

## The Strategic Provinces

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### A FRONTIER STRATEGY

ONE OF THE MORE INTRIGUING CHARACTERISTICS of the Aztec empire is the existence of major unconquered enemy states surrounded by imperial territory (Fig. 6-1). Tlaxcalla, to the east of the Valley of Mexico, is the best known of these, but there were three others: Metztitlan in the northeastern area of the empire, and Yopitzinco and Tututepec along the Pacific coast. Ethnohistoric sources from Tenochtitlan suggest that the Aztecs did not really want or need to conquer these states, and that they could easily have done so had they wished. Such sources describe Tlaxcalla as a convenient cooperating partner in the ritually important flower-wars used for training soldiers and obtaining captives for sacrifice (e.g., Durán 1967, 2: 418-419, 433-452; see discussion in Isaac 1983: 415-416). Although some modern scholars accept the outlines of the Aztec view that the surrounded enemies could have been conquered had the Aztecs wanted (e.g., Hassig 1988), we follow Barry Isaac (1983) and Nigel Davies (1968, 1987) in viewing such enemies as serious threats that the empire could not eliminate. The boasts of the Mexica are better seen as propaganda than as accurate descriptions of political reality. To the four surrounded enemies must be added the Tarascans, who possessed an extensive empire of their own and were the major external threat to the Aztecs.

Our data on imperial towns located in the vicinity of the unconquered enemies reveal an organizational pattern directed at protection from and containment of these polities. The locations of imperial towns, their settlement patterns, the spatial configuration and nature of wars and battles along the frontiers, the presence of fortresses and garrisons, and the relationship between frontier states and Tenochtitlan all suggest the existence of a deliberate political and military strategy for dealing with enemy states. This frontier strategy involved the creation of "client states" (semi-independent polities) along enemy borders. These states shouldered much of the responsibility for maintaining the frontier against imperial foes. We have grouped regional clusters of client states into "strategic provinces" for analytical purposes. In this usage, the term *strategic* carries a somewhat different connotation from its use in "imperial strategies." In studies of international relations, the adjective

*strategic* refers to political and military aspects of relationships among independent states, and this is the meaning that we wish to convey with the term *strategic provinces*. As mentioned in the Introduction to Part II, we are calling the groups of client states *provinces* for convenience only. There is little evidence that they served as actual corporate groups or administrative units within the empire in the same manner as the tributary provinces. However, nearby client states usually played similar roles within the empire, and it probably is not a severe distortion to consider regional clusters as units. Table 6-1 lists the strategic provinces in numerical order, and the constituent towns are listed along with economic and political information in Appendix 4. As discussed in the Introduction to Part II, Robert Barlow lumped nearly all of these towns into their nearest tributary (Codex Mendoza) province. Barlow's province assignments are listed in the table for comparative purposes. Most of the towns in the strategic provinces were the capitals of city-states, although some dependent towns (i.e., not states) are included in lists of Aztec conquests or tribute payments.

We use the term *client state* to refer to polities included in the empire but not listed as members of tributary provinces in the Codex Mendoza or the Matrícula de Tributos. The imperial status of these states is usually indicated in two ways—inclusion in lists of imperial conquests, and/or statements to the effect that they either paid tribute or else somehow recognized the dominant position of Tenochtitlan. One problem in the analysis of client states and the empire's frontier strategy is the paucity of written documentation from the more distant parts of the empire. We have identified a total of 134 non-enemy city-states outside of the Valley of Mexico that are not included in the tributary provinces (see Table 6-2). Of these, 80 are clearly documented client states, but there is no information on the relationship to the empire of the other 54.

There are several reasons for assuming that most of these states whose relationship with the Aztecs is not documented were in fact client states under the empire. First, local areas were usually integrated cultural and economic units, and it is unlikely that only a portion of the states in a given region would be subject to the empire. Second, there is no positive evidence for the existence of "neutral zones"

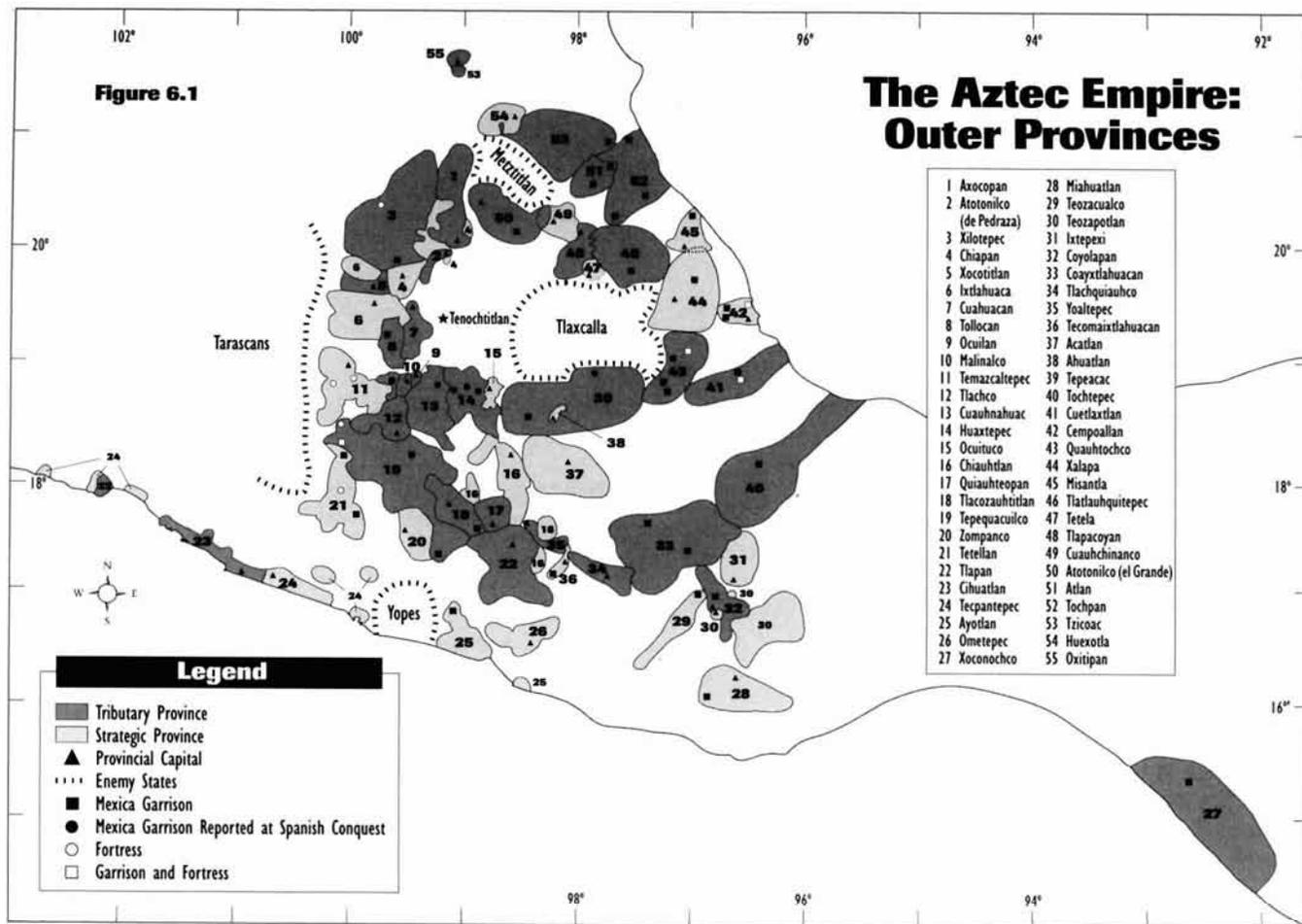


Fig. 6-1 Map showing the locations of Aztec fortresses and garrisons in relation to unconquered enemy states. See Table 6-5 for a list of town names and citations.

within the empire. Polities were either subject to the empire or else they were unconquered enemies, and the latter were clustered in the five well-known regions discussed below.

**UNCONQUERED ENEMIES**

A brief examination of the nature of the enemy states and their dealings with the empire shows that they were serious and powerful adversaries. Their continued existence brought into being the empire's frontier strategy as a supplement to the economic strategy that characterized the empire from the beginning (see Chap. 5). The most complete discussion of the four surrounded enemies—Tlaxcalla, Metzquitlan, Yopitzinco, and Tututepec—is found in Davies' work (1968); in this section we first discuss the Tarascan empire and then summarize the significance of the four surrounded states.

*The Tarascan Empire*

The Tarascan empire was centered in the Lake Patzcuaro Basin, 150 km west of the Valley of Mexico. This imperial core shared a number of important developmental similarities with the Valley of Mexico: a dense population (more than 100 persons/km<sup>2</sup>; Gorenstein and Pollard 1983: 156), a highly differentiated society with rigid social stratification

TABLE 6-1. STRATEGIC PROVINCES OF THE AZTEC EMPIRE

Number	Province	Number of Towns		Barlow's Provinces <sup>a</sup>
		States	Non-states	
4	Chiapan	12	—	9, 11
6	Ixtlahuacan	6	4	5, 7, 8
11	Temazcaltepec	8	5	3, 4
15	Ocuituco	10	—	—
16	Chiauhatlan	8	—	24, 25
20	Zompanco	4	—	2
21	Tetellan	5	1	2
24	Tecpantepec	8	4	1
25	Ayotlan	11	—	33
26	Ometepec	7	—	33
28	Miahuatlan	3	1	36
29	Teozacualco	1	7	36
30	Teozapotlan	5	—	36
31	Ixtepexi	7	—	36
36	Tecomaixtlahuacan	1	2	32
37	Acatlan	5	—	32, 35
38	Ahuatlan	3	—	31
42	Cempoallan	2	3	27, 28
44	Xalapa	20	—	26
45	Misantla	2	2	26
47	Tetela	3	3	26
49	Cuauchinanco	2	—	18
54	Huexotla	1	—	15

<sup>a</sup>These are the numbers of Barlow's (1949a) provinces that include our strategic provinces.

TABLE 6-2. NUMBERS OF CLIENT STATES IN THE STRATEGIC PROVINCES

Province	Documented Client States				States of Unknown Status	Total States
	Total	Conquered	Tribute <sup>a</sup>	Both		
4 Chiapan	5	2	2	1	7	12
6 Ixtlahuacan	3	3 (4) <sup>b</sup>	0	0	3	6
11 Temascaltepec	6	2 (4)	3	1	2	8
15 Ocuilco	3	0	2	1	7	10
16 Chiauhatlan	1	0	1	0	7	8
20 Zompanco	2	0	2	0	2	4
21 Tetellan	4	0 (1)	1	3	1	5
24 Tecpantepec	7	2 (4)	2	3	1	8
25 Ayotlan	2	1	1	0	9	11
26 Ometepec	1	1	0	0	6	7
28 Miahuatlan	3	0	0	3	0	3
29 Teozacualco	1	0 (1)	1	0	0	1
30 Teozapotlan	2	1	0	1	3	5
31 Ixtepexi	7	2	0	5	0	7
36 Tecomaixtlahuacan	1	0	1	0 (2)	0	1
37 Acatlan	5	0	0	5	0	5
38 Ahuatlan	3	0	0	3	0	3
42 Cempoallan	2	0 (2)	0	2	0	2
44 Xalapa	15	12	1	2	5	20
45 Misantla	2	1	0	1	0	2
47 Tetela	2	0	2	0	1	3
49 Cuauchinanco	2	0	0	2	0	2
54 Huexotla	1	0	0	1	0	1
Totals	80	27 (16)	19	34 (2)	54	134

<sup>a</sup>This column includes the following categories: (1) states that paid tribute to the empire, (2) states with imposed officials, and (3) states that fought local wars against imperial enemies.

<sup>b</sup>Figures in parentheses indicate the number of towns that were not independent city-states yet were conquered or paid imperial tribute.

and a complex economy, city-state political organization, urbanization, and a strongly developed pattern of militarism (see Brand 1943, 1980; Pollard 1982; Gorenstein and Pollard 1983; Pollard 1987). As in the Aztec core, these socioeconomic patterns led to militaristic expansion as the core polity (Tzintzuntzan) conquered nearby states and soon controlled a sizable empire (Fig. 6-2).

Most authorities suggest economic motives for Tarascan imperial expansion. Shirley Gorenstein and Helen Pollard (1983: 90) present data showing that "the Protohistoric population far exceeded the capacity of the [Patzcuaro] Basin to support it." They go on to show that food was imported through tribute mechanisms (1983: 101f), implying that the need for foodstuffs due to demographic increase was a basic motive for imperial expansion. Donald Brand (1943: 42f) stresses a desire for a variety of exotic resources as a factor motivating Tarascan expansion. These included salt (1943: 42) and "copper, gold, cinnabar, 'chalchihuite,' honey, wax, cacao, cotton, feathers, hides and skins, *axin*, vegetable fats and gums and oleo resins (such as copal), which abounded in the conquered territory" (1943: 43).

Pollard (1987) acknowledges the demographic and economic motives for expansion, but suggests that a desire for metals—copper, and particularly gold and silver—was a major factor influencing the direction of conquests. She argues that "it is surely no accident that the two zones of most active gold and silver mining, the southeast and far west, were on the most active military frontiers of the

territory" (1987: 750). Metallurgy was more highly developed in the Tarascan state than in other parts of Mesoamerica (Hosler 1988), and Pollard (1987) demonstrates that metal items played a significant political and social role in the domain of Tarascan elite power politics, similar to the role of luxuries in Aztec elite dynamics as discussed by Richard Blanton and Gary Feinman (1984), Michael Smith (1986), and Elizabeth Brumfiel (1987b). These economic motives are important, because the resources singled out by Brand and Pollard are abundant in the central Balsas drainage of Guerrero, and Tarascan expansion in this area led them into direct conflict with the Aztec empire.

The most dramatic confrontation between the Aztecs and Tarascans occurred in the area directly between the two imperial cores. Tarascan expansion to the east had reached the Toluca Valley by the 1460s and a large-scale but inconclusive battle with Tollocan is recorded for 1462 (Durbin n.d.: 87, Codex Telleriano-Remensis 1964: 33v). Tollocan, the powerful Matlatzinca state, evidently managed to retain its independence from the Tarascans, only to be conquered by the Mexica emperor Axayacatl 10 years later (Torquemada 1975b, 1: 250; Zorita 1963a: 197). When Axayacatl then mounted a large campaign into Tarascan territory near Zinapécuaro in 1478, the result was the largest pre-Spanish disaster suffered by the Aztec empire. The Triple Alliance forces were routed, and some 20,000 men are said to have been lost (Durán 1967, 2: 281-285).

This disastrous encounter evidently convinced the Mexica that direct military confrontation was not an appropri-

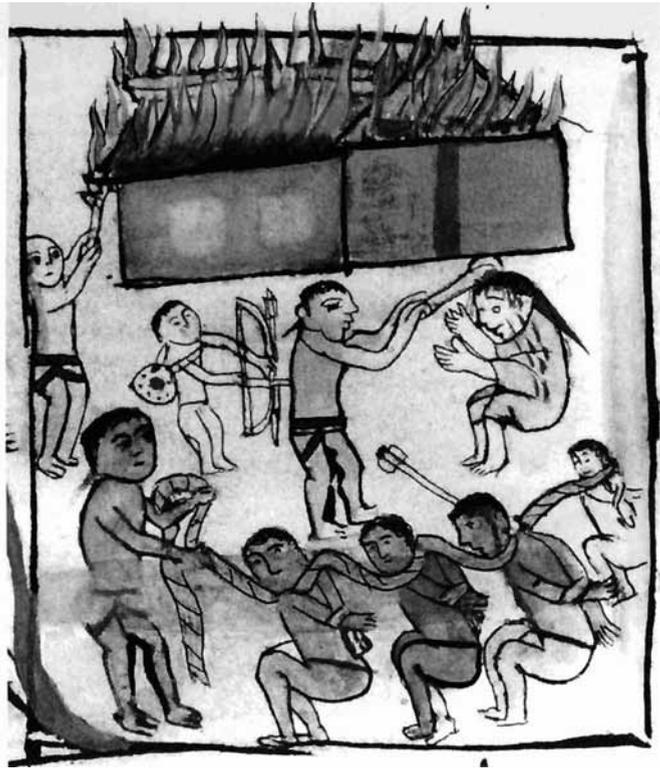


Fig. 6-2 Tarascan battle scene from the *Relación de Michoacan* (after 1956: 147, lám. 22).

ate method for dealing with the Tarascans. All later military interactions between the two powers were indirect, with the Triple Alliance relying upon local frontier polities to maintain the border and harass the western enemy. The closest they came to a direct confrontation after 1478 was when Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin sent a renowned captured Tlaxcallan general named Tlalhuicole to fight the Tarascans in the northern border area (Torquemada 1975b, 1: 301f). However, this episode involved harassment through the taking of captives and booty, and no major battles with strategic significance were fought by Tlalhuicole.

### *Tlaxcalla*

Unlike all of the other unconquered enemies, Tlaxcalla was a Nahuatl-speaking area whose population shared a common cultural and ethnic heritage with the rest of the peoples of central Mexico (Davies 1968: 81–93). After the settlement of the Puebla-Tlaxcalla Valley by groups of Aztlan migrants in the twelfth to thirteenth century (Smith 1984), populations grew and city-states developed in a fashion that paralleled the Valley of Mexico. By the early fifteenth century, three polities stood out as the most powerful and influential—Tlaxcalla itself, Huexotzinco, and Cholula. This area, which we will refer to as simply Tlaxcalla for convenience, is rich and fertile, and it tempted the Mexica from the beginning. Motecuhzoma I, the first emperor to campaign east of the Valley of Mexico, began by conquering Tepeacac and other towns along the south-

ern edge of Tlaxcalla. The Tlaxcallans were engaged in an active trade with peoples on the Gulf Coast at that time, and Davies (1987: 67) suggests that one of Motecuhzoma's goals may have been to take over this trade as the main highland exchange partner of the Gulf Coast polities.

Motecuhzoma I also conquered states north and east of Tlaxcalla, beginning a process of encirclement that continued under the following emperors and was largely complete by the time Motecuhzoma II took power in 1502. The Tlaxcallans were cut off from external trade, experiencing a loss in both elite goods (gold, feathers, and cacao) and utilitarian items (cotton and salt). Frequent flower-wars were fought between the Mexica and the Tlaxcallans, and then hostilities escalated soon after Motecuhzoma II's accession to the throne. There is some debate about the nature of these late battles and the empire's desire or ability to conquer Tlaxcalla. In Ross Hassig's opinion, the flower-war "was basically a demonstration of martial skills" (1988: 254) that served to wear down the enemy and prepare for ultimate conquest: "A flower war was the beginning phase of a protracted conflict that would evolve into a war of conquest" (1988: 254). Hassig sees the Aztecs as almost toying with the Tlaxcallans, and asserts that it "is likely that the Aztecs could have subdued the Tlaxcaltecs had they wanted to" (1988: 256).

On the other hand, Isaac (1983) and Davies (1987: 92–96) argue that the Aztecs made a great effort to conquer Tlaxcalla, but simply could not succeed. Davies (1968: 118–139) presents the most complete analysis of the situation, and we find his arguments (together with those of Isaac [1983]) persuasive. Motecuhzoma's campaigns against Tlaxcalla were frequent and serious, and Davies finds evidence for a deliberate decision to conquer and destroy this enemy. Our data on the client states ringing Tlaxcalla and their patterns of warfare clearly support Davies' and Isaac's interpretations. The Aztecs not only surrounded Tlaxcalla by conquering polities on all sides, but they organized their new territory into provinces that had major responsibilities for fighting the Tlaxcallans.

Two of the new provinces ringing Tlaxcalla were tributary provinces (Tepeacac and Tlapacoyan) that also played significant roles in the empire's economic strategy, and three were strategic provinces. Ahuatlan and Tetela (provinces 38 and 47) were both located in mountainous areas of low economic potential for the empire. They bordered Tlaxcalla, however, and client states in both strategic provinces fought wars with the Tlaxcallan polities. Both sent enemy captives to Tenochtitlan as tribute, and Ahuatlan also gave tribute in military shields (see App. 4). The Ocuituco strategic province, located on the southwestern slopes of Mt. Popocatepetl, paid tribute in flowers, wood, textiles, and foodstuffs (see App. 4), and a *Relación Geográfica* notes that "tenía guerra con Cholula, y con Atlixco, y con Huexotzingo, y era, pueblo de Tetela y Hueyapan, como frontera contra [estas] otras provincias" (Paso y Troncoso 1905–06, 6: 286). If the empire was only toying with Tlaxcalla by fighting flower-wars in preparation for an anticipated conquest, the reorganization of the frontier

using client states would hardly be necessary. In fact, imperial activity along the Tlaxcallan frontier resembled the Tarascan frontier in many respects, suggesting that the empire regarded Tlaxcalla as a long-term major enemy. These data are discussed below.

### *Other Enemies*

Three additional unconquered enemy states were completely surrounded by the empire: Metztlitlan, Yopitzinco, and Tututepec. *Metztlitlan* was a powerful Otomí conquest state located in a rugged mountainous area in what is now northern Hidalgo. Motecuhzoma I and Axayacatl conquered towns to the east and south of Metztlitlan, and then Tizoc chose this polity as the target of his initial campaign to obtain prisoners for sacrifice at his inauguration. As analyzed by Davies (1968: 51–56), Tizoc's campaign was hardly successful; 300 men were lost and only 40 captives taken. Hassig (1988: 191–192) attributes Tizoc's difficulty to the nature of the terrain in the Metztlitlan Valley, where a small but well-placed force could hold off a larger and more powerful army. After Tizoc's death, Ahuitzotl and Motecuhzoma II completed the isolation of Metztlitlan, but the state was never conquered. In contrast to Tlaxcalla, there were few resources of interest to the empire in this area, and the final emperors may have decided that Metztlitlan was not worth the effort. As Davies (1968: 55) and Hassig (1988: 134, 233) point out, Metztlitlan served as a refuge for dissident nobles fleeing the Valley of Mexico.

*Yopitzinco* is an isolated mountainous area along the Costa Chica of Guerrero southeast of Acapulco. The Yopes, who spoke "Yopi" or "Tlapaneca," were reportedly fierce warriors. The coastal regions on either side of Yopitzinco were conquered by Ahuitzotl, and then Motecuhzoma II concentrated his conquests on the Tututepec area farther down the Pacific coast. As in the case of Metztlitlan, the Yope territory had little to offer, and Fray Diego Durán (1967, 2: 324) states that the Mexica simply lacked any desire to conquer this remote area. Nevertheless, nearby client states helped maintain the Yope frontier (see below). Davies (1968: 157–175) assembles most of the available information on Yopitzinco.

*Tututepec* was a large and powerful Mixtec conquest state in the mountains of southwestern Oaxaca. As reconstructed by Davies (1968: 181–213), Tututepec controlled a long stretch of the Pacific coast and was in the process of expanding to the north and east in the decades prior to 1519. Its dynasty figures prominently in some of the Mixtec historical codices. Ahuitzotl was the first emperor to make significant inroads into Mixtec territory, and then Motecuhzoma II conquered a number of towns that had been tributary to Tututepec. Davies (1968: 198–202, 1987: 92) attributes to Motecuhzoma II a strategy to encircle Tututepec. Hassig (1988: 232) argues that the Aztec emperor conquered Tututepec, but Davies (1987: 91) suggests that the toponym in question refers to a town in another area. We find Davies' interpretation more likely, and Tututepec

is best seen as a powerful unconquered state surrounded by the empire.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE FRONTIER

The organization of the strategic provinces can be examined through the spatial locations and settlement patterns of provincial states, the nature of battles, the locations and organization of fortresses and garrisons, and the types of tribute paid to the empire.

### *Strategic Provinces and Imperial Frontiers*

It is clear from Figure 6-1 that the strategic provinces tend to lie on the imperial frontiers with the tributary provinces on the interior. The pattern of strategic provinces serving as buffers for the tributary provinces is replicated on a smaller scale within individual frontier states. Figure 6-3 shows the spatial pattern of Aztec and Tarascan polities along their frontier. On both sides of the border, capital towns are buffered from the enemy by subject settlements that lie along the actual frontier. This pattern is particularly evident along the northern Aztec border (for Ixtlahuaca, no. 601, Gerhard [1972: 177] speaks of subjects "off to the west," but does not give their names). Unfortunately, we have not found data on city-state composition for the northern Tarascan towns, so their spatial configuration cannot be mapped. The identification of Tarascan border towns is based upon the sources listed in Table 6-3; towns 1–8 are depicted in Figure 6-3. The strategic province of Tetela along the Tlaxcallan border provides another example of this pattern.

Beyond their locations and settlement patterns, client states also buffered the empire against enemies through military activity. Their military contributions took two forms, direct and indirect. Direct actions were actual battles fought by the client states against imperial enemies; indirect military activity involved imperial tribute quotas of either soldiers or provisions for Mexica armies. Table 6-4 assembles the data for local border wars, whose spatial distributions are plotted in Figure 6-1 (indirect military contributions are discussed below). As this table indicates, local wars with imperial significance were fought by polities in both the tributary and strategic provinces. States in the strategic province of Temascaltepec (province 11) were particularly active in fighting the Tarascans (Table 6-4); one source notes that the soldiers would get drunk on *pulque* in order to go fearlessly and energetically into battle with the Tarascans (Paso y Troncoso 1905–06, 7 [1]: 21).

### *Fortresses and Garrisons*

The function of the strategic provinces in border defense is also evident in the locations of fortresses and garrisons (Table 6-5). Fortresses and garrisons of Mexica soldiers were found in both the tributary and strategic provinces, but in both cases they tend to be located near enemy borders (see Fig. 6-1). The information in Table 6-5 suggests a possible difference in imperial strategies between

TABLE 6-3. TARASCAN BORDER TOWNS

Town	Sources <sup>a</sup>				
	Torquemada	Brand	Gorenstein		RG
			A	B	
1. Acámbaro	X	X	X	X	X
2. Zinapécuaro	X	—	X	—	—
3. Maravatio	X	X	X	X	—
4. Taximaroa	X	X	X	X	—
5. Zitácuaro	—	X	X	X	—
6. Tuzantla	—	—	—	X	X
7. Cutzamala	—	X	X	—	—
8. Axochitlan	—	X	—	—	X
9. Ucareo	—	—	X	—	—
10. Yuririapúndaro	—	X	X	—	—
11. Chapultepec	—	X	—	—	—
12. Zirizicuaro	—	—	—	X	—

<sup>a</sup>Torquemada = List of Tarascan frontier garrisons (Torquemada 1975, 1: 301–302).

Brand = List of Tarascan forts and garrisons (Brand 1943: 42).

Gorenstein A = List of mid-fifteenth century Tarascan conquests in the border area (Gorenstein 1985: 19).

Gorenstein B = Tarascan border towns examined by archaeological survey (Gorenstein 1985: 9–15).

RG = Tarascan towns listed in the Relaciones Geográficas as fighting Aztec towns.

the eastern and western portions of the empire. In the west (provinces 1–26), most of the towns with fortresses or garrisons (9 of 14) were part of strategic provinces, while in the east (provinces 27–55), there are more fortresses and garrisons in the tributary provinces (18 out of 27).

These data should help lay to rest the notion that there is no definitive evidence for military garrisons in the Aztec empire (Gorenstein 1966; Davies 1976, 1987: 173–176). The position taken here is in agreement with Barry Holt (n.d.: 357–366) and Hassig (1985: 96f), namely, that the empire maintained a system of garrisons and forts along the major enemy frontiers whose function was defensive (as argued below, we do not accept Holt's argument for the importance for internal security garrisons). Fortresses were of two kinds. Most were apparently built and maintained by the local polities, while a few fortresses (e.g., Oztuma and Alahuiztlan in Tepequacuico) were built or at least modified and maintained by the Mexica in collaboration with local polities.

The Mexica fortresses at Oztuma and Alahuiztlan point up several important features of Aztec frontier strategy. The great mineral richness of this area made it particularly attractive to both the Aztec and Tarascan empires. Alahuiztlan was one of the leading producers of salt in western Mexico, and its product was traded all over the western empire (Paso y Troncoso 1905–06, 6: 103–105, 1: 20). The fortress is said to have been built specifically to guard the salt source against the Tarascans (Paso y Troncoso 1905–06, 6: 105), who were interested in obtaining access to it (Brand 1943: 42). The Alahuiztlan Relación (Paso y Troncoso 1905–06, 6: 105) suggests that guarding this resource was also one of the functions of the celebrated Mexica fortress of Oztuma, some 15 km to the south.

The Oztuma fort was built prior to Aztec conquest of the area. Soon after Ahuiztlotl conquered the site, the Tarascans unsuccessfully attacked the fortress. In order to secure and hold the area effectively, Ahuiztlotl rebuilt the fortress and sent families of Nahuatl immigrants from the Valley of Mexico to populate the area around Oztuma, Alahuiztlan, and Teloloapan (Durán 1967, 2: 351–355; Alvarado Tezozomoc 1878: 526–535; Paso y Troncoso 1905–06, 6: 109–113; see also the archaeological reports of Armillas [1944] and Stocker and Kylar [1984]). According to the Oztuma Relación (Paso y Troncoso 1905–06, 6: 113), the Tarascans attacked and besieged the fortress repeatedly but could never overrun it.

The Mexica fortress of Quauhtochco is better documented archaeologically, although there is little information about it in the documentary sources. Quauhtochco is listed in various sources as an Aztec garrison center and capital of the tributary province of the same name (e.g., Berdan and Anawalt 1992, 3: 17v, 48r). Archaeological excavation in the 1950s (Medellín Zeñil 1952) revealed a central temple resembling archaeological and pictorial examples of Aztec temples in a number of details (Umberger and Klein 1993, Chap. 7; see Fig. 7-4). Although this alone is not sufficient to attribute the site to the Aztec empire, there are other traits supporting such an interpretation. The site is fortified with a wall (Fig. 6-4) and has unusually high frequencies of Aztec ceramics. Imported Aztec sherds (mainly Texcoco Molded-Filleted incense burners and Aztec III Black-on-Orange bowls and plates) constitute more than 20 percent of all excavated ceramics, whereas comparative data suggest that a site at this distance from Tenochtitlan (230 km) should have fewer than 1 percent Aztec imports if simple trade were the mechanism of distribution (Michael Smith 1990). The

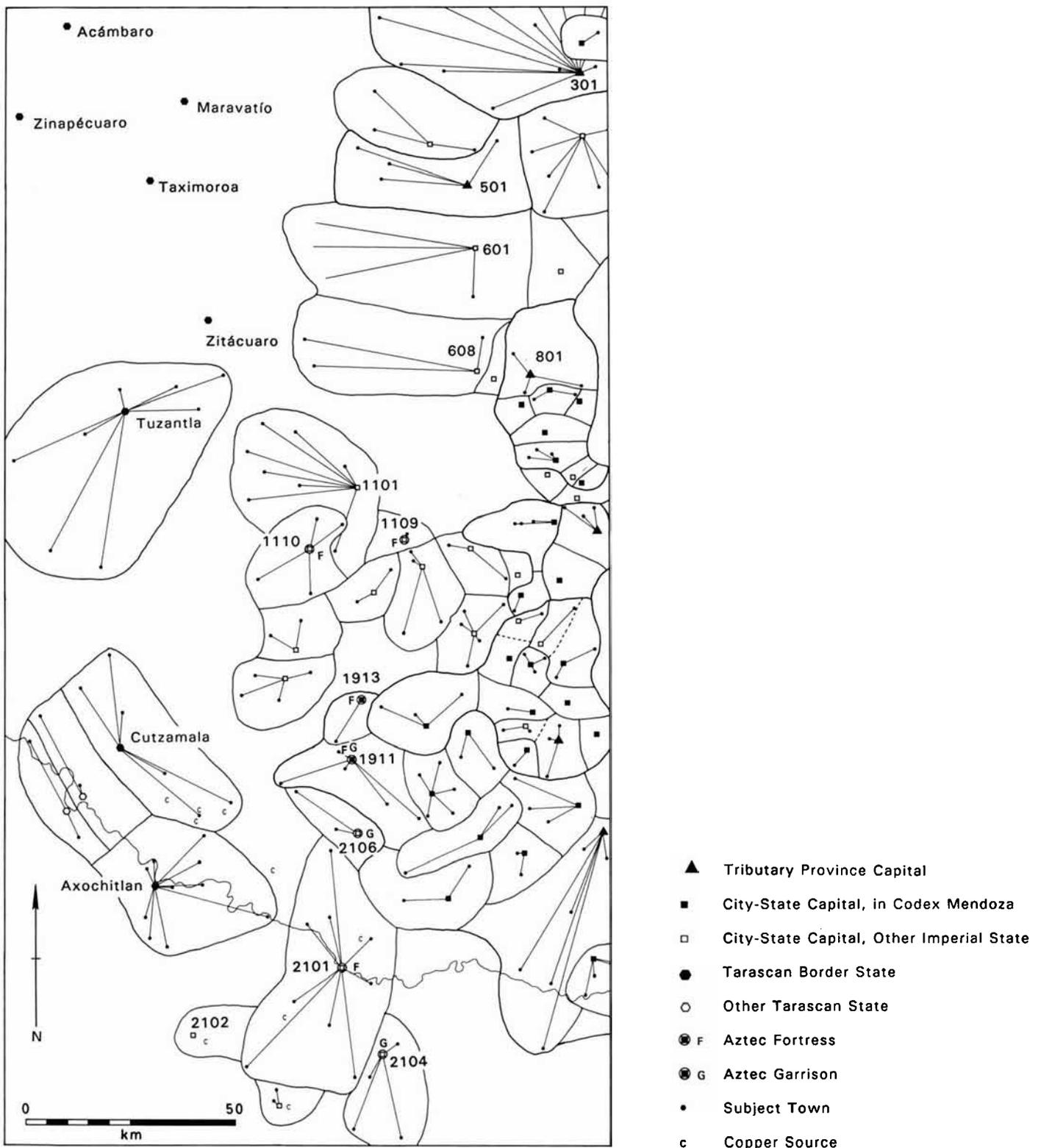


Fig. 6-3 Map of the Aztec/Tarascan frontier showing the locations of towns and subject settlements.

TABLE 6-4. WARS BETWEEN PROVINCIAL STATES AND IMPERIAL ENEMIES

	City-state	Codex Mendoza	Enemy	Citation <sup>a</sup>
<b>A. Wars with the Tarascans</b>				
501	Xocotitlan	Y	Acámbaro	RG for Celaya, cited in Gorenstein (1985:21)
801	Tollocan	Y	Tuzantla	Cline 1965: 67
1101	Temazcaltepec	N	Tarascans	PNE, 7 (1): 20
			Tuzantla	Cline 1965: 67
1109	Texcaltitlan	N	"	PNE, 7(1): 27
1110	Texupilco	N	Tarascans	PNE, 7(1): 23
1113	Zultepec	N	"	PNE, 7(1): 11
1910	Teloloapan	Y	Tarascans	PNE, 6: 147
1911	Oztoma	Y	Tarascans	PNE, 6: 109f
1913	Alahuiztlan	Y	Tarascans	PNE, 6: 102
2101	Tetellan	N	Axochitlan	PNE, 6: 133
			Tarascans	
2106	Totoltepec	N	Axochitlan	PNE, 6: 150
			Tarascans	
<b>B. Wars with the Yopes</b>				
1902	Chilapan	Y	Yopes	PNE, 5: 178
2001	Zompanco	N	Yopes	PNE, 6: 318
2501	Ayotlan	N	Yopes	PNE, 4: 260
<b>C. Wars with Mixtec States</b>				
2802	Coatlan	N	Tototepec	PNE, 4: 134
2803	Cuixtlan	N	Tetiquipa	RMEH:T.2, App: 115
2804	Oçelotepec	N	Mixes	PNE, 4: 140
			Chontales	
3001	Teozapotlan	Y	Tototepec	PNE, 4: 193
3003	Mictlan	Y	Tototepec	PNE, 4: 149
3004	Tlacolula	Y	Mixes	PNE, 4: 146
3308	Tamaçolan	Y	Tototepec	PNE, 4: 84
3314	Malinaltepec	Y	Yolos	PNE, 4: 169
			Chinantecos	
3401	Tlachquiuhco	Y	Mitlatonco	PNE, 4: 79
			Tototepec	Spores 1967: 14
3402	Achiotlan	Y	Tototepec	Spores 1967: 14
<b>D. Wars with Mayas</b>				
2701	Xoconochco	Y	Quiché	Carmack 1981: 142
<b>E. Wars with Gulf Coast Enemies</b>				
4021	Toztlan	Y	Coatzacoalco	PNE, 5: 6
4023	Ucila	Y	Tlacoacintepec	PNE, 4: 49
			Tepeltotutla	
<b>F. Wars with Puebla-Tlaxcalla</b>				
1301	Cuauhnahuac	Y	Huexotzinco	Anales de Cuauhtitlan 1975: 57
1401	Huaxtepec	Y	Huexotzinco	Relación de Huaxtepec 1930: 38
			Tlaxcalla	
1415	Yacapitzlan	Y	Huexotzinco	Relación de Yacapitzlan n.d.: 227
1503	Hueyapan	N	Cholula	PNE, 6: 288
			Atlixco	
			Huexotzinco	"
1505	Tetellan	N	(same)	(same)
3702	Chila	N	Atoyac	PNE, 5: 67
			Tonala	
3703	Petlalcinco	N	Teccistepec	PNE, 5: 71
3802	Çoyatitlanapan	N	Totomihuacan	PNE, 5: 91
3803	Texalocan	N	Totomihuacan	PNE, 5: 96
			Cholula	
			Huexotcinco	
3901	Tepeacac	Y	Coyxco	PNE, 5: 31
			Tlaxcalla	
			Huexotzinco	
			Cholula	
			Totomihuacan	
3917	Coatzinco	Y	Tlaxcalla	PNE, 5: 96
			Huexotzinco	
			Cholula	
			Totomihuacan	
4702	Capulapan	N	Tlaxcalla	PNE, 5: 160
4807	Acaçacatlan	Y	Tlaxcalla	García Payón 1965: 38
<b>G. Wars with Metztitlan</b>				
5001	Atotonilco	Y	Metztitlan	G: 335
5401	Huexotla	N	Metztitlan	PNE, 6: 188-189

<sup>a</sup>RG = Relaciones Geográficas for town cited

PNE = Paso y Troncoso 1905-06

RMEH = *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos* 1927-28

G = Gerhard 1972

TABLE 6-5. FORTRESSES AND GARRISONS

	Town	Codex Mendoza tribute list	Mexica Garrison	Fortress		Citation <sup>a</sup>
				Mexica	Local	
301	Xilotepec	Y	X	—	—	Descripción de Querétaro 1906: 21
308	Hueychiapan	N	—	—	X	Simpson 1934: 49f
800's	Toluca Valley	Y	X	—	—	Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975-77, 2: 145
1109	Texcaltitlan	N	—	—	X	PNE, 7(1): 27
1110	Texupilco	N	—	—	X	PNE, 7 (1): 20
1301	Cuauhnahuac <sup>b</sup>	Y	X	—	—	Cortés 1878: 120, 124; Díaz 1983: 306, 315f
1401	Huaxtepec <sup>b</sup>	Y	X	—	—	(same)
1414	Yauhtepec <sup>b</sup>	Y	X	—	—	(same)
1415	Yacapitztlán <sup>b</sup>	Y	X	—	—	(same)
1810	Pochotlan	N <sup>c</sup>	X	—	—	CM: 17v; Zantwijk 1967
1901	Tepequacuico	Y	X	—	—	Relación de Iguala 1931: 223
1911	Oztoma	Y	X	X	—	CM: 18r; PNE, 6: 113f; Lister 1941; Armillas 1944
1913	Alahuiztlan	Y	—	X	—	PNE, 6: 105
1918	Quecholtenanco	N <sup>c</sup>	X	—	—	CM: 17v 17f; Zantwijk 1967
2101	Tetellan	N	—	—	X	Hendrichs 1945-46, 1: 185-191
2104	Tlacotepec	N	X	—	—	PNE, 6: 123
2106	Totoltepec	N	X	—	—	PNE, 6: 149
2507	Tototepec	N	X	—	—	PNE, 1: 29
2701	Xoconochco	Y	X	—	—	CM: 18r
2802	Coatlan	N	X	—	—	PNE, 4: 133
2901	Teozacualco	N	X	—	—	RMEH: T.2, App: 175
3204	Huaxacac	Y	X	—	—	PNE, 4: 198; CM: 17v
3301	Coayxtlahuacan	Y	X	—	—	PNE, 4: 165
3313	Çoçolan	N	X	—	—	CM: 17v
3506	Ychca atoyac	Y	X	—	—	G: 108
3602	Ayoxochiquilazala	N	X	—	—	RMEH: T.2, App. 147-148
3901	Tepeacac <sup>b</sup>	Y	X	—	—	Díaz del Castillo 1963: 308-309
3911	Ytzucan	Y	X	—	—	Torquemada 1969, 2: 518
4001	Tochtepec	Y	X	—	—	Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1965, 2: 198; PNE, 4: 61
4101	Cuetlaxtlan	Y	X	X	—	Torquemada 1969, 1: 162; RHE 1: 158
4107	Otopa	N	X	—	—	RHE 1: 158
4202	Atocpan	N	X	—	—	G: 363
4202	Quiahuitlan <sup>b</sup>	N	X	X	or X	Díaz del Castillo 1963: 105, 109
4205	Tizapantzinco	N	X	—	—	G: 363
4301	Quauhtochco	Y	X	X	—	Medellín Zeñil 1952: 23
4305	Ahuilizapan	Y	X	—	—	Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1952, 2: 263
4307	Ytzteyocan	Y	X	—	—	CM: 17v
4308	Atzacan	Y	X	—	—	CM: 18r
4402	Acatlan	N	X	—	—	PNE, 5: 113; G: 373
4503	Nauhtla	N	X	—	—	Relación de Misantla 1962: 151
4601	Tlatlahquitepec	Y	X	—	—	Relación de Misantla 1962: 151
5006	Tulancinco	Y	X	—	—	Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1965, 2: 199
5101	Atlan	Y	X	—	—	CM: 18r; Zantwijk 1967
5102	Teçapotitlan	Y	X	—	—	CM: 18r; Zantwijk 1967
5201	Tochpan	Y	X	—	—	Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1965, 2: 197
5204	Papantla	Y	X	—	—	Krickeberg 1933: 113
5208	Tuzapan	Y	X	—	—	Krickeberg 1933: 188-189
5301	Tzicoac (and region)	Y	X	X	—	Alvarado Tezozomoc 1975: 311

<sup>a</sup>PNE = Paso y Troncoso (1905-06)

CM = Codex Mendoza (Berdan and Anawalt 1992)

G = Gerhard (1972)

RHE = Relaciones históricas estadísticas (n.d.)

<sup>b</sup>Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1983) reported "garrisons" of Mexica soldiers at these towns who fought against the Spaniards. As discussed in the text, there is some doubt as to whether these garrisons existed prior to the arrival of the Spaniards.

<sup>c</sup>Although Mexica garrisons at Pochotlan and Quecholtenanco are mentioned in the Codex Mendoza (see Zantwijk 1967), these towns are not included in the tributary provinces in Part II of that document (see Berdan 1992). Pochotlan is identified with the garrison town "Poctepc" in the Mendoza; both Tlacoazauhtitlan and Ahuacuatzinco of the Tlacoazauhtitlan tributary province have subject towns named Pochotlan (PNE 5: 252; Gerhard 1972: 113).

implication is that there were Mexica soldiers and perhaps others living at the Quauhtochco settlement.

A number of authors argue for the existence of regular garrisons away from frontier areas whose purpose was to keep the peace and ensure the proper payment of tribute (e.g., Litvak 1971: 38, Hicks 1985). Holt (n.d.: 366-370) is the most explicit, positing the presence of "security

garrisons" of Mexica troops in the tributary provinces whose purpose was to "discourage rebellion among subjugated peoples" (p. 366) and to "enforce Mexica authority" (p. 367). However, an examination of the supposed security garrisons shows that they actually functioned in terms of frontier defense rather than internal control. For example, four towns in Morelos (in the inner tributary

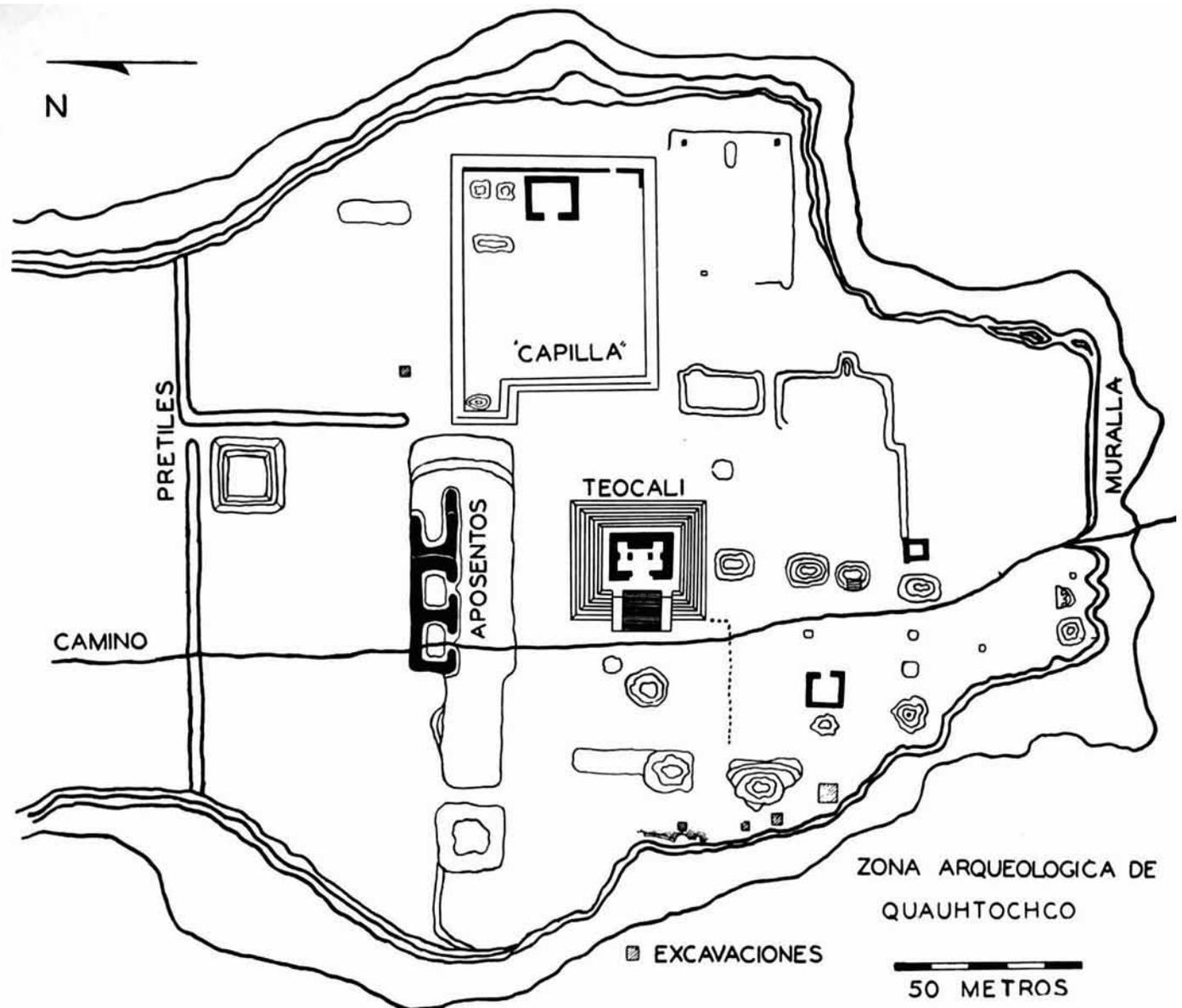


Fig. 6-4 Map of the archaeological site of Quauhtochco, location of an Aztec garrison (after Medellín Zeñil 1952: 24).

provinces of Cuauhnahuac and Huaxtepec), located well away from the frontiers, had garrisons of Mexican soldiers and thus fit Holt's definition of security garrisons—Cuauhnahuac, Huaxtepec, Yauhtepec, and Yacapitzlan. The only descriptions of the Mexica garrisons at these towns are given by Cortés (1978: 120, 124) and Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1983: 306, 315f) in the course of their final expedition of conquest in 1521. At that time, the Mexica soldiers were fighting to keep the Spaniards away from Tenochtitlan; they were not preserving the internal peace of the empire. As there are no other documentary descriptions of garrisons in Morelos, it is most likely that the soldiers reported by Cortés and Díaz were in place specifically to repel the Spaniards (see also Chap. 5, note 5).

The garrisons in the Toluca area are reported by Fernández de Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1975, 2: 145) in the context of the Triple Alliance conquest of that area. Again, these garrisons had a frontier control function at the time they were reported. There is no mention of such garrisons after the reign of Axayacatl, by which time the Toluca Valley was no longer a frontier of the empire. The only serious candidates for internal security garrisons in the west are Tepequacuilco (not mentioned by Holt), where the *Relación de Iguala* (1931: 223) reports the presence of a "presidio de gente de guarnición que cobraban los tributos," and Xilotepec, where the *Descripción de Querétaro* (1906: 21) mentions a garrison. These were both capitals of tributary provinces where imperial tribute was assembled, and the lack of references to peace-keeping duties beyond tribute

collection casts doubt on the security functions of these garrisons.

### Relations with the Empire

Two aspects of the client states' relations with the empire reinforce our model of their crucial role in frontier defense: tribute payments and imposed rulers. The strategic provinces paid imperial tribute just as the tributary provinces did, but there are three significant differences in the nature of their tribute: (1) military service is emphasized, (2) the term *tribute* is avoided in favor of gifts and presents, and (3) periods of payment were not always regular (see Hicks [1984a] for a similar situation in the Valley of Mexico). The available data are listed in Table 6-6. Military service is more common here than in the tributary provinces, particularly if several frontier states from Table 6-5 with local fortresses (but no explicit statement about tribute) are added on the presumption that their military service counted as imperial tribute.

A number of towns in the strategic provinces also gave tribute in war materiel and captured enemy soldiers. There are a number of strategic provinces not located along active enemy frontiers that supplied Aztec troops on the march. These are located on major travel routes, including Acatlan (3701) along the trail to the south, Cuauhchinanco and Xicotepc (4901 and 4902) along the major route to Totona-capan and the Huasteca, and several towns in Tecpantepec (province 24) along the Pacific coast of Guerrero toward Cihuatlan.

A second significant aspect of the tribute from strategic provinces is that it is often not called tribute in the sources. For example, "these people did not pay tribute, they only guarded the fortress [of Oztoma]" (Acapetlahuaya, Paso y Troncoso 1905-06, 6: 116). For Totoltepec, it is reported:

The Mexican king Axayacatl made war [on the people of Totoltepec] until he subjugated them. They did not bring him tribute because they were on the Tarascan frontier; they supplied the Mexica soldiers that were stationed there and at the fortress of Oztuma. A few times each year they sent presents to Mexico consisting of *mantas*, green stones, and copper (Paso y Troncoso 1905-06, 6: 149; author's translation).

Finally, tribute from client states was often delivered at irregular intervals. For example, Temazcaltepec contributed soldiers "when necessary" and goods "when requested" (Paso y Troncoso 1905-06, 7 [1]: 20). The second two points—avoidance of the term *tribute* and the irregular payment schedules—contrast strongly with the payments made by the tributary provinces (Chap. 5). Although the empire benefitted from the tribute of client states, it seems clear that the frontier functions far outweighed the economic functions of these areas.

A final method of integration for the strategic provinces was the imposition of Mexica officials (Table 6-7). Most of those listed in the sources are called *calpixqui* or *mayordomo* (tribute collector), and Davies (1987: 207) argues that when

Spanish administrators recorded *gobernador* for an imposed official, they actually meant *calpixqui*. If so, then there are no cases of imposed rulers (*tlatoque*) in client states, in contrast to states in the tributary provinces where imposed rulers are occasionally found (see Chap. 5). Some of the towns with tribute collectors are also included in the list of towns with recorded imperial tribute payments (Table 6-6); it is likely that *calpixque* were present in all of the other tribute-paying client states but were simply not recorded.

### AREAS OF UNCERTAIN IMPERIAL STATUS

Aside from provinces identified as tributary or strategic, we are also confronted with a number of city-states whose status vis-à-vis the empire remains somewhat uncertain. This is primarily due to the scantiness of data surrounding them. For instance, Mexica conquests of Tehuantepec and Zinacantan are recorded for Ahuitzotl and Motecuhzoma II, respectively (Codex Mendoza; Berdan and Anawalt 1992, 3: 13v, 15v; see also Alvarado Tezozomoc 1975: 250), but little is known of any subsequent imperial incorporation. Barlow (1949a: 99) includes some such towns as constituting "The Road to Xoconochco," suggesting that they were perhaps only required to provide imperial emissaries a safe right of passage. With no reasonably solid documentation, we have relegated them to an "uncertain status" category.

On the far side of Xoconochco, the Quiché Maya polity of Utatlan (in present Guatemala) is another poorly understood case. Robert Carmack's ethnohistoric analysis of Utatlan (1981: 142-143) suggests a dynamic relationship between the Quiché and the Aztec empire. During the empire's initial campaigns in the Xoconochco area (under Ahuitzotl), a group of *pochteca* journeyed to Guatemala. They visited Utatlan in 1501, but the ruler was powerful enough to expel them summarily. When Aztec armies again conquered towns in the Xoconochco area under Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin, the tables were turned. The Aztec military presence along the southern frontier was stronger, and the fortunes of the Utatlan polity had declined. When Mexica emissaries demanded in 1510 that the Quiché pay tribute, the leader of Utatlan agreed, and payments of quetzal feathers, gold, precious stones, cacao, and cloth were initiated (Carmack 1981: 142). A marriage alliance between the Mexica and Quiché dynasties was also formed at the time (Carmack 1981: 143). The data presented by Carmack suggest that the Aztecs may have been in the process of establishing Utatlan as a strategic province, but in the absence of more complete documentation, we are classifying Utatlan as a place of uncertain imperial status.

Also situated along important transit routes were Teotitlan (del Camino), Coxcatlan, and Tehuacan in the Tehuacan Valley. These towns, again, suffer from inadequate documentation. Barlow (1949a) determined that Teotitlan was "allied to the empire," based on a statement in the *Relación Geográfica* for that town (Paso y Troncoso 1905-

TABLE 6-6. TRIBUTE AND "GIFTS" FROM CLIENT STATES

	Town	Frontier Location	Tribute	Gifts <sup>a</sup>	Citation <sup>b</sup>
403	Atitlalaquian	N	bearers for Mexica armies; supplies for Mexica armies	—	PNE, 6: 206
407	Tezontepec	N	maguey <i>mantas</i> ; turkeys	—	Acuña 1985: 33
412	Yetecomac	N	maguey <i>mantas</i> ; wild game; soldiers for Mexica armies	—	PNE, 6: 21
1101	Temazcaltepec	Y	soldiers for Mexica armies; <i>mantas</i> and other goods	—	PNE, 7 (1): 20
1113	Zultepec	N	unspecified	—	PNE, 7 (1): 11
1501	Ocuituco	N	flowers; wood	—	Gerhard 1970b: 110
1503	Hueyapan	Y	personal service; <sup>c</sup> various goods	—	PNE, 6: 285
1505	Tetellan	Y		—	
1915	Acapetlahuayan	N	military service	Y	PNE, 6: 116
2001	Zompanco	Y	captives for sacrifice; gold powder	—	PNE, 6: 317 PNE, 6: 320
2101	Tetellan	Y	soldiers for Mexica armies	Y	PNE, 6: 133
2103	Otatlan	Y	cotton <i>mantas</i> <sup>d</sup>	—	PNE, 6: 128
2104	Tlacotepec	N	unspecified	—	PNE, 6: 123f
2106	Totoltepec	Y	supplies for Mexica garrison; luxuries	Y	PNE, 6: 149
2401	Tecpantepec	N	supplies and arms for Mexica wars	—	Relación de Zacatula 1945: 264
2404	Cacalutlan	N		—	
2406	Coyaco	N		—	
2403	Anecuilco	N	captives for sacrifice; cotton <i>mantas</i> ; gold powder	—	PNE, 6: 158
2405	Citlaltomahua	N		—	
2501	Ayotlan	Y	unspecified	—	PNE, 4: 260
2801	Miahuatlan	Y	gold dust; precious stones	—	PNE, 4: 127
2802	Coatlan	Y	gold dust; <i>mantas</i>	—	PNE, 4: 133
2804	Ocelotepec	Y	gold dust; <i>mantas</i> ; cochineal; battlefield slaves	—	PNE, 4: 138
2901	Teozacualco	N	jadeite; feathers; cotton and maguey <i>mantas</i> ; supplies for Mexica garrison	—	RMEH: T.2, App: 175
2903	Etztetlan	Y	gold, cotton <i>mantas</i>	—	RMEH: T.2, App: 185, 187
2904	Huiztepec	Y		—	
2905	Itzquintepec	Y		—	
2906	Quauxiloticpac	Y	"	—	"
2907	Totomachapan	Y	"	—	"
2908	Xilotepec	Y		—	
3001	Teozapotlan	N	unspecified; to Huaxacac	Y	PNE,4: 194
3101	Ixtepxi	N	base gold; feathers; maize; turkeys; deer; firewood; personal service to Mexica garrison	—	PNE,4: 16
3102	Atepec	N	greenstones; green feathers	—	RMEH: T.2, App: 124
3103	Coquiapan	N		—	
3105	Tecuicuilco	N	"	—	"
3106	Xaltianquizco	N	"	—	"
3601	Tecomaixtlahuacan	Y	<i>chalchihuites</i>	Y	RMEH: T.2, App: 137
3602	Ayoxochiquilazala	Y	gold dust; supplies to Mexica garrison	—	RMEH: T.2, App: 147-148
3603	Ycpatepec	Y	green feathers; gold dust; greenstone	—	PNE,4: 161
3701	Acatlan	N	<i>mantas</i> ; animal pelts; personal service; supplies for troops	Y	PNE,5: 59
3702	Chila	N	gold jewels; <i>mantas</i>	Y	PNE,5: 66
3703	Petlalcingo	N	food for troops; soldiers for army	Y	PNE,5: 70
3704	Piaztlan	N	salt; wax; supplies for troops	—	PNE,5: 78
3705	Ycxitlan	N	feathers; precious stones; live snakes; precious birds	Y	PNE,5: 75
3801	Ahuatlan	N	cane shields	—	PNE,5: 83
3802	Çoyatitlanapan	N	white lime; canes; lance blades; cane shields; raw cotton for armor	—	PNE,5: 90
3803	Texalocan	N	captives	—	PNE,5: 86
4201	Cempoallan	Y	unspecified goods; personal service	—	Díaz del Castillo 1963: 110
4401	Xalapa	Y	unspecified	—	PNE,5: 102-103
4416	Tlacolula	Y	unspecified	—	PNE,5: 108
4419	Xilotepec	Y	maize; liquidambar; turkeys	—	PNE,5: 106-107
4501	Misantla	Y	liquidambar	—	Relación de Misantla 1962: 16-17
4701	Tetela	Y	war captives	Y	PNE,5: 147
4702	Capulapan	Y	war captives	—	PNE,5: 161
4901	Cuauhchinanco	N	labor service to Texcoco; war provisions	—	Motolinía 1971: 394
4902	Xicotepc	N		—	
5401	Huexotla	Y	unspecified	—	Torquemada 1969 I: 193

## Notes:

<sup>a</sup>This column marks cases where it is specified that the items did *not* constitute "tribute" (see text for discussion).

<sup>b</sup>PNE = Paso y Troncoso (1905-06)

RG = Relación Geográfica for town cited

RMEH = *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos* (1927-28)

<sup>c</sup>This tribute was paid to Xochimilco (PNE,6: 285).

<sup>d</sup>The source states that local people carried the tribute to Tenochtitlan themselves (i.e., *calpixque* were not involved) (PNE,6: 128).

TABLE 6-7. IMPOSED OFFICIALS IN CLIENT STATES

	Client State	Official	Citation <sup>a</sup>
403	Atitlalaquian	<i>calpixque</i>	PNE, 6: 205
1101	Temazcaltepec	local nobles (imposed by Mexica)	PNE, 7 (1): 21
1602	Caltitlan	<i>calpixque</i>	PNE, 1: 98
2004	Tixtla	<i>calpixque</i>	LT: 491
2101	Tetellan	governador	PNE, 6: 134
2104	Tlacotepec	"governador y mayordomo"	PNE, 6: 123
2507	Tototepec	<i>calpixque</i>	PNE, 1: 29
2801	Miahuatlan	governador	PNE, 4: 127
2802	Coatlan	governador	PNE, 4: 127
2804	Ocelotepec	governador	PNE, 4: 127
3803	Texalocan	<i>Tzipayn tlacochcalcatl</i> ; <i>Acolnahuaacatl tlacatecatl</i>	PNE, 5: 87
4402	Acatlan	governador	PNE, 5: 113
4501	Misantla	governador	Relación de Misantla 1962 :notes, 151
4901	Cuauhchinanco	<i>calpixque</i>	Torquemada 1969, 1: 167-168
4902	Xicotepec	<i>calpixque</i>	
5401	Huexotla	<i>calpixque</i>	Torquemada 1969, 1: 193

<sup>a</sup> PNE = Paso y Troncoso (1905-06)

LT = Libro de las Tasaciones (1952)

RMEH = *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos* (1927-28)

06, 4: 216). Davies, however, concludes that Teotitlan and its surrounding region (including Tehuacan and Coxcatlan) were not independent, but rather tributary to the Aztecs (1968: 16). He bases his interpretation on their inclusion in a listing of towns that paid an undesignated tribute to all three lords of the Triple Alliance (Paso y Troncoso 1939-42, 14: 121). There are accounts mentioning the conquest of Tehuacan (Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1965, 2: 196) and Coxcatlan (Alvarado Tezozomoc 1975: 250), the latter by Nezahualcoyotl. Conquest, however, did not necessarily result in incorporation, as the checkered history of Huexotzinco and Cholula illustrate (see Isaac 1983). In light of these conflicting reports and interpretations, we are hesitant to designate this region with assurance as a strategic province, although with further documentation it may well fit the criteria. We choose, for the time being, to retain it as a peripheral region of uncertain imperial status.

#### CLIENT STATES AND IMPERIAL STRATEGIES

##### *Client States and Trade*

Although most aspects of imperial activity in the client states related to the frontier strategy, in some cases client states played a direct role in the empire's economic strategy. A number of towns with important markets were conquered and administered as client states in order to protect them from enemy interference. Huexotla, located along the Metztitlan border, provides an example. While this state fought wars against Metztitlan (Paso y Troncoso 1905-06, 6: 188-189), its imperial significance probably derived more from its role as a trading entrepôt. Huexotla was situated on major trade routes between the highlands and the lowlands. It functioned as a major trading center

for cotton and salt (Paso y Troncoso 1905-06, 6: 186, 187, 190), attracting merchants from considerable distances who may have established residence in the Huexotla area. This is suggested by the names of some of Huexotla's *estancias*: Chololan (Cholula), Totonacapan (Totonac), Puchtlan (Pochteca), and Tepevacan (Tepehua) (Paso y Troncoso 1905-06, 6: 187). Aztec commercial presence was probably significant: Roberto Williams García (1963: 56) notes that *tiyankis* (*tianquiztli*: marketplace) is one of the few Nahuatl words to work its way into the local Tepehua. The client states of Hueyapan and Tetellan in the Ocuituco strategic province are another example. These towns produced a number of goods (honey, maguey products, and wood products) that were traded to many towns at lower elevations to the south and west where such products were rare or non-existent (see App. 4).

Aside from direct military or commercial value, some polities were made client states because of their indirect military and/or commercial importance to the empire. For example, towns located on travel routes and providing provisions to Aztec troops (see above) also served as stopovers for traders who followed the same routes. The strategic province of Tetellan in Guerrero provides another example of indirect military and commercial benefits. The client states in this province (particularly Tetellan, Otatlan, Tlacotepec, and Totoltepec) were situated in an area rich in minerals and other resources directly along an active trade route (the Middle Balsas River) and a strategic portion of the Tarascan border. Although they provided some of these items as tribute (Table 6-6), their economic value was greater for their extensive trade connections throughout the western empire (see App. 4). This economic role of client states in the strategic provinces is interesting for its contrast with the well-known example of Roman client states.

*A Comment on Aztec and Roman Client States*

The concept of client states that enjoyed a semi-independent status under an empire was first employed in studies of the Roman Empire (e.g., Badian 1958; Wells 1984), and it is instructive to compare and contrast briefly the role of Aztec and Roman client states. The strategic role of Roman client states is analyzed by Edward Luttwak (1976), who notes their importance in the organization of the Roman Empire from the Republic period through the time of Nero. As Blanton points out in Chapter 10, Luttwak (1976: 20–40) develops a contrast between two types of empire: hegemonic empires that rely on indirect control, and territorial empires that involve more direct administration and rule of the provinces (see also Doyle [1986] on formal and informal empires). Hassig (1985) first applied these insights to the Aztec empire, and our use of the term *client state* continues this line of analysis. However, our interpretation of the structure and strategies of the Aztec empire and its comparability with the Roman case differs from Hassig's.

After summarizing Luttwak's model of hegemonic empires, Hassig goes on to state:

While the similarities between the Romans and the Aztecs can be overstated, they did share certain characteristics: (1) expansion of political dominance without direct territorial control, (2) a focus on the internal security of the empire by exercising influence on a limited range of activities within the client states, and (3) the achievement of such influence by generally retaining rather than replacing local officials. (Hassig 1985: 93)

These similarities are important, and on a general level the Aztec empire can be classified as a hegemonic empire in contrast to a territorial empire. However, there is a fundamental difference between Roman and Aztec client states that Hassig neglects to mention: the former paid no taxes or tribute, while the latter did. The imperial importance of the Roman client states was almost entirely military and strategic (Badian 1958, Luttwak 1976, Wells 1984), while Aztec client states in the strategic provinces also had economic importance. When the states in the Aztec tributary provinces are added (these are also included in Hassig's comparison), the similarity with Rome breaks down even further. These polities were controlled indirectly, as in the Roman case, but their role was almost exclusively economic, not strategic.

In sum, Luttwak's hegemonic empire model fits the Aztecs on a very general level, just as Michael Doyle's

informal empire model is appropriate. However, the specifics of early Roman imperialism are quite different from the Aztec situation. Aztec client states (in the definition used here) do resemble Roman client states, although the Aztec empire received greater economic benefits from its clients than did Rome. However, the states subject to the Aztecs in the tributary provinces fulfilled a role within the empire entirely different from that of the Roman clients.

*Client States and the Frontier Strategy: Summary*

The major argument of this chapter is that client states were created by the Aztec empire as part of a strategy for dealing with powerful unconquered enemies. The locations and spatial configurations of the client states provide strong evidence of their strategic role in the empire. They tended to face enemy territory directly and often fought local wars across the border. Imperial city-states along the frontiers were laid out with their capital towns at the internal edge of their territory and their subject settlements facing the enemy. The overall spatial configuration of the empire shows that in most areas, the tributary provinces were buffered from enemy states by the client states of the strategic provinces.

The first step in the creation of strategic provinces was the conquest of a formerly independent city-state, although in some cases towns submitted peacefully to the empire (Hassig 1988: 112–113). Once conquered, the client states began paying tribute, which most often consisted of military support of some kind. Goods were often sent to Tenochtitlan, but unlike the imperial payments of the tributary provinces, client states usually paid at irregular intervals, and their payments were often called gifts, not tribute.

Although military threat and conquest were used to subdue the client states, the provincial rulers were also recruited by the Mexica through the delivery of royal gifts. The empire might send troops to the border area or aid in the construction or renovation of fortresses and defenses. Although the strategic benefit to the empire of these client states was obvious, the provincial polities also gained from their participation in the empire. Without the backing of the Aztec empire and their own military efforts, the small city-states in frontier areas would easily fall prey to the enemy polities, at least two of which—the Tarascan state and Tlaxcalla—were large, powerful expansionist states. Both the empire and the client states benefitted from the frontier strategy and its strategic provinces, but in very different ways from the case of the tributary provinces described in Chapter 5.

# AZTEC IMPERIAL STRATEGIES

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