Miriam López Hernández

Aztec Women *and* Goddesses

FCAS

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Prologue

Because we live in a society with a strong androcentric bent, academic research on women's daily life and its contribution to their societies has traditionally occupied a secondary place in archaeology and history. But since the second half of the twentieth century, this situation has gradually changed. Now we have countless works that analyze the role of women in the societies of ancient Mexico and discuss their economic, political, and religious contribution. Among this wide range of studies, the work of Miriam López Hernández stands out. A young university researcher, she is deeply interested in gender studies, as they are known today, which are at the forefront of feminist thought in academia.

The work that López Hernández presents here is special in several ways. It offers an integral view of women (analyzing their life cycle) and of their contributions to Mexica civilization (domestic work and the trades they practiced). It points out that theirs was a classist society, a fact that necessitates study of not only women's particular condition but also their economic, religious, and political participation. It emphasizes that women's situations differed according to their social class, ethnicity, age, and legal status. And, considering that the Mexica built their empire through military might, it analyzes the ideological basis that supported the hegemonic doctrine of war: namely, religion, which was almost exclusively centered on the masculine.

Adopting materialism as her theoretical approach, López Hernández provides a critical focus based on consideration of the archaeological evidence, articulated through her knowledge of the source documents, affording us the most complete panorama possible of the living conditions of Mexica women. The author's knowledge of Nahuatl enables her to examine and explain the subterfuges of that language and the codes framing those practices that were permitted and sanctioned for women within this hierarchical state society.

To piece together the panorama in which women's activities and their contributions to their culture unfolded, López Hernández deploys a scientific analysis that foregrounds knowledge of the social, political, cultural, legal, and religious structures. She notes that the *macehualtin*, the poor women who constituted the demographic majority, were responsible for the education of children and the health of their family group; they were also required to participate in religious rites and make contributions to the state in the form of their domestic work and products, among other duties.

Another virtue of this work is that it highlights the ideological backdrop for women's practices: the religious order. To this end it points out the rather marginal role played by female deities in the Mexica pantheon, a melting pot of elements from various Mesoamerican cultural traditions. From this fusion arose the religious system that the Mexicas imposed on the various social groups present in their capital, the Altiplano of the Basin of Mexico, and on the political communities under their control.

With the patience, rigor, and determination that characterize her work, Miriam López Hernández offers a compelling analysis of the Mexica female condition, drawing on suitable theoretical tools and methodology, while also including the most significant examples to render a total panorama of the daily practices of women in the context of the relations of production that prevailed during the Postclassic in the center of Mexico. She thereby strikes a perfect balance in her presentation of women and their activities, viewed not only from a political and economic angle but also in terms of morality, sexuality, and daily life.

López Hernández's research is the fruit of a tremendous synthesis of data drawn from the archaeological record and from pictographic documents that examine daily life during the pre-Hispanic era, as well as from source documents that, viewed through the lens of materialist analysis and the more recent categories of gender studies, yield an enormously valuable contribution to the (re)construction of women's history—a history that up until half a century ago had been denied or passed over.

We celebrate and joyfully receive works such as this—ones that promise to become pioneering studies in the field of the anthropology of women thanks to their scholarly precision, their theoretical rigor, the seriousness with which their methodology is applied, and the scrupulousness of their assertions and final conclusions. This is a commendable work that will inspire other women scholars to undertake research in different Mesoamerican social contexts.

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Introduction

The present work seeks to convey the social condition in which **Mexica***
women lived. By looking at the various stages of a woman's life, we can analyze the possible destinies assigned to her by her society's norms and ideals of behavior.

The spheres of activity in which a woman's existence unfolded were different from those of a man, and her condition was determined by the combined relations of production and reproduction, along with all the other relations in which she was immersed regardless of her own will. Her condition was also determined by the ways in which she participated in these relations through the political and legal institutions that contained her and set rules for her, and by the conceptions of the world that defined her. These generated a series of essential circumstances, qualities, and characteristics that defined the woman as a gendered social and cultural being.

The condition of women was not homogeneous across all categories. A woman's status could vary according to her class, age, and individual characteristics. That is, her experiences and how she was addressed and treated would be different if she were a noblewoman or a commoner, and likewise if she were young or old,† attractive or not.§

An important part of this study is to highlight the contributions of women to society. It must be remembered, however, that because their contributions were not duly recognized, they did not afford women the prestige and social ascent that male activities brought.

* In this book we refer to the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan as Mexica and to their migrant ancestors as Aztec. Although the name "Aztec" has endured and spread to all areas of literature, for anthropologists it is important to retain the historical meanings of the two terms.

† Age was a determining factor for participation in certain ceremonies. Old women were needed for some festivals, such as those of Tititl and Ochpaniztli, because they were in menopause and the ceremony required their sterility.[1] For other festivals young women at menarche (their first menstrual period) were wanted, because this signaled the beginning of their reproductive capacity. The Mexica made use of this procreative power of adolescents for festivals of deities of sustenance, such as Chalchiuhcihuatl and Chicomecoatl,‡ in which young women of twelve or thirteen would represent the goddesses.[2]

§ Women who won the favor of nobles, based on Mexica standards of beauty, were allowed to cultivate poetry and other arts.[3] Indeed, one of the concubines of Huitzilihuitl, *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, was a painter.[4]

‡ In Nahuatl all words are naturally stressed on the penultimate syllable, making the addition of accents (generally used in Spanish transcriptions of Nahuatl) unnecessary. This work omits the accents accordingly.

Mexica culture developed in the **Altiplano Central of Mexico**, and its time frame is clearly defined by the **Late Postclassic**. Although this period runs from A.D. 1200 to 1521, the definitive settlement of **Tenochtitlan** took place in 1325. Our historical reconstruction is based on archaeological data, complemented by references from ethnohistorical sources.

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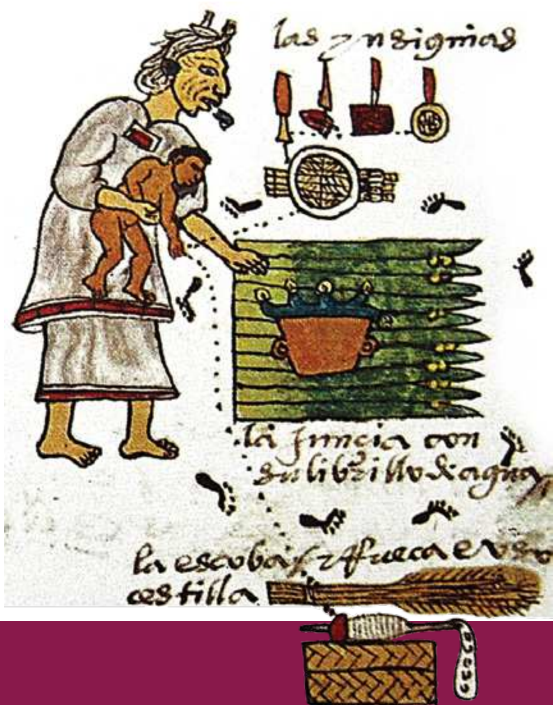
Life Cycles

childhood

Birth: The Assignment of Gender

The assignment of gender began as soon as the baby was born, and it would subsequently be reinforced through family, school, and religious education. At the birth ceremony, besides a name, the baby received a gender label thanks to the symbolic presence of implements associated with its sex: for a girl, there would be a **spindle** and **whorl**, a broom, and a small basket of cotton; for a boy, a buckler and four arrows, so that he would become a good warrior.[5]



The gender ceremony ended when the baby's umbilical cord was detached and buried. For girls it would be buried in the hearth of the home, while for boys it was buried in the battlefield, thereby defining their respective spheres of social activity (domestic and public).[6]

The midwife was in charge of baptizing the newborn; during the ceremony the baby was shown the emblems pertaining to its gender. Codex Mendoza.

- Boys would avoid contact with implements that were not of their gender, for fear of losing their virility and their prowess at war. They were told not to step on the hearth (the quintessential feminine space), because doing so would bring them misfortune in battle, and they would fall into enemy hands.[7]

Names

The parents then sought to name the baby and discover its fortune in life. To this end, they would ask the ***tonalpouhqui***, who consulted the ***tonalpohualli*** (ritual calendar of 260 days, divided into twenty thirteen-day cycles, that governed all activities of society). This calendar revealed the qualities of each day.

The parents went to the *tonalpouhqui* to learn of the newborn's future. Florentine Codex.

The method was as follows: the *tonalpouhqui* asked the hour of birth and what circumstances accompanied it; then he consulted the ***tonalamatl***, which specified the influence of the reigning deity for that thirteen-day cycle and other related events and predicted the child's virtues or tendencies. If the child was born under a good sign it would be given a name the following day, but if it was born on an ill-fated day, the parents would wait to assign a name under a more favorable sign, but only within the thirteen-day cycle of the child's birth. The sign of the day characterized what today would be called temperament or personality.[8]

When the birth took place during one of the last five days of the year, which were called ***nemontemi*** and were considered futile and adverse days in the calendar, the verdict was inevitably negative. In that case a boy would receive a name equivalent to *nemon* ("to be worthless") and a girl *nencihuatl* ("woman who is useless").[9]

It is important to note that there was a also a class distinction in naming. ***Pipiltin*** (upper-class people) would be given a name commemorating an ancestor for his exploits, with reverential terms incorporated in the name, while ***macehualtin*** (lower-class people) would receive only the name corresponding to the calendrical sign under which they were born.[10]

Statue showing a mother with her child in her arms.
Collection of the Fundación Cultural
Armella Spitalier INAH 1578-219.

NAHUATL	TRANSLATION
Citlalin	Star
Teuccihuatl	Lordly Woman
Tecpane	Palace Resident
Anican	Not Here
Mazaxochi	Deer Flower
Ilamaton	Little Old Woman
Necahual	Abandoned One
Tonallaxochiatl	Floral Water of Summer
Xoxopanxoco	Fruit of Spring
Cihuanenequi	She Imagines Herself a Woman
Xiuhnentl	Little Doll of the Year of Fire
Mocel	Only One
Teyacapan/Tiacapan	Oldest One
Tlaco	Middle One
Teicu	Younger One
Xoco	Youngest One

Names given to girls in the Nahau regions of Cuernavaca and Culhuacan.[11]

Teyacapan, Tiacapan, Tlaco, Teicu, and Xoco were names of goddesses and were given to the great majority of girls to distinguish their birth order with respect to their siblings.[12]

Education

It was customary for girls to remain in their mother's care, while boys, after they were three years old, were under their father's tutelage. Their upbringing was severe. Boys learned to carry water and firewood, go to the market, and pick up grains of maize scattered on the ground; girls began spinning, weaving, and embroidering at age five. "They did not let the girls go idly about, and if one got up from her work before it was time, they tied her feet, so that she would sit down and be still."[13]

At age seven, boys learned to fish and girls learned to grind maize on a metate and to sweep the house.

At the ***telpuchpan*** girls were taught the sequence of the days, the names of the signs, and the attributions of their gods, as well as to count. They also learned to perfect the duties proper to their sex, such as cooking, sweeping, and cleaning, as well as music and singing.[14]

Above: Girls learned spinning from childhood as a women's activity. Codex Mendoza.
Below: Strict punishment was administered from early childhood to correct disobedience. Codex Mendoza.

Within the family or at school, young and adolescent girls received rigorous preparation to make them suitable for marriage and skilled in domestic labors.

At the same time, "they were taught to be very honorable in speech and bearing, both in public and in private."[15]

Discipline in all respects was firm, and laziness was punished. Anyone who refused to carry out their socially imposed role would be pricked with maguey spines over their entire body or forced to breathe the smoke of roasted chilies. This training instilled consciousness of one's social role and guided women to fulfill their duties of biological reproduction and transmission of the established cultural norms.

adolescence

Morals and Sexuality

The proverb "the good medium is necessary" [***tlacoqualli in monequi***][16] sums up the ideal conduct expected of the Mexica. This refrain exhorted moderation in one's bearing and speech, in sexuality, dress, and personal appearance.

Mothers reminded their daughters how to carry themselves: "When you go out on the street or the road, do not hold your head down or your body curved, but also do not go about with your head held very high and [standing] very straight, because that is a sign of ill-breeding."[17]

The chroniclers attest to the efficacy of these admonitions: "[Girls] went about so honorably that they did not raise their eyes from the ground, and if they were inattentive, [their nannies] immediately signaled them to turn their gaze"; if they did not obey, "they punished their flesh cruelly with rough nettles, and pinched them until they were full of bruises."[18]

Daughters were also taught to speak with gentle, measured words, neither too fast nor too slow, and never screaming: "And when you speak, don't hurry your speech; don't talk anxiously but rather little by little and calmly. When you speak, don't raise your voice or speak very quietly, but rather use a medium tone." [19]

Girls were expected to be moderate in the way they spoke, walked, and dressed. Codex Mendoza.

Both girls and boys were advised not to dress or groom themselves in a way that would attract attention, because that was a sign of vanity. "Be sure that your dresses are decent and appropriate. See that you do not attire yourself in things that are unusual or very elaborate, because that signifies fantasy and little intelligence and insanity […] Never should you shave your face or put colors on it, or on the mouth, to look good, because that is a sign of carnal, worldly women […] They are called whores."[20]

Noble fathers also preached temperance to their sons, because self-control and good behavior were closely linked with social class. Their speeches, called ***huehuetlatolli*** in **Nahuatl** (meaning "ancient word"), convey the hierarchies within Mexica society; only he who controlled his body and his impulses could attain the highest level. In this regard, rulers and nobles had to show restraint, since observance of moderation justified their position of authority over the rest of the population.[21]

Makeup and excessive adornment were characteristic of prostitutes. Florentine Codex.

With respect to sexuality, the talks addressed to women exalted the value assigned to virginity and chastity. Virginity was a precious gift, and its loss could cost a woman her life; the consequences of her disobedience also extended to her family, who suffered social repudiation and shame. Sahagún's texts reveal the parents' preoccupation with making sure their daughters entered marriage with their hymens intact.

"Don't give your body to anyone. Be on your guard that no one may reach you, that no one may take your body. If you lose your virginity and later someone asks to marry you, and you marry him, never will he get along well with you nor have true love for you."
Fragment of *huehuetlatolli*[22]

No concessions were made in the matter of sexual prohibitions, and transgressions were punished by death. Even the mere suspicion of inappropriate behavior provoked exemplary punishment. It is said that **Nezahualpilli**, the monarch of **Texcoco**, upon hearing that a young ***pilli*** had jumped the wall to the enclosure where his daughters were being raised so that he could talk with one of them, ordered that this daughter be executed, since it would appear "very dishonorable if such a misdeed were to go unpunished."[23]

With regard to the moral and sexual environment, the historian Pablo Escalante[24] has pointed out the differences between *pipiltin* and *macehualtin*. He remarks that while it is true that virginity and premarital restraint were very important to the **Nahuas**, and that both the violation of these norms and adultery were severely punished and even received the death penalty, this is, however, only a partial view.[25] That is because among commoners, adultery could not always be sanctioned, and young couples who had sexual relations would often be wed to each other after the fact.[26] For the *macehualtin* the norm seems to have been tolerance and acceptance of spontaneous inclinations, even though they were kept within limits for the sake of preserving order in the community.[27]

The Florentine Codex[28] records a saying about cover-ups and complicity among members of the community. If a person learned of someone who had stolen, committed adultery, or was living in concubinage, the latter person would tell the former, "That which you saw, tell no one about it," to which the former would respond: "Do I seem like an ear of sweet maize, ready to shed all my grains and display my innards?"[29]

Clothing and Hairstyles

Pipiltin women in their typical garb. Florentine Codex.

Among the Mexica, *macehualtin* women made their dresses using fabric spun from maguey, palm, or raw cotton, while the *pipiltin* used finer fabrics made from dyed cotton, with geometrical patterns or designs of flora and fauna, and from cotton interwoven with fur and feathers, accented with gold ornamentation and fringes.[30]

Women's garb consisted of a ***cueitl***, a ***huipilli***, and occasionally a ***quechquemitl***. The *cueitl* was a skirt made of a single, straight piece of cloth that was not sewn; it was affixed to the waist with a belt or sash and went down to the calf. Noblewomen wore layers of two, three, or more skirts; some were shorter than others, allowing them to display the rich fabrics and embroidery at the bottom.[31]

The *huipilli* was a full, sleeveless blouse, while the *quechquemitl* was a small triangular cloak that came from **La Huasteca**. It should also be noted that *pipiltin* women accompanied their outfits with jewels and precious stones.

The Florentine Codex illustrates the clothing and various adornments that *pipiltin* women wore, as well as their hairstyles, which indicated their social class, marital status, and age.

Hairstyles were markers of class, marital status, and age. Between three and eleven years old, girls had their hair close-cropped in a crew cut, because this was considered healthy—a belief that may have originated in magical thinking. From twelve years of age until just before marriage, girls wore their hair loose, with bangs covering the upper forehead. When they married, the most common style for all women was one in which the hair was divided into two locks that crossed at the nape of the neck and were twisted or braided around the head, toward the forehead, ending in two raised points shaped like small horns. *Pipiltin* women also had the option of wearing their hair loose with bangs or with a variant style of graduated bangs, while long hair reaching the shoulders or back and trimmed at the temples was favored by ***maqui*** or ***ahuianime*** (prostitutes).[32]

Dentifrice, Perfumes, and Hair Care

Dental hygiene was important in the Mexica world. According to a curious tale, a princess's bad breath unleashed a war. The ***Crónica mexicayotl*** relates that **Moquihuix**, ***tlatoani*** of **Tlatelolco**, repudiated his wife Chalchiuhnenetzin because he could not stand the foulness of her breath. This rebuff angered the princess's brother, **Axayacatl**, *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, who declared war on his brother-in-law.[33]

Like prostitutes, single women could chew gum in public. In their case gum-chewing may have indicated that the woman was sexually available with respect to marriage. Florentine Codex.

To prevent bad breath, Mexicas prepared a brew from the roots and leaves of an herb they called ***tlatlancuaye***, mixed with red and white earth and the herbs *temamatlatzin* and ***tlanextia xiuhtontl***, all ground together and cooked in water with honey. They would drink a moderate amount of it before eating.[34]

Another remedy was *tzictli* (chicle), a chewing gum made from coagulated sap of the sapodilla (*Achras sapota L.*),[35] which besides eliminating bad breath also cleaned the teeth and made them look nicer. Its use was closely associated with prostitutes, however, since they would chew gum to attract the attention of prospective clients.[36]

To treat plaque, the teeth were first rubbed with extreme care. Once the plaque had been scraped off, the gums would be protected with a mixture of white ashes and white honey, which was applied with a fine cloth.[37]

All people bathed frequently, even several times a day, in the rivers, lagoons, and canals. They soaped themselves with the fruit and root of the ***copalxocotl*** *(Sapindus saponaria L.)*, which the Spanish called *árbol de jabón* (soap tree); it produced a foam that was also used for washing clothes.[38]

Not only was their personal hygiene important; Mexicas also made sure

Mexica women's personal hygiene was part of the codes of good conduct. Florentine Codex.

that their bodies, clothes, and rooms had a pleasant scent. To that end they made perfumes from the ***tlalpoyomatli*** flower, which produced a fragrance that they kept in vials.[39] Pine resin, called *ocotzotl*, was an ingredient suitable for scenting rooms, while washing with the juice of the herb *chiyahuaxihuitl* would eliminate underarm odor.[40] To soften skin, the face was cleansed with an infusion of the herb called ***azpanxihuitl***.

The Mexicas used various hair care preparations to maintain softness, color, and shine. An infusion of ***chatalhuic*** seeds made the hair silky. A thick oil from the seeds of the tree ***tzopilotl tzontecomatl*** *(Swietenia humilis Zuce.)* imparted color and shine. For dyes, blackish mud was applied to darken the hair, as was ***xiuhquilitl***, which gave a purple hue.[41]

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adulthood

Marriage

In Mexica society, marriage circumstances and ceremonies varied according to the couple's social class. Among the *pipiltin*, the male partner's family chose the bride based on virtues such as modesty, submission, devotion, and her skills in weaving and household management. The family turned to the *tonalpouhqui* to ask whether the young woman would make a good wife and find out if the couple's signs were compatible. If all results were favorable, the matchmaking family would solicit the hand of the bride and make overtures to her parents so that they would agree to set the wedding date.

The young woman had no say in the matter. Her parents would repeat, "If the one I choose for you should be well disposed, receive him. And should he be ill disposed and ugly, do not reject him."[42] Among the ruling groups, lineage was an important tool for forging alliances, and marriages were arranged for political and economic ends.

The wedding protocol included various exhortations by elders and family members. The young woman was brought to her future husband's house, where he received her. Then they walked hand in hand into the room and sat on a mat before the fire, and a priest knotted their mantles. To assure that they would have a good marriage and many children, the newlyweds had to fast for four days, during which time they also performed rites of penance. Afterward the families left them alone together, making renewed exhortations as they departed.[43]

The matchmaker carried the bride in the wedding ceremony and brought her to the groom's house. Codex Mendoza.

The knotting of mantles symbolized the new couple's commitment. Codex Mendoza.

During the wedding it would become known whether the bride was a virgin. Fray Diego Durán[44] explains that the mat laid under them would display "the proof of her virginity." If it turned out she was not a virgin, the groom's family would create an uproar and break the clay pots in which the drinks were served, and thus all the guests would find out.[45]

Both women and men could only celebrate the ceremony once in their lives, but the husband was entitled to have as many "secondary wives" as he wished or as befit his rank. Thus, the marriage system among Nahua nobles was a sort of compromise between monogamy and polygamy.[46]

Unlike the marriage ties established by the *pipiltin* to protect their socioeconomic interests or to justify and legitimate advantageous positions with access to power, the *macehualtin* took their wives "willingly, with conjugal affection." According to **Motolinía**,[47] these laborers would live together while waiting until they'd saved enough to have a modest ceremony—"though poor, they made their celebration with very little"—so that their union would be recognized in their neighborhood. "From then on they were considered husband and wife, and married neighbors in the village."

Some young *macehualtin* who fell in love would have sexual relations that they kept secret; however, when they

decided to live together, the young man would ask the girl's parents for forgiveness and for consent to their marriage. If the parents granted permission, the couple would hold a wedding ceremony scaled to their families' economic means.[48] In these cases too the ties of matrimony were recognized: upon assuming married status, the couple would thus be taken into account in the neighborhood's land grant registry.[49]

It should be emphasized that polygamy was a privilege reserved for the dominant class, even though the descendants of the concubines were considered illegitimate. Warriors distinguished in combat were allowed to have two or three concubines. Thus, polygamy was seen as a demonstration of a high level of cultural development and a manifestation of superiority on the part of the ruling class, while monogamy was classified as a characteristic feature of the subordinate group.[50]

It is worth noting, too, that the nobility was the only class with the resources necessary to have several wives—especially the *tlatoani*, whose concubines numbered up to two thousand, in the case of Nezahualpilli.[51] On the other hand, the *macehualtin*, the subordinate class that lacked the means to support several wives, practiced monogamy.

The marriage predictions told the prospective couple whether their union would be happy and successful or challenging, difficult, and disastrous. Codex Borgia.

Polygamy therefore did not violate the definition of marriage; furthermore, there could be economic advantages to having secondary wives. These women would be in charge of producing a large quantity of woven mantles, which were luxury items valuable for trade.

Pregnancy and Childbirth

The *temazcalli* was a very useful therapeutic resource during pregnancy, childbirth, and puerperium. It had a stone furnace, the mouth of which rose to the exterior. The junction of the furnace with the temazcal was sealed with dry stone, either *tetzontli* or a less porous type. Its use was as follows:

The *temazcalli*'s form suggested the maternal womb. Its interior, similar to a cavern, was enclosed, warm, and moist. It was a place of initiation, purification, and regeneration.[52]

The *temazcalli* was a steambath that served ritual, hygienic, and medicinal purposes. Codex Magliabechiano.

The furnace would be lit and the stones would begin to heat; once they were hot, water was thrown on them to give off a dense vapor that filled the upper part of the *temazcalli*. The pregnant woman would lie on a mat, and the person assisting her would direct the steam toward her with herbs or maize leaves. Throughout her pregnancy, the expectant mother would continue to receive baths in this structure—which was under the protection of the goddesses **Yoalticitl** and **Xochicaltzin**—during which the midwife would palpate her to adjust the baby.[53] At the onset of labor, the midwife bathed the future mother and made her an infusion with the ground root of the herb *cihuapatli (Montanoa tomentosa)*, which helped accelerate expulsion of the baby. If the birth pangs were strong but the delivery did not progress, the mother was given a drink made of a piece of tail from the *tlacuatzin* (*Didelphis virginiana*, an opossum), which was ground up in water.[54]

During pregnancy, the midwife reminds the newly expectant mother of the precepts she must follow in order to avoid complications. Florentine Codex.

Above: Tlazolteotl. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, Washington, D.C.
Below: The placenta is still attached to the newborn. Codex Nuttall.

When labor began, the midwife would invoke her fingers, known as the five fates, as well as the Earth, since the woman in labor was thought to be possessed by Cihuacoatl, an aspect of the Earth Mother.[55] She would also administer tobacco to help the woman overcome her pain.[56] The woman would assume a squatting position, her body crouched, her knees spread and pressed against her chest, and her fingers holding her vulva open to facilitate expulsion of the fetus. This position was advantageous because it oriented the force of the contractions by all the muscles in the body toward the birth canal.

Apparently the woman adopted another position to expel the placenta, as seen in the Codex Nuttall,[57] which shows a woman who has just given birth with her newborn still connected to a round mass between the mother's legs. Women would rest on the right leg while pressing down on the abdomen and uterus to expel the placenta.[58]

Cihuacoatl with implements of war. Codex Magliabechiano.

If the woman did not give birth once she had taken the utero-evacuants (*cihuapatli* and the tail of *tlacuatzin*), the cause was thought to be her sexual transgressions; she would be given the choice of confessing them or putting a little saliva inside her vagina to deliver successfully.[59]

Quilaztli-Cihuacoatl was invoked by midwives when there were difficulties in childbirth. She was called upon for her maternal and warlike aspect: maternal because she was the first goddess to give birth, and warlike because the woman in labor was urged to rally her forces and be valiant in order to expel the fetus.[60] Yoalticitl (another name for **Teteoinnan-Toci**), also a goddess of childbirth, was invoked at the beginning of delivery if there was no excessive danger to the mother;[61] later, if problems arose, both deities were summoned.[62]

If after one day and one night the delivery could not be completed and the baby's death was diagnosed, the midwife performed an embryotomy: with a stone knife she cut up the baby's body in order to extract it from the mother.[63] Before taking this step, however, she consulted the parents. If the parents opposed it, the delivery room would be shut up, and the woman left alone. If she died, she would be called *mocihuaquetzqui*.[64]

Often the decision to let the woman die in childbirth did not mean that the midwife had done her job poorly or that the delivery had become too difficult. Instead it reflected the family's interest in having a soul near the Sun.[65]

During certain of the thirteen-day calendrical cycles, the *cihuateteo* would descend to provoke illnesses and incite sexual activity. Florentine Codex.

The Mexicas believed that when these women died, they lived in the west, or **Cihuatlampa**, "in the direction of the women." They would emerge from there armed and would return accompanied by the Sun as it set. After their journey, the *cihuapipiltin*, as they were also called, would descend to Earth to frighten mortals or to devote themselves to women's work, seeking spindles so that they could spin and shuttles so that they could weave, as well as implements for sewing.[66] They were thought to cause maladies such as paralysis or sudden illness.

During puerperium, the mother was given all sorts of warm remedies such as teas, baths in the *temazcalli*, and hot foods, all of which were supposed to fortify her and speed her recovery.

Cihuateotl. These goddesses were considered frightful and dangerous.
Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.

If a man did not fulfill his male duties, he would be asked ironically whether to put a whorl or a *tzotzopaztli* (shuttle) in his hands[67]—a question that implicitly belittled the feminine realm.

old age

The elderly were accorded respect, and they were given a say in political affairs, such as the election of a new ruler, at village or city meetings.[68] They were so highly regarded that in organized dances, the elders danced in the first circle with the lords, "thus demonstrating the esteem they received from those who held power."[69]

Only the elderly were allowed to drink pulque, since drunkenness was severely punished. Codex Mendoza.

Old age also conferred the authority to warn and exhort young people in society.[70] Furthermore, the elderly who had been wounded in battle or who suffered a chronic illness were granted a sort of pension from the state.[71]

Widowers over the age of sixty were needed as priests of the god **Centeotl** in religious celebrations,[72] while elderly women participated in festivals such as that of **Ochpaniztli**.[73]

Elderly women had an especially active role in birth and marriage ceremonies,[74] but they were not limited to that function; they also served as healers, midwives, and soothsayers, among other professions that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Another privilege of old age was the authorization to drink pulque at festivals.[75] Although drunkenness among the Mexicas was severely punished, pulque was thought to cool the elderly's *tonalli* (a spiritual entity residing in the head), which had grown hot and strong because of the many years the old person had accumulated.

It is known that the elderly enjoyed a certain freedom in exercising their sexuality. In one case that has been recorded, some elderly women were reprimanded by **Nezahualcoyotl** for having had an affair with young priests. On being questioned as to how they could still be interested in sex, the women responded that men stop in old age because they abused their potency in youth and have been drained, but women were an insatiable chasm.[76]

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INAH: 1149-388

Occupations

Mexica society was characterized by the great complexity of its social and economic organization. The system of agricultural and artisanal production yielded substantial surplus; there was a marked division of labor; and economic resources were distributed through local markets, long-distance trade, and a system of taxation and redistribution.

Political organization was centralized; war was of great importance, both materially and ideologically; and a highly developed set of ceremonies and rituals was established. As this complex society emerged, religion came to influence all other spheres of interaction.

Mexica society relied on a complex organization. Obligations were distributed by sex; within that framework, women played an important role in agricultural and artisanal production and in local commerce. Collection of the Fundación Cultural Armella Spitalier.

Several authors have proposed that with the rise of the state in Mesoamerica—that is, the complexification of societies in the Late Classic—women's participation was banned from the economic, political, and ritual sphere and confined to the domestic sphere, leading to an asymmetry of the sexes that intensified during the Postclassic.[77]

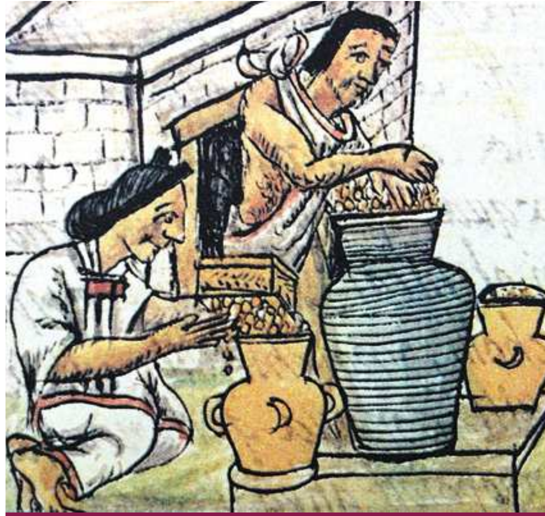
In fact the sexual division of labor was determined by the deities. The gods created **Cipactonal** and **Oxomoco**, who would serve as intermediaries between humanity and divinity. The *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* (History of the Mexicans as Told by Their Paintings) recounts that

"Next they created a man and a woman; the man they called [Cipactonal] and the woman [Oxomoco]. And they commanded them to till the earth, and her to spin and weave, and that the *macehuales* be born of them, and that they not be idle but always work; and to her the gods gave certain grains of maize, that she might heal with them and use them for soothsaying and sorcery, and this is how the women still use them today."[78]

The original account gives Oxomoco as the man's name and Cipactonal as the woman's; however, this is an error because Oxomoco means "First Woman" and Cipactonal was a male name according to plate 21 of the Codex Borbonicus.[79]

From that moment, the division of labor that would constitute the spheres

Oxomoco and Cipactonal. Codex Borbonicus.



The wife assisted her husband with agricultural tasks. Florentine Codex.

of activity for men and women was determined. The gods established that both sexes needed to participate in two activities: in agricultural production and in human reproduction. In the first, symbolically, the man used a pointed stick—like the male member—to prepare the ground, and the woman deposited the seeds.

Spinning and weaving were extremely important activities for the Mexica economy, and even from mythic history they were occupations reserved strictly for women, along with divination. In this way myths clearly drew the division between the male and female realms.

Divination using grains of maize. Codex Magliabechiano.

pipiltin women: nobles

María J. Rodríguez-Shadow[80] confirms that even though women of the noble class shared certain privileges with their male counterparts, their subordinate position was essentially unchanged, since they lacked access to political power but were simply the means through which power and class privileges were passed down. Their role in history thus remained secondary.

Three queens appear in the royal genealogy of Tenochtitlan by their own right; however, they were not *tlatoque*; they merely lent their nobility to the furtherance of the ruling lineage.[81] The first is **Ilancueitl**, a princess of the Toltec Culhuacan line. In some accounts she is the mother and in others the wife of **Acamapichtli**, the first Mexica *tlatoani*. This tie gave the Tenochca the right to declare themselves heirs to the ancient Toltec Empire.[82]

The second is **Atotoztli**, daughter of **Moctezuma I**, wife of **Tezozomoc**, and mother of the three *tlatoque* **Tizoc**, Axayacatl, and **Ahuitzotl**.[83] The third is **Tecuichpo**, whom the Spanish called Isabel, daughter of **Moctezuma II**. She was the wife of Cuauhtemoc, and together they lived through the end of the Mexica Empire.[84] According to her fifth husband, **Juan Cano**, Cuauhtemoc wed her in order to affirm his role as *tlatoani*.[85]

Another gender distinction is evident in the death customs for nobles. When a nobleman died, he was cremated with forty slaves (twenty men and twenty women); in contrast, noblewoman were cremated with only the clothes they wore and the implements they used for spinning and weaving.[86]

Ilancueitl. Codex Telleriano-Remensis.

Woman spinning. Codex Mendoza.

Among the duties a Mexica woman was expected to perform were spinning, warping, weaving, sewing, and embroidering, as well as carding cottons, cooking, and preparing drinks.[87] Despite their social rank, *pipiltin* women were kept segregated and isolated, but never unproductive.

In the political and religious arena, *pipiltin* women were given away in marriage—regardless of their wishes—to nobles from other lordships, abducted and humiliated by other rulers, and even offered up to the gods on the sacrificial altar.

Ethnohistorical sources recount that when rulers coveted another man's wife, they did everything possible to steal her and take advantage of her. Alva Ixtlilxochitl[88] reports that Tezozomoc, *tlatoani* of the **Tepanec**, "tried to rape and dishonor the legitimate wife of King Itzcoatzin, scorning and debasing all Mexicans."

Fray **Juan de Torquemada**[89] tells that **Maxtla**, the son of the lord of **Azcapotzalco**, upon discovering that the Mexica *tlatoani* **Chimalpopoca** had a woman of great beauty among his concubines, sent female accomplices who, through trickery, carried her off from Tenochtitlan and brought her before him. "Maxtla took advantage of her and then dismissed her. The queen… raped and dishonored… returned to her city confused and told her husband Chimalpopoca what had happened."

Nonetheless, the significant oppression experienced by *pipiltin* women within their social class did not compare to the intense economic exploitation to which *macehualtin* women were subject.

macehualtin women: commoners

The *macehualli* woman, besides taking care of her house and children, assisted her husband in agricultural labor, made the family's clothes, and produced the mantles that were needed to pay part of the tax imposed on her neighborhood. Furthermore, she periodically went to the lords' houses to perform domestic chores.[90]

Pipiltin women preparing food. Florentine Codex.

Some women also regularly sold goods and services at the markets to make a better income: "They sold bird pasties and fish empanadas and stewed fish; fresh fish was sold by the men … They also sold maize tortillas and tortillas made of eggs … [they went to] homes that offered meals for sale … Elsewhere there were women selling *atoles* [drinks made of corn flour] … And finally, they dispatched skeins of cotton in all colors for embroidering, as well as thick cords that young women used on some occasions to tie their hair."[91]

In spite of their commercial activity, women could not operate as long-distance merchants, a position that conferred prestige thanks to the luxury goods in which these traders bartered.

On the other hand, prostitutes almost exclusively belonged to this segment of society. These women were socially repudiated; however, prostitution was evidently tolerated, because there is no record of judicial sentences against those who exercised this profession. In some festivals of the *veintenas* (the twenty-day cycles of the Aztec calendar), prostitutes fulfilled a role promoted by the state in offering sexual entertainment to prisoners or to personifiers of certain gods. These women, called *maqui*, also accompanied soldiers to battle.[92] Various factors could lead women to become prostitutes: they may have been living in extreme poverty, their families may have handed them over as tribute, they may have been taken as spoils of war, or they simply may have chosen the profession.

Prostitutes took part in certain festivals as escorts for the warriors. Florentine Codex.

Above: Family of collared *tlatlacotin*. Florentine Codex.
Below: Mexica family. Florentine Codex.

For all the social disadvantages the *macehualtin* faced, they did not occupy the lowest rank of the social scale, that

of the slaves—the so-called *tlatlacotin ciua*. Even this group was not homogeneous, since it was divided into *tlatlacotin* and collared *tlatlacotin*, the latter being those who had neglected their slave duties and now could be sold as "sacrificial flesh" or exploited however one wished.

As we have seen, both *pipiltin* and *macehualtin* women were condemned to domesticity. They had no important political role and did not direct religious festivities. They were expected to be docile, peaceful, and humble, as well as honorable and chaste. They were required to be considerate and discrete, always attentive to the wishes of others and always obliging them, humiliating themselves and respecting all others.[93]

productive labors

In Mexica society, gender identity—that is, the self-perception of being a woman or a man—was defined in large part by the economic duties or activities assigned by divine mandate.

Ilamatecuhtli grinding maize. Codex Borgia.

Labor was strictly divided by gender, and these divisions determined male and female activities. Women's main duties were to spin, weave, sweep, grind grains, prepare foods, and raise children.

With respect to these tasks, all women were equal; the *macehualtin* as well as the *pipiltin* and even the goddesses had to perform them. Weaving was a role assigned to women by the creating gods. **Xochiquetzal**, the goddess of love, domestic arts, and beauty, was the first spinner and weaver, and thus she became the patron of this activity.[94]

Fray **Bernardino de Sahagún**[95] wrote of these duties:

"The women who work as weavers are responsible for weaving mantles that are embroidered or splendidly varicolored. Those who are good it are skilled and adept at this job [...] and can embroider the bodice of a huipil [...] Those who are bad are incapable of this job; they are clumsy and do poor work, and ruin every fabric."

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INAH: 1323-409 1/2

Whorls were used to twist the thread in spinning, whether the fiber was cotton or henequen (from agave leaves).

"The spinner's job is to do the following, it behooves her to know: how to comb and to shake out the combed fiber well. The good spinner knows how to spin thinly, evenly, and equally […] She also knows how to form a neat spindleful of thread and to wind a ball […]The one who isn't good makes a mess of things and is feeble and lazy, so that out of sheer laziness she can't wait for the time to leave what she's doing."

"The seamstress knows how to sew and embroider and put good work into everything she does. The good seamstress is good at her job, and sets to work by first tracing out what she needs to do. The one who isn't good makes long stitches and mangles what she sews; she does poor work in all respects, and she mocks and cheats those who have engaged her service."

"The woman who knows how to cook has as her job […] making good meals; she makes tortillas, kneads well, knows how to leaven, for all of which she is diligent and industrious […] The one who isn't good doesn't know how to do her job well; she is pathetic and irritating, because she cooks badly; dirty and filthy; greedy and gluttonous; she botches tortillas, and the stews that she makes are sometimes smoky, other times salty or sour; and thus she is coarse and crude in all things."

Above: Woman healer. Florentine Codex.
Below: Woman *tlacuilo*. Codex Telleriano-Remensis.

Mexica women did not, in any case, perform duties that they could have learned in a specialized institution. There was a clear tendency to exclude them from activities through which they might have achieved some sort of prestige.[96]

Put briefly, Mexica women's participation in productive labor was limited to tasks that were considered an extension of their domestic work and did not require physical mobility, jobs that needed little qualification (sellers, prostitutes, matchmakers), duties they had learned from childhood (cook, weaver, spinner), practices their mothers passed down to them (healer, midwife, soothsayer), or functions they fulfilled to assist their husbands or fathers (***tlacuilo***, ***amantecatl***) on a part-time basis, so as not to distract from their womanly obligations.

Female subordination in productive labor was part of a social framework that began with the fabrication of textiles, articles seen as essential to the identity of the ruling class, since an individual's attire reflected his social position. For example, cotton clothing was worn as a distinguishing mark of the nobility.

Goods belonging to the elite also took on meaning as political capital, since they were a means by which allies could be won or favors sought from superiors; thus they were instruments of political negotiation and transaction.

Textile labor constituted a heavy tax burden imposed on women, whose products conferred a prestige that benefited male political authorities. However, these products could also have been an important element for women in negotiating their own social status.[97]

So great was the economic power of the textile industry that mantles were used to pay the bride price and state fines, to buy slaves for sacrifice, and to trade for goods in the **tianguis**. Textiles were a means of appropriating power that was not in the hands of those who created them.

Mantles of various designs. Florentine Codex.
Below: Tlazolteotl. Florentine Codex.

Another activity in the hands of women was cleaning or housework. The Mexicas believed that when men went to war, women should support them in the rearguard—that is, from their homes—by sweeping nonstop so that they would succeed. If men failed in battle, the women were blamed for not having been conscientious about sweeping "diligently." [98]

Sweeping was crucial for goddesses as well. Coatlicue and Chimalman were in the midst of precisely this activity when they became pregnant. Likewise, the goddesses **Tlazolteotl** and Toci hold brooms in their depictions.

In order to win her love, a young man was supposed to gather twenty straws from the broom used by the woman he was courting.[99]

From an archaeological perspective, the study of bone remains has proven that women carried out strenuous work. At an excavation in Tizayuca, an area with Mexica influence, researchers observed alterations in some metatarsi and phalanges of the big toe. The morphology and location of these alterations "were produced by stress, as a result of frequent and extreme hyperdorsiflexion of the metatarsophalangeal articulations,"[100] which commonly occurs when a person kneels with their body weight falling back on their feet.

Unidentified goddess. In Mexica sculpture, most women are shown kneeling while resting their body on the knees and feet. This position is not just an artistic feature; it also expresses a certain ideology of gender. Collection of the Fundación Cultural Armella Spitalier. INAH: 1441-210.

These deformities, the result of intense physical and economic exploitation, were only discovered in female remains. The activities of Mexica women, no matter how substantial they might be, were not socially valued. As María J. Rodríguez-Shadow points out,[101] "It is not known that Tenochca paid honor or tribute to any woman who performed her domestic tasks efficiently. This stands in contrast to the prizes and awards of various kinds received by warriors for their success in battle."

OCCUPATION	DESCRIPTION
Merchants (market)	Vendors of feathers, medicinal herbs and roots, herbs and vegetables, stews, maize tortillas and tortillas made of egg, *atole* and tamales, chocolate, and skeins of cotton for embroidery.
Soothsayers	Made predictions through various methods: using grains of maize, their own fingers, cords.
Healers	Treated inflammations, fevers, body aches, fatigue, bone pain, urinary problems, gout, ulcers, dislocated or broken bones, etc.
Midwives	Cared for women through pregnancy, childbirth, and puerperium; they were also in charge of the baby's birth ceremonies.
Matchmakers	Elderly matrons who took part in marriage negotiations.
Painters	On religious feast days, women specializing in body painting would paint the bodies of dancers for the celebration.
Tlacuiloque	Women served as assistants to their male counterparts in painting codices and other documents.
Amanteca	Female artisans who assisted their parents or husbands in feather art.
Prostitutes	Poor women engaged in this morally repudiated activity, generally working at markets and along roads.

Some of the occupations practiced by Mexica women.[102]

Religion

Mexica religion incorporated the traditions of the people who had come before them. Through their contact with the groups that conquered them, the Mexicas adopted foreign numens, and upon settling in the Altiplano Central and establishing a state society, they further diversified their religion. Besides worshipping gods of hunting, war, rain, fire, and agriculture, they came to integrate in their rituals female deities associated mostly with fertility.

Mayahuel. Codex Borgia.

The earth goddesses and deities of sustenance (maize and maguey, along with other foodstuffs) were among their cultural borrowings. Félix Báez-Jorge points out that these deities "revealed, in their spheres of activity and their symbolic relations, the diverse interests of society with regard to fertility (of both humans and plants) and water (from both the heavens and earth), elements around which broad series of significant elements relating to birth, death, bodily pleasure, the expiation of sins, and human sustenance were linked to biocosmic rites."[103]

The divinities of Mexica culture clearly show how conceptions of godly essence differed depending on whether the deity was male or female. Thus, the gods were active, full of ardor, astral, creators, fertilizers, warriors in action; while the goddesses were the complete opposite: passive, bound to hearth and home as well as to the earth, nocturnal, rulers of sexuality and fertility.[104]

Another important detail that marks a substantial difference between gods and goddesses is that in Mexica cosmogony, gods were able to reproduce the human race without any intervention on the part of the female deities.[105] The goddess Quilaztli was allowed only to grind the bones and ashes that were to create human beings. The resulting mass would then be brought to life by the fertilizing effect of the blood of **Quetzalcoatl**'s member.[106] Thus, the female deities played only a marginal role in the creation of humanity.

Cihuacoatl with attributes of maize.
Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.

Coyolxauhqui. Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City.

Huitzilopochtli is another example, a deity who was never known to have a female consort, either as a god or as a man. It almost seems that he had an aversion to women, especially his sisters,[107] one of whom (**Malinalxochitl**) he abandoned during his peregrination, near Malinalco, accusing her of sorcery,[108] and the other of whom (**Coyolxauhqui**) he cut to pieces.[109] We will return to these myths below.

No goddess was ever accorded primary importance in Mexica religion. Female deities always needed to have an accompanying god with the same attributes but a greater range of action. Male deities were more numerous than female ones. Of the one hundred forty-four names (either Nahua names or names adapted to Nahuatl) belonging to different gods or their titles, only one third refer to goddesses.[110]

This asymmetrical religious ideology gave rise to "explanatory" myths that legitimized the subordinate and secondary nature of female deities and sanctioned their submissive status before their fellow gods, presenting a model that was used to justify the treatment to which Mexica women were subject.[111]

In this way, the gods of the Mexica pantheon marked the gender differences in society relative to the spaces that men and women were to occupy, their social importance, and their everyday habits—how they should dress, speak, walk, gaze, and so on. The gods also defined gender attributes by making clear the role of each in society.

Female deities generally fell into two categories. The first was the maternal protectress, whose goddesses were associated with the home, the earth, night, sexuality, and fertility. Her motherhood was understood in two ways: as mother of humans and Mother Earth. These were the goddesses of sustenance, the food that would enable humanity to survive. These divinities were foreign numens adopted in the course of the Aztecs' journey toward the center of Mexico, traditions drawn from other tribes and which were assimilated over time, until they finally blended into the Aztec-Mexica tradition itself. The second category of goddesses was rebellious, destructive, hostile—those of the past history. This group included Huitzilopochtli's sisters, who belonged to the Mexicas' own tradition, and whose stories are part of the mythic history that defined the idiosyncrasies of this people. The two traditions coexisted, forming the religious corpus of the Mexica Empire.

Woman weaving. Florentine Codex.

goddesses of the ancient mesoamerican tradition

In the agrarian thought of the Mexicas, Mother Earth was the Mother goddess, and she was viewed as the supreme womb, from whom sustenance was obtained. From an agricultural perspective (the earth and its fruits), the principal goddesses were **Xilonen** and **Chicomecoatl** (sweet maize and mature maize), **Mayahuel** (maguey), **Huixtocihuatl** (salt), **Chalchiuhtlicue** (water), **Iztaccihuatl** (mountains), and Xochiquetzal (flowers).

Coatlicue. Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City.

It was said that people born on days when the *cihuateteo* descended would be drawn to bodily pleasures or could die for having committed adultery. Florentine Codex.

Among the goddesses connected with fertility and motherhood were Omecihuatl, the great creator of both gods and men; Toci, "Our grandmother"; Teteoinnan, "mother of the gods"; Coatlicue, the mother of Huitzilopochtli; Tonacacihuatl, "woman of our sustenance," the primordial wet nurse of the populace; Oxomoco, the first created woman from whom the rest of the human race descended; Cihuacoatl, the goddess invoked in difficult childbirths; Tonantzin, "Our mother"; Yoalticitl, patroness of childbirth; Tlazolteotl, the great childbearing goddess; and the *cihuateteo*, deified women who had died giving birth to their first child.

At the same time, these goddesses were associated with other aspects, such as sexuality (Xochiquetzal and Tlazolteotl), embroidery and weaving (Xochiquetzal, Mayahuel, Tlazolteotl, and Toci), and the domestic sphere (Chantico).

Mayahuel was also considered the goddess of weaving because fibers from maguey were used like cotton to spin and weave clothing.

Tlazolteotl, dressed as a warrior, holding a captive. Codex Borgia.

Some depictions of goddesses portray them in an attitude of defeat, with attributes that deny their femininity; others show them exalting the masculine warrior values of their society. Among the manly accoutrements seen on goddesses are male warrior attire: the *chimalli*, or shield; a flag; some arrows; a multicolor band tied at the waist (as Xochiquetzal has in plate 18 of the Codex Cospi); and the *maxtlatl*, or loincloth, among other things. The *chicahuaztli*, or ritual staffs, and the serpents that come out from under their skirts are, in some images, obvious phallic symbols that reveal the androgynous or masculine nature that these deities had to adopt in order to possess a certain rank in Mexica religion.

At the same time, representations of goddesses with spinning and weaving implements highlight the importance accorded to women's economic contribution through these activities. The goddesses thus demonstrate the desirable model for women: a role of passivity and submission, versus the activity and domination of the gods.

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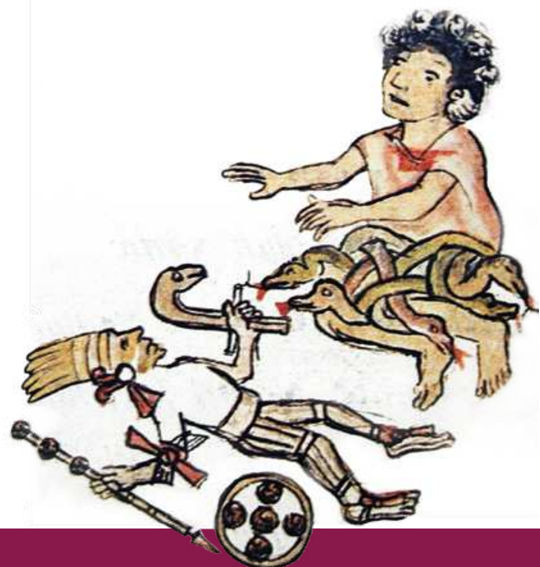
INAH: 1666-154

goddesses of the aztec-mexica tradition

The sisters Huitzilopochtli, Coyolxauhqui, and Malinalxochitl served as an example for women's behavior in this newly formed society. Even though the cult of these goddesses did not achieve the same importance as that of the ancient Mesoamerican goddesses assimilated from other groups, belief in them helped the ruling class solidify the new Mexica religion.

Myths related to the goddesses of the Aztec-Mexica tradition were used to deter any possible attempt on the part of women to take power, thereby assuring that the male authority of the tutelary god remained unquestioned. Let's consider these myths and their significance.

There are two versions of the myth concerning Coyolxauhqui.[112] The first is recorded by Bernardino de Sahagún, who recounts that her mother, Coatlicue, was sweeping in the mountains of Coatepec when suddenly a down feather fell from the sky, and she took it and tucked it beneath her skirt. When she had finished sweeping, she looked for it and couldn't find it; the down was understood to have fertilizing properties, and she became pregnant as a result. When Coyolxauhqui found out about her mother's pregnancy, she considered it a shame and a disgrace and incited her brothers, the ***centzonhuitznahuah***, to kill her. Coatlicue became disconsolate when she learned of this, but the baby spoke to her from her womb and comforted her, telling her not to fear. At the very moment the *centzonhuitznahuah* arrived to kill their mother, Huitzilopochtli was born, fully adult and dressed as a warrior. With a *xiuhcoatl* ("serpent of fire") he decapitated his sister and hurled her down from the mountain, so that her body broke to pieces.



Coatlicue and Huitzilopochtli. Florentine Codex.

Huitzilopochtli. Codex Magliabechiano.

The second version is from Fray Diego Durán, who indicates that Coyolxauhqui was the leader of a rebellion against Huitzilopochtli, because, wishing to remain in the Coatepec hills, she and her followers decided not to continue their peregrination toward the Valley of Mexico. That night Huitzilopochtli, furious that they should question his orders, tore open the breasts of Coyolxauhqui and her allies to devour their hearts.

In both stories, Coyolxauhqui is a woman who generates a cosmic conflict, an enemy who is destined to be defeated. She is shown as a selfish deity, rebellious and intransigent, who tries to usurp Huitzilopochtli's power. The sculpture of her at the foot of the Templo Mayor symbolizes the defeat of the feminine, the conquest of the new powers over the past.

Another notable case is that of Malinalxochitl, who was branded as inhuman (*amotlacatl*) and wicked (*tlahueliloc*). She was a great sorceress who ate people's hearts (*teyolloquani*) and grabbed them by their calves (*tecotzanani*) to trick them, put them to sleep, and lead them from their path. For this reason, during the peregrination toward the Valley of Mexico, Huitzilopochtli abandoned her with her people while they were sleeping. When she awoke, she cried and went to Texcaltepetl (which would later be called Malinalco). Arriving at the place

where she would settle, Malinalxochitl had a love affair with **Chimalcuauhtli**, the *tlatoani* there. From this relation was born **Copil**, who would also be a great ***nahualli*** ("magician"), though not as great as his mother.[113]

Malinalxochitl's abandonment by Huitzilopochtli marked a religious division and contempt for the prophetic and magical practices assigned to women.

Ideologically, both myths are fundamental aspects of the new Mexica tradition: the myth of Coyolxauhqui represents women's isolation from political power; that of Malinalxochitl symbolizes women's marginalization in the religious structure. These myths show that women were not suitable for performing socially relevant jobs, because in their thirst for power they led the people to instability and division.

On the other hand, the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* (History of the Mexicans as Told by Their Paintings)[114] recounts that Xochiquetzal was the first woman to die at war. This deity was an aspect of the Mother goddess, who was split into a multiplicity of titles (Teteoinnan, Toci, Tonacacihuatl, and even Coatlicue). We can therefore say that the Mother goddess was the first to be sacrificed in war, and that whereas in mythic times goddesses shared in all realms in which male deities were active, that time had ended. This story indicates the moment at which women, represented by the Mother goddess, ceased to participate actively in war. Thus, the different conceptions that people held of the two sexes came from various spheres, one being that of religion, in which the myths of the goddesses helped to legitimate the belief that women were arbiters of disorder, disintegration, and chaos.

To conclude, we may infer that Coyolxauhqui's reprehensible and ineffective behavior led to her becoming a model of inappropriate conduct for women, which is why, in the relief at the Templo Mayor, she is represented with masculine traits that are far from the feminine ideal. These characteristics imply that any attempt to challenge the principal deity (and his authority) would be severely punished. Likewise,

Itzpapalotl. Codex Borbonicus.

the myth of Malinalxochitl provides a model of undesirable female behavior because her thirst for power led the people to division and discontent.

Both goddesses were examples of what was socially unacceptable. In contrast, the goddesses of the ancient Mesoamerican tradition, in many cases, demonstrate what was considered acceptable and ideal for women: fertility and submission, as well as the performance of domestic tasks (sweeping, weaving) or the association with their implements (spindles, whorls, brooms).

Because the Mexica Empire was a warrior society, the more significant role played by the goddesses was relegated to the past, subordinate to the power of the most important god: Huitzilopochtli, the warrior deity par excellence.

Although the goddesses held a more prominent place in past Mexica history, their position was still never comparable to that of the male divinities. Like the later goddesses, those of antiquity all filled dependent roles as wives, concubines, or subordinates to a male deity. At no point did their condition approach equality with their male counterparts; however, it is clear that with the passage of time their status further diminished as their role lost its importance.

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GODDESS	MEANING OF NAME	SPHERES OF ACTIVITY
Chalchiuhtlicue	Her skirt of *chalchihuites* [green stones]	Goddess of earthly waters, patroness of sustenance. She watched over the growth of food plants.
Chantico	In the home	Goddess of earthly fire. She occupied the home's fireplace, before which several ceremonies were held each day.
Chicomecoatl	Seven serpents	Personification of the Earth in its aspects of sterility (hunger) and abundance.
Cihuacoatl	Serpent woman	Aided in difficult childbirths.
Cihuateteo Cihuapipiltin Mocihuaquetzque	Goddess women Noblewomen Those who rise as women	Women who died giving birth to their first child and were transformed into goddesses. They would descend during certain thirteen-day calendrical cycles, causing disease and inciting sexual activity.
Coatlicue	Her skirt of serpents	Mother of Huitzilopochtli. She was one of the personifications of the Earth.
Coyolxauhqui	She who adorns herself with bells	Lunar goddess and sister of the Sun, Huitzilopochtli.
Huixtocihuatl	Woman of salt	Inventor of salt.
Itzpapalotl	Obsidian butterfly	Telluric and warrior goddess.
Malinalxochitl	*Malinalli* flower	Sister of Huitzilopochtli; a sorceress.
Mayahuel	Goddess of maguey Goddess of pulque	Numen associated with fertility. Maguey, used to make pulque, is born of her own body.
Oxomoco	First woman	Together with the god Cipactonal, she is the progenitor of humanity. She oversees spinning, weaving, and divination using grains of maize.
Teteoinnan Toci	Mother of the gods Our grandmother	As Yoalticitl, "Doctor of the night," she was the patroness of doctors. As Temazcalteci, "Grandmother of the baths," she used sweat lodges as curative resources.
Tlazolteotl	Goddess of filth	Associated with childbirth. She provoked sexual desire; she was also able to consume transgressions, thus obtaining expiation.
Tonacacihuatl	Woman of our suste-nance	Together with the god Tonacatecuhtli, she provided sustenance for humanity.
Xilonen	She who lives like the cob of sweet maize	She personified the sweet maize plant.
Xochiquetzal	Precious flower	Goddess of love, domestic arts, beauty, and prostitutes.

The goddesses and their spheres of activity.

INRI

Conclusion

Warfare influenced all aspects of Mexica life: social, political, economic, and religious. Upon consolidation of the Empire, the most highly esteemed values were those of war. These values, setting the measure for all religious, social, and, specifically, gender values, contributed to the decline of women's status.

To achieve military success and political power, Mexica society relied on various state systems that strengthened the social base (family), created economic order through the sexual division of labor, and maintained political stability.

While the men concentrated on imperial expansion, the women contributed to the stability of the state through social, biological, and economic reproduction. In this way, the Empire grew strong with men occupying the political and religious spheres; women remained completely, or at least partially, excluded.

War was therefore the axis of official ideology, which had at its center the imperial warrior god: Huitzilopochtli. This military way of thought was superimposed on the values of both the ancient Mesoamerican and the Mexica (Aztec) tradition to form the new social order. In this system a gendered discourse distinguished the socially positive from the negative, victory from defeat, activity from passivity—hence, the masculine from the feminine. This discourse accorded high esteem to masculine qualities, while feminine attributes were "respected," as long as they did not stray from the limits clearly established by state ideology.

What was expected of women—besides their direct collaboration in work such as weaving and agriculture—was biological reproduction, the reproduction of the workforce, and social reproduction. The importance of this first expectation is self-evident, while the second and third were means of transmitting gender ideology, since basic education began in the home:

there mothers would instill in their daughters the feminine values imposed by society, while fathers would teach their sons how to behave according to their masculine role.

In Mexica culture's classification of gender, male control of the fundamental economic activities—agriculture and war—correlated with the preeminent status of men over women.

Thus we see a clear opposition between feminine and masculine values. Mexicas considered passivity an undesirable trait and related it inherently with women. By contrast, the male stereotype of virility and valor was exalted as one of activity (versus passivity). Any conduct that contradicted this ideal represented a transgression from the desirable masculine gender identity, which was applicable to women as well—because a highly esteemed woman would be called a woman with a "virile heart."

In short, the subordination of Mexica women was not based on the physical strength of men as compared to women or the biological functions of each sex. Rather, it was firmly rooted in the economic foundation, which was determined by the division between the organization of production, on the one hand, and of social reproduction, on the other.

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Glossary

Acamapichtli (?–1396)
The first *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, whose name means "Handful of reeds." Son of a noble *culhua* and founder of the Mexica dynasty in the fourteenth-century. He ruled from 1376 to 1396.

Ahuianime
Literally, the "happy" women. They were prostitutes who dressed and adorned themselves in an extravagant manner; they roamed the streets and markets directing sexual insinuations at men.

Ahuitzotl (?–1502)
The eighth *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, whose name means "Stickleback fish." He ruled from 1486 to 1502. His reign was characterized by a politics of intimidation and subjection, as well as by an increase in the number of human sacrifices. Because of the pressure he exerted on his subjects, his name became synonymous with ill-treatment; thus, a person who is beset by someone will say: "So-and-so is my *ahuizote*." When he ordered that a body of water be channeled from Coyoacan to Tenochtitlan, it flooded the city and indirectly caused his death.

Altiplano Central (Central Plateau) of Mexico
Region of Mexico that comprises the present-day Federal District (Mexico City) and the states of Mexico, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala, and the southern part of Hidalgo. At the end of the Postclassic period it was inhabited mainly by Nahuas, in addition to Otomi, Tlalhuicas, Matlatzincas, and Mazahuas, among other groups.

Amanteca
Expert artists in charge of making ornaments and attire from fine plumes. Only the *pipiltin*, which included rulers, priests, and warriors, could wear these sumptuous items. Moctezuma's headdress is an example of this feather art.

Atotoztli (?–1320)
Daughter of Moctezuma Ilhuicamina. She was the sole legitimate descendant of Moctezuma I; but for her blood, the lineage would have ended. She married Tezozomoc, son of Itzcoatl.

Axayacatl (ca. 1449–1481)
Sixth *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, grandson of Moctezuma Ilhuicamina. He ruled from 1469 to 1481. His name means "Face of water." One of his first initiatives was the conquest of Tlatelolco.

Glossary

Azcapotzalco
The name literally means "In the anthill." An important city during the Postclassic period, it was settled by the Tepanec, who, thanks to their aggressiveness and their large army, dominated the western part of the Valley of Mexico.

Azpanxihuitl
Herb with fibrous roots, serrate leaves like those of the almond tree, and thin stalks whose twig tips sprout white flowers. The Mexicas used this herb to treat skin conditions such as ringworm and pimples.

Benavente, fray Toribio de (ca. 1482–1569)
Called Motolinía ("poor one" in Nahuatl), he was one of the first twelve Franciscan friars to arrive in New Spain; his main residence was in Huexotzinco. He published two works, *Memoriales o Libro de las cosas de la Nueva España y de los naturales de ella* (Memorials, or Book of the Things of New Spain and of Her Natives) and *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España* (History of the Indians of New Spain), in which he recorded a social history of the Nahuas.

Cano de Saavedra, Juan (ca. 1502–1572)
Spanish conquistador, he took part in the subjugation of the Zapotecs, La Huasteca, and Michoacán. He was the husband of Tecuichpo, daughter of Moctezuma II, with whom he had five children: three boys and two girls. He wrote *Relación de la Nueva España y su conquista* (Account of New Spain and Its Conquest), now lost.

Centeotl
God of maize. His name comes from *centli*, which refers to the corncob, and *teotl*, which means "god." He was the son of Piltzintecuhtli and Xochiquetzal.

Centzonhuitznahuah
The name means "four hundred or innumerable southerners." They were sons of the goddess Coatlicue and brothers of Coyolxauhqui, who incited them to murder their mother in response to the offense she had committed by becoming pregnant with Huitzilopochtli without male intervention.

Chalchiuhcihuatl
One of the names by which the goddess Chicomecoatl was venerated. Literally it means "Woman of *chalchihuites* [green stones]." She was portrayed as a beautiful young woman dressed all in red, with a necklace and earrings of gold corncobs, and holding corncobs in her hands. On her feast day, celebrated throughout the country, she was asked to bring a year of abundant harvests.

Chalchiuhtlicue
The name literally means "Her skirt of *chalchihuites* [green stones]." She was the goddess of lakes and streams, the protectress of coastal navigation in ancient Mexico. She was

also the patron of births, and she played an important role in the ritual baths that were given to newborns.

Chatalhuic
A large tree with many branches and evergreen foliage. Its trunk is covered with a reddish down, and its leaves resemble those of the lemon tree. The seeds of its fruit were ground up in water and drunk to alleviate fevers. The water in which the ground seeds had been placed was also thought to help grow long hair.

Chicomecoatl
The name literally means "Seven serpents." She was the goddess of sustenance and sister of the *tlaloque*. Chicomecoatl was the personification of Earth that held a sinister aspect and a maternal one: she was the numen of sterility and hunger, because the Earth harbors death and winter; while under her second aspect she was the numen of abundance and joy.

Chimalcuauhtli
Matlatzinca lord from Malinalco with whom Malinalxochitl engendered a son, the sorcerer Copil, after having been abandoned by her brother Huitzilopochtli on his peregrination to the future Tenochtitlan.

Chimalpopoca (ca. 1405–1427)
Third *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, successor of Huitzilihuitl. His name literally means "Smoking shield." He ruled from 1417 to 1427; his government participated in the Tepanec conquests, notably that of Chalco. During his reign a wooden aqueduct was built to bring drinking water from Chapultepec to Tenochtitlan; it had a causeway with embankments and dikes connecting Tenochtitlan to the city of Tacuba, with interrupted segments spanned by wooden bridges that were removed at night.

Cihuatlampa
This was the place of women, or the feminine, a paradise located to the west, the cardinal point through which the Sun descends to the underworld. It was also known as Cincalco, "the house of maize"; it was inhabited by the *cihuateteo*, women who died giving birth to their first child.

Cipactonal
He and Oxomoco, his wife, were the lords of the *tonalpohualli*, because they invented it. They were also considered the ancestors of men and women, progenitors of the human race. Moreover, along with Tlaltetecui and Xochicahuaca, they were the earliest inventors of medicine and the first herbal doctors.

Copalxocotl
"Fruit of the copal," a tree whose fruit and roots produced a foam that was used as soap for bathing and washing clothes.

Copil
Son of Chimalcuauhtli and the sorceress Malinalxochitl. He was a great sorcerer who swore to avenge the offense his mother suffered on being abandoned by her brother Huitzilopochtli. He was defeated in combat by his uncle Huitzilopochtli, and his heart was thrown into a field of bulrush. From this field came the sign telling the Aztecs to settle and form their empire there.

Coyolxauhqui
Her name means "She who adorns herself with bells." She was the moon goddess and the sister of the Sun, Huitzilopochtli. Together with her brothers, the *centzonhuitznahuah* ("four hundred southerners"), she planned to kill her mother Coatlicue for having become pregnant in a way that they considered dishonorable. Because of this, Huitzilopochtli beheaded Coyolxauhqui and hurled down her from Coatepec. She was thus depicted as a dismembered woman.

Crónica mexicayotl
A work written in Nahuatl by Hernando Alvarado Tezozomoc, a Tenochca descendant of Moctezuma II, which recounts the history of the Mexica people starting with their departure from Aztlan and continuing up to several years after the conquest of Tenochtitlan.

Cueitl
Mexica women's garment consisting of a piece of fabric wound from the waist to the calves.

Huasteca, La
Region made up of parts of the present-day states of Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro, Hidalgo, Puebla, and Veracruz. The area is home to several ethnic groups today.

Huehuetlatolli
Literally, "ancient word." The term applied to speeches on ethics or morals delivered by public officials, as well as messages passed down from fathers to their children or from the old to the young exhorting them to behave properly and avoid transgressions.

Huipilli
Embroidered sleeveless blouse worn by Mexica women.

Huitzilihuitl (?–1417)
Second *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, who ruled from 1396 until his death. His marriage to the daughter of Tezozomoc, *tlatoani* of Azcapotzalco, resulted in a considerable reduction in the tributes his people had to pay to the Tepanec. In return, the Mexicas conquered neighboring villages in his name, which led him to become the most powerful lord in the Valley of Mexico.

Huitzilopochtli
The principal Mexica deity associated with war and the Sun. His name means "Hummingbird of the left" or "Hummingbird of the south." He was the god who guided the Mexica by signaling the site where they should found their city, which they would call Tenochtitlan. The great Templo Mayor of Mexico City (Tenochtitlan) was dedicated to him and to Tlaloc.

Huixtocihuatl
Her name literally means "Woman of salt." She was a sister of the *tlaloque* (rain gods), who banished her to salt waters following a dispute; there she invented salt. She dwelled in the fourth heaven.

Ilamatecuhtli
Her name literally means "Old woman." She is the old goddess also known as Tona, Cozcamiauh, Citlalicue, and Cihuacoatl. Various connections link her to Itzpapalotl and the *cihuateteo*, with which she was also identified. She was called Coatlicue as well, by which name she is known as the mother of the great gods Huitzilopochtli, Tezcatlipoca, and Quetzalcoatl. She was the wife of the old god of fire; her shrine was located on the Hill of Tepeyac.

Ilancueitl
To ensure the legitimacy of their ruling class, the Mexicas wed their first *tlatoani*, Acamapichtli, to Ilancueitl, a noblewoman from Culhuacan. The people of Culhuacan descended from the Toltecs; this lineage therefore brought nobility to the dynasty of Tenochtitlan. The marriage formed the foundation of Mexica nobility, which remained in power until the arrival of the Spaniards.

Iztaccihuatl
The name literally means "White woman." It refers to the snow-capped mountains located 55 km (34 miles) southeast of Mexico City, which were revered as a goddess. One of the caves of these mountains held a sculpture of her, to which people brought offerings and sacrifices. Cities also had temples dedicated to her.

Late Postclassic
For the area of the Altiplano Central, this was the final period of the pre-Hispanic era. It ran from 1200, shortly after the fall of Tula, to 1521, when Tenochtitlan was conquered by the Spaniards.

Macehualtin
(Plural of **macehualli**) Persons belonging to a social class above that of slaves and below that of the *pipiltin*, or nobles. *Macehualtin* could marry freemen or freewomen, own property, and have children who were free.

Malinalxochitl
Her name literally means "*malinalli* flower" or "grass flower." She was abandoned by her brother Huitzilopochtil in Texcaltepetl, which later was called Malinalco in her honor. With Chimalcuauhtli she bore Copil, a son who also was a sorcerer.

Maqui
Prostitute; these Mexica women accompanied warriors on their military expeditions.

Maxtla (?–1428)
Tepanec *tlatoani* of Coyoacan, son of the tyrant Tezozomoc, *tlatoani* of Azcapotzalco. When his father died in 1427, he usurped the throne of Azcapotzalco from his brother Tayatzin, whom he had killed; he also spread falsehoods about Chimalpopoca, *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan, provoking his suicide. Maxtla subsequently died in 1428, when Azcapotzalco was sacked and destroyed under the alliance of Tenochtitlan and Texcoco.

Mayahuel
Goddess of maguey or pulque. Mexica mythology associates her with fertility. She usually wears a feather headdress, with a blue or white ornament of folded paper at the nape of her neck. She wears two spindles in her hair and a cluster of green, flower-tipped branches. Her face is painted one of various colors—blue, white, yellow, or red. She wears a crescent-shaped nose ring (*yacametztli*), characteristic of the gods of pulque, and a white huipil, the color of pulque. Also characteristic are the fleshy leaves of maguey that she usually wears around her body.

Mexicas
A Nahua people who set out from Aztlan, a site located in the north of Mesoamerica, on a long journey to the Altiplano Central to settle and found their city, which they named Tenochtitlan. Huitzilopochtli, their guiding deity, changed their name from "Aztec" to "Mexica."

Moctezuma Ilhuicamina or Moctezuma I (ca. 1390–1469)
Fifth *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan. He ruled from 1440 to 1469. Mexica territorial expansion continued under his rule, which also saw the consolidation of the Flower Wars, fought in order to obtain victims for sacrifice to the gods.

Moctezuma Xocoyotzin or Moctezuma II (1466–1520)
Successor of Ahuitzotl and son of Axayacatl, he was the ninth *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan and the second to be named Moctezuma; he ruled from 1502 to 1520. His rule was notable for the replacement of *macehualtin*, who served as workers in his home and in the court, by nobles. His despotism was further evident in the set of formalities he introduced regarding his own personal treatment. The military campaigns waged under his rule were of no great significance. It was during Moctezuma II's time that the omens auguring the fall of Tenochtitlan to the Spaniards appeared. He died while in Spanish captivity.

Moquihuix (?–1473)
Fourth *tlatoani* of Tlatelolco, who ruled from 1460 to 1473. During his reign the relations between the Tlatelolca and the Tenochca deteriorated, and in 1473 Axayacatl invaded Tlatelolco. Upon the imminent fall and subjection of the city, Moquihuix decided to end his life, throwing himself from the Templo Mayor of Tlatelolco.

Motolinía. See **Benavente**

Nahualli
Nahuatl word relating to concepts of cover and disguise; it has been translated as "that which is my clothing." It signified a type of magician who could turn himself into an animal (felines, eagles, or serpents) or take the shape of natural elements, such as fire and rain.

Nahuas
Groups that shared Nahuatl as their language, with its regional variants, across the entire Altiplano Central. With the expansionism of the Mexica Empire, Nahuatl spread throughout a large part of the Mexican territory. Several groups that spoke Nahuatl emigrated as far as Central America.

Nahuatl
Language of the Yuto-Aztec linguistic family that was spoken by the Aztec-Mexica.

Nemontemi
The last five days of the year; they were considered unlucky and therefore were not counted. People avoided undertaking any new projects during this period, because disaster could result.

Nezahualcoyotl (1402–1472)
Fourth *tlatoani* of Texcoco, who recovered control over his city and the Acolhua provinces during the rule of the sovereign usurper of Azcapotzalco, Tezozomoc. He was one of the founders of the Triple Alliance of the Late Postclassic in the Valley of Mexico. He is known as a philosopher and poet. He ruled intermittently from 1418 to 1472.

Nezahualpilli (1464–1515)
Fifth *tlatoani* of Texcoco, son of Nezahualcoyotl. He took the throne upon the death of his father and governed from 1473 to 1515.

Ochpaniztli
The term means "sweeping [of the roads]." During this festival general cleaning took place: houses, temples, walkways, and streets were swept; fountains, canals, and statues of the gods were cleaned; and aqueducts and important buildings were renovated. It has been considered a festival of renewal, purification, and rebirth. The main deities celebrated represented the earth, maize, germination, and water.

Oxomoco
Wife of Cipactonal. The gods entrusted her with spinning and weaving, and they gave her grains of maize to use for healing and divining.

Pipiltin
(Plural of **pilli**) Mexica hereditary nobility that occupied important positions in government as well as in the military and the priesthood.

Quechquemitl
Pre-Hispanic women's garment, a small triangular cloak that fell over the torso. At the time of the Spanish conquest, this garment was worn in almost all of Mesoamerica. It was an attribute of the Mexica goddesses of fertility.

Quetzalcoatl
God and Toltec cultural hero. He appears at various times as a mortal, the ruler of Tula, and a deity, the Plumed Serpent, associated with fertility, the wind, and Venus. To distinguish these different qualities, the name *Topiltzin* is often added to refer to the human (Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl), and *Ehecatl* (god of wind) to refer to the divinity (Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl).

Quilaztli
A name given to the goddess Cihuacoatl, meaning "Fomenter of vegetables." Quilaztli played a secondary role in the creation of human beings.

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Sahagún, fray Bernardino de (1499–1590)
Franciscan friar who lived in the center of Mexico and in Tepeapulco, Hidalgo, as well as other places. Between 1558 and 1580, with the help of indigenous informants, he compiled an extensive work on Nahua culture, an indispensable reference for any study of this group. The version in Nahuatl is the Florentine Codex and in Spanish the *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España.*

Spindle
A long, cylindrical wooden implement that serves as a counterweight for the whorl at its lower end. It was used for making skeins of yarn.

Tecuichpo (ca.1509–1551)
Daughter of Moctezuma II, legitimate heir to the Mexica throne. At age eleven she was wed to her uncle Cuitlahuac, her father's brother, who died of smallpox sixty days later.

She was subsequently betrothed to her cousin Cuauhtemoc. She lived with him for approximately one year, in the midst of the destruction of Tenochtitlan. On August 13, 1521, they attempted to flee on Lake Texcoco but were caught by the Spaniards. In June of 1526, Hernán Cortés granted her and her descendants the profits and revenues from the town of Tacuba. She was converted by the Spaniards and christened Doña Isabel de Moctezuma. She was married a third time, to Alonso de Grado, who died in 1528. Cortés moved her to his palace to join his other concubines; they had one child together, Leonor Cortés Moctezuma. Cortés then arranged another marriage for her, this time to Pedro Gallego, who died in 1530. Two years later, Cortés chose her fifth and final husband, Juan Cano de Saavedra, with whom she had five children: Gonzalo, Pedro, Juan, Isabel, and Catalina.

Telpuchpan
The word means "Place of the young": a youth educational establishment.

Tenochtitlan
Capital of the Mexica Empire, which the Mexicas founded in 1325 on a small island in the center of Mexico designated by their god Huitzilopochtli.

Tepanec
A Nahua people with many Otomi cultural traits. The Tepanec arrived in the basin of what is now Mexico City in the thirteenth century, during the time of Techotlalatzin, the Chichimec-Acolhua descendant of Xolotl, who granted them the territory of Azcapotzalco. They gradually acquired great strength, forming an empire that controlled the basin for some time. Under the Tepanec rule of Tezozomoc the Acolhuas saw their power dwindle until Nezahualcoyotl and Itzcoatl defeated Azcapotzalco. Then the Tepanec capital moved to Tlacopan (Tacuba), and the Triple Alliance was formed between that city, Tenochtitlan, and Texcoco.

Teteoinnan-Toci
Mother of the gods. One of her spheres of activity was provoking earthquakes, which gave her the name Tlalli Iyollo, "Heart of the earth." She was also the patroness of doctors and soothsayers, hence her name Yoalticitl, "Doctor of the night." Among her curative resources were steambaths or *temazcales* (sweat lodges); thus she was also known as Temazcalteci.

Texcoco
Located to the northeast of what is today Mexico City, Texcoco was inhabited by the Acolhuas, descendants of the Chichimecs of Xolotl, whose most notable rulers were Nezahualcoyotl and his son Nezahualpilli. It became a member of the Triple Alliance headed by Tenochtitlan.

Tezozomoc (?–1427)
Tepanec *tlatoani* of Azcapotzalco who extended his dominion over the western part of the

Valley of Mexico. He betrayed and assassinated Ixtlilxochitl, the father of Nezahualcoyotl—whom he kept in exile from his cities—and tyrannized the Acolhuas.

Tianguis
Plaza market that offered various products. The two main *tianguis* were that of Tlatelolco, which sold all types of merchandise, and that of Azcapotzalco, where slaves were sold.

Tititl
The name means "Straightening." This festival celebrated Ilamatecuhtli, "Old Woman"—also called Tonan, "Our Mother," or Cozcamiauh, "Maize necklace"—and a female slave representing the goddess was sacrificed. Before the sacrifice the victim would dance while crying at her fate. She was then brought to the top of the temple of Huitzilopochtli, where her heart was torn out.

Tizoc (?–1486)
Seventh *tlatoani* of Tenochtitlan; he succeeded his brother Axacayatl in 1481. He was more inclined to religious life than to military expansion. His brief reign remains obscure. According to some versions, the rulers of Iztapalapa and Tlachco, Techotlalla and Maxtlaton, had him killed by poisoning.

Tlacoqualli in monequi
Adage that means "the good medium is necessary," which indicated the Mexica ideal of moderation in all behavior.

Tlacuilo
(Plural Tlacuiloque) Men and women skilled in drawing. They painted codices and murals in the cities.

Tlalpoyomatli
Aromatic plant used to make perfumes that were poured into small vials. It had thin, small roots from which grew stems with long, narrow leaves, green on one side and whitish on the other.

Tlanextia xiuhtontl
A plant known as "little herb that shines." Combined with other plants, it would be used to alleviate stomach rumbling and diarrhea.

Tlatelolco
Sister city of Tenochtitlan, founded by the Tlatelolcas, part of the Mexica group. It was the area's the first center of exchange, with all types of products and merchandise coming from beyond its borders.

Tlatlancuaye
The name means "that has knees." Gnarled herb with reddish, branching roots; long,

flexible, partly purple stems; and red flowers and seeds. It was used by the Mexicas as a remedy for fever, as a diuretic and diaphoretic.

Tlatoani
Literally, "he who speaks"; the title received by each successive ruler, who occupied the highest position on the social scale. Moreover, on being enthroned, the ruler acquired a divine nature, with his language transformed so that he could speak with the god Tezcatlipoca.

Tlatoque. Plural of **tlatoani**.

Tlazolteotl
Goddess of filth, as well as devourer of impurities, and goddess of sexuality. She was also identified as a lunar goddess, but at the same time she was the goddess of the Earth. The latter designation came from the Huastec area, where her cult originated. She was furthermore associated with pregnancy and childbirth, since she is the only goddess who, in the central Mexican codices, is shown giving birth.

Tonalamatl
Literally, "book of fates," which contained fortunes based on natal signs. These were ritual calendar codices that presented basic cycles for calculating time.

Tonalpohualli
Nahua ritual divinatory calendar of 260 days; in it an individual's fate was foretold based on the day of his birth. It is also known as the "count of the *tonalli*" or the "count of destinies."

Tonalpouhqui
Nahuatl word meaning "he who reads fates"; a specialist in charge of consulting the *tonalpohualli* to foretell the future of the newborn.

Torquemada, fray Juan de (ca. 1562–1624)
Franciscan missionary who wrote *Monarquía indiana* (Indian Monarchy) between 1592 and 1613, a work that discusses the pre-Columbian Nahuas and other pre-Hispanic groups, their gods, and their society.

Tzopilotl tzontecomatl
Tree with long and narrow leaves that produced a large, oblong fruit. From the pit of this fruit came an oily, emollient liquid with properties similar to those of almond oil. This liquid was used to dissolve tumors, alleviate coughs, and clear the chest. Women also used it to soften and clean their faces.

Whorl
A circular ceramic implement used to make skeins of yarn.

Xilonen
"She who lives like the cob of sweet maize." Goddess of sweet maize. She was depicted with two facial colors: yellow from the nose down and red for the forehead. She wore a four-cornered paper crown on her head, with many feathers emerging from the center as a crest. On her left arm she wore a round shield and in her right hand carried a staff that was dyed red.

Xiuhquilitl
Dye plant from which indigo was extracted. It was used, among other purposes, to blacken and dye the hair.

Xochicaltzin
Literally, "little house with flowers"; metaphorically it meant "in the steambath house," synonymous with *temazcalli*. The goddess of the bath, Temazcalteci, was also known by this name.

Xochiquetzal
Her name means "Precious Flower." Goddess of love, domestic arts, beauty, and public prostitutes (*ahuianime* or *maqui*), the companions of unwed warriors. She is notably related with the Tonacacihuatl, Tlazolteotl, and Chalchiuhtlicue.

Yoalticitl
The name literally means "Doctor of the night." It referred to the goddess Teteoinnan-Toci, patroness of doctors and soothsayers.

Notes

1. Danilovic 2009, p. 157.
2. Durán 2002, vol. 2, ch. 14, pp. 142–43.
3. Soustelle 1996, p. 186.
4. Codex Telleriano-Remensis 1964, pl. 30r.
5. Sahagún 1969, p. 141; idem 2002, vol. 1, bk. 5, ch. 1, p. 359; Torquemada 1975, vol. 4, bk. 13, ch. 20, p. 204.
6. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 31, pp. 618–20.
7. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 5, app., ch. 13, p. 463.
8. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 36, pp. 642–43; Torquemada 1975, vol. 4, bk. 13, ch. 19, pp. 203–4; Ruiz de Alarcón 1987, first treatise, ch. 1, p. 131.
9. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 18, p. 169.
10. Torquemada 1975, vol. 4, bk. 13, ch. 22, pp. 209–10; Durán 2002, vol. 2, third treatise, ch. 3, p. 242; Esteva-Fabregat 1962, p. 686.
11. Based on Lockhart 1992, pp. 120–21.
12. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 1, app., p. 122.
13. Mendieta 2002, vol. 1, ch. 23, p. 240.
14. Pérez-San Vicente 1944, p. 34; Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 39, pp. 650–52.
15. Motolinía 1996, ch. 69, p. 424.
16. Sahagún 1950–1969, bk. 6, ch. 41, p. 231.
17. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 19, p. 560.
18. Motolinía 1996, ch. 68, p. 424.
19. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 19, p. 560.
20. Idem.
21. López Austin 1996 (1980), 1:452.
22. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 19, p. 562.
23. Motolinía 1996, ch. 68, p. 426; Mendieta 2002, vol. 1, ch. 23, p. 241.
24. Pablo Escalante 1992.
25. Ibid., 33–34.
26. See, for example, *Códice carolino* 1967, fol. 56r, 26–27.
27. Escalante 1992, 34.
28. Sahagún 1950–1969, bk. 6, ch. 41, p. 228.
29. Escalante 1993, p. 103.
30. Flores 1992, p. 442.
31. Pérez-San Vicente 1944, p. 78.
32. Ibid., p. 82.
33. Alvarado Tezozomoc 1998, p. 117.
34. Cruz 1991, p. 35.
35. Soustelle 1996, p. 260n. 39.
36. Sahagún 1950–1969, bk. 10, ch. 24, pp. 89–90.
37. Cruz 1991, p. 29.
38. Clavijero 1945, vol. 2, pp. 349, 368.
39. Sahagún 2002, vol. 3, bk. 11, ch. 7, par. 6, line 1110.
40. Cruz 1991, p. 79.
41. Flores 1992, pp. 426–27; Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 8, ch. 15, p. 763.
42. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 18, p. 557.
43. Motolinía 1989, part 4, ch. 6, pp. 540–44; Motolinía 1971, part 2, ch. 4, pars. 554–614, pp. 313–34; Las Casas 1967, vol. 2, bk. 3, ch. 218, pp. 411–15; Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 23, pp. 581–87; Mendieta 2002, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 25, pp. 245–47; Torquemada 1975, vol. 4, bk. 13, chs. 6–7, pp. 153–161.
44. 2002, vol. 2, treatise 2, ch. 5, p. 66.
45. Idem; Cervantes de Salazar 1985, ch. 23, pp. 44-45; *Códice carolino* 1967, no. 45, pp. 26–27.
46. Rodríguez-Shadow 2000, p. 195.
47. 1971, part 2, ch. 5, par. 569, p. 319.
48. Motolinía 1989, part 4, ch. 6, pp. 543–44; idem 1971, part 2, ch. 5, pars. 569–71,

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pp. 319–20; Las Casas 1967, vol. 2, bk. 3, ch. 218, p. 414; Torquemada 1975, vol. 4, bk. 13, ch. 5, pp. 153–58.

49. Soustelle 1996, p. 188.
50. Gruzinski 1980, p. 31.
51. Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1997b, ch. 57, p. 152.
52. Sullivan 1966, p. 57n. 1; Alcina 1991, p. 60.
53. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 27, pp. 601–5.
54. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 28, p. 609; Hernández 1959, vol. 2, *Historia de los animales*, first treatise, ch. 5, 298–99.
55. Clendinnen 1991, p. 177.
56. Ruiz de Alarcón 1987, treatise 6, ch. 1, p. 197; Sern 1987, ch. 17, p. 393; López Austin 1970: V.
57. 1975.
58. León 1910, p. 22.
59. Ruiz de Alarcón 1987, treatise 6, ch. 1, p. 197.
60. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 28, p. 610.
61. Sahagún 1950–1969, bk. 6, ch. 27, pp. 151–58.
62. Ibid., ch. 18, p. 160.
63. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 28, pp. 609–10.
64. Ibid., ch. 29, p. 611.
65. Barba 1993, p. 39.
66. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 29, pp. 612–13; idem 1950–1969, bk. 6, ch. 29, p. 163.
67. Sahagún 1950–1969, bk. 9, p. 14.
68. Torquemada 1975, vol. 2, bk. 2, ch. 16, p. 145.
69. Sten 1990, p. 140.
70. Torquemada 1975, vol. 3, bk. 9, ch. 32, pp. 323–24; vol. 4, bk. 12, ch. 3, p. 102.
71. Ibid., vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 64, p. 261.
72. Ibid., vol. 3, bk. 9, ch. 8, p. 268.
73. Durán 2002, vol. 2, treatise 2, ch. 15, p. 150.
74. Torquemada 1975, vol. 4, bk. 13, ch. 5, p. 155; ch. 29, p. 234.
75. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 21, p. 109; ibid., bk. 2, ch. 9, p. 150; Torquemada 1975, vol. 3, bk. 10, ch. 20, p. 391; ibid., ch. 24, p. 400; ibid., vol. 4, bk. 13, ch. 23, p. 215; ibid., bk. 14, ch. 10, p. 339.
76. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 6, ch. 21, pp. 574–75.
77. Wiesheu 2007; Rodríguez-Shadow 2007; González Licón 2007.
78. 2002, ch. 2, pp. 27, 29.
79. Ibid., p. 27.
80. 2000, p. 81.
81. Gillespie 1989, pp. 18–19.
82. Durán 2002, vol. 1, treatise 1, ch. 6, pp. 98–104; Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1997a, p. 303.
83. *Genealogía de los príncipes mexicanos* 1958, pl. 1; Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1997b, ch. 51, p. 129.
84. Díaz del Castillo 2007, ch. 130, p. 269.
85. Fernández de Oviedo 1945, p. 134.
86. Rodríguez-Shadow 2000, p. 87.
87. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 8, ch. 16, p. 764.
88. Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1997b, ch. 30, p. 77.
89. 1975, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 28, p. 173.
90. Rodríguez-Shadow 2000, p. 93.
91. Pérez-San Vicente 1944, pp. 52–53. Cf. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 10, ch. 14, p. 889; ibid., ch. 19, p. 901; ibid., ch. 26, p. 919.
92. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 24, pp. 191–94; ibid., ch. 38, pp. 267–68; Torquemada 1975, vol. 3, bk. 10, ch. 35, p. 427.
93. Sahagún 2002, vol. 3, bk. 10, chs. 13–15, pp. 884–92.
94. Muñoz Camargo 1998, pp. 165–66; Durán 2002, vol. 2, treatise 2, ch. 16, p. 156; Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 4, ch. 2, p. 353.

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95. Sahagún 2002, vol. 2, bk. 10, ch. 14, pp. 888–89.
96. Rodríguez-Shadow 2000, p. 120.
97. Brumfiel 1991.
98. Burkhart 1997, p. 37.
99. *Códice carolino* 1967, no. 36, pp. 36–37.
100. Encina and Sterpone 2000.
101. 2000, p. 107.
102. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 4; vol. 2, bks. 6, 10.
103. 2000, p. 122.
104. Graulich 1996, p. 33.
105. Rodríguez-Shadow 2000, p. 243.
106. *Leyenda de los Soles* 2002, pp. 179, 181.
107. González Torres 1979, p. 11.
108. Alvarado Tezozomoc 1998, p. 28.
109. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 3, ch. 1, p. 302.
110. Tena 2009, p. 12.
111. Rodríguez-Shadow 2000, p. 243.
112. Sahagún 2002, vol. 1, bk. 3, ch. 1, p. 302; Durán 2002, vol. 1, treatise 1, ch. 3, pp. 76–77.
113. Alvarado Tezozomoc 1998, pp. 28–31, 41; Durán 2002, vol. 1, treatise 1, ch. 4, pp. 80–82; Ramírez Codex 1979, pp. 26–31.
114. 2002, ch. 6, p. 39.

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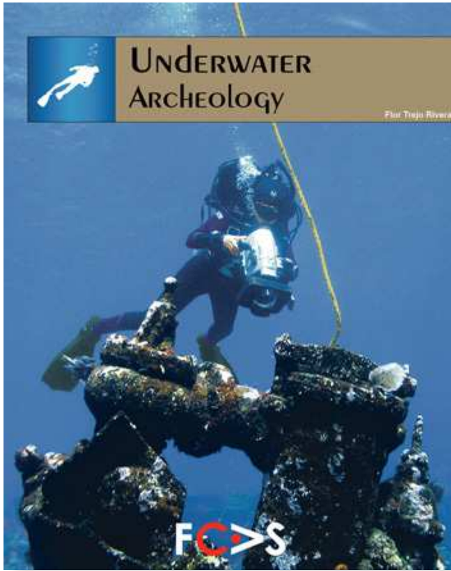

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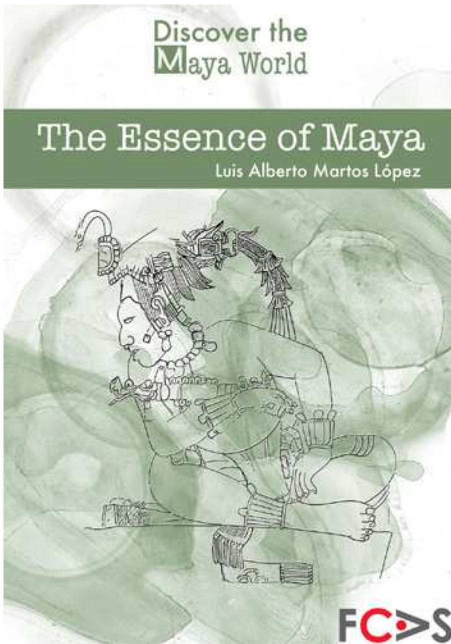

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