Sources and Methods for the Study of Mixtec History

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IN 1988, IN THE FIRST WEEK of my first graduate course at UCLA, the professor, Jim Lockhart, had me read an anthology titled *Estratificación social en la Mesoamérica prehispánica*.[1] I noticed that nearly all the chapters focused on the Nahuas of central Mexico, with the exception of one on the Mixtecs of Oaxaca and another on Michoacan. Whereas many of the chapters on the Nahuas made use of Nahuatl-language documents, the two on the Mixtecos and Tarascos did not use native-language sources. I had just begun to learn older Nahuatl using what we called the "packet," an early form (with the examples only) of Jim's *Nahuatl as Written,* and despite my interest in this language, I wondered aloud whether native-language writings existed for other groups of highland Mexico. "Good question," Jim replied (he insisted from the beginning on a first-name basis). He encouraged us to compare findings on the Nahuas of central Mexico with other areas of Mesoamerica, and I knew that my fellow first-year doctoral student and friend, Matthew Restall, intended to use Maya-language writings for his project on Yucatan. Whereas the existence of Maya-language writings was certain, the case for alphabetic writings in other Mesoamerican languages was unclear, at least to us at the time. A logical place to look for native-language writings outside the area of Nahua dominance was in the Mixteca and the Valley of Oaxaca just to the south. I knew that Mixtecs and Zapotecs practiced pictographic writing in the Postclassic period; if it were true that the earlier writing traditions facilitated the introduction of alphabetic writing, then one might expect to find native-language writings in this important region of Mesoamerica. Another fellow student, Barry Sell, pointed out that the existence of several church-sponsored religious and instructional texts in the Mixtec and Zapotec languages, including two lengthy *Vocabularios* published in the sixteenth century, indicated that people were learning how to read and write alphabetic texts in the two major languages of the region. But if Mixtecs and Zapotecs wrote in their own languages during this period, did any of the writings survive?

I found the answer when I consulted a guide to documents written in indigenous languages at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN). In retrospect, I realize that the guide is far from complete, but it did list about 20 Mixtec-language documents, mainly last wills and testaments in the Tierras section of the archive. That summer, I went to the AGN and photocopied about thirty Mixtec-language sources, and I also copied some Zapotec-language documents which were listed in the catalog as Mixtec. I did not know the difference between the two at the time, and neither did the authors of the guide, apparently. I also photocopied several Yucatec Maya-language documents for a seminar on the translation of Maya-language texts that Jim and Matthew had begun in the spring of that year. The next question was whether I could find anything in Oaxaca. From Mexico City I went to a town called Teposcolula, a former *cabecera* in the

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[1]Carrasco and Broda 1976; Spores 1967 and 1976.

Mixteca Alta and seat of the *alcaldía mayor*, where the judicial records of the Spanish alcalde mayor were kept. I knew that the archive in Teposcolula had proven very valuable for William Taylor's work on crime and rebellion, and also for Ronald Spores' second book on the Mixtecs.[2] But being the humble first-year graduate student *macehualli* that I was, I never imagined asking these scholars about any of this. And Jim never offered to intervene; he simply encouraged me to figure it out on my own, an approach which suited me well.

That same summer, I reached Teposcolula in the back of a pick-up truck taxi that one takes from the Pan American Highway to the town. After some confusion, local authorities of the *municipio* told me that the archive had been moved to Oaxaca City. The area was so green and scenic in the rainy season that I decided to walk back to the highway instead of waiting for the next makeshift taxi; after a while the puffy white clouds grew gray and dark and a light drizzle turned into a steady rain. Cold and wet, I wondered what I was doing and why I was there when an old school bus appeared—one of those second-class buses that stop often to pick up people waiting here and there alongside the road. I waved, climbed aboard, and noticed a pile of machetes by the stairwell, where *campesinos* leave the tools of their trade before taking a seat. After a while I began to speak with a man named Andrés who was seated next to me. When Andrés learned that I came from Los Angeles he showed me his California driver's license, much to my surprise. He had worked in the San Joaquin Valley, where many Mixtecs have migrated in recent decades. I felt more at home as the bus rolled along in the pouring rain.

I made it to Oaxaca City that evening, and the next morning I set out to find the archive from Teposcolula. I stumbled around for an entire day until I found the Juzgado, where I was led to a small room crammed with boxes and bundles of old papers. There I introduced myself to the caretaker of this "archive," Gonzalo Rojo Guerrero, who wore a protective mask while sorting through a stack of tattered, worm-eaten, fungus-ridden, old documents. After confirming that this was indeed the historical archive, and that it included documentation from Teposcolula, we began to talk about his project to preserve and organize the documentation, putting the dossier for each legal case in a separate folder, writing basic information about the case on the folder, and placing the folders in boxes. Beginning to sort through a few cases, I came across a Nahuatl-language document, accompanied by a sketch of lands and trees. The year 1551 was written at the top. More Nahuatl, I thought. Then I turned the page over and stared at handwriting in a language that was neither Nahuatl nor Spanish, dated 1579. On the next page was another native-language text from the same period. As it turned out, this one dossier from Texupa, a Mixtec-Chocho community in the Mixteca Alta, contained native-language writings in Nahuatl, Mixtec, and Chocho. I had never even heard of the Chocho language. Over the course of the next few weeks, I found and photocopied dozens of cases that included Mixtec-language writings, with the permission and invaluable assistance of Gonzalo. When I returned to Los

[2]Taylor 1979 and Spores 1984.

Angeles, I had more than enough material to keep me busy for a year. Soon after I had made my big "discovery" of Mixtec-language documents, I learned that some other scholars also knew of these documents in the Teposcolula collection, including Maarten Jansen, Kathryn Josserand, Rudolfo Pastor, María de los Angeles Romero, Ronald Spores, William Taylor, and Woodrow Borah. But nobody was working with the documents.

The following summer, I returned to Oaxaca and found that the Archivo del Juzgado del Estado de Oaxaca, which included the Archivo Judicial de Teposcolula (AJT), had moved again and was located in a building on the outskirts that the Juzgado also used as a warehouse for confiscated items. One room in the back was piled to the ceiling with old muskets and rifles. Next door were a small glass factory where men worked with blowtorches, and an old tire shop where they cut up car tires with handknives to make rubber soles for huaraches. Another neighbor had chickens, roosters and a burro. Despite these unusual and noisy surroundings, the relocation of the Teposcolula judicial archive from the Mixteca Alta to this warehouse in Oaxaca City, where it was cataloged and preserved, was one phase of an ambitious plan to move all local judicial archives throughout the state to a single site in the capital. Not only were the documents being preserved and made accessible to researchers (few as we were), but now we had (unofficial) access to photocopying machines as well. My project would have been impossible without the informal copying services that Gonzalo, the archivist, provided. Over the course of the next six years I searched every box and bundle of papers from the Teposcolula section of the archive, spending one full year in Oaxaca and returning every summer. At the request of my friend (and eventually *compadre*) Gonzalo, I wrote a couple of letters to the Presidente of the Juzgado, praising the historic value of the archive and Gonzalo's heroic and selfless work in preserving the documents, urging his excellency to devote more resources to this national treasure. One letter was published in the Juzgado newsletter, but it did little good, it seems. In the beginning, Gonzalo had only one assistant, a young lady from Pochutla named Elena who was helping to catalog the collection, writing with pencils in spiral notebooks that reminded me of my grammar school days. We all worked in the same little space, often to the sound of pop music blaring from the radio, surrounded by tall shelves and boxes of documents. The archive had few amenities. Gonzalo used to say with a wry smile that the Juzgado *jefe* had jokingly threatened to burn the archive down if Gonzalo kept asking him for more funds. Frightened by the thought, Lisa (Lisa Sousa, Latin American historian and my wife) and I, plus a few other *investigadores*, donated supplies and money to the archive, and we helped to catalog parts of the collection. We used to call Gonzalo "patron saint of the archives." Eventually, Gonzalo supervised a team of people who worked to preserve and organize truckloads of material coming in from various judicial archives across the state. They wore masks and protective coats and spent the better part of each day sorting through mounds of tattered papers, using brushes to clean them and formaldehyde to preserve the most damaged ones—the same substance that Gonzalo used to preserve his scorpion collection on the wall. Finding a scorpion in the archive was a form of entertainment, as was a passing vendor selling tamales and pulque on *viernes social*.

Since I began my work on the Mixteca in 1988, the archive has been moved four times and the collection has had three different cataloging schemes, reflected in the several different numbers on the manila folders in which the documents are now contained. When I returned in 1999, I was disappointed to learn that my friend Gonzalo had moved on to another position and that the Juzgado had moved the archive even further from the center of the city, to the other side of the *periférico*, in the colonia of Cinco Señores, on a street called Prolongación de la Noria, under the direction of licenciado Israel Garrido. Recently, however, the historical section of the archive was returned to the *centro histórico*, four blocks from the zócalo, in a renovated, pleasant building, at Avenida Hidalgo 1106. The working conditions and organization have improved dramatically; the documents are well preserved and most of the Teposcolula collection has been copied digitally. Instead of photocopying documents off the premises, they can be printed in the archive. Licenciado Garrido has continued the good work that Gonzalo Rojo began. We are very pleased to know that this collection has received the attention and care that it deserves, and very grateful for the careful and professional work of the archivists who have dedicated their careers to preserving the historical record.

Although I have searched far and wide for Mixtec-language records in various archives, libraries, and pueblos, I have not found a collection as rich as the civil and criminal records of the Archivo Judicial de Teposcolula. If not for the existence of this priceless collection, I would not have attempted to learn Mixtec as it was written in the colonial period. The Museo de Antropología e Historia claimed to have a book of testaments from Teposcolula, but they are from the Tamasulapa area, and only one is written in Mixtec. All the others are written in Chocho—much to the delight of Sebastian van Doesburg and Michael Swanton, who are working with documents written in the Ngiwa language. I found more documents in the AGN and a few more here and there in communities of the Mixteca Alta, but at this point the number of Mixtec-language texts outside of the Teposcolula collection is quite small, by comparison.

Provenance, Timing, and Types of Texts

I have found some four hundred texts of many types, ranging in date from 1567 to 1807. The collection is evenly spread across time; there is no five-year period between the earliest and latest dates that is not represented by at least one text. Several dozen *ñuu* (pueblos or communities) are represented, from Cuilapa in the Valley of Oaxaca to Tonalá in the Baja, from Coixtlahuaca in the northern Alta to Chalcatongo in the south. Most of the documentation comes from the Mixteca Alta, in and around the valleys of Nochistlan, Teposcolula, Tamasulapa, and Tlaxiaco, where Spanish-Mixtec interaction was concentrated in the colonial period. The miraculous survival of the judicial archive of Teposcolula accounts for the concentration of documents from this area. The jurisdiction included Yanhuitlan and dozens of ñuu in the western half of the Mixteca Alta. Unfortunately, colonial judicial archives have not survived in any other alcaldía mayor in the Mixteca. The Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City contains documents from the Mixteca Alta and Baja, and a few from the Valley. The coast is

the only area of the Mixteca that is not represented in this collection. Although the last extant record was written in 1807, native-language writing in the Mixteca had clearly declined in many places by the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In contrast, it was widespread in the years between 1570 and 1730, despite significant population loss throughout much of the first half of this period. This collection is only a small remnant of the many native-language texts that were written in the colonial period. And it is hoped that more texts will continue to surface in municipal and parochial archives and private collections.

Most Mixtec-language texts resulted from the recordkeeping requirements of the Spanish administrative and legal system. Native notaries of municipal councils (cabildos) recorded local transactions involving properties, accounts, and other official business in their communities. Local officials handled many conflicts according to local custom, unless a Spaniard was involved or the aggrieved party brought a complaint to the alcalde mayor, the Spanish administrator and first instance judge of the region. In handling a legal dispute, whether civil or criminal in nature, the alcalde mayor and his staff began a formal investigation by assembling evidence and obtaining preliminary declarations from the parties involved, scheduling hearings with witnesses, and making arrests, if necessary. The entire proceedings were recorded in Spanish with the aid of translators. A copy of the proceedings and the original documents were filed in the judicial archives of each alcaldía mayor. For sentencing and appeals, the papers might be sent on to the Audiencia (high court of New Spain) or the Juzgado de Indios (court which adjudicated cases involving Indians) in Mexico City, leaving an incomplete record of the case in the local archive. Thus, most surviving records in judicial archives were written in Spanish by notaries attached to the staff of the alcalde mayor. However, many dossiers contain native-language writings as evidence produced by plaintiffs and defendants in order to document succession or property rights. Most of the surviving Mixtec-language archival texts were used as evidence in civil and criminal disputes. Due to the nature of these archives, the documents are not confined to one given community or period like a collection of testaments from a parish archive.

It should be mentioned here that the importance of native-language documentation should not diminish the value of using Spanish-language sources, especially the very types of dossiers in which the native-language documents are normally contained. These files sometimes include Spanish-language translations of native-language originals, which are extremely helpful guides for studying the written language, especially because trained, bilingual native-language speakers wrote most of the translations. In my opinion, not enough has been said about the extraordinary value of using both types of sources together. At the same time, we should not rely entirely on translations of native-language texts, because they often obscure or ignore important categories. For example, consider the language of a testament in 1621, which begins: “I, the man named Domingo Siyo, here in my *siqui* this [named] Chiyo, in my *yuhuitayu* this [named] Santa María Tiquihui" (“nduhu tay nani ndomingo siyo yaha siquindi chiyo yaha yuviteyundi sacta maria tiquihui yaha”). This one line was translated in 1779 as “I am called Diego de la

Cruz and I am a native of my pueblo Santa María Natividad Tamasulapa."[3] Thus the translator edited the original by changing the speaker's baptismal name from Domingo to Diego, inserting a Spanish surname (de la Cruz) in place of a native name (Siyo) based on the 260-day Mixtec calendar, omitting any reference to his siqui (term for a constituent part of a ñuu or community in the Teposcolula area) named Chiyo, reducing yuhuitayu (a ñuu represented by a dynastic lord) to "pueblo," and referring to Tiquihui by its Nahuatl-Spanish name (Tamasulapa) instead of its Mixtec name. One short line contains five major alterations. Sometimes these omissions or mistakes reveal an inability to recognize older categories, especially when the documents were translated long after the original was written, as in the example above. But in general, translators and legal officials simply were not interested in such details.

Most often, evidence submitted in civil legal cases consisted of a last will and testament. Nearly half of all known archival records written in Mixtec are testaments, written on behalf of high lords and nobles or commoners, both men and women. The corpus of Mixtec-language texts also includes personal inventories and letters, criminal records (reports, testimony, confessions), land transactions (transfers, sales, and lease agreements), sales of houses and businesses, personal business accounts and inventories, community fiscal accounts, election results, tribute records, petitions to Spanish authorities, official decrees, ecclesiastical records (marriages and baptisms), primordial titles, and the proceedings of a Mixtec cabildo investigating a land dispute. In addition to surviving archival texts in Oaxaca and Mexico City, there are several church-sponsored Mixtec-language published books and unpublished manuscripts, done mainly under the auspices of the Dominican order and now scattered across Mexico, Europe, and the United States.

It is no coincidence that the earliest native-language document that I found in the Judicial archive was a Nahuatl-language land record, accompanied by a pictorial component, written in the year 1551. Nahuas played a vital role as intermediaries between Spaniards and Mixtecs after the conquest. Nahuatl had functioned as a lingua franca even before contact and was widely understood among Mixtecs. The presence of Nahuas in the Mixteca and the importance of Mexico City as a colonial center is illustrated by another text from Texupa—the so-called Codex Sierra, a book of accounts that combines Nahua-language alphabetic text with pictorial writing for the period from 1550 to 1564.[4] Most Nahuatl-language documents from the Mixteca are early in date (sixteenth century), and most refer to non-Mixtec-speaking groups in the region (including Nahua, Chocho, Trique, Chatino, Cuicatec and Ixcatec groups) or areas peripheral to the Mixteca Alta. In the long run, Nahuatl-language writing prevailed only in areas where lesser known, minority languages were spoken and where there were Nahuatl-speaking minorities, especially in the Mixteca Baja and the northern

[3]AGN (Archivo General de la Nación), Tierras 1226: 3, f. 9.

[4]León 1933. I am working with Angeles Romero Frizzi and Bas van Doesburg on a facsimile edition, translation, and analysis of the Códice Sierra, which is held by the Biblioteca La Fragua of the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla.

perimeter of the region. Once Mixtecs began to learn Spanish after continuous contact, Nahuatl was no longer needed as an intermediary language. The prior existence of a philology in Nahuatl made it natural to use Nahuatl at first while the equivalent was being worked out for Mixtec and helps explain the somewhat later onset of Mixtec writing even in the core Mixtec areas. But Mixtec speakers chose to write in their own language whenever possible. And once Mixtec alphabetic writing took root, it displaced Nahuatl in all but the most peripheral areas of the Mixteca, where it is possible that some languages were never written during the colonial period.

The strength of the pictorial tradition further delayed the beginning of Mixtec-language alphabetic writing in the sixteenth century. The Postclassic pictorial tradition of writing in the Mixteca, exemplified by the many "codices" or screenfold manuscripts and *lienzos* from the region, continued into the colonial period. The strength of this tradition enabled Mixtec elites, *yya* and *yya dzehe* (called *caciques* and *cacicas* by Spaniards), to document their dynastic and territorial claims before authorities for several decades before the beginning of Mixtec-language alphabetic writing. But there are two other good reasons for the delay in writing Mixtec with the alphabet: the small number of friars in the region, and the difficulty of adapting the Roman alphabet to the speech of a tonal language with several regional variants. By comparison, Nahuatl alphabetic writing faced no such obstacles, aside from the question of marking glottal stop and vowel length. Nobody understood these problems better than the few Dominicans who worked closely with Mixtec male elites in the early period to publish the first alphabetic writings in the language. As fray Francisco de Burgoa observed, these early efforts "to write the words, and to learn how to pronounce them," were characterized by "serious difficulty and error."[5]

Aside from glosses on pictorial writings such as the Codex Columbino, the first example of Mixtec-language writing is the *Doctrina en lengua misteca*, compiled and published by fray Benito Hernández in 1567, and published again in 1568, only two months later, in another regional variant of the language, using the same font, format, and illustrations. The fact that it took so little time to publish a second version reflects the minimal perceived differences between the Achiutla and Teposcolula area variants, which are limited to some predictable phonetic and orthographic changes. The *Doctrina* represents the first extant example of alphabetic text written entirely in the Mixtec language (the book contains only a few lines of Spanish and Latin). The first copy consists of nearly 200 folios and is certain proof that Mixtec alphabetic writing had been developed by the 1560s.[6] The *Doctrina* was followed by the *Vocabulario en lengua mixteca* of fray

[5]Burgoa 1989a (I): 282.

[6]The Huntington Library in San Marino, California, owns copies of both the 1567 and 1568 works. The 1567 copy contains an additional five folios of handwritten addenda. The 1568 copy is slightly larger at 201 folios. The Biblioteca Francisco de Burgoa in Oaxaca and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France also own copies of the 1568 Doctrina. The production of church-sponsored texts written in the Mixtec language continued through the colonial period, albeit on a modest scale compared to similar Nahuatl-language materials.

Francisco de Alvarado and the *Arte en lengua mixteca* of fray Antonio de los Reyes, both published in 1593. In the prologue, Alvarado admitted that although the principal debt for the conception and compilation of his *Vocabulario* was owed to various friars, much of the work was actually done by unnamed "Indians, who are the best teachers and thus were the authors." We associate colonial native-language books with the names of the Spanish ecclesiastics who compiled them, but indigenous people obviously played a crucial role in the production of these texts. Spaniards determined the nature of the dictionary's Spanish-to-Mixtec entries, but Mixtecs composed, checked, and edited the final version. Unfortunately, the *Vocabulario* presents only Mixtec responses to Spanish entries, like the first edition of Molina's *Vocabulario en lengua mexicana*, printed in 1555. Whereas Molina's version was complemented in 1571 by a full Nahuatl-to-Spanish side, the Mixtec *Vocabulario* was never reversed.[7] And although the *Arte* by Reyes is extremely useful, it is brief compared to similar works written for Nahuatl, especially Horacio Carochi's *Arte de la lengua mexicana*.[8] In any case, the compilations of Reyes and Alvarado were the only instructional Mixtec-language texts published in the colonial period.[9]

The publication of church-sponsored texts coincided with the appearance of notarial records produced by Mixtec notaries (*escribanos*), male elites who were trained to record mundane affairs in their own communities. The *Doctrina* predates the earliest extant Mixtec-language notarial document by only four years, a

[7]Copies of the 1593 *Vocabulario* can be found at the Library of Congress, Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Biblioteca Palafoxiana. Jiménez Moreno's reprint of the *Vocabulario* in 1962 is an important contribution to the study of colonial Mixtec. Three years later, Arana Osnaya and Swadesh compiled a brief but useful dictionary of "Ancient Mixtec," featuring a Mixtec-to-Spanish section of about two thousand words, using Reyes, Alvarado, and word lists from modern language studies. See Jiménez Moreno 1962: 109–153; Arana and Swadesh 1965.

[8]I refer to the version of the Arte published by Charancey in Paris in 1889, based on the original 1593 edition, and later republished in 1976 by the Vanderbilt University Publications in Anthropology series. The Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Biblioteca Pública de Guadalajara hold copies of the 1593 *Arte*.

[9]Aside from the works mentioned above, there are several other church-sponsored Mixtec-language publications and manuscripts, including a catechism of 1584, owned by the Biblioteca de la Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, which is titled "Catecismo de la doctrina Christiana en la lengua Mixteca." This appears to be a version of the Dominican theologian fray Gerónimo Taix's work of 1576 on various aspects of Dominican history, cofradías, and the Virgin of Rosario. Judging by the spelling of many Spanish words, the manuscript was clearly written by a Mixtec. Another catechism was translated into Mixtec by fray Antonio González, curate of Nochistlan; it was published in Puebla in 1719 and again in 1755 and appears to be a version or summary of the catechism of fray Gerónimo de Ripalda. The Byron McAfee Collection of the UCLA Young Research Library has microfilm copies of both the 1584 and 1719 Mixtec-language works. For a translation of excerpts of the Taix manuscript, see Jansen 1998. Other works of the eighteenth century include an *Arte, Vocabulario y Manual* of Mixtec spoken in Guerrero by fray Miguel de Villavicencio in 1755, and the unpublished works of fray Antonio de Morales and fray Francisco Ortiz (Jiménez Moreno 1962: 99–103; Smith 1973: 23). A catechism was published in Puebla in 1837 under the title *Manual en lengua mixteca de ambos dialectos bajo y montañez*.

testament written in 1571 on behalf of the *cacica* of Yucucuihi (Tlazultepec), doña María López.[10] Among her collection of books, she possessed a "tutu dotrina" ("doctrina book"), probably a copy of Hernández' *Doctrina* of 1567, since both writings are from the same general area. In her will she asked fray Antonio de los Reyes, who would later write the *Arte* of 1593, to say masses on her behalf. Thus doña María knew some of the friars (the "zutu mani," "precious fathers") who played a prominent role in the development of writing in the area. By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, native scribes in cabeceras had learned how to use the alphabet. From that time onward, the basic phonetic transcriptions and orthographies that emerged from the sixteenth-century dialog between Dominicans and Mixtec elites persisted throughout much of the colonial period with minimal revision. Several surviving testaments predate the appearance of the *Vocabulario* and the *Arte* of 1593.

The testament was the first genre of alphabetic writing to be practiced within the indigenous community. Priests promoted the writing of testaments to account for a person's body and soul, to settle matters of debt and inheritance, and to leave something in passing to the church. But the testament also fulfilled a basic function of the earlier pictorial tradition in confirming kinship ties and hereditary rights, and hence property entitlement. Appropriately, the earliest extant Mixtec-language testament appears together with a precontact-style pictographic text, known as the Geneaology of Tlazultepec; the two writings were submitted as evidence in a legal dispute over property rights. In the early period, alphabetic writing complemented the pictorial tradition. Most of the earliest, extant testaments were written on behalf of high-ranking male yya and female yya dzehe. While elites continued to use pictorial records to document their patrimonial claims within indigenous circles and before Spanish officials, many caciques and cacicas must have recognized that testaments were more effective claims to lands and succession in the prevailing legal system than images that Spanish officials could not decipher. The importance of dynastic succession and the occasion for inheritance and property disputes made the writing of testaments indispensable for elites. The cabildo of Yanhuitlan made this fact clear in 1591 when it actively encouraged the writing of testaments and inventories with native notaries and witnesses to facilitate property transactions and to mitigate the frequency of property disputes, especially among nobles. The cabildo decreed that "nobles, traders, and merchants," speaking of the three in unison, should make their testaments with native notaries and witnesses.[11] Civil suits over property and debts relied on testaments and inventories to settle claims; a small fraction of these documents were filed with the records of civil suits in judicial archives. Some cases include multiple testaments, extending across several generations, as evidence of continuous possession.

Judging by the archival record, many long-distance traders from the Yanhuitlan area complied with the cabildo's orders. Most of these men were lesser nobles or *toho* whose adopted surnames reflect their relatively high status within native

[10]AGN, Tierras 59: 2.

[11]AGN, Inquisición 6.2: 176, f. 41.

society. Indigenous traders left a trail of documentation because they often kept written inventories of their goods, unlike local market sellers, and because they attempted to settle their accounts in their testaments.

Let me give some examples of the type of rich detail that is so typical of these texts. Francisco López of Sayultepec (near Yanhuitlan) was one of many men who transported woven goods to "Yutnucucha" (Guatemala) in return for cacao and other items. His wife, María Ñuquaa, helped to produce or supply part of his cargo.[12] Francisco also used his eight mules and two horses to carry goods for others; several people owed him a total of 720 pesos at the time of his death in 1595, including the Spanish alcalde mayor, the encomendero, and a few local nobles. He instructed his wife and executors to collect the debts.

Another Mixtec who traded clothing for dyes, feathers, and cacao in Guatemala was Gregorio García, who came from Santa María Ysquisuchitlan, a *ñuu* near Yanhuitlan. In his testament of 1621, which he was forced to make in Guatemala because of illness, he bequeathed 38 mules, a large quantity of clothing, quetzal feathers and feathered headdresses, and 18 arrobas of *ñuma* (wax) to his wife, Catalina Pérez.[13] Shortly after her husband's death, Catalina made her testament in Yanhuitlan; she owned 42 arrobas of wax, four plots of land, and a wide assortment of material goods and sacred images. Her testament includes a separate inventory of wax goods and accoutrements worth over 1,000 pesos. It is likely that Catalina was an intermediary in the local wax business, while her husband transported wax and other goods on mules to distant markets.

Sometimes Mixtec traders who fell ill on the road were forced to make their testaments in another language, particularly Nahuatl. For example, Martín Cortés transported woven goods to Guatemala in return for cacao and other items.[14] A toho from Santiago Istepec (called Tiyyu in Mixtec), he used seven mules to carry cloth and clothing belonging to him and his wife, Inés de Velasco, as well as goods belonging to the cacique of Istepec. In 1594, when he fell ill while en route to Guatemala, he made a Nahuatl-language testament in haste, arranging for his goods to be sent back to his home in the Mixteca Alta, near Yanhuitlan. His inventory of goods included dozens of *huipiles*, *tochomite* (rabbit fur), doublets, and many *varas* of blue cloth. Martín's testament indicates that he and his wife kept their finances separately; in fact, he owed her 40 pesos at the time of his death. He divided his movable goods between his wife and his daughter from a previous marriage; witnesses in Tiyyu, in the *siña* (term for subunit of a ñuu in the Yanhuitlan area) of Titnee, affirmed that Inés took possession of cloth and clothing valued at 697 pesos. Martín also possessed four houses and some forty pieces of land.

In the first half of the colonial period, some women profited from a high demand for traditional and introduced types of cloth. Lucía Hernández Ñuquihui (6-Crocodile), from the siqui of Dzumañuu in Teposcolula, was involved in this trade. An inventory of her estate in 1633 shows that she possessed thirteen plots

[12]AJT (Archivo Judicial de Teposcolula), Civil 1: 161.
[13]AJT, Civil 2: 188.
[14]AJT, Civil 1: 161 bis. He made his testament in Nahuatl in a place called San Pedro and San Pablo Xiquipilan.

of land (six purchased), and a large quantity of yarn and weavings, including sixteen pounds of white cotton thread (*yuhua cuisi*), eleven pounds of woolen yarn (*yuhua ticachi*), and many types of cloth and clothing.[15] Lucía's list of possessions resembles the inventory of a store, though she apparently ran the business out of her house or in the marketplace. Not counting the value of her textiles, her lands, or her houses, her cash assets from sales and credits amounted to nearly 500 pesos; also, six Mixtec men and women owed her money for loans. It is no coincidence that Lucía's late husband was a long-distance trader who owned several mules; he probably conveyed her products to distant markets. Typically, she kept and bequeathed her own property and money separately from her husband's lands and mules.

Outside the marketplace, some toho ran small stores or traveled locally to sell their wares. For example, the testament of Miguel Jiménez reveals that he ran a *huahi tienda* or "store house" near the center of Yanhuitlan in 1621.[16] He counted on the help of two African slaves to run the store. A book of accounts kept by a toho trader in the mid-eighteenth century provides a closer look at this local trade. Juan Ramírez' accounts, dated from 1740 to 1758, document transactions with men and women who bought, bartered, and sold a variety of goods, including *fanegas* of wheat and maize, soap, books, clothing, wool, shoes, and even religious items, such as crucifixes, paintings (lienzos), and reliquaries.[17] The value and volume of his trade was relatively modest. The bilingual entries in his 68-page book represent how Juan served a multiethnic clientele.

One of Juan's clients was his compadre, Sebastián Sánchez Hernández, another toho from Yanhuitlan (from the siña called Tindee). Sebastián's 38-page testament and inventory, covering the years from 1754 to 1758, overlaps with Juan's book of accounts.[18] Apparently, Sebastián and his son carried on a local resale trade in cloth and other goods. His estate, valued at nearly 3,000 pesos, included a wide variety of imported and local items. He qualified the term for cloth, *dzama,* with the term *ñudzahui* to distinguish local cloth from imported cloth associated with Brittany or Britain, Germany, China (most likely through the Philippines), Castile, Venice, Guadalajara, Puebla, and Cholula. Nevertheless, much of his wealth was derived from the 43 tracts of land he possessed (eight purchased), four houses, two *jacales*, two horses, and six yokes of oxen. Sebastián resembles some of the wealthy traders from the earlier period, but he did not own a single mule.

By now we can see that the testaments and inventories in this collection of Mixtec-language documents contain a great deal of information on the landholdings, wealth, and activities of yya and toho. But the record represents a broad cross-section of local society, including many common folk or *ñandahi* as well. Although they were far more numerous than elites, commoners do not appear as

[15]AJT, Civil 3: 287.

[16]AJT, Civil 2: 243.

[17]AJT, Civil 12: 1029. Unfortunately, a lack of any supporting documentation obscures the nature of his work and the origin of his goods. Apparently, the legal records to which the document belongs were filed separately, removed, or lost.

[18]AJT, Civil 15: 1232. This lengthy testament and inventory is not accompanied by any supporting documentation or translation.

often as elites in the extant corpus of Mixtec-language testaments until the second half of the colonial period. Most ñandahi can be recognized at a glance. Take, for example, a man from Yucunama named Pedro de San Pablo. In 1690, he bequeathed to his wife nothing more than a house and "everything inside and in back of the house."[19] Pedro specified that when his wife died, their two sons were to divide the house and movable property among them. Compared to Pedro, Petronilla de la Cruz was a well-to-do commoner who sold two small plots of land (one planted in magueys) and a chest filled with clothes to pay for her burial and masses in 1627.[20] Her remaining property consisted of a house, one cultivable field (*ytu*), three strips of land (*coo*) and three metates.

The testaments of Pascuala María and Nicolás Miguel, commoners from Chinduhua, represent the extreme within this group. Neither Pascuala nor Nicolás had any land or property and, in fact, their testaments were little more than brief pious statements. They went through the motions of giving money to various saints, while the notary recorded zeros next to their mock offerings. Nothing more is known about these two humble ñandahi, who probably were landless dependents.[21] One would not expect to find two such testaments in a judicial dispute over land, mainly because these poor people had no land to claim or defend. In fact, the documents were filed in the judicial archive for an unusual reason. When one Juan Francisco was accused of having forged a land sale record in 1776, allegedly signed by a former notary of San Francisco Chinduhua named Pedro de San Pablo, the alcalde mayor ordered local authorities to produce official documents written by the deceased notary in order to compare the signature on the land sale in question with the notary's verified signature. The testaments of Pascuala and Nicolás, written in 1730 and 1737, respectively, were used for the comparison. But the documents were not related to the case in any other way. The fact that landless commoners are uncommon in my collection of wills, derived mainly from judicial archives, reflects the bias toward propertied people in the judicial record.

Dependents who lived in others' households, the type of commoners least likely to be represented in the record, do appear now and then in testaments from the region. Their presence confirms the enduring role played by dependents in Mixtec households throughout the colonial period. Some testators made some provision for dependents in their wills by virtue of a general tendency to bequeath something to everybody. In the absence of the usual heirs, especially children, dependents might receive a house and lands. More likely, dependents inherited a small amount of land, a few magueys, or movable property such as clothing. For example, in 1728, Lázaro de Aranda of Yanhuitlan divided his estate of multiple lands and houses among his wife and two daughters. Before closing his testament, he addressed a man named Nicolás de Santiago, called "my son, a person whom I have raised" ("codayanju chay nidacuanunju").[22] It could be that people like

[19]AJT, Civil 7: 689, ff. 7–8.

[20]AJT, Civil 4: 400, ff. 3–3v.

[21]AJT, Civil 14: 1124.

[22]AJT, Civil 7: 686, ff. 12–13. In this case, the *dz* of the Teposcolula area was pronounced as *d* in Yanhuitlan, especially in the late colonial period, so that *dzaya* is written as "daya" and *nidza-* is written as "nida-."

Nicolás were illegitimate children of nobles, but the use of *dzaya* may be more symbolic than literal, for many people often referred to their dependents as children. A term for poor commoners, *dzaya dzana*, combines the word for child with "orphan." In any case, Nicolás received a small patch of land, 20 magueys, and a "torito" (young bull). Similarly, in 1610 a dependent named Andrés Pérez Sicuañe, who lived with a toho from Topiltepec, received a yoke of oxen.[23]

The testament was only one of many native-language writing genres established by the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The criminal record is another rich and revealing genre of documentation that represented a wide spectrum of social types. When a serious crime such as homicide was committed, the nearest cabildo officials investigated the crime, made arrests if possible, and sent the Spanish alcalde mayor a brief written report of the crime. Sometimes native officials recorded confessions or statements from victims and suspects. More than forty criminal dossiers from the Mixteca Alta contain Mixtec-language writings, revealing a wide range of terminology for concepts related to crime, justice, and punishment.

One fine example of a criminal record from San Andrés Chalcatongo contains three Mixtec-language testimonies about an attempted homicide involving two men and a woman in 1581.[24] The text is a riveting "archival narrative" of adultery and sexuality, as told by commoners in their own language. María, at the tender age of twenty, tried to convince Andrés, who was only 15 years old, to kill her husband, Agustín. One night in October, when Agustín was tending to his fields, sleeping in a jacal about two leagues from town, María and Andrés set out with a knife to attack him in his sleep. But when young Andrés entered the shack, he fumbled the knife and awakened Agustín. The two men fought as María stood by until Agustín escaped and fled, badly wounded. The two met again on the way back to town and exchanged words of remorse; Andrés offered to give Agustín the shirt off his back, while the men who had come to help them sat and ate tortillas. The testimonies were taken immediately after the crime because authorities feared that the men might not survive their wounds. Indeed, Agustín died ten days later. María confessed that the devil had tricked her into killing her husband; Andrés claimed to have been drunk and had no recollection of anything. María and Andrés were awaiting their fate in prison, their bond set at 20 pesos, when the incomplete record of the proceedings comes to an end.

A rather extreme example of how writers put the alphabet to multiple uses is the text of Pedro de Caravantes, a toho from Yanhuitlan who killed his wife and pinned a murder note to her body before fleeing from the community in 1684.[25] Pedro produced a three-page letter in his language, addressed to both "Ñudzahui" and Spanish officials because he knew that both sets of officials would be involved in the homicide investigation. Testimony from the murder investigation alleged that the victim, a mestiza, had written letters to her alleged lover, a sacristan of the church. In his note, Pedro claimed to have caught his wife with

[23]AJT, Civil 8: 705.
[24]AJT, Criminal 1: 35.
[25]AJT, Criminal 5: 581. See Terraciano 1998 for a transcription, translation, and analysis of this document.

her lover more than once; when he caught them last on Good Friday, he ripped the sacristan's cloak from his back as he fled the scene. After killing his wife, Pedro wrapped her body in this confiscated cloak, tied her up in the manner of a preconquest funerary *bulto*, and stuck the note to the cloak. The note, then, is the first document in the dossier resulting from the investigation, which was filed in the judicial archive. The case gives us a glimpse into local attitudes toward adultery and domestic violence. Pedro appealed to Spanish custom and law, which might have exonerated an individual killing a spouse if provoked by rage. Thus, the trial held in his absence focused on this alleged act of adultery. Despite the testimony of many witnesses who claimed that the affair was public knowledge, the sacristan's wife came to her husband's rescue by confirming his place by her side every night, and the case ends with Pedro a fugitive from justice.

A more common form of correspondence was the personal letter. One example, written in 1572, is preserved in the national archive today because it concerned the possession of a contested plot of land. The lord of San Juan Bautista Tiyta (Atoyaquillo), don Diego de Guzmán, wrote a letter to nobles in Tlaxiaco in response to a verbal or written message they had sent him about some land.[26] This practice may have been fairly widespread among the literate nobility, but personal letters rarely appear in archives. Usually, one sees only indirect references to the practice: for example, in 1622, Francisco Pérez mentioned that he had delivered letters written by the cacique of Chalcatongo to his nephew in Miltepec.[27] Mixtecs also wrote letters to Spanish officials. In 1671, an alcalde of Santa Cruz Chalcatongo wrote to the alcalde mayor in Teposcolula that nobody in his community could understand a letter in Spanish that they had received from Mexico City. He informed the Spanish official that his cabildo intended to send a delegation to Teposcolula, bearing presents for him and the notary.[28]

In turn, Spanish officials relied on native-language writing for their daily business. In 1579, the alcalde mayor of Teposcolula sent a Mixtec-language letter to the cabildo of Achiutla about a thief who had looted the church sacristy.[29] Native officials from Achiutla responded to the plain words of the letter in their own refined and reverential language. Spanish alcaldes mayores also had *mandamientos* distributed and read aloud in the cabeceras of the Mixteca. One of these decrees, written in the regional variant of Teposcolula in 1616, called for the provision of labor to build a military fort in the port of Acapulco.[30]

These letters, notes, and decrees demonstrate that Mixtec-language writing served multiple functions in this period. In 1658, Juana de Zárate relied on a bill of sale to document her late husband's purchase in 1618 of a blacksmith's shop in the plaza of Teposcolula, with an attached inventory of the forge. The bill is a semi-formal written agreement between two native nobles; the document was translated for the alcalde mayor by the cacique of Teposcolula, don Francisco

[26]AGN, Tierras 57: 2.
[27]AGN, Tierras 637: 1, f. 68.
[28]AJT, Civil 4: 405.
[29]AJT, Criminal 1:16.
[30]AJT, Civil 2: 215. When some communities claimed that they could not understand the mandamiento, the alcalde mayor sent a bilingual Spaniard to explain it.

Pimentel y Guzmán, who could read and write both Spanish and Mixtec.[31] In contrast to such mundane matters, a gathering of prestigious lords from Chalcatongo and Miltepec came to Teposcolula in 1622 to arrange a marriage by church dispensation between don Diego de Velasco y Arellano and his cousin doña Micaela de la Cueva. The meeting produced a lengthy text on the hereditary qualifications of the caciques, and a discourse on marriage written in the form of a dialogue.[32] Priests presided over the ceremony while the native fiscal (church steward) drew up the document inside the entrance to the church. Local churches must have produced many writings of this nature, but I have failed to find many Mixtec-language texts in parish archives, the main exception being a book of baptismal records from Teposcolula in the mid-seventeenth century.[33]

The number of Mixtec-language documents in my collection increases during the period from the 1670s to the mid-eighteenth century, as many former *sujetos* or subject towns achieved independence from their cabeceras in this period and began to generate their own corporate writings, and as demographic renewal and increasing pressure on land generated more legal documentation of civil disputes. One case from Yanhuitlan, recorded in 1681, is especially interesting. Representatives of two siña called Ayusi and Yuhuyucha presented complaints to the cabildo of Yanhuitlan over some disputed lands. The notaries of the cabildo recorded its internal proceedings over the disputed land, complete with presentations, petitions, notifications, testimonies, and decrees. The document features twelve pages of Mixtec-language text and a supporting native-language testament from 1642, adopting the Spanish legal process for land disputes in the absence of Spaniards. Cabildo members sought to resolve their own disputes involving corporate landholdings without involving Spaniards.

In this case, the dispute focused on the question of whether the lands belonged to one of the siña or to the palace of a lord. Finally, people from Ayusi found a testament that indicated that the lands in question belonged to the governor of Yanhuitlan, don Domingo de San Pablo Alvarado, and dropped their claim. But they also spoiled the claim of the siña of Yuhuyucha, whose members were working the disputed land. Representatives of Yuhuyucha threatened to continue their claim when they informed the members of the cabildo: "If all our lords do not wish to do as we request, we ask all the officials to permit us to present testimonies, petitions, decrees, and testaments before the lord alcalde mayor so that he may see our concern here." Indeed, this case did go before Spanish officials, and that is why it is preserved in the judicial archive. Here we are reminded that there were two levels of local justice in the colonial period, and factions within a community could and did resort to involving Spanish officials, even when the matter did not involve Spaniards.[34]

[31]AJT, Civil 3: 366.

[32]AGN, Tierras 637: 1, ff. 66-73.

[33]The Mormon Family History Library in Salt Lake City has microfilm copy of native-language baptismal registers from San Pedro y San Pablo Teposcolula and San Juan Teposcolula, in the Mixteca Alta.

[34]This lengthy case from the Mixteca is comparable to a Nahuatl document of 1746 from Amecameca, in which the native cabildo carried out civil proceedings in 1746 in the absence of Spaniards (Karttunen and Lockhart 1978). The 1681 case from Yanhuitlan is discussed at length in Terraciano 2001 and is transcribed and translated in the appendix.

By the eighteenth century, many smaller places were keeping extensive written records. For example, the community of Santiago Yolomecatl submitted many pages from its book of accounts and expenses for the years 1704 and 1705 in response to an accusation of the misuse of funds.[35] This document served a function similar to that of the Codex Sierra (written from 1550 to 1564), but it was written entirely in Mixtec and contains no pictorial portion. The *libro de cuentas* features an extensive vocabulary and records many practices in a community that are not seen in other types of documentation.

A genre of Mesoamerican writing typical of the later colonial period is the so-called *título primordial*. Beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century, indigenous writers produced what they considered to be approximations of early colonial Spanish land titles and maps in order to maintain or extend claims to landholdings on behalf of a community or a particular group. The authors typically dated the manuscripts to around the time of the Spanish conquest in order to demonstrate continuous possession. Many titles contain pictorial portions which attempt to recreate the style and function of the ancient writing tradition, although most rely primarily on alphabetic writing to make their claims before Spanish officials.

I know of only one Mixtec-language title, which consists of eleven pages of alphabetic text and a painting.[36] A group from San Juan Chapultepec, in the Valley of Oaxaca, claimed that they had found the ancient document, which was dated 1523. They produced the title in 1696 in response to a Nahuatl-language title, dated 1525, which members of the neighboring community of San Martín Mexicapan had presented to Spanish officials. Thus Chapultepec trumped its neighbor's claim to antiquity by two years. These dates are impossible; if the document were from 1523 it would predate the earliest extant example of Mixtec alphabetic writing by nearly half a century. And the "pintura y mapa," as the authors referred to the pictorial portion of their title, contains many anachronistic images. Nonetheless, the painting employs certain conventions typical of codices, lienzos, and mapas from the earlier period. The alphabetic text explains that Chapultepec's claims were recognized in 1523 by their adversaries, the Mexica of San Martín Mexicapan, a satellite group from central Mexico who settled in the Valley of Oaxaca when they accompanied the Spaniards as allies in the 1520s. Thus Chapultepec's title attempted to demonstrate that the two communities had forged an agreement in 1523, and that Mexicapan had reneged on the agreement by the 1690s, when the title was produced. Chapultepec's strategy of transmitting a historical narrative through images and alphabetic text reveals much about change and continuity in Mixtec-language writing by the end of the seventeenth century.

Ironically, once the practice of alphabetic writing was widespread enough to extend across the entire region, many members of the native elite had already begun to use Spanish. Some caciques and cacicas had their wills made in Spanish

[35]AJT, Civil 6: 568. Similar types of accounts exist for: San Pedro Topiltepec (1707) AJT, Civil 6:578; for San Bartolomé Tiyacu (1701) AJT, Criminal 6: 675; and for Santo Domingo Yanhuitlan (1677) AJT, Criminal 6: 644.

[36]AGN, Tierras 236: 6. See Sousa and Terraciano 2003 for a translation of both titles.

as early as the late sixteenth century. Don Gabriel de Guzmán, the bilingual cacique and yya toniñe of Yanhuitlan for more than three decades, issued his testament in Spanish in 1591. Doña María de Paredes, a widowed noblewoman from Teposcolula who claimed to know Spanish, made her testament in that language with the assistance of a translator in 1585.[37] Some men and women preferred to have their will written in Spanish even when they did not know the language; doña Micaela de la Cruz, cacica of Teposcolula in 1738, had her testament made by a Spanish notary through the translator Juan Carrillo.[38]

This practice became more common by the late colonial period, when it was no longer restricted to yya and toho. In 1788, for example, a humble soul named Mateo Barrios issued his own testament in Castilian, even though eight other testaments from his ñuu of Atlatlauca that year were written in Mixtec, including his father's. The Spanish was so awkward that it needed to be translated when presented as evidence in a land dispute.[39] The document was obviously written by a Mixtec-language speaker; among many grammatical mistakes, the author confuses singular and plural throughout the document, as in the phrase "dios padre, dios hijos, dios espiritu son tres persona." Likewise, Matías Bautista of Tamasulapa made his testament in Spanish in 1721, whereas all five of his preceding relatives had made theirs in Mixtec.[40] In 1784, María López of Santa Catarina Adequez first made her will in Mixtec, and then changed her mind and made it a few days later in Castilian.[41] Again, the Spanish in her second testament was clearly written by a Mixtec speaker, considering the use of "mungeres" for *mujer*, "boniete" for *poniente*, "tiquiclato" for *tequitlato*, and "quanreta," "quarreta," and "quanrenta" for *quarenta* (as *cuarenta* was then spelled).

The alternation between writing in Castilian and in Mixtec reflected increasing bilingualism by the later period. Documents written in Spanish by native hands often betray the first language of their authors. When a notary of Yanhuitlan wrote the testament of Juan de la Cruz in Spanish, he continued to use Mixtec place names instead of their Nahuatl/Spanish versions.[42] When two noblewomen from Yanhuitlan initiated a suit in 1674, the resulting proceedings went back and forth between Mixtec and Castilian, much of it written by the same notary.[43] Juan Ramírez, the itinerant trader from Yanhuitlan who kept a book of his accounts from 1740 to 1758, wrote in his native language and in Spanish, depending on the language of his clients.[44] Even the author of the native-language murder note from Yanhuitlan, discussed above, attempted to close his letter with three lines of awkward Spanish. As native-language writing became more widespread, Spanish

[37]AGN, Tierras 400: 1; AJT-Civil 1: 90, ff. 9-10. In these cases, all lands and place names were still listed in Mixtec.

[38]AJT, Civil 10: 847.

[39]AJT, Civil 16: 1303.

[40]AJT, Civil 10: 838. The other related documentation is dated 1634, 1648, 1656, 1665, and 1687.

[41]Five nicely written testaments are included in this case from Santa Catarina Adequez (dated 1776, 1798, 1784, 1789, 1800). Four are written on behalf of women. AJT, Civil 18: 1516, f. 51.

[42]AJT, Civil 4: 458. In the year 1673.

[43]AJT, Civil 13: 1109. Again, the Mixtec-language text is full of loan vocabulary.

[44]AJT, Civil 12: 1029.

came to be a viable second language of communication in communities with growing Spanish-speaking populations.

Those who chose to write in Spanish may have responded directly or indirectly to prejudices against native-language writing. In 1708, the same year when don Agustín Carlos Pimentel y Guzmán, cacique of Teposcolula, wrote and signed a document in Spanish concerning his title to a piece of land, Juan de la Cruz and María de Osorio of Yolomecatl presented a document which they avowed was legitimate "even though it is written in the Ñudzahui language."[45] Legal writings in Spanish became more expedient in the late colonial period. The function and content of the writing remained essentially the same, but switching to the official language was a matter of prestige and security. By the mid-eighteenth century, some Spanish officials had begun to question the validity of using testaments as legal instruments for documenting property possession. In a lengthy dispute between the native cabildo of Yanhuitlan and its caciques over possession of the royal palace, the Royal Audiencia judge expressed doubt as to whether testaments, submitted by the caciques to document continuous possession, represented valid legal instruments in lieu of official titles, even though earlier titles were based mainly on those same testaments.[46] In 1759 the judge ruled against the caciques, despite their impressive collection of testaments dating back to the mid-sixteenth century. The ruling seems to reflect changing Spanish attitudes toward native writings as legal documents.

If the testament was the first genre of alphabetic writing produced within indigenous communities, it was also the most conservative and enduring. More than three-fourths of all extant Mixtec-language documents dated after 1700 are testaments, whereas testaments for the entire colonial period represent less than half of all documentation. In the later period, these testaments appeared from areas not represented in the earlier period, written on behalf of a broad segment of society; these documents tend to focus simply on bequests of property and do not follow an elaborate formula. By this time the testament was a genre of writing not directly associated with the corporate community. Whereas all indigenous genres generated by the native cabildo were eventually superseded by Spanish, the testament became more of a private document, written outside of the cabildo's purview. These late colonial documents typically bear the signatures of only one or two witnesses, unlike the lists of names attached to testaments of the early period. The immediate audience was personal, conforming more to the Spanish model.[47]

On the other hand, some Mixtec-language testaments from the late colonial period are beautifully written texts signed by members of the entire cabildo; such documents usually come from remote, smaller communities where an upper group of males was actively involved in native-language writing. In general, the language itself betrays less Spanish influence than elsewhere. For those writers who

[45]AJT, Civil 6: 586.

[46]AGN, Tierras 400: 1, f. 382.

[47]For example, the testament of Nicolasa María of Chilapa (written in 1764) is very brief, contains little religious formula, and is little more than a simple listing of lands and goods. Appropriately, the case includes two testaments of relatives that were written later (1776 and 1787), both in Spanish. AJT, Civil 18: 1564.

came into close contact with Spanish speakers, the tradition evolved more along a Spanish model until Spanish eventually took over as the language of legal discourse. Castilian writing gradually supplanted Mixtec-language writing in the more prominent cabeceras, where writing first appeared. More peripheral communities practiced native-language writing later and continued the tradition longer, so that most documentation from the late eighteenth century is from more remote communities, such as Atlatlauca and Adequez. The testament of Casimiro de los Santos, written in Tonaltepec in the year 1807, was signed by the entire cabildo. Although it is the latest extant sample of Mixtec-language writing which I have seen (aside from a few church-sponsored materials from the nineteenth century), its neat prose and honorific vocabulary defy the notion of a dying tradition.[48]

Today, Mixtecan languages are no longer spoken in many of the communities where writing flourished in the colonial period. Many of these pueblos are situated along the highway from Mexico City to Oaxaca, the road running through the Mixteca that opened much of the region to contact with Spanish-speakers. On the other hand, colonial documentation exists for many communities where the language is still spoken today, places that are represented in the documentary record in the later period. In areas of close cultural contact, writing in Spanish became more expedient for legal purposes, much as native-language alphabetic writing had proven more suitable than paintings two centuries earlier. Mixtec communities and individuals innovated and adapted by necessity in order to defend their restricted rights within the Spanish legal system; the adoption of Castilian writing reflects greater changes within the indigenous community, in the presence of an ever-growing Spanish-speaking population.

Mixtec-Language Texts as Historical Sources

Native-language writings make repeated references to indigenous categories and concepts which in many ways are valid for the immediate preconquest and postconquest periods. Inventing new categories, if Spanish-influenced, normally involved the extension of an existing word to the new concept, in which meaning was extended by metaphor or identification, or it relied on the use of a Spanish loanword. Mixtec escribanos continued to refer to fundamental tradtional concepts when they wrote documents and letters intended primarily for other native speakers. Some categories faded or disappeared by the time native-language writing was fully developed, such as slaves taken in warfare, but few totally new or transformed categories appear in the texts. Most new categories, concepts, and items can be identified readily as literal translations of Spanish words into Mixtec, such as *dzini ñuu*, "head town," for *cabecera*. Another and doubtless older strategy for handling introduced phenomena was to extend an existing word to the new concept, applying *ydzu*, "deer," to the horse and mule, for example, and *ydzundeque*, "horned deer," to oxen. Yet another strategy was to extend a known equivalent and to use the word *castilla* to modify the new item, such as *tiñoo castilla* (Castilian turkey) for a chicken. Thus, terms for introductions, documenting the process of translation from one language to the other,

[48]AJT, Civil 18: 1578.

tend to stand out in the early colonial vocabularies. It is noteworthy that all of these strategies are virtually identical to those adopted by Nahuatl for the same purpose and at an earlier time. Whether the Nahuatl mechanisms influenced those of Mixtec or were merely parallel remains to be seen.

One concept that stands out especially in writings from the Mixteca Alta and the Valley of Oaxaca is the repeated use of the self-ascribed term *ñudzavi* or *ñudzahui* (pronounced *nu sawi* or *nu ꞔawi*), meaning "place of rain" or "place of the rain deity." The Ñudzahui equivalent of the Nahua rain deity, Tlaloc, was named Dzavi or Dzahui in the Mixteca.[49] Writers used this term to refer to people, their language, the region, communities, and artifacts associated with the culture area. I have examined how specific social and cultural contexts influenced an individual's use of the term to address broader issues of ethnicity and identity. I have observed the term "ñudzahui" in the earliest and latest native-language texts from the colonial period, whereas I did not find the Nahuatl-derived term "Mixtec" used in any of the same texts. The English "Mixtec" and the Spanish "Mixteco" come from "Mixteca," the plural form of the Nahuatl *mixtecatl*, meaning "people of the cloud place," a term first assigned to the people of this region by Nahuas and then reiterated and reinforced by Spaniards. Today, many native-language speakers from the area continue to use their own original term, pronounced and spelled many different ways, in reference to themselves and their language.

The existing corpus of Ñudzahui-language texts lends itself to the study of general patterns in the Mixteca rather than of the microhistory of a community. Centers of Spanish activity, especially the colonial cabecera*s* of the Mixteca Alta, are better represented than smaller sujeto communities, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although these writings come from many different ñuu, the repetition of familiar cultural patterns and conceptual vocabulary in all three subregions of the Mixteca has allowed me to generalize about the Mixteca as a whole; the corpus is diverse and manageable enough to observe patterns across the entire region, even though most of the sources were written in the western and central parts of the Mixteca Alta. Indigenous terminology for an entire range of cultural categories, from sociopolitical organization to land tenure, appears in native-language documentation from the Alta, Baja, and Valley. In the

[49] "Ñudzahui" is a commonly attested form of the word in native-language writings from the colonial period, even though some friars who studied the language and who attempted to develop and promote a standardized orthography in the Mixteca Alta distinguished *vui* from *hui* and wrote *dzavui* instead of *dzahui*. Fray Antonio de los Reyes, author of the *Arte en lengua mixteca* (discussed below), described the pronunciation of *vu* as "striking both the letters vu so that only one is heard clearly and distinctly." This sound approximates [w]. According to this scheme, *vu* plus a vowel was distinguished from *hu* plus a vowel in that the latter marked a medial glottal stop before [w]. However, more often than not, the distinction between *hu* and *vu* made by Reyes and Alvarado was either unknown or ignored by many native writers (and by fray Benito Hernández in the first edition of his *Doctrina christiana en la lengua mixteca*, also discussed below). In any case, I have found that most native writers from the Mixteca Alta wrote *dzahui* for "rain" or the "rain deity." The phonetic value of *dz* ranged from [d] to [ꞔ], depending on dialect area. This term, spelled and pronounced many different ways, is still used by many Mixtecan speakers in reference to themselves, as it was in the colonial period.

course of my research, I did observe and note local differences in texts from dozens of different communities, but the variation did not alter general regional and crossregional patterns that emerged from a close reading of multiple texts written from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

To keep track of and take notes on these documents, I built a simple database using Filemaker Pro. I created a file for each document with separate fields for when and where it was written, where it is archived, and the length and condition of the document. I noted the legal genre of the record, the title of the case in which it was located, the names of the people and notaries involved, its relation to any other documents, and whether I had a photocopy of the original. As I went along, I placed detailed observations on each document in a large "notes" field, referring to a separate Word document if the notes exceeded a couple of pages in length. And I assigned one or more subject headings to each document, so that I could search and sort the documentation by all of these fields, calling up all records that had anything to do with trade, for example, and then sorting them by time and place. And I could search for individuals or social groups. My subject headings consisted of several broad topics or key concepts that became chapter or section headings in my book. After a while, key concepts included Ñudzahui-language terms (such as *siqui, yya, tniño, toniñe, aniñe* and *ñudzahui*), representing prominent words and categories found in the native-language documentation. These were the major topics that emerged after reading hundreds of documents.

I used the writings to identify and address changes in each of these broad topics from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, beginning with the topic of writing itself. Not content to leave the study of images to other disciplines, and knowing that the images and iconographic symbols of pictorial texts constituted a form of writing, I studied numerous pictorial manuscripts and examined the transition from pictorial to alphabetic writing from the early to the later period. Fortunately, I could turn to a rich literature on pictorial texts from the Mixteca, from the works of Alfonso Caso and Maarten Jansen to Mary Elizabeth Smith, John Pohl, and Elizabeth Boone, to mention only a few. I read native-language alphabetic glosses on some manuscripts that corresponded to images and events, and my knowledge of the language enabled me to make sense of several glyphs and iconographic conventions in pictorial texts. For example, I had seen the term *yuhuitayu* over and over again in documents, spelled in many different ways, in reference to a place. I wondered what it meant, since the most common term for a place was and still is *ñuu* (and today no native speaker seems to have heard of a yuhuitayu), until I saw a glyph common in the codices and in so many other postconquest pictorial writings—namely, a married couple seated together on a reed mat (*yuhui*), a symbol of authority in Mesoamerican iconography. The couplet has an expanded potential meaning in that *tayu* can mean "couple" or "seat," depending on tone. Native-language documents used the term in reference to communities involved in these royal alliances.

To cite another example of how the study of language can shed light on pictorial texts, I found that some glyphs in the Nahuatl-language text called the Codex Sierra (1550–1564) corresponded to the Mixtec language, in addition to the fact that the alphabetic text contained several Mixtec words in reference to the

Ñudzahui version of the Mesoamerican calendar.

The writings abound with information on the language and its regional variants in this period, orthographic differences, and the special conventions and lexical differences of the older, honorific register or "lordly (yya) speech." I used both church-sponsored texts and archival documents to distinguish regional variants; I analyzed the Mixtec *Vocabulario* and *Arte* of 1593 as sources on the language, compiled by friars who relied on bilingual native participants. I used the *Vocabulario* to explore the range of terminology for a concept, as it was defined at the end of the sixteenth century, comparing the entries in this synthetic work with terminology in the mundane, archival documentation. I observed at least five distinct regional variants of the language represented by the corpus of extant texts, confirming many of the observations that Reyes had made in his *Arte* at the end of the sixteenth century. Documents from the Mixteca Alta reveal three variants, in and around Teposcolula, Yanhuitlan, and Tlaxiaco. The Mixteca Baja, around Huajuapan, constitutes a fourth variant; the fifth is the Valley of Oaxaca, around Cuilapan. Fortunately, most of the records are from the well-documented Mixteca Alta, around Teposcolula and Yanhuitlan, where the *Doctrina*, *Arte*, and *Vocabulario* were produced, and where variant orthographies based on phonetic differences were normally quite predictable. Documents from the Mixteca Baja are more challenging, however, in their phonetic and lexical differences from writings in the Alta. A lack of documentation from the Valley, which resembles in many ways the variant around Yanhuitlan, prevented further study.[50]

The corpus is extensive enough to assess the impact of Spanish on Mixtec across time. I had an excellent model for this study in the work of Lockhart and Karttunen on the effect of Spanish on Nahuatl. I found that the three stages of language contact phenomena for the adoption of Spanish by Nahuatl-speakers also applied to the Mixteca, although the timing was more gradual and extent of change less pervasive. I observed local and regional variation, too. For example, the cabeceras of the region, where Mixtec notaries had begun to write in Spanish by the second half of the eighteenth century, also showed the most evidence of language change by incorporating numerous Spanish loanwords, phrases, and conventions of speech. It is no coincidence that people who live in most of these former cabeceras today no longer speak a Mixtecan language, suggesting the long-term impact of cultural contact with Spanish speakers, who were clustered in selected centers of Spanish administration and trade, on the indigenous and mixed-race populations of the region.

Beyond my interest in the timing, form, function, and language of the texts, I used the documentation as a source of information for several interrelated and overlapping topics, including the social and political organization of communities, as they were defined and organized from both indigenous and Spanish perspectives. More than any other entity or organization, the Ñudzahui corporate community stands out in these sources. I noted every reference to a sociopolitical

[50]I also benefited from modern linguistic studies by Kenneth Pike, Barbara Hollenbach, and Kathryn Josserand, among others, and consultations with native speakers of Mixtecan languages from the Mixteca Alta, especially Aurora Pérez, Ubaldo López and Juan Caballero. I am also grateful for Pamela Munro's comments on some of my data.

entity that I found, observing how people referred to the places in which they lived, and trying to understand how Spaniards understood or perceived the same places by reading the Spanish-language documentation, which often involved comparing an original Mixtec-language document with its translation. I did this across time and region, noting local differences and changes whenever possible. Before too long, I realized that I had entered a labyrinth of complexity which defied descriptions of sociopolitical organization in the existing literature on the topic. What I found resembled recent findings for the Nahuas, which made sense to me, considering the proximity of the two culture regions and the history of interaction between central Mexico and the Mixteca, especially in the Postclassic period.

I identified the Mixtec equivalent of the Nahua altepetl, the *ñuu*. Many of these ñuu were divided into smaller constituent subunits (called *siqui*, *siña*, and *dzini* in the areas of Teposcolula, Yanhuitlan, and the Mixteca Baja, respectively). This basic structure existed throughout the Mixteca. I kept files on each ñuu for which I had found references to named subunits, and I tried to track the number of these units across time. I found a few lists of named units in the record, but in most cases I sifted for references to people who were identified as members of particular siqui and ñuu. I used a variety of sources for this purpose, including Spanish-language records which referred to named *barrios*. In a Mixtec-language baptismal register, in which the siqui of each baptized child was recorded in the margin of the book, I found repeated references to more than twenty siqui for Teposcolula (called the "ñuu yuhuitayu San Pedro y San Pablo Yucundaa") and eight siqui for the nearby ñuu of San Juan Teposcolula in the period from the 1640s to the 1680s.[51] The relationship between ñuu and smaller subunits was flexible and sometimes ambiguous. Several writers used the words ñuu and siqui in conjunction; in effect, each siqui was a potential ñuu, a possibility accounting for the ambiguity of intermediary terms such as "ñuu siqui."

I observed that many ñuu were joined with other ñuu through the marriage of their dynastic rulers to form aggregate or allied communities, called *yuhuitayu*. In addition to Mixtec-language documentation, I used numerous Spanish-language cases, especially those dealing with conflicts between cabeceras and sujetos, including a landmark dispute from the Archivo General de las Indias in Seville. I wanted to read one type of source against the other. Clearly, the complexity of settlement patterns and organization articulated in the native-language record was simplified by Spanish-language writings that reflected attempts to nucleate and to reorganize relations among various ñuu. The yuhuitayu, the ñuu, and its constituent siqui, siña, and dzini represent a complex and dynamic scenario comparable to Nahua sociopolitical organization in many ways.

The complex terminology to describe places is related directly to the complexity of terms for social relations. I observed every reference to terminology of status and social rank, and began to keep records on individuals in each group, when possible. Elites stand out in these early alphabetic texts, as they did in

[51]MFHL, microfilm roll #0671267, unnumbered pages corresponding to the years 1646–87.

pictorial writings before and after the conquest. The testaments of yya in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries revealed that they controlled multiple tracts of patrimonial lands and continued to rely on the services of dependents for the maintenance of their palaces and landholdings. They received tribute in raw materials and finished goods, invested in long-distance trade, and participated in the local market system. They acquired prestige or luxury items, including many introduced goods, from fine clothing and furniture to books and Christian images. Many male yya interacted with Spaniards, spoke some Castilian, and made use of the Spanish legal system in order to advance local and family interests. They were the first to adopt European architectural features and to modify their residences with doors and windows. As caciques and cacicas within the colonial order, they sought to protect their *cacicazgos*, as lordly establishments were called under Spanish law. As privileged lords, they obtained special permits to own horses, livestock, swords, muskets and even African slaves. And they were the first to adopt Spanish surnames. I used hundreds of records to identify indigenous naming customs in the region, based on the Ñudzahui version of the 260-day sacred calendar, and observed how Spanish names and titles were adopted selectively over the course of the colonial period, reflecting indigenous social distinctions while distinguishing most Mixtecs from Spaniards.

The sources provide abundant information on the indigenous system of hereditary authority, the representation of ñuu by male and female elites. The texts make repeated references to important concepts associated with these elites, including: hereditary authority or *toniñe*; the royal palace or lordly establishment, known as the *aniñe*; one's duty or responsibility to a community, called *tniño*; and the *yuhuitayu*. Despite local variation in the precise arrangements of hereditary government, all areas of the Mixteca shared these fundamental concepts and institutions. The yuhuitayu was a sociopolitical arrangement that united two *ñuu* (local states) through the marriage of a male *yya* and a female *yya dzehe*. Each hereditary ruler represented a separate, autonomous ñuu and its aniñe or lordly establishment (the buildings, lands, relatives, and dependent laborers associated with a yya lineage). The yuhuitayu was both a place, represented by a ruling couple, and a political arrangement. Spaniards called the place a cabecera and referred to the rights and properties of the yuhuitayu in terms of a kingdom, a cacicazgo or a señorío. Centers with lesser lordships were called sujetos.

After identifying the meaning and describing the significance of these important terms as they appear in a wide variety of sources, I tried to demonstrate the effects of colonial changes on these concepts and institutions, particularly the implementation of Spanish-style municipal government and the ways in which elites adapted to it. Male and female hereditary rulers survived the conquest and continued to represent and govern multi-level sociopolitical structures, in spite of significant colonial changes.[52] Spanish laws and customs recognized but altered sociopolitical relations; for example, female hereditary leaders were excluded

[52]Ronald Spores was among the first scholars to recognize the continued prominence of Mixtec female hereditary elites, called cacicas by Spaniards, in the colonial period; see Spores 1967 and 1997. See also Terraciano 2005 for a concise treatment of women elites in writings from the Mixteca.

from the cabildo, the body of male nobles that represented the community within the Spanish legal and administrative system, the male yya and toho who appear in various cabildo election records from the region, the men who played prominent roles in the local proceedings that generated so much native-language alphabetic writing from the period.

Many documents spoke of the yya and the toho as a single group, set apart from the ordinary folk or ñandahi. In general, testaments and inventories indicate subtle, rather than sharp, degrees of difference between lesser yya and higher toho in terms of landholdings and general wealth. Some toho resembled yya in terms of their wealth, in spite of their lack of titles (such as "don" or "cacique") or prestigious surnames. Long-distance merchants were the most prominent members of the toho group. The testaments of interregional traders reveal that most were lesser nobles, toho, from the Yanhuitlan area who prospered in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by traveling north to central Mexico and Puebla and south to the Valley of Oaxaca, Soconusco, and Guatemala, selling mainly cloth. All possessed typical lesser or middling noble surnames—López, Hernández, Cortés, García, and Pérez. Traders were especially active in and around Yanhuitlan in the first half of the colonial period, along the ancient road that connects the Valley of Oaxaca with Puebla and the Valley of Mexico. This road is now part of the Pan American highway, passing by Tamasulapa, Texupa, Yanhuitlan, Nochistlan and many other former cabeceras. Many of the traders also carried goods on behalf of other native elites or Spanish investors. Men who possessed numerous mules and a horse or two in their wills were surely involved in long-distance trade. Profits derived from their activities in this period sometimes amounted to great sums, by indigenous standards.

The documents also indicated another pattern: whereas men transported goods to distant markets, women produced or managed the collection of goods for sale. Often, long-distance traders counted on their spouses to produce or supply the goods, especially cloth. Many documents show men and women who possessed and bequeathed their profits from trade separately, even within marriage. In the second half of the colonial period, bilingual Ñudzahui merchants resold an assortment of Spanish and indigenous goods to local native and non-native clients, traveling to communities or attending periodic local markets. These men were the successors of long-distance merchants from the early period, who had been displaced by competition from Spanish and mestizo traders in the seventeenth century. By the second half of the seventeenth century, toho who owned mules and possessed hundreds of pesos were no longer to be found. Spanish-speaking *mercaderes* and *tratantes* took over the lucrative trade from Mexico City and Puebla to Guatemala, drawing on extensive lines of credit and benefiting from legislation that restricted Indian traders.

As with the yya-toho elite, the amount of land held by members of the ñandahi group varied greatly. Some claimed more than a dozen plots of land, whereas many men and women owned no land. Most owned one house lot, a field for maize cultivation, and one or two supplementary plots of secondary or marginal land for the cultivation of magueys. The more prosperous men and women possessed numerous good lands and houses and other resources and blended in

with the toho. The more humble people, as we glimpsed in the first section of this paper, worked as dependents in households. Sometimes, the latter were orphans or new arrivals who were taken in as members of an extended family. In the colonial period, all shared the same term *ñandahi*, suggesting that dependent status was not rigidly defined and change from dependent to commoner status was possible. The testaments of yya and toho reveal the continued importance of dependent live-in laborers throughout the colonial period. In most cases, testators recognized dependents in their wills, without giving them enough to become independent of the household.

I relied especially on testaments to describe the organization and possession of houses and land in this period. In particular, I examined the physical layout and organization of houses, land tenure categories, names and types of land, the distribution of land, inheritance patterns, and conflicts over land and agricultural labor. I was pleased to learn from two archaeologists working in the Mixteca Alta that my descriptions of houses and palaces, based on the documentary record, informed and confirmed the remains that they were finding in the field.[53]

The topics of land and material goods are closely tied to issues of social relations and the distribution of wealth. But as Jim Lockhart observed for the use of Nahuatl-language records, it is difficult to trace with great precision continuities and changes in native land tenure and distribution across the colonial period, mainly because the sources (primarily documents generated by native cabildos) record only certain types of economic data. Whereas testaments and inventories typically note the number of parcels held by a household, they rarely specify the size, value, and productivity of those landholdings. Nor do they talk much about how the lands were cultivated or even what crops were grown on them. Nonetheless, testaments and inventories from a cross-section of native society reveal distinct patterns of wealth and economic activity.

I used a sample of nearly 130 testaments to compare the relative wealth of men and women from different social groups. Particularly, I selected testaments of men and women whom I could confidently assign to either the yya/toho elite or the ñandahi commoner group, based on the terminology used to describe them in their testaments or by their surnames. The results of this sampling and tabulation revealed the extent to which native lords, both male and female, continued to distinguish themselves from commoners throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in many places, at least in terms of their landholdings, houses, material and prestige goods, and money. I compared my sample with similar records for Spaniards who lived in the Mixteca, combining some of my own notes with some data presented in the appendix of a fine book by María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi on the economy of the Mixteca Alta in this period.[54] This comparison highlighted the great disparity in liquid wealth and access to credit between Spaniards and Mixtecs in the region. The Spanish-mestizo group, however, remained a very small percentage of the total population in the Mixteca, even by the end of the colonial period.

[53]I am speaking of Verónica Pérez and Laura Diego Luna, who are working on separate projects in the Teposcolula area.

[54]Romero Frizzi 1990.

The testaments do not reveal a marked difference in the types or quantities of lands and goods possessed by men and women in these groups. However, I observed that fewer women issued testaments, based on the number of extant documents. A sampling of Mixtec-language testaments (45 written on behalf of women, and 83 written on behalf of men) indicates that men and women owned comparable amounts of land; among yya, toho, and ñandahi, the average man claimed only one more plot of land than the average woman. I found no indication that men and women in the Mixteca owned different types of land, or that women owned increasingly less land during the colonial period. However, the fact that extant testaments from the civil record represent nearly twice as many men as women suggests that men were more likely to make testaments or to present them in legal disputes, perhaps due to inheritance patterns.

Mixtec inheritance patterns were as flexible as the structure of the household itself. Most testaments conformed with Spanish principles of private property by making separate bequests to specific individuals, but provisions in testaments seem to confirm existing arrangements within the household complex. Bequests to married sons or daughters often mention the heir's spouse as a co-recipient. A widow or widower often makes bequests concerning the property of an entire household complex, executing the wishes of the deceased spouse. It is unclear what happened to the landholdings of individuals who moved away from the complex, whether to start another or to relocate to a spouse's household. Outgoing members of a household were unlikely to possess many lands, perhaps some scattered plots whose transfer to another household would not present any difficulties. In contrast, those who possessed household land (*ñuhu huahi*) and patrimonial land (*ñuhu chiyo*) seldom moved away from the house and adjacent lands.

These issues of residency may shed light on the tendency for sons to inherit land more often than daughters, and consequently for men to write wills more often than women (or for mens' wills to appear more frequently in the legal record), despite the general adherence to an even distribution of property among men and women. That is, the pattern may be related to a preference for patrivirilocal residence arrangements. Although choice of residence after marriage varied in this period, because such arrangements seemed to depend on existing or potential household resources, I observed that couples were more likely to move into the husband's household after marriage. Thus it was more pragmatic to bequeath land to sons who were less likely to move away from the original household. On the other hand, I did find cases in which a woman's inheritance of lands and houses may have encouraged the couple to relocate to her original household. One case from Chilapilla is very explicit about the relation between residency and inheritance; in 1749, don Lorenzo Vásquez bequeathed no land to his daughter, doña Luisa Vásquez, and her husband, don Antonio de Arellano, because "they chose not to reside in this ñuu."[55] Instead, he gave them a quantity of cloth and clothing. In any case, men and women relied on an extended network of support from multiple households and stood to inherit some property regardless of their place of residence.[56]

[55]AJT, Civil 20: 1684. [56]On women in the Mixteca, in general, see Sousa 1997, 1998.

If the native-language sources speak volumes about Ñudzahui men and women in their households and communities and the material culture of the region, they have less to offer about community or personal spiritual beliefs and practices, and especially little to say about non-Christian practices or beliefs. I was able to use church-sponsored native-language texts and several archival sources to theorize about how people came to understand Christianity in their own terms, in ways that made sense to their own cultural imagination and experience. Records of community accounts that detail the expenditures of a community were especially useful for identifying religious practices. The Nahuatl-language accounts from Santa Catarina Texupan for the years 1550–64, and the Ñudzahui-language accounts from Santiago Yolomecatl for the years 1705–06, for example, reveal that these two communities sponsored a variety of sacred practices throughout the year, from appealing to certain saints for rain to drinking pulque before firing a lime kiln or chopping wood. Providing food and drink for feast days and dancing ceremonies was a constant preoccupation; more than half the monetary expenditures of these communities went for religious expenses of one kind or another. The continued use of the 260-day sacred Mesoamerican calendar for naming people, based on their date of birth, is one subtle but telling survival of native religious practices. Native-language texts continued to refer to these types of names in the eighteenth century; for example, in the accounts from Yolomecatl, several people possessed surnames based on the calendar. A knowledge of this calendar for the sake of naming implied a knowledge of many other sacred practices and beliefs associated with it.[57]

Concluding Remarks

This overview of known extant Mixtec-language texts represents only a tiny fraction of all the writings which were once safeguarded in desks, wooden chests, and archives. The existing corpus lends itself to the study of general patterns in the Mixteca rather than the microhistory of any single community, although it is possible to study certain communities in considerable detail, such as Teposcolula and Yanhuitlan. Centers of Spanish activity, especially the colonial cabeceras of the Mixteca Alta, are better represented than the smaller sujetos, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The corpus is particularly strong for the western half of the Alta, in and around the valleys of Nochistlan, Teposcolula, Tamasulapa, and Tlaxiaco, where Spanish-Ñudzahui interaction was concentrated in the colonial period, in the heartland of the Mixteca. The repetition of familiar cultural patterns and conceptual vocabulary in each subregion has warranted certain general conclusions that apply to the Mixteca as a whole. Most of the key concepts addressed in my research appear in native-language documentation from three subregions of the Mixteca: the Alta, Baja, and Valley. Native terminology for an entire range of cultural categories, from sociopolitical organization to land tenure, is consistent in each region. When variation was observable, I have noted

[57]See Terraciano 2006 for a concise treatment of the types of information on native religious practices in the early colonial period that can be gleaned from Spanish-language sources, especially inquisitorial records.

the difference and searched for additional examples in the record. Despite the importance of local exceptions to regional and cross-regional trends, the exceptions do not seem to alter the general patterns. The native-language corpus is both diverse and manageable enough to observe patterns across the entire region and to appreciate the complexity and unevenness of change throughout much of the colonial period.

Native-language sources are known to exist in many areas of Mesoamerica, not only in central Mexico, Oaxaca, and Yucatan, but also in Michoacan, Guerrero, Chiapas, and Guatemala.[58] But despite recent discoveries of texts in many different languages, by now it is clear that no language group in the Americas has left a legacy of native-language writings comparable to that of the Nahuas. The entire corpus of known Ñudzahui-language writings is modest in comparison to existing Nahuatl-language materials. There are no extensive historical writings as in Nahuatl, nor anything resembling the encyclopedia of Nahua culture and language that fray Bernardino de Sahagún compiled in the Valley of Mexico, nor a body of theater. Whereas Nahuatl notarial records number in the thousands, Ñudzahui-language sources amount to a few hundred. Research fully comparable to that in Nahua sources is not possible in certain areas of inquiry.

At the same time, the sources suffice to make possible extensive and profound comparisons between the Mixteca and other parts of central and southern Mexico. The use of Ñudzahui-language texts has changed our understanding of the history of the Mixteca, which was based primarily on pictorial records, archeaeological investigations, and Spanish-language sources. The native-language corpus not only complements or adds to this knowledge, it challenges and changes the historiography and provides a new conceptual vocabulary to describe Mixtec culture in this period. We are able to appreciate better how the Mixteca shared cultural practices and organizing concepts observed in other parts of Mesoamerica, especially the contiguous eastern Nahua area that included Cholula, Tlaxcala, and many other prominent altepetl, as identified by Jim Lockhart.[59] The Ñudzahui-language corpus sheds light on the interconnected history of Mesoamerica in the so-called late postclassic and colonial periods. Another scholar working at UCLA, John Pohl, is studying codices, ceramics, and architectural remains of the late postclassic period as evidence of extensive cultural contact and mutual influence among Nahuas and Mixtecs in the eastern Nahua region and the Mixteca Alta, which resulted in a distinctive art style that H.B. Nicholson and others have called "Mixteca-Puebla," and which Pohl refers to simply as "Nahua-Mixteca."[60] These many shared concepts and conventions were not the result

[58]As mentioned above, Bas van Doesburg and Michael Swanton are currently working on translating several hundred documents written in the Ngiwa (Chocho) language. There are three groups currently working on the translation of Zapotec-language records: Michel Oudijk and Thomas Smith-Stark have organized a group at UNAM; María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi and Juana Vásquez Vásquez are working in Oaxaca with records from the Sierra; and the UCLA group has worked with documents primarily from the Valley of Oaxaca. Pamela Munro and I have led a group at UCLA, which has benefited from the participation of Xochitl Flores, Michael Galant, Brooke Lillehaugen, Olivia Martínez, Diana Schwartz, Aaron Sonnenschein, and Lisa Sousa.

[59]Lockhart 1992.

[60]Pohl 2003a and b, for example.

of Mexica expansion from the Valley of Mexico so much as of centuries of interaction and alliance in this rich region of greater highland Mexico. At the same time, we can also discern aspects of what appears to be unique about the Mixteca, speaking in general without neglecting the many local variants that characterize Mesoamerica. Finally, the documentation reveals how colonial changes played out more unevenly and gradually in this more remote corner of New Spain. We continue to consider the impact of changes in this southern part of Mexico, where many native languages are spoken today and where many indigenous people continue to live.

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