

***Pueblos de Indios, Pueblos de Castas:*
New Settlements and Traditional Corporate
Organization in Eighteenth-Century New Spain**

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The classification of different social groups in eighteenth century New Spain was very difficult for contemporary analysts, as it is today for modern historians. This situation is easy to understand in a society where people of mixed blood and unclear social standing were involved. The Indians, however, have commonly been classified in a very straightforward manner. They have always been singled out as the direct descendents of the ancient population of the country, and colonial legislation gave them a clear and distinctive standing. But decades of racial and cultural mixture blurred any possible image of a pure native population, and the legislation tended to oversimplify a complex social structure. Consequently, classifying colonial Indians in social and ethnic terms as a unique and distinctive part of the population can be too simplistic and based more on the traditional usage of the concept rather than on a clear understanding of the society. This is not to say that the concept is useless or inadequate to define certain groups in colonial society. Being Indian had at least an unequivocal meaning, that of belonging to one of the numerous corporate bodies known as *pueblos de indios*, generally understood to be the heirs of the native political bodies of Conquest years. In fact, the incumbent population identified itself primarily with a given *pueblo*, and defined itself as Indian solely for legal purposes or as opposed to the Spaniards or any other group. There is no evidence of an overall 'Indian' or native identity in colonial New Spain, and ethnic self consciousness, if present, was by far secondary to corporate identification. It would be useful to develop a more critical approach to the concept of Indian in modern historiography, particularly when an ethnic or racial meaning is involved.

There were of course individuals of Indian descent not linked to the *pueblos*, like those who moved to Spanish towns, mining camps, or *haciendas*, and who were frequently excluded from tribute lists and other duties and activities associated with corporate life. These In-

dians had a somewhat diffuse legal position and were frequently more acculturated to Spanish standards. They were Indians in view of their race and cultural background, but their descendents were not likely to be classified as Indian anymore. If a functional definition of the Indian is attempted, these individuals will not fit into it. In any event, it was the *pueblo*-incorporated native population that qualified permanently, exclusively and unequivocally as Indian.

Definition of other products of racial and cultural mixture was even more problematic, especially when individuals of African descent were involved. Racial classification could not be operative beyond the limits of the most basic combinations of primary racial stocks, like the ones found in *mestizos*, *mulatos*, or *zambos*. These categories proved to be ambiguous and inadequate to define the complex composition of colonial society. Although some attempts were made to develop a more detailed racial classification, usage favored a more simplified approach, and in eighteenth-century New Spain non-Indians and non-Spaniards usually ranked as *mestizos* or *pardos*, the latter being those who had any trace of African descent. To determine the position of an individual in that scheme, however, was in no way consistent and it became more a matter of social standing and statistical appreciation than of racial classification. The *pardos*, in particular, were an extremely heterogeneous group, and were not generally singled out in terms of their ethnic origin, but as registered tributaries or members of the coastal militias. Here, as in the case of the Indians, their status was determined according to some type of corporate aggregation.

In fact, and in spite of the racial terminology, social classification in New Spain rested ultimately on corporate aggregation. If some groups seemed to be undefinable it was not because of their unclear racial background, but because they were mere aggregations of individuals without a definite social bond. These groups included people from all racial or ethnic stocks, and of different economic position, and were commonly labelled as *castas*. This word originated with early attempts of racial classification and developed into a general concept loosely applied to almost anyone that was neither a Spaniard nor a *pueblo* Indian. More precisely, it was applied when corporate identification was not possible, as in the case of the independent rural population of newly created *ranchos*, and it was also frequently associated with people of negative social standing, such as the uprooted and the destitute, the outlaws or fugitives, maroons, and vagabonds, or the urban *léperos*. In some areas, like coastal regions, the *castas* were mainly composed of *pardos* or people of African descent, but this was not necessarily the case elsewhere.

This chapter deals with the way groups of people of different background ranked as Indians by acquiring corporate identity in eighteenth-century New Spain. Before discussing this process, however, it is convenient to include a general overview of the nature and evolution of the *pueblos de indios*.

The *pueblos de indios* were particularly significant as political bodies with a territorial basis, and in most cases their history could be traced back to pre-Hispanic times.¹ Historical traditions provide ample evidence on the nature and evolution of the statelike corporations that determined the political map of Middle America before European contact. These basic political units had been preserved in early colonial times through the *encomienda* and the political and administrative system developed from it. A direct line linked the early colonial *pueblo* with the Nahuatl *altepetl* or its equivalent elsewhere in Middle America, and most *caciques* or *pueblo* rulers were similarly linked with the ancient *tlahtoque*. Collective symbols and ceremonies could be traced back to pre-Hispanic ritual practices as well. The *pueblos*, therefore, had a strong historical background, and preserving the particular traditions and institutions of each one had been essential in their transition to colonial times. But the ultimate key to their survival through centuries of Spanish rule lay perhaps in their efficiency. The *pueblos* possessed the necessary resources, organization, and experience to face internal and external demands. They were involved in the pursuit of common interest and the preservation of social structure through the performance of a number of ritual functions and administrative tasks. Relations with the outside world, mainly tribute, labor, and matters of property and jurisdiction, were managed by each *pueblo* as a collective concern.

Despite their background, however, eighteenth century *pueblos* barely preserved the essential features of their predecessors. The history of the *pueblos de indios* had been complex and dynamic, and despite the nearly static image provided by persistent formal structures and a conservative legal framework, they were constantly undergoing deep changes in every conceivable field, political, social, economic, spatial or otherwise. The first hundred years of Spanish domination introduced substantial changes and innovations. Besides the introduction of Christianity, perhaps the most significant ones were an important twist in the social standing of the elites, and the whole process of the *congregaciones*, not to speak of the demographic collapse and its consequences. The early colonial *pueblo* developed a centralized structure as one of its main features, with a well defined *cabecera* as its dominant nucleus. This centralized structure proved to be incapable of facing the demands created by the emergence of new centers of political and economic power within most *pueblos*, a process that was favored by demographic recovery, economic changes, and spatial transformation, especially during the seventeenth century. Internal conflict was relieved through the secession of competing centers, and therefore the fragmentation of old *pueblos* and the incorporation of new ones with a portion of their territory was a common occurrence everywhere in New Spain during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Almost all late colonial *pueblos* were thus an indirect offspring of the *congregaciones*, and a product of the conflict between *cabeceras* and *sujetos*.

At the same time, the *pueblos* as a whole lost political significance. Spanish domination, originally dependent upon the structure provided by the Indian corporations, mainly in matters of tribute and labor, developed new sources of support. Territorial jurisdiction, an essential feature of the traditional corporations, was frequently contested and was soon confused with, and reduced to, the extension of communal property. Economic problems and internal conflict contributed also to erode the political basis of both old and new *pueblos* as corporate bodies, rendering them frequently inefficient and incapable of performing their primary ritual roles. It was the church that usually supplied the needed support, the ritual image of a local patron saint becoming the axis of corporate identity. Some of the *pueblos* most important functions of corporate concern were taken over by new organizations that were free of the administrative and fiscal burdens of the *cabildos* and their discredited *gobernadores*. The most conspicuous among these new organizations was the *cofradia*, a type of civil-religious organization that was closely associated both with *pueblo* structure and with church structure.² The *cofradia*, however, tended to be more localistic in scope, and lacked political status. It could not take care of issues like the payment of tribute, or take legal action on behalf of the community. Corporate bodies, old and new, became more and more localist in their concerns and thereafter it was evident that collective roots and identity had been transferred from by then obscure pre-Hispanic traditions to the cult of the local saint. Eighteenth-century *pueblos*, politically irrelevant, tiny and fragmented, limited to local concerns, were more akin to modern peasant communities than to the corporate political bodies from which they had originally evolved.

The complex evolution of the *pueblos de indios* has been obscured by a remarkable continuity of their formal features. *Pueblos* of late creation were so closely built upon the model of the ancient ones that even an eighteenth-century observer might not have noticed the difference without some knowledge of their history. The corporate organization of the new *pueblos* was similar to that of those from which they had seceded, and it reproduced, suited to their scale, a microcosmos of tiny *cabildos*, diminutive *sujetos*, and so forth, even when the system had proved to be inefficient in face of new prevailing conditions and had been incapable of counteracting, for instance, secessionist tendencies. As a result, the new *pueblos* soon experienced fragmentation in the same way. Colonial legislation, on the other hand, did not provide alternate forms of corporate organization for the Indians. In any event, creating new *pueblos* out of the older ones in the same fashion as some biological cells reproduce seemed convenient both to Indians and Spaniards alike.³

The history of the colonial *pueblos* appears then to be marked by a growing incongruency between an almost static formal and legal framework, and a very dynamic set of social, political, and economic conditions. By keeping up with such a model new corporate bodies

encountered severe limitations. The system, however, offered some advantages, such as a protective legislation, especially when it came to legitimate collective property. The role of the church and the patron saints, *cofradías*, *fiestas*, and other church-related rituals and institutions was essential in providing a simple and effective means to construct a strong collective bond. Therefore, in spite of all of their limitations and drawbacks, late colonial *pueblos* were still accepted as meaningful corporations, and the Spanish administration continued to regard them as the legitimate Indian interlocutors. And despite all changes and the transformed nature of the social bond, being part of a *pueblo* remained the essential element of political, economic and territorial identity among the native population.

What is important in this study is that the general image of the *pueblos de indios* in the eighteenth century was dominated by a substantial number of corporations of relatively recent creation. Approximately two thirds of the more than a thousand *pueblos* existing in the second half of the eighteenth century had been established only a few decades earlier as separate and individual corporations, mainly as a result of the process of secession and fragmentation mentioned above. Only one third of the *pueblos* could boast an individual history dating far back to the Conquest.⁴ This fact, however, has hardly ever been taken into account by scholars. Ethnohistorical studies have been generally restricted to immediate post-contact developments, and studies dealing with eighteenth-century Indian population usually disregard earlier conditions. Very few efforts have been made to compare early and late colonial *pueblos*.⁵ It seems quite evident, however, that most eighteenth-century *pueblos* shared peculiar traits, some of which stand out as soon as they are contrasted with earlier corporations.

A common trait of virtually all *pueblos* created during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was that they developed in most cases from an organized compact settlement centered on a church. Generally these settlements had previously figured as *sujetos*, and consequently had participated in the corporate life of the parent *pueblo*. The main legal requirements for a community of people to obtain the status of *pueblo* were to be above 80 families in number, to possess an adequate church building, and to produce a good reason to claim independent status, such as difficult communication with the *cabecera*. It is quite significant that demarcation of a territory was not a legal requirement, so new *pueblos* accomplished this by their own means, apparently according to traditional allocations of land to *sujetos*, and not without conflict. In any event, what turned out to be essential in the creation of a new *pueblo* was the existence of a strong nucleus, in which the church was evidently the focal point and the main element of cohesion. Some of these new *pueblos*, however, did not fit into this general scheme, since they did not previously figure as *sujetos* of another *pueblo* or were not the product of secession;

still, the existence of an organized compact settlement centered on a church was essential to their consolidation as individual corporations.

Another characteristic of most *pueblos* of late creation was the fact of their consolidation amidst a general condition of demographic recovery. As noted above, territorial fragmentation of old corporations originated in the emergence of new centers of political and economic power within a given *pueblo*, and a prospective new Indian corporation was legally required to have a minimum population of 80 families. This was a condition that more and more settlements were able to fulfill as soon as positive trends in the Indian population were achieved by the end of the seventeenth century. As a rule, the more a *pueblo* experienced overall demographic recovery throughout its territory, the more it became a candidate for fragmentation. It seems reasonable to assume that the peculiarities and characteristics of demographic recovery in some way influenced or determined the creation of new corporate bodies.

A further remark should be made on the element of continuity, namely that the general image of the *pueblos de indios* traced above rests upon the assumption that throughout their evolution they always had the demographic basis necessary to consolidate and perform their functions. This was the case indeed in most *pueblos*, especially in the highlands and the *sierras*, in spite of the epidemics and other setbacks during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Continuity of a substantial stock of Indian population turns out to be an important element when considering the character of the population of any given *pueblo*. But the evolution of *pueblos* in some areas, especially in the lowlands and the coastal regions, was quite different, because they suffered such a severe demographic decline that all continuity was lost. The few survivors could not provide the necessary support to maintain a corporate structure, much less to build a new one. In these cases, late seventeenth and eighteenth-century versions of these *pueblos*, if they appeared, did not develop out of their vanished sixteenth century predecessors. They were virtually new. And the question arises as to whether or not the new stock of population behind them shared the same Indian background.

A brief survey of the consequences of extreme demographic decline in some *pueblos* during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is useful at this point. *Pueblos* in the most affected areas disintegrated as the human element necessary to carry on ritual functions, administration of collective welfare, and political standing *vis à vis* colonial rule, vanished, especially during the last decades of the sixteenth century. In some cases the disappearance of the local elite had been enough to destroy social bonds, the remaining population lacking the necessary skills or legitimacy to undertake the complex functions of a corporate body. What was most common among the surviving native population in these areas was to merge into a few selected *pueblos* that managed to maintain corporate functions, usually the biggest or most populated within a region, gradually becoming completely inte-

grated into them and even losing their previous identity. Some people, however, did not merge into these *pueblos*, but instead pursued individual destinies as laborers in Spanish *estancias* or *haciendas*.⁶

It is pertinent then to examine some cases of Indian corporations established in the eighteenth century whose background differed from the standard evolution of the *pueblos de indios* in New Spain. Evidence shows that there were *pueblos* that did not appear previously as *sujetos*, that were not the product of secession, or that did not have a continuous stock of Indian population behind them, but still possessed the essential features of a *pueblo de indios*. It appears that they shared some traits that could lead to the characterization of a particular type of *pueblo*, one that was peculiar, although perhaps not exclusive, to some areas of eighteenth-century New Spain. Unfortunately, to single out these *pueblos* is a difficult task, since there is virtually nothing in their formal structure or in their eighteenth-century aspect, as delivered by written records, that points to their individualization. The only way to discover their peculiarity is through some knowledge of their history and background, and particularly of the conditions that led to their constitution as corporate bodies. This is something that our present state of knowledge does not allow, except in a few cases. Research on the colonial history of lowland and coastal areas has been extremely rare, which makes the task still more difficult.

The complexity of the problem is best illustrated with the case of Tenampulco, a *pueblo* in the *alcadía mayor* of Tetela y Xonotla. Tenampulco's existence as an *altepetl* of pre-Hispanic origin and as the object of an early *encomienda* is fairly well documented until the last years of the sixteenth century, when it suffered severe depopulation and disintegrated as a corporate body. Its territory was absorbed by the surrounding *pueblos*, particularly Tonatico and Xonotla.⁷ It absolutely ceased to exist as a *pueblo* or as an organized settlement of any type during the seventeenth century. The toponym, however, was probably kept to name the area or a particular place, and it reappears in written documents more than a century afterwards, in 1736, associated with a small settlement subject of Xonotla. In that year the place was again struck by epidemics. The survivors took refuge in the *cabecera*, Xonotla, where they stayed for at least twenty years. In 1758 they decided to return to their old place, where an abandoned church building still existed.⁸ The repopulation of Tenampulco was then not only a quick but an intensive affair. The sudden growth of the place is to a great extent explained by the demographic contribution of the '*mulatos rancheros*', a social group that, according to documentary evidence, was very common in the region. A record of 1773 states explicitly, not without a certain prejudice, that Tenampulco had been founded by *bandoleros* and *fugitivos*, a clear indication of the heterogeneous composition of its inhabitants.⁹ Tenampulco gained the status of *pueblo* after its secession from Xonotla four years

later, a very quick evolution indeed.¹⁰ The new corporate body had been created out of virtually nothing in two decades.

Tenampulco's history prompts some interesting comments. First, it shows how the apparent continuity in the history of a given *pueblo* may be deceiving or misleading. Toponyms tend to be more enduring than the social groups that create them, and therefore it is not strange to find the name of a disappeared *pueblo* associated with an uninhabited field, a valley, a mountain, or a spring located within its former territory. This is what happened in Tenampulco, as well as in many places throughout New Spain soon after depopulation early in the seventeenth century. Later on, when demographic conditions changed, a new settlement was likely to reappear in the area and be named with the same toponym, especially if this one had been preserved in some way. But it was obviously only the name that had been preserved. The survival of the toponym in no way indicated the continuity of the corporate body originally associated with it. The only apparent relationship of the new Tenampulco with its sixteenth-century homonym was the fact that it was located within the territory of the former *pueblo*. There is no evidence of any kinship relation between the new dwellers and Tenampulco's original inhabitants, and although it would have not been impossible, it seems clear that this eventual link with the past was not relevant to the new corporate organization.

A second and more important point is related to the nature of the population involved. Indians alone were not responsible for the demographic recovery in coastal and lowland regions of Middle America. After the dramatic population decline of the sixteenth century, these areas received an important flow of people of African descent, from Black slaves and *mulatos* of different social condition. Sixteenth-century records show that some areas, particularly those where cattle *estancias* dominated, received more Black than Spanish immigrants, and when racial mixture occurred it was likely to have been between people of American and African background. In the eighteenth century the coastal and lowland areas of central Mexico had the highest concentrations of Black elements in the colony.¹¹ Most permanent settlements that developed there in the seventeenth century were of a new type, since they could not be catalogued as *pueblos de indios*, *villas*, *reales*, *congregaciones*, or whatever, nor could they be confused with the Spanish owned *estancias* or *haciendas* where their population originated. These new settlements were sometimes identified as *ranchos*, and were obviously associated with the occupation by diverse people of uninhabited or unclaimed land.¹²

There are other elements in the history of Tenampulco that can help to further illuminate this point. The corporation created in 1777 ranked officially as a *pueblo de indios*, and there undoubtedly were Indian elements in it. Evidence shows that a family of Indians surnamed Serrano figured prominently in the local arena. Various documents refer to the Serrano family as 'los Serranos', and it seems that the surname was associated with the origin of that family in the Sie-

rra, the mountain area to the southwest where Indians were dominant.¹³ The fact suggests that the 'serranos', and by extension the Indians, were only a small, distinguishable fraction of Tenampulco's population. Actually, Indians alone could not account for the rapid growth of the *pueblo*. A significant part of its population was made of lowland *mulatos* or *pardos*, whose well known demographic dynamism became a matter of concern for the Spanish authorities. Documents may be literally wrong when they define Tenampulco as founded by 'bandoleros' and 'fugitivos', but by doing so they throw sufficient light to categorize the place as a no man's land and to identify these people with the so-called *castas*. Such documents simply reflect the widespread fear and contempt the Spaniards felt in face of a set of social groups they found difficult to understand, to classify, and to control. In short, the new Tenampulco was a *pueblo de castas* as much as it was a *pueblo de indios*, or possibly even more so.

The case of Tenampulco was not unique. Nearby Chila had a closely similar history, linked to the development of Tlapacoya, a *pueblo* significantly defined as a 'nueva reducción' in 1802. A neighbouring *pueblo*, Tlaola, claimed some land of which it apparently had been deprived when Tlapacoya received its '600-varas' shortly before. Tlapacoya's right to the land was based on the assumption that the new settlement was equivalent to the 'reestablecimiento' of the ancient *pueblo* of Chila.¹⁴ Chila, however, had passed away as a *pueblo* almost two centuries before, its name being preserved until modern times in an uninhabited area of dense subtropical forest, the 'Monte de Chila'. Tlapacoya, in fact, was a completely new settlement, and there is no evidence that its population had any previous relationship with the neighbouring Indian *pueblos*. Therefore, very probably Tlapacoya was also the joint creation of Indians and *pardos*, since it was also located in an area where Indian demographic decline had been extremely severe and the population of African descent was significant. Some other *pueblos* were created almost simultaneously in the area of the ancient Chila, namely Chicontla, Patla, Tlaolantongo, Nopala, and La Concepción de Chila. All of them shared the same basic characteristics.¹⁵ And there were still other settlements in the neighbouring areas that grew up rapidly and developed into individual corporations in the last decades of the eighteenth century as well, like Chimalco, Tihuatlán and El Espinal.¹⁶ As could be expected, the arrival of new people created pressure on land, and conflicts involving these *pueblos*, Tenampulco included, appeared in a few years' time.

In other regions evidence appears to point in the same direction. An interesting example is that of San Juan Azompa, in the *alcaldía mayor* of Sultepec, a place that does not appear in previous lists of settlements in the area. Azompa was defined in 1756 as a *paraje*, not as a *sujeto* of any *pueblo*, and its *naturales* claimed to number 147 and to pay their tribute in Sultepec,¹⁷ to be deprived of lands of their own, and to have no *pueblo* into which they could integrate. There was memory of the settlement having been founded by a certain Don

Julián, from the *pueblo* of San Miguel, doctrina de Aquistlán (sic; Alahuixtlan?) more than 100 years before, and the petition was made for a grant of land and the status of *pueblo*.¹⁸ The area had been severely depopulated in the sixteenth century, and the number of inhabitants of African descent had been significant since then. Settlements of late foundation seem to have been abundant in the jurisdiction of Sultepec, and the number of corporate bodies established in the area by the end of the eighteenth century suggests that the case of Azompa was not unique.¹⁹

An interesting suit of 1709 provides additional information on the character of people of African descent in the same region. The case involved *mulatos* and other non Indians living in La Asunción Telo-loapan (jurisdiction of Zacualpan), threatened with expulsion by the Indian local authorities. In their defense, they insistently claimed to be native *vecinos*, to be responsible for the establishment of the parochial church, and to maintain a rich and prosperous *cofradía* whose support was essential to the welfare of the whole *pueblo* and in which Indians were not excluded.²⁰ This example confirms that the *mulatos* were not alien to the experience of corporate organization, as is well known, and points to the fact that they developed institutions capable of going beyond the scope of interests of race or ethnic group. Some *cofradías* could have provided the initial basis for the later establishment of a separate *pueblo* of Indians and *mulatos* or pardos alike.

It should be clear by now that groups of people whose ethnic and cultural background was not predominantly Indian figured prominently among founders of new corporate political bodies shaped as *pueblos de indios* in the eighteenth century. These new *pueblos* shared common features with virtually all *pueblos* created during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, namely that they developed in most cases from an organized compact settlement centered on a church, and that their consolidation occurred amidst a general condition of demographic recovery. Unlike true Indian *pueblos* created at that time, however, these particular ones did not previously figure as *sujetos* of another *pueblo* and were not the product of secession. Instead, they originated from diverse settlements sometimes identified as *ranchos*, or as '*nuevas reducciones*', and were clearly associated with the occupation of uninhabited or unclaimed land in areas where the demographic collapse of the sixteenth century had been particularly harsh. These were areas where population of African descent, or the heterogeneous groups generally encompassed under the designation of *castas*, or both, were significant or predominant.

The boundary between Indians and *castas* was not clear, especially in areas where demographic recovery involved the participation of people of very different racial and cultural composition. A major peculiarity of the *castas* lay precisely in this ambiguity and heterogeneity. It was not uncommon for people of this background to figure as *mestizos* (which was almost as relative a concept), as Blacks, as

Spaniards, or as Indians, according to possibilities, convenience, or particular conditions. On the other hand, ethnic Indians not linked to any *pueblo* nor clearly attached to *haciendas* or other Spanish settlements where they could be included in tribute lists were also likely to be considered as *castas*, or labelled with derogatory terms as *vagabundos* or *léperos*. In the cases studied above, people involved in the foundation of new *pueblos* possessed one or several of the attributes of the *castas*: they had little or obscure Indian background; they ranked as people of dubious or negative social standing; they had identifiable African precedents (which was an attribute of the *castas* in lowland and coastal areas); and above all, they did not belong to any of the established *pueblos de indios*. It is well known that individuals of non-Indian descent ranked as Indians when they settled in a *pueblo*, and that some of them became *cabildo* members and even governors or *caciques*.²¹ It should be added that substantial groups of people that possessed the attributes of the *castas* ranked as Indians by creating new *pueblos*. Such a move provided a clear and unequivocal way of crossing the nebulous boundary of the *castas*.

Motivations behind a collective action as important as the establishment of a new corporate body with a clear territorial basis and political structure were undoubtedly complex. But the *pueblos* seemed to be an answer to the need of a growing number of people to organize in an efficient way to meet common interests. The main impulse behind their creation could have been the need to legitimate or to defend land claims, or the need to articulate a system of hierarchy or authority. The recognition of a group as a corporate body was very important in New Spain. The Indian model of corporate organization was likely to be considered suitable. To reproduce the *pueblos de indios* among the *castas* was an almost natural move, given the existence of elements of Indian background among the incumbent population, and the legal facilities involved.

The question arises as to where to locate the initial move towards corporate organization among the *castas*. Some evidence suggests that the influence of Indian people living among them was determinant. The foundation of a *pueblo* could be credited to small groups of dissident or exiled Indians who realized the convenience of attracting people of diverse origin in order to consolidate the basic population level needed to gain autonomy. Other evidence, however, shows that the *castas* did possess a social structure complex enough to generate the need for a corporate organization, and the ability to construct and manage such a body. Consciously or not, they could have been using elements of the Indian social structure to build up their own. The case of Tenampulco, for instance, accepts the two possible hypothesis. Probably both situations were common, and did not completely exclude each other.

From a different perspective, the new *pueblos* could also have been promoted by Spaniards. The Spanish authorities were seriously concerned about the possibility of losing control over a substantial seg-

ment of the population that was undoubtedly growing dominant in some regions. Classification according to race or descent had proved useless, and defining the legal status of thousands of individuals of unequal background was almost impossible. The situation was different when they constituted organized groups, such as a *cofradía*, and the creation of militias of *mulatos* or *pardos* in late colonial times turned out to be an excellent way to control and classify a substantial segment of the *castas*.²² The creation of *pueblos* could have been an equally convenient measure to end the nightmare the *castas* were for the Spaniards, not to speak of the advantages of having an increased number of permanent, registered tributaries. There is no evidence, however, that Spanish authorities openly promoted the creation of *pueblos* among the *castas*, although they certainly did not oppose the trend. It was probably among religious personnel that the issue was discussed the most. It should be recalled that a church building was at the hub of all new *pueblos*, that the church had taken over most ritual and symbolic functions, and that every *pueblo* was a potential parochial unit. The role of the church had been fundamental in the fragmentation of the old *pueblos* and the secession of their *sujetos* as well.

It seems opportune at this point to recall the corporate bodies established at different times in New Spain with Black runaways. They provide an interesting precedent that should not be excluded from this analysis.²³ Their establishment was the product of both Spanish concern and convenience. Their racial character was of course more definite, and the circumstances of their creation were infinitely more critical. Still, they can be useful contexts in which to understand the way people of African descent built social bonds. It might have been that a substantial number of individuals among the *castas*, regardless of their unequal ethnic and cultural background, developed unsuspected elements of social cohesion. The case of Santa Ana Tepetitlán in Jalisco shows, probably more than any other, how diffuse and misleading the racial and ethnic boundaries of colonial Indian corporations could have been. Founded with slaves as a defensive town, and constantly populated by *mulatos*, it eventually acquired the status and designation of a *pueblo de indios*.²⁴

A final remark should be made on the general situation of the rural population in eighteenth-century New Spain. While an important number of Indians were leaving the *pueblos* in order to move into *haciendas* or *ranchos*, therefore leaving corporate life for the pursuit of an individual destiny as free laborers, the *castas* seemed to proceed in the opposite direction, from the *ranchos* to the *pueblos*, following the Indian model of corporate organization. Unfortunately, the process was obscured by the imprecise boundary drawn between both social groups, and cannot be easily reconstructed from written records. In order to provide a substantial amount of facts and figures extensive research has to be done. A revision of some points in the history of the Indians is needed too. For instance, if some *pueblos de indios*

were in fact *pueblos de castas*, calculations of Indian population may require a careful consideration: are they dealing with ethnic Indians or with *pueblo* Indians? In fact, the presence of undefinable *castas* among Indians of unequivocal definition calls for a conceptual revision.

ENDNOTES

1. The following paragraphs synthesize the analysis of the evolution of the *pueblos de indios* carried out in my recent book *Los pueblos de la Sierra. El poder y el espacio entre los indios del norte de Puebla hasta 1700* (Mexico City, 1987). As in this book, I will use the word *pueblo* to define the corporation that evolved from the pre-Hispanic *altepetl* or its equivalents, and not as a synonym of town or village. A more concise version of this chapter was delivered at the 46th International Congress of Americanists, held in Amsterdam in July 1988. I wish to thank Prof. William B. Taylor of the University of Virginia for his valuable comments to an earlier draft.

2. See the essays of Lavrin and Gruzinski in this volume.

3. The fragmentation of the *pueblos de indios* is extensively analyzed in the book cited in note 1 above, but the subject is complex and still deserves much attention, especially for the eighteenth century. Traditional studies on Indian society pay little attention to the problem, and few modern scholars have devoted any time to it, although an interesting approach has been developed by Danièle Dehouve, "Las separaciones de pueblos en la región de Tlapa (siglo XVIII)," in *Historia Mexicana*, 33:4 (1984/132), 379-404, published in translation in this volume.

4. As a rule of thumb, ancient *pueblos* were those identifiable among the sixteenth-century *encomiendas*.

5. A major exception is Nancy Farris, *Maya Society under Spanish Rule. The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, 1984).

6. In any event their original *pueblos* disappeared in such a way that two or three generations afterwards it was already very difficult, if not impossible, to find traces of them. Modern historians only possess lists of *pueblos* that include the empty names of these victims of depopulation, and a loosely approximate idea of their location.

7. García Martínez, *Pueblos de la Sierra*, 72, 110, 114, 119-120, 135, 238, 242, 324, 337, 371, 375. The last known figure for Tenampulco's population gives 73 tributaries in 1597.

8. Order of Marqués de las Amarillas (July 12, 1758), Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN), Ramo de Indios, vol. 58, f. 129. The document refers erroneously to the *alcaldía mayor* of Tetela del Volcán.

9. AGN, Tierras, vol. 971, exp. 4 (1773). Also, order of Antonio Bucareli (August 25, 1773), AGN, Ramo de Indios, vol. 64, exp. 123. Tenampulco received its '600 varas' of land before this date. (On the '600 varas' see Wood and Dyckerhoff in this volume.)

10. Order of Antonio Bucareli (January 14, 1777), AGN, Ramo de Indios, vol. 65, f. 248.

11. *Pardos* accounted up to 85 percent of the non-Indian population in the 'central coast-areas' in 1742-1746, 1777 and 1789-1793; see Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah, "Racial Groups in the Mexican Population Since 1519," in their *Essays in Population History. Mexico and the Caribbean* (Berkeley, 1974), II, 202-221. On the Tenampulco area, see García Martínez, *Pueblos de la Sierra*, 227-228; Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (Cambridge, 1972), 219.

12. This is not the case of certain settlements founded by *pueblos* in empty areas within their legal limits to preserve or reinforce their rights over the land; see García Martínez, *Pueblos de la Sierra*, 239.

13. Order of Antonio Bucareli, AGN, Ramo de Indios, vol. 64, exp. 23.

14. File on a suit between Tlapacoya and Tlaola (1802-1804), AGN, Tierras, vol. 1343, exp. 17.
15. See file of 1791-1793 in AGN, Tierras, vol. 1222 1a pte, exp. 10.
16. On El Espinal, see file of 1781 in AGN, Ramo Civil, vol. 1975, exp. 7.
17. This apparently means that they paid their tribute directly to the *alcalde mayor*, since they were not under the jurisdiction of any Indian *gobernador*. A similar case is recorded in 1786 in Izúcar, where a census listed Indians in *ranchos*, not subject to any *gobernador*, together with Blacks and *mulatos*, who paid tribute directly to the Spanish authorities; census of 1785-1786 in AGN, Ramo de Tributos, vol. 8, exp. 1.
18. Order of Marqués de las Amarillas (May 31, 1756), AGN, Ramo de Indios, vol. 58, ff. 22v-24.
19. See figures for Temascaltepec, Sultepec, and Zacualpan in Cook And Borah, *Essays in Population History*, II, 227-231; Gerhard, *Guide*, 269-270; also, census of 1794 in AGN, Ramo de Tributos, vol. 37, exp. 6. According to Gerhard, there were 54 *cabeceras* in the province by 1801, which is an 'extreme example' of how communities obtained political autonomy in the colonial period.
20. Suit of 1709 in AGN, Ramo Civil, vol. 2195, exp. 8.
21. This feature of eighteenth-century *pueblos* is briefly analyzed in William B. Taylor, "Indian Pueblos of Central Jalisco in the Eve of Independence," in *Iberian Colonies, New World Societies. Essays in Memory of Charles Gibson*, Richard L. Garner and William B. Taylor, eds. (Private printing, 1985), 166-167. This article shows how landless non-Indian country men were attracted to *pueblos de indios* by the promise of a small piece of land and, especially, the legal privileges of Indian status.
22. See Christon I. Archer, "Pardos, Indians, and the Army of New Spain: Inter-relationships and Conflicts (1780-1810)," in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 6:2 (1974), 231-255.
23. See Patrick Carroll, "Mandinga: The Evolution of a Mexican Runaway Slave Community (1735-1827)," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29:4 (1977), 488-505; William B. Taylor, "The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Amapa," in *The Americas*, 26:4 (1970), 439-446.
24. Taylor, "Indian Pueblos," 166.