

# AZTEC-PERIOD POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF WESTERN MORELOS, MEXICO

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## Abstract

The Tlahuica, a Nahua ethnic group, arrived in what is now western Morelos and conquered several preexisting towns circa A.D. 1100. Members of Tlahuica elite lineages took control of irrigable land and founded *altepeme* (small city-states). As population increased, segmentation occurred until there were 32 *altepeme*. The elite's control of the irrigable land was the basis for collecting tribute consisting of cotton cloth. The 32 *altepeme* in western Morelos became part of three *señoríos* (regional centers) comprised of multiple *altepeme* by A.D. 1400: Cuauhnahuac, Tlaquiltenango, and Xiutepec. Coatlan, located in the southwestern part of western Morelos, remained an independent polity separate from the three *señoríos*. The 32 *altepeme* were conquered by the Triple Alliance in the 1430s and 1450s, putting a halt to further conquests by these *señoríos* and leaving Coatlan as an independent buffer state between the Tlahuica *señoríos* and Chontal polities to the southwest. The Triple Alliance did not displace the local population in western Morelos or send colonists from the Basin of Mexico, as they did in non-Nahua provinces of the empire.

## INTRODUCTION

At the time of the Spanish conquest, the western part of the modern Mexican state of Morelos was approximately coterminous with the Aztec tribute province of Cuauhnahuac. The Aztec (Triple Alliance) tribute province of Cuauhnahuac was made up of towns governed by Nahua elites descended from groups that migrated south from the Basin of Mexico and partially displaced communities of Matlatzincas (Matlame) and other non-Nahua groups already settled there. The Nahua in western Morelos are identified as the Tlahuica or Tlalhuica in several native accounts of Nahua migrations and conquests recorded by Valley of Mexico Nahua sources (Tira de la Peregrinación 1944). They were reputed to have been one of the original founding Nahua groups or “tribes” that journeyed from the Nahua origin-land at Aztlan to central Mexico. “Tlahuic” has also been used by Valley of Mexico sources as a geographical label for the Morelos “*tierra caliente*” zone, however, and some Nahuatl-language documents from the Morelos region do not refer to a Tlahuica ethnic category (Von Mentz 2008:64–66). Thus, while most scholars accept the “Tlahuica” of Morelos as a distinctive Nahua ethnic group, there is some possibility that it only refers to a geographic division. The issue of how to interpret different native accounts of Nahua “tribal history” is related to the wider historical process of the founding of Nahua city-state polities (and dynastic lines) in central Mexico, where various versions of the story of Nahua ethnic origins and later political segmentation were created by different city-states to justify their political ambitions.

The various Tlahuica towns in western Morelos were conquered and reconquered by members of the Aztec Triple Alliance during

the fifteenth century. The Triple Alliance was made up of the Mexicas, based at Tenochtitlan, the Acolhuas with their capital at Texcoco, and the Tepanec city-state at Tlacopan, successor to the earlier Tepanec empire based at Azcapotzalco, all in the Basin of Mexico. Cuauhnahuac (now known as Cuernavaca, Morelos) was the principal political center in the Mexica tribute province of Cuauhnahuac. The list in the Códice Mendoza of 16 towns paying tribute to the Mexicas within this tribute province mentions that a tribute collector was stationed in each town (Berdan and Anawalt 1992:vol 2, pp. 42). Cuauhnahuac formed one of the 55 tribute provinces established by the Mexicas of Tenochtitlan within the Aztec Triple Alliance empire (Smith and Berdan 1996).

Gerhard (1970, 1975) and Smith (1983, 1994a) identified 27 towns within the limits of the Mexica tribute province of Cuauhnahuac, although only 16 of these towns are reported as tributaries of the Mexicas of Tenochtitlan. They assumed that each town was the capital of a small city-state (*altepetl* in Nahuatl; plural *altepeme*) headed by a ruler or *tlatoani* before and during the era of Aztec rule (Cline 1993:17). According to Smith (1994a), the towns in Morelos that provided tribute to the Triple Alliance were grouped into conquest-states. The towns in the conquest-state had been conquered by, and paid tribute to, the capital of the conquest-state, in addition to the tribute they paid to the Triple Alliance. A conquest-state included multiple formerly independent *altepeme*, each ruled by a *tlatoani*. Rather than conquest-state, we use the term *señorío* to refer to a local multi-*altepetl* state in which various subordinate *altepeme* paid tribute to the dominant *altepetl*.

In the eastern part of the modern state of Morelos the Mexica (Tenochca) tribute province of Huaxtepec included multiple *señoríos* (Huaxtepec, Yautepec, Yecapixtla, Tepoztlan, and Totolapan; Smith 1983:Table 10). In western Morelos, however, it has been assumed that the tribute province of Cuauhnahuac was

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coterminous with the *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac and that Cuauhnahuac was the single political power center in western Morelos in the fifteenth century (Smith 1994a:315). In other words, it was assumed that the single *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac included all the towns (*altepeme*) in western Morelos at that time.

In this article, we argue that at least three regional political centers (*señoríos*), consisting of Cuauhnahuac, Xiutepec, and Tlaquiltenango, existed within western Morelos during the period of Triple Alliance and Mexica (Tenochca) conquests and reconquests in the fifteenth century. The research questions addressed here are: (1) How was western Morelos organized politically before the Triple Alliance conquest of the area? (2) What regional *señoríos* were present in the area, and how had they developed? (3) How had their relationships to one another been obscured in sixteenth-century and later information about pre-conquest political conditions in the region? The conclusions in this article are based on primary and secondary sources, some of which were previously summarized by Smith (1983, 1994a) and Maldonado (1990). The sources are used here, however, to provide a new interpretation of the development of three competing *señoríos* based on control of irrigable land used for cotton production. This analysis also discusses the importance of cotton in central Mexico as a political factor that permitted the survival, both before and after the Triple Alliance conquest in the 1430s, of the *señoríos* of Xiutepec and Tlaquiltenango despite the proximate threat of Cuauhnahuac.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF NAHUA ALTEPEME IN WESTERN MORELOS

The arrival of the Tlahuica in Morelos and their occupation of the central and western portions of the state has been dated by Smith (2010) as occurring circa A.D. 1100 and slightly later. Archaeological settlement pattern studies from the Yauatepec Valley in eastern Morelos show that when the Tlahuica arrived, a single settlement cluster existed in the northeast part of the Yauatepec Valley (in the modern town of Yauatepec) where a substantial amount of irrigable land (an alluvial area along the Río Yauatepec) was located (Hare 2001:562). One of the settlements in the cluster had monumental architecture (a pyramid complex) and was likely the capital of the local polity. It has been proposed by Hare that the Tlahuica conquered this Early Postclassic polity and established two *altepeme* capitals in this settlement cluster. The population of the conquered polity appears to have dispersed south along the Yauatepec River where there was additional unoccupied irrigable land available. The Tlahuica then established five additional *altepetl* capitals on foothills overlooking the irrigable land in the rest of the valley along the river south of the original Tlahuica *altepetl* capitals (Hare 2001:569, 571). The seven Tlahuica *altepetl* capitals continued to occupy the same locations until the Spanish conquest. Circa A.D. 1400, the *altepetl* at Yauatepec appears to have conquered the other *altepeme* in the valley, thus forming the *señorío* of Yauatepec (Hare 2001:22).

It is thought that the in-coming Nahua groups that arrived in western Morelos in the twelfth century took political control of the Matlazincas, an Oto-Manguean-speaking group which presumably occupied western Morelos prior to the Nahua arrival (Smith 1983:73). At the time of the Spanish conquest, Matlazincas occupied the portion of the present state of Mexico located to the west of Morelos.

The processes of migration and settlement of the Tlahuica are not described in sufficient detail to work out the timing and social organization of migration events. For Cuauhnahuac and other

Morelos *señoríos*, Nahua accounts of local dynastic and political history that would have provided an elite Tlahuica perspective on local city-state historical development are not available. This contrasts with the much ampler Nahua and early Spanish historical data available for Valley of Mexico city-states and their rulers. General statements about the sequence of arrival of the Tlahuica and other Nahua groups in central Mexico vary and sometimes cannot be reconciled with more detailed accounts of regional developments, such as Schroeder's (1991) analysis of the political history of the Chalca. The migrations of particular Nahua "nations" and *altepetl* founder groups that settled in the Basin of Mexico suggest several different scenarios for the founding of a local *altepetl*. First, the dispersal of local groups to found towns was sometimes reportedly carried out by long-established lineage descent units with their own respective leaders, gods, and god-carriers, as described for the Mexicas (Chimalpahin et al. 1997:vol. 1, pp. 108–111). For the Chalcas, Chimalpahin emphasized the importance of a legitimate dynastic history for an *altepetl* commencing with the arrival of an established elite lineage from somewhere else (Schroeder 1991:121–125). There are also cases where a ruling king appointed a son or sons to found additional *altepetl* units. Finally, an established *altepetl* ruler might be petitioned by an in-migrating newcomer group to permit it to establish a new *altepetl*. Schroeder's study of the migration and political history of the Chalca records all of these patterns. However, it emphasizes the continuous in-migration of new local groups as *altepetl* founders, some migrations and foundings being surprisingly late in time (Schroeder 1991).

Durán (1867:12), based in part on the Códice Ramírez (2010: 20), provides a Nahua migration account that states that the Tlahuica found the Valley of Mexico already occupied by the Xochimilcas, Chalcas, Tepanecs, and Culhuas, and therefore moved south into Morelos and occupied Cuauhnahuac as their first seat of rule. Durán's version of the account further states that the lords of Cuauhnahuac then set out from "that congregation" to establish their other centers of rule, as other immigrant Nahua groups had done. According to Durán, these other early settlements included Tlaquiltenango, Yauatepec, Huaxtepec (now Oaxtepec), and Acapichtlan (now Yecapixtla). Of these, Tlaquiltenango is located in western Morelos and the others are in eastern Morelos. Durán says that the Tlahuica "took" Cuauhnahuac as their capital and then moved to settle in the other towns and places. The earlier Códice Ramírez version of the account states that the Tlahuica moved into the Morelos area because it was depopulated. It also does not mention the settlement of towns other than Cuauhnahuac, although Durán may have independently obtained this information. In fact, a Tlahuica move into the area would imply that the Tlahuica asserted political control over the existing Matlazincas population and took control of economic resources, including irrigable land, when they arrived in the early twelfth century. In so doing, they would have partially displaced the previously existing local populations groups, as discussed previously for the Yauatepec Valley. It is possible that the Matlazincas became part of the commoner class who owed tribute to the Tlahuica nobility.

#### RELATIONS WITH THE VALLEY OF MEXICO SEÑORÍOS

Native accounts of the Nahua settlement of central Mexico mention Cuauhnahuac as one of several powerful *señoríos* in the early era of Nahua political history. Both Cuauhnahuac and Huaxtepec were so

mentioned in the *Anales de Cuauhtitlán* (Bierhorst 1992:128). The native chronicler of the Chalca, Domingo Chimalpahin, mentions a Chalca campaign to the Cuauhnahuac region in around A.D. 1269 (Schroeder 1991:69). In the *Anales de Tlatelolco*, the Mexica lord, Nonoualcatl Timal, is mentioned as having campaigned in Cuauhnahuac, in circa A.D. 1285–1290 (Berlin 1948:35). The expulsion of the Mexicas from Chapultepec in circa A.D. 1299 was described by Chimalpahin as involving five attacking groups, including the Cuauhnahuaca, who carried off captives (Berlin 1948:36). During the following century, there are mentions of wars involving Cuauhnahuac and the Chalcas in 1365 (Chimalpahin et al. 1965).

The Mexicas of Tenochtitlan were originally military vassals of the Tepanec alliance (1371–1428), and Acamapichtli, the first Mexica ruler, fought wars on behalf of the Tepanecs. The next Mexica ruler, Huitzilihuitl, was able to marry a grand-daughter of Tezozomoc, the Tepanec ruler (Davies 1977:48). After this marriage, the Tenochca status changed from that of vassals to something closer to allies of the Tepanecs and the Tenochcas fought in many wars of conquest on behalf of the Tepanecs. After the death of his Tepanec wife, Huitzilihuitl married the daughter of the *tlatoani* of Cuauhnahuac in 1396 or 1397, according to the earlier chronology of Huitzilihuitl's reign (Davies 1977:49). After this marriage, the Tenochcas are reported to have had access to cotton from Morelos obtained through trade with Cuauhnahuac (Smith 1983:93; Torquemada 1723:vol. II, p. 104). For the next half century, the flow of Cuauhnahuac cotton to the Valley of Mexico was accompanied by a turbulent relationship with the Triple Alliance as Cuauhnahuac played the roles of ally, enemy, and tributary.

The Tepanec Alliance or Tepanec empire was overthrown in A.D. 1428 by the Mexicas (from Tenochtitlan) and the Acolhuas (from Texcoco), who defeated the Tepanecs based in Azcapotzalco. The Mexicas and Acolhuas allied themselves with a less politically powerful Tepanec group based in Tlacopan to form the Triple Alliance. The three Triple Alliance members then began a series of conquests of central Mexican polities to form the Aztec empire.

During the period from circa A.D. 1400 to 1438, the city-state of Cuauhnahuac was allied with Chalco, a city-state in the southeastern Basin of Mexico that was an enemy of the Tenochcas and the Triple Alliance. In the *Septima Relación* reproduced by Chimalpahin (Chimalpahin et al. 1965:187), Cuauhnahuac is listed in A.D. 1410 (year 9 Rabbit) as an ally and client state of Chalco and an enemy of the Tenochcas. The famous episode of the capture of Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina (subsequently the Tenochca ruler) by the Chalca took place in A.D. 1428 (year 1 Flint). A Cuauhnahuac delegation was present in Chalco to observe the sacrifice of Moteuczoma. He escaped, however, before he was sacrificed. Chalco's circle of allies and clients was defined by use of a special white *yeso* supplied by Chalco during the inauguration of rulers. This white *yeso* was used in the inauguration of the ruler of Cuauhnahuac during this period (Chimalpahin et al. 1965:191).

The alliance with Chalco ended in A.D. 1438 when Cuauhnahuac was conquered by all three members of the Triple Alliance. Torquemada describes a confrontation between Cuauhnahuac and Xiutepec that led to intervention and conquest by the Triple Alliance. The ruler of Xiutepec proposed to marry the daughter of the ruler of Cuauhnahuac (Torquemada 1723:vol. I, p. 149). When the ruler of Cuauhnahuac refused the marriage proposal, the lord of Xiutepec asked the Triple Alliance for help. The Triple Alliance members responded by sending military forces to attack Cuauhnahuac from different directions. The Acolhua forces

came through Amecameca and eastern Morelos. They then passed through Tlaquiltenango and joined with the Xiutepec warriors to attack Cuauhnahuac from the east. The Tepanecs from Tlacopan came directly over the Ajusco Range to attack Cuauhnahuac from the north. The Tenochca forces, led by Itzcoatl, passed through the Valley of Toluca to Ocuilan and attacked Cuauhnahuac from the west. The Triple Alliance forces laid siege to Cuauhnahuac (Torquemada 1723:vol. I, p. 149) and it was defeated circa 1438 (other sources indicate different years for the conquest of Cuauhnahuac; Smith 1983:102). The Triple Alliance intervention also resulted in the conquest of the *señorío* of Xiutepec and the independent polities of Iztepec and Huitzilapan to the north of Cuauhnahuac, according to Mexica sources (Smith 1983:104). It is likely that the western Morelos *altepeteme* shown in Table 1 as paying tribute to one or more members of the Triple Alliance were conquered and added as tributaries during this Triple Alliance campaign in western Morelos. Tlaquiltenango is shown in Table 1 as paying tribute to Texcoco. This may have been a result of the Acolhua army "passing through" Tlaquiltenango.

Cuauhnahuac is shown in the *Código Mendoza* (1980) as a conquest of Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina, the Tenochca ruler who ruled from A.D. 1440 to 1468. This appears to have been a reconquest because Cuauhnahuac had previously been conquered by the Triple Alliance circa A.D. 1438 as previously discussed. The reconquest of Cuauhnahuac may have been the result of a refusal to pay tribute in cotton or to supply labor for the re-building of the temple of Huitzilopochtli in Tenochtitlan. Chimalpahin (Chimalpahin et al. 1965) gives two different dates (A.D. 1446 and 1452) for the reconquest that apparently took place after the construction of the temple of Huitzilopochtli. Xiutepec and Coatlan are also listed as conquests of Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina in either A.D. 1446 or 1452 (Smith 1983:Table 7). This is the first time that Coatlan is listed as a Triple Alliance conquest. This may indicate that Coatlan was not part of any other *señorío*, such as Cuauhnahuac, in A.D. 1446/1452 because it is listed as a conquest separately from Cuauhnahuac and Xiutepec. A third conquest of Cuauhnahuac by the Mexicas took place in A.D. 1476. The Cuauhnahuac elite were integrated into the Mexica elite as the Cuauhnahuac nobility contributed warriors to Mexica military campaigns, contributed laborers to Mexica construction projects, and participated in numerous state ceremonies and events in Tenochtitlan (Smith 1986:80).

#### IDENTIFYING PRE-HISPANIC CITY-STATES IN WESTERN MORELOS

The basic political unit in western Morelos prior to 1521 (when Cortés conquered Cuauhnahuac and other polities in Morelos) was the *altepetl* or city-state. Because of the small size of the *altepetl* capital cities in the region, both in terms of population and area, Smith (2008:4) defines such cities functionally, rather than based on size. Urban functions in a politically independent *altepetl* capital included civil and military administration, organized religious activities, and economic exchanges. An *altepetl* consisted of nobles, commoners and, in some cases, a servile class, all ruled by a *tlatoani*. The *tlatoani* was a member of an elite descent line with a dynastic history that linked its members with founding local ancestors and sometimes to more ancient non-local royalty, including Toltec kings. Nobles of lesser rank than the *tlatoani*, the *teuctli*, assisted the *tlatoani* as "*jueces*" and as the heads of *calpolli* units and they received land from the *tlatoani*. They were likely related to the *tlatoani* and may have been lesser ranking members of

**Table 1.** Towns (*altepetl*) with native rulers (*tlatoque*) in the Aztec tribute province of Cuauhnahuac in 1521, grouped by *señorío*, indicating towns in western Morelos that paid tribute to the Triple Alliance cities of Tenochtitlan (Ten), Texcoco (Tex), and Tlacopan (Tla; Carrasco 1999:130, 173, 201). Cortés 1532 indicates Cortés' (1992a) list of encomienda towns. Cortés 1544 indicates Cortés' list of *altepeme* that paid tribute directly to the native ruler of Cuauhnahuac/Cuernavaca (Benavente 1984).

Sixteenth-Century Name	Modern Name	Codex Mendoza (1980)	Paid Tribute to Triple Alliance Member(s) <sup>f</sup>	Cortés 1532	Cortés 1544	Had Resident Friar in 1604
<b>Señorío of Cuauhnahuac</b>						
Cuauhnahuac (principal town) <sup>a</sup>	Cuernavaca	X	Ten, Tex, Tla	X <sup>d</sup>		X <sup>e</sup>
Huitzillapan (principal town) <sup>b</sup>	Huitzilac	X	Ten			Unknown
Iztepec (principal town) <sup>b</sup>	Izteoca	X	Ten, Tla			Unknown
Xochitepec (principal town) <sup>a</sup>	Xochitepec	X	Ten	X		X
Acatlycpac	Acatlipa	X	Ten	X		
Mazatepec (principal town) <sup>a</sup>	Mazatepec		Tex	X		X
Xonexco	(no longer exists)				X	
Comentepeque	Cuentepec		Tla		X	
Alpoyecan	Alpuyeca		Tex	X		
Huehuetlytzallan	Ahuehuetzingo		Tex			
Miacatlan	Miacatlan	X	Ten, Tex, Tla	X		
Guatetelco	Coatetelco				X	
Cuachichinola	Cuachichinola			X		
Tetelpa (principal town)	Tetelpa				X	X
Xoxocotlan, Xuxucutlan	Xoxocotla		Tla	X		
Molotla, Metla	(no longer exists)	X	Ten, Tla			
Chimalco	Panchimalco	X	Ten			
<b>Polity of Coatlan</b>						
Coatlan (principal town)	Coatlan	X	Ten	X		Unknown
Ocpayucan	(no longer exists)	X	Ten	X		
<b>Señorío of Xiuhtepec</b>						
Xiuhtepec (principal town) <sup>a,c</sup>	Jiutepec	X	Ten	X		X <sup>e</sup>
Amatitlan	Amatitlan			X		
Tecioca, Tecoyuca	Tezoyuca			X		
Atlicholoayan	Atlacholoaya	X	Ten			
Temimilango	Temimilcingo			X		
<b>Señorío of Tlaquiltenango</b>						
Taquiltenango (principal town)	Tlaquiltenango		Tex	X		X <sup>e</sup>
Zacatepec (principal town) <sup>a</sup>	Zacatepec		Tex	X		
Xoxoutla, Xuxuctlan	Jojutla	X	Ten, Tla	X		
Teocalcingo	Teocaltingo	X	Ten	X		
Iztla (principal town)	Puente de Iztla	X	Ten	X		X
Tehuixtlan	Tehuixtla			X		
Tequisquitengo	Tequesquitengo			X		
Amacoztitla	Amacuzac	X	Ten, Tla			

<sup>a</sup> This town was one of five western Morelos towns—Cuauhnahuac, Xochitepec, Xiuhtepec, Mazatepec, and Zacatepec—documented in a listing of 46 towns that were allied with the *tlatoani* of Texcoco at some point during the period from 1377 to 1409 (Smith 1983:96), indicating that these towns were formerly independent.

<sup>b</sup> The list of conquests by the Mexica ruler, Itzcoatl, around the third decade of the 1400s included Huitzillapan and Iztepec, so they are believed to have been still independent at this time (Smith 1983:102) and may not have been incorporated into the Cuauhnahuac *señorío* until late in the fifteenth century.

<sup>c</sup> Triple Alliance forces defeated Cuauhnahuac in 1438 in a campaign that involved Xiuhtepec as a still-independent *altepetl* that was also conquered by the Alliance.

<sup>d</sup> Listed as *cabecera*.

<sup>e</sup> Monastery.

<sup>f</sup> Ten = Tenochtitlan, Tex = Texcoco, Tla = Tlacopan.

the same elite descent line. The commoners worked the land assigned to them by the *tlatoani* or the *teuctli* and were organized into *calpolli*, corporate political units that were not organized on the basis of kinship (Hicks 1986; Lockhart 1992). The commoners paid tribute to the *tlatoani* or the *teuctli*. Physically, the *altepetl* had a capital city, smaller settlements (hamlets and villages), and different classes of agricultural land (much of it irrigated) cultivated by

the commoners and the servile population (Smith 2008:89). The administrative, religious, and economic functions of the *altepetl* were concentrated in an “epicenter” in the capital city which contained the palace of the *tlatoani*, temples and shrines for various gods, and a marketplace (Smith 2008:89).

The political geography of Morelos at the time of the Spanish conquest has been reconstructed previously by Gerhard (1970)

and Smith (1983, 1994a). Gerhard (1970) provided a map that reconstructed the location of *altepetl* towns in Morelos in 1519. Gerhard's inventory of western Morelos *altepeme* is derived primarily from the towns (*altepeme*) listed in the *Codice Mendoza* (1980) that paid tribute to the Mexicas of Tenochtitlan. Smith provided a list of *altepeme* in Morelos as of A.D. 1519 and mapped their locations with reconstructed political boundaries between each city-state (Smith 1983:127, Table 10, 1994a). Smith's (1983:Table 10) list of 27 *altepeme* (including Cuauhnhuac) in the Triple Alliance tribute province of Cuauhnhuac consisted of the towns in western Morelos that Smith thought had a *tlatoani* in 1519 (Smith 1983:120). This list of 27 *altepeme* is repeated in later publications (Smith 1994a, 2010). Smith used two primary sources for identifying towns with a *tlatoani* in the Cuauhnhuac Mexica tribute province—the *Codice Mendoza* (1980) and a list of towns that Cortés (1992a) claimed in A.D. 1532 to be subjects of the *cabecera* of Cuernavaca in 1532. Smith supplemented these data with other "independent sources."

The list of 27 *altepeme* provided by Smith can be increased to 32 by using additional sources. Cortés' 1532 list (Cortés 1992a) names 21 towns (places that appear to be *barrios* of the city of Cuauhnhuac are not included in this total) and the *Código Mendoza* lists six more towns that do not appear in Cortés' list. These are the 27 towns listed by Smith. Two additional towns (Ahuehuetzingo and Xoxocotla) can be identified from a list of towns that paid tribute to members of the Triple Alliance (Carrasco 1999). Although Xoxocotla [Xuxucutlan] is included in Cortés' 1532 list, Smith (1983) did not include it in his list of 27 *altepeme*.

Four more *altepeme* in western Morelos appear in an A.D. 1544 lawsuit against Cortés, a source not used by Smith. The 1544 lawsuit was brought against Cortés by the Spanish Crown on behalf of the Indians of Cuernavaca (Benavente 1984). Cortés testified that there were several places (consisting of both towns [*altepeme*] in the *villa* of Cuernavaca and *barrios* of Cuernavaca city) that were not paying tribute to Cortés' Marquesado encomienda of Cuauhnhuac/Cuernavaca because, in pre-Hispanic times, they paid their tribute directly to the *tlatoani* of Cuauhnhuac, not to the *altepetl* or *señorío* of Cuauhnhuac (Benavente 1984). Don Hernando, native ruler of Cuernavaca in A.D. 1544, was allegedly receiving the tribute of these towns, rather than Cortés' Marquesado. Aside from the *barrios* of Cuernavaca listed in the 1544 lawsuit, the document yields four additional towns in the *villa* of Cuernavaca that are presumed to have been *altepeme* with *tlatoque*, at least prior to outside conquest: Xonexco, Coatetelco, Tetelpa, and Cuentepec. Based on a document cited by Gerhard (1970), Smith (1983) included Cuentepec in his list of 27 *altepeme*. Adding the three additional *altepeme* other than Cuentepec yields a total of 32 *altepeme* or former *altepeme* in western Morelos in A.D. 1521. These 32 *altepeme* in western Morelos are listed in Table 1 along with the sources in which they appear. The towns marked with an "X" in the columns labeled "Codex Mendoza" and "Cortés 1532" comprise the 27 towns listed by Smith (1983, 1994a).

Table 1 indicates the towns listed in the *Codice Mendoza* which paid tribute to Triple Alliance member Tenochtitlan. Other towns in western Morelos paid tribute to the other two Triple Alliance members (Texcoco and Tlacopan) (Carrasco 1999:130, 173, 201). It is assumed that towns that paid tribute to members of the Triple Alliance had at least formerly (at some point in time in the pre-Hispanic period) existed as independent *altepeme* with *tlatoque*.

In some cases, the conquest of individual *altepeme* by Triple Alliance powers may have led to changes in how these places were

ruled and administered. Six towns in western Morelos (Cuentepec, Jojutla [Xoxouhtlan], Xoxocotla, Miacatlan, Amacuzac [Amacoztlan], and Molotla) that paid tribute to Tlacopan were reportedly not ruled by local *tlatoque*. A Tlacopan source states that, "in these towns there was no lord [*señor*] but rather majordomos and principales who ruled them, all the inhabitants were like '*renteros*' [land renters] of the Lord of Tlacopan" (Maldonado 1990:112–114; Memorial de los Pueblos 1940:119). These towns probably had local rulers (*tlatoque*) prior to their conquest by the Triple Alliance. Thus, the conquests undertaken by the Triple Alliance appear to have led to either temporary or permanent removal of traditional local rulers of some of the *altepeme*.

#### LOCATIONS OF ALTEPEME IN THE REGION AND PRE-HISPANIC SETTLEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Proposed or known locations of the *altepeme* in western Morelos are listed in Table 1 and are shown in Figure 1. Most towns have continued to exist to the present day, and locations of these towns in Figure 1 are mostly based on their modern locations. Some of the towns were subjected to *congregaciones* (officially mandated forced movement of the residents of smaller towns to larger towns) in circa A.D. 1604, but the residents of the towns that were abandoned during the *congregaciones*, or their descendants, later moved back to their original towns (Haskett 1991:14). There is some evidence that the pre-Hispanic towns were located on hills or ridges overlooking the modern towns and agricultural fields. This has been documented for Coatlan, Mazatepec, and Temimilcingo and for the *altepeme* in the Yautepec Valley in eastern Morelos (Hare 2001). The town of Cuentepec was also originally located at a higher elevation, several kilometers northwest of its present location (Smith 2008:50).

In several cases, the pre-Hispanic towns have not survived into modern times. For these towns (Ocpayuca, Molotla, and Xonesco), the locations shown in Figure 1 are best guesses based on limited information. Several sixteenth-century documents (General de Parte 1576a, 1576b) indicate that Ocpayuca was located near Huajintlan, located on the Río Amacuzac south of Coatlan.

The towns of Molotla (also called Metla) and Tlatenchi were probably located near each other since a 1551 document lists their tributaries as a single unit (Hospital de Jesus 1551). In addition, an appeal from a *congregación* order in 1604 indicates that Molotla was located near both Panchimalco and Tetelpa. The appeal document stated that Panchimalco and Tlatenchi were to be congregated in Tetelpa, but that the *pueblo* of Molotla was allowed to stay in place in order to protect its very productive lands. The *congregación* order also said that the people of Panchimalco and Tlatenchi were allowed to resettle at either Tetelpa or Molotla (de la Torre 1995:207–208). This information about the proximity of Molotla to Tetelpa, Panchimalco, and Tlatenchi accounts for its location as shown on Figure 1, near the modern town of Galeana.

There is little information available about the location of Xonexco. One document, however, mentions a dispute between Xonexco and Malinalco (General de Parte 1580), indicating that Xonexco may have shared a border with Malinalco. Malinalco was the capital of a *señorío* where another Nahua group, the Malinalca, had settled circa A.D. 1220 (Smith 2003:36). Malinalco was located to the west of Cuauhnhuac in the modern state of Mexico.

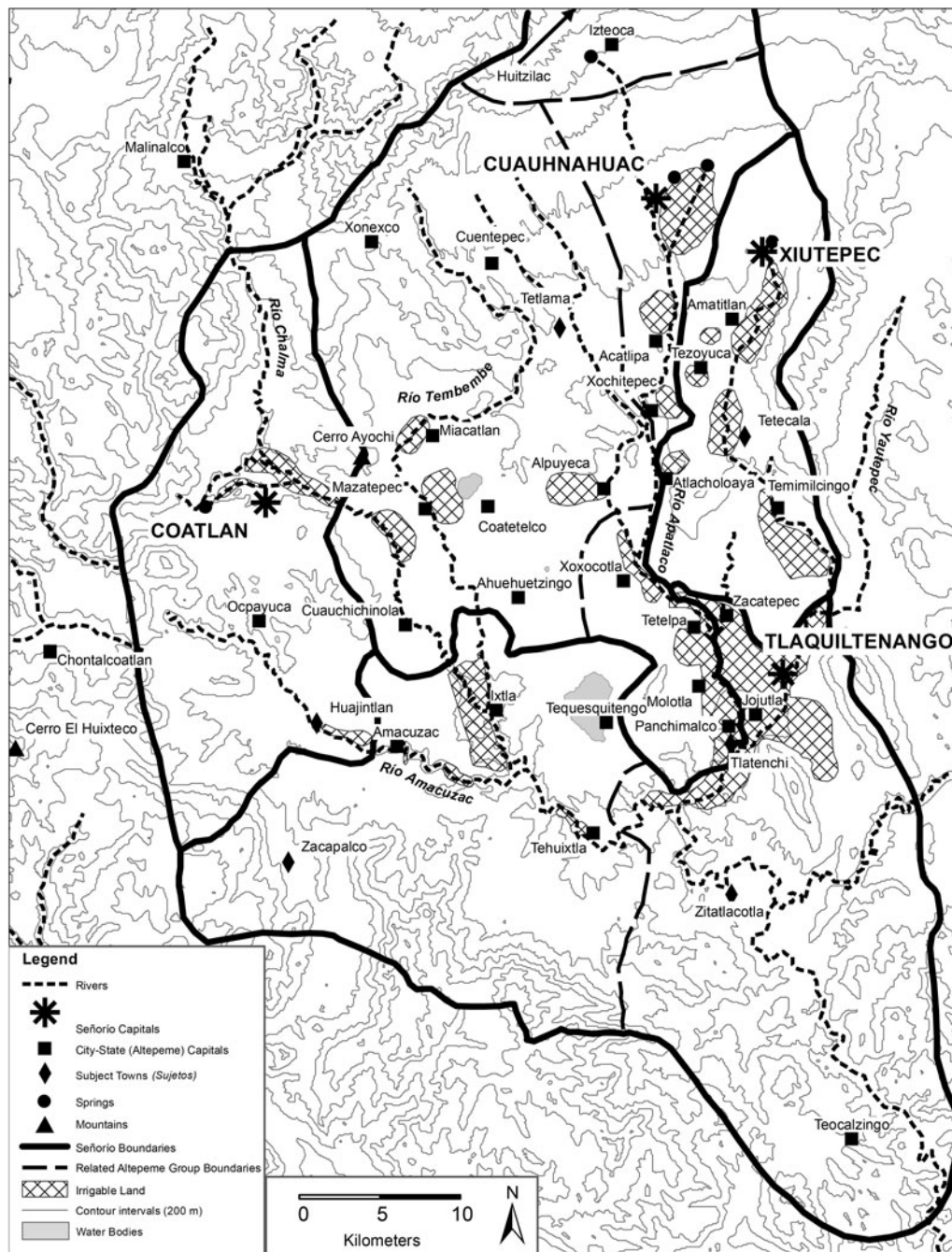


Figure 1. *Altepeme* and *señoríos* in western Morelos circa 1500. Map by Mark Deering.

As previously noted, it has traditionally been assumed that all of western Morelos formed part of a single *señorío* based at Cuauhnahuac, and that all *altepeme* were tributaries of that *señorío* prior to the conquests of the Triple Alliance in the region (Smith 1983, 1994a). Table 1, however, reflects scattered ethnohistorical data indicating that there were other regional political centers or small *señoríos* in western Morelos, aside from Cuauhnahuac, that received tribute and allegiance from other local *altepeme*. Although detailed information on tributary and other political relations within the region is mostly lacking, it is argued that the religious organization of the friars (locations of monasteries and resident friars) and

appeals to *congregación* orders from A.D. 1604 reflect pre-Hispanic political organization and indicate that there were other local political centers besides Cuauhnahuac. In addition, the information previously discussed about relations between western Morelos regional political centers prior to the 1430s (especially between Cuauhnahuac and Xiuhtepec) and about the Triple Alliance conquest of the region also suggests this.

The former pre-Hispanic political organization is reflected in the appeals to the *congregaciones* orders of A.D. 1603–1604 (de la Torre Villar 1995). The *congregaciones* required the native population of smaller towns to be resettled in larger towns where there was

a resident friar. This was for the convenience of the friars who would no longer have to travel from the monasteries to many small towns to say mass and administer the sacraments. Towns were allowed to appeal *congregación* orders that required their inhabitants to move to a town where they had no prior kinship or political relationships. Thus, appeals that were granted reflected pre-Hispanic political organization because the successful appeals allowed people from towns that were related to congregate together in one of the principal towns shown in Table 2. A compilation of the information from the appeals to *congregación* orders (de la Torre Villar 1995) indicates that towns that formed a group of related *alte-peme* were congregated at a principal town within the group where

there was a resident friar (Table 2). There were resident friars in the three towns with monasteries (Cuernavaca, Tlaquiltenango, and Xiutepec) and in the principal towns of Mazatepec, Tetelapa, and Ixtla. The towns listed under the principal towns in Table 1 had kinship relations or were friendly with the principal towns, according to the appeals to *congregación* orders.

The Franciscan friars' understanding of the pre-Hispanic political organization is reflected by the establishment of monasteries in the sixteenth century in the principal regional centers (*señorío* capitals): Cuauhnahuac, Xiutepec, and Tlaquiltenango. Later in the sixteenth-century friars were sent to live in the principal towns of Xochitepec, Mazatepec, Tetelapa, and Ixtla. Vetancurt (1971)

Table 2. Results of appeals to *congregación* orders, 1603–1604 (de la Torre Villar 1995).

Town Appealing <i>Congregación</i> Order	Originally Ordered to Congregate At	On Appeal, Congregated At	Town of Congregation Had Resident Friar	Reason for Appeal
Tlacacopeccho	Izteoca	Huitzilac	Unknown	Not stated
Malinaltepec	Izteoca	Huitzilac	Unknown	Not stated
Tetelan	Izteoca	Not Appealed	Unknown	
Chiamilpan	Izteoca	Not Appealed	Unknown	
Acatlipa	Xiutepec	Xochitepec	Yes	Not stated
Cuahuixtla	Xiutepec	Xochitepec	Yes	Already building houses in Xochitepec
Atlacholoaya	Xochitepec	Atlacholoaya	No	Not stated
Tezoyucan	Unknown	Xiutepec	Yes	Not stated
Cuaunaguacatzingo	Xiutepec	Temimilcingo	Unknown	Although is part of the <i>doctrina</i> of Xiutepec, Temimilcingo is closer
Cuentepec	Tlaquiltenango	Mazatepec	Yes	Not stated
Tetlama	Jojutla	Mazatepec	Yes	Tetlama had relatives and kin in Mazatepec
Ahuehuetzingo	Xochitepec	Mazatepec	Yes	Ahuehuetzingo had friends and kin in Mazatepec
Ejutla (Cuautlita?)	Tlaquiltenango	Mazatepec	Yes	Not stated
Coatlan	People of Coatlan ordered to help build houses in Mazatepec	Coatlan del Rio (new town along river)	Unknown	Cannot help build houses in Mazatepec because they are busy building their houses in Coatlan
Huajintlan	Mazatepec	Coatlan	Unknown	Huajintlan had friends and close relatives in Coatlan, but not in Mazatepec
Xoxocotla	Unknown	Tetelapa	Yes	Not stated
Molotla	Tetelapa	Molotla	No	People of Molotla can stay in Molotla in order to protect their very productive lands
Panchimalco, Tlatenchi	Unknown	Tetelapa or Molotla	Yes (Tetelapa)	Resident friar in Tetelapa will say mass in both Tetelapa and Molotla
Zacatepec	Unknown	Tlaquiltenango	Yes	People of Zacatepec need to be watched by friars at Tlaquiltenango to ensure they are observing the faith
Zicatlacotla	Ixtla	Tlaquiltenango	Yes	Would have to build houses in Ixtla, but can use vacant houses in Tlaquiltenango
Barrio of Coatlan in Zicatlacotla	Mazatepec	Tlaquiltenango	Yes	Mazatepec is over eight leagues away and would take them away from their relatives and the Dominican friars from Tlaquiltenango who visited them
Tehuixtla	Ixtla	Tehuixtla	No (Friar was in Ixtla)	Ixtla lacks good lands and houses Resident friar at Ixtla will go to Tehuixtla to say mass
<i>Sujetos</i> of Amacuzac: Ahuatepec (now Miahuatlan), Zacalapa (now Zacalapa, Guerrero), and Tecpancingo (no longer exists)	Ixtla	Amacuzac	No (Friar was in Ixtla)	People do not want to go to Ixtla, which is a dry town that lacks good lands and fruit and where the people would die of hunger. <sup>a</sup> Friar in Ixtla will visit Amacuzac

<sup>a</sup> It appears that the irrigation system was no longer functioning in Ixtla in 1604.

notes that Huitzilac, Izteoca, Xochitepec, and Mazatepec were *parcialidades* in the parish of Cuernavaca prior to 1694. Vetancurt also listed Xiutepec as a parish with *parcialidades* of Amatitlan and Atlacholoaya. Status as principal towns is also indicated by the designation of Xochitepec and Mazatepec as heads of Franciscan parishes in 1694 (Ledezma 1945). The appeals to the *congregación* orders indicate which other towns were politically affiliated with these six principal towns (Table 2).

The towns that were not listed by Vetancurt as forming part of a Franciscan parish were located in the Dominican parish of Tlaquiltenango. The Tlaquiltenango monastery had previously been transferred from the Franciscans to the Dominicans in A.D. 1574 (Mullen 1971:268). It is likely that the Dominicans created a separate parish at Ixtla at some point.

The available evidence suggests that the three principal towns where monasteries were located (Cuauhnhuac, Xiutepec, and Tlaquiltenango) were the former capitals of three *señoríos* that existed until shortly before the Spanish conquest. The other principal towns and their groups of related *altepeme* were incorporated into one of the three *señoríos* by conquest or alliance. Coatlan, however, appears to have been an independent polity that was not part of the three *señoríos*.

#### IRRIGABLE LAND AND ALTEPEME DEVELOPMENT

As discussed previously, it has been proposed that the Tlahuica arrived in Morelos shortly after A.D. 1100. Under such a scenario of a mass arrival of Tlahuica populations within a limited span of time, various Tlahuica elite descent lines (similar to lineages) would have conquered the polities of the native Matlazincpa people, founded their own *altepeme*, and taken control of the potentially irrigable land in the various new *altepeme*. As populations grew, the amount of potentially irrigable land that was actually irrigated and cultivated increased. In addition, agricultural terraces were expanded on slopes, especially in *altepeme* that lacked irrigable land. While the organization and the timing of arrival of the Tlahuica populations are not clearly documented, an expansion of population from the twelfth century to circa A.D. 1520 is clearly archaeologically detectable in the Yautepec Valley in eastern Morelos (Hare 2001).

The principal tribute item owed by Tlahuica *altepeme* to the western Morelos *señoríos* and to the Aztec Triple Alliance was cotton cloth. Durán (1867:13), a Dominican friar writing in A.D. 1587, described the area where the Tlahuica lived as “riquísima de algodón, donde acude el trato de toda la tierra a él” (very rich in cotton, [an area] to which all the trade in all the land comes). Large quantities of cotton *mantas* (rectangular strips of cotton cloth of a standard size) were produced by women in household production and were given as tribute to the rulers of each *altepetl*. Some of these cotton *mantas* were sent as tribute to the ruler of the *señorio* in which the *altepetl* was located. A separate tribute consisted of the tribute from the towns in the Aztec tribute province of Cuauhnhuac to the members of the Triple Alliance. The entire tribute province of Cuauhnhuac paid a total annual tribute of 16,000 pieces of cotton cloth and clothes of various types to the Triple Alliance in 1519, according to Berdan’s (1976) analysis of the *Matrícula de Tributos* (Berdan 1975:Appendix A) and the *Código Mendoza* (1980). The *Código Mendoza* and other documents and accounts provide information about the volume of cotton tribute paid to the Tenochcas and the Triple Alliance, but knowledge of the nature and volume of tribute payments of cotton and other goods, as

well as labor services, to local *altepeme*, *señoríos*, and their rulers is very limited.

Mexican cotton needs a constant warm temperature (above 16.1°C) with no frost, abundant water during the growing season, followed by warm sunny periods. In Mexico these conditions are found on the coastal plains, in coastal river valleys, and in inland valleys below 1,000 m (3,280 ft) in elevation (Berdan 1987:237). Such inland valleys are found in western Morelos, but it appears that cotton was grown at elevations of up to 1,300 meters (4,800 ft; at Cuernavaca) with irrigation. In the Tlatelolco market in the Basin of Mexico the quality of cotton was ranked by place of origin. The best cotton was from irrigated land (presumably from the inland valleys, including Morelos), followed by cotton from the coastal hot country, from the “west,” and from the northern deserts (Berdan 1987:237).

There is little ethnohistoric or archaeological documentation on the techniques and technology of cotton cultivation in Mesoamerica (Berdan 1987:237). It is uncertain whether more than one crop of cotton was produced per year in western Morelos. It is possible that with irrigation, cotton could be produced year-round (two or three crops per year), not just during the summer rainy season. Although cotton is not mentioned, a source from 1533 states that a Spaniard in Cuernavaca was harvesting two crops of fruit per year using irrigation (García 1984). The 7,000 to 9,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water per hectare needed for cotton germination, emergence, and seedling growth (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2011) could be supplied reliably only by means of irrigation systems in the inland valleys. Irrigation systems likely provided sufficient water for double-cropping. It is likely that irrigation was used year-round to grow both cotton for tribute and maize and beans for food. Cotton was originally produced in Mesoamerica without irrigation, and probably was grown in some areas of Morelos at lower levels of productivity before the development of irrigation systems. Thus, the development of irrigation in a *tierra caliente* area like Morelos would have allowed a great expansion in production of both cotton and maize. In the Basin of Mexico during the Aztec Period “every available tract of land was most likely being irrigated intensively” (Doolittle 1990:149). This was likely the case in Morelos as well.

There is documentation for the use of irrigation in western Morelos at eight places (Cuauhnhuac, Alpuyecá, Tlaltenango [Cortés’ sugar mill near Cuernavaca], Molotla, Tetelpa, Panchimalco, Xiutepec, and Jojutla) based on documents dating from A.D. 1533 to 1743 (Smith 1994a:Table 12.3). Cotton was grown in three places in 1743: Tetelpa, Panchimalco, and Jojutla (Smith 1994a:Table 12.3). There is much earlier documentation of irrigation in eastern Morelos based on a 1530s census of two towns (Cline 1993). In pre-Hispanic times it is likely that irrigation agriculture for growing cotton was used in all *altepeme* that had irrigable land because cotton was the major tribute item required by the Triple Alliance from the tribute province of Cuauhnhuac. As discussed above, irrigation was likely necessary for intensive cotton production in the inland valleys of Morelos.

Given the importance of irrigation, it is instructive to look at the distribution of irrigable land with respect to the locations of the 32 *altepeme* in western Morelos. The distribution of potentially irrigable land during the pre-Hispanic period (which ended in Morelos in 1521) shown in Figure 1 is based on topography and hydrography as seen on Google Earth and information on the location of springs is from documentary sources and Google Earth. Pre-Hispanic irrigation was likely based on gravity-fed, earth-lined canals that led



down-slope to the irrigated fields. The proposed reconstruction of the areal distribution of irrigable land in 1521 (Table 3) is based on the amount of contemporary irrigated land that is at a lower elevation than the water source (the amount of land that could receive water from gravity-fed canals). Thus, the amount of potentially irrigable land during the pre-Hispanic period is a subset of the irrigated

land that can be seen today on Google Earth. Land that currently needs pumps, siphons, aqueducts, tunnels, or long concrete-lined canals to receive irrigation water is not included. The amount of irrigable land around each *altepeltl* was calculated by drawing a polygon boundary around the irrigable land, as defined above, using Google Earth Pro, and recording the area of the polygon in hectares, as provided by Google Earth Pro. The total amount of agricultural land in pre-Hispanic times (irrigable land plus non-irrigated land that could be cultivated) cannot be calculated because almost all land that was not on steep slopes could be cultivated using rainfall agriculture. The area cultivated using rainfall agriculture probably varied depending on the needs of the local population at any given time.

Table 3. Irrigable areas by town (*altepeltl*).

	Irrigable Land (ha)
<b>Señorio of Cuauhnahuac</b>	
Cuauhnahuac and Xochitepec Area	
Cuauhnahuac	525
Huitzilac	0
Iztepec (Izteoca)	25
Xochitepec	360
Acatlipa	225
Subtotal irrigable area	1,135
<b>Mazatepec Area</b>	
Mazatepec	655
Cuentepec	0
Xonexco	0
Alpuyeca	370
Ahuehuetzingo	0
Miacatlan	160
Coatetelco	0
Cuauchichinola	25
Subtotal irrigable area	1,210
<b>Tetelpa Area</b>	
Tetelpa-Molotla-Panchimalco	950
Xoxocotla	25
Subtotal irrigable area	975
Total irrigable area	3,320
<b>Señorio of Xiuhtepec</b>	
Xiuhtepec (Jiutepec)	830
Tetecala (now Tetecalita)	625
Amatitlan	150
Tezoyuca	200
Atlacholoaya	120
Temimilcingo	720
Total irrigable area	2,645
<b>Señorio of Tlaquiltenango</b>	
Tlaquiltenango Area	
Tlaquiltenango-Zacatepec-Xoxoutla (Jojutla)	2,150
Teocalcingo (Teocaltzingo)	0
Subtotal irrigable area	2,150
<b>Ixtla Area</b>	
Ixtla (Puente de Ixtla)	930
Tehuixtla	60
Tequesquitengo	0
Amacuzac	100
Subtotal irrigable area	1,090
Total Irrigable Area	3,240
<b>Polity of Coatlan</b>	
Coatlan	460
Ocpayuca	0
Huajintlan (sujeto of Coatlan)	60
Total Irrigable Area	520

Note that the amount of irrigable land given in Table 3 for each *altepeltl* is the amount of land that was potentially irrigable in pre-Hispanic times. It is not known whether all the land that was potentially irrigable near a given *altepeltl* was actually irrigated and cultivated. It is likely that as population grew, more of the potentially irrigable land was actually cultivated.

Based on the distribution of irrigable land with respect to the locations of the 32 *altepeme* in western Morelos (Figure 1), it appears that eight (Huitzilac, Cuentepec, Xonesco, Coatetelco, Ahuehuetzingo, Tequesquitengo, Ocpayuca, and Teocalcingo) did not have substantial amounts of irrigable land. While most of the *altepeme* in western Morelos paid part of their tribute in cloth made from cotton grown with irrigation, these eight *altepeme* probably grew maize on terraced fields. In addition, some of them (Coatetelco, Ocpayuca, and Tequesquitengo) obtained fish from lakes and rivers, and some (Huitzilac and Xonesco) must have produced lumber, firewood, and charcoal from the montane forests. These products may have been traded through the market system in order to obtain cotton with which to pay the tribute.

Information from a 1530s census in Nahuatl (Cline 1993) and from a letter written by Cortés in 1538 (Cortés 1992b:186) indicates that Tlahuica *tlatoque* directly controlled the assignment of irrigable land within the *altepeltl*. Information provided by Cline (1993) from a census of two towns (each was an *altepeltl* with a *tlatoani*) in eastern Morelos that were subject to the *señorio* of Yauatepec suggests that the irrigable land of each *altepeltl* was “owned” or controlled by the elite lineage or family headed by the *tlatoani*. A particular plot of irrigable land was assigned to heads of household in the *altepeltl* by the *tequitlato* (tribute collector), a representative of the *tlatoani* (Cline 1993:74). The head of the household was then obligated to pay the tribute associated with that piece of land. Tribute consisted mostly of cotton cloth. The cotton was grown on the irrigated plot and was spun and woven into cloth by the women of the household. Corn and beans for household consumption were also frequently intercropped on the irrigated plot.

At least some non-irrigable land was described as being available for cultivation by anyone and was not assigned by officials. One plot of unirrigated land was described as a “temporary plot in the woods” (Cline 1993:75). The crop grown on unirrigated land was described as “hill maize” (Cline 1993:72–73) and appears not to have been subject to tribute requirements.

Cortés stated in a letter written in 1538 that the amount of tribute paid by the natives was based on land, not population. Cortés (1992b:186) said that land was distributed among the occupants of a *barrio* and those to which the land was assigned owed the tribute (*cargo*) tied to that land. Regular tribute was proportional to the amount of land assigned. The tribute payer lived on the assigned land “in a straw hut” and decided what crops to grow.

An individual's tribute to the "owner" of the land (the *señor* who could be a *tlatoani* or a *teuctli*) varied and could consist of giving a sheep's leg or a hen, serving in the house of the lord, bringing firewood, working the fields of the lord, carrying loads, or sending women to the house of the lord to grind corn, make bread, spin cotton, or weave cloth. This tribute is used to pay the tribute the lord owes and for what is necessary in the lords' houses (Cortés 1992b:187). Cline (1993:76), however, states that households with assigned land paid tribute in kind (cotton cloth) and in provisions (food and cloth), while households and individuals without assigned land paid tribute in labor by working for the *tlatoani* (Cline 1993:84). Thus, two sources from the 1530s, a census of two towns in eastern Morelos and a letter from Cortés, indicate that irrigable land was controlled by the *tlatoani* or *teuctli*, who assigned a plot of irrigable land to a household that was required to pay tribute for the use of the land. Note that, in these Morelos towns, only irrigable land was assigned by the *tlatoani* and households only paid tribute on the assigned irrigable land.

Smith (2014, 2015) states that all Aztec households with assigned land paid a land tax. Smith uses the term "tax" because the tribute was paid at fixed regular intervals. We continue to use the term tribute, however, because tribute better expresses the Mesoamerican concept of political suzerainty of some lords and their domains over other vassal lords. This relationship was expressed by the ceremony of vassalage (Gutiérrez 2013:150), by payment of tribute on the part of vanquished lords, by the required attendance of vassal lords at state ceremonies, by provision of *corvée* labor, and by provision of warriors. Thus, provision of tribute was but one of a number of expressions of submission by a vassal to his lord. In addition, while the Tenochcas created "tribute provinces" as a means of assigning a collectively applicable list of tribute obligations to groups of city-states, suggesting a system of taxation, each of the three Triple Alliance states imposed, for example, different packages of vassal obligations on different specific *altepeme* in western Morelos. Thus, the obligations involved in an individual lord-vassal tie could be different from vassal to vassal. Some communities in the Triple Alliance system might be exempt from tribute, but contribute through military service. Obligations of other vassal towns might emphasize labor service. The potential variability of the obligations of a vassal city-state to its lord was distinctive of this Triple Alliance system.

Detailed estimates, based on many assumptions, of the amounts of tribute paid in cotton *mantas* at the city-state and conquest-state levels were provided by Smith (1994a:Table 12.4, 2015:Table 3.5). One of the assumptions is that the "tax rate" at the city-state (*altepetl*) level was 0.40. We prefer not to make these assumptions. Here, only an order of magnitude for tribute in western Morelos is provided. The census of two towns in eastern Morelos with irrigation agriculture indicated that each household paid one quarter cotton Cuernavaca *manta* (also known as a wide tribute *manta*) every 80 days (quarterly) in tribute, making one complete *manta* per year per household (Cline 1993:76–77). If there were 45,410 commoner households in the Aztec tribute province of Cuauhnahuac (Smith 1994a:Table 12.4), and each household paid one *manta* in tribute, a total of 45,410 cotton *mantas* were paid in tribute per year by the commoner households in western Morelos (the Aztec tribute province of Cuauhnahuac). Of this total, 16,000 *mantas* were sent in tribute to the Triple Alliance each year (Berdan 1976). The remaining 29,410 *mantas* were received by the *tlatoque* of the 32 *altepeme* and the rulers of the three *señoríos* or conquest-states.

The *tlatoani*'s religious and military authority was reflected in the legitimacy of his collection of tribute in services and in kind. The right of the *tlatoani* to assign plots of irrigable land to commoner households was another reflection of this authority, which was bound up with the ability of the elite to control systems of water distribution. In exchange for access to a plot of irrigable land, the household to which the land was assigned paid the tribute associated with that plot to the *tlatoani*. It is likely that the *tlatoani* used the labor tribute to operate and maintain the irrigation system (e.g., opening and closing sluice gates and cleaning out the canals). The *tlatoani* could also assign land to other members of the nobility (*teuctli*). The commoners who worked the land of a *teuctli* paid tribute directly to the *teuctli* (Hicks 1986) and the *teuctli* paid tribute to the *tlatoani*. There were no *teuctli*, however, in the two towns to which the census in Nahuatl studied by Cline (1993) pertains.

In *altepeme* without irrigable land, terraced land may have been assigned by the *tlatoani* in a manner similar to that of irrigable land. It is likely that the agricultural terraces were built by the *tlatoani* and nobility (*teuctli*) using *corvée* labor services owed by households in the *altepetl*. Therefore, the *tlatoani* and the nobility may also have controlled the terraced land. While the Tlahuica nobility appear to have obtained potentially irrigable land through conquest, in areas without irrigable land they would have "built" the terraced land. At Cuexcomate (probably located in the *altepetl* of Cuentepec-Tetlama where there is no irrigable land) an elite residence and a small temple pyramid were built at the same time as the first agricultural terraces circa A.D. 1300 (Smith 1994b), indicating at least a correlation between the presence of a noble household and the construction of terraces.

The religious, social, and military power and prestige of the Tlahuica elites may have originally been based on the conquest and control of the irrigable land in each community. Durán's accounts of the arrival of the Tlahuica in western Morelos suggest that royal lineages were established in Cuauhnahuac and Tlaquiltenango (Durán 1867:12) which may have been the capitals of the preexisting Early Postclassic polities in western Morelos. Although there is no documentary evidence for the subsequent political and settlement history of western Morelos, the history of the development of the Chalco polity in the Valley of Mexico (Schroeder 1991) suggests that the founding of additional *altepeme* after the original Tlahuica *altepeme* were established likely proceeded through the budding-off of elite lineages, followed by intermarriage.

Whether segmentary kin connections through a budding-off process were responsible for the political development of *altepeme* in western Morelos depends on whether the "Tlahuica conquest" was a short-term in-migration of a population led by a single coherent political elite as opposed to a longer-term infiltration by relatively socially distant groups. If the latter were the case, regional *altepetl* elites could have been linked more by intermarriage than by common ancestry. At the time of the Spanish conquest, this was the case for the Chalca in the southeastern Valley of Mexico, although remembered dynastic histories indicate segmentation from a common ancestral group (Schroeder 1991). Some form of segmentation may account for the establishment of *altepeme* by the Tlahuica after their arrival in western Morelos. The state of our archaeological knowledge about the timing of presumed Tlahuica settlement, however, currently makes it difficult to characterize the social organization of community founding.

Over time, the political processes of elite descent and/or marriage gave rise to elite connections between the groups of related *altepeme* shown in Figure 1. Thus, the elite, and possibly

commoners, in *altepeme* near the principal towns had kinship and marriage ties to family units in the principal towns. These groups of related *altepeme* were reflected in the appeals in 1604 to the *congregaciones* orders (Table 2) discussed in the section Locations of *Altepeme* in the Region and Pre-Hispanic Settlement Characteristics. It is possible that the *altepeme* that were established in the vicinity of the principal towns were founded by members of the nobility from the original principal towns.

## POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE CUAUHNAHUAC ALTEPETL

As previously noted, Cuauhnahuac was mentioned in central Mexican native histories as a politically and militarily important city-state prior to the late 1300s. The Mexicas were reported to have conquered Cuauhnahuac in the late 1200s, and to have then been defeated by an alliance that included Cuauhnahuac circa A.D. 1298 (Berlin 1948:35, 81). It was also reportedly both a member of the Tepanec Alliance and an ally of Texcoco (at some time or times during the period 1377 to 1409), Cuauhnahuac was also recorded in Tenochca annals, including the Códice Mendoza, as having been conquered and made a vassal and tributary by the Tenocha king Acamapichtli at some point during his reign, given as circa A.D. 1377–1396 in the Códice Mendoza (Berdan and Anawalt 1992:vol. 4, pp. 10–13). The Anales de Tlaltelolco mentions a war with Cuauhnahuac two years before the installation of Acamapichtli, given as 1367 in this source (Berlin 1948:81). Several daughters of the Tlaltelolco king Tlacateutzin (circa A.D. 1409–1427) were married to Cuauhnahuac rulers (Berlin 1948:23).

The Tepanec Alliance (A.D. 1371–1428) consisted of the states of Azcapotzalco (the Tepanec capital), Coatlichan, Amecameca, Huexotzinco, and Cuauhnahuac. The Mexicas were military vassals of the Tepanecs and the first Mexica ruler, Acamapichtli (ruled A.D. 1372–1391), according to some sources conquered Cuauhnahuac, but other sources do not mention this. Cuauhnahuac appears to have been an independent state that was an ally of the Tepanecs and did not pay tribute to them (Smith 1986:77). Some towns in western Morelos are listed as allies of the Acolhuas at Texcoco in the eastern Basin of Mexico sometime during the period 1377–1409. These towns are Cuauhnahuac, Mazatepec, Xochitepec, Xiutepec, Zacatepec, and Coatlan. This suggests that during this time, these towns were independent states. Available information does not indicate that they paid tribute to Texcoco. The Mexica ruler Huitzilihuitl (ruled 1391–1415) obtained access to cotton from western Morelos through trade by marrying the daughter of the ruler of Cuauhnahuac in the 1390s.

Although Smith (1983:87) provides a list of towns in western Morelos which he says were subject to the Tepanec state during the Tepanec Alliance, both Gibson (1971:388) and Carrasco (1999:196–198) have concluded that this list from the *Memorial de los Pueblos* (1940:119) pertains to the later part of the Triple Alliance or Aztec empire. Nevertheless, Tecpan descendants claimed that Cuauhnahuac had paid tribute as part of the Tecpan empire, prior to the rise of the Triple Alliance (Carrasco 1984; Regidores de Azcapotzalco 1561).

Cuauhnahuac appears to have left the Tepanec Alliance circa A.D. 1400 and became an ally with Chalco, a city-state in the southeastern Basin of Mexico that was an enemy of the Tepanecs and later fought the Mexicas and the Triple Alliance. Cuauhnahuac remained an ally of Chalco until it was conquered by the Triple Alliance in A.D. 1438 (Chimalpahin et al. 1965:187).

Cuauhnahuac reportedly fought Tetelpa in A.D. 1390, which was also allied with Xiutepec and Yauatepec (Lehmann 1938:176). This situation is of particular interest because of information indicating that at this time ambassadors from Xiutepec, Yauatepec, and Tetelpa traveled to “Mexico” (probably Tenochtitlan) bearing gifts with the purpose of establishing an alliance. It could be presumed that such an alliance would have furthered efforts by these polities to counter the political and military designs of Cuauhnahuac. This incident raises the possibility, at least, that the regional *señoríos* of Xiutepec and Tlaquiltenango, in the face of the threat from Cuauhnahuac, appealed to outside alliances.

As discussed in the section Locations of *Altepeme* in the Region and Pre-Hispanic Settlement Characteristics, Tetelpa appears in a list of towns that later were said to have paid tribute directly to the *tlatoani* of Cuauhnahuac (Benavente 1984). Thus, it appears that circa A.D. 1390 Tetelpa was conquered by, and then paid tribute to, the ruler of Cuauhnahuac. The presence of a resident friar there in 1604 suggests that Tetelpa was a principal town and the head of a group of related *altepeme* (that included Panchimalco, Molotla, and Xoxocotla) in pre-Hispanic times (Figure 1 and Table 1). Cuauhnahuac’s war with Tetelpa may have resulted in the group of related *altepeme* headed by Tetelpa being incorporated into the Cuauhnahuac *señorío* between 1390 and 1400. Based on geography, it is likely that Cuauhnahuac had conquered Xochitepec and its group of related *altepeme* prior to conquering Tetelpa. Although there is no documentary evidence on this point, it is possible that the group of related *altepeme* headed by Mazatepec (which did not include Coatlan) was also incorporated into the Cuauhnahuac *señorío* at this time. Thus, by circa A.D. 1400, it is possible that the *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac had expanded by incorporating neighboring groups of related *altepeme*, including Xochitepec, Tetelpa, and Mazatepec. This would have greatly increased the amount of tribute collected by Cuauhnahuac. For comparison, settlement pattern data indicate that the Yauatepec *señorío* in eastern Morelos also expanded circa 1400 when the Yauatepec *altepetl* conquered the other six *altepeme* in the Yauatepec Valley (Hare 2001:22). The expansion of territory and tribute may have prompted moving the epicenter (civic-ceremonial center) of the capital of the *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac from Teopanzolco to a more defensible location in what is now central Cuernavaca (the location of the Palace of Cortés), which Smith (2010:140) thinks also occurred circa A.D. 1400. We note that, while we can identify Cuauhnahuac as an expanding regional *señorío*, we lack document-based inferences about possible prior local conflicts and local territorial expansions or contractions for the western Morelos *señoríos* before the later 1300s. Inference from archaeological data may be helpful in this regard in the future.

In A.D. 1423, the Cuauhnahuac *señorío* attacked and conquered part of the Coahuixca-speaking area to the south in what is now the Mexican state of Guerrero. Coahuixca was “a rustic Nahuatl” language and was spoken at Huitzoco (now Ciudad Huitzoco, Guerrero), the capital of a former native state about 28 kilometers south of Tehuixtla, Morelos (Gerhard 1993:146). Huitzoco may have been the Coahuixca state conquered by Cuauhnahuac.

Thus, immediately prior to the Triple Alliance conquest of Cuauhnahuac in the 1430s, it is suggested that there were three *señoríos* in western Morelos: Cuauhnahuac, and Xiutepec, and Tlaquiltenango (Figure 1 and Table 1). Each of these *señoríos* would have received tribute from the subject *altepeme* over which they exercised influence or “*dominio*.” As noted previously, we lack specific information about the tribute relations of the local *altepeme* for each of these *señoríos*. The grouping of subject *altepeme*

for these *señoríos* has been based on information from the early colonial *congregaciones* and other sources, as previously discussed. It is likely that the *señorío* of Cuauhnhuac included the groups of related *altepeme* headed by Xochitepec, Mazatepec, and Tetelpa (shown as principal towns in Table 1).

The *señorío* of Xiutepec included only the group of related *altepeme* headed by Xiutepec. These *altepeme* all received water for irrigation from the springs at Xiutepec. Von Mentz (2008:29) notes the political prominence of the Xiutepec regional *señorío* in the western Morelos region in the early decades of the 1400s. As discussed in the section Relations with the Valley of Mexico *Senorios*, prior to being conquered by the Triple Alliance, Xiutepec and Cuauhnhuac were involved in a dispute over a marriage proposal from the ruler of Xiutepec to the daughter of the ruler of Cuauhnhuac. After the Triple Alliance conquest, Xiutepec and Cuauhnhuac were listed as separate conquests of the Mexica ruler Itzcoatl, along with Huitzillapan and Iztepec, located in the hills and mountains north of Cuauhnhuac (Smith 1983:104). Thus, Xiutepec, Huitzillapan, and Iztepec appear to have been independent of Cuauhnhuac in A.D. 1438. Huitzillapan and Iztepec may have been incorporated into the *señorío* of Cuauhnhuac later.

The *señorío* of Tlaquiltenango included the groups of related *altepeme* headed by Tlaquiltenango and Ixtla. Although there is no mention of the conquest of Tlaquiltenango by the Mexicas, the Acolhua ruler, Nezahualcoyotl, is said to have conquered the cabecera of Cuauhnhuac and nine unnamed towns (Ixtilxochitl 1975: vol. II, p. 106) at the time the Triple Alliance conquered Cuauhnhuac. Some of these nine towns are likely the same as towns in Morelos that were subject to (paid tribute to) the Acolhuas (Texcoco): Cuauhnhuac, Miacatlan, Mazatepec, Alpuyeca, Zacatepec, and Tlaquiltenango (Smith 1983:106). Smith classified these towns as forming part of the *señorío* or conquest-state of Cuauhnhuac circa 1438. He also noted, however, that these listed subject towns could include both conquest-state (*señorío*) capitals and city-state capitals. In the list of subject towns above, and according to the model of three *señoríos* proposed here, Cuauhnhuac was a *señorío* capital with its subject *altepeme* of Miacatlan, Mazatepec, and Alpuyeca (and others) and Tlaquiltenango was a *señorío* capital with its subject *altepetl* of Zacatepec (and others). Thus, it appears that Tlaquiltenango was a conquest of the Acolhua, rather than the Mexicas. Tlaquiltenango appears to have remained independent of Cuauhnhuac until just before the Spanish conquest when the ruler of Cuauhnhuac, “*absorbó el señorío de Tlaquiltenango*” (absorbed the *señorío* of Tlaquiltenango) in 1520, the year before Cortés conquered Morelos (Mazari 1966:96). The merging of Tlaquiltenango with Cuauhnhuac in A.D. 1520 appears to have been a response to the arrival of Cortés and the Spaniards in central Mexico. Coatlan may have been independent of Cuauhnhuac as late as the early 1450s when it and Cuauhnhuac were listed as separate conquests of Moteuczoma Ilhuicamina (Código Mendoza 1980; Leyenda de los Soles 1975:128).

The amount of irrigable land controlled by a *señorío* may be an indicator of the economic and political importance of the *señorío* because the greater the amount of irrigable land that was available to produce cotton, the greater the amount of tribute in cotton cloth that could have been received. The previously discussed reconstruction of the potentially irrigable land in the three *señoríos* (Table 3) indicates a rough parity between the *señoríos* of Cuauhnhuac and Tlaquiltenango (approximately 3,200 ha each). This may have allowed Tlaquiltenango to avoid conquest by Cuauhnhuac.

Xiutepec, with about 2,600 ha of irrigable land, may have been at a disadvantage in relations with its more powerful neighbor, Cuauhnhuac. Xiutepec’s strategy, therefore, appears to have been to convert Cuauhnhuac from a potential enemy to an ally through marriage. In A.D. 1438, the ruler of Xiutepec (Cohuatztintecuhtli) sought a marriage alliance with Cuauhnhuac by requesting that the ruler of Cuauhnhuac allow the ruler of Xiutepec to marry his daughter. This proposed marriage alliance indicates that Xiutepec was not a vassal of Cuauhnhuac and that Cuauhnhuac and Xiutepec were two separate and independent *señoríos* at this time. Although the marriage proposal was originally accepted by the ruler of Cuauhnhuac, the ruler of Xiutepec was later told that the daughter of the ruler of Cuauhnhuac had married someone else. Unable to make a marriage alliance with Cuauhnhuac, the ruler of Xiutepec then requested that the Mexicas assist him in making war on Cuauhnhuac (Torquemada 1723:vol. 1, p. 149). The result of Xiutepec’s request for help from the Mexicas, however, was the conquest of both Xiutepec and Cuauhnhuac by the Triple Alliance.

Even though Coatlan had a relatively small amount of potentially irrigable land (520 ha), Coatlan was apparently able to remain independent of the three larger *señoríos*. Coatlan may have been left as an independent state to serve as a buffer between Cuauhnhuac and the Chontal polities to the southwest and to serve as a local military ally of the Mexicas and Acolhuas.

Although most of the *altepeme* listed in Table 1 paid tribute to one of the three *señoríos* (Cuauhnhuac, Tlaquiltenango, or Xiutepec) by A.D. 1430, they were still considered to be separate *altepeme* by the Triple Alliance. As shown in Table 1, the Mexicas at Tenochtitlan had subject towns in all three *señoríos*, while the Acolhuas at Texcoco and the Tepanecs at Tlacopan had subject towns in the *señoríos* of Cuauhnhuac and Tlaquiltenango.

In some cases, the conquest of individual *altepeme* by the Triple Alliance may have led to changes in how these places were ruled and administered. Six towns or *estancias* in western Morelos (Cuentepec, Jojutla [Xoxouhtlan], Xoxocotla, Miacatlan, Amacuzac [Amacoztitlan], and Molotla) that paid tribute to Tlacopan are listed in the *Memorial de los Pueblos* (1940:119) as among a group of only 17 *estancias* directly administered within the imperial holdings of Tlacopan. The explanatory heading prior to the list of towns and *estancias* subject to Tlacopan states that “in them there was no lord but rather stewards and principals who governed them. They all were as tenants [*renteros*] of the Lord of Tlacopan” (Carrasco 1999: 196). Carrasco (1999:197) notes that the listed places in Morelos (Tlalhuic) are classified as *estancias* rather than towns. According to Carrasco (1999:197), the *estancias* were somewhat isolated settlements with fields and peasants who cultivated them and were usually part of a larger town or township. In these cases, the local ruler of the town or *altepetl* where the *estancia* was located likely remained in place. The presence of these *estancias* at such a great distance from Tlacopan, and the effort required to administer them, suggests that they produced important *tierra caliente* products, including cotton.

The Mexicas placed *calpixques* (tribute collectors) in each of the towns in the Cuauhnhuac tribute province that paid tribute to the Mexicas. A governor was appointed by the Mexicas to oversee the *calpixques*. The governor and the *calpixques* were Mexica officials. These Mexica officials were not only in charge of collecting tribute, but also to provide justice and security so that the towns would not rebel (Carrasco [1999:75] discussing folio 22v of the *Código Mendoza* [1980]). While the Mexicas did not replace the local *tlatoani* in these towns, it appears that the Mexica officials

usurped some of their powers to administer justice and to make sure the local rulers did not rebel, all in order to ensure that the cotton tribute flowed directly from each town to Tenochtitlan.

These new relations of vassalage effectively ignored the local vassal-*señor* affiliations of individual *altepeme* (the relationship of individual *altepeme* with the *señorío* to which they also owed tribute). The direct control of individual *altepeme* by Triple Alliance members facilitated obtaining *tierra caliente* products like cotton directly from local *altepeme* without going through the chain of command of the rulers of the *señoríos*.

Although Smith (1983:128, 1986:79) assumed that the Cuauhnahuac conquest-state (*señorío*) continued to expand by conquering other *altepeme* and *señoríos* after the Triple Alliance conquered Cuauhnahuac in A.D. 1438, it is argued here that the Triple Alliance would not have, as a matter of policy, allowed Cuauhnahuac to extend its tributary jurisdiction over other *altepeme* that may have formed part of the other regional *señoríos* in western Morelos. Allowing Cuauhnahuac to conquer additional *altepeme* may have been problematic because this could have affected the on-going extraction of cotton and other resources from the individual *altepeme* of western Morelos by the Triple Alliance. In addition, given the long history of repeated conquests of Cuauhnahuac by the Triple Alliance (four reported conquests by the Mexicas alone), the later ones capping 40 years of trouble between Cuauhnahuac and the Triple Alliance, further expansion of the Cuauhnahuac *señorío* would likely not have been desirable from the viewpoint of the Triple Alliance. Thus, we argue that at the time of the Triple Alliance conquest of the various western Morelos *altepeme* circa A.D. 1438, the *señoríos* of Xiutepec and Tlaquiltenango were still independent of Cuauhnahuac. We also argue that subsequent attempts by the *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac to exert control and tributary demands on these other *señoríos* would have been resisted by them and also would have been seen by the Triple Alliance as both an economic (tributary) interference and a political threat.

“Reconquests” of Cuauhnahuac by the Triple Alliance in circa A.D. 1452 and in 1476 and the removal of the Cuauhnahuac ruler in 1487 (Chimalpahin et al. 1965:105; Dibble 1963:74) indicate that, like Chalco, Cuauhnahuac had to be treated by the Triple Alliance as an “enemy vassal” rather than an “ally vassal.” The “ally” vassal state provided tribute and military forces to the Triple Alliance, but was otherwise allowed to rule its subsidiary *altepeme* and interact with its neighbors as it saw fit. In the case of an “enemy” vassal state or *señorío*, the Triple Alliance intervened in and supervised not only the vassal state, but that state’s own subsidiary *altepeme*. It is possible that the “reconquests” of Cuauhnahuac reported for the 1450s and 1470s involved not only a suppression of attempts at rebellion by Cuauhnahuac, but also suppression of attempts at expansion. The extent to which Triple Alliance control could be continuously maintained, especially in the 1440s, is unclear, but Cuauhnahuac, like Chalco, was clearly a threat. By mid-century, there were increasing efforts to exert control from above. Maldonado (2018:151) states that “...Cuauhnahuac lost, in a definitive way, its independence, during the rule of Moctezuma I (1440–1469), the successor of Itzcoatl” [our translation]. Durán (1867:302) notes that during the reign of the Tenochca ruler Axayacatl (circa A.D. 1469–1481) there were “rebellions,” consisting of vassal *señoríos* fighting one another, which had to be suppressed. One of the three specific cases of “rebellion” that he mentions was a conflict between Cuauhnahuac and Ocuilan, that apparently occurred before the 1476 “reconquest” of Cuauhnahuac by the Tenochcas. This account suggests that such fighting between vassals represented

a violation of the obligations of vassals to their imperial overlords, and was treated as rebellion.

When we look at documentation of the relationship of the Triple Alliance to individual *altepeme* in western Morelos, this information emphasizes direct control of individual *altepeme* by the different Triple Alliance states, with tribute collectors, political overseers, estate and *pueblo mayordomos*, and so on, and even the replacement of *tlatoque*, as in the case of the towns that paid tribute to Tlacopan. This situation appears to be the result of two factors: that Cuauhnahuac was an enemy vassal and politically unreliable and that western Morelos was the principal area where cotton could be obtained. Therefore, the Triple Alliance directly intervened in managing their relations with specific vassal *altepeme*. We have noted that both Tlacopan and Texcoco focused on extracting goods and services from specific *altepeme* as *estancias*, presumably in order to maximize the amount of cotton cloth that was sent directly to the Triple Alliance as tribute, rather than being given as tribute to Cuauhnahuac and then being sent from Cuauhnahuac to the Triple Alliance.

Information about the 1430s conquest suggests that direct imposition of tribute requirements on individual *altepeme* began at this time. It is likely that after the initial Triple Alliance conquest of the late 1430s, direct control became more thorough with the passing of the decades. There was resistance to this by Cuauhnahuac, leading to the need for reconquest. The A.D. 1438 conquest targeted cotton-producing *altepeme*, and the towns conquered by each Triple Alliance power reflected preexisting alliances of local *altepeme* with Basin of Mexico politics such that former allies became vassals.

This interpretation of the political reach of Cuauhnahuac before and after the 1430s attempts to place a different emphasis on what Cuauhnahuac meant as a political and administrative unit during the 1400s. This interpretation stresses the existence of several independent *señoríos* other than Cuauhnahuac in western Morelos prior to the Triple Alliance conquest. It also suggests that after that time the Triple Alliance increasingly prevented Cuauhnahuac from exercising an independent hegemony across the western Morelos region. It is not clear, however, whether Cuauhnahuac in the late 1400s was still a semi-independent *señorío* that paid tribute to the Triple Alliance or was an administrative unit that was completely under Triple Alliance (essentially Tenochca) control. The fundamental question is whether a traditional local royal lineage and accompanying “*principales*” continued to rule, or whether they were replaced by compliant rulers and confederates sponsored by the Tenochcas. We have noted that a replacement of the Cuauhnahuac ruler was reported for circa A.D. 1487. Rulers and nobility from Cuauhnahuac participated in Mexica state activities, including coronations, funerals, and construction projects in Tenochtitlan, during the period circa A.D. 1460 to 1519. Cuauhnahuac was invited to, or required to participate in, the following events in Tenochtitlan: funeral of Axayacatl (1481), coronation of Tizoc (1481), funeral of Tizoc (1486), coronation of Ahuizotl (1486), dedication of the Templo Mayor (1487), and request for aid against Cortés (1519; Durán 1867; Smith 1983:113).

## POST-CONQUEST POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Cortés’ Marquesado government did not allow native town governments (*cabildos*) to form until the early seventeenth century. During most of the sixteenth century all of the towns in western Morelos were officially declared to be *sujetos* (subject towns) of

Cuernavaca and were ruled by the native ruler (governor) of Cuernavaca. In the early 1520s, Cortés, as Governor and Captain-General of New Spain, assigned 43 towns and provinces throughout Mexico to himself as *encomiendas* (with rights to tribute and labor from the native people; Riley 1973:110–111). In western Morelos Cuauhnahuac constituted a single *encomienda* but in eastern Morelos Huaxtepec, Yauatepec, Acapixtla, and Tepoztlan were listed as separate *encomiendas*. In the grant of the Marquesado to Cortés from King Carlos V of Spain in A.D. 1528, 22 *villas* (towns) were listed, but with a maximum of 23,000 vassals (tributaries) in all of the 22 *villas* combined (Carlos V 1992). The 22 *villas* in the Marquesado grant were a subset of the 43 towns that Cortés had assigned to himself in the 1520s. They again included Cuauhnahuac in western Morelos and Huaxtepec, Yauatepec, Acapixtla, and Tepoztlan in eastern Morelos.

In A.D. 1532, Cortés supplied a list of *cabeceras* with their *sujetos* that comprised the locations of the 23,000 vassals. In western Morelos, Cortés (1992a) listed only one *cabecera*, Cuauonavac (Cuernavaca) with 20 *sujetos* (Table 1). When *oidores* (inspectors) sent by the Audiencia went to Cuernavaca in 1531 to count the number of vassals, however, they said they counted the vassals in only one of the *cabeceras* of Cuernavaca, of which there were more than 20 (Oidores 1992). This pattern of Cortés and his successors maintaining that there was only one *cabecera* in western Morelos (Cuernavaca), while Crown officials reported multiple *cabeceras*, continued throughout the sixteenth century. It is unknown why Cortés appeared to be engaging in a conspiracy to conceal the presence of multiple *cabeceras* in western Morelos and lumping all of the native polities into one *villa*, Cuernavaca. Cortés and his son, however, were involved in disputes with the Crown over the terms of the Marquesado grant until A.D. 1560 (Riley 1973:34).

In most lawsuits and other legal documents dating from A.D. 1532 to about 1600 (Zavala 1984), the native people of western Morelos are lumped together as the “*Indios de Cuernavaca*” (Indians of Cuernavaca). In a document from 1533 (one year after Cortés established the Marquesado) the Indians of Cuernavaca complained about the excessive tribute required by the Marqués. The document lumps together all of the tribute that was given by all of the Indians of the province of Cuernavaca (now western Morelos; García 1984:107). Prior to A.D. 1533 (1529 to 1532), however, the *encomienda* of Cuernavaca was held by Antonio Serrano de Cardona. When Serrano’s *encomendado* Indians complained in 1531 about the tribute Serrano required, the Spanish representative of the Second Audiencia gave orders to “don Hernando indio, señor de la provincia, y a otros señores y principales de ella” (Don Hernando, Indian ruler of the province and to other rulers and nobles of it; Real Audiencia 1984:22). This document refers to Cuernavaca and Tlaquiltenango as “*pueblos*” (towns) in the province (*encomienda* area) of Cuernavaca, while Tetela, where Serrano had his sugar mill, was a “*sujeto*” (subject place) of Cuernavaca. Thus, prior to the establishment of Cortés’ Marquesado in 1532, there was more than one native ruler (*señor*) and more than one *pueblo* (town) in the province of Cuernavaca. The *pueblo* of Cuernavaca was the *cabecera* (capital) of the province or *villa* of Cuernavaca (a Spanish construct) and Tlaquiltenango was another *pueblo* in the province with its corresponding *señor*. Tlaquiltenango is not listed as a *sujeto* of Cuernavaca in the 1531 document. When Cortés’ Marquesado controlled western Morelos after 1532, however, all towns and places were considered to be *sujetos* or *estancias* within the *villa* of

Cuernavaca (Cortés 1992a). This state of affairs continued until the early seventeenth century. In most cases, no towns other than Cuernavaca were mentioned and the only recognized *señor* was the *señor* of Cuernavaca. Thus, prior to Cortés’ apparent need to maintain a distorted view of pre-Hispanic political organization to fulfill the terms of the Marquesado grant, Spaniards recognized at least two polities headed by a *señor* in western Morelos: Cuernavaca (Cuauhnahuac) and Tlaquiltenango. These were two of the *señorios* that we believe existed in pre-Hispanic western Morelos. These are the same two towns that Durán (1867:12) says were founded by the Tlahuica upon their arrival in western Morelos.

Prior to the establishment of the Marquesado, that is, from A.D. 1521 to 1531, the native government of Cuernavaca consisted of the *tlatoani* or *señor natural* (native ruler) and the lords of the various *barrios* in the town of Cuernavaca. It is likely that the *señores* (former *tlatoque*) of the other towns (former *altepeme*) in western Morelos also remained in power. After 1532, when western Morelos became part of the Marquesado, the Marquesado government treated the *señores* of the other *pueblos* (towns) as *indios principales* of *sujetos* of the *villa* of Cuernavaca. In A.D. 1538, a *cedula* (proclamation) from the viceroy stated that native rulers (*tlatoque*) could no longer use the title *señor natural*, which was reserved for the King of Spain (Haskett 1991:21). The title of *tlatoani* then changed from *señor* to *gobernador* (governor) and the rest of the nobility were known as *principales*. The only *gobernador* in the entire *villa* of Cuernavaca was the former *señor* of the *señorio* and *altepetl* of Cuauhnahuac/Cuernavaca. The former *señores* of the other *altepeme* were now known only as *principales*.

A document lists the native officials who met in Cuernavaca in 1551 to receive the decision of the Crown on a complaint about tribute and services begun in 1544:

*Don Diego Cortés, gobernador de la Villa de Cuernavaca y sus sujetos, y don Gabriel, y don Toribio, y don Esteban, y don Pablo, y Francisco Tlacatequepanecate, y Antonio Tlaylutla, y don Juan, y don Mateo Tlaxatlaquipaque, y don Diego Tlaquiltenango, principales que dijeron ser de la villa y sus sujetos* (Don Diego Cortés, governor of the *Villa* of Cuernavaca and its subject towns, and don Gabriel, and don Toribio, and don Esteban, and don Pablo, and Francisco Tlacatequepanecate, and Antonio Tlaylutla, and don Juan, and don Mateo Tlaxatlaquipaque, and don Diego Tlaquiltenango, nobles who said they are of the *villa* and its subject towns [our translation; Benavente 1984:156]).

Note that Don Diego Cortés is listed as governor of the *villa* of Cuernavaca and its *sujetos*. The listed *principales* appear to be the native rulers of the *sujetos*, or the other towns (former *altepeme*) in western Morelos. Don Diego Tlaquiltenango appears to be the ruler of Tlaquiltenango and it is possible that don Gabriel was the ruler of Coatlan, as shown on the *Mapa de Coatlan* (ca. 1550). The other *principales* cannot be associated with their towns because they seem to have lost both their titles (*tlatoani* or *señores*) and some of their native names.

Another indication that some of the former *altepeme* still had native rulers in the mid-sixteenth century (although they were not recognized by the Marquesado) can be found in the inventory of Cortés’ estate (Diaz 1992). Francisco Diaz, a Crown scribe, was sent in A.D. 1549 to conduct an inventory of Cortés’ possessions in the Cuernavaca area after Cortés’ death in 1547 in Spain. Because he was a Crown scribe and not an official of the Marquesado, Diaz recognized the fact that there were towns other

than Cuernavaca that had had independent native rulers. In the inventory of Cortés' possessions there is a description of places where Cortés had fields of mulberry bushes to provide food for silkworms. Two of these fields were located in Temimilcingo and Zacatepec. The scribe states that the *caciques* of both towns gave testimony about the mulberry fields in their towns (Díaz 1992: 429–430). This indicates that in 1549 at least two of the towns in Table 1 still had *caciques*, the Spanish term for *tlatoque* (Haskett 1991:100).

In the late 1540s, four subordinate governors of Cuernavaca were added, one for each of the *villas*'s four major districts. Originally, the districts appear to have been the four major *tlaxillacalli* or *barrios* in the town of Cuernavaca (Haskett 1991:22). By 1579, however, groups of towns elsewhere in western Morelos had been assigned to the district governors (Hospital de Jesús 1579). This grouping of towns in western Morelos into districts administered by governors in Cuernavaca removed the powers of the descendants of the pre-Hispanic *tlatoque* in the former *altepetl* capitals and ignored the pre-Hispanic political organization of the region, which included the regional *señoríos* previously described. This reorganization was a further elaboration of the theme that the 32 former *altepeme* and their native rulers were considered to be *sujetos* of the *villa* of Cuernavaca and were governed as extensions of one of the four *barrios* of Cuernavaca. Cuernavaca was the only *cabildo* government (a town council form of local government used in Spain) in western Morelos during most of the sixteenth century.

Thus, it appears that as late as A.D. 1579 the existence of towns with local native rulers was suppressed or ignored in the western Morelos portion of the Marquesado. Given that the limits on the number of vassals (23,000) from which tribute could be received by the Marquesado was removed by the King of Spain in 1560 and the fact that the Marquesado was totally sequestered (administered by the viceroy of New Spain) from 1567 to 1574 and partially sequestered from 1574 to 1593, it is unknown why the suppression of native towns continued as late as 1579. In 1560, King Philip II of Spain issued a decree stating that the heirs of Hernán Cortés (the Marquesados del Valle) were entitled to receive the tributes and services of all the *villas* (towns) listed in the Marquesado grant of 1528 (except for Tehuantepec), with no limits on the number of tributary vassals (Riley 1973:34). Thus, it no longer mattered how many native vassals (defined as the head of a household) there were in the *villa* of Cuernavaca. In the 1550s, it was estimated there were over 50,000 vassals in the entire Marquesado and at least 25,000 in the Morelos portion of the Marquesado (Riley 1973:34). Although the number of vassals in western Morelos was no longer a concern, the *villa* of Cuernavaca still had to count as a single *villa* under the terms of the Marquesado grant and the 1560 decree of King Philip II.

The Marqués in the 1560s was Don Martín Cortés, son of Hernán Cortés. As a result of a conspiracy led by Don Martín Cortés against the Crown's control of New Spain, the Marquesado was sequestered (administered by the viceroy of New Spain) from A.D. 1567 to 1574 and partially sequestered from 1574 to 1593. The Crown received the income from the Marquesado and had civil and criminal jurisdiction from 1567 to 1574. In the period 1574 to 1593 the Cortés family received the Marquesado income, but the Crown (as represented by the viceroy) retained civil and criminal jurisdiction (Von Mentz 2008:377). Although the viceroy retained legal jurisdiction over the western Morelos portion of the Marquesado from 1567 to 1593, the viceroy did not seem inclined to make any changes in the organization of local government. The only concern of the viceroy appeared to be to keep tribute from the western Morelos towns

flowing to the Crown or Marqués. The 1579 document about the four districts in Cuernavaca and the *sujetos* in western Morelos (Hospital de Jesús 1579) does not appear to represent a reorganization by the viceroy, but appears to be a statement by the local Marquesado officials about how Cuernavaca was organized at that time.

For unknown reasons, Cuernavaca is not represented in the *Suma de Visitas* (1540s) and the *Relaciones Geográficas* (1580s), which in other parts of New Spain provided information about the pre-Hispanic political organization, economy, and population of the local jurisdictions. Other towns within the Marquesado, including those in northern and eastern Morelos, were described in the *Relaciones Geográficas*. Nearby communities in Guerrero were described as well. It is unknown whether the collection of such information for Cuernavaca was prevented by the Marquesado or never attempted.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the *congregaciones* of native towns in western Morelos, previously discussed, increased the bureaucratic visibility of local former *altepeme*. The appeals to the *congregaciones* of 1603–1604 may have been the first time that the Marquesado and other Spanish political authorities recognized the former pre-Hispanic political and social organization of western Morelos. As previously discussed, the appeals showed that there were groups of towns (former *altepeme*) among which people were related by kinship, friendship, and political ties.

Some of the towns in western Morelos were finally allowed by the Marquesado to form *cabildo* governments in the early seventeenth century. The first towns outside of Cuernavaca that were permitted to form town governments were the capitals of the pre-Hispanic *señoríos*, Xiuhtepic and Tlaquiltenango, along with Coatlan. Xiuhtepic had a town government with an elected governor by 1628 (Haskett 1991:125). A document from A.D. 1630 stated that the towns in the “*doctrina*” of Tlaquiltenango, which was a *cabecera*, should elect a governor independently from the town of Cuernavaca (Indios 1630). This recognition that Tlaquiltenango was a *cabecera* appears to mark the first time in the colonial period that it was acknowledged by the Marquesado that there was a *cabecera* in western Morelos other than Cuernavaca. The document indicates that, beginning in 1631, there was a native governor of Tlaquiltenango who had jurisdiction over all the towns in the “*doctrina*” of Tlaquiltenango; that is, all the towns that were served by the friars from the Dominican monastery at Tlaquiltenango. It is suggested that the towns in the *doctrina* of Tlaquiltenango in 1631 comprised most of the same towns that were included in the pre-Hispanic *señorío* of Tlaquiltenango (Table 1). That Coatlan had a governor prior to 1631 is indicated in a document that states that the election for governor of Coatlan was voided by the Alcalde Mayor of Cuernavaca in 1631 and a new governor had been installed (Hospital de Jesús 1631). Most of the people elected as governors of the town *cabildos* were descendants of the pre-Hispanic *tlatoque* and *principales* of the respective towns (Haskett 1991).

While the native political organization of western Morelos was ignored or even suppressed by the Marquesado during most of the sixteenth century, the Franciscan friars, who provided religious instruction to the native people, were familiar with the native political organization and used it to determine where to build monasteries and place resident friars. It appears that the Franciscan friars' strategy was to build monasteries in the former political capitals of *señoríos* and to station resident friars in principal towns in order to maintain control over the local rulers.

The Franciscan friars built monasteries attached to large churches in the three pre-Hispanic *señorío* capitals in western

Morelos in the sixteenth century. The first monastery in Morelos was established by the Franciscans in Cuauhnahuac-Cuernavaca in A.D. 1525 (Gerhard 1993:96). During the late 1530s, the Franciscans must have sent friars to Tlaquiltenango to convert the native population of that *señorío* and to supervise construction of a monastery and church that was completed in A.D. 1540, as indicated by the year carved above the south door of the church (McAndrew 1965:122). The church at Tlaquiltenango may have been used as a prototype for the much larger church at Cuernavaca (built adjacent to the already existing monastery), which was not completed until 1552 as indicated by the date over the north door (McAndrew 1965:460). Both churches are similar and both have a skull-and-crossbones motif placed over the side door. The third church and monastery was built circa 1570 in Xiuhtepc (Gerhard 1993:96), another of the former *señorío* capitals. In 1574 Tlaquiltenango was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Dominicans (Mullen 1971:268). Therefore, after 1574, the people in the parish and former *señorío* of Tlaquiltenango were of a different “*doctrina*” (Dominican rather than Franciscan) than the people in the rest of western Morelos. Resistance to being moved from one *doctrina* to another is mentioned in several of the appeals to the *congregación* orders of 1604 (de la Torre Villar 1995). This may reflect resistance to movement from the former pre-Hispanic *señorío* of Tlaquiltenango to that of Cuauhnahuac.

Coatlan was not the site of a monastery and church. Coatlan, however, appears to have one of the two largest non-monastery churches in western Morelos built in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century. The Coatlan church was built just after the new town of Coatlan del Río was established along the Río Chalma as a result of the *congregación* of 1603–1604 (de la Torre Villar 1995:278), as indicated by the date of 1609 on the bells currently in the Coatlan church bell tower. While the east-west length of the churches at Coatlan and Huitzilac (another formerly independent *altepetl*) is 35 m, the average length of the other churches in western Morelos (other than the three churches with monasteries) is 25 m ( $n = 16$ ). Only the nave of the church at Xochitepec is longer (42 m) than the one in Coatlan. The Xochitepec church appears to have been built much later than the other churches, however, during the eighteenth century after Xochitepec became a parish in 1694 (Ledezma 1945). The churches at Coatlan and Huitzilac appear to be the next churches built after the three churches with monasteries were built. These two towns appear to have been independent of the three major *señoríos* during the fifteenth century, as previously noted.

## COMPARISON WITH OTHER AZTEC PROVINCES

Archaeological and ethnohistorical research bearing on aspects of the Triple Alliance empire has increasingly emphasized attempting to recover information about conditions at the local level rather than about institutions directed from the center. The agency of local social and political actors in adapting to or resisting the institutions and ideologies of expanding imperial states is currently of particular theoretical interest. In the case of the expansion of the Triple Alliance, ethnohistorical sources document in summary terms a complex system of political and economic obligations imposed on conquered polities. Researchers are attempting to focus on how imperial institutions—the obligations of political vassalage, tribute, or taxation in Aztec goods, labor service, military service, and so on—were applied in particular localities, and how this application may have varied from one region to another.

Imperial ethnohistorical documentation tends to emphasize a somewhat monolithic application of institutions: imposition of political vassalage and collection of tribute across the board. The post-conquest testimony of local communities often emphasizes non-standardized, local obligations contracted with the Triple Alliance, as well as greater local autonomy (e.g., claims of performance of military service in lieu of tribute). Such accounts generated from above and from below frequently do not coincide.

The Triple Alliance imperial system evolved over 90 years. It appears that over the decades the degree of central control over conquered areas, or at least troublesome ones, tended to increase. In addition, the process of expansion of the empire implied an increased involvement with non-Nahua-speaking ethnic groups. This led to the implementation of conquest policies that differed from those employed in the case of conquered Nahua groups. Researchers have documented the policies directed at non-Nahua groups—removal of local rulers, displacement of populations, and colonization by Nahua groups. They have also documented the ideological discourses employed by the Tenochcas and Triple Alliance to justify the displacement of non-Nahua groups. Silverstein (2001) discusses the conquest of the Chontal fortress area of Oztuma, to the southwest of Morelos, and Nahua colonization there, as well as along the Tarascan frontier further to the west (Silverstein 2017). He notes exaggerated Tenochca claims about the elimination of Chontal populations in the Oztuma area, where Nahua colonists were introduced and local lords removed. Beligand (2016), Borejsza (2018), García Castro (1999, 2006), and Tomaszewski and Smith (2011) have discussed the conquest of the Matlazincas of the Toluca Valley region by the Triple Alliance. Here, as well, non-Nahua populations were displaced by Nahua colonists and local rulers were removed. These researchers focused on documenting the local Matlazincas experience of conquest, and how this may have contrasted with the official Tenochca version of events. Overholtzer (2013) provides an additional example with the case of Xaltocan, an Otomi town in the northern Basin of Mexico, where Triple Alliance assertion of control over the town involved removal of native rulers and the reported replacement of the Otomi population that allegedly had abandoned the place, by Nahua-speaking settlers. Overholtzer argued that archaeological evidence contradicted the official Triple Alliance account of abandonment of the settlement. Gutiérrez (2013) also provided seldom-available detailed information about tribute payments at the local level, in the late case of Tlapa [Tlapan] Province, toward the Pacific coast to the south of Morelos, beginning in A.D. 1487.

Unlike areas of the Aztec empire where the conquest of other ethnic groups may have led to the displacement of the native groups and the introduction of Nahua-speaking colonists, the Triple Alliance conquest of western Morelos did not result in the displacement of the Nahua-speaking (Tlahuica) population and there was no need to introduce Nahua-speaking colonists. The relations of the individual Triple Alliance states with individual *altepeme* in western Morelos after the Triple Alliance conquest appears to reflect a special interest in this area on account of local cotton production, as well as a concern about the potential political unreliability of Cuauhnahuac, a traditional enemy of Tenochtitlan. In addition, the importance of western Morelos in particular as a strategic base and resource in pursuing imperial expansion into the territories of adjoining non-Nahua-speaking ethnic groups should also be kept in mind. The frontiers of Tlahuic with the Coahuixcas to the south, the Chontales to the southwest, and the Matlazincas to the west were significant for political events in the region during the 1400s.



The city-state of Coatlan, located along the frontier with Chontal polities to the southwest, may have served as a strategic locality for the Triple Alliance campaigns in Chontal territory in Guerrero.

We suggest that imperial strategy in western Morelos included some nonstandard features. These included the establishment of separate local tributary domains for each one of the Triple Alliance states, the setting up of *estancias* for cotton production by Tlacopan within several local city-states, the direct clientage of other *altepeme* to Texcoco, and the placement of Cuauhnahuac, along with the city-states of Chalco and Toluca, in a special category of political supervision by the Triple Alliance (Carrasco 1999: 32–33, 81). This latter was presumably the case because both Cuauhnahuac and Chalco had long been persistently troublesome enemies of the Tenochcas. As we have previously discussed, the Tlahuic tribute province of Cuauhnahuac, along with Chalco and Toluca, were characterized by Carrasco as different from both the inner conquered domains of the Basin of Mexico and the outer areas of the empire. Thus, as we have mentioned, these three regions had tribute collectors for individual members of the Triple Alliance stationed at different city-states within the domain, “unlike distant conquered areas, where joint control prevailed” (Carrasco 1999:33). These three areas provided military and construction service to the Triple Alliance in a manner similar to the Basin of Mexico cities, but were not placed in the individual sphere of influence of any one of the Triple Alliance kingdoms, as was the general rule for cities in the Valley of Mexico. The three Triple Alliance kingdoms each individually maintained direct relations with specific *altepeme* in western Morelos.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this article, we have discussed scenarios for the arrival of the Tlahuica in Morelos and the historical development of *altepeme* in western Morelos after circa A.D. 1100, based in part on archaeological evidence. Tlahuica in-migration would presumably have involved the partial displacement and political domination of existing Matlazincas populations in Morelos. We have presented a scenario for the successive establishment of *altepeme* through the segmentation of elite kin groups. It is assumed in this scenario that a key process in the establishment of Tlahuica *altepeme* or city-states was the elite control of areas of irrigable land where cotton could be produced. The segmentation of elite groups could account for the eventual founding of *altepeme* that were later documented as dependent on regional political centers or *señoríos*. We have also noted different opinions of researchers about the existence of a distinctive Tlahuica ethnic group in Morelos, and thus about a scenario involving Tlahuica in-migration and conquest of the Matlazincas. In addition, we have observed that the timing of a presumed in-migration would have affected the likelihood of a single chronologically compact process of segmentation of elite kin groups. In any regard, the development of *altepeme* in western Morelos and increases in local population were related to the availability and development of irrigation

technology and to the archaeologically-documented expansion of agricultural terracing in areas where irrigation was not possible. The city-states that developed in the irrigation zones of western Morelos were spatially compact but produced large quantities of cotton. This contributed to the political importance of these *altepeme* as both potential and actual allies of city-states in the Basin of Mexico, and as objects of conquest by these states.

We then discuss the political organization of western Morelos in the fifteenth century. We present evidence suggesting that this organization before the Triple Alliance conquest did not approximate the unitary organization claimed by Cortés and imposed by the Marquesado in the sixteenth century. In other words, the domination of all of the city-states by the Cuauhnahuac *señorío*. Instead, we have presented evidence about the existence of three regional *señoríos*, rather than the one claimed by Cortés.

We have argued that the arrangements of imperial administration in western Morelos after the Triple Alliance conquest emphasized an unusual system of distinct vassal relationships between individual *altepeme* and individual Triple Alliance states. This included the administration of *estancias* by Tlacopan, one of the Triple Alliance members, in several *altepeme*. These arrangements did not reflect the normal practice for conquests outside of the Basin of Mexico, where tribute from individual city-states was divided between the Triple Alliance states. It has been suggested that both a desire to manage access to tribute cotton, and other *tierra caliente* resources, and concern about the political unreliability of the *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac motivated these arrangements. Also, because western Morelos was a Nahuatl-speaking area, there was no local non-Nahuatl-speaking population to displace and no Nahuatl colonists from the Basin of Mexico were introduced.

We suggest that the political organization of western Morelos under the Marquesado in the sixteenth century does not apply to the earlier period of the decades after the Triple Alliance conquest. In other words, we have also questioned the applicability of the concept that aside from tribute extraction, the *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac would have been left to administer the entire region without outside interference. The claim was made by Cortés that the Cuauhnahuac *señorío* had traditionally dominated the rest of the city-states in western Morelos and therefore it counted as only one of his 22 *villas* under the Marquesado grant. We argue that this was not the case, and present circumstantial evidence about why this claim may have been politically convenient for Cortés and his successors. We have also discussed the interesting situation wherein the standard collection of information about pre-Spanish conquest political organization (*Suma de Visitas* and *Relaciones Geográficas*) either did not occur in western Morelos in the sixteenth century or did not provide information that survived to modern times. These circumstances made it more difficult to know about the political structure of western Morelos in the decades before the Spanish conquest, and contributed to the assumption that a “*provincia*” or regional *señorío* of Cuauhnahuac had completely dominated western Morelos politically during the course of the fifteenth century.

## RESUMEN

Las Tlahuicas, un grupo étnico Nahuatl, llegó en Morelos, México después de d.C. 1100. Llegaron en el poniente de Morelos y conquistaron pueblos que ya existe ocupados por Matlazincas. Estos pueblos incluye Cuauhnahuac (hoy Cuernavaca) y Tlaquilteango. Miembros de linajes Tlahuicas selectos

tomaron control de las tierras de riego y fundaron pequeños ciudades-estados (*altepeme*) por conquista. Las capitales de los *altepeme* estaban en, o dominaron por la vista, las tierras de riego controlado por el soberano (*tlatoani*). Hijos o hermanos de los soberanos de los *altepeme* originales fundaron

*altepeme* adicionales formando grupos de *altepetl* con parentesco. Los 32 *altepeme* in Morelos poniente fueron grupados en tres señoríos o estados formados por conquista hacia d.C. 1400: Cuauhnhuac, Tlaquiltenango, y Xiutepec. Los *tlatoque* de los *altepeme* en Cuauhnhuac, Tlaquiltenango, y Xiutepec controlaban gran cantidades de tierra de riego donde crecía algodón. Los *tlatoque* y soberanos de los *altepeme* y señoríos recibían tela de algodón por tributo. Los 32 *altepeme* fueron conquistado por la Alianza Triple en los 1430s y 1450s. La conquista por la Alianza Triple probablemente terminó conquistas adicionales de los señoríos y los tres señoríos probablemente ya existieron cuando llegó Cortés en México en 1519. Coatlán en el suroeste, estaba independiente de los tres señoríos y no tenía mucho

tierra de riego. Es probable que Coatlán no fué conquistado por Cuauhnhuac y que Coatlán asistieron los miembros de la Alianza Triple en sus guerras con los reinos Chontales al suroeste de Coatlán.

Aunque otros investigadores han creído que todos los 32 *altepeme* en Morelos poniente fueron parte de solo un señorío (Cuauhnhuac) en 1519, esto fué una ficción creado por Cortés para pretender que todo de Morelos poniente fué parte de una *villa* solo (Cuernavaca) de acuerdo con su concesión del Rey de España, el Marquesado. La Alianza Triple no removía la población local en Morelos o envía colonistas del Valle de México, como hacían en las provincias no-Nahuas del imperio.

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