Indiana* 13 (1993), pp. 9-38; Whittaker, “The principles of Nahuatl writing”; Whittaker, “Nahuatl Hieroglyphic Writing and the Beinecke Map” in Mary E. Miller and Barbara E. Mundy, eds., *Painting a Map of Sixteenth-Century Mexico City: Land, Writing, and Native Rule*. New Haven, CT: Beinecke Library, 2012. Because it deals nearly exclusively with Acolhuacan, Lesbre’s work is cited in note 68.

Finally, although some of the work cited here deals specifically with Acolhuacan, a later note in this introduction will deal more fully with the specifics of Acolhua historiography.

They (Tetzco) lack the paintings in which they had their histories, because when the Marqués del Valle, don Hernán Cortés, and the other conquistadors first entered it (Tetzco) some sixty-four years ago, more or less, they burned them in the royal houses of Nezahualpilli, in a great building that was the general archive of their papers, where all the antiquities were painted. Today, his descendants lament this with great feeling, because they were left in darkness, without news or memory of the doings of their ancestors. And those (documents) that had remained in the hands of some principals—some relating to one thing, others to another—the principals burned them, out of fear of don fray Juan de Zumárraga, the first archbishop of Mexico, in order to not be accused of idolatry.⁶¹

But traditions of Acolhua communication survived—even in the face of such systemic damage. Innumerable sources were surely lost, making recoverable history a suggestive patchwork quilt more than a lushly-illustrated tapestry; nevertheless, tlacuiloque and historiographers continued to mobilize canonical sources like the now-lost “Crónica X”⁶² and the sources constituting the *Codex Xolotl*, joining them to robust traditions of oral memory and performance.⁶³ Pomar makes the same point, arguing that

⁶¹ “faltan sus pinturas en q tenían sus historias, porq al tiempo q el Marqués del Valle D Herdo Cortés con los demás conquistadores entraron la primera vez en ella, q habrá sesenta y cuatro anos, pocos más o menos, se las qmaron en las casas reales de Nezahualpiltzintli, en un gran aposento q era el archivo general de sus papeles, en que estaban pintadas todas sus cosas antiguas, que hoy día lloran sus descendientes con mucho sentimiento por haber qdado como a oscuras sin noticia ni memoria de los hechos de sus pasados. Y los q habían qdado en poder de algunos principales, unos de una cosa y otros, de otra, los qmaron de temor de D Fray Ju Zumárraga, primer arzobispo de México, porq no los atribuyese a cosas de idolatría.” Juan Bautista de Pomar, “Relación de la ciudad y provincia de Tezcoco” in René Acuña, ed. *Relaciones geográficas del siglo XVI*, vol 7. Mexico City: UNAM, 1986, p. 46. Patricia Lopes Don—*Bonfires of culture: Franciscans, indigenous leaders, and the Inquisition in early Mexico, 1524-1540*, Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 2010, pp. 4-5—dates this second purge to 1530.

⁶² Robert H. Barlow’s 1945 reconstruction of the hypothetical “Crónica X,” together with later scholarship on this same putative source, serves as an example of what can be recovered from the fragmentary extant record. Cf. Robert H. Barlow, “La Crónica X: versiones coloniales de la historia de los mexica tenocha.” *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Antropológicos* 7 (1945), pp. 65–87. Also, Ignacio Bernal, “Durán’s *Historia* and the Crónica X.” in Diego Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*. Doris Heyden, trans. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994; Sylvie Peperstraete, “La ‘Chronique X’: reconstitution et analyse d’une source perdue fondamentale sur la civilisation Aztèque, d’après l’*Historia de las Indias de Nueva España* de D. Durán (1581) et la *Crónica Mexicana* de F.A. Tezozomoc (ca. 1598).” *British Archaeological Reports, International Series* 1630, Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2007; Stephen A. Colston, “A Comment on Dating the ‘Cronica X’” *Tlalocan* 7 (2013).

⁶³ On wider “graphic communication systems” in central Mexico, see Katarzyna Mikulska, *Tejiendo destinos: Un acercamiento al sistema de comunicación gráfica en los códices adivinatorios*. Zinacantepec, Mexico: El Colegio Mexiquense, 2015.

he had to “work harder to seek out and examine” remaining documentary sources, given the patchwork losses to imperial Acolhua archives.⁶⁴ Indeed, in this later period Acolhua researchers such as Pomar researched, re-imagined, and compiled sources that still shed considerable light on pre-Hispanic history. For the project at hand, the most important such compilations are the *Codex Xolotl* and a triplex of Tepetlaoztoc sources—the related codices *Vergara* and *Asunción*⁶⁵ (ca. 1543-44), and the *Memorial de los Indios de Tepetlaoztoc* (ca. 1554)—produced for an ongoing case against the early Spanish encomendero Gonzalo de Salazar and his son, Juan Velázquez de Salazar.⁶⁶

Scholars as early as Juan de Pomar in the later sixteenth century have worried about the trustworthiness and validity of extant Tetzcocha sources. Pomar pleads with readers that “if anything seems missing, or coming up short” in his history, they attribute this fault to his fragmentary documentary base, and “not to a lack of diligence.”⁶⁷ For Pomar and his contemporaries, however, these diligent efforts flowed through increasingly Hispanic forms and genres, though such forms still depended on local

⁶⁴ “tanto más se ha trabajado de buscar y escudriñar lo q se ha hecho” Pomar, “Relación,” p. 47. Key critical guides to these documents are Thouvenot, “Codex Xolotl”; Williams and Harvey, *The Códice*; Williams and Hicks, *Vergara*; Perla Valle P., ed., *Memorial de los indios de Tepetlaoztoc ó códice Kingsborough: A cuatrocientos cuarenta años*. Mexico City, Mexico: INAH, 1992.

An interesting comparison to Tetzcocha’s response to its damaged archives can be found in the work of tlacuiloque in the aftermath of the Mexica huei tlatoani Izcaotl’s spate of partisan archival editing. Among a broad bibliography on this topic, see in particular, Federico Navarrete Linares, “Los libros quemados y los nuevos libros. Paradojas de la autenticidad en la tradición mesoamericana” in Alberto Dallad, *La abolición del arte: El Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1998), pp. 53-71, on the resiliency of Aztec tlacuiloque. Additionally, José Rubén Romero Galván argues that the goal of Izcaotl’s archival destruction was to solidify “la unidad entre los calpulli y la clase en el poder”: “La historia según Chimalpain,” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 84:2, (1998), p. 185.

⁶⁵ Williams and Harvey (*The Códice*, p. 284) conclude that the missing glyph for Mateo Nauhyotl shows that the *Asunción* was copied from an earlier pictorial document.

⁶⁶ See Valle, *Memorial*; Barbara J. Williams, H. R. Harvey, “Content, Provenience, and Significance of the *Codex Vergara* and the *Códice de Santa Maria Asuncion*” *American Antiquity*, 53:2 (1988), pp. 337-351.

⁶⁷ “si en ello pareciere faltar algo y qdar en otras corto, se atribuya a lo dicho y no falta de diligencia” Pomar, “Relación,” p. 47.

tlaxilacalli. In 1608, for example, the historian Alva Ixtlilxochitl took great pains to verify his narrations with the leaders of seven separate tlaxilacalli in the altepetl of Otumba—Ahuatepec, Tizayuca, Aztaquemeca, Tlamapa, Tepayuca, Axoloayan, and Quatlacincó—who all pronounced his work “good and true.”⁶⁸ Even for the most conservative of documents, certain European demands and prohibitions occasionally made their influence felt. The deep stylistic traditionalism of the multi-valent *Codex Xolotl* compendium, for example, expresses certain tendencies toward consolidation, as scribes in Tlailotlacan compiled documents from their archives to face the challenges of the early decades of Spanish rule. Many pre-Hispanic aspects of this and other documents are recoverable, but only in the proper comparative context.⁶⁹

Much like their Hispanic-era scholarly forbears, modern historians have also struggled to assess the veracity of available sources.⁷⁰ However, as mentioned earlier, a comparative critical methodology is taking shape. For the specific case of Acolhuacan, scholars such as Patrick Lesbre, Jongsoo Lee, Eduardo de J. Douglas, and Jerome Offner

⁶⁸ Nos Don Martín de Suero, Gobernador, y Francisco Xuárez y Francisco de San Pablo, Alcaldes, y D. Silvestre de Soto, D. Gaspar de Guaman, D. Juan de Suero, D. Bartolomé Pimentel y D. Luis de Soto, Principales, Regidores y Ancianos de la cabecera de esta Provincia de Otumba, y los Alcaldes de los pueblos de Ahuatepec, Tizayuca, Aztaquemeca y Tlamapam, y de las Estancias de Tepayuca y Axoloayan, decimos: Que ya hemos visto, leído y considerado las Historias y Crónica que tiene escrita D. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxuchitl, en donde se contienen las historias y crónicas de los Tultecas y Reyes Chichimecas de estas nuevas tierras que ahora se llaman Nueva España . . . todo lo que contienen los diez libros de la dicha Historia y Crónica ha salido muy bueno y verdadero, sin ningún defecto; y la relación que los principales de la ciudad de Texcuco le dieron, está también muy cierta y verdadera. . . . Decimos Nos el Gobernador y Alcaldes Regidores Ancianos del pueblo de San Salvador Quatlacincó, que hemos visto y leído la Historia que tiene escrita D. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxuchitl, la cual es muy cierta y verdadera y conforme con nuestras antiguas historias.” Ixtlilxochitl, *Obras históricas*, vol. 1, 518-519, 521.

⁶⁹ On the specific case of the *Codex Xolotl*, see. Offner, “Ixtlilxochitl’s Ethnographic Encounter.” For the broader question of Hispanic influence in Nahuatl literary practices, see Lockhart, *Nahuas*, chaps. 7-9 and Escalante Gonzalbo, *Códices*, chaps. 4-6, 12.

⁷⁰ The strongest expression of doubt regarding the reliability of elite-oriented Mesoamerican sources remains Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth and History in Four Ancient Civilizations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

have worked to peel away the distorting layers of Mexica and European influence from Tetzcocha sources, laying bare tentative filaments of early Acolhua historiographical conventions. Others, including Elizabeth Hill Boone, Marc Thouvenot, Gordon Whittaker, and Justyna Olko, have expanded and systematized the early glyphic work of specialists such as Charles Dibble. Still others, particularly Barbara Williams and her various collaborators, have proved the scientific validity of Acolhua information traditions in such fields as mathematics, land surveying, and agronomy. Finally, and perhaps most foundationally, increasing collaboration with local historians and experts from the places studied has led to the “ground-truthing” of many important documents, placing them at last in their wider spatial context.⁷¹

All of these practices—local fieldwork, interdisciplinary collaboration, insistent archival research, and critical textual analysis of both alphabetic and image-based communication—undergirds the project at hand. Although sources remain imperfect,

⁷¹ Patrick Lesbre, “Illustrations acolhua de facture européenne (Codex Ixtlilxochitl, ff. 105-112)” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 84:2, (1998), pp. 97-124; Patrick Lesbre, “¿Influencias occidentales en el Mapa Quinatzin?” *Revista Española de Antropología Americana*, 38:2 (2008), pp. 173-197; Patrick Lesbre, “Le Mexique central à travers le Codex Xolotl et Alva Ixtlilxochitl: entre l’espace préhispanique et l’écriture coloniale,” *e-Spania* 14 (2012) <<https://e-spania.revues.org/22033>> (accessed 12/2/2015); Patrick Lesbre, “Oublis et censures de l’historiographie acolhua coloniale: Nezahualcoyotl,” *C.M.H.L.B. Caravelle* 72 (1999), pp. 11-30; Lee, *Allure*; Douglas, *Palace*; Jerome A Offner, “Improving Western Historiography of Texcoco” in Lee and Brokaw, eds. *Texcoco*, pp. 25-62; Boone, *Stories in Red and Black*; Thouvenot. “Codex Xolotl”; Whittaker, “Principles of Nahuatl Writing”; Olko, *Insignia of rank*; Charles Dibble, ed. *Códice Xolotl*, 2 vols. Mexico City, Mexico: UNAM, 1951; Barbara J. Williams. “Aztec soil knowledge: Classes, management, and ecology,” in Benno P. Warkentin, ed., *Footprints in the Soil: People and Ideas in Soil History*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 2006, pp. 17-41; María del Carmen Jorge, Barbara J. Williams, Clara E. Garza-Hume, and Arturo Olvera, “Mathematical accuracy of Aztec land surveys assessed from records in the Codex Vergara.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108:37 (2011), pp. 15053-15057; Barbara J. Williams and Janice K. Pierce, “Evidence of Acolhua Science in Pictorial Land Records” in Lee and Brokaw, *Texcoco*, pp. 147-164. Thouvenot has also played a major role in building the Tlachia image dictionary <<http://tlachia.iib.unam.mx/>> (Accessed 4/3/2016) and other online resources in Nahuatl.

Recent examples of “ground truthing” include David Carrasco and Scott Sessions, eds. *Cave, City, and Eagle's Nest: An Interpretive Journey Through the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan. No. 2*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2007; Williams and Harvey, *The Códice*; Williams and Hicks, *Vergara*; María Castañeda de la Paz, “Nahua Cartography in Historical Context: Searching for Sources on the Mapa de Otumba” *Ethnohistory*, 61:2 (2014), pp. 301-327; and Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*.

they can say much more than they are sometimes given credit for. After the patterned distortions in these documents are accounted for, after they are placed in a wider comparative context and anchored them to precise physical forms on the landscape, they become invaluable sources for early Acolhua history. Indeed, particularly for the early period, Acolhua sources are often more reliable than Spanish ones: where the latter speak in vague land measurements such as *fanegas* (the amount of land necessary to plant a certain volume of crop, also called a fanega); the former mark measurements down to the hand-span (*matl*), also noting soil type and quality. Context is key, however: because of to the complex processes of their formation and use, early Acolhua documents demand vigilant comparison and criticism. They are peerless, but they are also rarely if ever sufficient on their own.

CHAPTER OUTLINE AND SUMMARY

The six chapters in this book trace the history of Acolhua tlaxilacalli over time, beginning with their implantation along the northeastern edge of the Basin of Mexico in the thirteenth century and continuing forward through their transformation into bastions of community politics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They describe the ways that a particular pattern of local colonization became a core community institution, and how this institution (more successfully than most) responded to warfare and imperialism. *Pueblos within Pueblos* shows how local communities built empires, and also how they shattered them.

Chapter One shows how tlaxilacalli regimes formed the bedrock of the early Acolhua empire, describing the functioning of each rung of these colonizing hierarchies

in detail. It sheds new light on the internal workings of these systems, describing the strong economic and cultural forces, acting across centuries, that pulled agricultural commoners into such arrangements. Chapter Two sets this analytical framework in motion, describing the fights to establish the Aztec Triple Alliance and characterizing the powerful tlaxilacalli-based tension at the heart of this empire: local autonomy versus imperial investment.

Chapter Three puts both tlaxilacalli and empire to the test, and shows that the former is stronger than the latter. It briefly recapitulates the foreign (Spanish, Tlaxcalteca, and allies) invasion of the Aztec empire and the demographic and ecological disjunctures this irruption unleashed, the latter of which jostled the spatial array of tlaxilacalli across the Acolhua landscape. More than this, however, it highlights a recurring pattern of central Mexican imperialism, through which Acolhua tlaxilacalli regrouped to support the invading forces of Hernán Cortés and his many allies, in ways strikingly similar to the rapid additive rise of the Aztec empire a century before.⁷²

Chapter Four deals with the spatial and metaphysical redefinition of tlaxilacalli in the aftermath of foreign invasion. It shows commoners turning to local tlaxilacalli in times of extreme need, and investing them with renewed spiritual and collective power in early Catholic New Spain. This contrasts with the progressive disinvestment of the local nobility in these institutions; which, as shown in Chapter Five, placed revitalized tlaxilacalli at the very core of commoner politics by the end of the sixteenth century. Chapter Six carries this sea-change to its mid-seventeenth century close, showing how

⁷² On patterns of central Mexican imperialism see, Berdan, *et al*, *Aztec Imperial Strategies*, and Federico Navarrete Linares, “Las dinámicas históricas y culturales de ciclos de concentración y dispersión en las sociedades amerindias” in Berenice Alcántara Rojas and Federico Navarrete Linares, eds. *Los pueblos amerindios más allá del Estado*. Mexico City: UNAM, 2011, pp. 169-199.

these once-imperial institutions came to serve as the primary locus of autonomist and even anti-colonial commoner politics, a politics now so distant from centralizing power that it became nearly invisible to Spanish administrators. The transformation from imperial colonization to unequal community was now complete.

To summarize the main claims of this book: tlaxilacalli were commoner-administered communities that co-evolved with the Acolhua (later, Aztec) empire and structured its articulation and basic functioning. They were the administrative backbone of both the Aztec and Spanish empires in northern Mesoamerica, and often grew into full and functioning existence before their affiliated altepetl. They resembled other central Mexican polities, but expressed a local Acolhua administrative culture in their exacting patterns of hierarchy. As semi-autonomous units, they could re-arrange according to geopolitical shifts and even catalyze changes, as during the rapid additive growth of both the Aztec Triple Alliance and Hispanic New Spain. They were more successful than almost any other central Mexican institution in metabolizing external disruptions (new gods, new economies, demographic emergencies), and they fostered a surprising level of local allegiance, despite their structural inequality. Indeed, by the end of the periods covered in this book, they were declaring their local administrative independence from the once-sovereign altepetl. Administration through community, and community through administration—this was the primal two-step of the long-lived Acolhua tlaxilacalli, at once colonial and colonialist.