



Daniel Munguía

Four Archaeological Sites In the State of Mexico

María del Carmen Carbajal Correa*

In the context of the development of the major Mesoamerican cultures of Mexico's central highland in cities like Teotihuacan, Tula and Tenochtitlan, we can situate different cultures with distinctive characteristics. At different moments in their history they were subjected or influenced

by the hegemonic groups of their time. In what is today the State of Mexico alone, 17 archaeological sites open to the public testify to the multiple human settlements that were scattered over the central highlands. Teotihuacan is the most noteworthy and studied, but others, not quite as famous, played a role in the overall development of the areas. Examples are San Miguel Ixtapan, Huamango, Tenayuca and Calixtlahuaca, whose cultural evolution dates from the formative period (5000 to

* Professor and researcher at the State of Mexico National Institute of Anthropology and History Center (CINAHM).

2500 B.C.) to the post-classical period (A.D. 900 to 1521), shortly before the arrival of the Spanish.

SAN MIGUEL IXTAPAN¹

Before the conquest, Ixtapan (from the Nahuatl words “*iztatl*,” or “salt” and “*pan*,” meaning “where salt is extracted”) produced enough salt, one of the most valuable trade goods among pre-Hispanic peoples, to cover local consumption and export to different regions.

Ixtapan’s first inhabitants must have arrived at the end of the late pre-classical period (400 B.C. to A.D. 200), as can be inferred from the anthropomorphic figures found there.² There is also evidence of later occupations in the epi-classical period (A.D. 700-900). It may have been at this time that the basalt rock called the great “model,” discovered in 1958, was sculpted.³ This stone displays designs of architectural structures: temple complexes with sunken patios; basements with stairways, patios and ball games, whose characteristics coincide with Xochicalco and Teotenango architecture. Some Teotihuacan

figurines found make it possible to connect this occupation with groups from the great Teotihuacan.⁴

The location occupied a strategic place on the border between the Mexica and Tarasco lands, where constant confrontations took place. The Chontal, inhabitants of this border area, supplied salt both to the Tarasco and the Mexica before being conquered by the latter around 1476.

According to the Temascaltepec Account, the salt was extracted from a stream that flows down a deep ravine, “and they pour the water into holes they make in some stones, where it evaporates and they pick out the salt with which they support themselves...every four days, they take out a half bushel of it, and that, in the dry season.”⁵

This site was occupied until the late post-classical period (after 1476 and until 1521), right before the conquest. Evidence of this—three-legged Azteca III receptacles—⁶ has been found in the excavations of the ball game court. Other objects found in burial spots in the area have made it possible to identify the regions they traded with, including the Tarasca, the Valley of Toluca and the middle Balsas area.

Calixtlahuaca’s great agricultural production was one of the reasons the Mexica army forced the city to pay them tribute.



Daniel Munguía



Daniel Munguía



Daniel Munguia



Daniel Munguia

Huamango was the forefront of the Toltec empire, possibly dominated by some families from Tula.

HUAMANGO⁷

Huamango, from the Nahuatl word “*Quahmango*,” meaning “place of logs or unworked wood” or “where wood is worked,” was occupied by Otomí tribes, who spoke a proto-Otomí-Mazahua language. Huamango is located in an area of uneven mountain terrain which practically surrounds the Valley of the Mirrors, or the Valley of Acambay, 2,850 meters above sea level. The Otomí and Mazahua who today populate part of the northern State of Mexico are descendants of the groups of the same name mentioned in historical sources. They are related to the Matlatzinca of the Valley of Toluca, with whom they lived in the times around the Spanish conquest.

In the pre-Hispanic period, Huamango was subjected to Jilotepec, which, in turn was dominated by the ancient city of Tula. According to W.J. Folan, this was the forefront of the Toltec empire, dominated possibly by one or more families from Tula, whose main deity was Tezcatlipoca.

Its geographical position was determinant because it served as the gateway to the valley, from where they could control both entry and exit of people, goods and foodstuffs produced locally and imported. Its privileged location turned it into a crossroads.

From Huamango’s highest points, the entire Valley of Acambay can be viewed; this made it possible to create a system of roads that became part of the trade routes and a communications network for trade and alliances with its neighbors and far-away peoples. The longer routes (*yadonñu*) went to Atotonilco, Araró and Jerécuaro, Michoacán; Chalma, in the State of Mexico; Guanajuato and Salamanca; San Juan de los Lagos; Tenochtitlán, Tepititlán, Tecozauatla; Tlaxcala; Tula, Tulancingo; Zihuatanejo; and all the way to Guatemala. The shorter routes (*yahuenño*) went to Atlacomulco, Calixtlahuaca, El Oro, Jilotepec, San Bartolo Morelos and Valle de Bravo. These routes were useful for alliances, the payment of tribute and trade, as well as facilitating relations with far-away places.⁸

After the fall of Tula in 1168, the area may have maintained its independence under the mandate of Jilotepec until it was conquered by Moctezuma I in the fifteenth century.

TENAYUCA⁹

The name Tenayuca comes from the Nahuatl words “*tenamitl*” meaning “wall” and “*yohcan*,” meaning “place,” and means “place with walls” or “fortified

place.” After the city of Tula was destroyed and burned in 1168, around the Year 5 Tēcpatl (or 1224 in our calendar), many Chichimec tribes headed by Xólotl appeared in the north of the Mexico Basin. According to documents such as the Tlotzin and Quinatzin maps, they wore animal skins, used bows and arrows, lived in caves and straw huts and spoke a language closely related to Nahuatl.¹⁰

Xólotl’s journey began near the Huastec region of the state of Hidalgo and continued to Tenayuca, where he founded his capital.¹¹ Ixtlilxóchitl relates that Tenayuca was the first capital of the group of hunter-gatherers who arrived in Central Mexico toward the end of the twelfth century, when the fall and destruction of great Tula (Tollan) had left a vacuum of power in the central highland.¹² In 1925, Reygadas considered that the Chichimec culture was only a prolongation of Tula’s and that, therefore, its fundamental elements are Toltec.¹³ It is a fact that despite the abandonment and physical destruction of the Toltec city, the “Toltec culture” was preserved in the central valleys and was the source for the development of the high cultures of the late post-classical period.

Xólotl founded a dynasty that began with himself as king; he was succeeded by Nopaltzin and Tlotzin, who resided in Tenayuca, but the fourth

king, Quinatzin, moved the capital to Texcoco, diminishing Tenayuca’s importance.

Tenayuca shared spaces with the Tepaneca, the Tenanca of Chalco or the Acolhua of Coatlichan, whom Pedro Carrasco mentions as semi-civilized groups; before migrating to the Mexico Basin, they inhabited some of the “provincial” centers of the Toltec empire. These lands later merged with those of Xólotl to found the great province of Acolhuacan, producing a high degree of cultural development in central Mesoamerica.

CALIXTLAHUACA¹⁴

Calixtlahuaca is from the Nahuatl words “*calli*,” or “house” and “*ixtlahuacan*” or “plain” or “wide expanse of houses.” When the Mexica arrived, the place was inhabited by Matlatzinca, who called themselves the Nepinthatuhui, or “those of the land of corn.”

Calixtlahuaca is on the high central plateau and typically has abundant agricultural production and is rich in game, plants for gathering and fish.

From the late pre-classical period (400 B.C. to A.D. 200) on, there were organized settlements with Olmec influence in the Valley of Toluca. The archaeological evidence from this period in the Tejalpa



Enrique Tiego

Tenayuca was the first capital of the group of hunter-gatherers who arrived in Central Mexico in the twelfth century.

Valley allows us to infer a relationship with groups from the Mexico Basin. Receptacles and figurines similar to those from sites in Ecatepec, Tlapacoya and Tlatilco, make it possible to suppose that from there, the Olmec influence was transmitted to the Valley of Toluca through natural corridors.¹⁵

The late classical period (between A.D. 600 and 900) was distinguished by the cultural influence of Teotihuacan, possibly due to the exchange of agricultural and aquatic products carried out on the communication routes established years before. In this period, customs and rites from the great metropolis were adopted: the ball game, the form of burial and the worship of Quetzalcóatl and Tláloc. At the fall of Teotihuacan, settlements under its influence like Tecaxic, Teotenango, Calimaya and Calixtlahuaca, acquired importance as new centers of power.

In the early post-classical period (from A.D. 900 to 1200), Tula's influence was important, and its relations with the towns in the valley seems to have been very close. Rosaura Hernández says that the collapse of Tula brought the dispersion of the Toltec families and some of them, like the children of Mecometzin, moved to the Valley of Toluca "to save there the Toltec culture."¹⁶

The Toltec influence can be observed in the Mazapa and Coyotlatelco ceramics that characterizes

them and seem to have been the beginnings of Matlatzinca ceramics.

Evidence of Otomí, Mazahua, Matlatzinca and Mexica settlements have been found dating from the late post-classical period (A.D. 1200 to 1521).¹⁷

We know that the Matlatzinca culture is identified as the one from the Matalcingo Valley (now Toluca), the place where 12 fiefdoms were created by the Mexica empire after conquering it. When the Spanish arrived in the region, Calixtlahuaca was one of these 12 fiefdoms, as can be seen in the Registry of Tributes and the Mendocino Codex, where the glyph that identifies it as a fiefdom appears.

At the height of the Matlatzinca (from A.D. 1116 to 1474), Calixtlahuaca belonged to the northern province of the Valley of Toluca and, according to the chronicles, it was the capital of the Toluca. At this time, it became clear that there was a high density of sites with diverse hierarchy, covering the entire valley, and relations between the Valley of Toluca and other areas intensified, as can be seen by the presence of ceramics, objects and materials from regions of Michoacán, Puebla, Morelos and Guerrero.¹⁸

However, its great capacity for agricultural production, plus disputes between the lords of Toluca and Tenancingo, prompted the intervention of the Mexica army. This began the campaign of conquest

After the destruction of the great Tula, Toltec culture was preserved in the Central Valleys by cities like Tenayuca.



Enrique Trep



Rubén Nieto

San Miguel Ixtapan's first inhabitants must have arrived at the end of the pre-classical period.

in 1474, commanded by the chief, or *tlatuani*, Axayácatl. By 1476, Calixtlahuaca and the rest of the towns in the valley had been subjected to the Triple Alliance and forced to pay tribute.

Several attempts at rebellion by the Matlatzinca of Calixtlahuaca were put down by Moctezuma Xocoyotzin, who finally achieved total domination after burning the temples and populating the land with Mexicas. Defeat brought the emigration of a large number of Matlatzinca, who “abandoned their lands in order to avoid falling into the hands of the Mexica, or rendering homage, paying tribute or dying, sacrificed to the gods of the victors.”¹⁹

With the Mexicas, Calixtlahuaca became important; new buildings were erected on already existing monuments: “El Calmecac,” the Pantheon, “El Tláloc” and the Ehécatl Quetzalcóatl Temple. The culture went through the resulting changes; Aztec ceramics, characteristic of the Mexica, were introduced; the migration of Mexicas caused the assimilation of customs and traditions, although the Mexica also adopted forms of organization learned from the Matlatzinca, and they integrated them into a single order of power. **NM**

NOTES

¹ San Miguel Ixtapan is located 15 kilometers from Tejupilco, on the road to Amatepec and Tlatlaya.

² Patricia Aguirre Martínez, “Descripción de Figurillas de San Miguel Ixtapan,” *Expresión Antropológica*, New Era 1-2 (San Miguel Ixtapan, State of Mexico: IMC, 1996), p. 64.

³ Morrison Limón Boyce, “El proyecto Arqueológico de San Miguel Ixtapan,” *Expresión Antropológica*, New Era 1-2 (San Miguel Ixtapan, State of Mexico: IMC, 1996), p. 12.

⁴ Patricia Aguirre Martínez, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵ Morrison Limón Boyce, op. cit., p. 9.

⁶ Norma Rodríguez G. and María Soledad García S., “La Cerámica de San Miguel Ixtapan,” *Expresión Antropológica*, New Era 1-2 (San Miguel Ixtapan, State of Mexico: IMC, 1996).

⁷ Huamango is located north of the town of Acambay.

⁸ William J. Folan, “San Miguel de Huamango: Un centro regional del Antiguo Estado de Tula-Jilotepec,” *Investigaciones sobre Huamango y región vecina*, vol. 1 (n.p.: n.d.).

⁹ Tenayuca is located 10 kilometers north of Mexico City.

¹⁰ Ignacio Marquina, *Arquitectura Prehispánica* (Mexico City: INAH, 1981), pp. 164-165.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹² Morrison Limón, op. cit., pp. 7-10.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Calixtlahuaca is located nine kilometers northwest of Toluca, the capital of the State of Mexico.

¹⁵ Yoko Suguira, “El Valle de Toluca después del ocaso del Estado Teotihuacano: el Epiclásico y el Posclásico,” *Historia General del Estado de México, Toluca*, vol. 2 (Mexico City: El Colegio Mexiquense/Gobierno del Estado de México, 1998), p. 102.

¹⁶ Rosaura Hernández, “Historia Prehispánica,” *Breve Historia del Estado de México* (Toluca: Colegio Mexiquense/Gobierno del Estado de México, 1987), pp. 28-36.

¹⁷ José García Payón, *La Zona Arqueológica de Tecaxic-Calixtlahuaca y los Matlatzincas*. Part 2 (Toluca, State of Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de México, 1974).

¹⁸ Yoko Suguira, op. cit.

¹⁹ Ma. Noemí Quezada Ramírez, *Los Matlatzincas época Prehispánica y época Colonial hasta 1650* (Mexico City: INAH, 1972), p. 180.