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The Americas, Volume 71, Number 1, July 2014, pp. 9-35 (Article)

Published by Cambridge University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2014.0077>



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SPANIARDS IN THE NAHUA CITY OF XOCHIMILCO: *Colonial Society and Cultural Change in Central Mexico, 1650–1725*

In 1650, a Nahua noble named don Martín Cerón y Alvarado set down his last wishes in a codicil. Eminent but now elderly and frail, don Martín had served many times as governor of the central Mexican *altepetl* (ethnic state) of Xochimilco.¹ Located by the lakes to the south of Mexico City, Xochimilco was a prominent and populous polity, renowned for its bountiful wetland agriculture. Such was its size and economic vitality that Spanish authorities, under King Philip II, decided to award it superior municipal status as a city—one of just four such designations in the basin of Mexico.² In keeping with his position as the dynastic ruler of a prestigious *altepetl*, don Martín was a lord of the highest social rank. He could trace his exalted lineage back to Acamapichtli, the Mexica forebear of the Aztec emperor Moteuhcōma Xocoyotzin.³ By 1650, though, don Martín was the last of his kind. No person in Xochimilco would again hold his honorific title, *tlatoani* (dynastic ruler). His codicil and an earlier will and testament, both written in Nahuatl, marked the passing of an era.⁴

I would like to thank Susan Schroeder, James Lockhart, Kevin Gosner, and James Woodard, as well as the anonymous reviewers and the editorial staff of *The Americas*, for their kind suggestions and assistance.

1. As Sarah Cline has noted, Nahuas usually set down last wills and testaments as they perceived death to be approaching. Other documents from his family's estate records, including other testaments and a genealogy, tell us that don Martín Cerón y Alvarado was elderly at the time he signed the document. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City [hereafter AGN], Ramo Vínculos y Mayorazgos, vol. 279, exp. 1, fols. 6–7, 28–28v; Cline, *Colonial Culhuacan, 1580–1600: A Social History of an Aztec Town* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), p. 19.

2. The others were the constituent parts of the Aztec Triple Alliance. *Colección de documentos inéditos, relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de ultramar*, vol. 22 (Madrid: Tipografía de Archivos, I. Olózaga, 1929), p. 103.

3. AGN, Vínculos y Mayorazgos, vol. 279, exp. 1, fols. 28–28v, 30–30v; Luis Reyes García, "Genealogía de doña Francisca de Guzmán, Xochimilco 1610," *Tlalocan* 7 (1977), pp. 31–35.

4. AGN, Ramo Vínculos y Mayorazgos, vol. 279, exp. 1, fols. 10–10v, 12–13v.

In the postconquest period, Xochimilco suffered the same demographic catastrophe that befell other parts of the Americas.⁵ By 1650, its population had reached its lowest recorded level.⁶ Don Martín's own family had not been spared from the appallingly high mortality rates. All but one of his offspring had already passed away by the time he set down his testament. Having deemed his sole surviving son as unfit to inherit the estate, don Martín chose to direct his bequests to San Bernardino de Siena, the city's Franciscan friary.⁷ He arranged for the establishment of a *capellanía*, or chantry, through which masses would be held on behalf of deceased family members.⁸ He appointed his confessor, a friar named Alonso de la Lima, as the executor of the estate, and asked that a Spaniard, Diego Hernández, assist the executor in his work. In a sign of the changing times, all of the witnesses who signed their names to the Nahuatl document were identified as Spaniards.

On first glance, the fact of Spanish signatories to a Nahuatl testament is not especially remarkable. Spaniards and members of the indigenous nobility are known to have sometimes established and maintained close associations with one another.⁹ But it is worth noting that don Martín's testament was set down without the assistance of an interpreter, which suggests that some if not all of the Spaniards present at its drafting were conversant with Nahuatl. In fact, we know from separate sources that some of them were indeed Nahuatl speakers. Don Martín's last wishes, then, offer us a glimpse into a lesser-known facet of colonial encounters in Mexico, namely that of some Spaniards' adaptation to a foreign culture and their adoption of a key aspect of it—in this case, language. Thus, rather than framing don Martín's testament as an example of the declining fortunes of the Nahua nobility—and the end of an

5. Juan Manuel Pérez Zevallos, *Xochimilco ayer*, vols. 1 and 2 (Mexico: Instituto Mora, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Delegación Xochimilco, 2002-2003); Rebeca Ramos, Ludka de Gortari Krauss, and Juan Manuel Pérez Zevallos, eds., *Xochimilco en el siglo XVI* (Mexico: Cuadernos de la Casa Chata, 1981).

6. From an estimated 30,000 Nahuas at the time of the conquest, the indigenous population fell to just 2,686 in 1643. Population figures can be found in the Archivo General de Indias, Seville [hereafter AGI], Patronato, L. 184, R. 50; AGN, Indios, vol. 9, exp. 172 and 173, fols. 82v–83v; Newberry Library, Chicago, Ayer Collection, Ms. 1106, fol. 1v; Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), p. 246; *Moderación de doctrinas de la Real Corona administradas por las órdenes mendicantes, 1623* (Mexico: J. Porrúa, 1959), p. 46.

7. AGN, Indios, vol. 16, exp. 76, fols. 73–74 (71–72 old foliation); AGN, Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, vol. 15, exp. 171, fol. 130v, exp. 179, fol. 141v; AGN, Intestados, vol. 301, fol. 214; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [hereafter UNAM], Biblioteca Nacional, Fondo Reservado, Archivo Franciscano, caja 112, exp 1531, fols. 1–8.

8. See also Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia [hereafter INAH], Mexico City, Fondo Franciscano, vol. 48, fols. 7, 19–19v.

9. Rebecca Horn, "Testaments and Trade: Interethnic Ties among Petty Traders in Central Mexico (Coyoacan, 1550–1620)," in *Dead Giveaways: Indigenous Testaments of Colonial Mesoamerica and the Andes*, Susan Kellogg and Matthew Restall, eds. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), pp. 59–83.

esteemed lineage—this article uses the testament as a point of departure for examining cross-cultural exchanges from a Spanish perspective.¹⁰ As such, it provides a look at ethnohistory from a different vantage: that of Spaniards adjusting to life among Nahuas.

Examining the history of a Nahua *altepētl* from the perspective of its Spanish settlers and creole residents can offer insights into cross-cultural relations in central Mexico. The scholarly literature on Spanish society has typically focused on large, urban areas like the viceregal capitals or provincial cities such as Puebla de los Ángeles, Antequera (Oaxaca), and Santiago de Guatemala, which were designed to be regional centers for colonial authorities.¹¹ Alternatively, we are familiar with the Spanish presence outside those cities, as the owners, administrators, and employees of *encomienda* estates and haciendas, or as small-scale farmers. These *rancheros*, historians have noted, claimed Spanish ethnicity, and while they often came into contact with Nahuas, they usually retained close associations with the Spanish sector of society through ties of language and credit, and their provision of services to the haciendas.¹² Much less is known about the rise of Spanish society in indigenous polities such as Xochimilco, especially its changes over time and the ways in which settlers formed social and economic connections to the city.¹³

Encounters between members of the Spanish community and the majority Nahua population can also tell us about the complexities of *mestizaje*. Instances of Spaniards becoming conversant with Nahua traditions show that processes of acculturation could go in more than one direction, not only toward “Hispaniza-

10. Sarah Cline, for instance, wrote of Xochimilco that “impoverishment and decadence of native ruling lines was the long-term trend.” Cline, “A Cacicazgo in the Seventeenth Century: The Case of Xochimilco,” in *Land and Politics in the Valley of Mexico: A Two-Thousand Year Perspective*, H. R. Harvey, ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), p. 266. See also Charles Gibson, “The Aztec Aristocracy in Colonial Mexico,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (1959-60), pp. 169–196.

11. For works on Peru, see James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532–1560: A Colonial Society* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); and Lockhart, *The Men of Cajamarca: A Social and Biographical Study of the First Conquerors of Peru* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1972). For Mexico City, see Ida Altman, “Spanish Society in Mexico City after the Conquest,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 71:3 (August 1991), pp. 413–445; and Louisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico’s Merchant Elite, 1590–1660: Silver, State, and Society* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). On provincial centers, see Christopher Lutz, *Santiago de Guatemala, 1541–1773: City, Caste, and the Colonial Experience* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Robinson A. Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Sixteenth-Century Santiago de Guatemala* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); and John K. Chance, *Race and Class in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978).

12. 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: UCLA Latin American Center, 1976), pp. 106–110; John Tutino, “Provincial Spaniards, Haciendas, and Indian Towns: Interrelated Sectors of Agrarian Society in the Valleys of Mexico and Toluca, 1750–1810,” *ibid.*, p. 181.

13. One important example is Rebecca Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan: Nahua-Spanish Relations in Central Mexico, 1519–1650* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

tion.”¹⁴ For that matter, the case of Xochimilco calls into question the extent to which cultural hegemony was a guiding force in social relations. By extension, the experience of Spaniards in Xochimilco can speak to the intricacies involved in the fashioning of colonial identities. These experiences raise questions about what it meant to be Spanish or creole in a predominantly indigenous setting.¹⁵

Until recently, few historians had examined patterns of cultural change among Spaniards in a direct or sustained manner.¹⁶ Arguably, it can be said that the cases of Spaniards adopting aspects of indigenous culture with which we are most immediately familiar took place in remote settings or in unusual circumstances, such as those of Gerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero, both of whom were famously shipwrecked and stranded in the Yucatán before the conquistador Fernando Cortés arrived in 1519.¹⁷ Diet supplies another well-known example of adaptation, with colonists reluctantly eating American foods when their own preferred, imported crops failed to take root. In some cases they gradually developed a taste for New Spain’s cuisine.¹⁸ Beyond food, Spaniards occasionally made use of other groups’ medicinal or magical practices. Nonetheless, the abiding image has been of Spaniards clinging stubbornly to their own traditions.¹⁹ And as two historians recently asserted, we may have arrived at the point where we now know as much about the history of indigenous people as we do about Spaniards.²⁰

14. Presumably this absence can be ascribed to factors of colonial power and prejudice. Colonial ideologies are often understood to have involved the denigration of indigenous customs—obviously, there was no imperative, let alone compulsion, for Spaniards to adopt indigenous ways. Thus, terms with potential equivalence to “Africanization” or “Nahuatlization” have seldom if ever been used to describe the acculturative process. Charles Dibble, “The Nahuatlization of Christianity,” in *Sixteenth-Century Mexico: The Work of Sahagún*, Munro Edmonson, ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), pp. 225–233; Colin M. MacLachlan and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *The Forging of the Cosmic Race: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Mexico* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), p. 3. For more recent work on mestizaje, see Carmen Bernand and Serge Gruzinski, *Historia del Nuevo Mundo, tomo II: los mestizajes, 1550–1640* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999); and Serge Gruzinski, *Las cuatro partes del mundo: historia de una mundialización* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), pp. 97–123.

15. Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, “Ethnic and Gender Influences on ‘Spanish’ Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 4:1 (1995), pp. 153–176.

16. A few excellent examples: Solange Alberro, *Les Espagnols dans le Mexique colonial: histoire d’une acculturation* (Paris: A. Colin, 1992); Alberro, *Del gachupín al criollo: o de cómo los españoles de México dejaron de serlo* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1992); and María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi, *Economía y vida de los españoles en la Mixteca Alta: 1519–1720* (Mexico: INAH, 1990).

17. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, A. P. Maudslay, trans. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), pp. 43–46.

18. Shawn William Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 62; Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

19. Martha Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives: Gender, Religion, and the Politics of Power in Colonial Guatemala, 1650–1750* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Solange Alberro, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571–1700* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993); and Laura A. Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

20. Kevin Terraciano and Lisa Sousa, “Historiography of New Spain,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, José C. Moya, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 34.

This article, then, is intended to join recent scholarship on the mechanisms and dynamics of cross-cultural encounters. Historians have begun to reveal the extent to which Nahuatl was a *lingua franca* for different native peoples and for non-Indian groups, as Martin Nesvig has shown in his pioneering study of Nahuatl-speaking Spaniards in Motines (present-day Michoacán).²¹ The case of Xochimilco also serves to remind us of the permeable boundaries and fluidity of colonial identities. Contingent, overlapping, and ambiguous aspects of identity existed, as historians have shown, in spite of the fixed quality of colonial labels (and their continuing use through the postcolonial era). Many in Xochimilco who identified themselves as Spaniards, or were identified by others as such, may have had different or less well-defined identities and may also have seen themselves in ways that were never captured in the documentary records. And while their use is problematic, such terms for ethnicity as “Spaniard” and “mestizo,” among others, appear in this article, because they were found as such in the historical documents and because they serve to point out the juxtapositions and complexities involved in patterns of cultural change.²²

The colonial-era history of Xochimilco affords us with an abundance of documentation with which to examine cultural change among Spanish settlers, creoles, and individuals of mixed ancestry (described collectively as *castas*). For Xochimilco, there exists a comprehensive set of parish registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials that provides useful quantitative and demographic data. These sources in turn provide the base for tracing individuals’ career trajectories and participation in social networks, thereby facilitating the compilation of collective biographies. Prosopography is further supported by an extensive and coherent series of notarial records. Administrative sources provide alternative perspectives on social relations, and numerous legal records, including land and criminal lawsuits as well as a few Inquisition cases, reveal other dimensions of cross-cultural encounters. To these sources a wealth of Nahuatl-language materials can be added. Analysis of indigenous-language documents has become common practice among ethnohistorians of native societies, but those documents have only recently been used to study other social groups, for instance, the Spanish witnesses who appeared in don Martín’s testament. Accordingly, this paper joins a new scholarly trend in

21. See the special issue titled *A Language of Empire, A Quotidian Tongue: The Uses of Nahuatl in New Spain*, *Ethnohistory* 59:4 (Fall 2012), in particular Martin Nesvig, “Spanish Men, Indigenous Language, and Informal Interpreters in Postcontact Mexico,” pp. 739–764.

22. Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, “Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 12:1 (2003), pp. 5–35; Marisol de la Cadena, “Are Mestizos Hybrids? The Conceptual Politics of Andean Identities,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37:2 (2005), pp. 259–284.

which historians examine indigenous-language sources to learn about non-native speakers.²³

Considered together, the sources show the rise of a sizable Spanish society in Xochimilco between 1650 and 1725. The Spaniards living in Xochimilco sought to form a distinct community of their own, but the circumstances of demography meant that they not only encountered Nahuas regularly but also had to reckon, at least initially, with an unfamiliar way of life. By virtue of the demographic and economic influences at work, Xochimilco itself functioned as a force for cultural change. Those Spaniards who worked in trade and local government were the most likely to become familiar with Nahua customs. Long-term residents also fostered ties with the Nahuas, even if their lifestyles did not show many signs of Nahua influences. Identifying changes in past cultures is notoriously difficult. As one would expect, language and material culture, including the trade in indigenous commodities, emerged as the most tangible manifestations of cross-cultural exchanges. Nonetheless, the circumstances surrounding inter-ethnic relations, and the nature of the corresponding encounters, also speak to the ability of Spaniards to adjust to many aspects of life in an indigenous setting. They also reveal some of the processes at play in the making of an increasingly complex, mixed colonial society.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SPANISH SOCIETY IN XOCHIMILCO

Xochimilco's demographic orientation contributed significantly to the likelihood that Spaniards would encounter Nahuas: throughout the colonial period, many more Nahuas than Spaniards lived in the city. By extension, Spaniards would likely establish socioeconomic ties with Nahuas and become conversant with indigenous customs. They would have been exposed to indigenous culture—if not immersed in it—even if they generally showed a preference for endogamous marriages and gradually forged a community of their own. Although always a minority, the Spanish sector of society grew steadily, helped in part by the arrival of immigrants, many of whom were creoles. Newcomers were incorporated into the city through mechanisms common across colonial Latin America, with marriage primary among them.²⁴ Marital ties provided access to extended family networks, and while some individuals entered into fictive kin relationships, others found their places in society through employ-

23. On the use of native-language sources to explore the lifestyles of non-native groups, see the previously cited Fall 2012 special issue of *Ethnohistory*; and Matthew Restall, "A History of the New Philology and the New Philology in History," *Latin American Research Review* 38:1 (February 2003), pp. 113–134.

24. Ida Altman, *Emigrants and Society: Extremadura and America in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Altman, *Transatlantic Ties in the Spanish Empire: Brihuega, Spain, and Puebla, Mexico, 1560–1620* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

ment, credit networks, and participation in local institutions.²⁵ Multiple and overlapping connections bound Spaniards together and gave their community the appearance of being a discrete entity, as though it existed in its own orbit within Xochimilco. The city's demographic orientation, though, meant that Spaniards could not have lived in isolation from Nahuas.

For the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the absence of reliable censuses that included non-Indians prevents us from accurately gauging the size of the Spanish community. Royal officials, interested primarily in revenues from tribute, paid scant attention to the Spanish population but counted the Nahuas assiduously.²⁶ It does seem reasonably clear, though, that during the first half of the colonial period Spaniards were something of a rarity in Xochimilco. Before the second half of the eighteenth century, parish registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials supply the best information about the size of the Spanish and Nahua communities, even though the use of parish registers to gain a sense of population size and social composition is not without its limitations.²⁷ Nevertheless, a general sense of the size of the Nahua and Spanish populations can be gathered from the parish registers, if only because of the considerable disparity revealed in the numbers of their respective baptisms and burials. For example, the registers provide reasonably complete tallies of the number of baptisms for both Nahuas and Spaniards between 1658 and 1688. For Nahuas, the numbers varied between an approximate 200 and 390 baptisms for any single year; for Spaniards, there were between 5 and 35 baptisms each year. For both groups, the higher figures come from the final decade in the sample.²⁸

A similar pattern obtains for burials recorded between 1708 and 1727. The annual number for Nahuas ranged from 110 to 190. For Spaniards, the figures

25. For the social functions of credit, see Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Sixteenth-Century Santiago de Guatemala*, pp. 16–20; and Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

26. AGI, Patronato, L. 182, R. 22; AGI, Indiferente, L. 1529, N. 2 and 3; AGI, Audiencia de México, L. 256; France V. Scholes and Eleanor B. Adams, eds., *Cartas del licenciado Jerónimo Valderrama y otros documentos sobre su visita al gobierno de Nueva España, 1563–1565* (Mexico: J. Porrúa, 1961), p. 196; France V. Scholes and Eleanor B. Adams, eds., *Sobre el modo de tributar los indios de Nueva España a Su Majestad, 1561–1564* (Mexico: J. Porrúa, 1958), p. 105.

27. Some groups may have been more susceptible to epidemic disease than others, and birth and death rates may have varied among different ethnic groups. These uncertainties frustrate attempts to calculate accurately the proportion of Nahua, Spanish, and casta residents. See the parish records of burials for the early 1700s in AGN, Genealogía [microfilm], vol. 1855. There are other concerns. The documentation is not comprehensive, friars were inconsistent in recording information, and the determination of a person's racial status could be arbitrary. Such determinations were subject to contention or confusion, with friars ascribing identity on the imperfect basis of perceived physical characteristics. R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), pp. 24–25, 51–57, 69.

28. AGN, Genealogía [microfilm], vols. 1794 and 1795.

were between 5 and 30.²⁹ As these figures suggest, Nahuas significantly outnumbered Spaniards. Before 1656, Franciscan friars recorded the details of baptisms, marriages, and burials exclusively in Nahuatl; this in itself testifies to the small scale of Spanish society in the city. The friar in charge of the records explained as much, noting that separate entries for Spaniards had not previously been kept because of their small number. Thereafter the Franciscans maintained separate registers for Spanish and castas.³⁰

Parish records indicate, then, that until the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were comparatively few Spaniards in Xochimilco and, by extension, even fewer people of mixed ancestry. Even as the population grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the numerical gulf between Nahuas and Spaniards gradually narrowed, Spaniards remained very much in the minority. A 1688 report listed 2,734 tributaries in Xochimilco, a figure that did not correspond to the entire population because it excluded youngsters and the elderly. This number can be contrasted with the mere 300 non-Indians recorded in 1697.³¹ By 1778, when we have more comprehensive census materials, the proportion of Spaniards had grown to approximately a fifth of the city's population: there were 2,273 Nahuas, 591 Spaniards, and 183 castas (134 of whom were listed as mestizos).³² By contrast, the Spanish population appears to have been much larger in other central Mexican altepetl. Coyoacan, for instance, quickly attracted many Spanish settlers. In Cuernavaca, non-Indians had become the majority of the population by the late colonial period.³³

LAND, ECONOMICS, AND SPANISH SETTLERS IN XOCHIMILCO

The small number of Spaniards living in Xochimilco before the middle of the seventeenth century can be explained in several ways. Although the attractions of a full-fledged Spanish society were close by in Mexico City, and Puebla de los Ángeles was not very far away, Xochimilco would have been something of an unfamiliar place, given its environmental situation and its distinctive eco-

29. AGN, Genealogía [microfilm], vol. 1855.

30. AGN, Genealogía [microfilm], vol. 1794. The casta population remained limited because Xochimilco lacked the kinds of enterprises—for example, sugar and silver—that relied on the labor of African slaves. There was a sugar mill in Xochimilco's jurisdiction, owned by Nahuas, but its workforce consisted of Nahuas. AGN, Tierras, vol. 3018, exp. 2; Cheryl English Martin, *Rural Society in Colonial Morelos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), p. 25; Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519–1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 244.

31. Newberry Library, Chicago, Ayer Collection, Ms. 1106, fol. 1v; Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, p. 246.

32. AGN, Padrones, vol. 29, fol. 258.

33. Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan*, p. 2; Robert Haskett, *Indigenous Rulers: An Ethnohistory of Town Government in Colonial Cuernavaca* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), p. 17.

conomic orientation.³⁴ Nahuas had modified the lacustrine environment to construct raised garden plots of land, known as *chinampas*, as part of a remarkably productive but labor-intensive system of wetland agriculture. Residents cultivated a range of crops on these aquatic gardens, from such staples as amaranth, beans, and maize to vegetables, fruit, and flowers. Xochimilco's relatively prosperous economy was also renowned for its fishing, duck hunting, the harvesting of aquatic plants for foodstuffs and for weaving mats and baskets, as well as carpentry and other specialized trades, including the manufacture of canoes. Farmers, artisans, and traders all relied on canoes for water-borne transportation, as did the flourishing local markets.³⁵

Xochimilco's economic situation may also be distinguished from those of other altepetl in central Mexico. As Rebecca Horn has shown, neighboring Coyoacan soon attracted Spaniards eager to obtain land. As in Coyoacan, so residents of Xochimilco initially looked to Mexico City for the provision of professional services and Spanish products. Over time, a Spanish sector developed within the economies of both altepetl. In the sixteenth century, Spanish farms were to be found across Coyoacan's jurisdiction, farmers having been attracted by fertile soils and an abundance of fresh water. Environmental conditions in low-lying areas, moreover, were propitious for wheat cultivation and the growth of European fruit trees.³⁶ By 1650, the endpoint of Horn's study, Spanish society had become well established in Coyoacan and Spaniards occupied positions throughout the economy, in many cases taking direct control of production. In Xochimilco, by contrast, the rise of a more fully developed Spanish society did not take place until after 1650. And in Xochimilco, Spaniards were less likely to displace Nahuas in the agricultural sector; they thus had a greater chance of engaging in the commercial economy and occupying niche positions that complemented existing economic arrangements. Accordingly, the pattern of Spanish settlement, and its economic and cultural implications, differed considerably even between Xochimilco and nearby Coyoacan.³⁷

Even as they participated in certain aspects of Xochimilco's economy, Spaniards for the most part eschewed chinampa cultivation because of its unfamiliar, painstaking, and complex techniques. They opted instead for more

34. Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, pp. 321, 366, 409.

35. Teresa Rojas Rabiela, "Ecological and Agricultural Changes in the Chinampas of Xochimilco-Chalco," in *Land and Politics in the Valley of Mexico*, H. R. Harvey, ed., pp. 275–290; Rojas Rabiela, *Las siembras de ayer: la agricultura indígena del siglo XVI* (Mexico: CIESAS, 1988); Pérez Zevallos, *Xochimilco ayer*; Richard Conway, "Lakes, Canoes, and the Aquatic Communities of Xochimilco and Chalco, New Spain," *Ethnohistory* 59:3 (Summer 2012), pp. 541–568.

36. Horn, "Testaments and Trade," p. 63. On Spaniards acquiring land in Cuernavaca, see Haskett, *Indigenous Rulers*, pp. 185–187.

37. Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan*, 216.

extensive kinds of farming, particularly pastoralism. In Xochimilco's jurisdiction they typically did so in areas away from the lakes, in the hilly upland known as the *montes*. This piedmont became the site of ranches and haciendas.³⁸ Spaniards also engaged in sectors of the economy related to livestock ranching. They worked in animal husbandry and as livestock breeders, cowboys, and shepherds. They also worked in the provisioning of meat, establishing slaughterhouses in the city and operating butcher shops.³⁹ Alternatively, thanks to the local supply of wool, they worked in Xochimilco's *obrajes*, or textile workshops.⁴⁰ Beyond the agricultural sector of the economy, and employment in commerce, other Spaniards made a living from the trades they had brought with them from Europe, working as sculptors, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, cobblers, and tailors, and in other crafts.

Artisans were among the first to settle in Xochimilco during the sixteenth century. They gained entry into society by establishing connections with the Nahuatl nobility. Nahuatl testaments show that nobles and Spanish artisans loaned one another money. The city's dynastic rulers rented at least six shops on the corner of the plaza to Spanish tailors; of these the Cerón y Alvarado family rented half, and over time came to be closely associated with this line of business.⁴¹ By the seventeenth century, as Sarah Cline has noted, the nephew of the last dynastic ruler worked as a tailor and served as the artisans' titular head. When his daughter, doña Josepha Cortés Cerón y Alvarado, claimed inheritance rights to the family's former estate in 1686, the witnesses she presented in court included tailors.⁴²

If for the most part mutually advantageous, early relations between Nahuas and Spaniards were not without moments of tension. One of doña María de Guzmán's tenants, a Spaniard named Juan López, had been sufficiently delin-

38. Among early land grants for estancias, or ranches, some can be found in AGN, Mercedes, vol. 1, exp. 213, fol. 101v; vol. 2, exp. 41, fol. 19v, and exp. 356, fol. 145v. For some of the haciendas, see AGN, Tierras, vol. 720, fols. 57–163v, vol. 1477, exp. 1, fols. 1–12, 35–177v, vol. 1631, exp. 1, cuad. 2, fols. 1–114v, and vol. 1802, exp. 6, fols. 1–33v; AGN, Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, vol. 18, exp. 184, fol. 131v; and AGI, Escribanía, vol. 194c and México, vol. 781.

39. See among others AGN, Indios, vol. 2, exp. 315, fols. 76–76v, vol. 6, 1a pte., exp. 1025, fol. 277, vol. 7, exp. 100, fols. 50–50v, and vol. 9, exp. 220, fol. 106v; AGN, General de Parte, vol. 839, fol. 155; and Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, p. 346.

40. As such, the Spanish community in Xochimilco resembled that of Toluca in the late sixteenth century, with settlers arriving from Mexico City to work in the Spanish estate economy. Lockhart, "Capital and Province, Spaniard and Indian," p. 110; AGN, Inquisición, vol. 147, exp. 6, fols. 121–188v. For the obrajes, see AGN, Indios, vol. 3, exp. 366, fol. 85v, exp. 872, fols. 211v (219v old foliation); and vol. 6, 1a pte., exp. 640, fol. 170v, and exp. 907 and 908, fols. 244v–245.

41. Apparently the practice of crafts was not antithetical to Nahuatl concepts of nobility. Other nobles, including don Felipe de Santiago, worked as weavers. AGN, Criminal, vol. 232, exp. 21, fols. 409–432v; Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, p. 486, N. 106.

42. Cline, "A Cacicazgo in the Seventeenth Century," pp. 266–268.

quent in paying rent that she ordered his eviction. In their last wills and testaments, some noblewomen prohibited the sale of property to Spaniards. Yet in spite of occasional tensions, bonds of affection also developed, and informal familial links followed. In 1577, a Spaniard inherited property from his Nahua mother-in-law, doña Ana de Guzmán.⁴³ Testamentary bequests such as this, in contrast to the evictions and injunctions against selling property to Spaniards, provide tantalizing glimpses into the dynamics of early Nahua-Spanish relations. The wealth, status, and political clout of the Cerón y Alvarado family were such that Spaniards who sought to establish patron-client relationships had to be appropriately accommodating and deferential. A fascinating, rare vantage on these encounters is afforded by a Nahuatl testimony, translated by James Lockhart, presented before Xochimilco's *cabildo* (municipal council) in 1586 by don Juan de Guzmán. His sister, doña Juana de Guzmán, had set down her testament. Worried about the intentions of his sister, who was quite ill, don Juan paid her a visit. When don Juan arrived, three Spanish women, Juana Méndez, Isabel de Vargas, and Antonia de Avila, were attending to doña Juana, feeding her dinner.

Later, seeking to have the testament nullified, don Juan recounted the circumstances of his conversation with his sister to *cabildo* authorities. The scene he described offers a rare insight into the deferential behavior of the three Spanish women in the presence of his sister:

Then the lady doña Juana de Guzmán said to the Spanish women: "Thank you for your generosity; perhaps this was the last time I will tarry with you, perhaps tomorrow I will be buried; but my younger brother don Juan de Guzmán has come, whom I was looking for and languishing after, and my mind has been put to rest. So do please leave now, for I must talk to him about something." And then the Spanish women went out; they took their leave of the lady, then departed.⁴⁴

The scene is remarkable. As Lockhart has noted, the Spanish women paid their respects and behaved courteously to doña Juana, who occupied the preeminent rank in Nahua society. None of the Spaniards merited the title "doña," and the disparity between their social stations and doña Juana's was further highlighted by her dismissal of them. While don Juan recounted the conversation in Nahuatl, the original may have been conducted in two languages, perhaps with the three visitors and his sister each speaking their own tongue and relying on the listener's passive understanding.⁴⁵ Beyond the question of language, though, this scene

43. AGN, Vínculos y Mayorazgos, vol. 279, exp. 1, fols. 19–25v.

44. Translated by James Lockhart in "The Testimony of don Juan," *Nahuas and Spaniards: Postconquest Central Mexican History and Philology* (Los Angeles and Stanford: Stanford University Press and UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1991), pp. 81–82; AGN, Vínculos y Mayorazgos, vol. 279, exp. 1.

45. Lockhart, "The Testimony of don Juan," p. 79.

reminds us that some Nahuas maintained high status in colonial society. Not only does the scene stand in contrast to the widespread impression of Spanish ascendancy but it also belies the common portrait of the indigenous nobility's decline, particularly when viewed from the vantage of humble Spaniards.

Early relationships between Spaniards and the Nahua nobility set an enduring precedent. Spaniards long sought to remain on favorable terms with Nahua nobles because the latter sat on the *cabildo*, which in turn controlled valuable municipal resources, as well as the supervision of labor drafts. As discussed below, Spaniards sought to rent such municipal properties as quarries and haciendas. These rentals were formalized through notarial contracts, and in a few instances Spanish clients benefitted from the largesse of Nahua patrons—sometimes illegally. In September 1640 Nahua commoners initiated criminal proceedings against Xochimilco's governor for having coerced them into performing illegal labor on Spanish estates.⁴⁶

XOCHIMILCO'S EARLY SPANISH COMMUNITY

Expatriates and settlers also established relations with Spanish officials. Initially, Franciscan friars and royal officials formed the heart of the Spanish presence in the city.⁴⁷ Officials frequently forged strong ties to Xochimilco, with the exception of *corregidores* (the highest-ranking Spanish officers of a district), who did not always reside in the city; even when they did, their terms of office were usually short. In one instance, a *corregidor* returned to Xochimilco after the conclusion of his term of office. Bernardo de la Maza Riva rented a Nahua hacienda from the *cabildo* and loaned money to a prominent Spanish citizen and merchant, don Antonio de los Olivos.⁴⁸ The *corregidor's* staff, including his lieutenant (*teniente*), interpreters, and scribes were recruited to office precisely because they lived in the jurisdiction. The long-serving lieutenant, don Francisco Lozano de Balderas, owned property there.⁴⁹ Officials were also fully involved in the local economy and entered into credit relationships with their peers. Pedro de Manzanal, a shopkeeper who was also the *corregidor's* lieutenant, borrowed money from residents and used his shop and home as collateral.⁵⁰

46. AGN, Criminal, vol. 41, exp. 38, fols. 524–527v; AGN, Criminal, vol. 48, exp. 30, fols. 500–502v.

47. Lockhart, "Capital and Province," p. 111; Tutino, "Provincial Spaniards, Haciendas, and Indian Towns" pp. 177–194. Franciscan friars remained separate from Spanish society because of their place of residence, religious mission, and because they did not marry.

48. Archivo General de Notarías del Departamento del Distrito Federal [hereafter AGNM], Mexico City, Sección Juzgados de Primera Instancia, Serie Xochimilco [hereafter Xochimilco], vol. 1 (second foliation), fols. 47, 116–117v. Apparently, Maza Riva conformed to regulations forbidding *corregidores* from obtaining property in their jurisdictions for a period of six years after their tenures in office. See AGN, Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, vol. 11, exp. 87, fols. 131–131v.

49. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 1–2v, 25v–27.

50. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 83–84, 178v–180, 188–188v, 271–272v.

Official duties brought these individuals into contact with a wide range of residents. For much of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for unspecified reasons, Xochimilco lacked a permanent notary.⁵¹ The corregidor's lieutenant filled this position, a solution that required the presence of two witnesses (known as *testigos de asistencia*), who seem to have been friends and associates, to judge from the frequency in which the same names appeared in the documents.⁵² Officials maintained family ties with local Spanish residents, as with the interpreter Bernardino de Castro who negotiated dowries for his two daughters.⁵³ Even when they did not form family ties, officials could still establish close personal connections with other Spaniards. Don Francisco Lozano de Balderas, the *teniente*, acted as the guardian and tutor for a son of the García family. Indeed, so close was he to the Garcías that he also assisted in the sale of the family's property.⁵⁴

Social gatherings often took place in officials' homes. On Thursday, April 10, 1603, the Spanish residents don Juan de Orozco, Diego de Tapia, and Diego de Castro Ordiales met at the home of the corregidor don Alonso de Zúñiga. In what was otherwise an ordinary get-together, Diego de Castro made the ill-sounding (*malsonante*) and blasphemous comment that the saints were liars.⁵⁵ This unusual turn of events was the exception to an otherwise normal evening spent among friends. As with most other Spanish residents, the guests were creoles, originally hailing from Tlaxcala and Mexico City. They were the owners of European-style enterprises, in this case *obrajes*, and business had brought them to the city. Presumably Diego de Castro maintained close relations with the *obrajeros* because he owned a sheep ranch, which could have supplied wool to the textile workshops.⁵⁶

Gatherings like this suggest that the Spanish community was sufficiently small and intimate that all residents likely knew and associated with one another. Socializing provided an opportunity to reinforce a sense of solidarity. On another evening, a trader named Manuel de Betancourt entertained friends at his home. Those who joined him to play cards included Antonio de Padilla, his son-in-law and a livestock breeder, a goldsmith named Pedro Delgado, and a blacksmith named Diego de Cavallero. Little connected these men other than their status as *vecinos*, or citizens, and their ethnicity. Their occupations differed, as did their marital status and ages. The sole family connection was that

51. However, Xochimilco's *cabildo* had its own scribe.

52. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 19–20v.

53. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 5–6, 99v.

54. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 146–147.

55. AGN, Inquisición, vol. 271, exp. 3.

56. AGN, Mercedes, vol. 28, exp. 436, fols. 161v–162v.

of the father and his son-in-law. We know of this gathering because that night Manuel de Betancourt discovered his wife, Isabel de Mendoza, in the kitchen and in the arms of another man, Juan de Escovedo, and the ensuing fracas led to a criminal investigation.⁵⁷

Some of the early officials and settlers stayed in Xochimilco over the long term and established families that gradually rose to prominence, in some cases achieving relatively high status in the provincial setting. Don Juan de Orozco, who witnessed the blasphemous comment in the corregidor's home, was the head of a family that long remained one of Xochimilco's most notable and illustrious.⁵⁸ Long-term residents such as the Orozcocos facilitated the growth of Spanish society, serving as companions and mentors to newcomers, and helping to integrate immigrants into the community. For much of the seventeenth century Xochimilco typically attracted creole settlers. Notarial records, and in particular last wills and testaments, which often begin with statements about the testator's background, demonstrate that the majority of immigrants to Xochimilco came from Mexico City. Alternatively, as with Antonio López, they hailed from other central Mexican communities such as Quautla de las Amilpas.⁵⁹ Over the course of the century, this pattern gradually changed. Children were increasingly likely to be born to parents who were themselves residents of Xochimilco. Put another way, Xochimilco's Spanish community was becoming self-sustaining. The other change involved, for the first time since the mid-sixteenth century, the arrival of peninsular Spaniards. Presumably these two patterns were interconnected: before the rise of a stable and sizable Spanish community, there would have been fewer opportunities for peninsular Spaniards such as Nicolás García to marry into Spanish social networks. Nicolás originally came from Castile and settled in Xochimilco via an advantageous marriage to doña Luisa de los Olivos, who occupied a higher social rank and belonged to a family that was especially well established and active in the community. Nicolás further cemented his ties to the city when his daughter married into the Orozco family.⁶⁰

Other peninsular Spaniards eschewed marriage when making Xochimilco their home. Don Pedro del Campo, a merchant originally from Córdoba in Spain, had a long-standing, informal relationship with an unnamed woman, fathering three children with her. He became a vecino via property ownership and busi-

57. AGN, Criminal, vol., 232, exp. 6, fols. 136–147v.

58. AGN, Intestados, vol. 309, exp. 10, fols. 366–385.

59. Like many other settlers, López was from the second generation of emigrants from Spain. His father came from Castile but his mother, doña María de Sotomayor, grew up in Mexico City. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 148–154v.

60. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 138–139v.

ness connections, and he maintained ties with Nicolás García, whom he elected as his executor.⁶¹ Alternatively, as with don José Olmedo y Luján, wealth facilitated the setting down of roots in society. Olmedo y Luján arrived from Seville with enough capital to purchase rural properties and become a large landowner.⁶² But not all peninsular immigrants had the resources or the ability to forge personal connections with notable families. Francisco Salvador Jiménez, who married an orphan, established himself in the region in and around the southern lakes by working for a merchant named Pedro de Leite. After service to Pedro, Francisco became a trader on his own and joined a series of business networks. Some of these bound him to Xochimilco, for instance, credit arrangements with the Franciscan friary. He later chose don Juan de Orozco to be his executor, probably because of their participation together in business deals. That he chose an individual as important as don Juan suggests that he had become, by the time of his testament, well integrated into the fabric of local society.⁶³

As the inclusion of emigrants into the community demonstrates, Spaniards were bound together by a series of overlapping social networks that revolved around family and business. As with other parts of the early modern Hispanic world, some of these networks depended upon institutional contacts, for instance those with the Church. The Franciscan friary occupied a central place in the ties that bound Spanish citizens to Xochimilco. Residents became closely involved in local religion as parishioners, attending mass, joining in celebrations, and participating in the four *cofradías*, or lay religious brotherhoods that existed for Spaniards (Nahuas, by contrast, had nine).⁶⁴ Membership in confraternities provided a social connection to the community and could also afford vital assistance in business matters, for instance, in obtaining loans. Members of the Delgado family, for instance, belonged to the confraternities of the Santísimo Sacramento and Nuestra Señora del Rosario, which provided them with credit.⁶⁵ Those who served as deputies for the confraternities were some of Xochimilco's leading Spaniards, including Nicolás García, don Francisco Lozano de Balderas, and don Joseph Orozco, among others.⁶⁶

In addition to their interactions with institutions, Spanish citizens formed deep and abiding relationships with each other. Social bonds often overlapped

61. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 60–62v.

62. AGN, Tierras, vol. 3308, exp. 1, fols. 1–675. vol. 3322, exp. 3 and 4. See also vol. 3179, exp. 1.

63. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 201–204.

64. INAH, Fondo Franciscano, vol. 48, fols. 11v–12; AGNM, Xochimilco; vol. 2 (second foliation) fols. 5–7v.

65. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 71–73v.

66. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 74–76v, 114–116v, 98v–103, 105–107v.

with business connections; the fact that such multiple bonds were mutually reinforcing made them all the more durable. The Orozcós had ties with other notable families. Don Joseph de Orozco was linked to the García family through the marriage of his daughter to Nicolás García. In turn, Nicolás García reinforced this connection by granting his father-in-law powers of attorney. Another marriage between members of both extended families further cemented their ties. Twenty years after the first marriage was contracted, members of the Orozco and García families still continued to share properties or sell them to each other.⁶⁷

Table 1 presents connections among five of Xochimilco's notable families, organized into columns according to their last names. The types of connections between people are identified in the left-hand column and can be read horizontally across the rows, with the first names in the successive columns showing who was linked with whom. The table shows that several different types of connection bound the five families together.

Collectively, the Orozcós had ties with all four of the other families, suggesting that Spaniards were seldom unknown to one another. Indeed, it would have been likely that any one family was but a few stages removed from any other.⁶⁸ This was especially the case because high mortality rates meant that individuals might marry more than once. Joseph de Rentería married three times, and one of his wives was the daughter of the interpreter, Bernardino de Castro. Even without connection as members of extended families, Spanish citizens were acquainted through other forms of association. As the last row of the table shows, financial and property matters linked four of the five families. Also, the Orozco, Olivos, Morales, and García families were neighbors.⁶⁹ There was seldom any great gulf separating one family from another. Because Spaniards were so closely connected, their community could easily be construed as having existed apart from the larger Nahua society. Whereas Spanish settlers in the sixteenth century often forged connections with Nahua nobility, a century later they could do so increasingly with fellow Spaniards. But the fact that Spaniards remained in the minority of the population throughout these periods increased the likelihood of their knowing and establishing contacts with Nahuas. Many of the same mechanisms that bound Spaniards together also connected them with Nahuas.

67. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 7–8, 13–14v, 67–68, 138–139v, 146–147; Latin American Library [hereafter LAL] Tulane University, New Orleans, Viceregal Ecclesiastical Mexican Collection [hereafter VEMC], Leg. 46, exp. 8 (folder 1 of 2), no foliation but dated May 1, 1696.

68. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 98v–103.

69. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 146–147.

TABLE 1
Connections Among Five Prominent Families in Xochimilco, 1695–1725

Connection	Five Notable Families in Xochimilco				
	Puente	García	Orozco	Olivos	Rentería
Family (in-laws), power of attorney	Joseph	Nicolás			
Marriage, power of attorney		Josepha	Joseph		
Marriage		Manuela	Juan		
Marriage			Juan		Isabel
Credit			Nicolás		Antonio
Property sale	Manuel		Antonia's offspring		
Marriage			Antonia	Manuel	
Donation			Joseph	Hipólito	
Marriage		Nicolás		Luisa	
Property sale		Gertrudis		Hipólito	
Executor, credit	Manuel	Manuel		Antonio	Antonio

Source: Archivo General de Notarías del Departamento del Distrito Federal (AGNM), Mexico City, Juzgados de Primera Instancia, Serie Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 7–8, 13–14v, 21–23v, 89–92v, 130v–131v, 138–139v, 177–178v, 191–194, 245–250v, 261v–263v, 292–293v, and 311v–312v.

CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGES IN COLONIAL XOCHIMILCO

Spaniards regularly came into contact with Nahuas because they were neighbors. Notarial records demonstrate that residents lived near one another irrespective of ethnicity. In 1692, for instance, a Spanish woman, doña Josepha de Guevara, bought a house next door to that of Gaspar Andrés, a Nahua. Similarly, a Spanish resident sold a house which abutted those belonging to some Nahuas. In another transaction, two Spaniards were involved in the sale of a house adjacent to that of a Nahua.⁷⁰ One land sale required the participation of individuals of several backgrounds. These included the Nahua noble don Antonio de Mendoza, two commoners, a mestizo man, two *mestiza* sisters, and several Spaniards, including the buyer and seller of the land as well as the witnesses. Moreover, the land was adjacent to several Nahuas' homes, including that of Pasqual "el Metlapilero," which was also being sold to another Spaniard.⁷¹

70. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 15–16v, 63–64v, 87–88v.

71. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 103–104v.

Proximity between Nahuas and Spaniards was not confined to out-of-the-way corners of the city or outlying neighborhoods. Rather, it occurred in the heart of Xochimilco, in and around the plaza and among prominent residents, indicating that social rank did not factor into residential patterns. The corregidor's lieutenant, don Francisco Lozano de Balderas, counted among his neighbors three Nahuas who lived in their own separate homes, as well as two Spanish families.⁷² Doña Gertrudis García de los Olivos lived next door to the Nahua governor don Nicolás de Meza.⁷³ Her relative, don Antonio de los Olivos, had among his neighbors the Nahua governor don Nicolás López as well as another Spaniard.⁷⁴ These examples remind us that in Xochimilco, if not elsewhere, the legal concepts of separate Nahua and Spanish republics were not realized in any physical form. Similarly, Xochimilco's *traza*, those central blocks around the plaza, did not function as a segregated preserve for Spanish residents as they were supposed to in the major urban centers.⁷⁵ Rather, people of different backgrounds shared the same public space.⁷⁶

Living side by side, Spaniards and Nahuas all but inevitably came to know one another. In 1601, two Spaniards, Andrés Carrillo and his wife Úrsula, acted as witnesses in a marriage between Nahuas. They affirmed the marriage's conformity with the requisite banns, suggesting that they knew the bride and groom well.⁷⁷ Spanish witnesses to Nahua weddings such as this one appear intermittently in the parish records, as of course, do Spaniards contracting marriages of their own.⁷⁸ In 1675, Juan Lionel, a Spaniard who had lived in Xochimilco for three years, married a Nahua named Juana Francisca.⁷⁹ The two daughters of don Nicolás de Meza, a noble and governor, married Spaniards, one of whom was originally from Spain.⁸⁰ Others developed ties of fictive kinship, or *compadrazgo*. A Spanish woman, Leonor de Abiego, went to great lengths in 1643 to look after her Nahua goddaughter, Juana Bautista, who got caught up in a conflict with a Spanish woman, Úrsula de Castañeda.⁸¹

72. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 133–134.

73. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fol. 141v.

74. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 69v, 166–167.

75. Cope, *Limits of Racial Domination*, p. 10. Note the contrast with Toluca in the late sixteenth century where, as Lockhart notes, wealthy Spaniards came to be concentrated in the town center. Lockhart, "Capital and Province, Spaniard and Indian," p. 113.

76. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 133–134, 146–147, 173v–175, 197–198.

77. AGN, Genealogía [microfilm], vol. 1855, no foliation (the date given is November 22, 1601). On the requirements for marriage, see Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574–1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 75–78.

78. AGN, Genealogía [microfilm], vol. 1865, no foliation. See the entries for February 16 and March 6, 1642.

79. AGN, Matrimonios, vol. 45, exp. 56, fol. 240; vol. 90, exp. 37, fols. 94–96v.

80. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1 (second foliation), fols. 59v–68v.

81. AGN, Criminal, vol. 234, exp. 3, fols. 38–38v; Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, pp. 46–48. See also Haskett, *Indigenous Rulers*, pp. 149–150.

Both enmities and friendships grew out of daily encounters between neighbors, and some were nurtured over the course of many years. In 1642, a Nahua woman named Josepha de la Cruz, evidently bearing a grudge against two neighbors, a Spaniard named Benito Martín and a Nahua named Petronila Úrsula, asked the authorities to pursue criminal charges against them, for having allegedly stolen chickens and for living together outside of wedlock. Josepha declared that their illicit union had produced many children, but none of the witnesses called before the court supported her charges.⁸² The first, a Nahua man, stated under oath that he had known Benito for 35 years and Petronila since she was a child. He explained that as a neighbor he had seen Benito regularly delivering bread and other food to Petronila and her children. But he had never seen them engage in any kind of illicit act, nor had Benito ever stayed the night with Petronila; rather, his visits always took place during the light of day. The witness further explained that he was in a good position to know all this because he and Benito were colleagues. Both were employees of Francisco Pérez, the Spanish owner of a bakery, and both of them worked the night shift, Benito as foreman (*mayordomo*) and the witness as a baker. Separately, the owner of the bakery, Francisco, confirmed this testimony and added that Petronila had once looked after Benito when he had been ill; Benito now delivered her bread to return the favor. In light of this and several other corresponding reports, the investigating judge dismissed the case. From the neighbors' accounts, Benito apparently enjoyed the support of his community, and while he worked in an ostensibly Spanish enterprise (the bakery) and was employed by a fellow Spaniard, he was well integrated into Nahua society.⁸³

Nahuas and Spaniards did pursue intimate relationships outside of wedlock. As with the allegations against Benito, instances of cohabitation are hard to confirm—if they appear in the sources at all. A need for secrecy in the face of potential sanctions by ecclesiastical or civil authorities meant that informal unions rarely appear in the documentary record.⁸⁴ Alternatively, officials may not have pursued cases all that vigorously: in investigating the charges against Benito and Petronila, the corregidor did not seek evidence about the paternity of her children, even though the plaintiff claimed they were Benito's. Furthermore, traces of illicit relationships sometimes appear only indirectly in the sources.⁸⁵ The first

82. AGN, Criminal, vol. 49, exp. 21, fols. 284–290v.

83. AGN, Criminal, vol. 49, exp. 21, fol. 290v.

84. For cases related to *amancebado* (an intimate relationship outside of wedlock) involving Josepha Ortiz and Juan de Orozco, see AGN, Bienes Nacionales, vol. 596, exp. 42 and 43.

85. In one instance, Franciscan friars expressed worries over men and women bathing together at a *temascal* (bathhouse). AGN, Genealogía, vol. 1796.

draft of a married Spanish citizen's testament obliquely mentioned an earlier friendship (*amistad*) with a single woman whose name he no longer remembered. He subsequently stated that she gave birth to a daughter, whom he had not recognized because of doubts about paternity. In a later version of the will, he admitted the relationship had been illicit, named the parties involved, and acknowledged that he was the father.⁸⁶

Clandestine love, illegitimacy, and other factors often confused ethnic identities or made them indeterminate. The last will and testament of Antonio de los Ríos, an interpreter, highlights the uncertainty surrounding ancestry while also revealing extensive associations across cultures. Antonio may have been an illegitimate son of one don Francisco Velázquez: he described himself as an *hijo natural*, which likely signified illegitimate status. The use of the term *legítimo* was commonplace, and while he did not use it to refer to himself, Antonio did use it to identify his own children. Perhaps tellingly, he made no mention of his mother. His godmother was an unnamed Nahua from Tecomic to whom he owed 400 pesos. Antonio also owed money to at least a half dozen other Nahuas and several Spaniards, including the corregidor. He married twice, and both wives seem to have been Nahuas. He chose a Spaniard, Juan Pichardo, as his executor. Nowhere did the documents mention his ethnic identity.⁸⁷

Similarly, the ethnicity of the long-serving interpreter Bernardino de Castro remains unclear. He was listed in indigenous-language sources as a *nahuatlato*, or interpreter, and was formally employed by the Nahua cabildo. He also served the corregidor and his staff, interviewing criminal suspects, translating Nahuatl notarial records, and carrying out many other administrative duties. Bernardino enjoyed an especially long and apparently profitable career in spite of becoming embroiled in several scandals, including being found out as an accomplice of a malfasant governor and helping him to cover up crimes and deliver an opponent to Xochimilco's jail. Bernardino was also supposedly involved in rigging cabildo elections by sowing discord and threatening violent reprisals.⁸⁸ If he maintained close connections with Nahuas—lawful or otherwise—Bernardino also knew Spanish residents very well. His wife, Luisa de Vargas Calderón Machuca, bore a name that was not usually associated with Nahuas. Their daughter, María Ruiz de la Torre, married a Spaniard, and the parents were sufficiently well off that they could afford to pay a generous dowry. Another daughter, Antonia Domínguez, became the wife of Joseph de

86. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 98v–103, 105–107v.

87. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 175–177.

88. AGN, Indios, vol. 26, cuad. 1, exp. 25, fols. 24–24v, vol. 27, exp. 322, fols. 216v–217, vol. 30, exp. 248, fols. 232–232v; AGN, Criminal, vol. 48, exp. 30, fols. 508–510v, 512.

Rentería, a Spaniard. Perhaps this second marriage was in some way related to an earlier connection between the families: in 1652, Juan Gutiérrez de Rentería had assisted Bernardino as a second interpreter in the collection of testimonies in a criminal case.⁸⁹

Local officials like Antonio de los Ríos and Bernardino de Castro served as key intermediaries between the Nahua and Spanish spheres of society. Most Spanish officials were closely bound to the community from which they hailed; they were permanent, well-known residents who maintained numerous socio-economic ties. As these officials came into regular contact with Nahuas, the attributes that had made them suitable for government service also suited their new associations with native residents. Two of the Spaniards who had been witnesses to the last will and testament of don Martín Cerón y Alvarado held formal positions in local government. Alonso de Chávez served in an interim capacity as a notary. Bartolomé Domínguez Zamudio was a *teniente*.⁹⁰ In 1647, Alonso and Bartolomé worked together on a criminal case in which they were entrusted with gathering evidence. Bartolomé conducted interrogations of Nahuas accused of rioting, and he apparently did so in Nahuatl. Both men worked with the Nahua governor.⁹¹ Bartolomé had previously performed the same kinds of interrogations alongside *cabildo* officers after the arrest of some burglars. The governor of Xochimilco turned the culprits over to Bartolomé's jurisdiction, and together they supervised the investigation before passing what they had found to the courts in Mexico City for a ruling.⁹² These officials' social connections and experience in dealing with Nahuas could be of assistance to Nahua commoners as well as their *cabildo* officers. In 1647, Juan Gutiérrez de Rentería, who had worked alongside Bernardino de Castro as an interpreter, became a legal representative for a Nahua adolescent facing criminal charges.⁹³ Others served in similar capacities.⁹⁴ Just how Juan came by his familiarity with Nahuatl, beyond living and interacting with Nahuas, remains a mystery.⁹⁵

As neighbors, relatives, or officials working together, social connections naturally arose between Spaniards and Nahuas, but they often grew out of shared

89. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 5–6, 99v; AGN, Criminal, vol. 132, exp. 10, fol. 555.

90. Bartolomé may have been related to one Alonso de Zamudio, who had previously presided over a 1622 *residencia*, a routine investigation at the end of an official's tenure. AGN, Historia, vol. 36, exp. 2, fols. 95–196v.

91. AGN, Criminal, vol. 48, exp. 30, fols. 519, 550.

92. AGN, Criminal, vol. 49, exp. 1, fols. 1–44.

93. AGN, Criminal, vol. 232, exp. 14, fols. 333, 337v, 338v.

94. In the same year, Nicolás de Trujillo was appointed as legal representative for a youngster by the *teniente* Agustín de Trujillo. Perhaps the two men were related. AGN, Criminal, vol. 232, exp. 14, fols. 331v–332.

95. AGN, Criminal, vol. 132, exp. 10, fol. 555.

economic interests as well. The two groups came into regular contact when property titles were transferred. Spaniards purchased adobe as well as stone houses from Nahuas. Numerous others were thatched with zacatl and may even have been a kind of Nahua-style home known as a *zacacalli*.⁹⁶ Spaniards also purchased craft items from Nahuas. Isabel López bought religious ornamentation, including figurines and paintings, from Nahua artisans.⁹⁷ Spaniards with ample means may have had a taste for European clothes and Chinese porcelain, but as dowries and testaments show, Nahua goods entered many Spanish homes. Don Nicolás García and doña Lucía de los Olivos included in their daughter's dowry a bed fashioned by Nahua carpenters.⁹⁸

Associations sometimes began with such transitory ties as financial transactions, the rental of property, for instance. The money paid by the merchant Pedro de Leite to the Nahua government for renting the community's hacienda, Teutli, funded the city's hospital.⁹⁹ Miguel de Betancourt, also involved in commerce, likewise established numerous long-standing business relationships with Nahua officials.¹⁰⁰ He entered into several contractual agreements, renting a *tezontle* (volcanic stone) quarry and a hacienda.¹⁰¹ Many of these transactions amounted to little more than fleeting encounters; others, though, could grow into deeper, strategic plans for personal and familial advancement. As levels of trust grew, so people committed to longer-term relationships like credit and loan arrangements, sometimes acting as guarantors (*fiadores*) for one another. The merchant Miguel de Betancourt borrowed money from Xochimilco's Nahua governors, don Joseph Bautista and don Hipólito de Alvarado.¹⁰² Betancourt used his property as collateral to obtain the loans and, unusually, he owned several chinampas.¹⁰³ Through contacts established between neighbors or in business associations, Nahuas and Spaniards at times relied on one another. Some entered into power-of-attorney agreements.¹⁰⁴ Sebastián Flores, a Nahua from San Antonio Tecomic, granted powers of attorney to a Spanish neighbor named Mateo Lozano to represent him in a lawsuit over land.¹⁰⁵

96. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 21–23, 166–167, 183–184v, 214–217v; vol. 1 (second foliation), fols. 22–24, 35–36v.

97. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fol. 108v.

98. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 21–23v.

99. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 85–86v; LAL, VEMC, leg. 46, exp. 8 (folder 1 of 2), no foliation (dated December 23, 1699).

100. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 213–214.

101. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 19–20v, 68–68v, 81v–82.

102. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 158v–159.

103. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 33–34v, 41–42v.

104. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 3–4v, 80v, 148–154v, 203.

105. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 84–84v, vol. 1 (second foliation), fols. 20–21.

As one might expect, those involved in commerce, whether shopkeepers or petty traders, were at the forefront of cross-cultural encounters—their business interests meant that they dealt with Nahuas on a regular basis. Gerónimo de Echevarría, for example, seems to have been well connected with Nahuas. A creole, born in Tacuba, Gerónimo settled in the southern lake areas. His last will and testament, dating from 1643, provides a sense of his commercial activities. He engaged in government contracts to supply saltpeter, deposits of which were found in the nearby village of Mixquic (saltpeter was used for making munitions). He borrowed money and extended loans to Nahuas as well as to Spaniards, including titled individuals, friars, and merchants. Echevarría's testament set aside 150 pesos to repay a Nahua from whom he had obtained an *embarcadero*, a wharf on the shore of the lake. He also owned two horses, 14 or 15 mules, and five canoes, which he used to transport fruit and other local commodities to regional markets. His canoes, the *embarcadero*, and his credit relationships suggest that he had forged close ties with Nahuas. Presumably he spoke enough Nahuatl to support his enterprises.¹⁰⁶

DON ANTONIO DE LOS OLIVOS: SPANISH MERCHANT, NAHUA GOVERNOR

The career of don Antonio de los Olivos demonstrates the extent to which Spaniards could become adept at navigating between cultures. Don Antonio was baptized in Xochimilco as a Spaniard on December 27, 1675.¹⁰⁷ He grew up in the city, where his father, Captain don Cristóbal de los Olivos, was a wealthy Spaniard of respectable social status.¹⁰⁸ Because his father married twice, there is confusion about the identity of his mother. The baptismal record lists Antonio's mother as doña María del Castillo, but other sources name her as doña María de Rivas.¹⁰⁹ As was common in parish records, these women were not explicitly identified in terms of their ethnicity or birthplace.¹¹⁰ The family maintained close connections with other Spaniards in Xochimilco. The peninsular merchant, don Nicolás García, had married doña Lucía de los Olivos, who was apparently Antonio's sister; their daughter, doña Gertrudis García de los Olivos, in turn married another peninsular Spaniard. The marriage was blessed with an expensive dowry.¹¹¹ Indeed, so well established was

106. AGN, Tierras, vol. 2913, exp. 8, fols. 218–224.

107. AGN, Genealogía [microfilm], vol. 1795. For the specific entry, see the second set of records, fol. 92v.

108. Among the properties inherited by his children was a two-story house, a sign of wealth. AGN, Indios, vol. 19, exp. 441, fol. 249v; AGN, Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Distrito Federal – Colonial, Alcalde del Crimen, Serie Civil, caja 7B, exp. 48, fols. 4, 15, 35–37.

109. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 27v–28v, 69–70v.

110. Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences on 'Spanish' Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America," p. 163.

111. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 21–23v.

the Olivos family that one of don Antonio's relatives, perhaps an uncle, had served as the lieutenant to Xochimilco's corregidor in 1662.¹¹² Other relatives, including Hipólito, were perceived as Spaniards. Hipólito worked for the friary as its *síndico*, a position that entailed acting as an agent for the mendicant orders in the collection of the tithe and alms and in managing property.¹¹³ Hipólito served in this capacity for many years and arranged the sale and transfer of properties, in one case land belonging to the Orozco family.¹¹⁴ Don Antonio's son, who was identified as a Spaniard and employed as an embroiderer, would later fall under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition and be banished for bigamy. He succeeded in crossing paths with the inquisitors twice, having failed to go into exile after his first conviction.¹¹⁵

Don Antonio de los Olivos achieved an unusual degree of prominence in local affairs. His path of upward social mobility, however, did not entirely conform to the usual Spanish criteria. Rather, his ascent was realized partially on indigenous terms and owed much to his commercial and linguistic skills. He would have grown up hearing Nahuatl daily. One of his neighbors, moreover, was the Nahua governor Nicolás López.¹¹⁶ Having learned the language, don Antonio established a lucrative career as a merchant, often dealing with Nahuas. Furthermore, don Antonio's economic interests closely resembled those of Nahua traders.¹¹⁷ Among his properties were an embarcadero, two large canoes, and various lands, including chinampas and maguey fields. His last will and testament acknowledged debts to prominent figures in Xochimilco, Nahuas and Spaniards alike.¹¹⁸ Evidently, he made a good living because he could afford to lend substantial amounts of money, in one case 1,000 pesos to Miguel de Morales, a Spaniard, who wanted to purchase cattle.¹¹⁹

Don Antonio also pursued a second career in local government. His first entry into political office came when he was appointed as an interim interpreter, a post that brought him into contact with both Spanish and Nahua officials.¹²⁰ His duties provided crucial experience with bureaucratic and legal practices,

112. AGN, Indios, vol. 19, exp. 441, fols. 249v.

113. Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, S.A., 1995), 896; INAH, Fondo Franciscano, vol. 136, fol. 123.

114. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 232–233, 311v–312v.

115. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 27v–28v; AGN, Matrimonios, vol. 25, exp. 13, fols. 105–109; AGN, Inquisición, vol. 816, exp. 17, fols. 387–390, vol. 866, fols. 378–400, vol. 886, exp. 22, fols. 162–163, vol. 893, fols. 1–221, 381–389.

116. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 69–70v.

117. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1 (second foliation), fols. 39v–40v, 40v–41v; AGNM, Notary Number 392, Antonio Alejo Mendoza, vol. 2603 (second foliation), fols. 24–25v.

118. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1 (second foliation), fols. 46–50v.

119. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 273–273v.

120. AGNM, Notary Number 392, Antonio Alejo Mendoza, vol. 2603 (second foliation), fols. 27v–29v.

and at one point, don Antonio took the precaution of securing the services of a lawyer to represent him in any lawsuits that might appear before the high court.¹²¹ He also cultivated good relations with Nahua officials. Hence one finds his name appended to a Nahuatl notarial instrument through which the cabildo promised to honor some debts. Whether don Antonio was involved in drafting the document cannot be determined.¹²²

Incredibly, in the early eighteenth century the city's Nahua nobles elected don Antonio as their governor. That they did so is all the more remarkable given that he identified himself as a Spaniard.¹²³ Royal orders expressly prohibited non-Indians from holding this office, and Nahuas were quick to seek the removal of unpopular officials by declaring them mestizos.¹²⁴ It may have been that don Antonio gained entry into Nahua society via marriage. He had two wives—María de Sotomayor, and afterward Teresa de San Joseph. Since their ethnic identities were ambiguous, like those of so many other individuals at the time, they could well have been Nahuas.¹²⁵ In any case, don Antonio enjoyed a long and distinguished career as governor. He was re-elected at least seven times over the course of 20 years. He alternated in this post with don Nicolás de Meza, who happened to live next door to Doña Gertrudis García de los Olivos.¹²⁶

Clearly, don Antonio's appointment as governor was neither an expedient nor a temporary measure. Rather, he performed many years of good service for the cabildo, and represented the Nahua community assiduously in disputes.¹²⁷ He also defended the Nahuas' communal land holdings, on one occasion arranging for a land survey. Adhering to protocol so as to ensure proper legal representation, don Antonio extended powers of attorney to one of his predecessors in the governorship, don Hipólito Bautista de Alvarado. Because the notarial document was generated before Spanish witnesses, and don Antonio was then serving as the governor, Antonio de los Ríos stepped in as the official inter-

121. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 104v–105. He also served as a witness to notarial contracts, one of which involved the wealthy peninsular Spanish landowner Francisco de Olmedo y Luján. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 29–30, 217v–219.

122. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 43–43v.

123. On Spaniards being elected to the governorships of some of the larger towns in Cuernavaca's jurisdiction, see Haskett, *Indigenous Rulers*, 139.

124. AGN, Reales Cédulas Duplicadas, vol. 15, exp. 179, fol. 141v; AGN, Indios, vol. 12, 1a pte., exp. 180, fols. 116–116v; vol. 30, exp. 241, fols. 227v–228v and exp. 248, fols. 232–232v.

125. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1 (second foliation), fol. 46v.

126. Don Antonio held this office in 1703, 1704, 1707, 1708, 1716, 1720, and 1722. He may have done so in other years, too; we lack information for several of them. AGN, Indios, vol. 44, exp. 76, fols. 105v–106, vol. 47, exp. 26, fols. 42–43v; AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 85–86v, 96–97, 112v–113v, 113v–114, 155–156, 172–173v, 195–196v, 226v–229, 274–275v, 299–301 (second foliation), 12–13v, 21–22, 57–59v. See also Pérez Zevallos, *Xochimilco ayer*, vol. 2, pp. 72–73.

127. AGN, Indios, vol. 44, exp. 76, fols. 105v–106; AGN, Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Distrito Federal—Colonial, Alcalde del Crimen, Serie Civil, caja 31A, exp. 49.

preter.¹²⁸ Don Antonio's skills as a merchant also likely commended him for service to the Nahua community. He harnessed income from community resources, and was diligent in ensuring the timely payment of tribute. In 1708, he negotiated the rental of land in a swamp—perhaps meaning chinampas—to a Spaniard who held the license to supply meat to the city.¹²⁹ He also insisted that Spaniards repay their debts to the cabildo.¹³⁰

Don Antonio's career was that of an intermediary, much like the native nobles who brokered relationships between the colonial administration and indigenous peoples.¹³¹ He worked as an interpreter, governor, and merchant. He succeeded in converting his social status and well-developed linguistic, legal, and business skills into acceptance in both Spanish and Nahua societies. Even though he was apparently a Spaniard, over the course of three decades, don Antonio de los Olivos served as the highest official in Xochimilco's Nahua government. In doing so, he achieved a remarkable degree of inclusion at the forefront of the city's emerging, mixed colonial society. His biography attests to the success of Spaniards in adapting to life in a Nahua city. And in a poignant reflection of the changes that had taken place, in 1720, some 70 years after don Martín Cerón y Alvarado had established his chantry, don Antonio de los Olivos rented land from the friary that had belonged to don Martín. Abiding by don Martín's last wishes, don Antonio promised to use income from the land to pay for masses on behalf of the former ruler's soul.¹³²

CONCLUSION

From the outset, the Spaniards who established a community in Xochimilco encountered Nahuas and began to forge ties with them. Some adopted facets of Nahua lifestyles; material culture and language were the most conspicuous examples. Because of its demographic and economic orientation, the case of Xochimilco may have been exceptional. Its Spanish population was not especially sizable. Settlers, of course, did not always choose to live in indigenous communities, especially with Mexico City just down the road (or across the lakes). Proximity to the viceregal capital also held implications for the kind of Spanish society that developed in Xochimilco. As with the nearby altepetl of Coyoacan and communities in the Toluca valley, the city lacked the senior administrators, silver miners,

128. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 135v–136v.

129. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 172–173v; AGNM, Not. 392, Antonio Alejo Mendoza, vol. 2603 (fifth foliation), fols. 7v–10.

130. AGN, Indios, vol. 44, exp. 76, fols. 105v–106.

131. Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Alida Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500–1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

132. INAH, Fondo Franciscano, vol. 48, fols. 7, 19–19v.

and long-distance merchants who typically maintained homes in Mexico City. Also missing were the professional groups of licensed physicians and lawyers.¹³³ The Spaniards who did settle in Xochimilco were often those who could find a niche in the local economy, buying ranches in the hills away from the lake, working in enterprises connected with livestock, or making a living as artisans and traders. If a similar pattern had held for the many other altepetl of the region, the cumulative number of Spaniards who became similarly familiar with indigenous society could well have been considerably larger.

Cultural changes followed from routine contacts with Nahuas as neighbors, in business, and through other social and familial connections. Adaptations, it is worth remembering, did not require or entail the loss of Spanish customs or identity. Spaniards who spoke Nahuatl or lived in Nahua-style homes (*zacacalli*) did not become any less Spanish. Rather, cultural adaptations became part of their identities in multiple and often complex ways, and gradually individuals may have ceased to view cultural forms as exclusively Nahua or Spanish. Over time, Xochimilco's society and culture became more fluid, and the ambiguity surrounding the ethnicity of some individuals reflected this process of change.

While we cannot discount the possibility that individuals like don Antonio de los Olivos were mestizos, the case of Xochimilco shows that Nahua society was sufficiently large and attractive that it could act as an acculturative force. A good number of Spaniards and mestizos spoke Nahuatl. Tellingly, some of the latter group could not speak Spanish. In 1696, for example, two mestiza sisters appeared before Xochimilco's notary to sell a shop in the plaza. They had purchased the property from a Nahua and, in turn, were selling it to a Spaniard. To draw up the bill of sale, the sisters, who spoke only Nahuatl, required the services of don Antonio de los Olivos.¹³⁴ The experience of don Antonio, not unlike that of others who were identified as Spaniards, reminds us of the complexities and multiple directions in which cultural changes took place in Xochimilco and, by extension, in communities near the heart of Spanish society and government in colonial Mexico.

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133. Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan* and "Testaments and Trade"; Lockhart, "Capital and Province, Spaniard and Indian," p. 113.

134. AGNM, Xochimilco, vol. 1, fols. 51-51v.