

Visualizing the Miraculous,
Visualizing the Sacred

Visualizing the Miraculous,
Visualizing the Sacred:
Evangelization and the “Cultural War”
in Sixteenth Century Mexico

By

Robert H. Jackson

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

Visualizing the Miraculous, Visualizing the Sacred:
Evangelization and the “Cultural War” in Sixteenth Century Mexico,
by Robert H. Jackson

This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2014 by Robert H. Jackson

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-6402-1, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-6402-2

I would like to dedicate this study to the memory of Dr. Eleanor Wake (1949-2013). She was a friend and colleague who inspired me to look at things differently. She will be greatly missed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	ix
List of Figures.....	xi
Acknowledgements	xvii
Introduction	1
Chapter One.....	11
Visualizing the Miraculous: The Virgin of the Rosary Mural at Tetela del Volcán (Morelos)	
Chapter Two	33
Organizing Missions in Sixteenth Century Central Mexico	
Chapter Three	67
Dateline Yodzocahi (Yanhuitlan) 1542: “Idolatry” and an Inquisition Investigation	
Chapter Four.....	83
Visualizing the Sacred: Embedded Stones and Native Religious Iconography	
Chapter Five	125
Representations of Death and the Challenge of Evangelization	
Chapter Six	149
Confraternities and the Ritual of Penitence: Catholic Practice or Ritual Self-Sacrifice?	
Conclusions	163
Selected Bibliography	173
Index.....	181

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1: Political organization of the Tributary Province of Huaxtepec under Culhua-Mexica Rule
- Table 2: Augustinian Missions in the Tributary Province of Huaxtepec, c. 1580/1590
- Table 3: Visitas and Number of Tributaries of Yecapixtla in 1571
- Table 4: Dominican Missions in Morelos
- Table 5: Selected Dominican Missions in Oaxaca in the Late Sixteenth Century
- Table 6: Structure of the Jurisdiction of Tlaxiaco c. 1550
- Table 7: Jesuit Missions in Sinaloa and Sonora in 1624
- Table 8: The Number of Jesuit Missionaries Stationed on the Sinaloa-Sonora Missions, 1604-1625
- Table 9: Baptisms in the Sinaloa-Sonora Missions, 1591-1631
- Table 10: Text of El *Chuchumbé*

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1: The church and convent San Juan Bautista Tetela del Volcán (Morelos)
- Fig. 2: Illustration from the 1778 *Crónica de Michoacán* depicting the process of catechism and baptism
- Fig. 3: Panel from the *Doctrina Cristiana* regarding death and salvation through conversion
- Fig. 4: Santa María Magdalena Tepetlaóxtoc, built on top of a temple platform
- Fig. 5: Section of the surviving mural from San Juan Bautista Tetela del Volcán
- Fig. 6: Another section of the Tetela del Volcán mural program
- Fig. 7: A mural in the lower cloister of Nuestra Señora de la Natividad Tepoztlán (Morelos) that depicts a group of Dominicans
- Fig. 8: Mural in the *portería* of Santo Domingo de Guzmán Tlaquiltenango that depicts a Dominican blessing a native
- Fig. 9: Ruins of the Augustinian convent at Ocuila (Estado de México)
- Fig. 10: The mural of red Tláloc from the Tepantitla palace complex at Teotihuacan (Estado de México)
- Fig. 11: An embedded stone with the face of Tláloc found at the rear of the Franciscan church Santiago Tlatelolco
- Fig. 12: The Franciscan convent San Miguel Arcángel Maní, site of the 1562 *auto de fé*
- Fig. 13: Tributary Province of Coaxtlahuacan from the *Matricula de Tributos*
- Fig. 14: The Augustinian convent San Guillermo Totolapan
- Fig. 15: The 1581 map of Huaxtepec from the *relación geográfica* of that year
- Fig. 16: The Dominican church at Oaxtepec
- Fig. 17: The barrio chapel of the Barrio de los Reyes, Atlatlahucan (Morelos)
- Fig. 18: Santo Domingo de Guzmán, Antequera (Oaxaca) City
- Fig. 19: The open chapel and church of San Pedro y San Pablo Teposcolula
- Fig. 20: A reconstruction of Yucundáa shortly before the relocation of the Dominican mission to the valley floor
- Fig. 21: The Open Chapel at Yucundáa (Teposcolula)

- Fig. 22: The open chapel at San Juan Bautista Yodzocoo (Coixtlahuaca)
- Fig. 23: The Dominican church and convent built on the pre-Hispanic temple platform in Yodzocahi (Yanhuitlan)
- Fig. 24: The restored *Aniñe* or *Casa de la Cacica* at Yucundáa (Teposcolula)
- Fig. 25: The *Aniñe* at Yodzocahi (Yanhuitlan) from the Codex Yanhuitlan
- Fig. 26: Chapel and *Hospital de Indios* at Yucundáa (Teposcolula)
- Fig. 27: The Dominican mission Santo Domingo Yanhuitlan
- Fig. 28: Lamina 14 of the Lienzo de Tlaxcala showing the execution of native leaders for idolatry
- Fig. 29: Santo Domingo de Guzmán Hueyapan (Morelos)
- Fig. 30: Tláloc from the Codex Borgia
- Fig. 31: A mural identified in 1942 by Antonio Caso as being Talocan, “the paradise of Tláloc”
- Fig. 32: Xipe Tótec from the Codex Borgia
- Fig. 33: The rain deity Dzahui
- Fig. 34: The sacred valley of Yutatnuhu (Apoala)
- Fig. 35: Embedded stones on a wall of the pre-Hispanic *Templo Mayor* at Tlatelolco (Distrito Federal)
- Fig. 36: Embedded stones on the exterior wall of the Augustinian convent church at Acolman
- Fig. 37: Illustration from Diego Duran, O.P., showing the *Templo Mayor* in the sacred precinct at Tenochtitlan
- Fig. 38: An embedded stone with the image of Tláloc on the exterior wall of the Franciscan church San Martin de Tours Huaquechula (Puebla)
- Fig. 39: The convent at Tzintzuntzan, showing embedded stones
- Fig. 40: The open chapel at San Juan Bautista Yodzocoo (Coixtlahuaca, Oaxaca)
- Fig. 41: Embedded stones found in the walls of the open chapel at Yodzocoo (Coixtlahuaca, Oaxaca)
- Fig. 42: San Luis Obispo Tlalmanalco (Edo de Mexico)
- Fig. 43: Three embedded stones in the bell tower of the church at Tlalmanalco
- Fig. 44: An embedded stone (a *chalchihuitl* or symbol of water) on the lateral wall of the church at Tlalmanalco
- Fig. 45: Embedded stone on the exterior façade of the cloister at Amecameca
- Fig. 46: Detail of column in the cloister at Amecameca depicting a flower associated with the cult of Tláloc

- Fig. 47: Embedded stone that is a representation of Xipe Tótec on the exterior wall of the *visita* chapel San Agustín Zapotlán (Estado de México)
- Fig. 48: The exterior wall of the *visita* chapel San Agustín Zapotlán showing the location of three embedded stones on two buttresses
- Fig. 49: A section of the vault mural in the lower cloister at Malinalco
- Fig. 50: Page from the Codex Borbonicus
- Fig. 51: Detail of the speech and song glyphs
- Fig. 52: Detail of the Malinalco vault mural showing a speech and song glyph
- Fig. 53: Detail of the Jaguar Warrior mural at Ixmiquilpan, showing speech glyphs
- Fig. 54: A speech glyph from a section of the vault mural program, lower cloister, Malinalco
- Fig. 55: Speech glyph in the lateral wall mural program, lower cloister, Malinalco
- Fig. 56: A speech glyph from above the main entrance of the church
- Fig. 57: Mural in the *Tecpan* at Metztlán (Hidalgo)
- Fig. 58: The *Tecpan* in Tlayacapan (Morelos)
- Fig. 59: Embedded stones along the upper façade of the *tecpán* at Tlayacapan (Morelos)
- Fig. 60: Embedded stone, a *chalchihuitl*, along the upper façade of the *tecpán* at Tlayacapan (Morelos)
- Fig. 61: Petroglyphs located near Huichapan, Valle de Mezquital (Hidalgo)
- Fig. 62: Jesuit ruins at Pueblo Viejo (El Nio, Sinaloa)
- Fig. 63: Ruins of Cucurpe Mission
- Fig. 64: Design element on the lateral wall of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores Xaltocan, Xochimilco (Distrito Federal, México)
- Fig. 65: The Opodepe church façade design element
- Fig. 66: Petroglyph showing Kokopelli, the hunchback flute player
- Fig. 67: Panels depicting a pair of lizards and a human and a Kokopelli
- Fig. 68: Panels depicting the sun and a second Kokopelli playing its flute
- Fig. 69: The Dance of Death from St. Mary's church, Beram, Croatia
- Fig. 70: Mural depicting the Triumph of Death and the Dance of Death on an exterior wall of the Oratorio di Disciplini in Clusone, Italy
- Fig. 71: Detail of the Triumph of Death depicting Death's skeletal minions shooting victims with arrows and a primitive firearm
- Fig. 72: Depiction of the Dance of Death from the Franciscan convent San Francisco de Morelia (Morelia, Valencia, Spain)
- Fig. 73: Different members of society dance around death

- Fig. 74: Death shoots an arrow at a Tree of Life
- Fig. 75: Death depicted as the grim reaper and an Augustinian missionary at Malinalco (Estado de México)
- Fig. 76: Mural at Los Reyes Magos Huatlatlauca (Puebla) depicting the triumph of death
- Fig. 77: Mural depicting death in the *portería* of the Franciscan convent San Gabriel Cholula (Puebla)
- Fig. 78: Death riding in a chariot runs over his victims. Mural from the Casa del Dean (Puebla City)
- Fig. 79: Detail of the mural showing death holding a scythe
- Fig. 80: Mictlantecuhtli the God of death and the underworld. Statue in the Museo del Templo Mayor
- Fig. 81: Detail of depiction of a *tzompantli* from the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlán
- Fig. 82: Skull embedded in the nave wall of convent church San Bernardino de Siena Xochimilco
- Fig. 83: Section of a panel from Coixtlahuaca depicting death holding a scythe
- Fig. 84: A painting from the Hospital de la Santa Caridad (Sevilla, Spain) depicting death with a scythe
- Fig. 85: A painting from the Hospital de la Santa Caridad (Sevilla, Spain)
- Fig. 86: Side altar at San Luis Obispo Huamantla
- Fig. 87: Figure of the King of Death from Santo Domingo Yanhuitlan
- Fig. 88: Primitive church at San Miguel Achiutla (Nundecu)
- Fig. 89: The second church built at San Miguel Achiutla (Nundecu)
- Fig. 90: Penitential procession from a mural at the Franciscan convent San Martín de Tours Huaquechula (Puebla)
- Fig. 91: Mural depicting a penitential *santo entierro* procession during Holy Week and beneath it the *santo entierro* casket with the body of Jesus, from the church at San Miguel Arcángel Huexozingo (Puebla)
- Fig. 92: North wall mural that adjoins the Porciuncula door
- Fig. 93: Detail of an eighteenth century painting on cloth showing a penitential *santo entierro* procession (Church of the ex-convent of Singuilucan, Hidalgo)
- Fig. 94: The church and *portería* of the Dominican doctrina San Juan Bautista Teitipac (Oaxaca)
- Fig. 95: Mural program in the *portería* at Teitipac
- Fig. 96: A group of Dominican Missionaries lower Christ's body from the cross. Mural from San Juan Bautista Teitipac
- Fig. 97: The *santo entierro* carried by a group of missionaries followed in the procession by hooded penitents who carry *arma Christi*

Fig. 98: Detail of mural showing the *santo entierro*

Fig. 99: Detail of mural showing hooded penitents carrying the *arma Christi*

Fig. 100: Bare-footed penitents participating in a “Silent Procession” in Queretaro on Good Friday (2014) carry a *santo entierro* casket

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is difficult to document the elusive, such as what people believed, felt, and thought in the past. This is particularly difficult when considering religious beliefs, and how the native populations of central Mexico responded to the evangelization campaign launched by Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian missionaries in the 1520s and 1530s. The French historian Robert Ricard postulated that the religious conversion of the native populations was rapid and facile, and the missionaries themselves initially believed that the administration of the sacrament of baptism indeed marked the acceptance of the new faith. However, it was a more difficult proposition to eradicate a world view and religious beliefs that had sustained native civilization for centuries. Growing evidence of what the missionaries defined as idolatry, making sacrifices to idols, and apostasy, straying from the teachings of the Catholic Church, showed that the missionaries were wrong in their belief that the natives had embraced the new faith.

Historians generally rely on written documents to illustrate the past, but there is also physical and visual evidence that provides clues as to what has transpired in the past. The type of physical or visual evidence discussed in this study often escapes the attention of conventional historians who are not conversant with other academic disciplines such as archaeology, architecture, and art history. This does not mean that the types of information that scholars from these disciplines analyze have any less utility for historians trained in the conventional use of documents as their primary source. My own intellectual evolution has seen a shift from an earlier and continuing interest in subjects that rely on quantitative sources such as historical demography, to the construction of an interpretation of the past that relies, in part, on visual evidence such as murals, which normally would be a topic for art historians. This line of research has combined my interest in history and photography, and my wanderlust that has led me to visit hundreds of small towns across Mexico in recent years. My monograph titled *Conflict and Conversion in Sixteenth Century Mexico: The Augustinian War on and Beyond the Chichimeca Frontier* is based, in part, on a discussion of what murals executed in the sixteenth century can tell us about the ideology of the evangelization campaign the missionaries launched along the Chichimeca frontier after 1550.

In my approach to this research topic I benefited from intellectual exchanges with Eleanor Wake, who shared her ideas and perspectives in a series of communications that spanned several years, and during trips to places such as Malinalco, Michoacán, and Morelos. My interactions with Wake, who was a top flight art historian and innovative and stimulating scholar, refined my thinking on how to interpret art for purposes of the analysis of social history. She also introduced me to new forms of visual evidence that can be used to document the difficult question of how the natives living in central Mexico responded to the sixteenth century evangelization campaign, and what their religious beliefs really were. Wake introduced me to her creative research on embedded stones and how the natives visualized a sacred landscape linked to sources of water in sacred mountains, and the placement of temples to register the changes in the seasons critical for the agricultural cycle that sustained Mesoamerican civilization for centuries. I benefitted from her insights, but I alone am responsible for the musings and interpretations presented in this volume.

In November of 2012, I organized a two-day conference in Mexico City that brought together a talented group of scholars who presented original research on the topic of evangelization in different parts of colonial Mexico. I benefitted from interactions with the participants in the conference, and particularly Francisco Manzano Delgado who also has accompanied me on trips to historic sites in central Mexico, Arturo Vergara Hernández, who has been a friend and fellow intellectual traveler for a number of years, Maria de Fatima Wade and Susan Deeds who have been friends for years, and Gerardo Lara Cisneros. Cambridge Scholars Publishing recently released a volume of selected essays from the conference titled *Evangelization and Cultural Conflict in Colonial Mexico*.

My greatest debt of gratitude is to my wife, Laura Díaz de Sollano Montes de Oca. She has accompanied me on many of my outings across central Mexico to visit sixteenth century convents, and in many ways has put up with my wanderlust and my penchant for writing. This book would not have been possible were it not for her constant support.

INTRODUCTION

The Dominican missionary Diego Durán, O.P., wrote about problems in the evangelization of the native population in central Mexico in the late sixteenth century. He noted that:

If you don't believe the pot was broken, taste there the potsherds. And if you forgive me for what we see every day and at times have found and discovered, not only in the villages very remote from Mexico and which would have some excuse, [because of a] lack of doctrine, that generally does not reach them, but very close to Mexico [City] and in the same Mexico there are many evils and superstitions as idolatrous Indians, as in their old law, of physicians and conjurers, and imposters and old preachers of their damn law, which does not lead to forgetting [the old beliefs], teaching it to the young men and children, putting and pretending superstition in things which in themselves are not bad; up to piercing the ears and putting earrings on girls by women who have entered superstition...I say it's fine idolatry in them, because other than being an ancient rite, all idolatries are founded in eating and drinking, worse than it epicureans and they put all their happiness in it.¹

Durán was one of a number of missionaries and Catholic Church officials who towards the end of the sixteenth century recognized the persistence of traditional conceptualizations of the sacred by natives who ostensibly had converted to Catholicism. As Durán noted, the pre-Hispanic vision of the sacred and its rituals pervaded all aspects of life, including eating and drinking. The mere act of baptism that symbolized for the missionaries incorporation into the Christian world did not erase loyalty to deities that the natives had worshipped for centuries, and that had provided the basis for their civilization.

There are several seminal studies that have framed the analysis of how the native populations of central Mexico visualized the sacred, and the effort by the missionaries to impose the new faith and their vision of the miraculous. The French historian Robert Ricard was one of the first

¹ Diego Durán, O.P., *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de Tierra Firme*, 2 volumes (México, D.F.: Editorial Porrúa, 2006), I: 78.

scholars to systematically describe the process of evangelization.² Ricard offered a strictly Eurocentric perspective that focused on the missionaries, and presented the native populations almost as if they were backdrops to the story of the triumph of the missionaries in the campaign to impose their beliefs. Ricard posited a relatively easy and rapid conversion of the native populations because of the effectiveness of the missionary techniques. However, Ricard largely ignored native responses to the missionary campaign.

Scholars have challenged the Ricardian view of evangelization, but one of the more interesting and important was the study by the anthropologist Louise Burkhart that analyzed how the Náhuas populations of central Mexico responded to and more importantly interpreted the content of the religion the missionaries sought to impose.³ The Náhuas had different religious concepts and cultural norms to interpret religion. One example Burkhart documents is the attempt to associate Jesus with the sun which had important religious connotations for the Náhuas. The missionaries assumed that the natives would understand this culturally embedded religious symbolism in the same way that Europeans did. However, the Náhuas interpreted this concept through the lens of their own culturally embedded religious concepts, and understood Jesus to be a solar deity.⁴ Further evidence of this type of filtering of Catholic religious concepts comes from a document that Burkhart translated and published, which was the text of a sixteenth century religious play for performance on Holy Wednesday during Easter week. A native scribe translated the play into Náhuatl, and modified the play so that it could be understood by the target Náhuas audience. As Burkhart notes, the text of the play can be viewed as being either a colonial Spanish discourse or a Náhuas discourse, and the editing by the Náhuas scribe indicates how the natives interpreted the religious concepts the original text emphasized and attempted to teach.⁵

A second study offered a fresh and dynamic analysis of the incorporation of native religious iconography into sixteenth century churches and convents. Eleanor Wake identified indigenous iconography incorporated

² Robert Ricard, *The spiritual conquest of Mexico: An essay on the apostolate and the evangelizing methods of the mendicant orders in New Spain, 1523-1572* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).

³ Louise M. Burkhart, *The slippery earth: Náhua-Christian moral dialogue in sixteenth-century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

⁴ Louise M. Burkhart, "The Solar Christ in Náhuatl Doctrinal Texts of Early Colonial Mexico" *Ethnohistory* (1988): 234-256.

⁵ Louise M. Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday: A Náhua Drama from Early Colonial Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 4-5.

into what ostensibly were Christian visual themes, such as murals, atrial crosses, and design elements.⁶ Additionally, Wake described a sacred landscape defined by sight lines connected to sacred mountains that were the source of life-giving water. The missionaries often directed the construction of their sacred complexes on pre-Hispanic temples, and in doing so preserved the orientation and sight lines to sacred mountains. The natives also built temples to serve as solar calendars to mark changes in the seasons. On key days the sun illuminated sections of temples, such as the steps. Wake also documented the incorporation of pre-Hispanic stones with ritually important images into churches and convents. She cogently argued that the incorporation of embedded stones was not the mere recycling of building material, but rather an example of agency on the part of the natives who used the stones to continue practicing their traditional beliefs, if covertly. Catholic Church leaders in Mexico recognized the religious significance of the embedded stones, and the third Church Council held in 1585 ordered their removal.

In the decades following the launch of the evangelization campaign the newly introduced inquisition investigated cases of what the missionaries defined as “idolatry” and “apostasy.” The most notorious inquisition case was the 1539 trial and execution of don Carlos Ometochtzin, the *tlatoani* or native ruler of Tezoco, the site of one of the first four Franciscan missions. The first bishop of Mexico, the Franciscan Juan de Zumárraga, orchestrated the high profile trial, and had don Carlos Ometochtzin burned at the stake at Tlatelolco on December 1, 1539. Following the trial and other inquisition proceedings, the Crown ordered the Church to suspend investigations of native political leaders, who were important in the construction of a colonial political system based on autonomous indirect rule in the native communities. The trial of don Carlos Ometochtzin was a key moment in the early evangelization campaign, because before his execution he had been an important ally of the Franciscans and his baptism was politically important. Moreover, the trial pointed to the failure of the Franciscan approach to evangelization that consisted of baptisms of large numbers of natives with minimal religious instruction. Their belief that baptism marked the true conversion of the natives proved to be wrong, and gave rise to a controversy with the other missionary orders, the Dominicans and Augustinians, over the form of baptism.

A recent study of the trial of don Carlos Ometochtzin written by Patricia Lopes Don offered interesting and important insights to the

⁶ Eleanor Wake, *Framing the Sacred: The Indian Churches of Early Colonial Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010),

context of the trial, including the Franciscan efforts to suppress traditional religious practices in Tezcoco, such as conducting night raids on the principal temples to frighten the natives away. Lopes Don also analyzes the politics surrounding the problems between the Franciscans and don Carlos Ometochtzin.⁷ The trial forced the missionary orders and particularly the Franciscans to rethink their evangelization strategy, but was not the first instance of the use of capital punishment to extirpate what the missionaries defined as “idolatry” and “apostasy” in their effort to impose a new religious orthodoxy.

Lopes Don’s study highlights how evangelization proved to be a difficult endeavor, as have other studies such as the research on Oaxaca by David Tavarez. Tavarez has shown, for example, that native religious leaders created clandestine ritual texts written in indigenous languages. In 1635, Gonzalo de Balsalobre, the parish priest of San Miguel Sola located in the southwestern part of the Oaxaca Central Valley, had a confrontation with Diego Luis, a traditional religious leader who had a written text that had been sent to him by another man. Diego Luis conducted rituals associated with the corn harvest, birth, and burials. The parish priest confiscated the text and had it burned in front of San Miguel church in Sola, and had proceedings initiated by the inquisition. Balsalobre had another confrontation with Diego Luis two decades later, in 1653.⁸ Literate natives created ritual texts for their own use, shared them with ritual practitioners from other communities, and translated them from one indigenous language to another.

Written documents do not offer the only evidence for the continued practice of pre-Hispanic religion. There is also visual evidence. As Wake has shown, there not only was indigenous influence in what ostensibly was Christian iconography, but also overt incorporation of religiously significant symbolism that changed the meaning of the images from what the missionaries had intended. There is also evidence in the embedded stones that native artisans incorporated into the new sacred complexes that the missionaries ordered built. This was not the recycling of building materials or the random placement of stones from pre-Hispanic temples that had ritually important images sculpted on them. Rather, as Wake first suggested, the embedded stones served as sight lines that defined the

⁷ Patricia Lopes Don, *Bonfires of Culture: Franciscans, Indigenous Leaders, and Inquisition in Early Mexico, 1524-1540* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).

⁸ David Eduardo Taravez, “La idolatría letrada: Un análisis comparativo de textos clandestinos rituales y devociones en comunidades Nahuas y Zapotecas, 1613-1654,” *Historia Mexicana* 49:2 (1999), 197-252.

sacred landscape. Moreover, the embedded stones allowed the natives to continue practicing their old beliefs, and particularly the religion associated water, earth, and the fertility of the soil. While the missionaries were able to suppress the official state religion and the practice of human sacrifice, it was more difficult to extirpate from the minds of the commoners, particularly those who lived by agriculture, loyalty to the gods that had brought the rains and guaranteed the fertility of the soil that had provided the foundations of Mesoamerican civilization. The missionaries and Church officials continued to uncover evidence of the continued practice of traditional rites to ensure the rains and fertility of the soil during much of the period of Spanish colonial domination.

These pages offer musings on the covert persistence of traditional religious practices through a discussion of examples of the inclusion of religious symbolism in Christian iconography, and embedded stones used for ritual purposes and to mark site lines to sacred mountains. The first chapter discusses a Catholic representation of the miraculous based on an incident that allegedly occurred at a Dominican mission near Tezcoco shortly following the trial and execution of don Carlos Ometochtzin. The mural of the miracle of the Virgin of the Rosary is found in the upper cloister of the Dominican mission at Tetela de Volcán in what today is Morelos. A baptized native noble from Tepetlaóxtoc sought salvation through confession before dying, and gained salvation. Unlike don Carlos Ometochtzin, who turned his back on the Franciscans, the noble (*tlatoani*) from Tepetlaóxtoc complied with the sacraments, and was an example of the apparent success of the Dominican approach to evangelization. The incident at Tepetlaóxtoc was also set against the backdrop of the baptismal controversy, the criticism by the Dominicans and Augustinians of the early Franciscan evangelization strategy characterized by mass baptisms of natives with little or no religious instruction. The growing evidence of the persistence of traditional religious practices was proof positive of the failure of the Franciscan approach, while the Dominicans touted the divine intervention of the Virgin of the Rosary as evidence of the efficacy of their approach to evangelization. However, the Dominican triumphalism had to be tempered by the reality of the persistence of idolatry in their own missions, as shown by inquisition investigations at Coatlan and Yodzocahi (Yanhuitlan), both in Oaxaca. These cases and others showed the superficiality of the missionary evangelization campaigns, and the reality that the natives did not visualize the sacred in the same way that the missionaries did. The missionaries expected exclusivity, whereas the natives did not abandon their beliefs. Rather they made room in their belief system for the new faith, but on their own terms.

The first group of missionaries from the Order of Preachers (*Ordo Praedicatorum* or Dominicans) arrived in Mexico in 1526, two years following the Franciscans. Although not all evidence of the persistence of pre-Hispanic religious practices presented in this study involved the Dominicans, their missions figure proximately in this study. The incident that is commemorated in the mural of the miracle of the Virgin of the Rosary occurred at a Dominican mission, and the mural itself is from a second. The idolatry investigations in Oaxaca occurred at Dominican missions. The Dominicans were perhaps the most vociferous critics of the Franciscans and their practice of mass baptisms, and the incident at Tepetlaóxtoc shortly following the execution of don Carlos Ometochtzin touted their success, at least in their own minds. However, quite ironically, the details of the inquisition investigations at Coatlan and Yodzocahi (Yanhuitlan) revealed a pattern of systematic resistance to the imposition of Catholicism as serious as, if not more so, than the trial of don Carlos Ometochtzin.

The missionary enterprise was not strictly religious, but rather was part of a larger colonial political system with its administrative structures and agendas. The Spanish adapted the existing indigenous political-administrative system in central Mexico as the basis to construct a system of indirect rule that gave the native leaders a degree of internal autonomy, as long as they complied with the mandates of the colonial regime. It simplified and minimized the colonial bureaucratic structure. The missionaries also used the existing indigenous administrative structure to create their own jurisdictions. They generally established their *doctrinas* (mission centers) in the head towns of the pre-Hispanic *altépetl*, and categorized the subordinate communities as *visitas* that did not have resident missionaries and that were visited periodically from the *doctrina*. Chapter 2 examines this administrative organization in two regions in what today are Morelos and Oaxaca, using examples of Dominican missions. The Dominicans shared the missionary field in Morelos with the Augustinians, but exclusively administered missions in Oaxaca. It first examines the pre-conquest tributary province of Huaxtepec in Morelos, and then the Dominican missions in Oaxaca. It relates the Culhua-Mexica tributary system to the system the Spanish created following the conquest. It also outlines the elements of the urban plan the missionaries introduced with examples drawn from the Oaxaca missions in the region known today as the Sierra Mixteca.

The sedentary civilizations of Mesoamerica had a foundation in agriculture, and depended on the rains and the fertility of the soil. The rank and file members of society were farmers, and their allegiance was to the

deities that ensured abundant crops. The new gods the missionaries brought could not replace the deities that had provided for centuries. Rather, the old deities were angered by the arrival of the new gods, as evidenced by drought and famine and the epidemics that decimated the native populations. The Spanish suppressed the state religion that focused on deities such as Huitzilopochtli, but found it much more difficult to root out the water-earth-fertility religion. Many instances of idolatry involved sacrifices made to Tláloc and Xipe Tótec (Náhuas) and Dzahui (Ñudzahui). One hypothesis suggested in these musings is that many embedded stones, such as the one with the face of Tláloc found at the rear of Santiago Tlatelolco church (Distrito Federal, were placed to maintain a duality of sacred space shared by two deities. The *templo mayor* in the sacred precinct of Tenochtitlan was an example of two deities that shared space, in this case Tláloc and Huitzilopochtli. The placement of the embedded stone in a visible location converted what ostensibly was a Catholic structure into a temple shared by Jesus and Tláloc.

The rain and fertility deities were central to the pre-Hispanic religious tradition, and several of the important early idolatry cases reported the persistence of sacrifices to these gods. The Ocuila case appears to have involved sacrifices to ensure the rains and the fertility of the soil, and the Coatlan and Yodzocahi (Yanhuitlan) investigations turned up evidence of sacrifices made to Dzahui. Chapter 3 briefly examines the Coatlan and Yodzocahi (Yanhuitlan) cases that other scholars have examined in more detail, and then summarizes the rituals associated with Tláloc, Xipe Tótec, and Dzahui prior to the conquest and examples of the sacrifices made to these deities following the beginning of the “spiritual conquest.”

At the core of this study is an analysis of iconographic evidence of the persistence of pre-Hispanic religious beliefs, and particularly of the water-earth-fertility religion. It also documents the incorporation of sight line markers to sacred mountains in churches and convents. One example of the evidence discussed in chapter 4 is the embedded stones found in the churches and convents, and particularly stones placed in plain view with representations of Tláloc and Xipe Tótec or symbols associated with the two deities. I contend that the natives placed the embedded stones in order to be able to worship the deities. This was the belief of the Third Church Council held in 1585 that ordered the removal of the embedded stones. The natives also incorporated embedded stones and religious iconography in non-religious structures, such as the *tecpán* or municipal palace of the native government, which was not under the control of the missionaries. The enigmatic mural program in the lower cloister of the Augustinian convent at Malinalco provides additional evidence. The native artists who

painted the murals incorporated speech and song glyphs that converted a representation of local plants into a flowery song with religious significance. This chapter concludes with a discussion of a unique design element on the façade of the Jesuit church at Opodepe, Sonora, built in the early eighteenth century. The design element contains several representations of the fertility deity Kokopelli. Its inclusion in the chapter suggests that there is evidence of the persistence of traditional religious practices not only in the core areas of Mexico, but also on the frontiers.

In a previous study I briefly examined the iconography of death as related to representations of the last judgment in sixteenth century mission centers.⁹ Chapter 5 discusses representations of death, and the later change in the attitude of the missionaries regarding its use. In the sixteenth century the missionaries placed less emphasis on death, and more on the final judgment that was a concept useful for suppressing social-religious practices such as pulque consumption that the missionaries found objectionable. There was also a problem with parallel iconographic representations of death as a skeleton in both European and Mesoamerican cultures, and the missionaries suspected that the natives would associate skeletal representations of death with their own deities. However, by the seventeenth and eighteenth century new representations of death appeared in Catholic iconography in Mexico, mostly in paintings related to the final judgment. The discussion of death and related burial practices also touches upon an incident of grave-robbing by a Dominican missionary.

The Yodzocahi (Yanhuítlan) inquisition investigation alleged that the native lord don Francisco had spilled his blood on the site of a demolished temple, and that he had encouraged others to do so as well. The missionaries introduced the concept of penitence as being an essential element of salvation. Moreover, they promoted the organization of confraternities, lay organizations that organized popular displays of religiosity such as processions and particularly penitential processions during Easter week. Confraternities also organized processions in response to societal crises such as epidemics and drought, and natural disasters. Penitents engaged in self-flagellation to extirpate their bodies of sin, and to placate God's anger, for surely God sent epidemics and other natural disasters to punish humanity for sin. Penitents mortified the flesh to placate God's anger.

Chapter 6 briefly examines the evolution of penitential processions in Europe in the early modern period, and the introduction of confraternities

⁹ Robert H. Jackson, *Conflict and Conversion in Sixteenth Century Mexico: The Augustinian War on and Beyond the Chichimeca Frontier* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2013), 123-133.

and processions in sixteenth century Mexico. Murals and a painting survive at several missions that depict penitential processions, as well as *santo entierro* processions staged on Good Friday to recreate the lowering of Jesus' body from the cross and it's being carried to the tomb. Some penitents engaged in mortification of the flesh during *santo entierro* processions to atone for the crucifixion. The Yodzocahi inquisition investigation documented accusations that don Francisco had made sacrifices to the Dzahui. Why did don Francisco spill his blood on the site of the temple the Dominicans had demolished to make way for the construction of a new sacred complex? Don Francisco may have believed that Dzahui and the other gods were angry because the missionaries had arrived to displace them, and the gods caused drought and sent epidemics as punishment.

The natives embraced confraternities and ritual self-sacrifice. Did penitential processions offer the natives cover for making self-sacrifices to the old gods? Processions staged at Yodzocahi most likely would have passed over the site of the demolished temple, located as it was within the atrium of the Dominican convent complex. Processions generally originated in the church, and then moved around the atrium. This would have given the participants, particularly those engaging in self-flagellation, an opportunity to spill their blood on the site of the temple. I suggest that the natives used the confraternities as a way to continue ritual self-sacrifices per their traditional beliefs. In a recent article I argued that the description of a burial at one of the Chiquitos missions in eastern Bolivia staged by an organization similar to a confraternity provided evidence of the persistence of traditional religious rites, in this case of a burial.¹⁰

As is often the case, the process of elaborating a monograph evolves in stages, and includes the publication of articles. Such is the case with this study. I first discussed the story of the mural of the miracle of the Virgin of the Rosary in an illustrated article that appeared in print in 2013.¹¹ In 2012, I organized a conference in Mexico City dedicated to the theme of evangelization and culture conflict in colonial Mexico. Cambridge Scholars Publishers contacted me about publication of the papers presented at the conference, and in June of 2014 a collection of articles

¹⁰ Robert H. Jackson, "Social and Cultural Change on the Jesuit Missions of Paraguay and the Chiquitos Mission Frontier," *The Middle Ground* 5 (Fall 2012), 1-39.

¹¹ Robert H. Jackson, "The Virgin of the Rosary at Tetela del Volcán (Morelos), Conversion, the Baptismal Controversy, a Dominican Critique of the Franciscans, and the Culture Wars in Sixteenth Century Central Mexico," *Bulletin: Journal of the California Missions Studies Association* 29:1 (2013) 12-28.

that I edited appeared in print.¹² For this volume I recast the article on the mural of the miracle of the Virgin of the Rosary, and included a discussion of embedded stones as evidence of the persistence of pre-Hispanic religious practices and as markers to locate sacred mountains.¹³ The introduction to the same volume cites examples that now appear in Chapter 4 of this study.¹⁴ In 2013, I published a study of Augustinian missions on the Chichimeca frontier in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁵ This study examined issues that appear prominently in the present offering, such as the baptismal controversy, representations of the final judgment, penitential processions, and the iconography of death. These topics are pertinent to this study, and I expand upon them and include new information and analysis.

Finally I would like to make a disclaimer. The musings presented here by no means pretend to be the final word on the subject of evangelization and cultural conflict. Rather, I would hope that what I have written in these pages would inspire other scholars to dig further, and to twist their necks to look for elusive embedded stones on the walls of early colonial structures or pre-Hispanic iconography in what ostensibly were Christian murals. It is for a younger generation of scholars to continue this intellectual odyssey.

¹² Robert H. Jackson, editor, *Evangelization and Cultural Conflict in Colonial Mexico* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

¹³ Robert H. Jackson, "The Virgin of the Rosary at Tetela del Volcán (Morelos), Conversion, the Baptismal Controversy, a Dominican Critique of the Franciscans, and the Culture Wars in Sixteenth Century Central Mexico," in Robert H. Jackson, editor, *Evangelization and Culture Conflict in Colonial Mexico* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 1-29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xvii-xxvi.

¹⁵ Jackson, *Conflict and Conversion*.

CHAPTER ONE

VISUALIZING THE MIRACULOUS: THE VIRGIN OF THE ROSARY MURAL AT TETELA DEL VOLCÁN (MORELOS)

On the second floor of the cloister of the ex-Dominican convent San Juan Bautista Tetela del Volcán (see Figure 1) is an enigmatic mural that partially relates an incident that reportedly occurred in 1541. The incident the mural memorializes symbolized how sixteenth century missionaries in central Mexico conceptualized the process of evangelization. The missionaries believed that the baptism of natives marked a transition in their spiritual lives. The missionaries also believed that they were involved in an ongoing war with Satan to win the hearts, minds, and souls of the natives. Visual representations of the evangelization process depicted demons attempting to reclaim the natives at the same time that the missionaries indoctrinated them in the mysteries of the new faith. Once the missionaries baptized the natives, however, the demons were no longer present, and their absence marked victory in the war against Satan. The missionaries also believed that Satan inspired pre-Hispanic religion, and that Satan governed those parts of Mexico where the missionaries had yet to plant the Christian cross. An example of a visual representation of this belief is an illustration from the Augustinian *Crónica de Michoacán* that depicts Augustinian missionaries catechizing natives. Demons surround the natives receiving religious instruction, and demons also appear behind a group of assembled natives with their lord, thus establishing the connection between the native world before the conquest and Satanic influence. In the final section of the illustration the missionary baptizes a group of natives, and through this symbolic act vanquishes the demons (see Fig. 2).



Fig. 1: The church and convent San Juan Bautista Tetela del Volcán (Morelos).

Baptism marked salvation through incorporation into the Christian community. Sinners and those who died not having been baptized did not receive God's grace, and instead were consigned to hell, as shown in a sixteenth century picture catechism (see Figure 3). The mural at Tetela del Volcán conveyed the same doctrinal lesson. The mural memorialized an incident that reportedly occurred in 1541 at another Dominican mission, Santa María Magdalena Tepetlaóxtoc located near Tezcoco. The Dominicans established a *doctrina* at Tepetlaóxtoc around 1527 or 1528, and it was one of their first missions.¹ The Dominican chronicler Fr. Alonso Franco, O.P. narrated the incident that involved Fr. Domingo de la Anunciación, O.P. According to the account, a native resident of Tepetlaóxtoc died while Anunciación was away from the *doctrina* visiting other communities. The native was unable to confess. Anunciación returned,

¹ José Tinajero Morales, "La vicaria dominica de Tepetlaóxtoc, eremitismo y evangelización ¿Contradicción o complemento?" *Estudios de Historia Novohispana* 41 (julio-diciembre, 2009), 17-44.