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“The rupture generation” : nineteenth-century Nahua intellectuals in Mexico City, 1774-1882

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Chapter 3

The Nahua Intellectual Tradition in Mesoamerica and New Spain

Introduction

There is a long history of Indigenous Peoples' intellectual, which originates in the earliest societies in the area of Mesoamerica and continues to the present day. This intellectual tradition flourished among the diverse Mesoamerican societies and also continued during the centuries of the Spanish colonization. As I have mentioned before, this tradition cannot be considered as homogenous and lineal, but rather heterogeneous and variable according to the cultural and linguistic context of all Mesoamerican various peoples.

Based on this premise, it is important for this present study to consider that the Mesoamerican intellectual tradition continued under the period of the Spanish colonial system albeit under difficult and very particular circumstances. The characteristics of the works and production of indigenous intellectuals under the Spanish colonial regime also vary. Nevertheless, the characteristics that transformed and shaped the way indigenous intellectuals rechanneled their production in the colonial context also demonstrates a continuity with the Mesoamerican intellectual roots of their ancestors. Several secondary studies about this topic evidence the existence of Mesoamerican elements and ideas that prevailed in the intellectual work of Indigenous Peoples under the colonial system. The works produced by those Indigenous Peoples who had access to westernized knowledge during the period of the Spanish conquest resulted in an interesting process of synergy that permeated the way these individuals conducted themselves as members of a specific group. Nevertheless, another element that we must consider for the understanding of Indigenous Peoples' intellectuality is the social hierarchy and the position that these intellectuals held during the colonial era. In this light, the case of early nineteenth-century indigenous intellectuals does not represent the exception.

Indigenous intellectuals' works during the period of the Spanish colonization continued by following two separate paths of production: the non-institutionalized means of production, and institutionalized one. The non-institutionalized intellectual production remained active, but without the acceptance and sponsorship of the Spanish colonial authorities. There are several examples about this type of intellectual production and practices all over the Spanish colonized territories of Mesoamerica throughout the entire period of the colonial regime and up until the present. Diverse practices that kept a record, memory and performance of traditional pre-conquest knowledge did not cease to exist during the colonial era; but Spanish colonial authorities persecuted and condemned these cultural expressions. On the other hand, the institutionalized intellectual production of Indigenous Peoples enjoyed the colonial Spanish

authorities' acceptance by promoting the creation of this intellectual work through authorized cloisters for their own interests.

The creation of diverse colonial schools or *colegios* had the purpose of educating, indoctrinating, forcefully converting and instructing Indigenous Peoples into a westernized religion and economical activities. For instance, the first *colegio* founded in New Spain by the Spaniards was the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales*, founded in 1527, which had the purpose of teaching young Indigenous People the Spanish language, literacy and introducing these individuals into westernized skills and crafts. The main purpose of the *Colegio de San José* mainly focused on creating a solid group of indigenous craftsmen that could reproduce the religious European-styled sacred images for future religious buildings that otherwise Spanish authorities had to have brought directly from Europe at great expense, increasing the costs of the religious entrepreneurship.¹⁶⁹

Colonial Spanish authorities founded diverse schools with the purpose of educating Indigenous Peoples in both Catholicism and Western values. This chapter will briefly explore the history and objectives of diverse Spanish institutions founded for the indigenous population in the capital of New Spain, Mexico City. By doing so we will be able to appreciate the way in which indigenous intellectuals continued and developed their cultural memory under the sponsorship of the colonial institutions during the early and final years of the Spanish colonial regime.

3.1 On Intellectualism in Mesoamerica

Mesoamerican societies have developed their intellectual activity over a long period, influenced by both social and geographic factors. Examples of this Mesoamerican intellectual activity are numerous and they include a wide variety of materials, knowledge and practices. In this regard, it is important to consider the social and geographic characteristics of Mesoamerican societies in order to define or determine the meaning of both the terms intellectual and what intellectual activity meant to the various cultures under study.

The previous chapter of this work established a few of the basic historical and theoretical concepts to necessarily define the role of intellectuals within Mesoamerican societies. The main objective of this current chapter is to examine a few of the general characteristics of intellectuals within these early Mesoamerican societies. The discussion below is based on the interpretation of the theoretical elements and historical evidence discussed in the previous chapter. As this

¹⁶⁹ For more information about the education of indigenous artists under the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales*, see Penny C. Morriff, *La Casa del Deán. New World Imagery in a Sixteenth-Century Mexican Mural Cycle* (Austin: University of Texas at Austin Press, 2014); and also the work of Elena Fitzpatrick Sifford, "Hybridizing Iconography. The Miraculous Mass of St. Gregory Featherwork from the Colegio de San José de los Naturales in Mexico City," *ReVisioning: Critical Methods of Seeing Christianity in the History of Art*, eds. James Romaine and Linda Strafford (London: The Lutterworth Press, 2013), 133-142.

previous chapter argued, this intellectual tradition continued and survived the Spanish invasion and process of colonization. Similarly, all Mesoamerican societies experienced this phenomenon of intellectual survival during the Spanish invasion and long after the process of colonization began. Nevertheless, every Mesoamerican society experienced this process in different ways, which resulted in a wide diversity of indigenous intellectual traditions developing during the period of the Spanish colony.

The process of the Spanish colonization, due to the trauma it caused over the indigenous population and its grievous character, dismantled and damaged the institutional structure that supported indigenous intellectual life within these Mesoamerican societies. However, even considering the traumatic elements of social decomposition inherent in violent conquest, intellectual activity among Mesoamerican peoples survived the process of colonization. This process of survival can be traced by current historians through two basic means: by either studying the clandestine manifestations of surviving intellectuals; or through an examination of those indigenous intellectuals who adapted to and used the new colonial institutions. Nevertheless, as any other social phenomenon, the division between these two types of intellectual responses is not easily separated. As a matter of fact, and according to the sources, there are several examples that demonstrate that clandestine practices could also be performed by Indigenous People who mainly functioned within the colonial institutionalized realm. In this regard, it is important to avoid considering these two spheres as radically opposite or completely independent from each other.¹⁷⁰

The pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican intellectuality that survived the Spanish colonization through non-colonial traditional manifestations did so by continuing certain prohibited practices outside the institutional realm enforced by the colonial authorities. These intellectual practices ranged from traditional non-Christian religious ceremonies performed in secrecy from the supervision of the colonial authorities, to popular medical practices which combined elements of both the European worldview and elements from traditional indigenous knowledge. Since these non-authorized manifestations happened outside the institutional and permissible fields approved by the colonizers, the performers of this knowledge became the object of persecution and punishment by the colonial authorities.

There is significant historical evidence, both archaeological and archival, about this phenomenon that occurred in secrecy. Currently, archaeological reports exist which have identified and discovered places that were used as sacred spaces by Indigenous Peoples during

¹⁷⁰ For more about the clandestine intellectual material that Indigenous People produced during the period of the Spanish colonization in Mesoamerica, see: David Tavárez, "Zapotec Time, Alphabetic Writing and the Public Sphere," *Ethnohistory* 57, No. 1 (2000): 73-85. Also see, John Chuchiak, "The Images Speak: The Survival and Production of Hieroglyphic Codices and Their Use in Post-Conquest Maya Religion, 1580-1720," *Maya Religion and Practices: Processes of Change and Adaptation. Acta Mesoamericana* 14 (Saurwein Verlag: Markt Schwaben, 2004): 71-103.

and after the period of the Spanish conquest.¹⁷¹ In these sacred ritual spaces, the members of the former Mesoamerican elites continued to perform ceremonies to their ancient deities that the Spanish authorities considered as prohibited due to their supposed “demonic” nature.

On the other hand, historical documentation concerning these traditional non-Christian practices exists in the surviving archives of the bishop’s courts known as the *Provisorato de Indios*, and sometimes called the “Indian Inquisition.”¹⁷² This ecclesiastical institution remained in charge of the proper social and religious control over the Christianized indigenous communities after the founding of the Inquisition which did not have jurisdiction over Indigenous Peoples. It was these ecclesiastical courts, and not the Inquisition, that oversaw the social and religious behavior of the new converts in the Americas.

In this regard, these non-institutional activities led by Mesoamericans during the colony remained open acts of resistance against the process of subjugation exerted by the Spaniards on the Mesoamerican population. Due to its nature, this non-colonial sponsored intellectuality requires a particular perspective in the analysis of the social and cultural elements that triggered this phenomenon.

Another facet of this phenomenon of Mesoamerican intellectual continuity during the period of the Spanish colony occurred through the indigenous use of permitted institutions of colonial society. This institutionalized phenomenon was led by Mesoamerican individuals who looking to ensure their survival, decided to continue their intellectual tradition by learning and adapting the methods of the European colonizers, and by themselves becoming disciples of the colonizers within some colonial institutions.¹⁷³ Some of these indigenous individuals were members of the former elite Mesoamerican noble families, while others saw an opportunity to

¹⁷¹ See Stanislav Chládek, *Exploring Maya Ritual Caves: Dark Secrets from the Maya Underworld* (Maryland, Altamira Press, 2011). Also, James A. Brady and Keith Pruffer, edit., *In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use* (Austin, University of Texas at Austin Press, 2005). Also, Fátima Tec Pol, “El uso de las cuevas mayas a través del tiempo,” in *Las cuevas de Yucatán. La región de Valladolid* (Montrauil, Ediciones Xibalba, 2001), 42-53; David Tavárez, *Nicachi Songs: Zapotec Ritual Texts and Postclassic Ritual Knowledge in Colonial Oaxaca*, FAMSI Report, 2005:

<http://www.famsi.org/reports/02050/02050Tavarez01.pdf>. For the reuse of ritual elements of Mesoamerican culture, see the example of the Purepecha in Verónica Hernández Díaz, “El reuso colonial de los *janamus* en Tzintzuntzan, Michoacán: Una exaltación del pasado prehispánico,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 32, número 96 (2010): 5-35. For other cases of religious resistance and synergy of Mesoamerican religion in the Maya area, see, John F. Chuchiak, “Colonial Maya Religion and the Spanish World: The Role of “Idolatry” *Axis Mundi: Journal of the Slovak Association for the Study of Religion* 9, no. 1 (2014): 47-66.

¹⁷² Jorge E. Traslosheros, “Los indios, la Inquisición y los tribunales eclesiásticos ordinarios de la Nueva España. Definición Jurisdiccional y justo proceso, 1571-1750,” in Jorge Traslosheros y Ana de Zaballa Beascochea coord., *Los indios ante los foros de justicia religiosa en la Hispanoamérica virreinal* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2010), 47-74; also see John F. Chuchiak, “The Indian Inquisition and the Extirpation of Idolatry: The Process of Punishment in the *Provisorato De Indios* of the Diocese of Yucatan, 1563 – 1812 (PhD. Diss. Tulane University, 2000).

¹⁷³ A clear example of this phenomenon is the case of the Maya Gaspar Antonio Chi, who worked as interpreter and scribe for the Maya people in the Colonial Spanish Courts. See Frans Blom, “Gaspar Antonio Chi, Interpreter,” *American Anthropologist*, 30, No. 2 (April-June, 1928): 250-262.

integrate themselves into a new social sphere that allowed them upward mobility. These individuals gained access to the European knowledge and way of thinking by participating primarily in colonial religious institutions. Within these institutions, a select group of these indigenous individuals learned new social skills and they quickly learned how to survive serving as mediators between the Spanish colonial society and their original communities.

In the case of the Nahua people from central Mexico, these colonial institutions that offered them a chance for survival were mainly educational compounds directly administrated by one or more of the Catholic religious orders. As we will see, the first of these institutions was *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* (run by Franciscans); the *Colegio Imperial de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* (also run by Franciscans), later on, the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán*, the *Colegio Seminario de San Gregorio* (run by the Jesuit order), and the major institutions of *the Real y Pontificia Universidad de México*, and finally the *Academia de San Carlos de las Nobles Artes de la Nueva España*.

The institutional pathway for survival that these indigenous individuals followed was not an easy task, since several of these institutions openly restricted the access of Indigenous Peoples. Nevertheless, even though the colonial institutions legally restricted the access of Nahua peoples to higher education, in reality it was not impossible for certain members to gain access to these institutions through various means. In this sense, it is not the intention of this chapter to make a summary or historical sketch about all of the educational institutions that existed in New Spain. The purpose of this chapter is rather to demonstrate that by these institutional means a significant number of Nahuas used these institutions to ensure that their indigenous intellectuality continued. Consequently, by analyzing this process this chapter does not pretend to minimize this social phenomenon –i.e. indigenous intellectuality- but rather to show that there is indeed a continuity of this indigenous tradition from pre-conquest Mesoamerican societies until the nineteenth century. In this regard, it is also important to note that regional variations existed in the way indigenous intellectuality developed and prospered institutionally. However, the main purpose of this research is to use the case study of Nahua intellectuals as an example of this Mesoamerican social experience of synergy during colonial times. Thus, it is important also to note up front that when I refer to the continuity of the indigenous intellectual tradition in the area of central Mexico I do not imply that the characteristics of this intellectuality did not become transformed by colonial contact. On the contrary, in order to ensure the continuance of Mesoamerican knowledge, these colonized indigenous intellectuals had to transform that knowledge and constantly recreate it.

3.1.1 The Mesoamerican Intellectual Tradition

Mesoamerican societies such as the Maya, Nahua, Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec), Bèñizàa (Zapotec), Mixe, Otomi, Purepecha, just to name a few, developed a complex social organization divided into diverse hierarchies. Intellectuals made up one of the social groups that formed part of these

complex societies' hierarchical organizations. Nevertheless, Mesoamerican intellectuals had specific obligations and duties that remained indispensable for the sake of their communities' survival.¹⁷⁴ Before the fifteenth century, Mesoamerican intellectual elites had already developed their own regional traditions based on their various historical backgrounds, geographical locations and social needs.¹⁷⁵ The knowledge produced by Mesoamerican intellectuals constantly transformed and changed according to the development of the social order within their communities. These Mesoamerican intellectuals mastered literacy, developed a complex graphic pluralism, and created a series of manifestations of knowledge, in various forms such as music, oratory, and other types of performances.¹⁷⁶

In terms of social hierarchies, similarly to other regions of the world, the “fundamental” social group in Mesoamerican communities became constituted by a restricted sphere limited to those who held the disposition and exercise of power and leadership over other groups that constituted the rest of the society. This specific group counted upon one or more types of intellectuals in order to provide their strata of society with certain homogeneity and ideological stability within the community.¹⁷⁷ In this sense, it was the main duty of the intellectuals to create and re-create the collective knowledge and to keep the memory alive about the experiences that they lived within a specific collective group.

Mesoamerican intellectuals had diverse social responsibilities across all of these cultures. Among these duties included the preservation of knowledge, the communication of their expertise, the preservation and communication of the history of their community, as well as the reenacting of historical or divine events that influenced the sake of the community. Due to this level of specialization and the importance that they held among their society, Mesoamerican intellectuals became members of a separate class or social group that enjoyed a high level of prestige.¹⁷⁸ In this manner, Mesoamerican intellectuals constantly worked toward the maintenance of the establishment to which they belonged. These intellectuals achieved this task by constantly transforming and revitalizing the ideological basis of the establishment.

In this way, Mesoamerican intellectuals' work became characterized by the preservation and creation of demonstrable and commensurable political, cultural and/or economic ideals and values. These values influenced the society and their leaders, either temporally and/or

¹⁷⁴ Maarten Jansen y Aurora Pérez Jiménez, *La lengua señorial de Ñuu Dzauí. Cultura literaria de los antiguos reinos y transformación colonial* (Oaxaca: Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca, Secretaría de Cultura, 2009), 23.

¹⁷⁵ J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, 237: “A tradition, in its simplest form, may be thought of as an indefinite series of repetitions of an action, which on each occasion is performed on the assumption that it has been performed before; its performance is authorized-though the nature of the authorization may vary widely-by the knowledge, or the assumption, or previous performance,” p. 237.

¹⁷⁶ See Margaret Bender, “Reflection on What Writing Means, Beyond What It ‘Says:’ The Political Economy and Semiotics of Graphic Pluralism in the Americas,” *Ethnohistory* 57, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 175-182.

¹⁷⁷ Gramsci, *La formación de los intelectuales*, 21-26.

¹⁷⁸ See Mónica Quijada y Jesús Bustamante, *Elites intelectuales y modelos colectivos*.

spatially.¹⁷⁹ Intellectuals in Mesoamerica preserved and created knowledge as their major practical activity, which constantly influenced the physical, social and ideological realm of their societies. Consequently, there is a diversity of intellectual products (monuments, codices, ceramics, etc) that preserved both the thinking and the mentality of Mesoamerican societies.¹⁸⁰ Various documents such as texts written in diverse Mesoamerican writing systems, oral traditions, rituals, music, and a diversity of performances currently provide testimony about the complex historicity of Mesoamerican memory. Consequently, due to their diverse nature, both tangible and intangible intellectual manifestations survived throughout time. Also, the content and the way in which these intellectuals materialized this knowledge both reveal the intense ideological production of Mesoamerican intellectuals.

Mesoamerican societies formed their historicity based on recording series of notable events, even though some of these events appear to have been the work of a single historical individual protagonist. This Mesoamerican recollection of the past reflects events in which the collective community also participated in one way or another.¹⁸¹ In brief, Mesoamerican intellectuals kept and recorded this collective memory by considering it as a communal process rather than an individual one.¹⁸² Another element observed in Mesoamerican sources is the diversity of historical and literary genres included in these texts.¹⁸³ This attestation evidences the specialization that Mesoamerican societies reached in recording their historical processes.

Mesoamerican literary sources also are characterized by both their diegetic and mimetic nature. The diegetic character of these literary sources can be briefly defined as a narrative conceptualization of an experience within the realm of language. In other words, this diegetic character of Mesoamerican texts included the linguistic narration of an act or event, such as a reading or an oral interpretation, regardless of whether or not the event was written down or preserved through oral tradition. The mimetic nature of these texts served as a representative physical imitation of the historical experience such as the use of gestures, motions, sounds, and performances. For Mesoamerican intellectuals these two elements were fundamental in the configuration of the past. Both the diegetic and mimetic elements were essential for the re-creation of knowledge, which could be modified according to the needs of their society's

¹⁷⁹ Gramsci, *La formación de los intelectuales*, 26.

¹⁸⁰ The word "monument" should be understood as any cultural creation, regardless of its size or material, which keeps the memory of their creators and their historical context. See Reginald G. Haggard, *A Dictionary of Art Terms. Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, and the Graphic Arts* (Poole-Dorset: New Orchard Editions, 1962), 217.

¹⁸¹ There are several examples about this idea on the importance of the collective character of Mesoamerican historiography. In this sense, diverse codices show in their content the history of different peoples, interpreted by the feats and events in which the leaders of these peoples appear as major characters. See María Castañeda de la Paz, "La Tira de la Peregrinación y la ascendencia chichimeca de los tenochca," *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl*, Núm. 38 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2007), 183-212.

¹⁸² See Pierre Guiraud, *La Semiología*.

¹⁸³ Alfredo López Austin, *Los mitos del tlacuache* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 1998), 256-258.

contemporaneity. The use of these two elements in the creation of knowledge evidences the need that Mesoamerican societies had for relying on a group of “specialists” to record and perform this collective knowledge. In order to adequately preserve the collective history of their people, Mesoamerican intellectuals required specific training. In this process of learning, other intellectuals with greater experience and expertise prepared future specialists in all of these Mesoamerican societies.

The recording of the existence of sacred places, time and objects remained highly necessary elements for the development of the said knowledge. These places, times and objects were manipulated and reserved for the use of these intellectuals, who through their training knew the code and regulations about the way in which these elements worked and how they should be used and performed.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, these intellectuals remained responsible for constantly performing both the configuration and re-configuration of cultural knowledge. As dynamic as this process appears, this collective comprehension concerning cultural knowledge remained in constant transformation. Since this activity always became associated with the cognitive affinities of the peoples who created it, the re-creation and re-interpretation of knowledge contributed to the development of both a cultural consciousness and a collective identity. Given the degree of specialization of this work, Mesoamerican societies created a series of specific terms that referred to those in charge of the creation, re-creation, memorization, performance and capture of the memory of their peoples.¹⁸⁵

The specific terms that these diverse Mesoamerican societies created to refer to their intellectuals, gives evidence to the highly specialized nature of these intellectuals and offers hints at a few of the duties that these intellectuals performed. Just to name a few out of an extensive number of examples, the Ñuu Dzau used the term *Tay saque* to refer to their priests and both to their ability to speak eloquently and their power to convince people.¹⁸⁶ Meanwhile, the term *Yya toniñe*, refers to the ruler, who without a doubt held special characteristics that he did not share with the rest of the members of the community.¹⁸⁷ These specialists also used sacred substances such as tobacco and copal, incense, hallucinogenic mushrooms and medicinal herbs in their rituals and performances.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Emile Durkheim, *Las formas elementales de la vida religiosa* (Madrid: Akal Editor, 1982), 27.

¹⁸⁵ J. G. A. Pocock, “Time, Institutions and Action: An Essay on Traditions and Their Understanding,” in *Politics, Language and Time*, 233-272.

¹⁸⁶ Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, *La lengua señorial de Ñuu Dzau*, 21.

¹⁸⁷ Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca*, 103.

¹⁸⁸ See Terraciano, *Ibid*, 134; Jan G. R. Elferink, José Antonio Flores and Charles D. Kaplan, “The use of plants and other natural products for malevolent practices among the Aztecs and their successors,” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*, Núm. 24 (1994): 27-48. See also Ferdinand Anders, Maarten Janen and Luis Reyes García, *Los templos del cielo y de la oscuridad. Oráculos y liturgia. Libro explicativo del llamado Códice Borgia* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 62-69.

Other Mesoamerican peoples also had specialists who conducted these same performances of historical memory. For instance, other terms in the Zapotec language also reveal the level of specialization that the intellectual elite achieved in their culture. During the sixteenth century the word *colaní*, referred to a calendar specialist; and the terms *pigana*, *bigana* or *vigana*, referred to a young assistant of the ritual specialist.¹⁸⁹ Also, for the people from the region currently denominated as the Mexican State of Michoacán, the terms *t'arhēsī* referred to the imposing character of an old sage or wise-man; while the terms *tachátiicha* or *acháecha* referred to their rulers, who they also considered as the personification of their gods in both ceremonies and on the battlefield.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, for the Mayan area, there are specific terms that describe the duties and activities performed by these intellectuals. Terms in Yucatec Maya such as *Ah Kino'ob*, meaning “day keepers” or Sun-Priests; *Chilam Balam*, or a sage or the “one who speaks and prophesizes”; as well as *ah ts'ibo'ob*, referring to scribes, all reveal the social importance of this intellectual class and the variety of the assignments under their individual charge.¹⁹¹

Both specialization and precision of these historical documents written by Mesoamericans peoples give evidence to the formal instruction of the intellectual leaders of a community. The result of this specialized instruction resided in the complex materialization that these Mesoamerican intellectuals made of their collective knowledge.¹⁹² Since “the broad definition of writing embraces both verbal and nonverbal systems,”¹⁹³ pursuits associated with the ability to interpret knowledge remained broadly based. These activities included creating a discourse, reading and interpreting texts, memorizing events, leading or participating in ceremonies, as well as singing and playing instruments. Mesoamerican intellectuals performed all of these specialized and highly appreciated activities in order to configure and re-configure time and knowledge. This characteristic placed them into a realm that went beyond the human sphere. For instance, Mesoamerican intellectuals occupied a position on the threshold, between the human and the sacred realm. In this position, the intellectuals were intermediaries between the collective group and the sacred world. Consequently, these intellectuals had the appropriate knowledge to maintain the harmonic relationship and balance between both the sacred and the human sphere. The ability to deal with the sacred realm was restricted and available only for certain members of the society, such as these intellectuals. As Miguel Pastrana stated:

¹⁸⁹ See David Tavárez, *The Invisible Wars. Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

¹⁹⁰ Carlos García Mora, *Los tarascos y los purépechas. Dos formaciones históricas* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011), 159.

¹⁹¹ See Kevin J. Johnston, “Dedos rotos. La captura del escriba en la cultura maya clásica,” in *FAMSI-Reports*, URL: <http://www.famsi.org/reports/03101es/62kevin/62kevin.pdf>, last retrieved on April, 2015. Also see Chuchiak IV, “Writing as Resistance.” See also Michael D. Coe and Justin Kerr, *The Art of the Maya Scribe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997).

¹⁹² Robert Michels, *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden & Cedar Paul (New York: Heart's International Library Co., 1915), 80-81.

¹⁹³ Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black. Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 31.

Dada la cercanía del sacerdote con lo sagrado, claramente se comprende que es más fácil que él (el sacerdote) entre en lo sagrado que cualquier otro profano y por lo tanto, es menos peligroso para la colectividad que representa que él realice las prácticas de intermediación necesarios y no alguien que no esté adecuadamente preparado. En pocas palabras, se necesita de un especialista religioso capaz de mediar entre lo sagrado y lo profano y que, hasta donde sea posible, garantice el buen éxito de la empresa que la comunidad le encomienda.¹⁹⁴

Hence, these series of re-enactments belonged to the sacred realm, and consequently the performer underwent a liminal experience, or in other words, the experience of being at the threshold:

[...] the “first manifestation” of a reality is equivalent to its creation by a divine or semi divine being; hence, recovering this time of origin implies ritual repetition of the god’s creative act. The periodic reactualization of the creative acts performed by the divine beings *in illo tempore* constitutes the sacred calendar, the series of festivals.¹⁹⁵

Both the level of specialization and social appreciation, regardless of its religious importance, indicate the institutionalization that knowledge held among Mesoamerican societies. In this sense, Victor W. Turner stated that “[...] liminality may be institutionalized in societies with a high degree of specialization and complexity and develop a dialectic relationship with the surrounding structured society.”¹⁹⁶ In this sense, additional characteristics that Mesoamerican cultures shared in the process of the production of knowledge focused on the strict transmission, memorization and learning of the past. The learning of these processes served as part of the intellectual training of these specialists.

These activities or formal training processes became regulated by the establishment through the administration and supervision of specific institutions,¹⁹⁷ such as the *calmecac*, or the place of higher instruction where the priests and religious men lived;¹⁹⁸ the *telpochcalli*, which worked as an educational center for young *macehualmeh*, or commoners, in order to get

¹⁹⁴ Miguel Pastrana Flores, *Entre los hombres y los dioses. Acercamiento al sacerdocio de calpulli entre los antiguos nahuas* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México- Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas 2008), 19.

¹⁹⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: A Harvest Book Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1987), 85.

¹⁹⁶ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure. The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 125.

¹⁹⁷ See, Serge Gruzinski, *La colonización de lo imaginario*.

¹⁹⁸ Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia de las cosas de la Nueva España* (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1999), 50.

some instruction;¹⁹⁹ and the *cuicacalli*, a compound where only a selected number of Nahua people studied singing for the benefit of the rulers and the religious people,²⁰⁰ all educational and formative venues established by Nahua people from Central Mexico.²⁰¹ Since the establishment regulated and arbitrated the production, interpretation and diffusion of ideas according to the state's needs (which were indeed diverse in Mesoamerica). There were also a myriad of productive activities that became divided among scribes, interpreters, ritual specialists which all together created varying regional and ethnic traditions of interpretation throughout the Mesoamerican territory.

Since the creation and preservation of knowledge, as we have seen, had a diegetic character (based on orality) among Mesoamericans, it was vital for these specialists to count upon the basic elements of verbal communication: transmitter, receptor, reference, medium and message.²⁰² Additionally, practicing and creating knowledge, as well as interpreting it and materially capturing it, remained only a few of the privileged activities reserved for these selected members of the society.²⁰³ This privileged position also provided these intellectuals access to the consumption and/or administration of special substances, foods or beverages.²⁰⁴ Hence, some practices performed by these intellectuals became associated with sacred space. In this sense, intellectuals came to share this sacred place, where gods and goddesses continuously performed divine actions that took place *in illo tempore*.²⁰⁵

In this way, Mesoamerican intellectuals, personified as variously the political leaders, wise-men, scribes, healers, and ritual specialists, all acted as mediums between the sacred and the profane realms. Therefore, the main duty of Mesoamerican intellectuals' was to influence the lives of the members of the society through the performance of specific liminal rituals and ceremonies.²⁰⁶ Similarly, these intellectuals preserved the history, traditions, knowledge and the heritage of their ancestors through ceremonial discourses learned from their ascendants.²⁰⁷

3.1.2 The Nahua Intellectual Tradition in the Valley of Mexico

The intellectual activities produced by the Nahua peoples are extensive and certainly impossible to condense completely in this dissertation. Nevertheless, this chapter supports the hypothesis

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 105.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 466.

²⁰¹ See, Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *Huehuehtlatolli. Testimonios de la antigua palabra. Recogidos por fray Andrés de Olmos hacia 1535*; trans., Librado Silva Galeana (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991), 13-45.

²⁰² Pierre Guiraud, *La Semiología*, 11-31.

²⁰³ See, Miguel Pastrana, *Entre los hombres y los dioses*, 18-22.

²⁰⁴ Enrique Florescano, *El patrimonio cultural de México* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 66-67.

²⁰⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 69-70.

²⁰⁶ See, Victor W. Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," in *The Forest of Symbols* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93-111.

²⁰⁷ See Ubaldo López García, "Sa'vi: Discursos ceremoniales de Yutsa To'on (Apoala)" (Ph.D. Diss., Leiden University, 2007), 9-26.

that Nahua intellectuality shared several of the main characteristics of intellectual production with the rest of Mesoamerican societies. One of the main characteristics of the intellectual production in Mesoamerica before the arrival of the Europeans focused on its institutionalized character. This type of institutionalized intellectuality relied on the existence of a solid ideological system promoted either by the state or the elite sphere that represents the prevailing political system within societies. In the specific case of the Nahua people from the area of central Mexico, the prevailing state sponsored a series of educational institutions that instructed both boys and girls on certain intellectual or technical practices. These Nahua institutions included at least the *telpochcalli*, the *calmecac*, the *cihuacalmecac*, or the compound where women received religious education, and the *cuicacalli*.²⁰⁸

The way these various institutions functioned depended on the highly hierarchical and complex structure of Nahua society. In this way, the access which certain individuals had to one of the already mentioned institutions depended on each individual's social ranks and position. Both females and males had access to education in Nahua society from central Mexico; however, admittance to these institutions remained restricted and not accessible to all. Those who were able to attend these institutions came from specific family and economic backgrounds from those groups and families who proved able to sponsor their child's internship in one of these institutions. In this regard, the work attributed to the Franciscan Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, but which was mainly authored by Nahua intellectuals, *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*, mentions the moral qualities and virtues that the aspiring students should possess in order to gain access to one of these institutions. Moreover, the family of the aspiring student should also possess certain economic status in order to satisfactorily cover the expenses generated by their student once he or she entered into the institution.

For instance, a student from the *calmecac* enjoyed a higher social status in comparison to the individual Nahua child who gained entrance into the *telpochcalli*. Nahua girls who enrolled in one of these institutions also enjoyed different privileges and social status which determined the activities that these girls and women performed and learned within these educational institutions. In this sense, and by taking into consideration the definition of intellectual activity, it is possible to state that within the *calmecac* Nahua students produced the most important number of intellectual activities and knowledge for Nahua society.²⁰⁹

The *calmecac*, had the purpose of preparing future intellectuals, regardless of whether they would end up practicing their duties in either the religious or the political sphere. The

²⁰⁸ Pilar Alberti Manzanares, "Mujeres sacerdotisas aztecas: las cihuatlamacazque mencionadas en dos escritos inéditos," *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 24 (1994): 171-217; 175-176.

²⁰⁹ Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia de las cosas de la Nueva España*, 401-405: "Capítulo XXXIX. De cómo los padres y madres deseando que sus hijos e hijas viviesen, prometían de los meter en la casa de religión, que en cada pueblo había dos, una más estrecha que la otra, así para hombres como para mujeres, donde los metían en llegando la edad conveniente."

condition that these future intellectuals had to achieve by occupying this privileged position within this elite institution focused on the creation and recreation of Nahua collective knowledge.²¹⁰ As different Mesoamerican societies also experienced, Nahua intellectuals trained in these institutions held the responsibility for reviving, re-telling and remembering the history of their divinities, rulers, people, outstanding events, among other memorable cultural elements.

For the Nahua people from Central Mexico the preservation and elaboration of their collective memory remained in the hands of different groups of specialists. One of these groups of specialist, the *tlamatinime*, served as the group of sages or intellectuals who preserved the collective memory of the Nahua peoples through the writing of books, which the Nahua called *amatl* or *amoxtl*. However, these *amoxtl* were not the only material constructions in which intellectuals preserved their knowledge, since extensive examples of monuments, such as sculptures, codices, embroidered fabrics, objects of pottery, and all other kinds of ceremonial paraphernalia existed. The *tlamatini* or *tlamatinime* (sages),²¹¹ also preserved the collective memory of the Nahua peoples through the creation of diverse literary genres. A few of these categories of literary and poetic creations included the *cuicatl*, or singing;²¹² *tlahtolli*, or speaking;²¹³ *teotlahtolli*, divine discourse or words;²¹⁴ *zazanilli*, understood as riddle²¹⁵ or as a fable;²¹⁶ *tlatlatolli*, proverb;²¹⁷ *machiotlaolli*, metaphors;²¹⁸ *huehuetlatolli*, history;²¹⁹ *cuicayotl*, hymn;²²⁰ among an extensive list of other terms.²²¹

The diversity of the intellectual production of Nahua people mirrored in many ways the status and type of instructional institutions that they founded. These institutions led to the creation of an important number of specialists that performed diverse duties and preserved knowledge and collective memory in specific ways. For example, the Nahua terms *tonalpouhque* referred to “those who read the books and refer about fate.” These *tonalpouhque* served as the specialist who had the ability to read the *tonalamatl* (the book of days-260 day calendar) and the *xiuhamatl* (the book of the years), or “the books about the days and the books

²¹⁰ Pierre Guiraud, *La Semiología*, 11.

²¹¹ Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana* (Leipzig: Julios Platzman, 1880), 126.

²¹² Remi Simeon, *Diccionario de la lengua náhuatl o mexicana* (México: Siglo XXI Editores), 136.

²¹³ Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana*, 141.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

²¹⁵ Maarten Jansen, “Las lenguas divinas del México precolonial,” *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 38 (Junio 1985): 3-1; 6.

²¹⁶ Fray Alonso de Molina transcribed this term as “consejuelas para hacer reir,” see Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana*, 13.

²¹⁷ Jansen, “Las lenguas divinas del México precolonial,” 3-1, 6.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²¹⁹ Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana*, 76.

²²⁰ Frances Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 71.

²²¹ Dominique Raby, “Xochiquetzal en el cuicacalli. Cantos de amor y voces entre los antiguos nahuas,” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 30 (1999): 203-229.

about the years.”²²² Another category of specialist included the *cuicapicque*, “the one who creates and shapes the singing,” while the *tlamatinime*, served as the “sages or those who were expert on doing something specific.” The term *ticitl* or its plural variation as *titici*²²³ referred to the terms for doctors, surgeons or midwives. The terms *cichuatlamacazque* referred to women who devoted their lives to serve in religious temples. In this sense, while women played a pivotal role as intellectuals within Nahua society, the violent process of colonization under the Spaniards destabilized their privileged post-conquest position. Therefore, some of the Nahua sources that referred to the role and importance of Nahua women in society either faced destruction or are still understudied by current research specialists. Equally unfortunate, the colonial sources written by Europeans included only a few limited mentions or misinterpreted information concerning the role that women played as intellectuals within Nahua society.

The work of some of the European colonizers who did deal with the study and observation of Nahua women, whether intellectuals or not, and the role that they played in Nahua society often resulted in a mere series of references that emphasized both the differences and similarities that these authors found between European and Nahua women. Whether intentionally or not, these European authors “saw” several common elements between the way in which Nahua authorities administrated education for women and the way that European religious institutions, such as convents and boarding schools, dealt with women in the European context. For instance, the scholar Pilar Alberti Manzanares conducted a study on two lesser known colonial manuscripts, which are currently housed in the *Real Academia de la Historia*, in Madrid. These manuscripts, authored by unknown Spaniards, included information about the role that *cihuatlamazque*, or Nahua priestesses had in Nahua society.²²⁴ The anonymous authors of these manuscripts emphasized the importance and complex duties that these women had within the religious lives of the Nahuas. Nonetheless, the authors of these manuscripts did not hesitate in comparing European nuns to the work and role of the *cihuatlamazque*, which resulted in a limited comprehension of the social complexity that permeated these Nahua women in their own context.

Nevertheless, several colonial authors recognized and referred to the level of specialization that both female and male intellectuals reached within Nahua society. Regarding this, the cultural compilation directed by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún referred to this level of

²²² Miguel León Portilla, *Obras. Tomo II. En torno a la historia de Mesoamérica* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2004), 332-333.

²²³ See Fray Juan de Torquemada, *De los veinte y un rituales y monarquía indiana compuesto por Fray Juan de Torquemada de la Provincia de el Santo Evangelio de Nueva España* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1975), 198-200: Volumen IV, Libro XIII, Capítulo XVI. “Donde se trata de la costumbre y ceremonias que hacían estos indios en los nacimientos de sus hijos; y se dice de un cierto bautismo o lavatorio con que los lavaban o bautizaban.”

²²⁴ See Pilar Alberti Manzanares, “Mujeres sacerdotisas aztecas,” 171-217. The title of the documents are “Noticias de las vestales mexicanas escrita por Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, año de 1684” and “Daré noticia de las doncellas que al modo de las vírgenes vestales consagraban los indios para el servicio y culto de sus templos.”

specialization by listing a series of intellectual activities practiced by Nahua peoples.²²⁵ These activities ranged from transforming bird feathers into artifacts, to the activities of doctors, merchants, jewelers, vendors, mechanics, astrologers, singers, musicians, etc. The European colonizers referred to the members of these elite strata of society in the Mesoamerican territory by using various words that denoted the social parallelism that Europeans found between their societies and Mesoamerican ones. The perception that European colonizers had about Mesoamerican societies also revealed their own medieval mentality, since the terms that they used to call the Nahua intellectuals varied widely. A few of these concepts and terms included words such as *caciques*, *nigromantes*, *adivinos*, *sátrapas*, *sabios*, *ministros*, *viejos sabios*, *hechiceros*, *encantadores*, *parteras*, *bruja*s, or *señores nobles*.

The extensive production of these Nahua intellectuals existed in both tangible and intangible forms. Most of the knowledge that we have about these intellectuals is contained in both Mesoamerican and European sources from the period of the Spanish conquest. After the Spanish conquest, the conquistadors destroyed a large number of Nahua intellectual creations. Nevertheless, there is documental evidence concerning a wide variety of sources that Nahua intellectuals created.²²⁶ Without a doubt, one of the most important works, considered as the best compilation about the life and organization of the Nahua people from Central Mexico, is the work entitled *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*.²²⁷ Fray Bernardino de Sahagún wrote this manuscript in conjunction and collaboration with several Nahua intellectuals.²²⁸

The knowledge gathered in this work demonstrates the variety of facets and duties that intellectuals performed in Nahua communities. These activities ranged from soothsaying, performing medicinal practices, and providing moral advice. Even though the *Historia de las cosas de la Nueva España* has been referred to by multiple scholars as one of the greatest compilations about Nahua knowledge, this work is only a small glimpse of the Nahua intellectual greatness. From the perspective of the Spanish colonizers, this vast realm of Nahua intellectual production remained difficult to classify. For instance, “[For fray Antonio de] Molina, history is

²²⁵ See, David Tavárez, “Letras clandestinas, textos tolerados,” 59-82.

²²⁶ See Maarten Jansen, “Ideology and History in the Pictorial Narratives of Ancient Mexico,” *Quaderno 6. Historiography: Practitioners & Public* (Milano: Istituto di Studi Storici, Facoltà de Scienze Politiche, Università degli Studi di Milano, 2015).

²²⁷ For more information about the political positions that influenced the content of the Florentine Codex, see Silver Moon “The Imperial College of Tlatelolco.”

²²⁸ According to Silver Moon in her dissertation (Ibid.), the name of several of the intellectuals who collaborated with Sahagún in the production of this work were Antonio Valeriano (Azcapotzalco), Pedro de San Buenaventura (Cauhtitlan), Martín Jacobita (Tlatelolco), Alonso Vejarano, Andrés Leonardo (Tlatelolco), Diego de Grado (Tlatelolco), Bonifacio Maximiliano, Francisco Bautista Contreras (Xochimilco), Pedro Juan Antonio (Azcapotzalco), Martín de la Cruz, Anton Hernández, Juan Badiano (Xochimilco), Agustín de la Fuente (Tlatelolco), Miguel (Cauhtitlan), Mateo Severino (Xochimilco), Pablo Nazareno, Gregorio Medina, Antonio Ramírez de Fonseca, Bernaldino Jerónimo, Joaquín, Gaspar de Torres, Mateo Sánchez, Gregorio, Martín Exidio, Josef de Castañeda, Hernando de Ribas (Texcoco), Juan Bernardino (Huejotzingo), Diego Adriano (Tlatelolco), Pedro de Gante (Tlatelolco), Bernabé Velázquez, Bonifacio Maximiliano, Francisco Acaxitli, (Tlalmanalco). According to Silver Moon’s research most of these intellectuals were either students at the Colegio de Tlatelolco or political leaders in their communities.

both *tlatollotl* (“speech or oral discourse”) and *nemiliz amatl* (“life paper” or “life book”); a chronicle or a history is *nemiliz tlacuillo*, *nemiliz tlatollot* (“life painting, life saying”). In describing the concepts related to history and historians, Molina used the words for painting (*tlacuillo*) and speech or oral discourse (*tlatolli*) almost interchangeably.²²⁹ The cultural gaps that existed between the Nahua people and the Spaniards and their understanding of the recording or recreation of historical knowledge resulted in a misunderstanding of the complexity of intellectual production among the Nahuas. This confusion also led to misconceptions about how gender remained an important element in intellectual activities.

The misunderstanding that Spaniards had about gender and intellectuality among the Nahuas determined the way in which colonial institutions administrated education and collaborated in intellectual production during the colonial era.²³⁰ Thus, the conceptions and misconceptions that Europeans had both about education and intellectuality influenced the role that gender played in the construction and production of intellectuality in New Spain. As a direct consequence of this European perception about gender roles, the type of education that women received during the colonial period in the capital of New Spain become more limited in comparison to the access that their male counterparts had to diverse institutions. These inequalities resulted in the high social recognition that Nahua male’s received for their achievements and the virtual lack of any recognition of female Nahua specialists in the colonial period.

A diverse series of colonial institutions that educated and indoctrinated Nahua people during the period of the Spanish colonization replaced these former Nahua organizations or the places of higher instruction where the priests and religious men lived;²³¹ the *telpochcalli*, which worked as an educational center for young *macehualmeh*, or commoners, in order to gain some instruction;²³² and the *cuicacalli*, a compound where only a selected number of Nahua people studied singing for the benefit of the rulers and the religious people.²³³ Consequently, only a few of the institutions founded by the Spaniards remained accessible for certain sectors of the Nahua population. Moreover, this access became restricted according to the limitations of gender, social status, abilities, and learned practices. In the case of Nahua intellectual women, the access that they gained to colonial educational institutions became much narrower in comparison to those that their male counterparts enjoyed during colonial system.

European gender perceptions determined the restricted access to institutional life that Nahua women received from the colonial authorities.²³⁴ This limitation came in direct detriment to the social position that Nahua women occupied within the colonial society as intellectuals.

²²⁹ Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black*, 21.

²³⁰ Pilar Alberti Manzanares, “Mujeres sacerdotisas aztecas,” 171-217.

²³¹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia de las cosas de la Nueva España*, 50.

²³² *Ibid.*, 105.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 466.

²³⁴ See Mónica Díaz, *Indigenous Writings from the Convent. Negotiating Ethnic Autonomy in Colonial Mexico* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2010).

However, this asseveration should not be interpreted as a statement that supports the idea of an absence or lack of Nahua women intellectuals in New Spain. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that, as a result of this institutional limitation, several of the intellectual activities that Nahua women had practiced before the Spanish invasion, became either marginal or fell outside of the limits of institutional life during the colonial era. This condition of institutional exclusion does not mean that Nahua women and their knowledge became less valuable or less appreciated by the rest of the Nahua community, but rather that the lack of access that Nahua women had to institutions that the colonial authorities recognized and regulated, marginalized their practices and kept them outside the main-stream acceptable institutional realm.

3.2 The Spanish Colonial Period: Continuity of the Nahua Intellectual Tradition in the Capital of New Spain

Once the Spaniards conquered Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1521 and established their colonial regime, the city, as William F. Connell described, “[...] became over the course of the sixteenth century both an indigenous and a Spanish city.”²³⁵ Consequently, the administration of the territory conquered by the Spaniards initially utilized the original indigenous social, political, and demographic organization, both territorially and economically. At the time of the conquest, those Nahuas who really knew how the system functioned before the arrival of the Spaniards were the Nahua intellectual elite. However, in this process of colonization the organization of labor from the new subjects remained equally important due to the exploitative character of the Spanish colonial system. Moreover, the Spanish colonizers required a highly organized administration of goods and labor that they hoped to obtain from the new subjects. Nevertheless, the successful administration of the colony depended on the knowledge that Spaniards could obtain from Nahua leaders and intellectuals.

When the Spanish conquistadors established the colonial system in New Spain, they consolidated their authority by creating diverse institutions throughout the territory. For the better management and administration of the territory, the Spanish conquistadors divided their colony into two political entities: the *República de indios* and the *República de españoles*.²³⁶ In the beginning, these institutions had the purpose of dividing the population between those natives originally from the Mesoamerican territory (*naturales* or *indios*), and the conquistadors (*españoles*). Originally, the idea focused on maintaining the separation between the *indios* and the *españoles* in terms of their privileges, rights and obligations. Over time, as Pilar Gonzalbo asserted “(...) this system considered the differences [between these two republics], so that rather than being two separate bodies of law, they were integrated into one involving the provisions,

²³⁵ William F. Connell, *Indigenous Politics and Self-Government in Mexico City*, 3.

²³⁶ Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial. El mundo indígena* (México: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1990), 22-25.

mutual commitments and mutual obligations of both Spaniards and Indians.”²³⁷ This integration resulted in the creation of segregated colonial institutions, and social privileges such as the access to education and social prestige, remained accessible or unreachable for certain individuals.

Even though the *República de indios* eventually resulted in providing some level of autonomy to indigenous societies over certain matters, education did not fall under the direct control of indigenous communities in central Mexico.²³⁸ In this sense, it is important to emphasize that early on during the colonial period in New Spain, indigenous communities did not lose their interest for education, but rather they just lost their control over its access. So, despite the limitations that the *República de indios* imposed on them, Nahua political leaders quickly learned the way to successfully lobby and negotiate with the Spanish authorities in order to gain access to different services, one of the most important being their access to education.

In the beginning of Spanish colonization, Indigenous People in general, including the members of the former indigenous nobility, resisted accepting the education and new religion provided by the colonizers. Mostly this rejection occurred because this education came with forceful religious and cultural indoctrination since Spaniards or European clergymen took charge of this task. However, Indigenous People soon realized that gaining access to European education offered them the opportunity to maintain their social status and/or upward mobility within in otherwise exclusive colonial society. Thus, during the early years of the colony, collective efforts from different indigenous communities resulted in the creation of “*escuelas de primeras letras*.”²³⁹ Most of these schools survived due to the sponsorship that colonial authorities provided to these projects, and also because the members of the indigenous communities usually covered the expenses of the instructor assigned.²⁴⁰ Therefore, available documentation demonstrates that for the members of the indigenous nobility, the instruction of their younger relatives in elemental literacy was not enough to maintain their elite intellectual status.

Even though the colonial authorities sponsored and regulated educational institutions during the colony, diverse religious orders remained in charge of the direct administration of education and its institutions for both Indigenous People and Spaniards alike. These institutions sought to exclusively educate the sons of indigenous leaders and former nobles. The clergymen

²³⁷ Ibid., 23. Original quotation: “Sin embargo, en este mismo sistema se consideraban ya las diferencias, de modo que en vez de constituir dos cuerpos de leyes separados, se integraban en uno solo las disposiciones que implicaban compromisos mutuos y recíprocas obligaciones de españoles e indios.”

²³⁸ For more information about how the *barrios de indios* worked within the concept of the “*República de indios*,” see Felipe Castro Gutiérrez, “Origen y conformación de los barrios de indios,” in *Los indios y las ciudades en Nueva España*, coord. Felipe Castro, 105-122 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2010).

²³⁹ Pilar Gonzalbo, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial*, 25-41.

²⁴⁰ Dorothy Tanck de Estrada, “El gobierno municipal y las escuelas de primeras letras en el siglo XVIII mexicano,” *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa* 7, núm. 15 (mayo-agosto 2002):257-278, 263.

in charge of these institutions further divided the population into gender, ages, and social classes. In the capital of New Spain, Nahua adults and Nahua children received different types of education according to their social status. Thus, the Nahua pre-conquest terms *pipiltin*, interpreted as noble people, and *macehualtin* or *macehualmeh* as terms used to refer to commoners, became the categories that determined the type of education Nahua children received during the colonial period.

The colonial authorities offered education to the Nahua people from central Mexico through two main educational pathways: One of these pathways focused on the immediate preparation of the Nahuas for the type of labor that the colonial system required, followed by the teaching of basic elements of the Spanish language and principles of Christianity. The other pathway of education sought to achieve the already mentioned goals, but at a much deeper level. Thus, the children of Nahua noble families, those considered as *pipiltin*, received intense education on Spanish, Latin, Christianity, and western knowledge. These children from noble Nahua families were under the care, tutelage and surveillance of clergymen. The Spanish colonial authorities expected that these children, once they were prepared, would become the authorities and cultural intermediaries in their respective communities. Several of these noble children remained in the *apostas*, or chambers, of the convents administrated by the members of diverse religious orders, in order to avoid the contact with their cultural heritage and any possible non-Christian religious influences from their Nahua parents. About this initiative, the author of the *Código Franciscano* stated:

Los que miran y consideran las cosas conforme a la calidad y necesidad de cada una dellas, no enseña indiferentemente a los niños hijos de los indios, sino con mucha diferencia, porque a los hijos de los principales, que entre ellos eran y son como caballeros y personas nobles, procuran de recogerlos en escuelas que para esto tienen hechas, a donde aprenden a leer y escribir y las demas cosas que abajo se dirán, con que se habilitan para el regimiento de sus pueblos y para el servicios de las iglesias, en lo cual no conviene que sean instruidos los hijos de los labradores y gente plebeya, sino que solamente aprendan la doctrina cristiana, y luego en sabiendola, comiencen desde muchachos a seguir los oficios y ejercicios de sus padre, para sustentarse a si mismo y ayudar a su republica, quedando en la simplicidad que sus antepasados tuvieron [...]²⁴¹

Knowing the benefits of literacy, the colonial Spanish authorities restricted the access to both schools and religious institutions only to those members of the nobility who could contribute to the consolidation of the colonial system. As the previous primary source stated, the colonial

²⁴¹ Joaquín García Icazbalceta, ed., *Código franciscano. Informe de la provincia de Santo Evangelio al visitador Lic. Juan de Ovando. Informe de la provincia de Guadalajara al mismo. Cartas de religiosos, 1533-1569* (México: Imprenta de Francisco Díaz de León, 1889), 62.

Spanish authorities originally planned to educate the sons of the *pipiltin* in order to keep them as the representatives of the Spanish Crown in their original towns. However, some *macehualmeh* quickly ascended their social status based on the services they provided to the Spaniards. Some of these commoners rose in prominence because of the interest that they demonstrated in spreading Christianity in the conquered territory among their fellow Nahuas, or for their abilities and aptitudes for European learning. This social mobility became the result of the organization established by the Spanish colonial system. This social phenomenon contributed both to the deterioration of the former Nahua social order, and to the preservation of intellectual knowledge within the colonial institutions. This statement is not contradictory if we consider that the Nahua intellectual tradition did not come to an end with the establishment of the colonial government. Rather, Nahua intellectuals received influence from Western ideas and they incorporated some of them into their traditional knowledge. However, this process was not smooth, but it involved all of the complexity and difficulties that any process of conquest and colonization represented.²⁴² One of the consequences of this intricate process of learning under the colonial system resulted in the minimization or reduction of the multi-dimensionality that characterized the Nahua tradition of knowledge.

Thus, in effect, both traditional Nahua literacy and indigenous intellectual activities adopted a Western dimensionality, which reduced much of this knowledge to the European canons of the time. Thereby, the colonial system forced surviving Nahua intellectuals to synthesize their traditional knowledge and refashion it by adopting alphabetic writing and westernized style drawings.²⁴³ This method of learning fragmented the original complexity of Nahua intellectuality. Thus, this process of reduction fragmented the diegetic and mimetic characteristics of Nahua knowledge and turned it into different disciplines. As a result, under Spanish colonial institutions both indigenous intellectuality and literacy started to function as semi-isolated spheres of knowledge and performance.²⁴⁴ In other words, colonial education fragmented the supra-segments that constituted Nahua intellectuality into semi-independent European-styled disciplines of knowledge such as painting, playing and composing, or playing music, sculpting, singing, dancing, drawing, writing, reading, and etcetera.²⁴⁵

Based on European mentality and conceptions, most conquistadors and clergymen referred to the Nahua pictographic tradition as “drawings,” or as “monstrous drawings” denying them the complexity of synthetic knowledge production that the writing process had among Mesoamerican societies. The Spaniards also considered the sculptural or architectonic representations, as well as music and other performances, as “demonic” or “horrendous,” or at

²⁴² Federico Fernández Christlieb y Ángel Julián García Zambrano, *Territorialidad y paisaje en el altepetl del siglo XVI* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 34-36.

²⁴³ Patrick Johansson K., *La palabra, la imagen el manuscrito*, 23-24.

²⁴⁴ Matthew Restall, Lisa Sousa and Kevin Terraciano, *Mesoamerican Voices. Native-Language Writings from Colonial Mexico, Oaxaca, Yucatan, and Guatemala* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12-13.

²⁴⁵ See Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*; trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

best the Spaniards interpreted them as sloppy aesthetic constructions. Nahua music, dance and other manifestations shared the same fate.²⁴⁶ As a consequence of this perspective and also due to the process of colonization, Nahua intellectuals transformed and re-organized both their moral and aesthetic values during the colonial period. Moreover, the Spanish colonial authorities founded institutions of education that only helped to consolidate this process of fragmentation.

During and after the period of colonization, institutionalized knowledge in the Western style influenced the way that surviving Nahua intellectuals developed their own knowledge. Both the ecclesiastical and civil colonial authorities classified and dictated the way colonial Nahua intellectuality developed, and this remained limited within westernized parameters. Colonial authorities divided Nahua intellectuality into different disciplines, such as painting, playing music, drawing, writing, dancing, sculpting, among others, without considering their internal integrity and the way in which these manifestations of knowledge worked and interconnected before European colonization. The division and hierarchy of all these intellectual activities followed the cultural guidelines established by the western tradition of the Middle Ages and which developed through the parameters of the European Renaissance. This perspective about knowledge indeed transformed the way Nahua intellectuals faced the production of ideas under the new colonial regime.²⁴⁷

3.3 Systematization of Nahua Education as a Process of Colonization

From initial contact, Spaniards had a vested interest in gaining the support of the Nahua intellectual elite for the efficient administration of the colony. This interest resulted in the creation of a few limited educational institutions, but not in the creation of a widespread educational system, that focused on the indoctrination of the Nahua elite during the colonial period. Hence, the Spanish crown authorized the construction of the first religious institution for Indigenous People in the capital of the New Spain. This institution, run by the Franciscan order, became the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales*. Later, Spanish authorities founded a second institution, the *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* for indigenous instructions.²⁴⁸ The *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* had a more ambitious and sophisticated plan of study than the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales*, since the college at Tlatelolco mainly focused on the education of an Nahua intellectual elite, but at a much higher level.

The educational acculturation that Spanish authorities offered through these institutions allowed the Nahua intellectual elite to preserve their heritage and re-interpret it according to their immediate needs in a long term process. For instance, the scholar James Lockhart suggested that

²⁴⁶ Maarten Jansen, "The Search of History in Mixtec Codices," *Ancient Mesoamerica*, Number 1 (1990): 99-112, 99.

²⁴⁷ See Lourdes Tourrent, *La conquista musical de México* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 17 -45.

²⁴⁸ Miguel León Portilla, *Visión de los vencidos: Relaciones indígenas de la conquista* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), 48-49.

this long term phenomenon endured because of the organizational similarities that existed between Spanish and Nahua institutional life and administration. Lockhart called this phenomenon a “double mistaken identity.”²⁴⁹ Thus, the intellectual tradition in Mesoamerica continued after the period of the Spanish conquest and during the entire period of the Spanish colonization. The characteristics and goals of the Nahua intellectual tradition that prevailed during the centuries that came after the Spanish regime changed according to the social needs of the Nahua intellectuals and their historical backgrounds and contemporary experiences, all of which led to the creation of several generations of Nahua intellectuals. This process resulted in what is called the *novohispano* intellectual tradition in New Spain.²⁵⁰ Thus, the capital of New Spain became the focal point of the manifestation of this historical process that the Nahua intellectual elite experienced during the first years of colonization. This process together with continued access of the elite to certain educational institutions created a culturally syncretic Nahua intellectual tradition.

The elements that characterized this cultural synergy retained some of the main elements of the Nahua tradition and incorporated some other elements from Catholicism. This process of synergy resulted in the authentic Mesoamerican historicity that indigenous intellectuals developed during the colonial period. The indigenous intellectual tradition in New Spain also included regional elements, which directly resulted from the Mesoamerican cultural pluralism that existed before the Spanish conquest. The different impact that Spanish colonization and its policies had over different Mesoamerican regions, ethnic groups with varied social strata and economic activities, resulted in a varied Mesoamerican intellectual tradition. As Susan Schroeder stated:

[A]mong Nahua intellectuals in the capital at the turn of the century there was surely a keen sense of urgency to keep to tradition while securing vestigial positions of high status within the colonial system. Writing local histories seemed to furnish at least temporary solutions for both concerns. Typically, each author focused on his home region in order to champion his particular royal lineage and the unique qualities of his own altepetl [...] Tezozomoc wrote about the grandness of Mexico Tenochtitlan, Alva Ixtlixochitl did the same for his Texcoco altepetl, and Chimalpahin portrayed Amaquemecan Chalco as equal to if not better than any other place in the world.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest. A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 445-446.

²⁵⁰ Javier Garciadiego, *Autores, editoriales, instituciones y libros: Estudios de historia intelectual* (México: El Colegio de México, 2015).

²⁵¹ Arthur J. O. Anderson and Susan Schroeder, eds., *Codex Chimalpahin. Society and Politics in Mexico Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Texcoco, Culhuacan, and Other Nahua Altepetl in Central Mexico. The Nahuatl and Spanish Annals and Accounts Collected and Recorded by don Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 6.

Accordingly, the diverse places of origins of these indigenous intellectuals, as well as their noble background, determined their intellectual production and the way that they interpreted and utilized their ancestral knowledge. For instance, a clear example of this synergy is present in the content and writing style that is evident in the *Diary* of a Nahua intellectual from Amecamecan, Domingo Francisco de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin. This document demonstrates how both European and Nahua cultures merged into a synergic intellectual production. Suffice it to say, Chimalpahin's diary presented a lineal and descriptive succession of historical events similar to the way in which Europeans kept accounts of their historical events. While the section in which he described the history of his people, the Chichimeca-Mexicas, and the chronology of its rulers followed the Nahua system of narrative using the ancient Nahua calendar to record the historical dates. The content of Chimalpahin's *Diary*, as Schroeder suggested, is also characterized by the incorporation of the history of Chimalpahin's ancestors as major players in the history of the Anahuac region and even showing their important role after the conquest. In other words, through his *Diary*,²⁵² Chimalpahin had the purpose of justifying the social position of both himself and his family in the colonial establishment.

Through the written testimonies that many of these early Nahua intellectuals provided about the sources that they consulted in order to write their own perspectives about Mesoamerican history, we know that some of them had access to Mesoamerican manuscripts that previous indigenous intellectuals had written before the arrival of the Spaniards. The way sixteenth-century Nahua intellectuals interpreted the content of earlier documents offers us an invaluable perspective on what these early manuscripts meant to Nahua intellectuals from the period of the Spanish colony.²⁵³ The interpretation that many early Nahua intellectuals, such as Chimalpahin, created about the content of these ancient Mesoamerican manuscripts influenced their own perspective about their ancestors and their own past.

3.3.1 The *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* (1527)

The first institutionalized attempt to educate select members of the Nahua nobility took form in 1527, with the construction of the chapel of *San José de Belén de los Naturales*,²⁵⁴ built nearby the *Colegio Grande de San Francisco*, in the capital of the New Spain. This enclosure became the first *Escuela de Artes y Oficios* for Indigenous Peoples. However, as the first name of the institution suggested, this school had the objective of teaching select indigenous children how to sing in Latin during the ceremony of the Catholic mass; as well as how to play the pipe organ. The school also taught these children how to reproduce European-styled sacred images and religious sculptures that otherwise would have been very expensive to bring to the Americas

²⁵² Domingo Chimalpáhin, *Diario* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2001), 440.

²⁵³ Arthur J. O. Anderson and Susan Schroeder, *Codex Chimalpahin*, 14.

²⁵⁴ On November 26, 1545, by Royal Decree, the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* started to receive 300 ducados to Fray Pedro de Gante with the purpose of sustain and maintain the school. See Tomás Zepeda Rincón, *La educación pública en la Nueva España en el siglo XVI* (Guadalajara: Editorial Progreso, 1993), 51-62.

from Europe. This institution also had several economic advantages for the administration of the colony. The sons of indigenous noblemen made up the majority of the students of this school. However, admission to this school remained opened to other promising non-noble Nahua children who also received education in this compound.²⁵⁵ The *Codex Franciscano* includes specific mention about the importance and goals of this *colegio*:

Tiene este monasterio de S. Francisco, a las espaldas de la capilla mayor de la dicha iglesia, una escuela adonde se enseñan a leer y escribir y la doctrina cristiana a los hijos de los principales indios, y lo mesmo tienen todos los demas monasterios de los otros pueblos; y desta escuela tiene cargo Fr. Pedro de Gante, [...] y este fue el primero que enseñó a los indios a cantar u la musica que ahora tañen, y les ha hecho aprender el pintas y otros oficios en que se igualan y exceden a los españoles.²⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the basic character of this school distanced itself from evolving into an institution of higher education, although some of its students mastered several techniques. Instead, the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* focused on training Indigenous People in productive activities that could contribute both to the economic benefit of the church and the maintenance and support of the indigenous students. Consequently, former students from this school maintained their economic independence and additionally many played or sang independently from the school and the confines of the Church for their own economic benefit.²⁵⁷ The reduced number of qualified musicians and singers that operated in Mexico City enabled many of the former students of this school to enjoy greater economic mobility due to the skills they learned in this *colegio*.

For the members of the Nahua nobility, the creation of this college represented another opportunity to gain access to certain spheres of social prestige. However, in the beginning some Nahua noblemen resisted the idea of accepting the westernized education that Spanish clergymen offered in the religious institutions that were under their supervision. Concerning this resistance, in the sixteenth century Fray Pedro de Gante mentioned how Nahua noblemen refused to send their sons to the *Colegio de Belén de los Naturales*, and instead they sent the sons of their servants and commoners in replacement.²⁵⁸ However, native noblemen quickly realized how “much” these commoners learned in these schools and the value of their adopted skills in alphabetic literacy and the other arts from Europe. Their withholding of their own sons had

²⁵⁵ Jonathan Truitt, “Adopted Pedagogies: Nahua Incorporation of European Music and Theater in Colonial Mexico City,” in *The Americas* 66, No. 3 (Jan. 2010): 3311-330, 311.

²⁵⁶ Joaquín García Icazbalceta, ed., *Códice franciscano, Informe de la provincia de Santo Evangelio al visitador Lic. Juan de Ovando. Informe de la provincia de Guadalajara al mismo. Cartas de religiosos, 1533-1569* (México: Imprenta de Francisco Díaz de León, 1889), 6.

²⁵⁷ Jonathan Truitt, “Adopted Pedagogies,” 319-320.

²⁵⁸ Tomás Zepeda Rincón, *La educación pública en la Nueva España*, 46-47.

placed the heirs of the Nahua noblemen in a disadvantaged position. This realization made the Nahua nobility change their minds, and they quickly started to send their own sons to this school.

Alongside the foundation of the *Colegio de San José*, the Franciscan order in conjunction with the civil authorities founded another school for indigenous women.²⁵⁹ However, the main purpose of this said school was not to teach these indigenous women alphabetic literacy or other “arts,” as its male counterpart set out to do, but rather to protect these women and keep them away from the inherent sexual abuses that both indigenous caciques and Spanish conquistadors committed against them.²⁶⁰ This measure, instead of empowering indigenous women, reinforced their vulnerable position; hence the intellectual activity within these enclosures remained more discrete and much less publicized.²⁶¹

In 1532 the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* first started to teach Latin to its Nahua students.²⁶² This practice, according to the sources, became so successful that the indigenous students mastered the Latin language and grammar. Nevertheless, the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* only enjoyed a short period of prosperity. In 1572 fray Pedro de Gante, the founder of the *colegio*, died and the school rapidly declined in its importance. Moreover even those indigenous musicians educated in this institution later faced difficulties. For instance, in his study, Dr. Ross-Fábregas mentioned that:

(...) the situation of Indian musicians seems to have deteriorated for many reasons, such as the rivalry between religious orders, secular priests and the Spanish crown. Thus, the economic and social condition of indigenous musicians relapsed due to the fact that Indians were not allowed to be ordained priests, which also frustrated one of the original goals of the Franciscans who advocated for the education of Indigenous Peoples in New Spain.²⁶³

This phenomenon of decline in the arts helped to ensure that the once vibrant *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* turned into only a school of “*primeras letras*,” that eventually closed

²⁵⁹ *Colegio de las niñas*, document without date, AGN, Instituciones coloniales, Gobierno virreinal, Real Junta (099), Volumen único, fojas 40-40v.

²⁶⁰ Fray Juan de Torquemada also mentioned in his *Monarquía indiana* that at this school Indian young women learned “trabajos mujeriles” since these indigenous women did not prepare themselves for being nuns, reason why they stayed in this compound only ten years. See Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1983), 167-168.

²⁶¹ It is important not to confuse this effort for educating indigenous girls with the colonial efforts made on behalf of the education of Spanish girls in New Spain. For more about the efforts of the colonial authorities for educating Spanish or mestizo girls, see Josefina Muriel, “Notas para la historia de la educación de la mujer durante el virreinato,” in *Estudios de Historia Novohispana* V (1974): 97-100. From the same author “La legislación educativa para las niñas y doncellas del virreinato en la Nueva España” in Josefina Muriel ed., *La sociedad novohispana y su colegio de niñas I* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2004).

²⁶² Pilar Gonzalbo, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial. El mundo indígena*, 111.

²⁶³ Emilio Ros-Fábregas, “‘Imagine all the people...’ polyphonic flowers in the hands and voices of Indians in 16th-century Mexico,” *Early Music* 40, No. 2 (May 2012): 177-189, 184-185.

its doors as a school forever. However, the Franciscan initiative of education and its initial success led to the creation of a new institution that centered its efforts on providing access to higher education for New Spain's Indigenous Peoples.

3.3.2 The *Colegio Imperial de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* (1536)

Even before the closure of the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales*, the Franciscans further advanced their religious and educational agenda in New Spain by founding the *Colegio Imperial de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* in 1536. The colonial Spanish authorities in conjunction with the Franciscan order had in mind the making of the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* as a school of “*artes mayores*” for the indigenous population. Thus, the college offered a humanistic westernized and Catholic education to some members of the indigenous elite of central Mexico, especially to the sons of the Nahua noble families.

The *Colegio Imperial de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* became the cornerstone of the education of Nahua noblemen in the capital of New Spain. Due to the purpose and the advanced curriculum of the *Colegio de Santa Cruz*, this institution can be considered as a paradigm for indigenous education in the Spanish colonies. For the Nahua people from Mexico City, especially for the members of the Nahua nobility, the *Colegio de Santa Cruz* had its parallels and similarities with the Nahua *calmecac*. Hence, the *colegio* prepared a significant number of privileged Nahua with a special emphasis on European-styled humanistic education.

The *Colegio de Tlatelolco* introduced young members of the indigenous nobility to all the fields of westernized-Christian knowledge, including the religious principles of Catholicism, alphabetization, and the basics precepts of current European scientific knowledge.²⁶⁴ The effectiveness of the curriculum and organization of the *Colegio* resulted in the creation of the first generation of Nahua intellectuals in New Spain during the colonial period. These Nahua intellectuals also worked with fray Bernardino de Sahagún in writing the work known as the “*Primeros Memoriales*,” which became the precedent for the later monumental work of *Historia de las cosas de la Nueva España*. The invaluable contribution of the Nahua intellectuals from the *Colegio de Santa Cruz* on this project reveals the reciprocal process of learning that existed under this institution.

The Franciscans originally founded the *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* with the purpose of serving as the official institution in charge of the process of acculturation for the members of the indigenous nobility with the ultimate goal of creating the first of indigenous clergy in the Americas. This multi-phased process involved first the religious conversion of both the members of the Nahua nobility and their intellectuals; and secondly, the ideological indoctrination of these elites through the supplantation of Nahua ideology and intellectual

²⁶⁴ Silver Moon, “The Imperial College of Tlatelolco,” 3.

activities for westernized ideas. At this early point, the college had a promising future, both for the purpose of the Franciscans and for the Nahua peoples. For the members of the Nahua nobility the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* represented an opportunity for learning the manners, forms and alphabetic literacy used by the conquerors. According to the regulations of the Spanish authorities, the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* sought to house “two children from every *altepetl*, or two children from indigenous communities that had been led by a *tlatoani*.”²⁶⁵ Just as the *Colegio de San José de los Naturales* did, the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* used the vernacular languages to evangelize and to publish religious and intellectual materials for Indigenous Peoples.²⁶⁶ The usage of the Nahuatl language in the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* favored both Spanish clergymen and Nahua intellectuals by creating an authentic exchange of knowledge between the two cultures.

Even though the educational project of the *Colegio* existed for only a short time, it witnessed an abundant Nahua intellectual production. Under the sponsorship of the Spanish authorities, Nahua intellectuals produced many works with the collaboration of their Spanish tutors. This collective effort resulted in a variety of important works, such as Alonso de Molina’s Spanish-Nahuatl Dictionary, the *Historia de las cosas de la Nueva España*, the *Codex Cruz-Badiano*, and many other translations of important religious documents from the medieval tradition such as the Nahuatl language version of the *Imitatio Christi*.²⁶⁷

These works demonstrate how Nahua students from the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* learned to write both in Nahuatl and Spanish, and similarly how they mastered the discipline of interpretation and translation of texts in Latin.²⁶⁸ The successful practice of these activities also demonstrated how the Nahua artfully adopted and appropriated religious ideas and western knowledge.²⁶⁹ Thus, the works produced by the alumni of the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* displayed the influence of both Christianity and Nahua traditions, reflecting the adaptation and synergic knowledge elaborated by the Nahua of the *Colegio*.

However, it did not take long for the Spanish authorities to complain against the Nahua intellectuals’ exercise of translation and interpretation of religious texts conducted by the Nahua students at the *Colegio de Tlatelolco*.²⁷⁰ According to the religious authorities in New Spain and

²⁶⁵ Gonzalbo, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial. El mundo indígena*, 112.

²⁶⁶ See Martin Austin Nesvig, “The Epistemological Politics of Vernacular Scripture in Sixteenth-Century Mexico,” *The Americas* 70, No. 2 (October 2013): 165-201.

²⁶⁷ David Tavárez, “Nahua Intellectuals, Franciscan Scholars,” 203-235.

²⁶⁸ For a short list of the prolific work of Nahua intellectuals see Willard P. Gingerich, “A Bibliographic Introduction to Twenty Manuscripts of Classical Nahuatl Literature,” *Latin American Research Review* 10, No. 1 (Spring, 1975): 105-125.

²⁶⁹ David Tavárez, “A Banned Sixteenth-Century Biblical Text in Nahuatl: The Proverbs of Solomon,” *Ethnohistory* 60, No. 4 (2013): 759-762.

²⁷⁰ For more information about the conflict that translation and interpretation of religious texts into indigenous languages generated among the clergy and the colonial Spanish authorities in the Americas, see Esperanza López Parada, “Poder y traducción coloniales: el nombre de Dios en lengua de indios,” *Revista Chilena de Literatura*, Núm. 85 (noviembre 2013): 129-156, 138. See also the research of Mariana C. Zinni, “De la metáfora náhuatl: construcción de la divinidad en dos textos sahuagustinos,” *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 61, No. 2 (Julio-diciembre 2013): 629-646, 632-633.

members of other religious orders, especially the Dominicans, the translation of religious texts conducted by indigenous students from the *colegio* demonstrated clear misinterpretations and misunderstandings on the Catholic faith. These complaints argued that the conversion and interpretations of religious terms in Spanish could change their meaning when the native students translated them into indigenous languages. According to the detractors of this practice, these interpretations and their translations of the basic elements of the Christian faith put the success of the process of evangelization at risk.²⁷¹ Consequently, the texts translated into indigenous languages quickly came under the scrutiny of the colonial religious authorities and eventually the Inquisition. The colonial authorities considered that halting the translation of religious texts into indigenous languages would protect Christian orthodoxy in the Americas and keep the recently converted Indigenous Peoples away from any “heretical contamination.”²⁷² Due to this strict surveillance, the colonial authorities either suppressed or censored the intellectual production from the *Colegio de Santiago de Tlatelolco*. The culmination of this strict censorship at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition, the *Consejo de Indias* and other Spanish authorities came about in 1575. Consequently, this policy had a detrimental impact on the curriculum of the *Colegio de Tlatelolco*, which led to a decline in its intellectual production, and the defeating of the initial purpose of the founders of the *Colegio*. This situation, coupled with the opposition of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities to the eventual formation of a native clergy, became the main causes that led the ultimate decline of the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* as a leading institution of higher education for Indigenous Peoples.²⁷³

As if this were not enough, the Mexican provincial Church councils, or *Concilios Provinciales*, as early as 1555 and 1565 excluded Indigenous Peoples from receiving sacred orders and also prohibited them from the reading of printed books and other manuscripts concerning religious topics. Finally, the *Tercer Concilio Provincial* in 1585 limited Indigenous Peoples to merely receiving a basic elemental education in the Christian faith, without the possibility of gaining access to institutions of higher education or obtaining a position in the clergy.²⁷⁴ As a consequence of these royal policies, the *Colegio de Tlatelolco* definitively closed its doors to Nahua students around 1649.²⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in the mid-eighteenth century several attempts by secular Spaniards and clergymen attempted to seek the reopening of the *Colegio* in order to recover its intellectual splendor. Nevertheless, these later attempts did not succeed in reviving the college.

²⁷¹ Carlos Sempat Assadourian, “Hacia la “Sublimis Deus”: las discordias entre los dominicos indios y el enfrentamiento del franciscano padre Tastera con el padre Betanzos,” *Historia Mexicana* 47, No. 3 (January-March, 1998): 465-536, 481.

²⁷² See Martin Austin Nesvig, “‘Heretical Plagues’ and Censorship Cordons: Colonial Mexico and the Transatlantic Book Trade,” *Church History* 75, No. 1 (Mar., 2006): 1-37.

²⁷³ For a more complete discussion about the idea of creating an indigenous clergy in the Americas, specifically in the capital of New Spain, see Margarita Menegus y Rodolfo Aguirre, *Los indios, el sacerdocio y la Universidad*.

²⁷⁴ Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuri, “Del Tercero al Cuarto Concilio Provincial Mexicano,” *Historia Mexicana* 35, núm. 1 (jul.- Sept., 1985): 5-31, 9-10.

²⁷⁵ Pilar Gonzalbo, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial. El mundo indígena*, 129.

3.3.3 The *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán* (1548)

By the middle of the sixteenth century the population of *mestizo* children who lived in social vulnerability increased dramatically. Most of these children, the products of illicit sexual relations between Spaniards and indigenous women and despised by both parents, lived on the streets of the capital of New Spain, contributing to an increasing level of delinquency and social unrest. To alleviate this social burden, the colonial authorities, specifically the *Cabildo*, or Town Council of the City of Mexico, founded the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán* in the mid-sixteenth century for male *mestizo* children. From the beginning, the idea of founding a new *colegio* counted with the support of the Archbishop of Mexico, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, and the Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza. The original purpose of this institution focused on preventing homeless *mestizo* children from the vices that derived from poverty. However, the high number of non-*mestizo* children who lived in similarly precarious conditions obliged the authorities to accept children who were not necessarily *mestizos*, but who also needed the attention of the authorities:²⁷⁶

[...] es cosa útil y necesaria en aquella república, porque muchos mestizos y otros muchachos que andan perdidos se recogen allí y son doctrinados, y unos salen para oficios y otros para religiosos y para otras cosas de Nuestro Señor se sirve, y se quitan de muchos vicios y aprenden virtud. [...] son muchos así con clérigos que les enseñan la doctrina cristiana y buenas costumbres y leer y tienen cargo de regirlos y gobernarlos, como con un preceptor que enseña gramática, y con médicos y otros gastos necesarios [...]²⁷⁷

In a letter written by the Viceroy don Antonio de Mendoza, the Viceroy explained the importance of having an institution of this nature in the capital of New Spain:

[...] me mandaron por muchas veces que yo diese orden como los hijos mestizos de los españoles se recojiesen, porque andan muchos dellos perdidos entre los indios. Para remedio desto y en cumplimiento de lo que sus majestades me mandaron, se ha instruido un colegio de niños donde se escojen no solo los perdidos, mas otros muchos que tienen padres que los ponen a depender la doctrina cristiana, y a leer y escribir, y a tomar buenas costumbres [...]²⁷⁸

Even though the *colegio* primarily focused on the education of *mestizo* children, Margarita Menegus mentioned that there existed a few known cases that demonstrated that indigenous

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ France V. Scholes, "The Colegio de San Juan de Letrán in 1552," *The Americas* 1 (Jul., 1945): 99-106.

²⁷⁸ "El Colegio de San Juan de Letrán de México," in Joaquín García Icazbalceta, comp., *Obras* II (México: Imprenta de V. Agüeros, 1898), 189.

children also attended the *colegio*,²⁷⁹ and that the school even counted upon “Indian instructors” of the Nahuatl language and Latin Grammar.²⁸⁰ Unfortunately, as Dr. Menegus also stated, little archival work has been done in studying the circumstances and particularity of the cases of these indigenous students.

The large plurality of the students from this *colegio* explains the higher number of employees and personnel that were in charge of this institution. Moreover, the population of this institution gradually increased if we consider that not including the workers and other personnel, the school housed nearly 200 students in its early years.²⁸¹ Nevertheless, indigenous students had restricted access to the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán* due to one of the goals of this school: to create a clergy from New Spain. Since the creation of indigenous clergy failed in New Spain, the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán* came to substitute for the failure of the original goals and ambitions of the *Colegio de Tlatelolco*’s attempts at creating an indigenous clergy. However, the main difference between these two colleges was that the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán*, in opposition to the original idea of the *Colegio de Tlatelolco*, had as its main goal the creation of a *mestizo* clergy.

The *mestizo* population in New Spain represented an attractive sector of the population to some religious orders since several of these children spoke both Spanish and at least one indigenous language. The founders of this *colegio* saw in these *mestizo* children an opportunity to create a *novohispano* clergy. As the following document gives evidence, the colonial authorities had special interest in seeing the former students from the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán* to collaborate in the evangelization of the Indigenous Peoples:

[Que estos niños] se inclinen a las letras y a ser eclesiásticos:... religiosos o lo sean, porque de allí salgan personas que aprovechen en los naturales, porque sabrán las [len]guas de ellos y ayudarán mucho más que los que de acá van, uni más que diez, por ser naturales y tener la lengua y conocer y saber las flaquezas y condiciones de ellos para los convertir y atraer. Enseñar y conservar en la fe y doctrina; y serán para más trabajo y suplirán la falta que hay de religiosos y de sacerdotes allá en muchas maneras [...]²⁸²

Consequently, and considering the pragmatism of this goal, the document continues stating that:

[...] porque [estos estudiantes] se compadecerán más de las necesidades de los indios y les dolerán más sus trabajos por ser sus naturales, y entenderlos han

²⁷⁹ See Menegus and Aguirre, *Los indios, el sacerdocio y la Universidad*, 60-65.

²⁸⁰ *Carta del Consejo de las Indias a su Majestad*, Madrid, 23 de octubre de 1552, as cited in France V. Scholes, “The Colegio de San Juan de Letrán in 1552,” 100.

²⁸¹ *La orden que se tiene en el colegio de niños de México*, AGI, Indiferente General, legajo 737, as cited in France V. Scholes, “The Colegio de San Juan de Letrán in 1552,” 101.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 104.

mejor que los que de acá van, que de ciento se vuelven los noventa acá; y más si es de hace universidad que esté junto a la casa y colegio de niños recogidos en México, y aun ordenándolo de manera que se enseñen todas las lenguas en la dicha casa para que de allí salgan algunos predicadores para enseñar tanta diversidad de lenguas de gentes como hay en aquellas provincias.²⁸³

It is highly possible to consider that the need that the *colegio* had for instructors of indigenous languages served as one of the conditions that allowed at least a few indigenous pupils to enroll as students in the school. In this way, the indigenous former students of the *colegio* could have been trained to teach the rest of their classmates one or more indigenous languages. In this sense, due to the restricted opportunities for education that Indigenous Peoples had in the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán*, it is important to emphasize the ability and effort that apparently some indigenous families found to make higher education available for their children. Archival information also demonstrates that some indigenous parents wrote and sent letters to the authorities of diverse *colegios*, such as the one of San Juan de Letrán, asking for special permission for their children to attend the school. Margarita Menegus mentioned that one of these cases focused on the petition of the indigenous student Pascual de Roxas, cacique from Texcoco, who in 1749 narrated how he had attended the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán* for learning of his “*primeras letras*.” After this period of basic education, Mr. Roxas gained admission into the University of Mexico and graduated as a *bachiller* in Philosophy. Another case, also mentioned by Dr. Menengus, is the case of Tomás Damián, an indigenous male from Ixmiquilpan, who also initially attended the *Colegio de San Juan de Letrán* and later on also became a student at the *Seminario Conciliar* of the Archbishopric of México, where he studied Theology around 1808.²⁸⁴ Nevertheless, at this point it is not possible to determine if these few cases were an exception rather than a rule since very little archival work has been made on this topic.

3.3.4 The *Real y Pontificia Universidad de México* (1551)

Since the *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* faced an economic decline during the last years of the sixteenth century, the opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to gain access to higher education declined dramatically by the end of the sixteenth century. However, the creation of the *Real y Pontificia Universidad de México* in 1551 represented a new opportunity for indigenous caciques, members of the indigenous nobility, and other interested Indigenous People in order to continue their intellectual preparation. These interests in pursuing higher education derived both from the social status and economic benefits that holding an academic degree and title from the University of Mexico represented for Indigenous Peoples.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Menegus and Aguirre, *Los indios, sacerdocio y universidad*, 115-116.

The regulations of the university did not specifically include the exclusion of any student due to their ethnic origin, with the exception of those who were considered by the Spanish colonial system as “*personas prohibidas*” or anyone who was a “*persona no infame por infamia vulgar*,” which mostly became associated with the social quality of the student and his family, not his ancestry or “*race*.” In this sense, the university did not explicitly exclude any Indigenous People, including those from the Spanish colonies in Southeast Asia, but rather it excluded only those individuals with a reprehensible judicial status, such as enslaved people, *mulatos* or *chinos morenos*.²⁸⁵ Even though initially petitions existed in favor of keeping the university free from *indios*, *mulatos* or members of other *castas* as students,²⁸⁶ as the ethnic and social diversity increased in New Spain it became harder to keep certain institutions racially segregated.

Meanwhile, the *pueblos de indios* and their indigenous leadership remained engaged in a constant battle for gaining both the human and economic means to continue the teaching of the *primeras letras* for the youngest Indigenous Peoples from their populations. This phenomenon and the heightened interest that the indigenous population of New Spain showed towards education reflect the appreciation and importance that they had for maintaining their high social status or improving it through obtaining a degree from the university or any other *colegio*.

In Mexico City the attendance of Nahua and other Indigenous Peoples at the university continued until 1696, when the regulations of the university officially excluded everyone except the ethnic Spaniards from being enrolled as students at the university. The constant changes in the internal regulations concerning the requirements for the enrollment of students demonstrated the dynamic environment that existed within the University of Mexico. However, it is also a fact that being a student of the university represented a large investment of financial and social resources that limited many indigenous students’ access to this institution of higher education. Nevertheless, some self denominated “*indios caciques*” managed to attend and obtain a university degree following the procedures established by authorities from the university.

In the beginning, the number of indigenous students enrolled at the University of Mexico became far reduced in comparison to the number of Indigenous Peoples that attended one of the other *colegios*, especially those later sponsored by the Jesuits.²⁸⁷ However, it seems that social factors, such as the increasing diversity of *castas* excluded them from gaining access to higher education, as well as the interests and social pressure that some sectors of the population exerted over the colonial authorities, limited the University of Mexico in mid 18th-century to only accepting Spaniards, criollos or so-called “*indios puros*.”²⁸⁸ Still, a few cases demonstrate that

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 60-65.

²⁸⁶ *Acta del claustro pleno celebrado el 19 de octubre de 1674*, AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Regio Patronato Indiano, Universidad (114), Volumen 17, Expediente 1, fojas 3-5.

²⁸⁷ Menegus and Aguirre, *Los indios, sacerdocio y universidad*, 105.

²⁸⁸ *Acta del claustro celebrado el 14 de mayo de 1727*, AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Regio Patronato Indiano, Universidad (114), Volumen 21, Expediente 308, fojas 35-38: “se ordena no admitir ningún acto dedicado a la Universidad, ni matricular en ella, a los que no sean españoles criollos o indios puros.”

Indigenous Peoples indeed studied in the Universidad de México and continued with the corresponding bureaucratic procedures to be able to legally practice or hold their corresponding professional degrees.²⁸⁹

By the seventeenth century, the image of the “*indio letrado*” became prevalent since an important number of Indigenous Peoples who had gained access to the educational system in major urban centers, such as Mexico City, Puebla and Oaxaca, offered their services for the elite of their indigenous communities. According to the work of Dr. Menegus, several indigenous students decided to study Law instead of pursuing a direct career within the religious realm, which also required that indigenous students enjoyed a good economic position, which was not always the case. In other words, as Dr. Menegus suggested, for indigenous students from rural areas, studying Law represented a shortcut to achieving a position within the religious sphere without becoming an ordained member of the clergy. The social status and local power that ecclesiastical authorities held in medium-sized and smaller towns remained a bastion for aiding in the maintenance of social privileges for Indigenous People former noble families. Nevertheless, indigenous students who lived in urban centers diversified their economic activities and their professional opportunities were not limited to studying Law.

By the mid-eighteenth century the University of Mexico openly expressed the idea that Indigenous Peoples had the right to attend to university. In the *Constituciones de la Real y Pontificia Universidad*, published in Mexico City in 1775, article number 246 openly expressed the availability for indigenous students to attend the University:

Ordenamos , que qualquiera que hubiere sido penitenciado por el Santo Oficio, o sus Padres , o Abuelos, o tuviere alguna nota de infamia, no sea admitido a grado alguno de este [sic] Universidad, ni tampoco los Negros, ni Mulatos, ni los que comúnmente se llaman Chinos morenos, ni qualquiera género de esclavo, o que lo haya sido: porque no solo no han de ser admitidos a grado , pero ni a la matricula; y se declara, que los Indios, como Vasallos libres de su Magestad, pueden, y deben ser admitidos a matricula, y grados.²⁹⁰

As we can see, access to the *Universidad de México* in the mid-seventeenth century remained opened for all the subjects of New Spain, except for those with enslaved ancestry or those with a family history of heresy by having had relatives who were penitents of the Inquisition. In this

²⁸⁹ See the case of Isidro del Espíritu Santo in the document entitled *Licencia de Ysidro del Espíritu Santo, indio cacique natural de la ciudad de México, y que ha deliberado el estado eclesiástico, para portar los hábitos en atención a estar cursando la sagrada teológica, en la Universidad*, México 8 de noviembre de 1713, AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente Virreinal, Cajas 5000-5999, Caja 5152, Expediente 002 (Clero Regular y Secular) Caja 5152, 6 fojas.

²⁹⁰ *Constituciones de la Real y Pontificia Universidad de México, Segunda edición, dedicada al Rey Nuestro Señor Don Carlos III* (México: Imprenta de Don Felipe de Zuñiga y Ontiveros, 1775), 132.

sense, gaining access to the *Universidad* represented a possible improvement in the social status for the Indigenous Peoples of New Spain.

3.3.5 The *Colegio Seminario de San Gregorio* (1586)

A radical expansion in indigenous access to education came with the arrival of the first members of the Company of Jesus, or the Jesuit Order, who quickly upon their arrival in 1586, founded another school for the education of the sons of regional caciques, the *Colegio Seminario de San Gregorio*. This *colegio* initially remained under the economic dependency of the *colegio Máximo*, also known as the *Colegio de San Pedro y San Pablo*, founded by the Jesuits for the sons of Spaniards. While the *Colegio Máximo* centered its attention on the education of Spaniards, the original plan for the *Colegio de San Gregorio* focused on the instruction of a few indigenous children, sons of regional indigenous caciques, who were willing to live in a boarding school system while they remained as students in the *colegio*.

The internal organization of the *colegio* counted upon a seminary for a reduced number of “*hijos de principales*,” a school of “*primeras letras*” for *macehual* children, and a church where indigenous adults could attend the ceremony of the mass. The *Colegio de San Gregorio* did not represent an isolated effort of the Jesuits for the education of indigenous children. The Jesuits also founded the *Colegio de San Martín de Tepoztlán*,²⁹¹ for the education of indigenous children, sons of caciques and *principales* from both nearby areas and those from remote locations. Similarly to the policies of the *Colegio de San Gregorio*, other indigenous children, the sons of *macechuales*, also received instruction in a variety of technical skills, along with the study of the “*primeras letras*” and basic Catholic religious doctrine.²⁹² Juan de Tovar, the first rector of the *colegio* and a *mestizo*, pointed out that the main objective of this school was to educate indigenous children from an early age in the Christian faith and in “good manners and education.”²⁹³ By educating these indigenous children into what the Spaniards called “proper manners of living,” these children would be able to return to their communities and influence their entire environment.²⁹⁴

During its first years of existence, the *Colegio de San Gregorio* counted upon a relatively small number of students who remained under the direct economic sponsorship of the *Colegio Máximo*. However, an important donation made in 1651,²⁹⁵ which consisted of sufficient

²⁹¹ Antonio Garrido Aranda, *Organización de la Iglesia en el Reino de Granada y su proyección en Indias siglo XVI* (Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1979), 246.

²⁹² Lilian Álvarez Arellano, “El Colegio de San Gregorio: Modelo de educación para los indios mexicanos.”

²⁹³ Andrés Pérez de Rivas, *Crónica y historia religiosa de la provincia de la Compañía de Jesús de México en Nueva España I* (México: Imprenta del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, 1896), 120-121.

²⁹⁴ *Testimonio de la fundación de Colegio Seminario de San Carlos para Indios en el de San Gregorio*, AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente Virreinal, Colegios Caja 2257, Cajas 2000-2999, Caja 2257, Expediente 024, 4 fojas.

²⁹⁵ Pilar Gonzalbo, “Del Tercero al Cuarto Concilio Provincial Mexicano,” 169.

resources to build the church, allowed the authorities of the *colegio* to build the *Capilla de Lotero*.²⁹⁶ In 1683, the *colegio* received another important donation from Juan de Chavarría, a wealthy colonist who was also a member of the knightly order of Santiago. Mr. Chavarría donated to the *colegio* the resources to build another church, and also granted the *colegio* a bequest of his former hacienda of “San José de Oculman,” along with its cattle, and other valuable goods,²⁹⁷ including “some slaves.”²⁹⁸ This last donation greatly increased the revenue of the school, and consequently by the beginning of the eighteenth century the *colegio* enjoyed a surplus in its rents. The school then became a semi-independent institution from the *Colegio Máximo*. At the same time, this economic independence allowed the members of the *colegio* to improve the compound and the classes that the *colegio* offered. Nevertheless, in 1767, with the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from New Spain, the college became transferred to the administration of the smaller religious educational order known as *Compañía de María de Nuestra Señora*. However, due to the independent rents and economic resources that the *colegio* still had, the authorities of the *colegio* remained semi-independent, turning the *Colegio de San Gregorio* into one of the last bastions of education for the Indigenous People.

The intellectual production of the many generations of students of the *Colegio de San Gregorio* cannot be directly or appropriately compared with the productivity of the indigenous students of the *Colegio Imperial de Tlatelolco*. First of all, we have to recognize that the objectives of the two colleges were very different. Also a comparison between the two is not appropriate because the Jesuits founded the *Colegio de San Gregorio* under the strict guidelines stipulated by the *Concilios Provincial Mexicano* II in 1585 which limited access to education and the training for the Indigenous People to professions other than the goal of obtaining positions within the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, the students from the *colegio* did not stop their intellectual production and these limitations did not halt their advancement. As a matter of fact, the alumni and students who graduated from the *Colegio de San Gregorio* eventually occupied positions as professors and teachers at the University of Mexico, as well as lawyers and positions as important as public notaries. However, there were some students, both from the *Colegio de San Gregorio* and from the *Seminario de Tepoztlán*, who excelled in their scholarly skills allowing them to attend either the *Colegio de San Juan y San Pablo* to continue with their learning of Latin, or to gain access to the University of Mexico as students of higher education and advanced degrees.

Unfortunately, the exact number of students from the *Colegio de San Gregorio* who were able to attend the University or other institutions of higher education currently remains unknown.

²⁹⁶ José Ignacio Rubio Mañé, *El virreinato IV. Obras públicas y educación universitaria* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México- Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas- Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 298.

²⁹⁷ *Constituciones del Real Colegio de San Gregorio de México aprobado por el Ecsmo. Virrey don Félix Calleja, por el superior decreto de julio de 1815*, AGN, Ramo: Justicia-Instrucción Pública, Volumen 1, Expediente 52 o 46, número 8, legajo 13, fojas 389-408, f. 390.

²⁹⁸ Lucas Alamán, *Diccionario universal de historia y geografía* II (México: Librería de Andrade, 1853), 398.

Margarita Menegus and Rodolfo Aguirre in their collective work mentioned the existence of an important number of files that demonstrate the large number of indigenous students enrolled in the University of Mexico during the late eighteenth century; however, the authors did not include either the number of referred students, or the references to their sources. This fact demonstrates that the policies of restriction and acceptance for indigenous students remained relatively flexible and operated according to the particularity of the case of each student.

3.3.6 The *Real Academia de San Carlos de las Nobles Artes de la Nueva España* (1784)

In 1784 the colonial authorities in New Spain founded the *Real Academia de Pintura, Escultura y Arquitectura de San Carlos de la Nueva España*.²⁹⁹ Following the example of the University of Mexico, the statutes of the *Real Academia de San Carlos de Nueva España*, published in 1785, specified that the access to this school was “open to anyone who wishes to attend,” making special emphasis on the opportunity that this school offered to Indigenous People:

En la sala de principios se admitirán indistintamente todos quantos se presenten, ya sea con el fin de estudiar completamente qualquiera de las tres Artes, ó la del Gravado, ó ya sea con el ánimo de adquirir solo el dibujo para aprender despues con mas perfeccion qualquiera oficio.³⁰⁰

Similarly, this *estatuto* also mentioned the importance of accepting Indigenous Peoples as students, due to their “natural ability” for the arts, which represented an archaic idea dating from the period of the first arrival of the Spaniards. As a matter of fact, the “*artículo XIX*” from the *estatuto*, regarding the “*Discípulos pensionados*,” states that those who could receive the *pensiones* (pensions or financial aid) could be either Spaniards or “*naturales*.” This statute also emphasized the importance of accepting Indigenous Peoples as students of the academia and ordered the: “[...] permanent inclusion of four pure Indians from New Spain who were willing to study any of the Arts offered by the Institute of the Academia, by considering both their poverty and this interest united [...]”³⁰¹ Consequently, the acceptance of indigenous students in the *Academia de San Carlos* became a very common practice. As available documentation shows, the number of students in the *Academia* in 1794 fluctuated around 67, and approximately 20 out of these 67 enjoyed the status of “*pensionados*.”³⁰² It is difficult to accurately determine the

²⁹⁹ *Bando relativo a la fundación de una nueva Real Academia de Pintura, Escultura y Arquitectura con el título de San Carlos de Nueva España*, 1784, AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente Virreinal, Cajas 1-999, Caja 0136, Expediente 008, Bandos, Caja 0136.

³⁰⁰ *Estatutos de la Real Academia de San Carlos de Nueva España*; México (México: Imprenta nueva mexicana de Don Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, 1785), 33-34.

³⁰¹ *Estatutos de la Real Academia de San Carlos de Nueva España*, 38. The original quotation states: “(...) con inclusión precisa y perpetua de quatro Indios puros de Nueva España que quieran aplicarse a cualquiera de las Artes del Instituto de la Academia, teniendo todos la pobreza y la particularidad unidas (...)”

³⁰² *Relación de alumnos que asisten a la Real Academia*, Noviembre 15 de 1794, and *Relación de los alumnos pensionados*, file without date, ARASC-FAUNAM, documento número 25, Número de referencia 10092.

ethnic or indigenous status of students who received financial aid since this information is not always specified in the documents. However, independent files and documentation submitted by a significant numbers of indigenous students expressed their status as “fellows” of the *Academia*.

The attendance of Nahua students in the *Academia* offered them a prestigious social position not only among their communities, but also among the rest of the population of the region. This social prestige also represented real economic benefits for the graduates since indigenous students enrolled in the *Academia* were exempt from tribute.³⁰³ This exemption of tribute represented only one of a series of social benefits that indigenous students at the *Academia de San Carlos* had, especially after they graduated. Once a student graduated from the *Academia*, whether the student was indigenous or not, he received a certificate that “approved them” or “certified them” as specialists in the specific discipline that they studied, such as painting, sculpture, etc. This official recognition served as a type of license which allowed them to perform their abilities while pursuing personal economic benefits. This status placed graduated students from the *Academia* above indigenous artisans in New Spain, who lacked any official certification and, thus, performed their work at a cheaper rate than the graduates from the *Academia*. For example, in 1799 the Protector of the Indians, in an attempt to protect the privileges and licensing of these indigenous graduates from the *Academia* stated that:

pulsan graves dificultades en la práctica, siendo muy duro que a tantos infelices como los hay, principalmente indios sin contar con otra cosa para su subsistencia que lo poco que ganan en hacer estas o las otras pinturas ligeras y de poca dificultad, se les prive de algún destino [...]; que lo mas que podría hacerse en el casi es que se pusiese algún distintivo en las casas u obradores de los pintores aprobados y así el público no se engañarían [...]; que se forme una lista de todos los pintores aprobados que hay en el reyno [...]³⁰⁴

As this document illustrates, the commercial competition that former students from the *Academia* faced from non-licensed indigenous artisans represented a very common phenomenon which challenged their prestige. This is the reason why the authorities of the *Academia* later appealed to the higher authorities in New Spain to pass legislation to avoid common indigenous artisans from usurping the artistic and creative work that former students from the *Academia* were licensed to do.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ *Memorial del indio Juan de la Cruz Fortes, del Ramo de Escultura, sobre que se le obligaba a pagar tributo*, 1791; and *Real Orden revelando a los indios pensionados de la Real Academia de San Carlos del pago de tributo*, 1 de julio de 1794, ARASC-FAUNAM, gaveta 8, 1794-1795, documento 18, número 124.

³⁰⁴ *Oficio del fiscal protector de indios (Saparsurieta), diciendo: que en el adoptar una providencia general sobre los pintores no examinados*, diciembre 31, 1799, ARASC-FAUNAM, Documento 20, Gaveta 9. 1796-97-98-99-800.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The intellectual opportunities that the *Academia de San Carlos* offered indigenous students did not remain limited to the teaching of artistic skills. Along with the learning of aesthetic values, the students of the *Academia* also remained in close contact with innovative ideas and literary works produced in Europe. These ideas arrived to the *Academia* either through published works acquired by the institutional authorities for the improvement of the library, or through the visits of intellectuals from Europe who served as temporary visiting faculty. Consequently, during the early nineteenth century these students became involved in social issues that concerned them as members of a specific social group in New Spain, as we will see in the next chapter.

3.4 Conclusion to Chapter 3

As we have seen, all Mesoamerican societies practiced institutionalized intellectual activity. Mesoamerican states created several institutions that sponsored the creation and maintenance of intellectual activity, and those who practiced these activities must be considered as intellectuals. Regional, cultural and gender variations determined the characteristics of the institutions that sponsored this intellectual activity. In this sense, even though we can refer to the existence of a Mesoamerican intellectual tradition, we need to clarify that this tradition was heterogeneous and diverse.

With the arrival of the Spaniards to Mesoamerica and with the process of colonization this Mesoamerican intellectual tradition became disrupted. Nevertheless, even with this disruption, Mesoamerican peoples found ways to preserve their collective knowledge and memory through a very complex process of cultural synergy. Those indigenous intellectuals who decided to continue performing their Mesoamerican knowledge without the sponsorship and outside Spanish colonial institutions often found themselves prosecuted and punished by the colonial authorities.

In contrast, some Mesoamerican individuals, either by choice or because of the need to resist challenges to their former privileged social position within the Mesoamerican establishment, found their way to participate in the institutionalized life that the colonial system provided. The cultural adaptation that these individuals experienced implied their learning and eventual practicing of some of the features of the intellectual European tradition. In this sense, alphabetic literacy became one of the main skills acquired by the indigenous individuals who gained access to these colonial institutions. Thus, during this initial colonial restructuring, educational institutions founded by Spanish colonizers became the main route through which these Mesoamerican individuals continued producing their intellectual tradition. In the particular case of central Mexico, these institutions were mostly for the purpose of educating the members of the former Nahua nobility into the European style of life.

Through the existence of these colonial institutions, Nahua intellectuals found a limited, but very valuable, opportunity to continue with the production of knowledge and their intellectual activity. These institutions became the intellectual refuge where several Nahua intellectuals adopted new skills through which they preserved and continued developing their identity and ancestral knowledge. Consequently, even considering how disruptive and violent the process of the conquest and colonization remained for Mesoamerican people, several indigenous individuals were able to gain access into the spheres of higher education and their intellectual activity became sponsored by the colonial authorities. This intellectual continuity cannot be considered as homogeneous and lineal, but rather as heterogeneous and variable. However, it is very possible to come to an understanding about Nahua intellectuals through the study of the sources that they left behind as a result of their education, activities and membership in the many diverse colonial educational institutions.