

THE AZTEC ARISTOCRACY IN COLONIAL MEXICO

The student of Aztec "aristocracy" in its colonial period (1519–1810) confronts an historical situation of which the abstract conditions are familiar from other (and often much better known) instances of conquest and long-term adaptation. Romans and Barbarians, Moslems and Christians, Whites and Negroes, and additional examples will immediately suggest themselves. The situation is one wherein a given society, previously independent, suffers subjugation under an external society to the extent that its whole hierarchy of class stratification is subordinated to a new and foreign upper class. The society is demoted as a whole, and whereas for lower classes this entails only a further degradation, for ruling classes the change is absolute, from a dominant to a subordinate rank. Theoretically, at least, one could expect stimulus and response in greatest degree and greatest incidence in the group whose position is most seriously affected. This expectation is fulfilled – to be sure with some local and particular modifications – in the case of the native Mexican aristocracy under Spanish rule. The present objective however is not to argue for this viewpoint but to describe for purposes of comparison the conditions of upper-class Aztec society from the early sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. The subject has many facets and complications. From the point of view of the historian of Latin America its full treatment would require a discussion much more *in extenso*, and certain special topics, e.g., the land holdings of *caciques*, would merit a complete and separate monographic study. The preliminary and provisional nature of all our conclusions should be insisted upon, for the subject has not heretofore received systematic examination.

Upper classes in late Aztec (i.e., pre-colonial) imperial society may be distinguished as follows: the series of sovereign "monarchs", of whom the last was Montezuma II (ruled 1502–1519); the monarchs' retinues and staffs resident in the capital city of Tenochtitlan; similar semi-independent "monarchs" and courts, notably those of Texcoco and Tlacopan (Tacuba); and a complex of local chiefs, military officers, tribute collectors, priests, judicial authorities, and miscellaneous state officials. By the time of the Spanish conquest (1519–1521) these comprised an authoritarian bureaucracy skilled in the characteristic Aztec practices of political administration, religious shamanism (including human

sacrifice), militarism, and tribute assessment and collection. Most high officials, including the Cihuacoatl, Tlacatecatl, Tlacochealcatl, and Huitznahuatl, exercised their offices in Tenochtitlan during the whole or a portion of each year.¹ Outside the capital each substantial community (*altepetl*, *cabecera*) possessed a chief or Tlatohuani (pl. Tlatoque) and a local officialdom supported by community tributes.² Succession in the monarchical and Tlatohuani offices was for the most part hereditary, from brother to brother in some instances, from father to eldest "legitimate" son in others, but with certain additional variants if age or incapacity made the normal heir incapable of inheritance or if the incumbent's own choice fell on another. Many of the Tlatoque and other officials of 1519 were related to one another and to Montezuma either directly or through marriage. The principal officers of the state possessed private lands and received services and tributes from one or more communities or parts of communities. Relatives of the principal lords, forming the Pilli (pl. Pipiltin) group, and members of military orders, forming the Tecuhtli group, likewise received private lands and laborers and other marks of favor. None of these groups was completely separate from the others. The priesthood maintained the cult, guarded the temples, and performed the religious ceremonial. Within the several classes of nobility many gradations of rank and privilege were recognized and at their lowest levels the "upper classes" merged indistinctly with the administrative officers of the sub-community units, *calpulli* and others. The mass occupied *macegual* status, paying tributes, performing military and labor services, and cultivating land principally in the form of usufruct privileges on communal properties.³ A sub-*macegual* class existed

¹ Hernán Cortés, *Cartas de relación de la conquista de México* (2 vols., Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1942), II, 109. Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Apologética historia de las Indias* (*Nueva biblioteca de autores españoles*, XIII; M. Serrano y Sanz et al., eds.; Madrid, Bailly-Bailliére é hijos, 1909), p. 554. *Colección de documentos inéditos, relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, sacados de los archivos del reino, y muy especialmente del de Indias* (title varies; 42 vols.; Madrid, 1864-1884), XIII, 253 ff. (hereafter abbreviated as *CDIAI*). Eduard Seler, trans., *Einige Kapitel aus dem Geschichtswerk des Fray Bernardino de Sahagun* (Stuttgart, Strecker und Schröder, 1927), pp. 459, 566 ff. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (3 vols.; Miguel Acosta Saignes, ed.; México, Editorial Nueva España, S.A., 1946), II, 71 ff. Many other sources treat of these officials.

² The pre-conquest *altepetl* is not however in every case to be equated with the colonial *cabecera*.

³ Las Casas, *op. cit.*, pp. 173 ff., 566 ff. Motolinía (Toribio de Benavente), *History of the Indians of New Spain (Documents and Narratives concerning the Discovery & Conquest of Latin America*, New Series, Number Four; Elizabeth Andros Foster, trans. and ed.; Berkeley, The Cortés Society, 1950), p. 28. Mariano Cuevas, ed., *Documentos inéditos del siglo XVI para la historia de México* (México, Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnología, 1914), pp. 225, 230. Alonso de Zorita, "Breve y sumaria relación de los señores..." *CDIAI*, II, 9 ff., 31, 201-202. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, ed., *Nueva colección de documentos para la historia de México* (3 vols.; México, Editorial Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, 1941), III, 267. Seler, *op. cit.*, p. 493. "La orden que los Yndios tenían en su tiempo para hacerse tecutlis" and other titles, Clements Library, University of Michigan, MS No. 100, Phillipps MSS 13685, pp. 1-17. Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas, "Los macehuales," *Filosofía y letras, Revista de la facultad de*

also, directly under the control of the Tlatoque or others, and in several conditions, including one wherein individuals might be bought and sold or otherwise maintained in a condition approximating that of European slavery.⁴ The records are unanimous in indicating the full social and economic subordination of the *macegual* and sub-*macegual* classes to the others mentioned, and for working purposes all Aztec ranks superior to the *macegual* may be considered as composing the nobility or aristocracy – terms which we here understand to be synonymous and which it would be an excess of refinement more exactly to define and apply to Aztec conditions. The terms are not precise, and they could be made so only arbitrarily and with a much more thorough exposition of the complexities of Aztec social organization.⁵

The effect of the Spanish conquest was practically to eliminate the central Indian authority and the military and priestly ranks. “Imperial” offices either ceased to function after the conquest or came to be controlled under new circumstances by Spaniards. The dynasties of the three major imperial cities suffered the most rapid alterations of their histories, and their jurisdictions were immediately confined to local limits.⁶ In Texcoco the Spaniards recognized a schismatic and collaborating puppet ruler, while fratricide, internal conflict, and dynastic intrigue made of the native administration a complex and shifting sequence.⁷ In Tacuba two successive rulers quickly met their deaths, Totoqui-

filosofía y letras de la Universidad N. de México, II (1941), 119-124. Martín Fernández Navarrete et al., eds., *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España* (112 vols.; Madrid, La Viuda de Calero, etc., 1842-1895), IV, 198 ff. (hereafter abbreviated as *CDIHE*).

⁴ *Don Vasco de Quiroga Documentos* (Rafael Aguayo Spencer, ed., México, Editorial Polis, 1939), pp. 398-400. Carlos Bosch García, *La esclavitud prehispánica entre los aztecas* (México, El Colegio de México, 1944).

⁵ There is no satisfactory full treatment of Mexican social or political organization. The well known paper of Ad. F. Bandelier, “On the Social Organization and Mode of Government of the Ancient Mexicans”, *Twelfth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1880), pp. 557-699, is fundamentally misleading, as are all studies of colonial Indian society that take Bandelier as their point of departure.

⁶ A significant exception to the statement regarding curtailment of jurisdiction lies in the *repartimiento* or labor draft. See Charles Gibson, “Llamamiento General, Repartimiento, and the Empire of Acolhuacan”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXXVI (1956), 1-27.

⁷ Cortés, *op. cit.*, I, 90 ff., 186 ff. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (2 vols.; Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1942), I, 295 ff. *CDIAI*, XXVII, 389 ff. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, *Historia de la nación chichimeca (Obras históricas, II; Alfredo Chavero, ed.; México, Oficina tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1892)*, pp. 329 ff. Francisco de Aguilar, *Historia de la Nueva España* (Alfonso Teja Zabre, ed.; México, Ediciones Botas, 1938), pp. 89, 91. Domingo Francisco de San Anton Muñon Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuauitzin, *Annales de Domingo Francisco de San Anton Muñon Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuauitzin, sixième et septième relations (1258-1612)* (Rémi Siméon, trans. and ed.; *Bibliothèque linguistique américaine*, XII; Paris, Maisonneuve et Ch. Leclerc, Éditeurs, 1889), p. 192. J. M. A. Aubin, *Mémoires sur la peinture didactique et l'écriture figurative des anciens mexicains* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1885), pp. 67-69 and Plate II (Mapa Tlotzin). Eugène Boban, *Documents pour servir à l'histoire du Mexique* (2 vols. and Atlas; Paris, E. Leroux, 1891), I, 213 ff. *Archivo mexicano. Documentos para la historia de México* (2 vols.; México, V. García Torres, 1852-1853), I, 198 ff.

huatzin during the conquest of Tenochtitlan, and Tetelepanquetzaltzin at Spanish hands on the expedition to Honduras in 1525.⁸ In Tenochtitlan, the main capital, five rulers served in rapid order. Montezuma II was killed during the Indian uprising of 1520. Cuitlahuac, his successor, died in the same year from a smallpox plague that the Spaniards unwittingly introduced. Cuauhtemoc, the third ruler, was executed by Spaniards in the spring of 1525, incidentally becoming thereby the chief martyr of modern Mexican Indianism. Cuauhtemoc's successor, the former Cihuacoatl, Don Juan Velásquez Tlacotzin, died while accompanying a Spanish expedition to Guatemala. And the fifth ruler, Don Andrés de Tapia Motelchiuhtzin, was killed in Chichimec action in Sinaloa, while accompanying the expedition of Nuño de Guzmán.⁹

In a superficial examination of the 1520's, these various losses may appear less consequential than in fact they were, for native succession methods continued to operate, vacancies were immediately filled (often, to be sure, under Spanish sponsorship), and a continuity of officeholding by Indians was maintained through the period of shock.¹⁰ It might be argued of the Texcoco (Acolhua) portion of the empire, for example, that the Spanish conquest was less disruptive of native leadership than the pre-colonial Tepanec attack upon the same area in the early fifteenth century, when some eighteen Tlatoque of as many communities had been forcibly removed from office.¹¹ But the comparison is deceptive. The fifteenth-century disturbances had been quickly suppressed and Texcoco had been restored to a position as powerful as before. In the 1520's, on the other hand, the individual deaths signified a progressive loss of native control. The administrative superstructure was destroyed together with its personnel. Rather than a large imperial territory, Montezuma's colonial successors governed only the Indian portion of the city of Tenochtitlan and its immediately adjacent suburban dependencies. Outside of Tenochtitlan, the local Tlatoque

⁸ Ixtlilxóchitl, *op. cit.*, p. 404. Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-207. Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia de la conquista de México* (2 vols.; México, Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1943), II, 144. Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc, *Crónica mexicanoyotl* (Adrián León, trans.; México, Imprenta Universitaria, 1949), p. 165. *Anales de Tlatelolco, Unos Annales históricos de la nación mexicana y Códice de Tlatelolco* (Fuentes para la historia de México, II; Heinrich Berlin and Robert H. Barlow, eds.; México, Antigua Librería Robredo de José Porrua e hijos, 1948), pp. 7, 9.

⁹ "Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas," García Icazbalceta, ed., *op. cit.*, III, 233. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, *Relaciones (Obras históricas)*, I; Alfredo Chavero, ed.; México, Oficina tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1891), p. 450. Byron McAfee and R. H. Barlow, "La segunda parte del Códice Aubin", *Memorias de la Academia mexicana de la historia*, VI (1947), 158. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, *Crónica de la Nueva España* (Madrid, The Hispanic Society of America, 1914), pp. 555, 578. Boban, *op. cit.*, II, 157 ff. Hector Pérez Martínez, *Cuauhtemoc, vida y muerte de una cultura* (México, Editorial Leyenda, 1944), pp. 262-263 ff. López de Gómara, *op. cit.*, II, 143 ff. Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 207, 222. Alvarado Tezozomoc, *op. cit.*, pp. 165 ff. *CDIAI*, XLI, 110. Henri Ternaux-Compans, *Voyages, relations et mémoires originaux pour servir à l'histoire de la découverte de l'Amérique* (20 vols.; Paris, A. Bertrand, 1837-1841), VIII, 265-266; XVI, 177.

¹⁰ Cf. Díaz del Castillo, *op. cit.*, I, 525.

¹¹ Boban, *op. cit.*, I, 231 ff. (Mapa Quinatzin). Ixtlilxóchitl, *Historia*, pp. 167 ff.

continued to function, but they lost contact with the imperial organization, and that organization itself disintegrated rapidly. The pagan priesthood yielded to the Mendicant and episcopal rule of Spanish colonial Catholicism. Members of the Tecuhtli orders adjusted their activities to the period of peace, maintained honorary titles for a time, and finally allowed even these to lapse. Tribute taking became the prerogative of crown officers or of individual Spanish *encomenderos*, each in the area assigned to him. The enormous staff of nobles that Montezuma had housed in his palace was dispersed and the palace site became the residence of the Spanish conquistador, Fernando Cortés.¹² These events indicate obviously the collapse of native imperialism, but they indicate as well the survival or partial survival of its separate elements, especially the individual towns with their Tlatoque. It was in these towns, the connecting political bonds of which had been destroyed, that the Indian nobility was to find its most effective adjustment to colonial life.

During the conquest and the conquest aftermath, Indian resistance to the Spaniards had been punishable by death, either in military attack or, as with Cuauhtemoc of Tenochtitlan and Tetzepanquetzaltzin of Tacuba, by summary execution at the hands of conquistadores. When peaceful conditions were established, secular and ecclesiastical judiciaries assumed the task of controlling recalcitrant native leaders. No inquisitorial tribunal was formally instituted in Mexico until the 1570's – it appeared then as a check on the spiritual purity of Spanish, not Indian, society – but early inquisitorial authority over Indians was exercised by the first bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, and in the post-conquest years the ecclesiastical accusations against idolatrous Indian nobles became additional agencies in the imposition of Hispanic ways. The most noteworthy instance involves the baptized Tlatohuani of Texcoco, Don Carlos Chichimecatecuhtli (Ometochtzin), whose secret *adoratorio* containing idols of Quetzalcoatl, Xipe Totec, and other pagan deities was discovered late in the 1530's. Don Carlos' formal trial, with charges and countercharges and testimonies by Christianized Texcocan leaders is graphically documented. It resulted in his condemnation, his delivery to secular authority, and his execution by burning in the public plaza of Mexico City in November, 1539. The event was witnessed by the viceroy, the bishop, the members of the Audiencia, and a great throng of Indians and Spaniards. Its theatrical aspect, however preceded in the European tradition of capital punishment, is reminiscent of the great public spectacles of human sacrifice in Aztec civilization, but whereas the earlier Aztec victims had been carefully selected for honorable and sacrificial death there could be no question of the punitive character of the Christian act of 1539. Don Carlos' heresies were proclaimed to the assemblage in Nahuatl, and to Indian eyes the act emphatically disgraced and killed the Tlatohuani of one of the foremost Indian cities of Mexico. Christianity, rather than peace alone, had become by the late 1530's a

¹² George Kubler, *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century* (2 vols.; New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948), I, 190 ff.

recognized criterion for acceptable native conduct. Without it no member of the Indian upper class could thereafter maintain his position.¹³

Such punishments, and the whole process wherein the central Indian authority came to be curtailed, fall within what may be called the "negative" aspect of early Spanish relations with the Aztec nobility. In inducing cooperation, an important initial objective for Spaniards was the eradication of non-collaborating individuals, and in this both the civil and the ecclesiastical arms of Spanish authority were capable of vigorous action. But the negative aspect was balanced by a remarkable "positive" aspect, which likewise emphasized the position of the native leaders and which concentrated on the cooperating local Tlatoque, thus encouraging the maintenance and decentralization of community governments. Positive protection of Indian society depended in general upon an admission of Indian rationality and an application of *jus gentium* to the peoples of America, as argued by Matías de Paz, Francisco de Vitoria, and other legal philosophers and theologians of Spain. Their demonstrations strongly affected royal policy. Spanish apologists agreed that the *res publica* of the Indians was to be maintained in all ways compatible with Christianity and civilization: Indian properties were to be preserved; Indians were not to be reduced to slavery; existing Indian rulers were to be respected as "natural lords" (*señores naturales*).¹⁴ In the early post-conquest years the most instrumental and effective supporters of these doctrines were the Mendicant clergy, whose standard technique was to sequester the sons of the Indian nobles and to convert them to Christianity free from the influence of their non-Christian elders.¹⁵ Within a very few years the native nobility came to consist in large part of young men trained by the friars to Christianity and Hispanic ways and ready to take an active, if subordinate, part in colonial life. The friars employed paternalistic and attractive methods with great success. "My ancestors for 900 years had many vassals and subjugated provinces," wrote the heir of the Tlatohuani of Texcoco only fifteen years after Don Carlos' death, "but I have incomparably more than they for I am a Christian with the light of the faith and the water of baptism and am under the lordship of the king."¹⁶ It would be naive to assume

¹³ *Proceso inquisitorial del cacique de Tetzoco* (*Publicaciones del Archivo General de la Nación*, I; México, 1910).

¹⁴ Juan López de Palacios Rubios, *De las islas del mar océano*; Matías de Paz, *Del dominio de los reyes de España sobre los indios* (Silvio Zavala and Agustín Millares Carlo, eds.; México and Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954). *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de ultramar* (25 vols.; Madrid, Est. tip. Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1885-1932), XXI, 200; XXII, 175. (hereafter abbreviated as *CDIU*). Robert S. Chamberlain, "The Concept of the *Señor Natural* as Revealed by Castilian Law and Administrative Documents," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XIX (1939), 130-137.

¹⁵ Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana* (México, Antigua Librería [Impresa por F. Díaz de León y S. White], 1870), pp. 217 ff. *Cartas de Indias* (Madrid, Impr. de M. G. Hernández, 1877), p. 56. *CDIAI*, XXVI, 141. *CDIU*, XXI, 157.

¹⁶ Hernando Pimentel Netzahualcoyotl to Charles V, Texcoco, 25 November, 1554, in

that the statement contains no element of posturing, but in this respect as well as in its literal content it accurately reflects a characteristic Indian attitude of the middle sixteenth century.

The positive phase of Spanish policy expressed from the earliest period a recognition and appreciation of status within Indian society. The policy followed the tradition of the peninsular Reconquista as well as the more recent Spanish experience in the Canary Islands and the West Indies. In all such newly conquered areas Spaniards confronted interrelated economic, political, and ecclesiastical tasks – the effective utilization of native manpower, the establishment of secure and responsible government, the molding of a Christian society – and in each such task the cooperation of a pre-existing native leadership was regarded as essential. Spaniards in Mexico, to be sure, generally failed to comprehend the intricacy of upper-class Indian relations. “Up to now we have no information on their government or system of justice or the true status of their *señores*,” the Audiencia wrote to the king in 1531, “and it all seems to have been a tyranny.”¹⁷ Most Spaniards were not interested in the prior condition of the native aristocracy, save in selected practical considerations, such as the amount of tribute it had received from lower classes. Spanish society in general refused to recognize the particular status positions of Tlacochealcatl or Cihuacoatl.¹⁸ Spaniards simplified and generalized and referred to the existing native upper class in a terminology already familiar. Thus Tlatoque emerged in Spanish understanding as *caciques*, an Arawakian word (with Spanish plural) borrowed and introduced by the Spaniards from the West Indies. The much larger group of the Pipiltin, the surviving members of the military orders or their successors, and certain of the community officials were classified in an undifferentiated way as *principales*. With respect to the mass of the Indian population Spaniards adopted the Nahuatl term, again adding the Spanish plural, in the form *maceguales*, though this usage was far from universal and frequent references were made to such classes as *plebeyos* and *gente común*. At the lowest ranks the terms *mayeque*, *terrazguero*, *tlalmaitl*, *esclavo*, and *naborío* were used, though not wholly indiscriminately.¹⁹ While some of this classification reflected a degree of Hispanic misunderstanding, it corresponded in a gross or over-all way to the main divisions of Aztec society and it was wholly suited to the real conditions of the colony. For the native

Mariano Cuevas, *Historia de la iglesia en México* (5 vols.; El Paso, Editorial “Revista Católica”, 1928), I, 468.

¹⁷ *CDIAI*, XLI, 92. Cf. Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Papeles de Nueva España* (9 vols.; Madrid and México, Est. tip. “Sucesores de Rivadeneyra” etc., 1905-1948), VI, 174.

¹⁸ Cf. Cortés, *op. cit.*, II, 108-109.

¹⁹ Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana* (facsimile edition; Madrid Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1944), *sc.* “Tecutli”. Cristóbal de Castillo, *Fragmentos de la obra general sobre historia de los mexicanos* (Biblioteca Náuatl, V; Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, trans.; Florencia, Tip. de S. Landi, 1908), p. 105. *Don Vasco de Quiroga Documentos*, pp. 398-400. *Actas de cabildo de la ciudad de México* (54 vols.; México, Ed. del “Municipio Libre”, etc., 1889-1916), I, 128.

aristocracy its principal implication relates to the distinction between *caciques* and *principales*, the former occupying higher rank than the latter, while both were recognized as superior to the mass of the Indian population. The descendant, real or supposed, of a conquest Tlatohuani came to be regarded as the *cacique* of his community, and save in exceptional cases no one else was entitled to this rank. His wife (Indian marriage under Christian auspices began in Mexico in 1526) was the *cacica*. Others of his family and the descendants of the officers of the Tlatohuani's court became *principales*, without further distinction.²⁰

Caciques and *principales*, for their part, were immediately alert to the opportunities afforded by Spanish imperialism. Their behavior during the conquest had been characterized by a limited opportunism. Warfare and the conduct of warfare had been by no means novelties to them, and in a sense the advent of the Spanish army represented an additional factor in the continuing warfare among Indians, who fought both for and against Cortés. After the conquest *caciques* and *principales* sought favors from Cortés or addressed themselves directly to the Spanish monarchy. That they did so is perhaps indicative of a desire to perpetuate or re-create relations of a centralist character, in the assumption that Hispanic imperialism, though directed by new personnel, would resemble Aztec imperialism. High-ranking Indians began to visit the king in the earliest post-conquest years, several having already had audiences with Charles V by 1527-1528, when Cortés returned to Spain with a group of about forty upper-class Indians, including several close relatives of Montezuma.²¹ One Mexican community sent six separate delegations to the Spanish court between 1524 and 1585. Other Indian nobles communicated in writing. Their petitions characteristically called attention to the services rendered by themselves or by their ancestors in the conquest, prudently overlooking the period of their resistance to the Spaniards and emphasizing instead their aid in secondary conquests.²² They remarked at length upon their progressive im-

²⁰ Motolinía, *op. cit.*, p. 148. In a few instances Spanish authority elevated converted Indians to a Hispanized rank called "royal Tecuhtli". See *CDIAI*, II, 201-202.

²¹ Vasco de Puga, *Prouisiones, cédulas instrucciones de Su Magestad, ordenanças de difuntos y audiencia para la buena expedición de los negocios y administración de justicia y gouernación de esta Nueva España, y para el buen tratamiento y conseruación de los indios desde el año de 1525 hasta este presente de 63* (2 vols.; México, Edición de "El Sistema Postal", 1878-1879), I, 17-18, 37-38. Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 262-263; XVI, 87-88. *Anales de Tlatelolco*, pp. 10-12. *CDIU*, XVIII, 33. Antonio de Herrera, *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y tierra firme del mar océano* (title varies; 4 vols.; 8 decades; Madrid, Imprenta Real de Nicolás Rodríguez, 1726-1730), II, Dec. III, 287. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia general y natural de las indias, islas y tierra firme del mar océano* (4 vols.; Madrid, Impr. de la Real Academia de la Historia, 1851-1855), III, 527-528. López de Gómara, *op. cit.*, II, 185-186. Amada López de Meneses, "El primer regreso de Hernán Cortés a España", *Revista de Indias*, Año XIV, Núm. 55 (1954), pp. 80 ff.

²² Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 164 ff. *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de Ibero-América* (14 vols.; Madrid, Editorial Ibero-Africano-Americana, 1927-1932), I, 201-202. (hereafter abbreviated as *CDIIA*). Joaquín García Icazbalceta, ed., *Nueva colección de documentos para la historia de*

poverishment under Spanish rule. Without exception their purpose was to secure particular advantage either for themselves or for their communities. It is probable that Charles V and Philip II were intrigued by the visits of exotic vassals from across the sea, visits that represented the only direct contact these monarchs ever knew with native American society. And at least at first, when the experience was still novel, the monarchy took seriously its obligations to the "natural lords" of Mexico. Charles V had his Indian visitors attend Christian schools in Spain, gave them coats of arms, signed cédulas of privilege for them, ordered annuities paid to them from the royal treasury, outfitted them in Spanish clothing (silk sashes and velvet shoes are mentioned) and confirmed their property possessions inherited from pre-conquest times.²³ But the overriding impression gained from an examination of the history of royal grants favoring *caciques* and *principales* is that in most respects the kings accorded only minor or nominal privileges and that so far as meaningful advantage to the Indian upper class was concerned the effort and expense of communicating with the monarchy proved not worth while. Most substantial grants of a kind that promised to interfere with the ambitions of Spaniards in the colony were ignored. "Your majesty granted me two towns that belonged to my father as patrimony," one of the earliest visitors reminded Charles V in 1532, "but no one supported my claim and your letters have not taken effect."²⁴ "The letters we have sent to the king and council either have not been read or have not arrived," a group of *caciques* and *principales* wrote to Philip II in 1570; "The royal cédulas favor us but they are not obeyed here."²⁵ Indian visits to the king became notably less frequent after the mid-sixteenth century, and there can be little question that the fact is related to an increasing Indian disillusion with the monarchy as an effective dispenser of privilege.²⁶

It is true that an instance of remarkably successful adaptation to Spanish society occurred in the Montezuma family. The descendants of Don Pedro Montezuma, as the mestizo Condes de Montezuma in Spain, became wealthy

México (5 vols.; México, Andrade y Morales, Sucesores, 1886-1892), IV, 128-136. Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 261-269. *CDIAI*, XIII, 293-301; XLI, 142-144. Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario de Nueva España 1505-1818 (Biblioteca histórica mexicana de obras inéditas, Segunda Serie; 16 vols.; México, Antigua Librería Robredo, 1939-1942)*, XVI, 74 ff.

²³ *Cedulario heráldico de conquistadores de Nueva España* (México, Talleres gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1933), Nos. 124 ff. Antonio Peñafiel, ed., *Colección de documentos para la historia mexicana* (7 vols.; México, Oficina tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1897-1904), Cuad. 7, pp. 6-8. Francisco F. de la Maza, ed., *Código de colonización y terrenos baldíos de la república mexicana* (México, Oficina tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1893), pp. 6-7. Francisco Fernández del Castillo, *Apuntes para la historia de San Angel (San Jacinto Tenanitla) y sus alrededores* (México, Imp. del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnología, 1913), p. 24. *Nobilaro de conquistadores de Indias* (Madrid, 1892), pp. 250 ff. *CDIU*, XVIII, 33. *CDIAI*, II, 315-316. Herrera, *op. cit.*, II, Dec. III, p. 287. Museo Nacional, México, Documentos sueltos, primera serie, Leg. 23, Nos. 44 ff.

²⁴ Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 263.

²⁵ García Icazbalceta, ed., *Nueva colección* (1886-1892), IV, 129.

²⁶ Cf. *CDIU*, XXI, 224.

grandees and one of them became Viceroy of Mexico in the late seventeenth century. But the Montezuma family history represents a non-Mexican and untypical solution of the normal *caciques'* problems, which related to the maintenance of traditional positions of community authority, the preservation of inherited private lands and servants, and the protection of communities against exploitation by white colonists. Most *caciques* and *principales* remained dependent upon their immediate environments and worked out solutions in their own localities independently of any real royal aid. Many *caciques* were able to establish themselves as *gobernadores* of their pueblos when Viceroy Mendoza instituted the elective Hispanic offices in the Indian municipalities after 1535. In this system, which came to be adopted in most *cabeceras* by the 1560's, municipal *cabildos* were established, with Indian officeholders chosen customarily by the local *principales*. The office of *gobernador* entitled a *cacique* to regular services and salaries supplied by the town, and even when *caciques* did not hold the gubernatorial offices they frequently appeared on the municipal payrolls for reasons of hereditary status alone, receiving stated amounts of maize or other tribute and specified services from the community.²⁷ Even in a substantial community, however, gubernatorial salaries were small in comparison with *caciques'* traditional perquisites in tribute and service and the salaries did not in themselves offer sufficient inducement to enter into formal office holding after the Hispanic model. What the governorship provided was a further position of local authority, one created and endorsed by the viceroyalty and one that furnished its holder with local judicial authority and some other powers that a *cacique* could not comfortably allow to fall into non-*cacique* hands. Most of all the governorship entrusted its holder with the control of royal or *encomienda* tribute collection in the community. Indian tributaries were principally the *macegual* family heads, each of whom was required to contribute to the Spanish state a payment in money or in kind. *Gobernadores*, whether *caciques* or *principales*, were charged with the collection of these taxes and with their delivery to Spaniards, a privilege that provided them with opportunities for coercion, extortion, embezzlement, and other illegal methods for enriching themselves. Spanish authority frequently connived at the governors' procedures, which were as effective as any that Spaniards themselves could devise, and a degree of legality countenanced the governor's private take in what were called "tribute leftovers" (*sobras de tributos*). Other officers of the Indian towns, especially the *alcaldes* and *regidores* of the *cabildos*, were normally, though not invariably, *principales*, and they too found in the

²⁷ Representative examples may be found in Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, VIII, 232-244. Manuel Gamio, *La población del valle de Teotihuacan* (3 vols.; México, Dirección de Talleres Gráficos, 1922), I (Pte. 2), 499 ff. *Códice Mariano Jiménez. Nómima de tributos de los pueblos Otlatzpan y Tepexic en geroglífico azteca y lenguas castellana y nahuatl. 1,549* (Nicolás León, ed.; México, 1903). Archivo General de la Nación, México (hereafter abbreviated as AGN) Ramo de Indios, I; Ramo de General de Parte, II, fols. 153r ff.

Hispanized municipal administration of the communities repeated occasion for self-enrichment.²⁸

In other ways also the *caciques* and *principales* in the Indian towns achieved for themselves intermediate positions between Spanish authority on the one hand and Indian *macegual* and sub-*macegual* classes on the other. Spanish imperialism was administered through them in a variety of particular institutions. In the *repartimientos* or labor drafts, directives were addressed to them by the viceroy or by *jueces repartidores* requiring them to arrange for the labor quotas and to guarantee the delivery of *macegual* workers. In *encomienda* the Spanish possessors (*encomenderos*) ensured the delivery of goods and services through the *caciques* and *principales*. In *corregimiento* the tribute, labor, and routine legal enforcement were handled by or in association with the native nobility. In Indian town government the *principales* who served as *alcaldes* and *regidores* in the *cabildos* punished minor offenses, drafted market regulations, enforced church attendance, dealt with drunkards and vagabonds, and performed innumerable other duties of municipal administration. In church building it was repeatedly the local *caciques* who made the initial commitment, provided the land, and arranged for "voluntary" Indian labor – sometimes involving thousands of individual workers. In the suppression of the frontier uprising of 1541 *caciques* and *principales* marched out with Spanish troops and led their followers on horseback against the insurrectionists, who were themselves led by a native "nobility" in a late resistance to conquest. In public ceremonies, viceregal receptions, and other festivals they took the principal Indian role, often with symbolic public reference to their subjugation to the Spanish crown.²⁹

It should not of course be inferred from these conditions that all or even most relations between Spaniards and Indian leaders were directed harmoniously toward common political or social ends. Spaniards who "used" the Indian leaders likewise abused them. Side by side with the more famous history of Spanish land usurpations at the expense of *macegual* communities is the history of the usurpations of private land properties of *caciques* and *principales*, a

²⁸ Boban, *op. cit.*, II, 296. *CDIAI*, II, 34. AGN, Ramo de Indios, I. *El libro de las tasaciones de pueblos de la Nueva España siglo XVI* (México, Archivo General de la Nación, 1952), *passim*. José Miranda, *El tributo indígena en la Nueva España durante el siglo XVI* (México, El Colegio de México, 1952), *passim*.

²⁹ *Actas de cabildo*, I, 135. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, IV, fols. 256v-257r. Boban, *op. cit.*, I, 387-389, and Atlas, Plate XXVII. Oviedo y Valdés, *op. cit.*, III, 536. García Icazbalceta, ed., *Nueva colección* (1886-1892), IV, 130. Andrés Pérez de Rivas, *Corónica y historia religiosa de la provincia de la Compañía de Jesús de México en Nueva España* (2 vols.; México, Impr. del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, 1896), II, 55-56. Gerard Decorme, *La obra de los jesuitas mexicanos durante la época colonial 1572-1767* (2 vols.; México, Antigua Librería Robredo de J. Porrúa e hijos, 1941), I, 248. *Anales de Tlatelolco*, pp. 107 ff. Genaro García and Carlos Pereyra, eds., *Documentos inéditos ó muy raros para la historia de México* (36 vols.; México, Vda. de C. Bouret, 1905-1911), XII, 173 ff. *Memorias de la Academia mexicana de la historia*, IV (1945), 108-110.

history that begins with Cortés' earliest dealings with the native aristocracy.³⁰ Lands of the priests and lands of nobles killed in the conquest were rapidly sequestered. An Indian noble who traveled to Spain always incurred the risk that his properties would be pre-empted during his absence. Many such territories were geographically scattered and could not be properly guarded or maintained even by an Indian who remained in Mexico.³¹ Spaniards further weakened the position of *caciques* and *principales* by extorting gold from them and in lieu of gold or other property taking from them their dependents, at first conveniently classified as *esclavos* (the point here was that a "slave" supposedly recognized as such in native society could be justifiably maintained as a slave by the Spaniards, whereas a "free" Indian could not be enslaved).³² A town in *encomienda*, particularly one at some distance from the viceregal capital, might be under the nearly absolute control of its *encomendero*, who could circumvent or exile the *cacique* and place in the governorship his own candidate, who might be a *macegual* or even a *naborío*.³³

The prohibition of "slave" holding by the Indian nobility after 1538, the gradual limitations on the authority of *caciques* and *principales*, the regularization of tribute, and the intrusion of non-hereditary *gobernadores* in the Indian towns progressively reduced the *caciques'* position.³⁴ In a large number of communities, when the governorship was achieved by an Indian other than the *cacique*, opportunities were offered for the alienation of *cacicazgo* lands, tributes, rents, and services.³⁵ The *caciques* complained of their misery and abundant sympathetic testimony in the colony recorded their plight. An observer of 1554 asserted that the descendants of the Tlatoque had already been reduced to a condition of poverty exceeding that of the *maceguales* and that he personally had seen the *señor* (*cacique*) of Meztitlan working his own land with a digging stick "like the poorest *macegual* of the pueblo."³⁶ Other evidence demonstrates that this and similar accounts exaggerated the degree, rapidity, and universality of the *caciques'* decline, but there can be no question that the Spaniards' own position in the mid and late sixteenth century was depending less upon the mediation of the traditional Indian ruling group than

³⁰ Peñafiel, ed., *op. cit.*, Cuad. 7, pp. 12-13. Maza, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7. Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 261 ff. *Don Vasco de Quiroga Documentos*, pp. 455-460. *Códice Kingsborough – Memorial de los indios de Tepetlaoztoc al monarca español contra los encomenderos del pueblo* (Madrid, Fototipía de Hauser y Menet, 1912), fols. 210 ff. *Actas de cabildo*, I, 175 ff.; II, 59 ff.

³¹ *Actas de cabildo*, I, 171, 184, *et passim*. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, I, 129 ff. *CDIA*, VIII, 339. García and Pereyra, eds., *op. cit.*, XV, 31-32. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, XIII, fols. 320r ff.

³² *CDIAI*, XIII, 57 ff., 256 ff. *Actas de cabildo*, I, 29, 134 ff., 221-222. *Don Vasco de Quiroga Documentos*, pp. 398-400.

³³ *CDIAI*, II, 34; VI, 501. Cuevas, ed., *Documentos*, pp. 224-225.

³⁴ *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos*, II (1928), 50. *CDIAI*, II, 34, 102; VI, 509; XIII, 296-297. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, IV, 28.

³⁵ E.g., AGN, Ramo de Tierras, XIII, exp. 4.

³⁶ Cuevas, ed., *Documentos*, p. 223. García Icazbalceta, ed., *Nueva colección* (1886-1892), IV, 128-136.

upon more direct kinds of personal control or upon control through mestizo or mulatto or non-noble Indian hirelings.

Nevertheless the particular position of *caciques* and *principales* in colonial society normally induced them to look with a certain favor upon Hispanic ways and to Hispanize themselves as actively as circumstances allowed. For them Hispanization was both a symptom of authority and a method of maintaining authority. Their ambitions in this complemented official Spanish policy in its "positive" phase. Whereas a *macegual* of the mid or late sixteenth century would normally have received only a rudimentary ecclesiastical instruction, a well-appointed cacique would have received training at one of the several *colegios* established for the Indian upper class, such as the Franciscan Colegio de Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco or the Jesuit school at Tepozotlan.³⁷ He would have learned to read and write, to study grammar and rhetoric, and to speak Spanish and possibly Latin (Don Antonio Valeriano, governor of Tenochtitlan in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, was probably the foremost Indian Latinist of his day). Literacy and Hispanization in general meant that *caciques* and *principales*, like Spanish colonists, could express their complaints in writing to the monarch, as they did frequently in Spanish and occasionally in Latin.³⁸ Some educated Indians became *maestros* in the *colegios*, and some *caciques'* sons were ordained as priests for missionary work. (Clerics of Indian descent were much more common in the later colonial period, however, than in the earlier, and the development of an Indian or partly Indian clergy, which came ultimately to include some bishops, was contrary to the earliest ecclesiastical policy). *Caciques* and *principales* in the sixteenth century adopted Spanish forms of dress, carried arms, and rode through the cities and towns with equipages and retinues of Indian servants.³⁹ A portrait of one of the great *caciques* of central Mexico in 1542 shows him wearing Indian sandals, Spanish breeches, an ocelot-skin shirt tailored in Spanish style, and a native *cacique's* headdress, i.e., a *mélange* of Spanish and Indian articles of apparel with the traditional insignia of rank retained.⁴⁰ The domestic accoutrements of upper-class Indians reveal similar mixtures. They might accept the Spanish bed with

³⁷ Decorme, *op. cit.*, I, 248. Cuevas, *Historia de la iglesia*, I, 386 ff. Nicolás León, *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVIII* (*Boletín del Instituto bibliográfico mexicano*, Núm. 4; México, 1903), pp. 84-85. Felix de Osores (y Sotomayor), *Historia de todos los colegios de la ciudad de México desde la conquista hasta 1780* (*Nuevos documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México*, II; México, Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1929). Francisco Borgia Steck, *El primer colegio de América - Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* (México, Centro de Estudios Franciscanos, 1944).

³⁸ Juan de Torquemada, *Primera (Segunda, Tercera) parte de los veinte i vn libros rituales i monarchia indiana* (3 vols.; Madrid, N. Rodríguez Franco, 1723), III, 113-115. Decorme, *op. cit.*, I, 248. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, X, 89 ff.

³⁹ Decorme, *op. cit.*, I, 248. José Alcina Franch, "El indigenismo de Fray José Díaz de la Vega", *América indígena*, XVII (1957), 279-280. AGN, Ramo de General de Parte, I, fols. 81v, 224v; II, fol. 112r. *Memorias de la Academia mexicana de la historia*, VI (1947), fac. p. 190. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, XV, 66. Díaz del Castillo, *op. cit.*, II, 560.

⁴⁰ *Anales de Tlatelolco*, p. 110 and Plate.

its mattress and bedclothes while rejecting the Spanish dining furniture of tables and chairs and continuing to eat on the ground.⁴¹ Undoubtedly individual *caciques* and *principales* differed in their private responses of rejection or acceptance of the particular items of Spanish colonial civilization. But as a group they strove to maintain their positions by self-interested compromise. Like Spaniards great and small they practiced formal Christian monogamy (the pre-conquest nobility had been partly polygamous); they made their wills and left a calculated portion of their lands and other property to the church. They built their houses in Spanish colonial styles. They imitated the great economic promoters of the colony, especially in the herding of sheep, some maintaining private flocks of thousands of head and ranches of horses and cows with majordomos and Indian servants.⁴² Noble Indian men and women continued to marry within their own Indian upper class, thus preserving the "purity" of native rank; or the women married Spaniards and became the matriarchs of influential mestizo families. Native colonial texts such as the *Crónica mexicayotl* betray an obsession with Indian genealogy and pedigree rivalling that of the Spanish *hidalgo* class itself.⁴³

Caciques and *principales* seized available opportunities to imitate Spanish society in another way by intensifying the severity of their treatment of *maceguales*. Their conduct was retaliatory toward *maceguales* and competitive toward Spaniards, whose ethics they adopted and whose techniques they adapted to local circumstances. They forced *maceguales* to plant their fields and build their houses, to run their errands, to labor for them and serve them in unprecedented ways. They seized the communal lands of *maceguales*, sometimes reducing *maceguales* to the status of *mayerques*, thus countering the alienation of *mayerques* to direct service for Spaniards and further controlling the *maceguales'* lands and tributes.⁴⁴ They possessed the advantage of a partially legal, intra-Indian tribute, which they exploited to the full. In the mid-sixteenth century a community paying 1000 pesos in tribute to the king might be paying up to 4000 pesos to its own Indian upper class. A single town

⁴¹ Gonzalo Gómez de Cervantes, *La vida económica y social de Nueva España al finalizar el siglo XVI (Biblioteca histórica mexicana de obras inéditas, 19; Alberto María Carreño, ed.; México, Antigua Librería Robredo, de José Porrúa e hijos, 1944)*, p. 136.

⁴² Motolinía (Toribio de Benavente), *Memoriales (Documentos históricos de Méjico, I; Luis García Pimentel, ed.; México, Paris, Madrid, En casa del editor, etc., 1903)*, pp. 123 ff. Chimalpahin Quauhthlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 216 ff. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Papeles de Nueva España*, VI, 62, 78. Museo Nacional, México, Colección antigua, T. 2 57, fols. 9r-10r. AGN, Ramo de Congregaciones, I, fols. 8v-9r, 86v. AGN, Ramo de Indios, III, fol. 63r. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, IV, fol. 142v. AGN, Ramo de General de Parte, I, fols. 50r, 115r.

⁴³ Clements Library, University of Michigan, MS No. 100, Phillipps MSS 13685, pp. 33 ff. Francisco A. de Icaza, *Diccionario autobiográfico de conquistadores y pobladores de Nueva España* (2 vols.; Madrid, Impr. de "El Adelantado de Segovia", 1923), I, 115-116. Alvarado Tezozomoc, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

⁴⁴ García and Pereyra, eds., *op. cit.*, XV, 122-124. *CDIAI*, II, 40-41; IV, 445, 449, 450, 515-516. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, X, 35 ff. AGN, Ramo de General de Parte, II, fol. 82r-82v. Boban, *op. cit.*, II, 42 (Códice Cozcatzin).

is recorded as paying 8000 pesos, many times the income of the average *encomendero*, in *sobras de tributos*.⁴⁵ The record contains numerous examples of approved tribute schedules for *caciques* – their income included money, *mantas*, cacao, chickens, chiles, firewood, salt, ocote, tomatoes, and various other goods in quantities sufficient to enable them and their families to live in abundance. But the approved amounts diminished during the course of the sixteenth century; the *sobras de tributos* came to be assigned in fixed quantities, like the tributes themselves;⁴⁶ and the extent of intra-Indian tribute became a constant source of concern to the monarchy, which while it endorsed a limited exaction by *caciques* and *principales* saw in excessive exactions both a social ill and a loss of income for the royal treasury. The problem contained a variety of implications, both ethical and practical. As Viceroy Mendoza observed, if the *principales* were favored they mistreated the *maceguales*; if they were not favored they lacked authority to rule. When Indians accused their *caciques* and *principales* of excessive tribute exactions and other kinds of ill treatment, the common viceregal procedure was to appoint another *cacique* or *principal* from another town to investigate and to perform a *residencia*, with the result that the local predicament might be compounded rather than solved. In most communities the mid and late sixteenth century was a time of precarious self-preservation for the Indian upper class, whose desperate exploitation of *maceguales* is to be interpreted as a response to strain, an effort to maintain position and security.⁴⁷

It is not surprising that individual *maceguales* in the colony made efforts to escape from their condition and to pass as *principales*. Instances of personal rise in the social scale are not unknown from pre-conquest times, but they were then characteristically dependent on recognized, generally military, achievement and formally sanctioned by the native state. In the post-conquest world that state had ceased to exist, and the Spanish administration had not been immediately prepared to forestall the initiative of *maceguales*. Vacancies left by the loss of local leaders in the conquest could be surreptitiously occupied by ambitious *maceguales*, and time and custom could reinforce these usurpations to the point at which their colonial origin might be forgotten, or, if remembered, ignored. The *maceguales*' techniques reveal an adept manipulation of the conditions of the Spanish colony. A *macegual* might engage in commerce, gain a measure of wealth and local influence, and become accepted as a *principal*. Alternatively he might serve the friars in a monastery, make himself a favorite,

⁴⁵ *CDIAI*, IV, 442. Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 256. Museo Nacional, México, Colección franciscana, CXC, fols. 16r ff.

⁴⁶ AGN, Ramo de Indios, I, *passim*. Clements Library, University of Michigan, MS. No. 100, Phillipps MSS 13685, pp. 33 ff. *Información sobre los tributos que los indios pagaban a Moctezuma, Año de 1554* (*Documentos para la historia del México colonial*, IV; France V. Scholes and Eleanor B. Adams, eds.; México, José Porrúa e hijos, Sucs., 1957), pp. 63 ff.

⁴⁷ *CDIAI*, IV, 360; VI, 491, 503, 509. *CDIIA*, I, 188-189; VIII, 339. *CDIU*, X, 254; XXI, 280 ff. *Anales de Tlatelolco*, p. 119. *Códices indígenas de algunos pueblos del marquesado del valle de Oaxaca* (México, 1933), No. 31. Cuevas, ed., *Documentos*, p. 226. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, II, fol. 233v.

escape the tribute and labor rolls of his community, and move out of Indian life and into Spanish life, under the assumption that he was a *principal*. Or again he might win the favor of his *encomendero* and be elevated to a position of gubernatorial power, in defiance of the electoral principle and the claims of *caciques* and *principales*.⁴⁸ An observer of the 1550's asserted that in various parts of Mexico the number of new or pseudo-*principales* was greater than the number who belonged rightfully and by birth to this class. And a mid-century *corregidor* reported that in a community of 3000, one-third had become "nobles" by illegal means. Such practices contributed to a further blurring of the borderline between *principales* and *maceguales*, a process that became more pronounced in time and one that was affected not only by *macegual* ambition but by economic status, miscegenation, *latifundia*, and many other standard conditions of colonial existence.⁴⁹

These factors of imprecision and change affect any calculations regarding the number of *caciques* and *principales* in relation to the non-noble population. A basic point is that the ratios varied from town to town. The ratio 1:2, if indeed the *corregidor*'s report may be accepted, was surely exceptional, and such figures as are available suggest a customary *principal* nobility under ten per cent. Thus the community of Tizayuca in the mid-sixteenth century is known to have contained between 550 and 600 tributary families, with ten or twelve *principales*, or a nobility of about two per cent. Approximately the same ratio is found in the small community of Oztoticpac, with three *principales* in a population of some 125 tributaries. The moderate-sized town of Tequixquiac, with some thirteen *principales* and about 1750 tributaries, had a considerably smaller ratio. In Xochimilco, a large town, the mid-sixteenth century ratio of *principales* to tributary population was approximately 400:7000 (a nobility of over five per cent), and in Huitzilopochco 40:400 (a nobility of ten per cent).⁵⁰ The sub-*macegual* classes, on which *caciques* and *principales* directly depended, persisted into the later sixteenth century in decreasing numbers and ultimately merged with *maceguales* or became *peones* on Spanish *haciendas*. In Huitzilopochco the *gobernador* preserved a *patrimonio* of about fifty Indian families in a total population of less than 500 families in 1551. In Colhuacan, with a population of about 800 families, 160 or twenty per cent served the *gobernador* and *principales* in a sub-*macegual* status in 1550. Ratios as high as 1900 *terrazgueros* in a community of 3000 are recorded.⁵¹ But land usurpation,

⁴⁸ *Código Chimalpopoca, Anales de Cuauhtitlan y Leyenda de los soles* (Primo Feliciano Velázquez, trans.; México, Imprenta Universitaria, 1945), p. 57. *CDIAI*, IV, 449. García and Pereyra, eds., *op. cit.*, XV, 123. Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 257.

⁴⁹ Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 257-258. *CDIAI*, IV, 450. Ixtlilxóchitl, *Relaciones*, p. 445.

⁵⁰ Luis García Pimentel, ed., *Descripción del arzobispado de México hecha en 1570 y otros documentos* (México, José Joaquín Terrazas e hijas imps., 1897), pp. 53-54, 66-67, 225. *CDIAI*, XIII, 298-299. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, ed., *Colección de documentos para la historia de México* (2 vols.; México, J. M. Andrade, 1858-1866), II, 151.

⁵¹ *CDIAI*, I, 172, 177. *CDIAI*, IV, 361.

cacicazgo failure, truancy, epidemic, and a number of other factors of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reduced this sub-*macegual* population thereafter or transferred it directly to Spanish masters. The fact implies the loss of control by *caciques* and *principales* as well as the more general deterioration of the whole principle of native status.

The *cacique* class was more resistant than the *principal* class to direct usurpation from below. Single towns maintained only one or a very few *cacique* families and since these were known to all inhabitants intrusive and innovating claims to *cacicazgo* in any community were instantly recognized as fraudulent. What disturbed *cacicazgo* inheritance was not so much usurpation from *maceguales* as disputed successions involving competing claimants within the *cacique* family itself. Early royal law was applicable only in a general way to the settlement of the family quarrels of *cacicazgo*. Through the sixteenth century and through most of the seventeenth century viceroys and *audiencias* received from the monarchical administration a general endorsement of *cacique* continuance but in the absence of detailed instructions on primogeniture, female descent, or any other of the troublesome matters of inheritance. The monarch was understandably far less concerned with the operation of *cacicazgo* inheritance than with the operation of *encomienda* inheritance. Viceroy Mendoza (1535-1550) adopted an *ad hoc* policy: to confirm the decisions arrived at according to the custom of the community providing that the candidate were of good repute, of Christian habits, and uncontested. *Audiencia* and other decisions in *cacicazgo* inheritance of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries followed the Mendoza precedent so far as it went, recognizing both primogenital descent and local custom, deciding in favor of the more immediate relative against obvious external usurpation, and refraining always, in accordance with a standard royal directive and Spanish policy, from innovation.⁵²

Only in the eighteenth century, with the revision of regulations regarding the payment of royal tribute, did a specific principle of primogeniture come to be fixed. *Caciques* and their eldest sons had been legally exempt from royal tribute since 1572 (*caciques* before that had sometimes paid tributes just as did other Indians), and a device available to some influential Indians had been the assertion of a related *cacique* status in order to escape the tribute levy. Such practices came under severe administrative scrutiny in the eighteenth-century programs of imperial economy. In the mid-eighteenth century for the first time the Mexican *Audiencia* outlined elaborate procedures for proof of eligibility in tribute exemption – the rules resemble the *limpieza de sangre* regulations for Spaniards – and the *Audiencia* reasserted that all cadet sons of *caciques* were to be enrolled as tributaries, only the “hijo mayor” being excepted. Thus in a

⁵² *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias* (4 vols.; Madrid, 1681), Lib. VI, Tit. 7, *passim*. *CDIAI*, VI, 501-502. Cuevas, *Historia de la iglesia*, I, 428. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, CMXCIV, fols. 17r ff. A summary of royal legislation favoring *caciques* is contained in *CDIIA*, VIII, 333 ff.

sense the principle of effective primogeniture entered the statute books indirectly, i.e., with reference to exemption from tribute. But a *cacique's* eldest son in the later eighteenth century might claim the primogenital succession to the *cacicazgo* precisely for the reason that he had been exempted from tribute while his father lived, thus reversing the criterion. In practice the modification of Indian systems of inheritance – which sometimes permitted brothers to succeed prior to sons, and which included some local and circumstantial variants – proceeded generally in the direction of Spanish *mayorazgo* rules.⁵³

The practical meaning of these various generalizations is best illustrated by a series of examples. For the Tepanec (Tacuba) area the community of Coyoacan exhibits a single durable *cacicazgo* well suited to purposes of exemplification. Its Tlatohuani at the time of the Spaniards' arrival was Cuappopocatzin. He "married" the daughter of Huitzilatzin, Tlatohuani of Huitzilopochco and granddaughter of Huehuezacatzin, the brother of Montezuma I. Their eldest son, Cetochtzin, baptized as Don Hernando, inherited his father's position as Tlatohuani of Coyoacan after the father died in the conquest and accompanied Cortés to Guatemala, where he died in 1525.⁵⁴ Don Hernando Cetochtzin's younger brother, Don Juan de Guzmán Itztollinqui, was then installed as Tlatohuani in Coyoacan by Cortés in 1526, a position that he held until his death in 1569. Don Juan de Guzmán Itztollinqui was a typical mid-sixteenth-century *cacique*. He served the Spaniards in suppressing the Mixton uprising. He spoke Spanish and as the viceroy stated (in his own and Don Juan's favor) was "always treated as a Spaniard." He wrote to the king commenting on his father's and his brother's services to the crown, complaining that Spaniards treated his Indians as if they were slaves, and objecting to the excessive tributes. Royal cédulas were issued to him in 1534, 1545, and 1551, conceding him a coat of arms and confirming his private properties "by just and legitimate right and title." Viceroy Mendoza issued him a license permitting him to carry a sword, after the Spanish manner. He married a *cacica*, the niece of Don Carlos, the Texcocan *cacique* who was burned in 1539, and their combined properties included an enormous number of lands and houses in the vicinity of Coyoacan and elsewhere. He was an affluent native aristocrat, continuously provided for by his town. By a taxation of 1560, Don Juan received from Coyoacan each year 400 *fanegas* (probably *ca.* 630 standard U.S. bushels) of maize and 200 *fanegas* (probably *ca.* 315 standard U.S. bushels) of wheat; each week he

⁵³ *Recopilación*, Lib. VI, Tit. 5, Ley 18. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, VI, 264; X, 34. García Icazbalceta, ed., *Nueva colección* (1886-1892), IV, 135. Cuevas, ed., *Documentos*, p. 226. Ternaux-Compans, *op. cit.*, VIII, 257. Eusebio Bentura Beleña, *Recopilación sumaria de todos los autos acordados de la real audiencia y sala del crimen de esta Nueva España, y providencias de su superior gobierno* (2 vols.; México, Por D. Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, 1787), I, third pagination, 38-39, 40, 348. Biblioteca Nacional, México, MS 482, fol. 85v.

⁵⁴ *Códice Chimalpopoca*, p. 63. Alvarado Tezozomoc, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-134. *Anales del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía*, Época 4, V (1927), 354, 356 ff. Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

received four Indian servants, provided and paid for by the town, and 700 chiles and 700 tomatoes; each day he received one-half loaf of salt, two fowls, three loads (i.e., by human carrier) of wood, two loads of fodder, and two bunches of ocote. The community was to maintain four plots of land for his use, of which two were to be sown in maize and wheat each season and two to lie fallow. By another assessment he received each day three fowls, two baskets (*chiquihuitls*) of maize, 400 cacaos, 200 chiles, one loaf of salt, ten male servants, eight female servants, six loads of wood, and five loads of fodder. The natives of Coyoacan had to build his house and to maintain ten masons and ten stonecutters in readiness for its repair and to pay him fees for the privilege of selling their goods in the market of Coyoacan.⁵⁵

In Nahuatl notices Don Juan was designated as Tlatohuani. In Spanish documentation he was indicated as *señor* of Coyoacan in the 1520's, as *señor natural* in the 1530's, and as *cacique* and *gobernador* in the 1540's.⁵⁶ But in Coyoacan as elsewhere the hereditary *cacicazgo* and the elective governorship were not continuously held by the same individual. The earliest documented accession of a second party to the governorship in Coyoacan is dated 1554. Don Juan regained the governorship after this but was unable to maintain it regularly.⁵⁷ After his death, his sons Don Juan de Guzmán the younger, Don Lorenzo de Guzmán, and Don Hernando de Guzmán served as Tlatoque in rapid succession, the former dying in 1573, the latter two dying in the epidemic of 1576. The governorship fell to Don Lorenzo's son, Don Felipe, in 1573.⁵⁸ In the seventeenth century a major crisis in the inheritance occurred following the death of the incumbent *cacique* Don Juan Estolinc (Itztollinqui) y Guzmán. The succession of Don Juan Hidalgo was confirmed first in 1683, but his full possession was hindered by the claims of Don Thomás de Larrales, son-in-law of the preceding *cacique* Don Alonso de Guzmán. The suit was actively prosecuted in Spanish colonial courts during the mid-1680's, the Audiencia reaching its decision in 1687 in favor of the *cacica* Doña Tharía de Guzmán, daughter of Don Alonso and wife of Don Thomás de Larrales. She thereupon took possession of all that had been granted to Don Juan Hidalgo. But the succession was promptly disputed again by Don Ignacio de Tapia and Don Carlos Patiño. While all these intra-family disputes were taking place in the late seventeenth century, outsiders, Spaniards and mestizos were appropriating the lands and houses of the *cacicazgo*, sometimes with the connivance

⁵⁵ *Actas de cabildo*, I, 210; II, 4. Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 210, 280. *Anales del Museo Nacional*, Época 4, V (1927), 354-355. García Icazbalceta, ed., *Colección*, II, 87, 311. Fernández del Castillo, *op. cit.*, pp. 24 ff. We select the Castilian *fanega* of 55.5 liters as most likely, but the point remains disputable.

⁵⁶ Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *op. cit.*, p. 210. *Actas de cabildo*, I, 210; II, 4. *Anales del Museo Nacional*, Época 4, V (1927), 354. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, II, fols. 268v, 322r.

⁵⁷ AGN, Ramo de General de Parte, II, fol. 133v. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, IV, fols. 2r, 216r.

⁵⁸ AGN, Ramo de General de Parte, I, fol. 107r. Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *op. cit.*, p. 290. Fernández del Castillo, *op. cit.*, p. 32. *Actas de cabildo*, X, 114.

of the *cacique* contenders themselves. In the mid-eighteenth century, following the tenure of the *cacique* Don Miguel Cortés Ramírez, the long-standing dispute resolved itself into a conflict between Doña Theresa de Guzmán and the heirs of Don Carlos Patiño. By the time of the late eighteenth-century *cacique*, the extensive landed properties officially confirmed to the *cacicazgo* in the sixteenth century had in large part been lost. The prodigious efforts of the incumbent of the 1790's and early nineteenth century to recover them proved unavailing. He waged a thirty-year lawsuit, worked his passage to Spain as a sailor, maintained himself as a carpenter in Madrid, engaged in protracted conflict with Godoy and other royal ministers, and finally died in prison.⁵⁹ The *cacicazgo* history as a whole, while it offers some dramatic and unique features, is interesting chiefly for its typicality: the early identification of the Tlatohuani as *cacique*; the governorship first held by the *cacique* himself and then by others; the occasional succession by brothers rather than by sons; the inheritance by women, as *cacicas*; the extended legal wrangles; and the loss of properties. All were standard and characteristic features of *cacicazgo* history in post-conquest times.

To exemplify the institution in its more complex form the case of Amecameca may be selected. Prior to the conquest of this community by Tenochtitlan in the mid-fifteenth century its political history was one of many lords and local place-names with an unusual richness of Tecuhtli titles: Tlayllotlac Tecuhtli, Atlauhtecatl Tecuhtli, Tlatquic Tecuhtli, Teohua Tecuhtli, Chichimeca Tecuhtli, Tlamaocatl Tecuhtli. The Mexican conquest followed a series of wars between Chalco Province and Tenochtitlan and was principally achieved under Montezuma I (1440-1469). As in many other instances in pre-colonial history, conquest here brought about an interruption in the local dynastic history. For twenty-one years (1465-1486) the area possessed no Tlatoque. The local

Subdivision	Tlatohuani Title	Incumbent	Accession Date	Behavior 1519	Death
Panohuayan	Tlamaocatl Tecuhtli	Cuauhcecequitzin	ca. 1488	Met Cortés at Amecameca	1519
Tecuanipan	Chichimeca Tecuhtli	Miccacalcatl Tlaltetecuintzin	ca. 1492	Fled to Mexico	1522
Tzacualtitlan Tenanco	Tlayllotlac Tecuhtli	Yotzintli	ca. 1487	Fled	1520
Tlayllotlacan	Teohua Tecuhtli	Cacamatzin	ca. 1486	Met Cortés at Amecameca	1519
Yztlacochaucan	Chichimeca Tecuhtli	Cihuayllacatzin	1511 as infant	Met Cortés at Amecameca	1572

⁵⁹ AGN, Archivo del Hospital de Jesús, Leg. 120, exp. 5; Leg. 302, exp. 6. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, MDCCXXXV, exp. 2. Fernández del Castillo, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

dynasties were then reinstated under the Tenochtitlan rulers Tizoc (1481-1486) and Ahuitzotl (1486-1502). The restorations involved some innovations and simplifications, resulting in five separate dynastic divisions in the single community of Amecameca at the time of the Spaniards' arrival (see table).⁶⁰

A "normal" community of the sixteenth century maintained, as has been noted, a single *acciqne* family. Amecameca is noteworthy for the reason that its five Tlatohuani successions were preserved long after the conquest. The successions in the five subdivisions during the first post-conquest generations were these:

Panohuayan:⁶¹

1. Cuauhcequitzin, Tlamaocatl Tecuhtli and Tlatohuani; died 1519.
2. Don Pedro Tlahuancatzin, Tlamaocatl Tecuhtli and Tlatohuani; ruled *ca.* 1530, presumptively after a lapse of ten years.
3. Don Joseph de Santa María Teuhctlaçoçauhcatzin, Tlamaocatl Tecuhtli; installed as Tlatohuani 1548; grandson of Cuauhcequitzin; died 1564 after a rule of about seventeen years.
4. Don Felipe Páez de Mendoza, Tlamaocatl Tecuhtli; installed as Tlatohuani 1564; son of predecessor; allowed to wear Spanish clothing and to ride a horse; granted an *estancia* in 1594; probably ruled to his death in 1604.

Tecuanipan:⁶²

1. Miccalcatl Tlaltetequintzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli and Tlatohuani; died 1522 in Tenochtitlan after escape.
2. Don Juan Baptista de Sandoval Toyaotzin, Teohua Tecuhtli; son of Don Juan de Sandoval Tecuanxayacatzin, Tlatohuani of Tlayllotlacan, and of a *cihuapilli* (female *principal*) of Tecuanipan; installed as Tlatohuani by his father 1548; governed eight years; imprisoned for the murder of his wife; became Tlatohuani of Tlayllotlacan 1565.
3. Don Agustín Baptista Cuitlachiuitzin; installed as Chichimeca Tecuhtli 1561; son of Miccalcatl Tlaltetequintzin; presumably ruled until his death 1572.
4. Don Pablo Santa María Cuitlaquimichtzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; installed as Tlatohuani *ca.* 1573; son of predecessor; ruled to his death in 1575.
5. Don Esteban de la Cruz de Mendoza; installed as Tlatohuani 1575 as grandson on his mother's side of Don Sancho Toctecontzin, Tlatocapilli of Tzacualtitlan Tenanco; imprisoned 1588.
6. Don Miguel Baptista de Gaona, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; grandson of Miccalcatl; installed as Tlatohuani 1589; permitted to dress in Spanish clothing and to carry a sword and dagger; *gobernador* of Amecameca 1594 and 1595.

Tzacualtitlan Tenanco:⁶³

1. Yotzintli, Tlayllotlac Tecuhtli and Tlatohuani; died of plague 1520.

⁶⁰ See table overleaf. The material tabulated is derived from data in Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 183, 187 ff., 202.

⁶¹ Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 18, 19, 189, 221, 245, 262. AGN, Ramo de Indios, I, fols. 105r-106r; V, fols. 115r, 332r. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, XVIII, fol. 308r-308v. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, CMXCIV, sixth pagination, *passim*.

⁶² Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 202, 245, 255, 263, 286, 308-309. AGN, Ramo de Indios, VI, Parte I, fol. 282v. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, XVIII, fols. 309v-310r; XIX, fols. 277r ff.

⁶³ Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 13, 190, 199, 201, 204-205, 210, 221, 245, 289. Museo Nacional, México, Colección antigua, 273-274, p. 373. AGN, Ramo de Indios, I, fols. 105r-106r. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, VII, fol. 162v.

2. Don Tomás de San Martín Quetzalmaqatzin, Tlayllotlac Tecuhtli; installed as Chichimeca Tecuhtli ca. 1521-1522 after brief lapse in succession; son of Cacamatzin, Tlatohuani of Tlayllotlacan; governed only a few weeks and became Chichimeca Tecuhtli in Yztlacoçauhcan.
3. Don Hernando Cortés Cihuayllacatzin, Tlayllotlac Tecuhtli; installed as Tlatohuani ca. 1522-1523; deposed as Tlatohuani 1527; punished for idolatry 1530; died 1572.
4. Don Joseph del Castillo Ehcaxoxouhqui, Tlayllotlac Tecuhtli; son of Yotzintli; installed as Tlatohuani 1548 after a lapse of some twenty-two years; died in plague 1576.
5. Don Miguel de Santiago, *cacique* at least by 1580; served as guardian of the two sons of Don Juan de Santo Domingo, Tlatohuani of Yztlacoçauhcan.

*Tlayllotlacan:*⁶⁴

1. Cacamatzin, Teohua Tecuhtli and Tlatohuani; died 1519.
2. Don Juan de Sandoval Tecuanxayacatzin, Teohua Tecuhtli; installed as Tlatohuani ca. 1525 after lapse; son of Cacamatzin; ruled to his death in 1565.
3. Don Juan Baptista de Sandoval Toyaotzin, Teohua Tecuhtli; son of predecessor; installed as Tlatohuani 1565; ruled to his death in plague 1576.
4. Don Juan de Sandoval, *cacique* at least by 1580; details obscure and possible confusion with Don Juan Baptista de Sandoval Toyaotzin; date of death unknown.

*Yztlacoçauhcan:*⁶⁵

1. Don Hernando Cortés Cihuayllacatzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; son of Aocuantzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli.
2. Don Tomás de San Martín Quetzalmaqatzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; installed from Tzacualtitlan Tenanco by Cortés 1523; ruled to his death 1547.
3. Don Juan de Santo Domingo de Mendoza Tlacaoeltzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; installed as Tlatohuani 1548; ruled to his death 1563; left two sons, Don Diego and Don Pedro, under the care of Don Miguel de Santiago.
4. Don Gregorio de los Angeles Tepoztlaxayacatzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; son of Don Tomás de San Martín Quetzalmaqatzin; installed as Tlatohuani 1564; ruled to his death 1580.
5. Don Tomás de Villavicencio the younger, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; installed as Tlatohuani 1582; ruled to his death without heirs 1587.
6. Don Juan Maldonado Miyçahuitzin, Chichimeca Tecuhtli; son of Don Tomás de San Martín Quetzalmaqatzin; uncle of predecessor; installed as Tlatohuani 1591; death at unknown date.

Here a number of significant points emerge. The Tecuhtli ranks were preserved through the sixteenth century, and several individuals shifted from one Tecuhtli title to another. The comparable changes in office from one dynastic lineage to another, as in the cases of Don Juan Baptista de Sandoval Toyaotzin and Don Tomás de San Martín Quetzalmaqatzin, are suggestive of an interrelation-

⁶⁴ *Código Chimalpopoca*, p. 63. Museo Nacional, México, Colección antigua, 273-274, p. 371. Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 190, 208, 263, 289-290. AGN, Ramo de Indios, I, fols. 105r-106r. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, VIII, fol. 19r. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, MDCCCXXVIII, exp. 1, fols. 1r ff.

⁶⁵ Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 203-205, 244-245, 262-263, 298, 307, 312. AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, VII, fol. 162v. AGN, Ramo de Indios, I, fols. 105r-106r; III, fol. 183r. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, MDCCCXXVIII, exp. 1, fols. 1r ff.

ship, an absence of isolation among the *cacique* families of Amecameca. An instance of intermarriage is revealed, involving the Tlatohuani of Tlayllotlacan and a noble woman (*cihuapilli*) of Tecuanipan. Interruptions, restorations, and impositions occurred. A governorship was created in 1560, the first *gobernador* being Don Juan de Sandoval Tecuanxayacatzin, Tlatohuani of Tlayllotlacan. Governors of the later sixteenth century included some of these Tlatoque, e.g., Don Miguel Baptista de Gaona in 1595 and Don Felipe Páez de Mendoza on several occasions prior to 1600. It is noteworthy that Don Juan Maldonado served as *gobernador* before 1591, the date at which he succeeded his nephew as Tlatohuani at Yztlacoçauhcan.⁶⁶ Critical rivalries among the *cacique* heirs occurred, notably in the 1530's when competing *caciques* allied themselves with the competing Franciscan and Dominican orders in Amecameca, to create a situation of mingled Spanish-Indian antagonisms resembling that of the period of military conquest.⁶⁷

The five *cacique* dynasties of Amecameca underwent many periods of stress and crisis after the sixteenth century, all of immediate practical concern to the individuals involved but exhibiting at the same time a similarity that suggests the conditions under which survival was possible and the limits within which "legitimate" *cacicazgo* could function. Mestizos were introduced in the *cacique* families in the seventeenth century. A *despacho* issued in the early eighteenth century to place the *caciques* in the possession of their *cacicazgos* was disputed by the *gobernador* and other non-*cacique* officials of the Indian government. When Don Domingo Páez, *cacique* of Panohuayan, died in the eighteenth century, his son Don Luis was a minor and too young to assume the position. The circumstances provided an opportunity to Don Francisco Páez, cousin of Don Luis, to intrude in the succession and seize the *cacicazgo* with its properties, privileges, and documentary titles. Succession by sons and succession by brothers or the sons of brothers occasioned intricate disputes, contested for long periods, and the trials brought to light conflicting testimonies and much evidence of the abuse of *cacique* authority. Testaments, baptismal records, and land *mercedes* were repeatedly cited to establish "legitimacy".⁶⁸

Such conflicts, which are wholly characteristic of colonial *cacicazgo* litigation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were complicated by some imprecision and local variation in the popular concept of the institution. Technically a *cacique* was the single *dueño* of the *cacicazgo* and the heir of the pre-conquest Tlatohuani. But it is evident that this technical sense was not universally recognized or fully admitted among the Indians of the Mexican towns. Examples are available from later colonial times in which the sons and

⁶⁶ AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, VII, fol. 299r; XIX, fol. 277r-277v. AGN, Ramo de Indios, III, fol. 183r. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, CMXCIV, sixth pagination, fol. 13r. Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-255.

⁶⁷ Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuantzin, *op. cit.*, pp. 234 ff.

⁶⁸ AGN, Ramo de Tierras, CMXCV, *passim*; MDCCCXXVIII, exp. 1, fols. 2r ff.

daughters of an individual *cacique* all successfully adopted the *cacique* title, to the confusion of viceregal investigators. The Audiencia regulations of the mid-eighteenth century brought to light instances of multiplication, where the several sons and daughters of a *cacique* had themselves been “reputed to be *caciques*”.⁶⁹ Again a criterion sometimes advanced as indicative of *cacique* status was the holding of office in Indian government, particularly the office of *gobernador* – and while it is true that *caciques* did sometimes hold the gubernatorial office in the seventeenth and eighteenth as well as in the sixteenth century, and probable that their candidacies to this position were enhanced by their status as *caciques*, still neither the *cacique* office nor the governorship was a legal prerequisite to the other.⁷⁰ Outright inheritance by female *caciques* was recognized from an early date, and very clear instances of mestizo succession and the assumption of *cacique* title by mestizos are recorded in violation of the law.⁷¹ At other times pretenders to a *cacicazgo* sought to disqualify their opponents by accusing them of being mestizos and hence ineligible for the succession. Together with accusations of *mestizaje* went accusations of bastardy – and indeed the words *mestizo* and *bastardo* were not unrelated in colonial usage. Birth out of wedlock (but without any necessary implication of infidelity) was common among *cacique* families as it was among *maceguales*. *Audiencias* after the sixteenth century do not appear to have taken very seriously the matter either of *mestizaje* or of illegitimacy, and in any case a *cacique* on his deathbed might perform the marriage ceremony with his lifelong “wife”, thus legitimizing the heir.⁷²

Occasionally fraudulent efforts were made to establish new *cacicazgos* in later colonial times. In the community of Axapusco, a *principal*, Don Juan de los Santos, having served as governor for many years without election (elections were supposed to be made annually or biennially) and being challenged by the election of a rival in 1755, asserted himself to be a *cacique* and hence entitled to retain control of the pueblo, with its lands and *bienes de comunidad*. His *cacicazgo* claim was a false one, and his further claim to full authority over the town reflects a late colonial tendency to confuse *cacique* status with generalized local *gobernación*. The newly elected governor countered properly with the assertion that the lands in question were the possessions of the community rather than of any *cacicazgo*, and that the *cacicazgo* was a factitious one invented for private ends. Juan de los Santos and other members of his family, especially his brother and his grandfather, claimed descent from a conquest ancestor and connection with the noble Indian lineage of Austria y Montezuma,

⁶⁹ AGN, Archivo del Hospital de Jesús, Leg. 302, exp. 7, fols. 4r ff.

⁷⁰ AGN, Ramo de Indios, XV, fol. 77r; L, fols. 10r-11r, 46v-48v. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, CMXCIV, *passim*.

⁷¹ AGN, Ramo de Mercedes, VII, fols. 317r-317v, 355r. AGN, Ramo de Tierras, MDCCCXXVIII, exp. 1, fols. 22r ff. AGN, Archivo del Hospital de Jesús, Leg. 120, exp. 6, fol. 2v. Cf. Alvarado Tezozomoc, *op. cit.*, p. 156: “cihuapilli Mestiza”.

⁷² AGN, Ramo de Clero Regular y Secular, CXXX, exp. sin número, fols. 3v-4r.

which had been prominent especially in Tlatelolco in the early colonial period. To support these assertions a portfolio of forged documents was presented, including a bogus *merced* alleged to have been granted by Cortés in 1526 to the “indios caciques conquistadores” of Axapusco. The document, which is preserved, speaks naively and in a style and tone wholly inappropriate to 1526, of paintings and books and “ancient prophecies,” of Acamapichtli’s vision of the white and bearded stranger who warned him against human sacrifice and the eating of human flesh, and of two *caciques* of Axapusco who met Cortés at San Juan de Ulua bearing gifts. Documentary appendages included a royal confirmation of 1537 and a number of additional confirmations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Testimonies elicited the facts that no local *cacicazgo* had existed in Axapusco within the memory of opposition witnesses and that the Santos relatives had bought the alleged *merced* from a Spaniard, who then claimed to have found it in archives in Mexico City. The attempt to fabricate a local *cacicazgo*, with its romanticized eighteenth-century attributes, in any case came to nought. Criminal proceedings were brought and the instigators were sentenced to prison.⁷³

In general the position of legitimate *caciques* and *principales* deteriorated further in late colonial times. Their decline was an aspect of a much larger process: the decay of the enthusiastic Mendicant tutelage of the early post-conquest period; the ineffectual efforts of the government to control white exploitation of Indians; the failure of Indian towns to preserve their lands and status; the subordination of Indians to systems of *hacienda* and peonage. The special *colegios* for the sons of *caciques* deteriorated and in some instances ceased operation altogether, late colonial efforts to restore them being sporadic and almost wholly unsuccessful.⁷⁴ After the great decline in Indian population of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Indian nobility came to look with diminished favor upon the office holding privilege – for the reduced number of tributaries could not maintain the tribute quotas, and Spaniards continued to hold Indian *gobernadores* responsible for collection, frequently jailing them for arrears or partial payments and sequestering their properties in the effort to make up the balances.⁷⁵ In most towns office holding ceased to be a lucrative sinecure and became instead a prelude to impoverishment. “The Indian population in general is free from the vice of ambition,” Bishop Palafox y Mendoza solemnly noted in the seventeenth century, “and few Indians now

⁷³ AGN, Ramo de Tierras, MCDLXVI, exp. 1. See also García Icazbalceta, ed., *Colección*, II, x-xxiii, 1-24.

⁷⁴ Osoreo, *op. cit.*, pp. 4 ff. León, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85. Steck, *op. cit.*, pp. 83 ff. Fernando Ocaranza, *El imperial colegio de indios de la Santa Cruz de Santiago Tlatelolco* (México, 1934), pp. 61 ff. Francisco Sedano, *Noticias de México* (2 vols.; México, Impr. de J. R. Barbedillo y Ca., 1880), I, 98 ff.

⁷⁵ AGN, Ramo de Civil, C, exp. 5, fols. 32v ff. AGN, Archivo histórico de hacienda, Leg. 225, exp. 29.

aspire to be *gobernador* or *alcalde*.”⁷⁶ The statement epitomizes a characteristic mid-colonial ecclesiastical and secular view, wherein accuracy of observation was only partially informed by understanding, and the kinds of action natural to the early post-conquest years were vitiated by complacency.

By late colonial times a number of *cacicazgos* had ceased to exist altogether. This was the case even in important communities such as Cholula and in whole *partidos* such as Ecatepec.⁷⁷ In other cases *cacicazgo* survived, but in a precarious or indifferent form, without political authority or material wealth. When *caciques* were powerful in the eighteenth century their power rested upon forms of economic and social domination characteristic of the ruling families of whatever origin. Whereas in the sixteenth century *caciques* had imitated Spaniards, in the eighteenth century “*caciques*” and “Spaniards” might both be mestizos, and if they remained successful they managed their lands, rents, agricultural production, and mode of life in approximation of the generalized norms for *hacendados* and *rancheros*. Their properties were enlarged by methods that cannot be meaningfully distinguished from the methods of the propertied class in general. The Panohuayan *cacique* of the late eighteenth century in Amecameca outstripped his *cacique* colleagues decisively in this matter of late-colonial adjustment. He was a wealthy *hacendado*, *dueño* of the *hacienda* of San Antonio Tlaxomulco and other properties producing maize, wheat, and maguey, and yielding an income of thousands of pesos per year. The *cacicazgo* retained *terrazgueros* and renters to the end of the eighteenth century. Like any Spanish *hacendado*, the *cacique* took a regular income from Indians who cut wood and grazed animals on his property. His great house was equipped with Spanish furniture, silver dining service, and rich tapestries; he possessed an arms collection with guns, pistols, and steel and silver swords; his stables and store-houses and other possessions compared favorably with those of wealthy Spaniards.⁷⁸ But Panohuayan was an exceptional case, and it is worth noting that no known circumstance of the sixteenth-century history of its *cacicazgo* can be demonstrably related to its later affluence. Its success, while not “fortuitous” or without cause, is to be regarded as relevant primarily to *latifundio*, a separate subject and one that here circumstantially overlaps with *cacicazgo*.

One further example may be selected to suggest the limitations of late colonial *cacicazgo*: that of the Cortés lineage of the former imperial capital of Tacuba. In the sixteenth century Tacuba supported a *cacique* family in pride and ostentation. The family was the possessor of a coat of arms granted to Don Antonio Cortés by Philip II in 1564 for his own and his descendants’ use.

⁷⁶ Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, *Virtudes del indio* (*Colección de libros raros ó curiosos que tratan de América*, X; Madrid, 1893), pp. 37 ff.

⁷⁷ Alexander de Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (John Black, trans.; 4 vols.; London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1811-1822), I, 185. Biblioteca Nacional, México, MS 451, fols. 287v, 294r.

⁷⁸ AGN, Ramo de Tierras, CMXCIV, *passim*; CMXCV, *passim*.

The entire *cacicazgo* family was descended from Totoquihuatzin, the great Tlatohuani of Tlacopan at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards.⁷⁹ The *cacique* of the sixteenth century wrote letters to the king and received citation for his commitment of 3000 Indians in Tacuba for the construction of the first Jesuit church in Mexico City.⁸⁰ His son, Don Juan Cortés, *cacique* of the late sixteenth century, descended on his mother's side from Don Diego Huanitzin, Tlatohuani of Tenochtitlan. It was he who directed the construction of the Franciscan church in Tacuba and who was further celebrated as a witness of the apparition of the Virgin of Los Remedios.⁸¹ In the 1590's, after Don Juan Cortés died, the governorship passed to an alien *cacique*, Don Leonardo Xicotencatl of Tlaxcala.⁸² The seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century *caciques* enjoyed their privileges and displayed their arms on the Parroquia tower beside the royal arms. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, with an intrusion in the succession, the traditional privileges were lost, the family came to be "treated as *maceguales* and *plebeyos*," and the *cacique* heir, Don José Jorge Cortés Chimalpopoca, was placed on the tribute *matricula*. He had been baptized as a bastard at the time of his birth in 1738, but his parents married in 1769 two months before his father's death. After this the Tacuba native family of Alvarado – a name that the Cortés family insisted was a false one – supported by the *cura* and *justicia*, denied the Cortés genealogy and testified that the descendants of Don Antonio Cortés had been tribute payers, as indeed they had. Don José Jorge Cortés Chimalpopoca in the early nineteenth century appealed to the viceroy for the restitution of his privileges as the *cacique* of Tacuba and in 1810 was confirmed in a long list of specific favors, of which the following are examples:

1. Representatives of the jurisdiction of Tacuba were to attend the Cortés family funerals.
2. In community functions the *cacique* was to be separately seated, in a chair bearing his name.
3. The *cacique* was to be excused from serving in any minor capacity, as *topil*, *alguacil*, *merino*, *regidor*, *escribano*, or *fiscal* in the town government.
4. The *cacique* was to be excused from tributes, *repartimientos*, and other exactions.
5. The *cacique* was to be excused from the compulsory Sunday worship and the contribution of one or one-half *real*.
6. The *cacique's* servants were not to be liable for road repair or other public or private services.

⁷⁹ AGN, Ramo de Clero Regular y Secular, CXXX, exp. sin número, fol. 5r. *Nobilaro de conquistadores*, pp. 253-255. *CDIIA*, I, 194. *Código Chimalpopoca*, p. 63.

⁸⁰ *CDIIA*, I, 193-194. Paso y Troncoso, ed., *Epistolario*, XVI, 71-74.

⁸¹ Francisco Javier Alegre, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en Nueva-España* (Carlos María de Bustamante, ed.; 3 vols.; México, Impr. de J. M. Lara, 1841-1842), I, 64-65. Pérez de Rivas, *op. cit.*, I, 55-56. Alvarado Tezozomoc, *op. cit.*, p. 169. Agustín de Vetancur, *Crónica de la provincia del Santo Evangelio de México. Cuarta parte del Teatro mexicano de los successos religiosos* (México, Por Doña María de Benavides viuda de Ivan de Ribera, 1697), p. 70. Juan de Grijalva, *Crónica de la orden de San Agustín en Nueva España* (México, En el religiosísimo conuento de S. Agustín, y imprenta de Ioan Ruysz, 1624), fols. 81v ff.

⁸² Museo Nacional, México, Colección antigua, 273-274, p. 524.

7. The *cacique* might never be imprisoned for debt, nor might his house, arms, horses, oxen, clothing, or furniture be sequestered.
8. The *cacique's* imprisonment, in the event of serious crime, was to be in the *casas reales*, and not in the public jail.
9. When the *cacique* should visit the Spanish *subdelegado* he was to be given a chair and not to be kept standing.
10. The *caciques'* names were to be included in the *nobiliarios* of all the cities of the kingdom.
11. All these privileges were to apply equally to the *caciques'* wives and widows.⁸³

Even to an ear unaccustomed to the tonalities of Mexican history this listing will have a hollow ring. Legitimate *cacicazgo* per se had little meaning beyond family pride in the conditions of the late colony. Alexander von Humboldt, one of the most perceptive observers of the Mexican scene of any period, noted in the first years of the nineteenth century that *caciques* were by that time hardly distinguishable from the mass of the Indian population in their economic circumstances and mode of daily life.⁸⁴ Neither the urban economy of Mexico City nor the *hacienda* economy of the countryside favored the preservation of *cacique* status, in the earlier sense, on the eve of independence. The desperate Spanish monarchy of the early nineteenth century had nothing further to offer to the heirs of the fifteenth-century Tlatoque. The long process of diminishing Indian "protection" under Spanish authority and the often empty acts of patronization were about to come to an end, and nothing in the nineteenth-century ideologies of political independence, liberal egalitarianism, or creole domination was to restore the decayed prestige of the Indian nobility. The conditions of Mexican independence were only superficially seen as opportunities for the recreation of Indianist values. A descendant of Montezuma who sought to take personal advantage of independence was invested as Mexican emperor in a Paris hotel room – such at least was the report – but in Mexico itself his pretensions were ridiculed.⁸⁵ The term *principal* lost its colonial meaning in the nineteenth century. The term *cacique* had already been internationalized. It figured as one of the hereditary, noble, land-owning ranks in John Locke's Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina.⁸⁶ But in nineteenth-century Mexico the term *cacique* was vulgarized and lost hereditary significance – the process was already under way in colonial times – and acquired the meaning of political boss or local tyrant. It is symptomatic of these later transformations that Emiliano Zapata's Plan de Ayala (1911) could classify *caciques* with *hacendados* and *científicos* as the greatest enemies of reform.

CHARLES GIBSON

State University of Iowa

⁸³ AGN, Ramo de Clero Regular y Secular, CXXX, exp. sin número, *passim*.

⁸⁴ Humboldt, *op. cit.*, I, 179.

⁸⁵ Lucas Alamán, *Historia de México* (5 vols.; México, Imprenta de Victoriano Agüeros y Comp., 1883-1885), V, 440 ff. See also Servando Teresa de Mier, *Escritos inéditos* (México, El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1944), p. 382.

⁸⁶ John Locke, *Works* (10 vols.; London, W. Otridge and Son, etc., 1812), X, 175 ff.