In the preface to his essay *On Time*, Norbert Elias warns us that in the study of human knowledge and its institutions we must not “begin with an individual as the knowing subject” because “whatever his innovative contribution may be, the individual is supported by and prolongs preexisting knowledge”. Elias emphasized that institutionalized knowledge, for example the institutionalization of time in calendars, comes to exert a self coercing force over individuals and constitutes part of the very structure of their personalities; what he called a “civilizing process”. Hence, according to Elias, historiographic works on the genres of human creativity and their operation in cultural traditions must comprehend such civilizing processes, a particularly difficult challenge in cases of contact under uneven conditions of domination between civilizing processes that developed separately over millennia.

This challenge and its difficulties are the central problems discussed in the articles of the thematic section in this issue. The primordial titles of Indian townships are texts that attest to the territorial base of colonial towns and their existence since time immemorial. However, the production of the titles involved the conjugation of civilizing processes that prior to 1521 had separate millenary genealogies. Primordial titles also represent a “primordial titlehood” that includes ritual and symbolic aspects of the social representation of dominion and its institutionalization; phenomena that in effect appear represented both in native documents and in the ceremonial aspects of Mexican landscapes. The study of primordial titles thus presents us with a creative and subtle puzzle that demands understanding the continuity of Mesoamerican civilizing processes as resources in the defense of territory and identity.

The thematic section (coordinated by Hans Roskamp) begins with an argument related to Elias’ position and problematic. Michel R. Oudijk and María de los Ángeles Romero Frizzi, in a synthetic work based on the native documents from Oaxaca, develop the thesis that “primordial titles contain the sacred history of Indian townships.” Through a review of the sequence of production of native documents during the colonial period, they examine a movement documented first by the production of codices, *lienzos*, and genealogies in the sixteenth
century, then by the selections from *lienzos*, maps and genealogies reproduced in testaments written in tchazáa (zapotec) during the seventeenth century, and finally by the “classic” primordial titles produced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In all of these productions we encounter representations of complex “networks of social relations that make possible a massive and continuous flow of information between the towns of a region.” In spite of the diversity of themes and changes in form introduced during the production of native documents in the different historical periods of the colony, Ouidjük y Romero Frizzi argue that a common nucleus is conserved and constitutes an index of a genre of representation developed within a Mesoamerican tradition oriented to the territoriality of a group and its identity.

René García Castro and Jesús Arzate Becerril study another matrix of primordial titles, their apocryphal production. In the north and west of the Mexican basin, a zone of Otomian townships, Pedro Villafranca, the cacique of Xilotepec, produced several land titles in the period before August 1761. Of the twenty titles which still exist, one was the source of a well known controversy. In 1790, after almost thirty years of litigation, the apocryphal title of Asunción Malacatepec (a land grant dated in 1558 and created by Pedro Villafranca) was recognized as legally valid in a lamentably brief act of curious justice. The explanation of this case permits García Castro and Arzate Becerril to provide the details of the context of the production and use of the document in a legal process carried out in the Mexican *Audiencia* at the time of the Bourbon Reforms.

The theme of the relations between primordial titles, native oral tradition and the ceremonial aspects of Mexican landscapes presented in the study by Ouidjük and Romero Frizzi is developed for the State of Guerrero in a study by Blanca Jiménez Padilla and Samuel Villela Flores. The importance of the theme of territoriality is made evident by the fact that forty of the approximately sixty codices from Guerrero are either maps or documents of a historical-cartographic nature. In various Titles produced in Guerrero, the authors encounter references to rituals or protocols of territorial possession. In a similar fashion, there exist references to “acts for signaling possession” in documents that describe walking the boundaries of a territory. By studying the *Lienzos de Petlacala* and *Malinaltepec*, Jiménez and Villela examine the relations between these documents and the rituals and protocols of acts of possession. They review the references to rituals in documents from the eighteenth century and their relations both to Medieval European practices and Mesoamerican traditions. They also consider contemporary ritual forms including the current use of the *Lienzo de Petlacala* in rain rituals.

New Spain’s northern frontier, especially the central high plain of New Biscayne, has a history of colonial consolidation different from that of the provinces of New Spain and New Galicia. Hence, the notion of “primordial titlehood” and its development in the area during the colonial period are also different. We close the thematic section with an important work by Salvador Álvarez concerned with these differences and their conditions. Álvarez develops the thesis that there “never existed a sharp separation between civil and missional establishments in central New Biscayne”, but that both operated in a long and incomplete process to establish Indian townships in the sense of stable social-territorial entities with well defined spatial limits. Through an extensive review of the colonialization of the Tepehuanes and the Tarahumaras, the author describes this process and reflects on the degree to which “primordial titlehood” was instituted in the central part of the province in the colonial period.

The documentary section of this issue continues the theme of civilizing processes through contact during the formation of New Spain. Juan Carlos Cortés Máximo presents us with extracts taken from an earlier version compiled by Zubillaga in *Monumenta Mexicana* of the *Relación sobre la residencia de Michoacán*, a report on the activities of the Jesuits in Pátzcuaro and its surrounding P’urhépecha communities, written in 1585 by Francisco Ramírez. In his presentation, Cortés Máximo argues that this work has been examined more in relation to its descriptions of the deities and celebrations of the P’urhépecha people than as regards the sections dedicated to the description of the evangelical process in the early conformation of P’urhépecha townships in Michoacán.

The two articles in the general section also pursue themes relevant to the indigenous history in the New World and both represent efforts
century, then by the selections from lienzos, maps and genealogies reproduced in testaments written in tcházáa (zapotec) during the seventeenth century, and finally by the “classic” primordial titles produced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In all of these productions we encounter representations of complex “networks of social relations that make possible a massive and continuous flow of information between the towns of a region.” In spite of the diversity of themes and changes in form introduced during the production of native documents in the different historical periods of the colony, Ouidjík y Romero Frizzi argue that a common nucleus is conserved and constitutes an index of a genre of representation developed within a Mesoamerican tradition oriented to the territoriality of a group and its identity.

René García Castro and Jesús Arzate Becerril study another matrix of primordial titles, their apocryphal production. In the north and west of the Mexican basin, a zone of Otomian townships, Pedro Villafranca, the cacique of Xilotepec, produced several land titles in the period before August 1761. Of the twenty titles which still exist, one was the source of a well known controversy. In 1790, after almost thirty years of litigation, the apocrphal title of Asunción Malacatepec (a land grant dated in 1558 and created by Pedro Villafranca) was recognized as legally valid in a lamentably brief act of curious justice. The explanation of this case permits García Castro and Arzate Becerril to provide the details of the context of the production and use of the document in a legal process carried out in the Mexican Audiencia at the time of the Bourbon Reforms.

The theme of the relations between primordial titles, native oral tradition and the ceremonial aspects of Mexican landscapes presented in the study by Ouidjík and Romero Frizzi is developed for the State of Guerrero in a study by Blanca Jiménez Padilla and Samuel Villela Flores. The importance of the theme of territoriality is made evident by the fact that forty of the approximately sixty codices from Guerrero are either maps or documents of a historical-cartographic nature. In various Titles produced in Guerrero, the authors encounter references to rituals or protocols of territorial possession. In a similar fashion, there exist references to “acts for signaling possession” in documents that describe walking the boundaries of a territory. By studying the Lienzos de Petlacala and Malinaltepec, Jiménez and Villela examine the relations between these documents and the rituals and protocols of acts of possession. They review the references to rituals in documents from the eighteenth century and their relations both to Medieval European practices and Mesoamerican traditions. They also consider contemporary ritual forms including the current use of the Lienzo de Petlacala in rain rituals.

New Spain’s northern frontier, especially the central high plain of New Biscayne, has a history of colonial consolidation different from that of the provinces of New Spain and New Galicia. Hence, the notion of “primordial titlehood” and it’s development in the area during the colonial period are also different. We close the thematic section with an important work by Salvador Álvarez concerned with these differences and their conditions. Álvarez develops the thesis that there “never existed a sharp separation between civil and missional establishments in central New Biscayne”, but that both operated in a long and incomplete process to establish Indian townships in the sense of stable social-territorial entities with well defined spatial limits. Through an extensive review of the colonization of the Tepehuanes and the Tarahumaras, the author describes this process and reflects on the degree to which “primordial titlehood” was instituted in the central part of the province in the colonial period.

The documentary section of this issue continues the theme of civilizing processes through contact during the formation of New Spain. Juan Carlos Cortés Máximo presents us with extracts taken from an earlier version compiled by Zubillaga in Monumenta Mexicana of the Relación sobre la residencia de Michoacán, a report on the activities of the Jesuits in Pátzcuaro and its surrounding P’urhépecha communities, written in 1585 by Francisco Ramírez. In his presentation, Cortés Máximo argues that this work has been examined more in relation to its descriptions of the deities and celebrations of the P’urhépecha people than as regards the sections dedicated to the description of the evangelical process in the early conformation of P’urhépecha townships in Michoacán.

The two articles in the general section also pursue themes relevant to the indigenous history in the New World and both represent efforts
to clarify ambiguities in the ethnohistoric register. First Enrique Florescano reexamines the written records about Ce Ácatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in relation to Nicholson’s argument about the “fusion of two originally distinct cycles of stories” and also Jacques Lafaye’s thesis on the construction of a Christian image of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl during the conquest and evangelization. Florescano reviews the arguments in favor of differentiating between stories concerned with the founder and governor of Tollan [Hidalgo] (“the saga of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl”) and the descriptions of the protagonist of the destruction and abandonment of Tula (el “Huemac Cycle”). He also presents an argument about the continuities in the tradition of Tollan primordial (Teotihuacan) in relation to the formation of city-states in Mesoamerica in a review of the similarities and differences between the ruins of Tula and Chichen Itza and the representations of Ce Acatl and Kukulcán.

Another work concerned with the review of the ethnohistorical register shares with Florescano the need to confront the ethnographic contents of early documents with archeological information. Phil Weigand argues for the inclusion of another case in the list of zones of the New World transformed by “the great frontier”; that is, the extended effects of disease and the collapse of long distance socioeconomic links provoked by European contact prior to their actual physical presence in an area. Notorious examples of this exist for Central Mexico, the Caribbean, the Amazon, and Western Mexico and Weigand presents evidence that the Verrazzano expedition in 1523 to the area around Long Island on the northeast coast of the United States initiated a similar process, with the result that when a colony of Europeans arrived in the area in 1640 they found a native population transformed by diseases and no longer representative of the social complexity that had characterized the area before contact. Weigand emphasizes the methodological implications of such cases for determining ethnographic base lines, especially the need to compare the results of archeological research and the ethnohistorical contents of the documents that describe areas during the process of contact and colonization.

We close the general section with two essays on methodological questions concerned with relational historiography. Both are works originally published in Italy and translated into Spanish by the histori-
to clarify ambiguities in the ethnohistoric register. First Enrique Florescano reexamines the written records about Ce Ácatl Topiltzin Quetzalcóatl in relation to Nicholson’s argument about the “fusion of two originally distinct cycles of stories” and also Jacques Lafaye’s thesis on the construction of a Christian image of Topiltzin Quetzalcóatl during the conquest and evangelization. Florescano reviews the arguments in favor of differentiating between stories concerned with the founder and governor of Tollan [Hidalgo] (“the saga of Topiltzin Quetzalcóatl”) and the descriptions of the protagonist of the destruction and abandonment of Tula (el “Huemac Cycle”). He also presents an argument about the continuities in the tradition of Tollan primordial (Teotihuacan) in relation to the formation of city-states in Mesoamerica in a review of the similarities and differences between the ruins of Tula and Chichen Itza and the representations of Ce Acatl and Kukulcán.

Another work concerned with the review of the ethnohistorical register shares with Florescano the need to confront the ethnographic contents of early documents with archeological information. Phil Weigand argues for the inclusion of another case in the list of zones of the New World transformed by “the great frontier”; that is, the extended effects of disease and the collapse of long distance socioeconomic links provoked by European contact prior to their actual physical presence in an area. Notorious examples of this exist for Central Mexico, the Caribbean, the Amazon, and Western Mexico and Weigand presents evidence that the Verrazzano expedition in 1523 to the area around Long Island on the northeast coast of the United States initiated a similar process, with the result that when a colony of Europeans arrived in the area in 1640 they found a native population transformed by diseases and no longer representative of the social complexity that had characterized the area before contact. Weigand emphasizes the methodological implications of such cases for determining ethnographic base lines, especially the need to compare the results of archeological research and the ethnohistorical contents of the documents that describe areas during the process of contact and colonization.

We close the general section with two essays on methodological questions concerned with relational historiography. Both are works originally published in Italy and translated into Spanish by the histori-