

The Irreplaceable Window

Reflections on the Study of Indigenous Wills

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If you had asked us in 1998, when the first *Dead Giveaways* came out, whether a second iteration of the volume would see the light of day, we are quite certain that we would have answered no. We were pleased when Louise Burkhart (1999, 838–840) wrote in *Ethnohistory* that *Dead Giveaways* was “a particularly good resource for graduate students seeking current research models and ideas for further development.” But we dared not imagine that almost two decades later the book would still be a model worth consulting, let alone emulating. However, *Native Wills from the Colonial Americas: Dead Giveaways in a New World* now exists, so it seems appropriate to ask why a sequel volume is justified and why the first book has endured as a scholarly contribution.

We suggest there are two answers. First, as Burkhart stated in the final line of her review of *Dead Giveaways*, “indigenous testaments still have much more to reveal.” If *Dead Giveaways* suggested as much, *Native Wills from the Colonial Americas* confirms it in rich detail. Second, the chapters in this volume do not merely repeat the themes, methods, and findings of the earlier volume. They also reflect recent historiographical trends. All the essays mirror the linguistic or, what one of us would term, “the philological turn” in ethnohistory. Some essays continue the ethnohistoric trend, well illustrated in the first volume, to use women’s wills as a way to explore their lives in great detail, especially their economic and political roles; others turn to the question of elite strategies for maintaining status and privileges; and another set confronts issues around death and dying. All reveal the

rich complexities and paradoxes of individual colonial subjects navigating urban and rural colonial cultures. All of the chapters, one way or another, deeply probe the use of language and/or images to convey or contest cultural changes as the individual testators actually experienced them. Furthermore, the analysis in these essays of wills and those who wrote them provides insights into particular people beyond the Nahua and mestizo intellectuals—such as Chimalpahin, Alva Ixtlilxochitl, and Alvarado Tezozomoc—who have been a focus of recent scholarship.¹

The book as a whole draws on the ever-expanding geographic and conceptual boundaries of Latin American history. Both Atlantic and transnational histories confront Latin Americanists today with the need to broaden our comparative geographic perspectives; *Native Wills from the Colonial Americas* takes on a more (if not wholly) continental perspective. Its essays show how individuals both embodied and enacted the changing times in which they lived, even when they used this legal instrument introduced by Europeans—the last will and testament—to conserve property and maintain, when possible, practices rooted in non-European cultural systems.² In providing an overview of the chapters preceding this one, we offer not only a summary of their main themes, but we also seek to suggest ways that future research into testaments might further probe questions of language and identity, as well as issues of cultural change and death and dying.

How, exactly, do these essays reflect an ever-evolving Latin Americanist historiography? Part 1, “Women of Native America,” explores how women, as active agents, sought economic stability. We see how the languages used in these particular wills, whether Spanish or indigenous (Mixtec, or Ñudzahui to be precise), captured both hybridity and efforts to enact cultural persistence. Karen Graubart’s essay explicitly takes up the idea of hybridity in Trujillo, Peru. Catalina de Agüero’s 1570 will shows how she mediated newly linked indigenous and Atlantic cultures. Catalina’s life spanned the turbulent middle decades of the sixteenth century in which new physical and transactional “go-betweens”—to borrow Alida Metcalf’s useful typology—emerged to play crucial roles in the development of colonial Andean society. While her life in Trujillo began in servitude in a novel urban environment, that servitude allowed Catalina to maintain property in the rural community of her birth, wearing clothing of a style that

perhaps reminded her of her rural origins, even as the new materials from which her clothing was made symbolized her mediation between American and Atlantic worlds, and urban and rural cultures (Metcalf 2005, 9–12).

The 1677 joint testament of Miguel da Silva, labeled a *chino*, and María de la Concepción, a free *mulata*, as evocatively described by Tatiana Seijas, is an unusual kind of will, to be sure. It reinforces the image of seventeenth-century Mexico City as a place of economic uncertainty and social variability, in which political and gender hierarchies had to be carefully navigated. Navigable they were, though, as Miguel and María fostered two children, one of whom was Spanish. More remarkable still was María's marital history: she married twice, first to a wealthy man of unknown ethnicity who left her the considerable sum of 5,000 pesos; she then used some of that money to free her second husband, a man of likely Filipino origin, from his enslavement. Did the limited "liberation" this sometimes anomalous urban atmosphere granted María come at the cost of deeper religious or communal ties, leaving her estranged from any of the political or religious structures to which communal identities were connected? María was able to purchase her new husband's freedom, but the interpersonal tension that came to characterize their family reflected the mix of racial and class differences embedded in that single family unit.

Jonathan Truitt explores the theme of popular religious belief and practice through the 1640 will of one female testator. Neither a "particularly wealthy nor destitute" woman, she owned a variety of saints' images, several of which she disposed of through burning, a potent prehispanic Mesoamerican symbol of both death and rebirth. Yet Nicolasa Juana does not appear to have had rebellious tendencies. Her will suggests her piety, and she refers respectfully to a woman named Ana, the *tenantzin* or "beloved mother" of the barrio of Teocaltitlan, who held the wills of her parents; this Ana enjoyed a position of some authority—whether formal or informal—to guard the written records of family and kin, a position recognized by residents such as Nicolasa Juana. No doubt her unclear indigenous, yet ethnic, identity exemplified the cultural hybridity that frequently characterized indigenous life in seventeenth-century Mexico City, especially in the particular parish in which she lived.

Hybridity also characterizes the seventeenth-century will of Lucía Hernández Ñuquihui. Far from powerless (as can be said of all three women whose wills are in this part of the book), her good fortune was based on

continuities of life in the towns and villages of the Mixteca Alta. Her ability to amass some wealth and navigate the more transcultural seventeenth-century economy of that region of New Spain was rooted in marital connections and in her success at adapting a traditional craft—weaving—to new forms of transport and exchange. As Kevin Terraciano explains, Lucía, her family, and her social network thrived within a political culture that retained significant structural similarities to that of the late prehispanic period. Mexico City and Trujillo, Peru, on the other hand, were places where indigenous people—native or migrant—faced an array of challenges in adapting to a transformed political world.

The chapters in part 2, “Strategies of the Elite,” examine the testaments of people of noble status—that is, descendants of the ruling dynasties of the late prehispanic era, families whose members often still held positions of authority or status—or look at the political culture elites sought to model and shape. Through such wills, we see how old, noble families acted strategically to use new vehicles like will making to reinforce traditional hierarchies and privileges—such as the Pech elite family in the small Yucatec town of Ixil, still maintaining economic and political status two centuries and more after the Spanish arrival, as uncovered by Mark Christensen. We also see this process at work in the use of the pictorial representations that sometimes accompanied wills, designed to reinforce legal claims to property, as described by Richard Conway for Xochimilco in the Valley of Mexico. Visual images had long been used to support oral performances in Mesoamerican cultures. Colonial pictorial documents also illustrate how new types of conflict and legal practice influenced the nature of such texts as they became legal instruments; as such, they were no longer just records of ownership, but also rhetorical devices intended to persuade Nahua and Spanish colonial officials. Conway’s emphasis on visual images reflects the way scholars of ethnohistory have deepened their analysis of pictorial representations in the late preconquest and postconquest Mesoamerican world, in conjunction with our now much greater knowledge of colonial indigenous language.

The bounty of Ixil testaments analyzed by Christensen illustrates how Maya nobles used new legal and social strategies to enhance their status in a system of prestige that conquest events and colonial power structures often undermined. The result was the emergence of novel practices, such as *chibal* (patronym group) endogamy, developed to allow the Pech family

to maintain wealth and position in an increasingly competitive eighteenth-century political context. Because the Maya continued to govern their own towns and villages through the *cabildo* system, and because *cabildo* officers signed their names and titles to every will, documents such as the Ixil testaments offer a unique insight into the inner workings of Maya community politics.³

The exquisite sensitivity to sociopolitical terminology shown in some of these chapters, such as those by Terraciano and Christensen, can also be found in the chapter by Owen Jones. His focus is on indigenous language terminology, using his extraordinary knowledge of the K'iche Mayan tongue to compare wills from three Guatemalan communities. He shows that the language in which these testaments were written does not merely capture the individual testator's voice, but also the voices of community leaders, including those of local scribes trained in practices specific to the locales that Jones discusses. But, beyond all that, even a highly individuated textual production like a will could represent, Jones shows, a communal act with strong social and political implications for Maya property relations and authority structures, judicial practices, and spiritual beliefs. The new thus became a vehicle to reenact the old.

The third part of the book, "The Individual and Collective Nature of Death," treats death and dying as an experience on two distinct levels, that of the individual testator and that of the group. In their introduction to the book *Death and Dying in Colonial Spanish America*, Martina Will de Chaparro and Miruna Achim (2011, 5) argue that in the early modern Atlantic world "death permeated the meaning of life," with many seeing themselves as "living in a community that they shared with the dead." Kathleen Bragdon uses ethnohistory, archaeology, and ethnography to suggest how, in a Christianizing eighteenth-century southern New England, death and dying became more individual experiences. As communities experienced Christian influence variously and at different times, the beliefs, goods, and legal practices that were introduced began to reshape the conception of personhood. Bragdon's article illustrates how the mortuary practices she describes began to vary within and between communities as new forms of property and legal conventions influenced socially defined concepts of personhood and community.

In her chapter, Lisa Sousa takes us back to Oaxaca, bringing to light the intriguing use of Nahuatl by Mixe testators in the Villa Alta region.

Nahuatl as a lingua franca is now coming into focus as a process of colonial language change that is being studied in greater depth by historians and linguists.⁴ What Sousa conclusively shows is that Mixe and Nahua land-holding practices were quite different well into the colonial era, with the rotational patterns of office holding and political organization that characterized the Nahua extending deeply into customary practices of land use and ownership among the Mixe. Sousa's remarkable body of documents includes a number of wills that show the Mixe faced the issue of how to use Nahuatl to express their own concepts of social organization. Nahuas had themselves faced this issue as they began to use their language in texts whose forms emanated from a legal system with different categories of land tenure and forms of transmission of property rights, to give just two examples. Although in the Mixe case a *novel* language was adopted, the practice of will making became a powerful means to conserve Mixe ways of owning, sharing, and working land, even as new classifications and forms of property entered into the lexicon and everyday practices in this remote part of New Spain.

Like Bragdon, Erika Hosselkus explores indigenous burial practices, focusing on the Nahua community of Huexotzinco. She also finds compelling evidence that local, community-based norms and social networks shaped the practices of burial location and devotion to the saints. While testaments, as she notes, to a large extent "organized and standardized the spiritual directives of the dying" in this and other Nahua communities, she is able to tease out "the personal, regional, and ethnic concerns" that influenced the decisions—especially about burials and the connections to the emerging cult of saints⁵—made by testators in the increasingly ethnically and racially diverse community of early seventeenth-century Huexotzinco.

Paul Charney likewise explores the relationships among the individual, local or regional, and cultural in his exploration of a small number of wills from rural communities around Lima, covering the years 1596 to 1607. One of the fascinating features of his corpus is that both nobles and commoners are almost equally represented. Focusing especially on debt and credit, Charney shows how "networks of trust" undergirded local and regional economies, allowing traditional commodities and forms of exchange and reciprocity to be integrated into a colonial economy. In such an economy, some labor and wealth were siphoned off into a market system in which Spaniards, Africans, and individuals of mixed ethnicity participated.

Indigenous nobles interacted with Spaniards through credit more than commoners, in part because of their responsibility for tribute payment. Whereas kin- and community-based forms of sharing and reciprocity did not disappear, ties among debtors and creditors played a role in the shift to a more monetized economy that linked villages in the Valley of Lima to the city of Lima and beyond.

As much as these essays illustrate recent historiographical trends in ethnohistory, they also reflect the enduring appeal of testaments as a source for colonial history, pointing toward the potential for wills to contribute further to numerous current trends in the field. One example is that of language and literacy. The approach known as the New Philology has arguably exploded into a nexus of investigative subfields and foci; many of the resulting studies emphasize the philological analysis of terms used by native protagonists, whether in Spanish or in an indigenous language, in vernacular speech or legalese, in a local tongue or *lingua franca*.⁶ In parallel, but closely related, are studies of writing and literacy. The similarities and differences in literacy traditions and trends in Mesoamerica and the Andes have long challenged and stimulated scholars of the two regions to think more deeply about each other's fields—and thereby their own too—and wills offer opportunities for such contemplation.⁷

Another example is that of the above-mentioned theme of cultural hybridity, which bears further study. In recent years, there have been some sophisticated musings on its relevance by nonhistorians and historians alike; to borrow Martin Nesvig's (2012, 190) conclusion to the study of a topic not related to wills, if something is "very Mexican, neither Spanish nor indigenous, a hybrid religious and cultural practice," then can we say that religious and cultural hybridity is something very Spanish American, both Spanish and indigenous?⁸

With wills as a source base—or as part of a set of source bases—culture change can be profitably examined using various concepts of hybridity, nonlinear change, collective memory, and so on. For example, while to some extent embracing James Lockhart's (1991, 22) observation that "continuity and change are often to a large extent the same thing," Caterina Pizzigoni's (2012, 10) recent monograph, based on a large corpus of wills from the Toluca area, suggests that while important continuities can be seen in indigenous culture, the idea that "a new whole created from indigenous and Spanish components, a different world even though it embodies im-

portant elements of continuity from both antecedents,” should be further explored.

While examples abound in this volume, here two will suffice. Richard Conway (first) shows how the prehispanic practice of pictorial record keeping became *repurposed*, with such records turned into documents that carried not just legally relevant information but legal power. But (second) just as the old became new, the new could become old—*repackaged*, we might say—as Kathleen Bragdon illustrates with metal goods bearing a potential for animacy. This “old” characteristic of new metal objects relates to the theme of social regeneration, which she ties to the chiefdoms of Late Woodland and early colonial New England native peoples. Social regeneration implies an effort, whether conscious or not, to maintain the past in the future.

Memory studies, especially those focusing on cultural memory, suggest communally rooted efforts to achieve the same thing. Do we find evidence for the idea that testators often, though not necessarily always, participated in propagating “shared memories of the past [that] are not accidentally produced by social groups but [as] a consequence of cultural mediation, primarily of textualization and visualization” (Tamm 2013, 461)?⁹ Wills propagated not just individual but family memories, and they could draw on community-based memories of, for example, property, land, and who used or owned it.

Jones’s virtually community-produced K’iche testaments suggest efforts to reinforce communal understandings—rooted in the past—of family, sociopolitical units, and the role of community officials. These memories were socially activated through making wills and carrying out their instructions, not simply for practical reasons but also with the goal of forestalling familial and community strife. Sousa’s Mixe testators showed an interest in maintaining the practice of *shared* use rights to land. She also suggests that testators tried to create a sense of “long-term obligation,” so that heirs would continue to care for the souls of those who had passed on and, in the process, propagate the memory of those from whom rights to use land came. This new practice—making a will and having it recorded neither in Mixe nor in Spanish, but in Nahuatl—not only reminds us of the complexities of change but points to what Restall (1998, 144) calls “interculturalization,” a term that “does not restrict culture change to a single direction or a single end result, nor does it overemphasize culture

loss or acquisition, expressing instead the colonial-era process of cultural intercourse.”

The idea of interculturalization not only encompasses the notion that responses to colonialism were highly variable and often included cultural creativity and innovation—points made especially well in this volume by Graubart, Charney, and Seijas—but also that change could be nonlinear, with no fixed endpoint. Indigenous residents of cities such as Trujillo made efforts to create or maintain strong ties to rural communities of origin; migrants such as Catalina de Agüero wore clothing that spoke to their birth identity, kept property, and maintained other ties to their natal communities. While such examples might be seen as an incomplete acculturative process, they can just as easily be understood as a way for a woman like Agüero to reinforce her sense of Andean-ness, her indigeneity, in the new multiethnic environment in which she lived and seemingly thrived. Cities could be places where indigenous identities flourished, however “reformulated” those identities became.¹⁰

Truitt’s chapter speaks to this point particularly well. His Spanish-language but indigenous-made testament shows clearly how indigenous women continued to play community-based leadership roles, perhaps repurposed to deal with new realities of disease, death, geographic mobility, and displacement. Caring for children, documents, and saints, the woman Ana, *tenantzin* of Teocaltitlan, points to ways that the urban indigenous of the largest Mesoamerican city adapted, adjusted, yet conserved communally based ways of doing things—despite urban, acculturative pressures that we think of as individuating, if not anomic, and often overwhelming. What if it was the case that a Mixtec-descended woman—*india ladina* though Nicolasa Juana appears to have been—found security and comfort in the Nahuatl-based cultural environment that at least partly shaped her life? Does this not, to some extent, undermine assumptions about acculturative processes’ centers and peripheries?

If the overall trend of change was toward the hybrid and acculturated, wills such as Nicolasa Juana’s and the Nahuatl testaments of Mixe testators show how complex intercultural processes could lead to nonlinear patterns of change. The contrasts among K’iche testaments from Rab’inal, Xelajú, and San Miguel Totonicapán suggest that—regardless of the impact of acculturative influence (less in Rab’inal, more in the other two communities)—individuals, communities, and their leaders were preoccupied by

the idea of avoiding future conflict. Community leaders appear to have seen wills as a highly utilitarian means to reinforce this value. The K'iche desire to influence the future went beyond passing along property and settling debts; it extended to avoiding conflict and to maintaining relationships to kin who then became ancestors (but whose being remained very present and real).

Jones's chapter, as well as Terraciano's, also suggests how important local traditions and practices could be, despite the fact that no communities writing wills in colonial Spanish America were immune to the influence of global processes and changes. For the K'iche towns that Jones examines, scribal schools were a notable local tradition. For other communities, localized culture might include attitudes toward death, the soul, bodies, and corpses.

Hosselkus, for example, takes up the issue of bodies in particular and what happened to them after death. Knowing that the sixteenth-century residents of Madrid were usually buried in churches (Eire 1995, 94–103), perhaps it is not surprising that the practice of church burial for Nahuas became well established by the last quarter of the sixteenth century.¹¹ As Hosselkus suggests, local practices shaped the burial instructions of Huexotzinco's Nahuatl residents, who often specified burial near particular saints; this concern over placement near saints suggests an early manifestation of what later became a more general practice (Pizzigoni 2007, 16–17; 2012, 188–190). But if it took some time to sort out what might become of Christian Nahuatl bodies, the need for masses for souls did not. The earliest Mexico City testaments offer evidence of testators providing funds for masses, as do those of Culhuacan (Kellogg 1995, 141; Cline 1986, 28–29). Thus concern for the care of the soul existed—and perhaps built upon Nahuatl beliefs—about the journeys that souls or spirits took upon death (Berdan 1982, 94–96; Kellogg 1995, 122–123).

Death, it seems to us, was a particularly pivotal moment of potential change, a window that could be opened to let in new beliefs and new rituals surrounding death. Such shifts in death-related perspectives and practices played a key role in the emergence of indigenous Christianities. Indeed, the Christianizing of death proved to be a crucial feature of conversion, not just in the Andes—as eloquently argued by Gabriela Ramos in her recent book, *Death and Conversion in the Andes*—but throughout the Americas, in both Catholic and Protestant communities.¹² As crucial as

baptism and marriage were to the formation of new Christians and Christianities, death provided perhaps the most significant means of teaching and reinforcing new ideas and arranging or rearranging family and community (as both lived space and/or a network of social relations), along with social and property organization. These changes were nonlinear in the sense that once interculturative practices began, they occurred in variable ways across the times and places dealt with in this book, never reaching a fixed endpoint.

Wills still have great potential for further exploration of the experiences and the cultural meanings of death and dying. But—in the wake of Carlos Eire’s inspiring use of the wills of sixteenth-century Madrileños—wills by native peoples of the colonial Americas need to be put in further dialogue with many other types of texts, annals, chronicles, pictorial histories, funerary descriptions, burial records, legal cases covering not just property distribution but burial or other death-related conflicts, as well as the rich death-related sodality records from across the Iberian Americas.¹³

We have seen in this volume that because will making and dying could never be wholly individual affairs, for many indigenous testators, producing a will could offer means, material and social, to strengthen familial and communal values and practices. Testament production always connected an individual, of whatever time and place, to other family and community members, including officials who represented the community. Many colonial testators—of all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds—left bequests to honor and aid families and a variety of institutions. Such bequests became basic to the socially regenerative, even reproductive, nature of death that Bragdon mentions in her essay. Part of the future of testamentary analysis, then, is to explore questions of changing mortality and mortuary patterns, death as experience and symbol, and regenerator of material and social value in ways that reflect the complex local, temporal, ethnic, class, and status patterns that existed across the colonial Americas.

This sequel to *Dead Giveaways* offers the historiographical version of such a regenerative future. The testaments and essays in both volumes capture individuals, families, and communities at moments of crisis, grief, and sometimes conflict. Explorable through both their forms of expression and for the social relationships, economic practices, and patterns of political authority that they reveal, these documents are also highly idiosyncratic. Even as the role of the scribe in mediating colonial textual production must

be acknowledged—as shown so persuasively in Kathryn Burns’s (2010) book—testaments capture people’s voices and offer a kind of chronicle of individual lives through a dramatic period of change in world history.

As Truitt and Christensen observe in the introduction, many more indigenous-language wills have come to light since *Dead Giveaways* was published, and the exploration of testaments from a greater number of areas and among other subaltern groups has progressed. This new volume captures that shift. But as we pointed out in the introduction to *Dead Giveaways*, testaments represent the conjunction of so many elements: moments just prior to death and an individual’s life course, the person and the community, the material and the spiritual, the customary and the legal, the old and the new (Restall and Kellogg 1998, 2–5). If testators “conceived of death and the hereafter as intricately bound to earthly life” (to borrow a phrase of Eire’s [1995, 249]), then ethnohistorical wills were intricately bound to life in their creators’ communities.

The great collective corpus of indigenous wills is an irreplaceable and invaluable window onto an early modern American world, revealing how its inhabitants experienced that changing world in particular corners of tiny towns and huge cities. The men and women whose names we know and whose stories we glimpse—because they left a record of their piety, property, families, and friends—hoped to record a past that would influence the future. That hope endures even as our tools of analysis develop and change.

Notes

1. The rich scholarship on Chimalpahin and Alva Ixtlilxochitl, in particular, can be sampled in the Schroeder and Brian essays in Schroeder 2010.
2. For discussions of recent historiographical trends in Latin American ethnohistory and colonial history, see Kellogg 2003 and Restall 2003, 2012. On the variety of comparative frameworks available to historians, including Atlantic world and transnational, see Hinderaker and Horn 2010.
3. Christensen here uses wills newly discovered by him to build on a testament-based analysis of Maya politics by Restall (1997) and by its pioneer (despite the later date of the eventual publication of the study), Thompson (1999).
4. A special issue of *Ethnohistory* ([Fall 2012] 59: 4) titled *A Language of Empire, a Quotidian Tongue: The Uses of Nahuatl in Colonial Mexico*, edited by Robert Schwaller, and also marketed as an edited volume (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012), focuses on the topic of Nahuatl as a lingua franca in New Spain.

5. There is a vast literature on saints in the Americas. Some especially relevant works include Morgan 2002; Greer and Bilinkoff 2003; Rubial García 2006a, 2006b; Taylor 2010; and Pizzigoni 2012, esp. 36–45, 180–181, 188–189, 222–224, 234–235.
6. On Nahuatl as a lingua franca, see Schwaller 2012.
7. See, for example, Rappaport and Cummins 2011 and Salomon and Niño-Murcia 2011.
8. A compelling essay by nonhistorians (albeit ethnohistorians who have written eloquently on historical topics) on the relevance of hybridity to the study of colonial Latin America is Dean and Leibsohn 2003.
9. Also see Megged 2010 and Megged and Wood 2012.
10. This idea owes something to Alan R. Sandstrom's (2008, 160) observation, based on his own ethnographic research and that of others, that "Native American [Mesoamerican] villages closest to urban centers can be more conservative of ancient cultures than villages farther removed."
11. See Cline 1986, 21–24 on the beginnings of church burials in Culhuacan in central Mexico. For the Andes (Lima and Trujillo in particular), Ramos (2010) discusses the issue of church burials in detail.
12. Burkhart (2004) has commented that "Perhaps as much as or even more than formal preaching, will-making familiarized Nahuas with Catholic practices and discourse related to death." The plays collected in this volume include one that expressly deals with will making: "Souls and Testamentary Executors," 164–189. Also see Cline 1998. For very recent work on the creation of new indigenous Christianities in Mexico and Yucatan, see Christensen 2013.
13. The amount of work on death using such records is growing; the recent collection edited by Martina Will de Chaparro and Miruna Achim (2011) contains a number of examples. Other important works on death in New Spain (where the literature has grown exponentially) include Malvido, Pereira, and Tiesler 1997; Zárate Toscano 2000; Voekel 2002; Roselló Soberón 2006; Von Wobeser and Vila Vilar 2009; and, of course, Lomnitz 2005, which discusses death throughout Mexican history.

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