The Aztec palace under Spanish rule: Disk motifs in the Mapa de México de 1550 (Uppsala map or Mapa de Santa Cruz)

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5 Citations

Abstract

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

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