WHEN I ARRIVED at UCLA in 1980 to study early Latin American history with Jim Lockhart, I joined a group of advanced doctoral students already working in Nahuatl studies. The group would become the first generation of Lockhart students to study the history and culture of Nahuatl-speaking peoples in the postconquest period using documents written by Nahua scribes in their own language. As the last member of this first cohort, I happily enough took for granted that I would work on something Nahuatl-related. I also expected that, like several of the others, I would work on a topic that was defined in part by a particular region (and in the event we each subsequently became associated with that region).

A striking feature of known Nahuatl sources at the time was how many of them originated in Coyoacan—a large and important altepetl located to the southwest of Tenochtitlan/Mexico City, fanning out from the fertile lakeshores to the forested mountains at the boundaries of the Valley of Mexico. Pedro Carrasco and Jesús Monjarás-Ruiz had already published a two-volume collection of documents, largely dating from the mid-sixteenth century; it included an investigation (visita) into tribute and labor abuse in the region, as well as a corpus related to the great mid-century Coyoacan ruler (tlatoani), don Juan de Guzmán, and his cacicazgo. Seemingly half the documents included in Beyond the Codices, a collection intended to present to the scholarly community a broad sampling of Nahuatl documentary types, had also originated in Coyoacan. It seemed that whenever a new document appeared, chances were it came from Coyoacan. While working at the notarial archives in Mexico City a few years earlier, Jim had transcribed, for example, a group of early seventeenth-century Nahuatl land sale documents, which proved to be from Coyoacan once more. The richness of Nahuatl documentation from Coyoacan reflects in part the prominence of the altepetl itself and its special jurisdictional status as part of Hernando Cortés’ marquesado grant. Its closeness to Mexico City may be another factor.

Coyoacan thus offered abundant sources written in Nahuatl, many of which were easily accessible in published form. A good number also dated from the mid-sixteenth century, a time of great change in central Mexican Nahua communities, and from which Nahuatl documentation was very scarce. Coyoacan also stood apart in another way. Early in the postconquest period, its rich soils, abun-
dant water supplies, and proximity to Mexico City attracted Spaniards seeking land to cultivate wheat or raise cattle and sheep. I settled on a dissertation project that proposed to study Nahuas and Spaniards together in one region over a significant period of time, using documents in both Nahuatl and Spanish. In the first great push of Nahuatl-based historical research, the overwhelming emphasis had naturally enough been on opening up indigenous-language documents, developing new techniques to understand them, so that Spanish sources had been largely left aside for the moment. My approach differed from the Nahuatl dissertation projects then under way at UCLA in that I thought the time had come to try to integrate the Spanish and indigenous worlds as to sources and to try to include both within a single view. I intended to study not only the Nahua and Spanish communities in Coyoacan on their own terms but also the direct interaction between individual Nahuas and individual Spaniards at all levels of society, including officials as well as ordinary Spaniards and Nahuas.

At the end of 1983, I left for Mexico City for a year of dissertation research. I worked almost exclusively at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), collecting both Spanish- and Nahuatl-language materials, at a time when the archive had already moved from its old central location downtown to the remodeled Lecumberri Prison near the San Lázaro metro stop. The sources proved so abundant that, feeling a bit overwhelmed, I largely concentrated on the transcription and photocopying of the Nahuatl materials, locating them primarily through the recently published Documentos mexicanos, an index to Nahuatl-language materials in AGN collections. Among other materials, including many testaments dating from the sixteenth to eighteenth century, the book pointed me to a second collection of early seventeenth-century land sale documents. At about the same time, I received word of a new acquisition by the Bancroft Library—a collection of Spanish land titles from Coyoacan that dated from the mid-sixteenth to the late eighteenth century and included what turned out to be approximately seventy Nahuatl bills of sale. On a short trip to California, I confirmed the importance of the manuscript for my project and made plans to study it after I had returned from Mexico at the end of the year. Early in my dissertation research, then, the significance of an active Spanish land market in the region was evident in three collections of Nahuatl bills of sale that would form the basis of an important part of my dissertation, “Postconquest Coyoacan: Aspects of Indigenous Sociopolitical and Economic Organization in Central Mexico, 1550–1650” (1989), and subsequent book, Postconquest Coyoacan: Nahua-Spanish Relations in Central Mexico, 1519–1650 (1997).

To study Nahua land tenure, I used the corpus of Nahuatl bills of sale, largely

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4Stephanie Wood’s dissertation (1984) is an exception to the extent that what began as a project based largely on Spanish-language sources came to include an innovative and rich discussion of Nahuatl primordial titles.

5Reyes García et al. 1982.

6AGN Bienes Nacionales 1453, exp. 12, folios 181r–96r, including approximately twenty-three bills of sale dating between 1587 and 1619.

7BL 84/116m (1563–1594).
from the just mentioned three core archival sources, along with many other land-related Nahuatl documents, especially testaments, including many from Colección de documentos sobre Coyoacan and Beyond the Codices. In all, I had compiled approximately 110 bills of sale, dating from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. They record land sales among Nahuas (nobles and commoners, males and females) and between Nahuas and Spaniards, a written record being issued more often when a Spaniard was involved. This collection remains, to my knowledge, unparalleled for any region of central Mexico. It reflects the strength of the Spanish land market in the region (and the consequent preservation of Nahuatl land sale documents among Spanish land titles and litigation) at a time when Nahuatl writing was a vibrant and well-established practice within the Nahu community. And, significantly, it includes many from the sixteenth century, when land descriptions in Nahuatl documents from the region were still relatively detailed, a characteristic that changed over time as (less precise) Spanish practices increasingly influenced Nahu ones.

I also pulled together a collection of forty-five Nahuatl testaments, drawn from disparate archival sources and dating from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century. Several testaments of Nahu nobles found among the cacicazgo papers published by Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz in Colección de documentos sobre Coyoacan date as early as the middle decades of the sixteenth century. By the late sixteenth century, testaments by (male and female) commoners (and large and small landowners) constitute the bulk of the Coyoacan corpus, a characteristic that grows even stronger for the later periods. I drew on the early material for my book, which ends at 1650, and Doris Namala used the later material (twenty-two testaments dating between 1671 and 1748) from my collection for her master’s thesis in the Department of History at the University of Utah. The entire corpus deserves fuller examination and publication. It can be brought into explicit comparison with two other collections of wills—the testaments of Culhuacan from the late sixteenth century, published by Sarah Cline, and the testaments of Toluca from the eighteenth century, published by Caterina Pizzigoni. Spanning three centuries and thus a longer time though fewer in number, the collection of Coyoacan testaments complements the other two and deserves the same treatment, which I hope to give it in the near future, along with an analytical edition of the collection of the bills of sale and other Nahuatl documents from the region.

Land figures very prominently in testaments; a will typically includes an itemized list of plots of land bequeathed by the testator. A bill of sale provides information on a single plot of land (perhaps more) being sold, rather than an individual’s entire estate, but the information is typically more extensive and detailed. Testaments thus present a snapshot of an individual’s (or individual household’s) overall landholdings at one moment in time, just prior to an anticipated death, whereas a bill of sale offers a close-up of one piece of land at the time of its sale. Neither allows the complete reconstruction of the history of a

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8Namala 1995.
single estate or an individual’s or a family’s holdings across the span of a lifetime or across multiple generations, an approach typical of studies on Spanish landholding. This is especially true because, except for prominent nobles who carried identifiable surnames, Nahua naming patterns make it extremely difficult to follow an individual through various documents across time. Land-related (and other) Nahuatl documents require an additional method—to compile many discrete examples of particular terms, phenomena or characteristics thereby to discern broader patterns of behavior. Using such a method, Nahuatl testaments and bills of sale convey a great deal about concrete land tenure practices, including indigenous categories largely absent from Spanish-language sources, delivering us from the generalized accounts written by Spaniards.

The Coyoacan corpus offered the opportunity to study Nahua land tenure in one region over a significant period of time, adding depth to the studies of that topic that had preceded me. I compiled many examples, each one from an individual testament or bill of sale, to discern landholding practices in the region from the mid-sixteenth to the early seventeenth century—a core household plot (callalli) and scattered parcels; indigenous units of measure, typically in vigesimal-based dimensions; a 400-square unit standard measure; a wide range in the size of holdings among and between nobles and commoners; the role of town officials in the allocation of land within the community as well as its sale to outsiders; and categories of land, such as inherited land (huehuetlalli) and purchased land (tlalcohualli), considered either alienable or not. Nowhere do Nahuatl documents actually define such terms as callalli, huehuetlalli or tlalcohualli. Rather, one must deduce the meaning of each from compiling many individual examples and comparing their use in context. And one must be attentive, at times with only a handful of examples, to controversial categories as well as change in meanings over time.

With such an approach, I demonstrate with the Coyoacan materials that long after Spaniards had gone to a head tax, altepetl authorities continued to assess taxes on the basis of (the size of) landholdings, as in the preconquest period. I also describe a subtle process by which Nahuaas adjusted to new situations created by the Spanish presence, by first resorting to a traditional concept and then adopting the appropriate Spanish concept that is nonetheless still heavily influenced by the indigenous one—a process Jim has labeled Double Mistaken Identity—with the possibility of the indigenous concept approaching ever closer to the Spanish meaning over time. I show that land sale documents first used the indigenous term huehuetlalli, or land closely associated with an individual household (in contrast

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10 For naming patterns, see Lockhart 1992, pp. 117–30, and Horn 1997A. At one time I would have said that following ordinary individuals was virtually precluded, but since then I have seen that in certain cases the fact that someone with a common name is seen to hold an identifiable property appearing in more than one document or to have received it from an relative appearing elsewhere can make it possible to do more than seemed feasible at first.

11 Cline 1986, and James Lockhart. Well before the time I completed my dissertation in 1989, Jim had done much of his research on land, and it was reflected in his lectures although it did not appear formally until the publication of his The Nahuas in 1992, which was in time for my 1997 book.
to land more directly controlled by town officials), as a pretext for its sale in an intensifying Spanish land market. Later documents use the Spanish loanword *patrimonio* (patrimony) in precisely the same context and clearly still with the same meaning as huehuetlalli, at times even compounded with *tlalli* (land) as in *patrimoniotlalli*.

I also used my collection of bills of sale to describe the bill of sale as a documentary genre. The analysis of a particular Nahuatl documentary genre is an approach characteristic of the group associated with Jim, including Sarah Cline on testaments, Robert Haskett on municipal election documents, and Stephanie Wood on primordial titles and Techialoyan codices. Jim, himself, has analyzed the genres of annals, primordial titles, songs, plays and municipal council records and to some extent the general question of documentary genre in the Nahuatl corpus. Similar to some other Nahuatl genres, the bill of sale was based on a Spanish model, in this case the *carta de venta*. The Nahuatl bill of sale follows a standard format: it names the seller(s) and buyer(s), identifies each by home town, describes the parcel of land, states the sale price, and notes the date either at the beginning or end of the document. As with Spanish custom, the notary typically gave the buyer the document, and many have been preserved among Spanish land titles or the records of land suits, having been submitted as evidence.

The Nahuatl examples of the genre were never, however, simple copies of a Spanish model written in an indigenous language. They differed in significant ways. Like a testament, a Nahuatl bill of sale records a transaction carried out before a presumed audience, indicated in part by the list of witnesses that typically appears at the end of the document. Witnesses typically numbered more than the three adult males required to authenticate a Spanish legal document and included a broader range of individuals—neighboring landowners, town authorities, Spaniards, and women. Moreover, the witnesses assented not merely to the proper issue of the relevant document (as with Spanish witnesses) but to the legitimacy of the actual proceedings. A bill of sale from Coyoacan states the validating role of the witness explicitly: “all the witnesses declare that it is really his [the seller’s] property.”

Another indication of the presence of a presumed audience and its role in validating the transaction at hand are various statements, often rendered in first person, that would have no place in a Spanish legal document. These include admonitions—statements directed at an assembled body that the agreement be carried out and not violated. A seller might admonish potential heirs (such as children) not to make future claims to the land or to stipulate a fine to be paid to town officials if anyone were to question or renounce the transaction. Other statements reflect Spanish law that sales be voluntary, using such words as “voluntarily, willingly” (*yollocacopa*, from *yollotli*, “heart”) and “to agree gladly” (*paccanonotza*). A seller might also state that the money from the sale was actually in his or her hands and then that “I am very satisfied” (*huel pachiuhtica*).

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13 AGN Bienes Nacionales 1453, exp. 12, f. 189r.
noyollo). Other statements reflect local custom, referring to categories of land considered either alienable or not, as in “it is purchased land” (ca tlačohualli) or “it is inherited land” (huehueltlalli), both considered alienable, or “it is not tribute land” (camo tequitcatlalli) or “it is not altepetl land” (camo altepetlalli), land more closely controlled by municipal authorities. A seller might also seek to establish the right to sell land in the first place by indicating how he or she had initially acquired it—by purchase, inheritance, grant or exchange—or simply declare that the land was truly his or her property. Yet other statements presented the supposed rationale for the sale, including that the seller needed money to pay tribute or other debts or had other properties with which to maintain him/herself.

Central to the bill of sale was a description of the land parcel, varying in length and detail depending on the notary, region, and date. I demonstrated that land descriptions also changed over time, reflecting in part a growing awareness of Spanish practices. In bills of sale dating from the mid- to late sixteenth century, the description of land parcels used place names to identify location; indigenous units such as quahuitl and matl (typically in terms of both length [hueyac] and width [patlahuac]) to indicate dimension; and cardinal directions along with striking features of the landscape and the identification of neighboring landowners to indicate land boundaries. (As Nahuatl did not adopt Spanish terms for cardinal directions until the mid-seventeenth century, bills of sale initially used such indigenous phrases as iquiçayampa tonatiuh itzticac, “facing east [literally where the sun rises],” and icalaquiyampa tonatiuh itzticac, “facing west [literally where the sun sets]” to indicate solar directions, identifying north and south by easily identifiable places, prominent peaks or towns, with the addition of the suffixes meaning “toward” [-pa, -copia, or -pahuic].) By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, bills of sale no longer used place names, dimensions, and cardinal directions to describe a land parcel; much as in Spanish documents, they described parcels by the identification of the owners of adjacent land and reference to notable vegetation or geographic or human-made features.

Land descriptions in testaments tend to be more cursory than those found in bills of sale, often simply mentioning the general location of the field and its dimensions. The 1549 testament of the nobleman don Pablo Çacancatl, for example, states “my land at a place called Palpan is 60 [quahuitl] in width and 180 [quahuitl] in length.”

Entries concerning other parcels in his testament follow suit. Nonetheless, changes in land descriptions in testaments may parallel those in bills of sale in the sense that later ones are less precise and increasingly rendered in terms of introduced Spanish measures. Eighteenth-century testaments from Coyoacan, similar to those from eighteenth-century Toluca, often indicate size of land parcels by Spanish grain measures for the quantity of seed necessary to sow the land—almudes and fanegas, among others. For example, a testament dated 1737 describes a parcel as the “field at Çoyatitlan that is eighteen almudes.”

descriptions of the earlier period. They also reflect an increasing familiarity with Spanish practices over time. Either way, the change in land descriptions means that the early documents, both testaments and bills of sale, that described land parcels more precisely than in later documents, makes them all the more valuable for understanding continuity and change in Nahua land tenure in the postconquest period.

Although it was central to the dissertation, I had never intended to concentrate solely on Nahua landholding. I hoped also to do on the local level, more exhaustively, what Charles Gibson had done for the larger Valley of Mexico—map the constituent parts of the postconquest altepetl (though he hardly used the term) and their relationship to the cabeceral/sujeto and corregimiento and parish jurisdictions introduced by Spaniards. To do this, I utilized a broad range of Spanish administrative sources (the kind Gibson had used), including most importantly census records photocopied at the AGN that presented ready-made lists of the region’s constituent districts at different moments in time. I also compiled my own lists. I compiled hundreds of references to district names (including both Nahuatl name and Spanish saint’s name, if possible), each one drawn from a single Nahuatl- or Spanish-language document. I also noted the date of each reference to track change in jurisdictions (or names) over time, especially to identify the creation of a new parish or cabecera. My collection of bills of sale proved especially useful in this regard, as each one identified the seller(s) by altepetl and district (tlaxilacalli). Also invaluable was the documentary collection published by Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz, which included extensive materials (many but not all in Nahuatl) that mentioned the names of altepetl districts.

After I had established a certain district’s affiliation and traced it through time, I looked for the same names in some recognizable form on published maps of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I used the excellent collection of contemporary and historical maps in the UC Berkeley Map Library while I was on campus in 1985 to work at the Bancroft Library. When possible, I also checked the locations of districts identified on maps against written sources. I remember, for example, descriptions that placed tlaxilacalli in the midst or at the edge of the Pedregal, the great lava flow that fanned out from the southern mountains to the lakeshore, easily verifiable on the maps. I then had a professional cartographer use a number of the maps housed in the UCB Map Library to create a base map of the corregimiento of Coyoacan that depicted topographical contours, approximate sixteenth-century lakeshore, approximate jurisdictional boundaries, and each district I had been able to identify. Then, on the base map, the cartographer depicted with lines (á la Gibson) the affiliation of each district to a cabecera or parish head town based on information gleaned from Spanish administrative records, Nahuatl documents, and the lists I had painstakingly compiled myself.

The maps visually depict institutional relationships that initially were at the center of Nahua-Spanish relations. They challenge older notions that portrayed

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16Gibson 1964.
17The maps and description of the corregimiento in García Martínez 1969 were also especially helpful.
colonial administration simply as a Spanish phenomenon and instead reflect the complex interplay between Spanish and indigenous concepts and practices. Gibson demonstrated through mapping that in the Valley of Mexico the indigenous altepetl served as the basis for Spanish civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions—initially the encomienda and parish and then, with the reach of direct royal administration into the Nahua countryside, the corregimiento. Following in Gibson’s footsteps and going to a different level, I use maps to tell the history of a single corregimiento, to illustrate at the local level how indigenous and Spanish forms of sociopolitical organization influenced one another, especially across time as constituent parts of the complex Coyoacan altepetl sought independent status.

I demonstrate first of all that Coyoacan counted among the great complex altepetl of central Mexico. It consisted of over one hundred tlaxilacalli grouped into entities intermediate between the larger altepetl and the tlaxilacalli themselves—what Chimalpahin calls tlacayatl for Chalco, as described by Susan Schroeder, and what Nahua documents from Coyoacan call altepetl as with the overall entity. Initially, Spaniards ignored or failed to recognize this intermediate level of the constituent altepetl, designating a single cabecera for greater Coyoacan that together with its sujetos also became a parish. Cortés claimed Coyoacan, along with the closely associated but independent neighboring altepetl of Tacubaya (with its own parish and cabecera-sujeto arrangement), and incorporated them (designated a corregimiento around the mid-sixteenth century) into his larger marquesado grant, where they remained until the end of the colonial period.

Yet, whatever Spanish understandings, the constituent altepetl that made up the complex altepetl of Coyoacan were apparently present all along and, when the opportunity arose, they reappeared. I demonstrate by mapping that newly recognized cabeceras and parishes over time fell along the lines of constituent altepetl rather than individual tlaxilacalli. The creation of independent cabeceras and parishes thus reflected Coyoacan’s complex organization with its canonical four parts plus an additional one apparently having been acquired from neighboring Xochimilco in the early postconquest period.

Mapping also allowed me to demonstrate another indigenous form of organization at work in Coyoacan that distinguished between tlaxilacalli designated as either acohuic (upper) or tlalnahuac (lower), the classic terms of dual organization. The acohuic and tlalnahuac labels appear in the market and land records related to the mid-sixteenth century cacicazgo as well as some municipal election documents from the early seventeenth century. The distinction was also used by municipal officials to organize labor at least until the early seventeenth century, as I demonstrated when I matched each tlaxilacalli listed in a record of a public labor draft (coatequitl) dated 1613 with its respective acohuic or tlalnahuac designation as found in other sources. Overall, what proved surprising was that acohuic and tlalnahuac tlaxilacalli did not match up with the five constituent altepetl described above. Instead, they crosscut them in certain ways, reflecting historic ethnic differences between a low-lying populous region running along the lake-shore and a less populous region running along the higher reaches of the jurisdiction.
In terms of its emphasis on the internal organization of a complex altepetl, my study of Coyoacan is comparable to what Susan Schroeder had done with Chalco through the annalist Chimalpahin but in my case using a diverse body of Spanish and Nahuatl documents to demonstrate how it actually functioned on the ground in the postconquest period. It is significant because Coyoacan was a large and important kingdom and because “equally well documented situations are extremely rare.”  

Many of the same documents that identified altepetl districts also proved central to my study of Nahua town government, a study that consists of two parts, each with a distinct method. The first part concerns the dominant ruling family recognized by the Spaniards at the time of the conquest. With identifiable surnames and the tendency to appear in documentation because of their important role as intermediaries between Nahua commoners and Spanish authorities, prominent town officials can be traced through various (Spanish and Nahuatl) documents over time, in a manner characteristic of the social history of Spaniards. Here I relied heavily on the Nahuatl (and related Spanish) documents published in Beyond the Codices and Colección de documentos sobre Coyoacan in addition to a published summary of a legal dispute in the 1680s over the inheritance of the cacicazgo.  

Most important is a group of mid-sixteenth century Nahuatl documents associated with the mid-sixteenth century tlatoani don Juan de Guzmán (who reigned for forty-three years from 1526 until his death in 1569) that demonstrate that he still held on to many of the traditional perquisites of office—tribute and labor, market taxes, landholdings, and dependent workers. Don Juan was arguably one of the most prominent and influential native lords in sixteenth-century Mexico and because of his family’s attempts to preserve its position, one of the best documented. With this relative wealth of information, I trace the changing fortunes of the postconquest ruling family over generations, from its height under don Juan de Guzmán in the mid-sixteenth century to its gradual decline, especially after the death of don Juan’s grandson in 1604 or 1605, which left no direct heir to the Coyoacan rulership.

I was also able to trace a handful of other high-ranking officials who served in various capacities in the sixteenth century, including don Pablo Çacancatl, who was closely associated with (perhaps even a member of) the Guzmán ruling family and active in the region from the 1520s to the 1550s, and don Baltasar de León, doubtless a member of another Coyoacan ruling family antagonistic to the Guzmáns, providing a hint of indigenous political factions so evident in other studies of indigenous government.

For the second part of my study on Nahua town government, which concerns the recruitment and career patterns of officers on the Spanish-style town council, or cabildo, introduced to native communities by Spanish authorities beginning in the 1530s, I turn again (as in the mapping of altepetl districts) to list making. With a few exceptions, including some election documents, no extant records from Coyoacan include complete rosters of municipal officers for any given year as

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19For a summary of the lawsuit, see Fernández de Recas 1961.
found, for example, in the minutes of council meetings from Tlaxcala, unique in all of central Mexico. Lists of cabildo officers (reproduced in my appendices) are (like the lists of altepetl districts) drawn from many scattered sources, written in both Spanish and Nahuatl.

My efforts in this respect represent an in-depth study of Nahuatl town government for one region in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and thus complement Haskett’s study for Cuernavaca in that he picks up where I leave off. They confirm general findings for central Mexico as a whole, that is, that preconquest traditions of governance influenced colonial ones, as Nahuas adjusted to the changes introduced by Spaniards. Initially, Spanish rule relied on the traditional authority of the tlatoani, just as Spanish civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions were superimposed on the altepetl. The position of governor on a Nahuatl cabildo had no counterpart on a Spanish one, having been introduced to accommodate the position of tlatoani. Indeed, in many cases the tlatoani initially held the position of governor, still with many attributes associated with the tlatoani and, as was the case with several of the Guzmán rulers of Coyoacan, often being called cacique y gobernador to indicate the association between the two positions. Over time, as already noticed by Gibson, with the introduction of the Spanish-style cabildo and the eventual separation of the office of governor from the position of the tlatoani, the tlatoani’s dominant role eroded and the cabildo took over many of his functions.

Yet recruitment and career patterns of the alcaldes and regidores who staffed the cabildo also drew heavily on preconquest traditions. We know in general that cabildo office holding was linked to sociopolitical organization, cabildo officers representing individual tlaxilacalli. Here I demonstrate by matching the home district and its acohuic/tlalnahuac affiliation to the cabildo officers serving in a given year that in Coyoacan the distinction between acohuic and tlalnahuac constituted the basis of political representation on the cabildo. I also show that in Coyoacan the increase in the number of alcaldes and fiscales (perhaps even notaries) over time reflects the creation of newly independent districts. Officials below the level of cabildo members are comparatively difficult to document because of their extremely localized responsibilities, in particular tribute collection and labor organization. An investigation into tribute arrears dating from 1629–30 that provides the names of lower-level officials called tequitlatoque thus helped to document individuals who tend not to appear in the documentation.

In the midst of research and writing, perhaps even as early as 1984 when I was working at the AGN, I realized that a study of Nahuas and Spaniards, even in one region, was unrealistic if I ever hoped to finish my dissertation within a reasonable time. I decided to focus on Nahuas for the dissertation and return to my original idea of including Spaniards for the book. Several years after completing the dissertation, then, I went back to Mexico to conduct more archival research on Spaniards in the region, to supplement the material I had photocopied (or taken notes from) during my year of dissertation research at the AGN.

Not surprisingly, in view of Coyoacan’s agricultural potential and its closeness to the Mexico City market, much of the source material for Spaniards in the region concerns land. Coyoacan became a major center of Spanish agriculture
early on, with estate formation occurring in three cycles, each of which I document with a separate set of sources. I use the records of land grants made by the Mexico City cabildo (found in the published cabildo proceedings, or *Actas*\(^{21}\)) and later viceroy (located in AGN Mercedes) to show that in the first half of the sixteenth century, many prominent residents of Mexico City, including royal officials, cabildo members, and encomenderos, received grants for garden plots to supply their Mexico City households along either the approaches to Coyoacan or its main thoroughfares. I use the already mentioned Bancroft manuscript that, dating from the mid-sixteenth to the late eighteenth century and numbering several hundred pages, includes a collection of Spanish land titles—records of land purchases (including the approximately seventy bills of sale discussed earlier), legal disputes over land and water, *composición* proceedings, and land auctions and rental agreements—to document a major wave of estate formation that occurred in the last three decades of the sixteenth century and reached deeply into the region’s prime agricultural zone. And I use the records of the numerous grants made by the fourth Marqués in the early seventeenth century (found in AGN Hospital de Jesús, an archive with its origins in marquesado administration) for land in the region’s hilly hinterland intended for livestock raising, woodcutting or charcoal manufacturing.

In contrast to other regions where encomenderos and their associates constituted the core of an emerging landowning group, Coyoacan seemed to be the special preserve of middle-level functionaries, reflecting both its short distance from Mexico City, where many were active, and its status as part of the marquesado that apparently worked to keep encomenderos out. Some Spaniards consolidated estates through the purchase of many, small, scattered but closely situated parcels, whereas other Spaniards who had greater capital resources purchased larger, more substantial properties. By 1589 Spanish landownership in the region was extensive enough to justify composición proceedings (verification of land titles), decades earlier than the important Spanish agricultural centers of Puebla, Toluca, and Morelos. By the early seventeenth century, the largest Spanish estates in Coyoacan had already been established and were scattered among Nahua settlements in the heart of the jurisdiction. The Spanish families who had painstakingly pieced together estates in the late sixteenth century now faced difficulty keeping them intact due to the impact of partible inheritance, debt obligations, and legal conflicts over land and water as competition for resources intensified with time. At opportune moments, prominent residents of Mexico City bought already established estates from the founding families. When a second wave of composición proceedings swept the region in the 1630s, even much of the marginal lands along the edges of the jurisdiction had come into the possession of Spaniards.

Along with the acquisition of land, the Spaniards of Coyoacan were also engaged in various commercial activities in the region. Having recognized the value of notarial records in studying ordinary Nahua, I hoped to locate notarial records on Spaniards. During my return research trip, I went to the Mexico City

\[^{21}A\text{ctas de cabildo de la ciudad de México.}\]
notarial archives that I knew included books of notaries who had been active in Coyoacan. The challenge was to find ones that included documents on Coyoacan among the hundreds (thousands?) of volumes housed in the archive. Indexes were minimal; they simply listed volume number, notary’s name and relevant dates. Because a notarial document is so formulaic, one can quickly scan the first line or so of a document to ascertain the relevant district. But they are also very short, typically a page or two. To scan a volume of notarial records to locate those that concern a particular region is both laborious and time-consuming. I chose several volumes from the time period at random and located so few documents from Coyoacan amidst hundreds from Mexico City that I decided it did not warrant the effort. I then went to other Spanish-language documents concerning Coyoacan, identified individual Spanish notaries and after that located their volumes in the notarial archive. The procedure of following the notary active in the region proved worthwhile, and during my research trip I located several hundred notarial records on Spaniards in the region. I photocopied most of them, as the process of location was still relatively time-consuming and the paleography, especially for the sixteenth century, difficult enough to make it unfeasible to read the documents fully there.

In the end, my collection of Spanish notarial records constituted an important source on Spanish commercial activities in the region, at least for the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for which I was able to locate relevant books. It largely concerns labor contracts between individual Nahuas and Spanish artisans and carters, some based in Mexico City; collection of the ecclesiastical tithe on Spanish agricultural production, either carried out directly by the cathedral chapter of Mexico City or indirectly by individuals who bid for the contract; and trade in land, livestock, grain, food, cloth and clothing, and black slaves. Supplemental materials provide a sense of other commercial enterprises in the region, including charcoal manufacturing, slaughterhouses, and obrajes, or textile manufacturing plants. Whether they cultivated wheat, produced cottage cheese, manufactured textiles, or traded in Spanish goods, these provincial Spaniards looked to Mexico City for business partners, credit, and markets, with little reference to the altepetl or its officials.

As with other regions, we have no Spanish notarial documents from Coyoacan for the period before the late sixteenth century. The main sources we do have, the cacicazgo records and the 1553 visita, emphasize by their nature the centrality of the altepetl and the Nahua ruling family. And indeed here we find evidence of relatively humble provincial Spaniards engaged in transport, petty trade or small-scale agricultural enterprises in the region, who sought close ties with local Nahua officials, including members of the ruling family.

Throughout the period, Nahuas actively participated in the commercial economy, activities that are documented in part by Spanish attempts to regulate them as well as by mundane Nahua documents. Together, they demonstrate that while Nahuas continued to cultivate maize many also adopted plants and animals introduced by Europeans. Many also drew on preconquest traditions of merchants and marketplaces and sold both locally and in Mexico City the modest surplus from household production. Others worked as provincial traders, their fortunes often
tied to local Spaniards who might provide credit, a mule, or some other advantage. Some other Nahua sold plots to Spaniards, a few even working informally for the buyers over time, helping them acquire parcel after parcel. Others worked as wage labor at a time when Spanish landowners—frustrated with the repartimiento to supply them adequate numbers of workers—increasingly turned to private arrangements. Some left the altepetl altogether, going either to local estates or to other jurisdictions. Clearly, direct contact with Spaniards especially in the context of commercial activities was an important part of Nahua life. Yet, with the exception of some labor contracts, Spanish notarial documents tend not to record agreements between Spaniards and Nahua, even for the later period when such interaction was so obviously a part of the local scene. Perhaps such transactions were too low in value or the participants too humble to warrant a formal record written by a Spanish notary.

After getting a sense of the provincial economy, I turned to two last topics to fill out a bit more about the formal relations between Nahua and Spaniards—tribute and labor and Spanish provincial government. In both cases I drew on a wide range of sources, many previously mentioned, including most importantly for the early period the mid-century cacicazgo records and the 1553 visita. The pictorial associated with the 1553 investigation—the so-called Códice de Coyoacan—is the most well known indigenous pictorial source from the Coyoacan and proved especially helpful for the history of tribute and labor in the region up to the mid-sixteenth century, when other (Spanish and Nahua) sources are relatively scarce.22

The administrative structure of the marquesado was institutionalized around the mid-sixteenth century and remained formally separate from and essentially parallel to the royal government throughout the rest of the colonial period. Coyoacan thus fell under the authority of a corregidor (provincial governor) appointed by the marquesado rather than the crown. Typically a high noble from Spain, the corregidor established his headquarters in the district’s cabecera, where he oversaw the provincial Spanish court, collection of tribute, and other various matters related to the governance of the province, including relations with the

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22 On Códice de Coyoacan, see León-Portilla 1971 and Batalla Rosado 2002. In step with the trend in the field to integrate native pictorial and alphabetic texts (promising to erode the traditional disciplinary boundary between art historians and historians), I used pictorial sources whenever possible, although they did not prove numerous for the region. I reproduced details from the Codex Mendoza to illustrate aspects of Coyoacan’s pre-conquest history and from the “Santa Cruz” map attributed to Alonso de Santa Cruz to flesh out a description of the region around the mid-sixteenth century. Several pictorial published in Colección de documentos sobre Coyoacan dating from the mid-sixteenth century were relevant to my study of Nahua land holding, illustrating pictorially such characteristics of Nahua landholding also evident in alphabetic texts as the house plot (callalli) and separate scattered properties; the role of altepetl officials in the division of estates among heirs; and the size and geographic extent of the landholdings of nobles. Dating from the mid-sixteenth century, these land-related pictorials also represent a certain point in the transition from pictorial to alphabetic texts and indeed, Jim uses them in The Nahua to illustrate as much. The other well known pictorial source from the region—the town-founding document associated with the Coyoacan district of Ajusco—falls outside the time frame of the book. On the Ajusco document see Wood 1997 and 2003, pp. 60–76.
Nahua town council. By identifying corregidores assigned to the region and whatever else I might gather about their social position and career paths, I make a contribution to the larger administrative history of the marquesado.23

The heart of my study of Spanish provincial government concerns the corregidor’s staff, which included a deputy (teniente), interpreter, and notary as well as such other lower-level officers as constables. They were typically drawn from the local Spanish population (over time, being actual natives of the jurisdiction) and, often serving through several administrations, provided some continuity to an administration whose highest-ranking official rotated frequently and in any case may have been primarily based in Mexico City throughout the duration of an appointment. These provincial officials are of interest because, along with the Dominican friars resident in the local monastery, they were at the center of Spanish provincial life in the region. They had close ties both to local Spanish residents and Nahua officials, including members of the ruling family. Diego Pérez de Zamora, for example, maintained close ties to generations of the Coyoacan ruling family in the second half of the sixteenth century, serving in various capacities. Antonio de Fuentes, who served as teniente in the early seventeenth century, clearly had antagonistic relations with the Guzmáns, suggesting distinct political factions. I also demonstrate that at least at certain moments, tenientes, interpreters and notaries served as a common pool of officials, often rotating between positions from year to year. Over time, with the creation of newly independent districts, additional tenientes were appointed with their own headquarters established in the secondary centers.

Overall, Postconquest Coyoacan is a study defined by the altepetl. The important preconquest altepetl of Coyoacan served as the basis for the colonial jurisdiction, thus establishing the geographic boundaries of my study as well as the particular administrative channels that led to the production and preservation of documentation. Such an altepetl-based approach differs from such region-wide studies as Jim’s The Nahuas, Kevin Terraciano’s The Mixtecs, and Matthew Restall’s The Maya World, all of which draw on sources from many different places. Rather it allows the in-depth study of a given locality, in this case a large and complex entity. The same subunits and individuals appear repeatedly so that I might map, for example, the internal organization of the postconquest altepetl or place the relations between a Nahua peddler and a Spanish landowner in the context of the local setting. Such an altepetl-based approach is feasible wherever adequate documentation exists and provides the opportunity for cross-altepetl comparison. For me, the comparatively restricted scope also made it possible to bring Spaniards into the picture, departing in this way from other work in the field of Nahuatl studies.

Coyoacan stands apart with its extraordinary abundance of extant Nahuatl-language materials, especially from the middle decades of the sixteenth century when Nahuatl documents in general remain relatively scarce. Two published collections—Beyond the Codices and Colección de documentos sobre Coyoacan—proved absolutely crucial to my study, as I returned to them again and again

for perspective on each new topic. They each point to the enormous value of published collections of documents, especially for the early postconquest period when sources are in general scarce and paleography especially difficult and time consuming. The bulk of my source material falls in Jim’s Stage 2—the period from roughly the 1540s/50s to the mid-seventeenth century and a time of enormous change in Nahua communities. In this period refashioned Nahua government flourished and indigenous population declined. Spaniards made serious inroads into the region, establishing ranches and farms and various commercial enterprises in the countryside. Relations between Nahua and Spaniards shifted from the Spanish and Nahua officials headquartered in the central settlement to individual Nahua and Spaniards in work sites scattered across the countryside.

The greatest challenge was to move beyond simply studying Nahua and Spaniards in one region at the same time but to find individual Nahua and Spaniards in direct contact with one another. As we know, Spanish documents in general tend to focus on prominent Nahua who came into contact with Spanish officials and thus much of the research based on them is institutional, concerned with the Nahua town or the upper levels of Nahua society. In the end, the immediately best place to find direct interaction between individual Nahua and individual Spaniards is right in mundane Nahuatl documents where we started. Coyoacan is so well endowed with documentary resources that it offers perhaps the best opportunity existing for the approach of concentrating intensely on all aspects of a single altepetl. Cataloging, summarizing, and publishing the documents can help greatly in such an endeavor. As we have seen, I myself profited from previous lists and documentary publications. I am presently planning a publication which will provide transcriptions, translations, and commentary for a large proportion of the Nahuatl documentation from Coyoacan and list or give abstracts of whatever else is known to be extant. Something similar with the Spanish documentation would also be most useful, for Coyoacan presents a notable opportunity for studies not only of a local Nahua society but of its interactions with Spaniards on the home scene and the evolution of an entity including both sectors.

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