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Alex Hidalgo. *Trail of Footprints: A History of Indigenous Maps from Viceregal Mexico.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019. 184 pp. $29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4773-1752-5.

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Translation is an inexact, often contentious, practice. Translating from one language or system —religious, political, graphic, economic, ethical, or cultural—to another is difficult when voluntary, more so when compulsory. Cartography is a visual language, and its forms of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary vary as much as those of verbal language. We may experience space and spatial relations intuitively through our bodies and senses, but we conceive of, quantify, measure, and communicate these experiences and relations through verbal or visual concepts, images, signs, symbols, and words: cultural conventions rather than physical imperatives or mathematical constants. Under Spanish rule, the indigenous peoples forcefully incorporated into the viceroyalties of New Spain and El Perú had to translate and negotiate across and between numerous languages and systems, whether to preserve their lands, languages, rights, and traditions or to incorporate themselves into the *criollo* and *mestizo* cultures, economies, and societies in the process of formation. Alex Hidalgo's *Trail of Footprints: A History of Indigenous Maps from Viceregal Mexico* follows a group of native maps from Oaxaca and others to which they are related by form or function through the processes of motivation, creation, translation, verification, and, finally, transformation into evidence that made visible and "true" claims to land as well as, later, archival documents from which to re-create and write the pre-Hispanic past that justified such claims.

Hidalgo's meticulously researched, clearly written, and generously illustrated study is innovative and informative. Divided into four thematic chapters—"Patrons" (chapter 1), "Painters" (chapter 2), "Materials" (chapter 3), and "Authentication" (chapter 4)—framed by an introduction and epilogue, *Trail of Footprints* focuses on Oaxaca, a region with a highly developed pre-Hispanic tradition of manuscript painting as well as a significant output of maps by viceregal-period indigenous painters, many today preserved in the *Tierras* (land litigation) series in the Mexican national archives, the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN). Because it was distant from the center of Spanish power and state administration in Mexico City, and because it formed part of the Marquesado del Valle de Oaxaca granted to Hernán Cortés by Charles V, Oaxaca did not attract many Spanish settlers initially, remaining more "Indian." But settlers did come eventually, and in increasing numbers, encroaching on indigenous lands, both those of the *cabildo* (inalienable municipal lands that citizens of indigenous municipalities held in usufruct) and of the *cacicazgo* (entailed lands for *caciques*, descendants of pre-Hispanic rulers), categories of landholding already

inflected by Spanish perceptions and practices. Indigenous municipalities and different indigenous ethnic and linguistic groups contested each other's claims to land, too, as they did those of the Spanish settlers and, lest one forget, of the church.

Whether indigenous or Spanish, on one's own behalf or that of one's community, landowners, actual or alleged, had no choice but to turn to the state and its representatives, laws, and courts to defend or establish their claims. Local and regional administrators and judges as well as the courts, judges, and viceroys in Mexico City adjudicated land disputes, and they did so on the basis of evidence, the nature and scope of which changed over time. As part of the evidentiary artillery wielded by litigants and lawyers, maps rendered visible the social and economic coordinates as well as and often more than the chorography and topography of land, and, if persuasive, they secured rights to it. Maps, like systems of laws and property rights, are culture, not nature; they are a language that requires fluency or translation to understand. And, as legal testimony, maps must meet certain basic requirements determined by the customs and laws that pertain at the time of their production and to which they must appeal.

Trail of Footprints traces the history of land litigation undertaken by the Mixtec municipality of Santa Cruz Xoxocotlán and the maps and other forms of proof that situated and verified its claims. The litigation record begins in 1643, before the production, in 1686, of the earliest extant —but not the earliest—map in the sequence (now AGN *Tierras*, vol. 129, exp. 4, f. 249), and comprises forms of oral and written testimony, indigenous and Spanish, the evidentiary value of which changed over time as the laws and patterns of property rights became increasingly Hispanized. Between 1643 and 1691, Santa Cruz Xoxocotlán repeatedly complained of and challenged the encroachment of a neighboring Spanish estate and its successive owners on five acres of land, asserting its claim through various forms of proof, documentary and witness, and with varying degrees of success. Hidalgo details the evolution of the "truth value" and efficacy of indigenous memory as communicated orally, graphically, and cartographically, then translated from one language to another, one cartographic system to another, and one legal system to another. Indeed, it is indigenous memory that motivated and was manifest in every word written or spoken and, more importantly, in every map that testified to Santa Cruz Xoxocotlán's rights to the disputed five acres; and it is indigenous memory that the formal Spanish land title—a legal document recording a commercial or testamentary transaction—denatures if not erases over time. Different systems of landholding, language, and verification, informed by divergent worldviews, confronted one another, and one eventually displaced the other.

Like history written from documents or Spanish settlers' testimony in land litigation cases, indigenous memory could be inaccurate and manipulated, if not outright falsified. The "truth value" attributed to indigenous memory as an evidentiary category, however, is independent of the actual veracity of the histories that it constructs or the chorographic and topographic accuracy of the maps that register the consequences of these histories. Hidalgo's analysis of the archival record of Santa Cruz Xoxocotlán's land litigation charts the declining value of indigenous maps and oral testimony—that is, indigenous memory—through time as well as the adaptations and strategies, specifically cartographic, that patrons and painters developed to counter this decline.

The causes and effects of the changes in patterns of land tenure, mapping, and truth value at issue in *Trail of Footprints* have been studied by other scholars, both art historians and historians, whose work and influence Hidalgo cites scrupulously. Much of the scholarship that precedes and informs his project, however, is more narrowly focused by disciplinary perspective—for example, art, cartographic, economic, legal, or social histor-

ical—and the nature of the archive or primary sources employed. Hidalgo brings together these approaches and sources and tempers them with newer cultural and material cultural interpretative strategies, most notably in the third and fourth chapters ("Material" and "Authentication," respectively) and the epilogue, where the trail of footprints ends with the transformation of indigenous documents—memory—into "scholarly" archives and collections that Western enthusiasts such as Lorenzo Boturini Benaduci could translate into histories of the pre-Hispanic Americas. This methodological and theoretical range is both welcome and problematic: while it avoids the potential pitfalls of too narrowly focused and ledger-like an account of an archival corpus, an economic trend, or stylistic configurations through time, for some readers, the diversity of approaches and subjects may prove too diffuse. Overall, the different paths that Hidalgo follows to and from the five acres of land claimed by Santa Cruz Xoxocotlán are wisely chosen, effectively mapped, and well worth traveling.