

And Translation  
Changed the World  
(and the World  
Changed Translation)



# And Translation Changed the World (and the World Changed Translation)

Edited by

Alberto Fuertes

and Ester Torres-Simón

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## PREFACE

Communication is the basis for human societies. Contact between communities is the basis for translation. Whether by conflict or cooperation, translation has been involved in the evolution of societies and it has evolved with them.

Translation has an effect on the relationships between peoples, between people and power and between power and people.

This volume explores the role of translators in different historical contexts focusing on how their work affected their surroundings and on how the context surrounding them affected their work.

The articles collected in this volume are arranged in chronological order, extending from 16<sup>th</sup>-century Mexico to 21<sup>st</sup>-century Spain.



# INTRODUCTION

KIRSTEN MALMKJÆR

The articles in this volume were developed on the basis of a selection of papers presented at the graduate conference, *New Research in Translation and Interpreting Studies*, held on 1-2 July, 2013 at the *Universitat Rovira i Virgili*, Tarragona, Spain. The title of the conference reflects its theme of the mutually influencing effect of translation on the world and of the world on translation: as Lewis (1983, 230), among others, has pointed out, linguistic meaning operates within and varies with contextual coordinates such as setting, time and speaker, and meaning in translated text is of course no exception to this rule. A translation is always situated in a set of physical, mental and cultural contexts which influence its creation and the understandings it may give rise to; and every translation itself becomes a part of the world and of one, or often many continuous chains of signification (Peirce 1958 [1904], 389). The articles collected here reflect this mutuality of influence from translation to world and from world to translation.

In the opening article, Zamora Ramírez focuses on the influence of culture and religion on the production and translation into the Aztec language, Nahuatl, of catechisms—manuals on Christianity usually including the main prayers, the articles of faith, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, the works of mercy and the capital sins—by friars of the four main religious orders, Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans and Jesuits, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in Mexico and Central America. These translations were intended to assist in the replacement of the indigenous religion with Christianity, along with the elimination of temples to the indigenous gods and of practices such as polygamy and human sacrifice—all radically world-changing processes, and ones subject to several paradoxes. The spread of the new religion was enabled in a major way with the arrival of the printing press in 1539 (printing presses were produced in Germany from 1439 onward), but at the same time, the three Mexican Councils (or synods) of 1555, 1565 and 1585, and the Council of Trent, held in Trento and Bologna between 1545 and 1563 as a counter measure to the Protestant Reformation, carefully restricted the

content of the translations. As the presses aided distribution, it became increasingly important to control what was distributed, which had consequences, also, for the very process of translation, and which led to delays in the dissemination of the catechisms. In addition, although the intention was to spread the new religion faithfully and accurately, the new religion needed to be presented in terms acceptable and comprehensible to its audience, which entailed adaptation of Christianity to Nahua culture, the use of simple language as well as illustration to cater for the majority of the audience, who were illiterate, and considerable ingenuity and invention to introduce Western and Christian concepts to a context in which these were radically alien. Furthermore, the order to which a friar-translator belonged would influence the translation: Franciscans emphasized humility and empathy with the indigenous people; Dominicans excelled in enthusiastic persuasion; Augustinians were able to build on earlier translations to add greater complexity to the presentation of the content; the Jesuits translated less than the remaining orders, and devoted more attention to work with children of Spanish settlers. Zamora Ramírez elaborates on the motivations that drove individual translators within these groups.

Priests are also in focus as translators in the second article, by Torres-Simón, as one of three types of translators into Korean in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here, the motivation to translate was somewhat different than that which drove the translators into Nahuatl: we are concerned with translations into English of Korean works of literature in order to promote understanding of Korean culture in the Western world between the beginning of the Korean War (25 June 1950-27 July 1953), which left the country divided into North and South Korea, and the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The aim of the article is to draw conclusions concerning the professionalization of translators more generally. Because Korean literary translators are generally not able to survive on their income from literary translation, Torres-Simón classifies translators according to their other, main, occupations as university teachers, writers, or members of religious orders; interestingly, the percentage of translators who are members of the last category declined from 12% in the first 25 years covered by the study to 3% in the second 25 year period. Next, she provides a qualitative profile analysis of the members of each of these broad groups, of which university teachers predominate in both periods (41% and 54%), followed by writers (29% and 28%). She finds increasing professionalization and specialization but less visibility among people who translate in the second of the two periods, as the number of people who are bilingual in Korean and another language increases.

In the third article, by de Luxán Hernández, the focus changes from the profiling of translators to the relationships between translation and history. As de Luxán Hernández points out and illustrates with reference to the English *Asiento* (1713-1750)—the period of the agreement between Spain and Great Britain concerning the supply of African slaves to the West Indies—this relationship has three dimensions: translation of historical accounts, translation of old documents, and the history of translation. In the translation of older texts, the time dimension is clearly more significant for the translation process than is the case when we are dealing with translation of contemporary texts; historical texts have their own genre characteristics; and the history of translation can afford valuable insights into the evolution and nature of norms as well as constituting a particular aspect of both the discipline of history and the discipline of translation studies. De Luxán Hernández points to the central role played by translation during the *Asiento*, highlighting the influence of a particular set of historical circumstances on contemporary translation practices.

Taking the *Antología de la “Beat Generation”*, published in 1970, as a case study, Lobejón Santos’s article on English-Spanish bilingual translations of poetry in Franco’s Spain and in the years immediately following (1939 until 1983) again emphasizes the interactions between translation activities and their contexts. Although a new Spanish Constitution was adopted in 1978, the censorship practices instituted by Franco, who ruled Spain as a dictator from 1939 until his death in 1975, were not abolished until 1985. The contextual dimensions highlighted by Lobejón Santos as affecting translation include the Spanish Civil War (17 July 1936 to 1 April 1939), which severely curtailed the book market, and especially the types of book he discusses, as well as the above mentioned censorship practices—the latter, of course, being awkward to maintain in bilingual publications, unless the source texts are altered to reflect the censored target text.

With Gyogi’s article, the volume moves on to consider translation as a language teaching and learning device that can be used especially effectively to promote cultural awareness. Gyogi reports on the content of classroom discussions among learners of Japanese following classes in which translation exercises had been used to highlight the presentation in Japanese of foreigner speech using katakana, the writing system—one of three Japanese writing systems—normally employed for this purpose. The students were asked to translate into English an episode of a manga which included a foreign character, and Gyogi presents examples showing the students’ enhanced sensitivity to stereotyping of foreigners’ speech and their raised levels of self-reflection in the language classroom.

Japanese remains in focus in the article by Matsushita on the use of omission in Japanese news translation. Matsushita uses the written translations made by Japanese journalist-translators and published in five top-selling Japanese newspapers of US President Obama's victory and inauguration speeches which he gave on, respectively, 7 November, 2012 and 21 January, 2013, to show that, contrary to the guidelines provided in Reuters' *Handbook of Journalism* (2008), omission is frequent across the translations, and that it regularly affects factual details. Matsushita suggests a number of potential reasons for these omissions: journalists may think that some content would cause comprehension difficulties for their readers; syntactic differences between Japanese and English might mean that a close rendering would lead to sentences whose length would contravene the norms of Japanese journalistic style; or the journalist-translators may simply have had difficulty in conveying Obama's precise meaning at certain points and omitted the problematic parts. As Matsushita points out, given the importance of news translation, the phenomenon of omission in what is presented as direct quotation deserves further attention within the translation studies research community.

Remaining focused on the notion of translation strategies, article 7, by Pfau, discusses the strategies used to deal with cultural references, including historical situations, names and representations of feeling and understanding, in four research articles bilingually published with open internet access on the multilingual *Portal SciELO*, both in translation into English and in the original Brazilian Portuguese. Guided by Nord (2005), Pfau asks whether the translations function in the same way as the source texts, what problems the target texts present, and whether they communicate well with scientific communities that read in English. She focuses on sentence fragments that have particular resonances in the source culture, figures of speech and proverbs, historical knowledge, and key words. The main strategies used to ensure a positive reply to the questions asked are explicitation and addition to deal with culture specific practices and beliefs, with names of famous people, and with historical knowledge. In the case of figures of speech and proverbs, and key words, a search for corresponding expressions tends to be the first strategy, although calque, borrowing, or omission may be resorted to when that search fails. An important point raised in Pfau's article is that English is not confined to a clearly delineated, uniform speaker group, and readability for a culturally diverse audience must be kept in mind when translating into it for international readerships; Pfau calls for international collaboration between authors, journal editors and translators to this end.

In his article on the medieval postmodern in translation studies, Anthony Pym calls for greater awareness of the origin in European medieval translation practices of certain contemporary debates and concepts within translation studies. In particular, he argues that attention to the medieval might have helped us prevent or abbreviate the long history of concentration on the source text-target text binary and the concepts of equivalence, neither of which prove (or were ever) adequate to deal with the realities of communication or to account for its complexities. These complexities can be hidden in current accounts of Western translation history, which tend to present the latter as far less varied and far more continuous than it actually is; and reminding us that what may seem to be issues specific to e.g. website translation (localization, adaptation, the locale notion) were well known to translators in much earlier times, Pym notes that what is new is largely the technology now available and the ease of transmission that this provides.

In the final article in the collection, Fuertes tackles the notion of the translator's voice in translations into Spanish of English literature. He argues that it is a mistake to seek to identify this voice as belonging to only the most recent translator of a classic work such as, e.g. *Treasure Island*, since previous translators' voices constitute a context for and inevitably blend into the voice in a new translation, so that voices in translation may be thought of as intertextual. Occasionally, a voice may be appropriated by way of overt plagiarism, in the sense in which plagiarism has come to be understood within capitalist economic contexts, where it is opposed to the notion of authorship. Using the example of a short story by Francisco Villaespesa, which contains a number of close parallels with a short story by Fialho d'Almeida, Fuertes points to the similarities between plagiarism and translation, as one of the most recurrent strategies of literary appropriation: voices in translation may be thought of as intertextual voices, and translations and retranslations may be closely aligned to plagiarism and rewriting.

In many and varied ways, then, translations both affect and are affected by the world. To translation studies scholars, this is not so surprising; but the articles in this collection illustrate it particularly clearly across a variety of fascinating contexts.

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**PART I:**

**PEOPLE AND PEOPLE:  
COOPERATION AND CONFLICT**



## CHAPTER ONE

# FRIARS TRANSLATING INTO NAHUATL BETWEEN THE 16<sup>TH</sup> AND 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

ELENA IRENE ZAMORA RAMÍREZ

In this article we will focus on the friars translating into Nahuatl in Mexico and the works they produced. Specifically we will study how the cultural and religious background influenced the production and translation of catechisms.

In our research, we have selected a random corpus of seven catechisms translated between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries available in the John Carter Brown Library (Providence, United States). Paratexts, and especially prologues, provided information on how friars felt towards translation (their fears, their opinions, their motivations) and how they worked (methodology, sources).

In order to provide the right context, the historical events that had an influence on the way these translations were made must be taken into consideration. Textual features and types of catechisms translated during this period will also be presented as a factor to be taken into account.

This information should provide a framework of reference in which the work of the translators can be effectively analyzed, both as a target text but also as a source text for subsequent catechisms.

Therefore we will answer the following questions: why Nahuatl was the target language, which historical events influenced 16<sup>th</sup>-century friar-translators, what textual characteristics narrowed translation options, how different authors interpreted such characteristics (leading to different levels of agency), how the four main religious orders presented different features and how it all is reflected in the way translators presented their works.

## **Nahuatl language and culture**

Nahuatl is a language spoken in some parts of Mexico and Central America. It is also known by the names of Aztec or Mexican. It belongs to the family of Uto-Aztecan languages and had its golden age during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. We know the Nahuatl written during this period as Classical Nahuatl, which is the most studied variety of this language.

The number of catechetical books translated into Nahuatl was higher than the number translated into other indigenous languages. For example Ricard (1986, 122) states that from 1524 to 1572, 109 books were written by friars. Some of them were grammars and dictionaries and others were catechisms. 66 of these books were written in Nahuatl. This superiority arises because, prior to the arrival of the missionaries, Nahuatl was already widespread in Mexico and Central America. Precisely for this reason and also because some of the natives were able to understand it even if it was not their first language, Nahuatl was established as a lingua franca for evangelization.

Since friars thought that indigenous gods were demons, they tried to eliminate them as soon as possible. They took several measures to eradicate idolatry: they eliminated the temples, prohibited polygamy and condemned human sacrifice. Friars initially rejected the Aztecs' religion but this position changed later when they tried to get a better understanding of other aspects of the indigenous people's life and customs.

During the first years after the conquest, friars prepared several studies on indigenous cultures, they wrote many grammars and dictionaries to learn the indigenous languages and they also attempted to collect the ancient history of the indigenous groups. In many cases this collection of ancient indigenous customs was made in order to get to know pre-Hispanic religious rites so they could eradicate them if they observed the Indians practicing them. However, these items favored the creation of a culture mix that still survives today.

The friars realized that to fulfill their mission it was necessary to learn the indigenous languages. Due to the variety of languages and the small number of friars, they had to organize themselves to cover all the languages of the territory that had been given to them. They started studying the languages of the region they lived in, and wrote grammars and dictionaries. This was a difficult but necessary step prior to the translation of catechisms.

## **Historical background and its influence on the translation of catechisms**

Historical circumstances in the 16<sup>th</sup> century influenced not only further historical developments but also the way translators worked. Some of these events such as the Reformation, the Counter Reformation, the Council of Trent and the Humanist movement happened in Europe. Others took place in America: the arrival of the press, the influence of Zumarraga, the establishment of the Inquisition in America, and the Three Mexican Councils.

In Europe, Luther had published his translation of the Bible and protestant ideas had spread throughout the continent. In Spain the Christian Re-conquest had finished, and Jews had been expelled from the country. These events formed a particular social and cultural context that obviously influenced translators. Within this context, the education they received in Spanish universities, strongly influenced by the Spanish Renaissance humanism, was also subsequently reflected in their translations.

The arrival of the printing press in 1539 meant a revolution for translators. Now they were able to publish their translations on a much larger scale. Before the arrival of the printing press translators had to copy their translations by hand so the distribution of their works was limited. Conversely, they had more freedom in their translations because the manuscript texts were infrequently censored by external agents. However once the first press started to work, external control over translated texts increased.

During the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, especially when Fray Juan de Zumarraga was archbishop of Mexico there was a proliferation of humanist doctrines encouraged by the climate of openness and tolerance that came from the Reformation. In some of these catechisms, especially in Zumarraga's works, we can even find a certain diffusion of Erasmus's thoughts. Sonia Corcuera (1994, 70) finds the content of these catechisms "complete and complex, attractive for the intelligence and seductive for the heart". However, all these projects were eventually discarded due to the mistaken belief that the indigenous people lacked skills to understand these more complex texts.

During the first decades of evangelization, thanks to the papal bulls issued by Leo X and Adrian VI, the three mendicant orders that were present in America (Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans) had considerable freedom to act and evangelize in the way they considered best.

The formal establishment of the Inquisition in 1570 had a great influence on their freedom. With the arrival of the Inquisition to New Spain the control over translated texts increased. There are several examples of friars persecuted in America for their translations into indigenous languages: the Franciscan Friar Maturino Gilberti suffered a long process because of his translations into Tarascan. Another Franciscan who also suffered the criticism of the Inquisition was Fray Alonso de Molina, who, despite his mastery of Nahuatl, had problems regarding the translation of some concepts into this language. For this reason his doctrine was unauthorized.

The three Mexican councils (1555, 1565, and 1585) and the Council of Trent (1545-1563) played a key role in the way catechisms were translated.

During the Mexican councils, norms guiding the translation of catechetical texts were established. The councils' recommendations became increasingly restrictive with regard to the content that catechisms should have and also with regard to who should translate these texts and how they should be translated. In the council of 1585, the restrictions went so far as to prohibit, under penalty of excommunication, the use of former catechisms and to force the friars to use only the catechism by Juan de la Plaza.

This influence of the councils on translation was contradictory because, on the one hand, the councils always encouraged the translation of catechisms into indigenous languages and urged the friars to learn these languages, but, on the other hand, numerous obstacles were put in the way of the translation and distribution of books in indigenous languages. For example, the translations should be made exclusively by friars, not by Indian or Spanish translators; indigenous people were not allowed to possess sermons and religious texts, but only catechisms approved and reviewed by the friars; they could not own manuscripts either; and the name of the person who had given them any book should be written at the beginning of that book.

During the Council of Trent, the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages was banned. This decision caused major problems because some of the catechisms which then circulated Mexico contained fragments of the Holy Scriptures in Nahuatl.

Due to the obsession of the religious orders with religious orthodoxy, the process of translating, editing, and printing a catechism was complicated and went through many stages. First, the translated text was reviewed by superiors who knew the language. Following this review they set out the requirements to be met by the text and the formalities it should include. Finally, a license was granted to print the text. It was a long

process that could last for years and produced long delays in the dissemination of catechisms. Printers needed to be careful to meet all the requirements, because failure to do so carried serious consequences. The following excerpt from the Council of Trent shows the entire process:

And wishing, as is just, to impose a restraint, in this matter, also on printers, who now without restraint—thinking, that is, that whatsoever they please is allowed them—print, without the license of ecclesiastical superiors, the said books of sacred Scripture, and the notes and comments upon them of all persons indifferently, with the press of times unnamed, often even fictitious, and what is more grievous still, without the author's name; and also keep for indiscriminate sale books of this kind printed elsewhere; (this Synod) ordains and decrees, that, henceforth, the sacred Scripture, and especially the said old and vulgate edition, be printed in the most correct manner possible; and that it shall not be lawful for anyone to print, or cause to be printed, any books whatever, on sacred matters, without the name of the author; nor to sell them in future, or even to keep them, unless they shall have been first examined, and approved of, by the Ordinary; under pain of the anathema and fine imposed in a canon of the last Council of Lateran: and, if they be Regulars, besides this examination and approval, they shall be bound to obtain a license also from their own superiors, who shall have examined the books according to the form of their own statutes. As to those who lend, or circulate them in manuscript, without their having been first examined, and approved of, they shall be subjected to the same penalties as printers: and they who shall have them in their possession or shall read them, shall, unless they discover the authors, be themselves regarded as the authors. (Council of Trent 1848)

The arrival of the Counter Reformation inspired by the Council of Trent constituted an impediment to the translation of catechisms and a change in the diversity and originality of the works.

### **The catechism as a text to be translated: characteristics, content and adaptation**

Due to the particularities of catechisms as texts many factors must be taken into account before a translation is produced. Here we focus on three of these characteristics—content, length and the use of images—and on the possibility to adapt the text to the indigenous recipients.

The content of these catechisms is basic. Most of them contain the main prayers, the articles of faith, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, the works of mercy and the capital sins. Although there are some books that go into detail and thoroughly explain dogmatic contents,

most catechisms are simple and contain few explanations. This can be due to various circumstances such as the rush to evangelize the indigenous population or the mistaken perception that some authors had about the intellectual ability of the indigenous people. Precisely for these reasons most of the catechisms, specially the earliest ones, are very short. The use of images and pictographic material was very important in the evangelization. Most of the population was unable to read so the images transmitted the ideas that they could not put into words. In the first decades pictographic catechisms were essential, these books being an interesting example of intersemiotic translation. They proved so effective that they continued to be used during the following centuries. The images of saints and virgins that appeared inside the catechisms provide plenty of information about the translators and their religious order.

All in all, the translation of a catechism into Nahuatl should faithfully reflect what a catechetical text is: brief, simple, clear and accurate. The text should be brief, since the aim was to evangelize a large number of people as quickly as possible. In fact, the title of most catechisms at the time included the adjective short. Also, the translation should reflect the simplicity of the original text. We must remember that these translations were made for the evangelization of people who were not literate and never had had contact with European culture. Thus, it was necessary that the translation was simple and used terms that could be understood by all the natives. Moreover, the translation should be clear and should not lead to confusion or misinterpretation. Last, the translated text would be examined very carefully to ensure it was an accurate reflection of the original.

Friars had to deal with another problem that was hard to solve: the adaptation of the translation to the recipient. Many of the problems derived from the translation of the truths of Catholic faith into indigenous languages concerned a lack of concepts and the words to express them in those languages.

In order to make the translation acceptable for the Indian recipients, it had to be adapted to the Nahuatl culture. Therefore, the authors did not only have to learn the languages, but they also had to study the indigenous culture in order to bridge the cultural gap and make the message understandable to the indigenous people. The fidelity of the transmitted message was different depending on the catechism. In many cases there was an adaptation of Christian religion to Nahuatl thoughts and archetypes to make the message acceptable and understandable. Charles Dibble (1974) has called this phenomenon "the Nahuatlization of Christianity".

Another problem was the adaptation to the writing system. Aztecs used a picto-ideographic writing system so it was necessary to teach the indigenous people how to write and read in the alphabetic system used by the friars. These catechisms were often the first contact the Indians had with alphabetic writing, so we should not underestimate the role they played in establishing indigenous literacy.

### **Levels of agency in translated catechisms**

The level of agency of the translator-friar in the production of catechisms can vary enormously from one text to another. Corcuera (1994, 67) offers a classification of catechisms according to agency.

The first category comprises copies of catechisms written in Spain. In this case the author simply added his name and published the text, not always citing the source. Juan de Zumarraga's *Doctrina cristiana* of 1546 is a copy of the *Suma de Doctrina Cristiana* by Constantino Ponce la Fuente. He also took the foreword and the conclusion from Erasmus of Rotterdam (Corcuera 1994, 67).

The second category includes compilations: the translator compiled, and sometimes also translated, a selection of other authors' texts.

The third category comprises comments on other texts. In these catechisms the author compiled texts written by other authors and added some paragraphs with commentaries of his own. It should be emphasized that the translations made in New Spain were sometimes a breath of fresh air compared to European texts: European texts hardly ever left any room for interpretation, while Nahuatl ones did. That is, the reader of the European texts could only accept or reject the text. However, through translation these texts became more explanatory, giving the reader an actual chance to "interpret" them. In these texts adaptation took place through translation. For example, Castilian catechisms emphasized eating in moderation. However, in Nahuatl translations this aspect is not often highlighted, because the Nahuatl people ate little. On the other hand, the insistence on moderation when drinking alcohol often appears in Nahuatl catechisms, as "pulque" consumption was related to the pre-Hispanic religion and was widespread, while in Castilla the consumption of alcohol did not worry the friars (Corcuera 1994, 79).

Finally, we contemplate original catechisms. Friars elaborated these texts drawing on texts by well-known authors. They constitute perhaps the most useful books, as they are fully adapted to the characteristics of the Nahuatl culture.

## **Influence of religious orders**

There were four main religious orders in America during the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Jesuits. The way friars translated was affected by the order they belonged to. Each of the religious orders had some particular characteristics and points of view about religion that were reflected in their translations.

Franciscans arrived in America in 1524. They were the most numerous group and therefore the ones who translated most catechisms into Nahuatl. They left their particular mark in many of their works emphasizing the humility and the affinity with the indigenous people. The Franciscan translator Alonso de Molina was one of the most respected translators and his works became a relevant reference for other translators.

Dominicans arrived in 1526. They were the second group to arrive in New Spain and their presence in America was also very influential. They made translations of great value during certain periods and had a great influence on the way some terms were translated. Their catechisms are a reflection of their ability to preach as they use a persuasive and enthusiastic language.

Augustinians arrived in 1533. Upon their arrival in New Spain the main areas were already occupied by Franciscans and Dominicans so their extension and influence was lower. They could benefit from the knowledge and experience of the other orders. As a possible result they had greater agility in producing texts in Nahuatl and their translations had fewer mistakes than the initial translations done by Franciscans and Dominicans. Their catechisms are more intellectual, they try to transmit the Christian Faith in a more complex way.

Finally the Jesuits arrived in 1572. Their production of translations into Nahuatl was lower, since being latecomers they had to expand into other territories where Nahuatl was not spoken. Another factor that influenced their lower production of translated catechisms is the fact that they were devoted to teaching the children of Spanish-speaking settlers. One of the most important Jesuit translators was Ignacio de Paredes, whose translations continued to be printed centuries after his death.

The secular clergy also had an important role in the translation of catechisms from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When the privileges of religious orders decreased the secular clergy started to translate catechisms.

## The view of the translator

Within the previously discussed context of historical changes, religious advances, specific religious orders and different types of texts, the analysis of paratexts indicated some motivations and characteristics that seem to be particular to the friar-translators. These features often distinguished them from other, non-religious translators.

After the analysis, two main motivations stand out: the need to standardize doctrine and the vow of obedience.

In the prologues, it is very common to find references to the high number of catechisms that were in circulation in New Spain. Many of these books were handwritten and their content and expression had not passed any quality control. According to the friar Juan de la Anunciación it was necessary to “eliminate the great number of handwritten documents that contain a varied, indigestive and confusing doctrine, which are useless to the point of making you waste your time without any positive results” (1577, prologue, my translation)<sup>1</sup>. For similar reasons many friars decided to make their own translations and tried to impose their own catechisms, thus constantly increasing the number of catechisms in use.

The second motivation of the translators was obedience. In many cases friars did not show interest in translating a new book, but undertook the job under superiors’ orders. They say that they did not think they were skilled enough to translate but that they had to do it because of their vow of obedience. Friar Manuel Perez states in the acknowledgements of his *Catechismo Romano*<sup>2</sup>: “[...] I dedicate to you this Catholic translation, with more merit (if I am able to do that) than the first one; because I did that one without being obliged to do it and now I offer you this one obliged by my superiors” (1723, my translation).

Regarding specific characteristics of the friar-translators, we should point at the humility of the translator. For example, the prologues of the Augustinian friar Juan de la Anunciación (1514-1594?) show how humble he is about his work. He mentions that he did not think he was going to be able to translate this catechism and he also states that the final translation is very likely to contain many mistakes. For this reason he apologizes in advance to the reader for his mistakes. The author also says that his translation is temporary and will only be valid until a more talented translator finishes a new catechism (Juan de la Anunciación, Prologue, 1577).

This humility could be linked to the translators’ awareness of the responsibility that comes with translating a catechism. Because of the nature of these texts, the translation had to be very accurate and it should

not lead to any misunderstanding as this could be considered a heresy. For this reason the translators convey in the prologues their concerns about the translation and they hope that if they were to make any mistakes these would not be an impediment to a correct understanding of the text. Juan de la Anunciación is an example of such point of view. In his catechism of 1575 he says he would like to be a better translator and he hopes that, despite its mistakes, his book will be useful for the salvation of the Indians.

Related to this responsibility was the necessity of some translators to seek protection from their superiors. They were aware that a wrong translation would have serious consequences for them because of the strict control over translations from the beginning of the Counter-Reformation, so they used to look for the approbation of their superiors to reduce the control of censors over their translations.

It is difficult to find the source text of these translations because most authors did not mention their sources. In the case of bilingual catechisms we can guess that they are translations because the text often appears in two parallel columns in Spanish and Nahuatl. For monolingual catechisms, it is difficult to know if these books were written directly in Nahuatl or were based in a pre-existing source text in Spanish or Latin. The translators did not usually mention if they had relied on a previous translation to do their own version. An exception is Domingo de la Anunciación who says in one of his catechisms that he has worked with previous catechisms made in Spain and America. We would like to conclude with the following quotation of this author:

To comply with your order [of translating a catechism] I did my best to abbreviate this catechism. To do this I used all the doctrines that have been printed until the present day, here and in Spain. I took the most useful and necessary concepts from these books in order to achieve the wellness of the souls of all the believers. (Domingo de la Anunciación 1565)<sup>3</sup>

All in all, prologues shed light on the motivations and the expectations of friars when translating catechisms. Further research should investigate the technical characteristics of such translations and the influence they had in the spread of Christianity in New Spain.

## Conclusion

The discovery of America and the need to evangelize the people who lived there led the friars to make an unprecedented translation effort. Due