

CONSTRUCTING RELATIONAL IDENTITIES:
THE TROPE OF THE CHICHIMEC IN NEW SPAIN, 1526-1653

by

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B.A., Pomona College, 2010

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Art & Art History
2013

This thesis entitled:
Constructing Relational Identities:
The Trope of the Chichimec in New Spain, 1526-1653

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Constructing Relational Identities: The Trope of the “Chichimec” in New Spain,
1526-1653

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor James Córdova

Abstract:

Recent scholarship regarding the Viceroyalty of New Spain has emphasized the fluid and provisional – rather than fixed and innate – political, cultural, and ethnic identities negotiated by the Spanish colony’s heterogeneous population. However, the dynamic social position of the indigenous peoples collectively glossed as “Chichimecs” has largely escaped such analysis. The present work attends to this lacuna by explicating the formation and re-articulation of a visual and textual trope associated with this cultural malapropism between 1526 and 1653.

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Introduction

Recent scholarship regarding the Viceroyalty of New Spain has emphasized the fluid and provisional – rather than fixed and innate – political, cultural, and ethnic identities negotiated by the Spanish colony's heterogeneous population. However, the dynamic social position of the indigenous peoples collectively glossed as “Chichimecs” has largely escaped such analysis. The present work attends to this lacuna by explicating the formation and re-articulation of a visual and textual trope associated with this cultural malapropism.

In its initial usage by Aztec nobles, the term “Chichimec” did not signify a culturally homogenous faction; rather, it connoted the perceived social characteristics of the semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer peoples from whom the Aztecs traced their descent. Etymologically, the Nahuatl term derives from the roots “*chichi*,” meaning to nurse or to suckle, and “*mecatl*,” translatable as rope or lineage. The resultant appellative thus qualifies its referents as social groups whose late migration to the Valley of Mexico was equated with their relative “incivility.” Because of the lack of surviving material culture attributable to the disparate groups collectivized in viceregal texts and contemporary scholarship as Chichimecs, these peoples are most often known through their veritable omnipresence in New Spanish visual and textual records.

The earliest-dated visual representations of Chichimecs are attributable to sixteenth-century *Nahua tlacuiloqueh*. These Nahuatl-speaking artist-scribes painted remarkably intricate and detailed manuscripts that recorded cultural histories and genealogies in which Chichimec figures were pictorially implicated.

Meanwhile, Hernán Cortés – the famous *conquistador* and New Spanish politician – was the first of many colonial authors to write about the northern natives. Indeed, Cortés’ description of the Chichimecs as “barbarous people and not so intelligent as those of other provinces,”¹ was echoed by innumerable viceregal authorities in relation to what scholars have termed the “Chichimeca War.” This prolonged series of armed conflicts between the Chichimecs and colonial agents lasted forty years (1550-1590) and posed a significant threat to New Spanish territorial and economic growth.

Written accounts from this period create an overwhelmingly negative stereotype associated with the semi-nomadic Chichimecs. Indeed, one soldier characterizes them as “the most bellicose Indians that have been seen in these Indies.”² Another source goes further, vilifying the Chichimecs as “common enemies of the human race.”³ These extreme debasements evince and exemplify the formation of a rhetorical trope associated with the term, “Chichimec,” that was manifested visually in artistic productions by indigenous and non-indigenous artists, alike.

Yet rather than assuming that these textual and visual denouncements resulted strictly from colonial hostilities, the present work asks whether such aspersions accorded with and potentially originated in Nahua glyphic discourse. In

¹ Cortés, Hernán. Letters from Mexico, Edited by Anthony Pagden. New Haven and London: Yale University Press ([1522] 1986), 446.

² Powell (1952), 54.

³ Poole, Stafford. Pedro Moya de Contreras: Catholic Reform and Royal Power in New Spain, 1571-1591, second edition. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (2011), 214.

addition to identifying the trope's origin, this analysis explores its metaphorical malleability and continual redefinition by the various agents who employed it. Furthermore, it posits that the trope's ambivalent signifying capabilities served the diverse socio-political needs of its respective operators.

Chapter one discusses these ambivalent signifying capabilities within Nahua iconic-script documents. More specifically, it attends to sixteenth-century manuscripts that detail Nahua migration histories in which colonial *tlacuiloqueh* trace the origin of their respective polities to Chichimec forebears. Moreover, it examines the role of Chichimec figures in constructing Nahua claims to socio-political status and privilege.

Meanwhile, chapter two emphasizes the perceived social position of Chichimecs as bellicose social outsiders who threatened colonial prosperity and largely resisted Christian conversion. This section begins with an historiographic examination of the scholarship regarding border settlements in northern New Spain. Thereafter, it draws upon sixteenth-century viceregal and ecclesiastical texts, as well as recent art historical studies of the nave frescoes at Ixmiquilpan, to argue that the Euro-Christian equation of Chichimecs with belligerent northern natives led to a largely negative view of the groups glossed under this term and to their conflation with the concept of embodied evil in New Spain. Ultimately, chapter two argues that this moralizing and pejorative connotation associated with the semi-nomadic Chichimecs was appropriated by non-Chichimec indigenous agents in the border town of Ixmiquilpan to present themselves as orthodox Christians whose civility contrasted with Chichimec incivility.

Finally, chapter three considers a dramatic shift in the Chichimec trope that stems from the Chichimecs' evangelization and integration within New Spain's "civilized" political corpus. This analysis emphasizes a close reading of a mid-seventeenth-century oil painting, *Transfer of the Image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the First Hermitage and Representation of the First Miracle*, in order to discuss the Chichimecs' newly-assigned position as members of colonial society. As a whole, the present work posits that the visual and textual trope of the Chichimec was a pliant socio-political tool actively reformulated by diverse agents to negotiate relative social positions and identities within the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

Chapter 1: Chichimecs in Nahua Glyphic Discourse

Since the late sixteenth-century, the term “Chichimec” has held ambivalent connotations. For example, in Juan Bautista de Pomar’s 1582 account of Pre-Hispanic Nahua history and customs written for King Philip II, the *mestizo* historian and great-grandson of Nezahualcoyotl referenced his Acolhua ancestors’ pride in their Chichimec heritage by stating, “if some pictures and characters [in pictorial manuscripts] feature them [Chichimecs], it is only [to trace] the lineages and genealogies of the native rulers [señores] of this land, *who pride themselves and boast of being descended from them* (emphasis added).”⁴ One year earlier, however, the Dominican Friar Diego Durán demonstrated a markedly different understanding of the term Chichimec and the people to which it refers:

The Chichimecs... were savage men... They were wild and rustic. And they were called thus because they lived among the peaks and in the harshest places in the mountain, where they led a bestial existence, with no propriety or human organization. They hunted food like beasts of the same mountain and went naked without any covering on their private parts... They adored no gods and had no kind of ritual, nor did they recognize any ruler. They lived a carefree life according to natural law.⁵

Later in his text, Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y islas de Tierra Firme, Durán describes the Chichimecs’ gradual “acquisition” of religion and civility following the annihilation of giants who previously populated much of central

⁴ This quotation is taken from Douglas (2010), who recorded and translated it from Pomar (1582), 39. See Douglas, Eduardo de Jesus. In the Palace of Nezahualcoyotl: Painting Manuscripts, Writing the Pre-Hispanic Past in Early Colonial Period Tetzaco, Mexico. Austin: University of Texas Press (2010), 101.

⁵ Durán, Diego. Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y islas de Tierra Firme, Translated by Doris Heyden. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (1994 [1581]), 16.

Mexico.⁶ He adds, “From this time on the Chichimec barbarians acquired a little culture and lived like rational people and covered themselves with clothing... they opened their eyes to distinguish good from evil; they abandoned their savage life.”⁷

Both Pomar and Durán use the term Chichimec to denote the semi-nomadic ancestors of the Acolhua, Mexica, and other Nahuatl-speaking groups of central Mexico. Yet while Pomar attests to the high esteem in which indigenous nobles held their Chichimec ancestry, Durán emphasizes the cultural barbarism associated with the hereditary progenitors of Nahua identity. Considering that Durán derived his ethnographic information, in part, from indigenous informants born before the arrival of Spaniards in the New World, how can we account for the (at least partially) incongruous understandings of the term “Chichimec” by these nearly contemporaneous authors?⁸

This chapter examines the discursive functions and symbolic affiliations of Chichimecs in sixteenth-century manuscripts to determine how *tlacuiloqueh* imaged and narrated Chichimec involvement in Nahua communal histories, especially in relation to other visually identifiable indigenous factions (most notably, Toltecs, Mexica, and Acolhua). Importantly, it recognizes that each and every Nahua glyphic history postdates the arrival of Spaniards in the Americas and thereby exhibits varying degrees of awareness regarding the ambivalent social experiences initiated in whole or part by this socio-political context. This position owes much to art

⁶ In her commentary on Durán’s text, Heyden explains that mammoth and other large Pleistocene animal bones were disinterred in Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica and mistakenly identified as the remains of giants, or Quinametin. See: Durán (1994 [1581]), 18.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Durán (1994 [1581]), xxi.

historian Eduardo de Jesus Douglas' stated conception of the manuscripts' colonial nature, in which he argues that Nahua iconic script histories "cannot and should not be read or understood as if they had been painted before 1519, even were they shown to be 'exact' copies of pre-Conquest documents."⁹ Douglas' reasoning presupposes that pre-Hispanic Nahua cultural experiences, perceptions, and socio-political structures and relationships were inherently distinct from their viceregal counterparts.¹⁰ Indeed, the corpus of art historical scholarship by manuscript specialists Elizabeth Hill Boone, Dana Leibsohn, and Mary Elizabeth Smith corroborates this assertion.¹¹ Despite the numerous continuities these scholars have detected in the form, symbolic content, function, and reception of central Mexican glyphic histories produced before and after European contact, their conclusions highlight important transformations in these same categories that evince and record unassailable discrepancies between indigenous conditions in pre- and post-Hispanic central Mexico.

Thus, rather than attempting to reconstruct Pre-Hispanic Nahua conceptions of Chichimecs, this chapter examines two colonial codices – Telleriano-Remensis,

⁹ Douglas (2010), 13.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See, for example: Boone, Elizabeth Hill. Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs. Austin: University of Texas Press (2000); also, Leibsohn, Dana. "Colony and Cartography: Shifting Signs on Indigenous Maps of New Spain," pp. 265-282 in Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650, Edited by Claire Farago (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994); Mundy, Barbara. The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press (2000); Smith, Mary Elizabeth. "The Codex Muro as a Land Document," pp. 383-414 in Painted Books and Indigenous Knowledge in America: Manuscript Studies in Honor of Mary Elizabeth Smith, Edited by Elizabeth Hill Boone (New Orleans: Middle American Research Institute, 2005); and Leibsohn, Dana. Script and Glyph: Pre-Hispanic History, Colonial Bookmaking, and the Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks (2009).

and Xolotl – as well as the Quinantzin and Tlohtzin Maps, also colonial documents, to argue that manuscript images of Chichimecs constitute a rhetorical trope employed by indigenous agents to negotiate their Pre-Hispanic past in order to shape their socio-political positions in New Spain. Though these are not the only manuscripts in which representations of Chichimecs appear, they exemplify a corpus of similar documents that trace the origins of specific polities to Chichimec forebears.¹²

Overall, the present analysis maintains that the ambivalent signifying capabilities of Chichimecs in Nahua pictorial histories cannot be categorized as wholly “positive” or “negative” – respected or maligned. Indeed, the social position of Chichimecs as pictured in colonial Nahua manuscripts reflects the “fluid and provisional, not fixed and innate” nature of political, cultural, and ethnic loyalties and identities in New Spain.¹³ By elucidating this symbolic ambivalence, this chapter prefigures Spanish accounts of Chichimec “savagery” as part of a fundamental shift in the rhetorical trope associated with these itinerant ancestors.¹⁴

¹² The *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* and *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan* No. 2 could also justifiably be analyzed in the context of this study. However, the HTC’s and MC2’s visual narratives closely parallel *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*’.

¹³ Douglas (2010), 12.

¹⁴ I do not assert that every Spanish account referencing Chichimec barbarism vilifies the peoples glossed under the moniker. Though theologians such as Durán and Acosta use moralizing rhetoric such as “savage” and “barbarian” to describe these peoples, their texts should be considered as expository accounts of the Americas’ creation and classification rather than moralizing invectives against specific indigenous groups. This distinction is important in the context of the present work, as chapter two discusses lay and ecclesiastical texts that employ moralizing rhetoric to malign the natives of northern New Spain as “Chichimecs” whose cultural barbarism justifies and impels their annihilation. Durán and Acosta’s ethnographic accounts should not and are not grouped together with these texts.

I: Theoretical Foundations

Long before the arrival of Europeans to the New World, indigenous Mesoamerican groups recorded knowledge through complex systems of mark-making.¹⁵ During the Post-Classic Period (900-1521 C.E.), cultural groups inhabiting the area currently known as Central Mexico developed semasiographic notational systems in which ideas were communicated through pictorial glyphs that visually approximated the people, places, and objects they represented.¹⁶ Calendrical, divinatory, historical, and genealogical information was recorded through highly structured glyphic amalgamations carved on architectural friezes or painted on animal hide and *amatl* paper (Figure 1).¹⁷ Histories and genealogies are of particular importance for the present work, as images of Chichimecs most commonly appear in the hide- or *amatl*-based painted manuscripts that detail cultural migrations, land claims, and dynastic lineages of *Nahuatl*-speaking groups.

Since Nahua pre-Hispanic iconic script histories have not survived to the present day, scholars must rely on sixteenth-century examples to study the discursive strategies used in Mexica and Acolhua glyphic records. The pictorial stories of cultural migration and evolution in which Chichimecs are pictured as protagonists are classified according to medium and physical assemblage as codices,

¹⁵ The oldest known Mesoamerican notational system dates to around 1000 B.C.E and is most likely associated with the Olmec culture.

¹⁶ Boone, Elizabeth Hill. "Introduction: Writing and Recording Knowledge," pp. 3-26 in Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes, Edited by Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter Mignolo (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 15-17.

¹⁷ For fuller discussions of painted calendrical and divinatory manuscripts, see, Boone, Elizabeth Hill. Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Books of Fate. Austin: University of Texas Press (2007); For historical and genealogical manuscripts, see, Boone (2000).

lienzos, or *mapas*.¹⁸ Irrespective of their corporeal facture,¹⁹ these pictorial narratives exemplify and conform to specific discursive types categorized by Boone as cartographic histories and mixed formats that combine the elements of cartographic, annals, and *res gestae* histories.²⁰ While the former organizes history through spatial relations upon quasi-geographic painted panoramas, the latter presents events according to the chronological sequence in which they occur.

Both of the above-discussed rhetorical structures are capable of relating migration stories that pictorially narrate formulaic processes of communal evolution and voyage through time and/or planar space. These accounts typically commence with the occurrence of supernatural phenomena and culminate in the foundation of sedentary Nahua communities.²¹ Between these bookend events, scantily clad and bow-and-arrow wielding figures identified as Chichimecs symbolically represent the hunter-gatherers from whom the Nahuas trace their origins (Figure 2). Moreover, they perform an important discursive function by propelling the pictured narrative through time and space, as they embody the

¹⁸ *Lienzos* typically take the form of large cotton cloths, while *mapas* (or maps) connote European or *amatl* paper documents that have not been folded. Codices are typically constructed of multiple animal hide or *amatl* sheets glued together as screenfolds or in the form of European-style books.

¹⁹ Here, I refer to art historian David Summers' conception of facture as the indication in an artifact of its having been made. See, Summers, David. Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism. New York: Phaidon Press (2003).

²⁰ Boone, Elizabeth Hill. "Aztec Pictorial Histories: Records Without Words," pp. 50-76 in Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes, Edited by Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter Mignolo (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 60-68.

²¹ Yoneda, Keiko. "Glyphs and Messages in the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2: Chicomoztoc, Itzpapolotl*, and 13 Flint," pp. 161-204 in Cave City and Eagle's Nest: An Interpretive Journey Through the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2*, Edited by David Carrasco and Scott Sessions (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 191.

historical and pictorial link that connects their ancestral places of origin, to their eventual settlement sites.

This argument is largely indebted to Boone's influential essay, "Migration Histories as Ritual Performance," wherein the art historian argues that Mexica migration histories record and perform ritualized rites of passage in which the protagonists depart from their mythic homeland before "[undergoing] a profound change in social and ideological status, from a small nomadic band to a people appropriate as rulers of Mesoamerica."²² Stated otherwise, the formative hunter-gatherer ancestors of Mexica cultural identity are symbolically transformed by the ritual migration-s recorded and reenacted in these pictorials. This figurative evolution and ennobling of Mexica culture – specifically the elite individuals who commissioned these manuscripts – transpires within a liminal space physically and temporally manifested by pictured events and locations that define the migratory journey from Aztlan to its symbolic reconfiguration as Tenochtitlan.

Another key theoretical model for the present analysis derives from Douglas' investigation of Acolhua iconic-script documents. He views these pictorial histories as "verbal texts... read according to the verbal system and textual traditions... that shaped them."²³ Moreover, he argues that "while, as numerous scholars have argued, iconic-script documents may have served as aides-mémoires, they need not

²² Boone, Elizabeth Hill. "Migration Histories as Ritual Performance," pp. 121-151 in To Change Place: Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes, Edited by David Carrasco (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1991), 122.

²³ Douglas (2010), 13-14.

have.”²⁴ Douglas therefore conceives of sixteenth-century painted histories as literary texts capable of crafting poetic metaphors in addition to explicit representations. Taken together, Douglas and Boone’s analyses provide the theoretical foundations necessary to examine the symbolic and discursive functions of Chichimecs in sixteenth-century Nahua manuscripts.

II: Chichimecs as Glyphic Signifiers and Discursive Metaphors

Chichimecs are typically depicted in Nahua migration histories as hunter-gatherers who don animal hide garb, wield bows-and-arrows, wear their hair long, and travel at the behest of tutelary deities or cultural heroes (Figure 3). These unique typological features render manuscript images of Chichimecs as easily distinguishable from representations of other indigenous factions. To this end, Chichimecs are predominantly juxtaposed with sedentary cultural groups visually characterized by their cotton garments, short hair, and distinctive *macahuatl* and *atlatl* weaponry (Figure 4).

Though visually differentiated from their Chichimec counterparts, these sedentary groups are not often distinguished from each other in Nahua migration histories.²⁵ For example, while the Quinantzin Map formally contrasts itinerant Chichimecs from the Toltecs with whom they intermarry (Figure 5), Toltec groups are not visually distinguished from the Acolhua factions that would eventually

²⁴ Ibid., 14.

²⁵ Certain exceptions exist, such as the visually distinctive Mixtecs in the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2*.

comprise an important hegemonic force in Central Mexico (Figure 6).²⁶ It therefore becomes pertinent to determine why the *tlacuilo* who created the Quinantzin Map visually emphasized Chichimec cultural specificity while seemingly ignoring central Mexican factionalism.

Boone dedicates a lengthy section of her magnum opus, Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs, to a discussion of visually recorded ethnic distinctions in Central Mexican manuscripts. In the following excerpt from this analysis, the art historian clearly and perceptively explains the pictorial differentiation between Chichimecs and Toltecs:

In Aztec documents, the principal distinction was between Chichimecs and those people of Toltec ancestry who were civilized. This distinction is not so much between ethnicities but between ways of life, the Chichimecs being barbarian hunters and gatherers who had not yet mastered cultivation and had not yet adopted the social ways of the settled people. In the Aztec migration histories, the people (Mexica and Acolhua alike) tend to begin as Chichimecs and end as cultured, civilized people, a transformation signaled by a change in costume and appearance.²⁷

As Boone explains, the fundamental difference between Chichimecs and their Toltec counterparts – social sedentism – is manifested visually so as to illustrate discrepant ways of life rather than discrete ethnicities. Just as the pictorial distinction between Chichimecs and Nahuas demonstrates the same juxtaposition of hunter-gatherers and agriculturists, the sedentary agricultural practices characteristic of both Toltec and Nahua socio-political groups explain the above-mentioned visual similarities between them. Yet as Boone intimates, the pictorial distinction between Chichimecs

²⁶ Douglas (2010), 103.

²⁷ Boone (2000), 47.

and people of Toltec ancestry (thereby including Nahuas) may also bear rhetorical significance beyond the acknowledgement of contrasting lifestyles.

Codex Telleriano-Remensis, a mid-sixteenth century Nahua manuscript bound like a European book, contains eight folio pages that depict a Chichimec migration.²⁸ The graphically recorded journey presents conventional images of Chichimec migrants wearing animal hide garments and carrying bows-and-arrows while traveling through glyphically annotated time and space (Figure 7). The protagonists exist within a pictorial plane qualified spatially by locative hill glyphs and temporally by a continuous year-band that records the passage of time in accordance with Mesoamerican calendrical traditions. Though several folios are missing, the extant pages record seventy-seven years of migration.²⁹ According to the painted account, the Chichimecs spent these years wandering, hunting wild animals, and fighting sedentary socio-political factions throughout the present-day Mexican states of Puebla, Morelos, Hidalgo, and the Distrito Federal.³⁰ These actions not only demonstrate the protagonists' itinerant lifestyle, they also attest to the Chichimecs' social marginalization and qualitative assessment as "barbaric" or "uncivilized" peoples. This cultural valuation is manifested in the rhetorical transformation of the peripatetic Chichimecs to sedentary Mexica who assume the

²⁸ Quiñones-Keber, Eloise. Codex Telleriano-Remensis: Ritual, Divination, and History in a Pictorial Aztec Manuscript. Austin: University of Texas Press (1995), 201-209.

²⁹ The migration narrative spans 1197-1274 CE. The next year recorded in the extant pages corresponds to 1385 CE. Thus, the missing folios would have contained 111 years of information. Quiñones-Keber (1995), 209.

³⁰ Ibid, 203.

visual trappings associated with the Chichimecs' metaphorically diaphrastic opposites – the Toltecs.³¹

Yet despite their rhetorical position as uncouth socio-political outsiders, images of Chichimecs also symbolically represent the revered progenitors of Nahua cultural identity. As noted previously, the itinerant Chichimecs depicted in Codex Telleriano-Remensis engage in martial combat against various sedentary groups encountered during their migration. The extant folios recounting this journey present fourteen discrete combat scenes in which a single bow-and-arrow-wielding protagonist stands opposite a *macahuítl*-bearing opponent (Figure 8).³² Each scene also features a locative place glyph positioned between the adversarial figures in order to record the geographic site of the depicted battle. In each instance, Chichimec arrows penetrate the antagonists and their corresponding place glyphs. These scenes conform to glyphic conventions for representing conquest in Central Mexican manuscripts, and denote Chichimec victory over their sedentary counterparts (Figure 9a and 9b).³³ Though these scenes may or may not depict “historically accurate” events, their veracity is of minor importance to this study, as the glyphic compositions primarily exist to rhetorically prefigure Mexica socio-political hegemony and legitimize the otherwise uncivilized predecessors of Nahua cultural identity.

³¹ Though this cultural “evolution” is not depicted in Codex Telleriano-Remensis’ extant folios, it is pictured in Codex Vaticanus A (alternately titled Codex Ríos) which scholars have acknowledged as a partially augmented copy of the Telleriano-Remensis. It is therefore almost certain that the cultural transition from Chichimec to Mexica was pictorially narrated in the missing folios. Ibid, 209.

³² An exception exists on folio 28 verso, wherein a single victorious Chichimec warrior stands over the dismembered bodies of three opponents.

³³ For the pictorial conventions of conquest, see Boone (2000), 33.

The legitimization of Chichimec ancestors seems also to have been a concern of the Acolhua agents who commissioned Codex Xoltol and the Tlohtzin Map. Each of Codex Xolotl's ten painted folios presents a cartographic plane that records movement and action within glyphically identifiable space.³⁴ In his prescient analysis of the manuscript's spatial organization, Douglas observes that images of Chichimecs occupy the center of each cartograph while their Toltec counterparts – when depicted – are relegated its margins (Figure 10). This juxtaposition not only differentiates the groups, it also legitimizes Chichimec claims to Tetzaco and other surrounding territories.³⁵ The art historian claims that Codex Xolotl “conceives movement as Toltec departure as much as Chichimec arrival, and history begins here with the end of the Chichimec journey... In contrast to the Chichimecs, who have just left behind an unseen, unmapped wilderness, the people of Tollan abandon regions already charted and civilized.”³⁶ Chichimec settlement and hegemony in Central Mexico is thus configured as a harmonious transition of land ownership. In the same moment that the Toltecs abandon their ancestral home, the Chichimecs rightfully claim their own. Moreover, the “charted and civilized” lands in which the Chichimecs legitimately settle necessitate equally civilized occupants. In order to invest themselves with the requisite socio-cultural legitimacy, Chichimec men marry

³⁴ Douglas (2010), 19-22.

³⁵ Ibid, 50-51.

³⁶ Ibid.

Toltec women, thereby begetting properly ennobled offspring – the Acolhua – who resolve the diaphrastic metaphor between Chichimecs and Toltecs.³⁷

In many ways, the Tlohtzin Map is a veritable cognate of Codex Xoltol. Both manuscripts narrate the Chichimec migration, settlement in Tetzaco, and establishment of Acolhua cultural identity. However, unlike Codex Xoltol, the Tlohtzin Map depicts the identificatory transition from Chichimec to Acolhua as a gradual process (Figure 11).³⁸ Though the eponymous individual glyphically identified as Tlohtzin is two generations removed from the initial Chichimec settlement in the Valley of Mexico, he wears a headdress associated with the Chichimec cultural hero, Xolotl, and carries a bow-and-arrow.³⁹ The same glyphic attributes are associated with Tlohtzin's son and heir – Quinantzin – three generations removed from the establishment of Chichimec sedentism. Indeed, each successive Acolhua *tlahtoani* (revered speaker) up to and including Nezahualpilli (the last ruler of Tetzaco before the Spanish arrival) carries the unmistakable symbol of Chichimec heritage – the bow-and-arrow. Importantly, at least one source indicates that the rulers of Tetzaco referred to themselves as *Chichimecateuctli*, or “Lord of the Chichimecs.”⁴⁰ As a symbolic and rhetorical device, the bow-and-arrow demonstrates genealogical continuity, rightful authority, and Chichimec ancestry.

³⁷ Douglas (2010), 104-105.

³⁸ Ibid, 116-118.

³⁹ Ibid, 116.

⁴⁰ Carrasco, Pedro. “Social Organization of Ancient Mexico,” pp 349-375 in The Handbook of Middle American Indians, vol. X. Austin: University of Texas Press (1971).

III: Conclusions

In their capacity as glyphic signifiers and rhetorical devices, images of Chichimecs carry ambivalent connotations that qualify their referents as respected progenitors of Nahua lineages and/or socially marginalized peoples whose relative lack of civility marked them as socio-political outsiders. For example, the Codex Telleriano-Remensis presents Chichimecs and their sedentary counterparts as starkly contrasting (and warring) opposites to cast the former as comparatively uncivilized while simultaneously foreshadowing Mexica cultural hegemony and martial strength. As the Acolhua-centric Codex Xolotl demonstrates, visual distinctions between Chichimecs and Toltecs enable the depiction of an uncomplicated process of land transfer from the latter to the former. Moreover, it records the cultural legitimization of Chichimec settlers through dynastic intermarriage with Toltec factions. Yet as the Tlohtzin Map reveals, Chichimec cultural heritage was, at least to some Nahua agents, a mark of honor and pride.

Taken together, these examples constitute a malleable rhetorical trope that functions according to the needs of specific Nahua agents. As has been demonstrated, this trope typically exists to legitimize the hegemonic social position and/or land ownership claims of the Nahua successors of Chichimec heritage. It therefore becomes important to note that the juxtaposition of the above-cited accounts by Fray Diego Durán and Juan Bautista de Pomar highlights the ambivalence of this glyphic trope. However, as the following chapter demonstrates, the term, “Chichimec” took on wholly pejorative connotations in its mid to late

sixteenth century usage, as colonial agents on the northern frontier of New Spain shaped the Chichimec trope to their own needs.

Chapter 2: The Chichimec “Problem”

In the years directly following the initial conquest of central Mexico, Spanish attention quickly turned to locating and exploiting mineral resources. In 1529, Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, a prominent political figure who held several important positions in New Spain,⁴¹ embarked upon his infamous excursion into the territories north and west of present-day Mexico City (Figure 12).⁴² Though historians have debated the initial impetus for Guzmán’s venture, most agree that it was motivated in part by a desire to find the fabled “Seven Cities of Gold” purportedly located beyond the deserts north of the Valley of Mexico.⁴³ During this quest for precious metals, Guzmán and his retinue of Spanish explorers and central Mexican allies encountered the semi-nomadic peoples native to the northern deserts.⁴⁴ The ensuing violence and bloodshed characteristic of these early cross-factional encounters both prefigured and initiated subsequent hostilities between the semi-nomadic inhabitants of northern New Spain and their culturally heterogeneous counterparts searching for mineral wealth. Though many indigenous groups resisted the northward advance of colonizing forces, none were more feared or

⁴¹ Guzmán held governorships in Pánuco from 1525-1533 and Nueva Galicia between 1529 and 1534. He also was appointed as the first president of the *Real Audiencia de México* – the highest judiciary in the land – in 1528 and held the position for two years.

⁴² Powell, Philip. Soldiers, Indians, and Silver: The Northward Advance of New Spain, 1550-1600. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press (1952), 3.

⁴³ Krippner-Martínez, James. Rereading the Conquest: Power, Politics, and the History of Early Colonial Michoacán. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press (2001), 36-44.

⁴⁴ Native allies in the northward expansion were typically of Nahua, Otomí, or Tarascan affiliations.

demonized by sixteenth-century expansionists as the factions collectively glossed as Chichimecs.⁴⁵

This chapter demonstrates that expansionist agents – both Spanish and indigenous – systematically appropriated the Chichimec trope to influence viceregal legislation and advance their respective socio-political agendas on the northern frontier. It commences with a truncated account of New Spain’s northward expansion before examining sixteenth-century lay and ecclesiastical texts that systematically position Chichimecs outside the literal and figurative boundaries of colonial hegemony. Further, this section argues that textual invectives against Chichimecs dramatized the natives’ perceived barbarity in order to incite a legally and morally justified “Holy War” that financially facilitated frontier development. The third and final section of this chapter attends to the nave frescoes at the church of San Miguel Arcángel in the Hidalgo town of Ixmiquilpan, a sixteenth-century border settlement. Though numerous art historians have examined the “Battle Frescoes,” their studies have created a contradictory network of interpretations based on divergent views of the fresco program’s iconographic and historical affiliations. The present work offers an historiographic intervention that delineates three seminal analyses and suggests that San Miguel Arcángel’s fresco program engages the malleable Chichimec trope to visually assert Ixmiquilpan’s social, political, and religious loyalties.

Though the present work is mindful of the multivalent social interactions that transpired on New Spain’s northern frontier, it recognizes that the primary

⁴⁵ Powell (1952), 33-36.

sources from which it derives its content often promulgate and shape erroneously monolithic conceptions of the contemporaneous historical situation. Thus, while the discursive trope associated with the term, “Chichimec,” merits deconstructive analysis that acknowledges the cultural pluralities constricted by this category, the following section primarily attends to the trope as a colloquial idiom denoting the perceived barbarity of its referents.

I: Chichimecs and the Northward Expansion of New Spain

During the sixteenth-century, New Spain’s northern frontier became a veritable socio-political crucible in which Spaniards, their central Mexican allies, and the semi-nomadic groups indigenous to the region contested their respective territorial claims, access to resources, political autonomy, and cultural lifeways. Accordingly, the resultant heterogeneous social environment was shaped by the fluid, rather than fixed, interests of all involved parties. For example, in 1679 Governor Juan Francisco de la Puerta y Barrera reported with frustration that several *pobladores* (settlers) in the northern province of Nueva Vizcaya sold firearms and ammunition to native groups who eventually turned these weapons on other settlers.⁴⁶ In marked contrast to Governor Puerta y Barrera’s dystopian account, sixteenth-century *relación* documents contained in Mexico’s Archivo General de la Nación indicate that numerous baptized Chichimecs were employed as

⁴⁶ Salmon (1991), 4. Though Governor de La Puerta y Barrera’s account is dated outside the temporal scope of this analysis, it cogently exemplifies the complex cross-cultural interactions that characterized northward expansion in New Spain. Moreover, Powell (1952, p. 159) reports that Viceroy Mendoza banned the indigenous use of European weapons and horses without explicit permission, indicating that this must have been a problem at the time of Mendoza’s writing (1542).

armed auxiliaries in New Spanish defensive settlements, or *presidios*.⁴⁷ These divergent accounts poignantly exemplify the complexity of social interactions that transpired on New Spain's northern border.

As stated above, Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán's northward expedition (1529-1536) initiated the first major interaction between colonial agents and indigenous groups native to what would become northern New Spain. During their search for mineral wealth, Guzmán and his retinue inflicted innumerable cruelties upon the native peoples they encountered, often in order to forcibly obtain information regarding the presence and location of mineral deposits.⁴⁸ The explorers' failure to find gold, silver, or other precious metals was compounded by the indigenous reprisals stirred by their activities.⁴⁹

The first large-scale indigenous revolt in the northern territories began in 1541 when a contingent of *Caxcanes* rallied their neighbors around present-day Guadalajara to take arms against their colonial oppressors. This uprising temporarily expelled Spanish and foreign indigenous settlers from the region and reversed the northward expansion of New Spain. However, this serious affront to viceregal hegemony was met by Antonio de Mendoza's swift response, as the

⁴⁷ Powell (1952), 158-159.

⁴⁸ See, for example: Gibson, Charles. *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (1964); Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America*, Translated by Richard Howard. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (1984); Warren, J. Benedict. *The Conquest of Michoacán*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (1985); and Krippner-Martínez (2001).

⁴⁹ Carter, William. *Indian Alliances and the Spanish in the Southwest, 750-1750*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (2009), 103-104.

viceroy personally led a retaliatory force against the *Caxcanes* and their allies.⁵⁰ The resultant conflict, known as the Mixtón War (1541-42), was the first in a long series of expansionist quarrels with the groups collectively identified as “Chichimecs.”⁵¹

This term, as employed by Viceroy Mendoza and other viceregal agents, refers to the characteristic lifeways and perceived connotations of the native groups encountered in northern New Spain.⁵² In the earliest written description of the Chichimecs, Hernán Cortés states, “between the north coast and the province of [Michoacán] there is a certain tribe called the Chichimeca. They are a very barbarous people and not so intelligent as those of other provinces.”⁵³ He continues by suggesting that the Spaniards might enslave the Chichimecs, “who are almost savages,” so as to secure free labor and potentially evangelize them.⁵⁴ Additionally, Cortés mentions his intent to commission a reconnaissance operation to learn more about the Chichimecs and their territories.

Another prominent source for understanding the sixteenth-century idiom comes from Gonzalo de las Casas, a Spanish settler and soldier who had extensive

⁵⁰ For more on Viceroy Mendoza’s involvement in the Mixtón War, see Altman, Ida. The War for Mexico’s West: Indians and Spaniards in Nueva Galicia, 1524-1550. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (2010).

⁵¹ Powell (1952), 227n. In a quotation footnoted by Powell, Viceroy Mendoza explicitly labels his opponents in the Mixtón War as “Chichimecas.”

⁵² See, for example: West, Robert. “The Mining Community in Northern New Spain: The Parral Mining District,” pp. 1-147 in Ibero-American 37, Edited by C.O. Sauer, Lawrence Kinnaird, and Arturo Torres-Rioseco. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press (1949); Powell (1952), 33; and Carter (2009), 102.

⁵³ Cortés ([1522] 1986), 446.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

personal encounters with northern natives.⁵⁵ According to las Casas, the Nahuatl word derives from “*chichi*,” which he translates as “dog,” and “*mecatl*,” or “rope.” Though this etymological translation is unquestionably incorrect,⁵⁶ it likely reflects the term’s sixteenth-century epithetical connotation as “dirty, uncivilized dog.”⁵⁷ This malapropism became canonized in New Spanish, and even peninsular, vernacular. Indeed, the prominent Spanish chronicler, Antonio Herrera y Tordesillas, explains the term “Chichimec” with a nearly verbatim etymological analysis in his contemporaneously popular text, the *Décadas*.⁵⁸ Amazingly, the negative perception of Chichimecs in the colony was so widespread that it was eventually canonized across the Atlantic.

This defamatory rhetoric was largely fostered within the context of a long, costly, and destructive series of inter-factional armed conflicts known by scholars as the “Chichimec War” (1550-1590). This guerrilla campaign, waged along the *camino real de la tierra adentro* (Figure 13), was undoubtedly one of the most difficult

⁵⁵ Las Casas’ account is reproduced in varying degrees of completion in: Powell, Phillip. “The Chichimecas: Scourge of the Silver Frontier in Sixteenth-Century Mexico,” pp. 315-338 in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (August, 1945); Powell (1952); Pierce (1987); and Gradie, Charlotte. “Discovering the Chichimecas,” pp. 67-88 in *The Americas*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (July, 1991).

⁵⁶ The proper etymological deconstruction more closely approximates “teat-suckling” or “nursing” people, and seems to reference the Chichimecs’ role as ancestors to settled Nahua groups. See, Simeón, Remí. *Diccionario de la lengua nahuatl o mexicana*. Distrito Federal: Siglo Veintiuno (1988), 96. Other sources offer divergent translations. For example, Durán (1994 [1581]) translates the term as “hunters, those who live by the hunt.”

⁵⁷ Powell (1952), 33.

⁵⁸ Herrera y Tordesillas, Antonio. *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del mar Océano que llaman Indias Occidentales*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia (1934 [1615]), 54. Since Herrera y Tordesillas compiled content for his chronicle from *relación* documents like the one written by Gonzalo de las Casas, it seems plausible that the chronicler relied upon las Casas’ account for his own work.

phases of Spanish colonization in the Americas.⁵⁹ However, since this historical conflict has received significant scholarly attention, the following truncated account provides a concise contextual analysis to situate more precisely the systemic malediction of Chichimecs.

The mid sixteenth-century discovery of silver deposits in Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Parral, Ixmiquilpan, and San Luis Potosí, initiated ever-increasing levels of northward migration and commerce.⁶⁰ Though the ensuing economic prosperity allowed the mines' principal financiers to become some of the wealthiest men in the Americas, the resultant "boomtown" effect left the expanse between the northernmost provinces and the capital almost entirely undeveloped and unregulated.⁶¹ This area experienced heavy traffic along the *camino real* and, partially as a result, witnessed widespread mistreatment of the native population and their lands.⁶² In seeming reprisal for their oppressed situation, many semi-nomadic indigenous groups raided commercial caravans for food, horses, and European weapons. By employing guerrilla tactics, the bow-and-arrow wielding natives inflicted tremendous damage while incurring minimal casualties.⁶³

According to contemporaneous Spanish accounts, their elusive Chichimec adversaries comprised confederate "nations" united by their nomadic lifestyle, lack

⁵⁹ Powell (1945), 315.

⁶⁰ Carter (2009), 103.

⁶¹ Powell (1952), 14.

⁶² According to AGN documents cited by Powell, travelers often stole food from the native populous and allowed their beasts of burden to graze beyond the specified grazing areas. Powell (1952), 23.

⁶³ In 1574, Pedro Moya de Contreras, who at various times served as Inquisitor General, Archbishop, and Viceroy, estimated that more Spaniards had died in the second decade of the Chichimec War than in the initial years of colonization. Cited in Powell (1945), 3n. 2.

of clothing, use of bows-and-arrows, and furious enmity toward Christian settlers.⁶⁴ By the end of the second decade of the war, miners, settlers, and viceregal authorities almost unanimously agreed that drastic measures were necessary to quell the prolonged hostilities.

In 1569, Viceroy Martín Enríquez de Almanza, with the support of a specially convened council of theologians, proclaimed a *guerra a fuego y a sangre*, or morally justified “Holy War,” against the entire Chichimec population.⁶⁵ Though many of the council members viewed this decree as extreme, it was largely accepted as a necessary measure to protect the peoples and commerce of the northern frontier. Five years later, the legality of the *guerra a fuego y a sangre* was reaffirmed in another specially convened meeting of lay and ecclesiastical officials. However, rather than subduing the Chichimecs, the all-out offensive further intensified cross-factional animosity and became increasingly costly in pesos and lives.⁶⁶ In 1585, sixteen years after the failed *guerra a fuego y a sangre* began, Viceroy Álvaro Manrique de Zúñiga officially declared a new viceregal policy of peaceful evangelization throughout the so-called “Gran Chichimeca.”⁶⁷ Within five years, prominent hostilities in the region had subsided.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Gradie (1991), 71.

⁶⁵ Powell (1952), 105-119; and Pierce (1987), 150.

⁶⁶ Powell (1952), 181.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 183-203. The term “Gran Chichimeca” does not have a fixed historical meaning. Though scholars have employed it as a pseudonym for New Spain’s northern frontier, I use it here in reference to the areas occupied by the groups collectivized as Chichimecs. These factions are primarily known through malapropisms that reflect the formation of confederate “nations” in response to colonial incursions.

⁶⁸ For readers interested in further analysis of the Chichimec War, refer to Powell (1952).

The present work now shifts its focus from history to rhetoric as it examines sixteenth-century written accounts from lay and ecclesiastical authorities who helped shape contemporaneous policies and popular attitudes regarding the Chichimecs.

II: Chichimecs in Political Rhetoric

Without exaggeration, the Chichimec “problem” was one of the most pressing and omnipresent political issues in sixteenth-century New Spain. Constant hostilities with the semi-nomadic groups north of the Valley of Mexico not only endangered the “civilized” populace, it also restricted commerce to and from the profitable northern silver mines. As such, the Chichimec problem was a major concern for each of the colony’s first twelve viceroys – from Mendoza, who led forces against the Chichimecs in the Mixtón War, to Zúñiga, whose policy of peaceful conversion facilitated the end of prominent aggressions in the Gran Chichimeca.⁶⁹ As the juxtaposition of these Viceroys suggests, vastly different approaches were used to solve the Chichimec problem. The available documentation regarding proposed solutions reveals a malleable discursive trope that facilitated the ability of viceregal and ecclesiastical agents to influence official positions and popular opinions regarding the settlement of northern New Spain and the treatment of hostile natives.

Though written records that explicitly vilify Chichimecs primarily date to the decades during which the eventual *guerra a fuego y a sangre* was debated (1560s-

⁶⁹ As late as 1617, however, friars financed missionary excursions near San Luis Potosí from a treasury account designated as the *gastos de guerra chichimecas* (funds for the Chichimec war).

80s), archival documentation from the early years of northern expansion reveal a growing concern about inter-factional hostilities. According to a letter written by prominent silver magnate Diego de Ibarra to fellow prospectors in 1548, an alarming number of miners were fleeing the northern provinces as a direct result of Chichimec aggression.⁷⁰ Ibarra attested that the “hostile shouts of the Indians who threatened to attack [the miners],” initiated a mass exodus that left the mines nearly inoperable. Accordingly, Ibarra beseeched his colleagues to send newly contracted miners and soldiers in order to repopulate and defend the provincial settlements.

Yet while an influx of Spanish and indigenous settlers in 1549 helped to curb Chichimec attacks on and around the silver mines, the semi-nomadic natives began ambushing and looting trade caravans passing along the *camino real*. Subsequently, Ibarra and his fellow magnates authored testimonials decrying Chichimec aggression and cultural barbarity in order to prompt government intervention. In response, Viceroy Mendoza initiated an investigation of the highway robberies as well as allegations of Chichimec “sacrifices, drunken orgies, and idol worshipping.”⁷¹

Importantly, modern scholars have linked the mid-century uptick in hostilities that spurred Ibarra’s complaints and Mendoza’s investigation to colonial abuses of a loophole in the New Laws of 1542.⁷² Affirmed by Habsburg Emperor Charles V, these proclamations sought to prevent colonial exploitation of the

⁷⁰ Powell (1952), 12-14. Powell cites a document called the “*Información de servicios de Diego de Ibarra*.”

⁷¹ Ibid, 9. Here, Powell quotes from the “*Comisión en forma a don Luis López de Mendoza para que vea dos ordenanzas*,” dated April 1550 and held in the AGN, Mercedes.

⁷² West (1949), 51.

American indigenous population through the *encomienda* system.⁷³ However, the laws also legalized the temporary enslavement of indigenous *gente de guerra*, or warring peoples, thereby incentivizing colonial antagonism of the Chichimecs in hopes of provoking militant raids that would legally authorize the capture and enslavement of northern natives. Yet rather than identifying highway violence as a series of indigenous reprisals for colonial abuses, Ibarra's allegations deliberately portray the Chichimecs as politically and spiritually untamed heathens in order to rationalize viceregal involvement.

The burgeoning highway banditry that impelled Viceroy Mendoza's investigation into Chichimec aggression and purported barbarism is now recognized as a precursor to the Chichimec War (1550-90). Though the first decade of this conflict was largely confined to isolated stretches of the *camino real*, the 1560s witnessed significant escalations in coordinated attacks nearer to mining settlements.⁷⁴ By 1561, frontier violence had increased to the point that Captain Pedro de Ahumada Sámano was compelled by personal responsibility and public requests to lead a retaliatory effort against the Chichimecs of the *Malpaís* (bad lands).⁷⁵ However, since the war against the northern natives lacked the status of an officially sanctioned *guerra a fuego y a sangre*, Ahumada was forced to fund the military incursion from his pocket.⁷⁶ Upon completing his mission, Ahumada

⁷³ In short, this system allotted lands and native laborers to prominent Spaniards and indigenous nobles in return for the *encomendero's* protection and evangelization of the natives under his care.

⁷⁴ Powell (1952), 73-85.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 78.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 89.

petitioned unsuccessfully for reimbursement of 26,000 pesos from the viceregal treasury. Deeply unhappy about this rejection, the captain spent successive years attempting to convince multiple northern *cabildos* (municipal governments) to fund his military expeditions. When those efforts failed, he appealed to King Philip II of Spain. Yet rather than seeking personal remuneration, Ahumada's letter to the king argued for a fully financed war against the bellicose and barbaric Chichimecs. In this letter, the captain described the Chichimecs as, "warlike Indians... who inhabit the desert region and go about naked, [like] savages. They have [no] law."⁷⁷ He added that Chichimec savagery was particularly pernicious and deserved royal attention because, "[the Chichimecs] are many in number, well-versed in warfare, and addicted to robbery."⁷⁸ Taken as a whole, Ahumada's involvement in the Chichimec War illustrates the viceregal administration's financial difficulties in funding frontier defense. Moreover, Ahumada's letter exemplifies a rhetorical strategy – previously employed by Ibarra – that empowered colonial agents to seek financial assistance against the natives of northern New Spain grouped under the pejorative label, "Chichimec."

By the latter half of the decade, viceregal control of the Gran Chichimeca had significantly deteriorated. In addition to a continued lack of financing for frontier defense, Chichimec raids crept ever closer to mining settlements and even the viceregal capital.⁷⁹ In a letter to King Philip II dated 1569, Bishop Pedro de Ayala of

⁷⁷ Gradie (1991), 76. Gradie derives this information from the *Relación de Pedro Ahumada*.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 98.

Nueva Galicia attested to his province's dire circumstances by claiming, "within a period of fifteen days, the Chichimecas have killed... one hundred [allied] Indians and sacked a small town... For the love of God, may Your Majesty be pleased to order this remedied as it needs to be; otherwise this province is going to be lost."⁸⁰ A few months later, the king ordered the newly appointed viceroy, Martín Enríquez de Almanza to convene a council of theologians tasked specifically with exploring the moral and judicial legality of a potential *guerra a fuego y a sangre* against the northern natives. The council almost unanimously approved the war's legality and moral necessity as well as the acceptability of a limited form of slavery levied upon Chichimec captives.

The issue of Chichimec slavery was extremely important in these meetings. Certain officials, such as then-Inquisitor General Pedro Moya de Contreras,⁸¹ considered lifetime enslavement of Chichimec captives as a morally justified means of obtaining free labor that essentially alleviated the economic harm incurred by Chichimec raids.⁸² Proponents argued that legalized slavery would remunerate expansionist stakeholders like Ibarra and Ahumada for their financial losses while increasing mining and agricultural efficiency. However, the council's consensus

⁸⁰ Ibid, 100.

⁸¹ Pedro Moya de Contreras' involvement in the Chichimec "problem" was extensive, as the religious and political figure held the offices of Inquisitor General, Archbishop of Mexico City, and Viceroy of New Spain. Though initially a prominent proponent of Chichimec slavery, Moya de Contreras would later reverse his position and advocate for a peaceful resolution to the Chichimec problem.

⁸² Poole, Stafford. Pedro Moya de Contreras: Catholic Reform and Royal Power in New Spain. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (2011), 211-212.

condemned perpetual slavery as immoral and redundant.⁸³ According to the majority opinion, total war and limited slavery offered the best solution to the Chichimec problem.

However, by 1584, fifteen years after the initial proclamation of total war, worsening frontier conditions compelled authorities to revisit the wisdom of resolving the ongoing Chichimec problem through forcible means. As acting viceroy and head of the Third Mexican Provincial Council, Moya de Contreras commissioned a complete report on the status of the northern frontier.⁸⁴ This account decried the Chichimecs' continued savagery, accusing the semi-nomads of "[using] their women barbarously without observing any order or relationships and committing incest at will." Further, the report supported the war's continued necessity, stating, "There is no safety anywhere since these common enemies of the human race have become so powerful." In a letter meant to bolster the report's findings, the municipal *cabildo* of Mexico City argued that the Chichimecs remained the "enemies of our Catholic and Most Christian Lord, Don Philip, and of all his vassals and of the church and the Christian religion."

Though these extreme invectives proved ineffective – Contreras' successor decommissioned the *guerra a fuego y a sangre* months later – they poignantly epitomize the crystallization of a rhetorical trope that dramatically emphasized the Chichimecs' perceived barbarity and threat to the colonial economy, viceregal hegemony, and Christian order. Indeed, the statements reproduced above

⁸³ Powell (1952), 106-107.

⁸⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all information in this section derives from primary sources cited in a well-researched section of Poole (2011), 213-217.

systematically position the Chichimecs as literal and figurative social outsiders whose relational alterity justified and compelled their annihilation.

III: Chichimecs in the “Battle Frescoes” of Ixmiquilpan

The nave frescoes in the Augustinian monastery of San Miguel Arcángel in Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo have garnered considerable scholarly attention (Figure 14), as their unique iconographic program seemingly defies their Christian context (Figure 15).⁸⁵ This continuous polychrome frieze depicts indigenous warriors dressed in pre-Hispanic battle garb and mythological beasts whose limbs intertwine with florid acanthus vines (Figure 16). The native warriors are differentiated by dress and weaponry as well as their relationship to monstrous dragons and centaurs. While one faction dons animal-hide uniforms and obsidian-bladed clubs, the other wields bows-and-arrows and appears naked except for their loincloths. These disparate groups engage in a gruesome conflict in which the scantily clad warriors enlist the aid of monstrous creatures. However, the dismembered heads and limbs previously belonging to these semi-naked combatants fly through the pictorial plane as their opponents, garbed in jaguar and eagle pelts, claim a resounding victory.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Carrillo y Gariel, Abelardo. *Ixmiquilpan*. México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (1961); Reyes-Valerio, Constantino. *Arte Indocristiano*. México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (1978); Estrada de Gerlero, Elena. “El friso monumental de Ixmiquilpan,” pp. 9-19 in *Actes de XLII Congrès International des Américanistes*, Paris, 2-9 September, 1976; Pierce (1987); Debrouse (1994); Abel-Turby, Mickey. “The New World Franciscans and Augustinians in New World Opposition: The Visual Statement,” pp. 7-23 in *Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 5: 1 (1996); Wake, Eleanor. “Sacred Books and Sacred Songs from Former Days: Sourcing the Mural Paintings at San Miguel Arcángel Ixmiquilpan,” pp. 95-121 in *Estudios de cultura Náhuatl*, vol. 31 (2000); Edgerton, Samuel. *Theaters of Conversion: Religious Architecture and Indigenous Artisans in Colonial Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (2001); and Lara, Jaime. *City, Temple, Stage: Eschatological Architecture and Liturgical Theatrics in New Spain*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press (2004).

This section offers an historiographic intervention that considers the complex and contradictory network of interpretations of the “Battle Frescoes” to delineate three seminal studies that offer distinct readings of the program’s pictured protagonists and central narrative. Moreover, it proposes an alternative explanation of the pictorial account that stems from the present work’s sustained attention to the malleable Chichimec trope. Ultimately, it demonstrates that the frescoes at Ixmiquilpan positioned its Chichimec figures as bellicose social outsiders whose opposition to viceregal hegemony and Christian evangelization paralleled the historical circumstances that morally justified and impelled their annihilation

In the pre-Hispanic period, the Río Tula divided the area presently known as Ixmiquilpan into two separate polities – each characterized by its own microclimate and inhabited by distinct socio-political groups (Figure 17).⁸⁶ While the southern region was described as having “good and temperate land with irrigation,” the northern district was contrastingly characterized as “sterile and dry.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, the inhabitants of the temperate southern province, known as Otomíes, practiced agricultural sedentism while their northern counterparts, collectivized under the “Chichimec” moniker, subsisted as semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, this dichotomy between Otomíes and Chichimecs was altered sometime in the fifteenth-century when the Otomíes became tributary subjects of the Aztec

⁸⁶ Debroise (1994), 155-156.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 156. This translation is my own. The original Spanish text reads, “Esta hacentado junto al río de Tula, *tiene buenas tierras y es tierra templada, ay regadíos: lo más de ello es estéril y seca...*” (translated portion in italics).

Triple Alliance.⁸⁸ Thereafter, the southern half of Ixmiquilpan was characterized by its cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, as Nahuatl-speaking peoples populated the Otomí territory.⁸⁹ The Chichimecs living north of the Río Tula, meanwhile, remained unmolested by the Aztecs, likely because of their land's sterility. Thus, the area currently known as Ixmiquilpan was a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century melting pot defined by its inhabitants' multi-cultural and multi-linguistic affiliations.

Spanish and indigenous settlers first encountered Ixmiquilpan's heterogeneous social milieu in the mid sixteenth-century. As a relatively small and unimportant northern outpost of Aztec hegemony, Ixmiquilpan was unknown to expansionist agents until 1550, when explorers noted the presence of extractable silver deposits.⁹⁰ One year later, Viceroy Luís de Velasco, at the behest of prominent silver magnates, commissioned the construction of a "feeder road" that would link the newly founded mining settlement to the *camino real*.⁹¹ This project was facilitated by native labor commissioned from the surrounding indigenous population, almost certainly including the inhabitants of Ixmiquilpan.

Though few primary sources exist to illuminate Ixmiquilpan's early years under Spanish hegemony, art historian Donna Pierce has estimated that the town's Augustinian monastery was erected within the first year of the town's colonization

⁸⁸ *Codex Mendoza*, folio 21 verso lists Ixmiquilpan as a tributary vassal to the Aztec Triple Alliance.

⁸⁹ Carrillo y Gariel (1961), 8.

⁹⁰ Pierce (1987), 1-8.

⁹¹ Powell (1952), 21.

in order to evangelize its indigenous population.⁹² Additionally, Pierce has conclusively demonstrated that much of the town's populace participated militarily in the Chichimec War, wherein they fought as auxiliaries alongside their Spanish allies.⁹³ Based on this information, the art historian surmises that the unique fresco program at San Miguel Arcángel depicts indigenous participation in the *guerra a fuego y a sangre* against the Chichimecs.

Pierce proposes a connection between the "Battle Frescoes" and the Chichimec War by arguing that at least one *cacique* (indigenous noble) from Ixmiquilpan may have been appointed as a captain-general in the war effort.⁹⁴ However, since none of the many archival documents cited by Pierce corroborates this assertion, the art historian's hypothesis has been questioned and resoundingly rebuffed in subsequent treatments of the frescoes' iconography.⁹⁵ The consequence of this interpretive denunciation has been a subsequent hesitance to relate the fresco program to the Chichimec War.

In fact, perhaps the only subsequent study to explore this potential link is an oft-overlooked examination by former curator of contemporary art, Olivier Debroise.⁹⁶ This insightful analysis argues that the Battle Frescoes symbolically reference theatrical dances akin to Peninsular reenactments of the Christian

⁹² Pierce (1987), 7.

⁹³ Ibid, 87-105.

⁹⁴ Pierce (1989), 89-113.

⁹⁵ See, Debroise (1994), 155; Abel-Turbey (1996), 17; Wake (2000), 100; and Lara (2004), 88.

⁹⁶ Indeed, Debroise's study ubiquitously eludes the citations of the books and articles referenced in the present work.

conquest of the Moors.⁹⁷ According to Debroise, the *danzas de mecos* (Chichimec dances) commemorate the heroic tales of Otomí participation in the Chichimec War, during which an Otomí *cacique* purportedly evangelized an entire Chichimec army.⁹⁸ Debroise argues persuasively that regardless of the story's historical accuracy, the Battle Frescoes potentially allude to this narrative to forge a "frontier identity" wherein Ixmiquilpan's culturally heterogeneous populace is united by their observance of Christianity.

More recently, fellow art historian Eleanor Wake has offered a markedly divergent interpretation of San Miguel Arcángel's fresco program. Wake directly contradicts Pierce's and Debroise's hypotheses by identifying the frescoes' non-Chichimec protagonists as Aztecs rather than Otomíes. Moreover, Wake argues that the frescoes comprise a visual manifestation of a Nahuatl warrior song.⁹⁹ Further, she posits that the song commemorates the souls of heroic fallen warriors who eternally guard the House of the Sun from the "native forces of darkness."¹⁰⁰ Within its Christian context at San Miguel Arcángel, this visually transcribed song metaphorically parallels the Aztec warriors' guardianship of the House of the Sun with the eponymous Archangel Michael's defense of Heaven against the fallen angels in the biblical Book of Revelation. The resultant cosmic battle, "symbolically incorporates the ancestral age into the colonial and Christian order while casting the

⁹⁷ Debroise (1994), 159.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 165-170. Upon the *cacique*'s exhortation to his troops that they should conquer in the name of Santiago Matamoros, a cross miraculously appeared in the sky and incited Chichimec devotion.

⁹⁹ Wake (2000), 113-117.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 116.

coming of Christ as an event that not only was prophesied in ancient times but recapitulates ancestral patterns of penance and world renewal.”¹⁰¹

Yet despite its compelling conclusion, Wake’s study assumes an alarming lack of Otomí agency at San Miguel Arcángel. If, as the art historian suggests, the visualized warrior song speaks the “flowery language” of the Aztecs, how might Ixmiquilpan’s predominantly Otomí citizenry have understood the Nahuatl-ized Christian allegory?

I would like to suggest that the Battle Frescoes appropriate the rhetorical strategies used in Nahua iconic-script documents such as those discussed in chapter one of the present work. As demonstrated above, the primary ethno-social differentiation in sixteenth-century Nahua painted manuscripts was between sedentary cultural groups and those of semi-nomadic “Chichimecs.” Indeed, rather than distinguishing glyphic figures on the basis of ethnic or linguistic affiliations, Nahua *tlacuiloqueh* emphasized differences in social organization and sedentism. Accordingly, sedentary Otomíes were pictorially rendered according to the same glyphic conventions as their Nahua counterparts. To this end, folio 37 recto of *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* depicts a battle between an Aztec and Otomí warrior portrayed according to the same glyphic customs for representing sedentary groups (Figure 18).¹⁰² Importantly, the only extant manuscript attributable to Otomí artist-scribes, the *Códice de Huamantla*, follows this precedent by picturing Otomí and Nahua groups according to the same glyphic conventions (Figure 19).

¹⁰¹ Wake (2000), 116-117.

¹⁰² Quiñones-Keber (1995), 222.

Thus, Ixmiquilpan's culturally heterogeneous indigenous population could have interpreted the glyphic figures portrayed at San Miguel Arcángel as warriors who shared their respective cultural affiliations. In this way, the Battle Frescoes' non-Chichimec figures can be understood to represent Ixmiquilpan's heterogeneous population as a whole, rather than its Nahua contingent alone. By appropriating the visual rhetoric of Nahua and Otomí painted manuscripts, the fresco program offers a scene that can be interpreted and internalized by Ixmiquilpan's multi-cultural commonwealth.

If this supposition is correct, it enables us to argue that San Miguel Arcángel's Nahua and Otomí parishioners, alike, could have understood the Battle Frescoes in the manner suggested by Wake – as a Nahuatl-ized Christian allegory that paralleled an indigenous afterlife with the Christian salvation that awaited evangelized natives. However, I believe that the frescoes' appropriation of Nahua and Otomí visual rhetoric offers another, more direct, level of interpretation.

As demonstrated in chapter one, Nahua migration histories such as the one recorded in *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* record ritualized rites of passage wherein formerly migratory peoples undergo a transformation of social and ideological status linked to the founding of their eventual homelands. The Otomí *Códice de Huamantla* narrates a similar process of cultural transformation through migration.¹⁰³ In it, the Otomíes are likewise depicted as travelers who encounter and confront numerous socio-political factions on the journey from an ancestral

¹⁰³ Aguilera, Carmen. *Códice de Huamantla: Manuscrito de los siglos XVI y XVII, que se conserva en la Sala de Testimonios Pictográficos de la Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia y en la Biblioteca Estatal de Berlín*. Tlaxcala, Mexico: Instituto Tlaxcalteca de la Cultura (1984).

birthplace to their ultimate settlement site. Though the fresco program at San Miguel Arcángel does not depict a cultural migration akin to the ones recorded in Nahua and Otomí glyphic histories, its juxtaposition of sedentary Nahua/Otomí figures with semi-nomadic Chichimecs elicits the rhetorical dichotomy that distinguishes settled and unsettled factions in iconic-script migration narratives. Yet rather than connoting cultural sedentism and subsistence practices, the pictorial distinction in the Battle Frescoes contrasts Ixmiquilpan's evangelized natives with their barbarous northern counterparts.

According to this interpretation, the indigenous battle depicted at Ixmiquilpan offers a re-inscription of Nahua and Otomí glyphic traditions that publicly portrays the town's populace as orthodox Christians. Though the fresco program lacks overt Christian references, it directly engages contemporaneous viceregal and evangelical discourse in which Chichimecs were positioned as bellicose social outsiders whose opposition to viceregal hegemony and Christian evangelization morally justified and impelled their annihilation. Additionally, the gruesome battle depicted at San Miguel Arcángel resonates iconographically with Ixmiquilpan's historical participation in the Chichimec War. It thus seems likely that the Nahua/Otomí figures depicted in the fresco program are implicated in this Holy War. Accordingly, the heroic protagonists should be viewed as indigenous Christian warriors whose opposition to the vilified Chichimecs distinguishes them from the maligned semi-nomads and affirms their social and religious orthodoxy.

Though the fresco program likely reflects the historical involvement of Ixmiquilpan's populace in the Chichimec War – whether literally, as Pierce posits, or

metaphorically, as Debroise argues – its iconography is best interpreted as a visual allegory that explains and publicly asserts the community’s cultural transformation from civilized Mesoamericans to Christian members of New Spain’s *República de los Indios*. Despite its liturgical context, this narrative appropriates the formal and rhetorical conventions characteristic of Nahua and Otomí stories of communal foundations. However, rather than delineating the pictured factions according to their social lifeways, the frescoes distinguish evangelized natives from the barbarous scourges of the northern frontier. By appropriating the pejorative connotations of the malleable Chichimec trope, Ixmiquilpan’s indigenous artists created a visual testimony of their community’s Christian orthodoxy comprehensible to its multi-cultural and multi-lingual viewership.

Chapter 3: Chichimecs and Christian Evangelization

In 1585, Viceroy Alvaro Manrique de Zúñiga mandated an end to the *guerra a fuego y a sangre* against the Chichimecs. In its place, Manrique instituted a novel and untested policy of peaceful evangelization and resettlement that he hoped would solve the Chichimec “problem.”¹⁰⁴ Five years later, the viceroy lauded the effectiveness of his program, stating:

The matter that required the most attention in this land [when I arrived] was the war against the Chichimecas... Then I began to pursue another course, reducing the number of soldiers and bringing the Indians to peace by better methods... By these means they have been *pacified and made submissive* to such an extent that now *there remain no hostile or rebellious Indians in the whole Chichimeca province*... I ordered that a Spaniard be placed with them... and they are to be given Indian friends [sedentary natives to settle with them]... to teach them to cultivate and plow the land so that they can profit from the land and *learn to like a civilized life*.¹⁰⁵ (emphasis added)

Though Manrique notes the overwhelming success of these measures in pacifying the northern natives, his statement alludes to the burgeoning challenge of incorporating the Chichimecs within the civilized colonial body of New Spain.¹⁰⁶

This chapter examines a mid-seventeenth century oil painting, *Transfer of the Image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the First Hermitage and Representation of the First Miracle*, to explore viceregal attempts to regulate and incorporate Chichimecs into New Spain’s social corpus. It argues that the pictured Chichimecs embody their

¹⁰⁴ Powell (1952), 183-184.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 189.

¹⁰⁶ Contemporary scholarship has metaphorized New Spain’s explicit social and political hierarchies as a highly structured “colonial body.” For example, see Carrera, Magali. *Imagining Identity in New Spain*. Austin: University of Texas Press (2003); and Cañeque, Alejandro. *The King’s Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico*. New York and London: Routledge (2004).

physical referents' socially constructed position within New Spanish society. Additionally, it hypothesizes that the painting's fictive account of a procession dedicated to the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe includes Chichimec actors in order to construct a convincingly historical narrative that substantiates the Virgin's miracle-working abilities.¹⁰⁷ Within the larger context of this sustained study of the rhetorical trope associated with the term, "Chichimec," this chapter examines the trope's late sixteenth- and seventeenth century association with evangelization and acculturation that Manrique set into motion with his policies regarding the Chichimecs.

I: History and Theology of Chichimec Evangelization

The forty-year war between colonial expansionists and the semi-nomadic Chichimecs of northern New Spain was finally quelled by Manrique de Zúñiga's policy of peaceful evangelization and resettlement. Though armed warriors were the primary conductors of Spanish-Chichimec interactions for most of the sixteenth-century, Christian friars became the most prominent cultural intermediaries by the century's close. Indeed, these multi-lingual clergymen often brokered treaties with the Chichimecs on behalf of the viceregal administration.¹⁰⁸ The proposed terms typically offered the natives fertile lands on level ground, exemption from taxation, and continuing gifts of livestock, food, and clothing. In return, the Chichimecs were expected to comport themselves as "civilized" sedentary peoples and aid in the

¹⁰⁷ Though I hope to substantiate the procession's fictitiousness, I refrain from inserting myself within the debate surrounding the veracity of the Virgin of Guadalupe's miraculous nature.

¹⁰⁸ Powell (1952), 205-209.

construction of Christian churches. Viceroy Luís de Velasco described these edifices as “the most important foundation[s] of this peace.”¹⁰⁹ Within these structures, the Chichimecs were not only introduced to Christian doctrine, they also learned how to behave as functionaries of colonial society. For example, the attendant friars gradually persuaded their Chichimec parishioners to abandon their “cultural vices” of excessive drunkenness and “marital irregularities.”¹¹⁰ This process of cultural as well as religious indoctrination was part of a carefully crafted theological mission formulated primarily by Jesuit missionaries.¹¹¹

One such Jesuit theologian, José de Acosta, authored an historically prominent and theologically influential text that illuminates the process of evangelizing the Chichimecs. In his *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, Acosta offers a theological treatise that attends to the nature of the indigenous inhabitants of New Spain and the Viceroyalty of Peru. Published in 1590, this text examines the status of Indians as “rational animals” in order to establish their potential for recognizing and adopting Euro-Christian religious and social norms. After determining that pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican and Andean socio-political institutions revealed the capacity for cognitive reasoning amongst American indigenous groups, Acosta argues that the native “idolatries” that precluded their

¹⁰⁹ Powell (1952), 208. This viceroy should not be confused with his predecessor by the same name.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 210.

¹¹¹ Powell notes that sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century viceroys greatly preferred and commissioned Jesuit missionaries over their Mendicant counterparts. Powell (1952), 209.

ignorance of God were artifices of the Devil.¹¹² The Devil's presence in the New World thus impelled Christian missionaries such as Acosta and his fellow Jesuits to evangelize the native masses.

Though the semi-nomadic Chichimecs of northern New Spain were part of these masses, Acosta identifies them as one of the Americas' most barbaric indigenous peoples. To this end, Acosta asserts that the Chichimecs are "savage men, similar to beasts."¹¹³ However, the Jesuit reasons that even the Chichimecs warrant salvation from the Devil's deceptions. He justifies this view by noting that Spanish agents encountered the Chichimecs within territories containing large deposits of silver. This durable and "negotiable" metal, argues Acosta, was placed in the Americas by God as a sign of His presence and desire for the Spaniards to evangelize the uncivilized peoples that lived nearby. Accordingly, the Spaniards were theologically obligated to convert the semi-nomadic Chichimecs.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Acosta proposes that friars would need to adopt extraordinary measures to convert the particularly barbaric Chichimecs. Indeed, the Jesuit posits that in order to properly convert the Chichimecs, "they must first be taught to be men and then to be Christians."¹¹⁵ This endeavor is precisely what late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century viceroys attempted to achieve through their policy of peaceful evangelization and social resettlement.

¹¹² Acosta, José de. Natural and Moral History of the Indies. Durham and London: Duke University Press (2002 [1590]), 253.

¹¹³ Acosta (2002 [1590]), 381.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 162-164.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 381.

Yet despite their large-scale Christian conversion, the formerly semi-nomadic Chichimecs were feared as potentially subversive threats to the colonial system well into the seventeenth-century. These fears, manifested in Inquisition documents currently held by Mexico's *Archivo General de la Nación*, were spurred by "the reputation that this fiery and half-subdued group of Indians came to acquire for their skill in [manipulating] demonic power."¹¹⁶ Many seventeenth-century eyewitness testimonies of Chichimec heresy accuse indigenous men of conspiring with diabolic forces to improve their agricultural yields and cowherding skills.¹¹⁷ For example, in 1605, a mulatto farmer informed inquisitors about, "a cave in the land of the Chichimecs... where those who want to get or ask for certain things to grow in valor go... those who thus go in and out of the said cave become good cowmen."¹¹⁸ Seven years later, a young Spanish herdsman claimed to have visited an old Chichimec man "who was known to be the devil" in order to better perform his occupation. The old man agreed to help the young Spaniard "on condition that he made a promise, signing it with his name written in his own blood, that he would be his... as a sign of slavery to him."¹¹⁹ Though scholars are often rightfully skeptical of accepting the veracity of the testimonies held in Inquisition documents,¹²⁰ these

¹¹⁶ Cervantes, Fernando. The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain. New Haven and London: Yale University Press (1994), 91.

¹¹⁷ Excerpts of the AGN documents that record these stories can be found in Cervantes (1994), 90-94.

¹¹⁸ Cervantes (1994), 91.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 93.

¹²⁰ Though these documents record sworn testimonies, they should not be trusted as unbiased historical records. Often, New Spanish agents of all ethno-social backgrounds used the Inquisition as a political tool to achieve their personal or factional goals. For an excellent analysis of the potentially biased testimonies recorded in Inquisition documents, see, Chuchiak, John. "Secrets Behind the

allegations of seventeenth-century Chichimec diabolism exemplify colonial apprehensions regarding their successful conversion. The following analysis of a mid seventeenth-century oil painting and New Spanish public festivities demonstrates that these colonial suspicions of the newly evangelized Chichimecs were so pervasive that they became canonized and alleviated within the colony's visual culture.

II: Visual Analysis and Historiography of *The First Miracle*

The Transfer of the Image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the First Hermitage and Representation of the First Miracle (hereafter, *The First Miracle*)¹²¹ was likely completed in 1653 by José Juárez, a prominent artist from a veritable dynasty of New Spanish painters (Figure 20).¹²² Though Juárez's father, Luis, was a distinguished Mannerist painter, contemporary art historians have identified José as the best American exemplar of the devotional style known as the Peninsular Baroque, led by Francisco de Zurbarán.¹²³ Furthermore, Mexican art historian Guillermo Tovar de Teresa has anointed Juárez as the "most important Mexican

Screen: *Solicitantes in the Colonial Diocese of Yucatan and the Yucatec Maya, 1570-1785*," pp. 83-109 in *Religion in New Spain*, Edited by Susan Schroeder and Stafford Poole. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (2007).

¹²¹ This painting has often been known by its shortened name; indeed, Mexican art historian Jaime Cuadriello uses this moniker in the exhibition catalogue to *La Reina de Las Americas*. See Cuadriello, Jaime. *La Reina de las Americas: Works of Art from the Museum of the Basílica de Guadalupe*. Chicago: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum (1996), 14.

¹²² Alcalá, Luisa Elena. "The Image of the Devout Indian: The Codification of a Colonial Idea," pp. 227-250 in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World*, Edited by Ilona Katzew. Los Angeles and New Haven: The Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Yale University Press (2011).

¹²³ Tovar de Teresa, Guillermo. *México Barroco*. México: SAHOP (1981), 297-298.

painter of the viceregal period.”¹²⁴ Currently held in the Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe in Mexico City, Juárez’s massive oil painting measures approximately 9’5” x 19’5” and depicts a continuous narrative illustrative of its title.

The pictured account begins in the background, where a long procession of New Spain’s culturally heterogeneous population accompanies the Virgin of Guadalupe’s miraculous image from its former home in Mexico City to its eventual repository in Tepeyac (Figure 21).¹²⁵ The accompanying throng is stratified according to their manner of dress, personal accoutrements, and skin color which in turn identify the processional participants as members of distinct social, political, and religious groups. Indigenous nobles donning brightly colored cotton garments form the vanguard, while prominent viceregal officials follow close behind, dressed all in black. Finally, a large contingent of clergymen, robed in white, process with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in their midst. The remainder of the pictured crowd wears black clothing reminiscent of the viceregal officials’, but are increasingly obscured as they recede into the background. However, the members of the group directly following the clergymen carry barely-discernable European weapons that likely identify these figures as the Virgin of Guadalupe’s ceremonial protectorate. Nearby, a mock maritime battle wages between scantily clad

¹²⁴ Ibid, 208. The original Spanish text reads, “José Juárez es el más importante pintor mexicano del virreinato.”

¹²⁵ According to the story associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego (a Christian of indigenous American ancestry) at Tepeyac, located on the northern outskirts of present-day Mexico City, where the miraculous image remains to this day.

indigenous actors donning feathered headdresses and bows-and arrows.¹²⁶ Despite the battle's performative nature, potentially lethal volleys are loosed in the pictorial space separating the opposing factions. Almost inevitably, a feathered shaft has hit an actor who lies dead with an arrow protruding from his chest.

The narrative continues in the foreground, where the procession assembles within and directly outside the Virgin of Guadalupe's "first hermitage." Inside this sanctified space, figures whose dress identifies them as viceregal and Church officials, surround the Virgin's mounted and canopied image (Figure 22). However, rather than addressing the icon, most of the crowd directs its attention to the prostrated indigenous man lying directly in front of the altar. Wearing only an animal skin loincloth, this man and his similarly clad companions contrast markedly from the other figures depicted within Guadalupe's hermitage. However, the crowd's fixation on the prostrated man derives not from his apparent cultural alterity, but from the miracle they have just witnessed. The arrow positioned against this man's chest indicates that he is the same indigenous actor who was killed while participating in the mock battle. However, the man's eyes are now open, his legs show signs of movement, and the lethal instrument has been extracted from his body. In short, he has been revitalized. The actor's reverent gaze and the arrow's upward slant converge upon the source of his revival, the miracle-working image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Meanwhile, a large culturally heterogeneous mass has assembled directly

¹²⁶ Extant analyses of this painting unanimously agree on the performative nature of this battle. See, Cuadriello (1996); Alcalá (2011); and Vidal, Magdalena Vences. "Manifestaciones de la Religiosidad Popular en Torno a Tres Imágenes Marianas Originarias," pp. 97-126 in *Mirador Latinoamericano*, no. 49. México: CIALC-UNAM (January, 2009).

outside Guadalupe's hermitage. Many of the aforementioned processional participants are present in the newly formed crowd. Indeed, the indigenous nobles occupying the painting's central axis are identifiable by the brightly colored garments formerly seen in the processional vanguard. Additionally, six of the crowd's members carry the European lances likely denotative of the Virgin's ceremonial protectors. However, the multitude's most distinctive constituents are elaborately dressed Aztec warriors and musicians who were not pictured in the processional backdrop. Their presence in the depicted scene evokes comparisons to a seventeenth-century ceremony commemorating the viceregal entrance to Mexico City, discussed more fully below, and contributes to the festive nature of the painting overall.

Scholarly treatment of *The First Miracle* has largely emphasized the painting's portrayal of the socially stratified New Spanish populace. To this end, Mexican art historian Jaime Cuadriello writes, "It is an eminently testimonial image which in a festive manner predictively unites the 'two republics,' that of Native and that of the Spaniard."¹²⁷ Cuadriello's analysis acknowledges the assembly's cultural heterogeneity and hints at the eventual "unification" of the *República de españoles* (Spanish Republic) and *República de indios* (Indian Republic) achieved by Mexico's independence from Spain. Though anachronistic, this position rightfully underscores the painting's unifying theme. To this end, Cuadriello posits that the pictured protagonist, the Virgin of Guadalupe, is herein canonized as the unifying

¹²⁷ Cuadriello (1996), 14.

symbol of religious devotion for all of New Spain's culturally diverse inhabitants.¹²⁸

Recently, art historian Luisa Elena Alcalá has echoed this aspect of Cuadriello's analysis, stating, "The work sets up the Virgin of Guadalupe as an all-inclusive devotion, celebrated by both the Spanish authorities... and the Christianized Indians who sing and dance outside the church in costumes reminiscent of pre-Hispanic times."¹²⁹ Alcalá, like Cuadriello before her, notes that *The First Miracle* explicitly marks Guadalupan devotion as a religious observance celebrated by Spaniards and natives, alike.¹³⁰ However, rather than simply restating extant analyses, Alcalá hints at tantalizing and unexplored research possibilities, stating, "This painting is unique for a number of reasons, but one of the most relevant... is the emphasis on Indian participation in a festivity related to a religious image in the viceroyalty's capital... In this respect, it is important to recall that processions were about performing social order."¹³¹ This point of departure becomes a catalyst for several questions regarding the indigenous actors portrayed in *The First Miracle*. Firstly, how does the painting conceive of these native agents? How and why are indigenous figures visually differentiated from non-natives? How

¹²⁸ Though this analysis is borne out in the painting, it is important to note that Jeanette Peterson has argued persuasively that the Virgin of Guadalupe was primarily a benefactor to "Spaniards or creoles... from a social and economic stratum that could afford to be generous." Peterson, Jeanette. "Canonizing a Cult: A Wonder-Working Guadalupe in the Seventeenth Century," pp. 125-156 in *Religion in New Spain*, Edited by Susan Schroeder and Stafford Poole. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (2007), 149-150.

¹²⁹ Alcalá (2011), 235.

¹³⁰ This line of analysis can also be found in Villegas, Martha Sandoval. "La devoción y el culto de los indios a la Señora del Tepeyac. Una República elegida por la Reina del Cielo," pp 153-199 in *Guadalupe arte y liturgia, La sillería del coro de la colegiata*, Edited by Nelly Sigaut. Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán (2006).

¹³¹ Alcalá (2011), 238.

and why are indigenous figures visually differentiated from other natives? And ultimately, how are these differences manifested in civic participation and social order?

III: Performing and Ordering Indigenous Bodies

Alejandro Cañeque, a noted historian of colonial Mexico, has argued persuasively that, “Throughout the early modern period, the Spanish monarchy created or adapted an extraordinarily rich repertoire of rituals devoted to creating what can be considered a true ‘theater state.’”¹³² Cañeque posits that these rituals enacted and embodied political and religious ideologies. For example, the symbolic entry of a newly appointed viceroy to the New Spanish capital was orchestrated as an elaborate affair devised to publicly acknowledge and reinforce the viceroys’ position as the king’s, and thus God’s, colonial representative and metaphorical embodiment.¹³³ Additionally, these theatrical festivals facilitated social organization by canonizing hierarchical power structures in festive rites that mirrored social stratification. Historian Linda Curcio-Nagy elucidates this concept by stating, “These spectacles were crucial media for modeling, presenting, teaching, and acting out political and social concepts... [they] were designed as tools of cultural hegemony in that Spanish officials sought to utilize festivals and their messages as a means of social control.”¹³⁴

¹³² Cañeque (2004), 120.

¹³³ Ibid, 123-129.

¹³⁴ Curcio-Nagy, Linda. The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (2004), 3.

This section seeks to determine whether the public ceremonies depicted in *The First Miracle* can be considered as similar public theaters wherein participants were intended to learn or “act out” their culturally specific positions within colonial society.¹³⁵ It employs Cañeque’s theories of the performatively embodied colonial politic and Curcio-Nagy’s historical accounts of festive rites in seventeenth-century New Spain to argue that the public celebration portrayed in *The First Miracle* can profitably be compared to contemporaneous civic ceremonies such as Corpus Christi and viceregal entries.¹³⁶

As discussed above, this monumental oil painting depicts New Spain’s culturally heterogeneous population united in their devotion to the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In both the foreground and background scenes, figures are grouped according to their dress, personal accoutrements, and spatial positioning relative to the Christian icon. Intriguingly, the background scene largely accords with historical accounts of New Spain’s Corpus Christi celebrations. Public observances of this important feast day, dedicated to the Holy Eucharist, were similarly commemorated with lavish processions in which native and non-native peoples participated as a stratified mass united by their Christian devotion.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ibid, 141-155. Importantly, these relative social positions were ever-changing and not fixed.

¹³⁶ This section also profits from art historical analyses by Carolyn Dean and Magali Carrera that employ a model similar to Cañeque’s to study performative embodiment in the visual culture of the Viceroyalty of Peru and eighteenth-century New Spain, respectively. See Dean, Carolyn. Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru. Durham: Duke University Press (1999); and Carrera, Magali. Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings. Austin: University of Texas Press (2003).

¹³⁷ See, Curcio-Nagy, Linda. “Giants and Gypsies: Corpus Christi in Colonial Mexico City,” pp. 1-26 in Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico, Edited by William Beezley, Cheryl Martin, and William French. Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc. (1994); and Cañeque (2004), 135-138.

Curcio-Nagy describes Corpus Christi as the largest and most expensive annual festival in New Spain, eclipsed in cost only by intermittent public celebrations such as the appointment of a new viceroy or the king's coronation.¹³⁸ Moreover, she states that Corpus Christi processions mirrored and enacted the colony's hierarchical social relationships by dictating the relative spatial positioning of distinct social and political groups within the festive celebration. "Location in the procession reinforced group and ethnic identification and the hierarchical nature of viceregal society... [It] promoted acceptance and reaffirmed a social system devised by the ruling elite."¹³⁹ Indeed, the ruling elite (both lay and ecclesiastic) expressed their authority by mandating the placement of the most prominent guilds, confraternities, and administrators nearest to the Eucharist while positioning less important groups further from it.¹⁴⁰

As discussed above, the procession portrayed in *The First Miracle* appears stratified according to group membership in a comparable manner to the hierarchical organization of colonial New Spanish festivals. Within a similarly theatrical and hierarchical setting, it seems plausible that Guadalupe's miraculous image performs a symbolic function roughly equivalent or parallel to the Eucharist in Corpus Christi celebrations. If so, the native participants in the oil painting's festive procession occupy and perform a surprisingly elevated social position. Their physical proximity to the Virgin of Guadalupe's sanctified image marks them as

¹³⁸ Curcio-Nagy (1994), 3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Positioning with the ceremony further mirrored the hierarchical nature of New Spanish society in their fluid, rather than fixed, nature.

particularly important members of both the celebration and colonial society. Indeed, the relative spatial positioning of these indigenous nobles parallels that of the most important civic and ecclesiastical officials in Corpus Christi processions. Within the context of this oil painting, the native nobility's eminent status likely stems from the fact that an indigenous Christian, Juan Diego, was the supposed intercessor between the Virgin of Guadalupe and Bishop Juan de Zumárraga.¹⁴¹ This is not to suggest that the depicted nobles are somehow related to Juan Diego, but rather to posit that the indigenous farmer's communication with the Virgin elevated the religious and social status of all indigenous Americans, and in this case, particularly the pictured noblemen.

In marked contrast to the procession's solemnity, the mock battle depicted near the causeway connecting Mexico City to Tepeyac offers a chaotic spectacle. This maritime display presents leaderless archers bombarding their symbolic opponents with seeming disregard for their weapons' lethal potency. Struck by a wayward arrow, the aforementioned fallen performer epitomizes and embodies the uncivilized nature of the battle and its participants. Though this chaotic display seemingly belies the gravity of the surrounding scene, its disordered theatricality mirrors the participation of performative monsters in New Spanish Corpus Christi celebrations. Curcio-Nagy offers a description of these Corpus Christi participants, stating,

An unusual assortment of *gigantes* (giants), *cabezudos* (big heads), *diablillos* (little devils), and a *tarasca* (dragon) led the procession...

¹⁴¹ Though it is tempting to analyze the natives' social position in terms of *calidad*, or diagnostic social status, Magali Carrera has demonstrated that this term and the concepts to which it refers were products of Enlightenment thinking that postdates *The First Miracle*. See, Carrera (2003), 8-9.

Although the focal point of Corpus Christi was the *Santísimo Sacramento* (Holy Eucharist), few eyes could have failed to notice the

tarasca. Traditionally, [this] dragon symbolized ‘sin conquered by the Holy Spirit.’¹⁴²

In addition to noting their involvement in the festivities, Curcio-Nagy explains the importance of these mythical creatures by positioning them as performative embodiments of the Eucharist’s redemptive *raison d’être*. In other words, the giants, devils, and dragons that accompanied Corpus Christi processions can be considered as physically manifesting social chaos and sin – disorders that the festival sought to alleviate. In a similar manner, the undisciplined archers depicted in *The First Miracle* personify the concept of undesirable native incivility and sinfulness eventually “conquered” by Christian – particularly Guadalupan – devotion.

Despite the performative nature of the battle pictured in *The First Miracle*, one of its participants has been punished for his ritualized embodiment of intolerable incivility and unorthodoxy. Indeed, the man’s death marks his performed identity as an unacceptable position within the colonial Christian hierarchy. In this sense, his death parallels the Eucharist’s symbolic victory over the mythical opponents of Christian social order during Corpus Christi. However, unlike the giants, devils, and dragons in Corpus, the native performer is revitalized by the miracle-working image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Though it remains unclear whether the actor’s death is – along with his identity – a performance, its portrayal within a theatrical public spectacle likely indicates its metaphorical nature. Accordingly, while fundamentally a discrete act of redemption, the Virgin’s

¹⁴² Curcio-Nagy (1994), 6.

miraculous intercession should be understood as a symbolic act connoting the Christian acceptance and deliverance of all indigenous peoples – even the most barbaric among them. Moreover, this performance demonstrates the viceregal desire to incorporate New Spain’s Chichimec inhabitants within the colony’s civilized body politic.

Though extant analyses of *The First Miracle* refer to the semi-naked indigenous actors pictured throughout the continuous narrative as performative *índios bárbaros* (barbaric Indians) or *índios gentiles* (heathen Indians),¹⁴³ they are more properly understood as Chichimecs. Indeed, their scantily clad bodies, long hair, and bows-and-arrows mirror the visual characteristics of the Chichimec figures discussed in previous chapters of this study. Moreover, their exclusion from the orderly procession – and thus from New Spanish society – mirrors the Chichimecs’ historical situation as social and cultural outsiders whose proclivity for violence led an afore-mentioned Christian official to state, “there is no safety anywhere since these common enemies of the human race have become so powerful.”¹⁴⁴ Though the pictured Chichimecs do not directly threaten the nearby procession, their unruliness defies the sense of order created by religious and political orthodoxy. Yet despite the Chichimecs’ (pictured and historical) infamy as scourges of viceregal and Christian hegemony, the Virgin of Guadalupe herein peacefully subdues and evangelizes them, thereby incorporating them within the civilized and orthodox colonial society.

¹⁴³ See, Villegas (2006); and Vidal (2009).

¹⁴⁴ Poole (2011), 214.

An important comparison to the pictured procession is offered by Curcio-Nagy's description of the festivities accompanying a nearly contemporaneous viceregal entry to Mexico City. The historian relates that this public ceremony, commemorating Cabrera y Bobadilla's assumption of the viceregal office in 1640, was accompanied by "Native Americans, wearing elaborate traditional attire, [dancing], [singing], and [fighting] in mock battles."¹⁴⁵ This description bears a striking similarity to the pictured account of indigenous civic participation in *The First Miracle*. These festive traditions forced natives to perform their officially determined identities as individuals whose ancestors were subjugated by the Spanish during the Conquest. By embodying their ancestors' historical positions as conquered subalterns, New Spain's indigenous population reified and enacted seventeenth-century social stratification. Thus, the festivals described by Curcio-Nagy and painted by José Juárez systematically sought to "persuade citizens to accept not only the concept of rule by virtuous and divinely inspired Spanish colonial government but also the social and ethnic hierarchy of the capital that reinforced Spanish control."¹⁴⁶ Within this hierarchical body politic, the newly converted Chichimecs occupied the lowest and most marginalized position in New Spanish society.

IV: The Civilized Chichimec Body and the Virgin of Guadalupe

In addition to establishing the lower limit of New Spain's social hierarchy, the

¹⁴⁵ Curcio-Nagy (2004), 41-49.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 42.

Chichimec actors portrayed in *The First Miracle* embody a powerful testament to the Virgin of Guadalupe's miracle-working abilities and willingness to intercede on the behalf of even the most barbaric of her American children. To this end, the painting's Chichimec figures aid in the construction of a forceful narrative meant to strengthen seventeenth-century Guadalupan devotion. Scholarly analyses of the Virgin of Guadalupe's apparition, miraculous image, and devotional cult often attempt to authenticate or refute her well-known story. Though this section refrains from entering this conversation, it borrows a wealth of relevant information and contextual framework from such studies to demonstrate that *The First Miracle* was likely commissioned as part of a promotional program for the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, it considers the role of the painting's Chichimec figures in canonizing Guadalupan devotion.

Before proceeding, it is helpful to recount story of the Virgin's miraculous apparition. According to the popular legend, Juan Diego, an indigenous commoner, was passing through an area north of Mexico City known as Tepeyac in order to visit his church in Tlatelolco for religious instruction when he saw an indigenous noblewoman whose garments shone and glistened like the sun. Captivated, Juan Diego approached the woman and knelt before her. After asking about and being informed of Juan Diego's destination, the woman revealed herself as Mary, the

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, LaFaye, Jacques. Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531-1813. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press (1974); Burkhart, Louise. "The Cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico," pp. 198-227 in South and Meso-American Native Spirituality, Edited by Gary Gossen. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company (1993); Poole, Stafford. Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797. Tucson and London: The University of Arizona Press (1995); Peterson (2007); and Taylor, William. Shrines and Miraculous Images: Religious Life in Mexico Before the Reforma. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (2010).

mother of Christ. Furthermore, she conveyed to Juan Diego her desire for a church dedicated in her name to be erected in Tepeyac and ordered him to relate her wish to Bishop Zumárraga in Mexico City.¹⁴⁸

As a devout Christian eager to heed the Virgin's wishes, Juan Diego travelled directly to the bishop's palace but was rebuked by Zumárraga who did not take the message seriously. Dejected, the indigenous farmer returned to Tepeyac and related to the Virgin what had transpired. However, the noblewoman insisted that Juan Diego try again. When the farmer returned to Bishop Zumárraga the next day, he was questioned closely about the supposed apparition. Though the bishop found Juan Diego's description of the Virgin's appearance to be accurate, he told the farmer that he required a sign from the Virgin herself before he would believe Juan Diego's account.

Two days later, the farmer encountered the Virgin once again – this time while travelling by an alternate route to Tlatelolco in order to exhort the local priest to give his ailing uncle his last rites. Mary told Juan Diego to abandon his journey and return to Mexico City, for his uncle had already been cured while the Virgin's temple remained un-built. Further, she told him to revisit the site where she had originally appeared to him and cut the roses growing there. These flowers, she assured Juan Diego, would provide the sign Bishop Zumárraga requested. Though the bishop was skeptical of Juan Diego, he hesitantly admitted the farmer into his chambers. When Juan Diego unwrapped the cloak in which he carried the Virgin's flowers, the image of Mary, popularly known as the Virgin of Guadalupe, appeared

¹⁴⁸ Juan de Zumárraga was Mexico City's first bishop, and occupied the post from 1528 to 1548.

emblazoned upon the fabric.

Though this miraculous intercession supposedly occurred in 1531, contemporary historians typically date the rise of Guadalupan devotion to the mid seventeenth-century. While their studies acknowledge the existence of a shrine in Tepeyac that may have been associated with Guadalupe, they note the dearth of archival sources regarding the shrine before the mid seventeenth-century to substantiate the relative obscurity of the Guadalupan cult prior to this period. According to Louise Burkhart, an ethno-historian specializing in Mesoamerican and New Spanish devotion,

It is not clear when a small hermitage dedicated to Mary was first erected at [Tepeyac]. A few reports claim that it was founded soon after the Spanish conquest; whatever its origins, it received little notice until 1555. A number of chronicles, Nahuatl as well as Spanish, date the origin of the Guadalupe devotion there to 1555 or 1556.¹⁴⁹

Stafford Poole, an historian and ordained priest, corroborates Burkhart's account, stating, "From the beginning there was an image that was venerated in the ermita, but it is not clear what it was... With regard to the devotion that was originally centered at the ermita, Martín Enríquez cited a vague tradition that traced its origins to the cure of a herdsman around 1556."¹⁵⁰ More recently, fellow historian William B. Taylor has analyzed the financial records of the small hermitage at Tepeyac to demonstrate its relative penury before 1648.¹⁵¹ Taken together, these studies seemingly establish the obscurity of the cult centered at the Tepeyac hermitage

¹⁴⁹ Burkhart (1993), 205.

¹⁵⁰ Poole (1995), 215-216.

¹⁵¹ Taylor (2010), 103-112.

before the mid-seventeenth-century.¹⁵²

In 1648, Miguel Sánchez – a Creole theologian – published the first-known hagiographical account of the Virgin of Guadalupe, *Imagen de la Virgen María de Dios de Guadalupe*. A year later, fellow priest Luis Lasso de la Vega published a similar account written in Nahuatl, titled *Huei tlamahicoltica* (the Great Happening).

Taylor's above-cited fiscal analysis indicates that these hagiographies were preceded by steady financial gains at the Tepeyac shrine between 1634 and 1648.¹⁵³ Furthermore, his study demonstrates that the five-year period directly following Sánchez and Lasso de la Vega's publications witnessed the highest levels of income and expenditures by the hermitage in the seventeenth-century. This information spurs the historian's claim that,

The years during and immediately after the publication of Sánchez's and Lasso de la Vega's hagiographies of Our Lady of Guadalupe were, indeed, a pivotal point in this history of faith... [They] both built on a devotion in the making and actively promoted it in a way that eventually ensured the exceptional importance of the shrine at Tepeyac... The visita financial records and other sources that reach beyond the hagiographies into a more ample history of devotion... suggest leads that place the famous texts of Sánchez [and] Lasso de la Vega... into a process of devotion and promotion.¹⁵⁴

As Taylor suggests, the hagiographic narratives of 1648 and 1649, as well as subsequent financial expenditures until 1653, should be understood as products

¹⁵² Art historian Jeanette Peterson (2007) has offered an important hypothesis that diverges from the main line of Guadalupan scholarship. Peterson analyzes two early seventeenth-century pieces – an oil painting on cloth and a copper engraving – to argue that the tenets of Guadalupan devotion were negotiated well before the mid seventeenth-century. In light of this convincing study, it is important to note that the prominent mid seventeenth-century promotional program, of which *The First Miracle* is a part, built upon an established corpus of devotional tenets.

¹⁵³ Taylor (2010), 107.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 112-113.

and tools of a concerted campaign to increase Guadalupan devotion. Completed in 1653 by New Spain's most renowned painter of devotional images, *The First Miracle* was almost certainly commissioned as part of this promotional program. With this contextual perspective in mind, it becomes critical to consider how, specifically, *The First Miracle* presents and propagates faith in the Virgin.

The painting's continuous narrative depicts a large contingent of New Spain's culturally heterogeneous population accompanying the Virgin of Guadalupe's transference from Mexico City to Tepeyac. However, as explained in the above-cited studies, the origins of the hermitage and devotional cult at Tepeyac are obscure – likely owing to the shrine's lack of popularity and funding. It thus seems unlikely that the pictured procession represents an historical celebration. Rather, the festival presents a ceremony whose formal characteristics largely accord with descriptions of contemporaneous public festivals such as Corpus Christi and viceregal entries. By replicating the ceremonial pomp of these contemporaneous festivities, the painting offers viewers a seemingly historical and canonical scene that celebrates Guadalupan devotion as a miracle cult accepted by all of New Spain's culturally heterogeneous populace. This assertion is further supported by the absence of large festivals dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe from the primary sources that inform the previously discussed studies.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Additionally, Ilona Katzew notes that the depicted procession supposedly dates to 1533 – two years after the Virgin supposedly appeared to Juan Diego. Since the shrine at Tepeyac escapes mention until 1555, it seems extremely unlikely that a large procession to this site occurred in 1533. However, this line of reasoning is weakened by Katzew's failure to cite the source from which she derives the 1533 date. See, Katzew, Ilona. "Remedo de la Ya Muerta América': The Construction of Festive Rites in Colonial Mexico," pp. 151-175 in Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World, Edited by Ilona Katzew. Los Angeles, New Haven, and London: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Yale University Press.

The First Miracle seeks to substantiate the power and historicity of Guadalupan devotion. This task, fundamental to the painting's commission, is achieved through the Virgin's evangelical "taming" of the Chichimec body. Her miraculous revival of the fallen archer redeems the heathen man and his companions, inciting their burgeoning devotion. As with the rest of the performative festivities, this scene should be considered as an explanatory and didactic metaphor. Accordingly, the Virgin's discrete redemptive act and the Chichimecs' conversion enact the social acceptance and religious conversion of the semi-nomadic natives of northern New Spain into the civilized colonial body. With a single act, the Virgin of Guadalupe has accomplished a task that occupied viceregal authorities for more than five decades. *The First Miracle* thus seeks to authenticate and promote the Virgin's miraculous capabilities by appropriating the rhetoric associated with the Chichimec trope in order to ascribe Chichimec civility to the Virgin of Guadalupe's intercession.

Conclusions

New Spain's visual and textual records indicate that the indigenous peoples collectively glossed as "Chichimecs" were omnipresent in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century socio-political discourse. Indeed, both native and non-native glyphic- and alphabetic-script tomes implicate Chichimec figures in their discursive accounts. As glyphic signifiers in Nahuatl painted manuscripts, representations of Chichimecs carry ambivalent connotations that qualify their referents as respected progenitors of dynastic lineages and/or socially marginalized peoples whose relative lack of civility marked them as socio-political outsiders. Meanwhile, textual accounts written by viceregal civic and ecclesiastical authorities reconstructed the rhetorical trope associated with the term "Chichimec" to justify and subsidize a morally sanctioned *guerra a sangre y a fuego* against the semi-nomadic natives of northern New Spain. The rhetorical vilification of Chichimecs as scourges of northern expansion is also evinced in and propagated by the "Battle Frescoes" of San Miguel Ixmiquilpan. There, indigenous artists implicated the Chichimecs as pernicious opponents of viceregal and Christian hegemony. However, the late sixteenth-century evangelization and resettlement of the formerly "barbaric" Chichimecs initiated the natives' incorporation into the political body of New Spain. *The First Miracle*, a mid-seventeenth-century oil painting, presents a fictive account of that process in which indigenous actors perform the Chichimecs' newly founded position on the lowest rung of the civilized colonial corpus.

Though the present work is by no means exhaustive of the sources and narrative possibilities that exist to consider the ambivalent visual and textual

treatment of Chichimecs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New Spanish rhetoric, it endeavors to engage with timely currents in art historical scholarship. It is important to note that while the historical scope of the present work culminates in 1653, Chichimecs are also implicated in the socio-political and artistic discourse of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century New Spain. Though scholars such as Elena Isabel Estrada de Gerlero, Eduardo de Jesús Douglas, Ilona Katzew, Magali Carrera, and others have published studies that attend to this field, it remains rife with research opportunities.

In closing, I would like to add that the material presented here is part of a living tradition that extends beyond the mid seventeenth- and even eighteenth-century. The Chichimec trope did not die with Mexico's eventual independence from Spain. Rather, its multifarious connotations became associated with other semi-nomadic indigenous groups in the northernmost provinces of New Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Most notably, the ubiquitously vilified Apaches were often discussed as scourges of governmental hegemony as recently as the early twentieth-century. Moreover, the term "Chichimec" and its attendant history and tropic relationships still resonates in remote parts of present-day Mexico. Indeed, a recent ethno-linguistic study published by the University of Texas Press, Adoring the Saints, offers a view into this living tradition by attending to the unique patron saint festivals celebrated in the Otomí community of Cruz del Palmar and a Chichimec Jonáz village, San Luis de la Paz.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Lastra, Yolanda, Dina Sherzer, and Joel Sherzer. Adoring the Saints: Fiestas in Central Mexico. Austin: University of Texas Press (2009).

According to this study, the inhabitants of Cruz del Palmar and San Luis de la Paz jointly celebrate their respective patron saint festivals on August 25 of each year. Importantly, this date corresponds to the date in 1552 when the inhabitants of these towns enacted a truce that ended hostilities between the allied Otomí and Spanish forces and their Chichimec opponents. Today, individuals from these communities make annual visits to the other's village on August 25 to greet each other in elaborate encounters and jointly worship their respective saints. In addition to expressing mutual respect for each town's patron saint, this performance is understood by individuals in both communities as "a contemporary manifestation of the alliance between the Otomis and the Chichimecs following the Chichimec Wars."¹⁵⁷

Additionally, every January 1, Cruz del Palmar celebrates the New Year with an elaborate festival called the "Dance of the French and Apaches."¹⁵⁸ According to authors of Adoring the Saints,

The Apaches... [paint their faces] with black-and-white patterns deliberately made to look wild. On their heads they wear a white feather headdress. The French... wear contemporary French policemen's hats... Some Apaches may carry a bow and arrow... The French carry a French flag and the Apaches a Mexican one, with the Virgin of Guadalupe replacing the eagle. Death, two monkeys, and the Devil take part in the dance... The two sides fight an endless series of stylized battles... The French win every single individual battle... In the words of one of the dancers, "The Indian (*meco*) dies, the French win, and Death, the Devil, and the Monkey kill."¹⁵⁹

Though one must proceed carefully before asserting potential social and religious

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 11.

¹⁵⁸ Though the authors gloss the festival of the "Dance of the French and Apaches," it is notable that at least one participant identifies the indigenous participants as *Mecos*, an abbreviation of Chichimecs popularly used in colonial parlance.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 99-100.

continuities between contemporary devotions and historical devotions, the intersections between this festival and the mid seventeenth-century civic ceremonies discussed above are numerous. These intersections must serve as a reminder that the social, cultural, and religious identities and loyalties in the Americas are informed by extensive and complex histories that extend from before the arrival of Europeans to the present day.

Figure 1

Codex Xolotl, leaf 1



An example of a Nahuatl pictorial history recorded on *amatl* paper.

Figure 2

A Chichimec man, as pictured in Codex Telleriano-Remensis



Figure 3

A Chichimec man traveling at the behest of his tutelary deity, Huitzilopochtli (manifested as a hummingbird), as pictured in Codex Telleriano-Remensis



Figure 4

A sedentary, non-Chichimec, figure as pictured in Codex Telleriano-Remensis



Figure 5

Quinantzin Map, leaf 1



A Chichimec (male) and Toltec (female) marriage pair can be seen in the glyphic cave

Figure 6

Toltec (top) and Acolhua (bottom) figures are not visually distinguished in the Quinantzín Map



Figure 7

Codex Telleriano-Remensis, folio 26 recto



Figure 8

Codex Telleriano-Remensis, folio 27 recto



Figure 9a

Conventional glyphic representation of territorial conquest
as seen in Codex Zouche-Nuttall



Figure 9b

Conventional glyphic scene of martial conquest
as seen in Codex Selden



Figure 10

Codex Xolotl, leaf 1



The Chichimecs occupy the center of this leaf (symbolic of their migration into central Mexico), while their Toltec counterparts are relegated to the right margin.

Figure 11

Tlohtzin Map, left-center section



Figure 12

Map of northern New Spain



Figure 13

Map of the *camino real de la tierra adentro*

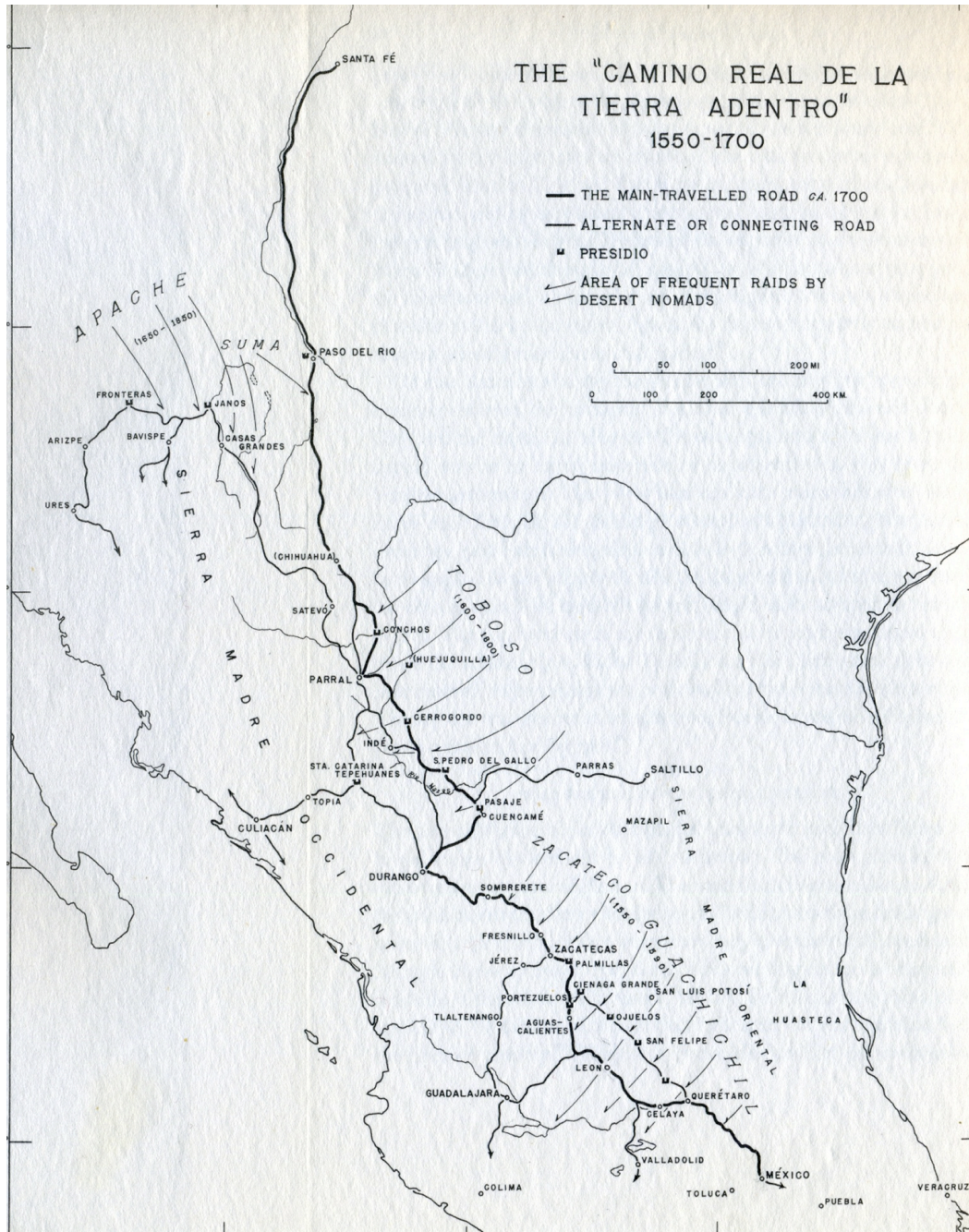


Figure 14

Map indicating the geographic position of Hidalgo (green) and the town of Ixmiquilpan (red dot)



Figure 15

Interior view of San Miguel Arcángel at Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo



Figure 16

The "Battle Frescoes" of San Miguel Arcángel



Figure 17

Map of the Río Tula

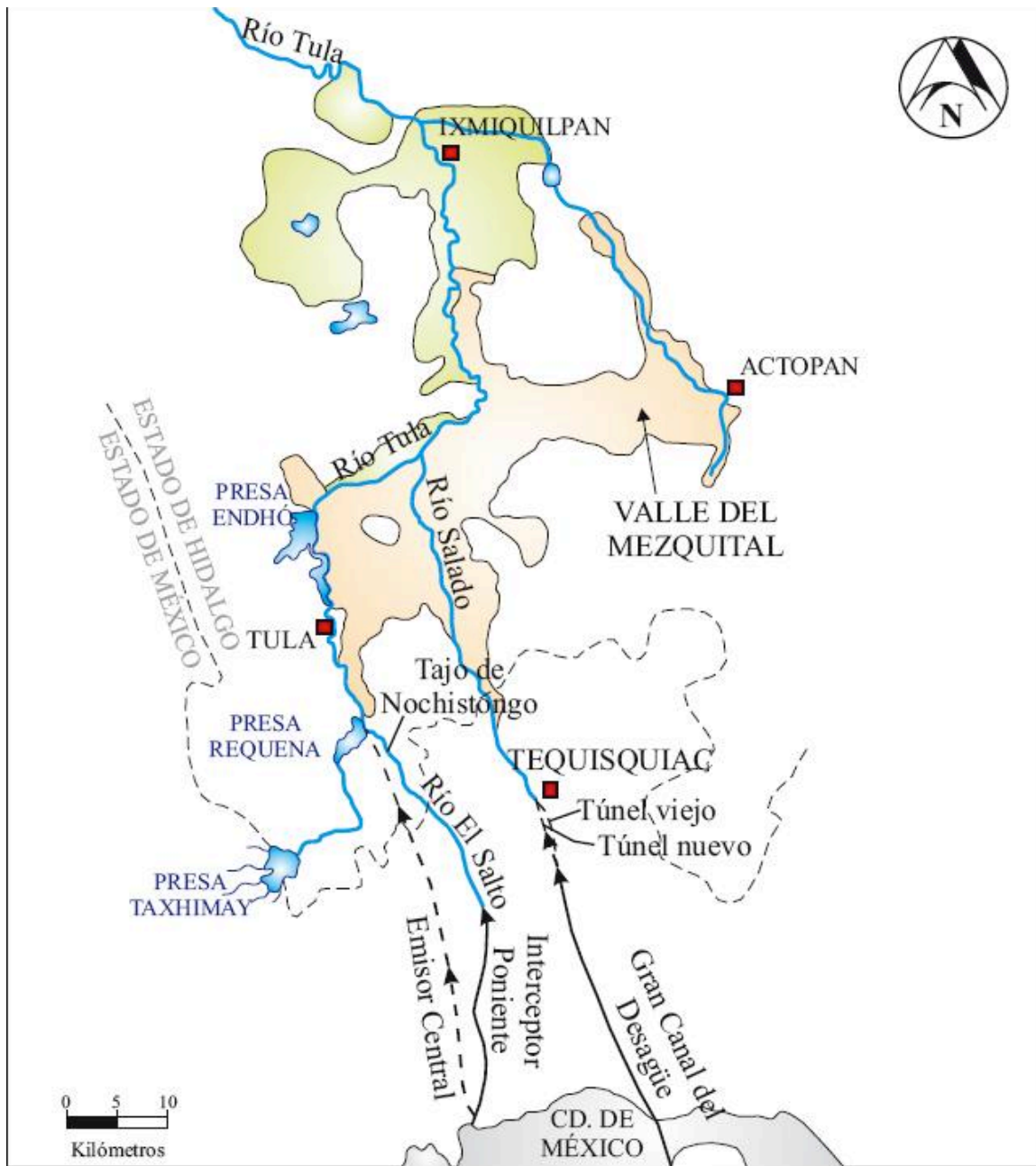


Figure 18

Battle between an Otomí (left) and Aztec (right) warrior as seen in
Codex Telleriano Remensis



Figure 19

Nahua (top) and Otomí (bottom) Figures as seen in Códice de Huamantla



Figure 20

*Transfer of the Image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the First Hermitage and
Representation of the First Miracle
(The First Miracle)*



José Juárez, 1653, oil-on-canvas, Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe

Figure 21

Detail of *The First Miracle*



Figure 22

Detail of *The First Miracle*



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