

The “Original Conquest” of Oaxaca: Nahua and Mixtec Accounts of the Spanish Conquest

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Abstract. This article features the transcription, translation, and analysis of two primordial titles, written in the Mixtec and Nahuatl languages, and a large map. Two indigenous communities in the Valley of Oaxaca attempted to lay claim to disputed territory by presenting these competing “titles,” ostensibly written in the 1520s, to Spanish authorities in the 1690s. The titles present each community’s account of the Spanish Conquest of Oaxaca and subsequent colonial events. We consider how the documents shed light on Mixtec and Nahua ethnic identity and historical memory in the Valley of Oaxaca in the late colonial period.

In the 1520s, four Nahua warriors from central Mexico responded to a call for help from the great “Noblewoman of the Zapotec” in distant Oaxaca. She complained that the Mixtecs threatened her people and had cannibalized members of a previous rescue party. The warriors appeared before Hernando Cortés, the “Ruler of the Children of the Sun,” and sought to convince him, by staging a mock battle, that they could succeed where others had failed. Impressed by this show of force, Cortés sent them into battle. They fought their way through the mountainous Mixteca and descended into the Valley of Oaxaca, where they confronted and defeated the Mixtecs amid a windstorm and an earthquake. In victory, they were given a place for their descendants to settle. But when Cortés came to Oaxaca, the alliance disintegrated and the Spaniards and Nahuas prepared for war. As the fighting began, the Nahuas frightened and confounded the Spaniards by unleashing a flood of water from underground. After the Spaniards sued for peace, the Nahuas proudly proclaimed that they had defeated everyone and had even captured a few African slaves. These “famous Mexicans” called their victory the “original conquest.”

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But there are two sides to every story. The Mixtecs rejected this Nahua notion of the original conquest when they offered their own account of these events. They claimed to have welcomed and honored Cortés when he came to Oaxaca; they gave him and his men some land to settle. All went well until Cortés returned with a group of Nahuas from central Mexico, with whom they began to fight. The Spaniards intervened only after the Mixtecs had forced the Nahuas to surrender. The Mixtec ruler cooperated with Cortés and accommodated everyone's interests; he found the Nahuas a place to settle. Thereafter, Mixtecs, Nahuas, Zapotecs, and Spaniards coexisted peacefully in the Valley of Oaxaca.

These two versions of the Conquest appeared in the 1690s, when a Mixtec and a Nahua community from the Valley of Oaxaca presented "titles" in their respective languages as claims to disputed territory. The documents were dated from the 1520s, almost two centuries earlier; representatives of the communities purported to have found the titles only days before submitting them to Spanish officials. Both present interpretations of events surrounding the Conquest, relating how they came to possess the land that they claimed at the end of the seventeenth century.

In this article, we translate and analyze sections of the two lengthy texts, written entirely in the Mixtec and Nahuatl languages. The Nahuatl version is ostensibly dated 1525 and consists of twenty-four pages; the eleven-page Mixtec document bears the date of 1523 and is accompanied by a map.¹ The Mixtec document is the only known example of a primordial title in that language, whereas the Nahuatl text is the only known title written by a Nahua satellite community outside of central Mexico. This article examines how the two stories shed light on Mixtec and Nahua ethnic identity and social memory in the Valley of Oaxaca nearly two centuries after the Spanish Conquest. We also consider the interaction of indigenous groups under colonial rule and the importance of writing and the oral tradition in colonial legal discourse. Finally, our transcriptions, translations, and analysis of the titles contribute to an understanding of a little-studied genre of indigenous writing.

The Titles Genre

The titles genre constitutes one of the most discursive, unpredictable forms of indigenous writing found in local and national Mexican archives. Most purport to be early-sixteenth-century accounts of the arrival of Cortés and the subsequent settlement and possession of lands. Many are accompanied by pre-conquest-style pictorial components. However, judging by language, handwriting, style, and dates of presentation, no known example predates

the mid-seventeenth century. Some scholars have referred to them as *títulos primordiales* (primordial titles): *título* denotes that the document is essentially a claim to land; *primordial* refers to the antiquated origins to which the titles usually lay claim. They were in some shape or form based on officially sanctioned Spanish land titles, but they rarely fooled Spanish officials. Historians have only recently recognized primordial titles as a distinct genre. Stephanie Wood (1991: 177) observed that "the study of primordial titles is still in its infancy." James Lockhart (1992: 410) reasoned that there have been very few studies of titles "first because only a small portion of the probably extant corpus has been discovered and second because of the enormous difficulty of the texts."²

Some of the best-known examples of falsely dated titles are the so-called Techialoyan Codices from central Mexico. These manuscripts typically combine pictorial images with alphabetic glosses and short texts in Nahuatl, painted and written on native paper.³ Although the authors or artists intended to apply an ancient appearance to the manuscripts, European stylistic conventions abound (Wood 1984: 302–22; Glass and Robertson 1975). Most primordial titles contain fewer pictorial elements than the Techialoyans and were written on European paper. All titles belong to an oral and written Mesoamerican tradition of making claims to land. In this sense, the documents were designed for local audiences as well as Spanish officials (Wood 1989: 259). Some titles are little more than a founding leader's testament, with none of the more fantastic features associated with the genre (Lockhart 1992: 416 n. 154). In fact, the Mixtec and Nahuatl titles from Oaxaca contain testaments. The indigenous last will and testament in colonial Mexico served as a title to individual lands and proof of hereditary succession. Both testaments and titles, like many other genres of postconquest indigenous writing, were based on European models, but they also fulfilled many prequest written and/or oral functions and retained remnants of ancient discourse. Many titles were probably based upon damaged or lost writings (Florescano 1994: 116).

Many falsified documents were produced in response to Spanish demands of title verification. A late-seventeenth-century program called the *composiciones de tierras* (legalization of land titles) restricted the corporate landholdings of a given pueblo or community to a specified area of six hundred *varas*, measured from the town's center (its church). This townsite, called the *fundo legal*, marked the minimal extension of an indigenous community's property (Taylor 1972: 68–69; Romero Frizzi 1990: 87).⁴ The program was designed to establish the limits of community holdings and to raise revenue by the granting of *títulos de composición*. These laws responded to changes in the second half of the colonial period, when demographic

growth coincided with increasing Spanish competition for access to land, especially in densely populated areas such as the Valley of Mexico. The program attempted to repossess all “vacant” land occupied without formal grant or proper title, which was legally royal domain, forcing communities to furnish or purchase proof of possession. Few had the requisite Spanish legal documentation from the early colonial period. Community officials who failed to submit legal titles struggled to produce some record of their claims for the surveyors, whether maps and paintings or other written materials. Community representatives were summoned to substantiate territorial boundaries. Official papers concerning land rights were prized and guarded possessions throughout the colonial period; those who had none were forced to find some because claims to disputed lands were tenuous in the absence of such documents (Wood 1984: 257–300). Some resorted to producing their own titles, not fully aware of a legitimate title’s format, content, or language. They submitted their homemade, primordial titles to Spanish authorities as evidence of possession since the Spanish Conquest and time immemorial.

People also produced primordial titles to support claims to territory in disputes with neighboring indigenous communities. Although the case from Oaxaca included complaints against Spanish-speaking individuals, the main issue concerned a dispute between the communities of Mexicapan and Chapultepec that was rooted in events surrounding the Conquest. The titles also involved a cacique from Cuilapan who competed with both communities for lands; part of the dispute hinged on the question of whether the lands were held communally by Chapultepec, a subject settlement of Cuilapan, or belonged to the cacique’s estate. Land disputes arising from an unclear distinction between private and public domain within indigenous communities were all too common in the late colonial period. Titles did not always serve the interests of the greater community but, rather, often catered to the concerns of caciques or competing groups, documenting private as well as community landholding. Thus, many titles were apparently conceived outside of official structures of authority.

Most titles seemed to have been produced in an “underground” fashion. Many of the documents were written not by the skilled notaries of the community but by relatively untrained hands. The official Spanish format was either unknown, misrepresented, or combined with indigenous forms to create a new genre of expression. As unofficial manuscripts, primordial titles tend to feature a more discursive narrative than genres of writing that adhere closely to a Spanish model. They depict a popular, local impression of events, drawing upon oral traditions and the social memory of the community.

The titles from Oaxaca originated in two neighboring communities, located across the river from the Spanish city of Antequera. Let us consider the historical setting in which the titles were produced.

The Valley of Oaxaca

The titles testify to the confluence of cultures and languages in colonial Oaxaca. There were more than a dozen culture and language groups in Oaxaca when the Spaniards arrived in 1519. Zapotec communities populated much of the Valley of Oaxaca, whereas Mixtecs were settled in the western part of the valley. The Mexica of Tenochtitlan and their central Mexican Nahuatl allies came to Oaxaca during the century before the Spanish Conquest, especially in the reigns of Ahuitzotl and Moteuczoma II, and founded a tribute and trade post called Huaxyacac at the valley's intersection. Though they represented a very small minority, Nahuas exerted considerable influence through intermarriage, alliances, and warfare. The Dominican chronicler, fray Francisco de Burgoa (1989, 1:42), reported that many of the valley's caciques were fluent in Nahuatl. In the sixteenth century, Dominican friars in the valley spoke Nahuatl as a lingua franca, employing bilingual Zapotec or Mixtec nobles as interpreters.

According to the *Relaciones geográficas* of Teozapotlan (called Zaachila in Zapotec) and Cuilapan, the first Mixtecs entered the valley some three centuries before the Spanish Conquest by way of intermarriage. It is said that when a lord from Mixtec Yanhuitlan married a sister-in-law of the lord of Zapotec Zaachila, Cuilapan was given to the couple as a gift. Although this statement simplifies the complex web of dynastic relations between lordly establishments in the Mixteca Alta and the Valley of Oaxaca, suffice it to say that Cuilapan had become one of the largest settlements in the valley by the late postclassic period (ca. 1300–1500). Apparently, Cuilapan eventually went to war with Zaachila, and the Zapotec dynasty relocated to Tehuantepec. Later, a tentative arrangement between Cuilapan and Tehuantepec against Nahuas from central Mexico was undone by another pact between the Zapotecs and Nahuas, crowned by the marriage of the lord Cosijoeza and a relative of Moteuczoma. With Mexica support, Zapotec lords controlled much of the valley when the Spaniards arrived.⁵

The Spanish Conquest proceeded rapidly throughout most of Oaxaca. Francisco de Orozco and Pedro de Alvarado led small groups of Spaniards and their central Mexican allies into the Mixteca, the coastal region, and the Valley of Oaxaca in the 1520s. Indigenous alliances disintegrated upon their arrival. Spaniards encountered sporadic resistance along the perimeter

of the region, but they rapidly took control of the Valley of Oaxaca. After the Conquest, Nahuas who had accompanied the Spaniards, roundly estimated at four thousand, settled in and around Antequera, in San Martín Mexicapan to the southwest, in Villa de Oaxaca to the northwest, in Jalatlaco to the northeast, and in Santo Tomás Xochimilco to the north (Taylor 1972: 23) (see Figure 1). The Spanish city of Antequera was located just east of the Naha garrison at Huaxyacac, at the intersection of the valley's western, southern, and eastern arms. The city, later called Oaxaca (after its Nahuatl name), eventually subsumed the settlement of Jalatlaco and relegated it to an urban barrio. Its residents included Nahuas from various central Mexican *altepetls* (Nahua ethnic states), Mixtecs from Cuilapan and nearby areas, Zapotecs from the valley and sierra, and even a contingent of Guatemalans. Nahua culture was confined to a very small area, but Nahuas played a dominant role in the indigenous sector of Antequera (Chance 1978: 21). Across the Atoyac River, San Martín Mexicapan maintained its separate status and was divided into barrios representing various central Mexican *altepetls*.

Cuilapan remained the largest native community in the valley throughout the colonial period. Cortés attempted to congregate many smaller Mixtec settlements in Cuilapan. By the time the *Relaciones geográficas* were written in the late 1570s, Cuilapan had seventeen subject settlements, including Santa Cruz Xoxocotlan and San Juan Chapultepec (Taylor 1972: 22–23).⁶ In 1696, Chapultepec produced the Mixtec-language title in response to the claims of the cacique of Cuilapan and the Nahuatl title of neighboring San Martín Mexicapan.

The Proceedings

Like many other cases in the Tierras section of the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), this lengthy dossier contains many competing claims, rulings, and appeals, and it is unclear how or when this case was ultimately resolved. Nevertheless, the main contentions are reasonably clear and are highlighted by four indigenous-language documents: a Mixtec-language title and painting dated 1523 from San Juan Chapultepec, a *sujeo* (subject municipality) of Cuilapan; and a Nahuatl-language title and a testament, dated 1525 and 1602, respectively, from San Martín Mexicapan. A fifth document exists only in translation—a Mixtec testament dated 1565, presented by don Andrés Cortés de Velasco and don Juan Manuel de Velasco, caciques of Cuilapan.⁷

In brief, the Mixtec community of San Juan Chapultepec, the Nahua community of San Martín Mexicapan, and the Mixtec cacique of Cuilapan

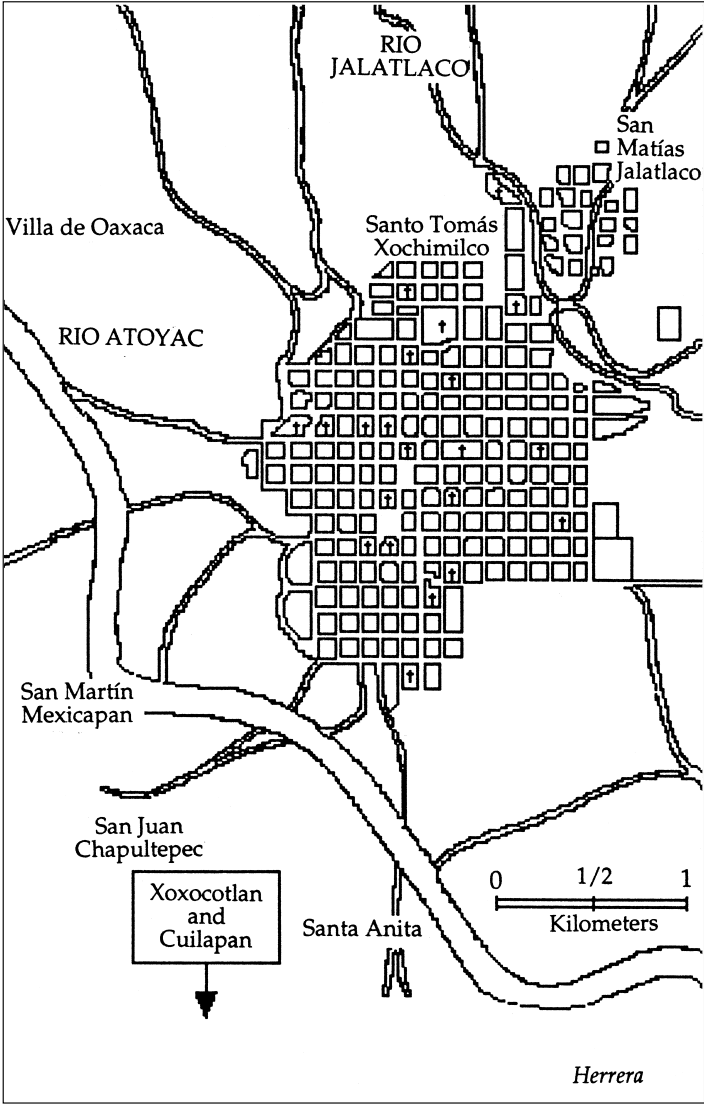


Figure 1. Map of Antequera and surrounding communities, based on Chance 1978.

and Chapultepec, don Andrés Cortés de Velasco, all claimed the same land. The people of Mexicapan maintained that their Nahua ancestors came from the Valley of Mexico to Oaxaca in the 1520s, preceding the arrival of Hernando Cortés or any other Spaniard. They initiated the civil suit in 1688 and presented a Nahuatl-language testament of don Francisco de los Angeles y Vasquéz, ostensibly dated 1602.⁸ This was the first of many attempts by the feuding factions to produce documents, authentic or forged, to substantiate their claims to the land.

In 1693, after the cacique of Cuilapan responded with documents to protect his *estancia de ganado menor* (sheep or goat ranch), Mexicapan submitted additional papers and paintings.⁹ When the *alcalde mayor* (chief Spanish judicial and administrative official in a jurisdiction), the representatives of Mexicapan, and the cacique of Cuilapan walked the borders together, it was clear that the documents provided by don Andrés had made some impossible claims. In his defense, he could muster only what the *alcalde mayor* considered “frivolous responses.” Consequently, Mexicapan was awarded the land, and the native officials proceeded to “pull up grass, throw stones and perform other acts of true possession.”¹⁰ The cacique immediately appealed the decision. At the same time, a faction from San Juan Chapultepec staked a claim to the disputed land, challenging Mexicapan’s possession and the cacique’s pretensions to what Chapultepec considered to be its own community lands. When the faction demanded that don Andrés Cortés de Velasco present his proof of ownership, he responded with a Spanish translation of the “title and testament” of cacique don Diego Cortés, which was dated 1565. Not to be outdone, the residents of Chapultepec submitted their own Mixtec title and painting, dated two years earlier than the Nahuatl title and several years prior to the cacique’s testament. The title of Chapultepec will be discussed below; the original version of the cacique’s testament is not included in the legal dossier.¹¹

By 1701, Chapultepec’s title had failed to unseat Mexicapan from the land. Members of the Chapultepec community bitterly complained that, despite the “obvious falsehood of the title” and its “insane contradictions and defects,” Mexicapan managed to maintain possession of lands to which it clearly had no right. Furthermore, they pointed out that the title from 1525 and the testament from 1602 were written by the same hand. The officials of Chapultepec accused Juan Roque, an “intrusive, notorious Indian who had produced similar titles,” of forging the documents.¹² Juan Roque was a resident of Mexicapan; he was married to Tomasa Maria of the *barrio Analco* in Villa Alta, another Nahua satellite settlement in the Zapotec Sierra. Roque testified that the controversial documents belonged to the community of Mexicapan, and he admitted to translating the original

Nahuatl testament into Spanish. Meanwhile, Nicolás Miguel, a native of the Nahuatl-speaking barrio of Jalatlaco in Antequera, was released temporarily from jail to translate the Nahuatl title. Incidentally, Roque’s signature on an affidavit matches the handwriting of the title from 1525 and the testament from 1602. It is true, then, that Juan Roque appears to have written the Nahuatl documents.

Simultaneously, Mexicapan’s grant came under attack from the cacique of Cuilapan, who questioned the title’s authenticity and insisted that Juan Roque had forged the documents. Despite the fact that Mexicapan’s title had been fully discredited, it retained possession until 1707. After reviewing the evidence, a new *alcalde mayor* overturned the 1693 decision and ruled in favor of Chapultepec and the heirs of don Andrés. Predictably, Mexicapan residents challenged the new ruling. They acknowledged that even though the new *alcalde mayor* considered their titles “null and void of either value or effect,” they nonetheless had retained “ancient and actual possession” for the past fourteen years, living and working on the disputed lands.¹³ In 1709, Mexicapan appealed its case to the *audiencia* (viceregal court and governing body) in Mexico City. As far as we know, the case dragged on throughout the eighteenth century and beyond.¹⁴

The protracted proceedings among Mexicapan, Chapultepec, and the cacique of Cuilapan involved a number of separate but related charges, implicating Spaniards and other outsiders. For example, don Andrés Cortés de Velasco complained in 1674 that a certain don Diego de Abalos owed him seven years of rent on some of his *cacicazgo* (the estate or institution of cacique rule) lands. In turn, Mexicapan, Chapultepec, Santa Ana, and Santo Tomás Xochimilco filed a joint complaint in 1691 against don Andrés Cortés de Velasco for usurping community lands, and they brought charges against Cristóbal Barroso, a Spaniard, for damages caused by grazing animals. In 1696, Mexicapan accused Tomás Alonso, a mulatto *mayordomo* (estate custodian) of doña Margarita de la Cueva’s hacienda, of allowing animals to enter their land. Mexicapan claimed that the *mayordomo* had no title and attempted to deny them access to the entrance of the forest, where they gathered wood and pastured their animals, as they had done since “time immemorial.” Juan Roque, the alleged forger of Mexicapan’s title, was among those who filed the complaint. Finally, a nearby estate owner named doña Margarita de Castillo filed a complaint in 1700 against a judgment in favor of Mexicapan. The assortment of related conflicts in this case, to mention only a few, illustrate the complexity of land tenure near Antequera at the close of the seventeenth century. These were the circumstances in which indigenous communities presented the following titles. (See Figure 2.)

2
40 natit y p^o l hua ca zo qui qui mo machi ti a
Mexico Hualca y hua mo tlaquechi ti que yo
qui to pan o pan o ^{mo} modica

Hualca yalanque ocah to pa o qui tlanique

Chalacne pan pi cane hua p^o l y hua no r m m e
tonat y y ca ti no p r i m o o m e n t i c h i
mat p^o p o l a o t r a y d e a p i l a t e h u a n n o t r m o
no n o t q u e q u n n o t i c m o t l a t l a n i t u t e
e y t l a t l a n i t u n a t i y p a l l a n a q u e m i n y r i
y h u a p i l e p a p^o t e l a t o q u i h u o t l a t l a n i
t i c o q u i t l a t l a n i q u a y a y p i l h u a p a r a
q u i p a l e h u i q u e l a o q u i m o t i t l a n i t i c h i
C o m e n t i y n i y e h u a n t e y e j o l a h e o c
n a h u n t e c a o p o l i u e q u e t l a y n o o t r a n t i
p o y x p a n t i n e w t o n a t i p o l h u a l o r t e o
t e t l a t l a n i q u e t i m o d h i t i n a h u i t e c a m a t e h
t i t l a n i t a t e h u a n t i t i m o t l a p a h a t i m o
y a o t i q u e y n a h u a c y n i n t l a c a m e m i t t e l o y
o t e h m o n a n q u i t i t u n a t i p i l h u a q u e
n i h e t i t i t e c h u a n t i s a t i n a h u a t i y h u a
c h i w m e n t i o p o l i u e q u e l a o t i c m a n q u i t i
q u e l a t e h u a n t e h i n a t i q u i t i c a m a t e h t i
l a t e t l a n i t a o t e h m o t l a t l a n i t i t o
n a t i y p i l h u a q u e n i h u e l t i c h i h u a q u e
a n y t i c a o t e p o m a c a h u a q u e y x p a n

Figure 2. Page from Nahuatl title.

The Nahuatl Title

The “Noblewoman of the Zapotec” narrates the opening of the Nahuatl title, appealing to Cortés and the Nahuas for help in fighting the Mixtecs. This episode may be based on the historic rivalry between Zapotec and Mixtec contingents for control of the Valley of Oaxaca. The reference seems to mix preconquest and postconquest events, since the Nahuas arrived in the valley at least a century before the Spaniards, when they allied with the Zapotecs against the Mixtecs. In any case, most importantly, her testimony corroborates Mexicapan’s historic presence in the valley. She serves as both narrator and witness, introducing the Nahua characters and lending credence to their story. The noblewoman even advises the Nahuas to write these events on paper for the sake of posterity.

Nehuapol nisichuapile tzapotecal ca onicotlatlanilito ca huey tlatoani tonati pilhua ytocayoca cortes ytechcopa huel nehcocolia oc sentlamantli tlacame nehmoayaotia yca mochti nopilhuantzitzitzi ca quinequi nehquixtilis notlal yhua tlen notlatqui ca melahuac onihualasito ynahuactzinco toeytlatoani tonati pilhua ytocayoca cortes onicotlatlanilito ma nechmopalehuilis quimotitlanilis ypilchua para nehmpalehuilisque yca yni tlacame mixteco cani oquimocaquiti toeytlatoani tonati ypilhua ytocayoca cortes oquimotitlanili ypilhuantzitzitzi chicomenti yehuanti ca melahuac ca opoliucqui yca opa oquimotitlanili oc nachunti aqui onehmopalehuilique ca melahuac mexicatlaca ca yoqui quimatisque yteh yni notlaquetzal ca melahuac oniconomaquili cani motlalisque yhuan ypilhua ytechcopa amo aqui quimoyaotis ypilhua ca yaxca ytlatqui yes ca yoqui oniconahuatili mexicatlaca ca yehuanti quiamatlacuilosque san quen oquimomaquilique yca oquitlanque ca yca yaoyotica oquitlanque omotemacque ynin tlacame misteco aqui nexmoayaotia ca melahuac omotemacaque yoqui quimotlaquechilisque yehuantzitzitzi mexicatlalcal quenin oquimomaquilique cani motlalisque ypilchua ca melahuac ycuac otehpaleuiqui yni tlacame ca yca yno otictlatlanique motlalisquiaya tonahuac ayac oquinequique yni yehuanti mixtecos yca yno oquinemactique yn itlal canpa yaea motlalisque ytocayoca acatepel ca melahuac yca yno oticahuaque ca ya quimopielia yaxca ytlaqui yoqui oquimotlanilique ca yoqui quimotlalisque quenin oquimotlanilique ca tonati ypilchua quimomachitia quenin oasisico canatiuc teponastli chimali macuahuil tlaminalli omochiuc ahuiyol yaoyotica yoqui motlatlanilisque yca moyectias ca oquiximatique ca melachuac yehuanti moteneuctica mexicanes ca melahuac yoqui omochiuc quenin onicmotlatlanilito

toeytlatoani tonati ypillhua ca melauac oquimictique nopilhua yhua
 oquicuaque sano yoqui sa can quinamiquiaya nopilhua quiquexcoto-
 naya ynin tlacuanime mixteco yca yno onicnotlatlanilito tonati
 ypillhua ma nehmpalechuilis ca melauac notlal amo nehquixtilisque
 ca omochiuc ca tlen onicnotlatlanilito toeytlatoani tonati ypillhua
 ca yoqui quimomachitia mexicatlaca yhua motlaquechilisque yoqui
 topan opano—omochiuc

I, the Noblewoman of the Zapotec, went to ask the Great Ruler of the Children of the Sun named Cortés about the people who hate me, make war on me and all my children, and want to steal my land and property. It is true that I went before our Great Ruler of the Children of the Sun named Cortés, and asked him to assist me by sending his people against the Mixtec people. When our Great Ruler of the Children of the Sun named Cortés heard [our request], he sent seven of his children, who perished. The second time he sent four more, who helped me. It is true that the Mexican people, likewise, will know of my story. It is true that I gave them and their children a place to settle, so that no one would make war on their children. It will be their property. Thus, I advised the Mexican people to write on paper exactly how it was given to them, because they won it. The Mixtec people who waged war on me surrendered because they [the Mexican people] defeated them. It is true that they surrendered, for the Mexican people will tell you in stories how they were given a place for their children to settle. It is true that when these people helped us, we asked if they would settle next to us. None of the Mixtecs wanted to accept them [the Mexican people], so they gave them a portion of their land, called Acatepetl, to settle. It is true that we left them with that, and now they have their property. Thus they won it and have settled it. As to how they won it, the Children of the Sun know how they came bearing log drums, shields, obsidian-blade clubs, and arrows. It was done joyously through war, as they wished. They were recognized as the truly famous Mexicans. It is true that it happened, because I requested it of our Great Ruler of the Children of the Sun. It is true that they [the Mixtecs] killed my children and ate them. Likewise, my children who encountered these Mixtec cannibals were beheaded. Therefore, I went to the Children of the Sun and asked them to help me. It is truly my land and no one is to steal it. What I requested from our Great Ruler of the Children of the Sun was done. Thus, the Mexican people know it and will tell others in stories what happened to us.

The Zapotec noblewoman’s exposition sets the stage for the four Nahua ruler-warriors of the second scene. The narrative flashes back to the noblewoman’s plea to Cortés for help. This section evokes the elaborate ritual and accoutrements of warfare. A mock battle before Cortés suggests an ancient war song and dance, accompanied by the beating of the log drum.

tlacayacanque oc ahtopa oquitlanique
 tlacahuepantzi ca nehuapol yhua normano tonalyeyecatzi no primo
 omenti chimalpopoca atxayacatzí ca tehuanti otimononotzque quenin
 oticmotlatlanilito toeytlatoni tonati ypillhua quenin yni sihuapile
 tzapotecal oquimotlatlanilico quititlanisquiaya ypillhua para quipale-
 huisque ca oquimotitlanili chicomenti yni yehuanti yey ocualoc oc
 nahuinte ca opoliucque yca yno otonasto yxpanctzincó tonati pillhua
 cortes otictlatlanque timochti tinahuinte ca ma tehtitlanis ca tehuanti
 timotlapalóa timoyaotisque ynahuac ynín tlacame mixtecos otehm-
 nanquili tonati ypillhua queni huelitis techuanti sa tinahuanti yhua
 chicomenti opoliucque ca oticnanquiliqui ca tehuati tinahuinti ca yao-
 yotica tictlanis ca otehmotlatlanili tonati ypillhua queni huel ticchi-
 huasque auylica otictomacahuaque yxpan tonati ypillhua otocontla-
 lique otehnahati ma nacalaquisque ytec ahuiocali ma cana[s]que
 ahuiol ca oticalaquique oticanaque teponastli otictlanque chimali
 macuahuil tlaminalli ca oticonanque tecactli otiqui[s]que oticonahua-
 tilique toeytlatoni tonati ypillhua otechmonquili aso ya cuali tlen oti-
 canque aso yca yno ya cua[li] yca timahuiltisque ca oticnanquilique
 ca ya cuali ca ycuac yno otehmotlatlanili quenin tichihuasque ahui-
 yol aso melauac nanquitlanisque tlali para mopilchua ca ycuac yno
 otictlalique oticnahuatique tonati ypillhua amo momauctis tlen ticchi-
 huasque ca oquin[i]talhuiaya camo nimomauctis ycuac yno otipeucqui
 otimahuiltique yca chimali macuahuit tlaminalli ycuac yn oquimitalhui
 tonati ypillhua ma sa yxquich ca melachuac quitlanisque tlali oquinel-
 toca eyca yno otehtitlani otiquisque tinahuinte

First, the leaders requested it.

I, Tlacahuepantzin, along with my brother, Tonalyeyecatzin, and my two cousins, Chimalpopoca and Axayacatzin, conferred as to how we would go to ask our Great Ruler of the Children of the Sun, and how the Noblewoman of the Zapotec came to request that he send his children to help her. He sent seven, of which three were eaten and four others perished. Therefore, we went before the [Ruler of the] Children of the Sun Cortés and all four of us requested that he send us, for we

dared to wage war on the Mixtec people. The [Ruler of the] Children of the Sun responded: “How will it be possible [to wage war] with just four when seven have perished?” We answered him that we four would win it through war. The [Ruler of the] Children of the Sun asked us [to demonstrate] how we would be able to do it. We joyously consented to stage [a mock battle] in the presence of the [Ruler of the] Children of the Sun. He ordered us: “Enter the fortress and wage war.” We entered with log drums, wielding shields, obsidian-blade clubs, and arrows, and wearing stone sandals. We went in and sought the approval of our Great Ruler of the Children of the Sun. He responded that perhaps what we assembled was good enough, perhaps it would be enough to engage them [in battle]. We responded: “Good.” Then he said to us: “If you do it joyfully, perhaps you will truly win land for your children.” Then we staged [the mock battle] and advised the [Ruler of the] Children of the Sun not to be frightened by our actions. He said: “I will not be frightened.” And then we started to play with shields, obsidian-blade clubs, and arrows. The [Ruler of the] Children of the Sun said: “That’s enough, it is true that they will win the land.” He truly believed it, so he sent us.

When the four warriors leave Cortés, the narrative abruptly shifts location for the third time. They fight their way through the Mixteca region en route to the Valley of Oaxaca. The Nahuas arrange a time and place to fight the Mixtecs, and the leaders inform the women and children of the event. Overwhelmed by Nahua martial prowess, a windstorm, and an earthquake, the Mixtecs surrender to the “famous Mexicans.” The Nahuas, then, claimed to have conquered Oaxaca before the Spaniards arrived. By elevating their status to that of conquerors, rather than aides or secondary allies, their account substantiates all subsequent claims to land. The references to “our land next to the Zapotecs” suggest a high price paid for their help. The section concludes with an agreement among all parties that promises to last forever.

otihualaqui otonasico oc achtopa mixtecapa otictlanico tepiton tlali
 yaxca topilhua ca nima otiquisque tinahuixti otichualasito can yaoyo
 titlamachticayaya yni sihuapile zapotecal y tihualasico tolotepel can
 onahuati toteponas oquimatique mixtecatlaca otlatlanque tlen on-
 huatiuc oquilique quenin mexicatlaca oalaque oquitoque tlen quite-
 moa oalaque ca ma tiquitatihui ca oalaque otehtlatlanico tlen ca
 otihualaque tlen tictemoa ytic nanquilique queni otiquitaco total
 ynahuac tzapotecal aqui quimoyaotia quinequi quiquixtilis tlen totlat-
 qui ca ycuac yno otehnquili ca tehuanti mixtecal quen nanquinequi

can yca auyl ca oticnanquilique ca yca auiyool ycuac yno otehnahuati canpa timonamiquique tlen tonati para timahuiltisque ca quinahuantis ypillhua tle tonatiuc yes auiyol ca otehnahuatiuc tlen tonatiuc otonpatlanque tepet iteh ytocayoca mexicatepelyan ca tomayec canpa canpa otepinia teponastli oquicaquiqui omonechicoque cantion catca para auiyol ca ycuac yno ome chicoque auiyol sihuame pipiltoton temachtí auiyol quinotzayaya ca ycuac oasico canpa tioncate oti-peuqui yca ahuiyol opeuc yeyecal tlali omoliniuc tel omomictique can otictlanpatlanque ycuac yno oquitlatlanque ynín tlacame mistecos yca melahuac ma yuc ties ca melahuac namehuantin motenehua mexicatla ca timitzmacaque canpa no motlalisque yca mopilhua ca ycuac yno otechmacaque totlal asta can tlantica otechmacaque ycuac yno oticnanquilique queni yni yehuantí tzapotecal timotlalisque sase caca ycuac yno oquitoque mixtecal ca amo huelitis ma moncahuasque ynahuac tzapopotecal tonahuac tehuantin ma mocaunque yca ya timitzmacaque canpa timotlalis ca melahuac oticnanquilique quenin timotlalisque ynahuac topilhua ypanpa amo quemania aquí momiqtis tiquitasque yoqui totlatqui ca ycuac yno otehnquilique ma tel yectie ca ycuac yn otimocaeque ca otimononotzque ynahuac tlatoani mistecal timotlalisque yoqui ermanos amo quemani tlen timomictisque amo quemania ycuac yno oticnanquilique ca ma yoqui mochihuas ma no necmacasque canpa motlalisque nopilhua hualosque canpa oticchiasque ca tehuanti acmo timocuepasque canpa niquimitzties nopilhua amo oc sepa yes auiyol ca ycuac yno otehmaca canpa timotlalisque ytoca acatepel y timocauique tinahuante canpa oticchiaque topilhua oalaque

First, the four of us left and arrived in the Mixteca, where we won a little land for our children. Then we four emerged and went to war. We and the Noblewoman of the Zapotec enriched ourselves. We reached Totoltepetl, where our log drums sounded. The Mixtec people heard it. They asked: "What's that sound?" They were told that the Mexican people had arrived. They [the Mixtecs] asked: "What are they looking for? Let's go see." So they came to ask us [the Mexican people] why we came and what we sought. We responded that we came to see our land next to the Zapotec, and to see who is fighting with them and wants to steal our land. Then they replied: "We are the Mixtecs. What do you want, war?" We responded: "War it will be." Then they instructed us where and which day to meet them, so that we could play. They would advise their children which day to do battle, as they informed us. We flew to the hill near the place called Mexicatepelyan,

on the right-hand side, where we beat the log drums. They heard the war song and assembled. Then, on both sides, the war leaders summoned the women and children. When they came to where we were, we started the battle. The wind blew and the earth moved, and they were killed. We withdrew only when the Mixtec people said: "Let it be, for you are truly the famous Mexican people. We give you a place where your children can settle." Then they gave us our land, up to where it [now] ends. They gave it to us. We responded how we and the Zapotec people would settle once and for all. Then the Mixtec people said: "It will not be possible. Let the Zapotec stay next to us and we will give you another place to settle." It is true that we said that we would settle next to our children, so that none of them would be killed, and that we would regard it as our property. Then they replied to us: "It will be all right after all." We left and consulted with the Ruler of the Mixtec people in order to live as brothers, so that we would not kill each other. Then we said: "Let it be done. Let them also give us a place to wait for our children to be brought to settle. We will not turn back; we will await our children. Never again will there be war." Then they gave us a place to settle called Acatepetl, where the four of us went and waited for our children to come.

This tale of war and peace with the Mixtecs is followed by a terse report that the alliance with the Spaniards has collapsed. Suddenly, a hostile Cortés invades the Valley of Oaxaca and begins to wage war on the Mexica. The Mexica retaliate by unleashing a torrent of water from underground, spouting from a giant reed. The Spaniards are forced to retreat. Cortés appears startled by this unexpected turn of events, and then he becomes angry when the Mexica persist in raising the water. A furious battle ensues until the Spaniards are forced to submit to the "truly famous Mexicans." The section closes with remarks and postscripts that herald their own victory within a specific Spanish, Christian context. Later, they boldly refer to their defeat of the Mixtecs and Spaniards as the "original conquest."

ca melahuac oasisico omoseuc yn tepet itech ytocayoca huaxacatzí cano
 motlalique omoseuqui caní omocues oc oquitemo yauiol tonahuac
 otimtlecotique ytech acatepec ca noca yo ye huel yehual aquí oqui-
 tlani tlali ca otehtzacuili al queni tehmicstisquia quenin quinequiaya
 tehchihuas tlacotli ca ycuac yno otictlecoltique al yca se acal ytzintla
 tlali oquitac cortes quenin ayac omotlapaloc tehmicstis ca ycuac yno
 otehnotza macamo panos ma ye uc tie auiyol ma timotlali ca yoqui
 ermanos ca yoqui noyolocacopa timotlalisque ynahuac mexicanos

yoqui ermanos ca ycuac yno ca ycuac oquitaque otleco al opehua
 omoxicoque españoles caxtiltecal queni otictlecahuique altepet itech
 opeuque auiyol huei chicahuac omochiuc tonahuac tehuanti mexi-
 catlaca asta otictlanique tonati ypilhua ycuac yno oquitoque ma
 yxquih ma ye uc tie ca melauac motenehua mexical ca yoqui oqui-
 teneuc yehuatzi melahuac tlatoani dios ca oticneltoyaya
 otitemoqui nica conquista timohinte mexical otimomictique auiyol ca
 sano yoqui caxtiltecal chimali macuahuil otictemoique
 ome tlilic otiquilpique
 ca sano yoqui caxtiltecal yca auiyol ycan tlequiquistlali otictlanique

It is true that we went to rest near the hill called Huaxacatzin; also, they [the Spaniards] sat down and rested. It was there that they first sought to fight us. We climbed up Acatepec, where we met those who had won the land. He [Cortés] rebuked us: “Who would kill us and who wants to make us slaves?” At that very moment we raised the water through a reed from below the ground.¹⁵ Cortés saw how nobody dared to kill us. Then he told us: “Let there be no more war. Let us live as brothers. We shall settle willingly beside the Mexicans, as brothers.” When they saw the water [still] ascending, the Spaniards were angry that we raised the water over the hill. They began to battle with great strength and fought us until we, the Mexican people, defeated the Children of the Sun. Then they said: “That is enough, let it be.” He [Cortés] declared: “You are truly the famous Mexican people.” We believe in the true ruler God.

Just like the Spaniards we died in battle and we sought war.

We captured two blacks.

Also, like the Spaniards, we won it with war and gunpowder.

Victory secured, the warrior-leaders exit. The fourth scene marks a transition in the document from dramatic narrative to mundane legal concerns and from the battle at Acatepetl to the founding of Mexicapan and other altepetls. After the Conquest, leaders of several central Mexican altepetls establish barrios and walk the borders of their new jurisdictions. Although the boundary-marking section is not without interest, it is lengthy and generally conforms to the standard of the time. Most importantly, the contested lands are strategically included within this passage, giving the appearance that this central issue had been decided long ago. The founders also establish a form of Spanish-style government that combines pre-conquest and postconquest concepts of officeholding. In addition to keeping vigil over the borders and other tasks, the *alguacil* (native constable) must supply food and drink (most likely *pulque*, an indigenous fermented alco-

holic beverage) to members of the *cabildo* (Spanish-style municipal council). He or she is also entrusted with the responsibility of verifying and identifying border markers on any “paintings” that the community may possess. These events transpire in the absence of any Spaniards, yet they invoke Spanish institutions. According to the title, the community acted autonomously in compliance with God and the king of Spain.

ca tehuati otitlazontequique tieyxti titlatoanime timotocayotia oc ahtopa tlatoani marquesado don fabiab de serbantes de velasquez tlatoani mexicapa san martin don fran^o de los angeles basques = tlatoani xuchimilco = don marcos de los angeles ca melahuac ca sase ca otitlatzontequique yoqui dios motlanahuatilia yhua Rey ca sase alguasil mayor yhua alguasil quenin quimocuitlahua yexca xohmilco san martin marquesado ca yehual ytequi yes quirrondosos quitlatzacuiltis yhua quitzacuas telpiloya aqui amo cuali sese jueves ytequi yes tetlamacos yhua tehmahuistilis tehatlitis semicac sese jueves ca yoqui otitlatzontequi quenitocabildo ca melahuac amo quemania tlamis ca sano yoqui mochiu ties ca sa ysel yni alguasil mayor quipias cuenta mochi cuaxohilque quetza cruscan tlanti ca sese yacu ycuenta quitotonis pintura ycuac yno tetlamacas teatlitis quinotzaque tlacame san pedro san jasinto cual huicasque tlen monequis cual huicasque neuctzintle monequis caya yoqui omochiuque obligar—

ca san yxquih totlanahuatiz otictlalique tieyxti para quipiasque topihua toxuihua semicac ca nymac yes yni orixinal conquista yca yno otimofirmatique tieyxti yni altepel cabesera ca toyxpa tieynti otiquixtique toamatlacuiloca ca nehuapol nitlatoani yni altepel san mar año 1525

don Fabian de Serbantes y Belasquez

don Fran^{co} de los Angeles Basquez

don Marco de los Angeles

We three rulers decreed it: first, the Ruler of the Marquesado, don Fabián de Cervantes; the Ruler of San Martín Mexicapan, don Francisco de los Ángeles Vásquez; and the Ruler of Xochimilco, don Marcos de los Ángeles. It is true that once and for all we decreed as God commanded, along with the King, as to how an *alguacil mayor* and an *alguacil* [(constable) would] be responsible for three places: Xochimilco, San Martín and the Marquesado. It is his duty to patrol, and to punish and jail those who are bad each Thursday. It will be his duty to respect us, to serve us food, and to provide us with drink on every single Thursday. In this manner we established our *cabildo*. It is true that the way in which it is done must never stop. It will always be the

alguacil mayor alone who will keep a record of all borders marked with crosses, and with his account he will shed light on the painting. Then he will serve food and provide people with drink, and the people of San Pedro and San Jacinto will notify him as to what he should bring. They will bring a little honey, as is required. Thus, it will be done as obligated.

These are all the orders that we three have set forth for our children and grandchildren to keep forever. This original conquest will be in their hands. We three provide our signatures in this altepetl cabecera. We three witnessed our written document. I am the tlatoani of this altepetl of San Martín. [In] the year of 1525.

[signatures]

don Fabián de Cervantes y Velásquez

don Francisco de los Ángeles Vásquez

don Marcos de los Ángeles

In summary, the Nahuatl title consists of five sections or scenes. The first three sections feature the Zapotec-Mixtec conflict, which affords the Nahuas a pretext to establish a foothold in the region. This act is sanctioned by Cortés himself. Thereupon, the Nahuas defend their newly won land from the Spaniards, establish a settlement, and negotiate a permanent peace in the Valley of Oaxaca. In the two final passages, the borders are marked and local government is implemented. Each episode legitimates the Nahuas’ historical presence in the area and, specifically, corroborates Mexicapan’s possession of the contested land. But the Mixtecs of Chapultepec had a different version of these events. Now we turn to their writings.

The Mixtec Map and Title

In 1696, sixteen residents of San Juan Chapultepec presented a Mixtec title to Spanish officials, protesting that don Andrés de Velasco, the cacique of Cuilapan, had usurped their lands. The document also responded to Mexicapan’s Nahuatl title. According to the litigants, they had not presented their titles earlier because they could not find them; they supposed that, in a previous dispute, the documents had been sent to the audiencia in Mexico City. Then, the nobles of the community suddenly found a Mixtec-language document and a map, dated 1523, that happened to antedate the Mexicapan title by two years. They requested a translation of the papers into Castilian. (See Figure 3.)

The “antique painting” constituted the first “page” of the title and was translated separately by Gerónimo Galván, a translator from Antequera, and Nicolás de los Santos, a bilingual noble from Atzompa. They remarked



Figure 3. Mixtec “pintura y mapa.”

that some passages on the painting contained “defective” and incomprehensible letters and words. The remaining eleven pages of alphabetic text were translated by the cacique of Guaxolotitlan. His version is more of a summary than a translation, condensing or omitting parts that he could not read or understand; the cacique ignored the practically illegible second page. The authors probably buried or wet the paper to give it an antiquated appearance.¹⁶

The “*pintura y mapa*” was designed, in the words of the presenters, “to be viewed as one speaks with the said title.”¹⁷ In other words, the eleven pages of alphabetic text complemented the pictorial writing; the authors combined semantic and visual forms of expression to present themselves and their version of the past.¹⁸ Clearly, this is no conventional European-style map. It is a product of the hybrid indigenous map tradition, exemplified by the *Relaciones geográficas* of the late 1570s. The map’s principal function is to delineate borders and major landmarks, but it also contains genealogical information and references to symbolic events. Chapultepec is featured just left of center on the map; in the top portion, their cacique, don Diego Cortés Dzahui Yuchi, defends the community against a bellicose Mexica contingent. A brief text beneath don Diego’s coat of arms announces that the map and title belong to San Juan Chapultepec and that the border agreement has been verified by the people of Mexicapan (see Figure 4).

bichan lunes 8 dubi yoo feferero nicubiuaha titulo sinhi mapa pintura siña ñoo san Juan cha yuchayta daba tan ca ni cutu dsaño † sa batubi tonho naa yodisi chee ñocoo chayu san martin dsabani yodzasinocabahadi tutudi titulo mapa pitura cuiya de 1523 años

Today, Monday, the eighth day of the month of February, the title and painted map belonging to the ñuu and tayu of San Juan Yuchayta were made, concerning all the borders † agreed upon and recognized by the Mexican people of the tayu of San Martín. Thus we conclude our title and painted map in the year of 1523.¹⁹

The narrative voice of the title alternates between the cacique of Chapultepec and the notary. They relate how Hernando Cortés came to Chapultepec (called Yuchayta in Mixtec) with a group of Spaniards and was treated as a *stobo*, a “lord.” He then renamed and baptized the nobles of Chapultepec, beginning with the cacique, to whom he granted his own name and the honorific title of “don.” The cacique’s new name, yya don Diego Cortés Dzahui Yuchi, combined Spanish and Mixtec appellations and titles. *Yya* refers to a Mixtec lord. The name Dzahui Yuchi may be



Figure 4. Detail of map showing Don Diego Cortés Dzahui Yuchi.

based on the ancient calendrical naming system, or it may be a personal name.²⁰ Preconquest-style codices show that lords possessed both calendrical names, based on their dates of birth, and personal names. As in the Nahuatl title, don Diego's story attempts to portray an early-colonial consensus among the Mixtecs and Spaniards. The Nahuas are conspicuously absent, undermining Mexicapan's claim that they rescued the Zapotecs from the Mixtecs. On the contrary, the Nahuas appear as uninvited meddlers who disturbed a peaceful situation.

titulo dn diego cortes ñoo sa ju^o yuchayta sihi vario santa^a
 saha dzahua tnaha nicuhui quihui niquisi dzina ñoo stohondi cortes
 quihui nichacaya titni che cui si nisaaya ñoo chayundi quihui dzahua
 niseenchatu niseedzihuindi sihi yyandi niseenchatu niseedzihui yyandi
 don diego cortes dzahui yuchi
 . . . niseenducha yya don diego cortes sihi nicuhui uhui niseenducha
 ndihi taca toho sihi nicuhui uni ñanchehe niseenducha . . . ca noo
 ca dzina ñoo cui si nicahua siyudad nicuhui cuachi huatuhui nducha
 cuhui ^{cha} ñe cua cuhui nisica españole chee niquidzatnaño nani ñoho
 yutno nduhua
 quihui dzahua nidzahuidzo don diego cortes quehe tno cuihi tno nani
 nisiya ndihi taca chee cuhui nano nisahatahuiña yuhu yya don diego
 cotes quihui dzahua ninocoondahuindi sihi chee cui si chee cuhui nano
 nisahañahandi nocahua huehe ñoho cano

Title of don Diego Cortés of the ñuu of San Juan Yuchayta and the barrio of Santa Ana.

When our lord Cortés first arrived with a crowd of white people, he came to our ñuu chayú. Then he came out to meet us and to name us. He received and named our yya don Diego Cortés Dzahui Yuchi.

. . . The yya don Diego Cortés was baptized and, second, all the nobles were baptized and, third, all the commoners were baptized. . . . Then, at first, he founded a city at the place called Ñocuisi, because there was no water where the Spaniards lived, those who made war at the place of the guaxe trees.²¹

And then don Diego Cortés responded in an elegant manner before all the great ones: “I, lord don Diego Cortés, shall give you a gift.” Then we lived together in peace with the white people, the great ones, and we gave them a place to build the big church.²²

They lived peacefully until Cortés came a second time, accompanied by a group of Nahuas from central Mexico, with whom the Mixtecs began to fight. Chapultepec formed a Mixtec confederation with Cuilapan and Xoxocotlan to confront the Nahuas. By the time Cortés intervened, the Mixtecs had defeated the Nahuas. The Mixtecs gave some land to the Nahuas only because Cortés had wanted it that way. By denying defeat, the ceded land was simply a gift. In serving Cortés, the Mixtecs demonstrated their allegiance, secured his authorization, and controlled the terms of exchange. The map documents this early agreement. By contending that they had accommodated the Spaniards and Nahuas by generously ceding half of their lands, an act resulting in the removal of their people to other nearby Mixtec sites, the title’s authors suggest that Chapultepec had

already paid the price for peace and could not afford to give up more land. Furthermore, don Diego Cortés of Chapultepec independently arranged this settlement without interference from the *cabecera* of Cuilapan or its cacique. In order to counter the claims of the Mixtec cacique of Cuilapan, don Andrés Cortés de Velasco, Chapultepec attempted to portray itself as a faithful ally of Cortés and an autonomous entity rather than a subject community of Cuilapan.

nacuhui uhui sito niqisitucu stondi cortes ñaha caya chee ñocoo nino-
cuacañahaya dzini aniy ñocoyo nchacañaha stondi cortes
nisacha ñoondi quihui dza ninaandi sihi chee ñocoo yucu saminoo
nisahatnahandi nduhua yuchaticaha noyoo nicuhui ndihi sihindi qui-
hui ninandi sihi chee ñocoo
quihui dzahua niqisi chee cui[si] españole nisadzino nocha ^{no}
ninandi quihui dzahua nidzandeendi sihi chee saminoo chee ñocoo
saha dza yni stondi cortes marques quihui dzahua nisahañahandi ñoho
coo—chee ñocoo nduyu chee ñodzahui ñoo sa ju^o yuchayta si vario
santana sihi vario yucucuii yya uni vario siñaha yuhu do ndiego cortes
dzahui yuchi
dzahua dzaya dzana yucua noho dzini ñoo yuchaticaha nisano sihi
dzahua cadzaya yucua noho yu ñoo noyoo ño cano nicaa yuhuichayu
sa ju^o yuchayta sa nitahui dzahua
yuhu do ndego cortes ñoho nisahayu toho ñocoo saminoo chayü ñoo
sa martin ñoo cano usa vario nisaquicha nchaqui saha si saha cumi
sichi dzini ñoo marques siñahandi siñaha stohondi marque
saha huicha yosaahayu dzaño noondi taca toho nisano sa Ju^o yuchayta
dzaño yuhu do ndego cortes saha ni . . . ni nyiyu yosahañahayu ñohoyu
cucha cha sihi dzaya ñani dzaya dzacuacha nica nicuhui

The second time that our lord Cortés came he brought many Mexi-
cans from the head palace of Mexico City, all in the company of our
lord Cortés.

When they arrived in our ñuu, we went to fight with the Mexicans
at the hill called Saminoo [Mexicapan]. We were defended by arrows
from Yuchaticaha [Cuilapan], and Noyoo [Xoxocotlan] also sup-
ported us when we encountered the Mexicans.

And then the Spaniards arrived. They stopped our fighting when we
defeated the Mexicans. Only because of the will of our lord Cortés,
the Marqués, we gave the Mexicans some land to settle. The Ñudzahui
[Mixtecs] of the ñuu of San Juan Yuchayta [Chapultepec], the bar-
rio of Santa Ana, and the barrio of Yucucuii, were the three barrios
belonging to me, don Diego de Cortés Dzahui Yuchi.

Half of the commoners will settle there in the cabecera of Yuchaticaha the old [Cuilapan], and the other half will settle there at the entrance of the ñuu of Ñuyoo [Xoxocotlan], the large ñuu which borders with the yuhuitayu of San Juan Yuchayta [Chapultepec].

I, don Diego de Cortés, have given half of the lands belonging to us to the Mexican nobles of the tayu ñuu of San Martín. It is a large ñuu with seven barrios, which is one of the four parts or cabeceras belonging to our lord the Marqués.

Today I mark the borders before all the nobles and elders of San Juan Yuchayta. I, don Diego de Cortés, willfully give my lands on which my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will live.

The remainder of the title enumerates the borders of Chapultepec. Finally, like many testaments, the document admonishes people not to interfere with the agreement. Although the lands belong to him, don Diego entrusts them to Chapultepec and thereby lays the foundation for their present claim. By asserting that this final agreement was sanctioned by and served the interests of Hernando Cortés, the title explicitly warns that interlopers who challenge Chapultepec will pay a stiff penalty to the Marqués himself.

saha dza huicha yodzandaayu tutu titulo siñaha yuhu don diego cortes sihi mapayu yonachihiyu ndaha ndihi taca toho ñoyu sa Ju^o yuchayta saha conducucha dziñooho ndaha sitohondi marques chatna ñana dzaya ñani dzaya dzucuayu tna ndacu nehe ndacu cachi sa situtu yya saho dzico pessos pena ñandee sanu stohondi marques saha titulo siñaha ñoo yonduhisi

Bi^o cortes noo yuhu do luysi de salazar chee chaa tutu huicha martes 8 nduhui yoo febrero 1523 a^s

Thus, today, I guard the title that belongs to me, don Diego Cortés, and my map, which I entrust to the hands of all the nobles of my ñuu, San Juan Yuchayta. Let them acquire the tribute in gold for our lord Marqués, and for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to keep and guard, to record and recount what pertains to the lordly title. He who attempts to interfere with our lord Marqués will be fined 300 pesos, for the title belongs to the ñuu. It is said and done.

Diego Cortés. Before me, don Luis de Salazar, notary.

Today, Tuesday, the eighth day of the month of February, 1523.

The Mixtec narrative is more condensed than the Nahuatl account. The people of Chapultepec did not need to legitimate their presence in the area and thus did not raise some of the concerns addressed in the

opening scenes of Mexicapan's title, such as the invitation by the Zapotecs, the appeal to Cortés for permission to fight the Mixtecs, and the dramatic entry into the Valley of Oaxaca. According to this account, the cacique of Chapultepec had forged an agreement with Hernando Cortés. He bequeathed the agreement to his descendants in the form of a last will and testament. Above all, the Chapultepec version asserts autonomy from the cacique of Cuilapan while affirming a lasting settlement with Mexicapan. Similar to the Nahuatl title, it denies defeat, establishes a historic alliance with Cortés and the Spaniards, and records the boundaries that were supposedly marked immediately after the Conquest.

Let us now proceed from translations and summaries of the two titles to an interpretation of their language, style, and characteristic themes. First, we consider the documents as complex speech and writing genres from late seventeenth-century Oaxaca.

Language, Writing, and Performance

The fact that Nahuatl and Mixtec alphabetic writing did not exist in the early 1520s proves the titles' impossible dating.²³ If genuinely dated 1523, the Mixtec title would predate the earliest extant example of Mixtec alphabetic writing by nearly half a century. The Spanish loan vocabulary and anachronistic content of the two titles confirm that they could not have been written in the sixteenth century. The suspect training of the authors and their conscious attempts to imitate older forms of writing and speech may account for the titles' difficult and unpredictable orthography and vocabulary. Titles also defy a linear ordering of events. They shift back and forth from narrative to dialogue and from the past to the present. Perhaps the nonlinear narrative conforms to indigenous conceptions of time, or the precise chronology and timing of events were altered and condensed as the stories were passed from generation to generation. The "telescoping" and layering of events is typical of storytelling in general (Bricker 1981: 149–54; Fentress and Wickham 1992: 40; Gruzinski 1993: 126–7; Taggart 1983: 7–11).

The example of Nahuatl from Mexicapan is unique in that it was written by migrants of central Mexico, not by non-Nahuas who used Nahuatl as a second language, as is the case with most Nahuatl written in Oaxaca. Still, the title's vocabulary and orthography are characteristic of peripheral Nahuatl.²⁴ The title's language reveals many of the same changes as central Mexican Nahuatl in contact with Spanish. Many types of Spanish loan words, including verbs and prepositions, are sprinkled throughout the title.²⁵ The use of Spanish verbs and prepositions in central Mexican

Nahuatl texts did not occur regularly until the mid-seventeenth century.²⁶ The Nahuatl-language title shows every sign of its late-seventeenth-century production.

The orthography of the Mixtec title represents a variant of the language in the Valley of Oaxaca. The writing shows that Cuilapan shared certain phonetic characteristics with the Yanhuitlan-area variant, reflecting a pattern of eastward migration from the Mixteca Alta to Cuilapan in the centuries before the Spanish Conquest.²⁷ Like its Nahuatl counterpart, the Mixtec title employs loan words that did not enter the language until many decades later.²⁸ The glosses on the Mixtec map and title, judging by the handwriting and orthography, indicate a different authorship.²⁹ The author of the eleven-page alphabetic text attempted to imitate the flourish of a scribe’s handwriting in the sixteenth century (see Figure 5). The map strikes the eye as a hybrid oddity. John B. Glass (1975a: 75 n.42) declined to include this “crude” pictorial in his catalog of Middle American manuscripts because he considered it to be “too removed from the native tradition for inclusion in the census.”³⁰

There is little doubt that the Mixtec “pintura y mapa” was drawn in the seventeenth century. By this time, European introductions had clearly influenced indigenous forms of painting and writing. Unlike depictions of their ancient predecessors, men in this map have mustaches, and women wear their hair unbraided. They lack the detail, elaborate clothing, and regalia of personages in the codices. Besieged by Mexica warriors, don Diego de Cortés Dzahui Yuchi defends himself with a phony coat of arms instead of a Mixtec *yusa* (handheld shield) and brandishes a lance rather than an obsidian-blade club.³¹ Hills bordering maps are a familiar sight in preconquest and early colonial pictorial writings and maps, but these shaded blotches bear little resemblance to the stylized glyphs of the earlier period. A smiling sun, leafy trees, and an attempt to draw perspective reflect European influences. Alphabetic glosses identify place-name glyphs located on the edges of the map.³² Other features of the map are plainly anachronistic; the four prominent churches could not have been built in 1523, within two years of the Conquest. The church is a prominent, symbolic structure in colonial pictorials from the Mixteca, including those drawn for the *Relaciones geográficas* of 1579–81. The map’s local perspective or bias is betrayed by the relative size of Chapultepec’s church.

Despite its late colonial style, the Mixtec map evokes the form and function of preconquest-style writing. Codices and *lienzos* linked the genealogies of indigenous rulers to sacred events and personages from the past. Likewise, titles connected communities or members of political factions to ancestors who had negotiated agreements with Spanish authorities at the

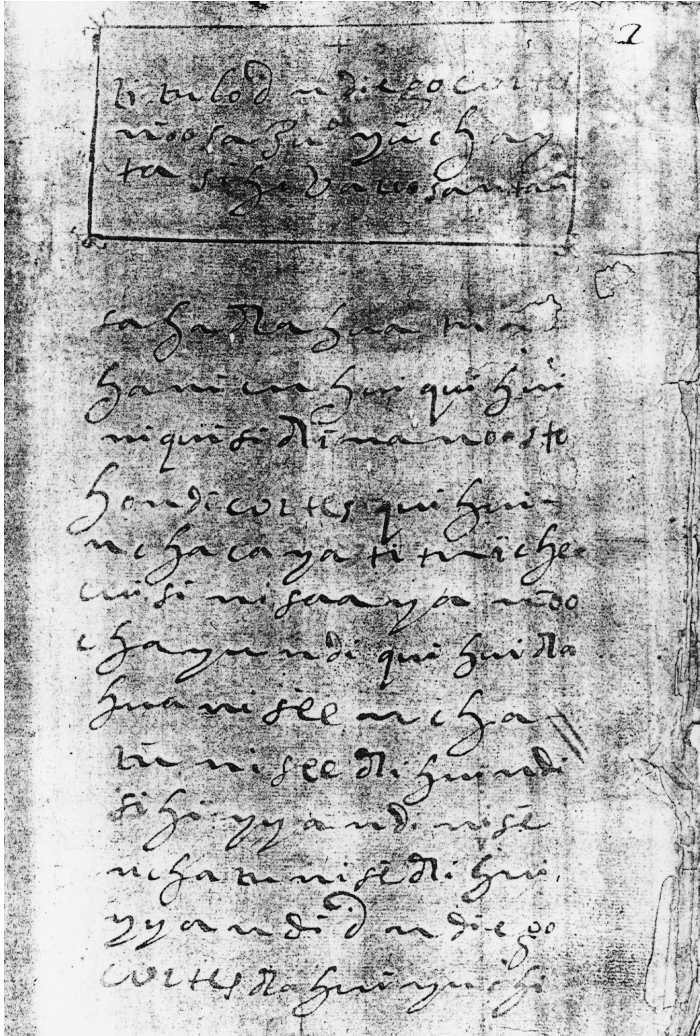


Figure 5. Page from Mixtec title.

time of the conquest. In form and style, the pictorial portion of the Mixtec title reveals a conscious attempt to imitate earlier writing. For example, the map portrays couples in profile, who face one another, reminiscent of ruling couples in preconquest-style codices and sixteenth-century pictorial writings (see Figure 6). Here, the couples appear before churches, just

as the codices depicted couples seated by or inside temples (see Figure 7). The familiar image of the seated couple represents the Mixtec *yuhuitayu*. The term is a metaphorical doublet: *yuhui* is “reed mat” and *tayu* is “seat” or “pair,” depending on tone (Mixtec is a tonal language); as a pictographic writing convention, *tayu* is a tone pun for the seat of rulership and the married, ruling couple.³³ The image of the couple seated on a reed mat represented a place and its hereditary rulers. Mixtec-language sources show that all settled places were called *ñuu*. But the most prominent and populous *ñuu* in the Mixteca were better known as *yuhuitayu* and were only called *ñuu* in the most general sense. A *yuhuitayu* resulted from the marriage of a male and a female ruler; each marriage partner represented the lordly establishment of a separate *ñuu*.³⁴ The *yuhuitayu* survived the conquest and persisted in some places, in altered form, throughout the colonial period. The map from Chapultepec, which depicts four simplified *yuhuitayu* couples, confirms the survival of the institution and its continued significance. The Mixtec authors employed symbols from the past to legitimate their present claims, even though they did not articulate the precise relation of the couples to those claims. We can assume from a semiotic reading of the map that the authors asserted the autonomy of their community by representing Chapultepec as a *yuhuitayu* with its own hereditary rulers.³⁵

Although the Nahuatl title was clearly written in the 1690s, it fulfills many of the same functions as the earlier pictorial histories. In reference to Nahua pictorial writings, Elizabeth Boone (2000: 163, 242) observed a number of common features in narratives of the past.³⁶ Most central Mexican pictorials feature a migration, a journey filled with battles. When the protagonists reach their final destination, they make war upon neighboring peoples and conquer them. Finally, the group founds an altepetl in ceremonial fashion and divides the territory among its constituent parts. The Nahua title conforms entirely to this structured narrative sequence. The four warriors migrate from central Mexico, battling Mixtecs along the way, until they reach the Valley of Oaxaca, where they fight and defeat their enemies. The four warriors establish an altepetl at the place called Acatepetl, “reed hill,” which is recognized by their new neighbors. Then they defend their altepetl from the Spaniards. Actually, Acatepetl defends itself by shooting water through a reed cannon at the Spaniards. This symbolic act of self-defense, in which the altepetl becomes an animate, indestructible force, has been observed in other titles from central Mexico.³⁷ Water and reeds conjure up the Mexica homeland, Tenochtitlan, and their legendary connection with the Toltecs, the people from the place of reeds. In fact, the Mixtecs called the Mexica *tay ñucoyo*, “people from the place

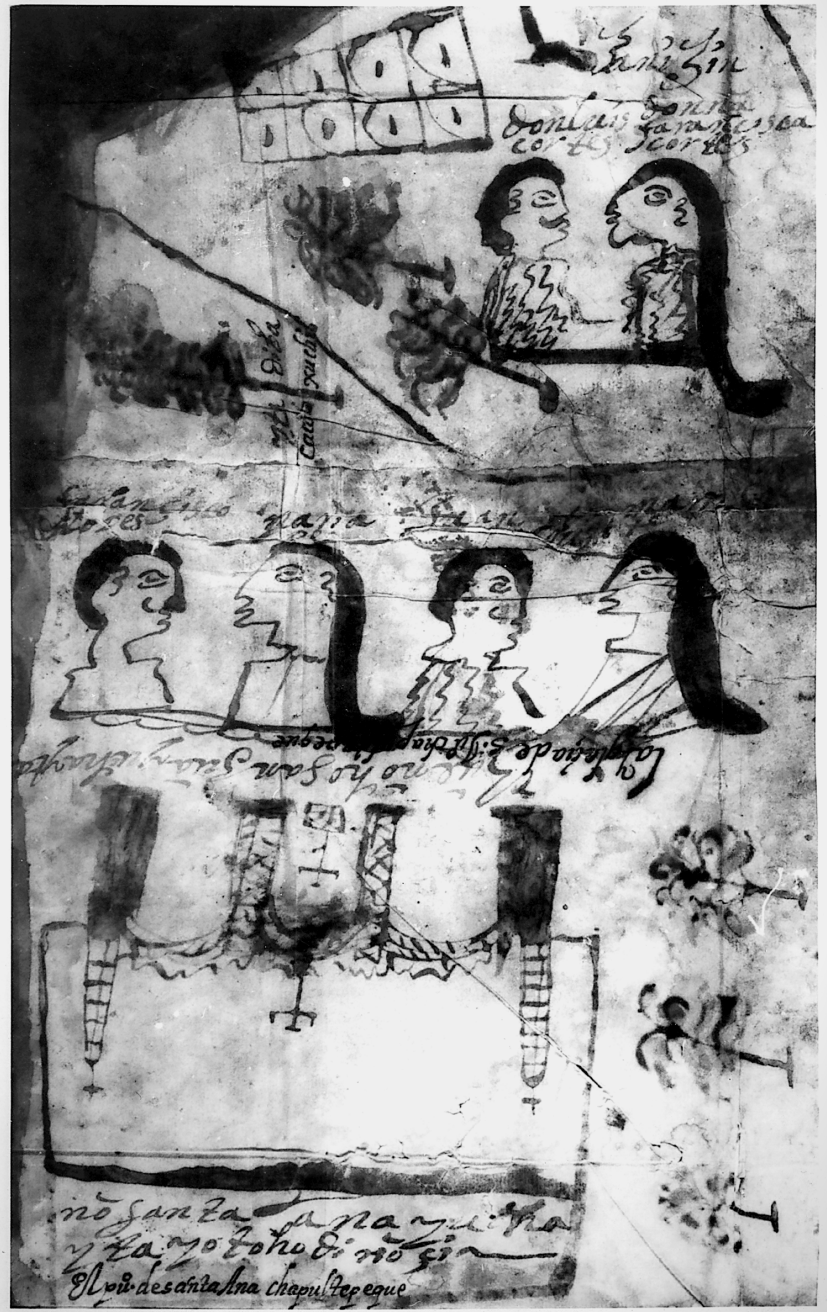


Figure 6. Detail of map showing ruling couples.



Figure 7. Depiction of Mixtec yuhuitayu in Codex Becker II.

of reeds."³⁸ Reeds refer to time as well as place. The reed was both a day sign and one of the four year bearer signs in the Nahuatl and Mixtec calendars. Nahuatl writers used bundles of reeds to signal the binding of years at the close of a cycle.³⁹ Floods also symbolized the passage of time. In Mesoamerican lore, floods marked the end or beginning of a cycle, including the cosmological end of the fourth sun. The title's references to reeds and floods associate the foundation of the altepetl and the legendary defeat of the Spaniards with the beginning of a new cycle. One can imagine how the migration and military victories would have been depicted in a pictorial manuscript, crowned by the foundation of the altepetl of Acatepetl. As

mentioned above, Mexicapan's title was accompanied by a pictorial document that was either lost or left out of the legal dossier.

The first three sections of the Nahuatl title exhibit the most archaic and dramatic language and content. A specific style and vocabulary is employed in each changing context; the straightforward language of the Nahuatl land survey differs from the rhetorical style of the mock battle before Cortés. Sections of speech within the narrative make the title appear more intimate and believable, as if it were an eyewitness report. The frequent assertion of truth (*ca melahuac* or "it is true") imparts the aura of a legal deposition to the narrative. The fact that witnesses sign their names further "officializes" the title as an authentic document, which was authorized by prominent community representatives (Hanks 1987: 678–80). According to the Nahuatl title, the Zapotec noblewoman advised the Nahuas "to write exactly how it happened on paper," thus providing a motive for documenting these events. These devices exhort the reader to believe the story.

The Nahuatl title pays special tribute to the paraphernalia and protocol of warfare. The narrative invokes war with its beating of log drums and dramatic displays of arms and battle accoutrements, including shields, obsidian-blade clubs, arrows, and stone sandals. The Mexicapan title employs a couplet for war, *chimalli macualli* (shield, club), which is reminiscent of *mitl chimalli* (arrow, shield), a standard metaphor in Nahuatl high speech. The attention to detail resembles descriptions of rituals recorded by fray Bernardino de Sahagún's informants in the *Primeros memoriales* and *The Florentine Codex*. Natural disasters, including earthquakes and floods, aid the Mexica in their conquest of the Mixtecs and Spaniards. Women and children assemble to witness the fighting, as if the battle were a ceremonial performance. The act of war is depicted as ritualistic play. References to battle in terms of pleasure and joy, employing Nahuatl words derived from *ahuilli*, resonate with the language of sixteenth-century Nahuatl songs about warfare.⁴⁰

In many ways, titles resemble indigenous songs and performance. The rhythmic and repetitive qualities of the Nahuatl narrative and dialogue and repeated references to the sound of log drums evoke the performative aspect of song and storytelling. Indigenous history was preserved in the form of song. In the mid-seventeenth century, fray Francisco de Burgoa (1989, 1:396) commented how Cuilapan commemorated their ancient victory over the Zapotecs during the feast of Santiago by "making songs of all their histories." Miguel León-Portilla (1969: 119) concluded that chronicles and histories "contain a certain rhythmic style which undoubtedly helped in memorizing." In the Nahuatl title, the Noblewoman of the Zapotecs prefaces each statement with the refrain *ca melahuac*, "it is true." The Mix-

tec speaker paces the narrative with *saha dzahua* and *quihui dzahua*, “when” and “then.” Semantic couplets and repeated phrases contribute to the titles’ lyrical qualities. Titles include dialogue, introduce a cast of characters, and focus on momentous events. The Nahuatl title features dramatic scenes, such as the warriors’ appearance before Cortés, the mock combat, and their march into battle. The commemoration of these events in writing or in song sustained the social memory of the community.⁴¹ The performative, ceremonial aspect of the titles is rooted in the indigenous oral and pictorial writing traditions.⁴²

The two titles leave an impression of how some Mixtecs and Nahuas of the late seventeenth century perceived early colonial writing. If it is certain how the form and style of indigenous writing had changed two centuries after the Conquest, it is less clear how a title’s content reflects the historical memory of a community. What did the authors and their constituencies really think about the past?

Historical Memory

Titles intertwine local history, oratory, legend, and propaganda. In describing their content, both Woodrow Borah (1991: 217) and Stephanie Wood (1984: 324) have evoked the image of a tapestry interwoven with “myth, fantasy and falsehood.” Charles Gibson (1975: 321) described the typical title as representing “an individual or collective memory of lands possessed or once possessed and endangered . . . [which] might be misguided or deliberately contrived to support a claim.” Lockhart (1982) demonstrated in a study of four titles from the Chalco region that the documents were in some cases deliberately falsified. Falsification was clearly intended in many titles, especially considering the aging process to which the paper was subjected, the impossible dating, and the intentional use of archaic language and pictorials. In central Mexico, an underground network of writers produced Nahuatl- and Spanish-language false titles in the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century (Wood 1984: 305; Lockhart 1992: 414). The issue of fraud and forgery raises the prospect that indigenous groups or individuals may have fabricated stories and forged documents to achieve their goals. The scholars who first examined these types of writings often denied the possibility of falsification; more recently, historians have considered their spurious nature (Gibson 1975; Lockhart 1982; Wood 1984; Borah 1991). Wood (1984: 313) defended them as “the product of reasonable people trying to meet an impossible demand—to produce a written and/or pictorial record that they either never had or had lost.”

Cultural practices and practical concerns led authors to portray events

in a particular light. For example, most central Mexican titles deny military defeat at the hands of the Mexica or Spaniards because such an admission would have been tantamount, in Mesoamerican terms, to renouncing claims to disputed territory. The same phenomenon can be observed in responses to questions concerning preconquest tribute arrangements in the *Relaciones geográficas*. Many community leaders denied that they had paid tribute to anybody, even though historical evidence indicates otherwise. In the title from Mexicapan, the primordial founders were invited to Oaxaca, where they defeated both the Mixtecs and the Spaniards. Similarly, the Mixtecs claimed to have welcomed the Spaniards and to have given land to their Mexican allies as gifts. Clearly, these versions of the past were shaped by pragmatic concerns.

It is important to recognize that the titles genre is not unique in its selective representation of history. Comparative studies of social memory show that selective and distorted versions of the past are common in all societies.⁴³ Social memory refers to a social group's collectively held ideas and shared images about the past. James Fentress and Chris Wickham have noted that for most communities or societies, whether in western Europe or western Africa, conforming to the facts is less relevant than the need to justify the present. It is a natural tendency of social memory, the authors conclude, "to suppress what is not meaningful or satisfying in the collective memories of the past and to interpolate or substitute what seems more appropriate or more in keeping with a particular conception of the world" (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 58; see also Cohen 1985: 99–103). Social memory is retrospective and prospective; it legitimizes the present and looks ahead to the future. This is precisely what the authors of the titles from Mexicapan and Chapultepec hoped to achieve: to address contemporary concerns through a selective construction of the past. As records of the oral tradition written down on paper, the titles represent the social memory of their communities or certain constituencies within the altepetl or ñuu. In this light, titles are not simply confused history or clumsy attempts to falsify legal records; by their nature, they interpret past events in the light of present and future concerns.

If a title's authors knowingly contrived past events to suit their present designs, how reliable is its narrative? The essential subjectivity of social memory does not necessarily compromise the factual content of the information offered by titles, especially when other types of sources provide a context for this information. Indeed, the titles from Oaxaca articulate versions of the past that combine legendary and historic events. The Nahuatl title features four men who were preconquest Mexica *tlatoque* (plural of *tlatoani*, a Nahuatl hereditary ruler) and/or warriors especially known for their

martial valor. Three of these characters, Tlacahuepan, Axayacatl, and Chimalpopoca, are featured in *The Florentine Codex* and the *Cantares Mexicanos*.⁴⁴ Axayacatl, the famous Mexica tlatoani who conquered Tlatelolco, plays a prominent role in many central Mexican annals (Boone 2000: 224). Tlacahuepan, a son of Axayacatl, was memorialized and romanticized in many Nahuatl songs as a hero who died fighting the Huexotzinca. In the title from Mexicapan, however, in which he is called a cousin of Axayacatl and Chimalpopoca, he and the other three warriors defeat the Spaniards with the help of a flood. The recollection of celebrated, historical figures indicates that Nahuatl satellite communities retained central Mexican lore nearly two centuries after the Conquest. In reality, the three men could not have fought together because they lived at different times, but legendary heroes are not bound by such mortal concerns.

The Zapotec noblewoman of the Nahuatl title probably represents a Nahuatl-Zapotec marriage alliance, such as the historic union between the daughter of Ahuitzotl, the Mexica tlatoani, and the Zapotec lord, Cosijoeza. The beleaguered Zapotec noblewoman’s reliance on the Mexica for protection corresponds with sixteenth-century sources stating that the Zapotecs had forged an alliance with the Nahuas against the Mixtecs in the Valley of Oaxaca.⁴⁵ Significantly, the two hills on which the Nahuas first confronted the Spaniards in the title, Huaxacatzin and Acatepec, were sites of Mexica garrisons in the years before the Spanish Conquest.⁴⁶ The first part of the Nahuatl title focuses on war and subsequent tribute arrangements resulting from the so-called original conquest. Yet this alliance between the Nahuas and the Zapotecs was created before the arrival of the Spaniards, and so it could not have been sanctioned by Cortés. The Nahuas exploited the Mixtec-Zapotec rivalry to establish a foothold in the area; implicit in Nahuatl aid to the Zapotecs was the promise of new lands and tribute. Similarly, aiding the Spaniards on expeditions guaranteed the Nahuas land to settle and favored status in the conquered region. Again, fundamental native conceptions of conquest and alliance shape the documents’ contents.

The Nahuatl title’s reference to the Mixtecs as cannibals further justifies Mexica involvement in Oaxaca. The authors consciously appealed to a Christian audience’s sensibilities by accusing the Mixtecs of cannibalism and ritual human sacrifice. In other words, the Nahuatl title portrays the Mixtecs as barbarians. In fact, the Nahuas attempted to validate their own conquest in Spanish terms. They affirmed at the end of the narrative that they fought willingly, that they killed in battle, that they fought with gunpowder, and that they captured black slaves — “just like the Spaniards.” Finally, they proclaimed their belief in the “true ruler God.” This process of

regulation, in which the speakers/writers strategically appeal to the ethical values of the addressee, is typical of this discourse and has been observed in the Maya chronicles (Hanks 1987). The authors project a preconquest objective of warfare, to capture slaves, onto the description of a postconquest battle. But here the victors mimic Spaniards by taking and possessing African slaves. They validate their own power in the new order by dominating another subaltern group.⁴⁷

In reference to better-known accounts of the period, León-Portilla (1969: 124) wrote that “native records of the Conquest are dramatic proof of the persistence of what can be called a deeply rooted historical consciousness.” This assertion applies equally to the titles. Most titles feature an encounter with the Spaniards, yet few attribute any negative repercussions to this event. In the titles from Oaxaca, military defeat is either denied or downplayed. It is true that the Spanish invasion was more violent in central Mexico than in Oaxaca, but the impact of these events is understated even in titles that were produced in places where the fighting was fierce and prolonged. The titles selectively sequence and suppress events in such a way as to give them new meaning.⁴⁸

After describing the initial encounter, titles highlight the acts that symbolize a community’s evolution into a Spanish-style municipality. Community members received baptism and Christian names, and then they built the local church. The establishment of the *cabildo* is another landmark event that conveyed status and legitimacy to the community (Wood 1991: 184; Gibson 1964: 33–57). Despite being modeled on a Spanish institution, *cabildo* offices retained certain preconquest responsibilities. The transition to municipal government is portrayed as an autonomous process that was undertaken by the community, rather than an external Spanish imposition.

In the end, all titles focus on land. The survey of lands and borders witnessed by the community is the most predictable part of the title, usually corresponding to Spanish methods of investigation. Because the customary procedure of walking borders included a number of witnesses, many community members were probably familiar with the protocol of land grants. Each side attempted to demonstrate that a boundary dispute with another community had been settled earlier and that the designation of borders had been witnessed and approved by both indigenous and Spanish officials. Both sides denied instigating the dispute, and both warned others not to interfere with the existing agreement, as they understood it. For these reasons, the Mixtec map contains a suspicious addendum to the main text: “*no tenemos pleito con los mexicanos*” (we don’t have a legal dispute against the Mexicans). This telling statement does not appear in the original Mixtec passage. In reality, the dispute with Mexicapan and the *cacique* of Cuila-

pan is the very reason for the map's existence. The authors had to portray an amicable resolution of conflict in the 1520s in order to support their claim in the 1690s, which might have been jeopardized by an admission of ongoing conflict. Finally, each title makes specific recommendations for the future. In this sense, as Enrique Florescano (1994: 119) has noted, the titles retrieve ancestral claims from the past, but they also transmit messages to future generations.

The titles from Oaxaca cannot speak of the past without referring to specific ethnic identities. Indeed, the authors assert their communities' historic rights and unique origins on ethnic grounds.

Ethnicity and Identity

In his analysis of titles from central Mexico, Lockhart (1992: 417) noted that a "broader ethnic awareness or solidarity is no more to be found in the titles than anywhere else." Like most Nahuatl-language documentation, titles emphasize their identification with the local *altepetl* and *calpolli* (subdivisions of the *altepetl*) rather than broader ethnic categories (ibid.: 115). Likewise, in Yucatan, primordial titles rarely speak of an ethnic consciousness beyond the *cab* (Yucatecan Maya term for a community, similar to the Nahuatl *altepetl* and the Mixtec *ñuu*) a specific *chibal* lineage group. In general, indigenous peoples of Yucatan rarely used the term *Maya* as a self-appellation during the colonial period (Restall 1997: 14; 1998: 44–46). The titles from Oaxaca also focus on the Nahuatl *altepetl* or Mixtec *ñuu*, represented by its hereditary rulers or elected leaders. The Nahuatl title describes how groups from specific central Mexican *altepetl* settled separately in the Valley of Oaxaca and retained their corporate identity. Chapultepec's map and title focus on the interests of the *ñuu* and related settlements.

However, the two titles from Oaxaca also articulate broader, overarching identities by making repeated references to ethnicity and ethnic solidarity. The three Nahuatl-speaking communities of Mexicapan, Xochimilco, and the Marquesado forged an alliance based on common Nahuatl origins. Similarly, San Juan Chapultepec received help in fighting the Nahuas from two other Mixtec *yuhuitayu* of the valley, Cuilapan and Xoxocotlan. The multiethnic setting of the valley and the oppositional nature of their encounter with one another heightened each group's consciousness of its origin and language.⁴⁹

The Nahuatl title justifies and explains the historic presence of the Mexicatla (Mexica people) in the area. The narrative introduces various indigenous ethnic terms: the Nahuas were known as *mexica*, *mexicatla*, and *mexicanos*; the Mixtecs were called *mixteca*, *mixtecatla*, and *tlacame*

mixtec; the Zapotecs were *zapotecatl*. The title even refers to *teomixtecal*, or “the authentic Mixtecs,” who belonged to the yuhuitayu of Chapultepec and Xoxocotlan. Although the Nahuas who accompanied the Spaniards to Oaxaca originated from various central Mexican altepetl, they were collectively called “Mexica” or some derivative in the title and were associated with the one prominent Nahuatl-speaking group from Mexico Tenochtitlan. It is unclear whether this reference to the Mexica was applied to Nahuas in general in the early colonial period or if it was a later development affected by the Spanish term *mexicano*. Twice in the document’s opening sections, the last three letters of “Mexicanos” were crossed out, perhaps in recognition that it was the Spanish version of the original Nahuatl term *Mexica*. Later in the document, however, the author wrote “mexicanos” frequently. Sixteenth-century Nahuatl-language documentation from the Mixteca also referred to the Nahuas as Mexica. The widespread use of *Mexica* reflects the complexity of Nahua identity. Nahua writers did not use the term *Nahua* consistently. It often appears in reference to language, especially in ecclesiastical publications, such as *doctrinas*, confessional manuals, and dictionaries. Although it is probably the best term for the culture group and its language, it is not common in the archival record.

The authors of the Mixtec title articulated a conscious ethnic identity, distinguishing themselves as *tay ñudzahui* (people of the rain place). In Nahuatl, *mixtlan* means “place of the clouds” and *mixteca* is the plural of *mixtecatl*: “people of the cloud place.” After the Conquest, Spaniards adopted the name *Mixtecos* for the people of this region, based on the Nahuatl term. However, in Mixtec-language colonial documentation from the Mixteca Alta, the term *Ñudzahui* has been attested dozens of times, whereas the term *Mixtec* has not been attested.⁵⁰ The self-appellation appears in reference to language, the region, the people as a group, individuals, indigenous flora and fauna, and cultural artifacts, such as metates (grinding stones), clothes, and paper. The term can be found in documentation from the early and late colonial periods and surely originated in the preconquest period (Jansen 1982, 1:226–8, 490 n.). Judging by the context of its usage in the title and other documents, contact with other ethnic groups prompted one’s use of the term. Ethnic boundaries were reaffirmed by the dichotomy between “us” and “others” inherent in the ascriptive, exclusive term.⁵¹ People referred to their cultural, ethnic affiliations when they perceived a need to identify themselves with a familiar, unambiguous term that did not compromise their belonging to a ñuu and one of its subunits.

The *Ñudzahui* authors also applied a broader designation to the Nahuas, whom they called *tay ñucoyo*, or “people of the reed place.” The

term is based on the place-name for Mexico Tenochtitlan, *ñuu coyo*, referring to the Mexica and, by extension, Nahuas.⁵² The Ñudzahui title also refers to the Nahuas as *saminuu*, literally “burnt face or eyes.” The term is rarely found in other Ñudzahui-language sources, but it does appear as an ethnic marker in pictorial writings, in which Nahuas (Toltecs and Aztecs) are represented with blackened eyes and faces.⁵³ Just as the Mixtecs associated the Nahuas with the most prominent atlepetl of central Mexico, Tenochtitlan, they named the Zapotecs after the largest settlement in the Valley of Oaxaca, Teozapotlan, or Tocuisi in Mixtec. In Zapotec, it was called Zaachila. According to sixteenth-century sources, *tay tocuisi* (white noble people) was the term applied to the valley Zapotecs.⁵⁴ The Mixtec title states that Spaniards settled in a place called Ñucuisi or “the white place,” perhaps in reference to Teozapotlan or its Nahuatl semantic equivalent in the valley, Tlalistaca (white land place).

Another indication of the titles’ late colonial production is the fact that they refer to the Spaniards as “españoles.” In the sixteenth century, Spaniards were called *caxtiltecatl* by Nahuas and *tay castilla* by Mixtecs (the latter term was also used once in the title). The titles also employ unusual and enigmatic names for the Spaniards. The Nahuatl title calls the Spaniards “children of the sun” and specifically refers to Cortés as the “ruler of the children of the sun.”⁵⁵ The Mixtec title also refers to the Spaniards by some unusual names, such as *chee cubui nano*, “the great people,” and *chee cuisi*, “white people.” The latter term was translated by the cacique of Guaxolotitlan in 1696 as “Spaniards.” References to Spaniards in terms of skin color are rare in Nahuatl- and Mixtec-language writings, as well as Spanish-language writings, for that matter.⁵⁶ The use of *whites* for Spaniards in the Mixtec parallels the use of *blacks* for Africans in the Nahuatl. Both Nahuas and Mixtecs referred to Africans as “black,” but this designation may have been influenced by the Spanish *negro*. Another term, *chee niquidzatnañu*, “the people who made war,” associates the Spaniards with the Conquest.⁵⁷

The word *Indian* is conspicuously absent from the titles. In Ñudzahui-language documentation from the Mixteca Alta, Baja, and valley, the term *indio* has not been attested a single time. The term is equally rare in colonial Nahuatl documentation.⁵⁸ Indigenous-language sources do not indicate that a generic “Indian” identity had eclipsed specific Nahuatl or Mixtec ethnic identities in the Valley of Oaxaca by this period.⁵⁹ Rather, the two titles confirm the maintenance of specific Ñudzahui and Mexica identities in the Valley of Oaxaca nearly two centuries after the Spanish Conquest. Increased competition for local resources and the growth of the local Spanish-speaking population in and around Oaxaca City provoked

a more assertive expression of indigenous ethnic and corporate identities. In response to external challenges, the authors of the titles drew selectively on culturally specific memories and shared images of the past in order to construct, reinforce, or reconstitute the symbolic and physical boundaries of their communities in the present.⁶⁰ They asserted their perceived cultural and ethnic differences in defense of their communities, when the boundaries of those communities seemed to be threatened by outsiders.

Conclusions

Historians have proposed that official titles, native-language primordial titles, the “Techialoyan” manuscripts, and Spanish-language forgeries constitute a continuum of documents representing indigenous attempts to protect and promote the interests of their corporate communities or special interests therein.⁶¹ We propose that the function and style of the primordial title extend beyond land documentation to encompass a much broader spectrum of indigenous writing and expression. Primordial titles contain elements of many genres. They present testamentary information, if not entire testaments. They resemble all documents pertaining to land in their concern with borders and ceremonies of possession. They employ the flowery and antiquated language of classical speech, and they feature the repetition and rhythm of song. They introduce characters who narrate stories and perform heroic deeds in the manner of performance. Some titles contain pictorial components that are reminiscent of earlier styles and forms. Even titles that rely on the alphabet present similar narratives and address many of the same concerns as the earlier pictorial writings. They resemble annals in their attention to symbolic, local events. They imitate the legal conventions of official petitions and depositions. Most importantly, indigenous titles rely on a spirited oral tradition. Thus, titles constitute a collage of indigenous and Spanish writing genres. Records of the legal proceedings that elicited the titles and additional supporting Spanish-language documentation provide a context for understanding and interpreting the titles.

The titles from Oaxaca present highly selective accounts of the distant past, each of which bristles with local pride and patriotism. One title declared victory over the Spaniards, whereas the other demanded cooperation for the common good. In the end, the titles emphasize triumph and accommodation over conflict and defeat. The authors combined indigenous and Spanish forms of expression to construct their own versions of the past. Rewriting the past to suit present concerns and future aspirations, the Nahua and Ñudzahui writers transformed the Spanish Conquest from cer-

tain defeat into self-serving history. In writing their own conquest histories, the authors sought to make the pen mightier than the sword.

Notes

An earlier version of this article is Terraciano and Sousa 1992.

- 1 The two titles are located in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) Tierras, vol. 236, exp. 6. See Gruzinski 1993: 139–40 for a description of these documents within a larger discussion of the primordial titles genre.
- 2 The difficulty lies in the context, language, origin, and narrative of the texts, as we shall see. Primordial titles also exist in Zapotec, Yucatec Maya, Chontal, Quiche, Cakchiquel, and perhaps other Mesoamerican languages. For recent research on the titles genre in central Mexico see Borah 1991; Florescano 1994: 115–20; Gibson 1964: 271–87; Gruzinski 1993: 98–145; Haskett 1996; Lockhart 1991: chap. 3, 1992: 410–8; and Wood 1984, 1989, 1991. For “chronicles” in the Maya region, see Brinton 1969 [1882]; Carmack 1973; Hill 1991; Restall 1998; and Scholes and Roys 1968. For the Zapotec region, see Oudijk 2000 and Romero Frizzi 2000.
- 3 Borah 1991: 216–21 summarizes the main points of agreement and disagreement among scholars who have studied the Techialoyan codices and the títulos primordiales. For a discussion of the Techialoyans, see Robertson 1975; Wood 1984, 1989; and Harvey 1986.
- 4 A vara measured approximately thirty-three inches.
- 5 For the *Relaciones*, see Acuña 1984, 1:178–81, 2:157–8. See also Spores 1965: 964–6; Whitecotton 1990; Jansen et al. 1998; and Oudijk 2000 on the Valley of Oaxaca at the time of the Spanish Conquest.
- 6 Santa Cruz Xoxocotlan and San Juan Chapultepec were called Ñuhuyoho and Yuchayta in Mixtec, respectively. Actually, *Chapultepec* is the Nahuatl name for the hill next to Yuchayta, which is named Yucutica in Mixtec. It is depicted on the map with a grasshopper glyph. *Yuchayta* means “river of flowers,” not “grasshopper hill.” Often, the Nahuatl names adopted by Spaniards did not correspond in meaning with Mixtec names for places. In any case, most of the Mixtec communities were intact by the end of the colonial period. Mixtec communities included San Juan Chapultepec, Santa Cruz Xoxocotlan, San Pedro Ixtlahuaca, Santa María Atzompa, San Jacinto Amilpas, and San Lucas Tlanichico. Also, Santa Ana Tlapacoya, Santa Ana Zegache, and Zaachila each contained a Mixtec “barrio,” and there were Mixtecs in the western Etlá branch of the valley at Guaxolotitlan, Santiago Xochilquitonco, and Tenexpan.
- 7 William Taylor (1972: 40–41, 115) and John Chance (1978: 32, 83) refer to the documents as possible copies of earlier originals. Based on an analysis of the pictorial portion, Mary Elizabeth Smith noted the possibility that both the document and the painting had been artificially aged, doubting the painting’s date because of its iconographic style. She concluded that it was probably done in 1696, when it was presented (Smith 1973: 207). John B. Glass (1975a: 75) shared this view. Genaro V. Vásquez (1931: 22) thought the Nahuatl text was written in Zapotec.
- 8 The testament, translated by Juan Roque, enumerates the lands belonging to Mexicapan. The language of the testament contains Spanish loan vocabulary

- of a later period, including prepositions, suggesting that it was not written in 1602.
- 9 They were said to present “*papeles, recaudos, mapas y pinturas.*” Unfortunately, the pictorial portion has not been found.
 - 10 AGN Tierras, vol. 236, exp. 6, ff. 20–21.
 - 11 The 1692 Spanish translation of the 1565 Mixtec testament and title of don Diego Cortés was allegedly based on the original, which he claimed was located in Mexico City. The testament’s opening overlaps in content with the Mixtec title from Chapultepec and is typical of many titles. For example, don Diego (whose Mixtec name Dzahui Yuchi is translated as “*aguasero como cuchillo*”) speaks of Cortés’s arrival and proclaims that he was the first to be baptized and to receive the honorific title of “don” in the church of Cuilapa. The testament focuses almost entirely on border descriptions. The document concludes with a list of witnesses described as “*principales deste pueblo, hombres que hisieron la conquista, en el serro delgado de Theosopatlan.*” The last line refutes a competing claim from don Gerónimo de Landa, the father of doña Magdalena Melchora. The nature of this claim is unknown. AGN Tierras, vol. 236, exp. 6, ff. 33–33v.
 - 12 AGN Tierras, vol. 236, exp. 6, f. 99.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, f. 132.
 - 14 For example, in 1760, a survey determined that Chapultepec possessed only half its fundo legal (the 1695 law that provided each community with six hundred varas of land, measured in a radius from the parish church), so adjoining lands were taken from Mexicapan to make up the difference. Though Mexicapan was primarily responsible for Chapultepec’s loss of land, they were forced to rent out many lands to pay off debts accumulated in various lawsuits. One of these lawsuits was the long-standing dispute with Chapultepec. See Taylor 1972: 69 for a brief description of this case. In fact, disputes between the two communities persist to the present.
 - 15 In Terraciano and Sousa 1992, we translated the word *acal* as “boat,” from *acalli*. However, we believe that this is another example of the use of *-l* or *-t* for *-tl* in peripheral Nahuatl, as discussed below. The author wrote *acatl*, “reed,” as *acal*, just as he wrote *atl*, “water,” as *al*.
 - 16 See Smith 1973: 207.
 - 17 AGN Tierras, v. 236, exp. 6, ff. 10–11.
 - 18 See Fentress and Wickham 1992: 17–36 on the use of semantic and sensory (visual) patterns of memorizing and presenting the past, including a discussion of maps as aide-mémoire.
 - 19 The sociopolitical terminology employed in the documents has been retained in the translation, instead of using the rough equivalents of “community” or “pueblo.” This terminology will be discussed below.
 - 20 If the name Dzahui Yuchi were based on the ritual 260-day Mixtec calendar, then it consisted of two day-signs (rain and flint) and no number. This was an unlikely combination. Also, we would expect to find the special calendrical vocabulary for names (and numbers) in this period. For example, in the ritual calendrical vocabulary, “rain” is *co* and “flint” is *куси*. See Smith 1973: 24–26 for a description of the Mixtec ritual calendrical vocabulary. It is interesting to note that Cosijoeza, the name of the ruler of Zaachila at the time of the conquest, has a similar meaning in Zapotec (Oudijk and Jansen 2000: 298–9).
 - 21 The “place of guaxe trees” was called Nunduhua in Mixtec, Huaxyacac in Nahuatl, or Oaxaca in Spanish.

- 22 Some parts of this document are difficult to read and translate, especially the faded second page. Also, much less is known about the valley variant of the language because there are few Mixtec-language records from this area. As explained below, *chayu* is the valley (and Yanhuitlan) equivalent of *tayu*, which is short for *yuhuitayu*.
- 23 The map and title were allegedly done on the same day, 8 February 1523. One refers to the day as Monday and the other as Tuesday.
- 24 For example, the standard central Mexican absolutive suffix *-tl* is commonly written as *-l* or *-t* in peripheral Nahuatl, and *ch* and *h* were interchanged; in some cases, *x* is substituted for *ch*. The glottal *h* in central Mexican Nahuatl is written as *c*. Peripheral Nahuatl is also unique in that nouns often carry both the possessive prefix and the absolutive suffix, and *nahuac*, “next to, near,” is used as the main relational. The second- and third-person singular and plural reflexive pronoun *mo-* is frequently employed to mark first-person singular and plural; the extension of reflexive *mo-* to first person is also characteristic of Tlaxcala Nahuatl. Finally, the title contains unusual vocabulary; for example, the first word of the document carries the *-pol* suffix, which normally has a derogatory connotation, but its addition to the pronoun *nehuatl* may suggest some form of (mock?) humility. These are only a few of the many characteristics of peripheral Nahuatl represented in the text. On peripheral Nahuatl, see Dakin 1981.
- 25 Examples of Spanish nouns as they appear in the text include: *normano* (*hermano* with the Nahuatl first-person, possessive prefix); *noprino*; *tobarríos*; *tomarques*; *laudensiatl*; *tocabildo*; *ofissyo*; *siudad*. Stage three phenomena of borrowed verbs and particles are evidenced by the following words: *entregar*; *obligar*; *para*; and *hasta*. Finally, the use of *panos*, “to occur,” in the sense of the Spanish verb *pasar* is a calque, a stage three phenomenon.
- 26 For discussions of the evolution of Nahuatl in contact with Spanish based on a study of language contact phenomena in Nahuatl-language writing from central Mexico, see Karttunen and Lockhart 1976 and Lockhart 1992.
- 27 Fray Antonio de los Reyes, author of *Arte en lengua mixteca*, observed in 1593 that the Cuilapan variant of Mixtec was influenced by contact with Yanhuitlan and the Mixteca Baja (Reyes 1976 [1593]: vii). For example, the first-person pronoun in this document, *yuhu*, was written *yuhu* in the Baja, *nduhu* in the Teposcolula area, and *njuhu* or *nchubu* in the Yanhuitlan area. Orthographic variation presumably reflects phonetic differences in each variant. In this document, [t] is written as [ch] before [a] and [i]; for example, the *tayu* of Teposcolula is written here as *chayu*; *nduta* is written as *nducha*. As in the Baja, “today” or “now” was written as *huicha*, as opposed to *huitna* in the Alta; similarly, “palace” was written as *aniy* in the valley, as opposed to *aniñe* in the Mixteca Alta. These differences are confirmed by other records from the Valley of Oaxaca. Honorific pronouns used throughout the Mixteca Alta (for example, *ñadzaña* for first-person singular or plural) were not employed in the title. Likewise, they do not appear in the Baja. See Josserand 1983 for a discussion of dialectal variation in the Mixteca. See Terraciano 2001: chap. 3 for a discussion of the language of colonial texts.
- 28 Loan words in the Mixtec title include *siyudad*, *españole*, *vario*, *título*, *mapa*, and *pena*.
- 29 One difference is the use of *bi* in the map (as in *nicubi*, *bichan*), compared to the use of *hui* and *vui* in the document.
- 30 Smith reproduced the map in her work on Mixtec pictorial writing; she trans-

- lated its boundaries and noted its relation to the 1771 map of Xoxocotlan. See Smith 1973: 202–10, 340 Figure 164; for map of Xoxocotlan, see 338–9 Figures 162–3.
- 31 See Haskett 1996 for a discussion of the symbolism of coats of arms in Nahuatl primordial titles.
 - 32 San Juan and Santa Ana are on the left; San Martín and the Marquesado are on the right. The glosses include the names for: Oaxaca (*ñoduvua*); Santa Catalina de Oaxaca (*ñodzoduhua*); the cabecera of the Marquesado (*dzini ño marquesado*, literally “head ñuu”[of the] Marquesado); various churches (*hue ño*, *hue ñoho*, *hue ñobo sam martin sibi siña chee ñocoo*); the road to Oaxaca (*ychi ñoduhua*); the road to Xoxocotlan (*ychi ñoyoo*); and the Atoyac River (*yuchadzaño*).
 - 33 *Tayu* is given for “pair” (*par*) in the *Vocabulario*, and the term for *marido y muger casados* is *tay nicuui tayu* or “those who were paired” or “seated together.” See Alvarado 1964 [1593]: 161, 146.
 - 34 Mixtec codices depicted a construction of hereditary rule and succession that required direct descent from two royal parents. Alfonso Caso (1977–9, 1:30) recognized this unique aspect of Mixtec succession, although he focused on the male rulers. For a discussion of Mixtec royal succession, see Spores 1967: 131–54, esp. 145 on female succession. See also Smith 1973: 29–31; Jansen 1982, 1:59–60; Marcus 1992: 229–37; and Terraciano 2001, chap. 6.
 - 35 On the manipulation of symbols to promote community consciousness, see Cohen 1985: 11–15.
 - 36 Whereas most Nahuatl histories document how they won land after a long migration, Mixtec pictorial histories show how they have lived upon the same land since the beginning of time. This general pattern applies to the titles from Oaxaca.
 - 37 In a primordial title from Sula, for example, a quail defends the altepetl from attack. Sula is from the Nahuatl *Çollan*, or “place of quail.” On the title from Sula, see Lockhart 1982. *The Florentine Codex* also refers to reeds as weapons. In book 12, Nahuas referred to war arrows as “yellow reeds.” See Lockhart 1993: 136 for a translation of book 12.
 - 38 The Mixtec title refers to Acatepetl as *saminoo*, which was another term for the Mexica, discussed below.
 - 39 Boone 2000: 166, in reference to the Mapa Sigüenza.
 - 40 See Bierhorst 1985: 356–65 for examples of metaphors involving pleasure and warfare.
 - 41 On the role of ceremony in creating and sustaining social memory, see Conner-ton 1989.
 - 42 The codices were probably not read in our conventional manner of reading to oneself silently but were rendered in a more public setting as scores or scripts filled with performance guides and mnemonic devices for recitation. The presentation may have included song, music, and dance. On performance and song in the Mixtec codices, see Jansen 1982, 1:46; King 1990: 141–51; Monaghan 1990: 133–9.
 - 43 For discussions of collective memory and social memory, see Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992; and Le Goff 1992.
 - 44 In the *Florentine Codex*, Tlacahuepantzin is one of several valiant warriors who died in battle. See Sahagún 1969: book 6, p. 13 n. 11. Chimalpopoca was tlatoani of Tenochtitlan from ca. 1417 to 1426 C.E.; Axayacatzin ruled from ca. 1468

- until 1481. See Bierhorst 1985: 53, 444 for references to these figures in the *Can-
tares Mexicanos*. For example, Axayacatl appears in songs 47 and 65, and in song
67 Tlachahuepan represents Mexico in battle. We have not found any references
to the fourth hero of the title, Tonalyeyecatzin.
- 45 For a synthetic account of these events, see Spores 1965: 964–7.
- 46 We assume that Huaxacatzin is the same as Huaxyacac. The *Relación geográfica*
of Teozapotlan referred to Acatepec as a garrison. Smith (1973: 207–8) asso-
ciated the hill called Yucuyoo (depicted on the map) with Acatepec.
- 47 In his analysis of a Pech primordial title from Yucatan, Matthew Restall (1998:
44) observed the lack of distinction between the “Spanish conquerors and the
Maya conquered.” The authors of the title criticized Maya from outside the
Pech-controlled areas who “were not willing to deliver themselves to Dios.”
Just as the Nahuas of Mexicapan boasted of their role as conquerors over other
indigenous groups, the Pech accentuated their role as allies of the conquerors.
Of course, no group championed its perceived role as allies of the Spaniards
more than the Tlaxcalans of central Mexico. For a recent study of conquest
pictorial writings from Tlaxcala, see Kranz 2001.
- 48 According to Fentress and Wickham (1992: 201), this process is typical of the
way social memory is constructed.
- 49 Wood has documented the use of primordial titles and codices among multi-
ethnic or non-Nahua communities, involving the Matlatzinca, Mexica, and
Otomí. She has observed a few examples of a broader indigenous identity that
did not compromise an immediate identification with the altepetl. See Wood
1984: 332–43; Wood 1991; and Lockhart 1991, 1992.
- 50 See Terraciano 1998 and 2001 for a discussion of this term in the colonial
period. *Nudzahui* is the most commonly attested form of the word in native-
language writings from the colonial period, even though some friars who
studied the language and who attempted to develop and promote a standard-
ized orthography in the Mixteca Alta distinguished *vui* from *hui* and wrote *dza-
vui* instead of *dzahui*. Namely, *vu* plus a vowel was distinguished from *hu* plus
a vowel in that the latter marked a medial glottal before [w]. In reality, this
distinction was either unknown or ignored by many native writers, who wrote
dzahui most of the time. The phonetic value of *dz* ranged from [d] and [d̥] to [z]
and [s], depending on the dialect area or variant. This term is still used by many
Mixtecan speakers in reference to themselves and is spelled and pronounced
many different ways, as it was in the colonial period. Thus, we use the most
common form of the term in the colonial period as it appears most often in the
record.
- 51 For a discussion of ethnic boundaries, see Barth 1969: 14–15 and Cohen 1985.
- 52 The reference to “place of reeds” is associated with Tula; this is probably an
association of the Mexica with their mythical/historical Toltec predecessors, or
merely a reference to the physical landscape of Tenochtitlan, or a more meta-
phorical allusion. The depiction of Tenochtitlan in the Codex Sierra is very sim-
ilar to the place sign for Tula in the Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca, except the
latter has no Mixtec *ñuu* frieze symbol at the base.
- 53 Alvarado (1964 [1593]: f. 149v) lists *saminuu* as one of four definitions for *mexi-
canos*. On the appearance of *saminuu* in the codices, see Jansen 1992: 27. John
Pohl has attributed this identifying characteristic as an association with the
legendary leader Camaxtli-Mixcoatl, a Chichimec leader from the seven caves

- of Chicomoztoc who killed Itzapotlotl, burned her body, and smeared the ashes on his face as a sign of their conquest (Pohl 1994: 93–108; Byland and Pohl 1994: 142–6). See also Smith 1973: 209 for a discussion of this term.
- 54 Another prominent group in the area, the Chocho or *tay tocuü*, were associated with the color green.
- 55 In 1910, in his interpretation of the Mixtec Codex Columbino, Abraham Castellanos (1910) referred to the Spaniards as false “children of the sun” and “white men” who came from the east. He referred to the Quetzalcoatl legend of central Mexico, in which the Spaniards were mistaken as warriors sent by “our father the sun.” To Castellanos, the real “children of the sun” were the ancient indigenous ancestors. Clearly, the terminology of the titles was preserved in the oral tradition of Oaxaca more than two centuries later.
- 56 For a discussion of such racial and social terminology in postconquest Nahuatl-language writings, see Lockhart 1992: 115.
- 57 The subsequent reference to *ñuhu* and *nduhua* may refer to Oaxaca (Ñunduhua in Mixtec), or it may be another reference to war. The expression “to do battle” was *caba-nduvua-ñuhu*, and the verb “to conquer” was *chibi-nduvua-ñuhu-ñaha* (Alvarado 1964 [1593]: 33, 52). Both phrases involve the act of thrusting an arrow, *nduvua*, into land, *ñuhu*, evoking the symbol for a conquered place in the Mixtec codices, which depicts an arrow sticking out of a place-name glyph.
- 58 The term’s rare appearance in Nahuatl-language documentation involved non-Nahuas and the translation of a Spanish document into Nahuatl. See Lockhart 1991: 8 and 1992: 115.
- 59 See Chance 1976: 620 and 1978: 152 for a different interpretation, especially for Oaxaca City.
- 60 On the use of recalled past experiences, shared images, and symbols on the constitution of social groups and the defense of community, see Fentress and Wickham 1992: xi, 25; and Cohen 1985: 104–18.
- 61 Borah 1991, in reference to the studies of Lockhart and Wood.

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