Nahuas and Spaniards

Postconquest Central Mexican History and Philology

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As the process of collecting, transcribing, translating, and publishing a
corpus of mundane Nahuatl documentation continues, we see the importance
not only of a chronological spread and a wide variety of document types but
also of a wide representation of regions across central Mexico. To date, the
Valleys of Mexico and Toluca are somewhat overrepresented. Concentra-
tions of documents from Tlaxcala, Cuauhtinchan, and Cuernavaca go far
toward correcting the imbalance, but whenever a cache of Nahuatl texts from
an additional region reaches the eyes of scholars in the field, a wider per-
spective is gained, and our sense of the universality or peculiarity of a whole
range of social-cultural developments is strengthened.

The Tulancingo Collection of UCLA is a potentially valuable resource
in this respect, concerning as it does a large province on the northeastern
periphery of the Nahuatl-speaking peoples (east of Pachuca and north of
Tlaxcala) about whose internal development until now little has been
known. The collection is in two parts, of which the one relevant here is
numbered 2073 in the Research Library's Special Collections.1 It consists
of diverse documents dated from the 1560's to the 1820's, apparently taken
at some time from the archive of the chief magistrate or alcalde mayor of the
Tulancingo district. Most of the papers are in Spanish, but perhaps a fourth
or fifth are in Nahuatl, dated variously from 1567 into the 1760's. Many
were written in Tulancingo proper, others in surrounding settlements such as
Acatlan, Totopec, Xalitepec, and Acaxochitlan. The material is distrib-
uted in 34 folders, none containing more than fifty to seventy pages, and
most far less.

Fragmentary as it is, containing only a small fraction of the larger ar-
chive of the alcalde mayor reputed to be in private hands, the collection is
the only one presently known to me which originates in a single Mexican
provincial center, is distributed chronologically across all three postconquest
centuries, and contains Nahuatl documents of diverse types integrated with
Spanish documents (as opposed to some invaluable collections that are
largely from one period—usually an early one,—are entirely internal to the
Indian community, or consist entirely of one kind of document, such as
testaments).

From the collection quickly emerges the fact that, despite its relatively
peripheral position, Tulancingo shared the general characteristics of post-
conquest central Mexico in several basic ways: internal organization of the
indigenous community, the latter's cultural, social, and economic practices,
its manner of expression, its relation to the Spanish community growing up
alongside it. The overall chronology of change was also similar, with per-
haps a retardation of some years in certain respects, compared to centers such
as Tlaxcala and areas close to Mexico City. Item 2 in the present volume
points these things out in the realm of sixteenth-century local governmental
practice, comparing Tulancingo with the better known Tlaxcala.

It is a bit surprising to find out how much in the mainstream Tulancingo
was as to language and writing. The style of writing and orthographic
conventions in the Nahuatl texts of Tulancingo are very much like those
seen in the larger centers of the Valley of Mexico, more polished and
standard than what is typically found, for example, in the Valley of Toluca
or in smaller or more remote centers generally. The same is true of the
language itself, which turns out not to share any of the special character-
istics of the Tlaxcala-Puebla region to the south.2 By the late seventeenth
and eighteenth centuries, it is true, some of the texts do show greater
idiosyncrasy, but that fact itself places them within the broader trend of the
time.

Two outstanding subsections of the collection are 1) a liberal selection
of documents from the 1570's and 1580's, in which individuals both Span-
ish and Indian recur frequently enough to throw some light on the overall
articulation of the community, and (2) a sheaf of documents, mainly in
Nahuatl, showing how a Gómez family gradually bought up bits of land
over two generations (middle and later seventeenth century) from individual
Indians, usually commoners. In the first section especially, and to a lesser
extent throughout the collection, one will find scattered details concerning
the organization of indigenous Tulancingo into two halves, Tlatocan and
Tlaxipan (see Item 2).

The Spanish-language materials are also instructive, especially for the
late sixteenth century. For that time they reveal dominant encomendero
families, based in Mexico City, with employees and lesser relatives taking
care of family interests on the local scene. Mainly humble Spaniards, with
some foreigners among them, were beginning to raise stock, especially
sheep, and in some cases to grow wheat and maize for sale. Some mulatos
and mestizos held intermediate positions, while a certain number of
Indians had learned enough Spanish skills to enter Spanish employ as crafts-
men and keepers of stock. The center of the town of Tulancingo was be-
ginning to become Spanish. At the main church, a mass was said for Spaniards after the one for Indians. A Spanish merchant rented a store on the square, and a black owned a house there. Also to be found on the square was Antonio Genovés, an Italian tratará (petty trader) and tavern keeper. In a word, the picture is strikingly similar to that seen in the Toluca region at the same time (see Item 12 in this volume). Indeed, one of the stockmen in Toluca, Francisco Gómez Maya, came there directly from Tulancingo, where he had leased the sheep ranches (estancias) belonging to the two halves of the indigenous corporation.3

Here follow, then, some sample Nahuatl documents from the collection, in transcription and translation, with comment. Texts 1 and 2 belong to the materials of the 1570's and 80's. Document 3, from the mid-seventeenth century, belongs to the Gómez papers, and Document 4, dated 1720, shows the municipal council of Tulancingo in its late-colonial unified form, in contrast to the two separate cabildos of the earlier period.

**Text 1. Petition of a group of painters to the Spanish alcalde mayor for pay from the altepetl.** Tulancingo, 1570. Folder 1.

Conflicts over whether indigenous artisans should be paid by the altepetl for services performed for the municipality or its church is a recurring theme in Nahuatl documents of the sixteenth century. An example is found in the cabildo minutes of Tlaxcala.4 Here the altepetl officials have refused to pay a group of painters for some work done in connection with the church (not on the church building proper, apparently); nor is this the first time they have done so. The reason for their reluctance is doubtless not any feeling that the matter was outside their purview, for Nahuat municipal organizations in general shouldered a large financial responsibility for church construction and other functions, but a belief that by preconquest standards craftsmen should work on palaces and temples as part of their altepetl duty. (It is not clear whether this matter affects Tlatocan or Tlaxpan, or both.)

The eleven artisans requesting pay are an interesting set about whom the document contains some suggestive hints. They refer to themselves as tlacuiloque, "painters with color," apparently to distinguish themselves from writers on paper, who shared the generic term tlacuiloque. None of them is able to sign his name. On the other hand, the names themselves tell us something of the group's status, for even though rank and name type do not always correspond in a single case, a whole set of names can be very indicative.

Not one of the painters bears an indigenous surname, which, given the time period, tends to place them above the lowest ranking members of society, nor do any show the double first name that was the next step up. Five, however, have saints' names as surname, a name type that at a moment's notice could become a double first name. That is, it is possible that the Juan de San Francisco on the list was known ordinarily as just Juan Francisco and appears here somewhat dressed up for the occasion. Two painters have a higher-sounding religious surname, de los Angeles. Four have surnames of the same type as Spaniards, the most prestigious kind borne by Indians, but some distinctions must be observed. Three of the four are patronymics, the lowest-ranking among Spanish names, and two of these are Juárez, which for whatever reason was often used as a name for Indians and was per se not especially prestigious. Only one person bears the kind of non-patronymic surname, Delgado, that was characteristic for the highest-ranking nobles. Not a single one of them has the "don" which preceded first names at the highest level. Thus the overall naming pattern is consonant with a group status intermediary between ordinary commoners and noblemen.

The following listing can perhaps render the above clearer:

| non-patronymic Spanish surname | 1 | Leonardo Delgado |
| ordinary Spanish patronymic | 1 | Marcos Alvarez |
| Spanish patronymic much used as an Indian surname | 2 | Francisco Juárez |
| | | Pedro Juárez |
| religious surname | 2 | Gabriel de los Angeles |
| | | Pedro de los Angeles |
| saint's name as surname | 2 | Juan de San Francisco |
| | | Antonio de San Juan |
| | | Francisco de San Juan |
| | | Baltasar de San Miguel |
| | | Pedro de San Gabriel |

Linguistically and orthographically, the most unusual feature of the document is its attempt to notate the glottal stop. Full consistency is not achieved (for example, in "tovetytlatocatin" no glottal stop is indicated after ó, and in "huallaq̃n" none is indicated after the second a), but even so it would be hard to find another text done outside Spanish auspices with such a full notation. The notational devices employed are equally unusual. The use of h is in itself not uncommon, though the notation of a word-final glottal stop in any fashion is virtually unseen elsewhere (as in "tlatoq̃ nh," "otihuallaq̃n"). The most unique aspect of all is in the diacritics employed.
Spanish-inspired texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often use a grave accent to indicate glottal stop, but here an acute accent is put to that use. In all likelihood, some Franciscan friar with his own notions about how to write Nahua was stationed at Tulancingo at some point, and the writer of the present document had been his pupil.

To the very magnificent lord:
Here is that with which we have come before the lord our ruler, we painters whose home is here in Tulancingo; we address ourselves to the rulership of our great ruler the king, His Majesty, and to the lord our alcalde mayor. Here is what we announce about our work; in the present year we worked three months for the holy church; the total of what we did is that we painted four houses and six large cloths for covering (i.e., awnings?), for which the alcalde has not granted us any of our pay. We have told the rulers (the cabildo members), but they do not want to grant us anything. Therefore we have come before our ruler, for very often they withhold our pay for our work. This is all with which we have come before the lord our ruler and with which we kiss his rulerly hands and feet. Let us be paid in his presence, so that we will not be falsely accused of something. This is all with which we implore the lord our ruler.

/Here we who have worked in the year of 1570 give our names:

- gabriel de lus ageles - marcos alarez - peo de lus angeles
- juo de sanc franco - balthasar d. s. miguel - anto d. s. juo
- franco juarez - leonardo dergado franco d. s. juo - peo d. s. gabriel
- peo juarez
(all in the same hand)

Texts 2A and 2B. Petition and counterpetition concerning the activities of (don) Martín Jacobo in Xaltepec. Tulancingo, ca. 1570. Folder 1.

Xaltepec was a major constituent part or subkingdom of the complex altepetl of Tulancingo, and the person accused here, who then makes petitions in return, must have been Xaltepec's dynastic ruler, or at least the head of one of its lordly houses. He styles himself don Martín Jacobo, though his enemies deny him the "don." The brunt of the accusation, made in the court of the Spanish alcalde mayor, is that don Martín has been taking calpalli land as his own and alienating it to Spaniards; one of these Spaniards has married don Martín's daughter. In his own statement don Martín reveals that he has also been accused of excess in exercising the traditional prerogatives of a lord. Both of these complaints were common all over sixteenth-century central Mexico. It is not entirely clear what body the accusers represent, but some if not all of them are persons of rank rather than the directly affected commoners. Pedro Jiménez, who heads the list of petitioners, was regidor on the Tlaxpan cabildo in 1569 and majordomo in 1582. He is the same person as the Pedro Tepanecatl teuctli at the head of don Martín's list (as regidor he appeared as Pedro Jiménez Tepanecatl teuctli). Teuctli means "lord," and in don Martín's list two of the accusers bear this title. The Andrés de Soto who is second among the petitioners must be the same person as the don Andrés de Soto who was alcalde on the Tlaxpan cabildo in 1585. (For the cabildo positions see Item 2 in this volume, Table 3.) Xaltepec, then, clearly belonged to the Tlaxpan half of Tulancingo.

Each side in the controversy has Spanish allies, and each accuses the other of aiding them or being instigated by them. In Spanish-language documents in Folder 1, it turns out that don Martín's Spanish son-in-law, Francisco de Morillones, had occupied the rather lowly post of constable in Tulancingo and had worked for an encomendero. The friend of the other side, Pedro Giraldo, was a farming entrepreneur (labrador) residing in Xal-
tepec. Although he was somehow related to an earlier encomendero of the area, his enterprises were not very high flying; he had been accused of selling beef to local Indians without precise weight. As usual, Spaniards who are directly involved in Indians' affairs prove to be relatively marginal in Spanish society.

Text 2A contains some noteworthy Nahuatl terminology. The document makes one of the clearest explicit statements known concerning the basic structure of Nahuatl land holdings, which consisted of two types, a central plot where the household was located and second, optionally but characteristically, one or more often smaller plots at some distance. The statement runs “atley en ijolal y vá anotley en ivécámil y ýchivá,” “they have no lot, nor do they have any distant field to work.” The usual term for the central plot was callalli, “house-land.” Here it is jolal, taken from Spanish solar, “lot.” In Spanish the word usually means an assigned residential lot of uniform size and rectangular shape in an urban setting, but it is clear that to the writer of the present text it signifies the same thing as “house-land.” House-land is mentioned quite frequently in Nahuatl documentation generally. But though scattered additional plots are frequently seen in wills and other sources, a well defined general term for this kind of holding is mainly lacking. Here we have such a term, huecamilli, literally “far field.”

Equally interesting, but more obscure, is the term nauhco. Since it contains the element nauh-, “four,” and since Nahuatl sociopolitical units at all levels often had four subdivisions, I take it to refer to four parts of Xaltepec, but the -coco element remains mysterious to me at present.

Text 2A. Complaint against Martín Jacobo by a delegation from Xaltepec.

muy magú señor
Ma evatzin y dotlahćomaquixtacitzin
jesù xīppó [m]otlahcincó ye dotlah-
çonavizitchióxàcinne can achiçín
ye dnicpechclicia y mojosticacitzin
ma xintechmixachilin ca tevanti
y ditotlelvia y inxápincin y norte-
veitlahotcauh Rey
Ca tevanti pō ximmenes y vá ares de
suto y vá augustin viznavatli vá
pablo tepanecatl y vá nicolas fraú de
sámarnoc tochar xaltepec nauhco-
Very magnificent lord:

May our precious redeemer Jesus
Christ be with you, our dear hon-
ored ruler; it is with only a small
matter that we bow down to your
justice. Recognize us, for we make
complaint before our great ruler the
king.

We, Pedro Jiménez, Andrés de Soto,
Agustín Huiznahuatl, Pablo Tepa-
ceatl, Nicolás, and Francisco de San
Marcos, our home being Xaltepec,
mixpacícin tejin y titolotacitzin
the four [parts], appear before you,
cah ticetylvia y mǐn sacobo ma xic-
momachitcin ca y yehuatl y mǐn sa-
cobo chicotez y vevež y nixatlaxatl
y tocalpolal y tomil ojxunamațiitó
espanoles vel tocolhua totava yniml
uovevemil y vá cenhuitin doxivá do-
pilvá ymil y ñcuxia y ñxmatacín y
caultl tlacah av ivá y nacemal-
titizintí cenca y motolinyà aocle
ey quimchivilia y mlitzintí av ívá
y cenándi y macemacatl atley
en ijolal ca moch ñmocuixtiitíuñ cán
moch évatl ñlacoa y mǐn sacobo y
moch ñxmacadia y ñmotlatxía y ni-
ltatí n altepetl ahu cenjintin macen-
macatl ca ñménamá y tlachcalalxí
atley en ijolal y vá anotley y ivé-
cámil y ýchivá ca ó moch caaxcháin
y imo fraú de morilton yapá cenca
e motolinniá y macemacatl oc yx-
çh in y in xipacícin odiqtoque in se-
ño diego de surío deniete av ascán
dítotolvoavicac in tontolotacitzin
ma xintechmamali y toxisticia y
xle dixitacániyí yltolocaugh Rey
Canal ic ca cenjistcia y amomac-

Be informed that this Martín Jacobo
has sold seven large meadows, our
calpoli land and our fields, to vari-
ous Spaniards, which were very
much our fathers' and our grandfa-
thers' fields, our patrimonial fields,
and from some of our children and
grandchildren (i.e., constituents) he
takes their fields and has made them
the property of Castilians. And the
poor commoners are suffering greatly
and no longer plant fields. Some
of the commoners have no lot; this
Martín Jacobo takes it all and spoils
everything and appropriates the pro-
property of the altepetl. Some com-
moners wrongly pay tribute who
have no lot nor any distant field to
plant, for he gave it all to his son-
in-law Francisco Morillones, for
which reason the commoners are
suffering greatly. All this above is
what we have said before señor
Diego de Soria, lieutenant (of the
alcalde mayor), and now you have
come, our ruler. Give us our justice
and what we are demanding of our
ruler the king, since entire justice is
in your hands (or since that would
be entire justice and it is in your
hands?).

Pedro Jiménez. Andrés de Soto.
Agustín Huiznahuatl. Pablo
Tepanecatl. Nicolás. Francisco de
San Marcos. Alonso Tilhua
Teuctli.
To the very magnificent lord:

I don Martín Jacobo and Juan de la Cruz appear before you who are the representative of our great ruler His Majesty. Listen, O lord, here are the names of those who are accusing me before the law: Pedro Tepanecatl teuctli, Andrés de Soto, Alonso Tilhua teuctli, Juan Ċacancałt, Pablo Tepanecatl, Francisco de San Marcos, Fabián Icnot, and Juan Icuqnoquahu. These are the ones who are presenting themselves before the law. And here is what they are accusing me of: that I mistreat them (by demanding from them) turkeys, cacao, wood, pine torches, and people to fetch water, grind maize at my house, plant my fields, and build my house. Let each one of them verify it before you; interrogate all the (subdistrict) leaders, and let someone come to see how my home and fields are. Now I leave myself in your hands and demand my justice; hear it truly. And further, a person named Pedro Giraldo pressed them (into complaining), and they are verifying it before the law only through malice. Now I have given the lord lieutenant (of the alcalde mayor) a petition of mine and a judgment (in my favor). What has he done with my judgment and petition? I don't know whether he has concluded with them or not.

Documents from Tulancingo

Demand them from him so that you will conclude the matter. This is all with which I bow before you.

Don Martín Jacobo.

The present document is one of several Nahuatl land sales in the Tulancingo collection concerning the Gómez family; in each, the Gómezes acquire a small piece of land from an individual. Some of the persons selling land in one document appear as witnesses in other transactions. One gets the impression that the Gómez family was gradually accumulating plots around the borders of their property from Indian neighbors who possibly also worked for them. The documents probably came into the archive of the alcalde mayor of Tulancingo as evidence in one of the campaigns of title verification (composición) which took place in central Mexico in the seventeenth century. Without confirmation by higher Spanish authority, sales by individual Indians to individual Spaniards were of dubious legality, and all the more so if the local indigenous council did not sanction the transaction. Such is the case here, for no mention is made of the cabildo of Tulancingo or any of its officers. The document is prepared by a Juan Hernández who calls himself a notary, but he does not say that he is presently employed by the cabildo.

As far as one can tell, the process of land accumulation by the Gómez family was not very swift, aggressive, or methodical. The main strategy seems to have been simply to await likely opportunities. In the present case, opportunity came in the form of the death of one Agustín de Santiago, leaving an aged wife, Cristina Cecilia, and no son or daughter. The proceeds from the sale could pay for Agustín’s burial and provide some support for Cristina, who would doubtless not have been able to work the land. Thus the transaction seems to have been in the interest of the sellers as well as the buyers. Similar sales frequently took place in which all the parties were indigenous. The unknown quantity here is a grandchild Baltasar Juan who might have expected to inherit the place; the buyers are concerned enough about him to give him a pittance and have him specifically renounce further claims. Possibly Baltasar Juan was too young to care for the property; possibly he had other assets, perhaps inherited from Agustín’s now dead son or daughter; or possibly his interests suffered in the sale. Without more information, we have no way of knowing.
A notable feature of the original document is a diagram of the house and land in question, reproduced on p. 101. Its style contains nothing reminiscent of preconquest pictorial conventions, but its very existence and its placement on the page put it within a certain indigenous tradition. In Tetzoco in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, land documents were often written around a preconquest-style pictorial representation of the land in question, placed in the center of the page. The pictorial part must have been done first; the alphabetical document would then comment upon it, in part duplicating it. As it happens, Tulancingo was in the cultural and political orbit of Tetzoco in preconquest times, and some hints exist of ties continuing after the conquest. It is entirely possible that the land diagram here goes back in some sense to the Tetzoco tradition even though there is nothing in the drawing itself that a local Spaniard might not have done.

Note that while the witnesses for the Spaniards are male, those for Agustín de Santiago are female. The Nahua long remained more willing than the Spaniards to call upon women to attest to the authenticity of legal proceedings.

- Y nican ypan alipetel nallantzincou propicia Sant juñon pabistaca axca ypan mar dez yec 8 yluhtul mani metztli Agoston yipan niquinnomaquillia notatl ynhuanitzitzin sefori juñon gozmez modeacodo yhuan y namanitzzin sefori francisca diaz ca nocecauiloca y niquinnomaquillia y notatl yhuan nocaj yhuan mochi ca cahuati quahuil yipan mani notatl yhuah yhuah (sic) ym omac mani notatl ypan iac dorazho yhuan nochtli mochi niquinnomaquillia yca caxotzli pesus tomizex yzcac teocuitlatl onicelolu 11 pesus nusmatica ahu ync occequi ca ync nictotoc ca nechmotequilc ym sefori juñon gozmez ca nima ayac ten quirot y nhucauhictia yyla oninonciquili ca notlatqui ca naaxca y niamaca hayac ylatqui ypanca nican nino tocotayotl y nehualt agustin de

Here in the alipetel of Tulancingo, province of San Juan Bautista, today Tuesday the 8th day of the month of August, I give my word to sefor Juan Gómez Monteagudo and his wife sefora Francisca Díaz; with my entire I will sell them my land and my house with all the walnut trees which are on my land, and a piece of my land on the other side of the road on which there are peaches and fruit cactus. I sell it all to them for 15 pesos in silver reales; I have received 11 pesos in my hands, and with the rest sefor Juan Gómez will bury me. When I have died, no one whatsoever is to make any objections for a long time to come, for it is my property I am selling, not anyone else’s property, wherefore here I give my name, Agustín de Santiago, and so that my statement will be verified I manifest here my house and land; how it is will appear here:

- ahu y nehualt xquina ancilia yhuan noxhuiah ytocac juñon y nican niquitocha ymniyvantzinco y sefori diego de gasto yhuan luyzlopez yeztecitziyhuah yehuatzin juñon gozmez yhuah tehuant niyentziycohuy yabel clara yhuan melchiora de s.ta maá tleyel niquitoque y oquismonamaquillitehuac y nanmitzin agostin de s.tiago ym icay yhuan ynoxhuiah ca aycoc mocep ten quirot y nhucauhictia ycuiquicauh y tlalli ahu ca cay xuchi y nehualt ca na nomiquic niyahixtica ca hayocmoci ytec niyotlatoqu ytlalli yhuah ca tonehuan otiyquauh y nanmitzin oitancahquiue y oitcopollote ca huel ymacatzinco y otehmonamaquillue y tom oiquimoculiz (sic) noamnic yztag teocuitlatl ca nima ayac ten quirot y nhucauhictia ahu y nehualt juñon pathacar ca nican nechmomoquillia orme pesus y yehuatzin sefori juñon gozmez ca caniuht niyotlatoqui ca cencu nictlocoxmati onechmonakauceliftizinco ca nima ayac quin tlatoz y nhucauhictia ca ye iquicauh y ye oitancahquiue y tocal ca ye yc... ylatquiztin ca sefori juñon gozmez yhuah ynanmitzin sefori francisca dia ca nima ayac quin nhucauhictia y yucauhictia ahu ynqu tlatoz y quenmanga ca quixtlaahuaz huax (sic) matlactli peca.

And I Cristina Cecilia and my grandchild named Baltasar Juan say here, in the presence of the gentlemen Diego de Castro and Luis López, witnesses for Juan Gómez, and our witnesses, Isabel Clara and Melchora de Santa María, that what we will say is that my husband Agustín de Santiago sold his house at dying, and my grandchild will never make any objection in the future about how he gave up the land, and likewise I am awaiting my death and I no longer have any say about the land and house which sustained us both, my husband and me, and we shared (our expenses? that which we have now given up?), for with their very hands they gave us the money and my husband took it in silver, and no one whatsoever is to make any objections for a long time to come. And I Juan Baltasar am being given 2 pesos by sefor Juan Gómez, which he is just giving me as a favor, and I am very beholden and grateful to him, so no one whoever is to make any objections far into the future. This is all, for we have left our house and it is once and for all the property of sefor Juan Gómez and his wife sefora Francisca Díaz, and no one whoever is to take it from them in the
sus tominez ytech monequiz yn ijuciacalitzin toheuytlatocaztin
Rey náro senor yn technopieltia yn oquimotequimaquilli yn dios yn to-
hueylatocaztin totemaquixitzacaztin -
tiø jesu christo ca amo tahahuitzin
ca totoyoxcoxatcizin ma çemicac tic-
toyecencheuillica yn timochinti ni-
can ticate ma yuh mochihua amen
jesus

auh nican tiquintocayotia yn teztigo
yn tehuantli totezicohua nican ti-
quintocayotia ynic netcities yn to-
ltol ynic ce ytoqa ysbel clara ye
ome melchiora de s.ta ma
auh yn yehuatl yn senor juñon gomez
mondeacodo ca nican cate yn itest-
cohua
diego de gastro luys de ribera
ysbel clara melchiora de s.ta ma
(all signatures by notary)
- nehuatl juñon h índz eczcrivano nica
nictallia y nòforma yc netitez yñin
ltolli ca melauac y oniquicuilo
amo tle onicpollo axca ypan mardes
ye 8 tonallli mopohua metziti agusto
años 1645 y circ quimoçelilia yn
tlallamotl y yehuatzi sensor juñon
gomez mondeacodo yhua yanmicitzin
seniora françë diaz ypanca nican
nictallia nòforma juñon hrnz
eczcrivano
- yhua ynic omostac y nocoltzin
yn tomi 4 pös yhua 4 tös yc onaci
yn ipatiuh y calli caxtolli pesus nel
yn oquipanahu nahui tomi nican
nezica ayac aquí dtatoz

future. Whoever should sometime
make objections is to pay 10 pesos
in cash to be used for the courthouse
of our ruler the king our lord who
guards us, who was given office by
God our great ruler and our redeemer
Jesus Christ, who is not our play-
thing but our divine creator; let all
of us who are here always praise
him. May it be so done, Amen,
Jesus.

And here we name the witnesses:
we name here our witnesses to how
our words are true: the first is
named Isabel Clara and the second
Melchora de Santa Maria.

And here are the witnesses of Juan
Gómez Monteagudo:

Diego de Castro. Luis López de Ri-
bera. Isabel Clara. Melchora de
Santa María.
- Juan Hernández, notary, place
here my signature verifying this
statement, and I wrote it truly and
left nothing out. Today, Tuesday
the 8th day of the month of August
of the year 1645, señor Juan Gómez
Monteagudo and his wife señora
Francisco Diaz receive the land doc-
ument, wherefore I set down here my
signature. Juan Hernández, notary.
- And the money with which my
grandfather was buried was 4 pesos
and 4 tomines, with which it attains
the price of the house, 15 pesos, and
in truth exceeded it by 4 tomines.
Here it appears, and no one is to
make objections.

In a common convention of postconquest Nahua inheritance, a dying person bequeathed a piece of land not to a relative but to a saint (or saint’s image); the relative was then put in charge of the land, “to serve the saint with it,” i.e., to support the saint’s cult. What are we to make of such arrangements? It is hard to achieve certainty, for the Nahua themselves could not; ambiguity and contention pursued the lands of saints. In most cases, the actual intention seems to have been to leave the land to the relative, with some expectation that a saint to which the family was devoted (often housed in the family residence) would receive some candles, flowers, and incense. Yet by an arrangement Nahua rationale, saints were conceived to be the residual owners of land, perhaps indeed of all lands. In some cases, and particularly when the whole community was involved, the holder of the land really was a custodian only, a steward for the saint. Yet such a holder might still aspire to full ownership.8

The present document, at whose instigation we cannot be sure, attempts to clear up the picture for one saint’s lands case, but with dubious success. The text speaks at times of the land being left to María Agustina, the holder, but it also says in no uncertain terms that the land belongs to Santa Elena. Where the document says “her grandfather Francisco de la Cruz bequeathed it to her,” or “left it all to her,” the English is no more ambiguous than the Nahuatl. Either Santa Elena or María Agustina could be meant. While it appears that María Agustina’s rights are being confirmed, the mere fact that the municipal corporation is intervening could be ominous. Cases of this type, often evoking in prolonged and bitter controversy, abound from central Mexico in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Notice the form of the cabildo illustrated here. In the sixteenth century Tulancingo had two separate municipal councils for the two moieties of Tlatocan and Tlaixpan, each with its own governor, alcaldes, and regidores (see Item 2 in this volume). At some point in the seventeenth century the two were consolidated, with one governor, one “regidor mayor” (with no simple regidores as far as one can see), and four alcaldes, apparently two each for Tlatocan and Tlaixpan.9

1720, before me don Juan Mal- donado, governor, don Antonio de Galicia, regidor mayor, don Pedro de la Cruz, don Bartolomé de la Cruz, don Juan Ramos, and don José de San Juan, alcaldes, and Antonio Rodríguez, notary of the commonwealth—before me don Juan Maldonado and all of us who serve within the aforesaid altepetl, appeared María Agustina of Temascaltilian about the land at the place called Atempan, a small round field planted in maguey; it begins next to the land of the late don Agustín and reaches as far as the road going to the marketplace. María Agustina’s mother (and her grandfather?) bequeathed it to her; her (the mother’s) late father named Francisco de la Cruz had given it to her, with another house foundation beside a house on a lot, next to the house of the late Antonio de San Juan. This aforesaid land belongs to Santa Elena, with which María Agustina is to serve her, since her late grandfather Francisco de la Cruz bequeathed it to her, along with another piece of land planted in maguey at Tetelá, beginning at the edge of the irrigation ditch by which water goes to the church, where we border on the lord don Diego de Galicia, and then it goes straight as far as the edge of the water; then it goes to the threshing place, straight along the edge of the water, and then it turns and goes straight again until it again reaches the irrigation ditch by which

yn nican ypan Allepetl $0 Ju$0
Bap$0 tollant$0 axcan yc empo-
hualli yhuam matlactli mani metzti
Here in the altepetl of San Juan
Bautista Tulancingo, today the 30th
of the month of July of the year
7. A Language Transition in Eighteenth-Century Mexico: The Change from Nahuatl to Spanish Recordkeeping in the Valley of Toluca

By the mid-eighteenth century central Mexico’s dominant indigenous language, Nahuatl, had been in contact with Spanish for over two hundred years. As a result, it contained numerous Hispanisms, and many Nahuatl speakers habitually used Spanish in certain contexts.¹ At what point in time, among what groups, and for what reasons did Spanish replace Nahuatl as a vehicle of communication? In general, one must still answer such questions rather schematically and speculatively, but for one aspect of the matter—the language used in conducting corporate community business—texts are beginning to come to light which give us a closer view of how certain towns, in the course of the eighteenth century, made the transition from Nahuatl to Spanish in their internal recordkeeping. The particular texts to be used here come from the southern part of the Toluca Valley (the western neighbor of the Valley of Mexico), supplemented by a glimpse at some parallel texts from a segment of the indigenous community of Mexico City.²

The countryside of central Mexico during the colonial period, the area lying in between the dominant but widely interspersed “Spanish” towns such as Mexico City and Puebla, was organized into a large number of Indian municipalities, based on local preconquest states, which despite numerous obligations to the outside were, on a day-to-day basis, locally autonomous under their own town councils. From the mid-sixteenth century forward these Indian towns maintained records of council meetings, trials, land grants, wills, property sales, and the like, in essentially Spanish genres, but written (using the Roman alphabet) in Nahuatl. In some towns, at some periods, a large portion of the local upper group was literate in Nahuatl; in other situations Nahuatl literacy was confined to two or three local specialists who rotated as notaries attached to the town council or church. While almost universal over a wide area, the tradition of Nahuatl writing and recordkeeping was handed down locally in each case, and the numerous texts still preserved are a rich source for the study of Nahuatl speech in a time dimension one might have thought lost to direct observation.