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Rebecca Horn*

The Sociopolitical Organization of the Corregimiento of Coyoacan[1]

Spanish rule left intact much of the indigenous socio-political organization at the regional level in central Mexico. The administrative forms of *encomienda*, *corregimiento*, and *doctrina* were merely superimposed upon the indigenous city-state, or *altepetl*, leaving the internal functioning of central Mexican Indian society at the provincial level much as it had been in the pre-conquest period.[2] This paper addresses the persistence of indigenous characteristics of sociopolitical organization in relation to the introduction of, and adaptation to, Spanish administrative forms in the *corregimiento* of Coyoacan located just southwest of Mexico City. Coyoacan was an important pre-conquest regional state, and the integrity and complexities of its sociopolitical organization persisted well into the colonial period. This persistence is particulary striking when one considers Coyoacan's proximity to the colonial capital and the intensity of Hispanic intrusion which that proximity entailed. While proximity to Mexico City posed a threat to indigenous culture, at the same time it allowed for the abundance of documentation in both Spanish and Nahuatl that is preserved from and about the region. For these reasons the study of colonial Coyoacan contributes greatly to an understanding of important ethnohistorical issues throughout colonial central Mexico.

The pre-conquest altepetl (*atl*: water; *tepetl*: mountain) referred to both a people and a territory, and it was ruled by a dynastic lineage. Each altepetl was subdivided into smaller units termed *calpulli* or *tlaxilacalli*. The members of each subunit were governed through local officers under the autority of the dynastic ruler to whom all members owed service and tribute. The organization of subunits within the altepetl was cellular rather than hierarchical, each subentity being equal, "...each with its own sense of separate origins, each a microcosm of the whole [altepetl]".[3] After the conquest the Spaniards designated the subunit in which the dynastic ruler, or *tlatoani*, resided as *cabecera*, "head town", the other subunits subject to the ruler being designated *sujeto*, "subject". The prevailing pattern was for one alte etl with one tlatoani to become one encomienda and one doctrina (parish). Indigenous mechanisms of organization channeled tribute and labor from the sujetos through the cabecera to the *encomendero* (one who held an encomienda grant) and to the parish church. Ideally, in terms of Spanish administration these civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions were coterminous. The corregimiento was a larger civil administrative

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[1]This paper is part of a larger project which concerns the Indians of Coyoacan from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. It is based on research conducted in the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico and the Sección Histórica of the Archivo General de Notarías del Distrito Federal during 1984 under the terms of a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, and at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, with the support of a Bancroft Library Study Award for the academic year 1985-86.

[2]My discussion of the altepetl, and its relationship to Spanish administrative forms, is based on Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford, 1964), especially chapters 3, 4, and 7; James Lockhart, "Capital and Province, Spaniard and Indian: The Example of Late Sixteenth- Century Toluca", in *Provinces of Early Mexico: Variants of Spanish American Regional Evolution*, Ida Altman and James Lockhart, eds. (Los Angeles, 1976), pp. 99-123, especially pp. 99-103; and James Lockhart, "Some Nahua Concepts in Postconquest Guise", *History of European Ideas*, 6 (1985) pp. 465-482, especially pp. 469-471.

[3]Lockhart, "Some Nahua Concepts", p. 469.

unit usually made up of several encomiendas and therefore several indigenous altepetl, each with a designated cabecera and sujetos.

The pattern of one altepetl governed by one tlatoani becoming one encomienda or parish, however, did not always hold true, due both to the complexity of pre-conquest provincial organization and to post-conquest political accommodation. Two dynastic lineages might have been present within one altepetl, forming a kind of dual organization or moiety. And often pre-conquest altepetl grouped together, forming a larger entity also called altepetl (sometimes modified by *huey*: great, large), yet each constituent altepetl remaining to some extent independent and autonomous within the larger framework of the complex altepetl, each having its own titled ruler, set of subunits, and sense of separate origin. Even so, these constituent altepetl were "bound together so tightly in one large unit that outsiders refer mainly to the larger, not the smaller unit".[4] Amecameca, Tlaxcala, and Tulancingo are well-known examples of such complex altepetl.[5] Coyoacan was also a complex altepetl, made up of four constituent parts, only the aggregate unit being recognized by the Spaniards in the post-conquest period. The Spaniards often ignored or did not recognize each and every tlatoani lineage in moiety arrangements or in double or multi-altepetl formations. In such a case, the Indians largely maintained pre-conquest forms of organization while adapting to the post-conquest context: municipal officeholding and public labor duties, for example, were rotated on the basis of moieties or constituent altepetl.

Coyoacan was an important pre-conquest state in the Tepanec ethnic region that lay to the northwest, west, and southwest of the Valley of Mexico lakes. Tepanec towns with indisputable tlatoani lineages were promptly granted cabecera rank by the Spaniards; Coyoacan was included in this group.[6] The cabecera of Coyoacan, with its sujetos, was claimed by and officially granted to Cortés in 1529, forming the major part of his Marquesado holdings within the Valley of Mexico. Cortés also claimed the Tepanec town of Tacubaya located to the northwest of Coyoacan and much closer to Mexico City. Tacubaya's pre-conquest status, and the nature of its relationship to Coyoacan in the pre-conquest period, are not entirely clear. Evidence suggests that it was an independent altepetl. For example, it was listed in the Memorial de los Pueblos as an independent town, and had a history of local rule.[7] Tacubaya may well have been largely independent of Coyoacan but associated with it in some kind of a dual altepetl formation. Since dual organizations of various kinds were prevalent in central Mexico, a larger dominant altepetl (Coyoacan) in association with a smaller subordinate one (Tacubaya) would not have been unlikely.[8]

Whatever the case, the Spaniards did not recognize a tlatoani in Tacubaya at the time of the conquest, and Cortés and his adversaries feuded as to whether or not Tacubaya was to be designated a cabecera. Cortés' motive in having Tacubaya delcared a cabecera is not wholly clear, but Gibson suggests that if Cortés were able to "establish Tacubaya as a cabecera he might conceivably assign additional sujetos to it and thus increase his holdings".[9] Cortés' interests may have coincided with those of the Indians of Tacubaya, who faced losing their independent status because of the historical circumstance that found them without a recognized tlatoani at the time of the conquest. Indeed, the pos-conquest dispute over the status of Tacubaya's tlatoani lineage may have represented

[4]Susan Schroeder, "Chalco and Sociopolitical Concepts in Chimalpahin: Analysis of the Work of a Seventeenth-Century Nahuatl Historian of Mexico" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), p. 161.

[5]For Amecameca see Schroeder; for Tlaxcala see Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, 1952); and for Tlaxcala and Tulancingo, see James Lockhart, "Complex Municipalities: Tlaxcala and Tulancingo in the Sixteenth Century," in this volume.

[6]Gibson, *The Aztecs*, p. 39.

[7]"Memorial de los Pueblos", in *Espistolario de Nueva España, 1505-1818*, ed. Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, 16 vols. (Mexico, 1939-42), vol. 14, p. 118ff; Gibson, *The Aztecs*, pp. 39-41.

[8]Lockhart, "Some Nahua Concepts", p. 471.

[9]Gibson, *The Aztecs*, p. 39, and p. 477, note 50.

in itself the unfolding of pre-conquest conflicts in which the Indians of Coyoacan had been attempting to take advantage of a disrupted tlatoani lineage in order to incorporate Tacubaya fully into the Coayoacan jurisdiction. Initially the *audiencia* designated Tacubaya a sujeto of Coyoacan, but in the end Cortés' view prevailed and Tacubaya was granted cabecera status. Thus Cortés' Marquesado holdings in the Valley of Mexico, which were designated a corregimiento for royal administrative purposes, constituted what Gibson has called a "composite encomienda", made up of two altepetl, Coyoacan and Tacubaya, each with its own tlatoani and set of subunits and each representing a separate cabecera-sujeto arrangement.[10]

In colonial central Mexico each cabecera with its sujetos was usually designated a parish, and this was the case with the two cabecera-sujeto arrangements in the corregimiento of Coyoacan, The parish of San Juan Bautista Coyoacan was founded in 1528, and the church of the parish of San José Tacubaya built in 1556. Both were Dominican parishes, and the head town of each became the *cabecera de doctrina*, or head town of the parish, from where ecclesiastical matters were administered to the sujetos, or *visitas de doctrina*. In the case of Coyoacan, the ecclesiastical and civil jurisdictions coincided in the sense that each cabecera with its respective sujetos constituted a parish. There was not a one-to-one relationship, however, between parish and encomienda, as was the pattern elsewhere in central Mexico, because of the special nature and unusual size of Cortés' grant.[11]

In addition to being designated the head of a parish, other features of a town with cabecera rank included a municipal government fashioned after the Spanish model and a town jail. Although probably built much earlier, the first documentary evidence of a jail in Coyoacan dates from 1553 and in Tacubaya from 1583. The importance attributed to the right to possess a town jail as an expression of independent status is illustrated by a request made by the Indians of Tacubaya in 1583 that the corregidor (highest local Spanish official) of Coyoacan be prohibited from housing wrongdoers from Tacubaya in the Coyoacan jail. Claiming that their own jail was sufficient, and that being held in Coyoacan caused undue hardship, the Indians of Tacubaya requested and obtained an order requiring all wrongdoers from their jurisdiction be held in their own jail.[12]

In 1553, when Oidor Gómez de Santillán made a *visita*, or inspection, to Coyoacan and Tacubaya in order to investigate tribute abuses, each had an organized *cabildo*, or town council.[13] In Coyoacan with its recognized tlatoani line, the designation of cabecera and sujetos and the formation of the municipal town government posed little problem. In the early post-conquest period the tlatoani was appointed *gobernador*, the highest official on an Indian town council. This position had no counterpart on the Spanish cabildo but was an innovation that took into account the indigenous tradition of a local dynastic ruler. Don Juan de Guzmán Itztollinqui was officially recognized as tlatoani by Cortés in 1526 (after the deaths of his father, who had aided Cortés in the conquest, and of his brother, who had accompanied Cortés to Guatemala), and he served virtually uncontested as

[10] *Ibid.*, p 66.

[11] For the foundation of the parish of San Juan Bautista Coyoacan see Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 101; and for the parish of San José Tacubaya, see Gerhard, *Guide*, p. 101, and Licenciado Antonio Fernández del Castillo, "Tacubaya", in *México en el tiempo: el marco de la capital*, ed. Roberto Olavarria (Mexico City, 1946), p. 193. For the visitas of San Juan Bautista Coyoacan, see Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico (hereafter AGN), Hospital de Jesús (hereafter HJ) leg. 382, exp. 38, and AGN-HJ, leg. 278, exp. 13, ff. 3r-4r. For the visitas of San José Tacubaya, see AGN-HJ, leg 382, exp. 39. Several sources discuss Franciscan activities in Coyoacan prior to 1528. See: Gibson, *The Aztecs*, p. 99; Gerhard, *Guide*, p. 101; Federico Gómez de Orozco, "Apuntes para la historia de la Villa de San Angel, D.F.", *Anales del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía*, series 4, 5 (1927-8), p. 476; Manuel Toussaint, *Arte colonial en México*, 2nd. ed. (Mexico City, 1962), p. 50.

[12] An *alcaide de la cárcel* in Coyoacan is mentioned during the inspection of 1553 in *Colección de documentos sobre Coyoacan*, eds. Pedro Carrasco and Jesús Monjarás-Ruiz, 2 vols. (Mexico City, 1976 and 1978) vol. 1, p. 75. For the first documented mention of a jail in Tacubaya and the petition made by the Indians of Tacubaya, see AGN-Indios, vol. 2, exp. 81, f. 92r.

[13] For information on the sujetos and town government of Coyoacan and Tacubaya in 1553, see Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz, *Colección*, vol. 1. For a detailed and comprehensive study of Indian town government in Morelos, see Robert S. Haskett, "A Social History of Indian Town Government in the Colonial Cuernavaca Jurisdiction, Mexico" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985).

gobernador of Coyoacan until 1554. During the inspection of 1553 he was accompanied by a full roster of town officials: two *alcaldes*, eight *regidores*, two *mayordomos*, two *contadores*, two *escribanos*, eight *alguaciles*, and one *alcaide de la cárcel*.[14] Although Tacubaya experienced greater difficulty in acquiring cabecera status than Coyoacan, by the time of the inspection of 1553 it was recognized as a cabecera and had an organized town government. The tlatoani don Toribio served as gobernador, and was accompanied by the other members of the Tacubaya town council, including one alcalde, two regidores and seven alguaciles.[15] Nonetheless, the dispute as to Tacubaya's pre-conquest status was still evident. While the break in tlatoani rule in Tacubaya was never explicitly mentioned, don Toribio was questioned during the inspection about his right to the title of local ruler. He stated that his father and grandfather had held the title before him, and that they were descendants of the lords of Azcapotzalco (historically the most important of the Tepanec political centers). Witnesses were also brought forward to confirm his statement.

In Spanish documentation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Tacubaya is referred to as the "sujeto" of Coyoacan. Yet by the time of the inspection of 1553 Tacubaya was recognized as a separate cabecera, responsible for the collection and delivery of its own tribute to Marquesado officials. Furthermore, there is no indication that the Coyoacan municipal government interfered in any major way in the internal affairs of Tacubaya, or that the Indians of Tacubaya owed either personal service or tribute to the native officials of Coyoacan.[16] The designation of Tacubaya as a "sujeto" in this context, then, does not refer to an altepetl subunit (calpulli or tlaxilacalli) owing allegiance to a tlatoani lineage. Rather, it represents and administrative subdivision of the corregimiento, Tacubaya serving as a secondary administrative center within the jurisdiction.[17] However, the designation of Tacubaya as "sujeto" in Spanish documentation may still be in part a reflection of indigenous organization, the relationship between the primary and secondary administrative centers of Coyoacan and Tacubaya within the corregimiento resembling the relationship between a dominant altepetl (Coyoacan) and a subordinate one (Tacubaya) in some kind of pre-conquest dual altepetl association.

As previously stated, in pre-conquest and early colonial central Mexico, the subentities forming the altepetl were referred to as calpulli and tlaxilacalli. The precise meaning of these terms and their regional and temporal variations is still not well understood, although tlaxilacalli seems to be the more commonly used term in many areas of colonial central Mexico.[18] In colonial Coyoacan, for example, altepetl subunits were almost exclusively called tlaxilacalli. Both common and noble Indians identified themselves as belonging to a particular tlaxilacalli, invariably stating in testimony its traditional Nahuatl name, Spanish saint's name, or both. In colonial Coyoacan, the term tlaxilacalli covered a wide range of subunits, from rather large important ones to small insignificant ones. Furthermore, tlaxilacalli naming patterns suggest that there were subunits of tlaxilacalli, themselves called tlaxilacalli, and that in addition associations existed between tlaxilacalli

[14]Gibson, *The Aztecs*, p. 159; Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz, *Colección*, vol. 1, pp. 74-5.

[15]Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz, *Colección*, vol. 1, pp. 54, 67-73.

[16]For tribute collection, see AGN-HJ, leg. 114, exp. 1, ff. 2r-v. For obligations to native officials, see Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz, *Colección*, vol. 1. For an analysis of personal service and tribute as recorded in the inspection of 1553, see Emma Pérez-Rocha, *Servicio personal y tributo en Coyoacan: 1551-1553* (Mexico City, 1978).

[17]Gibson, *The Aztecs*, p. 68, discusses this same use of sujeto in reference to the three cabeceras in the encomienda of Cuauhtitlan.

[18]For recent research on the use of the terms calpulli and tlaxilacalli in local-level Nahuatl documents from Culhuacan, see S.L. Cline, *Colonial Culhuacan, 1580-1600. A Social History of an Aztec Town* (Albuquerque, 1986), pp. 53-8; from Morelos, see Haskett, "A Social History", pp. 495-6; from Molotla, Morelos, see Pedro Carrasco, "The Joint Family in Ancient Mexico: The Case of Molotla", in *Essays on Mexican Kinship*, Hugo G. Nutini, Pedro Carrasco, and James M. Taggert, eds. (Pittsburgh, 1976), pp. 45-64; and from various regions of central mexico, see Luis Reyes García, "El término calpulli en documentos del siglo XVI", paper presented at the International Congress of Americanists, Vancouver, 1979. For an exhaustive study of sociopolitical terms, including calpulli and tlaxilacalli, in the work of the seventeenth-century historian Chimalpahin, see Schroeder, "Chalco", pp. 173-185.

situated near one another, perhaps in some kind of dual organization similar to that found in colonial Culhuacan.[19]

Tacubaya, which was located in the northern region of the corregimiento, was smaller than Coyoacan and had far fewer tlaxilacalli-- aproximately thirteen in contrast to Coyoacan's nearly one hundred. Differences between Tacubaya and Coyoacan, however, went beyond size and the number of tlaxilacalli. In organizational terms Coyoacan was much more complex. While Tacubaya served as the civil and ecclesiastical center for its thirteen subunits, the tlaxilacalli of Coyoacan were organized into five distinct groups: Coyoacan, San Agustín de las Cuevas (Tlalpan), Santo Domingo Mixcoac, San Jacinto Tenantitlan (San Angel) and San Pedro Quauhximalpan.[20] Of the latter four groups, each had a slightly different relationship to--or extent of independence from--the cabecera of Coyoacan. Over the course of the colonial period, one tlaxilacalli in each of the four groups sharing the name of the group as whole, acquired all or some of the attributes associated with cabecera status.

The pursuit of cabecera status, or more generally the pursuit of independent status, was the expression of a strong sense of local patriotism and separatism among the tlaxilacalli and calpulli of central Mexico. Spanish rule removed some of the incentives which had previously held them together, and it also introduced factors which encouraged separatist tendencies. The concept of hierarchy inherent in the Spanish distinction between cabecera and sujeto in particular brought to the fore the tendency within subunits to seek a more independent status.[21] Cabecera status initially was granted on the basis of the existence of a pre-conquest tlatoani lineage; with the formation of Spanish-style municipal government the tlatoani usually served as its first gobernador. During the course of the sixteenth century, however, the office of Indian gobernador became increasingly independent of the position of tlatoani. Thus, the original criterion for cabecera status, that is, a preconquest tlatoani lineage, was gradually replaced by other attributes attached to cabecera status, the most important being the presence of a cabildo with its own gobernador, a town church, marketplace, and jail.[22]

San Agustín de las Cuevas (Tlalpan) was the first sujeto of the cabecera of Coyoacan to attempt and then to acquire cabecera status. Located in the southern area of the Coyoacan jurisdiction, bordered by the jurisdiction of Xochimilco, San Agustín de las Cuevas was initially acquired by Coyoacan from Xochimilco in the 1520's. The court ordered San Agustín de las Cuevas returned to Xochimilco but, at least in part due to the political clout of the Cortés estate, Coyoacan secured it again in the 1540's and it remained within the corregimiento of Coyoacan throughout the rest of the colonial period.[23] In 1591 San Agustín de las Cuevas requested and was granted a *licencia* to build its own jail. In 1592 the officials of Coyoacan complained that its sujeto, San Agustín de las Cuevas, was attempting to elect an *alcalde* of its own. By the early seventeenth century, San Agustín de las Cuevas was electing its own municipal officials in spite of the attempts by the Coyoacan town officials to prevent it. In the municipal elections of 1630, for

[19]Cline, *Colonial Culhuacan*, pp. 53-8.

[20]My information on the constituent parts of Coyoacan and Tacubaya is gleaned from a large number of documentary sources written in both Spanish and Nahuatl.

[21]James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 172-3; Lockhart, "Some Nahua Concepts", p. 477; Gibson, *The Aztecs*, pp. 54,188-190; Stephanie G. Wood presents a detailed discussion of the pursuit of independence by sujetos in the Valley of Toluca, in "Corporate Adjustments in Colonial Mexican Indian Towns: Toluca Region, 1550-1810" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), pp. 4-5, 195-212.

[22]Gibson, *The Aztecs*, pp. 54, 167-8, 188-190. Wood, "Corporate Adjustments", discusses in detail the criteria used in the pursuit of pueblo status in the Valley of Toluca.

[23]*Colección de documentos inéditos, relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españoles de América y Oceanía, sacados de los archivos del reino, y muy especialmente del de Indias*, 42 vols. (Madrid, 1864-84), vol. 12, p. 295; and Gibson, *The Aztecs*, pp. 72-3.

example, a full roster of town officials was elected, except perhaps a gobernador, the gobernador of Coyoacan possibly still serving in San Agustín de las Cuevas for that year.[24]

The importance of ecclesiastical issues in a sujeto's struggle for independence is suggested by the Coyoacan town officials' complaint in 1592 that the people of San Agustín de las Cuevas were holding their own processions locally during Holy Week rather than in Coyoacan as was traditional, and that they were encouraged to do so by the Dominican *religiosos* in residence at the local monastery. The Coyoacan officials requested that these actions be prohibited.[25] These protests may have been either aimed at preventing San Agustín de las Cuevas from becoming an independent parish, or in reaction to its actual foundation which occurred when it was designated a cabecera de doctrina sometime between 1570 and the end of the sixteenth century.[26]

In the case of San Agustín de las Cuevas attributes of cabecera status were acquired gradually. Construction of a municipal jail and the creation of a parish came first, probably because such actions not only would have attracted less protest than an attempt to elect town officials, but also because thereafter their existence could be used as arguments in favor of cabecera status. In the establishment of an independent municipal council the first step seems to have been the election of an alcalde, then other town officials, and finally the gobernador. In the Valley of Toluca, a sujeto rarely elected a gobernador prior to legal recognition of independent status.[27] If the case in Coyoacan was similar, San Agustín de las Cuevas would have received official recognition sometime before the election of its first gobernador, although it is not known exactly when this occurred. Certainly, by the mid-seventeenth century, San Agustín de las Cuevas was an independent town, functioning as a cabecera, with a number of recognized sujetos located nearby and in the hilly hinterland to its south, its overall jurisdiction corresponding to the recently established parish of the same name.[28]

As the fragmentation of the cabecera-sujeto system of town hierarchy, and of the indigenous altepetl upon which it was based, continued over the course of the colonial period, the meaning of the term altepetl underwent change. A study of Indian municipal government in the colonial jurisdiction of Cuernavaca, for example, demonstrates that "no matter how small or insignificant a place might be, the fact that it elected a town council made it an altepetl".[29] In early seventeenth-century Nahuatl documents San Agustín de las Cuevas is called altepetl.[30] Although there is no direct evidence, San Agustín de las Cuevas may have constituted a pre-conquest altepetl within the multi-altepetl of Xochimilco.[31] It is also possible that San Agustín de las Cuevas was made up of a cluster of tlaxilacalli grouped together during the colonial period by virtue of their separation from Xochimilco and lack of ethnic and historical ties to Coyoacan. The use of the term altepetl under these circumstances suggests that its meaning adapted during the colonial period to changes in post-conquest sociopolitical organization. When a sujeto acquired attributes originally associated with a cabecera (that is, a gobernador and town council, an independent church, etc.), and received official cabecera rank, the newly designated

[24]AGN-Indios, vol. 6, 2a. parte, exp. 600, ff. 134r-v. For elections of 1630 and 1631, see AGN-HJ, leg. 59, exp. 2, ff. 66r, and leg. 59, exp. 2, ff. 83r-v, respectively.

[25]AGN-Indios, vol. 6, 2a. parte, exp. 129, ff. 31r-v, and vol. 6, 2a. parte, exp. 600, ff. 134r-v. Wood, "Corporate Adjustments", pp. 188-190, discusses the role of ecclesiastical matters in the pursuit of pueblo status in the Valley of Toluca.

[26]For the foundation of the parish of San Agustín de las Cuevas, see Fortino Hipólito Vera, *Itinerario parroquial del arzobispado de México y reseña histórica, geográfica y estadística de las parroquias del mismo arzobispado* (Amecameca, 1880), p. 74; and Gerhard, *Guide*, p. 101.

[27]Wood, "Corporate Adjustments", p. 214.

[28]For cabecera de gobierno (and sujetos) and cabecera de doctrina (and visitas), see AGN-HJ, leg. 278, exp. 13, ff. 1r-v, and leg. 382, exp. 37; and Bienes Nacionales (hereafter BN), leg. 912, exp. 30.

[29]Haskett, "A Social History", p. 85.

[30]See the election documents cited in note 24 for the use of the term altepetl in reference to San Agustín de las Cuevas in the seventeenth century. For the eighteenth century, see AGN-HJ, leg. 55, exp. 15, ff. 8r-v and 14v; and leg. 55, exp. 16, f. 33v.

[31]On Xochimilco, see Gibson, *The Aztecs*, pp. 41-2.

arrangement of the cabecera and its sujetos may have been perceived by its Indian members as the true-- or at least a legitimate--embodiment of the altepetl, and therefore called as such.

By the mid--seventeenth century two other Coyoacan sujetos, Santo Domingo Mixcoac and San Jacinto Tenantitlan (San Angel), enjoyed a status quite distinct from the remaining Coyoacan sujetos, although they were not full civil cabeceras. Both were affected by the ecclesiastical elaboration which began in the Coyoacan area in the late sixteenth century. Santo Domingo Mixcoac, like San Agustín de las Cuevas, was designated a cabecera de doctrina sometime between 1570 and the end of the sixteenth century, and San Jacinto Tenantitlan was so designated in the early seventeenth century. Each parish included visitas located in the inmediate vicinity of their respective ecclesiastical centers and in the hilly hinterlands fanning out from the lake shore to the west and southwest of them.[32]

The core areas of each parish, that is, those tlaxilacalli which were part of or located relatively near the Spanish- designated ecclesiastical head towns of Santo Domingo Mixcoac and San Jacinto Tenantitlan, constituted distinct entities. While neither had an independent municipal council, both had specific representation on the Coyoacan municipal council. In election documents of 1629, 1630, 1631, and 1632, for example, an alcalde and *fiscal* (church official) were specifically elected from each district.[33] The election of an alcalde, as discussed in reference to San Agustín de las Cuevas, was often the initial step in the formation of an independent council. Furthermore, in Nahuatl documents from early seventeenth-century Coyoacan, each of these groups of tlaxilacalli is called altepetl.[34] Both Santo Domingo Mixcoac and San Jacinto Tenantitlan represented a situation quite distinct from that in San Agustín de las Cuevas in that they had both been part of pre-conquest Coyoacan, and in the early seventeenth century were closely associated with the cabecera of Coyoacan without fully independent municipal councils of their own. The use of the term altepetl in reference to these two districts, therefore, could refer to pre-conquest constituent altepetl within the complex altepetl of Coyoacan. Becoming the core of a parish independent of Coyoacan and having specific representation on the Coyoacan council were then post-conquest expressions of the identity and integrity of pre-conquest entities.

Sometime after the mid-seventeenth century the group of tlaxilacalli constituting the western area of the parish of Santo Domingo Mixcoac broke off from that parish and gained independence from Coyoacan. San Pedro Quauhximalpan became its civil and ecclesiastical cabecera, the surrounding towns constituting its sujetos and visitas. In 1746, and perhaps much earlier, San Pedro Quauhximalpan held municipal elections for a full municipal council, including a gobernador. In election documents from the early and mid-eighteenth century, the district of San Pedro Quauhximalpan is consistently referred to as an altepetl, its component parts as tlaxilacalli.[35] The use of altepetl in reference to San Pedro Quauhximalpan is more ambiguous than in the three districts previously discussed. San Pedro Quauhximalpan formed part of pre-conquest Coyoacan, but the references to it as an altepetl date from after it already had a full municipal council with a gobernador (indeed the references are from municipal election documents). Used in this

[32]For the creation of the parish of San Agustín de las Cuevas, see note 26. For the parishes of Santo Domingo Mixcoac and San Jacinto Tenantitlan, see Vera, *Itinerario parroquial*, pp. 32 and 53, and Gerhard, *Guide*, p. 101. For their respective visitas, see Santo Domingo Mixcoac - AGN-BN, leg. 912, exp. 11, and AGN-HJ, leg. 382, exp. 38; San Jacinto Tenantitlan (San Angel)--AGN-BN, leg. 912, exp. 13, and AGN-HJ, leg. 382, exp. 38.

[33]AGN-HJ, leg. 318, exp. 14, ff. 61r-70r.

[34]For the use of the term altepetl in reference to Santo Domingo Mixcoac, see AGN-BN, leg. 1453, exp. 12, ff. 181r-195v; for San Jacinto Tenantitlan, see the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, BL 84/116m: 533.

[35]For municipal elections in San Pedro Quauhximalpan, see AGN-HJ, leg. 51, exp. 1, ff. 8r-9v; leg. 55, exp. 15, ff. 7v, 19v, 21v, and 30v; and leg. 55, exp. 16, ff. 34v-37v. In AGN-HJ, leg. 382, exp. 40 (dated 1807), San Pedro Quauhximalpan is listed as a cabecera de gobierno and de doctrina, its visitas also identified as sujetos. The one exception is Santa Rosa, which was a sujeto of San Pedro Quauhximalpan but a visita in the doctrina of San Jacinto Tenantitlan. I have been unable to find any notice or confirmation of San Pedro Quauhximalpan's cabecera de doctrina status in other documentary or secondary sources.

way altepetl could refer either to a constituent altepetl or to a group of tlaxilacalli which had broken away from the cabecera of Coyoacan and united under the authority of the newly recognized cabecera of San Pedro Quauhximalpan.

The distinct groupings of Coyoacan tlaxilacalli in the colonial period suggest that Coyoacan was a complex pre-conquest altepetl composed of four parts: Coyoacan (representing in itself a sizeable district), Santo Domingo Mixcoac, San Jacinto Tenantitlan, and San Pedro Quauhximalpan. San Agustín de las Cuevas, as discussed earlier, was part of pre-conquest Xochimilco. A complex Coyoacan altepetl, even in the number of its component parts (that is, four), would be perfectly consistent with what is known about other areas of central Mexico. Furthermore, although there is evidence that the meaning of the term altepetl underwent change over the course of the colonial period, its use in the early seventeenth century to refer to Santo Domingo Mixcoac and San Jacinto Tenantitlan (neither of which had full municipal councils or recognized cabecera status), suggests reference to pre-conquest entities. And Coyoacan is also at times called *huey altepetl*, "great, large altepetl", characteristic of complex altepetl elsewhere in central Mexico.[36] The internal composition of these four pre-conquest constituent altepetl might account for the grouping of tlaxilacalli in colonial Coyoacan, explaining why certain subunits were associated with Coyoacan, while others were associated with Santo Domingo Mixcoac, San Jacinto Tenantitlan, and San Pedro Quauhximalpan. The pursuit of cabecera status in colonial Coyoacan, therefore, must be viewed as an activity tied to pre-conquest altepetl identity rather than to individual altepetl subunits (that is, calpulli or tlaxilacalli). Each constituent altepetl sought for itself those attributes--that is, a gobernador, municipal council, and church--which in the early colonial period had become the embodiment of municipal pride.

The pace and timing of the pursuit of a more independent status by all five groups of Coyoacan tlaxilacalli can also be explained in both pre- and post-conquest terms. That San Agustín de las Cuevas was the first district to break away from Coyoacan is consistent with the fact that it was the most recently acquired and, therefore, the least integrated into the altepetl of Coyoacan. Furthermore, all, or a significant segment, of the people of San Agustín de las Cuevas and its sujetos, may have been of a different ethnicity than the Tepanec Indians of Coyoacan, since they had been part of the altepetl of Xochimilco prior to their acquisition by Coyoacan and, therefore, of Xochimilca ethnicity. Taking advantage of post-conquest developments, the people of San Agustín de las Cuevas may have been attempting to move toward independent status based on ethnic differences which transcended pre- and post-conquest institutional arrangements.[37]

Geographical considerations also seem important in San Agustín de las Cuevas' early acquisition of cabecera status, and probably also influenced San Pedro Quauhximalpan's eventual ability to become independent of Coyoacan. Both San Agustín de las Cuevas and San Pedro Quauhximalpan were located largely in the hilly hinterlands on the edge of the corregimiento some distance from the cabecera of Coyoacan. Furthermore, both were located on important trade and transportation routes. San Agustín de las Cuevas was located on the *camino real* which tied Mexico City to Cuernavaca and the southern areas of Mexico including the Pacific coast ports, and San Pedro Quauhximalpan was situAted near the camino real which tied Mexico City to the Toluca Velley.[38] With the degree of political and economic independence afforded by distance and strategic location, San Agustín de las Cuevas and San Pedro Quauhximalpan may have been able to achieve independence

[36]AGN-HJ, leg. 55, exp. 15, f. 13v, and exp. 16, f. 36v.

[37]Gibson, *The Aztecs*, p. 73.

[38]Bernardo García Martínez, *El Marquesado del Valle: Tres siglos de regimen señorial en Nueva España* (Mexico City, 1969), Map of the Corregimiento de Coyoacan; Gibson, *The Aztecs*, Map 10, "Main roads and canals, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries", p. 363. For an example of a sujeto arguing for independence on the grounds that it was located some distance from its cabecera, see *Ibid*, p. 53. Wood discusses this issue and provides examples from the Valley of Toluca, "Corporate Adjustments", pp. 197-9.

from the Coyoacan cabecera more easily than could the sujetos of Santo Domingo Mixcoac and San Jacinto Tenantitlan, which were located in the heart of the Coyoacan district and on less strategic roads.

While initially sujetos sought and acquired cabecera status for themselves, the cabecera-sujeto arrangement itself underwent modification over time because of its decreasing importance to the colonial economy. In the sixteenth century indigenous organization was vital to the economy as it was the basis for channeling tribute and labor to the Spaniards. As private estates began increasingly to rely on informal labor arrangements without reference to the formal structure of the indigenous polity, towns began to be recognized simply as *pueblos*, and the distinction between cabecera and sujeto largely gave way to the concept of undifferentiated pueblos.[39] Under these circumstances, the five groupings of Coyoacan tlaxilacalli were themselves not immune to the tendency for separatism among their own tlaxilacalli. By the mid-seventeenth century, there were already indications that certain tlaxilacalli were woving toward a more independent status. San Andrés Totoltepec and Ajusco, for example, were awarded specific representation (an alcalde each) in the municipal elections of San Agustín de las Cuevas, at virtually the same time that Santo Domingo Mixcoac and San Jacinto Tenantitlan were represented on the Coyoacan council.[40]

The tlaxilacalli of the five districts of colonial Coyoacan were further differentiated by the designations *acohuic*, "upwards", and *tlalnahuac* (*tlalli*: lan; *nahuac*: next to), "next to the land". Several examples exist of the explicit use of these terms in the Coyoacan region between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. The first is a statement made by the vicar of the Dominican monastery of Coyoacan to the *visitador*, Oidor Gómez de Santillán, during the inspection of 1553. In describing the way in which the people of Coyoacan were organized in order to work "en la obra de la iglesia", he stated that Coyoacan was divided into two parts, the first called "Acouya", "en la parte de ponyente", and the second called "Tlalnahuac", "en la parte de oriente". The terms acohuic and tlalnahuac were also used about 1550 to subdivide land and tax lists pertaining to don Juan de Guzmán, the tlatoani of Coyoacan. Its latest documented use is a municipal election document dated 1632 in which a regidor mayor tlalnahuac and a regidor mayor (presumably acohuic) are listed among the elected officials.[41]

In many areas of colonial central Mexico municipal offices and public labor duties rotated among altepetl within a complex altepetl. One might reasonably assume, even in the absence of direct evidence, that the same was true for Coyoacan. That the acohuic and tlalnahuac categories somehow mediated the rotation of municipal offices and the organization of public labor among the constituent altepetl is indicated by their use in the organization of church labor and in the designation of tlalnahuac and acohuic officials on the municipal council. An analysis of those tlaxilacalli designated acohuic or tlalnahuac for which a location can be determined indicates that the tlaxilacalli of Santo Domingo Mixcoac, San Jacinto Tenantitlan, and San Pedro Quauhximalpan were exclusively designated acohuic. Coyoacan and San Agustín de las Cuevas, on the other hand, included tlaxilacalli of both designations.[42]

Scholars have suggested that these terms might designate topographical features, acohuic representing the upper region, and tlalnahuac representing its lower lying areas. This appears to be the case in other regions in which the term acohuic has been used.[43] In

[39]Lockhart and Schwartz, *Early Latin America*, pp. 172-3. In *The Aztecs*, pp. 50-57, 167-8, and 188-90, Gibson discusses a number of factors which modified the town hierarchy of cabecera and sujeto. Wood, "Corporate Adjustments", presents a detailed study of the transformation of the cabecera-sujeto system of town hierarchy, the formation of pueblos, and the pursuit of pueblo status in the Valley of Toluca.

[40]AGN-HJ, leg. 59, exp. 2, ff. 27r and 83r-v.

[41]See Carrasco and Monjarás-Ruiz, *Colección*, vol. 1, p. 147; Arthur J.O. Anderson, Frances Berdan, and James Lockhart, *Beyond the Codices* (Berbeley, 1976), pp. 149, 159-162; AGN-HJ, leg. 318, exp. 14, f. 69r.

[42]The location of many but not all tlaxilacalli has been identified. This discussion is, therefore, preliminary.

[43]Anderson, Berdan, and Lockhart, *Beyond the Codices*, pp. 148-9.

Coyoacan, however, both hilly and low-lying tlaxilacalli are found under both acohuic and tlalnahuac designations. Santa Cruz Atoyac, located near the edge of Lake Texcoco, and Ajusco, located in the hilly hinterland, for example, are both designated tlalnahuac. Similarly, Santa Catalina Omac in the low-lying area of Coyoacan proper is designated acohuic but so are a number of tlaxilacalli located in the hills southwest of Coyoacan including, for example, San Bartolomé Ameyalco and San Pedro Quauhximalpan.

Another suggestion as to the meaning of the terms acohuic and tlalnahuac proposes that they may distinguish a core area of the altepetl from tlaxilacalli of more recent acquisition.[44] A preliminary analysis of tlaxilacalli designated either acohuic or tlalnahuac in the five districts of colonial Coyoacan supports this explanation: the acohuic tlaxilacalli for which sites can be identified occupy a more or less "central area", while the tlalnahuac tlaxilacalli lie on the outskirts of the jurisdiction, in particular along its eastern edge. Making a distinction between a core area and areas of more recent acquisition is quite compatible with the history of territorial acquisitions by Coyoacan in the sixteenth century. Coyoacan engaged in border disputes with both Xochimilco and Huitzilopochco (San Mateo Churubusco) in the early sixteenth century. Backed by the power of the Cortés estate, Coyoacan acquired three sujetos from Huitzilopochco, and acquired San Agustín de las Cuevas (Tlalpan) from Xochimilco, both border disputes being with non-Tepanec peoples, that is, people of a different ethnicity. Although we do not know the names of the sujetos acquired by Coyoacan in these transactions, both acquisitions were in the general area of what we know to be the tlalnahuac tlaxilacalli located on the eastern edge of the Coyoacan jurisdiction.[45]

It is quite possible that in Coyoacan the use of these terms denoted a distinction between a core area of traditional Coyoacan tlaxilacalli of Tepanec ethnicity and more recent acquisitions of non-Tepanec tlaxilacalli. In this case, the use of the term acohuic might mean "upper" in the sense of original or senior, tlalnahuac meaning "lower", or junior. Although the land acquisitions of which we have knowledge occurred in the post-conquest period, the concept of a division between a core and more recently acquired areas might well have had pre-conquest antecedents. The eastern part of the Coyoacan jurisdiction borders on regions of non-Tepanec peoples, likely adversaries in border disputes. Moreover, this region was much more populous and fertile (and therefore more valuable) than the hilly western portion of the jurisdiction. Thus it would be an attractive area for territorial acquisitions either before or after the conquest.

The persistence of indigenous forms of sociopolitical organization in colonial central Mexico is striking, especially in regions such as Coyoacan which experienced relatively intense Spanish contact and settlement in the early post-conquest period. Relying on indigenous mechanisms for the collection of tribute and the allocation of labor, Spanish rule left intact much of the indigenous sociopolitical organization at the regional level, superimposing Spanish administrative forms upon the indigenous city-state, or altepetl. Altepetl were in many cases organizationally complex, and in many areas of colonial central Mexico the rotation of labor obligations and municipal officeholding were based on moieties and multi-altepetl formations. Coyoacan itself was a complex altepetl in which indigenous distinctions between a core area of Tepanec people and an "outlying" area of ethnically distinct peoples most likely mediated the rotation of labor obligations and municipal officeholding as late as the 1630's.

Continuing to function in many ways as it had before the conquest, the altepetl was nevertheless transformed as the Indians of central Mexico adopted and adapted Spanish forms of government and Spanish representations of municipal identity. The Spanish-style cabildo and the office of Indian gobernador gradually replaced the presence of a tlatoani

[44] *Ibid ., p. 9.*

[45] For Xochimilco, see note 23; for Huitzilopochco, see *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de Ibero-América*, 14 vols. (Madrid, 1927-32), vol. 1, pp. 177-8; Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario de Nueva España, 1505-1818*, vol. 6, p. 117.

line as the basis of independent status, and a gradual fragmentation of the altepetl occurred over the course of the colonial period as altepetl subunits sought and acquired independent status on the basis of these Spanish criteria. The continuing fragmentation of the altepetl was in part, however, an expression of indigenous interests, Indians using Spanish criteria to meet local needs and aspirations. Individual tlaxilacalli had a strong sense of micropatriotism and tendency to separatism. In the sixteenth century the importance of the cabecera-sujeto structure to the colonial economy inhibited this tendency to separatism. But as Spaniards increasingly relied on informal labor arrangement with no reference to the formal structu e of the indigenous polity, the desire among tlaxilacalli to separate came to the fore, encouraged in part by the concept of hierarchy inherent in the distinction between cabecera and sujeto as introduced by the Spaniards. In Coyoacan the fragmentation of the altepetl first occurred along the lines of constituent altepetl rather than individual tlaxilacalli, the Indians adopting Spanish criteria for independent status, but instilling them with indigenous meaning, and using them to express the indentity and integrity of pre-conquest units.