

UNHOLY PEDAGOGY: LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, INDIGENOUS
INTERMEDIARIES, AND THE LESSONS FROM SPANISH
COLONIAL LEARNINGSCAPES, 1400—1650

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Mexico's history of Unholy Pedagogy examines the history of colonial education schooling It argues that Nahua students 350 words

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	
Education Studies & Nahua Visions of Learning	1
Intermediaries, Tequitqui Art-Work, and Old Media Studies	16
Framing Places in Mesoamerican Conquest History	29
The Dissertation's Structure	46
II. CHAPTER II: MESOAMERICAN LEARNINGSCAPES:	
Formulations of Nahua Place-Identity & Schooling.....	51
Education for All.....	51
Making Learningscapes Places & Placemaking in Mesoamerican Studies.....	57
Persistent Place-Identities Before the Rise of the Triple Alliance.....	62
Cosmological Learning Practices in Pre-Colonial Nahua Ceremonies	67
Institutions for Higher-Leaning: The Telpochcalli & Calmecac	80
Home Schooling Nahua Children	90
The Song & Dance of Nahua Schooling.....	94
Toltec Thinking Caps & the Illusions of Grandeur	105
Educational Formalities: Cholollan, Tlaxcala, & Huexotzinco	111
Coyote Lessons of the Mesoamerican Landscape	115

Chapter	Page
III. CHAPTER III: PLACEBREAKING LEARNINGSCAPES	
Conquest as Education & Academic Places under Attack.....	122
The Crushing Teeth, the Licking Flames: Killing Nahua Knowledge	122
Sense of Place & Place-Identity Formation	129
No Place, Nowhere: Placebreaking on Nahuatl Terms.....	135
A Dog in the Fight: Mutual Misunderstandings & Placebreaking	143
Breaking Sacred Places: Motolinía Goes to the Mountain	152
A Frog Problem.....	165
Good Deeds Done: The Huexotzinca Recall Auto-Exirpation.....	173
IV. CHAPTER IV: COLONIAL REPLACEMENTS	
Sixteenth-Century Schools for Nahuas & the Changing Learningscape	176
Hounded by Demons: Extirpating Knowledge from Indigenous Learningscape.....	176
Placement and the Map of the Valley	185
Words and Wisdom.....	191
Formal Lessons from Nahua Confessions	197
Cultural Realities and Musical Notes in the Colonial Learningscape	208
Conclusion: The Persistence of Memory Despite the Attempted “Conquest” of Indigenous Learningscapes	220
V. CHAPTER V: LOCAL LEARNINGSCAPES	
The Shape, Design, & Practice of Nahua Provincial Education.....	224
Diego de Valadés: Chief Architect of the Perfect Classroom.....	224
Making a Place for Education in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley	239

Chapter	Page
A Tale of Two Juans in Quauhquechollan.....	245
Making a “House like a Mirror to All”.....	248
The Matriculated and the Dead.....	255
Tlacuilo Visions: Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley Place-Identifiers.....	262
Conclusion: Provincial Learningscapes at the Crossroads	265
VI. CHAPTER VI: NAHUA PROVINCIAL LEARNINGSCAPES	
Composite Parts and Practice.....	268
Ethno-Spatial Studies of Three Provincial <i>Altepeltl</i>	268
Lessons Learned? Spiritual & Educational Networks	273
Practicing the Sacred.....	274
The Body of Knowledge	280
Ethno-Spatial Studies of Courtyard Culture	286
Winged Warriors, St. Michaels Wind, and Fertile Soils.....	307
Learningscapes on Stage.....	315
"Dumb" as a Rock & Other Muddled Thoughts	324
Concluding Remarks.....	328
VII. CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION	
Lingering Lessons from Local Learningscapes:	330
Palafoxian Pedagogy in Seventeenth-Century Cuetlaxcohuapan	330
A Matter of Place: “A Homeland, and a Holy Land”	340
REFERENCES CITED.....	348

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 Fig. 1.1, <i>Plaza de tres culturas</i> (2012).....	3
2 Fig. 1.2, <i>The Nahua ithualli</i> (“courtyard”).	6
3 Fig. 1.3, <i>Early church construction projects in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley</i>	23
4 Fig. 1.4, “ <i>Imageability</i> ” as Icons	40
5 Fig. 2.1, <i>Imageability of the ithualli</i>	61
6 Fig. 2.2, <i>Birds of Casa de Caracoles Emplumados</i> (2012)	66
7 Fig. 2.3, <i>Patio de los Pilares</i> (2012).....	66
8 Fig. 2.4, <i>Tepeilhuitl and exemplary tepictoton</i> (“ <i>small molded ones</i> ”)	72
9 Fig. 2.5, <i>Visions of Mesoamerican song and dance</i>	97
10 Fig. 2.6, <i>Pre-colonial courtyard ritual performance</i>	104
11 Fig. 2.7, <i>Coyotl, Cincoatl, and the Wanderer</i> , Coyotl.....	121
12 Fig. 2.8, <i>Coyotl, Cincoatl, and the Wanderer</i> , Cincoatl.	121
13. Fig. 3.1, <i>Manuscripto de Aperreamiento</i> (<i>c. 1560</i>).....	123
14. Fig. 3.2, <i>Moctecozuma’s Throne/Teocalli de la Guerra Sagrada</i>	141
15. Fig. 3.3, <i>Dog of war</i> , Florentine Codex, Book XII.....	151
16. Fig. 3.4, <i>Tlachihualtepetl</i> (“ <i>man-made mountain</i> ”) of Puebla (2011).....	162
17. Fig. 3.5, <i>Mapping Mesoamerican places in sixteenth-century Cholula</i>	168
18. Fig. 3.6, <i>Tlachihualtepetl’s small chapel (a)</i> (2011).	171
19. Fig. 3.7, <i>Tlachihualtepetl’s well (b)</i> (2011).	171
20. Fig. 3.8, <i>Massive stone carving of Tlachihualtepetl</i> (2011).	172

Figure	Page
21. Fig. 4.1, <i>Postclassic ruins of Tetzcotzinco</i> (2012)	177
22. Fig. 4.2, <i>Pedro de Gante's Doctrina Cristiana</i> (ca. 1545)	183
23. Fig. 4.3, <i>Meeting in the utopian community Santa Fé Acasúchil, ca. 1550</i>	189
24. Fig. 4.4, <i>Pictorial catechism with glosses</i> (2016)	200
25. Fig. 5.1, <i>Valadesian vision of the spiritual landscape</i> (2016)	228
26. Fig. 5.2, <i>A vision of perfect pedagogy</i> (2016)	231
27. Fig. 5.3, <i>Lessons underway in the perfect colonial classroom, Glyphs</i> (2016)	234
28. Fig. 5.4, <i>Lessons underway in the perfect colonial classroom, Mural</i> (2016)	234
29. Fig. 5.5, <i>Proper use of educational flora</i> (2016)	236
30. Fig. 5.6, <i>Scenes from Illustration 17, Temple</i> (2016)	237
31. Fig. 5.7, <i>Scenes from Illustration 17, Courtyard</i> (2016)	237
32. Fig. 5.8, <i>Teaching the Crucifixion of Christ</i> (2016)	238
33. Fig. 5.9 <i>The Roses of Huexotzinco</i> (2016)	258
34. Fig. 5.10, <i>Xaltepetlapan, 1560 from the pictorial census of Huexotzinco</i>	263
35. Fig. 5.11, <i>The community church of Santa María Asunción Almoyahuacan</i>	264
36. Fig. 6.1, <i>Ordering society in Huexotzinco c. 1560</i>	284
37. Fig. 6.2, <i>White spine designs of the flowering cactus, Borgia Codex</i>	287
38. Fig., 6.3, <i>Imageability in San Andrés Calpan</i>	289
39. Fig. 6.4, <i>Mountain-like Capilla posas at San Andrés Calpan</i> (2011)	295
40. Fig. 6.5, <i>Processional pattern through courtyard spaces</i>	297

Figure	Page
41. Fig. 6.6, <i>Sightline to Itztaccihuatl</i> (2011)	298
42. Fig. 6.7, <i>Winged beings of Calpan</i> (author, 2011)	302
43. Fig. 6.8, <i>Chapels for the Saints and saintly creatures, Mary</i> (2011):	305
44. Fig. 6.9, <i>Chapels for the Saints and saintly creatures, Michael</i> (2011):	305
45. Fig., 6.10, <i>Chapels for the Saints and saintly creatures, John</i> (2011):	305
46. Fig. 6.11, <i>The triumphal Saint Michael</i> (2011)	308
47. Fig. 6.12, <i>Saint Michael and Diego's well</i> (2015).	310
48. Fig. 6.13, <i>Cacaxtla mural of the Bird-Man and Plumed Serpent</i>	314
49. Fig. 6.14, <i>Judgement in the provincial learningscape</i>	319
50. Fig. 6.15, <i>Mutually misunderstood but never mute (Brooker)</i>	327

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION STUDIES & NAHUA VISIONS OF LEARNING¹

The fall of 2019 will mark the quincentennial anniversary of the so-called Spanish Conquest of (1519-1521) as well as the beginning of the history Spanish-colonial religious education in the Americas. Thinking of the anniversary might conjure up romanticized visions of a time when transatlantic Christianity collided with Mesoamerican religious traditions in a historic clash of cultures. It might be assumed that, starting in 1524 with the arrival of the first cohort of Spanish priests, Catholics used religious texts, crosses, churches, and forced indoctrination systematically change the spiritual countryside. At the same time, the anniversary might remind many of the expressions of Mexican Native spirituality that exist today, signifying that living traditions have outlasted colonizers' attempts to stamp out what they considered to be unholy practices.

Fueling these conflicting visions of how societies change through processes of cultural hybridity are the histories that emphasize these narratives. For instance, a century ago, in 1920s, Anita Brenner, a U.S. journalist and anthropologist, published *Idols Behind Altars* as a romantic study Mexican art. Brenner believed that Native art was on track to subsume "the white layer at the top [of Mexican society, which] has steadily diminished, by death or flight, or by growing darker... Native symbols are carved into these churches; saints are recarved out of idols, and eventually recarved again so that they certainly do

¹ Translation note: All Nahuatl-English translations herein, unless otherwise indicated, are provided by the author using Karttunen (1983), Lockhart (2001), Molina (1970), and the wealth of citations and contributions to Stephanie Wood's "Nahua Dictionary," *Wired Humanities Projects*, Eugene, OR: University of Oregon: <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/> (accessed spring of 2019).

not look European.”² Mexico’s history of art was distinct, Brenner proposed, “That is why Mexico cannot be measured by standards other than its own, which are like those of a picture; and why only as artists can Mexicans be intelligible.”³ Later on, she reveals how Natives maintained unholy gods and rites, by secreting them into “habitual private places... pushed them into caves, dropped them into lakes, covered them in growing vines... The gods skulked sullenly in the hills and winds.”⁴ Setting aside Brenner’s depictions of the rise and fall of religions, what are the realities hiding behind her assumptions about indigenous culture? Was it the case that skulking Native gods never entered church grounds? Were the friars so apt at creating Christian places void of local customs?

In order to answer these questions and others about Mexico’s history of religious conversion it is useful to question our assumptions about colonial pedagogy and locate perspectives from indigenous students at the heart of this history. Some of the first Native students in this story began to study Catholicism in the Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco, located in what is called the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* in Mexico City today. It is a significant place, one that showcases the cultural confluence of Mexican heritage, where precolonial temple ruins are revealed as the foundation for the church and school for Native boys. It highlights a history about the time that Christianity first “entered” the Mesoamerican countryside and expanded outward from there (Fig. 1.1). That earlier experience and the ways that it affected the lives of Native students of Catholicism living far beyond the Valley of Mexico can help us understand Mexico’s deeper history of

² Anita Brenner, *Idols Behind Altars* 1929, 29.

³ Ibid., 31.

⁴ Ibid., 136-137.

education.⁵ 500 years ago, there was a kind of student activism among indigenous people attempting to preserve local knowledge while simultaneously learning the religion of Spain. They were confronting the transformative power of acculturation, what Robert Ricard once called the “Spiritual Conquest.”⁶ Ricard’s history emphasized top-down education, and it remains an influential but flawed historical argument that proposed that European pedagogy and cultural traditions sublimated Native beliefs, which is similar to Brenner’s belief. Ricard believed that regular instruction and disruptive evangelization conquered popular belief. Others keeping in line with Ricard, up to the 1970s, even argued that Spanish pedagogues applied “education as conquest” to defeat what the friars saw as profane.⁷ Native

Americans faced threats of violence, compulsion, and even death from foreigners and their zealous Native neighbors. This “cultural trauma” tested the will of communities that might have sought to maintain local customs from the



Figure 1.1, *Plaza de tres culturas* (2012). Ciudad de México embraces the precolonial ruins of Tlatelolco and the *Colegio Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco*.

⁵ Gordon Brotherston, *The Book of the Fourth World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), 202.

⁶ Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain: 1523-1572*, trans. by Lesley Byrd Simpson, [Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1966 (1933)].

⁷ José María Kobayashi, *La educación como conquista: empresa franciscana en México* 1st ed. (México: El Colegio de México, 1974).

past.⁸ But Native peoples often would prove to be resilient and able to resist such top-down impositions. The educational process of the sixteenth century had many complex and evolving parts, such that the true history of colonial schooling explodes the myth of a triumphant Spiritual Conquest that easily eradicated nonconforming traditions. Moreover, the true history of colonial education points to the power of local, indigenous transmission of knowledge, wherein actors attached their own sacred and cultural memories to sacred and mundane places that became scenes of attempted Catholic instruction.

The real story of cultural exchange demonstrates the staying power of symbols and the conveyance of meanings through objects based in places, how those symbols and objects had an association with the indigenous landscape, and the enduring nature of those associations that survived, even when they were affected by the onset of the disruptive Catholic practices. Epistemologically, human individuals and their communities develop multifaceted ways of associating meaning to symbols—the alphabetic text on this page is an obvious example of a grapheme system of letters that can be arranged to convey meaning phonetically to a reader. Students in colonial classrooms encountered alphabetic texts as well as other visual and material goods used for the purposes of education, and this basic fact begs several questions, chief among them: What was the relationship between students and the material realities of the colonial classrooms? What was that relationship before the sixteenth century and how did

⁸ Justyna Olko and Agnieszka Brylak argue that indigenous rulers picked up on Franciscans zealotry, in particular, in the early years in Tlaxcala, and that local leaders found agency by following through with the demands of their Christian supervisors to keep power in local hands, not necessarily because of religious propagation; Olko et al., “Defending Local Autonomy and Facing Cultural Trauma: A Nahua Order against Idolatry, Tlaxcala, 1543,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 98.4 (2018), 573-604.

a student's environment transform with the advent of Christianity? And relating to the traditional image of a top-down pedagogy employed by the Catholic clergy of the time, how did indigenous students shape schools on the local or regional scale? This dissertation will seek to answer these and other questions, but my core contention is that learning materials were intricately linked to an indigenous sense of place and place-based ways of teaching, which was an act of Native student activism that needs further study.

By exposing the indigenous history of colonial education, this project will reveal some of the flaws in our understanding of learning environments and the power of place. It proposes a theoretical framework for further investigations. Namely, this study puts forth the term “learningscape” as a nominalization that helps us understand the local vision of how colonial societies thought they ought to have been instructed and ritualistically used as places for learning. Learningscape is a designation distinct from the traditional concepts of “education,” “schools,” “classrooms,” and “pedagogy” because it compensates for the visual and material nature of the transfer of knowledge within a time and place by way of noting the “scape” that confronted learners, one that opens up the discourse about human and environmental ecology. In Classical Nahuatl, the pithiest term employed before and after the Spanish Invasion that encapsulates the idea of the learningscape is *ithualli*.⁹ *Ithualli*, or “patio, interior courtyard within a house compound; atrium, churchyard,” as defined by the Online Nahuatl Dictionary (Wired Humanities Projects), is not a “school” but it was one of the more common places within which

⁹ James Lockhart explains that the term was applied in numerous contexts to indicate a “household,” especially what appears to be a God-fearing one, but also a sense of the household’s exterior spaces (i.e. contained in the metaphor: *in quiahuatl*, *in ithualli*, or “the exit, the patio”), which sticks around long after other terms have been replaced by Spanish concepts; Lockhart, *Nahuas After the Conquest* (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 1992) 59-60, 71, 490n4. See also, “Ithualli,” Nahuatl Dictionary, UO Wired Humanities Projects, <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/ithualli>

indigenous education, in a Western sense, occurred (Fig. 1.2). Intimately connected to Nahua houses and temples, and, later, Nahua-Christian houses and churches, “courtyards” were learning environments. Using learningscape as a categorical term might help to put bracket together like structures and the practices that occurred within them within them. Opening up a better understanding about how knowledge was generated and propitiated on the local scope can helps us to more effectively recover Native perspectives from the past. The use of the term helps to refocus the discourse about colonial education on the experiences of Native learners and their history and away from the traditional emphasis on Spanish-Catholic educators and their pedagogy.

There can be a tendency in colonial studies to draw clear lines between homegrown ideas and those that might be imposed from without. Scholars tend to exaggerate or undercut the nature of the Spiritual Conquest when they too narrowly define learning as written texts residing on a page, or as the clergy-generated pedagogy practiced within church walls. Thus, the term learningscape complicates the traditional binary vision of indigenous-Christian places of learning, revealing the way in which local place-identity—a community’s cognizance of their connection to an environment—did not see their schooling as a stark contrast of Christian versus non-Christian ideas,

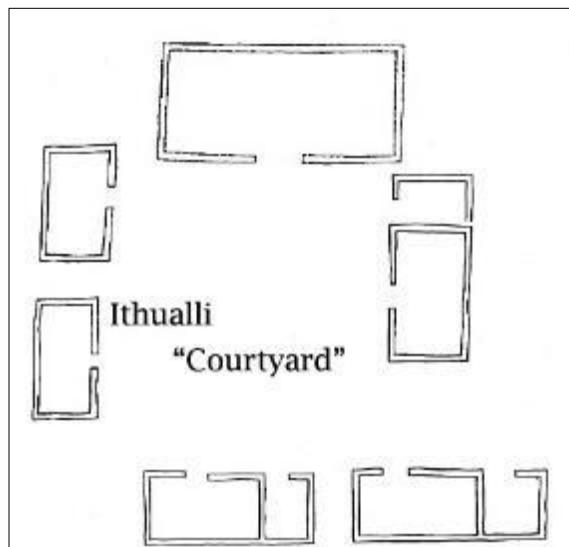


Figure 1.2, The Nahua *ithualli* (“courtyard”). The basic cultural building block for pre-Hispanic society was the household unit. One function of the central courtyard was educational in nature (image based upon Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, 199).

practices, and expressions. And the concept is useful for the study of the indigenous place-identity formation and perseverance that can better inform our understanding of the science of learning in Colonial Mexico.

Learning science and the technologies used for remembering, especially the expression of cultural traditions, were related to the Mesoamerican sense of place. Stephanie Wood, a specialist in Mesoamerican memory, reminds us, “Systems of remembrance... are constellations that revolve around shared, group-embracing signs that can be reproduced, repeated, and recognized by multiple individuals.”¹⁰ These signs, especially when revealed in Native documents and, as will be shown, the “manuscripts” of indigenous-influenced Catholic art and architecture, have an “intertextuality” which “gained and maintained ethnic identities in regular reenactments of social activities associated with places and things laden with meaning and usually inscribed in mnemonic devices.”¹¹ This aspect of memory demonstrates the need to understand the relationships between place and knowledge. Art historian Eleanor Wake once suggested, “[w]hile this art and architecture is overwhelmingly Euro-Christian in iconography and form at a visual level it is more complex at the level of meaning and function.... While it is true that some [indigenous people] accepted or assimilated to Christianity and its signs and symbols...there is considerable evidence to argue that many more did not.”¹² Wood and Wake, in other words, advise scholars to seek out the complex multilayering of colonial

¹⁰ Amos Megged and Stephanie Wood, *Mesoamerican Memory: Enduring Systems of Remembrance* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹² Eleanor Wake, *Framing the Sacred: The Indian Churches of Early Colonial Mexico* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 4.

knowledge through which Native people maintained their sense of place, memories about those places, and practices carried out in them within a community's context.

According to Robert Haskett's *Visions of Paradise* (2005), indigenous peoples created multilayered senses of meaning by deriving a relationship based on five basic social memory associations: toponymic, utilitarian (or based on a resource of resource management), eponymic, mnemonic, and cosmic, with the latter three (eponymic, mnemonic, and cosmic) proving to be the most crucial associations that locals use to form their sense of place-identity. That local vision was distinct from the objectification resulting from observing and dictating about the land through basic cartography and charting.¹³ For the ancestral people of Central Mexico, places themselves had (and still have) agency and this recognition of the power attached to places was expressed and negotiated between the place and its inhabitants.¹⁴

For the most part, Mesoamerican education histories have shown that before contact with Europeans Central Mexico was a hotbed for formal educational institutions involving both nobles and commoners, as well as informal praxis that took place in the household. For Frances Berdan, the former served the basic function of the “maintenance of the system of stratification” for the “highly imperialistic… Aztecs” and thus segregated society.¹⁵ Seemingly, this formality primed the Nahuas for systemic Ibero-Christianization.

¹³ Robert Haskett *Visions of Paradise: Primordial Titles and Mesoamerican History in Cuernavaca* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 2005), 129-134.

¹⁴ For an excellent discussion of central Mesoamerican place names as they weathered the Spanish colonial era see Barbara Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, The Life of Mexico City* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 2015), 128-167.

¹⁵ Frances Berdan, “Enculturation in an Imperial Society: The Aztecs of Mexico” found in Wilbert, *Enculturation in Latin America: An Anthology* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, University of California. 1976), 238.

Within the walls of the sixteenth-century Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco native students understood the lessons of Christianity on their own terms, as did their priestly counterparts.¹⁶ According to Louise Burkhart, “Within a single, hierarchical order, mutual misunderstandings allow[ed] conqueror and conquered to coexist.”¹⁷ This way of looking at processes of cultural dialogues had previously been labeled “double mistaken identity” by historian James Lockhart, an interaction “in which each side of the cultural exchange presumes that a given form or concept is functioning in the same familiar way within its own tradition and is unaware or unimpressed by the other side’s interpretation.”¹⁸ And this process of exchange was not static. An example of this fact is the story of the Colegio de Santa Cruz (opened January, 6, 1536), the early Native-Christian school, which witnessed ups and downs in its status and success.¹⁹ Following the first few decades of its existence, an initial surge of instruction by impassioned foreign educators (Pedro de Gante, Juan Focher, and Bernardino de Sahagún) and, increasingly, some of their veteran indigenous students played a central role in the education offered to well-connected youths, particularly after 1546.²⁰ These gifted Native scholar-teachers oversaw the production of many new teaching materials designed especially for the Nahuas and other Mexican peoples.²¹

¹⁶ Louise Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday: A Nahua Drama from Early Colonial Mexico* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 40-42, 55-65.

¹⁷ Ibid., 41

¹⁸ James Lockhart expressed his most recent discussion of this process, see *Of Things of the Indies: Essays Old and New in Early Latin American History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 99. Lockhart added that “the indigenous and Spanish Phenomena that both sides saw as similar were rarely, indeed never, literally the same.” [98-99]

¹⁹ Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday*, 57.

²⁰ Ibid., 62.

²¹ Ibid., 55-60.

In 1555, however, new imperial edicts put the lie to the story the friars had told the Native collegians about the possibilities of their social and spiritual advancement based on education. The graduates of Santa Cruz could not become priests, a decision that did not please them. For a disappointed Pablo Nazareo, lord of Xaltocan and recent graduate of the *Colegio*, this was disheartening news, since he and his fellow classmates believed that they had become “new men” doing everything expected of good Christians.²² Later, in 1584, Alonso Ponce claimed to have interviewed a Native student of Santa Cruz Tlatelolco, who observed, “[W]e Indians of New Spain are like shrikes or magpies and parrots, which fowl can with some effort be taught to speak, yet quickly forget what they have been taught. And this is not said in vain, for in truth our ability is weak, and for that reason we have great need for help so that we can become complete men.”²³ This statement confirmed Ponce’s idea that the students of Tlatelolco contributed little, being merely unreliable objects and intellectual parrots of the school’s curriculum. Ponce seems to have expected this outcome and we only have his words document the conversation, so it is possible the moment was a figment of his imagining. Nevertheless, schooling only worked with constant instruction, surveillance, and regular parroting back of religious texts. In other words, students showed little sign of agency in the making of meaning at the school, at least according to Spanish sources.

This gloomy, if not to say biased, characterization ignored the growing agency of Nahua scholars in the later sixteenth century. With diminished possibilities for official standing within the church, in the 1570s new cohorts of students nonetheless passed

²² Ibid., 61.

²³ Ibid., 64; also from Lluís Nicolau d’Olwer and Mauricio J. Mixco, *Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, 1499-1590* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1987), 100.

through the Colegio's doors and became accomplished scholars. Despite Ponce's interviewee's dispiriting words, in reality many Santa Cruz scholar-students became key players in New Spain's unfolding educational program for Native peoples, providing essential help for Franciscans such as Sahagún in the creation of his celebrated *General History of the Things of New Spain*, the *Florentine Codex*, and his and Juan Bautista's many important didactic texts. The collegians proved linchpins in the process of cultural imperialism, helping to design teaching materials for the conversion and acculturation of Mesoamerica. Seemingly they had lost some connection to their pre-colonial roots, choosing to live the new education system, embody the model life of a convert, and push for the recapitulation of the same among other Native peoples. The role indigenous intermediaries played in this early phase set the tone for what would come later in the sixteenth century, and we might question whether they were the cause of a decline in indigenous culture, or if their actions preserved it helping it attain a new form. How were these collegians influenced by Spanish colonialism and Catholic indoctrination?

Within the last few decades, historians have begun to explore the critical role played by Native allies of the Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco and those in other capacities of collusion under the editorship of the friars, paying closer attention to their complex ethnic makeup. In the 1990s, James Lockhart noted that while the clergy might "instigate, oversee, and in large part determine the basic content" of the first manuscripts written in alphabetic Nahuatl, Nahua scribes and artists were "responsible for the fine points of the phrasing and syntax," which he argued was "One of the clearest examples... that many confessionals and sermons [drew] heavily on preconquest rhetoric."²⁴ Mark Z.

²⁴ Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, 256.

Christensen adds that “from the 1540s to 1578-1579, the Franciscan Sahagún worked with a team of Nahuatl writers and informants to produce...the *Florentine Codex*,” and that the friar had employed “Nahua elders and aides” in the 1560s to help him craft his *Doctrina Cristiana*. According to Christensen, Juan Bautista “claims that the indigenous aide Hernando de Ribas...helped compose [Fray Alonso de] Molina’s grammar and dictionary,” and that Bautista “openly admits that various native assistants ‘have helped me’” in the creation of his 1606 *Sermonario*.²⁵ Sahagún himself wrote that his Nahua collaborators, “being knowledgeable in the Latin language, inform us of the properties of the words, the properties of their manner of speech. And they correct for us the incongruities we express [in Nahuatl] in the sermons or write in the catechisms.”²⁶ According to Diana Magaloni Kerpel, in particular concerning the *Florentine Codex*’s indigenous painters and authors (*tlacuilos*), Native artists appear to have transformed European writing genres in a purposeful attempt to enliven and enrich them with Mesoamerican cosmovision.²⁷ The Colegio and other institutions of acculturation may have faded in importance over time and the priests retained the credit for the Spiritual Conquest, but we do a great disservice to the study of Nahua agency and colonial imperialism if we ignore the voices of even the most acculturated Christian students’ of Native or mixed-ethnic (*mestizo*) descent and the role they played in the creation of colonial teaching tools that filled learningscapes.

²⁵ Mark Z. Christensen, *Nahua and Maya Catholicisms: Texts and Religion in Colonial Central Mexico and Yucatan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 32.

²⁶ Ibid., 55; quoted from the *Florentine Codex*.

²⁷ Diana Magaloni Kerpel, *The Colors of the New World: Artists, Materials, and the Creation of the Florentine Codex* (Los Angeles: CA, The Getty Research Institute, 2014), 12-13.

The history of Spanish-Christian education in New Spain requires an honest depiction of the pedagogical regimes before and during the Spanish colonial period from the ground up, one that attempts to look through the lens of pedagogues and their allies, the vision of those that overwrote Spanish-Catholicism and settler-colonial culture in Mesoamerica, but also, and most significantly, the perspectives of indigenous peoples learning before and after the advent of the so-called Spiritual Conquest. It is a study that explores systems of conversion and education under Spain that centers its focus on local history and indigenous ways of learning. In the process, this study will tap into several useful and important theoretical and analytical currents. In general, the study of native societies from their own perspectives as a discipline has transformed history and the writing of histories since World War II.²⁸ A time when professional consensus histories based on Western sources were becoming more common, scholars began to adopt new ethnohistorical methodologies to examine an increasing number of mundane sources, particularly in the 1970s and beyond. In so doing, they too helped to produce alternative histories about people and subjects that had traditionally been neglected by earlier generations of professional historians. This ran counter to an earlier predisposition to identify the superiority of all things European as scholars explained the histories of conquests, empires, as well as the resulting colonial relationships that ensued, seeing them as evolutionary, biological, and predetermined.

In contrast, a better understanding of the relationships between humans and their cultural ecologies requires the use of the study of critical ethnolinguistics, place-identity,

²⁸ Charles Gibson, “Writings on Colonial Mexico,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (May, 1975; Erik Van Young, “The New Cultural History Comes to Old Mexico,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 79, No. 2, (May, 1999).

and Spatial Studies.²⁹ Scholars, especially ethnohistorians and art historians, have pursued this more profound analysis when studying material culture and visual media (including pictorial and three-dimensional sources) created by the Native communities that were exposed to the work of the collegians in the sixteenth century. New Social and Cultural Studies historians, beginning in the 1950s, overturned the Westernized depiction of the Spanish Conquest and colonialism.³⁰ Forerunners of this new movement questioned the authenticity of a past that relied so heavily on Spanish records to tell Native history.

Rigorous scholarship of the 1970s and after (fueled in part by Native activism and better ethnographic study) has resulted in studies that challenged older presumptions about the nature of the Spanish colonial enterprises. Rather than simple binaries of Indian versus Spaniard, recent revisioning has exposed complex negotiations between and throughout groups living, learning, and dying during the Spanish colonial era. Scholars have documented shared and mitigated “middle grounds,” contested and Native borderlands, and ambivalent conquest and ineffective colonialisms that, until this

²⁹ Georges Baudot, *Utopia and History: The First Chroniclers of Mexican Civilization (1520-1569)* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1995); Davíd Carrasco (ed.), *To Change Place: Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1991); and *Quetzalcoatl and The Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2000); John Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkley, University of California Press, 1956); John Schwaller, *The Church and Clergy in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Steck (ed. and trans.), *Motolinia's History of The Indians of New Spain* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1951); and see also Joshua Fitzgerald, “Deconstructing Franciscan Conventual Schools: Sixteenth-Century Architecture, Decoration, and Nahua Educational Spaces” (MA Thesis, Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, 2012).

³⁰ Angela María Garibay Kintana, *Historia de la literatura náhuatl* (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1953); Gibson, Charles. *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952); and *The Aztecs under Spanish rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964); Miguel León Portilla, *Visión de los vencidos: relaciones indigenas de la conquista* (2nd ed.), (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1961); France Karttunen and James Lockhart, *Nahuatl in the Middle Years: Language Contact Phenomena in Texts of the Colonial Period* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976); and Luis Reyes García, *Documentos nauas de la Ciudad de México del siglo XVI*, 1st edition (México, D.F.: CIESAS: Archivo General de la Nación, 1996).

movement, only the source communities knew had once existed.³¹ The results of, first, a social turn and, later, a cultural one were scholarly interpretations revealing indigenous perspectives. Revised histories exposed the contingency of teleological studies that had proposed social and cultural dominance of the Europeans over the Americas, critically taking to task the assumptions of nineteenth century racial, ethnic, and spiritual categories prescribed by consensus historians. One example of the developments from this period is the discourse about non-Western systems of record keeping and writing, the colonial intervention of “lettered” societies, and intersection of education, class, and ethnicity under the Spanish Empire.³² Revisionists have exposed the complexity of Native writing and recordkeeping practices and how adaptive many indigenous methods proved to be in

³¹ For discourse in Latin American history, on completed conquests, see: Lino Gómez Canedo, *Evangelización y conquista: experiencia franciscana en Hispanoamérica* 2nd ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1988); José María Kobayashi, *La educación como conquista: empresa franciscana en México* 1st ed. (México: El Colegio de México, 1974). For some of the discourse surrounding spiritual/cultural hybridity, or bi-cultural identity in, commonly “nepantlism,” see: J. Jorge Klor de Alva, “Spiritual Conflict and Accommodation in New Spain: Toward a Typology of Aztec Responses to Christianity,” found in Collier et al., *The Inca and Aztec States, 1400-1800: Anthropology and History* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1982), 353-355; Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1989); and Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002). An early example of a scholar focusing on the Spanish conquest as less impactful or noneventful, see Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). An example of the complexity of intercultural and interethnic post-conquest is Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). For Borderlands Studies digressions into the “middle ground,” see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, 20th ann. Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (Jun., 1999), pp. 814-841; Susan Sleeper-Smith, “The Middle Ground Revisited,” *The William and Mary Quarterly Third Series*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January 2006), pp. 3-8; Andrew Lipman, “No More Middle Grounds?” *Reviews in American History*, Volume 44, Number 1, (March 2016), pp. 24-30.

³² Angel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); and, for examples of how this current of thought has develop to include non-Western media, see Alcira Dueñas, *Indians and Mestizos in the “Lettered City”: Reshaping Justice, Social Hierarchy, and Political Culture in Colonial Peru* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2010); and Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

the colonial period.³³ What proved crucial at this juncture was a concerted effort of interdisciplinary study, the coupling of the methods of historians, art historians, anthropologists, and scholars of new philology. The words of Wake capture this sense for art history: “ritual and image... performance and text, pervade[d] the religious architecture of Indo-Christianity... the text of the Indo-Christian sacred *that is this art and architecture* was written by native artist-scribes in paint and stone as the ritualized act of its own ‘framing.’”³⁴ Wake’s work exemplifies some of the better results from interdisciplinary rigor in this new phase, and her theme of indigenous artistic expression, intermediation, and the local context or “framed” meaning of historical sources, such as architecture, implores scholars to dig deeper in their interpretation of colonial and pre-colonial material culture.

Intermediaries, *Tequitqui* Art-Work, and Old Media Studies

The Nahuas, the central Mexican ethnic group at the heart of this study, practiced sophisticated methods of knowledge transfer, sacred and profane, from *tlamatini* to *tlamatini*.³⁵ These were “highly literate individual[s] and...scholar[s], an embodiment of

³³ Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter Mignolo produced a strong case for deeper analysis of visual communication, see Boone & Mignolo, *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994). Dueñas’ work adds a coherent case about Andean power-knowledge and access to the indigenous archive, see *Indians and Mestizos in the “Lettered City”* (2010).

³⁴ My emphasis, Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 8. Several scholars have applied varying degrees of “Spatial Theory” to this region and temporal moment, see Mundy’s introduction in *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City* (2015); James Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2013), 419-477; Michael E. Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004); Philip Arnold, *Eating Landscape: Aztec and European Occupation of Tlalocan* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1999); and Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire* (2000).

³⁵ This dissertation uses the Classical Nahuatl orthography when referencing placenames and communities in the past (Tetzcoco, Huexotzinco, Quauhquechollolan, Chollolan...), and maintains modern spellings when referencing contemporary towns (i.e. Texcoco, Huejotzingo, Huaquechula, Cholula...). Some Nahuatl groupings denoted the particular locale with a hyphenated term, ergo Tenocha-Mexica, with “Mexica” referring to the people of Mexico, the city, whereas people who spoke Nahuatl lived across vast regions,

wisdom contained in the painted books.”” A learned *tlamatini* was ““also...a teacher.””³⁶ Critical to the current study about Native-Colonial education history are the roles played by intermediaries, or what many scholars have termed “cultural brokers,” and the complex choices of “survivors” studied by Frances Karttunen or the process of “acculturation” as defined by John Kicza and others.³⁷ As noted above, the intermediary role of Nahua-Christian converts and student-teachers at Santa Cruz Tlatelolco proved them to be crucial linchpins in both the proliferation of Christianity *and* apparently indigenous cosmology. In economic arenas, as Leslie Lewis revealed, schooled and affluent intermediaries, Tetzcoco’s own *indios principales*, found lucrative enterprises living between two worlds.³⁸ When discussing cross-cultural mediators (“cultural intermediaries”) in Anglo- and French-Native encounters, Margaret Szasz poignantly clarifies that their role was often unparalleled compared to others in colonial society or back across the Atlantic.³⁹ Szasz’s words are true for Mexico’s history of educated intermediaries too. Based on previous histories, she distinguished key indigenous intermediary occupations (interpreters, linguists, traders, spiritualists, educationists, and

including the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. The pluralization of Classical terms varies based on the particular locative suffix: for instance, the Tetzcoca people.

³⁶ Kelly McDonough, *The Learned Ones: Nahua Intellectuals in Postconquest Mexico* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 6-7, 10 (quoting Elizabeth Hill Boone).

³⁷ Margaret Szasz, *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Frances Karttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); John Kicza, *The Indian in Latin American History: Resistance, Resilience, and Acculturation* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2000); Yannakakis, *Art of Being In-Between* (2008).

³⁸ Leslie Lewis, “In Mexico City’s Shadow: Some Aspects of Economic Activity and Social Processes in Texcoco, 1570-1620,” found in Ida Altman and James Lockhart (eds.), *Provinces of Early Mexico: Variants of Spanish American Regional Evolution* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, University of California, 1976).

³⁹ Szasz, *Between Indian and White Worlds*, 6; See that volume’s “Introduction” (3-20) for a concise treatment of “cultural brokers” in U.S. historiography. Szasz’s study of Samson Occom offers an eerily similar story about colonial schooling to that of Burkhardt’s *Holy Wednesday* though 200 years later, and a wider scope of cultural intermediaries undergoing colonization, in that case a Mohegan Indian living through Anglo-American indoctrination and acculturation in the mid-seventeenth century (*Between Indian and White Worlds*, 61-78).

artists), at their core encompassing the mediation of internal and external goods, ideas, and practices by historical agents positioned in or around the “border region” that delimits ethnicities or cultural groups.⁴⁰

In most cases, depending on the particulars, the Nahuas of central New Spain made choices to accommodate and adjust to new political and economic superstructures that could have insidious effects on and their communities. Louis Burkhart, for instance, examined the lives of Mexico City’s early “collegians” and the tenuous position they held in learning environments, as well as their even more constricting role of aiding foreigners who sought to do away with what they saw as “idolatry,” acts which represented a distinct assault on Native culture and history.⁴¹ Despite this, through these acts of accommodation to new sacred and educational settings in the semi-autonomous indigenous towns, spaces that were neither wholly Spanish nor wholly “Indian” arose⁴²

Throughout Mesoamerica, Christianized indigenous conquerors who imbibed new and traditional ideologies at the same time launched military and cultural campaigns alongside the Spaniards.⁴³ One way of “coping” in post-Conquest Mexico was to adopt what Haskett called an “imperfect façade of Europeanization,” a tradeoff for cultural,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19; Szasz cites historians from the 1980s as key thinkers in intermediary studies, namely Daniel K. Richter and James A. Clifton.

⁴¹ Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday* (1996).

⁴² Kicza, *Indian in Latin American History*, xx;

⁴³ Yannakakis argues that locals expressed this in-betweenness as a way to “defend an autonomous native space,” especially when indigenous rituals took place away from priestly oversight, see *The Art of Being In-Between*, 70. For further examples, see: Laura Matthew and Michel Oudijk (eds.), *Indian Conquistadors: Indigenous Allies in the Conquest of Mesoamerica* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Stephanie Wood, *Transcending Conquest: Nahua Views of Spanish Colonial Mexico* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Florine Asselbergs, *Conquered Conquistadors: The Lienzo de Quauhquechollan: A Nahua Vision of the Conquest of Guatemala* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2008).

social, political, and financial security.⁴⁴ Yanna Yannakakis, in her study of indigenous societies negotiating Spanish colonialism in Oaxaca, has more recently called this the “art of being in between.”⁴⁵ This tradeoff and the resultant “art” produced by some of those involved in the process have not always been recognized by art historians, specialists who have tended to downplay the ethnic specificity of the objects or flatten the dimensions of *in situ* Native craft production and artistry. Scholars from José de Moreno Villa (1942) to Manuel Aguilar-Moreno (2013) have classified plastic Native didactic materials as being “primitive,” “Indo-Christian,” “Indian,” “folk,” or “*Tequitqui*”—the latter being a Nahuatl term sixteenth-century grammarian Alonso de Molina defined as a “worker, commoner, or tributary.”⁴⁶

Coined as a descriptive word with a different meaning by prolific architecture historian José Moreno Villa in the 1940s, “*Tequitqui*” is a problematic term in art history to say the least.⁴⁷ Its most recent, best definition in an art historical context is probably Wake’s: a “distinctive style... characterized by its flat, surface beveling over a roughly

⁴⁴ Haskett, “Coping in Cuernavaca with the Cultural Conquest,” found in Kicza (ed.), *Indian in Latin American History*, 123.

⁴⁵ Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between* (2008). For a study that compares the diversity of materials produced by in-betweeners, especially didactic materials used in the education of Maya and Nahua Christians, see Mark Z. Christensen, *Nahua and Maya Catholicisms; and Translated Christianities: Nahuatl and Maya Religious Texts* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

⁴⁶ “*Tequitqui*” in Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario de la lengua mexicana* [1880 (1571: fol. 105v)]. See also period attestations of *tequitqui* (or “tribute payer; or, someone who performed tribute labor”) from the 1540s to 1650s at: “*tequitqui*,” Nahua Dictionary, Wired Humanities Projects, <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/tequitqui>.

⁴⁷ José de Moreno Villa, *La escultura colonial mexicana* (México, El Colegio de México, 1942), 16 and 110; and *Lo mexicano en artes plásticas* (Fondo de Cultura, 1948), 174. Moreno Villa argued that, like the use of “*mudéjar* art” to signify art produced by Islamic tributaries under Christian overlords, *tequitqui* art represents similar characteristics for “Aztec” subjects of Christian overlords. Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, “Transculturation in Art: Sculpture in the Posa Chapels at the Monastery of Calpan, Mexico,” *Colonial Latin American Review*, 22.1 (2013). For her part, Elizabeth Wilder Weismann agreed with Moreno Villa, but advised fellow art historians to toward a “careful interpretation” of “indigenous element[s]... clearly related to pre-Conquest sculpture,” for “[i]f it is used for anything whatever that is not pure European tradition, it means everything and nothing, see *Mexico in Sculpture, 1521-1821*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 11. See also, Weismann, *Art and Time in Mexico: From the Conquest to the Republic* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1985) 25.

hewn but deep undercutting, together with the rhythmic patterning of its crowded motifs,” though future publications by others investigating the term will surely continue to reify its usage.⁴⁸ The term is a sixteenth-century Nahuatl noun for a particular kind of “tribute” work that was applied by Moreno Villa as a way to capture the “attempt” by Natives at a Christian artistic style, one referring to the workers without clear delineation in their specific works and a lack of the artworks local context. It has since been applied to distinct art forms as a general act of expediency by many who wish to acknowledge indigenous agency.⁴⁹ One assumption baked into the use of the term is that *tequitqui* artworks represent the compelled labor of people conquered by a foreign power, the results of which are subjugated depictions of the subject matter, or visions of the vanquished.⁵⁰ The continued use of the term tends to situate indigenous expression, Christian or otherwise, within a conqueror/conquered hierarchy, one that undercut local ingenuity and human agency.

In doing this the field seems to reproduce Western visions of indigenous knowledge and culture by adopting a sixteenth-century term for a particular kind of

⁴⁸ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 172. Wake’s papers, a larger collection of fieldnotes, photographs, and a few unpublished articles, has recently been acquired by the University of Essex Library (see the “Eleanor Wake Collection” prepared by Nigel Cochrane), and this author would like to extend his gratitude to her graduate advisor Valerie Fraser (emeritus professor, Art History U. of Essex) for her help archiving those documents. See also Aguilar-Moreno’s effective historiography of the term in “Transculturation in Art,” 2013: 40; his dissertation “The Tequitqui Art” (UCLA, 1999) is an omnibus on artworks associated with the term and sixteenth century transculturation. For the author’s advocacy for the term’s usage (see especially Chapter 5 of “The Tequitqui Art: Indian-Christian Transculturation in Sixteenth-Century Mexico,” PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1999). Dr. Aguilar-Moreno plans to revisit the debate in his forthcoming book (personal communication, 2019).

⁴⁹ Aguilar-Moreno “Transculturation in Art,” 40-43; and Chapter 5 of his “The Tequitqui Art,” 1999.

⁵⁰ Moreno Villa, *La escultura colonial mexicana*, 16-17. Even during and periods of trauma and conquest that followed, ‘conquered’ or ‘colonized’ peoples tend to be surprisingly tenacious in their acts of political, social, and cultural perseverance.

person to refer to an artistic style, which is of course anachronistic.⁵¹ For instance, architecture specialist John McAndrew applied *tequitqui* to the indigenous artisans of Calpan and Huexotzinco, two communities that will take center stage in this dissertation. As tributary laborers, McAndrews argues, the artisans of Calpan and Huexotzinco were likely a workforce spread thin by the demands imposed upon them by Spanish priests headquartered in nearby Cholula.⁵² In Cholula, the costs of similar *tequitqui* building projects they produced weighed heavily on successive indigenous town councils and certainly affected their access to skilled labor.⁵³ Adversely, when George Kubler claimed that the onerous labor demanded of Native workers led to simpler, and therefore “Indian” art, he tended to ignore local contexts and meaning of the art altogether.⁵⁴ Kubler’s understanding of tribute artists was that they created simple reliefs, muddled models from European artworks, and only aped styles learned from their supervisors. Mexican colonial architecture specialist Constantino Reyes-Valerio, whose oeuvre includes several site-specific studies from across the Mexican countryside, also relied on *tequitqui* as a viable

⁵¹ Early on in the art historical record some proposed bookends for so-called *tequitqui* arts breadth. Elizabeth Weismann capped its lifespan to the early seventeenth century, a period when Indian identity faded into the past and parish church constructions show “no more *tequitqui*, because that special relationship of the Indian who remembers the old culture and the Spaniard who values it (or at least permits it) is over;” see *Art and Time in Mexico*, 44.

⁵² John McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches of Sixteenth-Century Mexico: Atrios, Posas, Open Chapels, and Other Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 312. These are the very same sites where Weismann described the “*tequitqui*” artwork of at least one ornamental display to be a “great gift” and no “finer example of good decoration from a poor model,” meaning the Native artisan(s) had produced a work of art, in this case a depiction of the Last Judgment, that the European original’s woodblock print artist had poorly produced (*Mexico in Sculpture*, 1950: 61).

⁵³ Veronica Gutiérrez, “Converting a Sacred City” (PhD dissertation, Los Angeles: CA, UCLA, 2012); Gutiérrez’s PhD dissertation exposes the intricate construction project that coopted much of surrounding towns’ labor force in the sixteenth century. Gutiérrez’s close reading makes a sound argument and only lacks her interpretation of a few relevant Nahuatl sources, such as Cholula’s codex (*Codice de Cholula*, ca. 1586: <https://codices.inah.gob.mx/pc/index.php>), which may offer revealing perspectives on the process of physical and imagined conversion of space. See for instance, Francisco González-Hermosillo Adams and Luis Reyes García, *El Códice de Cholula: la exaltación testimonial de un linaje indio* (Porrúa, 2002).

⁵⁴ Wake argues against Kubler’s position, for instance (*Framing the Sacred*, 140-141).

term, as have others.⁵⁵ However, Reyes-Valerio also proposed calling the style “IndoChristian-art,” a term that, much like the ineffective colonizers’ descriptor “Indian,” falls short because it occludes the complexity of the particular messages articulated by local actors and artists.⁵⁶ “Indo-Christian” and “tribute” or *tequitqui* art simply fail to convey the nature of a given community’s surviving place-identity and the memories that locals may have elicited with their artforms (Fig. 1.3).⁵⁷

There is an obvious interplay of human agency in *tequitqui* discourse, one that should force art historians to describe the large body of artforms to which it refers with broad strokes, while still paying credence to local influences (though this has not always happened).⁵⁸ Such a nuanced approach is being shown in recent works that have moved beyond culturally-stunted interpretative frameworks. These more nuanced studies would include Wake’s important consideration of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley and other provincial places and Barbara Mundy’s work on Nahua urbanites in Tenochtitlan-Mexico

⁵⁵ Manuel Aguilar-Moreno finds the term accessible because of its similarities to definitions for Iberian *mudéjar* art, a history of “art that the conquered made for their conquerors, or the conquerors’ assumption of the style of the conquered,” and he qualifies that “one distinction is that the Moors of Spain made Christian churches without changing their religion, whereas the Indians of Mesoamerica saw the destruction of their culture and suffered the imposition of both a new religion and a new way of life” (“Transculturation in Art,” 40). One point of this dissertation is to add nuance to this depiction of the “Spiritual Conquest” in indigenous places and challenge clean-slate approaches to sixteenth-century cultural studies.

⁵⁶ The subject of Constantino Reyes-Valerio, *Arte indocristiano* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2000).

⁵⁷ Haskett, *Indigenous Rulers: An Ethnohistory of Town Government in Colonial Cuernavaca* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 138-141. For comparison, see Gauvin Bailey, *The Andean Hybrid Baroque: Convergent Cultures in the Churches of Colonial Peru* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). Bailey’s concept of “Baroque hybrid art,” though reflective of the intermingling nature of many artistic traditions in the Andes, relies on the ethnic term “Indian” to define what he sees as a reverse conquest of “Catholic” art.

⁵⁸ For instance, Weismann argued that the term was “something original” compared to the use of the term Plateresque to define this Native variant on the style, and that it was useful because it “reminds us that the mingling of different cultures was an old story to the Europeans.” Weismann furthers her point with the pithy: “A church is a spacious void to hold a congregation; the Aztec holy place was a small shrine raised on top of a pyramid...,” *Art and Time in Mexico*, 25-26. This Euro-centric and top-down stance offers us little wiggle room in trying to uncover the “old story” of indigenous cultural traditions, and the use of the term recapitulates the Western perspective that arts education at the time was derived from Europe alone.



Figure 1.3, Early church construction projects in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. Indigenous builders offer up community tribute (*tequitqui*) in the form of building construction. The unknown artist imagined Bishop Juan de Zumárraga (center), among other church leaders, handing an illustration over to an indigenous worker. Excerpt from “*Vita Reverendissimi Patris, Martini Sarmiento Tlaxcallae Episcopi.*” Orscelar de Marianus, *Gloriosus Franciscus*, 1632 (Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University).

City.⁵⁹ When investigating “viceregal” art and architecture, Kelly Donohue-Wallace carefully reconstructs the local history surrounding murals within “teaching spaces,” community-based drinking and exchange rituals, material culture, and several cases of locally-minded architectural programs found across the Andes and Central Mexico. Her work reveals complex textures of indigenous influence on supposedly “imperial” art.⁶⁰ But for Donahue-Wallace, “*tequitquí*, Indo-Christian, and mestizo” are acceptable terms, adding that “indigenous sculptors... visualized Christian iconography in a form that referenced local pictorial traditions and therefore appealed to native viewers,” in a way

⁵⁹ Wake, *Framing the Sacred* (2010); and Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City*, 2015.

⁶⁰ Kelly Donahue-Wallace, *Art and Architecture of Viceregal Latin America, 1521-1821* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008): 39-41, 66-71, and 77-88.

that also broke the mold of cultural micropatriotism as they saw fit, demonstrating their own artistic agency.⁶¹

Yet adopting the Nahuatl term *tequitqui* to describe art created by artisans living and working in Nahua communities and, even worse, applying it to non-Nahua indigenous artists, renders that art to a sense of manual rather than creative labor and uninventiveness, and puts the impetus for this art's generation upon the demands imposed by nonindigenous people and structures.⁶² In the case of Wake's study, using the term seems effective at times, but only when it is used to refer to specific examples of three-dimensional indigenous sculpture derived primarily from two-dimensional European visuals, thus the act of an indigenous artist creating an "exact copy" in the form of tribute that was expected by an imperial force.⁶³ Instead, it would be better to redefine Native contributions with, as Manuel Aguilar-Moreno once opined, a "precise term that defines the [artists'] inventive participation in a unique, transcultural art that had its own aesthetic categories," and thus highlights local identity and indigenous agency.⁶⁴ Investigating the sacred art produced in local contexts re-centers the discourse, and this specificity is crucial to understanding how culture influenced learning and, therefore, learningscape constructions.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., 14.

⁶² For the term's use among art historians, see Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 172-173.

⁶³ Ibid., 173.

⁶⁴ Aguilar-Moreno, "Transculturation in Art," 390-91. If one were to rehabilitate the term, it would be better defined as a style of art or process of artistic expression created by indigenous artisans that is suffused with local, non-European elements while also acknowledging Spanish Catholic models. In other words, *tequitqui* art ought to be understood not as a crude imitative artistic expression, but an innovation that witnessed "Catholic" subject matter subjected to indigenous forms of expression and interpretation. And we ought to chip away at notion that it is an acute result of production of art found "always in the details," as Weismann prescribed (*Art and Time in Mexico*, 139).

⁶⁵ See, for instance, Jeanette Favrot Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe: From Black Madonna to Queen of the Americas First* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), 5-8.

This discourse is related to other problematic terminology regarding the confluence of cultural traditions of the Spanish colonial period. Traditionally, the emerging Catholic culture among indigenous peoples that resulted from the attempted “spiritual conquest,” has been seen as syncretic in nature. But according to Samuel Edgerton, syncretism, much like hybridity, as a “singly defining word,” masks the fact that Nahuas and other peoples were actually attempting to “rationalize standard Christian visual symbols in terms of sympathetic similarity to their own traditions.”⁶⁶ Edgerton’s “expedient selection,” the choices the clergy seem to have made and the responses to these by Indians, produced and reproduced “collusion... never documented in the contemporary written records” but which he finds “in the extant fabric of the artifacts themselves.”⁶⁷ The following pages seek to parse out this type of collusion within several learningscapes over time, but keeping the perspective more centered on local producers and less so on visions from above.

This approach helps to reproduce indigenous dynamic vernaculars, how locals characterized people, places, and things. For example, James Lockhart’s excavation of ethnolinguistic adjustments made on the part of Nahuas as they adopted and adapted themselves to Spanish-speaking terms exposes a timeline for a four-stage process of cultural evolution. The focus of the present dissertation falls into the era of Stage II, which Lockhart explained regarding linguistic and architectural vernaculars began in the 1540-50 and lasted to 1640-50. This phase saw a “mixed Hispanic-indigenous style of

⁶⁶ Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion: Religious Architecture and Indian Artisans in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 2 and 299n4-n5.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2.

expression... executed by individuals still cognizant of preconquest skills and lore, buttressed by a still strong solidarity of the altepetl.”⁶⁸

This study’s application of “learningscape” benefits from Eleanor Wake’s recognition that studies of sacred spaces continually framed indigenous contributions through predominately Euro-Christian eyes.⁶⁹ The hope was that scholars might better show Native art, culture, and intelligence by “mov[ing] away from the idea that the whole artistic and architectural product of sixteenth-century New Spain tells a uniquely Euro-Christian story,” obligating us instead to tell a more complex one that exposes how “churches and their iconography tell a very Indian story.”⁷⁰ This dissertation argues, in turn, that this story was “Indian” in that it was articulated by Native communities and adapted to specific senses of place.

This project directly engages in the discourse of Mesoamerican media studies or the examination of tools used for “visual thinking” and the recognition of indigenous and mixed-heritage people’s intellectual agency. It challenges the cant of the phrase “people without history” and explanations of colonization based on this concept created by well-meaning but ignorant scholarship, as Eric Wolf argued, that presupposed a teleologic path to societies, from tribal to capitalistic.⁷¹ Before and after Europeans intervened upon Native American places, indigenous intellectuals and commoners produced visual and material “media” in the form of pre-Hispanic-style pictorials, alphabetic manuscripts, art, and architecture that clearly communicated meaning in manners unlike but no less

⁶⁸ Lockhart, “Postconquest Nahua Society and Concepts Viewed through Nahuatl Writings,” *Estudios de cultura Náhuatl*, No. 20, (1990), 111; also Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 276, n63.

⁶⁹ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 2010: 4.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 4 and 6.

⁷¹ For “people without history,” see Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

meaningful than Western traditions.⁷² Since the sixteenth century, colonial and neo-colonial regimes, and the scholars who have supported them, argued that indigenous peoples lacked the “right” kind of culture to be fully civilized or to be truly capable human beings.⁷³ From the beginning, the Spanish-colonial phenomena fostered a superiority complex, involving myths that Matthew Restall has famously debunked.⁷⁴

Restall is a fairly recent addition to the cadre of ethnohistorians who have worked to revise narratives about the conquest and its aftermath since at least the 1970s (and in some cases even before that time), advocating for analytical ethnolinguistics and the use of Native sources.⁷⁵ These studies have truly reshaped what we thought we knew about

⁷² Gordon Brotherston, *Image of the New World: The American Continent Portrayed in Native Texts* (London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 17-20; and *Book of the Fourth World*, 50; Boone and Mignolo, *Writing Without Words*, 227; Boone and Tom Cummins, *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 2nd through 4th October 1992* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998), 158; Boone, *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000), 31-61; Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 7-8; and Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003a), 90-92. For a clear example of the obverse, that a lack of writing equated disunity and dysfunction, see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 160. For a thoughtful and well-rounded study of “pictographic vocabulary” by two lions in the field that explicates of mature colonial era writing without words, see Boone et al. *Painted Words: Nahua Catholicism, Politics, and Memory in the Atzaqualco Pictorial Catechism* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017), 53-66.

⁷³ Early Spanish sources noted as much, see for example, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, trans, and ed. by David Carrasco, 2008; Elizabeth Foster (trans.), *Motolinia's History of the Indies of New Spain*, 1950; Toribio Motolinia and Nancy Joe Dyer (trans. and ed.), *Memoriales: libro de oro* (El Colegio de México, 1996). The juncture was an outgrowth of “cultural imperialism,” with “culture,” according to Edward Said, being both “those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms” that ensure “us” and “them” logics and practices (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, NY: Knopf, 1993, xii-xiv).

⁷⁴ Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (2003a).

⁷⁵ Though started earlier with post World War II ethnolinguists, the ranks of New Philologists swelled in the 90s, see Restall, “A History of the New Philology and the New Philology in History” (2003b). Select examples include: Berdan and Anawalt (eds.), *The Essential Codex Mendoza* (1997); Smith and Berdan (eds.), *The Postclassic Mesoamerican World* (2003); Berdan, *Aztec Imperial Strategies* (1996); Carrasco and Scott Sessions, *Daily Life of the Aztecs: People of the Sun and Earth* (1998); Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire* (2000); Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (1993); Ross Hassig, *Time, History, and Belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico* (2001); Miguel León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture* (1963); León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (1992); López Austin, *La educación de los antiguos nahuas* (vols. 1-2, 1985); Sahagún, *General history of the things of New Spain: Florentine Codex*, edited and translated by Arthur O. Anderson &

pre-colonial and colonial indigenous peoples because the documents have allowed those peoples to, in essence, speak for themselves. This sophisticated revisionist approach and methodological thrust is most evident in the nuanced depiction of “local religion.”⁷⁶ Chauvinistic “White” versus “Black” legends about Spanish benevolence or depravity persist to the present, so it is in order to continue to debunk them by carrying out “locally specific” approaches instead of an emphasis on “top-down” orientations or “high-level politics of formal parties, revolutions, and policies.” It is much more useful, then, to follow the lead of “the newer cultural history of politics [that] emphasized the role of the peasant, the underrepresented, and the ‘popular.’”⁷⁷

Accordingly, this dissertation challenges several assumptions. First and foremost, it will recast the “Spiritual Conquest” as an attempted assault by Christian priests and their aides on indigenous educational practices. I will argue against characterizations of this process that originated from a top-down, unidirectional concentration on a supposedly triumphant process of conversion and acculturation among indigenous peoples.⁷⁸ The dissertation examines indigenous “media” used in pre-contact educational spaces to find the true complexity of patterns set forth by foreigners and their indigenous allies as they endeavored to convert non-Christian, non-Iberian peoples and their traditional ways of learning, as well as community-level reactions to this imposition in the first one hundred years or so of Spanish colonialism in central Mexico. James Lockhart demonstrated that Native artists participated (unwittingly or otherwise) in the

Charles Dibble, 1952-1981; Susan Schroeder and Stafford Poole (eds.), *Religion in New Spain* (2007); Schroeder, Wood, and Haskett (eds.), *Indian Women of Early Mexico* (1997); Smith, *The Aztecs* (1998); Jaques Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest* (1961).

⁷⁶ See Martin Nesvig, *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2006), xviii-xiv, among others

⁷⁷ Ibid., xx.

⁷⁸ Ricard, Spiritual Conquest (1966); and Kobayashi, *La educación como conquista* (1974).

operation of “double-mistaken identity,” the process in which cultural expressions were mutually misunderstood by both teachers and pupils, resulting in a complacency that things were the same while in fact they were different, allowing for indigenous cultural survivals under the noses of the colonizers.⁷⁹ By seeking Mesoamerican voices within the indigenous, colonial, and multifaceted provincial learningscapes, this project furthers the identification of transcultural processes plainly carried out in and enacted upon the courtyards of sixteenth-century schools.

Framing Places in Mesoamerican Conquest History

Several scholars have studied elements of the concept of Mesoamerican “framing.” James Maffie proposed the concept “time-place” to rationalize how Nahuas (or “Aztecs”) framed their philosophy of space and time. Time-place, Maffie argues, helps interested scholars imagine indigenous understanding of places, which were local, concrete, and both terrestrial and non-terrestrial. Maffie continues, “[t]he Valley of Mexico [was] part of the unfolding of *teotl*. As such, it [was] animated and charged with power.”⁸⁰ Before him, mid-twentieth century Romanian religious historian and theorist Mircea Eliade set the tone for this type of study, proposing analytical approaches that remain useful when defining the concepts undergirding Mesoamerican sacred centers. What he called “architectonic symbolism of the Center” involved essential sacred centers comprised of three cosmograms, or universal symbols: the sacred mountain, the ideal temple or palace derived from that mountain, and the community that surrounds and

⁷⁹ Lockhart, *Of Things of the Indies* (1999).

⁸⁰ Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy*, 421. Maffie defines *teotl* as a “nonpersonal, nonminded, nonagentive, and nonintentional... power: continually active, actualized, and actualizing energy-in-motion...” that animates the indigenous cosmos, a driving force behind power in social, political, and cultural expression (see *Aztec Philosophy*, “Section 1.1”).

identifies with both of these. The community's orientation to these three cosmograms was a combined *axis mundi* or a "meeting point" between the sacred and the profane, links in society to place and place to what the community holds sacred.⁸¹ In Mesoamerica and elsewhere, human societies established their sense of place—what Pierre Bourdieu termed one's *habitus*—and they would identify themselves within their environments, including the referencing of landmarks, such as sacred mountains, in the landscape (among other kinds of revered places), recreate them in their architecture, and converse with them ritualistically.⁸²

The study of place and memory in conjunction with the grand nature of Mesoamerican cosmos has revealed intriguing aspects about how indigenous people oriented themselves in place-time. Enrique Florescano explained that Mesoamericans sought order and the orderly "placing" of well-defined component parts of the universe that surrounded them. The basic "map of the world" could be conceived of as relations between five points: the center and the four cardinal directions.⁸³ The east was masculine, red, and related to the Reed sign; north was the Stone sign, black, and death; west was the

⁸¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 12; Eliade continues on in the deconstruction of these types of symbols to study the "repetition of the Cosmogony," or repeating symbolic references to zones of the sacred (17-21).

⁸² Bourdieu believed that societies tend to order themselves around hierarchies that, he theorized, sought "cultural capital," or essentially a Marxist belief in the zero-sum activities humans tend towards, including the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills. His concept of *habitus* (*Distinction*, 170) was the resulting (physical) sense of place that came from accumulating material goods and status, a cognizance that was influenced by petit bourgeoisie tastes and aristocratic asceticism, and by way of internalizing society's tastes and the urge to keep up with "taste makers," one establishes and hones individual and group identity. Societal tastes, producers of taste, and the limitations on some (especially the lower classes) to accumulate capital and refine taste is all part of the milieu that encourages attachment to things and the places (177). Though the theory is ambiguous, for Bourdieu, one's status pins people to class-based places and things, or as he pithily explained in regard to the "taste of necessity": "workers eat beans because they cannot afford anything else" (178). For a collected volume that fills in the ambiguity and works to decolonize Bourdieu's theory, see Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby, *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005).

⁸³ Enrique Florescano, *Memory Myth, and Time: From the Aztecs to Independence* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), 11.

House sign, white and feminine; and the south was tied to the Rabbit sign, the color blue, and life.⁸⁴ Because east was the place associated with the rising sun at the moment of creation, Florescano argued, it was the “guide direction” to the others and that all Mesoamerican societies cosmogony purposefully used the moment of creation in the “mythic” past as their basis for ordering of life and sacred city planning.⁸⁵ In the case of the Triple Alliance, its members appear to have adopted the existing mythic cosmovision and adjusted their rituals to fit that seasonal/temporal schema. They “integrated” important rites and religious obligations into the cardinal makeup throughout their calendar year, and, according to Florescano, even demarcated their home city, Tenochtitlan, along a quadripartite pattern, placing themselves at center.⁸⁶ The result was the fastening of historical memory and religious practice with directions that anchored the practitioners in place and time, or to a grander “sacred” and “superhuman order” under the Triple Alliance’s “system of political and ideological domination.”⁸⁷ That the Triple Alliance tapped into and legitimated their rule using existing spiritual and cultural anchors seems likely (and the process appears to have presaged the practices of colonizers to come), but it is wise not to concede too much power and influence to superhuman forces. Furthermore, Florescano’s interpretation tends to undercut the agency of place in the matter and the study obscures some of the ways that local knowledge and religion negotiated identity on the ground level.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 13 and Figure 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 15-17.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 16-20. The described quadripartite layout was not an innovation by the Mexica-Tenochca of Tenochtitlan (or “Aztecs”), and, in fact, the deep roots of Mesoamerican environmental history and urban settings has been the topic of several archaeological studies, as discussed later in this dissertation.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 20-21.

Theory-rich investigations into the roots of Mesoamerican placeness have revealed significant geo-cultural concepts that will recur in the present study. Davíd Carrasco, an adherent and preacher of Eliade's theories, graphed the latter's model onto a study of Mesoamerican city/urban formations, highlighting place and space as well as time, in *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire* (1982).⁸⁸ He identified the usages of key symbolism employed throughout the region, documenting archetypes, the hero Quetzalcoatl, for instance, and the Ur-symbolology of Mesoamerican sacred spaces, the city of Tollan. Tollan is thought to have been the real Toltec city by the same name (today Tula), but was more likely an imagined, "Place of Reeds," an archetype *altepetl* and possibly tied to the early urban environs of Teotihuacan. For Carrasco, both the hero and the place are traceable throughout the Mesoamerican zeitgeist in the Classic Period and have been recapitulated, with augmentation, in societies ever since.⁸⁹ Recently, ethnohistorians and others have drawn upon Eliade's elaborations to better understand sacred space and place creation. Robert Haskett, for one, noted its usefulness in navigating loaded value judgments, assumptions implied when others have contrasted "real" versus "mythical" stories.⁹⁰ Spatial analysis allows for a fuller development of indigenous "visions" of learning environments.⁹¹

Others have argued against the romanticized cosmological approach to Mesoamerican place-identity formation, especially Michael E. Smith's *Aztec City-State*

⁸⁸ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire* (2000).

⁸⁹ Carrasco argues, related to Eliade's concepts, that "Put simply, Tollan was a symbol of sacred space and Quetzalcoatl was a symbol of sacred authority (*Ibid.*, 4)," and then launches into a deep analysis of select sites and figures that demonstrate this key point. This chapter directs his theory upon Nahua learning environments in some of the same sites.

⁹⁰ Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 53-55; Jaime Lara, *City, Temple, Stage: Eschatological Architecture and Liturgical Theatrics in New Spain* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 93-94.

⁹¹ Here, I borrow Haskett's pursuit of the "mythic visions" of colonial Cuernavaca, (*Visions of Paradise*, 21-23).

Capitals (2008). Unswayed by cultural archetypes and symbolic Ur-urbanism, Smith believed that functionalism played the greater a role in determining what constituted a city's identity.⁹² Smith's study is invaluable because of his concerted effort to approach archeological evidence within the framework of Amo Rapoport's discourse on the meaning of man-made environments. Rapoport's thesis, a sociological construction that inspires many, is a three-tiered schema of how meaning was constructed: high-level architecture, or specific and esoteric knowledge; middle-level, or examples of how humans express power, status, and identity; and low-level, or individual and local "visual coherence" of towns.⁹³ Smith superimposes Aztec cities and towns over this three-tiered understanding to demonstrate how they expressed urbanism on the local, regional, and macro scales, and he grounds his approach in political economy theory, seeking to highlight materialism.⁹⁴

This approach is most effective in the attention granted to the wider matrix of communities, those sub-*altepetl* beyond the often-romanticized sacred centers of Carrasco's studies, especially Tenochtitlan, and Smith's groundbreaking work. Its relevance to the present study is evident in the following pages.⁹⁵ He sheds light upon the basic reality that at the heart of each sub-*altepetl*, not solely in the context of dominant urban centers, Nahuas incorporated palaces alongside temples and that their building

⁹² Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals*, 1-6.

⁹³ Ibid., 10-15. For Amos Rapoport's distinctions for high-style design/high culture down to low-style lower culture, see Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Prentice-Hall, 1969). For an example of one spatial theorist following Rapoport's, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991).

⁹⁴ Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals*, 10.

⁹⁵ I am especially drawn to Smith's investigation of Nahua conceptualizations of urbanity versus incivility and migratory social structures (i.e. Valley of Mexico urbanites contrasted against Chichimecs) and his masterful study of daily life and movement in urban spaces; see, respectively, his chapters 3 and 6 (Ibid.: 71-93, 151-174). Peter Gerhard's work is an exemplar for piecing together the wider matrix, see *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (1993).

placements reveal a less than romantic “chaotic situation” as far as astronomical cosmovisions are concerned.⁹⁶ Thus, he reminds us, in the end, that place-identity was composed through cosmology *and* politics.⁹⁷ I find that this point—a pushback against Eliade’s universalisms and cosmovisionaries writ large—does not entirely undercut Carrasco’s findings. Certainly, it admonishes scholars to take care in piecing together the pragmatic realities of Central Mexico’s socio-ecology and challenges the assumption of supremacy of primary written sources from Tenochtitlan. His hardnosed functionalist approach to the Post-Classic matrix of economic exchange is useful. Significantly, colonial land records seem to agree with a more cautious vision of orientation. Staunch adherence to cardinal directions is not clearly indicated by the plots Nahuas built in daily life, at least not as they appear on paper manuscripts. For instance, James Lockhart found that multistructure plots in the Valley of Mexico favored eastern, western, and sometimes northern settings around the *ithualli* (courtyard) space, and that the east-west axis proved to be the most common arrangement.⁹⁸

Under Spain, indigenous visions of places and ancestral lands appear to have been tied to real and imagined key identifiable markers, but not necessarily to grander cosmologies or politics. For that reason, recent ethnohistories that have demonstrated fascinating links between ancestral landscapes, the mapping of places, the preservation of memory, and boundary descriptions tied to landmarks. Robert Haskett’s findings from Cuernavaca’s Nahuatl language primordial titles—in some ways the alphabetic translations of pre-contact-style cartographic histories—reveal that social memory did

⁹⁶ Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals*, 142.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 188-189, 204.

⁹⁸ Lockhart also notes how we may never know how much influence Spanish building practices infiltrated indigenous ones on the household level, *Nahuas after the Conquest*, 61-63; and 71.

have a physical component.⁹⁹ He argues that memories of historical figures and incidents expressed in descriptions of a community's purported territory shed light on how “[t]here is history and sacred power in the landscape.”¹⁰⁰ Haskett asks scholars to seek out a dynamic vision of Native material culture, explaining it “represent[s] a kind of collective memory obeying intellectual conventions rooted in enduring Mesoamerican traditions, ways of conceiving of the past and its meanings that are just as valid, just as much true history, as those created by Western chroniclers and scholars.”¹⁰¹ I adhere to this philosophy in this project, seeking more “just as valid” evidence about indigenous knowledge based in places.

My interest in seeking a re-assessment or alignment of how indigenous place-based practices and visions of learning environments is necessary for the fields of Native and Spatial Theory Studies. As fields of research primarily borne out of European intellectual traditions, their philosophies share a history with settler-colonialism, the historical process by which non-indigenous settlers have to varying degrees displaced—in the real and/or metaphorical sense—indigenous populations to enslave, exploit, or otherwise intervene upon natural or societal resources.¹⁰² As a descendant of U.S. settler-

⁹⁹ Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰² Several scholars have attempted codifications of the phenomena associated with “colonialism,” “settler-colonialism,” “ethnic cleansing,” “elimination,” and historical acts of social, political, and cultural “erasure” for the benefit of empires and nation-states. The discourse is ongoing, for instance, consider two recent articles: Nancy Shoemaker, “A Typology of Colonialism” *Perspectives on History* (2015); and Aimee Rowe and Eve Tuck. “Settler Colonialism and Cultural Studies: Ongoing Settlement, Cultural Production, and Resistance,” *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies* (2017). The core debates in Settler-Colonial Studies have led to productive academic discourse and further revelations about the history of genocide and, within the last three decades, increased awareness and recognition of the legacies of European colonization beginning in the early modern period, see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); A. Dirk Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (Berghahn Books, 2008); Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006).

colonial legacies with a vested interest in decolonizing academic discourse as much as possible, I find it productive to reassess the important theories that still hold value. Early place and space theorists, as well as modern psychologists and sociologists before them, quite often disregarded American native peoples because they have considered them as being without a place. This belief arose from particular kinds of ethnocentric interpretations of the centuries of disenfranchisement and displacement of “others” that began when Europeans first documented and differentiated Native people in their historical records. Rationalizing the superiority of imperial placeness, European chroniclers mapped and categorized things as they saw fit. They most often disregarded and devalued concepts that felt too alien in relation to their own understandings of the world. The rise of modern philosophy further distanced Native people from placeness because they were believed to be too backward to share the same worldviews and incapable of forming equally valid ones to those theorists held dear.

A case in point is provided by the works of preeminent Spatial Studies scholars, such as Edward Relph and Edward Casey, and the more recent urban design scholarship that has pushed back against them. For Relph, writing in the early twentieth century, a “place” could essentially lose its placeness, and become inauthentic, when its intentionality and or meaning had been removed. This Western philosophical and foundational theorist ignored Native spaces and indigenous geographies, or in the least considered them “placeless,” as in not constituting Western visions of what an authentic place constituted because of settler colonialism that came with European westward

migration.¹⁰³ This vision often prescribed Eurocentric assumptions about indigenous land tenure and customary practices, placing these low on the imagined hierarchy permanence, below more-sedentary, Western, civilized societies and closer to non-sedentary, nomadic practices—a term that one scholar notes “yokes ethnicity to mobility” in a positivist sense.¹⁰⁴ Western views, for instance Edward Relph’s understanding, relegated Native lands to a state of lacking place sense and place-identity comparable to European and “Western” ones.¹⁰⁵ Traditional studies, those in the vein of Ricard’s concept of a “spiritual conquest,” saw a sparsely peopled territory and a clean cultural slate in Native America, one that the newcomers could write upon at will. If Natives had a place, settlers had been justified in effectively displacing them because of divine right, technological advantages, or cultural dominance.

Relph’s approach was both problematic and useful to spatial studies. He ignored non-Western peoples and their sense of sacredness, understood “Indians” as a universal identity, and did not study sedentary peoples throughout the Americas let alone Mesoamerica, but we can learn much from extending his thoughts to pre-Christian

¹⁰³ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London, UK: Pion, 1976). As a counterpoint and contemporary to Relph’s early study, Yi Fu Tuan argued for more caution in understanding the complexity of “placeness,” especially the significance of local understandings of “place [as] not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspective of the people who give it meaning;” *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 213. Michael Southworth and Deni Ruggeri offer a sharp and coherent argument against the underlying “dichotomy,” and general depiction of places as being either one or the other, a duality that fails to capture “the many degrees and shades” of the phenomenology of place, see Southworth and Ruggeri. “Beyond Placelessness: Place Identity and the Global City” (New York/, NY: Routledge, 2011), 501. Recently, a collection of scholars have revisited the groundbreaking study, including Relph himself, and the core impetus is a response to delving deeper into cultural hybridity in their conceptualizations of “place” and the “placeless,” see Robert Freestone and Edgar Liu (eds). *Place and Placelessness Revisited* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ For contemporary nation-state habits that “yokes ethnicity to mobility” regarding the Roma of Italy, see Kate Hepworth, “Abject Citizens: Italian ‘Nomad Emergencies’ and the Deportability of Romanian Roma,” *Citizenship Studies*, (2012) 435.

¹⁰⁵ Relph., *Place and Placelessness*, 79-87.

educational places. His preposition derived from the teleological view that Spaniards successfully erased the meanings indigenous peoples ascribed to places, sacred or profane, but Relph's investigation did influence others to question human interconnectedness to the natural and built environments and the basic premise stimulated place theory toward valuable results. In highlighting the importance of this phenomenon, his work has value, though it also allowed for the imposition of Western conceptualizations of space that closed off discussions of the return of land or reconciliations with removed populations.

In the 1990's, spatial phenomenologist Edward Casey's work focused on the experiential nature of placeness. For instance, he argued three basic psychological mannerisms, or "cases" that determined an individual's sense of place: first, non-movement, or "staying in place"; second, "moving within a place; and third, "moving between places."¹⁰⁶ Casey's emphasis on bodies in motion and, conversely, those who chose to move through places in time, is useful in thinking through Nahua experiences, but his ideas need to be tethered to the cultural and ethnic underpinnings of indigenous cosmology and recognize the asymmetrical relationships that transformed with Spanish colonial urbanism. In his cases, Casey tends to dissociate the critical context of historical bodies in places when he deconstructs, and thus removes much of the distinct ethnic makeup.

This dissertation seeks to displace the traditional Spanish conquest histories that assumed, unwittingly or otherwise, the belief that the representatives of Spanish Catholicism "completed" a top-down annihilation of Native places. By destroying

¹⁰⁶ Edward Casey "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," *Senses of Place*, 27, (1996), 23

indigenous temples and using their rubble to make Christian churches and courtyards, Europeans believed that they had imposed a new sense of place on the tractable indigenous populations of central Mesoamerica.¹⁰⁷ Spaniards even superimposed their built environments on the sites of sacred springs and on mountaintops, precontact sites with minimal architecture before contact, in an effort to coopt meaningful natural landmarks.¹⁰⁸ Spaniards who wrote narratives about what has erroneously been called the “spiritual conquest” of New Spain believed that education and training in these re-fashioned places would finish the job of physically destroying places (what I call “placebreaking”), by intellectually reshaping the Natives.¹⁰⁹

That is why I have found it useful, as the above scholars have done, to apply some spatial frameworks upon indigenous and colonial learning environments to capture, at least theoretically, socially-constructed layouts of places and place-identity. This practice

¹⁰⁷ Few Latin American scholars have turned to the larger body of spatial studies as an approach to colonial Mexico. That said, Jonathon Amith’s investigation of land tenure and migration in eighteenth-century Palula, Mexico, developed a useful scaffolding for a concept, “placebreaking” (a bit of parallel-thinking that this author and he share) which this dissertation investigates in the following chapters. Though Amith developed critical analysis of local disputation rhetoric that the Native communities used, he only scratched the surface of the place makers and place breakers of Palula, and more work needs to be done; see “Place Making and Place Breaking: Migration and the Development Cycle of Community in Colonial Mexico,” *American Ethnologist*, 32, no. 1 (2005).

¹⁰⁸ Significantly, D. Medina Lasansky has defined a sort of place-memory lapsing, what he termed “urban editing,” that occurred under Fascist interventions in San Gimignano, Italy, in the last century, see Lansansky, “Urban Editing, Historic Preservation and Political Rhetoric: The Fascist Redesign of San Gimignano,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 63, no. 3 (2004). Lasansky argues that the ideal place, the one envisioned by the state and offered to tourists over decades, eventually usurped the authentic landscape and memory of the town, a process of manipulation that the 1920s-30s Fascist regime pursued. By comparison, sixteenth-century Christian-Spanish sources seem to follow a similar editing process, when they attempted to rationalize a non-Christian history within their Christian worldview. This is seen in pre-Christian encounters between Native Americans and Christ, his apostles, or the lost tribes of Israel, and in cases when figures were identified with Christian saints, for instance Quetzalcoatl and St. Thomas, and the flexibility of both Catholic and indigenous narratives and iconographic traditions appears to have aided the persistence of Mesoamerican ones; see William Christian, Jr., “Catholicisms,” in Nesvig, *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, 2006.

¹⁰⁹ For a powerful example of how places can be overwritten like a palimpsest, see Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430-1950* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2005); however, it is telling that his history helps to rekindle what was lost from regular conquests of space.

foregrounds the concept of placeness along tempered phenomenological lines. In particular, relevant urban design methodologies, for example Kevin Lynch's general schema for understanding how participant's engagement with and experience within a given place's distinct "image," will add to the conceptualization of the various learningscapes highlighted throughout this study. Lynch argues that places are comprised of key elements, include: paths, edges, nodes, landmarks, and districts (Fig 1.4). He explains that, when present, these elements help to strengthen the participants' ability to access and engage with the given place and he believes in a universal social construction called "wayfinding," wherein individuals and groups oriented themselves with an identity that fit with a place. Lynch employed this language to define an "imageability matrix," a schema, like a postcard, that captures place-identity at a static moment in time.¹¹⁰ Adopting Lynch's model helps to determine the "imageability" of learning environments in the context of Nahua and Nahua-Christian architecture, and how these places may have been theoretically integrated into residents' lives. For our understanding of local place-

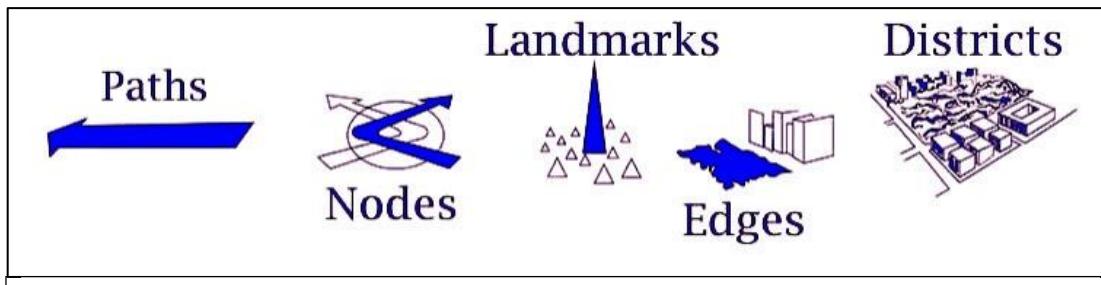


Figure 1.4, "Imageability" as Icons. Kevin Lynch's theoretical framework of how humans survey their surroundings, create psychosocial maps of places, and learn about places. He offered five basic components (paths, nodes, landmarks, edges, and districts), which have been repurposed to highlight design themes and "wayfinding" in Mesoamerican contexts.

¹¹⁰ Kevin Lynch, *Good City Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 110-111.

identity, I feel this exercise will further Smith's study of meaning in the Post-Classic.¹¹¹

In doing so, it situates the learningscape theory within the larger study of places and may prove useful to understanding how Nahuas envisioned learning.

It is my intention here to reveal the distortion between the discourse on Western investigations of place-identity, studies that have too often assumed Native peoples as "placeless," and build upon the ethnohistorical arguments for the obverse. This pursuit builds on other attempts of the same type. For instance, Louise Burkhart's analysis of gender-specific training on the pre-contact Nahua "home front" explains the lessons Nahua mothers taught their daughters during the early period of childrearing. Burkhart believes, "[i]t was in that smoky interior [of the home and its hearth] that the Mexica infant developed its orientation in space and time. It learned that space is quadrilateral and has a central point." Apparently aligned with Carrasco's discourse, she argues that the city and its arrangement of *teocalli* (temples) was replicated in the quadripartite nature of the house as "symbolic center," and that Nahua women were weavers of space and time.¹¹² Adding to this type of analysis, I hope to shed light on how educators and schools helped to recreate space and time beyond the home front. Colonial learning environments and indigenous learning modalities were inextricably entangled in complex pre-contact spatial orientations.¹¹³ These useful theoretical imports aside, my analysis

¹¹¹ Smith develops strong evidence about Aztec urban meaning based on Rapoport's understanding of higher, middle, and lower built forms, most convincingly in his discussion of (*Aztec City-State Capitals*, 136-150).

¹¹² Louise Burkhart "Mexica Women on the Home Front: Housework and Religion in Aztec Mexico," found in Schroeder et al. *Indian Women of Early Mexico* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 30-32; 50-51.

¹¹³ Matt Cohen and Jeffery Glover (eds.), *Colonial Mediascapes: Sensory Worlds of the Early Americas* (2014); Richard Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87, no. 4 (1997); Fran Speed, "The Sacred

also seeks a grounded approach to sources and attention to social and political networks, and when possible, I map real ecologies of indigenous and colonial networks and built forms in the hopes of developing a dynamic set of architectural designs and capturing the persistent use patterns of communities.

Strong evidence has revealed that older notions of space survived in central New Spain even when Spaniards had obliterated pre-contact sacred places, often “topping” them with new Catholic edifices and courtyards. Wake’s argument that indigenous painters, writers, and artisans were able to “frame” the Catholic sacred with their own conceptualizations of place and the cosmos calls more traditional interpretations in to question.¹¹⁴ Barbara E. Mundy’s tour-de-force study of Tenochtitlan before and after the Spanish invasion, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, The Life of Mexico City*, ably deploys spatial theory and practice. She parses the works of Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre to better understand what she sees as a triad of spatial spheres that Mesoamericans produced on three basic scales: perceived, conceived, and lived spaces.¹¹⁵ It is Mundy’s focus on the latter that sets her work apart. Her interpretive framework combines Lefebvre’s understanding of how societies create representations (perceived space) and conceptualizations (conceived space) of cities with Certeau’s view that the essence of a city was found more so in the practice of daily life.¹¹⁶ The latter exposes the agency of a city’s occupants, in Mundy’s case Tenochtitlan’s pre- and post-contact cosmopolitans, and she is able to convincingly “find that historical continuities, rather

Environment,” *Constructing Place: Mind and Matter*, (2003); Clare Twigger-Ross and David Uzzell, “Place and Identity Processes,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16, no. 3 (1996).

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 238-256.

¹¹⁵ Mundy, *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 12-13.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 13

than ruptures, reveal” the ways that indigenous knowledge undergirded the city’s planning and how it “offered its indigenous residents comforting reminders of their seamless integration into a larger cosmic order” even after they came under Spanish political domination.¹¹⁷

Mundy argues that though Spanish writers beginning with Hernando Cortés emphasized the complete destruction of the Mexica capital, “[w]hile rulers can die, spaces cannot. And while ethnic communities are conquered or ravaged by disease, spaces endure.” Like Haskett’s vision from primordial titles, Wood’s “intertextuality” of memory devices, and Carrasco’s cosmic drivers, Mundy finds that the Mexica sense of “place memory” went “beyond the physical monument.” She continues, “[C]ollective rituals make their mark on lived space and contribute to the social nature of space..., [and to] shape future action [that] has to do with the memory of urban dwellers.”¹¹⁸ Not directly challenging scholars in the vein of Smith, Mundy’s contention asks us to pay attention to the agency of places and the deeper meanings that humans place upon them. My intention is to continue this investigative spur, adding more cases of places and place-identity formation to best understand indigenous art and education. Place mattered for indigenous peoples because it aided and abetted the survival of ideas and culture on the local level. Pre-colonial Nahua knowledge persisted and was adapted to the new, not only by those Nahua scholars working with friars to create didactic materials in Nahuatl and other indigenous languages, but also by the Native artists, artisans, and students who built and studied in colonial learningscapes. This is testimony to the capacity of origin beliefs and cosmological constructions to rebuild indigenous place-identity in ways that may not

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 13, 211.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 10, 14.

have been recognized by Spaniards at the time, and by later generations of scholars who approached this subject from a “Western” perspective and bias.¹¹⁹

In order to understand the multifaceted ways in which people from the period discerned nature of places, learning environments, and pedagogy, “Unholy Pedagogy” turns to a variety of written sources. I have interpreted Nahuatl sources whenever possible, both published and archival Nahuatl texts, in an effort to represent places based on their community’s records. These include annals, church records, and oral histories recorded in the sixteenth century, though some sources were produced later based upon sixteenth-century originals or oral accounts. Nahuatl annals and the minutes from town council meetings recorded by local notaries are frustratingly limited in the amount of descriptive details about pedagogy but surprisingly helpful in approximating aspects of local agency (at least as depicted by lettered indigenous officials). Unfortunately, the needle in the haystack of education histories has yet to be uncovered, and we lack the vision of learning that might come from a teaching manual or an equivalent to a ‘textbook’ written for a student from Calpan, Huexotzinco, Tlaxcala, or any indigenous town from the period. Thus this study highlights genres (and the scholarly studies of those) that approximate elements of religious education, such as Nahuatl didactic plays, songs and musical performances, and descriptions of local festivals. More readily available are the dozens of extant colonial imprints and handwritten copies of imprints of doctrinas, catechisms, and sermons or chronicles and travel accounts, the vast majority of

¹¹⁹ However, works on the History of Memory and Memory Studies show that even the leveling of a populace or the removal of landmarks has not meant that oral traditions and historical memories do not live on; see Megged, *Social Memory* (2010) and Megged and Wood, *Mesoamerican Memory* (2012); for a comparative look at U.S. urban studies and memory, see Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

which were more commonly produced by priests or their indoctrinated aides. One example discussed below is Bartolomé de Alva's *Confessionario Mayor y Menor en lengua Mexicana* (1634), a primer for confessional discourse with Nahuatl-Spanish translations, which was written by a mestizo priest. These genres can be problematic on several fronts. On one hand, Spanish sources offer historians visions of Catholic educational practices especially from those seeking to affect the inculcation of Christianity and dogmas. And on the other hand, when read with a critical eye and in conversation with the relevant literature, these sources can reveal visions of educational happenings on the local level and the consternation of priests attempting to dissuade unChristian lesson plans.

Because of the lack of a locally-sourced treatise on education, “Unholy Pedagogy” approaches the study in a distinct fashion, drawing upon the material culture and pictorials of colonial architecture. Pictorials have been a part of modern ethnohistorical discourse since the 1950s, and my interpretations of pre- and post-contact manuscripts is informed by the body of rigorous scholarship. In turn, material cultural includes archaeology and critical architecture, especially new interpretations of ornamentation, statuary, building façades, illustrations, paintings, and other three-dimensional goods. These visual stimuli or their machinations are essential components in the investigation of the Mesoamerican and Spanish colonial education, and my art and architectural studies and surveys of these elements and places has been a crucial contribution to the study. Thus “Unholy Pedagogy” makes a unique contribution to the

analysis of colonial-era religious education studies and the history of learning science.¹²⁰

This approach recovers voices from Native communities, revealing more about indigenous connections to places and their vision of education on the local level. I hope it spurs further analysis of these types of sources as any thorough history that might deconstruct Nahuatl catechisms, wills, and Inquisition records might do.

The Dissertation’s Structure

Following this introduction, Chapter II launches the discussion about place-identity by finding it first in the pre-Christian schooling and educational practices from the Post-Classic Period (1400-1500 CE), demonstrating their complexity in the realm of the Triple Alliance. It focuses in on two of the most important *altepetl* in the Valley of Mexico, Tetzcoco and Tenochtitlan. These and other fifteenth-century Nahua cities featured specialized schools, often if not exclusively run by priestly teachers, that were known as *calmecac* (“house of the lineage,” schools for the sons of nobles with an emphasis on military training and religion), *telpochcalli* (“youth house,” the schools for commoner boys), *cuicacalli* (“song house” in which ritual practices were emphasized for boys and girls), and ritual learning spaces such as plazas and courtyards associated with temples and other kinds of structures. Significant here are a number of rich studies of formal educational practices, above all as they were pursued in the famous *calmecac*.

¹²⁰ This project defines “learning” and the science of learning as the “complex process that spans interdependent biological, psychological, sociocultural, and technological systems,” as defined by Johns Hopkins Science of Learning Institute, see “Unpacking the ‘Black Box’: The Science of Learning Institute Fifth Year Anniversary” (Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University, January 2018), 3. The implications of this dissertation’s findings relate to the contemporary study of how humans learn and the science of learning, as it adds to our understanding of interethnic cognitive science that took place in multisensory environments built for learning. By recognizing more about James Lockhart’s concept of “double mistaken identity alongside indigenous ways of learning and how they shaped forms of teaching under a colonial regime from the past, this project shows the importance ethnohistory in further unpacking the so-called “black box” of learning.

Chapter III investigates violent moments of invasion, colonial impositions, and attacks on Native archives, places of “power-knowledge,” defines the term “placebreaking,” yet poses ways in which this place-centered concept can both explain and challenge traditional assumptions about the erasure of the past by the imposition of the new.¹²¹ The chapter focuses on the religious and educational capital of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, Cholollan (Cholula) and its temple of Quetzalcoatl. Since this was the site of one of the earliest assaults upon an indigenous learningscape, the chapter examines what that process looked like, how foreigners understood it as proof of a completed spiritual conquest, and how those assessments overlooked a failure to remove traditional indigenous connections to an important sacred place.

Chapter IV describes the role of the Nahua “collegians” in the production of learning tools and curricula, and early colonial visions of “new” formal education taking place under the tutelage of Catholic priests. Synthesizing previous scholarship at times, the chapter examines three basic modes of learning utilized by Nahuas and Europeans: catechisms and Christian *doctrinas*, songs and plays, and oral traditions and histories. As well, the chapter explores themes and moralistic stories associated with specific saints, such as the Virgin Mary, and the ways that teachers and learning tools guided new Christians in the use of sacred and profane spaces. It also reveals the persistence of pre-Hispanic rituals and identities in the guise of Catholic beliefs and practices as they were

¹²¹ This concept, codified by Michel Foucault, and challenged and informed by postmodernists, argues that the production of power relies essentially on an understanding of knowledge, an epistemology that offers legitimacy to the learned and thus reinforces the purpose of knowledgeable people. Though useful in theory, Foucault’s construction of “knowledge” is plastic, based on Western synthetic expressions of power and assumed violence of intent, and theorists have sought to soften clear dichotomies that Foucauldian power-knowledge produced Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Pantheon Books, 1980). This is most evident in recent studies of “learned” and influential Nahuas, and this chapter reiterates those rigorous studies, such as McDonough, *The Learned Ones* (2014).

set out in Spanish-Nahuatl didactic texts. Scholars have combed through many of these official church sources, but this chapter’s emphasis on the concept of “place” in the context of the sources helps produce new insights into the histories of religious instruction and learning in a multicultural colonial context.

Chapter V moves the discourse of the learningscape back into the provincial countryside of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. It introduces key figures in provincial education and the theory of “Unholy Pedagogy.” It was unholy in the sense that Catholic learning environments and the lessons they inspired were not simply unencumbered sites of prescribed knowledge, but places rife with indigenous influences. It follows in the footsteps of Nahua collegians, church people, and visiting Franciscan and Dominican priests as they introduced the Nahua populations to Christian pedagogy, investigating the learning environments of convents and the persistence of local knowledge alongside adopted and adapted saints. Tracking participation in the founding of churches and planning associated with new provincial learningscapes, this chapter argues that the people of the *altepetl* of Huexotzinco, Calpan, and Quauhquechollan did not simply sit idly by as the shape of their education was being conceived and enacted. Rather, the ways in which they directly contributed to new modes of learning will be identified.

Chapter VI then tests those indigenous designs by analyzing the community level learning environments of Huejotzingo and Calpan, contextualized with some other Valley examples, to expose the practice and composite parts of indigenous contributions to learning environments. Many of the *conventos* begun before 1550 were not completed until the end of the century, so that the process of construction and elaboration was a lengthy one. With this in mind, it is possible to locate both Christian *and* Nahua-minded

lessons in church courtyards to show how place-based pedagogy informed educational practices, creating what I call partial and unholy pedagogy. These potentially unorthodox lessons were taught not only by word of mouth, but also through the use of architectural ornamentation and other visual media, the actual use made of educational environments in the courtyards, and the overarching vision of learning that emerged in them. “Unholy Pedagogy” interprets the practice and vision of education alongside Native sources, demonstrating community-level influence upon supposedly “Catholic” pedagogy.

In Chapter VII, “Unholy Pedagogy” concludes by presenting the critical top-down changes enacted by the zealous Palafox y Mendoza, beginning in the 1640s, as well as even more critical changes spurred by disease and disinvestment in the provincial learning environment. Ironically, the persistence of local knowledge led to attempts at its displacement on the part of increasingly suspicious regular order clergy and, eventually, their replacement by secular teachers. The conclusion is rounded out by some final thoughts about the legacy of the kind of locally-focused studies of colonial education carried out in the dissertation.

More generally, I hope that my findings will spark further study of local place-identity and reconsiderations of the Science of Learning at large. Humans are place-based creatures, and their language is enveloped by the places they learn in. They inhabit place and time with the understanding that they are meaningful pieces of the landscape themselves. Remembrances are part and parcel to identity perseverance, and the directed assault upon a people’s places of learning, the willful destruction of their tools for cultural perseverance, or the disappearing of bodies of knowledge that by some accounting may be considered unorthodox or challenging of dogmas needs our full

attention. The discipline of history and history writing is better at doing justice to historic peoples when scholars contextualize texts within the larger cultural fabric of sources that helped spawn the written word. This research has helped me find agency and perseverance in places commonly perceived to be some of the sites of clear-cut cultural trauma and even genocide. As may become evident throughout the following pages, I find stories about places to be surprisingly enduring in local eyes and frustratingly hard to kill from the perspective of the colonizers, even five hundred years on.

CHAPTER II

MESOAMERICAN LEARNINGSCAPES: FORMULATIONS OF NAHUA PLACE-IDENTITY & SCHOOLING

Education for All

In fifteenth-century Mesoamerica, the process of education started at birth. Among the Nahuas, parents carried their newborn child, “our jewel, our precious feather,” to be laid before a teacher at the neighborhood school. There they would wait as the teacher assigned the infant to a future place of learning.¹²² Witnessed by the faculty of the school and members of the community, this rite designated the child’s connection to one of two educational venues. One was the *calmecac* (“House of Lineage”), the school for affluent and socially privileged boys, where students were provided with a rigorous education in priestly duties, military tactics, and elite training, and some girl students, who learned logistics about proper comportment, resource management, and staffing for palace life.¹²³ The other, the less academically-oriented locally managed *telpochcalli* (“Youths’ House”), was a neighborhood school system best known for its military training of commoner boys.¹²⁴ Noble families, according to colonial sources, placed their babies in the *calmecac* with a great deal of fanfare, giving speeches to the educated class, the *tlamacazque* (“wise ones”), and their socio-economic peers.¹²⁵

¹²² Bernardino de Sahagún, Arthur J.O. Anderson and Charles Dibble. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain: Book III: The Origins of the Gods* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1950-1981), 59.

¹²³ Frances Berdan, *The Aztecs of Central Mexico: An Imperial Society* (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2005), 64; Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 87-91, 98-99.

¹²⁴ Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 64; Aguilar-Moreno, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World*, 92-93, 99-103.

¹²⁵ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book III*, 61-63.

The vision of the ideal *calmecac* surely differed over time, and each lineage or warrior enclave would have had particular ornamentations, but a brief sketch of a general example of a *calmecac* is nonetheless useful. Several sources depict these noble institutions. For instance, in the *Florentine Codex, Book III*, the Spanish and Nahuatl texts explain the strict nature of attending the Lineage House. An indigenous artist painted several noble boys accompanied by an adult male escort, all meeting with a *calmecac* “priest” garbed in the warrior cord cloak of his rank.¹²⁶ Students were expected to complete a number of specific tasks. For instance, their fourteenth task was to be “carefully... taught [by the priests] the songs which they called the god’s songs. They were inscribed in the books. And well were all taught the reckoning of the days, the book of dreams, and the book of years.”¹²⁷ Edward Calnek’s comparative examination of the institution found that Tenochtitlan designated *calmecac* to specific commercial specializations, and that these were also associated with communities around the city, including at least thirteen structures named by Sahagún associated with particular *calpulli* or districts.¹²⁸ These may have been replaced by Spanish-Catholic structures, though it is not clear if it was Spanish or Native architects who were targeting these specific sites for conversion.

¹²⁶ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book III*, f 31v. For the context of the priest’s “cord cloak”, see Justyna Olko, *Insignia of Rank in the Nahua World: From the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2014), 84-106.

¹²⁷ Sahagún, *General history of the things of New Spain, Book III Origin of the Gods*, 65.

¹²⁸ Edward Calnek, “Calmecac and Telpochcalli in Pre-Conquest Tenochtitlan” (1988), 171-173. The definition of *calpulli* may elicit various concepts such as a large house, a kin group, a migratory group, or a temple group. For the purposes of this dissertation its physical dimensions likely mirrored those of the *tlaxicacalli*, which have courtyards and plazas.

In contrast, the process commoner families went through to register their boys in the *telpochcalli* appears to have been less formulaic.¹²⁹ After all, according to the elite Nahua contributors to the *Florentine Codex*, these schools were places fit mainly for the coarse *totoquauhtlatoa*, *tlatlaquauhtlatoa*, *quaquauhtlatoa*, (those who “spoke forest-bird-speech, who-speak-while-they-eat, who-chew-their-words”), those common youths who “talked coarsely, grossly, and uncouthly,” though military training appears to have been a core component of the *telpochcalli*.¹³⁰ Anthropologist Susan Kellogg has characterized these occasions of school selection as the “most public” event of a Nahua child’s early existence, the moment the “earthly name” was bestowed upon the child.¹³¹ That both the *calmecac* and *telpochcalli* combined religious education with other things was recalled by sixteenth-century Nahua Catholics who referred to this aspect of life as *in itlaecoltiloca, in tlacatecolotl* (literally “his service, the demon”), a couplet that appears to have the Christian-influenced metaphorical meaning of “serving the devil,” inadvertently emphasizing the sacred aspects of pre-contact education in this way.¹³²

After registering their child with the proper school, the parents would bring their precious cargo home and, over the next decade of the child’s life, raise them in the fundamentals of instruction. Girls learned to sew, cook, and sweep; boys were taught to collect wood for fires, crops for consumption, and practiced hunting and fishing.¹³³ Parents and elders oversaw these activities centered in and around the home, or *calli*, and

¹²⁹ Aguilar-Moreno describes telpochcalli as the “general alternative” to rigorous education in the calmecac, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World*, 358-359.

¹³⁰ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book III*, 60; Francis Berdan notes that the *telpochcalli* was primarily focused on warrior and military training (*The Aztecs*, 64).

¹³¹ Susan Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Culture, 1500-1700* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 90.

¹³² This couplet opens the Appendix of the Third Book, a volume that offers several examples of how service was rendered to the Devil or various *tlacateculotl*, Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book III*, 39.

¹³³ Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 92-95.

the environs of the *tlaxilacalli* (also called *calpulli*) neighborhoods of the *altepetl* (ethnic state).¹³⁴ The *calli* was the basic building block of Mesoamerican identity and sense of place, what philosophers refer to with the place term *habitus*.¹³⁵ Beginning at roughly 12 years old, all Nahuas under the control of the Triple Alliance attended the local *cuicacalli* (“house of song”), or the public schooling institution that taught oral and martial training in significant traditions through exercise in song and dance.¹³⁶ One day, after boys had turned 15, they could return to the grounds of the designated *calmecac* or *telpochcalli*, where they would receive more formal kinds of educational training.

The dedication ceremony at birth was a child’s first encounter with an educational process that fostered the perpetuation of social hierarchies and gender-specific forms of education bound up in the transference of knowledge. By placing their boys upon a predetermined educational path, families recapitulated indigenous knowledge that had been tied for generations to places of learning. The process of socializing Nahuas helped maintain local and regional identity as well as culture more generally speaking. Education taking place in households, *cuicacalli*, *telpochcalli*, or the *calmecac* not only profoundly shaped Mesoamerican societies, they were the types of pedagogical learningscapes, pre-contact visions of educational practices in specific kinds of learning

¹³⁴ The similarities and differences between these terms is still contested to the present. For instance, Luis Reyes García, among others, investigated the term *calpulli* and cross referenced it against *tlaxilacalli*, and in at least one case, that of the *Ordenanzas* from Cuauhtinchan (1559), a community discussed briefly in Chapter V, there appears to have been a distinction between the former which indicated “ethnic relationships” and the latter which meant “residential groups” (Reyes García, *Documentos Nahuas de la Ciudad*, 39). See also, Reyes García, *Documentos sobre tierras* (1978), 184, 192, 200, and 202.

¹³⁵ For the social construction of habitus associated with homes, see Hazel Easthope, “A Place Called Home” (*Housing, Theory and Society*, 2004). For Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of “habitus,” see Chapter I: Introduction. See also the anthology by Hillier and Rooksby, *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, 2005.

¹³⁶ Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 95.

environments that Spaniards would confront when they arrived in central Mexico in the sixteenth century.

In order to understand the physical and experiential parameters of pre-colonial formal and popular education, and to set the stage for the investigation of the ways in which educational practices were transformed during the Spanish colonial period, it is necessary to study key archeological sites and pictorial documents created before contact. Equally necessary is a critical examination of eyewitness accounts—the descriptions of naming ceremonies from colonial written sources above, for instance—to determine just how much place mattered for so-called “Mexica” or “Nahua education.”¹³⁷ An understanding of indigenous geo-spatial cognizance, sense of place, and place-identity formation within the relevant body of pre-colonial research on Mesoamerican will help tie together what have, historically, been divergent studies.¹³⁸ Pre-colonial place-based educational systems had deep and complex cultural roots, traditions that directly affected how Christian pedagogy and place-based colonial learningscapes operated in the sixteenth century. Primarily, this background discussion will focus on sites located in the Valley of Mexico, with some reference to relevant sites in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley.

One hundred fifty years before European-Native American contact, the Mexica had begun to build the foundations of the imperial Triple Alliance through economic investment in and political associations based around the productive, marshy soil of Lake Texcoco. Yet imperial tentacles extended vast distances, extracting tributes from far-

¹³⁷ Alfredo López Austin, *Educación Mexica: Antología de documentos sahagunitos*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1985a; and *La educación de los antiguos nahuas* Vols. 1 y 2, Mexico City, Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública; 1985b.

¹³⁸ Nahua education studies include several key works by Alfredo López Austin as well as the handful of “daily life” studies by Frances Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 2005; Carrasco & Sessions, *Daily Life of the Aztecs*, 2011.

flung city-states. Long before that their predecessors had established a range of culturally significant practices in the region that led to the rise and propagation of the grander, Nahua learning praxis, especially in the capital, that became particularly intense in the decades before the Spanish invasion. Most of the communities in the heart of the Triple Alliance consisted of complex entities with *tlaxilacalli*—neighborhoods, the sub-*altepetl* social formations—related politically and culturally to a larger *altepetl*. According to James Lockhart, such neighborhoods were the “microcosms of the *altepetl*,” social units with a distinct sense of micropatriotism or “ethnic pride so characteristic of the *altepetl*.” This structure was replicated, too, across the multi-ethnic city-provinces all around Nahua central Mesoamerica.¹³⁹ It is vitally important to take into account archaeological investigations of surviving architecture in these subdivisions of major socio-political entities, particularly when supported by information found in significant pre-colonial pictorials and colonial ethnographic materials.

These post-contact sources generated by Nahua authors and informants are essential, though it is important to study them with a certain amount of caution. This post-invasion work is not without Christian influences, since the Nahuas involved were at least nominally Catholic and because of the significant influence of foreigners, primarily Spanish priests. Native scholars, scribes, and their children and grandchildren aided the educated groups of European priests in the creation of Nahua history, as well as in the production of Christian didactic materials.¹⁴⁰ But, despite being compiled after contact,

¹³⁹ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after Conquest*, 17.

¹⁴⁰ This chapter draws upon pre-contact pictographic paper and parchment codices, mural and architectural ornamentations, and onsite analysis of mentioned sites, conducted by the author in summer 2011, 2012, 2014-2015. As a graduate student member of two National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes, I conducted onsite surveys and discussed art historically and architecturally significant traditions

the *Florentine Codex*, written and informed by the Tlatelolcans and Tetzcoca under the supervision of the Franciscan fray Bernardino de Sahagún (a process that began sometime around 1550 and was completed between 1575-77), as well as the *Codex Mendoza* (completed before 1553), are crucial sources of information about pre-colonial social structures. Spanish eyewitness accounts contain other valuable kinds of material, though foreigners did not fully understand all aspects of the indigenous educational rituals and customs they witnessed, particularly since they hoped to police and to extirpate what they saw as illicit, idolatrous behaviors. Thus, such chronicles are markedly biased, while still necessary to consult.

Making Learningscape Places and Placemaking in Mesoamerican Studies

One challenge presented by these kinds of sources, therefore, is the task of qualifying the influence of a colonial regime as it acted upon the psychological and socio-political underpinnings of indigenous informants as they relayed memories about the pre-colonial past. Asking a Nahua who had been a student in the old system to describe its administrative units likely would produce a different outcome than an inquiry directed at that school's former administrator. Catholic priests might describe the practices and places where pre-contact education was situated in biased, negative ways. Applying the theoretical framework of place and Spatial Studies to the study of local identity and pre-Colonial education is an extremely useful approach, particularly since a number of

at many of the sites discussed in this chapter. For commentary on these kinds of source materials, see Jongsoo Lee, *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl: Pre-Hispanic History, Religion, and Nahua Poetics* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 1. For a key anthropology of pre-contact educational practices, see Berdan, “Enculturation in an Imperial Society,” 238.

scholars have applied spatial theory to these regions.¹⁴¹ The study of Nahua learningscapes and placemaking pinpoints the envisioned and ideal zones for learning. Nahua educational “placemaking” and “placeness,” were anchored in pre-colonial schools and the communities they served and fostered.¹⁴² Nahua formal and familial education recapitulated the placeness of an *altepetl*’s cosmogenic center. With this in mind, it is in order to investigate three important questions: what constituted an indigenous learning environment before contact? How did Nahua schooling foster social cohesion and societal hierarchies? Did the displacement of local knowledge occur in pre-colonial learningscapes?

Native educational spaces were grounded in a rich soil of place-identity formation, a surface area that prominent early Western philosophers of “place” and Spatial Studies have ignored or considered “placeless,” as in not constituting Western visions of what constituted a place.¹⁴³ Western views, like that espoused by Edward Relph, undervalued Native lands as lacking a sense of place and place-identity along the lines of European ones.¹⁴⁴ In a similar way, traditional studies of pre-contact indigenous sacred spaces, such as those in the vein of Ricard’s “Spiritual Conquest” assumptions, saw Native America as a clean slate in this connection. If Natives had a place, settlers had

¹⁴¹ Baudot, *Utopia and History* (1995); Carrasco (ed.), *To Change Place* (1991); Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire* (2000); Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (1993); Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy* (2014); Arnold, *Eating Landscape* (1999); Kay Almere Read, *Time and sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos* (Indiana University Press, 1998). See also, Fitzgerald, “Deconstructing Franciscan Conventual Schools” (MA Thesis, 2012).

¹⁴² See the Introduction of this volume for a discussion of the theory of place-identity, placeness, and placelessness. Refer to Michael E. Smith’s fascinating investigation of Central Mexico’s urban spaces, including a typology of architectural structures (*Aztec City-States*, 2008).

¹⁴³ Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 79-87.

effectively displaced them because of divine right, technological advantages, or cultural dominance.

Understanding Mesoamerican places requires a thorough understanding of knowledge about ethnic sense and cosmology. Educational spaces beyond the home front rested in the chief social formation, the *tlaxilacalli*, at least most evidently in Nahua sources from the Valley of Mexico.¹⁴⁵ Families, kinship networks, and state-backed institutions fostered local education while pursuing their own personal or instructional goals, and this negotiated educational system was a primary factor in arrangements in place-based learning in the Spanish Colonial period.

Mesoamericans relied on a multipurpose conception of sacred places of learning, each encoded with informative knowledge-bearing media. These were all elements of a coherent educational system built around the “phenomenon of place and placelessness,” Relph’s idea of a shifting sense of belonging that humans experience in connection to their physical environment.¹⁴⁶ Relph noted the power of Western religious architecture to convey an “I-Thou relationship” in visitors, or a place that connects the individual with the sense of “God.” Religious architecture, he argued, not only impressed visitors with its monumental scales and dramatic ornaments, but magnified the community’s sense of belonging when “combined with settings in the landscape or townscape.”¹⁴⁷

The useful psychologies and experiential models that have focused on movement and the nature of placeness (see Chapter I) help us determine that pre-colonial learning

¹⁴⁵ López Austin, *La Eduacación*, Vol. 1, 27.

¹⁴⁶ Relph argues that this connection is a “relationship” with places, one that is both “necessary, varied, and sometimes perhaps just as unpleasant as our relationships with other people,” Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 141.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 73-75.

environments allowed for and encouraged place-identity formation in the Nahua world.¹⁴⁸

For instance, Kevin Lynch's general schema of a place's distinct "image" argues that

places are comprised of key elements (paths, edges, nodes, landmarks, and districts).

These help to strengthen a visitor's ability to engage with a given place in a functional

sense. Nahuas moving and stopping along paths, at the edges of structures, and between

nodal spaces as they went about their day-to-day activities would have been part of their

place-identity's "way finding," Lynch's understanding of how individuals and groups

orient themselves to fit with a place.¹⁴⁹ It is also important to note, however, that Barbara

Mundy argues that an *altepetl*'s residents likely did not recognize their city and urban

setting along Lynchian lines, edges, and nodes. Rather, the collective daily activities,

rituals, and other social "representations of space" affected Mesoamerican experiences of

urban place-attachment so that it "intersected and interpenetrated into a seamless

whole."¹⁵⁰

Mundy's wholistic vision and Lynch's reductive one may seem incompatible, but

the former helps to qualify Lynch. Lynch's psycho-social program, his idea about the

"imageability" of places and landmarks, can be applied usefully to the study of an

altepetl and its residents' lives even if other of his ideas might not be as applicable to

Mesoamerican, Nahua situations (Fig. 2.1). First, in considering "imageability" we come

closer to understanding the patterns in indigenous learningscapes that may have proven

valuable before and then after the Spanish invasion, why the memory of place-attachment

for Nahuas seemed so strong at the time of contact. Second, paying attention to this kind

¹⁴⁸ Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (1969); Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1991); Casey "How to Get from Space to Place" (1996).

¹⁴⁹ Lynch, *Good City Form*, 110-111.

¹⁵⁰ Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 59-60.

of theoretical model can be revealing in terms of the agency of places and how spaces affect humans, which Mundy and others have also noted.¹⁵¹ Nahuas believed that natural and built places had power and could influence over living beings. The employment of well-developed archaeological and ethnohistorical studies of Tenochtitlan and other significant central Mesoamerican *altepetl* can temper what could otherwise end up being an uncritical grafting of imported theoretical models onto places urban and ceremonial spaces unlike those that informed the original development of those same theories. We as well must not assume that patterns identified in these grander settings of the Valley of Mexico's imperial capitals were repeated exactly in less densely populated cities and towns. With these caveats in mind, it is possible to consider four significant central Mesoamerican built environments: the *calli* and the three formal educational institutions, the *cuicacalli*, *calmecac*, and *telpochcalli*. From birth to marriage, all of them imparted a sense of place to the Nahuas.

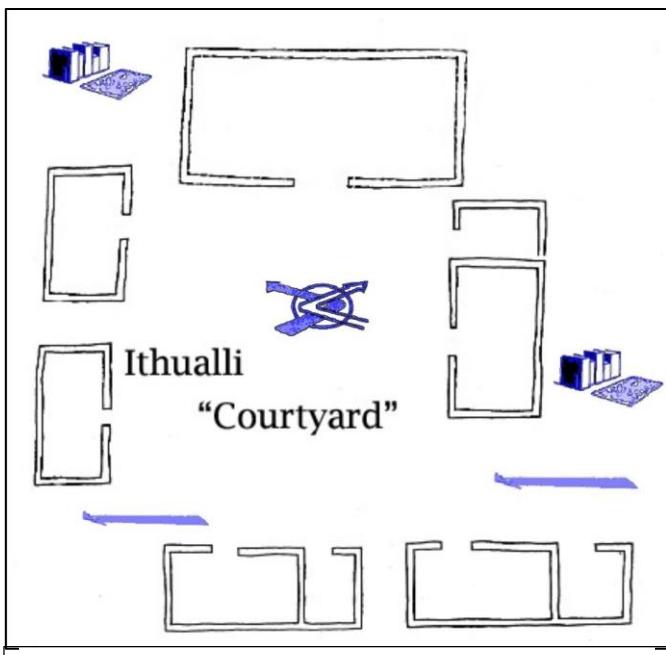


Figure 2.1, Imageability of the *ithualli*. The basic paths, edges, and central node of an indigenous family's learningscape. (Image by author.)

¹⁵¹ Mundy smartly draws our attention to the fact that Nahuas attributed (seemingly) inanimate objects with agents and the work of cultural anthropologist Alfred Gell (*Ibid.*, 60). See, Gell's *Art and Agency: An Anthropology Theory*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Persistent Place-Identities Before the Rise of the Triple Alliance

Educators in three fifteenth-century imperial *altepetl* of the Triple Alliance—Tenochtitlan, Tetzcoco, and Tlacopan—did not invent the Mesoamerican learning environments. Rather, they appear to have adapted these architectural traditions pioneered by previous cultures. Archeological findings have uncovered a much deeper history of a shared architecture of learning in Mesoamerica. The typical Mesoamerican learning environment consisted of a delimited space open to the memorialization of and education about past events and state-of-the-art knowledge on a recurring basis, a process overseen by a specialized few. These sites appear to have been sacred in nature, at least for those sites described in early documentation.¹⁵² One common attribute was a courtyard space used for performing ritual tasks. Also common were objects, usually structures of some kind that helped to anchor the centrality of the courtyard. These structural anchors appear to have had significance for educators and students, alike, and displayed a common layout arranged around this central feature and four other anchors, each associated with the four cardinal directions, undoubtedly a representation of the five-part cosmic model of the universe that was also replicated in the layout of many larger urban places.

More formal settings reserved for specialists, higher nobility, and special ceremonies beyond this public courtyard appear to have been blocked from view by walls and various kinds of buildings. It can be argued that at least some (or many) of these spaces were used for schooling, possibly the earliest forms of *telpochcalli* or *calmecac*. If so, they likely housed a priestly or lineage-based class of educators and welcomed

¹⁵² The sacred dimensions of these architectural archetypes are discussed in detail in Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and The Irony of Empire* (2000).

initiates to perpetuate their numbers, thus maintaining sacred and or military knowledge.

According to Carrasco, such building complexes were made up of “elaborately

decorated” structures “arranged around a central patio with surrounding rooms.”¹⁵³

Carrasco never plainly calls the kind of structural arrangement a “school,” implying only that cultural traditions were enacted by generations of political and priestly classes.

However, the roots of institutional learning found in such spaces can be discerned in Teotihuacan’s so-called *Casa de Caracoles Emplumados* (“House of the Feathered Conch Shells”), discovered beneath the famous Palace of the Qutezalpapalotl near the Pyramid of the Moon.¹⁵⁴ This structure, which dates from around 200 CE, has qualities also associated with what the Nahuas would later describe as a *calmecac*, especially in its physical location connected to the larger palatial structure and architectural and its

iconographic imagery of plumed serpents and water birds (Fig. 2.2).¹⁵⁵ Vivid murals featuring these elements decorate a three-foot tall platform base that is the foundation of a temple with “watery” kinds of scenes that are repeated on other murals elsewhere in Teotihuacan.¹⁵⁶ The *Casa*’s mural depicts a “procession” of repeated emerald-green avian

¹⁵³ Ibid., 109, and 112-113.

¹⁵⁴ Archeologists divide Mesoamerican civilizations into four periods of human existence: Paleo (habitation to 3500 BCE), Archaic (3500 to 2000), Formative (2000 BCE to 200 CE), Classic (200 CE to 900 CE), and Postclassic (900 CE to early-modernity).

¹⁵⁵ See Kathleen Berrin and Clara Millon (eds.), *Feathered Serpents and Flowering Trees: Reconstructing the Murals of Teotihuacan*. (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1988); see also, Nawa Sugiyama, “Animals and sacred mountains: how ritualized performances materialized state-ideologies at Teotihuacan, Mexico” (PhD diss., Harvard, 2014), 107-111. This argument is also supported by onsite investigations conducted by the author as part of a National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar at the cite guided by John Pohl and Karl Taube (summer 2013).

¹⁵⁶ This is found, for instance, in the famed depictions of priests, priestesses, or god-like figures at the Tepetitlan site. See Janet Berlo, “Icons and Ideologies,” found in *Art, Ideology, and the City of Teotihuacan*, edited by Berlo (Dumbarton Oaks, 1992), 129-168; Esther Pasztory, “The Gods of Teotihuacan: A Synthetic Approach in Teotihuacan Iconography” (in *Pre-Columbian Art History*, 1977) 81–95. Berlo, *Art, Ideology, and the City of Teotihuacan* (153-159) was the first to argue that the Great Goddess/Water Deity of Teotihuacan was usurped by the Aztec’s Huitzilopochtli, in fact, possibly the

creatures (either parrots or quetzals) participating in some kind of watering ceremony, as they pour or spill water out of their beaks onto yellow plant shoots, usually identified as flowers.¹⁵⁷ The squat building built atop the watering scene platform is a one-room structure, with detailed longitudinal engraved friezes of plume-covered conch shells (called *caracoles emplumados* today in Spanish) and four-petal flowers placed in the building's corners and at the entrance (once again similar to decorative motifs found elsewhere in Teotihuacan). The pairing of feathered conches with winged animals may have associated the temple courtyard space with the forces of wind and change later associated with Quetzalcoatl and the fecund watery world of the so-called “Googly-eyed Figure,” or the likeness of a being later associated with Tlaloc.

Built a century or more later, the grand complex of the Palace of the Quetzal-Butterfly that tops the *Casa de Caracoles Emplumados* suggests the persistence of the iconographic and architectural usage of its predecessor. Like the *Casa* before it, the Palace complex sits on the northeast side of the grand courtyard of the Pyramid of the Moon. Teotihuacanos, had they been allowed to surmount the steps and enter the Palace, would eventually enter the *Patio de los Pilares*, a courtyard with architecture that repeats the key motifs of the submerged past. The *Patio* includes eleven pillars, three of which are set in the corners of the courtyard (the northwest, southwest, and northeast) and consist of double pillars. These pillars are covered by low-relief but highly-detailed longitudinal carvings of avian creatures with their heads in profile (fig. 2.3). There are droplets of water falling from their beaks in front of their breasts and into urn- or plant-

Coyoxauhqui referred to in Mexica mythos, and thus a possible precursor to similar types of Christian-Nahua adaptations in new pantheons under Spanish Catholicism.

¹⁵⁷ Guided visit to the site with Karl Taube and John Pohl, NEH Summer Institute, 2013.

like vessels below them. Though some assume that these are pectoral decorations or shields, but it seems more likely that they called up the same associations as those found in the decorations of the earlier *Casa* below. The *Patio* birds may be quetzals or eagles, rather than the owls that some believe them to be, considering the plumes of feathers jutting from each head, but the floral shapes associated with them are similar to the petals of the flowering plants of the *Casa*. It is possible, then, that those who created the Palace intended to carry forward the meanings of the watering procession scenes found in that earlier structure, rearticulating the older tradition by adding three-dimensionality to its symbolism.¹⁵⁸

The shared configurations, reuse, and revision of this kind of imagery suggests that the built environment's sense of place had a cross-generational significance for Teotihuacanos. Following Lynch's schema, the patios of both *calmecac*-like structures would have represented a "crossing or convergence of paths" and a nodal point, one tuned to the symbolism of precious winged creatures playing some role in the watering of vegetation.¹⁵⁹ Their enclosed courtyard complexes, adjacent to a larger (potentially more publicly accessible) grand courtyard fronting the Temple of the Moon, created "paths" that may only have been accessible to initiates or specialists. If so, iconographic elements in these spaces would have focused a learner's attention on the knowledge-bearing media before them.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ For a recent investigation of the shared iconography of the *Casa de los Caracoles Emplumados* and the Palace of the Quetzalpapalotl, see Robin Heyworth's travel blog for the site "Teotihuacan: Palace of the Quetzalpapalotl," at *Uncovering History*, uncoveredhistory.com (November 2014), accessed Nov. 2018.

¹⁵⁹ Lynch, *Good City Form*, 479. Lynch defined nodes as "the strategic spots in a city into which a [participant] can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling."

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*



Figure 2.2, Birds of *Casa de Caracoles Emplumados* (2012). These murals are painted along base insets of the “Plumed-Conch House,” and they depict jade birds, likely quetzal birds, in profile. The birds are in the act of dispensing liquid from their beaks, which falls upon yellow three-lobed flowers before them, a symbolic representation of reciprocity that appears to be repeated in the column reliefs of the *Patio* built over this site.



Figure 2.3. *Patio de los Pilares* (2012). This grand, palatial structure was built in the 300s to the south west of Teotihuacan’s Pyramid of the Moon. Builders constructed it over the *Casa de Caracoles Emplumados*, and the pillars of its courtyard (pictured) feature several detailed carvings of avian creatures in the act of dispensing droplets of liquid from their beaks onto three-lobed flowers before them. The repetition of iconography and space indicates cosmologic connections and the propensity of highly-decorated courtyard spaces at the site.

After the fall of Teotihuacan, the Toltec *altepetl* of Tollan (Tula) began to exert influence in the Valley of Mexico and beyond it. According to Davíd Carrasco, even after Tula's demise in the twelfth century inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico constructed their sacred spaces as hierophantic reproductions of Tula's architecture. And the narrative connecting Quetzalcoatl with Tollan traveled beyond the site's boundaries. In doing so, Nahuas reaffirmed a connection to a sacred past that legitimized political lineages. This is evident in the layout of ceremonial architecture—with adjoining learningscapes—as well as in the depictions of these places found in pre- and colonial-era indigenous-style texts and maps.¹⁶¹ For example, in the late-sixteenth century map of Cholula from the *Relaciones Geográficas*, the artist was so inspired by the lingering vision of Tula that he (presumably) used a watery, swampy scene with reeds (*tolli*) to link Cholula's pre-contact sacred center to the Toltecs and Tollan and fashion itself as a New Tollan and its residents as descendants of Quetzalcoatl.¹⁶²

Cosmological Learning Practices in Pre-Colonial Nahua Ceremonies

Placemaking ceremonies associated with key features in the landscape appear to have also guided the Mexica's choices in the final days of their famous journey from Aztlan to the Valley of Mexico, according to colonial sources. A story retold in at least two early sources, the Mexica, after leaving the *altepetl* of Chapultepec, made their way into the reedy swamps of the Basin's aquatic system. When they reached the *altepetl* of

¹⁶¹ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire* (2000); the irony being that early Christian evangelists benefitted from romantic views of the sacred city to introduce new concepts with an old cast of characters. Priests latched on to key icons and mythic interpretations of Tula, such as the tension between Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl over the practice of human sacrifice, and the latter's departure east, to insert Christian narratives of Christ's return to the Americas.

¹⁶² This depiction often included frogs, which are references to the ancient sacred-force energies of Tlaloc (1576-1582).

Iztacalco, they honored the surrounding mountains with a “Mountain Festival” (*Tepeilhuitl*) a ceremony in which participants created reproductions of sacred mountains out of amaranth dough.¹⁶³ The *Cronica Mexicayotl* notes that this occurred in the year 13 Rabbit (perhaps in 1362), explaining: “There [at Iztacalco] they celebrated the Festival of the Mountains, which was a very solemn ceremony. The people made many hills of dough and gave them eyes and mouths of seeds. Inhibited by their lack of security, they celebrated their festival as best they could.”¹⁶⁴ The *Codex Aubin*, on the other hand, simply states that the Mexica performed the *amatepetl*, or “paper-mountain,” using paper to ritually decorate small-scale reproductions of the surrounding mountains that they had made from amaranth dough. Soon afterward, the Mexica continued their arduous journey as they sought their promised land, eventually coming upon the eagle atop the cactus that later stood for the sacred legitimacy of their foundation of Tenochtitlan. Re-creating the sacred landscape for the *Tepeilhuitl* appears to have helped the Mexica situate themselves in the basin, as well, adding to the sacred legitimacy of their later imperial stature.

The elements of the “Mountain Festival” demonstrate how a sense of place mattered to the public, in particular a divinely-ordained landscape, and they point to the connections between ritual practices and education. Nahuas in the Valley of Mexico and

¹⁶³ Kruel’s reconstruction of the *Cronica Mexicayotl* and the Nahuatl text of the Codex Aubin (f.23); see Gabriel Kruel, “Resucitando la Cronica X. Reconstrucción filología de un fragmento inicial de la Cronica Mexicayotl de Hernando de Alvarado Tezozomoc,” *Tlalocan* XIX, Universidad Nacional 2013, Autónoma de México, 340-343; *Codex Aubin*, 1576, f. 23:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=237312001&objectid=3008812. The Codex Aubin text reads: *ipan ic onxiuhque in Mexica in oncan Iztacalco, oncan quichiuuhque in amatepetl ce yohual in quicuicatique oncan quicuique uhque in tlacatecoatl cohuacan itoca tetzitzillin queuhque Tetzitzillintzin amatlahuice amatlacolo che hopan chocaticac. etc.* Dominican Diego Durán described the “día solene” and the affairs associated with Tepeilhuitl in the trans-valley regions in which he served, including references to specific mountains and strictures, see Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias Gods and Rites Calendar Manuscrito*, Biblio Nacional España (1579) fs.294r-296v; Heyden (ed.), *Book of Gods and Rites*, 1971: 255-260.

¹⁶⁴ Diego Durán, *The Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain*, ed. and trans. by Doris Heyden and Fernando Horcasitas (Orion Press, 1964.), 40.

the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley celebrated Tepeilhuitl as one of the 20-day months or *mezatl* (what the Spanish termed a *veintena*) and its ritual performances honored the sacred landscape in the hopes that supernatural forces would feel honored enough to bring the people rain and a productive season.¹⁶⁵ According to Diego Durán, *Tepeilhuitl* was a “general feast of all the land.”¹⁶⁶ In brief, at the month’s beginning Native communities would create edible displays, honor these for the month, and ultimately devour the landscape as a final act of consecration.¹⁶⁷ Performing the ritual gave observants time to re-orient themselves within the landscape, sacred and real.¹⁶⁸ Nahuas associated the dioramas with sacred-forces, both masculine and feminine deities, and shaped each dough-mountain in the likeness of said force.¹⁶⁹

According to several sources, Tlaloc was the most prominent deity honored during the month, and the designated temple-shrine to him atop Mount Tlaloc featured a constantly maintained set of dough-mountains. Sources also note several mountains that Nahuas commonly celebrated, and according to Durán each *altepetl* made sure to honor local mountains.¹⁷⁰

The primary lessons Nahuas appear to have passed on was the annual obligation to sacred landscape in return for rain and good crops, and the secondary curriculum was

¹⁶⁵ Michel Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas: Las fiestas de las veintenas, fiestas de los pueblos indígenas* (Instituto, 1999), 161-170; much of the following study of Mexica rituals is based upon Graulich’s tireless study, especially his work on Mesoamerican rituals.

¹⁶⁶ Durán, *Book of Gods and Rites*, 156.

¹⁶⁷ Philip P. Arnold, *Eating landscape* (1999); Jaime Lara, “A Meaty Incarnation: Making Sense of Divine Flesh for Aztec Christians” *Image and Incarnation*, (2015).

¹⁶⁸ Tepeilhuitl had a living history component too. During the month, five impersonators, or *ixiptla*, dressed in the likenesses of these deities. On the final day, according to at least two sources, these impersonators were sacrificed and, according to some of the sources, their bodies were consumed by community members. I will not digress upon the topic of human sacrifice, here, excepting to point out the many studies on the topic available for those with interest. See Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas*, 161-170, 225-232.

¹⁶⁹ Joseph Kroger and Patrizia Granziera, *Aztec goddesses and Christian Madonnas: Images of the divine feminine in Mexico* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2012), 34-39.

¹⁷⁰ Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas*, 161.

the observant's education about the physical landscape that embraced the community, essentially they helped to create a sacred-social map of the *altepetl*.¹⁷¹ A structured process of building, designing, and honoring the mountain shrines during *Tepeilhuitl* was a crucially important element of indigenous learning modalities. This knowledge was affirmed by the creation of three-dimensional educational materials and communal memorialization. The materials used during the twenty-day *veintena* festivals of the sacred calendar were significant to why and how Natives practiced *Tepeilhuitl*. Also known as *Huey Pachtli* ("great moss," most likely beard or Spanish moss) took place in connection with seasonal changes in the late fall, and the cue for beginning the ceremony was when *pachtli* growing on the trees of the mountainside matured to the extent of sprouting its long, curly, and chartreuse leaf-like tendrils. At that point Nahuas deemed it ready to be harvested and prepared to be applied to objects and people to make them appear fruitful and verdant.¹⁷² Other decoratives included paper (*amatl*) appliques, precious feathers, gemstones, various seeds, white puffs of cotton, and liquid rubber for painting.¹⁷³

Ornamentals in hand, observants prepared the most crucial centerpieces of the ceremony: amaranth-dough mountains, "In honor of the tall mountains where they touch the clouds."¹⁷⁴ These mountain or hill replicas were called *tepictoton*, or "small molded ones." According to Sahagún's *Primeros Memoriales*:

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 161-62, 170.

¹⁷² Otomí *volador* performers in nineteenth century living in the Sierra Norte de Puebla would cover themselves with clumps of *pachtli* when they performed their death-defying acrobatics; Guy Stresser-Péan, *The Sun God and the Savior: The Christianization of the Nahua and Totonac in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2009), 277, 345-46, 403-404.

¹⁷³ The previous *veintena* had witnessed the first shoots of *pachtli*. For *Huey Pachtli* see Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas*, 161-170.

¹⁷⁴ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book II: Ceremonies*, 131-132.

Everyone fashioned them in their homes. [The mountains] were fashioned at midnight, and after they had been fashioned, they made an offering of incense to them. They also sang to them; they sang what were their songs, a song to each of the mountains. They sang a different song to each one; hence it was called “The Festival of the Mountains.” Payment [to the gods] was made. They decapitated birds in their honor when they made offerings of tamales to them.¹⁷⁵

The *Florentine Codex* describes these assemblages (fig. 2.4). First, observants made likenesses of serpents or men—possibly miniature Tlalocs—that were called *ehecatotontin* (“breezes”).¹⁷⁶ They began by crafting “serpents” (*cocoa*) made by using either wooden or amaranth dough skeletons (*imomoio* “their bones”), which were then coated in amaranth.¹⁷⁷ These likenesses were placed together in the household courtyard, and this pile then became the foundation for small dough mounds, called *tepictoton*.¹⁷⁸ Residents pressed relevant geological features and a deity’s face (or faces) into the *tepictoton*, decorating what had become their festival diorama or altar. In the final stages, artists added the appropriate accoutrement (feathers, paper, and paint) for each deity-mountain’s representation

Several priests specialized in the ceremony helped throughout the *veintena*.¹⁷⁹

One key figure was the *Epcoacuacuilli*, a head priest in charge of Tenochtitlan’s sacred

¹⁷⁵ Sahagún, *Primeros memoriales*, ed. and trans. by Thelma Sullivan and H. B. Nicholson (University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 64.

¹⁷⁶ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: Ceremonies*: “Thirty-second Chapter, in which are related the feasts and sacrifices which they made, in the days of the thirteenth month, which was known as, and named, Tepeilhuitl.” The Nahuatl and Spanish differ in the specifics but it appears that both mention the likenesses were crafted to commemorate people with palsy and crippling diseases and those who had drowned or been struck by lightning, i.e. deaths associated with Tlaloc, as well as those threatened by drowning or raging waters: 23, 121-122. See also, Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas*, 162-164.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 23. According to Torquemada (*Monarquía india*, B. VII, Cap. 8), the mountains were honored with “...unas culebras de palo, o de raíces de arboles, dándoles cabeca de culebra, y vnas mañequillas de lo mismo (que llamaban *Ecatotontin*) y estas figuras de culebras, y niños fagidos, las revestían de vna masa que llaman Tzoaili, hecha de semillas de bledos...”

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 121

¹⁷⁹ Sahagún lists eight specific priestly titles: Tezcatzoncatl Ometochtli, Ometochtli Yauhqueme, Ometochtli Tomiyauh, Tlilhua Ometochtli, Ometochtli Nappatecuhtli, Atlixeliuuhqui Opochtli, The Priest of



Figure 2.4, *Tepeilhuitl* and exemplary *tepictoton* (“small molded ones”). Native artist-scribes (*tlacuilos*) of the *Florentine Codex* depict the three-dimensional objects participants constructed, praised, and eventually ate, which were the ikenesses of mountain-gods, pictured: Popocatepetl, Quetzaltepelt, Chalchiuhlicue, Iztaccihuatl, and Matlalcue (Image provided by the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Ms. Med. Palat. 218 c. 12v., granted by the MiBAC. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.)

the People of Chalma at Zopotlan, and the Priest of Totoltecatl at Totellan: Sahagún, *Primeros Memoriales*, 85-87, 90, and 93.

songs sung to *tepictoton*.¹⁸⁰ Whoever built a dough-mountain first consulted this priest, who would then “assign, he could order the singers. When they were going to sing at the home of someone who was to make a figure, it was he who passed judgment...”¹⁸¹ Other priests helped with preparations, such as *Tezcatzoncatl Ometochtli*, who oversaw the application of the black liquid rubber paint (*octli*) upon mountains’ facial features.¹⁸²

The *tepictoton* themselves symbolized the surrounding sacred geography, both historically and physically prominent in the minds of the observants, and they appear to have been arranged in the courtyard with a particular pattern.¹⁸³ Most sources state that each household produced five mountains, though Durán explains that this varied from place to place and *Primeros Memoriales* notes they “fashioned images of as many mountains as [they] wished.”¹⁸⁴ Each *tepictoton* was given the features of the mountain, a three-dimensional map, and then “arrayed in the adornments of Tlaloc.”¹⁸⁵ For one display that Sahagún describes, replicas of the sacred mountains Popocatepetl, Itztaccihuatl, Matlacueye, and Chalchiuhltlicue were

¹⁸⁰ *Epcoacuacuiltzin* translates to, roughly, “Tonsured Priest of the Mother-of-Pearl Serpent” (Ibid., 83n13), and, according to López Austin and López Luján, he functioned as the head of the state religion, overseeing the entirety of the sacred calendar round; found in Deborah Nichols and Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the Aztecs* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 612-613). However, sources only specifically link him to Tepeilhuitl songs for *tepictoton*.

¹⁸¹ Sahagún, *Primeros memoriales*, 89. For a recent discussion about Nahua poetry and the role of the *epcoacuacuilli*, see Lee, *The allure of Nezahualcoyotl*, 131-142.

¹⁸² Sahagún, *Primeros Memoriales*, 85; for specifics on ritual uses of *octli*, see H. B. Nicholson’s “The Octli Cult In Late Pre-Hispanic Central Mexico,” found in Carrasco, *To Change Place*, 163-164.

¹⁸³ Sahagún and the Nahuatl aides admonished the a “childish [and] puerile” (ca cocuneyutl, ca pipillutl) act of building, honoring, and eating Tepictoton that continued “not now completely uprooted” in the 1570s, see *Florentine Codex: Book I: The Gods*, 44-45.

¹⁸⁴ Sahagún, *Primeros Memoriales*, 113; see also, Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book II: The Ceremonies*, 131-133, 152-154; Durán, *Book of Gods and Rites*, 255-258; Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas*, 161-167, and 228-229. For the “Feast of the Falling Tlalocs” during Atemoztli (the thirteenth *veintena* the *Florentine Codex* lists 13 mountains: Popocatepetl, Iztactepetl, Tlaloc, Yopaltecatl, Quauhtepetl, Cocotl, Yiauhqueme, Tepetzintli, Tepepolli, Uixachtecatl, Chicomecoatl, Chalchiuhltlicue, and Ehecatl (*Florentine Codex: Book II: Ceremonies*, 139-140).

¹⁸⁵ Sahagún, *Primeros Memoriales*, 113.

placed on the ground, the one following the other in a row, and they were facing the fifth [figure] which they called Quetzalcoatl... his face was painted with the wind design. [On his head] he had placed his wind flowers [and] his black paper crown with the quetzal feather crest. His [paper] vestments were painted with rubber... his crook... in his hand.¹⁸⁶

Arranged facing Quetzalcoatl's *tepictoton* "following the other in a row," the five dough-mountains created a three-dimensional space for ritual discourse.¹⁸⁷ Singing to them and observing their attributes and props would have helped Nahuas recall the altepetl's mythology, and the finer details appear to have been carefully molded into place. In the Tovar Codex, an artist renders an example of a *tepictoton*, this one with the likeness of a human head wearing a headdress with green feathers and a necklace with blue beads and gold pendants.¹⁸⁸ These specific details were the basic set of props that observants used to help others recall this deity.

The deification of sacred mountains was inextricably tied to the celebrations Natives held throughout the year, from month-long devotionals to individual acts.¹⁸⁹ Both real and symbolic mountains were part of other observances, such as those more obviously linked specifically to Tlaloc (though feminized sacred forces associated in

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 114.

¹⁸⁷ Sahagún, *Primeros Memoriales*, Biblioteca Digital Mexicana, http://bdmx.mx/documento/galeria/bernardino-sahagun-codices-matritenses/fo_06, DG037139 (accessed 08/01/18).

¹⁸⁸ Juan de Tovar, *Historia de la benida de los yndios apoblar a Mexico de las partes remotas de Occidente...*, 1585, fol. 153v; see also "Tepeilhuitl," John Carter Brown Library, John Carter Brown Archive of Early American Images:<https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCB~1~1~1540~2000001?qvq=w4s%3A%2Fwho%2FTovar%2C%20Juan%20de%2C%20ca.%201546ca.%201626%2F%3Bq%3ATovar%3Blc%3AJCBBOOKS~1~1%2CJCBMAPS~1~1%2CJCBMAPS~2~2%2CJCB~1~1&mi=43&trs=52> (accessed 09/15/2016).

¹⁸⁹ Tepeilhuitl had a living history component too. During the month, five impersonators, or *ixiptla*, dressed in the likenesses of these deities. On the final day, according to at least two sources, these impersonators were sacrificed and, according to some of the sources, their bodies were consumed by community members. I will not digress upon the topic of human sacrifice, here, excepting to point out the many studies on the topic available for those with interest. See Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas*, 161-170, 225-232.

some way with mountains were also honored in similar ways).¹⁹⁰ When observants sought to honor this deity and his associated places and functionaries, they went to stand “[o]the summit of the mountain.” The extant remnants of this temple are located on a high mountain protruding between Huejotzingo and Texcoco today known as Mount Tlaloc.¹⁹¹ Prominent among the masculine forces, Tlaloc was made real in his designated temple-shrine atop Mount Tlaloc. Ceremonies to Tlaloc were tied to seasonal rains, most famously to what the Dominican fray Diego Durán described as a “general feast of all the land.”¹⁹² But each *altepetl* seems to have maintained a local mountain ritual, as well, acts that rehashed the core elements of beliefs and practices tied to Tlaloc.¹⁹³ The primary purpose of all of these festivals was to request rain, fertility, and good crops. The outcome of the rites was as well an affirmation of an individual’s or group’s understanding about the sacred and societal map of Central Mexico.¹⁹⁴ During the general Feast of Tlaloc, known as *Huey Tozoztli*, in Tenochtitlan’s ceremonial center, priests and highly educated students constructed five dough-mountains in Tenochtitlan’s ceremonial center, acts which appear to have mirrored Tepeilhuitl’s methodology.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Kroger and Granziera, *Aztec goddesses and Christian Madonnas*, 34-39.

¹⁹¹ Durán described the temple as “a great square courtyard surrounded by a finely built wall about eight feet high, crowned with a series of merlons and plastered with stucco... On one side of this courtyard was a wooden chamber neither large nor small, with a flat roof. It was stuccoed both within and without and possessed a beautifully worked and handsome [castellated] crown. In the middle of this room, upon a platform, stood the stone idol Tlaloc... Around [Tlaloc] were a number of small idols, but he stood in the center as their supreme lord. These little idols represented the other hills and cliffs which surrounded this great mountain. Each one of them named according to the hill he stood for. These names still exist, for there is no hill lacking its proper designation. Thus the small idols which stood around the great god Tlaloc had their own names, just like the hills which encircle the great mountain; Dúran, *The Book of Gods and Rites*, 156.

¹⁹² Ibid., 156.

¹⁹³ Graulich, *Ritos Aztecas*, 161.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 161-62, 170.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 159.

Tepeilhuitl and Huey Tozoztli both honored the reciprocal relationship between the *altepetl*, nature, and animating sacred-force energies. Tepeilhuitl's intimacy with decorated *tepictoton* reenergized memories of the sacred potency of the landscape and community in the minds of the people. Upon completion of the festivities, observants would disassemble the mountain diorama, bring the "children" and "snakes" to a nearby "mist house" to wash and prepare them for consumption. They would then eat the dough-flesh from the wooden bones. Philip Arnold referenced this act of "eating the landscape," and others have discussed the ritual's connection to Mesoamerican oral traditions about "food mountains."¹⁹⁶ Seen from a distance, collective memories of the community, the songs assigned by the Epcoacuacuilli, the supernatural forces they honored, and the sacred-mountains that embraced the community, were all part of an ongoing process to educate society. Participants in three pedagogical settings—household, *altepetl*, and trans-*altepetl*—created didactic objects that were displayed for weeks at a time.¹⁹⁷ These objects memorialized the sacred geography surrounding the community. The creation of *tepictoton* and the songs that reverberated around them helped to reinforce a larger sense of place-identity and indigenous *habitus*.¹⁹⁸

The Festival of Mountains is evidence that indigenous learningscapes on the microcosmic level, the household and *calpulli*, held powerful tools for the recapitulation of local identity that was not solely reliant on top-down forces. Thinking about the *Tepeilhuitl* in this sense helps us test Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* and spatialization, how

¹⁹⁶ Arnold, *Eating Landscape*, 111; Elizabeth Morán, *Sacred Consumption: Food and Ritual in Aztec Art and Culture* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016), 66-68.

¹⁹⁷ Burkhardt argued for the centralizing effect of household arrangements: Found in Schroeder et al., *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, 30-32; 50-51.

¹⁹⁸ According to spatial theorists, acts such as these, whether viewed consciously by participants or subliminal, reinforced a resident's sense of *habitus* and larger social cohesion.

social spaces are “structured and structuring structures” and how individuals and groups acquiesce to “taste,” or the selective process humans make based on their class, ethnicity, and up-bringing.¹⁹⁹ Bourdieu’s schema, a materialist’s view of modernity, argues that humans adopt and emulate “legitimate culture” (bourgeois) by “help[ing] to produce the product [they consume], by a labour of identification and decoding” because of economic necessity.²⁰⁰ Social conditioning, he argued, based on educational qualifications that segmented members of society, pervaded what he called the *habitus*. *Habitus*, the practice of habits and the habits that act upon individuals, is informed by necessity among the lower classes, and individuals and groups are inspired toward conformity because of need.²⁰¹ Though Bourdieu’s case study disregards non-Western, non-materialist societies, festivals and popular celebrations are one way that he claims classes stay put in regards to “the principle of conformity.”²⁰² His notion implies that choices to worship or the practice of cultural traditions are simply the forces of necessity pressing down upon groups. This assumption ignores human agency, too, and its assumptions also overlook the fact that these types of festivals appear to have been celebrated by all, noble to commoner, and not just by people seeking economic interests or elevated social status. Studying commoner, elite, and priestly activities during the Festival of Mountains can help to challenge the notion that elites alone monopolized ritual education, taste and conformity.

The educational purposes of these didactic dough-mountains appear to have been wide ranging. Comparing the practices of *Tepeilhuitl* to those of *Atemoztli*—the thirteenth

¹⁹⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinctions*, 170-175.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 102-103.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 374.

²⁰² Ibid., 381-383.

veintena during which Nahuas also built dough-mountains—it becomes apparent that *tepictoton* may have been used to help recount military history or perhaps acts of conquest. For instance, at the beginning of this veintena, the priests (*tlamacazque*) stationed in the *calmecac* (the elite schools) had designed paper banners and appliques (“paper adornment,” *imamatlatqui*), which they had given to the community members who built this festival’s *tepictoton*.²⁰³ These paper adornments could number from five to fifteen, but there is no indication of their exact design. They were set at the center of the courtyard and on display during the entire month, and as such they are one example of specialized visual media designed by the priestly class introduced into Nahua residencies.

Beginning in the dark of the final night of *Atemoztli*, select “youths... sounded trumpets” in the courtyard while designated singers recanted to the adorned dough-mountains. This act signaled the dawn and the final ritual, during which some—either the trumpeting youths or the priests—stuck weaving sticks or battens (*tzotzopatzli*) into the lower portion of the dough-mountains. This practice may have recalled the many examples of conquered altepetl, symbolized by embedded arrows in a mountainside. Then the participants decapitated and ritually “killed” the mountains, removed the “what had been used as their hearts” to be placed in a designated vessel, and finally all helped in the processes of consuming portions of the dough-mountains or burning the remains: rubber-coated paper ornaments, wooden skeletons, and amaranth dough.²⁰⁴ Significantly, the trumpeters who welcomed the dawn “were not those whose office it was [to blow trumpets], but youths... much honored... [and] offered food and wine,” one sign of the

²⁰³ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: The Ceremonies*, 140-141.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 141.

educational elements of drawing in non-specialists and rewarding them for their trumpet work.²⁰⁵ Additionally *Atemoztli*'s climax, the feasting and the burning, took place within the courtyards and was for all intents and purposes the residents' ceremony. The likelihood that residents helped destroy and consume the sacred landscape and that some may have comprised the "youths" or the singers announcing the dawn would cement investment in the annual practice.

The process of creating altar-sized mountains within homes and in the courtyards of the *calpulli* center broke the mold of conformity because they were generated on the local level. The places that the family had made legible on their personal three-dimensional map and valued enough to include, reinforced the household's understandings, which were part of but also removed from larger educational strategies.²⁰⁶ Tepeilhuitl and Atemoztli celebrations were not separate from society, of course. The fact that the resource at the heart of these festivals' modes of instruction was a common good may have fostered the creation of a socially equal playing field, at least temporarily. The production of power-knowledge on the household scale likely encouraged the families and *tlaxilacalli* to invest in the larger social makeup of the Triple Alliance, making them feel connected because of the shared cultural tradition. To polish off the Festival of the Mountain, for instance, families would carve up the mapped landscape and, when ingested, it would essentially sustain each participating member—inspiring individual place-identity attachment through the reproduction of the landscape. However, the practice of building sacred mountains in the *calli* and *tlaxilacalli* appear to have some connections to grander models.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Schroeder et al., *Indian Women in Early Mexico*, 30-32.

Institutions for Higher-Leaning: The *Telpochcalli* and *Calmecac*

After Tenochtitlan rose to political dominance in the fifteenth-century Valley of Mexico, there is evidence that its history and ideology were deliberately reengineered. Scholars Geoffrey Conrad and Arthur Demarest convincingly argue that this process proved to be a “revolutionary” element in the reshaping of the emerging empire’s conceptual and socio-political landscapes. Chief among the new reforms were policies proposed by the *huey tlatoani* (emperor) Itzcoatl and his *cihuacoatl* (chief adviser) Tlacaël that included increased control over knowledge transmission.²⁰⁷ Similar to sixteenth-century Spanish raiders who collected and destroyed thousands of pre-contact pictorial manuscripts, the Mexica ransacked the “writings” that were deemed “not necessary for all the common people to know of.”²⁰⁸ This change appears to have ensured that the emerging imperial state could take more control over daily life. According to Conrad and Demarest, the Mexica state could now impose an “ideology that successfully integrated religious, economic, and social systems into an imperialistic war machine.”²⁰⁹

One critical transformation in schooling at this time was the growing association between Quetzalcoatl priesthoods and the *calmecac*, the priestly schools.²¹⁰ Davíd Carrasco maintains that these organizations imposed their hierarchies on the towns and cities surrounding Tenochtitlan.²¹¹ Nahuas living in the Empire clearly did use similar

²⁰⁷ Geoffrey Conrad and Arthur A. Demarest, *Religion and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 36-37.

²⁰⁸ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book X: The People*, 191; also in Conrad and Demarest, *Religion and Empire*, 37-38.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 37.

²¹⁰ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire*, 45.

²¹¹ Ibid., 36-37, 40, 133-134. The source Carrasco mentions is André Thevet’s copy of Olmos’s *Histoire du Mechique* (173). It is likely that Chololteca’s schools did not play second fiddle to the Mexica *calmecacs*. It may have been the case that Quetzalcoatl’s came originally from his sacred stronghold in Cholollan, and

architectural vernacular for their *calmecac*. The Tenochca-Mexica called Quetzalcoatl the “Lord of the Calmecac,” emphasizing their nobility’s links to that enigmatic and highly venerated figure.²¹² To varying degrees the centers of Tlatelolco, Texcoco, Cholula, and other important *altepetl*, replicated the features of Tenochtitlan’s center: a central temple and courtyard, at least one noble lineage house, and a house for youths connected to the priests’ dwelling, known to have been connected in turn to *tecpancalli* (political palaces). Ruins of these types of temple and palace buildings have been found throughout the Valley of Mexico.

Challenges to securely identifying structures devoted mainly to educational purposes remain—and disagreement as to what, precisely, went on in them, remains. Archaeologist Michael E. Smith, surveying dozens of sites throughout the Valley of Mexico, has written that he could not locate a single *calmecac* nor *telpochcalli*.²¹³ He believes that Nahuas probably set the practices described for the *telpochcalli* (“youth house”) within the courtyards of the *tecpancalli* (“palace”), and that the *calmecac* was likely connected to centrally-located temples as places “where Aztec elite culture was inculcated into the youth of the nobility.”²¹⁴ Carrasco proposes that, based on the assumption that the *calmecac* was under the sacred jurisdiction of Quetzalcoatl, these elite institutions were the setting for pedagogy emphasizing the mythos about that deity.²¹⁵ In the 1980s, Alfredo López Austin briefly explored the concept of “temple-schools” as stuffy sacred institutions, defining them as first and foremost being religious

that his powerful priesthood entered him into Tenochca-Mexica cosmology from the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley.

²¹² Ibid., 45, 77.

²¹³ Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals*, 119-120.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 119.

²¹⁵ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire*, 175-176.

“places of service.”²¹⁶ On the other hand, Edward Calnek’s analysis of references in the *Florentine Codex* and the *Codex Mendoza* argues that these institutions were associated with occupational training and that there was a level of socio-economic equality that resulted from both.²¹⁷ Calnek believes that in the case of Tenochtitlan both texts’ indigenous compilers offer elite visions of schooling that nonetheless convey a more general Nahua understanding of social mobility as it could be obtained through education and spiritual training.²¹⁸ Echoing this analysis, Francis Berdan explains that the priesthood of the *calmecac* drew upon nobility, including some women, to fill its numbers, while commoners could enjoy some social mobility through their education in the *telpochcalli* coupled with military service.²¹⁹

It is clearer that *Calmecac* and *telpochcalli* were institutions related to the portentous *Xiuhmopilli*, or “New Fire,” ceremony that was celebrated to begin a new 52-year “century” cycle.²²⁰ The fire priests of Cupulco (also Copulco), as depicted in such pre-contact-style manuscripts as the *Codecies Borbonicus* and *Borgia* and as described in the prose *Florentine Codex*, ignited the new fire in the open chest cavity of a human sacrificial offering. The flame would be taken by priests from Tenochtitlan’s principal temple to other religious structures, as well as to the *calmecac* and *telpochcalli*.²²¹

²¹⁶ López Austin, *La Eduacación de los antiguos Nahuas*, vol. 1, 26.

²¹⁷ Calnek, “Calmecac and Telpochcalli in Tenochtitlan” (2007), 173-176; the *Florentine Codex* offers less support for Calnek’s view than the *Codex Mendoza*.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 177.

²¹⁹ Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 70.

²²⁰ Christina Elson and Michael Smith, “Archaeological Deposits from the Aztec New Fire Ceremony” (Ancient Mesoamerica, 2001) 157-158; David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica* (Waveland Press, 1991) 85-88; and *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization* (Beacon Press, 2000): 88-103; Megged, *Social Memory*, 140-141.

²²¹ A digital copy of the “Codex Borgia” (author and date unknown), is available through the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican Library, Vatican City Codice Borgianus Vaticanus mess. 1. Digital Vatican Library (accessed spring 2018 — 2019): https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.mess.1. (Copyright Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, used with permission)

Eventually every household in the empire would light their hearth with this new flame.²²²

According to Sahagún, a core duty of priests and their initiates in the *calmecac* appears to have revolved around “guarding” or keeping the fire going.²²³

The *Florentine Codex* states that parents “willingly” brought their sons and daughters to the *calmecac*, and though the exact age at which they entered is not clearly noted, it appears that students entered between twelve and fifteen years of age and stayed for roughly seven years.²²⁴ Thus while *telpochcalli* appear to have been designated for males only, both males and females seem to have attended the *calmecac*.²²⁵ However, according to other accounts, 12 or 13-year-old noble girls spent a year in service to the gods living at temples.²²⁶ To complicate matters, Francisco Clavijero argued that both boys and girls attended “seminaries,” the nobility going to one type (*calmecac*, where the sexes were segregated), commoners to another (*telpochcalli*). Men remained in the priestly schools until the age of twenty or twenty-two, women until seventeen or eighteen. Others agree that girls, when in school, were raised in seclusion and had no contact with boys or men.²²⁷ They were kept under the supervision of old women at all

²²² Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book VII: The Sun, Moon and Stars, and the Binding of the Years*, 25-32.

²²³ Ibid., 25

²²⁴ See especially “Seventh Chapter,” Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book III: The Origins of the Gods*, 59-61, and Dibble and Anderson’s notes on the matter (49n1 and 59n1).

²²⁵ Francisco Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, Vol. 2, (Porrúa, 1959), 199; he cites the Codex Mendoza, plates 53: all went for three years of instruction (religion, good usage, good behavior. Men usually followed their fathers’ vocations. The *telpochcalli*, according to Alfonso Caso, prepared the young men for war, and discipline was less severe than in the *calmecac* and education less intensive; Caso, *The Aztecs: The People of the Sun* (University of Oklahoma, 1988), 87. See also, Aguilar-Moreno, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World*, 98-103.

²²⁶ Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 94.

²²⁷ Juan de Torquemada indicates supervision: they slept and they went out only under the supervision of old women, *Monarquía india... Segunda Parte...descubrimiento, conquista, conversión y otras cosas maravillosas de la misma tierra*. 1975 (220, 471). Aguilar-Moreno notes the distinct scarification that boys and girls would receive, explaining that female initiates were scarred on the hip, while their male counterparts received cuts to their chests once bound for the *calmecac* (*Handbook to Life in the Aztec World*, 358).

times. They were taught how to address their elders with respect.²²⁸ Noble girls enrolled in the schools seem to have been taught by a priestly class of older women. These priestly women would have led their students through ceremonial acts and ensured the accuracy of knowledge received.²²⁹ This sort of role would not be accessible again to girls of any kind until long after the Spanish invasion, when in the eighteenth century conventual schools for indigenous women gave rise to Native nuns.²³⁰

Telpochcalli students seem to have used its training grounds for military exercises, though they were led by a designated “priest of youths.” The young men received martial instruction in weaponry and tactical warfare. Seemingly, parents desired the toughening of their sons, since *Book Three* of the *Florentine Codex* tells us that the “youth-priest, the parents entreat: ‘our lord hath given a jewel, a precious feather; a child hath arrived. … he wisheth to be hardened. … he is your son.’”²³¹ These parents hoped that their sons’ training might result in combat honors and perhaps entry into either the eagle or jaguar warrior classes, though the actual benefit of this kind of education as a source of social mobility remains unclear.²³² It is likely that the majority of *telpochcalli* boys comprised the rank-and-file of unsung foot soldiers, rather than gaining entry into the elite warrior orders. As the *Florentine Codex* puts it, “Receive him, take him. Let him

²²⁸ Caso, *The Aztecs*, 87.

²²⁹ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire*, 172.

²³⁰ Margaret Chowning, “Convents and Nuns: New Approaches to the Study of Female Religious Institutions in Colonial Mexico” *History Compass* (2008).

²³¹ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book III: Origins of the Gods*, 51; in essence the priest of the *telpochcalli* would adopt responsibility for the youth.

²³² Ibid; these “classes” were military ranks males might enter based on the social status as well as the school they had been associated with at birth.

follow, let him know those who are instructed, who are educated, the sons of others, and the poor sons of the poor eagle [warriors], the poor ocelot [warriors].”²³³

However this may be, and despite the “tough” talk of some entries, the *Florentine Codex* and other Native-influenced sources make it clear that parents expected teachers to provide compassionate care and guidance, especially where high-society is concerned. For instance, when *telpochcalli* parents spoke with the instructors, they clearly asked for “compassion,” viewing the knowledge imparted as a “gift”: “And there [the teacher] instructeth [the students], there he giveth them gifts, there he showeth them compassion.”²³⁴ Instructors appear to have cared for the youth: “Let us instruct children; let us educate children. Let the word, the statement, motherhood, fatherhood come forth.”²³⁵ Book VI of the *Florentine Codex*, which focuses on the moral philosophy of rulers, repeats similar language. Apparently, it was expected that men would emerge from schooling to become compassionate warriors prepared with the knowledge to defeat the enemies of the *altepetl*, though the regular physical threats from their instructors would surely impart a sense of stoicism. Whether or not such rhetorical uses of “compassionate” language were always translated into the realities of schooling, daily life and war remains unknown.²³⁶ *Telpochcalli* students would exit schooling at the age of 20 or 22 and have an arranged “marriage” ceremony.

Most available information leaves out detailed explanations of the roles and activities of female teachers and the parents of young woman attending the *calmecac*. As

²³³ Translation by Anderson and Dibble: *manoço nelli xjcmocelilica, manoço xiqualmanilica, ma qujmontoca ma qujmonmati yn izcaltilo, on oapaoalo, in tepilhuan, auh ie iehoantin in jcnotepilhoan, ijcnocauhtin yn jcnoocelo*; Ibid., 50.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ *ma titlacazcaltia, ma titlacaoapaoa ma quiça in cententli, in cencamatl yn naniotl, in taiotl* (Ibid., 51).

²³⁶ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book VI: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy*, Chapters 2, 4, and 17 discuss the hopes for compassionate rulers in passing (3, 8-9, 19, 25, 75, 88-89).

to girls and women, the *Florentine Codex*'s "Account of How the Women Served There in the Temples" in Book IV links young women's development and rearing to priestly duties.²³⁷ According to this text, "the life of the priestesses [began] when [their mothers] vowed them [to service] there in the great temple [*huey teopan*]."²³⁸ Both fathers and mothers seem to have been present when girls celebrated at their temple designation ceremony, or in other words were assigned to a specific temple as their training home. Capping their education was another ceremony called "face-veiling" in which they were taught the proper use of copal for cleansing rituals.²³⁹ When girls left the temple schools (unless they were among those who stayed on to serve as priestesses) they would then take part in a "knot-tying" ceremony, binding themselves to a male suitor in marriage.

Elite girls, those bound for training in higher education at the *calmecac*, would encounter the academic rigor needed to produce religious specialists, but it is possible that they did not have the same attachments to these institutions as their male counterparts. Women seem to have not lived in the lineage houses, at least not for an extended period of time.²⁴⁰ This is according to colonial sources, biased accounts written and depicted pictorially by men who likely did not base their assertions on interviews with surviving women priestesses.²⁴¹ There were women instructors (*cihuatlamacazque*) that have been linked to a generic "earth-mother cult," and it seems unlikely that these

²³⁷ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: The Ceremonies*, 215-216.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Aguilar-Moreno, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World*, 358.

²⁴¹ Calnek noted the elite and male identity of the authors, though failed to discuss the implication for Aztec women's education, see "Calmecac and Telpochcalli in Tenochtitlan," 177.

important spiritualists did not have a designated *calmecac* (or some other kind of educational center).²⁴²

Another enlightening source of information about pre-contact education is comprised of the paintings and accompanying Spanish and Nahuatl glosses of the *Codex Mendoza*, such as those found on folio 61. This page depicts two male students entering a *calmecac* and a *cuicacalli*.²⁴³ At top-center, a youth walks to the *tlamacazqui* (“priest”) of the *calmecac*. The youth below will enter the *cuicacalli* to be indoctrinated and instructed by the *teachcauh* (teacher). These youths and their teachers are distinctly drawn, viewed by the artist as representatives of the ideal candidates entering each institution (i.e. lineage, class, or comportment). The young man entering the *cuicacalli* wears the scratchy maguey fiber cloak of his lower status. The other boy, heading off to years of higher education in religious and political history and military tactics at the *calmecac*, is cloaked in the white cotton *tilmahtli* of his noble rank. Possibly a colonial intervention in the scene, the noble boy’s hair is short, mirroring the hairstyle commonly depicted on neophytes, while the *cuicacalli* initiate’s mane is long and straight in back and cropped short on top. The educators are similarly distinct. Both speak from a similar position of power, seated on reed mats and plain speech scrolls emanating from their mouths.²⁴⁴ Behind these scenes, a male figure, “father,” of unknown rank and profession directs the youths to either institute.

Any similarity between the two kinds of schools is hard to find in traditional depictions of what went on in them. In the *calmecac*, which Davíd Carrasco and Scott

²⁴² Aguilar-Moreno, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World*, 90.

²⁴³ Berdan, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 166.

²⁴⁴ Carrasco & Sessions explain that the red was a “bloody smear” to demonstrate the priest’s self-sacrificial observations and his “endearing pain,” *Daily Life of the Aztecs*, 114.

Sessions regard as the “most rigorous school,” students were confronted by a curriculum of “military, mechanical, astrological, and religious training.”²⁴⁵ The young men were under the general authority of the “Keeper of the Gods,” the priest-instructor overseer of the *calpulli* temple-school. These priests would “keep watch that indeed was a matter of his being like a father in the calmecac,” as had been implied when the youth had been set before them after their birthing ceremony.²⁴⁶ For the *calmecac* of the Mexica, the priest received “all the children... that he might train them, that he might bring them up by his words, that they might live well. And whether men ruled, or were rich, or led others, directed things, all this was the charge of the Keeper of the God of the Mexicans.”²⁴⁷ The Keepers did so when they “maintained usages,” the knowledge and techniques that the students needed to know before finishing their education.

Under the priest’s supervision and depending on the particular temple’s devotion, *calmecac* students learned specific penitential practices. For instance, Natives describe how at the “Tlillan Calmecaca: there dwelt the guardians of Cihuacoatl... Mexico Calmecac: there dwelt the penitents who offered incense at the summit of the [pyramid] Temple of Tlaloc [which they did] quite daily.”²⁴⁸ Managing the dispersion of daily incense for the patron deity was not all. Penitence might include creating materials for public display. Later, at the regional *calpulli* temple for Huitzahuac, “they molded in man’s form, the image of the demon [*diablo*] whose name was Tlacauepan

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: The Ceremonies*, 206.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Cihuacoatl was the political delineation for an advisor to the huey tlatoani; *In tlillan calmecac:vncan onoca, in jtepixcauh cihoacoatl...In mexico calmecac: vncan onoca in tlamaceuhque, in ontlenamaciaia tlalocan ijcpac: çan mumuztlae* (*Florentine Codex, Book II: The Ceremonies*, 168).

Cuexcochtzin.”²⁴⁹ It is unclear what material they used to mold the figure of the “demon,” or what accoutrements might have been decorated the image. But the construction of three-dimensional likenesses of sacred figures and the maintenance of the smoky atmosphere of the temples were tasks that the *tlamacazque* taught to their students.

Novitiates also learned to fast in the temple-school, an evening ritual that trained the elite to abstain from worldly desires. They “fasted for five nights. Not by day but by night... And when it dawned they went forth [i.e. left the temple]; they performed their tasks. Thus they did this daily; thus five days passed.” Awake all night, these students were not allowed any food, nor where they permitted to have any contact with women during the fasting times.²⁵⁰ They would repeat this practice—and if the student was of the priestly caste they were obligated to do so—for 20 days at a time, until they left the school.²⁵¹

Education had particular specializations for commoner and middling boys of 15, though there is a certain disagreement as to specifics found in available sources. According to the *Florentine Codex*, for instance, it was at the *telpochcalli* and not the *calmecac* that future “fire priests” learned the significance of fire and fire ceremonies. Though it is unclear when exactly and why the fires had been lit, it is clear that students learned how to maintain a proper fire, fire placement, and fire technology and

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 169: *In vuitznaoac calpulco, vncan muchioaia, vncan tlacatia in ijxiptla diablo, in jtoca catca tlacavepan cuexcochtzin.* It is worth noting that the loanword’s appearance is evidence that the Native informants have already been influenced by Christian teachings by the time of the preparation of this text, in the second half of the sixteenth century, more than a generation after colonization began.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 180: “And they fasted for the space of five nights—not by day but by night. And every time night fell, then they went within. And when day broke, they went forth and performed their tasks. Daily they thus did, until they had spent five days. And not then did they lie with women.” See also, Carrasco and Session, *Daily Life of the Aztecs*, 113-115.

²⁵¹ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book III: Origins of the Gods*, 193.

management. These lessons were complicated and required specialized teachers in various stages to ensure the young men adhered to the proper forms. The Keeper taught them how to gather and carry wood and branches, cut ceremonial thorns, lay fires, guard them in the evenings, and training in accompanying rituals such as the shell trumpet blowing ceremony and how to produce the black paint from the fire used to color their bodies. In the section “The Education of Men” (*Tlacazcaltiliztli*), the text relates that “The fire priest, who educated [the young priests] left them in the hands of the offering priests, those who dealt blows, those who guarded.”²⁵² And, they remembered how “experienced priests secured the fires, experienced trumpet blowers, black coloring (*tlilpatlaliztli*) stain dissolved when all anointed themselves, then they redressed their stains before dawn.”²⁵³

Home Schooling Nahua Children

It is more difficult to define the physical and structural evolution of household educational spaces, but Nahuatl and Spanish-language accounts have been useful sources in reconstructing components of two other architectural forms. Immediately after birth, before parents took their babies to their school dedication at a *calmecac* or *telpochcalli*, a midwife cut and removed the umbilical cord, and then buried a baby girl’s umbilicus under the home’s hearth. For boys, ideally she would dry and bury it away from the home, on a battlefield. This distinguished sex, labor, and place-identity differentiations from birth that, however, were unlikely to have been viewed through a European-style patriarchal lens that privileged male over female. Next, parents, kin, and community elders gave the child a set of gender-specific objects: boys received a set of miniature

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid., 218-219.

weapons and girls items for spinning and sewing. Finally, a diviner visited the home for the child's day-naming ceremony. It appears that either male or female soothsayers conducted these ceremonies. The diviner determined the child's fate, as explained in many sources, using a genre of calendrical books called *tonalamatl*, such as what is now known as *Codex Borgia*. In this way, the home became a place for the maintenance of individual and kinship knowledge in concordance with the literate diviner and his book and the immediate social network of family and community.

From birth to age twelve or fifteen, Nahua parents and community elders groomed children using admonishments and memorized examples, teaching them the fundamentals of domestic life, morality, and responsibility. Conveying lessons that were pessimistic in nature, parents and elders subjected both boys and girls to repetitive lectures in an effort to teach the youth that the world was a "painful and dangerous place, and offered advice on how to cope in such a world."²⁵⁴ This negative vision of existence seems to have helped knit the family unit to the larger subunit, the community, as children exited the home.

Undergirding each *altepetl*, we find a cohesive network of distinctive *calpulli* (literally "big house"), existed that ordered local identity and basic vision of learning.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 86.

²⁵⁵ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after Spanish Conquest*, 16-17. For spatial studies, *calpulli* would function on the social level as something akin to the nature of Lynch's "district," see Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960). Lynch defines these as "relatively larger city areas" where visitors might feel a distinct or "common character." They might be "recognized internally, and occasionally can be used as external reference as a person goes by or toward them," the district. Larger landmarks, mountains, rivers, valleys, and large buildings help to distance district dwellers from their non-district places. For more on "big house" studies, see: Reyes García, *Documentos Nauas*, 21-68; and López Mora "Entre dos mundos: los indios de los barrios de la ciudad de México. 1550-1600" and Castro Gutiérrez, "El origen y conformación de los barrios de indios" found in Castro Gutiérrez, *Los Indios y las ciudades de Nueva España* (2010), 57-77, and 105-122. Lockhart examined the concept of tlaxilacalli and calpulli political, socioeconomic, and religious structures in close detail, see *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 16-20, 104-109, 142-149, 204-205, 444-445. For a few case studies that followed in this tradition, see: John K. Chance,

According to James Lockhart, this geospatial social formation, or at least the concept of it in Nahua society encapsulated the “ethnic pride so characteristic of the altepetl... at the calpolli level too.”²⁵⁶ Scholars continue to wrestle over distinctions, but in general relationships in the *calpulli* were based primarily on kinship.²⁵⁷ People lived and learned together in these subunits, which Lockhart called the “microcosm of the society.”²⁵⁸ Susan Kellogg notes that one defining characteristic is that *calpulli* membership appears in some cases to have descended from key ancestors and in others to have radiated outward from a central place-identity, that is according to the Tenochca-Mexica record.²⁵⁹ *Calpulli* consisted, roughly, of territorially significant neighborhoods of multi-resident complexes, each with a designated schooling node: the *calpulco* (local temple). Coined by Sahagún and his Nahua aides as the “tribal temple” (and translated into English by Anderson and Dibble as such) the *calpulco* rested on what has been identified as “public” *calpullalli* (shared *calpulli* land), though they were probably not solely educational institutions²⁶⁰

“Barrios of Colonial Tecali Patronage Kinship Territory,” *Ethnology* (1996); Mulhare, “Barrio Matters Ethnology of Mesoamerican Customary Social Units,” *Ethnology* (1996); Monaghan, “Mesoamerican Community as a Great House,” *Ethnology* (1996). Additionally, the topic has recently received much attention from Benjamin Johnson, see Johnson, *Pueblos within Pueblos: Tlaxilacalli Communities in Acolhuacan, Mexico, Ca. 1272-1692* (Niwot, CO: University of Colorado, 2018).

²⁵⁶ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 17.

²⁵⁷ Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Culture*, 172-180.

²⁵⁸ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 17; Lockhart & Swartz also make mention that this microcosm (*Early Latin America*, 38) had either a nucleated or unnucleated centers, and this chapter focuses upon the previous; each of the three *altepetl* discussed herein appear to have had concentrated centers where nobles from the surrounding *calpulli* might sent their children for elite priestly or martial training (*Ibid.*, 37-41).

²⁵⁹ Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Culture*, 176-178. Kellogg uses the term “Ego” and “Ego oriented,” not place-identity.

²⁶⁰ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book VIII: Kings and Lords*, 53. Reyes García noted that *calpullalli*, at least in one case dealing with the town of Tlapallan under the Marquesado del Valle, were lands used for tribute for the Marqués himself (*Documentos nahuas*, 43), which he based on AGN, Hospitales de Jesús, Leg. 210, No. 43. See the definition with colonial attestations of the term “calpulco” at Nahuatl Dictionary, UO Wired Humanities Projects, <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/calpulco>.

Education within the *calpulli* learning environment appears to have been tied to ethnicity and sacred forces. Luis Reyes García, in “*El término calpulli en documentos del siglo XIV*” (1996), notes evidence of the relationship between the *calpulli* members and their “*calpulli-temple*” which, according to inquisitorial records from 1539 was the site where the “distinct idols” of a pueblo were maintained.²⁶¹ Several sources describe the *calpulli-temple*’s functions as the place of community song and dance, “idol” and weapons storage, and place of the local deities.²⁶² This appears to be most evident when the term is coupled, perhaps metaphorically, with *teocalli*, “temple.”²⁶³ “*Teopantlalli* (“temple land”) designated the land used for religious ceremony and ritual, and these would have made the prime sites for the education of such activities. It is unclear if all temple lands were physically attached to the temple or if they were simply lands managed by the *calpulli* “temple,” but the sources imply that those used for education purposes were adjoining.²⁶⁴ Regardless, we can assume that the temple sat upon *calpulli* lands, and it was on said grounds where community members, entered the *cuicacalli*, the “House of Song,” to celebrate the scared calendar.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ AGN Inquisición, Vol. 37, primera parte, Exp. 4; published in Reyes García, *Documentos nauas*, 37 and 44.

²⁶² Reyes García, *Documentos Nauas*, 48-53.

²⁶³ Ibid., 49. See “teocalli,” Nahua Dictionary, Wired Humanities Projects, <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/teocalli>.

²⁶⁴ Land tenure studies note the complexity of determining pre-Hispanic *teopantlalli* and *calpullalli*. For instance, there is evidence from nearby Culhuacan and Toluca that these lands might be privately owned, and that the colonial public (by way of the church) benefited from crops produced upon them at the behest of the owner. See Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 156-157; S.L.Cline, *Colonial Culhuacan, 1580-1600: A Social History of an Aztec Town* (University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 142-144; and Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Culture*, 140.

²⁶⁵ Durán, *Book of Gods and Rites*, 289. *Calpulli* membership and *Calpultin* “people of the *calpulli*” are discussed in depth in Lockhart, *The Nahuas after Conquest* (1992). Sahagún notes that all the veintena festival celebrations took place in the *cuicacalli*, and during Toxcatl for instance, at the *calpulco* drums beat out the rhythm for the men to dance their *mococoloa* “serpentine” dance and women, the *momoichotia* “popcorn” dance; Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book II: Ceremonies*, 6 and 72.

The Song and Dance of Nahua Schooling

The *cuicacalli*, basic subunits of Nahua schooling, were run by male and female “teachers.” Nahuas used these “houses of song,” for oral and physical ritual training. As public institutions, they reinforced *calpulli* identity and beginning in adolescence inculcated the youth with local identity. It is difficult at this remove in time to gauge the quality of education available through these schools, since prejudiced Catholic priests tended to belittle them. As the Dominican fray Diego Durán explained in late-sixteenth century, “Nothing was taught there [in the *cuicacalli*] to youths and maidens but singing and dancing, and the playing of musical instruments.”²⁶⁶ However, in larger *altepetl* the *cuicacalli* appear to have operated on a grander scale, since specialists would lead song and dance performances for the entire area, rather than just one of its districts. Sahagún’s indigenous aides mention several ceremonies related to or taking place within Tenochtitlan’s *cuicacalli*, and they explain that young Nahuas attended the Song House at least once daily, usually in late afternoon or early evening as the sun set, depending upon the demands of the rite.²⁶⁷ As to the significance of the education actually received in these schools, Frances Berdan notes that *cuicacalli* were “an important means of transmitting knowledge and beliefs... a vast amount of information was contained in the songs themselves.”²⁶⁸

Both women and men appear to have taught in the *cuicacalli*. Yet despite the prevailing idea that gender parallelism was the norm in Nahua society, some have argued that women did not lead rituals in the formal, centrally-located *cuicacalli*, those

²⁶⁶ Durán, *Book of Gods and Rites*, 289.

²⁶⁷ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book III: Origins of the Gods*, 21-22, 54-55,

²⁶⁸ Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 95.

ceremonial grounds related to state religious functions.²⁶⁹ The description found *Book VIII*, “Kings and Lords,” Fourth Paragraph, of the *Florentine Codex* fails to mention both sexes taking part as teachers at work in the “House of Song”:

Cuicacalli: there were the *tiachcahuan* [elder brothers] and the *telpuchtlatoque* [rulers of the youths], there established in order to oversee what was by way of work. And every day, when the sun had already set, they turned their attention to dances.

Moreover, it describes clothing and accessories worn by male instructors.

They went quite naked. So they went to the *cuicacalli* [house of songs]; so they danced with song, proceeding with, about their necks, only [a cape] made like a net. They set in place and proceeded with their forked heron feather ornaments and the red cord with which they bound their hair; and [they had] their turquoise earplugs and seashell lip pendants.²⁷⁰

Donning particular capes and regaled with feathers, cordage, and cerulean gems, the performers entered the learning environment.²⁷¹ Others have challenged that houses of song were male-dominated, including Susan Kellogg and Frances Berdan.²⁷² Women are in fact described as having played key functions in several ritual dances in the *Florentine Codex*, though these entries do not make direct connections to their role as

²⁶⁹ Ethnomusicologist Mark Pedelty believes that Native women were underserved as to education and did not hold administrative roles but that their labor was a crucial element of the types of educational experiences taking place in the cuicacalli and ritual performance throughout Tenochtitlan, see *War stories: The culture of foreign correspondents* (Routledge, 2013), 13-15; and *Musical ritual in Mexico City: from the Aztec to NAFTA* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), 14-15, 46.

²⁷⁰ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book VIII: Kings and Lords*, 43: The translation is Anderson and Dibbles'. The Nahuatl reads: *Cujcacalli, vncan catca in tiachcahoan, in telpuchtlatoque vncan tlatecpanoaia injc qujchiaia tleintequjtl, auh in momuztlae, in jquac ie calaqij tonatiuh: tlamaçeoalitzli ipan qujmatia, çan petlaihuja, injc viita cujcacali, injc oncujcoanooaia çanijo inquech in onactiuja, iuhqujn matlatl ic tlachiuhhti, imaztaxel conmantiuji, tochacatl injc qujlpia intzzonchichilicpatl: ioan ixiuhnacoch, ioan intempilol eptli.*

²⁷¹ “Singers”” [*cuicacameh*, pl. *cuicaní*] role in Nahua society is one of the clearest examples of an educative carryover into the post-colonial learningscape, wherein “church people,” especially “chapel singers,” held sway over critical church musical performances (see Chapter III); Lockhart, *The Nahauas after the Conquest*, 216.

²⁷² Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Society*, 90-91; Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 95. Also, Jacques Soustelle once described the role women priestesses and “magicians,” though it is unclear when he indicated their presence in *cuicacalli*, see Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest* (1961), 50-58.

educators. Lisa Sousa has shown varying degrees of gender complementarity in those public functions as well as the moral and spiritual setting of the homefront.²⁷³

A glimpse of what these performances were like can be seen on folio 119 of the *Tovar Manuscript*, a pictorial that may date from around the same time as the *Florentine Codex*. (Fig. 2.5).²⁷⁴ One of the two drummers in the scene beats a horizontal drum, the *teponaztli*. The other uses his palms to pound the barrel-like *huehuetl*. Each dancer, all apparently men, carries or wears accouterment similar to that described by Sahagún's Nahua co-authors, including long green "feather ornaments" suggesting precious quetzal feathers of the type worn by nobles and prominent warriors. The identities of particular figures are unknown, and the Spanish gloss explains simply "The manner of dance of the Mexicans."²⁷⁵

Cuicacalli instruction rested in the capable mind of the *tlapixcatzin*, or "caretaker."²⁷⁶ The *tlapixcatzin* was figure in charge of the corpus of "sacred songs" central to Nahua oral tradition, memorizing the lyrics and the significance with "great care" so that he could pass on this knowledge to lesser "teachers of sacred songs" and noble and commoners by "issu[ing] summons that the singers or the lords be assembled so that they would be taught."²⁷⁷ Assembling "singers and lords" for this type of

²⁷³ For women dancers, see Chapter 6, 8, 15, 17, among others in Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: Ceremonies*; see also Lisa Sousa, *The Woman Who Turned into a Jaguar and Other Narratives of Native Women in Archives of Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 30-40, 239-248.

²⁷⁴ JCB, "Tovar Codex," Codex Ind 2, "el modod de baylar de los Mexicanos...", Fol. 119. accredited as *Historia de la benida de los yndiosca* by Juan de Tovar, 1582-87.

²⁷⁵ Specialists have identified the figure clad in a sun cloak, dancing on the right of the drummers as "the high priest." They have also linked the full-body eagle and jaguar costumes to warriors, such as what may be representations of as two members of the eagle and a jaguar orders (though the bird's beak could also indicate a hummingbird). Whether or not this image refers to the *cuicacalli* without clearly identifying this location, it is likely that similar events would have taken place there.

²⁷⁶ Sahagún explains this functionary as a musical "custodian" of sorts: *Primeros Memoriales*, 84.

²⁷⁷ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: The Ceremonies*, 195. Translation by Anderson and Dibble: *Tlapiscatzin: In tlapiscatzin qujmocujtlayaia in jncuyc Diablome in ie muchi teucujcatl injc aiac tlatlaco*,



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Figure 2.5, Visions of song and dance. The two drummers at center likely became a focal point for the performers, in this sixteenth century depiction of a pre-colonial learningscape. Cod. Ind. 2, “el modod de baylar de los Mexicanos...” Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

instruction in a courtyard, the organizers of the song and dance had established a space for directed learning. If done on a daily basis, then participants would quickly memorize these hymns. Both styles of drums used in such dance ceremonies were commonly carved from wood and decorated with depictions of animals and sacred symbols. At least one example, housed in the British Museum, is a late fifteenth-century “Aztec” *teponaztli* drum from the Valley of Mexico that depicts the head and feathery body of an owl

vel qujmocujtlavjaia, injc qujtemachtiaia in teucujcatl, yoan qujtzatziliaia injc monechicozque in cuicanjme anoço tetecutin injc qujmomachtizque in teucujcatl. Note the loanword Diablomeh or “Devils.”

(*tecolotl*).²⁷⁸ The dozens of textually recorded *cantos* found in the *Florentine Codex* are evidence of the long-lasting memories that the Caretaker imparted to his pupils.

One of the clearest depictions of the *cuicacalli* in action was chronicled by Diego Durán, a description that seems to preserve the Native elders' descriptions and memories of how dance and song functioned in society, and one that reveals the types of nonwestern educational media used in this setting.²⁷⁹ In Chapter Twenty-one of his *Book of the Gods and Rites*, in a passage describing the “God of Dance and the schools of dance,” Durán explains that each day elders assembled local boys and girls between the ages “twelve to fourteen” at a local school attached to the temple. Most likely each *calpulli* had specific customs in this connection, but according to Durán the “teachers” lived in the *cuicacalli* and regulated instruction.²⁸⁰ His informants did not mention teaching tools like manuscripts or books, instead only “singing, dancing, and the playing of instruments.”²⁸¹ In fact, there is little evidence that the Nahuas, either teachers or students, relied on pictographic manuscripts in the *cuicacalli*. Apparently lessons in pictographic literacy were reserved for the noble males attending the *calmecac*. This division of educational media and access to higher-knowledge maintained the social distinctions between noble and commoner. Instead, inside the walled, rectangular,

²⁷⁸ “Slit-drum,” early-fourteenth to late-fifteenth century, British Museum, #Am1949, 22.218, Oldman Collection, Oldman No. 891. The assumed provenance of this particular drum, as with many items registered in museums, deserves our skepticism. It would be almost a miracle for anything made out of wood from the region and time period—in such pristine condition—to have survived, and it could very well be an unrecognized, relatively modern fake. Further study is needed of this and other famous wooden drums, including cross analysis the time-worn collections in MAHM in Ciudad de México, Mex.

²⁷⁹ Durán, *Book of the Gods and Rites*, 289-292.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

roofless “Houses of Song,” commoner youths regularly reaffirmed their devotion to the sacred patrons of their *altepetl* and sub-*altepetl* through song and dance.²⁸²

However, the *cuicacalli* did not lack recognizable educational materials. They appear to have relied on three-dimensional material goods to maintain oral history and local knowledge.²⁸³ It is important to note that the teachers resided next to the sacred temple structure, a physical relationship that was part of their occupation as keepers of cultural knowledge. These teachers, both male and female, taught the boys and girls song and dance by means of physical training based on statuary.²⁸⁴ The students memorized each song’s particular movements, rhythm, cadence, and lyrics under the guidance of the *Tlapixcatzin*. The concrete demonstration of dance movements performed by teachers was a kind of visual “textbook” inscribed on and by these instructors’ bodies. Durán’s informants in the “hot lands” south of Mexico City, in the region inhabited by the Nahuatl-speaking Tlalhuica ethnicity, emphasized that dance was central to the transmission of knowledge in the “House of Song.”²⁸⁵ Instruction took place daily, at sunset. Elders, both male and female, collected the youths in two segregated lines, one for boys followed by the male elder, or *teananqui* and the other for girls, with the elder female, or *cihuatepixqui*, following them. These positions were appointed, and the two officials helped to maintain an orderly procession into the classroom.

²⁸² Durán explains that “Attendance at these schools was so important and the law [in regard to attendance] was kept so rigorously that any absence was considered almost a crime lese majesty” (*Ibid.*, 289).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ For female teachers see, Kellogg, “From Parallel and Equivalent to Separate and Unequal,” found in Schroeder et al., *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, (1997) 127-130.

²⁸⁵ Robert Haskett explored the Tlalhuicas the “dominant ethnicity” of Cuauhnahuac (modern day Cuernavaca) and their role as an “expansionist state” in the late pre-contact era: *Visions of Paradise*, 60-69.

Apparently, the Nahua instructors among the Tlalhuica venerated a stone image, which Durán called “God of Dance.” Tlahuica lived in the “hot lands” south of the Valley of Mexico, and according to Durán’s informants, the “idols” used by the Tlalhuica were small enough to be carried to the center of the ritual patio, taken from the designated “chamber in front of the courtyard,” which was maintained by their priests and teachers. Durán himself makes it difficult to confirm who, exactly, was that the Tlalhuica’s God of the Dance, or whether or not a similar deity was revered in Valley of Mexico *cuicacalli*. He wrote, “I did not find this God of the Dance was revered in the cities of Mexico or Tetzcoco or in the Kingdom of Tlacopan but only in the province of Tlalhuica...”²⁸⁶ Whatever the case, at the time of instruction and religious ceremony, practitioners adorned the statue in the “native way” with intricate floral arrangements placed in the openings of his fists and other attachments, perhaps a cloak wrapped around its body, or feathers attached to his head and neck.²⁸⁷ The Nahua youths assembled before the God of the Dance would have been prepared to reenact local knowledge; the act of the elders assembling the boys and girls at sunset was also an affirmation that the sun would be reborn because of the teachers’ guidance and the students’ interaction with the statue-text.

Once the stone image had been set in the center of the schoolyard, the Nahuas “asked [the image] permission before beginning the dance,” demonstrating not only the animistic quality of their rituals, but also showcasing the Nahua custom of interacting

²⁸⁶ Durán’s God of the Dance shares attributes with the deity Xochipilli (Flower Noble), *Book of the Gods and Rites*, 290. Xochipilli is described as a deity associated with painful skin maladies, venereal disease, and overindulgence, as well as more positive, artistic, and productive aspects of Nahua life; see Mary Ellen Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (Thames and Hudson, 1997), 190.

²⁸⁷ There are many accounts of this type of decoration, for example, the dressings associated with Nezahualcoyotl’s likeness on Tetzcotzinco (discussed below).

with the classroom environment, which had become a space of community participation. Then the children performed memorized dance steps and sang songs that recreated local knowledge. Each dancer or singer, as they had been instructed, referred to the adorned mnemonic device like a three-dimensional and multi-sensorial text. In fact, as Durán noted, they feared that the statue might become angry if the performance did not recreate the local knowledge accurately, and in some cases the Nahuas of Tlalhuica would “create new chants” for the image.²⁸⁸

Based on this account (which it must acknowledged comes from a Christian perspective), education in the *cuicacalli* can be described as a living and malleable construct. Though the primary symbols of the statue-text remained the same, the teachers created new histories around these statue-texts, reworking the past and present. This community-level form of Nahua education relied on regular, directed study in an ordered, controlled, and sacred environment based at least in part around the use of idols as a texts and mnemonic devices. This instruction and ritual also use of intricately designed drums and sumptuous regalia, items that must have told different stories that augmented those embodied in images like that of the God of the Dance.

The *Codex Borgia*, too, offers glimpses of pre-contact indigenous ritual educational techniques. Specialists believe that the *Borgia* is a manual for divination, though most agree that its panels include narrative scenes and historical details. Created in the southern Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, these narrative moments may reflect the views of Nahuas living out from under the thumb of the Triple Alliance. If its authors originated east of the Basin, for instance, close analysis of its pictorial components may bring us one

²⁸⁸ Durán, *Book of the Gods*, 289-291.

step closer to determining a visual vernacular common to Eastern Nahuas. The paintings are highly-detailed, and the artist(s) used a variety of colors and positioned figures in such a way as to convey depth of field and physical distance in its scenes. Human figures are gesticulating in dance and circumambulating; depictions of anthropomorphized animals, fantastical creatures, and deities abound, as do buildings, sacred spaces, and props used in ceremonial activities.

Tlacuiloqueh, indigenous scribes, painted several scenes taking place in courtyards in the Puebla-Mixteca style *Codex Borgia*. According to Anton Nowotony, the mid-portion of the *Borgia* offers a blueprint for the ceremonial center of a pre-colonial Native community (though we know not which), and he has revealed the temple precinct as covering a large area, which was largely enclosed by walls. Within several walled courtyard-like spaces there were at least two pyramids, one black and the other red, a large ball court, pyramid of the “sacred bundle,” and many other ancillary buildings and pools.²⁸⁹ The *Borgia*’s Folio 46 depicts manmade enclosure, likely a courtyard, with four openings (echoing other scenes in the manuscript in this way), and the artist highlights an act of political legitimacy, perhaps an initiation of princely figures, underway(fig. 2.6).²⁹⁰ The four corners of the space are delimited by what seem to be walls, as suggested by their incised lines and the dohnut-shaped disks that run frieze-like along their edges. Extending down into the interior space are a banner of yellow and red that is broken up by white and black strips. Other large squares of blue, yellow, and red

²⁸⁹ Nowotony, *Tlacuilolli*, 4.

²⁹⁰ Nowotony, *Tlacuilolli*, 32, and 102-107. The ceremony seems similar to one found in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*; see Dana Leibsohn, *Script and Glyph: Pre-Hispanic History, Colonial Bookmaking and The Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2009), 37, and 129-130. A digital copy of the *Historia* presented by the Bibliothèque nationale de France is available here: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84559448/f1.image>.

are filled with dismembered body parts or a daysign. Flower merlons atop its walls and the circular disks below this indicate that the space had a focused theme of ornamentation, possibly associated with princely or precious things.²⁹¹ In the center of the courtyard is a yellow, Rectangular Goddess who produces from her torso the flowering, multicolored tree that anchors the scene. She is reaching out to accept an anthropomorphic heart with a face, taking it into her body, an act that causes the heart to burst into flames, from which the flowering tree erupts. Perched atop this is the main protagonist of the pictorial narrative, a man wearing a warrior regalia-like hummingbird suit (*tlahuiztli*). The hummingbird figure's face is blackened, his nose is perched, and above him is a scaly, winged bat-like being. The scaly bat is offering (perhaps the same one seen bursting into flames in the goddess's body) and is surrounded by four hummingbirds who are touching their beaks to the bat, as it descends from the sky. At the courtyard openings, (read from right to left) Eagle, Quetzal, and Jaguar confront a candy-cane striped-, flower-, and fire-serpent, placing their maws at the nose of each serpent.

The particular function of pictorial manuscripts in precolonial learningscapes is unclear, but it is possible that the iconography of the *Codex Borgia* would have been 'read' aloud to an audience. Individuals may have highlighted different semasiographic qualities in each telling and certain concepts may have been downplayed depending on the interests of the reader, but repeated patterns could have helped to maintain a consistent structure. Representations of the cardinal directions such of this are a repeating

²⁹¹ Gisele Díaz and Alan Rodgers dub this a "flower/flint" courtyard associated with South, because of the day sign medallions in the corners, and describe the ceremony devoted to a variant of Xochiquetzal and the action within the context of Borgia's protagonist, named "Stripe Eye," and label the pierced nose fellow "Smoke Eye," see Díaz and Rodgers, *The Codex Borgia: A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript* (Courier Corporation, 1993), xxvi, 34.



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Figure 2.6, Pre-colonial courtyard ritual performance. As an example of a primary source created before the Spanish colonial period, the *Borgia* presents several invaluable depictions of pre-colonial architecture, including possible visions of Mesoamerican learningscapes, as seen in this panel. It is undetermined if this particular ceremonial courtyard ever existed in physical form. Its key components include: four L-shaped corner walls, each topped by combined rows of circular disk friezes (likely *chalchihuihtli*) with dozens of merlons in flower designs atop this; the transversal breaks between these walls; and the courtyard space, outlined by red-and-white flint knives, at the heart of which is a multicolored, flowering tree. The human, anthropomorphic, and supernatural bodies that fill in the rest of the image indicate the complexity of the narrative. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican Library, Vatican City. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.

occurrence in the *Borgia*.²⁹² Particular colors, objects, and iconography, such as particular flora and fauna depicted and key day signs, serve as didactic illustrations of cosmic places as well as time and space.²⁹³ The iconography of the *Borgia* is full of dance-like movement and sacred meaning, suggesting that it could have been used as a guide for performers enacting the ceremonial activity of seen in the manuscript in real life. As a divination manual, it also would have served as an informative component of the pre-contact indigenous learningscape, if pictorial manuscripts of the sort were part of the process of instruction in the Cuicacalli.

Toltec Thinking Caps and the Illusions of Grandeur

The pervasiveness of pre-contact educational practices and the materials that propelled religious learning on all levels of society, like the Festival of the Mountains and didactic visual tools such as pictorial manuscripts, lasted well beyond the onset of colonization. This is particularly true of songs. No single figure is more closely associated with songs and poetry than Nezahualcoyotl, the “poet-king” of Tetzcoco.²⁹⁴

²⁹² This is particularly true of what has been called the central “chapter” of the manuscript, which includes Folios 49 to 53 and highlights conceptualizations of the five directions in images (North, East, West, South and Center). For a recent investigation into the biography of the *Borgia Codex* (a.k.a. Yailli Ehecatl Codex) see Chapter 7, Maarten Jansen and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez, *Time and the Ancestors: Aztec and Mixtec Ritual Art* (Brill, 2017).

²⁹³ Nowotony, *Tlacuiloalli*, 34-36, 112-121.

²⁹⁴ Nezahualcoyotl’s intellectual centrality and stature has been challenged in the last decade. For instance, Jongsoo Lee and his co-authors have dimmed the grandeur of Nezahualcoyotl and asserted that Tetzcocan grandeur was largely over blown. Nonetheless, a majority of pre-Hispanic Nahua poetry still is often accredited to his name. Miguel León-Portilla and Alfredo López Austin staked large portions of their careers to the understanding of “Aztec” literature and philosophy attributed to this enigmatic figure. See Lee, “A Reinterpretation of Nahuatl Poetics: Rejecting the Image of Nezahualcoyotl as a Peaceful Poet” (2003), 233-249. For examples of the body of literature: León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World*; León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*; León-Portilla, *The Broken Spear*; León-Portilla, *Toltecayotl: aspectos de la cultura náhuatl*; and López Austin, *La educación de los antiguos nahuas*. This current of thought reverberated in several studies: Berdan and Anawatl, *The Essential Codex Mendoza* (1997); Michael Smith and Frances Berdan (eds.), *The Postclassic Mesoamerican World* (University of Utah Press, 2003); Berdan, *The Aztecs* (1996); John Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs* (Stanford university, 1985); Carrasco and Sessions, *Daily Life of the Aztecs* (1998); Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the*

According to the accounts left by his kin, Nezahualcoyotl led the Acolhua-Tetzcoca through an art-filled renaissance between 1427-1472 after defeating the city-state's occupiers, the Tepaneca of Azcapotzalco under Tezozomoc Yacateteltetl (1320-1426). The idea that there was a flowering of “Toltec” identity and cultural enlightenment during this period is based largely on the fact that his name appears in two “sacred songs,” as well as in biographies produced by his descendants written in the early-colonial period, likely their attempt to legitimize their own assertions that they were members of a proud and ancient lineage. As such, romantic translations of “his” poems may have ultimately come from a nostalgic reading that may or may not have reflected the songs’ original qualities.²⁹⁵

What is known about Nezahualcoyotl’s life tells us that as a youth of 15 he witnessed the assassination of his father. Due to threats to his life as the primary heir of Tetzcoco, he was whisked away to Tenochtitlan to live in and to receive an education in a Mexica *calmecac*. He would not return to regain control of Tetzcoco until 1427. It is safe to assume that, as Lee argues, the ideological programming of the Mexica *calmecac* would have familiarized the Tetzcocan to his neighbor’s practices, history, and future.²⁹⁶

From 1412 to 1427, constant conflict appears to have leveled Tetzcoco. Available sources tell us that Nezahualcoyotl’s return signaled an unprecedented reconstruction effort that was aided by the young ruler’s Mexica allies, who began “building the houses

Irony of Empire (2000); John Curl, *Ancient American Poets* (2005); and Judith Gleason, “Summer Visits Nezahualcoyotl” (2009).

²⁹⁵ See especially, Lee, “A Reinterpretation of Nahuatl Poetics,” 233-249.

²⁹⁶ Lee, et al, *Allure of Nezahualcoyotl*, 99.

for [Nezahualcoyotl].”²⁹⁷ In return, he granted the Mexica-Tenochca lands in his realm, and had them build a “grand house for their idols... and built a *cu* [temple] and a big house that had never been built to that point.”²⁹⁸ Lee highlights the depiction of seven “craftsmen” in the *Mapa Tlotzin* meeting with Nezahualcoyotl in the reconstruction effort.²⁹⁹ The characteristics of the craftsmen seen in the *Mapa* indicate the existence of roughly seven intellectual or vocational pursuits (artisan types also described in the *Florentine Codex*) that must have learned through Mexica-style education or apprenticeships. They include a painter putting his brush to a flat media and bowls filled with red and black ink, a man with a pot in front of him clasping a drill-like stick in both hands, which he presses against a taught surface, a flower or textile craftsmen pressing a sharp tool at a circular shield with copal incense smoldering on a censer next to him, a man tending a fire by using two sticks, as it burns and smokes in a large censer in front of him, another feather craftsmen who sits cross-legged clutching and tying a set of splayed plumes, with a small table before him with a bowl of white matter and a finished feather fan before him, a lapidary hammering a stone pick at a block of grey stone, and a woodcarver chiseling at a brown branch with a serpentine-shaped tool of some kind.

For the Tetzcocans, this contribution and the subsequent political alliance that formed when their rulers established the Triple Alliance in 1428 must have reshaped the

²⁹⁷ Robert H. Barlow, *Anales de Tlatelolco: unos annales históricos de la nación mexicana y Códice de Tlatelolco* (Porrúa, 1948), 55.

²⁹⁸ Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, Fernando de. *Obras históricas; incluyen el texto completo de las llamadas Relaciones e Historia de la nación chichimeca en una nueva versión establecida con el cotejo de los manuscritos más antiguos que se conocen*. Volume 1. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1975), 379.

²⁹⁹ Painted before 1546, and likely the source of information that Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Spanish priests relied upon to discuss their histories of the Chichimeca, Toltecs, and Tetzcocans, this amoxcalli, or indigenous painted parchment, is a valuable source for understanding both precontact history and ethnology, but, as Lee cautions, it is a product of the colonial period and likely was influenced by European and Christian themes, see Lee et al., *Allure of Nezahualcoyotl*, 37-39.

traditional religious education system, adding Mexican and rituals onto existing precursors. In fact, supposedly it was only through Mexica-Tenochca manipulation that Nezahualcoyotl was left alive so that he could inherit the seat of the *altepetl*'s *tlatoahuani*.³⁰⁰ His re-education in Mexica schools was therefore crucial. The Tetzcoca appear to have worshiped and paid penitence to several deities, and Tlaloc, the rain deity, was prominent among them.³⁰¹ But in 1467 Nezahualcoyotl constructed a temple dedicated to Huitzilopochtli in Tetzcoco, four years before a new temple associated with Tlaloc was erected in 1471.³⁰²

The Temple of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc in Tetzcoco is a symbolic representation of Nezahualcoyotl's adoption and adaptation of Tenochca education and culture. Theoretically, this structure placed a node of Mexica-Tenochca ritual practice—including human offerings-- physically at the heart of Nezahualcoyotl's city-state. According to the archaeological record, double-temple pyramids such as the one described by Alva Ixtlilxochitl as standing in Tetzcoco's ceremonial center were rare and one of the “most distinct type of Aztec building.”³⁰³ Remnants of this kind of dual structure have only been truly identified in the ruins of Tenayuca (the oldest), Tlatelolco, and in the form of the Templo Mayor in Tenochtitlan's center.³⁰⁴ Tetzcoco's temple,

³⁰⁰ Lee, *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl*, 105-108; Jongsoo Lee and Galen Brokaw (eds.), *Texcoco: Prehispanic and Colonial Perspectives* (Nowiot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2014), 68-69

³⁰¹ Miller and Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods*, 166-167. According to Amber Brian, colonial historians sought to caste Nezahualcoyotl in a Greco-Roman and Christian light, posthumously, accrediting him and his *altepetl* with pre-Christian monotheism under one entity called *in tloque in nahuaque* (“the lord of the heavens and the earth”), see Lee and Brokaw, *Texcoco: Prehispanic and Colonial Perspectives*, 99-103.

³⁰² Alva Ixtlilxochitl's account seems to conflate these two events when it tells us that at the center of the *altepetl*, Nezahualcoyotl ordered a dual temple built for Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli; Lee et al., *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl*, 105-108.

³⁰³ Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals*, 101.

³⁰⁴ Ibid. 101-103. According to Eduardo Douglas, whose study focuses heavily on the architectural features of Nezahualcoyotl's palatial structure instead of the *huey teocalli*, or double-temple pyramid, only briefly

possibly standing taller than the latter, may have challenged Tenochtitlan's sacred eminence.³⁰⁵ Whatever the case, similar to traditions from Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan, we find a series of houses with lintels at the base of temples matching those found on top of them. In the temple courtyard, some of these house-like structures could have been *calmecac* or *telpochcalli*, though none of the sources indicate their direct function.

Whatever the exact nature of the intellectual relationship, the *altepetl* of Tetzcoco's state and those of Tenochtitlan appear to have been closely linked through spiritual lessons about Lake Tetzcoco learned in temple schools. The waters played a role in the spiritual economy between the allied groups. During grand festivals, such as the great feasts dedicated to Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca, the Nahuas "would grind a lot of *maíz* which they would slather over taut leather strips like a sign, and with shouts from all to the temple and they would offer the seeds... and in Tazcuco[sic] they would cook and make cakes and send them to Motizuma [sic]."³⁰⁶

The waters of Lake Texcoco physically and spiritually linked the two communities through the most crucial functions of cosmological regeneration. For example, to honor the sacred energy of Tlaloc, both groups would send children to their deaths in the Lake's saline waters. Motolinia describes how Nahuas would sacrifice their

digresses into the makeup of this image. Douglas, following Pomar's *Relación de Texcoco*, offers that the temple was modelled after Templo Mayor and functioned as the cosmic axis mundi for Tetzcoco. He also explains that the structure was meant to re-create "metonymic architectural traces" like its predecessor for the Tenochca; see, Douglas, *In the Palace of Nezahualcoyotl: Painting Manuscripts, Writing the Pre-Hispanic Past in Early Colonial Period Tetzcoco, Mexico* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 98-101.

³⁰⁵ Patrick Lesbre, "Teocalli de Texcoco" (*Trace*, 1998); according to Lesbre's study, the double temple in Tetzcoco was 45 meter tall and 134 meters wide (via Smith, *Aztec City-State Capital*, 102).

³⁰⁶ Motolinia *History of the Indians of New Spain* (1950), 172. The "seeds" Motolinia speaks of were likely the same type of amaranth seeds, sometimes called "fish-black" seeds in the *Florentine Codex*, which were a common foodstuff used to make a dough used for profane cakes but also the dough-idols used for Tepeilhuitl rituals.

young to Tlaloc at the principal temple in Tetzcoco.³⁰⁷ Priests would host a meal for a young boy and girl in the patio of Tlaloc’s temple (the same place others were taught to dance and sing to this deity). Next, they would take the couple to Lake Texcoco and float them to the “center of the lake and drowned them” in honor of Tlaloc. On other occasions, Motolinia contends, “slave children from five to seven [were] sacrificed to the demon, they would have not cried [made tears] for four years before and then they would produce water [tears]” for Tlaloc, during that sacrificial affair.³⁰⁸ Like a vessel that had collected rainwater dropped into a lake, the two liquids would come together at the moment of drowning. Nahuas believed that these types of sacrificial rites would perpetuate the cosmos and honor the sacred-force energies that animated the earth and skies.³⁰⁹ The *Florentine Codex* regularly describes the lake and the water’s edge (*atenco*), especially the site at the place of the “mist houses” (*aiauhcalli*), as a ritualistic educative place for priests to assume the role of water fowl when initiating a “fire priest,” for community members to bathe their dough idols at the climax of *Tepeihuitl*, and, during *Panquetzaliztli*, the place where the woman designated to wash slaves cleansed herself.³¹⁰ Tetzcoco was integrated in the grander place-identity schema because of its nature as a central node for the processing of sacrificial bodies for one of the region’s oldest sacred energies.

Beyond the confines of the *telpochcalli* and *calmecac* that must have existed in Tetzcoco itself, Nezahualcoyotl constructed a grand learningscape on the nearby hill

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 193: *y su principal templo era en Tezcoco, juntamente con los dioses de Mexico los cuales templos eran más altos y mayors de toda la tierra, y más que los de Mexico.*

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 172; my translation.

³⁰⁹ Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, 196-197.

³¹⁰ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: The Ceremonies*, 77, 121, 131-32.

called Tetzcotzinco. It was possibly devoted to the patron Tlaloc, and at least one outsider, fray Diego de Valadés, decried the place as the site of the sacrifice of “sixty-six thousand” Tlaxcalan war captives.³¹¹ The ruins of Tetzcotzinco include massive statuary, aqueducts, baths, and patios that, because of Tetzcoco and Nezahualcoyotl’s association with Tlaloc, may have been the site of child sacrifice. The architecture signifies specialization similar to the formal institutions of learning discussed above. For instance, its patio spaces would have been perfect *cuicacalli*-like venues for song and dance; the highly decorated and planned architecture of the site suitable for other kinds of educational programming. Sightlines allow for visitors to find key landmarks of the surrounding valley, as well. But it remains nearly impossible to define or delimit the site’s true potential as a learningscape. It is now clear, however, that Tetzcotzinco was not simply a zoo or series of baths (as was once thought), but a learningscape of sorts, one that allowed its visitors—likely not commoners though we may never know this for certain—to stand before sophisticated statuary covered by shiny yellow cloaks of feathers, flowery symbolism, and other ancient markers that helped viewers reference deeper meanings, at least according to colonial sources.³¹²

Educational Formalities: Cholollan, Tlaxcala, and Huexotzinco

No place in Mesoamerica was exactly like another, but the people of Cholollan (modern-day Cholula) seemed to consider themselves the architectural heirs-apparent to

³¹¹ Lee’s more grim revision of the vision of Tetzcotzingo was helpful in forming my opinions of the place, Lee et al., *Allure of Nezahualcoyotl*, 226-227. Though I reference the original in later chapters, here, I am relying on the transcription of Valadés. This 60,000 number is surely an exaggeration on Valadés’ part, as many scholars now think in connection with similar stupendous figures for the size of sacrificial cohorts at Tenochtitlan.

³¹² Richard Townsend (ed.), *The Ancient Americas: Art from Sacred Landscapes* (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago Museum, 1992), Esther Pasztory, *Visual Culture of the Ancient Americas: Contemporary Perspectives* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 197-208.

the Tolteca of Tollan. One of the oldest continually occupied communities in the Americas, persisting in spite of the periodic depredations of its neighbors for two millennia, Cholula and intervalley practices of place associated with it offer up case studies in pre-Christian place-formation and Nahua maintenance of ethnic identity. Cholula provides us as well with a good case study of “placebreaking,” or the intentional practice by historical actors to dislodge the sense of attachment that an individual or group feels to particular environments.

Davíd Carrasco has argued that Cholollan “had a special kind of centripetal power” that drew in and acted upon the socio-political and cultural fabric of the Mesoamerican world.³¹³ Others have argued that the city was the “Rome” or “Mecca” of Mesoamerica in the fifteenth century.³¹⁴ As a prominent city-state capital, Cholollan’s ceremonial center does appear to have replicated aspects of previous urban spaces of those city-states surrounding it. Spaniards took note of the city’s hundreds of temples and its central *teocalli* that seemed taller than the Mexican Templo Mayor.³¹⁵ The *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* and the *Annals of Cuauhtinchan* describe the basic layout of early, or “ancestral,” Cholollan in typical Mesoamerica spatial fashion as a city formed out of four *tlaxilacalli* districts, each with its own central temple.³¹⁶ A *calmecac* is depicted and labeled in the southeastern (bottom-right) quadrant of the scene.³¹⁷ Cholollan’s main temple appears to have been devoted to the deity Quetzalcoatl, but may

³¹³ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire*, 134.

³¹⁴ Geoffrey McCafferty, “Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid of Cholula, Mexico” (*Ancient Mesoamerica*, 1996), 1-17.

³¹⁵ Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The History of the Conquest*, 135-136.

³¹⁶ Based upon Dana Leibsohn’s masterful study of both: *Script & Glyph*, 135-138. This pattern was repeated by the Mexica with their quadrate structure of Tenochtitlan and other sites.

³¹⁷ Smith, *Aztec City-State Capitals*, 56; Smith bases his interpretation upon Michael Lind’s unpublished 1990 study of Cholula and the pictorial called “The Great City Square: Government in Ancient Cholula.”

also have been associated with other sacred forces.³¹⁸ Tlaloc, or in the least pictorial implication of the water deity, is depicted within the vicinity of Quetzalcoatl's temple. Both of these patrons were heavily freighted with sacred force.

Motolinía studied the cultural history of Cholollan and its surrounding region in the 1540s. He interviewed Nahuas to identify what he and other Spaniards regarded as idolatrous practices, part of a larger process of policing indigenous heresy and belief. Despite his obvious biases, Motolinia's description of the people and culture of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley can help us understand the complex system at work in the region in the years before the Spanish Conquest and against a backdrop of Mexica cultural imperialism.³¹⁹ For instance, Chololteca, like the Mexica, were devotees of Quetzalcoatl while the Huexotzinca and the Tlaxcalans observed Camaxtli, a local hero and brother to Quetzalcoatl.³²⁰ Motolinía was impressed with the Cholollan he visited himself, famously likening it to “another Rome in which they have many temples of the demon... more than 300 or so, as many as there are feasts as there are days of the years.”³²¹ For one feast day, “the teachers would guard the idols, call the people to service, and sleep all together,” and they would have a “teacher of the others that, when needed, would congregate the parish and lead penitence.”³²²

One important ceremony for Camaxtli, the patron deity of the Huexotzinca and Tlaxcalans, took place in the month of March. The oldest provincial *tlamacazque* (“teachers”) called the *achcauhtin* (“leaders of youth; “singular, *achcauhli*) would

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Motolinía, 1996, 165. As the reader may have gathered, Motolinía was one of the first Spaniards to explain Tenochca-Mexica and Tetzcoca-Acolhua “new fire ceremonies” as statecraft, and to grasp their impact throughout “all their land.”

³²⁰ Motolinía, *Memoriales*, 201.

³²¹ Ibid., 201-202

³²² Ibid., 208.

“instruct the others: ‘my sons, the year of our god and lord is here. This forces us to make penance and serve him. Those that are weak and without spirit will leave [the town] for five days.’” Motolinía noted, “[i]n Spanish he would be called the “older brother” (*hermano mayor*), the equivalent of *achcauhtin*.³²³ This town elder would lead the young and weak to “a great mountain, that is from here, four leagues travel,” referring to the Tlaxcalan mountain of Matlalcueitl (“dark green skirt”), home and likeness of Mayahuel, the female deity associated with maguey and patroness of the Tlaxcalans. Once at the mountain, the Older-Brother would go up to a temple of the goddess Mayahuel and offer *chalchihuitl* (jade stones) and other precious things, including “great green feathers they call quetzalli, and much paper and incense of the land [they would offer] to lord Camaxtli and Matlalcueitl.”³²⁴ Camaxtli, an alter ego of Mixcoatl and therefore the father of Quetzalcoatl, were thus tied to the mountainside, Mayahuel, and youth education. This particular ritual may have been meant to inculcate to the Tlaxcalan youths deeper local connections to Mayahuel and Camaxtli, which because of his elder status to Quetzalcoatl, may have shown greater homage to the father deity and created sacred distanced between learners and the son deity to the south, the patron of Cholollan.

By worshiping Mayahuel at the site of her spiritual home, the place of her most potent influence, the young and supposedly weak men of Huexotzinco and Tlaxcala learned valuable lessons about the sacred that were rooted in the classroom of the natural environment, and in the nurturing hands of the deity. By situating this ceremony and

³²³ Molina lists *achcauhatl*, as the noun for brother, with Karttunen posing that it is possibly related to *achto*, or “first,” and thus “first brother,” Frances Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1992), 2. Relatedly, *teachcauh*, the older/eldest brother to s.o. being common; see, “achcauhatl,” “teachcauhtin” at: <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/achcauhatl>; <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/teachcauh>

³²⁴ Motolinía, *Memoriales*, 211-212.

others like it that took place on ancestral mountains such as Matlalcueitl, away from their setting at the *tlaxilacalli* temple-school and within the *altepetl*, the Older-Brother incorporated the sense of mountainside places into the larger cosmology of the community. For the Chololteca, devotees of Quetzalcoatl, Motolinía explained “they would do the same for Quetzalcoatl, in the same way.”³²⁵ Motolinía does not mention the use of mountains in the same fashion in connection with Quetzalcoatl, though such practices seem to be implied in the friar’s account.

When the Spanish arrived in came to be known as the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, then, they encountered a complex educational system at play, one that had individual and community-centered as well as extra-*tlaxilacalli*, more universal ritual elements that were specific to the practitioners of the local faith. Mountains housed sacred energies, and locals visited them regularly to learn at the mountain temples. Trees and ornately decorated *teocalli* anchored the courtyard in a larger cosmos. And intravalley ideological differences, especially distinct lesson plans devoted to patron deities, churned with potential friction. And shared cosmologies and older forces, especially Tlaloc’s influence, appear to have helped allow for ethnic diversity and accommodation. In other words, the landscape of schooling was alive with new and old lessons.

Coyote Lessons of the Mesoamerican Landscape

The encyclopedic *Florentine Codex* encompasses many specific themes relevant to indigenous lore and natural sciences, beyond the socio-political and cultural digressions contained within its twelve volumes. *Book XI: Earthly Things*, stands out as an ethnozoologic and ethnobotanical treatise, the research for which may have even

³²⁵ Ibid., 213-214.

witnessed Sahagún's aides travelling the Valley to speak with Nahuas with special knowledge and do some investigative study on their own, examining real animals in the natural environment.³²⁶ One example of the process of collecting older, indigenous knowledge and wildlife science is the account of the *coyotl*, ("coyote" or *Canis latrans*). In the years and decades in which collegians were gathering oral histories to catalogue the species for Spanish (and Nahuatl) readers, unbeknownst to many folklore and coyote scholars, the aides appear to have documented one of the first Native American Coyote folktales.

Reading the multi-ethnic account for *coyotl*³²⁷, reveals a significant indigenous mode of learning from animals, the way that Nahuas understood coyote psychology, and one locally-hewn legend from the precontact past.³²⁸ Both Spanish and Nahuatl texts describe the *coyotl* as a "very large furry woolen and it has a very shaggy pelt: it has little ears, that are sharp with a large snout and not so hairy."³²⁹ The authors describe it as "diabolic." When someone steals its kill, "[the coyotl] takes note, and watches them, and then seeks revenge upon the person, killing its chickens or other animals." If the thief lacks animals, "whenever the person goes along the road, [the coyotl] follows behind barking like it is going to eat them, by this way it threatens the person: and at times it is accompanied by three of four of its companions to frighten the person: and this they make, by night or day."

³²⁶ Sahaguntine Studies continue to reveal fascinating details about the indigenous aides themselves and the ways in which they influence the collection of Mesoamerican knowledge in the Christian-colonial period. For example, see Molly Basset, *The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015).

³²⁷ *Coyotl* (*Canis latrans*) is the North American coyote, a wily species whose territory ranges across the continental U.S. and, longitudinally, from Alaska to south of Mexico.

³²⁸ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book XI: Earthly Things*: "Coyotl: Second Paragraph of the animals like foxes, wolves, and other similar animals."

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

Yet coyotes relied upon humans, too, as witnessed in a tale from the *Codex* that could be entitled “Coyote, Constrictor, and the Wanderer.”

But also this animal is grateful and appreciative. A short time ago, in our time, a man came upon a coyote sitting on the grassy plain; the man was going along his way. And the coyote then beckoned to him with its paw. And the man was much frightened and took it as an omen? He went toward it, and when he came to reach it, he saw a serpent which was coiled around [the coyote]. The serpent protruded from its neck, from under its front legs. [The serpent,] called a *cincoatl*, was thus well coiled. And the warrior said within himself, “Which shall I help?” Then the warrior went up, taking a stick, a club, a green branch. Then he repeatedly beat the serpent with them; for the serpent abhorred the stick. Then the serpent fell to the ground; whereupon the coyote staggered off.³³⁰

The *cincoatl* (a constrictor) entry more or less repeats the same story:

Thus does it kill: once a coyote was seen seated on the grass by the edge of the road, its face very much swollen; it had protruded its eyes. And a traveler came upon it. It was beckoning to him with its paw; like a man was this coyote. Then the traveler went toward it and saw that a *cincoatl* was coiled about its neck and its legs; it protruded from its flank. Thus [the serpent] could kill it. Then the traveler took a stick; he repeatedly beat the serpent with it. Then the *cincoatl* uncoiled and fell to the ground, whereupon the coyote fled. Later the coyote paid its debt well, for it gave many birds to this warrior who had saved it.³³¹

Squeezed between images of the *cincoatl*³³², or “maize snake,” on folio 240r of the Codex we find a vivid and slightly comical scene of depicting this Story of Coyotl,

³³⁰ Ibid., 7: *Auh yoan inin iolqui, tlatlaçocamatini mocnelilmatini: quin izqui iquin ie topan. Ce tlacatl ipan quiçato: çacatla eoatica, in coiotl: vtli quitocatiuh, in tiiacauh. Auh in coiotl; niman ie quoalmanotza: auh vel tlamaviço, huan huel motzavi, in tiacauh: ca ivic iatia. Auh in oitech acito: quittac cooatl, in itech omotetecuis: iquechtlan quiztoc, in cooatl iciiacacpa quiztoc, huel ic omotetecuis: in itoca cincooatl. Auh yitic: quito; in tiacauh. Ac ieh in nictlaoculiz, y: nima concuito in tiacauh in tlacutl, in tetlacutl, in ollacutl: njman ieh ic quivivitequi, in cooatl: ca aiel qujttaz, in tlacutl, in cooatl: niman oalchapantivetz, in cooatl, nima ie iaiatica, in coiotl.*

³³¹ Ibid., 84.: *Injc tlamjctia: ceppa ittoc çacatla vtenco ieoatica in coiotl; omach ixtomaoac, opanj qujtlatlali in jxtelo. Auh in nenenquj ipan quiçato: quoalmanotztica, iuhqujnma tlacatl in iehoatl coiotl: njman ivicpa ia in nenequj. Auh qujttac oiquechtlan motecujx cincooatl, yoan imapan. oiciacacpa qujqujz, ic vel commjetia: niman tlacotl qujcujc in nenenquj, ic qujvivitec in cooatl: njman oalchapantivetz in cincooatl, ic motlalo in coiotl çatepan vel tlaxtlauh in coiotl, ca mjec in qujmacac totoli in iehoatl tiacauh in qujmomaqujxtili.*

³³² Ibid., *Cincoatl* (a term derived from *cintli*, a dry or mature ear of maize, and *coatl*, “snake”) is commonly associated with the Mexican Bullsnake (*Pituophis catenifer sayi*) a long maize-colored field snake that still roams Central Mexico’s milpas today. *Caterifer sayi* are nonvenomous, diurnal, and have

Constrictor, and the Wanderer (figs. 2.7–2.8). The yellow-brown checkered *cincoatl* is wrapped tightly around a distressed coyote's body. The coyote's eye bulges, as it lifts its left-front paw to signal to a third figure in the scene, the Wanderer, is a Nahua commoner man (rather than a warrior) rushing toward the two animals raising a branch overhead as if to strike at the pair. It was Coyotl's understanding of human communication that ultimately led to salvation. In return for his help, the Wanderer found a nourishing fresh kill left for him every day for the rest of his life. The entry for Coyotl is more specific, for instance, it explains that only hours later Coyotl found the Wanderer, offered him two freshly killed turkeys, and “with its muzzle almost as if to say to him, ‘Take them.’”³³³ Coyotl returned to the man twice more, once on the road home and, later, when the man had arrived there, delivering a turkey each time, the latter kill dropped in the man's “courtyard” (*yitoalco*).³³⁴

The Nahuatl texts for coyotl and cincoatl thus combine to create a subtext of Nahua-animal interconnectivity and reciprocity in its lesson. Conversely, the Spanish text for *coyotl* describes the tale, in brief, but the *cincoatl* script barely mentions it: “Here [in the Nahuatl text] is explained what occurred to the *coyotl* with the snake, the one that was of this genus of snake.”³³⁵ For the Nahua author and artist, it would seem, this tale was important enough to be told when referencing either creature and with purpose.

These stories highlight the didactic nature of much of what is found in the *Florentine Codex*, and suggest some of the educational components that pre-contact

been recorded as long as eight feet in length and weighing in at nearly ten pounds (Taul Levi, Asst. Prof., Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Oregon State University personal communication, 2019).

³³³ Ibid. 7: *iixpan quijmtlaçato, quijtentopeuh tinemj ach iuhqujnma qujlhujznequj xiccuj. Oc ceppaia in coiotl, in ie iauh, ichan tiacauh: oc ceppa vtlica qujnamjc, in coiotl...*

³³⁴ Ibid.: *oc no centel qujmacac cioatotolin auh in oia ichan tiacauh: oc no ceppa iquezqujioc, no centel qujtlacato, yitoalco vexolotl*

³³⁵ Ibid., 84.

Nahuas would have learned in *calmecac*. Moreover, one can easily imagine tales like the “Coyote, Constrictor, and the Wanderer” being recounted by elders and parents around the hearths of the homes of the citizens of Nahua communities, the “learningscapes” of everyday life. This is one example of the lore involving indigenous animals, and the implication that Nahuas and other indigenous peoples understood that they could communicate with and learn from the natural environment lived on into the late-colonial period under Spain.³³⁶ The rearticulation of indigenous knowledge about animals and places had a deeper context. Indigenous learningscapes were learning environments rooted in particular kinds of places that were freighted with specific sorts of meanings and lessons.

Sense of place and learning environments mattered in the complex socio-religious lives of the post-Classic period. Birth and burial practices show how local knowledge rested in individuals tied to specific places, such as home and hearth, as well as in the affiliated schools they would frequent throughout their lives. The obvious evolution and intermingling of these types of structures—*ithualli*, *cuicacalli*, *calmecac*, and *telpochcalli*—discredits the stereotypical assumption that pre-Christian education was static or monolithic. *Cuicacalli* were open-air courtyards used for dancing and singing, a popular form of socializing that the majority of Nahuas experienced during their lives. The centrally-located and semi-public *telpochcalli* or “house of youth” was a formal setting for military training and basic study carried out mainly by the children of middling families up to nobles. By comparison, the basic individual and family unit

³³⁶ For one recent example, see Lisa Sousa’s study of the gendered body, Native spirituality, and the instability of human and animal forms (nahualism) that was alive at least well into the seventeenth century: Sousa, *The Woman Who Turned Into a Jaguar*, 19-49.

practiced traditional learning on the microcosmic scale in their household patio or around its hearth. The more advanced learning that would accompany education in the confines of *calmecac*, or “house of lineage,” ensured that, if not exclusively, the middle and upper crust stayed on top of the theoretical middle- to high-cultural traditions. In the Valley of Mexico, political and cultural difference appears to have been inextricably linked to the application of lessons in the various learningscapes between those of their neighboring altepetl. Even though he was, in part, a product of Mexica-Tenochca formal education, Nezahualcoyotl devised ways to create local learningscapes like Tetzcotzinco. However, regional placemakers seem to have both accommodated and complicated those of his Tenochca-Mexica neighbors, long before Europeans invaded the Americas. There was not a single top-down pedagogy, in other words, but a range of learning systems that fulfilled the needs of families, commoners, elites, and lords. From the sacred landscape to historical songs, localized learning and grander micropatriotism negotiated the practice of education that appears to have found value in place-based learning.

Nahuas encapsulated their oral and written (visual) traditions within these places. By entering their learningscapes they recapitulated memories and rituals for patron deities. The indigenous learningscape was a social structure that facilitated the persistence of local knowledge. Nahuas actively produced knowledge-filled didactic media in their *ithualli*. These were durable traditions, but would they be able to survive when gripped by the throat or set to flame by new arrivals from across the sea?



Figures 2.7–2.8, Coyotl, Cincoatl, and the Wanderer: Coyotl & Cincoatl. Represented on the margins of its own entry (left), the *coyotl* account offers readers an encyclopedic description in the Plinian sense. Cross-referencing this with the entry for the *cincuatl* (below) reveals the first recorded folktale of its kind from Mesoamerica, including a depiction of Coyotl asking for help from the Tlacatl. That Nahua informants thought to include this specific narrative in two points in the *Codex* demonstrates the dynamic knowledge of interspecies relations and place from indigenous perspectives. (Image provided by the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Ms. Med. Palat. 220 cc. 161v, 240r v, granted by the MiBAC. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.)



CHAPTER III

PLACEBREAKING LEARNINGSCAPES: CONQUEST AS EDUCATION & ACADEMIC PLACES UNDER ATTACK

The Crushing Teeth, the Licking Flames: Killing Nahua Knowledge

In 1523 the people of Tlatelolco had just begun to reclaim the burnt remains of their temple when they heard what the violent invaders had done when the Spaniards and indigenous allied forces temporarily resided in the southern part of the Valley at fertile Coyoacan.³³⁷ As recorded in the indigenous authored *Anales de Tlatelolco* (1545, one of the earliest Nahuatl alphabetic texts), it was there that the Christians had hanged several indigenous rulers—Macuixochitzin, the *tlatoani* of Huitzilopochco, and his counterpart, Pitzotzin of Culhuacan, among others--and subjected the *Tlillancalqui* (high judge) of Quauhtitlan and some people from Xochimilco to the even more gruesome fate of being ripped apart by hulking Spanish war mastiffs. This must have been similar to the horrific scene depicted in the scarlet blood splatter at the mouth of the black hound on the “Manuscript of Dogging” (fig. 3.1).³³⁸ Painted in 1560, it depicts a scene from 1523 involving Nahuas from Cholollan, including the *teopixqui* (priest) of Quetzalcoatl, Tlalchiachteotzin. The manuscript’s alphabetic gloss explains that these men were the lords from San Pablo, San Andrés, and Santa María of Cholollan. Representative of

³³⁷ *niman ic xochmilca [no] quinperroqualtique: huan tetzcoca ecamaxtlaçi quipelloqualtiquez ça mocahuacoaiac quihualhuicac çan inamatlacuilollo quihuatquiquez nahuiti ce choloquez ça yey in acico Coyoaquez.* (Lockhart’s translation, *We People Here*, 272). Leon-Portilla translated *ecamaxtlaçi* as referring to the priest of Ehcatl (1992, 144). Lockhart disagreed with this interpretation (*We People Here*, 272-273). The root of the term *inamatlacuilol* (“their document”) is found Molina, fol. 58r, Spanish to Nahuatl section, found also on fol. 4v of the Nahuatl-Spanish section.

³³⁸ *Manuscripto de Aperreamiento* (c. 1560), Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris; for details of “dogging,” see Lori Boornazian Diel, *Manuscrito del aperreamiento (Manuscript of the Dogging): A ‘Dogging’ and its Implications for Early Colonial Cholula.” Ethnohistory*, vol. 58, no. 4 (2011): 585-611. The description of the hanging of the *tlatoque*, and others, as well as the “dogging” of the *Tillancalqui*, see Lockhart, *We People Here*, 272-273.

tlaxilacalli near the religious center of the *altepetl*, they had likely witnessed the infamous massacre at Cholollan in October of 1519.³³⁹ The Tlatelolcans tell us that, “some Te[tz]coca... were eaten by dogs.”³⁴⁰ The *Anales de Tlatelolco*’s description of the unnerving events at Coyoacan demonstrates the psychological effect this spectacle had on the survivors of the Spanish invasion.³⁴¹ The *Anales* thus offers readers a Nahua perspective of what it was like to be living in a time of tumult, a transformative era when new practices and ideas began to act upon indigenous culture. But war dogs were only one tool of “conquest” set loose on indigenous identity.

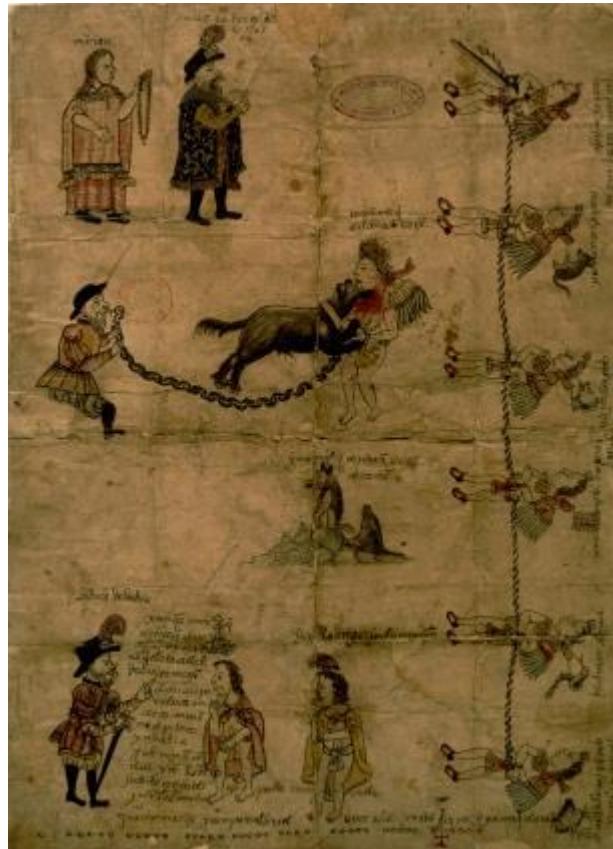


Figure 3.1, *Manuscrito de Aperreamiento* (c. 1560). Bibliothèque nationale de France Département des Manuscrits, Mexicain 374, Source Gallica (BnF).

³³⁹ Lori Boornazian Diel, “El Manuscrito del Aperreamiento. Castigos abominables”, *Arqueología Mexicana* núm. 115, pp. 66-70; For one example of a priest considering Cholollan as a “Rome,” see Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de Nueva España*, 158.

³⁴⁰ Boornazian Diel, “El Manuscrito del aperreamiento,” 158. In the image one sees Doña Marina, holding a rosery; the future “Marqués del Valle,” Hernando Cortés; and Andrés de Tapia, clasping his sheathed sword. The six chained men, soon to meet the mastiff’s teeth. Don Rodrigo Xochitotzinli of Cholula (see Chapter V) is identified by a “Bird Flower” glyph, and the indigenous men are similarly identified. The Nahuatl text reads, *niman ye xochmilca [no] quinperroqualtique: yoatetzcoca ecamastlaçi quipelloqualtiqz çamocauaco ayac quiualhuicac çan ymamatlacuilollo quiuatquiqz nauiti ce choloqz çayey in acico Coyoaqz* (Lockhart’s translation, *We People Here*, 272). Leon-Portilla translated *ecamactlaçi* as referring to the priest of Ehcatl (*Broken Spears*, 144). Lockhart disagreed with this interpretation, see *We People Here*, 1993, 272-273.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 42.

The *Florentine Codex*, a source that Tlatelolcan aides (among others) helped create, records the memory of another type of violence dating from the era of the Spanish Conquest, the burning of their *teocalli* (temples): “And then was also when [the invaders] burned the temple, setting fire to it. When they had set it on fire, it flared up; the tongues of flames rose very high, and the fire seemed to crackle and roar. And when [the Tlatelolcans] saw the temple burning, there was weeping and people greeted one another tearfully; it was thought that plundering was to begin.”³⁴² The burning of a spiritual center and looting to follow were far-reaching events for Native people. The *teocalli* had been the central anchor for the worship and education of elite members of the community. It symbolized the spiritual center of Tlatelolco while simultaneously linking the *altepetl* with the Triple Alliance. Now, as “tongues of flames” burned the building to the ground and looting began, the people may have feared that plundering would remove even more. Tlatelolcans may have tracked the attack as the latest episode in their long ethnic history, which had featured an earlier temple burning at the hands of victorious Tenochca forces.

In the end, both deadly affairs were symbolic of a sudden and unexpected intervention in the history of Mesoamerican education and modes of learning.³⁴³ Growing

³⁴²*Florentine Codex: Book XII: The Conquest*, “Chapter 36” (1570s); a translation and transcription of this part of Book 12 can be found in Lockhart, *We People Here* (1993), 220-221; The Nahuatl text reads: *auh yoan nimā iquac quitlatique in teucalli, contleminque: auh in ocontleminque nec cuetlan, cenca veca eoac in tletl, in tlenenepelli, iuhquin ihicoioca tletl yoan cuecuetlani. Auh in oquittaque in ie tlatla in teucalli: niman ie ic nechoquililo in ca ie ontenamioeloz*, while a differing, Spanish explanation included in the book reads: “y el mismo dia pusieron hoego al *cu* mayor qye era de Vitzilobouchtli y todos se qmo en obra de dos o tres horas. Como vieron los mexicanos que se quemaua el *cu* comenzaron a llorar amargamente porque tomarō mal agüero de uer quemar el *cu*. ”

³⁴³Olkó et al argue that “The friars’ strategy was aimed at breaking the social and political continuity of the indigenous world” offering an “immediate alternative to preconquest forms of educating the indigenous nobility. This successful policy of closed schooling of indigenous youths [was] the most efficient;” see “Defending Local Autonomy,” 591.

out of the socio-political belief in “Just War” and rightful domination, invading Iberian Catholics exacted immediate extirpation campaigns attempting to wipe the slate of indigenous intellectual and cultural identity clean by killing those who preserved and taught this knowledge, and by destroying the places they used for such purposes.³⁴⁴ This early approach was based on the idea that by breaking apart idolatry in all its forms, the process of religious indoctrination and subjugation would be eased. The advent of Christian education was designed initially to eradicate the process education as Nahuas understood it, leaving it broken and bleeding to death on the ground of Coyoacan and other places.

These sorts of destructive events are powerful examples of the concept “placebreaking” and how it was perceived by representatives of indigenous communities living in the Valley of Mexico and the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley during the Spanish Conquest. Placebreaking is the intentional practice by historical actors to physically, psychologically, and/or spiritually dislodge an individual or group from their sense of place-attachment to particular environments. Place-breaking behavior was nothing new in central Mesoamerica, since it had been customary for indigenous invaders and conquerors to symbolize their victories by burning temples; in fact, a burning temple was a glyphic symbol for such things.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Later indigenous histories—such as the majority of primordial titles—erase these earlier, destructive events and highlight a voluntary, enthusiastic, and more or less autonomous embrace of Catholicism on the part of the *altepetl*, its leaders, and its people; see “Introduction” of Wood, *Transcending Conquest* (2003). One needs to consider this when gauging the long-term effects of what happened in the early decades, in other words.

³⁴⁵ Valley of Mexico Nahuas, especially those sharing a history of violence with the Triple Alliance such as the Tlatelolca, were no strangers to the act of conquering by way of depicting burning and toppled temples. For instance, in the *Codex Mendoza*, Axayacatl's defeat of Tlatelolco and its ruler, Moquihuix, is shown with the main temple on fire and Moquihuix falling headfirst from it (*Codex Mendoza*, f. 9v). See also Berdan, *Essential Codex Mendoza*, 32-33. Some have argued that the bellicose nature of Mexica visual

The stories recounted in the Dogging Manuscript and the *Annals of Tlatelolco* provide memories of grief-stricken moments of crisis. Scholars studying colonial New Spain and the early stages of Catholic evangelization reference events like these to underline the sometimes-violent beginnings of the “spiritual conquest” of Mexico in the sixteenth century. These events had the potential to wreak havoc upon many social institutions, but especially on modes of learning in the densely-populated Nahua centers: slicing into scribes, toppling idols, burning images and painted books, and blasting apart schools. Contrary to what some Spatial theorists believe, the formation of group place-identity was not static. Placebreaking was one way that invaders might attempt to shake up perceived cultural stasis and living traditions. Rather than using “conquest” to refer to such acts, placebreaking can be used to distinguish attacks on sacred landscapes associated with various kinds of discourse. The phrases “spiritual conquest,” “conquest of place” or “conquest of sacred environments” might be useful, but the cleaner dichotomy of placemaking and placebreaking leave room for a consideration of indigenous agency, as well as physical, psychological, political, spiritual, economic, and social elements involved in the process.³⁴⁶ A sense of place mattered to Nahua communities. It was inextricably linked to the propagation of old and new knowledge.

But spirituality is not so easily ripped apart, nor is violence able irrevocably to silence the means of sacred knowledge production. This means that a careful assessment of the destructive placebreaking projects pursued by the Catholic clergy and their allies

imagery was displayed on stone artforms, such as the so-called “Teocalli of Sacred Warfare,” see Mundy’s summary of two examples in *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 45.

³⁴⁶ For a fascinating attempt to categorize the many guises of “spiritual conquest,” see J. Jorge Klor de Alva, “Spiritual Conflict and Accommodation in New Spain,” found in *The Inca and Aztec States 1400-1800*, 1982: 345-366.

must be carried out. Attention must be paid to the cultural significance of violence that targeted sacred places in the presence of what was often still a pre-Christian audience. Did the Nahuas themselves wholeheartedly ascribe to the idea that there had been a cosmic defeat of their notions of spiritual “placeness?” Building upon the scholarship surrounding Native conquistadors and indigenous allies, as well as scholarly studies of complex political and social exchanges in New-World “borderlands,” it is in order to understand how *altepetl* and their constituent *tlaxilacalli* contributed to or confronted foreign interventions in places. How did they negotiated and rationalized memories of the destruction of such places? What sorts of agency were Native peoples able to exercise? In what ways did the power of place-identity shape “conquest” narratives written during the lengthening colonial era? And how did indigenous teachers and students contribute to the emergence of new provincial learningscapes during the colonial era?

Beginning in 1519, Spaniards colluded with indigenous allies such as the Tlaxcalans and Huexotzinca in a piecemeal military campaign that drew upon traditions dating from the era of Iberian Reconquista. In Mexico, Native allies proved crucial in the disruption of existing socio-political, economic, and cultural patterns, but they also aided in the maintenance of information about those existing structures. These military campaigns were followed by a period of information collection, likely unparalleled in world history, during which Europeans attempted to understand the existing socio-economic nature of the Triple Alliance and the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley (among other places). The *Matricula de Tributos* (1522-30s, apparently a copy of a pre-contact manuscript ordered by Hernando Cortés) and the subsequent and related *Codex Mendoza*

(1542), are examples of the newcomers' drive to benefit from the existing tributary system. In the religious realm, the so-called "spiritual conquest" was first energized in 1524 by the arrival of twelve Franciscan priests who passed through Tlaxcala and Cholula in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley on their way to the Valley of Mexico and such altepetl as Tenochtitlan and Tetzcoco. Two years later the Dominicans followed. By mid-century, hundreds of evangelicals were serving dozens of Native congregations throughout the countryside, based primarily in densely populated indigenous cities. From their headquarters in Tlatelolco, Texcoco, Cholula, and Tlaxcala, Franciscan priests began to draw upon the knowledge of Native intellectuals to study indigenous philosophy, history, and customs with (among other things) the intent of policing unChristian behavior and persistent idolatry, as they defined pre-existing indigenous faith systems. The knowledge they collected came from learned noble males and their sons, many of the latter became the first students ("collegians") of the New Spain's Christian educational system.

As depicted in the gruesome "dogging" of the Tetzcocan scholars and priests, Native intellectuals were at times persecuted, but for the most part foreigners targeted them as sources of specific knowledge about older practices and beliefs. Yet there may always have been a tacit threat of violence from Europeans or their converted Christian allies that influenced the collection of indigenous knowledge throughout the colonial period.³⁴⁷ Whatever the case, Native intellectuals' contributions in written and pictorial

³⁴⁷ See Hugo G. Nutini, "Syncretism and Acculturation: The Historical Development of the Cult of the Patron Saint in Tlaxcala, Mexico (1519-1670)," *Ethnology*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1976), pp. 301-321. Significantly, colonial compulsion, even at its most mundane, was not necessarily a one-way street for the production of knowledge. Pictorial manuscripts and hybrid indigenous histories that used visuals and text glosses in alphabetic scripts actually appear to have allowed for a "dialogue" to develop between European

form produced some of the first indigenous-authored conquest histories of the Spanish invasion, sources that provide important examples of the attempted destruction of indigenous knowledge and place-identity. Nahua intellectuals or, as Kelly McDonough describes them the *ixtlamatini* (“knowledge producer” or “learned one”), were not empty vessels that were subsequently filled to the brim with Euro-Christian identity and knowledge. Rather, Nahua intellectuals and bearers of religious knowledge participated in the preservation and transference of indigenous thought along with their Iberian partners. Nahua-Christian scholars and teachers helped rearticulate existing information into what might be called a neo-indigenous frame of mind by participating in the production of Nahuatl-language catechisms, grammars and basic vocabularies, catechisms, and other kinds of Catholic didactic materials.

Sense of Place and Place-Identity Formation

The literature on place-identity and Spatial Studies fuels a continuous debate about what humanity believes constitutes a geographical or conceptual “place.” Defining “place” versus “space” former Jesuit priest turned social historian Michel de Certeau proposed that “place” was “the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location [place]… it implies an indication of stability.”³⁴⁸ Space, in turn, “exists” because of the factoring in of “vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables,” and made real when things (entities or objects) move within and through that

and Native genres. For instance, Frederico Navarrete argued that, in the case of the provenance and purpose of the Codex Azcatitlan (a colonial document whose pictorial style has clear indigenous roots), its artists purposefully wrote in to discourses, one European and the other Indian. They did so by way of “indeterminacy” of content, or showing less in order to say more to a multicultural audience, see Frederico Navarrete, “The Hidden Codes of the Codex Azcatitlan,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* (2004), 146.

³⁴⁸ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* Steven Rendall (trans.) (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

existences. He continues, “[s]pace occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities.”³⁴⁹ In other words, space is place put into practice and place is space made stable. When bodies move into and/or through a defined space, they act upon the place’s stable character. Size was irrelevant, excepting that place stability required the reproduction of stories. Certeau believed that narratives helped distinguish the differences between these two basic existences. Spatial discourse, stories that have a plot that moves, his image of a “camera panning over a scene,” can describe elements of a given place’s stability.³⁵⁰ Places collect stories (or practices of space), part of the nature of a place’s stability. And “proper places,” For Certeau, “proper places...exhibit the products of knowledge” of the practice of everyday life.³⁵¹

According to the postcolonial theory of geographer Yi-fu Tuan, language was a critical component in the perception and practice of space and place. Throughout their development, humans acquire the ability to rationalize space, which children do before understanding the related concept of time. After children have developed an understanding of themselves in space, they then begin to apply language to their surroundings to better acquaint themselves in space and, thusly, place.³⁵² Tuan’s “exhibits,” the curated stories of a place beginning with childhood, help show how people maintain stability of a place. People orient themselves at an early stage through the use of their surroundings and language since there is an inextricable reciprocity between

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 118.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 121

³⁵² Tuan “Space and place: humanistic perspective,” *Philosophy in Geography* (1979), 392-393

humans, stories, and places informing an individual or group “sense of place.”³⁵³ If some of these elements are missing or out of practice, the concept of a place becomes dormant and its stability is lost, though the built environment might remain. In other words, stories foster a sense of place and places require the retelling of place-based stories to continue to exist. When invaders intervene in the locally curated archive of places’ stories, they attack those places themselves. Ironically, telling traumatic conquest stories does not make places dormant, but revitalizes them.

Yi-fu Tuan’s concept of a “visual-aural zone” addresses the issue of how sentient bodies orient themselves in space.³⁵⁴ Objects in focus make up the “foreground” of awareness; a “middle ground [which] may be the walls of a room or hall... visible but unfocused” are things in the “patent zone;” and the “latent zone” consists of those objects and experiences that “frame” the patent zone, “what I have seen before... what I shall see when I leave.”³⁵⁵ In the act of orienting themselves, groups of individuals negotiate (a practice he calls “crowding”) to determine the edges of these zones. He argues, “tribes and nations in the New World” ascribed to an anthropocentric view of their zones as “mythical-conceptual space” with “broad principles: center, cardinal directions and the four quarters... part of a total world view that embraces the cyclical rounds of nature.”³⁵⁶ This makes his theory applicable to indigenous perspectives in the construction of place attachment.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 399.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 403-405

Edward Relph agrees that a place can essentially lose its placeness, become inauthentic, when its intentionality and/or meaning are removed.³⁵⁷ Yet a flaw Relph's argument echoes a similar one found in older treatments of the "Spiritual Conquest" of New Spain. Both overlook the importance of understanding notions of placelessness found in "non-Western" societies before the arrivals of Europeans on the scene. Colonizing groups are considered to have been "good" at actualizing moments of severe placebreaking. Obviously, the slaughter of many or all members of a community, or the leveling of artificial sacred mountains, might disrupt much of the existing placeness at such times. But pre-colonial Nahua knowledge persisted and adapted, and the capacity of myth and memory have been used to rebuild indigenous place-identity.³⁵⁸ In other words, even "broken" places rarely become "placeless" in the memories and surviving cultural teachings of the people.

Nahuas and other sophisticated "nations" in the Americas ascribed to forms of monism, the philosophy of interconnectedness of the cosmos, and their ancestral places reflected that understanding. Pre-contact indigenous places were thought to be animated, alive with this a powerful cosmic essence (often glossed by Nahuas as *teotl*). Landscapes had agency. James Maffie argues that Mesoamericans in "fused [time and space] into a single seamless dimension," creating a metaphysical concept of "time-place," an important component of *teotl*.³⁵⁹ But Maffie neglects to consider the ways in which Nahua places were filled with animated things, too. Placeness for Nahuas was not

³⁵⁷ Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 79-87.

³⁵⁸ See Megged, *Social Memory* (2010); Megged and Wood, *Mesoamerican Memory* (2012).

³⁵⁹ Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy*, 182n92, 423-430.

dependent only upon time.³⁶⁰ Time surely played a role in the Mesoamerican experience of places, and stories were set within a structure of time, but from a local perspective place mattered too. In the end, Maffie's work ignores how the practice of place and animated things in places as well as time where just , if not more, important to the maintenance of local identity as cosmic ones.

The process traditionally glossed as the “spiritual conquest” and the literature surrounding it contains legions of examples of assaults upon peoples and their curated places. Targeting what they saw as the “unholy” and “uncivilized” ideologies and the places where “diabolism” prevailed in the physical environment, Christian overlords tried to lay waste to stable frames of reference and local identity. Early attempts at forced conversion were not, for the most part, pleasant for those indigenous people who ran afoul of them.³⁶¹ Acts of transculturation, however, do show signs of reconciliation on the part of supposed victims. In fact, some Spanish invaders were following through on native sociopolitical programs already underway. “Indian” conquistadors were not ones to sit on the sidelines of local history. Almost immediately after violent occasions, its victims took it upon themselves to make sense of what happened as best they could, realigning their actions in keeping with these understandings.³⁶² Displaced or occupied

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 203.

³⁶² Uprooting demons, Catholic priests did in fact seek to wipe out paganism where present, though many accommodations were made along the way. They applied a specific language in the process including the terms “exterminar” or “extirpar,” the latter of which was a supposedly benign attempt to “spiritual garden” the Mesoamerican (and other) landscapes; see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). See also, Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 72-100.

peoples turn out to have had an uncanny ability to “frame” and reframe places, in this way.³⁶³

In the 1500s, in the moment of attempted ethnocide and the process of conquering Native communities, Spaniards and their Native allies purposefully sought to disfigure and change indigenous learningscapes and senses of place, the latter seen as sites dedicated to the “devil in the New World.”³⁶⁴ Yet it was difficult for dogmatists to distinguish between elite and popular diabolism. Fernando Cervantes has argued that Spaniards essentially believed in the “close links between demonism and the Indians” as seen in the majority of “wayward” practices that Natives or mixed-heritage persons may have engaged in.³⁶⁵ By assaulting temples and the peoples associated with these places, conquerors sought to excise a “devil” that they themselves had created in their own minds.

Placebreaking militants and evangelicals thus attempted to disrupt the socio-cultural identity of the indigenous peoples and their children, seeking to create a rupture between them and their traditional surroundings.³⁶⁶ Spaniards superimposed their new built environments onto sacred springs and mountaintops, pre-contact sites that usually had minimal architecture, in an effort to coopt meaningful natural landmarks. Newly

³⁶³ The present study follows the concept of “framing” proposed most recently by Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 8-9.

³⁶⁴ Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (Yale University Press, 1994), 4.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁶⁶ Other useful concepts of a similar sort include: “unmaking,” Tuan, “Topophilia: A Study of Perception, Attitudes and Values of Environment” (*Difel*, 1980), 6; “disruptions,” Lynne Manzo and Douglas Perkins, “Finding common ground: The importance of place attachment to community participation and planning” *Journal of planning literature* (2006), 337; “erasure,” Schein, “The Place of Landscape,” 662; and “desymbolizing,” Appleyard, Donald. “The Environment as a Social Symbol: Within a Theory of Environmental Action and Perception” *Journal of the American Planning Association* (1979), 144. See also Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, 2003, 64-76.

manufactured churches and religious shrines, built on temple sites with stones quarried from those previous structures, further solidified a process of placebreaking and placemaking in the archetypes of Euro-Christian culture. Christian pedagogy based in these new sites, the lessons devised by priests and their Native allies, was intended to change the ways in which people understood these re-fashioned places, intellectually finishing off the job by transforming Natives into Christian citizens of the Empire.

No Place, Nowhere: Placebreaking on Nahuatl Terms

Precontact Nahuas had a very well developed concept of space, something that can be discerned in the grammar of the Nahuatl language. According to seventeenth-century Jesuit linguist Horacio Carochi, Nahuas applied complex prepositional phrases to designate places and an experiential sense of place. This is seen in grammarian's desire to replicate the plethora of adverbs and adverbial structures of the Nahuatl language. One clear example of "place" is the locative suffix *-cān*, which "means places of the thing denoted by the word with which it is compounded."³⁶⁷ *-Cān* helped to denote qualities of spaces, *qualcān* meant a "good place," for instance, or it could organize relations of spaces, the *difrasismo* *āhuacān*, *tepehuacān* meant, literally, "place where water is owned, place where mountains are owned" but which figuratively meant "from town to town" (*de Ciudad en Ciudad, de pueblo en pueblo*, in his original Spanish, which is ultimately a metaphor for the concept of the *altepetl*). Other locative suffixes, especially -

³⁶⁷ Horacio Carochi, *Grammar of the Mexican language with an explanation of its adverbs*, trans. by James Lockhart (Stanford University Press. 2001), 78-79.

co/-c, *-pan*, *tlah*, and *-tlan*,³⁶⁸ round out a sense of place and spatial cognizance, what Lockhart et al. termed “locative force,” which grammatically attached people to places.³⁶⁹

On the other hand, the best term for “nowhere” in Nahuatl is the adverb *ahcān*.³⁷⁰ Derived from the negative *ah-* and the postposition/locative suffix *-cān*, the term quite literally means “not some place” and appears to be used in phrases associated with sensory verbs, *acan niquitta*, *acān nicnepanoa*, or “nowhere do I see him, nowhere do I meet him,” for instance.³⁷¹ *Aoc cān*, in turn, adds a connotation of time as in “no longer anywhere,” wherein the referent (an animated person or thing) is no longer in the position it once had been.³⁷² Humans and things occupy places in time, in other words. In Classical Nahuatl, one was settled by referencing “roots” or being “rooted,” for example, *nelhuatl* (“root”) became the reflexive verb *nelhuayotia*, (“to take root, settle down”) and this term also connoted “to base a discourse on a particular authority,” according to Molina.³⁷³ Additionally, *nelhuayoh*, “a thing that has a root,” is attested, and when one “sought the root” of a person, place, or thing, they might employ the same terminology for business dealings, the possessed forms of *nelhuayotoca*.³⁷⁴ One clear term for dislocation of one’s “roots” worked for both the pulling up of a plant’s root system and the act of prying free stone from the landscape.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁸ Ibid. For other examples of locatives, see Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*: -ca, “through, by, by means of” (18); -co/-c, “among, in” (35); -pan, “on the surface of, for or at a particular time” (186); -tlah, “place where there is an abundance of something” (259, 283); -tlan, “place of, at” (283).

³⁶⁹ Carochi, *Grammar of the Mexican Language*, 218-219n4

³⁷⁰ -campa is in general interchangeable with -can, see Ibid., 334-337; Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 4.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 3, 4, 24.

³⁷² Ibid., 11; Carochi, *Grammar of the Mexican Language*, 336-337.

³⁷³ Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 162.

³⁷⁴ Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario de la lengua mexicana* (Teubner, 1880), 66v

³⁷⁵ Compare the verbs “to uproot some thing” (*tecopina*) and its related cousin “to pry out stones” (*tecopini*) Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 217.

“Place” also played a role in the classification of outsiders (as the Spaniards would certainly be when they arrived on the scene in 1519). The concept of a “stranger,” or one who “comes from other parts” or another place appears to have played off of terms rooted in space, ergo *hueca*, or “far away, distant”: *huecatlacatl*; *huecahualehua*. Karttunen explains that *huehcāhuah* (derivative of *huēi*: “great, grand, larger things”) meant a person who had “attain[ed] great age or [remained] for a long time in one place.”³⁷⁶ A sense of what Nahuas may have termed placebreaking or the sense of dissociation with a place, comes from the phrase *amo qualcan nican*, or “this is not a good place.”³⁷⁷ The concepts of place expressed by these linguistic structures were durable ones, concepts that would be challenged as never before during and after the destructive years of the military invasion of the Empire by Spaniards and their indigenous allies, and by the processes of Catholic indoctrination that would follow.

In Book 12 of the *Florentine Codex*, the Nahuatl account of the conquest employs a handful of terms to describe the breaking of places, especially in its coverage of “disappeared” “perished” or “collapsed” people and structures. For buildings the authors on several occasions use *xitīnia*, “to knock down something, to destroy something” or *xitōnia*, “to unravel something, to destroy something.”³⁷⁸ Regarding humans, the authors reference the verb *poloā* or its intransitive form, *polihui*, “to perish, to be destroyed.” According to *Book XII*, “the Otomis [of Tecoaac] met [the Spaniards] with hostilities and

³⁷⁶ “Huecahuah,” Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 82,

³⁷⁷ Carochi, *Grammar in the Mexican Language*, 78-79.

³⁷⁸ Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex* Book 12 contains roughly 20 references to these verbs, some of which are allusions to destroying opponents (Lockhart, *We People Here*); for definitions, see Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 326-327.

war. But they annihilated the Otomis of Tecoac, who were destroyed completely.”³⁷⁹ The Nahuatl record of the violent Massacre of Toxcatl, for instance, also states “then followed Toxcatl, also twenty days. At this time the warriors who were cut to pieces perished [*ixpoliuuhque*]; many Mexica died.”

Visually, Nahua artists persisted in the use of particular iconographic traditions to capture moments of placebreaking carried out against their opponents’ altepetl, with the burning temple icon foremost among them.³⁸⁰ It was not the goal in pre-colonial warfare to exact total annihilation, but rather to humble the sacred heart of the opposing town by setting it aflame.³⁸¹ On one hand, Fernando Cervantes proposed that this was part of the amelioration of conquest, accepted “not only as a matter of prudence, but also as a welcome recruit into a supernatural pantheon accustomed to the extemporaneous incorporation of foreign deities.”³⁸² David Carrasco, on the other, saw this symbol as an emphatic removal of the “structure, symbols, gods, energy, and ‘essences’ of a community,” or in other words a process of placebreaking.³⁸³ One way that Nahuas depicted “warfare” was with ideogram consisting of a water symbol (*atl*) mixed with one of scorched earth (*tlachinolli*).³⁸⁴ *Atl tlachinolli* terminology seems to mirror conquest rhetoric.

³⁷⁹ Lockhart, *We People Here*, 90.

³⁸⁰ Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 116-117; Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, 25-26.

³⁸¹ On the notion of defeat and sacked temples, see Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 21 and 201.

³⁸² Cervantes, *Devil in the New World*, 42.

³⁸³ Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, 1999: 25.

³⁸⁴ See especially Alfonso Caso, *El Teocalli de la guerra sagrada (Descripción y estudio del monolito encontrado en los cimientos del Palacio nacional)*, 1927; and William Barnes, “The Teocalli of Sacred Warfare and late imperial calendrical rhetoric in the court of Motecuzoma II,” *RES: Anthropology and aesthetics* (2017), 235.

This type of pre-colonial conquest imagery appears to have been used to call to mind earlier Mesoamerican traditions in dynamic ways, including both the act of defining breaks in time as well as rooting Late Postclassic (1350-1521 CE) politics to the deeper past. One physical example of this is the engraving that graces the back of Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin’s “Throne” (also known as the “Teocalli of Sacred Warfare”), a hulking stone monument created in 1507 to commemorate his reign and reflect upon Mexica heritage.³⁸⁵ This intricately carved piece of volcanic rock (measuring 123 x 92 x 100 cm.) is a large model of pre-colonial temple or possibly a life-size throne, what Emily Umberger and others have described as reminiscent of the *momoztli*, or the raised platforms or altars, which sources note were constructed at crossroads and sacred sites throughout Central Mexico used in sacrificial rites and/or the gifting of sacred offerings.³⁸⁶ Most believe that its primary message relates to human sacrifice.³⁸⁷ The 1507 Throne includes dozens of Nahua engravings, which reveal some of its context and possible narratives it was meant to convey to viewers. It is the Throne’s back panel that seems to resonate with the concept of placebreaking but also relates to other, ancient

³⁸⁵ Caso, *El Teocalli de la guerra sagrada* (1927); Richard Townsend, *State and Cosmos in the Art of Tenochtitlan* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1979), 49-63; Emily Umberger, “Aztec Sculpture, Hieroglyphs, and History” (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1981) 191-192, 209-213, 222-223; and “The Reading of Hieroglyphs on Aztec Monuments.” (*Thule, Revista italiana di studi americanistici*, 1999), 80-83; William Barnes, “Icons of Empire” (PhD dissertation, 1999), 297-333; Mundy, *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, Life of Mexico City*, 2015: 45-49. Recently, William Barnes deconstructed the object with great care, making a compelling case that the Teocalli links together the principals of religion and authority (“The Teocalli of Sacred Warfare,” 239) by way of a “complex iconographic text, a visual manifestation of elite high discourse, that weaves together dynastic, corporate, and sacred histories” (252).

³⁸⁶ The nature of the pre-colonial *momoztli* is described differently in Nahuatl and Spanish sources, consisting of either a single block of stone carved into the shape of a platform, mound, or pile. That, or the creation of the same basic shape resulting from builders amassing stones; see Umberger, “Aztec Sculpture, Hieroglyphs, and History, 185; Barnes, “The Teocalli of Sacred Warfare,” 237-239. It related to boundary marking and the practice of setting down like stone markers to indicate boundaries persisted in a new form to the present; Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book II: Ceremonies*, 12. See also “momoztli” Nahuatl Vocab <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/momoztli>

³⁸⁷ Hassig, *Time, History, and Belief*, 103.

narratives about place creation and legitimacy (Fig. 3.2). For instance, the back panel is a coda for Tenochtitlan, an eagle rests on the top of a prickly-pear cactus, which grows in the swampy setting that became the island city. According to Umberger and others, the eagle is eating the tuna fruit, reflecting the “figurative assertion that the city provides food [i.e. human hearts] for the sun in the guise of the eagle.”³⁸⁸ Separated by time and place, the basic symbolism appears to reflect to the murals of the *Casa de Caracoles Emplumados* (ca. 200 CE) and the carvings of the *Patio de los Pilares* (ca. ~350 CE) found at Teotihuacan (see Chapter II). For instance, both depict detailed images of birds positioned above flora, with the central figure discharging liquid from its beak down onto the latter. However, unlike Teotihuacan, the Throne’s eagle pours forth a clear representation of the *atl tlachinolli* symbol, a visual statement that some interpret as the Mexica’s patron deity pursuing sacred warfare and the sun cult.³⁸⁹

Placed within the context of the fifteenth-century Mexica in their expansive state under Motecuhzoma’s rule, the Throne tells a story of a people “taming” nature.³⁹⁰ Barbara Mundy notes that the back panel is an “absolutely straightforward” metaphorical depiction of the founding of Tenochtitlan that occurred in the year House 2 (1325 CE), when the peregrinating Mexica witnessed Huitzilopochtli (in the likeness of an eagle)

³⁸⁸ Umberger, “Aztec Sculpture, Hieroglyphs, and History” (1981).

³⁸⁹ For a definition of *atl tlachinolli* and attested usage in the colonial period, see <https://nahuatl.uoregon.edu/content/atl-tlachinolli>. Alfonso Caso took this bellicose interpretive approach to heart, arguing that the object signified bloody sacrifice through the many tuna cactus fruits meant to indicate human hearts offered up to Huitzilopochtli in *guerra sagrada*, see Caso, *El teocalli de la sagrada guerra*, 57. See also Hassig, *Time, History, and Belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico*, 27. Hassig’s reassessment of the object’s *atl tlachinolli* imagery is intriguing, especially for place-based studies. He argues that the water-scorched earth icons are visual callbacks to a mythical and real placename, that of the spring called *tleatl* or “fire-water” by Sahagún, supposedly the site where swamp gas burned on the water’s surface (108). This argument cuts at the “bloodlust” that Caso perceived and poses that actually the artist’s intent was a “reaffirmation” of Tenochtitlan’s power and legitimacy by having many figures verbalizing the name of the altepetl’s foundation (107-109).

³⁹⁰ Mundy, *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 49.



Figure 3.2, Moctecozuma’s Throne/*Teocalli de la Guerra Sagrada*. The back panel depicts the foundational narrative of Tenochtitlan in petroglyphic form. An eagle perches atop a flowering cactus, its open beak pouring forth *atl tlachinolli* (“water, scorched earth”). Photograph by Shiroka, distributed under a CC-Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International (accessed 2018).

perched atop the famed flowering nopal cactus, thus signifying that the Mexica had found a new homeland.³⁹¹ The cactus appears to grow up from the chest cavity of a reclining figure, one that Mundy argues is watery goddess Chalchiuhltlicue.³⁹² The iconography, Mundy argues, indicates that Native “artists drew on long-standing and widespread spatial templates” to memorialize the past in stone. Significantly, Ross Hassig argued that the emanations from the eagle’s beak (and the mouths of most of the anthropomorphic figures on the object) were visual representations of *tleatl*

(“fiery-water”) and *atlatlayan* (“burning water”) glyphs—as opposed to *atl tlachinolli* or “warfare”—the supposed Nahuatl name for one of the springs, streams, or caves that appear to have helped the wayfinders discover their new home.³⁹³ This point strengthens

³⁹¹ Ibid., 48. See the close reading of the object’s calendrics by William Barnes (“Teocalli of Sacred Warfare, 2017).

³⁹² Mundy, 48. Interpretations of exactly from what or whom the cactus grows are discussed in: Townsend, 56-57; Umberger 1981, 177-179; Klein, 237-239; and Barnes, 237.

³⁹³ Hassig, *Time, History, and Belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico*, 108; Mundy, *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 2015, 51. In his study, Hassig focuses only on the one spring, whereas Tezozomoc’s account clearly describes two springs, see Thelma Sullivan, “The Finding and Founding of Mexico Tenochtitlan” *Tlalocan*, 2016, 331. Mundy translates the Nahuatl as “crag and cave” (*Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 32).

the argument that the object had a historical purpose, not solely Caso's gory interpretation about sacred warfare. In this particular case, the Throne is a Postclassic vision of when and where the Mexica began to carve out power over the environment and how they ordered society around a sacred story, ergo the life-giving sun and the cactus-tree axis mundi of Tenochtitlan at the fiery and bubbling spring of *tlateatl, atlatlayan*.³⁹⁴ Significantly, the iconography can be interpreted as both the divine place of Mexica salvation and the conquered landscape and warfare. This aspect of the object and the place-based stories attached to it makes it a teaching tool activating a narrative for viewers with guided instruction.

The scorched-earth mentality in reference to sacred structures is attested in some of the colonial sources, as well. For example, Tlaxcalan historian Diego Muñoz Camargo, in his sketches for his *Historia de Tlaxcala*, reproduces a similar scene in F240v.³⁹⁵ There, the artist has depicted two temples—seemingly from the province of Tlaxcala—in the process of being torched by two Franciscan priests, positioned on either side of the page. The fire has taken its toll on the foreground temple. Two burning pieces of building material (possibly wooden beams) and two ornamentations tumble to earth. The temples' interiors have been abandoned, with only empty alters left inside them. Two fantastical

See also, Johanna Broda's reading (231) of the caves/springs as key elements in the symbolism that Templo Mayor was a sacred mountain, "The Provenience of the Offerings," found in Elizabeth Hill Boone, *The Aztec Templo Mayor: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 8th and 9th October 1983* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1987).

³⁹⁴ Mundy, *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 46.

³⁹⁵ Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala*, f. 240v, cuadro 13, Upper, Nahuatl text is *ycqui tlahtlac ome tza[c]ual calli teopixque* ("thus the priests burned two pyramid house") and the lower, Spanish: *Quema y incendio de los templos idolátricos de la provincia de Tlaxcala por los frayles y españoles y consentieron a los naturales*, "Thus the friars and Spaniards burn and set aflame the idolatrous temples in the province of Tlaxcala, and the Natives allowed them to." See also, Camargo, Diego Muñoz, *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala*, René Acuña (trans.) (El Colegio de San Luis, 2000).

beasts finish off Muñoz Camargo's sketch. The beast fleeing the foreground temple, is a fork tongued, curly-haired and horned humanoid, who along with a winged reptilian beast flying skyward undoubtedly stood for the "demons" being purged from the structures.³⁹⁶

Though no perfect term exists, indigenous peoples on the receiving end of acts of placebreaking understood much of the conquerors' intended meaning.³⁹⁷ Destroying indigenous temples and other expressions of culture, was inextricably tied to the act of Christian conquest in the Americas. The act of religious conquest in a Mesoamerican tradition also was inseparable from a belief in the spiritual prowess of the victor's supernatural backers. As James Lockhart argued, Native communities assumed that new sacred-forces would be added to their own following conquest. Spanish priests often focused on teaching and correcting heresy rather than on simply converting or missionizing Natives.³⁹⁸ Monotheistic Christian invaders justified placebreaking acts designed to change physical places and the people used them as the best way to transform the latter into "good Catholics." However, the process of human transculturation, an act of transforming and transcending the past and present, ensured that even targeted populations had some ability to "frame" their new reality and places within new contexts.³⁹⁹

A Dog in the Fight: Mutual Misunderstandings and Placebreaking

When invading Tlaxcalans and Castilians arrived in Cholollan lands in the fall of 1519, they came prepared to destroy the place. As described by Sahagún's Nahua

³⁹⁶ Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción de la ciudad*, f242r, which depicts Los Doce planting a cross, which causes demons to fall to earth, several where specific headdresses associated with Mesoamerican pantheon, see Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, 1994: 25-26.

³⁹⁷ J. Jorge Klor de Alva "Spiritual Conflict and Accommodation in New Spain," 351-362. See also, León-Porrilla, "Testimonios nahuas sobre la conquista espiritual" (1974).

³⁹⁸ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 203.

³⁹⁹ See the concept of "framing" as proposed recently by Eleanor Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 8-9.

collaborators in *Book XII* of the *Florentine Codex*, “when they arrived, there was a general summons and cry that all the noblemen, rulers, subordinate leaders, warriors, and commoners should come, and everyone assembled in the temple courtyard.... When they had all come together, [the Spaniards and their friends] blocked the entrances, all the places where one entered. Thereupon people were stabbed, struck, and killed. No such thing was in the minds of the [Chololteca]; they did not meet the Spaniards with weapons of war.”⁴⁰⁰ Sahagún’s Spanish-language rendition of the text adds that the Spaniards entered the courtyard on horseback, using their lances to skewer “as many as they could [though] it is believed that the friendly [Tlaxcalans] killed many more.”⁴⁰¹ Tragically, in the face of their defeat, “the greater part of [the Chololteca] died in despair, by killing themselves,” casting themselves from the top of their main temple.⁴⁰² Word of the slaughter traveled quickly to Tenochtitlan and the ears of Motecuzoma Xocoyotzin, an ominous note for the leader of the Triple Alliance, and one that seems to have presaged the Spanish massacre of the Tenochca-Mexica during the twenty-day feast of Toxcatl in

1521

For the Chololteca, the Massacre of 1519 was to be a defining test in the community’s investment in sacred-force energy and local knowledge. The Chololteca had ritualized their sacred place and reaffirmed their devotion to Quetzalcoatl by sacrificing

⁴⁰⁰ Lockhart, *We People Here*, 90; see Anderson and Dibble’s translation, which differs slightly, in Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book XII: The Conquest*, 29.

⁴⁰¹ Lockhart, *We People Here*, 91. Mass burials at the site of the later church of San Gabriel hint that upwards of tens of thousands of Chololteca may have died over the course of two days of fighting. See Efraín Castro Morales and Roberto García Moll “Un entierro colectivo en la ciudad de Cholula, Puebla” *Religión en Mesoamérica, XII Mesa Redonda* (1972), 382-383; David A. Peterson and Z. D. Green, “The Spanish arrival and the massacre at Cholula” (*Notas Mesoamericanas*, 1987), 210-211; and Geoffrey McCafferty, “The Cholula Massacre: Factional Histories and Archaeology of the Spanish Conquest” *The Entangled Past* (2000), 353.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

young children between the ages of 2 and 3.⁴⁰³ Priests combined the sacrificial blood with lime they had created bitumen to cover over the springs near and beneath the temple, an act repeated on a yearly basis intended to recharge the sacred forces of the structure following the same pattern. According to Muñoz, the Chololteca thought that Quetzalcoatl would rain beams of fire on whomever attacked his temple, and that waters would come to consume and inundate the enemies. But when this did not happen as the Tlaxcalans and their Spanish allies assaulted this sacred place, the belief was revealed as “all falsity and lies,” through the eyes of the assailants. Instead, the Chololteca “were not able to escape nor find shelter with their angry gods, nor entertain the Spaniards for peace.”⁴⁰⁴

According to Díaz del Castillo, after selecting and installing the new *tlatoani* of the *altepetl* Cortés “ordered all the priests, captains, and other chieftains of that city to assemble.” After informing the group of “all matters concerning the holy faith,... [he] told them that they could see how their Idols had deceived them, and were evil things not speaking the truth; he begged them to destroy the idols and break them in pieces,” adding, should they not be willing to do so then the Spanish and their allies would do it for the Chololteca. Then, in an act that may have been confusing to the seemingly corrected pagans, Cortés “also ordered them to whitewash a temple, so that we might set up a cross there.”⁴⁰⁵ The act of planting what must have seemed to be a symbolic representation of a world tree on what had been a pre-Christian sacred structure could

⁴⁰³ According to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Native allies told the Spanish that the night before the massacre the Chololteca had sacrificed at least 5 children to “their Idol, the God of War,” probably meaning Huitzilopochtli. Translation from the Spanish in Díaz del Castillo, *The History of the Conquest*, 135.

⁴⁰⁴ Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala, 1592, Ms. 210 de la Biblioteca Nacional de París*, (eds. Luis Reyes García and Javier Lira Toledo) (Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala, 2013), 188-189.

⁴⁰⁵ Díaz del Castillo, *The History of the Conquest*, 142 (Translation by Davíd Carrasco).

have sent mixed messages, perhaps inadvertently confirming the continued existence in this place of the potency of their traditional beliefs and the *teotl* that animated them.⁴⁰⁶

In trying to break (however imperfectly) Cholollan's primary sacred learningscape, a combined force of Spanish and indigenous Christians toppled local knowledge, at least to a certain extent. In this way, the Massacre of 1519 demonstrates the complexity of the process of placebreaking and the intent of placebreakers.⁴⁰⁷ More than a dozen eyewitness and postbellum accounts, including a handful of Native pictorial depictions, vary in assessing blame.⁴⁰⁸ Whether the invaders planned the destruction or it was a reaction to the duplicity of the Chololteca, a battle erupted throughout the ceremonial center. Multiple sources agree that several hundred to several thousand Native citizens died because they were ill-prepared for Spanish tactics and steel weaponry at close combat. The accounts of invading Native allies blame the "treacherous" Chololteca leadership, who it was believed planned to massacre the Spanish.⁴⁰⁹ In his second letter home to the Emperor, Cortés described the massive Cholollan forces and flippantly noted of the destruction "some towers and fortified houses were burned."⁴¹⁰ The Tlaxcalan historian Diego Muñoz Camargo depicted the event as a long-delayed victory by Tlaxcala over their traditional enemy.⁴¹¹ This *mestizo* historian linked the conquest moment to omens given to the Tlaxcalans by their spiritual patroness, Matlacueye, who had sent a

⁴⁰⁶ The concept of planting crosses and the spread of Native devotions to crosses because of the object's potential for a multicultural audience is described in detail in William B. Taylor, "Placing the Cross in Colonial Mexico," *The Americas* (2012).

⁴⁰⁷ McCafferty, "The Cholula Massacre" (2000).

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ Bernal Díaz del Castillo described what he called the "Cholulan treachery" and foiled assassination plot in *History of The Conquest of New Spain*, 137-141.

⁴¹⁰ Found in McCafferty, "The Cholula Massacre," 350.

⁴¹¹ Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, 1592, Ms. 210, 188-189.

miraculous wind that descended upon the Valley at an opportune time.⁴¹² Yet it is said that the Tlaxcalans who had worshipped the spiritual father of Quetzalcoatl, Camaxtli/Mixcoatl, before and at the end of the Massacre attack shouted out “Santiago!” the patron of the Castilians, suggesting that they had recognized a potent sacred force in this new “god.”⁴¹³

It may have been the case that the Tlaxcalans wanted to test the resolve of Quetzalcoatl, but in any event attacking material things at Cholollan meant attacking the *altepetl*’s identity.⁴¹⁴ Tlaxcalan forces had only recently entered into their alliance with the Spaniards after first trying them in battle. It is doubtful that any of them had had time to understand and to adopt Iberian-style meanings of placebreaking in any meaningful way, even if (as in the case of invoking Santiago) they seemed to have been parroting what Spaniards did. In these early years of conflict Spaniards rarely presented more than very rudimentary and symbolic religious instruction to their Native allies; subsequent recollections by religious historians to the contrary projected a later and more profound embrace of Catholicism among indigenous allies back in time to highlight the “Christian” nature of the allied assault on the Triple Alliance. On their part, indigenous sources tend to focus on the Mesoamerican symbolism as they seek to portray the placebreaking that took place at Cholula and elsewhere in the light of their own place-identities.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, 11-12; Matlalcueye (from *matlalin*, “blue-green/jade color”, and *cueitl*, “skirt”), also known as Chalchiuhlticue (from *chalchihuitl* “precious green/blue stone,” and *cuietl* “skirt”) was the goddess of lakes and springs.

⁴¹³ Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, 1592, Ms. 210, 189 and 192.

⁴¹⁴ As described in the Lienzo de Tlaxcala, Muñoz Camargo’s account, and the *Florentine Codex*, the Massacre was an assault on the plumed serpent and snake symbolism; see McCafferty, “The Cholula Massacre,” 352-355.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 351-352.

The Massacre of Cholollan was just one instance of early placebreaking and attempted placemaking on the part of the invading Spaniards.⁴¹⁶ In the spectacularly bloody case of Cholollan, much of the combat took place in the main plaza of the temple dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, a “demonic” place that surely needed to be “killed.”⁴¹⁷ The temple grounds would have likely been associated with priestly and warrior quarters for training initiates, either the *calmecac* or *telpochcalli*, and even the site of a *cuicacalli*. In keeping with Mesoamerican placebreaking traditions, the Tlaxcalans must have helped focus the massacre and the destruction that went with it on this potently symbolic place, with the conquest icon of the burning temple still firmly fixed in their minds.⁴¹⁸ Moreover, the assault on these indigenous learningscapes and the priests and student-priests that studied within them was also an assault on local education.

That many joined in with the invading forces after this massacre was nothing new in Mesoamerican history. Scholars have argued that the Chololteca needed a little pressure to side with some ethnicities in the invading forces, particularly the Tlaxcalans and Huexotzinca. According to Native colonial chronicles, the many *altepetl* of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley had been in conflict among themselves right up to 1519. In the Massacre of Toxcatl in Tenochtitlan later that year, Chololteca, Castillans, Tlaxcalans, and Huexotzinca reproduced this lesson—that as had traditionally been the case vanquished peoples were likely to ally with the victors—for the Mexica. The Massacre of

⁴¹⁶ Upon arrival, the Iberians planted crosses in the “new” town of Vera Cruz. Furthermore, one might argue that another early battleground of conversion occurred when the Iberians converted women on the Mayan coast, gaining a translator, La Malinche, in the process. Even more, we might say that the story of the baptism of Tlaxcalan lords was a more likely candidate for the first physical conversion of indigenous sacred space. In the end, I focus on the transformation of architecture, and area that is less emphasized in the recent studies, excepting some key examples.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ This was the strategy for conquering an opposing altepetl, see Berdan, *The Aztecs*, 116-117; Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, 25-26.

Cholollan can be seen as the first real act of Spanish-led placebreaking in the Americas, but it was not entirely innovative from an indigenous point of view. It did prime many of the attackers for what was to come, the lengthy urban warfare of the Battle of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco.

In essence, Spanish-Native placebreaking came to the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley as it would in many parts of Mesoamerica, through deception and innovative European-style tools of war. But it was also played out within the context of pre-Christian conflict.⁴¹⁹ Relying on theatrically graphic displays of ferocity that seemed to upset normalcy, Spanish cannons, horses, and especially dogs communicated violence.⁴²⁰ On balance, it is clear that the psychological trauma of the acts of placebreaking that took place at Cholula and elsewhere that involved previously unknown animals remained potent lessons in the memory of Nahuas and Spaniards, alike. Images and descriptions of steam-breathing horses and the gruesome fates of those being “dogged” settled heavily upon the psyche of Native historians, perhaps underwriting their own traditional links of animal prowess with the skills of celebrated warrior orders. Fierce animals and animal-inspired regalia fit snuggly into the deep history and usage of insignia of rank and status. The ability of Spanish cavalry and dog handlers to order their charges to attack specific human targets may have led Nahuas to equate this skill with the notion that their own priests could communicate with nature, its sacred-forces, and even to transform into their *nahualli* animal alter egos.

⁴¹⁹ For details regarding Mesoamerican warfare, see Hassig, *Aztec Warfare* (1988). For an example of how the introduction of the horse as a new form of colonial violence, in the case of Anglo- and U.S. settler-colonialism in the Great Basin and Native (Ute, Paiute, and other peoples) actions and reactions, see Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the land: Indians and empires in the early American West* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 136-144.

⁴²⁰ Restall, *Seven Myths and the Spanish Conquest*, 24, 142.

The *Florentine Codex*'s ominous depiction of the fearsome hounds accompanying Spaniards and Tlaxcalans into the Valley of Mexico obviously left a vivid psychological imprint on the populace. The Mexica heard how "dogs came in front... keeping to the front," of the warriors, and that the animals were "panting, with their spittle hanging down" (fig. 3.3).⁴²¹ Earlier in *Book XII*, the authors describe Spanish hounds (*imitzcunoan*, "their dogs") as "huge creatures, with their ears folded over and their jowls dragging. They had burning eyes, eyes like coals, yellow and fiery. They had thin, gaunt flanks with the rib lines showing; they were very tall. They did not keep quiet, they went about panting, with their tongues hanging down. They had spots like a jaguar's, they were varicolored."⁴²²

The idea that fierce dogs associated with death may not have been a new one in central Mesoamerica. According to Karl Nowotny, the *Codex Borgia*'s representation of the day sign for Dog depicts a large white canine with black spots is depicted to the left of Mictlantecuhtli, the Lord of the Dead, who is seated in the land of the dead; a mummy bundle resting on the open maw of a crocodilian head (the entrance to the underworld) and a "very sick person" is painted in the space above these.⁴²³ The exposed heart on the waist of the dog indicates that the figure is dead or close to death, at least according to

⁴²¹ Lockhart, *We People Here*, 95; *Auh in imitzcunoan iacativitze, quiniacantivitze iniacac icativitze, iniacac onotivitze, hiicicativitze, intenqualac pipilcavitz*; Lockhart's translation: "Their dogs came in front, coming ahead of them, keeping to the front, panting, with their spittle hanging down." The Spanish reads differently noting that they were hounds and other physical features: "Likewise the greyhounds they brought with them inspired great dread, for they were large, with their mouths open and tongues hanging out, and they went along panting, and thus they inspired great fear in all who saw them (96-97)." The image comes from the *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico*, Cap. II., Fol. 17.

⁴²² Translation from Lockhart (*We People Here*, 80); *auh in imitzcunoan veveipopol, nacazcuecuelpachtique, tenvivilaxpopul, ixtletletique, ixdetlesuchrique, ixcocoztique, ixdecocoztique, xillanicoldque, xilláoacaltique, xillancapitzdque vel quaquauhdque, amo daca mani, neneciuhtinemi, neneneplotinemi, ocelocuicuiltique, mocuicuiloque*.

⁴²³ Nowotny, *Tlacuiloalli*, 19; See also *Codex Borgia* 2 Page 13 "Plate 2: Twenty Days Signs and Their Regents"

Nowotony.⁴²⁴ The *Florentine Codex*'s vivid allusion to the Spanish hounds' gaunt flanks and prominent rib lines were traits of the underworld dog, too. Thus, the creature leading



Figure 3.3, Dog of war, *Florentine Codex*, Book XII. A collared dog leads the Spanish and Native invaders after the Massacre at Cholollan. Image provided by the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Ms. Med. Palat. 220 c. 424rv., granted by the MiBAC. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.)

the invading forces through Cholollan and on to Tenochtitlan could well have been identified as the dog of the underworld or as the deity Xolotl's companion (dogs were thought helped this god—who was also sometimes represented with a dog's head—guide the souls of the dead to Mictlan), if not that god himself.⁴²⁵

It is important not to

downplay Spanish violence and compulsion in initial acts to convert non-Christians.⁴²⁶

By busting apart temples and cutting off the existing priestly class, many conquerors and priests believed that Christianity and the conqueror could surmount Native politics, spirituality, customs, and identity. Yet the most profound attacks on indigenous places and learningscapes would not begin until after the dust of war has settled in central Mesoamerica.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Miller and Taube, *Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico*, 80.

⁴²⁶ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 203.

Breaking Sacred Places: Motolinía Goes to the Mountain

Following the military campaigns, Catholic priests entered sacred learningscapes with an eye toward cultural reform. Prominent temples and courtyards had been the scene of violent encounters, but despite this the newly baptized Nahuas (particularly nobles allied with Spanish conquistadors and the priests) often sponsored these priests within the densely populated *altepetl* social structure. *Altepetyl*, with their ceremonial and sociopolitical centers once graced by temple precincts housing the priestly class, their grand plazas the focal points for both economic and cultural activities, and the sites of their governmental palaces seem to be perfect theaters for the enterprise of evangelization. From these centralized nodes the process of religious indoctrination and education could be carried to the *calpolli*, usually numbering four to eight districts which themselves were organizationally smaller versions of the greater *altepetl* itself.⁴²⁷

From a European standpoint, the Christianization of vernacular and high-culture architecture was an old and complex process that aimed at subverting what were regarded as unholy places. As far back as the sixth century, Pope Gregory I had cautioned against simply demolishing “idol temples,” because they were “well built... places [the pagans] are familiar with.” For this reason, priests would be wise to purge the building’s interior and allow them “to banish error from their hearts... now recognizing and worshipping the true God” in places already regarded as being connected with sacred forces.⁴²⁸ This form of geo-spiritual gutting was pursued by Franciscans, Dominicans, and members of other religious orders in New Spain, where it was the common practice to replace pre-contact

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 99-102.

⁴²⁸ Mark David Baer, “History and Religious Conversion,” In The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion, L. Rambo et al. 2014, 35.

temples with Catholic churches and monasteries. Many accredit Franciscan Fray Pedro de Gante for “spear-heading” the adoption of existing plaza and courtyard spaces for Catholic ritual and instruction, including the repurposing of quincuncial layouts.⁴²⁹ Gante’s “semiotic inventiveness,” the purposeful reliance on oral and visual media in catechism, was inextricably linked to an indigenous audience that was predisposed to pay attention to sacred teachings carried out in these kinds of places.⁴³⁰ Walled and ornamented church courtyards reframed indigenous sacred landscapes using corner chapels, or *capillas posas*, creating a visible case of double mistaken place-identity in which it would have been possible for Nahua students to see more continuity between the old and the new than was intended by the clergy.⁴³¹

In the decades following the conquest, Franciscans and Dominicans documented cultural and ethnographic details about religious life before and after the advent of the new Faith. Prominent among them was the zealous Bishop Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga (1468–1548), who dealt with several challenges to the stability of early colonial society, including executions of alleged heretics, early extirpation campaigns, and the grueling day-to-day propagation of Christianity within the *altepetl*. Towards the end of his life, he wrote several letters to the Spanish king recalling all of this. In one such letter, he described the growth of conversion efforts in Ocuituco, a parish he oversaw located just north of Mexico City.⁴³² On at least one occasion, Zumárraga asserted that he had rooted

⁴²⁹ Logan Wagner, Hal Box, and Susan Kline Morehead, *Ancient Origins of the Mexican Plaza: From Primordial Sea to Public Space* (University of Texas Press, 2013), 80.

⁴³⁰ Massimo Leone, “(In)efficacy of words and images in 16th-century Franciscan missions in Mesoamerica: Semiotic features and cultural consequences” (Brill, 2011), 2, 4.

⁴³¹ For examples of localized “framing,” see Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 2010. For a thorough study of quincunx architectural layouts, see Wagner et al. *Ancient Origins of the Mexican Plaza*, 80-119.

⁴³² Archivo General de las Indias, AGI 2-2-5L5; found in Mariano Cuevas (eds.), *Documentos inéditos* (1975), 135-153

out idolatry in the mountains and hills around that *altepetl*. When discussing developments in the Tenochtitlan's center, he noted that thirteen Native architects had been trained in the workshops of his fellow clergy. He requested the authority to begin construction of new schools, one of which was for the underserved daughters of indigenous rulers, as well as better church structures that could accommodate the growing number of people brought into the Catholic Faith. Zumárraga also addressed the issue of the collection of Native tithes.⁴³³

The Bishop also appears to have accommodated older practices that seem to have been related to persistent indigenous practices associated with such things as the Tepeilhuitl, which because of the shift from the indigenous to European calendar now fell in the month of October when the green bearded moss (*pachatlí*) matured in the mountains. In 1547, while he served in Tetzcoco, Fray Juan watched as indigenous Catholics brought tithings to the churches there. His description, when read against the grain, provides very good evidence for this connection to the pre-contact past. The Tetzcoca offered not only things such as wheat and other introduced products, but also "native things," goods native to the region that were easiest for them to acquire. According to Zumárraga, it was important that "the Indians would bring the tithes to the cathedrals, as they would bring [as they would] to the houses of their masters" because of their "condition and manner that are of the Indians."⁴³⁴ Whether or not the Tepeilhuitl

⁴³³ Ibid., Carta de don Fray Juan de Zumarraga al Príncipe Don Felipe. México, 2 de junio de 1544.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 142. My translation: *Y en el capítulo que los franciscanos tuvieron en Tezcuco[sic], en el mes de octubre, donde me hallé, fué harto disputado sobre el dezmar de los indios, y que si todos tuvieron por inconveniente que saltan por el tiempo presente, diezmen los indios de cosa alguna, ni de la cosas de Castilla, como S.M. lo concedió a la petición del Obispo Guaxaca, como es de trigo, ganados, seda, y tuvieron por menos inconveniente que los indios trajan los diezmos a las catedrales, como les traen a sus amos los tributos a sus casas, que hacer dezmar de cosa alguna por ser de la condición y manera que son*

festival was especially on indigenous minds in this event, the fact that there were engaged in a kind of religious ritual in October could have recalled earlier practices. That locals would fill the sacred and temporal spaces with food is certainly reminiscent of the offerings of comestibles and the feasting that had taken place during Tepeilhuitl. It is hard to determine, however, if the Bishop was consciously or inadvertently accommodating pre-contact practices in his effort to help Christian places thrive.

Franciscan and other evangelizers' accounts describe the contact period in provincial *altepetl* as a time filled with church building and temple decommissioning projects. It was also an era filled with other disruptive events. New political identities related to systems introduced from Spain were beginning to take hold and evolve, informed, however, by pre-contact ways, as well. Indigenous people were also confronted with, and had to make sense of, an increasingly global system of resource exchanges, as well as changes in market structure that brought European goods, agricultural products, and animals into New Spain. Furthermore, both Iberian and Mesoamerican conquerors—the grit and grime of campaigning still coating them—expected rewards for their military successes, especially access to sources of Native American tribute labor and goods derived from grants of *encomienda* that funneled resources to favored conquistadors, mainly Spanish but also indigenous. Some Spaniards

los indios, que con dezmar serán turbados y vejados y ternán en poco en comparación de dar la menor cosa por su gran pobreza y vejaciones que ternán el traer los diezmos.

And in the chapter that the Franciscans had in Tezcoco[sic], in the month of October, where I found myself, how to tithe the Indians was much disputed, and that if it was an inconvenience or it angered them, at the present time, they [priests] tithe the Indians of some thing, nor of the things of Castile as [Your Majesty] granted it to the request of Bishop Guaxaca[sic], in the case of wheat, cattle, silk, and had for less inconvenience that the Indians deliver the tithes to the cathedrals, as they bring tributes to their master's houses, that to make the tithe of thing some by being of the condition and manner that are the Indians, who with the tithe will be disturbed and harassed and would scare some in comparison to give the least thing for their great poverty and vexations that they would fear to bring the tithes.

and Mesoamerican nobles sought to solidify access to these kinds of things through marital unions with elite and ruling-class Native women, who could potentially control quite a bit of wealth and labor resources, particularly if they had been widowed during the invasion.

Priests led the majority of the church building projects during these tumultuous early years. They did not desire to preserve Native structures, particularly temple pyramids, which among other things were not suitable for Catholic-style worship. Christian jurisdictions, shaped around existing ethnic ones and adjusting to demographic changes, placed Regular Order priests among the *tlaxilacalli* and *altepetl* of city-provinces. Most clergy stationed in the indigenous hinterland lived and worked in the *altepetl* that had been identified (rightly or wrongly) as a province's political center.⁴³⁵ For example, the newly designated *cabecera* (head town) of Cholollan was prime real estate from which to launch a campaign of Catholic evangelism in its broader hinterland.⁴³⁶ For the Franciscans, Cortés' favorite order, the process of replacing the "demonic" sites of the city was an honorable task. Members of first significant group of friars from this order, Los Doce ("The Twelve"), who arrived at Cortés' invitation in 1524, enthusiastically took up the task of initiating the education of Nahua citizens in Cholollan and elsewhere. This long-term, painstaking process of religious education was in the end far more influential than the early post-invasion extirpation campaigns or

⁴³⁵ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 112.

⁴³⁶ Lockhart argued that, though Spaniards believed in the ready adoption of their *cabecera* model for a centrally located "altepetl" head-town, in reality the super-imposed juridical designation failed to mirror the true nature of preexisting Nahua socio-political distinctions (*Ibid.*, 99-102).

previous attacks on temples, courtyards, and altars that were still in cherished use as indigenous learningscapes by locals between 1519-21.⁴³⁷

One of The Twelve, Fray Toribio de Benavente, self-styled as *Motolinia*, or “poor one” in Nahuatl because he observed such strict devotion to the mendicant stricture of poverty, witnessed and undertook several acts of place-based acculturation.⁴³⁸ Collecting anecdotes from his time spent in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley (among other places) from the 1520s to 1540s, Motolinia’s *Historia de los indios de Nueva España* and *Memoriales* offer an outsider’s vision of evangelization and placebreaking unfolding at the time.

Skewed to highlight the triumphal reproduction of Christianity in the New World, his view must be carefully parsed. His audience was the Pope, the Holy Roman Emperor, and his fellow clergy, so that he mainly offers edifying examples of “spiritual conquest” and the defeat of “idolatry” for literate Christian faithful (though despite circulating in manuscript form, and known to other clergy in New Spain, it must be remembered that his work was not published until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).⁴³⁹

The *Historia de los indios* (dated 1541) catalogues one of the earliest Catholic ideas about the nature of Native schools, lesson plans, and ways of learning that

⁴³⁷ An incredibly ambitious undertaking. Its actual effectiveness is questionable, since even when Los Doce are combined with the clergy already in central Mexico, there were at the time only about fifteen evangelizers dedicated to the instruction of millions of indigenous people.

⁴³⁸ For a recent discussion of this fascinating figure and, especially, the troubles one encounters reading Motolinía’s work ethnographically, see Patricia A. Ybarra, *Performing Conquest: Five Centuries of Theater, History, and Identity in Tlaxcala, Mexico*. (University of Michigan Press, 2009), 34-67. Ybarra smartly notes his triumphalist nature and cautions readers to be wary that for Motolinía, “acting like a Christian in a religious play is being a Christian (*Ibid.*, 45). See Elizabeth Foster’s interpretation in *Motolinía’s History of the Indians of New Spain* (Berkeley, CA: Bancroft Library, Cortés Society, 1950), 2. She reports that, when he died in 1569, Motolinia was the last of *Los Doce* and he finished his service to Christianity with a final sermon in one of the first churches built in the Americas (10).

⁴³⁹ Foster documents only 13 biblical references and considerably less rhetorical moralizing (*Ibid.*, 14); Motolinía highlighted the flaws of his study of the diversity of Mesoamerican cultures, what he considered a “mere patchwork (216),” and was specifically taken with the primacy of devotion to Saint Francis he saw growing around him (172-174).

confronted first generation of post-conquest friars in Cholula, Tlaxcala, and elsewhere that they sought to bury. The *Historia*'s Capítulo XI, for instance, exposes the author's views of such programs as they were tied to the *teocalli*, as well as the uses to which this kind of learning environment was put, opinions that reflect more than a simple disregard for non-Christian practices.⁴⁴⁰ In his eyes, the function of the *teocalli* was to maintain memories of the ancestors "los que a esta tierra vinieren de aquí adelante." Each *teocalli* had a courtyard or "grand rectangular patio [some] the from corner to corner [the length] of a crossbow's shot," that Motolinia explained was the place for singing and dancing. These courtyards or patios were "encircle[d] with a wall and many of those were crenellated." Openings in the walls would lead out to the city's roads and pathways. These *teocalli*-patio complexes were aligned with other temples by "very straight roads [that had been laid out] by cords, from one and from two leagues [away]."⁴⁴¹ At these temples friars might find one or more altars dedicated to "demons," each with statuary and a "cover like a chapel." In the grander complexes they saw "rooms and accommodations for the *tlamacazqueh* or ministers."⁴⁴² At springs, keeping the eye of the water at its center, Natives would build and place four covered altars in a "cross"

⁴⁴⁰ Viviana Díaz Balsera mentions this "sense of wonder" as well, especially when Motolinía described the *teocalli* of Tetzcoco; Balsera, "Erasing the pyramid under the cross: Motolinía's History of the Indians of New Spain and the construction of the Nahua Christian subject," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* (2003), 116.

⁴⁴¹ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, 174: *llámanse estos templos Teucallis, y hayamos en todas esta tierra, que en lo mejor del pueblo hacían un gran patio cuadrado; en los grandes pueblos tenía de esquina a esquina un tiro de ballesta y en los menores pueblos eran menores los patios. Este patio cercabanle de pared, muchos de ellos eran almenados, guardaban sus puertas a las calles y caminos principales que todos los hacían que fuesen a dar al patio, y por honrar más a sus templos sacaban los caminos muy derechos por cordel, de una y de dos leguas, que era cosa harto de ver desde lo alto del principal templo, como venían de todos los pueblos menores y barrios, salían los caminos derechos e iban a dar al patio de los teocallis.* The length of a league Motolinía mentions is likely the "common league" of approximately 5.5 km or 3.4 miles.

⁴⁴² It is significant that Motolinía adopted key Nahuatl nouns to document structures, signifying that, perhaps only slightly, the reverse effect of ethnolinguistic exchanges between nahualtatos, see *Ibid.*, 174-175.

pattern, each altar serving as a cardinal point. This pattern would be repeated in courtyards and around large trees, as well.

For Motolinia, all of these things were places where Native teachers and students practiced learning, even if it was wrong-headed pagan learning.⁴⁴³ *Tlamacazque*, whom Motolinía calls also calls “*maestros*” (teachers) from time to time, would design, craft, and place objects made of stone, sticks, clay, and dough.⁴⁴⁴ He likened them to “Bishops, with their mitres and staffs... others... of men... head a mortar instead of miter, and in it they poured wine [i.e. *pulque*], because it was the god of wine. Others had different insignia, so that they would know which demon was represented [these included] figures of women”⁴⁴⁵ These “mitre-wearing” statues undoubtedly depicted “priests” or deities sporting peaked caps like those found on representations of Quetzalcoatl. Or, following Justyna Olko’s study of the *xiuhhuitzolli*, at least some of them might have been the royal turquoise-encrusted diadem worn by rulers as seen in some indigenous sources.⁴⁴⁶

Beyond confronting gods in the patios, Motolinia learned something about sacred zoology. Next to statues of gods there were “wild beasts, such as lions, tigers, dogs, deer, and the many animals that live in the mountains and fields... snake figures, these in many fashions, long and twisted; Others with a woman’s face. Before these many idols they offered snakes and vipers.⁴⁴⁷ One snake was the noisy Mesoamerican “rattlesnake,” and another serpent that was “very fierce, of 10 or 15 lengths its bite is fatal, and [one bitten

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 138. 137-141.

⁴⁴⁴ Motolinía did give credit to these teachers’ craftsmen, see Balsera, “Erasing the Pyramid Under the Cross,” 117.

⁴⁴⁵ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, 139 (my translation).

⁴⁴⁶ Olko, *Insignia of rank*, 37-47, 297-298.

⁴⁴⁷ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, 139 (my translation).

by it] only has 24 hours to live after the bite.”⁴⁴⁸ The pairing of jaguars and eagles was very common, with other precious birds such as owls and *quetzaltotol* (quetzal birds). There were fish fashioned from stone, reminiscent of Tenochtitlan’s “Fish God” that admonished the people when they “asked it” that they should not eat fish. Other aquatic creatures included caiman, toads and frogs.⁴⁴⁹ These curated objects, regardless of what Motolinía learned about or from them, were destined for erasure.

Motolinia’s anxieties about indigenous ways of learning regularly got the better of him. His accounts are filled with grim depictions of idolatry lurking around every corner, in every courtyard, behind every cross, and in “notable places” everywhere.⁴⁵⁰ This sort of romantically lurid depiction of diabolism fueled the acts of zealots among the first clergy on the scene, who targeted anyone who seemed to be a Native shaman or relapsed indigenous heretic in the Valleys of Mexico and Puebla-Tlaxcala for “correction” or elimination.⁴⁵¹

Fearing recidivism himself, Motolinia oversaw or witnessed numerous new construction projects—most carried out by native laborers--designed to break pre-contact sacred sites and structures and to replace them with Catholic buildings. On one occasion, Motolinia documented how locals turned on their traditional *teocalli*. Whereas, “the Indians had always tried to keep their temples whole and sound” in the early years, soon “they began to lay hands on [the temples] and take stone and wood from them to build churches.” In so doing, Nahuas removed the very stones that had once supported indigenous instruction, innovating them for a new audience of learners. “[T]he temples

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 140.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁵¹ See works by Richard Greenleaf (1962, 1963, 1969).

were left desolate and destroyed,” he continues, “and the idols of stone, of which there were infinite numbers, not only were broken and knocked to pieces, but came to serve as foundations for churches.” For a priest dead-set on conquering Native spirituality, this was “the best thing in the world for the foundation of so great and holy a work.”⁴⁵² In Motolinia’s eyes, Nahuas vehemently chose to learn about and practice Christianity. Breaking apart *teocalli*, *calmecac*, and other physical receptacles of local knowledge was in his mind the first step in ensuring that pre-contact traditions would not infect Catholic doctrine. Personally, he would soon train his vision on an even more ambitious mountain of a task.

In 1531, Motolinia led an extirpation campaign in the heart of Cholollan. He and his fellow Franciscan fray Martín de Valencia took it upon themselves to rid the community of lingering demons.⁴⁵³ Residing in the still unfinished cloister of San Gabriel he organized locals to surmount the lofty pyramid that came to be known as the *Tlachihualtepetl*. The new Franciscan residence had been erected near the base of the grander mountain-pyramid (which in the 1530s was only home to rabbits and snakes) at the site of a temple dedicated to Quetzalcoatl that had once stood there.⁴⁵⁴ His encounter with the pre-Hispanic structure looming above the site documented the size and makeup of pyramid as a crossbow’s shot a across at its base and perhaps the same in height.⁴⁵⁵ This “Great Pyramid” today dominates the center of the municipalities of San Andrés and San Pedro Cholula. Atop it, visitors find the nineteenth-century church of Virgen de los

⁴⁵² Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, 49.

⁴⁵³ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva*, 89.

⁴⁵⁴ Gutierrez and others have argued that the timing for construction of this convent, some two decades after initial contact, was intended on the part of Franciscans, “Converting a Sacred City,” 122-123.

McCafferty, “Altepetyl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as Water Mountain” (2008).

⁴⁵⁵ Gutierrez, “Converting a Sacred City,” 134-135.

Remedios, a structure rebuilt after a series of earthquakes in 1844. The original building had begun life as a hermitage in 1594, well after Motolinia's campaign. In 1644, Native annals describe a rededication celebration for a "new" church with a pre-contact-style volador ceremony (fig. 3.4).⁴⁵⁶



Figure 3.4, *Tlachihualtepetl* ("man-made mountain") of Puebla (2011). Christians "topped" the overgrown ruins of the precolonial peoples of Cholollan with crosses and, eventually, this seventeenth-century church of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios.

Long before any of this and prior to the time when Quetzalcoatl was said to have settled in Cholollan sometime in the third century CE, an unknown group of people living in the region began building the first of an eventual six pyramidal structures.⁴⁵⁷ The surviving "sacred mountain" of Tlachihualtepetl remains the

largest pyramid in the world by volume. Presuming it once had temple structures on its summit, it would have been the tallest in the Americas, too.⁴⁵⁸ Motolinía linked it creation to a "madness" he compared with the allegory of the creation of the Tower of

⁴⁵⁶ Camilla Townsend (ed.), *Here in this year: Seventeenth-century Nahuatl annals of the Tlaxcala-Puebla valley* (Stanford University Press, 2010), 98-99. With evidence of long-term occupation and growing amounts of archaeological discoveries, scholars consider the site a valuable pre-contact source for religious and cultural studies. See also Megged, *Social Memory*, 162-163.

⁴⁵⁷ Carrasco reexamined and compiled various data surrounding the pre-Christian "city" Cholula/Cholollan/Tollan and the symbol of the "city's" connection to the Man-God Quetzalcoatl (*Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire*, 2000)

⁴⁵⁸ McCafferty among many has proven the Great Pyramid to be "largest pre-industrial building in world history," surpassing, by volume, Egyptian pyramids and monoliths, Emperor Qin's tomb in China, and Native America structures and mounds in the United States, "Altepetyl: Cholula's Great Pyramid as Water Mountain," 23.

Babel, which upset God.⁴⁵⁹ In response to Chololteca's efforts, the deities sent a “terrible tempest;” a “great stone in the form of a toad fell” upon the massive but still unfinished structure, meaning that in Motolinia’s time it remained only a “small mountain.”⁴⁶⁰

Yet it is likely that this state of what seemed to be natural overgrown was intentional. It is believed that the pyramid was meant to symbolize an *axis mundi*, the central anchor of a psycho-social and spiritual worldview held by Cholula’s citizens.⁴⁶¹ Eleanor Wake noted the city’s centrality as “the ancient city... invested with the power to legitimize rulers in central Mexico.”⁴⁶² Motolinía claimed the pyramid was dedicated to the “god of the air [whom the Cholollans] would call in their tongue Quetzalcoatl,” which seems plausible. But it is popularly thought to have been related to rain and watery places, as well as to the deity Chiconauhquiahuatl (“Nine Rain”) and Tlaloc, the Goggle-Eyed force associated with storms, lightening, and other things aquatic. According to the Franciscan, “on the top of [the pyramid] there was a small old temple. [The Nahuas] tore it down and set up in its place a tall cross.”⁴⁶³ Ironically, in these willful acts of temple destruction on the part of Native people under the supervision of Motolinía and others,

⁴⁵⁹ The allegory comes from Genesis 11:1-9 (King James), and its implications in *Historia* are perplexing. For instance, Motolinía may have desired to convey Man’s hubris (i.e. the Chololteca’s folly) attempting to reach heaven or he may have connected the incident with the message of diverse children of God, when he scattered the people from the Tower—God “confounded the language of all the earth,” significantly.

⁴⁶⁰ Both Gutiérrez and I, in our own projects, found this biblical juxtaposition fascinating, “Converting a Sacred City,” 32; Fitzgerald, “Deconstructing Franciscan Conventual Schools,” 2012.

⁴⁶¹ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and The Irony of Empire*, 65. Carrasco has analyzed the redaction of the eternal city Tollan and its manifestation or rebirth in Cholollan and has explored sacred geographies of this nature (*Ibid.*, 90-91, 133-140). He used Eliade’s theoretical methodology to define what he called the “ideal type of city in Mesoamerica.” Carrasco argued that both the city and pyramid of Cholula were expressions of the cosmogenic recreation of the sacred city of Tollan. Thus, when the Spaniards invaded and massacred Cholula in 1519, they had attacked a vital pilgrimage center and a significant site of learning and cultural knowledge. See also, McCafferty, “So What Else is New? A Cholula-centric Perspective on Lowland/HIGHLAND Interaction in the Classic/Postclassic Transition,” 449.

⁴⁶² Wake, Eleanor. “The Serpent Road,” In Carrasco and Sessions (eds.), *Cave, City, and Eagle’s Nest: An Interpretive Journey Through the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan 2* (2007), 205 and 213.

⁴⁶³ Foster, *Motolinía’s History*, 89; there is no distinct person indicated for the removal of the “small old temple.” “They” were most likely indigenous laborers and not a group of Spanish conquistadors, colonist, and priests.

the assumed Spanish conquest of indigenous learningscapes was carried out by the indigenous themselves.

Breaking down the “small old temple” on the top of *Tlachihualtepetl* apparently went quickly, but another issue arose with an attempt at the planting of a cross there. Christian placebreaking required symbols that would divest the site of conquest from its dangerous past. Planting a cross was a common first step. According to Motolinia, however, when he and his aides set up the first cross, it “was shattered by lightning.”⁴⁶⁴ A second cross was destroyed in the same manner.⁴⁶⁵ After the “cholulas” carried out a fortuitous excavation of the ground beneath the remains of the smoldering crucifix, they unearthed a cache of pre-contact artifacts.⁴⁶⁶ Once those idols were destroyed the third cross miraculously took root.⁴⁶⁷ Motolinía and his Native aides had defeated the old gods with a symbol of a “new god.” By 1581, the *Corregidor* Rojas wrote that the story of Motolinía’s work in Cholula was well known. He noted that the objects removed from the top of Tlachihualtepetl were “grand conch shells from the sea.”⁴⁶⁸ Throughout the sixteenth century, writers such as Motolinia celebrated the ways in which priestly persistence appeared to have won out over idolatry, its demonic symbols, and its dangerous places.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ McCafferty has fittingly called Motolinía’s account of the Christian claiming process of the top of the Great Pyramid an “exorcism;” “Altepetyl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid,” 21.

⁴⁶⁶ Foster, *Motolinía’s History*, 89; to date, sadly, there is no record of what objects were destroyed in this cache.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ “Antes q los españoles ganaran esta tierra, no se remataba este cerro en llano, sino en forma convexa, y los religiosos lo hicieron allanar para poner allí aquella cruz, la cual, ha más de cuarenta años, fue dos veces derribada de rayos; donde los religiosos, pensando que había algún mixto en ello, hicieron cavar en lo alto del dicho cerro y hallaron muchos caracoles grandes marinos con que los indios antiguamente tañían en lugar de trompetas. Y, quien considera bien la naturaleza de los rayos, y que en esta ciudad y comarca de ordino caen muchos, no tendrá a milagro (como algunos historiadores quieren) el haber derribado dos veces aquella cruz, por estar, como está dicho, más alta que los más altos edificios de la ciudad cuarenta varas,” *Relacion de Cholula*, F9R-V.

Centuries later, religious historian Robert Ricard agreed, adamantly stating that the “topping” process physically subordinated or “completed the political disorganization and initiated a policy of substitution.”⁴⁶⁹ Architectural historian John McAndrew called this process the “appropriation” of indigenous “raised site” locations, a process of physical conquest familiar to Christians and non-Christian alike, with many examples of appropriation dating back to antiquity in the Mediterranean.⁴⁷⁰ On his part, Ricard believed, “the spiritual conquest completed and reinforced the military occupation.” These acts seemed to inspire other construction efforts that were to come.⁴⁷¹ In the mid-1570s, Cholollan would see Native Christians building a stone chapel and, later, a hermitage, which eventually would be replaced by the church of Virgen de los Remedios. Today, both the ruins of the *teocalli* and its recently renovated church draw more than one million faithful pilgrims and enthusiastic tourists.⁴⁷² But under Motolinía’s watch the pagan temple had been toppled and topped by Christian structures and practices.⁴⁷³

A Frog Problem

The lessons Motolinía took away from his time spent investigating *teocalli* and breaking down “idolatrous” learning environments seem to have paid off, or at least so he thought. He was prepared to find the symbols that the devil used, and he found them. Archaeology at *Tlachihualtepetl* has helped scholars learn about what might have been the true meanings of these symbols. For one thing, themes of drink, fertility, and water carry across the site’s ornamentation. The massive round “head” on display in one of its

⁴⁶⁹ Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 163.

⁴⁷⁰ McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches*, 186.

⁴⁷¹ Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 163.

⁴⁷² Joyce Kelly, *An Archaeological Guide to central and southern Mexico* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 159-164.

⁴⁷³ McCafferty, “Altepetyl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid,” 22.

many courtyards appears to have goggle-like eyes (probably representing Tlaloc) and may be a model of the “toad” that destroyed the “tower” Motolinía described. Worshipers ritualized the site and augmented these representations with other objects and offerings, many of them brought from long distances away. The *Tlachihualtepetl* was the precursor to Cholollan’s *teocalli* dedicated to Quetzalcoatl that the conquistadors saw in use. The 1519 Massacre took place in the large patio of the Quetzalcoatl temple, in the shadow of the man-made, over-grown mountain. Rites, such as nasal piercing ceremonies may have occurred at this Quetzalcoatl temple site long before the Cholollans occupied it, as is evident from the tools archaeologists have uncovered there in the lowest level of human occupation, including bone implements that mirror the tools used for this purpose displayed in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*.⁴⁷⁴

The *teocalli* of Quetzalcoatl in Cholollan undoubtedly had been a learningscape reserved for a priestly class, one that legitimized rulers from all around. The *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* depicts one of its central figures, the priest Icxicoatl, at Cholollan’s *teocalli* for the nasal piercing ceremony; the priest’s body is painted black and his hair and beard shaped to reflect the duck-billed buccal mask of Quetzalcoatl.⁴⁷⁵ Elsewhere in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* are vivid paintings of this temple’s courtyard and façade. Based on representations of *teocalli* in the *Florentine Codex* and other precolonial pictorial manuscripts, it is likely that the artist who created the image in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* remembered the *Teocalli* of Quetzalcoatl as having two shrines

⁴⁷⁴ McCafferty highlighted the legitimization associated with a “nose-piercing” ritual in pre-Contact Mesoamerica and depictions of Cholula/Cholollan priests, which points to the centrality of the city to the region; “So What Else is New?” 460-465.

⁴⁷⁵ Leibsohn, *Script and Glyph*; see a digital copy of the *Historia* presented by the Bibliothèque nationale de France at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84559448/f1.image>

crowning it, much like the dual Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan with its shrines dedicated to Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc.⁴⁷⁶

The Great Pyramid had a life of its own in the imaginations of the townspeople after Motolinía’s time. Locals incorporated it into depictions of their place in the world.

Artists set the *Tlachihualtepetl* in a variety of colonial codices, painted and written in the sixteenth century and later. Nahua illustrators, such as the unknown indigenous creator of the map that accompanied the *Corregidor* Gabriel de Rojas’ *Relación de Cholula* (1581), is a case in point.⁴⁷⁷ This *Pintura de Cholula* depicted and described the earthen mound that was mentioned by the Rojas, a Spaniard, in his Spanish-language text, but was undoubtedly a Nahua vision of the community’s orientation around the ceremonial center that had persisted into the colonial era.⁴⁷⁸ At the heart of the *Pintura*, a fountain in the central plaza is bordered on the top by the walled and gated *atrio* of the church of San Gabriel, clearly labeled as the symbol of the “Ciudad San Gabriel de Chollolā [Cholllan].” Surrounding it are the churches of the six *cabeceras* under the authority of Cholllan—San Miguel Tecpan, Santiago, San Juan, Santa María, San Pablo, and San Andrés—which de Rojas described in the accompanying text. Behind each *cabecera* church is a rendition of a *tepetyl*, “mountain/hill” (fig. 3.5).⁴⁷⁹ The Great Pyramid itself appears to burst out of the confines of its prescribed box. It is glossed as “tlachivualtepetl” and, as described earlier in Chapter I, is associated with a good deal of

⁴⁷⁶ Leibsohn, *Script and Glyph*, 37, and 129-130.

⁴⁷⁷ Rojas, “Relacion de Cholula”, Benson Library, UT Austin, Texas,
<https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/24501>

⁴⁷⁸ See Felipe Solís et al. “*Cholula: la gran pirámide*,” (2006); and Gutiérrez, “Converting a Sacred City” (2012).

⁴⁷⁹ Rojas, “Relación de Cholula” (1985).

aquatic imagery.⁴⁸⁰ The *Pintura* and Rojas' text reproduce pre-colonial memories and knowledge into the schema of the colonial city. Even in 1581, some *tlaxilacalli* in the



Figure 3.5, Mapping Mesoamerican places in sixteenth-century Cholula. The *Pintura* from the *Relación geográfica de Cholula* (1580), depicting Tlachihualtepetl using pre- and post-contact symbolism to denote the importance of the site. Used with permission from the Benson Library, University of Texas at Austin.

town still had ruins of “*cerrillos menores*” or “*teocalli*,” Rojas explained, using alternatively Spanish and Nahua terms to describe these.⁴⁸¹ On one of these *cerrillos* “there [once] was an idol called Chicono uhquiauitl” [sic] (9-Rain) and “when they lacked water” the people would “sacrifice children ages six to ten” bringing them to the top of the hill “singing,” after which they would remove the child’s heart and burn it to

⁴⁸⁰ Amalia Nieto, “La música militar en tiempos del General San Martín” (1996), 75-83. See also Wood, *Transcending Conquest* (Size of conquistadors).

⁴⁸¹ *Relación de Cholula* f4v. It would appear that Gutiérrez (2012: 40) and, before both of us, Felipe Solís et al (2007:35), picked up on the symbolism of the Spanish-colonial trumpet painted atop Tlachihualtepetl in the *Pintura*.

cover the idol in its smoke.⁴⁸² Since the goddess Chiconauhquiahuatl was associated with Tlaloc, these rites mirrored pre-contact practices associated with Tlaloc and other water deities held in Lake Texcoco. On the Cholula map, the swirling current of water symbols (*atl*) with the red droplets, the patches of tall reeds with the seven cattails (*tollin*) the man-made mountain *Tlachihualtepetl* coupled with reeds (echoing the alphabetic gloss Tollan, “place of reeds”), created a colonial place glyph that recalled the site’s deeper past.⁴⁸³ In this way, the seemingly “colonial” map reinforced the cosmologic significance of Cholollan’s enduring pre-contact place-identity. By painting the *corneta* over the top of Tlachihualtepetl, the author signified conquest of Native place, the horn being but one tool announcing the presence of iron-clad invaders. Yet does the horn’s presence “break” the image’s pre-contact qualities, symbolizing their utter defeat?

The presence of a Spanish-style *corneta* perched atop the Tlachihualtepetl in the *Relación*’s map, the type of structure where according to the *Historia* conch-shell equivalents were once played, and where in fact conch shells had been buried, could well signal the military alliance forged between the people of Cholollan and Spanish invading forces rather than some kind of Christian conquest of the place.⁴⁸⁴ In other words, this kind of double-mistaken iconography may have helped to meld old and new concepts in a way that might signal the prowess as “Nahua conquistadors” whose efforts led to the *altepetl*’s recognition as a colonial-Christian *ciudad*.

The staying power of pre-contact teachings about the sacred forces of water seem to be glossed in the *Relación mapa*’s rendition of a flow moving through the image in a

⁴⁸² *Relación de Cholula*, F.3v-4r; (*chiconahui*, “nine,” and *-quiyahuitl*, “rain; downpour”).

⁴⁸³ See a digital reproduction of this map at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/benson/rg/rg_images2.html.

⁴⁸⁴ Gutiérrez agrees with this assumption based on her reading of de Rojas (“Converting a Sacred City,” 40).

way that is too powerful to be contained by the boxes that otherwise delimit the map's built environment. Springs and watering holes had held significant meaning for pre-Christian Mesoamericans. They were powerful "places of memory," as well.⁴⁸⁵ Many *mapas* and prose sources such as late-colonial primordial titles document the locations of springs in relation to churches and *altepetl* centers.⁴⁸⁶ For instance, *títulos primordiales*, written in the Cuernavaca region recall the supernatural draw of springs, which in pre-contact times were used as sacred points of reference in the landscape and as such often featured altars and "idolatrous" statues near them.⁴⁸⁷ Water and springs were also important in biblical narratives, so that Christian Nahuas living in Cholollan and elsewhere may have found their traditional ideas about such places to have been reinforced by Catholic teachings and imagery.

As early as the 1530s, Motolinia voiced his concern about the extent to which springs had remained among the indigenous people. According to him, at Cholollan fray Martín de Valencia (leader of *Los Doce*) had moved quickly to remedy the redirect the use and meaning of a seemingly natural spring situated on the Tlachihualtepetl. After observing the local population's habits at the "spring," the friar oversaw the construction of a Catholic shrine on the spot.⁴⁸⁸ This small shrine would, over time, became what is today a well-situated chapel on the side of Tlachihualtepetl a short distance below the

⁴⁸⁵ For the latter concept, see Megged, *Social Memory*, 164.

⁴⁸⁶ See the collection of *mapas* found in de Oca Vega, Mercedes Montes. *Cartografía de tradición hispanoindígena: mapas de mercedes de tierra, siglos XVI y XVII* (UNAM, 2003); See also, Megged, *Social Memory*, 164-179. Haskett proposes that "Nahua reverence for springs would have made it easy for them to maintain this orientation even after the Spaniards with similar beliefs arrived on the scene" (*Vision of Paradise*, 160-162).

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁸⁸ McCafferty, "Altepetl: Cholula's Great Pyramid," 20-21; 24.

church of *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios* on the south-facing slope (fig.3.6-3.7). Remnants of a pre-contact aqueduct that once collected water on the top of the pyramid can still be seen about fifteen feet below the lip of the well. Reportedly, in “Christian times” before the Catholic shrine was built over it, seasonal rainwater would still fill this shaft as, presumably, it continued to do afterwards. It is likely that the conduit had originally been designed to send water through the interior of Tlachihualtepetl (which must have shared or increased its sacred force along the way) and out onto the surrounding valley floor about 350 feet away.⁴⁸⁹



Figure 3.6–3.7, *Tlachihualtepetl*'s small chapel (a) and well (b) (2011). The well is from the Christian era, but the ancient aqueducts and other waterworks of the man-made mountain extend out into the fields surrounding the ruins.

The association of the giant toad with the Tlachihualtepetl was probably linked to the traditional significance of such amphibians in Cholollan and Tollan, which were both either actually or reputedly marshy places. Whimsical-seeming but very large toads are associated with what seem to be intended as sacred mountains in the *Historia Tolteca-*

⁴⁸⁹ Personal visit and guided tour, Summer 2012. See also, Gutiérrez, “Converting a Sacred City,” 36-37; McCafferty, “Altepetyl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid.” There are no accounts of rituals that may have accompanied these waterworks, but water rituals devoted to Tlaloc and other sacred forces often entailed requests for healthful outcomes and prosperity associated with agricultural production.

Chichimeca, as well.⁴⁹⁰ According to *Book XI* of the *Florentine Codex*, toads were strong singers, “more so than frogs,” and the thunderous croaking of toads occurred before and during the rainy season.⁴⁹¹ Since their bodies, especially the amphibians’ skin, reacts poorly to periods of drought and the cold, it is no wonder that in Nahua thought when the raining season arrived toads would croak in praise.⁴⁹² In the sixteenth century, Motolinía confronted a “toad” figure at Cholollan; much later, in the nineteenth century, archaeological digs unearthed a sculpture of a “frog-like” head (Fig. 3.8).⁴⁹³



Figure 3.8, Massive stone carving of *Tlachihualtepetl* (2011). Believed to be in the likeness of a toad, this may be the very same object described by early Franciscans in the 1540s.

The struggles associated

with Motolinía’s attempt to break apart local attachments to Tlachihualtepetl were directly linked to the strength of indigenous knowledge about the sacred function and significance of the structure. At least in the eye of the beholder priest, the

man-made mountain fostered unholy living memories and idolatrous behaviors that threatened to weaken the pure messages he and his fellow evangelists professed. Local Nahuas now found new praxis had entered Cholollan center as daily instruction began in

⁴⁹⁰ Leibsohn, *Script and Glyph*, 135-138.

⁴⁹¹ *Florentine Codex Book XI*; the frogs were “Cueiatl,” “Tecalatl,” Acacueiatl,” and “Coquicueiatl,” F.64v-65r; For toads see “Cacatl” whose songs were “very annoying,” also “Tamaçoli” and “Micalatl,” F.76r-77r

⁴⁹² McCafferty, “Altepetyl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21

⁴⁹³ Geoffrey McCafferty, “Mountain of heaven, mountain of earth: The Great Pyramid of Cholula as sacred landscape” found in *Landscape and power in ancient Mesoamerica* (Routledge, 2001), 301-302.

the courtyard of San Gabriel.⁴⁹⁴ And in seeking to dislodge customs, Franciscans attempted to use placebreaking as a way to clean the slate for learning untroubled by winds, seasonal rains, and stubborn toads. As a learningscape in transition, Tlachihualtepetl functioned as a sounding board for both old and new ideas.

Good Deeds Done: The Huexotzinca Recall Auto-Extirpation

Needless to say, many forces worked upon the sacred places and the citizens of Cholollan; Christianity was only the latest of them. In the process of attempting to break the indigenous learningscape, evangelizers like Motolinía mistakenly believed that the process had been a success. In reality, when he and his assistants topped the Great Pyramid with the symbol of Christ's cross, they were not able to erase its significance as a place to announce the winds of change or the coming of rains. In truth, Native communities found a way to renew places that had been beset by the violence of the Spanish invasion. For instance, in 1560 the Nahua leaders of Huexotzinco sought to highlight their contributions to the defeat of the Triple Alliance in a Nahuatl-language petition dispatched to the Spanish king Phillip II.⁴⁹⁵ Taxed heavily, they worried their *altepetl* might not last much longer as a viable socio-political entity if things did not change soon, lamenting that “your *altepetl* and city of Huexotzinco is as if it is about to disappear and be destroyed.”⁴⁹⁶ It is likely that the Huexotzinca wanted, above all else, was to enjoy the same political and economic arrangements as their neighbors the Tlaxcalans had secured as rewards for their alliance with the conquistadors. They used

⁴⁹⁴ Gutiérrez, “Converting a Sacred City” (2012).

⁴⁹⁵ A digital copy of this document is available at Early Nahuatl Library, “Huexotzinco (Puebla), 1560: Letter to the King,” <https://enl.uoregon.edu/bc31/elements/bc31a/000>. See also, Arthur J. O. Anderson, Frances Berdan, and James Lockhart, *Beyond the Codices: The Nahua View of Colonial Mexico* (UCLA, 1976), 196–199.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 196–199; Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 184–185; the translation is Lockhart’s: *ya xiniznequi ya poliviznequi in maltepetzin in mociudad vexuco*.

not so subtle language to remind their king that the tribute and labor coming from the community might be in danger of halting all together unless reforms were enacted. Yet at the same time this legal tactic was also the Huexotzinca's way of saying metaphorically that they were about to become placeless.

The Huexotzinca's letter to the King tells us that the demands of life in the new imperial world pressed indigenous people to the point of near place-identity dysfunctionality. Their sacred centers had faced violence at conquest. The ensuing extirpation campaigns appeared to have uprooted traditions and local knowledge. On the other hand, the letter exposes Native agency and the indomitable spirit of place-identity. As will be discussed in more detail later, by 1560 the Huexotzinca appear to have embraced the Catholic Faith, followed its doctrine, and built churches while simultaneously doing their best to protect the integrity of ancestral lands and kin networks. The letter displays their mastery of that new order, or at least the ways in which they might most effectively address authorities to win concessions that would help them reclaim and maintain ownership of their community and their own vision of how life in the Christian *altepetl* ought to be lived. The Huexotzinca's conceptualization of place-identity was based upon historic notions of how place-attachment formed and the placebreaking practices were normalized in Mesoamerican soil. The execution of Nahua priests and elders and the burning of temples associated with educational practices cut to the heart of the indigenous learningscape. They found that Spaniards seem to have downplayed the sophistication of indigenous ways of learning.

But Natives understood this violence, even massacres, within the context of their own micropatriotic histories, too. Their narrative devices actually show the persistence

of how the past was reconstituted in “new” learningscapes. The casting of new iconography in old places may be the best example of this. A Mesoamerican discursive tradition of military history appears to have influenced how the conquest was seen to have taken place. On the other hand, what the Spaniards regarded as the unnerving nature of “idolatry” they saw in traditional Mesoamerican learningscapes surely affected the thinking of clerical pedagogues in the early decades of cultural reform and indoctrination that followed initial contact, the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

COLONIAL REPLACEMENTS:

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY SCHOOLS

FOR NAHUAS & THE CHANGING LEARNINGSCAPE

Hounded by Demons: Extirpating Knowledge from Indigenous Learningscapes

By the time a decade or more had passed since the bloody Spanish-Native conquest of the Valley of Mexico, the people of Tetzcoco had settled into a new daily routine as they navigated the new institutions and rules imposed by Christian authorities. European priests such as the Franciscans and Dominicans had filtered into the Valley of Mexico in a noticeable, if still modest, way. As in other *altepetl*, Franciscans in Tetzcoco decried the existence of “diabolical” temples, supervised their demolition, and, by the late 1520s, had ordered the erection of Spanish-Christian chapels and churches in their place. Arriving in New Spain in 1528, the first bishop, fray Juan de Zumárraga, sought to publicize unChristian behavior by exposing would-be Native idolaters. One infamous victim of this purge was Don Carlos Chichimecatecutli (a.k.a. Ometochtzin and Yoyotzin), lord of a *tlaxilacalli* related to Tetzcoco.⁴⁹⁷ In a trial sponsored by the bishop in 1539, Don Carlos was found guilty of idolatry but remained unwilling to recant. As a result, the unrepentant indigenous lord was burnt at the stake in the former Mexica capital of Tenochtitlan.⁴⁹⁸ East of Tetzcoco, the “unholy” temple he had honored, on the top of Mount Tlaloc dedicated to that rain deity was reduced to rubble.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Another well-known unchristian indigenous spiritualist, Martín Ocelotl, also exemplifies nonconforming subjects from the period. Patricia Lopes Don has written an interesting biography about Ocelotl’s education and explains that the lessons from his indigenous upbringing affected him up to his conviction (he died in exile on his way to Spain, or at least the ship he was on never made port). See Patricia Lopes Don, *Bonfires of Culture: Franciscans, Indigenous Leaders, and the Inquisition in Early Mexico, 1524-1540* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012): 52-82; see also Don, “Franciscans, Indian Sorcerers, and the Inquisition in New Spain, 1536-1543,” *Journal of World History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 2006, pp. 27-49.

⁴⁹⁸ The events that led to Chichimecatecutli’s death appear to have had lingering effects, and the trial likely shaping Spanish-Colonial education from this early stage. Fray Pedro de Gante, one of the first educators to

Almost immediately, indigenous towns in the Valley of Mexico and beyond felt the ripple effects of the 1539 trial of Don Carlos Chichimecatecutli, partly because Tetzcocan witnesses had attempted to blame Nahuas living in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley for leading Don Carlos astray. Some alleged that citizens of the *altepetl* of Huexotzinco were practicing idolatry on the edges of their town.⁵⁰⁰ Perhaps to avoid a similar fate or accusations that they, too, were idolaters, in July 1539 a group of Tetzcocans led by local rulers joined forces to destroy

Nezahualcoyotl's "sierra de Tezcucingo" (today known as the Baños de Nezahualcoyotl), the first time the site entered the colonial record (fig. 4.1).⁵⁰¹

Chichimecatecutli's uncle, the *tlatoani* Antonio Pimentel, testified that he and his followers had attacked the "carved idols in the cliffs... and when they could



Figure 4.1 Postclassic ruins of Tetzcotzinco (2012). Known as the "Baños de Nezahualcoyotl" because of the many cisterns and aqueducts, this mountaintop site felt the brunt of "spiritual conquest," during extirpation campaigns led by Dominican priests in the 1540s.

enter Mesoamerica, taught Tetzcocan nobility in the famed Palace of Nezahualcoyotl and, supposedly, he counseled Chichimecatecutli right up to his execution in "quiet talks," according to hagiographies; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 317. For more on the trial of Chichimecatecutli, see Luis González Obregón, "Proceso inquisitorial del cacique de Tetzcoco" (AGN, 1910); and for a recent look at how it factored into Tetzcoca consciousness, see Benton, *The Lords of Tetzcoco* (2017).

⁴⁹⁹ Megged, *Social Memory*, 163-165.

⁵⁰⁰ García Garagarza, "The 1539 Trial of Don Carlos Ometochtli," in *Mesoamerican Memory*, 202-203, relates the deep indigenous history of the events of Don Carlos' trial to living traditions and the landscape.

⁵⁰¹ Benton, *Lords of Tetzcoco* (2017). Benton's exposition on the region, land tenure, and lineage of Nezahualcoyotl, describes the wide range of territory under the purview of the *altepetl* (*Ibid.*, 4-6). Benton references several pictorial manuscripts and chronicles to reveal even more of the local vision of power and place in the *altepetl*.

not break these, they set fire to them, because when [the idols] were burned they were able to break and unmake them... the Indians... began to break and leave in ruins the forms and figures of the faces... and as his lordship [Zumárraga] commanded that all should be unmade in a way that none shall have memory of them.”⁵⁰² The Dominicans also claimed to have joined in the uprooting of Tetzcotzinco. Leading the charge, Dominican priest fray Domingo de la Anunciación (1510 – 1591) waged holy war against the “demonic” place called Tetzcotzinco and its imagery.⁵⁰³

Built by Tetzcoco’s former *tlatoani*, Nezahualcoyotl, a hundred years back (See Chapter II), the buildings, statues, baths, aqueducts, gardens, and plazas of Tetzcotzinco signified a crowning achievement in Native ingenuity.⁵⁰⁴ Nezahualcoyotl was the grandfather of both Chichimecatecutli and Pimentel, suggesting that some kind of familial conflict may have lain at the heart of the 1539 trial, hostile testimony about Don Carlos’s alleged idolatrous ways, and the subsequent destruction of Tetzcotzinco at the hands of what might be called a politically motivated “Pimentel faction” of new Nahua Christians.⁵⁰⁵ It is possible that Anunciación was not aware of this connection, but it is highly unlikely that when he published his *Doctrina Christiana breve* in 1545 he was unaware that the ”demons” he sought to extirpate were idols and images of coyotes or humans in coyote mantles and, thus, symbols associated with Nezahualcoyotl’s likeness.

⁵⁰² My translation: “idolos esculpidas en las peñas... y a las que no se pudiesen quebrallar, que les diesen fuego, para que despues de quemarlas se pudiesen quebrar y deshacer... los indios... comenzaron a quebrallar y a quitarles las formas e figuritas de las caras, y a uno de los dichos pusieron fuego, en cama: para deshacer y quebrar, despues de quemado: y su Senoria les mando que todos se deshiciensen de manera que no quedase memoria de ellos”; found in McAfee and Barlow, “Titles of Tetzcotzinco (Santa María Nativitas)” (*Tlalocan I*, 1946), 125-126, note**.

⁵⁰³ Agustín Dávila y Padilla, O.P., *Historia de la fundación y discurso de la provincia de Santiago de México*, ([1596] 1634), fs. 767-771.

⁵⁰⁴ It was also (as argued in Chapter II) a semi-autonomous Acolhua-Tetzcocan learningscape that espoused a distinct variation of formal Nahuatl education.

⁵⁰⁵ Benton, *Lords of Tetzcoco*, 2017.

Finally, after Fray Domingo had surmounted Tetzcotzinco to “the highest part of the hill, carved on an outcropping, there was a *Coyotl* [coyote], as it is called in this land: It is a genus of wolves, less fierce than European wolves and more brave than mastiffs, thus it seems a species half between wolves and dogs.”⁵⁰⁶ With righteous determination, Fray Domingo, his fellow Dominican Domingo de Betanzos, and their Native aids were commanded to “chip off and ruin” the coyote idol, and to destroy the unholy place. Then they planted a cross atop it and warned that any would-be idolaters continuing to worship at the site would be castigated.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ Dávila y Padilla, *Historia de la fundación y discurso*, fs. 770; JCBL 01616-1: “lo mas alto de todo el cerro estaua labrado en pena viua vn Coyottl, que llaman en esta tierra: y es vn genero de lobos, menos feroz q- los de Europa, y mas brauo que los mastines; y assi parecen vna media e specie entre lobos y perros.” In the *Itenerario* of the Parrochial Archbispicr of Mexico, created in 1880, Fortino Hipólito Vera describes the remains of a statue on Tetzcotzinco, which was of a “Great Indian Azaualcoyotl [Nezahualcoyotl]”; Vera, *Itinerario parroquial del arzobispado de Mexico y reseña histórica, geográfica y estadística de las parroquias del mismo arzobispado*, Amecameca (Colegio Católico, 1880), 146-147.

⁵⁰⁷ Dávila y Padilla, *Historia de la fundación y discurso*, fs. 1596: 770-771, JCBL 01616-1; Dávila y Padilla notes that both Juan Zumárraga and Domingo de Betanzos were involved in the final destruction of the site. Perhaps Fray Domingo, as a Dominican, was outraged to see a dog-like figure associated with what he would have seen as idolatrous expressions; the founder of his order, St. Dominic, came to be associated with a dog: “His usual emblems are a lily and a black and white dog (in punning reference to *Domini canes*, dogs of the Lord) holding a torch as herald of truth,” David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 2011), 147. The engraved frontispiece of Fray Domingo de Anunciación’s *Doctrina* features the saint with a dog at his feet, and there is an illustration of St. Dominic with a black-and-white spotted dog surrounded by flames at the saint’s feet in Dávila y Padilla, as well. It is tempting to think that this latter dog, in particular, was meant to stand for the white, spotted dog found in the *Codex Borgia* that was associated with what the Spaniards would have regarded as the diabolical figure of the underworld lord, Mictlantecuhtli (see Chapter III). In the *Florentine Codex*, Book 11, the coyote is characterized as being “in every way diabolical” (7), and generally speaking dogs have the disgusting habit of eating “the flesh of the dead, the spoiled; it east the revolting, the stinking, the rotting” (16). The Dominican Fray Diego de Durán wrote that he saw “more than four hundred large and small dogs” being offered for sale at a traditional indigenous marketplace. When he asked what they were for, his was told that they were “for fiestas, wedding, and baptisms.” Durán was “deeply distressed, for I knew that in olden times the little dogs had been a special sacrifice to the gods and that they were eaten afterward.... Therefore, why should we allow them to eat these unclean things which formerly were kept as offerings to the gods and for sacrifice?” *Book of the Gods and Rites*, 278-279. It is tempting to think, then, that Fray Domingo, the biographer Dávila y Padilla, and the artist who created the engraving for the latter’s *Historia* were calling up images of these “unclean” and “diabolical” creatures in the texts, and that the engraving of the burning, spotted dog was a deliberate reference to the demonic canines that inhabited such places as Tetzcotzinco. However, it would take more research than is possible to carry out for the present dissertation to determine this beyond the shadow of doubt.

The accounts of Anunciación’s exorcism and Pimentel’s unmaking of Tetzcotzinco are further corroborated when we consider the local records. According to members of the community of Santa María Nativitas Tetzcotzinco, locals had decided to cast down the hounds and destroy the school on the hill themselves. They had lived beneath Tetzcotzinco, enjoying primordial claims to the lands there marked off by ancient trees and other landmarks. In their *Títulos de Tetzcotzinco*—a late-colonial document that explained their deep knowledge of the region—they described Tetzcotzinco’s built environment and the fate of one of its more memorable images.⁵⁰⁸ “There on the mountain of Tetzcotzin[co] they removed an image that was like his face and his upper body. It was on a stone like a feathered wolf⁵⁰⁹ [*quetzalcuetlachatl*]; they removed what Nezahualcoyotzin ordered his artisans [*itoltecahuau*] to record so that it would be remembered by his children, his grandchildren, and all the people, so that they saw him.”⁵¹⁰ Recording their account hundreds of years after the fact, the Tetzcotzinca not only remembered that there had been some sort of portrait of Nezahualcoyotl on the heights of Tetzcotzinco, but that the presumably Catholic indigenous people themselves had eventually destroyed it. This sort of allegedly autonomous, “Christian” act would have been just the kind of thing that would be emphasized in primordial titles.

⁵⁰⁸ McAfee & Barlow, *Titles of Tetzcotzinco*, (1946).

⁵⁰⁹ Or perhaps “next to a plumed wolf.”

⁵¹⁰ McAfee and Barlow, “The Titles of Tetzcotzinco,” 117 (corrected orthography): *Auh in itech tepetl tetzcotzin oncan quiquixtique in ixptla in yuhqui catca in ixayac, ihuan in itlac in itech tetl in yuhqui quetzalcuetlachatl ipan quiquixtique in itoltecahuau ini[c] quitzicuiloque itencopa in Nezahualcoyotzin inic omonescayoti inic oncan quitazque in ipilhuan in ixhuihuan ihuan in ixquich tlacatl.* “Quetzalcutlachatl” the “feathered/plumed wolf,” may or may not have been a symbol of the *tlatoani*. McAfee and Barlow did not translate the term. What seems to be a feathered canine classed as a “Cabeza-Coyote” (13 cm) is held in the MNAH in Mexico City, and is a ceramic bust covered in opal shell scales or plumage originating from Tula, Hidalgo.

The Tetzcocan historian Fernando Alva Ixtlilxochitl wrote that that the ruins had displayed a “lion of more than two arms in length with wings and feathers, which was looking off toward the East and within the its opened mouth was a face in the same likeness of the king [Nezahualcoyotl]. It was a standard lion and it was beneath a canopy made of gold and feathers.”⁵¹¹ Alva’s “standard lion” or the title’s “plumed wolf” may actually have been a *coyotl*, as it seems to be described in Dávila y Padilla’s account, a canine that would have been a more fitting anthropomorphic vehicle for Nezahualcoyotl’s image; at this remove it is impossible to say for sure, however. The golden, feathered canopy may seem a fanciful invention of Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s, yet the *Codex Mendoza*’s tribute records demonstrate that coyote mantles were woven with using golden or yellow parrot feathers, suggesting that the canopy may have been some sort of variation on that sartorial tradition.⁵¹² In the end, when the zealous newly Catholic *altepetl* leaders and fray Domingo surmounted Tetzcotzinco in July, 1539, they hacked, burned, and broke apart symbols of indigenous socio-political status and the learningscape, whatever they might have been.⁵¹³

The persistent memory of Nezahualcoyotl’s sacred learningscape at Tetzcotzinco reveals the resilience of social fabrics confronted by the stress of foreign invasion and the

⁵¹¹ Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, *Historia de la nación chichimeca*, Vázquez, Germán (ed.) (Madrid, 1985), Capítulo 42: *estaba echado y mirando a la parte del oriente, en cuya boca asomaba un rostro que era el mismo retrado del rey, el cual león estaba de ordinario debajo de un palio hecho de oro y plumería; un poquito mas abajo estaban tres albercas de agua, y en la del medio estaban en sus bordos tres ramas esculpidas y labradas en la misma peña, que significaban la gran laguna, y las ramas las cabezas del imperio*

⁵¹² Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, 49 and 199.

⁵¹³ July was an important month the pantheon of saints and the psalms that accompanied them. For instance, it was the month of Blessed James the Apostle, the horseman warrior, who, according to the Sahagún’s text “Our great captain, Saint James, himself came waging war here in New Spain against our foes the devils;” Arthur J.O. Anderson, (trans. and ed.), *Bernardino de Sahagún's Psalmódia Christiana* (Salt Lake, City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1993), 200-205.

onset of a colonial regime. The *coyotl* (or other fierce quadrupeds) speaks to lasting memories of two distinct learning modalities—indigenous and foreign—and the power of the former, place-based way of learning to persist long after violent Christian acts of toppling has taken place. This suggests that the efforts of conquest-era clergy and their indigenous allies to destroy this non-Christian site on the edge of a Spanish colonial town had only been partially successful, best at marring physical remains, but not other kinds of ideological residues. The clergy were not entirely blind to all of this. To combat the continuing threat that places such as Tetzcotzinco might remain dear to the hearts of Nahua Catholics, ensuing generations of Franciscans, Dominicans, and other clergy tried to combat this perceived “idolatrous” tendency with an arsenal of what they hoped would be intelligible educational tools.⁵¹⁴

As early as 1545, the Dominican Fray Domingo de la Anunciación began work on what would become the *Doctrina cristiana breve y compendiosa por vía de diálogo entre un maestro y un discípulo* (published in 1565). Before this, a number of first-generation New World *doctrinas* (bilingual ecclesiastical manuals) were produced by clergy such as the Franciscan Pedro de Gante (~1480-1572), who is credited with having developed the very first of these works (Fig. 4.2).⁵¹⁵ Unlike Gante’s *Doctrina*, Anunciación’s text was written in Spanish and Latin with an accompanying Nahuatl translation, which was shaping to become the most common presentation of *doctrinas* created during the Spanish colonial era. It is likely that the *Doctrina* was informed by Anunciación’s Nahua allies, especially those attending the first schools in Tetzcoco.

⁵¹⁴ For two approaches to the developing admixture of ways of learning carried out in central Mexico see Christensen, *Nahua and Maya Catholicisms* (2013) and Wake, *Framing the Sacred* (2010).

⁵¹⁵ Pedro de Gante, *Doctrina Christiana en lengua mexicana* (1547).

Before, during, and after the 1539 trial of Don Carlos, Native rulers, including the alleged heretic's uncle, the *tlatoani* Antonio Pimentel (1540-1545), took center stage in the reordering of Tetzcoca-Alcohua society.

Before the Spanish invasion, Pimentel had been a student of the prestigious education system that his grandfather

had envisioned. His encounter with Christianity began after his relatives welcomed Catholic priests into the Palace his grandfather had built. These Franciscans introduced Tetzcocans to the first Christian educational environments, encouraging Natives to meet with them at a simple wooden *ramada* (shelter) or, later, a wood or stone "Indian chapel," *capilla de indios*, which would have been located in the courtyard of Nezahualcoyotl's former palace.⁵¹⁶ There they would have learned about the basic tenets of the Catholic Faith the diabolical trickery of Satan, and the wayward practices of idolaters. Noble Tetzcocan sons would soon accompany the priests to the first *colegios*, such as Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco.⁵¹⁷ Though Christianity seemed to be seeping into Native communities, Don Carlos Chichimecatecutli's trial and execution, as well as the

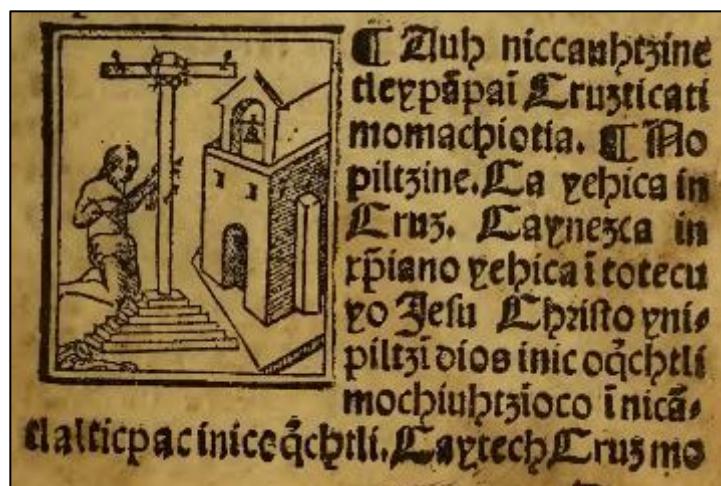


Figure 4.2, Pedro de Gante's *Doctrina Cristiana* (ca. 1545). This copy includes several illuminations, such as the above depiction of a European church and cross—one of the first representations of such to circulate in the Americas. It is unclear how or if at all religious pedagogues would use these images. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University (author's photograph, 2016).

⁵¹⁶ Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest*, 208.

⁵¹⁷ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book 1: The Gods*, 131-132.

subsequent extirpation campaign of indigenous learningscapes like the heights of Tetzcotzinco, even if all vestiges of the old ways and beliefs had not been entirely eradicated.

Examining the creation of Christian learningscapes on the ruins of older ones thus involved the development of formal modes of religious indoctrination. Yet by using Native places and indigenous allies to do so, it was possible for Native knowledge to inform this process in important ways. Christian Nahuas, *mestizos* (people of mixed ethnic descent), and European priests envisioned education in various ways based on their own cultural backgrounds, creating a complex process in which cultural biases, transculturality, and indigenous agency all came into play in the Valley of Mexico in places such as Tetzcoco. Three pedagogical traditions adopted and adapted to suit Nahua learners are particularly important things to examine: texts, songs, and signs. Religious texts such as fray Domingo de Anunciación’s *Doctrina* (1545), and Nahuatl-language didactic materials make it possible to hear the voices of Nahua elders and students.

European ecclesiastics relied on teaching techniques familiar to them from the experience in the colleges and universities back home. However, their initially limited language abilities and the relatively small number of priests on the scene in the first decades of the post-invasion sixteenth century meant that pedagogues necessarily needed to learn from their new indigenous students. The priests’ adoption of innovative learning modes, as well as the subsequent imposition of regulations designed to head off idolatry imposed by anxious officials, demonstrate elements of top-down accommodation. But they are also a sign of agency enjoyed by their first Native students, who may have sought to retain (or who at any rate did retain) valuable information from the

Mesoamerican past that was rearticulated in concert with new Christian pedagogies. As Louise Burkhart and others have argued, Nahua “collegians” (student/teachers) appear to have had more of a say in the application of text, song, and signs than traditional Spiritual Conquest historians believed.⁵¹⁸

Sixteenth-century Nahuatl and bi- or tri-lingual sources (*doctrinas*, songs and hymnals, material culture, and catechisms) touched upon different ways of learning, including the pre-Hispanic temple and courtyard models of learning that had existed before 1519. The “new” learning environments created in such old places and the teaching materials used in them became “colonial learningscapes” where the transference—and transformation--of formal knowledge about religion, ritual society was carried out. Older ways of thinking about the sacred were not immune from the influences of intellectual and spiritual intervention on the part of the mendicant friars and indoctrinated Native allies who considered themselves Christian from birth. Nahuatl texts, songs, and signs were informed by both Christian and pre-Christian practices and conceptions of place.

Placement and the Map of the Valley

The 1530s would prove to be a decade of great physical transformations in which European understandings of places could be “converted” in terms of faith were key elements in these early projects. Vasco de Quiroga, an *oidor* (judge) of the second *Audiencia* (1531-1535) and then the first Bishop of Michoacán has long been famous for his humanistic drive to create model Iberian-style societies among the Purépecha of

⁵¹⁸ Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth* (1989).

Michoacán.⁵¹⁹ His utopic vision was a design based on Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), a design Quiroga would first attempt to emulate in the Valley of Mexico.⁵²⁰ Arriving in Mexico-Tenochtitlan in January 1531, he launched into social reform as he and his fellow judges greeted a politically fractious environment.⁵²¹ Quiroga's background in Iberian legal precedents and staunch humanist bent allegedly resulted in heavy-handed treatment of Spanish settler-colonists, but he seems to have approached indigenous peoples with a lighter hand (though his reforms were likely not as innocuous as religious histories have described).⁵²² Acasúchil, the focal point for his first efforts in the Valley, was located on the opposite side of Lake Texcoco from Tetzcoco and Tetzcotzinco. Quiroga saw the people there as a *tabula rasa* ripe for Catholic action.⁵²³ According to Franciscan Fintan Warren, Quiroga envisioned a religious and educational town-hospice for the Nahuas of Acasúchil. It was to be an all-encompassing program of social and cultural change. As he wrote in a 1531 letter dispatched to Spain, his place called for the congregation of young male Nahua converts to "new pueblos... in the unused common lands of each of

⁵¹⁹ For more on Quiroga, see Rodrigo Martínez Baracs, *Convivencia y utopía* (2015); Bernardino Verástique, *Michoacán and Eden* (2000); and Warren, *Vasco de Quiroga and His Pueblo-Hospitals of Santa Fé* (1963).

⁵²⁰ Warren, *Vasco de Quiroga and His Pueblo-Hospitals*, 4-5, 29-30, 33-38; and Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 99-100. Martínez Baracs adds that Quiroga was also informed by the model Bartolome de Las Casas provided in Cuba, which he appears to have visited, briefly, on his way to the mainland (*Convivencia y utopía*, 181-185, 190-194). Art Historian John McAndrew argues that Quiroga's blueprint based on More was "radically modern" for its time, see *The Open-Air Churches*, 623.

⁵²¹ Warren, *Vasco de Quiroga His Pueblo-Hospitals*, 26-27.

⁵²² Warren offers a close study of Quiroga's early endeavors and headaches at Santa Fé Acasúchil, juxtaposing his protector-of-the-Indians status against the greedy land-grabbing of Spanish colonists (*Ibid.*, 64-76). See also Martínez Baracs, *Convivencia y utopía*, 166-167.

⁵²³ "Información en derecho del licenciado Quiroga sobre algunas provisiones del Consejos de Indias" (1535), in Torres de Mendoza, Luis (editor). *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía sacados de los Archivos del Reino, y muy especialmente del de Indias* (V. XII). Printed by Manuel G . Hernández. 1869, 352-353.

the old pueblos.”⁵²⁴ The judge appears to have taken this strategy seriously because he put up his own money, selling “his clothes, his sheep, and other worldly goods for funds to launch” his first *hospitales de pueblos*.⁵²⁵ Quiroga describes his initiates metaphorically as soft wax warmed to receive an Ibero-Christian stamp through the process.⁵²⁶

Quiroga’s physical imprint upon the land and people living in the *altepetl* of Acasúchil included the use of art and architecture to help shape their minds and spirits. McAndrews argued that Santa Fe Acasúchil was a “socialist colony, a school for vocational and humanistic studies, and orphanage, old people’s home, and hospital in the modern sense,” anachronistically recasting Quiroga’s interest in the light of a modern socio-political system.⁵²⁷ He explained that through the use of staunch sumptuary guidelines that saw men and women dressed in white, unadorned clothing and regimented farming the place buttressed new Christians from backsliding.⁵²⁸ Geographer Peter Gerhard situates Acasúchil as an *estancia* (estate) of Tacubaya, and it is plausible that its newly converted inhabitants came from this *altepetl*.⁵²⁹ Its physical boundaries comprised territory from three Native villages, and because of its designation as Quiroga’s project and local autonomy, Santa Fé Acasúchil eventually remained under the sway of indigenous rulers.⁵³⁰

In the coming years, viceregal jurisdictions and practices such as the *congregaciones*, or the forced community reductions from Native villages into a central town or more populated community, followed this pattern. These events appear to have

⁵²⁴ Warren, *Vasco de Quiroga and His Pueblo-Hospitals*, 29.

⁵²⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 623.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 623-24.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Gephard, *Historical Geography*, 100-101.

⁵³⁰ Ibid. 101.

challenged indigenous communities subject to translocation, but documented cases demonstrate that Nahuas managed these types of acts using innovative means of coping.⁵³¹ It is easy to exaggerate the results of the congregation process, however, since it included failing or unsuccessful town formation, the consolidation of power in new towns that welcomed their enhance status, the flight of unwilling subjects, and innovative re-creations of former *altepetl* within new *congregación* spaces.⁵³²

Though he planned it as a “new” indigenous community, Quiroga still relied on Native builders to construct what was named *Santa Fé de Mexico*. The majority of these builders likely came from the nearby *altepetl*. Laborers built a church with an extensive courtyard and a designated chapel at courtyard-center for the sick.⁵³³ Historians of Architecture believe that these first structures were likely simple in nature, with construction materials coming from two key sources: raw and then refined *tepetate* stones, a semi-porous volcanic stone (blocks of which are found at the site today) from local origins, along with less-durable adobe bricks made in Tenochtitlan by Native laborers.⁵³⁴

The *Mapa de Santa Cruz*, or “Uppsala Map,” created by an indigenous artist and the earliest known map of Mexico City, features a scene of what may be a fiesta or gifting ceremony taking place in Santa Fe (Fig. 4.3).⁵³⁵ The scene is found just past the

⁵³¹ Haskett, *Indigenous Rulers*, 13-14.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 624.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ See John Lopéz, “Indigenous Commentary on Sixteenth-Century Mexico City,” *Ethnohistory* (2014). For a high-quality digital copy of the Uppsala Map of 1550, see the World Digital Library’s presentation at: <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/503/>. Mesoamerican mapas and pictorial-textual hybrid manuscripts continue to be a vibrant source for the study, see Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 345-364. For a treatment on Nahua colonial “maps,” one part of what she terms the “visual language” of the period, see the dissertation by Diantha Steinhilper, “Identity and Empire in Colonial Maps of Mexico, 1524-1600” (PhD.

church-topped mountain for Chapultepec. The painting details what an ideal learningscape would have looked like on the ground, complete with a church and its cloister, as well as a three-arched *capilla abierta* (open chapel), likely to have been built before the church itself.⁵³⁶ It depicts a meeting of people at the site and there is certainly some sort of event or ceremony taking place. Some of the participants with head coverings are likely bandaged sick people. The entire effect is unlike anything found elsewhere on the map, implying that the artist may have witnessed the events firsthand.

On the other side of the Valley, according to the primordial title of Tetzcotzinco, at least, the foundation of that community as a Catholic place was accomplished largely without any outside influence or direction. However, a sort of Catholic “hero” did endorse

what they were doing, the Franciscan Guardian of the church of Tetzcoco, fray Juan de Alameda. Fray Juan essentially gave his blessing to the socio-political reconstitution of Tetzcoco by presiding over the formal delineation of the town’s boundaries, an event set



Figure 4.3, Meeting in the utopian community Santa Fé Acasúchil, ca. 1550. “Karta över Mexico City ca 1550,” Uppsala universitet, Public Domain Mark 1.0.

Diss., Florida State University, 2013), especially 133-136. The Uppsala Map also has what may be one of the first depictions of the Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco associated with two grand courtyards, a fountain, and the *altepetl*’s famous marketplace. Amos Megged found evidence of the “high-rising Mount Tetzcotzinco, and on it the carved face of Nezahualcoyotl!” in the nearby mountains (though it is unclear which head he indicated); Megged, *Social Memory*, 168.

⁵³⁶ See the encyclopedic Berdan and Anawalt, *Essential Codex Mendoza* (1997) for the history of that particular source and many other examples.

in January of what appears to have been 1538 in this particular document.⁵³⁷ Typical of the later-colonial primordial titles genre, the Tetzcotzinco text narrates the completely autonomous acceptance of Christianity and the enthusiastic construction of the church of Santa María of the Nativity that followed, construction done by the people themselves under the architectural guidance of “*in maestro in oquichiuuh in teocalli*” (“the master, the one that made the church”) who had helped to craft the Dominican church of Azcapotzalco (*ex-convento* de San Felipe y Santiago Apóstoles).⁵³⁸ The message that the people of this community had christened the new church at the heart of their ancestral lands without any pressure or force from outsiders is a powerful assertion of local agency, of the will and autonomous construction of colonial learningscapes.⁵³⁹ While people such as Quiroga, as well as other friars and clergy may have thought their attempts at reorganization were innovative, indigenous people had their own ideas. They and their

⁵³⁷ Benton (2014; 2017). As a later colonial primordial title, however these details must be checked against other sorts of historical records.

⁵³⁸ The Nahuatl copy, McAfee and Barlow (“Titulos de Tetzcotzinco,” 120) transcribe as: *Don Antonio Pimentel gobemador ihuan mochi tlacatl inipan tlatoacayotl Tetzcoco icantzincio Rey Nuestro Senor ihuan in tehuantin. axcan macoli in initlalnemac in Tetzcotzincotlaca, Santa Ma Nativitas ialtepeticin. Niman ayac huel quin cuiliz in intlalca ipan tlacalaquizque, ca nel oquinmonemactili in Dios ihuan in Rey ayac huel oncan tlatoz, ce caxtiltecatl, noso aca occce tlacatl. ida quincuiliz in innemac ynatl in yeloxochitla. hualehuaihuan tlalli inompa adtica quaxochtli ihuan tlalquahuitl huel huey pena quixtililoz, namoyaloz noso totocoz, quimachiltiz pesos quixtlahuaz. Ca nel yqui motequipanilhuia in tohueytlatocatzin REY. Auh ompa onacitica in quaxochtli inipan ahuehuetl Acoliuhyan auh inic patlahuac ipan in tochatlauhtli. Auh ynic xopiltic ompa tetipac acitica ca nel in nemac ca in tlatoca tlal ynic omo teneuhque tlacpac. Tixpan omochiuuh in tehuantin nican tic tlalia in totoca.[signatures of Don Antonio Pimentel and others] Nican momachiotia in intlatquipanolis inic omochiuuh initlazomahuizcaltzin in Dios itlazomahuiznanztin Sancta M[aria] Nativitas yeica ayac ce caxtiltecatl oman, omo huenticia. Zan huel oquimixcahuique mochintin in macelhualtin inipil huantzintzin in tlatoca cihuapill, in axcan motenehuazque. Auh iniquac mononotzque in mochintin ipan itlazomahuiz ilhuitzin cemicac ichpochtzintli Sancta M[aria] Nativitas in quichihuazque in otlazomahuiz caltzin ayac oquin cuitla huilt zan oquinmolnamictli in Dios Espiritu Santo in huehuetque ihuan in inamcihuan ihuan in inpilhuan [266r] mochintin oncan oquin netolique, inic mochihuaz ini tlazomahuiz caltzin in Dios inantzin. Auh ompa canato in Azcapotzalco in maestro in oquichiuuh in teocalli i[x]pan tzinco guardian Fray Francisco Rodrguez Temachtiani Fray Andres Gallo, Presidente Fray Pedro de la Parra. Auh in maestro mayor Don Juan de Galicia. Auh inic inanato cempohualli pesos monacato zanitlacual mochiuh ipan xihuitl momachiotia de 1537; Ibid., 120-123*

⁵³⁹ Megged, *Social Memory*, 165-166. According to Robert Haskett, this feature, the voluntary acceptance Christianity and willing construction of the community’s first church, is common to primordial titles (personal communication, 2017). See also Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 250-267.

pre-contact traditions of community organization, their ideas about the importance of centrally located sacred and educational spaces, were far more influential in what came into being during the Spanish colonial era than idealized studies of utopian Catholic projects and visions would have us believe.

Words and Wisdom

In the process of inculcating the new faith in the minds and practices of Native Christians in the decades following contact, there was no greater tool for a pedagogue such as Anunciación than the use of a bilingual teaching manual, collected catechistic volumes called *doctrinas*. Dominicans were just as inventive concerning indoctrination as the Franciscans in this endeavor. In 1526, the evangelical runners-up began settling among the Nahuas of Azcapotzalco, center of the ethnic Tepaneca who had once warred with the Tetzcocans and Mexica. Led by fray Tomás Ortiz, the Dominicans had overseen the construction of a small chapel and cloister there, apparently helped with designs drafted by the Franciscan Fray Juan de Alameda.⁵⁴⁰ By 1529 a more permanent structure had taken shape, accredited to fray Lorenzo de la Asunción (perhaps the master builder glossed in Tetzcotzincos' *Título*).⁵⁴¹ It is likely that fray Domingo de la Anunciación first visited the new chapel in Tetzcoco from Azcapotzalco's Dominican headquarters.

Anunciación's *Doctrina Cristiana* was designed to teach Christian practices knowledge in the churches and chapels being established by his order. It consisted of a dialogue between two people, seemingly Nahuas, a "teacher" and his "disciple."⁵⁴² This

⁵⁴⁰ Jorge Manrique (*Los Dominicos y Azcapotzalco*, 1963), provides an illustrative study of Dominican architecture at first contact in the Valley of Mexico, though the author does misname Anunciación as "Asunción. (26.)"

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 29-31.

⁵⁴² Domingo de la Anunciación, O.P., *Doctrina Cristiana* (1565).

imagined conversation, like one that might occur in the local church courtyard or within a church building itself, taught its audiences about the best ways for Nahuas to avoid sin and seek salvation. By setting the exchange in familiar structures (courtyards, churches, and texts), Dominicans such as Fray Domingo hoped to ease the path to enlightenment.

Anunciación's first chapter establishes the general premise of the conversation between *tlamachilli* (student, translated by Fray Domingo as *discípulo*, or disciple) and *temachtiani* (*maestro*, or teacher). It explains a basic format for learning, with the Teacher reminding the Student that all Christians can benefit from these types of dialogues and the study of the teachings of Christ in their battle with “weapons of our Lord God” (*yn itlahuiz totecuyo Dios*) against “our enemy demons” (*yn toyaohuatlacatecolo*).⁵⁴³ The defeat of “sorcerers” who might try to lure the unwary with devilish temptations is first accomplished with baptism and through the proper veneration of the cross, by which Christians would find salvation.⁵⁴⁴ Touching and signing the cross was a physical act that both sanctified and legitimized the words a student spoke in prayer. In other words, the movement of one’s body in space in relation to a physical object further inscribed the meaning of the words and the spiritual referents the words connoted (Christ, Christ’s sacrifice, Christ’s coming resurrection). The idea that the physical nature of Christian icons had power must have taken on a more tangible quality when clergy such as Fray Domingo and the Franciscan Motolinia oversaw the destruction of pre-contact sacred imagery and planted crosses atop sites such as Tetzcotzinco and Cholula’s Great Pyramid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., fols. 9r-v.

⁵⁴⁴ Anunciación incorporated the Nahuatl “tlacatecolotl” (“man-owl” or sorcerer) for “demonio,” a common mixed message from these types of texts, see Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday*, 183-184, 193.

The student learned of “other weapons” for use in the battle with temptation and Lucifer in the second chapter. One metaphor with pre-contact roots taught that with the “shield of the Faith” (*yn tlaneltoquilizchimaili*) “you all will protect yourselves with a shield from destruction by your enemies (*āmochimalcaltizque yn ihuicpa yn intenepacholiz yn amoyaohuan*).⁵⁴⁵ Learning scripture protected them just as the “words of God that are written in the divine books that by another name are called the Holy Scriptures... through books and words we are instructed and taught all that [Christians] must believe and keep.”⁵⁴⁶ Holy words blocked evil intent and bad thoughts from entering the Nahua Christian’s mouth. Armed with these types of oral and physical referents, the student was prepared to battle Lucifer in daily life. Lessons such as these, the practicing of powerful words in safe places, therefore grounded Anunciación’s lessons within the colonial learningscape.

Anunciación’s imagined conversation likely had antecedents in the Nahua world. One obvious example is the genre with pre-contact roots known as *huehuetlatolli* (“sayings of the elders”), a well-known form of prescriptive literature that was recorded in alphabetic Nahuatl during the same general period that Fray Domingo was creating his *Doctrina*, though probably after he had begun his work in 1545.⁵⁴⁷ The existence of this genre in what may have been its pre-contact guise as oral tradition (possibly based on public performances) was documented by early Nahuatl archivists from Tetzcoco.⁵⁴⁸ According to historian Bradley Benton, the 1540s were a turning point, a “generational

⁵⁴⁵ Anunciación, *Doctrina Cristiana*, fols. 11v-12r.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12v.

⁵⁴⁷ Several different versions of *huehuetlatolli* are known, including one found in *Florentine Codex: Book VI*, which Anderson and Dibble title *Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy*. For another example, see Karttunen and Lockhart, *Art of Nahuatl Speech* (1987).

⁵⁴⁸ Karttunen and Lockhart, *Art of Nahuatl Speech*, 9.

shift,” from the rule of the last Tetzcocan *tlatoani* in 1545 to the rule of don Hernando Pimentel Ilhuian.⁵⁴⁹ This transition in political power may have inspired Nahua scholars to collect traditional wisdom from elders because of the currents of nostalgia that seem to have run through the *altepetl* at the time.⁵⁵⁰

One extant copy of these speeches is known as the “Bancroft Dialogues” is thought to have been augmented at some point in the later sixteenth century by the Franciscan *Nahuatlato* and educator fray Juan Bautista, Guardián of the *convento* of Santiago Tlatelolco.⁵⁵¹ All of these documents had to have been influenced by the colonial world in which they were written, suggesting that they probably do not represent purely pre-Christian forms of knowledge. But the reverberations of pre-contact learningscapes and Nahua discourse are evident within the *huehuetlatolli*, and this reverberation indicates that indigenous ways of conversing influenced the first colonial learningscapes.⁵⁵²

The main participants in the *huehuetlatolli* apparently are of noble birth, but may include some commoners, as well. Characters are young and old, scholars and merchants, men, women, and children. The *Florentine Codex’s Book 6*, “Rhetoric and Moral

⁵⁴⁹ Benton, *Lords of Tetzcoco*, 64-67.

⁵⁵⁰ Benton terms this the *Pax Tetzcocana*, an intellectually and politically productive period following the instability of the first two decades after the Spanish Conquest, (*Ibid.*, 53-78). Additionally, Benton deconstructs several coat of arms and heraldry relevant to this study, namely the eighteenth century illustration of don Hernando’s coat of arms. Due to limitations of space, the current study will not incorporate his and others’ findings about this illustration, except to mention here that the iconography does include specific references to Tetzcotzinco, Nezahualcoyotl’s coyote-mantle, and violent conquest of space, which are examples of what Benton refers to (68n40) as, “many preconquest-style representations in what is a distinctly European genre.”

⁵⁵¹ The convent attached to the *Colegio de Santa Cruz*.

⁵⁵² For the critical study of the Bancroft Library’s copy, see Karttunen and Lockhart, *Art of Nahuatl Speech* (1987); the genre of *huehuetlatolli* has been found in Book VI of the *Florentine Codex* (Karttunen and Lockhart, *Art of Nahuatl Speech*, 8-9), and, more recently, Ruiz Bañuls (2013) has shown how its discursive style is present throughout that work.

Philosophy,” attributes much of the wisdom being imparted to knowledgeable ancestors, the “great-grandfathers,” “forefathers,”

those who have already gone beyond to reside, those whom our lord hath destroyed, hath hidden; those who have departed, those who have gone to reside in the place of no openings, of no outlets. Perhaps their thorn, their maguey, which [the tutors] departed leaving, which [the tutors] planted deep, will bud, will blossom.⁵⁵³

These ancestors provided knowledge from beyond the grave through the conduits of living teachers so that Nahua youths would absorb important moral teachings and thrive because of this.

A pertinent example of a “teacher-student” kind of dialogue found in the *Bancroft Dialogues* text takes place between an old man, a nobleman, two noble youths, a “tutor” (*ayo*, a Spanish loanword), the youths’ mother and grandmother, and the local Spanish priest.⁵⁵⁴ In the scene, one of the youths greets the prior of the Franciscan monastery, and then the two and their tutor greet their mother and grandmother. The grandmother imparts the most important lessons, which appear to come from Tetzcocan oral history. From them the intended audience would learn not only the wisdom of right behavior, but also about the proper ways in which nobles were to interact with each other and the priest, and how interlocutors, such as the old man, the tutor, and the grandmother, helped the boys navigate these types of conversations. The old man advises the boys on how to “go along

⁵⁵³ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book VI: The Soothsayers*, 138: *totechiuhcaoan, in ie nachca onmantivi: in oqujnopolhvi, in oqujnmotlatili totecujo: in oiaque, in omotecato in apuchqujiaoaiocan, in atlecallocan: aço xotlaz, aço cueponz in jnvitz, in jnmeuh, aço vecatlan in contlazteoaque, in qujtlalaqujtaique;* The ancestors transplanted some part of their essence in the very ground for it to grow forth in the next generation: *aço oalpanvetzi in jnvitz, in jnmeuh in machcocolhoan, in motechiuhcaoan in mjzmocavilitivi: aço qujmoxotlaltiliznequj, aço qujmocueponaltiliznequj in vitztli, in metl in vecatlan: tlallan contlazteoaque in vevetque*, or “perhaps there emerge the thorn, the maguey of thy great-grandfathers, of thy forefathers, which they go bequeathing to thee. Perhaps [our lord] desireth that the spine, the maguey which the old men planted deep in the soil, should sprout, should flower;” Ibid., 142.

⁵⁵⁴ Karttunen & Lockhart offer a literal (*Art of Nahualt Speech*, 136-159) as well as an allegorical (Ibid., 185-194) translation of this text.

properly.”⁵⁵⁵ They are not to look sideways, make faces, or otherwise misbehave in public. When they are speaking with the *altepetl*’s lords, “tutors, and elders, they are not to get in these peoples’ way, but stand off to the side.”⁵⁵⁶

All the characters in the dialogue politely ask after the health and wellbeing of the others. The boys’ greet the Franciscan priest character surveying his “priestly body,” asking if the “our lord God, the lord of heaven” (*in totecuiyo in ilhuicahua*) had “sent upon [the priest] some of His afflictions.”⁵⁵⁷ These formal greetings, as well as the acts of offering blessings and best wishes to others, was a way for the speaker to help shield people from ailments that might otherwise enter into the conversation. If Anunciación’s student and teacher took the time to concern themselves with explaining how Christians might best protect themselves from ignorance—arming themselves for combat with words and images—then the dialogues among community members found in the *huehuetlatolli* about similar subject matter, such as good comportment, reveals how “Christian” didactic texts could have incorporated older moral teachings and instructive turns of phrase that were not obviously at odds with Catholic morality.⁵⁵⁸ The act of verbalizing good thoughts in the *huehuetlatolli* created a protective shield of words

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 185: “go well spread out.”

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 144-145. The literal translation is even more illuminating: “perhaps [the boys] will get, perhaps they will take your breath, your words, perhaps [the grandmother] will place upon the top of them, at their necks, at their throats, the precious green stones, the divine stone, the bracelet (that) you [the grandmother] bring forth for them (from) your case, your chest, and the precious feathers, the precious tailfeathers with which you befriend them... [the other elders] would return your breath, your words with one lip(ful), with one mouth(ful)” (188).

⁵⁵⁷ Karttunen and Lockhart, *Art of Nahuatl Speech*, 138-139; the literal translation includes either a mistake on the part of the copiest or an added puzzle to this scene. Namely, the boys tell the priest “I kiss your priestly hand, *I will disturb your face*, your heart, I will raise your chest” (my emphasis). Did they intend to disturb the priest’s “spirit” and “stomach, or not? Most likely they did not, but the concept of disturbing one’s face and heart (likely a metaphor), and causing another’s chest to rise needs further study (185).

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.:138-159 (ff. 8r-11v).

comparable to, but somewhat distinct from, the *Doctrina*'s heavenly shield of good Christian belief.

Formal Lessons from Nahua Confessions

The *huehuetlatolli* and *Doctrina Cristiana breve* also contain discussions about women and women's lives. Before the advent of Christianity in New Spain, Nahuas had several complex depictions of wise and efficacious women after which to model themselves. From the 1520s on, new notions augmented those traditional depictions. Saint Mary, as students learned from priests and their aides, was a symbol of nurturing devotion for Christ and Christians. She was a teacher by example to all, but especially for women who would come to cherish and emulate her actions in life and her final Assumption into Heaven. Sermons defined wondrous Mary's sanctimony with lessons that "you instructed people, you taught all maidens... And you caused the fragrance of your good life to flow among them. Thus they smelled the fragrance of your pure life. Thus, all maidens lived as maidens."⁵⁵⁹ Mary's composure at the end of her life was one of iconic maidenhood, a maidenhood that spread the faith of the Church like a newly planted flower.

Nahuas who learned of Mary's sacrifice and example retained this knowledge by means of other mnemonic devices. Fray Domingo de la Anunciación's *Doctrina Cristiana breve* explained the observation of the rosary and its stations, teaching specifically about Mary and how best to think of her. The rosary is a mnemonic device that miniaturizes and makes portable memories of Mary's life. Physically manipulating

⁵⁵⁹ Santoral en mexicano – BNM MS 1476, a Jesuit sermon on the Assumption; Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe*, 108. Burkhart notes that white flowers held pre-contact symbolism associated with women, and were not only the color of the west but were also associated with the deified women who died in childbirth (pg. 31).

them between one's fingers rekindled memories of the scenes of veneration for Catholics engrossed in prayer. Comparable to more descriptive images and sculpture representing the Stations of the Cross and Christ's Passion, the rosary could articulate Catholic concepts through a specific introduced mnemonic device.⁵⁶⁰ Though not usually compared to indigenous mnemonic devices, in pre-contact time precious beaded necklaces were numerous and at least some are thought to have had sacred connotations.⁵⁶¹

Doctrinas commonly described the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, including those invoking the Virgin Mary.⁵⁶² As learners listening to their priest, or more likely the local *teopantlacatl* ("church person") who read aloud these passages, they learned of Saint Mary's qualities and how to emulate them. They learned to call out to her image, "O! Great noble-lady, most adored and loved, that God put a *corona* on you," and they connected her with her role in Christ's birth, her supernatural ability to love and forgive the sinner, and her fate in the Assumption in the heavens above.⁵⁶³ Applying life lessons, students might then know to seek her intercession and absolution when visiting the confessional.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁰ John D. Miller, *Beads and Prayers: The Rosary in History and Devotion*, 2001.

⁵⁶¹ Nicholas J. Saunders, "Stealers of Light, Traders in Brilliance: Amerindian Metaphysics in the Mirror of Conquest," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 1998.

Rosemary Joyce, "Girling the Girl and Boying the Boy: the production of adulthood in ancient Mesoamerica," *World Archaeology*, 2000.

⁵⁶² Anunciación, *Doctrina Cristiana*, fols. 75r-76r.

⁵⁶³ Ibid. Fol. 79r: *A yo vey ciuapille totepan tlatocatzine mocpactzinco que momaniluntomahuiz teouh yntlatoca corona yn cenza nia huizauhqui, in icnmitzmo tla toca tlalilitzincó yn onpa ilhuicac, nimitz notlatlauhtilia manopan ximotlatlatlauhtili yn nitlatlcouani, in icno maceualtiz yn niquittatiuh yn motlatoca mahuizcotzin yn ompa ilhuicac cemicac netla machtiloya. M, mochiua.*

⁵⁶⁴ Many Spanish sources describe Nahua confessionals, for example, see Dávila Padilla, *Historia de la fundación y discurso*, 81; Jerónimo de Mendieta *Historia eclesiástica india*, 282-83; Steck, *Motolinía's History of the Indians of New Spain* (1951), 131-37, 149, 185; and Durán, *Book of the Gods and Rites*, 129.

Lessons from colonial-era Mesoamerican learningscapes included new ways of teaching the catechism by way of visual media.⁵⁶⁵ Beginning in the decade after the fall of Tenochtitlan and its empire, Fray Pedro de Gante and others are credited with the creation of “Testerian manuscripts,” a series of innovative pictorial renditions of prayers and teachings about such figures as the Virgin Mary and the saints, which priests hoped would be accessible to Native learners.⁵⁶⁶ The authenticity of surviving examples of these neo-pictorial manuscripts remains controversial since there is a lack of unequivocally dated Testerian manuscripts from the sixteenth century. On the other hand, there is evidence that Pedro de Gante and fray Jacobo de Testers did devise and used some form of this genre.⁵⁶⁷ The adoption of pictography was not a revelation for Christian educators, since Old World hagiographies seem to indicate that similar techniques and materials had been in use long before the arrival of Spaniards in Mesoamerica. Imagery and icons had long helped to acculturate humans for millennia.⁵⁶⁸ In its application in New Spain, however, pictorial catechisms and the use of visual aids in the colonial learningscape amounted to a direct intervention into Nahua ways of learning. It confronted indigenous learners with a distinct pictographic “alphabet” of images that sought to bypass the traditional Mesoamerican glyptic writing systems that had been hashed out by Mesoamerican scholars and educators for millennia, particularly since Spaniards were

⁵⁶⁵ Anne Normann, “Testerian codices: hieroglyphic catechisms for native conversion in New Spain” (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1985); Burkhart, “The ‘Little Doctrine’ and Indigenous Catechesis in New Spain” (2014); Boone et al., *Painted Words* (2017). For Lockhart, these manuscripts had resulted from pragmatism on the part of the European priest, and he found “few similarities with indigenous methods. The exemplars of this genre attempt to follow a spoken text far more closely and exhaustively than occurs in indigenous writing” (*The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 334).

⁵⁶⁶ For a recent examination of “Testerian” pictorial catechism with a valuable review of their historiography, see Burkhart, “The ‘Little Doctrine’ and Indigenous Catechesis,” 2014.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁶⁸ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 334.

highly suspicious of perpetuating the use of things they associated with “books of the devil.” Ironically the new visual pictorial renderings of text both strengthened and weakened the Catholic teaching process. When transcribed outside of the confines of particular letters, punctuation, and syntax, ideas and concepts become exposed to informational slippages, or in other words created space for reinterpretation on the part of students (Fig. 4.4).

On balance, it seems likely that many of the extant Testerians are “compendium[s] of the various prayers and other words of Christian doctrine that were encoded by indigenous painters, including texts first adapted into Nahuatl in 1524, under the eyes of



Figure 4.4, Pictorial catechism with glosses (2016). One of several pictorial catechisms, also called “Testerian codices,” housed at the John Carter Brown Library.

Franciscans.”⁵⁶⁹ Some priests, however, still feared what unspoken ideas Native students might take away from these ideographs and pictorials. For instance, at the end of the sixteenth century the Jesuit priest José de Acosta worried “for this method of writing our prayer and matters of the faith was not taught to them by the Spaniards, nor could [Natives] have come up with it unless they had their own specific understanding of what they were taught.”⁵⁷⁰ The earliest pictorial confessionals and catechisms may have been

⁵⁶⁹ Boone et al. *Painted Words*, 2017.

⁵⁷⁰ Joseph de Acosta, *Historia Natural y moral de las indias* (1962), 290; also found in Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 79.

subsequently rounded up and removed from public use, and alphabetic texts such as the *doctrinas* favored as the best common instructional media.⁵⁷¹.

On balance, the symbols articulated in Testerian-like materials likely would have been helpful guides to understanding Christian beliefs and figures whenever they actually appeared on the scene despite some of their possible shortcomings. The mid-seventeenth-century Testerian catechism produced for the Nahuas of San Sebastián Atzaqualco is one of at least thirteen variations preserved in archives around the globe.⁵⁷² The Atzaqualco manuscript pays a good deal of attention to the Virgin Mary and by extension to lessons having to do with presumably patriarchal Catholic ideas about the proper comportment of women. The opening “Confession” presents Mary as a human figure, hands clasped before her, standing in profile donning a petal-like golden crown, a blue-green cowl, a symbol that conveyed the phrase “Oh! Saint Mary.” Another image presents women as a couple of sinners “chitchatting” with “malicious speech” (*chicotlatoltica*).⁵⁷³ The two women wearing traditional native cloaks kneel upon the dirt, each wearing their hair in two coiled braids in the age-old way. Their speech is signified by dots emanating from their mouths that rise upwards toward Mary, perhaps suggesting that women ought to speak as Mary would and not as the gossiping sinners.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ Wake suggests that the first printing press in Mexico and the fears of relying upon pictorials led to the adoption of the doctrina corpus (*Framing the Sacred*, 80).

⁵⁷² Boone et al., *Painted Words*, 2017; here I am relying heavily on the facsimile reproduced in this book, of Fonds Mexicain 399, housed in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France; the Confiteor, Ave Maria, and Salva Regina comprise several lines of the manuscript. I have also consulted sets of pictorial catechism at the JCB (JCB 25).

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 168-169

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 170

In the Atzonalco catechism Mary often bears flowers, symbols of glory and joy.⁵⁷⁵ In the *Ave Maria*, for instance, we see the crowned Mary in profile carrying a two-petaled flower, the symbol for *ma ximopaquiltitie* (“rejoice!”). In the *Salva*, to trigger the spoken Nahuatl phrase *tetlamachtianie tecuiltonoanie* (“O one who makes people happy, O one who gladdens people”), we find two different figures of Mary bearing bouquets of multicolored flowers. Occasionally male figures also carry flowers, especially Christ.⁵⁷⁶ Significantly, there is some evidence to suggest that floral bundles and female lineage may have helped indigenous communities to claim sovereignty of land or townships, both before and after contact with Europeans, as Stephanie Wood demonstrated for the Valley of Toluca and the founder dona Ana Corteza of Metepec.⁵⁷⁷

As Saint Mary was a representation of the holy Church, it is not surprising to find flowers emanating from painted churches as well.⁵⁷⁸ In the depiction of how to receive the body of Christ at Easter (Pascua), the Native artist has rendered a blooming flower before a church to stand for the phrase *oquiçaco in tosuchiPasqua, in tohueiPascua, in inezcalilitzi in totecuio Jesu Christo* (“Our Easter Sunday, our great festival, arrives; the

⁵⁷⁵ In one scene of the “Articles of the Faith,” a glowing Mary sets down, literally and visually, “commandments,” a collection of what appear to be papers with a cross sticking out from them (*Ibid.*, 197).

⁵⁷⁶ As per below, other didactic media, Nahuatl Christian canticles for one, would adopt this same refrain. The “Seventh Psalm” in *Sahagún’s Psalmodia Christiana* (Anderson, 23, 29-31), introduces the Ave Maria and Salve Regina as a “chaplet of flowers... different necklaces of radiating pendants, to your flowery paper, with which your mother holy Church adorns you... made of a number of surprisingly perfect flowers glistening like gold and precious jade;” and, later, when discussing the “Virtues,” Sahagún draws comparisons to the very real “handful of flowers, your shield of flowers formed of a number of different flowers, the articles that your mother holy Church gives you, which are always to remain held in your hand,,, which you will enjoy [as] you smell them. They are called virtues...;”

⁵⁷⁷ Stephanie Wood, “Gender and Town Guardianship in Mesoamerica: Directions for Future Research,” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 84:2 (1998), 253-258. Wood develops this point to include depictions of founders clutching human hearts (259).

⁵⁷⁸ Boone et al., *Painted Words*, 198.

resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has come”).⁵⁷⁹ The image of a church dressed in flowers, sprouting flowers, and covered in flowers entered other pictorial catechisms, too.⁵⁸⁰ Now as in the colonial era, churches remain decorated with carved stone flowers, and people continue to decorate them and their precincts with flowers, particularly during fiestas.

As far as the clergy were concerned, it seems, the un-Marian gossiping women of the Testerian would have been found throughout the city. In another image from later in catechism, they are associated with the ideograph for *tепan ahahuiyalitzica* (“[sinning] through making fun of people”), an image of a group of people standing or kneeling behind a well-to-do (possibly noble) male dressed in seventeenth- century ruffles and a black, wide-brimmed hat. He is extending his hand pointing skyward, and a speech scroll with four dots emits from its tip. However, from beneath his feet and appearing to come forth from the group behind him is a second speech scroll likely indicating that the group is having a laugh at the expense of the nobleman.⁵⁸¹

Knowing how to confess one’s sins properly (or how to navigate the confessional) was another valuable lesson imparted to Nahuas studied in Catholic learningscapes.⁵⁸² Testerians aside, those who wrote the *Confessionarios* despised the writing about or painting of people that would denigrate them in some way: “Did you falsely write [or paint] a document about another person so that when you finished it you mocked them

⁵⁷⁹ The Nahuatl textual phrase is from Sahagún, *Psalmodia Christiana*, first Psalm of April, (Anderson, 199).

⁵⁸⁰ Additionally, Sahagún’s *Psalmodia* drew connections between women and the holy Church (Ibid., 112-113).

⁵⁸¹ Boone et al., *Painted Words*, 169.

⁵⁸² Burkhart explains that, “[t]he friars were impressed by the Nahuas’ acceptance of and devotion to sacramental confession. Many confessed very well, following the Ten Commandments. … They confessed frequently, often travelling great distances to do so (*The Slippery Earth*, 182).”

with it?”⁵⁸³ Priests and the *teopantlaca* (and the Council of Trent for that matter) were not able to restrict the use of pictography. In fact, colonists encouraged Nahuas to create many religious and temporal artworks and crafts under a system of vocational training. Burkhart has noted how valuable this multimedia support was for non-Hispanic neophytes, explaining that confessors “brought their sins... painted with hieroglyphs.”⁵⁸⁴ But too much artistic freedom, when accompanied by the instructive hand of the Devil, led to the kind of mockeries that one priest, Andrés de Olmos, decried, “Thus it is well known that he teaches people, he speaks to people, or perhaps provokes people with black, dirty words, or perhaps black living; thus he infects people, thus he dirties people, thus it is quite clear that he is very bad.”⁵⁸⁵

Nahuas, like other Christians, were primed by leading questions. Incautious answers could result in having to carry out acts of atonement if such was judged to be necessary. Understanding common prompts and how to respond to them surely benefited those seeking painless absolution. Priests and *teopantlaca* (Nahua aids working under priestly guidance) were the vanguard of personal and communal socialization. Priests felt that women particularly needed to be asked about their work on Sundays and holidays. Whereas the confessor fretted over men playing and gambling, he feared that Nahua women might not properly engage in weaving, sewing, the cleaning of clothes, and other kinds of domestic labors. The concern of being in, by, or near water, away from the gaze of the church, seems to be the most troublesome. The ways in which women mistakenly polluted themselves while bathing, a personal act that women had a good measure of

⁵⁸³ Cuix otlapic tiquicuilo amatlacuilolli in çan occe tlacatl ytech tictlami ynic teca otimocayauh? Molina, *Confesionario mayor en la lengua mexicana* ([1565] 1975), F.15

⁵⁸⁴ Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, 182.

⁵⁸⁵ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, 61.

control over, appears to have been a common concern for confessors. Priests and perhaps their Nahua assistants, too, seem to have expected women to uphold the biblical beauty, splendor, and virginal chastity associated with Mary. Both the *Ave María* and the *Salve Regina* in Nahuatl equate Mary's presence to the bringing forth of joy and happiness, a theme established in the sixteenth century and still emphasized in the later colonial era if the Testerians are any indication.⁵⁸⁶

Nahuatl confessionals asked priests to urge male and female Nahua Catholics to become informers, divulging criminal behavior witnessed in public spaces beyond the walls of monasteries and parish churches. A priest using Molina's *Confesionario* (1565) would expect Nahuas to pay close attention to the veneration and use of potentially idolatrous images. In the section regarding the Seventh Commandment on property, Nahuas are reminded that they must not covet the *tilmanli*, (cotton mantas), gold, precious stones, quetzal feathers, or several food items belonging to others of in ways rooted in pre-contact usages.⁵⁸⁷ When he or she found someone else's money or clothing lying about (*oticmottili yn tetomin, yn tetilma*), the good Nahua Catholic ought not take or "hide" such goods. In fact, things ought not to be left in such a tempting state. Instead, teachers and confessors expected Nahuas to serve their community by setting things in their right place. They were to "find the owner, asking around the market (*tianquizco*) in the town square or at the church (*teopan*)," and return the items to their rightful owner.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ For a translated example of a Nahuatl confessional see Bartolomé de Alva, and Barry Sell and John F. Schwaller (eds.), *A Guide to Confession Large and Small* (1999). For Nahuatl versions of the *Ave María* and *Salve* see Gante, *Doctrina Cristiana*, fol. f37r; and Anunciación, *Doctrina*, fols. 47r-v.

⁵⁸⁷ Molina, *Confesionario mayor en la lengua mexicana*, 1565, F.14 (my translation); The Spanish text inserts "silver" between gold and feathers, which may indicate either Spanish assumption that silver was a common good and or the lack of concern on the part of the Nahuatl translator to differentiate between "gold and silver" and "precious metals."

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.* F.15

This confessional guidance seems to reflect the admonitions of Nahua elders on this subject found in the *huehuetlatolli* to a certain extent. However, the danger of falling into sinful behavior that Christian Nahuas faced when they wrestled with the question of actually fulfilling their obligation to confess covetous longing after someone else's property and not locating its rightful owners was new to these types of exchanges.⁵⁸⁹ Confessional lessons helped the sinner recognize the necessity of making a trip to the two central places of the market and the church to avoid sin.

When good Christians entered these spaces, especially the market, they confronted their need to adhere to a growing set of strictures and to avoid potential sins. They needed to learn how to avoid doing the Devil's work in such places, most of all those dedicated to the important educational tasks carried out in the colonial learningscapes approved by priests that were established for the indoctrination and betterment of Christian Natives. According to Antonio Ciudad Real's account, a sort of travel diary he kept during Ponce de Alonso's survey of New Spain in the 1580s, Santiago Tlatelolco's monastery was seen as having been specially prepared for these sorts of spiritual "vocations."⁵⁹⁰

On Wednesday, February 5, 1584, after passing through the crowded public *tianguiz* (*tianquitzli* or "open-air market"), the investigator's group entered the monastery's grounds. Ciudad Real remembered the *Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco*'s walled-off courtyard that appeared to delimit the sacred from the profane, noting the utility of at least part of the complex as a place for learning. According to Ciudad Real, the market that was located "in a plaza very grand in quarters that is

⁵⁸⁹ Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, 31.

⁵⁹⁰ Salva, *Relación breve y verdadera... documentos inéditos* (1872), 232-233.

connected to the convent.” It would, at times have held massive affairs when perhaps tens of thousands of people might fill the space. It was “inside of the courtyard” where the first “Colegio for the vocation of the holy cross” was established.⁵⁹¹ In the late-sixteenth century, Dr. Francisco Hernández commented, “Every neighborhood has an open space where, every five days (or more frequently), markets are held, called *tianguis*... Tlatelolco is the largest, with a capacity of nearly 60,000 people.”⁵⁹² Bowing to the inevitable, the friars had likely hoped to carve out a place for schooling with a convenient central location that people were already used to using, and which had been the site of a previous ceremonial complex dedicated to the old religion of the Tlatelolca. Depicted in Native pictorials as open-air plazas with a centralized source of water, often with wells, *tianquitztli* likely fulfilled an ancient social memory function.⁵⁹³ Historian Amos Megged, among others, has convincingly argued how Mesoamerican peoples incorporated sources of water into social functions and keeping of local knowledge.⁵⁹⁴

Robert Ricard believed that this kind of physical environment aided Christian educators and their catechism lessons, seeing conventional schooling as the prime factor in “the stabilization of the Church.” His sources (mostly priestly texts and chronicles) lauded the positive relationships created between pupil and priest that laid the foundations for spiritual training. Primary school and early childhood catechism, Ricard argued, gave Native children “a modicum of useful knowledge” and “the instruments necessary to carry forward the study of their religion, if they so desired.” He believed

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 232-233.

⁵⁹² Simon Varey (ed.), Rafael Chabrán, Cynthia L. Chamberlin, and Varey (trans.), *The Mexican Treasury: The Writings of Dr. Francisco Hernández*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 75.

⁵⁹³ Megged, *Social Memory*, 164-179.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid. 164-165.

that, “[w]ithout primary schools...[the Church] would not have been based upon an organized society.” In other words, schools and schooling meant structure, and structure equaled social order, all of which flowed from Christian teacher to prepubescent pupil.⁵⁹⁵ The science of early childhood development has made massive leaps since Ricard’s book was written, with psychologists and developmental analysts agreeing, for the most part, that children and pupils inform the educational programming teachers and community members design. In the end, the early vision of a teaching philosophy and architectural planning used for conversion would be rearticulated for the provincial learningscape.

Cultural Realities and Musical Notes in the Colonial Learningscape

When placed next to the *tianquitztli* or near the center of indigenous towns, early colonial learningscapes competed with the sounds of popular education. The complicated relationship between San José de los Naturales, built by 1555 in downtown Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and its location next to its massive *tianquitztli*, is a good example of pedagogy in transition.⁵⁹⁶ Some Catholic priests encouraged certain types of song and dance performances within the courtyards such as the one at San José. Early New Spain’s prime pedagogue, fray Pedro de Gante, had a role in founding and teaching at this monastery in and around its early *capilla de indios* and courtyard.⁵⁹⁷ Letters from Gante indicate that from 1523 to 1527 he struggled to bring Christianity to commoners, noble children, and adults through imported orthodox approaches. Noticing that “all their songs were directed at their gods,” he produced a collection of specially designed hymns that he hoped would drum up interest among his flock, reasoning that they were used to singing

⁵⁹⁵ Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 207.

⁵⁹⁶ Ernesto Colín, *Indigenous Education through Dance and Ceremony* (2014).

⁵⁹⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 369-371

in worship, when sanctifying an act of sacrifice, and before and after acts of conquests. In the months preceding the observation of Nativity, he “composed solemn verses about God’s Law and about the faith, and how God was made a man to save the human lineage, and how he was born of the Virgin Mary, though she remained pure and without blemish.”⁵⁹⁸ Furthermore, Gante gave them “livery” of sheets and allowed them to “paint” upon these, apparently with their own designs. In all of this he was plucking out the essence, but not the substance, of pre-contact ways of celebrating the sacred and bending them to the cause of Catholic Holy Day celebration. According to Lorenzo Candelaria, this produced an “attractive form of instruction” that according to Gante attracted tens of thousands of Native learners who filled *San José de los Naturales’* courtyard.⁵⁹⁹ Through these types of early exchanges of song, cloth, and paint—customs that had originated beyond the monastery’s courtyard’s walls before the Spaniards set foot in Mexico—indigenous knowledge entered the colonial learningscape.⁶⁰⁰ These lessons evolved from such beginnings to meet the needs of a bicultural student body.

⁵⁹⁸ Y cómo me había de haber con ellos, y es que toda su adoración dellos a sus dioses era cantar y bailar delante dellos, porque cuando habían de sacrificar algunos por alguna cosa, así como para alcanzar victoria de sus enemigos o por temporales necesidades, antes que los matasen habían de cantar delante del ídolo; y como yo vi esto y que todos sus cantares eran dedicados a sus dioses, compuse metros muy solemnes sobre la Ley de Dios y sobre la fe, y como Dios se hizo hombre por salvar al linaje humano, u como nació de la virgen María quedando ella pura e sin macula; y esto dos meses poco más o menos antes de la natividad de Cristo, y también les diles libreas para pintar en sus mantas para bailar con ellas, porque así se usaba entre ellos, conforme a los bailes y a los cantares que ellos cantaban así se usaba entre ellos, conforme a los bailes y a los cantares que ellos cantaban así se vestían de alegría o de luto o de vitoria; García Icazbalceta, *Codice Franciscano*, 1971: 223-224; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 372; 634-635; for a recent treatment on de Gante’s interest in teaching through “dance and ceremony,” see Colín, *Indigenous Education through Dance and Ceremony*, 8-10.

⁵⁹⁹ Lorenzo Candelaria, “Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Psalmodia Christiana*: A Catholic Songbook from Sixteenth-Century New Spain,” (*Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 2014), 365.

⁶⁰⁰ De Gante’s figure was 50,000 Natives, and if describing San José de los Naturales in Tenochtitlan, this was likely an embellishment. Following McAndrew, de Gante was “an old man freely given to exaggeration” and that the space would not have been able to contain so many; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 378-379.

While clergy like Gante have often been given credit for the development of such practical approaches to Catholic education, their Native aides contributed to them as much or perhaps more than their Spanish allies.⁶⁰¹ One result of this agency was that priests were constantly witnessing the survival of indigenous beliefs and practices, and it concerned them. It was an ongoing situation, and while they worried about songs and dances keeping ancient customs alive, they were also condoning and even encouraging the use of song and dance, hoping it would help inculcate Christian beliefs. The Third Provincial Council of Mexico regarded Native-language *cantares* and dancing as dangerous and potentially sinister acts.

Nonetheless, music and dance continued to be encouraged or condoned by Catholic clergy. Thanks to the agency of their indigenous allies, these “Catholic” forms referenced both European and Mesoamerican traditions. Nahuatl-Spanish hymnals and didactic musical performances appear to have been then placed into the hands of Christian *teopantlaca* (“church people”) living in the Valley of Mexico and beyond. Though there is still much to learn about *teopantlaca*, it is clear that this sort of official carried out cultural and socio-economic roles before and after the advent of Spanish colonization.⁶⁰² According to James Lockhart, the adoption of this term to describe colonial-era indigenous church workers may have been linked to its apparently generic

⁶⁰¹ The ethnohistory of cross-cultural musical adaptations and practice has been most effectively explored in Jonathon Truitt’s concise and smart “Adopted Pedagogies: Nahua Incorporation of European Music and Theater in Colonial Mexico City” (*The Americas*, 2010). For more from musicologist views on the roles played by indigenous aides and Catholic choir masters, and their use of choral and orchestral instruction in religious conversion, see Linda Popp, “Music in the Early Evangelization of Mexico,” *Missiology: An International Review*, January 1980, Vol.8 (1), pp.61-69; and Arturo García Gómez, “Música en la conquista espiritual de Tenochtitlan,” *Acta Musicologica*, Vol. 85, 2 (2013), pp. 169-185.

⁶⁰² Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest* 1992, 215-217.

sense of “temple people.”⁶⁰³ “Church singers” (*teopantlaca cuihcanimeh*) especially held a key role in the propagation of Nahua Christian knowledge.⁶⁰⁴ Lockhart believed that *teopantlaca* and “singers” were not synonymous, and that church staff in the early years adopted many functionary roles, from sweeping the floors to serving as a high-status *fiscal de la Santa Iglesia* (chief indigenous assistant to the clergy).⁶⁰⁵

For instance, in Coyoacan Don Juan de Gúzman Itztollinqui (*tlatoani* from 1526-1569), an affluent ally in early military campaigns under Cortés, noted the importance of the *teopantlaca* of the *altepetl*.⁶⁰⁶ In a document dated from between 1545-1550, Don Juan documented the active presence of *cuihcanimeh* in the *altepetl* when he bequeathed some plots of land to the “church singers:”

Here are written the chapel singers of the church, those to whom I gave land, I, don Juan, so that all [of them] will sing in the church and they will teach singing. As I pronounced it... in the presence of seven men I pronounced it. No one may abrogate [my] royal command, I, don Juan, so that I gave land to them, the church singers. It was given to nineteen men. Truly they were given the land for the sake of the chapel truly they will sing, and never will they cease....⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 216.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 210-218. Lockhart wisely explained that we must be careful to avoid assigning clear hierarchies to *teopantlaca* in the sixteenth century. For example, the role of the church sweepers may have been on par with singers considering pre-Christian understandings of sweeping and religious purification (217-218) He did make a distinction for the notary or *escribano de iglesia*, however. For a deeper study of the Nahua “housework,” see Burkhart’s “Mexica Women on the Home Front” in Schroeder et al., *Indian Women of Early Colonial Mexico*, 33-38; and *The Slippery Earth*, 117-24.

⁶⁰⁶ Early in the study of Coyoacan, Charles Gibson tracked don Juan de Gúzman and his offspring, noting the large tribute owed to the Nahua ruler, his strategic marriage with a Tetzcocan *cacica* (female indigenous ruler), and his influence over parts of the southern Valley. Don Juan contracted that the *altepetl* would provide him with dozens of masons and stone cutters for housing upkeep (*The Aztecs*, 158-159). For a closer description of the encroachment of Spanish authority over the region’s first indigenous rulers and pre-colonial land designations, see Rebecca Horn, *Postconquest Coyoacan: Nahua-Spanish Relations in Central Mexico, 1519-1650* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 46-52.

⁶⁰⁷ AGN, Tierras 1735, exp. 2 fol. 113. Closely following Anderson, Berdan, and Lockhart, *Beyond the Codices*, 110-111, this is my interpretation of the salient Nahuatl text: *Ynican yn icuyliuhtoque y capilla y cuycanime y teopa oniquinotlahlmaquili y nehuatl yni don juo ynic mochipan cuycazque y teopa yuan quitemachtizque y cuycatl...* [listing of 7 people present at the pronouncement] - *caxtollti tlacatl onavi yn omotlahlmacac y vel omotlahlmacaque yn ipampa y capilla y vel cuycazque yn ayc y quicavazque ça quimotequipovilizque mochipa...* [list of 13 names, with the remaining undetectable due to deterioration of the document]. It may also be important to note that *quitemachtizqueh* could also mean “they will preach it

The nineteen singers who were the beneficiaries of Don Juan's largess represent a slightly larger number than what the Franciscans, in their early decrees, considered to be the proper number. They hoped to ensure that groupings of no more than fifteen to sixteen singers with "thin voices" would be on hand to supplement the singing of the congregation and the sounds of instrumental ensembles. Choirs that were too large might overpower the others "like a multitude."⁶⁰⁸ Once Coyoacan's choir was given land by means of this paper contract to support their continued services, they would have had a stronger a physical attachment to the place they served. In exchange, they were expected to teach singing that would impart Christian knowledge to observant Nahua Christians living under the *tlatoani*'s purview. Presumably the church singers would have had access to songbooks, or at least have studied with those who generated them.

Women could also serve as *teopantlaca*, appearing to have played important roles in the early years, which may indicate a survival of their pre-colonial role in musical instruction. According to Motolinia, Native women and girls chose baptism and converted, and in the process instructed their sisters in Christian Breviary, especially the hymns. He effused about their acts of instructive singing that accompanied early lessons, especially regarding matrimonial customs. At least on one occasion, Native women's musical acumen in Huexotzinco particularly impressed him.⁶⁰⁹ Motolinia believed that this was all due to their daily instruction of the Hours liturgy. But significantly, the

to someone," though whether or not Nahuas would have considered their singers to be "preaching" in the European Christian sense of that word is not known. See Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary*, 221.

⁶⁰⁸ García Icazbalceta, *Codice Franciscano*, "El orden que los religiosos tienen en enseñar a los indios la doctrina, y otras cosas de policía cristiana" (1941), 57-58. See also García Gómez, "Música en la conquista espiritual de Tenochtitlan," 183.

⁶⁰⁹ Motolinia, *Historia*, 372-373; this rosy depiction must be considered carefully because of Motolinia's biased vision of an easily converted populace and masculine gaze upon indigenous women's practices.

younger women of Huexotzinco would visit a “devout hermitage” dedicated to Nuestra Señora by morning and, then, when they would stage a practice matrimonial ceremony, the women would sing not understanding the “meaning of the song” in the church patio—just as they did in the houses of affluent women. The singing maidens would draw in their family and caretakers (“Indias viejas”) in this romantic depiction of the act of propagating the faith.⁶¹⁰

Excellent examples of pre-contact-style prototypes for more thoroughly Christian hymns can be found in two Nahuatl-language compilations of poems and songs (themselves obviously influenced by Catholic elements), the *Cantares Mexicano* and *Romances de los señores de Nueva España* of the 1550s and ‘60s.⁶¹¹ Historians have harvested many elements from these and other sung texts to debate the nature and trajectory of a revitalization of “Aztec” poetry and metaphor, history, spirituality, and zeitgeist in the sixteenth century.⁶¹² According to John Bierhorst, who translated and edited the *Cantares* (1985), the songs collected in it were colonial “adaptations” of both pre- and post-conversion stories.

Arthur Anderson, in his important translation and study of Sahagún’s *Psalmodia Christiana*, seemed to agree with this assessment of sixteenth-century song forms when he argued that the mentality of newly converted Native *cuicapicque* (“song-makers”) differed from that seen in European Christian canticles. In his view, Sahagún’s purpose was to fill the gap between semi-acceptable re-articulations of Native song (such as those

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 373.

⁶¹¹ Bierhorst, *Cantares mexicanos*, 9-12; see also his thoughts on Christian influences (33-34).

⁶¹² Bierhorst was by no means the first to pay attention to the *Cantares*. For an important critique of Bierhorst’s specific approach to the *Cantares*, see Lockhart, “Care, Ingenuity and Irresponsibility: The Bierhorst Edition of the *Cantares Mexicanos*” (*Reviews in Anthropology*, 1991).

found in the *Cantares*) and dogmatic didactic songs from Europe, though Bierhorst believes that the *Psalmodia* also catered to indigenous phraseology and metaphor.⁶¹³

It is useful to apply place-based analysis to a comparative look at the *Cantares* and the *Psalmodia*, an approach that not only serves to fill a gap in the study of sixteenth century ethnomusicology, but which as well demonstrates the power and tenacity of indigenous knowledge in transcultured colonial learningscapes. The *Psalmodia* was designed to create Christian “canticles accommodated to the festivals of the year for them to sing instead of profane [songs]… a Catholic book free of all suspicion of error or heresy and very necessary and beneficial for these natives’ knowledge.”⁶¹⁴ The *Cantares*, possibly lacking the oversight of a Catholic priest, were collected with antiquarian concerns.⁶¹⁵

In the *Cantares*, the famous *Xochi Cuicatl* (“Flower Song”), the singer(s) describe the ways in which Nahuas can make Huexotzinco a productive place for the nobles listening in, or possibly the spiritual return of ancestral heroes.⁶¹⁶ In this poetic song references to verdant places and valiant heroes are inextricably linked to a courtyard space, a learningscape that Nahuas had used in pre-colonial Huexotzinco. At the heart of the song, midway through the verses, the singer/drummer establishes a narrative about

⁶¹³ Bierhorst, *Cantares mexicanos*, 86-87; Anderson, *Bernardino de Sahagún's Psalmodia Christiana*, xxii.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶¹⁵ Bierhorst, *Cantares mexicanos*, 9-12. Lockhart argues on the other hand that the *Cantares* were created in Mexico City “under the auspices of the Franciscan philologists of the capital,” *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 393.

⁶¹⁶ Bierhorst argued that this was a “reprisal song” meant to chastise the Huexotzinca and Tlaxcala peoples the singer describes, which he bases upon the calling to arms that are for “(Mexican) ancestors as revenants (*Cantares mexicanos*, 437). However, the song regularly praises the place and people of Huexotzinco, as he also points out.

why the nobles should listen, calling upon the memory of the local lord and ruler

Tecayehuatzin:⁶¹⁷

Thus, in the same way the lord, the vaulted one comes to do so, only with the polished Quetzal-bracelet-like thing / He pleases the only-god [*teotl*], how else, perhaps / He consents. Through it there is life how else would there be something good on earth / May it be so from now and for all time after. I am bathing them [the nobles] in / Chalchiuh. Nobles I am just flower-like spinning for / the well-bred. Only I am here, and through my song I am wrapping up towards the nobility / Here, at the foot of the drum. / Henceforth, I have become a guest here, in Huexotzinco, I Tlatoani, I Tecayehuatzin / Only the precious green jades I gather them all together. / The nobles, I am just spinning [them] like flowers, the well-bred ones. / From within the heaven now comes good-flowers, good / Songs that remove our pain, remove our sadness. [interjection] / He the Chichimec-lord, the Tecayehuatzin with [the songs], / Indulge in it.⁶¹⁸

The direct references to being physically present “at the foot of the drum” and as a “guest” in the presence of Huexotzinco’s *altepetl* demonstrates the importance of place for Nahuas by directly connecting the performance of the song with the stated surroundings. The listening nobles and other audience members refer to the mental conception of Huexotzinco as a people and place, encouraging the “well-bred” nobility with a place-based song coaxing and empowering them to be “flower-like,” to be bathed in aural performance.

The song’s religious implications—recorded after the advent of Christianity but still harkening back to pre-Christian places—are also telling. Later in *Xochi Cuicatl*, the

⁶¹⁷ Leon-Portilla argued that Tecayehuatzin was the poem’s author, which is very plausible, however, the only references to authorship come from the explanatory information in the *Cantares*; Leon-Portilla (ed.) *Fifteen poets of the Aztec world* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

⁶¹⁸ *Xochi Cuicatl Cantares Mexicanos* Folio 9v-12r.: *No iuh quichihuaco[h]n teuctlo[h]n timalo[h]a ye [z]an quetzalmaquiz-tla/matloltica ya conahuiltia y[n] celteotl huia achcanon azo ce-/yan ypalnemoa achcanon azo tle nelin tl[atic]p[a]c a ohuaya etc/Ma cuel achic aya ma oc ixquichcahuatl niquinnotlanehui inchal/chiuhtin i in maquitzin i in tepilhuan aya zan nicxochima/lina intecpilotl huia zan canica nocuic yca[h] ya noconytl/a/catzohua a in huehuetitlan a ohuaya ohuaya/Oc n[i]-on-cohua-ti nican huexotzinco y nitlahtohuani nitecaehua/tzin hu'a chalchiuhti zan quetzalitztin y niquincenquix/tia in tepilhuan aya zan nicxochmalina intecpillotl/huia ohuaya ohuaya/A yn ilhuicac i[h]tic ompa ye ya huitz in yectli-ya[n]-xochitl yectli-/yan-cuicatl y, compoloa n t[o]ellel compoloa n totlayocol y intlaca'zo ye[h]huatl in chichimecalteuctli in tecayehuatzin yca x[i]o[n]/a huiyacan a ohuaya ohuaya...,*

singer appears to draw in the new, Christian figures and motivations: “And you that are warbling there, it would seem, on the flower-tree branches, where flowers are swelling... [you are] a singer for God... first of these singers to watch for the dawn.” This and other flattery calls forth “God” and local warriors from the past within the courtyard, perhaps represented by costumed Native participants in the moment of the song’s performance.⁶¹⁹ Next, “Angels” or winged figures of some variety came forth, announcing God by playing flutes, and the fellow observants pounded upon a drum, in this case one situated “within the house of flowers.”⁶²⁰ Christian influence, in the form of Spanish loanwords, such as *angelos* and *Dios*, exemplifies a period of transition within developing Catholic-Nahuatl sacred songs. The *Cantares* may indicate indigenous agency in the autonomous or semi-autonomous antiquarian effort to maintain old knowledge while fusing it with the new, though likely not without clerical influence in the post-evangelist moment. In this latter portion of the song, singing or “warbling,” as it were, “in this home of yours, this picture house” resurrected historical indigenous figures alongside European them in the imaginations of the singers.⁶²¹

The performative physicality of the song in the *Psalmodia* entitled “The Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” parallels that of the *Xochi Cuicatl* in various ways. According to “The Resurrection,” “All you little birds: hover, all of you, over the various precious trees as they are budding, as they are arching.” These fecund trees, noisy birds, and precious flowers were “Spread circling about our church courtyard.” Christians “sing together; let us take pleasure together; together let us praise the great Lord Jesus,

⁶¹⁹ Bierhorst, *Cantares mexicanos*, 162-163.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 164-167.

⁶²¹ Ibid., 166-167.

for He is resurrected.” Sahagún, too, had his singers pay homage to winged creatures alongside celestial beings: “You divine orioles, you grosbeaks, you mockingbirds, you hummingbirds, all you sons of God, you angels: come, circle round the courtyard of our church.”⁶²² The use of hummingbirds in near conjunction with the “sons of God” and “angels” was surely a reverberation of Mesoamerican metaphors about the flighty colorful birds, about the sacredness of their flashing feathers, and perhaps even the pre-contact belief associated with the birds and warfare. Hummingbirds were identified with Huitzilopochtli (“Hummingbird on the Left”) and the deceased warriors descended from their duties escorting the sun to sip nectar from flowers in the guise of hummingbirds, which Mesoamericans considered to be aggressive creatures.

When Sahagún recorded the Nahuatl psalm for “All Saints,” to be performed in November, he included a narrative about actions of saints Peter and Paul in Rome. We hear of the “spacious temple which they named the Pantheon… [It] was very large [and] circular, and all vaulted. There they placed all of the gods that they had taken.” What Christians saw as false gods, such as the Romans’ god Jupiter, sat on a “godly throne… the [other gods] remained encircling him; they followed, resting on the wall, as if they thus were honoring their god Jupiter.” To put a halt to this paganism, Saint Peter and Paul—two figures fashioned, regularly, into the fabric of monastic architecture—entered the Roman Pantheon and “broke up the gods’ images, destroyed them,” setting stage for

⁶²² Anderson, *Bernardino de Sahagún's Psalmodia Christiana*, 112-113: *In teuiutica tisuchitotol, in telototol in tacentzontlatole, in tiuitzitziltzi, in ie amuchinti in amipilhoa in dios, in amangeloti xioalmouicaca, xiciaolotimaniqui in toteuital*. The English translation is Anderson’s; see also 108-109 for another reference to these kinds of precious birds that does not, however, link them to *angeloti* (the pluralized loan “angels”) or *dios*, the Christian God.

Mary and the martyrs to find a place in Rome.⁶²³ This sacred narrative likely rang true for Mesoamericans, with other key figures and places inserted into the account's narrative arc, but comparing it to the *Nican ompehua Huehue cuicatl ynnnepapaquilizcui tlatoque* of the *Cantares* reveals more of the indigenous perspective of the colonial learningscape.⁶²⁴

This “Very old ancestor song” describes the intervention of the convent of Santiago de Tlatelolco, as well as local history, from an indigenous perspective. Throughout, the singer, the “old man,” praised a Bishop (perhaps Zumárraga), referred to the physical church grounds (using the term *oztocalli* or “cave house”), mentioned Fray Pedro de Gante by name, and described the pedagogical tools of the colonial learningscape, especially the library of Santiago. The metaphorical cave-house appears to have been blanketed in flowers. Mirroring the *Psalmodia*’s depictions in image and text of flowers bursting forth from churches, the song in the *Cantares* includes the Nahuatl *Xochioztocalco* (“in/at the flowery cave house”), likely a specific structure or place, though it is difficult to pinpoint.⁶²⁵ Furthermore, the final stanza may, according to Bierhorst, position Resurrection motifs with those from an indigenous perspective on “life” after death, a form of transmogrification where in the person was not reborn, but rather took on a new form and purpose.⁶²⁶ The references to “this baby who has been speared, this thorn within the flexing neck bone,” though specifically attributed to Tezozomoc, imply the Native sacrificial and autosacrificial use of pointed objects to pierce human flesh and, thus, bleed out sacred blood. It may also, depending on the

⁶²³ Ibid., 320-323.

⁶²⁴ Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 178-183.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 180.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 438-439.

listeners' Christian education and upbringing, reference the spearing of Christ at Crucifixion and a concept found in of both types of learning systems that thorns or spines produced new human life.

Nahua Catholics' songs filled the place of worship, "God's home," with praise. Their words were a refreshing and potent sound that fought back against the pagan past. Performing Christian wisdom in song within the sanctity of the sacred place itself, placing the singers, drums, flowers, and memories of the past within the church grounds, the *Cantares* presented the legitimacy of Nahua sacred canticles alongside that of the Catholic priests, painted depictions of biblical events, and texts of Christian instruction. The lyrics, flowing from the mouths of the *cuicanime* [or *cuicanimeh*] and other indigenous parishioners, and words so full of age-old Nahua forms of expression and content—along with the new—provided a crucial medium for remarkable cultural survivals.

Sahagún's *Psalmodia* reverberates with mixed messages, too, drawn directly from biblical passages, and the singing of Nahua-Christian hymns would have certainly produced challenges for those navigating the literal details. For instance, in the "First Psalm" of the "Holy Cross, a "miracle that Jesus Christ our Lord wrought" was the fulfillment of an earlier prophetic act of "our Lord" (God) who was angry "because of the sins of the children of Israel" in the time of Moses, causing the Creator to order "snakes to issue forth against them. They were stung by snakes." The portentous quality of this story becomes clearer in the song when Moses intercedes with God on behalf of the Israelites, with the result that "our Lord said: Moses, make an iron snake; hang it on a post; stand it on a mountaintop that everywhere it may be seen. Anybody bitten by a

snake, if he will look at the iron snake, will at once recover, will not die.”⁶²⁷ This lesson of the Psalms might confuse and confound Native learners, especially those hearing the lyrics in the first decades after conversion. The chances for mutual misunderstandings regarding the worship of serpents and trees in a pre-Christian context are exactly the sorts of troubles Lockhart and others have highlighted as being part of the process of “double-mistaken identity.”⁶²⁸

In the end, didactic music produced for the colonial learningscape clearly tried to echo the optimism of the New Faith, especially its ability to make earthy people and places better than they were before. Inadvertently, it is likely to have helped maintain indigenous knowledge of earlier beliefs and practices, as well. *Cantores* (singers) might intone about early miracles of Christ and God while conjuring up memories of sacred serpents and trees.

Conclusion: The Persistence of Memory Despite the Attempted “Conquest” of Indigenous Learningscapes

This chapter explored some elements of sign, text, and song put to use by pedagogues in the early colonial learning environments. Remembering fray Domingo de

⁶²⁷ Anderson, *Bernardino de Sahagún's Psalmodia Christiana*, 146-147. For the full biblical verse, see Numbers 21:5-9 (reproduced here from the King James :

5 And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neighter is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.”

6 And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died.

7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8 And the Lord said unto Moses, “Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”

9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

(<http://www.thekingsbible.com/BibleText.aspx?bibleid=4021008#>)

⁶²⁸ Lockhart, *Of Things of the Indies*, 99.

la Anunciación's tale of exorcism at Tetzcotzinco, as told in Agustín Dávila y Padilla's *Historia* (1596), reveals how persistently the teeth of indigenous knowledge locked on the cultural memories of the local populace. Though a biased hagiographical sketch, Dávila y Padilla's work chronicled the Dominican hemispheric evangelism from pre-contact times to publication, and it defined Anunciación as a hard-nosed and persistent preacher, one who travelled extensively throughout Mexico and Central America. If we give credence to his account at all, we learn that the memory of Nezahualcoyotl and indigenous conceptualizations of coyote intelligence and the sacred qualities of both were threats to Catholic lesson plans, as was an undamaged survival of the Tetzcocan ruler's sacred compound at Tetzcotzinco.

The persistence of Native knowledge, memory, and culture was also revealed in other Christian printed works produced by the collegians, as well as in "ethnographic" manuscripts that circulated in unpublished form. Recording the lyrics of songs, reaffirming customary lessons, and repurposing teaching tools for the classroom revitalized and did not defeat Native ways of knowing within the colonial learningscapes of the Valley of Mexico. Bilingual *Doctrinas* and Nahuatl-language catechisms adopted the structure and style of preexisting didactic techniques, shape shifting to meet the needs of the student bodies they purported to inculcate. The *huehuetlatolli* supported the discursive exchanges between the teacher and the precocious child of Anunciación's *Doctrina*. The boys' grandmother had meant to instill local history at the request of the tutor as a way to shore up their knowledge about familial lineage, but also to school them about good behavior. The Mother admonished the older boy that he did not "fear things at all; when he has left (flying out), as though he were a Chichimec he goes beating his lips,

he goes shouting (while) he runs.”⁶²⁹ Left unschooled by family and elders, those knowledgeable about the Chichimeca and the ways of acting that led to disarray, Native children might only receive half of the important lessons to be learned in New Spain. Indigenous participants in the epic process of Catholic education in central New Spain’s learningscapes shaped the collection of local knowledge and history, and then adapted it to new Christian styles as well, as seen with the mixed traditions found in the *Cantares Mexicanas*.

Even in the utopic envisioning of what a colonial learningscape ought to have been, such as the Quiroga’s Santa Fé Acasúchil, we find the way that architecture bent to the will of the landscape and its Native occupants. How else could the new faith best reach a wider audience then by diluting its strict message of imposed structure with an admixture of preexisting forms? Alien designs, in other words, were articulated for indigenous minds, and not the reverse. Disrupting in degrees, however, new constructions of churches and conventional courtyards were clearly complicated as well with Christianity.

Under the umbrella of Christian extirpation campaigns, moral guidance, liturgy, and oral performances, Catholic pedagogues attempted to create a clean slate, a purer form of transplanted Christianity in Mesoamerica. In the process, however, indigenous knowledge found innovative ways to persist, both thanks to native agency and the interests of Spanish educators to create a Catholic sense of place in educational materials. Indigenous learning modalities turn out to have been very adaptable; Spanish clerical pedagogues, perhaps unwitting, were accomplices of the revitalization of local

⁶²⁹ Karttunen and Lockhart, *The Art of Nahuatl Speech*, 158-159, 194.

knowledge. The adoption of pictographic writing for catechisms, the use of indigenous modes of learning through song, repurposing of the wisdom of the elders in *huehuetlatolli*, and even the violent interventions into indigenous sacred spaces and the learningscapes of the *cuicacalli*, the *calmecac*, and the temples, inadvertently fostered a measure of preexisting Native cosmology to survive and to seep into Catholic didactic presentations.

In the following chapter, key players, such as Juan de Alameda, will return, and new pedagogues will add their visions of the most perfect forms of provincial schooling into the mix. Foremost among them is Diego de Valadés—an important intellectual architect of the ideal “classroom.” Yet even the perfect Valadesian courtyard of the late-sixteenth century was not proof against the equally potent, visually bicultural audience that interacted with such places in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley on a daily basis.

CHAPTER V

LOCAL LEARNINGSCAPES: THE SHAPE, DESIGN, & PRACTICE OF NAHUA PROVINCIAL EDUCATION

Diego de Valadés: Chief Architect of the Perfect Classroom

Fray Diego de Valadés and his work exemplify the top-down formula of Christian education in the courtyards of New Spain. The facts of his life are somewhat obscure. It is believed that he was born in 1533, a mestizo son of a Spanish *conquistador* of the same name, and a Tlaxcalan noble woman. However, some have argued that he was actually a Spaniard himself, who, at a very young age, was brought to New Spain following his birth. Whatever his origin and ethnicity, by 1549 and at the age of 16 he had entered the *Colegio de Santa Cruz* in Tlatelolco, and there he was subjected to daily instruction alongside the Mexica, Tetzcocans, Tlaxcalans, and Huexotzinca, among many other elite children.⁶³⁰ By the time he turned twenty-two in 1555 he was ordained as a Franciscan priest.⁶³¹ This was also the same year the Mexican Provincial Council declared that pedagogy aimed at indigenous peoples needed reassessing, and that Native communities took too many liberties when they were left in charge of their own education. From the application of religious images to musical instruments being played in the local atria for festivals, Native Christians supposedly were fouling what otherwise should have been a clear message of faith.⁶³² Facing this pedagogical dilemma in the 1550s, Valadés did not respond exactly like some of his Franciscan brothers who had grown up in Europe.

⁶³⁰ The fact that as a young man Diego attended a school primarily for Natives did not necessarily mean that he was Native himself, though of course he may have been a high-status *mestizo* whose mother was a noblewoman from the Conquistadors' most important allied province.

⁶³¹ Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana*, x; Jaime Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs: Art and Liturgy in Colonial Mexico* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 6.

⁶³² Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 80-83.

At the time that the young Diego attended the *Colegio* he would have been subjected to the same learningscape as his Native peers. According to fray Pedro de Gante, instruction was carried out in large classes of roughly fifty to a hundred students, with a single priest-teacher leading the boys through reading and letter writing, catechism, sermons, and oral recitation.⁶³³ The *Colegio*'s physical plant evolved over time, but students always moved from educational halls to dormitories situated behind the church; their instruction included academic and manual training in craft production, too.⁶³⁴ Gante's adaption of pictorial means of instruction, his subsequent writing of the first *Doctrina Cristiana en lengua Mexicana* (1553), his mentorship of Valadés, and the latter's continued practice of both visual and textual media helped colonial learningscapes maintain existing Mesoamerican modes of learning, albeit in a different guise.⁶³⁵ Perhaps in consequence to his childhood instruction with images as text, the future Franciscan developed into an accomplished artist of Christian doctrine. Valadés utilized these skills and his fluency in three common indigenous languages--Nahuatl, Otomí, and P'urhépecha—to educate creoles, mestizos, and indigenous boys in iconography and art at Tlatelolco's Franciscan school.⁶³⁶ Later in life, he evangelized in areas north of Mexico Tenochtitlan among less sedentary Chichimecs living in New Galicia. In the 1560s, he returned to preach among the Nahuas and Otomíes of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley.

⁶³³ McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches*, 372-374; for more on the Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco, see Michael Mathes, *Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco: la primera biblioteca académica de las Américas* (1982); see also Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial* (2000).

⁶³⁴ Sanford, *Story of Art and Architecture*, 147-148.

⁶³⁵ For the doctrina tradition, see Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 80.

⁶³⁶ Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana*, ix; Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 63-64.

Over the course of these interactions he became infatuated with indigenous memory, material culture, and ways of learning and maintaining knowledge. In fact, his magnum opus, the *Rhetorica Christiana*, devotes four chapters solely to a study of what he called the “artificial memory” of Natives, a study of the inner workings of the Native American mind.⁶³⁷ He believed that the Nahuas’ use of images and the landscape strengthened their ability to retain information, an important aspect of Nahua memory.⁶³⁸ In other words, he found value in Native uses of space and place in education. Explaining the “art of memory” (*ars memoriae*), Valadés used a terminology that later place-identity and spatial theorists adopted, believing that objects helped to deepen one’s ability to retain information. A *locus* (place) and groups of *loci* (“places”) would be paired with *imagines* (“images”) that augmented learning outcomes. This revolutionary idea, though he never mentions what inspired it, likely grew from his experiences teaching Christianity to Natives through sermons, texts, and images throughout his life.⁶³⁹ Valadés seems to have searched for educational practices that would suit Native learners in ways that basic ecclesiastical pedagogy could not.

Valadés appears to have borrowed the symbolism of place glyphs when he described and illustrated the role of indoctrinators in the Americas. “Illustration 7” in the *Rhetorica* is Valadés’s depiction of the relationship between Christ, the Apostles, educators, and their parishioners. It is a metaphorical example of how he believed that Christianity, Catholics, and the environment could live in complete harmony. He wielded

⁶³⁷ Since as an adult he did not consider himself “Indian” (he self-identified as a Spaniard), he did not consider “artificial memory” his own.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., xxv-xxvi, and “Secundo Parte, Capítulos 24-28.”

⁶³⁹ Wake’s in-depth investigation of hundreds of sixteenth century churches and courtyards uncovered “nothing to suggest that [Valadés’] proposal was ever taken up...” though she qualified, “this is not to say that the stones did not function as reference points on the body of the structure,” as she then proves quite well (*Framing the Sacred*, 142 & Chapter Five).

religiously charged zoological and anthropomorphic tropes, depicting the proverbial flock as sheep feeding in the fruitful pastures of Christ. Christ, the centerpiece of the image, supports a spade while offering the flock sheaves of wheat and an opened bundle of abundant crops. His blood pours forth from wounds in his side and the tops of his feet to fill a large fountain decorated with figures of bulls, lions, and large birds of prey (probably eagles). Valdés's preachers, figuratively depicted as hounds wearing collars, guarded the flock from atop of one of four mountains placed in the image's corners, keeping order in Christian society through the "foresight and vigilance of the missionaries, as sentinel dogs, designated."⁶⁴⁰ While sheep, bulls, and lions (not to mention large guard dogs) were introduced other qualities of the *Rhetorica*'s illustrations seem to recall indigenous ways of rendering portentous landscapes. For instance, it would appear that Valadés' guard dogs, posed on mountains, matched the pre-contact indigenous use of eagle- and jaguar-mountain glyphs (among many other glyphic animal-place representations), such as the sign for the *altepetl* of Coyotepec (fig. 5.1).

Valadés' *Rhetorica* contains priestly philosophies and descriptions of techniques about education influenced by the forms and natures of the Valley of Mexico's earliest colonial learningscapes as they had been shaped by Pedro de Gante, Bernardino de Sahagún, and Juan Focher, among others, during a window of time between the 1530 to the 1550s. The Valadesian vision of education was undoubtedly informed and transformed by his students, the Nahuas, Otomíes, and the Purépecha (and possibly other Natives, "Chichimecas" of north-central Mexico) he encountered. By the 1570s, he was living in Europe, traveling around France and Spain and eventually residing in Rome and

⁶⁴⁰ Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana*, 8.



Figure 5.1, Valadesian vision of the spiritual landscape (2016). In this woodblock print from *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579), Valadés (or a commissioned artist) renders into anthropomorphs the four pillars of the Faith, sculptures of the apostles, and the proverbial flock of humanity. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Perugia, where he finished writing and publishing the *Rhetorica*. Besides the obvious tools at his disposal (pen, parchment, and writing desk), there is little indication that he brought material goods with him to Rome aside from his own memories and perhaps some sketches and notes. Whatever his source base—written on paper or etched into his mind—his work framed the process of conversion for teachers active in New Spain.

Valadés intended for educators to utilize the *Rhetorica*'s twenty-seven illustrations as references, or perhaps as images to display to students as visual aids facilitating the transfer of knowledge.⁶⁴¹ All of the images are didactic, and with a few

⁶⁴¹ Valadés likely had the assistance of professional woodblock carvers and a small print-making workshop owned by Pedro Jacobo Petruito (*ibid.*, xii-xiii).

exceptions can be described as being “narrative” in nature.⁶⁴² Some depict the Christian world and its social order, telling their stories by integrating Natives into the larger Christian world that explains hierarchies of power, spirituality, and knowledge.

How much influence on the form of these illustrations is concerned has been the focus of a certain amount of controversy. There is no indication that Valadés knew how to carve woodblocks; only a few of the engravings are glossed in Latin to say that he conceived of them himself. Jaime Lara argues, “we should consider [Valadés] the conceptual designer rather than the actual artists or engraver” yet this does not mean that Valadés made only a minor contribution to the forms taken by the illustrations.⁶⁴³ The care taken with connecting the explanatory text to them throughout the work argues that his influence was strong and constant, even if he may not have controlled all the details of the illustrations. For example, the depiction of circular *posas* (small chapels in the corners of the *atrio*) with open arches have been critiqued as inauthentic details, yet it seems as if circular sacred buildings were already in use in Mesoamerica when Valadés' lived and worked there.⁶⁴⁴ In the end, it is difficult to ascertain how effectively the *Rhetorica* actually functioned as a pedagogical tool in New Spain's classrooms. Yet it is abundantly clear that following its publication, prominent chroniclers, including the

⁶⁴² For instance, Valadés' treatment of the anatomy of the human mind (Illustration 4) or his schema for a hybrid glyptic-alphabetic code and reproduction of the Aztec calendar (Illustrations 9-12) do not explicitly tell a story

⁶⁴³ Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 64-65. Valadés, *Rhetorica Cristiana*, Illus., 1-24. Scholars do not, for instance, dissociate other priests from the woodblock prints they inspired. Some may believe that Valadés influenced only those images that lack careful shading and artistic rigor. But the Latin labels accredit him with many of the most detailed prints.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 65; Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 189-190. Lara holds that “the imaginations of his Italian engravers” got the better of Valadés,’ but bases this critique on what seems like fairly fanciful interpretations on his own part

Franciscan Jerónimo de Mendieta, incorporated copies of his illustrations into their own works, which, in turn, circulated among the Christian educators of the day.⁶⁴⁵

No image best represents the “perfect classroom” of sixteenth-century evangelization than Valadés’ “Illustration 18,” a sketch of an imagined courtyard where Catholic priests are shown teaching Native students (fig 5.2). The image was so vivid that it inspired the seventeenth-century hagiographic chronology of the Franciscans, *Gloriosus Franciscus rediuius siue Chronica observantae strictioris...* (1632), by Marianus de Orscelar, and perhaps others (See Introduction, Fig. 1.3). The *Rhetorica* engraving presents a two-dimensional overhead view of a monastery’s courtyard, providing a bird’s eye view of the proceedings. Four straight brick-and-mortar walls, three interrupted by gates, demarcate the limits of the scene. There are four domed and circular corner chapels, or *posas*, with an arched arcade running along the base of the illustration. Educational scenes are placed around this courtyard featuring priests and groups of Native students undergoing instruction; these scenes are labeled with capital letters from A to R and/or glossed in a way that would have allowed that readers to compare them with Valadés’ accompanying Latin text.⁶⁴⁶ At the center of the scene there are thirteen priests—Fray Martín de Valencia and the other members of *Los Doce* led by

⁶⁴⁵ Most recognizable is the use and circulation of “Illustration 18” by Mendieta in his *Historica ecclesiastica indiana* (1582); *ibid.*, xvi; see also, Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 63-65, 67.

⁶⁴⁶ Illustration 18’s lettering system reflects the times. It includes 17 letters (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I/J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, and R.), and several scenarios are not lettered, including: MORTVVS, HOMINES, PVERI, PVELLE, and MVLIERES (thus the four corner chapels and the funeral ceremony at the top of the image). The student body consists primarily of males, though women, figures dressed in checkered skirts usually with hair styled with two plaited (horn-like) braids, are found throughout. Women are central to several scenarios, especially in the BAPTISMVS and MORTVVS scenarios. In fact, it is an unnamed woman’s funeral that the procession of Nahuas participate in. The only places in which infants or little children are depicted are in the groupings of baptismal participants (B) and the explication of the creation of the world (K). B – 2M/6F/8Y, C – 17, D- 14, E -18M/5F, F – 2M/1F, G – 2M/1F, H 4M, I- 5M/1F, K – 19M, L – 17M/3F, M – 8M/1F, N – 12M/1F/9Y, O – 7M, P – 14M, Q 5M, R – 5M, ; Mulieres 4 F, Hominies – 2M/2F, Pvelle – 4F, Peuri – 4M, Mortuus – 14M/9F

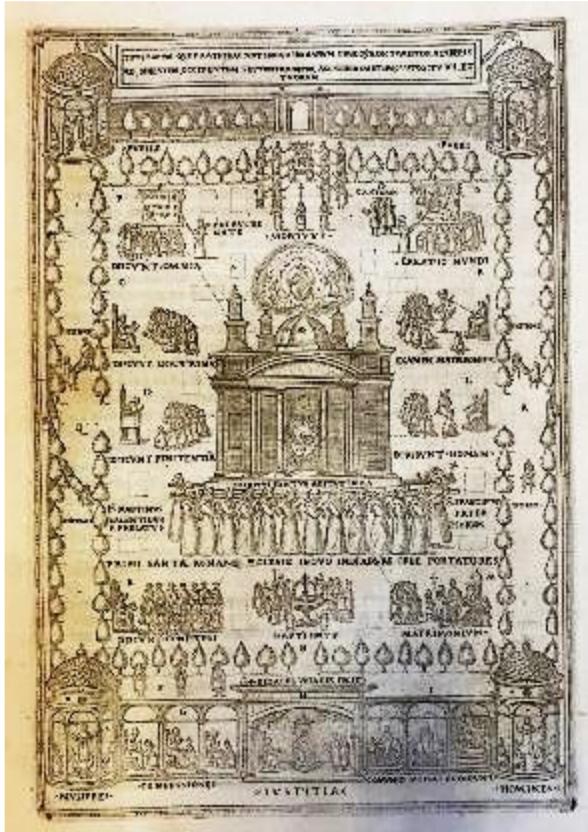


Figure 5.2, A vision of perfect pedagogy (2016). Diego de Valadés' depiction of Christian indoctrination and conventional education from the sixteenth century. Note the four corner chapels (*capillas posas*) that are characteristic of the open-air courtyard layout. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

church in a cloud. The church, the posas, scenes of teaching, the Franciscans bringing the Church to New Spain, and these holy figures combine create an ordered sacred environment demonstrating the logic of priestly pedagogy⁶⁴⁹

order founder Saint Francis of Assisi—

who are carrying the metaphorical

“Church” on a liter to the New

World.⁶⁴⁷ Lara believes that the scene

depicts the Church “as if [it] were the

Ark of the Covenant” as well as an

idealized Christian church structure

seemingly based on Saint Peter’s

Basilica in Rome circa 1570.⁶⁴⁸

Within this church readers would

identify the winged dove symbol of the

Holy Spirit surrounded by brilliant

rays of light. Further sanctification of

the scene is added by Mary and an

Angel who flank Christ seated in Final

Judgment while floating above the

⁶⁴⁷ Valadés’ accompanying text explains that “the first twelve brought the word of God and translated it into Nahuatl;” *Rhetorica Christiana*, 477.

⁶⁴⁸ Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 66-67

⁶⁴⁹ Lara believes that fray Diego created the likeness of the “new Saint Peter’s Basilica” in his famous illustration while visiting Rome in the 1570s, when he was able to observe the construction work in person; *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 67.

The overarching idealism of the *Rhetorica* must be considered in the context of Valadés' formative years of preaching in New Spain's heavily indigenous provinces. At the same time that his centerpiece, the church and church bearers, ground the depiction in Christian intervention, it also aligns with a preexisting, persistent, and traditional Mesoamerican visual schema. When complimented by the four corner chapels, the image creates the quincunx, or a display of five cardinal points (four anchors with a central intercept point) common to Christian *and* pre-contact cosmologies. Christian artists created the quincunx in their own works, such as in the form of a *saltire*, or "X" cross-like shape with the Holy Spirit (but more commonly Christ) positioned at center but empty of other kinds of ornamentation. In Mesoamerican traditions as seen in pre-contact-style codices and even Olmec burial sites, and though variations certainly existed, the quincunx was a latitudinal and a longitudinal line crossing at center, and with figures that anchored the four corners such as trees, mountains, or other things, each associated with specific directional colors.⁶⁵⁰ Thus the Valadesian open-air courtyard with chapels in its corners and activities filling all of the quarters of the sacred space resembles, cosmologically, Mesoamerican spirituality that the Franciscan picked up during his long career in New Spain.⁶⁵¹

Illustration 18 features many props and teaching media to show how the friars ought best to utilize the perfect classrooms of New Spain. These media took three basic forms: large-scale visual displays, hand-held materials, and the physical environment

⁶⁵⁰ Jesus Galindo Trejo, "Mesoamerican cosmology: recent finds," *Cosmology Across Cultures* (2009).

⁶⁵¹ While the circular *posas* in the illustration call to mind similar structures found in New Spain's church complexes, as well (though most of them have square floorplans), they lack the kinds of decorative elements that studded those "American" structures. Over time, the façades of churches and *posas* became elaborately studded with painted and sculpted didactic images. It is possible that Valadés envisioned the chapels as playing an important role for daily religious activities in Native courtyards, but failed to show how sculpture and ornamentation might be best put to use.

more generally speaking. They were all to be part of the larger practice of oral and physical programming associated with the colonial learningscape. Some of them, especially references to local flora and geographic features, would have resonated with preexisting indigenous ways of learning. The application of large-scale visual displays and portable didactic materials would also not always be new to Mesoamericans; the use of pictorial manuscripts, mural art, and descriptive sculpture all had equivalents in the pre-contact indigenous learningscape. Valadés' depiction, however, has no indication of the use of color (being printed in black and white) or the use of murals, floral or fabric banners or streamers, nor educational costumes such as masks and embroidered clothing that would have been common in older Mesoamerican times.

Valadés depicts the use of media that is featured in the illustration in nine instructional moments (fig. 5.3–5.4). In one of them, labeled “P,” a group of Natives are seated on the ground in front of an easel while a priestly figure glossed as fray Pedro de Gante (“F. PETRVS DE GATE”) stands next to it. The text accompanying the illustration describes Gante’s strong faith and importance. Gante interacts with a depiction of an easel with the alphabet upon it, seemingly leading the Native students through a reading exercise. In the scene labeled “N, The Creation of the World,” an unnamed friar stands before another group of Native students. Using a pointer, he explicates a didactic painting on a canvas of God carrying out acts of creation. Not depicted in the *Rhetorica*’s illustration were other teaching tools that included the diptych, a pair of wooden slates hinged at one end containing visually didactic material, doctrinal texts such as the *Rhetorica*, pictorial catechisms such as the one apparently described by Valadés in the *Rhetorica* (see above), and other kinds of written texts (prose catechisms, sermons,

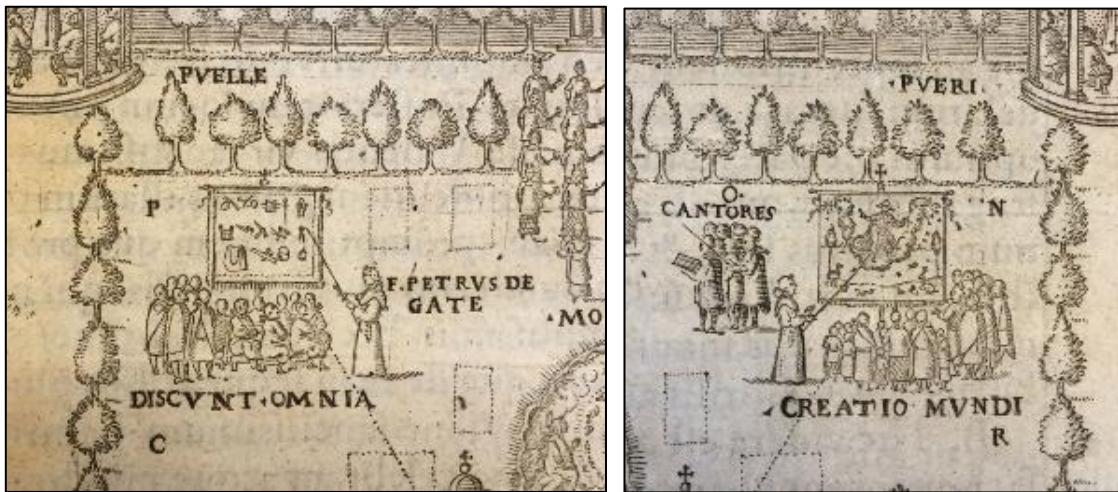


Figure 5.3–5.4, Lessons underway in the perfect colonial classroom, glyphs & mural (2016). Pedro de Gante (left) encouraging indigenous students to use pictorials and (right) an unnamed priest references a painting of biblical creation narratives using his pointer and an easel. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

confessional guides, chronicles), trees and other plants in the *atrio*, carved wooden and sculpted clay or stone objects (atrium crosses, some decorated with scenes from Christ’s Passion, baptismal fonts or cisterns, wall ornamentation), and temporary structures such as the stages, props, and scenery used for religious plays or processions.

But the *vara* (“stick”) or *puntero* (“pointer”) that does appear in Illustration 18 was a crucial handheld teaching tool. Priests employed these thin and tapered wooden pointing sticks, commonly four feet in length, to highlight specific parts of objects, paintings, and other visuals in order to fully describe and give context to the pieces of a composition, thus controlling the narration and tempo of the means of learning. According to Valadés, teachers were to use the *vara* in association with large, portable paintings that were to be kept in the church sacristy when not in use, such as in the *atrio* of the *cabecera de doctrina*’s church, or when friars traveled to *visititas*. According to Valadés in the *Rhetorica*, a priest standing to the left of an unrolled canvas wielding his pointer demonstrates that,

Here is where they inculcate them to the Christian doctrine by means of painted figures and forms on ample tapestries arranged conveniently, beginning from the articles of the Faith, the Ten Commandments of God's Law, and the deadly sins, and are made with great ability and care. In the sacred sermons these [things] are continually gone over... Thus, more easily it is engrained in the memory, as much because of the illiteracy of the, *índios*, as because they are especially attracted to this genre of instruction.⁶⁵²

The group of Natives, some standing, others kneeling, appear to be looking at the biblical scene painted on the tapestry in front of them, though the exact content of the lesson is not made clear. It is quite possible that this same uncertainty could have been experienced by indigenous students standing a fair distance away from a *vara*-wielding friar, in the back rows of a group being instructed in a large church *atrio* in sixteenth-century Mexico.

Valadés does not seem to have considered this particular kind of communication problem, but for him, the instructor was the paramount figure in the application of these types of teaching materials. The *Rhetorica* does not mention the possibility that Native *fiscales* or *maestros* might lead instruction instead of priests. His is a classroom with a strong bias in favor of European (or European-heritage) friars as those involved in all facets of instruction. Though Valadés believed priests would impart crystal-clear religious teachings, their reliance on visual communication to tell stories in large outdoor settings allowed for the operation of “double mistaken identity.” By relying on spoken Nahuatl to explain what students were seeing on canvases and in other media, as was the custom, the instructional friars unintentionally left space for their Catholic images to be received as pre-contact-influenced understandings.

⁶⁵² Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana*, 1579 f.221, JCB. My translation based on Palmera's Spanish-language edition of the *Rhetorica*, 501.

When describing native educational practices and learning environments, Valadés does seem to have been aware that there was a possibility that those who made use of his *Rhetorica*'s methods needed to guard against cultural miscommunication. In the highly detailed two-page Illustration 17, preceding his “Perfect Classroom” depiction, the artist focused on rituals taking place in the ceremonial center of Mexico-Tenochtitlan before the advent of Christianity. It features a grand pyramid at its heart, what seems to be a body of water representing Lake Texcoco, and a rolling mountain valley in the foreground.⁶⁵³ Indigenous dancers carrying flowers and other implements caper around a *teponaztli* drummer at the center, as accompanying musicians play on either side of the courtyard, which itself is a rather untidy, poorly delimited space. Juxtaposed with the “Perfect Classroom” in the next illustration, the disorder of pagan imagery and rites seems to emphasize the orderly, legible learning environment of the ideal Christian

sacred place (fig. 5.5). The Native-Christian bodies are solemn and demure, focusing on their lessons in his courtyard. For instance, in the tableau labeled “K. EXAMEN. MATRIMONIUM” where students are being taught about proper Catholic marriage customs by a pointer-armed



Figure 5.5, Proper use of educational flora (2016). The seated, unnamed priest references a sapling in the instruction of good upbringing. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

⁶⁵³ Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana*, 171-172, JCBL.

friar-instructor, all of them gathered around a small, symmetrical tree being used by the teacher as a visual symbol for Catholic matrimony.⁶⁵⁴ Compared to the disordered landscape of trees surrounding the Native temple in the “pre-contact” illustration, this new marriage examination seems civilized, calm, and well regulated (fig.5.6–5.7). The contrast between the two illustrations is surely intentional, combining to remind the clergy what happens if they leave any allowances for disorder in their own lessons.



Figures 5.6-5.7, Scenes from Illustration 17, Temple & Courtyard (2016). This large illustration offers a vision of (above) what Diego de Valedés understood to be a sacrificial rite taking place in a pre-colonial temple (*teocalli*). Trees dominate this space, looming over the dark temple interior. At the base of this temple (below) are dancers in pairs gesticulating and drummers playing, one at center and two more to the left. Compared to Illustration 18 (above), these scenes appear to emphasize indigenous religion as chaotic and unkempt. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Another powerful visual in the *Rhetorica*, Illustration 22, depicts a pointerstick-wielding friar and his students below a vivid scene of the crucifixion (figs 5.8). At the moment caught by the illustration, the priest appears to be describing the flow of blood from the five wounds of Christ, using the *vara* to point directly at one of the angels who

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., f. 219 JCB.

is using a goblet to catch Christ's blood. But Nahua "New Catholics" could well have been reminded of the flow of sacred blood to feed the gods, fusing pre-contact and Christian ideas about sacrifice in this way. Once again, Valadés may have foreseen this possibility. Two Native women in the friar's audience are directing their gaze away from the teaching stick and toward the approaching horsemen. These students might be a warning for the clergy that they should do all in their power to keep indigenous people, in particular the "weaker" intellects ascribed by Spaniards to women, especially indigenous women, from being distracted by non-Christian figures and ideas.⁶⁵⁵



Figure 5.8, Teaching the Crucifixion of Christ (2016). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

In the real, rather than ideal, educational settings of colonial New Spain, the clergy would be constrained by the interests and traditional beliefs of their students. Iberian teachers, and for that matter Native *fiscales*, were forced to make instructional tools and the pictorial lessons being navigated with their pointers relevant and understandable to indigenous audiences. In other words, in the process of teaching a holy Christian

⁶⁵⁵ It is indeed possible that fray Diego de Valadés chose women as the distracted students to emphasize their gender as weaker than the male Christians, a generalized idea about the capacity of men versus women long held by the clergy (and among the laity, for that matter) in the patriarchal thinking of the time.

platform the media and the student's attention mattered, especially if memories of indigenous learningscapes lived on in the minds of the new flock.⁶⁵⁶ But first one would have to build the proper setting.

Making a Place for Education in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley

At the behest of royal authority and church officials in 1567, the Huexotzinca played the determinant role in the placement of their new school in the *altepetl*. Strapped economically by Spanish labor and taxation demands, the town's elders consulted amongst community members to validate and survey construction plans. Finishing the church and courtyard (today the Ex-Convento de San Miguel Huejotzingo) would cost them dearly. They would need to collect the resources from their traditional allies, lumber from the Calpaneca's forested mountain lands, stone from the Chololteca's quarries, and powdery lime from the newly formed cosmopolitan town of Puebla de Los Ángeles.

Speaking through local translators and the priest Diego de Valadés, the Huexotzinca agreed that new facilities were in their community's best interests. According to Juan Gutiérrez de Bocanegra, the still-emerging courtyard had already become the place where *indios maceguales* ("commoner Indians") "congregated to hear Mass," where they were actually helping to define the value and shape of provincial learning environments and education.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁶ As an example of potential Double Mistaken Place-Identity, comparing ritual settings of this illustration and the Codex Borgia may reveal visual harmonies, such as the winged creatures attending to a precious being, the presence and shedding of sacred blood, similar uses of cross-like axis mundi, and the commonality of gender roles in each.

⁶⁵⁷ Juan Gutiérrez de Bocanegra, letter to Viceroy Luis de Velasco, found in Salas Cuesta (1982). My paraphrase of a larger Spanish text, which can be translated in whole as, "The materials that are needed to finish the work are the lime that can be brought from the City of the Angels (Puebla), five leagues away, and the wood for the scaffold and structure beams will be brought from Mount Calpa [or Calpan], three leagues from this city. Stone for the masonry is found two leagues from Huexotzinco. It is hard to quarry, and it would be good to use bulls to get it. I desired of the commoner Indians [*Indios maceguales*] to gather

The Huexotzinca had already received a foundational visit from friars hoping to establish a presence in the *altepetl*. In 1529, thirty years before Bocanegra and Valadés met with town elders, the thirty-year-old priest fray Juan de Alameda graced the community with transatlantic designs for pedagogical architecture. By most art historians' accounts, Alameda was the first and foremost Franciscan architect active in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley.⁶⁵⁸ He is said to have designed several monasteries, chapels, and courtyards in the provinces. His vision, according to Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, resulted in the “embellish[ment of] the towns where he resided, of which there were many,” including the Nahua and Otomí communities of Huexotzinco, Calpan, and Quauhquechollan.⁶⁵⁹

By 1560, Alameda had continued to labor on behalf of the people of Huexotzinco. His students there were primarily men drawn from the town's permanent residents and tenant farmers (*terreros*), whom he claimed to have educated and trained in architecture during his thirty years of activity in Huexotzinco. In the 1550s, Alameda helped them plot the limits of the *altepetl* against the expanding boundaries of Puebla de los Ángeles. By 1560 some of these Huexotzinca were worried about future labor demands associated with ongoing church construction projects. The *Matricula de Huexotzinco* (1560), created under the auspicious of another Spaniard, the magistrate Diego de Madrid in response to a petition in protest of tribute hikes (1558) from

together where they congregate for hearing Mass and through the translation of fray Diego de Valadés, friar of the Order of San Francisco, in the presence of Juan de Cortegeña and Gaspar Lopez, local translators. He made it understood to the commoners [*maceguales*] what demands Your Excellence sent” (1564); see also Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 2010.

⁶⁵⁸ George Kubler, *Mexican Architecture of the 16th Century* (Yale University Press, 1948), 2; Penny C. Morrill, *The Casa Del Deán: New World Imagery in a Sixteenth-century Mexican Mural Cycle* (University of Texas Press, 2014), 86.

⁶⁵⁹ Marcela Salas Cuesta, *La iglesia y el convento de Huejotzingo* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estética, 1982), 44-46.

Huexotzinco's town leaders, was the result.⁶⁶⁰ While Alameda may not have had a direct role in the creation of the manuscript, his mentorship of a cadre of well-respected Native artisans is hinted at by a number of images of churches found in the *Matricula*.⁶⁶¹

Beyond church construction projects, the Native apprentices and professional architects of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley would be the engines of construction for urban spaces, resource infrastructure, and the crafting of several hundred material objects, including murals, didactic carvings, and sculptures for use in provincial learningscapes. Following Lockhart and Schwartz, the “best trained and most gifted” friars commonly retreated to colonial city centers away from the more remote provincial towns.⁶⁶² In doing so, they left Native artisans and laborers to produce the monasteries seen today as glorious examples of provincial culture.⁶⁶³ Native inventiveness and artistry has usually been regarded as a result of foreign intervention, so that architects such as Alameda are typically given credit for the work involved, as was the case for indigenous-language didactic materials. Foreigners were certainly at the forefront of local patterns of building, but specific choices were made by the people of *altepetl* Huexotzinco were in keeping with their own localized visions. Alameda’s guidance did indeed help prime Huexotzinco’s artisans for the task of bringing Valadesian designs for the perfect classroom into reality.

⁶⁶⁰ Carmen Aguilera, “The Matricula de Huexotzinco: A Pictorial Census from New Spain,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* (1996): 529-541. 531; 536; Howard F. Cline, *Handbook of Middle American Indians, Guide to Ethnohistorical Sources*, Parts III (University of Texas Press, 1975), 134-135; Morrill, *The Casa Del Deán*, 86-87; Thouvenot et al., 2009 (worries about tribute increases and the 1558 petition).

⁶⁶¹ For some of Alameda’s activities in connection with architecture and the plotting of lands in Huexotzinco see *Actas de Cabildo de siglos XVI y XVII de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de la Puebla de los Angeles* (1996); 1552, 208f., 212f., 215f., and 219f. Upon his death a few years later, according to church records and living traditions, Alameda would be buried with his brothers at Quauhquechollan, today, the Ex-Convento de San Martín Caballero, Huaquechula, Puebla.

⁶⁶² Lockhart and Schwartz, *Early Latin America*, 107.

⁶⁶³ Native builders’ hard work influenced generations of Valley residents spiritually and aesthetically.

The provincial learningscapes in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley found in the Nahua *altepetl* of Huexotzinco, Calpan, and Quauhquechollan are ripe for an informed “reading” of visual and material artifacts of the florescence of Nahua-influenced Catholic architectural and artistic expression. They reproduced local as well as introduced knowledge, highlighting the mixed messages that may have once been received by indigenous students active within the provincial learningscape. Native socio-political and religious structures in the Valley both supported and dismantled Spanish colonial counterparts, in that indigenous rulers did not shy away from seeking and obtaining power, nor did they necessarily comply wholly with royal decrees or papal bulls. Rather, many elites, middling sorts, and even some commoners found ways of exploiting regulations, dogmas, and taxation for their own gain.⁶⁶⁴

Pueblos de indios (“Indian towns”) and those communities designated as *cabeceras de doctrina* (parish centers) were usually based in some way on pre-existing *altepetl* organization, though on their part Spanish authorities sometimes misunderstood what these had been. Spaniards—seeking to maximize access to extractable resources, such as food, cloth, and tribute labor—associated these larger *cabecera* units with a number of smaller *sujectos* (“subject communities”), often demoting communities that had once been outlying but equal parts of an *altepetl* to a subordinate status. Religious administrators, headquartered their services in the *cabeceras de doctrina* (usually, but not quite always, also serving as civil *cabeceras* for governmental purposes), extended their activities out into the *sujectos*, designated *visitas de doctrina* in religious terms and

⁶⁶⁴ Olko and Brylak, “Defending Local Autonomy” (2018).

usually supporting some kind of church of their own that was “visited” from time to time by the clergy who, however, were not permanently housed there.⁶⁶⁵

Indigenous rulers found mutual interest with Spanish priests and authorities to establish new teaching regimes in the provinces.⁶⁶⁶ Rural *doctrinas* adjusted themselves to and often physically sat atop pre-existing Native communities and their sacred centers. Parish clergy tended to collude with indigenous leaders to better integrate their interests with local concerns.⁶⁶⁷ Named *doctrineros* throughout the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth century, priests “dispensing (Christian) instruction” in the provinces would try to set the tone for instruction. Yet evidence from Native communities in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley suggests that after the first generation or so, these *doctrineros* had become only the first among equals in provincial educational settings.⁶⁶⁸ The act of assigning saint’s names to indigenous communities was one final step in adapting local culture to the transatlantic Christian world.⁶⁶⁹

Attached to particular *tlaxilacalli*, Spanish-Catholic administrative agents ignored much of the importance of local texture of daily life and administration, a pattern repeated in educators’ lesson plans.⁶⁷⁰ Unable to so easily ignore local history, Native communities situated Spanish-Catholic religious buildings and the services they rendered

⁶⁶⁵ Lockhart and Schwartz, *Early Latin America*, 107.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 114-115.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 93-93, 108-109.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 98 and 110.

⁶⁶⁹ Gibson, *Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 101-110; Favrot Petersen, *The Paradise Garden Murals*, 15-17.

⁶⁷⁰ Benjamin Johnson’s *Pueblos within Pueblos* (2018) argues that the tendency for Hispanic sources to label Native social structures based on their skewed Euro-centric view essentially “flattened the dynamic relationship between” *tlaxilacalli* and *altepetl* (7). Johnson is certainly not the first scholar to argue this about the colonial relationship between *tlaxilacalli* and *altepetl*, and the entity of the *tlaxilacalli/calpulli*, a subject covered in some detail in Lockhart’s *The Nahuas after the Conquest* (1992); Haskett, *Indigenous Rulers* (1991); Stephanie Wood’s dissertation at UCLA looked at this relationship in some detail (“Corporate Adjustments in Colonial Mexican Indian Towns: Toluca Region, 1550-1810,” PhD dissertation UCLA; Latin American History, 1984).

to the community within precontact ceremonial zones, similarly to governmental structures, the colonial equivalents of centralized *tecpan* or palatial units used in pre-contact times. As witnessed in Bocanegra's account, civil and religious indigenous town leaders (some now with titles such as *alcalde*, *regidor*, *fiscal* and *sacristan*, among others) worked together, apparently giving the visitor the impression that a group of "commoners" acquiesced to imperial designs.⁶⁷¹

As far as the ornamentation added to their churches, learningscapes, and even municipal constructions by indigenous artists and artisans is concerned, some art historians up to the 1980s tended to overlook or disparage the qualities of this artistic and architectural production. Scholars from Moreno Villa (1942) to Aguilar-Moreno (2006) have classified Native didactic materials as representative of a style of art, labeled: "primitive," "Indo-Christian," "Indian," "folk," or "*Tequitqui*." McAndrew mentions that the Calpan and Huexotzinco's artisans were spread thin by the demands imposed upon them by priests in Cholula, which exercised a great deal of influence in the region.⁶⁷² Cholula's projects certainly affected access to skilled labor, but claiming that the labor involved led to simpler, and therefore inferior "Indian" art, as Kubler implied, is biased and unfair.⁶⁷³ Reyes-Valerio's *Arte-indocristiano*, or "Indian-Christian Art" (2000) falls short, as well, because both terms mask the community-wide and individual efforts linked to Native artistic creation. Bailey's concept of "hybrid art" (2010), though reflective of

⁶⁷¹ Johnson is the source for the concept "commoner-administered communities" (*Pueblos within Pueblos*, 106-108), by which he means local rule was under the purview of lesser elites, especially *calpixque* ("house-keeper" or "householders"), and this particular arrangement of land tenure and tribute collection increased the likelihood that government was in local hands as it transformed in the mid-sixteenth century, at least in the case of his sources.

⁶⁷² McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 312.

⁶⁷³ Gutiérrez's PhD dissertation exposes the intricate construction project that coopted much of surrounding towns' labor force in the sixteenth century ("Converting a Sacred City," 2012). Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 140-141, argues against Kubler's position, for instance.

the intermingling, hybrid nature of much of the cultural expressions of the times (in his case for Andean communities), also blankets the complexities and modalities at play in producing this kind of art.

In reality, Native artistry was central to the construction of learningscapes at Huexotzinco, Calpan, and Quauhquechollan, even though some art historians have downplayed that ingenuity when they assume that imposed labor came before local interests. By adopting the Nahuatl term *tequitqui*, “one who makes tribute” or “tributary,” some might agree that Native laborers produced art and artistic environments in an uninventive way, not because of their own interests but in response to the demands and models being imposed by others. Instead, following Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, *tequitqui* should be redefined as a “precise term that defines the Indians’ inventive participation in a unique, transcultural art that had its own aesthetic categories.”⁶⁷⁴ Looking at the sacred art produced in the *pueblos* and *tlaxilacalli* re-centers the study learningscape creation on the contributions of indigenous artists, architects, artisans, and learners.

A Tale of Two Juans in Quauhquechollan

From the late-sixteenth century to the 1980s, it was common to credit friar-architect Juan de Alameda as the sole creative genius behind church and courtyard construction efforts in both Huexotzinco (1528) and neighboring Quauhquechollan (1532).⁶⁷⁵ Torquemada later affirmed much the same, adding Alameda “built the church

⁶⁷⁴ Aguilar-Moreno, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World*, 390-91; and see his expansive dissertation on the subject “The Tequitqui Art” (1999). This is also the stance of art historian Jeanette Favrot Peterson, among others, for framing her study of depictions of the Virgin de Guadalupe; Favrot Peterson, *Visualizing Guadalupe*, 5-8.

⁶⁷⁵ Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana* (1975). For mention of the “very strict Spanish domination” of “friar-architect” see Sanford, *The Story of Architecture* (1947), 140-141.

of Huaquechula in the year 1533.”⁶⁷⁶ Before that, chroniclers and historians have argued that in 1525 Alameda had decided to move the citizens of so-called “primitive” Huexotzinco from their traditional home on the skirts of the dormant volcano Iztaccihuatl to its present location in the valley center.⁶⁷⁷ The *Relación de la Descripción de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio*, written 1585, relates that, “Fray Juan de Alameda... moved all the *barrios* of Huexotzinco... and built the monastery that they have there in a short time.”⁶⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Salas Cuesta asserted that this move of some 40,000 households to a new location and the church construction process both began in 1528-1529, and remained active in the area until 1560.⁶⁷⁹ According to this account, other unnamed church officials had already helped construct a “primitive” church at the *altepetl*’s original site.⁶⁸⁰

Indigenous agency is somewhat ironically easier to see in Motolinia’s account. Written while he was stationed in the region between 1529 and the early-1540s, the Franciscans 39th chapter in the *Memoriales*, “How the Indians Persisted, Seeking Confession, and of the Good Example of a Good Lord, Native of Quanbiquechulla” [sic] describes the origin of the first church in that community, as well as relations between it and Huexotzinco.⁶⁸¹ It is one of several dozen anecdotes in the *Memoriales* (written in 1541, unpublished until 1901), a work that sprang from Motolinia’s desire to tell the triumphal story of Christian evangelism against the backdrop of idolatry and extirpation campaigns. Chapter 39

⁶⁷⁶ *Monarquía Indiana* published in 1615.

⁶⁷⁷ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica india*. The use of “primitive” by scholars to describe the previous home of the Huexotzinca persisted in archeological studies up to 2000, and is part and parcel to the discourse of art styles explained in the Introduction.

⁶⁷⁸ Salas Cuesta, *La iglesia y el convento de Huejotzingo*, 56-57.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 51-56.

⁶⁸⁰ Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana*. See also Lara (2004, 2008); Salas Cuesta (1982); and McAndrew (1965) for varying accounts of the timing and nature of Alameda’s activities in and around Huexotzinco.

⁶⁸¹ The *Memoriales* was written around 1541, but not published until 1901.

features an exemplary biography of a *Principal*, probably a “lord” or *tecuhtli*, named Juan whom the chronicler says had a large house full of “many friends and servants.”⁶⁸² As Motolinia told it, he heard that the noble Juan was ailing and near death from an unnamed Franciscan confessor based at the church of Huexotzinco who knew the Nahua lord well from previous contact. He was even then an elderly man with a large family. When he traveled to and from Huexotzinco, he would bring his wife and children along with him traveling “eight leagues” (about twenty-four miles, roughly a day’s journey) to visit the *altepetl* during its principal Christian festivals. Juan and his family were “subjects” of the Quauhquechollan’s *tlatoani* (ruler), the Nahua lord Don Martín, who seems to have sponsored the family’s travels, though the reasons for this sponsorship are not made clear in Motolinia’s account. When the Quauhquechollteca visited Huexotzinco, they would stay for eight or ten days at a time. During the stay, Juan would meet with the confessor.⁶⁸³ On the third and final trip, taking place during the wintery events that begin with Navidad and lasting to Día de los Reyes (December 24 to January 6), Juan presented the confessor with a gift of a “white and pure *camisa*” (undoubtedly a man’s garment). The shirt was

one that none of those brought up in the house of God wore, [and Juan] showed it to the confessor and said, ‘See here, I have brought this shirt. Bless it for me and look upon it, I beg of you. For all the times I have come here, I have only given confession, and they are many. I pray that now you will want my confession and grant me communion. My spirit truly wants to receive the body of my lord Jesus Christ.’

According to Motolinia, seeing “the strength of this confession, [the confessor] not only removed his old vestments and dressed in the white and pure shirt, but he also removed

⁶⁸² Juan is an otherwise enigmatic figure in the historical record who may possibly have been the friar’s invention,

⁶⁸³ Motolinía, *Memoriales*, 251-252.

the clothes of the old man [Juan] to dress him as a new Christian, and he agreed to what [Juan] justly commanded and religiously requested.” By exchanging the shirt, a handmade textile that according to the confessor was like no other, Juan received the body of Christ and was refashioned, bodily—an internal and external expression of Christian conversion.⁶⁸⁴

A contract of sorts, the gifting of the shirt and his knowledge of previous encounters with Juan compelled the confessor follow through with elderly man’s request. Though he was seemingly “happy and in good health” at confession, three or four days later Juan would succumb to illness and die. The illness of this local leader, who probably enjoyed a certain amount of socio-political power that brought him access to labor, resources, and decreased taxation, was a serious thing. During the three-years of contact prior to his death, Juan and company “would bring many roses, which are plentiful in that town, and, soon after, the Ruler [of Quauhquechollan] with other lords would come with more roses and cacao...” The “Mother of the Ruler and the wife of this Juan, accompanied by many women and many of them with roses,” came to visit the Franciscans in Huexotzinco, too. With roses and chocolate, seemingly the entire community wooed the friars. What Juan and the Quauhquecholteca at large, wanted, what was behind Juan and the community’s gift giving, was a reciprocal act from the clergy, the foundation of a monastery in their home *altepetl*.⁶⁸⁵

Making a “House like a Mirror to All”

On its surface Motolinia seems to have intended to highlight the “good example” of Juan’s confession and communion and the subsequent building project as triumphant

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 251.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

Christianity, and, clearly, it is a rosy depiction of religious conversion. But local projects and indigenous tactics appear to be at work as one Native community invested in and secured what would become an educational learning environment. By purchasing the commitment of the Franciscans, the town and its leaders won the construction of a new Catholic sacred center for themselves, the complex of worship and learningscape now known as the *Ex-Convento de Huaquechula*.

This was not an isolated example. According to the *Actas* (minutes) of Tlaxcala's *cabildo* ("town council"), building projects required a local feasibility study. New construction was conducted only after the town council weighed in. For instance, on April 14, 1567, representatives from several *tlaxilacalli* "heard well" the request for church expansion, and "approved" construction, stipulating that it would "not be necessary that the commoners who should build the church and monasteries be paid." This was because in the newly built church would pay them in another way, since "they will hear mass and sermons there, and there obtain and receive sacraments, and there be taught the holy Catholic faith." Tlaxcala's workers would be supervised by a paid *español callahma*, or "Spanish builder."⁶⁸⁶ A more practical reason for the lack of pay for workers, then, was that "the commonwealth has very small assets, which are being spent on church ornaments [*ornamentos*] in all the monasteries there are in Tlaxcala..."⁶⁸⁷ As they rationalized such new construction projects, Tlaxcala's leaders emphasized the

⁶⁸⁶ Kubler argued that the lack of expert architects throughout New Spain led to muddled results (*Mexican Architecture of the 16th Century*, 108-109). Regardless of his biased assumption about the artistry itself, here the Tlaxcalans seem to desire skilled and expert direction.

⁶⁸⁷ James Lockhart, Frances Berdan, and Arthur J.O. Anderson (trans. and eds), *The Tlaxcalan actas: a compendium of the records of the Cabildo of Tlaxcala, 1545-1627* (University of Utah Press, 1986), 123; the document details the actual workforce (100 builders and 100 more onsite church people) for the entire project and lists the need to adhere to a feasible ratio of construction, a "gradual" and allowing the builders to "go along doing their work gladly."

spiritual and educational rewards of the endeavor, appearing as selflessly zealous Catholics in the process.

Motolinia and others were aware of these types of exchanges and possibly the association of these with indigenous reciprocity ceremonies—traditions that helped unite communities in the region. During the “Feast of *Tlaxochimaco*,” for instance, all Nahuas throughout the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley had collected flowers with the beginning of verdant summers. They would bring these offerings to the “house of the demon [in one of Tlaxcala’s *tlaxilacalli*], and would offer them up and dance for said demon on this feast day.”⁶⁸⁸ This pan-altepetyl ceremony that involved gifting flowers to one another resulted in good will among the communities.⁶⁸⁹ Nahuas also followed a common practice of placing flower garlands and single flowers before the feet of their elected or chosen leaders to cement a ruler’s new position, presented flowers to opponents to signify a coming battle, and adorned incognito foreign ambassadors with them for secret liaisons, all of which occurred alongside “flowery” speeches and smoldering incense.⁶⁹⁰ What is more, the act of “placing” flowers was a metaphor for coupling and reproduction, to “place” children in the womb of the mother.⁶⁹¹

By accepting roses from Quauhquecholteca women and the *camisa* from the elderly *principal* Juan, the friars of Huexotzinco appear to have followed (perhaps unwittingly) traditional acts of exchange and reciprocity understood at the local level as

⁶⁸⁸ Motolinía, *Memoriales*, 197.

⁶⁸⁹ Wake explores the Mexica-Tenochca’s expression of Tlaxochimaco, described in the *Florentine Codex*, arguing that it was a truly popular, or commoner-centric celebration. The Tenochca “occupied themselves all night” to craft the foodstuffs needed for a massive celebration of food the following day; Framing the Sacred, 46.

⁶⁹⁰ Durán’s account is full of examples, but here are a few: *Book of Gods and Rites*: 302-304; 322; 332-333.

⁶⁹¹ Louise Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahua Literature* (University of Texas Press, 2001), 9.

being mutually obligatory. Juan's "wife" enjoyed a prominent heritage, the Mexica-Tenochca lineage of Motecuzoma Xocoyotzin (one of the last of the Mexicas' *Huey Tlatoani*), someone who was likely schooled in the moral teaching of the *huehuetlatolli*. One text explained how a nobleman ought to greet and convey good wishes to a newly wedded lord and lady whose marriage united Acolhua and Mexica-Tenochca families. In colorful allusions to consummation, the nobleman offers:

... and I wonder if we will also be so fortunate that a jewel and plume of ours will split and break off from you, will bloom and blossom out of your womb and throat, the sprout and blooms of the lord ruler, the Tlacateuctli; perhaps the Engenderer, the Master of the created, the Creator, the Giver of life, our divine Lord, will create... one or two children who will be the illumination and splendor of the city, through whom there will be light...⁶⁹²

The couplet phrase *aço xotlaz aço cueponiz* or "will perhaps flower, will perhaps bloom" expressed a wish for a fruitful union between lord and lady.⁶⁹³ This metaphorical union associated with flowers seems to reflect the acts of exchange associated with the construction of the Quauhquechollan's new church.

The deep roots of Native customs ensured that Christian ceremonies, too, rang with indigenous gifting practices. When residing in Tlaxcala in the 1540s, Motolinia recorded the devotion of Nahuas for Pascua de Flores, a traditional Catholic pageant. Starting on Holy Thursday and continuing into Vespers:

⁶⁹² Karttunen and Lockhart, *Bancroft Dialogues*, 124-125; 126-127; *ihuan aço ça nen no tocnopiltiz inic motechtzinco tzicuehuaz tlapaniz in tocozqui in toquetzal, aço xotlaz aço cueponiz in moxillantzinco in motozcatlantzinco in itzmolinca in icelica in ixotlaca in tlacatl in tlatoani in tlaicateuctli, aço ça huel cetzin ometzin quimomacahuiliz quimochihuiliz quimoyocoliliz quimozacaliliz in totechiuhcatzin....*

⁶⁹³ *Cueponi*, or "to bloom, burst, shine, or explode" was often used in reference to a coming forth of flowers and light. The couplet was one of many *difrasismo* used in the *Huehuetlatolli*. *Difrasismo* (the Spanish term used to describe this formula) involved the poetic Nahuatl speech patterns using metaphorical couplets to reinforce a core idea. Later, Nahuatl references, including Chimalpahin's 1613 description of fireworks bursting over the church courtyard at festival time, also use *cueponi*. "They too went shooting off many rockets" (*no cenza cuepontiaque*); *Annals of His Time*, 244–245, found through the online Nahuatl Dictionary <http://whp.uoregon.edu/dictionaries/nahuatl/index.lasso>.

[the Tlaxcalans] begin offerings in the church. They encircle the sacred sacrament and ... they offer their *mantas* [cloaks], the very same they had been covered with. Others, the poor, bring small cloaks about four or five hands in length or thinner... other women offer some cloth items like those for the offering plate... three or four hands big, woven in cotton and rabbit fur. ... most have a cross in the middle and these crosses are very different from each other... [Other] cloths bare a shield with square woven colors, others the name of Jesus or Mary, with their face on it... Others are of flowers and roses threaded and well-situated.

Motolinia offers us no specific distinctions in the ways in which participants associated themselves with key images and icons, but it is clear that devotees applied local customs to this practice, including the use of rabbit fur and woven cotton, and the individualized banners with cross-like and floral designs. Items such as these comprised the bulk of tribute in goods collected before 1519 by the Triple Alliance from subjugated peoples.⁶⁹⁴ Juan's *camisa* was crafted of very fine cotton that was "white and pure," suggesting that it was the perfect (and undoubtedly fairly expensive) gift to give to a Catholic priest, and one that was an innocuous present devoid of "dangerous" pre-contact-style decorations.⁶⁹⁵

Nahuas participating in Pasqua de Flores were also commemorating the dead.

According to Motolinia,

They would, on their knees, grab [these clothes] in their hands and raise them up before themselves, one or two or three times. Then they set the clothes on the steps [of the church]. They would make and bring these offerings, along with their children for whom they had brought an offering, and they would have them in their hands, and kiss them there, and get down on their knees. ... They did this for the spirit of the dead.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁴ Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza* (1997).

⁶⁹⁵ Mendieta also relays the story of Juan's camisa, leaving out many critical points Motolinía described, especially the offering of the roses and the subsequent church construction in Huaquechula; however, he does highlight the prominence of the Juan's confession, and his marriage to a daughter from noble lineage, and, interestingly, Mendieta adds in the account of the lady from Tehuacan, (a town in the southern part of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley), who sent her two boys to Huexotzinco for conversion and doctrine following "Don" Juan's great example (Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana*, Izcabalceta (ed.), 1870: 290-293).

⁶⁹⁶ Motolinía, *Memoriales*, 239-241.

During Pascua de Flores Tlaxcalans continued the practice of offering of textiles of various sizes made from decorated cotton cloth to a sacred recipient. These textiles were still decorated with rabbit fur and embroidery that might include depictions of flowers and roses. Other decorative embellishments may or may not have been wholly new, the crosses, what seem to have been coats of arms, and likenesses of “divinities” such as Christ or Mary. Significantly, in December 1554, Tlaxcala’s town council would oversee the production of vestments at a “cost to the [altepetl] of 300 pesos.” Their “tailors sewed up a white one and red one with all their accessories.”⁶⁹⁷ This type of community ownership of the cost and production of sacred textiles may have also resonated with preexisting patterns of exchange. The living and dead, the latter now resting beneath the churchyard or, if wealthy enough, inside the church itself, would communicate through this gifting process. These types of exchanges, as we will see, existed within the provincial learningscape complex and the seemingly Christian acts tied to these places, sanctifying the heart of the community in ways consistent with older traditions.

The church that rose in Quauhquechollan, approved by the Vatican itself, was described as a “humble monastery” by the Franciscans who oversaw its construction. The local *tlatoani*, whom Motolinia calls don Martín (likely don Martín Cortés Xochitlahua), sponsored this construction, an act that fostered the spread of Quauhquechollan’s narrative of Christianity from that period forward.⁶⁹⁸ Don Martín also seems to have been

⁶⁹⁷ Lockhart et al., *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 54.

⁶⁹⁸ The *Tlaxcalan Actas* entry for April 14, 1567 notes that body of local officials investigated the landscape and determined the placement of new buildings there; this process may well have been carried out in Quauhquechollan, too, though the *Mapa* does not record such a process. However, it is likely that the leaders of that latter *altepetl* would have been happy with a regulation similar to Tlaxcala’s stipulating that “only *pipiltin* [“noblemen”] are to establish their homes” near the monastery, though if commoners had already settled in the area prior to the new law, “only they will be there next to the monasteries,” see Lockhart, et al, *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 123-124.

the plaintiff of the text-and-pictorial manuscript known as the *Mapa Circular de Quauhquechula* (1546).⁶⁹⁹ The structure at the *Mapa*'s heart is the first-ever depiction of the monastery, the *altepetl*'s Catholic cosmological space. The center of the manuscript also glosses the antiquity of the *altepetl*'s legitimacy with a place glyph featuring what seems to be a roseate-spoonbill (*quecholli*), with a “water-mountain” (*altepetl*) icon overlaid on the bird’s chest. Human figures and structures in the *Mapa Circular*, may reflect the original layout of what we presume to have been *tlaxilacalli* or *calpolli* at the *altepetl*'s heart, and undoubtedly mark some structures as places dedicated to some kind of administrative activities.⁷⁰⁰ Part of the litigation for land and water rights, this *mapa* portrays Martín as a wise and benevolent *tlatoani*, the determining factor in the community’s “prosperity” because of his “contributions.” He was the benefactor for the local church, and a lord who espoused Christian teaching for his Nahua subjects.⁷⁰¹ These lands could be economically beneficial to anyone who could control rights to production

⁶⁹⁹ The best study of the *Lienzo de Quauhquecholan* is Asselbergs’, “El Mapa Circular de Quauhquechollan” (Tlalocan, 2011). The *mapa* is an example of the European-Native hybrid documents produced in the colonial period, manuscripts that include alphabetic text and pictorial elements in a kind of visual bilingualism; see also Cecelia Klein, “Editor’s Statement: Depictions of the Dispossessed” (1990), 106-109; Bailey, “The Indian Conquest of Catholic Art” (1998), 24-30.

⁷⁰⁰ A series of smaller *tlaxilacalli* (or *calpulli*) radiate out from the center of the *Mapa* linked together by a black line. According to Asselbergs’ study this layout indicates a hierarchical relationship between the communities depicted on the manuscript. Tributary communities are also depicted, associated with twelve pictured tributary items. A somewhat enigmatic black line, which Asselbergs defines as a “river” or “canals,” might instead be a lineage line, though this requires more analysis than is possible here. See Asselbergs, “El Mapa Circular de Quauhquechollan,” 228, 231.

⁷⁰¹ The specifics of this *mapa* are discussed in Asselbergs (“The Conquest in Images,” 2007; “El Mapa Circular de Quauhquechollan,” 2012), as well as in an article I currently am developing. For a bit of brief context: According to the accompanying Nahuatl text (top-left corner), Spanish judge don Estevan de Guzman oversaw the investigation of don Martín Cortés’s claim of ruling status in the region in 1546, a status depicted in the *Mapa*. An indigenous ruler returning from the Nahua-Spanish Guatemalan military campaign in the 1520s-30s, don Martín sought official, viceregal recognition for his quest—a campaign which is depicted in another local pictorial manuscript, the *Lienzo de Quauhquecholan*. As part of his claims to legitimacy, the *Mapa Circular* defines the ruling houses under his sway in the years after the campaign. The document—as with the others discussed in this article—should be “read” as an indigenous vision of geography, history, and place-identity shaped by the Christian-colonial context.

and water, since the properties had long produced the crops Quauhquechollan was known for: flowers, cotton, and cacao.⁷⁰²

In the years following the Spanish invasion and evangelization of Mesoamerica, the Nahuas of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley persisted in local religious praxis, continued to claim traditional lands, and sought *altepetl* unity through the construction of churches that were to become the new sacred hearts of their communities. With the encouragement from the don Martín, the new monastery of Quauhquechollan, however “humble,” helped the municipality enter the new Christian era. Motolinia reflected on its success, explaining “not only there but in all the neighboring and connected places... that house was like a mirror to all that came from all over to be baptized, indoctrinated, and give confession.”⁷⁰³ Reflecting the fervor of the friars as well as local, pre-Christian traditions, the church of Quauhquechollan and others similar structures were mirrors to all. However, the reflections seen in these Nahua-derived and locally envisioned monasteries and courtyards built in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley were not simply mirrors of exemplary Catholic orthopraxis. Rather they functioned like two-way mirrors, at once reflecting the bright gaze of outsiders and their authorized didactic texts while simultaneously allowing indigenous students the space to keep alternative narratives alive.

The Matriculated and the Dead

The circumstances surrounding Juan’s death and the Quauhquechollan church-building project occurred against the larger movements of the new colonial world. The

⁷⁰² Asselbergs (“El Mapa Circular de Quauhquechollan,” 2012). While this is not the place to carry out an extensive study of the *Mapa*, other of its key features include the tower-like church image, as well as seventeen seated human figures, one wearing a black Spanish-style hat of authority while sits on a Romanesque curule chair. A tree and five house symbols appear to be relevant to don Martín Cortés Xochitlahua’s court case.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 223-224.

sixteenth century would prove to be a defining period in the shaping of regional life.

After contact, as Europeans migrated into the valley, many came to reside in a small town southeast of Cholollan called Cuetlaxcohuapan, which would eventually grow into the important city of Puebla de los Ángeles. Native communities began to be resettled following the military campaigning of the Spanish invasion. The movement of people and things was exacerbated by increased labor demands and population decline from epidemic diseases that ravaged the western valley communities in waves, as they did throughout Mesoamerica, up to the eighteenth century.⁷⁰⁴ For example, Huexotzinco reportedly declined from 35,000 in 1524 to 4,000 in 1623, nearly a ninety percent decline.

The obvious loss of life had real consequences for these communities, not just in the form of human deaths and the flight of people fleeing disease outbreaks, but also the ways in which all of this transformed the environment. Motolinia remembered that the loss of life between 1528-1529 was so horrid, “it was impossible to bury all the dead in order to remove the offensive odor that came from the corpses, [so that] their houses were thrown over them and made into their sepulchers.”⁷⁰⁵ Priests such as Motolinia often cast disease as a punishment from God for pagans and idolaters, justifying Christian conversion in this way.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁴ Lockhart and Schwartz explained that, though communities persisted afterward, disease was the “most tangible” outcome of the Spanish presence in Native lands, *Early Latin America*, 112-113.

⁷⁰⁵ Motolinia, *Memoriales*, 21; found in Erika Hosselkus, “Noble Nahuas, Faith and Death.: How the Indigenous Elite of the Colonial Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley Prepared to Perish,” in *Death and Dying in Colonial Spanish America* (2011), 36.

⁷⁰⁶ Hosselkus explains that millenarian priests located epidemics in a historical trajectory to the forthcoming millennial kingdom; “Noble Nahuas, Faith and Death,” 38. For a classic study of the Franciscan “millennial kingdom” and how the religious’ understanding of Native conversion transformed over the sixteenth century, see John Liddy Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom* (1970).

The Huexotzinca faced another disease outbreak in 1570. According to a priest named Ovando, Native residents were leaving in significant numbers to avoid the greater tribute demands put on them with the loss of so many lives. The once populous *altepetl* only had “some 8,000 residents, from all of its *sujetos* [districts]. The... living are charged with the tributes of the dead. Because of this, many have fled to other parts.” Declining numbers such as this resulted in terrible demoralization and dislocation, agricultural crises, challenges to record-keeping, and, relevant for the discussion of learningscapes, what most scholars agree to have been a sharp drop in church construction.⁷⁰⁷

The monastery complex and material culture helped communities add a proscriptive infrastructure to the new normal of epidemic death.⁷⁰⁸ As was true of many other indigenous communities in this era, the Huexotzinca tried to document local deaths in parish records and censuses, such as the *Matricula de Huexotzinco*. Native *tlacuilos* (“scribes”) painted the pictorial portions of the *Matricula*, likely in 1559, before accompanying Spanish-language texts and certifications were added in 1560.⁷⁰⁹ Census data was collected from “alcalde[s] regidores y prencipales [sic], and other middling officials and reproduced on European paper.⁷¹⁰ The living and the dead were depicted visually, with residents of each district and community represented by heads, some with distinguishing name glyphs and, occasionally, an indication of an individual’s occupation or craft. On the other hand, the dead often lack glyphs or other kinds of identification,

⁷⁰⁷ Kubler, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America* (1993), 66-70; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 1965, 86-90; Weismann, *Art and Time*, 1985, 38; Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 85-87

⁷⁰⁸ Lockhart and Schwartz, *Early Latin America*, 113; Wake, *Framing the Sacred*. 87.

⁷⁰⁹ Thuevenot and Herrera, *Matricula de Huexotzinco: Diccionario de elementos constitutivos de los glifos y personajes*, 2003.

⁷¹⁰ Quoted identification of the types of indigenous officials involved in the process is reproduced in Thouvenot, “Estructura de la Matricula de Huexotzinco, 2, based on fol. 482r of the original manuscript.

and are simply darkened or smeared over to signify their demise. The task of counting the numerous dead became an occupation at this time, perhaps unlike anything that had existed before.

Combining an investigation of the *Matricula*'s deceased with the analysis of alphabetic Nahuatl parish death records, the *Difuntos*, ranging between 1582-1632, reveals fascinating details about changes to end-of-life documentation.⁷¹¹ *Difuntos* entries also draw out familial connections and relationships. Record keepers often list a parent, commonly the father, or the name of a spouse; the *Matricula* only draws connections between community members in the portions that depict nobility. The sparer written texts of the *Difuntos* were unable to match

the pathos of the pictorial representations of the dead in the *Matricula*, which represented emotions with weeping eyes to indicate loss.

Both records reflect individuality through naming conventions (fig 5.9).

For the *Matricula*, pictorial representations are not all the same. For instance, various glyptic iterations of Xochitepetl ("Flower Stone") imply that the name might be "written"

Figure 5.9 The Roses of Huexotzinco (2016). Church records track local deaths, including the deceased person's name. Mapping the social network should prove useful to reveal aspects of community place-identity attachment. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

⁷¹¹ The *Difuntos* registers are currently housed in the John Carter Brown Library. Fitzgerald, unpublished manuscript, will present a more detailed study of these important records. "Los difuntos" (various authors). Codex Indiana 43. San Miguel Huejotzingo, Puebla, México (1582-1640) JCBL Codex Ind 43.

several different ways. However, *Difuntos* names follow a formula, leaving little distinction between various women named “Rose” or *Castillanxochitl*.

An increase in the tracking of social details seen in the *Difuntos* exposes how church people and the educational processes being carried out in provincial learningscapes anchored society. The *fiscales* of Huexotzinco recorded deaths occurring in all parts of the *altepetl*; throughout 1619 *fiscales* documented deaths in 11 of the total of 18 *tlaxilacalli* listed in the *Matricula*, with a number of the deceased having been residents of the cabecera of Huexotzinco itself, many of them having lived in the aristocratic center of town, near the monastery.⁷¹²

Preparing for death and activities associated with dying in a Catholic context provided new lessons for people in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. Ethnohistorian Erika Hosselkus has written how, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Nahuatl testaments indicate that Nahuas actively engaged in Christian doctrine about dying while simultaneously adapting burial practices to their local needs.⁷¹³ Evaluating dozens of individual end-of-life requests, primarily created by and for local nobility, Hosselkus found that influential members of the community “considered the altar... a sacred and desirable location for their earthly remains.”⁷¹⁴ However, many Huexotzinca desired to rest at the base of saint images, namely Saint Francis and Saint John, a pattern Hosselkus believes shows the extent to which townspeople adopted patron saints earlier in the area than in other parts of central New Spain. For instance, Stephanie Wood and others have

⁷¹² Forty-four of the roughly 230 (19%) registered dead in the *Difuntos* for the year 1619 list themselves as residents of Huexotzinco (including the declared 13 *tecpan* and 19 *totollac* residents). It is important to mention that this is a single year sampled and, furthermore, distance from the parish, timing, and environmental challenges would affect the number of registered dead from any given town.

⁷¹³ Hosselkus, “Noble Nahuas, Faith and Death,” 195-214

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

shown that this phenomenon became more prevalent in the middle colonial years.⁷¹⁵ Wood found direct evidence that Native families, including wealthy landowners, failed to specifically bequeath a particular patron saint's image in their wills.⁷¹⁶ Burial practices also appear to have been dependent upon socio-economic status, with elites having more ability to find a plot inside the church in a favored, high-prestige location than their humbler counterparts.⁷¹⁷ Wood argues, however, that none of this meant that the individuals from her case studies were less pious or that their burial practices were unholy.⁷¹⁸

Not all population loss was linked to epidemic disease, so that some of the decline does not show up in death records (though at times other kinds of loss were mentioned in census records, as they were occasionally in the *Matricula*). The sixteenth century witnessed the temporary migration of indigenous populations due to conflict and participation in Spanish-sponsored expeditions in pursuit of further “conquests.” Many valley residents, often at the behest of local Native rulers, served in military campaigns, leaving home for parts of modern-day Guatemala, Northern Mexico, the US Southwest and even Florida. The Tlaxcalteca, Cuauhtlantzinca, and Cuetlaxcohuapaneca (people of Puebla), among others, recorded these campaigns in pictorials and written *actas*. For instance, the annals of Tlaxcala and Cuetlaxcohuapan recorded that between 1541 and 1542 they had engaged in battles with the Chichimeca living in Nayarit. Such military activities led them to be away from home for several years altogether: “At this time a

⁷¹⁵ Wood, “Adopted Saints: Christian images in Nahua Testaments of late colonial Toluca” (*The Americas*, (1991), 110n35.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 271-273.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., 269

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., 291.

party went to Xochipillan,” and five years later, “At this time the warriors came back from Xochipillan.”⁷¹⁹ The depletion of population during these times obviously prompted Nahua community historians to memorialize the activities of these indigenous troops, maintaining paper links to them in this way. Whether or not these temporarily absent community members were given regular Christian instruction while they were in the field is unknown, but they certainly lost their regular contact with or participation in their “hometown” learningscapes.

Natural disasters also affected the development of provincial learningscapes. Weather phenomena might strike, destroying the materials housed in monasteries, harming workers, or even destroying wood and stone buildings. One memorable occasion of this kind confronted the Tlaxcalans in 1552, when “[a]t this time there was a frightening, inexplicable event when the church at Tepeticpac was carried off by the wind.”⁷²⁰ On the face of it, this could be a reference to a tornado, but whatever happened the destruction of the church severely damaged its educational activities and whatever parish records and didactic materials that had been kept there.

Local investments on the part of indigenous parishioners in labor and land for provincial learningscapes might also face opposition from the religious officials who policed church construction. Not every Puebla-Tlaxcalan Valley *tlaxilacalli* was allowed to have a school even if they might have had a *calmecac* or *cuicacalli* in the past. Nahuatl annals and town council minutes from the region record one troubling example of external interference in the 1550s. The *Tlaxcalan Actas* account of December 1553 explains that fray Francisco de Lintorne, the Franciscan Guardian of Tlaxcala, had

⁷¹⁹ Townsend, *Here in the Year*, 162-163.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 164-165.

determined that a number of churches would be “rescinded,” or in other words dismantled, “because people have been much afflicted by there being churches at such small intervals. And it was ordered that only four are to be brought to full splendor, the ones at San Francisco Ocotelulco, San Esteban Tizatla, Tlapizahuacan de los Reyes, and Tepeticpac de Santiago Mayor. And the father guardian will decide where any other churches are approved to stand. For the saints are not to be dishonored, and often something goes wrong there [at small churches].”⁷²¹ The *cabildo* expected each community’s town officers to oversee the collection of stone, wood, and lime for these efforts.⁷²²

Tlacuilo Visions: Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley Place-Identifiers

The *Matricula* also offers some of our earliest visions of provincial learningscapes. The *tlacuilos* documented each community with a placename glyph and, often times, a rendition of the local monastery. Each depiction seems distinct in style and suggest the contributions of a number of different Native artists. The glyphs appear to have been sketched first, perhaps with charcoal, outlined in ink, and then colored and embellished with watercolor pigments. This methodology produced a variety of visions of early learning environments and the communities that built and studied within them.

Depictions of local churches offer us a glimpse of how locals constructed and placed schools within their traditions. Native authors present 27 church-like structures throughout the census, including the repeated sketches of a handful of places (fig. 5.10).

⁷²¹ Lockhart et al., 54; *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 90. The Nahuatl *annals* credit the *alcalde mayor* Francisco Verdugo with the leadership of the demolition effort: “9 House Year. At the time señor Francisco Verdugo demolished some churches;” Townsend, *Here in this Year*, 164-165 (1553 9 Calli xiuitl Yhquac quixixini deocalli señor Francisco berdogo).

⁷²² Ibid.

For instance, Santiago Xaltepetlapan's church structure consists of a three-dimensional brick and mortar wall with a columned and classical Greco-Roman arched entryway encompassing a rectangular church and cylindrical tower, perhaps a *capilla abierta* topped with a cross.⁷²³ This attempt at realism contrasts with the placename glyph for *Xaltepetlapan* ("place of pebbly sand and reed mats") drawn beside it. The placename, a more central figure on the page, presents a bold, carefully-drawn bisected circle, the upper half of which features what appears to be sand and pebbles, while the lower is inscribed with a tessellated series of rectangles representing a woven mat. The image of the Christian church stands side by side with the pre-contact symbol of the place, a visually strong survival of the pre-contact writing system, and of equal or larger size.



Figure 5.10, Xaltepetlapan, 1560 from the pictorial census of Huexotzinco. This type of hybrid text-pictorial census is useful in learning, firsthand, from local scribes, in particular, the first renderings of their town churches. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mexicain 387, Source Gallica (BnF).

On Santa María Asunción Almoyahuacan's title page, this *tlacuilo* has drawn two tall rectangular stone-and-mortar buildings surrounded with what appears to be its walled courtyard (Fig. 5.11). The right building is the church façade, with a plain black and arched opening at its base and a belfry and bell. A slightly larger and taller cloister is

⁷²³ *Matricula de tributos*, fol. 495. The churches belong to Santiago Xaltepetlapan and Santa María Asunción Almoyuacan, the latter a monastery church. The scribe also captured fine three-dimensional detail based on the use of crosshatch shading and minutia, especially as seen in the tiny windows that line the campanile seated atop the church.

connected to the façade.⁷²⁴ Two openings in the wall associated with the church lead into its *atrio*; such entrances would have been utilized by students, among others who came into the complex. Once again featured near the center of the folio is Almoyahuacan's place glyph, which has a watery theme. The implied connection between Catholic and indigenous representations rather than the disconnected icons as seen in both sets of illustrations seem to stand for the physical act of "topping" Native sacred sites with



Figure 5.11, The community church of Santa María Asunción Almoyahuacan. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mexicain 387, Source Gallica (BnF).

Christian churches, reinforcing the idea that the new faith had entered an older socio-political and sacred landscape. The individuality of each image of a church, associated with a specific place glyph, suggests that the *Matrícula*'s creators not only saw the buildings but that they also enjoyed a good deal of autonomy as they represented emblems of their corporate legitimacy based on old and new sacred places that undoubtedly also served by then as Catholic learningscapes.

The period of church building in and around Huexotzinco coincides with a proliferation of these kinds of ecclesiastical projects throughout New Spain that some

⁷²⁴ Of the 27 (perhaps 30 counting priestly figures to represent churches) depicted churches found in the *Matrícula*, only three are touched with red. Red is also found in Almoyahuacan's church illustration, the upper walls of both buildings in the image have two windows each and are topped with fortress-like crenels and merlons. Beneath these, the *tlacuilo* drew either a balustrade or decorative frieze with lines of black rhombuses touched with red watercolor. The use of color in this way is undoubtedly significant, but a more extensive analytical study of this subject goes beyond the scope of the present dissertation.

scholars see as part of the congregation process, as well as the spreading influence of the Church in central Mesoamerica⁷²⁵ There was a significant degree of indigenous participation and agency in the process in which preexisting indigenous constructs fostered church production as an expression of local identity and pride.⁷²⁶ By building churches, learning and worshipping within them, and celebrating them in their pictorial manuscripts and histories, indigenous towns used this “central tangible symbol” of the *altepetl* to assert their own identities as Catholic citizens, with its concomitant benefits, such as official recognition of their town councils and the territorial bases that came to be called the *fundo legal* and the *ejido*.⁷²⁷

A closer examination of the surface of these kinds of provincial learningscapes and the mutual misunderstandings that may have resulted will be examined in the next chapter. This process of “double mistaken identity” calls the stereotypical trope of a “unidirectional” and monolithic imposition of new beliefs and practices into question by revealing how profoundly these learning environments relied on local history when in use.

Conclusion: Provincial Learningscapes at the Crossroads

This chapter has examined two varying visions of religious construction in the mid-sixteenth century, and the result is a more dynamic interpretation that complicates the history of education in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. One clear contention is that Diego de Valadés produced a teaching manual, his *Rhétorica Christiana*, in an attempt to

⁷²⁵ For somewhat differing views of the role of the clergy in this process see Kubler, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America*, (especially 60-65), as well as Borges, *Utopia and History in Mexico*, 1977; and McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 1965.

⁷²⁶ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 14-28; Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 87.

⁷²⁷ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 206, 421. For more on these benefits see Wood, *Transcending Conquest* (2003).

capture the best practices of his ideal teachers and the imagined expressions of their pedagogy. In the end his approach appears to have been informed by Nahua communities, the Huexotzinca especially, with whom he interacted. This exchange, however, is not relayed in his manual, and the study mutes the voices of local learning environments at the same time that it appears to reify the types of learningscapes that best suited education.

So-called friar-architects have, to the present, received the lion's share of accolades when it comes to the construction of provincial learningscapes, especially the monasteries in modern Huejotzingo, Calpan, and Huaquechula. For the latter, it is irresponsible scholars to ignore the role played by local indigenous people in the founding of San Martín Caballero. As attested to in the art historical record, which is based on hagiographic accounts, it is probable that Juan de Alameda supervised its construction. But the other Juan, recognized in the Spanish records appears to have anchored the site by using a combination of innovative strategies to make an educational space in the heart of his community. His lord, don Martín, enshrined it, seemingly for his own purposes. In doing so, the people of Quauhquechollan recognized their ancestral practices and transatlantic realities.

Taking place in the period during a period of cultural trauma, when epidemic disease and forced migration, the construction of provincial learningscapes appears to have help ameliorate loss and maintain a sense of community. Recording their community's distinct church in pictorial form indicates that *tlacuilos* were primed to document local visions of perfect classrooms. They appear to have modeled there pictorials by highlighting European features, and by placing these images in conversation

with their individual placename glyphs, Nahuas framed a sense of place alongside their learning environments. This cultural context influenced the types of lessons and practices that developed within these locally-sourced structures.

CHAPTER VI

NAHUA PROVINCIAL LEARNINGSCAPES: COMPOSITE PARTS & PRACTICE

Ethno-Spatial Studies of Three Provincial *Altepetyl*

Three of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley's cities now enjoy UNESCO World Heritage status, sites of the *ex-conventos* of San Andrés Calpan, San Miguel Arcángel Huejotzingo, and San Martín Caballero Huaquechula (Quauhquechollan). Abbreviated stories of these notable places can today be read on placards placed within their precincts, heard from tour guides, or viewed through the actions of living history reenactors. This idea that sixteenth-century courtyards are now places for reenacting the past does not contradict their original purpose. Today, as in the past, people coming into these places who draw upon the specific geographic and ethno-spatial circumstances of each learningscape engage with processes of local knowledge production.⁷²⁸ The basic layout of these three courtyards and the surrounding monastic grounds follows that of many sixteenth-century churches built in the sixteenth century.⁷²⁹ The *atrio* had pragmatic features for large-scale uses “as a classroom, a cemetery, an unroofed nave, a dance floor, or even a chapter room for lay friars.”⁷³⁰ For the most part, the atrium was not used for

⁷²⁸ In the process of creating an evidentiary database for this part of the dissertation I conducted on-site surveys and “grounds truthing” investigations over two summers, 2014 and 2015, with preliminary investigations taking place in summer 2011. I visited these three churches (and several others) on multiple occasions, met with church and museum staff, photographed and documented my findings, and reviewed primary and material sources up close with authorization and supervision from local preservationists. I reviewed municipal, national, and international documentation provided onsite, in municipal archives, and online. I attended a handful of local religious ceremonies and processions so that I had a better sense of how sound and visual displays worked in real time. Following the example of scholars who have sought to increase decoloniality and local perspectives about indigenous knowledge, future projects will seek living local knowledge of community members.

⁷²⁹ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 102.

⁷³⁰ Gutiérrez, “Converting a Sacred City,” 127-128.

the production of food; lands used as orchards and for other kinds of crops were maintained in the grounds behind and to the side of most monasteries.

Native architects and their supervisors concentrated ornamentation in the atrium on church façades facing out into the courtyard.⁷³¹ Art historian Trent Sanford once called these artistic expressions “Indian symbols sprinkled here and there,” noting among more obviously “Christian” images “a partially disguised head of an Indian chieftain...used to balance that of a winged cherub; a [stone] friar’s cord terminat[ing] in the head of a snake,..[a] cactus flower, the pineapple, the chirimoya... and particularly, the ear of corn....”⁷³² Elizabeth Wilder Weismann explained that “churchyards... especially belonged to the Indians.”⁷³³ In the sixteenth century, the Franciscan Jerónimo de Mendieta was angered by what he saw as the misuse of atria—especially the entrance to the monastery—complaining that the Natives of Cuauhtinchan painted “a memory of the ancient count” of day signs and their “characters of signs full of superstitions.”⁷³⁴ Wake believed that this particular example shows both the existence of the practice of painting local knowledge upon the walls and surfaces of courtyards as well as the awareness of some priests at the time that this knowledge might present a very serious

⁷³¹ For several case studies of courtyard ornamentation, see Juan Artigas, *Capillas abiertas aisladas de México* (1992); Aguilar-Moreno, “The Tequitqui Art” (1999); Edgerton, *Theaters for Conversion* (2001); Lara, *Cave, City, Stage* (2004); *Christian Texts for Aztecs* (2008); Reyes-Valerio, *Arte IndoCristiano* (2000); and Wake, *Framing the Sacred* (2010).

⁷³² Sanford, *Story of Architecture in Mexico*, 140.

⁷³³ Weismann, *Art and Time in Mexico*, 29.

⁷³⁴ Mendieta’s complaint reads: *Y los han pintado en algunas partes; y en particular en la portería del convento de Cuatinch tienen pintada la memoria de la cuenta que ellos tenían antigua con estos caracteres o signos llenos de abusión Y no fue acertado dejarlo pintar, ni es acertado que se conserve la tal pintura, ni que se pinten en parte alguna los dichos caracteres, sino que totalmente los olviden.* (1973, 61); quoted in Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 93 and 275n50.

challenge to their endeavors.⁷³⁵ It is only recently that ethnohistorians and scholars of Local Religion have taken these objects and the stories they tell seriously.⁷³⁶

Four *capillas posas* (chapels placed in the corners of an *atrio*) that are known to have been (or still are) in the courtyards of these three churches are reflective of the Valadesian vision of the perfect learningscape, though art historians have long debated the *posas'* origins and the evolution of their designs.⁷³⁷ New Spain's *posas* were associated with biblical figures and events, often tied to scenes or themes from the processional stages of Christ's Passion.⁷³⁸ Natives must have found them critical elements in the physical confines of provincial learningscapes. *Tlacuilos* often depicted these smaller chapels next to their renderings of larger churches. Wake proposed that the *posas* had "and architectural value or symbolism that was meaningful on an Indian map."⁷³⁹ The chapels themselves are tall and broad. They tower over the viewer, some reaching as high as 30 feet inclusive of the crosses that top them. The *posas* of Calpan

⁷³⁵ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 93.

⁷³⁶ Though building over the last century, the most recent "Visual" and/or "Pictorial Turn" and the development of a larger visual studies approach to ethnographic materials in the last two decades have challenged traditional Western conceptualizations of Native American knowledge and media. See Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents," 2010; Deborah Poole, "An Excess of Description: Ethnography, Race, and Visual Technologies," 2005; Peter Erickson et al., *Early Modern Visual Culture*, 2000; For two critiques of the approach's innovativeness and its relevance to Latin American Studies, see Andrea Noble, "Visual Culture and Latin American Studies," 2004; and James Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction*, 2003. Lockhart describes several early examples in "Charles Gibson and the Ethnohistory of Postconquest Central Mexico" (1986). He offered readers a "glimpse" at visual analysis and called for the coupling of it with new philological methodologies (*The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 418-426).

⁷³⁷ Sanford called these things a "distinctly Mexican creation" (*Story of Architecture in Mexico*, 141), though antecedents are present in Spain (Schuetz-Mueller, "Survival of Early Christian Symbolism," 2000) and variations cropped up quickly after these in the Spanish Andes: Sandra Negro, "Permanencia y nuevos usos de los atrios, capillas posas, y de la misericordia en la arquitectura peruana" (Instituto de Investigacion del Patrimonio cultural, 2017); Lockhart and Schwartz, *Early Latin America*, 111).

⁷³⁸ Not all courtyards housed *posas* and when present, there was variation in placement and number. In fact, Gutiérrez ("Converting a Sacred City," 128) explains that the larger monastery complex at Cholula only had three and argues that this may have been a way for friars to expedite the process of conversion.

⁷³⁹ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 118; Wake also argued that the placement of *posas* on the *Mapa de Huapalteopan* and the *Mapa de Atlaluahca*, both from 1580, reflected usage patterns, in that the map-maker painted them directionally related to processional use (118, 127).

and Huexotzinco have high-relief ornamentations, three-dimensional narratives that explain key moments.

Scholars have long used Huejotzingo's monastery as an example of the infamous "Fortress Monastery" design of early churches, but a close reading of the space can help to downplay the connotations that fortress monasteries were first of all built for protection.⁷⁴⁰ Since the 1960s, art historians have argued that defensibility was not intended in church designs of the sixteenth century.⁷⁴¹ Rather, eighteenth and nineteenth century historians viewing the intimidating, crenulated buildings invented the idea.⁷⁴² The walls at Huexotzinco are high and the merlons appear defensive, but these types of designs also mimic pre-contact decorative traditions such as spiked spines running along the tops of walls that were reminiscent of those seen along the backs of reptilian creatures. Churches whose outer walls were covered in lime and painted white with red accents seem to have replicated familiar pre-contact designs, not necessarily a fortified Spanish structure.

Much of the actual building material for these structures was quarried from local temples. Some have argued that Native architects reused the stones of Cholollan's Quetzalcoatl temple for the construction of Huexotzinco's church.⁷⁴³ The placement of artifacts and carved stones from preexisting temples and sacred sites occurred also at Quauhquechollan; Wake argues that by preserving, relocating, and placing a ball-court

⁷⁴⁰ Sanford, *Story of Architecture in Mexico*, 143-144; Kubler, *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century*, 431-449; Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 135; Gutiérrez, "Converting a Sacred City," 125-126.

⁷⁴¹ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 119.

⁷⁴² McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 268. McAndrew believed that in 1612, Torquemada understood that "the monasteries with friars were worth more in the towns than fortresses with soldiers" (227).

⁷⁴³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 183.

ring and a warrior stone under the north wall of the church, local artists were seeking to preserve the symmetry of sacred ornamentation.⁷⁴⁴

Posas appear to have mirrored indigenous practices and belief systems associated with mountains and sacred pyramidal structures, such as the temporary mountain-like props used for various kinds of pre-contact festivals.⁷⁴⁵ Wake noted that even the definition for “mountains” found in *Florentine Codex, Book 11*—“high, pointed, pointed on top. Pointed at the summit”—led to “perceptual reinterpretations” of these structures extending into the colonial era.⁷⁴⁶ Huexotzinco’s courtyard includes four *posas* dedicated to Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, San Juan Baptista, San Pedro y Pablo, and Santiago. On their roofs pairs of winged angels bearing the objects of Christ’s Passion are repeated across the *atrio* on the church façade at Calpan.

Indigenous communities influenced these arrangements, helping to shape the friar-architect’s visions and the so-called “perfect classrooms” depicted by Valadés. Alameda and Valadés were influenced by European traditions, but this does not mean their designs were free from Mesoamerican ones. Friar-architects were not omnipresent figures in the construction of new churches. Their reliance on indigenous labor allowed for the influence of local knowledge in the “new” learning environments of the mid-sixteenth century. Indigenous visions of early churches and the new Christian landscape show adaptations to colonial circumstances, new concepts, disease outbreaks, and efforts to convince Spanish invaders of the depth of *altepetl* legitimacy. In the making of meaningful places, Nahuas in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley would come to record their

⁷⁴⁴ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 94-95; see also her discourse on “embedding” in Chapter Five (139-169).

⁷⁴⁵ Fitzgerald, “Deconstructing Franciscan Conventual Schools,” 2012; for the account in Motolinía, see *Historia*, 62-63.

⁷⁴⁶ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 117.

history of colonial education in local annals and upon the walls that surrounded them in daily lessons. Indigenous citizens of these three communities, as well as in Tlaxcala itself, were very concerned that their places would retain robust learningscapes.

Lessons Learned? Spiritual and Educational Networks

Around the time that Huexotzinca elders deliberated about the efficacy of their new learningscape in the presence of fray Diego de Valadés, their Tlaxcalan neighbors exercised a similar sort of agency for building places of learning. By the beginning of 1560, Tlaxcala's town council was in the middle of a new *altepetl*-wide construction project, one that had started in the previous decade. On January 1, 1560, they had declared the need for extra constables to help push the project forward.⁷⁴⁷ The *altepetl* of Atlihuetzyan, to the north, would receive "two church constables, one house constable, and one person to supervise the [church] stonemasons."⁷⁴⁸ The subject community of Topoyanco would have one extra church constable assigned, as well. Come February, the Tlaxcalans decreed that their constables must put an end to unwanted woodcutters from Cholullan entering their forests and cutting Tlaxcalan wood for lime.⁷⁴⁹ This decree would have been relevant to the planners in Huexotzinco. Lime was one critical product for all building projects, and this decree may have been a determining factor causing the Huexotzinca in 1564 to seek their supplies from Puebla, instead.⁷⁵⁰

The lords of Tlaxcala had other needs, too, besides dealing with construction projects and predacious Chololteca. On September 2, 1558, the council ordered the collection 120 pesos from the coffer to invest in a new *letaplo teyxiptla* (retablo image)

⁷⁴⁷ Lockhart, et al, The *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 59.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., 60.

for their church.⁷⁵¹ The council's decision to increase the number of ornaments in their church would prove significant, perhaps part of the reason that on May 1, 1562 they requested a loan of 400 pesos from the lords of Calpan.⁷⁵²

The lack of funding, then, could dramatically impair a community's ability to create viable learningscapes, potentially leading to inter-valley politicking and the need to make undesirable decisions down the road. Questions about how to manage, settle into, and govern sixteenth-century provincial learningscapes loomed large in community life. The risks associated with investing in education were very real. Significant investments of time, labor and money expended in association with the built environments framing local places of learning were effectively inscribed in the learningscape.

Practicing the Sacred

Throughout the mid-sixteenth century, several prestigious members of Tlaxcala's town council reviewed how the community had taken on Christian rituals and pedagogical tools. In the 1540s, they ensured church people could continue their service, including "lapidaries, woodworkers and church singers, musicians, and other workers of the grounds," by receiving a designated portion of locally produced maize, chia, and beans.⁷⁵³ For Corpus Christi 1549, they ordered the making of large cloaks, saintly sacramentals that the cabildo members needed to don for the upcoming procession during the festival.⁷⁵⁴ They appear to have prided themselves on performing religious stories and

⁷⁵¹ Lockhart, et al, *The Tlaxcalan Actas*, 58, n32, defined *letaplo teyxiptla* to mean either "the set of images that constitutes an altarpiece" or "altarpiece with images."

⁷⁵² Lockhart, et al, *The Tlaxcalan Actas*, 62.

⁷⁵³ Eustaquio Celestino Solís et al., *Actas de Cabildo*, 58, 252-253 (My translation: *quicuizque tezozonque cuahxinque yuan teopancuicaní tlapizque yn oc cequin tequipanouani quicuizque tlaolly ahno chiyan etl yehica yn nochipa tlatequipanotinemi.*)

⁷⁵⁴ Eustaquio Celestino Solís, et al, *Actas de Cabildo*, 66-67, 260-261. The mayordomos of Tlaxcala Diego Cihuaintecuiyo and Juan Tozquencoyotzin would be paired for the creation of this clothing.

ceremonies in the proper manner.⁷⁵⁵ For example, on December 18, 1553, council minutes noted that Baltazar Cortés and five other members of the council had been in Cuetlaxcohuapan [i.e. “Puebla”] to be instructed in the wind instruments [called]... cheremías...and sackbut[s];” the group spent 150 pesos in *tomines* and were fed during the fourteen days of training.⁷⁵⁶ Then on June 30, 1555, the *cabildo* once again focused on preparations for the upcoming festival of Corpus Christi. They ordered that the *altepetl*’s citizens would be required to produce goods for the processions. Adopting the Spanish term *merino* for their “rural constables,” the lords of Tlaxcala decreed that:

It was entrusted to the rural constables all around Tlaxcala to urge that flowers and tree foliage will be required. And wands are to be gathered there to complete the pageant. And also some angels’ wings and yellow hair and shirt appurtenances are to be made, and some devils’ images. And the rural constables may do and urge all that is to be done. And when [the things made] have been used and served their purpose on Corpus Christi, the rural constables are to take it all [to their various places of origin], where it will be church property; nothing is to remain here in Tlaxcala [proper]... And as to how the angels’ wings and so forth can be made, the rural constables are responsible for it.⁷⁵⁷

The prescribed implements for this particular religious observance seem to be following an order from less complex items (i.e. flowers and branches) to thin sticks for wands (*quahpitzacatl*) to manufactured wings, wigs, accessories, and figures of devils.⁷⁵⁸

Planning to return the props to the rural communities where they were made so that they

⁷⁵⁵ Max Harris, *The Dialogical Theatre: Dramatizations of the Conquest of Mexico and the Questions of the Other* (Springer, 1993), 70-74.

⁷⁵⁶ Celestino Solís, et al, *Actas de cabildo*, 141, 143, 337, and 339.

⁷⁵⁷ Lockhart, et al, *The Tlaxcalan Actas*, 56, 94-95: *Yntech cavaloc yn merinome nouiyan tlaxcalan ipan tlatozque monequiz xochitl yuan quauhxihuitl yuan quappitzactli oncan mocuiz ynic tlamauiçolly moyeyecoz Auh yuan mochivaz cequi angel ahtlapalli yvan tzoncocoaztli yuan camisatli nechichiuhtli yuan cequi tlacatecolatl yxiptla Auh yn nochi mochivaz yn uel quichiuazque merinome ipan tlatozque Auh yn iquac omonec ipan corpos xpi yn ipan otlayeyecoloc nochi quihitquizque yn merinome onpa ynteopantlatqui yezqui atle... Auh ynic mochiuaz angel ahtlapalli yuan oc cequi yehuan quimati merinome.*

⁷⁵⁸ Molinia, *Vocabulario*, part 2, Nahuatl to Spanish, f. 86v. col. 2. has *quauhpitzactli* ‘thin stick, wand.’ See also the online Nahuatl Dictionary, <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/quauhpitzactli>; and Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 63.

would become church property there, implies that the *cabildo* felt that these churches, rather than one in the central *altepetl*, would be the best places to preserve these items for later community use. On September 2, 1558, Tlaxcala's *cabildo* ordered the completion of a tabernacle, a monstrance, and an image of some kind as the lords of Tlaxcala also managed construction efforts supporting the Franciscans in the towns of Atlihuetyan and Topoyanco.⁷⁵⁹

The process of completing these kinds of projects and initiatives was so challenging, and seemingly not what the town council had originally desired, that in a decree issued on April 14, 1567, the council took over the direction and hired a “Spanish construction expert” (*español callahma*) to oversee the construction of a church and monastery (*teopan monasterio.*)⁷⁶⁰ The *cabildo* stipulated that the commoners “are not to be gathered and establish their homes where the churches and monasteries are built.... The commoners are to remain in the various places where they are now.” Only nobles “are to establish their homes there”⁷⁶¹ People who live near each church are not “to assign themselves tasks in building, but are given assignments as to what they are to do,” tasks that are unfortunately not specified in the entry.⁷⁶² The Viceroy had ordered—and the *cabildo agreed*--that “the churches and monasteries should be begun right

⁷⁵⁹ Celestino Solís, *Actas de Cabildo de Tlaxcala, 1547-1567*, 171-173, 369-371

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., 220-223, 420-423; see also, Lockhart et al., *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 123;

⁷⁶¹ Lockhart et al., *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 123-124, and my editing of a translation by Eustaquio Celestino Solís, et al, *Actas de cabildo*, 222, 422: *Yuan yn teocallli yglesias monesterios zan iuian yazque yn tlazalollí amo cencia huehuei amp ixquich yez in omopehualti Topoyanco Atliguetza auh in incal teopixque zan quezquitel ipanpa zan omen ieh in teopixque oncan yezque. Ihuan in oncan in mochihuaz Iglesias monasterios amo ancan mololoz mochantlaliz in macehualli in tla oncateh pipiltin zan yehuan in oncan mochantlalizque ipan calles in tla ya no cequin macehualtin oncan chancateh zany a yehuan oncan yezque in inahuac monasterios auh in ixquich macehualli in campa cahcateh axcan zan iuh yezque ieh huel necuitlahuilozque inic misa quihtazque ihuan teotlahotlli quicaquizque. In ihquac domingo ahno ilhuiipan ipanpa in tla oncan mohololozque in inahuac iglesias monasterios auh in onpa ic cahcateh quicahuazque in nohpal imehu ihuan in cuen ic polihuiz zatepan nochí zacatlalli mochihuaz etc.*

⁷⁶² Lockhart et al., *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 123.

away...because they are right on the road, and traveling Spaniards and local people [*nican tlacah*] need them greatly in order to attend mass there or obtain other divine sacraments.”⁷⁶³ Significantly, the Tlaxcalan elite hoped the lessons of the learningscape would reach “Spaniards” as well as “the people here,” or in other words the Tlaxcalans and other indigenous people who lived in the region.

Thus, Tlaxcala’s town council assumed an advisory role in the design plans for church complexes, oversaw resource management, dictated the implementation of tools for the community’s cultural events, and set the pathway forward regarding instructional media. Masses, festivals, and various representations of the sacred associated with churches and monasteries had definite didactic qualities about them, even if Tlaxcala’s council minutes did not necessarily specify this purpose. Their concern to regulate and control these aspects of the community’s religious infrastructure highlights the potential for local indigenous people to enjoy a certain amount of agency in the production and expression of knowledge. Considering the number of surviving statues and busts of Christ, Mary, and the saints, of crosses, devotional paintings, and regalia found in the Mexico’s many church museums, including Tlaxcala’s, they enjoyed a great deal of success in this sort of endeavor. The altepetl’s town council and Nahua church officials may not have completely realized the true extent of the transformative practices they were using to record all of this. By adopting and adapting the use of alphabetic writing, paper, and ink in their daily decision-making, had they lost some sense of their traditional identity? How had adopting new communication styles and structures changed the people of Tlaxcala and their neighbors? The introduction and adoption of the Latin alphabet

⁷⁶³ Ibid., 124.

appears to have transformed the ways in which Native communities recorded local knowledge and then learned from the past. *Escribanos* and *fiscales* took on new materials and writing genres to document events, appearing to move further and further away from the oral and pictorial histories of the past. Grabbing for an inkpot and quill surely echoed the preexisting practice of using paint pot and brush, but what specific changes affected locals and how did they adapt new recordkeeping strategies to the needs of the community and the provincial learningscape?

Communities carried out religious observations and local performances with a determined collective effort. In Tlaxcala, for instance, for the Corpus Christi celebration of June 30, 1555, the *cabildo* taxed “rural constables [to] collect such items as flowers, foliage, and wands, and arrange for the making of angelic gear, as well as figures of devils... [and after] return the items to the places where they were made, to become church properties.”⁷⁶⁴ In doing so, the town council dictated the types of pedagogical tools, their composition, and future application attached to monasteries. The items were not to be burnt or disassembled when the festivities ended. Rather, for the foreseeable future, performance materials ought to be preserved and reused.

By and large, the Catholic clergy of this era believed that education was best perfected with regimented lessons taught twice daily in the courtyard. This daily educational pincer attack, first in the morning and then in the late afternoon, would help with basic social and cultural programming while it simultaneously attacked idolatry and

⁷⁶⁴ Lockhart et al, *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 56.

staved off its return in the evening.⁷⁶⁵ According to Mendieta, lessons began with a call to the courtyard:

Assembled by four o'clock at the latest, [the Natives] start out for the church, all on order as though in a procession, the men in one row and the women in another. They are guided by an Indian who goes in front with the standard of each neighborhood, made of red silk with the insignia of whatever Saint the neighborhood has taken for patron... [After] kneeling in front of the church door... [t]hey seat themselves in rows, the men squatting on their heels in their customary way (on the Evangel side) and the women apart by themselves (on the Epistle side).⁷⁶⁶

Bells, versions of those pictured in many of the *Matricula de Huexotzinco* pictorial renditions of churches, chimed to alert students that the hour for mass was upon them. The standard bearer helped to express local identity with each particular neighborhood's iconography, and significantly, this was based on the decision of the district or "insignia of whatever Saint the neighborhood has taken for patron."⁷⁶⁷ It is possible that this textile and pictorial display mirrored some of the pre-Hispanic traditions embedded in other festivals, such as the Pascua de Flores event discussed above.

Town councils enforced this type of twice-daily activity and appear to have sponsored the "Indian" that guided them to the courtyard. The Tlaxcalans, for instance, appointed constables to enforce attendance (and police wayward habits, such as drunkenness).⁷⁶⁸ Guiding town members into the learningscape, constables represented the specific *tlaxilacalli* on church grounds in the presence of the *fiscal*, musicians, or other *teopantlaca*.⁷⁶⁹ Ethnohistorian James Lockhart discussed the roles of the *fiscales*,

⁷⁶⁵ Mendieta (*Historia eclesiástica india*, 429) and Valadés (*Rhetorica Christiana*, 481) mention daily Masses; Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 21

⁷⁶⁶ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica india*, (1980), 209-210.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁸ Lockhart et al., *The Tlaxcalan Actas*, 49.

⁷⁶⁹ "Church people," or *teopantlaca*, were elite males who managed church property, finances, and leading the community in religious instruction and song. Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 210-211, 215-

whom he called the “most visible figure[s]” of the local church staff. These regular fixtures in the learningscape fulfilled multiple duties at once.⁷⁷⁰ According to Ethnohistorian Robert Haskett, for instance, the *fiscal* of Cuernavaca, don Baltasar Valeriano, came to “personify the entire community” through the multitude of duties he performed, including instruction in doctrine, casting judgment and doling out punishments for sinners, and supervising of the church properties and its sacristans.⁷⁷¹ Town councils, then, held sway over much of the educational authority invested in educational spaces. Standing at the head of the conventual courtyard, *fiscales*, and other *teopantlaca* shaped the stories that accompanied the physical environment and pedagogical tools.

The Body of Knowledge

In the early days, the most thoroughly trained students of the new faith—the sons of nobles and ruling class figures—have been seen as a kind of “fifth column” of transculturation by scholars such as Charles Gibson. In this view, they were subversive agents who helped to erode traditional practices and upturn seemingly unchristian behaviors.⁷⁷² This process happened with serious implication for these agents, and traditionalists (including indigenous lords, and in at least one notorious case, a parent), repaid this behavior with violence and public castigation. Tlaxcala's Boy Martyrs, for instance, were either roasted alive or beaten to death with sticks.⁷⁷³ Clearly, as Estafanía

216, could not find evidence that this term was used before the 1560s, though “church people” of some sort must have been active before this time.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., 212-215.

⁷⁷¹ Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 262-264.

⁷⁷² Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 39-40.

⁷⁷³ Kobayashi makes a case that espionage was essentially part of the education’s purpose (1996:182-3). For the Boy Martyrs, see Haskett “Dying for conversion: Faith, obedience, and the Tlaxcalan boy martyrs in New Spain” (*Colonial Latin American Review*, 2008).

Vinke's thought-provoking dissertation notes, fifth column figures and the goods that indicated their status "changed the dynamics of the evangelization process, providing an internal dimension," but that "internal dimension" would soon come to embrace larger numbers of students as well as indigenous functionaries associated with them and the learningscapes.⁷⁷⁴

Catholic priests believed that day-to-day spiritual education was best perfected with regimented lessons taught twice daily in the courtyard. Instruction in the morning and then in the late afternoon would help with basic social and cultural programming. Early lessons would stave off non-Christian thinking, while those in the afternoon would guard against its heretical return in the evening.⁷⁷⁵ It is not clear how often this training truly occurred, but the clergy tended to document it in an idealized way. According to the Franciscan Jerónimo de Mendieta (1525-1604), for instance, early in the Catholic era, when people lived in a more dispersed pattern than would be true after the congregation programs had led to a greater nucleation of settlements, people were gathered for fiestas by officials the chronicler called *centenarios y veintenarios*.

As described in Mendieta's description above, it would seem that the new classrooms were regimented and under the purview of colonizers. "Assembled by four o'clock at the latest," the bells would chime to alert people that the hour was upon them. The "red silk" had Christian and Iberian antecedents, with the banners being linked to Christian patron saints.⁷⁷⁶ Yet the Nahuas could have defined them as markers of their legitimacy as a corporate group with a divine patron in a way reminiscent of pre-contact

⁷⁷⁴ Estafania Vinke, "Books and codices: Transculturation, Language Dissemination and Education in the Works of Friar Pedro de Gante" (2015), 126-127.

⁷⁷⁵ Mendieta and Valadés mention daily Masses; Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 21.

⁷⁷⁶ Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiastica indiana*, 209–210.

times. The officials glossed by Mendieta as *centenarios y veintenarios* were *macuiltecpanpixque* (singular, *maquiltecpanpixqui*, people in charge of one hundred tributaries) or *centecpanpixque* (singular, *centecpanpixqui*, officials in charge of twenty tributaries), but apparently here serving the interests of the Church and the Christianization process.⁷⁷⁷ According to James Lockhart, both types were mid-level *altepetl* officials, people who supervised groups made up of units of twenty (*-tecpantli*) tributaries.⁷⁷⁸ Their activities are attested in the *Ordinanzas de Cuauhtinchan*, which related, “every eight days they would tell the commoners when their week of [tribute] labor was coming.” They also seem to have enforced at least some processes related to Catholic life, as “the *macuiltecpanpixque* made very sure that no one wed in secret [i.e. outside of the sacrament of holy matrimony]. And when some were going to wed, the *centecpanpixque* or the *tequitlato* [another tribute official] would take them.”⁷⁷⁹ The *Matricula de Huexotzinco* seems to allude to this same sort of function. Two of the *macuiltecpanpixque* depicted in it are paired with alphabetic Nahuatl glosses stating, “he guards all of the married people” (*quipia yxquichtin namiqueque*).⁷⁸⁰

The *Matricula de Huexotzinco*’s folios depict a total of 161 of these officers, usually (though not always) indicating their titles with an alphabetic gloss and through

⁷⁷⁷ For examples of the depictions of *centecpanpixque* in the *Matricula de Huexotzinco* see fols. 523v, 591r, 638 r, and 871r; for *macuiltecpanpixqui* see 527r, 569r, 593r, 602r, 612r, 615r, 640r, 666r, 771r, 816r, and 830v. Another, apparently similar officer with at least responsibilities for tribute collection was the *tepixqui*; see the online Nahuatl Dictionary for attestations to this title, as well as to the other two.

⁷⁷⁸ Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 43; see also the online Nahuatl Dictionary for *cen-* and *macuiltecpanpixqui/que*, and *centecpanatl*; in the latter, the *-tecpantli* operates as “twenty,” making this particular word “one group of twenty.” Molina, *Vocabulario*, part 2, Nahuatl to Spanish, f. 17v. col. 1, translated it as “twenty tamemes, houses, stones, animals, etc.” See also Reyes García, *Cuauhtinchan del siglo XII al XVI*; and Martínez, *Tepeaca en el siglo XVI*, 160.

⁷⁷⁹ Reyes García, “Ordenanzas para el gobierno de Cuauhtinchan.” (Estudios de cultura Náhuatl, 1978), 280-281; 284-285, 298-299.

⁷⁸⁰ See the *Matricula de Huexotzinco* for the depictions of Diego Mixconhuatzin, fol. 612v, and Antonio Tlapal, fol. 615v.

the use of *pantli*, banner-like glyphs meaning “twenty.” For instance, a *centecpanpixqui* will be associated with a single *pantli*, which a *macuiltecpanpixque* will be linked to five *pantli*. Luys Totolpech, the constable (*macuiltecpanpixqui*) from the Almoyuaca *calpulli* of San Lorenzo Chiauhzinco, for example, is linked by a black line five *pantli* to his right.⁷⁸¹ There is even a *yeteccpanpixqui* (someone in charge of sixty tributaries) paired with a group of three *pantli*.⁷⁸² As depicted in the *Matricula* they were clearly men with some social status that set them above the majority of the *altepetl*’s citizenry.

Symbolizing order and control, they were likely highly localized models of Nahua Christian order. Official insignia included clothing other kinds of accessories. The most prominent accouterment displayed by the full-figure images of such individuals (many of the *centecpanpixque* are depicted with heads or busts) was a *topilli* (“staff of office”), held by at least six of the featured officers.⁷⁸³ Some, but not all, of the full-figure officers wear shoes, hat, shirt, and cloak (they are *macuiltecpanpixqui*). Some wear high-status *cactli* (sandals) on their feet, footwear usually associated with the nobility and ruling class (Fig. 6.1).⁷⁸⁴ Diego Mixconhuatzin, one of the *macuiltecpanpixque*, wears this kind of footwear, decorated with red straps on the tops of his feet. So does another officer of this rank, Luis Totolpech (fancy but uncolored straps), as does Antonio Tlapal (red straps).⁷⁸⁵ One of the sermons crafted around 1606 under the editorship of Franciscan scholar and *Nahuatlato* Fray Juan Bautista (active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries) seemed to stress the high status signaled by this type of sandal

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., F602r

⁷⁸² Ibid., fol. 896r.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., fols. 612v, 615v. For *topilli* see Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, 1983: 58, 62.

⁷⁸⁴ Fifteen -*tecpanpixqui* wear *cactli*, roughly 1% of the total, and, by comparison, nearly all of the depicted *tlatoani* wear them. For a discussion of this type of sandal see Olko, *Title*, 269-270.

⁷⁸⁵ Luis Totolpech, fol. 602r; Diego Mixconhuatzin, *Matricula de Huexotzinco*, fol. 612v; Antonio Tlapal, idem., fol. 615v; both Mixconhuatzin and Tlapal seem to have been painted by the same *tlacuilo*.

when it described a man of good spiritual character: “*In auh inic huey, ahmo nomahcehual inic nicnocaccopiniliz; inic nicnotomililiz in ilpica icactzin* (“he is so great that I do not deserve to remove his sandals, to loosen the straps of his sandals”).⁷⁸⁶ It is remarkable how the attention to what is probably pre-Hispanic iconographic detail lives on in this manuscript, all of it laden with layers of status and indications of functions for indigenous office holders that *tlacuilos* were still learning and conveying to readers.



Figure 6.1, Ordering society in Huexotzinco c. 1560. Painted by an unnamed *tlacuilo*, Diego Mixconhuatzin exemplifies a *macuitecpanpixque*, or an official in charge of one hundred local tributaries. Mixconhuatzin has adopted and adapted his garb to reflect two worlds. His vibrant red-strapped cactli harken back to high social status. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mexicain 387, fol. 307, Source Gallica (BnF).

If this officer type continued to be used to gather people for religious functions during the era in which the *Matricula* was created, the several classes of *-tecpanpixqui* may have had a role in gathering children for their daily lessons in the courtyards of that *altepetl* and other communities in the region. In Tlaxcala, another officer type, or at least an office type glossed with a different title, had a clearer role in connection with churchly functions. In mid-July of

⁷⁸⁶ Biblioteca Palafoxiana, Bautista, *Sermonario*, fol. 583v.; I am thankful for the reference and translation provided by Mark Z. Christensen, “Nahua and Maya Catholicisms: Ecclesiastical Texts and Local Religion in Colonial Central Mexico and Yucatan,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2010, Appendix D, 9.

1550, for instance, the town council appointed constables (*topileque*) to “take care so the Indians go to hear mass and the doctrina cristiana.”⁷⁸⁷ Other indigenous officers played significant roles in the educational process, including *fiscales de iglesia* (or *fiscales de la santa iglesia*), *musicos* and *cantores*, and/or other indigenous church workers of the kind that, after 1560, came to be called *teopantlaca* (“church people”).⁷⁸⁸ For instance, it is clear that *fiscales* had responsibilities in this area. Lockhart called this officer the “most visible figure” of the local church staff. These regular fixtures in the learningscape could become everymen, fulfilling multiple duties at once.⁷⁸⁹ According to Robert Haskett, the *fiscal* of Cuernavaca, don Baltasar Valeriano, supervised instruction in doctrine, making judgments and doling out punishments for sinners, and overseeing the use of the ornaments of the church and the duties of its sacristans.⁷⁹⁰ Town councils, then, held sway over much of the educational authority invested in educational spaces. Standing at the head of the learningscapes of the provincial churches, *fiscales*, musicians, and *maestros* shaped the stories that accompanied physical environment and pedagogical tools.

The particular accessories that all of these stewards brought into the learningscape transformed the space into a truly “indigenous” Catholic learning space. District-specific banners of the type mentioned by Mendieta defined local identities and

⁷⁸⁷ Celestino Solís et al., *Actas de Cabildo de Tlaxcala, 1547-1567*, 1985: 109-112, 305-308; Lockhart et al., *The Tlaxcalan Actas*, 49, 153-154.

⁷⁸⁸ “Church people,” or *teopantlaca*, were elite males who managed church property, finances, and leading the community in religious instruction and song. He could not find evidence that this term was used before the 1560s, though “church people” of some sort must have been active before this time; Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 210-211, 215-218.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., 212-215; Robert Ricard’s deep study of church records comes in handy here because, to date, no sources creates a more compelling depiction of church affairs as the infamous *Spiritual Conquest* (1933 [1996]). For the role of the catechists throughout the countryside see, John Schwaller, “The Clergy,” found in *The Countryside in Colonial Latin America*, Hoberman and Socolow (eds.), 1996, 123-41.

⁷⁹⁰ Robert Haskett, *Visions of Paradise*, 262-264.

their membership in the larger community. The clothing, staffs of office, and fine sandals worn by the authority figures involved in the great educational process colored the courtyard.

Ethno-Spatial Studies of Courtyard Culture

An examination of the extant architecture, ornamentation, and layout of key examples of the learningscapes of the three UNESCO World Heritage sites graced by important convents and courtyards in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley can produce productive theoretical understandings of local ways of learning. Today, simply pacing the grounds of the churches and atria of the *ex-conventos* of San Andrés Calpan, San Miguel Arcángel Huejotzingo, and San Martín Caballero Huaquechula (Quauhquechollan) grants visitors a basic level of understanding of sixteenth-century conventional education, since each place provides placards, tour guides, reenactors of events and practices, albeit media that give visitors what are essentially top-down narratives of an allegedly one-way process of acculturation directed by educated foreigners. This approach unfortunately has had the effect of robbing agency from their indigenous collaborators and the students themselves. Drawing upon the specific geographic and ethno-spatial circumstances found in each of these learningscapes, however, better representations of what actually went on in them can be suggested.⁷⁹¹

The basic layout of these three courtyards and the surrounding monastic grounds follows that of many sixteenth-century churches built at the time.⁷⁹² Whether or not the

⁷⁹¹ I conducted on-site surveys over two summers 2014 and 2015, with preliminary investigations taking place in summer 2011. I visited these three churches (and several others) on multiple occasions, met with church and museum staff. See also, Fitzgerald, “Deconstructing Franciscan Conventional Schools” (diss. 2012).

⁷⁹² Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 102.

convento of San Miguel Huejotzingo is an example of the early “Fortress Monastery” design has by now been called into question as a notion originating in the nineteenth century.⁷⁹³ It is true that the walls at Huejotzingo are high and the merlons appear defensive, but these types of designs also mimic preexisting traditions, including the possibility that similar embellishments on pre-contact structures mimicked spines running along the backs of certain reptiles or cactus, such as those seen in some of the *Codex Borgia*’s images (fig. 6.2).⁷⁹⁴

At least a significant amount of building materials used for these Christian structures was quarried from preexisting temples. Durán noted the process undertaken by construction workers in Mexico City during the 1570s, as they demolished the original central cathedral on its main square and



Figure 6.2, White spine designs of the flowering cactus. Excerpt from Codex Borgia, fol. 52, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican Library, Vatican City. Any further reproduction by any means is prohibited.

⁷⁹³ As a reminder, since the 1960s, scholars have argued that defensibility was not intended in the sixteenth century. McAndrew was one of the first modern art historians to argue that the “military character” of early monasteries was misplaced. Rather than huddling for safety in the confines of the courtyards, according to a wealth of sources, patrols of horses and horsemanship protected the populace in the sixteenth century (*Open-Air Churches*, 275-277). The massive size and high walls may have been the designers’ attempt to dramatically separate the activities within from those without (*Ibid.*, 268). See also Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 119. McAndrew noted that there were honest needs for fortified military structures and town walls, however (*Open-Air Churches*, 274-275), but it appears to have been a strategy largely applied to communities facing privation from horse-powered Chichimecas in the northern territories, according to architect Beverly Spears, for instance (*Early Churches of Mexico: An Architect’s View*, 2017, 36). See also Richard Perry, *Mexico’s Fortress Monasteries* (1992).

⁷⁹⁴ The Dominican priest Diego Durán, among others, described several Mesoamerican courtyards in this way. A number of pre-colonial depictions of this kind of design show white and red spiked spines running along the backs of reptilian creatures’ bodies and plant spines that may have been echoed in architecture; see *Borgia* Plates 27, 39-40, 50, 51, 53, and 71

built the extant building—removing the pillars fashioned from pre-contact materials previous builders had repurposed for the Catholic structure. Stones from the Cholollan temple dedicated to Quetzalcoatl seem to have been used to construct Huexotzinco’s Franciscan church.⁷⁹⁵ A handful of blocks used in Calpan’s current courtyard wall show signs of markings that suggest a pre-contact origin. And at Huaquechula, large, pre-Hispanic carved stones interrupt key portions of the building’s walls, including a downward-facing “warrior” and a decorated ring that was probably once part of the *altepetl*’s ballcourt, an act. Eleanor Wake believes was designed to preserve them within a local Christian context.⁷⁹⁶ The *atrio* (atrium) commonly associated with these structures had pragmatic features for large-scale uses. According to Verónica Gutiérrez, these included use “as a classroom, a cemetery, an unroofed nave, a dance floor, or even a chapter room for lay friars.”⁷⁹⁷ Art historians have long found that indigenous decorative elements served as prominent features in these provincial learningscape.⁷⁹⁸ For instance, Kline Morehead describes Calpan’s ornamentation “a kind of architectural picture book” for such purposes.⁷⁹⁹

The *posas* found in the atria of these three *ex-conventos* (see Chapter V) played significant roles in their learningscapes. Present as well in idealized form in the *Rhetorica Cristiana*’s engraving of the Perfect Classroom, Valadés’ sketch does not do justice to the elaborate physical ornamentation that covered the surfaces of the corner chapels at

⁷⁹⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 183.

⁷⁹⁶ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 94-95; see also her discourse on “embedding” in that volume’s Chapter Five (139-169).

⁷⁹⁷ Gutiérrez, “Converting a Sacred City,” 127-128.

⁷⁹⁸ Reyes-Valerio, *Arte IndoCristiano*, 2000, 434-435; see also Edgerton, *Theaters for Conversion*, 2001.

⁷⁹⁹ Wagner et al., *Ancient Origins of the Mexican Plaza*, 114; see the introduction of this volume for a discourse on the scholarship about “writing without words.” Priests were troubled by what seemed to them to be “pagan” elements in such decorations, see Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 93.

Huejotzingo and Calpan (fig. 6.3). Art historians have investigated and continue to debate whether or not such *posas* were a “New World” innovation, but in the end it seems likely that there were designed specifically with indigenous traditions of outdoor worship and ritual in mind, even if some apparent architectural precursors have been identified in Spain.⁸⁰⁰

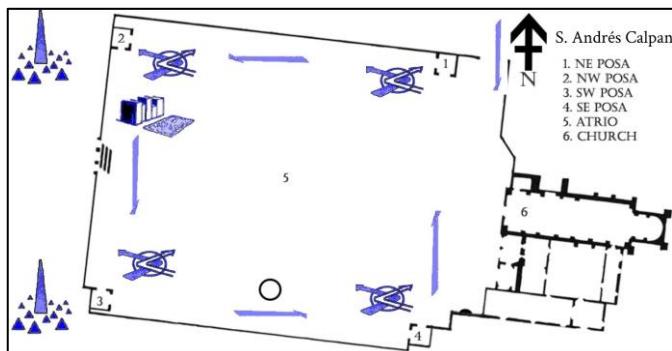


Figure 6.3, Imageability in San Andrés Calpan. Native builders appear to have aligned *capillas posas* (corner chapels) along locally-relevant sightlines, such as mountains, rivers, and other geomorphs. Consisting of four nodal points set along a processional path, the *posas* direct attention to the landscape and strengthen the ordering of educational and ritual practices (modified from McAndrew, 1965).

It is quite true that the ornamentation of Mexican *posas* often seems to be derivative of biblical accounts, and thus of European decorative origin.⁸⁰¹ Parishioners used and still use the iconography to reflect upon key religious figures and events tied to scenes or themes from the story of the Immaculate Conception,

Christ’s Life, Christ’s Passion, and the spreading of the Gospel. Jaime Lara connected Calpan’s architectural traditions to European rather than indigenous traditions. For Lara,

⁸⁰⁰ McAndrew’s study has yet to be challenged in scope and depth of concentration. He argued that these were “common in Mexico in the sixteenth century, but not in Spain” (*Open-Air Churches*, 280-281). Franciscans, more so than their fellow mendicants, appear to have adhered most tenaciously to the *posa* program (283), though it will be made clear that Native communities, not the priests, more closely policed *posa* construction and use. Sanford called them a “distinctly Mexican creation” (141), though antecedents are present in Spain. Artrigas (1992) explored several variations upon the blueprint of the four-posa atria Juan Artigas, “Arquitectura a cielo abierto” (UNAM, 1991); and *Capillas abiertas aisladas de México* (1992). Not all courtyards housed *posas* and when present, there was variation in placement and number. In fact, Gutiérrez explains that the larger monastery complex at Cholula (neighboring our three sites) only had three and argues that this may have been a way for friars to expedite the process of conversion (“Converting a Sacred City,” 128).

⁸⁰¹ For a recent and convincing argument for this case, see Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 125-134.

“the four *posas* have the liturgical theme of the four central mysteries of Christ’s incarnation, passion, resurrection, and glorification,” themes which do come through clearly in the four *posas* of Calpan.⁸⁰² He argues that Valadés’ Perfect Classroom, with its four corner chapels, was heavily influenced by renderings of the prophet Ezekiel’s Temple of Jerusalem, and there are indications that Valadés and others appeared to be referencing this type of structure, while trying to adapt it to the Mexican arena.⁸⁰³ The implication of this kind of analysis is that all architecture, save for some minimal hints of the presence of an indigenous vernacular, were transplanted to and imposed upon the Americas.⁸⁰⁴ Furthermore, up to the present, scholars have argued that clergy and religious authority figures configured the architectural programs of these and other courtyards to erase indigenous icons and beliefs, and to supersede them with Christian figures and narratives.⁸⁰⁵ Some argue that New World clergy coopted indigenous heroes, such as the venerable Juan of Quauhquechollan, to simply “draw them into the story and bring them to the conversion,” which seems likely but ignores the finer details of how indigenous audiences might have contributed to the construction and shaping of the

⁸⁰² Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 178-179; and *City, Temple, Stage*, 126-128. Lara pins the blueprints of *posas* to the freestanding arch, or “aedicule” (*Ibid.*, 125); two Islamic posa-like chapels, or *qubba* (*Ibid.*, 123); and Jewish architectural studies of the Temple of Jerusalem, namely Johann Hottinger’s 1662 *Cippi Hebraici sive Hebrarum* of 1662 (what he calls a “commemorative guidebook for fundraising;” *Ibid.*, 127). This scholarship removes doubt that Diego de Valadés, when visiting Iberia and Italy in the later sixteenth century, studied Christian architectural traditions, but its heavy focus on European antecedents leaves readers with a bit of a lackluster explanation for indigenous architectural traditions.

⁸⁰³ Lara, *Christian Texts for Aztecs*, 179.

⁸⁰⁴ Lara’s work (2004; 2008) remains a valuable contribution to the study of colonial architecture and educational materials. However, we must not ignore local settings and context, and the influence of Native agency upon these built environments. For a stunning achievement of local-first analysis, see Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 2010.

⁸⁰⁵ Serge Gruzinski, “La Colonización de lo imaginario. Sociedades indígenas y occidentalización en el México, Siglos XVI–XVIII,” 1993.

architecture and then interpreted such things from their own perspectives, drawing from their own worldviews.⁸⁰⁶

These macroscopic views can be valuable in that they point to larger patterns in religious settler-colonialism, acts of ethnocide, acculturation and spiritual imperialism.⁸⁰⁷ On the other hand, in the 1960s McAndrew had already cautioned against the practice of disavowing any direct connection to the preconquest past because “so many monuments have been lost” and that further study was required.⁸⁰⁸ Indeed, colonial-era sources explaining the use of *posas* challenge the Eurocentrism embedded in the work of Lara and other scholars who have come to conclusions similar to his.⁸⁰⁹ Native intellectuals, religious specialists, authors, and artists also had a say in the ornamentation found on church façades and *posas*, as well as the lessons taught by them. No matter how impressive and omnipresent Spanish Christian planners and architects such as Fray Juan de Alameda might have been, locally minded church people and town council members contributed to and informed the process of transculturation on a daily basis. Elders with direct knowledge of valuable local narratives could and did shape what at first glance appear to be entirely Catholic dogmas. Native peoples did not passively receive cultural content as mere objects for the delivery of Iberian sacred wisdom.

Rather, the Nahua learning communities of Huexotzinco and Calpan actively participated in the adoption and adaptation of new and old conventions into a trans-

⁸⁰⁶ Monika Brenišínová, “Sixteenth-century Mexican Architecture: Transmission of Forms and Ideas between the Old and the New World,” 2016, ; to be fair, Brenišínová does argue that exchanges were mutual ((21-22), though her evidence primarily address unidirectional European projects and the final implication is that sixteenth-century clergy and friar-architects were manipulative and in control of possible exchanges (18-21).

⁸⁰⁷ See the introduction of this dissertation for “Settler-colonial”

⁸⁰⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 302.

⁸⁰⁹ Schuetz-Miller, ““Survival of Early Christian Symbolism,” 2000.

spiritual vision of how their townspeople ought to learn about the past, present, and future. *Tlacuilos* often depicted smaller chapels—likely *posas*—standing next to their renderings of churches. Wake proposed that these *posas* had “and architectural value or symbolism that was meaningful on an Indian map.” She argues that the placement of *posas* on the *Mapa de Huapalteopan* and the *Mapa de Atlaluahca*, both from 1580, reflected usage patterns, in that the map-maker painted them in a way that signaled the directions followed by religious processions in each place, and processions have their pre-Hispanic antecedents in Mesoamerica.⁸¹⁰ The preserved *posas* of Calpan and Huexotzinco have high-relief ornamentations, three-dimensional narratives that explain key sacred moments and figures that would have been associated with the lessons being taught by processions passing around the edges of the *atrios*.

As to the visual power of *posas*, John McAndrew explained that when present, they pulled the eyes of spectators toward an *atrio*’s corners, likely emphasizing the overall scale of the courtyard.⁸¹¹ When aligned with visible objects and landmarks in the surrounding landscape, the *posas* would then draw an aware spectator’s attention to a larger sacred landscape with roots in the pre-contact past. Before permanent corner chapels were constructed, in the early colonial era *altepetl* and their constituent *tlaxilacalli* appear to have been perfecting the use of temporary corner altars in Catholic ceremony, a possible holdover from the practice of placing trees and mounds to orient a learningscape in earlier times.⁸¹² In the 1540s, for example, Motolinia noted the habit of

⁸¹⁰ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 118 and 127.

⁸¹¹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 285.

⁸¹² Ibid., 295.

Natives to fill the corners of their church courtyards with “triumphal arches,” crosses made of flowers and branches, and flowering trees:

[The Tlaxcalteca] had in the route [of their processions] their chapels with altars and retablos, well adorned for resting [pausing], where nine children would come out singing and dancing ahead of the Holy Sacrament.... One thing very good to see: in four corners or turns that they made in the route, they had in each one a mountain, and for each they would make a very tall outcropping, and below this they made a meadow with bushes of herbs and flowers, and all that would be in the fresh [i.e. natural] field, and the mountain and outcropping were so natural it was as if it had been born there [i.e. formed there]...⁸¹³

In the 1580s, Jerónimo de Mendieta claimed to have witnessed much the same things among the Tlaxcalans. During the spring celebration of Pascua de Flores, the town had graced the courtyard of San Francisco with temporary chapels: “at the four corners which the course of the procession turns, they raise four chapel-like affairs, well canopied and adorned with images and trellises of flowers, with an altar in each one where the priest says a prayer.”⁸¹⁴ McAndrew pointed to the persistence of “fanciful constructions” such of these that lasted well into the nineteenth century.⁸¹⁵ On his part, Valadés explained that the more formal courtyard he envisioned was to have “other chapels, the first of which serves the instruction of girls, the second for boys, the third for women, and the fourth for men.”⁸¹⁶ This suggested practice appears to have followed the use of monastic cloisters in Europe, according to McAndrew.⁸¹⁷ However, this layout would have echoed the

⁸¹³ Motolinia, *Historia* (1985) 192-194. My translation, “Había en el camino sus capillas con sus altares y retablos bien aderezados para descansar, adonde salían de nuevo niños cantores cantando y bailando delante del Santísimo Sacramento. ... Una cosa muy bien de ver: tenían en cuatro esquinas o vueltas que se hacían en el camino, en cada una su montaña, y de cada una salía su peñón bien alto, y desde abajo estaba hecho como prado, con matas de hierba y flores y todo lo demás que hay en un campo fresco, y la montaña y el peñón tan al natural como si allí hubiera nacido...”.

⁸¹⁴ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiastica indiana* (1945), 84 translated and reproduced in McAndrew, 295.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Valadés, *Rhetorica Cristiana*, 1579, 481.

⁸¹⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 295-301.

indigenous learningscapes from before as well as the four cardinal directions of the pre-contact model of the cosmos.

Indeed, these corner chapels and Christian practices related to them appear to have mirrored indigenous place-based ritual techniques and belief systems, especially those associated with mountains and sacred pyramidal structures, as seemingly expressed in the organization of the early post-conquest festivals described above.⁸¹⁸ The mountain-centric rites of *Tepeilhuitl/Huey Pachtli* and the tree ceremony of *Huey Tozoztli* that Nahuas practiced likely overlapped with the style of outdoor worship that continued under Catholic sponsorship (see Chapter II). For instance, *Tepeilhuitl*'s seed-dough sculptures, *tepetlatia*, mounded in households and temple courtyards had three-dimensional faces and ornamentations similar in nature to the more permanent *posa* reliefs. Wake noted that even the definition for “mountains” found in the *Florentine Codex, Book 11*—“high, pointed, pointed on top. Pointed at the summit”—led to “perceptual reinterpretations” of these structures in later “Christian” architecture.⁸¹⁹ The layout of Tlaloc’s Temple on Mount Tlaloc and the version indigenous priests created in the central plaza below the *Templo Mayor* were oriented in a similar manner to *posas*. The indigenous learningscape had featured a chief dough-mountain for Tlaloc and four others—set in the four corners of the courtyard—which had been made to look like the divinities Tepexoch, Mayahuel, Matlalcueye, Xochetecatl, Iztaccihuatl, Chalchiuhlicue, Cihuacoatl, Chicomecoatl, or Milnahuatl. The corner chapels, then, seem to have reproduced this (Fig. 6.4).

⁸¹⁸ Fitzgerald, “Deconstructing Franciscan Conventual Schools,” see *Historia*, 1990, 62-63.

⁸¹⁹ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 117.

According to Logan



Figure 6.4, Mountain-like *Capilla posas* at San Andrés Calpan (2011).

Wagner, Hal Box, and Susan Kline Moreheard, the “quincunxial centering and the rituals surround it are at the core of Mesoamerican belief, and the early friars....soon realized its value as a conversion tool, arguably the

most effective one in the mendicant toolbox.” These scholars emphasize that “the four-cornered *atrios* characteristic of mendicant conventional complexes in early New Spain were symbolically tied to the movement of the sun, even though the friars were most probably unaware of the mythical and celestial origins of the Mesoamerican quincunxial ritual.”⁸²⁰ Examining maps from the *Relaciones geográficas* they believe that, following pre-contact ways of thinking, “the open spaces of each community—the plazas and church *atrios*—are the symbols necessary to acknowledge the existence of each community.... Many of the RGs present either the *atrio* or the plaza as the source of water and abundance....”⁸²¹

A valuable example of the potential for this kind of double-mistaken place-identity in the making comes from Motolinia in his recounting of the Corpus Christi procession of 1539, when Tlaxcalans reenacted and adapted several didactic plays,

⁸²⁰ Wagner, et al, *Ancient Origins of the Mexican Plaza*, 80.

⁸²¹ Ibid., 55.

including the *Conquest of Jerusalem*, to their local setting.⁸²² After that drama (hoped to be prophetic) had passed, the Corpus Christi events then turned to three *autos* that took place along the flower-covered roads surrounding the church courtyard. Stationed along the way, the Tlaxcalans had fashioned three stops for the performances, “artificial mountains” around which the action of the short plays would take place. The plays included on about *The Temptation of Christ*. According to Motolinia, during the performance the devil perched in a “ravine” or outcropping on the simulated mountainside, tempting actors toward the underworld. These mountains were temporary but living dioramas similar to ephemeral structures used in *autos* in late-Medieval Iberia.⁸²³ Obviously, in Tlaxcala these models had been given a Mesoamerican spin, had been customized with traditional indigenous iconography and ritual practices in mind.

Indigenous Christian students and their teachers used *posas* following traditional learning modalities. Processional visits to each station proceeded around the space in a counter-clockwise direction, moving from northern courtyard entrance to the northeast chapel, then on to the northwest, south to the southwest, and back east toward the final southeastern chapel and the church façade (fig. 6.5). This pattern mimics the directional reading of some lienzos, including the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2*, the beginning portion of the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, large portions of the pictographic *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, and other pictorial manuscripts.⁸²⁴ There is a possibility that this counterclockwise pattern was actually due to instruction in Christian practices, though

⁸²² Harris, *The Dialogical Theatre*, 1993: 92-94.

⁸²³ Claire Farago, *Reframing the Renaissance: visual culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450-1650*, 1995.

⁸²⁴ For the reading order of the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2*, Carrasco et al., *Cave, City, and Eagle's Nest*, 2007. The seventeenth-century Zapotec pictorial manuscript, the *Mapa de San Andrés Mixtepec* housed at the University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History, follows a similar counter-clockwise pattern, as well.

more study is needed. If this were to be the case, by adapting the pattern to a local setting Nahuas would have Calpan-ized or Huexotzinc-afied this pattern to line up with their local interests. In the case of the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2*, *tlacuilos* demarcated the figurative and historical content of their *mapa* by way of first referencing the landmarks that helped them narrate that history.⁸²⁵

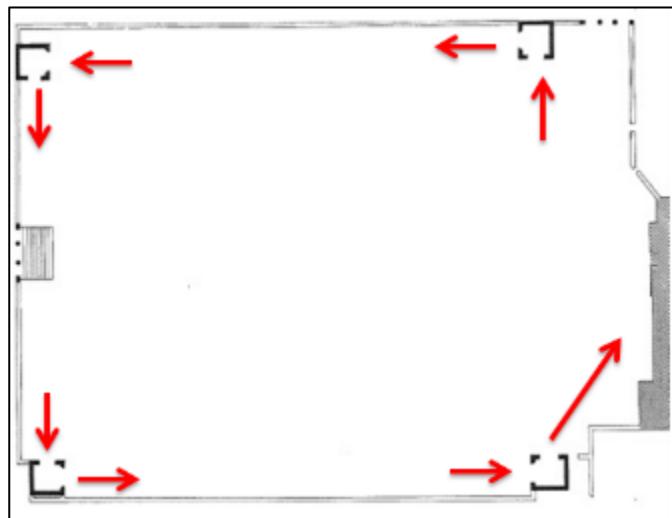


Figure 6.5, Processional pattern through courtyard spaces. This counter-clockwise motion mirrors the patterns found in several indigenous mapas (pictorial histories) (based on McAndrew, 1965).

The ritual practice of place and significance of “non-written and unvoiced” sources used in conjunction with texts and paintings has exposed what Stephanie Wood and others have highlighted as “deep collective identifiers” in the local landscape that date to pre-contact times.⁸²⁶ At Calpan, on clear days, visitors can

follow “sightlines” in the distance to key natural markers of this kind (fig. 6.6).⁸²⁷ Thus, when designing their courtyards Native builders working in this *altepetl* as well as at

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ Megged and Wood, *Mesoamerican Memory*, 4-7; see the entirety of this anthology for in-depth studies of social memory in practice, including the volume’s contributions to understanding “sacred landscapes” and other rich mnemonic devices.

⁸²⁷ Franz Tichy (1970s) was the first scholar to propose sacred sightline investigations of indigenous landscape in the region (1975, 1978, 1979); Tichy argued, as well, that sacred mountains surrounding and Native communities near Teotihuacan were inextricably linked to the Ur cosmologic center of Tollan (Tula) and other towns through the placement of temples and, later, churches, and political centers (1991a, 1991b). For a recent application of Tichy’s work, see Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 130-135. Other recent studies have pursued this line of thinking to very productive ends; León García Garagarza’s careful exposition on the persistence of memory and agency surrounding “archetypal mountains” such as the sacred Mount Tlaloc is one strong example (Megged and Wood, *Mesoamerican Memory*, 193-214).

Huexotzinco appear to have followed a strategy of aligning *posas* with significant memory markers from times past. The resulting layout of the courtyard fit both pre-Christian and Christian rationalities of how memories and beliefs linking holy lands in the natural (and supernatural) worlds ought to be connected to human-built sacred places.

For new Christians who still desired to pay homage to their indigenous past, *posas* decorated with floral and other natural elements melded well with both pre-contact notions about the sacred qualities of such things as well as romantic Christian depictions of the “Earthly



Figure 6.6, Sightline to Iztaccihuatl (2011). Note the courtyard walls (Lynch’s “edges” and the “landmark”) and posa align with, in this case Iztaccihuatl in the distance.

Paradise” of Genesis. By the 1570s, Huexotzinco’s four *posas* were dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption, Saint Juan Baptista, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint James. On their exterior roofs pairs of winged angels bearing the objects of Christ’s Passion appear, a motif repeated across the church façade. These also included allusions to an imagined place with trees as mountains with crosses atop them, as well as references to flower gardens such as are found in the *Cantares Mexicanas* “Xochicuicatl,” “Huexotzincan Piece,” and “How Tezozomoc was anointed lord.”⁸²⁸ “Xochicuicatl” specifically locates itself “here in Huexotzinco, on the day that the *tlatoani* Tecaehuatzin came to perform

⁸²⁸ Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanas*, 150-161; for trees as mountains, see Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 117-118.

there, in the courtyard standing beside the drum...” And flowering trees are featured throughout the song.⁸²⁹

Catholic didactic texts made use of floral and atmospheric imagery, too. When lamenting the pain of death in “Sunday in Septuagesima: song of lamentation,” Christian-Nahua songs recorded at roughly the same time impressed upon its listeners a floral and verdant sacred place. Sahagún’s *Psalmodia* memorialized how the Lord God “made a spacious flower garden there at a place called the Earthly Paradise. When lamenting the pain of death, in “Sunday in Septuagesima: song of lamentation,” the singers memorialize how Lord God “made a spacious flower garden there at a place called the Earthly Paradise. There we people would have lived. It was a very goodly place, a well-sheltered place. Here on earth no place is like it.”⁸³⁰ The well-sheltered place was complimented by the trees of Paradise, especially the Tree of Knowledge, from which humanity would pluck its first real lesson:

In the middle our Lord God set out a tree; it was with the fruit trees, and this one was called the Tree of Knowledge. It showed what was good and what was evil... if you eat this, the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, you will die. There in the good land there dwelt a serpent. In wisdom it surpassed the other animals. This serpent had a human face, and also it spoke human speech, and it was wound about the Tree of Knowledge.⁸³¹

We have no definitive proof that Native Christians ever intoned these particular songs in either Calpan’s or Huexotzinco’s courtyards. Nonetheless, the references to trees that anchor the world coupled with real trees and orchards planted around the courtyard must

⁸²⁹ Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanas*, 160-163

⁸³⁰ Anderson, *Psalmodia Christiana*, 62-63. Sell explains that the songs were “keyed to the Christian calendar” and Native traditions, see Sell et al., 1999, 19-20.

⁸³¹ Ibid.; Anderson’s translation: *In vncan I, iectlalpa, vncan nенca coatl, inic mimati quimpanauiaia in ocequinti que. In iehoatl y coatl tlacaxaiaque, auh iequene tlacatlatoia, auh itech icuisticaca in tlamatilizquauitl.*

have been influenced on some level by the celebration of both the oral and sung recitation of psalms and the imagined world trees of bygone days. During the festival of the Resurrection in April, the *Psalmodia* called upon Nahua Christians to implore God's heavenly creatures to "circle round the courtyard of our church."⁸³²

Students and worshipers who followed the divine around the *atrios* would not only view the carved and painted ornamentation on their walls and buildings, but also the atrial crosses that were customarily erected in their centers. These crosses have been the subject of several investigations, especially studies seeking to determine the juxtapositions between Mesoamerican and European "cosmic trees."⁸³³ For instance, Lara argued that Huejotzingo's *posas* described the Sibylline Prophecy, or the Roman oracles about cosmological cycles or transitioning from age to age described by prophetesses, which Catholics appear to have latched onto in their efforts to describe the "new," latest age of Christianity.⁸³⁴ Lara believes that the Christian/Roman prophecies depicted at Huexotzinco and Calpan foretold the coming of the end of times and the Final Judgment of Christ.⁸³⁵ Being the saint most associated with nature and fauna, it is not surprising that the Franciscan's founder, Saint Francis, was described as a "quetzal-cypress tree" whose "branches, shadows, shade all the children of the holy Church. And in its shade, in its shadow, we people of New Spain are happy. We rejoice."⁸³⁶ This allusion to a protective, tree-like shelter, again tied to the church grounds was reflected at Huejotzingo in a number of crosses that shared space with trees planted in the atrium. There were four

⁸³² Ibid., 112-113: *In teuiutica tisuchitotl, in telototl in tacentzontlatole, in tiuitzitziltzi, in ie amuchinti in amipilhoa in dios, in amangeloti xioalmouicaca, xiciaoalotimaniqui in toteuitoal.*

⁸³³ See Lara's treatment, for instance, *Cave, City, Stage*, 151-162.

⁸³⁴ Ibid., 45-48.

⁸³⁵ Ibid., 163-167.

⁸³⁶ Anderson, *Psalmodia Christiana*, 156-157

crosses that topped each *capilla posa*. These have since been removed, and only one remains, now protected by the cloistered interior of the *ex-convento*.⁸³⁷

Motolinia remembered that along with the trees and corner altars erected during early post-contact festivals, Natives used live birds (falcons, eagles, sparrows, and owls, for instance) or, possibly, fashioned mock avian creatures with the ability to emit sounds because they twittered and squawked in the branches, just as they had in similar artificial forests erected for ritual purposes before the arrival of the Spaniards.⁸³⁸ Once churches and *posas* became more richly ornamented, avian-like beings were present in stone relief and in mural decoration.⁸³⁹ Ornamentation found at Huejotzingo and Calpan depicts angels and winged celestial beings that must have had metaphorical connotations for the bi-cultural audience that saw them. For example, at Calpan, a cherubim pattern runs along the upper trim of two the *posas* (south-east and west chapels). Each cherub consists of a head with protruding wings, and both courtyards feature angels and saints (Fig. 6.7).

Sixteenth-century didactic Nahuatl, Spanish, and Latin texts include references to winged angels, among other things, for the edification of their indigenous audiences, too. During the month of March, when celebrating the feast of *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, the *Psalmodia*'s "First Psalm" explained:

I utter, I have sung the song, the indication. King Solomon produced two cherubim of olive wood; he sculpted them, he fashioned them. The cherubim that Solomon made were quite alike. Their wings were each five cubits long.... King Solomon set up these two cherubim within the temple, where was kept the golden coffer called the holy of holies. And on both the cherubim the arms were stretching out, their wings were spreading out as if flying. And on each side their

⁸³⁷ Wake points out that the "wounds" running along the only existing *posa* cross, now viewable inside the cloister, are "chalchiuhuitl-like" and the base of entwined vines are 'serpentine roots,''" (*Framing the Sacred*, 220).

⁸³⁸ Motolinia (1985), 194.

⁸³⁹ Jeanette Favrot Peterson, *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco* (1993)

wing tips reached the temple wall. And their other wings stretched out to intercept each other in the middle of the temple.⁸⁴⁰



Figure 6.7, Winged beings of Calpan (author, 2011). This corner cherub relief on the NW *Posa* is one stylized depiction of winged human heads found in the courtyard. As the second highest order of angels in Christian traditions, stone icons of cherubim amplified the divine qualities of colonial learningscapes.

Later in the year, during April's festival of the Resurrection, Christians would call on God's heavenly creatures to "circle round the courtyard of our church."⁸⁴¹ Stone reliefs of winged-figures made manifest the celestial beings called for in Christian songs.

The stone cherubim at Calpan have wings less than 5 cubits in length and lack open arms, but nonetheless

they could bring this Psalm to life for learners being instructed in the *atrio*. Elsewhere on the *posas* at Calpan and Huejotzingo pairs of angels, with arms and wings, fly above and to either side of the doorways in association with the *Arma Christi* ("Weapons of Christ"), iconic implements of the Passion.⁸⁴² According to Lara, Huejotzingo's angels were made to focus one's attention on the atrial cross that was at courtyard's center, which he believes acts as an icon of the soon-to-appear Messiah.⁸⁴³ A few of the angels have been removed or defaced, but those that remain hold several of the approximately 20 icons associated with the Passion, including the True Cross, a Crown of Thorns, a branch or reed scepter, the Lantern of the Roman soldiers, and what appears to be the

⁸⁴⁰ Anderson, *Psalmodia Christiana*, 78-81.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., 108-109

⁸⁴² Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 163.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

Sacred Chalice. Another carries a blocky flagellum or possibly a rod, and two trumpet flowers burst forth cornet horns.

Calpan's several depictions of angels and winged saints carry similarly reverent icons. Much like those at Huejotzingo, the Calpan *posa* chapel murals, painted on the ceilings of the two westernmost chapels, depict both angels and cherubim—the southwest *posa* has four angels, one on each interior wall, and the northwest *posas*'s ceiling features painted reliefs of four cherubs and four lion's heads. Three of the southwest *posas*'s angels appear to carry select *arma Christi* implements: the Crown of Thorns, three nails, a barbed whip, and a wooden cudgel are visible. The figures and their implements are vividly rendered, each wearing a colored robe (brown, blue, green, and yellow), have peachy skin, and are framed by cerulean borders against plain white backgrounds.

On the outer stone surfaces of the *posas*, however, five named and sixteen unnamed angels stand out. Of the unnamed, six appear on the northeast *posa*'s south-facing wall, four are positioned on either side of the scene of Saint Mary's Assumption into heaven, and two others hold the crown that will soon be placed atop her head. Above this scene, two angels carry scepters, while two others below Mary swing censors that fume, the puffy smoke rising to surround the Virgin. Named figures include Christ the Redeemer, who is seated in Final Judgment on the façade of the southwest *posa*, and there are several other sculptures of the Virgin Mary on the northeastern, northwestern, and southwestern corner chapels. Beyond the expected Trinity, among the featured biblical figures are two images of the Archangel Gabriel gracing the northeastern and southwestern *posas*, the saints Michael and Raphael, found on the southwestern structure, and the four Apostles—Saint Mathew, and the animal likenesses of saints Mark, Luke,

and John, located on the southeastern chapel (figs. 6.8–6.10). These Christian figures not only conveyed Catholic teachings but were also clearly influenced by the indigenous artists who created them. The iconography, devotional items, and clothing associated with the angels, saints, Christ, and Mary resonated with the ways in which the full “portraits” of figures presented in the *Matricula de Huexotzinco* were painted. Angels and saints carried rods, scepters, banners, or branches that echo similar items wielded by or associated with *calpulli* officers in the sixteenth-century pictorial census. The angel or saint flying in to bring divine knowledge of the Christ child to Mary in the scene depicted on the western face of the northeast *posa* carries a “paper” copy of the *Ave Maria* in its left hand and what appears to be a rod, possibly a variation of a lily branch, in its right. He holds either a lily (representing the purity of the Mother of God), a trumpet, a shining lantern, a branch from Paradise presented to him by the Mary, or a spear in his right hand and often a mirror—made of jasper and with a X, the first letter of Christ (Χριστός) in Greek—in his left hand. What key Christian symbolism were the architects seeking to convey and what messages might have resonated on the local, indigenous level?

Gabriel’s presence on the northeastern *posa* appears to lock in an emphasis on Christian narratives, but the marginalia surrounding him and many of the other “architectural picture books” have the potential to accommodate indigenous readings.⁸⁴⁴ Kline Morehead highlighted the reoccurring “adjectival borders” sculptures of flowers, hearts, and seashells as symbolic for both Mesoamerican and European viewers, and argues that for this *posa* such imagery emphasizes both Christian and indigenous

⁸⁴⁴ Fitzgerald, “Deconstructing Franciscan Conventual Schools,” Chapter 4.



Figure 6.8–6.10: Chapels for the Saints and saintly creatures, Mary, Michael, John (2011): The Posa de la Asunción's west façade (above), depicts the Anunciación of Mary's pregnancy. Mary sits to the left, arms crossed over her chest with an open book before her. The Angel Gabriel stands to the right, bringing word of the Christ child. At center we see a potted bouquet of what look like lilies, and above the flowers we see a bird (possibly a dove, indicating the Holy Spirit). Rays of light, or possibly drops of rain, project from the bird toward the expectant Mary. The southwest posa, north façade (right), features key saints: Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael. The Southeast posa, west façade (below), displays detailed medallions, each with a likeness of one of the four evangelists. Pictured, John the Evangelist has taken on characteristics of an eagle.



femininity.⁸⁴⁵ Of some relation to Kline Moorhead's assumption, are the four Christian medallions that seem to anchor the Annunciation scene. These medallions are filled with European symbols, some intricate letters referring to biblical figures and texts. Encircling these are borders of curls, seemingly the same as European medallions. However, the placement of four icon-filled circles appears to mirror indigenous traditions, too. Several of *Codex Borgia*'s folios, for instance, depict day-signs (commonly sets of four animal visages) surrounding some of its more narrative scenes.

More recently, Logan Wagner, Hal Box, and Susan Kline Moorhead have delved even deeper into the courtyard at Calpan, exposing how the site reiterates pre-Christian structures such as the sunken courtyard and borders that emphasize key scenes from the sacred world.⁸⁴⁶ Another type of resonance with pre-contact religious imagery may be found in Franciscan cords and flora iconography depicted in Calpan and Huexotzinco's *atrios*. Ornamental stone cording traces and highlights many of the edges in both courtyards. It is evident on Huexotzinco's church façade, where Franciscan cords make a rectangle above the *portada principal* and, above that, frame the window piercing the façade. Similar Franciscan cording is found over the arches of each *capilla posa* and around the angles bearing the *Amra Christi*. At Calpan, roof trim running along the northwest *posa* mirrors that of its sister monastery, and the church façade shares an upper window framed by cords as well as the maguey plants flanking this feature, which also appear to reflect Franciscan cordage.⁸⁴⁷ Angels depicted on the walls of structures in both settings often wear a stole that falls down, with two hanging straps where the figures'

⁸⁴⁵ Kline Morehead, "An Iconology of Architectural Ornament," 86-109.

⁸⁴⁶ Logan Wagner et al., *Ancient Origins of the Plaza*, 113-115.

⁸⁴⁷ Wake, *Framing the Sacred*, 213-214.

legs would be.⁸⁴⁸ In keeping with the symbolic implications of those worn by Franciscans, the stone cords possibly reminded observants of their need to maintain commitments to charity, obedience, chastity, penance, and detachment.

Winged Warriors, St. Michael's Wind, and Fertile Soils

Most of the icons in Calpan's *atrio* strike powerful poses. Standing before their likeness would empower student-teachers, but to what effect? What spiritual lessons beyond local arrangements of power and knowledge might have been seen in the *atrio* figures? The iconography in both Calpan's and Huexotzinco's courtyards helped to augment lessons about San Miguel Arcángel and Lucifer, a heavenly conquest of good over evil, and the cycle of life after death. Either a friar-architect or local specialists placed Saint Michael with his fellow archangels, Gabriel and Raphael, flanking him on the north-facing surface of Calpan's southwestern *posa*. Saint Michael, with a scaly figure beneath him, stands above the portal at the center of the *posa*. This is a scene of victory, when the Archangel vanquished Lucifer. Nahua Catholics encountered Saint Michael standing in his moment of triumph: wings spread wide, his right arm raised as he swings his sword toward the devil. His left arm grasps a cross, which he is thrusting down and into Lucifer's mouth. Satan, a humanoid figure that appears to wear a snake costume, writhes beneath the archangel (fig. 6.11).⁸⁴⁹

The three saints were commonly celebrated together during Michaelmas in September, and they symbolize the shift between cycles of biblical time: following the war for heaven, regarding the battle with Lucifer as well as Saint Michael's role as

⁸⁴⁸ Evident red pigment can be found around the edges of the angels bearing the Five Wounds on the northwestern capilla *posa* of Calpan. Additionally, the angels' faces remain red to the present. Future studies will need to be conducted to verify the date of application.

⁸⁴⁹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 166.



Figure 6.11, The triumphal Saint Michael (2011). The Posa de San Miguel (north façade) depicts the winged St. Michael conquering the scaly skinned, bat-like Lucifer, by stabbing his cross into the serpentine face. Note also the flowery armor St. Michael wears over his elbows and knees, especially.

spiritual intercessor for the end of times. Could this figure of Lucifer call to mind pre-contact deities such as Tezcatlipoca, who as far as the Spanish were concerned was one of the most evil of all the “demons?”⁸⁵⁰ According to Sahagún, Tianquizmanalco, a community in Calpan’s jurisdiction sited at the southern base of Popocatepetl, had historically been the site of serious sacrificial fervor. For a “great feast” held in the honor of Telpochtli (“youthful one,” a likeness of Tezcatlipoca), the people of Tianquizmanalco

⁸⁵⁰ Some have suggested that Lucifer was a stand-in for Tezcatlipoca. Ibid., 165; see also, Aguilar-Moreno, “Transculturation in Art,” 56. This is possible, since narratives about the wayward practices associated with this unpredictable figure made good fodder for the priests practicing in the area. For instance, Bernardino de Sahagún took time away from translating the Nahuatl descriptions of prominent mountains in the *Florentine Codex Book XI* in order to advise his fellow evangelists of the sinister nature of Tezcatlipoca in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley. On the other hand, would the Catholic clergy wanted to preserve a memory of this pre-contact “demon” for all time on the façade of a holy *posa* in a Nahua community such as Calpan?

would host visitors from “distant lands” to “perform that feast.”⁸⁵¹ According to the distressed Franciscan, in the decades following the Spanish Conquest the people of Tianquizmanalco persisted in this traditional practice, though it had become “cloaked under the name of San Juan Telpochtli as it appears on the surface” because they mistakenly equated Saint John’s virginal nature with *telpochtli* (“sons, young unmarried men”).⁸⁵² Sahagún quipped, “Since Saint John has performed no miracles there [at Tianquizmanalco], neither is there reason to meet there [to celebrate his festival] rather than any other place where he has a church.”⁸⁵³

At Calpan itself, the narrative of good conquering evil is ripe with both Mesoamerican and European symbolism. Minor details on Calpan’s southwest *posa* could have loomed large in an ongoing process of double mistaken identity at the site. Four-petaled flower symbols mark Saint Michael’s knees and elbows. They seem similar to the four-petaled flowers on the knees and elbows of a statue of the pre-contact deity Xochipilli.⁸⁵⁴ The artist or artists who created Xochipilli and the Nahua builders of Calpan were never in conversation with each other, yet the persistence of what seem to be pre-contact floral stylistics associated with “heavenly” figures seems evident here.

Saint Michael was associated with another site in the region thanks to the story of three related apparitions that occurred in the seventeenth century at San Bernabé in the vicinity of the later church and shrine of San Miguel del Milagro. According to a legend recorded by Francisco de Florencia and published by the Jesuit in 1690, in 1631 a young

⁸⁵¹ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book I: Introductions and Indices*, 91.

⁸⁵² “telpochtli,” Nahuatl Dictionary, Wired Humanities Projects, <https://nahualt.uoregon.edu/content/telpochtli>; “youth, adolescent, unmarried young man.” possessed, (grown) son. abs pl. tēlpōpōchtin. James Lockhart, *Nahuatl as Written: Lessons in Older Written Nahuatl, with Copious Examples and Texts*, 2001: 233.

⁸⁵³ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: Book I: Introductions and Indices*, 91.

⁸⁵⁴ Xochipilli is on display at Mexico City’s Museo de Antropología e Historia.

16 or 17-year-old Native boy named Diego Lázaro known as a “good Christian” from San Bernabé, witnessed these apparitions of Saint Michael (fig., 6.12). Diego was the son of Francesca Castillan Xuchitl and grandson of Isabel Castillan Xuchitl, a family lineage that Florencia made sure to record, based on church records. The boy and the people of his *altepetl* suffered from outbreaks of illness, this was all due to the menacing “demons” that plagued the land, preying on Natives and leading them to temptation. Diego himself had contracted some malady and was visited by Saint Michael because the archangel



Figure 6.12, Saint Michael and Diego’s well (2015). *La Aparición de San Miguel al indio Diego Lázaro*, by painter Juan Tinoco (c. 1675), one of the earliest depictions of Lázaro’s account. Located in the Catedral del Puebla.

hoped to intervene on behalf of all the sick people in the region.⁸⁵⁵ Despite experiencing the first of the apparitions during a holy fiesta procession, a timid Diego failed to pass on the saint’s message to anyone else. His reluctance remained even after a second visitation had resulted in Diego’s miraculous escape from the raging contagion and a vision of the location of a miraculous spring.⁸⁵⁶ Months passed, until an angry archangel appeared for a third time to compel the boy to act. He took

⁸⁵⁵Francisco de Florencia, *Narración de la maravillosa aparición que hizo el Arcángel San Miguel a Diego Lazaros de San Francisco*, 65-68. It may prove significant that Florencia made sure to track the matrilineal line of Castillan Xochitl, especially considering the number of women who were christened with the surname in the region.

⁸⁵⁶Ibid., 67, 128-129.

waters from a spring revealed to him earlier by Saint Michael to the bishop of Puebla who, testing them, found the liquid healed all who drank it. The apparitions and the miraculously healing spring were finally known and certified, along with Saint Michael's defeat of the forces of darkness that had obscured the font, of crows lurking in the area that were actually "the Prince of Darkness, and his miserable pack."⁸⁵⁷

This story, and the compelling presence of Saint Michael at Calpan, suggest the didactic significance of this figure in the area. This appears to have been true of another element placed on Calpan's posa, the presence of a serpent or reptilian-like figure beneath a winged one. Motolinia's description of Tlaxcala's festive artificial mountains emphasizes the presence of many birds perched atop the flowering trees, and that "a great many snakes" who were alive but defanged were also positioned in their tableaus.⁸⁵⁸ With various mammals interspersed, including humans hunting these creatures, smoke billowing up from tobacco leaves, and the cacophony of songs and animal sounds, the *posas* for the Pascua de Flores learningscape of 1538 must have been quite a vivid experience to hear, smell, and see.

The roots of these sorts of observances in the region appear to have been deep ones. Roughly a half-day's journey by foot to the northeast of Calpan, and less than that from Huexotzinco, rest the ruins of Cacaxtla-Xochitecatl, an eighth-century city-state.⁸⁵⁹ Cacaxtla, an archaeological site best known for its vivid murals and elite architectural complex, presents a pictorial counterpoint to the understanding that Calpan and

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid. See also, Jaime Cuadriello, *Las glorias de la república de Tlaxcala: o la conciencia como imagen sublime*, 2004 287-302.

⁸⁵⁸ Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians*, 132; *Dialogical Theater*, 93-94; Motolinia, *Memoriales*, 194.

⁸⁵⁹ Archaeology of the ruins continues to reveal fascinating details about the site, see the work of Serra Puche (1998, 2001) and Serra Puche et al. (2011).

Huexotzinco were wholly Christian in the nature of their ideology.⁸⁶⁰ Claudia Brittenham explains that though we may never be able to decipher the language of pictorial texts from the site, the “writing... falls squarely within the heavily pictorial Central Mexican writing tradition” of its day, namely those found at Teotihuacan.⁸⁶¹

In his *Historia de Tlaxcala* (1592), Diego Muñoz Camargo emphasized local associations with Xochiquetzal and Xochitecaciuhatl. The first, the precious “Quetzal Flower” goddess of fertility, creativity, rivers, and springs was paired in a balanced way with the male water deity Tlaloc. The second, the “goddess of meanness and avarice, the woman of Quiahuitzcatl,” was linked to a male deity who was also a local variant of Tlaloc.⁸⁶² Both, or at least Xochiquetzal alone, lived “seated in the flowery tree” place, most likely a reference to the Mesoamerican “paradise” of Tlalocan or perhaps to Tamoanchan. Xochiquetzal would lose her place when, according to Muñoz Camargo, Tezcatlipoca stole her away for himself, leaving Tlaloc to unite with Matlacueye, Tlaxacala’s own patroness. In the 1550s or 60s, Muñoz Camargo had visited the ruins of the ancient city and commented that the “ruins of their structures... continue to demonstrate how strong and grand [the makers] were; as so were the fortifications, embrasures, battlements, parapets, and bastions... [they] must have been the strongest thing in the world.”⁸⁶³ His glowing description was probably written, consciously or not, in a way that would glorify the high-level ancestry of Tlaxcala, his own home *altepetl*.⁸⁶⁴ There is also some evidence that a model pre-contact learningscape may have existed at

⁸⁶⁰ For an enchanting investigation of the murals’ creation and context see Claudia Brittenham, *The murals of Cacaxtla: The power of painting in Ancient Central Mexico*. Austin, TX: University of Texas, 2015).

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., 25.

⁸⁶² Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, [1892] 117; 154-155.

⁸⁶³ Ibid., 20-21.

⁸⁶⁴ Brittenham argues that much of what we know comes through sixteenth century texts first, and not the pictorial traditions of the time, *The Murals of Cacaxtla*, 26.

this site, a space modern investigator Brittenham describes as being “screened from public view,” resembling in this way the form of a *calmecac* or *telpochcalli*.⁸⁶⁵

Whatever the case, the ruins were sequentially buried over time, only to be rediscovered by outsiders in the 1970s. For instance, it is apparent in Tlaxcala’s pictorial *Codex Xochitencatl* of 1632 (included in records of a land dispute with the *altepetl* of San Miguel Xochitencatl) that both sites were depicted as large grassy mountains. Whoever painted the codex seemed to have been unaware by this time that the site had buildings decorated with murals (Fig. 6.13).⁸⁶⁶ However, it is clear that the memory of Cacaxtla had persisted well into the Spanish colonial era and during the sixteenth-century period of intensive church construction. Whether or not the decorative motifs on the site’s buildings had any direct influence on what was going on artistically in Catholic Calpan or Huexotzinco remains to be seen, but stylistically it seems clear that older ways of depicting the sacred survived to make themselves felt on the façades of churches and *posas* in the region. Brittenham argues that “[e]ven after the Cacaxtla paintings were hidden, they were not forgotten.”⁸⁶⁷

With this in mind, Saint Michael’s victory over Satan at Calpan, depicted as a winged warrior defeating a scaly serpent, could have allowed for unintended

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., 185.

⁸⁶⁶ Archivo Histórico del Estado de Tlaxcala, 1725, caja 60, exp. 33, f. 198; see also, Brittenham, *The Murals of Cacaxtla*, 23 fig. 29, and also 25-26. Stephanie Wood has noted some of the traditional conventions used by the artist, including footprints that run along the road as well as the presence of Christian influence, see: “Codices,” curricular development blog entry, Wired Humanities Projects (accessed 2019) <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/mesoinstitute/about/curriculum-unit-development/codices/>. The way the church is represented, however, with vivid colors and a textile-like pattern that was probably echoed in tiles and bricks so typical of this region deserve further study.

⁸⁶⁷ Brittenham, “Style and Substance” (2009), 139, 146-151. Cacaxtla’s murals are pregnant with material to be decoded, making Brittenham’s study a masterful accomplishment; see Brittenham, *The Murals of Cacaxtla*, 15. The specific mural of the Bird-Man and Plumed Serpent date to after the 950s (221-224). See also Pohl, *Exploring Mexico* (1999), 132, 137-140.

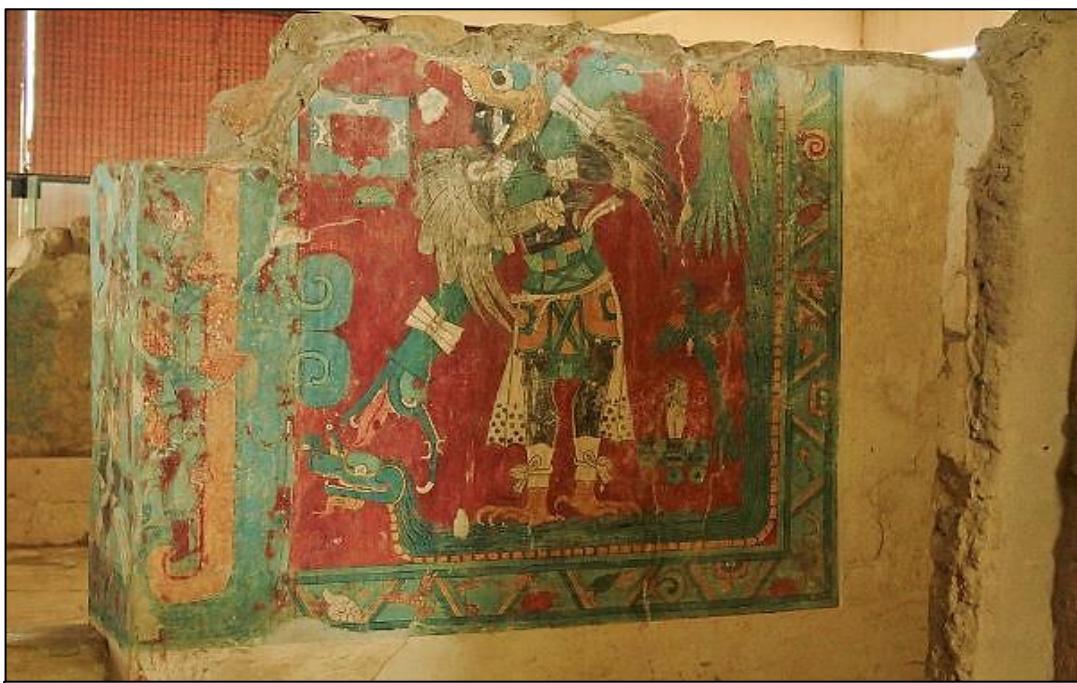


Figure 6.13, Cacaxtla mural of the Bird-Man and Plumed Serpent. Uncovered in the 1970s, this mural of a winged figure, body painted black and dressed in eagle regalia, is shown clutching a tubular staff with a serpent's head at its lower end. Beneath the bird-man is a feathered-serpent, its head extending upwards as if to accept the open maw of the staff-tube.

interpretations on the part of Nahua students, for whom serpents of various kinds could harbor sacred qualities, even if they were demonized by Catholic clergy.⁸⁶⁸ Christian narratives set Michael's battle during the war for heaven, when he "also fought with the dragon and his angels, and casting them out of heaven, had a great victory."⁸⁶⁹ In Sahagún's *Psalmodia*, the Psalm for "Blessed Michael the Archangel" taught, "Saint Michael, along with all his angels, fought the great constrictor serpent Lucifer."⁸⁷⁰ In another Psalm, Nahuas would hear about the end of Saint Martha's life when, after

⁸⁶⁸ See Cervantes' discussion of European demonizing, especially of Tlaloc, in *Devil in the New World*, 8-20. Cervantes argues that the roots of this can be found in medieval Christian "spiritual introspection" and the rigorous devotion to demonology held by educated clergy and scholasticism at large (20, 25-39). For various responses by Native converts (and heretics), from idolatry to prideful adoptions/adaptations, see his Chapter 2 "The Indian Response" (40-73).

⁸⁶⁹ Apocalypse 12:7-9

⁸⁷⁰ Anderson, Sahagún's *Psalmodia*, 286-287. Anderson's translation of *In iehoatzi in sant Miguel, yoan in isquichti in iAngeloa, quicalia in vei mazacoatl in iehoatl Lucifer*.

moving with Mary Magdalena to France, Martha miraculously “killed a large [and] deadly constrictor-like snake.”⁸⁷¹ The “great constrictor” (*huey cincoatl*) was a fearful creature in Mesoamerica, as depicted in the *Florentine Codex, Book XI*.⁸⁷² Men (and coyotes) were wise to fear it (see Chapter II).

The doctrine of the downfall of Lucifer not only explained to Nahuas the consequences of sin, evil, and disobedience to God, but also served to guide their habits until the fateful Day of Judgment. Saint Michael’s victory made him a potential patron saint among the Nahuas, and in fact he did serve this role in Valley communities, as the namesake for San Miguel Huexotzinco, for instance, but also pueblos in the colonial jurisdictions of Actopan, Mixtepec, Cuiseo de la Laguna, Mexico, San Miguel el Grande, Valladolid, among others.⁸⁷³ Throughout the sixteenth century, a serious drop in the population created crises challenging the Native community’s sense of place. In the 1520s, mid-1540s, late-1570s, and continuing throughout the seventeenth century disease wracked the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley (see Chapter V). The events in Diego Lázaro’s life are likely a reflection of the long history of epidemic disease in the Valley. In each instance, the Native population needed both sacred and medical intervention. The hope that the intercession of powerful saints and angels such as St. Michael and the Virgin Mary on behalf of the ailing before God would have provided comfort, as well as instructional opportunities, in the colonial Puebla-Tlaxcala learningscapes.

Learningscapes on Stage

⁸⁷¹ Ibid., 212-213.

⁸⁷² “Cincoatl” *Florentine Codex, Book XI: Earthly Things*, 84 (see especially the Nahuatl entries for “coyotl” and “cincoatl”

⁸⁷³ Gerhard notes that San Miguel Huexotzinco was not permanently established until 1540s and 50s, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 1993: 45, 51, 99, 141-143, 181, 237-239, and 351.

Despite having to endure devastating disease outbreaks, as well as the increased labor and tribute obligations that went along with them, the Huexotzinca appear to have responded by persisting in their use of the learningscape. In 1586, for instance, fray Alonso Ponce noted that he had “passed by two or three towns [of Huexotzinco] where the Indians were playing [music] in the churches for the souls in Purgatory, and they would differentiate the music they were playing: for a while the bell music and for another while the drumming songs.”⁸⁷⁴ Ponce was not specific on the composition besides the use of bells or drums and that the songs “differentiated,” but he was clear that Natives from the towns he visited played music “in the churches” specifically for the purposes of honoring the dead.

Didactic Christian dramas and comedies had become popular, though exactly how many and which of them were presented in Calpan, Quauhquechollan, or Huexotzinco is not known. According to Louise Burkhart, a widening collection of morality plays helped teach Native Christians about death and preparations for dying, so that there is no good reason to doubt that at least some of them were performed in the towns of the colonial Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley.⁸⁷⁵ Their invaluable scripts tell us much about the times in which they were composed and staged. Barry Sell convincingly dates the syntax to well into the seventeenth century, but explains the “strong possibility that many arose in some fashion before, perhaps even well before, 1600.”⁸⁷⁶ Max Harris’s fascinating study of living traditions in recent times, in conjunction with the colonial record represented by Nahuatl-

⁸⁷⁴ Antonio de Ciudad Real, *Tratado curioso y docto de las grandesas de la Nueva España...* Edited by Víctor M. Castillo Farreras and Josefina García Quintana (Instituto de investigaciones históricas, 1976), 168-169.

⁸⁷⁵ Barry D. Sell, Louise Burkhart, and Gregory Spira (eds), *Nahuatl theater: Death and life in colonial Nahua Mexico*, Vol. 1. (University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 29-53.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 15

language didactic plays, demonstrate that what he calls the “dialogical frontier” was a negotiated process of learning. Harris notes that in the late 1980s, the people of Huejotzingo continued to relive the Spanish Conquest at a carnival event, including the use of modern interpretations of traditional obsidian-embedded wooden clubs (*maquahuitl*) and an accompanying didactic called *Play of St. Francis*.⁸⁷⁷

One of the colonial-era plays that has been preserved and translated from its original Nahuatl is *Final Judgment*. People in Calpan (and elsewhere) would have been familiar with scenes from this apocalyptic event; a representation of Christ in Judgment still graces the southwest *posa* at Calpan, for instance. The Nahuatl-language didactic play on the same subject would have brought the lesson carved in stone even more vividly to life. In *Final Judgment*, the audience meets Saint Michael, Death, Christ, Satan, a devout Priest, a handful of demons, several souls living and dead, and the fulcrum of the plot, the wayward Lucia. Saint Michael admonishes the crowd to fear death and prepare for God’s judgment.⁸⁷⁸ Death enters with other abstractions (Time and The Holy Church), to declare that he works directly with one who is “sending out sunbeams, filling up everywhere in heaven and everywhere in the world...the bad ones [i.e. sinners]... he will throw into the depths of the place of the dead.” Next, he declares that “the people of the earth... know that with sin they have really masturbated themselves black in the face... may they scrub themselves, may they bathe themselves

⁸⁷⁷ Harris, *Dialogical Theater*, 99 and 108-120. Furthermore, Harris shows that folk dramas bring us surprisingly close to understanding what others call the “vision of the vanquished” wherein descendants recreate and repurpose events in the Spanish Conquest to tell an inventive story where the Spanish are defeated (120-121).

⁸⁷⁸ Sell et. al., *Nahuatl Theater*, Vol. 1,190-191.

with the sacred light of goodness.”⁸⁷⁹ Later, when the Day of Judgment has arrived, Lucía, confesses to a Priest, declaring a shameful secret that, while unvoiced, has to do with the fact that she not only never married, but engaged in illicit sex as well. When she comes before Christ, it was too late for her to find forgiveness and redemption. “Now the world is about to come to an end,” she cries, “about to be finished off.”⁸⁸⁰ Saint Michael blows a wind instrument, and the audience witnesses the judgment scene. Christ announces that, “the good ones I will give their heavenly flowery riches, heavenly jades and garments, heavenly palm fronds... the bad... [receive] the house of the place of the dead and the sufferings of the place of the dead will become their possessions, because they were not able to keep my sacred commands.”⁸⁸¹ Confronted by Christ, Lucía admits that “I did not work for you...,” to which Jesus responds, “Now, truly your heart never spoke to us on earth. It was only your lustful living that you used to work at.”⁸⁸² In the end, she and other sinners are carted off to Hell by demons grateful to add more lost souls to their torments.

This same lesson, that proper confession and Christian marriage would lead to salvation, was on display on courtyard walls such as the *posa* at Calpan (Fig. 6.14).⁸⁸³ Not all of the figures found in *the Final Judgment* script are there (such as Death and Satan), but Christ or God sits in majestic judgment, sending out beams of light from his head. Angels blowing horns descend to summon the dead, near replicas to the angels blowing trumpets on one of Huexotzinco’s *posas*. At Calpan, the saintly Christian models

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., 194-195.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid., 198-199.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., 200-201

⁸⁸² Ibid., 204-205.

⁸⁸³ Burkhart also notes the flower and the sword; Ibid., 40

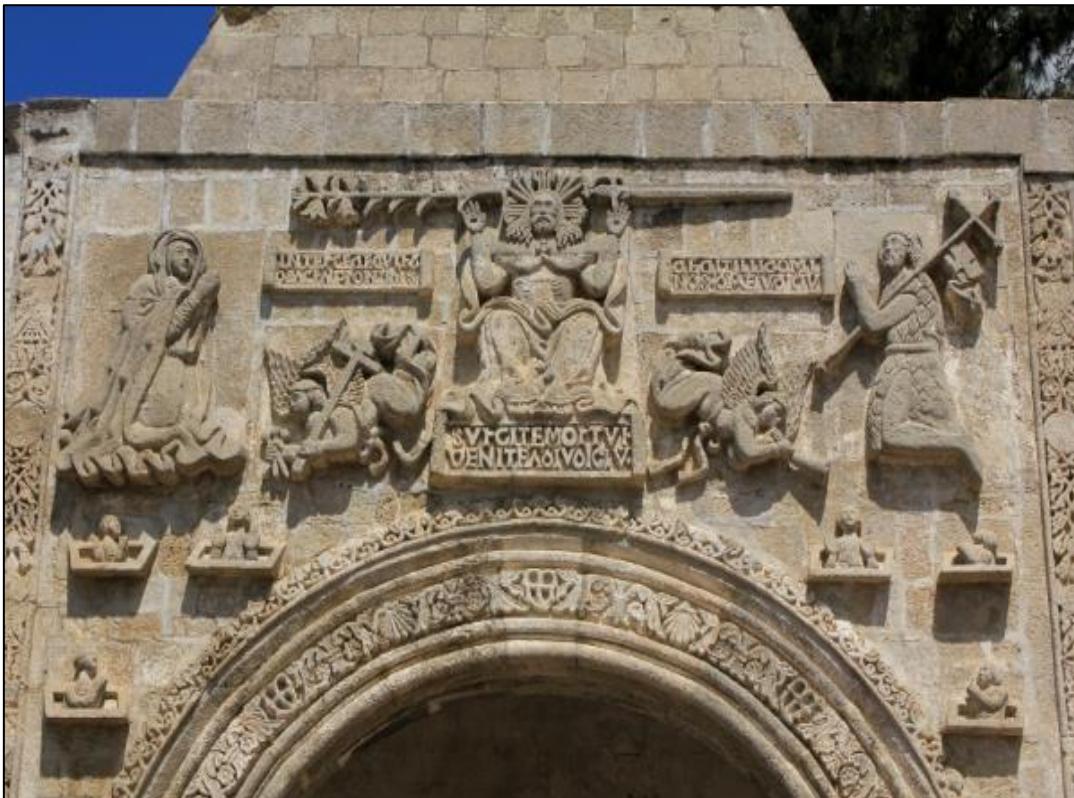


Figure 6.14, Judgement in the provincial learningscape. Posa de San Miguel (east façade), depicting the moment of the Final Judgment. His head is surrounded by a radiant sunburst, and a sword and a stalk of wheat, or possibly flowers, extend outward above his hands. Two messenger angels descend from his side toward groups of dead spirits arising out of Hell. Mary and Saint Andrew pray on either side of the seated Christ.

Mary (on the left) and John the Baptist (on the right), kneel in prayer to God. Yet this *posa*'s ornamentation could have called up older memories of beliefs connected with death and the afterlife. Nahua religious history held that the sun crossed into the underworld at night through the power gained from the daily blood offerings of faithful Mesoamericans. Nahuas believed that during its nightly journey, the sacred orb and deity had to travel among the endlessly journeying dead through a “very bad place, a great abyss, it stands wide. It is a very frightening place, it is filled with fire, it is very dark, a very gloomy place where the darkness can be held, can be touched. And it stinks so

much, it is a repulsive place,” the abode of the fearsome skeletal Lord of the Dead, Mictlantecuhtli, who in the Catholic era was equated with Lucifer, himself.⁸⁸⁴

In the sixteenth-century, indigenous elders told the Franciscans that Quetzalcoatl had journeyed into the underworld to take the “precious bones” of people who had lived in previous Suns (world ages) so that they could be used as the raw material for the humans who would populate the age of the new Fifth Sun.⁸⁸⁵ Before acquiescing, Mictlantecuhtli ordered him to “blow [his] conch and carry the bones four times round [the Dead Lord’s] jade circle.” When Quetzalcoatl blew the conch, the “sound reache[d] the Lord of Mictlan,” and he received the bones.⁸⁸⁶ In this way, Quetzalcoatl was eventually able to renew human life on earth by confronting the underworld and by blowing on this conch-shell “trumpet.”⁸⁸⁷ It is possible, then, that Calpaneca learning about the Final Judgment through the learningscape’s architecture—and lessons that would have incorporated it—had the ability to make connections between older metaphors and introduced ones, such as divine figures blowing wind instruments to revive the dead. The resonance of this indigenous iconography in a place of Christian teaching could have been fraught with interpretations in line with Lockhart’s double-mistaken identity.

The *posas* and atrium of Huexotzinco tells a far more specific narrative about death and rebirth against the backdrop of the Passion and Crucifixion. Susan Webster’s exposition on sixteenth-century Nahua confraternities from Huexotzinco focused on the Cofradía de Vera Cruz, reviewed the rediscovered murals painted on the inner north and

⁸⁸⁴ Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, 55.

⁸⁸⁵ Brotherton, *Book of the Fourth World*, 272.

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 272-273.

south walls of the nave of the church.⁸⁸⁸ The north wall mural depicts a procession in penitence for the Santo Entierro. Three rows of male robed and hooded figures trisect the wall's surface. They are dressed in white and carry crosses and whips, presumably for self-flagellation. The middle queue depicts figures in black, carrying reproductions of the *Arma Christi* (implements of the Passion) and a palanquin bearing Christ's body prepared for burial. Finally, the bottom row consists of figures of adult and adolescent penitents dressed in white and flogging themselves; the youths cling to white cords attached to the adult figures. On the north wall, modern visitors find a faded depiction of Christ in the moment of Descent from the cross, or the Deposition of Christ. Here, in the places of saints Joseph and Nicodemus, we see four tonsured clergy, some using ladders to help lower Christ to the earth.⁸⁸⁹

According to Webster, the lessons would have been rearticulated by members of the *cofradía* in Huexotzinco's *atrio*.⁸⁹⁰ On relevant holy days, confraternity members and church people, along with two or four priests, would reenact the Passion scene and its aftermath. They would have used wooden replicas, similar to the one of the few on display behind museum glass, today, or might have selected an actor to be placed on a cross that had been erected in the courtyard as the enacted narrative proceeded. At the end, the stand-in would be deposited, wrapped, and moved through the courtyard, from

⁸⁸⁸ Susan Webster, "Art, Ritual, and Confraternities in Sixteenth-Century New Spain. Penitential Imagery at the Monastery of San Miguel, Huejotzingo" (1997). I was unaware of Webster's findings while working in Huejotzingo, and her careful investigation affirmed much of my own. I am inspired by her work for a future project studying the documents held in Spain's archives.

⁸⁸⁹ Webster identifies some of the robed figures as being women, though it is very hard to determine the sex of any of them.

⁸⁹⁰ Webster noted how "interesting" it is to find a *cofradía* of Vera Cruz reenacting the Santo Entierro, a procession not commonly performed by this town, though she assumed it was primarily because of European precedents (26).

*posa to posa.*⁸⁹¹ Throughout, the clergy would lead the observants in prayer and give sermons. One key lesson learned from this art and lived practice would have been that Christ's death and subsequent entombment needed to be witnessed by the community. Priests would have offered sermons describing the events meaning and explain Christ's sacrifice. And these practices reveal some of the ways that Huejotzingo's courtyard was used as a Christian-Native learningscape.

The practice of the *Sancto Entierro*, when viewed from a Nahua standpoint, would have reflected preexisting patterns of observing life and death. On the surface, when locals watched fellow community members performing a kind of auto sacrifice, the act might have called to mind the practices of their ancestors and Native priests, some of whom painted their skin black and publicly bled devotees of the god Camaxtli (a deity venerated in the Tlaxcala region closely related to Quetzalcoatl).⁸⁹² Natives could have remembered the act of “curing” the sun of eclipse,” which was done through a blood auto sacrifice aiming to nourish the sun god, perhaps likening the blood of the “penitent” with Christ’s blood shed on the cross, and the penitent’s body with Christ’s body.⁸⁹³ What is more, when the Catholic Huexotzinca removed the sacrificed Christ from a tall, tree-like cross the act could have called to mind other Mesoamerican traditions.

⁸⁹¹ Weisman (*Mexico in Sculpture*, 57, 198) explains that the use of corner chapels by locals and pedagogues was an important intervention in the liturgical habits of the time, and she noted, early on, the counterclockwise functionality of most. This, she added, appears to have confounded even visiting Spaniards, at least based on one *dialogó* from Cervantes de Salazar’s *Méjico en 1554* (1939: 84).

⁸⁹² Motolinia, *Memoriales*, 201-202.

⁸⁹³ Brotherston, *Image of the New World*, 105-108. Brotherston’s reading of the Codex Laud folio of this ceremony even further augments Webster’s claims. For instance, the four priests stand or come from the east, and Webster’s belief that the display was erected in the cemetery to the left (north) of the church would put the east behind this; Webster, “Art, Ritual, and Confraternities in Sixteenth-Century New Spain” 33-35.

The accent and descent of the crucified Christ on high pole reflects histories and rituals described in several accounts of pre-contact ritual practices. For instance, fray Diego Durán wrote of a ritual death that had taken place in the 1460s that, if it did not feature a figure fastened to a cross, did associate a self-sacrificial act with a tall wooden structure. During a conflict between the Mexica and Chalca in the time of the first Motecuhzoma, the Chalca had captured one of Motecuhzoma's first cousins, Ezhuhahuacatl. Hoping to draw the conflict to a close, they offered him the Chalcan throne. Ezhuhahuacatl feigned acceptance, though secretly he planned to sacrifice his life to inspire the other captives. He requested the Chalca to erect a "tree trunk about twenty *brazas* high and place a platform at its top. He wished to play and sport on this with the [Mexica] prisoners," and, once this was done, he led the group through a ritual:

[H]e came out surrounded by the other prisoners. A drum was brought out and all began to dance around the pole. After dancing, Ezhuhahuacatl said farewell to the Aztecs, crying out, "Brothers, the time has come! Die like brave men!" Having said these words, he began to climb the pole. When he arrived at the wooden platform at the summit, he began to dance and sing. When he finished singing, he shouted in a loud voice, "O Chalcas, know that with my death I shall have bought your lives and in the future you will serve my children and grandchildren! My royal blood will be paid for with yours!" And on this last cry he cast himself off the platform and was shattered to bits.⁸⁹⁴

The remaining prisoners were executed, shot through with arrows as was custom for sacrifices to Camaxtli, the god of Chalco, Tlaxcala, and Huexotzinco. Ezhuhahuacatl's death encouraged the Mexica to wage a final battle and resolve the conflict with Chalco.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹⁴ Doris Heyden noted the similarities to the *volador* (flyer) ceremony pervasive throughout central Mexico today, wherein acrobats climb, hang, and descend from a great height; see Durán, *Book of the Gods and Rites and the ancient Calendar*, 142-143, 143n1.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., 143-48.

The events of Ezhuhuacatl’s sacrifice occurred during the feast of *Xocotl*, and Durán and Sahagún, among other religious, recorded tree-climbing/descending rituals for several calendrical events. For instance, during the “feast of the trees,” *Huey Tozoztli*, participants would harvest the tallest trees from significant mountains and install them upright in the central plaza of Tenochtitlan.⁸⁹⁶ The group procession to the base of the pole, its performance of song and dance once there, and the sacrificial person’s ascent and dramatic descent follow the pattern that Christians followed during the Sancto Entierro. Participants carried the clothbound body of Christ to each corner chapel following the guidance of four key reliefs placed on one side of each posa, the Franciscan emblem of a skull and crossbones, maintaining a visual ritual association with death.

“Dumb” as a Rock and Other Muddled Thoughts

What could this mean, then, for Christians seeking to police idolatrous practices later on? After all, the potential for mutual misunderstandings, for the process of double mistaken identity to have been at work in the provincial learningscape, threatened to introduce heresy (or allow it to persist) in daily life. A realization that this problem might have existed seems to have driven the creator of a Nahuatl confessional guide, don Bartolomé de Alva, whose important work that became widely available by 1634. A graduate with an advanced license from the University of Mexico in the 1620s, Alva and appears to have grown up an urbanite of Mexico City and Tetzcoco. Alva’s *Confessionario Mayor y Menor en lengua Mexicana* sought to attack “superstitions of idolatry” and “Mexican ignorance” with a “useful doctrine that it contains for Indians.”⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹⁶ Graulich, *Ritos aztecas*, 271-274.

⁸⁹⁷ Alva, *A Guide to Confession Large and Small*, 53, 56-57.

Exactly how often Nahuas actually went to confession in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley is still not known (the hapless didactic character Lucia had certainly neglected this duty). Erika Hosselkus has documented at least some evidence for Huexotzincan familiarity with the sacrament, as revealed in a statement written into the testament of a noblewoman named Ana Xiuhpetlacatl. After depositing her land, belongings, and how she preferred to be buried, Ana concludes, “Afterward I remembered that a book is preserved that cost four pesos, a confessional book. It was sold and came to two pesos, six reales” (*çatepan oniquilnamic mopia amatl ypatiuh nahui pesus confesionaria auh monamacac mo... ci ome pesus yhua chicquace tomin*).⁸⁹⁸ This money would be added to the masses she had requested to follow her burial ceremony.⁸⁹⁹ It is unclear whether this testator was literate enough to have actually used the confessional, though the fact that she seems to have forgotten it until the last minute suggests that she had not. Regardless, we can assume some familiarity on Ana’s part with confessional practices similar to those witnessed in the play. Converts like the character Lucia who did not confess properly could end up in two of the three less than fortunate places listed in Alva’s confessional, “purgatory, limbo, and hell.” In Purgatory the dead faced excruciating fire and in Hell (“Mictlan” as “your grandfathers called” it) all the “bad Christians” would pay their debts among the demons.⁹⁰⁰

⁸⁹⁸ Hosselkus, “Noble Nahuas, Faith and Death,” 206-211. Hosselkus’ translation of a testament found in Mexico’s Biblioteca Nacional, Archivo Historico, 3rd series, leg. 28, doc. 14-23, f. 19-23.

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid. This act of postmortem exchange is similar to the gifting of musical instruments, used in fiestas and church functions, evidenced in at least one testament from Stephanie Wood’s fascinating study of Toluca; see Wood, “Adopted Saints,” 267.

⁹⁰⁰ Alva, *A Guide to Confession Large and Small*, 86-87. Limbo might have been a bit puzzling for Catholic Nahuas, who had no prior belief prior to the arrival of the Catholic Spaniards. As the “place of eternal darkness [where] God puts the little children who just died as such who did not enjoy the act of pouring water on one’s head, holy baptism... they suffer nothing nor enjoy [any]thing but just lie in darkness.”

Alva's confessional guide targeted idolatry and monism, and, if it was applied to confession given in the provincial learningscape, its questions challenged indigenous *and* Christian understandings that mere stones could be informative.⁹⁰¹ Alva worried that his fellow Nahua Christians still cherished what he considered to be false idols in their hearts, especially “turquoise frogs and turquoise toads” (*chachiucoconeme, chalchiuhtamaçoltin*), interesting considering the earlier discussion about such amphibians and water associations. But any stone with possible Native religious associations deserved scrutiny, in Alva’s view. Confessors were expected to question confessants if they believed that stones might “give you your daily sustenance as the little old men your grandfathers... went along deceiving themselves?”⁹⁰² If the response was yes, the confessor excoriated the confessant for their ignorance, saying “What power do miserable little rocks have? Do they have understanding? Are they prudent, wise and creative? No—just the excretions of rock and volcanic outcroppings.”⁹⁰³ Quite literally, Alva attacked the landscape and any who might believe it possessed sacred agency, helped communicate ideas, or functioned as a medium for the transfer of knowledge. Trying to root out such thinking, Alva pointed to the behaviors and beliefs he thought dangerously threatened a pure understanding of Christian conceptualizations of nature. As attested by the pre-colonial and colonial glyphs on display on the walls and façade of the Convento de San Martín Caballero in Huaquechula (ancestral Quauhquechollan) today, dumb stones can convey knowledge. Ironically, the existence of hybrid artforms

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., 5, 31-32. Significantly, Alva trained his sights upon Mt. Tlaloc, see 9, 78-79.

⁹⁰² Ibid., 77.

⁹⁰³ Ibid., 77.

in learning environments such as this, placed purposefully to target a multicultural audience of learners, proves Alva's point (fig. 6.15).



Figure 6.15, Mutually misunderstood but never mute (Brooker). The influential ornamentation used by Native builders at San Martín Caballero Huaquechula. Combining the Indigenous and Christian iconography to meet the needs of a multicultural audience of learners. Photograph by Niccolo Brooker, used with permission.

Catholic teachings also emphasized the hope for resurrection for those who confessed their sins regularly, who avoided the dissolute life of someone like Lucia, and who lived an upright Christian life. The glories of Christ's Resurrection, and by extension resurrection more generally speaking, were performed in a gorgeous song whose lyrics are

preserved in *Sahagún's Psalmodia*. Using Mesoamerican-style symbolic language, the text proclaims, "Let the golden upright drum, the turquoise horizontal drum, the lordly flowers arise; let there be glorying [in them];' let there be [their] adorning. Let the golden wreaths of flowers be taken up; let them be worn. Let the turquoise gourd-like rattles stir. Let the golden flute sound clearly; let it flame forth. Let our song, our words sound clearly everywhere."⁹⁰⁴ These unabashedly joyous Nahuatl metaphors undoubtedly helped bridge two cosmologies in the minds of indigenous students and worshipers. Re-learning how to die in a fortunate way must have been essential to people exposed to

⁹⁰⁴ Anderson, *Sahagún's Psalmodia Christiana*, 112-113.

recurrent epidemics. In the end, however, the employment of these kinds of teaching tools about places and the pleasant and potentially pagan things in them could have led to a muddled vision of what Christianity as the clergy intended it to be understood really was.

Concluding Remarks

In the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, accessories worn by participants, courtyard ornamentation, and the narratives that connected the two with local history were important didactic tools in colonial learningscapes. The likely operation of the process of double mistaken identity could be found in the sixteenth-century material culture of Calpan and Huexotzinco teaching places. Nahua town councils governed the production of these material objects and how they ought to be preserved. Reading the architecture from a local perspective sheds light upon the messages encoded on the walls of the two *altepetls'* Franciscan monastery complexes. From Huexotzinco's *Cofradía de la Vera Cruz* to actors playing roles in festival performances, Natives adapted Christianity to fit familiar traditions, but also transformed those preexisting practices into a transcultural learning experience.

Clergy and indigenous teachers performed their functions against a backdrop of coded surfaces. Some of the core lessons that were rearticulated to fit the provincial learningscape included instruction about war, imperialism, death, rebirth, heroes and villains, and how best to teach and know sacred knowledge in these settings. The unvoiced directions sculpted into the ornamentation and painted into murals seem wholly Christian at first glance, but upon closer inspection the alternative narratives that may have been expressed by them could have appeared to be just as coherent and powerful to

Nahua students. Under the supervision of clergy, town elders and council members appear to have driven the nature and trajectory of construction projects. Local students made these spaces matter. It was incumbent upon the audience to fill the courtyards with meaning; the evidence suggests that they would have done so. In the end, the Nahuas of Calpan and Huexotzinco contributed to colonial education by fostering multicultural lessons based on place and tradition, no matter what one might read on the explanatory placards placed in the *atrios* today.

CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION: LINGERING LESSONS FROM LOCAL LEARNINGSCAPES

Palafoxian Pedagogy in Seventeenth-Century Cuetlaxcohuapan

From the 1620s to the 1640s, Native communities in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, and the provincial learningscapes they had helped to build, witnessed significant challenges. Maintaining a sense of place was tested by continued epidemic outbreaks, unexpected disasters such as earthquakes, a growing non-indigenous population, and serious educational reforms promulgated by colonial authorities. The Valley's Nahua *escribanos* and *fiscales* documented these events in their annals, as they had recorded local history since adapting this alphabetic genre of record keeping to their older traditions. With new events and people entering the provincial learningscapes of the seventeenth century, what would be the result?

Disease continued to reduce populations, especially in the lead-up to the 1650s. The *Difuntos* are an indication that, at least for Huexotzinco, of the need to document the dead by preserving their ends in parish archives continued throughout these traumatic times. Other kinds of accounts recognized how challenging the era was for the Huexotzinca, too. For example, writing in the 1670s and 80s, annalist don Miguel de los Santos of Puebla explained how in 1622, disease had entered his community.⁹⁰⁵ He explained that in “Flint-Knife 1622 Here in this year [a person named] Huancho passed by. He brought with him a bad cough of which many died. They burned him at

⁹⁰⁵ Camilla Townsend, *Annals of Native America: How the Nahuas of Colonial Mexico Kept Their History Alive* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 215-217.

Huexotzinco.”⁹⁰⁶ For the unnamed, rural documentarian of nearby Topoyanco, the details were a little fuzzier: “1623 1 Reed year... An epidemic of coughing broke out, a dried up person [*tlacahuatzalli*] brought it here. They burned him at Huexotzinco.”⁹⁰⁷ “Huancho” does not appear in the *Difuntos* register from 1622 to 1623, though as a nonmember of the parish (and a diseased and cremated stranger) it seems possible that the *fiscales* would not list him. The two priests stationed there in 1622 and the sole visitor in 1623 failed to make any mention of the outbreak. This omission may seem odd, but unfortunately the priests who helped maintain the *Difuntos* records rarely divulged pertinent information as to the causes of death of the people recorded in them.

Simultaneously, new church construction projects and maintenance of sacred spaces continued apace. In 1644, in Cholollan (now subject to the growing Puebla de los Ángeles) the *Tlachihualtepetl*, that ancient man-made mountain for frogs and plumed serpents, finally inaugurated its new church dedicated to Nuestra Señora de los Remedios where the famous lighting-rod cross had once stood. The potent force of this earlier Christian symbol seemed to endure, for when this church was dedicated a new testimony to this sacred power is said to have occurred. Nahua Catholics had gathered to perform the volador ceremony—what annalist don Miguel of Puebla called “the head-flyers”—to mark the consecration of the new church. Suddenly, “the head-flyers fell to the ground...

⁹⁰⁶ Townsend, *Here in this year*: Townsend’s translation: “*Tecpatl 1622 NiCan ypa xihuitl yn oqiusaco huанcho quihualhuicac chicahuac tlatasisitli miec yc momiquili Onpa oquittlatiq huexotzinco;*” Townsend (2010, 90-91, 91n3) notes that this event is recorded across other annals, and then links the event to the *Difuntos* of Huexotzinco, implying also that the 3,000 dead listed 1619-1630 were due to this illness. This is a valid claim, however, further research on this particular episode and the other death of the region would better qualify this point. After all, *difuntos* do not solely track deaths from disease.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., 174-175: Townsend’s translation: “1623 1 acaxihuítli... quisaco tlatlaçistli quihualhuicac tlacahuatzalli quitlatihque huexotzinco.” Justyna Olko suggests that Huancho was Chichimec because of this appellate “dried-up person” though the connotation remains unclear; “Remembering the Ancestors: Native Pictorial Genealogies of Central Mexico and Their Pre-Hispanic Roots,” In Wood and Megged, *Mesoamerican Memory* (2012), 187n26.

[as] the pole broke and then separated into three parts. It was when the building of Los Remedios was inaugurated, on the 16th day of the month of October, a Sunday in the afternoon. Many people died.”⁹⁰⁸ The juxtaposition of Native men accidentally “sacrificing” themselves just as the new church was begun could have been interpreted in at least two ways (though aside from marking the deaths of “many people” the annalist did not add his own ideas about its meaning): either Christian holy force had punished those who used a “pagan” rite to mark the dedication of the Virgin’s church, or a different kind of primordial sacred energy exacted a blood sacrifice for the new “temple.” Whatever the case, the lessons taught by the event must have been ripe for the operation of double mistaken identity in the minds of Nahua onlookers.

Some forty years later, in 1685 Poblanos gathered in the city’s central plaza for a bit of public fun that was also freighted with spiritual and educational meanings. According to don Miguel, *tepixque* (constables) from Cholollan assembled a macabre but raucous affair for all to experience. In a public display with roots on either side of the Atlantic staged in honor of the Feast of Saint John the Baptist, a local Spanish *alcalde mayor*, don Juan Isidro Pardiñas, had the *tepixque* corral several animals into the mix:

They celebrated [San Juan Baptista’s] feast day in the market place. First they amused themselves with bulls, and then greyhounds came out; they [the dogs] chased rabbits in the marketplace; that was the first time. The next day [don Juan] ordered that cats be rounded up. He assigned the task to the *tepixque*. . . .they brought [the cats] out in the marketplace and put them in a cask. Then in the middle of the marketplace they opened it so that [the cats] ran here and there. Then on the next day he ordered that dogs be rounded up. [The *tepixque*] took them to the marketplace. There they outfitted [the dogs] with firecrackers that they wrapped in old mats. [The fireworks] exploded, so that [the dogs] ran around in the marketplace. . . . And [the *tepixque*] let loose a wild beast. Never had the like been seen.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁸ Townsend, *Here in This Year*, 98-99.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., 134-135.

Several elements from the three-day event ring with Mesoamerican and colonial learningscape flair. Most notably, the Chololteca's use of live animals echoed the practice of placing living birds, snakes, and other creatures on or near the artificially constructed mountains and tree arbors used in church courtyards, such as those described by Motolinia fashioned by Tlaxcalans in the 1540s (see Chapter VI). Likewise, events in the patio of Santa Cruz Tlatelolco, near the market of Tenochtitlan, also celebrated the natural environment and cosmic hunts, reaching back into the indigenous past (Chapter IV).⁹¹⁰

Growing clerical fears of a poorly educated public in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries inspired some to try to change what was beginning to be considered the hardening of Indian "superstitions." The seventeenth century Bishop of Puebla and Viceroy of New Spain, Juan de Palafox y Mendoza looms large in this connection. A prolific author, in 1650 Palafox y Mendoza wrote a treatise to King Philip IV that outlined his thoughts on how to shore up the "*calidades, virtudes, y propiedades de aquellos utilissimos, y fidelissimos Vasallos de las Indias*" ("the qualities, virtues, and characteristics of these most useful and loyal Vassals of the Indies").⁹¹¹ Palafox y Mendoza believed that his plans to severely alter the sacred culture of New Spain's indigenous peoples were completely benevolent in nature. He must have realized that he

⁹¹⁰ For an interesting examination of "thick description" and the "great" massacre of cats, see Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, 1984.

⁹¹¹ Bishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, *Virtues of the Indian/Virtudes del indio: An Annotated Translation* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 15-76; quotation on 107. This treatise is in many ways a precursor to modern reformers' of the U.S., such as the infamous brigadier general-turned-Native educationist Richard Pratt when he claimed the need to "kill the Indian and save the man." For a concise history of Native American-US education, especially the ideology of Richard Pratt, see David Wallace-Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (University Press of Kansas, 1995).

himself benefited from the “Indians,” since his salary upon arriving in New Spain as visitor-general had been provided by means of Native tribute and labor.⁹¹² Perhaps he had this debt in mind in 1640, when (as noted in a Nahuatl-language annals) he helped prompt the further construction of the great Cathedral of Puebla.⁹¹³ In 1646, the Bishop of filled the massive public library named after him, the *Biblioteca Palafoxiana*, with several thousand texts, advocating for the use of his books as “didactic companions” for the indigenous peoples (though the annals fail to mention this).⁹¹⁴ Before his departure from the Valley in 1649, the Bishop had served Natives in other ways, pushing to secularize their local churches, for instance, by removing the Franciscans and Jesuits who had seen service as parish clergy.

The latter “service,” however, was not warmly received by many people, indigenous and otherwise. The Franciscans fought back, having grown attached to their sense of place in seventeenth-century learningscapes and harboring grave doubts about the suitability of secular clergy to serve as priests and educators for indigenous Catholics. Secularization proved to be a challenging moment for new and old pedagogues. One reason for this stemmed from the low opinion that regular order clergy had regarding secular priests due to their attachments to worldly things, political liaisons with imperial powers, and seemingly beneficial access to key regions in the Americas.⁹¹⁵ Native communities watched this battle unfold. In Topoyanco, Tlaxcala, for instance, things really came to a head. According to the annals, beginning on the Feast of Saint Isabel in

⁹¹² Palafox y Mendoza, *Virtues of the Indian*, 17-18.

⁹¹³ Townsend, *Here in This Year*, 96-97; 178-179. The annalist still referred to the town by its Nahuatl name, Cuetlaxcohuapan. Typically recording the comings and goings of prominent Spaniards and church officials like the Bishop, in 1649 the annalist not only record when the Cathedral was finished, in 1649, but also that Palafox y Mendoza left Puebla/Cuixtlacohuapan right after this; 100-101, 178-179.

⁹¹⁴ Palafox y Mendoza, *Virtues of the Indian*, 22.

⁹¹⁵ Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest*, 59-60, 81-82.

1669 a group of rowdy Franciscans came to town harassing the secular confessor Antonio de Torres in an effort to halt his activities in the confessional. Torres ignored them, and on the Feast of Nuestra Señora de Asunción in 1670 (or 9 Rabbit in the annals), “our fathers broke each others’ heads. A Franciscan father did some head-breaking. They broke the head of the parish priest don Antonio de Torres along with Juan de Escobar [his assistant].”⁹¹⁶ In other words, Palafox y Mendoza’s approach to reform and the redemption of wayward indigenous Catholics upset many with his pursuit of imperial educational improvements.

Significantly, Palafox y Mendoza reiterated a famous pattern in claiming the triumph of his pedagogy while at the same time downplaying indigenous customs and interests. The “Indians,” he told King Philip IV, were pious. His descriptions of Native communities focused on what he saw as their impoverished yet morally promising condition, “there are no thieves nor anything thing to steal,” and he praised “the Santo Cali [sic, church], where they have Images of Saints on paper.”⁹¹⁷ One such person, a “Cacique named don Luis de Santiago, Gobernador of Quautotola, Doctrina of Xuxupango,” just on the edge of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley was a glowing example of a good Christian living.⁹¹⁸ Xuxupango, a small village in the Sierra Madres “more than forty leagues and by way of the most harsh road,” needed something from the bishop.

⁹¹⁶ Townsend, *Here in This Year*, 182-183: Townsend’s translation: “Ypan ilhuitzin totlaçohnātzin asubcio omoquatlatlaque dotatzitzin: otequatlápā dodatzin sn franco oquiquatlapapanque cora D: anttonio de torres yuā Joa descobal ayorate...”

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., 138-139.

⁹¹⁸ Cuautotola and Xuxupango were located in northeast Zacatlán, a jurisdiction two league northeast of Tlaxcala and an “almost constant mist[y] and considerable rain[y]” portion of the Sierra Madres, under Franciscan purview (Gerhard, 390). Gerhard wrote the doctrina of Xuxupango’s original eight *sujectos* (tlaxilacalli) had been reduced to four, Cuautotola being one of them, by 1580 (393). See Joaquín García Izcabalceta, *Relacion de los obispados de Tlaxcala, Michoacan Oaxaca y otras lugares en el siglo XVI*, 1904: 8.

Don Luis, “eighty years of age... [is] an exceedingly vulnerable person.... His hands and even his whole body trembling from old age,” told Palafox y Mendoza,

Father you know well that whatever I have had I have spent on the Church of my Village... and in the defense of those poor Indians, so that they would be considered and so that they would not bring more tribute than that which they owe. Now seeing that I am to die very soon and finding myself with one hundred and fifty pesos, I wanted to spend this money before I die on an ornament for my Church of the color which you think best: I pray that you will see this done... so I may return to my land to die.⁹¹⁹

According to Palafox y Mendoza, “I gave the order that... [it] would be done,” and the old man, don Luis returned with his colorful ornament. Much like Motolinia’s worthy elder Juan of Quauhquechollan, a feeble, 80-year-old don Luis sought the institutional support of Puebla’s Catholic establishment to obtain an ornament proving his and his communities piety⁹²⁰.

Palafox y Mendoza’s exemplary Native Christian moved between spiritual communities, using material goods and promises of unification to deepen a regional sense of place. The Bishop critiqued what he saw as previous failing strategies of the Empire and highlighted the resilience of Native communities, though he understood this as “obedience.” Following the *Cédula de la Congregaciones*, the community resettlement programs (discussed briefly in Chapter IV), Valley Natives had returned to their ancestral homes, “their beloved solitude and the mountains,” likely to have been the case for old don Luis’s fellow townspeople.⁹²¹ According to the Bishop, as the numbers of the dead increased in Valley, communities selecting villages for laborers to “work on drainage,

⁹¹⁹ Palafox y Mendoza, *Virtues of the Indian*, 114-117.

⁹²⁰ See Chapter IV, for a discussion of Juan of Quauhquechollan. It was standard practice for ecclesiastical writers to feature exemplary indigenous figures as living proof of the triumph of the faith among New Spain’s indigenous peoples.

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

causeways, mines, and other public works,” was evidence for the “grave harm” of the *congregaciones*. He believed that such onerous and dangerous tasks had inspired many to move back to the traditional sites of their pueblos, noting that the otherwise “obedient” indigenous “Nations allowed themselves to be transported from the mountains to the villages and from the villages to the mountains.” For the Bishop, this was a sign of how pliable the Native population could be but considering the deep attachment to “the mountains where they had been raised,” it is most likely that such migrants were essentially voting with their feet. They also typically had a tendency to reoccupy places where they had a deep historical and ancestral attachment. The ornament that old don Luis brought to his community from Puebla may have been an attempt to renew relationships that had soured through the hardships of forced removal and labor; this, or by crafting and painting the ornament in the color which the Bishop thought would be best, the old man was cementing the Native-Christian legitimacy of his pueblo and its new centerpiece—the church at the center of Xuxupango.⁹²²

Aside from highlighting the personal piety of people like don Luis, the Bishop gushed about the Natives’ “humility, courtesy, silence, and astuteness,” praising the ways “common people greatly revere the nobles among them, as do the youth their elders, who are very temperate and value knowledge and teach others... boys and girls to say prayers.... [M]any of these elderly nobles are given to learning about public occurrences and events.” In one town in the south of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, elders even knew events taking place in faraway Germany. One of them, an “old man of eighty years.., translated into his own language a few pieces” of fray Luis de Granada’s many historical

⁹²² Ibid.

notes and geographic details about Germany, becoming a world traveler without ever leaving his town located “at the end of the earth” in the mountains of New Spain.⁹²³ Valley Indians also impressed the Bishop because of their deep understanding of local flora and fauna.⁹²⁴ He had personally witnessed elders’ “great knowledge” in the making of “remedies for diverse maladies with singular ability” from native plants, roots, and herbs.⁹²⁵ Ethnobotanical remedies consisted of a deep indigenous lore and a vast and long-lived body of healing practices, not the least of which could also be interwoven with spiritual beliefs, alongside the gradual accumulation of European treatments.

For Palafox y Mendoza, the indigenous Catholics of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley could radiate the types of Christian lessons that inspired others to remain members of well-taught spiritual communities. Don Luis and his community (and the unnamed priest) exemplified what ought to be the norm. Focusing on the way Native students had taken to Spanish “practical and the mechanical arts, as in trades of Painters, Gilders, Carpenters, Masons and those of Stone working or Architecture,” the people of the Valley, he hoped, would have fought off what he considered the devil’s idleness.⁹²⁶ In each of the church libraries across the Valley one found a “music book in their Chapels and music Masters in all the Parishes,” boasting that in Europe this was something only common in the large cathedrals and “Collegiate Churches.” *Musicos*, choirmasters and other musically inclined church people in Atlixco—the breezy valley northwest of Quauhquechollan—thrilled Palafox y Mendoza. One of them who had been training to read and sing local

⁹²³ Ibid., 168-169.

⁹²⁴ Ibid. 158-159.

⁹²⁵ Ibid.

⁹²⁶ Ibid., 156-157. Nineteenth-century assimilationists in the U.S. would employ a similar tone when they described the “successes” of Indian education.

sheet music had even bested a Spaniard, with whom he had shared his instruction under the supervision of Atlixco's *Maestro de Capilla* in the local church.⁹²⁷ Still, the Bishop lamented, “there are among the Indians very skilled musicians, though they do not have very good voices.”⁹²⁸

The people of Zacatlán, the *cabecera* with jurisdiction over Xuxupango, welcomed Palafox y Mendoza in the 1640s. They beguiled him with “such intelligently arranged arguments” about their local sense of Christianity based on the teachings of a famous priest, now no longer among the community.⁹²⁹ The Bishop explained how the Zácatecas felt a “happiness” as they remembered how “their Father and Priest had been to visit.” An enigmatic figure, the priest they spoke of may have been a Franciscan, possibly Andrés Ruiz del Alarcón, the vicar of Xuxupango mentioned in the *Relación del Obispados de Tlaxcala*.⁹³⁰ Palafox y Mendoza was likely avoiding pointing to the past triumphs of regular order clergy as he was trying to replace them with secular priests. But whoever he had been, this priest had “suffered due to the harshness of the roads and saying that like the Sun lights the earth, so would he illuminate their souls and how, like the sun, he did not tire of doing good, nor did their Prelate tire of caring for and helping them and that the flowers and fields rejoiced in the coming of their Father and Priest.” The Bishop described this exemplary cleric by using the Nahuatl phrase “*yn tatzin yn teopixcatzin*” (“the father, the priest,” with honorific suffixes).⁹³¹ Admiring the way that “the very words themselves manifest the respect and reverence with which the Indians

⁹²⁷ Ibid., 158-159.

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

⁹²⁹ Ibid., 152-153.

⁹³⁰ See García Izcabalceta, *Relación de los obispados*, 8. Also, Ovando mentions two priests serving the two monasteries (San Pedro and San Pablo) and surrounding 14 churches of Zacatlán, see *Codice Franciscano*, 26. See also Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography*, 390-393.

⁹³¹ Palafox y Mendoza, *Virtues of the Indian*, 152-153.

speak,” Palafox y Mendoza ignored the fact that the worshipers might have been expressing double mistaken identity at work when they told him the priest essentially helped the sun recharge the land and people with new life with every visit he made.⁹³² In the end, the community was in charge of telling their story to the outsider, and though he gushed over their educated nature, Bishop Palafox y Mendoza did more than he realized. Reproducing Zacatlan’s narrative and the possibility that he was misinterpreting it in some ways, as when he employed a little Nahuatl that he thought expressed a completely Christian message.

A Matter of Place: “A Homeland, and a Holy Land”

In September 2016, I stepped out of the hushed reading room of the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, RI, and into a vocal circle of commemoration for the second anniversary of the 43 “disappeared” Mexican students from Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers’ College. Three dozen Brown students voiced their connections to Mexico, thoughts about the still-missing youths that were “just like us,” and chanted “*¡Nos faltan 43!*” and “*¡Fue el estado!*” We also talked about the history yet to be written about the kidnapping. On September 29, 2014, 100 Mexican teachers-in-training rode busses into Iguala City, Guerrero. Upon arriving, an altercation occurred between some of the students and the local, and after several students had been fired upon, some killed, at least one bus full of students disappeared. In the months and years that followed, reports have placed blame upon corrupt Iguala City officials, affiliated members of *Guerreros Unidos* a drug cartel, the Mexican army, and the national government itself. Ironically, the 43

⁹³² Ibid. For a fascinating study of the application and context for the Nahuatl term “Father,” including its transformation throughout the colonial period, see Julia Madajczak, “Life-Giver: The Pre-Hispanic Nahua Concept of ‘Father’ Through Colonial Written Sources” (Ancient Mesoamerica, Fall 2017).

disappeared had come to Iguala hoping to drum up support for the October commemoration of the 1968 Massacre of Tlatelolco.⁹³³

The Massacre of Tlatelolco was a terrifying affair that witnessed the deaths of at least 300 unarmed civilian demonstrators, many of them students, at the hands of the state. On October 2 of that year, college students had organized their demonstration around the historic site of *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* and the Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco⁹³⁴ Just after 5:30 PM in the *Plaza*, in ‘68, as violence took place, “rattling” machinegun fire from state agents positioned in the surrounding apartment complexes “turned the Plaza de Tres Culturas into an inferno,” Elena Poniatowska flamed, and we still have no definitive count of the number of students “disappeared” in the aftermath.⁹³⁵

Today the inter-valley region of Central Mexico is alive with tourist activity. Millions of visitors—regardless of religious affiliation—stroll through UNESCO’s historic convent courtyards that are still standing in the states of Puebla and Tlaxcala. Even more tend to make their way to the Ciudad de México to visit the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* and, especially, the *Catedral Metropolitana* and the adjacent *Museo del Templo Mayor*. Catholics and atheists alike will often deliver themselves to the *Basílica de*

⁹³³ Elena Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* (1975); *Massacre in Mexico* (University of Missouri Press; 1991); Kate Doyle *Tlatelolco Massacre: Declassified US Documents on Mexico and the Events of 1968* (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 10, October 2, 1998); Claire Brewster, “The Student Movement of 1968 and the Mexican Press: The Cases of *Excélsior* and *Siempre!*” (*Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 2002); Kevin B. Witherspoon, “Before the eyes of the world: Mexico and the 1968 Olympic Games” (Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); and “Tres años de impunidad: Los 43 de Ayotzinapa” Telsur TV.net (accessed 2017) <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/Tres-anos-de-impunidad-Los-43-de-Ayotzinapa-20170924-0045.html>.

⁹³⁴ Sergio Aguayo Quezada, *1968: Los archivos de violencia* (México: Grijalbo: Reforma, 1998). In hindsight, I find fascinating similarities in the way that Mexicans have described the lessons of 1968 massacre and its symbolic connections to democratization compared to the depictions of religious histories and the relation between conquest and Christianization. For example, see Matthew Gutmann, *The Romance of Democracy: Compliant Defiance in Contemporary Mexico*, (University of California, 2002), 67-71.

⁹³⁵ Elena Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco*, 167; *Massacre in Mexico*, 203. See also, Sylvia Karl, “Rehumanizing the Disappeared: Spaces of Memory in Mexico and the Liminality of Transitional Justice” (*American Quarterly*, Volume 66, Number 3, September 2014), 727-748.

Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe to see the hierophantic image of the Virgin upon Juan Diego's cloak. And in each of the above places, visitors will often hear the innocuous unidirectional story of the spiritual conquest. Too few understand that the spaces they now walk through are representative of the indigenous and colonial learningscape, an adaptive architecture and material culture that incorporates the visions of Mexican Natives as well as biblical references and indoctrination. Even the Christian courtyards, where they see angels frozen in flight and holy figures looking down upon them, are not telling officially dogmatic stories about a single victorious conquest of the Native spirit.

Peter Nabokov's penetrating survey of Native American places that anchor communities sheds light on how attachments to places stick around. Borrowing Anthony D. Smith's thoughts on nation-states and ethnicity, Nabokov argued that Native Americans were "attached to 'a particular piece of land, a homeland, and a holy land.'"⁹³⁶ "It is the stories alone, or resurrected place names," Nabokov explained, "that release memories of a once-owned landscape, even when the visible topography has become modernized beyond recognition."⁹³⁷ Christianity and its representative mapped out a distinction between "Indian" and "Christian" senses of place and place-identifiers.⁹³⁸ Modernity, Western settler-colonial habits, and Christian clergy had tried to wipe this kind of environmental slate clean, but failed to do so. Instead, Nabokov argued that Native material objects were on equally hallowed ground as the "original Declaration of

⁹³⁶ Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 131. Nabokov accidentally mislabels Smith as "Anthony Hopkins;" see Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 183.

⁹³⁷ Nabokov, *A Forest of Time*, 143.

⁹³⁸ Nabokov's analysis of human geographies and what he called "concrete... inventories of old place names and accounts of migrations and intertribal warfare" remains a thoughtful investigation of memory, indigenous knowledge transference, and decolonial archives; see *Ibid.*, 126-149.

Independence, or a splinter of the True Cross, these revered key symbols emerg[ing] out of well-established typologies.”⁹³⁹

The belief that places and things matter in the telling of Native stories was and still is found among the indigenous peoples of central Mesoamerica (as it is among peoples all over the world). Realizing this helps to “decolonize” understandings of indigenous religiosity and to re-center narratives about these histories on the agency of traditionally underrepresented and artificially rendered “voiceless.” In New Spain, the persistence of Indigenous literacy through the adoption of alphabetic writing, “[w]ith significant regional variation...at first shared and eventually displaced pictorial text; essentially, pictorial text represented the visual component of precontact writing and alphabetic text reflected the oral component.”⁹⁴⁰ Native communities found the new media advantageous when communicating their ideas to a particular audiences, their own people as well as to “outsiders” such as the Spanish colonialists. By the end of the colonial period, Native-language writing may have been displaced in many ways by rising Spanish literacy among certain sectors of indigenous society, but this evolutionary process “did not spell the end of indigenous literacy and does not necessarily signify the disempowerment of native communities.”⁹⁴¹ The same argument can be applied to the “reading” of indigenous ornamentation and architecture. By adopting and adapting new ways of writing and introduced architectural and artistic media, the Nahuas of Central New Spain refused to become voiceless.

⁹³⁹ Ibid., 163.

⁹⁴⁰ Matthew Restall, Lisa Sousa, and Kevin Terraciano (eds). *Mesoamerican Voices: Native Language Writings from Colonial Mexico, Yucatan, and Guatemala* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid., 19-20

Today, some fear the dumbing down of humanity at a time when at least the quarter of all humans participate in “social media.” “Tweeters,” with their symbol-laden and abbreviated mini-messages, or “Instagrammers” who incessantly post vacagrams, foodgrams, and minute-by-minute updates, are decried in similar ways and for the same reasons.⁹⁴² Corrupting influences, the social media “trolls,” have infiltrated our virtual spaces. By adopting new media tools and apps, have we been rendered voiceless in the cacophony of now, or are we simply adding to our repertoire a greater array of choices for expressing ourselves?

In today’s Mexico City, Tlatelolco and its modern Plaza of the Three Cultures is a place that calls up memories of more than just the nation’s pre-contact, colonial, and “modern” cultures. For many Mexicans, it tells a darker story that tends to muffle an official one. For these Mexicans (as well as for knowledgeable visitors) it enshrines memories of the infamous Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968, as well as those of other, later deaths and disappearances such as the still unknown fate of 43 abducted students of Ayozinapa, Guerrero. In the fall, activists once again might fill the streets to honor these hundreds of murdered or disappeared people, perhaps adding symbols to their clothes, skin, or signs legible to those who know how to read them: #Ayozinapa #FueElEstado #NosFaltan43. In other words, alternative knowledge, using new media, has and will continue to find its place in the submerged courtyard and remains of the Tlatelolco’s ancient temples and next to the colonial *ex-convento* of Santa Cruz Tlatelolco, the place where so many prominent Nahua intellectuals, historians, and allies of the clergy who

⁹⁴² Stettfield, “‘The Internet Is Broken’: @ev Is Trying to Salvage It,” *The New York Times* (May 20, 2017), <https://mobile.nytimes.com>; See also Dovilė Jankauskaitė, “Social Media as a Tool for Improving Teaching and Learning Experience,” *Signnum Temporis*, Vol. 7, 1, 2016.

spear-headed the great enterprise of Catholic education for New Spain's indigenous peoples were educated.

In the sixteenth century, toppling preexisting structures and systems of learning encouraged Christian agents to define themselves and the newly arrived Catholic Faith as being opposed to traditional ways of thinking about ancestral lands and locales. Coupled with violent invasions, crippling labor systems, and cycles of introduced disease vectors, it would appear that indigenous knowledge and place-identity must have disappeared, never to be seen again. Some have proposed, the terms “cultural genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” seem warranted—especially when we call out oppressive oversight by Spanish evangelist educators of indigenous peoples learning under a colonial regime. Catholic priests tended to apply their own language “exterminar” or “extirpar” the latter implied the innocuous and benevolent sense of “spiritual gardening.” Extermination could be effective, in fact, as a complex and combined Spanish-Native invasion did tear apart much of the socio-cultural fabric that had tied indigenous spiritual and intellectual communities to particular portentous places.⁹⁴³

⁹⁴³ Genocide Studies scholars and the habit of retroactively applying the term “genocide,” “ethnic cleansing,” or even “ethnosuicide” based on examples from early Mexico remain problematic, as this study demonstrates. For a comparative world history of genocide, including examples drawn from Latin American and about the 1519 Massacre of Cholula, see Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (Yale University Press, 2007), 72-100. Kiernan argues that the “Spanish” did pursue “genocide” based on the four “common ideological features” he devises: racial or religious differences, utopian visions, a cult of antiquity, and a cult of cultivation (21-33). Without a comparative of Mesoamerican “genocides,” though, his study tends to reify the Western “black legend” of unrelenting conquistadors. For one thing, the moments of imposed acculturation including and were inspired by local and regional agents and the nuanced interplay between accommodation and resistance was hard to pin down as “us vs them” acts. For another, historical actors had a tendency to use other, just as powerful verbs to denote acts that we can see were similar to genocide. According to Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, both Catholic priests and New England Puritans tended to apply the verbs “exterminar” or “extirpar” when describing moments of “spiritual gardening;” see Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford University Press, 2006). When read at face value, Spanish sources describe uprooting demons and paganism, but, as this study has shown, this line of thinking gives undue prominence to one view of what transpired. In fact, indigenous communities

Nonetheless, this knowledge and social memory had a tendency to live on in the minds and lives of the survivors, helping to teach students, young and old, local history and beliefs about the sacred in the very same places often designed to make such things disappear. Indigenous knowledge infused the documents, songs, images, teaching materials, and courtyards of colonial Christian provincial learningscapes. Town elders and their underlings, though newly introduced administrative positions, clung to ideas and interpretations preserved in memory, oral tradition, and pre-contact-style pictorial manuscripts. Dealing with death had changed, too. There were new systems used to register the dead and their place in society. Introduced Christian practices taught the people about how best to prepare to die in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley and elsewhere. Yet the Nahuas accompanied these changes with their own particular liturgies about the cycles of life and perhaps even in remembrance with spiritual intercessors such as Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc, who might have continued to exist in some way in the likenesses of and lessons about the saints, Mary, and Christ.

The Eurocentric visions of the learningscapes of Mesoamerica found “Idolatrous” or “Unholy” things archived in hidden, “sacrilegious” places. But locals witnessed objects in these places a part of the local cultural fabric, responsive to the community needs and applicable to history and cosmologies. The tools of the learning environment were successful in the way that they retained their ability to harry European pedagogues throughout the colonial period, or at least these were priestly nightmares about such things. Catholic clergy, from Tetzcotzinco to *Tlachihualtepetl*, had overseen the burning,

remembered the coming of Christianity with pride and satisfaction, even as they enthusiastically maintained many age-old traditions and actively participated in moderating and adapting new cultural innovations, showing resiliency and innovation.

toppling, and shattering of objects that seemed to them to ooze with the occult and an unholy pedagogy. Ironically, it was Native Catholics, at times of their own accord, who helped break apart these places and to extirpate the supposedly nefarious teaching materials from them. Setting their communities' eyes on new Christian learningscapes, Christian Nahuas repurposed old customs for new audiences. In so doing, they helped foster the survival of the old within the new. Even the very material goods, such as stone images that, before the advent of Christianity, had proven themselves to be useful teaching materials in pre-contact learningscapes persisted in the "Catholic" worlds of Nahua pueblos well into the Spanish colonial period. Artificially crafted mountains filled the atria of churches, just as traditional and potentially sacred *tepetl* remained important markers in colonial but indigenous-style cartographs. They were joined in such manuscripts (as well as in other kinds of pictorial records) and such spaces by churches with strikingly "indigenous" designs. Native artisans, student-teachers, and interlocutors created and made physical and spiritual use of *posas* erected in spaced where once those mounds of amaranth dough or miniatures of sacred mountains might have reigned.

Pausing at the ornamented walls of a *capilla posa* at Huexotzinco or Calpan, today, one can still learn ancient lessons about life and death and prepare for the afterlife along unwholly Christian paths.

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