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The Lords of Tetzcoco:
Sixteenth-Century Transformation of Indigenous Leadership in the Aztec Empire's Second City

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Bradley Thomas Benton

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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When Spaniards arrived in central Mexico in 1519, Tetzcoco was one of the two most important ethnic states in the region. It was a cultural center—home to famed "poet-kings"—and was second in power only to the Aztec capital of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Yet by the beginning of the seventeenth century, Tetzcoco had been reduced to a mere shadow of its former grandeur. This dissertation focuses specifically on Tetzcoco's native nobility in this period of waning influence. Using a combination of Spanish- and Nahuatl-language documents as well as indigenous pictorial sources from archives in Spain and Mexico, this work chronicles the strategies employed by the indigenous hereditary nobles of Tetzcoco to navigate the first century of Spanish rule and serves as a case study of the powerful forces that reshaped and transformed local power and indigenous leadership. These changes did not occur as quickly as once believed;

the Spanish conquest, while tumultuous, did not destroy native aristocrats. Indeed, some factions of the Tetzcoca nobility benefited from the Spanish arrival, as Cortés and his men eliminated rivals in local government. The native aristocracy continued to govern in a manner similar to that of the precontact period until the 1560s. By the last few decades of the sixteenth century, however, the family's power and place in local politics was under increasing pressure. Spaniards increasingly challenged the native nobles' control over local land and tribute. Several wealthy and influential *mestizos*, or individuals of mixed-race, emerged to rival the indigenous members of the aristocracy for influence. And after the death of the Tetzcoca leader in 1564, the viceroy took power from the old ruling family by appointing local leaders of his choosing in Tetzcoco. The traditional native aristocrats became divorced from the corporate roles that they traditionally played in Tetzcoco's political life and no longer participated in direct governance. Being ousted from local office effected different nobles in different ways. Some were reduced to poverty and obscurity. Those that possessed the family's entailed estate, however, simply withdrew into private lives of affluent leisure modeled on the aristocracies of Europe.

The dissertation of Bradley Thomas Benton is approved.

Cecelia Klein

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2012

For Neely

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGI-I	Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Indiferente Section
AGI-M	Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Audiencia of Mexico Section
AGN-I	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Indios Section
AGN-Inq	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Inquisición Section
AGN-IV	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Indiferente Virreinal Section
AGN-P	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Padrones Section
AGN-T	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Tierras Section
AGN-V	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Vínculos Section
BN INAH	Biblioteca Nacional, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

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INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the hereditary native aristocracy that ruled the ethnic state of Tetzcoco in the Valley of Mexico in the sixteenth century. Before the Spaniards conquered central Mexico in 1521, Tetzcoco had been one of the most important political, cultural, and economic sites in Mesoamerica. Politically, Tetzcoco partnered with the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan and militarily subdued vast expanses of central and coastal Mexico. Culturally, Tetzcoco was preeminent in the Aztec-speaking world; it was considered the cultural capital of the vast Aztec imperial territory. And economically, the city stood at the center of a vast, complex tributary system that stretched from the highlands around Lake Tetzcoco all the way down to the Atlantic coast. Tetzcoco and its indigenous hereditary nobility occupied a central place in the precontact world.

In the colonial period, Spanish authorities recognized the city's grandeur; Tetzcoco was one of only four indigenous communities in New Spain to be designated a *ciudad*, or city, in Spanish legal terms, further attesting to its perceived importance. But by the beginning of the seventeenth century, less than one hundred years after the Spaniards arrived, Tetzcoco was a mere shadow of its former self. As David Brading noted:

> By the close of the sixteenth century, [the indigenous nobles of Tetzcoco] could be observed ploughing the fields, obliged to gather a meager subsistence by the sweat of their brow, their sparse earnings reduced by demands for tribute from royal officials who refused to recognize their noble status.[1]

And Charles Gibson determined Tetzcoco to be the "most conspicuous case" of several in which "large and centrally located towns [in central Mexico] changed from an affluent condition to one of abject depression."[2]

Tetzcoco underwent substantial changes in the sixteenth century, when the city experienced economic collapse and a dramatic ebb in its fortunes. But Brading's assertion that the hereditary nobility collapsed along with the city should be viewed with caution. The history of Tetzcoco's native aristocrats is far more complicated and nuanced than Brading would have us believe. The old ruling family was not simply overwhelmed by Spanish colonialism. They were not all forced to take up the plow and work. The lords of Tetzcoco actively responded to conquest and colonialism and negotiated a place for themselves within the colonial order.

My research has revealed that many of Tetzcoco's native nobles were skilled navigators of the colonial regime, and they did not experience the same economic collapse that their city suffered in the first century of colonial rule. At the same time, however, the indigenous aristocracy was not left unchanged. In fact, after 1564, the old ruling lineage of Tetzcoco showed signs of radical transformation. In that year, they were deposed as the political leaders of Tetzcoco. They no longer participated in the day-to-day running of the city. Instead, many increasingly withdrew into a private life of affluent leisure modeled on the aristocracies of Europe.

Historiographical Antecedents

This study is born out of a very vibrant subfield of Latin American history that examines indigenous history under colonial rule. Indeed, in the past few decades, the number of studies of indigenous communities and regions in colonial Mexico has grown considerably. These works have greatly enhanced our understanding of indigenous history and, by extension, colonial Mexican history more generally. Recent innovations in methodologies and the use of sources have taken the study of native communities in new and exciting directions.

Archival Sources

The pioneering study of indigenous Mexican communities is Charles Gibson's *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (1952). Gibson was one of the first to refocus scholarly attention away from the European perspective of the colonial experience and examine native society. *Tlaxcala* relies on both published and archival sources (and Gibson strongly advocated the use of Mexican as well as Spanish archives) to construct a picture of the early colonial period in one of the largest and most prominent altepetl of central Mexico. Tlaxcala, like Tetzcoco, was a prominent precontact altepetl and is generally well documented in the early chronicles and histories.[3] Moreover, the records from the meetings of the Tlaxcala cabildo from around 1547-1562 are preserved, and Gibson made expert use of them. They were written in Nahuatl with Spanish marginal notes (and it was these notes, no doubt, that allowed Gibson to use them as extensively as he did). Many pictorial sources from Tlaxcala exist—and Gibson seems to have been fascinated by them (especially the Lienzo de Tlaxcala)—but his analysis is not based on detailed studies of pictorials.

What emerges from Gibson and his selection of sources (especially the cabildo records) is the recognition that the Tlaxcalteca exhibited complex and varied responses to the Spanish invasion and that they quickly adapted to the Spanish administrative and ecclesiastical presence while largely maintaining their precontact social structure. Such conclusions were directly at odds with the conventional notions of indigenous colonial history; most pre-Gibsonian scholars believed that native society was destroyed by the Spanish invaders and replaced with hispanic forms of social organization almost immediately after conquest.[4] But for Gibson, conquest in the 1520s was not the era of the most significant changes in Tlaxcalteca society; instead, he found

that towards the end of the sixteenth century, the pressures of the presence of Spanish settlers in and around Tlaxcala and their demand for indigenous resources precipitated Tlaxcalteca decline.

Gibson's *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule* (1964) extended his approach to indigenous history to the Nahuatl-speaking area of the Valley of Mexico and to the whole of the colonial period. Unlike *Tlaxcala*, *The Aztecs* relies exclusively on mundane Spanish-language sources from archives. Gibson uses these Spanish-language sources to examine the historical trajectory of such elements of colonial society as the *encomienda* and *corregimiento*, the church, the town, tribute obligations, labor, and land tenure. He found that the Spaniards relied on precontact indigenous institutions and organization in order to govern. The encomienda, for instance, was largely based on the precontact *tlatoani* line (what subsequent scholars will identify as the *altepetl*). Such findings confirm his assertions in *Tlaxcala* that native society persisted after the conquest. His conclusions, however, assert that the Spanish demand for land and labor in central Mexico later in the colonial period damaged native civilization beyond repair.

Gibson's work sparked interest in native society in other parts of Mesoamerica. William Taylor applied a similar methodological approach to the region of Oaxaca in *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca* (1972), which ventured south to the Mixtec and Zapotec region of Oaxaca. Taylor recognized the value of local archives for the study of history and made use of the rich local archives in the south. Specifically, he documents the high level of integration of indigenous communities into the Spanish legal system in efforts to protect Indian-held land from Spanish encroachment. Though his study is limited to Spanish-language sources, he highlights the changing nature of social relations in the Valley of Oaxaca and the shrewd adaptations by indigenous society during the colonial period. These adaptations resulted in far more Indian-held land in the Valley of Oaxaca when compared to central Mexico and a much slower pace of

indigenous social decline. Indeed, the native hereditary nobility in Oaxaca was still quite visible at the end of the colonial period, and they owned some of the largest estates in the region.

Nancy Farriss's *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule* (1984) extended this type of archival study to the Yucatán peninsula and focused attention on the indigenous members of society in that region. Farriss's analysis—also based on Spanish-language texts—emphasizes the process of "cultural exchange" that took place in colonial Yucatán, as opposed to a linear process of "acculturation." She finds that Maya experiences of colonialism were—like the experiences of those in Oaxaca—much different than those of central Mexico. The Maya were far removed from the centers of power in New Spain, and the pressures of Spanish society—especially the demand for land—were not as acute as in, say, Tlaxcala or Tetzcoco. Maya society was, therefore, relatively better able to resist these pressures until, she asserts, the Bourbon reforms of the late-eighteenth century constituted a "second conquest" of indigenous society in Yucatán.

Works such as those by Gibson, Taylor, and Farriss had profound implications for our understanding of colonial Latin American society generally and of indigenous societies more specifically. While a previous generation of historians had marked the conquest as the moment of precipitous decay in indigenous society, these scholars—using the heretofore underutilized national and local archives in Mexico—acknowledged the perseverance of native society in the colonial order and emphasized a more fluid process of accommodation and exchange between cultures. Gibson and Farriss nevertheless saw in their sources a gloomy picture of native life towards the end of the colonial period; Gibson, for instance, asserted that centuries of Spanish colonialism had led to wide-spread poverty and alcoholism among the Indian population.

In the 1970s and 80s, scholars working in the field of colonial Mexican ethnohistory were beginning to look to different sources and methodologies; they focused their attention on the

language(s) of the Indians themselves. This historical-linguistic, or philological, approach to source analysis has come to be known as the New Philology school within colonial Mesoamerican ethnohistory.[5] The work of scholars such as Gibson, Taylor, and Farriss proved useful as points of departure and comparison for this new school, and New Philologists expanded, confirmed, and challenged their findings.

The New Philology movement began in earnest in the United States in the mid-1970s with the publication of *Beyond the Codices* by Arthur Anderson, Frances Berdan, and James Lockhart and of *Nahuatl in the Middle Years: Language Contact Phenomena in Texts of the Colonial Period* by Frances Karttunen and Lockhart.[6] *Beyond the Codices* brought scholars' attention to the potential of native-language mundane documents—such as wills and land records—for historical analysis, while *Nahuatl in the Middle Years* demonstrated the ways in which historical-linguistic scrutiny of these sources could reveal patterns of cultural contact between Spaniards and Nahuas.

The New Philology came to be centered on James Lockhart and several of his doctoral students at UCLA, who made numerous valuable contributions to the field. Their studies of native communities and regions have placed indigenous-language sources at the center of historical analysis. Following the pattern observed in the earlier scholarship, the first New Philological community studies focused on the centrally located Nahuatl-speaking region of Mexico. More recent work has shifted attention again to the south to the Yucatecan Maya and the Mixtec of Oaxaca. The use of native-language sources has dramatically broadened our knowledge and understanding of colonial history.

Early attempts to incorporate native-language texts were local in scope and include Leslie Lewis's dissertation (1978) and Juan López y Magaña's thesis (1980), both at UCLA under the

direction of Lockhart. Lewis's work, "Colonial Texcoco," is a survey of colonial Tetzcoca society around the turn of the seventeenth century, a period of time when Tetzcoco was experiencing what she calls "consolidation" as a Hispanic city. Though this study focuses heavily on Hispanic elements of Tetzcoca history (and correspondingly relies on Spanish-language sources), Lewis does include a chapter on native socioeconomic conditions, as well. As part of her discussion of native history, she draws upon her translation of five Nahuatl-language documents from the nearby altepetl of Huexotla. These documents allow her access to native practices regarding land tenure and sub-altepetl level organization that would not have been possible from a study of Spanish-language texts alone.

Juan López y Magaña's thesis, "Aspects of the Nahuatl Heritage of Juan Bautista de Pomar," examined Tetzcoco in greater depth. The thesis describes a legal dispute between Juan Pomar (a mestizo descendent of precontact Tetzcoca nobility) and a faction of the Tetzcoca elite in the late sixteenth century. The study is based largely on the "Pomar Papers," a collection of Nahuatl- and Spanish-language documents that pertain to this case, and López y Magaña transcribes and translates a portion of the Nahuatl-language material included with the Papers as part of this work. By using Nahuatl-language sources, he gains insight into the kinship relations among the Tetzcoco elites in this period and elite access to land and labor.

Community studies with larger and more explicit uses of indigenous-language sources began to appear in greater number in the 1980s and 90s. All of these works offer a picture of colonial native society that was not visible through the exclusive use of Spanish-language texts, focusing on single Nahua communities. S. L. Cline, for example, translated and analyzed sixty-five Nahuatl wills to reconstruct social life in the Culhuacan altepetl from 1580 to 1600 in *Colonial Culhuacan* (1986). These wills provided Cline with insight into a variety of aspects of

native life in Culhuacan in this period—such as household organization and land tenure, local commerce, the role of women in the community, and naming patterns—all of which were previously unknown. Because Cline relied almost exclusively on sixty-five Nahuatl testaments—all of which come from the last two decades of the sixteenth century—the work is more defined in its scope.

While Cline's study examines a discrete corpus of Nahuatl-language wills, Stephanie Wood is more inclusive in her selection of sources. Wood's dissertation, "Corporate Adjustments in Colonial Mexican Indian Towns" (1984), considers the corporate vitality of indigenous communities in the Toluca Valley of central Mexico. Wood found that these native polities were quite vigorous, even into the late-eighteenth century. Much of her analysis relies on Spanish-language sources—land litigation, criminal trial records, and complaints from the Indian court—which show that indigenous communities fought for recognition as pueblos. But Nahuatl-language sources, in the form of "títulos primordiales," give Wood direct access to native expressions of corporate identity and are thoroughly examined in her work.[7]

Susan Schroeder published her *Chimalpahin and the Kingdoms of Chalco* in 1991, which examines the Nahuatl-language writings of the seventeenth-century Nahua historian, don Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, in order to piece together the social history of his native Chalco. Her analysis is based almost entirely on Chimalpahin's writings, and from them she gives the reader a sense of Chalco as a native political organization, as understood by a seventeenth-century Nahua. Moreover, she combs Chimalpahin's Nahuatl text for political terminology concerning Chalco and is able to reconstruct much of Chalco's internal organization. Much of this information would have been obscured if Chimalpahin had

written in Spanish. The Nahuatl-language text gave Schroeder a more direct view of the indigenous polity and the ways that native Nahuas conceived of it.

Robert Haskett, another Lockhart student, also made an important contribution to the growing New Philology school. His work, *Indigenous Rulers* (1991), examines the colonial Indian *cabildo*, or town council, in Cuernavaca and shows how native elites in this altepetl skillfully adapted the Spanish-imposed government structure in such a way as to preserve their precontact political culture and systems. Using Nahuatl-language election documents from Mexico's Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Haskett shows how the Cuernavaca cabildo incorporated most of the traditional, precontact-style local leaders, not just those elected through the officially sanctioned Spanish system. Thus, colonial indigenous government was quite traditional (i.e., precontact) in its form despite what one might be led to believe by official Spanish ordinances concerning native government. Haskett's philological analysis of Nahuatl-language sources attests to a relatively high degree of political continuity with the precontact past.

James Lockhart took these four early "micro-regional" studies of the colonial Nahuas in central Mexico and—along with his own extensive research and the work of Horn, discussed below—used them as the basis of his own work, *The Nahuas After the Conquest* (1992).[8] This quintessential New Philological volume examines Nahua society from a much broader perspective and draws correspondingly broad conclusions. In an extension of the basic findings of Gibson's work—and in contrast to much of the early-twentieth-century work on native society—Lockhart finds evidence that the basic elements of indigenous culture were quite "sticky" and persisted long after conquest. He recognized, for instance, that Spaniards used the precontact Nahua altepetl as a basis for colonial administrative organization. Native society did

not disintegrate, but rather maintained much of its precontact local-level form well into the eighteenth century despite the severe impact of population loss. Three stages of language-contact (and, by extension, culture-contact) phenomena emerge from Lockhart's study; as the colonial period progressed, Nahuas move gradually into more and more intimate exchange with the Spanish world. Lockhart does not identify a period of indigenous "decline," only one of more open interconnection. The existence of indigenous-language documents for the entire span of the colonial period is evidence of continued native vitality.

Lockhart's *Nahuas* does not focus on local-level, micro-regional detail as the earlier studies do. Instead, it emphasizes the society and culture of all Nahuatl speakers in central Mexico. Similarly, subsequent works of New Philology continued this trend away from local histories and toward regional-level studies. These more recent works also moved the New Philology school away from central Mexico; Matthew Restall took the school's methodology to the Maya-speaking world of Yucatán, whereas Kevin Terraciano made use of Mixtec-language documents from the Oaxaca region. But first, let us look at two more recent publications that have wrestled with some of the broader issues involved in native-language source analysis.

Rebecca Horn's work, *Postconquest Coyoacan* (1997), analyzes the sociopolitical structure of the altepetl of Coyoacan in the early-colonial period. Coyoacan was an important precontact altepetl located in the Valley of Mexico. Her work, drawing on both Spanish- and Nahuatl-language sources, is particularly noteworthy for its treatment of land tenure in the area and the interaction between settler Spaniards and the local Nahua community vis-à-vis land transactions. She also explores the sub-altepetl level of government in Coyoacan in the colonial period and demonstrates the fragmentation of the larger altepetl into its constituent *calpolli/tlaxilacalli* over time. Horn does not view this fragmentation as an indicator of decline,

per se, but conceives of these fragmentary tendencies as consistent with traditional manifestations of calpolli-level micropatriotism. Horn's use of both Spanish- and Nahuatl-language documents appears to be a conscious attempt to redirect the field of indigenous community studies. "Many recent studies based on Nahuatl documents," she says, "largely treat Nahuas in isolation rather than in contact with local Spaniards. At times this creates the impression that Nahuas crafted their own worlds and preserved an indigenous culture separate from that of the Spaniards."[9] Her work places these two groups in their appropriate context of contact.

One of the particular studies at which Horn aimed her critique was Susan Kellogg's *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Culture, 1500-1700* (1995). Drawing on Nahuatl-language litigation from Tenochtitlan, Kellogg depicts various aspects of Mexica life—gender, inheritance, kinship, etc.—in relative isolation from Spaniards (who, in Tenochtitlan, would have been very closely interconnected with Nahuas). She concluded that the Spanish courts were not only used by the Indians of Tenochtitlan to protect themselves from Spanish and intra-indigenous predation, but also by the Spaniards as a way of establishing Spanish hegemony in the metropolis and building colonial control of the native population. In addition to constructing a view of indigenous society that Horn saw as too isolated from Spaniards, Kellogg's work also challenges some of the fundamental assumptions of native-language scholarship. While the work of Lockhart and his students have generally viewed indigenous language sources as proof of the continued vigor of native society, Kellogg sees them as instruments of colonial domination.[10]

Horn's critique may well have anticipated the critiques aimed at one of Lockhart's own students (and, indeed, even at Lockhart himself) for his reliance on native-language documents. Matthew Restall's *The Maya World* (1997) does for Yucatán what Lockhart's *The Nahuas After*

the Conquest did for central Mexico. This monograph documents and analyzes the extant corpus of mundane Maya-language documents from the region and shows that the Maya maintained striking social and cultural vitality. The precontact Maya *cah*, similar to the Nahua altepetl, remained the organizing unit of colonial society, for example. This work is, in many ways, the companion piece to Farriss's *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule*. While Farriss relied on Spanish-language sources, Restall is able to introduce Maya-language texts into the historiographical discussion. The most notable difference between the two works is that the native-language texts do not suggest a "second conquest" of the Maya in the late colonial period, as Farriss had described it. The different findings may be related to the nature of the authors' sources; Spanish legal and ecclesiastical records do not contain the types of information to be found in Maya-language writings that were generated by Mayan cabildos, whereas the exclusive use of Maya-language documents cannot address some important historical questions (especially those relating to the economy and religion).

Kevin Terraciano's *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca* (2001) sought to use all available sources, including many native-language writings, for a history of the Mixtec (or Ñudzahui) region of Oaxaca. Terraciano's work is—like *The Nahuas After the Conquest* and *The Maya World*—broad in scope; it describes and analyzes numerous changes to Mixtec society through three centuries of Spanish colonization. Terraciano notes the tenacity of Mixtec lifeways in the face of significant changes in the colonial period. He characterizes the many different responses to colonialism as the result of a complex "convergence of cultural influences" rather than a more rigid imposition of the European onto the indigenous.[11] Traditional female rulers, for instance, continued to be held in high esteem, and Spanish law protected their rights and property as "cacicas." But these same women were almost entirely excluded from the official local, Spanish-

style cabildos even as they exercised real authority in their jurisdictions.[12] In addition to Terraciano's return to Spanish-language sources, *Mixtecs* also incorporates a large number of pictorial sources from the Mixteca. In this respect, Terraciano's work embodies another important development in the historiography of the Indians of colonial Mexico: the use of images as historical texts.

The study of visual sources, the so-called "codices," from precolumbian and colonial Mesoamerica has a long and productive record. In the United States, these pictorials were initially the purview of art historians. The early field was dominated by Donald Robertson, whose *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: The Metropolitan Schools* (1959) was the first attempt to seriously address the problem of dating the Mesoamerican and to categorize them in terms of regional style. Robertson also examined issues of patronage and provided histories of the manuscripts as they were known at the time. Scholars continue to rely on much of Robertson's work today. As the field has developed, both historians and art historians have built upon Robertson's foundation and examined these sources with an eye to their content and use for the study of the past. Much of this impetus has emerged out of UCLA's Department of Art History and the students of Cecelia Klein. An expert in the pre-Columbian period, especially the postclassic Aztec world, Klein has trained several students who have produced studies of pictorial manuscripts that either straddle the pre-Columbian-colonial divide or fall squarely within the postconquest era. Their work tells us as much about the colonial as the prehispanic period and represents a real innovation in the use of visual sources for Mesoamerican history.[13] Elizabeth Hill Boone at Tulane has also long argued for scholarly recognition of the alternative literacies embodied in Mesoamerica's rich pictorial documents. These locally produced pictorial sources reflect the precontact Mesoamerican tradition of non-alphabetic

record keeping and should, for Boone, rightfully be considered "texts" that convey—just as any alphabetic text—important information about their (colonial-era) creators.[14] The use of pictorial "texts" as sources for the study of colonial history has continued to grow.

One of the earliest and best examples of the use of pictorials for the study of colonial history is Howard Cline's 1966 article, "The Oztoticpac Lands Map of Texcoco 1540." Cline's analysis goes beyond the standard practice of describing pictorials and deciphering glyphs; he provides a reading of two colonial pictorials—the Oztoticpac Lands Map and Humboldt Fragment VI—that clearly ties the two documents not only to one another, but also to local politics in the sixteenth century. The two pictorials, he finds, were part of the litigation that arose after the heresy trial and execution of the Tetzcoca noble don Carlos Ometochtli. When the church confiscated the condemned man's lands, his surviving family sued to have portions of it returned to them. Cline demonstrates the early-colonial native elite's active participation in the Spanish court system and the complicated customs surrounding elite land tenure in this period. Though his work is not explicitly a community study, it is limited to the altepetl of Tetzcoco and draws on a host of alphabetic texts to substantiate his findings.

More recent work has used images in the context of broader community histories. Dana Leibsohn, for instance, analyzes the pictorial Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca from Cuauhtinchan in her 1993 dissertation at UCLA, "The Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca," and in her resultant monograph, *Script and Glyph: Pre-Hispanic History, Colonial Bookmaking, and the Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* (2009). By juxtaposing the document's historical (pictorial) narrative with a more standard version of colonial history from her own modern perspective, Leibsohn is able to identify the ways in which the artist(s) and his patrons hoped to shape coeval perceptions of the Cuauhtinchan colonial present. She also emphasizes the ways in which these pictorial sources act

to create and preserve communal identity (though they were generally produced by specific factions of the community's elite). Moreover, Leibsohn demonstrates with pictorial sources the on-going conflict between rival indigenous groups in the colonial period.

Lori Boornazian Diel's work on the Tira de Tepechpan (2008) is another study to use pictorial documents produced by native peoples to reconstruct the colonial past of native communities. Diel's analysis of the Tira demonstrates the way that the altepetl of Tepechpan in the eastern Valley of Mexico negotiated a place for itself in both the prehispanic and colonial political systems of central Mexico. Tepechpan's history as presented in the Tira, she finds, changed over time according to how native leaders thought it best to secure privilege and ensure corporate survival. For the precontact and early colonial periods, for example, the Tira emphasizes Tepechpan's loyalty and allegiance to the dominant power, be it Tenochtitlan or the Spanish empire. As the sixteenth-century progressed, however, the tactic of demonstrating allegiance was no longer sufficient. Native leaders shifted their approach in the late-sixteenth century to appeal, instead, to the Spaniards' sense of pity; the Tira begins to emphasize the destructive effects that Spanish colonialism has had on the altepetl.

The historiography of colonial Mexican community studies, then, has been driven by its increasing attention to sources produced by native peoples themselves. Early works (from the mid-twentieth century) relied almost exclusively on Spanish-language sources. In the 1980s and 90s, scholars began to use native-language documents productively for the study of colonial history. Now we understand the value of using both types of sources to address myriad questions. Somewhat concurrently, community/regional studies began to use the pictorial documents produced in the colonial and precontact past as acceptable "texts" from which to gather historical information.

Indigenous Elites

The study of indigenous elites, a sub-field within the broader study of indigenous peoples, has also received substantial attention from scholars. After all, elites stand out in the archival record. The treatment of native elites has ranged widely; while some of the same trends in the broader ethnohistory field appear, elite history has also taken the field in exciting directions of its own. Here, I give particular attention to the study of the Nahua elites of central Mexico.

As in the broader field of Mexican ethnohistory, studies of Nahua elites have sought to gauge the level of decline or vitality in the colonial period as compared to the precontact era. Much of the earliest work, including that of Charles Gibson, for instance, emphasized decline among the native nobility by focusing on the topic of government. Gibson's *Tlaxcala* (1952) demonstrates that the *tlatoque* (plural of *tlatoani*, ruler) of Tlaxcala's four constituent *cabeceras* developed a system in which the Spanish office of *gobernador* rotated among each of them in a fixed pattern, each tlatoani holding the position for a two-year term. But this apparent maintenance of precontact political organization and power would not last long; Gibson observes "complete breakdown of legitimate succession at the end of the [sixteenth] century."[15]

In Gibson's *The Aztecs* (1964), the fate of the elite in the Valley of Mexico is much the same. Gibson finds that government at the cabecera (or altepetl) level was wrested from the traditional native tlatoani over the course of the colonial period and given over to the elected Spanish office of gobernador. At first, the positions of tlatoani and gobernador were held by the same person, and native rule continued much as it had in the precontact period. "But," says Gibson, "the significant fact for Indian government was that the office of gobernador came to be differentiated from that of tlatoani, with the two offices held by different persons."[16]

Other scholars have also recognized decline in the native nobility. Pedro Carrasco noted in his article, "The Civil-Religious Hierarchy" (1963), that "the most important change throughout colonial times and the nineteenth century was the elimination of the nobility as a separate group with inherited rank, private landholdings, and exclusive rights to office, with the consequent opening of the entire hierarchy to the whole town."[17] Elite history, then, is often considered one of the most significant aspects of indigenous history and used as a barometer of native decline/vitality.

But not all studies have uncovered evidence of decline among the native elite. William Taylor, working in the Oaxaca region, found that "at the end of the colonial period the hereditary nobility was still distinguishable as the wealthiest social group."[18] While Taylor's findings could have been dismissed as a regional variation on central Mexico, other scholars have seized upon his work and sought evidence for continued vigor among native Nahua elite.[19]

As already mentioned, Robert Haskett's *Indigenous Rulers* (1991) is one of the most important of these studies. Haskett shows how native elites in Cuernavaca skillfully adapted the Spanish-imposed government structure in such a way as to preserve their precontact political power and influence. Haskett's vision of colonial continuity with the precontact past is not supported by recent work in other parts of central Mexico, however. Rebecca Horn's *Postconquest Coyoacan*, for instance, reaffirms for Coyoacan Gibson's general pattern of the disassociation of the tlatoani and gobernador offices. As early as the 1520s, the Coyoacan tlatoani did not hold the position of gobernador. Moreoever, Horn notes that, "over time, the effectiveness of local government was attenuated as tlatoque families, including their noble relatives, slipped from the more privileged positions of the early postconquest period."[20]

William Connell (2011) examines indigenous government in Mexico City. Indigenous government continued there despite the fact that the Spaniards established the capital of New Spain on the very site of the seat of power of the preconquest Triple Alliance. Connell demonstrates, however, that the preconquest ruling family could not hold on to power for very long. By 1564, the Mexica tlatoani lineage had lost control of the governor position.[21] Connell's findings, therefore, are similar to those of Horn and present a far different picture of native government that the one depicted by Haskett.

The variation in the findings of these scholars is somewhat puzzling. It is easy enough to reconcile Haskett's findings with Gibson's, for Haskett utilizes Nahuatl-language sources whereas Gibson does not. But Horn, too, uses Nahuatl-language documents, yet her findings seem to thoroughly support Gibson's claims. If we can dismiss Taylor's findings in Oaxaca as too distant from central Mexico as to be usefully comparable, then perhaps we can also find some kind of geographical variation in Haskett's study to explain his contradictory findings. His altepetl of study, Cuernavaca, is, after all, located in the rather unique Marquesado del Valle. The existence of his sources in the first place is largely due to the altepetl's more insular position within Cortés's estate. If geography is to help us explain the relative rate of decline among the indigenous ruling families of central Mexican altepetl, then Tetzcoco, situated so close to Mexico City, would certainly seem to follow more closely the pattern described by Gibson, Horn, and Connell rather than the process described by Taylor and Haskett.

One work that examines the issue of decline vs. vitality from a slightly different perspective—and one that has important implications for my own study—is Donald Chipman's *Moctezuma's Children* (2005). Chipman's study is less concerned with the ways in which indigenous government continued to function after the Spanish arrival and examines, instead, the

fate of one of central Mexico's deposed ruling lineages, specifically, the descendants of the famed Mexica tlatoani Moteuccçoma Xocoyotl (r. 1502-1520). By focusing on the deposed lineage itself, rather than on native government, Chipman follows the Mexica native nobles for a far greater period of time than is possible in the works of, for instance, Horn or Connell. Moteuccçoma's progeny are quite atypical of indigenous rulers, however. The Spanish crown was quick to recognize the noble status of the Moctezumas, as they became known. Most of them eventually won entry to the peerage of Spain, and the Dukes of Moctezuma continue to occupy a position in the peerage to this day. The Tetzcoca and other indigenous ruling families in New Spain fared far differently. They received no noble titles. They did not move to Spain and build palaces. Thus, while Chipman's work is important for its emphasis on the ruling family and not the native government, his findings are far from representative and are little help in understanding the situation in Tetzcoco.

In addition to trying to assess levels of decline or vigor, scholars of native elites have also turned their attention to elite social organization. Perhaps not surprisingly, several conflicting descriptions of the lordly household and estate have been documented for central Mexico. Pedro Carrasco and Luis Reyes García, for instance, have noted the existence of "teccalli" or "lord-houses." In his "Linages nobles" (1976), working with documents from Tepeaca (in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley) from around 1580, Carrasco finds evidence of the teccalli and sees their significance as a socio-political organization. These lordly houses were headed by a *teuctli* (lord) and composed of *pipiltin* (nobles), who are related to the teuctli through linear descent.

Similarly, Luis Reyes García's work (1977) on Cuauhtinchan (also in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley) notes the presence of seven teccalli there in the precontact and early colonial periods. But he describes the seven teccalli of Cuauhtinchan as each having, not a teuctli as

Carrasco noted, but a tlatoani (ruler). According to his sources, one of the seven tlatoque was elected to serve as the "universal" tlatoani over the larger altepetl.

Lockhart (1992) discerned a distinct difference in of central Mexico from the one described by Carrasco and Reyes in the east. In the Cuernavaca region, Lockhart found that *teteuctin* (plural of teuctli) are indeed present, but that they are only described as lords of their calpolli. There is no mention of teccalli in any Nahuatl-language source in the western part of central Mexico; Lockhart asserts that the western part is, instead, dominated by the calpolli at the sub-altepetl level.

Both Carrasco and Jerome Offner (1983) suggest that teccalli is the eastern equivalent of the western "tecpan," or palace. Offner finds that the tecpan in Tetzcoco is often described as consisting of a tlatoani, the palace, the ruler's dependent relatives, and the laborers that work the land. Schroeder's 1991 work on Chimalpahin, however, presents still another descriptive variation that makes this equation (and, indeed, any type of generalizations about elite social organization) difficult. Chimalpahin describes what he calls *tlayacatl*, which appear to be the constituent altepetl of a compound altepetl. These tlayacatl are very similar to both the teccalli described for the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley and the tecpan of Tetzcoco.

More recent scholarship has reexamined the teccalli of eastern central Mexico in terms of kinship relations and inheritance. John Chance, in his article titled "The Noble House" (2000), challenges Carrasco's assertion that the teccalli were descent groups. Using testaments and litigation from the community of Santiago Tecali in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, Chance demonstrates that teccalli could be more usefully conceived of as a "house" as defined by Lévi-Strauss. These "houses" were less concerned with lineage and more concerned with maintaining the teccalli lands or the lordly estate. Houses, therefore, held land collectively and gave access to

this land to its members according to bilateral inheritance and loosely defined kinship affiliations as part of their strategy to maintain the estate intact.

While Chance's evidence comes from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Stephen Perkins, in "The House of Guzmán" (2007), uses sixteenth-century documents from Tepeaca to confirm Chance's hypotheses for the sixteenth century and to analyze the collapse of the teccalli structure in the Tepeaca case. Perkins is concerned with the Spanish designation of the teccalli as *cacicazgos* and the ways in which they reflect the Spanish model of the *mayorazgo*. He finds that though Spaniards often treated the cacicazgos as mayorazgos (with entailed estates, titles, etc.), they continued to function in much the same way as they had in the precontact period (teteuctin still donated land and labor to their kin group in the precontact fashion). Perkins sees this type of inheritance practice not only as reflective of ancient Nahua custom, but also as a way in which to ensure the social survival of the extended noble house during the extreme upheaval in sixteenth-century native society. He also notes that, in contrast to the continuity described by Chance for Tecali, the teccalli of Tepeaca were effectively weakened and dismantled by Spanish encroachment in the later colonial period.

The picture that we are left with, then, is one of extreme variation. Elite kin groups are generally divided into two types. Those in the east are based on teccalli, which recent scholarship has continued to explore. Those in the west are more mysterious in their organization, but probably centered around the calpolli (or tlayacatl). Local variation appears to be as much of an organizing principle as anything. Even in the east, as Perkins has demonstrated, local circumstances could profoundly affect the colonial experiences of the lordly house.

Local Identities and Factionalism

A third trend that emerges in the study of native elites is increased attention to the factionalism that existed among the elite of any given polity and between the elite groups of different polities. The term "micropatriotism" has sometimes been used to describe the existence of local pride and loyalty at the altepetl level. This micropatriotism, however, can also be seen at the sub-altepetl level as evidenced by Horn in her above-mentioned work, *Postconquest Coyoacan*. In it she demonstrates the gradual fragmentation of the larger Coyoacan altepetl into its constituent calpolli/tlaxilacalli over time. Horn does not view this fragmentation as an indicator of decline, but conceives of these fragmentary tendencies as consistent with precontact manifestations of calpolli-level micropatriotism. Calpolli elites are presumably largely responsible for this splintering of the altepetl and for the administration of the newly constituted splinter groups.

Much work on pictorial sources has also specifically focused on elite factionalism. Leibsohn's "Primers for Memory" (1994), which treats maps ("cartographic histories"), is a fine example of this trend. Leibsohn asserts that the maps from Cuauhtinchan were important in shaping historical memory there. Though they usually purport to represent the entire altepetl, they were generally factional in their perspective and privileged one group within Cuauhtinchan over another.[22] Conflicts among indigenous groups are far more visible in these documents than indigenous conflicts with Spaniards.

Elizabeth Hill Boone's *Stories in Red and Black* (2000), which surveys over 160 painted Mexican manuscripts from the precontact and colonial periods of both Aztec and Mixtec origin, is similarly concerned with elite factions in pictorial documents. Boone forcefully argues that these pictorials, which are often treated as fonts for precontact history only, should be

reintegrated into the *colonial* historiography. The primary reason for this is the local nature of these documents and the association with local elites that she finds. The colonial-era pictorial sources, she believes, represent an important continuity with precontact indigenous forms of expression, but they are also important sources for the study of colonial history.

Eduardo Douglas (2010) sees factionalism and micropatriotism in his analysis of the three most well known pictorials from Tetzcoco: the Mapa Quinatzin, Mapa Tlohtzin, and Codex Xolotl. These sources have long intrigued scholars of the precontact past because of their prehispanic style and subject matter. Douglas shows, however, that the style and subject matter are deceiving. All of these documents were produced in the mid-sixteenth century, well into the colonial period, by Tetzcoco's native nobles. Douglas restores these documents to the colonial historiography, and demonstrates the important purposes they undoubtedly served to strengthen the position of the colonial nobility against the Spaniards or to validate the claims of one noble faction over another.[23]

Scholars have also noted elite factionalism and micropatriotism in the native histories produced in the early colonial period. Enrique Florescano's "La reconstrucción histórica" (1985) examines the most notable of the native and mestizo chroniclers: Chimalpahin, Tezozomoc, and Alva Ixtlilxochitl. He shows that Chimalpahin and Tezozomoc acted as guardians of ancient Nahua knowledge (from Chalco and Tenochtitlan, respectively) by recasting the oral and pictorial traditions of his ancestors into the increasingly dominant alphabetic format. Guarding the ancient knowledge of one's altepetl (and presenting it to authority figures at the appropriate time) was an important means of protecting and/or procuring coveted positions of favor in the colonial order. Alva Ixtlilxochitl, as Florescano notes, did not write his history from the perspective of the Tetzcoca generally, but from a specific faction's perspective. Specifically, he

wrote from the point of view of the branch of the native Tetzcoca nobility who allied themselves with the Spanish conquerors.

Salvador Velazco's *Visiones de Anáhuac* (2003) also notes the ways in which Alva Ixtlilxochitl's history served the interests of the Tetzcoca nobles who had aided the Spaniards. Alva Ixtlilxochitl wrote, he says, in order to create "un historia apologética del reino de Texcoco que sirva como 'relación de méritos y servicios' para que la maquinaria de la burocracia española reconozca y conceda derechos, perrogativas, privilegios y bienes a la nobleza indígena de Texcoco."

Studies of elite factionalism and micropatriotism are valuable contributions to the study of elites more generally. If factional tensions and micropatriotic feelings were, as Leibsohn has maintained, more central to the day-to-day lives of most indigenous nobles than were conflicts with Spaniards, then any discussion of elite history should be very careful to identify these local-level tensions when analyzing sources. Documents that otherwise seem to be primarily concerned with the precontact past (like the Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca that Leibsohn examined, Douglas's Mapa Quinatzin, or the writings of Alva Ixtlilxochitl) suddenly take on added colonial significance when viewed in this light.

The study of the native elite in colonial central Mexico, then, has moved in many exciting directions in the recent past. Indeed, the sub-field of elite history has produced significant findings for the field of ethnohistory as a whole. By examining these questions of decline vs. continued vitality, local organization and variation, and factionalism, the study of native elites has thrown light onto significant processes of colonial change.

The study of Tetzcoco presented in this dissertation builds on these various traditions of historical inquiry. One might ask why a localized study of Tetzcoco is now necessary. Many of

the early native-language-based studies (Cline, Schroeder, Wood, Haskett, etc.) were similarly focused on the local community, but more recent native-language-based works have taken a broader, regional perspective. If, as Horn asserts, Lockhart's regional study represents a "maturation" of the field, are local studies in central Mexico and other regions obsolete?

Historians of Europe have demonstrated that local histories play an important role in our understanding of history. The field of "microhistory" in European historiography is a testimony to this fact. Microhistorians—including Carlo Ginzburg, David Sabean, Natalie Zemon Davis, and others—have focused the historian's analytical lens on the smallest of historical events. Frustrated with historiography's twentieth-century focus on long term, immobile patterns, these scholars pushed history back in the direction of the individual and the small-scale. But even Ginzburg, one of microhistory's earliest proponents, admits that "the results obtained in a microscopic sphere cannot be automatically transferred to a macroscopic sphere (and vice versa)."[24] Yet this "vice versa" is an important motivating force in microhistorical studies, for neither can *macro*history alone tell the complete story of history. Ginzburg flatly rejects the notion that the only important aspects of history are those that are repetitive and capable of being serially analyzed. The richness of history lies in the heterogeneity of evidence, in the *inequality* of individuals and the power relationships that they shape and in which they operate. The close examination of evidence typical of microhistory elucidates what the all-encompassing vision of "total history" cannot.

In the context of colonial Mexican history, the same principles apply. The broader, regional studies of Gibson, Farriss, Lockhart, and Terraciano all have their place in the historiography, but these studies must necessarily make regional generalizations that look beyond variance and anomalies at the local level. To be sure, microhistorical studies also have

their flaws; local history is often not generalizable to the larger area and has limited applications. But it is precisely this non-generalizable aspect of local-level studies that makes them important contributions to the field, for they offer challenges to dominant notions of history and points of comparison. The aggregate result of community-level, microhistorical inquiry is a more profound and nuanced understanding of the past.

The lords of Tetzcoco, like many, many other ruling lineages from central Mexico, occupied a complicated liminal space in the colonial world: They were too important in the precontact political order and too close to the center of Spanish power in Mexico City simply to be left alone to govern their indigenous community as many of the Indians of more remote regions in New Spain did. But they were also not important enough in the eyes of the Spanish monarch to warrant the kinds of noble concessions that the Moctezumas received. The Tetzcoca were transformed. This study examines several dimensions and implications of this transformation.

Sources, Methodology, and Organization

Sources for the study of Tetzcoco's native leaders are rich and diverse. Though the chronological coverage provided by these sources is not uniform, sixteenth-century Tetzcoca history is generally well documented. This varying degree of coverage over time is due mainly to the lack of alphabetic writing among the precontact population of central Mexico. Though the native population was quick to adapt the Latin alphabet to the Nahuatl language (and, in many cases, to learn Spanish) after contact, Europeans monopolized the power of written alphabetic texts in the earliest years of the colonial enterprise. What is more, the Spaniards were actively engaged in destroying the traditional pictorial records—the so-called "codices"—of the

precontact native peoples, depriving modern scholars of the rich historical information that these codices contained.

For the history of the early years of colonization, therefore, we must rely a great deal on non-native sources. Fortunately, Tetzcoco figures prominently in many of the early Spanish chronicles of conquest, colonization, and conversion. Hernando Cortés's letters to Emperor Charles V, for instance, offer very detailed accounts of the Tetzcoca and their role in the conquest of Tenochtitlan.[25] And Cortés's fellow conquistador, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, relied on his first-hand experience of the events of the 1510s and 20s to write his *True History of the Conquest of Mexico*, which includes details on the Tetzcoca.

The writings of the regular clergy in Mexico are also significant ethnographic source materials from the early colonial period. The work of early Franciscan friars, particularly—fray Pedro de Gante, Motolinia (fray Toribio de Benavente), and fray Bernardino de Sahagún—are excellent first-hand accounts of the early years of the colony. Motolinia, whose *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España* draws on native pictorial documents from Tetzcoco and other areas, and Sahagún, whose twelve-volume *General History of the Things of New Spain* (also known as the *Florentine Codex*) is a collaboration between the Franciscan and numerous native authors, have the added benefit of including in their works substantial amounts of material produced by indigenous people. Sahagún's opus includes a large number of illustrations that have been important sources of information on the early colonial period.

The Dominican fray Diego Durán also offers an important perspective on the early years of the colonial enterprise, for, though he was born in Spain, Durán spent a significant portion of his childhood in Tetzcoco. His *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*, written in the 1570s, describes indigenous history from creation to conquest. Like

Sahagún, Durán includes a large number of important illustrations. The Franciscan fray Juan de Torquemada's *Monarchía indiana* from the early seventeenth century also draws on primary source material—including pictorials—from the Indians of New Spain; the text was produced in collaboration with the mestizo Tetzcoca historian don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and dwells heavily on Tetzcoca history.

By the 1540s, the native Tetzcoca perspective begins to emerge more directly in the historical record through, for example, the Inquisition's idolatry trial of the Tetzcoca noble don Carlos Ometochtli and through the resurgence of pictorial painted manuscripts. Many of the more well known pictorial sources—the Codex Xolotl, Codex en Cruz, Mapa Tlotzin, Mapa Quinatzin, Oztoticpac Lands Map, Humbolt Fragments, Tira de Tepechpan, and Codex Kingsborough, for instance—all date from the mid-sixteenth century and provide rich information on Tetzcoco's colonial past.

Two final published sources from the colonial period merit mention here. Juan Bautista Pomar's *Relación de Tezcuco* (with its accompanying illustrations in the Codex Ixtlilxochitl) appeared in 1582 and provides rich details about local history, society, and culture. And the writings of the mestizo historian of Tetzcoca descent, don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, which come from the turn of the seventeenth century, are invaluable for their Tetzcoca perspective and Alva Ixtlilxochitl's access to pictorial sources and native informants as he wrote them.

As the century progressed, the native noble Tetzcoca became more and more adept at navigating the Spanish administrative system, and the archives of Mexico and Spain are flush with mundane documentation—in both Spanish and Nahuatl, both alphabetic and pictorial—from the last three decades of the century. One of the key goals of this study was to mine this rich variety of sources. To that end, I explored material related to Tetzcoco's native leaders in

Mexico City's Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) and Seville's Archivo General de Indias (AGI). These archives mostly contain Spanish-language documents such as wills, petitions for land grants, legal suits, and correspondence related to the Tetzcoca nobles. The AGN also houses a large collection of maps that were included in land grant requests; these maps receive considerable attention in this dissertation. The Biblioteca Nacional in the National Antropology Museum in Mexico City is useful as a repository for a collection of Nahuatl-language documents from Tetzcoco from the late-sixteenth century. I have used a few of the documents from this collection—sometimes called the "Pomar Papers"—in Chapter Four.

The transformation of the Tetzcocan indigenous nobles was not quick or straightforward. In fact, for many decades, Tetzcoco's old ruling lineage maintained political power in Tetzcoco and demonstrated great skill in navigating the ever-changing political and social environment of the sixteenth century. Only in the last few decades of the sixteenth century did radical transformations in local governance begin to occur.

My dissertation is organized so as to highlight this process of complex, gradual change in local government. Indeed, the work has been divided into two parts. Part One, "Conquest and Continuity," examines native politics in Tetzcoco during the decades following the Spanish conquest of the region. This part emphasizes the continuity of native government in these first decades of the colonial period. Chapter One, "Tumultuous Colonial Beginnings, 1515-1539," looks at the period of conquest, with particular attention to the complex factional competition within the Tetzcoca noble house that existed before the Spanish arrival. One of these prehispanic factions of the nobility fought against the Spaniards while another readily joined the Spaniards and provided crucial supplies and manpower. This chapter shows that some of the Tetzcoca

nobles, far from being passive victims of Spanish conquest, were active agents in the Spanish victory and even benefited at times from the Spanish interference in regional politics.

Chapter Two, "Reassertion of Traditional Authority, 1540-1564," continues the theme of indigenous agency and continuity of governance from 1540 through the mid-1560s. This period marks the reign of two especially competent Tetzcoca tlatoque. Their time in office is characterized as a resurgence of the authority of the old ruling lineage of Tetzcoco. Both leaders demonstrate great skill in negotiating the colonial system and achieve important recognition of their noble status and authority under Spanish rule.

When the second of these leaders died in 1564, the noble lineage of Tetzcoco no longer consistently held political office in the altepetl. This year, therefore, marks the break between Part One and Part Two, which I have called "Post-1564 Transformative Forces." In this second part, I emphasize the forces at work in the late sixteenth century that converged to depose the old ruling family and dramatically transform the native nobility. Chapter Three, "Noble Resources: Tribute, Labor, and Land," examines the changing economic environment for the indigenous aristocracy towards the end of the sixteenth century. Labor drafts and tribute collection became more difficult and circumscribed in the later decades, and Spanish demand for Tetzcoca land put further economic pressure on native nobles.

Chapter Four, "Interethnic Unions and the Rise of the Mestizo," looks at the changing nature of ethnicity among the indigenous aristocracy. Native Tetzcoca women began marrying Spaniards from the very moment of conquest, and the children of these unions—*mestizos*, or individuals of mixed indigenous and European descent—became important agents of change in the late sixteenth century. Chapter Five, "Family Conflict and Local Power," gets right to the heart of political changes in Tetzcoco with a direct examination of politics in the late-sixteenth

century. This period witnessed the end of the native aristocracy's exclusive hold on local political office in Tetzcoco, and here I consider the factors that contributed to their deposition.

What clearly emerges from this work is the fact that native nobles, while ultimately divorced from local political office and under a variety of forms of increasing pressure, were not victims of decline, as many have argued. Indeed, the picture of the old ruling family that emerges from the archival documentation is one of continued status, wealth, and privilege. They may have no longer participated in the daily governance of Tetzcoco, but they continued to possess large estates and fortunes and to command a certain degree of prestige in both Tetzcoco and Mexico City, where the most successful members of the family eventually moved. The lords of Tetzcoco cannot be said to have survived conquest and colonialism unchanged, but neither can they be said to have been destroyed by it.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

[1] Brading (1991), 275.

[2] Gibson (1964), 365.

[3] See especially the work of Muñoz Camargo (1892).

[4] Ricard (1966), for example, depicts the conversion of Nahuas to Christianity as a process whereby the mendicant friars swiftly and completely imposed the new religion onto the defeated indigenous population without significant resistance. For a more nuanced view of Nahua conversion, see Burkhart (1989), who emphasizes the ways in which the mendicants were forced to place Catholic teachings and ideology into "dialogue" with precontact Nahua religious and cosmological beliefs as they rendered Christian concepts into Nahuatl. This dialogue often resulted in a less-than-orthodox understanding of Catholic ideas and the creation of specific, local Nahua Christian beliefs and practices.

[5] For a detailed discussion and history of the New Philology, see Lockhart (1991) and Restall (2003).

[6] This movement focuses on mundane, archival documentation, but it built upon a rich tradition of translation and analysis of Nahuatl literature in both the United States and Mexico. See especially Garibay (1953), Sahagún (1950-1982), León-Portilla (1956), Kirchoff, Odena, and Reyes García (1976). Important work of this nature continues with, for instance, Bierhorst (1985 and 1992), León-Portilla (1986), Sullivan (1987), Chimalpahin (1991-1997), and Chimalpahin (2006).

[7] Wood's 2003 monograph, *Transcending Conquest*, expands the analysis of the *títulos primordiales* from her dissertation and places these titles in the context of other colonial native depictions of the conquest. She emphasizes the variety of responses to conquest and colonialism and the ability of native peoples to incorporate the conquest into their community histories and identities.

[8] See Lockhart (1992), 179-200.

[9] Horn 1997, 3

[10] Still others, notably Gruzinski (1993), have flatly rejected New Philological claims and reconstructed the idea that contact and colonialism exterminated indigenous societies and cultures and replaced them with a European one.

[11] Terraciano (2001), 361.

[12] Terraciano (2001), 179-190.

[13] See, for example, Dana Leibsohn (1993 and 2009), Travis Kranz (2001), Delia Cosentino (2002), and Angélica Afanador (2009).

[14] Boone 2000. See also Boone and Mignolo (1994).

[15] Gibson 1952, 103.

[16] Gibson 1964, 167.

[17] Carrasco 1961, 493.

[18] Taylor 1972, 196.

[19] Yannakakis (2008), working further to the south in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca, also considers this question of native noble decline and continued vitality. Yannakakis's work emphasizes the complexity of the indigenous noble response to colonialism and the myriad ways in which this group negotiated a place for itself within the colonial order.

[20] Horn 1997, 45.

[21] Connell 2011, 35.

[22] See Leibsohn (2009) for a fuller treatment of these ideas.

[23] Luz María Mohar Betancourt has also published a study of the Mapa Quinatzin: *Códice Mapa Quinatzin: justicia y derechos humanos en el México antiguo* (2004). This work does not situate the map in its colonial context, but rather attempts to reconstruct precontact Nahua notions of justice and human rights.

[24] Ginzburg 1993, 33.

[25] Cortés's chaplain-turned-historian, Francisco López de Gómara, drew on Cortés' reports and the ethnographic work of Motolinia to publish a more polished account of the conquest events in

1552. Despite its sophistication, López de Gómara's account was accused, even in its own day, of having been embellished with imaginative and less historically accurate ornamentation. The work of Díaz del Castillo, for example, was intended to correct the errors of López de Gómara.

PART ONE:

CONQUEST AND CONTINUITY

CHAPTER ONE
Tumultuous Colonial Beginnings, 1515-1539

"For in truth the Tlaxcallans had incited [the Spaniards] against them."
- *Florentine Codex*, Book 12

"Indeed, nothing has helped us more in fighting against their very powerful nations than their inability to cooperate."
- Tacitus, *Agricola*[1]

The popular imagination has long held two competing visions of the prehispanic native peoples of the Americas. Indigenous societies, many suppose, were composed of either barbaric savages or childlike innocents. The historical reality is far from either of these extremes, however. Politically, the precontact world was in fact dogged by the same political machinations and rivalries as any other period of Mexican history and, indeed, any other part of the world. When Hernando Cortés and the Spaniards arrived in 1519, they stepped into a complex political environment, one in which armed conflict was well known and opposition to the established political order was, in many places, either actively hostile or very nearly so. There was no unified indigenous monolithic state poised to resist the Spanish assault. Just as Tacitus' father-in-law Agricola, the first-century Roman governor of Britain, was able to exploit existing divisions among the indigenous islanders to bring them under Roman rule, so too were sixteenth-century Spaniards able to take advantage of the prevailing tendency to local autonomy and separateness between the *alteptel*, or local-states, of central Mexico as well as the dissent and discontent within these communities to achieve their goal of political domination. As the above quote from the Florentine Codex suggests, the Spaniards themselves were at times manipulated into serving the interests of one group or another.

In Tetzcoco, internal, intra-altepetl divisions were particularly strong. After the death of Tetzcoca *tlatoani*, or ruler (pl., *tlatoque*), Nezahualpilli in 1515, his sons were unable to decide

on a universally accepted successor and the Tetzcoca territory eventually was divided between two of them. The Spanish conquest, therefore, occurred in the context of this preexisting political tension, a tension that Cortés's campaign for Spanish political control would only exacerbate and exploit, leaving the Tetzcoca nobles more divided than ever. This division would reach its dramatic climax in 1539, when one of Nezahualpilli's sons was denounced to the Mexican Inquisition and burned at the stake, his accusers composed principally of members of his own family.

The early colonial period, then, was a period of great continuity with the precontact period in the sense that the political instability and conflict of the immediate precontact period continued. Yet while many indigenous leaders likely viewed the Spaniards as merely one more conqueror in a long list of conquerors in the Valley of Mexico, there were aspects of Spanish rule that were unfamiliar to native peoples and outside the scope of what they understood conquest to entail. The imposition of Christianity at the expense and exclusion of traditional Mesoamerican deities, for example, was inconsistent with the more typical practice of merely adding a conqueror's patron deity to the already established local pantheon. Molding local governing bodies to appear more Spanish was also in conflict with prehispanic ways of exercising imperial authority, where the exaction of tribute—not direct interference in local politics—was generally the goal. These uniquely Spanish demands required more adaptation and flexibility on the part of indigenous leaders than would have been necessary had the conquering forces been indigenous rather than European.

As this chapter examines the years surrounding the Spanish conquest from a Tetzcoca perspective, particular attention is given to this process of negotiation and adaptation between the native Tetzcoca leaders and their new Spanish overlords. Just as the Tetzcoca were divided

during the conquest—some Tetzcoca came to the decision that fighting alongside the Spaniards was in their own best interests while others fought bitterly against them—so too did the Tetzcoca continue to negotiate the turbulent politics of the colonial period in a variety of ways. Their survival strategies in these first few decades were met with varied success; those who lacked the skill or foresight to adapt were soon relegated to obscurity and destitution, whereas those who managed to negotiate the new realities of Spanish hegemony often succeeded in increasing substantially their wealth and power.

Nezahualpilli and His Family

The divisions within the ruling family of Tetzcoco that played out so dramatically during the conquest period and the early years of Spanish control had roots that stretched back generations into the precontact period. The most salient tensions, however, were the result of the compound polygynist families of the Tetzcoca rulers and their relatively flexible succession practices. The rising military and political power of the altepetl of Mexico Tenochtitlan at the expense of Tetzcoco and other regional powers also contributed to the hostility.

The two most famous precontact tlatoque of Tetzcoco are Nezahualcoyotl ("Fasting Coyote," r. 1431-1472) and his son Nezahualpilli ("Fasting Noble," r. 1472-1515). Indeed, these two rulers enjoy the reputation among Mexicans today as having been enlightened poets, skilled administrators, and even proto-monotheists. While the accuracy of such characterizations remains in doubt, they nonetheless loom legendarily in the story of Mexico's prehispanic past.[2] Part of their appeal is the length and stability of their reigns. They were also important allies of the dominant—and expansionist—political power in central Mexico, the altepetl of Mexico Tenochtitlan, and enjoyed a portion of the spoils of the military conquests in which the alliance

participated. Nezahualcoyotl was actually one of the architects of this "Triple Alliance" system that bound Mexico Tenochtitlan, Tetzcoco, and Tlacopan in a loose—and unequal—confederation.

Nezahualpilli, like all of the powerful Nahua rulers of central Mexico, took many wives and concubines. From these unions, he had many children. By some accounts, his children numbered as many as 145.[3] The large majority of these children would have little influence in Tetzcoco politics. Mexico Tenochtitlan's influence in Tetzcoco assured that Nezahualpilli's children by his Mexica wives would be the most powerful. Indeed, across the Nahuatl-speaking world, rulers of more powerful altepetl would send their sisters or daughters to the rulers of subject altepetl to take as wives. As long as the power of the dominant altepetl continued, the children of these marriages were first in line for the thrones of the lesser polities.[4]

In Tetzcoco, this pattern prevailed. Nezahualpilli himself was the son of a high-born Mexica noblewoman. Information on Nezahualpilli's wives is contradictory, however. Three colonial-era authors—Juan Bautista Pomar, a powerful sixteenth-century mestizo heir of Nezahualpilli; fray Juan de Torquemada, a sixteenth-century Spanish mendicant; and don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, an early-seventeenth-century historian from Teotihuacan—all give rather different accounts of Nezahualpilli's Mexica wives.

Pomar, who was Nezahualpilli's grandson and knew the royal family intimately, asserted that Nezahualpilli's principal wife was the daughter of Axayacatl (r. 1469-1481) of Tenochtitlan (See Figure 1.1). Nezahualpilli had no children with this woman, however, and she was put to death for adultery.[5] Of the rest of Nezahualpilli's wives, Pomar has little to say, suggesting that they were, in some way, illegitimate or insignificant in the political hierarchy of the valley. The other two authors, however, made claims to the contrary.

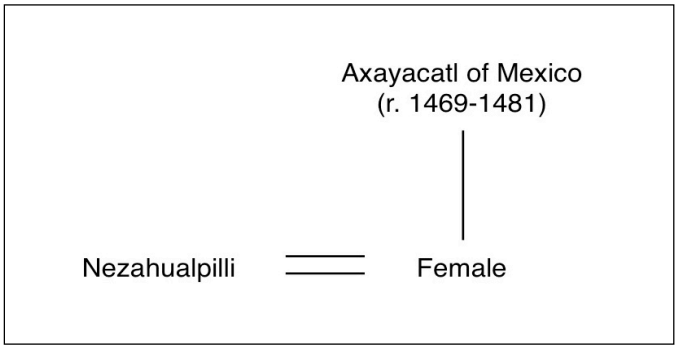


Figure 1.1. Nezahualpilli's wives according to Pomar.

Torquemada claimed that Nezahualpilli had two principal wives, both who were of Mexica descent (See Figure 1.2). These women were sisters, nieces of the Mexica tlatoani Tizoc (r. 1481-1486). The elder sister, whose name Torquemada did not know, bore Nezahualpilli a son named Cacama, who inherited the Tetzcoca throne on Nezahualpilli's death. The younger sister, Xocotzincatzin, had the great luck, according to Torquemada, to be loved by Nezahualpilli more than any of his other wives. Xocotzincatzin had many children: the eldest, a son named Huexotzincatzin, then four unnamed daughters, then two more sons, Coanacoch and Ixtlilxochitl.[6]

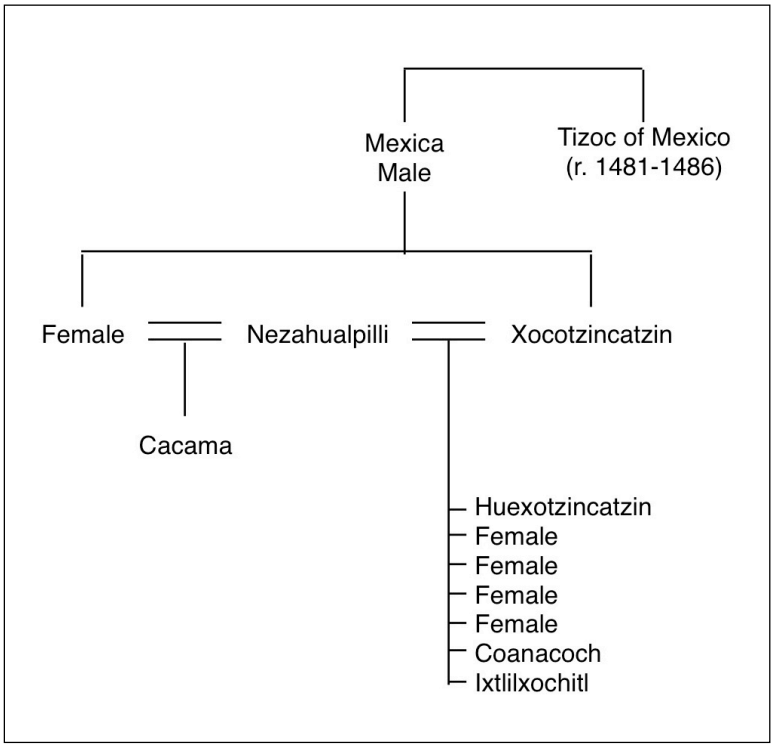


Figure 1.2. Nezahualpilli's wives according to Torquemada.

Alva Ixtlilxochitl, another mestizo descendant of Nezahualpilli, gave conflicting reports of Nezahualpilli's wives within the corpus of his own writings. In one place, he stated that Nezahualpilli's legitimate wife was Tenancazihuatzin, daughter of Xoxocatzin and Teycuhtzin of Mexico. From this union came eleven children (see Figure 1.3). He also noted that other Mexica women came to Tetzcoco with Tenancazihuatzin, among them Xilomen, who was the sister of Moteuccçoma Xocoyotl (r. 1502-1520) and Cuitlahuac (r. 1520).[7]

In another place, however, Alva Ixtlilxochitl calls Nezahualpilli's wife Tlacayehuatzin, daughter of Atocatzin and descendant of Moteuccçoma Ilhuicamina of Mexico (r. 1440-1469). He also clearly states that one of Moteuccçoma Xocoyotl's sisters was Nezahualpilli's concubine and the mother of Cacama (see Figure 1.4).[8]

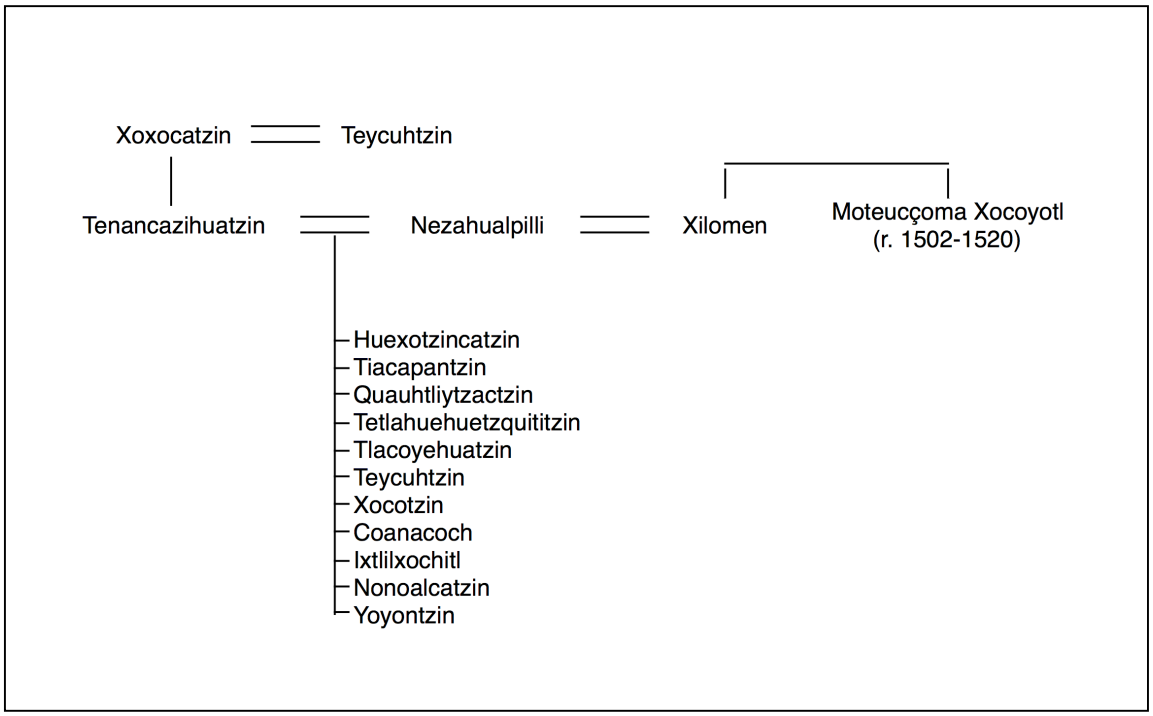


Figure 1.3. Nezahualpilli's wives according to Alva Ixtlilxochitl, first reference.

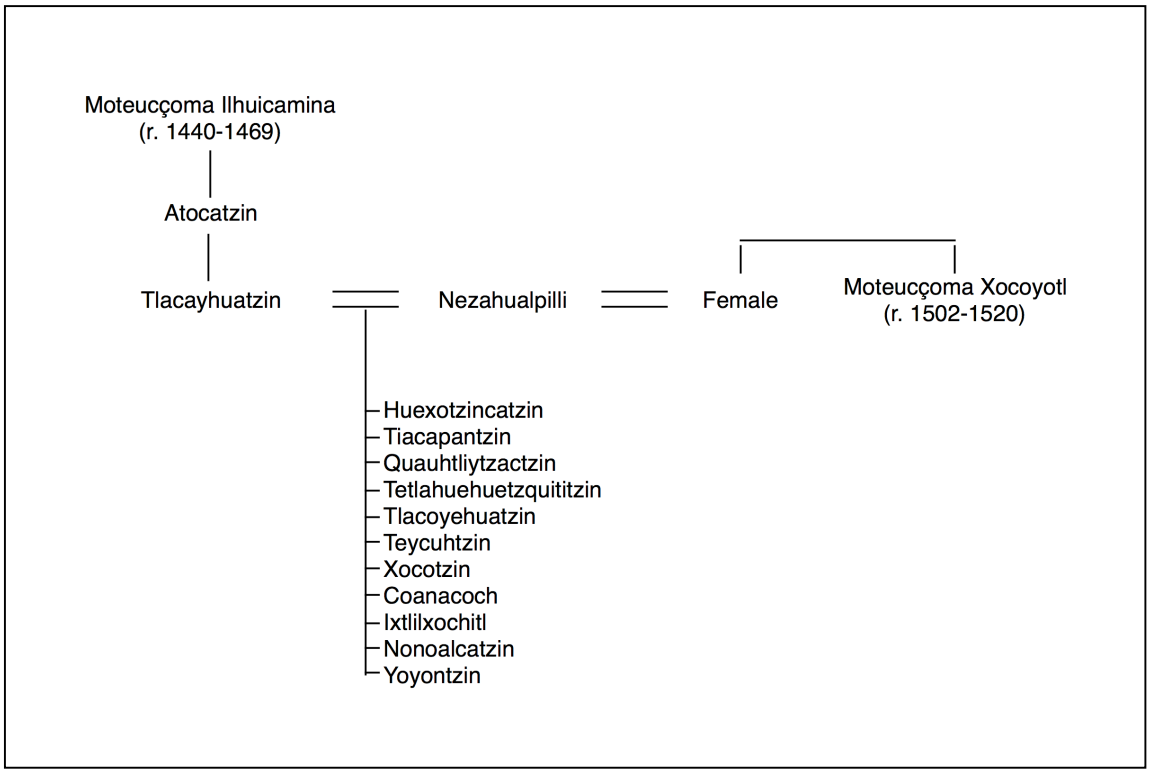


Figure 1.4. Nezahualpilli's wives according to Alva Ixtlilxochitl, second reference.

The differences in these sources with respect to Nezahualpilli's wives are not easily reconciled. Torquemada suggested that Pomar's insistence that Nezahualpilli's legitimate wife was childless and executed should be read with suspicion because of Pomar's desire to downplay his own illegitimate pedigree (his mother was Nezahualpilli's daughter by a slave woman). Torquemada and Alva Ixtlilxochitl do coincide in some details (and coincide further once orthographic variation is accounted for), but significant discrepancies persist. One feature of Nezahualpilli's marriages stands out in all of these sources, however, and that is the fact that his most important unions are with women from Mexico.[9] Similarly, the sources agree that the children of these Mexico-Tetzcoco unions—especially Cacama, Coanacoch, and Ixtlilxochitl—play the most important roles in the precontact and early colonial period.

Despite Nezahualpilli's vast progeny, then, the majority of his children were relegated to the ranks of the lesser nobility or even to the commoner class. The only real claims to power rested with his children born to Mexica noblewomen, as the threat of Mexica military intervention helped ensure their political success. Within this select group, however, the path to power was not obvious. Succession practices among the Nahuas often led to violent conflict upon the death of a tlatoani. Such was the case when Nezahualpilli died in 1515.

The 1515 Succession Crisis and Civil War

Since, as mentioned above, succession was implicitly linked to regional politics—the children of the ruler's wife from the most powerful family in the region generally succeeded their father to the throne—each ruler's death represented a potential struggle for regional political control and dominance as children from wives of differing ethnic affiliation and descent

tested the strength of their candidacy for the rulership.[10] Furthermore, the Nahuas of central Mexico allowed for both lineal succession—from father to son, for example—and co-lateral succession—from brother to brother. Thus, in addition to the competing claims of the children of a deceased ruler, the ruler's surviving siblings were also potential claimants to the throne.

In Tetzcoco, there were succession procedures in place aimed at minimizing the uncertainty of these periods and heading off succession crises. For example, it was not uncommon for the dying tlatoani to designate his successor. It was also customary for the lords of the Acolhua region of which Tetzcoco was the capital to gather and confirm the ascension of this individual.[11] These practices helped to establish one individual as the legitimate successor. On the death of Nezahualpilli in 1515, these procedures broke down, however, and the inherent tensions among his sons surfaced.

If the Tetzcoca acted according to tradition in 1515, those candidates for the office of tlatoani with the greatest chance of actually succeeding Nezahualpilli would have been his children from his marriages with women from the ruling family of the regionally dominant altepetl to the west, Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Tenochtitlan's power had been growing at the expense of the other regional powers in central Mexico, especially under the leadership of Moteucçoma Xocoyotzin (r. 1502-1520), and the Mexica leaders were keen to strengthen their influence in Tetzcoco—once a more equal partner in their Triple Alliance—by having their nieces and nephews in positions of power there.

Nezahualpilli had at least six living sons with Mexica mothers when he died. From his union with one Mexica lady—who is sometimes described as being Moteucçoma's sister—he had only one child, a son named Cacama. From another Mexica wife, at least five sons were still alive in 1515: Tetlahuehuetzquititzin, Quauhtliyiztaccic, Coanacoch, Ixtlilxochitl, and

Yoyontzin. Nezahualpilli apparently had not indicated his choice for successor from among these sons at the time of his death.[12]

The different accounts of what exactly happened after Nezahualpilli died vary somewhat in their details. They do agree that several of these Mexica-affiliated sons, for reasons that remain unclear, seem not to have been seriously considered for the position of tlatoani when their father died; the three principal contenders for the *tlatocayotl*, or rulership, of Tetzcoco were Cacama, Ixtlilxochitl, and Coanacoch.

Torquemada asserts that the Acolhua lords gathered and selected Cacama, who enjoyed the support of his uncle, Moteucçoma, in Tenochtitlan, to succeed his father. This choice angered Ixtlilxochitl, who left the city. Coanacoch, however, sided with his half-brother Cacama, only angering Ixtlilxochitl further.[13]

Alva Ixtlilxochitl's version of the story is a bit different. In his account, the Acolhua lords did not favor Cacama, but Moteucçoma intervened in their selection process and declared his nephew Cacama to be the new tlatoani of Tetzcoco, anyway.[14] Notwithstanding their discrepancies, both versions of the story share significant similarities. Most importantly, the writers agree that Cacama was named successor to Nezahualpilli, that Moteucçoma in Mexico heavily influenced this decision, and that Ixtlilxochitl was unwilling to accept his uncle's interference.

Indeed, Ixtlilxochitl was so angered by Moteucçoma's intrusion into Tetzcoca politics that he left the city. He went, accompanied by his supporters, to nearby Metztitlan, where dissatisfaction with Mexico was also strong and where Ixtlilxochitl was received as ruler.[15] From Metztitlan, Ixtlilxochitl marched to Otumba, a principal city in the northern reaches of Tetzcoco's domain. As he traveled, the number of his followers swelled. At Otumba, however,

the local leaders declared their allegiance to Cacama; Ixtlilxochitl laid siege to the city. The number of Ixtlilxochitl's supporters was sufficiently large to allow him to take the city of Otumba and its corresponding territory. He was now ruler of a portion of Tetzcoca territory.[16]

Back in Tetzcoco, news reached Cacama and Coanacoch of their brother's treason. These Mexica-backed brothers seem not to have had the military might or political will to quash Ixtlilxochitl's rebellion outright, however, possibly due to Otumba's geographic inaccessibility. Instead, they retreated to Tetzcoco and fortified the city against what must have appeared to them to be Ixtlilxochitl's impending attack. Ixtlilxochitl, however, did not attack Tetzcoco. Instead, he established a boundary between Cacama's territory and the territory he controlled from Otumba. That boundary ran through the Alcohua altepetl of Acolman, Chiconauhtla, Papalotla, Tecaman, Tzompanco, and Huehuetocan.[17]

Cacama, seeing that his brother did not make war on him, sent emissaries to Ixtlilxochitl with a proposal: Ixtlilxochitl would keep control of those provinces in the *sierra*, or mountains, that he now controlled, Cacama would remain in power in Tetzcoco, and Coanacoch would be given control of Tetzcoco's tributaries to the south.[18] Ixtlilxochitl happily agreed to these terms, and Tetzcoca territory was divided in this manner.

Serious divisions, therefore, existed within the royal family of Tetzcoco years before the Spaniards arrived in 1519. The Spanish presence, however, upset the balance of power that existed between Cacama and Ixtlilxochitl as Ixtlilxochitl correctly perceived an opportunity for advancement through an alliance with these new arrivals. As Cortés set out to conquer central Mexico, he found support for his project among some of the Tetzcoca nobles. Other Tetzcoca nobles, however, proved to be some of his most spirited adversaries.

Tetzcoco Conquered and Conquering

Cortés established himself as an astute player in indigenous politics across central Mexico. Exploiting existing rivalries, disaffection, and hostility among the various Nahua altepetl, Cortés recruited a large following of indigenous allies to assist in his attack on the imperial altepetl of Tenochtitlan. The Tlaxcalteca, particularly, have long been recognized as invaluable allies.[19] The Tetzcoca, too, however, were easily persuaded to join the Spanish in their fight against Moteuccçoma.

When Cortés and his men first landed at Vera Cruz, news of their arrival quickly spread inland to the territories of the Triple Alliance.[20] As the Spaniards got closer to Tenochtitlan, the Tetzcoco tlatoani, Cacama, on behalf of his uncle, Moteuccçoma, met Cortés on the road and accompanied him into the city.[21] After the Spaniards settled themselves in Tenochtitlan, they soon took Moteuccçoma prisoner in his own palace compound. Nahua writers recount in one account that "when they had gone to arrive in the palace, when they had gone to enter it, at once they firmly seized Moctezuma. They continually kept him closely under observation; they never let him from their sight."[22]

With his uncle imprisoned and isolated, Cacama took matters into his own hands. Cortés reports to Charles V that "after Mutezuma [*sic*] had been imprisoned, the lord of this province [of Tetzcoco], who is called Cacamazin, rebelled both against the service of Your Highness, to which he had pledged himself, and against Mutezuma." In response to Cacama's "insubordination," Cortés had him seized and brought to the palace as well. [23] Thus the rule of the last precontact tlatoani of Tetzcoco ended.

In Cacama's place, Cortés appointed Cuicuizcatl, one of Cacama's many brothers, to rule Tetzcoco from his side in Tenochtitlan (see Table 1.1).[24] But the ruling elite in Tetzcoco were

naturally disinclined to accept a ruler installed by a Spaniard as a legitimate tlatoani, especially one who did not meet traditional prehispanic criteria for the office. The lords of Acolhuacan, therefore, selected Coanacoch, the third of the three initial candidates for Nezahualpilli's throne, to be tlatoani in Tetzcoco, and he ruled much in the same capacity as his father, Nezahualpilli, and brother, Cacama, had before him.[25]

Tetzcoca Rulers	Reign began	Reign ended
Nezahualpilli	1472	1515
Cacama	1515	1519
Cuicuizcatl	1520	1521
Coanacoch (don Pedro de Alvarado)	1520	1521
Tecocoltzin (don Fernando)	1521	1521
Ixtlilxochitl (don Fernando)[26]	1521	1531

Table 1.1. Conquest-era succession of Tetzcoca tlatoque.

A short time later, during the famous *noche triste*, when Cortés and his men were driven from Tenochtitlan by force, the Spanish-installed Tetzcoca tlatoani Cuicuizcatl managed to escape from his Spanish captors and make his way back to Tetzcoco. When he arrived, however, Coanacoch assumed that his brother had been sent on behalf of the Spaniards and, on the advice of the recently liberated Mexica tlatoani, had him killed.[27] With Cortés in retreat, then, and the Spanish-backed rival tlatoani dead, Tetzcoco appeared to have reclaimed its precontact status—even its subordination to the Mexica. But Tetzcoca freedom from Spanish domination was short-lived. Cortés soon recovered from his humiliating defeat and withdrawal, and the Tetzcoca

empire, meanwhile, remained vulnerable as a result of the continued division between the armed Ixtlilxochitl and his brothers.

Cortés spent about two years in and around Tlaxcala—to the east of Tetzcoco—reorganizing and rebuilding his forces before his second entrance into Mexico Tenochtitlan.[28] In that time, Moteucçoma's successor Cuitlahuac died from disease (only months after taking office), and Cuauhtemoc (r. 1521-1523) was elected to the position of tlatoani in his place.[29] In Tetzcoco, Coanacoch remained in power and reaffirmed his loyalty to the Mexica.[30]

But Cortés was determined to end the position of dominance that the Mexica and their allies—including the Tetzcoca—enjoyed. According to Alva Ixtlilxochitl, the Spaniards entered Tetzcoco and, with "the Tlaxcalteca and other friends that Cortés brought, they sacked some of the main houses of the city and set fire to the principal palace of King Nezahualpilli." And the Mexica-loyal Coanacoch, "taking with him his possessions and women, left for the city of Mexico."[31] Indeed, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of the men in Cortés's company, wrote that Coanacoch "had already placed himself in safety, for he was the very first to flee to Mexico with many other chieftains."[32]

The flight of Coanacoch to Tenochtitlan once again left the office of Tetzcoca tlatoani vacant. And again Cortés installed a candidate sympathetic to the Spanish cause. Yet another of Nezahualpilli's many sons, don Fernando Cortés Tecocoltzin (Cortés served as his baptismal sponsor) was selected to rule.[33] Tecocoltzin proved to be very helpful to the Spaniards; Cortés related to Charles V that "the inhabitants of the city, although at that time there were few present . . . obeyed him. Many of the people who had fled now began to return to the city and province of Aculuacán, and they also obeyed and served Don Fernando; from then on the city began to be rebuilt and reinhabited."[34] But Tecocoltzin did more than simply swell the altepetl's population.

Under don Fernando's leadership, Tetzcoco took a lead role in the attack on Mexico Tenochtitlan.

While loyal Coanacoch prepared to fight alongside the Mexica in the defense of their city in the Spaniards' final siege, the treasonous Tecocoltzin undermined his brother's efforts. Don Fernando provided his altepetl as a base for the strike, and the Spaniards stationed themselves in Tetzcoco for the five months preceding the attack on Mexico Tenochtitlan. During that time, the Tetzcoca leadership provided the Spaniards with everything they needed for a successful offensive. When Cortés decided to assail the altepetl from the water, the Tetzcoca cut down the trees needed to build his boats. They provided clothing, arms, ammunition, and even manpower.[35] As Cortés reports:

> Don Fernando, lord of the city of Tesuico [*sic*] and the province of Aculuacan . . . had attempted to win over to our friendship all the inhabitants of his city and province, especially the chieftains, who were not then so firm in their friendship as they afterwards became; and every day there came to don Fernando many chiefs and brothers of his, all resolved to join us and fight against Mexico and Temixtitan [*sic*].[36]

The captain of these Tetzcoca forces was none other than Ixtlilxochitl, the rebellious brother who had assumed control of a large portion of the Tetzcoca empire even before the Spanish arrival.[37] With his appointment as captain, the Tetzcoca empire was once again united. This time, however, the vast area was united in opposition to the Mexica tlatoani to whom parts of the empire had rendered loyal service only a few months earlier. This unification and shift in allegiance became more apparent when Tecocoltzin died just before the fall of Mexico Tenochtitlan. In his place, Cortés installed Ixtlilxochitl himself as tlatoani.[38]

The final siege of Tenochtitlan, then, saw Tetzcoca nobles fighting on both sides. In Tenochtitlan itself, Coanacoch fought alongside the Mexica to keep the Spaniards out. Beside Cortés, however, were Ixtlilxochitl and his Tetzcoca warriors. Each of these Tetzcoca nobles

fought for what he saw as serving his own best interests. Coanacoch recognized that his power came, in part, from the strength of his relatives in Mexico Tenochtitlan and therefore fought to keep them in power. Similarly, Ixtlilxochitl, excluded from power precisely because of Mexica interference, saw that the enemy of his enemy was his friend and hurried to curry Spanish favor. In the end, Ixtlilxochitl chose the winning side, and the Mexica forces and their allies lost their battle to preserve the status quo. The Spaniards—with their superior military technology, the unexpected assistance of infectious microbes, and their numerous indigenous allies—managed to conquer Mexico Tenochtitlan in 1521.

Cortés the King-Maker and Viceregal Authority

The Spanish victory in central Mexico certainly altered the face of politics in the region. Cortés, especially, used his power to shape Tetzcoca politics to suit his needs. But Cortés soon saw a potential benefit in keeping the old prehispanic ruling families in power. By using the hereditary nobility already in place as intermediaries through which tribute and labor could be extracted from local populations, the Spaniards could avoid a large-scale reorganization of indigenous political society—a task that would have been impossible for the relatively small Spanish contingent in central Mexico. Indigenous leaders fast became essential to the colonial enterprise, and they used their position to continue to advance their interests and maintain authority. Thus, the years immediately following the conquest in 1521 were strikingly similar in terms of political structure to the years before the Spanish arrival.

At the same time that Cortés—shortly after his arrival in the Aztec capital—seized Moteuccçoma, he also imprisoned the Tetzcoca leader Cacama. While Cortés claimed that these leaders had plotted against him and "rebelled" against the authority of the Spanish king, the

arrest of these men was undoubtedly a calculated part of Cortés's conquest strategy. In Tetzcoco, Cacama's imprisonment allowed Cortés to appoint a puppet ruler, one whom he could easily manipulate.

Cortés's appointed ruler however, had little legitimacy in the eyes of the Tetzcoca; the individual that Cortés appointed—Cuicuizcatl—is not listed among Nezahualpilli's offspring from his Mexica wives. Instead, the Tetzcoca answered to Coanacoch, a more obvious choice to succeed Cacama from their perspective. But Coanacoch's reign was to last only as long as Mexico Tenochtitlan resisted the Spanish attack; after the Spanish victory, Coanacoch was imprisoned as well. He was held captive until 1525, when Cortés, on another conquest campaign to Honduras, had him executed along with the deposed Mexica tlatoani, Cuauhtemoc, after an alleged plot by the captive leaders to kill Cortés.[39]

Cortés's puppet ruler Cuicuizcatl had a shorter reign than Coanacoch, however; he was killed in the course of the conquest. Undeterred, Cortés continued to hand-select the tlatoani of Tetzcoco. In 1521, he selected another son of Nezahualpilli, don Fernando Tecocoltzin.[40] Like Cuicuizcatl, Tecocoltzin's mother was not a high-ranking Mexica lady. He had little legitimacy and would likely never have ascended to a position of authority without the support of Cortés.

Despite Cortés's efforts, however, his control in Tetzcoco was undermined by the arrival of European diseases. Mere months after taking office, Tecocoltzin succumbed to pestilence. And some sources claim that still more of Nezahualpilli's children succeeded Tecocoltzin in rapid succession, holding office for only a few months or weeks before dying from infection themselves. Indeed, diseases from the Old World played a key role in the conquest itself and in the subsequent period of colonial control.

The epidemic diseases that ravaged the Americas after contact with Europeans nearly destroyed the indigenous population of Mexico. By some estimates, the indigenous population at century's end was only 10% of what it had been in 1519, when Cortés first landed at Veracruz.[41] According to Díaz del Castillo and others, the first exposure to smallpox—a particularly fierce virus among the unexposed indigenous population—occurred when one of the Spaniards' servants arrived from the Caribbean with symptoms.[42]

Ironically, the disease did not begin to spread among the Mexica until after the Spaniards had been expelled from Tenochtitlan in the 1519 *noche triste*, or sad night. In the intervening period between Cortés's 1519 flight and his return in 1521 for what was to be his victorious conquest attack, European diseases ravaged the native population of central Mexico. Moteuccçoma's successor Cuitlahuac died from the disease only eighty days after taking office.[43] Disease contributed mightily, perhaps more than any other factor, to the Spanish victory over Tenochtitlan in 1521.

While disease helped in Cortés's conquest campaign against the Mexica, it complicated his efforts to consolidate power in Tetzcoco by eliminating several of his chosen leaders. The high turnover in the tlatoani position, however, gave Cortés an opportunity to become more familiar with the intricacies of local politics. He eventually selected his ally Ixtlilxochitl to hold the position of tlatoani, a choice in line with Cortés's emerging governing strategy: to keep the prehispanic ruling families in power at the local level.

Even before the Spanish arrival, Ixtlilxochitl had been a strong political figure. He raised a rebel army from his stronghold in Otumba and maintained control of a portion of the Tetzcoca territory against the wishes of both his brother, Cacama, and his uncle Moteuccçoma. His pedigree—being the son of a Mexica noblewoman—gave him a certain amount of popular clout

and legitimacy. Ixtlilxochitl's skills and connections, coupled with his loyal service to Cortés in the conquest campaign, made him a logical choice for tlatoani of Tetzcoco. In 1521, Ixtlilxochitl assumed control of city government with Cortés's blessing and acted as tlatoani until his death in 1531.

While Ixtlilxochitl came to power with the help of the Spaniards and their vanquishing of his rival brothers and uncle, Cortés himself enjoyed power for a very short period of time. Once the Spanish crown understood the scale of his conquest—and the size of the population of sedentary indigenous peoples now under the dominion of the monarchy—it moved quickly to establish more direct control of what was now being called New Spain. Throughout this period, however, the Spaniards chose to rely on existing forms of local government and on the local hereditary nobility to govern their newly won territory.

The first institutionalized government of New Spain, largely free from royal control or oversight, was called the *audiencia*, or high court, and was composed mainly of conquistadors. From an administrative perspective, the first audiencia was disastrous. The conquistadors, as investors and participants in the voyages from Cuba and subsequent conquest battles, perhaps rightly viewed the post-conquest world as one in which they were owed the spoils of war. The first audiencia systematically worked to that end, rewarding conquest participants at the expense of both native peoples and royal authority.

By the early 1530s, the crown recognized the dangers of its benign-neglect approach to New Spain and decided to implement a viceregal system there, one similar to the system used successfully by the Aragonese monarchs for centuries in southern Italy. The first viceroy of New Spain, don Antonio de Mendoza, arrived in Mexico City in 1535, and began the process of asserting royal control. The first audiencia was dissolved and a second audiencia convened. The

second audiencia deliberately excluded many of the old conquistadors that had dominated politics in the region since conquest. Instead, this new body included peninsular aristocrats and legal scholars.

Viceroy Mendoza and the second audiencia directed their efforts at curtailing conquistador influence. Many indigenous communities—once tributary holdings of individual conquistadors—now escheated to the crown and paid tribute directly to the king's representatives.[44] Even those communities that continued to pay tribute to conquistadors and their descendants, however, benefited from the viceroy's more disinterested form of colonial control. The viceregal administration was not, as the conquistadors had been, exclusively devoted to amassing personal wealth at the expense of the indigenous population. Indeed, Viceroy Mendoza was keenly interested in regularizing the process whereby communities were taxed and worked.

The viceroy learned from Cortés. Instead of meddling in local politics and appointing outsiders to positions of local authority, he followed Cortés's lead and relied on traditional, prehispanic leaders to exact tribute and assure political subordination. In Mexico City, for example, as William Connell demonstrates, under Viceroy Mendoza the traditional ruling family of Tenochtitlan was returned to power there.[45] In Tetzcoco, the sons of Nezahualpilli continued to hold power after Ixtlilxochitl's death. Moreover, these rulers appear to have been sons of Mexica noblewomen and therefore the most legitimate rulers according to prehispanic tradition.[46] Ixtlilxochitl's brother, don Jorge Yoyontzin, assumed control in 1532 when the former died. And when Yoyontzin died just one year later, another brother, don Pedro Tetlahuehuetzquititzin, took the tlatoani title (See Table 1.2).

Tetzcoca Rulers	Reign began	Reign ended
don Fernando Ixtlilxochitl	1521	1531
don Jorge Yoyontzin	1532	1533
don Pedro Tetlahuehuetzquititzin	1534	1539

Table 1.2. Selected Tetzcoco tlatoque.

Viceroy Mendoza's policy of supporting the hereditary ruling families of Tetzcoco and other indigenous communities in New Spain did not prevent him from making changes to local government. In fact, Spanish administrators were keen to reshape institutions at the local level according to Spanish models. To that end, they created municipal councils, or *cabildos*, to make local decisions. These councils were composed of *regidores*, or council members, and led by a *gobernador*, or governor, who was elected for a fixed number of years.

Robert Haskett has demonstrated that these councils, while Spanish in name and appearance, actually retained much of the prehispanic system of local government. The regidores of any given cabildo, for example, were generally the high-ranking nobles of the prehispanic period and their descendants. And Charles Gibson has shown that the governors, too, were generally drawn from the hereditary nobility. Gibson maintained that, initially, the governor position was simply filled by the local tlatoani. As the sixteenth-century progressed, he claimed, these two positions became less frequently held by the same person and the offices were separated.

For Tetzcoco, however, the evidence suggests that the tlatoani was not an obvious choice for governor in the earliest years of its implementation. While don Pedro Tetlahuehuetzquititzin ruled as tlatoani (1534-1539), for instance, he was not also the gobernador, at least not always. In a 1537 Inquisition document, don Pedro is listed as the "cacique," while someone called don

Francisco is listed as the "gobernador."[47] And in another Inquisition case from 1539, the gobernador is listed as don Lorenzo de Luna, a man who, while undoubtedly important in local affairs, is not listed in any source as having ever been the tlatoani of Tetzcoco.[48]

The imposition of the office of governor on local governments, therefore, was not as simple as Gibson suggested. Even in the early years of governors and cabildos, the tlatoani did not always occupy the governor position, and, as a result, the gobernador would not have been the most powerful person in local affairs. The Spanish administration officially recognized one man as local leader, but real local power was held by another individual.

The advent of viceregal authority in central Mexico, then, had several consequences for leaders in Tetzcoco. First, it ended the purely exploitative practices of the conquistador-dominated first audiencia. It also continued Cortés's practice of relying on existing systems of local government in order to exact tribute and maintain political control. While keeping local leaders in power, the viceregal administration nonetheless attempted to shape local government to appear more Spanish by imposing cabildos and governors. These new institutions may have been intended to replace indigenous political offices, but instead, they existed alongside and were dominated by prehispanic systems of political organization through the 1530s.

The consolidation of Spanish colonial authority in central Mexico in the 1530s happened in fits and starts. Far from being a moment of instant annihilation, Spanish colonization was, in fact, a complex process. Both Spaniard and Indian were forced to adapt their goals and expectations according to the realities of each one's relationship to the other. These early years began what would be a complicated process of evolution. In matters of religion, too, the imposition of the Spanish system happened gradually and with a fair amount of give and take,

acceptance and resistance. In 1539, for example, even as Christianity was beginning to take hold among the Nahuas, a Tetzcoca lord was burned at the stake for heresy.

The Trial and Execution of Don Carlos Ometochtli

In the prehispanic Nahua world, it was common for conquering city-states to impose their patron deity on conquered groups. The Mexica, as they brought most of central Mexico under their control beginning in the fourteenth century, required subordinate polities to maintain a cult to their patron god, Huitzilopochtli. But the Mexica and other precontact conquerors did not require dominated peoples to abandon their preexisting cults. Instead, the new deity was absorbed into the pantheon.

The Spaniards, like Christians generally, required a strictly monotheistic devotion to Christ and the Trinity (insofar as the worship of a triune god can be monotheistic). Robert Ricard famously described the Christian conversion of the Nahuas by the Spaniards as a "spiritual conquest," a complementary process to the political conquest of a few years earlier. In recent decades, however, scholars have begun to view the process of conversion as a more complicated endeavor than Ricard suggested. The Nahuas were not, as Ricard believed, simply converted to an orthodox Catholicism in one fell swoop. Instead, the Nahuas approached Christian teachings through the lens of both the Nahuatl language and their own cosmological world-view.[49] The Spaniards—and the mendicant friars who arrived in the Americas to do the conversion work—were prepared, to a large extent, to meet the Nahuas on their own terms. The Franciscans, especially, were keenly interested in learning native languages and understanding what they referred to as native "superstitions" in order to better indoctrinate native peoples in the fundamentals of Christian faith and practice.[50]

Moreover, the friars in New Spain commonly baptized indigenous peoples en masse and immediately upon their arrival in a given location. The relative haste of their conversion further contributed to the Nahuas' comparatively heterodox understanding of Christian principals, and troubled some elements of the religious establishment. The Dominican friars were especially troubled by what they saw as a hasty and incomplete conversion of the native population. When the Holy Office of the Inquisition, used for centuries in Europe to stamp out perceived heresy, was brought to New Spain to ensure that an orthodox form of Catholicism was practiced there as well, it is no surprise that native peoples soon became targets of its investigations.

One of the most significant—both for contemporaries and for subsequent historians—of all of the Inquisition's early work in New Spain was its trial and execution of a Tetzcoca noble, don Carlos Ometochtli. Modern historians have tended to view don Carlos as the tlatoani or cacique of Tetzcoco at the time of his arrest and death and, subsequently, to view his trial as emblematic of the futile struggle of local indigenous leaders against the horrors of Spanish colonialism and religious intolerance.[51] In the trial itself, however, don Carlos is not described as the ruler of Tetzcoco. Several recent studies of the trial document itself have corrected this error, though it bears repeating here that he was never tlatoani.[52]

It appears that this confusion comes, at least in part, from the turn-of-the-seventeenth-century Nahua chronicler Chimalpahin, who wrote that don Carlos was killed and burned after ruling as tlatoani for eight years. The first modern scholar to undertake a critical analysis of the don Carlos trial gave credence to this idea when he titled his 1910 study and transcription "Inquisition proceedings against the cacique of Tetzoco." The actual title page of the archival manuscript, however, describes don Carlos not as the cacique, but as "a *principal* of Tetzcoco."[53] *Principal* was a generic and vague title given to all important members of indigenous society and

does not imply ruler status. Other archival documents, as well as early published sources, also deny that don Carlos ever held the tlatoani position. Witness testimony from the trial proceedings themselves, for example, clearly states that the *señor*, or lord (a common Spanish substitution for the indigenous terms tlatoani and cacique), of Tetzcoco was don Pedro Tetlahuehuetzquititzin. He died only two months before the trial began.[54]

Don Carlos was not the tlatoani, and his trial should not be seen as some kind of epic battle between local native leader and evil inquisitor overlord. In fact, the trial record demonstrates that this case was much more complex and played out in the context of family tensions and the local political situation. It further reveals the ways in which the native nobility navigated the turbulence of the first years of colonialism. Don Carlos's actions—and the actions of his accusers—should be read as strategic plays within the local political system.

While don Carlos did not hold power, he was nonetheless keenly interested in attaining it. He tried in vain, it seems, to secure the tlatoani position for himself. Don Carlos's sister doña María testified that "when her brother don Pedro was alive and was lord of Tetzcoco, don Carlos tried many times to get him to name don Carlos lord after he died." She went on to say that "don Carlos had always tried to rule and command them all by force and be lord of Tetzcoco."[55] Don Carlos was, then, a pretender to the rulership of Tetzcoco, even if he never actually held it.

In an attempt to strengthen his claims to the title, don Carlos took steps that would have been commonplace in prehispanic Nahua society, but were viewed as scandalous among the Christianized members of his family in the early colonial period. Don Carlos attempted to take the late don Pedro's wife—his sister-in-law—as his concubine, a common practice for new rulers among the prehispanic Nahuas.[56] The move scandalized the women of his family, however, especially his sister-in-law. Don Pedro's widow, also called doña María, described in detail how

don Carlos came to her house night after night following the death of her husband. Each night, he was prevented from entering her house. One night, however, doña María heard footsteps in her bedroom. She called out to one of her servants to light a torch and search the house and outbuildings. The servant, while searching the outbuildings, found don Carlos up against a wall. Doña María sent a group of old women out to confront her brother-in-law. After don Carlos confessed to them that he had come to sleep with his sister-in-law "as his fathers had done with their sisters-in-law," the women scolded him and threw him out of the house. Thoroughly frightened, doña María slept with many lights burning in her house at night from then on.[57]

With such an affront to their good Christian reputations and sensibilities, it is no wonder that don Carlos's sisters, sister-in-law, and wife appear in the trial proceedings as some of his most hostile accusers. These women—all of whom, incidentally, were named doña María—presented evidence of don Carlos's moral corruption. One of his sisters confirmed that he tried to take his sister-in-law as concubine. The other claimed that he tried to persuade her to allow her husband to take more than one wife, a common prehispanic practice among the nobility. And his wife, arguably the most aggrieved of them all, gave testimony of an even more scandalous nature. She confirmed the testimony of others in the trial that don Carlos had been sexually involved with his niece, doña Inés, had had two children with her, and sometimes allowed her to stay in his bedroom with him while his wife was at home.

What is curiously absent from the testimony of these women is any mention of idolatry. Don Carlos's wife, in fact, says that she knew nothing of any alleged idols or sacrifices. Don Pedro's widow, too, said nothing of idolatry. More striking is the testimony of don Carlos's brothers, who were called to testify on the presence of pagan practices in the area. These brothers, all members of the cabildo and all high-ranking men in Tetzcoca society, said nothing

of don Carlos in their statements. Instead, they testified to having recently gone on a campaign to collect the prehispanic idols that locals periodically left at the feet of the crosses that dotted the roadsides in the region, crosses that were, shortly after the conquest, erected on the sites of prehispanic altars. They also described an apparent recent sacrifice on top of nearby Mount Tlaloc. But these brothers came to the conclusion that the people from the town of Huexotzinco were responsible for the sacrifice, and they posted guards on the mountain to stop the ceremonies. Don Carlos does not appear in their testimony at all.[58]

The accusations of idolatry against don Carlos actually came from indigenous commoners from the neighboring subject town of Chiconautla, where don Carlos's sister was married to the local tlatoani. His brothers in government in Tetzcoco did not accuse him of anything, and the women in his family were upset about his dubious sexual conduct and his inappropriate claims to power, not idol worship. Don Carlos, for his part, did not deny any of the accusations made by his female relatives. He acknowledged that he kept his niece as a concubine and had children with her. He also admitted to having sneaked into his sister-in-law's house at night. But his only offense to God, he says, is having concubines. He never admitted to heretical beliefs or idol worship.

The inquisitor, fray Juan de Zumárraga, first Archbishop of Mexico, convicted don Carlos of the charges anyway. Don Carlos's defense was nearly non-existent. Whether by fault of the inquisitor or don Carlos's council, not one new witness was presented to speak on don Carlos's behalf. Instead, the same accusers from Chiconautla reappeared and confirmed their earlier testimony. None of them even answered the list of questions prepared by don Carlos's attorney. Not surprisingly, this defense had little chance of clearing don Carlos's name. On

November 30, 1539, following his ecclesiastical sentencing ceremony, don Carlos was publicly burned at the stake in Mexico City's main square.

Fallout from the don Carlos trial reached all the way to Spain. As historian Richard Greenleaf demonstrated, his execution helped tip the scales against Bishop Zumárraga, who was reassigned to a less prestigious post in the empire. Inquisitorial authority over the indigenous population, too, was revoked following the don Carlos trial. The Spanish crown did not believe that the newly converted indigenous population should be subjected to the same standards of orthodoxy or, more importantly, to the same capital consequences as its "old Christian" subjects.

The most interesting implications for this study, however, are not its effects on bishops and royal policy, but rather its consequences for native leaders in Tetzcoco. As recent scholars have shown, this was not a proto-nationalistic rebellion that attempted to overthrow Spanish rule. We should, instead, view don Carlos's "heresy" in the context of local politics, a context in which he was a marginal figure before 1539. His failure to comply with Spanish norms regarding sexual practice eroded the support he might have expected from his family when allegations of heresy surfaced. Instead, his wife and sisters, alienated by his choice of paramour and the attempted rape of his sister-in-law, sided against him. Neither did his brothers come to his aid. Don Carlos's pretensions to power made his death not altogether unattractive for them, or at least kept them from risking any possible accusations of guilt by association. While they never actually accused him of anything, his brothers' silence in his defense was perhaps equally damning.

Don Carlos's desire for local power and his inability to conform to normative Christian sexual practices made for a tense political climate in Tetzcoco. And while don Carlos tried to shore up his claims to the tlatoani position by attempting to take the late brother's wife in the

prehispanic fashion, his antagonists pursued a distinctly colonial strategy by engaging the Inquisition against him and playing to Spanish fears of heresy among the indigenous nobility. Don Carlos demonstrated a particularly poor understanding of the rules of conduct governing the new colonial system (or at least a poor grasp of the potential consequences of not following them). His inability to seek power through colonial channels alienated him and left him vulnerable to attack by those better able to navigate these new Spanish institutions.

Conclusions

The first twenty years of Spanish colonialism were tumultuous for the native nobles of Tetzcoco. Some resisted the Spanish conquest when it was in their interests to do so. The Tetzcoca tlatoque, Cacama and Coanacoch, for instance, whose power derived, in part, from the support of their uncle Moteucçoma in Tenochtitlan, fought bitterly against the Europeans. Other high-ranking indigenous individuals, however, saw an opportunity in siding with the Spaniards. Native leaders like Ixtlilxochitl—who was already at odds with his powerful brothers in Tetzcoco—took advantage of the Spanish presence to advance his own interests and secure power for himself.

From the perspective of the Tetzcoca leaders, the Spaniards were just one more conqueror in a long list of conquerors stretching back centuries, and, at least initially, day-to-day life functioned much as it had before the Spanish arrival. Cortés, for his part, did much to maintain the prehispanic status quo at the local level. Most importantly, he reinstated the prehispanic ruling family to power just as the conquest battles were ending. In Tetzcoco, the reigns of Ixtlilxochitl and his brothers Yoyontzin and Tetlahuehuetzquititzin—all very high-

ranking members of the prehispanic ruling family—provided a great deal of continuity with the precontact past.

The administrative policies of the first viceroy also continued Cortés's strategy of keeping the old ruling families in power and using them as intermediaries in the colonial endeavor. Yet Mendoza began to subtly shape local government in New Spain according to Spanish ideals. Cabildos and governorships were instituted, and indigenous leaders were expected to conform to these new models. The actual process of adapting to these new local institutions, however, was gradual and incomplete in the period covered by this chapter. While Tetzcoco did, indeed, have a governor and a cabildo, the governor was relatively weak compared to the tlatoani office-holder and the cabildos were largely composed of members of the prehispanic hereditary nobility.

In matters of religion, too, the conquest was less of a break with the old traditions than was once believed. While many native leaders quickly accepted Christian baptism—or had it forced upon them—indigenous beliefs concerning Christianity were often less than orthodox. This is due, in part, to the prehispanic practice of imposing a conqueror's patron deity on conquered populations—but not to the exclusion of the local population's own preexisting pantheon. After the Spanish conquest, many indigenous groups likely believed that the Christian god would simply be added to, not replace, their central Mexican deities.

The process of conversion, then, was, like politics in this period, one of gradual evolution. The Spanish concern for orthodoxy, however, presented both challenges and opportunities for the indigenous nobles. The case of don Carlos Ometochtli demonstrates that blatant disregard for Christianity had serious consequences. It also suggests, though, that church authorities could be manipulated to serve the interests of the native nobility. Don Carlos's

accusers had what appear to be ulterior reasons for denouncing him to the Inquisition and stood to gain from his public shame and death. Even if they did not act deliberately to have don Carlos killed, their general lack of support for don Carlos left him vulnerable to inquisitorial ire.

This chapter shows that the conquest in Tetzcoco was not the cataclysmic political event that so many scholars once believed that it was. In many ways, the Spaniards were similar to other groups that had conquered central Mexico in the preceding centuries, and the native leaders of Tetzcoco navigated the Spanish advent in ways that would have been familiar to their ancestors. While some of them were understandably opposed to the Spanish invaders and suffered as a result, many Tetzcoca nobles came through the event in much stronger political and economic positions than when they began.

After the conquest, however, the Spaniards turned out to be unique among Mesoamerican conquerors in a few of key ways. Most importantly, they brought to the native peoples of central Mexico the full panoply of Afro-Eurasian disease. The effects of this epidemiological introduction were demographically devastating; the indigenous population of the region fell by more than half by mid-century.[59] In politics, they imposed new forms of government at the local level. In religion, they insisted on the abandonment of the Mesoamerican pantheon in favor of the Christian god. Even these rather radical changes, however, failed to destroy native leaders and the local political system. They adapted to their new circumstances, using Spanish institutions for their own benefit and evolving into increasingly adroit colonial leaders. As the next chapter demonstrates, the next decades of the sixteenth century produced leaders in Tetzcoco who were progressively more skilled in navigating the complexities of the colonial world.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1] Sahagún 1975, 30; Tacitus 1970, 62.

[2] Lee (2008) is a good place to start to unpack the lore surrounding these leaders, especially the elder ruler.

[3] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 188-189.

[4] Carrasco 1984, 45-54.

[5] Pomar 1975, 25, 32. Chimalpahin and Alva Ixtlilxochitl confirm Pomar's claim. See Carrasco 1984, 51.

[6] Torquemada 1975, I:254-55.

[7] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 152.

[8] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 449-50.

[9] Carrasco 1984, 52.

[10] Carrasco 1984, 74-75. Offspring from a union between a local lord and a noblewoman from a more powerful altepetl were the most likely of all of a ruler's children to inherit the throne. There are many examples of regional power struggles at the death of a ruler. The case of the succession of Nezahualcoyotl in 1431, as depicted in the Codex Xolotl, is a prime example. Nezahualcoyotl's success was due in no small part to his alliance with the growing military power of Mexico Tenochtitlan and his spurning of the then-dominant Tepanec empire at Atzcapotzalco. See Dibble (1996).

[11] Torquemada 1975, I:303-305. See also Gibson (1971), 389.

[12] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975, 449. Torquemada 1975, I:303; Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 188-189. In another place, Alva Ixtlilxochitl asserts that Nezahualpilli named his youngest son Yoyontzin as his successor because he was more capable than his siblings, but he contradicts this claim in the passage just cited (Compare Alva Ixtlilxochit 1975, 450 with 1977, 188-189).

[13] Torquemada 1975, I:303-305.

[14] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975, 450.

[15] Torquemada 1975, I:306.

[16] Torquemada 1975, I:308.

[17] Torquemada 1975, I:309.

[18] Torquemada 1975, I: 310.

[19] See Gibson 1952, Sahagún 1975 (Book 12), and García Quintana, Martínez Marín, and Torre (1983).

[20] The Florentine Codex recounts, from the Mexica Tlatelolca perspective, the first sightings of the Spaniards and the Triple Alliance reaction to them. Sahagún 1975, 5-20.

[21] Cortés 2001, 81 and 96-97.

[22] Sahagún 1975, 47.

[23] Cortés 2001, 97-98.

[24] Cortés 2001, 98.

[25] Cortés 2001, 177.

[26] Fernando Ixtlilxochitl may have been preceded by one or more of his brothers after Tecocoltzin's death, but they ruled for very brief periods of time.

[27] Cortés 2001, 177.

[28] Sahagún 1975, 82.

[29] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975, 450-51.

[30] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 404-05.

[31] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 414. "los tlaxcaltecas y otros amigos que Cortés traía, saquearon algunas de las casas principales de la ciudad, y dieron fuego á lo más principal de los palacios del rey Nezahualpiltzintli. . . . llevando consigo sus haciendas y mujeres, se fueron á la ciudad de México."

[32] Díaz del Castillo 1967, 7.

[33] Díaz del Castillo 1967, 8 and Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 414-15.

[34] Cortés 2001, 180.

[35] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975, 442-43.

[36] Tenochtitlan. Cortés 2001, 220.

[37] Cortés 2001, 220.

[38] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975, 443. The editors of the Cortés and Díaz del Castillo texts maintain that another of Nezahualpilli's sons, don Fernando Ahuaxpitzactzin, took office after Tecocoltzin's death. The texts themselves, however, refer only to "Don Fernando," whom I believe to be don Fernando Tecocoltzin, not the elusive don Fernando Ahuaxpitzactzin. Alva Ixtlilxochitl makes only brief mention of Ahuaxpitzactzin, implying that he ruled for only a brief period of time, if at all. He also lists Ahuaxpitzatzin as having been named Carlos, not Fernando. While Díaz del Castillo says that Ixtlilxochitl was given the name Carlos at baptism, Alva Ixtlilxochitl lists Ixtlilxochitl as having been named Fernando, and the editor of the Cortés text confirms that Ixtlilxochitl was called Fernando, not Carlos. Cortés does mention a "Don Carlos" who took over from "Don Fernando." See Cortés (2001, 177, 180, 483 n. 11, and 488 n. 52), Díaz del Castillo (1967, 8-9, 155, and 189), and Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1975, 361 and 398).

[39] Gibson 1964, 155. Cortés 2001, 366-367. AGI-I, 1381. These sources do not all agree that Coanacoch was killed.

[40] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975, 456. Tecocoltzin may have been succeeded by various other brothers and half-brothers. Their reigns were very short, however, and they shared with Tecocoltzin a lack of prehispanic legitimacy.

[41] Cook and Borah 1971, 80-82.

[42] See Gibson 1964, 448.

[43] Hassig 2006, 124.

[44] Gerhard 1993, 8-9.

[45] Connell 2011, 17.

[46] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 152-153.

[47] AGN-Inq, 38:4.

[48] *Proceso*, 1910.

[49] For a detailed look at how the Nahua world-view informed their understanding of Christianity as taught by the mendicant orders, see Burkhart (1989).

[50] The most spectacular example of the type of ethnography in which the Franciscans were engaged is the twelve-book, Nahuatl- and Spanish-language *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España* (now better known simply as the *Florentine Codex*), compiled by fray Bernardino de Sahagún with the help of a host of indigenous writers. See Sahagún (1950-1982).

[51] See, for example, Greenleaf (1961) and Ricard (1966). Tavárez (2011, 45) notes that this understanding of don Carlos's role in local government comes from the writings of Chimalpahin, the early colonial indigenous annalist from Chalco. Recent scholarship has not completely abandoned this traditional view. See Don (2010).

[52] Cline (1966). Also Tavárez (2011) and Don (2008).

[53] *Proceso* 1910, xvi.

[54] *Proceso* 1910, 33.

[55] *Proceso* 1910, 32.

[56] Carrasco 1984.

[57] *Proceso* 1910, 33-35.

[58] *Proceso* 1910, 15-24.

[59] Cook and Borah 1971, 82.

CHAPTER TWO
Reassertion of Traditional Authority, 1540-1564

In May 1539, Tetzcoca tlatoani don Pedro Tetlahuehuetzquititzin died. In November of the same year, don Pedro's brother, don Carlos Ometochtli, was burned at the stake by the Inquisition, convicted of fomenting a return to prehispanic religious and political practices. While don Carlos claimed the title of tlatoani at his trial, the other members of Tetzcoco's hereditary nobility did not recognize don Carlos as their leader. Indeed, don Carlos's failure to conform to the new realities of the colonial order made him an unappealing candidate for tlatoani. Instead, the ruling family in Tetzcoco turned to another of don Pedro's brothers, don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin, to rule them.

The tumult of the first two decades of Spanish rule—tumult that culminated in the execution of don Carlos—gave way, under the leadership of don Antonio and his nephew and successor don Hernando Pimentel, to nearly twenty-five years of relative stability in Tetzcoco's local government. Tetzcoco's native leaders became more confident and expert in their ability to navigate the colonial system, and don Antonio and don Hernando, ruling from 1540 to 1564, demonstrated clear leadership abilities in the postconquest world. Their political skills are made all the more impressive when one considers the considerable potential upheaval that characterized the mid-sixteenth century for the native Tetzcoca; they experienced continued epidemiological crisis and demographic decline, increasing Spanish interest in the lands in the eastern Valley of Mexico, and challenges to traditional native authority in local government. Both don Antonio and don Hernando actively fought to maintain Tetzcoco's wealth and prosperity in this unsteady period. Compared to the turbulence of conquest or the chaos of the late-sixteenth century, however, their reigns are some of the most stable of the early

postconquest period and represent something of a high point for the old ruling family in colonial-era government.

Don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin (r. 1540-1545) was the son of the famed precontact Tetzcoca tlatoani Nezahualpilli (r. 1472-1515) and brother to all of the tlatoque of Tetzcoco since his father's death (see Figure 2.1).[1] Don Hernando Pimentel (r. 1545-1564) was don Antonio's nephew and son of Coanacoch (r. 1520-1521), the last tlatoani of an independent Tetzcoco free of Spanish colonial control. They ruled over Tetzcoco in a period in which the hereditary nobility of central Mexico was experiencing great transformation. After conquest—especially following the arrival of New Spain's first viceroy, don Antonio de Mendoza (r. 1535-1550)—the Spaniards largely left intact or restored traditional indigenous social and political structures.[2] In fact, the Spaniards relied heavily on the tlatoque of central Mexico to collect tribute from the newly conquered population and exploit indigenous labor for their benefit. The Spanish *encomiendas*, or grants of indigenous labor and tribute, awarded to conquistadors and other early colonists corresponded more or less to existing *altepetl*, or Nahua ethnic states; existing tlatoque and their relatives and descendants became crucial intermediaries through which Spaniards operated.[3]

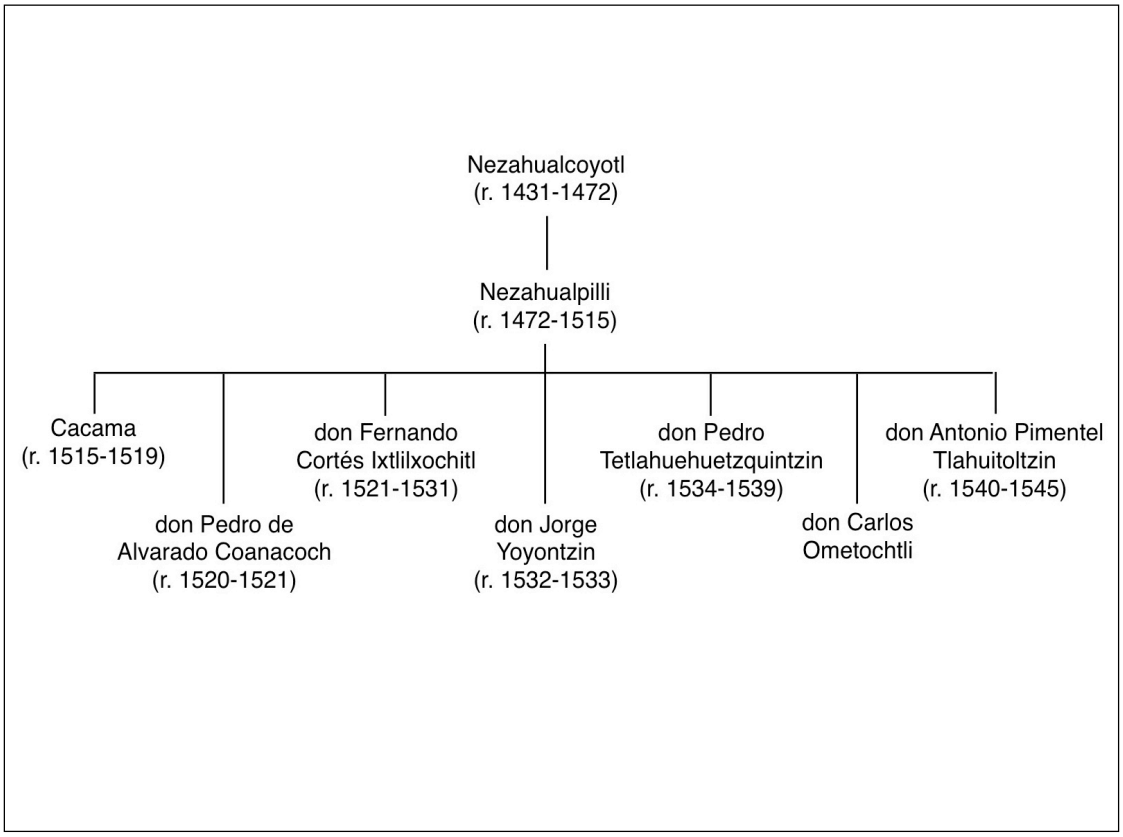


Figure 2.1. Ruling family of Tetzcoco, selected genealogy.

The Spanish colonial administration did attempt to shape the local government of indigenous towns in the image of Spanish institutions, however. As early as the 1530s, indigenous communities had adopted Spanish-style municipal town councils, called *cabildos*, composed of members of the precontact ruling nobility. These councils were presided over by *gobernadores*, or governors. Despite their Spanish appearance, these bodies were generally still composed of members of the old precontact nobility and often presided over by the community's tlatoani.[4]

Thus while Spaniards relied on indigenous nobles in the colonial period to maintain control of the large sedentary native population, they also introduced institutions that altered the precontact balance of power. These news forms of local political organization put pressure on

the traditional ruling elite and left them susceptible to encroachment by new players in local politics, including mestizos, commoners, and non-locals. In fact, the hereditary rulers of many altepetl in central Mexico—especially those altepetl located closest to the center of Spanish authority in Mexico City—were increasingly excluded from political offices and decision-making in the course of the sixteenth-century. In Mexico Tenochtitlan, for example, non-nobles increasingly exploited new viceregal institutions to oust political opponents and place themselves in positions of power.[5]

The Tetzcoca indigenous nobles in the early colonial period faced the same challenges and pressures as those faced by native leaders throughout the Valley of Mexico, and they were forced to conform to the expectations of Spanish authorities in many aspects of governance. Nonetheless, as the cases of don Antonio and don Hernando show, the mid-century leaders of Tetzcoco negotiated the ever-changing political environment of the early colonial period with great skill and success, engaging and exploiting colonial institutions to protect and expand the power and influence of the hereditary nobility.

An Altepetl in Crisis

The death of don Pedro Tetlahuehuetzquititzin in May 1539 began, as is the case at the time of any ruler's death, a period of political instability. According to Nahua custom, the rulership could pass either through linear succession, to a child of the old ruler, or co-laterally, to one of his siblings. Since the time of contact with Spaniards, the tlatoani office in Tetzcoco had passed from brother to brother. The high mortality rate within the ruling family due to the violence of conquest and the advent of European diseases meant that each ruler's reign was relatively short and accounts for the preference for co-lateral succession in this period. If this

pattern held in 1539, then the most likely candidates to succeed don Pedro were his brothers, many of which survived him.

Through don Carlos's Inquisition trial from a few months later, we see that don Pedro's brothers were already involved in local government, serving as both leaders and rank-and-file members of the cabildo. Don Lorenzo de Luna, for example, was governor of Tetzcoco in 1539, and don Hernando de Chávez served as alcalde. A man called don Antonio also served as alcalde.[6] These men were likely the most promising candidates for the office of tlatoani after don Pedro's death.

Don Carlos's insistence that he be named tlatoani made the situation more complicated. Don Pedro's sister doña María maintains that don Carlos constantly pestered the late don Pedro to name don Carlos as his successor. But, evidently, don Pedro declined to name don Carlos as the next tlatoani, for he is never referred to as such in his trial proceedings. Doña María's testimony gives us a clue as to why don Carlos failed to win the nomination. Don Carlos's brothers, she says, were angered by the way he harassed don Pedro. His brothers were also angry that he disregarded church teachings, took his niece as his concubine, and had children with her. As a result, doña María claimed, don Carlos's brothers separated themselves from him in their day-to-day activities.

Unpopular and marginalized, don Carlos had little chance of securing the leadership position without resorting to violence. Perhaps his supposed attempt to revive prehispanic politics and religion should be viewed as the first steps towards a violent seizure of power. Regardless of don Carlos's ambitions, however, his fellow Tetzcoca nobles did not consider him for the tlatoani post, and his execution cleared the way for the transfer of power to another, more acceptable, contender.

The job was eventually awarded to one of don Pedro and don Carlos's brothers, don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin. He was likely the same don Antonio who held the position of alcalde during don Pedro's tenure in office and during don Carlos's trial.[7] His experience in local government and his pedigree as the son of Nezahualpilli made him a good choice. The Boban Calendar Wheel, a sixteenth-century pictorial document from Tetzcoco, suggests that don Antonio was already quite a strong leader even before don Pedro's death (see Figure 2.2). In the upper half of the wheel, two figures appear facing one another. The figure on the right is named by the glosses as don Antonio Pimentel, and he sits above a mountain, or *tepetl*. The figure on the left is identified as don Hernando de Chávez, don Antonio's brother, and his seat is perched atop a body of water, or *atl* in Nahuatl. Together, atl and tepetl refer to the "water-mountain," or altepetl, of Tetzcoco.[8] Don Antonio and don Hernando are thus depicted so as to suggest that the two men are associated with Tetzcoco in some official capacity. The artist reinforces this suggestion by showing them seated on woven mats reminiscent of the *icpalli*, or woven reed-mat thrones of the prehispanic and early colonial tlatoque.

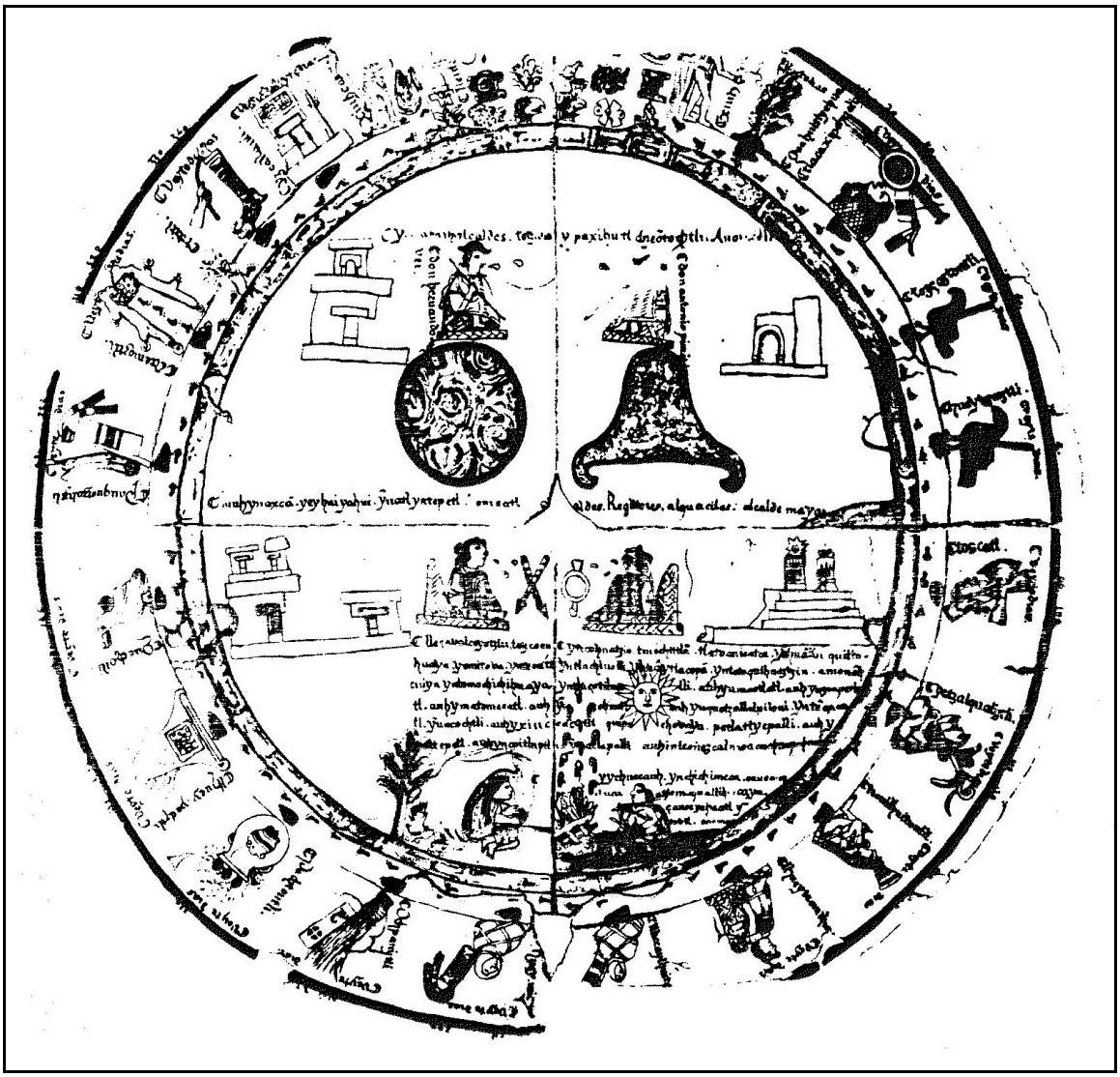


Figure 2.2. Boban Calendar Wheel, lithograph. Image courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

The Nahuatl glosses above and below these figures help to date the document. Translated, they read: "The alcaldes of Tetzcoco in the year 7 Rabbit, in the year . . ."; "and presently conditions are such in the city [on the day] 2 Water: alcaldes, regidores, alguaciles, alcalde mayor."[9] The date given in the glosses, the year 7 Rabbit and the day 2 Water, is a date from the prehispanic calendar of central Mexico. When correlated with the European calendar, it could be either 1538, 1590, or 1642. Since these two men appear in the don Carlos Inquisition

trial record as alcaldes of Tetzcoco in 1539, it seems reasonable to think that this document was made on the occasion of the installation of these men as alcaldes in 1538.[10]

In 1538, then, don Antonio was already involved in the production of documents glorifying his elevated position in local politics. It is small wonder that the nobles of Tetzcoco would look to him as a leader when don Pedro died the following year. Indeed, the historical record repeatedly testifies to don Antonio's ability to manipulate the colonial system and his efficacy as tlatoani. As the sixteenth-century progressed, so too did the skills of the Tetzcoca leaders.

The Challenges of the 1540s

While the 1540s saw an increased ability of the Tetzcoca hereditary nobility to navigate the colonial world, so too did the decade present challenges for local leaders. Don Carlos's dogmatizing, for instance—even if it were less radical than the Inquisition believed—was a reminder that the consolidation of Spanish power was an ongoing process in these years. The memory of the preconquest past could be—as don Carlos's case demonstrated—manipulated and exploited by those seeking power in order to gain support and overthrow the local regime.

The Inquisition's heavy hand in the don Carlos matter undoubtedly made the Tetzcoca nobles wary of even the smallest suspicion of heresy. Don Carlos's execution showed the zero-tolerance stance the Spaniards seemed to have for any type of heretical behavior in this period. Continued aversion to Christianity—real or perceived—on the part of the leaders of Tetzcoco or their subjects would undermine the nobility's position as crucial intermediary players in the Spanish colonial enterprise in New Spain and perhaps leave them vulnerable to more direct Spanish intervention in local politics.

Besides this threat of heresy, the Tetzcoca leaders in the 1540s faced more concrete challenges to their authority. In a 1545 document written by don Antonio, he lamented several challenges to tlatoani authority by various indigenous groups, both Tetzcoca and non-Tetzcoca. Don Antonio complained, first, that the *calpolli*, or constituent political units of Tetzcoco, continued to dominate certain lands in Calpulalpa that don Antonio claimed for the government of Tetzcoco, and they refused to recognize the tlatoani's right to them. Second, non-Tetzcoca nobles in the area had begun unlawfully working lands that belonged to the government of Tetzcoco. Third, native officials and merchants in and around Tetzcoco refused to recognize the government of Tetzcoco and render tribute to it as they had under don Antonio's father and grandfather.[11]

These challenges to tlatoani power in Tetzcoco reflect larger pressures on indigenous leaders throughout New Spain generally, who faced the potentially destabilizing presence of the Spanish government and courts, diseases, and settlers. Historian Charles Gibson, for instance, has demonstrated that the Spanish presence encouraged a disintegrating trend among altepetl whereby calpolli would break away from the precontact altepetl and form polities recognized as altepetl themselves by the colonial administration.[12]

A final source of potential instability in the 1540s was less a consequence of the Spanish presence and more the result of the simple passage of time. By 1540, the generation of rulers—Nezahualpilli's sons—that had held power since the conquest was advancing in age. More importantly, their children were reaching an age at which they expected to take part in local government. As the next generation attained young adulthood and middle age, it would be increasingly difficult for their fathers and uncles to continue to pass the rulership along co-laterally and exclude their sons and nephews from power. A lineal succession from the older

generation to the younger would need to occur soon, and the process whereby that transfer would happen was far from certain. If mishandled, a generational shift in control had the potential to unleash acrimonious chaos among the Tetzcoca nobles.

These challenges, while serious, proved not to be devastating for Tetzcoco and the rule of don Antonio. In fact, the new tlatoani dealt handily with these issues, kept Tetzcoco stable, and preserved his family's powerful position until his death in 1545. Indeed, historical evidence suggests that don Antonio was a dynamic leader who deftly negotiated the complexities of the ever-changing political landscape of the early colonial period.

Adroit Maneuvers

In matters of religious orthodoxy, don Antonio was very careful not to arouse suspicion or ecclesiastical scrutiny, an approach far different from don Carlos's hazardous life-choices. In fact, don Antonio made a concerted effort to embrace Christianity and the social order it represented. This support for Christianity is most clearly illustrated in don Antonio's will, dated July 20, 1545, which emphasized the Tetzcoca tlatoani's subordinate position to the will of the Christian god and the Spanish emperor. In this document, don Antonio implored his successor to continue to assume this same subordinate position in the political-religious hierarchy of the colonial period. "He who is to be lord [after me]," he wrote, "firstly and before all things, with all care, respect, and reverence, must live in compliance with God Our Lord, doing that which is his will, and the same with his Majesty the Emperor our lord, under whose protection we are and who governs us."[13] Additionally, don Antonio was concerned that churches in the Tetzcoco jurisdiction be properly built and that the communities around these churches be well ordered.[14] Such concerns reflect a sharp distinction in the goals of don Antonio and the heretical don

Carlos. The socio-political order advocated by don Antonio kept Christian churches in the center of neatly arranged indigenous communities according to the desires of Spanish authorities.

Don Antonio took other actions that illustrate his religious leanings; he maintained a close relationship with the famed Franciscan missionary known as Motolinia (fray Toribio de Benavente). Motolinia spent much time in Tetzcoco and developed a relationship with the Tetzcoca ruling family. It appears that Motolinia even appealed to his patron in Spain, the Count of Benavente, don Antonio Alfonso Pimentel, to represent the ruling house of Tetzcoco at court in Spain and to serve as their baptismal sponsor. In 1551, the count petitioned the crown to allow the Tetzcoca rulers to use his coat of arms.[15] Don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin also took the count's name. This close relationship between don Antonio and Motolinia further distanced the tlatoani from his unorthodox brother and demonstrated at least an outward embrace of Christianity.

In addition to embracing Christianity, don Antonio also recognized that he and his successor had to lessen the appeal of rebellion among those they governed. If most Tetzcoca were happy with the way things were run, if they had a vested interest in the colonial system, then they would be more likely to ignore the kinds of rebellious and unorthodox ideas that don Carlos supposedly preached. To maintain power and avoid future challenges to his rule, don Antonio had to make the colonial order desirable. To that end, don Antonio, in his will, instructed his successor to care for all those who suffer want and misery and, more specifically, to address the problem of a lack of water in the area called Acoculco and the dire circumstances that the people there faced as a result. Don Antonio charged the next tlatoani with the duty of constructing a proper water delivery system and providing basic services to this population.[16] Lack of basic human necessities like water and land could lead to discontent with the Tetzcoca

leadership and undermine their ability to govern. If the Tetzcoca rulers were to prevent any future rejection of the Christian-colonial social order, then don Antonio's successor had to work—as don Antonio did—to continue to provide for the people of Tetzcoco.

While don Antonio was careful to maintain credibility as a Christian and to inculcate a vested interest in the colonial order among his people, he also worked to counter the corrosive effect of Spanish colonialism on the office of tlatoani. As mentioned above, Tetzcoco's calpolli, non-Tetzcoca nobles, and regional native officials and merchants had, according to don Antonio's will, increased their influence at the expense of the tlatoani in the first decades of colonial rule.

Don Antonio refused to accept passively these affronts to his authority. Abundant archival evidence attests to his active fight to preserve the power of his office. One of the most intriguing documents related to don Antonio is the Humboldt Fragment VI, now housed in Germany's Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (see Figure 2.3). This pictorial manuscript depicts litigation between don Antonio and a Spaniard over the Oztoticpac palace compound in Tetzcoco.



Figure 2.3. Humboldt Fragment VI. Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

The Oztoticpac palace compound was seized, along with the rest of don Carlos Ometochtli's property, by the Inquisition in the course of don Carlos's trial. Whereas the Inquisition believed the palace compound to be don Carlos's personal property, and therefore subject to seizure and sale, don Antonio contended that it was not held by any individual, but rather belonged to the lordly estate of the hereditary rulers of Tetzcoco and could not be alienated from that office.[17] A map of the Oztoticpac Palace and various outbuildings occupies the center of Humboldt Fragment VI. The size of the property belonging to the palace compound is recorded along the perimeter of the property in the precontact numerical notation system of bars and dots. Two roads—one shown coming out of the palace and another cutting across the palace property—are marked in the traditional precontact style with footprints. The figures to the

left and right of the palace are the two parties involved in the litigation. Don Antonio is pictured to the left of the palace (see Figure 2.4) with his lawyer and a co-litigant. To the right of the palace is the opposing litigant, a Spaniard who bought the palace property from the church. Above the palace, the artist has drawn the viceroy and the oidores of the audiencia giving their judgment on the case.



Figure 2.4. Don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin. Humboldt Fragment VI, detail. Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

In addition to the Humboldt Fragment, don Antonio was also involved in the production and patronage of several other pictorial manuscripts. Howard Cline, for instance, identified the Humboldt Fragment as related to another document, the Oztoticpac Lands Map, which he dates also to around 1540 and from Tetzcoco (see Figure 2.5). In the upper-left corner of the Oztoticpac Lands Map, one can see a nearly identical portrayal of the Oztoticpac palace

compound as drawn in the Humboldt Fragment. The remaining properties depicted on the Oztoticpac Lands Map constitute the rest of don Carlos Ometochtli's property seized by the Inquisition. The glosses that accompany these various properties carefully describe whether or not the property belonged to don Carlos as his personal property. The maker of the map implied that those properties that belonged to the Tetzcoca patrimony were improperly seized by the Inquisition and should be returned to the ruling family.[18] Both of these cadastral-style maps were part of the legal battle to reclaim Tetzcoca seigneurial property seized by the Inquisition after don Carlos's execution. Don Antonio's involvement in the production or use of these pictorials attests to his active push for the maintenance of the traditional rights of the local nobility and his ability to engage the viceregal government to that end.

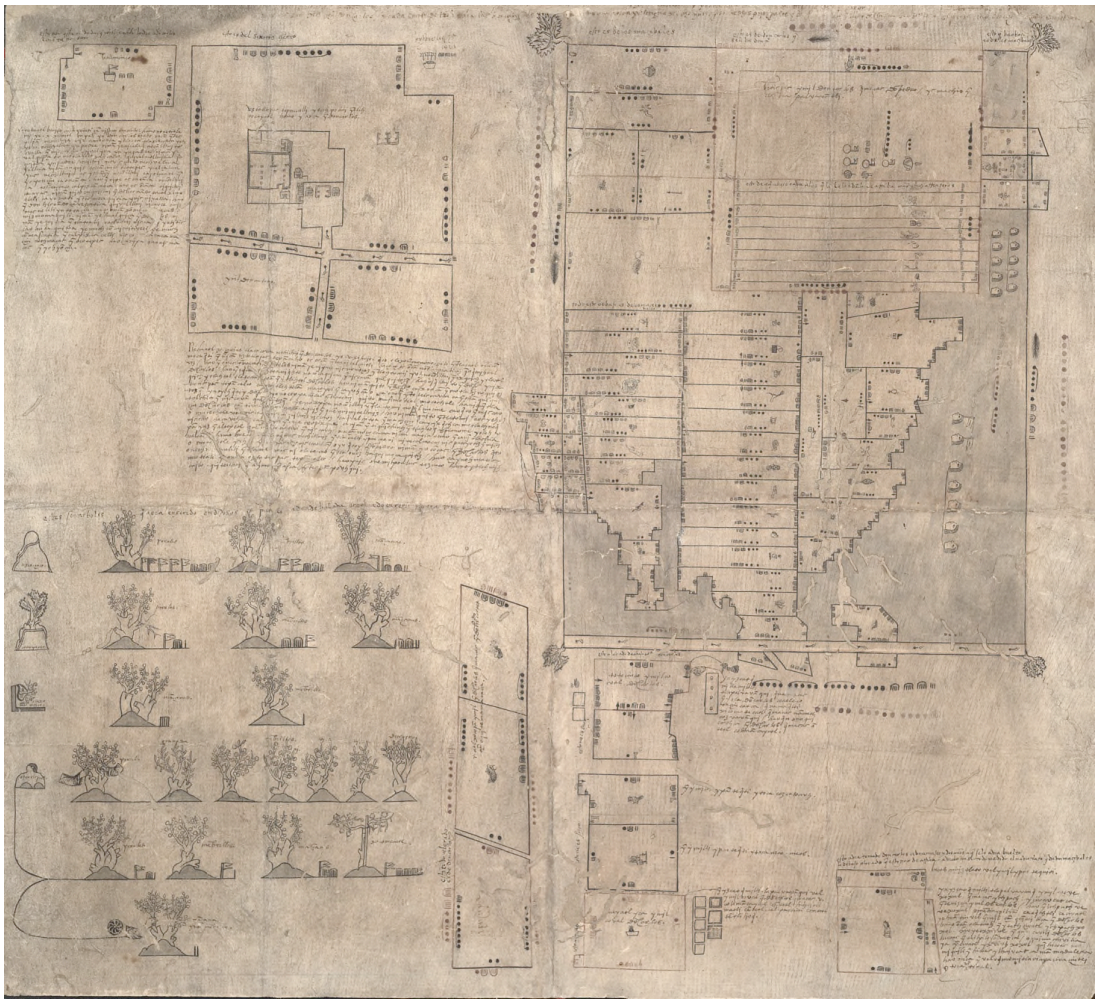


Figure 2.5. The Oztoticpac Lands Map. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Eduardo Douglas has demonstrated that several other pictorials from Tetzcoco come from the 1540s and were likely commissioned by don Antonio. The first of these is the Mapa Quinatzin, which Douglas dates to 1542, two years into don Antonio's tenure as tlatoani. This document touts the combination of barbaric Chichimec and cultured Toltec heritage that characterized the Tetzcoca nobles and their rags-to-riches history. The Mapa Quinatzin's intended audience seems to have been a local indigenous one, and native readers would have

readily understood the pictorial conventions employed by the artist as a means of reinforcing the Tetzcoca nobles' right to high status and respect.[19]

Also dating from don Antonio's tenure are the Codex Xolotl and the Mapa Tlotzin.[20] Though different in their content and form from the Mapa Quinatzin, the Codex Xolotl and the Mapa Tlotzin nonetheless also attempt, as Douglas contends, to shape the history of precontact Tetzcoco in such a way as to "assert the rights and privileges of their colonial patrons, descendants of the rulers whose achievements they commemorate and extol."[21] All of these pictorial manuscripts—the Humboldt Fragment VI, the Oztoticpac Lands Map, the Mapa Quinatzin, the Codex Xolotl, and the Mapa Tlotzin—therefore, can be seen as representations of don Antonio's active campaign not only to restore property to the government and royal family of Tetzcoco but also to restore the image of Tetzcoca magnificence in central Mexico.

While don Antonio had to work both to maintain his Christian image and protect the office and lordly estate of the tlatoani, he was also concerned with the matter of succession after his death. Among the Nahuas of central Mexico it was possible for power to pass both linearly from one generation to the next and also co-laterally between members of the same generation.[22] All of don Antonio's surviving brothers, therefore, were potential heirs to the throne of Tetzcoco as were any surviving children of the quickly growing number of recently deceased rulers. As these surviving children grew into adults—as many of them had by this point in time—the possibility of conflict between them and their uncles over who would succeed to the rulership increased.

Recognizing the need for power to move to the next generation and seeing the potential threat that his brothers posed to this process, don Antonio began his testament with the matter of his successor. "In order that the nobles [of Tetzcoco] and the Tetzcoca [commoners] not be

neglected," he says, "and that there be no confusion among them, I name as my successor don Hernando Velazquez [Pimentel] to be señor." Don Hernando was don Antonio's nephew, the son of don Antonio's half-brother, don Pedro de Alvarado Coanacoch, who was killed along with Cuauhtemoc by Cortés in Honduras (see Figure 2.6). Noting that illness—a persistent problem for the indigenous populations of the Americas throughout the sixteenth century—could claim don Hernando's life, don Antonio named a second candidate for the position should don Hernando die. This second candidate was don Hernando's younger brother, don Pedro de Alvarado.[23]

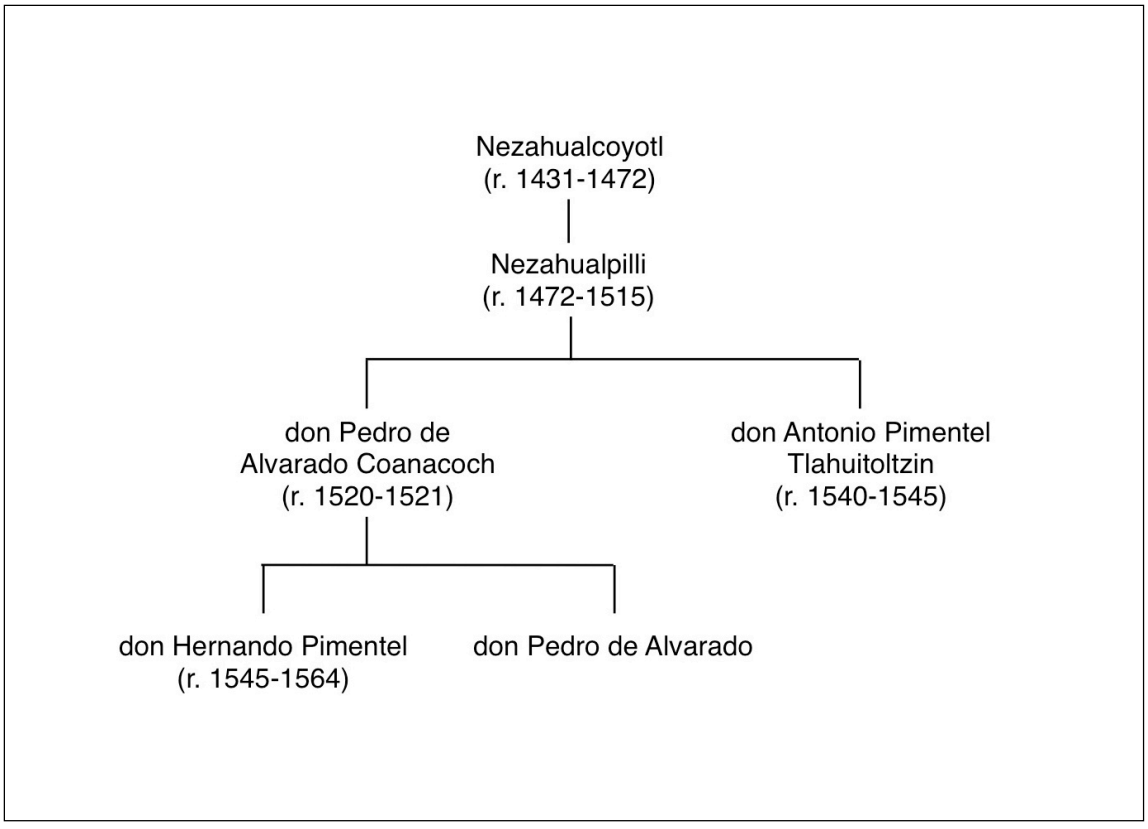


Figure 2.6. Ruling family of Tetzcoco, selected genealogy.

It may appear odd that don Antonio would nominate his nephews over his brothers or sons. But don Antonio knew that in Tetzcoco, potential successors to the office of tlatoani had to be accepted by a group of senior nobles.[24] His choice of don Hernando suggests that don Hernando was more likely to be confirmed by the other nobles than don Antonio's own sons or brothers. Don Hernando's popularity may have stemmed from the fact that he was the son of don Pedro de Alvarado Coanacoch, the last independent tlatoani of Tetzcoco before the Spanish victory in 1521. It may also have come from his potential to engage the Spanish colonial bureaucracy; once in office, don Hernando wrote extensively to the Spanish crown and was responsible for securing a coat of arms for the ruling family and Tetzcoco's designation as *ciudad*, or city, within the Spanish municipal classification system.[25] Whatever don Hernando's specific qualifications, don Antonio undoubtedly had them in mind when choosing him as his successor. Don Antonio's foresight and leadership in this matter helped to ensure a peaceful, stable change of power.

Don Antonio also reminded his brothers of their role under the next tlatoani. He cautioned them that it was their responsibility to "take very particular care to correct [his successor] and teach him, accompanying him always on the straight road of truth, for we have always had our good laws and laudable customs from time immemorial, since the origin of the señorío."[26] Their role was not to antagonize, but to assist and advise. Political stability and continuity in Tetzcoco depended on their acceptance of don Antonio's successor and on their aid in governing the altepetl. To the newly elected don Hernando also fell some of the responsibility, however. According to don Antonio, the new ruler had to reward good service to the altepetl with gifts of land and properties, as was the custom.[27] By naming a successor and by clearly outlining his expectations for both the successor and any potential rivals, don Antonio helped to

preserve harmonious government in Tetzcoco and diminish the destabilizing effects of such a large contingent of potential claimants to the tlatoani post.

By examining don Antonio's tenure as tlatoani, then, we get a sense of the issues confronting the Tetzcoca indigenous leadership in the years immediately following don Carlos's notorious execution. First, we see that any new allegations of another don-Carlos-style rejection of Spanish authority could threaten the ruling family's ability to govern. Second, we see that the authority of the position of tlatoani was challenged by various groups in and around Tetzcoco. Third, and perhaps most importantly, we see the potential political instability within the Tetzcoca ruling family as a new generation of rulers came of age.

Don Antonio's responses to these issues and threats represented a careful negotiation between prehispanic traditions on the one hand, and the new realities of Spanish political dominance in New Spain on the other. Outward displays of prehispanic religious devotion were no longer tolerated in Tetzcoco, and don Antonio—unlike his brother don Carlos—advocated respect for the Christian god and the Spanish monarch. He cultivated a relationship with Motolinia and was also concerned that Tetzcoca communities be well ordered, church-centered settlements. At the same time, however, don Antonio promoted a traditional system of government in which the Tetzcoca tlatoani was responsible for the provision of basic human needs and the general welfare of those he governed.

Respect for the office of tlatoani in Tetzcoco had diminished under Spanish rule, yet don Antonio utilized traditional painted manuscripts with prehispanic pictorial conventions to reassert the Tetzcoca royal family's right to high status and respect by drawing on a local, indigenous reverence for the political might of Tetzcoco and for ancient Toltec and Chichimec

cultures. He also actively litigated in the viceregal courts in an effort to reclaim improperly seized patrimonial lands.

In an attempt to avoid factional in-fighting among the Tetzcoca nobles, don Antonio named a successor to the tlatoani position. This individual, don Hernando Pimentel, was the most likely candidate to be confirmed by the other Tetzcoca nobles after don Antonio's death and to enjoy the legitimacy required for effective rule. This prudent decision, along with his insistence on traditional forms of social interaction within the royal family, showed don Antonio's desire to avoid conflict among his relatives and promote the political health of this illustrious altepetl. In hindsight, his choice of don Hernando seems wise; don Hernando's twenty-year rule was peaceful and stable.

Don Carlos Ometochtli's disregard for the colonial social order led to his trial and burning at the stake and cast doubt on the continued ability of the hereditary indigenous nobility of central Mexico to govern. But don Antonio's moderation and judicious negotiation of the new colonial order in which he found himself ensured the Tetzcoca ruling family's continued existence, authority, and prosperity.

A Generational Shift

Don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin was the final son of Nezahualpilli to serve as tlatoani. Though other sons were still alive in 1545, the office nonetheless passed to the next generation, to don Antonio's nephew, don Hernando Pimentel. There is evidence that don Hernando's surviving uncles were not all pleased with his selection. Yet don Hernando's rule has been dubbed the *pax tetzcocana*, a period of great stability and peace, especially as compared to the periods of great turmoil during and after the conquest and the period of political crisis

following his death.[28] This stability was due, in part, to don Hernando's strong leadership and active engagement with colonial authorities. He, more than any of his colonial-era predecessors, embraced the new colonial order and tirelessly acted to advance the interests of Tetzcoco, its rulers, and the indigenous population of central Mexico within it.

Don Hernando's selection marked a generational shift in the office of tlatoani. Since Nezahualpilli's death in 1515 until don Antonio's death in 1545, the Tetzcoca tlatoque had all been sons of Nezahualpilli. Don Hernando, however, was the first of Nezahualpilli's grandchildren to hold the office; he was the son of Coanacoch—later baptized don Pedro de Alvarado—who assumed the position of tlatoani of Tetzcoco after Cacama's death and who fought against the Spaniards until the fall of Tenochtitlan in 1521. Coanacoch was held prisoner and killed, along with the Mexica tlatoani, Cuauhtemoc, by Cortés on his trip to Honduras in 1525.

The reasons for selecting Coanacoch's son—as opposed to the sons of the other late rulers or Coanacoch's surviving brothers—were undoubtedly complex and varied. The selection itself fell, as it did in preconquest times, to a committee of high-ranking members of the Tetzcoca hereditary nobility. Local Spanish leaders, recognizing this precontact tradition, approached six of Nezahualpilli's sons to ascertain who would rule next. The guardian of the Franciscan monastery in Tetzcoco, fray Juan de San Francisco, said to them: "Consult among yourselves. To whom does the office of lord by right belong? To whom by nature and lineage falls its responsibility?"[29]

According to sources preserved by don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and submitted to the Audiencia in the early seventeenth century, these brothers did meet, in the presence of a notary, in order to carry out the friar's instructions. The fundamental problem that they faced, as

they saw it, was the fact that not only were there the six of them who might succeed legitimately to the tlatocayotl, but that there were now also the sons of the former tlatoque, don Pedro de Alvarado Coanacoch and don Fernando Cortés Ixtlilxochitl, who could reasonably assert a claim to power. With don Antonio Pimentel's dying wishes in mind, however, they concluded that the tlatocayotl and cacicazgo would pass to their nephew, don Hernando Pimentel Velázquez Nezahualcoyotl, son of don Pedro de Alvarado Coanacoch.[30]

Other sources suggest that the choice of don Hernando was much more controversial and involved a degree of Spanish interference. In an undated Nahuatl-language letter collected by Chimalpahin, the early colonial annalist from Chalco, some of don Antonio's brothers expressed frustration with the choice to have don Hernando take over after don Antonio's death. "For sons of Neçahualpiltzintli are living," they complained, "and other noblemen who are grandsons of Neçahualcoyotzin are living, whom the altepetl favors. We say: how shall we be esteemed? For we are its fathers."[31] These writers—unnamed in the document—felt entitled to the rulership position themselves and expressed unease about their role in altepetl government under the leadership of their nephew. They also suggest that what appeared to be a seamless, unanimous selection process was actually coerced by Spanish authorities, specifically the Franciscan guardian, fray Juan de San Francisco. "And when [don Antonio] died we were at hand," they wrote, "Why did he tell us nothing? . . . But when don Antonio Pimentel died, our Father fray Juan de San Francisco no more than showed us the paper [in] which don Antonio had indicated [his will]. There we learned that he had designated don Hernando Velázquez. . . . And our Father fray Juan de San Francisco said: It is done; don Antonio has indicated [his will]. We did not respond to our Father."[32] If we are to believe this source, the decision to elect Coanacoch's son as tlatoani instead of one of his surviving brothers or their children was less the result of don

Hernando's support among his kinfolk and the people of Tetzcoco and more directly related to the favor he enjoyed among local Spanish authorities.

The actual roots of don Hernando's legitimacy and strength as a candidate for tlatoani probably lay somewhere in between. As the son of the last independent tlatoani of Tetzcoco before Cortés's victory, he was certainly a dominant force in local politics in his own right. Yet Spanish support for him in the tlatoani election likely overwhelmingly tipped the scales in his favor. Whatever the case, don Hernando was able to overcome the opposition from this group of uncles and seems to have gone on to enjoy quite a strong mandate with which to govern. Indeed, there is little evidence to suggest that his reign was marked by anything but stability and a lack of overt factional confrontation among his grandfather's descendents.

The *Pax Tetzcocana*

Don Hernando ruled as tlatoani for nineteen years, the longest reign of any tlatoani since his grandfather, Nezahualpilli, died in 1515. His father's generation, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, was plagued by very quick tlatoani turn-over. Cacama, for example, ruled only five years, from 1515 until Cortés took him prisoner and he was killed during the *noche triste* flight from Tenochtitlan in 1520. Don Hernando's father, don Pedro Alvarado Coanacoch, ruled an independent Tetzcoco for an even briefer period following Cacama's death until the fall of Tenochtitlan in 1521. After the Spanish victory in 1521, the average time in office for a Tetzcoca tlatoani was about five years. Compared to the forty-one-year reign of Nezahualcoyotl and the forty-three-year reign of Nezahualpilli, the time in office for the early colonial tlatoque was tragically short. Don Hernando's nineteen-year reign, however, provided stability and continuity in Tetzcoco. Don Hernando used this long period of time in office productively. Perhaps more

than any other Tetzcoca leader in the sixteenth century, don Hernando engaged the Spanish colonial bureaucracy to further his economic and political interests and those of his family.

The strongest evidence we have for don Hernando's engagement with Spanish authorities are his letters and references to his letters left behind in repositories in Spain and Mexico. In 1551, for example, don Hernando petitioned the king in Spain for recognition of Tetzcoco as a *ciudad*, or city, in the Roman-style system of municipal classification used by the Spaniards. Such a designation would raise Tetzcoco's status among the altepetl of central New Spain; only the most important polities received this distinction. Through don Hernando's efforts, Tetzcoco was awarded the *ciudad* title and received a coat of arms (see Figure 2.7).[33] Additionally, don Hernando enlisted the help—through his friendship with Motolonia—of Spanish nobleman don Antonio Alfonso Pimentel, Count of Benavente, to petition the crown for a coat of arms for the Tetzcoca tlatoque.[34] Don Hernando Pimentel received this coat of arms in 1551, as well (see Figure 2.8).[35]



Figure 2.7. Coat of Arms of the City of Tetzcoco. Photo: Bradley Benton

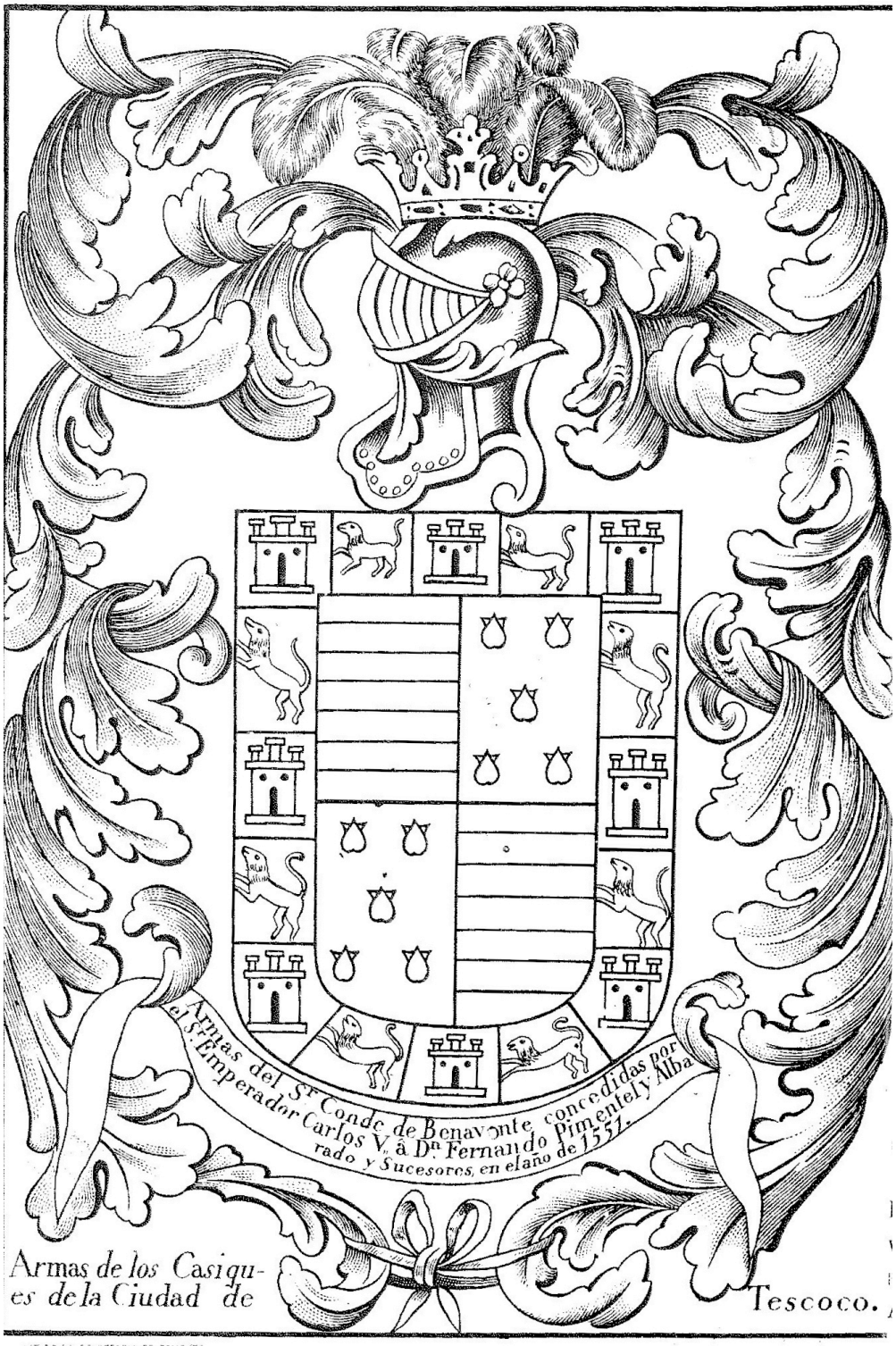


Figure 2.8. Coat of Arms of the Tlatoque of Tetzcoco (after Peñafiel 1979, iii).

The coat of arms for the tlatoani is identical to that of the Count of Benavente, but the coat of arms for the city of Tetzcoco is an original composition and is not a copy of a preexisting European coat of arms. In fact, this coat of arms includes many prehispanic elements. A document in the AGN that appears to be from much later in the colonial period gives an explanation of the coat of arms.[36] The shield, it says, is supported by a coyote, which was meant to symbolize the great precontact tlatoani Nezahualcoyotl. Just below the coyote's head is drawn an indigenous-style hunting hood of the type worn by the prehispanic rulers of Tetzcoco. On the left-hand side, the Tetzcoca military dress, called a *xiquipile*, appears below two eagles. Below that are the shield, club, and drum of the central Mexican precontact battlefield. On the right-hand side, the nearby hill of Tetzcotzinco, where Tetzcoco's precontact rulers would go for recreation, is depicted. The seven heads painted along the shield's border are meant to represent Tetzcoco's seven tributary altepetl: Coatlinchan, Huexotla, Coatepec, Acolman, Tepetlaostoc Teotihuacan, and Otumba. The basis for this late-colonial description of Tetzcoco's coat of arms is unclear, and many of these elements could be interpreted in a variety of ways. It seems clear, however, that the city's coat of arms included many preconquest-style symbols in what is a distinctly European genre.

The borders of the coat of arms—which are not discussed in the explanatory text from the AGN—also appear to be prehispanic in style. They seem to be a representation of the *atl-tlachinolli*, or burning water, motif, which was a metaphor for war. The border on the left appears to be a band of running water, or *atl*, and the border on the right appears to be a flaming serpent's body, which typically connotes *tlachinolli*, or "that which burns," in prehispanic iconography. These elements together—the water and the fire—formed a metaphor for war in the precontact central Mexican pictographic tradition.[37] Indeed, war and warfare seem to dominate

this coat of arms; the alt-tlachinolli, the xiquipile, and the battlefield implements, along with the shield and arrows that the coyote holds on either side of the armorial shield, give the strong impression of bellicosity. María Castañeda de la Paz has demonstrated that coats of arms from several central Mexican altepetl also emphasize war in order to assert their dominance over other altepetl in the region.[38] The inclusion of Tetzcoco's seven tributary altepetl on its coat of arms would seem to support such a reading in this case, as well.

Thus don Hernando succeeded in having the nobility of his altepetl and his indigenous family formally recognized by the Spanish monarch according to Spanish custom and secured a place for himself in the Spanish system of class distinction and social and economic privilege. Yet don Hernando was also concerned with matters of a more practical nature, and he continued to write to the king throughout the 1550s and 60s on a variety of matters. At least four letters signed by don Hernando reached Spain during this period, and there exist references to a fifth. In each of them, don Hernando appeared as the unquestioned leader and representative of Tetzcoca government. The letters also reflect don Hernando's changing understanding of his place within the colonial order and his adaptation to the operations of the colonial administration.

In a letter from 1554, don Hernando perhaps overestimates his position within the Spanish empire. Writing as the "cacique and legitimate heir of the city of Tetzcoco and its subjects," don Hernando asks for permission to travel to Spain to see the king in person "for the good government [of Tetzcoco] and in order to better serve your majesty . . . and to deal with a few items of business which cannot be dealt with by letter."[39] While many native leaders may have wanted to travel to Spain—and some, in fact, did make the journey—indigenous nobles were not often granted permission to travel to Europe. Yet don Hernando earnestly appealed to the king for permission to make the trip, perhaps more confident in his interpersonal bargaining

skills than in the Spanish empire's bureaucratic means of dealing with his problem. Somewhat predictably, don Hernando's request seems not to have been granted. Despite this failure, don Hernando's letter nonetheless demonstrates several important features of his governing strategies. His recognition of the king in Spain as final arbiter in colonial disputes, for example, shows that he understood the colonial hierarchy and saw the limits that the king placed on colonial administrators. Also, the fact that don Hernando wrote at all shows his political acumen. The preconquest form of writing was composed of a complex system of pictographic and phonetic elements. Don Hernando, however, used the Roman alphabet and the Spanish language when drafting his letter and communicated to the king in the language of the empire, not in his native tongue.

This unsuccessful attempt to bring Tetzcoco's problems to the attention of the crown did not discourage don Hernando. He continued to write to the king, but his methods shifted slightly. In 1556, rather than ask for permission to travel to see the king, don Hernando—along with his fellow indigenous leaders in Mexico, Tlacopan, Coyoacan, and Iztapalapa—asked that the king appoint a "protector" to represent indigenous interests at the royal court in Spain. The native leaders specifically asked the king to appoint fray Bartolomé de las Casas, bishop of Chiapas, to this position.[40] Their request reflects don Hernando's earlier feeling that their problems could not be sufficiently addressed in a letter. Here they wrote, "neither can we list all of our needs in writing, for there are so many of them and they are so large that they would greatly bother your majesty."[41] These leaders, though, were learning from their past interactions with imperial officials. Instead of asking to go in person to plead before the king, here they asked for their representative to lobby on their behalf.

Five years later, don Hernando's name appeared on another letter to the king. Here again, he employed the tactic of sending someone to the king in the name of the Tetzcoca. In this instance, don Hernando writes as the *gobernador* of Tetzcoco, which confirms that he is the Spanish-recognized political leader of the altepetl. Writing with him are the council, alcaldes, regidores, and principales of Tetzcoco. They communicated their complaints to a Franciscan friar, whom they wanted the king to receive and hear.[42] This tactic reflects don Hernando's increasing political savvy; here he sent to the king not simply the general protector of all the Indians of New Spain, but a man with specific—and *Tetzcoca*-specific—issues instead. Don Hernando, then, sent both regional and local lobbyists to Spain to work on his behalf.

The next year, 1562, don Hernando relented and put down some of his issues in writing. This decision may reflect a clearer understanding of the Spanish empire's reliance on written communication for the administration of its territory.[43] In any case, this letter is written by the "caciques and governadores" of Mexico, Tetzcoco, and Tlacopan and addresses the problems faced by these leaders of the three former Triple Alliance altepetl. They complain of tribute demands, the personal service obligations required of the commoners, the difficulty that Tlacopan was having as part of an encomienda grant to a Spaniard, and the damage that Spanish livestock were causing to indigenous property and crops in the region.[44]

A fifth piece of correspondence from don Hernando to the crown appears in fragmentary form as a part of Manuel Orozco y Berra's nineteenth-century *Historia antigua y de la conquista de México*. The original of this now lost "Memorial de don Hernando," once part of the Boturini collection, was apparently undated and unsigned. The quoted text in the Orozco y Berra volume suggests that the letter was an attempt to demonstrate to the Spanish crown the vastness of Tetzcoco's precontact territory and control. Don Hernando lists the "towns and provinces" that

were "under the dominion and lordly estate of my uncle" at the time of the conquest as well as the towns in which the lords of Tetzcoco held personal property, the towns that divided their tribute between Tetzcoco and Mexico, and the towns that paid tribute to Tetzcoco alone.[45] Such detail demonstrates don Hernando's active attempt to have the precontact grandeur of Tetzcoco recognized and to translate that recognition into some tangible benefit for Tetzcoco's colonial rulers. Since don Hernando included information on precontact tribute obligations, the letter was perhaps designed to influence the level of tribute to be collected from don Hernando, or to resolve disputes that Tetzcoco was having with some of its surrounding municipal jurisdictions at the time.[46]

This array of correspondence represents the variety of tactics don Hernando used to advance Tetzcoca interests vis-à-vis the crown. He sought, at one point or another, audience with the king, a regional lobbyist to work on behalf of the major altepetl of the Valley of Mexico, a local lobbyist to work on behalf of Tetzcoco specifically, recognition of the rights of the Triple Alliance altepetl, and a restoration of its tribute-paying sujetos. All of this was in addition to the coats of arms that he had already requested and received for both the city and tlatoani of Tetzcoco.

The reign of don Hernando as tlatoani-gobernador in Tetzcoco represented a new beginning in many ways. First, don Hernando was the first grandson of Nezahualpilli to hold the office of tlatoani; he represented a generational shift from the old, precontact-born generation of don Antonio to a generation with more colonial sensibilities. As a result of these colonial sensibilities, he received—perhaps actively sought—the support of Spanish authorities in his bid to be elected tlatoani in 1545, for instance. He also wanted to be formally recognized as "noble" according to Spanish definitions and secured the support of the peninsular nobility to that effect.

He also wrote prolifically to the king in a language and system of writing that was unknown in Tetzcoco just a few decades earlier.

But don Hernando was also in many respects a conservative force in colonial central Mexico. The goal of his energetic activity was to advance the interests not of some illegitimate branch of the royal family or some non-noble element within Tetzcoca society, but of the traditional hereditary nobility of Tetzcoco and central Mexico. In fact, his efforts did much to preserve the high status and privilege of this group. Paradoxically, only by adroitly engaging and exploiting the new colonial order could don Hernando secure the authority of his indigenous office and preside over what Patrick Lesbre has called the *pax tezcocano*.

Conclusion

Both don Antonio and don Hernando were strong, skilled colonial rulers, whose leadership allowed traditional indigenous governance to flourish in the mid-sixteenth century despite the pressures of the burgeoning Spanish colonial system and the experience of nearby altepetl in central Mexico. Nezahualpilli's royal descendants in Tetzcoco were still in power more than four decades after Cortés brought down the Triple Alliance that Nezahualcoyotl had helped build. Only by learning how to interact with, engage, and manipulate the colonial order could the precontact hereditary nobility survive.

The example of these two leaders was soon forgotten, however. In 1564, after don Hernando's death, a variety of forces coalesced to put the very existence of the noble house of Tetzcoco in jeopardy and loosened their exclusive grip on local power forever. As the following chapters demonstrate, disputes between factions of the surviving descendants of Nezahualpilli erupted in 1564 that paralyzed local government. Additionally, the Spanish presence in and

around Tetzcoco grew tremendously in the late-sixteenth century and competed for access to the natural resources of the region with the Tetzcoca nobles and commoners. Finally, new players in local politics emerged as a result of intermarriage between the hereditary nobles and Spaniards. These *mestizos*, or individuals of mixed race, particularly the powerful Juan Bautista Pomar, had the advantage of being able to navigate easily both Spanish and indigenous society and political circles.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1] Though Cline spells don Antonio's Nahuatl name Tlahui*lo*tzin, fray Bernardino de Sahagún's Nahua collaborators give his name as Tlahui*tol*tzin, which is more consistent with don Antonio's name glyph as drawn in the Florentine Codex and Humboldt Fragment VI: a bow, or *tlahuitolli* in Nahuatl. For this reason, I employ Sahagún's spelling here. Cline 1966, 83, table 1; Sahagún 1979, 10.

[2] Connell (2011) demonstrates that Mendoza's arrival brought an end to the capricious, conquistador-dominated First Audiencia and ushered in a more predictable, disinterested form of royal control. To accomplish this, Mendoza rather ironically restored to power in Mexico Tenochtitlan the traditional ruling lineage of the precontact tlatoque.

[3] Lockhart 1992, 28-31.

[4] Gibson 1964, 167-172. See also Lockhart (1992), 30-35, and Haskett (1991).

[5] Connell 2011, 55-89. Gibson (1952), 193-194, demonstrated that, by the 1590s, the Tlaxcalan native leaders had lost much of their control as a result of changes in population, labor organization, and tribute demands. Horn (1997), 228, notes that the ruling family of Coyoacan lost its exclusive grip on local power early in the sixteenth century. For a regional view see Lockhart (1992).

[6] *Proceso* 1910, 16-20.

[7] Dibble 1990, 176.

[8] Dibble 1990, 176.

[9] Dibble 1990, 176. "yn . . . alcaldes. tetzcoco ypa xihuitl chicon tochtli. Ano . . . ; auh yn axcan ye yhui yahui. yn atl yn tepetl. ome atl a . . . aldes Regidores. alguaciles. alcalde mayor.

[10] Caso 1967, 72. Dibble (1990), following Robertson (1959), dates the document rather arbitrarily as having been produced in 1564. Robertson's dating was based on his belief that the don Hernando de Chávez in the Boban Wheel was don Hernando Pimentel, don Antonio

Pimentel's nephew and successor (Robertson incorrectly identifies him as his son), who assumed the rulership in that year. Whether or not this is in fact the case, it does not alter the fact that two men depicted in the wheel were contemporary alcaldes in the late 1530s. Keeping the date in the glosses in mind, I believe the date 1538 to be a more accurate dating for the painting of this document.

[11] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 2v-3r.

[12] Gibson 1964. See also Lockhart (1992), Gerhard (1993).

[13] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 3v-4r. "Y el que hubiere de ser tal señor Primeramente, y ante todas cosas con todo cuidado, respecto y reverencia, han de vivir ante el acatamiento de Dios Nuestro Señor, haciendo lo que es su voluntad y lo mismo con la Magestad de el Emperador nuestro señor debajo de cuyo amparo estamos y nos gobierna."

[14] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 5r-5v.

[15] Peñafiel 1979, 6-8.

[16] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 4v-5r.

[17] Cline 1966, 90.

[18] Cline 1966, 87, 91.

[19] Douglas 2003, 286, 289, 302. See also Douglas (2010), plates 12, 14, and 16 for color facimilies of this manuscript. For a discussion of the importance of pictorial writing and pictorial histories among the Nahuas and the vocabulary and grammar of the pictorial system employed by native artists in the precontact and early colonial period, see Boone (2000).

[20] Douglas 2003, 24-26. For published illustrations of these manuscripts see Douglas (2010), plates 1-10 and 18.

[21] Douglas 2003, 162.

[22] Carrasco 1984, 43.

[23] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 1v-2r. "Por que no se descuiden los principales y los tescucanos, ó halla alguna confucion entre ellos: Yo nombro por mi subsesor á D. Hernando Velazquez para que sea Señor."

[24] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 6v-7v.

[25] AGI-M 168:51, 56, 86, 88; Horcasitas 1978, 152-156; Peñafiel 1979, 3-11.

[26] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 5v-6r.

[27] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 4r.

[28] Lesbre 2004, 11.

[29] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 6v. "Consultadlo entre vosotros, quien es el que de derecho le pertenece y que de naturaleza y linage le compete este Señorio."

[30] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 7v.

[31] Chimalpahin 1997, 203.

[32] Chimalpahin 1997, 203.

[33] AGN-P, 43; Peñafiel 1979, 3.

[34] The count of Benavente was Motolinia's patron. See the title page of his *Memoriales* (1971).

[35] Peñafiel 1979, 6-7.

[36] AGN-P 43, f. 2r-2v.

[37] Torres (2011) has identified an atl-tlachinolli on the sixteenth-century blazon of the governor of Tlacopan. The coloring of these elements on the Tetzcocan blazon is somewhat perplexing, however. The band of water is colored red, which may indicate that it is not water but blood or another liquid. If we were to read this as a band of blood, however, it would only strengthen the interpretation of these elements as a metaphor for war. The tlachinolli, too, though, is atypically colored. These surprising color choices may indicate that this is not an atl-tlachinolli at all. I suspect, however, that color may have been added to the image at a later date by someone unfamiliar with the pictorial system and that the atl-tlachinolli was inappropriately painted.

[38] Castañeda de la Paz 2009, 125-161.

[39] AGI-M 168:51, f. 152r. "Yo tengo al presente, como cacique y legitimo heredero, esta çiudad de tezcuco y sus subjetos y para su bien governaçion e para que mejor se pueda perpetuar en servicio de Vuestra Magestad . . . y tratar algunos negocios que no se permiten por carta ay neçesidad que yo baya en persona a besar los Reales pies y manos de Vuestra Magestad."

[40] AGI-M 168:56, f. 172r.

[41] AGI-M 168:56, f. 172r. “Tanpoco podemos manifestar las [necesidades] por escrito por ser tantas y tan grandes que seria dar gran molestia a vuestra magestad.”

[42] AGI-M 94:10, f. 1r.

[43] See Owensby (2008).

[44] AGI-M 168:86, f. 257r-258r.

[45] Orozco y Berra (1960), II:172-173.

[46] See Gibson (1964).

PART TWO:

POST-1564 TRANSFORMATIVE FORCES

CHAPTER THREE
Noble Resources: Tribute, Labor, and Land

If Tetzcoco's indigenous ruling family experienced some measure of stability in the 1540s, 50s, and 60s, forces—both within and external to the ruling family—were nonetheless at work that would transform both the foundation and practice of their power and influence by century's end. The sources of the indigenous nobility's wealth, for instance, were seriously challenged by the Spanish colonial government and settler Spaniards in New Spain. Intermarriage with Spaniards, moreover, created a group of *mestizos*, or individuals of mixed race, who moved in both Spanish and indigenous circles and often competed with the indigenous nobles for political and economic power. And, finally, factional in-fighting and intra-familial disputes opened the way for direct viceregal influence in local government. This chapter and the two that follow it address these three forces in turn. Here, we consider the dramatic changes to native noble economic wealth.

One of the most significant challenges to continued noble prosperity in the late sixteenth century was a severely reduced ability to access the resources on which noble fortunes had been established in the precontact period. While access to certain resources were substantially curtailed almost immediately after contact, the final decades of the sixteenth century were particularly difficult. The ruling family's reaction to diminishing prosperity was far from passive; they went to great lengths, in fact, to preserve their wealth. The magnitude of changes at work, however, proved insurmountable in many instances. By 1600, and despite their best efforts, the Tetzcoca nobles had been cut off from nearly all tributary income and were fighting to retain control of their real estate holdings.

The sources of economic support for the Tetzcoca nobility were increasingly threatened as the sixteenth century progressed. The Spaniards took more direct control of the tribute collection system and—by the 1570s and 80s—increasingly excluded Tetzcoco's hereditary nobility from this lucrative exchange. Moreover, the Tetzcoca themselves and the larger Acolhua ethnic group over which they ruled were dying in great numbers as a result of epidemics of diseases. As the population plunged, so too did the ruling family's potential labor pool. Finally, an increasingly large Spanish population in Mexico City turned to the Acolhuacan region around Tetzcoco in the late sixteenth century in their quest for land for agricultural production and raising livestock. This Spanish demand for land in and around Tetzcoco brought Europeans into direct conflict with the Tetzcoca noble family. Though the hereditary nobles fought to protect their interests in the Spanish viceregal courts, their attempts to preserve their rights to land were met with mixed results.

This chapter examines the Tetzcoca hereditary nobility's changing access to these three important economic resources—tribute, labor, and land—in the course of the sixteenth century, with particular attention to the dramatic shifts that occurred in the final few decades. The tributary system of the precontact period is a useful place to begin this discussion and serves as a point of comparison for later changes. The complexity and geographical size of the prehispanic arrangement stands in marked contrast to the meager sums over which late-sixteenth-century indigenous leaders presided and underscores the severity of the indigenous nobles' sixteenth-century economic decline.

Precontact Noble Access to Resources

In the precontact period, the Triple Alliance, of which Tetzcoco was a founding partner, collected tribute from a territory that stretched from the Gulf to the Pacific, from the northern deserts to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Most of this "imperial" tribute was sent directly to Tenochtitlan and then divided and sent to the other two alliance members in Tetzcoco and Tlacopan. The bulk of Tetzcoco's income, however, did not come from these far-flung imperial conquests. Instead, Tetzcoco's own territory—the region right around Tetzcoco in the eastern part of the Valley of Mexico called Acolhuacan, in addition to a smattering of tramontane cities that lay to the northeast beyond the mountain limits of the Valley of Mexico—provided most of the tributary support for Tetzcoco's precontact rulers and hereditary nobility.[1]

This core of Tetzcoco's empire included both communities that were governed by their own tlatoani, as well as communities that had no tlatoani and were ruled instead by a group of community elders. This distinction determined what type of tribute these dependent communities were to give in tribute to Tetzcoco. Within the Tetzcoco territory, there were fourteen altepetl with a hereditary tlatoani line. These altepetl and their tlatoque were responsible for supplying the tlatoani of Tetzcoco with labor for special building projects, for supplying the royal palaces with firewood, and—in the case of the tlatoque—for paying court in Tetzcoco and serving on the high councils of the tlatoani of Tetzcoco. The Spanish-language sources from the colonial period often refer to these fourteen subject tlatoque as the *grandes del reino*, or grandees of the kingdom, of Tetzcoco.[2]

In addition to these fourteen subject "kingdoms" within Tetzcoco's "empire," there were also communities without tlatoque, which were governed instead by groups of elders and administered by the Tetzcoco tlatoani's *calpixque* (sing. *calpixqui*), or stewards. These calpixque

were responsible for collecting all of the tribute due Tetzcoco and for maintaining the tlatoani's household and court for a fixed period of time during the year. In contrast to the altepetl headed by the fourteen grandees, these communities without hereditary rulers rendered tribute to Tetzcoco in the form of agricultural products and agricultural labor.[3]

Colonial chroniclers suggest that Tetzcoco's territory was divided into halves for the purpose of tribute payment. Each half—which roughly corresponded with the northern and southern half of the territory—was responsible for sending labor and agricultural products to Tetzcoco for half of the year. According to Pedro Carrasco, Plate 2 of the Mapa Quinatzin from the mid-sixteenth century pictorially represents Tetzcoco's precontact tribute organization and this north-south division (see Figure 3.1).[4] At the top of the page, in the center, the great precontact tlatoque Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli are shown seated within the palace in Tetzcoco. Below them, within the palace walls, the fourteen dependent tlatoque are pictured, symbolically participating in the administration of Tetzcoca government within the palace. A series of place-glyphs and glosses encircles the palace. These glyphs represent all the polities of the Tetzcoca territory—both the fourteen tlatoque-headed altepetl and the other agricultural communities under the Tetzcoca tlatoani's direct control—that rendered tribute to the Tetzcoca tlatoani.

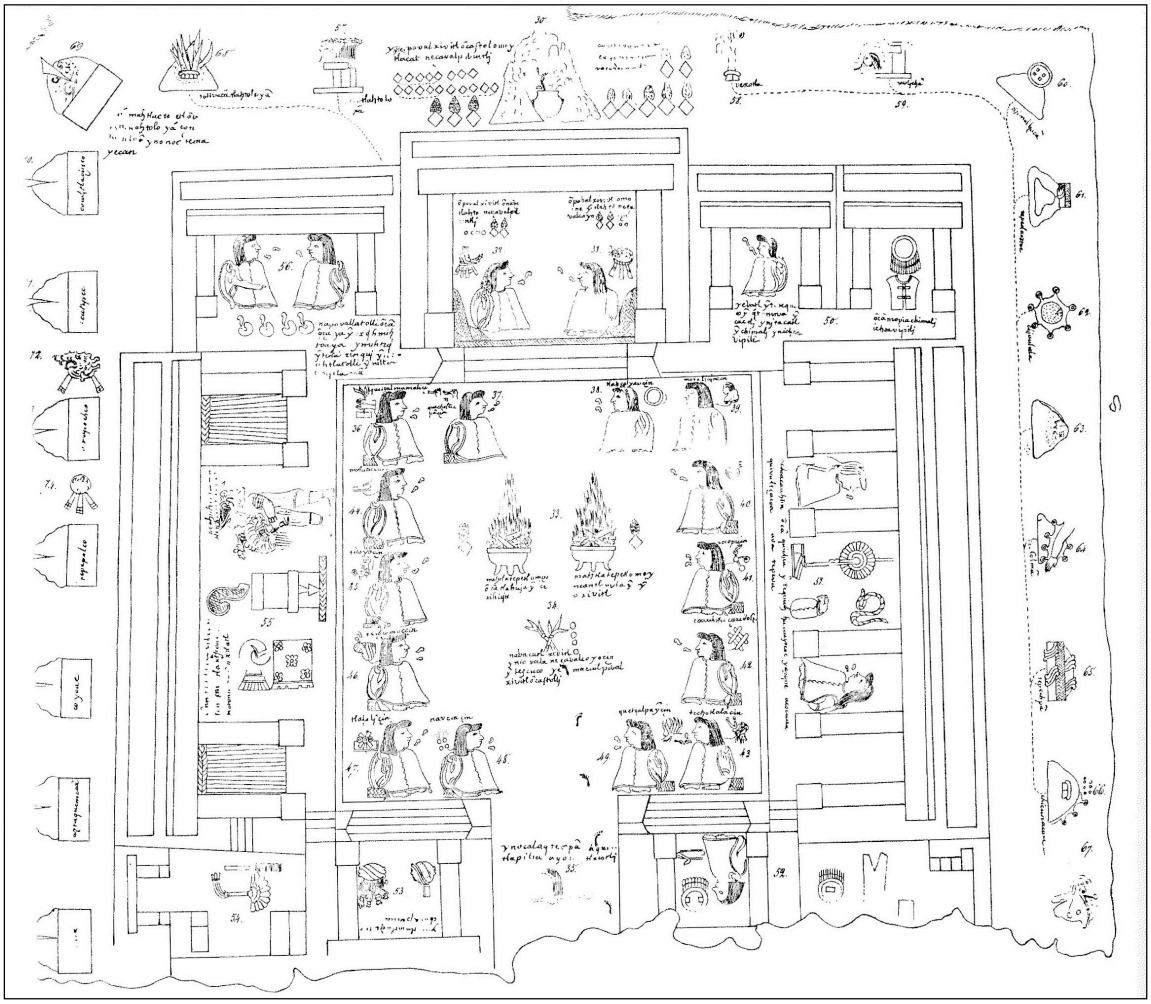


Figure 3.1. Mapa Quinatzin, Plate 2 (after Mohar Betancourt 2004, 138).

If we imagine this scene as a map with east at the top—as was common in European and indigenous maps of the time—then south falls to the right and north to the left. The place-glyphs confirm that this image is indeed a stylized geographic representation of the Tetzcoca territory; the polities on the right are those that lie roughly to the south and west of Tetzcoco, while those on the left are situated in the more remote north and east. The right-hand side of the Mapa Quinatzin, then, would provide tribute to Tetzcoco for half the year, while the left-hand side would provide it for the other half.

Tetzcoco's direct tributaries were not confined to Tetzcoco's territorial core, however. An important feature of the Triple Alliance was the territorial integration of the three alliance members. Tetzcoco had tributary communities within the core areas belonging to Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan to the south and west of Lake Tetzcoco, and Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan, in turn, had direct tributaries within Tetzcoco's Acolhuacan region to the east. The Tetzcoca tlatoani had a specific calpixqui responsible for the collection of tribute in the lacustrine district of the Valley of Mexico belonging to Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan, called the Chinampan. He also collected tribute—as did Tenochtitlan and Tlacopan—from communities in Tlalhuic, or what is now the region around Cuernavaca, Morelos. These districts, which were largely urban, densely populated, and included skilled artisans, paid tribute in the form of luxury goods: royal apparel, feathers, jewelry, gold, etc.[5]

Tetzcoco's tribute at the time of contact, therefore, came from a variety of sources and varied according to the tributary's degree of political complexity and relationship with Tetzcoco. The majority of tribute came from the central Tetzcoca territory of Acolhuacan and the valleys and sierra to the northeast. This territory was roughly divided in half, and each half was responsible for tribute for half of the year. The tributaries included both cities with their own subject tlatoani and communities without hereditary rulers. Tlatoque-ruled altepetl typically gave tribute in the form of labor and government service while non-tlatoani communities worked agricultural land for the Tetzcoca tlatoque. Tetzcoco's rulers collected luxury goods from the densely populated Chinampan and Tlalhuic regions, which fell within and were mingled with the territories of the other two Triple Alliance members. Tribute from more remote regions that had been conquered jointly by the Triple Alliance was delivered directly to Tenochtitlan and then distributed to Tetzcoco and Tlacopan according to what they were owed.

The Tributary System in the Colonial Period

When the Spaniards gained political control of central Mexico in 1521, they directed the Triple Alliance's imperial tribute into the coffers of the Spanish royal treasury. Thus, all of the Alliance's far-flung conquests ceased to render tribute to their prehispanic conquerors. In the Tetzcoca territory in the Valley of Mexico and tramontane region, the tribute collection system was also disrupted, as many of Tetzcoco's fourteen subject tlatoani-led altepetl began to send tribute directly to Spaniards. At the local level, however, the Spaniards intentionally kept Tetzcoco's precontact system of tribute collection in the core Acolhuacan region intact, at least initially, and relied on it for their own benefit.[6] Indigenous leaders, therefore, still had opportunities to profit from tribute collection. Indeed, Tetzcoco's tlatoani continued to direct an important and lucrative—albeit smaller—tributary system, from which he kept a portion for himself. As the colonial period progressed, however, even this local system ceased to be profitable for Tetzcoco's native nobility, as colonial administrators found it easier and more expedient to bypass the traditional native aristocracy and administer the collection of tribute according to their own dictates. As a result, hereditary nobles were increasingly cut off from one of their most important traditional sources of income.

After the Spanish political success in the conquest campaign, the conquistadors were quick to enjoy the spoils of their exploits. To that end, they awarded grants of indigenous labor and tribute, called *encomiendas*, to those among them who had participated in the fighting. To make sense of the highly complex political arrangements of indigenous society in central Mexico, however, the Spaniards relied on the hereditary nobility and the systems of political and tribute organization already in place. Generally, an encomienda was composed of the territory

governed by a tlatoani. As a result, the fourteen dependent altepetl were at risk of being alienated from Tetzcoco and given in encomienda to a Spaniard. This did, in fact, occur in most of these fourteen altepetl. Four, however, remained dependent on Tetzcoco and were called *sujetos*, or subject towns, by the Spaniards. These sujetos continued to pay tribute to Tetzcoco, where the Tetzcoca leaders could help themselves to a share of it before sending it on to the Spaniards.[7]

Whereas many important altepetl in central Mexico rendered tribute to their *encomenderos*, or encomienda holders, Tetzcoco—very early in the colonial period—escheated to the crown and paid tribute directly to the royal treasury. The Tetzcoca rulers, therefore, were spared many of the difficulties of dealing with encomenderos and instead dealt directly with the viceregal administration, whose interests were represented at the local level by the office of *corregidor* (and later, after around 1552, the position was renamed *alcalde mayor*).[8]

Despite the relative protection that royal control afforded Tetzcoco, viceregal officials still demanded tribute from Tetzcoco; archival records indicate that the Tetzcoca nobles consistently collected tribute from the tributaries under their control and rendered it to the colonial government. The records also attest to the fact that the nobles kept a portion of the collected tribute for themselves. While they were no longer the main beneficiaries of the tribute system as they had been before the Spanish arrival, they still managed—particularly in the early years of the colony—to profit from their intermediary position between indigenous commoners and the Spanish crown.

It was typical for local officials in the service of the crown—both Spaniards and Indians—to be paid out of the tribute coffers. In 1532, for example, the Spanish corregidor and alguazil of Tetzcoco were paid from the profits earned from the sale of Tetzcoco's textile tribute that year.[9] The salaries of the hereditary indigenous nobles, unlike those of these Spanish

officials, were not recorded in the viceregal documents, however, for indigenous officials did not disclose to Spanish authorities the amount of tribute they collected for themselves. While Spaniards familiar with the local political system might have had an idea of the extent to which indigenous leaders profited from tribute collection, the exact portion of total tribute revenue that went to the Tetzcoca nobles, called *derramas* by Spanish officials, was not officially known.

The longer the Spaniards remained in New Spain, however, the more they understood about indigenous tribute collection, and the more they attempted to bring collection under their direct control. An early change was to simplify the kinds of items paid as tribute. Whereas tribute had been paid largely in textiles in 1532—netting, undershirts, and underskirts—by 1544, Tetzcoco's tribute obligations were principally bushels of maize with a small additional cash payment. And in 1556, Viceroy don Luis de Velasco simplified the tribute obligations further so that tributaries paid only in maize.[10] The tribute obligations of the Tetzcoca, then, were gradually converted from the wide array of household goods that would have typically been given in the prehispanic period into a strictly maize-based tribute. The Spaniards no doubt found it easier to keep track of and sell an all-maize tribute than one that included undergarments and other woven items.[11]

Relying exclusively on the maize harvest had its potential pitfalls for the royal treasury as well, however. It was up to local indigenous leaders to ensure that the communal fields dedicated to maize tribute were properly worked and maintained. If they neglected this duty, then royal coffers suffered. Archival evidence suggests that payments of maize had, in fact, been declining steadily since Viceroy Velasco instituted all-maize quotas. In 1578, for instance, Tetzcoco and its sujetos paid little more than half of the amount they had given in 1556.[12] As a result, the viceregal administration decided that paying local leaders a portion of the harvest would bring

the interests of the indigenous leadership in line with the interests of the crown treasury.[13] If local leaders were paid out of the harvest, then they would be more inclined to tend the communal maize fields carefully.

Putting indigenous leaders on the official payroll would also help treasury officials keep track of harvest revenues and expenditures, something that the native nobles—by keeping their tribute revenue "off the books"—had thwarted for decades. In 1582, for example, the audiencia in Mexico City angrily declared that "heretofore, proceeds from [communal maize] fields had been spent according to the will of the indios principales in the towns where the maize was harvested without keeping an account [of the harvest]." The royal treasury had little notion of how much maize was under cultivation and harvested. They only knew the final amount of tribute collected, an amount that was considerably diminished by whatever the native leaders chose to keep for themselves. The viceroy ordered that, from 1582 forward, indigenous leaders in the districts of Tetzcoco, Cuautitlan, Toluca, and Chalco should send a record of the maize harvest to the audiencia no later than twenty days after the harvest. The viceroy also made explicit that indigenous leaders not spend, sell, or distribute any of the maize until given permission.[14] In this way, the central government hoped to bypass their hereditary noble middlemen and curtail their ability to profit from the royal tribute collection process.

Such attempts marked a significant shift in Spanish approaches to tribute collection and the management of colonial finances. They also had, when successful, a dramatic effect on the fortunes of the hereditary indigenous nobility. The type of tight control envisaged by the audiencia would have greatly limited the ability of the Indian leaders to support themselves through the official tribute-collection process. This would have also had the effect of decreasing the appeal of serving as tribute collectors for the crown. As long as the crown turned a blind eye

to the amount of tribute that local leaders kept, the position of tribute collector was profitable and desirable. But more closely regulated control and accountability of the process considerably diminished the hereditary nobles' desire to continue the burdensome task of extracting tribute from the indigenous population on behalf of royal officials.

Indigenous Demography and the Spanish Demand for Land

Even as tribute collection became less and less profitable for and desirable among the hereditary nobles, another key source of income, landholdings, also came under pressure in the 1570s, 80s, and 90s. The immediate pressures on noble property were twofold. First, Spaniards were becoming more numerous in the Valley of Mexico, and as resources in the Chinampan region of the valley's center became increasingly scarce, more newly arrived Spaniards in Mexico City began to look further afield for property, particularly in the Acolhuacan region of the eastern valley around Tetzcoco. Second, the indigenous population of Acolhuacan continued its rapid decline in the late-sixteenth century. As the countryside lost population, it appeared—from the Spanish perspective—that properties around Tetzcoco were unowned and unused, and Spaniards argued that these ownerless properties should be granted to them by the viceroy.[15] These twin pressures of population growth among Spaniards and population loss among the Acolhua increasingly forced the Tetzcoca nobles into the uncomfortable position of having to defend their rights to property in the Spanish court system. Though the hereditary nobility proved adept in the ways of Spanish litigation, they were not always successful in their struggles to retain possession of landholdings.

When the Spaniards arrived in the early sixteenth century, they found Mesoamerica to be densely populated with highly complex indigenous societies. One hundred years later, however,

the indigenous population had collapsed and was a fraction of what it had been. The particulars of this collapse vary considerably among modern scholars and continue to be highly contested.[16] There is relative consensus, however, that a demographic catastrophe did, in fact, occur, and that epidemic disease is to blame.

The indigenous populations of the Americas had had no contact with—and, as a result, no immunity to—many of the pathogens common in Eurasia and Africa before the Spaniards arrived in 1492. Their lack of immunity resulted in several waves of large-scale epidemics of various Old World diseases that began in 1531 and continued until the native population reached its nadir in the early seventeenth century. Depopulation proceeded in a step-like fashion, with severe drops during epidemic outbreaks and more stable population levels—perhaps even small amounts of growth—in intervening periods.[17]

By the final two decades of the sixteenth century, the region had, by some estimates, lost nearly 90% of its precontact population.[18] As the indigenous population fell, European settlers were increasingly attracted to the abundance of available land in the region. The Spanish crown controlled the transfer of all land in New Spain and had, by the 1550s, established legal procedures governing land transactions. Importantly, Indian land could not be taken from Indians. The Spanish government, however, sought to ensure that all available land was being put to good use. Thus, land that was neither under cultivation nor exploited in any other useful way, was generally considered to be available for someone else's use.[19] To acquire unused land, however, one had to obtain a *merced*, or royal grant, which was awarded only after prospective land owners submitted a formal petition to the viceroy and the colonial administration conducted an official investigation.[20]

Grants were awarded in various sizes depending on how the plot was to be used. If one wanted land for agricultural cultivation, one was awarded a *caballería de tierra*, which was, according to some estimates, about one hundred acres. But if one wanted to graze livestock, these awards—called *sitios* or *estancias*—were quite a bit larger, usually between two and five thousand acres.[21]

Grants of such large proportions had serious consequences. As Elinor Melville has shown for the Mezquital Valley in the present-day state of Hidalgo to the north of Tetzcoco, the introduction of grazing animals, in particular—goats, sheep, and cattle—wrought destruction on indigenous communities located nearby, the animals eating and trampling crops intended for human consumption and competing directly with indigenous peoples for survival.[22] Charles Gibson, too, has described the extreme damage done to indigenous crops, homes, public works, and even entire communities by Spaniards' cattle in the region around Tlaxcala.[23]

Indeed, in 1582, the indigenous residents of Tetzcoco submitted a formal complaint to the viceroy asking him to protect them from the Spanish herders who had begun to bring their sheep and goats into Tetzcoco. The animals, they reported, had "done and caused much damage, both general and particular . . . resulting in notable harm to agricultural fields and the owners of the fields." To add insult to injury, the herders refused to pay for the damages they caused, claiming that a previous one-time payment of a mere ten pesos in damages released them from all future claims against them.[24]

The viceroy, however, was specifically charged with protecting indigenous communities and other nearby landowners against these particular types of damaging effects of livestock grazing and agricultural production. Don Lorenzo Suárez de Mendoza, viceroy at the time of the 1582 complaint, came down unequivocally against the offending herders, limiting their access to

Tetzcoco's city center and requiring them to pay for the removal of livestock from the city center and any damages they may have caused.[25]

To head off complaints such as these, royal authorities were careful to observe certain precautions before issuing any grant of land for farming or raising livestock. Grants could only be made if they did not compromise Indian welfare and if they did not conflict with existing claims on the land. To that end, vicregal representatives conducted rather thorough investigations, making site visits, collecting oral testimony, and commissioning maps.[26] It seems certain that these investigations were not always conducted with the utmost care and honesty. Nonetheless, mechanisms were in place that, when properly observed, provided a measure of protection for native communities against Spanish encroachment.

Case Studies from Tetzcoco, 1570s-1590s

Documents pertaining to conflict over land in Tetzcoco appear almost immediately after the conquest, but the number of legal battles fought in colonial courts expanded dramatically beginning in the 1570s. In the Acolhua region around Tetzcoco, many of these suits involved the indigenous nobles of Tetzcoco itself. A look at a few of these cases demonstrates something of the nature of noble landholding in the late-sixteenth century, the tactics employed by Tetzcoco's nobility to preserve their rights to property, and the degree to which native nobles and their real estate wealth were threatened by an ever-expanding Spanish population by century's end.

In 1596, for example, a Spanish woman, doña Aldonça de Beldedo, petitioned the viceroy for four *caballerías de tierra*, or parcels of land, near the town of Atengo in the Tetzcoco jurisdiction, to be used for agricultural production. The nobles of Tetzcoco, however, argued that they themselves already possessed three caballerías in this same area, and they adopted two

strategies to protect their interests in this case.[27] First, Tetzcoca nobles submitted proof of their ownership of the three caballerías. This proof consisted of a viceregal merced from seven years earlier. They also presented a copy of the official document that described their act of possession of these plots.[28] Here, then, we can see that Tetzcoca nobles themselves actively sought and were awarded viceregal grants of their own. They appear to have acted proactively to secure grants for land that they already controlled, perhaps as a safeguard against future grant petitions by Spaniards precisely like the one whom they faced in this case.

The second strategy that the nobles of Tetzcoco employed came in the form of support for their case from one of their mestizo cousins, Juan Bautista Pomar, an influential man in local politics at the time. Pomar, arguing in Spanish without an interpreter, also protested the proposed grant to doña Aldonça. As he says in his statement, "others of my fellow descendents of Nezahualpilli and I were found [by the Audiencia of Mexico] to be lords of direct dominion of all of these lands. . . . For this reason doña Aldonça's request must be denied since they are lands of our patrimonial estate."[29] Pomar's assistance in this case no doubt added much weight to the Tetzcoca cause.

The map commissioned by the Spanish official in charge of the Tetzcoco jurisdiction, Gonçalo de Salazar, did not reflect the Tetzcoca indigenous leaders' claims, however (see Figure 3.2).[30] On this map, the proposed grant site appears to sit in a large empty space between a road and an irrigation ditch. No markings indicate that the land here was used for any purpose. Indeed, the area around the proposed site seems quite unused and available to be granted to doña Aldonça. The map was perhaps a foretelling of the direction in which the case was heading. Despite the other evidence that the land already belonged to the nobles of Tetzcoco, Salazar recommended to the Audiencia judge in Mexico that the grant be awarded to doña Aldonça,

anyway.[31] The Tetzcoca were skilled in the ways of the Spanish court system, however, and mounted an appeal to overturn Salazar's decision against them.

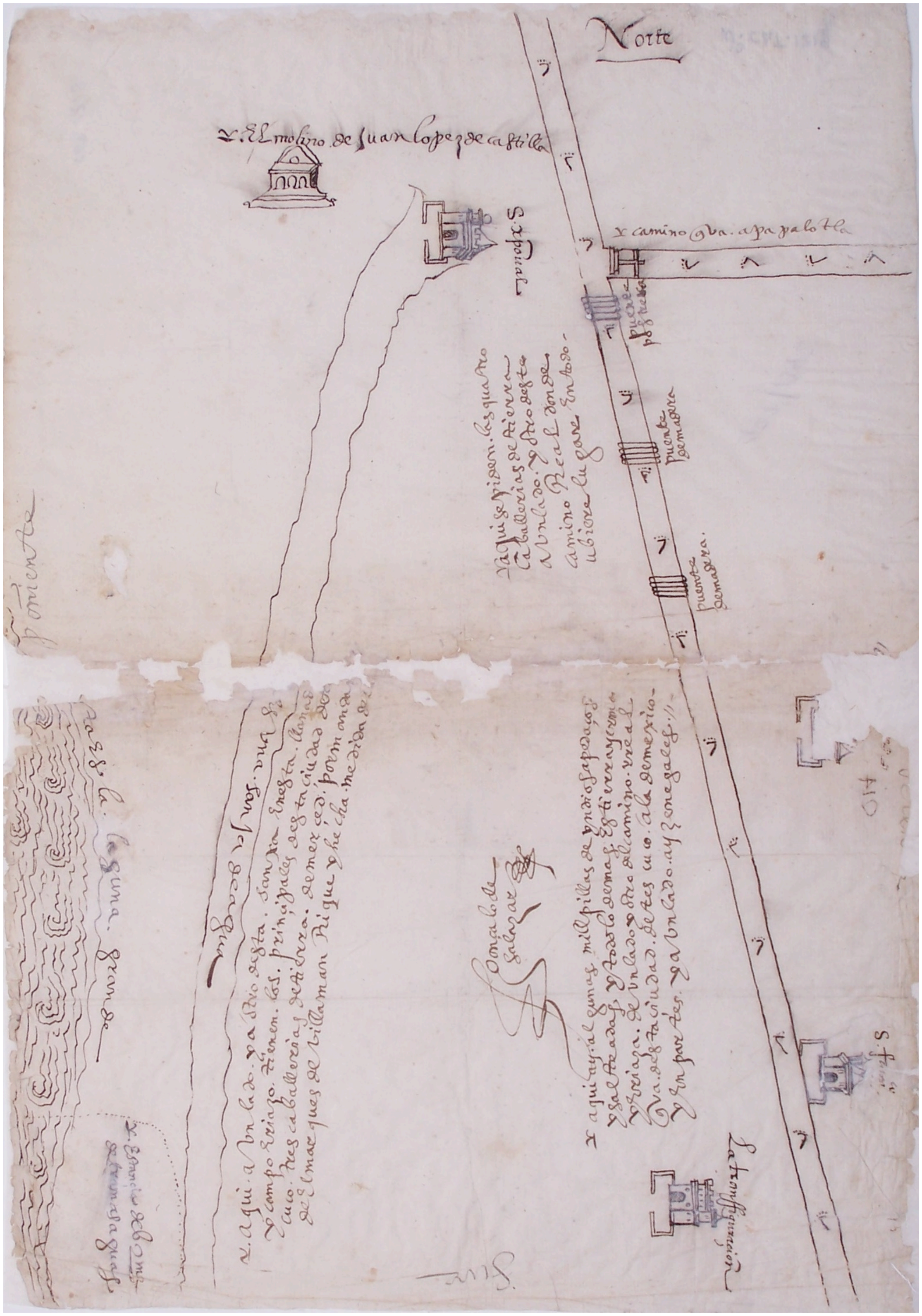


Figure 3.2. AGN, Mapa 1218. Photo: Bradley Benton

The methods employed by the indigenous nobles in their appeal demonstrates their thorough understanding of Spanish legal processes. They wisely sought the help of the *procurador general de indios*, or the solicitor general for Indians, in the Audiencia in Mexico, Pedro Díaz Agüero, who agreed to appeal the decision on their behalf. The procurador's actions were completely consistent with his position and he deftly represented the legal interests of the indigenous population he was appointed to protect. His first objective was to have Salazar, whose impartiality as judge he had reason to doubt, removed from the case. The procurador declared in court that "it is clear that [Gonçalo de Salazar] is a great admirer of [doña Aldonça de Beldedo]," and that the Tetzcoca nobles would suffer extreme prejudice in this case if Salazar were to remain in charge of it.[32] The procurador when on to assert that the map that Salazar commissioned was "not true." The Audiencia judge agreed with the procurador's claims and had Salazar immediately removed from the case. In his place, the judge appointed an official from nearby Coatepec to oversee the appeal at the local level.[33] New testimony was given, and a new map—which does indeed differ from the first—was commissioned (see Figure 3.3).[34] This map is arranged almost identically to the first, but has one important difference. Instead of occupying empty, unused space on the map, the grant site on this new map is situated just to the north of a few small, indigenous-style houses. These houses, moreover, are surrounded by stalks of maize and a gloss reads "sementeras," or sown fields. This depiction, in contrast with the first, suggests that the grant would be located very close to established indigenous communities and agricultural areas and supports the Tetzcoca nobles' claim that they already possessed farm land there.

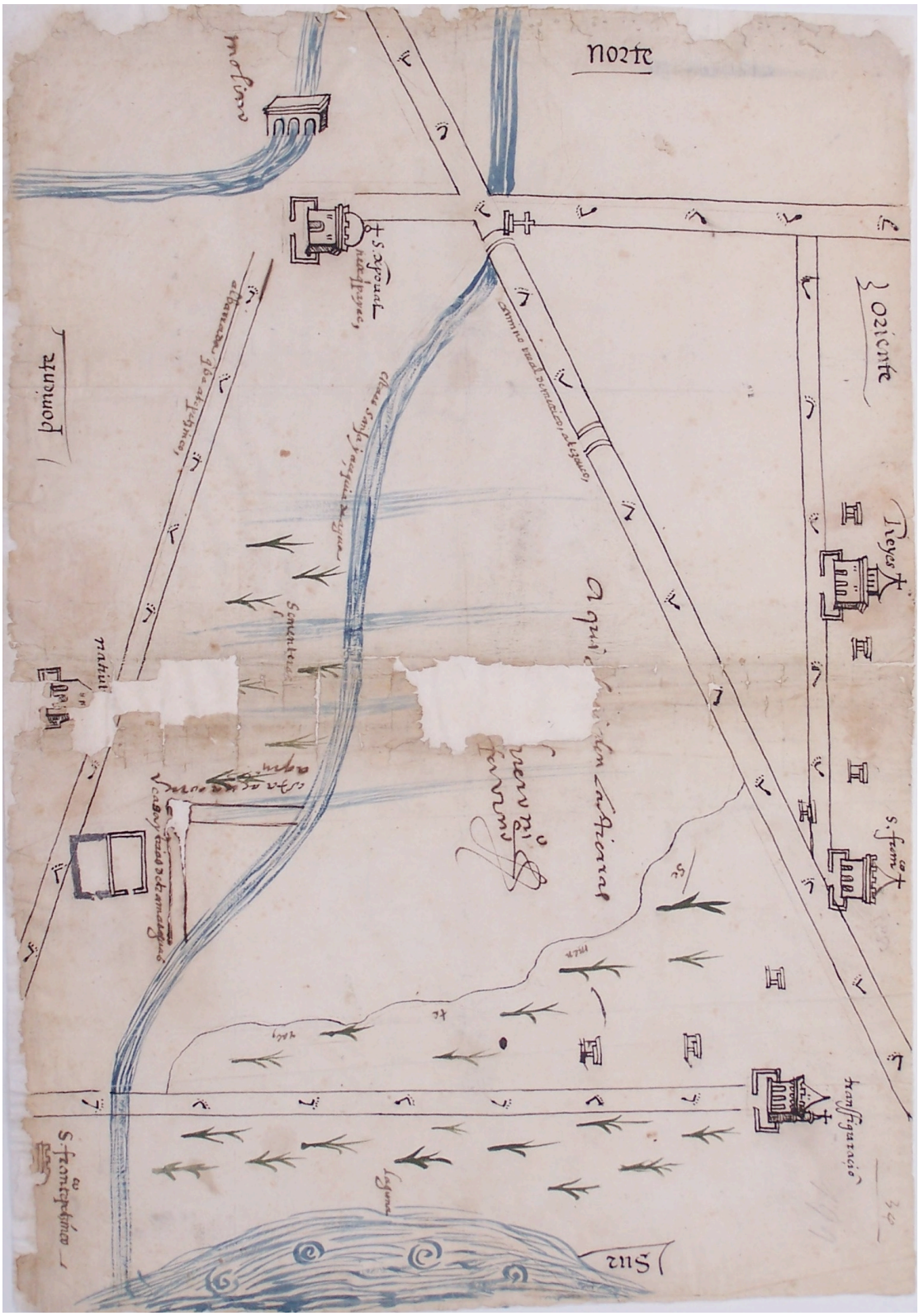


Figure 3.3. AGN, Mapa 1217. Photo: Bradley Benton

Though the results of the appeal are unknown, this case shows some of the strategies used in the Tetzcoca nobles' disputes over land. They united various elements of the noble house, for instance, and enlisted the help of their mestizo cousin, Pomar. We also see that the indigenous nobles themselves were actively involved in the acquisition of mercedes from the viceroy and were successful in attaining grants, even if they were sometimes subsequently ignored in court. Finally, the nobles availed themselves of the astute solicitor general for Indians, who was able to remove an official with a conflict of interest from their case. Interestingly, in this case, pictorial representations of the grant site were of extreme importance. Salazar interfered in the map-making process to such a degree that the first map submitted in the case was deemed prejudicial to the Tetzcoca nobility.

While the Tetzcoca were most often involved in disputes over land, they were, at times, also drawn into conflicts over other important natural resources. In 1575, for instance, the Tetzcoca nobles were involved in a suit over *cal*, or lime. Cal was an important element in construction in this period, and *caleras*, or limestone quarries, often appear in the historical record as objects of disagreement and litigation. In the 1575 case, the son-in-law of the conqueror Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Capitán Antonio de Guadalaxara, petitioned the viceroy for "a grant of two sites of caleras near the town of Calpulalpa, which is subject to the city of Tetzcoco."[35] In the course of the requisite viceregal investigation, however, the nobles of Tetzcoco claimed the caleras in question as their own.[36] The *cacique*, or indigenous leader, of Tetzcoco maintained that these caleras were part of the city's patrimonial holdings and were available to any member of the indigenous republic of Tetzcoco according to their individual need for cal.[37] The local Spanish official in charge of conducting the investigation was the same Gonzalo de Salazar from the case discussed above, however, and he believed that no injury to

any third party could come from the grant and that the objections raised by the Tetzcoca nobles were an attempt to keep the price of cal high by preventing Guadalaxara from mining and selling the commodity. Salazar's recommendation was confirmed by the judge in charge of the case, and the viceroy, don Martín Enríquez, formally granted the caleras to Guadalaxara a short time later.[38]

The Tetzcoca nobles proved to be formidable opponents in this dispute, however, and they fought the decision. They officially appealed the ruling to the Audiencia in Mexico City, and adopted a broader approach to fight Captain Guadalaxara's request. As a part of their new strategy, the cacique of Tetzcoco once again allied himself with one of his worst rivals in local Tetzcoca politics, and together, these two factions within the city's nobility presented a unified front against Guadalaxara, thereby strengthening their appeal.[39] Arguing before the Audiencia, the Tetzcoca reminded the colonial government of Tetzcoco's crucial role in the Spaniards' political conquest of Mesoamerica some fifty years earlier. "Since don Hernando Cortés, Marqués del Valle, came to this land," they argued, "our fathers and grandfathers and all the city of Tescuco [*sic*] began to serve your majesty . . . and they were the ones who helped to pacify all the rest of New Spain that had yet to be won."[40] The Tetzcoca nobles did not expect this argument to win the suit for them, however. The real strength of their case consisted of things that Spaniards valued in these kinds of legal wranglings: documentary evidence. The Tetzcoca produced documents to show that the Spanish monarchy supported their position. Indeed, they presented two *reales cédulas*, or royal decrees, from Europe. The first was dated 1535, was signed by Queen Juana, and instructed colonial officials in New Spain to respect the rights of the Tetzcoca leaders to the lands in their jurisdiction and to keep settler Spaniards from harming or harassing them. The second was dated 1564, was signed by King Philip II, and ordered colonial

officials to uphold the mandate of his grandmother's earlier 1535 cédula.[41] What better evidence could be produced than decrees of support from the sovereign?

Despite the apparent strength of these cédulas, however, viceregal officials in Mexico appear not to have been convinced overwhelmingly of the Tetzcoca nobles' rights to the quarries. The indigenous leaders thought it necessary to bolster their position by appealing to more practical concerns of the colonial government. First, they noted that Guadalaxara's mining operation would require cattle to mine, process, and transport the limestone. A large number of cattle was likely to be a great bother to local indigenous communities and to drive them out of the Tetzcoco region and across the border into Tlaxcala, where they would be exempt from paying tribute to royal authorities.[42]

Secondly, the Tetzcoca noted that they had already built *xacales*, or huts, and *hornos*, or limekilns, near the caleras.[43] Xacales were built to house temporarily those who went to mine the caleras when they needed lime. And the kilns were used to burn the raw limestone down into the lime that could be used in construction. Such an assertion indicated that these caleras were already being used by the Tetzcoca. This would have been problematic for Guadalaxara both because grants could not be awarded if they would harm Indians and because the Spanish legal system typically favored litigants who could show actual possession.[44]

The various issues of the case were represented pictorially on the accompanying map (see Figure 3.4).[45] The two proposed grant sites, located in the upper center portion of the map, are drawn as crosses atop piles of stones. The xacales that the Indians claimed to have built are depicted at both sites, as is an horno belonging to a nearby landowner. Red lines connect the quarry sites with items of interest in the surrounding area: an indigenous community, an orchard, and properties held by other Spaniards. The glosses that accompany the red lines state the

distances these sites lay from the caleras. At the top of the map—to the east—the indigenous artist drew a red line representing the old boundary line separating Tetzcoco and Tlaxcala. The Indian settlement likely to be most affected by the calera grant appears to be located very close to this line, making any potential tax-evading migrations into Tlaxcala relatively easy. In all, the map seems to have been drawn in a manner that would support the claims of the Tetzcoca nobles.

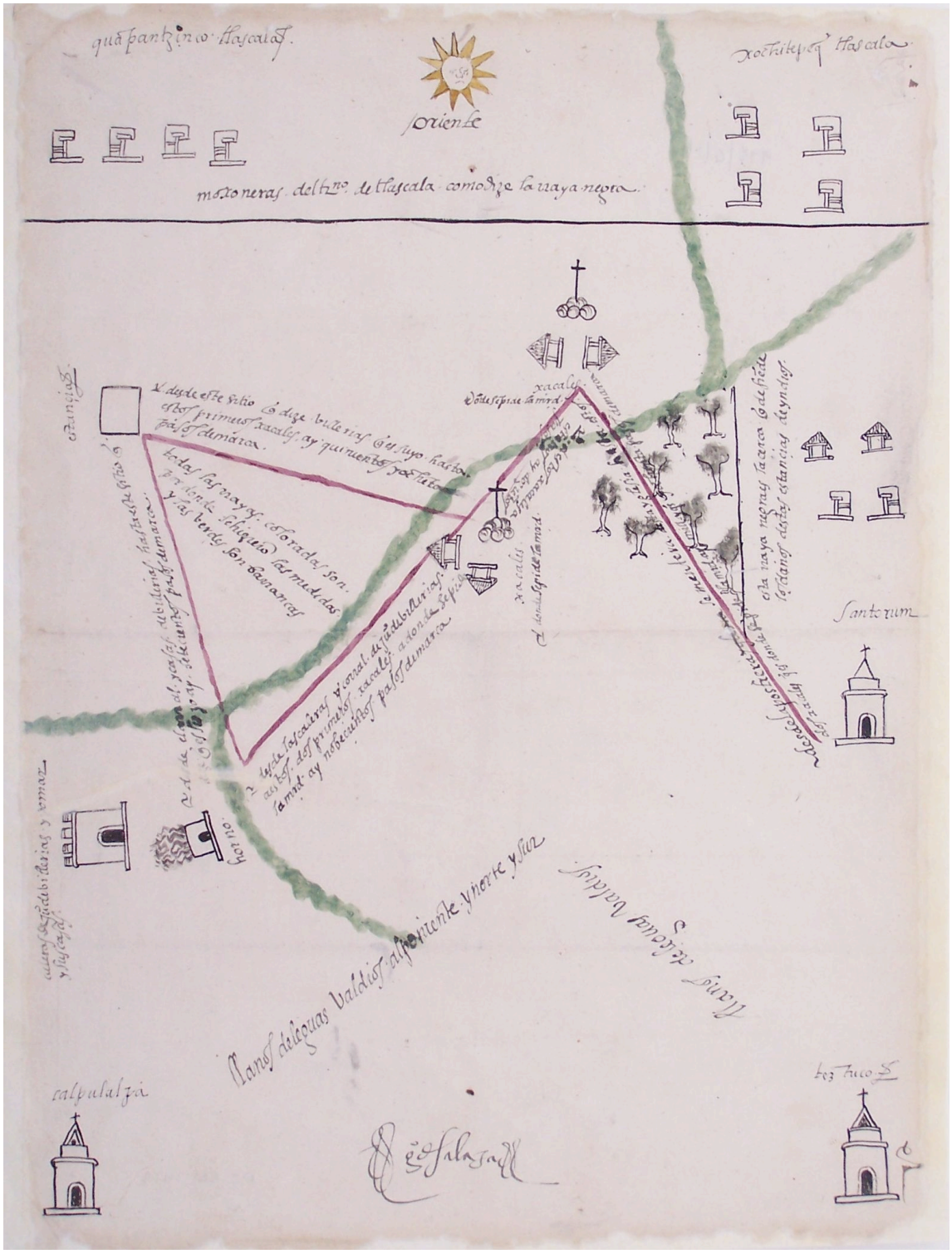


Figure 3.4. AGN, Mapa 1479. Photo: Bradley Benton.

Though the document as it is preserved does not indicate whether or not the hereditary nobles won their appeal, this case involving limestone does demonstrate the strategies employed by the Tetzcoca nobles to defend their economic position and control of the region. They pushed internal rivalries aside in the face of threats from outsiders, they reminded colonial officials of Tetzcoco's helpful role in the conquest of central Mexico in the 1520s, they sought, attained, and preserved royal decrees issued in their favor, they noted the possibility of lost tribute revenues for the crown, and they demonstrated their prior and continued use of the quarries. It also shows that Spaniards were increasingly interested in the Tetzcoco region in the last few decades of the sixteenth century and were actively engaged in securing titles to property in the eastern Valley of Mexico.

In addition to fighting over lime, Tetzcoco's indigenous nobles also fought over water. Cases concerning access to and control over water resources were not limited to disputes over potable water, however, and often involved other water-dependent economic activities such as raising livestock, grinding grain, farming water-needy European crops, and processing woolen textiles in *batanes*, or fulling mills. In a 1592 case that focused almost exclusively on water, for example, the grant request—made by a Spanish resident of Tetzcoco named Pedro de Contreras—was actually for "a ranch site to be used to raise goats."[46]

The *gobernador*, or indigenous leader, of Tetzcoco, don Juan de Alvarado, raised several concerns about the proposed grant. "That grant," he said, "cannot and should not be given to Contreras because of the great damage and harassment that could befall this city and its inhabitants."[47] Don Juan was concerned about two specific problems. First, he complained that the merced would prevent the indios that lived near the grant site from cutting wood used for the maintenance of the Tetzcoco church, prison, and hospital. Additionally, the gobernador

complained that the grant site was too close to "the channel of water that goes to this city from which all of its residents drink. If livestock are there [at the grant site], they will drink from the said water, and it will go to the city filthy."[48] He went on to warn that if Contreras's grant was given, "[Contreras's] goats will destroy the channel and the water will be murky and dirty and will not flow continually all the way to the city, and the residents will suffer want for water."[49] While the complaint about cutting off access to wood seems not to have elicited much of a response from colonial authorities, the gobernador's complaint about the possible effects of the grant on the city's drinking water, on the other hand, appears to have greatly troubled the viceregal government. Although local Spanish officials testified that the grant posed no danger, the judge in the case sent them back to the proposed grant site several times to verify the distance between the water source and the grant site.[50]

Viceregal authorities may have been especially cautious with this case as a result of the portrayal of the region in the accompanying map, which was commissioned by the *alcalde mayor*, or the Spanish official in charge of the Tetzcoco district (see Figure 3.5) and made by an indigenous artist. The map depicts the water source, glossed as an "irrigation channel of water that goes to the mills and batanes and to Tetzcoco."[51] The proposed grant site, in the top left corner, is separated from the channel only by a narrow strip of *tierras baldías*, or unoccupied lands. Contreras's goat ranch would certainly damage the water supply if it were only separated by such a narrow space. The indigenous painter—perhaps sympathetic to the Tetzcoca cause—may have purposefully drawn the map to suggest that the merced site threatened the channel of water. Spanish representatives in Tetzcoco, however, reassured audiencia officials several times with sworn statements that the channel was more than three-quarters of a league from the grant site, and the sitio de estancia was eventually granted to Contreras.[52]



Figure 3.5. AGN, Mapa 1891. Photo: Bradley Benton.

Despite the eventual decision against them, the indigenous nobles in Tetzcoco understood that water complaints compelled representatives of the colonial government to act. In this case, the decision of whether or not to grant land in the Tetzcoco jurisdiction to a Spaniard hung on the proximity of the grant to the city's drinking water and was delayed because of lingering doubts about water pollution in the mind of the Audiencia judge. Though they failed, in the end, to prevent Contreras from acquiring land in their jurisdiction, the nobles of Tetzcoco exploited colonial authorities' sensitivity to complaints about water in an effort to protect their interests and public health.

The large-scale *hacienda*, or plantation, style of economic organization that became common in colonial Mexico was in its infancy in the sixteenth century. Not until later in the colonial period did Spaniards consolidate their various mercedes and acquire land in great tracts.[53] Thus, the most disruptive effects of Spanish entrepreneurialism, i.e., direct competition for labor between indigenous leaders and Spanish *hacendados*, or hacienda owners, occurred later than the time period under consideration in this study.[54] Nonetheless, Spaniards exerted a great deal of pressure on the indigenous nobility as early as the 1570s as they began to take an interest in Tetzcoca land, to petition the viceroy for titles to that land, and to have—as the 1592 petition for a goat ranch demonstrates—at least intermittent success in winning those grants.

Far from passively accepting this Spanish incursion, however, Tetzcoco's hereditary nobles were actively engaged in the process as well. As in the cases detailed above, the indigenous nobility made their own petitions to the viceroy to secure what they hoped would be legally binding and Spanish-recognized titles to properties in which they had an interest. More importantly, however, they took advantage of the Spanish government's legal obligation to ensure that no harm came to indigenous communities from the award of any grant of land to a

Spaniard. Even if, in practice, indigenous interests were not always protected, the participation of the indigenous nobles in the requisite grant investigations ensured that their interests were also not always ignored.

Conclusions

As the sixteenth century drew to a close, Tetzcoco's indigenous hereditary nobles experienced increased competition from Spaniards for the twin pillars of their precontact economic support: tribute and land. The precontact tributary system that had funneled agricultural and labor resources from the Acolhuacan region to the royal house of Tetzcoco had, by 1600, been effectively dismantled by Spanish administrators. Colonial authorities rightly perceived that the participation of the hereditary nobility in the tribute-collection system siphoned substantial sums away from the royal coffers. More direct control of the collection system by the central government would not only significantly reduce indigenous nobles' profits from this process, but also their interest in participating in local government posts, as Chapter Five will show. The fixed salaries that accompanied local administrative posts could not compete with the sums of tribute that the hereditary nobles were accustomed to collect.

The native nobles' land, too, was under attack. The epidemics of the sixteenth century decimated the indigenous population of the Acolhuacan, and an increasingly large population of Spaniards naturally looked to that region—given its proximity to the capital—to expand their real estate holdings. What appeared to Spaniards as unused, vacant land, however, was often claimed by some indigenous group or individual. While the veracity of these claims is difficult to assess in many of these cases, the hereditary nobles of Tetzcoco nonetheless went to great legal lengths to secure rights to property. Despite the best efforts of the indigenous nobles, Spaniards

were often successful in their attempts to secure grants of land around Tetzcoco, and Spanish-style ranching and farming took hold in the region.

In addition to these changes in their access to resources, the Tetzcoca nobles, as the next chapters demonstrate, experienced other dramatic transformations towards the end of the sixteenth century. As high-born Tetzcoca women married prominent Spaniards, for instance, their children—the first Tetzcoca *mestizos*, or individuals of mixed-race—came to play important roles in local government, politics, and society. The mestizos' ability to inhabit both Spanish and Nahua cultural worlds gave them distinct advantages over their indigenous relatives, and the final decades of the sixteenth century saw several of these individuals rise to the pinnacle of local power and influence. The following chapter examines the genesis of the mestizo in Tetzcoco, chronicles the rise to power of several important mestizos, and considers the implications of their success for the traditional hereditary indigenous nobility.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1] Carrasco 1999, 230-231.

[2] Carrasco 1999, 136-143.

[3] Carrasco 1999, 143-154.

[4] Carrasco 1999, 161-166. See also Douglas (2010, 70-76), who confirms Carrasco's assertion.

[5] Carrasco 1999, 167-175.

[6] Gerhard 1993, 312.

[7] Gerhard 1993, 312.

[8] Gerhard 1993, 312. Though Tetzcoco had permanently escheated to the crown by 1531, it was intermittently held in encomienda by Hernán Cortés prior to that date.

[9] AGI-M, 323ii. The salaries of these two officials constituted nearly seventy-nine percent of total tribute revenue.

[10] AGI-M, 256:27, 1r-1v.

[11] This is consistent with the tribute collected from Tlaxcala, for instance. See Gibson (1967, 172). Gibson notes that once the maize reached Mexico City, treasury officials would then sell the lot of it at auction and deposit the earnings with the treasury. As the sixteenth century progressed, it was common for the auctions to occur before the maize reached the capital. The winning bidder, then, would assume both the duty of collection and the risk of non-payment. When Tlaxcala—in a manner similar to Tetzcoco—fell behind on its payments in the late-sixteenth century, private Spaniards moved to collect the delinquent tribute from the Tlaxcala cabildo, not the treasury. See Gibson (1952, 178).

[12] AGI-M, 1990:50, f. 2.

[13] See AGN-I, 1:190, for example.

[14] AGN-I, 2:83.

[15] Similar processes were underway in nearby Coyoacan, located on the lakeshore just south of Mexico City. See Horn (1997, 142).

[16] See, for example, the exchange between Whitmore (1991), Feldman (1992), and Henige (1992).

[17] Whitmore 1992, 203.

[18] Gibson 1964, 138. See also Whitmore 1992, 203.

[19] Owensby 2008, 16.

[20] Gibson 1964, 275-276.

[21] Gibson 1964, 276.

[22] Melville 1997.

[23] Gibson 1952, 152-153.

[24] AGN-I, 2:131, f. 32v.

[25] AGN-I, 2:131, f. 32v.

[26] Gibson 1964, 275-276.

[27] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 216r.

[28] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 210r-211r.

[29] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 213r. "Yo y otros mis consortes decendientes de neçahualpiltzintli estamos declarados por señores del directo dominio de todas ellas . . . y asi no ay lugar para la pretension . . . de la dha doña aldonça por ser trras nras patrimoniales."

[30] AGN, Mapa 1218.

[31] AGN-T, 1740:1, 215r.

[32] AGN-T, 1740:1, 219r. "Consta claro estar muy afficionado a la otra p^{te}."

[33] AGN-T, 1740:1, 219v.

[34] AGN, Mapa 1217.

[35] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 1r. "Merced de dos sitios de caleras en ter^{nos} del pu^{o} de calpulalpa sujeto a la çiudad de tezcuco."

[36] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 5r.

[37] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 18r.

[38] AGN-T, 2519:8, ff. 41v-43r.

[39] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 50r. The long-standing dispute between these two rivals is documented in AGN-T, 1740:1.

[40] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 50r. "Y siendo esto ansi y que desde que vino a esta tierra don hernando cortes marques del valle nuestros padres y aguelos y toda la dha ciudad de tescuco luego comenco a servir a su mag^{t} . . . y que fueron los que ayudaron a la pacificacion de todo lo demas que rrestava de ganar desta nueva espana."

[41] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 52.

[42] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 60. Tlaxcala's fabled tax-exempt status allegedly stemmed from the crown's desire to reward the Tlaxcalans for their invaluable service in the conquest of central and southern Mexico in the 1520s and 30s, but it is not clear that Tlaxcala actually paid significantly less tribute than Tetzcoco. See Gibson 1967, 170-181.

[43] AGN-T, 2519:8, f. 60.

[44] Owensby 2008, 95, 100.

[45] AGN, Mapa 1479.

[46] AGN-T, 2726:10, f. 166r. "Merced . . . de un citio de est^{a} para ganado menor."

[47] AGN-T, 2726:10, f. 175r. "Tal merced no se puede ni deve dar al dicho contreras por muchos daños y vexaciones que pueden suceder a esta ciudad y a los naturales della."

[48] AGN-T, 2726:10, f. 167r. "El caño del agua que ba a esta dha ciudad de donde beben todos los vs^{o} y que aviendo por alli ganado beberan de las dhas aguas y ira en ella a la ciudad muncha çuçiedad."

[49] AGN-T, 2726:10, f. 175r. "las cabras romperan el dicho caño y el agua estara muy turbia y suzia y muchas bezes no llegara a esta ciudad el agua de que padeceran falta de agua los bezinos y naturales della."

[50] AGN-T, 2726:10, f. 189v.

[51] AGN, Mapa 1891. "Acequia de agua que va a los molinos y batanes y a tezcuco." Maps produced as part of merced cases like these were not always painted by Indians. The four maps presented here, however, do bear the markings of an indigenous hand. See Endfield 2001, 10-11.

[52] AGN-T, 2726:10, f. 189v.

[53] González Rodrigo 1994, 443-454. See also Gibson 1964, 289.

[54] As Lockhart (1992, 113) has shown, the indigenous lordly houses of central Mexico lost a significant number of dependent laborers to the Spaniards, who could offer them better wages in exchange for their services.

CHAPTER FOUR
Interethnic Unions and the Rise of the Mestizo

As the native indigenous nobles of Tetzcoco found themselves increasingly alienated from property and other economic resources, they were also experiencing something of a revolution in ethnic identity. As high-ranking indigenous women married Spaniards, their children—who would come to be known as *mestizos*, or individuals of mixed-race—blurred the social lines that separated Spaniards and Indians, and further complicated Tetzcoco's local political and social environment.

This chapter begins with an examination of the very earliest instances of intermarriage between Spaniards and the old royal house of Tetzcoco, which occurred between indigenous women and Spanish men almost immediately after contact. We then consider a number of high-born Tetzcoca women—both those who married Indians as well as those who married Spaniards—to assess better the opportunities available to native Tetzcoca women and the ramifications of their marital choices in the course of the sixteenth century. The chapter concludes with biographical profiles of two important sixteenth-century Tetzcoca mestizos, their roles in local politics and society, and the effect that their presence had on indigenous leadership in Tetzcoco.

Conquest-Generation Tetzcoca Women

Marriage in the precontact era was an important strategy of political alliance and regional stability. The daughters and sisters of regionally dominant tlatoque were typically wives of the rulers of subject polities. The most important wives of the Tetzcoca rulers, for example,

typically came from the ruling family of politically dominant Mexico Tenochtitlan. Similarly, Tetzcoca noblewomen married into the ruling families of Tetzcoco's subject polities, such as nearby Teotihuacan.[1] Women from the powerful ruling families of central Mexico, therefore, had long been important power-brokers and alliance-makers in the regional political hierarchy.

After the conquest, women continued to occupy an important role in the elite stratum of indigenous communities. Spaniards, as powerful participants in regional politics after 1521, entered, not surprisingly, into this system of marriage alliance. Noble Tetzcoca women, as members of the second most powerful ruling family in central Mexico, began marrying Spaniards almost immediately. While the specific mechanics of marriage alliance changed after conquest, high-born indigenous women continued to play an important role in determining which of the various lineages of the Tetzcoca noble house would be the most powerful, politically dominant, and economically successful.

Nezahualpilli (r. 1472-1515), the famed precontact *tlatoani*, or ruler, of Tetzcoco whose sons ruled Tetzcoco at the time of conquest, had at least two daughters who married Spaniards after the Spanish victory in 1521. The first of these daughters was called doña Ana. Ana was not the name given to Nezahualpilli's daughter at birth, but rather her baptismal name acquired after the Spanish arrival in the 1520s. Many details of her life—including her Nahuatl name—are not known, but several interesting particulars of her life have been preserved. Not only is doña Ana's one of the earliest marriages between Spaniard and Indian in central Mexico, but it also illustrates the incredibly complex and politically charged nature of marriage choice in this immediate post-conquest environment.

In addition to being the daughter of Tetzcoco's last precontact ruler, doña Ana was also the niece of the famed Mexica ruler, Moteuccçoma: doña Ana's mother was Moteuccçoma's sister (see Figure 4.1).[2] This prestigious lineage from the two most politically powerful noble houses in Mesoamerica at the time, placed her within the highest circles of precontact society. Hernando Cortés, recognizing doña Ana's importance, was anxious to marry her to one of his fellow conquistadors, and the conquistadors were anxious to make these advantageous alliances with native women. The wealthy families of these women typically provided them with lands and indigenous labor when they married.

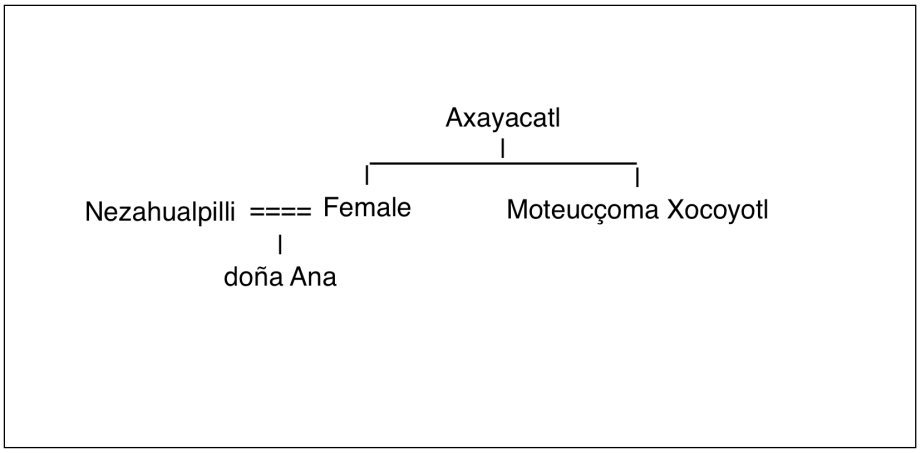


Figure 4.1. Doña Ana's Family Tree.

Cortés arranged for doña Ana to marry the Spanish conquistador Pedro González Trujillo. Both parties to the union benefited. She continued to occupy a high social position as the conquistador's wife, and he received the benefit of the use of the lands she brought to the marriage. Her dowry consisted of indigenous labor and lands, which had been given to her by her parents (i.e., the tlatoani Nezahualpilli) and were part of the real estate wealth of the royal house of Tetzcoco.[3] Doña Ana's story does not end there, however. Her husband died soon after their

marriage, in fact, and Cortés, not content to let this important woman slip away, again assumed control of doña Ana's private life and arranged a marriage for her to another conquistador, Juan de Cuellar. It is through Juan de Cuellar and his 1531 petition for an encomienda grant that doña Ana's story survives.

Cuellar's petition shows that the conquistador's hopes for an encomienda were pinned largely on his wife's precontact social standing. Moteuccçoma's daughters, after all, were awarded important encomienda grants in the central valley of Mexico.[4] Cuellar no doubt fully expected that his wife—Moteuccçoma's niece and Nezahualpilli's daughter—would also receive substantial forms of economic support. The title page of his request, in fact, is explicit about why he thinks he deserves to be rewarded with encomienda labor. It reads: "The *probança* (or proof) of Juan de Cuellar. Which shows that he served with Hernan Cortés, Diego Velazquez, and Juan de Grijalva in the conquest of New Spain with his arms and horses at his own expense, and that he was married to doña Ana, daughter of the Lord of Tetzcoco and niece of Moteuccçoma."[5] Cuellar also used this petition as an opportunity to complain about the way that Cortés had treated doña Ana. Cuellar claimed, and his witnesses confirmed, that after doña Ana's first husband died, Cortés seized the dowry lands and labor that doña Ana brought to her first marriage—lands given to her by her parents, part of the real estate wealth of the royal house of Tetzcoco—and he exchanged them for another, presumably less valuable, set of lands and workers. Ironically, the conquistador Cuellar rose up in defense of the traditional land rights of Tetzcoco's indigenous nobility. Doña Ana's wealth, high status, and marriage placed her at the center of an alliance between a conqueror and the Tetzcocan noble house and pitted one conqueror against another.

Doña Ana's marriage afforded her a comfortable life in the capital, where she moved with her husband. The income from her encomienda and land holdings enabled her to live fashionably in Mexico City. Like her cousins, the daughters of Moteuccçoma, doña Ana moved in the very highest circles of indigenous society. She was not, however, present in Tetzcoco very often. Her name does not appear in any of the records that survive from Tetzcoco. Thus, while doña Ana was wealthy and important, her marriage choice cut her off from Tetzcoco's ruling inner circle.

Doña Ana was not the only one of Nezahualpilli's daughters to marry a Spaniard. Her half-sister doña María Ixtlilxochitl also married a Spaniard, a man by the name of Antonio de Pomar. Doña María was not Moteuccçoma's niece, though. Polygyny was a common feature of central Mexican noble families, and doña María's mother had been, according to later sixteenth-century authors, little more than one of Nezahualpilli's many wives of secondary rank.[6] Doña María, therefore, was not singled out as a reward for one of Cortés's conquistadors.

Her less illustrious maternal lineage and relative lack of money compared to doña Ana spared doña María Ixtlilxochitl many of the troubles that came with Cortés's interference. She did not hold an encomienda grant like her more important sister. And unlike her sister—who enjoyed a comfortable life in Mexico City—doña María continued to live in Tetzcoco. A document from 1539 confirms that doña María was intimately involved in the daily life of the ruling family in that period.[7] Her continued participation in high society in Tetzcoco afforded her mestizo son, Juan Bautista Pomar, discussed below, a unique advantage: His intimate knowledge of local indigenous culture coupled with his ease with the Spanish language and Spanish institutions prepared him perhaps better than anyone else in Tetzcoco to navigate the sixteenth century's nascent colonial system.

Marriage Choices in Subsequent Generations

Subsequent generations of Tetzcoca noblewomen were faced with similar marriage options to those of their conquest-era kin. Cortés's power in Mexico had ebbed considerably by the time these women were ready to marry, so the blatant interference that doña Ana had endured no longer took place. There were also few conquistadors left to marry. At least one woman from the second postconquest generation married a Spaniard, nonetheless. The examples left to us, however, show that marriage to an Indian was still a desirable match for indigenous women and certainly more common than a Spaniard-Indian union.

Information survives for at least three of Nezahualpilli's granddaughters. These women were all nieces of doña Ana and doña María Ixtlilxochitl; they were their brothers' children. One of these women, doña Cecilia, married a Spaniard. The other two, doña Ana Cortés and doña Antonia Pimentel, married indigenous nobles. The fathers of all three of them had been, at some point during the sixteenth century, tlatoani of Tetzcoco, so it is reasonable to assume that they held similar positions within the Tetzcoca native social hierarchy.

Doña Cecilia, the only one to marry a Spaniard, was the daughter of don Pedro Tetlahuehuetzquititzin, ruler of Tetzcoco from 1534 to 1539. Doña Cecilia married Juan Freyle, an interpreter in the *audiencia*, or high court, of Mexico, and the couple lived in Mexico City. Like Cuellar, Juan Freyle sent a petition to the crown to ask for a land grant.[8] He also highlighted the prestige of his wife in the course of his 1554 petition and drew on her familial connections in Tetzcocan government to support his case. For instance, Juan Freyle called on his wife's cousin, the current ruler of Tetzcoco, don Hernando Pimentel (r. 1545-1564), to testify to his wife's high status. He also called on another of her cousins, don Lorenço de Luna, who had held the Spanish-

style office of *gobernador*, or governor, of Tetzcoco in the 1540s.[9] Both of these men testified to doña Cecilia's direct descent from the illustrious precontact Tetzcoca lords and helped Juan Freyle in his (ultimately) successful petition for salary and lands.

Like her aunt, doña Ana, before her, doña Cecilia married outside the native noble community and moved to the city of Mexico, where she lived in the viceregal court. And like her aunt, doña Cecilia's children constituted some of the first and most elite mestizos to inhabit the capital. These children were cut off from Tetzcoco and their powerful relatives there, however. If they ever played a role in Tetzcoca politics or society, evidence of their involvement has not come to light.

The second of Nezahualpilli's granddaughters, doña Ana Cortés, was the daughter of don Fernando Cortés Ixtlilxochitl, who was a close ally of Cortés in the conquest of Mexico, and who ruled Tetzcoco from 1521 to 1531. Despite her high birth, or perhaps because of it, she did not marry a Spaniard. Instead, she married another indigenous noble, don Francisco Verdugo Quetzal Mamalitzin, the ruler of nearby Teotihuacan. Information on her life comes from her husband's will from 1563.[10]

Doña Ana Cortés's marriage perpetuated an ancient Tetzcoca custom. Prior to the Spanish arrival, it was customary for the ruler of Tetzcoco to marry his daughters to the rulers of subject polities, such as Teotihuacan. The offspring of these unions were generally first in line to inherit the rulership of the subject polity.[11] Doña Ana Cortés, then, continued to play this important precontact-style role of alliance preserver and protector of political order between dominant Tetzcoco and subject Teotihuacan. From her husband's will, we learn that doña Ana Cortés was as well attended in Teotihuacan as her cousin and aunt were in Mexico City. We also learn that she brought Tetzcoca land to her marriage, just as her aunt had done, and that she

continued to possess these dowry lands separately from her husband.[12] Here the Spaniards did not interfere in the landholdings of the Tetzcoca royal family, and doña Ana Cortés was able to dispose of these lands in the manner in which she saw fit.

The third of Nezahualpilli's granddaughters, doña Antonia Pimentel, was the daughter of don Antonio Pimentel, who served as tlatoani from 1540 to 1545. Doña Antonia looked not to Spaniards or even to other regional indigenous leaders for a potential husband, but chose instead to marry within the Tetzcoca royal family. In fact, her husband, don Pedro de Alvarado, was her cousin. Doña Antonia's father and don Pedro's father were half-brothers, both sons of Nezahualpilli by different wives.

Doña Antonia, then, remained in Tetzcoco and continued to move in the same social circles in which she moved before her marriage. As the granddaughter, daughter, and daughter-in-law of Tetzcoca tlatoque, she enjoyed great prestige there. But her husband was not a tlatoani. In fact, doña Antonia's father passed over his son-in-law, don Pedro, when he named his successor in his will. He chose, instead, to name don Pedro's brother, don Hernando Pimentel (r. 1545-1564). Doña Antonia, therefore, enjoyed a bit less fortune and prestige as a wife than she had as a daughter.

Though doña Antonia's husband, don Pedro, was not tlatoani, it was not for lack of effort on the couple's part. The two of them worked hard to try to gain the rulership for don Pedro. In 1564, when don Pedro's brother, don Hernando Pimentel, died and left the office of tlatoani vacant, don Pedro and his wife moved to claim the office for don Pedro. They came into direct conflict with their nephew—don Hernando's son—don Francisco Pimentel. Together, however, don Pedro and doña Antonia were a formidable force. They kept Tetzcoco's rulership and entailed cacicazgo estate tied up in the courts for decades. Only after direct intervention by the

viceroy did don Francisco and his allies win control of the contested properties. The office of tlatoani, as will be seen in Chapter Five, was never occupied again as a result of the litigation efforts of doña Antonia and don Pedro.

For Nezahualpilli's granddaughters, then, as for his daughters, marriage choices were far from limited. The record contains ample evidence of these high-born women variously marrying Spaniards, regional indigenous rulers, and fellow native aristocrats from Tetzcoco. This variety of spousal choices led to equally varied lives for their children. The children of each of these unions played very different roles in New Spain's colonial society. The archival record gives us a clear view of the emergence of some of the first people of mixed-race in colonial Mexico.

Mestizas, Mestizos, and Indians

For modern-day Mexicans, *mestizos*, or individuals of mixed European and indigenous ancestry, have come to be seen as constituting the majority of the Mexican population. Yet in the sixteenth century, when mestizos were born for the first time, this category was not necessarily recognized as a distinct social group, especially among the high-ranking members of Tetzcoco's old ruling family. By turning now to the children of Nezahualpilli's daughters and granddaughters, we see how racial categories like "mestizo" had limited meaning within the sixteenth-century native aristocracy. We also see, however, that the presence of mestizos, who were often well placed to attain power and wealth, significantly altered the balance of power in Tetzcoca local politics.

The children of the Spaniard-Tetzcoca marriages that we have examined thus far—i.e., the children of doña Ana and doña Cecilia—do not appear in the archival documents examined for this study. Their birth and upbringing in Mexico City likely precluded them from

participating in Tetzcoco's indigenous society in any meaningful way. Their fathers' relatively high status as conquistador and audiencia interpreter, respectively, also likely meant that the children moved in the social circles of Spanish conquerors and bureaucrats, and not those of native aristocrats. A combination of race and geography, then, set these mestizos apart from their indigenous relatives in Tetzcoco.

Likewise, the indigenous children of doña Ana Cortés, who had married the indigenous ruler of Teotihuacan, were also excluded from Tetzcoca local politics and society. Doña Ana Cortés's daughter, doña Francisca Verdugo, was a very powerful and wealthy woman. From her own and her father's testaments, we know that she was recognized as the *cacica*, or ruler, of Teotihuacan and inherited the Teotihuacan *cacicazgo*, or lordly entailed estate.[13] And yet she was an outsider in Tetzcoco. Only when her Tetzcoca cousins began to fight among themselves in the late sixteenth century (discussed in detail in the next chapter) was doña Francisca able to play any role in Tetzcoca politics, and even this role was rather limited. In a document from 1576, doña Francisca and her husband allied themselves with her cousin, don Francisco Pimentel, of Tetzcoco, and pledged to aid him in the legal battles he was waging at the time. Don Francisco had taken control of Tetzcoco's cacicazgo and was being sued by the rest of his family for its return. Doña Francisca, in return for her political and economic support of don Francisco, was promised a portion of the estate once it was won.[14] These promises seem never to have been fulfilled, however. Twenty years later, when don Francisco settled his case, doña Francisca apparently was given nothing in the settlement. In her testament, she left detailed instructions that her heirs should continue to fight for Tetzcoca land.[15]

From both these mestizo and indigenous cases, then, it appears that one's physical presence or absence was more instrumental in determining success in Tetzcoca local politics than

racial categories. Both doña Ana's and doña Cecilia's mestizo children and doña Ana Cortés's indigenous daughter—none who lived in Tetzcoco—had trouble remaining relevant in Tetzcoca high society. Residence, not blood ties, seems to have constituted membership in a community. This phenomenon has been observed among the Nahuas at the household level as well.[16]

In contrast, both mestizos and indios did well in Tetzcoca politics if they remained in Tetzcoco. Don Francisco Pimentel was the product of a marriage between two indigenous individuals. His father had been tlatoani from 1545 to 1564, and he managed to secure the Tetzcoca cacicazgo for his own use in the final decades of the sixteenth century. Don Francisco's nephew don Juan de Alvarado—also an indio—enjoyed high status in Tetzcoco, too, and even served as its governor for a time.[17] High-ranking mestizos, too, however, enjoyed great success in Tetzcoco, and the most important mestizo in Tetzcoco in this period was Juan Bautista Pomar.

Juan Bautista Pomar

Juan Bautista Pomar was the son of doña María Ixtlilxochitl, one of Nezahualpilli's daughters, and Antonio de Pomar, a Spaniard. He grew up in Tetzcoco and remained close with his indigenous relatives, many of whom held important positions in Tetzcoca government. His continued close ties to Tetzcoco's native aristocrats, coupled with his ease speaking Spanish and using the Spanish legal system, made Pomar one of the most important and wealthiest individuals in Tetzcoco. His success speaks to the changing economic and political situation for the indigenous upper class in Tetzcoco. Pomar's ability to operate effectively in both the indigenous and the Spanish cultural milieu placed him in a unique position to succeed in the early colonial period. We will follow our discussion of Pomar with a consideration of his distant mestizo cousin, don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, who offers a revealing contrast to Pomar.

At the most basic level, Pomar's participation in both indigenous and Spanish culture is apparent in his use of both Nahuatl and Spanish. He was comfortable in both languages, and his signature is attached to documents composed in each. But Pomar's bi-cultural abilities go well beyond mere language use. He was an important, respected man in both the Spanish-language and Nahuatl-language worlds of Tetzcoco. The indigenous aristocracy of Tetzcoco saw Pomar as a devoted nephew, a powerful ally, and a spokesman. For example, Pomar inherited the estate of his indigenous uncle and aunt, don Fernando de Chávez and doña Angelica. Don Fernando was the brother of Pomar's mother, doña María Ixtlilxochitl, and the son of Nezahualpilli. In the Boban Calendar Wheel from mid-century, don Fernando de Chávez is depicted on an indigenous woven ruler's mat, holding a Spanish staff of office, and speaking (see Figure 4.2). The Nahuatl term for ruler, *tlatoani*, is literally translated as "speaker." Thus, don Fernando is at or near the very top of the indigenous hierarchy. Pomar's aunt, doña Angelina, who took over the estate when her husband died, left the estate to her beloved nephew, Pomar. In her will, composed in Nahuatl in 1590, doña Angelina says of Pomar that he "has shown me much love and continues to do so at present . . . and has provided for me and given me all that is necessary."[18] The fact that Pomar enjoyed the esteem of his wealthy and powerful indigenous aunt and uncle and inherited their estate demonstrates Pomar's close ties to the indigenous leadership and continued participation in indigenous high society.



Figure 4.2. Boban Calendar Wheel, detail. Image courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Pomar's close ties to powerful indigenous aristocrats was not limited to his aunt and uncle, however. In the 1560s, Pomar allied himself with the son of the late tlatoani don Hernando Pimentel (r. 1545-1564), don Francisco Pimentel. Together, Pomar and don Francisco fought for and won control of the Tetzcoca entailed lordly estate, or *cacicazgo*.[19] Don Francisco gave power of attorney to his ally, Pomar, and Pomar filed motion after motion in the Spanish court system in their legal battle for control of the properties.[20]

Pomar also served as something of a spokesman for the indigenous nobles of Tetzcoco. In 1582, Pomar penned—in Spanish—the *Relación de Tezcuco*, which was Tetzcoco's official response to King Philip II's efforts to collect encyclopedic knowledge of his vast empire.[21] In it, Pomar provided information on Tetzcoca geography, history, politics, and culture. To craft his responses to King Philip's questionnaire, Pomar drew upon not only his own personal knowledge of the area, but also the oral testimony of community members, especially elderly indigenous

individuals.[22] As the author of the *Relación*, then, Pomar gathered the collective knowledge of Tetzcoco's native population and served as its mouthpiece to King Philip. But Pomar was not merely a passive channel through which information flowed unchanged. Not only did Pomar have to take the information from his Nahuatl-speaking informants and translate it into Spanish, but he had to reorganize the information to conform to the *Relación* format, which arrived in Tetzcoco as a numbered questionnaire. In this way, Pomar served as a link between his indigenous relatives and fellow townspeople in Tetzcoco and his Spanish audience in Mexico City and Iberia.

Pomar's role as mediator between Indian and empire is even more apparent when one considers the authors of other *Relaciones geográficas* written in New Spain. In many instances, local Spanish officials took it upon themselves to answer the king's questions. Local *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores* are some of the most common respondents. Indeed, the crown likely envisioned that their responses would be written by Spaniards.[23] The fact that Pomar, a mestizo with close ties to the indigenous population, wrote the Tetzcoca response to this imperial exercise illustrates the ways in which Pomar bridged the Spanish and indigenous worlds of early colonial New Spain.[24]

Pomar's ease in both Spanish and indigenous worlds had financial implications for Pomar and placed him in a unique position to acquire property and make money. His relationships with the native Tetzcoca were generally very good, as were his relationships with local Spaniards. These connections, coupled with his knowledge of Spanish procedures governing the sale and acquisition of land, allowed Pomar to amass quite a bit of property from Tetzcoco's native and Spanish residents in the mid- to late-sixteenth century. Pomar used the land for farming and appears to have been very successful. Much of Pomar's land acquisition occurred as the result of

gifts or bequests from his relatives who were members of the native nobility. In 1589, for instance, Pomar's aunt, doña Angelina, gave him a field. This is the same doña Angelina mentioned above who bequeathed her entire estate to Pomar at the time of her death several years later. She was the widow of don Hernando de Chávez, who was the son of Nezahualpilli and the brother of Pomar's mother. In the transfer document, written in Nahuatl, doña Angelina states that she is now very old in 1589 and can no longer manage all the property she owns. Pomar, she believed, should have the property since she had no children of her own and since Pomar was related to her husband. The field is called Oztotliyacan and it lies between the churches of Santa Ana and Nativitas.[25]

In 1596, Pomar similarly acquired land from an indigenous man named don Miguel de Carvajal, who may have been Pomar's cousin. In the transfer document, also in Nahuatl, don Miguel calls Pomar *notiachcauh*, or "my elder brother, my elder cousin," as well as the Spanish term *primo hermano*, or "first cousin." Don Miguel could have been the son of another of Pomar's uncles, don Toribio de Carvajal, though that relationship is not made explicit in the text.[26] The land given to Pomar by don Miguel lies to the north and borders a large canal. Don Miguel gave Pomar this property "because we are one and of the same people, for he is my first cousin, and he does greater things for us."[27] As Juan López y Magaña has noted, "us" likely refers to other relatives of Pomar and don Miguel. Don Miguel's reason for donating land to Pomar suggests, then, that Pomar was actively working on behalf of his family. The nature of this activity is unclear; Pomar was perhaps representing the interests of his family in legal matters in the Spanish courts.

Pomar and his wife's work on behalf of native peoples seems not to have been limited to native nobles. In 1605, after Pomar's death, a group of indigenous commoners donated a piece of

property to Pomar's widow, doña María Ibarguren, who had remarried by that time. The commoners, from the town of San Ildefonso Çoltepec, gave doña María a field that bordered her own land in the area because, they said, "we owe her a great deal. She has helped us in many ways in times of sickness and our sufferings and has helped us with money."[28] The commoners do not mention Pomar specifically as having assisted them—only his wife, doña María—but the actions of Pomar's widow certainly reflected on her late husband and conform to the types of activity in which we know Pomar participated.[29]

Pomar (and his wife), then, earned a great deal of gratitude among the native population of the region. This gratitude was so strong that it prompted at least two groups to donate property to Pomar and his wife. Again, the exact reasons that these people were so grateful is unclear, but their donations helped Pomar in his efforts to build an estate. At roughly the same time, Pomar was busy buying property in a conscious effort to enlarge his landholdings.

A Nahuatl-language document from 1587 shows the kinds of purchase transactions in which Pomar was involved. In this document, Pomar buys a field from María, whom Pomar calls *tohuepol*, or "our sister-in-law." María is the widow of a man named don Cristóbal Çacacoyotzin, who was a grandson of Nezahualpilli and, therefore, Pomar's first cousin. María's son, Diego Maldonado, was also present at the sale. We see, then, that Pomar continued to deal with his relatives as he acquired land. In this case, however, he was not given the land as a gift but purchased it instead. The purchased field is in the Tetzcoca *calpolli*, or constituent political unit, of Metepec. María notes that "the field is not big," and she therefore sells it for the relatively small sum of three pesos.[30]

In 1592, Pomar confirmed in court that he had been systematically acquiring land since around 1557. "Thirty-five years ago," says Pomar, "I began to buy . . . from different individuals,

Spaniards and Indians."[31] These properties augmented others that he inherited from his relatives. Not content with the amount of his own property available to work, Pomar also leased some lands from other local landowners. Indeed, other Tetzcoca nobles confirmed that Pomar worked land that had been leased to him. In the same court case from 1592, the indigenous hereditary nobility, led by don Juan de Alvarado, verified that Pomar worked lands that belonged to the patrimonial estate of Nezahualpilli's heirs.[32]

With all of this property—inherited and purchased, owned and leased—Pomar made his living by farming it. He appears to have been relatively successful. The agricultural surpluses of central Mexico had been enriching the region's native nobility for centuries before the Spanish conquest, and Pomar similarly profited from the region's agricultural potential in the late-sixteenth century, as well. Pomar, however, planted his fields not with the traditional crops of prehispanic Mexico like maize and beans, but with the new European staple: wheat. Indeed, in a dispute with a Spaniard over land ownership in 1592, Pomar testified that his land was under cultivation "for the most part with stubble and wheat that Indians and servants of mine were mowing."[33] Pomar, ever the cultural link between the Nahuas and the Europeans, used the land bought, inherited, and leased from his indigenous relatives in order to plant newly arrived European cultivars like wheat, which he undoubtedly sold to Spanish buyers.

The 1592 case cited above included a map, giving us a rare visual depiction of the landscape in which Pomar worked (see Figure 4.3). The map was painted as part of a request by a Spaniard named Pedro de Mexía for a grant of land from the king. For all such requests, the viceregal administration was responsible for ensuring that no one would be adversely affected by the grant. In this map, with east depicted at the top, we see that the mapmaker has drawn the site of the proposed grant, here marked with a cross, in the upper central portion. The painter has also

shown all the indigenous communities in the vicinity of the grant site that could potentially be affected by the grant. The artist has conveniently connected these communities to the grant site with red lines that are glossed with information about the distance each site lies from the site.



Figure 4.3. AGN, Mapa 1890. Photo: Bradley Benton.

Importantly for this study, the mapmaker included material further to the west—further down the page—that involved Pomar and the rest of the Tetzcoca native nobility. The painter noted that lands on either side of the water channel that lies along the south side of the map belonged to Juan Pomar. Those to the left of the channel are glossed as being fallow. Those to the right are glossed as being planted with stubble, presumably from a recent wheat harvest, and belonging to "the patrimonio of the principales of Nezahualpilli."[34] Nearby, we see visual depictions of other economic activity in the region. Just below the land worked by Pomar, we see a fulling mill on the water channel, which would have been used in the production of wool textiles. And just above Pomar's land, we see a corral with several head of cattle. These three products—cattle, wool from sheep, and Pomar's wheat—represent economic activities unknown in this region just a century earlier. And yet even this area, rural and somewhat isolated, was quick to adopt these products of European origin. Even the hereditary nobles of Tetzcoco, with Pomar as their lessee and proxy, were engaged in these new economic activities by the end of the sixteenth century.

While Pomar appears to have been an agent of change in Tetzcoco, it is difficult to characterize his activity as parasitic or exploitative of the indigenous community. He and his spouse seem to have done a great deal to help both the native aristocracy and the native commoners and were repaid for their allegiance with parcels of land. These people would never have given property to the Pomars if they had felt exploited by them. Pomar, moreover, did much to protect the Tetzcoca *cacicazgo*, or the estate of Nezahualpilli, that he shared with his relatives. By leasing the land from them and keeping it under cultivation, Pomar prevented Spaniards from acquiring the estate lands through viceregal grant. Pomar successfully demonstrated in the 1592 case cited above that he and his family would suffer great harm if the

viceroy were to award the land requested by Pedro de Mexía, and the viceroy denied Mexía's grant request.

Pomar's motives in Tetzcoco were not, of course, entirely altruistic. His financial activities—acquiring land and using it to grow wheat—were also designed to make Pomar money. And it appears that Pomar earned considerable profits.[35] With wealth comes power and influence, and Pomar, arguably, enjoyed as much of this in Tetzcoco as any other individual of the sixteenth century.

We will return to Pomar and his influence in Chapter Five. For now, let us turn to another mestizo of Tetzcoca descent, don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl. His example stands in stark contrast to that of Pomar, and provides another window onto the experiences of high-ranking mestizos of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. By considering don Fernando's story and comparing it with that of Pomar, we get an ever more complex picture of local politics in Tetzcoco as the colonial period progressed.

Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl

Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, like Pomar, was a descendant of Nezahualpilli. And don Fernando, like Pomar, wrote extensively about Tetzcoco's history.[36] His turn-of-the-seventeenth-century works are some of the most often cited sources on prehispanic and early colonial central Mexico. Unlike Pomar, however, don Fernando was not a native of Tetzcoco and spent very little time there. And unlike Pomar, don Fernando crafted his histories not as a response to a questionnaire from King Philip, but as a device to help him advance his career in the viceregal bureaucracy. These two mestizos could hardly have been more different; a comparison of the two reveals that elite mestizos could follow a number of paths and employ a

variety of different strategies to secure their fortunes. Their successes and failures depended less on the fact that they were of mixed-race than on class considerations and their access to economic resources, and their ties to local and viceregal actors.

Don Fernando was Nezahualpilli's great-great-great-grandson on his mother's side. He traced his lineage back to Nezahualpilli's son, Ixtlilxochitl, the conquest-era Tetzcoca leader who allied himself with Cortés and who fought against his own brothers and the Mexica tlatoani Cuauhtemoc in the siege of Tenochtitlan in 1521 (see Figure 4.4). The connection between don Fernando's ancestors and the Tetzcoca native aristocrats ended here, however. As mentioned above, don Fernando's great-grandmother and Ixtlilxochitl's daughter, doña Ana Cortés, married the indigenous ruler of Teotihuacan and moved there. Doña Ana Cortés, his great-grandmother, was his closest relative actually to have lived in Tetzcoco. She spent her married life in Teotihuacan, though, and her daughter—don Fernando's grandmother—was born and raised in Teotihuacan.[37]

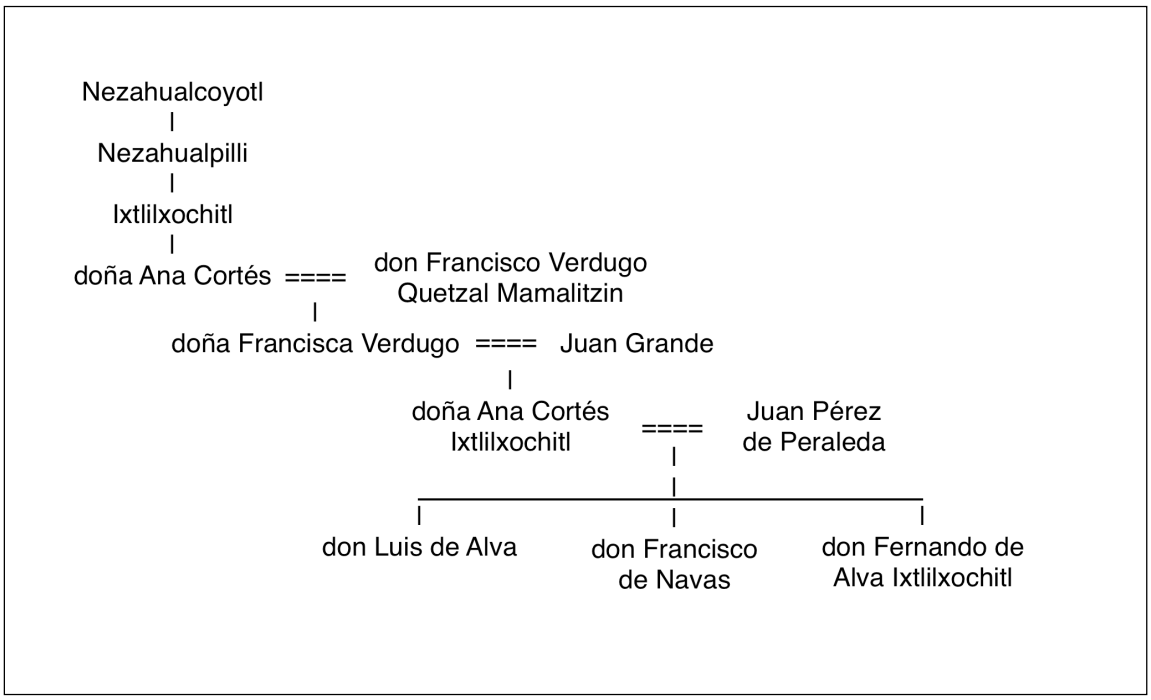


Figure 4.4. Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Family Tree.

In Teotihuacan, don Fernando's great-grandmother, doña Ana Cortés, and grandmother—named doña Francisca Verdugo—were the tlatoani's wife and daughter, respectively, and therefore the highest-ranking Indians in town. And doña Francisca inherited her father's *cacicazgo*, or entailed estate, that belonged to the rulers of Teotihuacan. Doña Francisca's relative wealth attracted the eye of a Spaniard in Mexico City named Juan Grande, whom she married. Grande worked as an interpreter in the audiencia in Mexico City and moved his wife to the capital to live with him there.[38] Don Fernando's residential ties to Teotihuacan were thus broken as his grandmother moved to Mexico.

Don Fernando's mother, doña Ana Cortés Ixtlilxochitl, a *mestiza*, was born and grew up in Mexico City. She inherited the Teotihuacan cacicazgo from her mother and, like her mother, also married a Spaniard from Mexico City, named Juan Pérez de Peraleda. Doña Ana's children—including don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl—were raised in the capital, as well.[39]

Don Fernando's family, therefore, had not lived in Teotihuacan for two generations and had not lived in Tetzcoco for three.

Don Fernando's mother was styled the "cacica of Teotihuacan" and held the cacicazgo from that town. So while she was far removed from the day-to-day running of Teotihuacan's indigenous republic, her prestige and wealth stemmed directly from her descent from Teotihuacan's indigenous rulers. Her primary residence, however, was located in Mexico City, and her status as a Teotihuacana was occasionally questioned.[40] It is possible, though, that doña Ana spent a fair bit of time in Teotihuacan looking after her assets there. Indeed, her Spanish husband died in Teotihuacan and wished to be buried in the church there.[41]

Don Fernando's parents had no property in Tetzcoco, however, that would require time spent in that municipality. Don Fernando, likewise, had little reason to spend time in Tetzcoco. He likely knew few people there and possessed no property in the region. He was not even the heir to his mother's cacicazgo in Teotihuacan; that estate was bequeathed to his brother, Luis de Alva, when his mother died. Nonetheless, don Fernando devoted considerable energy to associating himself with Tetzcoco and Tetzcoco's illustrious prehispanic past. His wish to establish this connection was rooted not, as has been shown, in his close personal relationship with the altepetl, but in his desire for political, economic, and career advancement.

Even don Fernando's name is evidence of his desire to connect himself with the indigenous nobility. There was a certain degree of flexibility surrounding surnames among central Mexicans in the early colonial period; men and women certainly felt no need to observe a strict patrilineal surname system. Don Fernando and most of his brothers, for instance, took the surname Alva, which seems to be unrelated to the father's name: Pérez de Peraleda. And at least one brother, don Francisco de Navas, took his surname from still another source. It is unclear

why any of doña Ana Cortés Ixtlilxochitl and Juan Pérez de Peraleda's children took the surnames they did; perhaps they received them from their baptismal sponsors, a potential source of surnames in this period.

For don Fernando, who used Ixtlilxochitl as well as his Alva surname, the reasons behind his choices are more easily understandable. Ixtlilxochitl was the Nahuatl name of don Fernando's great-great-grandfather. As mentioned above, Ixtlilxochitl was one of Cortés's allies in the fight against the Mexica in 1521. But Ixtlilxochitl's descendents generally did not adopt the name and opted instead for Ixtlilxochitl's Christian surname, Cortés, which was given to Ixtlilxochitl by his famous conquistador baptismal sponsor. For many generations, then, the name Cortés appears to have had greater importance than the name Ixtlilxochitl.

Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's mother was the first post-conquest-era descendant to reintroduce the Ixtlilxochitl moniker. Interestingly, his mother's ethnic identity was questioned over the course of her life, and the use of Ixtlilxochitl might have been an attempt to strengthen her claims to indigenousness.[42] Don Fernando also had reason to stress his links to Tetzcoco's prehispanic indigenous aristocrats. His association with these towering figures of the preconquest past could help him to secure a position in the viceroy's bureaucracy. This idea is reinforced when one considers that his brothers, including the priest don Bartolomé de Alva, neglected to use the Ixtlilxochitl name. His brothers did not seek posts in the viceroy's administration; their fortunes did not depend on Tetzcoco's precontact magnificence.

Don Fernando's use of the honorific title *don* was also a strategic choice. In Spain in the sixteenth century, *don* would only have been used by the highest members of the peninsular nobility. In Mexico, the title was extended to the indigenous nobility, who used it with great pride.[43] Spaniards and criollos in Mexico, however, generally did not hold high noble titles and,

consequently, also lacked the honorific don. In Mexico, then, the don title came to be something of a hallmark of the indigenous aristocracy. By using don with his own name, don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl consciously placed himself in the social milieu of native nobles, and distanced himself from the Spaniards, criollos, and other mestizos of Mexico City.

Don Fernando's reasons for cultivating an image of native nobility seem to be rooted in his desire for employment in the viceregal bureaucracy. The specific object of his designs seems to have been—as it was in his histories—the altepetl of Tetzcoco. Despite the fact that don Fernando's family had been affiliated with Teotihuacan—not Tetzcoco—for the past three generations, don Fernando singled out Tetzcoco as the most desirable location for his employment in the colonial bureaucracy.

Don Fernando's success in the colonial bureaucracy was likely the most he could have desired. As one of nine children, he could hardly have expected to inherit much of his parents' property. His mother's cacicazgo was entailed, so it could not legally be divided among the children, but passed, instead, to just one of them. And the heir to the cacicazgo was not don Fernando, but his brother don Luis de Alva. A career in the church was possible. Indeed, his brother don Bartolomé de Alva had a successful career in the church, and don Fernando's father actually left a chaplaincy to don Fernando for him to use if he became a priest.[44] But, for whatever reason, don Fernando did not join the clergy. The life of a priest did not agree with don Fernando, perhaps. As a young man without much property or prospects, service in the colonial bureaucracy must have been one of the few remaining options open to him. If the archival record is any indication, he seems to have expended a great deal of effort to secure government employment.

The seeds of don Fernando's attraction to Tetzcoco were no doubt planted by his grandmother. In the 1570s and 80s, when the Tetzcoca tlatoani position was vacant and a succession dispute raged in the colonial court system between rival factions of Tetzcoco's ruling family, doña Francisca Verdugo of Teotihuacan inserted herself into the local family squabble. In June of 1576, doña Francisca and her husband, Juan Grande, pledged to support doña Francisca's cousin, don Francisco Pimentel, who was locked in a protracted fight over the Tetzcoca cacicazgo with another cousin, don Pedro de Alvarado.[45] This show of support by doña Francisca and Grande sought both to demonstrate their right to share in Tetzcoco's prehispanic wealth and to place them in a position to benefit from don Francisco's potential successes in the struggle. In her will, doña Francisca also argued that she should have inherited land from her mother's family in Tetzcoco. But she knew nothing specific about Tetzcoca properties at the time of her testament, and said only that if at any time her children were able to figure out which lands she should have inherited, then they should inherit them as well.

Don Francisco seems to have forgotten about the help that his Teotihuacana cousin and her husband had pledged to him. When he eventually did win control of the Tetzcoca cacicazgo, his Teotihuacan relatives seem not to have benefited. Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's family did not forget this slight. His mother, doña Ana Cortés Ixtlilxochitl, reminded everyone in her will that "I am a legitimate descendent of the old kings of Tetzcoco . . . I declare this so that my heirs might benefit from the right that I have to the [Tetzcoca] señorío and patrimonio, in accordance with the agreement made between my mother and don Francisco Pimentel, her cousin."[46] His grandmother's and mother's preoccupation with Tetzcoco foreshadowed don Fernando's own attempts to insert himself into the politics of that city. In addition to writing extensively around the turn of the seventeenth century about Tetzcoco and its illustrious

prehispanic past, don Fernando also managed, in 1612, to secure a position in Tetzcoco's local government.

In that year, the viceroy recommended that don Fernando take over the position of *juez gobernador* of Tetzcoco.[47] The juez gobernador was the successor position to the prehispanic office of tlatoani, which was not held in Tetzcoco after 1564. Even though the juez gobernador was the highest-ranking local indigenous official, we should not assume that don Fernando secured the position because of his connections in Tetzcoco. In fact, the position of juez gobernador had become, by the late sixteenth century, almost entirely divorced from the traditional ruling family of Tetzcoco and dependent, instead, on the favor of the viceroy.[48] Don Fernando's ability to secure the juez gobernador position, then, says more about his relationship with the colonial bureaucracy in Mexico City than it does about his ties to Tetzcoco's native aristocracy.

In fact, local leaders in Tetzcoco were furious about don Fernando's appointment. In a letter to the viceroy on January 8, 1613, a mere thirty-two days after the viceroy appointed don Fernando, the *alcalde mayor*, or resident Spanish official, in Tetzcoco confessed that don Fernando was having great difficulty. "Each day," he wrote, "I find things closer to the boiling point. . . . The Indians do not esteem him [don Fernando], nor do they help him organize the labor rotation or the collection of tribute."[49] Attached to the alcalde mayor's letter was a letter signed by the members of the indigenous cabildo of Tetzcoco, who expressed, in no uncertain terms, their displeasure with the choice of governor. "He who is now [gobernador]," they complain, "is young and has not worked in any kind of government." They also quite pointedly alleged that don Fernando had not properly attended to the collection of tribute and would soon lead the city and the cabildo members themselves into financial ruin.[50] The Spanish official,

understandably nervous about such widespread hostility, asked the viceroy to replace don Fernando as soon as possible.

Thus while don Fernando is often described as having been governor of Tetzcoco, his brief, one-month tenure in office was a failure in almost every way. It must have been his dream job: the highest-ranking indigenous official in the land of his illustrious ancestors. And yet he was hated, inept, and replaced almost before he had begun. Fortunately for don Fernando, the viceroy cared little about his job performance in Tetzcoco. Indeed, viceregal policies regarding the government of indigenous polities required men like don Fernando. The viceroys had long been working to establish more direct, centralized control over local indigenous governments. They did this by replacing the traditional ruling lineages of indigenous communities in New Spain with viceroy-appointed governors. These new governors—without personal, emotional, and economic ties to the local community—would, they believed, more efficiently exact tribute and compliance from local native peoples. Men like don Fernando were just the sort of people the viceroys needed to help them accomplish it. Don Fernando was of mixed race, spoke both Spanish and Nahuatl, and had few ways of supporting himself other than employment in the colonial bureaucracy.

In the early sixteenth century, the viceroys were limited in their ability to implement this plan for centralized control. There simply had not been enough individuals capable of holding these positions, and the viceroys were forced to rely on traditional local indigenous rulers—men with strong loyalties to the local populations and little to gain from service to the crown—to deliver tribute to the royal treasury. As the century progressed, however, more and more towns found their governorships occupied not by local men who represented local interests, but by representatives of central authority.

We have evidence that don Fernando's position within the gubernatorial corps was secure, despite his poor performance in Tetzcoco. In 1616, don Fernando received an appointment in the town of Tlalmanalco, in Chalco province, where the then gobernador was having trouble paying its tribute. The viceroy removed that gobernador and replaced him with don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl.[51] In Tlalmanalco, unlike in Tetzcoco, don Fernando seems to have done well. At the end of the year, the viceroy extended his assignment in Tlalmanalco for another twelve months.[52]

Don Fernando continued to work in the colonial bureaucracy. But not content with a mere governorship, don Fernando appealed to King Philip III in Madrid for a recommendation for a more important and lucrative post. In his request, don Fernando was careful to emphasize all the help his Tetzcoca ancestors gave to Hernando Cortés during the conquest. The king responded favorably to this request, and, in 1620, recommended don Fernando for a job in service to the crown.[53] The recommendation seems to have worked; near the end of his life in 1643, don Fernando held a position in the Juzgado General de los Indios, or General Indian Court, in Mexico City.[54]

Conclusions

These two men, Juan Bautista Pomar and don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, are fascinating examples of the kind of changes afoot in Tetzcoco in the late-sixteenth century, as mestizos became more and more prevalent and prominent. In many ways, these mestizo cousins were better able to navigate the early colonial socio-economic system than their indigenous relatives. Pomar, by all accounts, died a very rich man with significant influence in local politics and society. And don Fernando, too, with his post in the viceroy's General Indian Court, was far

from destitute at the time of his death. Many of their indigenous relatives in Tetzcoco, on the other hand, had few resources available to them. Only the most important of Nezahualpilli's heirs were able to maintain their economically privileged positions.

These two mestizos also demonstrate the variety of different strategies available to individuals of mixed race in the early colonial period. Pomar remained closely connected to his indigenous relatives. He worked within the native governing and social frameworks. He was skilled at navigating this indigenous socio-political environment, and his success was a direct result of this skill. Don Fernando, however, was an outsider in the world of Tetzcoco's native rulers. He grew up in Mexico City and was tied to Teotihuacan, not Tetzcoco, by his mother's cacicazgo there. He did not understand Tetzcoco's native government or its native participants. And when he attempted to govern Tetzcoco, he failed miserably. Don Fernando nonetheless succeeded in indigenous government in other polities by appealing to and relying on the growing Spanish colonial bureaucracy. His ability to navigate the viceroy's administration and fill the needs of colonial government allowed don Fernando, too, to prosper.

Mestizos, the product of the unions of Tetzcoca noble women and Spanish men that were consummated immediately after conquest, came, then, to be powerful forces in indigenous politics and society in the late-sixteenth century. At times, they benefited the native aristocrats. Pomar, for instance, greatly enhanced the wealth of his cousin don Francisco as his partner in a legal battle. And Pomar's innovative farming methods protected, in at least one case, the Tetzcoca cacicazgo from Spaniards who wanted the land for themselves. Moreover, nobles and commoners alike in Tetzcoco demonstrated their gratitude for Pomar and his wife by giving them property.

The mestizo presence was also unwelcome, though. Don Fernando, especially, was quickly removed from local government when the Tetzcoca native nobles expressed their great dislike. And Pomar, too, effected dramatic negative change for native aristocrats in Tetzcoco. His partnership with don Francisco Pimentel had devastating consequences for the fortunes of all but a select few native nobles. The rise of the mestizo was a mixed blessing for Tetzcoca indigenous aristocrats.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1] Carrasco 1984, 47.

[2] AGI-M, 203:11, f. 40-41.

[3] AGI-M, 203:11, f. 6-7.

[4] Chipman 2005, 143-144.

[5] AGI-M, 203:11, f. 1.

[6] Pomar 1975, xviii.

[7] *Proceso* 1910, 32-33.

[8] AGI-M, 96:3.

[9] AGI-M, 96:3, f. 15r-16v.

[10] AGN-V, 232:1.

[11] Carrasco 1984, 45.

[12] AGN-V, 232:1, f. 16r-v.

[13] AGN-V, 232:1, f. 16r, 21r.

[14] AGN-T, 3594:2, f. 12v.

[15] AGN-V, 232:1, f. 22r-v.

[16] Lockhart 1992, 59 and 72.

[17] AGI-M 121:2 (no. 37), f. 7r-8v, 10v-12v.

[18] AGN-T, 2726:8, f. 136v. The will is translated into Spanish for the colonial court: "me a tenido mucho amor y lo mismo haze al pres/te . . . y me provee y da lo que e menester."

[19] This dispute is described at length in Chapter 5.

[20] AGN-T, 1740:1.

[21] Pomar 1975, xvii.

[22] Pomar 1975, 1.

[23] Mundy 1996, 29.

[24] Pomar's role is very similar to that of a mestizo from Tlaxcala, Diego Muñoz Camargo. See Muñoz Camargo (1892).

[25] López y Magaña 1980, 79.

[26] López y Magaña 1980, 81.

[27] López y Magaña 1980, 84.

[28] López y Magaña 1980, 89.

[29] See especially Chapter 5 below.

[30] BN INAH, 3ª Serie, Caja 9, Legajo 30, Doc. 3, f. 23. Transcribed and translated by the author with assistance from Kevin Terraciano and James Lockhart.

[31] AGN-T, 2726:8, f. 132r.

[32] AGN-T, 2726:8, f. 118r.

[33] AGN-T, 2726:8, f. 132r. "Con la mayor parte de rastrojo y trigo que estavan segando yndios y criados mios."

[34] AGN, Mapa 1890. "Tierras de Juan de Pomar /de Rastrojo /que pide Pedro Mexia /las qualles son juramente del pa /trimonio de los principa /les de Neçagualpilcintli"

[35] See especially the discussion of Pomar's ability to pay Tetzcoco's tribute obligations in the next chapter.

[36] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1975-1977.

[37] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 281-286.

[38] AGN-V 232:1, f. 21r.

[39] AGN-V 232:1, f. 370v.

[40] See Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1977), 354-369.

[41] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 338-342.

[42] See Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1977), 354-369.

[43] Lockhart 1992, 125-126.

[44] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 347.

[45] AGN-T 3594:2, f. 11r.13r.

[46] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 348.

[47] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 334-335.

[48] See Chapter 5.

[49] AGN-IV 3066:8, f. 1r-1v.

[50] AGN-IV 3066:8, f. 2r-2v.

[51] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 336.

[52] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 337.

[53] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 343.

[54] Alva Ixtlilxochitl 1977, 359.

CHAPTER FIVE
Family Conflict and Local Power

While the previous two chapters have examined the forces external to Tetzcoco's group of hereditary nobles that shaped and reshaped their fortunes in the late sixteenth century, this chapter seeks to focus attention on the agents of change within the nobility itself. Far from being passive onlookers on whom the transformative processes of late-sixteenth-century colonialism impinged, the Tetzcoca nobles actively participated in the give-and-take process of negotiating their place in the colonial world. There were certainly circumstances over which they had little control, and yet the political machinations and aspirations within the royal house itself had profound effects on local government and the family's continued success and prosperity. Change in Tetzcoco came from within as well as from without.

The period of time following don Hernando Pimentel's death in 1564 is particularly difficult for those who would attempt to understand local politics. Indeed, local government after 1564 has been something of a mystery for modern scholars. The typical published sources for the history of the altepetl give little information for this era. The Florentine Codex, for example, one of the most important sources of Nahua history, was written during the rule of don Hernando, so the ruler list for Tetzcoco ends with him. And Juan Bautista Pomar is curiously silent about the state of local government in Tetzcoco at the time he wrote his 1582 *Relación de Tezcuco* to King Philip II. Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, too, ignores the late-sixteenth century in his copious writings on Tetzcoca history from the turn of the seventeenth century. Even Charles Gibson's seminal work, based on a thorough search of Mexican and Spanish archives, fails to answer the question of who was in charge after 1564.[1]

Post-1564 Tetzcoco has been enigmatic for modern scholars partly because it was a problematic period for those who lived through it. Don Hernando's death set off a succession

crisis that lasted nearly thirty years, involved the Spanish authorities in Mexico City, and seriously compromised the hereditary nobility's control of local government. It is small wonder that Pomar and Alva Ixtlilxochitl, writing during or just after this period of conflict, failed to give a clear picture of the political situation. Major changes in Tetzcoca government were underway that defied traditional forms of categorization and description. The situation was simply not that tidy and easy to explain, even for these contemporaries. Archival documentation from this period, however—rich in detail and yet heretofore little studied—allows us to reconstruct much of the turmoil in post-1564 local government.[2]

As has been shown in previous chapters, succession in Tetzcoco was marked by potential crisis and conflict. Nezahualpilli's death in 1515, for instance, prompted intense factional fighting that continued until Cortés's arrival and conquest. Don Antonio Pimentel Tlahuitoltzin in 1545 was also concerned about the potential instability following his death. Likewise, don Hernando Pimentel's death began a new period of political instability for the altepetl. The succession crisis and attendant intra-familial conflict led to substantive changes in local government: the post of tlatoani disappeared, outsiders and commoners held the governorship, the tlatoani's entail was broken and the vast estate divided among a few select members of the royal family, and the new position of *cacique*—a Taino term brought from the Caribbean by the Spaniards—emerged as the most influential hereditary noble in Tetzcoco.

Succession Crisis of 1564 and the Audiencia Court

Don Hernando Pimentel (r. 1545-1564) was the first of Nezahualpilli's grandchildren to hold the tlatoani position. Prior to his accession, the office had passed laterally among members of his father's generation for thirty years. At least six members of that generation had been

named tlatoani. It is not surprising, therefore, that don Hernando's brother, don Pedro de Alvarado, expected to be tlatoani after don Hernando died (see Figure 5.1). In fact, at the time of the previous tlatoani's death in 1545, don Pedro was the alternate choice for tlatoani if don Hernando had been unable to hold the office.[3] Don Pedro's hopes were complicated by don Hernando's long reign, however. After nineteen years in office, don Hernando had children who were old enough to assert competing claims to the *tlatocayotl*, or rulership, themselves by 1564. Don Hernando's son, don Francisco Pimentel, was indeed interested in securing the tlatoani title for himself.

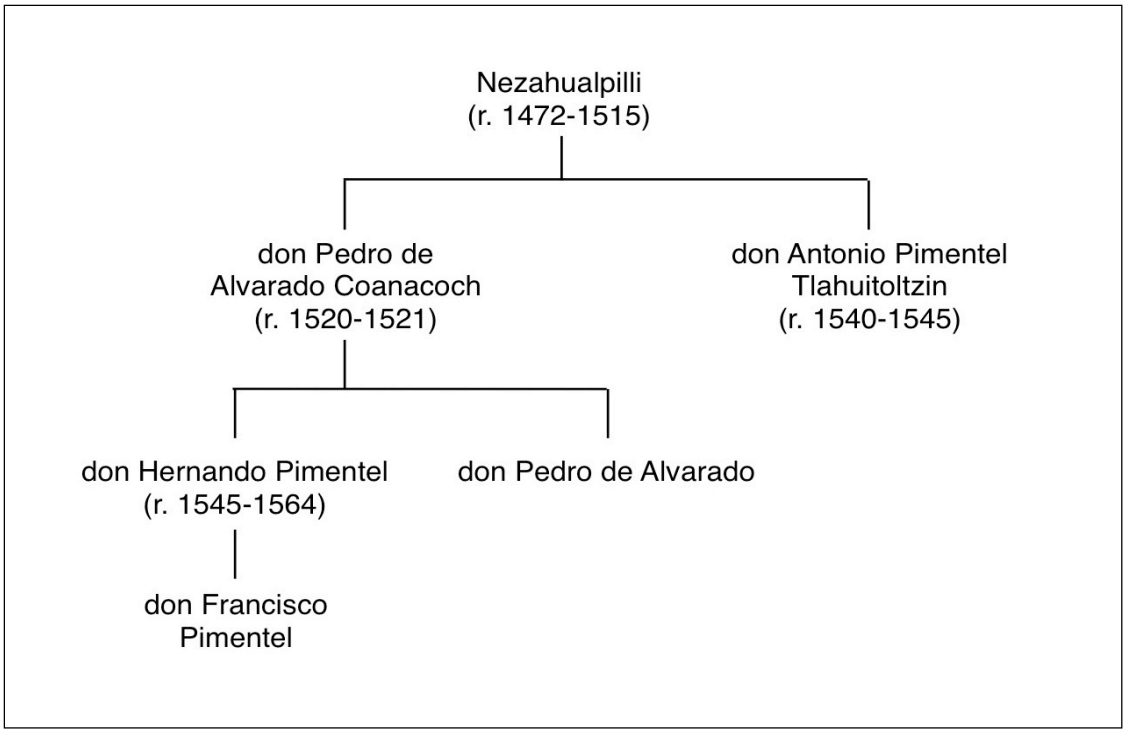


Figure 5.1. Selected Tetzcoca Noble Genealogy.

When an elite group of Nezahualpilli's descendents attempted, upon don Hernando's death, to meet to elect a new ruler, don Francisco came out in opposition to the election itself. Taking his case to the *Audiencia*, or high court, of Mexico, don Francisco argued that there was

no need for an election because, as don Hernando's legitimate son, he was heir to both the Spaniard-recognized ruler position of *gobernador*, or governor, as well as the indigenous lordly estate, called the *cacicazgo* in the Spanish-language court records.[4]

Among the Nahuas, don Francisco's claim would certainly have been a novel idea. Nahua leaders were chosen based on many different qualities, not simply on the basis of birth order, as don Francisco attempted to assert. Don Francisco's prehispanic forebears had been selected because they were the most qualified candidates for the tlatoani position. This typically meant that they were descended from a tlatoani (though not necessarily the immediate past tlatoani; they could have also been the brother or nephew of the most recent ruler), that they had appropriate family connections and support from other regional powers in central Mexico, that they had demonstrated bravery as a warrior, and that they enjoyed enough support among the rest of the Tetzcoca nobles to be confirmed by them.[5] By claiming rights to the tlatocayotl simply because he was the late tlatoani's eldest son, don Francisco blatantly disregarded the more complex succession practices of the Tetzcoca royal family.

It is highly unlikely that don Francisco would have been ignorant of the prehispanic practices surrounding succession. Indeed, by bringing his case to the audiencia, he seems to have sought deliberately to bypass the old means of selecting a tlatoani, means which might have denied him the office. His actions also speak to his ability to manipulate the colonial system to his advantage. Recognizing the Spaniards as the new final arbiters in all political matters in New Spain, don Francisco endeavored to circumvent any potential local opposition to his political aspirations by appealing directly to them. The Spanish judges in the audiencia would certainly have understood and viewed as logical the premise of passing a ruler's title to his eldest son, which was the basis of don Francisco's claim. The Spanish monarch, for example, was chosen in

just such a fashion. The subtleties of Nahua succession practices, on the other hand, were likely not as well understood by the court. By involving Spanish officials in this matter of mostly local concern, don Francisco furthered his own interests, regardless of the legitimacy of his claim by Nahua standards.

Based on the level of opposition to don Francisco's claim, it seems that his chances of securing the tlatoani office on his own—without the aid of the Spanish court—were not good. In addition to his above-mentioned uncle don Pedro de Alvarado, archival documents show that don Francisco was also opposed by a host of other Tetzcoca nobles. The group naturally included don Pedro's wife, doña Antonia Pimentel, and their children: don Juan de Alvarado, don Gabriel de Alvarado, doña Margarita de Alvarado, and doña Francisca de Alvarado. But several other members of the nobility—doña Ysabel Pimentel, doña Juana Pimentel, don Gabriel de Ayala, doña Francisca Cortés, and doña Magdalena Cortés—opposed don Francisco, as well.[6]

The nobles of Tetzcoco were threatened by don Francisco's claims to the rulership. The court record suggests that they would be dispossessed of the properties of the Tetzcoca cacicazgo on which they depended if don Francisco were to be made ruler. These properties had been used in precontact times to support the altepetl's hereditary nobility. As a group of nobles in the late-sixteenth century pointed out, "Does [not] the ruler act as our mother and our father? We know that Neçahualpiltzintli loved his elder brothers and sisters, because he guarded their property for them; he was the representative of their father."[7] Under Spanish rule, the tlatoani's patrimonial holdings were recognized as private property that could be used according to his personal preferences. While earlier Tetzcoca tlatoque—including don Francisco's father, don Hernando Pimentel—had generally chosen to use their estate to support their relatives in the traditional

way, don Francisco seems to have been unwilling to use these properties for anyone's support but his own.

Despite the fears that don Francisco's political pretensions caused among many of his relatives, don Francisco did enjoy some support among his family. As noted in the previous chapter, his most important ally was one of his father's mestizo cousins, Juan Bautista Pomar. Pomar was the grandson of Nezahualpilli through his mother, doña Maria Ixtlilxochitl. His father was Antonio de Pomar, a Spaniard. As discussed in the preceding chapter, Juan Bautista Pomar was a rather influential figure in sixteenth-century Tetzcoco; he authored Tetzcoco's *Relación* in 1582, the city's official response to King Philip II's famous questionnaire.[8] Pomar moved with ease in the highest political and social circles—both Spanish and Nahua. Together, Pomar and don Francisco were a formidable force.

With Tetzcoco's hereditary nobles pitted against each other in the Audiencia court—don Francisco Pimentel and Juan Pomar on one side and don Pedro de Alvarado, doña Antonia Pimentel, and their allies on the other—the stage was set for marked changes in Tetzcoco's local governmental structure. Involving the Spaniards in this familial squabble gave the colonial administration the opportunity to reshape indigenous government in Tetzcoco according to Spanish ideas of municipal management.

The Tlatocayotl's Demise and Viceregal Intervention

While the Audiencia might have been a strategically clever place for don Francisco Pimentel to take his case, it did not result in the outcome for which he had hoped. In fact, it did not result in an outcome at all, at least in the matter of the tlatoani post. The case between don Francisco and his uncle dragged on for nearly three decades, and throughout this extended

period, no one held the tlatoani position. Even after a settlement was reached in 1593, the office of tlatoani never recovered; the decision to take the dispute over local succession to the Audiencia effectively put an end to this ancient office. Decisions regarding local government devolved to the Spanish-style office of *gobernador*, or governor, which continued in the tlatoani's absence.

The office of governor—along with the *cabildo*, or municipal council—was introduced in central Mexico in the first decade after conquest (see Figure 5.2). Spanish authorities were faced with the task of consolidating control over a large indigenous population, in which the subtleties of native local government were not immediately grasped by the new colonial officials. To overcome this challenge, Spaniards endeavored to shape local systems to better resemble Spanish institutions. The first viceroy, don Antonio de Mendoza, began systematically appointing governors in native polities after he took office in 1535. And by the 1550s, most important altepetl had aquired a full cabildo under the governor composed of *alcaldes*, or judges, and *regidores*, or council members.[9]

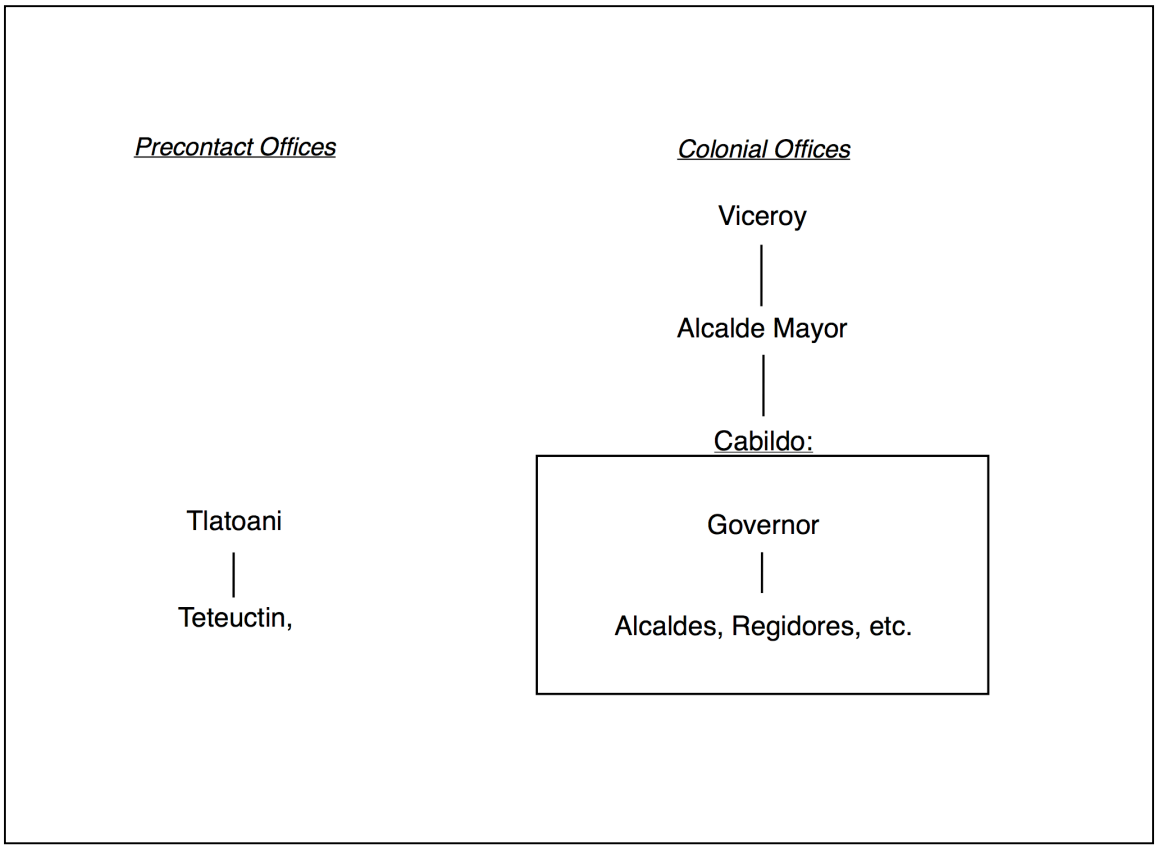


Figure 5.2. Local Government Organization in the Colonial Period.

Though the governor-cabildo system was meant to mirror the institutions in Spain, local central Mexican colonial governments were not, in fact, identical to those in Spain. In Spain, a municipality did not have a governor, but a *corregidor*, who headed the local cabildo. These corregidores were generally outsiders to the municipalities they led, appointed by the crown to serve crown interests. Their terms were limited, so that they might not become too personally involved in local affairs and would remain faithful executors of royal policy and central authority. The corregidor in Spain was intended to balance the concerns of the rest of the cabildo members, the regidores, who represented established, local interests.[10]

While central Mexican gobernadores might have been designed to serve a similar function in local government in New Spain—i.e., to represent the interests of the crown—they

did not conform to this ideal, at least not in the first few decades of colonial rule. The viceregal government may have liked to have had outsider, disinterested bureaucrats to administer the indigenous communities for fixed terms of one to two years, but they did not. Instead, in many communities, the tlatoani moved quickly to secure the title for himself, and he held it for life. In other communities, the title rotated among a group of high-ranking nobles.[11]

Given the newness of the office and its foreign origin, it is not surprising that the local practice of selecting governors was still fluid in the sixteenth century. In Tetzcoco, in fact, both forms of selection had prevailed in different periods.[12] In general, though—and this is the principal difference between governors in New Spain and corregidores in Europe—governors were selected from among the traditional ruling class and represented the interests of the local establishment, not the colonial authorities, for most of the sixteenth century.

When there was no tlatoani in Tetzcoco after 1564, however, the question of who would serve as the altepetl's governor was also unsettled. Officials in Mexico City, capitalizing on this opportunity to exert a higher level of control in Tetzcoco, stepped in to fill the office of gobernador with individuals of their choosing. Such a move was in keeping with the Spanish tradition of appointing outsiders to head municipal governments in Spain and would have been a step forward in the long process of implementing a more peninsular system of local political organization. Throughout the period of leadership crisis in Tetzcoco after 1564, the viceregal administration consistently intervened in governor selection.

Though the individuals selected by administrators in Mexico City at times continued to come from the old Tetzcoca royal house, the viceroys appear to have felt little need to keep the noble family in power. As a group of nobles complained in 1593, "the government of this city has been left to those persons named by the lords viceroys."[13] Indeed, the viceroys named several

indios forasteros, or non-Tetzcoca "foreign Indians," to the post of gobernador of Tetzcoco in the years after don Hernando Pimentel's death. Between 1588 and 1593, for instance, both locals and outsiders held the governor post. Two governors, don Juan de Alvarado and don Josephe de Molina, were from Tetzcoco, but two others were not. One, named don Andrés de Arellano, was a member of the nobility of the town of Paguatlan, in the present-day state of Puebla, some ninety miles away.[14] The second, Gerónimo López—who lacked the honorific title "don" and was, therefore, probably not even a member of the native nobility—is also described as a "forastero."[15]

Outsiders like Arellano and López angered members of the royal family, who claimed that the indios forasteros acted "only with the aim of profiting [from the office of gobernador] and without thought to public well-being. They greatly aggrieved the local Indians and left the republic and its business untended."[16] Specifically, they complained, "they have kept the rents and royal tributes that they collected . . . and have left without giving account of them . . . all to the great detriment of the royal rents and of the Indians of this province."[17] As late as 1613, both the nobles of Tetzcoco and the *alcalde mayor* of Tetzcoco—a Spaniard serving as the viceroy's representative in the Tetzcoco area—petitioned the viceroy to remove the current governor of Tetzcoco and appoint a locally born one. Both the indigenous leaders of the town and the local Spanish bureaucrat called for his removal. The nobles were quite concerned that he had misused the money they had collected to pay tribute to the crown.[18]

Archival evidence confirms that their fears of fiscal mismanagement were well founded. At least twice in the late-sixteenth century, in fact, the city of Tetzcoco fell behind in its tribute obligations to the crown. An unintended consequence of viceregal interference in local affairs, then, was a reduced efficacy in tribute collection. Outsiders were perhaps unable to collect

tribute because of their lack of ties to the tribute-paying population or their lack of legitimacy in the eyes of tributaries. Whatever the case, the outsiders, who colonial officials assumed would better represent the interests of the central government, had, ironically, many more problems delivering tribute to the royal treasury than did the locally born leaders whom they were meant to replace.

The first time that municipal leaders ran into trouble, officials of the *real hacienda*, or royal treasury, found that the city of Tetzcoco owed the Spanish crown 10,734 pesos and 4 tomines in back tribute payments. This amount is roughly equivalent to about three years of the total tribute given by Tetzcoco. Just a few years later, the city was in debt again in the amount of 5,406 pesos in back tribute.[19] Such debts posed serious problems for local leaders. The real hacienda held members of the indigenous government personally responsible for the collection of tribute from their subject indigenous populations.[20] Thus, even if the transitory, temporary governors inappropriately managed tribute monies, the cabildo members—who were still largely members of the locally born hereditary nobility and, therefore, easier to track down—were held accountable for any missing quantities.

The old royal family, then, were held responsible for municipal finances over which they had little control. Such an arrangement understandably led to bitter complaints from the indigenous nobles, who protested that municipal leaders spent the tribute they collected on their own salaries instead of paying this money to the crown as they should have. Such a claim is not unreasonable, especially if foreign Indians had intermittent control of local finances and had no reason to fear collection at a later date. Indeed, the treasury did not hold the indios forasteros accountable and, instead, moved to collect the delinquent payments from the cabildo, which comprised members of the old ruling family, and from their *cacicazgo*, or lordly estate.[21]

After the conquest, the estates of precontact tlatoque were recognized as private property. This wealth—at times called *patrimonio*, or patrimony, in Spanish-language documents—was often entailed into a cacicazgo.[22] The Tetzcoca cacicazgo—the estate of the precontact tlatoani Nezahualpilli as it had been passed to his children and grandchildren—was an important source of income for the city's hereditary nobles.

Indeed, the sale of cacicazgo properties to raise the money owed would have devastated the fortunes of the most powerful members of the hereditary noble class in Tetzcoco and effectively destroyed them. The sale of those properties, therefore, was out of the question. Unfortunately, they had few other means of paying the crown the money that they owed. They had already collected tribute from the commoner populations within their jurisdiction; trying to collect additional sums from a population that continued to suffer a decline in numbers as a result of epidemic disease would have been nearly impossible. Collecting tribute was the primary traditional method of raising money for the preconquest nobility, however. The cabildo of Tetzcoco was uncertain as to how to collect these additional sums outside of the tributary system. Yet their mestizo cousin Juan Bautista Pomar had some ideas, and he asked the royal treasury to give him control of the cacicazgo so that he could raise the amount owed.

The indigenous nobles were wary of Pomar's involvement. Pomar had never held municipal office within the city's indigenous republic and had never been given control of any of the cacicazgo properties prior to this crisis. Moreover, once Pomar had control of the properties it would be difficult to wrest them from him in the audiencia. Nonetheless, officials of the real hacienda granted Pomar exclusive use of all properties in order to raise the debt money. For six years, Pomar managed these properties without input from the hereditary nobles with whom he was in active dispute, and who were angered by the loss of the cacicazgo. But the judgment of

the treasury officials proved sound; Pomar repaid the back tribute with rent monies from these properties and with money from the sale of produce from these lands. He cleared the city's debts and ceased his tribute-collecting activities on behalf of the city.[23]

With Pomar out of city government, however, Tetzcoco's nobles were soon in financial trouble again. When debts to the treasury began to mount for the second time, Pomar was again put in charge of raising the money, this time by direct order of Viceroy don Lorenzo Suárez de Mendoza (r. 1580-1583). As before, Pomar paid the debt, and, in 1588, he even gave the crown one thousand additional pesos to be applied towards the city's future tribute obligations.[24]

The reasons behind Pomar's success in collecting tribute remain unclear. I suspect that, as a mestizo with close ties to both indigenous and Spanish circles within Tetzcoco, Pomar moved beyond the traditional tribute-collection system—one that relied on the labor of an increasingly small indigenous population—and adopted Spanish forms of land exploitation in the region, forms that might have included the increasingly popular practice of raising livestock.[25] By the early seventeenth century, in fact, many indigenous nobles had adopted the practice.[26] Pomar, with his dual Spanish and indigenous sensibilities, may have bridged the gap between the heavily pastoral culture of Iberia and that of central Mexico, where domesticated sheep, cattle, and goats were unknown until the Spanish arrival in 1519. Indeed, it was likely Pomar's ideas concerning the exploitation of land that convinced the viceroy to hand over control of the cacicazgo to him in the first place. Whatever the methods or the reasons, Pomar was very successful in his efforts to raise a large amount of cash from the old royal estate.

Pomar's success had serious implications for the hereditary nobility. His ongoing feud with don Pedro de Alvarado, doña Antonia Pimentel, and the other native nobles kept him from sharing his fortune with the very people who would have customarily benefited from the

cacicazgo properties. Evidence from Tetzcoco suggests that the Tetzcoca nobles expected the indigenous leader to support not just himself, but his extended family as well.[27] Stephen Perkins has shown that in the Valley of Puebla, too, Nahua lords usually offered pieces of the cacicazgo to support consanguineal and affinal kin in the sixteenth century.[28] During this period of legal conflict between Pomar and his relatives in the late sixteenth century, then, the highest levels of Tetzcoca native society were suddenly cut off from their traditional means of economic support.

The death of don Hernando Pimentel in 1564 had profound consequences for local government. The tlatocayotl died along with don Hernando when his son, don Francisco Pimentel, and his son's ally, Juan Pomar, decided to take their battle to the Audiencia of Mexico. By preventing the election of a new tlatoani through conventional means, Pimentel and Pomar inadvertently opened the way for the viceroys to interfere in Tetzcoco's local government and continue the viceregal campaign to install rulers in central Mexican municipalities—rulers who would be more beholden to crown authority. Viceregal interference was disastrous for tribute collection and town finances, however, and—in an effort to raise back tribute owed to the treasury—Tetzcoco's cacicazgo was taken from the ruling family and awarded to their mestizo cousin, Pomar. Pomar's adversaries refused to accept their new poverty passively, however. Just as Pomar acquired the fortune with the help of Spanish authorities, his opponents engaged the Spanish legal system in their efforts to get it back.

The Dispossessed Fight Back

Though Pomar and don Francisco had successfully involved the Spanish colonial government in their efforts to secure the cacicazgo for themselves, they were not the only ones who understood how to manipulate Spanish institutions to serve their interests. Don Pedro de

Alvarado and his allies, in fact, were as capable in their dealings with the Spanish colonial government as their mestizo cousin, Juan Pomar. Though they were unable, in the end, to recapture the cacicazgo from Pomar, their campaign to get the property back did achieve a partial success.

When don Francisco Pimentel challenged the right of his relatives to elect his father's successor, he argued that he was the heir to both the governorship and the cacicazgo. As has been demonstrated, the conflict over the governorship opened the way for Spanish authorities to interfere in local politics and place government in the hands of outsiders, who failed to manage the affairs of the city—especially its financial affairs—properly. Conflict over the cacicazgo had equally disruptive effects for the hereditary nobles. While the cacicazgo did not disappear like the tlatocayotl, it was separated from the royal family for a number of years.

In the audiencia—as was typical in cases in which property ownership was in question—the *oidores*, or judges, forbade the litigants on either side to use any of the properties or resources of the cacicazgo until the case came to a close and a legal decision was made. According to the court record, "none of the said heirs has possessed or administered the possessions of the said patrimonial estate."[29] Being cut off from the lordly estate of the rulers of Tetzcoco put the hereditary nobles in a precarious position. Without revenue from these properties, the family lost a substantial portion of its usual income. The court record indicates that the family had little choice but to attempt to profit from the properties, anyway, despite the official ban. Family representatives, for instance, reported that some members of the family had taken possession of some of the family properties by force and in defiance of the audiencia's orders.

When the city fell behind on its tribute payments and Juan Pomar was given control of the cacicazgo properties in order to raise the money, the rest of the family continued to attempt to profit from the cacicazgo. In the years after 1588, these family members, in their roles as city leaders and cabildo members, attempted to collect the rents from select cacicazgo properties—likely their only source of income—without regard for the viceregal arrangement with Pomar. Angered by his relatives' disregard for his arrangement with the treasury, Pomar sought the assistance of his ally, don Francisco Pimentel—who by this time had been named tlatoani in Tlaxcala and lived there.[30] Together they sued the city of Tetzcoco for more formal legal control of the disputed property. The courts sided with Pomar and don Francisco, and these properties, along with the rights to any rent or produce from them, were given over to the two as their personal property.[31]

In the documents, Pomar is never called by any of the titles one would expect of a person of such power and wealth. He is never called—and he never claims to be—for instance, tlatoani, governor, or cacique. He also does not use the title of don, which would have associated him with his indigenous relatives. Legally speaking, Pomar identifies with Spaniards, not with Indians. Nonetheless, with don Francisco living in Tlaxcala, Pomar possessed the entirety of the cacique estate as his own personal property. In practice, therefore, if not in name, Pomar became the most influential and wealthy resident of Tetzcoco in the 1580s. This situation is ironic because, while Pomar was—as a native Nahuatl-speaker and a grandson of Nezahualpilli—a local political insider, he was also an outsider in many ways. His father was a Spaniard, after all, making Pomar a mestizo. More importantly, however, Pomar had never held municipal office in Tetzcoco. Unlike the tlatoque of previous generations, Pomar was completely outside of the

official decision-making circles in Tetzcoco. His primary interests lay in real estate wealth, not high political office.

The legal victory for Pomar and don Francisco hardly ended the dispute among the nobles. On the contrary, don Francisco's uncle, don Pedro de Alvarado, and his sympathizers were enraged by the ruling. Together with his wife, doña Antonia Pimentel, his children and several others of his extended family, don Pedro sued Pomar for the return of the patrimonial properties. Their actions demonstrate that this group of indigenous nobles was just as at ease in the Spanish courts as their relatives. In fact, don Pedro and his allies claimed the right to possess a certain portion of the cacicazgo based on the fact that they held a document—a royal provision—that they claimed came from the audiencia itself.[32] They therefore based their case not simply on their pedigree as direct descendants of Nezahualpilli, or on their elevated social status as members of the hereditary nobility, but on things that mattered to Spanish officials: documentary evidence. If Pomar and don Francisco could gain the cacicazgo by involving the Spaniards, so then could don Pedro take it back by appealing to Spanish notions of what constituted proper proof of ownership. The suit dragged on, however, despite don Pedro's audiencia document. Pomar, ever the astute litigant, countersued, and for many years don Pedro and his allies kept Pomar tied up with court proceedings aimed at stripping him of the cacicazgo property. Attorneys for the two sides were ever present in the audiencia, filing legal motion after legal motion on behalf of their clients. After years of these maneuverings, Pomar was finally ready to compromise in 1593.[33]

By 1593, Pomar's rivals were also ready to cede a portion of what they had originally demanded. Don Pedro de Alvarado was dead, and his widow and children reached out to Pomar and don Francisco to settle their disputes. Looking realistically at their financial situation, don

Pedro's family likely saw that they had few alternatives. Pomar and don Francisco held most, if not all, of the cacicazgo, and the rest of the family was denied access to the wealth of the patrimonial possessions. With don Pedro dead and no longer able to object, they moved forward with reconciliation in hopes of getting at least some source of income from which to live. Pomar, for his part, was ready to bring his legal troubles to a conclusion. Though he possessed the upper hand in the dispute over the cacicazgo—and continued to call the suit against him "unjust"—the litigation had nonetheless cost Pomar a great deal of money and time. By 1593, he was ready to relinquish control of a number of cacicazgo properties requested by his cousins.[34] Importantly, both sides received assurances from the other that their legal suits would end immediately, thereby freeing the resources that had been consumed in the legal dispute.

The list of properties given over to doña Antonia and her supporters in 1593 sheds some light on the extent and composition of the Tetzcoca cacicazgo and the nature of their victory (see Table 5.1). While some of these properties were rural holdings with indigenous renters, many were located in the center of the city of Tetzcoco, and some even had Spanish tenants. The centrality of these properties demonstrates that Pomar's rivals were able to acquire relatively important pieces of the cacicazgo that would provide financial support for them and their dependents and enable them to live in a manner suitable to what they continued to view as their exalted social position.

Cacicazgo Possessions Ceded to doña Antonia Pimentel and Her Allies
• House and workshop in which Francisco Ortiz de la Puente presently lives, which are in the middle of the houses known as the hospital, with the corrals that lie to the east
• House and shop in which Marcos de la Puente presently lives, which are above the houses of Nezahualcoyotl
• Houses in which Juan Martínez del Campo presently lives
• Houses on the city plaza next to the jail and court
• Houses and garden of Macuiltochco on the royal street, next to the houses of Luis Camacho
• Houses and lot next to those of don Gabriel de Ayala
• Houses presently occupied by doña Marta de Guzmán, which are in back of the monestary
• Cuezcomacali garden in front of the Tecpan shop, which is presently held by Pedro de Dueñas
• Houses and garden called Tecpilpan in the barrio of San Pablo, and those of Capoltitlan and Contlan with their gardens, and Macuylhecac next to the royal highway that goes to Mexico
• Houses and garden of Tulpatlactitlan which is held by don Gabriel de Ayala
• Lands of Ocelotepec, Coatepec, Ytztliyhuetzian, Comaltepec, Ytlilapan, Yaxocopan, Ychichimecapan, and Coautla, Xapuchco, Yxipitezco in the district of Calpulalpa, Maçapan, and Ahualica
• Lands of Xaltelulco Tlapatlahuayan
• The Ahuehuenacazco Acoyoco piece of land

Table 5.1. Division of the cacicazgo of Tetzcoco (AGN-T, 1740:1, ff. 151r-153v).[35]

Despite winning what looks to be a large amount of property, doña Antonia and her allies appear not to have received the bulk of the cacicazgo. The exact properties retained by Pomar and don Francisco are not enumerated in the court record, but they are explicitly given ownership of everything that is not specifically given to doña Antonia. Since Pomar already owned the entailed estate and willingly consented to have the entail broken so that his relatives might have a

portion of it, one assumes that Pomar retained the greater part of the cacicazgo after the agreement was made. Why would he consent to such an agreement if he had not managed to hold on to a very large piece of the estate? It stands to reason, then, that Pomar and don Francisco kept the majority of the estate for themselves.

The division of properties through legal agreement in the Audiencia of Mexico represents a rather sharp break with traditional land-use practices within the ruling family of Tetzcoco and with typical practices in early colonial central Mexico. While all cacicazgo properties remained within the hereditary noble family, they were no longer entailed as a lordly estate. Thus, the Tetzcoca case does not conform to the wider regional pattern of increasing entailment of lordly estates into cacicazgos. Instead, the Tetzcoca had their entail broken.

By 1593, then, the tlatocayotl had been abandoned and the tecpan properties had been divided. But the Spanish-style local offices of governor and alcaldes—the successor offices to the tlatocayotl—also experienced marked changes in this period. The last decades of the sixteenth century saw the hereditary nobles take less and less interest in these positions, leaving local government increasingly in the hands of others.

The Waning Allure of Local Government

The waning allure of municipal office can be seen as a consequence of the post-1564 changes in municipal government detailed above. With the tlatoani position gone, the governorship became the highest ranking municipal position. Yet the prestige of the governor position among locals must have been steadily eroding since the viceroy began appointing outsiders in the 1570s and 80s. And with the agreement between Pomar, don Francisco, and doña Antonia in 1593, the audiencia officially recognized the old tecpan possessions of Nezahualpilli

as privately held property divorced from political office. The cacicazgo, as they called it in the case, would never again be tied to any official form of municipal leadership. Thus, the governor position no longer carried with it the real estate wealth of the old tecpan. Without the vast wealth of the prehispanic rulers at stake, participation in local government was decidedly less urgent for the noble family.

Perhaps the most salient concern for the hereditary nobles as they considered whether or not to accept these leadership positions, however, was the increasingly onerous duties associated with them. One of the most important functions of the gobernadors and alcaldes of the municipalities of New Spain was the collection of tribute for the king.[36] Local leaders were important intermediaries in the colonial enterprise. Early in the colonial period, Spanish authorities recognized the ability of the traditional noble class to exact tribute from their commoner populations. As the sixteenth century progressed, however, the indigenous population of central Mexico continued to suffer from waves of epidemic diseases brought from across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The population steadily declined, even as levels of tribute remained constant. Native leaders were understandably hard pressed to collect the tribute demanded by the royal treasury. Rather than continue to be accountable for sums of money that were increasingly difficult to collect, Tetzcoco's nobles simply withdrew from public duty. Without the old, prehispanic prestige and wealth of local leadership and now with the increasingly burdensome demands of the treasury, Tetzcoco's highest ranking nobles were thoroughly disinclined to participate in local government in any meaningful way.

Evidence of municipal government's declining appeal can be found in the 1594 elections to fill the offices of governor and alcaldes in Tetzcoco. As might have been expected, members of the hereditary nobility were elected to serve in these important positions. The election

winners, however, refused to accept the offices that they had won, and the Spanish alcalde mayor was forced to appoint *indios maçeguales*, or commoner Indians, to fill the positions in their places. The matter came to the attention of the viceroy himself, who believed the indios maçehuales to be unqualified for these positions. He wrote to his alcalde mayor, ordering him to force those elected to municipal offices to accept them.[37]

As this incident demonstrates, Tetzcoco's native nobility had become—by the end of the sixteenth century—reluctant to hold municipal office. And by the early seventeenth century, they were thoroughly disenchanted with local leadership positions. In 1635, for instance, there was so little interest among the hereditary nobles to run for governor that a Spaniard was elected to the post instead.[38] This development again worried the viceroy, who felt the need to write to his official in Tetzcoco on the subject. Perplexed by the popularity of the Spaniard among the indigenous electors and wary of the Spaniard's intentions, the viceroy cautioned the new governor not to exploit his position and to act appropriately in office. Despite his reservations, though, the viceroy approved the election. After all, if the Indians of Tetzcoco wanted this man to lead them, he could hardly object. Was it his business if the traditional local leaders were uninterested in the position?

Despite the hereditary nobles' reluctance to hold official government positions, they were not indifferent to the type of "soft" power that came with wealth. Indeed, the most powerful hereditary nobles shifted their attention away from the governorship and toward the real estate fortune of the now-divided cacicazgo. The cacicazgo of Tetzcoco was still very large; its divorce from top political offices and its division in 1594 did not detract from its value. Men and women who claimed descent from the old royal house of Tetzcoco continued to fight over the cacicazgo properties and cacique titles until the 1850s—decades after Mexico achieved independence from

Spain.[39] Thus, while the era of the gubernatorial nobles was drawing to a close in Tetzcoco at the turn of the seventeenth century, the cacique—the privately wealthy noble without formal ties to government—was ascendant.

While the landed few negotiated changes of the late sixteenth century with skill, not all of Tetzcoco's nobles fared well. As David Brading has suggested, there was a group within the hereditary nobility who did not enjoy the same carefree lifestyle as don Francsico and doña Antonia:

> By the close of the sixteenth century, descendants of Nezahualcoyotl could be observed ploughing the fields, obliged to gather a meager subsistence by the sweat of their brow, their sparse earnings reduced by demands for tribute from royal officials who refused to recognize their noble status.[40]

Life was much more difficult for the less important branches of the old ruling family. Only a relatively few nobles—mostly those descended from the Mexica's conquest-era ally, Coanacoch—had managed to negotiate comfortable positions for themselves.

For those left behind—those who did not possess great real estate wealth—the situation was far from hopeless, however. The changes of the late sixteenth century presented opportunities for advancement within local government for this less wealthy group. As their more affluent relatives tired of local political life, the less prosperous branches of the family were afforded greater opportunities to participate. And with political office came a salary. When these local, less-successful nobles were able to win election to the post of governor or alcalde—which was by no means guaranteed given the competition from commoner Indians and Spaniards—they supplemented their income with wages from the royal treasury. While this sum was insufficient to raise them to the level of economic prosperity reached by Pomar and don Francisco, it nonetheless contributed to their otherwise modest incomes.

The intra-familial conflict set in motion by the succession crisis of 1564, then, led to substantive changes in local government. The tlatoani position was left vacant and ceased to be important in local affairs from that time forward. The governorship, which until that time had represented local interests and the interests of the old hereditary nobles, was afterwards held, as a result of the viceroy's ability to intervene, by outsiders and commoners. And the old tecpan wealth of the Tetzcoco tlatoani—entailed into an estate called a cacicazgo by the Spanish—was ultimately divided, its entail broken, and henceforth alienated from the local political offices of Tetzcoco's governing cabildo. Political leaders, without this wealth and with increasingly difficult administrative duties vis-à-vis the crown, ceased to be drawn from Tetzcoco's old ruling class. The most influential members of that class—now styled caciques—no longer participated in the day-to-day operation of local government. The most successful hereditary nobles withdrew into a private life of affluent leisure while less powerful relatives, commoners, outsiders, and even Spaniards stepped in to fill the positions they left vacant.

Tetzcoco in Regional Context

How typical was Tetzcoco's experience? Did other altepetl in central Mexico experience change to the same extent and at the same time as in Tetzcoco? By comparing Tetzcoco's experience with those of other nearby communities, a pattern emerges of regional change in the sixteenth century. Tetzcoco was among a group of municipalities that underwent these significant changes to local politics very early in the colonial period. Generally speaking, these communities were located closest to the center of Spanish control: Mexico City. Indeed, the indigenous hereditary nobles of Mexico Tenochtitlan and Mexico Tlatelolco—displaced as the Spaniards established their seat of government there—saw dramatic changes to their political

roles as early as those in Tetzcoco did. And the community of Coyoacan, located, like Tetzcoco, just across the lake from Mexico City, also experienced political change at an accelerated rate. The nobles of more distant and more isolated communities, however, like those in Tlaxcala, which lay in a valley to the east of Tetzcoco, or of Cuernavaca, insulated within Cortés's *marquesado* to the south, experienced changes like those in Tetzcoco only later in the colonial period, if at all.

In Mexico City, indigenous government continued despite the fact that the Spanish established their capital of New Spain on the very site of the seat of power of the preconquest Triple Alliance. Indeed, when the first viceroy, don Antonio de Mendoza, began to consolidate Spanish control of the indigenous communities of the region, he actually reinstated the ancient ruling lineage of Mexico Tenochtitlan as governors of the colonial indigenous municipality. William Connell has recently demonstrated, however, that the preconquest ruling family could not hold on to power for very long. By 1564, the Mexica tlatoani lineage had lost control of the governor position.[41] While Connell has not been able to identify the specific means by which this took place, it is likely that, as in Tetzcoco, the old royal line could not long fend off the interference of the viceregal government—which was based mere blocks from where the indigenous cabildo held their meetings—and the outsiders who would exploit Spanish colonial institutions to their advantage within the indigenous republic.

In Coyoacan, just across the lake from Mexico City on the southern shore, the ruling family was able to hold onto political power for a bit longer. The tlatoani held the governorship in that community until at least 1594. In that year, the viceroy stepped in and removed him from office. Unlike the indigenous community of Mexico, which was administered directly by the viceroy through much of the sixteenth century, Coyoacan was a part of Cortés's marquesado

holdings in the Valley of Mexico. This additional layer of bureaucracy between the indigenous government and the viceregal administration provided added insulation that forestalled direct viceregal intervention in local politics for a few decades longer than in Mexico or Tetzcoco.

The indigenous community of Tlaxcala was directly administered by the crown very early on in the sixteenth century. But as it lay further from Mexico City than Tetzcoco—outside and to the east of the Valley of Mexico—the ruling lineage of the precontact leaders continued for about as long as that of Coyoacan. Tlaxcala's unique political structure, composed of four distinct altepetl that rotated the duties of greater Tlaxcala among their representatives, meant that the governorship rotated in a fixed order through the four constituent polities. This system served Tlaxcala well for most of the sixteenth century. By 1596, however, this fixed rotational system broke down, and governors were chosen by the viceroys after 1600.[42] The old tlatoani lines also were deposed by the end of the century.[43] The precontact ruling families of Tlaxcala, then, maintained control of local government for three decades longer than the Tetzcoca hereditary nobles did. The increased distance between Tlaxcala and Mexico City no doubt postponed their eventual decline.

In Cuernavaca, located some fifty-three miles away from the New Spanish capital, the hereditary nobility maintained local political control for far longer. Like Coyoacan, Cuernavaca was located within Cortés's marquesado, which separated the indigenous government from the viceregal one with an additional layer of administrative oversight. This distance kept the Cuernavaca nobles further from the direct control of the viceroy and his officials. As a result, according to Robert Haskett, the hereditary nobles continued in positions of local political power. The post of governor, for example, was still held by the old ruling family well into the eighteenth century, some two hundred years longer than in Tetzcoco or Mexico.[44] Moreover, the

governorship had still not been brought fully in line with Spanish norms in the eighteenth century; the governors of Cuernavaca continued to hold extended terms of office, whereas governors in the Valley of Mexico had been limited to strict fixed terms for generations.[45]

As might be expected, hereditary nobles in the more remote regions of the Mixteca and Yucatan were able, in many places, to retain political positions of authority far longer than in the Nahuatl-speaking regions to the north. Many precontact ruling lineages in the Mixteca, for instance, maintained control of local political power until the eighteenth century.[46] And in Yucatan, local Maya leaders simply appropriated the title of governor while keeping their precontact systems of rule wholly intact through the entire colonial period.[47]

The pace of change in indigenous government in New Spain, then, can be fairly well explained by two factors: a municipality's geographic distance from the administrative center in Mexico City, and the degree of direct administrative control wielded by the viceroy over the indigenous government. Local forms of government in towns like Cuernavaca and in areas like the Mixteca and Yucatan were preserved for much longer than was possible in Tetzcoco by the combination of these two factors. The twin pressures of Tetzcoco's location just across the lake from Mexico City and its direct administration by the crown took a toll on Tetzcoco's nobles, dramatically limiting their ability to continue to govern Tetzcoco as their ancestors had done before the Spanish arrival. Political change occurred at a more accelerated pace in indigenous communities at the center of colonial rule, such as Tetzcoco, than it did in most other, more peripheral indigenous municipalities.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

[1] Gibson (1964, 171) simply states that the governors were "disassociated from the continuing tlatoani succession." As I show in this chapter, however, the tlatoani succession does not, in fact, continue after don Hernando Pimentel's death in 1564.

[2] AGN-T, 1740:1, and AGN-V, 234:1, ff. 49v, 52r, 68r, 71r. See also López y Magaña (1980). López y Magaña was actually the first to question, though rather cautiously, Gibson's claim of a continuing tlatoani succession. His Master's thesis at UCLA, based on copies of documents in AGN-T, 1740:1 now housed in Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, noted that "it is exceedingly hard to find out any specifics on this question [of tlatoani succession]" (29). This chapter confirms López y Magaña's suspicions.

[3] AGN-T, 3594:2, f. 1v-6r.

[4] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 148v.

[5] See Lockhart (1992, 103) and Berdan (1982, 100).

[6] It is important to recognize that the surnames Alvarado and Pimentel were not passed on in the same way that surnames are today and do not constitute family units within the hereditary nobility; Alvarados could be (and were) siblings or children of Pimentels and vice versa.

[7] Chimalpahin 1997, 191.

[8] Pomar 1975.

[9] Lockhart 1992, 31, 35.

[10] Lockhart 1992, 30.

[11] Gibson 1964, 167-172. See also Lockhart (1992, 30-35) and Haskett (1991).

[12] See Chapter 2.

[13] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 149r-v.

[14] AGN-I, 6:776-777.

[15] AGN-I, 6:646.

[16] AGI-M, 270:1, recto. "Van solo con fin de aprovecharse, y no del bien publico, Han hecho muchos agravios a los naturales, y no tenido ningun cuidado de la republica y cossas della."

[17] AGI-M, 270:1, recto. "y se han quedado con las deudas rentas i tributos reales que han cobrado y entrado en su poder, y ausentadose sin dar quenta dellas, ni residencia, todo en gran daño [de] las rentas reales y de los yndios de la dha provincia."

[18] AGN-IV, 3600:8, f. 1r-2v. This governor is mestizo historian don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl from Teotihuacan, whose work—ironically—is the basis of much of what we know about prehispanic Tetzcoco, and who is discussed at length in Chapter Four.

[19] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 149v-150r. For the value (in pesos) of tribute in the years 1574-1576 see AGI-M, 1990:50, f. 2.

[20] Gibson 1964, 218; Lockhart 1992, 95; Haskett 1991, 104, 107.

[21] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 149v.

[22] Horn 1997, 121.

[23] AGN-T, 1740:1, ff. 149v-150r.

[24] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 150r.

[25] See Melville 1997, 122-123.

[26] Haskett 1991, 166.

[27] Chimalpahin 1997, II:191.

[28] Perkins 2007, 33.

[29] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 149v.

[30] Don Francisco inherited two of the four tlatoque positions in the nearby altepetl of Tlaxcala through marriage. He first married doña María Maxixcatzin, daughter of the tlatoani of the Tlaxcalan altepetl of Ocotelulco. On the death of his father-in-law, he was elected tlatoani of Ocotelulco. When María died, he married doña Francisca de la Cerda, widow of the tlatonai of the Tlaxcalan altepetl of Tizatlan. Don Francisco was subsequently named tlatoani of Tizatlan as well (Gibson 1964, 101). At the time of the agreement in 1593, then, don Francisco was tlatoani

of two of Tlaxcala's four altepetl and a full-time resident there. He gave his power of attorney to Pomar, who remained in Tetzcoco. AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 146r.

[31] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 150r.

[32] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 150v.

[33] AGN-T, 1740:1, ff. 151r, 152v.

[34] AGN-T, 1740:1, f. 141v.

[35] "la casa y obraje en que al presente bive fran^{co} hortiz de la puente que esta parado en medio de las casas que dizen ospital con los corrales que le caen hazia el nacim^{to} del sol del mysmo ancho que son las dhas casas y cavalleriza corriendo derechamente de la esquina de la dha cavalleriza al oriente y por la misma horden y dereçera a de correr desde la esquina de la dha cavalleriza a la calle principal del dho ospital y la casa y obraje en que al pres^{te} vive marcos de la puente que esta arriba de las casas de necahualcoyozin y las casas en que al pres/te bive Joan martinez del canpo . . . las casas que estan en la plaça desta ciudad que lindan con la carcel e audi/a della; las casas y cercado de macuiltochco en la calle rreal que lindan con casas de luis Camacho; las casas y solar que estan linde de las de don gabriel de ayala calle en medio de la alcantarilla del cercado del monesterio de esta ciudad; las casas que al pres^{te} posee la dha doña marta de guzman que esta a las espaldas del dho monesterio; el cercado de cuezcomacali en frente del obraje de la tecpa donde al pres^{te} lo tiene Pedro de dueñas; las casas y cercado que llaman de tecpilpan en el barrio de sant Pablo y las de capoltitlan y contlan con sus cercados y macuylhecac junto al camyno real que va a mex^{co}; las casas y cercado de tulpatlactitlan que tiene don gabriel de ayala; las tierras de ocelotepec coatepec ytztliyhuetzian comaltepec ytlilapan yaxocopan ychichimecapan y coautla xapuchco yxipitezco en termynos de calpulalpa maçapan y ahualica; las tierras de xaltelulco tlapatlahuayan; el pedaço de tierra de la ahuehuenacazco acoyoco."

[36] Gibson 1964, 218; Lockhart 1992, 95; Haskett 1991, 104, 107.

[37] AGN-I, 6:845, f. 227v.

[38] AGN-I, 12:210, f. 133r.

[39] AGN-T, 1740:1; AGN-T, 2518:4; AGN-T, 3594:2.

[40] Brading 1991, 275. Brading's source for this information appears to be Alva Ixtlilxochitl. See Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1975-1977).

[41] Connell 2011, 35.

[42] Gibson 1952, 107.

[43] Gibson 1952, 99. Dynastic problems occurred early and often in the colonial period, however. See also Lockhart, Berdan, and Anderson (1986).

[44] Haskett 1991, 133.

[45] Haskett 1991, 126.

[46] Terraciano 2001, 184.

[47] Restall 1997, 63-64.

CONCLUSIONS
A Colonial Aristocracy

The Spanish arrival profoundly altered the nature of local politics and indigenous government in Tetzcoco. A group of nobles writing near the end of the sixteenth century noted that changes to government began at the very moment of contact and the policies employed by Hernando Cortés. They complained that

> don Hernando Cortés really mistreated the noblemen of Texcoco and the rulership . . . When the Captain [Cortés] went to Anahuac . . . the Captain spoke to all the field people whom [the Tetzcoca noble] Ixtlilxochtzin was taking with him. He said to them: you no longer belong to Ixtlilxochitl. You are to construct my house in Mexico.[1]

The power of the native nobles was almost immediately under attack, then, as Cortés attempted to profit from the work of the Indians of Tetzcoco and set in motion a long history of colonial exploitation.

The exploitation of native labor and the marginalization of native leaders increased in intensity as time passed. In 1582, the high-ranking Tetzcoca mestizo Juan Bautista Pomar penned one of the most strident condemnations of Spanish colonialism of the late-sixteenth century. In his *Relación de Tescuco*, Pomar complained that

> there was never pestilence or mortality as there has been after [the indigenous] conversion [to Christianity]. [Disease and death] have been so extensive and cruel that it is confirmed that nine-tenths of the people that were here have been consumed by them . . . If there is any cause of the consumption, it is the very great and excessive work that [the Indians] suffer in service to Spaniards, in their workshops, ranches, and farms . . . And they say that from what they suffer there, from hunger and exhaustion, their bodies are weakened and consumed such that any minor sickness that they contract is enough to take their lives . . . And they go about afflicted in this manner, and one notes it clearly in their persons, because from the outside they exhibit no sign of happiness or contentment. And rightly so, because, really, [the Spaniards] treat them much worse than if they were slaves.[2]

Pomar's diatribe demonstrates the perceived injustice of Spanish policies towards the Tetzcoca commoners. The traditional native aristocracy, Pomar implies, would have treated the

commoners as they always had—as subordinates, certainly, but not as slaves. The newcomers had no respect for the traditional limits of local power, and the people suffered as a result.

Spanish colonialism, then, radically transformed both native rulers and native commoners. For the Tetzcoca nobility, however, Spanish rule was complicated. To be sure, it presented serious challenges, but it did not destroy them. During the conquest, certain factions within the ruling family actually benefited from the Spanish arrival and the political defeat of the Mexica Tenochca. Ixtlilxochitl, for instance, who acted as Cortés's military ally in Tetzcoco, saw his rivals removed from power and himself installed in the top political office. And Viceroy don Antonio de Mendoza's policy of relying on indigenous officials for local administration and tribute collection ensured that the Tetzcoca nobles continued in power in the early years of the postconquest period. The church, too, proved subject to manipulation by the Tetzcoca indigenous nobility, who allowed the Inquisition to execute one of their troublesome relatives in the 1530s and thereby prevent him from taking control of local government against their will.

The most compelling evidence of the Tetzcoca nobility's survival is the fact that the old precontact ruling lineage continued to hold power in Tetzcoco for many decades after the Spanish conquest. As the cases of don Antonio Pimentel and don Hernando Pimentel demonstrate, these native leaders were quite adept at navigating the Spanish colonial system and secured important recognition of their precontact nobility and status. Following the scandal of don Carlos Ometochtli's burning at the stake for heresy, don Antonio reasserted the Tetzcoca nobility's Christian piety, fought in the courts for the return of certain lands confiscated by the church, and helped to smooth the transition of power from one generation to the next after his own death. And don Hernando Pimentel engaged the colonial system even more directly—writing letters to the monarch, securing noble titles and coats of arms for the Tetzcoca, and

decrying the abuses of Spaniards and colonial officials in Tetzcoco. From 1540 to 1564—under the leadership of these two leaders—Tetzcoco's native nobility was active and effective in its administration of native government in the altepetl.

Despite the native nobles' early tenacity, substantial changes in local government were underway, especially after 1564. The financial resources of the Tetzcoca nobles, for example, were increasingly under pressure in the final decades of the sixteenth century. The viceregal administration attempted to exert ever tighter control of the collection of tribute traditionally overseen by Tetzcoco's native leaders, and thereby limit the profitability of this enterprise for the native leaders. And the nobles' land, too, came under increasing pressure beginning in the 1570s. As the Spanish population of New Spain grew, they were increasingly interested in the lands to the east of Mexico City around Tetzcoco. And the demographic collapse of the indigenous population made it appear to Spaniards that much of the land in the region was unoccupied and available for their use. The indigenous nobles were increasingly drawn into legal battles over land and other resources, and their efforts to protect their assets were met with mixed results in the courts. At times, the Tetzcoca managed to prevent the viceroys from granting land to Spaniards. In other cases, however, the Spaniards prevailed.

Major changes in ethnicity were also afoot among Tetzcoco's indigenous nobles by the late sixteenth century. Noble Tetzcoca women had begun marrying Spaniards almost from the moment of contact with Europeans. Many of these women with Spanish husbands moved from Tetzcoco to live with their husbands in Mexico City. These absentee women and their children typically ceased to have any meaningful impact on Tetzcoca politics once they left Tetzcoco. Those noble women whose husbands joined them in Tetzcoco, however, were in much better positions to remain relevant in Tetzcoca society and government. By the 1560s, many of the

offspring of these unions—*mestizos*, or individuals of mixed race—were important actors in local Tetzcoca politics. The most important of these mestizos was Juan Bautista Pomar, who inherited an estate from an important uncle, formed an alliance with a powerful indigenous cousin, and amassed considerable property and wealth through his farming ventures. Importantly, Pomar was resident in Tetzcoco and remained a part of indigenous society there. Another mestizo with Tetzcoca ancestry, don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, did considerably worse in Tetzcoca politics and society. Having grown up in Mexico City, don Fernando was scorned by the Tetzcoca native nobles when he was appointed governor there in the early seventeenth century. Don Fernando was forced to seek his fortune elsewhere. His skills at navigating the viceregal bureaucratic corps, however, ensured that he, too, would make a comfortable living even if he would not significantly influence local Tetzcoca politics.

In addition to these economic and ethnic changes over which the Tetzcoca native aristocracy had little control, the hereditary nobles themselves also effected substantial changes in local government after 1564. The death of the tlatoani, don Hernando Pimentel, in that year led to a succession crisis and the deposition of Tetzcoco's precontact ruling lineage. The viceroy seized upon the opportunity presented by the succession crisis to install his own ruler in Tetzcoco. Never again would the old ruling family hold power as it had in previous times. The entailed estate of the hereditary nobility, the *cacicazgo*, also underwent substantial change. Before 1564, the cacicazgo had been held by the tlatoani/gobernador and was a perquisite of office. When the hereditary nobles were deposed from the rulership, however, they took the cacicazgo with them. This real estate wealth, therefore, became divorced from political office, and after 1564, political posts offered an insignificant amount of economic benefit as compared to the pre-1564 levels. The rulership's lack of monetary compensation, coupled with the

increasingly onerous tribute-collecting duties of the office near the end of the sixteenth century, made the governorship progressively less appealing to the native nobles, who increasingly refused to serve in that capacity.

The viceroys interfered quite substantially in Tetzcoco's internal politics. This interference is, perhaps, the primary cause of the old ruling lineage's inability to stay in power. With Tetzcoco so close to Mexico City—located just a quick canoe ride away—it was perhaps inevitable that the viceregal government would get involved. The communities in which old ruling lineages remained in power tended to be located much further from the capital, further from the viceroy's prying eyes. Internal disagreements were far less likely to result in a lineage's loss of control in, say, Yucatan, than they were in centrally located communities like Tetzcoco.

Even after the dramatic transformations in Tetzcoco in the final decades of the sixteenth century—the increasingly restricted access to tribute and land, the growing presence and interference of mestizos, and the precontact ruling lineage's loss of the local political rulership—the hereditary nobles were not defeated. Many members of the indigenous nobility—especially those who had been dependents of the tlatoani—were cut off from their traditional source of financial support once the tlatoani office ceased to function and the lordly estate was entailed into a private, individually held cacicazgo. But the main branch of the royal family—the branch that continued to possess the lucrative cacicazgo—continued to enjoy economic prosperity. In fact, the cacicazgo was a significant source of wealth for centuries to come. Descendants of Nezahualpilli continued to fight over this entailed estate into the nineteenth century, even after Mexico's independence from Spain.[3]

The individuals that appear in this nineteenth-century document—with their Spanish names and peninsular habits—seem so far removed from the indigenous rulers of the sixteenth

century that I initially dismissed them as unworthy of inclusion in this project. And yet they conceived of themselves as inextricably linked to their Indian forbears. In the eighteenth century, these individuals celebrated their indigenous ancestry in a pictorial genealogical tree now housed in Berlin (see Figure 6.1). This document, painted not in the style of the ancient Mexican pictorials, but in the European style of the eighteenth century, charts the ever fairer, ever more Hispanized trajectory of the Tetzcoca nobles and perfectly captures the radical nature of their colonial transformation.[4]



Figure 6.1. Genealogical Tree of the Royal Line of Tetzcoco. Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

The tree begins at the bottom of the page with the famed Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli. The next levels mark the beginning of the colonial period and depict the first colonial-era leaders. The upper branches of the tree hold those seventeenth- and eighteenth-century family members who never held local political office in Tetzcoco. Stylistically, however, there is nothing to indicate the profound transformation of the family from local rulers into wealthy private citizens. We do see a change in the costume of the individuals from the bottom of the tree to the top, however. Whereas Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli are depicted wearing fanciful feathered dress that reflects eighteenth-century ideas of what precontact peoples wore, the eighteenth-century family members at the top of the tree are adorned in Spanish clothing. The women wear long black dresses and mantillas, and the men wear waistcoats and European wide-brimmed hats. Their partners, too, are increasingly peninsular. The husband of one of the women from the eighteenth century, we are told, comes from the "Kingdoms of Castile." This tree plainly demonstrates that Tetzcoco's old ruling family has not been destroyed. They thrived in the eighteenth century—they dressed as Spaniards, married Spaniards, and had their regal family lineage painted in a thoroughly European style.

I do not contradict David Brading's assertion that some nobles from Tetzcoco were forced to take up the plow and work for a living as the colonial period progressed. The archival record is flush with complaints from Tetzcoco's native aristocracy about their destitution and deprivation. When the Spaniards introduced the model of the entailed estate to the central Mexican indigenous aristocracy, access to patrimonial holdings that once supported large numbers of kin and dependents was increasingly denied to many members of the noble class. But as I have demonstrated, not all of Tetzcoco's nobles were reduced to poverty. The main branch of the old ruling family continued to enjoy all the wealth and privileges of the Tetzcoca entailed

estate. They may not have continued to participate in politics at the local level, and they may not have been awarded the titles of peninsular nobility that were given to the children of Moteuccçoma, but Tetzcoco's ruling family managed to negotiate a place for itself in the Spanish colonial world.

The transformation of the hereditary indigenous nobility of Tetzcoco into a group of peninsular-style aristocrats has serious implications for our understanding of Spanish colonialism, in general, and the consolidation of Spanish power in central Mexico, in particular. The Tetzcoca example confirms what is now clear in Latin American historiography: colonialism affected different people in different ways at different times. The Spanish conquest, as this and many other studies have shown, was not the watershed in indigenous politics that scholars once believed. For some indigenous communities, such as those in Oaxaca or Yucatan, for instance—traditional ruling families remained in power for centuries. In altepetl in the central area such as Tetzcoco, however, ruling lineages persisted in local government for far less time. The Tetzcoca nobles could only hold onto control over local governance for around forty years after conquest. This time frame is consistent with the experiences of other altepetl in central Mexico such as Tenochtitlan, Tlaxcala, and Coyoacan.[5] What emerges from this study, however, is that native nobles continued to occupy an important place in the colonial world even after they no longer held political office. They left office for a variety of reasons, not simply because they were forced out. And once they stopped holding public office, many remained wealthy private citizens with considerable influence. They were, perhaps, no longer native nobles in the prehispanic sense, but they were not destroyed or defeated. Many of them could not even be said to have experienced any real decline if we measure decline in terms of assets and influence.

The history of Tetzcoco's indigenous nobles begs the question: What happened to Tetzcoco's native commoners? With the traditional ruling family out of power by the 1560s, who took over the duties of government after they were gone? As has been shown, a variety of individuals were able to step in: less important branches of the ruling family, "foreign" nobles from other towns, commoners, and even Spaniards. What qualified these individuals to govern, though? They were, by design, not responsive to local interests, but to the interests of central authority. Who, then, was left to speak for the Tetzcoca commoners in the face of Spanish power once their traditional representatives, the old ruling lineage, no longer wished to lead them? The transformations in local government in Tetzcoco in the sixteenth century left the community, the Tetzcoca commoners and regular folks, vulnerable and ill-prepared to face the challenges of Spanish rule even as it afforded select sectors of the native nobility the opportunity for continued financial gain. As Pomar's 1582 writings demonstrate, life under Spanish rule was difficult for the majority of Tetzcoco's indigenous population. As research on Tetzcoco moves forward, we should be careful to keep in mind that the experiences of the commoners were dramatically different from those of some of the most prominent and successful lords of Tetzcoco.

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

[1] Chimalpahin 1997, 195 & 199.

[2] Pomar 1975, 53-55. "No se halla que sus padres ni antepasados diesen noticia de haber habido jamás pestilencia ni mortandad, como después de su conversión las ha habido, tan grandes y crueles que se afirma haberse consumido por ellas de diez partes las nueve de la gente que había . . . si hay alguna causa de su consumición es el muy grande y excesive trabajo que padecen en servicio de los españoles, en sus labores, haciendas, y granjerías . . . y de lo que padecen allí de hambre y cansancio se debilitan y consumen de tal manera los cuerpos, que cualquiera y liviana enfermedad que les dé basta para quitarles la vida . . . y ansí andan muy afligidos, y se parece muy claro en sus personas, pues por defuera no muestran ningún género de alegría ni contento, y tienen razón, porque realmente los tratan muy peor que si fueran esclavos."

[3] AGN-T, 1740:1; AGN-T, 2518:4; AGN-T, 3594:2.

[4] Douglas's (2010, 165-166) analysis of the Genealogical Tree of the Royal Line of Tetzcoco draws very interesting parallels between this tree and the genealogies found in the Quinatzin, Tlotzin, and Xolotl manuscripts.

[5] See Connell (2011), Gibson (1952), and Horn (1997).

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