Aztec royal pleasure parks: conspicuous consumption and elite status rivalry

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The word 'Aztec' conjures up images of warfare and sacrificial gore, yet beauty and pleasure figured powerfully in Aztec culture. Aztec rulers, like great lords everywhere, had well-indulged tastes in amusement and luxury, and invested substantial wealth in leisure facilities. Pleasure parks and palaces and their role in courtly life are here described and interpreted as vehicles for status rivalry between the two great noble lineages of Aztec Mexico, rulers of the two major cities, Tenochtitlan and Texcoco (figure 1).

The lords of Tenochtitlan and Texcoco were relatives through blood and marriage, subject to the politics of the family, as well as to the economics of co-ownership of a significant proportion of Mesoamerica's wealth. These related dynasties grew enormously wealthy in a short period (c.1430-1520) when the family tribute business boomed. Although growth had slowed by the early 1500s, their wealth was still very impressive. How natural that these royal relatives would compete through displays of conspicuous consumption, while simultaneously sanctifying themselves by appropriating meaning-drenched locales with magnificent vistas. But they did not merely claim these areas, they actively redesigned them through sweeping programs of landscaping, architecture and sculpture, investing heavily in amenities for pleasure, ritual and contemplation.

Outside the city, pleasure palaces were built in settings remarkable for their natural beauty and historical and sacred significance. While city gardens were walled displays of plants and flowers pleasant to see and smell, countryside gardens revealed the more intellectual pleasures of landscape design and horticultural experimentation; rulers planted groves of trees and built palaces among them, or selected palatial sites amidst horticultural nurseries, where exotic plants were carefully tended. Water features in these settings were not just tanks and canals, rather carefully devised waterfalls and fountains, celebrations of human engineering and ingenuity, and country palaces were situated to enjoy the spectacle of water channels feeding vast tracts of irrigated land, or whole cities.

City pleasure resources included seraglios, enclosed gardens and zoological collections of animals and of human beings of non-normative phenotype. Special facilities for ball games or gaming and gambling on board games were available for the elite classes. There were also places to observe astronomical events, to rehearse and perform poetic works and other feats of rhetorical elegance, and for recitals of music and dance. Jesters and acrobats were ready to amuse the rulers whenever such diversions were desired.

Palaces, pleasures and pleasure parks

Aztec palaces

Aztec period palaces in the Central Highlands of Mexico were found in every community ruled by a noble lord; the Nahuatl term for palace, teopan calii, meant lord-place house. The term was used for all types of noble establishments, administrative palaces as well as ones designed for pleasure,
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which the Spanish called casas de recreo. Over time, the term has come to have a narrower meaning, that of an administrative residence of the community headman, or a community building, its modern meaning. In 1519 the two great, or hue tepan callis, were Motecuzoma II’s palace in Tenochtitlan and the Texcoco palace complex, while more modest tepans in hundreds of smaller communities of the Aztec empire served as local palaces. Tepans ranged greatly in size: the smallest were a few hundred square meters, while that of Motecuzoma II was over 50,000 m², and those of the Texcocan kings, even larger. They featured suites of rooms around courtyards, an expanded version of the basic house plan in the highlands. All were made of stuccoed and painted adobe or stone walls surmounting low platforms and stone wall bases, and all featured a large central courtyard, serving as a hub of daily community activity and locus of important feasts and rituals. The tepan’s size, complexity and quality of finishing varied with the size and complexity of the area under the ruler’s authority and his lineage’s prestige and wealth.

Pleasure palaces are distinguished from administrative palaces in documentary sources. One lord in the southern Basin of Mexico, for example, had a ‘palacio... en su capital... solo para recreo y placer.’ Palaces of all sizes had many residents — the ruling family and its retinue, who were the tepoauhiquel (signifying, ‘palace people’ in Nahuatl), regardless of their social class or estate and who worshipped a patron deity, Xochipilli, the god of flowers, feasts, hallucinogens and gambling.

Aztec pleasures

Aztec ‘rulers took their pleasure’ in many ways. Documentary sources make it clear that Aztec rulers devoted special resources to ensure luxurious and pleasant, even monumental surroundings for relaxing, bathing, gardening, hunting and entertaining. Some pleasurable activities are ‘unprovenanced’ in that they were not recorded for particular locales, even though there is little doubt they were always available to the ruler. Gambling, for example, was a daily activity, and one of the conquistadores, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, recounted that sometimes Motecuzoma and Cortés would play at Tetoque, which is the name they give to a game played with some very smooth small pellets made of gold for this game, and they toss these pellets to some distances as well as some little slabs which were also made of gold, and in five strokes [tries] they gained or lost certain pieces of gold or rich jewels that they staked.

Pedro Alvarado cheated while keeping score for Cortés, but the ever-gracious Motecuzoma joked about it, and all laughed. Avid gamblers, the Aztec lords bet heavily on a board game, patolli, and ‘wagered ... costly goods — gold,
... slaves, ... cultivated fields, houses... on ball games played at ballcourts throughout the city. Nobles played the soccer-like game themselves, and also seem to have sponsored teams.

Good food was provided at all palaces, and meals at the main palace were a major daily event for the ruler and his hundreds of noble retainers. Díaz noted that Motecuzoma's daily hospitality incurred significant expense for the ruler, with 'over a thousand dishes of the food' and 'over two thousand jugs of atlatl [chocolate]... so that with his women and female servants and bread makers and atlatl makers his expenses must have been very great.' Díaz remarked on the 'excellent arrangements and the great abundance of provisions' with many types of food, ending each day's feast by smoking tobacco mixed with liquidambar. Mid-sixteenth century chroniclers provide ample evidence of the care spent in planning, preparing, and serving special feasts.

The pleasures of the great foods of Mexico are perhaps our strongest modern Western experience of any of the particular refined enjoyments experienced by Aztec nobles. Many dishes enjoyed today have changed little in 500 years, and are essentially the same foods as tasted by Aztec kings. According to the Anonymous Conqueror, '[o]nly the lords have a great variety of viands, sauces, and vegetable soups, pies and pastries of all the animals..., fruits, vegetables, and fish, which are in abundance. They use all of these... while the diet of the commoners was monotonous and meager.

Feasts were enlivened by entertainments such as music, which is among the lordly pleasures described in the Florentine Codex. The ruler sang, and his lords 'told him proverbs and pleasantry to pass the time.' And, as was the case in Europe at that time, lords at court were entertained by 'jesters... And [those] who rolled a log with their feet,' an acrobatic trick so remarkable that after Aztecs performed before Pope Clement vii during their 1528–1529 European tour, he thanked God he lived in an age to see such things.

'They kept eagles, ocelots, bears, mountain cats, and various birds.' They hunted deer and rabbits with bow and arrow, darts, blowguns, and nets. They were attended by 'pages who... gave them solace; dwarfs, cripples, hunchbacks, servants.' Hunchbacks were highly valued as personal attendants, particularly when the lords bathed, as they did in spring-fed pools and enclosed sweatbaths (temascal in Nahuatl). There is some documentary and archaeological evidence that sweatbaths were located in the service courtyards of palaces; excavations in Mexico located what may have been the temascal section of Motecuzoma's main palace, and in the rural village of Cihuatepec, two temascal were found in the rear courtyards of the teopan palace.

About the carnal aspect of Aztec noble life, and especially about sex as a pleasure palace activity, we know relatively little. Many of the Spanish chroniclers were Catholic clergy who had renounced sex in their own lives. Their sermons in praise of moderation sounded an ethical theme familiar to the Aztecs, because the indigenous moral code propounded moderation for all: young men would become impotent from too much sex, and such indulgence would unleash an inherent insatiability in young women. Unions outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage could carry the death penalty (for incest, lesbianism, adultery, breaking priestly vows of celibacy). Sexual pleasure is not in Fray Sahagún's Florentine Codex summary of royal enjoyments, but other sources document royal sexual activities in the palace. Aztec kings had access to many women — some are reported as having several hundred wives and concubines — in relationships bearing a wide variety of legitimacy. Polygyny was permitted to any man who could afford it, such men were usually nobles.

'Sexual satisfaction' by definition impels a search for other amusements. Among the more sophisticated are various forms of mastery demanding concentrated training and honing of skills. Beyond physical excellence (dancing, sports, sex), is the heightened pride of social and political dominance, a trait that kings specialize in; their most successful courtiers flatter them, reminding them of their royal highness, and palatial surroundings reinforce this notion. Yet, in spite of their differential access to many forms of purchased or inherited mastery, kings, like all others, could only achieve actual artistic or intellectual mastery by hard work and creativity.

Some of the lords were known to enjoy these other, more intellectual pleasures. The pleasure of accomplishment as a skilled artisan requires a personal commitment of time and concentration, unlike passive amusements and flattery, available to anyone able to pay for them. Aztecs set great store by learning and by achieving mastery over crafts, dances, musical instruments, rhetoric and poetics. Suitable occupations for nobles included luxury craft production, poetry, horticulture, architecture and landscape design. Aztec rulers and their families were to set the example in such things, and
the great Texcoco ruler, Nezahualeyoitl, (reigned c.1430–1472), placed the school of higher learning in Texcoco next to his main topan palace, reflecting his particular appreciation for the pleasures of intellectual mastery, and readily affording himself opportunities to work with scholars and artisans in residence.

The pleasure of Aztec gardening. Flower gardens were laid out and gardening was a favorite pastime and an elite profession. Spanish observers noted the beauty and ubiquity of gardens in and around elite residences. Mesoamerica gave the world such decorative flowers as dahlias, cosmos and marigolds. Many special garden terms are found in the Nahuatl language, and descriptions of gardens beloved by Aztec nobles (and coveted by Spanish conquistadores) reveal highly refined horticultural practices. Flowering and fragrant plants and many shrubs, trees and medicinal plants were prequisites of the lords, according to Cervantes de Salazar.

The climate of the Aztec heartland, the high altitude Basin of Mexico, was a challenge to gardeners, with a frost season running from October to April, however, 'doubtless ... the native gardeners had learnt ... that many plants thrive best among rocks which not only preserve moisture but also the heat of the sun, which counteracts the chilliness of the night temperature in this high altitude.'

The lords created groves and gardens to recreate paradise around themselves, a notion which 'corresponded to Aztec and European perceptions of the locus of human origins and a most desirable hereafter.' Lords set out dramatic groves and sweeping formal lines of great cypress trees. This cypress, the ahuehuetl (Taxodium 'Montezuma Cypress,' Mexico's national tree) grew to 60 m with evergreen foliage, a humble yet dignified presence whose name was an Aztec metonym for the lords themselves, and thus the trees strengthened the sense of royal majesty.

The grand geometric effect created by lines of these huge trees suggests that the Aztecs had a linear style of landscape design that complemented the more naturalistic style demonstrated in their zoos, where appropriate environments were recreated for the animals in captivity. Musset used the familiar contrast between the geometric gardens of France and the 'natural' park gardens of England to highlight such differences among the different kinds of Aztec gardens. Variety in Aztec garden design styles was discussed by Lombardo for Tenochtitlan, where king Ahuizotl's grand-spirited style (reigned 1486–1502) in the 1480s differed from the mannerism of Motecuzoma II (reigned 1502–1520). Although not a single garden plan has survived to clarify such issues, it is apparent that noble masters of landscape design would have experienced the transcendent pleasure of doing meaningful work well, and at a grand scale: pleasure park development was, in itself, a pleasure.

Pleasure palaces and parks

Pleasure palaces are fantastical settings of amusement and residence, and they manifest the power of their creators. In ancient Mexico, this was the power of the ruler to command the resources of his domain, today it would be the power of money — and they express a society's fundamental values about how to spend time, a resource which is much more democratically distributed than wealth.

Aztec rulers had many places in which to relax, ranging from fenced game parks to urban 'gardens' devised of precious metals and jewels. They cut bathing pools into cliff faces in the mountains, and in zoos near their main administrative palaces in the cities they kept wild beasts and raptorial birds. They gambled on sports and games, and gamboled with their concubines, all in luxurious settings. For Aztec rulers, pleasure amenities were an important part of daily life, providing luxurious surroundings where opulence and exclusiveness, flattered and soothed exalted personages. Even after Motecuzoma II had been take prisoner by the Spaniards,

... many times he asked my permission to go and spend some time at certain residences [casa de recreo] which he owned both inside and outside the city, and not once did I refuse him.

The sixteenth-century chronicler Motolinía noted that Motecuzoma had aviaries, and many gardens and orchards in these he had his lodgings. He had rocky hills surrounded by water and on these roamed abundant game. He had enclosed forests and mountains and in these there were many fine houses and cool lodgings well swept and clean, because his servants were as numerous as those of the greatest lord on earth.

The lords of the Basin of Mexico had at least a score of special purpose royal parks situated away from the main palaces at distances ranging from 100 m to...
STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES: EVANS

TABLE 1. Pleasure parks in the Central Highlands of Mexico, contact era (AD 1520)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acatetelco</td>
<td>Atenco major horticultural garden with grove, pool, palace; lakeshore plain; Texcoco (5 km SE).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amecameca</td>
<td>Tzcaualli Tenango local lord's pleasure palace in the town.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlaxco</td>
<td>Gardens in town tributary to Tenochtitlan (95 km NW). (Musset 1986: 66.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calpulapan</td>
<td>Gardens in town tributary to Texcoco (35 km to the W), in hostile border region; area specialized in medicinal plants. (Alva 1985: II:114; Brasdefer 1979.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapultepec</td>
<td>Major royal retreat, wooded hill with springs; Tenochtitlan (5 km ENE).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimalhuacan</td>
<td>Chalco 'a pleasure house in the country' near the town of Chimalhuacan Chalco (Lopez de Gomara 1966: 135; also Cortes 1986: 79).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cozcauauhco</td>
<td>Forested hill, game preserve for Texcoco, 5 km distant. (Alva 1985: I:114; Gillmor 1954-1955: 360.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuauhualco</td>
<td>Forested hill, game preserve for Texcoco, 5 km distant. Large cave provided refuge for Nezahualcoyotl in exile and for other historically important visitors. Some accounts say Quinatzin was buried there. (Codex Xolotl, Luminia 8; Porrer 1941: 55; Alva 1985: I:114, 534, 537; Gillmor 1954-1955: 360.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuatzlachitlan</td>
<td>Forested hill, game preserve for Texcoco, 5 km distant. (Alva 1985: II:114; Gillmor 1954-1955: 360.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huaxtepec</td>
<td>Major horticultural garden with grove, pool, palace; tropical hillside; Tenochtitlan (60 km NW).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ixtapalapa</td>
<td>Gardens of the town's tepan palace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazaapan</td>
<td>Gardens in town tributary to Texcoco (35 km W), in hostile border region; area specialized in medicinal plants. (Alva 1985: II:114; Brasdefer 1979.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenochtitlan</td>
<td>Zoo-aviary complex major urban pleasure park; gardens, palaces, collections of rarities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Tepepulco major game preserve with palace; island in Lake Texcoco; Tenochtitlan (12 km NW).  
Tepetzinco major game preserve with palace, hot springs, water god shrine; island in Lake Texcoco; Texcoco (23 km E).  
Texcoco zoo-aviary complex major urban pleasure park; gardens, palaces, collections of rarities.  
Texcotzinco major royal retreat, wooded hill with springs; Texcoco (7 km WSW).  
Tzinanocotoc forested hill, game preserve for Texcoco, 4.5 km distant. Favored place of early Texcoco rulers, birthplace of Nezahualcoyotl's father Ketzilxochitl in c.1368. (Alva 1985: I:114; 115; Mendizabal 1946; Gillmor 1954-1955: 366.)  
Yehualica gardens, palace, possible water god shrine, canal system, ponds, in town tributary to Texcoco (35 km W), in hostile border region; area specialized in medicinal plants. (Alva 1985: II:114; Brasdefer 1979.)

100 km (figure 1; table 1). Parks overlapped in functions and amenities, and each shows sensitivity to its site's unique character and resources. Parks featured luxurious houses, rock-cut baths, and bas reliefs sculpted into cliff faces that became enormous artistic and iconographic statements, commemorating dynastic history and the sacred significance of the sites. Shrines, tombs, columnaria, temples and performance space were found in some parks. Animals were accommodated in enclosures ranging from cages in zoological gardens to game reserves.

These places and their histories were well known to the native population, and during the Early Colonial period many observers described them, for motives ranging from greed to moral outrage to scholarly concern for the preservation of an eclipsed way of life. Material evidence — the sites, their buildings and landscape features, their refined accoutrements — is scarce; these places unfortunately share the sorry fate of so many Aztec structures and goods. What survived the conquest process and fervent iconoclasm of the sixteenth century fell prey to ignorance and idle destructiveness: the bas relief portraits of Tenochtitlan rulers, carved into the rock face of Chapultepec Hill, suffered when 'one of the last Spanish viceroys ... tried to blow them up with gunpowder.'
While no single pleasure site is completely documented and fully studied archaeologically, fragmentary evidence from many sources and about numerous locations allows a coherent view to emerge. In the big cities of Tenochtitlan and Texcoco, the two most important in the Basin of Mexico, rulers had gardens, zoos and aviaries. A short distance from these cities were the magnificent pleasure parks, Chapultepec (near Tenochtitlan) and Texcoco (near Texcoco). Each ruler also had hunting preserves, and horticultural gardens, and smaller retreats at numerous other locations. Great rulers were not alone in having special pleasure palaces, as attested by the reference noted above, to a local lord with a ‘palacio...sólo para recreo y placer.’

Types of pleasure parks. Aztec lords had four basic types of park: great imperial retreats, urban amusement parks, horticultural gardens, and wooded game reserves. Tenochtitlan and Texcoco could boast similar magnificent examples of each type.

The great imperial retreats, Tenochtitlan’s Chapultepec and Texcoco’s Texcoco, were developed in monumental style on dramatic, historically significant sacred hills near the capitals. The two parks were great aesthetic and technological achievements, demonstrating the lords’ power to appropriate places of unusual beauty and significance and command massive resources to achieve their plans of landscape mastery. Both parks were within two hours’ walk (or litter ride) from their respective capitals.

Urban amusement parks consisted of gardens, zoos and aviaries close to the main palaces, developed in grand style from the mid-fifteenth century on. These settings conjoined amusements (e.g., watching wild animals) with historically important, even sacred locations. They also demonstrated political control over vast areas by the exotic array of species gathered in tribute, coupled with the rich materials in use in the parks.

Horticultural gardens were established in many locations. Tenochtitlan’s Huaxtepec and Texcoco’s Acatepec were the most elaborate, with water gardens, groves, and palaces developed in the mid- to late-fifteenth century. They also served as propagation nurseries, ‘semeventas’ (seed beds) and plantations for the production of plants, medicines, cut flowers and foliage, the latter two providing materials that were used in great quantities wherever lords convened. Rulers of fifteenth-century Basin of Mexico gained prestige for growing unusual plants and commanded them to be given in tribute.

In forested mountains, lords maintained game reserves. Aztec nobles loved to hunt, with weapons, raptorial birds and crews of game keepers. Each capital had a major game park: Tepeyolco for Tenochtitlan, and Tepetzinco for Texcoco. Both were promontory islands in Lake Texcoco, with historic and sacred importance, developed into parks that were rustic in function, with wild habitats for hunting, yet also had opulent palaces and water god shrines. Their similar names are based on the root word tepetl (Nahuatl for hill), and chroniclers often confused the sites.

Urban and pleasure park development by Tenochtitlan and Texcoco

The Basin of Mexico tradition of elite development of palace gardens and special parks may date at least from Teotihuacán’s apogee, early in the first millennium AD. Aztec royal pleasure parks are first mentioned as rural retreats for Texcoco’s fourteenth-century rulers (see, for example, Tzintzincañáctoc, table 1). Then, in the 1420s, Tenochtitlan’s Chapultepec pleasure park was begun, and the tradition has continued, with changes in ownership, to the present. Aztec rulers developed pleasure parks with great enthusiasm in the mid- to late-fifteenth century, when Tenochtitlan and Texcoco engaged in a recreational building boom contest that no other cities could afford.

With projects like Chapultepec and Texcoco, Tenochtitlan and Texcoco and their parks shared a sequence of five phases of development from AD 1000 to 1600. Although both cities drew similar benefits from their allied program of tributary empire expansion, it should be noted that Texcoco had a longer urbanized history, suffered less damage from periodic natural disaster and benefited from a more stable rule: two rulers during a long crucial period (1431-1515) that witnessed six kings in Tenochtitlan. But Tenochtitlan’s more varied political history, sequence of urban renewal, and life in its palaces and parks are better documented.

Phase 1, Urban inception: c. AD 1000 to 1420s

Tenochtitlan. Sixteenth-century Aztec tribes in the Basin of Mexico shared a tradition of origin in Azlán, a semi-mythical locale hundreds of kilometers away in northwestern Mexico, whose name is sometimes interpreted as the Place of Whiteness. Around AD 1000, as refugees from conflicts during Tula’s
hegemony, the Toltec and Chichimec ancestors of the Aztecs settled all over the Basin, and pioneered such marginal areas as the marshy western shores of Lake Texcoco, which provided good camping grounds for nomadic groups.

Along this lake shore stood Chapultepec, a hill with abundant springs, and one of the most important refuges on the western mainland. In 1162, the exiled Toltec king Huemac killed himself in Chapultepec's Cincoaco Cave, which came to be known as an entrance to Tlacocan, the paradise of the Storm God, guarded by the spirit of Huemac.

In the 1200s, migrant Aztecs who would become known as the Tenochca (of Tenochtitlan) established a fortified encampment at the summit, but were driven away by unfriendly neighbors. The Tenochca knew they were near their promised land, however, when they saw a vision in the mist-shrouded marshy islands of western Lake Texcoco: a place of whiteness — white trees, albino animals, birds, and fish — that was their new Aztlán, where their great capital would later rise.

The Tenochca on Chapultepec were betrayed to their enemies by their kinsman Copil, who 'went up to the top of a hill called Tepetzingo ... to watch the destruction of the Aztecs.' On this wooded promontory island the Aztecs caught and slew [Copil, casting] his heart into the middle of the lake... out of his heart sprouted the prickly pear cactus where later the city of Mexico–Tenochtitlan was built.

Tenochtitlan and its adjacent sister city Tlatelolco were formally founded in the fourteenth century according to their legend, but there is archaeological evidence of eleventh-century settlement on the marshy islands. Turning these boggy bits of high ground into a city involved cutting canals and using the fill to create solid islands. Development saw bridges, dikes, pathways, causeways and aqueducts in increasing numbers and sophistication, pulling the city together into a rough but coherent quadruplicate grid, with the ritual precinct and chiefly residence at its center. On Copil's Tepetzingo Island a beacon was erected to orient navigation in the canal system and on Lake Texcoco; it may have been a focal point of the layout of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco, particularly with regard to the canal system.

Tenochtitlan had probably become a considerable town by the 1370s, when it gained its first noble ruler, Acamapichtli. He may have lived at or close to the shrine that was later to grow into the Templo Mayor (figures 2a and 2b). As Lombardo perceived, Tenochtitlan reversed the more common pattern of urban growth: with its precociously urban nucleated center and socially differentiated neighborhoods, it then conquered a hinterland capable of sustaining the center.

Texcoco. Texcoco's earliest archaeological materials also date from just after AD 1000. Archaeological evidence from the thirteenth century substantiated the early establishment of the city's six ethnically distinct sectors, as reported by the chroniclers. These sectors included enclaves of skilled artisans who contributed to Texcoco's enduring reputation for elegance and erudition.

Texcoco's tradition of monumental architecture no doubt predated that of Tenochtitlan. The palace of fourteenth-century king, Quinatzin, 'was for many years the principal feature of Texcoco, housing the ruler and his court' and later served as council hall for the lords of Texcoco up to the time of the Spanish Conquest. Quinatzin died in 1357 and was buried at nearby Texcotzingo, the prominent and isolated foothill of the Sierra, rising c. 200 m above the plain. Even in the fourteenth century, it probably had some formal shrines and buildings, including lodgings for the king.

Late-fourteenth-century Texcoco was probably a far more sophisticated city than Tenochtitlan, and Texcocan lords may have then begun to develop formal pleasure parks. They certainly failed at statecraft, because in 1418 they lost their domain to the Tepanecs (figure 1), who assassinated the king and drove the nine-year-old heir, Nezahualcoyotl, into exile. He spent his first night in hiding at Texcotzingo. From there, he made his way east to the Calpulapan region (figure 1 and table 1). By the late 1420s he was living in Tenochtitlan with his cousins, the rulers.

Phase 2, Independence and urbanization: 1420s to c. 1450

Tenochtitlan was also a vassal state of Texcoco's Tepanec overlord. By the 1420s Tenochtitlan was increasingly presumptuous, demanding monopolistic control of the important Tepanec-controlled springs at Chapultepec, which had become the growing city's major potable water source. The water was carried by a long aqueduct (figures 2a and 2b) built in the 1420s and 1430s. Nezahualcoyotl is credited with directing this effort, and with building a palace at Chapultepec springs for his Tenochca cousins and with planting a grove in the environs. Chapultepec's pleasure palace is thus the first documented example of Aztec monumental pleasure park development and the start of Nezahualcoyotl's distinguished career in landscape design.
AZTEC ROYAL PLEASURE PARKS: CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION AND ELITE STATUS RIVALRY

Figure 2a. Tenochtitlan and environs: Locations of pleasure parks and other major features (after Gonzalez Aparicio 1968; Carena Stampa in Dahlgren et al. 1982, Figure 75).

Figure 2b. Nuremberg map of Tenochtitlan and environs, made in 1524 to accompany the publication of Cortés’s Second Letter. Drawn in Europe from information provided by Cortés, it shows Tenochtitlan’s buildings drawn European-style, but it is generally reliable in terms of spatial relations of larger features.

It is only natural that, as he worked on the Chapultepec palace, Nezahualcoyotl would have been thinking about his own family retreat at Texcotzingo, because from Chapultepec Hill, looking directly across Tenochtitlan, he would be able to see it in the distance—a hill standing behind his city, as sacred to his dynasty as Chapultepec was to the Tenochca (figure 3). In this single line of vision (figures 1 and 2a) the two hills were the ends of the axis, each behind its capital city (each capital with its artificial hill, a great pyramid), forming a balanced linear symmetry and aligned duality. Each stood facing the other across the lake as a perfect mirrored embodiment of the Aztec concept of the city-state, the altepetl, water-hill. Duality is “one of the basic structural principles of Mesoamerican religious thought . . . a recognition of the essential interdependence of
opposites', and of undoubted importance to Nezahualcoyotl, who would embed dualistic themes into the design of Texcoco, his own great imperial retreat.

The first step toward developing Texcoco was liberating it and other territories from the usurping Tepeces. War was precipitated over Tenochca appropriation of Chapultepec and its springs. Tepecs defeat in c.1430 marked the establishment of Tenochca and Texcoco independence, and the start of the Aztec tribute empire.

Victory over the Tepecs regained for the Texcocan branch of the family its sizeable domain and brought both cities a regular income in goods and labor from the former Tepecs tributary system. Tenochtitlan's first king, Acamapichtli (ruled 1375–1396) would have been proud to know that his son, Itzcoatl of Tenochtitlan (ruled c.1430–1441), and his grandson, Nezahualcoyotl of Texcoco (ruled 1431–1472), would come to control most of the Basin of Mexico, and these rulers began to enjoy the tremendous benefits of tens of thousands of tribute offerings in goods and labor, which they invested in building more substantial capitals.

Tenochtitlan's plan became more orthogonal, establishing permanently an urban grid centered upon the Templo Mayor precinct, whose limits were laid out in about 1435 (figure 2a). At this time other civic-ceremonial buildings were constructed, among them Axayacatl's palace. In Texcoco, Nezahualcoyotl directed remodeling and extensions of that city's civic-ceremonial complex and oversaw Texcoco's greatest period of development, when visionary design and vast resources came together. Nezahualcoyotl's palaces were large and opulent, though details of his projects are not known.

Acatetelco and other horticultural gardens of Texcoco. Horticultural gardens may have been planted during this period. Acatetelco, the most impressive of Nezahualcoyotl's horticultural gardens, was 10 km north of the capital. It was famous for the grove of almueltl trees planted near a huge square reservoir (shown on the Mapa de México de 1550 as a great square of water). To fill it, Nezahualcoyotl rerouted the San Juan River, which originated in the ancient holy precinct of Teotihuacan, 15 km to the north in the Teotihuacan Valley arm of the Texcoca domain.

Even as late as the 1840s, some survivors of Acatetelco's groves gave semblance to the garden's ancient rectilinear pattern, forming one of the most remarkable relics of the princes and people of the Texcoca monarchy. ... The grove is formed by double rows of gigantic cypresses [sic], about 500 in number, arranged in a square corresponding to the points of the compass and enclosing an area of about 10 acres. At the northwestern
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point of this quadrangle another double row of lordly cypresses runs westwardly toward a dyke north of which there is a deep oblong tank neatly walled and filled with water.\(^{60}\)

Acatetelco would eventually have included impressive features like the palace called Ahuehueteitan, a place name which nicely combined the meanings of lords and noble trees.\(^{61}\) As far as pleasure palace development costs are concerned, establishing a horticultural nursery is relatively cheap. Most likely, Nezahualcoyotl at first (in the 1430s and 1440s) staked claims and planted the basics, such as nursery beds to supply his other gardens, and groves of \(\textit{ahuete}^{\text{\textdagger}}\) trees. Their rapid growth gave pleasure parks and cities an air of maturity and permanence, a factor especially important to Tenochtitlan, a brand-new city built on man-made fill in a marsh and dedicated to creating a strong impression on its visitors. Later on, when tribute income became substantial (in the 1450s and 1460s, our next phase), the \(\textit{ahuete}^{\text{\textdagger}}\) trees provided a perfect backdrop for the more costly features like palaces, royal canals and fountains, as these were added or elaborated.

Other Texcocan horticultural gardens were developed in Tlatlalca, in the high country on the other side of the Sierra Nevada from Texcoco.\(^{62}\) When Nezahualcoyotl fled into exile, after the assassination of his father, the king, he spent a night at his family’s retreat at Texcotozingo Hill, then continued traveling into the mountains east of Texcoco, stopping to rest at Texcocan properties at mountain towns of Calpulalpan, Mazapaan, and Yehualica. Years later, he established or further developed horticultural gardens in these places, taking advantage of the region’s tradition of growing medicinal herbs.\(^{63}\)

At Yehualica were found the remains of eight structures on or near a ‘T’ shaped platform, its long extension pointed toward the north, and its largest section 64 m by 104 m.\(^{64}\) The plan is remarkably like that of the shrine atop Mount Tlaloc, where, each April 28, the lords gathered for the feast of the water and earth deity, Tlaloc.\(^{65}\) This ritual occurred a few weeks before the rainy season began, and involved a procession down the long north-south corridor, which Townsend likened to a reenactment of the ancestral tribes emerging from the womb-like caves of their origin.\(^{66}\) Yehualica’s plan suggests that Nezahualcoyotl may have been expressing reverence for Tlaloc. Yehualica also had a round structure (22.3 m in diameter), which Beslerfer suggested may have been Nezahualcoyotl’s residential quarters: the ruler was said to have build a round sleeping chamber at his palace at Texcotozingo.\(^{67}\)

\textbf{Phase 3, Investing the spoils: c.1450 to 1470s}

Returning to Tenochtitlan, we find the mid-fifteenth-century city coping simultaneously with growing pains and natural disasters. Tenochtitlan’s disastrous flood of c.1449 heavily damaged the city, providing an opportunity to rebuild it more durably, using stone.\(^{68}\) But extended cold spells in early 1450s brought crop failures and famine, and would have defoliated the groves of evergreen \(\textit{ahuete}^{\text{\textdagger}}\) trees (by then, at least 20 m tall). Tributary communities revolted against labor drafts to work on rebuilding the temples and ‘\textit{tetas reales},’ \(^{69}\) but the many ongoing projects may have been the lords’ way of retrieving some value from famine-relief handouts. Nezahualcoyotl brought Texcocan workers to Tenochtitlan to build a monumental dike (figures 2a and b) to separate the city and its lagoon from saline Lake Texcoco.\(^{70}\) The dike would reduce danger from floods while enhancing the highly productive drained field systems carved out of the marshes of western Lake Texcoco.

\textit{Tepetzinco, Texcoco’s game reserve.} It may have been at this time that Texcoco claimed (or was ceded) control over Tepetzinco, the beacon island. Although this island seems much closer to Tenochtitlan than to Texcoco, traveling from Tenochtitlan’s royal palace to Tepetzinco was much less direct and convenient than the trip between the island and Texcoco. For this journey, the king entered a canoe at the royal palace and was swiftly paddled across Lake Texcoco via a well-maintained direct canal.\(^{71}\) Best known in 1520 as a royal game reserve,\(^{72}\) Tepetzinco had caves and a stone quarry, which were used during various rebuildings of Tenochtitlan, and a famous spring, ‘where Copil was killed hot springs began to flow,’\(^{73}\) a sure attraction for noble pleasure palace development. In addition to its palace, Tepetzinco had shrines to the water gods where children were sacrificed,\(^{74}\) left to die ‘in the middle of the lagoon at Tepetzinco.’\(^{75}\)

\textit{Tenochtitlan.} Hard times in the 1450s apparently inspired Tenochtitlan and Texcocan rulers to widen their tributary zone to tropical areas,\(^{76}\) which helped subsidize further development. In c.1461, Tenochtitlan’s main plaza was laid out in its present location (figures 2a and b), just south of the Templo Mayor precinct.\(^{77}\) The city was further shaped by new sumptuary
laws; nobles needed the ruler’s permission to build two-storey palaces and adorn them, and access to areas within the main palace was restricted, by rank.\textsuperscript{78}

**Chapultepec, Tenochtitlan’s royal retreat.** Along with designing and executing the Lake Texcoco dike, Nezahualcoyotl also directed major rebuilding of the Chapultepec aqueduct in the 1450s and 1460s.\textsuperscript{79} Water from Chapultepec’s springs was revered for its power to purify the soul,\textsuperscript{80} and its first destinations were the pools of the royal pleasure palace. Then it flowed through aqueducts to Tenochtitlan, potable water for the city. Tenochtitlan’s rulers in residence at Chapultepec could relish their position at the fountainhead of all that hydrological power as they enjoyed the pleasure baths, surrounded by elaborate gardens and groves of towering trees.

Like other royal parks, Chapultepec was extensively landscaped, planted with orchids and other species rarely found at this altitude.\textsuperscript{81} The hill was terraced, with ‘wide, large steps to the mountain’s summit … [that] encircle almost the whole of it … On these slopes Moctezuma had planted trees as in gardens.’\textsuperscript{82} As Tenochtitlan grew rich, Chapultepec became more elaborate, with the initiation of a sumptuous art program. In the 1460s the tradition began of sculpting portraits of Tenochtitlan’s rulers into Chapultepec’s cliff face when the ruler felt death approach.

**Urban amusement parks of Tenochtitlan.** Water flowed northwest from Chapultepec’s pool (figures 2a and b) for a few kilometers, and then the aqueduct-causeway turned east, toward the city, at the high ground of ruler’s orchards at Mazatzintzintalco (figure 2a). This would have been the first place to draw water from the aqueduct — clear preferential access to that valued resource. This horticultural garden’s name means ‘where the ruler gives out food’\textsuperscript{83} and Aztec imperial orchards may regularly have given away surplus, in ceremonies involving the ruler or his representative. But unless an Aztec ruler was an enthusiastic horticulturist, orchards were not regarded as pleasure gardens: ‘It was not kingly to cultivate plants for utility or profit in his pleasure. He said that vegetable gardens and orchards were for slaves or merchants. At the same time he owned such, but they were at a distance, and he seldom visited them.’\textsuperscript{84}

The Nuremberg map (1524) of Tenochtitlan (figure 2b) shows the causeway and aqueduct system as a set of rectilinear features, and indicates two of Moctezuma’s pleasure parks as a string of elaborate buildings and large trees, labeled ‘Donus ad Voluptas, D. Mutezuma’ and ‘Viridazul, D. Mutezuma’ southwest of the city.\textsuperscript{85} Their location along the causeway suggests that renovations of the aqueduct-causeway system may have coincided with establishment or renovation of the parks; ‘Alurehuextil’ at this location evokes the sense of a place of great trees and kings.

**Urban amusement parks of Texcoco.** Meanwhile, in the late 1450s and 1460s Nezahualcoyotl was overseeing civic improvement in Texcoco. Texcoco’s zoo-aviary complex apparently dated from this period, and was located in front of the main temple precinct. It had specimens from all over Mexico, and sculpted images of varieties that could not survive in the Central Highlands.\textsuperscript{87} These were made of stone and precious metals, and recall Tenochtitlan’s precious metal ‘House of Birds’ mentioned by Tapia.\textsuperscript{88}

**Texcocingo, Texcoco’s royal retreat.** Texcocingo, Nezahualcoyotl’s masterpiece, was the most ambitious of all the pleasure parks, and perhaps the most challenging of Nezahualcoyotl’s many engineering projects. Extensively developed with rock-cut and stucco-surfaced water channels, baths (shaped much like modern home spas, see figure 4), paths, bas-relief sculptures, and platforms for palaces and shrines, it was also landscaped with exotic plants and an aviary.\textsuperscript{89} The temple at Texcocingo was dedicated in 1467.

Alva Ixtlixochitl verbally re-created his family’s pleasure park:

At the summit there were built some houses like towers and the tops and spires were made of stone … [there] were the castle and the lodges which the king had in the grove and in which there were many halls and rooms and chambers, one of them very big and in front of it a patio in which he used to receive the kings of Tenochtitlan and Tacopan and other great lords when they came to take pleasure there and in the patio were held dances and exhibitions of a pleasing and entertaining nature. … the room where the king slept was round.\textsuperscript{90}

Water from a spring higher in the mountains was carried by an aqueduct and causeway system nearly 8 km long, ‘carried, not on arches, but on a solid embankment, a hundred and fifty or two hundred feet high, and wide enough for a carriage-road.’\textsuperscript{91} From this feature, water arrived at a level
Texcotzingo’s plan, a model of the world, was a geohistorical monument with sacred references. As Musset recognized, these were references to the fruitful union of Aztec Texcoco’s ethnic progenitors: civilized Toltecs and nomadic Chichimecs. The tropical garden recreated Tlalocan, a mythical place of creation and paradise in the east (also commemorated by the holy shrine at Chapultepec). Water, a precious and sacred substance to all Aztecs, united it all.

One of the most potent experiences of pleasure at any Aztec recreational facility must have been Nezahualcoyotl’s sense of satisfaction as he enjoyed the water in his rock-cut bath (figure 4). Not only would he have savored the spectacular view of the lands in his domain and beyond it, the colors, fragrances, and birdcalls from his surrounding gardens, but he would have also delighted in the completion of his most challenging project.

Huiltzépetl, Tenochtitlan’s horticultural garden. The 1460s were a busy time for Nezahualcoyotl, and it would have been obvious to him and his Tepochca cousins that Texcotzingo would trump Chapultepec in coherence of its design program and labor investment. So Nezahualcoyotl, a noted horticulturalist, must have been very impressed when Motecuzoma I of Tenochtitlan began to create the Huaxtepec garden in tropical Morelos, 95 km southeast of Tenochtitlan. This was the garden judged by the Spaniards to be the most beautiful they had ever seen; valuable praise from the visitors, presumably some of whom were familiar with Moorish gardens.

To establish Huaxtepec, Motecuzoma I claimed a hilly tract, and within its 10 km boundary had streams dammed for a lake to be surrounded by all manner of exotic, fragrant, medicinal, flowering and foliage plants. Many unusual tropical species had been obtained in tribute. The plants were brought to Tenochtitlan ‘in great quantities, with the earth still about the roots, wrapped in fine cloth.’ They were ‘taken to Huaxtepec and planted around the springs’ where they thrived.

Díaz remembered its ‘orchard ... so beautiful ... contained such fine buildings that it was the best worth beholding of anything we had seen in New Spain. ... certainly the orchard of a great prince.’ Cortés, in a letter to Charles V, recalled that

we were all quartered in a chief’s country house amid the most beautiful and refreshing gardens ever seen. ... There are summer houses spaced out at
distances of two crossbow shots, and very bright flower beds, a great many trees with various fruits, and many herbs and sweet-smelling flowers. Certainly the elegance and magnificence of this garden make a remarkable sight."

In the 1460s, Huaxtepec’s gardens not only raised the stakes in the game of conspicuous consumption and display, but also moved the contest to a tropical venue where tender exotic plant materials could be extensively cultivated, an impossibility in the Basin of Mexico, no matter how careful the gardeners. Huaxtepec may have let the Mexica maintain their pride of ascendency in the contest of sumptuous display.

Phase 4, Urban amusements: 1470s to c.1500

Facing off across the lake, Tenochtitlan’s Chapultepec and Texcoco’s Texcotalingo symbolized a balanced rivalry of sacred and economic power. At Texcotalingo, Nezahualcoyotl had certainly succeeded in memorializing his people, and he had also created ‘a monument . . . to himself.’ Throughout the four decades of his rule, he managed to remain loyal to the Mexica without losing his domain to them, and this required projecting a strong historical presence for the Texcocan confederation (such as with monumental parks) while generously taking an active role in design and construction of Tenochtitlan’s palaces, parks and hydrological system.

At his death in 1472, the balance of political power shifted; Nezahualcoyotl had been hugely influential, and his heir (his son Nezahualpilli) was yet a child, so Tenochtitlan was freer to act without consulting Texcoco. For example, Texcoco had been a strong ally of Tenochtitlan’s sister city, Tlatelolco, whose marketplace and long-distance trade system were Mesoamerica’s richest and most extensive. Soon after Nezahualcoyotl’s death, Tenochtitlan subdued Tlatelolco, thus gaining a major new source of income and political control.

Tenochtitlan’s 1475 earthquake ushered in a new round of urban renewal including rebuilding the ruler Axayacatl’s tepan palace (future lodging-place of Cortés and his company). In the 1480s the Templo Mayor was enlarged, and its 1487 dedication was another occasion for civic improvement. To beautify the city, the ruler Ahuitzotl encouraged gardening by all householders. Late fifteenth-century tribute in goods and labor was considerable, and crews from various towns worked on sophisticated artisanal activities — Aztec nobles finally possessed the means and the trained workmen to execute their elaborate landscape and architectural designs.

Urban amusement parks: Tenochtitlan. Tenochtitlan’s royal urban amusement parks were probably extended during this period. These parks were well known to the Spaniards; while they lived in the city from November 1519 to July 1520, guarding Motecuzoma, they spent much of their time in recreational activities with Aztec nobles. The Spaniards consistently singled out for detailed description a set of pleasure gardens located close to Axayacatl’s palace. These gardens, like so much of Tenochtitlan, were in a fairly marshy location, and a major city canal, the Canal of the Royal Palace (Acapulco Real), flowed through the gardens and continued on past Motecuzoma’s main tepan palace, 0.5 km away. The gardens boasted ponds with birds and fish, buildings for waterfowl and other birds (including large raptors), insects, reptiles, and mammals of many kinds, human albinos and humans of non-normative phenotype. Other buildings stored tributes; some sources mention a room or courtyard made of precious metals, perhaps an earthly recreation of the shimmering paradise garden described by Sahagún in the Psalmodia Christiana.

The zoo-aviary complex may have been spread over several locations, but eyewitnesses group certain sets of buildings in the same general area. The most reliable source is Andres de Tapia, one of Cortés’ most trusted officers, and a careful observer of life in the pre-Conquest city. He recalled that one day, Motecuzoma said to Cortés,

‘Have some of your men go with these servants who will show them a house with gold jewels and personal ornaments of mine.’ And the one who writes this, with another gentleman, accompanied two of Motecuzoma’s servants to the house of birds, as it was called, where they showed us a hall and two other chambers full of gold and silver, and green stones, though not of the finest.

This may have been a ‘garden’ of precious metals and stones, worked into sculptures. There was also a separate facility, a storehouse and a zoo for carnivorous animals and birds, a

house of many rooms and courtyards where [Motecuzoma] had robes and mantles [most common tribute items] and other things. In some of the courtyards of this house he kept separate cages of lions and tigers, oapses, wolves, and foxes. In other courtyards, in a different type of cage, he kept
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many kinds of falcon and hawks and all manner of birds of prey. And it was a
tsight to see the amount of meat fed to all these birds and beasts, and the
number of people for their care. Also in large earthenware vessels there were
many snakes and vipers, and all of this was merely a form of grandeur. In this
house of beasts he kept men and women monsters, some crippled and others
dwarved or hunchbacked.

Yet a third facility was for waterfowl and albino,

another house where he kept all the kinds of waterfowl one could think of,
and other kinds of fowl, each kind to itself. Without fail, more than six
hundred men were kept occupied in the care of these fowl. There was,
besides, a place where the sick birds could be cured. In the house of these
waterfowl Montezuma kept men and women who were white all over; their
bodies and hair and eyebrows.

Cortés found this waterfowl aviary and albino residence to be 'only a little
less magnificent' than the main tezcan palace, and noted that it had

a very beautiful garden with balconies over it; and the facings and flagstones
were all of jasper and very well made. In this house there were rooms enough
for two great princes with all their household. There were also ten pools in
which were kept all the many and varied kinds of water bird found in these
parts, all of them domesticated. For the sea-birds there were pools of salt
water, and for river fowl of fresh water, which was emptied from time to time
for cleaning and filled again from the aqueducts. ... Above the pools were
corridors and balconies, all very finely made, where Montezuma came to amuse
himself by watching them.

This waterfowl and albino park exemplifies the Aztec approach to under-
standing, revering and controlling their own sacred history. According to the
sixteenth-century chronicler, Fray Diego Durán, in 1593, the Aztec nation
reached this land. These people, like the others who populated the country,
departed from... a land... called Aztlan. This name means "Whiteness" or
"Place of the Herons." Because of this the people originally were called
Aztec, which means "People of Whiteness."  

The Aztecs 'continued to roam' among the marshy islands of western Lake Texcoco,

seeking... a permanent home. And wandering... among the reeds and
rushes, they came upon a beautiful spring and saw wondrous things in the
waters... a white bald cypress... and the spring came forth from the foot of
the tree... a group of white willows around the spring... white reeds, and

white rushes surrounding the water. White frogs came out of the water, white
fish... white water snakes... The priests and elders... wept with joy... 'We
have now found the promised land.'

This was clearly a new Place of Whiteness, recreating the discovery of the
new Aztec (see Phase 1), and thus recreating the sacred origin point itself. It
was a kind of sacred theme park for Tenochtitlan's nobles, where they could
experience the reenactment of a seminal event in their ethnic history while
also amusing themselves with the ethological drama of the moment. The
Aztecs enjoyed reliving their history, and had an elaborate ritual performance
cycle for this purpose. None of the sources indicate when the zoo-aviary
complex was first built, but the wealth it contained in 1519 argues the
extensive tribute system of the late fifteenth century.

The location and layout of some of these urban facilities is rather poorly
understood, and few sources agree on the organization of this complex,
notwithstanding that later historians described them in great — if apocryphal
— detail. The zoo of the fierce animals may have been separate from the
waterfowl-albino complex. On the 1524 map (figure 2b), a zoo of fierce
animals is located east of the Templo Mayor precinct, convenient at feeding
time for the zoo's carnivores, who ate the torsos of human sacrificial victims.

Some of the zoo animals may have ended up buried in the Templo Mayor as
offerings, along with other precious materials.

Urban amusements parks: Texcoco. Texcoco continued to grow after
Nezahualcoyotl's death, and Nezahualpilli was responsible for enlarging
Texcoco's main temple, constructing his own palace complex, and probably
building other palaces as well. But he lacked his father's architectural
interests, and was thought to have neglected Texcotozingo.

Evidence for Texcoco's urban palaces and pleasure parks is sparse.
Motolinia briefly described Texcoco's

very elegant houses and lodging places for the lords. Among these the house of
the chief lord was worth seeing. This is true of the old one with its enclosed
grove of more than a thousand large and beautiful cedars, most of which are
standing to this day, although the house itself is leveled to the ground. The
other house of the chief was large enough to accommodate an army. It had
many gardens and a very large pond which they used to enter in boats through
a canal below the ground.
In addition to the big *tepatl* palaces, the 'king had many houses in the city in different places, and gardens and recreations, where he had his women and where his children were raised with their nurses and servants.'

The rich descriptions of Tenochtitlan’s zoo-aviary complex unfortunately have no counterparts for Texcoco. Our principle sources, Pomar and Fernando de Alva Ixtlahuiztli (a descendant of Texcocan nobles), are voluble but vague. Given similar access to labor, materials, precious goods, plants and animals, plus Texcoco’s inventive genius in pleasure park design, it is likely that Texcoco’s preconquest facilities were probably as elaborate as Tenochtitlan’s.

*Phase 5, Royal mannerism: c.1500 to 1519*

Another disastrous flood hit Tenochtitlan in c.1499, ushering in a new construction episode in which the city became

well-ordered, attractive, beautifully finished, with large and well-made houses, full of areas for recreation such as pleasing gardens and fine courtyards. The level of the ponds was carefully controlled and around these were planted groves of willows and ... poplars.

When Motecuzoma II became ruler in 1502, the city was still in the process of rebuilding. He created a new palace in the east side of the Plaza, in the location of the present-day Palacio Nacional. In several important ways, Motecuzoma reduced social mobility within Aztec society, and his restrictions concentrated control over summptuary wealth and its display. In general, Motecuzoma’s personality was shaped by religious fervor and paranoia, reinforcing his notions of aristocratic exclusivity. Lombardo has called his approach to the organization of his palaces and parks 'mannerist' because their development bore the marks of his peculiar nature. The Spaniards noted his enjoyment of these facilities, and his emphasis on his exclusive rights to them.

Although Motecuzoma II was in apparent good health, he sensed the approaching end of the world as he knew it, and went to Chapultepec to escape to Tlaloc’s paradise through Cincaclo Cave on the side of the hill. He sent his personal servants, his hunchbacks, with gifts of skins from human sacrificial victims to the cave’s guardian, Huemac, but his overtures availed him of no sanctuary in Tlalocan. Carrying on the family tradition, he ‘ordered that his statue be carved on a rock in Chapultepec, in the place where portraits of his forefathers had been carved’ (figure 5).

*Phase 6, Aztec parks for Spanish pleasure: beginning 1519*

Before Cortés and his company arrived in Tenochtitlan, Motecuzoma had tried to dissuade them from visiting, but after they arrived, as high-ranking emissaries from a powerful foreign king they were received with fullest hospitality, living in Axayacatl’s *tepatl*, which, less than two decades before, had been Tenochtitlan’s main *tepatl* calii. Even after the Spaniards put Motecuzoma under house arrest, he played the gracious host, entertaining them in his palaces and pleasure parks until diplomatic relations deteriorated into war.

In spite of the total foreignness of their respective cultures, the Spaniards and Aztecs understood each other quite well, recognizing many behavioral commonalities of life in complex societies. The Spanish chroniclers often compared life in Mexico to Moorish culture. Like the Moors, the Aztecs had a stratified society dominated by wealthy nobles living in extensive and

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**Figure 5.** Motecuzoma II poses for his bas relief portrait at Chapultepec (D敦煌 Atlas).
beautiful houses with elaborate gardens, attended by many wives, courtiers, servants and workers. The amount of labor and tribute controlled by the ruler Motecuzoma was massive, conspicuously demonstrated in the opulence of his main palace, and further marked by the effort and resources he could afford to invest in pure luxuries, such as his pleasure parks.

Motecuzoma II's sense of impending doom was justified. Cortés took him and his kingdom under Spanish protection. Other Aztec lords were furious at Motecuzoma's capitulation, and held clandestine meetings at the palaces at the Tepetzinco game reserve, forming a 'consejo de guerra', and considered the feasibility of blockading and attacking Spanish-controlled Tenochtitlan. Meanwhile, Cortés and company were living like — and with — lords as they explored the zoos and gambled for pleasure.

*Tepepulco, Tenochtitlan's game reserve. A telling incident from this era was the Motecuzoma–Cortés hunting expedition to Tenochtitlan's game reserve, Tepepulco, 12 km southwest of central Tenochtitlan, along the southern shore of Lake Texcoco. Motecuzoma II usually traveled to Tepepulco, one of his favorite places, by royal canoe directly from his main *tecpantli* palace to his pleasure palace. But the Spaniards had recently built sloops to use on Lake Texcoco (eventually for besieging Tenochtitlan). Díaz recorded that

When Montezuma heard of it, he said to Cortés that he wished to go hunting on a rocky island ... which was preserved so that no one dared to hunt there, however great a chief he might be, under pain of death. Cortés replied that he was very welcome to go, ... moreover he could go in the sloops... [Motecuzoma] took with him many lords and chieftains, and advised his huntsmen to follow in canoes and pirogues. ... So he arrived at the Peñol [de Tepepulco], which was not very far off, and Montezuma killed all the game he wanted, deer and hares and rabbits, and returned very contented to the city.

Motecuzoma had few contented days left, and after his death the Spaniards fled the city to escape the rage of the Tenochca. When they returned in 1521, their blockade of Tenochtitlan began with severing the Chapultepec aqueduct. During the subsequent siege, Cortés lived at Tepepulco, probably in the pleasure palace located on the eastern side of the island. After the conquest, Tepepulco became Cortés's game park, where he raised South American llamas or alpacas (*avejas de Perú*) and other ranch animals.

**Tenochtitlan's pleasure parks were ruined, with the rest of the city, in the 75-day siege (May 30 to August 13, 1521)** that destroyed the city. The city's human survivors were wasted from starvation; the zoo animals may have provided them with some nutrition during the siege. In the early Colonial period, the city was remade, but with remarkable continuity of layout and functions, as noted above. The prize house lots for the conquerors were in the old neighborhoods of noble houses, and Cortés claimed the two big *tecpantli* palace ruins on the main square.

**Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: locational syncretism.** Many other places continued to function in the same capacity before and after the conquest. Tenochtitlan itself remained the capital city and many of its basic facilities were maintained in the same place: the patterns of streets and parks, the central plaza, the ritual precinct, Motecuzoma's palace transformed into Cortés's, and then the viceroy's.
The old zoo-aviary complex, the new Place of Whiteness, is one of the more interesting examples of this locational syncretism, because it was taken over by the Franciscan order in 1529;\(^{138}\) St. Francis of Assisi, Christian protector of animals was an apt patron for a sacred zoological garden. In the overgrown tangle of the untended park grounds, the early Franciscan convent buildings were small and provisional, ‘almost lost in the ancient Aztec buildings which had contained ... Mectezuma’s zoo.’\(^{139}\)

Among the convent facilities was an open-air chapel for preaching to the natives. It was designed by Fray Pedro de Gante, who had lived for three years in Texcoco’s main teapan palace and had noted the native custom of gathering in open-air courtyards for rituals and meetings. Gante was a pioneer in using familiar native forms to package the ideas of Christianity, and it may have been he who thought of cutting one of the tallest contact-era altarhuatlts in Chapultepec Park\(^{140}\) to use as the upright for the monumental cross erected in the Franciscan convent’s courtyard in 1527. This would have raised the Christian symbol above the level of the Aztec effigy-mountain pyramids still surviving as huge rubble piles in the rising Colonial city, and would have been visible from a great distance. The convent’s surrounding park is gone now, but the Franciscan church still stands, across the street from the well-known restaurant, Sanborn’s House of Tiles, on Avenida Madero.

Between the city and Chapultepec, in the vicinity of Colonial period Mazantzinamalco, lay ‘urban estates ... their extensive, charming gardens irrigated by canals from the aqueduct’\(^{131}\), foremost among them Cortés’s ‘magnificent home’ at the fork of the road (formerly a causeway), first stop on the aqueduct and another former property of Mectezuma’s. Cortés and the other Spaniards no doubt recognized from their months of palace life that these choice properties should be claimed quickly.

Chapultepec was coveted by various conquistadores\(^{132}\) but became the property of the viceroy, who had their ‘recreational house built on the same spot where Great Mectezuma’s old palace once stood’ and ‘ordered that another wall be built around the forest, transforming it into private hunting grounds.’\(^{133}\) By the mid 1550s, the grove [was] enclosed all around with ... high walls, with entrance ... open only to a very few ... to prevent the spring from being defiled by Indians crowding in, or the game, in which the woods abound — antelopes, deer, conies, hares — either from being killed or taking refuge here when pursued by hunters.’\(^{134}\)

Chapultepec’s summit is now crowned by the Castillo, a former military school that became the imperial palace of the nineteenth-century Hapsburg rulers, Maximilian and Carlotta. Since 1934 it has been the palace of the presidents of the Republic of Mexico.\(^{135}\) Chapultepec, now open to all, is the most important recreation park in the world’s largest city, and even today still bears vestiges of Aztec times, particularly in the remaining stands of great cypress trees.\(^{136}\)

Texcoco is also now open to the public, but its quiet ruins are well off the tourist track. Nezahualcoyotl’s majestic art program and Texcoco’s distance from Mexico City caused its downfall early in the Colonial period. It was too far from the city to be rebuilt into a Colonial elite retreat, and so richly inscribed with the iconography of the Aztecs that, soon after the conquest, Bishop Zumárraga made its rapid destruction his special project.\(^{137}\)

The horticultural gardens retained their value. Acatetelco is now El Contador Federal Park, with a few Aztec features still perceptible.\(^{138}\) The gardens at Mazantzinamalco were claimed by Cortés and he specifically asked for Huaxtepec as part of his Colonial period fiefdom.\(^{139}\) The gardens were visited in 1570 by the great natural historian Francisco Hernandez, sent by Philip II to study resources and secure valuable plants.\(^{140}\) Today, the Aztec gardens are gone, but Huaxtepec remains a vacation spot administered by Mexico’s social security service.

**Pleasure parks: ornaments of empire**

The variety and scale of these pleasure parks and palaces demonstrate their importance in the lives of Aztec nobles. All these projects matured during the short period of Tenochca-Texcoco power and, given the timing of the flow of tributes into these cities, the late fifteenth century was probably the most active period of pleasure resource development. Chapultepec was probably the earliest, in the 1420s. Nezahualcoyotl returned to Texcoco in the early 1430s, and no doubt began work on Texcoco as soon as possible, completing it a few years before he died in 1472. In the meantime, development of tepanes took place in both cities, and as tribute domains extended into the hot lands (1450s and after), exotic species of animal and plants would become more readily available, making zoo-aviary complexes and exotic gardens possible. The game reserve islands may have been late projects, more opulent versions of broadly available rustic facilities.
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Pleasure park development as an expression of interdynastic rivalry was spurred by one of the key dynastic players, Nezahualcóyotl of Texcoco. Nezahualcóyotl maintained Texcoco’s actual independence under a weak titular vassalage, no mean feat while the Tenoxtla were absorbing other powers, and causing considerable loss of blood on both sides in the few cases where their efforts were thwarted. Status rivalry between Tenochtitlan and Texcoco in this context of conspicuous consumption, building splendid monuments, was a means by which Texcoco maintained ethnic identity within the elite faction. As Brumfiel has argued, “[t]he need to defend corporate assets from predatory neighbors may explain the exceptional durability of ethnic identity at the local level.” These pleasure parks advertised the joint power-holding status of the royal families of these cities, while also expressing each city’s identity.

The descriptions of the facilities offer a qualitative and impressionistic view of elite conspicuous consumption and, as such, provide background information for the development of a more precise model of pleasure park development, one based on quantified values. One could calculate such values as the tons of rock hacked from the face of Texcoco using stone tools, and the cost in time, or the annual worker-days required to maintain the gardens of Huátepec and how plant materials produced there were distributed through networks of gift-giving or market exchange. Some of these problems could be approached through replication studies, to calculate labor and materials estimates, as Abrams has done for the Maya. But even without such calculations, this review has provided an overwhelming sense of the massive resources that were used on projects that would be costly to build and to maintain.

The establishment of these parks created their own economic networks. To establish extensive horticultural and ornamental gardens, Aztec rulers demanded rare plants in tribute, and no doubt obtained such materials through the trading system as well. Some plants were sumptuary items; perhaps this status was part of the larger trend within Aztec society, in the decades before contact, toward more restricted access to all manner of perquisites, but lavish display, wherever permitted.

Recalling that the Aztec rulers were bellicose in the cause of self-interest, we can assume that they would see the benefits of developing a wholly new specialized production subsystem such as horticulture, investing heavily in nursery gardens and then controlling the production and distribution of medicinal and other plants. While rulers did not necessarily have a monopoly on many kinds of plant materials, they could very effectively discourage competition in market-scale cultivation, and even restrict, perhaps sometimes forbid, cultivation of certain plants. Yet, many nobles were clearly proud of their sumptuous and varied gardens — the chroniclers comment on it as a widespread phenomenon — which would seem to imply that Aztec nobles liked showing their gardens off to each other, an impulse familiar to any gardener. If Motecuzoma, in his zeal to make the nobility more exclusive, demoted some lords, then forcing them to abandon or dismantle their pleasure gardens would be a cruel blow, indeed.

At the more general level of cultural processes, palaces in general are a diagnostic feature of stratified, state-level societies, and the pleasure palace or park is an elaborate example of civic-scale architecture in mature states where rulers control massive wealth and elite artistic ‘great traditions’ are well developed. In Mesoamerica, the pleasure park phenomenon has been little explored beyond the Aztec period and central Mexico. The generalizations and examples presented in this study suggest the archaeological signature of this site type: in addition to luxury lodgings, such features as gardens, baths, shrines, temples, sculpture and vistas are often found in pleasure parks. Furthermore, pleasure parks may be at a considerable distance from the official residence of the ruler — or alternatively may be next-door.

There is surely a continuum in pleasure facilities, ranging from the tepantl palace garden of a local lord up to the imperial retreat, with many variants between. But in addition to these differences in degree, the very existence of pleasure palaces would bespeak a difference in kind of site — the emergence of this particular site type signifying an economic system vastly more wealthy than that of any previous Mesoamerican society. The tribute empire run by several related Aztec families drew upon millions of contributions every year, generating wealth far beyond the imaginations of, for example, Maya lords. Pleasure palaces serve to mark a new and more complex level of wealth concentrated into noble hands, the riches of whole regions devoted to a great ruler’s largely secular, indulgent and self-congratulatory comforts. This is surely a high water mark of civilization.

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NOTES

1. Aztec (more properly, Nahua) culture of the Central Highlands of Mexico flourished during the Aztec or Late Postclassic period, ca. AD 1200–1521, in the Basin of Mexico, a high-altitude (base = 2240 m asl) hydrological bowl, c.7000 km², with a contact-era population of about 1.5 million. In 1519 there were seven ethnic polities in the Basin, six of them subject in varying degrees to the last, the Mexica of Tenochtitlan. General descriptions include: Miguel León-Portilla, Aztec Thought and Culture (Norman, 1963); William T. Sanders, J. R. Parsons and R. Santley, The Basin of Mexico (New York, 1979); William T. Sanders, ‘Ecology and cultural syncretism in 16th-century Mesoamerica’, Antiquity 66 (1992), pp. 172–90; Elizabeth H. Boone, The Aztec World (Montreal and Washington, DC, 1994); Frances F. Berdan, Richard E. Blanton, Elizabeth H. Boone, Mary G. Hodge, Michael E. Smith and Emily Umberger, Aztec Imperial Strategies (Washington, DC, 1996); Michael E. Smith, The Aztecs (London, 1996).

2. ‘The plaza of modern Texcoco occupies the site of the largest patio of this residence’ in George Kubler, Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century (New Haven, 1948), p. 102.


4. The Aztecaneca lord’s ‘palace[,]...[was only for recreation] and pleasure’ according to early seventeenth-century writer Domingo Francisco de San Antonio Musón Chimalpahin Coauhtihuanitzin, Relaciones Originales de Chalco Anuapanecan (Mexico, 1963), p. 88.

5. Frederick Hicks, ‘Rotational labor and urban development in prehispanic Tetzoco’, Explorations in Ethnohistory (Albuquerque, 1984), pp. 147–74, p. 163.


7. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Kings and Lords, Book 8 of the Florentine Codex (Santa Fe, 1976 [1569]), p. 29.


12. Sophie D. Coe, America’s First Cuisines (Austin, 1994).

13. It is an odd feature of late twentieth-century Western middle-class life that ordinary people are able to sample all manner of sybaritic pleasures reserved, in antiquity, for nobles.


15. Sahagún, Kings and Lords, Book 8 of the Florentine Codex, pp. 29–30.


17. Sahagún, Kings and Lords, Book 8 of the Florentine Codex, p. 30.

18. Ibid.
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20. Evans, 'Architecture and authority in an Aztec village: form and function of the tecpan'.
22. Historia de los Mexicanos por Sus Pinturas (Mexico, 1963 [c.1550])
24. Nezahualcóyotl or Fasting Coyote was an accomplished landscape architect and poet, as well as a statesman and political tactician, and was certainly the most interesting personality in the history of ancient Mexico, whose name would be voiced oftener if it were not considered as so unpronounceable' (Zelia Nuttall, 'The gardens of ancient Mexico', Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, 1923 [Washington DC, 1925], pp. 453–64, p. 459). He was a polymath culture hero, like Henry viii or Thomas Jefferson. Nezahualcóyotl's interest in architecture and engineering developed while he was still a young man, and one of his earliest projects was the park at Chapultepec. Nezahualcóyotl's talents cannot be dimmed by even the most skeptical reading of ethnographic sources — he seems to have recognized the great pleasure to be had from intellectual problem-solving and acts of creation.
25. Ibid., p. 453.
27. Ibid., p. 455.
29. The alsinuel is fast-growing, to 12m in 14 years according to the Sunset National Garden Book (Menlo Park, 1997), p. 215, tolerant of wet conditions, and related to the redwood of California and the bald cypress of the southern United States' as noted by Doris Heyden, 'Note 2', in Fray Diego Durán, Book of the Gods and Rites and The Ancient Calendar (Norman, 1971 [1579]), p. 267.
30. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy, Book 6 of the Florentine Codex (Santa Fe, 1969 [1569]), p. 252.
38. See commentary by Miguel Leon-Portilla and Carmen Aguileras in Mapa de México Tenochtitlan y sus Costumbres Hacia 1530 (Mexico, 1986 [c.1550]), p. 46, pp. 59–60.
41. Ibid., Folio 11:6.
42. Durán, Book of the Gods and Rites and The Ancient Calendar, pp. 29–33.
43. Ibid., pp. 40–1.
44. Ibid., p. 32.
45. Ibid., pp. 32–3.
46. Obsidian hydration dating identified occupation at c.1100, according to Manuel Reyes Cortés and Joaquín García-Barriga, 'Estratificación en el área de la Catedral', El Recinto Sagrado de México-Tenochtitlan (Mexico, 1979), pp. 16–28. Aztec II ceramics were reported from this level by Constanza Vega Sosa, 'La cronología relativa de México-Tenochtitlan', Mexicon 12 (1990), pp. 9–14, p. 12.
49. This was the pattern in the nearby town of Cuauhtitlan in the 1560s and 1700s, when the ruler 'lived at the temple ... which had been the royal residence' Annals of Cuauhtitlan op cit., pp. 72–3.
54. From Chapultepec, Tenochtitlan was 5 km distant to the ENF, Texcoco was 35 km distant, and 5 km behind it, Texcocoño.
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58. Archaeological and documentary evidence indicate an arrangement similar to that of the reservoir, palace, and surrounding orchard of the Menara Gardens (Marrakech, Morocco).

59. JUAN BAPTISTA DE POMAR, Relación de Texcoco (Mexico, 1531 [1582]), pp. 54–71; PARSONS, Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in the Texcoco Region, Mexico, p. 95.

60. M. H. Mayer, quoted by NUTTALL, "The gardens of ancient Mexico.


62. ALVAR ISTLIXCOCHITL, Obras Históricas, p. 114.


64. Ibid.

65. DURAN, Book of the Gods and Rites and The Ancient Calendar (1971), pp. 155–56; PARSONS, Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in the Texcoco Region, Mexico, pp. 151–2, Fig. 34.


67. BRASBIEFE, "Un palacio de Acolman en el norte de la Sierra Nevada," p. 77. These circular sleeping chambers may suggest to modern sensibilities an erotic association, but the Aztecs built round structures as abodes of the spirit of Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent, in his dimension as god of the wind and of the creative mastery Nezahualcóyotl revered.

68. LOMBARDO DE RUIZ, Desarrollo Urbano de México-Tenochtitlan Según las Fuentes Históricas, p. 81.

69. Ibid., p. 99.

70. Ibid., pp. 67–9, 116.

71. ALVAR ISTLIXCOCHITL, Obras Históricas, p. 150.

72. Ibid., pp. 114, 150.


74. Ibid., p. 32, Note 2.

75. FRAY BERNARDO DE SAHAGUN, The Ceremonies, Book 2 of the Florentine Codex (Santa Fe, 1981 [1569]), p. 192.

76. This process is described by RON HASSE, Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control (Norman, 1988).

77. LOMBARDO DE RUIZ, Desarrollo Urbano de México-Tenochtitlan Según las Fuentes Históricas, pp. 130–1.


79. CHIMAPAHIH, Relaciones Originales de Chalco Amaguecan, p. 201.


81. LOMBARDO DE RUIZ, Desarrollo Urbano de México-Tenochtitlan Según las Fuentes Históricas, p. 100.

82. F. CERVANTES DE SALAZAR, Life in the Imperial and Loyal City of Mexico in New Spain (Austin, 1933 [1554]), p. 71.

83. GONZALEZ APARICIO, Plan Reconstrutivo de la Región de Tenochtitlan.

84. NUTTALL, The gardens of ancient Mexico, p. 454, quoting Cervantes de Salazar.

85. In Europe this 1524 map was plagiarized widely, in radically erroneous versions, but all featured the 'Donus... gardens. Bordoni's 1538 version reversed the Nuremberg map, and was the basis for many similarly erroneous copies. Bordoni named many fewer places; the parks known as 'Donus...' and 'Viridzuns...' were called 'il giardino del Sfener', in a place mirroring their actual location. Ramusio's plan (1556) followed the accurate Nuremberg map, and among its few labeled features of Tenochtitlan are the 'Donus...' parks, now called 'giardino de' uccellini.' In 1568, Brun and Hogenberg copied Bordoni's erroneous map; their version altogether lacked labels, and it marked the 'Donus... park locations with European-style palaces, as did Bertius's 1619 version of Bordoni's erroneous map.

86. GONZALEZ APARICIO, Plano Reconstrutivo de la Región de Tenochtitlan.

87. ALVAR ISTLIXCOCHITL, Obras Históricas, p. 96.


91. TYLOR, Antropología: Mexico and the Mexicans, p. 152.

92. Alva Ixtlilxochitl, quoted by NOGUERA, 'Arqueología de la región Tetzocana,' p. 94.

93. MUSSET, 'Les jardins préhispaniques', pp. 64, 69.

94. ANNALS OF CUALUHTITLAN op cit., p. 116.

95. DIAZ DEL CASTILLO, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p. 375.


97. DIAZ DEL CASTILLO, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p. 361.

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100. Lombardo de Ruiz, Desarrollo Urbano de México-Tenochtitlan Según las Fuentes Históricas, p. 99.
102. Tafira, The Conquistadores, p. 40; also F. Lopez de Gomara, Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary (Berkeley, 1964 [1552]), pp. 131–2.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., pp. 40–1.
109. Ibid., p. 40.
111. Díaz del Castillo, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, p. 213.
112. ‘Animal remains predominate among the 118 offerings’ (Leonardo Lopez Lujan, The Offerings of the Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlan [Niwot, 1994], p. 130).
113. Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Obsas Históricas, p. 223.
115. Pomar, Relación de Texcoco, pp. 28–9. Mendizábal hypothesized a concubine’s palace at Texcoco, based on a non-systematic collection of female figurines, ‘maked ... and lacking deity attributes’ (Miguel Othon de Mendizábal, El jardín de Netzahualcoyotl en el Cerro de Texcoco, Obsas Compleatas, V.2 [Mexico, 1946], pp. 443–51, p. 445) but this evidence is at present too slight to support such an inference. It is of interest, however, because so little is known of special facilities for sexual pleasure. (Evans, ‘Sexual politics in the Aztec palace’ 1998).
118. For most of Motecuzoma II’s reign, he depended on the good counsel of Nezahualpilli, who was famed as a wise man and a wizard. In 1516, Nezahualpilli sensed death approaching and went to Texcoco to die. The following year brought the Aztecs tangible evidence of Europeans on their shores, and Motecuzoma II’s confusion and fear made him powerless to act in the face of many dire portents.
120. The cave, however, ‘still exists today, at the entrance to the elevator’ on the hillside; Miguel Angel Fernandez, El Marco del Encuentro (Mexico, 1990), p. 18.
122. Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Obsas Históricas, p. 223.
124. The pleasure palace at Texcoco was discovered and excavated by students at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología of Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Antropología. They uncovered a patio and a portion of a roof held up by stuccoed and painted columns c.0.75 m in diameter (Eduardo Noguera, ‘Sitios de ocupación en la periferia de Tenochtitlan y su significado histórico-arqueológico’, Anales de Antropología 11 [1974]; pp. 53–88, p. 84).
125. Archivo General de Indias, ‘Relación de lo que valieron las rentas del marqués del Valle en los años de 1568 y 1569, hecha por Juan de Cigorondo, contador de dicho Estado’, Papeler de Sinanasses, Est. 59, sig. 4, leg. 3. Seville, Spain.
128. Antonio de Leon y Gama, Descripción histórica de la Ciudad de México al tiempo que entraron en ella los españoles, Historia de la Ciudad de México Según los Relatos de sus Cronistas (Mexico, 1930 [c.1780s and 1901]), pp. 44–52, 49.
131. Cervantes de Salazar, Life in the Imperial and Loyal City of Mexico in New Spain, p. 70.
132. Santiago Montero, Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de Ibero-América (Madrid, 1927), and Arte Camino de Valle-Arizpe, Historia de la Ciudad de México Según los Relatos de sus Cronistas (Mexico, 1939).
133. Mario de la Torre, Chapultepec, Historia y Presencia (Mexico, 1988), p. 47.
134. Cervantes de Salazar, Life in the Imperial and Loyal City of Mexico in New Spain, p. 71.
136. Fernandez op cit.
139. H. Cortés, ‘Carta de Hernán Cortés a su padre Don Martín Cortés, México 26 de septiembre de 1526’, Cartas y Otros Documentos de Hernan Cortés, Novísimamente Descubiertos en el


144. But examples may exist, such as Blom Group B at Palenque (Classic Maya; Chiapas, Mexico), at the foot of the waterfalls and boasting bathing pools cut into the stone riverbed.

145. Ancient Assyrian pleasure parks, for example, bear many parallels to those of the Aztec; see Irene Winter, "'Seat of Kingship'/'A Wonder to Behold': The palace as a construct in the Ancient Near East." *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993), p. 34.