

The 'Secession' of Villages in the Jurisdiction of Tlapa (EIGHTEENTH CENTURY)

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INTRODUCTION*

The 'agrarian community', with its institutions and territory, is usually regarded by anthropologists and most historians as the typical form of social organization of the present indigenous population of Mexico, Central America and the Andean countries, a form derived from the colonial period. However, on studying the Mexican past, one encounters no such community, but rather distinct units bearing various names: *pueblo*, *estancia*, *parido*, *cabecera*, *barrio*, *sujeito*, *república*, or *común*. Besides, those units have undergone continual changes, because as a result of the 'secession'-of-village-trend that prevailed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in many parts of New Spain the subject villages became independent from the headtowns. This process of political and economic separation of smaller villages contradicts the commonly held though erroneous view of a stable indigenous village. In this chapter, I will attempt to describe it, bringing to light along the way the constitution of the late colonial community in the *alcaldía mayor/subdelegación* of Tlapa, now part of the modern state of Guerrero.

A few figures will show how late the phenomenon occurred in Tlapa, and how notorious it was. But first of all, I wish to point out that the *alcaldía mayor* of that name was composed of two distinct parts:

1. To the North of Tlapa, the headtowns of Huamustitan and Olinatá (from whom the villages of Cuclac and Xochihuehuetlan seceded) extended their jurisdiction over the ancient Az-

2. In the surroundings and to the South of Tlapa stretched a zone more strictly controlled by the town, which coincided first with the ancient Aztec province of Tlapa and later with the *encomienda* of that name. The configuration of the river towns' surroundings is typical of the depression of the Balsas, but further South it rises towards the heights of the Sierra Madre del Sur which are called today *La Montaña*, then goes down again to the Pacific coast. The mountainous relief limits the extension of irrigated land, and in 1743 Tlapa's *alcaldía mayor* complained that "there were no plains left except in the valley of Huamustitan (...) all the rest were most uneven, with a lot of high mountains and deep chasms, so that it did not bear much fruit and most of the years they suffered hunger."¹ The Indians grew spring corn and fruit-trees. They also had various handicraft among which the spinning of cotton for the domestic market of New Spain was the most famous. In the rare irrigated lands they cultivated first cotton and cocoa, then rice or sugarcane. Today the area is inhabited by peasants who speak one of three indigenous languages: Nahuatl, Mixtec and Tlapanec.

The latter part of the *alcaldía mayor* of Tlapa was the most affected by the 'secessions' of villages, so what I mean by 'Tlapa' in the following discussion is this part of the jurisdiction. Olinatá and Huamustitan will be left aside.

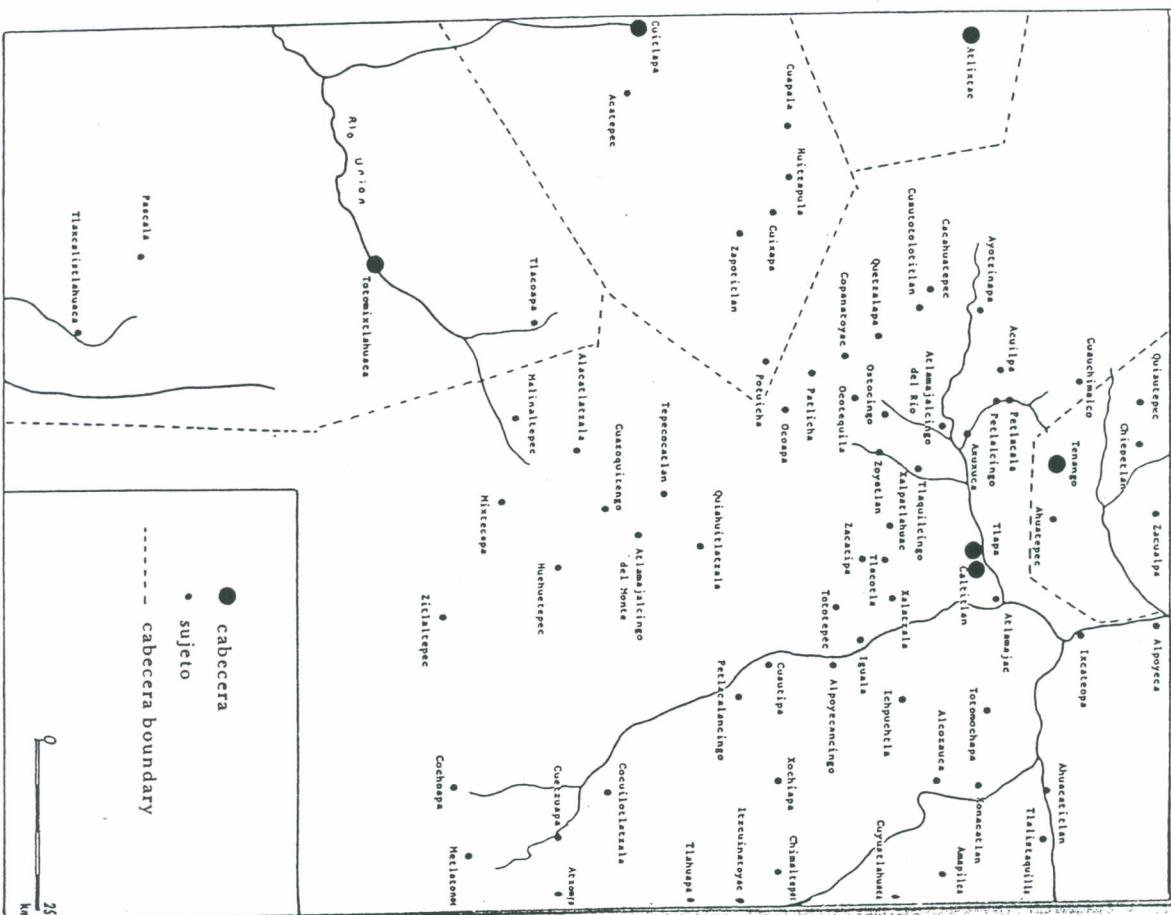
In 1570, the headtown of Tlapa controlled six subject villages; all together they owned 111 farms.² At that time the Augustinians noted:³

"This community gives too much work to the ministers, being distributed into 130 villages, with all the land most mountainous, and so stretched out that one of the villages is 34 leagues away from the headtown. They have to walk more than eighty leagues to take a whole tour of the area."

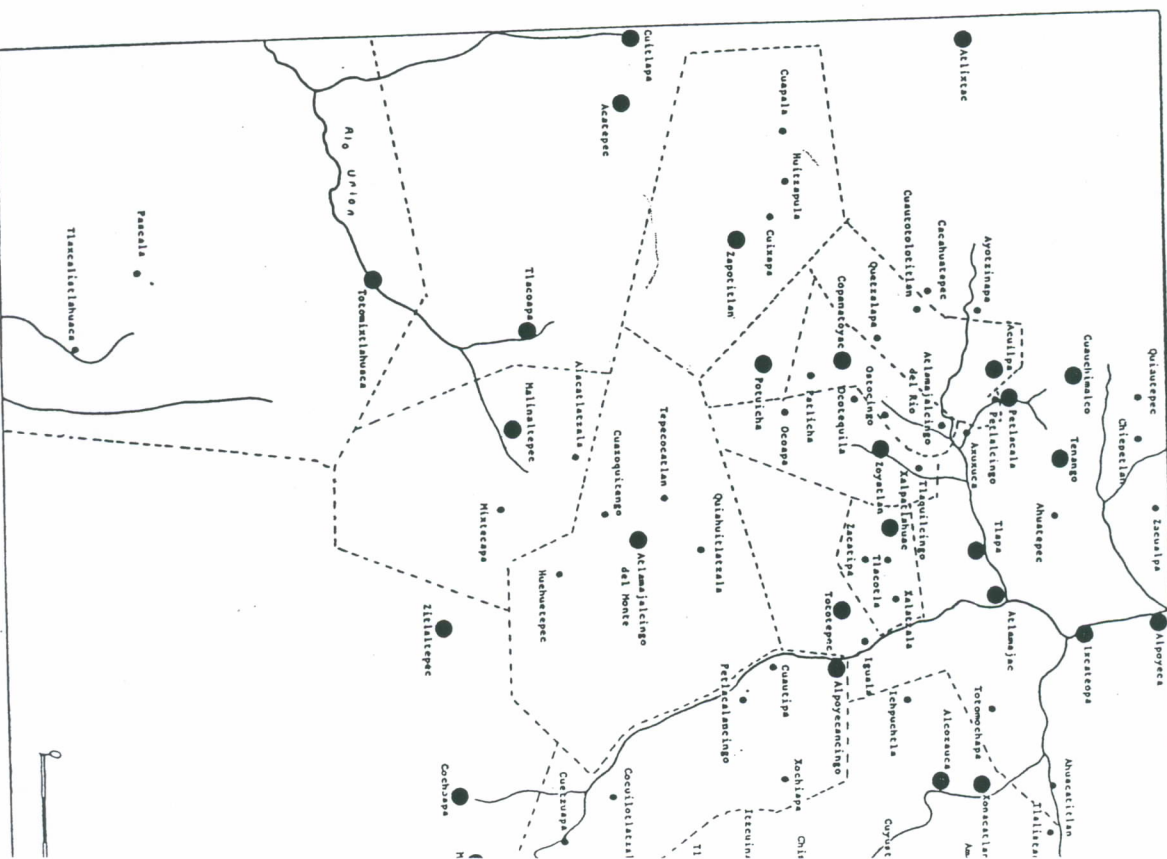
Two centuries later, in 1767, Tlapa's *alcaldía mayor* wrote that the headtown had still "seventy subject villages and numbered, according to the records, 4200 tributaries,"⁴ which was more than half of the number of tributaries of the whole *alcaldía mayor*. However, only thirty years later, this vast jurisdiction had totally disintegrated and most of the subject villages had attained the rank of *pueblo cabecera*-headtown (see Maps III and IV). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the word 'headtown' referred to no more than an isolated village or a village with at most three subjects.

* A Spanish version of this essay, "Las separaciones de pueblos en la región de Tlapa (Siglo XVIII)," was published in *Historia Mexicana*, 33:4 (1984), 379-404. (162)

MAP III. THE HEADTOWNS OF TLAPA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



MAP IV. THE FORMATION OF NEW HEADTOWNS IN TLAPA BETWEEN 1720 AND 1770



Understanding this process is essential to an explanation of what the anthropologists name 'the indigenous community': what were the internal contradictions that resolved themselves in the 'secessions' of villages, and what were the changes in the *cabeceras'* social organization after these divisions?

THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE ANCIENT HEADTOWNS

As stated above, the process undergone by the Indian communities was the division of extensive jurisdictions set up after the Conquest. It should be noted that this process did not alter the communities uniformly, but that it affected them in various ways under three aspects: politico-administrative, ecclesiastical and agrarian. The same village could actually belong to three different categories. It could be, for instance, an administrative subject and at the same time a *cabecera de curato*, and it might or might not own its land. For this reason, the fragmenting affected villages, parishes and territory.

The 'Secession' of Villages

The division into *cabeceras de república* suffered few changes between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth. Tlapa was at that time the main headtown. One of its subject *cabeceras* was Caltitlan, which enjoyed an autonomous government, though it was just *barrio* (ward) of the town of Tlapa. Tlapa and Caltitlan shared between them most of the subject villages located in the highlands of the mountain and on the Pacific versant. Tlapa's other subject *cabeceras* divided among themselves small domains numbering less than ten subject villages: Atlixtae and Cutitlapa (today's Teocuitlapa) to the West of Tlapa, Tenango to the North, Totomixtlahuaca in the heart of the Mountain, and San Luis Acatlan de la Costa on the Pacific side (see Map III).

The question of the two headtowns Tlapa and Caltitlan is of major interest. These controlled from the same place the mountain communities which belonged to three parishes at the end of the eighteenth century: Atlamajalcingo del Monte, Metlatonoc and Zoyatlan. Between 1570 and 1743 they experienced a demographic explosion all the more extraordinary as, over the same period, the rest of the population in the jurisdiction declined or remained constant. In the headtowns of Atlixtae, Cutitlapa and Totomixtlahuaca, the population stagnated, while the villages surrounding Tlapa (such as Tenango) lost half of their inhabitants.⁵ Doubtless for this reason village 'secessions' were more conspicuous in Tlapa and Caltitlan, which controlled the growing population of *La Montaña*, than it was in smaller sized headtowns whose population was stationary or decreasing. This was even more so after Caltitlan and its subjects had been absorbed by Tlapa between 1716 and 1740.

The first requests for 'secession' were filed around 1720. The Crown's response remained strict until 1750. Every request was followed by an enquiry. Most of the time, the Crown favoured the *status quo* and required that past usage should be investigated and confirmed to. However, Tlacoapa was granted 'secession' from Totomixtlahuaca, and Ixcateopa from Tlapa. Still, Alcozauca, whose first request dated from 1721, had to wait until 1754, after witnesses were heard and the vicar and the *alcalde mayor's* lieutenant had given their assent. To the North of Tlapa, in 1726, the three villages Comitlpa, Tepetlapa and Xihuitipan discontinued their services to the *cabecera* Xochihuehuetlan.

The Crown's representatives changed their policy regarding 'secessions' in the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1767, the *Real Coadunaduría* ordered that Tlapa's subject villages set up their own governments in order to facilitate the collection of tributes. At that point the chief concern of the Crown was this: a single governor residing in the headtown of Tlapa collected taxes from over 4,200 tributaries living in seventy villages, who paid more than 8,000 *pesos* annually. Since this governor "usually owned little more than a straw hut and a couple of oxen and maybe two mules: should he happen (as had occurred in the past) to misuse the tribute money in his hands, how could the Royal Finances possibly recover such a large sum?"

The villages could choose between two procedures: the setting up of a new town-government, or by asking for confirmation of an already existing, but not yet legalized, government. It turned out the same, actually, as their requests were easily granted. These indicated that the village ad "a very decent church," "decently adorned," with "the Blessed Sacrament placed in a very good ostensory," and "provided with a font." The temple's dimensions were specified as well as the holy images it should contain. Such a village also possessed a "community house" and "communal property," although they were so poor in these mountains that those were limited to a few herds of no more than 40 goats, three or four cows and usually a maize field. Its annual crop was used during the Synodal feasts. Therefore, the possession of communal land was often emphasized in the texts. Finally, starting from 1770, they also mentioned that the villagers "did their best to learn the Christian doctrine and prayers in Spanish," implying the re-tribution of a schoolmaster.

As early as 1768, Tlapa only had two subject villages left (see Map IV). In small groups of subjects gathered around a *cabecera*, the following seventy villages had separated from Tlapa:

Tlacoapa (1722)
150 tributaries

[in 1743, it was to number 264 of them including Tenamazapa and Tetistac (23 and 19 tributaries)];

Alcozauca (1754)	[Tlaltistaquilla, Itzcuinatoyac, Chimaltepec, Ichpuchta, Coyoxitlahuaca, Xonacatlan and Amapilca (with 314† tributaries)];
Alpoyecancingo (1765)	[Atzompa, Huechupan, Cocuilotlatazala, Xochiapa and Cuautipan];
Zoyatlán (1767)	[Tlaquilingo, Ocoapa and Ocotequilla (with 250 tributaries)];
3 subject villages	
Xalpatlahuac (1768)	[Tlaquetzalapa, Cuautototitlan, Petalcingo (with 230 tributaries)];
3 subject villages	
Coparatoyac (1768)	[Paticha, Ostocingo, Atlamajalcingo del Rio (with over 300 tributaries)].
3 subject villages	

To this list should be added Atlamajalcingo del Monte which, along with several subjects, was probably granted 'secession' earlier than 1767. It also happened that isolated villages requested their autonomy: Alpoyeca had refused since 1726 to recognize Ixcateopa's sovereignty; Poticha, with 130 tributaries, became independent in 1767.

Among the villages (*pueblos de indios*) made autonomous by the decree of 1767 several had no subjects; others were mere 'barrios':⁶ Alpoyecanzinco (with 140 tributaries), Atzompa (116 tributaries), Zitaltepec (117 tributaries), Tototepec (204 tributaries), Malinaltepec (100 tributaries) included three *barrios* Alacatlatazala (125 tributaries), Mixtecapa and Moyotepec (132 tributaries), Zapotitlán (38 tributaries) included two *barrios* Cuixapa (38 tributaries) and Huitzapula (32 tributaries), Metlatonoc (162 tributaries) included three *barrios* Cochoapa, Cocuilotlatazala and, Santa Maria (210 tributaries), Atlitxatc (66 tributaries), Cochoapa (170 tributaries) with one *barrio* Calpanapa (47 tributaries), Hueycantenango (72 tributaries), Acatepec (59 tributaries), Teocuitlapa (41 tributaries). Thereafter, a second wave of divisions took place affecting the headtowns that had formerly seceded from Tlapa. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Xochiapa, for instance, after being first incorporated into Alpoyecanzinco, then subjected to Metlatonoc, seceded from the latter with only 47 tributaries. Having no land of their own did not prevent the villages from claiming their autonomy, like Xonacatlan which obtained a legal tenement after separating from Alcozauca in 1799.

The policy then applied by the *subdelegado* (who replaced the *alcalde mayor* in the jurisdiction of Tlapa) was clearly against the gathering of small villages under one *cabecera*: "The governors (...) divided and distributed unclaimed building grounds; they selected and appointed whoever they pleased for minor charges (...) and in some villages, they even made testaments and distributed the property (...) left by the deceased." More important still, "in the case of an Indian rebellion, it was easier to pacify one village than several. Villages almost never joined forces, except when they shared the same governor

or the same leaders: on the contrary, the neighbouring villages were likely to be the most helpful in containing the rebellion." In other words, the Crown's concern was no longer to find a satisfactory fiscal policy as it had been thirty years before. From now on, the 'secession' of villages was aimed at restraining the power of the Indian government by dividing it. As these politico-administrative divisions were occurring other splits were observed at the Church level.

The Divisions of Parishes

At the start of the seventeenth century, when Bishop de la Mota y Escobar visited the area, the Augustinians held four convents (at Tlapa, Atlitxatc, Totomixtlahuaca and Alcozauca) - the first three being also headtowns - and the secular clergy had the parishes of San Luis Acatlan de la Costa, Olinálá and Huamuxtitlan. In 1680, the Augustinians built a last convent at Atlamajalcingo del Monte. But it was not until the eighteenth century that, following a process similar to the 'secession' of villages, the parishes also began to split. This development took place in a context marked by the takeover from the Augustin Friars by the secular clergy. Between 1720 and 1770, the former were replaced everywhere by vicars who settled in new parishes called *cabeceras de curato*: Xochihuehuetlan, Huamuxtitlan, Cualac and Olinala (to the North) were founded in a first stage; Chiepetlan and Ixcateopa (to the North), and Zoyatlán and Metlatonoc (in the *Montaña*) in a second one. The effect of this trend, in addition to the village 'secessions', was to reduce the number of villages under the jurisdiction of a *cabecera (de curato or republica)*, thereby restraining the local influence and power of the old villages. This process was accompanied by a search for increased land autonomy.

The Separation of Lands

At the very beginning of the eighteenth century when the land properties in the jurisdiction were recorded, the title of village (*pueblo de indios*) did not automatically imply land ownership. Two sorts of villages were without any land:

- a) Landrenting villages (*pueblos arrendalarios*), which rented patches of land every year from the same neighbouring village. In 1712, there were seven of them:

<i>pueblo</i>	- arrendalario del/renting from:
Zacatipa	- Xalpatlahuac
Cuauchimilco	- Petlacatala
Tlatauquitepec	- Atlitxatc
Cuapala	- Huitzapula
Cuixapa	- Zapotitlán
Peltancingo	- Acuinpa
San Miguelitio	- Cochoapa

b) Subject villages (*pueblos sujetos* or *agregados*), which were incorporated into larger villages called *partidos* (districts). At least sixteen of them were in that case in 1712:

pueblos sujetos o agregados -> *pueblos partidos*

Tlaxcalistlahuaca
Pazcala
Tenamazapa
Teitstac
Tlacoapa

-> Totomixtlahuaca

Zapotiltan
Huitzapula
Acatepec

-> Teocuitlapa

Azoym
Zoyatlan
Cuanaacastiltan
Ahuazacuapala

-> San Luis Acatlan de la Costa

Amapilca
Ahuacatlitan
Tlahuapa
Chimaltepec

-> Alcozauca

-> Itzcuinatoyac

Some 30 percent of the villages had no land of their own. Besides, the situation was further confused by the closeness of subject villages and landrenting ones; the *partido* village of Teocuitlapa, for instance, was comprised of six villages including the headtown and three subjects, two of which had one tenant each:

Teocuitlapa was headtown to:

Acatepec;
Zapotiltán which rented out land
to Cuixapa;
Huitzapula which rented out land
to Cuapala.

The origin of tenant villages is hard to determine, since it probably dates back to an unknown pre-Hispanic or early colonial past; it is to be noted, however, that several of those renter-tenant couples had a pluri-ethnic character, Huitzapula was Tlapanec and Cuapala was Nahuatl, just like Zapotiltan and Cuixapa Zacatipa was Mixtec and Xal-palahuac was Nahuatl.

On the other hand, it is easy to ascertain that agrarian headtowns (*partidos*) were former administrative headtowns (*pueblos cabeceras sujetos* of Tlapa), and that agrarian subjects (*agregados*) were former administrative subjects (*pueblos sujetos*), since all the applications for the assignment of land were filed by the headtown's governor who, as such, received the titles of property of all the subject villages. To use the same example again, when in 1648 the village of Zapotiltán requested the formal recognition of its property, its request was presented: "We, the governor, *alcaldes* and other *republic officers* of the headtown of Teocuitlapa of the Tlapa district, appear before your Excellency to request the assignment of the land (...) that we own in a village named Santiago Zapotiltán." In 1709, a new document drafted on the same model (*titulo de composicion de la cabecera del pueblo de Teocuitlapa de San Luis y pueblos sujetos de Santiago Acatepec, Santiago Zapotiltan y San Pedro Huitzapula*) defined separately the limits of each of the subject villages. However it was kept by the Teocuitlapa representatives. This situation as described later as follows: "Since the foundation of this village Teocuitlapa and of those of Acatepec, Zapotiltan and Huitzapula which were then its districts, they all together indiscriminately owned the land shown on the map (...). Teocuitlapa acting as their chief. In 1709, they appeared before the Judge of Land and Water (...) asking that the following grounds should be formally acknowledged as their own (...)."

The same type of document may be found in the other minor headtowns (*partidos* or *cabeceras*) of the jurisdiction. San Luis Acatlan, for instance, had a "decree dated February 17, 1710 in favor of the headtown San Luis Acatlan de la Costa and of those of Zoyatlan, Azoym, Cuanaacastiltan and Aguazacuapala its subjects (...)," stating that "as far back as anyone could remember," they had held the land in common. One document dated 1798-1799 also mentioned the limits of the properties of Totomixtlahuaca, Tlacoapa, Pachcala, Tlaxcalistlahuaca and Teystac in the same document drawn-up on behalf of the headtown (Totomixtlahuaca). On the other hand, the major headtowns of Tlapa and Caltitlan were probably prevented from doing the same by their very size. This might explain why all the agrarian documents of their former subjects are from a later date, from the middle of the eighteenth century, which was approximately the moment when they became *cabeceras*. The quest for agrarian autonomy soon followed the administrative autonomy: the conflicts that broke out after 1777, for example, between Teocuitlapa and its former subjects, which had become headtowns in 1767, show that the old community bonds no longer existed.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Crowns' representatives urged the landowning villages to donate some land to their former tenants. In this context, Huitzapala granted Cuapala the tenure of a piece of land in 1796: "Since the *barrio* of *Saini-Juan Cuapala* had very little land other than the legal tenement of six hundred *varas*, it

was graciously given some so that it might build its own temple, acknowledging, however, its debt to the village of Huizchilin Pilitin San Pedro Huizapula, for the land belonged to the latter." Similarly Xalpatlahuac, in 1793, granted Zacatipa the tenure of a few patches of land, although the Nahuatl text dictated by the Xalpatlahuac authorities shows mitigated goodwill:

"Axca ticchiuato Amatzin ypanpa tepirizim tiquitlanetia se pen-daso tlalin Sacatipa tlaca yca tomahuiso yllaquihuelia yhua tlamoquihuelia, yehuatzin quimain ypapan tohuaxca tlalin tlaque-ma yehuatzin pehuasque yca tlaloti yuac ynomonchtatiquituis-tisque tollal ypapan tohuaxca tlali santichua sen caridad."

[We shall write a paper whereby we loan for a time a piece of land to Zacatipa if it will please them, and if not, too bad for them, since the land belongs to us and if they should start complaining we will take our land back, since it is ours and we are only doing it out of charity.] (translated by the author).

Nevertheless, in all cases, these "acts of charity" (in the Nahuatl text the Spanish word *caridad* was used) or "temporary loans" gradually became actual donations, and the assurances that the owners would forever retain their original rights were forgotten in course of time.

Yet not all communities agreed to these transactions, so that there were still villages in the *Montaña* that were totally deprived of land, such as Cuixapa, which depended entirely on Zapotitlan, or Alacatlazala whose inhabitants rented land every year from neighbouring communities. Such cases remind us of the fact that the agrarian community anthropologists are so fond of, i.e. the village which owns its land, is the result of the disintegration of older and larger units. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the Crowns' representatives undertook to provide each village with a tenement. They assigned land to the headtowns according to various procedures: either they legalized the lots for which they had previously obtained joint titles when they were mere subjects (like at Teocuitlapa), or they legalised those they had formerly cultivated (like for the subjects of the main *cabecera* of Tlapa), or they even assigned to them a legal tenement when, for any particular reason, they did not have any (like Xonacatlan located in the jurisdiction of a *cacicazgo*). In some cases they assigned tenures to subject villages which were not headtowns, when they rented land from neighbours.

Although this trend did not prevail everywhere, it was so strong and complementary to the village 'secession' process that at the start of the nineteenth century it could be said that almost every single village had its own government and its own land. The few subjects that had failed to become headtowns still had their agrarian autonomy. This could but have further reduced the *cabeceras'* influence, already limited by the 'secessions' of villages and parishes. However, the agrarian community at the end of the eighteenth century should not be characterized only by these factors, but also by its operation and internal contradictions. What motives induced villages to apply

for 'secession'? Did these evolve between the first splits which concerned over two hundred families and the latest which concerned only about forty? To answer these questions, it is necessary to go into the details of the social and political organization of the *pueblos de indios*.

THE INTERESTS INVOLVED: A CALCULATION OF THE WORKLOAD

The agrarian community of the late eighteenth century, which I would like to describe according to its internal relationships as a 'community of interests', was only made possible by the disappearance of the old relationships between the nobility and the peasants.

The End of the Forced Labour System

The first village 'secessions' did not occur until some major administrative reforms had been implemented. The headtowns had appeared at the end of the sixteenth century. The Indians had elected a *gobernador*, assisted by various civil officers, like *alcaldes*, *regidores*, or *escribanos*, and some church officers, like a *fiscal* and his assistants. The governor represented the highest native authority and was particular entitled to collect tribute. Subject villages had their own officials - various *alcaldes* including the most important *alcalde llayacanguil*. They handed the tribute money collected from the heads of the village households over to the governor.

As early as the middle or the end of the sixteenth century the Indian *caciques*, made up of the former pre-Hispanic nobility, held the first governor charges. Gradually this political function became for them the best way to maintain their privileges. For instance, they imposed contributions in kind and in work on the Indian tributaries, no longer as an acknowledgment of their status as *cacique* or *señor natural*, but as 'officers of the Republic of Indians'. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the same *cacique* could be heard year after year nearly all the governor charges of the Tlapa jurisdiction. For example in 1664 was Don Antonio Garcia *gobernador* of four headtowns: Totomixtlahuaca, (Teo)Cuitlapa, Tenango and Atlixtac. In addition, he also held the charge of *fiscal* in Atlixtac and of *llayacanguil* in Chiepetlan, a subject of Tenango. One can imagine his power in the region where he helped himself to *indios de servicio* ('service Indians') to take care of his fields and his home, and demanded contributions of cockerels and hens, pretending these were for the Church.

The government of the major headtowns of Tlapa and Caltitlan was taken in the same way. This gave rise to internal conflicts within the Indian population, about which little is known. At any rate, at some point between 1664 and 1720 the Spanish authorities denied accession to the posts of *alcaldes* to "all people belonging to the *cabecera* (of Tlapa) (...) for there had been a lot of trouble in collecting tribute

money, with the (Tlapa) authorities misusing it or taking advantage of their fellow Indians: sometimes they made them pay the same tribute twice, sometimes they forced them to build their houses, till their fields or made them work for them personally against their will without paying them anything."

To prevent this kind of abuses an annual rotation was set up among the subject villages: "It has been the custom (...) to hold elections every year to appoint an Indian governor with the required abilities, one coming from a neighbouring village, and who came to the headtown to hold his office." The new organization was efficient in overcoming the caciques (who, starting in the eighteenth century, seemed to have lost interest in village government anyway), but failed to eliminate the forced work tasks, part of their pre-Hispanic heritage. As early as 1721 the governor of Tlapa and his three *alcaldes* had come from the village of Atlamajac according to the rotating system and stayed the whole year in the headtown. "When the time came for the Indians to pay tribute to him, he used them, just like his predecessor, to cultivate the fields, whether irrigated or not, as well as vegetable gardens, and for other personal purposes, without paying them anything." During the following thirty years, though the offices were no longer hoarded by the caciques, forced work and dues in kind still persisted. All the requests filed between 1720 and 1750 complain of "personal services rendered to the governor" and of double payment of dues. In 1721, Alcozauca explained that quite often the officers "spent the tribute money and had them pay it once again." Again in 1759, the governor and officers of Tlapa were jailed for 325 pesos and 2 reales of the August installment (tribute money) and the people of Zoyatlán declared: "They made us work for their own profit to pay for their drunkenness (...). After we had more than fulfilled the royal tribute, those governors dissipated and spent it in their sinful customs." Lastly, in 1767, the *alcalde mayor* of Tlapa noted himself that it had happened that the governor had spent the tribute money he collected. He further complained that "(...) this governor visited all the villages in his charge in order to collect the tribute gathered by the republic officers (...), and forced them to pay various duties illegally." However, starting from 1760, as a result of the rotation of charges combined with the first village 'secessions', these corrupt practices were no longer mentioned. From then on, the requests were concerned with different kinds of things.

The Interests of the Cabeceras of the Republic of Indians

While, until that time, the village 'secessions' had appeared as a refusal of the contributions inherited from the old caciques, the new splits had different motivations. The main reason alleged was that the *alcaldes* had to reside in the headtown during their tenure in office. The people of Alpoyecancingo complained that "the village *alcaldes* were forced to take their office in the residence of the headtown gov-

ernor, bringing with them their wives and children." Those of Acuilpa "were forced to desert their homes to hold the Republic offices of the town of Tlapa: when their turn came to be appointed by election, they had to leave their lands and lose their crops in order to collect the royal tributes." The requests often exaggerated the distance between the subject and its headtown, mentioning a river that had to be crossed between the two. The situation may be described as follows: the inhabitants of a group of villages took turns to hold the *alcaldes* offices (*gobernador*, *alcalde llayacanguí*, or *alcalde ordinario*) in the communal house of the headtown. This system worked well when it was the turn of the headtown people; but those from subject villages had to come and stay in the headtown or else to go there periodically. To avoid this unfair treatment, subject villages started seeking their autonomy, so that over half a century all the community groupings split one after the other.

In 1767 Tlapa, suddenly bereft of fourteen subjects, reorganized itself: the old rotating system would be maintained, resting on seven villages: Acuilpa, Cuatololotlán, Copanatoyac, Xalatzalan, Cuachimalco, Petlacala and Tlapa. The first four, in fact, lost no time in becoming independent. In 1768 the government of Tlapa was handled by three rotating villages: Tlapa proper, Cuachimalco (66 tributaries) and Petlacala (56 tributaries). Until then, no community had ever tried to secede with such a small number of families. Cuachimalco and Petlacala were the first ones, which is understandable, considering that, beside holding offices in the headtown, their inhabitants, men or women, were also required by the *alcalde mayor* for "personal services such as gathering wood, drawing water, taking care of horses and other domestic duties (...). These works had been tolerated until now because there were many subject villages, so that each one's turn came up every fifth week; now, however, because of the new division, it was their turn twice a month," which was a very heavy load. One can guess at the thoughts of the inhabitants of the two villages faced with the alternative of providing even more work to comply with Tlapa's increased requirements, while still maintaining a subject village government with at least three officers (the *llayacanguí*, the *alcalde mayor* and the *fiscal*). By the end of the century a great many villages of less than fifty tributaries had acquired their own churches, community houses and governments to avoid having to participate in two governments - their own and that of the headtown.

As a matter of course, the *cabeceras'* interest was to oppose the secessions, which reduced the number of men liable to hold public offices. The documents occasionally mention a governor who continued to demand tribute from his ex-subjects, notwithstanding the split; or they tell tales of village raids very much like the ones which happen today in the *Montaña*: "The Indians (from Alcozauca) gave assault to our village (Amapla) one night to take us prisoners and do us wrong."

The emergence of these *cabeceras* of the second generation, gathering several subjects under their jurisdiction and thus reinstating a situation of inequality between the communities, remains to be explained. Though this process is fairly difficult to trace, it seems that it arose from older subjection situations, of which agrarian documents give us a hint. Let us recall that landless villages used to rent land from a neighbouring village: landowning villages, as it happened, often became headtowns, while their tenants became subjects:

a) Xalpatlahuac, which became headtown to three villages in 1768, had been the 'owner' of one of them named Zacatipa. To this initial nucleus a neighbouring village was adjoined (Xalatzala) along with its 'annex' (Tlacotla);

b) Acuilpa, which at the same time took three subject villages under its jurisdiction, had owned the land of one of them, Petalcingo, and took over the other two.

However, the power of the *cabeceras* of the second generation always remained restricted and often questioned, sometimes even before independence from Tlapa was granted. Zoyatlan, for instance, filed its first request in 1759, on behalf of thirteen villages. When it became autonomous in 1768 only four of these were still under its control. The others had filed suits on their own account, like Potulich which with 130 tributaries was strong enough to elect its own government. In the same way Alpoyecancingo became headtown to five subject villages in 1765. The first of them, Atzompá, became independent itself after two years; the others subjected themselves either to Atlamajalingo del Monte or to Metlatonoc. Even the power of the landowning villages came to be questioned during 'secessions', as occurred with Cuachimalco and Petlacala, which remained Tlapa's only subjects after 1768. As the former was the latter's tenant it might have been expected to become its subject, but it turned out otherwise. Both villages requested their autonomy at the same time, each on its own account. Thus the administrative reorganization of the second half of the eighteenth century was the result of an intricate play of interests. All the other changes that affected the area, whether dictated by the Church, were inspired by the same kind of considerations.

The Interests of the Cabeceras de Curato.

The Indian villages were also part of the Church organization. What were the specific interests involved in becoming a parish centre? The peculiar case of one village of the region will bring them to light: in 1770 Chietepec was "the subject of two different headtowns, which was not the case for any other village in the jurisdiction. At the secular or political level, it depended on the government of Chiuepeltan which required the inhabitants to share in the labours and charges of its community and of its church." It should be repeated here that a village government was comprised of public (*alcaldes*) and Church (*fiscales*) office holders. But Chietepec also belonged to the parish

of Tlapa "whose Indians forced them also to participate in all the personal services that might be required in the church," meaning the works carried out in the Tlapa temples.

Indeed, the building of churches was the main source of inequality between the headtown and its subjects, as shown in the following example. In 1771 five villages of the parish of Metlatonoc were working without payment on the construction of a church in stone in the village of Metlatonoc. Starting from 1771 a third of their tributes also served to pay for the masons who had thus far been paid by the vicar. The four subject villages had to provide a greater effort than the *cabecera* since, beside providing free labour for the church being built, they had to commute from their own villages to Metlatonoc. So, they profited from it much less than the headtown, since they still had to build and maintain their own churches, which with their limited means in labour and money would necessarily be plainer than the Metlatonoc church. Heavy work and less profit for the subjects than for the headtown, and you have the parish divisions. The same applies to other areas as well.

The Interests of Villages with Schools

Starting from 1770, a royal warrant made it compulsory to teach the Christian doctrine in Spanish to every village: "all the Indians, adults and children alike (...) are compelled to attend every day from morning till evening (...). The prejudice will be great for adult and married Indians who are kept away from their occupations (...), especially at the times of sowing and harvesting when the same assiduity is required (...). Moreover, when they skip school, they are flogged by the minister (...) and he will do the same thing to those who, in view of their age, do not know but their own language and can not speak Spanish." The heads of families in each village shared the cost of the schoolmaster (from 30 to 100 pesos annually according to the school size), each one providing him besides with two *almudes* of maize at harvest time. The people of three subject villages of Atlamajalingo del Monte attended school in the headtown. They suffered even greater prejudice, "having to walk five miles and back; the Chinacauitla people had to walk even further." Later on, school attendance was no longer compulsory for adults, but a number of subject villages continued to request one schoolmaster per village.

The Interests of the Cabeceras de Alcaldia Mayor

Only in exceptional cases did the villages under this politico-administrative category exhibit their interest. Most of the time, the *cabecera de alcaldia mayor* remained perfectly steady, and Tlapa was no exception. However, in the neighbouring province of Iguatapa, two major towns fought for this title through the centuries. First, Iguatapa was the residence of the *alcalde mayor*, then he chose to live in

Ometepec, whose large numbers of Spanish and other non-Indian inhabitants seemed more welcoming. But by 1766, one *alcalde mayor* decided to return to Iguatapa; he summoned the governors of the headtowns of the *alcaldia* (Ometepec, Saculpa, Sochistahuaca) and ordered them to build palaces and a prison. The villagers who, beside losing the privilege of living in a capital, were also compelled to provide many days of free, unpaid labour, reacted violently. In the face of the Indians' resistance in the whole region, the *alcalde mayor* did not dare send troops on the grounds that "it would have started a riot, as I was told that they were on the alert and armed with arrows." Some time later there were clashes when Ometepec officials beat some soldiers, and upon inquiry, the judge decided in favour of the Ometepec inhabitants and ordered the *alcalde mayor* to keep his residence there.

TABLE II. POLITICO-ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECCLESIASTICAL CATEGORIES RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SPANISH WORLD

principal category	definition	subordinate category	definition
<i>cabecera de república</i>	place of residence of a tax-collecting gobernador	<i>pueblo sujeto</i> or <i>barrio</i>	place of residence of <i>alcaldes</i> subordinate to the gobernador and without direct relationship with the <i>alcalde mayor</i>
<i>cabecera agraria</i> or <i>partido</i>	place of residence of <i>alcaldes</i> representing the territory	<i>pueblo sujeto</i> or <i>agregado</i> or <i>barrio</i>	subordinate to an <i>alcalde</i> representing the territory
<i>cabecera de curato</i>	place of residence of a vicar	<i>pueblo sujeto</i>	without direct relationships with the vicar
<i>pueblo con escuela</i>	place of residence of a schoolmaster	<i>pueblo sujeto</i>	without direct relationship with the schoolmaster
<i>cabecera de alcaldia mayor</i>	place of residence of the <i>alcalde mayor</i>	<i>pueblo sujeto</i>	without direct relationships with the <i>alcalde mayor</i>

COMMUNITY AND FREE LABOUR

At the beginning of this chapter I raised the question of the definition of the native community as it was formed at the end of the eighteenth century. It comes out of the documents that a distinction

must be made first between the categories -administrative and ecclesiastical- imposed by the Spanish regime. This leads me to define the terms used in the documents pertaining to this region and these years (see table II). The same term had different meanings: the term *cabecera*, for instance, could apply to the village where the governor who collected the tributes had his residence, to the village which took the lead (*hacia cabeza*) in agrarian affairs, or to the place of residence of the vicar or of the *alcalde mayor*. The term *sujeto* or *barrio* could be used for a village depending on a *cabecera* for political or agrarian matters. However, a village could also have been the subject of a parish village (*sujeto de curato*), of a village with a school, or of an *alcaldia mayor*. In one case, that of Caltitlan, the *barrio* had the quasi-European meaning of a section of the town of Tlapa, with the rank of *cabecera*, a governor and different subjects, but that is the only example of its kind.

More generally speaking the categories of *cabecera* and *sujeto* or *barrio* determined the relationship of a village with the Spanish colonial world. In the case of a *cabecera*, this was a direct relationship with the *alcalde mayor*, the agrarian authorities, the vicar, the schoolmaster, and in the cases of *sujetos*, *barrios* and *agregados* of an indirect relationship depending on the *cabecera*. In addition, as is shown in Table III, those categories determined the amount of labour or money required from the villages. Each category had its own sector: the role of the *república de indios* was to distribute offices, collect tributes and order the building of community houses and churches. The parish was concerned with the construction of major churches and the organization of domestic services which were due to the clergy; the villages which owned a school had to build the classrooms, check the attendance to classes and pay for the schoolmaster. In the *alcaldia mayor* obligatory domestic services were organized for the *alcalde mayor* and his lieutenants, and the construction of *casas reales* or municipal buildings.

But being a headtown or a subject meant more or less labour contribution for the village inhabitants. The subject villages always found themselves at a disadvantage position, however; an essential difference introduced in the middle of eighteenth century. Until then, the subject villages owed personal services to the governor and sometimes paid the tributes twice. In other words, most of their effort was directed to the governor and the Indian *alcaldes* of the headtown. This was no longer the case after 1750: from then on, the main effort of the subject villages was an unequal sharing in the communal organization, like enforced residence in the headtown for the *alcaldes* coming from the subject villages, double work for the construction of the community houses in the subject village and in the headtown. The subject villages of a parish or school centre also had to build two buildings, one in their own village and one in the headtown, and provide domestic services despite the distance between the two places. In the case of villages subjected to agrarian communities (named *sujetos*,

TABLE III. POLITICO-ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECCLESIASTICAL CATEGORIES
COSTS IN LABOUR AND MONEY

principal category	costs in labour and money	subordinate category	costs in labour
<i>cabecera de republica</i>	construction of a community house and of a church, "having enough leading Indian citizens to hold the offices of <i>gobernador, alcaide</i> and <i>fecales</i> "	<i>pueblo sujeito</i> or <i>barrio</i>	- before 1750: personal services to the <i>gobernador</i> and double payment of tribute; - after 1750: construction of a community house and of a church, holding minor offices, residing in the <i>cabecera</i>
<i>cabecera agraria</i> or <i>partido</i>	direct right to use the land	<i>pueblo sujeito</i> or <i>agregado</i> or <i>barrio</i>	no direct right
<i>cabecera de curato</i>	construction of an adobe church; personal services to the vicar	<i>pueblo sujeito</i>	participation in the construction and personal services, plus the trip to the <i>cabecera</i>
<i>pueblo escuela</i>	construction of a school; school attendance; payment of the schoolmaster	<i>pueblo sujeito</i>	the same, plus the trip to the headtown
<i>cabecera de alcaidia mayor</i>	construction of the <i>casas reales</i> ; personal services to the <i>alcalde mayor</i>	<i>pueblo sujeito</i>	the same, plus the trip to the <i>cabecera</i>

agregados or *barrios*) there was no free labour involved. The only prejudice they could suffer was an economic one, such as the payment of a rent. But at any rate, the agrarian struggle seems to have been an epiphenomenon of the administrative or ecclesiastical struggle which were aimed at reducing the workload of the people.

In sum, the indigenous village, before being defined by its communal territory, was defined as a part of the tax-collecting system, whether in labour or in money. Little by little the villages evolved with the division of the old large *cabeceras* and the weakening of their internal hierarchy, while neighbouring villages kept fighting each other in court, trying to reduce their shares of forced labour. Although at the end of the eighteenth century there was still some inequality between headtown and subjects, this was much less so than it had been before. The contributions in labour due to the governors

had disappeared and a majority of the villages had their own territories and governments. For these reasons, the native community which arose in Tlapa at that time seems to have had quite modern features and resembled in many ways modern twentieth peasant communities. It should be noted that it was formed by this contradictory 'secession' process, which was not without conflicts arising from the conjunction of special interests.

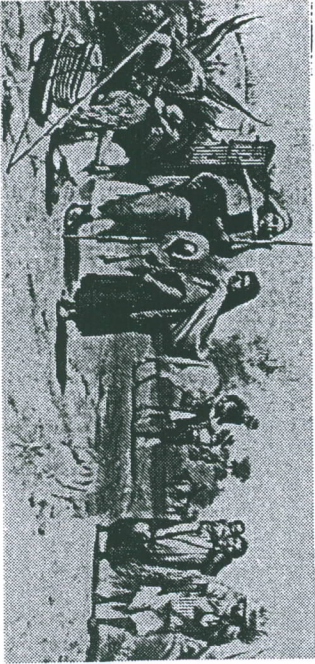
More important still is the fact that from the eighteenth century up to this day, the native communities have continued to split. For example, on the territory of the colonial village of Malinaltepec, separated from Tlapa in 1767, a large number of *comisarias*, i.e. subordinate centers somewhat similar to the *sujetos de cabecera* of the colonial period, have been formed. Twenty of them appeared between 1910 and 1950 and twentythree between 1950 and today. Moreover, the anthropological studies of the region demonstrates that the consequence of this process was that only the most ancient villages possess both their own land and their own 'government' (which is now called the '*cargo*-system'). The majority have only one of these attributes. Besides, having one's own *cargos* does not save one from having to share in the system of *cargos* of a larger community and from being incorporated into a larger territory.⁸ An important feature of the instead of postulating that stability is an essential feature of the indigenous community, as anthropologists have done for so long, might not the contrary be suggested: that its intrinsic characteristic ever since its inception has been the recurring conjunction of conflicting interests, leading to neverending 'secessions'?

ENDNOTES

1. "Descripción de la provincia de Tlapa" (1743), in Archivo General de Indias, Seville (hereafter AGI), Indiferente General, leg. 108, fs. 188-197.
2. Letter from Fray Alonso Delgado (March 26, 1571), in *Relación de los obispos de Tlaxcala, Michoacán, Oaxaca y otros lugares en el siglo XVII*, Luis García Pimentel, ed. (Mexico City, Madrid and Paris, 1904).
3. AGI, Patronato, leg. 182, exp. 44 (1573).
4. For all documentation directly concerned with the secession of villages, see Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Ramo de Indios, vols. 25-70.
5. These figures were taken from a demographical study, see my book *Quand les bandiers étaient des Saints: 450 ans de l'histoire économique et sociale d'une province indienne du Mexique* (Paris, forthcoming, 1991). Here the 1570 census is compared with those of 1743 or 1777, although the demographical depression of the beginning of the seventeenth century occurred between those two dates. The Tlapa province, excluding Huamuxtlihan-Olnalá, totalized 5,360 tributaries in 1570 and 5,975 in 1743.
6. Further on, the various meanings of the term *barrio* will be given; here it applies to a minor community which lacks the government of a subject village, in other words, to a category inferior to that of subject village.

7. This and the following two documents were taken from the agrarian titles which are still in the hands of the village authorities of Teocuitlapa, Acatepec, Zapotitlán Tablas and Huitzapula, where I consulted them.

8. This problem has been discussed in Danièle Dehouve, "Comment définir la communauté indienne meso-américaine? Reflexions sur les fluctuations des coutumes communautaires en Pays Tlapanique," in *Cahiers des Amériques Latines*, 20 (1979), 47-63. For a discussion of the economic integration of the *pueblos de indios*, see my essay "El pueblo de indios y el mercado: Tlapan en el siglo XVIII," in *Empresarios, indios y estado. Perfil de la economía mexicana (Siglo XVIII)*, Arj Ouwenel and Cristina Torales Pacheco (comps.) (Amsterdam, 1988), 86-102.



Part Two

Religion, Ideology and Politics