The Mexican Imperial Dream: The Role of the State, the Civilian and Institutions of Tenochtitlan
Lindsay C Sidders Hodgins

Abstract
The Mexica in the Central Valley of Mexico witnessed the development, expansion and collapse of their empire in the space of only two hundred years. Although the Empire’s collapse was swift and thorough, suggesting a weak structure in the first place, the sophisticated political and ideological development and the whirlwind expansion of the Mexican state, suggests just the opposite. The imperial leadership at Tenochtitlan accomplished the loose organization of city-states that was empire by the coercive and manipulative ideological domination of its civilian populations. The state ideology or value system of the elite was a unique product of the political environment of Central Mexico and the predominance of violent confrontation in that environment.

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The overall role of Mexico within the Hapsburg Empire was in flux as well. Nothing signals the change as much as the emergence of silver mining as the principal source of Mexican exportables in the second half of the sixteenth century. While Mexico would soon be eclipsed by Peru as the most productive center of silver mining—at least until the eighteenth century—the discovery of significant silver mines in Zacatecas in the 1540s transformed the economy of the Spanish empire and the character of New Spain’s as well.