

7. Convents and Conflict: Jurisdiction and Urban Space

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The process of conversion (or reversion) to the patrimonial model of convent foundation and the concurrent homogenization of Mexico's existing women's institutions show the extent to which convents were a source and focus of conflict in the early colonial period. As we have seen, colonial society brought great and near-unanimous enthusiasm to the foundation of women's institutions of various kinds. Indeed, the preceding chapters have argued that convents and similar establishments for women were essential to the Hispanizing city. Yet that city itself was heterogeneous, and its ideal parameters were contested by settlers, royal representatives, secular churchmen, and friars. In such a context, convent foundations were rarely free from controversy. Questions over jurisdiction caused discord both between regular and secular churchmen and within each group. Later on, disagreements about convents' role in urban space became another focus for hostility between the episcopacy and the Franciscan order.

Both dramatic clashes were played out in Mexico's first two convents for professed nuns. Confusion and dissension over the jurisdiction of La Concepción lasted some twenty years. In the case of Santa Clara, disputes among its governing churchmen would be particularly bitter, and would come close to destroying the convent. When the institution received its bull of foundation in 1570, there were no signs of discord. The foundresses and those who would be novices were installed in their house to await profession, and all seemed well. Yet by 1575, Juan de Aldaz, acting for the Archbishop of Mexico, was lamenting the state of Santa Clara, comparing it unfavorably with the newly founded nunnery of Regina Coeli (1573). "The whole city is wondering," he wrote of the foundresses of Santa Clara, "at how five sisters and their mother have been powerful enough to disrupt an entire city." ¹ 

Indeed, the contrast between the two foundations was striking. While the foundation of Regina had proceeded smoothly and without scandal, Santa Clara was by 1575 the center of controversy and conflict that enveloped the city. Its foundresses were the focus of both denigration and near-hagiography, its finances were in total disarray, and, most importantly, it was the object of an intense jurisdictional competition between the archdiocese and the Franciscan order. The conflict over Santa Clara culminated, in 1575, in a bizarre cloak-and-dagger escapade. Under cover of night, Franciscan friars spirited more than half of the nuns of Santa Clara away from the downtown convent, and installed them in a remote church in one of the city's Indian barrios. The requisite dagger was produced by an unnamed nun, who stabbed one of the archbishop's men in an attempt to resist removal from this church; the cloaks were provided by the Franciscan friars, who led their female charges, covered with the friars' own mantles, in procession through the streets of Mexico. The city, predictably, was scandalized.

There are various ways to understand this episode. The struggle over Santa Clara, divorced from the context of Mexico City's urban development, can be seen as nothing more than a bizarre postscript to the well-known struggles that dominated relations between the episcopate and the regular orders in the 1560s and 1570s. ² But there is more to the story than *costumbrismo*. However theatrical the episode, it was part of an escalating conflict over jurisdiction, which will be examined here. The future of the newly founded convents for women was at stake. The outcome of the jurisdictional controversies of the 1560s and 1570s would determine who would govern Mexico's convents for women throughout the colonial period.

But this conflict was also about urban space. The foundation of Santa Clara and its various locations highlight the extent to which Mexico City in 1575 was still a city divided: by ethnicity and status, and also by the clash between the growing power of the archdiocese and the resistance of a regular clergy still aware of and insistent upon its power among the native population. In this context, conflict arose not merely about how the convent would be governed, but about where it would be. Would the convent sanctify the inner Spanish core, or would it anchor the Franciscan claim to the "Indian city" of San Juan Tenochtitlan? Thus the conflict also highlights the extent to which foundations of convents for women served to claim space. Just as La Concepción functioned to claim, sacralize, and purify the Spanish city, Santa Clara would function as an ultimately unsuccessful Franciscan claim on the Indian barrios around the traza. The neighborhoods, streets, and buildings of Mexico City, then, are not merely the backdrop for this conflict, but protagonists in an instructive urban drama.

Jurisdiction over Women's Convents

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Conflicts over jurisdiction were not exclusive to the New World. In Europe, such conflicts arose everywhere in the late sixteenth century as Tridentine bishops flexed their new muscles and began to extend their power at the expense of the regular orders. In Spain, jurisdiction over women's houses was also in a state of flux. Most women's monastic institutions had been placed under the governance of bishops because of their marginalization by the men of their orders in the Middle Ages. ³ In the reformative fervor of the late fifteenth century, attempts were made to change this situation. The papacy began to favor the union of men's and women's orders "as a counter to episcopal autonomy." ⁴ In the fifteenth century, the Benedictine order attempted to re-annex its female wing; the nuns, however, resisted. ⁵ Such resistance to change was widespread, and in general, jurisdiction—the right to make changes in monastic life and maintain its discipline—remained the province of the ordinary. At the same time, nuns could expect the spiritual guidance of male confessors and teachers from their own orders, while bishops oversaw other aspects of convent administration. During the reign of the Catholic monarchs in Spain, this began to change. Visitadores were appointed to reform regular religious life, and recommended that at least

some women's orders be submitted to their male counterparts. 6

The sixteenth century intensified attempts to reform the governance of women's houses. Philip II was particularly interested in such reform. 7 The Council of Trent, however, had the most decisive impact on the administration of women's institutions. The council's final session, in 1563, determined that all women's houses currently not subject either to episcopal authority or the general chapter of their order be subordinated to male direction. 8 The foundation of women's institutions in Mexico thus took place during a period of reform in and controversy over the proper jurisdiction of such houses. Because of the great power gained by the orders through the missionary effort, however, battles between bishops and others were, if anything, more intensely fought on American soil.

Jurisdiction over Mexico's women's institutions was a recurrent problem during the sixteenth century, and arose with the arrival of the first beatas. As we have seen, these women refused to accept the governance of either the ordinary, Bishop Zumárraga, or the Franciscan order, to which they belonged as third-order beatas. The secular teachers imported by Zumárraga in 1535 were even less willing to accept his supervision, pointing out that as laywomen, they owed obedience to no one. 9 The matter was never satisfactorily resolved.

Also difficult to resolve was the administration of La Concepción. The foundation of La Concepción as a convent of professed nuns meant that its inhabitants would have to accept some male supervision, obedience being an important vow of women religious. But jurisdiction over the house remained problematic for some time.

Indeed, confusion concerning the proper dependence of the entire Conceptionist order was endemic in its first century. At its foundation, the order was submitted to diocesan supervision and the Cistercian Rule. In 1493, however, discord arose when some Conceptionist nuns transferred to the rule of Saint Clare and to concomitant Franciscan jurisdiction, 10 which was confirmed by papal order in 1501. 11 Though a true Conceptionist rule was granted in 1511, providing for episcopal supervision, the link between the Conceptionist and Franciscan orders was not so easily broken. In Mexico, Zumárraga's status as both Franciscan and bishop may have involved tensions at that time. Given Zumárraga's status as patron and official founder of the house, it seems clear that he exercised jurisdiction. But soon after his death in 1548, the governance of La Concepción became a thorny issue.

The confusion engendered by the vacancy of the bishop's seat was one cause of conflict. Zumárraga's successor, Fray Alonso de Montúfar, would later claim that during the long period of *sede vacante* following Zumárraga's death, "*the nuns were commanded to remove their obedience from the sede vacante, which they did.*" [12](#) Apparently, then, the convent transferred its obedience from the ordinary to the Franciscan order sometime between 1548 and 1554.

Between 1555 and 1565, despite the nuns' having given their obedience to the Franciscans, Montúfar seems to have governed La Concepción; at the very least, there is no evidence of open conflict. By 1565, however, the issue of jurisdiction had arisen once again. In that year, the nuns of La Concepción wrote to Philip II describing the confusion. First, they claimed, their order was subject to the Franciscans. But Mexico's Franciscans "never wanted to receive the said convent ... because they had no license."  Therefore the convent had asked for and received permission to transfer to episcopal jurisdiction. But this too had proved unsatisfactory, "because the ordinaries cannot carry out the doctrine the nuns need because of their many duties."  Thus the convent now asked the king to order the Franciscans to receive La Concepción under their jurisdiction. [13](#)

A month later, the audiencia judge (*oidor*) Doctor Villanueva wrote to Philip II, informing him that the Conceptionist nuns "want to give obedience to the order of Saint Francis, whose rule they professed."  The nuns, who believed themselves Franciscans, were understood as such by others. Villanueva linked the nuns' desire for change to their "conservation in the spiritual realm." (*conservacion en lo spiritual*) Thus it seems that while the nuns were not dissatisfied with the day-to-day administration of the convent by the ordinary, they believed that Franciscan friars could better serve their spiritual needs. This was a recurrent theme in their quest for Franciscan governance. According to Villanueva, some of the other *oidores* also approved of the transfer and had discussed the matter with the Franciscan friars. The friars said that they would accept the *cura monialis* if ordered by the king, "because it appears very necessary for the quietude and recollection of the said nuns." [14](#) 

Thus supported by at least some of the audiencia's judges, the nuns also found an ally in the cabildo. As discussed in Chapter Five, the cabildo seems to have understood La Concepción as a Franciscan house. When the jurisdiction issue arose, the cabildo took two steps. First, in 1566 it petitioned the king to grant jurisdiction over La Concepción to the Franciscan order. Second, in the same year, as we have seen, the ayuntamiento proposed the creation of a true Franciscan convent for women. The king assented in both requests.

But if the Franciscans had been willing to take La Concepción under their wing in 1565, the situation had altered only a few years later. In 1569, the provincial, Fray Miguel Navarro, and other friars informed the king that they had received his 1568 order to accept "a monastery of nuns of this city, which is called Mother of God, and which they say is of our order." According to Navarro, "this demand" was of long standing. In the face of the Franciscans' reluctance to shoulder the burden of the *cura mulierum*, the nuns had petitioned both the Vatican and the general minister, or head of the Franciscan Order. Navarro described accepting the nuns as highly prejudicial, not because they were anything but good religious, but because the friars needed to be free to pursue the conversion of the Indians:

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... if we would take charge of a monastery of nuns, because they are enclosed and cannot themselves pursue their own affairs, of necessity, or out of pity, the friars would have to take them on as our own, and we would place ourselves in a web from which we would be unable to escape. [15](#)

The nuns, the provincial firmly avowed, should remain under the jurisdiction of the ordinary. The Franciscan change of heart is difficult to explain, but Navarro may be the key. In 1565, when the Franciscans were apparently willing to accept jurisdiction over the nuns, Navarro had been in Spain. He was elected in 1567, coming from Cantabria. [16](#) He had surely not consented to governing Conceptionist nuns. More importantly, by 1569 Navarro was fully occupied with the foundation of Santa Clara, and was preparing to leave for France, where he and Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta were to attend a general chapter meeting. Whatever his reasons, he had no time for the nuns of La Concepción.

Archbishop Montúfar was similarly dismissive of their request. He reported that the convent was split into two factions, one supporting the ordinary and one the Franciscans. Moreover, the bishop claimed, the Franciscans had earlier rejected the idea of jurisdiction, even though the nuns had succeeded in gaining the support of the papal nuncio by representing Franciscan jurisdiction as the goal of all the convent's inhabitants. [17](#) Some months later, Montúfar informed the King that ordinary supervision had always been accepted by the convent, and that only the machinations of the previous abbess were responsible for the quest for rule by friars. "*Because of their respect for and fear of the abbess,*" none of the nuns had dared to assert their preference for ordinary supervision; now, under an abbess who favored the bishop, opinion in the convent had made an about face. [18](#)

Montúfar's version of events was bolstered by the abbess Juana de San

Miguel and the more than ten nuns who signed the letter she sent to the king in 1570. While she admitted that "*many nuns, and most of them*" had sought Franciscan jurisdiction, Juana de San Miguel claimed that they had been misled through the influence of the Devil. She urged the king to keep things as they were. However, in a concession that indicates how divided the convent was, she suggested that La Concepción be given two or three friars to administer the sacraments, "insofar as the friars understand more and better things relating to religion and perfection." ¹⁹ The abbess clearly hoped that nuns' craving for spiritual supervision by friars could be sated this way, leaving temporal jurisdiction in the hands of the bishop.

In response to these missives, in October 1570 Philip II ordered that the convent remain under the jurisdiction of the ordinary, as he now believed that Franciscan jurisdiction was "against the opinion and will of the majority of the nuns." ²⁰ Sometime thereafter, however, the king - apparently confused - reordered Franciscan jurisdiction, or so in 1572 complained the Franciscan commissary general. ²¹ Francisco de Ribera, elected commissary in 1569, was an experienced missionary from the province of Santiago (Nueva Galicia). Perhaps because of his emphasis on evangelization, he had no interest in overseeing the Conceptionist nuns. Ribera wrote that he had received through the recent *flota* the order to accept the nuns, "in spite of the objections we raised previously." (*no obstante las causas que antes aviamos dado*) The friars had obeyed this order, but when they advised the viceroy and nuns of the new ruling, they received absolutely no agreement or response. Ribera now asked that the king "be served to not permit that we be further afflicted with this demand, as it is clearly understood that the nuns, since they do not respond, do not want friars." ²² Ribera was supported by Fray Alonso de Escalona, who also signed the letter, and who had become provincial in 1570 after the departure of Navarro for France. ²³

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Ribera's hunch was correct. Juana de San Miguel, at least, was clearly uninterested in Franciscan jurisdiction. She wrote again to Philip II, urging him to keep the convent under the governance of the ordinary in order to flout the Devil's attempts to sow discord among the nuns. ²⁴ Viceroy Martín Enríquez was no more sanguine about the prospects for Franciscan jurisdiction. He detailed how, several years earlier, the nuns had been divided, with three quarters in favor of the Franciscans. Now, however, Juana de San Miguel and her party, partisans of the bishop, were in the ascendancy. Placing the convent under the Franciscan order would therefore be difficult, and both the viceroy and the audiencia believed it best to leave things as they were. ²⁵

Several months later, Enríquez repeated this message. But this time, he had an intriguing suggestion. The only way out of the impasse was to split the

convent, establishing a new convent under Franciscan jurisdiction. Because of the paucity of women's institutions, this step seemed practical. There was apparently local support for such an option; Enríquez described it as something that was currently being attempted. ²⁶ If nothing else, Enríquez's request for the splitting of the convent shows how battle lines within La Concepción had hardened. Yet given that Regina Coeli was established in 1573, and that its origins are obscure, one is tempted to view its establishment as part of this process. To be sure, aspects of Regina's foundation militate against this conclusion. Most importantly, the new institution was under ordinary governance. The convent was established with ten foundresses from La Concepción and took the new archbishop Moya de Contreras as its founder and director. It was, apparently, never under Franciscan jurisdiction. This can, however, be explained. First, the king's response to Enríquez's suggestion for two convents with differing jurisdiction was a strong ruling in favor of episcopal jurisdiction; he did not approve any split. In May 1573, Philip II ordered definitively that La Concepción be placed under the ordinary, because for the Franciscans the charge "would be inconvenient as they could not fulfill the doctrine and instruction of the natives of the land." ²⁷  The notion of Franciscan jurisdiction for the new convent was thus put aside because the Franciscans were unwilling.

Nonetheless, the new foundation proceeded. The archbishop-elect, Don Pedro Moya de Contreras, took control of the diocese in October 1573, and the official founding of Regina took place around the same time. ²⁸ Moya, unlike his predecessor Montúfar, was a relatively young and unquestionably vigorous cleric. He was also a typical Catholic Reformation-era bishop. As the first secular priest to accede to the seat of archbishop of Mexico, he was determined to advance the cause of the seculars. At the same time, he was a prudent manager of his church. ²⁹ It would have been entirely characteristic of Moya's approach to use the new foundation as a way of defusing tensions in La Concepción, perhaps even choosing the partisans of the Franciscan option as foundresses in order to purify the poisoned atmosphere of the cloister. The presence of Bernaldino de Albornoz as a founder of Regina Coeli, and one of his daughters as a Conceptionist foundress, is also suggestive. The cabildo of which Albornoz was a member was among the partisans of Franciscan jurisdiction. Given the tendency of disputes and allegiances to penetrate convent walls in either direction, Albornoz's daughter and others in her party may have been chosen foundresses in part to defuse what had been a volatile situation. At the very least, Enríquez's letter provides a new context in which to consider the enigmatic foundation of Regina Coeli.

Regina's official founder, the new archbishop, was decidedly intransigent in regard to questions of jurisdiction. Moya took his seat determined to limit the power of the mendicants, who in his view had usurped many of the privileges of the ordinary and whose power over the Indians he considered

excessive. ³⁰ Thus, in the spirit of Trent, the new archbishop attempted to comply with the royal order concerning La Concepción. In 1574, he wrote to the Council that he had tried to "bring them into accord with the Council of Trent, although with gentleness." Moya also supplied his opinion regarding regular jurisdiction of nuns, which he presented as a recipe for disorder:

I have the obligation to say what I feel; when [nuns] are subject to friars, they never lack correspondence with or visits from the provincial, the commissary, the guardian, and from their companions, friends, and acquaintances; and in one year they get to know the entire order.

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Moya thus gave notice that he would brook no interference from meddling friars or from nuns whom he described as "friends of novelty." (*amigas de novedades*) And indeed, he had managed to maintain control over La Concepción and over the new convent of Regina Coeli, which he now compared favorably to "the most relict of Spain." ³¹ (*los mas recoletos de españa*)

Santa Clara, however, was notably absent from Moya's panegyric. Indeed, by 1574 that convent had incurred the archbishop's notable disfavor. The ambitions and characters of Santa Clara's foundresses (discussed further in Chapter Nine) led to problems almost immediately. As a result, by 1573, as Viceroy Martín Enríquez complained, the convent had come to a legal impasse. ³² Questions concerning the legality of the foundresses' professions and ambitions, however, were soon overshadowed by the issue of jurisdiction. Authority over Santa Clara, unlike direction of La Concepción, would generate a conflict in which Moya's stubbornness would be more than matched by the Franciscan friars.

The nature of Santa Clara's creation was sure to generate jurisdictional confusion over administration. The papal bull of 1570 that approved the foundation specified Franciscan administration. But actual governance was far from clear-cut, in part because of the shared enthusiasm brought to the foundation by various sectors of colonial society. The archbishop had supported the project; so too had the provincial of the Franciscan order. The archbishop had given the foundresses their church; the Franciscans had supplied them with friars.

The problem was further complicated because of the absence from New Spain (1570-3) of Fray Miguel Navarro, who as provincial had supported Santa Clara's foundation as a Franciscan nunnery. Navarro's enthusiasm for

the convent was not matched by all members of his order. The cleric Juan de Bergara described how, upon the receipt of the papal bull ordering Franciscan jurisdiction, he had been sent as a notary to notify the Franciscans. The friars let him know that they were far too busy to administer a convent of nuns. This attitude was not uncommon among the Franciscans. As we have seen, Navarro himself had sought to exempt the order from the *cura monialis* in regard to La Concepción. In that case, he argued that the Franciscans were not only unable to accept jurisdiction because of their missionary duties, but had in fact been barred from doing so by the orders given to the first twelve Franciscans by their general minister. ³³ These arguments could also be used by those within the order who opposed jurisdiction over Santa Clara.

The foundresses of that convent, for their part, were in 1571 already complaining that the Franciscans did not want to govern them. They therefore asked the Holy See to place them under the jurisdiction of the ordinary. Miguel de Ecija, the convent's mayordomo in the early 1570s, claimed that the women had never wanted to give obedience to the Franciscans and had actually been pleased to hear of the Franciscans' ambivalence. ³⁴ Juan de Quirós, a tailor who had been inside the convent many times, claimed that the abbess María de San Nicolás had told him that the inhabitants of Santa Clara were "happier under the jurisdiction of the ordinary, as he was closer to hand to meet their needs." ³⁵  The would-be nuns' own views with regard to Franciscan jurisdiction seem confused, at least as reported by men who were undoubtedly partisan themselves.

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The early administration of the convent, however, seems to have been in the hands of the ordinary, even as Franciscan friars maintained their role as spiritual advisers and patrons. In 1570, for example, the archbishopric, not the Franciscan order, supplied the royally ordered information that concerned Santa Clara. ³⁶ Archbishop Montúfar's assistant, Fray Bartolomé de Ledesma, repeatedly entered the convent in an administrative capacity. ³⁷ Both Ledesma and the provisor of the archdiocese, Estevan de Portillo, administered the convent, and their activities went beyond the economic. Around 1571, for example, María de San Nicolás and Leonor de San Agustín (Leonor Gutiérrez) came into serious conflict. As a result, they were separated in different cells within different houses. Portillo came to the convent and preached a sermon on "peace and concord" to the assembled women. Witnesses saw María and Leonor kneeling before Portillo, kissing his hands and telling them that they gave him their obedience "as to their prelate, in the name of the Lord Archbishop." ³⁸ (*como a su perlado en nonbre del señor arzobispo*) Another witness described a more informal and comfortable meeting between Portillo and the would-be abbess: Portillo entered a cell (*aposeno*) and seated himself on a chair, María de San Nicolás seated herself on a cushion, and the two began to talk about affairs of the convent. At the

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same time, however, Franciscan friars served the convent as confessors. Writing over two hundred years later, Fray Antonio de Rosa Figueroa attempted to summarize the situation thus:

in relation to spiritual and monastic matters, they were without a doubt subject from the beginning to the religious order, although in the economic governance of the house, they were subject to the Holy Mitre while the matter was before His Holiness and the King.

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Though any such neatness in the division of labor is difficult to find, the system seems to have functioned - for the moment. Thus the women of Santa Clara remained without profession, in a state of limbo between the papally mandated Franciscan jurisdiction, which was at best theoretical, and the day-to-day administration of the convent by the ordinary.

In 1572, this stalemate was broken when Archbishop Montúfar died. Fray Francisco de Ribera, the commissary general, had little interest in convents of nuns. As we have seen, he did not want to govern La Concepción. He was also ambivalent toward Santa Clara. Ribera now served notice that he would not comply with the papal order regarding Franciscan jurisdiction. Rather, he would turn the convent's inhabitants over to the archbishop, "because of having many duties in relation to the administration of the Indians of the land." 41 The advisers (*difinidores*) of the monastery of San Francisco were in accord. As a result, the women of Santa Clara formally gave their obedience to the cathedral chapter. 42

In 1573, however, Navarro, the original proponent of the project, returned from France bearing orders from the Franciscan general minister that granted him the new office of vice-commissary general. In addition, the general minister sent word that Ribera should appear before him in Spain. Ribera, however, felt that he should exercise his jurisdiction until leaving New Spain. Thus there were now two pretenders to the most important Franciscan office in New Spain, with no love lost between the two. The battle for Santa Clara was on. Navarro now set himself against Ribera; despite the opposition of the latter, Navarro undertook the Santa Clara project anew. In October 1573, he convened a meeting of Franciscan advisers, who agreed to receive the women under Franciscan jurisdiction in compliance with the original orders of the Holy See, and under the conditions laid out therein. 43

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This decision, however, was at least for some friars motivated less by

enthusiasm for Navarro's project than by pragmatism. The friars were bound to accept the orders of the pope, but some of them clearly hoped to escape responsibility for Santa Clara. Fray Antonio Roldán, who had become provincial in 1573, [44](#) wrote:

now comes a new affair of the nuns of Santa Clara, whom because of being busy with the doctrine of these [native] people we did not want to admit to our obedience except under certain conditions, thinking that we would liberate ourselves from [the nuns] through the impossibility of the said conditions. [45](#)

Indeed, it does appear that the provincial and *difinidores* of San Francisco sought to excuse themselves from the obligation of governing the convent, largely because "the principal aim for which they came to these parts at the command and order of His Majesty was for the doctrine and conversion of the Indians." [46](#) Navarro paid little attention to such qualms, promising profession to the impatient would-be nuns. He thus enacted de facto Franciscan jurisdiction, and created an effective split within his own order. Navarro and his supporters would fight for the right to administer Santa Clara even as other Franciscans sought to liberate themselves from such responsibility.

If Navarro's decision caused conflict among the Franciscans, it was even more odious to the archbishop. Moya had no intention of allowing the Franciscans to extend their power even further. The archbishop found his best ally in Ribera, who had already attempted to transfer Santa Clara back to the ordinary. Ribera informed the archbishop that "because of my desire to see my order freed of the yoke of administering nuns," he was bringing an end to the matter. Ribera also advised the archbishop that Miguel Navarro had no authority to invest nuns or accept their obedience. [47](#) In fact, Ribera claimed, Navarro had brought his own appointment papers but not any papers revoking Ribera's own office. Thus, the latter would not acknowledge that he had been deposed. [48](#) Soon thereafter, however, Ribera embarked for Spain, where he died. Navarro's claim to the commissariat general was now uncontested. [49](#)

The women of Santa Clara, meanwhile, had been waiting for profession since Navarro's original departure three years before. Now that he had returned to New Spain, they were agitating for immediate investiture. On 16 November, they sent a letter to Navarro, claiming that if he left the city for a planned inspection (*visita*) of the provinces without first confirming their profession, there would be a great scandal in the convent. [50](#) This pressure from the

women, rather than weakness or mental illness on Navarro's part, [51](#) should be held responsible for the Franciscan's hasty actions.

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Moya, however, had no intention of relinquishing the convent without a fight. On the 3rd of December, the archbishop ordered the gathering of evidence concerning the beatas' having given their obedience to Fray Alonso de Montúfar, his predecessor. [52](#) In charge was the provisor Estevan de Portillo, a fierce guardian of episcopal privilege and a veteran of secular-regular battle. In 1569, Portillo had ordered secular priests to celebrate Mass in the Church of Santa María la Redonda, claimed by the Franciscans because it was in an Indian area of the city administered by the order. Portillo ordered the Franciscans not to attend. Instead, the friars attended en masse, arriving in procession accompanied by many Indians armed with rocks and sticks. When the friars and their supporters attempted to enter the church, a battle ensued, bringing relations between secular and regular to a new low. [53](#) Now Portillo ordered Navarro, under threat of excommunication, to desist from meddling in the convent's affairs. Informed of this threat, Navarro haughtily replied that Portillo was not his judge. [54](#)

On the 10 December 1573, while witnesses were still testifying before the archbishop's investigation, the women received their long-awaited profession at the hands of the venerable Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta, who gave gray habits to María de San Nicolas (now officially abbess) and seven other nuns. [55](#) They were now officially Clares, subject to the Franciscan order.

When Portillo heard of this, he ordered mayordomo Miguel de Dueñas to withhold the dowries of the newly received novices from the abbess. The nuns, through their new mayordomo Juan Alonso de Hinojosa, lodged a complaint with the archbishop, alleging that, "as is well known, the said monastery and nuns are under obedience and subjection to the Order of Saint Francis of New Spain." [56](#)  Apparently they had conveniently forgotten their earlier acceptance of ordinary jurisdiction.

Moya did not relent, and the dispute escalated. The provisor Portillo informed the mayordomo Hinojosa that the archbishop's orders would stand. Hinojosa replied that the archbishop had no jurisdiction over the case. [57](#) Portillo threatened grave penalties against those who would contravene his order. The nuns of Santa Clara, however, were not easily intimidated, and refused to allow a notary to enter their convent to read them the orders of the archbishop.

When the archbishop slapped an interdict on the convent, ordering priests not to say mass there and excommunicating the nuns, the nuns sent Hinojosa to the audiencia. He claimed that the archbishop's actions had caused scandal in the republic and had afflicted the nuns. [58](#) Hinojosa argued that, while the archbishop had enjoyed some jurisdiction over the convent in the early days of its foundation, the nuns then were purely laywomen, and therefore could not be subject to anyone else. But they were entitled to change once they had become professed nuns. On the 16th of February, the audiencia ruled in favor of the nuns' right to choose Franciscan jurisdiction - perhaps because Moya was in conflict with the viceroy as well as the religious orders. Moya was ordered to lift his interdict.

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Meanwhile, new professions had been carried out. In common with the foundresses, none of the new nuns had apparently completed a year of novitiate. The speed and irregular nature of the professions caused Provincial Fray Antonio Roldán to complain to the Council of the Indies:

I swear as a Christian that the deeds of the nuns and their helpers are proceeding in a sinister fashion and with much cunning and many lies. I beg Your Illustriousness to favour the side of the lord archbishop and to free us of the administration of [the nuns] so that we may better occupy ourselves in the service of God and Her Majesty. [59](#) 

For his part, Archbishop Moya sent a letter to the council dated 24 March (delivered by the fleet of mid-April), informing Ovando of the dispute, and encouraging him to seek it as a matter of royal patrimony. Moya drily insisted that only his duty to that office made him pursue the affair, "because my will does not extend itself to seeking more nuns than those of whom I have charge." [60](#) 

Nonetheless, Moya was clearly unwilling to relinquish his claim to these troublesome women. In his next letter to the Council, dated 1 September 1574, Moya had a new outrage to report. On the first of August, between two and three in the morning, "certain friars" acting on Navarro's orders had taken sixteen nuns - half the convent - out of Santa Clara and transported them to the Indian church of San Juan, which had been established as a parish in 1545, Moya claimed, but had been without the sacrament or a priest for the last six years.

In the wee hours of 1 August, the nuns, who included the putative abbess María de San Nicolás, walked with the friars and "some Spaniards" through the darkened streets of the city until they reached the church

of San Juan. [61](#) The friars took the nuns into the church, saying to witnesses that it would be the seat of their new convent and pealing the bells to alert the neighborhood. In the morning they sang Mass, attended by the nuns, who sang from behind a makeshift cloister fashioned from grass mats (*petates*). "The whole city was there," the archbishop wrote, "appalled by the audacity." [62](#) (*Acudio toda la ciudad espantados del atrevimiento*) Whether appalled or merely curious, the city took note of the event. The "procession" was secretive and at night, and this disturbed some witnesses, like Andrés Quixelmo, who compared it unfavorably to the normal mode of transporting nuns to a new convent:

when a monastery is founded it is done with much accord and solemnity and with the approval of the prelate, and thus this witness has seen it done when they brought nuns from La Concepción whom are now in Regina Coeli, and when the Repentant Nuns of La Penitencia moved, because with the nuns of Regina came a very great accompaniment of people and with those of La Penitencia there was a very solemn procession which included His Excellency [the viceroy] and all the city and high court. [63](#) 

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Indeed, the scandal in the city can well be imagined: how must its inhabitants have reacted to the image of nuns and friars walking through the darkened streets in the middle of the night, attended by blacks, their destination the dark and dangerous Indian barrios? Witnesses described how news had spread, and how they had been awakened and alerted by others who told them of the strange late-night procession. The movement of the nuns, cast as an abduction by the friars, was an audacious act that scandalized many onlookers.

Moya was unwilling to tolerate the situation. On 5 August, he ordered the Franciscans to return the nuns. Provincial Antonio Roldán insisted that he knew nothing about the incident and that it was a personal decision of Navarro, who was now in Texcoco. Roldán gave the archbishop *carte blanche* to solve the problem. [64](#) On 6 August, Moya sent the provisor Portillo to speak with Viceroy Martín Enríquez. Enríquez gave the order to remove the nuns and ordered the *alguacil mayor*, Don Diego de Mercado y Peñalosa, to accompany Portillo to the church, where they "found such resistance from the friars and so many Indians gathered in the church and its patio, that we feared a scandal." The provisor's party included Pedro López de Buitrago, the fifty-year-old vicar of Toluca; Pedro de Peñas, a forty-year-old *racionero* of the cathedral; and Jerónimo de Villanueva, a forty-six-year-old priest. Others, like Don Alonso de Sarria, a twenty-four-year-old deacon, went "to see what was happening." [65](#) They found, according to witnesses, between two and eight thousand Indians gathered around the parish church when

Portillo, Mercado, and the priests who accompanied them arrived. Repeatedly, witnesses referred to their fear of an uprising because of the Franciscans "power and command over the Indians." ⁶⁶ (*tanta mano y mando sobre los yndios*) Indeed, a witness suggested, "one of the said friars need only make a scene and the Indians will rise and take up arms." ⁶⁷ 

At the entrance to the church patio, the archbishop's party encountered Antonio Valeriano, newly appointed governor of the Indians of San Juan Tenochtitlan, a post in which he served for some forty years. ⁶⁸ One of the most illustrious of the alumni of the school of Santiago Tlatelolco, Valeriano was an accomplished Latinist and collaborator of Sahagún who at the end of his life was still doing translation work for the Franciscans. ⁶⁹ His importance to San Juan Tenochtitlan makes him an Indian counterpart to the "father of the nation" Bernaldino de Albornoz. Perhaps it is not too fanciful to compare Valeriano's role in this first attempt at a foundation among the Indians to the role played by Albornoz in the creation of so many institutions among the Spaniards. Valeriano met the archbishop's delegation "with the officials and councilors of the said Indians," ⁷⁰ (*con los alcaldes y regidores de los dichos yndios*) and was read the royal order. He ordered his alcaldes to repeat it in Nahuatl to the assembled Indians. After some discussion in that language, Valeriano told the episcopal expedition that he and the other Indians were loyal vassals and owned the church, "and that it was in accordance with their will that the friars had brought the said nuns there, and the Indians were happy with the situation." ⁷¹  The archbishop's men were thus reminded, as is the modern reader of Valeriano's words, that the Spaniards were now outside the traza. Valeriano concluded by asking the provisor and alguacil not to remove the nuns from the church, cautioning that the assembled Indians might rise up in outrage. ⁷²

Nonetheless, the archbishop's men proceeded through the church's patio to the main door, where they encountered eight or nine Franciscans guarding the entrance. Among them was the aged Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta, no threat physically, but terrifying in his perceived power over the Indians. The Franciscans were intransigent, even though the provisor promised that the nuns would be treated with all respect and honor. In fact, according to witnesses, the friars used "dishonest words" in their refusal, arguing that they were not obliged to follow the provisor's orders. Fray Jaime Navarro, according to witnesses, went particularly far in his denial of Portillo's authority. When Portillo asked him whether he did not know him for the provisor of the archdiocese, Fray Jaime responded that he did not. Upping the ante, Portillo asked whether he knew the king, whose orders - indirect, of course - were now being enforced. The friar allegedly responded, "that he did not know the King, but only the pope and his provincial." ⁷³ (*que no conocia al rrey sino al sumo pontifice y a su provincial*) Given that this testimony was taken from an información created by the archbishop for the

Council of the Indies, one might cast aspersions on the accuracy with which the friar was quoted making such an extreme claim. Whether a true reporting of Navarro's words or a construct, however, the statement points up the extent to which the conflict was construed as an ultimate clash between Franciscan and other claims to power and authority.

The provisor now entered the church to enact the order, and asked to speak with the abbess. He told the friars that if they wanted to verify the viceroy's order, they should send two friars to see him. Near the main altar was the mayordomo of the *cofradía de la Vera Cruz*, Diego de Aldana, who was said to have a daughter among the nuns. He insulted the archbishop's men and said that the nuns were "martyrs." With tempers running so high, the removal of the nuns was not easily accomplished. The provisor and his men approached the door of the sacristy, behind which the nuns were secreted. Though repeatedly asked to open the door and informed of the viceregal order, the women refused to open the door, hurling epithets at the provisor from behind it. María de San Nicolás said that she had removed her obedience from the archbishop and was not bound to obey him. ⁷⁴ Finally, Portillo had a black servant break down the door with a bench.

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The nuns were in a room above the sacristy, and immediately commenced hurling the usual insults, calling the archbishop's party Lutherans, bad Christians, and excommunicants. Then they began to lob stones instead of words. The abbess's young brother was sent up to talk to her, but she just told him to leave, because otherwise "he would be the first one knocked down." ⁷⁵ (*al primero que derribasen sería a él*) Frustrated, the provisor asked the clerics who were with him to climb the stairs and remove the nuns physically. The nuns put up great resistance, striking the cleric Manuel de Nava in the forehead with a rock and gashing his head as he attempted to climb the stairs. The priests rallied, swaddling their heads in coats "and other defenses" ⁷⁶ to protect themselves as they climbed the stairs, and soon they managed to bring the nuns down, assisted by a "black" servant of the nuns themselves, ⁷⁷ but not, however, before an unnamed nun had stabbed another priest in the hand. ⁷⁸

A page came from the viceroy, ordering that the nuns be removed very quickly in two coaches, to limit the growing scandal. It had been planned to remove them at night, but now, at two in the afternoon, there was no time to waste. (One is tempted to see in this decision the growing nervousness of a small group of Spaniards in the heart of a restive native barrio.) At the same time, reinforcements arrived in procession from San Francisco. The Franciscans had no intention of allowing the nuns to be carried incognito in coaches. Instead, they seized the opportunity to create a piece of street theater, a spectacle of instruction for the Indians and for the entire city. A friar dashed into the church and brought out a cross, which was draped with

a black cape to signify mourning, as in the auto *de fe*. ⁷⁹ With this cross, and the cross the Franciscans had brought with them, the procession began. As the nuns emerged from the church, each was covered by a Franciscan cape and taken tenderly by the hand by a friar. The nuns were thus led by their protectors in a procession "through the covered streets," singing Psalm 114. When they reached the street that went to San Francisco, they attempted to turn the procession toward it rather than toward Santa Clara. One friar attempted to rouse the group, crying out that since the nuns had been thrown from their own house they should be taken to San Francisco. ⁸⁰ Portillo would not permit deviation, however, and the procession reached the nuns' convent without further incident. Nonetheless, the parade attracted a great deal of attention from the inhabitants of the city, according to Moya, "giving extreme scandal to the pueblo through their excessive liberty." ⁸¹ 

The nuns were thus safely returned to their first convent in the heart of the Spanish city. But Moya was far from satisfied, complaining to the Council of the Indies of the difficulty of administering justice in Mexico, as exemplified by this intolerable situation. Aside from usurping the jurisdiction of the ordinary, Moya claimed, Navarro had gone against the dictates of the Council of Trent by giving profession to the nuns without their having completed the required year of novitiate. The dowries had been received and spent without being kept for the year of probation. Having received about forty nuns, the convent was now poor and needy, and the nuns were living on alms. ⁸²

Navarro's side of the story, reported in a letter to the Council of 9 September 1574, was predictably different not in its account of the actual events, but in its appraisal of their import. Navarro emphasized the scandal caused by the removal of the nuns from San Juan in midday, saying that he was sending a full relation of the affair,

which I would like to write in my own blood to declare the sentiments that I and the friars of this order with good reason have. And I could well do it, as thirty ounces have been taken from me as the result of an illness I received from the disturbance and pain of hearing such a horrendous case. 

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Navarro claimed that all he could be accused of was not having notified the archbishop of the removal of the nuns, "because of knowing him to be notably disfavoured to and against them as is notorious in the whole city."  If the nuns had to return to their first convent, Navarro said, it could have been done in a different manner so as not to cause such a great scandal among the people, "especially people so new in the faith." (*mayormente gente tan nueva en la fe*) Navarro said he had

avored the nuns not because he had any relation among them or had known them before, but "because I have taken them for chosen plants to found anew in these parts the order of Saint Clare." [83](#)

This message was reinforced by Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta, who wrote that the incident was "one of the greatest cruelties that has been heard of, and I think among Catholic Christians has never been seen." Mendieta was appalled by such an affront to religious persons "in the presence of the whole Indian pueblo." (*en presencia de toda el pueblo de los yndios*) Thus Mendieta, like Navarro, emphasized the deleterious effect on the Indians of the maltreatment of the religious, and said that though he had not known the family before its conversion, he took the nuns for "some of the most sincere and blessed creatures and good and exemplary women that I have known." Those arrayed against them were acting out of "worldly interests," (*humanos intereses*) like the Viceroy, who "has publicly manifested himself against them since they were novices." [84](#) (*publicamente ha mostrado contra ellas desde que estando novicias*) But, the Franciscans' protests notwithstanding, the nuns remained in their original convent.

Jurisdiction and the whole question of the convent's legality, however, were far from settled. The twisted course of the events that followed is difficult to puzzle out. In October 1575, Fray Rodrigo de Zequera, Commissary General of the Franciscan Order in New Spain, acting on orders from the commissary general of the Indies, annulled the professions of the six foundresses and transferred them to the authority of the archbishop. [85](#) Zequera referred to a 1505 papal bull forbidding Franciscans from receiving nuns under their jurisdiction without the express consent of the order's general, as well as to the falsehoods sown by the foundresses and their supporters. [86](#) The archbishop's provisor had examined all of the irregular aspects of the convent, from the domination of offices by the founding family to the absence of clausura, and had found virtually total disorder. [87](#)

In response to this disorder and Zequera's abnegation of Franciscan jurisdiction, Moya removed all six of the foundresses, depositing them in the Colegio de las Niñas Mestizas. Nonetheless, he wearily said, they were stubbornly hoping to return to their "prelacies, or more precisely, to finish destroying the monastery, as their insolence reaches that far." [88](#) The archbishop now placed six Conceptionist nuns in charge of the convent. [89](#) One of them, Isabel de San Francisco, became abbess.

The foundresses lodged an outraged protest before the audiencia, which was threatened by Moya's efforts to extend episcopal privilege. [90](#) Asking to

return to their convent, the nuns' request was upheld. However, when returned to the convent of Santa Clara and handed over to the jurisdiction of the Conceptionist abbess, the foundresses became even more furious, and the convent "was hugely disturbed." ⁹¹ (*se avoroto grandismamte*) In response, Moya secluded the foundresses within an apartment of the nunnery, attempting to keep them separate from the rest of the nuns. Even worse, Moya reported, the Franciscans were divided over what to do with the nuns. ⁹²

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Around this time, Moya received a copy of a patent from Fray Francisco de Guzmán, commissary general of the Indies, approving the transfer to ordinary jurisdiction. But only six days later, he was shown another patent from even higher in the Franciscan order mandating that the province of Michoacán receive the nuns under its jurisdiction. ⁹³ The Franciscans were apparently no less confused than anyone else. News that the nuns were to be transferred to the authority of Michoacán, "fifty leagues from Mexico," was met by parental outrage in the city as those who had daughters in the convent rushed to complain to the archbishop. Novices complained that they would have to leave the convent and return to the houses of their parents. ⁹⁴ Chaos once again reigned.

Moya convened a meeting of sixteen religious, representing the four orders and the archbishopric, to decide what should be done. All agreed with the course he had taken. In 1576, however, a new papal bull arrived, nullifying the archbishop's authority over the nuns, ordering the building of a new convent, confirming that the foundation would remain under Franciscan authority, ordering the Conceptionist nuns to return to their convent or profess the rule of Saint Clare, and asking that the troublesome foundresses be sent to Spain to profess there. ⁹⁵ The audiencia asked for clarification of all bulls received and not seen in council, and found that in April of 1576, the Franciscan minister general in Rome had ordered that the province of Michoacán receive the convent of Santa Clara under its obedience, and that the province of Michoacán be given one of the convents of Santiago Tlatelolco, Tlacupan, or Tlalnepantla for the habitation of the vicar and confessors of Santa Clara. This patent was given to María de San Nicolás, who offered the convent's obedience to the provincial of Michoacán. ⁹⁶

Apparently, however, the friars of Michoacán were too occupied in the conversion of the Indians to busy themselves with the administration of a convent of nuns, at least according to Bernaldino Pérez, acting for the commissary general Zequera. The convent once again was an unwanted burden. Pérez asked that the king order the archbishop to take the convent under his care, relieving the Franciscans of the responsibility that at least some of them had defended so strongly. ⁹⁷

In 1577, however, the nuns were still agitating for Franciscan jurisdiction. Moya considered this mostly the work of the foundresses, "seditious women and perturbers of all quietude." ⁹⁸ (*sediciosas y perturboras [sic] de toda quietud*) Zequera also sought a remedy to the problem of the "very unquiet and restless." (*muy inquietas y desasosegadas*) foundresses. He asked that "for the peace and quietude not only of the said convent, but of the city of Mexico," they be sent to Spain, provided with money and dowry, and professed in Spanish convents. "With this," he wrote wearily, "will cease many scandals, because when [the foundresses] are present, the rest, who are more than forty, are very unquiet." ⁹⁹ Zequera denied the validity of papal and Franciscan orders ordering the convent to fall under the jurisdiction of the Franciscans of Michoacán, because the information under the influence of which these orders were issued had been patently false. ¹⁰⁰ Finally, however, the Franciscans had to relent. In March 1577, Zequera wrote to the king saying that the audiencia had ordered him to receive the nuns under his own jurisdiction, and he had given each of them a dowry of 500 ducados to facilitate their profession in Spanish convents. ¹⁰¹ The Conceptionist abbess Isabel de San Francisco professed as a Clare, and the six foundresses sailed for Castile, where they professed as Clares. ¹⁰² Peace was restored and the convent thus definitively turned over to the Franciscans. ¹⁰³

With this battle ended a period of conflict over women's houses. The tendency of the sixteenth century - codified in Trent - was to bring more and more nunneries under episcopal control. The Franciscan order, however, had no intention of allowing this to happen to a convent of Clares. Future foundations of Clare houses would fall under the aegis of the Franciscan order. All other houses would be subject to the ordinary.

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The clashes over La Concepción and Santa Clara are thus illustrative of another aspect of the foundational period of women's institutions in Mexico City. The cooperative and unitary character of the earlier sixteenth-century foundations led to disputes over the role of different groups in administration. Nuns also were fiercely partisan, as can be seen in the fractiousness of La Concepción's jurisdictional debate. Ultimately, however, disputes over administration were resolved quickly and in appropriate Tridentine fashion, with episcopal power vindicated. The Franciscans kept Santa Clara, to be sure, but in a form acceptable to the rest of society. The midnight attempt to establish nuns in an Indian neighborhood failed; moreover, Franciscans like Mendieta were forced to accept the notion of urban space propounded by the archbishop and other representatives of Spanish colonial society.

Convents and Urban Space

In the dispute over Santa Clara, urban space became a contentious issue. Debates over jurisdiction were not uncommon in the late sixteenth century as bishops began to exercise their enhanced power and responsibilities. These debates, however, rarely manifested themselves in such a dramatic - if temporary - physical movement as we have seen in the case of Santa Clara. As we saw earlier, convents and similar institutions functioned as part of a Spanish claim on the city. The case of Santa Clara shows that women's institutions could also support other kinds of claims; in a period of urban reorganization, the Franciscans sought to establish nunneries in areas outside the traza. In the early 1570s, however, such a step was nothing less than odious to other representatives of Spanish colonial society. Thus the Franciscans showed their fundamentally different and ultimately anachronistic view of Mexico City.

In medieval Europe, nunneries were often built in suburban areas. In Scandinavia and England, convents within city walls were rare. In England, even urban institutions were generally situated "on the outer limits of settlement." ¹⁰⁴ The earliest known nunneries in France were similarly suburban. In Florence, as city walls were constructed, women's convents sprang up at the city gates. ¹⁰⁵ Even in Spain, with a stronger tradition of urban nunneries, many convents were in exurban locations. The sixteenth century would bring change to this practice. As early as 1513, there were efforts to move a Pamplona convent inside that city's walls. Though the suppression of rural monasteries for both sexes was part of the reformative plan of the Catholic monarchs, women's rural convents were a particular concern. ¹⁰⁶ The flagging fortunes of Seville's San Leandro were increasingly attributed to its location outside the city walls, where it had been founded in 1297. ¹⁰⁷ Centralizing tendencies were also apparent in regard to other sacred sites. In the late fifteenth century, the relics of Ávila's first bishop were moved to the center of the city from what had become an unsavory and lower-class area full of tanneries. ¹⁰⁸ The Council of Trent reinforced this pre-existing trend, ordering that no women's monasteries be established outside city walls. New foundations, such as that of San José de Ávila, founded by Saint Teresa in 1562, were placed at the heart of the city. If medieval nunneries had been, by virtue of their location, "liminal places," ¹⁰⁹ sixteenth-century convents were to be central elements in the city and its civic identity.

In the New World, the decrees of Trent were received and publicized early in January 1565 in a meeting attended by cabildo and audiencia. ¹¹⁰ Yet the decrees in regard to extra-urban foundation of women's convents were virtually unnecessary because of the local scene— that is, because of fears for the safety of women placed among possibly hostile Indians and away from the protection of Spanish garrison cities. (Even the beatas who were to school Indian girls were installed in the heart of Mexico City.) Nonetheless,

insofar as women were linked to the missionary effort, there were some who thought it appropriate to install them among the Indians. As we have seen, in 1537, when three bishops sought to establish a convent of professed nuns, it was to be located in an Indian neighborhood. But missionary goals in this regard were never fulfilled. La Concepción, like the beaterio and colegio de niñas indias before it, was established within the Spanish core. Indeed, no convent would be established in the barrios for some time to come. The will of Hernán Cortés provided for the establishment of a convent of Capuchina nuns in Coyoacán; the location, as well as the austerity of the order, would prevent his wishes from being fulfilled. Early colonial society was too anxious to permit extra-urban foundation of women's institutions.

The same concerns were at work in other areas of Spanish America. As we have seen, the first bishop of Guatemala, like Zumárraga in Mexico, sought to establish a convent in which mestiza and other women could profess as nuns. Like New Spain's bishops, Don Francisco Marroquín sought to place his convent outside the Spanish urban core. He established a hospital near the center of his seat, Santiago de Guatemala, but left property outside the city for the foundation of the nunnery he dreamed of but never saw. In early 1578, the city's cabildo brought four nuns from La Concepción de México to found the new institution on the site Marroquín had designated. The foundresses were quickly joined by eight novices. ¹¹¹ After only forty days in their new convent, the nuns were asking to be moved, because the house in which they had been installed "*is quite outside the city.*" ¹¹² The cabildo, for its part, undertook to gain royal permission for such a move, which would exchange the buildings of the convent and hospital, leaving the convent in the city center and the hospital outside. Witnesses all agreed that the move would be beneficial, as "the diseases of the sick will not infect the city." ¹¹³ (*no ynficionaran las enfermedades de los enfermos la ciudad*) The convent would also benefit, as its inhabitants would be in the core, where all agreed that women should be. Their convent would be more able to keep clausura, as in the current location the convent's interior could be seen from a nearby hill. Once in the city center, the nuns could be "more enclosed and guarded, as there are royal streets that will encircle them from all sides." 🌐 Thus both the nuns and the city government revealed a strong belief that women religious belonged in the heart of the city, enclosed and protected.

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This belief, then, was obviously not exclusive to Mexico. But the tendency to install women's institutions in urban cores was enhanced by the peculiar character of Mexico City as an Indian capital taken over as a Spanish one. The center was Spanish and the periphery Indian; resistance to suburban foundation of convents was therefore even stronger. In 1557, in the midst of a lawsuit between the colegio de niñas mestizas and the monastery of San Francisco, the Franciscan friars proposed moving the girls' school. The Franciscans claimed that the colegio was prejudicial to San Francisco because it was too close. Given that the school had become a popular site for

local devotional practice, it is entirely conceivable that it was siphoning off some of the clientele of the Franciscan friary. ¹¹⁴ Whatever their motivation, the friars came into conflict with the *Cofradía del Santo Sacramento y Caridad*, which governed the colegio and which protested vigorously. The cofradía's members claimed that the colegio was no closer than 740 steps from San Francisco, and that many churches, including that of La Concepción, were closer. The girls could not be heard or seen from the monastery, even when they sang the divine offices.

Most importantly, the cofradía asserted, there was no other place to put the colegio, "except among the Indians ... and as a house of women it is proper that it should be in the middle of the city." ¹¹⁵ The cofrades who testified claimed that mestizos and Indians might leap the walls of the colegio were it outside the city center. Moreover, they warned, if the house were moved "in this city of Mexico there would be very great discontentment among all the citizens." ¹¹⁶ A cleric who testified on their behalf noted that

the said college and house of orphan girls could not be [re] placed or [re] built in the settlement of the Spaniards of this city but would have to settle among the Indians, and settling among the Indians it will lose the devotion of the people, because it will be far away and in a place that is not decent, and because it is a house of women it is appropriate that it be among the Spaniards. ¹¹⁷

The prior of the friary of San Agustín concurred. ¹¹⁸ Another witness, an officeholder in the urban government, said that the colegio should be in the city and not in a spot where "they will not be seen or taken note of, and being apart from [the Spanish population] could be cause of offenses to God." ¹¹⁹ Thus, Spanish inhabitants of Mexico City had the usual objections to extra-urban foundation of institutions for women. Oversight and surveillance of such institutions would be impossible and disorder would ensue. But to these usual fears were added specific anxieties relating to the Indian-and increasingly, mestizo-character of the outlying suburbs. All such fears were specifically related to *women's* institutions. Friaries and monasteries were commonly situated among the Indians and outside urban centers. The Franciscans had moved their first monastery from a site near the *Iglesia mayor* to a site nearer the Indians. ¹²⁰ Extra-urban foundations of male orders were applauded by the urban government, which in 1570 asked the Crown to prohibit male regular orders from taking houses within the city, "because the citizens have nothing left to buy." ¹²¹ (*porque los vecinos no tenían ya que comprar*) Women's orders were exempted from this request even though they tended to take up more urban space, being

generally larger.

In the early 1570s, then, the Franciscans should have known that moving Santa Clara into the church of San Juan would be repugnant to many of Mexico's Spanish inhabitants. Why would they attempt to do so? The answer may well relate to the Franciscans' own anxieties circa 1570. First, the relation of Indians to Christianity was changing. It is well known that interest in the conversion of the Indians flagged after the Council of Trent, in that it was no longer the principal concern of the Church. The phase of active evangelization had diffused, with its most intense manifestations dispersed to the margins of the empire. ¹²² By 1570, the great experiment of higher education for Indians was ending, with Santiago Tlatelolco in senescence and the dream of an indigenous clergy abandoned. Indians from outside the city were now moving more and more to Spanish urban centers, where they partook of "a collective, multi-ethnic religiosity." ¹²³ Virgins appeared to Indians around Mexico City three times in the late 1570s and early 1580s—clear indication that the natives were making the religion their own and that "the possible vagaries of religious exaltation" might be the newest cause for concern. ¹²⁴ Cynicism and suspicion had set in after the triumphalism of the early phase of the missionary effort. Even among the Franciscans, 1570 saw a "violent antinative reaction." ¹²⁵

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The city was also changing. Even as friars like Mendieta continued to preach the ideal of separation between the republics of Spaniards and Indians, ¹²⁶ the lines between the two were being blurred. Nowhere was this clearer than in the expansion of the secular church into formerly Franciscan-dominated Indian domains.

In the early days of the colony, the Indian city had been clearly ceded to the regular orders, particularly the Franciscans. Although the Spanish civil government had little regard for the pre-Columbian urban divisions of the Aztec capital, subsuming all the Indian parts of the city under the title of San Juan Tenochtitlan, the ecclesiastical powers used the pre-existing divisions as the basis of church divisions. Under Pedro de Gante in the 1520s, the four parts of Tenochtitlan outside the Spanish traza became four units (*visitas*) under Franciscan jurisdiction. Each *visita* had its own head church, or *iglesia de visita*: San Juan, Santa María la Redonda, San Sebastián, and San Pablo. ¹²⁷

During the episcopate of Alonso de Montúfar, the secular church and the Franciscans came into conflict over the status of these Indian areas. Jurisdiction and urban space became controversial. The city had thus far been served by one parish—the cathedral parish—that served the traza

population. In fact, parishes were equated with and accompanied the expansion of the república de españoles. ¹²⁸ Parish structure thus connoted Spanish identity. Increasingly, Montúfar tended to interpret formerly Indian *visitas* as secular parishes. San Pablo became a parish in 1556-7, although this status was immediately disputed by the Franciscans and Augustinians. ¹²⁹ Eventually San Pablo was transferred to the Augustinians; San Sebastián was transferred first to the Carmelites and then in 1607 to the Augustinians. Santa María la Redonda, where the Franciscans battled the seculars in 1569, and San Juan remained under Franciscan control into the early seventeenth century. ¹³⁰

While the Franciscans were able to maintain control over some Indian *visitas*, the integrity of the boundary between the traza and the Indian areas of the city had been greatly compromised. By the late 1560s, the Indian *visitas* included Spaniards, and the cathedral parish, which served the traza, served Indians as well as the república de españoles. ¹³¹ New parishes were therefore created to serve the non-traza Spanish population; these parishes unavoidably overlapped with previously Indian areas and encompassed Franciscan *iglesias de visita*. Santa Catalina was created as a parish in 1568-69, and included two small churches or "hermitages" (*hermitas*) administered by the Franciscans. The Franciscans thus were allowed to continue serving the 2000 Indian vecinos of the parish and their families. The new parish also included about 200 Spanish vecinos and their families, most of whom were merchants, muleteers, and officials. ¹³² The parish of Vera Cruz, created in the late 1560s, intruded upon Tlatelolco and was designed to serve the Spanish, mulatto, and mestizo inhabitants of an area formerly designated for the república de indios. Unlike the new parish of Santa Catalina, which had at least 850 Spanish inhabitants, Vera Cruz contained only 950 souls, between "españoles, mestizos, y mulatos y negros," in addition to at least 8000 Indian tributaries. Thus Vera Cruz's Spanish population was heavily outnumbered by Indians; moreover, it was a poor and racially mixed population in comparison to that of Santa Catalina. ¹³³ In addition, Vera Cruz contained the Indian barrio of San Juan, centered on the church where the Franciscans would attempt to found a new nunnery.

Moya de Contreras launched a strong attack on the idea of Franciscan jurisdiction over San Juan. The archbishop and his partisans made it clear that the parish had always been under ordinary jurisdiction, even if that jurisdiction was somewhat inattentive to the needs of this largely native barrio. As a result of the Franciscan invasion, Moya asked the Council of the Indies that, "because in that barrio of San Juan many Spaniards have settled," (*porque en aquel varrio de sant joan ay poblados ya muchos españoles*) he be granted a cédula establishing the parish and confirming the ordinary's jurisdiction. ¹³⁴ According to the archbishop, the barrio lacked the necessary streets to allow the exit of the Sacrament in

procession, and thus the sacrament was suspended there pending the construction of an avenue. ¹³⁵ The mayordomo of the Hospital Real de Indios noted that priests had come to the church during Lent to hear Indian confessions, and other sacraments had been administered by priests of Vera Cruz, but there had been no permanent curate. ¹³⁶ Juan de Aldaz, a partisan of the archbishop, claimed that the said site was designated by the past archbishop as a parish because it was a "good spot" and "because the greater part of the Indians of the city lived there." ¹³⁷ (*por estar alli abezindada la mayor pte de los indios de la dicha ciudad*) Thus Aldaz went even farther than his bishop, who argued that the Spanish presence in the area required a new parish; Aldaz denied the Franciscan claim to the Indians of the city, asserting that the new parish was perfectly sited because it encompassed them.

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The foundation of the convent of Santa Clara, then, was occurring in the midst of a dramatic reorganization of sacred and secular urban space. For the Franciscans, fears of disorder were awakened by new tendencies in Indian religiosity, disillusionment concerning evangelical labor, and the blurring of the boundaries between Spanish and Indian populations. Perhaps as a result, many Franciscans sought refuge in retrenchment, asserting the millennial vision with renewed vigor. In a 1571 letter to the Council of the Indies, for example, Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta went so far as to deny any jurisdiction of bishops over Indians, calling them "*bishops solely of the Spanish nation.*" ¹³⁸ (*obispos solamente de la nación española*) It should not surprise us to find Mendieta a leader in the abortive attempt to found a new nunnery, remembering his dream of total Franciscan government of the entire Indian population in a perfect republic. ¹³⁹ The establishment of the convent of Santa Clara in an Indian area was a Franciscan strategy to control and assert dominion over Indian religious life in the face of the incursions of the secular church and the "contamination" occasioned by mixing of the two republics. Thus, a women's institution served for the Franciscans, as for Spanish society at large, as a claim on space.

The founding party that left Santa Clara's first convent represented almost half its nuns, including the abbess María de San Nicolás. Apparently she had left her sister to be abbess of Santa Clara's downtown house while she and the other nuns went to found the new convent in San Juan. ¹⁴⁰ A witness claimed to have been told by a Franciscan friar that two more convents were to be founded in the Indian areas. ¹⁴¹ This was possibly a mere rumor fomented by the partisans of the archbishop. I find it more likely, however, that a new Franciscan plan had been hatched, a virtual revival of Zumárraga's dream. Not since 1537 had the founding of women's convents within explicitly Indian areas been proposed. The Franciscans were using the nuns of Santa Clara to stake their claim to an Indian neighborhood, and the Indians and nuns were apparently amenable. The plan may well have extended to the foundation of Franciscan convents for women in several

Indian areas.

The Franciscans saw the barrio of San Juan as not sufficiently Indian; it was threatened by the infiltration of dangerous elements from the Spanish republic and by the archbishop's designs. The friars thus had to assert their dominion over it and claim the right to influence its future development. The nuns of Santa Clara were thus an antidote to the influx of bad influences from the *república de españoles*. But for others, the neighborhood was far *too* Indian to permit the installation of a women's institution. Witnesses called by the archbishop were unimpressed by the church that was to form the basis for the new convent; they described it as completely inappropriate, because "it is not decent or comfortable enough to place nuns in it." [142](#) (*no esta decente ni comoda para meter en ella monjas*) Though the Franciscans installed mats to create a choir for the nuns, *clausura* was impossible in the Indian church.

Moreover, and more importantly, witnesses testified that the neighborhood was inappropriate, because

the said church is surrounded by houses of Indians, mulattos, and mestizos, and very separated from the Spaniards.... The church, as has been said, is in a very unquiet neighbourhood of very idle people, where meet mulattos, mestizos, and other ill-living peoples. [143](#)

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Bachiller Diego de Fuentes agreed, saying that, "most of the people of the said neighbourhood are lost, idle, and vice-ridden." [144](#) Maese Alonso, mayordomo of the Hospital Real de Indios, also averred that neither the church nor the neighborhood was suitable for nuns, referring to the decrees of Trent for support. [145](#) Here is the crux of the matter: for the archbishop, and many of those who testified before his investigation, nuns belonged to the Spanish center of the city, and the newly decreed orders of the Council of Trent were a bulwark for their position. But for the Franciscans who staged this "abduction," it seems, the nuns were a means of staking their claim to the Indians - and the Indians a means of staking their claim to the nuns.

And what of the Indians themselves? [146](#) Witnesses reported that they claimed the church was theirs to give. Antonio Valeriano, the Indian governor, told the archbishop's party that the nuns were in San Juan at the invitation of the Indians who owned the church. Years later, the Indians of another barrio would solicit and receive permission to establish a convent of

nuns in their neighborhood. Not surprisingly, even the Indians called as witnesses by the archbishop's investigation did not seem to believe that a convent of Spanish nuns should not be among Indians. Alonso de San Miguel, a "principal Indian" of sixty years of age, did not offer an opinion on the suitability of the neighborhood, though he agreed that in the neighborhood there were mulattos and mestizos "of evil life," and that the church was in the middle of the Indian population. ¹⁴⁷ Martín Estevan, an Indian of the parish of San Pablo, agreed that the site was unsuitable for a convent of nuns because of the presence of such mulattos and mestizos. ¹⁴⁸ None of the Indians whose words are recorded in the documents, unlike the Spanish witnesses, expressed the view that a convent of nuns was not suited to an Indian barrio, even though the interrogatory asked them whether the church of San Juan was surrounded by Indian houses. Nor did they (not surprisingly) include Indians among the ranks of those "of evil life." The Indians thus expressed a different view of the suitability of their neighborhood. Their view, however, was a minority perception.

As we have seen, the Franciscans were forced to return the nuns of Santa Clara to their original convent in the urban core, thus apparently abandoning their project of extra-urban foundation. But in 1577, when the friars received definitive orders to accept Santa Clara under their jurisdiction, they immediately purchased land for the erection of a new convent and began construction, using some existing buildings as their basis. On 1 January 1579, twenty-two nuns received profession at the hands of Zequera. ¹⁴⁹ On the first day of Christmas, 1579, the nuns, headed by the Conceptionist abbess Luisa de San Gerónimo and vicaress Francisca de la Trinidad, entered the new convent in procession. ¹⁵⁰ Existing nuns ratified their professions, and some novices professed, so that by the end of the day there were twenty-eight nuns in the new convent of Santa Clara, including the six foundresses, now returned from their Spanish sojourn. The ceremony was attended by the audiencia, friars, viceroy, and various members of the nobility, but, notably, not by Archbishop Moya de Contreras. The site to which the representatives of the Spanish elite proceeded, however, was outside the traza. Santa Clara had been re-founded in an area outside the city, "at the edge of the city, in the outlying area of Coyoacán." ¹⁵¹ (*al cabo desta cibdad en los arrabales della de Cuyacan*) Somehow, by 1579 it was acceptable to place a convent of nuns in an area previously beyond the pale. This might suggest, at first glance, that the clashes of 1574 over where the convent should be founded were merely smoke and mirrors; the Franciscans and the bishop were merely engaging in a wrestling match, and the bishop's party would condemn the location of San Juan's church simply to support their argument for episcopal jurisdiction. But this explanation, while seductively simple, does not acknowledge the sea change that had occurred in the city in the intervening five years, which would alter the role of women's institutions in urban geography.

Urban Space and the Conquered City

In the late 1570s, as women's institutions began their shift toward elite homogeneity and patrimonial foundation, the role of the convent in urban space changed, largely because of the demographic changes overtaking the city. Devastating Indian mortality rates had been a fact of colonial life since the conquest. Yet, as we have seen, in the 1530s and 1540s there was little perception among the Spanish citizens of Mexico City of the decline in the city's population. The city government continued to speak of a growing population even after the 1545-8 epidemic, with its disastrous mortality rates. [152](#) From the 1560s on, the city's population decreased steadily even as the Spanish population grew. [153](#) From 1568 to 1595, the Indian population declined by half. [154](#) Much of this decline occurred during the course of the massive epidemic that struck Mesoamerica and Central America between 1576 and 1581. This plague received the most contemporary attention of any of the sixteenth-century epidemics; the archbishop reported 100,000 dead in New Spain after only two months, while Torquemada claimed at the epidemic's end that 2 million had died. Later estimates suggested that half the Indian population had succumbed. [155](#)

For the first time, the cataclysmic decline of the aboriginal population awakened the grave concern of the urban government. Indeed, by 1581 the cabildo was concerned about Indian depopulation—a complete change of heart from the position it had held from the 1530s to the 1560s, which emphasized the threat posed by the Indians to the Spanish settlers. In 1581, the cabildo members agreed to petition the viceroy "concerning how New Spain has declined a great deal because of the lack of Indians, which is worse all the time."  <> Asserting that the conservation of the colony depended on the health of the Indians, the city fathers asked the viceroy to outlaw mine service and allow the importation of blacks who could replace Indian laborers. [156](#) Fears of the Indians in the city would never be completely extinguished. Indians would outnumber "whites" in the city virtually throughout the colonial period, and periodic flareups of paranoia would occur. The redefinition of the traza would be a sporadically recurrent theme. From time to time, colonial authorities attempted to preserve the *cordon sanitaire* separating and defining the two republics, even after the boundaries between the traza and the rest of the city had become a hopeless anachronism. [157](#) But the epidemic of 1576 seems to have caused a great change in the local mindset. After its end, no one apparently raised the concern that convents should not be situated outside the traza; indeed, objection to extra-urban-or extra-traza-foundation was now most likely to come from nuns who feared not wall-vaulting Indians but poverty. Old fears had collapsed with the increasing fluidity of the city's new boundaries and the extension of the Spanish population. New fears were far more prosaic.

A striking example of this change in attitude is provided by Santa Clara, which was the focus in 1575 of so much concern over nuns' location outside the traza. Yet by 1579, as we have seen, the Franciscans were able to place the convent beyond the city's edge. After Santa Clara's definitive transfer to Franciscan jurisdiction, then, the order had selected a suburban site. Yet while María de San Nicolás and her cadre had been willing to move to an Indian barrio in 1575, the nuns in control in the early 1580s preferred a location within the traza. They wrote to the Council of the Indies complaining of the convent's poverty and their inadequate building. ¹⁵⁸ They gave notice that they had bought a "good and almost built" ¹⁵⁹ (*buena y casi edificada*) house in the city, and asked for lands suitable for the sustenance of the convent. ¹⁶⁰ The logic of purchasing the house in town was indisputable. The convent was in financial difficulty, and needed the support of the wealthier Spanish population of the core. Thus, "because it was in a place apart from conversation and no one came to hear the Hours or Divine Offices,"  the convent moved back into the city. ¹⁶¹ The nuns now took up residence in Calle de Tacuba. ¹⁶² They continued to purchase houses to create a proper convent, and in 1588 renovations were still continuing. Thus, even the Franciscans were forced to admit the logic of locating women's institutions in the city core. The "chosen plants" of 1575 would now thrive in the more congenial atmosphere of the urban center.

Other nuns were no more willing to take up residence outside the prosperous core of the city. ¹⁶³ Jesús María, like Santa Clara, was established in 1580 on a site outside the traza. Indeed, the convent had been placed right next to the parish church of Vera Cruz, the Spanish center of a not very illustrious barrio. As soon as Pedro Thomas left Mexico City in 1582, the Conceptionist abbess and foundresses began to plan for a move. The original site, they complained, was too humid, as well as being outside the city. The house was too small to receive more nuns. On 26 June 1582, the archbishop's vicar general, with what might seem like excessive haste, conceded the convent a license to move. The abbess purchased a house that had once belonged to the oidor Doctor Vasco de Puga; 18,500 pesos ¹⁶⁴ sealed the deal, more than 11,000 of which had come from dowries received from new novices. On 12 September, carried in litters and covered carriages, the nuns were conducted by the *alcalde de crimen* and other principal men of the city to their new site, several blocks southeast of the cathedral. ¹⁶⁵

When Pedro Thomas returned from Spain, having won royal favor for Jesús María, he found the convent in a new site. He was, predictably, outraged, and asked the audiencia to order the nuns to return to their original site. Thomas defended the location of the convent, which he claimed covered four *solares*

in which can be built four dormitory rooms in which 500 nuns will fit; and without the three rooms already begun, strongly built and with massive walls ... and with all this the abbess has tried to seek another house, without paying attention to the fact that this was a house of poor maidens. [166](#) 

Thomas elaborated that the convent was already well supplied with water from the Santa Fe aqueduct, which arrived in a fountain in the middle of the patio. The site, for its part, was "*in the highest and healthiest part of the city.*" [167](#) (*en el mas alto y mas sano de la ciudad*) Thus the founder could not understand why the abbess should want to spend the convent's money to move to a poorer site. [168](#) What Thomas apparently failed to understand was that, while the areas outside the traza were now sufficiently Hispanized to permit the foundation in them of convents for nuns, the barrios were still seen as areas of poverty. In May 1587, the audiencia finally ruled that newly received dowried nuns should remain where they were while the dowryless nuns returned to the original location. In November, this obviously impractical decision was reversed and the convent was left where it was. [169](#) Hereafter the convent stayed in this central site, of which only the church now remains. [170](#)

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Nonetheless, founding convents outside the city center in areas previously viewed as dangerous and polluted was increasingly acceptable. Such areas were viewed as regions of poverty, but this could even be appealing to women who wanted to create convents of strict observance. The foundresses of Mexico's first discalced Carmelite convent sought an extra-urban site because they wanted their convent to be "*withdrawn from the noise and commerce of the people.*" [171](#) (*retirado del comercio y ruido de la gente*) Following this logic, during the 1590s several foundations were attempted in the areas outside the traza. Two were successful. In 1591, Viceroy Don Luis de Velasco (hijo) gave permission for the establishment of a new convent of Urban Clares, to be called San Juan de la Penitencia. [172](#) Its geographical focus was the southwestern barrio of Moyotla (Moyotlan) in the parish of Vera Cruz. Unlike the abortive transfer of Santa Clara in 1575, the new foundation proceeded without controversy. The convent was to be supported by alms collected from among the Indians of the barrio, who had importuned Velasco to install a convent of nuns in their neighborhood. [173](#) The Indians began to collect alms and to construct the cloister, using as the convent's base an *ermita* established many years before by Pedro de Gante. In 1598, the four nuns selected as foundresses left Santa Clara de México and entered their new convent. The following year, they were joined by eight more nuns from Santa Clara, bringing their numbers to twelve. [174](#) Outside Spanish center of the city, however, the new convent had to struggle for survival, particularly because it accepted girl pupils without charge and had no income, its foundresses' dowries presumably having been

left with the original convent. ¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, it remained in its founding location, supported only by alms until it received personal patronage in the seventeenth century.

Personal patronage and an extra-urban location were the hallmark of another foundation attempt in 1601. Doña María de Velasco, widow of the treasurer Ruy Díaz de Mendoza, also sought to establish a suburban convent. Doña María had been a resident of La Concepción, and now applied to the Crown for permission to establish a convent in the *hermita* of San Cristóbal, "between Mexico and Santiago, in a barrio belonging to the friars of Saint Francis, where they used to say mass for the devotion of the Indians." ¹⁷⁶ 

The would-be foundress sought to establish an extremely rigorous institution, staffed by fifteen or sixteen nuns. Doña María's attempt was apparently unsuccessful.

A more successful attempt at an extra-traza foundation was made in the same year when the Franciscan convent of Santa Isabel was founded by the wealthy widow and encomendera Doña Catalina de Peralta. Doña Catalina established the convent in her own houses, which were located to the west of the plaza mayor near the monastery of San Francisco. ¹⁷⁷ The new institution was inaugurated in February 1601, when six nuns from Santa Clara came to join the house as foundresses. Originally established under the First Rule of Santa Clara, ¹⁷⁸ the convent desperately needed the alms that its environs were unable to provide. ¹⁷⁹ Only its eventual conversion into a foundation of Urban Clares allowed it to escape the meager existence endured by the nuns of San Juan de la Penitencia. ¹⁸⁰ Thus the patron was able to use her considerable personal wealth - she established the convent with assets worth nearly 100,000 pesos - to ensure a reasonably stable and comfortable existence during her lifetime. ¹⁸¹ However, a wealthy patron was needed for seventeenth-century church building. Diego del Castillo dedicated his wealth for this purpose, and the new church was dedicated in 1683.

These extra-urban foundations, however, had little to do with the crises that surrounded the foundation of Santa Clara de México. By the last decade of the century, the city was noticeably different. The epidemic of 1576 had depleted the city's Indian population, and more and more members of the *república de españoles* spilled over the edges of the traza and into previously Indian neighborhoods. San Juan de la Penitencia and Santa Isabel, then, were not extra-urban foundations in the same threatening sense that Santa Clara had been when the Franciscans moved it to the Indian church of San Juan. Nor was their jurisdiction a cause of conflict. The Franciscans' dwindling authority and the diminishing Indian dominance outside the traza made it tolerable that such areas should be sanctified by the presence of

nuns. Where regions outside the Spanish traza had been figured only twenty years before as a perilous zone "of evil life," full of dangerous Indians, by the end of the period under examination here the only concern for nuns living outside the traza was the poverty that seemed to accompany such a location, which few nuns were apparently willing to accept without the counterweight of powerful personal patronage. The only question now was whether the nuns themselves would be willing to accept residency in the less-prestigious areas outside the traza. Most were not, and clustered tightly around the inner core of the Spanish city.

The end of the century, then, saw the triumph not only of patrimonial models of foundation, as we saw earlier, but of a customary association between women's institutions and the urban core. Notwithstanding sixteenth-century experiments in alternative models-whether Zumárraga's dream of convents among the Indians or the Franciscans' use of nuns to anchor their own claim to the rapidly changing Indian barrios of Mexico - convents were by century's end solidly entrenched in the most Spanish zones of the city. The association between the convent and the Spanish population was reinforced, by the *fin de siècle*, by the definitive settlement of controversies over jurisdiction, which placed most of Mexico's nuns firmly under the control of the secular church.

Appendices

[Appendix 1. AGI, México 280. El monasterio de la orden de la concepcion de mexco. 19 August 1570.](#)

[Appendix 2. AGI, México 282. Al Illmo señor don Juan ovando presidente del consejo real de las yndias. Fray Geronimo Mendieta dize lo mal que parecio ... 8 September 1574.](#)

Notes:

Note 1: AGI, México 283. Relacion del negocio de santa clara. C. 1575. [Back.](#)

Note 2: The only mention of the episode I have found is in Stafford Poole, C.M., *Pedro Moya de Contreras: Catholic Reform and Royal Power in New Spain, 1571-1591* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 76-77. [Back.](#)

Note 3: McNamara, op. cit., 388. [Back.](#)

Note 4: Ibid., 387. [Back.](#)

Note 5: García Oro, op. cit., 204. [Back.](#)

Note 6: Ibid., 211. [Back.](#)

Note 7: Ibid. [Back.](#)

Note 8: Joan Morris, *The Lady Was a Bishop: The Hidden History of Women with Clerical Ordination and the Jurisdiction of Bishops* (New York: MacMillan, 1973), 102. [Back.](#)

Note 9: The stratagem of claiming to be laywomen and therefore exempt from jurisdiction was not limited to Mexico City's beatas. After Trent, Ursulines resisted the imposition of clausura by claiming to be a lay foundation. A. D. Wright, *The Counter-Reformation: Catholic Europe and the Non-Christian World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 53. [Back.](#)

Note 10: Marroquí, op. cit., ii, 133-5. [Back.](#)

Note 11: Muriel, *Conventos*, 20. [Back.](#)

Note 12: Carta del arzobispo de México al Consejo de Indias, sobre el Concilio Provincial y el estado y gobierno de aquella Iglesia. 12. ix. 1555. In Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario* viii, No. 432, 30-4; 31. Montúfar was designated archbishop by Philip II in 1551, three years after the death of Zumárraga, but arrived in Mexico only in 1554. See Robert Ricard, "Notes sur la biographie de Fr. Alonso de Montúfar, second archevêque de Mexico (1551-1572)," *Bulletin Hispanique* 242-6. [Back.](#)

Note 13: AGI, México 280. A su magd del monestio de la concepcion de mexco. 2. xi. 1565. [Back.](#)

Note 14: AGI, México 280. El doctor villanueva a sm. 6. xii. 1565. [Back.](#)

Note 15: Carta de Fray Miguel Navarro y otros religiosos de la órden de San Francisco al Rey Don Felipe II... 6. xi. 1569. *Cartas de Indias i* (Madrid: Atlas, 1974), No. xxxiv, 162-4. [Back.](#)

Note 16: Torquemada, op. cit., iii, Libro 19, Cap. xxvii, 373. [Back.](#)

Note 17: AGI, México 336A, Doc. 60. El arzobispo de mexico a sm. 20. iv. 1570. [Back.](#)

Note 18: AGI, México 336A, Doc. 66. El arzobispo de mexico a sm. 18. viii. 1570. This letter is published with the date of 20. iv. 1570 in Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario* xi, No. 641, 84-6. [Back.](#)

Note 19: AGI, México 280. El monasterio de la orden de la concepcion de mexico a sm. 19. viii. 1570. [Back.](#)

Note 20: Al virrey y Audiencia de la Nueva España; sobre lo que toca al monasterio de monjas de la Limpísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora, que ha procurado eximirse de la jurisdicción del ordinario. 20. x. 1570. In García, *El*

Clero, No. lxxxiii, 175-6. [Back.](#)

Note 21: The commissary general was an official given power over all the Franciscan provinces of New Spain, dependent only upon the commissary general of the Indies in Madrid. His powers were vast, including the foundation of convents, the naming of prelates, and the administration of sacraments. Thus his power exceeded that of the provincial. Isaac Vázquez Janero, "Estructura de la orden franciscana en América," in *Actas*, 173-208; 197-8 passim. [Back.](#)

Note 22: AGI, México 282. Fray francisco de rivera y fray alonso descalona a sm. 26. xi. 1572. [Back.](#)

Note 23: Fray Alonso de Escalona was elected provincial in 1570 after the departure of Navarro. Torquemada, op. cit., iii, Libro 19, Cap. xxvii, 373. [Back.](#)

Note 24: AGI, México 282. La avadesa del monasto de la conception a sm. 14. xii. 1572. [Back.](#)

Note 25: AGI, México 19, N. 96. Martin enriquez a sm. 16. xii. 1572. [Back.](#)

Note 26: "La que pretenden es que a costa de la rrenta del monesto se hiziese otra casa de la mesma orden y a ella se pasesen algunas de las que aora estan en el monesterio que pretenden dar la ovediencia a los de san franco." AGI, México 19, N. 101. Martin enriquez a sm. 1573. [Back.](#)

Note 27: Al arzobispo de México: que tome bajo su amparo y obediencia el monasterio de monjas de la Concepción, porque dos [sic] frailes Franciscanos no pueden ya tenerlo a su cargo. 26. v. 1573. In García, *El Clero*, No. lxxxvii, 82-3. [Back.](#)

Note 28: Muriel gives a date of 4 October 1573 based on an eighteenth-century document. Muriel, *Conventos*, 74. During the final illness of the aged Montúfar, Moya was appointed coadjutor bishop of Mexico with right of succession. He made his first appearance before the cathedral chapter on 30 October 1573, when the chapter transferred administration of the diocese to him. He was consecrated 5 December 1574. Poole, op. cit., 39-40. [Back.](#)

Note 29: Ibid., 3 passim. [Back.](#)

Note 30: The Franciscans, for instance, were still maintaining prisons and stocks for Indians, despite prohibitions against such practices; further, they were in the habit, as Moya saw it, of invading and seizing secular parishes and the territory of other orders. Ibid., 75-76. [Back.](#)

Note 31: AGI, México 336A, Ramo 2, doc. 108. El arzobispo de mexico a juan de ovando. 1. ix. 1574. [Back.](#)

Note 32: "Aunque ay en el cantidad de mugeres y siguen su coro mas en efecto no son monjas." AGI, México 19, N. 105. Martin enriquez a SM, 20. iii. 1573. [Back.](#)

Note 33: Carta de Fray Miguel Navarro y otros religiosos al Rey Don Felipe II... 6. xi. 1569. *Cartas de Indias* i, No. xxxiv, 162-4. [Back.](#)

Note 34: AGI, México 283. Informacion de como se le dio la obediencia al provisor. Testimony de Miguel de Ecija, f. 5v. Ecija, however, may be an unreliable witness. Juan de Bergara said that Ecija told him that if the friars did not accept jurisdiction, Ecija would give him a cassock as the bearer of good news (*le darian de albricias una sotana por que la dicha maria de san niculas y las demas rreligiosas del dicha monasterio deseaban y rrescibieran mucho contento de que no las aceptasen*). Bergara also said, however, that when he went back to the convent with Juan de Sepúlveda and talked to María de San Nicolás about the matter, she displayed great contentment at the news and said that she would give him the promised *albricias*. [Back.](#)

Note 35: Ibid., f. 12. [Back.](#)

Note 36: AGI, México 336A, R. 2, doc. 104(7). Relacion de los iglesias, diezmos, religiones, etc., ... de mexico. 1570, f. 6. [Back.](#)

Note 37: AGI, México 283. Informacion de como se le dio la obediencia al provisor. Testimony of Pedro Tomas, f. 4v. [Back.](#)

Note 38: Ibid., f. 2. [Back.](#)

Note 39: AGI, México 283. Informacion de como se le dio la obediencia al provisor. Testimony of Francisco Pérez del Castillo, f. 9. [Back.](#)

Note 40: INAH, Colección Gómez de Orozco 42. Crónica suscinta del convento de Santa Clara de México por fr. Antonio de la Rosa Figueroa. C. 1793. [Back.](#)

Note 41: AGI, México 283. Informacion de como se le dio la obediencia al provisor, f. 3v. [Back.](#)

Note 42: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de mexico y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de santa clara del monasterio... 1574-5. Testimony of Pedro Tomas, f. 4v. [Back.](#)

Note 43: AGI, México 282. Información como las monjas de sancta clara de la ciudad de mexico fueron rrecividas a la obediencia de la orden de san francisco. [Back.](#)

Note 44: Torquemada, op. cit., iii, Libro 19, Cap. xxvii, 373. [Back.](#)

Note 45: AGI, México 282. Fray antonio roldan a don juan de ovando. 20. iii. 1574. [Back.](#)

Note 46: AGI, México 283. Relación del negocio de santa clara. C. 1575. [Back.](#)

Note 47: AGI, México 282. Fray francisco de ribera al arzobispo moya de contreras. 29. xi. 1573. [Back.](#)

Note 48: Ibid. "En la comission que trae el pe navarro de vice comisso gral no viene rrevocada la mia de comisso gral que yo tenia, y en mi obediencia en que me manda el gnalisso ir a su presentia me llama comisso gral como antes y segun dice algunos canonistas ni yo estoy privado (pues en ningua parte esta la privation) ni el pe navarro puede hacer su offitio hasta que yo salga de la tierra, porque se presume que el gnalisso quiso que yo saliese con esta honrra de las indias." [Back.](#)

Note 49: Torquemada, op. cit., iii, Libro 19, Cap. xxvii, 375, says that Ribera died in Spain in 1573, but as he was writing to the bishop from Mexico at the end of November of that year, it seems more likely that his recall and death took place the following year. [Back.](#)

Note 50: AGI, México 283. Relacion del negocio de santa clara, f. 2v. [Back.](#)

Note 51: Poole suggests that Navarro's actions are sufficiently bizarre to merit such a diagnosis. Op. cit., 76. [Back.](#)

Note 52: AGI, México 283. Información de como se le dio la obediencia al provisor. 3. xii. 1573. [Back.](#)

Note 53: Schwaller, *Church*, 70. In 1577, in fact, Portillo would be convicted by the audiencia of *lèse majesté* for infringing upon royal court privilege in a case he heard as an ecclesiastical judge. Though he was later reinstated by the Council of the Indies, he was clearly as vigorous as Moya in his promotion of the power of the mitre. [Back.](#)

Note 54: AGI, México 283. Información de como se le dio la obediencia al provisor. 11. xii. 1573, f. 15. [Back.](#)

Note 55: AGI, México 282. Información del convento de Santa Clara de México, como las monjas de sancta clara de la ciudad de méxico fueron rrecividas a la obediencia de la orden de san francisco. 10. xii. 1573. [Back.](#)

Note 56: AGI, México 283. Información de como se le dio la obediencia al provisor. 11. xii. 1573. [Back.](#)

Note 57: Ibid., f. 20. [Back.](#)

Note 58: Ibid., 27. [Back.](#)

Note 59: AGI, México 282. Fray antonio roldan a juan de ovando. 20 iii. 1574, f. 1. [Back.](#)

Note 60: AGI, México 336A. R.2, doc. 105 dupl. El arzobispo moya de contreras a juan de ovando. 24 iii. 1574. [Back.](#)

Note 61: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de México y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de santa clara del monasterio... 1574-5. Testimony of Andrés Quixelmo, f. 53. [Back.](#)

Note 62: AGI, México 336A, R. 2, doc. 108. Carta del arzobispo Moya de Contreras. 1. ix 1574, f. 4. [Back.](#)

Note 63: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de México y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de Santa Clara del monasterio... 1574-5. Testimony of Andrés Quixelmo, f. 53v. [Back.](#)

Note 64: Ibid., f. 69v. [Back.](#)

Note 65: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de México y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de Santa Clara del monasterio... 1574-5. Testimony of Alonso de Sarria, f. 25. [Back.](#)

Note 66: Ibid., testimony of Pedro de Penas, f. 20v. [Back.](#)

Note 67: Ibid., testimony of Alonso de Sarrio, f. 30v. [Back.](#)

Note 68: Tomás Zepeda Rincón, "La instrucción pública en la Nueva España en el siglo XVI." (Master's thesis: Universidad Nacional de México, 1933), 75. [Back.](#)

Note 69: Ricard, op. cit., 223. See also Gibson, op. cit., 382. [Back.](#)

Note 70: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de México y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de santa clara del monasterio... 1574-5, testimony of Pedro López de Buitrago, f. 10v. [Back.](#)

Note 71: Ibid., testimony of Alonso de Aguilar, ff. 35v-36. [Back.](#)

Note 72: Ibid., f. 36. [Back.](#)

Note 73: Ibid., testimony of Jerónimo de Villanueva, f. 25v-26. [Back.](#)

Note 74: Ibid., f. 22. [Back.](#)

Note 75: Ibid., testimony of Pedro López de Buitrago, f. 14v. [Back.](#)

Note 76: Ibid., testimony of Jerónimo de Villanueva, f. 28. [Back.](#)

Note 77: Ibid., testimony of Jerónimo de Villanueva, f. 23v. [Back.](#)

Note 78: Ibid., f. 28v. [Back.](#)

Note 79: Alejandro Cañeque, "Theater of Power: Writing and Representing the Auto de Fe in Colonial Mexico," *The Americas* 52: 3 (January 1996), 321-43; 322. [Back.](#)

Note 80: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de México y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de Santa Clara del monasterio... 1574-5, testimony of Alonso Rodríguez, f. 49v. [Back.](#)

Note 81: AGI, México 336A, R. 2, doc. 108. Carta del arzobispo Moya de

Contreras. 1 ix. 1574. [Back.](#)

Note 82: Ibid. f. 5. [Back.](#)

Note 83: AGI, México, 282. Fray miguel navarro a sm. 9. ix. 1574. [Back.](#)

Note 84: AGI, México 282. Fray jeronimo de mendieta a juan de ovando. 8. ix. 1574. [Back.](#)

Note 85: AGI, México 283. Patente del comisario general de san francisco. 1575. Navarro renounced the office of Commissary General sometime in 1575 and was replaced by Zequera, who came from Spain. Torquemada, op. cit., iii, Libro 19, Cap. xxviii, 375. Torquemada says that this occurred in 1576, but Zequera was already acting as commissary in 1575. [Back.](#)

Note 86: AGI, México 283. Traslado autorizado, de cierto auto y dexacion que hizo frai rro de sequera ... 5. xi. 1576, f. 1. [Back.](#)

Note 87: "No aver avido en el dicho convento de santa clara abadesa ni monjas profesas ni fundacion fformada del dicho convento con la clausura que conviene." AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de México y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de santa clara del monasterio... 1574-5. f. 3. [Back.](#)

Note 88: Carta al rey, del arzobispo de México sobre provisión de prebendas, publicación de la Cruzada, historia de fray Bernardino de Sahagún y otras cosas. 28. iii. 1576. In Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario* xii, No. 689, 9-16; 15. [Back.](#)

Note 89: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de mexico y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de santa clara del monasterio... 1574-5. f. 3. Also see AGI, México 283. Relación del negocio de Santa Clara, f. 1v. [Back.](#)

Note 90: Poole, op. cit. [Back.](#)

Note 91: AGI, México 283. Relacion del negocio de santa clara, f. 2. [Back.](#)

Note 92: Carta al Rey, del arzobispo de México diciendo que tenía buena inteligencia con el virrey y Audiencia, y tratando de otras cosas referentes al gobierno de su Iglesia. 6. xi. 1576. In Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario* xii, No. 690, 16-25, 23. [Back.](#)

Note 93: AGI, México 283. Relacion del negocio de santa clara, f. 2. [Back.](#)

Note 94: Ibid., f. 2v. [Back.](#)

Note 95: Muriel, *Conventos*, 172. [Back.](#)

Note 96: AGI, México 18. Información sobre las bulas que han pasado a la nueva españa. 1577. [Back.](#)

Note 97: AGI, México 283. Fray bernaldino perez al señor don diego de zuñiga. [Back.](#)

Note 98: Carta al rey del arzobispo de México sobre el gobierno de su Iglesia, muerte de los indios y otras cosas. 15. iii. 1577. In Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario* xii, No. 692, 27-31; 29. [Back.](#)

Note 99: AGI, México 283. Fray bernaldino perez al señor don diego de zuñiga. [Back.](#)

Note 100: AGI, México 283. Traslado autorizado, de sierto auto y dexacion que hizo fray rodrigo de sequera comisario general de las monjas y conventos de santa clara. 5. xi. 1576, f. 3v. [Back.](#)

Note 101: AGI, México 283. Fray rodrigo de sequera a sm. 20. iii. 1577. [Back.](#)

Note 102: Muriel, *Conventos*, 173. [Back.](#)

Note 103: Early in 1579, however, Zequera was still complaining to the king of the difficulty of governing the nuns. He granted that the two years of his jurisdiction had been without great incident, but noted that he had had to give profession to the nuns only "por atajar muchos escandalos que estaban amenazando si no se hiziera," as the nuns were importuning him to allow them to profess. AGI, México 284. Fray rodrigo de ssequera a SM. 10. i. 1579. Moya, for his part, eventually pleaded with the king to order that Santa Clara remain under Franciscan jurisdiction. AGI, México 336A, Ramo 3, doc. 145. El arzobispo pedro moya de contreras a sm. [Back.](#)

Note 104: Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994), 64. [Back.](#)

Note 105: Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, Studies in Social Discontinuity, 1980), 35. [Back.](#)

Note 106: Archivo de Simancas, Reformas Monásticas 2208. Breve de Julio II a su Nuncio, a instancia del Rey Católico, sobre la trasladación de ciertos monasterios, extramuros de Pamplona, al casco de la ciudad, especialmente de monjas menores. 1513. See also García Oro, op. cit., 211. [Back.](#)

Note 107: Perry, *Disorder*, 77. [Back.](#)

Note 108: Bilinkoff, op. cit., 7. [Back.](#)

Note 109: Gilchrist, op. cit., 66. Convents were liminal because of their location "at the physical and psychological margins of society." [Back.](#)

Note 110: Carta al rey del arzobispo de México... 1. iii. 1565. In Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario* x, No. 561, 70-3; 70. [Back.](#)

Note 111: AGI, Guatemala 170. El monasterio de monjas de la conception de santiago de la provincia de guathemala sobre ... cierta md. 18. iii. 1579. [Back.](#)

Note 112: AGI, Guatemala 170. A sm de las monjas de la concepcion de guatemala. [Back.](#)

Note 113: AGI, Guatemala 170. ... Informacion fecha de pedimiento del cavildo y rregimineto della sobre la comodidad y mejoria que sera trocar la casa que oy es conbento con el ospital desta ciudad. 1578. Also see agi Guatemala 170. Geronimo gomez a sm, s.f.; Cabildo de santiago a sm, 29. iii. 1585. [Back.](#)

Note 114: AGI, Justicia 157, No. 2, Pieza 2, f. 24. Información sobre la casa de Nuestra Señora de la Caridad. 1557. [Back.](#)

Note 115: Ibid., 29. [Back.](#)

Note 116: Ibid. [Back.](#)

Note 117: Ibid., f. 36. [Back.](#)

Note 118: He also thought that the colegio should be among "gente onrrada y española y donde las vean y visiten e no entre yndios." Ibid., f. 53v. [Back.](#)

Note 119: Ibid., f. 66. [Back.](#)

Note 120: "Pero pareciendoles à nuestros Frailes, que aquel lugar estava mui metido en la Ciudad, que aora es de Españoles, y que los Indios estaban atrasmano, para Doctrinarlos con mas facilidad... Lo dejaron, y se pasaron al que aora tienen, en cuio contorno estava el maior Gentio de los Naturales." Torquemada, op. cit., iii, Book v, Cap. xvi, 36. [Back.](#)

Note 121: Marroquí, op. cit., i, 72. [Back.](#)

Note 122: Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th-18th Centuries*, trans. Eileen Corrigan, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 147. [Back.](#)

Note 123: Ibid., 194. [Back.](#)

Note 124: Ibid., 193. [Back.](#)

Note 125: Ricard, op. cit., 35. [Back.](#)

Note 126: Ibid., 141. [Back.](#)

Note 127: Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico 1519-1810* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964), 372. [Back.](#)

Note 128: There were, of course, Indian parishes, particularly later in the sixteenth century. John Schwaller distinguishes between three types of parish structure: urban, found in major cities; parishes created to serve mine communities; and Indian parishes, which tended to be small and poor. See

Schwaller, *Wealth*, 84-5. [Back.](#)

Note 129: John Schwaller with Anne T. Schwaller, *Partidos y párrocos bajo la Real Corona en la Nueva España, siglo XVI* (Mexico: INAH Colección Científica, 1981), 35. [Back.](#)

Note 130: Gibson, op. cit., 373. [Back.](#)

Note 131: Ibid., 376. [Back.](#)

Note 132: AGI, México 336A, R. 2, doc. 104 (7). Relación de los iglesias, diezmos. etc.... de mexico. 1570. [Back.](#)

Note 133: Ibid., f. 4. [Back.](#)

Note 134: AGI, México 336A, R. 2, doc. 108. El arzobispo moya de contreras a sm. 1 ix. 1574. [Back.](#)

Note 135: Ibid., f. 3v. [Back.](#)

Note 136: AGI, México 283. Informacion sobre santa clara de mexico, testimony of Maese Alonso, f. 54. Testimony of Diego de Fuentes, f. 58. However, the information produced by the archbishopric in 1570 had asserted that San Juan was a "barrio donde ay cinco mill yndios tributantes estos tienen a cargo los frayles de sant franco porque esta de su monesterio a un tiro de arcabuz." AGI, México 336A. Relación de los iglesias, diezmos. etc. ... de mexico. 1570, f. 4. [Back.](#)

Note 137: AGI, México 283. Relacion del negocio de santa clara. C. 1575, f. 1. [Back.](#)

Note 138: Carta de; Padre Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta al Ilustre Señor Licenciado Juan de Ovando ... c. 1571. *Cartas de Religiosos de Nueva España*, x, 101-15; 103. [Back.](#)

Note 139: Patricia Nettel D., "Cosmovisión y cultura material franciscana en los pueblos de indios de Nueva España según fray Diego Valadés (una perspectiva etnográfica)," in Elsa Cecilia Frost, ed., *Franciscanos y mundo religioso en México* (Mexico: UNAM, 1993), 39-53; 40. [Back.](#)

Note 140: AGI, México 283. Proceso y informaciones fechas en la ciudad de México y otros autos sobre haver salido las monjas de Santa Clara del monasterio ... 1574-5. Testimony of Maese Alonso, f. 55. [Back.](#)

Note 141: Ibid., testimony of Alonso de Torquemada, f. 57. [Back.](#)

Note 142: Ibid., testimony of Andrés Quixelmo, f. 53v. [Back.](#)

Note 143: Ibid. [Back.](#)

Note 144: Ibid., testimony of Diego de Fuentes, f. 58v. [Back.](#)

Note 145: He claimed to have heard "que el concilio tridentino manda que las que estubieren fuera de los pueblos las hagan rrecoger dentro de los pueblos." f. 54v. [Back.](#)

Note 146: Because I have not investigated Nahuatl sources, my comments in this regard remain brief. [Back.](#)

Note 147: Ibid., testimony of Alonso de San Miguel, 60v. [Back.](#)

Note 148: Ibid., testimony of Martín Estévan, f. 61v. [Back.](#)

Note 149: INAH, Colección Gómez de Orozco 42 bis, ff. 1-23. Nomina de religiosas del convento de Santa Clara de México, 1570-1747. [Back.](#)

Note 150: Ibid., f. 22. [Back.](#)

Note 151: AGI, México 287. Informacion de las monjas de santa clara de mexico. 20. iii. 1582. Testimony of Diego López, f. 5. [Back.](#)

Note 152: Hanns J. Prem, "Disease in Sixteenth-Century Mexico," in Noble David Cook and W. George Lovell, eds., *"Secret Judgments of God": Old World Disease in Colonial Spanish America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 20-48; 39. [Back.](#)

Note 153: Gibson, op. cit., 378. [Back.](#)

Note 154: Schwaller, *Wealth*, 151. [Back.](#)

Note 155: Prem, op. cit., 41-2. [Back.](#)

Note 156: *Guía*, Acta del 30. iii. 1581, 576. [Back.](#)

Note 157: Gibson, op. cit., 377. [Back.](#)

Note 158: AGI, México 288. Carta de las monjas de santa clara de méxico. c. 1580. [Back.](#)

Note 159: AGI, México 284. Petición de las monjas de Santa Clara de México. 12. ix. 1579. [Back.](#)

Note 160: Algunas cabellerias de tierra y tres sitios destancias para ganados y dos sitios para molinos." Ibid. [Back.](#)

Note 161: AGI, México 287. Información de las monjas de Santa Clara de México. 20. iii. 1582. Testimony of Juan Rodríguez de León, f. 6v. [Back.](#)

Note 162: AGI, México 287. Información de las monjas de Santa Clara de México. 20. iii. 1582. Testimony of Juan Rodríguez de León, f. 6v. [Back.](#)

Note 163: The connection between prosperity and the center was evident from

the beginning. In 1570, writing of their parishioners in the parish of Vera Cruz, the parish curias reported, "ay novecientas y cinquenta animas poco mas o menos de confesion entre espanoles mestizos y mulatos y negros. son casi todos e los mas pobres por que estan y habitan casi fuera de la ciudad." Those who lived outside the traza were necessarily poor because they lived outside the traza. AGI, México 336A. Relacion de los diezmos, religiones, etc., de México. 1570, f. 4. Though the ethnic connotations of extra-traza residency were lessened by 1585, the connotations of poverty continued. [Back.](#)

Note 164: Sigüenza y Góngora, op. cit., 12v. [Back.](#)

Note 165: Ibid., 14v. [Back.](#)

Note 166: AGI, México 286. Advertencias que pedro tomas a dado. s.f. (1584). [Back.](#)

Note 167: Ibid. [Back.](#)

Note 168: "... donde no tienen agua para beber ni guerta ni otras rrefrecion alga ni yglia que es lo principal." Ibid. [Back.](#)

Note 169: Muriel, *Conventos*, 84-5. [Back.](#)

Note 170: Mariano Cuevas, s.j., *Historia de la iglesia en México* (Mexico: Imprenta del Colegio Salesiano, 1926) Vol. 4, 182. [Back.](#)

Note 171: Texas, García MS 79. Relación de la fundación del convento antiguo de Santa Teresa, 80. [Back.](#)

Note 172: Muriel, *Conventos*, 191. [Back.](#)

Note 173: Cuevas, op. cit., Vol. 4, 188. [Back.](#)

Note 174: Texas, García MS 15, Folder 8. Fundación del convento de san Juan de la Penitencia, sacada del Teatro Mexicano, escrito por el R. P. fray Agustín de Betancur ... y de otras escrituras y testimonios. [Back.](#)

Note 175: Muriel, op. cit., 192. [Back.](#)

Note 176: AGI, México 270. Información doña María de Velasco. 19. xii. 1601. [Back.](#)

Note 177: Texas, García MS 15, Folder 8. Fundación del convento de Santa Isabel. [Back.](#)

Note 178: AGN, Bienes Nacionales 78, Exp. 63. Fray Francisco de Moreno en nombre de doña Catalina de Peralta. 26. i. 1601. [Back.](#)

Note 179: Muriel, *Conventos*, 212. [Back.](#)

Note 180: It is unclear when this change occurred. Muriel suggests that the

convent was inaugurated under the Urban rule; however, in 1610 the foundress was still referring to the convent as "discalced." AGI, México 2606. Ynform rda en la rreal audia de mexco en virtud de la rreal ca de su mt sobre la pretencion de doña cata de peralta biuda en favor de el convento de las descalças de mexco. 1610-15, f. 3v. [Back](#).

Note 181: INAH, Colección Antigua 106. Documentos varios de los conventos de monjas. Vol 102, 215 ff. f 196-214: Fundación de Sta Ysabel. 25 xii 1600. In 1610, Peralta complained that the convent only had 2000 pesos of income to sustain 90 people. She now sought to annex her encomienda villages to the convent in perpetuity. [Back](#).

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