

Colonial Culhuacan, 1580-1660:



*A Social History
of an Aztec Town*

S. L. Cline

[original copyright material for 1986 edition]

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cline, S. L., 1948-
Colonial Culhuacan, 1580-1600.

Bibliography: P.
Includes index. I

1. Nahuas-Social conditions. 2. Culhuacan (Mexico)-
Social conditions. 3. Aztecs-Social conditions. 4. Indians of Mexico-Social conditions. I. Title.
F1221.N3C58 1986 972'.53 86-7114 ISBN 0-8263-0884-8

© 1986 by the University of New Mexico Press. All rights reserved. First edition.

Designed by Susan Gutnik

COPYRIGHT SARAH CLINE 2002

To Marvin Shinbrot. notlaçonamictzin ocatca

CONTENTS

Illustrations / ix

Preface/xi

1 / Background to Colonial Culhuacan / 1

2 / The Testaments of Culhuacan / 9

3 / Piety, Death, and Wills / 13

4 / Town Government / 35

5 / Family and Inheritance / 59

6 / Wealth / 87

7 / Gender and Status / 107

8 / Land / 125

9 / Conclusions / 161

Appendix 1 / Prices / 173

Appendix 2 / Spanish Loanwords / 177
Appendix 3 / Testaments of Cristina Tiacapan / 183
Appendix 4 / Division of doña Luisa Juana's Estate / 189

Notes / 213
Glossary / 235
Bibliography / 239
Index / 249

[page viii blank in print edition]

p.viii

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

- Fig. 1** Relación geográfica map of Culhuacan / 40
Fig. 2 A Culhuacan house plan 52
Fig. 3 A Culhuacan genealogy / 67
Fig. 4 Cadastral of Juan de San Miguel's portion of doña Luisa Juana's estate / 128

Map

Lake Texcoco region xviii

Tables

- Table 1** Culhuacan rulers / 5
Table 2 Genealogy of Angelina Mocol's family 1
Table 3 Wards of Culhuacan c. 1580 / 56-57
Table 4 Titled testators / 108
Table 5 Testators with titled kin / 109
Table 6 Numerical iconography / 131
Table 7 Toponyms associated with Chinampas/ 136
Table 8 Toponyms associated with Tlalmilli / 138

[p. x blank in print edition]

p. xi

PREFACE

This work is a portrait of life in the Indian town of Culhuacan in the late sixteenth century. Culhuacan was renowned in the prehispanic period as a refuge for the Toltecs after the fall of Tula (about AD. 1100); but in the late sixteenth century, it was just another Indian town

under Spanish rule. This study of a small but historically important Aztec town is unique because it is based primarily on documentation in the native language of Nahuatl, *The Testaments of Culhuacan* (Cline and León-Portilla, 1984). The wills of some of the men and women who died in Culhuacan provide a wealth of information about life and death in the late sixteenth century. The focus is on the *people* of Culhuacan, using the lives of individuals to create a social history of an Indian town.

Anthropologists have described life in present-day villages by living there themselves, by interviewing people, and by observing customs and practices. Historians attempting to reconstruct life in a community are forced to rely on the written records of those long dead. Some types of documents, such as Inquisition records, lend themselves well to historical reconstruction of the lives of individuals. From a single case brought before the Inquisition, the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg could reconstruct the cosmology of a sixteenth-century Italian miller (Ginzburg, 1980). More analogous for this study of Culhuacan is Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie's recreation of life in the fourteenth-century Occitan community of Montaillou, using extensive Inquisition records (1979a).

Testaments and wills are also valuable to historians. A will is a window into someone's life. The men and women who made them listed their property, named their heirs, discharged their debts, [p.xii] made arrangements for the care of their children, and ordered masses. Although the assumption often is that wills were only made by the wealthy, historians of Europe have used testaments to discern patterns of peasant societies, including family structure, residence, and property holding (Goody et al., 1976). Others have used wills to probe changing attitudes toward religion and death (Aries, 1981; Vovelle, 1978).

The principal source for this study of colonial Culhuacan is a book of wills written in Nahuatl, *The Testaments of Culhuacan*. A detailed description of it is given in Chapter 2. The Culhuacan wills were recorded by Indian notaries entirely in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. In the sixteenth century, Spanish friars taught Indian notaries to write their languages in Latin letters. Records in Nahuatl exist in various archives, dating from the mid-sixteenth century through to the early nineteenth.

There are several different types of Nahuatl documents. Some were directed toward the Spanish colonial administration, such as petitions to the king to redress grievances. Other Nahuatl documents, such as testaments, were written for the Indians' own use. Essentially all Nahuatl documents are legal records. Except for a few letters exchanged by members of the Motecuhçoma [Moctezuma] family, which also concerned legal matters (Anderson et al., 1976), Nahuatl documents were public records, not private expressions of sentiment.

Wills are one of the few types of colonial Nahuatl documents which were *standardly* made by individual Indians concerning their families, their property, and their religious beliefs. For this reason, they are important for social historians. Some Nahuatl wills were ultimately introduced into evidence in property suits before Spanish courts, but initially they were simply the records of testators' final wishes. Wills were used to regulate transmission of property within the Indian community and were not primarily addressed to the Spanish world. The limitation of using just one type of historical source for this study—testaments—is offset by the richness of that source. The Culhuacan wills give detailed information on a variety of topics, allowing me to reconstruct a picture of the town and its people from the viewpoint of its Indian citizens.

There is a paucity of other sources for sixteenth-century Culhuacan. There exists a small number of printed sources such as the *Relación geográfica* (1580) (Gallegos, 1927 Monterrosa Prado, 1970) and a fragment of a baptismal register (1588) (Gorbea Trueba, n.d.). [p.xiii] In addition, there are a few scattered archival sources for the town during the period of study. These include a small cache of Nahuatl documents on an estate division of a Culhuacan noblewoman (1580- 1594) (AGN-T-58-4); a lawsuit preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, which

includes a Nahuatl will (1576-1594) (BNP 110); and finally, records of Culhuacan land sales to Spaniards (1585- 1628) (AGN-T-1739-5).

For many years studies of Nahuatl-speaking peoples focused either on the Aztecs of the prehispanic and conquest eras or on modern-day peasants. The glory of the Aztec empire, the horror of massive human sacrifice, the vacillation of Motecuhçoma, the deeds of Malinche, and the tragedy of Cuauhtemoc captured both popular and scholarly attention. Anthropologists who studied twentieth- century Nahua-speaking villages concentrated on modern practices and attempted to relate them to the prehispanic past (Redfield, 1930). Oscar Lewis's restudy of the town of Tepoztlan, Morelos (1951), includes a section on the colonial history of the town, but only as background to a modern ethnography. There was a hiatus between the prehispanic past and the present. The colonial descendants of the Aztecs, the Indians who lived under Spanish rule, were neglected by scholars who were more interested in the prehispanic era or in modern cultural survivals than in the process of transformation during the colonial period to new cultural modes.

Beginning in the late 1940s a group of scholars emerged, trained mainly in history and anthropology, who were interested in *colonial* Indians. Any study of colonial Aztecs now undertaken builds on the work by this group who examined how the Indians were ruled, how many there were, and what effects they had on the shaping of colonial Mexico. For the purposes of this study of colonial Culhuacan, the classic works by Charles Gibson are the most valuable. *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (1952) is one of the earliest and best modern studies of a single Mexican town. Gibson draws on Spanish political sources and native sources in Spanish to produce a detailed picture of Tlaxcala's institutions. His *Aztecs Under Spanish Rule* (1964) is an unsurpassed general account focusing on changes in Indian culture in the Valley of Mexico over the entire colonial period. Gibson's sources are mainly records in Spanish, many of which were produced by the colonial government in its efforts to rule the Indians.

As scholars begin to learn Indian languages, they can read the [p. xiv] records produced by Indians for their own use, and a potentially different history of colonial Indians can be written. There are numerous sixteenth-century reports by Spaniards that should be modified in light of the new information from Nahuatl documentation. While there was no countrywide conspiracy of Indians to mislead Spaniards about their cultural patterns, nor were Spaniards merely fumbling toward an understanding of native culture, there are differences between Spaniards' reports and what is found in Nahuatl documentation. Some of this can be attributed to Spanish misunderstanding of Indian ways, but perhaps some of what is at variance can be attributed to regional variations (Borah, 1984:27). What was true for the Puebla- Tlaxcala regions might not hold for Morelos-or for Culhuacan. Thus scholars turn again to doing local and regional studies, clearly demarcated by time and place. Many of these are now classified as ethnohistory. Ethnohistory has become a respectable field in its own right, but integrating it with the vast amount known about the history of the Spanish world deepens our understanding of cultural change.

In this study I hope to reach not just the coterie of Mesoamerican ethnohistorians but scholars of other disciplines, as well as students, and the general public. I focus on the people of a typical Aztec town sixty years after the conquest, seeking to pinpoint the cultural continuities from the prehispanic period and the changes wrought by the conquest.

An introductory discussion describes the ecological and historical background of colonial Culhuacan, the town's prominence as the heir to the Toltecs, its political decline in the prehispanic era, and its role in the Spanish conquest. Since the Culhuacan wills are the principal source for information on the town, in Chapter 2 I provide a brief discussion of *The Testaments of Culhuacan*. In Chapter 3 I bring the reader to the deathbeds of some Culhuacan citizens. This chapter is a discussion of wills, death, and the religious sentiments that shaped people's final actions. Most studies of Indians' deaths have focused on Indians in the aggregate (the deaths of

whole Indian populations from epidemic disease) or deaths of a few Aztec kings (Motecuhçoma and Cuauhtemoc). How individual colonial Indians confronted death is a complex interaction of prehispanic practices, newly introduced Christian beliefs, and Spanish legal practices. In Chapter 4 I outline the town government of Culhuacan and describe administration with special reference to estate division and resolution of disputes involving inheritance. The basic structures of town government were explicated by Gibson (1952, 1964), but estate division as a legal process is an area not previously explored in depth. In Chapter 5 I examine the family as a unit of social organization and as an institution for property holding. While we have known the ideals of kin behavior from the description of fray Bernardino de Sahagún, the Culhuacan wills provide examples of actual social behavior between kin. I discuss inheritance in this chapter because many of my inferences about social behavior are made from bequest patterns and comments of testators concerning bequest. In this chapter I also assess the effects of Spanish law and family patterns on colonial native society. In Chapter 6 I evaluate sources of wealth, such as land, money lending, and commerce; I also examine wage labor as a source of income. In addition, I discuss other forms of wealth, such as movable goods and houses. In Chapter 7 I analyze factors that shaped Culhuacan society: class, gender, and wealth. Since there are many Culhuacan wills by women as well as men, poor people as well as rich, commoners as well as nobility, it is possible to explore the dynamics of a colonial Indian society in its complexity. Very little has been written on colonial Aztec women as a group. In general, I have integrated my discussion of them in the text, and where I can illuminate some aspect of their role in colonial Indian society, I have done so. However, there are aspects of gender that merit explicit discussion. In Chapter 8 I discuss land tenure extensively. In a preindustrial society such as that of Culhuacan, land tenure goes to the heart of economic and social structure. The changes in land tenure brought about by population decline, the erosion of native practices, and the activities of Spaniards buying land are examined.

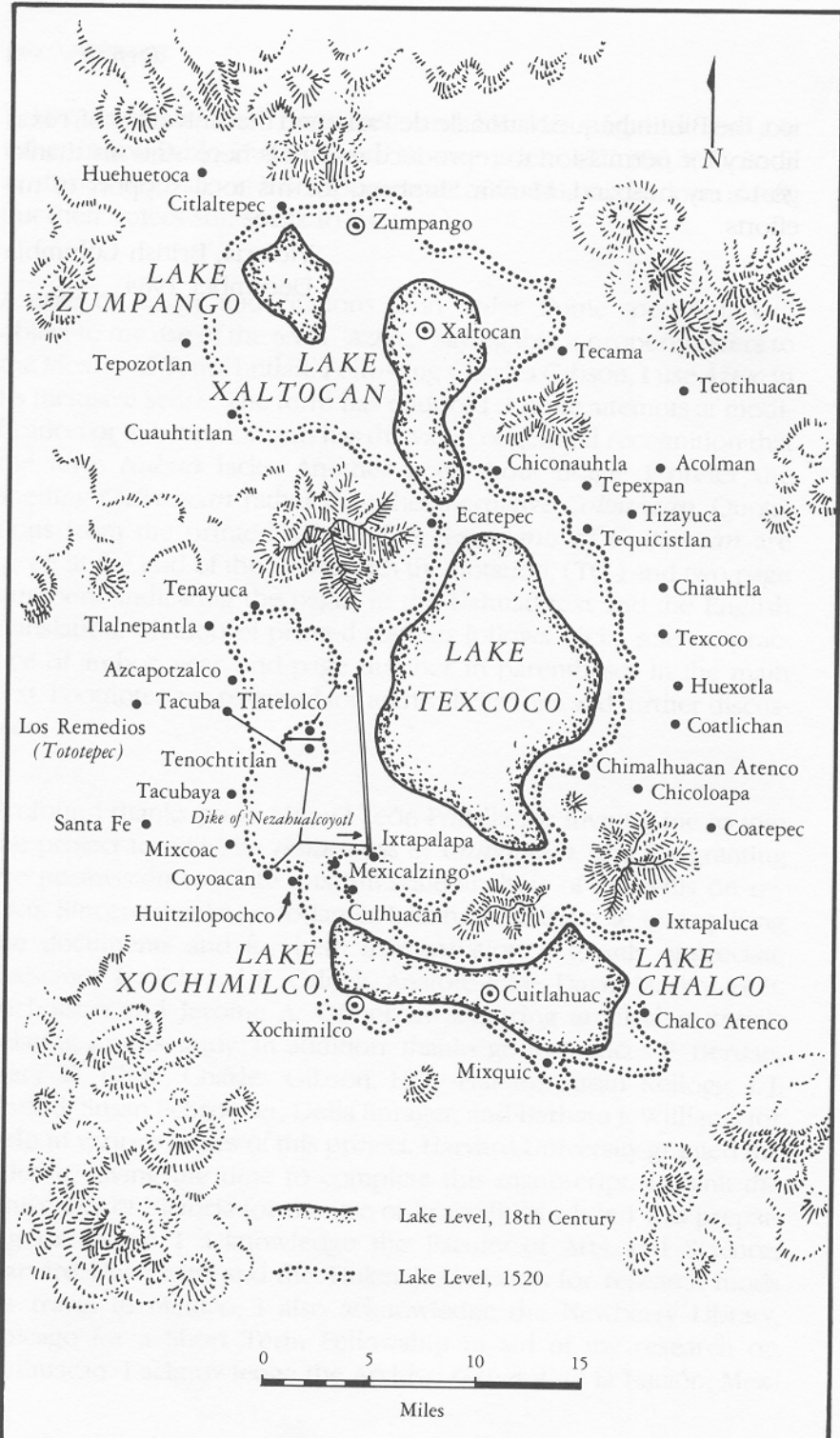
Some historians have argued that the history of subordinated peoples will be reintegrated into general history only by "number and anonymity" through quantitative history (Furet quoted by Ginzburg, 1980:xx). As Ginzburg has remarked, historians with this view no longer ignore the lower classes, but condemn them to silence (Ginzburg, 1980:xx). In this study of Culhuacan, I have relied on the words of the dying to tell us about life there. One Culhuacan notary scribbled some notes after a will: "The son of Nicolás of the Juan /p.xvi/ Velázquez mentioned here died, and his wife Angelina, and his father-in-law Pablo Huitznahuatl. No one is left" (TC 206,207). Four centuries separate us from the people of Culhuacan, no one is left, but their voices still speak to us.

A note on usage and citations is in order. Some specialists will object to my use of the term "Aztec," saying that it properly refers to the Mexica of Tenochtitlan. Following Charles Gibson, I use *Aztec* in its inclusive sense. The term has endured despite attempts at modification or substitution and has the value of general recognition that the term *Nahua* lacks. Another note about usage: I prefer the spelling *Culhuacan* rather than the alternative *Colhuacan*. Quotations from the printed text of *The Testaments of Culhuacan* are given at the end of the quote with the notation, (TC) and two page numbers, indicating the pages in the Nahuatl text and the English translation. Citation of printed sources follows social science practice of author, year, and page number in parentheses in the main text. Footnotes are reserved for archival citations and further discussion.

Profound thanks go to Miguel León-Portilla for inviting me to join the project to edit *The Testaments of Culhuacan*, and for granting me permission to write this full-scale analysis of the wills on my own. Sincere thanks go to James Lockhart for his role in acquiring the documents

and for help in translation. I greatly appreciate assistance by Edward E. Calnek, Anatole Joffe, David Marley, H. B. Nicholson and Jerome A. Offner in acquiring archival materials relating to this study. In addition, thanks go to Frances F. Berdan, Mary W. Cline, Charles Gibson, H. R. Harvey, Susan Kellogg, J.J. Rivaud, Susan Schroeder, Della Sprager, and Barbara J. Williams for help in various stages of this project. Harvard University granted me a leave, giving me time to complete this manuscript. I thank the University of Victoria for the use of its facilities while I was preparing the book. I acknowledge and thank the Faculty of Arts and Science, Harvard University, and the Tinker Foundation for research funds for travel to Mexico; I also acknowledge and thank the Newberry Library, Chicago for a Short Term Fellowship in aid of my research on Culhuacan. I also acknowledge and thank the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico [p. xvii] the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris; and the University of Texas library for permission to reproduce materials here. And my thanks go to my husband, Marvin Shinbrot, for his total support of my efforts.

Victoria, British Columbia December 1984



Huehuetoca •
 Citlaltepec •
 Zumpango •
 LAKE ZUMPANGO
 Tepozotlan •
 LAKE XALTOCAN
 Cuauhtitlan •
 Xaltocan •
 Tecama •
 Teotihuacan •
 Chiconauhtla •
 Acolman •
 Tepexpan •
 Tizayuca •
 Tequicistlan •
 Ecatepec •
 Chiauhtla •
 Tenayuca •
 Tlalnepantla •
 Azcapotzalco •
 Huexotla •
 Coatlichan •
 Los Remedios (Tototepac) •
 Tacuba •
 Tlatelolco •
 Tenochtitlan •
 Santa Fe •
 Tacubaya •
 Mixcoac •
 Coyoacan •
 Chimalhuacan Atenco •
 Chicoloapa •
 Coatepec •
 Huitzilopochco •
 Ixtapalapa •
 Mexicalzingo •
 Culhuacan •
 Ixtapaluca •
 LAKE XOCHIMILCO
 Xochimilco •
 Cuitlahuac •
 LAKE CHALCO
 Chalco Atenco •
 Mixquic •

— Lake Level, 18th Century
 Lake Level, 1520

0 5 10 15
 Miles

Chapter 1

Background to Colonial Culhuacan

"Place of those with ancestors"

Colonial Culhuacan was a small town with a long history. (fn.1) The name Culhuacan means "the place of those with ancestors," (fn.2) and "by implication, Culhuacan is a city that stands for ancient traditions" (Davies, 1980:23). The town appears in native chronicles, most noted as a refuge for the Toltecs. Culhuacan was one of many Indian towns in Central Mexico. It was located in the Valley of Mexico (fn.3) at the southern end of the Mesa Central. The Valley is surrounded by volcanic mountains, some as high as 5,000 meters, dividing it from other natural zones. To the west lies the highland Valley of Toluca; to the East, that of Puebla - Tlaxcala; to the south, the subtropical Valley of Morelos. The Valley covers some 8,000 square kilometers, nearly half of which are too steep for more than marginal use. Most of the Valley floor is around 2,200 meters above sea level. Although today much of it is dry and dusty, in the sixteenth century, a massive but shallow lake system (about 1,000 square kilometers) occupied the central area (Parsons et al., 1982:6-8).

From north to south the lake was about seventy kilometers. Three subsystems made up this inland sea. The central part, Lake Texcoco, was the largest and lowest. Lake Xaltocan-Zumpango to the north and Lake Chalco-Xochimilco to the south were smaller and higher than Lake Texcoco, and they drained into it. While the waters of Lakes Texcoco and Xaltocan-Zumpango were saline, Lake Chalco-Xochimilco was freshwater. On the shores of Lake Chalco, at the western tip of the Ixtapalapa peninsula, Culhuacan was founded, perhaps as early as the seventh century.(fn.4)

In the prehispanic and early colonial periods, before the lake /p.2/ level dropped, the Ixtapalapa peninsula jutted into the lake system, effectively dividing the waters. The peninsula still has rough terrain, composed of old volcanic massifs. Culhuacan grew up at the base of the farthest west of these, the Cerro de la Estrella (Blanton, 1970: 35-36). In the Aztec era, it was the most important mountain for all the peoples of the Valley, for it was the site of the New Fire ceremony (Linné, 1948:154). This ritual, according to Aztec belief, was a signal that the universe would continue for another fifty-two- year calendar cycle. At the end of every cycle, all the fires in the realm were extinguished for five days. From the top of this mountain, a new fire was kindled by the rays of the sun. The last New Fire ceremony before the arrival of the Spaniards was in 1507. The mountain, called Huixachtecatl in Aztec times, during floods might have been an island, with Culhuacan its only settlement (Linné, 1948).

Despite the problems of flooding, the lake system was vital to the Valley of Mexico. In a country with rough terrain, few roads, and no pack animals in the prehispanic era, the shallow lake linked towns by boat. Where it was necessary, canals were built. On the Ixtapalapa peninsula, a huge canal "like a large river" was the principal route from Culhuacan and neighboring Mexicatzinco to the capital Tenochtitlan (Paso y Troncoso, 1979:194). Market goods bound for the capital were carried "in long canoes, like little barques" (Vargas Rea, 1957:14). Even in the late sixteenth century, "three or four thousand passed through each day" (Paso y Troncoso, 1979:194). Great causeways spanning the water were another link between the island capital of Tenochtitlan and the mainland, the longest of which was to Ixtapalapa.

The lakes abounded with waterfowl and fish. From September to March there were wild cranes, geese, ducks, and herons (Vargas Rea, 1957:22). The lake people found many of these

beautiful birds good tasting and savory (Sahagún, XI:27) Little lake fish were also part of the lake dwellers' diet (Gallegos, 1927:173).

Around Lake Chalco, the freshwater southern lake, cultivators built chinampas, mounds of land extending into the shallow lake waters. Ditches were left between them, allowing water to reach plants independent of the seasonal rainfall. Fresh vegetables could be grown year-round.(fn.5) The lake towns of this region were the Chinampa Towns. The people of Culhuacan, according to archeological excavations, were the first to build chinampas, the earliest dated at about AD. 1100 (Blanton, 1970:333-34).

Archeologists have long been interested in Culhuacan. Franz Boas first investigated it in 1911-12. Because of the large number of black-on-orange potsherds at the site, he gave this domestic ware the name "Culhuacan style." This pottery is contemporary with the building of the chinampas, about AD. 1100 (Aztec I). Culhuacan was densely settled then, "perhaps the largest community in the Valley at that time" (Blanton, 1970:336). Evidence indicates that Culhuacan was the first town built deliberately on the lake (Blanton, 1970:333). Potsherds from Teotihuacan (Teotihuacan IV) found near Culhuacan indicate contacts and perhaps settlement from there (Blanton, 1970; Sejourne, 1970). Some of these potsherds were used in building the chinampas. On the slopes of the Cerro de la Estrella, a large classic and early Toltec site was found (Blanton, 1970:146-47, 165-66,334).

Archeologists have placed the earliest date of settled village life in the Valley of Mexico at 1500 BC (Sanders et al., 1979:94). However, the earliest written historical accounts, which are semi-legendary and semihistorical, only date to about the tenth century. Many of these are migration myths in pictorial form, revolving around the Toltec empire and ethnic groups entering the Valley of Mexico as the empire declined or collapsed. Scholars do not agree about the evidence.(fn.6)

The peoples of the Valley had a strong historical sense, tracing their origins and ethnicity through migration narratives. The peoples can be divided into a number of separate groups. The Otomi were linguistically distinct and late arrivals in the Valley, often residing in political units controlled by speakers of Nahuatl, including Culhuacan (Gorbea Trueba, n.d.). Different groups of Nahuatl-speaking peoples often viewed themselves as ethnically distinct, such as the Xochimilca, Chalca, Tepaneca, Acolhuaque, Cuitlahuaca, Mexica, and the Culhuaque, the people of Culhuacan (Gibson, 1964:9ff).

The written historical record for Culhuacan is quite complicated. The town was not merely one of the oldest settlements in the southern Valley of Mexico, but important historically. Accounts of Culhuacan's prehispanic history are often conflicting on major points. While /p.4/ Central Mexican peoples viewed the town as the legitimate heir to the Toltec heritage, native chronicles differ about Culhuacan's relation to Tollan, the Toltec center of power. Some sources have Culhuacan coming to importance only after the fall of Tollan (about AD. 1100), while others indicate it was Tollan's partner and therefore well established by the time Tollan fell. According to Chimalpahin, Culhuacan, along with Otumpan, was Tollan's ally. He lists six towns subordinate to Culhuacan: Coyoacan, Cuitlahuac, Mizquic, Xochimilco, Malinalco, and Ocuilan (Chimalpahin, 1958:20). The first four are Chinampa Towns, just as Culhuacan was. Domination of the last two may indicate that Culhuacan extended Tollan's influence outside the Valley of Mexico into Toluca and Morelos (Davies, 1980:27-8).

Although [in Bertolt Brecht's words] "the books are filled with names of kings," for Culhua- can just who they were and when they ruled is a major puzzle. Nigel Davies has devoted considerable attention to these questions. Using the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (1975) and Chimalpahin's *Memorial breve* (1958) he has worked out a tentative chronology of Culhuacan's rulers and the dates of their reigns (Davies, 1977; 1980).

Culhuacan's time of political dominance was brief, possibly less than fifty years. But according to Davies,

the role of Culhuacan as the bastion of Toltec culture in the Valley of Mexico is fundamental to the whole history of the period that separates the Toltec from the Aztec Empire. [Chichimecs, Acolhuas, Tepanecs, Chalcas and Mexica] were successive claimants to power [who] sought in turn to occupy Culhua land, while their leaders wooed the daughters of its ruler (Davies, 1980:41).

The defeat of Culhuacan in 1253 was accomplished by the Acolhua ruler of Coatlinchan, Huetzin. Despite its defeat, Culhuacan continued to be viewed as the legitimate heir of the Toltecs and was a major cultural center. The histories of Culhuacan and the militaristic Mexica became entwined. The Mexica in their migration to central Mexico from the semi-mythical Aztlan had settled at Chapultepec in 1299, only to be expelled from there by the Culhuaque in 1319. The Mexica then threw themselves on the mercy of Coxcox, the ruler of Culhuacan. According to Codex Acatitlan, the Mexica ruler Huitzilihuitl was sacrificed in Culhuacan and the Mexica exiled to inhospitable Tizaapan. Another account describes the Culhuaque as being so impressed by the staying power and fortitude of the Mexica that they began trading and intermarrying with /p.5/

Table 1 Culhuacan Rulers

1205-13 AD.	?Chalchiuhtlatonac
1213-48	Nauhyotzin
1248-53	Cuauhtepexpetlatzin
1253-72	Huetzin
1272-95	Nonoalcatl
1295-1309	Xihuitltemoc
1309-1327	Coxcox
1324-1336	Huehue Acampichtli
1336-1371	Achitometl II*
1377-1413	Nauhyotzin II
1377-1414	1413-1430 Acoltzin

Source: Davies, 1980: 35, 372.

*When the first Achitometl reigned is unclear, the sources contradict each other. Davies suggests that Achitometl might be the same person as, Coxcox (1980:367).

them. Ever since then, the upstart Mexica called themselves the Culhua-Mexica, and claimed ties to the Toltec line.

The Mexica joined their Culhuaque masters in a war with Xochimilco, an important chinampa town, and their participation was crucial to the victory. Culhuacan became alarmed at their vassals' military strength, and after a particularly provocative incident in which a Culhua princess was sacrificed and flayed, the Mexica were forced out and were exiled to a barren island in the middle of Lake Texcoco where they built their city of Tenochtitlan (Berlin, 1948:42; Duran, 1967 11:41, 43; Tezozomoc, 1975:57).

Culhuacan was conquered by the Mexica in the fourteenth century; though the exact date is in dispute, it was after the Mexica's departure to Tenochtitlan. According to the *Anales de Cuauhuitlan*, Culhuacan was conquered in the year 2 Calli (calculated by Davies as 1377). After the conquest, Culhuacan was ruled by two men. The first was the Mexica Nauhyotzin, who was killed by the Tepanec ruler, Tezozomoc of Azcapotzalco. His successor was Acoltzin, killed by the Acolhua ruler, Nezahualcoyotl of Texcoco.

Culhuacan participated in the wars fomented by their conquerors, the Mexica of Tenochtitlan. The *Relación geográfica* of Culhuacan gives a thumbnail sketch of its role. "The natives of the /p.6/ town of Culhuacan had war by order of Motecuhçoma with those of Huexotzinco and Tlaxcala and other parts which were against. . . Motecuhçoma [Moctezuma]." In those wars, the Culhuaque were dressed in typical garb. "At that time they wore cloth for belts and all the rest in leather, without anything else. And their arms were bows and arrows and cudgels and bucklers" (Gallegos, 1927:172).

Culhuacan figures in Spanish conquest chronicles only in a minor way. The Mexica of Tenochtitlan, though, had apparently impressed upon Hernando Cortés their Culhua connection, for he consistently refers to the island dwellers as Culhua. At one point he says "the name Culua [Culhua] comprises all the lands and provinces subject to Temixtitlan [Tenochtitlan]" (Cortés, 1971:173). Ixtapalapa, the strategically located town neighboring Culhuacan, receives greater attention in Cortés's chronicle. The Spaniards first entered Tenochtitlan using the causeway from there. Lake towns, including Culhuacan, rallied to Tenochtitlan's cause, though Cortés avers that he did not attack them (Cortés, 1971:217, 231). The Spaniards' native allies from Chalco despoiled them, and they then submitted (Cortés, 1971:231).

The Spanish gained control of Central Mexico with the fall of Tenochtitlan in 1521. Following the pattern established in the Caribbean, the labor and tribute of the conquered peoples were granted to the victors in an arrangement called *encomienda*. The *encomienda* was the basic colonial institution of the early colonial period. In exchange for the tribute and labor of specific groups of Indians, the grant holders, called *encomenderos*, were to see that their Indians were Christianized and were to provide certain military services to maintain Spanish control. The *encomienda* utilized existing native rulers and tribute structures, the Spaniards being more concerned with the final tribute or labor than in how it was acquired or mobilized.

Cortés distributed practically all of Central Mexico in *encomienda* immediately after the conquest. He awarded the newly established Spanish capital, built on the ruins of Tenochtitlan, the tribute and labor from the Four Towns: Culhuacan, Ixtapalapa, Huitzilopochco, and Mexicatzinco, but Culhuacan was subsequently awarded to Cristóbal de Oñate.

The *encomendero* of Culhuacan was fairly typical. Cristóbal de Oñate, however, had not participated in the conquest of Mexico, arriving in New Spain (as Mexico was called in the colonial period) /p.7/ in 1524 at the age of twenty. Oñate acquired Culhuacan as an *encomienda* in 1525 when Cortés was on an expedition to Honduras. In addition, he received tribute from other towns, including Tacambaro and income from four towns in New Galicia (now the Guadalajara area), as the result of his participation in the expedition of Nuño de Guzmán. When a major uprising of Indians, the Mixtón War, occurred in New Galicia, Oñate served under the first Spanish viceroy, don Antonio de Mendoza, to suppress it. Oñate was a co-founder (about 1547), with Diego de Ibarra, of the silvermining town of Zacatecas. Oñate married well, taking Doña Catalina de Salazar, the daughter of New Spain's treasury officer, as his wife (Himmerich, 1984:402).

The *encomienda* of Culhuacan remained in Cristóbal Oñate's hands for over forty years. He met a bad end, getting involved in a conspiracy of *encomenderos*, and was taken to Spain and executed in 1568. However, his son, Hernando Oñate, was not barred from inheriting the *encomienda*, and it remained in the family until 1659, when the Crown took control of it (Gibson, 1964:418). In 1580, the family lived in Mexico City (González de Cosío, 1952:156), and probably only occasionally (if at all) visited Culhuacan which was nine miles south-southeast of the capital.

Spanish presence in Culhuacan in the late sixteenth century was minimal. In 1580 it had a royal administrator, the *corregidor* Gonzalo Gallegos.(fn.7) In addition, the town had a resident Augustinian prior and perhaps two other friars at a given time. And in 1580, around thirty-six hundred Indians lived there. (fn.8)

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Presently Culhuacan is part of the Mexico City urban sprawl. Some prehispanic and colonial sites are still evident, but the description in this chapter is the situation in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
2. Dyckerhoff (1984:237) following Sullivan (1976) gives *-hua'can* as "place .of where owners of X are." According to the *Relación geográfica* of Culhuacan, the name means "twisted ridge" (*cerro corbado*) (Gallegos, 1927:171). The glyphic representation of Culhuacan is a mountain with a twisted top. The glyph has some phonemic content. "The mountain in name glyphs serves one of three functions: (1) as a medium to express shape or color; (2) as an indication of a settlement (*in atl in tepetl* 'the water, the mountain' is a metaphor for settlement); (3) as a picture word which indicates *tepetl* 'mountain.' In the case of Culhuacan, the mountain serves as the object utilized to express curvature. [It] appears to be phonetic, the *coltic* giving the initial syllable of Colhuacan [Culhuacan]" (Dibble, 1971:328).
3. Technically it is a basin since it has no natural outlet.
4. The dates for the foundation of Culhuacan are in dispute.
5. See Chapter 8 on land for a fuller description of chinampas.
6. Davies (1977, 1980) has done extremely interesting work on the Toltecs, including the problems of Tollan's relation to Culhuacan. I have generally followed his interpretation.
7. See Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of Spanish administration.
8. The *Libro de las tasaciones* gives the Culhuacan population in 1552 as 771 married Indians and 311 widowed people (*viudos*) (Gonzalez de Cosío, 1952:156). The *Descripción del arzobispado de Mexico en 1570* gives the number of tribute payers as 1,030 (cited in Cook and Simpson, 1948:8). For the year 1572, the *Relación de los pueblos de yndios que los religiosos de Sant Agustin tiene a su cargo*, written by fray Juan Adrian gives the figure of one thousand tribute payers (cited in Cook and Simpson 1948:7). **p.214** The *Relación geográfica* of Culhuacan (Gallegos, 1927:172) says that in 1580 there were nine hundred "whole" tribute payers, explicitly not counting young men. Each "whole" tribute payer was explicitly said to be two persons. All of these figures are based on partial counts. Blanton (1970:339-40) sets the population density of Culhuacan (a site he estimates at sixty-five hectares) at twenty-five to fifty persons per hectare with a total population of 1,625-3,250. Parsons (1976), taking Blanton's data, has rounded it off to about four thousand.