

**EL PROYECTO DEL PUEBLO DE LA MAGDALENA, 1787-1790. UN LUGAR
PARA NEGROS, PARDOS Y MULATOS HUAZOLOTITLÁN, OAXACA**

**THE PROJECT OF LA MAGDALENA'S TOWN, 1787-1790. A PLACE FOR
NEGROS, PARDOS AND MULATOS: HUAZOLOTITLÁN,¹ OAXACA**

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Summary:

The present investigation shows the purposes of the priest Francisco González de Serralde, to integrate the black population of his priesthood in a town to which he would give the name of La Magdalena. These communities were characterized by their indiscipline and by lacking a fixed place to live. These initiatives were developed in the town of Huazolotitlán; town located in the Xicayán Subdelegation; region that we currently know as Costa Chica. In this period, the initiatives of González de Serralde were supported by the Bishop of Oaxaca José Gregorio Alonso de Ortigosa. Among the concerns that motivated the priest of Huazolotitlán to promote a settlement for these populations, promoting among these men and women the Catholic faith and compliance with annual confession and communion stands out.

Resumen:

La presente investigación muestra los propósitos del cura Francisco González de Serralde, por integrar a la población negra de su curato en un pueblo al que le daría el nombre de La Magdalena. Estas comunidades se caracterizaron por su indisciplina y por carecer de un lugar fijo para vivir. Estas iniciativas se desarrollaron en la localidad de Huazolotitlán; poblado ubicado en la Subdelegación de Xicayán; región que en la actualidad conocemos como Costa

¹ Huazolotitlán means: "Place of turkeys"; Etymology: *Huexolotl*, "turkey"; *Tlan*, "place of", in BRADOMIN, José María, *Toponimia de Oaxaca. Crítica etimológica*, México, Talleres Linotipográficos de la Imprenta Camarena, 1955, p. 57.

Chica. En este periodo, las iniciativas de González de Serralde fueron apoyadas por el Obispo de Oaxaca José Gregorio Alonso de Ortigosa. Entre las preocupaciones que motivaron al cura de Huazolotitlán a impulsar un asentamiento para estas poblaciones sobresale el promover entre estos hombres y mujeres la fe católica y el cumplimiento con la confesión y comunión anual.

Keywords: Xicayán, Costa Chica, Priest of Huazolotitlán, La Magdalena's town, Bishop of Oaxaca.

Palabras clave: Xicayán, Costa Chica, Cura de Huazolotitlán, pueblo de La Magdalena, Obispo de Oaxaca.

I. Introduction

The richness of historical sources in the Costa Chica have allowed to focus my studies on the actions of the Church from 1750 to 1821 in said region.² This article arises from the research that took place in both national and international archives, and it's an effort to clarify the importance of clergy's presence and actions in the area. Thanks to the information collected, we can piece together the projects and concerns of a parrish priest like Francisco González de Serralde.

According to the documentation, this clergyman arrived to Huazolotitlán when he was about 27 years old, from his native Antezana,³ an area that was part of what today is the País Vasco, in Spain. He had solid academic training in different seminaries from his hometown, as well as from the City of Antequera. During those years, González de Serralde studied philosophy in Vitoria's *Convento de Santo Domingo*.⁴ He also spent four years studying Teology, and in Oaxaca, he learned to speak mixteco.⁵ He held several positions during his tenure in the Oaxaca's diocese. In 1786, bishop José Gregorio Alonso de Ortigosa appointed him Huazolotitlán's lieutenant parochial vicar.⁶ By november 28th of 1786, bishop Ortigosa promoted him to acting priest of

² UGALDE QUINTANA, Israel, "La insurgencia de Morelos en la Costa Chica de Oaxaca, 1810- 1821", in SERNA MORENO, Jesús e UGALDE QUINTANA, Israel, (coords.), *Afrodescendientes en México y Nuestra América. Reconocimiento Jurídico, racismo, historia y cultura*. Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina y el Caribe, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 2018, 207 p. Also, Israel Ugalde Quintana, "Economía, Sociedad y Religión en la Costa Chica en el Siglo XVIII", tesis de doctorado en Historia, México, UNAM, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, México, 2018.

³ Archivo General de Indias, Indiferente General, legajo 248. From now on AGI.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ This position was held at the request of the bachelor priest Don José López Argamasilla.

Huazolotitlán. By 1811, he was designated Oaxaca's Cathedral canon.⁷ As priest of Huazolotitlán, González de Serralde fostered the creation of several brotherhoods, like the Cofradía del Santísimo Sacramento; he promoted clergy houses, the building of the county seat's town square, and worked *diligently on the remodeling and restoration of the Pinotepa del Rey's parish*.⁸ He was Huazolotitlán's cleric for more than 25 years.⁹

In this article we will address the concerns that Francisco González de Serralde, priest of Huazolotitlán, had about his parish's black population, who were characterized as lacking in discipline and not having fixed living quarters, situations that, in turn, hindered their incorporation into *repartimientos* services, spiritual guidance and tax collection.¹⁰ We aim to illustrate González de Serralde efforts in organizing the black population into a fixed settlement, where the parishioners could be congregated with their families so the church could have better control over confession and annual communion.¹¹

Due to methodological considerations, the research was focused on Huazolotitlán, itself a town located in the *Subdelegación de Xicayán*. Our inquiries in the *Archivo General de la Nación* provided us with valuable documentation in this regard. We also relied on specialized bibliography about the Church activities in Oaxaca's diocese and New Spain, about the creation of *pueblos de indios* and an article about *pardos* and *mulatos* in Veracruz coast.¹²

The documents found in the *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal* of the *Archivo General de la Nación*, in Mexico City, have been crucial in our study. These registries are signed mostly by Francisco González de Serralde, Huazolotitlán's priest; Amaro González de Mesa, who was Xamiltepec's

⁷ AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 2583.

⁸ AGI, Indiferente General, legajo 222.

⁹ AGI, Indiferente General, Legajo 248.

¹⁰ GARCÍA RUIZ, Luis Juventino, "Los pueblos de pardos y morenos de la costa veracruzana: disciplina, congregación y fortalecimiento, 1764-1810", in CASTAÑEDA GARCÍA, Rafael y RUIZ, Juan Carlos, *Africanos y afrodescendientes en la América Hispánica Septentrional. Espacios de convivencia, sociabilidad y conflicto*. Tome II, pp. 627-649.

¹¹ Archivo General de la Nación, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 21. From now on AGN.

¹² TAYLOR, William B., *Ministros de lo sagrado, sacerdotes y feligreses en el México del siglo XVIII*, 2 vols., trans. Oscar Mazín y Paul Kersey, México, Secretaría de Gobernación, El Colegio de México, El Colegio de Michoacán, 856 p., CANTERA, Francisco y TOVAR, Martín de, *La iglesia de Oaxaca en el siglo XVIII*, Sevilla, Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científica, Caja Provincial de Ahorros de Huelva, 1982, 273 p., RUBIAL GARCÍA, Antonio, (coord.), *La Iglesia en el México colonial*, México, UNAM, IHH, BUAP, Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades Alfonso Vélaz Pliego/Ediciones de Educación y Cultura, 2013, 606 p., NAVARRO Y NORIEGA, Fernando, *Catálogo de los curatos y misiones que tiene la Nueva España en cada una de sus diócesis seguido de la memoria sobre la población del Reino de la Nueva España, Primer tercio, siglo XIX*, México, Publicaciones del Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Histórico-Jurídicas, Casa de Arizpe, 1813, 1994, 69 p; TANCK DE ESTRADA, *Pueblos de indios y educación en el México colonial, 1750-1821*, México, El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1999, 665.

subdelegate;¹³ Oaxaca's bishop, José Gregorio Alonso de Ortigosa; and on occasion by Antonio Bonilla, *Señor Fiscal de lo Civil*, and New Spain's Viceroy Revillagigedo. The efforts to promote González de Serralde's project took place between november of 1787 and august of 1790, that is, during the late 18th century.¹⁴ Lastly, the *Archivo General de Indias*, in Sevilla, Spain, provided valuable biographical facts about González de Serralde and Alonso de Ortigosa.

Some of the questions we'll try to answer are: What were the minister's reasons for trying to organize and provide a space for this community's Afro-descendant population? What were the benefits, for he blacks and the *mulatos*, of living in a permanent settlement? And lastly, was this type of arrangements exclusive, during colonial times, of *indios* and *españoles*?

II. Huazolotitlán. The space and its people.

Xicayán was, by the second half of the 18th century, one of 22 subdelegations that conformed the Oaxaca Intendency. In turn, this subdelegation managed thirty-eight towns, *estancias* and *rancherías*.¹⁵ The Revillagigedo census counted a total of 28,749 people in Xicayán, of which 14,447 were men and 14,278 were women. The parish of Huazolotitlán was part of this territory. In *Las relaciones geográficas de Oaxaca, 1777-1778*, its author, Manuel Esparza, using Bucareli's 1777 census¹⁶ estimated that, by then, Huazolotitlán was made up of two neighborhoods: the county seat and that of San Felipe Apóstol, both of them administered by one priest and two vicars.

The congregation consisted of four spanish families, five hundred *mulatos* of all ages and seven hundred *indios* that spoke mixtec language. In addition, there were four towns that were dependant of the county seat: San Andrés Huaspaltepeque, Santa Catarina Mechoacán, Santa Elena Comaltepec and Santiago Tetepeque.¹⁷ There were also eight sites around Huazolotitlán; the Frijolar, Dooyo Ysu,¹⁸ Chicometepeque, Boquilla, Llano Grande, Potrero de Tinic Yuhui,

¹³ In nahuatl, Xamiltepec means “Adobe hill”. In mixteco, Jamiltepec is called “Casandoo”, a composite word with two ethymologies, the first one “Casa” means “Home” in spanish, and the second “Ndoo” is mixteco; jtogether they mean “House made of adobe”. In José María Bradomin, *Toponimia de Oaxaca. Crítica etimológica*, México, Talleres Linotipográficos de la Imprenta Camarena, 1955, p. 57.

¹⁴ AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 21.

¹⁵ Those were: Xamiltepec, Guajolotitlan, Tututepec, Pinotepa, Xacoa, Sinuyu, Nutio, San Cristóbal, Santa María, San Juan Santiago, Xicayán, San José, Cacahuatpec, Icapaca, Zultepec, Grotes, Coahuatlan, Cortijos, Jocotepec, Santa Cruz, Santa Ana, Xuchatengo, Zacatepec, Tlaltepec, Xalotepec, Tepestlahuaca, Juquila, Olindepec, San Luis, Ixcantepec, Amiltepec.

¹⁶ RABELL ROMERO, Cecilia, *Oaxaca en el siglo XVIII: población, familia y economía*, México, UNAM IIS, 2008, 284 p.

¹⁷ ESPARZA, Manuel Esparza, (ed.) *Relaciones geográficas de Oaxaca, 1777-1778*, México, CIESAS, Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Culturas, 1994, 484 p.

¹⁸ Which means “Deer marsh”.

Potrero del Chino and Chacahua.¹⁹ These locations were used for planting corn, cotton, watermelon orchards, cantaloupe, banana trees, squash, sweet potato and prickly pear. There was domestic animals breeding in Huazolotitlán and its surroundings, such as of chickens, turkeys, ducks, and pigeons. Wild animals were also a common sight in the area, like jaguars, mountain lions, gophers, *sacatecuanes*, boars, coatis, raccoons, foxes, ferrets, deer, rabbits, armadillos, coyotes, minks, squirrels and otters.²⁰ The inhabitants of these communities relied on the rivers around Chicometepeque and Río Verde for growing their crops.²¹

As this data shows, Huazolotitlán was a region inhabited mostly by mixtec people.

The documents send us, repeatedly, into communities located in the so called “Los bajos”. What does it mean when this place is mentioned? If one visits Huazolotitlán, it's easy to realize it is a place situated among hills and mountains. However, when one descends into “Los bajos”, that is, into the coastal plains, one will find small settlements of *negros*, *pardos* and *mulatos*. These populations were observed and described by some members of the elite classes; thanks to such descriptions we now know about the daily lives of those men and women of african origin.

The historical livestock activities of the african people from the *Costa Chica* is well documented by the colonial sources. In addition, the farming activities of these villages were significant when it came to cotton production, corn planting, fruit crops, etc.²² In some occasions, people from these communities joined the militia. This institution allowed for a certain level of social mobility, due to the privileges it bestowed upon its members, like military *fuero* and tax exemptions.²³ During their free time, the residents rested inside the shacks they themselves had built. “They have no other ambitions for the moments of rest than some branches supported by four sticks to which they give the name of *Majareque*”.²⁴ It seems like this type of building survived amongst the people and villages of the *Costa Chica* until the first decades of the 20th century. Nowadays, said dwellings have died out. Their origins can be traced to the Bantu culture.²⁵ “Certainly, this building system consists of a bower of sticks and branches

¹⁹ ESPARZA, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, pp.138-139.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² AGN, *Ramo Tributos*, vol., 34 exp. 7, fs 163-173v, año de 1793.

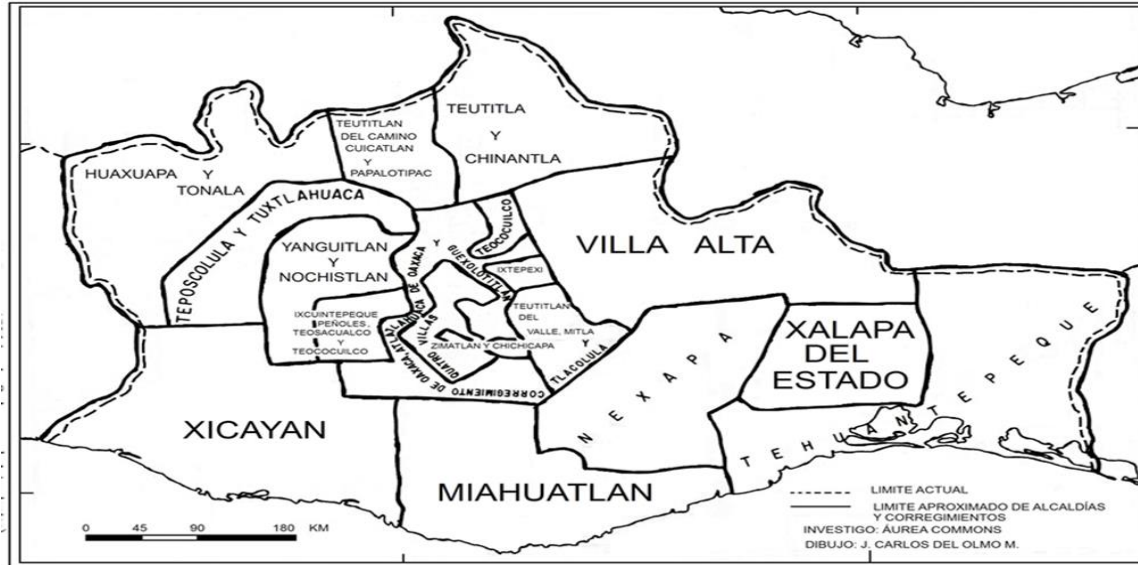
²³ UGALDE QUINTANA, *Economía, Sociedad...*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ AGN, *Ramo Tributos*, vol. 34, exp. 7, fs 163-173v, año de 1793. It's important to note that, nowadays, that word is written as *Bajareque* instead of *Majareque*, the latter being the word used in the colonial records.

²⁵ NGOU-MVE, Nicolás, *El África Bantú en la colonización de México, 1595-1640*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1994, 195 p.

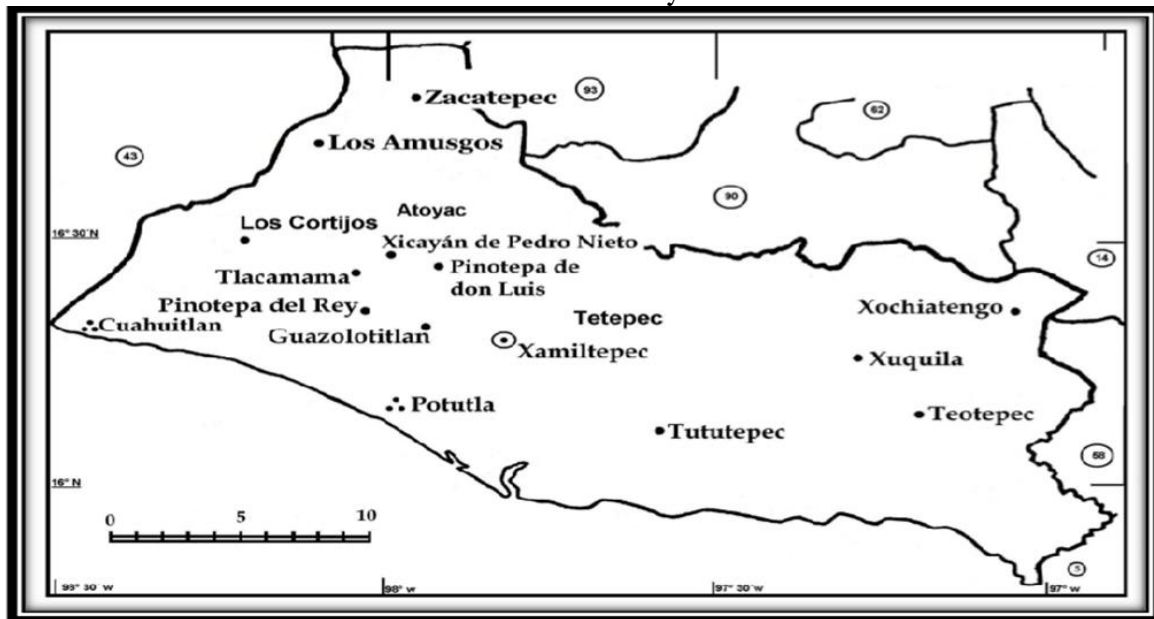
covered in mud that, once dried, it becomes a rather sturdy type of mortar that can be painted or whitewashed with lime.²⁶

Map 4. *Antequeria de Oaxaca* Intendency, 1786 (according to the *Ordenanza de Intendentes*).



Source: COMMONS, Áurea, *El estado de Oaxaca. Sus cambios territoriales*, México, UNAM, Instituto de Geografía, 2000.

Alcaldía of Xicayán



Source: GERHARD, Peter, *Geografía histórica de la Nueva España, 1519-1821*, trans. Stella Mastrangelo, maps Reginald Piggott, México, UNAM, IIG, Instituto de Geografía, 1986.

²⁶ Ignacio Bernal, *Tenochtitlan en una isla*. México, FCE, SEP, 1984, p. 30.

III. “La Magdalena” town. A place for *negros*, *pardos* and *mulatos*

It was 1787 when Francisco González de Serralde, Huazolotitán's priest, came up with the idea of organizing and bring together *negros*, *pardos* and *mulatos*, their families and every african descendant person to a site that would be called “La Magdalena”. Probably inspired by the images of Saint Mary Magdalene. It was november of said year when the cleric submitted his proposal to the higher echelons of the spanish authorities to relocate those parishioners within one new settlement. The response from Oaxaca's bishop, José Gregorio Alonso de Ortigosa,²⁷ was clear. On a monday, November 12th, the prelate communicated how beneficial the project would result if it could be implemented.²⁸

Bishop Ortigosa had a thorough knowledge about the towns and communities within the *Alcaldía de Xiyacán*, by reason of the pastoral visitation he had carried out in the region between november of 1780 and january of 1781. The registries about this visitation inform that he traveled through several communities, like San Pedro Amuzgos, San Miguel Xochistlahuaca, San Juan Igualapa, Santiago Ometepec, Los Cortijos, Pinotepa del Rey, San Pedro Atoyac, Pinotepa de Don Luis, Santiago Xamiltepec, Zacatepec, San Pedro Tututepec, Juquila and Santa María Huazolotitlán.²⁹ The pastoral visitations that New Spain's bishops carried through were useful for knowing the state of the Church's establishments and its worship within their dioceses. The tours from parish to parish allowed them to gather a good level of detail about each town's activities.³⁰ It is very likely that, during that visitation, Ortigosa was able to observe the conditions, lifesstyle and apathy in which this populace lived.

²⁷ Ortigosa was in charge of Oaxaca's diocese between 1775 and 1791; he organized five pastoral visitations that took place from 1777 to 1784. The first one was carried through in 1777; the second one, in 1779; the third, in 1781; the fourth, in 1782; the fifth, in 1784. During his journeys, Ortigosa administered confirmation to approximately 200 000 people, and traveled through more than 1500 leagues. AGI, Audiencia de México, Legajo 2588. This pastoral visitation has been regarded as one of the more rigorous and complete than any other known in Oaxaca. This bishop visited most of the territory on horseback, accompanied by two or three servants with a mule. He walked across deep mountain ranges and climbed rough, sloping peaks. ZABALLA BEASCOECHEA, Ana de y LANCHAS SANCHEZ, Ianire, *Gobierno y reforma del Obispado de Oaxaca, un libro de cordilleras del obispo Ortigosa. Ayoquezcó, 1776-1792*, Teresa Alzugaray los Arcos (transcription), España, Universidad del País Vasco, Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 2014, p. 32.

²⁸ AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

²⁹ AGI, *Audiencia de México*, Legajo 2587.

³⁰ Ana Carolina Ibarra González, “Religión y política. Manuel Sabino Crespo, un cura párroco del sur de México”, in *El clero de la Nueva España durante el proceso de independencia, 1808-1821*, México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2010, núm. 53, pp. 75-99.

We have found that it was precisely in 1787 when bishop José Gregorio Alonso de Ortigosa instructed Huazolotitlán's priest, Franciso González de Serralde, try to put a stop to what he considered the vices, bad customs and licentious life led by the *mulatos* in the district.³¹

Since the second half of the 16th century, the government had promoted settlements made out of indigenous communities in many regions of the New Spain, with the aim of creating the so-called *pueblos de indios*. For the Crown, this strategy had three main objectives: tax collection, christianization of the native population and its integration into the Realm's workforce. The spanish policy during the colonial centuries reflects a dual conception of New Spain's social world. The authority ruled over the *República de españoles*, on the one hand, and over the *República de indios* on the other.

During the *Ancien régime*, the concept of Republic was applied to any political space, city, principality or realm that had the characteristics of a political body. Thus, the term was applicable to both a pueblo de indios and to a spanish village, and was even used for the Spanish Crown, which was also identified as a Republic, despite its territorial extension and complexity.³²

Trying to orginize the new territory, both socially and politicaly, proved to be a complex task. Hence the politica and administrative authorities had to rely on the clergy. At a regional level, there were three basic goverment structures: the *alcaldía mayor*, the *república de indios* and the parish.³³ The first one was a spanish institution that was installed in each of the coastal territorial units; the second one was an indigenous instance set in the main towns; and the third was entrusted with administering the catholic faith.³⁴ Huazolotitlán was the seat of one of twleve parishes established within the Xicayán subdelegation during the second half of the 18th century.³⁵ By then, the growth of parishes was expected to lead to manageable regions, both fiscally and spiritually.³⁶

³¹ AGN, *Ramo Policía*, vol. 8, exp. 91.

³² LEMPÉRIERE, Annick, *Entre Dios y el Rey: la República. La Ciudad de México de los siglos XVI al XIX*, translated by Ivette Hernández Pérez Vertti, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 2013, pp. 30-31.

³³ RODRÍGUEZ CANTO, Adolfo, *Historia agrícola y agraria de la costa oaxaqueña*, México, Dirección de Centros Regionales/Dirección General de Difusión Cultural/Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo, Departamento de Sociología Rural, 1996, pp. 63-64.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ UGALDE QUINTANA, *Economía, Sociedad...*, *op. cit.*

³⁶ GARCÍA AYLUARDO, Clara, "Re-formar la iglesia novohispana", in Clara García Ayluardo (coord.), *Las reformas borbónicas, 1750-1808*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010, p. 258.

If colonial society was organized into *Republica de indios* and *Republica de españoles*, how did the black populations integrated into this process, particularly the congregation of *pardos* and *mulatos* that lived in Xicayán's subdelegation during that time? To shed light on this issue, we have to remember that the african populace from this district lived in a dispersed way. For most of these men and women the cattle, cacao and cotton *haciendas* were the spaces where they worked and socialized, and where they traded and sold the commodities they consumed within their communities and households.

In his report, Francisco González de Serralde emphasized the fact that his parish hosted one of the towns with the largest number of *mulato* inhabitants in the whole Xicayán's jurisdiction. The cleric estimated an approximate of 268 married *mulatos*, 34 male widows and 96 female widows; of these, 102 had not performed the annual confession nor communion.³⁷ Between 1792 and 1793, the spanish soldier Benito Pérez, commissioned by the viceroy Revillagigedo to carry out a visitation, made similar remarks to those from Huazolotitlán's priest.³⁸ Both of them pointed out that the parish had the largest black population in the district.³⁹

One key fact that's worth mentioning is that, at the time, the blacks and *mulatos* showed a deep devotion towards the Virgin of Guadalupe. They even had a ranch in the vicinity of “La Magdalena” which was named *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. This property had three hundred heads of cattle and fifty *yegüerizos*.⁴⁰ The religious fervor of these populations didn't stop there; we know for a fact that the congregation formed a brotherhood that recieved the same name: the *Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*.⁴¹

The project of Huazolotitlán's cleric included, in addition to the creation of a town, the construction of a parish within, the administering of confession and annual communion to the parishioners, having better spiritual administration overall and a more effective control over their tax contributions. In terms of usefulness, said the priest, the site would have enough rivers for

³⁷ AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

³⁸ AGN, *Ramo Tributos*, vol. 34 y AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

³⁹ AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ AGI, *Audiencia de México*, Legajo 2588.

the workers to grow cotton, *milpas* and *nopaleras*.⁴² In the last decades of the 18th century, the Crown's interest in having a greater influence over the *mulato* population was evident.

The priest's initial idea was supported by bishop Ortigosa when he stated that the existence of a parish in “La Magdalena” would bring spiritual benefits to this parish, it would provide the congregation with peace, order and they would have a civil and political government while living in society.⁴³ Clara García Ayluardo has pointed out that the intention behind the reorganization of the parishes was for the faithful to remain in their own parish for all liturgical acts and ceremonies. With this purpose in mind, a two-level policy was followed: the creation of new parishes in areas with small populations and the division of the territory into more parishes. The multiplication of parishes should result in territories that were more manageable both fiscally and spiritually.⁴⁴

However, we think that the intention of grouping subaltern populations into towns had to do with a larger project of assimilation into the spanish customs and ways of life. For Luis J. García, the creation of towns was one of the most important tasks of the Spanish monarchy during the 18th century. There were several opinions from small groups of intellectuals that revolved around the transformation of the subjects so that they would be more profitable for “God and the King”; so they could become equals with the spaniards through the practice of agriculture, industry, commerce, the founding of schools and the learning of the spanish language.⁴⁵ With this in mind, the colonial government launched a series of measures such as the founding of new towns and the expansion of communal territories.⁴⁶

The spaniards who lived in America were convinced that living in a city or town meant living together with other people in a civil way, therefore, those who decided to live in the mountains did so outside the limits, without law or king, and sometimes they were even compared to “animals in the wild” or “monkeys”.⁴⁷

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

⁴⁴ GARCÍA AYLUARDO, Clara, “Re-formar la iglesia novohispana”, in Clara García Ayluardo (coord.), *Las reformas borbónicas, 1750-1808*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010, p. 258.

⁴⁵ GARCÍA RUIZ, *op. cit.*, pp. 627-649.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, we think it's relevant to focus on another of the concerns expressed by González de Serralde: the tax contributions to which the black populations of the Xicayán subdelegation were subjected to. On this topic, we should consider two relevant aspects of the new politics that were being implemented in New Spain and, consequently, in the region. Firstly, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the black population that joined the militias did so to protect themselves within the institution and thus be able to use the military *fuero* to avoid tax contributions as well as a safeguard to crime allegations against them. The subdelegate of Xicayán estimated that this situation had led to an increase of ranks within the vicinity's corporatio over the last thirty years.⁴⁸ The local authorities regarded this institution as a haven for criminals and people from other towns. For these reasons, they wanted to dismantle said corporation due to its poor condition:

The *justicia mayor* of Xicayán has informed on the need and usefulness for the founding of a town, as proposed by the priest of Huazolotitlán, in the area of *La Magdalena*, the only drawback being the three companies of *pardos*, which he says should be abolished due to their perverse customs, it being used for the protection of criminals, and not respecting justice, expressing that they never give any justification to it, and they never pay the taxes they owe, using the military *fuero* as their excuse.⁴⁹

Secondly, we have to remember that, during that time, the Metropoli was in a state of economical weakness. The War of Seven Years occurred between 1756 and 1763, and the constant warring with France, Netherlands and specially with England, prompted Spain to seek financing in its american colonies. When the *visitador* José de Gálvez arrived in New Spain in 1765, one of the King's instructions was to organize the finances of all cities and villages, both of spaniards and *indios*. Charles III commanded for this reform to be modeled after the Royal Instruction of June 30, 1760, that had been issued for all “cities, villages and places” of Spain.⁵⁰

In addition, one of the objectives of the Bourbon reforms was to improve tax collection to help the Crown sustain its assets in Europe. In this context, by 1786, seeking to generate more income for the Crown, King Charles III established that *indios* should pay a tribute of 16 *reales*, while *castas* should pay 24 *reales*.⁵¹ One of the tax collector's obligations would be to make a

⁴⁸ AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ TANCK DE ESTRADA, Dorothy, *Pueblos de indios y educación en el México colonial, 1750-1821*, México, El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1999, p. 17.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 156.

register of *mulatos* that were eighteen years of age or older, who they lived with and how the family income was obtained.⁵² In the case of the Xiyacán's *alcaldía*, the soldier Benito Pérez, whom we have talked about before, was the compiler of said information.⁵³ We can divide these registries into two categories: one for spanish, *mestizo* and *castizo* families, and one for *pardos*, *mulatos* and *morenos* that were subject to tribute.⁵⁴ It would be useful to ask ourselves if the black communities of Huazolotitlán were willing to contribute these amounts. If we base the answer on the information provided by the colonial documents, we can make the assertion that these populations did not intend to make such contributions.

Going back to “La Magdalena” plan; it should be mentioned that the political and ecclesiastical authorities deemed necessary to ask for their opinion to some of the people that belonged to the communities that would be benefited by the project. A survey with eight questions was carried out to find out if they agreed with the proposal. A group of people who were members of the militias were summoned. Some of them held military ranks within the institution. Some of the names that appear are Jacinto Riva, Vicente Gallardo, José de Luna, Martín de Luna, Policarpio de los Santos,⁵⁵ Manuel Santiago y Gerónimo de Luna; all of them farmers by trade, and inhabitants of the vicinity.

On the other hand, some of the names that appear are those of Manuel Acuña, José Mateo Bustamante, José Lorenzana y Salvador Dols. This is interesting because all of them, except for José Mateo, who was classified as *mestizo*, were traders from Spain. In fact, Salvador Dols belonged to a trading elite that had vested interests in developing commercial networks with the cochineal grain that was produced in the Costa Chica during the second half of the 18th century.⁵⁶ The colonial records show us that Dols acted in the region as lieutenant administrator and was the one who sent large quantities of grain to the port of Veracruz for its export to Europe.⁵⁷ These facts allow for the assertion that the project of “La Magdalena” was not a mere

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵³ AGN, *Ramo Tributos*, vol. 34, exp. 7.

⁵⁴ AGN, *Ramo Indiferente de Guerra*, vol. 422^a.

⁵⁵ AGN, *Ramo General de Parte*, vol 54. Also: UGALDE QUINTANA, Israel, “Participación e integración de los pardos y mulatos a los batallones de defensa de Nueva España. Análisis del caso de Xicayán, Oaxaca, 1780-1800”, tesis de licenciatura en Historia, México, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and VINSON III, Ben, *Bearing arms for his majesty. The free-Colored Militia in Colonial México*, California, Stanford University Press, 2001, 304 p.

⁵⁶ UGALDE QUINTANA, *Economía, Sociedad...*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ AGI, *Audiencia de México*, Legajo 1400, Duplicados del Virrey, 1782 and AGI, *Audiencia de México*, Legajo 2374, *Expedientes de la Real Hacienda*, 1807-1810, Cuaderno Tercero.

extravagant idea of Huazolotitlán's priest, but it had the support of high officials both in the region and in the viceroyalty.

In the two tables shown below we have the questions asked and the answers the community members gave to the authorities; and the names, rank, profession and ethnicity of some of them. The data shown below is significant in terms of the information provided. As we will see, a significant number of the surveyed people did not show sympathy for the creation of “La Magdalena” town. What were the reasons for such apathy and refusal to the establishment of an organized town where they could live with rules and laws as a community? Perhaps to them it was easier, more comfortable and pleasant to remain outside of everything that was established by law and order.

Table I:

Survey carried out among some people of Huazolotitlán to find out if they agreed with “La Magdalena” project.

Question	Negative answer from the mulato population.	Positive answer from the mestizo and spanish population.
1.- Is the site called La Magdalena de los bajos de Huazolotitlán good and of good proportions for the establishing of a town?	The site called La Magdalena is not good, because there is no water there, and people could die as a result.	The site called La Magdalena is a good place for a new town, however, water is scarce there.
2.- Is it useful and necessary and are there proportions for establishing the town?	It is not useful nor necessary, and there's proportions for it.	A new town in that location would be useful because it would allow the administration of holy sacraments to the high number of people with no fixed home, who live in different places depending on rain or dry season; although it would be more convenient to force them to live in Huazolotitlán where many have houses and some don't.
3.- What are the conditions of the site and is there another, more fitting, location?	The conditions of La Magdalena are bad, and there are no other locations for the establishment of a new town.	The location is plain and of good climate, however the water is scarce, and there would be more adequate sites, like the one called Tamarindo.

4.- Are there families that would settle willingly in the new town?	None of the people living in Huazolotitlán want the establishment of a new town.	They have heard that the <i>mulatos</i> would not go willingly, and have shown contempt to the idea.
5.- What are the downsides and inconveniences for older people?	The downsides a new town in La Magdalena are that the people that already have a house in Huazolotitlán would lose them, and that many families would die because of the high number of wild beasts in said site.	The project has no downsides or inconveniences.
6.- Is there anything that could make the new town appealing despite all the downsides?	There is no way to overcome the downsides of a new town.	They don't know what could be done to overcome the difficulties of establishing a new town.
7.- What are the best ways for the people who has no home in Huazalotitlán to settle in the new town?	It would be very easy to urge everyone living in Chicometepc to build houses in Huazolotitlán so people go live there, besides, most of them already have houses in said town.	To have the justice authorities to send everyone with no house in Huazolotitlán to the new town to build and inhabit a house there.
8.- How to prevent strangers, lazy people, homeless and vagrants, with no home or neighborhood to live with the rest?	Let those who don't want to live under the authority of captains nor under the rule of Justice be banished from the area. Those who do should be allowed to do it in Huazolotitlán. They also said that they only spoke the truth, under oath, and declared to be sixty seven years of age, and didn't signed the survey since they did not know how to write, a witness having signed instead.	Have the justice authorities to send captains to fetch people to build houses so they can live there with their families. Those who disobey the laws should be banished from the district, since there's many people from other regions that have come to live in the Chicometepc's plains, and they live in the wilderness, like idiots with no other shelter than a bunch of sticks and hay over four forked props. They say they spoke the truth, under oath, and to be fifty years of age, having signed so along their witnesses.

Source: AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

Table II:
People who participated in the survey.

Name:	Ethnicity:	Profession:	Rank within the militia:
Jacinto Riva	Mulato	Trader	Lieutenant in a urban company of <i>pardos</i> .
Vicente Gallardo	Mulato	Trader	Lieutenant of the urban militia's first company of <i>pardos</i> .
José de Luna	Mulato	Trader	<i>Alférez</i> in one of Huazolotitlán's companies of <i>pardos</i> .
Martín de Luna	Mulato	Trader	Corporal in one Huazolotitlán's <i>pardos</i> militia companies.
Policarpio de los Santos.	Mulato	Farmer	Officer ⁵⁸
Manuel Acuña	Spaniard (from the Realm of Castilla).	Trader	No rank
José Mateo Bustamante	Mestizo. (from Tamazulapa).	Trader	No rank
Gerónimo de Luna	Mulato.	Farmer	No rank
José Lorenzana		Trader and Farmer	No rank
Benito Esquerria	Mestizo	Trader	No rank
Domingo Gómez	Spaniard rancher	Trader	No rank
Salvador Dols	Spaniard	Trader. And lieutenant administrator	No rank

Source: AGN, *Ramo Indiferente Virreinal*, Caja 0075, exp. 021.

IV. Conclusions

The idea of Huazolotitlán's priest, Francisco González de Serralde, of creating a town within his parish to establish a spiritual and social order among the black communities of this region is an unprecedented event in the strict sense of the word, since it was an initiative that arose from a religious person -instead of a regional or viceregal political-administrative authority- and it was supported by the highest authority of the catholic Church in Oaxaca. It's also clear that, for the black population of Huazolotitlán, the best option at that time was to live outside the reach of the established order.

⁵⁸ AGN, *Ramo General de Parte*, Volumen 54. Also UGALDE QUINTANA, *Participación e integración...*, *op. cit.*, and: Ben Vinson III, *Bearing arms for his majesty...*, *op. cit.*

The presence of ministers of the sacred and the Catholic Church in the region set the guidelines for the spiritual life that prevailed among the black populations of the Costa Chica throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries. The congregation and the Xicayán subdelegation, as a whole, were very appealing to the institution. We can say that initiatives such as the creation of a town like “La Magdalena” was just one of many ideas that the Church and its parish priests promoted in the region.

We'd like to finish this work by pointing out that currently there is no town known as “La Magdalena” in “Los Bajos” of Huazolotitlán. However, if it ever came to be, it would have to be located in the vicinity of what today are towns like José María Morelos, Paso del Jote, Cerro Blanco, la Boquilla or Collantes. These small towns are mostly inhabited by the descendants of those men and women brought from Africa. Today, these small towns are *agencias municipales* that depend, administratively, of Huazolotitlán.

V. Primary sources

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