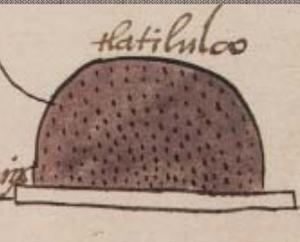




What can you tell us about Tenochtitlan's twin city, Tlatelolco? How were the two cities connected and how did the citizens live there?

Mexico - Tlatelolco: Twin City of Mexico - Tenochtitlan



The pictographic sign used to describe Tlatelolco. Codex Men-

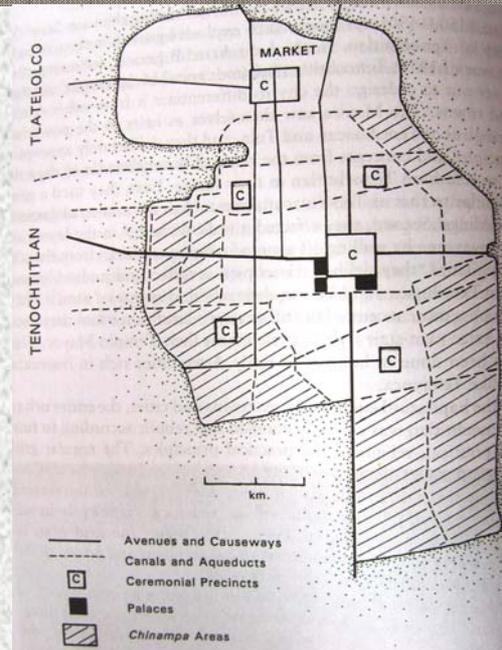
According to colonial Aztec codices and chronicles the twin city of Mexico - Tlatelolco was founded by an Aztec nomadic tribe, or 'Calpulli', in 1338. It became known as the Tlatelolca tribe, while their immediate neighbours to the south established Tenochtitlan and were called Tenochcas.

For many years, the two kingdoms lived independently but worked and conquered together.

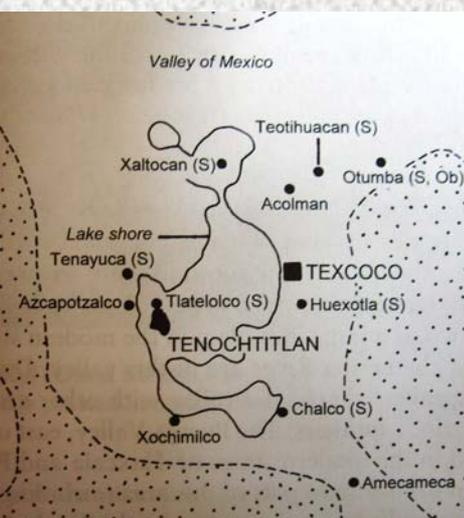
Both were Aztecs, outsiders in the Mexican Basin, and had to work hard to create alliances with neighbouring territories.

Originally called Xaltelolco "In the place of the mound of sand", Tlatelolco was situated on the northern tip of a swampy island in Lake Texcoco. In 1338 it had nothing more than a broken down abandoned temple and a little marshy land around it. This had been granted to its new Aztec inhabitants by the neighbouring king of Azcapotzalco, Acolnahuac, in return for tribute.

Xaltelolco began to prosper, becoming a busy market town with solid ground and floating gardens, or chinampas, on the lake. Its leading family married into the neighbouring Azcapotzalca dynasty and erected a palace in the centre. Xaltelolco's name changed to Tlatelolco "In the place of the mound of earth". This suggested a more solid establishment than the sandy inconstancy of the town's difficult beginning.



The Mexica island of Tenochtitlan - Tlatelolco, the twin cities. Smith:1996.



The Mexican Basin and Lake Texcoco, Smith:1996.

The upper right hand figure shows a close-up of the twin cities of Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan. Although the area inhabited by the Tenochcas was greater, Tlatelolco had by far the largest market and main temple.

The Tlatelolcas were known as well educated people and their city was home to a number of very specialised artisans that formed exclusive groups that could be likened to the guilds of the middle ages in Europe.

The feather workers of Tlatelolco, for example, had their own neighbourhood, temple, rituals, and apprenticeships that were offered only to those within their families. Specialised artisan groups must have been abundant in Tlatelolco because of the easy access to its great market and trade activity.

Kings of Tlatelolco painted in the Florentine Codex



1351 - 1409
Quaquapitznahuac



1409 - 1430
Tlacateotl



1430 - 1467
Cuauhtlatoa



1467 - 1473
Moquíhuix



The fall of king Moquíhuix. Depicted in the Codex Mendoza.



Kings Quauhtlatoa and Moquíhuix linked to the Tlatelolco symbol. Codex Mendoza.

The Joining of Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan

From the mid 1300s until 1473, Tlatelolco, like Tenochtitlan, became strong thanks to its hardworking, industrious inhabitants. An alliance with the Tenochcas, and the kingdoms of Texcoco and Tlacopan had, in 1427, defeated Azcapotzalco, to whom the Tlatelolcas had had to pay regular tribute.

From then on Tlatelolco could keep all of its earnings and invest in the great pyramid, city architecture and ritual festivals. Thus, it became a richer, more affluent place to live. Also, it could keep a share of the spoils of war, product of the conquests made by the Triple Alliance between the twin cities, who counted themselves as a sole force, and its allies Texcoco and Tlacopan.

Should the larger and more powerful city of Tenochtitlan have an opportunity to conquer Tlatelolco, it would be a very rich gain indeed. This occasion presented itself when the Tenochca king, Axayácatl, rose to power in 1468.

King Moquíhuix was the last king of Tlatelolco to reign before the Tenochcas attacked and conquered his kingdom. In spite of the great triumphs the cities had previously enjoyed together, their sovereigns apparently detested each other. It only took only a simple family quarrel between Moquíhuix and Axayácatl's wife to begin a full scale conflict.

Both cities raced to neighbouring kingdoms and petitioned military support. Tenochtitlan gained by far the most favour, so no matter how hard the Tlatelolcas fought they were doomed to failure.

According to legend, Moquíhuix, knowing that his kingdom would be lost to the Tenochcas, climbed to the top of Tlatelolco's great pyramid and threw himself off it.

Tlatelolco conquered, Tenochtitlan subjected its people to terrible humiliation. The main temple was filled with refuse and reparations were not allowed. A cruel military leadership was imposed upon the Tlatelolcas and it was only relaxed when the daughter of Moquíhuix, Tiyacapatzin, was married to the Tenochca emperor Ahuízotl.



A scene from Tlatelolco market with the city of Tenochtitlan spreading out to the south. Diego Rivera.

Tlatelolco and the Spanish conquest: the last bastion of 'Mexicayotl' or 'being Mexica'.

Ironically, it was Miquihuix's grandson, Moctezuma's nephew, Cuauhtémoc Xocóyotl, who would finally become king of Tenochtitlan (and, of course, Tlatelolco) in its last hours as a free nation in 1521.

At this advanced point in the conquest, the Tenochcas were losing all their allies and wanted to secure Tlatelolca support by electing an emperor who shared their blood. Once chosen, Cuauhtémoc, who was a fierce warrior, tried to look for allies but could not find many. Only Tenochtitlan's old friends from Tlacopan would join their ranks.

Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco was formally attacked in May of 1521. Their water supply was cut off. The conquistador Pedro de Alvarado placed himself in a strategic position near Tlatelolco and Sandoval attacked it from today's Cerro de Guadalupe to the north.

A list of tributes paid, every 80 days, to Tenochtitlan by Tlatelolco after it was conquered. Codex Mendoza.

Cortés and other conquistadors moved up from the south, taking half of Tenochtitlan with them. The Tenochcas were forced upwards into Tlatelolco. They carried their patron god, Huitzilopochtli's, sacred effigy with them.

Tlatelolco was now the only free territory on the island. The people were pinned into a small area that is now a part of modern day Tepito. In a last attempt to repel their attackers, they tried dressing up a warrior in Ahuizotl's great war suit and displaying him from the top of a building, but the Spanish, unaccustomed to native superstitions, were not afraid. The attack continued.

One day, the Tlatelolcas saw a great whirlwind of fire hurling itself across Lake Texcoco and they took this to be a sign of doom. From that point onwards, their defeat was secured. Cuauhtémoc was taken captive, along with his family and noble allies on the day of 1 Cōatl (1 Snake), year 3 Calli (3 House). For us, the 13th of August 1521, day of Saint **Hipólito** Martyr.

Cuauhtémoc was taken to his father's palace where his feet were burned by Cortés, who was eager to find the whereabouts of a huge amount of Aztec gold that had disappeared. According to a foot soldier, Díaz del Castillo, it had been thrown to the bottom of Lake Texcoco.

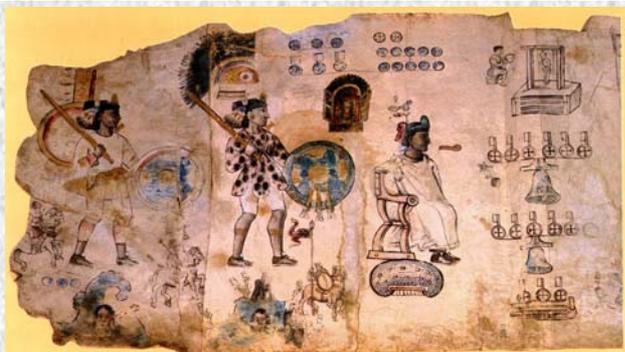
Interestingly, the geographical division between Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan continued after the fall of the Aztecs from power. Tenochtitlan became an exclusive area for the Spanish to live, and Tlatelolco was given to those Aztecs that had survived and therefore remained subject to indigenous rule for the time being.

Tlatelolco slowly succumbed to the influences of European culture, especially when the Colegio Imperial de Santa Cruz was founded and the evangelisation got underway in the mid 16th century. This special school was dedicated to the education of male indigenous nobles and was run by Franciscan friars. One of these instructors was Bernadino de Sahagún, who coordinated the compilation of several works during his life in Tlatelolco, including the Florentine Codex and the General History of the things of New Spain.



The final battle with the Spanish in Tlatelolco market. Book XII Florentine Codex.

A brief moment in Tlatelolco's colonial period



Page 1 of Codex Tlatelolco. Third from left to right, sitting on a Spanish-made chair, is Don Diego de Mendoza Inauhyantzin, elected cacique of Tlatelolco in 1549.

The Aztec belief in signs and omens did not disappear with the end of their rule.

Don Martín Écatl was the second governor of Tlatelolco during the colonial period. During his term of three years strange things were reported to have gone on in the city.

The mythical Cihuacóatl or crying woman ('la llorona' in popular Mexican legend) was said to roam the streets during the daytime and at night; she even ate a child lying in his cradle in Azcapotzalco. The last time she had been seen was by the emperor Moctezuma many years

before, in a vision that foretold the coming of the Spanish.

Also during Don Martín Écatl's mandate, two eagles that lived in separate cages miraculously hatched two fledglings each. What this meant, sources don't tell us but we do know that it was an omen important enough to be recorded in the Florentine Codex.



Sources:

Journals:

"La ciudad gemela: Tlatelolco", Francisco González Rul, *Arqueología Mexicana*, No.15, pp26 - 31, Mexico City, Mexico.

Books:

Sahagún, Fray Bernadino de "Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España", Prologue by Angel María Garibay, 6th edition, Editorial Porrúa, 1985, Mexico City, Mexico.

Smith, Michael E. "The Aztecs", 2nd edition, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK, 1996.

Codices:

Florentine Codex, Codex Mendoza, Codex Tlatelolco.