

Sustained sea invasion and the way the spanish armada used aztec's geography to i...

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The Aztec Empire had flourished for almost a century before being conquered by the Spanish conquistadors led by Hernán Cortés in 1521. The capital was Tenochtitlan, an island located in Lake Texcoco. The Aztecs were able to utilize the island as a defensive measure against invaders and through engineering, a place to grow food for an expanding empire. With the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, the geography that allowed the Aztec Empire to flourish would end up assisting in its downfall.

Tenochtitlan served as the capital city of the Aztec Empire and its location served many purposes. As an island located in Lake Texcoco, you could only reach Tenochtitlan by boat or via one of the three causeways that connected to the mainland. This protected the capital from potential invaders with there being a limited number of ways to reach the island. The only way to mount an effective offensive that permeated all sides of the island would have to come through a comprehensive sea invasion. With the surrounding mainland controlled by the Aztecs, it would be difficult for someone to accomplish without compromising their plans beforehand. If you attacked by land, your only choices were the three narrow causeways and that would mean a predictable offense that the Aztecs were well prepared for. Each of the causeways were controlled by draw bridges that could be lifted to protect against a ground invasion.

While the surrounding water gave the island a geographical advantage against potential invaders, it also provided space for growing food. The Aztec Empire, which would span large parts of Central Mexico at its peak, required ample food supply to support the population and the Aztec warriors who led the expansion efforts. The Aztecs build artificial islands in the lake that were <https://assignbuster.com/sustained-sea-invasion-and-the-way-the-spanish-armada-used-aztecs-geography-to-its-advantage/>

called chinampas. These were built by piling weeds and mud on top of a bed of sticks. The chinampas could support the growth of several crops and hundreds of these chinampas would be built in Lake Texcoco. These chinampas allowed Tenochtitlan to become a self-sufficient city-state and was critical to feeding the expanding empire and the soldiers that made it happen.

The protective island geography helped the Aztec Empire to reach its peaks, but with the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, it would end up playing a role in the conquest. After the Spanish conquistadors led by Hernán Cortés were welcomed into the Aztec capital by the Aztec ruler Moctezuma II, it only took a week for the Conquistadors to arrest Moctezuma II. Cortés would use Moctezuma II as a puppet ruler, but after the Conquistadors interrupted a human sacrifice ritual, the Aztecs revolted. In the chaos, Moctezuma II was killed and the conquistadors were driven off the island. The Aztecs had closed off the causeways, forcing the conquistadors to make boats to escape the island. Hundreds of conquistadors were left behind and were either captured, killed, or drowned in the lake. Cortés would strike back with the help of thousands of natives and the expertise of his shipbuilder Martín López, who survived the revolt and made it off the island.

Cortés decided to lay siege to the island by blocking off the causeways and preventing any food supplies to reach the island. The island geography that had helped protect the capital from invaders was now being used against the Aztecs. With the help of locals, Cortés was able to transport his newly built ships to the lake and sail his men to the island. The Aztecs, led by their new

ruler Cuitláhuac, refused to negotiate with the Spanish conquistadors. The siege that lasted 80 days resulted in the starvation of thousands of people living in Tenochtitlan and the eventual rout and capture of the capital. Cuitláhuac would later die due to smallpox and his successor Cuitláhuac would be the last Aztec Emperor.

The Aztec Empire had flourished in large part due to the capital city of Tenochtitlan. Its island geography had protected it from potential invaders and Aztec engineers built chinampas in the lake that allowed the Aztecs to grow enough food to support a growing empire. The fortunes of the Aztec Empire changed when the Spanish conquistadors led by Hernán Cortés arrived in the Americas in search of gold and wealth. The conquistadors turned the geographical advantage against the Aztecs by utilizing a blockade and laying siege on the island capital. The siege was effective in starving the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan and eventually the capital and the Aztec Empire fell to the Spanish.