The House of Guzmán: An Indigenous Cacicazgo in Early Colonial Central Mexico

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Abstract

Recent ethnohistorical studies in the Valley of Puebla (Central Mexico) use Claude Lévi-Strauss’s house model to explain the land tenure and social organization of Nahua (Aztec) noble houses. The purpose of this article is to clarify how Puebla’s 16th-century houses differed from their 18th-century counterparts. Documents from the city of Tepeaca permit a rare glimpse into their early colonial organization: the management of house lands, dependent nobles, and commoner laborers, all governed by a lord. Using members’ wills, I examine the organization of Tepeaca’s powerful Guzmán house. I evaluate the Nahua practices and Spanish mandates influencing its “consolidated” arrangement (John K. Chance 1998). Finally, I review the confluence of factors that destroyed Tepeaca’s houses. By the 18th century, the city’s elite no longer controlled houses, even as elites in nearby communities managed and profited from “dispersed” versions of the house. [Keywords: Lévi-Strauss’s house model, cacicazgo, hacienda, Nahua, Mexico]

Ethnohistorians of agrarian society in colonial Mesoamerica are presently revising long accepted ideas concerning land tenure, social stratification, and political organization within indigenous communities. Some revisions owe to methodological advances, principally the use of colonial native language documents produced by indigenous peoples (Horn 1997; Lockhart 1992; Restall 1997; Terraciano 2001). Other revisions emanate from detailed examination of region-specific indigenous institutions and class relations (Chance 2000; Hill and Monaghan 1987; Kellogg 1995; see also Taylor 1972). With better data, ethnohistorians address shortcomings in earlier portrayals that envisaged colonial Indian communities as the socially compressed, egalitarian remnants of population decline and Spanish reorganization, threatened on all sides by encroaching haciendas (Spanish estates; Gibson 1964; Wolf 1959). Studies demonstrate how both Spanish and native ideas structured indigenous culture and agriculture (e.g., Hill 1989; Lockhart 1982); and how local-level nobles (termed caciques by the Spanish) frequently remained dominant players in municipal politics and land tenure, even into the 18th and 19th centuries (Chance 1996; Haskett 1991; Menegus Bornemann 2005; Stern 1983; see also Wolf 1986).

Early ethnohistorical investigations in the Valley of Puebla anticipated these trends. Key Spanish and Nahua documents illuminated little known institutions, called noble houses (teccalli in Nahua), and their role in community organization (Carrasco 1963, 1969, 1976;Martínez 1984a; Olivera 1978; Reyes García 1977). Each Nahua noble house constituted a hierarchy of socioeconomic and political relations structuring the lord (i.e., caciques), secondary nobles (principales), and house commoners (terrazgueros or macehuales). Nobles and commoners participated as members of this stratified corporate group, albeit in very different manners. Through usufruct relations, terrazgueros gave personal service and cultivated noble house lands, donating a portion of the harvest to specific principals. Principales, in turn, paid tribute to the house cacique. A number of federated noble houses formed the infrastructure of each Nahua city-state (or altepetl) in Puebla (Carrasco 1976; Reyes García 1977).

Initial investigations in Puebla revealed how noble houses remained viable institutions in many 16th-century...
municipalities following the Spanish Conquest (Martínez 1984a; Olivera 1978). Later studies demonstrated how noble houses, treated as cacicazgos by the Spanish, persisted in certain municipalities well into the 18th and early 19th centuries (Chance 2000; Perkins 2005a). They possibly endured even beyond colonial years.

In the present discussion, I intend to build on previous scholarship and recent theoretical developments to further analyze change over time in the noble house organization of the city of Tepeaca, located in the Valley of Puebla. Special attention will be devoted to records associated with Tepeaca’s prominent Guzmán cacicazgo. I will describe its organization as a 16th-century “consolidated house” (Chance 1998:728). Consolidated houses, described below, have been hypothesized, but not fully investigated. With data from the Guzmán house, I will reveal its internal organization and its transmission over time. I will also examine the processes at work that ultimately undermined it, as Tepeaca’s hinterlands came to be dominated by hacienda agriculture during the late 16th and 17th centuries. The usurpation of indigenous lands by haciendas (Spanish estates) is of course well documented in agrarian studies of Mesoamerica (Van Young 1983). My purpose here is not to document the lands lost, but to track the specific processes through which usurpation occurred. Such an approach provides additional insight into house organization.

In concluding, I discuss why Tepeaca’s experience actually upholds, yet qualifies, Charles Gibson’s (1964:163) argument that cacique status became a ceremonial title of little significance by the 18th century. Through what processes did the title lose significance? And how did pre-Hispanic institutions like the noble house figure in their decline? Thanks to recent studies, we now appreciate how Gibson’s generalization fails to apply to many localities. Even so, it will be seen to have some cogency in Tepeaca; reminding us that agrarian life persists in both its organization and its transmission over time.

To further analyze change over time in the noble house organization, I will focus on how noble houses, treated as cacicazgos, perpetuated themselves through the transmission of their titles, goods, and its lands down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both” (1982:174). Groups seek to transmit property and thereby reproduce the estate over time, rather than blindly adhering to abstract principles, such as patrilineal or matrilineal descent rules. Today, anthropologists in Mesoamerica and elsewhere find Lévi-Strauss’s model powerfully explanatory, especially for societies in which cognatic descent prevails.²

Prior to the Spanish Conquest, Chance (2000:499) argues that Puebla constituted a “house society” because teccalli structured city-states in almost all respects.³ Colonization began to circumscribe their omnipotence. First, they no longer directly governed the newly organized Spanish-style municipalities, tasks reserved for the municipal council (cabildo). However, houses could still remain influential in municipal government, as I note below. Second, Spanish bureaucrats designated noble houses as cacicazgos. In colonial law, they became the legal equivalent of cacicazgos elsewhere in the colony. In Puebla, the designation effectively privatized the noble house, substantially weakening its pre-Hispanic corporate organization (Perkins 2005a:18–19). Still, early legal recognition fostered the survival of noble houses as colonial cacicazgos. Faced with the potential collapse of pre-Hispanic society, 16th-century officials took overt steps to uphold the privileges of local caciques and their institutions (Chance 2000; Martínez 1984a; Olivera 1978; Perkins 2005a, 2005b).

The Spanish jural model of cacicazgo reflected Spain’s mayorazgo (Taylor 1972). As privately entailed Spanish estates, mayorazgo consisted of titles, lands, property, and so forth, impartedly transmitted from a formally designated heir to another (Clavero 1974). A prohibition existed on the piecemeal sale of these estates. Ideally, the estate owner could deviate from mayorazgo only through judicial exemption.

**Theorizing the Noble House**

Pedro Carrasco (1963, 1969, 1976) and his students (Martínez 1984a; Olivera 1978; Reyes García 1977) unearthed Puebla’s noble house and recognized its significance. Carrasco proposed that it constituted an agnatic (or patrilineal) lineage, ruling unrelated or only distantly related commoner households (Carrasco 1976:28–29). But he also noted contradictory behavior. Occasionally, members transmitted noble titles and membership through female lines, actions hinting at cognatic practices in which members trace descent through either male or female lines. More recently, John K. Chance (2000) persuasively argues that Claude Lévi-Strauss’s (1982) house model better explains these contradictions than does anthropology’s older lineage formulation.

In contrast to lineages, Lévi-Strauss defines a house as “a corporate body holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both” (1982:174). Groups seek to transmit property and thereby reproduce the estate over time, rather than blindly adhering to abstract principles, such as patrilineal or matrilineal descent rules. Today, anthropologists in Mesoamerica and elsewhere find Lévi-Strauss’s model powerfully explanatory, especially for societies in which cognatic descent prevails.

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One intriguing issue arising from recent work in Puebla is the complete lack of correspondence between 18th-century cacicazgos and the mayorazgo ideal. Investigating 18th-century Santa Cruz Tlacotepec using last wills and testaments, I found that caciques frequently bequeathed cacicazgo property to every child. Individuals readily acknowledged joint ownership of properties with other caciques (Perkins 2005a:28). In other words, heirs from different nuclear families recognized one another as co-owners of particular parcels of cacicazgo property. Each family profited by dividing the rent paid by a tenant.

Finding this complex situation in Santiago Tecali, Chance (1998) hypothesizes that late colonial cacicazgos (ca. 1651–1821) represented what he terms “dispersed” cacicazgos.

In contrast to entailed, “consolidated” cacicazgos where succession occurred through a designated heir each generation, the Tecali estates after 1660 may be called “dispersed” in the sense that each generation brought multiple heirs and a more extensive reshuffling of usufruct rights, yet the estates as wholes remained legally and culturally distinct entities.” [Chance 1998:728–729; translation by the author]

In both Santiago Tecali and Santa Cruz Tlacotepec, however, the best data come from the last half of the colonial era, the 18th and early 19th centuries. What occurred earlier?

The city of Tepeaca contains abundant documentation on pre-Hispanic noble houses as they transitioned into early colonial cacicazgos. In the following discussion, I use 16th-century primary and secondary information to specifically analyze what Chance (1998:728) calls “consolidated” cacicazgos. Did they better reflect the mayorazgo ideal? I also trace the specific processes that undermined cacicazgos in the heart of Puebla’s hacienda belt.

**Tepeaca’s 16th-Century Consolidated Houses**

On the eve of the Spanish Conquest in 1519, Tepeaca constituted one of the most important and powerful city-states (altepetl) in the Valley of Puebla. At an elevation of approximately 2,250 meters, Tepeaca sits within its own valley of the same name, as part of the wider Valley of Puebla (see Figure 1). It was founded in approximately C.E. 1180 by two Nahuatl-speaking groups under the patronage of a locally prominent altepetl, Cuauhtinchan. Tepeaca initially fought alongside Cuauhtinchan and Cholula to establish dominance in the region. In 1398, however, the imperial Aztecs from the adjacent Valley of Mexico conquered most of the Valley of Puebla. These events actually elevated Tepeaca’s stature: It became a collection center for imperial tribute. Emperor Motecuhzoma also ordered the establishment of a regional market there (Durán 1994:152–159). It operates to this day. Tepeaca would remain a tributary of the Aztec Empire until its fall.

When the Spanish arrived, evidence indicates that Tepeaca had four kings (tlahtoque) who simultaneously ruled the altepetl and its subordinate settlements, an arrangement not uncommon for central Mexico (Hicks 1986:42). Each king apparently also ruled a separate noble house within the altepetl. Using post-Conquest Spanish documents, Hildeberto Martínez (1984a:79–88) reveals the tremendous amount of noble house lands and commoner laborers controlled by two kings in particular, Luis de Guzmán Quauhpotonqui and Hernando de la Cruz. Taken together, these two houses controlled an overwhelming majority of land surrounding the city (conservatively estimated at some 12,000 ha.).

As elsewhere, the Spanish established an Iberian-style municipal government in Tepeaca. Tepeaca’s noble class, composed of caciques and principales, served as both the electorate and the candidates. Under this arrangement, elites from the de la Cruz and Guzmán houses dominated local affairs in the 16th century. Between 1539 and 1600, the exercise and control of local power was not the work of isolated individuals but of well consolidated groups . . . a complete correspondence can be noted between those noble houses that possessed the largest quantity of land and tributaries and those whose members governed the greatest part of the time and retained for themselves the right of access to the principal municipal posts. [Martínez 1984a:140; my translation]

Voting in blocs, the Guzmán and de la Cruz noble houses elected the highest official, the governor, 64 percent of the time during these years (Martínez 1984a:141–142). They also filled roughly one-third of the lower offices. Seeking to break this monopoly in
1552, Spanish officials ruled that the governorship rotate every two years between Tepeaca and its two subject towns, Acatzingo and Oztoticpac. In reality, it continued rotating biennially between the Guzmán and de la Cruz noble houses whose members resided in Tepeaca (Martínez 1984a:155).

By the 1550s, Spanish officials began assigning Tepeaca’s noble house lands, principales, and terrazgueros to the patrimony of particular caciques, following the model of mayorazgo. Especially important assignments came after the deaths of Hernando in approximately 1552 and Luis in 1556. In both cases, the Spanish viceroy granted cacicazgo ownership to the caciques’ daughter: Francisca de la Cruz and Isabel de Guzmán. The largest house belonged to Francisca. She held land parcels in 25 different barrios, involving an estimated 1,610 terrazgueros and over 40 principales (Carrasco 1969:24–37). Table 1 summarizes her cacicazgo.
Table 1
The Noble House of doña Francisca de la Cruz, Tepeaca, 1581

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Casas de Macehualte (commoner households)</th>
<th>Principales (dependent nobles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Vicente</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>don Pedro Ximénez, Pedro Elías, Juan Mimitzin, Marcos de San Lorenzo, Bartolomé Quezalteuhtli,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlacaltech</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baltazar de la Cruz, Diego Maldonado, Torivio de Zozomotli, Francisco Calderón Marciales,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlayacac</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Gaspar Tlazalo, Simeón Teltzin, Cleofas Ramírez, Pedro Sánchez, Diego Tlamayotzin, Sebastián</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joachin</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>de Aguilar, Juan de Aguilar, Antonio Gómez, Baltasar López, Domingo Hernández, Lorenzo de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zayacochtlan</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Vicente, Felipe Quautle, Timoteo Soto, Pedro Socopin, Bartolomé Ruiz, Martín Cortés, Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa María</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>de Portugal, Juan Bautista, Clemente de Zamora, Francisco Adán, Juan Vicente, Francisco Mendoza,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purificación Chichico</td>
<td></td>
<td>Baltazar Jiménez, Diego Mendoza, Joaquin Olin, Diego Tlaquaumani, Pedro de Torres, Juan García,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Mauricio</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Gregorio López, Diego Ruiz, Simón García, Francisco de Zamora, Diego Tezozomotli, Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coyoa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Xochimaitle, Juan García, Lucía, Cecilia Tlauexos, don Buenaventura de Luna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Felipe</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quavazal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiquiuyucan</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bartolomé</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetopizco</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auatla</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pedro y San</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa María</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nativitas Tetela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecapala</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan Zotolocan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acaxi</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ayahuacalco</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santo Tomás</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicanyocan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Catalina</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yacapitzlan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Salvador de Uzcalotla</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlamaxac San Lorenzo</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capola Santa Inés</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa María</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocoyocan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzozotzinco Santa Ana</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianquiztenpan</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayapanco</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalticpac</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Guzmán Cacicazgo

No single document enumerates the totality of land parcels, principales, and terrazgueros constituting the entire Guzmán cacicazgo. Martínez (1984a: 80–81) uses documents from 1583 to 1608 to identify 60 different parcels scattered around Tepeaca. Before that time, the Guzmán cacicazgo probably exceeded this count, because even as heirs bequeathed the cacicazgo lineally to a single designated heir, they also made smaller bequests and donations to other relatives, effectively diminishing its overall size. In one of the earliest known documents from 1549, we learn that Luis Guzmán Quauhpotonqui donated land parcels and commoner labor to his brother, Diego de Silva (see Figure 2). As illustrated below, this donation reflects a pattern of bequests that would occur each generation thereafter, clearly violating the mayorazgo ideal. I argue that such donations point to enduring Nahua practices.

Additional Guzmán patterns of landholding and inheritance can be gleaned from 16th- and early 17th-century documents, mainly from the last wills and testaments of family members, summarized in Table 2. As represented in Figure 2, when Luis died intestate in 1556, Isabel and Alejo de San Juan Bautista, her husband, managed the lands and laborers of the Guzmán cacicazgo for the next 20 years. Alejo came from nearby Cuauhtinchan and brought his own cacicazgo into the marriage.

During her lifetime, Isabel donated lands and laborers to several collateral relatives with her husband’s permission. In May of 1557, for example, she gave her niece, María Chalchimaquiztle, rights to 100 commoner households in the barrio of Xicotla, supervised by her tribute collector, Antonio Acatl. Isabel donated two more land parcels to María, located in the barrios of Atlicoluca and Coacuentla. Isabel donated a parcel of similar size to her illegitimate half-sister, Magdalena de Guzmán. Each donation expressed Isabel’s gratitude to these women for services rendered to her father, but they clearly reflected kinship ties, too. Isabel directed that the donations serve as marriage dowries, insuring each woman’s future prosperity. Moreover, they also undoubtedly insured a measure of loyalty from the women and their husbands to the Guzmán family.

On her deathbed in 1576, Isabel bequeathed the cacicazgo to her son, Francisco de Guzmán. In her Spanish testament, she termed it a señorío y mayorazgo (lordship and mayorazgo). Francisco received the cacicazgo’s title, lands, and laborers. By itself, the endowment very much resembles what we would expect based on Spain’s mayorazgo. Significantly, however, no documentary evidence demonstrates conclusively that Isabel’s cacicazgo was ever legally entailed by Spanish authorities. Moreover, Isabel bequeathed rural parcels and urban house lots to four other children. She also bequeathed land to María de Zárate, her niece’s daughter, and to Domingo de Carrión, her Spanish in-law. In each case, the donations appear to come from the larger cacicazgo estate.

Francisco not only inherited entitlement to the Guzmán cacicazgo but also to his father’s cacicazgo. But only weeks later in 1576, his own death fast approaching, Francisco willed this second cacicazgo to

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**Figure 2**

A Partial List of Lineal Heirs and Affiliated Nobles, Guzmán Cacicazgo

(1) Luis Guzmán Quauhpotonqui (died 1556)  
(2) Isabel de Guzmán (d. 1576)  
Alejo de San Juan Bautista  
Four Other Children  
(3) Francisco de Guzmán (d. 1576)  
(4) María de la Cruz (d. 1602)  
Álvaro Pérez de Navia (Spaniard, d. 1615)  
(4) Sebastián de Guzmán (d. 1578)  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Office</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>Francisco de Guzmán</td>
<td>indio principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, paq. 1, exp. 29, fols. 4r.–5v.</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>Isabel de Guzmán</td>
<td>india natural y principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, paq. 1, exp. 29, fols. 6r.–9v.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>María de la Cruz</td>
<td>cacica y principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, paq. 9, exp. 6, fols. 22r.–22v.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Ana Sánchez</td>
<td>pilli tlatoani</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, paq. 9, exp. 18.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Francisca de Guzmán</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, paq. 9, exp. 19, fols. 11r.–19v.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>1615</td>
<td>Alvaro Perez de Navia</td>
<td>Español</td>
<td>AGN, Tierras, vol. 3412, exp. 5, fols. 10v.–17v.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>1616</td>
<td>Pedro de la Cruz</td>
<td>indio principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 22, exp. 4, fols. 95r.–97v.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>1656</td>
<td>Francisco Sánchez</td>
<td>principal y cacique, alcalde ordinario</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 23, exp. 11.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>Luis de Luna</td>
<td>cacique y principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 25, exp. 2, fols. 108r.–111r.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>1664</td>
<td>Luis de Guzmán</td>
<td>indio principal cacique</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 29, exp. 9.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>1694</td>
<td>María de Luna</td>
<td>cacique principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 29, exp. 9.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>1699</td>
<td>Baltasar Francisco</td>
<td>indio, governador actual</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 30, exp. 5, fols. 16r.–20r.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>Gerónimo de los Santos</td>
<td>juez gobernador</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 34, exp. 9, fols. 18r.–26v.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>1722</td>
<td>Juan de la Cruz Ximenez</td>
<td>gobernador actual</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 35, exp. 8, fols. 9r.–11v.</td>
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<td>1723</td>
<td>Josefa de la Cruz Sánchez</td>
<td>india cacica y principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 36, exp. 3, fols. 130r.–131r.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>Juan de Luna Guzmán y Mocesuma</td>
<td>indio cacique y principal</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>1736</td>
<td>Melchior de Silva</td>
<td>cacique y principal</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 39, exp. 49, fols. 101v.–103v.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>Antonio Cortez Ximenez Valiente</td>
<td>cacique y principal, governador actual</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 39, exp. 31, fols. 10r.–12r.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>Miguel de Ximenez de San Juan Baptista</td>
<td>cacique y principal, governador actual</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 40, exp. 18, fols. 5r.–13r.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Sebastien Vicente</td>
<td>cacique y principal, gobernador pasado</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 49, exp. 38, fols. 126r.–130r.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>Juan de los Santos Martinez</td>
<td>cacique y principal</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>Alejandro de Silva</td>
<td>gobernador</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 51, exp. 25, fols. 18v.–20r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>1774</td>
<td>Anna María Cecilia</td>
<td>india cacica</td>
<td>AGNP, Tepeaca, caja 50, exp. 29, fols. 33v.–35r.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
three brothers, Luis, Diego, and José de Guzmán. In a second gift, he gave another 42 hectares (i.e., a caballería) to his cousin, María de Zárate. But like his mother, Francisco left the Guzmán cacicazgo—its title, estate, and moveable goods—to his young son, Sebastián de Guzmán. Unfortunately, Sebastián lived only two years longer before dying in 1578. The cacicazgo then reverted to his mother, Francisco’s widow, María de la Cruz, who was already effectively managing the estate on Sebastian’s behalf.

**Discussion**

If we view each testator’s bequests as a whole, they fail to conform to the stipulations of cacicazgo envisioned by the Spanish. In fact, I argue that they conform closely to Nahua patterns that emphasized lineal and collateral relatives, in which both siblings and siblings’ children could expect to inherit goods along with a testator’s own children. I argue that these transfers be interpreted as one method used by nobles to nurture a wider web of loyalty among collateral consanguines and affines as part of a larger strategy to maintain local power during years of incredible upheaval.

Susan Kellogg’s (1995:172–186) exploration of the Nahua tlacamecayotl (“rope of people”) assists in understanding decisions made by Guzmán testators. With documents from the old capital of Tenochtitlán (colonial Mexico City), she examined bequest patterns made by 16th-century Nahua testators. She argues that tlacamecayotl, a group combining cognatic descent with a kindred-like concern for collateral relatives, explains testators’ decisions:

The tlacamecayotl played an important role in inheritance, household recruitment and organization, and certain types of legal obligations.
One context in which the term shows up is in discussions of inheritance. During the late pre-Hispanic era, it appears that only limited bequests of material property or rights to its use, flowed between spouses. Kin who received inheritance rights included children, grandchildren, siblings, and nephews and nieces. While precise genealogical links are difficult to trace because of the extension of kin terms, the kin who received property rights were related through the concept of tlacamecatl, that is, they could trace common ancestors back between three to five generations. [Kellogg 1995:184–185; emphasis added]

In Tepeaca, Guzmán testators made similar inheritance decisions. Only by narrowly focusing on the transmission of the title itself do their actions conform to the mayorazgo ideal. Even then, Francisco donated his father’s cacicazgo to his three brothers, violating the title’s impartibility. Beginning with Luis, each title-holder donated parcels to collateral relatives as members of the house. Such bequests were illegal in Spain, where only lands held outside mayorazgo could be alienated from the whole (Clavero 1974). But in Tepeaca, no documents have been found to prove that cacicazgos were ever formally entailed. In short, I argue that Tepeaca’s cacicazgos never attained the reified status so evident in Spain’s mayorazgos.

By way of comparison, studies in the adjacent Mixtec Alta of Oaxaca (southeast of Puebla) suggest similar ambiguities in ferreting out institutional ideals from actual practices. Ronald Spores (1984:109–113) previously argued that although two or more “cacicazgos could be joined, individual cacicazgos were viewed as impartible” (Spores 1984:112). But more recently, Kevin Terraciano (2001:220–224) uses Mixtec-language testament to reveal complex bequestal patterns that seem to violate the impartible maxim. For example, Terraciano (2001:223) describes what occurred in 1691, with the death of the noble lady Lázara de Guzmán (no relation to Tepeaca’s family). Dictating her last will and testament in Mixtec, she never uttered the Spanish term cacicazgo, but in so many words she stated that “the palace Nuñañu and all the palace lands and the lands belonging to the palace called Nuñañu, I declare that it all be placed in the hands of my three children, don Domingo, don Josef, and don Pedro, so that all may share it and work it as three forever” (Terraciano 2001:381, 383; emphasis added).

For the Nahuas of Tepeaca, I believe the overall pattern of bequests more closely resembles the tlacamecatl pattern in the context of a Nahua noble house. Aside from Francisco’s bequest, the lordly title did pass from a single heir to another, and its lands, nobles, and commoners did largely remain under the purview of this designated noble. Yet, if the title remained unified, its lands did not. Caciques shaved off slivers of land in donations to collateral relatives, reminiscent of older patterns of Nahua inheritance. Rather than selfishly employing Spanish edicts for the sole benefit of the individual or nuclear family, cacique donations frequently targeted consanguineal and affinal kin. Such choices characterized pre-Hispanic Nahua society, but they also made sense in the colonial situation as a strategy to maintain alliances during the rocky 16th century as Spanish officials imposed municipal government, privatized indigenous property, placed new demands on terrazguero labor, and so forth, all of which potentially threatened caciques’ local hegemony.

As described below, this generosity would eventually extend to the title as well. The fragmented entitlement of 18th-century dispersed cacicazgos would also ultimately contribute to their final demise: As I show, outsiders used multiple avenues of entry to usurp cacicazgo lands.

Tepeaca’s Agrarian Context

Previous investigations of noble houses in 18th-century Santa Cruz Tlacotepec (Perkins 2005a) and Santiago Tecali (Chance 1996) occurred in similar agrarian settings: poor soils, low precipitation, and other variables inhibited wheat cultivation, the Spanish staple. Consequently, neither community experienced the onslaught of hacienda agriculture seen elsewhere in late 16th- and 17th-century Puebla. By the time outsiders sought land in the 18th century, the caciques of Tlacotepec and Tecali had sufficient deeds and titles to largely prevent land usurpation. In fact, many caciques in Tlacotepec and Tecali actually profited by renting lands to Spaniards and others (e.g., Chance 2003).

Located squarely in Puebla’s fertile hacienda belt, Tepeaca’s hinterlands experienced a quite different fate, as did much of the central and western Valley of Puebla. During the late 16th and early 17th centuries, haciendas devoted to wheat production spread rapidly as Puebla became the colony’s breadbasket (Chevalier 1952; Garavaglia and Grosso 1986; Martínez 1994; Paredes Martínez 1991; Prem 1988).
From House to Hacienda

Following the Conquest, Spanish livestock ranches (estancias de ganado) began developing near Tepeaca. With time, ranches evolved into larger, consolidated haciendas. Employing Indian labor, hacienda owners (hacendados) engaged in stock raising and wheat cultivation, but also planted corn and other staples for urban markets.

Spaniards created haciendas by successfully aggregating smaller dispersed plots into larger contiguous estates. Noble house lands frequently consisted of many distinct parcels, often intermixed with other houses. These patchworks forced Spaniards to deal with numerous caciques, even within a fairly small area, to form larger estates. In terms of purchases, Spaniards often preferred smaller parcels anyway, because the colonial government stipulated that sales over 30 pesos had to be publicly announced by a town crier on 30 separate days. Or lands might be grossly undervalued to achieve the same end. One survey of 627 Spanish–Indian transactions from the region found that almost “half of the sales yielded a price between twenty and thirty pesos, regardless of the size of the plot that was up for sale” (Hoekstra 1993:107).

The creation of Tepeaca’s Hacienda Santa Justa, by the Spaniard Gaspar Martín exemplifies these processes. Martín and his cronies acquired land between 1578 and 1609 in some 27 separate transactions. In many instances, different buyers purchased adjoining lands from the same cacique, only to cede them to Martín.11

Take the parcel referred to as Teomilco. On June 10, 1591, the Tepeaca noble Juan Bautista completed four separate sales: One to Martín, a second to Francisco Vaez, and the last two to Martín’s brothers-in-law, Juan de Carrión and Domingo de Carrión. Each sale involved land with the same dimensions, 95 brazas comunes de largo by 60 brazas comunes de ancho (roughly 160 ha. of land), for 28 pesos each. Three months later on September 21, Martín’s accomplices sold their parcels to him for the same price. Martín thus acquired approximately 640 hectares for 112 pesos. On three other occasions Indian nobles divided and sold separately contiguous lands to Martín, each time avoiding the intrusion of Spanish officials. Other transactions involved greater sums, necessitating the aforementioned public proclamations.

Whereas Gaspar Martín consolidated the Hacienda Santa Justa largely by purchasing lands, he also benefited from land swaps. One exchange involved the Guzmán cacicazgo. María de la Cruz, the aforementioned widow of Francisco de Guzmán, swapped arable land in a parcel called Toxochinantla for undeveloped land owned by Domingo de Carrión in the barrio of Santa Isabel. Shortly thereafter, Carrión sold it to Martín for 300 pesos.12

Spaniards increasingly dominated Tepeaca and its hinterlands (see Table 3). One visitor in the 1580s noted their ubiquitous presence (Ponce 1873:141). In addition to wheat production, they owned textile workshops (obrajes), marketed livestock, and engaged in other ventures (Pietschmann 1977). Tepeaca was not unique. “In the Puebla region alone by the end of the sixteenth

Table 3
Estimates of Spanish and Casta Population, Tepeaca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Unit of Analysis</th>
<th>Enumerated</th>
<th>Multiplier</th>
<th>Estimated Population</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1580</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>60 “vecinos españoles”</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ponce (1873:235)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1681</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>70 families^a</td>
<td>5^b</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>Gerhard (1981:542)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1742</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>270 families^c</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>Villaseñor y Sánchez (1952:248)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>1,356 persons</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,356</td>
<td>British Library, Mexico, vol. 225, fol. 4v.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>municipality</td>
<td>2,310 persons</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,310</td>
<td>AGN, Padrones, vol. 38, exp.–, fol. 62v.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ^a This number includes 40 Spanish families and 30 Mestizo, Mulatto, and Negro families. ^b Cook and Borah (1968:39-47). ^c This number includes 180 Spanish families, 102 Mestizo families, and 2 Mulatto families. Following Cook and Borah (1968:46), I reduce the total number of families enumerated (n = 284) by 5 percent (14 families) to account for widows/widowers.
century, Spaniards by the score were living in close proximity to the natives around Cholula and Huejotzingo, and by the hundred around Atlixco, Tepeaca, and Tecamachalco." (Chevalier 1970:207). Spaniards moved their families to places like Tepeaca, Huejotzingo, and Tecamachalco. Others chose to marry indigenous noble women. As discussed below, such marriages permitted access to cacicazgo land, further dismantling noble houses (Martínez 1994:142; Prem 1988:209–210).

### A Declining Terrazguero Labor Force

Why would caciques sell land? For many, their position became increasingly tenuous. Not surprisingly, the loss of their terrazguero labor force significantly eroded the economic infrastructure of their cacicazgos. The availability of terrazgueros declined precipitously owing to disease, but also from Spanish demand for labor. By the 17th century, Tepeaca’s nobles saw manpower evaporate as the municipality became enmeshed in Puebla’s burgeoning economy.

As Table 4 summarizes, the Valley of Puebla underwent the same pattern of indigenous population collapse as Mesoamerican scholars find elsewhere. Its population declined steeply until approximately the mid–17th century. By 1650, epidemic disease had reduced Tepeaca’s population and surrounding indigenous communities (incl. Tecali, Huejotzingo, Cholula, and Atlixco) to one-fourth of their 1570 size (Vollmer 1973:43–51).14

As just mentioned, Tepeaca experienced rapid growth in the number of Spaniards and castas (individuals of mixed racial ancestry). Accurate figures for the non-Indian population of the city and its hinterlands are hard to identify, but all indications suggest a substantial influx during the 16th and 17th centuries (Table 3). Almost 50 years ago, Woodrow Borah (1951) noted how these divergent trends—inigenous decline and non-Indian growth—had far-reaching consequences for the development of the economy and society of the colony. Data from Tepeaca represent a microcosm of these trends.

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Unit of Analysis:</th>
<th>Enumerated:</th>
<th>Multiplier:</th>
<th>Estimated Population:</th>
<th>Source:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1520s</td>
<td>unspecified general area</td>
<td>30,000 “hombres”</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>Gerhard (1993:280)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1548</td>
<td>pueblo (?)</td>
<td>32,597</td>
<td></td>
<td>Borah and Cook (1968:147)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1552</td>
<td>Pueblo</td>
<td>9,122 tributaries</td>
<td>30,103</td>
<td>Paso y Troncoso (1940:155)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1568</td>
<td>City (?)</td>
<td>21,879</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cook and Borah (1979:20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1646</td>
<td>municipality (?)</td>
<td>8,220</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cook and Borah (1979:20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1702</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td></td>
<td>AGN, Tierras, vol. 2730, exp. 1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1742</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>2,239</td>
<td></td>
<td>Villaseñor y Sánchez (1952:248)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>2,118</td>
<td></td>
<td>British Library, Mexico, vol. 225, fol. 4v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>municipality</td>
<td>57,160</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gerhard (1993:280)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Following Cook and Borah (1960:102), aCook and Borah (1979:13). Following Cook and Borah (1968:46). I reduce the 481 enumerated families by 5 percent (or approximately 24) to account for widows/widowers. eCook and Borah (1968:46). eCook and Borah (1968:40).

No ethnic/racial distinctions enumerated. gNo ethnic/racial distinctions enumerated.
Spaniards exploited indigenous labor for their own benefit. The newly established city of Puebla, located some 30 kilometers from Tepeaca, relied on labor supplied from Tepeaca and other nearby Indian municipalities for various economic pursuits. One enterprise was the manufacture of woolen broadcloth. In factories called obrajes, wool was collected, processed, and woven. Obrajes acquired a notorious reputation for their abusive labor practices, often enslaving laborers. The city of Puebla’s first obraje opened in 1539. By the turn of the 15th century, approximately 35 to 40 obrajes operated there (Bazant 1964:59–65; Gibson 1964:243–246; Salvucci 1987:135–137). A few developed in Tepeaca, too. By 1591, members of Tepeaca’s municipal council sought remediation from the colonial government for the loss of its own labor force. Many individuals working in obrajes no longer remitted tribute, so the city struggled to meet its royal tribute quota.

As time went on, more and more terrazgueros contracted privately with Spanish hacendados. In doing so, they escaped both the repartimiento system and contracted privately with Spanish haciendas. In doing so, they escaped both the repartimiento system and overseas markets. Valleys of San Pablo and Atlixco) for domestic and served two wheat producing zones near Tepeaca (the tates. They proved equally detrimental. Those drafted drafts (repartimientos) provided labor to Spanish es-

Within this larger context, the Guzmán cacicazgo unraveled between 1585 and 1615. Recall that with Sebastian’s death in 1578, his mother, María de la Cruz, assumed control (see Figure 2). At this time, its extensive landholdings consisted of scattered parcels cultivated by affiliated terrazgueros. Less than ten years later, beginning in 1585, María and her second husband, the Spaniard Álvaro Pérez de Navia, sold, rented, or donated some 3,052 hectares of land (Martínez 1984a:82–83). Ironically, the sales funded litigation to prevent Spanish encroachment on Guzmán properties. María also bequeathed land to a wide array of relatives, including three brothers and their children. But distributing lands among both lineal and collateral relatives also increased the possible transfer of lands to Spaniards, especially if noble women (cacicas) married Spanish men, as increasingly occurred by the end of the 16th century. For example, the Spaniard Domingo de Carrión’s marriage to Leonor de Sánchez, a Guzmán relative, created rich opportunities for he and his heirs to acquire parcels of Guzmán land. As seen earlier, Carrión (who was fluent in Nahuatl) transferred lands to his Spanish in-law, Gaspar Martín. He also received lands from other caciques, including the elder matriarch, Isabel de Guzmán, who bequeathed land to him in
1576 as acknowledgment for work on her behalf. After Carrión’s death, his daughter Ana received another two caballerías of land from Francisca de Guzmán, co-heir of the Alejo de San Juan cacicazgo. Through these acquisitions, the Carrión family sold parcels from the cacicazgo to Spanish hacendados. With a web of both cacique and Spanish kin, the Carrión family was well positioned to move real estate.

By 1615, the Guzmán cacicazgo was essentially gone. María de la Cruz’s widower, the Spaniard Álvar Pérez de Navia, devoted more space in his own will to discussing debts from litigation, some 5,400 pesos, than in identifying the lands he possessed. He named 44 different Spaniards (including Gaspar Martín) as litigants over various parcels of property. Ironically, Pérez de Navia captured Tepeaca’s greatest colonial cacicazgo only to watch it crumble, its lands and laborers usurped by his fellow Spaniards.

Conclusion

With archived wills from members of the Guzmán noble house, I have reconstructed the patterns of land tenure evident in this early colonial “consolidated” cacicazgo. I have also tracked its demise in the Valley of Puebla, early colonial Mexico’s most important agricultural zone, where haciendas developed rapidly during the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

On the basis of the evidence, I concur with Chance’s (2000, 2004) application of Lévi-Strauss’s (1982) house model. As reviewed earlier, Lévi-Strauss (1982:174) postulates that house members act to preserve the material integrity of their estate, rather than preserving the genealogical purity of their membership. Examining the decisions of noble house titleholders, descent figured importantly in the transmission of Tepeaca’s houses over time, but the rules of descent remained wide open, even contradictory. Bequeathals included men and women, consanguineal and affinal relatives, and Spaniards. Such decisions fail to follow what we would predict if noble houses constituted patrilineal or matrilineal lineages in the anthropological sense.

One interpretation of Tepeaca’s early colonial cacicazgos might be to suggest that they blended Spanish mayorazgo tenets with Nahua inheritance practices. As I have argued, I interpret them instead as reflecting purely Nahua behavior. Imagined from a Nahua perspective, separate endowments, along the lines of the Nahua tlacamecayotl described by Kellogg (1995), distributed property among eligible house members (sometimes including Spanish in-laws). Eligible members included lineal and collateral relatives. Simultaneously, the title and the majority of the estate (lands, houses, and moveable goods) passed intact to a single heir who maintained house leadership. To simply focus on the impartible transmission of the title by itself, ignores the bequeathal of lands to an array of relatives. This evidence leads me to argue that Tepeaca’s cacicazgos did resemble Chance’s (1998: 728–729) postulated consolidated patterns, with the caveat that consolidated cacicazgos were not synonymous with Spain’s mayorazgo.

Transfers also underline how caciques used land to buttress wider kin ties during years of incredible upheaval and change. Quite in contrast to monopolizing land for strictly individual or nuclear family ends, they donated it in tangible support of a wider network of consanguineal and affinal relatives. I interpret such choices not only as characterizing Nahua society but also reflecting a colonial strategy of reinforcing extended family alliances during the tumultuous 16th century as far reaching changes (imposition of municipal government, privatization of property, new demands for terrazguero labor, etc.) threatened cacique hegemony.

Through what historical processes did 16th-century consolidated cacicazgos eventually transform into 18th-century dispersed cacicazgos? The documentary record provides no obvious explanation. To offer a simple (possibly simplistic) hypothesis, cacicazgos transformed during generational or lateral transfers as a single titleholder passed the title and lands not to one heir, but to multiple heirs within his or her immediate family; as when Francisco donated his father’s cacicazgo laterally to three brothers. Rather than partition it, heirs then continued to share it jointly, and in turn bequeathed rights to their own offspring, as seen in choices made by 18th-century testators. Over a number of generations, such decisions created a complex web of overlapping rights and a sense of shared identity among the landowners, all of whom claimed descent from the same founding caciques.

This hypothesis begs the question of why caciques would transfer the title to multiple heirs. I believe three interrelated changes transformed cacicazgos. First, as detailed above, Spanish colonial law privatized them. Privatization without effective entailment permitted titleholders greater latitude in decisions concerning the disposal of property. Second, the hierarchy
between caciques and principales, so prevalent in early colonial documents, disappears over time, reflecting the simplification of older indigenous noble statuses in the Spanish colony. After the 16th century, documents no longer identify principales as members of cacicazgos. Testamentary bequests in 18th-century Tlacotepec and Tecali reflect this absence in that they focus on land parcels or other property given largely to nuclear family members (Chance 1998, 2004; Perkins 2005a). Nothing is any longer said about coteries of principales so evident in 16th-century documents (e.g., as enumerated in Table 1). Third, caciques no longer recognized terrazguero households as an integral component of the cacicazgo. The land itself became the principal concern.

In essence, the cacicazgo transformed from a corporate institution in which mutual obligations and privileges existed between a lord, dependent nobles, and commoners, into a private estate owned by descendants of the original cacique. It freed landowners to bequeath property to whomever they wished, unconstrained by principal or terrazguero obligations. Ironically, at least from an anthropological perspective, the late colonial cacicazgo thus involved a more thorough emphasis on kinship (caciques’ immediate kin) and descent (tracing cognatic descent to early colonial titleholders to demonstrate legitimate membership) than its earlier manifestation, in which nonkin principals and terrazgueros participated.

It appears that late colonial co-owners used age and gender as determinants of leadership. Marked inequality persisted between caciques and macehualts. Tenants of cacicazgo parcels, however, were just as likely to be non-Indian renters as Nahua commoners. In fact, caciques sometimes expressly stated their preference for more dependable Spanish tenants than macehual renters. All in all, the late colonial dispersed cacicazgo became almost unrecognizable to the Spanish eye, especially when court cases forced colonial officials to sort out its internal organization (e.g., see Chance 2000:490). But no such confusion occurred in Tepeaca, where cacicazgos of any type had entirely disappeared by the 18th century.

Some 40 years ago, the eminent ethnohistorian Charles Gibson (1964) concluded that 18th- and early 19th-century caciques in the Valley of Mexico possessed little political or economic standing apart from Indian commoners. “By late colonial times cacique status could in some degree buttress a family’s prestige, but it could no longer in itself be regarded as a rank of major authority” (Gibson 1964:163). More recently, scholars demonstrate convincingly that his conclusion should not be overgeneralized. In many localities, caciques persisted as land owners, municipal officials, and individuals of high prestige (Chance 1996; Gruzinski 1989; Haskett 1991; Monaghan et al. 2003). Viewed through the lens of Tepeaca’s experience, however, Gibson’s argument remains valid as one possibility in a range of historical scenarios.

Tepeaca’s late colonial caciques retained little visible wealth or clout by the 18th and early 19th centuries. Their cacicazgos long since gone, they struggled to maintain an identity and place within the city. As their late colonial testaments suggest, nuclear family households predominated, starkly contrasting with the web of kin and affines visible in earlier wills. Inherited goods consisted of houses, house lots, or other personal items, rather than the substantial agricultural holdings of the 16th century. Eighteenth-century documents identify them as officers of the municipal council, representing the city in an occasional dispute, but caciques otherwise fade from view. It seems likely that many actually did fade away—individuals abandoned the status, passing into the colony’s swelling ranks of Mexican-born Spaniards (criollos). Thus, in Gibson’s (1964:163) words, the cacique designation in Tepeaca was no longer “regarded as a rank of major authority.” A new elite class dominated the city (Garavaglia and Grosso 1990): It consisted of hacienda-owning Spaniards exploiting Indian labor to cultivate the fertile soils of Tepeaca’s defunct noble houses.

Notes

Acknowledgments. A Fulbright Fellowship and a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation (Gr. 6023) funded archival research in Mexico. I appreciate the constructive suggestions of three anonymous reviewers and John Chance. Any errors remain my own.

1. Some scholars call all Nahua-speakers “Aztecs” (e.g., Smith 2003:3–4). In contrast, I prefer ethnohistorians’ usage of the Nahua term Nahua (e.g., Lockhart 1992). I use Aztec only to denote the Triple Alliance Empire (i.e., Aztec Empire) emanating from the Valley of Mexico. Concerning the Valley of Puebla’s Nahua noble houses (teccalli), Nahua terms for house statuses are the following: (1) teuctli/teteuctin (lord/lords); (2) pilli/pipiltin (noble/nobles); (3) macehuil/macehualtin (commoner/commoners). The Spanish denoted them, respectively, as (1) caciques; (2) principales; and (3) terrazgueros, or macehuals. I have chosen to use these post-Conquest Spanish terms throughout the text because they correspond to the terminology of 16th-century Spanish documents used in this study.
2. Reevaluations of indigenous social organization are presently underway not only in Puebla but also in Southern Mesoamerica. Susan Gillespie (2000) provocatively argues that the house better explains ancient Maya social organization than the older lineage construct used by generations of Maya scholars. Whether she is justified in this argument I leave for Maya specialists to determine. For house applications outside of Mesoamerica, see Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) and Joyce and Gillespie (2000).

3. Space limitations prohibit a comparative discussion of Puebla's teccalli with the highly ambiguous pre-Hispanic unit, the calpulli (or tlaxilacalli). James Lockhart (1992:104–108) summarizes our present knowledge, calling attention to the virtual absence of the terms calpulli and tlaxilacalli in native language documents from Puebla, whereas teccalli is not used in documents emanating from the Valley of Mexico (although the term tepant, or palace, does appear). Does different terminology reflect regional differences in Nahua social organization, or merely regional Nahua nomenclature? These significant questions remain unanswered.

4. Two kings, Luis de Guzmán Quauhpotonqui and Hernando de la Cruz, came from Tepeaca proper, whereas Juan Taylotlac resided in Acatzingo, and Tomás de León Tozquiuatzin in Oztoticpac. The latter two settlements constituted part of Tepeaca's conquered hinterlands (Martínez 1984a:37–49; Acuña 1985:224).


6. This behavior reflected Isabel's minority status under Spanish colonial law vis-à-vis her husband. That Isabel came to be treated as a jural minor represents one example of how Nahua women's social and legal status declined as their husband's social status increased. That Isabel, a jural minor, might be as impoverished as macehuales, if not more so. By the late colonial years, the title brought no guarantees.

7. AGNP, Tepeaca, paq. 1, exp. 4, fols. 9r.–11v. Each parcel measured 120 brazas de largo by 100 de ancho. A braza measures approximately 1.67 meters, so each parcel measured some 335 hectares in area (see Carrera Stampa 1949:10).

8. AGNP, Tepeaca, paq. 1, exp. 4, fols. 9v.–14r.

9. Many such entailments can be found in Mexico's Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter, "AGN") in the documentary collection entitled "Vínculos y mayorazgos." Significantly, no entailments pertaining to Tepeaca's cacicazgos were located.


11. An informative compilation of documents exists for the Hacienda Santa Justa, see AGN, Tierras, vol. 66, exp. 1, fols. 1r.–326r.

12. AGN, Tierras, vol. 66, exp. 1, fols. 12r.–17v.

13. A subgenre of Mesoamerican ethnohistory concerns the pre-Hispanic indigenous population, the subsequent colonial holocaust, and how best to measure them. I cite but a few of the classic or notable studies here: Borah and Cook 1960, 1963; Cook and Borah 1960, 1968, 1979; Rosenblat 1967; Sánchez-Albornoz 1974; and Sanders 1976, among many others.

14. Vollmer (1973) utilizes the tributary counts from 1560 to 1570 as a baseline for measuring subsequent losses during the 17th and 18th centuries. Even by 1560, however, the indigenous population had already been drastically reduced from its pre-Conquest size.

15. Many significant documents pertaining to this discussion can be found in Martínez (1984b), except where otherwise noted.

16. AGNP, Tepeaca, cajas 1–12, 14, 90, contain hundreds of these expedientes; see also Martínez's (1994:88) discussion.

17. Investigators in Central Mexico see fine-grained status distinctions between caciques and principales disappearing by the 18th century. Nobles were simply caciques, or they sometimes carried the conjoined title cacique y principal (Chance 1996:482; Hoekstra 1993:220). Equality among caciques did not prevail: some could be quite wealthy, others might be as impoverished as macehuales, if not more so. By late colonial years, the title brought no guarantees.

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