**Indigenous Morelos: The Land of the Tlahuica and Emiliano Zapata**

**by John P. Schmal**

Morelos is a land-locked state located in south central Mexico and is surrounded by the States of [México](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/mx-mex.html) (on the west and northeast), [Puebla](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/mx-pue.html) (on the east), [Guerrero](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/mx-gro.html) (on the south), and the [Distrito Federal](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/mx-difl.html) (on the north). As the third smallest federal entity in the Mexican Republic (after Distrito Federal and Tlaxcala), Morelos is made up of 4,879 square kilometers (1,884 square miles), representing 0.2% of the national territory.

Politically divided into 33 municipios, Morelos had a population of 1,903,811 persons in the 2010 census, ranking it as the 23rd most populous state in Mexico. The capital of Morelos is **Cuernavaca,** which had a population of 338,650 in 2010, representing 17.8% of the total state population. In addition to being very small in size, Morelos is a relatively young state, having been created in 1869 by President Benito Juárez in honor of the independence leader, José María Morelos y Pavón.

**Physical Description**

Morelos, most of which is located between 1,000 and 3,300 meters (2,900 - 9,800 feet) above sea level, has a very diverse topography. Mountain ranges cover 37.22% of the surface of the state. Plains cover almost one-quarter (24.26%) of the state surface, while hills and plateaus comprise another 34.06% of the state.

The majestic mountain peaks of the Sierra Ajusco in the north of the state divide Morelos from the neighboring Valley of Mexico. **Roughly seventy percent of the state has a subtropical climate, providing ideal conditions for agriculture, in particular sugar cane.** Today, Morelos farmers grow an extensive variety of vegetables all around the year. The chief products of Morelos fields are bananas, chimoyas, mameyes, melons, and tomatoes.

**The Aztecs**

The Tlahuicas are considered a subgroup of the Náhuatl-speaking Aztec Indians of south central Mexico. Although the Aztecs are best known as the inhabitants of the great city of Tenochtitlán and the conquerors of a great Mesoamerican Empire, ***the term Aztec actually represents a very large cultural group that was composed of several local ethnic groups, all linked together by a broader Aztec culture and by a common language (Náhuatl).*** All of the Aztec groups shared a common historical origin and many cultural traits.

Quoting the author Charles Gibson, Professor Smith observes that the Aztecs “were the inhabitants of the Valley of México at the time of the Spanish Conquest.” These Aztecs were Náhuatl speakers belonging to “**diverse polities and ethnic groups**.” In essence, it is important to recognize that **the Aztec Indians were not one ethnic group, but a collection of many ethnicities, all sharing a common cultural and historical background** **(including the Náhuatl language).** In contrast, the Mexica of Tenochtitlán were the Náhuatl people who eventually dominated the Aztec Empire, but they were only one of the original seven Náhuatl tribes that migrated to Central Mexico.

**The Original Náhuatl People**

According to Aztec legends, over a period of time, seven tribes that lived in **Chicomoztoc**, or “the place of the seven caves,” left the legendary **Aztlán** to settle in the Valley of Mexico and surrounding areas. The seven Náhuatl-speaking tribes comprised the following:

1. **The Xochimilca** — The Xochimilca were the first Náhuatl tribe to arrive in the Valley of Mexico, settling around 900 A.D. in Cuahilama, near what is now Santa Cruz Acalpixca (in Mexico City). They were eventually subdued by the Mexica and became part of the Aztec Empire.
2. **The Chalca of Chalco** — The Chalca were the second tribe to arrive in the Valley. They established themselves east of the Xochimilca about 25 km (16 miles) east of Tenochtitlán. Chalco was conquered by the Aztecs around 1465.
3. **The Tepaneca** — The Tepanecs or Tepaneca were the third tribe to arrive in the Valley of Mexico in the late 12th or early 13th centuries. They settled in Azcapotzalco on the northwest shore of Lake Texcoco. In 1428, Tepaneca became part of the Aztec Empire.
4. **The Acolhua of Texcoco** — The fourth tribe to arrive in the area, the Acolhua, settled on the northeastern shore of the Lake Texcoco. They occupied most of the eastern Basin of the Valley of Mexico, with their capital in Texcoco. Today, Texcoco is a city and municipio located in the State of Mexico, about 25 km (15 miles) northeast of Mexico City.
5. **The Tlahuica** — The Tlahuica were the fifth Náhuatl people to arrive in central Mexico. They were organized into about 50 small city states located in what is now the state of Morelos; their largest cities were Cuauhnahuac (modern Cuernavaca), about 85 km (53 miles) south of Mexico City, and Huaxtepec (modern Oaxtepec), about 60 km (37 miles) south of Mexico City. The Tlahuica eventually became part of the Aztec Empire.
6. **The Tlaxcaltecans (Tlaxcalans)** — The Tlaxcalans settled to the east of the Valley of Mexico. Their major city, Tlaxcala, is 125 km (78 miles) to the east of Mexico City today. The Tlaxcalans opposed the Aztec Empire and their nation evolved into an independent enclave deep in the heart of the Aztec Empire. By 1519, Tlaxcala was a small, densely populated confederation of 200 settlements with a population of about 150,000, surrounded on all sides by the Aztec Empire.
7. **The Mexica —** The **Mexica**, according to Professor Smith, were “the inhabitants of the cities of Tenochtitlán and Tlatelolco.” They were the last of the Náhuatl-speaking groups to arrive in the Valley of Mexico and they eventually became the masters of the Aztec Empire.

**Successive Migrations over Time**

In areas that had been conquered by the Aztecs, Náhuatl settlers came as traders, soldiers and emissaries. However, they had been preceded by other Náhuatl speakers who had settled in the same areas earlier. As a result of the successive migrations of people from different Aztec cultures over a period of three centuries, some of the Nahua languages became mutually unintelligible in areas such as Puebla, Veracruz and Guerrero.

**Cuauhnahuac (Cuernavaca)**

The largest city of the Tlahuica Indians was **Cuauhnahuac**, which was later renamed **Cuernavaca** by the Spaniards (who were unable to pronounce the original Náhuatl name). Cuernavaca, boasting a population of approximately 500,000 inhabitants today, is now the state capital of Morelos and lay only 90 kilometers (52 miles) to the south of Mexico City. Cuernavaca, because of its favorable climate, has been referred to as ***“The City of Eternal Spring,”*** while Morelos is sometimes called “Nearest Paradise.” The Valley of Cuauhnahuac provided the Tlahuica Indians with a fertile land for agriculture. The Tlahuica also founded Huaxtepec, which today is called Oaxtepec. Another city in the region, Xochicalco, became an important center of culture, commerce, and agriculture during the pre-Hispanic era.  
  
**Tlahuica in the 15th Century**

By the early Fifteenth Century, the Tlahuica had been organized into about fifty small city-states that covered most of the modern state of Morelos, each one ruled by a hereditary king (tlatoani). Each Tlahuica city-state consisted of a central town and the surrounding countryside and villages. City-state towns were built around a public plaza. On the east side of the plaza was the temple-pyramid of the city-state's patron god or gods. On another side of the plaza would be the palace of the ruler.  
  
The rapidly expanding Mexica Empire — centered about Tenochtitlán, Texcoco, and Tlacopan — first conquered the Tlahuica city-states in the late 1430s and again during the 1450s. As a result, the Tlahuica were forced to pay tribute to the three imperial capitals. However, as subjects of the greater Aztec Empire, the local government of the Tlahuica was allowed to stay intact. As a general rule, the Mexica did not interfere in the affairs of subject city-states as long as the tribute payments were continued without interruption.  
  
**Tlahuica Culture**  
Dr. Michael E. Smith, a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Albany in New York State, has done extensive studies on the Tlahuica Culture of Morelos and sponsors a website discussing Tlahuica history at the following link:

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mesmith9/tlapeop.html>

Tlahuica culture was highly respected for its knowledge of astronomy and its highly developed agricultural system. Historians credit the Tlahuicas with developing a calendar based on the agricultural cycle and with perfecting techniques for growing cotton. Cotton was grown throughout Morelos wherever the land could be irrigated. Eventually, the land of the Tlahuica became the largest cotton-producing area in the Aztec empire. Tlahuica women learned to spin and weave cotton textiles in their homes. Although the cotton was used for clothing, cotton textiles also became the primary form of tribute that people had to pay to both the Aztec empire and their local city-state.  
  
All of the Tlahuica city-state towns had periodic marketplaces where professional merchants, petty artisans, farmers, and other people gathered once a week to buy and sell. Traveling merchants linked these markets together, and also linked them into the larger network of Aztec markets throughout central Mexico. Through the markets, the Tlahuica people, commoners as well as nobles, had ready access to a large variety of goods produced throughout Mesoamerica.

**Cortés Arrives in Mexico (1519-1520)**

On April 21, 1519, Captain-General Hernán Cortés landed on the Gulf coast near modern-day Veracruz with a force of 11 ships, 550 men and 16 horses. In this year of the Aztec calendar, it had been prophesied that the legendary ruler Quetzalcóatl would return from the east. As Cortés marched westward to meet with Moctezuma II, the Emperor of the Aztecs, he met with the leaders of the various subject tribes of the Aztecs along the way. Once in Tenochtitlán, Cortés and his men were given a friendly reception.

However, Cortés' army soon wore out their welcome and with the murder of Emperor Moctezuma, the Spanish army was routed from the capital on the night of **“La Noche Triste” (The Night of Sorrows,”** or literally **“The Sad Night”**) on June 30, 1520. But while en route from the Mexica center of power, Cortés assembled a large army of allied indigenous tribes as he plotted his return to Tenochtitlán.

**Cortés Returns to Tenochtitlán (1520-1521)**

The Captain-General's army left Tlaxcala on December 26, 1520 on its march back to the Aztec capital. But this time, Cortés' army had been completely rebuilt. With his army of 600 Spanish soldiers and between 110,000 and 150,000 allied Náhuatl warriors, Cortés intended to occupy the city of Texcoco and blockade Tenochtitlán from there. With the city sufficiently weakened, his army would cross the Texcoco Lake on thirteen brigantines constructed for this purpose by the Spaniards.

In January 1521 Cortés once again led his force into the Valley of México. They staged a series of raids throughout the countryside, taking control of various cities surrounding the lake. After witnessing the military and technological advantages of the Spanish forces, many caciques in the Valley decided to join their forces with Cortés' army in order to save their own skin.

**The Final Assault on Tenochtitlán (April 1521 – August 1521)**

When the final assault on Tenochtitlán began on April 28, 1521, Cortés had more than 900 Spaniards, including 118 crossbowmen and harquebusiers, as well as eighteen cannons. The cavalry had been beefed up with 86 horses and their riders. Within the ranks of this huge army were at least 75,000 Tlaxcalans, and thousands of other indigenous supporters.

Emperor Cuauhtémoc, realizing that his horseless troops were no match for the Spaniards in open country, decided that it would be better to wage urban warfare against the enemy. Turning Tenochtitlán into an **Aztec Stalingrad,** he defeated the initial Spanish assault on the city and drove the enemy back to their siege lines outside the gates. Day after day, week after week, the fighting raged back and forth as the Spaniards and their allies attempted to break the Aztec defense from both land and sea. They did so a few times but were steadily pushed back by the now starving inhabitants of Tenochtitlán.

Cortés became increasingly distressed at his army's inability to break the Aztec spirit. So, after nearly three months of such fighting, the Captain-General ordered a full-scale assault on Tenochtitlán. After five days of intense fighting, the Aztecs - weakened by starvation and disease - were near exhaustion. The Aztecs fought valiantly against a huge coalition but - deprived of fresh water and food supplies from the mainland - **they surrendered on August 13, 1521, after an eighty-day siege.**

**The Conquest of Morelos**

In the spring of 1521, from Texcoco, his newly acquired base of operations for the coming siege of Tenochtitlan, Cortes sent Gonzalo de Sandoval, with a force to the south into Morelos. Sandoval tried to seize control of two Tlahuica towns, Oaxtepec and Acapistla, but his forces were met with fierce resistance initially. Sandoval’s forces only took the towns after vicious hand-to-hand combat.

According to Professor Cheryl English Martin, when the Spanish conquistadors arrived in Morelos in the spring of 1521, they “found a densely populated, agriculturally diverse region that had provided a variety of foodstuffs, textiles, and other commodities in tribute to the Aztec rulers since its definitive subjugation by Emperor Moctezuma I in the mid-fifteenth century.” The Spaniards also found that most of Morelos was politically subject to five principal rulers in Cuernavaca, Tepoztlán, Oaxtepec, Yautepec, and Yecapixtla, all of which were subject to Moctezuma and the Aztec Empire.

The northern highland areas of Morelos were occupied by the Xochimilcas Indians, while the Lowlands ‒ representing the southern three-quarters of the region ‒ were occupied by the Tlahuicas. Most of the Tlahuicas and some of the Xochimilcas comprised two of the Aztec provinces of more than 40 cabecera towns and their sujetos. Two of the more important cabeceras, Cuernavaca and Oaxtepec, served as administrative centers for the province.

**Cortés as the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca (1529)**

Cortés himself arrived in Cuernavaca and built a palace for himself in the city. In 1529, the Spanish Crown granted a sizeable tract of land that included all of the present-day state of Morelos, as well as all the Indians living within this region. As the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, Cortés was granted in perpetuity 22 encomiendas covering 23,000 Indians located in seven parts of the Oaxaca province, including Morelos. He was also authorized to receive tribute from the indigenous inhabitants and was given the right to their “lands, vassals, income, pastures, and waters.” However, a lawsuit by the First Audiencia in Mexico City during 1531-32 was able to deprive the Marques of 16 Indian districts in the southern and eastern regions of the valley.

**The Advantages of Morelos**

The historian Ward Barrett writes that "the region now known as Morelos has a physical unity sufficient to define it and set it in strong contrast to other regions of Mexico. This unity derives from its basin-like nature, which ensures that relatively abundant supplies of water drain into it from the escarpment and are available for irrigation at its base." Mr. Ward adds that "the region is unique in Mexico, for there is no other one of similar size, offering similar advantages of climate, water, and large areas of flat land."

**Colonial Tlahuica Economic Activities**

With the arrival of the Spaniards, the Tlahuicas made adjustments to their economic activities, switching from growing cotton to growing sugar cane and refining the sugar in nearby mills. To compete with the island-grown sugarcane of the Caribbean that employed slave labor, the Spaniards had to establish the Hacienda System, which utilized vast areas of land and Indian labor, reducing the people, in effect, to servitude. From the Sixteenth Century until 1917, the Hacienda System thrived in Morelos as a practice inherited from the colonial period. The great hacendados became a powerful economic and political force, reaping great profits from the harvest of the sugar cane.

**The War for Mexican Independence (1810-1821)**

After two hundred and eighty-nine years of colonial Spanish rule, the road to independence was initiated by two relatively unknown parish priests, Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Morelos. On September 16 1810 Miguel Hidalgo led Mexico's Indians in a revolt directed against the rich Spanish plantation owners in Guanajuato State. His call to arms, El Grito de Dolores (The Cry of Sorrows), paved the way for the opening salvos of a twelve-year war for independence.  
  
The territory which would become the state of Morelos was a crucial battleground during the War of Independence. After the defeat and execution of Father Hidalgo in 1811, Jose Morelos took control of the revolution. In 1812, the Royal Army besieged the rebel-held town of Cuautla, which was defended by the forces of Jose Maria Morelos. Morelos and his men held out for fifty-eight heroic days, ultimately winning one of the vital early battles on the road to independence. Although Morelos continued to lead guerilla attacks against the Spaniards, he was finally captured by Royalist forces and hanged in 1815. His sacrifices, however, were not forgotten by the Mexican people who would eventually name a state in his honor. In 1821, Mexico achieved independence from Spain.

**The Sugar Industry of Morelos**

In the post-war period, the sugar industry of Morelos made this region one of the richest parts of the Mexican Republic. Much of this sugar made its way to European markets. As a result, the city of Cuernavaca, serving as an important trade center for exports, became a well-established outpost along the Camino Real (Royal Road) to Acapulco. But the sugar cane estates were worlds unto themselves: great luxury for the (often absentee) owners and misery, debt and poverty for the workers.  
  
**Morelos Becomes a State (1869)**

On April 17, 1869, President Benito Juarez issued a decree which gave Morelos the status of state. Most of Morelos had been part of the Third Military District of the State of Mexico, which was transferred to the new state, along with some territories from the neighboring states of Guerrero and Puebla. The first state constitution was finalized in 1870, and Francisco Leyva Arciniegas became the first Constitutional Governor of Morelos.

**Morelos during the Porfiriato (1877-1911)**

During the long presidency of Porfirio Diaz (1877-1911) that followed the creation of the new state, the economy of Morelos continued to be dominated by the large sugar plantations. During this time, the sugar cane estates were modernized and began to use steam-driven mills and centrifugal extractors. These changes created a great new demand for the water and land resources needed to grow sugar cane. As a result, the haciendas expanded steadily, but only at the expense of the peasants, who were unfairly deprived of their land by the hacienda owners.

The historian Samuel Brunk, in his biographical work ***“Emiliano Zapata: Revolution and Betrayal in Mexico,”*** writes that the Porfiriato had brought on a period of "order and progress" which "allowed Mexico a new degree of involvement in the world economy. Foreign investment and trade were encouraged by increasing fiscal solvency, by lower tariffs, and by laws that favored private enterprise.

Railroads were built with dizzying speed; mining and industry prospered; the domestic market expanded. For the hacendados of Morelos - who largely produced for the domestic market - conditions were ripe for progress." To take advantage of the renewed economic boom, the plantation owners undertook massive new irrigation projects and began investing in modern milling equipment. Between 1905 and 1908, the hacendados of Morelos increased production by more than 50 percent.  
  
Early in the Porfiriato, some of the Morelos haciendas evolved into company towns, employing from 250 to 3,000 workers. Some planters were able to organize their own stores, powerhouses, schools and police. They employed bricklayers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and mechanics, and they recruited managers, overseers and skilled workers from Mexico City, Cuba and Spain. "Throughout the 1880s," writes Mr. Newell, "the Mexican government sold to the hacendados much of the common land left in the state, and also granted them favorable rulings on requests for titles to other requisitions. New Federal legislation jeopardized the previously held titles and water rights of many villagers."

During the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, many important towns surrounded by plantations actually ceased to grow. Small haciendas had failed and were incorporated into the more modern enterprises of their larger neighbors. In some cases, whole villages located near railway lines, timber forests or well-watered areas were disappearing.  
  
**The Hacienda System Dominates Morelos**

By the late 1890s, in fact, seventeen families of Morelos owned thirty-six haciendas that made up 25% of the surface area of Morelos, including most of its cultivable land. By 1909, twenty-eight hacendados actually owned as much as 77% of the state's lands. The Hacienda System destroyed many of the small villages by forcing Indians to live on the hacienda. Mr. Newell comments that in 1876 - the year that Porfirio Díaz took power - the total number of villages in Morelos numbered 118. But eleven years later, this number dropped to 105. By 1909, less than a hundred pueblos were registered in Morelos, in spite of an overall increase in population.  
  
"Little by little," writes Mr. Newell, "the peones lost their ejidos, pastures, water supplies and common lands. Inevitably, they were driven into debt peonage, and into the cane fields of the great hacendados and planters. Dispossessed and destitute, many villagers began sharecropping the scrubbiest of plantation fields; then, when their debts mounted, they too were forced to hire themselves out to the hacendados as field hands, sometimes still living in their pueblos, but working in contracted gangs under a foreman."  
  
Professor Samuel Brunk writes that "while some legal recourse did remain, laws emanating from the Sixteenth Century that were designed to protect the Indians rarely worked as they were meant to, and legal procedures did little to stop the greedy hacendados." This situation was one of the causes of the Revolution of 1910 against President Porfirio Díaz. In many parts of Mexico, localized rebellions, led by regional leaders, broke out. From the state of Morelos came one of the strongest and most respected revolutionaries of this period: Emiliano Zapata.

**Emiliano Zapata**

Emiliano Zapata was born on August 8, 1879 in the village of Anenecuilco, Morelos as the ninth of ten children of Gabriel Zapata and Cleofas Salazar, both mestizos of campesino (peasant) background. Professor Brunk writes that "Zapata enjoyed the work of a campesino, especially when it involved animals. Though most of Anenecuilco's land was owned communally, each family farmed its own plot." The Zapata family was able to hire extra labor "when it was needed, but hiring labor was expensive." The life of young Emiliano was "increasingly dictated by the rhythms of sunup and sundown," writes Professor Brunk, "of planting and harvest: preparing the ground in May, sowing the corn in June, three major weedings, and in November or December bringing in the crops."

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As a poor tenant farmer, Emiliano Zapata had occupied a social position between the peon and the ranchero. But Zapata was also a charismatic individual who felt very strongly the injustices suffered by his people. In 1909, the thirty-year old Zapata was chosen by his fellow villagers to travel to see the Governor of Morelos and try to reclaim the village lands taken by a local hacienda. Zapata was refused a visit and sent home. When Emiliano realized he would not be able to accomplish this task he and his brother, Eufemio, began to organize a guerrilla force of poor peasants.  
  
**Zapata Initially Supports Morelos (1910)**

Initially, Zapata threw his support toward the diminutive Coahuilan hacendado Francisco Madero. Although the first rebel activity of the revolution within the state of Morelos took place in December 1910, Zapata held his hand in the belief that Francisco Madero would be able to confer legitimacy on the movement. But, in March, Zapata decided to shift to armed resistance. In the beginning, Zapata's guerilla band numbered a mere seventy men. However, slowly recruiting natives from the plantations and villages of Morelos, Zapata's peasant force soon grew to more than 5,000 men.  
  
In northern Mexico two significant revolutionary forces had formed. One force, led by ***Francisco "Pancho" Villa*** (originally named Doroteo Arango), an ex-bandit, attracted many of Chihuahua's vaqueros (cowboys) into its powerful network. The second northern rebel army was led by ***Pascual Orozco***, another peasant who was discontented with the political and economic situation in Mexico.  
  
In early 1911, as Pascual Orozco and Pancho Villa began attacking government garrisons in northern Mexico, the forces of Emiliano Zapata moved to establish their military superiority in Morelos. By mid-May 1912, Zapata's forces, numbering a thousand rebels, had encircled the government forces occupying the large city of Cuautla, just east of Cuernavaca. Suffering from a shortage of food and munitions, the soldiers of the mighty Fifth Regiment on May 19 broke through the rebel lines and escaped westward to Cuernavaca, where they arrived a day later. Once Zapata secured Cuautla, he was able to block the road to Mexico City from the south. In the north, meanwhile, Francisco Madero reached an agreement with the old regime at the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez, by which the fighting ended. A week later Diaz realized he was doomed and fled Mexico for Europe. In his wake he left a provisional President and a large federal army that was commanded by General Victoriano Huerta.  
  
**Morelos in Rebel Hands (1911)**

On May 21, 1911, Cuernavaca was evacuated by government troops, leaving the entire state in rebel hands. Professor Brunk, describing Zapata's triumph, writes "On the twenty-sixth, at 4 o'clock on a bright Friday afternoon, Zapata rode triumphantly into that city at the head of four thousand troops. Waving images of the Virgin of Guadalupe overhead, these revolutionaries were a ragged lot in the eyes of the urbane. But to the throngs who greeted them - the common people of Morelos, the young girls with armfuls of bougainvillea - they were conquering heroes."

In June 1911, Zapata rode into Mexico City for his first meeting with Francisco Madero. Now that victory had been achieved, writes Professor Brunk, Francisco Madero “was most concerned with reestablishing order: he wanted Zapata's forces discharged.” When Zapata expressed his demand that the land problem in Morelos be resolved to his satisfaction, Madero, always the moderate, could only respond that his suggestions would require both study and legislation. Zapata tried to convince Madero that he should disband some of the haciendas and divide the lands among the nation's farmers. Then Madero attempted to buy Zapata's loyalty with a large piece of land and a hacienda of his own. This offer only succeeded in turning Zapata against him. In fact, every aspect of Madero's agenda was an attempt to please everyone, which translated into complete inaction.  
  
**Zapata’s Rebel Force is Discharged**

"With the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez," writes Professor Brunk, "the cause of the planters received a considerable boost, because its terms hardly spelled the demise of the Porfirian system." The Federal Army was left intact and the conservative Porfirian politician Francisco de León assumed the interim presidency. With renewed confidence, the planters started to put pressure on Madero to release Zapata as his lieutenant and disarm his rebel forces. Soon after, the discharge of Zapata's rebel force took place on the outskirts of Cuernavaca. Each rebel received between ten and twenty pesos, depending on how far he had to travel to Cuernavaca and the amount of weapons he surrendered. Within days, some 3,500 rebels were disarmed and an equal number of guns were collected. However, the planters complained that the discharge of Zapata's rebels had not been complete.  
  
In August, General Victoriano Huerta, a full-blooded Indian, went to Morelos to finish the disarming of Zapata's men, by force if necessary. Professor Brunk describes Huerta as "arrogant, brutal, ambitious, and spoiling for a fight" as he crossed the border into Morelos on August 9, 1911 to seek Zapata's unconditional surrender and subservience to Federal troops. As Huerta proceeded to ransack the Morelos countryside, Zapata decided to rearm and resist. In September, as Zapata escaped near capture, the hostilities between the Zapatistas and the Federal forces were renewed with great vigor. In the meantime, Madero was elected to the Presidency in October and took office on November 6, 1911.  
  
**Zapata’s Agrarian Plan of Ayala**

In November, Zapata and his chief lieutenants formulated their own agrarian plan. This program, outlined in the Plan of Ayala, called for the return of the land to the indigenous people. According to Professor Brunk, "the Plan of Ayala presented Zapata's demands for land, liberty, and justice in a fairly straightforward way." The Plan, even as it sought for legitimacy within the revolutionary community, "proclaimed Madero just another tyrant who had betrayed the Mexican people in pursuit of personal power. The result of this betrayal was 'the most horrible anarchy in recent history.'"  
  
Articles six, seven, and eight of the Plan of Ayala dealt with the question of land reform, demanding that land and water taken by haciendas should be returned to the pueblos and citizens who had held title to them. Zapata's plan also called for the expropriation of one third of estate "monopolies." But Zapata was not out to destroy the Hacienda System and called for the indemnification of planters for the expropriated land. The Plan of Ayala ended with the slogan "Liberty, Justice, and Law." In the following year, this slogan was amended to "Reform, Liberty, Justice, and Law." Professor Brunk states that "the Plan of Ayala would serve as the movement's main statement of goals until 1917 or 1918, and in a sense still after that."  
  
**Zapata’s Alliance with Orozco**

In his search for support, Zapata forged a new alliance with Pascual Orozco, "the mule skinner from Chihuahua who had been Madero's most able lieutenant during the spring." Orozco — with Pancho Villa's support — had forced the Díaz regime to its knees the previous May when he attacked Ciudad Juárez against Madero's orders. By the autumn, Zapata was able to put together a new force of 2,000 Zapatistas. But Huerta and his forces continued to hunt down and brutalize Zapata's men.  
  
Suspected Zapatistas, upon capture, were usually lined up and shot by a firing squad without being provided with a trial. Villages that were believed to have offered refuge to the rebels were frequently burned to the ground. With this oppression, peasants in the Federal District, Mexico state, and Morelos flocked to Zapata's cause, partly as an opportunity to protect themselves and what little land they held.  
  
By the end of 1911, Zapata and his revolutionary compatriots controlled large parts of the countryside in the states of Morelos, Puebla, Mexico, Guerrero, Michoacán, Tlaxcala, Oaxaca and the Federal District. They were, as yet, unable to occupy any of the largest cities. On April 6, 1912, Zapata captured the southwestern town of Jojutla with a force of one thousand guerrillas. In the meantime, Pascual Orozco had finally opened up the northern front by initiating rebel action in Chihuahua. This action was able to distract the Mexican Government from concentrating its full force against the Zapatistas of the south and soon diverted government troops to the north.  
  
By the beginning of January 1912, Zapata's armed force had grown to about 12,000 men. Mr. Newell writes that the liberation army "had organized itself into small, largely self-supporting bands, based upon the villages which, in turn, could be marshaled rapidly into much larger contingents where and when necessary." Each band, numbering from a couple dozen to a couple hundred men, elected its own chief, who owed his allegiance to Zapata, the Supreme Chief of the Liberation Army of the South. In February 1912, 1,000 Federal troops and 5,000 rurales occupied Morelos. However, these forces could only control the towns and had no effective control over the countryside. Their lines of communications, especially the railroads, were frequently cut.  
  
**Victoriano Huerta Becomes President**

On February 9, 1913, a coup broke out in the heart of Mexico City with a fierce frontal attack on the National Palace. Troops loyal to President Madero were able to repel the attack on the palace, but for the next ten days, more than a thousand civilians in the capital were killed in the fierce battles between Loyalists and Conservatives. By the end of the month, Madero had been captured and executed. Within days, Victoriano Huerta took control of the country, initiating a new offensive against Zapata's forces in Morelos.  
  
Immediately after Huerta came into power the amount of revolutionary violence skyrocketed. Huerta was hated because of his drunkenness and tyrannical rule. By this time, the three major rebel forces in the north were mounting new offensives. These revolutionary forces were led by Pancho Villa, Alvaro Obrégon, and Venustiano Carranza. Upon Madero's death, Carranza took control of the remainder of Madero's army.  
  
By December 1913, Huerta's dictatorship was in serious trouble. Faced with a precarious economic situation, Huerta closed down all the banks, effectively freezing most financial transactions. Huerta's army had begun to press-gang men in order to increase the size of the Federal Army. Men were pulled from their homes, cinemas and bullfights and locked into transport trains to serve in the Mexican Army. By this time, Pancho Villa actually controlled the whole state of Chihuahua, while Obregón had taken complete control of the state of Sonora. Through most of 1913 and the first part of 1914, Huerta and his army suffered one defeat after another.  
  
By March of 1914, Zapata's combined forces now totaled nearly 8,000. As the spring of 1914 progressed, four major revolutionary forces were beginning to converge on Mexico City. As the summer approached, Government forces in many parts of Morelos, Guerrero and Puebla were now on the run. In May 1914, Zapata, with a force of 3,600 men, took control of the southern Jojutla district. By this time, Cuernavaca was the only important town in Morelos that the Federal forces held onto.  
  
But, in late May, Zapata laid siege to Cuernavaca, at the same time that the Constitutionalist generals Pancho Villa and Alvaro Obregón marched closer to the capital of the Republic from the north. During June and July, Zapata began his own offensive against the Federal District, taking the city of Milpa Alta on July 20 with a force of 4,000 men. A sustained push on the capital from all directions began on July 25 as Zapatista forces were summoned from other battlegrounds to assist in operations against Cuernavaca and the Federal District. Zapata, flushed with self-confidence, declared that there would be no peace "while the land is not distributed among those who know how and want to cultivate it."  
  
As the summer drew to a close, General Victoriano Huerta, realizing the hopelessness of his situation, was forced to flee. On August 20, 1914, the hacendado Venustiano Carranza, the head of the northern Constitutionalist rebel faction, declared himself President of Mexico, against the objections of Pancho Villa. At the same time, Cuernavaca finally fell to Zapata's forces. With the fall of the capital, the entire state of Morelos was now in the hands of the Zapatista forces.  
  
Suddenly, however, new divisions within the rebel leadership led to renewed fighting. Soon after becoming President, Carranza and Pancho Villa began hostilities with one another. At the same time, Emiliano Zapata made up his mind about Carranza and decided that he was a man who could not be trusted. With this decision, Zapata threw his entire support to Pancho Villa. By the middle of November, some 90,000 troops loyal to the rebel forces of Villa, Zapata and Obregón faced some 70,000 forces of Carranza in the Federal District. The Zapatistas alone numbered about 25,000.

**Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata Meet in Mexico City (December 1914)**

By the night of November 24, 1914, the forces of Zapata had penetrated to the center of Mexico City. On December 4, Zapata and Villa met for the first time at Xochimilco in the Federal District. Two days later, to the applause of wildly enthusiastic crowds, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, with their combined force of 50,000 troops behind them, rode triumphantly into Mexico City. Immediately, Villa, Zapata and Obregón agreed to the installation of Eulalio Gutiérrez as Interim President of the Mexican Republic.  
  
Although peace was momentarily achieved, the revolutionaries quickly broke up into alliances. In December, Zapata and his troops withdrew from the capital to take part in the battle for the state of Puebla. Although Villa and Zapata remained loyal to each other and backed Gutiérrez, Obregón defected and sought and alliance with Carranza, supporting his claim to the presidency of the Republic. On January 28, 1915, Obregón's forces were able to occupy Mexico City as rebel forces retreated in disarray. In April 1915, at the Battle of Celaya, the forces of Obregón decisively defeated Pancho Villa, significantly reducing Villa's power.  
  
**The Peak of Zapatismo (1914-1915)**

"From the summer of 1914 to the summer of 1915," explains Professor Brunk, "Zapatismo was triumphant. Zapata's national power had reached its peak, and he was able to enact his program of social reform - at least in his own region. Due in part to his fortitude and guidance, many of the villagers of Morelos, southwestern Puebla, Guerrero, Mexico state, the Federal District, and even farther afield were working the land for themselves. Miraculously, the hacendados of Morelos had completely disappeared from the scene. For Zapata it was in many ways a time of great prosperity."  
  
**The Tide Turns Against Zapata (1915-1916)**

In December 1915, Carranza embarked upon an offensive that retook significant parts of the state of Morelos. In the previous months, both Villa and Zapata had suffered significant strategic losses while fighting with the armies of Obregón and Carranza. By the spring of 1916, Zapata was forced to abandon several of his strongholds. The biggest loss came on May 2, 1916, when Zapata lost Cuernavaca to enemy forces, which now numbered some 30,000 troops. As Zapata continued to lose ground, his forces were forced to return to the guerilla warfare that they had waged a few years earlier. In the fall of 1916, Zapata's forces made several disruptive raids in the Federal District. In the following months, Zapata's forces once again made progress, retaking Cuernavaca in mid-January, 1917.  
  
**The War Takes its Toll on Morelos**

By this time, however, war had begun to take its toll on Zapata's home state. "The Zapatistas themselves had begun to dismantle the haciendas as they scavenged for the resources needed to continue the war," writes Professor Brunk, "The destruction of war was deeply rooted. It had become a way of life, and it would be an ongoing process.” Morelos was falling into a state of lawlessness.

**The Assassination of Zapata (1919)**

On May 1, 1917, Venustiano Carranza was formerly installed as President. By this time, Zapata had experienced a series of diplomatic and strategic losses, from which he was unable to recover. Then, in April 1919, one of Carranza's generals expressed an interest in defecting and becoming a Zapatista. On April 10, 1919, Zapata went to visit the defecting general. Only after he arrived did Zapata realize that the meeting was an ambush. Zapata was shot and killed moments after he arrived.  
  
**The Legacy of Zapata**

To his enemies, Zapata was sometimes regarded as a despicable bandit. However, to many of the indigenous peoples of Mexico, he was a savior and the hero of the revolution. The people remembered very clearly that his agrarian movement had been the primary objective of his revolution. Many Mexican historians consider Emiliano Zapata the most significant figure of the Mexican Revolution. Even while he lived he became legendary, celebrated in innumerable tales and ballads.  
  
In the post-Zapata Morelos, the citizens of Morelos came to realize that "the mere ownership of land was no guarantee of a livelihood," writes Professor Brunk, "In the countryside of Morelos the expanding central government replaced the hacendados as the arbiter of campesino destinies, and the land reform process became riddled with corruption."

**Languages Spoken in Morelos in 1895**

In Mexico’s first national census of 1895, Morelos had 28,368 persons who spoke indigenous languages, representing 17.8% of the total population of the state. The vast majority of these persons — 27,926 (or 98.4%) — spoke the Náhuatl language. However, Morelos was only ranked seventh among the states with significant numbers of Náhuatl speakers.

**The Racial Categories of Morelos in the 1921 Census**

In the special 1921 Mexican census, we can get a view of the widespread mestizaje of Morelos’ modern population. In this census, residents of each state were asked to classify themselves in several categories, including “indígena pura” (pure indigenous), “indígena mezclada con blanca” (indigenous mixed with white) and “blanca” (white). In 1921, Morelos counted 103,440 inhabitants.

The mezclada population represented 61.24% of the state’s population. People claiming pure indigenous identity represented more than one-third (34.93%) of the state, while white persons comprised only 3.59% of the population. A very small segment of people either did not state a racial classification or were tallied as “extranjeros” (foreigners).

**Morelos in the 2010 Census**

According to the 2010 census, 31,905 persons three years of age and older in Morelos spoke an indigenous language. But, of the dozens of languages spoken in Morelos’ 33 municipios, only three indigenous languages were spoken by more than 1,000 individuals 3 years of age and older. They were:

* Náhuatl (19,509 speakers — 61.1% of the indigenous speaking population in Morelos)
* Mixteco (5,517 speakers — 17.3%)
* Tlapaneco (1,531 speakers — 4.8%)

In addition, 8% of the indigenous speaking population (2,548 speakers) spoke an unspecified indigenous language. The Mixteco speakers were most likely migrants or the children of migrants from the neighboring state of Guerrero or from Oaxaca. The Tlapaneco speakers — who call themselves Me’phaa — were likely from Guerrero, where 94% of Mexico’s Tlapaneco speakers live. There were also 608 Zapotec speakers (1.9%), another migrant group from Oaxaca.

There are about 35 Náhuatl-speaking communities dispersed through 16 Morelos municipios. The municipio with the largest population of indigenous speakers in 2010 was Tetela del Volcán (Tetela of the Volcano), which had 3,028 indigenous speakers, representing 17% of the municipio’s population. Most of the Nahua speakers in the municipio are concentrated in the community of Hueyapan. Tetela is located on the slopes of the volcano Popocatépetl in northeastern Morelos, bordering with the states of Mexico and Puebla.

The municipio with the second largest indigenous speaking population was Tepoztlán, where 2,229 speakers made up 5.7% of the population in 2010. Most of the indigenous speakers in that municipio were Náhuatl speakers who lived in the community of Santa Catarina. Tepoztlán is in northwestern Morelos, bordering with the Distrito Federal. Other municipios with considerable indigenous speaking populations included Tlayacapan (4.5%), Temixco (3.9%), Ayala (3.6%) and Cuautla (3.1%).

**The 2015 Intercensal Survey**

In 2016, the Mexican government agency, **Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática (INEGI)**, published the **2015 Intercensal Survey**. One of the survey questions asked, **“De acuerdo, con su cultura,** **se considera indígena**?” Essentially, Mexican residents were being asked if they considered themselves indigenous through their culture.

**The Concept of “Autoadscripción Indígena”**

In the 2015 Intercensal, Mexico practiced the policy of **“Autoadscripción Indígena” (Indigenous Self-Recognition)**, in which inhabitants were encouraged to express their cultural identification with their indigenous background, even though they did not speak an indigenous language. Mexico’s period of **ethnic revitalization through this policy** has led to a significant increase in the number and percentage of people who identify as indigenous throughout Mexico and in Morelos.

Based on the responses to this question, across all states, the survey reported that **21.5% of all Mexicans considered themselves to be of indigenous descent,** which means that more than one-fifth of the entire population of the nation recognized its indigenous origins.

In the 2015 Intercensal, Morelos had a total population of 1,930,811. Within this population, only 1.98% spoke an indigenous language. On the other hand, more than one-quarter (28.11%) of the population claimed to be of indigenous identity.

Only one municipio — Tetela del Volcán — had a population of 10% or more indigenous speakers (Tetela had 13.29% indigenous speakers). Only two other municipios had indigenous speaking populations over 5%: Tepoztlán (6.21%) and Tlayacapan (5.8%). However, six Morelos municipios had populations of 40% or more who identified as being culturally indigenous:

* Totolapan (67.8%)
* Tepoztlán (55.53%)
* Tlayacapan (48.85%)
* Huitzilac (48.50%)
* Tetela del Volcán (47.61%)
* Atlatlahucan (46.37%)

**Morelos: The Present-Day Success Story**  
The Morelos of the present-day represents a success story by virtue of several competitive advantages. Its strategic location and proximity to Mexico's largest market have provided many inhabitants of the state with an excellent quality of life, services and education. With 1,819 kilometers (1,130 miles) of roads and another 246 kilometers (153 miles) of railroads, Morelos' well developed transportation system is linked to both Mexico City and other surrounding states.

Morelos recorded 826,069 workers during 2017, of which 20% (168,487 workers) were involved in the commerce industry. In addition, 95,173 workers in the manufacturing industry represented another 12% of the work force, while 90,439 workers participated in the Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting segment (11% of the work force).

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Morelos was 241,633 million pesos in 2017, contributing 1.2% to Mexico’s national GDP. The Manufacturing industry contributed 20% to the Morelos GDP, while Wholesale and Retail trade contributed another 19%. Other major contributors were: Commerce (13%) and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (12%).

Morelos is considered to be one of Mexico's most important agricultural regions. Flowers such as carnations, bird of paradise, and chrysanthemums are grown for export. Corn, tomatoes, and avocados are grown throughout the state. Sugar cane and peaches are also important crops. Livestock include sheep, cows, pigs, horses, goats, and poultry.

Morelos is also a tourist destination for many Americans. The state has many golf courses, national parks, and spas catering to tourists. There are also many archeological sites, including Las Pilas at Chalcatzingo and the Pyramid of Tepozteco. The following website of Dr. Michael E. Smith describes many of the archaeological ruins of Morelos:

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mesmith9/tlaruin.html>

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