

4.0 A GUIDE TO WARRIOR SUITS

Here follows a broad outline of the various warrior suits that were known to be associated with the Aztecs. It should be noted that all of these showy feather suits were available to the noblemen only, and could never be worn by the common man. The prime source of information for the following chapter is from the tribute lists in the Codex Mendoza and the Matricula de Tributos, the suit and banner lists in the Primeros Memoriales plus some commentary in Duran's Book of the Gods, History of the Indies and some of the Florentine Codex. The first two give clear examples of many different types of war suits, as well as a defined list of warrior and priest suits with their associated rank. Unfortunately they do not show all the suit types possible, nor do they explain what several of the suit types sent in tribute were for. Trying to mesh these sources is not neat, and some interpretation is required. While Chapter 3 examined the tribute from various provinces on a province by province basis, this chapter concentrates only on the warrior suit types as individual topics. The Mendoza Noble Warrior List (Section 4.2) and Priest Warrior List (Section 4.3) are further expanded upon with information from the tribute lists and then any other primary sources with relevant information or images. These lists are then followed up by a list of suit types not covered by either of these two lists (Section 4.4.) This section of the documentation does not cover the organisational or ranking levels of the suits except as a method for listing the suits for discussion. For details on how these suits and their associated ranks were defined and organised within the army, refer to chapter 6

4.1 THE BASIC FEATHER COSTUME (SUIT)

In popular thought, all Aztec warriors were decked out in magnificent feather suits and smothered in gold and precious jewels. While some warriors were indeed so dressed, the vast majority of warriors never wore feather suits. To qualify for a feather costume, the warrior needed to be of the noble class. *"Thus the common man was rewarded to distinguish him from the noble, and the difference was this: the noble knights were dressed from head to foot in quilted armour covered in feathers, while the common men were given no feathers but wore the skins of different animals over the quilted material. This was due to a law prohibiting the wearing of featherwork without the permission of the sovereign, for the featherwork was the Shadow of the Lords and Kings and was called by this name. This ruling ... was enforced more strictly than our modern ones regarding the wearing of silk."*¹

The basic feather suit awarded to experienced nobles came in two versions, a full suit from neck to ankle (tlahuiztli), or a skirted version (ehuatl) which was less common judging by the tribute list numbers. Both types were constructed of a heavy cotton fabric overlaid with feathers and were worn over the top of the padded cotton armour. It is not clear whether the cotton armour also covered the lower body, or was merely the normal cotton armour vest. The amount of protection provided by this layer of feathers is debatable, Hassig suggesting that the feathers gave some additional benefit against glancing blows due to their 'slick nature.' I believe that the suit was entirely for show and ritual and not worn to improve the warriors defence and did not contribute anything meaningful to the defence on the battlefield.

The costume came in the full variety of standard feather colours - red, white, blue, yellow, and green. Black is rarely shown. Other colours such as pink and orange used on the banners do not appear on suits. Within Codex Mendoza, the feathers used for suits were supplied in two qualities, a fine quality (better colour and feather shape) for suits supplied singly, and a lesser quality for suits supplied in larger numbers.

The Primeros shows the ehuatl worn by both noble and non noble warriors. Here they are shown in the Primeros usual style of a rainbow pattern of colours around the skirt. This should be compared against the Mendoza/Matricula versions that are always of a solid colour. Interestingly the Primeros depicts 6 ehuatl, one of each colour - turquoise, green, yellow, red, white then black.

4.1 WARRIOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Aztec warrior could derive from one of at least three separate and exclusive groups. These are the common (non noble) warrior, the noble warrior, and the priestly warrior. It is not clear whether priestly warriors also came in noble and non noble variants, for they are only shown wearing featherwork suits. The author believes that the priestly warriors, even if from a non noble background, due to the profession, were treated as a class of nobles.

The ranking of the warriors is fraught with many references and names which are not clearly defined against each other. Names such as Knights of the Sun, Grey Knights, tequihua, eagle knights, jaguar knights are not always clearly defined, particularly as warriors are also ranked by the number of captives they have taken, and also by the number of brave deeds they have performed in battle. Trying to deconstruct the various names from references in documentation does not give neat acceptable definitions.

¹ Duran - Book of the Gods p200. Reference should also be made to Section XX and my comments on the use of cotton armour, for this quote only directly explains the feather portion of the discussion.

The feathered suit he was given showed the mark of a tested warrior whether he was of the priestly or noble warrior ranks. These were distributed, along with corresponding mantles (tlimatli), during the 11th month of the Aztec calendar, Ochpaniztli (the month of brooms, or sweeping or cleaning, which went from August 31 to September 19)² or alternately, at the end of a campaign. During this month the military formations were paraded past the Great Speaker, followed by a grand festival which culminated in a ritual combat between Eagle and Ocelot knights.

The feathered suits did not represent a ranking as such, that we would imagine of as being corporals, lieutenants and captains, so I will refer to them as levels rather than ranks. Suits were awarded based upon how many enemies a warrior had captured in battle, so it indicated more a mark of experience and fighting ability. The capturing of enemies for sacrifice was one prime idea of the battles and it was this that determined the warrior's standing. Leaders of formations may have the feathered suits described below, for generally experienced battle warriors ended up being the leaders of villages and towns, or their sons. However, high level leaders of tlatoani status were also known to have their own variations of uniforms and suit styles.

The suits were constructed by applying glue soaked and stiffened feathers, either woven or glued, over a heavy cotton fabric. Helms were made of wicker overlaid with cotton and feathers, or John Pohl suggests some helms such as the ocelotl were made from carved hardwood.³ Diaz describes the armour thus: ... *"a great deal of cotton armour, richly worked on the outside with different coloured feathers which they use as devices and distinguishing marks, and they had casques and helmets made of wood and bone which they also highly decorated with feathers on the outside."*⁴

During the siege of Tenochtitlan, the Aztecs abandoned the use of their helms. *"The captains from Tenochtitlan cut their hair short, and so did those of lesser rank. The Otomies and the other ranks that usually wore head dresses did not wear them at all during all the time we were fighting."*⁵ Looking closely at the images of the siege from the Florentine Codex also reveals many warriors with banners and suits, but only rarely is a helm shown. My observations can only pick out one Eagle, one possible Ocelot and two Cuextecatli helms, all other warriors are shown bareheaded.

While Codex Mendoza is very specific in showing suit types, other codexes are less explicit in what they are showing. Most illustrations of the battle scenes show only a handful of warriors on each side, and in most cases they show either basic warriors, or the most notable high level warriors. As the suit types are further discussed below, these other representations are also discussed.

The low level noble warriors, with less than 2 captives, tend to be referred to as the younger warriors. The Florentine Codex makes an interesting statement: *"But all the very young men, those with the lock of hair at the back of the head ... and with the jar shaped headdress, those who had taken a captive with others help, the leaders, those called leaders of the young men, who were unmarried, who had gone to take 2 captives, these they also detained."*⁶ It later reinforces the idea that the warriors are broken into two broad categories, the ranked warrior and the unranked, the distinction being tied to their back banner device. *"... the brave warriors climbed up - the select, the chosen ones, those who possessed devices, those in whose faces was war..."*⁷

4.2 NON NOBLE WARRIORS

Before launching into a long detailed chapter on the feather suits, we should look at the very brief detail on the non noble warrior, who was severely restricted in the accoutrements of war he could wear. The wearing of cotton armour and feathers was restricted to nobles only. This leaves very little of the usual Aztec decoration available for the vast majority of warriors. They were therefore restricted to wearing little more than their breech cloths and perhaps a maguey fibre mantle. It is also debatable whether the hair style of noble warriors was also available to the non noble warriors, though my personal leaning is toward no. Considering that feathered suits were restricted to nobles, it may also be possible that feathered shields were also restricted to the nobles, and the non noble warrior may have had nothing more than plain unadorned shields. Non noble warriors advanced in skill the same way nobles were, ie by the number of captives and brave deeds they had undertaken in war. No mention is made of what badges of experience these non nobles may have attained in their early careers. It is unlikely they had any significant obvious differentiation. It is not until they had reached the rank of tequihua that we gain any information on a change in their appearance.

4.2.1 GREY KNIGHTS

Duran mentions that once non noble warriors had reached the level of tequihua (4 captives), they were entitled to join the ranks of the Eagle warriors (i.e. the ranks of noble warriors) and were granted special favours. *"Through their bold spirit, courage, and pluckiness they managed to be admitted into the numbers of the Eagles and thus be called conquerors, or tequihua. In manner different from those of high birth, they belonged to an order and were dubbed knights... The lord gave him a jacket covered with skin bearing the head of a jaguar or white strips of chamois, covering him down to the waist. A wide and magnificent breech*

2 The Ancient Sun Kingdoms of the Americas by Victor von Hagen p58

3 Aztec Warrior by John Pohl p24

4 The Conquest of New Spain – Bernal Diaz pXX

5 The Broken Spears – Miguel Leon-Portilla p134 quoting from Unos anales historicos de la nacion mexicana – (Manuscript 22)

6 Florentine Codex by Dibble and Anderson p54

7 Florentine Codex by Dibble and Anderson p62. The reference to "those in whose faces was war" might also refer to some form of facial painting.

cloth covered his thighs. He was given ear plugs and a labret and also a white shield bearing five tufts of feathers. He was granted the right to dress in cotton and wear sandals in the royal abode, to eat human flesh and drink wine...He could keep two or three concubines. He was free from paying tribute and taxes and contributions....They wore no hats or any other covering on their heads except for their long hair clipped below their ears."⁸

4.3 NOBLE LOW RANK WARRIOR SUITS

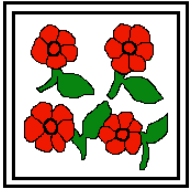
Codex Mendoza lists 7 distinct levels of warriors, this section shall discuss the first few of these which covers the warriors as they ascend in skill but are still not considered full warriors with all entitlements.⁹

All warriors began as novices, meaning that they had not captured an enemy in battle. These men had no particular distinctive accoutrement on the battlefield, being dressed in nothing more than their breech cloth, plain shield and a weapon. All hoped to advance in the battle ranks which follow.

These are:

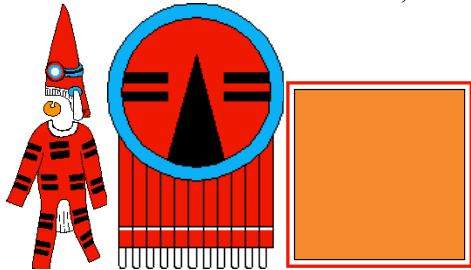
4.3.1 ONE CAPTIVE WARRIOR

The one captive warrior was the first rank on the noble novices path to greatness. At this rank he gained the right to wear cotton armour, which is the main feature of this rank. He also wore a plain loincloth and carried a plain unadorned shield.¹⁰ The warrior was identified as such when off duty by his mantle, which was plain white with red flowers on it.

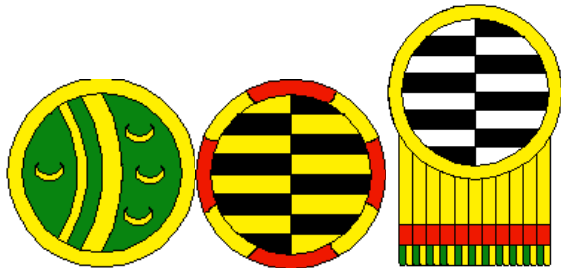


4.3.2 TWO CAPTIVE WARRIOR - CUEXTECATL

This suit and shield set was referred to as the Cuextecat, the name referring to a region of the Huastecs. This suit type originally came from a style used by them, and was presumably adopted after an Aztec victory over them. When off duty he was identified by his mantle of orange, with a border of white with a red outside edge. The orange disk at mouth level is actually gold and is called a yacameztli, which means 'nose moon,' and is identified with the Aztec goddess of filth called Tlazolteotl,¹¹ an aspect of the goddess of water Chalchiuhtli. Codex images always display the Aztec suit as a single colour, but some textual references indicate that at least for the Huastecs, the suit and hat was split left and right into two colours.



While the tribute lists always show either the cuexyo or cuextecat shield supplied with the suit, images in the Lienzo de tlaxcala indicate other shield types used by this warrior class, as shown below. The tribute from Tlatililco (refer section 3.1.2) show a variant of the suit in which the headress reflects that of the goddess Tlazolteotl rather than the pointy cap.



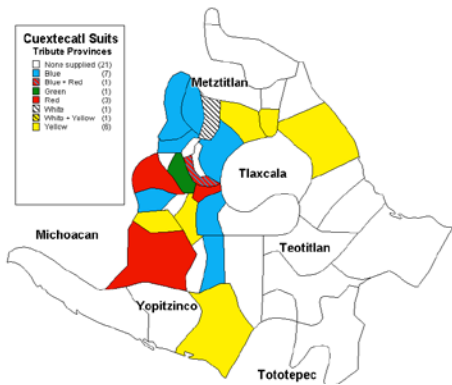
The pointy hat associated with the suit is always shown in a plain colour in the tribute lists, though other illustrations of the suit in use indicate a difference. In these the hat also has two or more commonly three horizontal bars to the front of the hat, while the rear half of the hat is portrayed as black.

⁸ Book of the Gods by Duran p199-201. The long hair clipped below the ears sounds very much like an Otomi hair style.

⁹ Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p91, 96 & 97

¹⁰ Refer comments on the shield markings under Section 4.6

¹¹ Aztec Warrior – John Pohl p 57

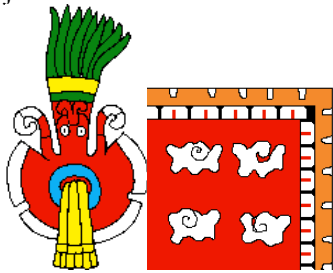


Map indicating provinces which supplied the Cuextecatli suit, and the colours they were supplied in.

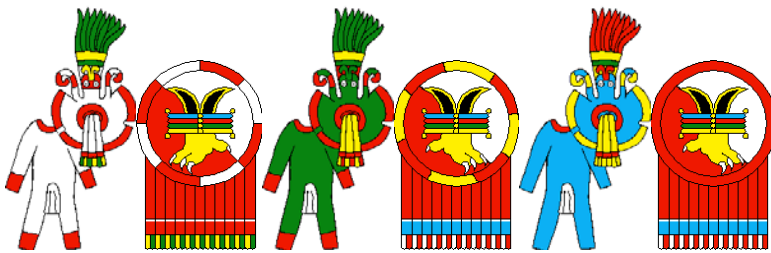
“The yellow Huastec pointed conical cap had a golden disk in the front of it and was girt with quetzal feathers. And the shirt was of yellow parrot feathers decorated with hawk scratches. Gold was his crescent shaped nose plate, gold were his ear pendants, with quetzal feather spindles. The white Huastec pointed, conical cap had quetzal feathers bound at the base and a disk of gold at the front. Its spindles were of quetzal feathers and gold. Gold was his crescent shaped nose plate, and gold were his ear pendants. The bi-coloured Huastec, the shirt was half blue and half yellow [I suspect as in left right not front back]. His conical pointed cap was also bi coloured - half blue and half yellow, and it had quetzal feathers girt at the base and a golden disk at the front. Gold was his crescent shaped nose plate, and gold were his ear pendants, and his spindles were of quetzal feathers.”¹²

4.3.3 THREE CAPTIVE WARRIOR - PAPALOTL

According to the Codex Mendoza, the suit was referred to as the papalotl (butterfly) due to the banner he carried on his back.¹³ The Mendoza list shows the warrior wearing a simple padded cotton tunic and no feathered suit, with a plain unadorned shield with blue rim.¹⁴ Off duty he was awarded a red mantle with a patterned border of black and orange referred to as a ‘wind twisted jewel mantle.’¹⁵



There were 41 suits sent in tribute from 3 provinces, all of which had variations of the eagle claw shield.



20x 1x 20x

The above are the tribute from Codex Mendoza.



Matricula variants

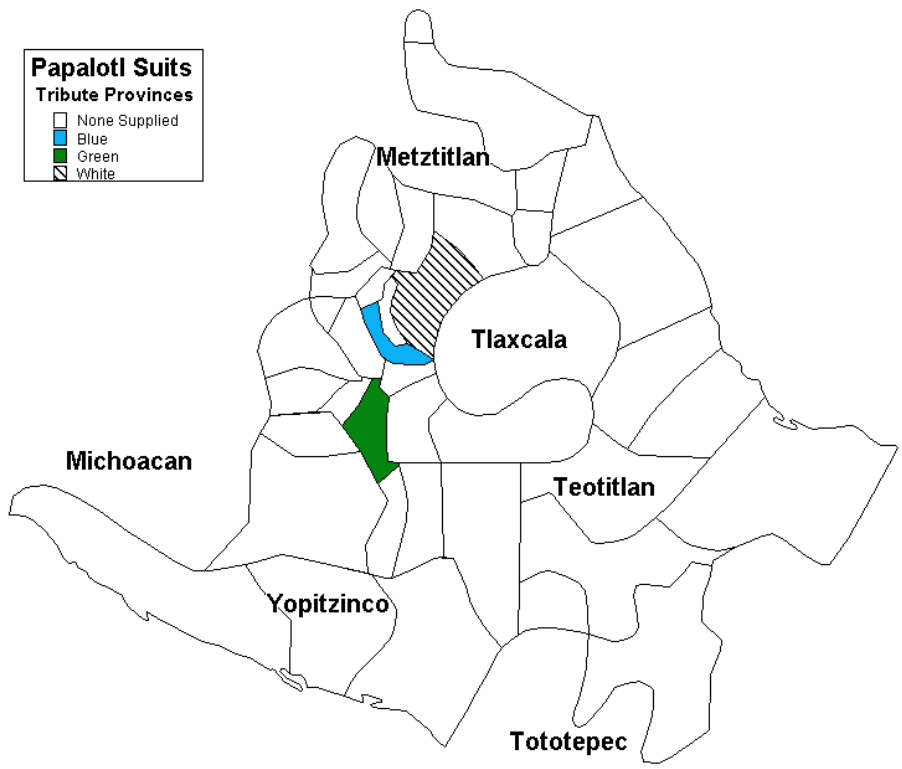
Primeros Memoriales lordly variants
Names: Quetzal Xolo Caqua

Eagle Warrior variants
Tlil Ytz Papalotl

The Primeros Memoriales depicts 5 papalotls, some associated with the nobles, and some with the eagle warriors. It also depicts one noble with papalotl carrying a cuexyo shield with a red field.

12 Florentine Codex – Book 8 – Anderson & Dibble – p35
 13 Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p97
 14 Refer comments on the shield markings under Section 4.6
 15 Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p97

“The finely wrought obsidian butterfly [Itzapapalotl] was of quetzal feathers and gold. Its teeth and claws were all of precious feathers, and it had quetzal feather horns.”¹⁶



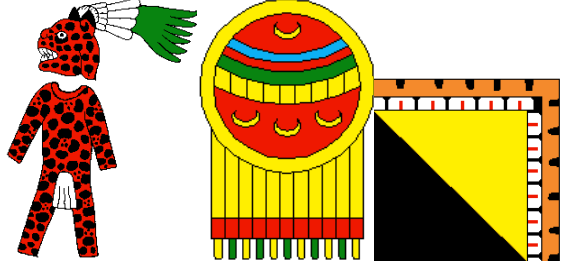
4.4 TEQUIHUA - KNIGHTS OF THE SUN

*"In this land there was an order of knights who were dedicated to war. They made a vow and promise to die in the defence of their country and not to flee in the face of ten or twelve foes who might attack them. The Sun was their god and leader... All those who made vows and entered this institution were illustrious and brave men, all sons of knights and lords, the common man being excluded, no matter how brave."*¹⁷

*"Tequioa - The valiant warrior wear his hair over the back of his head; he has a lip pendant, ear plugs, war devices, shield, war club. The good valiant warrior is a sentinel, a strategist, a tracker, a seeker of roads, a skirmisher, a take rof captives. He commands respect; he spreads - he implants fear; he terrorises, he takes captives, he is reckless. The bad valiant warrior is unreliable - one who sleeps at his post, who leads into ambush, who causes death through neglect. He is afraid of war, timid, he is cowardly in his retreat."*¹⁸

4.4.1 FOUR CAPTIVE WARRIOR - OCELOTL

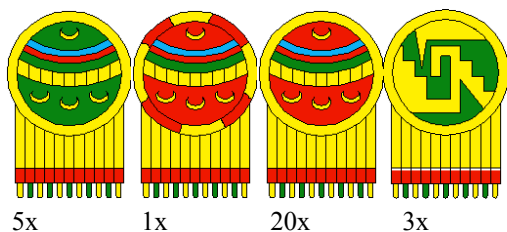
This feather suit is commonly referred to by the Aztecs as an Ocelotl¹⁹ suit, and in the Warrior List illustration the suit is shown in red. He was awarded a mantle of yellow and black with a patterned border of black, white and orange. This style of suit is associated with the Eagle Warrior, a fuller description of this association is given in Section XX Eagle Warrior. I have named this suit style the Ocelotl, and left the description Jaguar warrior to refer to a military order as described under section XX.



There were 29 suits of this type sent as tribute from 10 provinces, one province supplying 20 of them while the other 9 provinces supplied only 1. Colours varied with 22 being blue, 1 white, 2 red and 4 yellow. The cuexyo shield was the most common supplied though a few also carried the xicalcolihqui.

These suits are reproduced in the Matricula in slightly different ways that further clarifies the jaguar/ocelot association.

16 Florentine Codex – Book 8 – Anderson & Dibble – p34
 17 Book of the Gods by Duran p186
 18 Florentine Codex Book 10 by Dibble & Anderson p24
 19 A South American nocturnal cat, Felis Pardalis. It is the largest species of the small cat family, growing up to 1m long. Refer further discussion on naming it an ocelotl suit under Section 5.4

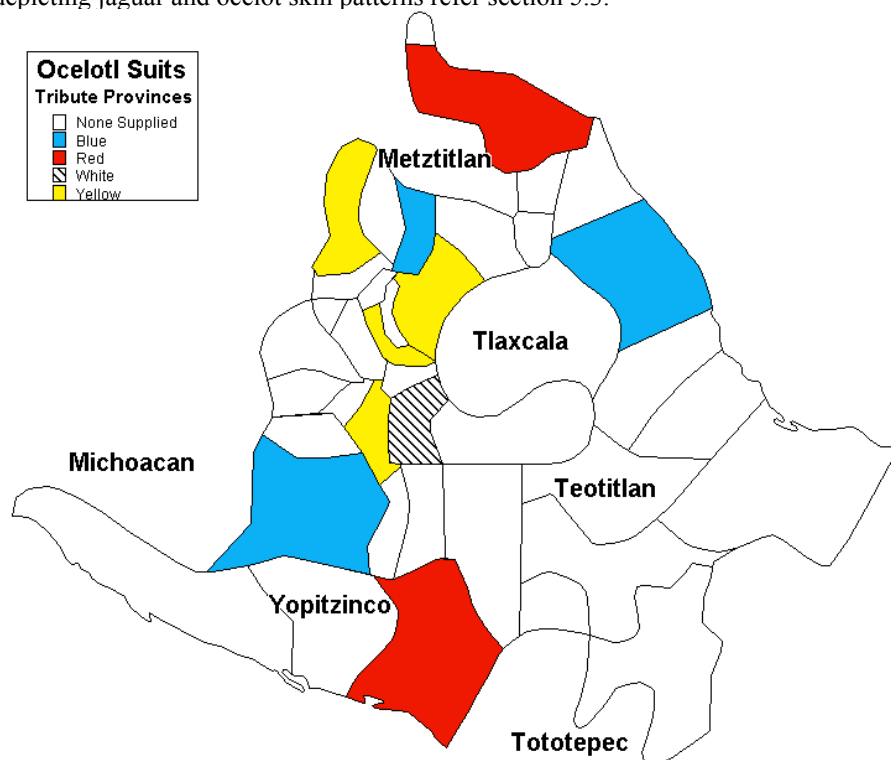


5x 1x 20x 3x

A second style of ocelot suit is often shown being made from actual animal skins (called an Oceloehuatl), and is used by the common man who has achieved this rank. This suit style is composed of a normal cotton armour jacket over which is attached either a jaguar skin complete with head and paws or else white strips of chamois arrayed in an undescribed fashion, probably as infill portions where the skins will not cover, or as an undergarment style vest over the armour but under the jaguar skin. For depicting jaguar and ocelot skin patterns refer section 5.3.

Ocelotl Suits
Tribute Provinces

- None Supplied
- Blue
- Red
- White
- Yellow



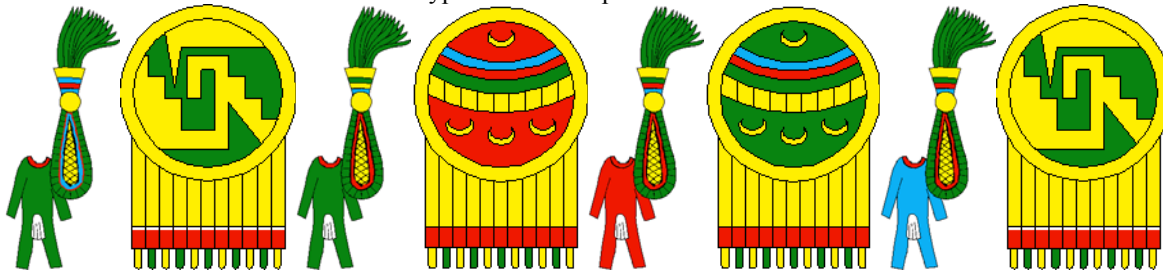
4.4.2 FIVE/SIX CAPTIVE WARRIOR - OTOMI

Called an Otomi class warrior, his back banner is called a Xopolli (claw back.) The Otomi were a tribe the Aztecs found particularly barbaric and backward, but especially brave. They were allied with the Tlaxcalans and formed a buffer between the Aztecs and Tlaxcalans on the western Tlaxcalan border.



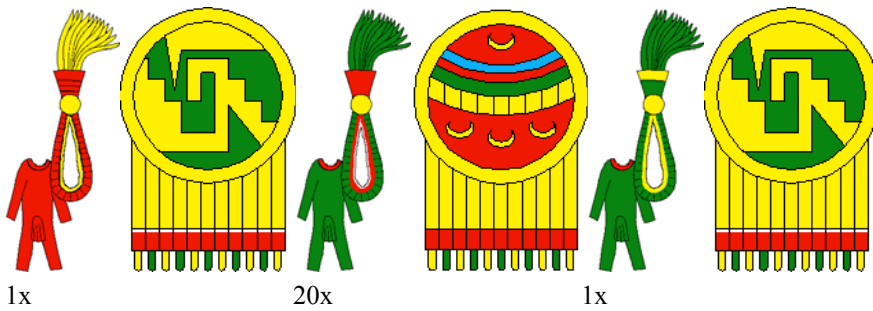
Within the Codex Mendoza the warrior list shows the Xopolli differently to the tribute lists in a number of subtle ways. The warrior list shows the association of the water cuexyo shield, which is only given as tribute from Tlatilulco, and never as a tribute associated with this suit style. The back banner is different in that the fringe is in yellow rather than the tributes green, and the central portion is white rather than the tributes yellow. The feather bundle arrangements are also different.

In Mendoza there were 23 suits of this type sent from 4 provinces.



1x 20x 1x 1x

The Matricula varied these designs slightly in each case, and appear to indicate that the centre of the back banner was actually a hole rather than an object, here shown in white.



1x 20x 1x

The Florentine Codex gives some indication that the Otomi warrior had a peculiar form of head decoration, but does not explicitly state what it is. *“But Tzilacatzin only disguised himself so that he would not be known... Only his head went uncovered, whereby it was evident that he was an Otomi.”*²⁰ Illustrations of this particular warrior seem to indicate a style of face painting consisting of vertical and horizontal bands of a dark colour, probably black.

Mention is made in the Florentine Codex²¹ that certain parts of a town could be called the Otomi’s area, which probably refers to [Masters of young people, and the young soldiers of elite], [expand on] as well as Otomi temples, or probably temples to Mixcoatl.

4.4.3 SEVEN PLUS CAPTIVE WARRIOR - CUACHIQUEH - SHORN ONES

Various called Cauhchic, Cuachiqueh, Quachic and Quachiqueh, Bernal Diaz and Cortes also refer to tribal chieftains as Caciques in their memoirs, which is not to be confused with this type warrior. I will hereafter refer to him only as Cuachiqueh. They were also known as the ‘shorn ones,’ a reference to their own hair style, which in some ways may said to be similar to a mohawk, though more a low flat ridge than a high spiked ridge of hair. They were known as the bravest of the brave, the elite warrior that all warriors aspired to be in combat. They not only had captured more than 6 enemies, but usually 6 or more very tough enemies and also performed many (20 or more) other spectacular feats in action. The image below is from the Mendoza warrior list. They are drawn specifically in the Florentine Codex²² where they are shown wearing various pamtli banners, patzactli banners and carrying regular cuexyo shields. The Cuachique formed their own military order and were the supreme embodiment of the Aztec warriors. They were the elite, and vowed never to retreat in battle.



*“The Shorn One (Quachic) - The shorn one is of many virtues. He is a bulwark, furious in war; a rabid, a vigorous warrior [very vigorous as Catherine Zeta Jones would say]; a great leader. The good shorn one is a skirmisher, an aggressor, who hurls himself to his death; a vanquisher, a sweeper away of the foe. He encircles the foe; he turns them back. He instils courage, he instils pride. He is unchallenged; no man meets his gaze. He remains firm; he stands up against one. The bad shorn one is an avoider of battle - dainty - delicate of body, self indulgent, afraid, fearful, cowardly. He retreats - he is afraid; he acts like a woman [hmm, so who was that defending Tenochtitlan during the siege again if not women?] - he is effeminate; he instils cowardice; he causes riots.”*²³

Duran's Book of the Gods describes the attire of the Cuachique in different terms to that of Mendoza and the illustrations in the Florentine. *“This term means 'shorn man,' and thus for this new knightly order his entire head was shorn with a blade, though a lock of hair was left above the left ear. It was as thick as a thumb and was braided with a red ribbon. One half of his head was painted blue and the other half red or yellow. He was given a large and magnificent breech cloth and was covered with a net mantle, an open weave of maguey fibre. This provided no defence or protection for the body, since he went about as if naked. He was forced to wear this net mantle always in public, even if there was frost, rain, or hot sun, since it was the garb of his profession....”*

*“This order of knights always constituted the rear guard of the armies so that when their own men retreated, when they saw that they were in trouble, the Cuachique came out as a reinforcement with such daring and high spirits that they frightened away and routed armies, caught and killed large numbers of men. They fought face to face with numerous warriors, having been ordered not to flee fewer than twenty attackers. Skillful and dexterous, they had lost their fear of battle to such an extent that, once they had set foot in one place, one hundred men were not capable of removing it. Occasionally two or three Cuachique were capable of destroying a whole army. They were highly esteemed by the kings, honoured with great solicitude, daily granted large and plentiful favours. The sovereigns called them the light of their eyes!”*²⁴

4.4.4 TLACATECATL - KEEPER OF THE HOUSE OF DARTS

20 Florentine Codex by Anderson & Dibble p92 plus illustrations 131, 135-137

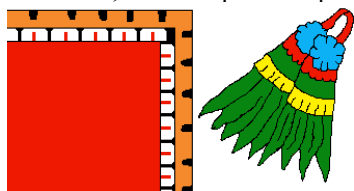
21 Florentine Codex – Book 12 Anderson & Dibble p75

22 Florentine Codex – Book 12 Anderson & Dibble image 127

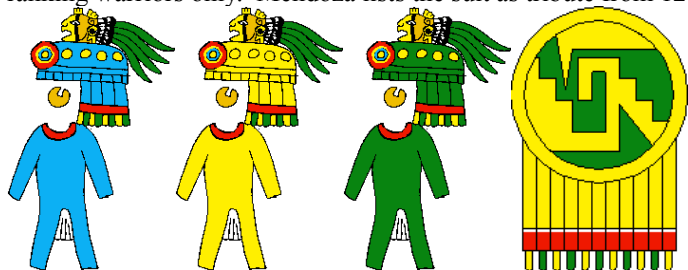
23 Florentine Codex – Book 10 - Dibble & Anderson p 23

24 Book of the Gods by Duran p198-199

Codex Mendoza places this figure in the noble warrior list wearing the style of mantle shown below along with the feathered headdress, called a quetzallalpiloni. Interestingly he does not wear a feather battle suit in this list.



This name is later attached also to a diagram of the warrior suit shown below, which one of the Aztec generals in the Codex Mendoza is shown wearing.²⁵ The image is also shown repeatedly in the Florentine Codex, which tends to show the higher-ranking warriors only. Mendoza lists the suit as tribute from 12 provinces.



2x

7x

3x

The Tlacatecatl commanded the larger formations of warriors called Xiquipilli, which consisted of roughly 8000 men. He is also listed as a governor of certain towns within the tributary provinces. Cortes was described as a tlacatecatl, which gives us some understanding of the function: “*And at the very last ... came the commander, who was considered the same as the tlacatecatl, the battle ruler, the battle director.*”²⁶

“The Commanding General, the General. - The commanding general, as well as the general, the military governor, the ruling general - his office is warfare. He is the manouverer of troops - a courageous warrior, one whose mission it is to go to his death. The good commanding general, or general, is able, prudent, a holder of vigil, a manouverer of forces. He devises the strategy, he declares, he assumes the responsibility of war. He distributes, he supervises the arms of war, he distributes, commands, supervises the provisioning. He lays out, he searches out the roads to the foe, he tracks them. He establishes the war huts [ie sets up camp], the prisons, the market places in enemy lands. He places the sntries, posts the chosen ones, stations the spies, the hidden ones, the concentrated ones. He interrogates them, he discovers the places where the enemy will approach. The stupid commanding general, or general, causes trouble, causes death, leads one into danger.”²⁷

The Mendoza generals list shows the Tlacatecatl as part of the 4 ruling men, in which example he is shown in a red outfit with a yellow banner and a gold disk shield. [insert image]

The banner is referred to as the Quaxalotl. The dog head and feather bundle arrangement on top of the banner is different from each tribute province, though stylistically fairly similar. The earless dog head refers to the god Xolotl, who was associated with death, and the final journey to the underworld. The Xolotl banner is also the banner for Tlaxcalan town Tepecticpac. It is shown in various colours and with stripes to the face in varying styles in all the tribute examples. The reason for these subtle differences is not clear, and all the variations of it have not been illustrated here.

While Mendoza doesn't note any particular difference with the yellow version, the Florentine²⁸ states “*The Xolotl head [Quaxalotl banner] of yellow feathers was ornamented with gold. With it belonged a shirt of yellow parrot feathers with hawk scratch decorations of gold.*”

The Primeros Memoriales²⁹ shows a number of colour versions for the Quaxalotl banner, though only one is attached to a full figure image. In it he carries a gold disk sun shield. The Primeros lists him as a great warrior. The gold crescent indicates a nose ornament.



25 Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p101,104

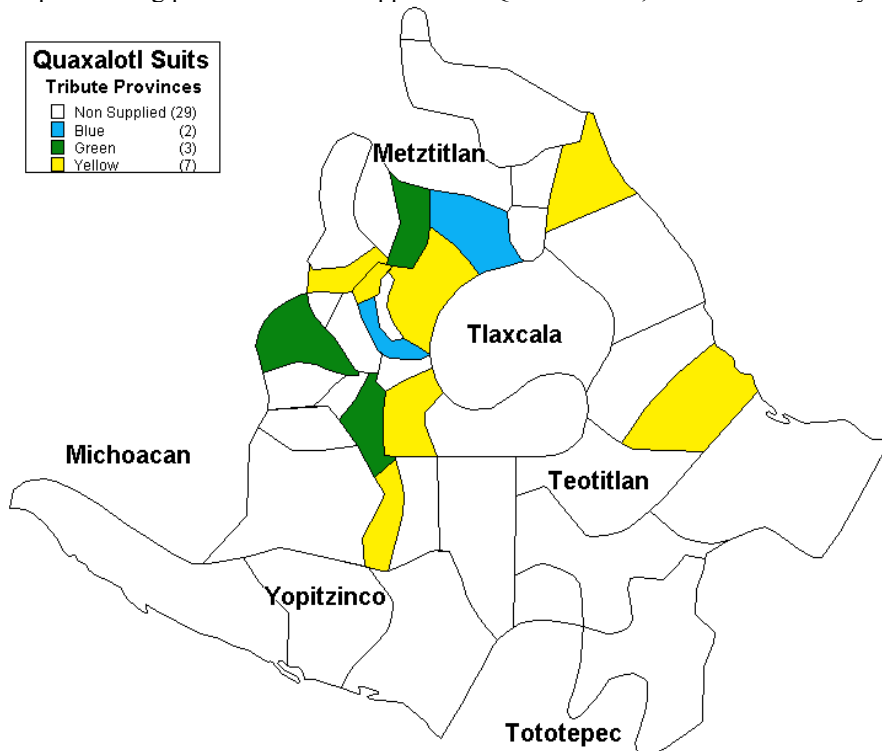
26 Florentine Codex – Book 12 - Dibble & Anderson p 40

27 Florentine Codex - Book 10 Dibble & Anderson p24

28 Florentine Codex – Book 8 - Dibble & Anderson p 34

29 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume – plate72v,76r

Map indicating provinces which supplied the Quaxalotl suit, and the colours they were supplied in.



4.5 PRIESTLY WARRIOR SUITS

No priestly rank is given a mantle such as the noble warriors were. Diaz described mantles for priests as “black with hoods like our Dominican friars.” They may be bordered with white patterns representing death symbols, such as [insert reference] Cortes describes them “all these priests dress in black and never comb their hair...”³⁰ All priestly warriors are depicted with long hair, bound at neck level with a tie of white. Codex Mendoza shows four priests as generals wearing coloured mantles. All priestly warriors conducted a ceremony of self-mutilation of the ears (and possibly tongue) prior to combat. Because of this the images of the priestly list showing a smear of blood at ear level where the head is visible.

Entering the priesthood was available to both noble and common man. By entering into the priesthood the common man was elevated in stature, to such an extent that he may have become a de fact noble, though with some restrictions.

Codex Mendoza is the only prime source on the priest warrior, listing 6 distinct levels.³¹ It does not specifically list the novice priest, whome we assume is attired exactly as the noble warrior novice.

4.5.1 ONE CAPTIVE PRIESTS

The one captive warrior priest on the battlefield was attired the same as the one captive warrior within the army.³² He wore a plain padded cotton vest, with loin cloth, and carried a plain unadorned shield.³³

4.5.2 TWO CAPTIVE PRIESTS - CEMIZTAC OR MEZTLI³⁴



Nowhere is this banner style shown except in the Codex Mendoza priest list. Its significance is therefore not know. I have named him at one option Cemiztac warrior, which roughly means all white. Whether this suit was only white is a guess, it may as easily come in red, green, blue and yellow variants. He carries the Tenochtitlan feather tuft shield.

I’ll put forward a second proposition that his banner is a representation of the moon, a conclusion I have drawn from the various ways the moon is represented in the religious codexes.³⁵ It is an imprecise guess, but I feel a suitable one. The back banner is odd in that the vertical stem has white cotton/feather balls on a white background. This is not a common feature of the white tufts, which often appear on a black background. However, white circles do appear on a white rectangular back banner style associated with a goddess of death.³⁶ Assuming that the banner represents the moon, it would be more logical the vertical stem would be white tufts on a black background. Assuming the warrior is based upon the moon, he could be called a Meztli warrior.

30 Hernan Cortes – Letters from Mexico by JH Elliott p105

31 Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p91, 98

32 Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p91, 98

33 Refer comments on the shield markings under Section 4.6

34 I stress again these are names I have given this warrior priest type

35 Codex Borgia plate 18

36 Codex Borgia plate 29

4.5.3 THREE CAPTIVE PRIESTS

This suit type appears only in the warrior priest list, and the general list of Codex Mendoza.³⁷ Whether green is the only available colour is not know. The coloured piano key design shield is also the only known example like this. At this level he also gained the right to wear sandals.



[repair graphic]

4.5.4 FOUR CAPTIVE PRIESTS - CICITLALLO CUEXTECATL

Referred to as the Cicitlallo Cuextecatl, or the starry Cuextecatl, this was another suit type adopted from the Huastecs. The suit represents the night sky, and is shown in Aztec use only here in the Codex Mendoza warrior priest list. The Florentine Codex shows the suit in use by the Huastecs at least 3 times, but for them the suit is split into a left and right side, one being white dots on black background, the other black dots on a white background. Two of the images carry a back banner, and all three carry shield designs unrelated to the suit style. Whether this applies to Aztec use is not known. I have included a sample of this second suit style below.



Mendoza



Huastec

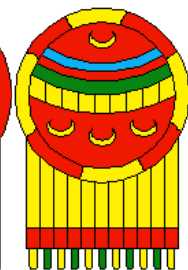


Primeros Shield Variant

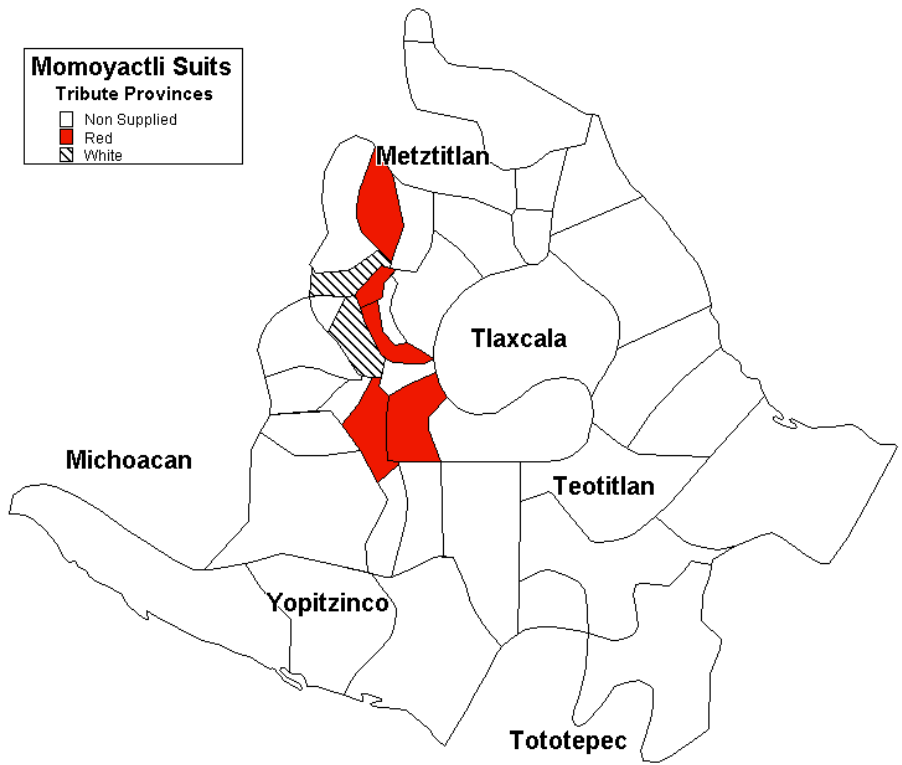
The Primeros depicts a starry shield design as shown above, and also lists a Cicitlallo coyote suit. Refer section 4.3.6 for an illustration. It is not known whether the coyote version was applicable to this rank of priest, or to the coyote rank.

4.5.5 FIVE CAPTIVE PRIESTS - MOMOYACTLI

Referred to as the Momoyactli due to the back banner, which means a spray of plumes. The suit as described in the priest list comes as a plain red suit with an eagle claw shield, while those described within the tributes come with variants of the cuexyo shield, usually the red banded rim version. The suit was supplied by 7 provinces and came in three style patterns, 41 of an all red suit, 40 of a white suit with red extremities, or 40 of a white with red extremities. The back banners come in a variety of slightly different styles, and one should refer to the tribute sections to examine these. One should be aware of the unsophisticated nature of the Aztec art in relation to perspective and shape. Consideration should be given to the fact that though the back banner looks to be fin like running from front to back, it may in fact represent a semi circular shape with radiates out like a great fan as shown in the example graphic below.

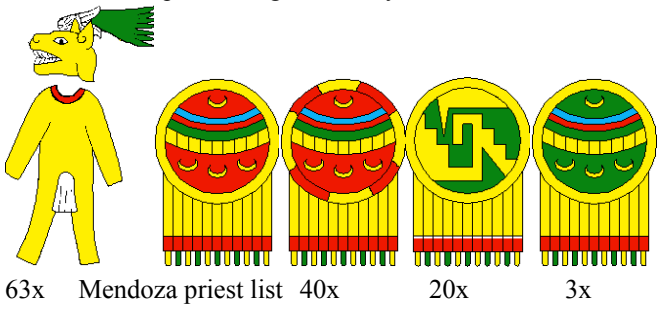


Red with white extremities, white with red extremities Matricula Variants optional banner arrangement

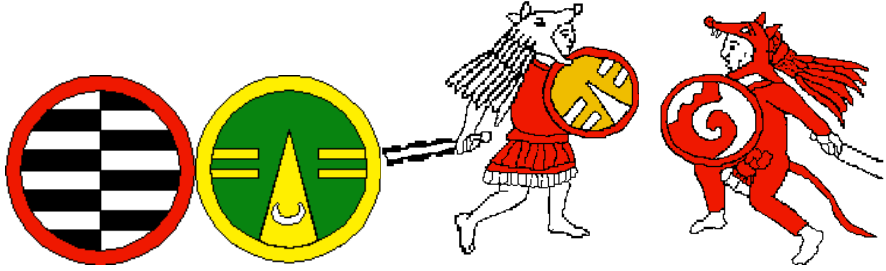


4.5.6 SIX PLUS CAPTIVE PRIESTS - COYOTE

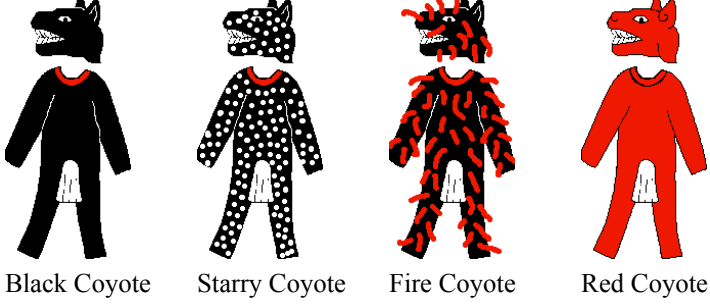
Stylised on the coyote, this suit is always supplied in yellow in the Codex Mendoza. Tribute was received from 6 provinces, yielding 63 suits. The Priest List shows a plain red cuexyo shield in use, though tribute shields numbered 40 red banded versions, 20 xicalcolihqui, and 3 green cuexyo. This suit does not have an associated back banner in any illustrations.



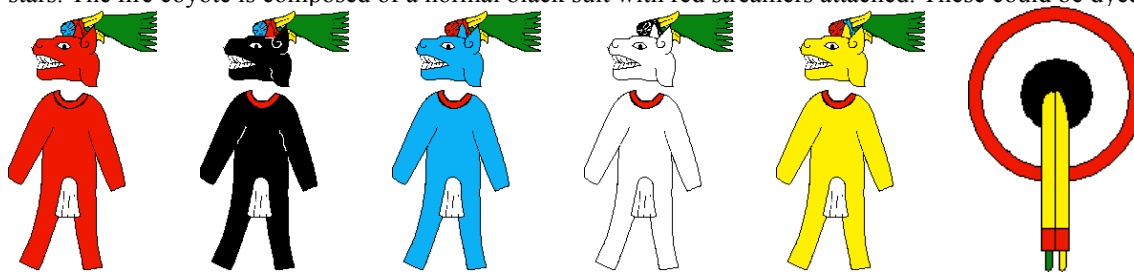
Images of the coyote appear a number of times in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala and Florentine Codex, where the colouring does not always appear complete. Common colours are all white or all red. Images of the suit in use indicate a variety of shield designs, and variations on whether teeth were attached to the helm.



The suit is shown with many variations in the Primeros Memoriales³⁸ though only one image is a full figure carrying a shield. Suits are broken into plain coyote suits for normal priests, or suits with feather bundles to the head for lordly priests. All the suits represented had long tails drawn as long as the leggings of the suit.



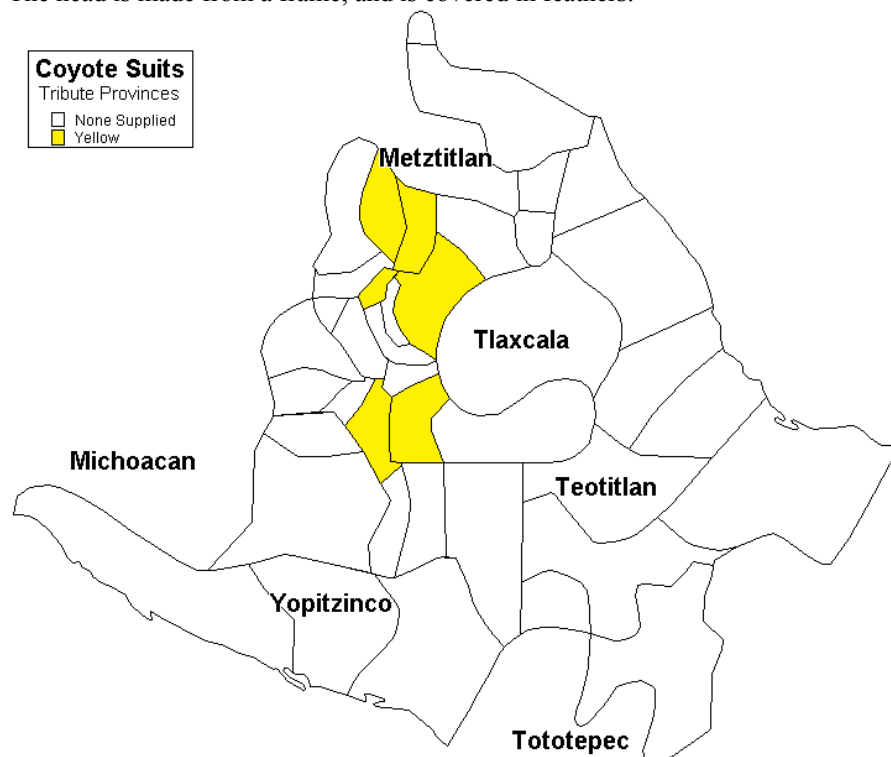
The starry coyote is composed of a normal black suit made with turkey hen feathers with white feathers attached to represent the stars. The fire coyote is composed of a normal black suit with red streamers attached. These could be dyed cotton or paper.



Red Coyote Black Coyote Blue Coyote White Coyote Yellow Coyote Black Disk

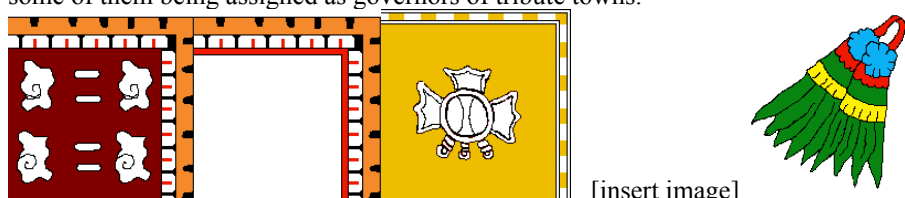
The black disk shield is shown being carried by a yellow coyote. The red coyote in this list is called a Chamal Coyote and is drawn in red, whereas the red coyote in the non noble list is called a Tlapal Coyote. I suspect the suit should instead be brown for the noble coyote version.

The head is made from a frame, and is covered in feathers.



4.5.7 PRIESTLY COMMANDERS

Codex Mendoza illustrates four high ranking priests who were commanders in the army.³⁹ They are not shown with any particular suit, merely wearing their mantle. They are referred to as the Tlacochealcatl (Keeper of the House of Darts, refer Section 4.5.8 for further details,) Tezacacoatl (Keeper of the Mirrored Snake), Ticocyahuatl (Keeper of the bowl of Fatigue) and Tocuiltcatl (Keeper of the Worm on the Blade of Maize.) They were assigned to look after whatever duties the lords of the Aztecs required, some of them being assigned as governors of tribute towns.



Tlacochealcatl Tezacacoatl Ticocyahuatl Tocuiltcatl

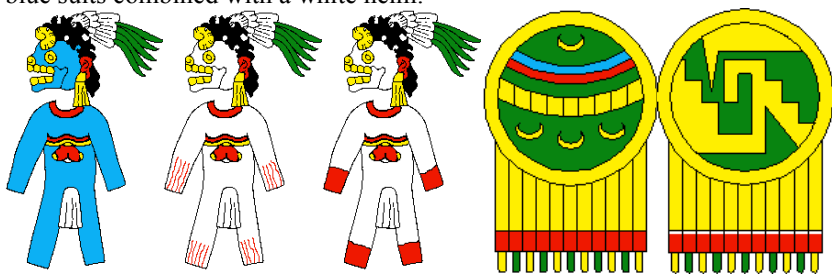
4.5.8 TZITZIMITL / TLACOCHCALCATL

The Tzitzimitl's association is unknown. It means literally 'The Demon of the Air,' which is a term usually female in scope. Within the Codex Mendoza commander list, this suit type is listed as a Tlacochealcatl, one of the high ranking Priest Warriors.⁴⁰ This name means the Keeper of the House of Darts. This title was awarded after a long period of faithful and exemplary service. The Primeros Memoriales lists the helm as a possible accoutrement of a noble warrior - refer discussion on the Eagle warrior (section XX)

The suit was sent in tribute from 13 provinces and came in 1 red, 6 blue, 4 yellow and 2 variations of white. It could be supplied

39 Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p91, 99
 40 Codex Mendoza – Aztec Manuscript by Kurt Ross p101, 105

with either cuexyo shields (green commonly, but there is one red) or the xicalcolihqui shield. The blue version shown below could be altered to red or yellow by replacing the blue portions shown with the appropriate colour. The Matricula shows one of the blue suits combined with a white helm.

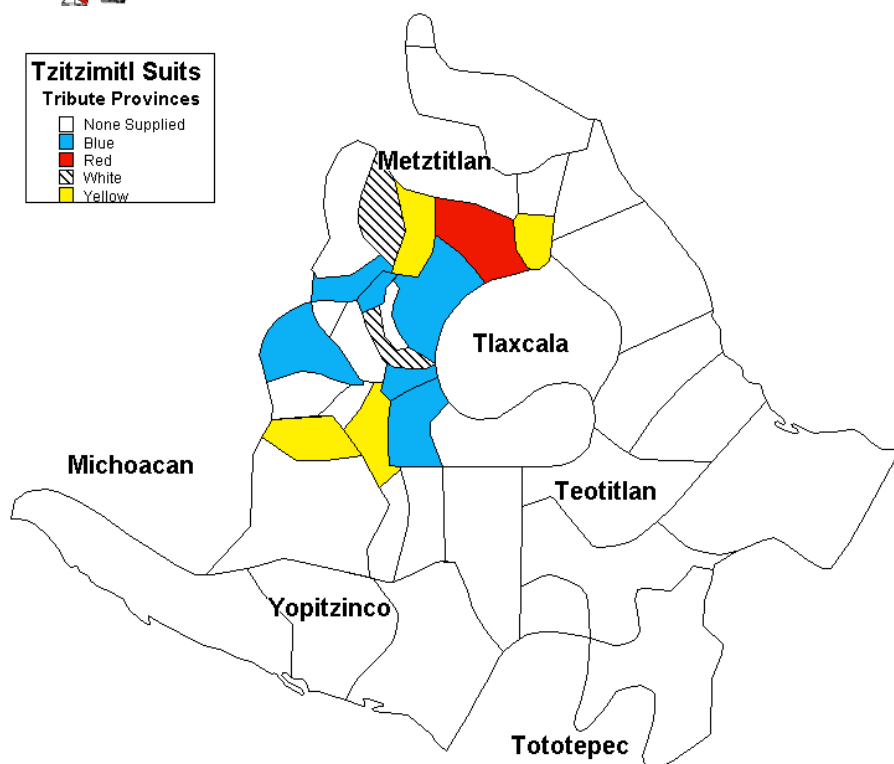


The Primeros Memoriales indicates the Tzitzimitl helm among the list of lordly accoutrements.

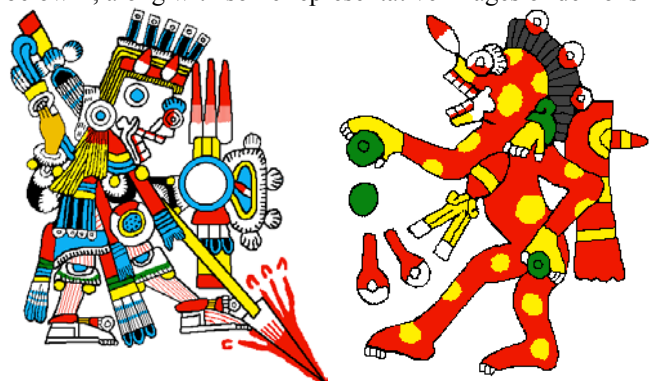


This image shows one of the Aztec generals from Codex Mendoza, complete with his resplendant back banner. The gold portions to the shield and ear rings are probably actual gold.

Tzitzimitl Suits	
Tribute Provinces	
	None Supplied
	Blue
	Red
	White
	Yellow



Stylistically the suit appears very similar to Mictantecuhtli, the god of death, an example from the Codex Borgia is reproduced below ⁴¹, along with some representative images of demons from the same Codex.



Mictantecuhtli [repair graphic]

Demon

Demon [complete graphic]

4.6 OTHER WARRIOR SUITS

The tribute lists from Codex Mendoza yield a few suits that aren't on the warrior/priest lists, and there are also suit types missing

41 Codex Borgia plate 23 and plate 22

completely from Codex Mendoza. This section details these suits. Certain suits listed are modeled directly upon certain of the Aztec gods and the way they are adorned, and one must assume that as these suits are shown being worn by those of very high rank, in many cases rulers, they would be almost unique. It is implied in some texts that certain nobles of high rank, such as governors, had their own unique suit style based upon their personal whims, most based on mythological and godly themes. The Florentine Codex lists some of these rulers wearing as many as 16 different types of suits.⁴²

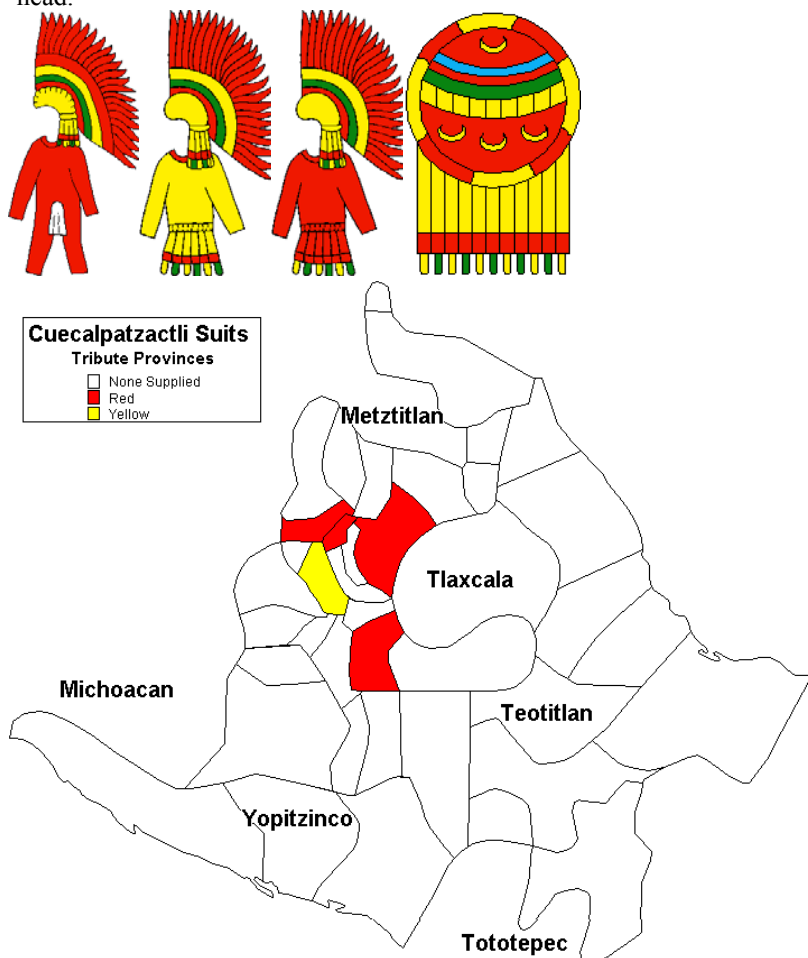
4.6.1 PATZACTLI

For the purpose of this document, I shall take all the Patzactlis together as one style, though there are 5 sub styles. In essence the Patzactli is formed by an umbrella shaped frame with a rear facing feather fringe. The top of the umbrella is decorated with a fin or fins of feathers or arrows. It is not clear from sources whether it was a back banner or a headdress. Both types are clearly defined and illustrated, however, both versions are named exactly the same.

The patzactli is probably the quetzal devices being mentioned in the Florentine Codex⁴³ concerning the pochteca siege of the Anauac, and were in turn presented to the pochteca as insignia by Auitzotzin in [confirm date]. There are no textual descriptions of exactly where the patzactli belongs in warrior ranking terms. Oblique reading from the Florentine appears to imply it is exclusive to the pochteca, and can be worn by warriors of the Tequihua level

Two of these items are listed as tribute from provinces in the Codex Mendoza where they appear to be suit and helm styles. These are the Cuezal Patzactli and the Quetzal Patzactli. The Codex does not explain their use or symbolism. Duran's History also shows the headpiece in use by very high level leaders in many images.⁴⁴ The Matricula de Tributos draws the two items in a slightly different way in which it at times could be construed as a back banner. They are not shown with a banner frame at any time, but offset against this, neither are the Quaxalotl banners in the same document. The Primeros Memoriales gives a different version of the Mendoza items, drawing and describing both as banners.⁴⁵ Therefore it is not clear whether these should be read as helms or as banners.

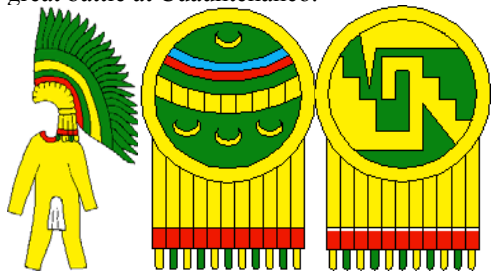
The Cuezal Patzactli was sent in tribute numbers of 20 and came with red crest feathers and suit from the scarlet macaw with a red cuexyo shield. A short skirt version is also possible, the suit coming in either red or yellow. Five provinces sent in tribute 60 full red suits, with 20 yellow skirt and 20 red skirt variants. The Primeros says that it was "A frame fashioned like a head, which is covered with feathers. On top is a row entirely of macaw feathers." The yellow portion shown in the images below refers to the 'head.'



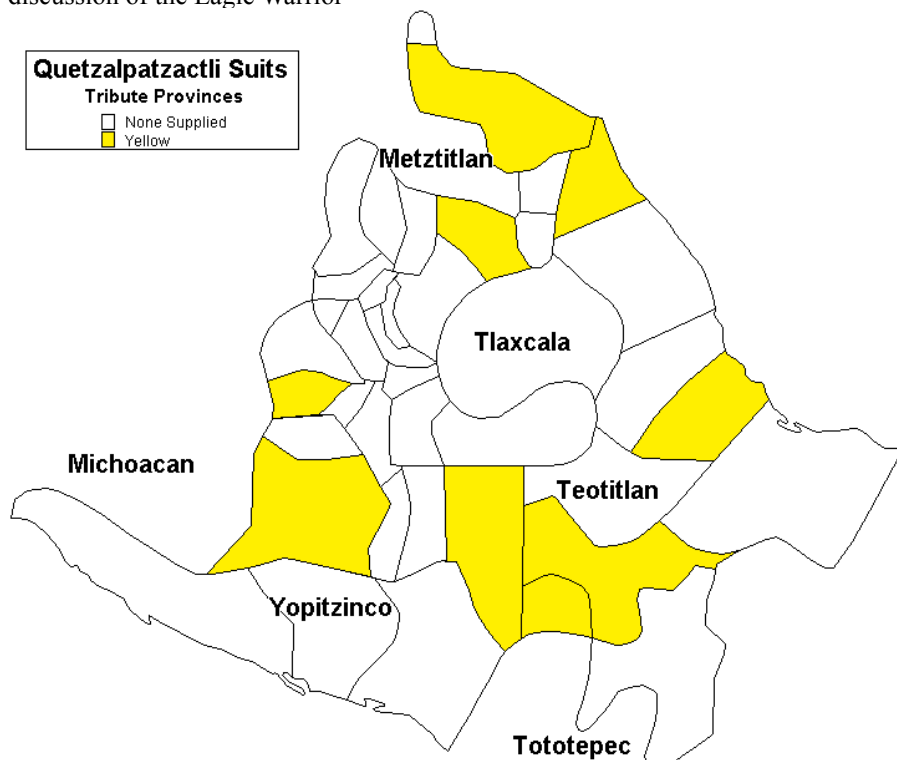
Quetzal Patzactli were sent individually as tribute, being supplied from 9 provinces. They all came with yellow suits and green

42 See if you can find the actual representations in the Florentine Codex to confirm this
 43 Florentine Codex - Book 9 - p3-8
 44 History of the Indies by Duran – by Doris Heyden – for example, refer Plates 11,12,14,21,22,23,27,31
 45 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume plate 72r, 76v – text volume p265,271

crest feathers from the quetzal. A green cuexyo shield was supplied from 2 provinces, while the other 7 supplied xicalcolihqui shields. The Primeros describes its construction as *“a frame is fashioned. It is covered with diverse feathers [many colours.] On top, on each side, are rows of quetzal feathers which face each other.”* It was absorbed into the Aztec military suit style after a great battle at Cuauhtenanco.⁴⁶

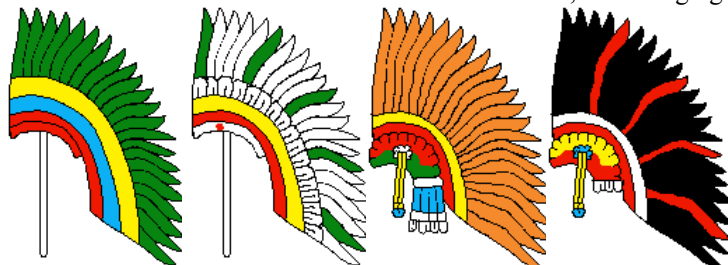


These two suit styles are supplied in quite large numbers (100 & 9) from 14 provinces, the third highest in numbers of tribute suits, yet it is not a defined warrior or suit type in the Mendoza priest or warrior list. The Primeros lists the Quetzal Patzactli as the accoutrements of a great noble, and the other four Patzactlis as accoutrements of the eagle warriors. Refer section 6.2.1 for further discussion of the Eagle Warrior



As a banner, it appears in a number of images in various codexes, variously as being carried by very high level warriors. It appears in the Florentine Codex⁴⁷ drawn in many examples, being carried by warriors in eagle costume, or by Cuachique and Otomi warriors. At times it is shown accompanying the Tlacohtcalcatl. In book X it is shown being carried by a warrior in Eagle suit.

Three other variations are also shown in the Primeros, all belonging to the Eagle warrior list. These are illustrated below.



Quetzal Ytz Cuezal Cacal Tlacocho

The ridges of the Quetzal Patzactli are made from the feathers of the Quetzal, the Ytz Patzactli is made from the feathers of the white heron, the Cuezal Patzactli from the feathers of the macaw, and the Cacal Patzactli from the feathers of the crow. The ridge to the Tlacocho is formed from quills formed into arrows.

There is not much evidence upon which to determine what this style of banner is for. Judging by the numbers supplied in tribute, they must have been quite common on the battlefield as far as suit/banner styles go. One might assume they are command banners, though this does not explain why an Otomi and Cuachique, who have no general command roles, would be wearing them. If the

46 Florentine Codex - Book 9, p5-8

47 Florentine Codex – Book 12 by Anderson & Dibble - various illustrations

Primeros Memoriales ranks its items in the order in which they appear, which may not necessarily be the case, the Patzactlis are directly behind the Quaxalotl in rank. This may be backed up by the fact that certain images in the Florentine⁴⁸ the Quaxalotl and Patzactli are shown together, or the Patzactli in battle scenes without the accompanying Quaxalotl. One might assume that the Patzactli shown in these scenes is the Quetzal version, though regrettably I am unable to tell as my copy of the Florentine Codex is in b&w.

The link between the number of Quetzal Patzactlis and Quaxalotls isn't too bad, 9 against 12 in the Mendoza tribute list, so perhaps a noble Quetzal accompanies the Warrior Quaxalotl. However, this does not explain the large number of Cuezal Patzactlis and how they were used. One might assume they were commanders underneath the Quaxalotl.

4.6.2 EAGLE SUIT - CUAUHTLI

This section refers to an eagle suit, and not to an eagle warrior. The eagle warrior as a military order is described under section 6.2.1. To eliminate confusion with this suit type also being called an eagle warrior/suit, I shall refer to it as a Cuauhtli, which roughly translates as eagle warrior anyway.

This suit style is illustrated many times in many codexes that deal with war and religious ceremonies, but is not shown in any of the codex warrior lists.

Depictions of the Eagle warrior fall into two styles, one based upon certain Codex images, the other based upon other Codex images plus murals and statues.

The Florentine Codex shows what clearly look like Eagle warriors in a brown coloured suit (one would assume eagle colours) with a beaked helm (the helm made of feathers) but with no crest to the helm, and a tail to the suit in some instances. It is of interest that none of these images attempt to show the warrior with any form of 'wings.' The warriors, in the illustrated examples below probably pochteca, may carry a back banner, which looks surprisingly like the crested helm of one of the Mendoza Quetzalpatzactli variants, or certain variant banners of the Momoyactli. While this style of banner may look like they may be showing a side 'eye,' they are rather showing a 'rosette' to the front similar to say the cuextecatli suit hat rosette shown in Section 4.3.2.



The Lienzo de Tlaxcala shows an Eagle warrior in the image showing Cuauhtemoc surrendering to Cortes. While some commentators list the figure as a captured Aztec, other commentators suggest it is actually one of the victorious Tlaxcalans, an idea to which I agree. Nevertheless, the image is probably applicable to Eagle warriors from all provinces, and its description will suit here. It clearly shows wings hidden behind the shield. [insert image]

We turn now to imagery from statues, and temple paintings.

These two life-size pottery sculptures [image 1 & 2] clearly show eagle style warriors.⁴⁹ They were recovered from the Temple of the Eagles [confirm] and formed flanking statues to the entry. What is different to these versions compared to the Florentine Codex representations is that the arms are dressed to appear as wings, and also the claws are shown at the knees. All stelae/statue representations of eagle warriors in fact look very similar and very different to some of the codex illustrations, and one wonders if they are showing exactly the same thing.

This image from the Cacaxtla mural⁵⁰ [insert image] again shows a warrior similar to the statue, and not like the codex versions. This image from the same mural shows the warrior with clawed feet and the outfit is clearly not feathered padded armour as the codex illustrations might suggest.

This information gives us two variants for colour, the white of the statues which is probably unlikely, or the multi hues of the mural best shown by the first example above

4.6.3 CROCODILES & SNAKES

Representing images of primeval demons associated with the great goddess Chalchiuhtli, the crocodile or snake warrior is not commonly illustrated in association with the Aztecs.

48 Florentine Codex – Book 12 by Anderson & Dibble – images 93, 138

49 <http://instructional1.calstatela.edu/bevans/Art446-12-Aztec/WebPage-Full.00063.html> and <http://instructional1.calstatela.edu/bevans/Art446-12-Aztec/WebPage-Full.00046.html>

50 <http://www.inaoep.mx/%7Esole/turismo/Tlaxcala/Cacaxtla/cacax13c.jpg> and <http://www.inaoep.mx/%7Esole/turismo/Tlaxcala/Cacaxtla/cacax18b.jpg>

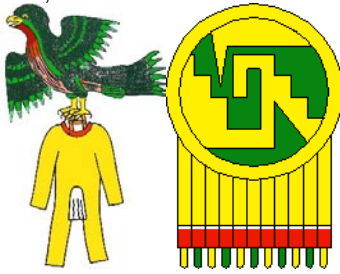
Chalchiuhtli [insert images]

References to this style of helm is mentioned in the Narrative of New Spain : *“To guard the head they carry things like the heads of serpents, tigers, lions, or wolves, with open jaws and the head of the man is inside the head of the creature as if being devoured.”*⁵¹ and in a tribute list sent by Cortes to King Charles

[Insert tribute quote from Cortes with gold crocodile head mask]

4.6.4 QUETZAL TOTOTL BANNER

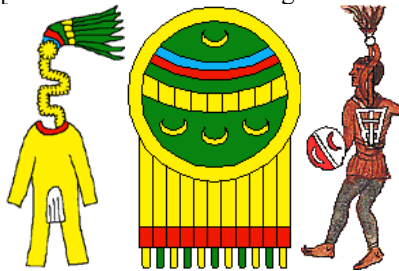
This suit is unique. The Quetzal banner was the Aztec army standard according to some, and was used only for major invasions and call outs of the army. It is not shown in any of the Florentine or Lienzo battle scenes, whereas the Tlaxcalan bird banners are. The banner and suit was supplied by Tochtepec province. The Primeros lists the banner as art of the nobles list, and describes it as a frame made to look like a bird and covered with Quetzal feathers.⁵² I believe it to be a calpulli banner rather than a complete army banner.



4.6.5 TOXICOCOLLI

This banner appears once in the Codex Mendoza as tribute from Coayxtlahuacan, with no mention made whatsoever of its function. It is translated as the umbilical cord banner, though the Primeros describes it as a frame made up with a covering of yellow parrot figure made into a serpentine shape. It is shown only in Aztec use in the Florentine Codex during a sacrificial ceremony, where the carriers could easily be Tlaxcalans, and several times in Duran’s History⁵³ where it could be construed the warriors are of a high level. It appears several times in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala being used by the Tlaxcalans. The suit is plain yellow, and supplied with a green cuexyo shield. The Duran codex shows the banner used quite often, generally with invading armies.

[insert info where this image came from]



Mendoza

Duran

4.6.6 XIPE BATTLE SUIT

This suit type is shown being worn by Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin in Codex Vaticanus, and one must assume therefore that it is one of the more unique battle suits.

4.6.7 OTHER ANIMAL MOTIFS

Other animal suits are mentioned rather obliquely in various commentaries. Clues as to what they are referring to are brief, and visual references almost non-existent. The Florentine Codex mentions several unusual warrior suits.

*“Thereupon they arrayed him, they set him, in the quetzal-owl garb.”*⁵⁴ In Aztec belief, the owl represented what might be described as The Devil, or a creature of great evil. I have attached here an image of an owl from Codex Borgia, which may give some indication for what this suit may have looked like. [insert image]

*“And in just the same way Macuil tochtli also wore his disguise, like the head of a rabbit.”*⁵⁵

4.6.8 OTHER SUIT TYPES

Mention is made in the Florentine Codex of the Otomi warrior Tzilacatzin disguising himself by *“[putting] on a feather headdress with a wig, with two eagle feather pendants which went tied to the back of his head. This was the array of one who cast men into the fire... each of his golden arm bands went, on both sides; they went on both arms. And the golden armbands glistened. And also on each leg went leather leg bands, golden leather leg bands. They were quite brilliant.”*⁵⁶

51 Narratives of New Spain – Anonymous Conqueror p8
52 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume plate 74r, Text Volume p267
53 History of the Indies by Duran – by Doris Heyden – Plate 44, 60
54 Florentine Codex by Anderson & Dibble p117
55 Florentine Codex - Book 9 by Dibble & Anderson p84
56 Florentine Codex by Anderson & Dibble p92

4.6.9 ARROW KNIGHTS

Mention is made in some early wargaming materials about an order of Arrow knights nominally suited out in bird style helmets, which probably is trying to show the Quetzal Patzactli/Cuezal Patzactli suits as drawn in the Codex Mendoza. This style/order arose from the corruption of earlier texts and should be dismissed as being incorrect.

4.7 ARMOUR

I have found no neat place in which to locate my comments on the use of armour within the Aztec army, so I shall locate them here, as inappropriate as it may be.

Some authors have made the vague statement that all, or almost all, Aztec warriors wore cotton armour⁵⁷, I contend instead that this is simply not the case.

Within the Aztec culture, no common man could ever wear cotton, ever, or be subject to immediate death. Only one exception is noted, one who had performed great deeds in battle.⁵⁸ At this point he was promoted into the noble class and gained many benefits of this class, though he never became a true noble. He was presented a jaguar skin jacket by the Emperor and given the right to wear cotton, being now a 'noble.' Duran says this in two documents *"thus the common was rewarded to distinguish him from the noble, and the difference was this: the noble knights were dressed from head to foot in quilted armour covered in feathers, while the common men were given no feathers but wore the skins of different animals [jaguar or white chamois] over the quilted material. This was due to a law prohibiting the wearing of featherwork without the permission of the sovereign"*

Prior to achieving this rank, the common man could not wear cotton, hence cotton armour. This was a strictly enforced code of law. One could assume surely any thinking reasonable leader would give all his men cotton armour, but of course this is a repressive and restrictive regime where the life of every one is strictly controlled and regimented in what they could and couldn't do, and what they could eat, wear and think. Duran noted for example that a commoner who even wore his mantle too long (beyond the knees) deserved to be killed instantly. A commoner wearing cotton was asking for instant death and probably even worse. The other thing that will be noticed from a lot of the codex writing is that it is noble-centric, particularly the military sphere.

It may, at a vague argument, be said that the common man wore instead maguey fibre armour. No mention is ever made of the Aztecs using this style except in their very early trekking where it is more called maguey clothing than armour. It was a sign if their civilising they wore cotton. I doubt they would have tolerated anyone wearing armour made of maguey.

Simply put, no one says that the common man wore armour, and no one says they didn't. Codex illustrations of battle scenes are usually noble-centric, though even in some of these warriors are shown in nothing more than breecloth and mantle. However, it is difficult to tell if they are referring to common men at all. Reading from side commentary on permissions to wear cotton alludes to the crux of the matter. Judging by the common man's miserable life and that they were forbidden to wear cotton, the author clearly thinks that they did not wear cotton armour.

To illustrate the spartan life of the common man (not all of them though, for some still did alright, but many didn't) Frances Berdan in her *Aztecs of Central America - An Imperial Society* (page 56) says

"A graphic picture of the conditions among the Mexican commoners was painted by a Spanish chronicler, Oviedo y Valdes, in the sixteenth century. Drawing on the memories of Spanish conquistadores in pre conquest times, he states that: *"In their homes they have no furnishings or clothing other than the poor garments which they wear on their persons, one or two stones for grinding maize, some pots on which to cook the maize, and a sleeping mat. Their meals consist chiefly of vegetables cooked with chili and bread."*

Ross Hassig in his widely acknowledged work *Aztec Warfare - Imperial Expansion and Political Control* (page 97) says

"Like their civilian attire, the battle dress of the Aztecs showed considerable variation, much of it the result of insignia and special attire granted to individuals to attest to their rank, class, past exploits, or membership in military orders. Offensive weapons were also socially skewed. Virtually everyone carried a shield, but the ichcahuipilli [cotton armour vest] was restricted to warriors who demonstrated skill - tequihuaqueh and members of military orders. Lacking this armour, commoners were more vulnerable to the blows delivered to their unprotected head and body, and they died in greater numbers in both projectile barrages and in hand to hand combat."

I conclude therefore that no common man ever wore cotton armour, and the Pohl statement is vague and misleading. A better assessment of the use of armour should say:

All warriors of the pipiltin (and probably priestly) class and above wore armour, except when they began their career as novices. Beyond 1 captive warriors, the nobles then always wore some form of feather suit over their armour. The common man never had the opportunity to don armour until he had reached the rank of Tequihuaque, in which case he was given the right to wear a cotton

57 John Pohl in *Aztec, Mixtec and Zapotec Armies* p9 - *While most common soldiers wore a heavy cotton quilted vest for protection...* and also *Aztec Warrior* p20 *Nearly all soldiers wore armour jackets of cotton called ichcahuipilli*

58 A Tequihuaque, which equates roughly to 4 captives

armour suit with a covering of either jaguar or white chamois skin.

The armour itself is described in sectionXX

4.8 A QUICK GUIDE TO SHIELDS

4.8.1 A GENERAL NOTE ON SHIELDS

Here follows many illustrations of various shield decorations as used by the Aztecs and illustrated in various codexes. Many patterned shields shown in combat situations do not have the feathered fringe to the lower rim, so it is debatable whether they served any purpose other than decoration, and may have been fairly readily removable. The Aztec name for the shield was chimalli.

*“They use shields of various kinds, made of good thick reeds which grow in that country, interwoven with cotton of double thickness...”*⁵⁹ The Primeros Memoriales describes the construction of shields as *“split bamboo pieces are put together with maguey fibres. They are reinforced with heavy bamboo...”*⁶⁰

Cortes was presented with a ceremonial shield described as *“the shield with bands of gold crossing bands of shells, on whose lower rim went quetzal feathers outspread; on which went a quetzal feather flag.”*⁶¹ John Pohl suggests that for combat the array attached to the lower shield rim might be leather instead of feathers for leg protection, though from what creature the leather is derived is not stated, but probably deer.⁶² If these lower strips portrayed in illustrations are meant to depict anything other than feathers, and some sort of protective strips, I would think they would be of bound cotton similar to the armour, abit like flat sausages. No examples exist I can think of that I can find to support the theory of protective strips, but it would seem practical and logical.

4.8.2 SHIELDS WITH NO ILLUSTRATIONS

Cortes describes this type of shield in his tribute back to Spain: *“Sixteen bucklers of stone mosaic with pieces of coloured featherwork hanging round the outside of them, and with a wide angled board of stone mosaic with its pieces of coloured featherwork. In the centre of this board is a cross inside a wheel made of the same stone mosaic, and lined with leather the colour of marten skin.”*⁶³ The Anonymous Conqueror mentions *“and they cover them with precious stones and round plates of gold, which makes them so strong that nothing can go through, unless from a good crossbow.”*⁶⁴

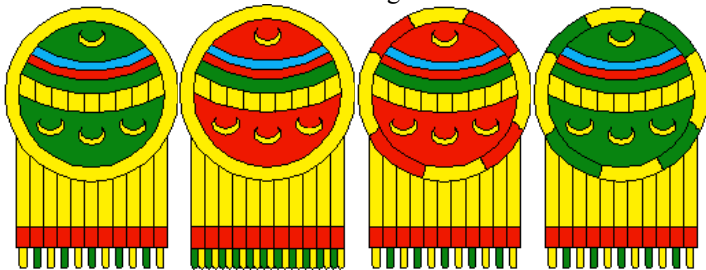
Diaz describes another type of shield which is not shown in the manuscripts: *“... and another sort of shield that can be rolled up when they are not fighting, so that it does not get in the way, but which can be opened when they need it in battle and covers the body from head to foot.”*⁶⁵

4.8.3 PLAIN UNADORNED SHIELDS

Generally shields for the unseasoned warrior are shown as plain, being depicted with a white, yellow or whicker field. Rims vary in colour between red, blue, white and yellow with blue being dominant in Codex Mendoza. The significance of the shield rim colour is not known, so it cannot be surmised whether warriors in one formation had all the same colour rims. Apprentices and warriors who had not captured an enemy would have used plain shields, the feather decorated versions listed below were only awarded to warriors with some rank. The Primeros Memoriales⁶⁶ lists a white field with blue border as a warrior’s shield and names it as a ‘whitened shield,’ so called because the field is coloured with white chalk.

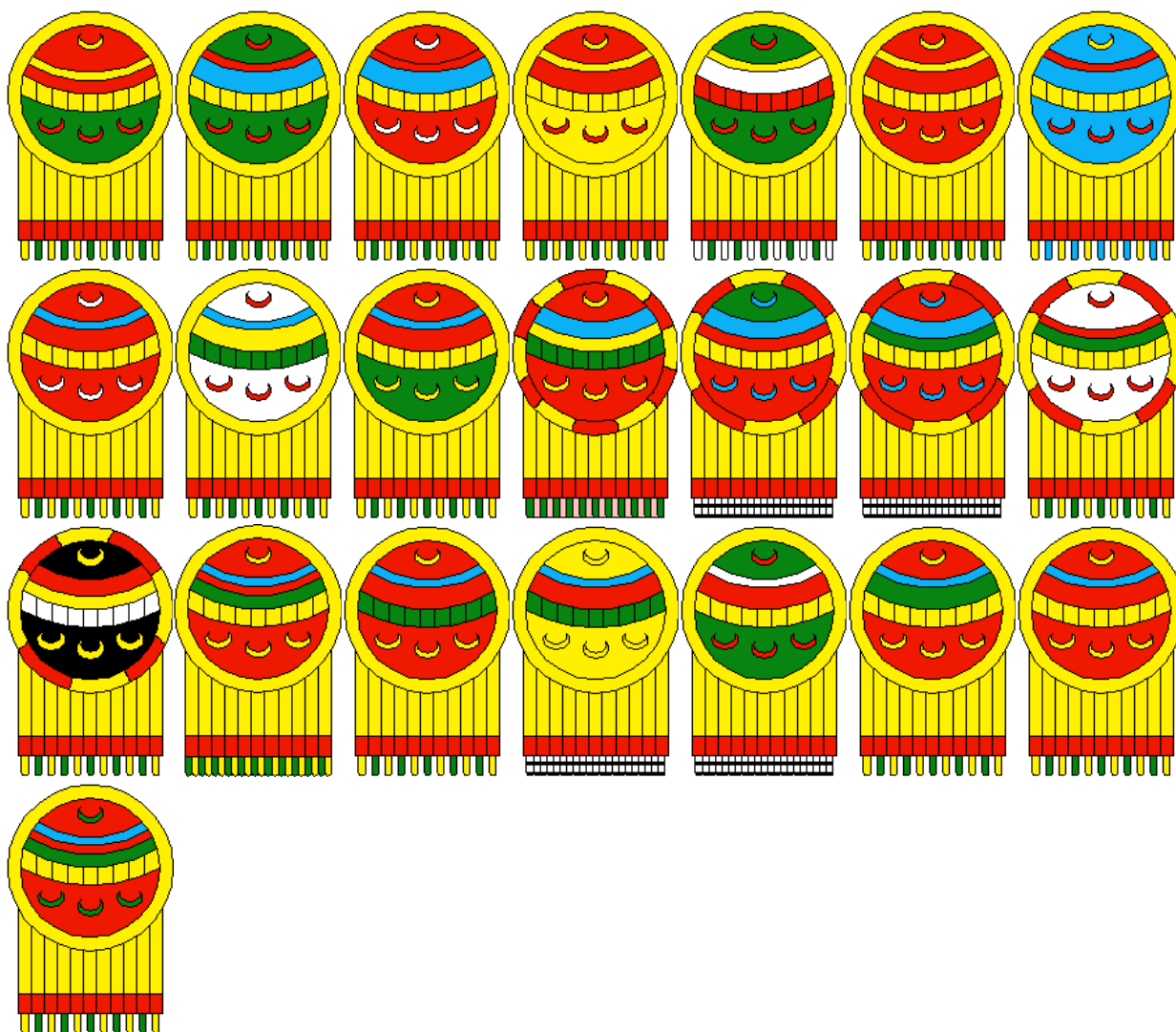
4.8.4 CUEXYO

In the Codex Mendoza tribute lists the Cuexyo was the most common of shield styles supplied. It was used by ranked warriors, and was included as tribute from most provinces. While the plain green shield was shown more frequently, the banded red version was more common than the banded green version.

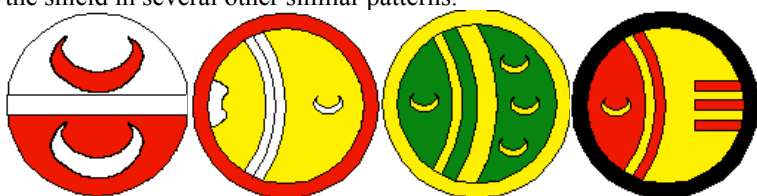


The following versions are drawn from the Matricula de Tributos

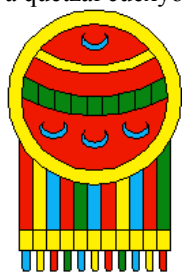
59 Things of New Spain by the Anonymous Conqueror p8
60 Primeros Memoriales – Text Volume p261
61 Florentine Codex – Book 12 - Anderson & Dibble – p15
62 Aztec Warrior – John Pohl p23
63 Hernan Cortes – Letters from Mexico by JH Elliott p43
64 Things of New Spain by the Anonymous Conqueror p8
65 The Conquest of New Spain – Bernal Diaz pXX
66 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume plate80r – Text Volume p280



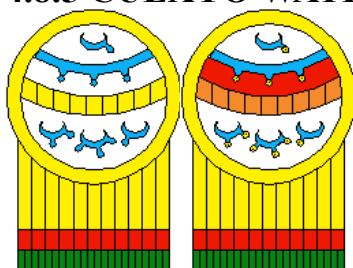
While the tribute shields always appear in the style above, several images in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala and Florentine Codex show the shield in several other similar patterns.



A description in the Primeros Memoriales appears to indicate that the shield originated with the Huastecs, where it is referred to as a *quetzal cuexyo*. It is also shown in the Primeros's usual colourful feather fringe variation.⁶⁷



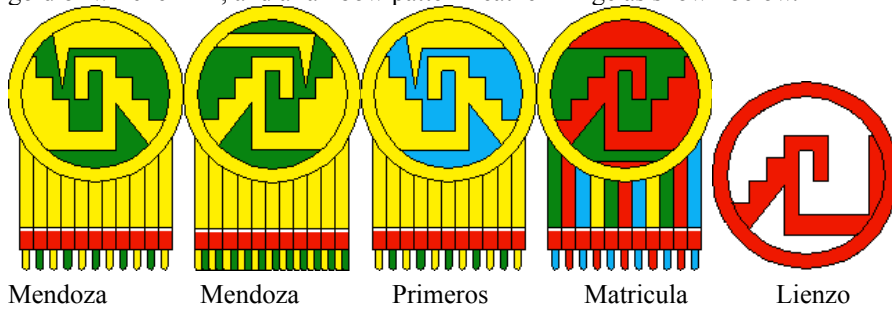
4.8.5 CUEXYO WATER VARIANT



Two variations are shown within the Mendoza, the left is from the Otomi warrior depiction, the right from the Tlatilulco tribute associated with a variant of the Cuextecatl suit.

4.8.6 XICALCOLIUHQUI

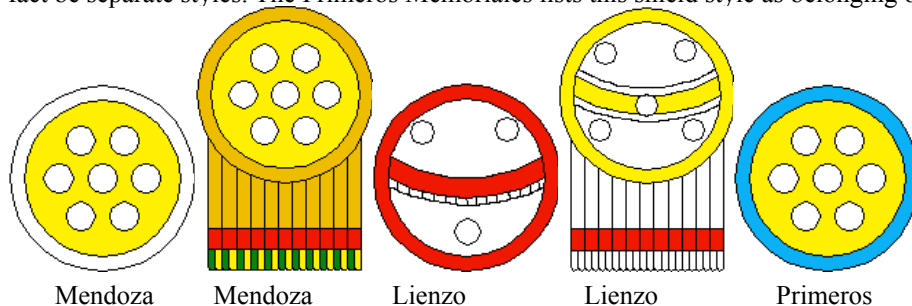
A very common shield type in the tribute lists, third behind the plain and the Cuexyo style. It comes in a number of subtle permutations in the way the stepped pattern lies within the field. Besides the first two variants shown below from the Codex Mendoza, the central field could be mirrored in the vertical and horizontal axis. A variant of this shield is shown in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala, with the yellow portions replaced with red and the green replaced with white. The Matricula also depicts this shield with a field completely of yellow. The shield is always shown as yellow over green in Mendoza, but with many versions in the Matricula de Tributos which are yellow over blue. It may be possible that the citizens of Tenochtitlan use the shield more than the citizens of Tlatilulco. I base this only on the way the shields are shown at times carried by certain warriors in certain images. However, the shield is associated with the god Yacatecuhtli, who was the patron of merchants. The god's shield as shown in the Primeros Memoriales⁶⁸ is green over yellow rather than the warriors yellow over green. His shield also has a white rim with a white paper fringe. The shield is repeated again being carried by a nobleman⁶⁹ where it is in red over a green field with either a gold or whicker rim, and a rainbow pattern feather fringe as shown below.



While the illustrated designs don't quite show it correctly, the coloured and yellow portions of the field should exactly mirror each other to the first three examples. Consider it a complicated version of the black and white ying/yang symbol.

4.6.7 TENOCHTITLAN SHIELD - IHUITETEO⁷⁰ OR TEHUEHUELLI

Tenochtitlan warriors had their own style of shield, based upon the shield of the hummingbird god Huitzilopochtli. It is shown being used by several types of warriors, from unranked warriors up to the higher ranks. It comes in a number of variations as well. Its common features are a yellow field covered with several tufts of white feather down bundles. Examples of the shield appear in Codex Mendoza, as well as the Lienzo de Tlaxcala which shows a distinct variation. Mendoza tends to show the tufts in linear rows, with a total of 7-10 arrayed across the field, without a feathered fringe to the bottom. A Tzitzimil commander carries the gold example below, and I assume the gold colours on this shield are actual gold. The Lienzo shows the shield with 3-5 tufts, and a curved horizontal white band at the centre. It is commonly shown in yellow colours, though there is one example of a red variant. A reference to this type of shield is "... he went with shield of stout reedwork; it was a shield of stout reeds decorated in four places with feathers, with eagle down, with tufts of feathers. It was called teueuelli."⁷¹ So these two types of shield may in fact be separate styles. The Primeros Memoriales lists this shield style as belonging only to the warrior list.



The Codex Telleriano-Remensis shows the shield with a red or yellow field with a white rim with 5 tufts arranged in a pattern similar to the "5" pips on dice for the early portions of the Aztec wandering history. Later in the settled history the field is either red or yellow with 5 or 7 tufts with a blue border.

When carried by the god Huitzilopochtli it may be coloured with a white field, such as the example in the Primeros Memoriales.⁷²

4.8.8 CUEXTECATL

The Cuextecatli shield comes in a number of distinct variants, though they all show a similar style. It is distinguished by a thin pointed vertical triangle in the centre of the field, running from the lower rim. On each side of the triangle are a number of horizontal bands or circles. The horizontal bars are referred to as hawk scratches. Codex Mendoza and the Lienzo de Tlaxcala show horizontal bars, while the Florentine Codex depicts circles or bars. The bars are commonly shown in a single pair on each half of the shield, though the 3 bar variety is more common in the Lienzo. Some 4 bar versions are shown, drawn as 2 pairs of two.

68 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Plate Facsimiles Volume - folio 262r

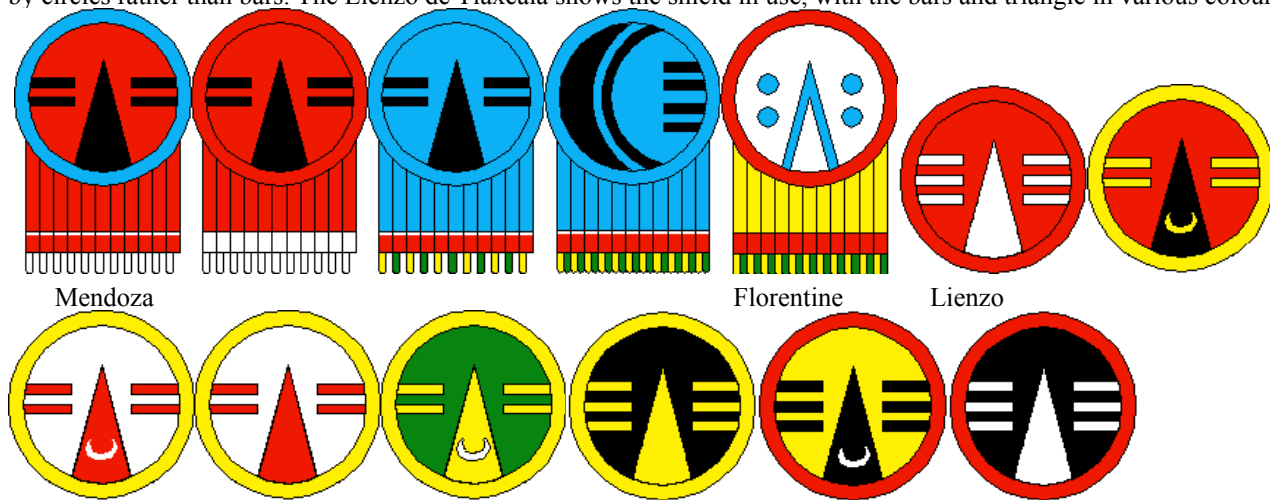
69 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Plate Facsimiles Volume – plate 72r

70 Essential Codex Mendoza – Berdan & Anawalt p198 or Primeros Memoriales Text Volume p94 where it is described as the shield of destruction when carried by Huitzilopochtli

71 Florentine Codex by Dibble & Anderson p53

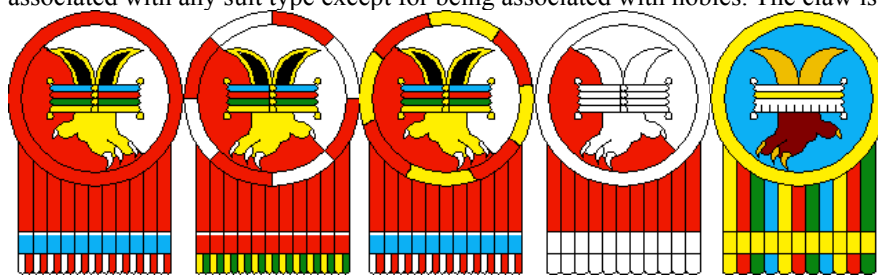
72 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Plate Facsimiles Volume – plate 261r

The shield was supplied as tribute from 4 provinces, always associated with the cuextecatli suit, where it was either completely in blue or red, though the Matricula de Tributos shows the Huaxtepec tribute as all green. The shield is also shown in the warrior list associated with the Cuextecatli suit, in which instance it is shown as red with a blue rim. The Florentine Codex shows the shield a number of times being used by a variety of suit types. In these cases it is usually a white field with a hollow triangle, and flanked by circles rather than bars. The Lienzo de Tlaxcala shows the shield in use, with the bars and triangle in various colours.

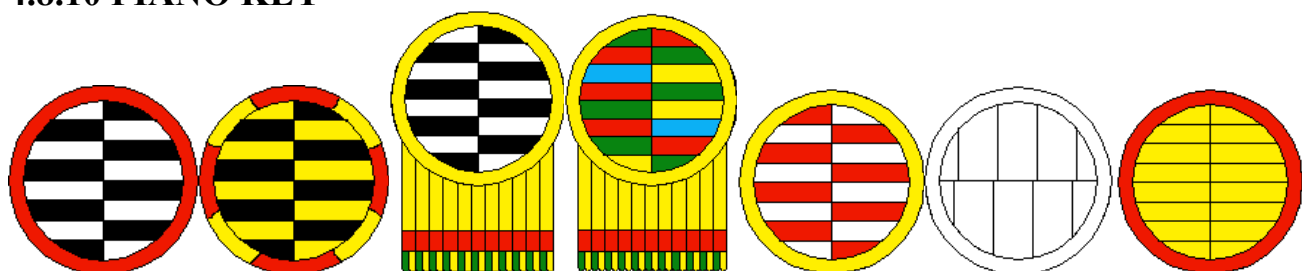


4.8.9 EAGLE CLAW - QUAUHTETEPOYO

This shield is shown in use in Codex Mendoza, where the two banded rim varieties are supplied as tribute from 3 provinces, in each case associated with the papalotli suit. Mendoza again shows the shield without a banded rim as being associated with the Momoyactli suit, while the Matricula shows the fourth version. The fifth version is from the Primeros Memoriales⁷³ and is not associated with any suit type except for being associated with nobles. The claw is formed of eagle feathers with gold talons.



4.8.10 PIANO KEY



The piano key pattern shield comes in two styles, black and white, or colour keys. The style appears to be widespread as several other allies and enemies use it. It was not supplied as tribute, though there are many images of its use by the Aztecs. The black piano keys can have red or yellow rims, and the keys also in red. The number of keys in the pattern appears to vary. A couple of images in the Lienzo show the black and white keys standing vertically.

The shield is shown in use in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis⁷⁴ during the conquest of Colhuaca. Regrettably it is not clear whether the figure represents an Aztec or a Colhuacan. In this case the shield has a blue rim. It is shown in Duran's History⁷⁵ with a fringe being carried by an Ocelot suit. It also shows⁷⁶ an Eagle suit warrior carrying a stylised red and white piano key shield. In another Duran illustration⁷⁷ of the war between Tenochtitlan and Cholula, it is the only shield shown being carried by the Aztecs. Here it is carried by the senior commander, an Ocelot warrior, and a warrior with a Toxicocolli banner.

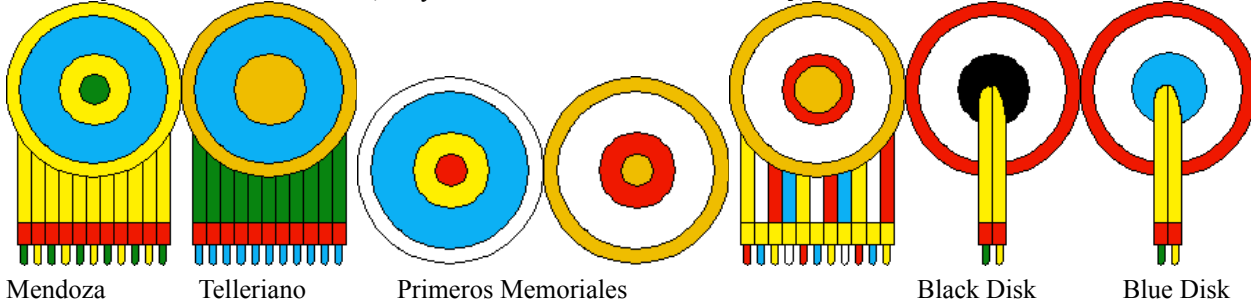
The banded yellow version is shown in the Lienzo during the breakout of the Spanish from Tenochtitlan, where it is not clear if it is used by the Tlaxcalans or Aztecs. Variants of the shield have plain or banded rims. It could be possible the yellow field is not feathers but the plain wicker background.

73 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Plate Facsimiles Volume – plate 75v – Text Volume p262
 74 Codex Telleriano-Remensis by EQ Keber p61
 75 History of the Indies by Duran – by Doris Heyden – Plate 62 Duran always shows the shield with a fringe
 76 History of the Indies by Duran – by Doris Heyden – Plate 60
 77 History of the Indies by Duran – by Doris Heyden – Plate 44

4.8.11 DISK SHIELD

Named after the general concept of a disk to the field centre. The majority of the disks are gold and referred to as sun disks.

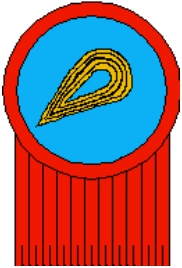
A blue shield with a yellow central circle and yellow rim is shown in both the Codex Mendoza and Telleriano-Remensis.⁷⁸ In Mendoza the central yellow circle contains a green circle within it. Telleriano implies the shield is sent as tribute from Cuetzlaxtlan, and may have a rim of gold. The shield is only shown in use by the Aztecs once, by a Tlacatecatl in Mendoza. A similar shield is shown in the Florentine Codex 79, though my copy is in black and white and I am unable to determine the colouring. It is carried by a boat pole-man. The Primeros Memoriales shows this style of shield being carried by Xochipilli - the Flower Prince. His shield is described as having a central sun device surrounded by turquoise. It also shows the last fringed style of shield being carried by a Tlacatecatl. Therefore, only the most elite warriors in an army, such as the Tlacatecatl should carry this style of shield.



4.8.12 OMEGA

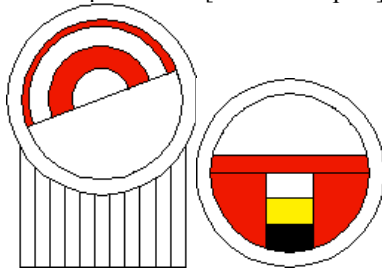
The Florentine Codex shows a number of shields that bear a flattened omega symbol. [insert image]

4.6.13 TEAR DROP



4.8.14 GOD SHIELDS

A number of shield styles are indicated being carried by rulers and gods, a few of which I have reproduced below. Whether they saw service in the field is questionable, and if they did they were likely carried by one of the most senior people on the field along with a special suit.[more examples]

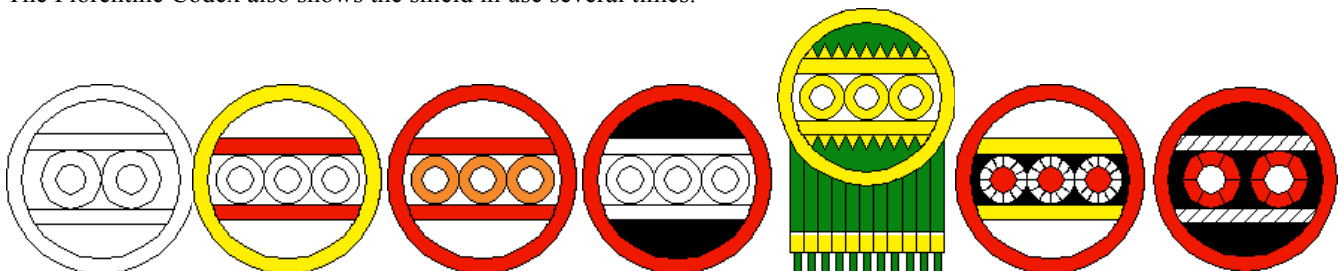


Xipe shield Cihuacoatl

The Cihuacoatl shield is based upon representations of this goddess, and it is assumed that when the Cihuacoatl (war minister,) as her image on earth, took to the field, he used this shield. No one else should carry this style.

4.8.15 CIRCLE AND BAR

Images of this style of shield appear several times in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala, some coloured, some all white. The circles vary between two and three depending on the image they come from. They are always shown as all twos or all threes in each image. The Florentine Codex also shows the shield in use several times.



78 Codex Telleriano-Remensis by EQ Keber p70 and Codex Mendoza by Anawalt & Berdan Folio 67 illustration
79 Florentine Codex book 12 by Dibble & Anderson Illustration 91



4.8.16 OCELOT CLAW -

The Florentine Codex makes a brief allusion to an ocelot claw shield by stating “its shield [is decorated with] a leg either a leg of eagle [eagle claw] or a leg of jaguar.”⁸⁰

This image of an ocelot claw is from Codex Borgia. The Primeros Memoriales depicts an ocelot claw shield in the lord’s list.

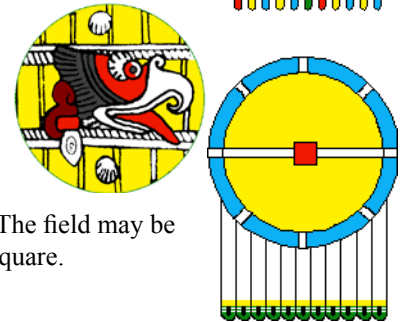
4.8.17 DEATH’S HEAD - TOZMIQUIZYO

The shield is shown in use in the Primeros Memoriales⁸¹ where it is associated with nobles. The white skull, made from cotinga feathers, is commonly formed over a yellow parrot feather field. The rim is shown in blue, with a multi coloured feather fringe shown in typical Primeros style. The image of the skull shown here is from the Codex Borgia replacing the more European stylised skull. Some versions show a skull face from the front perhaps trying to represent the Ychimal shield.



4.8.18 EAGLE’S HEAD

This shield type is illustrated in Codex Borgia, and does not appear in any of the battle scenes in other codexes. It would seem logical this style of shield might be used by suited warriors. [complete image]

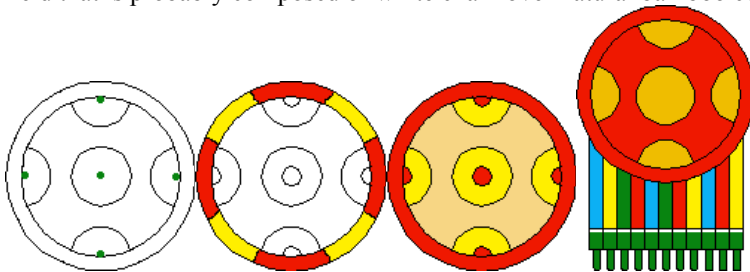


4.8.19 RED SQUARE

This style of shield is shown several types in Codex Borgia with several slight variations. The field may be composed of a white hash (#) symbol with each intersection of the lines marked by a red square.

4.8.20 OTOMI SHIELD

Based upon the shield carried by the Otomi god Otontecutli, it is never clear whether this shield is used by the Aztecs or their Otomi allies. It is shown in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala during the Spanish escape where the shield is extensively used in one image where it could be referring to the many Spanish allies killed, or alternately many Aztecs killed in the waters. As the Codex Mendoza lists the Cuexyo water variant for the Otomi class warrior and then does not list many supplied as tribute, I have included this shield style with the Aztecs and suggest that it may also be associated with the Otomi class warrior. The shield is completely in white, with white feather balls (the main field circles) fixed with small cactus spears (the green dots) over a white field that is probably composed of white chalk over natural bamboo construction.

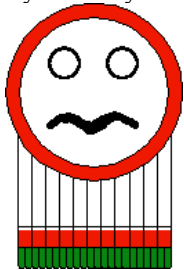


The red variant is called a Teucitlateteyo and is portrayed in the Primeros Memoriales⁸² where it is called the silver stone shield. It may therefore be more appropriate to colour the disks as silver rather than gold. It is included in the lordly list of shields.

4.8.21 FACE WITH THICK LIPS - YCHIMAL

This style of shield is shown in the Primeros Memoriales⁸³ where it mirrors a similar back banner. It is carried by a senior warrior wearing the Heron Back banner (Ytz Patzactli) and white ehuatl, and is listed as part of the accoutrements of the eagle warrior.

This is further backed up by an image in Duran’s History⁸⁴ where a warrior in an eagle suit carries the shield, in this case shown as a more characteristic modern ‘smiley’ face with an inverted V nose. It may be trying to show a skull viewed from the front in a stylised way.



80 Florentine Codex – Book 12, page 113

81 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Plate Facsimiles Volume – plate 72v – Text Volume p261, 262

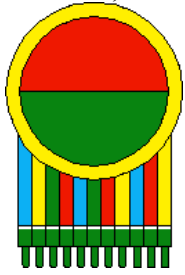
82 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume – plate 75v

83 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume – plate 73r

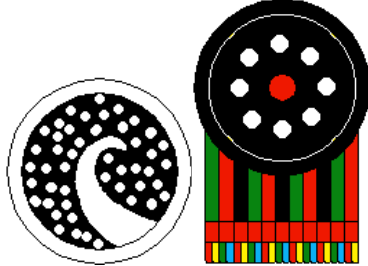
84 History of the Indies by Duran – by Doris Heyden – plate 62

4.8.22 QUETZAL PIZTECQUI - CLEFT QUETZAL

Shown only in the Primeros Memoriales⁸⁵ in the lords shield list, it is shown in the god's list being carried by Atlahua, god of the Chalmecha, where it is not fringed with a white rim. The green field is formed from Quetzal feathers, the red is painted.



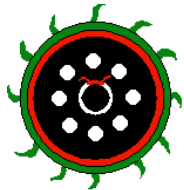
4.8.23 CITLALLO - STARRY SHIELD



Mendoza

Primeros

4.8.24 IHUITE COUHQUI - FEATHERED FRINGE SHIELD



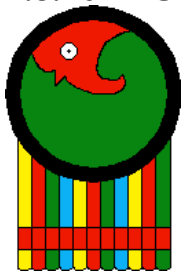
4.8.25 TEZACANECUILO - CURVED LIP ORNAMENT



Depicted only in the Primeros Memoriales⁸⁶ and described as a shiny black background (therefore not feathered?) with a white design like a curved lip ornament. The Primeros illustration is not clear whether the yellow/gold portion to the top left of the white curve is really there or not, as the whole patch is quite dark and an attempt may have been made to colour over it with black. It is a shield of the warrior list.

A variant of this style of shield is shown in the Florentine Codex⁸⁷ being carried by Tlaxcalans when fleeing Tenochtitlan.

4.8.26 IXCOLIUHQUI - CURVED EYE



Depicted only in the Primeros Memoriales⁸⁸ as part of the warrior list shields. A variant is shown being carried by a coyote warrior in the Lienzo.

4.8.27 MACPALO - HAND SHIELD



Shown only in the Primeros Memoriales as a shield in the warrior list.

85 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume - plate 75v

86 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume plate 80r – Text Volume – p269

87 Florentine Codex – Book 12 by Anderson & Dibble – plate 91

88 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Facsimile Volume plate 80r – Text Volume – p269

4.8.28 OMETOCH - TWO RABBIT

A style of shield shown carried by the god Totochtin in the Primeros.⁸⁹ It is not explicitly shown being carried in any of the codexes, though a couple subtle variations are shown in the Lienzo.



Primeros & Florentine Lienzo

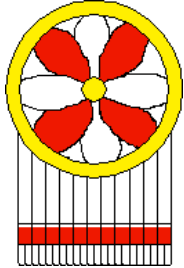
4.8.29

A style of shield illustrated in the Florentine⁹⁰ but not discussed or illustrated elsewhere.



4.8.30 FLOWER DESIGN

Shown once in the Lienzo during the defence of Texcoco.



4.8.31 SPANISH SHIELDS

While there are no illustrations of the Aztecs using captured Spanish shields, I would suggest it is highly likely that senior warriors would have commandeered them for personal use considering their use of the Spanish swords.

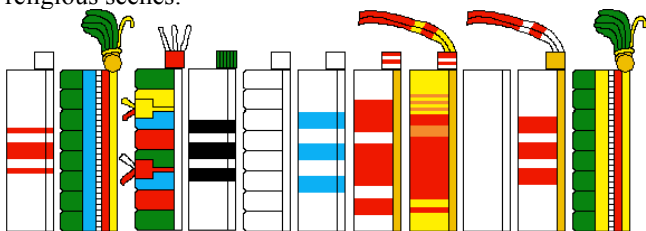
4.9 BANNERS

This section covers the banners that are not associated with particular feathered suit types or with certain levels of warriors and priests, which have already been discussed under sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. Back banners are made usually from paper and feathers. Banners for higher ranked warriors tend to be worked with gold. They are strapped to a frame on the back which is very tightly bound on. The use of such a frame on the back would be uncomfortable in battle, and not the best thing to be using to perform heroic acrobatics. My personal opinion is that such banners are for command and control purposes, similar to the way flags were used in many conflicts. The Primeros Memoriales lists banners as either pertaining to nobles, or to eagle warriors. These distinctions are noted in the banner titles.

The Aztec's bird banner is discussed under section 4.6.4

4.9.1 PAMITL BACK BANNERS (NOBLE)

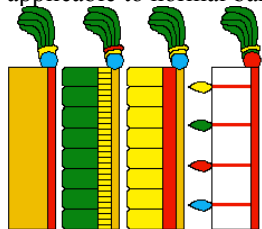
Pamitl banners are usually made of paper sheets attached to the central pole, painted with motifs, occasionally decorated with some feathers, and usually topped by a feather bundle. The banners illustrated are collected from various battle scenes as well as religious scenes.



The above banners are reproduced from various images in Codex Borgia. While used in a religious context, they may well be

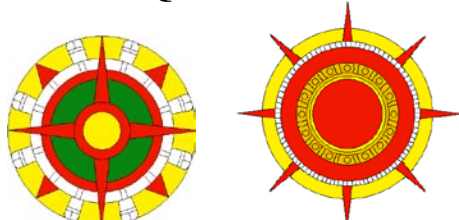
89 Primeros Memoriales – Colour Fascimile Volume plate 261v – Text Volume – p96
90 Florentine Codex – Book 12 by Anderson & Dibble – plate 108,110

applicable to normal banner types. The rounded corner rectangles on the left-hand edge of some of the banners represent feathers.



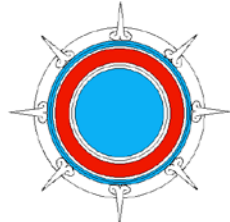
The above banners are from the Primeros Memoriales. The first is associated (as a pair) with a nobleman⁹¹ with no warrior level association. The next two banners also appear in pairs, the left called a quetzal pamatil, the right a caqua pamitl (black and gold troupial.) Both are again associated with the nobles. [last banner is from where?]

4.9.2 CAQUA TONATIUH - SUN BANNER (NOBLE)

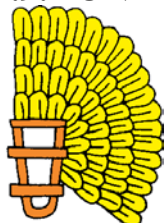


Said to be the banner of Tenochtitlan, and the prime army banner, its use in imagery is very limited. It is shown in the Primeros Memoriales which lists it as a banner of the nobles.

4.9.3 METZTLI BANNER - MOON BANNER (THEORETICAL)



4.9.4 UNKNOWN MENDOZA BANNER



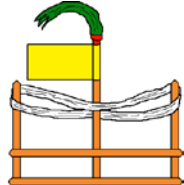
4.9.5 OMETOCHTLAVIZTLI - TWO RABBITS BANNER⁹² (NOBLE)



A frame is fashioned like an earthenware vessel. It is covered with princely feathers and heron feathers. On top are set quetzal feather spikes.¹ This tyle of banner is shown being carried by an ocelot suit warrior in the Florentine² where it is associated with the feather workers of Amantlan, and probably serves as the calpulli banner.

1 Primeros Memoriales Text edition p267, Colour Fascsimile folio 74r
2 Florentine Codex - Book 9 by Dibble & Anderson image 71, p83-85

4.9.6 TZATZAZTLI - WARPING FRAME BANNER⁹³ (NOBLE)



It is made of wood, on it is a length of feather yarn, topped by a quetzal banner.

4.9.7 TEUCUITLAVEVEL - GOLDEN DRUM BANNER (NOBLE)

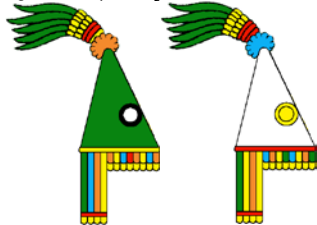
91 Primeros Memoriales by Sahugun - colour reproduction - folio 72v
92 Primeros Memoriales by Sahugun - colour reproduction - folio 74r
93 Primeros Memoriales - Colour Facsimile - Folio 74v



The frame is made in the shape of a drum and covered with gold. It is decorated with feathers with a quetzal plume.

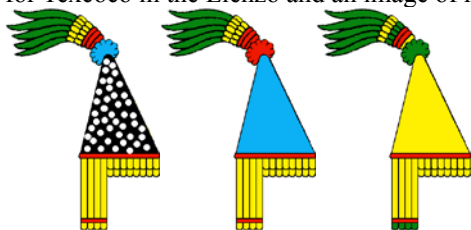
4.9.8 COPILLI - CONE BANNER (NOBLE & EAGLE)

Quetzal (lordly) and Azta (heron - warrior)



The Primeros says that the frame is made into a conical shape and covered with the appropriate feathers.

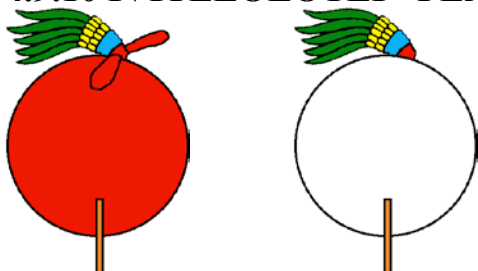
The Telleriano ⁹⁴ shows two other examples, a cicitlallo version and a blue. The yellow version is a reconstruction from the battle for Texcoco in the Lienzo and an image of ritual sacrifice from Duran where it is used as a decoration on the temple.



4.9.9 TLECOCOMOCTLI - CRACKLING FIRE BANNER (EAGLE)



4.9.10 IVITELLOTLI - FEATHER BALL BANNER (EAGLE)



Tlapal (red),

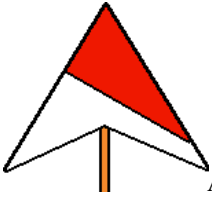
Yztac (White)

The frame is formed into a ball and covered with the appropriate feathers. The red version appears to have a couple or red ties to the base of the feather bundle.

4.9.11 AZTATZUTLI - HERON FEATHER HAIR BANNER (EAGLE)

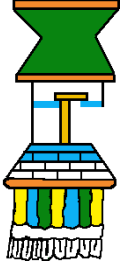


4.9.12 TLAPAL ITZMITL - RED ARROW BANNER (EAGLE)

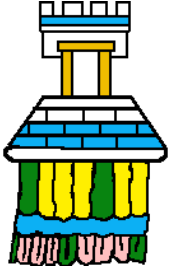


A frame is constructed that is pointed at the top and quite broad at the base in the shape of an arrowhead. Half is covered with white feathers, and half with red feathers.

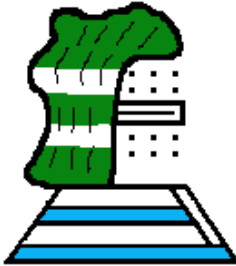
4.9.13 XACALLI - STRAW HUT BANNER (EAGLE)



4.9.14 CALTZAGUALLI - MASONRY HOUSE BANNER



4.9.15 CACACALLI - GRASS HUT BANNER

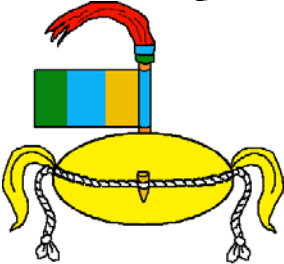


The frame is constructed like a trap (fish trap?) and covered with white feathers.

4.9.16 TZIPITO - FRETFUL CHILD BANNER

Wood is carved like a seated child with a rolled tortilla in his hand and placed upon a frame.

4.9.17 TLAQUIMILOLI - BUNDLE BANNER



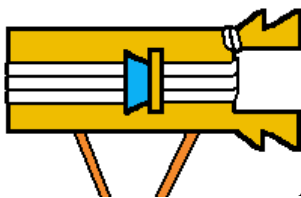
A frame is constructed to look like a bundle. It is presumably covered with a cotton sheet with the ends tied. It is topped by a pamiñ and macaw bundle.

4.9.18 MEXAYACATLAVIZTLI - THIGH SKIN MASK BANNER



A cylindrical frame is constructed, with the facial area covered with blue feathers.

4.9.19 TLAZIMALUAPALLI - MAGUEY FIBRE PULLING BOARD

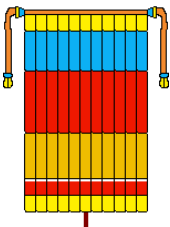


A frame is constructed that looks like a plank of wood that is used for pulling maguey fibre. It is decorated with a length of yarn.

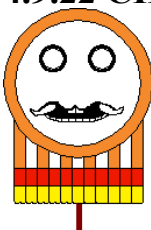
4.9.20 VEXOLOT - TURKEY COCK BANNER

A frame is constructed to look like a turkey cock and decorated as such.

4.9.21 YXTLAPALPAMITL - TRANSVERSE PAMITL BANNER



4.9.22 CHIMALLAVIZTLI - SHIELD BANNER



4.9.23 SHIELD BANNERS

Several of the senior warrior and god suits feature shield banners, which are shown being carried in the shield hand along with the shield and javelins. Due to the javelins being carried in the same hand, it would appear the hand banner is fitted to the shield with some form of bracket. The nature and use of these shield banners is not clear, though one must assume they are signaling devices. They are made of lightweight material, reeds for the support, and paper or cotton and feathers for the decoration.

Cortes was given a hand banner when the Aztec envoys first met him. “And they gave him, laid upon his arm the shield with bands of gold crossing shells, on whose lower rim went quetzal feathers outspread; on which went the quetzal feather flag.”⁹⁵

The Toxcatl banner was described as being of white paper painted with stripes of blood.⁹⁶

4.10 WEAPONS

4.10.1 BOW -

As with all cultures that developed the bow, various arrowheads were produced depending on the nature of what they were intended to do to the target. “Each one’s quiver went filled, crowded with feather arrows, some with barbed points, some blunted, some obsidian pointed.”⁹⁷

4.10.2 SLING -

4.10.3 DARTS/JAVELINS (ATLATL)-

“The tips of the end are of edged stones, or of a strong sharp fish bone. Some darts have 3 tips...”⁹⁸

“Atl Atl - It is fashioned from a thick long piece of wood. The dart has flight feathers and is tipped with a copper head.”⁹⁹

4.10.4 WAR CLUBS - HUITZOCTLI

4.10.5 OBSIDIAN WAR CLUB - MAQUAHUITL

One of the more common of the hand to hand weapons, the Maquahuitl was the rough equivalent of a heavy slashing sword. It could vary in length, but generally was about 1m long, though longer versions were possible and were used two handed. In European terms, they varied from long sword to bastard sword upto a 2 handed weapon in general concept.

95 Florentine Codex by Dibble & Anderson p15

96 Florentine Codex by Dibble & Anderson p53

97 Florentine Codex by Dibble & Anderson p41 referring to the Tlaxcalans and allies, but pertinent to the Aztecs

98 Things of New Spain by the Anonymous Conqueror p8

99 Primeros Memoriales – Text Volume p276

The sword was fashioned from a long length of timber roughly rectangular in cross section for the main portion of the 'blade.' Set into a recess in each of the thin sides of the blade was a row of obsidian chips fixed with bitumen adhesive. The chips appear to be quite thin and roughly rectangular in shape, appearing a bit like the old-fashioned razor blade, and just as sharp.

The main purpose of the weapon was naturally enough to kill and wound, though by having a flat harmless edge to the blade, they could also be used to club an opponent into submission. The obsidian flakes were exceptionally sharp and quite capable of causing extensive damage. The Spanish sources speak of them as lethal, though the instances of completely decapitating a horse needs to be viewed with some extreme cynicism. Some may chose to believe it, though I fail to see how the wider rectangular wooden blade will allow the obsidian to pass right through something as thick as a horses neck without a few slashes first. Granted though, the depth of cut from one blow of the obsidian into a horse's neck would be enough to render the horse dead.

*"... the Indian gave the horse of his protagonist such a blow in the breast that he opened it to the entrails, and it fell dead on the spot ... I saw another Indian give another horse a blow in the neck that stretched it dead at his feet."*¹⁰⁰

It is also interesting to note that following the Noche Triste, many of the Spanish swords were put into use, possibly as preferred weapons, for they had the added ability to pierce cotton armour with the pointy end, something which the maquihuitl could only do by slashing.

The wooden portion of the blade could be worked with patterns both carved and painted.

I am not aware of any tests conducted with reproduction weapons by belting them against metal armour and padded cotton, as it would be interesting to see how well the blades stood up to use over the length of a battle.

4.8.6 SPEARS -

4.10.7 HALBERDS -

4.10.8 AXES -

4.10.9 TWO HANDED SWORDS

4.10.10 PIKES

4.11.11 SPANISH WEAPONS

After La Noche Triste, the Aztecs looted the bodies of the dead Spanish, taking all their weaponry, except for the cannon, which they rolled into the lake. It is interesting to note in the accounts that many of the Spanish swords were attached to poles, in essence forming a sort of halberd. However, it would seem sensible that as many of the swords as possible were used as such by the warrior elite, who would have claimed ownership for them.

This observation is backed up illustrations in the Florentine ¹⁰¹ of senior Aztec warriors, up to Tlacatecatl level, wielding Spanish swords. Gomara says that

4.12 ACAL CHIMALLI - SHIELD BOATS

Throughout the war around the shores of the lake, the Aztecs employed at least two styles of water craft. These are the normal canoe, and the Acal Chimalli, which literally translates as shield boat or boat with shield. Documentary evidence of the use of either is scarce, and limited to mentions in Diaz, Cortes and Florentine Book 12, of which the Florentine is the better source. Illustrations of both types in use appear in the Florentine Book 12 and the Lienzo de Tlaxcala with an image of a general canoe also shown in one illustration from Duran's History.

In essence both types of vessel are drawn similarly, with the Acal Chimalli also being shown with a sort of mantlet to the bow. Both types are shown with a raised fore and aft, a fairly low silhouette, and being propelled by pole rather than an oar.

5.0 PAINTING YOUR AZTEC ARMY

Reference should be made to the various suit types discussed in Chapter 4, which will detail their colour variations. Chapter 5 provides additional details for the accoutrements of war not associated directly with the suits.

5.1 COLOURS AND FEATHERS

The Aztec's regalia were made from either dyed cotton or bird feathers and for ceremonies some banners and fittings could be made from painted paper. Feathers came in two types, the lesser feathers that needed to be dyed and trimmed for shape and colour.

¹⁰⁰ Things of New Spain by the Anonymous Conqueror p9

¹⁰¹ Florentine Codex – Book 12 by Anderson & Dibble – illustrations 126,138, 139, 151, 153

The dyed feathers were usually used as the base layer of a suit or shield. The top layer was formed of undyed feathers. Both layers of feathers were first sealed and formed by soaking them in glue to retain their shape and probably to stiffen them somewhat.

- Black (representing both war and religion) - black cotton was derived from black carbon dyeing. Black feathers could come from the Troupial Bird, Turkey hen, or the crow.
- Blue (representing sacrifice) - Blue feathers were taken from the Cotinga bird (Cotinga cayana,) which yields a rich turquoise blue. This was the most highly prized colour. The province of XXX sent 80 bird carcasses and 800 handfuls of Cotinga feathers as tribute each 6 months.
- Green (representing royalty) - The most prestigious green feathers were taken from the Quetzal bird, which shimmered with a turquoise sheen. The long tail feathers were attached as the long tails in feather bundles, particularly from head dresses, and were of a mid forest to lime green. 3200 handfuls of quetzal feathers were collected from the provinces of XX & XX every 6 months.
- Red (representing blood) - Obtained from the scarlet macaw. 800 handfuls of red feathers were collected in tribute from XX[provinces] every 6 months. Other red feathers used were the red Spoonbill and red Cotinga or red arrara. Red cotton was produced from iron oxide, or achiote or brazilwood.
- White -White feathers were from the white heron or white troupial. A number of white bundles on suits could be eagle down feathers, particularly the Aztec's own yellow shield, though these are often also described as cotton tufts. White for shields was commonly a chalk application.
- Yellow (representing food) - Obtained from the Yellow Oriole, producing a lovely yellow to golden yellow colour. 400 handfuls of these feathers were sent by XX every 6 months. Yellow cotton was produced from dyeing it with hydrous iron oxide.
- Pink - Obtained from the dominant feathers of the Roseate Spoonbill, a soft pale pink colour.
- Orange - discuss vs red

5.2 LOINCLOTHS, SANDALS AND OTHER ORNAMENTATION

5.2.1 LOIN CLOTHS

The loincloth (maxtlatl) was of woven cotton, sometimes embroidered at the ends. The level and style of embroidery is directly related to the status of the wearer. Novice warriors are unlikely to be embroidered. Extremely high level commanders have more ornate loincloths dyed with a red colour (ie not a base white colour). Patterns and colours for embroidery are dominantly red, with some black or orange. The war suit descriptions in chapter 4 indicate some loincloths where they are known to be associated with that suit. However, many suits have no known association.

Codex Mendoza shows all the tribute suits with a plain white maxtlatl. I believe this an artistic feature indicating merely that a maxtlatl was worn but not supplied. The Matricula, showing the same suits, indicated at times the maxtlatl the same colour as the suit. Some of the cloths pictured as separate tribute are very colourful, with blue, red, green and yellow. It is probable some of these are the ones actually worn by various warriors.

5.2.2 SANDALS

The sandals are usually woven straw base, with white cotton heel backing and red cotton straps that run from between the toes to the ankle, and fixed to the instep by buttons. Cotton is usually raw, but may have patterns depending on very high status I assume. High level warriors may have all red cotton sandals, or fittings of gold, or made completely of gold. It is probable that peasant warriors do not wear sandals at all.

5.2.3 EAR RINGS, NECKLACES

5.2.4 HAIR TIES

All levels of warriors are shown having their hair tied up. Warriors depicted in the Warrior list (sectionXX) all have hair knots fixed to the top of their head, in each instance bound by red bows. Warriors from the Warrior Priest list (section XX) all have their hair left long, bound at the neck line with white binding. "He who has distinguished himself is marked by a special manner of wearing the hair, so he may be known as a man who has done some great action by everybody at the first glance, for it is not their custom to wear any covering on the head. Every time that he performs some notable action, he is marked in some similar way, and the great Lords always make him presents."¹⁰²

High level warriors wore their hair in a style called temillotl, which meant stone pillar. It represented a 'column' of hair on top of the head bound by champion warriors (tequihuaque). A corresponding hair style where the hair was bound to the side and worn by the tequihuaque is called tzotzocolli.

5.3 JAGUAR AND OCELOT SKINS

[insert descriptions and images of the variation between ocelot and jaguar skins]

Ocelot faces are distinguished by the two vertical stripes that run from the nose up over the head. The eyes are usually patched white along with white cheeks and inner ears. Streaking away on the side of the face from the eyes and whiskers are two dark stripes that run to the shoulder. The back of the ears is black with a central white patch. Running down the back of the spine are dark stripes, there may be up to 3 broken stripes running parallel to the spine before they break down into elongated spots.

¹⁰² Things of New Spain by the Anonymous Conqueror p7 The new presents also refer to his new suit style as well as possible gifts or grants of lands or slaves

The legs and tail are banded, usually with elongated spots. Mottling patches tend to have a fine black border with the occasional internal black spot. The coat varies from a light orange cream on the back to white on the underbelly and inner legs, with the mottling patches a darker shade of the coat colour. [insert front view image, side elevation image]

Jaguars differ in that they are completely spotted, having no real streaks or stripes. Their mottling patches also tend to be very geometric rather than the elongated shape of the ocelot. Where the jaguar does have stripes is running horizontally down the front of the chest. [insert face view, front view, side view]

5.4 COTTON ARMOUR - ICHCAHUIPILLI

Cotton armour was generally depicted in natural colours, being a dirty white. A few examples exist of green or blue suits being worn in various codexes such as the Telleriano, while yellow is sometimes referred to in tribute lists.

Cotton armour may have hems to the neck and armholes, though rarely to the torso end. These hems are made of leather and depicted as red in most illustrations, or occasionally in plain white. The armour is tied along the back usually, though rarely also along the front. The ties are made of leather, and are usually depicted as red. The Anonymous Conqueror describes the armour as “*certain loose garments like doublets made of quilted cotton, a finger and a half thick, sometimes two fingers; they are very strong... These feather garments are in proportion to their weapons, for neither arrows nor darts pierce them, but are thrown back without making any wound, and even with swords it is difficult to penetrate them.*”¹⁰³ The Primeros Memoriales adds the detail that the padding was made from unspun cotton.¹⁰⁴

The armour evolved specifically as part of the Aztec warfare style, which usually involves only slashing or clubbing. The armour therefore served as good protection against these methods of fighting. It is interesting that the armour does not cover the arms or the legs, or even the head. Therefore one may assume that it was specifically only meant for hand to hand combat, as no protection was afforded the rest of the body against missile fire. The normal shields did not afford full body protection either, so the lack of protection to the limbs is puzzling.

With the arrival of the Spaniards with their high powered arquebus and crossbow, and stabbing metal weapons such as the sword, pike and halberd, the cotton armour encountered its first major test. Reading between the lines of the eyewitness accounts, the armour did not perform as well as the Aztecs would have wanted, with wounds to the torso being often noted, brought about by the fact that the Spanish weapons were quite capable of piercing the cotton in a stabbing motion.

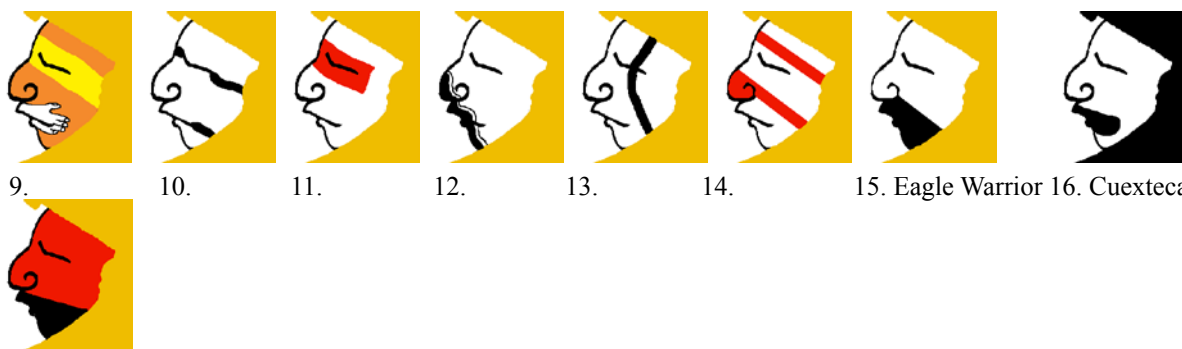
5.5 FACIAL PAINTING PATTERNS

The Aztecs used facial painting patterns to differentiate certain aspects of the warriors. These patterns are not clearly explained or shown, and are usually only obliquely mentioned. Many have purely religious aspects. Besides the Otomi pattern shown in the Florentine Codex, all other images I have collected from religious sources such as Codex Borgia. For example the Ocelot image is from a suited warrior in Codex Borgia, where it is not clear whether this is a common face painting style, or whether it is representing something else, for the pattern is also used to represent an intoxicated person. It is interesting he is also shown with a beard. Generally the faces are shown with a white background, which merely indicates natural flesh. It is noted where this convention is not applied.



1. Otomi 2. Ocelotl 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.

The red portions to image 7 at the lips probably represent blood, as this is a common way to portray it with the small crescents at the end. The offering of blood from the ears and tongue were common sacrifices.



17 Cihuacoatl¹⁰⁵

103 Things of New Spain by the Anonymous Conqueror p8

104 Primeros Memoriales – Text Volume - p260

105 Primeros Memoriales - Colour Facsimile folio 264r

Image 9 indicates a white hand painted over the mouth, the orange colour being natural flesh in this case to clarify the white hand. The lips in this style could also be coloured red and I believe this also represents blood. Image 15 is conjectural, this style of face painting is commonly associated with fertility goddesses, with which the Eagle can be associated. The gold colour can be ignored for this image.

5.6 FORMATION COLOUR CODING

There is not a lot of evidence of how each formation within an army was differentiated. Various allusions are made within eyewitness accounts that seem to bear out the idea of different colours for different formations, though these may in fact be referring to the variations between the warriors from different towns. “*Some companies of soldiers wear white and crimson, others blue and yellow, and others again of different styles.*”¹⁰⁶

Hassig suggests that each quarter of the city was coloured according to their compass direction, based upon the colour of the 4 Aztec generals shown in Codex Mendoza: Tlctecatli - red, Tlocochcalcatli - white, - green and cuachiqueh - yellow.¹⁰⁷

To the Aztecs, the basic colours and materials were associated with the directions of the compass.¹⁰⁸ This came from a long established tradition going back to the Toltecs.

These were to the

East - gold plate - yellow feathers

West - green stone and fine turquoise - queztal and blue cotinga feathers

South - shells and silver - white feathers

North - red shells and red stones - red feathers

According to Duran, Tlacacl introduced the concept of marshalling the armies forces into clearly identifiable groups. “*Listen, soldiers: when you are on the battlefield you can become confused with the enemy and someone might make a mistake when aiming at a squadron and this way attack allies. So Tlacacl orders that the men from each squadron carry a flag on high, with the insignia of the barrio well visible so that all the men of that place will follow their flag and will shout the name of the barrio during battle, so they will be identified in this way.*”¹⁰⁹

One might assume from some of the rather interesting back banner designs, that each calpolli had its own banner.

106 Things of New Spain by the Anonymous Conqueror p8

107 Folio 67r image from Codex Mendoza

108 Florentine Codex - Book 10 by Dibble & Anderson p166

109 History of the Indies by Duran, relating to the Huastec war with Montezuma the Elder p163-4