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Robert Haskett*

The Indian Municipality of Cuernavaca in the Colonial Period

The rapid Spanish military victory over the Mexica Empire was only a violent precursor to a much longer administrative conquest of New Spain. Crucial to the formation of a viable colonial state was an effort to reshape indigenous society into an easily controllable form, one that would be compatible with the Spanish system. A corpus of laws and procedures began to take shape during the sixteenth century that would theoretically touch upon every aspect of indigenous life. Many of them called for an intervention into the traditional political organization of the indigenous *altepetl*, the regional states covering much of the central Mexican countryside. In each of the states (as the Spaniards perceived them) an attempt was made to shape the local ruling apparatus into a form closely approximating Iberian municipal councils (*cabildos*). These quasi-Spanish cabildos were eventually established in all areas of New Spain, including sepecial jurisdictions such as the Cortés family's Marquesado del Valle, the huge seigniorial estate granted to the conqueror in the early sixteenth century.

One segment of the Cortés domain, the Cuernavaca jurisdiction, is an especially rich field for a study of the effect of conquest and colonialism upon indigenous ruling structures. The altepetl of this region were involved in the first wave of attempts to alter indigenous governmental structures. By the end of the sixteenth century all but the smallest towns were led by governing bodies staffed by functionaries bearing an array of Spanish official titles. It seemed as if a fundamental rearrangement, if not a more complete disruption, of pre-conquest jurisdictional allignments had taken place. Yet the Spanish quest for conformity never completely succeeded. The action of decreeing change did not always lead to the desired reaction from the conquered people. Why this was so emerges from the analysis of more mundane sources than imperial legislation. The working documents of community life, above all those written by the Indians themselves, suggest among other things that indigenous cabildo organization was markedly different from Old World counterparts. Indigenous input into the formation and evolution of the cabildos was a key element in all of this. It meant that instead of being finite bodies of officers, the Indian councils of the Cuernavaca region were broader and much more complex groups of elites who together acted as guardians of corporate interest.[1]

Cuernavaca's sixteenth-century cabildo was structured by the governing elite themselves so as to directly reflect the villa's pre-Hispanic organization. In a pattern repeated all over central New Spain, Cuernavaca's hereditary *tlatoani* held the office of *gobernador* (chief administrative officer) through the 1540s, after which other high nobles began to hold the position as well. From the start this office, theoretically a Spanish innovation but with no ready Iberian equivalent, was modified so that it was more in keeping with the villa's own ruling traditions. Before the conquest, Cuauhnahuac (the villa's pre-Hispanic name) had been composed of four major districts, perhaps semi-independent altepetl in their own

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[1]Pedro Carrasco, "The Civil-Religious Hierarchy in Mesoamerican Communities: Pre-Spanish Background and Colonial Development", *American Anthropologist*, 63 (1961), p. 492; and Charles gibson, "The Aztec Aristocracy in Colonial Mexico", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2 (1960), pp. 172-173, both discuss the survival of indigenous "councils of elders" following the conquest of Mexico.

right, complete with distinct tlatoani lineages. There was probably some sort of as-yet undiscovered rotation of the rulership among the four parts similar to a system which existed in pre-Hispanic Tlaxcala that allowed power to be shared over time. Such an arrangement is strongly suggested by the fact that each subdivision boasted its own governor once the villa's quasi-Hispanic cabildo had been established. The position of these apparently subordinate governors within the cabildo is not yet understood. In any event, this system disappeared during in the late sixteenth century.[2] Yet the importance of these subdivisions continued to be reflected in council structure. Officers below the level of governor were specifically attached to these districts, each of which had an *alcalde*, a *regidor*, and several other subordinate officers, a ubiquitous structure that persisted everywhere in the jurisdiction to independence.[3]

Day-to-day council records illustrate time and again that indigenous perceptions of cabildo organization repeatedly strayed fron the narrow path marked out in colonial regulations. In any community, officers of many different types and levels customarily acted together in a variety of matters, and especially in litigation, as rough equals. Past officers and other members of a local group who bore only the titles *huehuetque*, *pipiltin*, or *altepehuaque* (elders, nobles, or town notables) were just as likely to participate in such activities as their elected brethren. Elite women are even known occasionally to have played active if unofficial political roles. Pragmatic Marquesado officers abetted the Indians in the maintenance of this broader operational structure by routinely recognizing the legitimacy of such mixed groups.[4]

In a similarly marked departure from Spanish models, the functions of specific officer types overlapped in ways not envisioned by imperial administrators, further eivdence for the essentially indigenous nature of Cuernavaca's cabildos. Gobernadores (chief municipal officers), alcaldes, and regidores had similar administrative duties, were expected to collect and deliver tribute to the proper authorities, and acted as judges, police officers, and functionaries of the local church. On the other hand, officials generally thought to have been attached primarily to the church, such as *fiscales* (chief secular aids to priests), were not only elected members of most cabildos but also acted with their colleagues in purely secular matters.[5]

This functional confluence can be explained, in part, by the fact that membership in the jurisdiction's ruling bodies remained heavily restricted to the end of the colonial period. With some few exceptions, participation was possible for only a recognized, hereditary elite. The ruling groups of most towns ranged from two to fifteen percent of the male tributary population at any time during the colonial period.[6] Furthermore, elected officials

[2]Archivo General de la Nación, México, Hospital de Jesús (hereafter AGN-HJ), leg. 208, exp. 9. For additional information on Cuernavaca's early cabildo structure see Silvio Zavala, *Tributos y servicios personales de indios para Hernán Cortés y su familia: extracto de documentos del siglo XVI* (Mexico City, 1984), pp. 85-108, 145-196, and 199-206; James Lockhart, Frances Berdan, and Arthur J.O. Anderson, *The Tlaxcalan Actas: A Compendium of the Records of the Cabildo of Tlaxcala, 1545-1627* (Salt Lake City, 1986), discuss Tlaxcala's early cabildo organization.

[3]Cuernavaca's political organization can be recreated by using information found in the expedientes comprising AGN-HJ, vols. 9, 52, and 86, and legs. 51, 59, 106, 115, 329, 347, 421, and 427; the structural evolution of the cabildos of such municipalities as Tepoztlán, Yecapixtla, Tlaltizapán, and several others are discussed in Robert Haskett, "A Social History of Indian Town Government in the Colonial Cuernavaca Jurisdiction, Mexico" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985), Chapter 2.

[4]This is a summary of Chapters 5 and 6 of Haskett, "A Social History of Indian Town Government". Data comes fron Nahuatl- language municipal records and the copious body of litigation preserved in the ramos Civil, Hospital de Jesús, Indios, Tierras, and Tributos of Archivo General de la Nación, México.

[5]Woodrow Borah, "Population Decline and the Social and Institutional Changes of New Spain in the Middle Decades of the Sixteenth Century", *Akten des 34. Internationalen Amerikanisten Kongresses, Wien* (1962), pp. 172-178; Edward Calnek, "Tenochtitlan in the Early Colonial Period", *Proceedings of the XLVII International Congress of Americanists, Paris*, (1979), pp. 35-38; Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford, 1964), p. 153; Delfina Esmeralda López Sarrelangue, *La Nobleza indígena de Pátzcuaro en la época virreynal* (Mexico City, 1965), p. 160; Alejandra Moreno Toscano, *Geografía económica de México* [siglo XVI] (Mexico City, 1968) p. 66; and Joseph whitecotton, *The Zapotecs: Princes, Priests, and Peasants* (Norman, 1977), p. 187, have all identified such a simplification in the areas of New Spain covered by their work.

[6]This compilation is based on a comparison of voter lists from the jurisdiction's Nahuatl and Spanish election records with population figures from census summaries periodically produced by the Marquesado. The ramo AGN HJ is the primary repository of such documents.

and "councils of elders" made up of individuals known as huehuetque were not distinct units, but rather two parts of the same whole. Officers rotated in and out of this pool, giving a past official as much knowledge and authority as another currently in power. Council members who had initiated litigation one year tended to follow it to its conclusion regardless of their momentary electoral satatus. Cabildo veterans who happened to be out of office for the year probably still had more credibility than inexperienced officers serving for the first time.

But the ruling group's apparently egalitarian internal structure should not be overemphasized. It is not evidence that indigenous society had been simplified by conquest and demographic disaster.[7] When the group activities of councils in litigation are examined more closely, for example, it becomes clear that only a few individuals, generally those filling the upper range of political office or coming from families of the highest elite, were in control. Overlap in officer function aside, it soon becomes obvious that certain functionaries possessed greater authority and pursued a broader set of duties than others, and that officials in the lower reaches of a cabildo carried out a much narrower range of functions than those above them. All of this indicates that the jurisdiction's ruling bodies were hierarchically organized and internally stratified, and continued to be so to the end of the colonial period.[8]

Career patterns

Officer career patterns echoed the ruling group's internal stratification. The survival of pre-Hispanic notions of what constituted suitable official employment for elites allowed some people to begin their careers in relatively low-level posts with no loss of social status and then move on to ever higher positions.[9] But such symmetrical career ladders were the exception rather than the rule in the Cuernavaca region. For present purposes, the career paths followed by a majority of the ruling group can be organized into three major categories.

At the top were those who never held anything but the highest municipal office, the governorship, and sometimes did so for long periods of time. Repetition in office seems to have been especially common in the seventeenth century, if not before, as much a result of the depressed demographic situation as a survival of pre-conquest dynastic traditions. Governors were constantly re-elected in seventeenth-century Oaxtepec, Tepoztlán, Yecapixtla, and other pueblos and villas of the jurisdiction.[10]

Data are most complete for Cuernavaca itself. A man named don Toribio de San Martín Cortés was habitually governor of the villa in the late sixteenth century.[11] For the period between 1629 and 1650 as few as five people dominated the governorship, two of them members of the Hinojosa family. Similarly, the governor for 19 of the 27 years between 1670 and 1697 was don Antonio de Hinojosa, and only four other individuals are known to have held the post for short terms during the period.[12] At this time Cuernavaca's

[7]Pedro Carrasco, "La transformación de la cultura indígena durante la colonia", *Historia Mexicana*, 25 (1975), p. 180; Nancy Farris, "Indians in Colonial Yucatan: Three Perspectives", in *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica*, Murdo J. MacLeod and Robert Wasserstrom, eds. (Lincoln, 1983), pp. 29-32; José Miranda, "Importancia de los cambios experimentados por los pueblos indígenas desde la conquista", *Akten des 34. Internationalen Amerikanisten Kongresses, Wien*, (1962), pp. 147-152; and John Tutino, "Provincial Spaniards, Indian Towns, and Haciendas: Interrelated Agrarian Sectors in the Valleys of Mexico and Toluca, 1750-1810", in *Pronvinces of Early Mexico*, James Lockhart and Ida Altman, eds. (Los Angeles, 1976), p. 182, all comment on the persistence of a recognizable indigenous ruling group following the conquest.

[8]Lockhart, Berdan, and Anderson, *Tlaxcalan Actas*, identify similar career patterns and the "broadly defined", intrinsically indigenous nature of officer-function in mid-sixteenth-century Tlaxcala. Carrasco, "Civil- Religious Hierarchy", pp. 485-487, discusses a pre-Hispanic career "ladder" and officer hierarchies.

[9]AGN-HJ, vol. 49, exps. 11, 12, and 13 (Oaxtepec, don Matías de la Cruz, 1671-93); vol. 49, exps. 11 and 13, vol. 86, exp. 50, leg. 312, exp. 9; AGN-Tierras, vol. 1714, exp. 8 (Tepoztlán, don Jacinto de Rojas, 1671-1705, and don Bernardino de Rojas, 1689-99); and AGN-HJ, vol. 49, exps. 3 and 11 (Yecapixtla, don Lucas Bautista, 1671-92).

[10]AGN-HJ, vol. 52, exp. 8; AGN-HJ, leg. 312, exp. 20, and leg. 387, exp. 37; and Zavala, *Tributos y servicios personales*, pp. 145-205.

[11]See AGN-Tributos, vol. 52, exp. 17.

[12]Don Josef Gaspar Díaz (1719-1720, 1722-1724, 1728), don Antonio de Hinojosa II (1729-1730), don Melchor de Hinojosa (1714-1716), don Matías de Santiago (1740, 1748, 1751), don Nicolás Pedro de Santiago (1735, 1738), and don Francisco de Santiago (possibly two individuals-1734, 1739, 1744, 1746, 1754-1755).

pool of potential officers stood at 40 people, or two percent of the male tributary population. The office of governor was therefore monopolized by a mere 13 percent of the ruling group, or a minuscule .02 percent of the tributary population.

The situation changed only slightly during the eighteenth century. Certain people continued to serve exclusively in the post of governor and some individuals held the post frequently, though extended contiguous terms became rarer. The reasons for this change are not entirely clear, but the demographic increase during this century probably meant that there were more people eligible for the job, and that greater competition for the office of governor led to a slightly more frequent rotation in and out of office. This is not to say that eligibility for the post was broadened or that it became the preserve of more than just a select few. Between 1710 and 1757 the Cuernavacan governorship was held by at most 15 people, six of whom served multiple terms of office.[13] During the same period the governorship of other towns, such as Yautepec, was still dominated by as few as one percent of the male tributary population.[14]

Systematic data available from 1772 to 1811 include the names of all gubernatorial candidates for many different towns. In Cuernavaca, for example, 32 different people aspired to the office, but only 15 of them actually served as governor. Typically, of these five held the office for more than one term.[15] Though governors tended to hold office in a more episodic pattern during the eighteenth century and more people could hope to achieve this rank than before, it remained a highly restricted position unavailable to most members of the ruling group.

Some of those who reached the rank of governor had served in a lower office at a prior date (see List 1), and these people represent the second level in the ruling group's internal hierarchy. Some had worked their way up through the ranks, the governorship representing the peak of their career, but this was not always the case. Many officers, including several in the sample presented here, actually filled lesser offices after completing their terms as governor.[16] Others held a lower office in the midst of a successful gubernatorial career. There was a certain tendency for governors to have served also as fiscales, the principal post connected with the church-related arm of a cabildo, and a similar relationship existed between the offices of governor and juez in Cuernavaca itself (the office of juez was second to the governor in the villa). It is highly significant that all of the offices held by these governors tended to be on the higher levels of the council--it was rare to find someone who had been a mayordomo later attain the governorship.

It should be obvious by now that a large majority of any town's ruling group never attained the governorship. List 2 provides examples of such careers, which can be assigned to the third and lowest level of the ruling elite. Yet it is possible to subdivide this group in turn. Some people seem to have held

List 1: Sample Careers--Officers who Attained the Rank of Governor

don Mateo de la Cruz,	Alcalde, 1712
Tetecala	Governor, 1715
don Juan Esteban,	Regidor mayor, 1628-29
Yautepec	Governor, 1632

[13]See Yautepec's Nahuatl- and Spanish-language election records in AGN-HJ, vols. 8, 9, and 69, and legs. 59, 115, 345, and 373.

[14]See, for example, the career of don Dionisio José Atliyac, governor in 1784, 1793, 1795-1799, 1801-1805, and 1807, AGN-HJ, vol. 82, exp. 17, leg. 55, exp. 1, leg. 309, exp. 5, leg. 356, exp. 5, and leg. 427, exp. 37.

[15]This was also true in Tlaxcala; see Lockhart, Berdan, and Anderson, *Tlaxcalan Actas*.

[16]For a discussion of election disputes in general and this aspect of them in particular, see Haskett, "A Social History of Indian Town Government", Chapter 4.

don Juan Francisco, Tezoyuca	Fiscal, 1642 Governor, 1643, 1644 Alcalde, 1646
don Domingo Gabriel, Tepoztlán	Alcalde, 1716, 1725, and many other times Governor, 1740 Fiscal 1746
don Bonifacio José, Mazatepec	Alcalde, 1798+ Governor, 1800-04, 1806, 1809
don Hipólito Méndez, Cuernavaca	Juez, 1710-11, 1714-16 Governor, 1718
don Francisco de Rojas, Tepoztlán	Governor, 1723, 1737-39, 1742, 1745, 1747, 1751-52 Alcalde, 1735, 1765
don Francisco de Santiago, Cuernavaca	Alcalde, prior to 1734 Juez, prior to 1734 Governor, 1734 Fiscal, 1751
don Lázaro Díaz de Santiago, Cuernavaca	Fiscal, 1630 Governor, 1638, 1640, 1643

+ Had been one of three candidates for governor.

Source: Various volumes, legajos, and expedientes in AGN Civil, Criminal, HJ, Indios, Tierras, and Tributos.

List 2: Sample Careers--Officers who did not attain the Rank of Governor

don Luciano Antonio, Yecapixtla	Alguacil mayor, 1795 Notary, 1801 Alcalde, 1804 Regidor, 1806
Nicolás Antonio, Cuernavaca	Mayordomo, 1739 Regidor, 1745
don José Antonio Atenco, Tlaltizapán	Mayordomo, 1798, 1802
José Guillermo de la Cruz, Tlaltizapán	Notary, 1773-74, 1794-95
don Josef de la Cruz, Yecapixtla	Regidor, 1772-73, 1777
Tomás Enriquez, Huacalco	Alcalde, 1748 and "one other time" Regidor mayor, prior to 1748 Topile, "many time" prior to 1748
Francisco Gómez, Cuernavaca	Alcalde, 1647 Juez, 1648
don Francisco Ortiz, Tepoztlán	Alcalde, 1711, 1725
don Miguel Osorio, Yautepec	Alcalde, 1728-29, 1731-32
don Andrés Antonio de Rojas, Tepoztlán	Notary, 1740, 1747, 1759, 1772-75, 1777-80, 1782+

	Regidor, unspecified date
Juan de San Pedro,	Alcalde, 1673
Cuernavaca	Regidor, 1672

+ Long career verified by handwriting analysis.

Source: Various volumes, legajos, and expedientes in AGN Civil, HJ, and Tributos.

offices exclusively in the upper reaches of the political hierarchy even though they never became governors, while others began at the lowest officer levels and advanced to a relatively high rank over time. Still others did not follow such a symmetrical career pattern at all, filling lower- and higer-level positions in rotation. Finally, there were those who never rose above the lowest levels of office. At any rank, there were many individuals who specialized in one type of office in the same way that certain members of the ruling group served only in the office of governor.

There was some room for mobility between the ruling group's various strata, but rankings tended to be restricted and difficult to penetrate. There was no significant trend towards a weakening of such distinctions as the colonial period progressed. A given individual's relative social status was an important determinant of his access to certain levels of the political hierarchy, a subject which deserves some discussion in its own right.

Social status

Social position was always an important consideration with respect to cabildo service and membership in the ruling group. The documentary record indicates that the status and genealogy of gubernatorial candidates, at least, were hotly debated in election disputes.[17] The social ranking which has received the most scholarly attention is that of *cacique*, an Arawakan word for leader (*Kassiquan*-to have or maintain a house) adopted by the Spaniards during the very early Caribbean phase of settlement and thereafter applied to the *tlatoque* (rulers) and other high nobles of central New Spain.[18] In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries people called caciques held the governorship in the Cuernavaca jurisdiction with great frequency. As elsewhere, caciques gradually found that they had to share power with other powerful nobles, but even so men with the title cacique or *caciques y principales*, a common variant, continued to assume office through the eighteenth century.[19] A liberalization of the title, which could conceivably have been accorded to all officers above a certain rank and social station rather than hereditary caciques alone, may be at work here. As a rule, though, caciques did not serve in low-level offices, most of them filling the governorship at some point in their careers. Below the governor level there were far fewer men in office bearing these titles. Alcaldes or similar officers tended to be called "principales", while regidores and lesser officers were never identified as caciques.

Another way to approach the question of social status is by examinig the use of the title "don". The use of don was highly restricted in colonial New Spain, as it was in Old Spain during the same time period. A Spaniard sporting the title was a person of distinction, a rule also applied to indigenous society. In general, only those of tlatoani, *tecuhtli* (lord), or

[17]Women of a similar rank were called *cacicas*. They could not, however, vote or hold political office. See Ricardo Alegría, "Origin and Diffusion of the Term 'Cacique'", *Acculturation in the Americas: Proceedings and Selected Papers of the 29th International Congress of Americanists* (1952), p. 313.

[18]Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Formas de gobierno indígena* (Mexico City, 1953), p. 37; Woodrow Borah, "The Spanish and Indian Law: New Spain", in *The Incan and Aztec States, 1400-1800*, George A. Collier, Renato I. Rosaldo, and John D. Wirth, eds. (New York, 1982), pp. 268-269; Gibson, *Aztecs*, pp. 154-156, 167-168; and Ronald Spores, *The Mixtec Kings and Their People* (Norman, 1967), pp. 111-112, have identified such a reduction.

[19]See Aguirre Beltrán, *Formas de gobierno*, p. 36; Lockhart, Berdan, and Anderson, *Tlaxcalan Actas*.

pilli (noble) status could rightfully use don before their names, and although its use broadened over time, it remained a designation of consequence through the early nineteenth century.[20] When the available data for the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are compiled (the data for the sixteenth, late eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries are too sparse to be of much use), a suggestive pattern emerges.[21] Nearly all governors were dons, but alcaldes were less apt to be. Officers of the regidor class or lower almost never had the title proceeding their names.

At times, people who moved up through the political ranks were accorded the honorific don when they had achieved a certain official level.[22] For example, Antonio Cayetano, regidor for Cuernavaca's San Miguel district in 1740 and 1744, became don Antonio Cayetano when elected as San Miguel's alcalde in 1746.[23]

Even the powerful don Antonio de Hinojosa, who served as governor through most of the final decades of the seventeenth century. did not sign his name with a don until he achieved the position (and perhaps not coincidentally entered his thirties) in 1670.[24] Though the honorific once achieved was usually retained forever, there were instances in which the title seems to have appertained to the office and not the person. Diego Antonio, regidor of Cuernavaca's San Pedro district in 1738, became don Diego Antonio when he was elected the district's alcalde in 1744. When the same man became San Pedro's alguacil mayor in 1746, however, his name no longer included the honorific.[25]

The use of don reflected almost exactly the internal stratification of the jurisdiction's ruling group. Those of sufficient status to fill the higher cabildo ranks possessed the honorific as a matter of course or achieved the title by reasons of seniority or advancement. Some individuals who did not have a strong social claim to the title might use it if they reached a cabildo's lower official reaches. The majority of the jurisdiction's officers did not use don at all even though they were members of an elite with respect to the rest of society. A few of these men may have been ambitious macehualtin (commoners), and there is a chance that some dons may have sprung from commoner families. This is almost impossible to document, however, and there is every indication that it would have been an exceptional occurrence. Even if the entry of comoners into the ruling group did take place, it did not dilute this body nor did it lead to the disappearance of an independent indigenous nobility, as suggested by some scholars.[26] In the first place, there was a pre-Hispanic precedent for the ennoblement of able commoners, such figures sometimes acting as ruler. In the second place, any macehualli who succeeded in gaining membership in the colonial-period indigenous elite ceased to be a commoner in any real sense.

The available social data for the jurisdiction support and at least partially explain the pattern of stratification suggested by officer careers. Below the level of the dons, caciques, and caciques y principales who served exclusively in the governorship, officers such as those appearing on List 1 were probably from families of lesser stature who depended more heavily on their personal ability and political connections in the quest for the highest cabildo office. In addition, an "apprenticeship" system in which younger members of a

[20]Data was gleaned from a wide variety of Nahuatl and Spanish documentation, notably witness testimony and electoral records, found primarily in the ramos Civil, Hospital de Jesús, Tierras, and Tributos. Sources are far too numerous to list individually.

[21]Lockhart, Berdan, and Anderson, *Tlaxcalan Actas*, have discovered a similar pattern in sixteenth-century Tlaxcala.

[22]AGN-HJ, leg. 59, exps. 3, 9, 10, and 11, which include data for Pascual de la Cruz, a regidor of the San Pedro district who became don Pascual de la Cruz upon attaining the post of alcalde in 1745.

[23]AGN-Tributos, vol. 52, exp. 17.

[24]AGN-HJ, leg. 59, exps. 3, 4, and 10.

[25]Carrasco, "Civil-Religious Hierarchy", p. 493; Gibson, *Aztecs*, p. 153; Moreno Toscano, *Geografía económica*, p. 66; Whitecotton, *Zapotecs*, p. 187.

[26]Pedro Carrasco, "Royal Marriages in Ancient Mexico", *Explorations in Ethnohistory: Indians of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century*, H.R. Harvey and Hanns J. Prem, eds. (Albuquerque, 1984), pp. 43, 45-54. This article is an excellent study of the topic of dynastic marriage in the late pre-Hispanic era. Ronald Spores, *The Mixtecs in Ancient and Colonial Times* (Norman, 1984), p. 109, finds that principales in colonial Mixtecan Oaxaca tended to marry within their class.

higher-stratum family cut their teeth in lesser offices could have been in operation. Individuals such as those on List 2 who never rose above certain positions were members of minor elite families of various ranks who were nonetheless full members of the ruling group in a larger sense.

Marriage, family and compadrazgo

The social status of an individual was of course inseparable from that of the family. Marriage and family had been politically important institutions during the pre-Hispanic era. Certain families had a tradition of officeholding, and it had been common for marital alliances to be formed between various dynasties and noble lineages. The coupling of families of unequel status also took place, usually to the benefit of both parties when one partner possessed position and the other drive and ability.[27] On a more basic level, marriage had marked a man or woman's entry into adult society, and a citizen's "reputation...depended largely upon the decency of his family life and the care with which he brought up his children".[28] The Christian Spaniards held identical beliefs, and these were regularly inculcated among the indigenous population by the Church. There is some evidence that marriage remained a prerequisite for public service: the bachelorhood of one of Cuernavaca's eighteenth-century governors, don Melchor de Hinojosa, was used against him during an election dispute when his opponents suggested that this was one reason for the governor's ineligibility to rule.[29] For the most part, married officers were the norm and bachelors the exception in the colonial Cuernavaca jurisdiction.

The region's patterns of familial officeholding and marital alliance had much in common with pre-conquest strategies. Membership in families of a certain position within a town's differentiated ruling-class society helped determine an individual officer's access to certain political posts and levels of the cabildo hierarchy. Single families often provided incumbents for the same council posts over long periods of time. The tendency for Hinojosa males to hold Cuernavaca's governorship has already been discussed, but the same situation existed in most of the jurisdiction's towns regardless of size. For example, the brothers don Francisco Juan and don Marcos Juan both served as governors of Guaxintlán, the latter in 1733 and the former in 1740. In the Yautepec of the 1770s and 1780s, don Felipe de Alva and don Alberto de Alva, father and son, both held the office of governor. Families of the lesser elite often supplied their pueblos with officers of suitable lower status. It is doubtful that the offspring of petty officials could hope to move above their socially defined station unless they could overcome their family's status through alliances made with more powerful individuals.[30]

Patterns of intermarriage not only traced lines of stratification, but more importantly served to bind the ruling group together. Domination of the upper political strata was strengthened by the tendency for powerful elite families to intermarry, forming alliances which sometimes had the flavor of pre-Hispanic dynastic strategies. Cuernavaca's don Antonio de Hinojosa, for example, married a cacica who was the descendant of a Texcocan cacique family. Marital alliance sometimes brought people of disparate position together for the benefit of both parties much as it had before the conquest, fostered the formation of political factions, and occasionally reflected the existence of ongoing political rivalries. Another Hinojosa marriage, that of doña María de Hinojosa (one of don Antonio's daughters) to the sometime governor don Josef Gaspar Díaz in the early

[27]Soustelle, *Daily Life*, p. 187.
[28]AGN-Criminal, vol. 39, exp. 26, Cuernavaca, 1716.
[29]AGN-HJ, leg. 344, exp. 5, Guaxintlán; and AGN-HJ, vol. 82, exps. 10 and 14, Yautepec. See also AGN-Civil, vol. 118, exp. 5, 1711-12; AGN-HJ, leg. 208, exp. 9 and leg. 344, exp. 17, 1720s; and AGN-HJ, leg. 74, exp. 72 and leg. 78, exp. 15, 1750s, for evidence of families of Tepoztlán which habitually provided the villa with town officers.
[30]AGN-Tributos, vol. 52, exp. 17.

eighteenth century, was an apparent attempt to end the political rivalry that had plagued the two families for over one hundred years.[31] But this marital alliance was an abject failure, and the resulting domestic discord merely fueled the families' traditional rivalry. But other marriages were more successful than this, so much so that the jurisdiction's various ruling groups were closely knit together by familial relationship and the bonds of marriage.

A related quasi-familial tie was based on the Spanish institution of *compadrazgo* (co-godparenthood), an essential element in the sacraments of baptism and marriage in colonial New Spain, quickly adopted by the indigenous population. There actually seems to have been some pre-Hispanic precedent for this Christian institution. Francisco López de Gómara, in describing the marriage rites of the Mexica, mentions people "like godparents" who sponsored and aided a bride during the ceremony.[32] For the jurisdiction's ruling group compadrazgo served as another important strand in the web of interlocking socio-political relationships. Entries in surviving baptismal records from seventeenth-century Cuernavaca show that many of the villa's rulers entered into this relationship with one another. In 1632, Cuernavaca's sometime governor don Lázaro Díaz de Santiago became godfather for the son of a cacique and former governor. In 1633, other nobles sponsored don Lázaro's son, Blas.[33] Tepoztlán's political alliances were customarily cemented with compadrazgo in the eighteenth century. The villa's governor of 1712 was related in this way to the most powerful member of the ruling group at the time, and several important allies of governors belonging to the influential Rojas family were described as "compadres de bautismo".[34] These officers used the personal obligation and tie of godparenthood to cement political alliances and ensure loyalty within the ruling group.

The institution could also be used to bind individuals from lower levels of society to those of higher ones. A former governor of Pazulco, for instance, became godfather to the children of commoners in the 1690s. The Hinojosas of Cuernavaca were perhaps the quintessential godparenting elite family, acting as compadres and comadres for the offspring of numerous macehualtin in the seventeenth century.[35] Members of the ruling elite became the godparents of commoners as a kind of duty which included many potential personal and financial obligations. Such actions must have been encouraged by Spaniards imbued with similar European traditions. The obligations of compadrazgo were not all on one side, however, and the commoners thus favored were bound to their rulers by sacrosanct quasi-familial ties that reinforced subordinate position. Elite godparenting was a favor repaid by commoners with loyalty, service, and the acknowledgement of the status quo. The institution was an integral part of a town's political and social structure, of immeasurable help in maintaining its physical cohesion.

Spanish godparenting of the indigenous ruling group's children operated in much the same fashion.[36] Again, records concerning the Hinojosa family provide the best examples of such relationships. The children of the governor don Antonio de Hinojosa and the cacica doña Felipa de Haro, his wife, tended to have godparents who were influential members of the local Spanish community. One daughter, for instance, was sponsored by one of the jurisdiction's alcaldes mayores. Several other children had Spanish godparents who sported the titles don and doña and were clearly members of the cream of local Hispanic society. The villa's political record demonstrates that the Hinojosas often

[31]AGN-Civil, vol. 1627, exp. 2. Don Josef was a rival of don Melchor de Hinojosa in 1716, AGN-Criminal, vol. 39, exp. 26, and a second don Antonio de Hinojosa in 1730, AGN-HJ, leg. 59, exp. 17.

[32]Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia general de las indias* (Barcelona, 1966), vol. 2, p. 401.

[33]Genealogical Society of Utah, Salt Lake City (hereafter GSU), microfilm, roll 659054. Nahuatl baptismal records of the Cuernavaca parish, 1600-1640; AGN-Civil, vol. 1118, exp. 5, Tepoztlán, 1712; and AGN-HJ, vol. 75, exp. 6, leg. 74, exp. 72, and leg. 78, exp. 15, Rojas and allies, Tepoztlán, 1759.

[34]AGN-HJ, vol. 72, exp. 19.

[35]All godparenting information for the Hinojosa family was found among Nahuatl and Spanish baptismal records from the GSU, microfilm, rolls 659054 and 659063, Cuernavaca parish, 1600-1700.

[36]Cheryl E. Martin, "Demographic Trends in Eighteenth-Century Morelos" (unpublished ms., 1983), p. 12.

benefited from the influence of friendly Spanish officers and citizens. The compadrazgo relationship with such people was certainly an important ingredient in these political connections. In return, the Hinojosas were staunch supporters of the colonial system.

Age and ethnicity

Age, which might also be thought to reflect an individual's standing in the political hierarchy, actually seems to have had relatively little to do with ranking. Throughout the colonial period officers on all levels in every town reportedly ranged from 20 to 100 years old, but caution must be exercised when dealing with any age information appearing in the documentary record. Most data are found in witness testimony in which informants tended to give their ages in round figures or in increments of five; it was extremely rare for anyone to say he was 39 years old, for example. Some had no idea of their own age, in which case Spanish witnesses recorded that the person "is [40] by the look of him". For the most part, ages over 70 can probably be translated merely as "old", though there is some evidence of officers still serving when they had reached quite advanced years. A don Francisco de Rojas of Tepoztlán, for example, was still holding the governorship when he was well over 70.

Such longevity was probably exceptional in colonial New Spain, one study calculating that in the eighteenth century only around seven percent of the indigenous population was over fifty years of age.[37] In the Cuernavaca jurisdiction, the normal age spread for officers of all types was between 30 and 50 or 55 years of age. There does not seem to be have been any rigid ranking by age within any of the jurisdiction's local ruling groups, nor was there an identifiable seniority system in which an officer gained ever-higher ranks as he matured. It was not unusual to find regidores, alcaldes, and even an ocassional governor, as well as lesser officers, who claimed to be less than 30. Social status, rather than seniority or age, allowed 50-year-old topileque to serve under 30-year-old alcaldes. In other words, though in most cases an individual would have to reach 30 before active council service could begin, beyond this general constraint age was not apparently a major force shaping the indigenous political hierarchy.

Ethnicity, too, had a limited impact on the ranking of an individual in the ruling group's social and political hierarchy. The majority were ethnically Indian through the early nineteenth century. Mestizos, castizos, and sometimes Spaniards, however, assumed office in the jurisdiction's cabildos despite repeated laws to the contrary. Many families of the highest elite, such as the Hinojosa of Cuernavaca, were biologically mestizo by the early seventeenth century.[38] Though much was made of their mixed heritage during disputes, few people were ever removed from office for this reason, nor were they barred in practice from the highest poliitical offices. In general, persons of mixed background with the poper ancestry, conec-ctions, or exceptional ability were favored despite the accident of their birth.

Language and literacy

Aside from the highest elite (notably the caciques and *naborías* (personal dependents essentially removed from the Indian world), New Spain's indigenous population never became thoroughly Spanish-speaking. This is obvious from the persistent need of interpreters when Spaniards and Indians dealt with one another, the huge corpus of native-language

[37]Gibson, *Aztecs*, 144.

[38]Similar trends in other parts of New Spain are identified by Gibson, *Aztecs*, pp. 144, 163, 177; Jonathan Israel, *Race, Class and Politics in Colonial Mexico, 1610-1670* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 61-65; Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston, 1967), pp. 43-46; Magnus Mörner and Charles Gibson, "Diego Muñoz Camargo and the Sagregation Policy of the Spanish Crown", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 42 (1962), pp. 561-562; Spores, *Mixtec Kings*, pp. 114-115; David Szewczyk, "New Elements in the Society of Tlaxcala", in *Provinces of Early Mexico*, James Lockhart and Ida Altman, eds. (Los Angeles, 1976), p. 141; and Tutino, "Provincial Spaniards", p. 183.

documents dating from the years immediately following the conquest and extending well into the eighteenth century, and examples of civil documents and religious works written in indigenous tongues by Spaniards for dissemination in the countryside.[39] In some parts of central New Spain, however, there seems to have been a trend towards a growing number of *ladinos* (Indians able to speak Spanish) by the late seventeenth century. This is not demonstrated by a lessening need to use interpreters, but rather by witnesses who admitted to ladino status yet used interpreters anyway.[40]

But in the Cuernavaca region, and perhaps elsewhere, the presence or lack of an iterpreter cannot always be equated with bilinguality of witnesses. Interpreters were used whenever possible because testimony taken from Indians without such assistance could be challenged. Further, the extent to which people were really bilingual when they were called ladinos is questionable. They may have been able to carry out a certain amount of business in halting Spanish, but when giving testimony or swearing out important legal instruments they used Nahuatl, the language in which they could express themselves most easily and clearly, with the least chance of having their statements challenged at a later date. Detailed information drawn from a wide variety of documentary sources is more enlightening, and shows that a vast majority of the jurisdiction's ruling group was unable to speak Spanish even in the later eighteenth century. As might be expected, there was a slight tendency for officers serving on cabildos in the jursdiction's larger towns, with significant Hispanic populations, to be ladinos. Governors, especially those of larger towns, were far more likely to be ladinos than any other officer type, with alcaldes the only other body of officials with any significant number of Spanish-speaking members.

Literacy was tied to social and political status in a similar fashion. In pre-Hispanic times, those filling governmental posts were expected to be well educated. Members of the nobility received rigorous instruction at the hands of indigenous priests at the local *calmecac* (school for the upper classes), including instruction in law, statecraft, reading, writing, divination, chronology, poetry, and rhetoric.[41] In a sense this tradition was carried on following the conquest by those who attempted to teach the younger members of the indigenous nobility Christianity as well as the reading and writing of Spanish.[42] But despite this tradition and the Spanish effort to educate them, very few members of New Spain's indigenous elite were actually able to read and write either their own or the intrusive language.[43]

Literacy is discernible primarily through the analysis of signatures. Individuals with shaky or indistinct hands were probably not actually able to read and write with any facility, while those unable to sign their names at all were definitely illiterate. Truly literate members of the jurisdiction's ruling group included notaries (who were usually literate only in Nahuatl until the mid-eighteenth century) and a few of the high elite.[44] Officers from the jurisdiction's larger towns (primarily those which had the highest non-Indian propulations) were more likely to be literate (in Nahuatl, at least) than those from the many smaller pueblos de indios. This distinction should not be exaggerated, however, for illiteracy rates were high in both cases. When literacy rates for the various officer ranks are compared, it is clear that governors had a better chance of being literate than alcaldes, who in turn were more likely to be able to read and write than regidores and lesser officers.

[39]See Gibson, *Aztecs*, pp. 147-149; and William B. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, 1972), p. 38.
[40]Gibson, *Aztecs*, p. 149.
[41]Francisco Javier Clavijero, *Historia antigua de México* (Mexico City, 1979), pp. 206-207; Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (Mexico, 1979), p. 211; and Jacques Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest* (Stanford, 1961), pp. 169, 172.
[42]Gibson, "Aztec Aristocracy", p. 174. Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico* (Berkeley, 1966), pp. 207-235, gives a detailed if idealized description of these early educational efforts.
[43]Once again, data have been gleaned from hundreds of pages of witness testimony as well as other documentary sources located in the ramos Civil, Hospital de Jesús, Tierras, and Tributos.
[44]The best example of the latter is don Antonio de Hinojosa of Cuernavaca, who not only had a good hand but could also write lengthy documents in excellent Spanish: AGN-Tributos, vol. 52, exp. 17; and AGN-Tierras, vol. 1501, exp. 2.

The ability to read and write, or at least to sign one's name and to speak and understand Spanish, were characteristics that could aid an official career in the colonial world, since indigenous officers with these skills were much better equipped to deal with the Spanish system than those who lacked them. It is therefore not surprising to find such people only in the highest levels of the political and social hierarchies. This is not to say that all upper-level officers were well educated and that suitably able or aristocratic monolingual illiterates could not attain high political rank, since many of the latter did so. But it is no accident that non-ladinos unable to read or write dominated the jurisdiction's lower-level offices.

Conclusions

Even in the last years of Spanish rule, the Cuernavaca jurisdiction's indigenous ruling elite had not become a socially debased group desperately clutching at the tattered remnants of past glory. By actively modifying Spanish cabildo organization in light of native tradition, they had crated a unique Nahua-Spanish political system that survived into the early nineteenth century. As was true of the pre-Hispanic governing class, this colonial council hierarchy was dominated by a vigorous, internally stratified ruling group headed by a few interrelated families whose members monopolized the highest political offices.[45] Below this level were two more main political strata populated by officers carrying out duties which were defined in fundamentally indigenous ways and who pursued career patterns determined in large part by an individual's social status. Some of these officials were undoubtedly literate and bilingual, others may have been ethnically mixed, but the more typical town officer of any level was Indian, functionally illiterate, unable to speak Spanish with any facility, and somewhere between 30 and 50 years old. One of this ruling group's most important achievements had been to construct a system of municipal government that satisfied the colonial authorities at the same time that it preserved a large measure of their own political and social traditions. This proved to be a crucial mechanism of survival in a system in which indigenous rulers found themselves answerable to, and in the final analysis politically dependent upon, foreign overlords.

[45]Preconquest *tlatocayotl* (rulership) had been limited to those descended from certain dynasties of recognized royal status. Below them a hierarchy of nobility and officers, bound together by marriage and family relationships, existed within restricted and well-defined strata. See Edward calnek, "Patterns of Empire Formation in the Valley of Mexico, Late postclassic Period, 1200-1521", in *The Incan and Aztec States, 1400-1800*, George A. Collier, Renato I. Rosaldo, and John D. Wirth, eds. (New York, 1982), pp. 48-57; Carrasco, "Civil-Religious Hierarchy", pp. 484-491, and the same author's "Estratificación social indígena en Morelos durante el siglo XVI", in *Estratificación social en la Mesoamérica preispánica*, Pedro Carrasco and Johanna Broda, eds. (Mexico City, 1976), p. 104; and Michael E. Smith, "The Role of Social Stratification in The Aztec Empire: A View from the Provinces" (unpublished ms., n.d.), which is a study of of Cuauhnahuac's pre-Hispanic ruling class.