

# The Aztec Palace under Spanish Rule

## Disk Motifs in the Mapa de México de 1550 (Uppsala Map or Mapa de Santa Cruz)

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**Abstract:** *The tecpan, the Aztec administrative palace, has persisted into the present in many small communities in Mexico because it has retained governmental functions and provided an arena for them and for the public lives of local leaders. This paper looks at the transformation of the tecpans of the Aztec empire into community buildings of Spanish colonial rule, using archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence to examine those conditions under which some tecpans were destroyed (e.g., the tecpan of Motecuzoma II in Tenochtitlán) while others, at regional and local capitals, survived and thrived. The Mapa de México de 1550 shows the political geography of the Basin of Mexico in the mid-sixteenth century, and reveals that many of the ancient city-state capitals are designated graphically by buildings with a motif of disks over their lintels. However, while the disk, a very ancient Mesoamerican symbol for preciousness and authority, has well-known associations with tecpans, and thus the map is a guide to some of the locations of tecpans—and native governorships—at that time, its disk-related references were more broadly associated with a range of valued locales on the Basin of Mexico landscape.*

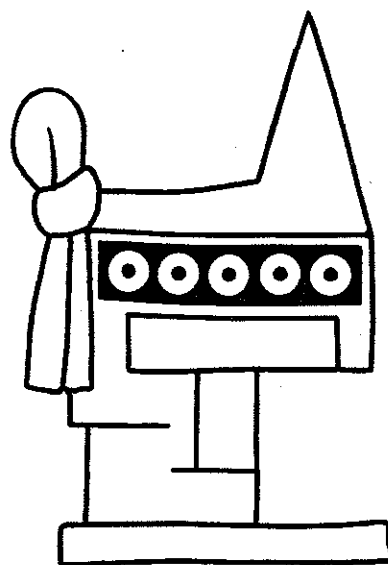
**Resumen:** *El tecpan, o palacio administrativo azteca, ha persistido hasta el presente en muchas comunidades pequeñas del Valle de México, ya que ha retenido sus funciones gubernamentales y funciona como un centro público para los líderes locales. En este capítulo considero la transformación de los tecpans del imperio azteca durante la colonia española, usando evidencias arqueológicas y etnohistóricas para examinar las condiciones bajo las cuales algunos tecpans fueron destruidos (incluyendo el tecpan de Motecuzoma II en Tenochtitlán) mientras otros, ubicados en los centros regionales y locales, sobrevivían. El Mapa de México de 1550 muestra la geografía política del Valle de México a mediados del siglo dieciséis, y se puede apreciar que muchas de las capitales prehispánicas están representadas gráficamente por edificios con motivos de discos sobre sus dinteles. Los discos, símbolos muy antiguos de la autoridad y la preciosidad, tienen asociaciones bien conocidos con los tecpans, por lo cual el mapa es una guía a las ubicaciones de algunos de estos centros políticos. Sin embargo los discos del período colonial tienen asociaciones más amplias que incluyen a varios tipos de localidades importantes en el paisaje colonial del Valle de México.*



In Late Postclassic central Mexico, each community's political life was centered upon the local lord's residence and administrative headquarters. This building was called the *tecpan-calli*, literally meaning "lord-place house" in Nahuatl, the Aztec language (Figure 2.1). Thus the *tecpan* (as the building is usually called) had a continuing institutional identity, a role in community life that transcended the powers and lifetime of any one local lord.

This concept of the *tecpan* as representing community rulership persisted when the Aztecs came under Spanish rule, after A.D. 1521. Despite the radical transformation of so many aspects of Aztec society, the *tecpan* showed remarkable durability and consistency in meaning and function. It continued to represent—and to serve as the focus for—local civic life of the native population. In fact, the survival of *tecpan*s in different kinds of communities serves as a shorthand for Aztec cultural survival in general, as this paper will demonstrate, and it also gives us clues as to changing political organization in the sixteenth century. *Tecpan*s, like the communities they governed, experienced differential survivorship in the Colonial period, with the great imperial *tecpan*s falling victim to the conquest and the local village *tecpan*s disappearing in the first century of colonial rule. *Tecpan*s at city-state capitals survived, as did those governing the native barrios of Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco and Texcoco. The first part of this paper discusses patterns and examples of differential survivability of *tecpan*s.

Because native documentary sources identified *tecpan*s by the disk frieze over the lintel, an ancient motif for preciousness and power, confirmation of the survival of city-state and barrio *tecpan*s can be sought in Colonial-era documents. In the second part of this paper, the *Mapa de México de 1550* (aka *Mapa de Uppsala*, and erroneously [see below], *Mapa de Santa Cruz*, Elsasser 1974; León-Portilla and Aguilera 1986;



**FIGURE 2.1** The *tecpan-calli* glyph (this example from the *Codex Mendoza*) expresses its composite concepts through the *copil* headdress, symbolic of political authority, surmounting a house with a disk motif frieze across its lintel. The disk motif, a symbol of preciousness, was used to denote religious sanctity, or more commonly, political authority (*Codex Mendoza* 1992:III). Redrawn by author.

Linné 1948) is examined as a mid-sixteenth-century record of *tecpan* location in the Basin of Mexico. The map helps us to understand transformations and continuities in the meaning of the disk motif. The disk motif as shown in the map suggests changing views of landscape and place. It preserves the locations of valuable places, but while these include parts of the remnant political structure, they are not necessarily limited to seats of Postclassic period lordship. Thus the disk motif survived, in part, to designate *tecpan*s, but as a subset of places recognized as precious by the standards of European and native cultures.

## Survivability of Tecpans

Differential survivability of precolumbian tecpans as community buildings in the Colonial period is better understood if we look at changes over time in the political hierarchy that such tecpans represent. Writing in the 1560s, the Spanish chronicler Zorita said of the Postclassic political hierarchy that “when New Spain was conquered by the Spaniards, this mode of government of the natives was retained and continued for some years. Moctezuma alone lost his kingdom and dominion, which were vested in the royal Crown of Castile” (Zorita 1994:113). Gradually, over the course of the hundred years after the European intrusion, this situation changed. We can define three periods pertinent to this transformation: first, immediately prior to the conquest; second, immediately after the conquest; and third, after A.D. 1600. By that time, demographic collapse had resulted in the abandonment of many villages and forced resettlement of remnant populations of rural villagers into the towns, as part of the civil *congregación*. Over the course of this period, the tecpans became the focus of an emerging conflict of interest between the communities and the ancient ruling families; court cases show how towns tried to retain tecpans as a community-based focus of local authority, while the heirs of the Postclassic rulers tried to assert private property rights over them.

We can conceptualize the three periods of change in terms of the changing hierarchy of political power. Figure 2.2 presents these three situations as schematic diagrams. Prior to 1521, the great imperial *huetecpans* of the *huetlatoanis* of Tenochtitlán and Texcoco topped the hierarchy, with a chain of command through the tecpans of the city-state rulers (the *tlatoani* [hereditary lord] and *calpixque* [steward]), down to the minor lords administering local villages from their tecpans.

The first big change after 1521 was the substitution of the Spanish palace for the highest level tecpans (in the diagram, the “Casa de Marqués [Cortés]” from the *Mapa de México* has been substituted for the glyph representing the imperial tecpan). This illustrates

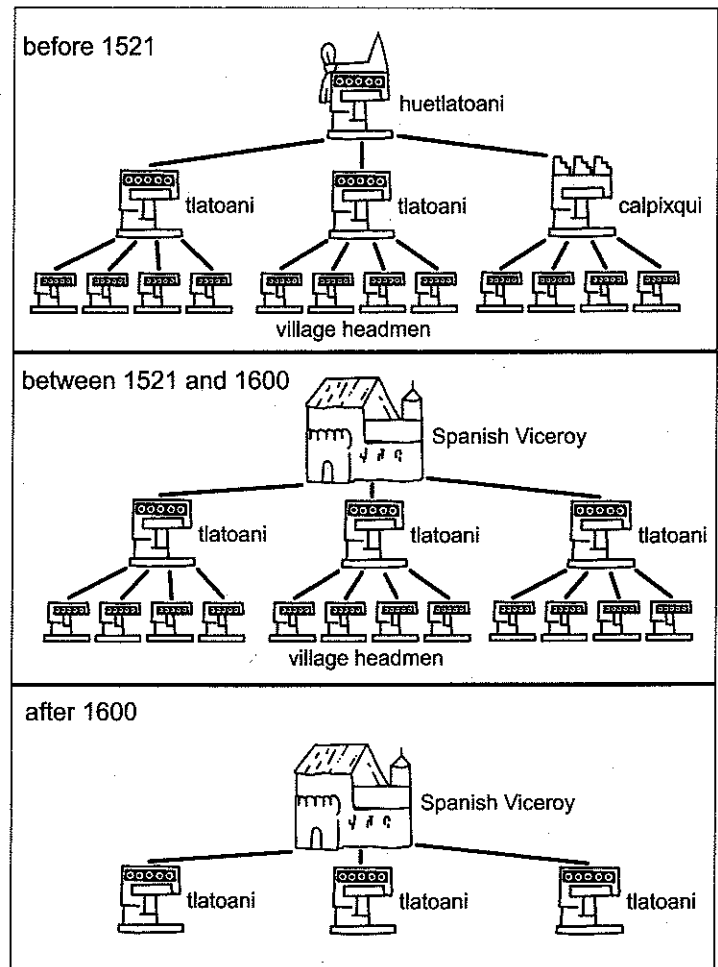


FIGURE 2.2 Changing political organization in central Mexico, pre-1521, post-1521, and post-1600.

Zorita’s observation that the Spaniards had conserved the political structure of the Aztec empire, while replacing the highest rulers with themselves. The maintenance of the precolumbian tribute and administrative hierarchy in the early years of the Colonial period provided a strong element of stability amidst much change, but the diseases that wracked the population over subsequent decades took their toll from commoner farmer-artisans and local native lords alike. In this chaotic situation, not only was the tributary system undermined by population loss, but also opportunities arose for ambitious natives and colonists to

take advantage of property whose rightful ownership was in limbo (Gibson 1960). Frequently, the ambiguity derived from the conflict between the ancient tradition of the tecpan as community house and the newer one of establishing private property rights in the Spanish colonial courts.

This conflict between public and private ownership claims was intrinsic to the dual functions of the tecpan. As a community house, it was a major element of continuity in the lives of the native population of Mexico during the Colonial period, as we know from examples in many towns, such as Tlatelolco, Culhuacan, and Cuernavaca. Yet, as a place where a lord or ruling family had lived as well as worked, the tecpan also had an identity as a family home. It was subject to alienation from the community if the family tried to claim it as private property, and to alienation from both the community and the noble family when the Spaniards tried to claim it.

In sum, the most exalted tecpans, those of the great emperors, were transformed by the Spaniards as they installed themselves at the highest level of the sociopolitical order and built their mansions where Aztec palaces once stood. At the other end of the Aztec administrative spectrum, village tecpans were abandoned as the countryside was depopulated. The best survivorship of communities and their tecpans took place at the city-state level, where native governors continued the tradition of rulership, and their tecpans continued to function. And this system of administration by native lords functioned well—so well, in fact, that remnants of it still remain today in large towns, in the institution of the *comunidad* or *comunidad-tecpan*, a town hall where various civic events take place, and which functions as a gathering place when consensus must be achieved. This calls forth the point that while an ethnohistoric focus emphasizes the tecpan as an institution, the tecpan was a *place*—specifically, a precious place with tangible material assets. Tecpan locations were noted on maps and in some cases tecpans have been recovered archaeologically.

### ***The Fate of Preconquest Imperial Tecpans of Tenochtitlán and Texcoco***

Aztec traditions located the lords where spiritual and secular potency intersected: the center of town, where the temple and the marketplace were located. In Tenochtitlán, the Templo Mayor complex was planted at the axis of the city's grid and dominated the civic-ceremonial architecture. The tecpan where Motecuzoma lived in 1519 was located just south of the Templo Mayor and faced west, onto the city's main plaza—the Zócalo—where Tenochtitlán's market was held. Tlatelolco, Texcoco, and many other communities spatially concatenated the temple-pyramid, tecpan, and market. The temple conferred upon the rulers the spiritual energy of their relatives, the gods. The marketplace gave them control over—and revenue from—the exchange of goods within and beyond the community they ruled.

Most of what we know about the great imperial tecpans at Tenochtitlán and Texcoco is derived from sixteenth-century sources, and thus our view of their preconquest identity is colored by the great extent to which they were destroyed as the Spaniards conquered the Basin of Mexico. Tenochtitlán was largely leveled by the siege of 1521. Apparently there remained some vestiges of Motecuzoma's tecpan on the east side of the plaza, but after the conquest the site was quickly claimed by Cortés who built his own palace there. Cortés was actually more interested in his palace in Cuernavaca, and by 1562 his son had sold the Tenochtitlán property to the viceroys. Today, Mexico's Palacio Nacional occupies the site, making it a remarkable case of locational syncretism over the past 500 years.

Texcoco's imperial tecpans suffered a different fate, analogous to the fates of the two cities. Extensive and lavish, the palaces of Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli were partly destroyed in the conquest, particularly by the actions of "friendly fire"—even after the Texcocans had pledged loyalty to the Spaniards, their Tlaxcalan allies looted and plundered. Even so, there was enough remaining of Nezahualcoyotl's palace for Pedro de Gante to live there in the early 1520s and come to understand

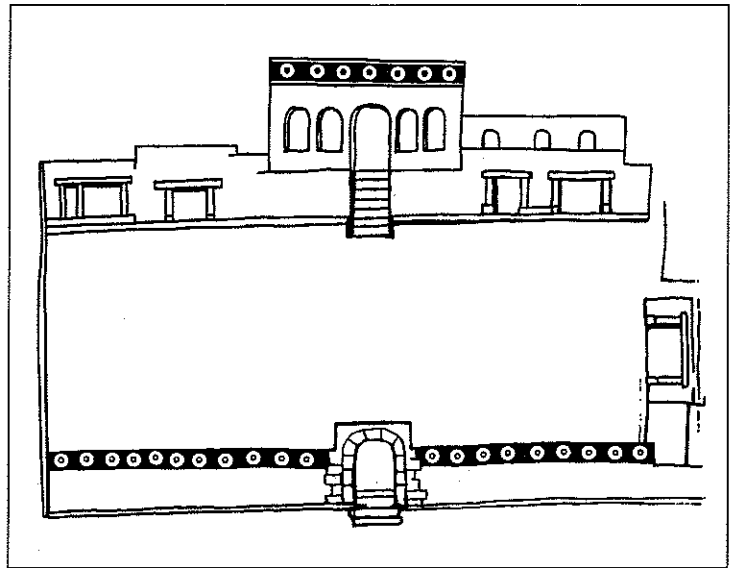
the important role of the tecpan's main courtyard as a forum for enculturation and political persuasion (Evans 2004; de la Maza 1972). De Gante used the tecpan's form as a basis for his school for elite Aztec youth that was part of the Franciscan monastery built in Tenochtitlán on the site of Motecuzoma's zoo.

Part of the contrast between Texcoco's situation and Tenochtitlán's relates directly to the extent to which each city remained a native capital. Texcoco was frankly of relatively little interest to the Spaniards, who clung to big-city life across the lake and disliked living elsewhere (Charlton 1986:124). Thus native governors in relatively ignored settings continued to administer the surviving Aztecs from tecpans, even when the buildings were crumbling, as was the case in Texcoco.

**Texcoco: Tecpan of Quinatzin.** While the more famous and extensive palaces of Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli became ruins, an even older Texcoco tecpan, that of Quinatzin, continued in use. In the most famous Inquisition episode in Colonial Mexico, Texcoco's native governor, a descendant of Nezahualcoyotl, was accused and found guilty of continuing native religious practices. Here the old adage "look for the money motive" is appropriate because one of the contested issues was the Quinatzin tecpan and its extensive orchard of European and native fruit trees. The Spaniards contended that the property was forfeit because of the heresy of its owner, while the natives claimed that under ancient tradition the tecpan was community property, occupied—but not owned by—the legitimate native ruler (Cline 1966, 1968; Harvey 1991).

### **New Postconquest Tecpans**

We see the tecpan in transition in Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco in two cases. In Tenochtitlán, a new tecpan was built for don Andres de Tapia de Motelchiuhtzin, the city's native governor and a descendant of both Motecuzoma and one of the conquistadors. In Tlatelolco, the old community tecpan was re-established after 50 years of Tenochtitlán overlordship, begun in the

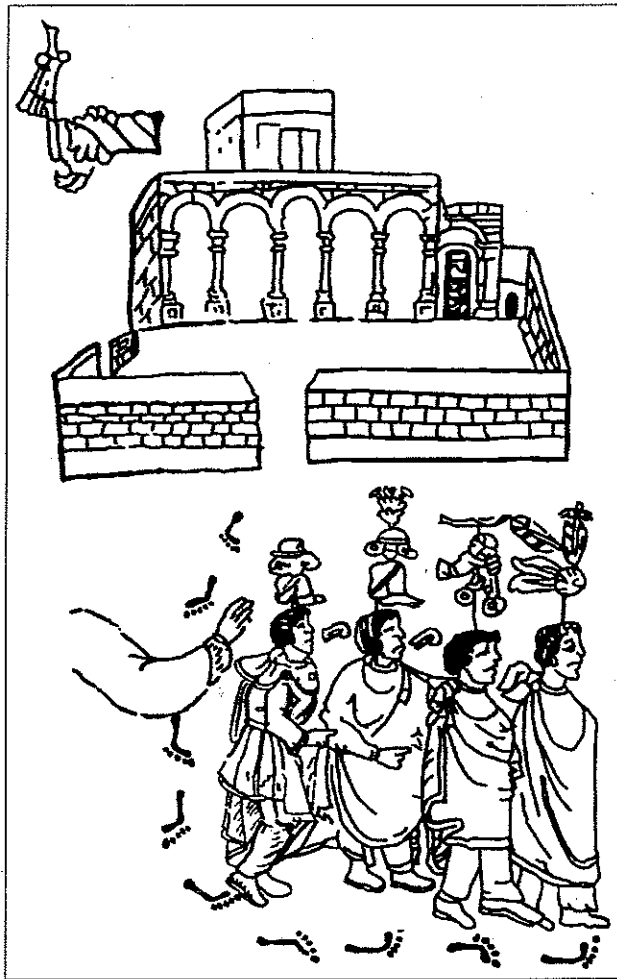


**FIGURE 2.3** Tenochtitlán-Mexico City: sixteenth-century *tecpan*, as depicted in the *Codex Osuna* (1565). Redrawn by author.

1470s with the overthrow of the independent Tlatelolco dynasty. The two cases offer a contrast in how tecpans survived at the capital in the second, Early Colonial period stage of tecpan transformation.

**Tenochtitlán-Mexico City: Tecpan of the Tapia Family.** In Tenochtitlán-Mexico City, a variant of the struggle to define the tecpan under Spanish rule took place with regard to a new tecpan that was built for Tapia. While the Tapia tecpan was built with native labor, and clearly was intended to be the residence of the native governor, by the mid-sixteenth century the governor and his family were embroiled in a fight with their native subjects about ownership of the tecpan, with the Tapias claiming it as their personal palace (Calnek, personal communication 1997, citing *Archivo General de la Nación* 1576).

**Tenochtitlán-Mexico City: Codex Osuna Tecpan.** Part of the resolution of this issue was the construction of another tecpan in Tenochtitlán (Figure 2.3). This illustration from the *Codex Osuna* (1878) shows a hybrid



**FIGURE 2.4** Tlatelolco: *tecpan*, showing the eviction of the native lords by Spanish authority (*Códice del tecpan Santiago Tlatelolco* 1576–1581). Redrawn by author.

of native and Spanish-style architectural traditions, but most strongly expressed is the native *tecpan* layout: the very large main courtyard and the elevated room opposite the entry, which was probably the ruler's dais room (see Evans 1991 and 2004 for more extensive discussions of *tecpan* layout). Also note the lavish use of the disk frieze as a motif on the outer wall of the *tecpan* compound and above the lintel of the main building.

**Tlatelolco: Tecpan Santiago Tlatelolco.** The four quarters, or main barrios, of Tenochtitlán–Mexico City were home to the city's Spanish population and to many native families. The city's "fifth quarter" since the 1470s was Tlatelolco; at that time, Tlatelolco had made a failed bid for independence from its overbearing sibling city, and since then it had languished under Tenochtitlán's military dictatorship. After the Spanish conquest, a sort of native quarter was made of Tlatelolco. In fact, the Tlatelolcan dynasty was restored, and its long-destroyed *tecpan* was rebuilt.

The *tecpan* of Tlatelolco has had an enduring history. In a sense, it has survived into the present as a building providing community services. In the sixteenth century, the *tecpan* was a "magnífico palacio" according to Cervantes de Salazar (1875 [1554]). But in the early 1560s, the native rulers were evicted from the *tecpan*, as Figure 2.4 shows, because a Spanish judge was installed to officiate there (Barlow 1948:119). Another *tecpan* was built in 1576 in the same vicinity.

Tlatelolco's *tecpan* continued as an important focus throughout the colonial era—as late as 1809, the "Gobernador por Su Majestad" was signing documents in the "Real Tecpan de Santiago [Tlatelolco]" (López Sarrelangue 1956:200). But by the 1850s, the building was turned into a kind of juvenile delinquency center, and after that, into an orphanage. There were some efforts to restore a part of it in the 1960s (Flores Marini 1968).

### City-state *Tecpans*

Along with these *tecpan*s in the native quarters of major cities, *tecpan*s at the city-state level had the highest survival rate, because their communities survived and because, for a very extended period, the Spaniards permitted native governors to administer them directly. Thus in Cuernavaca, for example, colonial-era native peoples voted not in a religious building or in the home of a local powerful Spaniard, but,

without the intervention of non-Indians  
and in buildings described variously as  
*casas reales*, a *palacio*, or a *comonidadtecpan*

(community palace). The latter practice probably would have been the norm anyway, for it was a preconquest custom to consummate the selection of a tlatoani in the *tecpan*, or palace [Haskett 1991:32].

At Culhuacan, we find a situation similar to that of the Tapia *tecpan*, with the *tecpan* building being legally treated as a piece of family property. Consider the case of one María, who lacked noble titles but who lived in the *tecpan* and attempted to guarantee her family's continued right to do so in her will:

And the house which has just been roofed will be for the public because it is the *tecpancalli* (palace), but despite its being public, it is the home of all my children and grandchildren. It will be as it has been; they are to keep it swept and attend to the public there [Cline and León-Portilla 1984:228–233].

María may have been a long-term caretaker, but another woman, who used the Spanish title “doña,” not only expressed in her will that “her *tecpancalli*” was her home, but also claimed that the 20 *chinampas* associated with the *tecpan* “are my property and my inheritance” (Cline and León-Portilla 1984:249). This amounts to a serious erosion of the old institutionalized association of land to support the *tecpan* with the *tecpan* as a community building.

### **Village Tecpans**

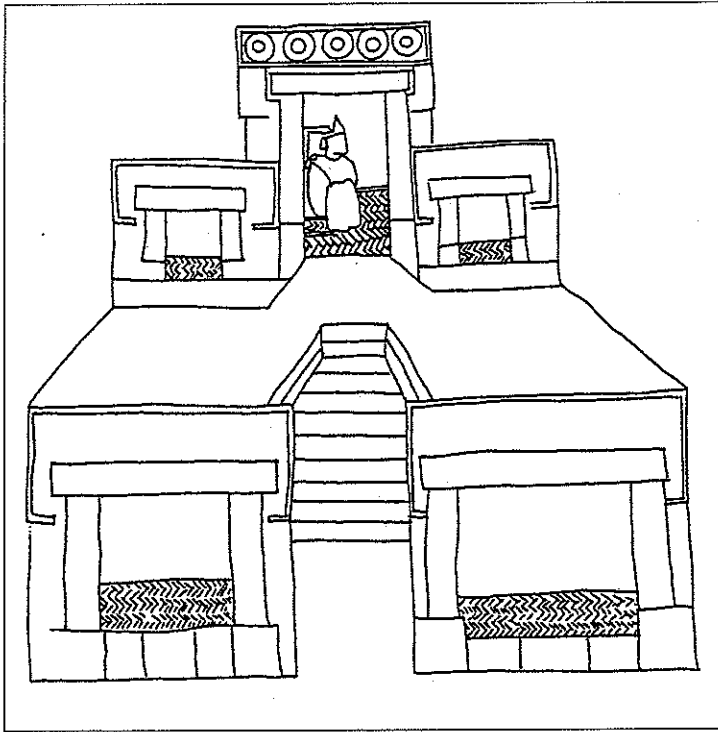
These matters ceased to be problematical by 1600 for most of the smaller communities because their *tecpan*s no longer were needed by the remnant populations. A case in point is the *tecpan* at Cihuatecpan, a village of about 1,000 people that was ordered abandoned in 1603 (*Archivo General de la Nación* 1603). Excavations there confirmed the ethnohistoric record—sherds of Aztec IV, a few Majolica-type wares, figurines depicting Spaniards, even some metal fittings and cow bones in the back courtyard of Structure 6,

the presumed *tecpan*, all attested to the sixteenth-century use of this building (Evans and Abrams 1988). All over the Basin of Mexico, the bottom fell out of the Aztec *tecpan* hierarchy over a long period of time, a symmetrical loss to that of the early postconquest removal of the *huetecpan* tier.

### **Lord-place, Place of Preciousness: Significance of the Disk Frieze**

The disk motif as designating the *tecpan* was part of the Postclassic period system of glyph notations for the central highlands, defining and recording places of community power. Thus the disk motif is an important key to understanding how the preconquest world was organized, the power possessed by certain places. Already we have seen a Colonial period example of its use, in the *Codex Osuna* depiction of the *tecpan*. Comparing Figures 2.3 and 2.4, we see buildings with similar layout and shape: the big courtyard is a standard feature of *tecpan*s everywhere, and so is the raised room across the courtyard from the entryway. Both buildings have European arches, but the *Codex Osuna* *tecpan* also has native-style doorways and the disk frieze. In sixteenth-century documents such as the *Florentine Codex* this motif is most commonly associated with the *tecpan*, though it is also featured on ritually sacred buildings (Evans 1991:71–76, citing Sahagún 1979 [drawing 84] and 1963 [drawings 885–890]).

The disk motif, the glyph for preciousness, is a shorthand for several precious objects and concepts. It is the sign for jade and other greenstone *chalchihuites*, and by association, a representation of water and vegetation. The disk also represents the unit “one” and is used in calendric and tribute records, such tabulations being special forms of knowledge by elites to regulate societal and spiritual matters. All these meanings had special associations with lordship in Mesoamerica, and examples extending back thousands of years indicate the temporal depth and spatial extent of their usage.<sup>1</sup>



**FIGURE 2.5** Tenochtitlán: Motecuzoma's *tecpan*, as depicted in the *Codex Mendoza*. Redrawn by author.

The Aztecs shared in the general Mesoamerican belief that the lords were more closely related to the gods than were the commoners. Thus, the lord's place, such as Motecuzoma's palace as depicted in the *Codex Mendoza* (Figure 2.5), was, by definition, a sacred place, and dimensions of godliness pervaded the royal residence. As a symbol of preciousness, the disk motif's application to temples and other important buildings was logical. However, its most consistent association in Aztec contexts was with the palace. Let us now turn to the *Mapa de México de 1550*, an example of the disk frieze as a shorthand expression of native governorship and of a more general perception of a place as geographically critical in the early colonial Basin of Mexico.

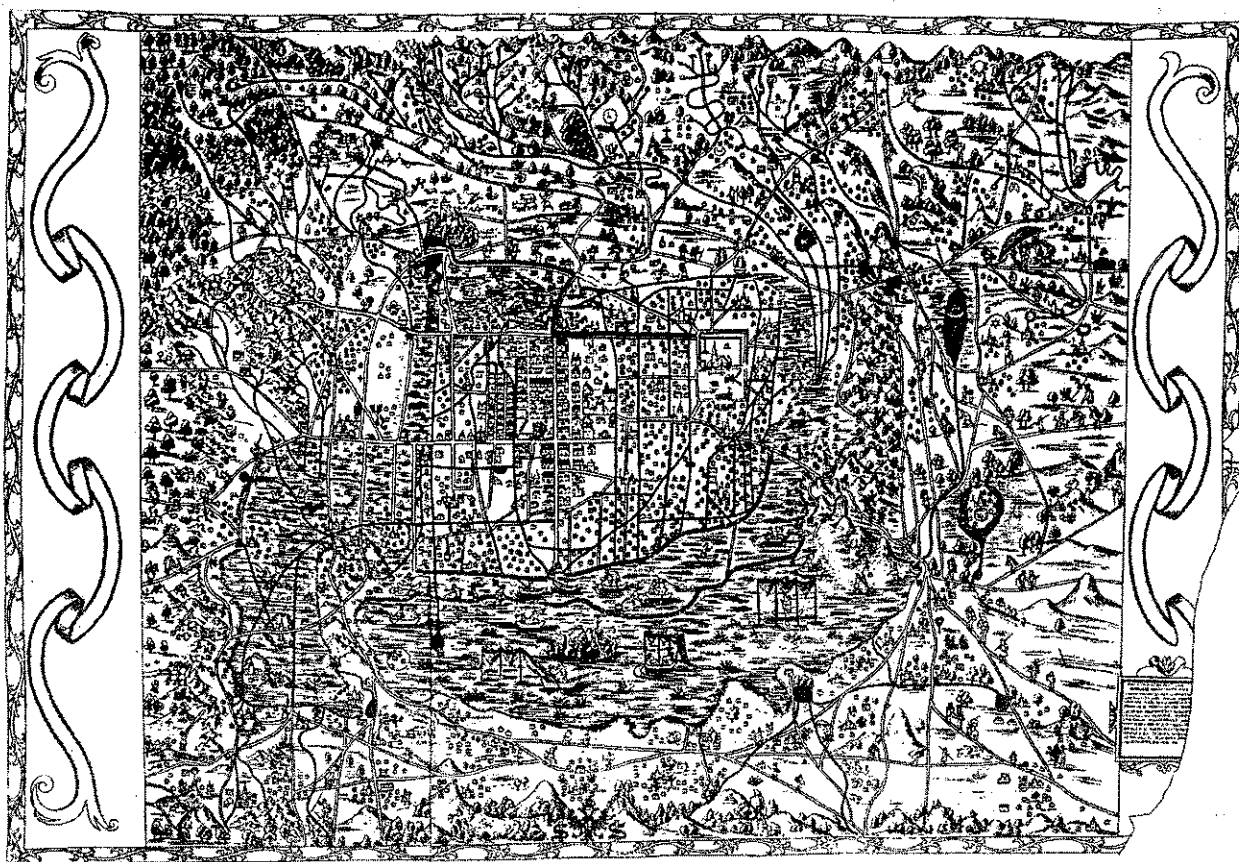
## Mapa de México de 1550

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Colegio de Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco trained young native men to produce manuscripts in a style that combined customs of expression in the European and central Mexican traditions. These artisans produced some of the most famous illustrated manuscripts of early colonial central Mexico: the *Badianus* herbal, Sahagún's *Codex of Tlatelolco*,<sup>2</sup> and the *Mapa de México de 1550* (Figure 2.6), which has become known as the *Mapa de Santa Cruz* (Linné 1948:201; Robertson 1994:156) and also the *Uppsala Map* because it resides in the university library at Uppsala, Sweden (Glass 1975:194; Linné 1948).<sup>3</sup> More recently, in an effort to distinguish it from the other "Santa Cruz map," it has been named *Mapa de México Tenochtitlán y sus Contornos hacia 1550* (León-Portilla and Aguilar 1986). For simplicity's sake, it will henceforth be called the *Mapa de México* in this study.

Measuring 78 by 114 cm, painted on a ground of skin, the map bears a now badly damaged dedicatory note in Latin from the court cartographer Alonso de Santa Cruz to Charles V, offering a view of Tenochtitlán (León-Portilla and Aguilar 1986:29–30). Presumably, the map was commissioned to be sent to Spain, and its intended audience is an important clue as to why and where the disk motif was employed. Such documents were valuable additions to royal libraries, and this one may also have served as an *aide-mémoire*, an illustration for travelers returning to the Spanish court from New Spain and describing events taking place in and around the capital. It was certainly a vast improvement over the 1524 Nuremberg map and its fantastical offspring (see Note 3, above).

The map depicts the Basin of Mexico as seen from the east, with Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco accounting for a disproportionate share of the space.<sup>4</sup> In terms of general spatial relationships, however, the map is quite accurate; for example, the grid of roads and watercourses that effectively links the settlements is shown with great care and compares well with other sources, including the modern layout of Mexico City and environs—a





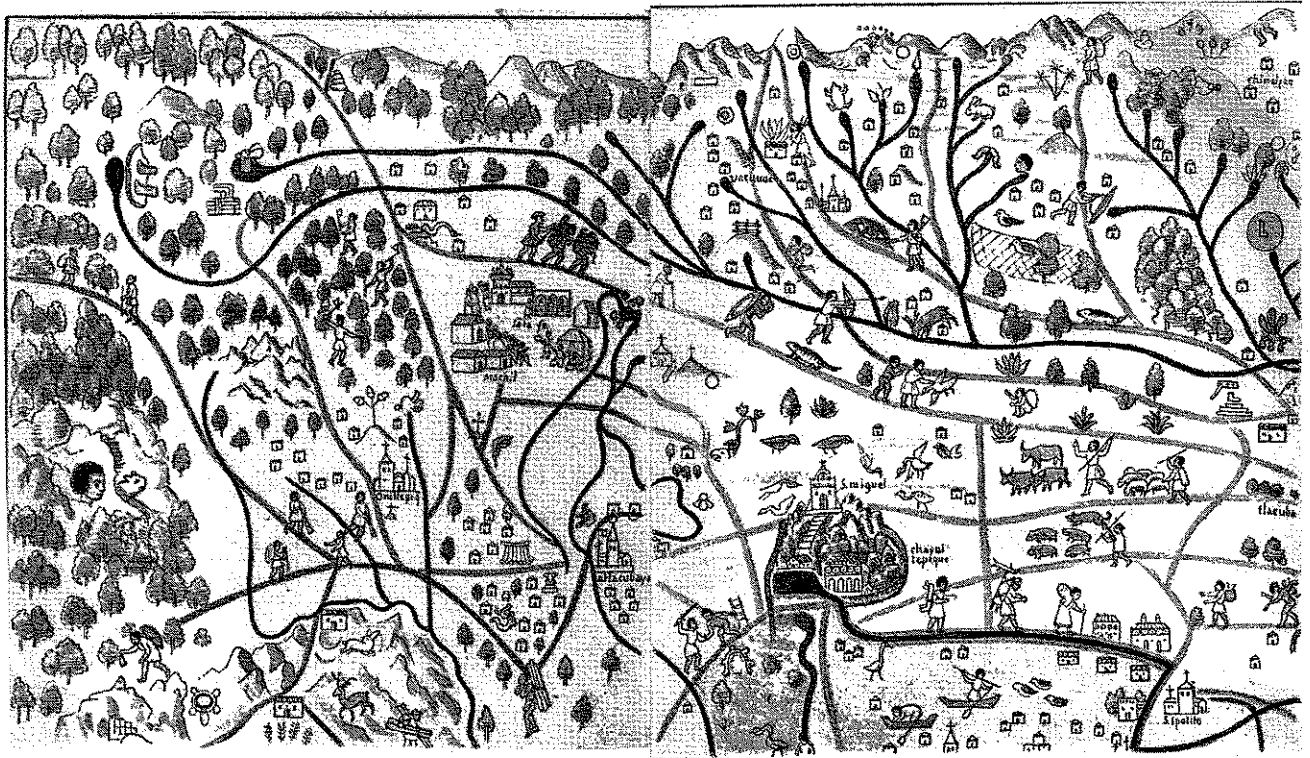
**FIGURE 2.6** *Mapa de México*, about 1550. The map's view is from the east (north is at right), and its major focus is Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco, which occupies the middle section. The network of roads and canals provides a grid that maintains a reasonably accurate directional relationship between features. This version of the map is from Elsasser (1974). Courtesy of the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California.

palimpsest of transport routes based in large part on ancient causeways and canals.

In style, the map is typical of pictorial documents from the Colegio de Santa Cruz, in that it combines elements of the native map tradition, such as the *Codex Xolotl*, and the European Renaissance traditions of "landscape maps" ("*mapas de paisaje*" [León-Portilla and Aguilar 1986]), and of filling the landscape with "genre figures—porters, travelers, and hunters. These scenes are reminiscent of the figures in north European landscape painting, such as Breughel's "The Tower of Babel" (Robertson 1994:160). In the *Codex Xolotl* the figures told a definite historical story pertinent to the

map's setting, but in the *Mapa de México* they were supernumeraries in a stage setting, although accurate in costume and occupation.

The map's glosses are also a hybrid of Nahuatl and European culture. Place name glyphs outnumber the place names written in script, and usually the two refer to different places. Place name glyphs most frequently pertain to landscape features, while script names refer to towns and institutions (like hospitals) and often include Nahuatl and Spanish names. However, much of the information conveyed by the map is inconsistent—early colonial *cabecera* towns, successors to the Late Postclassic city-states (Berdan



**FIGURE 2.7** *Mapa de México*. Sectors I and II show the map's southwestern and west-southwestern sections, as redrawn and published in Linné (1948). This detail has many examples of the "genre figures"—traveling on roads, chopping down trees, herding animals. The largest set of architectural features is on the hill at Chapultepec (right of center toward the bottom of the map), with a church on top and an individualized *tecpan* at the bottom. This is the viceregal pleasure palace, built over Motecuzoma's. Another pleasure palace, Cortés' at Mazantzintamalco, is at lower right, where the Chapultepec aqueduct (dark line flanked by causeways) turns east, toward Mexico City. This building is probably the "*suntuosa casa que llama la atención con sus dos pequeñas torres. pertenece á Cortés*" (Linné 1948:98). Note the three small "genre *tecpan*s" nearby—these are probably also mansions (used by permission of the University Library of Uppsala).

et al. 1996:109–110) are not uniformly shown, for example. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that because the intentions of the mapmakers are poorly understood by us, their choice of the map's details seems inconsistent.

### **Architecture in the Mapa de México**

To a certain extent, the architecture in the *Mapa de México* fills the same purpose as do the genre figures. The figures suggest activity, and many of the structures seem to suggest habitation or other activity,

without specifying the actual community existing in that particular spot.

In order to better analyze the contents of the map, it has traditionally been divided into 11 sectors (see Figure 2.6): 10 are roughly square, and comprise the borderlands, while the eleventh, Sector VI, is a double square comprising Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco (Linné 1948; León-Portilla and Aguilera 1986). This system is followed here in an analysis of the architectural forms (Tables 2.1 and 2.2, Figure 2.7).

*text continues page 28*

**TABLE 2.1 Architectural forms of the Mapa de México**

		RESIDENTIAL/ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS = 1,570 (94% of all buildings)							
		native-style houses and/or tecpans = 1,474 (94% of all houses)			Euro-style houses and/or administrative buildings = 96 (6% of all houses)				
					disk frieze houses and/or administrative buildings = 72 (5% of all houses)				
		small native- style house	large native- style house	DISK FRIEZE on native-style house	DISK FRIEZE on individualized native-style house	DISK FRIEZE on Euro-style house	Euro- style house	Church	Other Building
ENTIRE MAP	1,679	1,395	17	48	14	10	86	82	27
SECTOR I: southwest	51	37	1	2				2	convent-hospital, 7 bldgs; 2 mill bldgs
SECTOR II: WSW	83	70	1	5	2		1	4	
SECTOR III: WNW	168	153	1	6				4	3 mill bldgs; Otomi temple
SECTOR IV: northwest	109	100		2				7	
SECTOR V: south	121	108		6				7	
SECTOR VI: center Tenochtitlán- Tlatelolco	723	563	13	8	10	10	82	27, including one with disk	6=Tlatelolco civic-cerem; 3=Francis; 1 pyramid w/ disk frieze
SECTOR VII: north	69	62						7	
SECTOR VII: southeast	119	97		7			3	10	2 pyramids
SECTOR IX: ESE	77	71		3				3	
SECTOR X: ENE	91	79	1	6	1			4	
SECTOR XII: northeast	68	55		3	1			7	2 pyramids

Presence of disk motifs on buildings was verified by comparing the copy drawing published in León Portilla and Aguilera against a photograph of the original map. There were a few minor discrepancies, but overall, depictions of buildings were correct as to location, size, and detail. Some disk motifs were not "pierced" as chalchihuites; this is probably the result of abrasion of highlight details off the original painted map.

TABLE 2.2 Mapa de México buildings with disk friezes, by sector

sector	building depicted	probable function	width of façade <sup>1</sup> / N of buildings/ N of levels	relative width of disk frieze/ N of disks	location (town name, neighborhood, size, and type of building [location names in quotes are from gloss, <i>Mapa de México</i> ])
I	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/5	probably town of Tenanitla (S.Angel): isolated medium-large native-style building at the W boundary of the Pedregal and the plain, at intersection of road & river. <i>Cabecera after 1570 (Gerhard 1993b)</i> .
I	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.29/1/1	1.29/5	town of "Techimalpa": isolated large native-style building on the pedregal, intersection of two roads.
II	ind.* tecpan	mansion	1.71/1/1	1.71/5	"Chapultepecque"—v. large native-style building with roof details, 4 arched doors, fountainhead of major spring, intersection of 2 roads. <i>Early Colonial palace on same location as Motecuzoma's (de la Torre 1988: 47)</i> .
II	genre tecpan	mansion	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	probably pleasure gardens of Mazantzintamalco: medium-small native-style building, at the intersection of 2 major causeways + aqueduct.
II	genre tecpan	mansion	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	probably pleasure gardens of Mazantzintamalco: medium-small native-style building, at the intersection of 2 major causeways + aqueduct.
II	genre tecpan	mansion	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	probably pleasure gardens of Mazantzintamalco: medium-small native-style building, at the intersection of 2 major causeways + aqueduct.
II	ind. tecpan	mansion	1.71/1/1	1.71/5	probably pleasure gardens of Mazantzintamalco: v. large native-style building with roof details, 2 arched doorways, at the intersection of 2 major causeways + aqueduct. <i>Late Postclassic royal orchards located at Mazantzintamalco became the Early Colonial property of Cortés (Cortés 1990 [1526]; Evans 2000:222)</i> .
II	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	town of "Uneuuac": medium native-style building, between two roads, nr intersection of road & river.
II	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/5	town of Tacuba: "Tlacuba": medium-large native-style building, at the conjunction point of roads. <i>Late Postclassic city-state, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:41)</i>
III	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	Tacuba: "Tlacuba": medium-small native-style building at the intersection of roads. <i>Late Postclassic city-state, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:41)</i>
III	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	Tacuba: "Tlacuba": medium-small native-style building at the intersection of roads. <i>Late Postclassic city-state, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:41)</i>
III	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	"S María de la Vitoria ...tepetepec" (Remedios, Linné 1948: 118): medium native-style building, in town, alongside river. <i>Refuge for Spaniards on Noche Triste, this is also the western terminus of a sightline transecting the Tlatelolco civic-ceremonial center and ending, in the east, at the Tepetzinco beacon (Gonzalez Aparicio 1973)</i> .
III	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.00/1/1	1.00/5	center of sector, next to mill straddling a river: medium native-style building with several very small native-style buildings nearby
III	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/4	"Clitepe": medium-large native-style building in center of town, near river.
III	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/5	far west mts, at fountainhead of spring: isolated medium-large native-style building
IV	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	"Metztitlan"?: medium-small native-style building between road and river
IV	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	N of Cuauhtitlan: isolated medium-small native-style building at 'T' intersection of roads. <i>Possibly Coyotepec, sub-cabecera of Cuauhtitlan in the 1560s (Gerhard 1993b:128)</i> .
V	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	S of Huitzilopochco: isolated medium-small native-style building, on edge of lake at intersection of 2 roads and one river. <i>Late Postclassic tlatoani at Huitzilopochco (Gibson 1964:39)</i> .

\*ind. = individualized

TABLE 2.2 Mapa de México buildings with disk friezes, by sector (cont'd)

sector	building depicted	probable function	width of façade <sup>1</sup> / N of buildings/ N of levels	relative width of disk frieze/ N of disks	location (town name, neighborhood, size, and type of building [location names in quotes are from gloss, <i>Mapa de México</i> ])
V	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	town of "Ixtapalapa": medium native-style building at N edge of town, on lake [not on map copies—picked up from photo of original]. <i>Ixtapalapa's preconquest tlatoani, Cuiclahuac, became Moctecuzoma's successor during the conquest (Gibson 1964:39)</i>
V	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/5	town of "Coyohuacan": medium native-style building at W edge of town at intersection of 2 roads, one with canal. <i>Late Postclassic city-state, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:41)</i>
V	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.14/1/1	1.14/5	town of "Culhuacan": medium-large native-style building at S edge of town, on lake. <i>Late Postclassic city-state, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964: 38–39, 49)</i>
V	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/4	SE boundary of Pedregal & plain: isolated medium-large native-style building near a river
V	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.29/1/1	1.29/5	SE boundary of Pedregal & plain: isolated large native-style building, near a road, at source of spring
VI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	E of Tepeyaca: isolated medium-small native-style building straddling the 2nd, outermost dike. <i>Possibly Ecatepec, a Late Postclassic city-state, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:38)</i>
VI	pyramid	n.a.	na	0.88/5	Tenayuca: pyramid serpent wall. <i>Tenayuca a Late Postclassic city-state, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:41)</i>
VI	ind. mansion	admin. build. <sup>†</sup>	1.71/2/2	0.71/4	0.88/4 Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: E edge of city, at embarkation for Texcoco, 2 connected bldgs w/ peaked roofs form a large Euro-style building
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	1.43/1/2	1.29/6	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NE barrio, NE of Cathedral (corner of Piño Suarez and Rep. Guatemala), large Euro-style, 2-part building with jagged roof line
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	1.43/3/2	1.43/7	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NE barrio, NE of Cathedral (on Piño Suarez, 2nd house from Rep. Guatemala), large Euro-style, complex, 3-part building
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	0.88/1/2	0.88/5	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NW luxury barrio, between Tacuba & Peru (1 house N of Tacuba, 4 houses W of Piño Suarez), medium-small Euro-style building with 3 arched doors, double row of disks suggesting 2nd floor
VI	genre tecpan	mansion	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NW luxury barrio, between Tacuba & Peru (1 house S of Peru, 1 house W of Piño Suarez), medium-small native-style building with 1 arched door, drawn in perspective
VI	ind. tecpan	mansion	1.00/1/2	1.00/4	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NW luxury barrio, between Tacuba & Peru (2nd house NE of S Juan Letran & Tacuba), medium building, native style but with two towers
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	0.88/1/2	0.88/4	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NW luxury barrio, between Tacuba & Peru (corner of S Juan Letran & Tacuba), medium-small Euro-style building with pitched roof, perspective view
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	0.88/1/2	0.88/4	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NW luxury barrio, between Tacuba & Peru (on S side of Peru, 1 house W of Piño Suarez), medium-small Euro-style building with 1 arched door and roof details
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	1.00/1/2	1.00/5	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NW luxury barrio, between Tacuba & Peru (on Tacuba, 3rd house E of S Juan Letran), medium Euro-style building with pitched roof, perspective view
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	1.29/4/3	0.71/4	Tenochtitlan–Mexico City: NW luxury barrio, between Tacuba & Peru (on Tacuba, 4th house E of S Juan Letran), large Euro-style, complex, 4-part building

<sup>†</sup>admin. build. = administrative building

TABLE 2.2 Mapa de México buildings with disk friezes, by sector (cont'd)

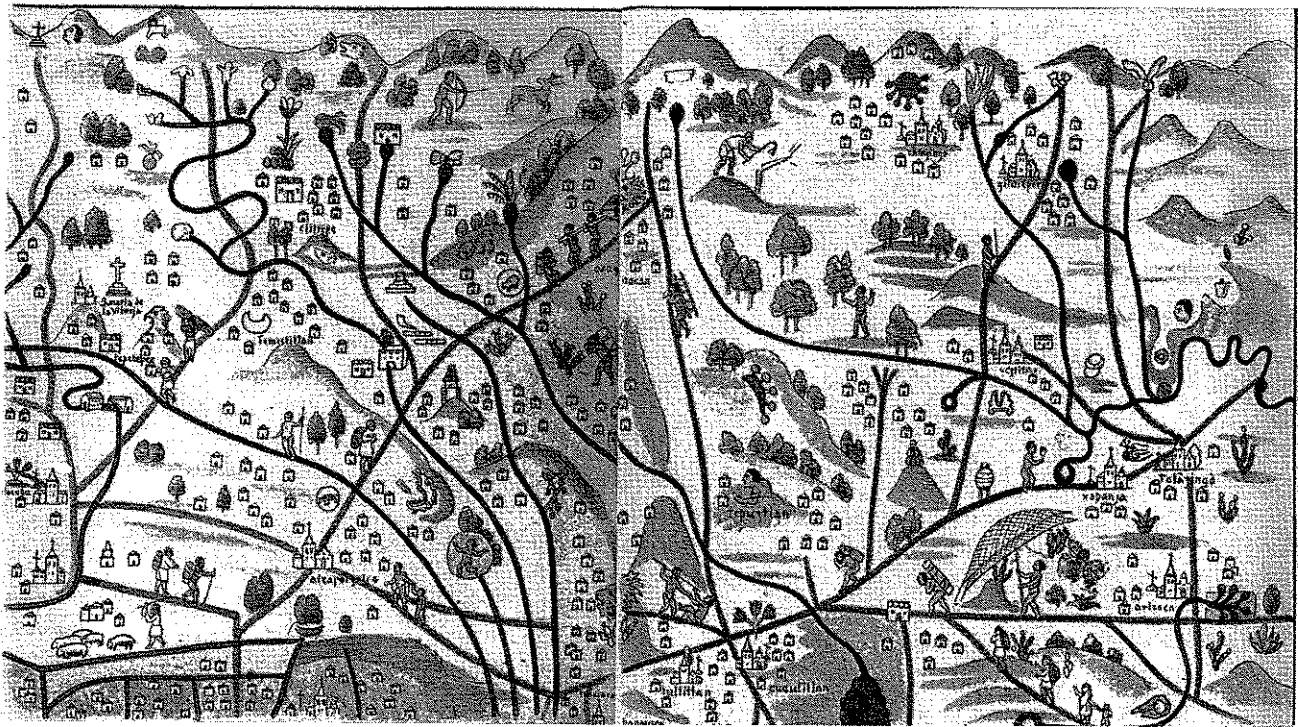
sector	building depicted	probable function	width of façade <sup>1</sup> / N of buildings/ N of levels	relative width of disk frieze/ N of disks	location (town name, neighborhood, size, and type of building [location names in quotes are from gloss, <i>Mapa de México</i> ])
VI	ind. tecpan	tecpan?	1.00/1/1	0.71/3	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SE barrio near casa de do' Pablo, small native style building attached to small Euro-style building, thus hybrid medium building
VI	ind. mansion	mansion	1.57/1/2	1.43/6	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SE barrio, E of Cathedral (corner of Piño Suarez & Rep. Guatemala), large Euro-style building, 2 story w/ 6 arches on upper level
VI	ind. tecpan	mansion	1.57/1/3	1.43/7	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SE barrio, E of Cathedral (on Rep. Guatemala, 2nd house from Piño Suarez), large native-style building with 2 arched doorways, plus Euro-style pitched roof with tower
VI	ind. mansion	tecpan	2.00/5/3	1.00/5	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SE barrio: Casa de Tapia (Linné 1948: 66), very large Euro-style building, largest residence depicted in this largely native quarter.
VI	ind. tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/7	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SW barrio (between V. Carranza & Tacuba), medium-large native style building with 3 arched doorways
VI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/5	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SW barrio, "S. Lazaro" (corner of SJuan Letran/L. Cardenas & Arcos de Belem), medium-large native style building, terminus of Chapultepec aqueduct (Linné 1948: 66)
VI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.88/1/1	0.88/5	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SW barrio, across from "S. Agustin", medium-small native-style building with 1 arched door
VI	ind. tecpan	admin. build.	2.57/1/1	2.57/11	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SW barrio, between V. Carranza & Tacuba, largest single building with disk frieze, 6 arched doorways and decorative detail under disks
VI	ind. tecpan	admin. build.	1.00/1/2	1.00/5	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SW barrio, S edge of Zócalo, medium native-style building with 1 arched door; and roof detail suggesting 2nd floor, E bldg of Palacio Municipal, or Casa de los Cabildos (Linné 1948: 65)
VI	ind. tecpan	admin. build.	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SW barrio, S edge of Zócalo, medium-small native-style building with 1 arched door; W bldg of Palacio Municipal, or Casa de los Cabildos (Linné 1948: 65)
VI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: SW barrio, S side, V. Carranza, medium-small native-style building with 1 arched door
VI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.71/1/1	0.71/4	Tenochtitlan—Mexico City: W side of SJuan de Letran, S of Tacuba small native-style building is at center of a connected block of 5 buildings
VI	ind. tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/5	Tlatelolco—Mexico City: NE, medium-large native style building, 2 arched doorways, along a canal, W bldg
VI	ind. tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/4	Tlatelolco—Mexico City: NE, medium-large native style building, 3 arched doorways, along a canal, E bldg
VI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.71/1/1	0.71/?	Tlatelolco—Mexico City: S of "mercado", small native-style building drawn in perspective (disk frieze on original map but not on copies)
VI	ind. tecpan	tecpan?	1.00/1/1	1.00/5	Tlatelolco—Mexico City: S of Tlatelolco compound, S bldg, medium native-style building with 2 arched doorways
VI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.14/1/1	1.14/5	Tlatelolco—Mexico City: W, S of Tlatelolco c-c compound, N bldg, medium-large native style building
VIII	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/5	"Amacamecan": medium native-style building, in town, S edge of town, between road & river. <i>Amecameca, early 15th C tlatoani, Early Colonial cabecera</i> (Gibson 1964:49).
VIII	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	"Chimalhuacan"—Chimaloapa: medium native-style building, SE edge of town, along road. <i>Chimalhuacan Chalco, early 15th C tlatoani, Early Colonial cabecera</i> (Gibson 1964:49).
VIII	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	"Chimalhuacan"—Chimaloapa: medium-small native-style building, in town. <i>Chimalhuacan Chalco, early 15th C tlatoani, Early Colonial cabecera</i> (Gibson 1964:49).

TABLE 2.2 Mapa de México buildings with disk friezes, by sector (cont'd)

sector	building depicted	probable function	width of façade <sup>1</sup> / N of buildings/ N of levels	relative width of disk frieze/ N of disks	location (town name, neighborhood, size, and type of building [location names in quotes are from gloss, <i>Mapa de México</i> ])
VIII	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	"Chimalhuacan"—Chimaloapa: medium-small native-style building, W of town, along road. <i>Chimalhuacan Chalco</i> , early 15th C tlatoani, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:49).
VIII	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	"Miziqui": medium native-style building, in town, straddling canal thru lake. <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:39)
VIII	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.88/1/1	0.88/5	"Tlalmanalco": medium-small native-style building with double row of disks, in center of town. <i>Tlalmanalco</i> , early 15th C tlatoani, Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:49).
VIII	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.14/1/1	1.14/6	Ixtapalaca [town, named, is in Sector IX]: medium-large native style building near lakeshore, at convergence of 2 roads. <i>Late Postclassic calpixqui center of Texcoco</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:49).
IX	genre tecpan	mansion	0.88/1/1	0.88/5	Tepezinco, important island game reserve and beacon for lake and city canal traffic: medium-small native-style building, probable pleasure palace.
IX	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	"Coatlíchan": medium native-style building, in town, straddling road. <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
IX	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.00/1/1	1.00/5	"Cuauhiztac"?: medium native-style building, center of town, 2 roads converge.
X	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.88/1/1	0.88/4	"Chiahuiztla"—Chiautla?: medium-small native-style building, in town, next to church. <i>Chiautla</i> , <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
X	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.71/2/1	0.71/4	"Tepetlaoztoc": small native-style building, E of town, near roads, river. <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
X	genre tecpan	tecpan	0.71/1/1	0.71/3	"Tetzco" ?Quinatzin Palace? small native-style building, with small tower, on E side of town. <i>Texcoco</i> , <i>Late Postclassic huetlatoani capital</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
X	ind. tecpan	tecpan	1.00/2/1	1.00/5	"Tetzco": in town, medium native-style building w/ wall and gatehouse. <i>Texcoco</i> , <i>Late Postclassic huetlatoani capital</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
X	genre tecpan	mansion	1.00/1/1	1.00/5	probably Acatetelco/Atenco: medium native-style building, SW of square reservoir, probable pleasure palace
X	genre tecpan	mansion	0.71/1/1	0.71/3	probably Acatetelco/Atenco: small native-style building, near the N side of the square reservoir, probable pleasure palace
X	genre tecpan	tecpan?	0.88/1/1	0.88/5	W of Tepetlaoztoc: isolated medium-small native-style building, near road, river. <i>Possibly Tezayuca</i> , <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
XI	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	"S Juan" Chiconautla: medium native-style building, in town next to church, hillside. <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
XI	ind. tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/5	"S Juan .. Otumba": medium native-style building, on southwest side of town, with platform. <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
XI	genre tecpan	tecpan	1.00/1/1	1.00/6	"S Juan .. Otumba": medium native-style building, on southeast side of town. <i>Late Postclassic city-state</i> , Early Colonial cabecera (Gibson 1964:43).
XI	genre tecpan	tecpan?	1.00/1/1	1.00/4	"Tecuinslan" Atlantonco: medium native-style building, in town, nr important canal. <i>Not S. Juan Teotihuacan (which is a cabecera near the pyramids, shown as a church on the map)</i> .

<sup>1</sup> Width of the façade, possibly a meaningful comparative measure, is a relative value: all the building drawings were measured, and the median value was set at 1.00. Other values are expressed as relative proportions (thus the largest building is 2.57 times as wide as the median building).





**FIGURE 2.8** *Mapa de México*. Sectors III and IV show the map's west-northwestern and northwestern sections, as redrawn and published in Linné (1948). In the lower left part of Sector IV are Toltilan and Cuahtitlan, both *cabecera* towns in the Early Colonial period (Gibson 1964:48), though neither has a *tecpan* on this map. A "genre *tecpan*" appears to the right of Cuahtitlan, at the intersection of several roads (used by permission of the University Library of Uppsala).

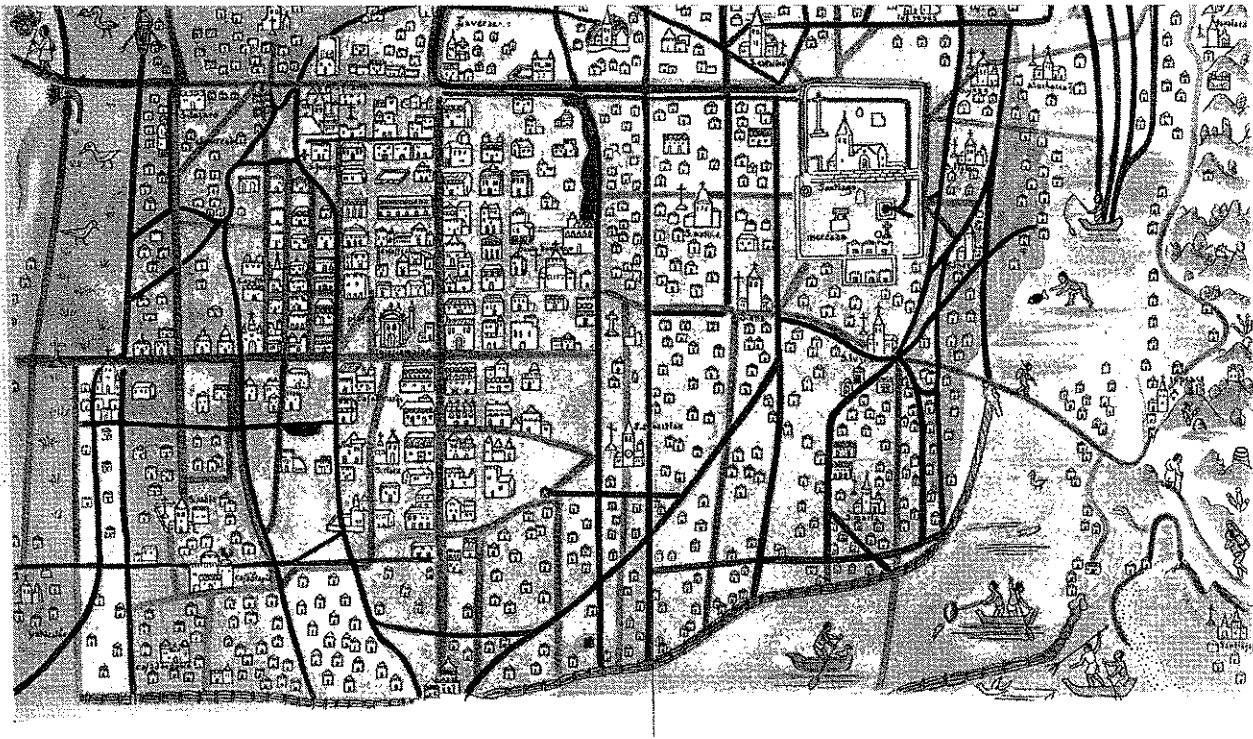
The map's nearly 1,700 structures<sup>5</sup> are categorized herein (Table 2.1) as to presumed function: house/administration building, church, and other building (pyramids, hospitals, mills). Most buildings in the first category are clearly houses, but some, such as the Cabildo administration buildings on the south side of the Zócalo of Tenochtitlán–Mexico City, may have had other, more important functions; the more general category follows the functional precedent of the *tecpan* itself as a multifunction residential building. Even if all European-style buildings served a non-residential function, they only account for about 12 percent of the structures depicted.

The most common structure is the native house, accounting for 88 percent of all structures. Within that category, most common are relatively small drawings

of native-style houses: about 95 percent of all native-style houses are smaller than the median size of the *Mapa*'s building depictions. Each of these simple buildings was drawn as a square with a vertical line for a door and a row of dots across the top (for example, Figure 2.8, the small houses clustered in towns). These dots are not disk motifs but represent, no doubt, the ends of beams in native-style houses. The slight peak of the roof may be an attempt to portray vanishing point perspective because these houses were usually flat-roofed. So conventionalized are these drawings that we could define them as "genre native-style houses," in keeping with the terms used to describe the human figures on the map.

The next largest category of buildings is the church, including religious institutions counted under





**FIGURE 2.9** *Mapa de México*. Sector VI shows Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco/Mexico City. The civic-ceremonial precinct of Tlatelolco, upper right, appears to be the most important set of buildings in the entire city. The Zócalo (plaza) and Metropolitan Cathedral (*iglesia mayor*) are modest in relative dimensions. At lower right, surmounted by a rooster, is the Casa de Tapia (used by permission of the University Library of Uppsala).

“other buildings.” The largest church depicted on the map, and the complex with the most buildings, is not the Metropolitan Cathedral in Tenochtitlán, but Santiago Tlatelolco (Figures 2.6, 2.9). The Tlatelolco civic-ceremonial complex occupies the most disproportionately large space of the entire map. With that exception, the size of buildings on all parts of the map is remarkably consistent. There tend to be more large and elaborate drawings of buildings in Mexico City than in the hinterlands, but this reflects the reality of architectural size within and beyond the city.

#### **Disk-Frieze Buildings, Including Tecpans**

The map shows 72 buildings with disk friezes (not including the serpent wall at Tenayuca), and they are tabulated by map sector in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Examination of all 72 buildings drawn with disk friezes resulted

in three distinct styles of drawn building: first, the “genre tecpan” was a front-view version of the glyph; second, the “individualized tecpan” embellished the basic form with such features as multiple arched doorways or small towers; third, European-style mansions with (or without) disk friezes were highly individualized.

The highest concentration of disk-frieze buildings appears in Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco Sector VI (Table 2.2 and Figure 2.9)—with nearly 40 percent of all such buildings, 70 percent of the “individualized native-style” disk-frieze buildings, and all of the European-style buildings with disk friezes. Much of Sector VI consists of the city center, *la traza* (grid pattern)—plots distributed to the Spaniards in the decades just after the conquest, though the newcomers rapidly encroached upon the extra-traza neighborhoods, which were reserved for the indigenous

population (Calnek 1979). The old northwest section of Tenochtitlán was regarded by the Spaniards with particular favor; it had been an area of rich Aztec mansions with extensive gardens, and many early post-conquest lots were assigned in this area (Valero de García Lascuráin 1991a). This is the area bounded by the modern streets República de Peru on the north, San Juan de Letran on the west, Tacuba on the south, and Piño Suarez on the east. The map depicts 34 residences, seven with disk friezes.

### ***Transformations in Meaning: Tecpans and Disk Motifs in the Mapa de México***

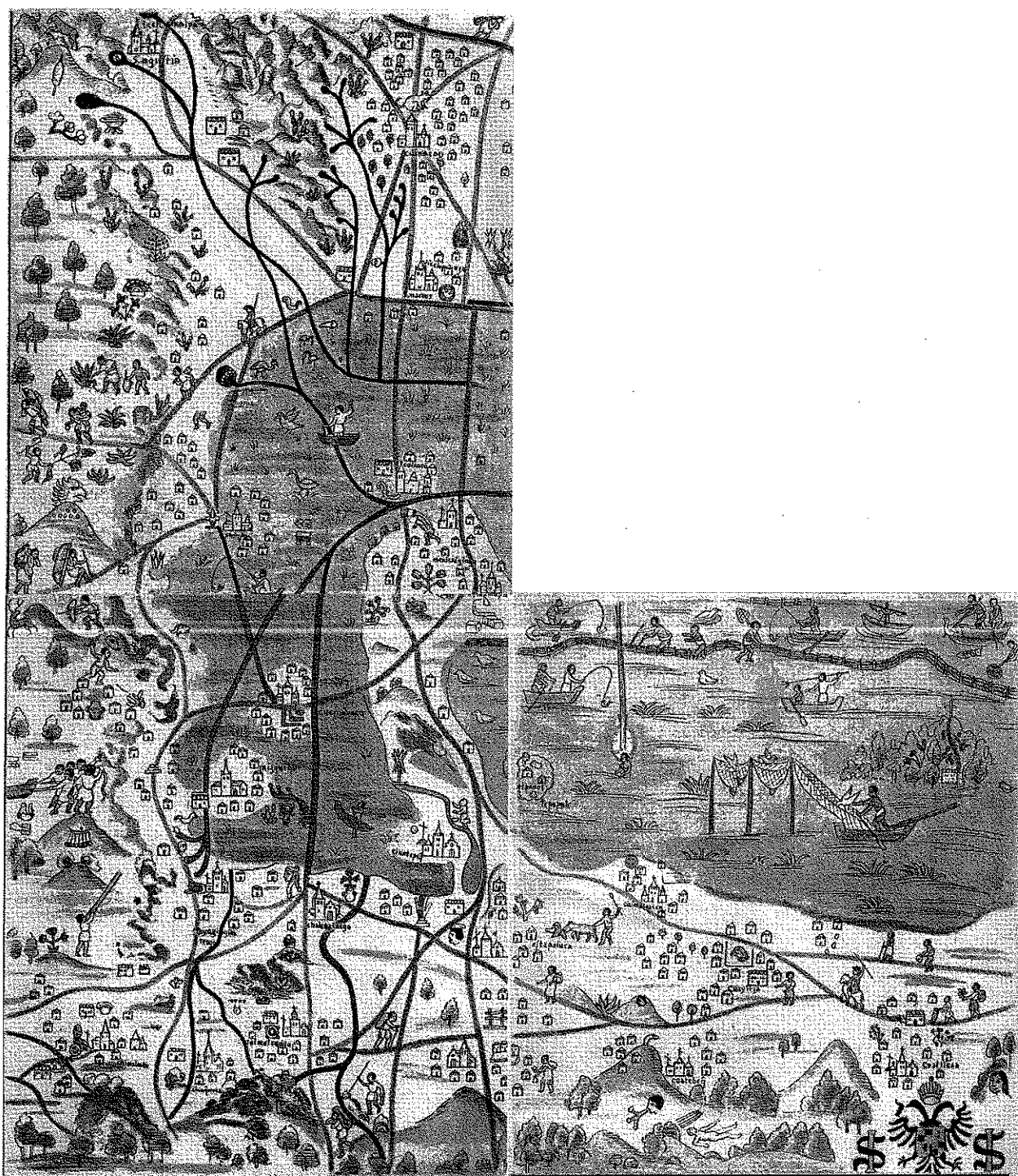
It is beyond the scope of this paper to try to match buildings on the *Mapa* with plots on la traza, and I suspect that it would be futile. In fact, given that some of these houses would have been famous for their opulence, it is curious, as Linné (1948:68) noted, that none are labeled: "*que ninguna de las casas de los grandes de la época estén marcadas. . . . En este sector [the western half of Mexico City in Mapa de México] se encontraban casas de gente muy encumbrada, pero todas están sin nombre en el mapa,*" [that none of the grand houses of the epoch are marked. . . . In this sector houses of exalted people are found, but all are without name on the map] (translation by editor). In fact, the only residence with a disk frieze in Tenochtitlán–Tlatelolco–Mexico City that is glossed is the Casa de Tapia. Its hybrid architectural format aptly reflects the uneasy cultural synthesis it came to represent. The Cortés Palace does not have a disk motif, and while this lack is understandable from the perspective of the native connotation of the motif, we find disk motifs on what surely must have been many fine residences of Spanish ownership in la traza. The Cabildo buildings on the Zócalo, as noted above, were marked with the disk motif, probably to denote their governmental function. For Tlatelolco itself, its important and enduring tecpan seems not to have been depicted at all, though the circular element at left center in the walled compound may be the map's most imposing chalchihuitl. Texcoco's two disk-marked buildings may represent the Quinatzin Palace, still in use,

and possibly also the functioning parts of the old Nezahualcoyotl-Nezahualpilli palace complex.

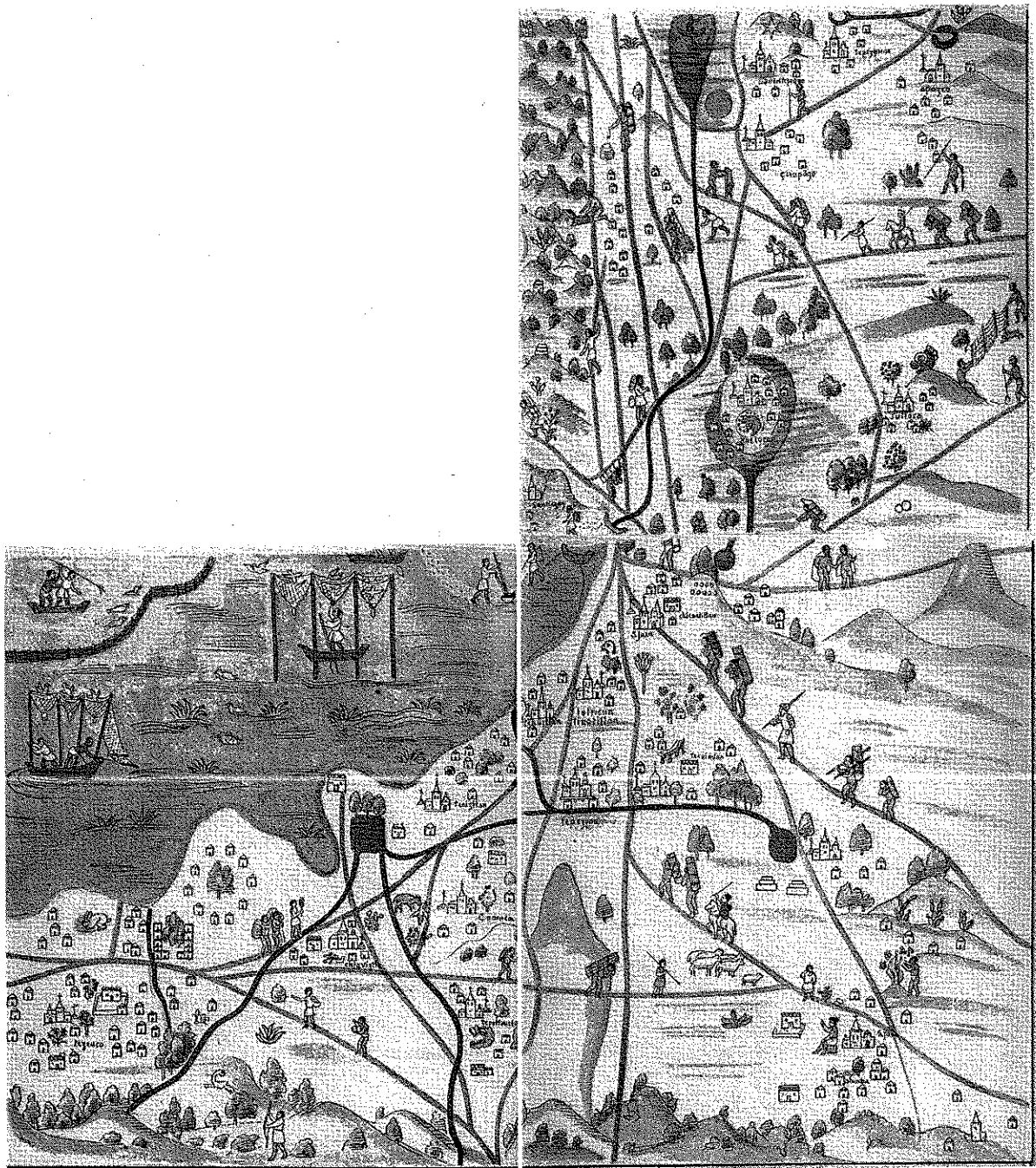
What does the distribution of the disk motif on the buildings of the *Mapa de México* tell us about the tecpan—or its successors—in 1550? Because of the close association of the disk frieze with the tecpan, we might expect that this motif is used as a shorthand to identify the Basin's cabecera centers, but no such consistent relationship exists. Table 2.2's "probable function" column indicates those buildings that probably served as tecpans for native governorship. There are 49 in all, close in number to the roughly four dozen cabecera centers in the Basin in the early Colonial period, but unfortunately not a good match against the known distribution of cabeceras (Gibson 1964:48–49). There are 19 known cabecera centers on the *Mapa* that have 22 disk-frieze tecpans—multiple rulership was especially prevalent in Chalco (Figure 2.10), and both Texcoco (as noted above) and Otumba are shown with two tecpans (Figure 2.11). However, the overall cabecera-tecpan depiction relationship is unclear. Similarly, there exists no clear relationship between pleasure palaces and buildings with disk motifs. Four such parks are illustrated (Table 2.2), but many more existed in 1519 and we know that they persisted as favored recreational properties of former conquistadors (Evans 2000).

The use of the disk frieze in the *Mapa de México* must be interpreted from the perspective of the artists fulfilling their commission. While the map was destined for foreign eyes, perhaps never being interpreted to Europeans by a Nahuatl culture-bearer, it was itself an indigenous product, valued for its exotic details as well as the clarity of its presentation of the center of Charles V's New Spain. The locational notes in Table 2.2 reveal that the disk frieze was used to indicate preciousness of several kinds. Within the city, it marked certain valuable buildings, such as mansions, or buildings with particularly important functions, such as the administrative Cabildo buildings.

Outside the city these functions also held, but disk friezes were also applied when a location was strategic—mills in the western hills are linked with disk-frieze



**FIGURE 2.10** *Mapa de México*. Sectors V, VIII, and IX show the southeastern corner of the Basin, with the *cabeceras* of the southern lakes, Chalco, and the southern part of the Acolhua domain. In the lake in Sector XI are two islands that were game reserve pleasure parks: “*el peñol tepapulco*” was one of Motecuzoma’s favorite retreats, while Tepetzingo, to the right, was the beacon island controlled by Texcoco (Evans 2000). Archaeology has revealed the remains of a palace on Tepapulco, and Cortés established his own facilities there, but no disk frieze building is shown. There is one on Tepetzingo, however (used by permission of the University Library of Uppsala):



**FIGURE 2.11** *Mapa de México*. Sectors VII, X, and XI cover the northeastern corner of the Basin. The far north was quite arid and relatively thinly settled in Aztec times (Sanders et al. 1979a:Map 18); Sector VII is the only one lacking disk frieze buildings. Sectors X and XI cover the Texcoco region and the Teotihuacán Valley. The black square in Sector X marks the great reservoir created by Nezahualcoyotl for his horticultural gardens at Acatetelco/Atenco. One of its sources is the springs at San Juan Evangelista/Teotihuacán, illustrated as a pool next to a church just west of the two pyramids. In the far northeast, Otumba is shown with two *tecpan*s in its vicinity; an extensive area of probable elite residential architecture was identified in archaeological survey (Charlton and Nichols 1992). The interpretation of the notation "S Juan" (Toussaint et al. 1990) as San Juan Teotihuacán is incorrect (used by permission of the University Library of Uppsala).

buildings, and in all parts of the hinterlands, so are places where roads intersect or converge with canals or rivers. Also, the disk frieze was used to communicate sanctity and/or authority, sometimes for a culturally extinct locale such as the Tenayuca serpent wall.

### **Tecpans, Disk Friezes, and the Sanctity of the Landscape**

We have seen that tecpans conflated the ideas of sacred lords and the politically powerful places where they held office. In the *Mapa de México*, the disk frieze was applied to tecpan depictions and to the glyphic expressions for other important buildings.

This range of sources of power for the lords echoes the range of meaning of "preciousness" that can be applied to the disk motif. Apparently, by the mid-sixteenth century, the Tlatelolco artists retained and employed the concept that the disk frieze was an effective means of signaling the importance of certain structures. The motifs were thickly applied throughout the neighborhoods of wealthy Spaniards but would also mark landscape features that represented particularly valuable resources, from the Spanish perspective. The Spaniards never valued actual jade disks or chalchihuitls; for the Spaniards, the disk frieze would have been an abstract symbol indicating value.

The Tlatelolco artists in 1550 were unlikely to remember the precolumbian world since they were enculturated into a highly Europeanized indigenous subculture. Yet ancient traditions are expressed in the *Mapa de México*. The vital power of the landscape itself is acknowledged with glyphs (not glosses) identifying the hilltops that would still have provided local populations with folkloric orientations, such as horizon

calendars to mark the times of ancient festivals. Thus the hilltops depicted on the *Mapa de México* served as mnemonic devices for the old and often forbidden cognitive maps. Disk motifs were also related to powerful places, almost all of them buildings that represented either very expensive real estate or deeply rooted places of native authority. The tecpan had been transformed in the decades since the conquest, and would continue to change, but the tecpans depicted by *Mapa de México* artists expressed the ideas shared by their colleagues, Sahagún's informants, that it was "the house of the ruler . . . a fine place . . . not just an ordinary place. . . . It is something embellished" (Sahagún 1963 [1569]:270).

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