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GOVERNING SMALLER COMMUNITIES IN AZTEC MEXICO

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Abstract

The Nahua-speaking area of Postclassic central Mexico was composed of many city-states, which consisted of a nucleated and urbanized central area where the major political and economic centers were located, and a predominantly rural area where most of the people lived. This outlying area and its small communities had to be governed, and this paper identifies, from ethnohistorical sources, the most likely tasks of local government and the local officials responsible for carrying them out. Special attention is given to the role of the local nobility, where present, and of their equivalent, when not; to overseers of labor, and to leaders of the all-important labor squads which built and maintained the urban centers. The custodians of wealth and those most likely to have been military or ritual leaders are identified.

In Late Postclassic times, the Nahua-speaking area of central Mexico was composed of a great many city-states (*altepetl*), each one ruled, usually, by one or more nobles of *tlahtoani* rank, who may be called kings. A king's palace was the center of a nucleated area containing other palaces, a temple precinct, and perhaps a market, a ballcourt, and one or another kind of youth house. But most of a city's inhabitants lived near their fields, scattered over a large, mainly rural, area which was within the limits of the city-state. Most of these houses were clustered into villages, or at least well-defined regions, often called, in the Spanish sources, "estancias," "aldeas," or "barrios." Archaeological settlement-pattern surveys in the Valley of Mexico provide a good picture of this distribution (Parsons 1971; Parsons et al. 1982). This paper is about governing these smaller communities in the Valleys of Mexico, Puebla, and Morelos, on the sub-*altepetl* level. I will try to identify the politically important people in them and what they did. By the time of the Spanish conquest, most of the city-states in this area had become subjects of the Aztec empire, obliged to serve it with tribute in goods and to respond to its calls for labor service, but they retained their own rulers and their own identities.

From our general knowledge of Aztec society, we have a pretty good idea what "governing" a small village must have involved. As I see it, what had to be done was to: (1) provide sustenance—goods and services—to the local lordly house, if there was one, (2) see to it that the required tribute and service was delivered to the imperial overlord, (3) mobilize labor for public works when called for by the state, (4) enforce obedience to the local lord or other authority figures, (5) organize and provide facilities for religious instruction and ceremonies, (6) see to it that the people had land or other resources for their subsistence, (7) resolve local disputes of all kinds, including disputes between local communities, and, (8) provide for the necessary military training. The question to be addressed is, who was in charge of all these responsibilities and what did they do?

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Practically all the ethnohistorical data we have dates from the Early Colonial period, although they frequently make reference to wars and other events of pre-Hispanic times. Archaeology sometimes helps relate the facts on paper to facts on the ground. But a great deal of the ethnohistorical data we have was written either to satisfy Spanish concerns, such as how much tribute they could get from their "Indians," or to conform to Spanish expectations, such as legal disputes in which native claims are presented, insofar as possible, in Spanish terms. We can still get a great deal of information about the late pre-Hispanic period from these, but they shed only slight and indirect light on some topics. Aztec military organization had ceased to exist shortly after the conquest, and played no part in early colonial life. Other topics were unmentionable, such as religion. The Spanish were determined to stamp out every vestige of the native religion, so while we have accounts of the gods and the ceremonies so that the priests could recognize them and abolish them, they tell us almost nothing directly about religion or ceremonialism in relation to government at the local village level.

I have organized the data in terms of political functions and the people in charge of them. They are: (1) lordly executives, (2) executives in regions without lords, (3) management of labor, (4) custodians of wealth, (5) public works, (6) organization of ritual, (7) military readiness, and, (8) enforcers. Information is abundant on some of these topics, but very scarce on others. I avoid using the Nahuatl terms for these positions as subject headings or descriptive categories because there was considerable variation, regional and circumstantial, in the way these terms were used. An excessive focus on Nahuatl terms can lead one to see differences that do not exist, or to overlook differences that do exist.

LORDLY EXECUTIVES

I use the term "executives" for those at the head of the local leadership hierarchy. A city-state as a whole, or at least an *altepetl* (a city-state could have more than one) was governed by a noble of *tlahtoani* rank, assisted by several high nobles, but it was divided into many smaller segments, of various sizes. Typically, the

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executives in charge of such segments were noble lords of *teuctli* rank. Each *teuctli* headed a noble house, called a noble "lineage" by Carrasco (1976a) who first defined it and called attention to its political functions. The lord's own household could be an extended family, inhabiting several buildings grouped around a patio, or *ithualli*, but often it was more extensive. The local lord seems to have been the principal executive authority over all the people subject to his house, which was in effect a segment of the *altepetl* below and dependent on the *tlahtoani*. The lord of the house was in many cases—but not all—related to the *tlahtoani* of the city-state, but his household usually contained kin of lesser rank: his sons or sometimes brothers or collateral kin, who were nobles of lower rank (*pilli*). Many of these *pillis* were allowed to establish noble houses of their own, *pìlcalli*, which were dependencies of the lord and his house. Some lordly houses seem to have been headed by lords who had headed houses before the current ruling dynasty assumed power, or by newcomers who arrived and pledged allegiance to the ruler. Some may have been headed by recently-ennobled plebeians. If a city-state had more than one *tlahtoani*, and hence more than one *altepetl*, each would have his own set of subordinate lordly houses.

The lordly house—and I use that term in the sense advocated by Joyce and Gillespie (2000) and Chance (2000)—had lands and subjects. Basically, a noble was a member of a family that held lands and received the services of subjects settled on those lands. Receiving services from these subjects was the key thing, because that was what enabled a noble to exercise political power. Such a family formed the core of a noble house. The head of the house normally bore the title of *teuctli*, "lord," but not always, and sometimes (but rarely) he was a she. The lord's junior kinsmen were *pillis*, which was also the general term for "noble."

A person who did not have lands of his own, and who served a noble or the king directly, was a *macehualli*, which literally means "subject;" Molina (1970 [1571]) gives "vasallo" as one of its meanings. Being subject to a noble, and owing service to him, was what made a person a *macehualli*. Under the Spanish, "*maceguales*" became the general term for all natives who were not nobles, or "principales." Earlier, however, and maybe even in the sixteenth century in some places, it is likely that there were communities of people who did not have subjects to serve them, so were not nobles, but neither did they give service to a specific noble house, so were not *macehuallis* either. Describing early periods in the Cuauhtinchan area, Puebla, the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* (Kirchhoff et al. 1976) called them *calpolleque*, literally people of a *calpolli*, or community. As a rule, *macehualli* families attached to a noble house were given lands on which they could raise food for their subsistence and possibly a surplus for trade in the market; they could pass these lands on to their descendants. For their lord, they were required to work a piece of his land and serve him in whatever way he wanted, including military service. Since the lord got his land and lordship ultimately through the good graces of the king or with the king's approval, I think the lord can be regarded as a functionary in the local *political* system. His *pillis*, if they had noble houses of their own (*pilcalli*), had their own *macehualli* subjects, over which the *pilli* was, in effect, an assistant executive.

After the Conquest, the Spanish sought to make land a commodity that could be bought and sold, and worked by hired labor; that is, an economy separate from the polity. Many Indian nobles tried to convert the political power they no longer had into economic power, and their subjects into tenants ("terrazgueros" or "renteros"). In addition, some lords lost many of their landholdings, along with control over their *macehuallis*. Thus we find, as the sixteenth century moved along, many commoners who were not *macehuallis* in the earlier sense of the term. They were commoners, hence "maceguales," but not "terrazgueros," because they had lands of their own and were not the subjects of any particular lord.

The lordly house was usually called a *teccalli* in sources from the Valley of Puebla, although at least in Tlaxcala some were called *huehuecalli* or *yaotequihuacalli*; and *calpolli* in Morelos. In the Valley of Mexico, the term *tecpan* is often used for a noble house, although it may refer more narrowly to the palace of the lord. In Tepeaca, the noble house was usually called a *tlatocayo*, and the lord a *tlahtoani*, even though he was subordinate to the *altepetl* ruler and had only *pillis*, and no *teuctlis*, for his own subordinate nobles (Martínez 1984a:15, 25, 45, 55). Sources from Cuauhtinchan use *teccalli* for the noble house, but its head was called a *tlahtoani* (Reyes García 1977:94–97). There may have been something similar in Chalco before the Mexica conquest, where there were multiple levels of noble authority (Jalpa Flores 2008; Ruhnau 1988; Schroeder 1991). Such regional variation in terminology is common in large-scale societies, and one cannot assume that a given Nahuatl term always means the same thing wherever it is found.

The segments into which a city-state was divided were in turn divided into lesser segments, and in the very informative house-by-house censuses from Morelos (Carrasco 1964; Cline 1993; Hinz et al. 1983), these lesser segments also were called *calpollis* just as the major ones were. They were usually headed by nobles, sometimes of *teuctli* rank (a lord normally bore the term *teuctli* after his name), but sometimes not, although he is still said to *tlapachoa*, "rule," the same as a lord did. Possibly he was a *pilli*, possibly a non-noble. In some of the smallest segments of the *calpolli* of Molotla (probably a dependency of Yautepec), which were called *chinamitl* rather than *calpolli*, no one was identified as ruling (tlapachoa). It should be noted that the word *calpolli* is a very general and imprecise term. As Luis Reyes García (1996) has pointed out, it can refer to social units of any kind, large or small, with or without nobles, to ethnic groups or occupational groups, to draft labor squads, to lordly houses or segments thereof, and even to certain kinds of buildings or rooms.

In Tepetlaoztoc, the cadastral censuses—the codices Santa María Asunción and Vergara—indicate that the major subdivision was called a *tlaxilacalli*, but these in turn had subdivisions of their own, which were the major units of the census (Williams and Harvey 1997; Williams and Hicks 2012). These censuses do not provide any explicit information about local-level governance, but they offer clues, in the order in which the households and their lands are presented, and sometimes the way the color red is used. From this it can be deduced that the governing structure was pretty much like that of Morelos.

We have good data on the noble houses of Huexotzinco, Puebla. The pictorial *Matrícula de Huexotzinco* (Prem 1974) includes a depiction of all the local lords and the number of *pillis* in each noble house, but does not tell us anything about their landholdings, nor what their duties or responsibilities were. The *macehuallis* were also counted, grouped by work squad (see below), but they are not linked to the noble house to which they "belonged." We also have a count of the "principales" of Coyoacan in 1553 and the number of "terrazgueros" that each had, which ran from 2 to 62, except for the ruler ("gobernador"), who had 208 (Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz 1976).

In at least some regions, there were varieties of noble houses or of noble statuses beyond *huehuecalli* instead of *teccalli.*

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Yaotequihua was a military title found occasionally in the Valley of Mexico, and Anguiano and Chapa (1976:152) suggest that possibly a *yaotequihuacalli* was the house of a commoner who had been ennobled as a reward for military accomplishments. Durán (1967: I:113–115 [Chapter 11]) reports that this was one of various kinds of lordly statuses, including one awarded for military or other accomplishments. A *huehuecalli* may have been a lordly house founded before the current ruling dynasty was established. They all had dependent *pillis*, just as did the *teccalli* and in the padrones studied by Chapa (in Rojas et al. 1987), they are recorded in the same way as *teccallis*. In the pictorial *Matrícula de Huexotzinco*, the heads of most houses are drawn wearing the diadem and cape that seem to represent *teuctli* status (though some lack the diadem), but one (Prem 1974:Folio 711r) wears a coyote (?) headdress instead of a diadem, and his cape is entirely black. The sixteenth-century *Padrón de los nobles de la cabecera de Ocotelolco* in Tlaxcala lists 37 *teccalli*, plus 11 *yaotequihuacacalli* and 24 *huehuecalli*, each with a stated number of *pillis* (Rojas et al. 1987).

A number of probable noble headquarters establishments are known archaeologically. At Cuexcomate, a Late Postclassic settlement of 175 structures in Morelos, the most prominent structure is a probable noble headquarters house. It is a residential compound formed of four interconnected platform houses (Smith et al. 1989). Noble houses and their *macehualli* dependents are quite prominent in ethnohistoric accounts from the Valley of Puebla, and to some extent from the Valley of Morelos as well, but less so from the Valley of Mexico. The Valley of Mexico was unusual for its extraordinarily large and highly nucleated urban centers, particularly Tenochtitlan, and to a lesser extent Texcoco and possibly Tlacopan, many of whose people were not food-producers. Nevertheless, archaeological settlement-pattern surveys present a picture of many small hamlets without palatial residential architecture (Parsons 1971; Parsons et al. 1982). Cihuatecpan, an Aztec community in the Teotihuacan Valley with an estimated population of about 1000, had several residential structures that were larger than average, and one particularly large one (Structure 6) that may well have been the headquarters of a major lordly establishment (Sanders and Evans 2000).

EXECUTIVES IN REGIONS WITHOUT LORDS

Particularly in the Valley of Mexico, there were some communities that did not have resident noble lords, although they were subject to one or another city-state and its king, and the common people were *macehuallis*. The rulers of the Triple Alliance states (Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan) and many of the rulers of states subject to them had extensive landholdings in conquered regions too far away to be under their close supervision.

When Tenochtitlan and its allies began the conquests that would eventually culminate as the Aztec empire, they seized large quantities of land, along with the existing *macehuallis*, and distributed them among nobles of their own or allied states, leaving the defeated nobles relatively impoverished (Alvarado Tezozómoc 1975 [1593]). For example, the *Códice Kingsborough* (Valle 1993) lists the lands of the nobles of the royal house of Tepetlaoztoc, some of which were in Chalco, and the high nobles of Cuauhtitlan, who had lands in the Valley of Matlatzinco as well as in Chalco (AGN Tierras 13/4). There is no indication that nobles of Tepetlaoztoc or Cuauhtitlan lived among them. On a somewhat larger scale, Xaltocan, in the northern Valley of Mexico, was defeated by the Tepanec in A.D. 1390, its king and many of its people fled, and it remained unpopulated until it was resettled under Mexica leadership in A.D. 1435. Its kingly line was not restored, however, and apparently no noble houses were established there yet there were people there who served the kings of Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, and Texcoco (Brumfiel 2005; Hicks 1994).

Thus kings and lords subject to the empire would have land and *macehuallis*, so they could live very comfortably, but as Brumfiel (1983) has noted, the lands and their *macehuallis* would be dispersed in various distant realms, so they would be hard to mobilize as an armed force which might challenge the supreme ruler. Very shortly after the Spanish conquest, Hernán Cortés ordered that lands held by local rulers in distant states be returned to the rulers of those states, and in exchange they would be given other lands, so that a ruler and his subjects would all be in the same bounded area, accessible to Spanish proselytization and exploitation (AGI Justicia 123/2:13 May 1533, 5 March 1535; AGI Justicia 159/2: Folio 204r; Zavala 1992:112; Zorita 1941:151–156).

Where there were no local lords to serve as local executives, the evidence suggests that this function, at least in the Valley of Mexico, was performed by a *calpixqui*. This was an office usually concerned with the management of wealth in goods and in most smaller communities he was not an executive. I will discuss the office in that context later. Alva Ixtlilxóchitl (1975 [1600]:II:380) tells of eight extensive regions in Acolhuacan that the king Nezahualcoyotl designated for the "realengo" of the king—that is, lands which in Spain would be for the common good or from which the king could make grants (Ramírez Ruiz 2006: 178)—and placed under a *calpixqui*. This arrangement outlasted Nezahualcoyotl and his successor Nezahualpilli as well, and as late as 1575 there was a dispute between the lordly descendants of king Nezahualpilli and the descendants of the *calpixqui* he had placed in charge of Atenco, one of those eight regions (Hicks 1978). Here, the head *calpixqui* and his staff of subordinate *calpixqui* saw to it that the people of the eight small communities in Atenco fulfilled their duties to cultivate lands in the region and to deliver the harvests to the nobles of Texcoco where they were stored in granaries designated for the purpose. They were also required to provide other goods and service to these nobles. It was further stated in the proceedings of this dispute that there were no nobles living in Atenco, and the general impression given is that the head *calpixqui* in effect served as the local executive. It was also made fairly clear that he was not a noble, and served simply as an agent of the king of Texcoco. Nevertheless, Pomar (1986 [1580]) tells us that the *calpixqui* in charge of a region such as this was given a large amount of land for his own support, and was authorized to distribute, on behalf of the ruler, parcels of land to those who merited it.

Communities without lords, where the *calpixqui* was the one in charge, seem to have been a distinctive feature of the Valley of Mexico. Here there were communities dedicated to producing food and providing labor for a high lord in one of the three imperial centers, but who was not a local resident. The Valleys of Puebla and Morelos were too distant for that to be practical, so it was the local noble houses, whose lands and *macehuallis* were not taken when they were conquered, that provided the major local executives there. It is perhaps significant that while in the Valley of Mexico a commoner tended to identify himself in court cases as a member of a community (*calpolli* or *tlaxilacalli*), in Tlaxcala he tended to identify himself as the subject of a given lord or *teccalli* (see examples in Sullivan 1987). This would seem to confirm, at least for Tlaxcala, the greater importance of the noble house and

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its lord as a major political subdivision of an *altepetl* than we see in the Valley of Mexico.

MANAGEMENT OF LABOR

In any society where a landlord controls a large quantity of land on which many workers labor, he cannot micro-manage the work of each one. Invariably, therefore, one finds people who are foremen or overseers, usually not of the same upper social stratum as the lord. They are essential for governing the region, but while the noble lord sets policy in his domain, the plebeian overseer ensures that it is carried out. Early colonial accounts, especially from Morelos, often refer to newcomers arriving, as individuals or nuclear families, and being provided with land for their subsistence and tribute obligations. This probably intensified after the Spanish conquest and the weakening of the old discipline, but additional labor must almost always have been welcome in pre-Hispanic times as well. As Martín Cortés (1865 [1563]:541) indicated for Morelos, it was the lord executive of the community who made the decision to grant land to the newcomer, but it was the "tequitlato" or "jurado" of the barrio who tells the lord or his "mayordomo" which lands are empty and available. A source cited by Zavala (1992:123) said there were in each "barrio" specific lands called "tierras tributarias" under the charge of the "mandón principal del barrio" whose duty was to allocate among the residents of the barrio the land that each was to work. In the barrio censuses of the Marquesado, the house of the *tequitlahto* is often listed either right after the house of the one who governs (*tlapachoa*) or right after the houses of those dependent directly on the local headman. In Tepetenchic, the *tequitlahto*, a man named Pedro Tepetenchicalqui, seems to have been unusually powerful. His own field was quite large, and he headed a patio group of 13 households, all of whom worked land given them by Tepetenchicalqui and helped him with his tribute to the Marqués (Hinz et al. 1983: II:28–39). In Atempan, the second *calpolli* of Molotla, the *tequitlahto* has the first house after the three houses of the *calpulli* head, and this *tequitlahto* has a fairly large amount of land. The *tequitlahto*'s house is also the first one listed in the small *chinamitl* of Conquechuacan, which only has three households, no noble, and no one said to "rule" (*tlapachoa*) (Hinz et al. 1983:I:41, 136). In Yacapichtlan, Morelos, those who kept the lists of tribute-payers in the small communities ("barrios y estancias") subject to Yacapichtlan under the Marquesado were referred to as "calpules y tequitlatos" (Nuevos documentos 1946:253). (<*calpol-*,community" +*e*, possessive suffix, "one who has a *calpolli*".)

Several documents from the Valley of Mexico seem to indicate that *tequitlahtos* accompanied the *macehualli* tribute payers when they went to give their tribute or do their service to their local overlord. This is the case with the people of the small town of Temascalapa traveling to the *altepetl* center of Tepechpan (Hicks 1984b:247–248) and with the people of the various barrios of Tezoyuca when they reported to the cacique with their tribute on goods and labor. In a 1584 legal dispute with the "cacique y gobernador" of Tezoyuca, the "tequitlatos y mandones" sided with the maceguales (AGN Tierras 1524/1:Folio 48v–50r).

I would thus conclude that there was a position in village government, whose occupant was usually called a *tequitlahto*, although in lordless communities he might be a *calpixqui*, who was like a labor foreman, charged with seeing to it that the *macehuallis* fulfilled their labor duties to their lord or to their community as the lord directed. Although he was provided with enough land to live comfortably, the *tequitlahto* was a commoner, not a noble, and may have identified in many cases with the *macehuallis* in his charge rather that with his noble superiors.

The work of someone called a *tequitlahto* could vary with conditions or place. That is, there could be a variety of tasks assigned to a *tequitlahto* and sometimes he would be identified with a different title, as we will see below in the discussion of public works.

A Note on Training and Socialization

In any society, children have to learn the practices and beliefs necessary to fit into their society as adults and play a productive and useful role in it. Aztec culture was no exception and many general works, drawing heavily on the account in the Appendix to Book 3 of the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún 1956:I:298–308), write about two youth houses, the *telpochcalli* and *calmecac*, with Sahagún's customary emphasis on ceremonialism and oratory. No doubt these were among the concerns of those who governed small communities. However, the youth houses or similar institutions appear to figure as an element in many other aspects of local government, so rather than deal with them as a topic by itself, I will discuss the role they played, or may have played, when I discuss other aspects of local government.

CUSTODIANS OF WEALTH

Lords of all ranks acquired wealth—material goods of all kinds, from food for distribution to precious feathers and gold. The tribute demanded by the Aztec empire from the lands it conquered, sometimes in precious goods and sometimes in basic necessities, are well known (Berdan and Anawalt 1997; Rojas 1997). Imperial tribute provinces were demarcated in the conquered areas, and imperial *calpixquis* were sent from Tenochtitlan to take charge of collecting the tribute and forwarding it to the imperial capital, where it was received by another *calpixqui* in charge of the goods received from that region and stored in the *Petlacalli*, the central repository for tribute goods in Tenochtitlan. The *calpixqui* in charge of a tribute province worked with a staff of subordinate *calpixquis*, each in charge of one town in the province. The *calpixquis* also distributed supplies to the army when it went on a campaign (Alvarado Tezozomoc 1975 [1593]:329–330, 451), and in Tenochtitlan, he was in charge of war captives (a form of wealth) awaiting sacrifice (Durán 1967:II:182 [Chapter 21]; Hicks 1984a, 1992). In distant lands subject to the empire, the imperial *calpixqui* was the emperor's representative, in some cases more powerful than the local ruler, and was often if not always a noble. Tribute to Tenochtitlan is well known (Berdan and Anawalt 1997; Rojas 1997); the other imperial powers—Texcoco and Tlacopan—collected tribute the same way.

In small communities also, the lords acquired material wealth—as tribute from their subjects, as gifts from other lords, as war booty, and in other ways—and there was an official who took charge of the goods and kept account of them. In the censuses of the Marquesado, in Morelos, there are references to people who work in the "*calpixcan*," and most of them are identified as people from Mexico. One possibility is that these were people who had been sent by Tenochtitlan to collect tribute in pre-Hispanic times, or their descendants, who remained there to work for the Marqués. They lived in the barrios among the other people, however, and worked lands like the others (Carrasco 1976b:106; Hinz et al. 1983). On the other hand, in 1552 the Spanish viceroy issued rules for the

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proper government of Tepeaca and, among other things, he ordered that there be a separate house to be called "calpisca" to which they should bring all the supplies necessary for provisioning the inn (mesón) and its service (Ordenanzas de Tepeaca, cited in Martínez 1984b:30), and this seems to fit better with the scant data from Morelos. Elsewhere, there are accounts of *calpixqui* abusing their office, rebelling against their lords in early colonial times, and/or being summarily dismissed and replaced with others (AGN Tierras 13/4). *Calpixqui* appointed to serve their lord in a distant area apparently had authority only over those lands, or communities assigned to work the lands, that had been designated to provide tribute to that lord. They did not have formal authority over the polity as a whole although as representatives of the emperor they probably had considerable influence.

My impression is that in accounts of the administration of wealth or other goods, the official in charge is called a *calpixqui*, while if he is administering labor he is called a *tequitlahto*. However, since wealth was produced by labor, the two terms could sometimes be used almost interchangeably; and it seems possible that the same individual could be called either a *calpixqui* or a *tequitlahto*, depending on which aspect of the labor/wealth process he is engaged in at the moment. In Coyoacan under Spanish rule in 1553, the functions of custodian of labor, of goods, and public works seem to have been almost merged, and the lower level custodians were called *tequitlahtos*. On a local level at least, both seem to have been more or less equal in rank or status, although this rank was quite variable. However, while an imperial *calpixqui* could be a noble of high status, I know of no cases where a person of high status was called a *tequitlahto*.

A status that is harder to pin down, but which may possibly fit here, is that of *tlayacanqui*. There were three of them in Molotla, Morelos: one each in Atempan, Tenango, and Ahuatlan, three of the smaller *calpollis* of the main *calpolli*, Molotla. All worked land which in the first two cases was given them by "the *pipiltin*" (plural of *pilli*) and in the third by the *calpoleque* (plural of *calpole*, "one who has a *calpolli*"). Their land is called *tlayacancamilli*. The first two work in the *calpixcan* (Hinz et al. 1983:I:76, 83). Sahagún (1956:II:185 [Chapter 29]) describes the *tlayacanquis* as "cuadrilleros" who called the people for an event in the ceremonies of the veintena (20-day "month") of Xocotl Huetzi. Karttunen (1983) defines *tlayacanqui* as a "leader," and Molina defines *tlayacati* as "cosa primera, o delantera." Possibly in Morelos he was some sort of unofficial boss or squad leader who worked for the community headmen. The word is clearly derived from *tlayacatl*, a term that Chimalpahin uses regularly for the five major divisions of Chalco (Durand-Forest 1987:158–211 [see also Chapter 5]; Ruhnau 1988: 21; Schroeder 1991:131–135), and the three of Xochimilco (Chimalpahin 1983:97).

PUBLIC WORKS

Quite often, rulers found it necessary to mobilize the labor force of an entire state, or a large part of it, for some special task. In pre-Hispanic times, this might have been for the construction or renovation of a major temple or palace, preparations for a major ceremony, or construction of major hydraulic works. There would also be the need to marshal labor for repairs of public works and maintenance of the infrastructure. This was corvée labor, or *coatequitl*; Gibson (1956) called it "llamamiento general" and found that it was a good way to identify the limits of a political jurisdiction as distinct from a tributary province. It was always the king, not a local *calpixqui*, who summoned the people for this kind of draft labor. A local lord could call on his *macehuallis* for work he needed done, but *coatequitl* was for public works, for the populace as a whole and its rulers. There were some duties that had to be performed for the state on a regular basis by specific communities in rotation (Hicks 1984b), but the system was especially useful for the many less predictable needs. Durán (1967:II:313 [Chapter 41]) describes the use of rotational labor in Tenochtitlan in preparation for the festivities attending the selection of a successor to the king Tizoc in A.D. 1486. Durán also reports that as soon as a child was born in the kingdom, he was entered on the rolls kept by the officials of the barrios. Everyone's specialty was noted on these official records. These officials were those in charge of 20, of 40, or 100 houses, and they mobilized the people for special tasks when needed. They were called to action by the king when a mass mobilization was required, or whenever some special need for labor arose. If there was a need for specialists of a certain kind, the officials could locate those needed.

The system surely dates from pre-Hispanic times, but it was eagerly adopted by the Spanish who used it in mobilizing labor for many of their large projects. Some of our best data come from the Valley of Puebla, where labor was mobilized through this system for building the new cities of Tlaxcala and Puebla. Indeed, the Spanish authorities issued orders for using the system (Ordenanzas de Cuauhtinchan 1559, in Reyes García 1978: 180–215; see also Valle 2006).

In Tlaxcala, beginning in 1557, the *macehualli* population of each of the four "cabeceras" was organized into labor squads which there were called *tequitl*. The household heads in each of these squads were recorded in the *Padrones de Tlaxcala* (Rojas et al. 1987). The commoners of Ocotelolco were organized into six *tequitl*, Tizatlan into six, Quiyahuiztlan into four, and Tepeticpac in just one. Each *tequitl* consisted of lesser units identified by toponyms and the people listed simply as people of that place, for instance, "Atenpan tlahca," people of Atenpan. Each such entity was headed by a *tecpanpixqui*, or "guardian of 20,"[1] although they usually had slightly more than 20 each. Artisans and other specialists were identified in each unit. Widows, orphans, and nobles were counted separately, as they were not subject to draft labor.

In Huexotzingo, in the Valley of Puebla, a count of all the people was ordered in 1560, and to carry it out, the Spanish judge summoned all the *tequitlatos tepixquis* who have charge of the "indios macehuallis" to do the count; nobles were counted separately, grouped by house or lineage (Prem 1974). The result was the *Matrícula de Huexotzinco*, and while the *Padrones de Tlaxcala* is a strictly prose document, this one is pictorial, although with alphabetic glosses. The commoners were listed first, followed by the nobles. The commoners were grouped into named squads sometimes called "calpul," sometimes "barrio," and most often identified just by their toponym. Each page depicts a "veintena," that is, 20 male heads with their name glyphs, plus a glyph for their profession if they have one, and a standing figure of the *tequitlahto* in charge of them, with a flag representing "20." He is their *tecpanpixqui*, guardian of one score of people. On every fifth page is an additional standing figure with five flags, and he is the *macuiltecpanpìxqui*,

[1] The element *-tecpan-* is a numerical classifier, used for counting people, and means "20." Thus a *tecpanpixqui* (sometimes *centecpanpixqui*) is a guardian of a score (or one score) of people, and a *macuiltecpanpixqui* is a guardian of five score. By itself, *tecpan* also means "palace."

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in charge of 100 (five score). Artisans or other specialists were identified, so that they could be called up separately as needed.

Because of an unresolved dispute over whether commoners who were already giving tribute to specific nobles should also be liable to tribute to the city or its encomenderos, commoners who were "terrazgueros," that is, subjects of a particular noble, were identified by placing a red dot over their heads. The document does not tell us, however, which noble they were subject to, so we do not know how many subjects a particular noble house had. Terrazgueros and non-terrazgueros were often placed together in the same veintena. Most of the *tequitlahto* lacked these dots, but a few do have them, including at least one *macuiltecpanpixqui*. Clearly, the *tequitlahtos* were commoners.

The 1552 "Ordenanzas de Tepeaca" explains how the system was to work (note the terminology): "Henceforth every Friday there shall come to the town council all the calpixques who are macuiltecpanpixque, tequitlatos who have charge of the maceguales of the province" ("*…de aquí adelante en los dichos viernes vengan a las casas de cabildo de este pueblo todos los calpisques que es: macuiltecpanpixques, tequitlatos que tienen cargo de los maceguales de la dicha provincia.*") and there the gobernador and alcaldes will speak to them and tell them what they are to do…" (Martínez 1984b:30).

As noted, specialists were identified as such in the rosters kept by the squad leaders, who were sometimes called upon to mobilize these specialists to produce a certain number of items. Thus the functions of custodians of labor and custodians of goods could appear to be merged, and this probably increased in colonial times. In Coyoacan in 1553, the "mandones," here called *tequitlahtos*, collected contributions in goods as well as labor for the town and its officers and skimmed some off for themselves (Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz 1976). This was unpaid corvée labor, but the New Laws of 1542 required that labor be paid, and this, plus the reduction of the nobles' political power as a market economy developed, led to the gradual disuse of the system under the Spanish. However, some elements of it remained in use in some regions well into the seventeenth century (e.g., Horn 1997:106–107).

Teresa Rojas (1979:50–51) raised the question of the relation between this system and the youth houses *telpochcalli* and *calmecac*, customarily described as schools, under either religious or military leadership. These youth labored for the temples and the military, but they also learned various manual skills, and may also have been available for other work (Durán 1967:I:25 [Chapter 2]; Sahagún 1956:Book 9; see also the *Codex Mendoza* Folio 61r-64r in Berdan and Anawalt [1997]), Indeed, the heads of the *telpochcalli*—the *teachcahuan* and *telpochtlatoque*—reported daily to the *cuicacalli*, where gathered those who would receive orders for public works. Possibly when they left the schools to marry and start a tributary household they were enrolled in a work squad as a continuation of their *telpochcalli* cohort. Zorita (1941:112, 1999:I:203) reports that (my translation) "Upon marriage, they were registered with the other married men because they also had their squad leaders or captains, for tribute as well as for other things…and although the land was densely populated and full of people, all of them, young and old, were registered, and each one reported to his superior and what he ordered without fail or negligence." As Durán (1967:II:313) noted, the people were entered on the rolls of their barrio as children. I have not found any specific reference to *telpochcalli* or *calmecac* in the rural villages, but I suspect they had them. The Spanish sought to stamp out all vestiges of the native religion, destroy the native military leadership, and educate the youth in Christian ways, so the *telpochcalli* and *calmecac* could not be allowed to continue. But draft labor for public works was as badly needed as ever, and the system of "veintenas" served very well to supply it, especially since it was not an alien imposition. Under the viceroys the system was continued and strengthened, but stripped of any religious or military content it may have had.

ORGANIZATION OF RITUAL

Information on the way the state ecclesiastical work was organized at the local level is extremely elusive. A major problem is that while we have many detailed accounts of deities, rituals, and theology, the accounts are usually devoid of any political or social context. Also, much of our written data on small communities comes from post-Conquest reports, when native religious activity was forbidden, or if present, hidden.

There were many household rituals connected with such matters as the birth of a child, sickness, and important agricultural tasks. Many of these are described by Ruiz de Alarcón (1984 [1629]), Motolinía (1971 [1536–1543]), Part 3 of the *Codex Mendoza* (Berdan and Anawalt 1997), and elsewhere, but what we are concerned with here is religion and, more specifically, the ritual based on it and sanctified by it as an aspect of government. Any stratified, state-organized society must have a system of ideological indoctrination so that the people accept the socio-political system as proper and just, including those features of it that might seem arbitrary and unfair. An appropriate ideology is most likely to be accepted if it is sanctified by linking it to religion—that is, to the unverifiable and hence unfalsifiable sacred propositions that can only be accepted on faith (Rappaport 1971). Such an ideology is most effectively transmitted by ritual, including songs and standardized orations, which must be learned "correctly." Formal orations marked almost every life-crisis event, for commoners as well as nobles, and through them, the official ideology was subtly transmitted (Hicks 1996; Sullivan 1986).

It is likely that the people of outlying parts of the *altepetl* would have been urged or required to come to the urban center to witness and take part in the major ceremonies, where they would be properly impressed, and one task of governance in the villages was to get them there. This would seem to be an appropriate task for the labor squad leaders, but I have no evidence that it was. A more likely task of governing in the small communities was providing facilities so that the people could learn the correct ritual. For this, the youth houses—the *telpochcalli, calmecac*, and possibly the *cuicacalli*—would have played an important role (Durán 1967:I:189).

Although the major ceremonies were held in the civic-ceremonial centers of the *altepetl*, there were small ritual structures in most rural villages. Parsons et al. (1982) found several isolated ceremonial structures in or near small hamlets, and Smith et al. (1989) describe a modest ceremonial structure in the Late Postclassic village of Cuexcomate, in Morelos. Motolinía (1971[1536–1543]:84, 1ª parte, cáp. 31), writing apparently about the Valley of Puebla, reported that beyond the major cities, in every "barrio o parroquia" there were small patios with three or four *teocalli* (temples or shrines), sometimes five or six, or just one; and on hills or prominent places, and on the roads or among the cornfields there were other small ones, all of them plastered and whitewashed. He tells us that there were people in the region who kept them in repair, but does not tell us how they were used.

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MILITARY READINESS

The polities of central Mexico frequently went to war. We know from many sources that nobles were encouraged to view war as the occupation par excellence, and nobles who performed well in successful campaigns could expect many rewards. It has been estimated that as much as 90% of the male population was subject to mobilization for war at one time or another (Hassig 1988:59), which indicates that the men of small rural communities as well as the cities must have participated. But how were men recruited, trained, and led at the local level in small communities? By the time most of the ethnohistorical accounts were written, the Spanish were in control and the native military system was disbanded, so specific data on pre-Hispanic military organization on the local level is scarce. Can we identify any institutions or officials in the small communities that might have played a role?

Because of the close association between nobility and war, at least in Aztec official ideology, it seems reasonable to infer that members of the local nobility provided the local military leadership. Possibly the *macehuallis* of a noble house served in war under the command of nobles of the house, but an additional possibility involves the youth houses, or *telpochcalli*.

Motolinía (1971[1536–1543]:312–313, 2ª parte [Chapter 4]; cf. Torquemada 1975 [1615]:II:185 [Book 9, Chapter 12]) says that while some of the sons of nobles were raised in the temples, other boys were raised in the "capitanías," headed by the *telpochtlahto*, of which there was one in each "barrio o filigresía," and some of these boys found their interest in arms. Sahagún (1956:II:211 [Book 6, Chapter 39]) tells of parents introducing their son or daughter to the *telpochcalli*, headed by the *telpochtlahto*, while Folio 61r of the *Codex Mendoza* (Berdan and Anawalt 1997) depicts a father presenting his son for training in either a *calmecac*, where he will be taught by the priest, or to a *cuicacalli*, to be taught by the *teachcauh* (basically "[someone's] elder brother," but *achcauhtli* has a wide range of meanings, generally involving leadership or guidance, and Molina gives "ser mejorado en lo que se reparte" for the verb *achcauhia*.)

Another institution possibly involved was the labor squads. The Spanish retained this institution as a means of mobilizing the people for corvée labor, but in pre-Hispanic times it would seem to have been ideally suited for, among other things, mobilizing the people for war. As discussed above, Rojas noted the association between labor squads and youth houses.

ENFORCERS

There must have been many occasions in small communities when some kind of force had to be used to maintain order, punish theft, or enforce an unpopular order. Who did this sort of thing? I do not have any data from the small communities themselves, but in accounts from the major centers one occasionally finds mention of the people who administered punishments or whose presence implied a threat to do so if necessary. There are hints that men who had proved to be skillful and effective warriors were likely to be employed in such tasks. The same anonymous early source that described the "veintena" system for labor mobilization also described *achcauhtli* whose duty was to apprehend *macehualli* offenders and bring them to the jail and the stocks when necessary (noble offenders were confined to their houses), but they had no authority to execute offenders; only the king could order that (Anonymous 1940). In several sources there are references to *achcauhtlis* who carried out assassinations on orders from their king (Lehmann 1974:1248–1253; Sahagún (1954:43, Book 8), but they do not seem to have operated against ordinary people in small communities.

In Molotla, the first *calpolli* of Molotla *calpolli*, following the houses of the *teuctli* come the houses of the tribute-payers, the *tequitquis*. The first of these houses belongs to Domingo Nonohuacatl Achcautli, whose title suggests a political function. He also has quite a lot of land. The next house belongs to Mexicatl Tequihua. *Tequihua* was a title bestowed on distinguished warriors, and considering how near the beginning of the *calpolli* count Mexicatl is, and that he is in the head *calpolli*, one suspects a political function here too, possibly some sort of enforcer. However, he gives tribute to the Spanish like the others. A man named Mexicatl Tequihua also lives in Tenango, another *calpolli* in Molotla, and he has quite a large amount of land (Hinz et al1983:I:9–10, 83). People described as strong warriors are found in other accounts of punishment in central Mexico, and although the documents are silent, I suspect these represent some sort of enforcing function.

When Ahuitzotl and the other Triple Alliance kings undertook to resettle the devastated and depopulated areas of Teloloapan, in what is now northern Guerrero, settlers were drawn from the domains of all three kings. According to Alvarado Tezozomoc (1975 [1593]: 533–534), the king and his adjutants called all the "principales y mandones"—the *achcauhtli, tequihuaques* y *otomíes*—to convey the order to all the subject towns to provide colonists, accompanied by a "mayoral" for every 20 households. This was apparently not a popular order, hence the use of military figures to convey it (*otomí*, in addition to being the name of an ethnic group, was an order of distinguished warriors).

DISCUSSION

I have tried to identify in this paper some of the political responsibilities that had to be carried out in small rural communities in late pre-Hispanic central Mexico, and tried to identify the administrative structures through which they were addressed. I have framed the paper in terms of functions, not offices or personnel. The small communities were outlying parts of city-states, rural areas controlled from the state's urban core and its ruling establishment. The ruling establishment could set policy for the state in broad terms, but a local administrative structure was needed to carry it out in rural areas. Details of policy varied from time to time and from place to place, but there had to be relatively permanent political structures that could be activated to deal with problems as they arose on a local level.

Rulers could not of course rule a state all by themselves. They had to have subordinates to whom they could delegate responsibility for various domains, on various levels down to the smallest rural settlements. Domains such as the provision of supplies for the urban center, and for the army; the construction, maintenance, and repair of public works such as temples and administrative palaces, canals, irrigation systems and other waterworks, and roads; the recruitment and training of warriors in small communities; the collection and storage of tribute; and the ideological indoctrination that is essential in any heterogeneous state-organized society. Those with responsibility for such matters on the city-state level needed assistants on various levels who could take charge of smaller parts of the domain.

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I see the heads of noble houses, where present, as local level executives, and certain plebeian officials as executives where there were no noble houses. The nobles normally controlled labor on the estates in their charge, and in this non-mechanized society, control of labor was a major form of wealth. The king, of the city-state or of the larger domain of which the city-state was a part, had ultimate control over corvée labor through the labor squads. I have devoted special attention to these labor squads, because they have not generally received the attention from scholars that they deserve. I would go so far as to say that Mesoamerican civilization as we know it could not have existed without them.

Finally, another domain that was part of the political system involved ideological indoctrination, essential for any complex state-level society, and most effectively carried out through the correct learning of ritual, sanctified through its links to the supernatural. Temples and priests figure here, but on the local level, it was probably in the youth houses, under the direction of the *telpochtlahto* or the equivalent, that the youth learned the correct rituals and the ideology conveyed through them.

RESUMEN

Durante el posclásico tardío del México central, una ciudad-estado, o *altepetl*, contenía un área nucleada donde estaba el palacio del rey, otros palacios de las instituciones gubernamentales, los templos principales y otras construcciones de carácter urbano. Pero también contenía un área rural, donde vivía la mayoría de la gente, cerca de sus tierras de cultivo, a veces en pequeñas estancias o aldeas. Esta parte del *altepetl* también tenía que ser gobernada. En las fuentes etnohistóricas se puedan identificar las tareas del gobierno local y los oficiales responsables.

He podido identificar ocho funciones y los oficiales responsables, o más probablemente responsables, a saber: (1) ejecutivos señoriales, que son los *teuctlis* locales, jefes de su casa noble, con sus *pillis* y los maceguales adjuntos. Un noble era miembro de una familia que tenía tierras y recibía los servicios de plebeyos asentados en sus tierras. Su control sobre la mano de obra representada por estos plebeyos (*macehuallis*) era la fuente de su poder. Además de sus funciones económicas, era oficial en el sistema político. (2) Ejecutivos en regiones sin casas señoriales locales, como en los terrenos extensos de los reyes en el valle de México. Aquí los *macehuallis* servían al rey directamente. Un *calpixqui* o su equivalente servía como ejecutivo local, y también veía que los *macehuallis* entregaran el tributo o servicios debidos al soberano o como él mandaba. (3) Supervisión de la mano de obra. Un ejecutivo no podía dirigir personalmente el trabajo de cada macegual en el terreno bajo su mando, y por eso encontramos oficios como capataces o mayordomos, generalmente llamados *tequitlahto*, que llevaban a cabo los órdenes del *teuctli*. (4) Guardianes de bienes o fondos. Los señores de todos los rangos adquirían riquezas, como tributo de sus *macehuallis*, botines de guerra, regalos de otros señores y riquezas provenientes de otras fuentes, y un oficial, generalmente llamado *calpixqui*, estaba encargado de cuidar y tener cuenta de ellas. A diferencia de los *calpixquis* imperiales encargados de los tributos de provincias conquistadas, parece que estos *calpixqui* locales, como los *tequitlahto*, eran generalmente plebeyos. (5) Los encargados de las obras públicas en el nivel local. Cada hombre, posiblemente desde su niñez, era asignado a una cuadrilla, bajo un jefe llamado o *tequitlahto, tecpanpixqui*, *calpixqui* o *tepixqui*, y estaba sujeto a ser movilizado para el *coatequitl* u obras públicas, por órdenes del rey. Los españoles adoptaron este sistema, y lo usaron para muchas construcciones y reparaciones. (6) Los encargados del ritual oficial. Sabemos muy poco de esto en el nivel local, pero parece probable que los encargados de las casas de juventud servían en esta función. (7) La organización militar tampoco sobrevivió la conquista española, pero las casas de juventud servían en el entrenamiento y las casas señoriales probablemente proporcionaban los dirigentes. (8) Los encargados del cumplimiento de las leyes u órdenes de los señores del *altepetl* posiblemente eran algunos de los guerreros distinguidos que encontramos en algunas fuentes.

En el curso de la investigación, resaltó la importancia de las casas de juventud y las cuadrillas de labor, que merecen más atención de la que han recibido. También es de notar que había mucha variación, regional y circunstancial, en la terminología nahuatl para estos oficios, y es mejor no clasificar los datos bajo un término nahua, para no ver diferencias que no existen o dejar de ver diferencias que sí existen.

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