Sources for Indigenous Women and Men in the Valley of Toluca, Eighteenth Century

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The first time I heard of the Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de México (AHAM) was at the end of 1999, when I started the primary research for my doctoral dissertation1 in Mexico City. I was looking for information on the strategy that the church used to educate native women in the eighteenth century, and Pilar Gonzalbo, of the Colegio de México, suggested that I have a look at the reports of inspections (libros de visita) of Archbishop Rubio y Salinas, which were in the Archivo. That is, I started my work as a prospective historian of women within the framework of ethnohistory and more especially of church history of a rather traditional kind. I as yet knew no Nahuatl. Professor Gonzalbo told me that although in previous times it had been extremely difficult to get access to the archive’s collection, the director had recently changed, and the archive might have become more accessible; at least it seemed worth trying. Among the facts researchers in Mexico and many other Latin American countries must deal with are the frequent drastic changes in policy and organization with each new administration of an archive. Had I been more experienced, I would not have been so surprised to find that the people in charge were in the process of moving the archive and starting a new classification of the entire holdings. But even under those conditions they allowed me to study the libros de visita.2 I went there every day, and while reading the reports I became more and more aware of the whole collection that was being classified.

One day, one of the archivists suggested that I might be interested in having a look at the documents of the Juzgado Eclesiástico of Toluca, since they seemed to contain many lawsuits involving the indigenous population, and therefore information on Nahua women.3 The Juzgado was a local court established by the archbishop to exercise discipline in matters of Christian morality, so such materials seemed to correspond to my purpose of investigating the relationship of the church and indigenous women; and in fact, Toluca turned out to be a very suitable area to carry out my intention of studying the everyday life of rural Nahua women and determining the influence (or lack thereof) of the model of Christian life that the church tried to impose. I reviewed more than a thousand files for the first sixty years of the eighteenth century, the time span I meant to cover in order to reach up to the report of the inspection of the Toluca Valley left by Rubio y Salinas. Thus my framework at that time was still quite institutional.

Leaving aside documents related to tithes and litigation among Hispanic peo-

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*© Caterina Pizzigoni 2008.
1Pizzigoni 2002.
2The classification of the documents was begun in August 1999 by a new group of archivists. During the time of my research there was no catalog, then in February 2002 a catalog of the holdings was finally made available to the public: Watson Marrón et al. 2002.
3I am very grateful to Marco Pérez Iturbe for his suggestion, and to him and Berenise Bravo Rubio for their help.
ple, I selected about five hundred files in which the Indians played an essential role, basically lawsuits and marriage certifications (*diligencias matrimoniales*), and also communications of the archbishop or the local clergy concerning the indigenous population. Among them, I found some testaments in Nahuatl, and that is how I got interested in the language. Knowing that the Juzgado of Toluca was a local court, and all litigation that exceeded its competence went to the Provisorato de Indios y Chinos in Mexico City, I also searched in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) for documents from the Provisorato that came from the Toluca Valley.

The unknown is exciting, and so I soon developed a very strong interest in the puzzling Nahuatl testaments of which I could get an approximation only through the Spanish translations that accompanied some of them. I began to take courses in Nahuatl, and especially I attended a summer course at Yale University given by Jonathan Amith, bringing along photocopies of some of my Nahuatl testaments. Though Jonathan’s field was not older Nahuatl, he did devote a session to the transcription and translation of one of my wills; I was thrilled to be able to see the meaning of the Nahuatl words in detail and comprehend something of their structure. At the end of the course Jim Lockhart, whose stock in trade is Nahuatl wills, was a visiting instructor for a week, and I suggested repeating the exercise with him, using a different document. We were immensely lucky with the choice, the testament of a Melchora María. Not only was the will an excellent example of the extremely unorthodox orthography of many documents of late Toluca, its content corresponded precisely with my interests at that time. Melchora María left the majority of her property to her daughter, already grown or nearly so, to take care of her small son, too young to fend for himself, rather than leaving it directly to the infant son. And the will contained an example of an apparent irregularity in Melchora María’s comprehension of Christian doctrine, for in hoping that her children would not argue after her death, she used language showing that she expected to be in *mictlan*. By that she can hardly have meant hell, which was what the word meant in sermons and ecclesiastical texts in Nahuatl. She apparently retained, and surely not she alone, the precontact concept of a *mictlan* which was the land of the dead in general without clear distinction of heaven or hell. I did not then know how rare such documentary jewels are, but my continued avid study of Nahuatl wills was thereby assured.4

In this way my doctoral dissertation came to be built on documents both in Nahuatl and in Spanish. From the beginning my research stood at the juncture of ethnohistory and gender history; with the growth of my interests it came to combine gender history and the specific type of ethnohistory involving indigenous-language philology. Thus my trajectory has been quite the opposite of those who, coming from Nahuatl-language study, are beginning to branch out into Spanish sources as well, although the result may be quite similar.

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4The testament is now No. 24, pp. 96–98, in Pizzigoni 2007.
The Nahuatl Sources

The documents in Nahuatl that I found in the AHAM were overwhelmingly testaments from the eighteenth century, directly relevant to the time span I meant to consider, with the addition of a few I found from the seventeenth century, which later proved invaluable in measuring the timing of trends. Since I was interested in studying women’s issues, I first concentrated only on testaments issued by women, collecting a total of 13 wills; later, I realized not only that men’s testaments contain precious information on women, but also that a comparison of the two genders is essential in terms of a full understanding of women’s position in relation to property, inheritance, status terminology, and naming patterns, and indeed almost anything. I therefore considered also 19 testaments issued by men.

Originally I felt that both the AHAM and the testaments I found there were special, even unique, and I wanted them to be the primary source of any research I might do. But through interaction with Jim Lockhart, who had transcribed some Tolucan wills of the same time from the AGN, and with Stephanie Wood, who had collected a whole corpus of them, I came to realize that there was no essential difference between the documents based merely on where they were stored, and that within the limits of practicality the larger the corpus studied the better. As a result I added some items identified and collected by them, reaching a total of 30 wills of women and 38 of men. The remaining large body of testaments collected by Stephanie, most of them still not transcribed, I reserved for postdoctoral study.  

As I became more familiar with the corpus, I realized that spectacular, immediately impressive and meaningful finds like those in the will of Melchora María were not sufficient to form the underpinnings of a whole approach to the documentation. I did find a few testaments so full that a great deal could be deduced about the life of the testator, notably an Elena de la Cruz who had amassed very impressive holdings for an indigenous person, including real estate, animals, and magueyes, made stupendous local religious donations, especially to the patron saint of her district, was owed a large number of monetary debts by a wide variety of indigenous people, and had numerous children to whom she left bequests. She was important among other things in my first realization of how prominent women were in the production of pulque.

Another way of drawing meaning from individual testaments was taking advantage of any connections between testators that might appear, in other words exploiting testament clusters involving relatives. The situation with testaments which are collected bit by bit in large repositories such as the AHAM and the AGN does not at first sight look as propitious for clustering as with a collection originating in one place and time such as the testaments of Culhuacan, which as

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5Quite a few of my methods and conclusions in dealing with Nahuatl wills, as discussed in the pages below, were anticipated by Stephanie Wood in articles of hers: Wood 1991, 1994, and especially 1997. As it happened, I was aware of the contents only of Wood 1991 until very recently, but I surely want to acknowledge Stephanie for her pioneering.

6Pizzigoni 2007, No. 10, pp. 68–73.
we see in the chapter devoted to them here are full of rich clusters. But the Nahuaatl testaments in the AGN and AHAM, having originally been composed for internal purposes in the various communities, are where they now are by virtue of having been used in litigation in Spanish courts, most often by descendants of the testators. Frequently the litigants would bring in relevant testaments of more than one ancestor or older relative, and thus when we are lucky we can find clusters of two or three relatives in a single dossier. It also does happen, though, that clusters cross dossiers, and the researcher must remain alert for that possibility.

Clusters in a situation like Culhuacan may involve either the same generation or succeeding generations; in dossiers in central archives we are more likely to see succeeding generations. In the case of Elena de la Cruz the wills of two of her female relatives of the next generation were found, one her daughter, making it possible to trace the handing on of specific property. It turned out that the next generation continued in somewhat the same vein as Elena, but on a smaller scale and without such stunning success. But throughout the cluster there is a thread of female independence and assertiveness. In none of their wills do these women mention the husbands we know they had, though women testators most often did mention their husbands, in many cases even if already deceased. Elena followed normal patterns in bequests to her children, having given the most to the eldest son, but she made two daughters the executors of her will and gave them the most prominent duties associated with her religious bequests.

And indeed, a very close analysis of the content of each testament is called for even when it is not as long and as rich in detail as the one left by Elena de la Cruz. I gradually became aware that if someone left land and houses only to grandchildren, not only was that testator an older person, but his or her children were probably already dead. This conclusion could be reached, however, only by attention to the matter throughout the whole corpus. In the same way, trying to keep the whole lot in mind as I read any one will, I gradually became convinced that testators normally mentioned their children in order of birth, and that birth order was important in the allocation of bequests.

Such insights come about at first quite intuitively, from an impression gathered by reading over a variety of material. Some findings, and these include some of the most significant, such as the notion of the importance of birth order, are of such a nature that they must remain somewhat in the realm of the subjective. Others can be systematized and confirmed or refuted, and that sort of systematization became a large part of my work with the Toluca testaments as it proceeded. For example, I had known from the existing scholarship and from my reading of earlier wills that by the late sixteenth century the possessed word *namic*, “one’s spouse,” was the normal expression used in Nahuatl wills for both husband and wife. In reading my wills I indeed found *namic* frequently, but also very frequently the word *cihuauh* (actually usually in the reverential form *cihuahuatzin*), meaning “one’s woman” and here in effect “one’s wife.” I began to have the sense that *namic* in eighteenth-century Toluca testaments almost always meant “one’s husband.” Compiling and counting all the instances of these two words in my corpus confirmed my impression and led to further insight. Women universally called their husbands *namic*, but in the many, many instances of husbands
referring to their wives, that word was used only twice in all the eighteenth-century texts I studied at that time, the exceptions being early in the century and in reference to women of high rank.

Not knowing quite what to make of the exceptions, however, I continued my examination into the relatively few wills I had from the second half of the seventeenth century, and I found that in all of them either -namic was still used universally for both husband and wife, or usage switched back and forth between -namic and -cihuauh for one’s wife. I was thus, on the basis of surveying and counting all the relevant examples in my corpus, able to reach a firm conclusion that in the Toluca region the earlier general use of -namic for both genders began to cede to a differentiated pattern in the course of the second half of the seventeenth century and by the eighteenth century had virtually disappeared. My two apparent exceptions could be viewed as archaic usage in reference to very prominent people or as simply the last gasp of the older style. To confirm my findings yet further, for my sense of earlier usage had been simply an impression, I surveyed the Culhuacan testaments exhaustively and discovered that both husbands and wives were called -namic in literally a hundred percent of the cases.

I tried not to stop with simple compilation, but to put such findings in all the meaningful contexts I could see. In further similar work in my corpus with other kinship terms, I found additional cases in which gender differentiation in speech had advanced since the sixteenth century, and in some of these cases too an originally ungendered general term had been appropriated for the male, with a gendered term now used for the female. The tendency could be an ancient one in the Nahua world, for already in preconquest times the word pilli unambiguously meant a male noble, whereas a noblewoman was a cihuapilli, “woman-noble.” And yet it seemed intuitively clear that increased contact with the more gendered kin terminology of the Spanish world was the root cause, for -namic and -cihuauh are equivalents or translations as exact as one could find of the Spanish marital terminology then used, marido and mujer.

Thus I gradually evolved a methodology which first identifies elements of interest, whether they be tangible objects, relationships, or concepts embodied in words, then detects apparent trends, and finally applies a sort of quantitative analysis to them. Given my own interests, in each case I was careful to compare the instances according to gender associations and to reach conclusions on that aspect. The numbers involved are often not overwhelmingly large, and they do not lend themselves to sophisticated statistical procedures. In matters concerning quantitative proportions, as for example whether more men or more women mention the Virgin of Guadalupe, the size of the corpus is a legitimate source of concern, and I am extending it as far as that can be achieved. In matters of language use, the present corpus is probably already sufficient, at least for eighteenth-century Toluca; thus I have no remaining doubt that -cihuauhtzin replaced -namic as the way to refer to a man’s wife in that region by the first years of the eighteenth century. I claim no absolute novelty, for the first pioneers in the close investigation of collections of Nahuatl wills, such as Kellogg and Cline, already carried out quantitative analysis, but I believe I have innovated in extending the range of such investigation, especially to socioeconomic and kinship categories
and to ritual elements—indeed, to words in general—and that the potential of this kind of attention to words and concepts is great.

With tangible matters such as funeral practices, I have compiled data to find out how often a particular practice recurred in the testaments and thus could be considered either a general pattern or an exception. For example, both genders almost universally requested a mass and burial at the local church and, according to their economic means, made offerings to help their souls. Differences appear more in the details than in the level of assimilation of Christian practices. For instance, in the corpus I was using, while women seemed to give greater importance to dispositions about the mass and bells to be rung, men gave more details about their burial and shroud, and left more varied and substantial offerings to cofradías, as if they had more money at their disposal. Through quantitative comparison it has also been possible to show how certain traits seemed to be localized, such as the use of the habit of the Virgin of Carmen as a shroud, which appears mainly in women’s wills, but also in some issued by men, always coming from the same group of tlaxilacalli (districts).

The fact that Christian funeral practices figure prominently in most wills is evidence of the penetration of church influence at this level, but it is not a new phenomenon, rather a continuation from the sixteenth century, as can be seen by comparison with Nahuatl wills of that time. Indigenous populations had started the process of assimilation of Christian practices shortly after the conquest, although often rather than copying the Spanish models exactly, they reformulated them. This originality can be seen in the testaments from the Toluca Valley through the terminology that was adopted, which in many cases was the same as one would find in Nahuatl wills anywhere in central Mexico at any time after the mid-sixteenth century, but in other cases showed local variants. Many words for Christian concepts were of Spanish origin, but in other cases a native term was preferred even when a Spanish loanword existed as well, as with -tlacuén, used for the habit of an order much more frequently than -hábito, which is also sometimes seen. And indeed, a count of examples known so far shows that -hábito was predominant in the seventeenth century and that -tlacuén later virtually replaced it. The exact circumstances of these distinctions and the reasons for them remain to be investigated more closely, but we seem to see a strong tendency to retain a Nahuatl version of such concepts and especially a specifically local usage about such matters. In some cases the adaptation of Christian practices to indigenous conceptions is evident, not only in Melchora María’s mictlan, already referred to, but in a case such as that of Ambrosio Lorenzo, the father, and Gregorio Juan, his son (another valuable cluster); both of them give instructions in their testaments to be buried under a copal tree, fundamental in indigenous tradition, and no mention is made of religious points of reference such as churches, chapels or images.7

The same type of modest quantitative methodology was applied to patterns of inheritance, and it has been established that in the indigenous world of eighteenth-century Toluca it was common for both women and men to possess a house and some related land and to transmit them to the heirs, although house ownership

7Pizzigoni 2007, Nos. 22 and 23, pp. 91–96.
tended to be somewhat more frequent in men’s wills. These possessions were normally bequeathed to the eldest child, most often a son when there was one, apparently to assure the continuation of the family group. The impression is strengthened by the fact that in some cases, when the eldest son had died, the house and lot were given to his surviving wife to pass on to her children even though she was not a direct member of the family.

As for the house, quantitative analysis could go only so far. Only in the immediate surroundings of the city of Toluca were the constituent parts of the house complex mentioned. Here compilation could establish for example that when there were only two buildings in the complex, they were most often aligned to the east and west of the patio. But the spare language of the testaments left much hidden. In many of the complexes in the Toluca corpus only two elements were mentioned, the *ichantzinco Dios*, literally “the home of God,” also quite often called *oratorio* even in the Nahuatl wills, and a kitchen, *cocina*, but apparently no residential building. Yet the family groups in the Toluca wills generally seem no smaller than those in other corpuses of testaments (specifically, the testaments of Culhuacan). On the face of it, it would seem that these people had no place to live at all. The only likely solution is that the *ichantzinco Dios* was not merely an oratory, but a main residence which also contained an altar or altars with the saints’ images. The lack of specificity in the documents prevents entirely firm conclusions or detailed descriptions, but it would seem that the Nahua household complex in the Toluca region in the early eighteenth century had moved a bit in the direction of the Spanish pattern of a single main residential building for everyone, including the saints, as opposed to a separate building for each nuclear family as earlier. The term “*ichantzinco Dios*” is not seen in older documents or documents from other regions in this particular meaning as far as I know (it was common as a description of churches), and the term “*cocina*” is also rare in Nahuatl testaments of earlier times.

Here as in other aspects of my work with the Toluca testaments I have felt the need of some way to establish what was new or special to the region and what might have originated in earlier times or be shared with other places. In the long run, comparison with testaments from the sixteenth and seventeenth century and from all over New Spain would be called for. In the meantime, the testaments of Culhuacan have proved an excellent tool for a preliminary comparative vision. In this case, house complexes in late sixteenth-century Culhuacan seem to emphasize the building on the north of the central patio as primary, with others added on the east and west as needed, whereas in eighteenth-century Tolucan complexes, as just seen, the main buildings are usually on the east and west, with the northern slot often unoccupied. I have not yet strictly quantified these findings, but it is possible to do so. The term “*ichantzinco Dios*” does not appear in the Culhuacan testaments at all. From scattered references in the scholarship it appears that after the time of the testaments of Culhuacan a santocalli, a separate house for the saints, became a common feature of Nahua house complexes, but the word

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“santocalli” is virtually absent from the Toluca materials. Thus both the term “ichantzinco Dios” and the fact of the integration of the saints’ altar with the primary residential building seem to be new in the eighteenth century or special to Toluca, or both. Both santocalli and ichantzinco Dios are usually given as oratorio in accompanying Spanish translations of the Nahuatl testaments that contain those words, entirely obscuring an important development which can be detected only in the original Nahuatl.

The testaments show the importance of land parcels both inside and outside the house compound proper, and here too we see how significant Nahuatl documents are in revealing information not available through Spanish sources. We encounter a welter of land terms including milli, a cultivated field; tlalli, land in general; tlalmilli, still being investigated but apparently nearly equivalent to milli; solar, lot (for a house but often at a distance and cultivated), tlalli ihuicallo, land going with (a house), and others. They invite analysis in themselves and in their relation to inheritance by gender, a complex matter I will not broach here. Suffice it to say that this terminological richness is hardly even implied in Spanish translations of the wills. Many differences remain to be firmly established, but at present it appears that men receive more land in almost all the categories, while there is no category not also held by women. There was no restriction on women’s possession and bequest of houses and land, but when it came to inheriting them as daughters, they suffered some disadvantages compared to their brothers.

When the unclarity of categories makes statistical analysis difficult, I supplement it with situational analysis. An example that supports the conclusions just given is provided by a family cluster of San Miguel Chapultepec. At the time of his death, Marcos de la Cruz left his home and lot to one of his little sons, probably the eldest, ignoring the little daughter. A few years later, when the wife Paulina María issued her will, the two sons had died, so she left the house and lot to the daughter. Paulina María’s testament also shows how women could possess land that did not come from their husband or husband’s family, that seemed rather to be their personal acquisition or have come from their own family, and it was more likely to be passed on to female heirs. In fact, Paulina María left to her daughter ten furrows of land that her husband did not mention in his testament, so they can be deemed to be Paulina’s personal property, perhaps something that her family had given her at time of marriage.

Yet various cases have been found in which the general rule of bequeathing house and land (connected or not) preferably to sons was broken, and in some of them the decision was taken by a female testator who seemed to show a strong sense of independence. Moreover, these women tended to pass on to their daugh-

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9At the time of writing my dissertation and later preparing Pizzigoni 2007 I literally knew of no instance at all, but in recent further research I have found a single occurrence of the word in a will from Tenango del Valle.

10AGN, Tierras 2543, exp. 6, Testament of Paulina María, 1756, and AGN, Tierras 2542, exp. 6, Testament of Marcos de la Cruz, 1753.

11Another similar case in Pizzigoni 2007, testament of Polonia María, 1710, and testament of Jacinto de la Cruz, 1693, a family cluster from San Pablo Tepemuxalco (Nos. 40 and 41, pp. 130–34).
ters possessions that had already belonged to their mothers, confirming the existence of house and land ownership transmission from female to female across generations. For instance, Pascuala Melchora left the house that her mother had given her to her daughter.\textsuperscript{12} The case is especially interesting since she had a son as well, probably the eldest if we assume, as can be observed in various ways in the corpus, that the tendency is to name children in chronological order. Following this line, the most striking example is given by María Josefa, who declares that her house is to be sold in order to pay her debts, showing a good deal of independence in making decisions about her property. This impression is strengthened by the fact that her husband Adrián Josef mentioned no house in his testament, made before his wife died. One can speculate that María Josefa came from a well-off family who gave her the house at the time of her marriage.\textsuperscript{13}

Above I discussed how close attention to terminology and systematic, comparative compilation can lead to new insights into the evolution of marriage terminology. In addition, some conclusions can be drawn from the detailed analysis of terminology for women’s relationships beyond marriage. First, the findings for the Toluca Valley fully confirm the Stage 3 replacement of traditional Nahuatl sibling/cousin terminology by the Spanish equivalents, with a different manner of gender differentiation, a development which was already recognized as general in central Mexico. On the other hand, the discovery of a more subtle growth of gender differentiation for children, using indigenous terminology, is entirely new, and will likely prove to be general in Nahua society by the eighteenth century. Most of the new Spanish-derived terminology treats females and males equally, often using the feminine and masculine of the very same term. However, -\textit{pil}, originally “child” but now often specifically “son,” vs. -\textit{ichpoch}, originally “grown daughter” but now often daughter of any age, again gives the primary, originally ungendered category to the male alone, following a pattern already seen above with -\textit{namic} vs. -\textit{cihuahuatzin}. Indeed, these developments may be part of a larger trend in Nahuatl under Spanish influence over the centuries and across a large area. In the Nahuatl of Guerrero today, the word \textit{tlacatl}, a human being or person of either gender in traditional Nahuatl, is used to mean “man” specifically.\textsuperscript{14}

The language of the Nahuatl testaments of Toluca represents a challenge. Examples of its difficulties and apparent deviances have already been explored by Jim Lockhart,\textsuperscript{15} but with the larger corpus analyzed here, if we pay close attention to its orthography, we begin to recognize that some things that appeared to be extreme deviances are widespread trends. Yet in this same respect some documents are quite close to the standard seen in the Valley of Mexico at the time. Certain subregional differences are helping in beginning to distinguish cultural subareas within the Toluca region, or strata with different types of education, or cultural evolution across time. There is little doubt that overall the orthography of Toluca Nahuatl documents veers ever more from the relatively standard forms

\textsuperscript{13}Testament of María Josefa, 1737; and the related testament of her husband, Adrián Josef, 1733, in Pizzigoni 2007, Nos. 12 and 13, pp. 75–78.
\textsuperscript{14}Personal communication from Jonathan Amith, October 2001.
\textsuperscript{15}See Lockhart 1991, pp. 122–40. Stephanie Wood too understood the phenomenon.
still seen in the middle of the seventeenth century. But some notable exceptions exist.

In brief, the corpus of Nahuatl testaments of Toluca in the eighteenth century allows for a relatively subtle and reliable reconstruction of key elements of death ritual, the household complex and land regime, kinship terminology, patterns of inheritance, and some economic activity, in each of which the female and male aspects are equally well documented and can be systematically compared. A whole realm, evolving on its own terms however much it may be influenced by Spanish society, is revealed in a way not found in Spanish sources. On the other hand, many aspects of personal interaction are not touched on in the testaments, and one must look to Spanish sources, especially litigation, for some glimpse of the people in action. The kinds of things found in the Nahuatl testaments of Toluca call for a research effort in similar records of other times and places in order to establish trends and continuities that seem to operate quite independently of attempts on the part of the church or other official Spanish agencies to influence native life. Hints of large influence of Spanish civil society on indigenous society call for similar research in Spanish records concerning Spanish people to establish points of similarity and difference. Testaments of Spanish women and men of the Toluca region at the time would be a place to start.

The Spanish Sources

As far as Spanish sources are concerned, the AHAM provides first of all the reports of inspections (libros de visita) and the libros de gobierno of the archbishops of Mexico. The former were issued by the archbishop whenever he conducted an inspection of the archdiocese; for the selected time span two reports were available, one of José Lanciego y Egüilas (1713–28), and the other of Manuel Rubio y Salinas (1749–62). The latter are records of the activities of each archbishop during his rule in terms of edicts, pastoral letters, appointment of clergy, and litigation or complaints referring to the clergy. In this case, libros de gobierno are extant for a third archbishop as well, Juan Antonio de Vizarrón y Egüiarreta (1730–47), though the most interesting remain those of the two archbishops above mentioned. Through these two kinds of sources the official position of the church is made evident, and a certain type of information is provided on the behavior of the local clergy of the Toluca Valley in their everyday contact with the indigenous population. Documents of this kind are useful in giving the official perspective, but are very distant from the information that can be drawn from Nahuatl documents. They are an essential tool in reconstructing church policies and the background of church activities in the area, but they have to be combined with other more mundane sources containing a larger quotient of reliable information about life as lived and not placing church policy in the center of things.

A quite different case is that of marriage certifications (diligencias matrimoniales) and litigation in Spanish presented before the Juzgado, since they come far closer to the actual lives of individuals. The certifications were usually issued by the parish where the wedding took place, recorded in the parish book and also sent to the Juzgado as the main ecclesiastical authority of the area. It is highly

probable that these records did not reach the court in a systematic way, so that the corpus of records examined is not comprehensive, but it is a generous sample from which certain generalizations can be drawn. As to the litigation, lawsuits presented to the Juzgado concerned alleged violations of Christian morality. Whenever a case exceeded the competence of the local court, it was sent to the Provisorato in Mexico. The documents of this type that I analyzed were many, all together more than a hundred diligencias matrimoniales, and various cases of broken promises of marriage (thirteen), mistreatment of women by their husbands (twelve), adultery (four), informal unions (twelve), polygamy (four), healing practices (eleven), and production of alcoholic beverages (two lawsuits but many more references in other cases).\footnote{The documents from the Juzgado Eclesiástico of Toluca are to be found in the AHAM, while the documentation issued by the Provisorato is presently dispersed in different branches of the AGN.}

Generally these materials produce a different kind of information than what one finds in testaments, and in many cases the details provided are essential in order to gain a broader picture of the indigenous society, filling in important dimensions. An example of how the integration of the two sources can produce complementary information is the area of maguey cultivation and production of alcoholic beverages. Testaments reveal that magueyes were often left to heirs or to saints or cofradías, or to pay for burials and funerals, and this can be taken as indicating among other things their commercial value, which was linked to the production of alcoholic beverages, mainly pulque and tepache, a derivative of pulque very common in the Toluca Valley. With this in mind, fourteen women in my dissertation corpus of Nahuatl testaments mention magueyes in their wills, against only nine men; the difference testifies to women’s significant involvement in cultivation of the plant and production of beverages. It was normal for women to possess quite large numbers of magueyes, and in those cases often they did not bequeath any landed property, as if maguey cultivation was their primary activity, besides the usual housework.

From litigation in Spanish we learn that women usually cultivated magueyes in a lot close to the house, then at the proper time the plants were scraped and harvested to collect the juice, which was left to ferment. There remains some doubt as to whether women were just overseeing the harvesting, which we have some definite evidence for, or whether they also did the scraping and collecting themselves, of which we have few cases. Once the beverage was ready, women sold it in their houses or went to pueblo markets. Normally producers of pulque had to have a license provided by Spanish authorities; in fact, in some cases in the documentation, women declared that they produced and sold beverages in total compliance with the law. However, a greater part of production and sale was carried out illegally, within the secure space of the household, or in pueblo markets, not in regular pulquerías, in order to avoid paying taxes. A last detail that litigation gives evidence of is that local authorities carried out periodical expeditions to seek out and punish unlicensed producers, often throwing away pulque or tepache and imposing fines. So, while testaments give us evidence of
women’s ownership of the plants, litigation illustrates how the plants were used and commercialized. Actually, studying the production of alcoholic beverages requires an integration of all kinds of sources, even the formal documents on the church’s attitude toward indigenous people and the clergy, since in the reports of inspection there are often comments on the need to control indigenous consumption of alcohol.

Thus a large amount of complementary information on the maguey industry and women’s role in it can be drawn from the two so different sources of Nahuatl testaments and Spanish litigation. Sometimes important congruences emerge from individual small details which become sources of insight into both bodies of material. An example of this kind has to do with the concept of ichantzinco Dios, mentioned above as meaning literally “the home of God” and given in Spanish translations as oratorio. As we saw, using the testaments I reached the conclusion that the expression referred to the main residence in a house compound. This insight then threw light on an episode in a Spanish legal proceeding initiated by a man who accused his wife’s lover of breaking into the house at night. It was affirmed that when the lover entered the oratory, the family was sleeping there. This seemed an oddity until the conclusions coming from the testaments were brought to bear on it, whereupon this episode was seen to confirm, in a very different kind of source, the use of the oratorio as the main residence.

Spanish sources of another kind are the translations that are often found accompanying Nahuatl testaments, or in a few cases in my corpus are the only surviving evidence of the will. These texts can be useful in the sense that the translator lived closer in time and space to the testator than we do, so he could translate concepts that would otherwise be incomprehensible for us nowadays (as in the case of magueyes capones, where I could not understand the Nahuatl term, but from the Spanish translation I saw that it referred to plants cut in a certain way to extract the juice). The translations are also often extremely helpful in deciphering the puzzling forms of the names of people and local places constantly seen in Nahuatl wills. However, one cannot rely on them alone, since not only do they sometimes omit the most difficult passages and commit out-and-out errors, above all they do not reproduce the original categories reflected in the vocabulary of Nahuatl wills, as in the complexities of kinship and land terminology. For husband one will always find “marido,” for wife always “mujer,” for either tlalli or milli perhaps “un pedazo de tierra.” In the testaments in Spanish of which the Nahuatl original is missing, there is no way to retrieve the Nahuatl terms hiding behind the Spanish translations. Within these limits, Spanish translations remain a most useful source.

Another potentially important resource is the Spanish dossier in which a testament is included, when it is part of a larger proceeding; the dossier can provide essential information in understanding the context of the litigation and the persons involved. Unfortunately, there are very few cases of this kind in the AHAM; most

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18 In the testament of Pascuala María, AGN, Hospital de Jesús 326, 1717. Another example is the definition of almudes, a Spanish measurement derived from the amount of seed that would be used for land of a certain size, in terms of quahuitl, the indigenous land-measuring unit often found in Nahuatl wills, and vice versa.
of the testaments that I found there were isolated documents, or sometimes accompanied only by a translation in Spanish. Testaments in the AGN, however, are more often surrounded by dossiers. The latter are particularly important in carrying parts of the story on for a generation or two after the time of the testator, potentially telling us much about family continuity or its lack and the stability or instability of property holding in the indigenous world.

As I have said above, the data in Nahuatl testaments often suggest indirectly that the Spanish civil society of the region was an important source of influence on indigenous life, and at the very least must be taken as a point of comparison. The AHAM contains many legal actions concerning the relationships of Hispanic people closely equivalent to those I have examined for indigenous people, and an equally close examination of that corpus would doubtless bring to light both similarities and differences. Probably among existing Spanish ecclesiastical records will also be found more reliable information on the clerics acting as parish priests, so frequently condemned by their superiors but an important point of contact between the Spanish and indigenous worlds in ways that the archbishops never mentioned. Surviving wills of Spaniards in the Toluca Valley of the time also have great potential for comparisons and study of interactions.

Concluding Remarks

The use of a combination of sources in Spanish and in Nahuatl can be a very fruitful way of reconstructing the indigenous world of the Toluca Valley and assessing the influence of the church within it. While testaments in Nahuatl tend to give information about normal patterns of everyday life, litigation in Spanish provides details on common problems, tensions, or emergencies that originate in and go beyond the purely “normal” patterns. In a very different but complementary way, official ecclesiastical sources in Spanish (such as reports of inspections and libros de gobierno) can situate the patterns of indigenous everyday life in the context of the policies adopted by the church in the period under study. Thus my work with these documents moves in the direction of a more general integration of Nahuatl and Spanish sources in future research.19

Two aspects of the methodology have proved especially crucial. First is the close, systematic analysis of terminology, here especially Nahuatl words and phrases defining the culture and structure of the household. With documents in a relatively unfamiliar language such as Nahuatl, a philological approach inevitably becomes necessary; specific expressions of the language disclose aspects of the culture and its evolution that were previously understood. An important trend toward change in the use of gender in Nahuatl kinship expressions can only be seen by examining original Nahuatl terms. Work of this type can go far to define the operation and organization of the household and the extent to which various Spanish and Christian elements have been integrated.

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19I would be the first to admit that, affected by the newness to me of the Nahuatl documents, their richness and immediate results, I have to date given them more in the way of rigorous analytical attention than I have the Spanish resources, but the great potential of the latter and of the combination of the two types remains. Many of the methods I have used with Nahuatl sources can be applied equally well to sources in Spanish.
A second important aspect is the decision to include both women and men in the analysis. That is, in my research I have not considered women isolated from the context of their relationships with men, but have studied them in a dialectical perspective with the other sex. I did not, of course, take these directions simply because they were desirable in the abstract, but because they were promising, feasible in view of a source base which yielded a multitude of terms previously unanalyzed and contained fully parallel information on women and men. This approach grew directly out of the materials examined, but it parallels the more general evolution of women’s history in the direction of gender history.

Although using testaments to investigate developments in the Toluca region in the first half of the eighteenth century has identified the continuing penetration of various Spanish elements, it has also supported the view that the household and the local indigenous land regime were the sector least affected by Spanish influence. In other words, it does not seem that Nahuas at the family level reorganized their way of life in the period after 1700 by applying a model promoted by the Catholic church; indigenous household and family were not so malleable, at least not in a direct way, and relatively slight adjustments occurred rather than massive reorganization. The continuation of ancient practices has long been observed for the early colonial period, and it is interesting to see that they continued into the eighteenth century as well. Nor is it evident that the adjustments we find were to church policy rather than to an ever increasing Spanish presence in general.

The process of assimilation and retention can be illustrated through an image provided by a case of idolatry concerning the hacienda of Tlachialoyan. When the ecclesiastical judge made a survey of some confiscated figurines, the following appeared among the others: “Tres angeles, otro dicho al parecer fraile [. . .], otra con una guitarra, otra como en acción de moler [. . .], dos conejos, un venado, tres sapos, dos culebras, una aguila, un caballito.”

Thus traditional indigenous representations of individuals, such as a woman in the act of grinding maize, and native animals with precontact religious implications such as toads, snakes, and eagles were accompanied by figurines of angels, friars, and horses, a mixture of elements coming originally from two different worlds. Let it be noted by the way that such

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20 In the course of my dissertation research I learned a great deal about the definition of research topics in this kind of work. My original topic was the role of indigenous women in the education of children in relation to church teachings. If I had adhered strictly to that subject, I could never have produced a substantial study, because virtually no documents have appeared that say anything about it on the level of social reality. Fortunately I construed my topic broadly and realized that it was a part of the everyday life of indigenous women and that anything about that topic would be part of my research net. In this still new and far from comprehensively documented area, it seems best to define topics broadly from the beginning, and with known archival resources in mind, letting the nature of the sources to a large extent determine exactly what form of the underlying topic will be dealt with.

21 See the explanation in Scott 2001. For a reconstruction of the debate over tendencies in women’s history, see also Caulfield 2001.


23 AHAM, Box 1754, “Causa seguida contra indios y indias de la hacienda de Buenavista.”
open expression of the retention of precontact religious elements will be found primarily in Spanish records of investigations, for they had no occasion to surface in Nahuatl testaments.

Beyond my own specific future research plans related to the present project, some more general imperatives emerge. One lesson of the present study is that it is a fruitful approach not to separate church history or more broadly speaking institutional history from social and cultural history, considering them as distinct branches, but to combine them whenever possible, so that both the connections and the disjunctions can readily be seen. Another need that has emerged from the present project is for close social investigation of rural Hispanic families, which apparently exercised a crucial influence on the indigenous world, and were themselves doubtless strongly influenced.

But I cannot dismiss my own research plans so easily. How to handle a corpus such as the emerging large collection of Nahuatl testaments of the Toluca Valley of the seventeenth and above all eighteenth century is a significant question that deserves open discussion, as well as the place of full-scale philology as opposed to monographic research in dealing with it. It is clear that the body of wills collected by Stephanie Wood and myself, plus some found by others, deserve unified publication with transcription, translation, and commentary as a large Nahuatl corpus from a time and a region so far too little represented in Nahuatl studies. It is also clear that my work points in the direction of a monograph on everyday indigenous life in the Toluca Valley in the eighteenth century, combining Nahuatl and Spanish sources and systematically comparing Toluca with other times and regions on the basis of similar Nahuatl materials where available. Though the monograph is in a way my primary goal, my methods, which depend on a full comprehension of all the details and subtleties of the Nahuatl documents and an exhaustive examination of the whole corpus, virtually demand that the philology be done first. Thus I have been following the same path as Sarah Cline with the testaments of Culhuacan: first the publication of a major set of texts, then a monograph analyzing them. In fact, I have already prepared a publication quite on the order of The Testaments of Culhuacan, with a full treatment of each document, including an uncompromising transcription, a complete facing translation, and an extensive individual commentary or introduction, adding to that a large general analytical study. Since the collection is scattered in origin and very large, in the long run at least one additional volume is planned.

The volume of testaments became much more than I had originally envisioned. It is indeed one more example of what has been variously observed, that in philological ethnohistory the line between an edition and a monograph is becoming ever more blurred, both types likely to contain important new analysis and writing. Aside from the aspects I have already mentioned, the work on the testaments volume, based for practical reasons on wills from Toluca proper and from the double altepetl of Calimaya and Tepemaxalco, threw into relief a striking subregional variation in the Toluca Valley, within a larger regional uniform

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24 Pizzigoni 2007. Much of the introductory study there goes into greater detail as to both substance and philological method than the present article.
ity, and opened up a whole little-studied dimension of ethnohistory as well as providing a means to study it and some provisional conclusions. I believe that intensive philology with Nahuatl testaments of various regions and times will continue to produce new dimensions and insights, and will eventually give us a comprehensive framework for studying the evolution of local societies through the entire Nahua world in the years from contact to independence.

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25 Subregional and regional variation as seen in Pizzigoni 2007 are discussed systematically in Pizzigoni 2007A.

26 All this goes beyond Nahuatl. Much could be learned from comparing editions of Nahuatl testaments with similar things in other indigenous languages, such as Restall 1995, the only such example to date.

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