The Cosmic Conquest: Late-Colonial Views of the Sword and Cross in Central Mexican *Títulos*

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Abstract. Rare indigenous perspectives on the Spanish Conquest and Christianization of Mexico are gleaned from late-colonial Nahuatl manuscripts known as primordial titles, or *títulos*, from central New Spain. Although the coming of the sword and cross had become cosmic events by 1650 or later, when títulos were recorded, there is mounting concern in them about the growing penetration of Spaniards and mestizos into outlying Indian towns and their encroachment on increasingly scarce resources.

> Otechmotlayocolili Totlatocatzin Rey [i]nic oticchiuhque inin armas ca tonechicahualiz ca totlapalihuiliz mochihuaz inic titomaquixtizque in ihuicopa in Caxtilteca inic amo techmahuizpolozque anoze tlein techcuilizque anoze Toteopixcahuan techtolinizque.
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> [The King, our lord, granted us (the right) to make this (coat of) arms; it is our strength and our assistance. It will be made so we can free ourselves of the Spaniards, so they will not dishonor us or take something from us, nor will our priests afflict us.]
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> —"Municipal Codex" of Cuernavaca (BNP, MM, 291/292)

An outward reverence for the Spanish king juxtaposed against a profound distrust of local Spanish colonists and priests—these are but two of the many recurring themes running through the growing body of indigenous-language documents known as *títulos primordiales* (primordial titles). Recorded in various central Mexican Indian communities during the latter half of the colonial period, these informal municipal histories are among the best sources for examining the popular consciousness of New Spain's

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conquered peoples.[1] As such, they contain examples of indigenous popular lore that can be elusive in so many other types of ethnohistorical sources. Títulos form a unique genre. They do not conform to more traditional conventions found in Nahuatl-language annals, for example, and the majority were not written in the polished language of professional Indian notaries. It is highly unlikely that their production was ever supervised by Spanish officials or priests. Free in form and idiosyncratic, they were composed primarily for a local Indian audience by literate individuals who were at least temporarily outside local power structures.

Deciphering these cryptic documents, which deviate so from Western historical traditions, contain a very different sense of chronology, and have many orthographic and linguistic rarities, is a major challenge. Exact dates of composition, precise authorship, and the original context of most of the known títulos have been lost, weakening the modern historian's ability to assess their full thrust and to grasp completely their spectacular indigenous voice. What messages and attitudes do they convey? What traditions and cultural expressions? To what extent do they speak for the average citizen? Is their emphasis on the community exaggerated? Are self-interested individuals or factions really behind their composition? These and other questions are still being explored, as the study of primordial titles is in its infancy.[2]

One way of advancing our exploration of such questions is to scrutinize a number of the recurring themes in títulos. Among the more obvious themes are the ways in which they depict the Spanish invasion, the coming of Christianity, and the Indians' opinion of the intruders who had come to live in their midst. Do we find the same vivid Conquest-era descriptions of Spaniards lusting after gold as in such works as the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–82, book 12: chap. 12) or Miguel León-Portilla's (1962, 1985) edition of these and other indigenous accounts? Do we find the same emphasis on the heroic assistance given Cortés by communities like Tlaxcala and Huejotzinco, which in the sixteenth century curried favor with the Crown for their deeds?[3] Or, many generations after Cortés's triumph, had the collective Indian consciousness reframed the Conquest and the changes it set in motion? How had the foreign invasion come to figure in the indigenous peoples' sense of their own history? Was it viewed with some degree of acceptance, tolerance, or perhaps indignation? If so, what might account for these changing perspectives? Before beginning the analysis of these specific themes and questions, it is necessary to sketch out the genre's major characteristics.

The Títulos Genre

Although primordial titles are proving to be a significant source of information about the Indian view of conquest and evangelization, they are best known for their descriptions of corporate and sometimes elite landholding. One of their principal components is a detailed, allegedly sixteenth-century border survey of all territory claimed by a given community. An early viceroy or other high Spanish official is typically said to have been present at the survey and is described as having granted the land to the town or to its leading citizens. For this reason, and despite the presence of many other kinds of information about the town's history from prehispanic times through the seventeenth or eighteenth century, the entire genre sometimes came to be seen primarily as land tenure records—hence the denomination "titles." The adjective "primordial" was added in the nineteenth century as translators reflected on the many centuries of tradition a set of títulos usually contained.

Charles Gibson (1975: 321) has described the typical title as representing "an individual or collective memory of lands possessed or once possessed and endangered." That memory, he adds, "might be misguided or deliberately contrived to support a claim" (ibid.). James Lockhart (1982: 371), in his study of four títulos from the Chalco region, concurs with the assessment that, as proof of territorial claims, they are usually inaccurate and "in some sense deliberately falsified." But because these manuscripts were made primarily for Indian consumption, deceiving the courts was probably not their original intent. They may have been reassembled or altered in later times by people other than their original authors. For example, the so-called Díaz Título of Cuernavaca was conveniently discovered in the midst of a land dispute by Don Josef Gaspar Díaz, alleged descendant of one of the speakers in the text (AGN, HJ, legajo 447, file 7).

As records of land tenure in particular and as historical records in general, primordial titles were commonly disputed by Spaniards, who pointed to factual inaccuracies in their claims, such as incorrectly dated terms of office for well-known viceroys. Multiple copies of títulos often surfaced. Slight differences suggested to the non-Indian audience that copyists had made careless errors and had amended the various versions over the years, which further lessened the documents' legal value. Because sections of them spoke of sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century happenings in the first person and in the present tense, while the handwriting and the paper they were written on were late seventeenth- or eighteenth-century, they were likely to be denounced as fraudulent. The folkloric

historical nature of primordial titles, based on centuries-old oral tradition, perhaps fragments of earlier written records, and fading memory, was misunderstood, belittled, or disregarded, particularly when the land claims they contained were too grandiose.

Even though all land was Indian land before the arrival of Europeans, the territories best defended in the courts were those still held after considerable indigenous population decline at the time of official Spanish recognition in the mid-sixteenth century. The need for formal colonial documents of such recognition—documents which rarely existed in the era of the more intense late-colonial land battles—may have been partly responsible for the move by literate members of many Indian communities after about 1650 to record their own stories in their own way. It is surely no coincidence that títulos began appearing in considerable numbers as evidence in litigation around the start of the eighteenth century. Yet a careful reading indicates that they do not actually address the Spanish court officials who eventually read translations of them; instead, they are directed at the people of a particular town and to their descendants. Authors even warn against letting Spaniards see the titles, a point we will return to subsequently.

The fact that a considerable portion of the contents of títulos does not directly relate to territorial claims also supports the notion that they were directed at the internal audience. A drive to portray the increasing size and strength of the *altepetl*, or indigenous provincial unit, may have been the real motivation. Land grants were only one component of such a portrayal. Other equally important developments that come to light in titles include prehispanic migrations and multiple settlements; threats to the town from other Indian peoples, such as Mexica imperialists; efforts by founding fathers and mothers to sustain the community; the construction of indigenous temples and, later, churches; the selection of patron saints; mass baptisms; epidemics; the reorganization of town centers on grid patterns; the designation of *barrios* (wards); the appointment of Spanish-style town councils, including a *juez gobernador* (town governor) or an *alcalde* (high-ranking town council officer); the organization of tribute payments; and so on. Two-dimensional illustrations or sketches may accompany these narratives.

Not every title or version preserved in multiple copies will have all this information. Some will elaborate more extensively on the prehispanic events, others on the Christian aspects; some will dwell on various boundary surveys and related celebratory acts. Groups of titles from the same region, made by or for neighboring towns, such as those known for Chalco, will share prominent details or even whole sections almost verbatim. The

Xochimilcan títulos borrow from annals. The more numerous examples of títulos become, the more clearly their basic characteristics are seen to repeat and the more readily identified the documents are collectively as a distinct genre.

The examples of the genre considered here in the greatest detail are three sets of titles from the Valley of Toluca, representing the towns of Santiago Capulhuac, San Martín Ocoyacac (also known as Ocoyoacac), and San Juan Bautista Metepec. In addition, wherever possible, supporting information is drawn from the wider central Mexican region: from the four Chalco títulos examined by Lockhart (1982) plus three others associated with San Andrés Mixquic, San Matias Cuixingo, and Reyes Tlalaxayopaneca; from three heretofore unexplored Xochimilco-area títulos associated with San Gregorio Acapulco (also known as Atlapulco), Asunción Milpa Alta, and Santa Marta; from one of the títulos of Huejotzinco; and from seven titles tied to Cuernavacan communities being studied by Robert Haskett (1987, 1990). The latter include four from the regional capital itself, one from Chapultepec, one from San Lorenzo Chiamilpa (also known as Chamilpa), and one from San Salvador Ocotepec.[4]

The Sword

As a rule, any depiction of the violent contest that we might associate with the Spanish Conquest is absent from the known primordial titles. Lockhart (1982: 388) finds for Chalco that the "conquest proper hardly figures in the titles. It is merely signaled as 'the coming of Cortés' or 'the coming of the faith,' something taken as a cosmic event." The Chalcan Atlauhtla title, for example, refers only briefly to the surrender of the Mexican capital and some local fighting (ibid.: 383). The Chalco region sided with Cortés early in 1521, which may account for the relative lack of discussion of armed conflict (Gerhard 1972: 103). The Cuernavaca and Toluca areas, on the other hand, resisted and were defeated in 1521, yet títulos from these regions similarly contain little information on battles. Poor memory alone cannot account for this, since prehispanic events are remembered (or imagined) in various titles. Was it that battles of the Spanish Conquest occurred on fronts unobserved by títulos authors or were settled too quickly? Perhaps the local repercussions of conquest were not necessarily associated with the armed phase.

The only references to the Spanish Conquest in the Tolucan Capulhuac title, and they are oblique, include a simple statement that "Cortés came to win this new land" and one announcing that Mexico City had been refounded (AGN, T, vol. 2860, file 1, sec. 2: 68r). Nothing is said

of the destructive forces or change of government that necessitated the rebuilding of the capital. On a more local level, the town founder named in the Metepec title claims to have aided in the conquest of three barrios in his community, putting up five hundred pesos of his own money, a considerable sum (Garibay K. 1949: 12).[5]

One of the Xochimilco-area títulos, from Santa Marta, mentions ninety days of war in Santiago Tlatelolco in 1521. The reference seems to come from the annals of nearby San Gregorio Acapulco, which contain this and other conquest information (McAfee and Barlow 1952: 105).[6] As with the Capulhuac example, this is a reference to a distant front, apparently not a war endured by the earliest residents of Santa Marta. It is surprising that Xochimilcan titles do not tell of fighting in the regional capital or of the dramatic burning of the city in 1521 (Prescott 1964: 531–36). The spectacular battles in the Cuernavaca region (ibid.: 528–30) similarly escape notice in that area's known primordial titles.

The most notorious conqueror, Hernando Cortés, suffered a head injury and was taken captive temporarily just outside Xochimilco, but no such exciting details are recalled in these records. He appears in most títulos as simply the Marqués, or the Marqués del Valle, the title he used after forming his vast personal domain within a decade of the Conquest. He is never described as a warrior, an unwelcome intruder, or a hated overlord, even though he personally led the battles and claimed significant portions of the Valley of Toluca, the Cuernavaca region, and, for a time, the Chalco area as his domain (Gerhard 1972: 94–95, 103, 330). The Marqués's name is linked regularly to a string of other prominent Spanish officials, such as the king, Carlos V; the first two Mexican viceroys, Don Antonio de Mendoza and Don Luis de Velasco; the younger viceroy Velasco; and the first archbishop, Don Juan de Zumarraga. All are treated as powerful leaders who helped establish and strengthen the local community, its rank, its landholdings, its church, and its leadership. Most changes set in motion at the local level came with purported visits by these Spanish dignitaries or their representatives, who circulated through the central areas possibly as early as the mid-1520s and more regularly by mid-century.[7]

Another, somewhat mysterious, recurring figure in the central Mexican títulos is a Spaniard, Pedro de Ahumada, who arrived in Mexico in 1550 (Lockhart 1982: 388, n. 10) and may have served in both civil and ecclesiastical posts. His importance in the titles looms much larger than general histories have accorded him; he is hardly known at all, but perhaps he should be. "Arsubizbuc don Bero de omemadad," as he is called in the San Gregorio Acapulco títulos, was not really an archbishop but may have been an envoy of the archbishop (McAfee and Barlow 1952:

126).[8] He appears as "Do Petro de Omada" in the Chalcan Tetelco title, as "Do P te Omemadad" in the same region's Zoyatzingo document (Lockhart 1982: 388), and as "tlatohuani lisensiado D PeDro De onmata" in the Cuixingo records (AGN, T, vol. 2819, file 9: 55v). In the latter, Ahumada acts in an official capacity, overseeing resettlement and other municipal rearrangements in 1559. François Chevalier (1963: 209) tells of a Pedro de Ahumada reporting to the high court in 1559 about indigenous leaders seizing community lands and selling them to Spaniards in the Mexico City region.

Possibly the same person, Pedro de Ahumada Sámano served in the 1550s as the governor for Cortés's estate, the Marquesado del Valle (Riley 1973: 91; Zavala 1984: 263), and was called simply "Señor Pedro de Ahumada" in a report about his activities in this capacity in the *Libro de las tasaciones* (1952: 582–84, 642). A few years later, "Señor pedro aomada" appears as conqueror in the Nahuatl record of a sixteenth-century *entrada* against Zacatecs and Guachichiles in Nueva Galicia (Barlow 1943: 9–10). His own account of this excursion, in Spanish, is dated 1562 (ibid.: Appendix). A conqueror serving in an ecclesiastical function is also seen in the Huejotzinco título, where Gonzalo de Sandoval is presented as observing mass baptisms (LAL, VEMC, file 24, item 3). Thus the sword and the cross are intermixed in the persons of these lesser-known conquerors and early administrators, who may have had a significance in the sixteenth-century Indian world that has escaped modern researchers. Along with such high-level figures as the Marqués and the king, they are later seen in a uniformly positive light.

Civil Congregations

The importance of the general civil congregations of the mid-sixteenth century is well known today, and in the títulos they are some of the more prominent occasions for visits by Spanish officials to indigenous communities. An integral part of the consolidation of conquest, *congregación* programs are recognized by many modern historians as disruptive forces. Their ostensible purpose was to condense dispersed populations following epidemics for better religious instruction and taxation. But critics see congregación programs as having resettled people against their will and sometimes as having contributed to the more rapid spread of disease (see, for example, de la Torre 1952; Gerhard 1972: 27). While such appraisals seem just, it is instructive to note that the primordial titles do not put individual congregations in a wholly negative light.[9] Certainly, the titles recall considerable resistance to initial efforts to concentrate indigenous

settlement, but their authors also appear satisfied, at least in retrospect, with the result: a stronger, more settled, more populous town.

According to the Ocoyacac title, there were several attempts to congregate people occupying the "hills and plains, woods and ravines, rocks, caves," and so on (AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3: 29r).[10] The first attempt involved the people of the neighboring communities of San Francisco Cuauhpanoayan and San Martín Obispo, who were settled together in exchange for a land concession from Viceroy Mendoza. In August 1556 (a plausible date), a call was made to bring in people from outlying areas.[11] "Some came, others were afraid and did not want to come," but in the end there was a successful survey of boundaries marked by trumpet playing, the shooting of arrows, the presentation of flowers, neighbors embracing, and, finally, the sharing of a meal (AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3: 30r–v). There is a definite indigenous stamp on some of these celebratory acts.

Whether or not the first two congregación attempts in Ocoyacac failed is unclear; perhaps one simply strengthened the other. A third call to the "ancients" to form a pueblo was made to the sound of a trumpet on 19 February 1564 (again, a plausible date, although its exactness is surprising). "They did not want to come," the title recounts, and war nearly broke out. But the animated men and women quieted down, exchanged flowers, and embraced when the boundaries were once more marked off for the new territory (AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3: 49v–50r).

Resistance ultimately overcome is a theme also found in the Metepec título. In both this one and the one from Ocoyacac, there is little sense of the presence of any Spanish officials on the scene, let alone of their coercing people to abandon nonsedentary life. Instead, in Metepec, it is a local man and woman (but apparently not a conjugal or an autochthonous pair as in the Chalcan titles) who convince their people to congregate.[12] One says: "Let infidelity be rejected. Let God make us relinquish that which is not good. Let us be one" (Garibay K. 1949: 8). The other asks the people to give up living like deer and coyotes and to let God and the patron saint guide them (ibid.: 10).

This precept was not simply one learned from the friars; it was a standard theme of ancient Mexican teachings to encourage people to lead a sedentary life.[13] But another motive is also possible. The male town founders (and, indirectly, their spouses) had something to gain by encouraging congregación and might therefore remember it more fondly than those whose lives were disrupted by resettlement. Larger, denser populations meant greater tribute assessments and a greater likelihood of the leaders' winning official colonial recognition as town governors. Local indigenous elites and Spanish colonial officials had a common interest

in seeing to a smooth transition in the reorganizations that were taking place. Hence, in the Capulhuac title we see Cortés and Viceroy Mendoza supervising the implementation of tribute payments, "first for God and then for the King in Castile," and, finally, for the Indian juez gobernador of the local community, Don Bartolomé Miguel (AGN, T, vol. 2860, file 1, sec. 2: 70r).

The Capulhuac congregación is actually said to have occurred in 1604, a date that jibes with the official record and corresponds to the second wave of population concentration in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[14] In Capulhuac, congregación is associated with population growth rather than decline, perhaps because the town core became more populous despite the overall loss in smaller outlying settlements. An official came to issue house lots, four barrios were designated, patron saints were selected, and the land was measured and marked. All these events gave prestige to an altepetl and could help it gain status as a *cabecera* (head town) in the Spanish conceptualization of town hierarchy and its privileges (Gibson 1964: 33–57).

The Cross

While civil congregation, town council formation, and references to new tribute assessments are regular features in these municipal histories, religious changes set in motion by the arrival of the Spanish are much more prominent. Although Spanish friars or priests are not much in evidence in the Chalco titles Lockhart (1982) studied, Christian themes certainly are, especially in discussions of the local church, a "symbol of the town's existence and relative status" (ibid.: 391). Further study reveals that the church is a major feature of most central Mexican titles. Construction is a source of pride and a means to avoid labor drafts that forcibly removed people from their communities. Friars do make occasional appearances in títulos, too. While "ohualmohuicac [or 'oaçico'] yn tlaneltoquiliztli" (the arrival of the faith) is a benign formula virtually all titles mention in passing, the greatest Spanish intrusion and degree of coercion evidenced in them is seen in references to various forms of religious conquest carried out by friars, particularly notable in the Valley of Toluca documents.[15]

The first priest to visit Capulhuac came only once a month to say mass. But when this *clerigo* came, the town founder relates in the title, the people ran to hide. Gradually, the town founder got them to listen to the priest (although at that time they "did not know the Castillian language") and to accept baptism, which is said to have been initiated in 1539.[16] Still, they did not "believe properly," and so the priest had to come "to destroy

that which they had been worshiping" (AGN, T, vol. 2860, file 1, sec. 2: 68v). On another occasion, he was aided in "breaking up the gods" by the town founder's son (ibid.: 70r).[17] Since much of this title is a record in the first person of statements supposedly made by the town founder and his descendants, it is not surprising that, given their roles as intermediaries assisting the ecclesiastics, a Christian victory is taken for granted in these accounts.

In the Metepec title, the "faith was installed," presumably at the urging of one local leader who claimed to have willingly aided the newcomers, at the same time that a perhaps less compliant ruler "was expelled" (Garibay K. 1949: 7). Nothing more is said of the former ruler, but there are some intriguing details of the religious conquest. The title relates that a Fray Bartolomé "is to go to conquer [the infidels], and they will really not desire it" (ibid.: 10).[18] The town founder claims to have spent about a thousand pesos to help build the first chapel and provide its adornments. On one occasion, when some people tried to remove the image of Santa Clara from their temple, he and others of "God's beloved" pursued the dissidents up a hillside, carrying ropes. "Howling like coyotes" during the chase, some of the fugitives fell down and were captured. One gave in and promised to accept baptism. Finally, Clara's image was returned to the principal temple, and there was great rejoicing (ibid.: 10–11).

Interspersed with these brief accounts of conquest and resistance are stories about miracles and festivities. People are described as having been pleased by the religious instruction which introduced Latin grammar and other foreign languages to them (ibid.: 7). Supposedly, there was also "great happiness" when, on Friday, 1 December 1525, three friars brought consecrated bread from Xalatlaco, the head town of the parish, and Holy Communion was celebrated (ibid.).[19] In general, the Metepec account is a string of remembrances (seemingly not in chronological order) of steady Spanish incursions and waning indigenous resistance, with ultimate victory falling to the intruders and a swelling enthusiasm on the part of the new religious subjects. Pride is typically expressed in the local chapels, in the communal labor behind their construction and continued maintenance, and in service to the patron saints.

The selection of the patron saint of Milpa Alta dominates that community's primordial title and is prominent in that of Capulhuac. Chronology is somewhat hazy again. Indeed, the first saint seems to have been chosen before any Spaniards were on the scene. The patron of the earliest settlement associated with Capulhuac, a "stone saint" (a prehispanic idol, presumably), was the object of pilgrimages made by different ethnic

groups in the valley. The title reads that this occurred in the days when "we still do not really believe," when "in this land and its surroundings we do not yet believe [in Christianity]" (AGN, T, vol. 2860, file 1, sec. 2: 68r).[20] The authors are somewhat confused about what came before and after the arrival of the Spanish, but they understand that there was a pre-Christian era experienced not only by their town but by the whole region. The Ocoyacac title, in a similar vein, incorporates a Spanish term for "heathen" to describe the local inhabitants in the time before the faith arrived: *tigentilestlaca* (we gentile people) (AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3: 18r, 28r, 29r).[21] Was this a dawning awareness of Indianness (non-Christian Indians as opposed to Christian Spaniards) among people who also clung to a more immediate identification with their respective altepetl?

Interestingly, there is no longing in any of these titles for that earlier pre-Christian time, no hint that it was superior or something that should be recaptured. If anything, there is a sense of satisfaction that a misguided past had been overcome. Such sentiments are more forthcoming but not out of line with the relatively favorable views, seen above, associated with military conquest and civil congregations.

Anti-Spanish Sentiment

This is not to say that the period when the primordial titles were written down, probably the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, was a carefree time. There were problems associated with the gradual regeneration of population that followed the devastating epidemics of the sixteenth century. The growth in the number of new families that needed fertile land, some of which had been usurped by Spanish individuals, was partially responsible for the formulation of these titles. The mounting tension over precious resources that came with Indian-Spanish land competition is also spelled out in the form of occasional anti-Spanish remarks.

As noted, the principal Spanish individuals who appear by name in these records are colonial officials and high ecclesiastics who legitimize the town and bolster its claims. All the central Mexican títulos considered here treat these individuals alike. They are never described as "Spaniards" and are hardly thought of as individuals. Their legendary names are sprinkled liberally throughout the texts, while sometimes their first names and often their official Spanish titles are ignored or confused. The títulos show them considerable respect nonetheless, referring to them as "tlahtoque" (rulers). The Mixquic document boasts that the viceroy was greeted with flowers and *chirimías* (single-reed instruments) (AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: 213r–214r). The Capulhuac title describes the younger

Viceroy Don Luis de Velasco as *cencan mahuiztililoni* (the truly honorable) (AGN, T, vol. 2860, file 1, sec. 2: 71v). The elder Velasco, in the Reyes Tlalaxayopanecan títulos, is mistakenly but affectionately described with Spanish loanwords as "Rey noestro senior" (King our lord) (AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: 277r).[22]

Caution, fear, and anger are reserved for the generic Spanish individual who might penetrate the community's protective shield, which was, incidentally, initially raised against neighboring Indian towns. For example, the Capulhuac title defies any Spaniard (literally, *quixtiano*, "Christian," a Nahuatlization of the Spanish *cristiano*) ever "to alienate even a gourdful of maize or to plant half an *almud* of maize . . . and never can anyone sell land [to Spaniards]" (AGN, T, vol. 2860, file 1, sec. 2: 69r–v).[23] Later, it warns people not to make friends with Spaniards (*quixtiyanotin*, "Christians"), for they will try to take land (ibid.: 72r).[24] This warning comes in the midst of a discussion about a supposed outsider "who is not our relative, who is from another place; for he is really of another blood; he is a coyote."[25] This person of allegedly Spanish-Indian ancestry is said to have come from Mexico City and to have penetrated the local elite in the seventeenth century, gaining the title of *tlahtoani*. According to the títulos, the "big dog [*huey chichi*] ruined the town [*oquitlaco altepetl*]," and none of his descendants must ever be allowed to rule. Such political factionalism between different elite lineages is typically embedded in these manuscripts just as it was a feature of everyday life in the pueblos.[26]

Primordial titles allowed their authors, while covering the political and religious history of the town, to establish age-old territorial claims both for the community and for prestigious families within it. Perhaps the documents were made partly for use in the courts, for they often turned up there, but they also informed and reminded the local inhabitants of crucial boundaries and as such were jealously guarded. And if títulos were in part an attempt to replace lost land documents from an earlier time, their possessors probably wanted to be more careful with them. Leaders were reluctant to let anyone in the town show the títulos to outsiders, who might then be better prepared to counter their claims. Titles could serve as proof of ownership of land, even if they had somehow come to be held by non-Indians. It is this apparent frame of mind that we see in the Ocoyacac título's warning, "The Spaniards are already coming; do not show [this document] to them" (AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3: 47v). Don Carlos V is said to have given possession of the land to Ocoyacac's townspeople, not to the Spaniards (*caxtiltecantli*, "people of Castile") (ibid.: 21r, 30r). These two remarks are nearly identical to the sentiment expressed in the título

Charles Gibson (1964: 271) quotes: "'Spaniards come to seize what we have justly won.'"

The Milpa Alta title, cautioning its citizens of that inevitable and undesirable march of the Spanish, elaborates: "And you will all lose everything. The Spaniards will come, they will become your friends, *compadres* [coparents], and in-laws, they will bring money, and with that, they will go taking away little by little all the lands that are found here" (AGN, T, file 3: 215r–v). The original Nahuatl of this portion is missing, but the Spanish captures the same flavor Lockhart (1982) relates of the Chalco titles, a resistance to showing the papers to Spaniards and to letting them usurp Indian lands. The Zoyatzingo title also warns that the intruders are likely to worm their way into compadre relationships in order to get the land through purchase or gift. The Sula document describes them as tricky, deceitful people. There are abundant examples of the same distrust of the colonists across the lot of known primordial titles from central Mexico. Lockhart (ibid.: 391) suggests that while these documents reveal "an affirmative attitude . . . toward an overall Spanish-Christian framework, the same is not true when it comes to Spaniards as individuals."

In the títulos the Conquest proper was depicted as a cosmic event with only gradual repercussions, mainly religious changes, experienced in the first century of contact. But by the mid- to late-colonial period, the conquerors' presence was profoundly felt. The intruders were not conquerors per se; they called themselves Christians and were nominally accepted as such. They came from a distant land called Caxtilan (Castile) or, more recently, Mexico City and spoke a different language (*Caxtilan tlatoli*). But they were not mysterious. The alarm was raised among the locals only after the foreigners had made considerable inroads into the Indian towns. Apparently enough Spaniards and mestizos had already befriended or entered into compadre relationships with local Indians and had come to purchase or otherwise obtain community land that a nervous minority recognized a danger. In the titles, it is often the elders who warn future generations of the growing threat.

Perspective and Purpose

This returns us, finally, to the question of authorship, which has been vital from the start. Although there is little certainty yet about authorship, understanding the content of these manuscripts will help us assess just who wrote them and why. In turn, some idea of their perspective and purpose will help us recognize any propaganda or distortion in the generally positive characterization of the sword and the cross.

As seen above, the real or alleged town founders of these communities play a dominant role in the titles. In the Ocoyacac and Metepec manuscripts a man and, in a less prominent but still important role, a woman serve as intermediaries, accommodating colonial changes at the local level in exchange for official recognition of their communities. In the Capulhuac title, only the male town founder is mentioned. The generation succeeding the town founders, actually select sons, appear in the Metepec and Capulhuac títulos. In both, there is some urgency about their continuing as heirs to power and land. Certainly, they had a sufficient motive for getting their families' claims down on paper.

Because communities often had several elite lineages, and these often vied with one another, the títulos' claims about rulership or particular landholdings should be taken with a grain of salt. Self-interest possibly guided the selective memory that favored certain lineages over others in the títulos as the altepetl was founded and honored over the centuries. Factions temporarily out of power may have had a stronger motive to rewrite history to their own advantage. Perhaps it was the poorly educated, socially precarious descendant of a group that never quite reached the top who had a hand in recording and amending local lore to suit his needs (the lack of training in professional Nahuatl explains the sometimes deviant language and orthography used).

Regardless of which Indian family appears to have been more influential in their composition, the titles portray the generic Spanish interloper uniformly. Why were the probably semiprominent male authors of primordial titles particularly concerned about Spanish settlers, when they seem so supportive of Spanish authorities? The authorities had once secured for them (or their ancestors) a legitimate place in the local community and the colonial system. The settlers, however, looked out for themselves, often acting outside the law, which included protective provisions for indigenous communities, such as the prohibition of sales of corporate landholdings. Spanish individuals who came to live in or near Indian towns were also in competition with indigenous nobles for local influence and wealth.

If locally prominent (or upwardly mobile) males had the greatest influence on the content of the primordial titles, as they easily could have, is the picture we get of conquest and colonization also representative of the larger community's viewpoint? Would the people who bore the greater burden of tribute and ecclesiastical fees and faced reduced plots of land on which to cultivate their subsistence have shown a greater resentment of Spanish colonialism? Unfortunately, we may never know how much input, if any, the *macehuales* (commoners) had in their own histories. But

we must not presume them to have been radicals. While their responsibilities were surely heavy, it is entirely conceivable that they took outsiders as compadres for the vital support network that that relationship provided and sought others to buy land from them in order to raise desperately needed cash with which to pay tribute debts. It is also conceivable and not contradictory that macehuales were similarly cautious about local Spaniards and yet, at the same time, respectful of higher colonial authorities.[57]

Conclusion

An abhorrence of imperialism might lead one to search for evidence of heroic resistance in the indigenous experience under Spanish rule. Perhaps surprisingly, primordial titles, or local histories written by, for, and about Indians, are not the place to find a rejection of the intruding Spanish society and culture. Memories of the sword are vague at best, and the coming of the faith stirred some deep feelings of fear and resistance, but the Christian victory is ultimately a cause for celebration among at least the community leaders. Title authors do not connect the devastating diseases of the sixteenth century with the arrival of the Europeans and in fact barely give the epidemics a passing notice. They do not reject tribute levies or any of the demands made upon their people for the support of the church and clergy. Religious duties, in particular, such as building and maintaining the church and its accoutrements, are performed willingly, even enthusiastically. What might possibly have been resented by those who bore the greater burdens of colonialism was welcomed by community leaders, who gained authority and income by serving as brokers of change.

But change was also dawning in the attitudes of the local indigenous leadership. The balance had tipped. The once distant and palatable conquest of the imperial Aztec polity and religion now extended to the immediate vicinity, penetrating and unraveling the fiber of the communities' continued existence. Spanish estate owners increasingly competed for land, and mestizos on the local town councils usurped power. Enough of these individuals overstepped their bounds that the group as a whole came to be regarded with suspicion. Community leaders found in primordial titles a useful organ in which to voice their concerns about this increasingly real threat, interweaving local history with contradictory reverence for colonial authorities and rallying cries against individual encroachments of the Spanish world.

Notes

1 Primordial titles are not limited to central Mexico. For examples from the Chontal Maya, the Quiche Maya, and the Mixtecs, see Scholes and Roys 1968, Carmack 1973: Appendix, and Taylor 1972: 40n.22.

2 James Lockhart (1982) has done the most to clarify the salient characteristics of the genre, first briefly described by Charles Gibson (1964). Additional examples and features of these manuscripts have been brought to light by Jorge Klor de Alva (in private communications), Ursula Dyckerhoff (1979), Serge Gruzinski (1986), H. R. Harvey (1986), Robert Haskett (1985, 1987, 1990), and Margarita Menegus Bornemann (1979), among others.

3 See, for example, Anderson et al. 1976: 176–91.

4 Citations for the títulos of Toluca: AGN, T, vol. 2860, file 1, sec. 2: 59r–80v (Capulhuac); AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3 (Ocoyoacac); and Garibay K. 1949 (Metepec). The Metepec title was also consulted on microfilm in the Byron McAfee Collection (URL, SC). Citations for títulos of other regions: AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: 213r–216r (San Andrés Mixquic, Chalco); AGN, T, vol. 2819, file 9: 40r–62r (San Matias Cuixingo, Chalco); AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: fols. 276r–277v (Reyes Tlalaxayopaneca, Chalco); McAfee and Barlow 1952 (San Gregorio Acapulco, Xochimilco); AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: 207r–213r, 220r–227v (Asunción Milpa Alta, Xochimilco); AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: 202r–206v, 217r–218v (Santa Marta, Xochimilco); LAL, VEMC, file 24, item 3 (Huejotzingo); BNP, MM, 102; BNP, MM, 291/292; AGN, HJ, legajo (bundle) 447, file 7: 1r–6v, and Barlow 1946 (four títulos from Cuernavaca); AGN, HJ, vol. 48, pt. 2, file 9, sec. 3: 564r–567v (Chapultepec, Cuernavaca); AGN, HJ, vol. 79, file 4: 121r–125r (San Lorenzo Chiamilpa, Cuernavaca); and AGN, HJ, legajo 447, file 81: 6r–8v (San Salvador Ocotepec, Cuernavaca).

5 The figure of five hundred pesos is given in the Nahuatl as "macuili *siento*," or 5 × 100, showing the late-colonial influence of the decimal system, which replaced the indigenous vigesimal method of counting. A similarly influenced presentation of five hundred as "macuilmacuilpoal," or 5 × (5 × 20), found in a Techialoyan text (AGN, T, vol. 180, file 3: 11r), represents perhaps an intermediate step between the two systems. Earlier, it might have read "centzontli ypan macuilpohualli," or [400 + (5 × 20)].

6 The títulos of Acapulco were published with the annals of the same town. The pairing of these two different types of documents is unusual but intriguing for what it might say about the authors' familiarity with different history genres.

7 While personal visits of the highest dignitaries are known to have occurred, primordial titles seem to exaggerate their frequency.

8 The Atlauhtla title also gives nearly the same unusual spelling for *arzobispo*, "arsobizbuc," with the deviant final *c* (AGN, T, vol. 2674, file 1: 10r), as does the Ocoyacac title (AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3: 29r, 31v).

9 Furthermore, it should be noted that more congregaciones probably dissolved and more former sites were reoccupied than has often been recognized. See Wood 1984: chaps. 2, 6.

10 This may be a formulaic way of saying "in the wilderness," for it echoes wording found by Lockhart (1982: 382n.5) in the Zoyatzingo and Atlauhtla titles.

11 The Zoyatzingo congregación is said to have occurred in 1555, and Lockhart (1982: 382, 388) sees a clustering of similar dates in this decade for congregaciones mentioned in other títulos, as well.

12 In most central Mexican títulos the *huehuetque* (male elders) play the major roles in early altepetl functions; individual women and partners of male town founders appear occasionally. In one of the Cuernavaca titles reference is made to the *illamatque* (female elders) (BNP, MM, 102: 3v). The women of Mixquic also participated in a general way in early events (AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: 213r).

13 The Nahuas, proud descendants of the Toltecs, "are those who remained, those who could no longer migrate," according to the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–82, book 10: 170).

14 Other central Mexican títulos tell of congregaciones in this second wave, too. San Gregorio Acapulco's, for example, mentions one in 1603, another credible date (McAfee and Barlow 1952: 140–41).

15 One of the Cuernavaca titles also gives so much information about the coming of the priests and religious changes that it would not be surprising to find that a *fiscal* (Indian assistant to a priest) authored it (Haskett 1987).

16 This date is conceivable. Franciscans put down roots in Toluca possibly in the late 1520s but may not have established other parishes around the valley until the 1550s (Gerhard 1972: 176, 331). More research, however, could place these activities earlier. Several títulos date evangelization from the decades of the 1520s and 1530s.

17 In the Nahuatl, "oquimotlatlapannilico yn otictoteotiaya" and "onquitlatlapannanto teonme."

18 In the Nahuatl, "ca yehuatzin mohuicas quinmoconquistarhuis auh huel amo quinequisque."

19 The recollection of such an exact date here, as in most of the central Mexican títulos, is surprising. The year might also be early.

20 In the Nahuatl, "Ayamo huel tintlanelTocan" and "Can Ayamo tintlaneltocan Ypan ynin tlali ynhua nonhuiya cemananhuac."

21 This term and variations of it appear in many of the central Mexican títulos. See, for example, AGN, T, vol. 3032, file 3: 203v, 218r (Santa Marta) and 277r (Reyes Tlalaxayopanecan), or McAfee and Barlow 1952: 124–26 (San Gregorio Acapulco).

22 Lockhart (1982: 389) gives examples of the way titles of office are confused in the Chalcan títulos. The king is also called a viceroy in two of the Cuernavaca titles (BNP, MM, 102: 3r; Barlow 1946: 215) and in the títulos of Ocoyacac (AGN, T, vol. 2998, file 3: 29v).

23 In the Nahuatl, "Ayc aqui oc ce quixtiano quiquixtiz manel ce xicanli tlaoli noço tlaco almo tlaoli quitocaz . . . Aic aquin quinamacaz tlalli."

24 In the Nahuatl, "Tla quemania quimocniuhtiz quixtiyanotin Nima mocuiliz y tlalli."

25 In the Nahuatl (somewhat puzzling), "Canmo totlacanmecayo oc cecni y ehua can huel oc oyez queni ce tlamantli y eztli quipie can coyotl." There appears to be a copying error here, and possibly a problem with word division. The Spanish translator saw *loco* (crazy) in the words *huel oc oyez*.

26 See Haskett 1985: 140–47. He also discusses charges of non-Indian ethnicity as a regular feature in election disputes for town council office (ibid.: 168–71).

27 Speaking before the annual meeting of the Northeast Anthropological Association at SUNY at Albany in 1988, Jorge Klor de Alva referred poignantly to the ambiguity behind this desire to include non-Nahuas and the need to exclude them.

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HJ Hospital de Jesús Collection.
T Tierras Collection.
BNP (Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris)
MM Manuscrit Mexicain.
LAL (Latin American Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA)
VEMC Viceregal and Ecclesiastical Mexican Collection.
URL (University Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles)
SC Special Collections. Byron McAfee Collection, Microfilm.

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