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Los Angeles

Converting a Sacred City:

Franciscan Re-Imagining of Sixteenth-Century San Pedro Cholula

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Verónica Anne Gutiérrez

2012

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Converting a Sacred City:

Franciscan Re-Imagining of Sixteenth-Century San Pedro Cholula

by

Verónica Anne Gutiérrez

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Kevin Terraciano, Chair

This dissertation examines the political and spiritual implications of the Franciscan presence in sixteenth-century Cholollan, renamed San Pedro Cholula by the Spaniards, reading the friars' evangelizing project in light of the Order's foundational missionary mandate, its millenarian tendencies, its 1517 Reform, and its desire to replenish the numbers of faithful leaving the Church with the advent of Protestantism. Based on printed Franciscan chronicles and materials from municipal, judicial, notarial, state, and national archives in Mexico and Spain, this project provides the first detailed study of the Franciscan appropriation of this Mesoamerican sacred site. Because the Sons of St. Francis were the only Order in colonial Cholula, their efforts resulted in a very particular Franciscan charism more than a general early modern Mediterranean Catholicism.

The Franciscan establishment in Cholollan officially began in late 1528 or early 1529 with the arrival of guardian fray Alonso Xuárez. Given its centuries-old sacred legacy, its

identity as a site of spiritual and thus political legitimation, and its numerous *teocalli*, or indigenous temples, the polity would prove irresistible to the Franciscans. Because of the elaborate daily and seasonal rituals performed by the native Cholulteca, as well as the similarities between certain Nahua rites and Catholic sacraments, the friars believed they had discovered a people perfectly poised to receive and internalize Christianity. Re-naming the *altepetl* San Pedro Cholula after St. Peter, the first Pope, the mendicants harkened back to Rome and the days of the Primitive Church, when Christianity existed in its purest form. Indeed, the friars believed that Cholula would become a “new Rome” in New Spain, a spiritual center across the Atlantic from which they would launch their evangelization of central Mexico. Ironically, Franciscan efforts to re-imagine Cholula’s past into a Catholic present ensured the continuity of its centuries-old spiritual and political dominance in the region – rivaling even the recently-founded Spanish city of Puebla – albeit as a Nahua-Christian city.

The dissertation of Verónica Anne Gutiérrez is approved.

Teo Ruiz

Robin Derby

Charlene Villaseñor Black

Kevin Terraciano, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles
2012

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Introduction

(Un)Godly Geography: The Old World Meets the New

By the end of the twelfth century, the great upsurge of the medieval West was at its height.¹ Not since the decline of the Roman Empire had so many gathered in towns or villages around churches and fortifications. Advancements in agriculture and an improved food supply had produced a steady population increase from about the year 1000, prompting a shift in agricultural production methods and the proliferation of mills. Urbanized settlements began establishing networks of linked townships, functioning less as military and administration outposts than as economic, cultural, and political nuclei. Increased stability encouraged mercantile activity, which in turn prompted a rebirth of long-distance trade, producing a classed society whose merchants controlled the exchange of goods and moneychangers assumed the role previously held by monasteries.

The commercial revolution and the widespread use of money had a profound effect on medieval society, engendering a new mentality based on production, salaries, and new notions of secular time. No longer living on the edge of famine, rural immigrants flocked to developing urban sites, navigating the new profit economy by banding together in guilds and mutual aid societies. With free labor replacing servile labor, the popular classes began accumulating wealth even as the new bourgeoisie maintained control of urban life and politics. Immigration fostered the breakdown of established village farming communities, which widened the gap between rural inhabitants and urban society. Indeed, the contrast between town and country life was much greater in Western Europe than in contemporary industrialized societies, with town walls designating a very real boundary between two distinct worlds.²

In the cities, local bishops wielded episcopal power, symbolizing a holiness located within the safety of a walled community. Even so, the rising popular classes, struggling to assert control in increasingly polarized urban spaces, came to view the clergy with suspicion. Impatient with uneducated clerics unable to transmit more than the most rudimentary Church teachings – and unhappy with lord-like diocesan clergy and monasteries supported by landed estates and obligatory tithing – laymen clamored for change and became increasingly active in religious life. Ironically, the Church's response, by way of the late eleventh-century Gregorian Reforms, only increased popular dissatisfaction because it raised expectations of clerical behavior. Frustrated lay people began developing new forms of popular piety that included public preaching; certain of these movements, like the Cathars and Waldesians, would be deemed heretical. Ultimately, the Church lacked the necessary ministerial structures to adequately respond to the medieval world's radical transformation of secular and spiritual society. Instead, the clergy became mired in an on-going debate about whether the wealth generated by commercial activities threatened one's salvation; the growing bourgeois population became increasingly anxious.

Twelfth-century Assisi operated as a microcosm of these medieval shifts, trends, and advancements. Situated on a major trade route, the fortified city was ideally located to benefit from Europe's expanding economy; indeed, the town expanded its walls twice in five decades. Political stability did not, however, accompany Assisi's commercial prosperity. Rocking the area instead was a deep-rooted conflict between the townsfolk and the landed families who controlled the region and who allied themselves with the emperor. Although the commune had received autonomy in 1174, within three years the emperor's men re-feudalized the area, ruling from the imposing Rocca Maggiore castle on the bluff above town. It was during this time that Pica Bernadone gave birth to Assisi's most famous resident.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Mother Earth,
Who sustains and governs us,
And produces fruits with colorful flowers and leaves!

– St. Francis of Assisi, “The Canticle of the Sun,” 1224³

Giovanni Francesco Bernadone, the son of a prosperous merchant specializing in luxury fabrics, began working for his father around the age of thirteen. Successful in business, he was nevertheless a carefree youth who enjoyed feasting with friends whom he courted from the local aristocracy. Influenced by the troubadour poetry and chivalric tales popular among his peers, Francis dreamed of worldly accolades, likely participating in the 1198 militia that stormed the Rocca Maggiore and raided the homes of Assisi’s nobles.⁴ Captured during an attack on neighboring Perugia in 1202 while outfitted as a knight, he spent a year in captivity, an experience that would affect his worldly demeanor and prompt him to embark upon a life of prayer and penance.

Importantly, the beginnings of Francis’ conversion were social, rather than specifically religious in nature.⁵ Divinely-inspired to overcome his fear and revulsion of lepers, he began tending to their needs in the local colonies situated in the valley below Assisi. Drawn to the marginalized and the forgotten, Francis frequented abandoned chapels in the countryside. During a mystical encounter while praying before an image of a crucifix in the San Damiano chapel, he heard a voice telling him to rebuild God’s Church. Not yet fully detached from a world governed by the chivalric code, he immediately sold his horse and numerous bolts of cloth from his father’s stock, presenting the proceeds to the San Damiano priest. Enraged,

Pietro Bernadone sought civil restitution, leading Francis to famously strip naked and proclaim himself thereafter a son and servant of God the Father only.

Francis would become a fool for Lady Poverty, whom he embraced with an ardor worthy of the medieval tradition of courtly love. To serve her, he wore beggar's rags, joyfully suffering reproach in her honor. From the Church's perspective, Francis had become a lay penitent hermit, a sort of freelance religious wanderer of the type then in vogue in central Italy, and for this reason he enjoyed the protection of the local bishop.⁶ Soon, other men – and eventually women – joined his movement, some of whom also shared his upper-middle class background.⁷ Gathering in the valley at the Portiuncula, the “Little Portion” chapel belonging to the Benedictines on Mount Subasio, Francis and his companions developed the charism of a simple new life.

Armed with a simple Rule based on the Gospels, Francis and twelve male companions journeyed from Assisi to the Eternal City in the year 1210 to seek verbal approval of their way of life from Pope Innocent III; the Pontiff gave them tonsure and granted them permission to preach penance publically.⁸ Formally approved by Pope Honorius III in 1223, the *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*, or the Order of Friars Minor, would explode in popularity, so that by the time of Francis' death, the Order had swelled to more than 3,000 men.⁹

Rejecting the political stability available in Assisi's established commune government, the brothers deliberately sought social marginalization, living on a worthless piece of land owned by others in order to avoid the pettiness of a life driven by money and power. Even so, they would venture forth from the Portiuncula to practice their trades in town, accepting as payment only for the necessities of life, which they then shared with the poor. Free from the burdens of property or money, the brothers could freely approach all individuals as equals. As

Franciscan scholar David Flood expressed it, Francis and his companions left the world in order to draw nearer to people.¹⁰ In this way, the sharp social distinctions that characterized contemporary medieval society did not exist among them; the movement was a clear break with established patterns of religious life that presupposed a stable community.¹¹

The Order Francis inspired differed from medieval religious communities because it presented a compromise between the seclusion of the cloister and a life of active preaching. The Poverello's main messages were four-fold: the sanctification of poverty and a renunciation of wealth, an awareness of God's presence in the world, recognition of the humanity and vulnerability of Christ especially as a Child, and a new approach to "infidels," that is, embracing them in love rather than waging war against them.¹² The first message appealed to the nobility, who – unlike the Rich Young Man in Scripture – could and did embrace voluntary poverty and thus protect themselves against the perceived threat to their salvation that wealth and property presented. Of particular importance was the fourth message, since – as Franciscan historian Jack Clark Robinson has pointed out – the 1223 Rule marked the first time in the history of the Church that a religious order specifically mentioned a missionary effort among non-believers as part of the life of the community.¹³ From its inception, then, Franciscan charism was missionary in spirit, since, according to Francis, the message of the Gospels had to be shared.¹⁴

Even as members of the Franciscan movement engaged in itinerant preaching, they also maintained a strong eremitical component. To seek rest and prayer, Francis and his companions often retreated to secluded huts on Mount Subasio for extended periods of time. Praying and living in caves among the creatures of the forest fueled the second component of Francis' message, namely, an acute awareness of nature as a manifestation of God's glory.

Contrary to the writings of Augustine and Paul who denigrated the natural world and argued for its danger and filth, including the animals, Francis saw in all creatures the presence of God.¹⁵ The poor man of Assisi believed that the physical as well as the spiritual world belonged to the Creator, as his famous Canticle of the Creatures proclaims. Because of the poetry and prayers of a barefoot fool, the forest – popularly believed to shelter witches, beasts, and evil spirits – became a divinely-created haven for rest and contemplation. The natural world had become, in effect, a sacred landscape. Ultimately, the labors of Francis and his brothers in Assisi – and indeed throughout the medieval world – would bolster the Church against the dangers of the sweeping social and economic changes then transforming Europe.¹⁶

Sacred Landscape in Mesoamerica: The Pyramid-Mountain

The architectural symbol that best characterizes Mesoamerican civilization is probably the towering four-sided, broad-based edifice we call a pyramid for lack of a more appropriate general term.... perceived as mountains by the people who actually built them.... When social divisions began to emerge...it was logical for chiefs and their priests to invoke the image of the mountain as a symbol of social unity, ascribing to it the concept of cosmic center defined by the four world directions.

– John Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*¹⁷

Much like the medieval world inhabited by Francis and his brothers, the various cultures of Mesoamerica perceived of the natural world as a sacred landscape. In sharp contrast to the idea promulgated by Francis in the medieval West that creation was holy precisely because it originated from the hands of the Creator, Mesoamerican peoples instead believed that objects in the physical world were themselves imbued with the divine. Their pantheistic belief included not only a certainty in the supernatural nature of every created thing, but also the conviction that all objects, even mountains and cities, were animate. For Mesoamerican peoples, to consume the

goods of the earth was to consume the supreme spirit, a practice that ensured the careful nurturing of the natural landscape and its products.

Similar to medieval cities in Europe, early Mesoamerican polities functioned primarily as administrative and religious centers of power, authority, and ceremony, with extensive trade routes connecting peoples in distant territories and promoting cultural exchange. Unlike the medieval West, however, the very architecture and spatial design of Mesoamerican settlements attempted to replicate the order of the universe, as well as to mirror the hierarchical relationship linking man with the divine. Because Mesoamericans believed stones possessed sacred qualities, sculptors took care to preserve as much of the quarried block's natural form as possible even as they designed and raised monolithic civic and religious structures.¹⁸ As exemplified by the various buildings at Monte Albán in the current Mexican state of Oaxaca, the goal was to build structures that blended in with the sacred landscape while also reflecting natural sunlight. Though aesthetically attractive to onlookers, pleasing the gods was the primary goal of Mesoamerican architecture.¹⁹

In the shift from nomadic lifestyles to the sedentary lives of agriculturalists, Mesoamerican peoples developed a variety of techniques to increase the production of foodstuffs, constructing terraces on mountainsides, digging canals to transport drinking water, and creating artificial wetlands. They also began domesticating dogs and turkeys and using their crops of maize to lure peccary and deer (whom they milked) from the surrounding landscape. Agricultural surplus encouraged social specializations, which prompted the eventual appearance of a classed society consisting of merchants, artisans, aristocrats, and kings. This Golden Age of intellectual and artistic endeavors in Mesoamerica occurred around 200-800 AD, that is, about 400 years before the advancements of the medieval West at the time of Francis.

As Mesoamerican societies developed and became socially stratified, religion emerged as a unifying factor among its people. Daily life unfolded in a manner predetermined by a pantheon of gods who punished misdeeds with illness and responded to veneration with bountiful harvests and victories in conquest. Simply put, Mesoamerican peoples envisioned life as a series of exchanges with the deities and the ancestors in the underworld, a perpetual negotiation that could bring about an agricultural surplus if the gods received the necessary appeasements. The earth, being inhabited by loved ones and deities, functioned as a sacred landscape that sustained mankind; in exchange, it demanded that men be placed in the earth to be consumed by the gods.

Cultures across Mesoamerica shared basic philosophical and spiritual principles, including human sacrifice, which was the prime aspect around which most religion revolved. The priestly class – who oversaw human sacrifice – generally possessed the highest levels of culture and learning, planning buildings, directing religious ceremonies, and advancing in science and mathematics. Because man was the highest life form, Mesoamerican peoples considered the sacrifice of men to be the premier category of exchange with the divine, and in some cases a necessary act to ensure the rising of the sun or the rotation of the earth. The more militant societies in Mesoamerica satisfied the divine mandate for human sacrifice through the metaphorical performance of warfare, subjecting their captives to heart-sacrifice on the pinnacles of pyramid-mountains.

Mesoamerican peoples accurately measured time by observing the movements of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Because they believed time unfolded in cycles whose events could and did often repeat, prophets trained to predict the future by interpreting the past played an important cultural role. As John Pohl has noted, "... ancient priests ascribed particular astrological properties to planets, stars, and constellations based on legends of gods and heroes.

The morning and evening horizons became curtains for the pageantry of religious stories that played themselves out across the night sky throughout the year.²⁰ Native peoples of Mesoamerica employed two methods to calculate the passing of time – a 365-day solar calendar linked to agricultural production, and a 260-day ritual calendar used to synchronize religious ceremonies, feasts, and markets. The first consisted of eighteen months twenty days in length, with the remaining five days at year's end deemed a time of danger during which the world might conclude. During this period, Mesoamerican peoples performed special rituals not only to dispel disaster but also to ensure an auspicious beginning to the new year; this five-day-period also provided astronomers the opportunity to annually re-evaluate the calendar and adjust it if necessary.

Directly linked to the solar calendar was the 260-day ritual calendar, which may have been based on the gestational period of corn, human babies, or as a means of scheduling long-distance trade between elites.²¹ Fundamental to religious philosophy, the calendar's months also consisted of twenty days, each represented by a particular day sign. Though these sign systems differed amongst various Mesoamerican peoples, the numerical coefficients from one to thirteen remained, with each day sign possessing a patron deity associated with both positive and negative qualities. Educated priests trained to read the ritual calendar were responsible for determining the ideal days for religious, political, and social activities, including marriages of alliance or the waging of war.

The central Mesoamerican polity of Cholollan serves as a quintessential example of Mesoamerican sacred landscape. The oldest-continually inhabited city in the Americas, its ancient *tlachihualtepetl*, or man-made mountain, is the largest structure of its kind in the world. First settled around 1200 BC, Cholollan developed into an expansive regional center over the

next one thousand years.²² The first identifiable residents were the Olmeca-Xicalanca people, who acquired regional dominance around 200 BC, retaining it until being conquered by the Tolteca-Chichimeca in the mid-twelfth century, under whose oversight Cholollan would surpass its former glory.²³ The Tolteca-Chichimeca, in turn, would be conquered by a band of marauding Spaniards in the fall of 1519.

The construction of the *tlachihualtepetl* during the period of Olmeca-Xicalanca dominance prompted Cholollan's development into an independent polity, regional marketplace, and cultural-religious matrix. According to Mesoamerican legend, giants constructed the pyramid-mountain in an attempt to reach the abode of the sun; enraged, the deities sent emissaries to halt its construction, causing the leviathans to disperse in terror.²⁴ In a Christianized version of the tale, the structure becomes the Tower of Babel, upon which a great tempest descended, emitting a toad-shaped stone to level its summit.²⁵ More to the point, it was the Olmeca-Xicalanca who envisioned and completed the first phase of the multi-layered *tlachihualtepetl*, which underwent several major construction stages over the next few hundred years.²⁶

The legendary divine interference in the assembly and devastation of Cholollan's *tlachihualtepetl* provides just one reason for its identity as a sacred landscape. Being deliberately situated over a spring, the Pyramid also replicated the image of a mountain emerging from the water, a belief central to Mesoamerican creation sites.²⁷ Importantly, springs functioned as portals to the netherworld, so that the *tlachihualtepetl*'s placement over this particular water source permitted communication with the divine.²⁸ Besides being viewed as an opening to the celestial forces, the Great Pyramid supplied a lid, as it were, over the primordial waters of the underworld, holding them in place.²⁹ In many ways, Cholollan functioned as an archetype, not

just as a water-mountain, but as the primordial water-mountain, ensuring the site's longevity while also serving as a model for future polities.³⁰

After the Tolteca-Chichimeca conquest in 1174 AD – about seven years before Francis would be born in Assisi – Cholollan's *tlachihualtepetl* would lose its spiritual primacy to the newly-constructed Quetzalcoatl Temple; indeed, evidence indicates that the conquerors deliberately destroyed the pyramid-mountain in a “termination ritual” to prevent its continued use as a sacred space.³¹ Not only did the recently-erected and magnificent Temple of the Plumed Serpent serve as an homage to the polity's new principal deity, but it also became the focal point around which the Tolteca-Chichimeca re-mapped the site, shifting away from its previous layout, which radiated outward from the sacred *tlachihualtepetl*.

Over time, the cult to Quetzalcoatl and the ceremonies performed at the Temple in honor of the Plumed Serpent would attract Mesoamerican leaders from neighboring polities, who would consult with Cholollan's priests in matters of alliances and factional disputes.³² The authority vested in the polity as a sacred landscape became so notable by the fifteenth century, lords of neighboring city-states would travel to the Quetzalcoatl Temple to participate in a legitimization ritual before assuming leadership in their home polities. The Quetzalcoatl cult's appeal transcended local religious differences and served to link ethnically diverse peoples throughout the central highlands, facilitating alliances as well as economic exchange. By titling the nobility throughout the region with a distinctive and easily-recognizable nose ornament, Cholollan secured its position as a political and religious matrix in addition to its identity as a cultural and agricultural marketplace. Its status as a holy site was so well-established, that even if the great number of smaller temples did not dot its terrain, the Spaniards who arrived in the early sixteenth century would have had no doubt about the sacred nature of Cholollan's landscape.

This Study

For, thus, become madmen to the world, you might convert
the world by the foolishness of your preaching.

– fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones O.F.M. Minister General
to fray Martín de Valencia, leader of the Twelve, 1523³³

This dissertation examines the political and spiritual implications of the “Franciscanization” of sixteenth-century Cholollan, renamed San Pedro Cholula by the Spanish colonists.³⁴ This work reads the Franciscan evangelizing project in Cholula in light of the Order’s foundational missionary mandate, its millenarian tendencies, its 1517 Reform, its desire to replenish the numbers of faithful leaving the Church due to the advent of Protestantism, and its response to the 1527 Sack of Rome. Because the Sons of St. Francis were the only Order in colonial Cholula – and remain the only Order to this day – the resulting sixteenth-century Nahua-Christianity reflected their very particular Franciscan charism more than a general Early Modern Mediterranean Catholicism. Situated on a major trade route like Assisi, Cholula was also a city of merchants, thus resembling the medieval citadel that produced the friars’ seraphic father.

Given Cholollan’s centuries-old sacred legacy, its reputation as a ritual center, its identity as a site of spiritual and political legitimation, and its numerous *teocalli*, or indigenous temples, the polity would prove irresistible to the Franciscans. Because of the elaborate daily and seasonal rituals performed by the native Cholulteca, as well as the similarities between certain Nahua rites and Catholic sacraments, the friars believed they had discovered a people perfectly poised to receive and internalize Christianity. In this New World vineyard they envisioned themselves, like their father Francis, bringing to the bosom of the Church Militant both the faithful and the infidels, as the Minister General, fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones, had bidden them.³⁵

No doubt when the first friars, led by fray Alonso Xuárez, arrived in Cholollan as the winter of 1528 melted into 1529, they carried several considerations in the forefronts of their minds. First was the urgency with which their Minister General had sent them to New Spain, believing that the world was growing old and that the conversion of non-believers must take place with great haste; second was the desire to found an apostolic seat in New Spain, since unlike the seculars, the spiritual authority they and their religious superiors enjoyed originated from the Pope, not the Spanish Crown; third was the knowledge that the Spanish and German troops of Emperor Charles V had sacked Rome in the spring of 1527 and made a captive of the Pope, looting, desecrating sacred objects, and torturing citizens before leaving in early 1528; and lastly, by appropriating Cholollan, the Franciscans would be fulfilling their apostolic mandate to preach to all peoples as promised in the Rule of their Order.

Not only could the friars attempt to replace the recently-attacked Eternal City in the Old World by appropriating a holy site in the New World, but by re-naming the polity San Pedro Cholula after St. Peter, the first Pope, they harkened back to Rome and the days of the Primitive Church, when Christianity existed in its purest form. Indeed, in his writings the Minister General compared the current spiritual landscape in the early sixteenth century with the crisis of faith that occurred during the time of Francis, whom God chose to save the Church and raise her from her downfall to her primitive state.³⁶ The friars believed God had chosen them at that historical moment to labor amid the native peoples in the New World and thus save the Church from peril.

In the sixteenth-century, Cholula would become a “new Rome” in New Spain, a spiritual center across the Atlantic from which the friars would launch their evangelization of central Mexico. Ironically, Franciscan efforts to re-imagine Cholula’s past into a Catholic present would ensure the continuity of its centuries-old spiritual and political dominance in the region – albeit

as a Nahua-Christian city – so that it came to rival even the recently-founded Spanish city of Puebla. Evidence also indicates that the native Cholulteca themselves strived to retain aspects of their sacred past in their Franciscanized present. Recognizing the advantages associated with accepting a foreign belief system, Cholula, like many native communities in the colonial period, would welcome the dominant deity’s representatives into its midst.

I have organized my study into five chapters. The first, “Constructing the Landscape of the Plumed Serpent: From Great Pyramid to Great Temple,” outlines Cholollan’s development into a Mesoamerican holy site and ritual center, reading its first spiritual re-mapping by Tolteca-Chichimeca conquerors as a counterpoint against its subsequent Franciscan appropriation, and introducing the European friars chosen for the mission in New Spain.

I base Chapter Two, “Re-mapping a Holy City: The Sons of Quetzalcoatl meet the Sons of St. Francis,” on documents from the National Archive in Mexico City, the Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain, the Notarial Archive in Puebla, Franciscan chronicles, and other sixteenth-century ethnohistorical sources. Recounting the arrival of the Franciscans in late 1528 or early 1529, the chapter explores Cholula’s second spiritual re-ordering, examines its sixteenth-century status as a spiritual and political rival to Puebla, and discusses Franciscan enthusiasm for Cholula as the perfect site from which to launch the evangelization of central New Spain, especially given the ritualistic history of its people and their widespread spiritual influence in the region.

The royally-funded Franciscan building project is the focus of my third chapter, “A Complex for Evangelization: Cholula’s Franciscan *convento* as the ‘New Rome’ of New Spain.” Built by native hands on the site of the demolished Quetzalcoatl Temple using its recycled sacred stones, the *convento* became a training center for friars, offering courses in rhetoric, literature,

and native-language acquisition, even as it functioned as an eschatological landscape. Like the Quetzalcoatl Temple it was replacing, the new religious structure solidified Cholula's spiritual power, legitimizing its claim to be the new Rome, made all the more significant given its recent attack by the Emperor's troops.

The fourth chapter, “Que me entierren con el hábito del bienaventurado San Francisco:’ Franciscan Spiritual Economy in Late Sixteenth-Century Spanish-Indigenous Cholula,” examines a collection of twenty-six Spanish-language testaments from Puebla’s Notarial Archive, most of whose testators request burial in the Franciscan church wearing a Franciscan habit. Taking as a case study the will of doña María Tlaltecayoa, a high-ranking native woman, I examine how her request to be interred in a friar’s habit allows her to access the Franciscan economy of grace while also retaining continuity with a pre-contact burial rite. Analyzing her will against the others, I place doña María’s request into a Spanish-indigenous context, discussing early modern Spanish death ritual and testamentary practices as well as Nahuatl funeral rites and Nahuatl testaments. The chapter also provides insight into the transatlantic transmission of Mediterranean Catholic burial practices among Cholula’s Spanish inhabitants in what was ostensibly a *pueblo de indios*.

Lastly, in a brief conclusion entitled “Nahua-Christianity in the Land of the Plumed Serpent: La Procesión de los Faroles in San Pedro Cholula, August 31, 2007,” I describe Cholula’s most important annual ritual, linking the sacred city’s contemporary religious traditions and the blending of indigenous and Christian practice evident in modern worship to the Franciscan spirituality introduced in the sixteenth century. Even today, nearly five hundred years after the Sons of St. Francis arrived, Cholula is a Franciscan town.

I should note that when I entered the UCLA History Department in the fall of 2004, I had a carefully-defined research project: analyzing indigenous participation in the Christianization of San Pedro Cholula in the sixteenth century. Despite the rich cache of documents I amassed over various research visits to Mexico and Spain, the materials ultimately did not provide insight into the indigenous perspective, and instead lent my original chapter drafts a speculative air. Unable to adequately discern the participation of the Cholulteca in the Christianization process, to ascertain the extent of Franciscan-Nahua interactions, or even to tease out a more general social or cultural history, I shifted my dissertation to focus on the Franciscan perspective. What this study is *not* is what it was meant to be: an analysis of indigenous participation in the Christianization of San Pedro Cholula in the sixteenth century.

Related Studies and Sources

Analytical and descriptive works pertinent to my discussion fall into several groups. The first and most obvious are the mendicant chronicles produced during the period in question, which then formed the basis for the seminal work of Robert Ricard on the Spiritual Conquest. The second body of relevant literature includes scholarship on Franciscan history and spirituality, especially materials relating to the history of the Franciscan Order in the Americas, mainly produced by the Academy of American Franciscan History. The third group of materials, ethnohistorical studies in art history, archaeology, and anthropology, provide context and testify to Cholula's import as a sacred site. All of these sources, of course, illuminate my cache of archival documents from Mexico and Spain.

The most important studies relating to my work were penned by the colonial mendicants themselves. Of the numerous works that appeared, the most relevant can be narrowed to three.

The first is fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía's 1541 *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España* [History of the Indians of New Spain].³⁷ Given his years of service in New Spain, his extensive travel throughout the colony, and his rapport with the native peoples, Motolinía received a commission from the 1536 Franciscan General Chapter to write an account of the customs, beliefs, and history of the *indios*. One of the original "Twelve Apostles" of Mexico, Motolinía lived for a time in Cholula and it is he who identifies the site as "another Rome." He also discusses Franciscan success, including the intense indigenous despair and protestations in response to the 1538 Chapter's decision to demote the Cholula friary and send away its friars.

The second pertinent mendicant source is fellow Franciscan fray Jerónimo de Mendieta's 1596 *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana* [History of the Indian Church] which is largely derivative of Motolinía.³⁸ Much like him, Mendieta received a commission from his Franciscan superior general in 1571 to write a history of the *Provincia del Santo Evangelio de México*, the Holy Gospel Province founded in 1524. Mendieta's text bears the stamp of medieval apocalyptic mysticism; indeed, it is in this work that he situates himself as the primary proponent of the Millennial Kingdom theory during the colonial period via the parable of the wedding feast in Luke 14. In this story, a man holds a banquet and sends his servant to gather the invited, who decline with a variety of excuses. The master then bids his servants invite people from the highways and the byways, but with seats still unfilled, he commands his servants to search in ditches and compel people inside so that his hall may be filled. Mendieta reads the master of the parable as Christ himself, the servant as a representation of the friars, and the three groups of guests, respectively, as the Jews (invited to hear Christ's message but who refuse to answer the call), the Muslims (some of whom convert to the Gospel), and the Gentiles (in this case the

native people).³⁹ Mendieta's history provides invaluable insight into the strong millenarian tendencies of many of the early Franciscans, including the friars stationed in Cholula.

The third significant mendicant source is the work of a Dominican, fray Diego Durán, who in 1581 completed his *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme* [History of the Indies in New Spain and the Islands of the Tierra Firme].⁴⁰ Commissioned by his Order to write a study of the ideas and religion of the native peoples, Durán traveled throughout New Spain, consulting indigenous pictorials and interviewing native informants and Spanish eyewitnesses to the Conquest. Durán not only fulfilled his mission of providing a guide for mendicants laboring in New Spain, but he also produced one of the most accurate and thorough histories of Aztec culture from the colonial period, with many stories not appearing in any other source. Of particular interest to me are his discussions of the foundations of the indigenous world, the construction of the pyramid-mountain at Cholollan, and the Christianization efforts of the mendicants among the native peoples.

I have also relied extensively on *The Oroz Codex, or Relation of the Description of the Holy Gospel Province in New Spain, and the Lives of the Founders and other Noteworthy Men of said Province*.⁴¹ In addition to the official report on the Holy Gospel Province sent to the Franciscan Minister General in Rome in 1585, the text also contains various miscellaneous documents relating to the Franciscan enterprise in New Spain. Of particular interest are the biographies of the early friars in the Province, the status report on each friary including Cholula, and notes on the friars who died in the Province as well as those slain by native peoples. Most important for my purposes is the insight provided into the foundation and expansion of the Province, as well as the full, generously-footnoted text of both the "Obedience" and "Instruction" given to the Twelve by fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones in 1523 on the

occasion of commissioning them to evangelize in the New World. Taken together, the documents in the Oroz Codex form the backbone upon which I build my discussion.

Scholars who study religion in colonial Mexico inevitably reference the term “spiritual conquest,” a designation first appearing in the work of seventeenth-century Augustinian chronicler Juan de Grijalva to reference the religious accompaniment of the military subjugation of native peoples, an aspect he believed should supersede it.⁴² Though mendicant involvement in Mexico has been the subject of historical scholarship since the colonial period – most notably among chroniclers in the Franciscan Order – the concept of “spiritual conquest” was not popularized until the 1933 publication of *La “conquête spirituelle” du Mexique* by Robert Ricard.⁴³ Following the appearance of Ricard’s foundational study, historians and art historians alike largely espoused the Ricardian paradigm of spiritual conquest. Simply stated, this model argued for a static (and overwhelmingly and immediately successful) overlay of Christianity upon a conquered but ultimately receptive indigenous population.⁴⁴ Based upon a wide range of untapped Spanish sources, Ricard’s argument and prose echoes the paternalistic tones of fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía, who offered little agency to the indigenous neophytes he discussed. In essence, Ricard’s text reads as a panegyric to the mendicants.

Although generations of scholars owe much to Ricard’s seminal work – and even today all studies of Christianity in Mexico, including my own, originate with his scholarship – since the 1980s, scholarship has rightly shifted away from the paradigm of spiritual conquest to embrace a more nuanced understanding of the Christianization process. The incorporation of native-language sources and a greater understanding of Mesoamerican culture and religion have contributed to this trend; in an equally important shift that recognizes the European context, scholars have begun paying closer attention to the methodology of Franciscan evangelization,

Early Modern developments in Church teaching, and Iberian pastoral precedents in the development of New World religious traditions.

Even so, my work does not so much examine the spiritual conquest as contribute to the growing field of Franciscan Studies, the leading publisher of which is indisputably the Academy of American Franciscan History. The sources are numerous, so I will name only the most pertinent. First are the works of the prolific Franciscan, fray Francisco Morales, a historian of the Order, archivist, and current Provincial of the Holy Gospel Province in Mexico. He has published inventories of the largest Franciscan collections in Mexico and is among the most prolific Franciscan historians of New Spain. Most relevant to my study are his 2008 essay in *The Americas*, “The Native Encounter with Christianity: Franciscans and Nahuas in Sixteenth-Century Mexico;” his 1973 monograph, *Ethnic and Social Background of the Franciscan Friars in Seventeenth Century Mexico*, which includes introductory essays discussing the process of recruiting sixteenth-century friars to New Spain; and his 1983 edited collection, *Franciscan Presence in the Americas: Essays on the Activities of the Franciscan Friars in the Americas, 1492-1900*.⁴⁵ He also contributed to the 2002 publication of *Cholula: Un vínculo de sabiduría y fraternidad*; published by the University of the Americas in conjunction with the Holy Gospel Province, it gathered the latest work on Franciscans in colonial Cholula produced in Mexico.⁴⁶

Another important scholar in the field of Franciscan Studies is John Frederick Schwaller who has produced numerous works related to the Church in colonial Mexico. Most relevant to this study are three of his edited collections: *Francis in the Americas: Essays on the Franciscan Family in North and South America*, which appeared in 2005 and contains the essays presented at a conference organized by the Academy of American Franciscan History to assess the current state of Franciscan Studies; *The Church in Colonial Latin America*, containing important work

on policy issues, parochial issues, and cultural issues, which appeared in 2000; and 2003's *Sahagún at 500: Essays on the Quincentenary of the Birth of Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún*, which provides valuable insight into the Franciscan world of colonial Mexico via the life of its premier ethnographer.⁴⁷

Other relevant Franciscan studies include John Leddy Phelan's 1970 monograph, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, which remains the best overview of the eschatological dimension of Franciscan thought in New Spain, especially Mendieta's discourse on the parable of the banquet in Luke 14.⁴⁸ Closely-related is Edwin Edward Sylvest Jr.'s *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory in Sixteenth Century New Spain Province of the Holy Gospel*, which appeared in 1975 in response to Phelan, widening his study to include in the discourse of millennial thought Franciscan writers like Motolinía, Sahagún, the French friar John Focher, Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, and Diego Valadés.⁴⁹ In addition, Jacques Le Goff's *Saint Francis of Assisi*, a collection of four studies that first appeared in French in 1999, provided the medieval context for understanding the world of Francis and the Franciscanism he inspired.⁵⁰ Similarly, I found the Franciscan friar-historian Dominic Monti's *Francis and his Brothers: A Popular History of the Franciscan Order*, which appeared in 2009, to be a well-written and well-researched, and concise presentation of the eight hundred year history of the Order.⁵¹ I also consulted John Moorman's 1968 tome, *The History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517*, a detailed and well-documented chronology of the Order from its founding until the Leonine Division in 1517.⁵²

In my approach to the Franciscans in Cholula, I recognize, like historian James Lockhart, that the Nahuas' highly-developed religion lent itself to many aspects Christianity.⁵³ According to Lockhart, the extent of the friars' success depended precisely on the acceptance and retention

of indigenous elements and patterns, which in many respects resembled those of Europe; in this way, relatively few of the friars' innovations were entirely new to Mesoamerican peoples.⁵⁴ Based on Nahuatl sources, Lockhart's work set the stage for numerous studies in its wake that rely on native-language materials to understand the effects of Christianity on native communities. Unfortunately in my case, I could not locate Nahuatl documents to incorporate into my research.

Even so, several useful studies of Christianity in modern Cholula exist. These include Anamaría Ashwell's 1998 study, *Creo para poder entender: la vida religiosa en los barrios de Cholula* [I believe in Order to Understand: Religious Life in Cholula's Barrios].⁵⁵ Based on extensive research, numerous interviews, and personal participation in the religious life of Cholula from 1996-1999, Ashwell's work speaks to the longevity of the Franciscan Christianity introduced in sixteenth-century Cholula. Ashwell also collaborated with Texas-photographer-turned-Cholula-resident John O'Leary in 1999 on *Cholula: La Ciudad Sagrada/The Sacred City*, a bilingual text illustrating her findings with poignant images of religious life in Cholula.⁵⁶ In an earlier and similarly titled work produced by *Artes de México* magazine, the trilingual (Spanish/English/French) *Cholula Ciudad Sagrada* examines Cholula's sacred landscape from its founding to the present.⁵⁷

In the only published scholarly book on colonial Cholula to date, Norma Angélica Castillo Palma examines the demographic, economic, and social effects of miscegenation on the local population.⁵⁸ Focusing on the period between 1649 and 1796, she argues that Cholula's seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *mestizo* residents existed in what remained, essentially, a *pueblo de indios*, or indigenous city. My research, which concentrates on an earlier period, both supplements and qualifies her findings, first by revealing sixteenth-century Cholula as a Spanish-

indigenous society, since, as my documents indicate, individuals self-identified as *indio* (Indian), *Español* (Spanish), *mulato* (African and European), or even *negro* (black), but never as *mestizo* (mixed-blood). My study exposes early colonial Cholula as a pre-miscegenation culture, that is, ethnic groups remained separate even as they lived side by side.

My archival materials further challenge Castillo Palma by revealing a significant number of Spaniards residing in Cholula in the early period, residents who actively contributed to daily life in the newly hispanized city even as they interacted with native Cholulteca within a shifting social, political, and religious landscape. As historians Charles Gibson and James Lockhart have demonstrated, the success of many colonial cities in New Spain was dependent upon pre-existing indigenous structures.⁵⁹ Such was the case in sixteenth-century Cholula, whose thriving Franciscan evangelization complex was predicated upon the region's celebrated pre-hispanic sacred identity.

Related studies in the field of literary criticism include Osvaldo Pardo's 2004 monograph, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, and Viviana Díaz Balsera's book, *The Pyramid Under the Cross: Franciscan Discourses of Evangelization and the Nahua Christian Subject in Sixteenth-century Mexico*, which appeared the following year.⁶⁰ In the former, Pardo provides a penetrating study of the relationship between Nahua ritual and Christian sacraments, reading mendicant and Jesuit writings relating to evangelization alongside the works of Dominican theologian St. Thomas Aquinas, Franciscan theologian Duns Scotus, and the proceedings of the Council of Trent, asserting that a sacramental theology developed unique to the colonial Mexican situation. In contrast, Balsera works within a framework of subaltern and postcolonial theory to investigate the cultural negotiations that occurred in colonial Mexico, reading Nahuatl theater, confession

manuals, and fray Jerónimo de Mendieta's 1596 *Historia eclesiastica indiana*. Díaz Balsera contends that Spanish-led expansionism had more to do with an attempt to possess the soul of the native subaltern than with political and economic subordination. Both authors promote the negotiation model of evangelization, that is, they read the process as a cultural exchange rather than a willing submission or a forced subordination.

Also useful were two recent collections that speak to my topic, namely *Local Religion in New Spain*, which appeared in 2006 edited by Martin Nesvig, and *Religion in New Spain*, edited by Susan Schroeder and Stafford Poole, which appeared the following year.⁶¹ The essays in the first collection examine instances of regional devotion in various areas of Mexico; its eight fascinating case studies span the colonial period and consider native peoples, Spaniards, slaves, and men of African descent. Framing the work is an introductory essay by Early Modern historian Carlos M. Eire and a closing essay by William Christian Jr., who notes that local variation in Catholicism has its place in canon law, which allows customary practice to accumulate at all levels.⁶² Introduced by the editors, *Religion in New Spain* includes essays arranged around seven related themes, including encounters, accommodation, and idolatry; native sexuality and Christian morality; miracles; nuns; the Inquisition; music and martyrdom; and Christianity on the frontier. In all, the essays demonstrate the complicated nature of religious faith, the very real lives of priests and nuns, the manner in which political and economic considerations affected the colonial Church, and the various ways colonial subjects attempted to understand natural disasters through a spiritual lens.

My project has also benefited from scholarship on religious art and architecture in sixteenth-century Mexico, drawing upon arguments and architectural theories outlined by art historians such as Manuel Toussaint, George Kubler, John McAndrew, Samuel Edgerton, and

Jaime Lara. In addition, Francisco de la Maza and Ester Ciancas have published works that specifically focus on the churches of San Pedro Cholula.⁶³

Manuel Toussaint has been touted by art historians as the father of sixteenth-century Mexican art and architectural studies, particularly because of his work a series entitled *Iglesias de México: 1525-1925*.⁶⁴ Although he acknowledges that Mexican colonial art has both Spanish and indigenous precedents, he argues that indigenous architecture had no influence on colonial churches, allowing for indigenous influence only in the realm of decorative sculpture.

In *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century*, a monumental two-volume work appearing in 1948, George Kubler presented the art history world with the first synthetic examination of buildings in early New Spain, including architecture, painting, and sculpture.⁶⁵ In it, Kubler asserts that the open chapels built by the mendicants and their native laborers were “unprecedented in the history of architecture; they are the most original contribution of Mexican design to the world repertory of specialized building forms.”⁶⁶ In his work, Kubler comes closer to recognizing native participation and according them agency in the development of Mexican architectural forms than does Toussaint. He does, however, define Mexican structures as examples of “the Humanist architecture of the Golden Age of Spain in America.”⁶⁷

John McAndrew would draw upon *Mexican Architecture* when he published his own massive monograph, *The Open-Air Churches of Sixteenth-Century Mexico: Atrios, Posas, Open Chapels, and other studies* in 1965.⁶⁸ Focusing on the years 1521 to 1600, McAndrew’s major contribution lies in viewing the open-air churches, that is, walled *atrio*, *posas*, and chapel, as an organic whole. It is McAndrew’s careful use of published colonial sources, his wide reading of previous scholarship, and his personal and repeated visits to these church structures that contribute to the success of this study. Built as a result of the urgencies of the evangelizing

project, he believes these sixteenth-century structures can only properly be understood as byproducts of that conversion process.

In a 2001 monograph, *Theaters of Conversion*, Samuel Edgerton argues that from the beginning, friars conceived of their *convento* structures as unique architectural theaters in which to carry out their evangelization. Rather than use the word “syncretism” to describe this cultural exchange, Edgerton employs a phrase he has coined, “‘expedient selection’ to describe the way the mendicant missionaries used the visual arts for conversion purposes.”⁶⁹ He promotes the idea of negotiated accommodation among native artisans, who became “willing participants in the assimilation and dissemination of these European-style visual aids.”⁷⁰ Edgerton argues that because native peoples in Mexico adapted European motifs to their own artistic traditions, colonial churches serve as unique contributions to the worldwide spread of the Italian Renaissance while also functioning as regional examples of an “Indian Renaissance.”

In a 2004 monumental text, *City, Temple, Stage: Eschatological Architecture and Liturgical Theatrics in New Spain*, art historian and Catholic priest Jaime Lara explores his ideas about the medieval character of the Spiritual Conquest of Mexico.⁷¹ Arguing that the Middle Ages sang its swan song not in Europe but in the New World, he analyzes medieval texts, legends, liturgical practices, and prophecy. He sees in New Spain both a medieval and a Renaissance moment during which the evangelization complex functioned as an eschatological landscape modeled after the New Jerusalem, serving as an embodiment of medieval Franciscan millennial thought. Echoing Lockhart, Lara asserts that the coincidental similarities between Catholic ritual practice and Nahua religious traditions made it possible for the friars to “overlay” Christianity. Rather than introduce what Louise Burkhart calls a “‘Nahua Christianity,’

suggesting something alien to orthodox Christianity, expressed through a non-Western ethos,” Lara affirms that “it was an authentic and ‘traditional’ form of Christian identity.”⁷²

All of these sources, of course, illuminate the cache of archival documents I have amassed from repositories in Mexico and Spain. These include the National Archive in Mexico City, the Notarial, Municipal, and Judicial Archives of Puebla City in the Mexican state of Puebla, the State Archive of Tlaxcala in Mexico, and the Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain. Taken together, these texts and documents contribute the backbone of my innovative Transatlantic project.

Archives and Abbreviations

AH-T: Archivo Histórico del Estado de Tlaxcala (Tlaxcala)

AGI: Archivo General de las Indias (Sevilla)

AGN: Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico City)

AM-P: Archivo del Ayuntamiento Municipal de Puebla (Puebla)

AN-P: Archivo Notarial del Estado de Puebla (Puebla)

BF-C: Biblioteca Franciscana (San Pedro Cholula)

BP-P: Biblioteca Palafoxiana de Puebla (Puebla)

INAH-P: Archivo Histórico Judicial de Puebla del Centro Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Puebla)

MNAH: Archivo Histórico del Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexico City)

Chapter One

Constructing the Sacred Landscape of the Plumed Serpent: From Great Pyramid to Great Temple

The city itself is more beautiful to look at than any in Spain,
for it is very well proportioned and has many towers.... From
here to the coast I have seen no city so fit for the Spaniards to live.

– Hernando Cortés, 1520⁷³

In September 1519, the Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés sent two of his captains, Pedro de Alvarado and Bernardino Vázquez de Tapia, as an advance party to scout out Cholollan, a thriving Mesoamerican polity in what is today the Mexican state of Puebla. Situated in a valley beneath the shadow of two snow-capped volcanoes, the Smoking Mountain Popocatepetl and the White Lady Iztaccihuatl, sixteenth-century Cholollan would have impressed its visitors as a nucleus of culture and learning, a center of trade with a vibrant marketplace specializing in exotic goods and local ceramics, and as a focal point of ritual and pilgrimage in the region. The Spaniards' gazes would have been drawn to the numerous teocalli, or indigenous temples, interrupting the landscape, especially to the colorful, dominant, and centrally-located sanctuary of Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, for whose cult Cholollan was renowned. Distracted by the lively movement of goods, slaves, merchants, and penitents, the two conquistadors would have glanced only briefly at an unassuming mound of earth to the southeast of the central ceremonial precinct, not realizing that within its bowels lay the secret to Cholollan's sacred origins, its power, and its longevity. This hillside haven to rabbits, deer, and squirrels – long abandoned since the polity underwent a spiritual-remapping in the twelfth century – was, in fact, the Great Pyramid of Cholollan in disguise.⁷⁴

Unbeknown to the Cholulteca – and, perhaps, to an extent, even to the Spanish conquistadores – this visit set the stage for the subsequent spiritual re-mapping of a spiritual people, carried out this time by a band of eschatological friars from the most austere Franciscan Custody in Spain. Motivated by a belief that converting the native peoples in New Spain would usher in the End Times, the friars could not help but recognize the implications of converting the Cholulteca, whose polity enjoyed extensive spiritual reach. This, coupled with their desire to carve out for themselves a spiritual home, a “new Rome” in the New World that would set them apart – and above – the seculars and the other Orders, motivated the Franciscans to appropriate the holy site Cholollan, which they alone occupied throughout the sixteenth century.⁷⁵ Not only did they have the opportunity to establish a New World proxy for the recently-destroyed Eternal City, sacked by Emperor Charles V’s troops in 1527, but with its long sacred history and people accustomed to ritual and religious observance, Cholollan provided the friars the perfect eschatological stage upon which to perform their divinely-appointed leading roles in the last act of world history.

Ancient Cholollan

Twenty-five hundred years prior to Spanish arrival, the shallow lake that had once occupied the site of present-day San Pedro Cholula began to disappear.⁷⁶ The receding waters produced a rich lacustrine environment so ideal for agricultural production that Cholollan would eventually gain regional renown as a marketplace and center of long-distance trade. Lush, marshy lands bounded by the Atoyac River lured the region’s earliest inhabitants to settle along the lake’s shrinking shorelines sometime around 1,200 BC.⁷⁷ Soon thereafter, small communities began to form within about a one mile radius of Cholula’s current location.⁷⁸

During the Formative Period (~1,200 BC – 200 AD), the tiny lake-side settlement of Cholollan developed into an expansive regional center radiating outward from a nascent ceremonial complex.⁷⁹ Cholollan's earliest inhabitants were dedicated agriculturalists who supplemented their diet with local herbs, native fruits, and game from the hunt. Residing on a plain peppered with lakes and marshes that offered a favorable habitat for reeds, birds, and fishes, initial settlers produced ceramics and lived in shelters constructed of perishable materials.⁸⁰ Daily activities in the most ancient period cannot be discussed with certainty; indeed, even the original language and site name remains a mystery.⁸¹

The Olmeca-Xicalanca, Cholollan's first identifiable residents, arrived to the area around 200 BC and quickly acquired regional dominance, retaining it until being conquered by the Tolteca-Chichimeca in the mid-twelfth century.⁸² Migrating northward from their ancestral homeland in what is today the Mexican gulf states of Veracruz and Tabasco, the Olmeca-Xicalanca – among other feats – appropriated and refined Cholollan's budding ecological, political, social, and economic systems. Much like their predecessors, little may be said about their daily life in early Cholollan, except that they engaged in various regional artistic and building programs and continued the tradition of pottery production.⁸³ The Olmeca-Xicalanca also gained renown as powerful merchants, influenced, no doubt, by Cholollan's location along an ancient trade route linking the Valley of Mexico with the Gulf Coast and Oaxaca.⁸⁴

Given that the site's long-distant merchants would have continually associated with outlying cultures, observed distinct ritual practices during their travels, and borne this knowledge home, Cholollan's residents would have had ample opportunity to develop a multifaceted sacred tradition.⁸⁵ Indeed, the discovery of Olmecoid pottery shards has led at least one archeologist to suggest that Formative Cholollan participated in a pan-Mesoamerican religious ideology.⁸⁶

While this is certainly possible, archeological evidence remains inconclusive regarding the specifics of Olmeca-Xicalanca religious belief in the earliest period. What is clear, however, is that the construction of the Great Pyramid began under the Olmeca-Xicalanca.

*Classic Cholollan (~200 AD – 900 AD): The Tlachihualtepetl*⁸⁷

So they began to make [the Great Pyramid] taller than the highest mountain range...[but] God confounded them, as he did those who built the Tower of Babel, with a huge stone in the shape of a toad that fell during a terrible tempest that came over that place.

– fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, OFM, 1541⁸⁸

Cholollan’s development into an independent polity, regional marketplace, and cultural-religious matrix during the Classic period is inextricably linked to the construction of the Great Pyramid, that is, the *tlachihualtepetl*. With its “hand-made hill” or “man-made mountain” undergoing several major construction stages during the Classic period, Cholollan of the Olmeca-Xicalanca would mature into a principal religious center about two miles in size.⁸⁹ Much like Formative-era Cholollan, however, difficulties arise in providing a clean temporal site chronology during the Classic.⁹⁰ Even the addition of ethnohistorical sources to the archeological and anthropological literature does little to clarify the confusion given the discrepancies in the cultural-historical record.⁹¹

According to legend, the origins of the *tlachihualtepetl* coincide with the origins of the world.⁹² Ancient tradition holds that in the beginning, after the creation of light and sun in the east, monstrous men appeared to possess the land.⁹³ Unable to reach the sun but delighting in its light and in its beauty these men, who had gathered in a locale known as *Iztaczollin ineminian*, set upon building a tower so tall as to reach the heavens itself.⁹⁴ Mixing clay for bricks and

concocting a powerful mortar, the giants raised the tower in great swiftness. As suddenly as the tower appeared, however, so quickly was it destroyed by enraged heavenly dwellers who appeared from the four regions of the world.⁹⁵ The monstrous men, confused, confounded, and terrified, fled in all directions.⁹⁶

Cholollan's origin myth receives a slightly different treatment in the sixteenth-century indigenous-authored *Códice Vaticano Latino 3738*, which repeats the legend of giants as the conceivers and constructors of the Great Pyramid.⁹⁷ According to this pictorial, during the first era of the world or the Age of Water, a flood swept across the land, transforming all earthly beings into fishes; it was at this time that giants called Tzocuicxque appeared.⁹⁸ The codex credits a giant named Xelhua with conceiving the idea of the *tlachihualtepetl*, and relates how he organized his followers in its construction. Manufacturing adobe bricks with clay removed from a mountain called Cocotl in the somewhat distant settlement of Tlalmanalco, Xelhua's men arranged themselves in a queue, passing blocks hand over hand until they had constructed a tower that appeared to reach the heavens.⁹⁹

The Franciscan fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía, in his 1541 *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, aligns the *tlachihualtepetl* with the biblical Tower of Babel. A resident for several years in the Franciscan establishment in Cholula, he declares that the Great Pyramid's destruction was not due to the angry reaction of four heavenly beings, but rather to a massive toad-shaped stone that plummeted towards the tower from the clouds during divinely-ordained tempest, instantly halting its construction and leveling its summit.¹⁰⁰

Present-day community memory accounts for the Pyramid's flattened peak with an overtly Christian revision of Motolinía's story: in San Andrés Cholula (the municipality in whose jurisdiction the Pyramid currently stands; its boundaries delineate the former Olmeca-

Xicalanca polity), Geoffrey McCafferty has heard tale of St. Michael the Archangel's descent from the heavens to slice off the top of the Great Pyramid with his mighty sword, resulting in the numerous little pyramids in the surrounding fields.¹⁰¹ A similar Christianized legend from the neighborhood of San Francisco Cuapan in Cholula identifies the avenging angel as St. Gabriel – patron of the local Franciscan establishment – who descended on the orders of an angry God after being informed about the Pyramid's construction by the Archangel Raphael. With a sword in his hand and a powerful strike, Gabriel the Archangel cleanly sliced off the Pyramid's summit, sending the severed piece sailing away until it landed in neighboring San Pedro Atlixco, where the peak of the *tlachihualtepetl* can still be seen today.¹⁰²

Whether ancient or modern, giant or archangel, stone or sword, the persistence of these myths indicate that regional community memory relishes the notion of divine intervention in the Pyramid's original construction and subsequent destruction. This, then, is but one manifestation of the longevity of Cholollan's sacred legacy, an identity of which the sixteenth-century friars were well aware.

Cholollan in the Archeological Record

Archeologically-speaking, the *tlachihualtepetl* itself offers important clues not only to its construction and development as a sacred site, but also to Cholollan's political organization and relationship with neighboring polities in the region.¹⁰³ For example, since limestone accounts for a majority of one of the original building's support structures – including *taludes* (panels), *alfardas* (parallel beams), *tableros* (platform structures), breaks, and stairs – and the nearest lode lies about four miles from Cholollan, the site must have had easy access to building materials both near and far. Even with nearby sources, gathering the requisite amount of limestone for

such a monumental structure would have necessitated thousands of trips, since, as historian Ross Hassig has demonstrated, the traditional individual load in Mesoamerica would have been about fifty pounds.¹⁰⁴ Beyond limestone, the Pyramid also required the manufacture, transport, and assembly of thousands of adobe bricks, as well as the mining and dispatching of tons of clay and sand for filler material. Without a doubt, when Pyramid construction began during the Classic Period, the Olmeca-Xicalanca leadership had a significant labor force at its disposal from within Cholollan's population and possibly even from neighboring sites under its jurisdiction.

More than a ready and substantial labor force, these figures indicate the existence of a well-established and sophisticated hierarchical social structure. Not only did the Classic-era Olmeca-Xicalanca boast inter-related governmental, political, and religious bodies that organized laborers and oversaw and approved the work of trained specialists at the Pyramid site, but Cholollan itself also produced architects, engineers, and artists.¹⁰⁵ Importantly, no neighboring sites exhibit systems matching the level of sophistication present in Classic Cholollan, nor featured structures with dimensions comparable to the Great Pyramid, deliberately selected such durable construction materials, or possessed an intricate hierarchical arrangement including an elite class capable of mobilizing and directing a large labor force. Indeed, settlement patterns after the first century suggest a ruralization rather than an urbanization of the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, the abandonment of many locations, and an increasing shortage of settlements with public structures.¹⁰⁶

By the second century or earlier, Olmeca-Xicalanca Cholollan dominated an extensive territory, enjoyed access to a significant workforce whom they engaged in public architecture, produced artists, architects, engineers, and other scientific specialists, and boasted a well-established, albeit socially-unequal, administrative and religious hierarchical system. Throughout

the Classic Period Cholollan would continue to refine its unique ceramic style and solidify its identity as an agricultural center amid a sacred geography, the latter via ritual associated with the *tlachihualtepetl*, the center of its burgeoning ceremonial precinct. In many ways, then, Cholollan functioned in Mesoamerica at this time as an archetype, that is, as a model whose complex design seems to have been its original creation.¹⁰⁷

Cholollan as Sacred Landscape

Divine interference in the assembly and devastation of the *tlachihualtepetl* does not provide the sole basis for Cholollan's sacred identity; indeed, the Great Pyramid's very orientation and location deliberately link to the divine. One of the mound's symbolic meanings may be discerned by considering its placement twenty-four degrees to the north of west – the same angle as the setting of the sun at summer solstice.¹⁰⁸ Lending credence to the theory of the Pyramid's deliberate orientation is fray Diego Durán's mention of Cholulteca solar worship by the area's earliest inhabitants. According to this Dominican chronicler, the earliest Cholulteca had no established ritual, nor did they adore idols, except the sun. Worshipping it as a deity, they would first offer game from the hunt, raising the animal toward the sun and offering it to “the creator and cause of all that is created.”¹⁰⁹ Though Durán does not specify this activity's location, we may reasonably suppose that the solar worship he mentions occurred atop the Great Pyramid.

As equally significant as the *tlachihualtepetl*'s orientation is its geographical location over an ancient spring. Still active to this day, the stream may be accessed via a small well safeguarded within a locked shrine on the mound's eastern boundary. Contemporary visitors may partake of the divine waters by lowering buckets into the well's depths, an activity reminiscent of

the Mesoamerican tradition whereby women made offerings in streams and rivers to petition for pregnancy.¹¹⁰ Rivers were also a particularly useful location for encountering precious objects, or so reported fray Diego Durán, who encouraged his readers to search for former offerings in the streams flowing down from the Popocatepetl volcano.¹¹¹

By being deliberately situated over a spring, the Pyramid replicated the image of a mountain emerging from the water, a belief central to Mesoamerican creation sites.¹¹² Its identity as a foundational water-mountain finds further confirmation in the ethno-historical sources that link the *tlachihualtepetl* to the origins of the world as well as to a devastating global flood. In this way, the Great Pyramid functioned not only as a water-mountain, but as the primordial water-mountain, serving as a model for future *altepetl* while also ensuring the site's longevity.¹¹³ Importantly, in the Mesoamerican tradition, springs functioned as portals to the netherworld, so that the *tlachihualtepetl*'s placement over a water source permitted communication with the divine.¹¹⁴ Besides being viewed as an opening to the celestial forces, the Great Pyramid also supplied a lid, as it were, over the primordial waters of the underworld, holding them in place.¹¹⁵ In addition to functioning as a water-mountain, the Great Pyramid may also have replicated the physicality of Cholollan's sacred landscape, evoking el Popo, thus becoming a living volcano, the original brazier.¹¹⁶ Visual support for this interpretation appears in a 1586 map known as *El Códice de Cholula*, whose image of the Great Pyramid includes a clay brick mound with what appears to be a cavity at its peak, thus resembling a volcano.¹¹⁷

Reinforcing the Great Pyramid's function and import as a water-mountain and as a covering for otherworldly waters, several locally-produced indigenous pictorials portray the *tlachihualtepetl* with a spring at its base. These sixteenth-century sources include the first and

third maps of the *Códice Cuauhtinchan*, *La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, and *La Pintura de Cholollan*.¹¹⁸

The first of these, the Cuauhtinchan Codex – a post-conquest pictorial from the Valley of Puebla produced to resolve a land dispute between Spaniards and native peoples in this central Mesoamerican *altepetl* – includes five maps detailing the history and migration of the site’s founders from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries.¹¹⁹ The first map identifies Cholollan as a settlement alongside the Atoyac River with a trio of large temples radiating outward from a small, undecorated, hill-shaped pile of adobe bricks, beneath whose foundation appears a stylized swirl of water out of which several reeds protrude.¹²⁰ The artist classifies the *tlachihualtepetl* as a sanctuary by depicting nearby a tiny temple, which exhibits Late Post-Classic form, including green posts, a brown lintel, and a white roof decorated with multi-colored stones. Unlike the three larger temples in which ritual activity is clearly underway, the miniature sanctuary remains empty, a signal – taken in concert with its diminutive size and its separation from the clay mound – indicating the *tlachihualtepetl*’s disuse by the sixteenth century when the map was locally generated.

The third Cuauhtinchan map is but a simplified version of the first, portraying Cholollan as an *altepetl* alongside the Atoyac River, the *tlachihualtepetl* as a small hill constructed of adobe bricks, and a stream, rather than a swamp, at its red base. Like the first map, beside the mound appears a tiny, detached, Late Post-Classic temple with an exterior of clay bricks, five red stone access stairs on its face, two red parallel beams, and a red lintel supporting a pale roof decorated with protruding yellow stones. Though this map includes two approaching individuals, it provides no further relevant detail.¹²¹

Two additional indigenous pictorials, *La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* and *la Pintura de Cholollan*, offer related representations of Cholollan's *tlachihualtepetl* situated over a water source. Produced between 1550 and 1560, *La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* depicts Cholollan after the re-mapping of its sacred space by Tolteca conquerors in the mid-twelfth century. For our purposes it is enough to note that of its four Cholollan images, one includes a double-branched stream emerging from a cave at the *Tlachihualtepetl*'s base, two include a glyph of a reed-filled stream alongside the Great Pyramid, and the fourth features both a double-branched stream flanking the mound and a stylized swamp at its base.¹²² Similarly, the 1581 *Pintura de Cholollan* features an adobe-constructed hill in a large marsh with clusters of giant reeds flanking its side and a stylized stream flowing in a northeasterly direction.¹²³ Painted by an unknown indigenous artist in response to a 1577 questionnaire dispatched by the Spanish Crown, this map accompanied what is known as *la Relación de Cholula*, that is, the collected responses of a local Spanish official named Gabriel de Rojas.¹²⁴ Taken together, the seven images in these three pictorials confirm the *tlachihualtepetl*'s identity as a sacred water-mountain, allude to its dependence on the flood for its subsequent foundation and construction by giants, and intimate its significance as a portal to the celestial realms.

As revered landscape, the *tlachihualtepetl* naturally served as a focal point for Cholollan's Classic-era ritual and comprised the heart of the *altepetl*'s developing ceremonial precinct. Several ethnohistorical sources mention a sanctuary atop the Pyramid associated with human sacrifice, including the Spanish conquistador-turned-Dominican friar Francisco de Aguilar, who mentions in his 1560 chronicle "a building made of adobes, all hand laid, looking like a great mountain, on the top of which was a tower or chamber of sacrifices, but this was now abandoned." Through the friar mistakenly remembers the structure as being located in the center

of Cholollan (it lies, in fact, in Cholollan's ancient center), there is no doubt Aguilar is referencing the *tlachihualtepetl*, which had fallen into disuse by the sixteenth century.¹²⁵

The peak of the Great Pyramid also served as a sanctuary for rain worship; indeed, given the multitude of ceramic, goggle-eyed figurines of Tlaloc that have been excavated in Cholula, the male rain deity appears to have held widespread appeal in commoner ritual.¹²⁶ The sixteenth-century Spanish official, Gabriel de Rojas, provides textual evidence for this rite in his 1581 *Relación de Cholula*, mentioning an ancient temple dedicated to 9-Rain, or *Chiconauquihuitl*, formerly located on the summit of the *tlachihualtepetl*.¹²⁷ This sanctuary – which he dates to Cholollan's "pagan period" – served as a place of entreaty for the Cholulteca during times of drought and could, at the time he was writing, accommodate one thousand men. The chronicle relates how in order to appease the rain intermediary, the Cholulteca sacrificed to *Chiconauquihuitl* children between the ages of six and ten. This occurred for two reasons: as an attempt to reverse seasonal drought and as part of an annual sacred celebration. During the yearly ritual, an assembly of chanting elders would lead the captured or purchased victims to the Great Pyramid's crest, after which they would extract the children's hearts, incense the deity, and bury the bodies at the foot of *Chiconauquihuitl*. The Spanish *corregidor*'s discussion of 9-Rain's hilltop ceremony finds visual confirmation in several maps from the sixteenth-century *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*.¹²⁸ In this pictorial, the seven flowers blooming at the *tlachihualtepetl*'s peak represent *Chiconauquihuitl*, the sustenance deity, whose name underscores the importance of rain in Cholollan's agricultural society.¹²⁹

Human sacrifice via electrocution may have also occurred atop the Pyramid since, being the highest point in the valley surrounding Cholollan, the *tlachihualtepetl*'s peak functioned also as a lightning rod.¹³⁰ Indeed, the Franciscan friar Toribio de Motolinía reports how the high cross

placed by early Spaniards on the apex of the abandoned Pyramid was repeatedly struck by lightning in the 1530s, a fact he attributes to God's anger at the sins committed in that place and because of the idols eventually unearthed beneath the foot of that cross; Gabriel de Rojas disagrees, attributing the lightning strikes to natural causes since they were common in that place, especially during the violent storms of the rainy season.¹³¹ Even so, the Spanish official does mention the friars' excavations at the peak of the *tlachihualtepetl*. Rather than a cross or a church, however, the *Pintura de Cholollan* that accompanies his 1581 *Relación de Cholula* depicts a trumpet atop the Pyramid. The incongruity of portraying a European instrument crowning a pre-hispanic ceremonial mound becomes less suspect when taken with Gabriel de Rojas's remark that the friars unearthed several giant conch shells from the sea atop the Pyramid. Used as ritual instruments, these shells would have been played by native inhabitants as precursors to the trumpet.¹³²

With the croaking of the frogs signaling the arrival of the rains each year, downpours and amphibians became synonymous in Mesoamerica. Given Cholollan's often turbulent annual rains, references to Cholollan in both Spanish-language and indigenous pictorials often mention toads or frogs. Motolinía's aforementioned story of a toad-shaped stone falling from the heavens to destroy the Mesoamerican Tower of Babel receives visual corroboration in all four representations of Cholollan in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, each of which portray a giant toad lounging atop the *tlachihualtepetl*. Similarly, Motolinía's fellow sixteenth-century Franciscan ethnographer, fray Bernardino de Sahagún, writes about a ceremony at the Great Pyramid involving toad effigies that were dressed up and dedicated to *Chalchiutlicue*, the female deity of earthly waters who was closely associated with springs and rivers.¹³³

By the close of the Classic period then, that is, by about the tenth century, Cholollan's sacred identity had solidified, paralleling the *altepetl's* political, cultural, social, and commercial development. With its regionally-renowned water-mountain, its sophisticated and celebrated pottery tradition, and its status as an emergent agricultural center, Cholollan would come to dominate the area's spiritual and political landscape. By the middle of the twelfth century, Cholollan was the seat of an extensive territory comprising what are today the cities of Tlaxcala, Tepeaca, Atlixco, Izúcar, and Calpan. This "Great Olmeca State," as historian Cayetano Reyes García calls it, was governed by ten *tlatoque*, or indigenous leaders, consisting of two principal men and eight subordinates whose residential distance from Cholollan's ceremonial precinct reflected their particular rank.¹³⁴ As a powerful, sacred, independent polity, Cholollan would prove a ready target for a conquering people in the Postclassic (~900 AD – 1519 AD).

The First Spiritual Re-Mapping: Tolteca-Chichimeca Conquest in Postclassic Cholollan

According to *la Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, around the year 1130 AD a Tolteca *tlamacazqui* (Mesoamerican ritual minister) by the name of Couenan visited Cholollan for the first time, witnessing for himself its marvels and spending time with its prosperous inhabitants who were overseen by two wealthy and powerful principal leaders, Aquiach and Tlalchiach.¹³⁵ During this visit, Couenan operated as a pilgrim, and like the ancient Cholulteca, from atop a local hill he invoked the mercy of the sun deity Ipalnemouani, the entity through whom all things live. In response to Couenan's offering, the Feathered Serpent Quetzalcoatl, lord of the priesthood, of merchants, and of learning, assured the *tlamacazqui* of his protection, told him Cholollan would be the new home of his people, and promised that the current inhabitants would abandon the location; soon thereafter, the sun deity himself reiterated these promises. With joy

Couenan returned to his home in Tollan in present-day Hidalgo state and communicated his experience to the Tolteca leaders, who together decided to follow the command of the deities and emigrate to Cholollan.

As the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* relates, in the year Two-Rabbit, that is, in 1133 AD, the Tolteca collectively abandoned Tollan, beginning a lengthy and protracted journey towards their promised land. Not until 1156 AD, that is, twenty-six years after Couenan's original visit, did the Tolteca reach the northern borders of the great Cholulteca plain. In the year Seven-House or 1164 AD, the Tolteca began their conquest of the region, quickly dominating the northern and northeastern flanks of Cholollan; that same year they found success both southward and westward, arriving finally at San Lorenzo Almecatla, the principal residence of Cholollan's *tlatoani* priest Tlamacazque. Moving ever closer to the heart of Cholollan over the next several years, the Tolteca finally reached the tlachihualtepetl, the home of the primary *tlatoani* Aquiach Amapame, in 1168 AD.

Unable to conquer the Olmeca-Xicalanca at this juncture despite their previous successes, the Tolteca instead became subjugated to them, undergoing mistreatment even at the hands of the Olmeca women, who would throw *nixtamal* water on their faces and scratch their legs and backs with quills. During these years, the Tolteca gathered at night to plan their escape from Olmeca domination and to prepare weapons to use in future battles for their freedom. *La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* describes how during these evening meetings, the Tolteca would greet each other, weep collectively at their fate, and question one another about what they must do. The deity Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror or lord of destiny and fortune) eventually overheard the nightly clamors of the Tolteca people and urged them to fortify themselves, endure their suffering, and await the day when the current inhabitants of the Tlachihualtepetl would be

displaced. Revitalized by Tezcatlipoca's prediction, the Tolteca began immediately to prepare ritual chants, then presented themselves to Aquiach Ampare at the Tlachihualtepetl as humble commoners begging for the great favor of living there. Tired of the constant warfare and wanting to live in peace, the Olmeca-Xicalanca *tlatoque*, or leaders, discussed the matter, and of one accord decided to accept the Tolteca in their midst, inviting them into their homes and even permitting them to enter into the interior of their abodes.

The Tolteca, however, did not wish to continue living under the dominion of the Olmeca. Retreating from the Tlachihualtepetl, they began repairing the old weapons they had already used in battle: *ichcauipili* (twisted ropes), arrows, shields, and *macanas* (flint-edged wooden "swords"). In an attempt to harness the strength of the Olmeca-Xicalanca and provide themselves with a psychological edge, the Tolteca painted their old weapons red and blue, that is, the colors used by the governing men of Cholollan. With their newly-repaired and re-painted weapons, the Tolteca finally succeeded in conquering the Olmeca. Not only did the Tolteca destroy the inhabitants of the Tlachihualtepetl, but they also demolished Cholollan's *tlatoque* and *teocalli* (god-houses). Triumphant, the Tolteca prepared to rebuild the newly-conquered region in their own design.

Despite their territorial victories, the Tolteca experienced only five years of peace, at which point they were compelled to initiate the conquest of the Olmeca-Xicalanca's remaining regional allies. By the end of 1173 AD the Tolteca found themselves on the brink of exhaustion and annihilation. Worried, they returned to the hilltop deity Ipalnemouani, the creator of all that is living, asking that he strengthen them in order to finish their enemies and secure their regional dominance. Ipalnemouani immediately bade the Tolteca ally with the Chichimeca in their fight against the remaining Olmeca-Xicalanca allies.

So it was, as the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* relates, that in the year 1174 AD, the Tolteca leaders walked six days to Chicomoztoc to meet with the Chichimeca. For the first two days, the Tolteca performed various rituals and ceremonies, eventually approaching the Chichimeca leaders, apprising them of their needs and of Ipalnemouani's urging to seek their aid. Complimenting the Chichimeca on their weaponry and promising them political and religious power if they succeeded in their conquest of the Olmeca-Xicalanca allies, the Tolteca ultimately secured a Chichimeca alliance in the fight for control of Cholollan.

Dividing into seven ethnic groups and then subdividing into men, women, elderly, adults, and children, the Chichimeca left Chicomozoc in 1174 AD, traveling ten days until they neared the region of Cholollan. Pausing outside what is present-day Texcoco, the Chichimeca organized themselves strategically into two groups, one to follow the northern route that the Tolteca had taken upon leaving Cholollan, and the other to follow a western path, passing between the two volcanoes, el Popocatepetl and la Iztaccihuatl. Moving slowly towards the heart of Cholollan, the Tolteca-Chichimeca forces conquered the areas in their path before finally reaching the Tlachihualtepetl. By the end of 1174 AD, the combined Tolteca-Chichimeca forces had conquered Cholollan and its remaining Olmeca allies. True to their word, the Tolteca invested the Chichimeca with many honors and recognized them as *tecutli* or lords, referring to them as the Chichimecatecutli.¹³⁶

Following their grand victory, the Tolteca-Chichimeca dedicated themselves to rebuilding Cholollan, redefining its sacred space, constructing new *teocalli*, and re-organizing the *altepetl* into newly-designated *calpulli* (socio-political units within a Mesoamerican polity). The Tolteca-Chichimeca conquerors also strove to ensure that their recently allied and vanquished inhabitants acclimated and adapted to Cholollan's newly re-fashioned society. As a

definitive display of their spiritual and political dominance, the Tolteca-Chichimeca re-centered the *altepetl* slightly northwest so that it radiated from a new ceremonial precinct concentrated around an impressive new temple dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, whom they established as Cholollan's principal deity. This spiritual and political re-orientation relegated the regionally-renowned Tlachihualtepetl, the Olmeca-Xicalanca sacred water-mountain, to a ceremonial center of secondary importance, so that by 1519 when the Spaniards arrived in Cholollan it was overgrown and semi-abandoned.

In all respects, the late twelfth-century Tolteca-Chichimeca re-fashioning was a success, for under the new leadership Cholollan surpassed its former glory. Indeed, the *altepetl* would reach its maximum pre-hispanic size during the Postclassic, boasting thirty thousand to fifty thousand residents in its three square mile radius.¹³⁷ Although some scholars contend that Cholollan was abandoned for a time prior to the Tolteca-Chichimeca conquest, at which point its inhabitants sought refuge on the nearby Zapotec Hill, others claim it was not deserted.¹³⁸ Similarly, some suggest that the Pyramid's final construction stage either remained unfinished, or that its stones and stucco surface were deliberately removed, most likely to build the Tolteca-Chichimeca's new Postclassic ceremonial center, the crowning glory of which was the Great Quetzalcoatl Temple.¹³⁹

Archeological evidence supports the theory of a conscious dismantling of the Tlachihualtepetl, since excavations reveal that several of its altars were demolished with such force that one altar-stela was discovered broken into twenty-one pieces despite the size and durability of the stone.¹⁴⁰ Destroying and defacing the sacred water-mountain would prevent its subsequent use as ritual space. These destructive acts may have resulted from violent conflict between rival ethnic factions akin to episodes illustrated on murals in nearby Cacaxtla, or it was

possibly part of a “termination ritual” enacted by the conquering Tolteca-Chichimeca to symbolically release the power of the Olmeca-Xicalanca ceremonial center.¹⁴¹

During Cholollan’s five centuries of Tolteca-Chichimeca domination, the basis of the *altepetl*’s sacred identity shifted from its sacred water-mountain to its centralized Great Temple dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, of whose cult Cholollan became a regional ritual center. Indeed, representations of Cholollan in indigenous pictorials painted after the Tolteca-Chichimeca conquest include images of the Feathered Serpent alone or alongside the Tlachihualtepetl. In the sixteenth-century *Códice Xólotl*, for example, Cholollan appears flanked by the volcanoes el Popocatepetl and la Iztaccihuatl just north of the Sierra Nevada. The polity is easily recognizable by the image of a serpent, representing Quetzalcoatl, and a “tula” or reed indicating the calendrical name One-Reed, that is, 1519 AD, the year witnessing the arrival Spaniards, whose leader, Cortés, may have been initially identified with Quetzalcoatl.¹⁴² The additional presence of a deer’s foot in Cholollan’s toponym may reference the idea of “flight,” correlating to its Nahuatl root from the verb “choloa,” that is “to flee.”¹⁴³ Hence, Cholollan’s etymological meaning is “place of flight” or “the fleeing place,” a name referencing the celebrated Tolteca “flight” from Tollan to Cholollan in the Classic Period.¹⁴⁴

Over time, Cholollan’s cult to the Plumed Serpent transcended regional religious differences. By the fifteenth century, the polity had become so synonymous with the sacred that *tlatoque* in various *altepetl* in the central and southern highlands sought its priests’ counsel to solve factional disputes, often submitting to the authority of Quetzalcoatl’s spiritual sons in matters of political alliances.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, the foundation of Cholollan’s theocratic power lay in its Pyramid-Sanctuary to the Plumed Serpent, which was so closely associated with spiritual and political authority that aspiring regional *tlatoque* traveled to Cholollan to participate in a

legitimation ritual before assuming leadership in their home *altepetl*. After providing offerings of feathers, blankets, gold, precious stones, or other rich gifts to Quetzalcoatl, neighboring indigenous leaders would spend a few days in prayer and penance in a local *teocalli* dedicated to that purpose. In a ritualized ceremony, Quetzalcoatl's two high priests, Tlalchiach and Aquiach, would pierce the nose, ears, or lips of the visiting *tecutli*, depending on his rank, with sharpened eagle and jaguar bones. Into the perforated tissue the Cholulteca priests would insert a decorative ornament symbolic of the visitor's home polity, thus empowering him with political power via Quetzalcoatl's divine authority; images of these piercings appear in several indigenous codices, including the sixteenth-century *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* and the pre-conquest *Codex Fejevary-Mayer* from central Mexico.¹⁴⁶ After the ceremony, five priests from the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, clad in scarlet cloaks to indicate their spiritual association with Tlalchiach and Aquiach, would accompany the new leader to his *altepetl* to ensure local acceptance of his new authority. In addition to this ceremony, local law and custom mandated that every fifty-three years *tlatoque* would travel to Cholollan to confirm their political authority, bringing rich offerings and tribute to the Quetzalcoatl Temple.¹⁴⁷

Tecutli seeking favors from the Feathered Serpent and making offerings at the Great Temple – the base of which covered twenty four acres and rose one hundred and twenty steps – were not the only individuals participating in Cholollan's rich ritualized life. The *altepetl*'s numerous *macehualli*, or commoners, would visit the various smaller *teocalli* radiating outward from the heart of Cholollan. Importantly, all Cholulteca considered themselves Sons of Quetzalcoatl, a Mesoamerican tradition that would play itself out in the colonial period with the introduction of patron saints. Whereas in the pre-contact period Mesoamerica peoples referenced indigenous temples as *teocalli* (god-houses), after European arrival they identified churches as

santopan (where-the-saint-is). In this context, native peoples imagined saints as the parents of their people and true owners of the unit's land; at a corporate level, saints served as primary symbols signifying and uniting the *altepetl* and its constituent parts.¹⁴⁸

By Spanish arrival in the sixteenth century, Cholollan's local polychrome – glazed pottery whose origins date to the crude ceramics produced by its local residents as early as 1,200 BC – had become so valued that it was used as the exclusive banquet service of the Mexica court in Mexico-Tenochtitlan; some sources claim that the Great Tlatoani Moctezuma refused to eat unless served on Cholulteca earthenware.¹⁴⁹ A nucleus of culture and learning as well as a pilgrimage site and ritual center, Cholollan also boasted a well-stocked and vibrant marketplace, known as a *tianquiztli*, where long-distance Nahua merchants, called *pochteca*, acquired fresh fruits and vegetables grown in the lush surrounding fields. The development and popularity of Cholollan's religious traditions were no doubt linked to its extensive trading network, which facilitated the spread of devotion to the Plumed Serpent throughout the central highlands. In turn, recognition of the regional primacy of Quetzalcoatl transcended regional distinctions, bound ethnically-diverse peoples, and encouraged the emergence of long-distance political alliances and market systems. Allied with Moctezuma and the Mexica people who had gained dominance in central Mesoamerica following their 1325 AD arrival in the Valley of Mexico and whose central power lay in Mexico-Tenochtitlan one hundred and eighty miles to the northwest, Cholollan spiritually, culturally, and politically dominated the region in 1519, unaware that for the second time in its long history, it would prove ready prey for a conquering people.

*The Arrival of the Spaniards: The 1519 Cholula Massacre*¹⁵⁰

... they wished to kill us and eat our flesh, and had already prepared the pots with salt and peppers and tomatoes.

– Bernal Díaz del Castillo, 1560¹⁵¹

As dusk began to fall one evening in early October 1519, the Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés encamped with his men in the dry riverbed of the Rio Atoyac, six miles from Cholollan's central ceremonial precinct. Technically, Cortés was leading an expedition commissioned by Cuba's governor, Diego Velázquez, who had authorized him to explore and trade but not to travel inland, colonize, or conquer. After Moctezuma's ambassadors met Cortés on the coast upon his April landfall and presented him with gold and jewels, however, he decided to ignore Velázquez's orders, risk being hanged for treason, and march towards the riches of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the heart of the Mexica realm.

In a now-famous decision, Cortés scuttled his ships in August, absorbed the sailors into his company, and began marching westward. As the expedition trekked over mountains and forged across rivers, it encountered numerous emissaries sent by Moctezuma to gather information about the Spaniards and their progress. By mid-September, Cortés and his men reached Tlaxcallan, an *altepetl* whose people linguistically and culturally resembled the Mexica, but who remained their traditional political enemies. Here, they met with resistance from the Tlaxcalteca and their Otomí subjects. After two weeks of open battles in which the Spaniards emerged victorious, the Tlaxcalteca agreed to ally themselves with Cortés and accompany the Spaniards to Mexico-Tenochtitlan. The conquistador then led his expanded force westward towards Cholollan, eighteen miles from Tlaxcallan. Now, on this October evening, with a party consisting of hundreds of Spaniards, thousands of indigenous warriors from Tlaxcallan and

Cempoallan, and several of Moctezuma's ambassadors, Cortés waited outside Cholollan, one of many encampments on the road that evening preparing to enter the *altepetl* at first light.

The ensuing massacre at Cholollan remains one of the most controversial events in Cortés' campaign, both for his contemporaries and for subsequent historians. Even so, reconstructing the events of the Spaniards' two weeks in Cholollan is a complicated task given the discrepancies in the Spanish chronicles and the limited information available from indigenous texts.¹⁵² Even Cortés' motivation for traveling to Cholollan cannot be known with certainty since sources disagree, suggesting that he advanced towards the *altepetl* either on the advice of Moctezuma's emissaries who classify the Cholulteca as the Mexica leader's friends and vassals, or upon the enticement of his Tlaxcalteca allies, among whom there existed historical enmity with the Cholulteca. Either way, by implying that the native peoples within Cortés' company prompted him to approach Tenochtitlan by way of Cholollan, European texts ultimately exonerate him from blame, since the decision was not of his own volition.

The only indigenous source to discuss the massacre provides another clue in Cortés' resolution to march to Cholollan. The *Florentine Codex*, a twelve-book compendium of Mesoamerican culture generated by indigenous authors in the sixteenth century, notes in its original 1579 edition that the treacherous Tlaxcalteca "spoke evil of the [Cholulteca], so that [the Spaniards] might attack them by treachery;" their words prompted Cortés, his men, and his native allies to approach Cholollan in full battle array.¹⁵³ Upon arrival, Cortés' party demands with great shouting that the Cholulteca appear immediately in the courtyard. When the plaza has filled and the Spaniards have blocked the entrances, "the people were fallen upon, slain, and beaten... they were slain without warning. They were killed by pure treachery; they died unaware. For in truth the Tlaxcallans had incited [the Spaniards]."¹⁵⁴ In this version, the

Spaniards enter Cholollan with the intent to massacre its people, an interpretation of the event not presented in the Spanish texts, but which ultimately lays the responsibility of the massacre upon the Tlaxcalteca allies. The text also notes that when news of the massacre spread “all the common folk went in an uproar; there were frequent disorders. It was as if the earth quaked... there was terror.”¹⁵⁵ These last details reiterate an understanding of the massacre present in the Spanish accounts but most clearly outlined by Bernal Díaz, namely, that this affair was an example of demonstrative violence meant to terrorize the region into submission.

The 1585 revision of the *Florentine Codex* elaborates on Cortés’ decision to attack Cholollan, stating that when he learns how grievously the Tlaxcalteca have suffered at the hands of the Cholulteca, he tells his men to “prepare immediately for war. We will go against those who are their enemies.”¹⁵⁶ The text notes that war preparations take several days, that the Spaniards and their allies wait a day in Cholollan before gathering its inhabitants, and that the courtyard where the battle occurs is a division of the principal Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary. In addition, the narrative identifies the entrances to the courtyard as three – one facing west, another south, and another north and mentions that those who are not killed escape so that Cholollan is soon abandoned. After completing their mission and raiding and plundering in town, the account describes how the Spaniards and their allies march toward Tenochtitlán. Given that in 1519 Tlaxcallan remained an independent polity outside Moctezuma’s domination and also because the authors of the *Florentine Codex* hailed from *altepetl* near the heart of the former Mexica regime, it is no wonder they lay the blame for the attack squarely on their Tlaxcalteca enemies.

The Spanish sources provide a more complex set of circumstances leading to the events in Cholollan. To begin, when the Spaniards’ Tlaxcalteca allies learn the intended route of Cortés’ expedition, they beg him not to march through Cholollan. Cortés himself reports in his letter to

the King that at this juncture that Tlaxcalteca intelligence had uncovered a plot to kill the Spaniards upon their arrival: 50,000 Mexica have been garrisoned near Cholollan, the roads have been barricaded or filled with traps to injure the horses, and the rooftops have been piled high with stones as a method of surreptitious attack. Urged by his Tlaxcalteca allies, Cortés sends messengers to Cholollan to request a visit from its leaders, but they only send a few men to Tlaxcallan who excuse their leaders for not appearing. The Tlaxcalteca allies alert Cortés to the lowly rank of these Cholulteca messengers and urge him not to depart until their leaders appear. Cortés then dispatches a written order to Cholollan, demanding that their “chiefs” present themselves before him within three days or risk becoming rebels against whom punishment would be dispensed accordingly. Cortés insists that ignoring this written summons will constitute a Cholulteca act of rebellion and imply a refusal to subject themselves to His Sacred Majesty Charles V.¹⁵⁷ By using the language of conquest here, Cortés asserts that Charles V is already the legal emperor of “Mexico,” and that he, his loyal subject, need only claim that right. Cortés’ carefully contrived letter also promotes the theme of empire, an appropriate topic for a Spanish king who had recently been elected Holy Roman Emperor.¹⁵⁸

Spanish sources relate that in response to Cortés’ threats, numerous “chiefs” from Cholollan appear, explaining that because the Tlaxcalteca are their enemies, they were loath to enter Tlaxcallan, knowing that the conquistador has heard falsehoods about them. After excusing themselves for not arriving sooner, they invite Cortés and his men to their *altepetl*. Importantly, both Cortés and his chaplain-secretary, Francisco López de Gómara mention the presence of a Spanish notary, before whom several Cholulteca ambassadors offer themselves henceforth as tribute-paying servants. Maintaining his imperial theme and remembering that he hopes his letter will earn him the retroactive right to conquer (and remove the label of traitor), Cortés fashions

this incident into a Cholulteca desire to become vassals of the king, which is yet one more justification for his attack.

Unable to persuade Cortés not to advance towards Cholollan, the Tlaxcalteca allies instead offer to accompany the Spanish expedition to the enemy *altepetl*. Though not believing this is necessary, Cortés allows a number of armed Tlaxcalteca warriors to escort him, though it is unclear from the sources whether the original number offered was 40,000 or 100,000. Most sources agree, however, that the Spaniards arrive in Cholollan with only 1,000-4,000 Tlaxcalteca warriors, sending the rest back to Tlaxcallan for fear of upsetting the Cholulteca by arriving with too many of their enemies. One of Spanish captains, Andrés de Tapia, recalls that Cortés ordered that his indigenous allies march at a distance apart from his own men.

Cortés' chaplain-secretary, Francisco López de Gómara, recounts that during the Spaniards' overnight encampment in the dry river bed of the Rio Atoyac, several Cholulteca visit and beg Cortés to send away their Tlaxcalteca enemies. In response to this request, Cortés asks all but 5,000-6,000 of his allies from Tlaxcallan to return home. Gómara indicates that they obey warily, warning Cortés to be cautious amidst a wicked people, for as his friends they fear his encounters with danger. Cortés' fellow captain, Bernal Díaz del Castillo also describes a visit by the Cholulteca to the Spanish camp that night, but in his account, they welcome the visitors to their city with gifts of poultry and maize, and inform them that in the morning the priests will receive them.

All six European accounts agree that the Spaniards receive a warm reception by the Cholulteca on the morning of their arrival. Cortés remembers priests wearing their traditional garments and singing to the music of trumpets and drums; Tapia writes that the Cholulteca welcome them with maize and turkeys; Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas highlights the

reverence and order of the native procession; Gómara mentions gifts of bread, fowl, and roses, lighted incense braziers and impressive solemnity; conquistador-turned-Dominican friar Francisco de Aguilar notes the presence of incense but specifies that there was no accompanying ceremony; and Bernal Díaz focuses on the peaceful nature of the Cholulteca welcome, whose priests carry braziers of incense with which they fumigate the Spaniards. Aguilar adds that the Tlaxcalteca worry that this grand reception signifies war and indicates the Cholulteca intent to kill and sacrifice the Spaniards. As for the number of welcoming native peoples from Cholollan, Tapia remembers 10,000-12,000 whereas Gómara specifies 10,000.

Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas insists in his account that the Spaniards decide on a punitive attack almost immediately. The other accounts indicate a more complicated decision involving the Mexica ambassadors and a discovered plot. Specifically, four of the six European chronicles relate that the Spaniards are poorly fed for several days following their arrival. Aguilar describes how Cortés confronts the Cholulteca about their lack of hospitality, reassures them of his friendship, and warns them that if the Spaniards are not well-fed he will enter homes in Cholollan and take provisions by force. After five days without food or visits from the Cholulteca (during which Bernal Díaz remembers that the Cholulteca often laugh at them from afar), the captains in the Spanish party demand from Cortés a declaration of war. Here, then, is a clear motivation for the Spanish attack that exonerates Cortés from personal culpability in the massacre, since he falters under pressure from his men.

Francisco López de Gómara offers an interesting interlude at this moment, for he relates the thoughts of the Cholulteca when Cortés asks them for provisions. They apparently smile and say to themselves: “Why do these men want to eat, when they themselves will soon be eaten, served up with chili? Indeed, if Moctezuma, who wants them for his table, would not have been

angry with us, we should have eaten them ourselves by this time!”¹⁵⁹ While highlighting his ideas of Cholulteca culture to his readers – including duplicity and cannibalism – this scene in Gómara’s chronicle also argues for their just destruction. In this way he capitalizes on the larger justification for the Spanish Conquest and its violence and applies it to the massacre at Cholollan.

The accounts by Cortés, Tapia, Gómara, and Bernal Díaz each relate that a native Cholulteca woman warns Malinche, the Spaniards’ interpreter, of an impending attack. Not surprisingly, the accounts by the Dominicans Las Casas and Aguilar do not include this mitigating detail. After discovering this “plot,” Cortés announces his plans to leave Cholollan, so that the next morning, numerous Cholulteca warriors gather in the central plaza prepared to escort the Spaniards to Tenochtitlan. Gómara notes the presence of a multitude that arrives with hammocks in hand, “very joyous, believing they had their play well staged.”¹⁶⁰ Bernal Díaz’s account includes a similar remark: “When dawn broke it was a sight to see the haste with which the Caciques and priests brought in the warriors, laughing and contented as though they had already caught us in their traps and nets.”¹⁶¹ He adds that many more Cholulteca appear than Cortés has requested, so that the courtyard cannot hold them all.

In Cortés’ account, he has the *caciques* of the city bound as soon as they appear, rides away on his horse, and fires a harquebus as a signal to begin the attack. In his words, “we fought so hard that in two hours more than three thousand men were killed.”¹⁶² Las Casas, who was not an eye-witness, writes: “What a grievous thing it was to see those Indians... for they came stark naked, stark naked except for their private parts, which were covered. And they had a netting bag slung over their shoulders, holding their meager nourishment. They were all made to squat down like tame sheep.”¹⁶³ His judgment is damning: “the Spaniards agree to carry out a massacre, or as

they called it a punitive attack, in order to sow terror and apprehension, and to make a display of their power in every corner of that land. This was always the determination of the Spaniards in all the lands they conquered: to commit a great massacre that would terrorize the tame flock and make it tremble.”¹⁶⁴ Las Casas’ shrewd remarks at this juncture reveal an important motivation for the bloodshed, namely, Cortes’ desire to establish his unquestionable authority and superiority.

During the battle sequence, both Tapia and Gómara insist that Cortés orders the Spaniards to spare the women and children. Although Cortés makes no mention of this merciful deed, he assures the king that the Cholulteca removed their women and children before the attack began. Cortés does note, however – and Gómara concurs – that the Spaniards continue the fighting five hours after they have killed the majority of the Cholulteca in the initial two hour attack. The battle is so intense, in fact, that according to Cortés, Tapia, and Gómara, the Cholulteca are driven into the surrounding hills. Tapia and Bernal Díaz describe how their Tlaxcalteca allies go about Cholollan plundering mercilessly and making prisoners of their Cholulteca enemies. Bernal Díaz adds that Cortés cannot control the Tlaxcalteca violence, and that he is moved by compassion to send them away from Cholollan.

Despite the level of violence that ensues, in his letter Cortés reassures the king that “on the following day the whole city was reoccupied and full of women and children, all unafraid, as though nothing had happened.”¹⁶⁵ Cortés also credits himself with single-handedly re-establishing friendship between Tlaxcallan and Cholollan, and Bernal Díaz boasts that the Cholulteca beg Cortés to choose a new cacique for them since their former ruler died in the courtyard massacre. Though his boasting may at first appear hyperbolic, after the massacre the Cholulteca would choose to ally themselves with Cortés, much like their Tlaxcalteca enemies. In

honor of their new alliance, a certain number of *indios* from Cholollan would accompany the Spaniards to Mexico-Tenochtitlan, serving them, in Cortés' own words, as loyal vassals of the Crown.¹⁶⁶

So what really happened that afternoon in mid-October 1519? Although exact details cannot be determined with certainty, comparing archeological excavations in present-day Cholula with clues gleaned from these narratives confirms the element of surprise in this attack, questions the existence and relevance of a Chololteca-Mexica conspiracy, and underscores the necessity of the massacre within Cortés' master plan. As to the element of surprise, in the 1970s archeologists David A. Peterson and Z. D. Green excavated a large centrally located area behind San Gabriel Church in Cholula revealing six hundred and seventy-one skeletons, including women and children.¹⁶⁷ They note the conspicuous absence of juvenile bodies from the site, reading this as evidence that the Cholulteca were about their daily chores on the day of the massacre, unaware of the imminent Spanish attack. Not only do these findings contradict the claim that Cortés ordered his men to spare women and children during the massacre, but more importantly, they provide strong evidence against the existence of a plot.

Whether or not a conspiracy existed, however, is irrelevant to understanding the motivation for this massacre, for "the plot" is an all-too-familiar trope present throughout sixteenth-century Conquest literature. Examining other motives for the massacre far outweigh such a discussion. Instead, scholars should focus, as undoubtedly Cortés did, on the serious threat that Cholollan posed to the Spaniards, being as it was a large independent *altepetl* loyal to the Mexica, and how enacting a massacre in such a location would promote Spanish interests. First, he could capitalize on the historic Tlaxcallan-Cholollan discord, expending limited energy and resources in gaining support for his undertaking; second, Cortés could entice his new Tlaxcalteca

allies with spoils from their traditional enemies; third, the conquistador could build trust between his men and his Cempoalan and Tlaxcallan allies prior to the far more important battles at Mexico-Tenochtitlan; and fourth, the Spanish leader could be confident that a massacre in Cholollan would affect Moctezuma directly and swiftly, since this Mexica-friendly *altepetl* lay but a three day journey from Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Indeed, all seven sources (six Spanish and one indigenous) agree that after leaving Cholollan Cortés marched unchallenged directly to Tenochtitlan. In the end, it would seem the massacre had served its purpose, paving the way for the Spaniards to return ten years later, this time to establish a permanent presence. Like many other areas of New Spain, the military conquest in Cholollan would precede the spiritual.

The Introduction of a New Spirituality: The Franciscans Arrive in New Spain

... and following in the footsteps of our father St. Francis, who used to send friars to the places of the infidels, I thought of sending you, father, with twelve companions assigned by me, to those places already mentioned, commanding you and them by virtue of holy obedience to accept this laborious pilgrimage on behalf of the one which Christ the Son of God undertook for us....

– fray Francisco de los Ángeles Quiñones, O.F.M. Minister General to
fray Martín de Valencia, O.F.M., leader of the Twelve, 1523¹⁶⁸

On May 13, 1524, the first officially-commissioned delegation of Franciscan friars to New Spain landed on the shores of Veracruz and proceeded to walk barefoot the three hundred miles to Mexico City, the recently-established capital then rising on the ruins of Mexico-Tenochtitlan.¹⁶⁹ These twelve mendicants had been unofficially preceded to the mainland the previous year by three Flemish friars, including the renowned lay brother fray Pedro de Gante, a close relation to Charles V. The three had been sent on the recommendation of fray Juan de Quintana, the Emperor's Franciscan confessor, after Cortés requested reformed Franciscans to

evangelize the native communities he had encountered.¹⁷⁰ The Twelve, as the group commissioned in 1524 came to be known, were personally selected by the Observant Franciscan Minister General, fray Francisco de los Ángeles Quiñones, from the strictest province in Spain: the Custody of San Gabriel in Extremadura, Cortés' home region.¹⁷¹

The San Gabriel community, which had been at the heart of the late medieval reform movement supported by Queen Isabella's confessor, the Franciscan Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, was home to friars known not only for their austerity and poverty, but also for their commitment to evangelizing the Moriscos in Granada.¹⁷² In Extremadura they adhered to some of the most austere reforms of the Order, which included the wearing of ankle-length sackcloth habits, electing to walk shoe-less, sleeping on a wooden board or animal skin, and if a friar were healthy, abstaining from eggs, meat, wine, and fish.¹⁷³ Known as the Discalced friars because of their decision to walk barefoot, these friars lived in rented friaries, regularly used a penitential discipline, engaged in continual prayer, and in addition to their dedicated evangelization of non-Christians, served as preachers among the faithful in Spain.

Led by their former provincial, the elderly fray Martín de Valencia, and bound by holy obedience, the Twelve took leave of their miniscule hermit-hovels and sailed half a world away to evangelize a vast and populous new territory.¹⁷⁴ These friars would constitute but a small fraction of the almost 8,500 Spanish Franciscans who would arrive in the Americas during the three-hundred-year colonial period.¹⁷⁵ Upon their arrival to New Spain's fledging capital city, Hernando Cortés displayed his welcome them by kneeling in the dust to kiss the hand of their saintly leader before a gathered assembly of Spanish and indigenous nobles.¹⁷⁶ As historian David Brading has pointed out, the friars interpreted this ceremonious act as an indication of the enthusiastic support the secular officials would provide for the preaching of the gospel in New

Spain.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, the first two viceroys would rely on the mendicants as both spiritual mentors and political guardians of the native communities, a circumstance enabling the friars to immediately engage in a rigorous campaign to eradicate indigenous religion and replace it with Christianity.

Because the movement of barefoot friars was still quite new in the early sixteenth century and the Twelve lacked the necessary reformed personnel to found a Discalced house in New Spain, the first custody formed in colonial Mexico was the Observant *provincia del Santo Evangelio*. Formalized in 1524, the Holy Gospel Province successfully incorporated these Discalced friars into an Observant Franciscan community. This New World unification reflected an earlier Old World alliance, when a papal order in 1517 forced the small collection of Discalced friars in Spain to join the Observant Province of San Gabriel in Extremadura.

Despite the successful union of the Discalced and Observants friars in both the Old and New Worlds, relations between the two major branches, the Observants and the Conventuals, were far more vitriolic. As a group, Observant Franciscans emphasized poverty and compliance to the Rule, whereas their rivals, the Conventuals, who stressed obedience to religious authority, nevertheless amassed great material wealth. In Spain, the Franciscan friction dated to 1424, when Pope Martin V angered the Conventuals by granting the Observant houses in Aragón independence from provincial jurisdiction and permission to elect their own vicar; the same privileges soon granted to the Observants in León and Castile.¹⁷⁸ Despite papal intervention and internal attempts to maintain unity, tensions escalated in Spain, so that in the 1490s, Conventuals raised armed troops, invaded Observant houses, and attacked their brother friars.¹⁷⁹ At the same time in Andalusia, four hundred Conventuals converted to Islam and relocated to North Africa rather than accept Cardinal Cisneros' reforms, which called for the abandonment of their

concubines and personal luxuries; by Cisneros' death in 1517 not a single Conventual house remained in Spain.¹⁸⁰ That same year, Pope Leo X assembled all the Sons of St. Francis in Rome and declared that the Observant friars alone had the authority to elect the Franciscan Minister General. It was at this juncture that the Discalced friars in Spain, by papal order, joined the Observants in the new province of San Gabriel in Extremadura. In contrast the Conventuals, stripped of their vote, elected their own Minister General, thus establishing a separate congregation.¹⁸¹ The Leonine division of the Franciscan Order never mended, and over time, the Observant branch would splinter into the Recollects, the Reformed, and the Capuchins.

Importantly, the first Twelve friars in New Spain had in hand Pope Adrian VI's 1522 papal bull, *Exponi nobis feciste*, otherwise known as *Omnimoda*, granting them extensive powers to preach and administer the sacraments in the New World. This apostolic authority allowed the friars to use any means necessary in the conversion of native peoples if a bishop was not present or was a two-day journey away.¹⁸² This permission granted by the Holy See was unprecedented in the history of the Catholic Church, approved as a response to the extraordinary circumstance of discovering an extensive population of non-Christians in desperate need of baptism and eternal salvation. Despite the stipulations regarding episcopal power written into the *Omnimoda*, the friars conducted themselves as virtual bishops, largely ignoring the two day technicality. They stubbornly insisted that the papal bull allowed them free reign in all matters concerning indigenous pastoral care. Once the bishoprics began to appear in 1526, a familiar tension re-emerged between the Franciscans and their ecclesiastical leaders, especially those belonging to the secular clergy. The friars essentially refused to acquiesce to what they considered illegitimate authority, for they viewed themselves as apostles and considered the *Omnimoda* a piece of the rock of St. Peter passed down from Rome to the Franciscan General and his subordinates. In

contrast, the secular clergy descended from the national Church and possessed only *royal* rather than *apostolic* authority.¹⁸³ For the friars, the *Omnimoda* was the trump card.

Because the original Twelve belonged to a friary in Extremadura and Cortés and many other *conquistadores* were Extremeños, the first friars in New Spain enjoyed pre-established relationships with several colonial Spaniards; indeed, the Franciscans would retain a cordial association with Cortés for the rest of his life, defending him in their various colonial histories and chronicles. Eventually joined by twelve Dominicans in 1526 and seven Augustinians in 1533, the friars promptly divided into pairs to found evangelization centers built by native hands, partition the region into dioceses, organize a primitive church structure based on a mendicant system, and institute the formal study of Nahua culture as a tool for persuasive evangelization.

As allies and supporters of Cortés who in turn enjoyed his trust and devotion, the Franciscans quickly came to dominate evangelization in the central Valley of Mexico and its environs, founding four *conventos* in rapid succession: San Antonio Texcoco in 1523, San Francisco Tlaxcala and San Francisco el Grande in Mexico City in 1524, and in the shadow of the snow-capped volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, they established San Miguel Huejotzingo in 1525. By virtue of being located in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, the latter *convento* served as a base from which the friars would visit and minister to the vast population of native peoples in the nearby holy city of Cholollan, offering period pastoral care via a small, centrally-located visiting chapel.¹⁸⁴ Recognizing, no doubt, the importance of appropriating and Christianizing a Mesoamerican sacred site with a well-established sociopolitical and religious influence, the Franciscans would replace Cholollan's *iglesia de visita* within three years, formerly founding a Franciscan *doctrina* in late 1528 or early 1529.¹⁸⁵ By establishing a permanent presence among the native Cholulteca – a people long accustomed to spiritual and

political dominance in the region – the friars would herald the second spiritual re-mapping of that ancient sacred Mesoamerican landscape.

Chapter Two

Re-mapping a Holy City: The Sons of St. Francis Meet the Sons of Quetzalcoatl

... I send you to convert with words and example the people who do not know
Jesus Christ our Lord, who are held fast in the blindness of idolatry under
the yoke of the satanic thrall, who live and dwell in the Indies....

– fray Francisco de los Ángeles Quiñones, O.F.M. Minister General,
“The Obedience Given to the Twelve,” 1523¹⁸⁶

As the winter of 1528 melted into 1529, fray Alonso Xuárez, a Spanish friar residing in the convento of San Miguel Huejotzingo, one of the four original Franciscan establishments in New Spain, gathered his belongings and ventured to his re-assignment as guardian of the friary in neighboring San Pedro Cholula, as Cholollan had been renamed in honor of its new patron, St. Peter.¹⁸⁷ Passing into an altepetl that as yet had not experienced permanent mendicant presence, fray Alonso would have had to cross the dusty central plaza amid the bustle of Cholulteca trade in produce and ceramics in order to reach the site selected for Cholula’s new evangelization complex. Standing beside the crumbled foundation of the once splendid Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, he would no doubt have felt the full magnitude of his mission, having vowed – in holy obedience to his superiors and to fray Juan de Zumárraga, fellow Franciscan and first bishop of Mexico – to fully immerse himself in the process of re-ordering Cholula’s sacred space yet again, this time in the direction and orientation of the Christian God.¹⁸⁸

Not only did fray Alonso face the challenge of evangelizing a people long accustomed to regional political and spiritual superiority, but he also belonged to the race of men who had appeared suddenly one afternoon in 1519, only to brutally massacre thousands of Cholulteca in a matter of hours. In the nine years since that dreadful encounter, the native peoples of Cholula had received limited attention from the Spanish Crown, resulting in a nascent and disorganized local

colonial administration.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, throughout New Spain, the interaction between Spaniards and native peoples would not be regularized by any secular institution until the introduction of *corregimiento* and the installation of the second Audiencia in the early 1530s.¹⁹⁰ As such, the arrival of fray Alonso Xuárez would serve to both stabilize Spanish presence and authority in Cholula, as well as contribute towards its socio-political re-organization.

Cholula's early colonial history would develop largely in concert with its new neighbor, the quintessential Spanish city of Puebla de Los Ángeles. In 1531, Cholula and several local communities provided lands from within their jurisdictions to found the new urban center, whose establishment the local Franciscans initiated. As the nearest pre-existing indigenous settlement, Cholula would be jointly governed with Puebla until 1538, maintaining a close relationship to the Spanish city even after separating. Indeed, nearly sixty years later in 1597, Cholula's Spanish *corredidor* was still being called upon to assist in the elections of Spanish officials in Puebla.¹⁹¹

Though scholars have traditionally viewed colonial Cholula as a *pueblo de indios* or indigenous settlement, overshadowed in importance by the Spanish city of Puebla, evidence indicates that in the sixteenth century Cholula rivaled Puebla politically and spiritually. As this chapter will discuss, several factors contribute to this distinction: not only did Cholula boast a significant number of Spaniards in this period – residents who engaged in commerce or industry with their indigenous neighbors, whom they also married – but in 1549 the outgoing viceroy chose to conference with the incoming viceroy in Cholula, not Puebla. Similarly, in 1568 the Franciscans would hold their Provincial gathering at the convento in Cholula, a historically indigenous site rather than in Puebla, the Spanish city. Lastly, when doña Mariana de la Mota, the wife of Cholula's *corregidor* Alonso de Nava, died unexpectedly in 1594 and it proved difficult to transport her body to her parents' sepulcher in the Dominican church in Mexico City,

de Nava requested that she be buried in Cholula's Franciscan church rather than in the Spanish city.¹⁹² In this way, Cholula's Franciscan enterprise would dominate Puebla's, not in sheer numbers (at any given point Puebla would house more friars), but in spiritual importance. As Mendieta relates, throughout the sixteenth century, the Franciscan convento in Puebla sustained itself on alms and donations it received from the Cholulteca.¹⁹³

Cholula's ancient history and sacred structure would lead the mendicants to believe they had located the ideal site from which to launch their salvation of the world, mitigating, as it were, the souls lost to the Protestant encroachment in Europe. The friars viewed the Cholulteca – a ritualized people with a rich religious lineage – as perfectly poised to receive and internalize their similarly-ritualistic faith. Indeed, according to Cholula's late sixteenth-century Spanish corregidor Gabriel de Rojas, Cholollan's numerous native priests lived in community in the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary in much the same manner as the friars would later reside in the convento, which was built on the same site using the same stones. Like the mendicants, the Cholulteca priests wore "habits," donated all their goods to the Temple upon entering the "order," and received tribute and other offerings from the multitude of "pilgrims" who visited the sanctuary. In addition, whenever Quetzalcoatl's priests left the Sanctuary, they would be accompanied by 26 instrument-carrying indigenous nobles who resided in the neighboring square. These men would play not only at the head of processions originating from the Plumed Serpent's shrine, but also in the middle of the night to wake the priests for prayer; after providing another musical signal at dawn, the Cholulteca populace would gather at the Temple for morning prayer in a pre-hispanic Liturgy of the Hours, if you will.¹⁹⁴

The similarities of Cholollan's past to Christian religious practice would not have been lost on the friars, rendering their excitement at discovering a collection of "indigenous

Franciscans” in the sacred city more understandable.¹⁹⁵ Clearly, if the Sons of Quetzalcoatl were to become Christian, the numerous indigenous communities in the region who had long sought spiritual counsel from Cholollan’s priests would more easily be persuaded to accept the new religion. In this way, the friars were not only imitating the military strategy whereby Spanish conquistadores would capture indigenous leaders in order to “pacify” the peoples under his jurisdiction, but they were also pitch-hitting, as it were, for the native priests displaced by the Spanish Conquest, taking advantage of a spiritual situation that appeared ready-made for them.¹⁹⁶ Ironically, the friars’ efforts to usurp Cholula’s sacred landscape and exploit its extensive regional influence to spread Christianity would instead prolong its centuries-old spiritual and political dominance in the sixteenth century, since the native peoples, like many of their colonial indigenous counterparts, would capitalize on Franciscan presence to preserve a modicum of their pre-contact authority, albeit in a Nahua-Christian form.

Before the process of Cholula’s socio-political reorganization could begin in earnest, however, fray Alonso Xuárez and his brother friars had to gain the trust of the native Cholulteca after nearly a decade of disappointing and disastrous interactions with the foreign colonizers.

After the Massacre: Cholula in the 1520s

... on the following day the whole city was reoccupied and full of women and children, all unafraid, as if nothing had happened.... their markets and trade were carried on as before.

– Hernando Cortés, 1520¹⁹⁷

Following the 1519 massacre, the native Cholulteca did not see Spanish presence again until after the siege of Mexico-Tenochtitlan was complete in 1521. That same year, Cortés

allocated Cholula as an *encomienda* with 10,000 indigenous tribute-payers to one of his most trusted fellow conquistadors, Andrés de Tapia, a young Spaniard from Medellín.¹⁹⁸ A close friend of Cortés, as a teenager Tapia had served as groom to the famous Genoese explorer's son Diego Colón in Sevilla, setting sail for Santiago de Cuba upon his employer's suggestion and arriving in December 1518. Eventually commissioned by Governor Diego Velázquez to join Cortés in Havana, Tapia would accompany the Spanish conquistador on his voyage to the mainland the following year.¹⁹⁹ Due to his consistent success in battle, Tapia would become one of Cortés' most reliable captains in New Spain, both witnessing and participating in the Cholula massacre, disguising himself as a native person to sneak into Pánfilo de Narváez's camp on the coast, and fighting alongside Cortés in the long campaign against the Mexica in Mexico-Tenochtitlan.²⁰⁰ So highly did Cortés hold him in his regard, in fact, that the nominal indigenous ruler of Tenochtitlan from 1525-1530 was named don Andrés de Tapia Motelchiuhtzin, christened, no doubt, in honor of the captain.²⁰¹

Despite Tapia's significant contributions to secure and promote Spanish imperialism, Cortés revoked his *encomienda* in Cholula in 1523, apparently without clear cause, giving Tapia in its place Tuzapan, Papantla, and other towns in Pánuco whose lands were not as highly valued as Cholula.²⁰² Tapia somehow managed to remain in Cortés's good graces even after the revocation of his *encomienda*, for in 1526 he became an *alguacil mayor* and *regidor* in Mexico City. Tapia accompanied Cortés to Spain two years later, and upon his return to New Spain in 1529 was named *justicia mayor* and *contador*, eventually advancing to *mayordomo*. That same year, Tapia appealed to the Spanish Crown to rectify the injustice of his revoked *encomienda* in Cholula, and in September the King responded by issuing a *real cédula* from Toledo addressed to the president and *oidores* of the *Audiencia* of Mexico City on his behalf.²⁰³ Even so, the

situation does not appear to have been rectified. Though evidence suggests Tapia may have discovered petrol on one or more of his holdings, these lands were too near the sea to allow him to rent out the properties at a profit.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, he remained close to Cortés, being among those who testified in Valladolid on his behalf against Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza in 1543.²⁰⁵

Though Andrés de Tapia's various *encomienda* in Papantla, Tuzpa, Amola, Xaltepec, and Caxitlan brought in about 1,720 *pesos* per year, he died in the early 1560s in virtual poverty, with little to bequeath to his wife, Isabel de Sosa, or to their three children: Cristóbal de Tapia, Pedro Gómez de Cáceres, and María de Sosa.²⁰⁶ So concerned had New Spain's Viceroy Luis de Velasco become about Tapia's paltry income during this period that he wrote to Charles V in 1554 requesting special aid for the former conquistador.²⁰⁷ Around the time of Tapia's death, his son Cristóbal attempted to regain the family's right to indigenous labor and tribute in Cholula by gathering witnesses to testify about his father's life of meritorious service and military achievements during the conquest of Mexico. Among the many witnesses who surfaced during Cristóbal de Tapia's lengthy *Información de Servicios y Méritos* – which spans the years 1561 to 1564 – was the renowned Franciscan chronicler and one of the original Twelve, fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía, who had resided in Cholula for a time.²⁰⁸

After revoking Tapia's *encomienda* in Cholula in 1523, Cortés assigned it to Rodrigo Rangel, a Spaniard from Medellín who was probably the oldest conquistador in his retinue.²⁰⁹ A chronic complainer, the other conquistadors loathed to travel in company with him, for in addition to his penchant for swearing, Rangel was always ailing with headaches, boils, or scalp sores; he was even rumored to have killed a man in a brawl in Santo Spiritu, Cuba in 1518.²¹⁰ As the captor of Pánfilo de Narváez and Rodrigo de Salvatierra during the campaign against the

Mexica, Rangel remained behind in command in Veracruz, eventually requesting leave in 1521 to fight the Zapotecs.²¹¹

Like Rangel, the native Cholulteca tribute-payers under his jurisdiction participated in Spanish military campaigns in the early years of the sixteenth century. Despite the devastation resulting from the 1519 massacre – or perhaps because of it – the Cholulteca recognized the benefits of formally associating with the Spaniards, just as their Tlaxcalteca enemies had done after two weeks of fierce battle. Indeed, evidence indicates that after the massacre, Cortés secured a Spanish alliance with Cholula prior to leaving to pursue Moctezuma in Mexico-Tenochtitlan.²¹² Even without this 1519 agreement, however, the Cholulteca in Rangel’s jurisdiction would have had little input regarding military expeditions, since their *encomendero* could enlist them in any Spanish cause at whim.

One of the native Cholulteca’s sixteenth-century campaigns occurred during Rangel’s tenure as *encomendero*. As Bernal Díaz tells us, the native Cholulteca joined a group of about two hundred indigenous allies accompanying the Pedro de Alvarado expedition to Guatemala in 1524.²¹³ Though we do not know the number of casualties among the Cholulteca, of the several thousand Xochimilca who fought in the Guatemala, Honduras, and Pánuco campaigns, every one of them died in combat. The number of Xochimilca warriors was higher than the Cholulteca because of Alvarado’s status as *encomendero* in Xochimilco, meaning these native allies had been commissioned by the leader of the expedition himself.²¹⁴ One can only assume that the casualties among the smaller group of indigenous warriors from Cholula would have been staggering. A few decades later the Cholulteca would again join a military expedition, this time fighting alongside the Spaniards in the Mixtón War in 1540, joining a retinue of indigenous allies from Huejotzingo, Tepeaca, Texcoco, Chalco, Amecameca, Tenango, Xochimilco, Tlalmanaco,

and Tenochtitlan.²¹⁵ During this indigenous revolt – which originated in western New Spain and spread rapidly to the southeast – the native insurgents carried out a series of violent raids in an attempt to overturn Spanish rule, prompting Viceroy Mendoza himself to lead an expedition to quell the rebellion.²¹⁶

Though Rodrigo Rangel held the distinguished post of *alguacil mayor* in Mexico City in 1523 – the same year he received Cholula in *encomienda* – and also served as *regidor* from 1526-1529, he was nevertheless disgraced after being accused of blasphemy in 1527. Because he denied God, claimed the devil as his master, rejected the Virgin birth, and denounced the Mother of God as a whore, Rangel was required to attend mass publicly without a cloak while balancing a candle on his bare head.²¹⁷ His sentence also included nine months of penance in a monastery, the mandatory feeding of five indigents every Friday, and a 500 *peso* donation to several *conventos*, orphans, and to the poor in general.²¹⁸ Together with the native Cholulteca from his *encomienda*, he was condemned to complete the hermitage of the 11,000 martyrs already begun on the causeway from Tlaxcala and to donate three dozen slabs for the floor of the church of San Francisco.²¹⁹

As *encomendero* of Cholula, Rangel was called upon in a 1529 royal *cédula* to provide native peoples from his *encomienda* to aid in the construction of Franciscan houses and churches in Cholula, Pixca, Quatitlan, and Michoacán, as well as to grant his tribute-payers sufficient liberty, as well as ensure fair treatment, so that they would more quickly erect said religious structures.²²⁰ Apparently Rangel and his fellow *encomenderos* in these locales were neither generous nor persuasive with their native laborers, because the Spanish Crown repeated its royal decree the following year “at the request of the friars.”²²¹ Issued in Madrid in 1530, this *cédula* once again asked the *encomenderos* of the native communities in Tamanalco, Acapistla, Cholula,

Michoacán, Xochimilco, Huaquechula, and Huatitlan to treat their native peoples kindly, allowing them adequate free time to labor for the Franciscans and build their monasteries quickly and of their own free will.

In the end, Rangel's stint as *encomendero* ended within six years, for when the first Spanish *Audiencia* convened in Mexico City in 1529, it divided the *encomienda* at Cholula between two Spaniards: Diego Pacheco and Diego Hernández de Proaño, the latter of whom would eventually be named *alguacil mayor* of Cholula, a post he would hold until being promoted to *alguacil mayor* of Mexico City.²²² Rangel appears to have died that same year, for a 1530 royal *cédula* addressed to the president and *oidores* of Mexico City demanding that justice be served in the petition of García López de Avalos, an archpriest from the village of Medellín who was heir to Rodrigo Rangel's claim to Cholula; the *cédula* argued that the *encomienda* was unfairly revoked after Rangel's death.²²³

The petition would prove irrelevant, for in 1531 the second *Audiencia* revoked all *encomienda* grants in New Spain made by the first *Audiencia*, a decision prompting the unhappy *alguacil mayor*, Diego Hernández de Proaño, to challenge his right to part of Cholula.²²⁴ The fiscal brought a case against him in March; that same month the colonial government would place Cholula in *corregimiento*, an alternative Spanish system of government and tribute collection among native peoples overseen by a Spanish official known as a *corregidor*.²²⁵ Throughout the Spanish colony, the *corregidor* served as an administrator of Crown fees, as well as magistrate, tribute collector, and constable, merging what in Spain would have been the responsibility of four civil branches of government.²²⁶ Usually paid a salary and receiving additional living expenses from indigenous tribute, early colonial *corregidores* might also receive sustenance from the native peoples themselves, as was the case in neighboring Tlaxcala.²²⁷ In many ways,

the *corregidor* managed the province and supervised its government much as the viceroy oversaw the viceroyalty.

Because of the vast size of New Spain, the *corregidor* of Puebla initially also governed Cholula and Tlaxcala. Though the joint arrangement with Puebla concluded in 1538 after only seven years, the association with Tlaxcala continued twice as long, ending in 1545.²²⁸ Assigned as early as 1531, the first composite *corregidor* was Hernando de Elgueta, a former conquistador who had served with Cortés in Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala.²²⁹ Elgueta chose to live in Puebla until his residency as a Crown official ended in 1538, at which point Puebla became self-governed by royal dispensation and did not require a *corregidor*.²³⁰ Even so, Elgueta's successor, Antonio de Cadena, continued to reside in Puebla despite serving as joint *corregidor* of Cholula and Tlaxcala. Only when Tlaxcala and Cholula became independent *corregimientos* in 1545 did each jurisdiction maintain its own *corregidor* in situ.²³¹

The residency practices of the earliest Spanish officials not only reflected the geographical proximity of Cholula to Puebla, but also set the precedent for the close political relationship the cities would maintain throughout the sixteenth century. Even at the end of the century, Cholula's *corregidor* – who had served mid-century as a *regidor* in Puebla – would be called upon to assist in the election of the Spanish city's *alcaldes ordinaries*.²³² As the sixteenth century advanced, Cholula would emerge as a political and spiritual rival to Puebla.

Becoming San Pedro Cholula: The Sons of St. Francis Move Into Town

We have seen the great care with which Your Majesty has sent us ... religious fathers to teach us the Catholic faith and administer the sacraments and ... we implore that you always send us religious [friars] because it greatly consoles us as they are our fathers in everything.

– Indigenous *Cabildo* of Cholula to Emperor Charles V, 12 October 1554²³³

Although historians do not know the exact date fray Alonso Xuárez and his brother friars permanently established their residence in Cholula, we do know that one of the earliest local Franciscan undertakings was to christen the site San Pedro Cholula after St. Peter, its new patron saint.²³⁴ Choosing the first pontiff as the saintly overseer of Cholula's sacred landscape would have resonated with the Franciscans, since several of them associated the Mesoamerican holy site with the Eternal City and its glorious pagan past. Most notably, fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinía considered Cholula "another Rome, with many temples of the demon;" similarly, his fellow Franciscan, fray Bernardino de Sahagún, wrote that like the ancient Romans who built the Acropolis as a fortification, so too did the native Cholulteca construct the pyramid near Cholollan to serve as a mountain of defense, filled with mines and caves.²³⁵ Even Spanish officials promoted this association, for in 1581 Cholula's Spanish *corregidor* claimed that due to the numerous indigenous penitents who made pilgrimages to Cholollan's Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, the pre-contact polity was held in as much esteem as Mecca by the Moors and Rome by the Christians.²³⁶ Cholula's link to the Papal city persisted into the eighteenth century, evident by a remark appearing in the work of Francisco Javier Clavijero, a Mexican-born priest of the Society of Jesus who composed his history of Mexico during exile in Italy following the Jesuit Expulsion of 1767; in his chronicle, he writes: "In regards to religion, one could say that Cholula was the Rome of Anáhuac."²³⁷

In this context, who better to guide the newly-arrived mendicants in their endeavors to transform the seat of Mesoamerican regional ritual into a Christian evangelization center than the man chosen by Christ as the rock upon whom he built his Church? This was especially true precisely because of Rome's development into the seat of Catholicism over a former pagan site.

The friars' link to the Caput Mundi was particularly strong because they arrived in the New World with papal authority in hand, the aforementioned *Exponi nobis feciste* issued by Pope Adrian VI in 1522, granting them unprecedented powers to preach and administer sacraments in the New World. Unlike the secular clergy who would arrive to New Spain with royal authorization derived from the Spanish national Church, the mendicants considered themselves Christ's disciples, believing they possessed apostolic authority from the universal Church and thus were not so much imitating as participating in the continuum of Christian tradition.²³⁸ By referencing the capital of the Universal Church in re-naming this Mesoamerican sacred polity – and hence linking it with all that Rome represented – the friars underscored their belief that in New Spain they had returned to the days of Apostolic Church. It would be here, on the ruins of a site formerly dedicated to “the demon,” that they would fulfill the directives of their Franciscan evangelical mission.

Cholula's re-christening very likely occurred between 1521-1527, during which time the site remained under the guardianship of the neighboring Franciscan establishment at San Miguel Huejotzingo, possessing only a temporary *iglesia de visita*, or visiting chapel, rather than a permanent *convento* or *doctrina* of its own. In contemplating a Christianized name for Cholollan, the friars must have considered the Cholulteca's self-identification as Sons of Quetzalcoatl, their patron deity, a characteristic they understood given their own self-identification as Sons of St. Francis, the seraphic founder of their Order. Given that native peoples referenced their pre-hispanic temples as god-houses and began in the early colonial period to identify Christian churches as where-the-saint-lives, the choice of *santo* became important, especially since indigenous communities viewed patron saints as their parents and true owners of the church's land.²³⁹ By selecting San Pedro, then, the Franciscans had produced a veritable army of Sons of

St. Peter, that is, children of the pope, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, the Apostolic Church, the very Church losing souls to the Protestant encroachment in Europe.²⁴⁰ If the Cholulteca Christians could replace those wayward apostates in the Old World, then this pre-hispanic sacred landscape would surely prove the perfect vineyard for the harvesting of indigenous souls.

Unfortunately, the early years of Franciscan presence in Cholula cannot be discussed with any certainty due to a dearth of documentation. Indeed, the period between Cortés' arrival in 1519 and permanent Franciscan arrival in late 1528 or early 1529 remains hazy; except for the change in *encomenderos* and the shift into *corregimiento*, daily life in Cholula in the first decade of Spanish rule remains relatively unknown. Documents are sparse until after the friars permanently settled in Cholula, hence we have little indication of the quotidian experience of its residents up to that point. More significantly, indigenous voices remain absent in the first few decades of colonial rule, emerging only in the mid- to late sixteenth century, so what we know of the Cholulteca experience must be extrapolated from Spanish documents.

One of the earliest sources to mention Franciscan presence in Cholula is a 1529 *Información* taken by Cholula's *alguacil mayor*, Hernando de Proaño, who would receive Cholula in a shared *encomienda* with Diego Pacheco in December of that year. Issued on May 3, this document accuses certain Franciscan friars of disrespecting the *Audiencia*, and charges fray Toribio de Motolinía, the *guardián* of Huejotzingo, and fray Alonso Xuárez, the *guardián* of Cholula, of spreading malicious lies about the Spaniards, claiming that Cortés was stationed in Cuba with 600 men, poised to overthrow the government. The two friar guardians were also said to have been encouraging Spaniards and native peoples alike to disobey the *Audiencia* decrees, even as they seized blankets, hens, and tortillas from the poor indigenous inhabitants in their

respective areas.²⁴¹ Neither the resolution nor the Franciscan response to these accusations is known.

Neither do we know the names or number of friars who accompanied fray Alonso Xuárez in his early endeavors among the Cholulteca. We do know, however, that by 1531 Cholula was home to at least four friars, one of them being the new *guardián*, fray Francisco de Soto of the original Twelve.²⁴² The presence of four friars in a fledgling evangelization site was due in part to the twenty Franciscan reinforcements who arrived to New Spain in 1529, as well as to the instrumental role the Sons of St. Francis played in establishing the nearby Spanish city of Puebla de los Ángeles in 1531.²⁴³ It was not mere coincidence that the Spaniards founded Puebla on the feast day of San Toribio, but rather a means of honoring the distinguished Franciscan fray Toribio de Motolinía, who celebrated the city's founding mass. Because Puebla was still in its infancy and its buildings were under construction, the friars assigned to the City of Angels most likely began their residences in Cholula. Though the friars in their midst increased in number, unfortunately for the native Cholulteca, by 1531 their population had declined to about 20,000, a result of the massacre and the spread of European diseases, an overall significant deterioration from its pre-contact populace of between 40,000 to 100,000 families.²⁴⁴

The remainder of the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, which had already been burned and partially destroyed during the 1519 massacre, had been promptly demolished by the Spanish *conquistadores* who returned to Cholula not long after completing the campaign in Mexico-Tenochtitlan in 1521. Soon thereafter, the Spanish colonists designated the lands upon which the indigenous temple had stood as the home of the future Franciscan friary. Even so, construction on the ambitious Franciscan evangelization program in Cholula would not begin in earnest until 1549, a full twenty years after fray Alonso Xuárez's arrival. During the period between the first

guardián's arrival and the commencement of its *convento*, the friars assigned to Cholula lived in a simple residence near the site of the former Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary off the central plaza. Possibly attached to, or built as an expansion of, the original *iglesia de visita*, this adobe structure sported a roof of palm fronds and grass, an unadorned dwelling exhibiting the type of poverty that would have met with approval from the Poverello himself.²⁴⁵ The friars may have also taken occasional refuge in the neighboring *convento de San Miguel Huejotzingo* or even in the more-distant friary of *San Francisco de Tlaxcala*, Cholula's historic enemy. Although construction on the Franciscan friary and cloister stalled during the first two decades of colonial rule, Cholula's European *Casas Reales*, or government buildings, did appear alongside the central plaza, or *traza*; in addition, a handful of Spaniards built residences nearby. Radiating outward from the center were the dwellings of the native Cholulteca, with the higher ranking *indios principales* living nearest the Europeans.

During these early years, the Spaniards began razing the numerous ancient indigenous *teocalli* and replacing them with Christian churches, compelling indigenous laborers to recycle sacred stones as they built on the same site, a practice perfected during the days of the Spanish Reconquista, and which the friars would repeat with the Franciscan *convento*.²⁴⁶ Aside from producing a grid city of elongated rather than square blocks, little is known about this transition, except that it advanced gradually over several decades.²⁴⁷ In 1581, for example, Gabriel de Rojas reported that several ancient ritual "reliquaries" dedicated to minor deities still dotted the landscape.²⁴⁸ Indeed, the sheer number of sacred indigenous structures in Cholollan had led Hernando Cortés's chaplain, Francisco López de Gómara, to famously – and erroneously – claim in 1552 that it had a church for every day of the year; Cortés references four hundred "towers," Motolinía mentions more than three hundred, while Bernal Díaz del Castillo relates that there

were “more than one hundred.”²⁴⁹ Various local factors – including depopulation due to massacre and disease – hindered Cholula’s building project, the most important being that the native Cholulteca were preoccupied in the 1530s and 1540s with constructing the Spanish city of Puebla.

Building the City of the Angels: Cholulteca Labor in the New Spanish City

The City of [Puebla de] Los Angeles in New Spain ... was founded on the recommendation and by order of the *president* and *oidores* of the royal *audiencia* ... and at the request of the Franciscans... to have a town founded for the Spaniards who, the friars recommended, should devote themselves to tilling the fields and cultivating the land ... [since] not all Spaniards, they thought, should wait to have Indians apportioned to them.

– fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, OFM, 1541²⁵⁰

Founded in 1531, the city of Puebla de los Ángeles was meant to accommodate Spaniards who arrived in New Spain too late to participate in the distribution of *encomiendas*, though some *encomenderos* eventually settled there. In need of a stopover between the capital and the port of Veracruz, Spanish surveyors chose an area abandoned by native peoples, a region previously known as Cuextlaxcohuapan.²⁵¹ While the actual site designated in a 1532 letter by doña Isabel of Portugal, the Holy Roman Empress, to the president and *oidores* of Mexico fell within the limits of Cholula, the indigenous polities of Tepeaca, Totimehuacán, and Huejotzingo also provided land for the new Spanish city.²⁵² Puebla was unique among urban centers in New Spain not only because it was founded on “free” lands rather than built over the ruins of an indigenous *altepetl* that had been destroyed and appropriated during the conquest, but also because of its identity as a “Republic of Spanish Farmers.” The local Franciscans in particular envisioned the new city as a location where Spaniards might develop a love for their adopted land, cultivating it

Castilian style, rather than idle away their lives pining for their beloved España as their indigenous laborers tended to their properties.²⁵³ Eventually, however, this combination of free land and free people meant that few Spaniards were willing to construct its buildings and to work its fields, thus necessitating the importation of local indigenous labor.

Because *encomienda* distribution did not serve as the basis for Puebla's founding, neither was *repartimiento* officially endorsed, that is, the Spanish system of compulsory rotational draft labor. Instead, neighboring indigenous settlements provided *indios de servicio* to aid in Puebla's construction; these indigenous servants or employees of Spaniards – sometimes known as *naborías* – became important aspects of city life.²⁵⁴ In the case of Puebla, the *indios* hailed from neighboring Tlaxcala, Huejotzingo, Tepeaca, and, of course, Cholula. By 1570 – when Puebla boasted a population of 500 Spanish *vecinos* – there were around 1,000 indigenous tributaries in the city and its environs, including a good number of *indios* in Puebla who did not pay tribute; the Cholulteca in Puebla would receive this privilege in 1564.²⁵⁵ Though native peoples who were living near the region selected for Puebla's central plaza had been moved west of the Atoyac River in 1531, others remained to build the Spaniards' houses and to serve them.²⁵⁶ Some *indios de servicio* lived with or near their Castilian masters, though many others lived in irregular structures at the edge of town.²⁵⁷ This practice led to the flourishing of several indigenous *barrios* in Puebla, the most commercially successful and socially popular of which was the *barrio de Santiago Cholultecapan*, where the native Cholulteca resided.²⁵⁸

According to Motolinía, numerous *indios* from Cholula participated in Puebla's founding day ceremonies on April 16, 1531, which, as previously noted, was the feast day of his patron, San Toribio.²⁵⁹ In a simple hut with a palm frond roof – not unlike the original church structure in Cholula – the founding friar said the mass of dedication attended by the *oidor* Juan de

Salmerón, the Franciscan guardians of Cholula, Huejotzingo, and Tlaxcala, and the thirty-four Spaniards selected to found the new city.²⁶⁰ In Puebla de los Ángeles, the Franciscans were testing out the application of laws developed by the Spanish Crown during the Reconquista. Specifically, these decrees outlined the process by which the Spaniards were to establish Christian settlements on lands seized from the Moors. They were also experimenting with a city designed for Spaniards who would not exploit native peoples.²⁶¹

Motolinía recounts the impressive site of seeing so many indigenous laborers pouring in from neighboring *pueblos* to “aid the Christians.”²⁶² He describes how each *pueblo* arrived with its people, approaching the city in groups on the road originating from their home settlement. These *indios* carried bundles of straw to erect temporary housing, as well as cords that they would use to measure the city streets. The Cholulteca – whose numbers Motolinía estimates at around 7,000 – and the other *indios de servicio* arrived singing, holding aloft flags, ringing little bells and beating drums while some danced to the rhythm and others paused to perform ritual dances. These service *indios* accompanied the 40 or so founding Spanish residents to the central plaza, or *traza*, so they could expand the already laid-out city center. According to this founding Franciscan, the native peoples made short order of the construction, using their cords to quickly lay out forty home plots. Within a week’s time, in fact, they had finished erecting all forty homes, domiciles that Motolinía insists were of no mean construction, but ample and large enough to accommodate house guests.

Because the Spanish Crown had assigned to Puebla a *corregidor* who also administered Tlaxcala and Cholula, *indios de servicio* could be easily imported to aid in the construction of Puebla’s civic and religious buildings, a process that continued at least until the 1560s.²⁶³ The most important sacred structures requiring indigenous labor in the sixteenth century were the

Franciscan *convento de San Francisco* and the Puebla cathedral. Though construction on the friary did not commence immediately, the Franciscans date its origins to the city's founding, that is, to April 16, 1531. Motolinía himself chose the exact site for the new Franciscan *convento*, though scholars debate whether the structure present today sits on the original location. What is clear, however, is that the original parcels of land that the friars received in 1534 – in addition to access to the water in the nearby river – were much larger than the current lot.²⁶⁴

In contrast to the early development of the *convento*, construction on Puebla's colossal cathedral did not commence until 1575, this despite the *cabildo*'s requests to the Royal *Audiencia* in 1564 for four hundred native Cholulteca to aid in the construction of its buildings, and a petition in 1565 for another one hundred and fifty *indios* from Cholula.²⁶⁵ Interrupted in 1626, the enormous church that would serve as the seat of the bishop finally saw completion in 1690, though its lone bell was not hung until 1732.²⁶⁶ The delay was likely caused by the indigenous laborers' preoccupation with erecting Puebla's large Franciscan friary and accompanying cloister, as well as population losses due to various sixteenth-century epidemics. In addition, the native Cholulteca – whose numbers contributed significantly to the indigenous workforce in Puebla – spent the years 1549-1552 constructing the Franciscan *convento* and cloister in Cholula, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Native Cholulteca repeatedly appear in Puebla's municipal documents, evidence that they labored continuously throughout the City of Angeles during the 1530s and 1540s. On May 13, 1538, Puebla's *cabildo* approved payment to Cholula's *corregidor*, Hernando de Elguera, for 50 *indios* of Cholula who had been assigned to work in the construction of the city, a disbursement scheduled to occur annually beginning in January of that year.²⁶⁷ The document stipulates that though the indigenous laborers must construct the various buildings of the *cabildo*, they are not

obligated to work on the individual properties of the officials in municipal office.²⁶⁸ Three years later, Puebla's *cabildo* would authorize Spanish officials from Mexico City to approach the Viceroy, don Antonio de Mendoza, and request that Cholula comply with its obligation to provide indigenous workers to the city of Los Angeles.²⁶⁹ Though the documents do not discuss a response or resolution, at this juncture, Cholula would have found it difficult to comply with its labor obligations in Puebla given that a terrible *cocoliztli*, or epidemic, had swept across the Central Valley in 1540. Having already dwindled down to 20,000 indigenous inhabitants by 1531, this pestilence further reduced the population to 15,000, a significant deterioration from its pre-contact populace of between 40,000 to 100,000 families.²⁷⁰

Puebla and Cholula continued to be closely linked throughout the 1540s. In February 1545, for example, Mexico City's *Audiencia* received authorization from Carlos V and doña Juana to appoint Hernando Caballero, *corregidor* of Cholula, as a judge with privileges to arbitrate in Puebla.²⁷¹ The link between the two cities extended to native Cholulteca as well, for during this period several *indios principales* received home plots in the city, despite normally being relegated to the *barrio* of Santiago Cholultecapan.²⁷² On October 26, 1545, a high-ranking native Cholulteca named Rodrigo received a lot beside a mill belonging to Francisco Álvarez on the road leading to Cholula.²⁷³ In March of the following year Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza appointed two native Cholulteca, Francisco de Tezanco and Domingo Xicohtencatl, to the office of *lugarteniente de alguacil*, or lieutenant deputy sheriff, in Puebla.²⁷⁴ The next month, an *indio* from Cholula identified only as Francisco replaced Domingo Xicohtencatl as *teniente de alguacil*.²⁷⁵ Interestingly – especially given the appointment of native people as deputies in Puebla – in 1550 the *cabildo* prohibited native peoples from receiving undeveloped plots of land “from the slaughterhouse to the center of Puebla.”²⁷⁶ Perhaps by this mandate we can infer that

too many native peoples were receiving land in the city. From that point forward, native Cholulteca would be relegated to the *barrio* of Santiago Cholultecapan. This neighborhood appears to have grown rapidly, for in June 1556 Puebla's *cabildo* appointed Benito, a native Cholulteca, as *aguacil de indios* for the *barrio* of the Cholultecas. Within a few days it would appoint an *indio* named Diego as his *teniente de aguacil de indios*; from the presence of an interpreter we may assume that neither men spoke Spanish.²⁷⁷

According to Franciscan chronicler fray Gerónimo de Mendieta, by the 1590s Cholula had become one of the best cities in New Spain given that nearly everyone there was a merchant. Because of this, it had “the best houses and the richest people in all of the Indies.”²⁷⁸ The native Cholulteca were also apparently generous, for evidence indicates that they enthusiastically supported for their local Franciscans in both Cholula and Puebla. In his 1596 chronicle, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana*, Mendieta claims that it would be difficult for readers to comprehend the extensive devotion of the *indios* in Cholula for the friars, especially their penchant for giving alms. In fact, for the greater part of 1531-1596 (the period of his study), the quantity of items donated by the Cholulteca sustained not only the thirty friars and novices in training in its home *convento*, but also supported the mendicants in the struggling *convento de San Francisco* in Puebla, which ministered more to Spaniards than to native people.²⁷⁹ In addition to monetary donations, the native peoples from Cholula also contributed bread, wine, meat, fish, hens, and eggs.²⁸⁰

Though one might consider this activity a change prompted by the colonial situation, according to Gabriel de Rojas, these contributions actually served as a continuity of local pre-contact religious tradition, allowing the Cholulteca to maintain a link to their indigenous past. The Spanish *corregidor* writes that in their “pagan period” the native peoples of Cholollan –

whose sixteenth-century counterparts he considered “well-inclined to matters of doctrine” – were accustomed to bringing daily offerings at dawn to the collection of priests living in the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary. This Temple had, of course, been dismantled and rebuilt as Cholula’s Franciscan *convento*, and its priests replaced with a band of foreign friars.²⁸¹ In addition to the general populace’s daily donations of hens, quail, rabbits, deer, and copal incense, visitors to the Plumed Serpent’s shrine would offer feathers, blankets, gold, silver, precious stones, and other riches, though Rojas does not specify if the intended recipient of the alms was the deity or his priests.²⁸² Within this context, the enthusiasm with which the *indios* in Cholula supported the Franciscans becomes more nuanced, since it is unclear whether it was directed to the new patron-saint-deity or to his priests. Regardless, Cholulteca generosity not only indicates that its historically successful merchants continued to prosper in the first century of colonial rule, but it also provides yet another example of how the native peoples in Cholula wished to provide consistent evidence of their spiritual superiority over Puebla – by feeding those representatives of the new God who could not, by virtue of their vows of poverty, provide for themselves.

“We Will Build our Homes in the Spanish Style:” The Hispanization of Cholula

We would like Your Majesty to know that we are willing to construct our town of Cholula with buildings and *cabildo* and *audiencia* residences in the Spanish style.

– Letter to the Emperor from the *cabildo* of Cholula, 1552²⁸³

Despite the various obligatory building projects in the surrounding region that preoccupied its native peoples, Cholula’s hispanization commenced within a few years of Franciscan arrival. Even during its earliest period, the former holy site attracted Spanish attention. In 1536, don Martín Cortés – not a relation of the *conquistador* – petitioned Viceroy

Antonio de Mendoza for permission to plant one hundred thousand feet of mulberries within fifteen years in and near Cholula in order to cultivate colonies of silkworms.²⁸⁴ According to Martín Cortés, Cholula was not only the best region, but also the best city, in which to introduce silkworm cultivation to New Spain.²⁸⁵ He must have spent quite a bit of time there, for Joaquin García Icazbalceta tells us that Martín discovered ancient indigenous murals and requested sole access to them; he also built an adobe home in Cholula where he stored his belongings, including his tools for the silkworm trade.²⁸⁶

As Robert Ricard has noted in his seminal work, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, the silkworm industry was popular among friars and native peoples in the early colonial period.²⁸⁷ In fact, the practice became so prevalent and so successful that in 1539 the Crown issued a *cédula* ordering native peoples to pay a tithe on silk per the custom in Granada, Andalusia.²⁸⁸ Despite the support of the Spanish administration as well as numerous bishops, some friars worked to repress silk production, arguing that the cultivation of worms on the mulberry trees interfered with the native peoples' attentiveness to their Lenten obligations. In the end, the silk industry lasted only fifty years in New Spain, eventually replaced by the less expensive Chinese silk that became available after the colonization of the Philippines.²⁸⁹ Of the success of the silkworm trade in Cholula, little is known.

In addition to garnering the interest of Spanish entrepreneurs, Cholula also warranted early notice by the Spanish Crown. In appreciation of the aid its native people provided to Cortés during the Conquest of Tenochtitlan and in recognition of its ancient splendor, Charles V granted both city status and the establishment of an indigenous *cabildo* to the former Mesoamerican holy site in a royal *cédula* dated October 27, 1537.²⁹⁰ The Holy Roman Emperor followed his original declaration with a decree issued June 19, 1540, in which he provided the Cholulteca with their

own coat of arms, which the *municipio* of San Pedro Cholula retains to this day. The shield was meant to be comprised of four sections: on the upper right a small hill topped by a red cross on a field of gold, a lagoon with reeds and ducks against a blue field in the lower right, two golden bugles against an emerald backdrop in the third quadrant, and in the bottom left, a heraldic lion with sword in hand against a red background.²⁹¹ This decree made Cholula only the second indigenous urban center to receive a coat of arms after Tlaxcala, who received this privilege in its own royal *cédula* dated April 22, 1535.²⁹² Despite this early recognition, Cholula – which numbered 37,000 residents at that time, most of whom were indigenous – would not officially receive its city title until after its indigenous *cabildo* wrote a letter to Charles V in 1552; Viceroy don Luis de Velasco would confer the honor.²⁹³

Cholula's hispanization progressed at such a pace that by as early as May 1543 it had acquired a distinctive Castilian atmosphere and provided advantages not available in the nascent neighboring Spanish city of Puebla.²⁹⁴ As such, Viceroy don Antonio de Mendoza chose to lodge in Cholula while he attended to Crown business with the *cabildo* in neighboring Puebla.²⁹⁵ In 1549 when he was leaving office, Mendoza would again return to Cholula, this time for a series of important conferences with the incoming viceroy, don Luis de Velasco, about the business of overseeing New Spain.²⁹⁶ According to sixteenth-century historian Juan Suárez de Peralta, the two men passed several days in Cholula in great friendship, treating one another with gentlemanly decorum.²⁹⁷ Viceroy Mendoza's decision to meet his successor in what was ostensibly a *pueblo de indios*, rather than in the Spanish city of Puebla, was no doubt influenced by the time he spent in Cholula in six years earlier. As I shall discuss in the next chapter, the Franciscans would similarly decide to hold their 1568 Provincial meeting in Cholula rather than in Puebla, an unusual choice given the presence of a Spanish city nearby. Just as the meeting of

the viceroys underscored Cholula's early political significance, so too the gathering of all Franciscans in the Province in a traditionally indigenous settlement would signal Cholula's spiritual importance.²⁹⁸

Despite the hispanization taking place in Cholula and the eagerness with which the Franciscans claim the Cholulteca supported the local friars, from the 1530s the native peoples struggled to meet tribute obligations. In 1538, a royal *cédula* issued in Valladolid ordered native peoples in Cholula and Huejotzingo to provide food and service to their local *corregidores*. A report by the Dominican bishop of Tlaxcala, fray Julián de Garcés prompted this *cédula*, since he claimed that the Cholulteca and Huejotzinga were blatantly ignoring a two-year-old royal decree outlining their tribute obligations. In an attempt to reclaim lost tribute, the Crown asked the bishop to collect the 15,000 *maravedís* owed to the diocese, giving him authority to also oversee the collection of food, service, and tributes owed to the *corregidores* in Tlaxcala's jurisdiction.²⁹⁹ Though in 1542 Cholula would receive a one-year deferment of its tribute obligations in Puebla, in 1544, and again in 1545, it was still struggling to pay its backlogged dues.³⁰⁰ The dire situation may have prompted Puebla's *cabildo* to grant the scribe Francisco de Vallejo with the necessary authority to collect the payment Cholula owed the Spanish city in 1546; the *cabildo* would assign this role to various other officials the following year.³⁰¹

Eventually the heavily-indebted native Cholulteca take matters into their own hands, for in a 1552 letter to the Spanish Crown – in which they extol the recently-completed Franciscan *convento* as the most beautiful in all New Spain and promise to construct their town of Cholula with buildings and town council and court residences in the Spanish style if the King grants them city status³⁰² – they request a four-year moratorium on tribute, given that more than 70,000 Cholulteca had perished during the great *cocoliztli* of 1544-1546.³⁰³ The *cabildo* admits that

during the crisis of the epidemic they ceased paying tribute due to the incredible loss of life in Cholula, but insist that prior to that they always paid double the required amount. Hence, they respectfully request exemption.³⁰⁴

In a second letter to the king dated October 1554, the native *cabildo* in Cholula – in addition to thanking the Emperor for granting them the title of city and all its accompanying privileges – repeats its request to be relieved of its tithing obligations, protesting that its native inhabitants are very poor, that paying their debts would not only depress them but inflict great evil on the community, and that some of the commoners are so agitated by the city’s debts that they have threatened to run away.³⁰⁵ Even so, they assure the king that they remain prepared to obey him in all respects, and renew their promises to serve him. Though it is unlikely that the entire city of Cholula was relieved of its tribute obligations due to these letters, at the very least the native Cholulteca living in the indigenous *barrios* in Puebla were relieved of their status as “tribute Indians” in a 1564 order by the Emperor at the request of the Royal *Audiencia*.³⁰⁶

Even as the native Cholulteca engaged in civic and religious building campaigns in Puebla de los Ángeles and in Cholula proper, Spanish officials forbid them from acquiring local building materials for their own dwellings. The first official decree specifically prohibiting the *indios* from Cholula from taking limestone – which their ancestors had been accessing for centuries and with which they had built the Great Pyramid – first appeared in the minutes of the *cabildo* of Puebla on June 28, 1555. This edict, which stipulated that Cholulteca desiring to quarry stone must first petition for a license, also forbid them from gathering wood on Puebla’s outer limits because it damaged the area, insisting that permits would not be granted for this activity.³⁰⁷ Apparently the Cholulteca ignored this restriction, for the following month, Gonzalo Rodríguez, *regidor* and *procurador mayor* of Puebla, notified the *cabildo* that the *naturales* of

several pueblos – including Cholula – continuously entered the mountains and quarries of the city, felled trees, and acquired great amounts of wood and stone, ultimately causing a great deal of harm to the republic.³⁰⁸

The issue had yet to be resolved one year later when, on July 6, 1556, Puebla's *cabildo* authorized Gonzalo Díaz de Vargas, *alguacil mayor*, to travel to Mexico in the capacity of a *procurador* to resolve lawsuits with Cholula regarding the conditions of using Puebla's quarry.³⁰⁹ Cholula's *cabildo* responded that very day by petitioning for a license to quarry in the "cerro de San Miguel," a site managed by two residents of Puebla named Diego Román and Cristóbal Sánchez. The *indios* of Cholula explained that they desired access to stones on the hillside in order to construct the pillars of the *Casa Real* of his Majesty in Cholula, a promise they had made in a 1552 letter to the Emperor.³¹⁰ The exact location on the *cerrito* where the Cholulteca might extract the needed materials was indicated to them by Alonso de Mata, a *regidor* in Puebla who would later serve as *corregidor* of Cholula.³¹¹

In the late sixteenth-century, the native Cholulteca would secure access to a quarry of their own. By at least 1582, the *indios* of Cholula regularly quarried stone from a local olive-covered hill, as indicated by a February 23 license granting Fernando Gutiérrez, Puebla's *maestro de la obra de la iglesia*, permission to extract stone there, ostensibly for the cathedral's construction. It is unclear, however, whether the native Cholulteca used the stones they quarried to build their own homes or in the execution of their various obligatory building projects in Cholula, Puebla, and the surrounding Valley.³¹² Cholula would receive its own quarry three years later, when its *gobernador*, *alcaldes*, and *regidores* successfully petitioned Puebla's *cabildo* for their own site two *solares* in size so that they might construct *convento* buildings and other

necessary public structures in the meadows and pastures on the outskirts of the city known as Huitlaloç.³¹³

A few weeks later, two Spaniards named Francisco Hernando and Francisco de Castilla would petition for a quarry in Cholula three *solares* in length and one *solar* wide in a location abutting quarries belonging to the Augustinian friars, to Hernán Sánchez de Gálvez, and to the *indios* of Huejotzingo.³¹⁴ Though the men state that the desired located lies within the limits of Cholula, they no doubt mean the *barrio* of the Cholultecas where the Augustinian friars resided; Franciscans were the only mendicants in Cholula proper in the sixteenth century, a characteristic of the city that continues to this day. The Order of Preachers would become involved in the business of quarry-owning in 1594, when fray Francisco de Abrego, a Dominican friar and attorney for the College of San Luis, successfully requested excavation privileges on the city limits. He desired access to a site three *solares* in size near the quarry belonging to the *indios* of Cholula and the limestone kiln managed by Francisco de Castilla, since without a quarry, the Dominicans would not be able to complete the construction of their school.³¹⁵

As for the native Cholulteca, they took precautions to protect their quarry, and by at least 1595 had placed markers on its boundaries.³¹⁶ Their decision would prove important, for in 1607, Puebla's *cabildo* would call upon the native peoples of Cholula and Huejotzingo to present their licenses permitting them to quarry stone in the meadows of the city, ostensibly because unlicensed individuals were making away with the building materials.³¹⁷ Perhaps the native Cholulteca's long association with the Franciscans in their midst had taught them how to successfully enter into and protect their interests in various Spanish industries. As Gabriel de Rojas claimed in 1581, the *indios* of Cholula learned Spanish trades and customs with agility, and were flourishing merchants, farmers, gardeners, pottery venders, and painters, succeeding in

all the occupations of the Spaniards.³¹⁸ They also learned how to capitalize on the presence of the representatives of the new God to further their own interests.

“Because There Are Friars Among Us:” Capitalizing on Franciscan Presence in Cholula

“...it is necessary to have slaughterhouses in the city of Cholula in this way because there reside there and in the surrounding area many Spaniards and because in the said city there is a monastery of religious of the Order of St. Francis...”

– License to Juan de Cuevas to supply meat to Cholula’s slaughterhouses, 1583³¹⁹

In the 1590s, the native Cholulteca would acquire access to the profitable Spanish slaughterhouse industry, predicated in part by the presence of Franciscans in their midst. In that year, they would provide sixteen of the city’s numerous butchers, a position generally reserved for Europeans. Prior to this achievement, Cholula’s native community would have to endure decades of destructive behavior to its agrarian landscape from the European livestock that had been introduced into New Spain. Preventing cattle from wandering onto indigenous lands proved difficult throughout the sixteenth century, not least because traditional Spanish understanding of common pasturage sanctioned the grazing of one’s animals on agricultural stubble after harvest and prior to planting, regardless of the lands’ ownership.³²⁰ Further aggravating the situation were Spanish laws permitting cattle to graze freely on any unoccupied lands (*tierras baldías*), effectively transforming uncultivated fields into common pasture. The presence of cattle not only polluted local streams and rivers used for personal drinking water, but also affected locations downstream, where the desiccation of water sources prevented the sufficient irrigation of crops.

Despite indigenous attempts throughout New Spain to corral wandering cattle, fence off their sown fields, place trenches around their lands, or otherwise entrap the unruly quadrupeds,

livestock generally proved successful in finding forage. The rapid multiplication of herds – which included cows, horses, sheep, and goats – meant that Spanish owners would graze their large animals (*ganado mayor*) on the smaller properties that had been officially designated for sheep and goats (*ganado menor*). Without sufficient space, the crowded animals would naturally wander into adjacent fields seeking nourishment, which led native *cabildos* to appeal for legal protection against cattle infringement on their lands.

The Spanish administration did not ignore the consistent complaints of the native population, especially when ruined crops meant the inability to pay tribute. Indeed, multiple viceregal decrees in the sixteenth century indicate that the colonial government desired to alleviate the situation; unfortunately, the repetition of these edicts signals administrative inability to properly control either the livestock or the owners. Even so, in the middle of the century, the viceroy ordered offending Spaniards to compensate native peoples for damages and ventured to reassign land where injury to the indigenous population was most egregious. Because reassignment proved difficult to enforce, and because dispossession became increasingly infrequent, the viceroy altered his approach, instead attempting to mitigate the injurious conduct of cattle owners.³²¹ In 1567, for example, the viceroy granted each indigenous *pueblo* a protective “cushion,” as it were, of about a quarter mile in all directions, as well as a thousand *varas* of separation from the nearest Spanish cattle ranch.³²² Where cattle intrusion was most severe, the viceroy extended these protective limits, or forbid or restricted the pasturage privilege entirely.

Even as the native peoples in New Spain complained about unruly livestock, they generally consumed meat alongside their sixteenth-century Spanish counterparts, though slaughterhouse management remained the jurisdiction of Europeans or mulattos. Whereas

Spaniards tolerated indigenous consumption of fowl, pork, mutton, game, and dogs because native peoples produced as well as consumed these meats, they resented native communities for their lack of interest in animal husbandry even as they incorporated beef into their diets.³²³ After suffering from trampled crops and ruined lands for decades, native communities in New Spain would have had legitimate cause to distance themselves from cattle ranches and the maintenance of livestock. Beyond that, Spanish practice mandated the licensing of slaughterhouses in indigenous *pueblos* to the highest bidder; most likely this person would be a European.³²⁴

Depletion of cattle herds in the 1560s led angry Spaniards to blame native peoples for the shortage, citing their over-consumption of meat without contributing to the maintenance of the livestock industry. In truth, increased demand for hides in the European market – as well as desire for skins and tallow within the colony – contributed to the exhaustion of local herds.³²⁵ Even so, Spaniards attempted to outlaw the slaughtering of cattle in indigenous *pueblos*, where, by the mid-sixteenth century, *carnicerías* already existed in most of the larger settlements. Despite this prohibition, it appears unlikely that native peoples reduced their beef intake, since the restriction applied only to slaughterhouses that had not received viceregal confirmation and such confirmation was immediately granted to most standing establishments.³²⁶

Because of Cholula's size, its pre-contact and colonial importance, and the early presence of friars, its slaughterhouse likely dates from the mid-sixteenth century. As such, it would have suffered from the prohibition in the 1560s, and may have been threatened with closure, if not temporarily closed. Though we have no documentation detailing the founding date of Cholula's slaughterhouse, we do know the establishment was open and operational in 1576, for on February 27 of that year the viceroy, don Martín de Enríquez, granted license of the *carnicería* in Cholula to don Martín de Mauleón, a *vecino* of Puebla de Los Angeles, who was to slaughter the

number of cattle deemed necessary.³²⁷ Because don Martín was a resident of the Spanish city rather than a local, it is possible he may have been the first person to hold license to Cholula's *carnicería*; given the additional decrees dating to the same year, however, this conjecture remains unlikely. For example, within three months, another Spaniard, Sebastián de Saucedo, a *vecino* of Cholula, received from Viceroy Enríquez oversight of the slaughterhouse for the period of one year. Saucedo was to receive half of the salary attached to this position, as the other half was designated for the unnamed *visitador general* of the *carnicerías*.³²⁸ Likely the *visitador general* was a Spanish official who inspected New Spain's slaughterhouses to determine their compliance with local and royal ordinances. Because Cholula's *carnicería* was included in the *visitador*'s rotation, it was likely already well-established by 1576.

By July of that same year, the slaughterhouse in Cholula expanded beyond the slaying of *ganado mayor* when Viceroy Enríquez granted license to a Spaniard named Rodrigo Arias to slay, weigh, and provide to Cholula's *carnicería* twelve sheep per week.³²⁹ Arias' permit was restrictive, however, for the license would expire on *carnaval*, that is, on Shrove Tuesday of the year 1577, allowing him about eight or nine months to provide *ganado menor* to Cholula's *carnicería*, or roughly four hundred sheep total. Arias was further instructed to sell the sheep at the price they were sold in Tlaxcala, indicating that perhaps this was the first time sheep had been offered for sale in Cholula's slaughterhouse. Without further documentation of *ganado menor* in Cholula's *carnicería*, however, it remains difficult to determine if the license was granted on a probationary period in order to gauge local interest in mutton. More likely, the restriction reflected Lenten obligation rather than with the popularity of sheep as food, since most licenses issued to *carniceros* in Cholula expired within two days of Ash Wednesday,

indicating that meat was either not sold during Lent, or that its distribution was reduced or restricted.

Perhaps indicative of the success of mutton sales in Cholula's *carnicería* and the subsequent increase in the number of herds locally maintained, the native Cholulteca began complaining of wandering sheep soon thereafter. Apparently by 1579 Spanish sheep owners – lacking sufficient availability of *tierras baldías* during the growing season – had become accustomed to allow their *ganado menor* to roam freely in Cholula year-round, disregarding the mandate to graze their animals on the agricultural stubble of neighboring lands only after harvest and before planting. As a result, indigenous cultivation of maize, tunas, cochineal, and other vegetables had suffered severe damages, which, according to a July 10 viceregal decree, was an offense against God himself. As such, the viceroy, don Martín de Enríquez demanded that the *alcalde mayor*, Gabriel de Rojas, ensure that the offending Spaniards be forbidden to pasture their sheep at Cholula's jurisdictional limits or in its unoccupied lands until after the native people had collected the harvest.³³⁰ In other words, Cholula's Spanish residents were to obey previously mandated ordinances.

Incidentally, unlike indigenous aversion to animal husbandry, native *pueblos* did engage in shepherding during the sixteenth century as a means of securing funds for tribute as well as for the support of the local community.³³¹ The pasturage of sheep, in fact, developed into a moderately-sized indigenous industry, with the local *principales* adopting shepherding in imitation of wealthy Spaniards.³³² The native communities followed Spanish legal procedure, petitioning for the viceregal title that would provide formal ownership of the land, and which required the herding of two thousand head of sheep in an area about three miles square. Once assigned, the property could not be sold, ensuring that native communities used the lands only

for herding.³³³ Without a specific herding grant, sixteenth-century indigenous *pueblos* were restricted to three hundred head of sheep and two hundred and fifty goats. Indigenous interest in sheep raising did not threaten the Spaniards, however, perhaps because their commercial efforts remained limited.³³⁴ From the documents it is unclear whether the native Cholulteca raised sheep, though given their complaints it would appear they did not.

The issue of wandering livestock in Cholula was not quickly resolved, for in 1582, three Spaniards were cited for allowing their cattle to roam in the native Cholulteca's sown fields.³³⁵ In this decree, Viceroy don Lorenzo Suárez de Mendoza reprimanded the local *corregidor* for not realizing that three Spanish *labradores*, Diego, Pedro, and Luis Hernández, had been turning a profit for years by maintaining more livestock on their ranches than the law permitted. Because these men housed so many animals on their ranches, the extra cattle would wander into the nearby indigenous lands in search of food, trampling on the fields and destroying the grain. Having received information from the native Cholulteca alerting him to this problem, the viceroy demanded that the *corregidor* fine the Hernándezes, since their illicit activities had prevented the Cholulteca from fulfilling their tribute obligations. Beyond that, Diego, Pedro, and Luis were to not own more cattle than the law permitted and were to compensate the native peoples of Cholula for the damage their cattle had inflicted on their lands, ensuring that the community felt satisfied and vindicated for their losses. Here, then, we see the first direct reference to Spanish actions affecting tribute collection in Cholula, no doubt the primary motivation for Spanish intervention in the matter of unruly livestock.

Cholula's slaughterhouse industry must have remained successful, for in 1583 the city appears to possess more than one house within its jurisdiction. In March, a viceregal decree granted permission to a Spanish breeder named Juan de Cuevas to supply meat to the

slaughterhouses of Cholula for the period of one year beginning on Easter Sunday and continuing until *carnestolendas*, that is, two or three carnival days prior to Ash Wednesday.³³⁶ The license allows de Cuevas to slaughter and weigh the number of young bulls and sheep needed each week to provide for the sustenance of the local Spaniards, as well as to supply Puebla with its obligatory pounds of meat for one *real*.

Interestingly, the edict opens by referencing earlier viceregal policy prohibiting indigenous *pueblos* from having their own *canicerías* or slaughtering animals because of their proclivity to fraud and theft.³³⁷ Notwithstanding this proscription, the edict explains that Cholula warrants more than one slaughterhouse not only because of the numerous Spaniards who live in the city and its environs, but also and especially because it possesses a house of the “religious of the Order of St. Francis.”³³⁸ The implication here is that Cholula’s friars should not have to suffer the indignity of waiting to be served at a hectic *carnicería* when they were in the business of saving souls. Neither should Cholula’s Spanish residents wrestle hordes of local Cholulteca to acquire their meat. Beyond that, Cholula’s strategic location on a trunk line from Mexico City to Veracruz ensured that it was well-traversed by visiting Spaniards and native peoples, and could easily garner enough business to warrant a second *carnicería*.

Perhaps Cholula intended to designate one *carnicería* for the patronage of Spaniards and another for native peoples. Indeed, in a *visita* report dating to 1584, Franciscan Commissary General fray Alonso Ponce reported that nearly every indigenous town he visited in New Spain had its own *carnicería* contracted by Spaniards to provide meat to the native populace.³³⁹ Charles Gibson has noted that while native labor has been documented in several slaughtering operations in New Spain, there is no evidence of indigenous management.³⁴⁰ Cholula appears to follow suit, for by the 1590s, the native Cholulteca definitely participated in the maintenance of

the slaughterhouse industry. On May 8, 1590 – that is, within seven years of the establishment of the second slaughterhouse – nineteen indigenous butchers speaking through an interpreter agree to work for Pedro Cano, a Spaniard from Puebla responsible for supplying meat to the *carnicerías* in Cholula.³⁴¹ These *indios carniceros* promise that for the period of one year they will slaughter the necessary amount of livestock to sustain Cholula, either in the *carnicería* or any other agreed upon location, as well as skin, salt, and dry the leather. The Cholulteca men agree to a salary of 320 *pesos de oro común*, stipulating that they be paid one-third of their wages every four months. Like previous decrees, the agreement ends on *carnevolendas*, that is, that is, two or three carnival days prior to Ash Wednesday. The following year at Easter time, fifteen *indios carniceros* enter into a new agreement with the Poblano Pedro Cano that will end at *carnevolendas* of 1592, agreeing to wash and salt the skins in addition to slaughtering the necessary livestock. Some of the names from the 1590 document reappear, though most are new Cholulteca men; this time, the salary will be 400 *pesos de oro común*, nothing daily and nothing more.³⁴²

Pedro Cano quickly becomes disillusioned with this arrangement, for in July of 1591, a mere three months after the second document cited above, he complains to the *corregidor* that the *vaqueros*, the men who oversee and protect the cattle, and other unknown persons are defrauding him, killing and stealing the steers and selling them to native people.³⁴³ The Cholulteca, in turn, would often sell the meat to other native peoples. Cano demands that the cattle hustlers be punished for their crimes, and that an edict be issued forbidding the native Cholulteca to sell raw meat; rather, the native people should be restricted to selling only cooked or dried beef. The results of Cano's petition are unknown.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the following year a new name appears in the documentation as license-holder to one of Cholula's slaughterhouses. By this point, not only the native peoples, but also the orders have become involved in Cholula's butcher business, for on January 20, 1593, fray Pedro de la Encarnación, a Carmelite from Mexico City, attempts to collect a debt from Pedro de Alcandre. The friar needed the 1,400 *pesos* to pay for a license to supply meat to Cholula's slaughter-houses, this being our first indication of the customary amount bid for a *carnicería* license in Cholula.³⁴⁴

The only clue regarding the location of Cholula's *carnicería* appears in a 1592 document, when the indigenous *gobernador*, don Gaspar Tecameca Tazayasa together with two *alcaldes*, Esteban Maldonado and Frabres de Los Angeles, and four *regidores* rent some houses to Andrés López for the period of six years. These structures, which belong jointly to the community and to the native *cabildo*, are located in Cholula's central plaza next to the *carnicería*, perhaps indicating that this was a heavily-indigenous area.³⁴⁵ Whereas at least one of Cholula's slaughterhouses was centrally located, the *cabildo* in Puebla strove to ensure that its *carnicería* – which was founded in 1536 – remained outside the *traza*. By October 1545, it became necessary for the city of Puebla to repair the slaughter pen of its *carnicería*, using stones quarried from the areas outside Cholula and adding doors to the structure in the process.³⁴⁶ Already in March of 1546, the slaughterhouse had again fallen into disrepair. As a result, the *cabildo* agreed to build a new *canicería* on the road leading to Cholula; by 1550, however, Puebla's *traza* had expanded so rapidly that the *cabildo* decided to relocate the second slaughterhouse away from the city center.³⁴⁷ The poor state of Puebla's original slaughterhouse in the 1540s implies its lack of use, an issue Cholula never faced with its own *carnicería*, even building a second one in the 1580s.

Within the sixteenth century, then, Cholula would become home to a thriving slaughterhouse industry accessible to both native peoples and Spaniards, and was important enough to warrant license-holders as far away as Mexico City. What is especially significant are Cholula's numerous *indios carniceros*, which indicate that by the late sixteenth century, the Cholulteca had moved beyond traditional indigenous roles, becoming essential to the functioning of an important new, local industry, transforming the nuisance of European livestock who trampled their ancestral fields into a new opportunity. This phenomenon can be loosely linked to Franciscan presence in Cholula, and provides yet another example of how Cholula as a former center of agriculture and trade adapted to the colonial situation in order to maintain its pre-hispanic regional significance.

Concluding Thoughts

The transformation of Cholula's sacred landscape was a complex process. Though the native Cholulteca adapted to Spanish colonial rule much like their indigenous counter-parts in other areas of central New Spain, Cholula's unique status as a former Mesoamerican holy site, marketplace, and center of culture and learning means it was more deliberately evangelized and home to more friars in the Tlaxcala bishopric in sixteenth century than any other location outside Puebla.³⁴⁸ During the first century of Spanish colonial rule, the friars and native people both capitalized on Cholula's pre-hispanic sacred identity; the friars to channel its sacred past into a sacred present, and the native Cholulteca to retain, in some capacity, the spiritual significance they had enjoyed for millennia. To this end, the Nahuas participated in the construction of the largest *convento* complex outside of Puebla, understanding it as a sign of continued spiritual domination, allowing them to overshadow their pre-contact rivals in Tlaxcala and Huejotzingo.

As an analogue to the pre-conquest temple and a symbol of their corporate identity, the monumental Franciscan complex symbolized far more than the friars understood; for them, the Franciscan structure indicated spiritual superiority.

In the early years after Puebla's founding in 1531, all the native peoples in the surrounding area were required to attend liturgy in Cholula, emphasizing yet again the early importance of its Franciscan enterprise. In addition, Cholula rather than Puebla served as the meeting site for the outgoing and incoming viceroys in 1549, the location for the Franciscan Provincial chapter in 1568, and the burial site of a Spanish *corregidor*'s wife in 1594. Even so, the native Cholulteca did not suffer the appropriation of their lands without response. Not even the introduction of European livestock could permanently disrupt them, for they used the presence of the friars to gain access to a new, local industry. In the end, by accepting the dominant religion on their own terms and allying with the Franciscans against colonial abuses, the Cholulteca ensured the continuity of their regional domination in both the spiritual and political spheres, developing a new corporate identity as Nahua-Christians that survives to this day.³⁴⁹ Importantly for the friars, re-imagining Cholollan as San Pedro Cholula provided them with a new spiritual home, the heart of which was the Franciscan *convento* located in the city center, which they initially envisioned as the "new Rome" of New Spain.

Chapter Three
A Complex for Evangelization:
Cholula's Franciscan *Convento* as the "New Rome" of New Spain

They considered Cholollan a great sanctuary.
It was another Rome, with numerous temples of the demon.

– fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, OFM, 1541³⁵⁰

Franciscan desire to establish a "New Rome" in New Spain on the site of a former indigenous holy site must be understood within the context of their sixteenth-century spiritual situation, which included popular apocalyptic fervor sparked by decades of war in Europe, a reform in Spain spearheaded by Queen Isabella's Franciscan confessor fray Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, internal dissent amongst the friars, a papal division of their Order in 1517, and the advent of Protestantism the same year. Taken together, these events produced a sense of chaos and disorder in the Old World that would accompany the friars to the New World. Within this context, New Spain provided the Franciscans a blank canvas upon which they might craft their own rendition of salvation history apart from European interference. The friars considered it a signal of God's favor that they had encountered a holy site populated by a ritualistic people whose renown included both political and spiritual domination. The Franciscan *convento* would rise over the ruins of a premier pre-hispanic temple as a testament to the supremacy of Catholicism, a monument to the success the friars believed they had, and would continue, to achieve in their evangelizing enterprise among the Cholulteca, thus offsetting the numbers leaving to follow Luther in Europe. During the sixteenth century, the Franciscan *convento* in San Pedro Cholula would come to symbolize the dominance of the Franciscan Order in the region, especially poignant because it appeared at a time when Rome itself was under attack.

Christendom in the 1520s: The Sack of Old Rome and the Founding of a “New Rome”

In the late winter of 1527, the Spanish troops, under orders from Charles de Bourbon, constable of France, were at the walls of Rome. The Spanish, backed by fifteen companies of ferocious German mercenaries, were awaiting their opportunity to enter the city of the Caesars and make up for many months without pay. They were a horde of hungry, insubordinate soldiers ready to lay claim to the treasures of Rome and the Vatican.

– Isabel Allende, *Inés of My Soul*, 2006³⁵¹

By 1527, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V had been embroiled in a bitter war with the French for most of his reign.³⁵² During this decades-long struggle for political hegemony between the Medici Pope, Clement VII, and the ambitious Hapsburg ruler, central Italy had been laid waste by marauding French and Imperial forces. The poverty and devastation left in its wake produced an apocalyptic mood among the populace, prompting individuals mired in a sense of doom and hungering for reform to engage in public acts of repentance. These conditions provided the context for sweeping changes within the Franciscan Order, luring reform-seeking friars to embrace a lifestyle more akin to the primitive values of their founder. It was during this eschatological moment that the aforementioned Discalced Franciscans appeared in Spain, a reform tracing its origins to a Spanish friar named Juan de Guadalupe who received permission in 1496 to follow the Rule according to a “most strict observance.”³⁵³ When fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones, a Spanish Franciscan and disciple of Cardinal Cisneros, assumed his elected role as Minister General of the Order in 1523, he would encourage the development of reformed piety among the brothers, especially in Italy.³⁵⁴ The Discalced friars would, of course, be relegated to the Custody of San Gabriel in Extremadura in 1517.³⁵⁵

In an attempt to break the power of Charles V and free the Papal States from Imperial domination, Clement VII had allied himself with France and the Republic of Venice in 1526.

The forces of the Emperor nevertheless succeeded in defeating the French and its allies in Italy. Upon discovering there were no funds to pay them, more than 30,000 Imperial troops banded together in mutiny. Led by Charles III, Duke of Bourbon and Constable of France, the angry mob – many of whom were German Lutherans angry at Papal condemnation of the Augustinian friar who had spearheaded their movement in 1517 by posting the 95 Theses in Wittenberg – advanced towards Rome, reaching its gates in May 1527. In the initial skirmish, Bourbon would be fatally wounded, legendarily being shot in the eye by the musket of the ornery artist and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini. With Bourbon's death all restraint evaporated, and for days the unruly troops ransacked the riches of the Catholic Church's central city in an attack worse than any it had experienced at the hands of the barbarians, prompted, perhaps, by their theological fury. Hundreds of Swiss Guards sacrificed their lives on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica to ensure the Pope's successful escape via secret passage to the safety of Castel Sant'Angelo, where he remained a virtual prisoner for six months. The Sistine Chapel survived the madness only because it was within its walls that Charles of Bourbon had been laid in state.

During the decades of this tumultuous conflict, the Franciscan Minister General, fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones, served as mediator between the Pope and the Emperor. Not only was fray Quiñones a Spaniard stationed in Rome because of his office, but as counselor and confessor of Charles V, he was aptly placed to function as arbitrator.³⁵⁶ His diplomatic credibility had no doubt increased after his experience negotiating with the Emperor on behalf of the defeated *comuneros* – or council of elected delegates – after the *Comunero* Revolt in Spain in 1520. Using his influence, fray Quiñones attempted to separate Clement VII from his alliance with France and Venice in 1526, being commissioned by the pope to meet secretly with the Emperor in Granada in April. Unfortunately, upon returning to Rome with imperial promises of

peace, negotiations stalled due to the opposition of Charles, Duke of Bourbon, and the disorderly, underpaid, angry, and hungry mercenary troops wreaking havoc in central Italy. In 1527 fray Quiñones once again met with the Emperor, this time in Valladolid, but because of the Sack of Rome in May, peace again became impossible. In the office of papal legate, fray Quiñones would appear before the Emperor in Madrid, this time to negotiate Clement VII's freedom, successfully obtaining his release in December only after the pontiff agreed to pay a large indemnity, concede vast amounts of territory, and allow imperial occupation of important cities in the Papal States. December would prove a significant month for fray Quiñones, not only because the Franciscan Minister General would resign his post as leader of the Friars Minor given that his diplomatic activities precluded him from adequately overseeing the Order, but also because Pope Clement VII would elevate him to the rank of Cardinal; he would receive the red hat and title in Rome's Church of the Santa-Croce-in-Gerusalemme on September 25, 1528.³⁵⁷

Fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones's very direct involvement in both the affairs of the Spanish Court and the Papal Court during the 1520s meant that he had access to the most important developments in Castile and the Catholic Church. Due to his role as Franciscan Minister General, it's possible the Order may have been privy to the internal conflicts occurring between the two struggling European powers. More than likely, however, diplomatic confidentiality prevented fray Quiñones from disclosing sensitive information to his fellow friars. Even so, his frequent interactions with both leaders as well as his recurrent travel through warring territories could not help but affect his approach to leading the Order. Nor was he immune to the apocalyptic fervor advancing amongst the masses in Europe; indeed, in 1521 he received the necessary permission and spiritual faculties from Pope Leo X to leave behind his worldly affairs and travel to the New World with the Emperor's confessor, Juan Clapión, to

evangelize the mass of recently-discovered peoples. Though Pope Adrian VI would confirm the commission with a papal bull issued the following year, Clapión's sudden death forced fray Quiñones to abandon the project. Soon thereafter, he was elected Minister General of the Franciscan Order.³⁵⁸

Having a Spaniard at the helm of the Order no doubt facilitated the Franciscan mission to New Spain, especially given that fray Quiñones himself had longed to labor in the New World vineyard. Given the horrors he had witnessed in Europe, it is no wonder the Franciscan leader's words in his letters to the "Twelve Apostles of Mexico" were imbued with a sense of doom and a conviction of the world's impending end. No doubt the friars in the New World would have been aware of fray Quiñones's role in the Emperor's conflict with the Holy Father, especially given that he resigned specifically because his diplomatic activities affected his management of the Order. The situation in Europe may have even fueled the Franciscan desire to found in Cholula a "new Rome" in 1529, two years after the Emperor's brutal attack on the Eternal City, not only because of the urgent instruction fray Quiñones had provided to their original Twelve companions, but also because of his diplomatic experiences during the Sack of Rome. The friars in this way would be providing a fresh New World start, as it were, to the task of spreading the Gospel outward from a holy city. This would become especially urgent because of Franciscan belief that the end of the world was at hand.

“The World is Growing Old:” The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans

But now that the day is far spent and passing away, which is the eleventh hour of which the Gospel speaks, you are called by the head of the family to go forth into his vineyard; not hired for a price like the others, but rather like true sons of such a father, not seeking your own interests, but those of Jesus Christ without promise of pay or reward, may you run like sons following your father to the vineyard.

– fray Francisco de los Ángeles Quiñones, O.F.M. Minister General, 1523³⁵⁹

Underpinning the activities of the mendicants in New Spain, especially the Franciscan Order, was a conviction that the end of the world was imminent. Theories of millenarianism were not particular to the early modern period.³⁶⁰ Indeed, they had existed since the earliest centuries of Christianity, their acceptance and ideology circulating with increased urgency prior to the turn of every century when Christians anticipated the promised 1,000 years of peace. Beginning with the writings of the Egyptian theologian Origen in the third century and his contemporary Tertullian, Christians have believed they were living in the Last Days and would in their lifetime see the advent of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which they believed was hovering on the horizon. Over the centuries, these prophecies became such staples of folk religion in Europe that despite the Church’s efforts to minimize literal interpretations of the apocalypse in its official doctrine, eschatology persisted in popular culture and in the spiritual writings of mystics and scholars.³⁶¹ The Franciscans were among millenarianism’s most enthusiastic proponents in the sixteenth century.

Prophecies detailing the events of the End Times were not the only theories accompanying the friars from the Old World to the New. One of the most popular texts in the libraries of New Spain was St. Augustine of Hippo’s *City of God*, written early in the fifth century as a model for Christian living. Augustine’s theology served as a virtual textbook for the evangelizing enterprise in the New World because it aligned itself so well to the contemporary

situation there. In Anáhuac, the friars rejoiced at discovering the perfect opportunity to build God's city on earth amidst a people who had never known Christianity. Augustine's detailed discussion of Roman religion and ritual practice justified Franciscan investigation of Nahua culture and tradition to aid in its elimination. Furthermore, the book's status as a "liturgical-eschatological work" that encouraged "ortho-praxis, doing it the right way as opposed to mere ortho-credence, right belief," provided a model for Franciscan evangelization.³⁶² Stressing ritual performance and right posture and position during worship was at the heart of Franciscan efforts to Christianize their New World neophytes. Cholula's past as a ritual center meant that its people were accustomed to elaborate ritual ceremony, a fact that delighted the local Franciscans.

Augustine of Hippo was not the only influence on the Mexican friars, however. Popularized during the medieval period, the Christianized Messiah-Emperor myth resurfaced in early modern Spain as a blending of independent Jewish and Roman traditions.³⁶³ Significantly for the Mexican Franciscans who would evangelize the Nahuas, a group of apocalyptic writings called the Sibylline Oracles that dated to ancient Rome spoke of nine suns. The fifth sun, coincidentally corresponding with Nahua belief, was described as "bloodlike," a time when pagan temples and altars would be built, Rome would be captured, and tyrants would oppress the poor and innocent while protecting the guilty. God, however, would send a king from the sun, a sort of solar savior and heroic emperor to unite the western and eastern halves of the Roman Empire under his rule in a golden age that sees the final triumph of Christianity. In a foreshadowing of Spain's imperial activity in the Americas, this prophesized emperor would destroy the pagan cities, overturn their temples, and replace their idols with crosses.

In the Christianized version of the oracle, the arrival of the Messiah instigates the final battle between the forces of good and evil, and the victorious Messiah re-establishes the New

Jerusalem on earth and ushers in the millennial kingdom, which ends with the Last Judgment.³⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, in sixteenth-century Spain and New Spain, the unification of the Iberian kingdoms under the Catholic Monarchs taken together with Charles V's election as Holy Roman Emperor fueled belief in the approaching end of the world. The mendicants who labored in Mexico were not immune to the spread of this millennial anticipation.

By far the most important influence on the millenarian thought of the Franciscans is the medieval eschatology outlined by Joachim of Fiore, a twelfth-century Cistercian abbot whose prophecies remained influential well into the colonial period in Mexico. A biblical exegete and mystic, Fiore experienced a vision of the fall of Jerusalem after making a pilgrimage to the Latin kingdom of crusaders in the Holy Land.³⁶⁵ Soon thereafter, he developed and promoted his Trinitarian division of history: the layman's church, which he called the age of the Father, consisted of the time from Adam to Christ; the priests' church, that is, the time from Christ to the year 1260, was the age of the Son; and the third and final age, which began in 1260 and was attributed to the Holy Ghost, was the friars' church. This last epoch, which was Joachim's version of the millennial kingdom of the Apocalypse, "was to be inaugurated by a new Adam or a new Christ who would be the founder of a monastic order."³⁶⁶ Who else were the Franciscans to interpret as the embodiment of this prophecy but their holy, seraphic father Francis, who had established his new Order in 1209?

The Joachimite prophecies gained popularity in the thirteenth-century by virtue of being embraced by the Spiritual Franciscans, a movement within the Order that sought to rigorously follow Francis' vow of poverty. The Spiritualists allied themselves with Joachim's followers, identifying St. Francis as Joachim's Messiah, and viewing the third age as the time of the Spiritual Church when "all men would lead the contemplative life, practice apostolic poverty,

and enjoy angelic natures.”³⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, when the mendicants arrived in Mexico and saw the “natural poverty” practiced by the Nahuas, they believed they had entered this final epoch of history. When fray Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico and himself a Franciscan, brought the printing press to New Spain in 1539, Joachim of Fiore’s works became easily available to the mendicants and even to some of their indigenous flock, thus significantly aiding in the dissemination of millennial theory.³⁶⁸

From its inception, the mission of the original Twelve was fraught with eschatological significance. First, the Franciscans chose their number in direct reference to the number of Christ’s apostles, thus expressing belief in their apostolic authority, which contrasted with the less impressive royal decrees authorizing the seculars.³⁶⁹ The fact that the original leader chosen for the mission, fray Francisco de los Ángeles Quiñones, had to be replaced by fray Martín de Valencia served as a further reminder of the primitive church, for was not Judas replaced by Matthias? The urgency of the Franciscan enterprise remained explicit to all parties involved, especially given that prior to their departure from Spain they had received a reminder from the Minister General Quiñones to be quick about the evangelization in Mexico because the world was growing old.³⁷⁰ He encouraged them with these words: “And therefore, my sons, with the very end of the world at hand...take up the victorious contest of the heavenly Champion, preach by word and work...and hurry now to the active life.”³⁷¹

In this way, like many other Christian faithful in Europe, the original Twelve believed that the Second Coming of Christ and Final Judgment were imminent, since the discovery of the New World signaled that mankind’s redemption could be prompted through the conversion of the last of the world’s heathens, whom they believed to be the indigenous populations in New Spain.³⁷² For the Franciscans, the military conquest of Mexico raised the curtain on the last act of

world history, a play in which they had been assigned the leading roles. By converting the native peoples in the holy city of Cholula – a populace already accustomed to elaborate daily ritual and to the presence of a community of male religious in a centrally-located sacred structure – the mendicants could accomplish their mission even more swiftly. With Cholula as a base of operations from which to train friars who would then spread the Gospel throughout New Spain, these eschatological Franciscans must have believed they could fulfill the prophecy of the Millennial Kingdom at last, thus hastening the End Times.

From the Pope San Pedro to the Archangel San Gabriel: Renaming Cholula's Convento

O Mexico! If thou wouldst raise thy eyes to the mountains that encircle thee,
thou wouldst see more good angels aiding and defending thee than formerly
demons stood against thee in order to plunge thee into sins and errors.

– fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, OFM, 1541³⁷³

When fray Alonso and his brother friars founded the Franciscan *convento* in Cholula in late 1528 or early 1529 they christened it San Pedro, since it was customary for the *convento* to take the name of the town's patron saint, and so it remained for about a decade. In 1537, however, the new indigenous *cabildo* composed of the *indios principales* of Cholula petitioned to have the site's name changed to honor the Archangel Gabriel, since the town's "reduction or pacification" occurred on "the great day of the Lord, St. Gabriel."³⁷⁴ Although the Holy Roman Empress, Isabel of Portugal, issued a *cédula* granting to Cholula the title and dedication of San Gabriel, it somehow retained San Pedro as its patron and only the *convento* acquired the name of the Archangel.³⁷⁵ Traditionally, September 29 is the feast day of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, and is so noted in the Franciscan fray Bernardino de Sahagún's 1569

Psalmody Christiana.³⁷⁶ Since the first Spaniards to set foot in Cholollan – an advance party consisting of captains Pedro de Alvarado and Bernardino Vázquez de Tapia – did so in September 1519, I assume the *indios principales* of Cholula had September 29 in mind as the “*dia de pacificación*.” Though Cortés himself would arrive a few days later with his men, the fact that he orchestrated a massacre in early October means it was a saint’s day the Cholulteca purportedly would not have wanted to honor or remember.

Though the indigenous *cabildo* crafted the petition, in recognizing the day the Christians first brought the Gospel and thus “pacified” them of their pagan past they were exuding a Eurocentric perspective.³⁷⁷ Like the aforementioned 1552 and 1554 letters composed by Cholula’s *cabildo*, evidence indicates that the 1537 petition also appeared in Spanish.³⁷⁸ Though it is possible that some of Cholula’s *indios principales* had learned Castilian by this time, the fact that the letter materialized less than a decade after Spanish arrival indicates that the Franciscans took an active role in the letter-writing campaign. Why might they have encouraged their neophytes to request the patronage of the Archangel Gabriel so soon after establishing a “new Rome” in New Spain dedicated to St. Peter the first Pope? Since the original Twelve hailed from the austere Custody of San Gabriel in Extremadura, the Franciscans may have intended to link their endeavors in Cholula to convert the local populace with the labors of their Iberian predecessors who had evangelized the Moriscos. Perhaps also, like the opening quote from Motolinía above indicates, the friars were seeking the aid and defense of a good angel against the multitude of demons they perceived in Cholula’s past, diabolical spirits who remained even after a decade of full-time Christianization. Jaime Lara proffers another explanation, suggesting that the friars, in their attempts to transfer Jerusalem to the New World via Cholula, chose to name it after the

biblical messenger who would announce the destruction and subsequent restoration of the messianic Jerusalem and the rebuilding of its Temple.³⁷⁹

Elsewhere Motolinía writes that soon after the Spaniards arrived in Cholula they planted a tall cross atop the summit of the pyramid; lightning struck multiple times in the 1530s, prompting the friars to dig beneath the foot of the cross. To their intense dismay and disappointment, they discovered various idols and deities buried there, which, combined with the sins committed in that place, Motolinía believes caused God to strike the wood in anger.³⁸⁰ Perhaps in light of persistent sin and idolatry, the friars recognized the need for a patron stronger even than St. Peter the first Pope, in the form of the archangel who had appeared to the Virgin Mary to announce that she would give birth to the Savior. Perhaps Cholula's mendicants prayed that under the benevolent gaze of their new angelic patron, the indigenous and Christianized sons of San Gabriel would mimic the archangel, converting into messengers announcing Christ's arrival to save man from sin.

The year 1537 had other implications for the Franciscans in New Spain as well, for it was the year that Pope Paul III's papal bull, *Altitudo divini consilii* found the friars at fault for neglecting to conduct the full baptismal ceremony, as their Dominican counterparts did.³⁸¹ In the ongoing conflict with their fellow mendicants in New Spain, the Franciscans found themselves disadvantaged by the pope's decision.³⁸² Perhaps also by 1537, the friars – recognizing the rapid fragmentation of Christian Europe and the attacks by the Protestant contingency on the rampant abuses they saw in the Roman Church – encouraged the native peoples to petition for a new patron saint directly associated with an austere Franciscan Custody in Spain, whose strong peninsular religious identity and presence of internal reforms made it quintessentially Catholic.

Recycling Quetzalcoatl's Sacred Stones: Cholula's Convento Takes Shape

It is a pueblo of Indians, of the principal ones of New Spain, and there are quite a few Spaniards in it. The title is St. Gabriel. It lies a league and a half from Puebla de Los Ángeles towards the west, declining towards the north. Twenty-two friars reside in it; there is a course of the humanities and two preachers.

– Description of the Holy Gospel Province in New Spain, 1584³⁸³

From its earlier days, San Pedro Cholula enjoyed a strong relationship with the Spanish Crown. Not long after fray Alonso Xuárez's arrival, the Franciscan building project benefited from a royal *cédula* ordering Spanish officials to pay 500,000 *maravedies* to the friars of St. Francis so they might construct their *conventos* in various sites throughout New Spain, including Cholula.³⁸⁴ On that same day the Spanish Crown also issued a royal decree asking specific *encomenderos* to permit their *indios* to participate in the completion of several friaries in New Spain, including Cholula's friary.³⁸⁵ This decree was followed by a related *cédula* issued in September 1530, again entreating the *encomenderos* not to mistreat their *indios* who were engaged in the construction of these *conventos*, since the friars had specifically requested indigenous laborers to assist in their building projects and the native peoples would work more quickly and willingly if not censured by their local *encomendero*.³⁸⁶ It appears the *convento* may have continued to receive support from the Spanish government throughout the sixteenth century, because in 1590 local officials paid the four hundred *fanegas* of maize, ostensibly for its maintenance.³⁸⁷

Even so, construction on Cholula's ambitious Franciscan project did not begin in earnest until 1549, a full twenty years after fray Alonso Xuárez's arrival. The most important cause of this delay was the fact that since 1531, the Cholulteca labor force had been preoccupied with various construction projects in Puebla. The Franciscan complex would require further

postponement when a devastating epidemic swept across New Spain in 1544. The first of several major pestilences in the sixteenth century, this , as the Nahuas called it, killed between 400 to 700 native persons a day, according to fray Domingo de Batanzos.³⁸⁸ When the epidemic finally subsided in 1546, only 15,000 Cholulteca survivors remained from its once extensive original population numbered at 40,000 to 100,000 families.³⁸⁹ Within five years, then, Cholula had lost nearly half its population, straining its ability to complete its various labor obligations in Cholula, Puebla, and the surrounding Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley.³⁹⁰

According to an inscription inside the church of San Gabriel, on February 7, 1549, fray Martín Sarmiento de Hojacastro – Commisary General of the Franciscan Order who would be consecrated the third bishop of the Tlaxcala-Puebla diocese in April of that year – laid the first stone.³⁹¹ The Franciscan bishop-elect would have already been familiar with the Cholula friary, for soon after being appointed prelate in June 1548, he had humbly resided there among the other friars to prepare for his new post. At first unwilling to accept the prestigious position, fray Martín petitioned his provincial superiors to grant him permission to study canon law with the erudite Frenchman and fellow Franciscan, fray Juan Fucher, until the papal bull of office arrived in New Spain.³⁹² A Franciscan of Aquitanian origin who held a doctorate from the Sorbonne, fray Fucher taught Latin to indigenous pupils at the Colegio de Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco, provided instruction at San José de los Naturales in Mexico City, translated the Gospel into Nahuatl, and taught music in Cuautitlan and elsewhere.³⁹³ The presence of a renowned French scholar and a bishop-elect in the Cholula friary in the 1540s was yet another indication of its spiritual dominance over Puebla, whose own Franciscan structure had commenced in 1531, a full eighteen years before San Gabriel.

Not for a year, that is, sometime in 1550, did the *convento* take the shape that it has today, with a church, atrium, and a friary.³⁹⁴ That same year, the royal treasurer, Juan Alonso de Sosa, wrote a memo noting that the Crown had provided the superior of the Franciscan Order one hundred *pesos de oro* to aid in the construction of the monastery in Cholula.³⁹⁵ This amount, of course, would have supplemented the 500,000 *maravedies* the friars had already received in 1529. With the aid of numerous indigenous artisans – no doubt well-trained in European architecture, carpentry, and masonry by virtue of co-existing with Spaniards for two decades and aiding in the construction of Puebla – the evangelization complex saw completion in four short years.³⁹⁶ As a large Franciscan house, Cholula would serve as a model for other similarly-sized houses in New Spain.³⁹⁷

The same friar-bishop, fray Martín Sarmiento de Hojacastro, would consecrate the new Christian church on April 3, 1552.³⁹⁸ The rapid realization of the Franciscan building program was due, no doubt, to the enthusiastic participation of the local Cholulteca, who viewed the monumental Christian structure as an analogue to the pre-conquest temple, and thus as a symbol of their corporate identity.³⁹⁹ This building activity constituted but one of the many alterations to Cholula's spiritual landscape that would occur in the sixteenth century, the result of the friars' active recruitment of native peoples to fulfill their vision of a re-imagined San Pedro Cholula. As Anamaría Ashwell has observed, the friars strategically employed music and theater while courting and evangelizing the Cholulteca, approaches that were heightened within the isolated and protected boundaries of Cholula's *barrios*.⁴⁰⁰ Despite the speed with which the native peoples erected the San Gabriel complex, however, evidence indicates that the Cholulteca were more skilled working with timber than with stone, since many of their pre-contact homes had been constructed of wood covered with mud inside and out and then whitewashed.⁴⁰¹ As late as

the 1580s, there was not a single tile on any home in Cholula, even though a few had been manufactured in Puebla as early as 1540; similarly, Cholula boasted brick sidewalks and doorways consisting of brick set into adobe walls.⁴⁰²

In the aforementioned 1552 letter to the Spanish Crown, the native Cholulteca requested conferral of their official city title based on the success of the friars' royally-sanctioned building program. Beyond petitioning for the recognition of a right they already possessed, the letter may reflect a desire to reassert their political supremacy over neighboring Huejotzingo and Puebla. Cholula's indigenous *cabildo* justifies this request not only by boasting about having "built a temple for service and the divine cult and a monastery so sumptuous and of such craftsmanship, that it is one of the greatest and most costly that there are in all of New Spain," but by also offering – as previously discussed – to "construct our town of Cholula with buildings and town council and court residences in the Spanish style."⁴⁰³

Though the native Cholulteca write the letter, city status would benefit all inhabitants of Cholula: Spanish and indigenous. To begin, being upgraded to a *ciudad* – or Spanish urban rank of superiority – would guarantee Cholula precedence over neighboring *pueblos*, thus re-affirming and continuing its pre-conquest identity as a center of culture, trade, and learning.⁴⁰⁴ Furthermore – and perhaps more importantly (especially for the Franciscans) – being officially titled as a city would ensure Cholula's spiritual supremacy over neighboring San Miguel Huejotzingo. Though boasting an earlier Franciscan presence, Huejotzingo lacked a pyramid-sanctuary, remaining a *pueblo* until writing its own letter to the Spanish king in 1560.⁴⁰⁵

The *cabildo*'s efforts are rewarded, for in a second letter dated 1554, Cholula's *cabildo* would express its gratitude for receiving the title of city

that obliges us to be more loyal, as we have always been, and we are very happy, principally because God has given us the light of faith and has placed us under the subjugation and protection of Your Majesty, whose concern we have seen in that Your Majesty sends us bishops and archbishops and religious fathers to show us the Catholic faith and administer the sacraments, for which we give many thanks to God and Your Majesty, and we beg you always to send religious, who console us greatly and are our fathers in everything.⁴⁰⁶

The Spanish viceroy, don Luis de Velasco, would officially confer city title on Cholula after a wait of more than fifteen years, the cause of which has not yet become clear.⁴⁰⁷

Cholula's letter-writing campaign by its native town council was by no means unique to early New Spain. Indeed, the letters fall within a genre of petitions from the sixteenth century composed by native *cabildos* for the Spanish Crown. Most exude an overenthusiastic acceptance of Christianity and promise undying loyalty, and several reference their military aid to the Spaniards during conquest. While the native Cholulteca had legitimate cause to extol their military contributions, in their letters they instead focus on their acceptance of Christianity.⁴⁰⁸ In so doing, they deliberately partake in the continuity of religious experience; their actions highlight their desire to retain spiritual dominance in the region, even if it meant doing so under a foreign belief system. In fact, the use of Castilian rather than Nahuatl indicates a strong Franciscan hand in the letter-writing campaign.

It appears as if the Franciscans continued their ministrations with the native Cholulteca throughout the sixteenth century, aiding not only the *cabildo* or high-ranking native people, but also the *macehualli*, or commoners. As Francisco González Hermosillo has discussed, from 1553-1594 the friars repeatedly intervened with Cholula's indigenous *cabildo* in a series of disputes regarding the issue of personal service *indios* from among the *macehualli*.⁴⁰⁹ Even at the resolution of that dispute, the friars were still working closely with the native peoples, for in 1594 fray Bernardino de la Fuente, the current guardian of the *convento*, reportedly taught five

unnamed Cholulteca to play bugles, trumpets, and other European instruments, ostensibly for religious procession.⁴¹⁰ That same year, fray de la Fuente permitted the body of doña Marina de la Mota, the wife of Cholula's *corregidor*, to be buried in the Franciscan church of San Gabriel, even though she was meant to be entombed in her parents' sepulcher in the Dominican church in Mexico City, because it would be a hardship to transport her body.⁴¹¹ Despite the presence of Dominicans in neighboring Puebla – which also boasted a well-established Franciscan complex – *Corregidor* Alonso de Nava chose Cholula as his wife's final resting place, yet another indication of the regional spiritual dominance of its establishment of Friars Minor. De Nava's request is even more significant because it indicates that by the end of the century, the principal church constructed in an indigenous community as part of an evangelization complex had become an acceptable burial place for high-ranking Spaniards.⁴¹²

Indeed, by 1568, the *convento de San Gabriel* had become such an important training center for novices and a thriving base of Franciscan evangelization in the region that the friars elected to hold their Provincial Chapter meeting at the site. Laid out on a grand scale considering that the friars had taken vows of poverty, the church, atrium, and friary of San Gabriel were no doubt meant to completely overshadow all memory of the lavish Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, functioning in this manner as a Franciscan re-imagination of that sacred space. The size and significance of Cholula's Franciscan establishment certainly contributed to its selection rather than the obvious choice, the more populated *convento de San Francisco* in nearby Puebla. The decision to meet in Cholula certainly underscores its spiritual importance, since historically indigenous cities were not the usual choices for mendicant gatherings of this sort, particularly with a Spanish city in such close proximity. The decision becomes understandable in light of the

San Gabriel complex's identity as the second largest in New Spain in 1568; by the following year, San Gabriel would house five friars and administered to 60,000 native peoples.⁴¹³

Bolstered by the scholarly presence of fray Juan Fucher and bishop-elect fray Martín Sarmiento de Hojacastro in San Gabriel's friary in the 1540s, Cholula would eventually develop into an important educational facility.⁴¹⁴ In 1582, when the Commissary General of the Franciscans in the Indies, fray Pedro Oroz, made a visitation of all the friaries in New Spain, twenty-two friars and two preachers resided in Cholula, and the friary offered regular courses in the arts, literature, and language to its resident friars; in addition, the Franciscans in San Gabriel oversaw thirty *visita* chapels.⁴¹⁵ In a similar vein, fray Oroz's successor, Commissary General fray Alonso Ponce, conducted his own *visita* of the Indies, visiting sixty-eight Franciscan houses large and small in which resided three hundred and seventy friars in all.⁴¹⁶ Ponce elaborates upon Oroz, repeating Cholula's status as an indigenous site and admiring how the native Cholulteca merchants not only traded as far southeast as Guatemala, but were also very generous in giving alms. The friar was so impressed with the native Cholulteca, in fact, that he praised them as being devoted Christians; he also noted that the *convento de San Gabriel* was quite large, well-constructed, and possessed an accompanying friary with a two-story cloister, dormitories, and a garden.⁴¹⁷ By this period, the Franciscans in Cholula – recognizing the benefit of establishing an evangelization complex on a Mesoamerican sacred site – had focused their efforts in the sixteenth century on converting the physical landscape in order to then convert the hearts of its Cholulteca neophytes.

Fortified Faith, Turrets of Truth: The Convento as Eschatological Landscape

All the monasteries here in New Spain have a large walled patio in front of the church... The old men keep these patios swept and clean, and usually they are adorned with trees set in orderly rows. In the hot country there are alternate rows of cypresses and orange trees. And in the temperate and cold regions there are cypresses and pepper trees from Peru which stay green all year. To walk these patios is something to make one praise God.

– fray Jerónimo de Mendieta, c. 1565⁴¹⁸

The millennial urgency underpinning the Franciscan mission in New Spain extended even to its sacred structures, which were fraught with eschatological significance.⁴¹⁹ Though historians, art historians, and architectural historians have disagreed about the exact function of each component of the evangelization compound, most recognize the complexity of its design and the theological truths imbedded in its style.⁴²⁰ As arguably most important Franciscan settlement in the region, the church and *convento* of San Gabriel in San Pedro Cholula was no exception. Even if its collection of structures was not immediately erected, its evangelization center exhibited the architectural features that would qualify it as an apocalyptic landscape: crenulations, turrets or sentry boxes, battlements, an open chapel, and a general fortress-like appearance.

By choosing to construct Cholula's evangelization complex upon the site of the former Quetzalcoatl sanctuary, the friars were not only actively participating in the millennial Christianized Messiah-Emperor myth (overturning pagan temples and replacing them with crosses), but they were also capitalizing on Cholula's sacred legacy. And by having their indigenous laborers reuse the same stones, the friars were not only ensuring the availability of building materials at a period when they were generally scarce, but they were making a very clear declaration of religious superiority, a practice reflecting strategies employed during Spain's

800-year war to reconquer Iberia from the Moors.⁴²¹ Even so, by visibly imbedding segments of the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary into the walls of the San Gabriel church, native peoples may have been attempting to preserve the sacred material, reinvesting, as it were, the new shrine with the primordial sanctity of the old.⁴²²

As John Frederick Schwaller has observed, it may have been a strategic mendicant decision to wait twenty years before commencing construction on the *convento* in order to ensure that the generation who had witnessed the massacre and who remembered attending sacred ritual in the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary had reached old age or died. By these calculations, placing the new Christian church atop the remains of the Quetzalcoatl Temple would be “safe,” that is, native Cholulteca would be less likely to confuse the liturgical worship of their new faith with their ancestral ritual ceremonies to Quetzalcoatl.⁴²³ Alternately, the Franciscans, recognizing the significance of Cholula’s sacred identity, may have also have decided to wait until they had established their presence, become proficient in Nahuatl, and gained the trust of the native peoples before embarking on their ambitious building program. The answer may be yet simpler: for the first half of the sixteenth century, New Spain lacked skilled architects and overseers to plan and execute its monstrous mendicant structures.⁴²⁴ The colonial friars themselves were generally untrained in architectural theory, and instead learned by reading or by partaking in the humble tasks of construction alongside the native peoples, who also became proficient in construction techniques through practice. It wasn’t until 1550 that men trained in an academic standard of classical architecture began to appear in greater numbers in colonial Mexico.⁴²⁵

In the construction of this and other mendicant establishments, the organization of early colonial construction crews closely adhered to patterns of pre-contact labor organization.⁴²⁶ The native peoples quickly adapted to the introduction of European tools, such as measuring sticks,

durable cutting implements, energy-saving hoists, pumps, and wheeled machinery.⁴²⁷ Fortunately for the Franciscans stationed at San Gabriel, Cholula was well-situated for building materials. Not only did it possess an enormous amount of reusable rubble from the demolished Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, but the nearest limestone lode lay merely four miles from town; indeed, this material accounts for a significant portion of the *tlachihualtepetl*'s construction. Cholula's own quarry within the city limits produced darker stone, though as we have seen in Chapter Two, access to this and other excavation sites was often restricted unless native peoples needed the materials for European construction.⁴²⁸ Cholula also had at its disposal some of the most skilled craftsman in sixteenth-century New Spain, men who likely divided their time between the San Gabriel friary and the Franciscan establishments in Calpan and Huejotzingo.⁴²⁹

In building Cholula's multi-structured complex, the native Cholulteca utilized cut-stone masonry and rib-vaulting on the interior of the single-naved church, a uniquely European design acoustically ideal for singing and unobstructed concentration on the mysteries of the liturgy unfolding on the main altar.⁴³⁰ The wide and aisle-less interior plan, its barrel vault supported by traverse arches, was reminiscent of the classical architecture of Roman basilicas, and thus linked the New World Franciscan structure to the papal power and protection associated with Rome.⁴³¹ Windows punctuated the lateral walls of San Gabriel's nave, with a Gothic rose window depicting the archangel on its façade illuminating the choir loft. The church contained three entrances: the main door on the west wall, the entrance to the friary on the south wall, and the north door, known as the *portiúncula* in Franciscan architecture in reference to the "little portion" chapel in the valley below Assisi where Francis founded the Order, and which is now encompassed by the enormous shrine dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels. When open, the door signified readiness for Christ's imminent return, a hopeful reality for the millennial friars at

Cholula. Significantly, single-naved churches appear throughout apocalyptic literature from the eighth to eleventh centuries.⁴³²

On the exterior of San Gabriel, the native Cholulteca employed the indigenous technique of finishing structures with stucco burnished from surface-rubbing with smooth pebbles, thus allowing it to “shine.”⁴³³ According to the prevailing colonial style, the church walls were thickly constructed of rubble-and-mortar, its roof flat or slightly concave, and its exterior equipped with merlons, turrets or sentry boxes (*garritas*), crenellations, a parapet, and corner pier buttresses.⁴³⁴ The resulting effect led Manuel Toussaint to observe in 1927 that colonial *conventos* resembled medieval castles, a feature prompting him to christen them “gran iglesias fortificadas,” or great fortified churches.⁴³⁵ George Kubler, while acknowledging the “unusual...Mexican habit of fortifying the church, while leaving the city open to attack on all side,” nevertheless asserts that the colonial Mexican monasteries were sham fortresses, since they functioned as churches whose military decoration was part chivalric, part symbolic, but never utilitarian.⁴³⁶ He observes that though crenellation is a military device of European architecture, “it also served as a ceremonial function in pre-Conquest Indian society, where the temples were designated and distinguished by crenellations peculiar to the deity of the shrine they adorned.”⁴³⁷ John McAndrew suggests that the parapets may have served as service passages, echoing similar walkways in medieval European churches; his best guess is that “habit and a wish for decoration” moved the friars to build in fortress-style.⁴³⁸ He also cites examples of “fortification in reverse,” that is, when native peoples closed the gates of monastery complexes to keep the resident friar from being sent to another location.⁴³⁹ He suggests that the battlements ought to be interpreted more symbolically than realistically, as “signs of the militant faith of the people inside than as military deterrents for keeping unwanted people outside.”⁴⁴⁰

Jaime Lara, while citing the medieval European precedent of constructing a battlemented church in unfortified towns, recognizes that the colonial mendicant complexes in New Spain were more like eschatological stage sets than functioning fortifications. The strongest argument – aside from the impracticality of positioning cannons on the vaulted roofs – is that the sentry boxes, or turrets, beyond serving as drains for rainwater, often symbolically numbered twelve, while the parapets either provided access for inspection and maintenance of the roofs or functioned as a loft for the local orchestra to call the faithful to liturgy.⁴⁴¹ He decries as especially useless the crenellations facing the friar’s dormitories and private living quarters.⁴⁴² If the evangelization complexes did not intend to intimidate the indigenous neophytes who were accustomed to enormous pyramid-sanctuaries, they may have instead symbolized the protection the mendicants provided from the colonial Spaniards who abused them. Importantly, the friars would have been exposed to military themes in the Psalms that they prayed on a daily basis, especially to the notion of God’s fortress on the heights of Zion.⁴⁴³ In addition, spiritual writers like St. Bernard of Clairvaux would use fortification metaphors for pious purposes, urging his readers to “stand at your sentry-box, for now is the time of [spiritual] battle.”⁴⁴⁴ The friars in Cholula, fully aware of the importance of transforming a Mesoamerican holy site into a landscape of the Lord, would have found such ideas appealing.

One of the most expensive items utilized in the sixteenth-century construction process was the lime necessary for the manufacture of mortar. Colonial accounts generally distinguish between *cal y canto* (masonry construction of rubble and mortar) and *cantería* (precisely hewn stone used as trim in doorways and window frames).⁴⁴⁵ In addition to its scarcity, Spanish overseers complained that colonial native peoples required close supervision while mixing mortar due to their propensity to substitute ashes for lime, and thus contribute to the collapse of

certain colonial structures.⁴⁴⁶ Lime served an important purpose in Cholula, for to pave the San Gabriel friary's large atrium, the Franciscans directed indigenous laborers to cover the entire courtyard with dark red stucco, a surface widely used throughout the polity during its pre-contact days. This burnished red plaster was especially prized as outdoor flooring throughout New Spain.⁴⁴⁷ According to architectural historian John McAndrew, local folklore contends that mortar and eggs comprised this mixture, though his research revealed it to be Mesoamerican paving of volcanic sand and hard clay, pounded down to an even surface and then washed in lime and powdered red lava. Indeed, it is possible that some of the courtyard of the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary now survives in the atrium of the *convento de San Gabriel*. The unusual shape of the atrium plot lends credence to the theory that the friars were usurping a previously-established sacred patio.⁴⁴⁸ This was especially true in Cholula, where the biblically-minded friars, realizing that outdoor worship was the norm in pre-hispanic Cholollan and that San Gabriel's atrium once served as a patio in the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, re-mapped the space to their advantage.

The enclosed sacred precinct of the colonial walled atrium, or patio, had apocalyptic connotations. Known as a *corral* in medieval Spain before the term became synonymous as an enclosure for animals, in the New World it would enfold the Christianized flock in a metaphorical sense. This understanding manifested itself in the San Gabriel complex, since over the entryway of its *portiúncula* door, which opened directly into the atrium, were etched these words: "I am the gate [of the corral], whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out [of the corral] and find pasture."⁴⁴⁹ Atrial walls, which were usually crenellated, contained porticos with three entrances on the north, west, and south, though in Cholula's case, the atrium has two entrances on the west side and one on the east side. A pragmatic solution to large-scale evangelization, the atrium functioned as a classroom, a cemetery, an unroofed nave, a

dance floor, or even a chapter room for lay friars; in essence, the patio was a miniature urban center whose military characteristics lent it the appearance of a refuge or a citadel, albeit non-functioning given the squatness of its walls.⁴⁵⁰ The perfect idealization of the Church Militant, the corral allowed the mendicants to serve as a vanguard for the impending Heavenly Jerusalem.⁴⁵¹

In addition to an atrium and a large church, the Franciscans at San Gabriel directed the native Cholulteca in constructing three free-standing *posa* chapels.⁴⁵² Usually situated in the four corners of the atrium, these small outdoor ritual spaces provided a place for the priest to pause during religious procession and could also be used individually for theological instruction of native peoples; their maintenance was generally assigned to a particular *barrio*, an obligation reminiscent of the Mesoamerican period when *calpulli* cared for its own temple and altar.⁴⁵³ Because colonial Cholula had six *barrios* – half of which were associated with its pre-contact identity – it possessed three rather than the usual four *posa* chapels. Their position in the atrium allowed a procession to exit the open-air chapel, process counterclockwise, and then re-enter the church or the chapel by the west door.⁴⁵⁴ San Gabriel's *posas* feature no ornate sculptural designs, adorned instead with steep multi-directional gables and spiky merlons, leading John McAndrew to declare the ensemble “naively unarchitectural, overdressed with ill-fitting architectural finery.”⁴⁵⁵ Nevertheless, making use of the atrial space in a manner that blended pre-contact precedent with Christian theology allowed Cholula's friars to more expediently preach to their indigenous neophytes, thus hastening the salvation of their souls and encouraging the advent of the End Times.

The friars would also oversee the construction of Cholula's open chapel, or *capilla de indios*, to aid in the dissemination of the Gospel to as many catechumens as possible, not only

from the city itself but from Puebla, since it was customary for the native peoples working on the Spanish city to attend liturgy in their assigned indigenous chapel in Cholula.⁴⁵⁶ Though its exact origins are obscure, evidence indicates the *Capilla Real*, as it came to be known because of the privileges and exemptions it received, was in use by at least 1571, and possibly as early as the 1540s.⁴⁵⁷ Named after the Spanish royal chapel in Santa Croce-in-Gerusalemme in Rome once patronized by the Catholic Monarchs, which functioned as a reliquary for the *arma Christi*, and where the former Franciscan Minister General fray Francisco de los Ángeles Quiñones served as chaplain and cardinal, the title bore both Roman and Jerusalemite associations.⁴⁵⁸ A copy of the church of San José de los Naturales in Mexico City, Cholula's *Capilla Real* most likely appeared in San Gabriel's atrium independently of the church, since its placement does not seem to have taken into account its location, nor do the two structures have similar stylistic details.⁴⁵⁹ As a large former *altepetl* with a considerable indigenous population, Cholula obviously would have needed a spacious chapel to accommodate its native neophytes. As John McAndrew notes, given Cholula's large population of successful merchants and the fact that its residents helped sustain the friary of *San Francisco* in Puebla, the city likely "was big enough and rich enough to build at almost any time the friars wanted."⁴⁶⁰

Originally a wooden-roofed and columned structure, the permanent *capilla* was modeled after a mosque with nine naves, supporting arches, corner towers at both ends, and a barrel-vaulted ceiling.⁴⁶¹ Soon after its completion the open chapel suffered a terrible catastrophe when its roof collapsed in the middle of the night. Disaster struck following the removal of the central arches and vaults so that the Cholulteca could celebrate a great religious feast with the utmost pageantry. Since the mortar had not yet dried (or perhaps the native peoples substituted ash for lime?), the roof buckled, mere hours after some four thousand individuals had worshipped within

its walls.⁴⁶² Despite its collapse, Cholula's *capilla abierta* was one of the notable feats of sixteenth-century colonial Mexican architecture, constructed of bricks and covering an expanse of 170 feet by 190 feet. Covered by lightweight vaults only two bricks thick, the supporting arches provided only minimum obstruction, so that no other vaulted structure in sixteenth-century New Spain displayed so low a ratio of solid to void.⁴⁶³ The upper openings of the sidewalls indicate that it once sported a wooden latticework screen reminiscent of the one at San José de los Naturales. In addition, the roof over its façade boasts stone-carved imitation torches, as if to provide light for evening services or theatrical performances. This feature leads Jaime Lara to suggest that the friars may have envisioned Cholula's *Capilla Real* as an elaborate theatrical stage prepared, day or night, for liturgical service.⁴⁶⁴ The collapsed *capilla* would not be repaired for at least a decade, for in 1595, Spanish officials and the indigenous *cabildo* petitioned for the repair of its roof since the San Gabriel church could only hold between a quarter and a tenth of Cholula's native population.⁴⁶⁵ Rebuilding had already commenced by 1601, for in that year Cholula's Spanish officials promise to feed Juan Pérez, *maestro de carpintería*, for the duration of the repair project, as well as pay him two thousand *pesos de oro común* for his labor.⁴⁶⁶

In the end, it becomes clear that Cholula's San Gabriel evangelization complex made visible and manifest the eschatological beliefs of its resident friars. Franciscan interaction with the ritualistically-inclined native Cholulteca in the 1530s and 1540s must have convinced them of the validity of their apocalyptic aspirations, for the former Sons of Quetzalcoatl displayed a fervor they could only explain as divinely-inspired.

“They Form a Path Like Ants” : Religious Fervor Among the Cholulteca

One Lenten season, when I was at Cholollan, a large town near [Puebla de] Los Angeles, the number of those who came to confess was so great that I was unable to give them the advice I should have liked to give them. I told them that I could hear the confession of only those who would bring their sins written down in figures, because writing in figures is a thing they know and understand, this being their way of writing.

– fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, OFM, 1541⁴⁶⁷

One of Cholula’s most famous mendicant residents during the sixteenth century was fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, a Nahuatlato who dedicated his life to Christianizing the native populations of New Spain and who wrote extensively to chronicle his experience. The details of Motolinía’s early life in Spain are sketchy, particularly his year of birth, which scholars argue took place anywhere from 1482 to 1500.⁴⁶⁸ Born in Benavente, a town in the Province of Zamora which formed part of the Kingdom of León, his last name appears to have been “Parades.”⁴⁶⁹ As was customary at the time, he probably dropped his surname and adopted the name of his birthplace when he joined the Franciscan Order. More than likely he studied at the parish school associated with the Franciscan church and friary in Benavente.

Although the year he was admitted to the Order is not known, Motolinía was only seventeen when he received special permission to take the habit based on his serious, studious nature, keen mind and firm will. He was assigned to the Province of Santiago with the understanding that upon ordination – which most likely occurred in 1519 – he would become a member of the fledgling Custody of San Gabriel. This Custody remained subject to the Province of Santiago until 1520 when it became an autonomous province. Significantly, the San Gabriel Custody had been affected by the religious reforms of fray Juan de Guadalupe, who called for a stricter adherence to the Rule of St. Francis and austerity in religious life and discipline, attitudes

that would permeate the mission of the Twelve.⁴⁷⁰ The Franciscans were also affected as an Order by the reforms of Cardinal Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros, whose zealous dedication resulted in the closure of all the lax Conventual houses in Spain by the year 1517; that same year, Leo X declared the Conventuals heretical. In the 1520s, the major movement within the Order was the Observants, so-called for their strict observance of the original Rule of St. Francis.

During Motolinía's years as a philosophy and theology student, about which little is known, including the location, instructors, or course of study, he became personally acquainted with the friars with whom he would travel to Mexico, notably fray Martín de Valencia. It was as a member of the San Gabriel Custody that Martín de Valencia first distinguished himself with a saintly reputation, and held the young Motolinía in the highest regard. Little surprise, then, that Motolinía was chosen to form part of the first official delegation to the New World.⁴⁷¹ The Custody of San Gabriel was also not a surprising choice, for it was from western Spain that Cortés hailed.

When Cortés' achievements in Mexico became known, the San Gabriel friars saw themselves as the perfect candidates to evangelize the newly conquered peoples. And since most of the Custody's houses were located in Extremadura, "it is quite conceivable that regional as well as national pride played its part in the succession of events that followed so rapidly."⁴⁷² These events included the 1522 imperial approval of three Flemish Franciscans for travel to Mexico: Pedro de Gante, Juan de Tecto, and Juan de Aora. The group was to have included fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones, who had just returned from a papal audience in Rome where he had received a commission to Mexico alongside fray Juan Clapion, had not the latter died suddenly and Quiñones been elected the Minister General of the Order. This unexpected development allowed Quiñones to process the necessary papers of approval for the friars of the

Province of San Gabriel in a timely fashion. He appointed fray Martín de Valencia as leader of the mission, and fray Martín in turn chose his companions, including Motolinía.

The Twelve departed from Spain on January 25, 1524 (the feast of the conversion of St. Paul) and arrived in the harbor of Veracruz on May 13, thereupon setting out on foot to Mexico-Tenochtitlan. It was during a stopover in Tlaxcala that fray Toribio heard the native people muttering “motolonia” in reference to the friars’ tattered clothing and decided to adopt the word as his name. After a warm reception in the capital by Cortés, fray Martín de Valencia assembled the friars, held a chapter meeting, and incorporated into the new Custody five Franciscans, including Pedro de Gante, who were already laboring in Mexico. With sixteen friars within his jurisdiction, Martín de Valencia selected four *altepetl* as primary evangelization centers and assigned four friars to each, naming one the local superior with the rank of guardian. Motolinía was asked to remain as friar guardian in Mexico-Tenochtitlan, thus beginning his forty-year stay in Mexico.

Motolinía remained a strong defender of the native peoples against the secular authorities throughout his career, dividing his time at friaries in Huejotzingo, Texcoco, Cholula, and Tlaxcala as needed. In 1525, he was sent to Guatemala to make contact with the native peoples and determine the feasibility of mission activity, remaining two years before returning to Mexico in 1529. He was the main Franciscan involved in laying out the boundaries of Puebla, having the honor of saying the first Mass on the founding day of the new city: April 16, 1531, the feast of St. Turibius, his patron. In 1533 he took a brief trip to Tehuantepec with fray Martín de Valencia, and the following year he participated in another failed mission excursion to Guatemala. Upon his return, Motolinía was stationed again in Tlaxcala and was named its guardian once more during the chapter meeting in 1536. This meeting was important on several accounts. First of all,

the Custody of San Gabriel was elevated to rank of the independent Province of the Holy Gospel, a name chosen by the father-general for the new American jurisdiction, as Jaime Lara comments, “to further emphasize their evangelical mission.”⁴⁷³ Lara continues: “There, in the New World untouched by the corruption of the Old, dreams of the *renovatio ecclesiae* could become a reality through the ‘Indian Church.’ In a pristine land, among a *genus angelicus*, apocalyptic hopes could flourish just as Joachim of Fiore had prophesized.”⁴⁷⁴ In addition, the 1536 Chapter approved a recommendation to have a friar write an account of the customs, belief, and history of the native peoples. Given his years of service, his extensive travel, and his rapport with the indigenous people in New Spain and Guatemala, Motolinía was the perfect candidate for the job.⁴⁷⁵

Completed in 1541, the *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España* discusses the Franciscan project in Cholula among others. Motolinía describes Cholula as “another Rome, with numerous temples of the demon.”⁴⁷⁶ Having been informed in advance that it contained more than three hundred temples, he noticed upon arrival its many towers and temples but states that he did not count them. Because of the great number of feasts celebrated in pre-hispanic Cholula, Motolinía says, it had multiple “halls and apartments to serve as lodgings during the feasts that were held.”⁴⁷⁷ According to his observations, the *teocallis* were kept very white, polished, and clean, and some had little gardens with flowers and trees and in most of the large patios there stood a temple. He identifies Quetzalcoatl as the principal deity in Cholula, with a large central Sanctuary dedicated to his manifestation as “the god of air.”⁴⁷⁸ He continues:

This god, they said, was the son of that god of whom they had that great statue; he was a native of Tollan, and from there he had set out to build up certain provinces. But he disappeared; and the Indians always had hoped the he would return. Hence, on the arrival of the of the ships of the Marqués del Valle, Don Hernando Cortés, who conquered this New Spain, the Indians seeing them in the distance, coming by boat, said their god was coming; and when they saw the white and

high sails, they said their god was bringing his teocallis over the sea; but afterwards when the Spaniards landed, the Indians said that not their god but many gods had come.⁴⁷⁹

Motolinía goes on to describe the Great Pyramid, whose base – the only part that now remains – “measures a good crossbow shot from corner to corner, while from the bottom to the top it must measure the distance that a sturdy archer would cover with a good crossbow. And still the native Indians of Cholollan declare that it once had a greater foundation.”⁴⁸⁰ At the time he saw it, it resembled nothing more than a little mountain with rabbits and vipers as its permanent residents. Although Motolinía acknowledges Cholula’s sacred legacy, he is certain that Christianity will prevail. In speaking of the native peoples in New Spain, he writes that “God drew them to the bosom of His Church and subjected them to the King of Spain; wherefore He will also draw those to Himself who are still away from the Church and will not permit that in this land more souls be lost and condemned and that idolatries be practiced any longer.”⁴⁸¹

Motolinía’s confidence reflects the general mendicant attitude during the first decades of Christianization in New Spain, a period known as the Golden Age of Evangelization. More than that, the actions of individual Cholulteca contributed to Motolinía’s rather rosy interpretation of the friars’ progress. For example, on the Friday before Palm Sunday of 1537, a young Cholulteca named Benito died in the neighboring town of Tlaxcallan. After first having made a good confession, Benito took sick within two days in a house far from the Cholula friary. Nevertheless, he returned to see the friars in such a weakened state that Motolinía wondered how he was able to walk. Benito replied that he was coming to make his peace with God because he wanted to die. After confessing, Benito described to Motolinía how his soul had been taken to hell and how his fear had tormented him. But in that instant, he called upon God, asked for his mercy, and was immediately removed to a delightful location where an angel told him to prepare himself for death by confession his sins.⁴⁸² Because of Benito and others like him, in Motolinía’s

writings he remains confident and convinced of the sincerity of Cholulteca conversion, never questioning personal motivation.

An episode in 1538 must have solidified Motolinía's convictions. In May of that year, the Franciscans gathered in Mexico City for a chapter meeting, deciding that due to the scarcity of friars, any Franciscan establishment within a certain distance of another should be closed with the understanding that the remaining house would care for the local native peoples.⁴⁸³ Apparently the news spread among the local communities that the friars were planning to abandon them, prompting the affected indigenous neophytes to gather outside their designated *conventos* and wail and weep in despair. One of the Franciscan residences on the list was Cholula; Motolinía describes how the Cholulteca, upon learning their fate, gathered at the *convento* de San Gabriel "shedding tears and creating a disturbance."⁴⁸⁴ Eventually, between eight hundred and one thousand native Cholulteca set out walking toward the friary of St. Francis in Mexico City, arriving drenched from the torrential rains. Once there, they cried and begged the friars to have mercy on them, not so much for the sinful adults, but for the sake of the innocent children who would be lost if there was no one to teach them the laws of God. According to Motolinía, God heard their prayers because very quickly twenty-five additional friars arrived, which was enough to supply friars in all the residences.⁴⁸⁵

Whereas Motolinía's attitude toward his Cholulteca flock might appear incredulous five hundred years later, for someone laboring among a foreign people in a foreign land, he would necessarily have relied on personal observations. Having left behind his homeland and his family, he and his brother friars needed to "see" success in order to validate their mission and retain their motivation.⁴⁸⁶ What they saw may have indeed occurred, however, mendicant interpretation of events may have been naive. For example, whereas the friars believed that the

native peoples were earnest in their tears and insistence on catechetical instruction, perhaps their response was more nuanced. The native Cholulteca may have realized that allying themselves with the local Franciscans would provide a layer of protection between them and the abuses of the colonial system. Perhaps they realized that receiving the sacraments of baptism and confession would result in a type of social capital, ensuring Franciscan protection and acceptance, as well as the ability to marry low-ranking Spaniards and thus produce children who could “pass” as European. Finally, as the Sons of Quetzalcoatl, the local Cholulteca would have recognized the benefits of embracing the dominant faith in order to maintain the spiritual domination they had enjoyed for centuries.

“Not fit to govern, but to be governed”: The Silvery Winter of the Franciscans

Toward the end of the century, looking back pessimistically on the work of his confreres in New Spain, Mendieta was forced to mourn the passing of the golden age of the evangelization under Emperor Charles V and the growing tarnish of the silver age under Charles V’s son Philip II.

– Jaime Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*⁴⁸⁷

Jerónimo de Mendieta, a second-generation Mexican friar born the youngest of forty children in Vitoria, Spain, took the Franciscan habit at a young age before traveling to Mexico in 1554 to participate in the evangelizing enterprise. He studied Latin, the arts, and theology at the college of Xochimilco, where he quickly acquired mastery of Nahuatl. Although a speech impediment prevented him from preaching in Spanish, Mendieta became an accomplished writer, serving as the official archivist and editor of Franciscan writings during his period. He had such finesse with a pen, in fact, that Torquemada called him the “Cicero of the province.” In

addition to his archivist duties, Mendieta served as the guardian and superior of the Franciscan *conventos* in Tlaxcala, Xochimilco, Tlaltelolco, Tepeca, and Huejotzingo. His work in Mexico was only interrupted once, when he traveled to Spain in 1570 to attend the general chapter of the Order and during which time he pleaded on behalf of fellow Franciscan, fray Bernardino de Sahagún, to secure funding for indigenous aids to help the aging friar complete his important ethnographic work. Mendieta returned to Mexico in 1573 where he finished out his career, dying in the *convento de San Francisco El Grande* in Mexico City in 1604.⁴⁸⁸

Mendieta is best remembered, of course, as the author of the *Historia eclesiástica Indiana*. Commissioned in 1571 by his superior general to write a history of the *Provincia del Santo Evangelio de México*, Mendieta completed the manuscript in 1595. Sent to Spain in 1596, much like Motolinía's history, the manuscript was not published until the nineteenth century. Although it was overlooked by later prominent historians such as Clavijero, Prescott, and Orozco y Berra, it was in wide circulation among the Franciscan *conventos* in Mexico and Peru, perhaps consulted alongside Motolinía's manuscript. So well-known was Mendieta's history, in fact, that Jaime Lara asserts that it influenced the work of Guaman Poma de Ayala.⁴⁸⁹ Even so, not until 1860 was Mendieta's manuscript discovered in Europe. Modern readers have Joaquín García Icazbalceta to thank, for he purchased and published the book at his own expense in 1870.

As previously discussed, the text of Mendieta's *Historia eclesiástica Indiana* bears the stamp of medieval apocalyptic mysticism. Utilizing Scripture, prophecy, and the writings of his Franciscan predecessors such as Andrés de Olmos, Motolinía, Sahagún, and Francisco Jimenez (who wrote a biography of fray Martín de Valencia), as well as the letters of Cortés and the works of the Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas, Mendieta presents a history of the Franciscan Order in Mexico in five books.⁴⁹⁰ In essence, he illustrates the triumphs and tragedy connected

with the Franciscan establishment; the difficulties of evangelization, and the conflict between spiritual and material interests in the New World. In contrast to Motolinía's euphoric descriptions of the successes of evangelization, he laments the end of the golden age of the mendicant establishment and the debauchery prevalent among the native converts, especially drunkenness. Like Motolinía, Mendieta presents the advent of Christianity in New Spain as a direct consequence of the Spanish Conquest. In fact, in his chapter discussing the Franciscan arrival in Mexico, he asserts "that the preservation of this land [New Spain] and its not being lost after it had been conquered was due to the friars of San Francisco, just as the first conquest was due to don Fernando Cortés and his companions."⁴⁹¹ By this declaration, he credits the Franciscans with more direct involvement in the conquest than previously discussed in Conquistador writings, while at the same time embellishing the basic storyline of Franciscan memory of the Conquest outlined by Motolinía.

Much like Motolinía's history, the Conquest itself is not given significant space in Mendieta's narrative. In fact, in all of two paragraphs Mendieta summarizes the events of Cortés' arrival and domination of Anáhuac. Then he moves on to exalt Cortés as a Messianic figure, whose birth the same year as Augustinian friar Martin Luther and the dedication of the temple to Huitzilopochtli testifies to his status as God's chosen one. In addition, Mendieta continues, at a time when Luther was corrupting the Gospel and leading others away from Christ, Cortés brought Christianity to those who had never heard of him. Furthermore, Mendieta's description of Cortés as "el famosísimo y venturosísimo capitán" exemplifies his attitude toward the *conquistador*.⁴⁹² Like another Moses assisted by Aaron, God sends Cortés Malinche and Jerónimo de Aguilar as interpreters. For Mendieta, as well as for the other Franciscans, God's blessings indicate his approval of the Conquest.

As to the role of Franciscans, Mendieta believes they were chosen by God to carry out the work begun by Cortés to bring Christ to the native people. In addition, he reads their welcome by Cortés as indicative of the respect due to them by secular authority, since, at the time he was writing in the late sixteenth century, the mendicant influence was waning and their evangelization techniques were being questioned. Mendieta also discusses how his brother friars were divinely blessed in their endeavors. For example, following their inability to learn the native languages upon their arrival, the friars fasted and offered prayers to the Virgin Mary and to their Seraphic father, St. Francis. In answer to their prayers, God inspired them to play games with the children in order to learn the native languages and they were quickly successful.

As already noted, Mendieta insists that the friars were responsible for conserving peace among the native peoples in New Spain. Despite the early successes recorded by his predecessor Motolinía, Mendieta concludes that the native people in Mexico are not fit to govern, but to be governed. This paternalistic attitude reflects the approach to native people taken by the Third Mexican Provincial Council of 1585. By the end of the sixteenth century, not only had the period known as the Mendicant Church (1524-1555) long since passed, but the secularization of the Mexican Church was well underway. Many of the mendicants shared Mendieta's concern about the end of the golden age of evangelization, principally because they realized that their efforts to Christianize the native population had failed to usher in the Second Coming.

Concluding Thoughts

In their attempts to fashion the Cholulteca – natural practitioners of Franciscan poverty – into the Sons of San Pedro and then into the Sons of San Gabriel, the friars capitalized on the similarities between the two ritualistic faiths. Emerging as they did from a chaotic European

world where Protestant troops attacked the central city of their faith and forced the leader of their Church into hiding, the friars in Cholula did their part to rectify those events in a New World context. Motivated by an eschatological urgency, the Franciscans would oversee the construction of their *convento* on the ruins of a premier pre-hispanic temple, imbuing its very stones with apocalyptic significance by design. During the sixteenth century, the San Gabriel complex would come to dominate the region, achieving a political and spiritual importance beyond that of its Spanish neighbor Puebla. Not only was Cholula's evangelization compound larger than Puebla's, but its identity as a training center for friars meant that it was responsible for sending forth apostles to preach the Gospel, a return, as it were, to the days of the Primitive Church when Christianity existed in its simplest form.

The Franciscans were not the only beneficiaries of the colonial situation, however. The native Cholulteca, recognizing the benefits of housing the representatives of the new God in their midst, capitalized on their presence for social, political, and spiritual gain. Specifically, their desire to retain the friars in their midst despite the 1538 Franciscan Chapter's decision to demote the San Gabriel to a vicarship for lack of friars was fueled by their desire to retain their pre-contact spiritual dominance, for in many ways the mendicant priests served as a colonial replacement of the community of priests previously assigned to the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary. In addition, despite the Franciscan evangelization complex's intended use as a site for evangelization of the numerous native Cholulteca, by the end of the century the church of San Gabriel would become a burial site for the city's Spanish Catholics, with one prominent recorded exception in the 1590s, as we shall see.

Chapter Four

“Que me entierren con el hábito del bienaventurado San Francisco:” Franciscan Spiritual Economy in late Sixteenth-Century Spanish-Indigenous Cholula

May my body be buried in the Church of San Gabriel in the said city of Cholula in the tomb that the father guardian or president of the said convento will indicate to me.... Bury me in the habit of the blessed one, San Francisco; it is for the said effect that I ask it.

– Last Will and Testament from Cholula, 1590s⁴⁹³

During the sixteenth century, Cholula’s Franciscan *convento* complex developed into the premier sacred structure in the region. Much like the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary that it replaced, the evangelization compound enjoyed both spiritual and political significance, serving as the primary unifying ritual site for its vast number of indigenous residents, as well as to native peoples in the surrounding areas. A symbol of the city’s collective identity, which by the late sixteenth century included a significant number of Spaniards, by the 1590s the San Gabriel church had become prominent enough to serve as the burial place for the wife of the Spanish *corregidor* when circumstances prevented the transport of her body to Mexico City. Doña Marina de Mota’s interment in Cholula’s Franciscan church in 1594 was merely one of a number of recorded burials from that period.

Unlike the unplanned entombment of the *corregidor*’s wife inside the church, over two dozen late sixteenth-century European residents of Cholula prepared for their deaths by specifically requesting in their will that they be buried in the Franciscan church of San Gabriel; closely tied to this petition was their desire to be entombed wearing a Franciscan habit. For a site originally designed to Christianize native peoples, the shift of the evangelization complex to cater instead to its European residents remains consistent with the waning Franciscan enthusiasm for the evangelization project by the latter half of the sixteenth century, as well as the successful

rebuilding of the indigenous *Capilla Real*, already underway by this time. An examination of these testaments will indicate the extent to which Cholula's population, both Spanish and indigenous, had become Franciscanized by the end of the sixteenth century.

The Cholula Corpus

The wills from Cholula, which date from 1590-1601, reside in the Notarial Archive in the city of Puebla de Los Ángeles in the Mexican state of Puebla. Of the twenty-six testaments in the collection, most date from the early part of the decade with 5 wills – or nearly 20% of them – composed in 1594 alone. Most of the testators are Spanish males, that is, eighteen in number, with four Spanish women, one Portuguese man, an *india principal* named doña María Tlaltecatoya, and an *india ladina*, that is, a hispanized native woman who dressed, spoke, acted, and in all ways identified herself as culturally Spanish.⁴⁹⁴

Because the wills in the Cholula collection are Spanish-language documents and most of the testators are Spaniards, my approach to the testaments as a corpus is heavily influenced by early modern Spanish historian Carlos Eire's work on sixteenth-century wills from Madrid. In it, he poses three questions: 1) Why would a lay person request burial in a religious habit? 2) Why would friars accommodate this request? and 3) What does this request reveal about attitudes toward death and the afterlife?⁴⁹⁵ This chapter follows a similar framework and asks similar questions, with somewhat similar results, taking as a case study the unique testament of the high-ranking native woman, doña María. Another difference in my body of wills is that most of Cholula's testators request burial in the Franciscan *convento*, whereas in Eire's study, most sixteenth-century Madrileños request burial in a parish church.

Unlike their Madrileño contemporaries, however, all of Cholula's testators dictated their wills during their final illness rather than while healthy and strong.⁴⁹⁶ In early modern Spain, dictating one's will while in good health was lauded as more meritorious, not only for being a recognition of one's mortality but also an acknowledgement that one's life and possessions were on loan from God. The act of writing one's will in sixteenth-century Spain was, in fact, just one aspect of a highly ritualized process dating to the medieval period.

*The Art of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain*⁴⁹⁷

To a person overcome with illness in sixteenth-century Spain, a notary could become as imperative as a priest, and a testament as essential as a confession.⁴⁹⁸ At the moment when death appeared imminent, both would be hastily summoned to the home of the *moriens*, or the dying person. After the priest heard the individual's final confession, the notary would appear at his or her bedside, ready to record the last will and testament, to aid in the ordering of that person's life in anticipation of death. In this way, the notary – who served a political rather than a religious purpose – was often drawn into the intimacy of the death ritual, a process comprised of various customs and expectations for which the writing of the will comprised one part.⁴⁹⁹

For Spain's Catholics, the preparation of a will at one's deathbed was not meant to be an individual's first contemplation of death. Rather, individuals were expected to prepare for death throughout their lives, making recourse to the multitude of devotional literature available on the topic. Consequently, the writing of one's will developed a quasi-sacramental quality by the early modern period, so that preparing it while in good health and re-reading it on occasion in order to renew one's assent to its pious bequests could lessen one's time in purgatory.⁵⁰⁰ In this

atmosphere, participating in the death watch of one's friends and relatives and aiding them in their final preparations functioned as both a serious obligation and a meritorious act of charity.⁵⁰¹

The death ritual in early modern Spain consisted of several aspects.⁵⁰² First, family and friends would gather around the bedridden individual, either to assist in the recitation of prayers or perhaps to read aloud devotional material. Members of local confraternities might be summoned or paid to pray for the sick person's soul, or, if the *moriens* belonged to a specific *cofradía*, fellow members were obliged to appear and remain bedside throughout the ordeal. The arrival of the *cofrades* in procession was often marked in the streets with the tolling of bells and the chanting of hymns. The approach of the priest followed a similar ceremonial pattern, as bystanders would drop to their knees as he passed with the consecrated host, sometimes even emerging from churches to do so.

Upon the priest's arrival to the invalid's bedside, he would administer the sacraments considered necessary for a holy and peaceful death: confession and absolution, the last communion known as the *viaticum* (Latin for "take it with you") and at the last possible moment, the rite of extreme unction.⁵⁰³ Often the poor would be brought into the death chamber to receive alms from the dying individual in exchange for their presence and their prayers until the moment of expiration. This eleventh-hour charitable act might even enter the last will and testament, either as an additional pious bequest or as an addendum hastily scribbled at the end of the document. Then came the moment of death, when early modern Spaniards believed that the soul was rendered from the body and guided to heaven by the guardian angel of the deceased.⁵⁰⁴

During this highly ritualized process, the notary would prepare the testament, a document believed not only to aid in the achievement of a good and holy death, but that could also mitigate one's stay in purgatory. In this sense, the will served as a "passport to the afterlife," as Carlos

Eire remarks, a document prepared by a notary “as the dying person stood on the rim of eternity, poised between heaven and hell.”⁵⁰⁵ The lists of mandates to executors and heirs in the surviving documents provide contemporary scholars the opportunity to “overhear” the thoughts, hopes, and fears of early modern Spaniards on the brink of death.

According to Spanish tradition, the executors, or *albaceas*, had only one month to execute the will, hence testators were encouraged to choose wisely to ensure that their bequests were fulfilled quickly once they passed to the afterlife.⁵⁰⁶ As Eire has noted, optimally, early modern Spanish testators would choose two or three executors, of which one would be a dependable priest and one a married man neither too wealthy nor destitute. The choice was especially important because sixteenth-century Spaniards believed that negligent or lax executors could result in a significantly extended stay in purgatory for the recently deceased.

Given that testaments served so many practical functions within a late medieval and early modern world, they also aided in maintaining social order.⁵⁰⁷ Simply because wills *could* be imbued with a religious sensibility, however, does not indicate that every testator viewed his or her testament as a quasi-sacramental object, either in Spain or in New Spain. Eire argues that the spiritual references included in a corpus of wills can provide the basis for understanding the prevailing religious mentality in a given region, especially with the multitude of voices of the dead that emerge in the testaments.⁵⁰⁸ Sarah Cline, though recognizing the possibility that religious language expressed individual belief, finds it more likely that notaries gauged the amount of spiritual formula to use based on the social status of the testator, since the will of an elite would be more widely read than that of a commoner.⁵⁰⁹ Though the extent to which individual mentalities can be known is unclear, from the Cholula corpus we nevertheless begin to

learn something of the attitudes of its residents towards death and the afterlife during the first century of colonial rule.

Spanish Burial Dress

At first glance, the pious petition to be interred in mendicant robes may appear to have strictly European Catholic origins, especially considering the medieval Castilian precedent for requesting burial clad in friars' robes. As Carlos Eire has shown, sixteenth-century Spaniards frequently requested burial dressed in Franciscan garb – or in the habit of any religious Order, for that matter. Of the four hundred and thirty-six wills from sixteenth-century Madrid that Eire analyzes in his book, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, a sizeable number request burial dressed in the robes of a Franciscan.⁵¹⁰ Indeed, the most popular burial dress during the period of Eire's study, that is, the years 1520-1599, was the Franciscan habit, with 59% of his Madrileño testators choosing it during the decade of the 1540s alone.⁵¹¹ Clearly, the pious custom of requesting mendicant robes migrated to New Spain.

Even so, what did being buried in a Franciscan habit in a Franciscan church mean to the sixteenth-century Spaniards who requested it? And why should a lay person make such a request? The tradition, in fact, dates back to medieval Europe when the mendicant friars gained prominence in the Church due to the popularity of two new Orders – the Franciscans and Dominicans. According to early medieval monastic practice, one's habit (or cowl) was considered a physical manifestation of one's vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, as well as an external sign of humility.⁵¹² In fact, the prolific thirteenth-century Dominican, St. Thomas Aquinas, believed that one's habit was akin to a sacrament and represented a second baptism.⁵¹³ In Bonaventure's *Life of Francis* – which dates to the year 1260 – the Franciscan

author recounts how Francis desired to die naked in order to fully embrace the humility and poverty of Christ, his devotion to Lady Poverty manifest to the end. One of his companions, however – being inspired by God – convinced him to accept a habit as a loan, and Francis was thus able to enter heaven properly attired.⁵¹⁴ Taken together, these pious stories led to the popular medieval belief that dying in a monastic habit meant preferential treatment in heaven, so that by the sixteenth century, Spaniards habitually requested to be buried in a religious habit.

Eire makes an important point in his study of wills from Madrid that is relevant to our discussion. He notes that testators specify the habit of the saint, *not* the habit of the saint's Order, that is, they request "the habit of San Francisco," *not* "the habit of the Order of San Francisco."⁵¹⁵ A clear example from Eire's study is the will of one Madrileña who asks for the habit of St. Anthony of Padua, a Franciscan friar, rather than request the habit of Francis himself or the habit of the Franciscans. From these and other examples, it appears as if the saint is more important than his Order.

In the case of the Cholula testaments, Francis is the only saint mentioned, however, the wording of the request for his habit varies. Of the twenty-one testators who request burial in the Franciscan habit, four ask for the habit "del señor San Francisco," that is, of "the lord, San Francisco," and seventeen request the habit "del bienaventurado San Francisco," which can be loosely translated as the "felicitous or blessed San Francisco;" of this group, two people identify him as the "bienaventurado seráfico San Francisco," or the "blessed seraphic San Francisco."⁵¹⁶ Only one testament asks simply for "the habit of San Francisco." Because the first page of this will has been lost, I have relied on a published extract of the testament for this wording.⁵¹⁷ I am guessing that in the actual will he asks for the habit "del bienaventurado San Francisco" since that appears to be the norm.

Consonant with Eire's study of sixteenth-century Madrid, among the sixteenth-century Cholula testators, the saint is more important than his Order. This fact would especially be true in the case of doña María Tlaltecayoa, since as a native person, she may have viewed the Franciscan habit as the garment of God's representative rather than of Christianity as a whole. By these very particular requests, the Cholula testators invoked the advocacy and protection of Francis himself rather than the sum of all the friars in his Order, or the blessing of the Order itself.⁵¹⁸ Francis himself was to be their witness in the heavenly court.

As to why friars would accommodate the request for burial in their religious habit, the answer is very simple: the alms that accompanied these requests provided the friars with supplemental income. This was especially true because a *bona fide* habit could only be provided by the friars themselves. Though it is difficult to determine the customary "cost" of a discarded habit in late sixteenth-century Cholula because testators generally left alms for the habit, requiem masses, and a funeral procession together, its popularity implies that the friars reaped a steady, albeit possibly meager, profit from their used habits. With more than twenty friars residing in Cholula's *convento* in the sixteenth century, testators should have felt confident that a worn out habit would be available to them at the moment of their death.

Spanish Burial Location

Like requesting a religious habit as burial dress, requesting interment in a church attached to a religious Order was also a tradition from early modern Spain. Because the only acceptable place of burial for Catholics was in consecrated ground (*camposanto*) and there were few outdoor cemeteries in sixteenth-century Spain, parish churches, monastery chapels, and cloisters became popular burial grounds. In this way, the vaults beneath parish churches became virtual

cities of the dead.⁵¹⁹ Early modern Spanish priests recognized the profound psychological impact of surrounding parishioners with the buried dead, for it would encourage their flock to ponder their own mortality. Because Cholula did not have a secular church until 1640, the Franciscan church of San Gabriel – which was the only established church in San Pedro Cholula since the *Capilla Real* would not be repaired until the first years of the seventeenth century – became the prime burial location for the city’s Catholics in the sixteenth century.

In the Cholula corpus, nineteen of the twenty-six testaments request burial in the Franciscan church of San Gabriel. Unlike the requests to be buried in other churches in San Andrés Cholula, Atlixco, or Puebla, every person who requests burial in the church of San Gabriel also requests burial in the Franciscan habit. The popularity of the *convento* church as a resting place can be attributed to its central location as well as to its identity as the primary religious structure in town.

Three testators request interment in the church of San Andrés, the smaller Franciscan *convento* located in the nearby *municipio* of San Andrés Cholula, which became independent about 1585, that is, shortly before the composition of these wills. Of those who chose San Andrés as their resting place, one requests the habit and two do not. Two testators also request burial in “the Monastery of St. Francis in Cholula,” which I assume is the primary *convento*, San Gabriel, though I cannot be certain. Of these, one requests a habit and the other does not. Only one testator requests burial in the Puebla Cathedral – without a habit, which makes sense given that it is a secular church. He identifies himself as a resident of Puebla, though he states that he is in Cholula the day he executes his will. Likely his decision to have the Cholula notary execute his will rather than wait until he had returned to his home in the neighboring city of Puebla indicates that this testator was too weak to travel or feared his imminent death.

Although the testators in Eire's study make specific reference to the location within the church where they would like to rest for all eternity – near the high altar was the most popular, though some requested burial in the vestibule so that the excess liquid from the holy water font would drip blessing upon their bodies in perpetuity – Cholula's testators make no such stipulations.⁵²⁰ In fact, every person who requests burial in the *convento* includes similar formulaic wording, namely, that he or she would like to be buried in the tomb that the friar guardian or president of the *convento* will show them. I have not been able to ascertain why the testators use future tense in this junction, though perhaps it indicates the belief that death is not an end, but the beginning of a journey to God, so that the soul could "see" the tomb when the corpse was placed into it during its funeral, even if the eyes of the body had ceased to function. In the end, Cholula's dying do not appear to be preoccupied with being placed at a particular location within the Franciscan church. Their only concern seems to be buried within it. Such is the case of doña María Tlaltecayoa, the only high-ranking native person in the Cholula corpus. As someone who straddles both the European and indigenous traditions, her testament warrants closer inspection.

Case Study: A Nahua Woman Negotiates a Medieval Spanish Death Ritual

On May 23, 1596, in the city of Cholula, several officials crowded around the prone figure of doña María Tlaltecayoa, an *india principal* who lay on her death bed in the home she shared with her husband, a Spanish *labrador* named Juan Cardoso.⁵²¹ Earlier in the day, Cardoso had appeared before don Gaspar de Vera, the *corregidor*, or supervising Spanish official in Cholula, to request that a notary be sent to his home as his wife was ill and wished to write her last will and testament.⁵²² Because Cholula's regular notary, Hernando de León, was away from

the city that day, the *corregidor* commissioned Juan Gómez Lozano, the *escribano conjuez*, or jointly-appointed notary, with this task. Accompanied by the *alguacil mayor*, or high constable, and a Nahuatl interpreter, the *escribano conjuez* ventured to the marshy boundaries of Cholula's jurisdiction to assist doña María in the execution of her last will and testament.

Despite being the will of a high-ranking native person, the resulting Castilian-language *testamento* closely adheres to the early modern Spanish model, varying little in substance from the Spanish wills of doña María's European contemporaries in Cholula, including the nearly universal request to be buried in the local Franciscan church wearing a Franciscan habit.⁵²³ Being the wife of a Spaniard, doña María's recourse to the Spanish model is understandable. Her will varies significantly from the rest of the collection, however, in its narrative style, being the only testament with preliminary material contextualizing its composition, a stylistic technique reminiscent of the Nahuatl, rather than the European, testamentary tradition.⁵²⁴ Importantly, doña María is the only testator in the Cholula corpus to self-identify as a native person.⁵²⁵ Indeed, she is the only Nahua from sixteenth-century Cholula whose will has survived – in Spanish or Nahuatl.⁵²⁶ As such, her testament provides the only information addressing Christian funerary practice among the Nahuas in early colonial Cholula.

This section analyzes doña María's testament within its proper Spanish-indigenous context, revealing how her funerary decisions enabled her to re-imagine the spiritual landscape of her afterlife, much as her indigenous contemporaries had earlier re-imagined the sacred physical topography of San Pedro Cholula, their ancestral home. By requesting burial in a Franciscan habit, doña María was not only conforming to Spanish custom but she was also maintaining continuity with pre-contact Nahua death ritual, a negotiation predicated upon her ability to converse in two cultural and spiritual languages. As a Christian, being vested at death

in the discarded robes of a local friar provided her with the “said effect,” that is, she accessed Cholula’s newly-established Franciscan economy of grace, taking the holy, seraphic founder of the Order, St. Francis, as spiritual insurance, if you will, against her own personal sin. Within a Christian context, such a death bed request functioned as a symbolic rejection of the world and an aspiration towards personal sanctity. But to a Nahua-Christian like doña María, being wrapped at death in the habit of St. Francis would have resonated with her ancestral practice of shrouding a corpse to protect the soul from angry gods in the underworld. By imbuing her Christian future with her native past, doña María prevented the complete eclipse of her indigenous identity within her sixteenth-century Nahua-Christian self.

Doña María’s Death Bed Narrative

The individuals who gathered in respectful silence at doña María’s bedside on May 5, 1596 consisted of her husband, the notary, the *alguacil mayor*, a Nahuatl-Castilian interpreter, and three witnesses.⁵²⁷ As the *escribano conjuer*, Juan Gómez Loçano, settled in and poised his quill, the *alguacil mayor*, Nufio Manuel, made the customary opening remarks, namely, that doña María, an *india principal* born in Cholula, though stretched out in illness upon her bed, appeared sound of mind and sound of understanding.⁵²⁸ Speaking to her in the presence of Antón Sánchez, the interpreter, and in the company of the three witnesses – Andrés Pérez, Lorenzo Siáñez, and Antonio Gómez – the *alguacil mayor* asked doña María if she would like to make and order her will and she replied in the affirmative.⁵²⁹ When he asked if she would like her husband, Juan Cardoso, to remain present or if they should escort him out of the house to leave her at her liberty, doña María made clear that her husband was to remain during her dictation because she had already communicated to him her last wishes.⁵³⁰

The notary begins with an invocation to the most holy Trinity, three persons in only one true God who lives and reigns forever. Following custom by writing in the voice of doña María, he records her declaration that she is the legitimate daughter of Diego Tlaltecayoa and Isabel Tlapapaltze, his legitimate wife, both *indios principales* from the *cabecera* of Santiago and both native to the city of Cholula, and the legitimate wife of the Spaniard Juan Cardoso.⁵³¹ Following Spanish formula, doña María acknowledges that though she is ill of body she is sound of will and possesses all of the sense and understanding and natural judgment God gave her. Believing firmly as she does in the mystery of the most holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons and only one true God yet fearing death, which is a natural thing for every creature, she desires to place her soul on the most straightforward road to salvation possible and in the best manner and form before God. Hence, she is making her will in the following manner.

Like her fellow Spanish Catholic testators in Cholula, doña María opens by entrusting her soul to Our Lord God, who created it and redeemed it with his most precious blood, and she dispatches her body to the earth, from which it was formed. She requests that on the day his divine majesty sees fit to elevate her from this present life, she be buried in the Church of San Gabriel in the tomb the friar guardian or president of the *convento* will indicate to her.⁵³² She then asks to be buried with “the habit of the felicitous San Francisco,” and states that since she is a member of the *cofradía del Santísimo Sacramento* (Sodality of the Most Blessed Sacrament), the confraternity should oversee her interment.⁵³³ On the day of her burial – if not followed by a holyday – she would like a sung requiem high mass as well as a sung Office of the Dead to be prayed in vigil the night before her funeral; additionally, she asks that all the friars present in the *convento* on the day of her funeral say mass for her soul. To fulfill these requests, she asks her executors to give the *convento de San Gabriel* one hundred pesos in alms to cover the cost of a

habit, her funeral procession, her burial, an unspecified number of open casket masses, and so that the friars, moved by charity, might commend her soul and the souls of her parents to God.⁵³⁴ For fifty low masses offered for her soul in the Monastery of Our Lady of the Remedies in Puebla she leaves the “customary amount of alms.” Entrusting her executors to choose the appropriate priests and church, she requests an additional fifty low masses for her soul, ten low masses for the souls in purgatory that Our Lord might remove them from their suffering, and in order to alleviate her conscience, four low masses for those with whom she has any remaining earthly obligation.⁵³⁵

Taken together, the section of doña María’s will dealing with spiritual concerns is not at all remarkable. Because of the Spanish notary, her testament contains standard European formulae also present in the other Cholula wills. In this way, requesting masses and asking to be buried in a Franciscan habit classify her as a typical resident in late sixteenth-century Cholula. Of course, being a married, lay, indigenous woman, doña María would not have had any official affiliation with the local friars.⁵³⁶ Even so, she very likely would have interacted with them regularly, given their considerable and well-established presence in town, since by this point in the 1590s, Cholula was a thriving Franciscan center with over twenty friars in residence, some of whom were trained as Nahuatl preachers.⁵³⁷

Depending on her age in 1596, doña María may have witnessed the construction of the *convento de San Gabriel*, which was completed in 1552. It is more likely, however, that her parents, who were small children when the friars arrived, participated in its building program. As *indios principales* they may also have eventually become involved in overseeing the new church’s operations, much as high-ranking native peoples had supervised the functioning of the pre-conquest temple.⁵³⁸ As an *india principal*, doña María herself may even have been involved

in some capacity with the San Gabriel Church, which would, of course, have resulted in her familiarity with Catholic ritual. Though we cannot know for certain whether she remembered when the *convento* appeared, there is no doubt doña María witnessed the construction of the *Santuario de la Virgen de los Remedios* atop the Great Pyramid. Although the friars had placed smaller chapels at its summit in the 1530s, the permanent sanctuary to Our Lady of the Remedies was dedicated around 1590 – about six years prior to the afternoon under discussion. Of course, without further documentation, my assumptions about doña María’s relationship to the local Catholic churches must remain mere speculation. We do not even have a corpus of Nahuatl wills to provide a framework.

The Art of Dying in Sixteenth-Century San Pedro Cholula, New Spain

The preamble to doña María Tlaltecayoa’s will provides some insight into the transatlantic transfer of the intricate Spanish death ritual to colonial Mexico, albeit through the eyes of a high-ranking Nahua. Much like in Spain, the notary was summoned to her bedside during her final illness. This errand was undertaken by her husband, indicating, perhaps, a tenderness between them as well as his concern that she produce this important religious document before her death in order to receive the masses, prayers, and friar’s habit that would ensure the repose of her soul. On a more practical level, both doña María and her husband would have wanted to ensure that her property was appropriately distributed after her death, her debts paid, and her bills collected.

Unlike the custom in sixteenth-century Madrid, doña María’s *cofradía* brothers and sisters did not appear at her side during her death throes. Rather, she and her contemporaries in Cholula requested in their wills that their *cofrades* accompany their corpse in a funeral

procession on the day of their death. Nor did friends, the poor, or additional family crowd around doña María's death bed, not even her brother Francisco, who lived in an adjoining lot in Cholula's periphery. The prologue does not mention the recitation of prayers for the dying, the reading aloud of devotional literature, or the chanting of pious hymns, perhaps understandably given the presence of Spanish officials rather than friends in doña María's home. Whether the customs differed in San Pedro Cholula or these activities would occur after the notary's departure is unclear from the document.

Importantly, in colonial Mexico there was no direct connection between the writing of a testament and the priest's administration of Last Rites.⁵³⁹ In fact, notaries in New Spain were not obliged to notify a religious authority of a testator's imminent death, which explains why the preamble to doña María's will does not mention a priest or reference the sacrament of extreme unction. Neither does the notary mention bell-ringing in any of Cholula's numerous churches or chapels on May 23, 1596 to mark the imminent passage of one of its faithful, as was customary in Spain. And despite the popularity among native testators in central Mexico of leaving alms for bell-ringing upon one's death, doña María does not request that bells be rung to signal her passing.⁵⁴⁰ Even so, her will reflects the Nahuatl testamentary tradition in other ways.

Nahuatl Testaments

Nahuatl wills first appeared in New Spain in the 1540s and quickly gained popularity among native peoples, deviating more and more from Spanish models as the colonial period advanced. European friars introduced the practice during the first decades of evangelization, since the religious nature of testaments offered an opportunity to concisely transmit Christian concepts while reinforcing the basic tenets of Catholic belief and practice. Although no examples

of pre-contact wills survive, it is possible that a Nahua oral tradition existed whereby a dying native person would give final commands to an audience.⁵⁴¹ This may explain why the European testament genre was accepted so readily and became so widely-used among colonial native peoples.

Perhaps because of this pre-contact tradition, colonial Nahuatl wills differ from the Spanish model in several ways. In addition to being considered primarily an oral transaction carried out before an audience of listeners, Nahua testators often spoke directly to those present, unlike Spaniards who would always reference others in the third person even as they dictated their wills in first person.⁵⁴² Though doña María follows the Spanish tradition of speaking about those in the room in the third person – namely, about her husband – her desire to dictate her will before an audience of listeners indicates her cognizance of Nahuatl testament traditions and her desire to adhere to them, despite executing her will in Spanish. Having three male witnesses also follows Spanish custom, though their presence throughout the dictation of the will was not required in Castilian law.

Another related indigenous strategy was to seek out the highest local indigenous authorities to serve as witnesses, thus representing the enforcing power of the community more officially than the other often numerous native witnesses could.⁵⁴³ This might explain the presence of Nufio Manuel, the *alguacil mayor*, at doña María's deathbed. Though a Spanish rather than an local indigenous authority, his witnessing and signing of her will could reflect Nahua custom. In addition, as a fellow *labrador* he worked with doña María's husband Juan Cardoso and lived among the indigenous community on the edge of Cholula's jurisdiction, possibly quite near to doña María. Perhaps the two families had developed more than a strictly professional relationship and his attentiveness to her final hours reflects that friendship.

The only known sixteenth-century model for Nahuatl testaments appeared in a 1569 Nahuatl-Castilian confession manual penned by the Franciscan fray Alonso de Molina. Designed to aid European mendicants in administering the sacraments and providing pastoral care to native peoples in central Mexico, the *Confesionario mayor en lengua Mexicana y castellana* also contained a detailed set of instructions outlining the format and structure for recording Nahuatl wills that a priest was meant to provide to a notary.⁵⁴⁴ This two-part section – the directions and a model testament – underscores the religious nature of will-writing while also providing insight into Spanish attitudes towards native peoples in this period.

According to Molina's instructions, a good notary was known by his personal qualities and capabilities for performing his responsibilities properly, not by his racial or cultural identity.⁵⁴⁵ In fact, Molina's directions asked the notary to carefully consider his own qualifications since he was obliged to faithfully execute his office. This responsibility included ensuring that the testator remained lucid of mind and judgment, since testaments dictated by an unsound person held no legal or spiritual force. Among colonial Nahuas, little expectation existed for healthy individuals to produce a will, another departure from the Early Modern Spanish recommendation of producing a will in advance as a pious act.

Gathering the witnesses was another of the notary's duties and for this Molina provided strict guidelines regarding the types of individuals who could or could not fulfill this function. For example, neighbors and kin of the dying person were forbidden to serve as witnesses. Instead, six, eight, or ten individuals who lived further away from the testator and who were mature men should fulfill this role. Molina was insistent that those living in the same home as the testator should remain apart from the bedchamber so as not to hear the dying individual's words. This was to ensure complete freedom for the testator to speak without pressure from prospective

heirs.⁵⁴⁶ This notarial caution would explain why Nufio Manuel, Cholula's *alguacil mayor*, asked doña María if she would like him to escort her husband, Juan Cardoso, out of the room so that she could dictate her will at her liberty. As you will recall, she insisted he remain present, which conforms more to the Nahua tradition than to Molina's instructions, since native peoples often included their family members and spouses as witnesses. In this case, Juan Cardoso did not serve as an official witness, but he did remain present during the dictation of his wife's will, an apparent blending of the two traditions at doña María's request. As Sarah Cline has noted, the familial nature of Nahuatl testaments was clearly at variance with the European standard outlined in Molina's *Confessionario*.⁵⁴⁷

Nahua Funeral Ritual

It is worth mentioning a pre-conquest ceremony known as *miccaquimiloa* that is, the "shrouding of the corpse," since as a Nahua-Christian, doña María Tlaltecayoa may have understood Christian death ritual in this context.⁵⁴⁸ During this rite, the deceased's body was carefully dressed in various layers of ritual vestments meant to serve as protection during each stage of the soul's harrowing journey in *Mictlan*, the Nahua underworld. Importantly, the Nahuas had no binary between good and evil, and thus no equivalent concept for heaven and hell, since in their world view, all things – people, animals, plants, and gods – possessed both good and evil characteristics.⁵⁴⁹

During the *miccaquimiloa* ceremony, the body would first be wrapped in a *tequimillolli*, or a cloth shroud, meant to protect the soul from the *itzehecameh* or bitter flint-winds in *Mictlan*.⁵⁵⁰ Next, Nahua specialists known as *amatlamatque* would dress the body in paper vestments specially fashioned with symbols directed at the deities to whom the corpse was

dedicated, and useful, as well, to appease other, dangerous gods in Mictlan. During this process, the *amatlamatque*, or the paper-cutters, would give speeches, instructing the soul about the use of each of the pieces of paraphernalia they were placing upon him or her.⁵⁵¹

These paper vestments had particular functions distinct from the protection offered by the cloth shroud, namely, they were meant to ward off treacherous gods in Mictlan so that the soul would not be devoured or transformed into an animal. Before the last part of the rite, which was cremation, the funerary priests would wash the corpse's head, provide the body with drinking water for its journey in Mictlan, and then place a piece of jade – or a less valuable stone if the individual was poor – into the mouth of the deceased.⁵⁵² This act was meant to ensure that the person's heart-soul (*volotl*) continued in the afterlife. The entire funeral bundle – bound in a shroud and then wrapped in paper vestments – was then tossed into the ceremonial fire with all the possessions of the deceased. In essence, the Nahua tradition of shrouding a corpse was a protective measure, meant to ensure the soul's safe passage in Mictlan by wearing the appropriate symbolic garments necessary to appease the deities. For doña María, a Nahua-Christian dying seventy years after Spanish contact, requesting a Franciscan habit meant she would have an advocate in heaven much as she would have been protected from the perils of the under-world in a pre-conquest burial shroud.

In addition to being properly attired for Mictlan, Nahua tradition also specified a particular burial location based on one's status or cause of death. For example, women who died in childbirth and drowning victims were not cremated but buried directly, for their destination was not Mictlan.⁵⁵³ For everyone else, however, the ashes would be buried in homes, temples, oratories, or at the bases of mountains. *Tlatoani* or Nahua leaders, had the right to be buried in front of the image of Huizilopochtli, the Mexica war god, at the base of the *Huey Teocalli*, or

Great Temple.⁵⁵⁴ As a high-ranking native person, doña María's ancestors may have been buried in places of honor inside or at the base of a temple, possibly the Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, now replaced by a new sacred structure – the *convento de San Gabriel*. For doña María, then, being buried in Cholula's principal Catholic church would have resonated with her indigenous past, for as a high-ranking Nahuatl she would have deserved a prestigious location for her burial.

Is it any wonder that native peoples throughout colonial Mexico embraced the Christian practice of burial in the church or the *camposanto*? This is especially true because in the Spanish colonial world, even a poor, humble *macehual* – or indigenous commoner – could find him or herself buried in the polity's premier sacred structure, the analogue to the pre-conquest temple that had once been reserved only for burial of the indigenous elite. In the same way, native peoples wrote testaments, since it allowed the poor to achieve an equal status with the rich.⁵⁵⁵

Concluding Thoughts

In the end, what does the request to be buried in a Franciscan habit reveal about attitudes towards death and the afterlife? For Cholula's Spanish residents it indicates the persistence of the belief that wearing a religious habit upon one's death would mean preferential treatment in heaven. But in order for that preferential treatment to take place, the testators must believe that they would arrive at the gates of heaven *wearing* their religious habits. Or – at the very least – that God could and would look down into their coffins, see their burial dress, and grant them admission into heaven accordingly.⁵⁵⁶

In addition, by choosing the habit of the *saint* rather than of the *Order*, testators were selecting St. Francis as their personal advocate in the heavenly court. With Christ sitting as judge on Judgment Day, having Francis as one's "defense" was the clear choice, especially given his

identity as one of the most Christ-like of all the saints, a status predicated upon being the first person to receive the stigmata. In this way, the Franciscan habit served to spiritually cloak the personal sins of the individual. In addition, the habit symbolized the person's humility and withdrawal from the world and its vanity. Requesting a habit was considered the exemplary gesture of someone who aspired to sanctity; it represented renunciation of the world in order to attain eternal life. This, then, is how the twenty-five testators in Cholula entered into the Franciscan economy of grace, that is, by using the Franciscan habit as spiritual currency.

But what of doña María Tlaltecayoa? Although she would have been aware of the Christian motivations for requesting a Franciscan habit as burial dress, for her, its meaning may have been many layered. Rather than function merely as a symbol of her rejection of the world, it may have also served – like the *tequimillolli* shroud of her Nahua ancestors – to protect her soul as it entered the unknown, the Christian afterlife for which there had not been a word in her language, much less a concept. Like the paper vestments with which the pre-conquest corpse would be adorned during the *miccaquimiloa* ceremony, the Franciscan habit functioned as an apotropaic device meant to appease the God or gods that she would encounter in her soul's journey through heaven, purgatory, hell – or Mictlan. By wearing the symbolic attire of a representative of God, doña María knew that the perils of the underworld would not affect her, and that she would safely reach her resting place in the afterlife. By merging her two identities, she created for herself a spiritual cloak with both Christian and Nahua fibers.

Much like other aspects of what has been called the Spiritual Conquest of Mexico, doña María as a native person understood Christian concepts within her indigenous worldview. Although to the friars in the *convento*, to her Spanish husband – and to an extent even to herself – she may have appeared to be following strictly mandated Christian death ritual, her reasons for

requesting a habit may have been more nuanced. Although the available materials do not allow us to speak definitively in this matter, it appears that by adhering to the Christian practice of burial in a Franciscan church wearing a Franciscan habit, doña María operated seamlessly within both of her spiritual and cultural traditions, re-imagining an afterlife that took into account her complicated identity as a Nahua-Christian.

Conclusion:

Nahua-Christianity in the Land of the Plumed Serpent: La Procesión de los Faroles in San Pedro Cholula, August 31, 2007

Every year on August 31, just before sunset, the Franciscan friars assigned to the *convento de San Gabriel* in San Pedro Cholula, Puebla, México gather in the atrium for the annual procession in honor of *La Virgen de Los Remedios*, a Spanish virgin also identified as *La Conquistadora*.⁵⁵⁷ On this late summer evening, native Cholulteca and residents of the neighboring *barrios* roam through the courtyard anxiously, many bearing homemade lanterns fashioned from the defrocked plastic of two-liter Coke bottles and stubby beeswax candles. As the darkened sky rumbles a warning overhead, the populace advances towards the entrance, passes through soaring colonial-era carved wooden doors, and disappears into the darkness within. The eye of the Archangel Gabriel, in whose honor the church was christened in 1537, gazes benevolently at the crowds from his perch in a large circular stained glass window set above the entrance to the canary yellow colonial church.

In a scene taken from a complicated history that has repeated itself for nearly five hundred years, friars and Cholulteca assemble side by side in the church's ample nave. The grayness without appears to mute the already hushed tones of the multitude gathering within. Even the footsteps of the Franciscan friars are subdued as they mill about in their traditional brown habits, the rustle of their garments accompanied by the swish of their triple-knotted white cords, symbolizing their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Like their U.S. counterparts, Mexican Franciscans generally dress in street clothes, donning their habits only for the most precious of occasions, like October 4th, the feast day of their seraphic founder, St. Francis of Assisi, and tonight, when they orchestrate a procession through the streets of the *municipios* of San Pedro Cholula and San Andrés Cholula in honor of the city's *Virgen*.⁵⁵⁸ In a matter of hours,

the procession will arrive at the top of the pyramid and the friars will ceremoniously re-instate *Los Remedios* in her pyramid-sanctuary, completed in the 1590s, officiating at a midnight liturgy in her honor. Beginning at daybreak, the friars will offer mass every hour beneath a multi-hued canopy in the church courtyard. The friars' brown robes, white cords, and solemn Spanish will contrast sharply with the nearby crowd of native peoples in traditional dress who blend into a whirl of color as they chant in Nahuatl and dance before an image of Tonantzin, "Our Holy Mother."⁵⁹ The import of tonight's procession lies in its initiation of a week's worth of festivities in honor of the Virgin Mary, culminating in a special mass in the Sanctuary atop the former Mesoamerican pyramid on September 8th to celebrate her birthday.

A cherubic dark-skinned indigenous boy wanders through the crowded center aisle holding out a basket of candles to the faithful gathered in the pews. The *pop, pop, pop* of firecrackers in the courtyard ricochets against the atrium walls, rupturing the silence of the church's interior. Startled by the noise, the boy disappears behind a swarm of new arrivals, adults who quickly envelope him. The dull drone of voices in the nave indicates that the church is nearing capacity. Outside it has begun to drizzle, for the townspeople who file inside bring halos of moisture in their wake.

Without warning, the band that has been patiently waiting in the atrium launches into a lively patriotic beat, the trumpets keeping time with the homemade maracas. Playing an unconventional counterpoint is the urgent popping of more firecrackers, *cohetes* that whiz high above San Gabriel's bell tower to explode, letting fall bits of paper to the earth in a gentle confetti-rain. The first *barrio* makes its way into the atrium through the wrought-iron gate, into the *convento* complex, and past the church's welcoming wooden doors. The members of each district walk in step behind their *mayordomo*, an elected spiritual leader, easily recognizable by

the bronze staff he or she carries topped by a miniature image representing the *barrio*'s patron saint and namesake.

The stirring within the church escalates as the multitudes catch sight of the first *santo* to grace the church entrance, a life-size figure of St. Michael the Archangel adorned with a red fabric cape and a quetzal feather in his steel helmet. Balanced carefully on a broad wooden platform shouldered by four specially-selected men, the *santo* appears almost alive as he bobs to the natural rhythm of the men's footfalls. As the archangel crosses the threshold and proceeds down the center aisle towards the altar, there is an unmistakable look of triumph in his glass eyes as he gazes upon the defeated dragon at his heels, his sword glinting in the light of the church's numerous chandeliers. St. Michael's appearance signals the arrival of the *barrio* of San Miguel Tianguiznáhuac, the neighborhood of St. Michael-by-the-marketplace, of whom he is patron.⁵⁶⁰ The quarter's combination of Spanish and Nahuatl place names is a remnant of Cholollan's early sixteenth-century transformation into San Pedro Cholula, and evidence, as well, of the friars' attempts to re-map its sacred landscape. By replacing local deities with Catholic saints and then re-naming places to reflect their new patronage, the friars overlaid Christianity onto the pre-existing indigenous culture. St. Michael the Archangel became the standard replacement for Huitzilapochtli, the left-handed hummingbird, the Mexica god of sun and war.

As the band in the atrium maintains its beat, more *barrios* enter the church of San Gabriel holding aloft their *santos*. Each new group gathers at the foot of the altar where the *mayordomos* and *sacristanos* arrange them for the procession by order of their community status, privileging the *municipios* of San Pedro Cholula and San Andrés Cholula. Among the *santos* is a majestic St. Peter, the first pope, who represents the *barrio* of San Pedro Mexicaltzingo, St. Peter-of-the-place-of-the-Mexica, as the Aztecs are correctly known. He is followed by a *santo* dressed in a

Franciscan habit who represents the *barrio* of San Bernardino Tlaxcalalcingo, or St. Bernard-of-little-Tlaxcala.⁵⁶¹ Tlaxcala is Puebla's neighboring state, but despite its geographic proximity one has to wonder how and why the Tlaxcalteca settled in Cholula, given the animosity that still exists between the two states more than five hundred years after the Conquest. Though the *altepetl* initially resisted Cortés in a fierce two week battle in 1519, the Tlaxcalteca eventually allied with him and, if the sources are to be trusted, gleefully participated in the Cholula massacre. As an independent city-state outside the jurisdiction of Moctezuma in México-Tenochtitlán, the Tlaxcalteca not only suffered from embargoes on cotton and salt, but every year they were forced to provide their fiercest warriors to Moctezuma for his so-called "Flowery Wars" – mock battles that ended in death for the Tlaxcalteca – so that Moctezuma's young Mexica warriors could hone their warring techniques. It did not take long for the Tlaxcalteca to realize they had much to gain by a Spanish triumph. Not surprisingly, they quickly became the largest contingent of Cortés' indigenous allies, standing beside him when México-Tenochtitlán finally fell in 1521 after three grueling years of war.

A rumble of thunder momentarily drowns out the band in the atrium. The movement of *santos* passes in a sudden blur of unexpected color. Even so, the crowd appears unfazed by the unusual and unexpected sight of the face of Christ poking beneath the hood of a bright banana yellow rain slicker. The rains have arrived, for as Christ ambles past toward the altar, tiny beads of moisture slide down the yellow fabric to land with an imperceptible *plop* upon the church's stone floor. To a man, the *mayordomos* pull out gray and yellow and red and transparent rain slickers – each complete with a hood – to toss over their *santo*'s shoulders. The church becomes a forest of twelve-foot-tall hooded figures moved by invisible powers, indistinguishable save for the color of their apparel. Surprisingly, very few of the pilgrims don raincoats themselves.

Clearly, protecting the *barrio's santo* and thus its community status far outweighs personal comfort, a clear continuity with historical memory in which contemporary Cholulteca may not even be aware they are participating. By their actions, they are in fact mimicking their Mesoamerican ancestors who once stood upon this same sacred space and protected the images of their precious pre-conquest deities.

Once all the *santos* have arranged themselves as an honor guard along the altar railing, one of the friars ascends the pulpit, intones an opening prayer, and announces that this year, St. Francis, our holy seraphic father, would head the procession and *La Virgen de los Remedios* – to whom the procession was dedicated – would bring up the rear. The excitement in the air becomes palpable as the band gathers in the doorway of the church to play a marching tune, their trumpets setting the rhythm and pace the faithful would follow. The *barrio* privileged with beginning the procession angles its way down the center aisle, its *santo*, the holy seraphic St. Francis, practically unrecognizable beneath a steel-colored rain slicker twice his size. The raincoat billows out behind him, and as the platform moans and wavers, Francis sways to the rhythmic walking of his people as the other *barríos* quickly fall into step.

This is *la procesión de los faroles*, the procession of the lanterns. In the church's expansive atrium, hundreds of Cholulteca have gathered beside the band, homemade candle-lit lanterns in hand, to accompany the *santos* in their holy pilgrimage to the top of the pyramid. Although dusk is falling, the patio remains illuminated as one by one the pilgrims light the candles in their lanterns. As if on cue, the heavens intakes and holds its breath, providing momentary relief from the evening's intermittent showers. The procession officially commences only when the *convento's* bells begin to toll, their heavy tones initiating a cacophony of sound as the other church bells in Cholula join their chorus. Holding aloft candles and accompanied by

Cholulteca men playing European instruments, the friars sing as they lead their flock through the arched gateway of their colonial evangelization complex and into the city streets.

The Cholulteca are by no means strangers to ritual and pilgrimage, having enjoyed their status as a renowned sacred Mesoamerican polity for hundreds of years prior to Spanish arrival in 1519. Whether or not its participants are aware, this evening's festivities Christianize a long-standing pre-hispanic ritual that occurred in that very location, when the friars were indigenous priests, the Franciscan church dedicated to San Gabriel was the splendid Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary on whose face rose one hundred and twenty steps, and the *santos* were patron deities.⁵⁶² Tonight's ritual clearly displays the interplay of Catholicism and indigenous culture, a unique blending that anthropologists often refer to as "Nahua-Christianity." The historical moment comes alive, a crossroads when a *calpulli* becomes a *barrio*, an *altepetl* becomes a city, and a deity becomes a *santo*. Tonight Cholula has re-entered the sixteenth century.

At the head of the procession, the figure of St. Francis has loped its way across the atrium, exited through the gates and disappeared around the corner. The procession follows, snaking its way around the town square, the *zócalo*, the center and heart of every Mexican city, town, and village. It was here, in Cholula's *centro*, that Cortés ordered a brutal massacre of thousands of Cholulteca soon after arriving with his allies from Tlaxcallan – the traditional enemies of Cholollan – en route to meet Moctezuma in México-Tenochtitlán. Powerful allies of Moctezuma, the Cholulteca had orders from the Mexica leader to kill the invaders, at least according to a letter Cortés penned to the Spanish King and newly-elected Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. The Spanish *conquistador* insists that he had himself observed the removal of all women and children as a precaution, which action prompted him to forestall an attack. Gathering the Cholulteca warriors in the central plaza of the *altepetl* and placing his men at the four corners

to prevent escape, he fired a harquebus as a signal for his men to strike. Cortés boasts in his letter to the king that “we fought so hard that in two hours more than three thousand men were killed.”⁵⁶³ Cortés’ indigenous allies from nearby Tlaxcallan participated in the massacre, slaughtering their Cholulteca enemies with delight. But not to worry, for – as Cortés writes in his letter – afterwards he single-handedly restored the friendly relations between the two warring *altepetl*, a feat perhaps confirmed by the presence of the aforementioned *barrio* of Tlaxcalcingo so near to Cholula’s central plaza. As for the impact of the attack on Cholollan, Cortés assures the king that “the following day the city was reoccupied and full of women and children, all unafraid, as though nothing had happened.”⁵⁶⁴

The rapid *pop, pop, pop* of more *cohetes* startles several members of the procession, which is now passing the pale orange walls of the *parroquia de San Pedro*, the parish church of St. Peter, completed in 1640 by order of the bishop of Puebla, don Juan de Palafox y Mendoza. Early in the seventeenth century, the bishop, fearful of the influence of the Franciscans residing in the *convento de San Gabriel*, attempted to commandeer their holdings in Cholula. But the friars refused to leave. They were rebels, a fact that still brings the light of pride into the eyes of the friars who currently reside in Cholula’s *convento*. Unable to expel them, Bishop Palafox constructed a lavish parish church for his diocesan priests across the street from the *convento*. Due to space restrictions, however, he had to place his church sideways, rather than facing the *zócalo* like the *convento*. The rivalry between the parish and the *convento* still exists. Although the Franciscans could not prevent the bishop from erecting a church in Cholula, they *did* prevent the arrival of any other religious order into their territory. To this day, the friars are the only regular priests in town; they are, in fact, among Cholula’s most celebrated citizens, patrons of culture and the arts, and equal participants in both civic and religious ceremonies.

As the procession sidles alongside the open space of the *zócalo*, throngs of people fall into step beside the Cholulteca. Bringing up the rear are five Franciscan friars dressed in their traditional brown robes and triple-knotted cords who escort the image of *la Virgen de los Remedios*. The little statue stands encased in glass, the A-line of her figure visible beneath the pastel folds of her handmade linen dress. She has been taken down from her perch on the altar of her church atop the pyramid, but because her casing is so large and heavy, she rides in comfort in the bed of a midnight blue pick-up truck rather than balancing precariously on a wooden platform like the other *santos*. She *is* the queen of heaven, after all. Brightly colored bouquets of flowers surround her, their hues reflected off the glass by which she is enclosed. The friars – her honor guard – walk protectively alongside the truck. Acolytes dressed in Franciscan robes motion the air with incense, perfuming the path for *Los Remedios* and her friars.

The Virgin is not a stranger to travel. According to local legend, she hitchhiked to Cholula early in the sixteenth-century with a Spanish Franciscan who was reassigned by his superiors to the little indigenous town of San Pedro Cholula, New Spain. Halfway through the sea voyage, the friar realized that one of the sleeves of his habit was heavier than the other. Upon investigating, he was surprised to discover that a little statue of *La Virgen de Los Remedios* was hidden therein. Afraid someone would accuse him of stealing her, he kept her concealed for the remainder of the journey. Upon reaching the Franciscan *convento de San Gabriel* in Cholula, he reported his discovery to the head friar, who allowed him to place her in the *convento* and there be venerated.

One night while cleaning the *convento*, the friar noticed that his little statue had disappeared. Concerned, he called his superior and together they searched for her. Unable to find the Virgin in the friary, they stepped outside, noticing a strange light emanating from the top of

the old, abandoned, overgrown indigenous pyramid. Following the source of the illumination, they found the little statue nestled in the shrubbery at the top of the hill. Chiding the Virgin for her escapade, they carried her carefully back and replaced her in her niche in the *convento*.

Not long afterwards, when the Spanish friar learned he must reside for a time in the city of Puebla, he received permission from his superior to take the little statue with him. Mounting a mule with his meager belongings, including the little Virgin statue, he took his leave of Cholula's friary. Not long into the journey the mule planted its feet and refused to move. The friar climbed down and pushed and pulled the animal, but to no avail. Then, he remembered *Los Remedios*, realizing the mule had stopped because the Virgin did not want to leave Cholula, and that until he took her back he would not be able to complete his journey to Puebla. So he turned the mule around. Back at San Gabriel he told the story to his brother friars and, taken together with her prior disappearance to the top of the pyramid, they decided the Virgin was expressing her desire to have a *santuario* built for her at the top of the hill. The friars would complete construction on her little church atop the pyramid in 1590, and there she remains to this day, except for one night each year when she travels through Cholula as an honorary guest in a procession led by her friars.⁵⁶⁵

Though it is the rainy season in Cholula – a time when the evening deluge arrives with such force and persistence that its cobblestone streets overflow their embankments, their currents akin to rivers – few participants are outfitted for the occasion. As the rains begin anew, a scrawny white poodle joins the procession, slinking alongside the buildings for warmth, its fur dirtied by the rains. He darts away with a yelp when someone lights a line of fireworks strung across the rooftops overhead. Red, white, and green sparks, the colors of Mexico, radiate from the rooftops and disappear into the sky. The procession slows as its participants pause to watch.

The candles lining the procession route flicker and fade, their glow affected by the precipitation. Since there are not enough torches to light the way, teams of men run candles from the back of the procession to the front, depositing them haphazardly on the sidewalks before disappearing into the shadows for more. Now, the church of San Juan Calvario – that is, St. John of Calvary – rings its bell in welcome at the procession’s approach. Streaks of fireworks color the sky behind the church’s bell towers, casting the *santos* in an eerie glow. As soon as the procession leader, our holy, seraphic father St. Francis, comes into view, a group of mariachis stationed outside the church bursts into a rendition of *Las Mañanitas*, a traditional Mexican melody meant to impart honor to those for whom it is sung: *Estas son las mañanitas, que cantaba el Rey David. Hoy por ser día de tu santo, te las cantamos a ti...*

The rains are falling harder now. The pilgrims have been walking for more than two hours, traversing puddles that sit deep and wide on the cobblestoned street. Over an hour shy of arriving at the top of the pyramid, the *santos* make a sharp left turn towards the center of town. As if on cue, several families emerge from their homes and join in, their voices clear and strong as they raise them in song, including little children holding high their homemade lanterns.

The cobblestoned streets become muddy cow paths as the procession skirts the edges of the *municipio* of San Pedro and advances towards San Andrés, ambling past lofty rows of corn whose waterlogged stalks appear to bow in homage to the passing *santos*. These are the *milpas*, the corn fields that have existed in Cholula for over a thousand years. How many rituals have they witnessed, how many priests have passed this way cradling their divine images? As if in response – and as if to claim their Nahua-Christian identities – a rumble in the beginning of crowd slowly makes its way down the procession: “¡Que viva San Francisco! ¡Que vivan los franciscanos!” “Long live St. Francis! Long live the Franciscans!”

Just past the *milpas*, the cobblestones reappear. A pale blue church comes into view, and this one has brought its patron saint statue outside to watch the procession pass. It is an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the dark-skinned Virgin who appeared to a Christianized Nahua named Juan Diego in 1531 and subsequently became the patron saint of Mexico. Flanked by palm fronds and two young boys who swing thuribles, the telltale pink and green of her dress is obscured by whispers of incense that rise towards the heavens. Guadalupe is more renowned in Mexico than Christ himself, for as the celebrated literary son of Mexico, Octavio Paz, once said, Mexicans believe in only two things: the lottery, and the Virgin of Guadalupe.

St. Francis, our holy seraphic father, the leader of tonight's procession, and the renowned founder of the Order of Friars Minor, approaches the place where the Virgin of Guadalupe waits. Fireworks shoot off overhead and a radio blares *Las Mañanitas* in his honor, yet his attention is focused on the Virgin. Unexpectedly, he turns to face her. Slowly, Francis makes a deep bow, acknowledging that in the hierarchy of heaven, the Mother of God remains his superior. Only after the Virgin responds with a shallow bow of her own do Francis' platform bearers straighten their shoulders and process away.

Outside the gates of the next little church, St. Peter stands in the shadows, his white bishop's miter translucent in the light of the sidewalk torches. Here, the ritual repeats itself: Francis bowing to Peter, the Franciscan founder acknowledging the first pope. Only after Peter acknowledges the homage does Francis straighten, turn, and leave. The next *santo* appears. A red fabric cape. A steel helmet and a quetzal feather – it is St. Michael the Archangel, patron of the *barrio* of San Miguel Tianguiznáhuac. In the moments before Michael reaches Peter, it is unclear who will bow to whom – Peter is the rock upon whom Christ built his church, but Michael cast into hell Satan. Within moments, the two saints are facing off. For a second, neither moves.

Then, with a creak, Peter's platform leans precariously forward as he acknowledges his spiritual debt to the Archangel Michael. As Michael responds, the faces in the crowd do not appear to register recognition that this ritual is a blatant replacement of the indigenous pantheon with Catholic saints and their hierarchy. Instead, wrinkled indigenous women wrapped in gray *rebozos* motion the Sign of the Cross against their foreheads, hearts, and lips, and men bow their heads in reverence. Even though the Cholulteca may not recognize the continuity of historical memory, it is there.

Midnight approaches, and still the procession has not reached the pyramid. The faithful have been walking for five hours. In intermittent rain. Yet the townspeople do not seem to notice the discomfort of their feet, nor demonstrate impatience at the procession's sluggish progress. Despite the late hour, the crowds have actually increased, perhaps because the rains have abated. Now, a *santo* who had not made an appearance at the opening ceremony in the *convento* joins the procession. He sits atop a snow white steed that has reared onto its hind legs, a sword hanging from his belt. It is Santiago, St. James, the patron saint of Spain. What is he doing in the procession? Do the Cholulteca not know the significance of this *santo*? During the long centuries of the *Reconquista* on the Iberian Peninsula, when the Christians attempted to expel the Moors who had invaded from northern Africa in 711 AD, Santiago made a name for himself by appearing in battle on his white horse. Because of his skill at slaughtering Moors, he became known throughout Iberia as Santiago Matamoros, St. James the Moor-slayer. In the New World, soldiers claimed he fought beside them in the Spanish Conquest, appearing in the thick of battle on his white horse to kill native peoples and save Spanish lives. Hence, in New Spain he came to be known as Santiago Mata-indios, St. James the Indian-slayer. Yet here he is, carried along and

venerated by the descendants of the very native peoples whom he supposedly slaughtered. Perhaps historical memory has indeed faded and been recast in Cholula.

The procession takes a right turn along the *zócalo* and advances in the direction of the pyramid. A small crowd breaks off, including a family with three small children who display an energy their weary parents lack. In their stroll towards their residence, they revisit the cobblestones where hours earlier the town and its *santos* had marched in procession. Flower petals litter the street, reduced to mash by the passing of hundreds of pilgrim feet. On the edges of the sidewalks, empty canisters hold the remnants of wax candles. Flakes of burnt paper on the cobblestones are all that remain of multiple firecrackers lit in the Virgin's honor.

In sharp contrast to the silence and serenity of the streets, at the pyramid the midnight blue pickup truck will be winding its way to the rear of the Sanctuary as her Franciscan honor guard prepares to sing as they replace *Los Remedios* in her perch above the altar. After a week's hospitality in San Gabriel Church /Quetzalcoatl Temple she has at least returned home to her Olmeca-Xicalanca pyramid-sanctuary, where for nearly five hundred years she has reigned as queen of Cholula. Like Chiconauquihuitl, the revered Mesoamerican rain deity whom she replaced, the Nahua-Christian *Virgen de los Remedios-Tonantzin* loves and blesses her people.

¹ In this section I rely on both the first chapter of Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. Christine Rhone (London: Routledge, 2004), and the opening chapter of Dominic Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers: A Popular History of the Franciscan Friars* (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009). I also consulted a collection of unpublished Lecture Notes I received from medievalist Teo Ruiz when his Teaching Assistant at UCLA in the Spring of 2007 for a course on the Terror of History; the fruits of this course have since been published. See Teo Ruiz, *The Terror of History: On the Uncertainties of Life in Western Civilization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

² Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 2.

³ Also known as the Canticle of the Creatures, Francis composed these lines around the year 1224 during an illness at the convent of San Damiano; this translation appears in Brother Ugolino di Monte Santa Maria, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, trans. Raphael Brown O.F.M. Ter. (New York: Image Books, 1958), 317. Teo Ruiz points out that Francis sang this beautiful poem as he awaited death in 1226; see Teo Ruiz, “Lectures Notes for ‘The Terror of History: Mystics, Heretics, and Witches in the Western Tradition, 1000-1700’,” (Los Angeles: UCLA, Spring 2007). Though late in life Francis – who left few written documents in his own hand – would self-identify as “simplex et idiota” (ignorant and unlearned), he did receive a rudimentary education at the church of San Giorgio, learning simple arithmetic as well as to read and write in Latin; his father also taught him some French. Franciscan historian Dominic Monti suggests that in this quote, the saint was comparing himself to learned clerics then entering his Order. See Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 8-9.

⁴ Teo Ruiz points out that the cult of courtly love had deeply heretical aspects and as such was condemned by the Church. See Ruiz, “Lectures Notes for ‘The Terror of History’,” 14.

⁵ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 13.

⁶ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 17.

⁷ The most famous female member was, of course, Clare, the cousin of Brother Rufino, a young knight whose extended family lived in a townhome overlooking Assisi’s main piazza. When Francis learned that of her own accord Clare had begun living a life of penance, chastity, prayer, and fasting, he longed to meet her. On Palm Sunday night in 1212 she renounced her wealth and social status, escaping from her father’s home to the Portiuncula where she received the simple habit of a member of the order. Eventually she and the other women settled at the church of San Damiano, forming the Second Franciscan Order known now as the Poor Clares. See Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 22-23.

⁸ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 21-22. In 1524 the Franciscans in Extremadura would deliberately imitate Francis – who was imitating Christ – by choosing twelve companions to accompany fray Martín de Valencia to New Spain; the Minister General states as much in his 1523 Instruction. Ultimately, two friars would not make the voyage, though because one was replaced, the friars numbered an even dozen, thus becoming the famous “Twelve Apostles” of

Mexico. See Pedro Oroz, *The Oroz Codex or Relation of the Description of the Holy Gospel Province in New Spain, and the Lives of the Founders and other Noteworthy Men of said Province*, trans. Angelico Chavez O.F.M. (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1972), 348, fn. 345 and 350.

⁹ Francis required all his brothers to attend a chapter meeting at the Portiuncula each spring. Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 36 relates that the 1221 Pentecost Chapter was known as the “Chapter of Mats” because it drew 3,000 attendees who constructed rude shelters from reeds; Anthony of Padua, the saint known as the “Hammer of the Heretics,” was one of its more famous participants. Local legend instead states that 5,000 men attended, housed in straw huts provided by the generosity of the townspeople. See *The Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels in Portiuncula*, Discover Assisi (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 2006), 23.

¹⁰ Quoted in Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 20.

¹¹ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 24.

¹² Ruiz, “Lectures Notes for ‘The Terror of History’,” 24.

¹³ The section of the Rule in question is: “Let those brothers who wish by divine inspiration to go among the Saracens or other infidels ask permission to go from their provincial ministers. The ministers, however, may not grant permission except to those whom they see fit to be sent.” Jack Clark Robinson O.F.M. Ph.D., “Franciscan Spirituality is Franciscan Missiology,” in *Comments during American Historical Association, Chicago* (San Antonio: San Antonio de Padua Friary, 2012). The Rule of the Franciscan Order, originally composed in 1210, was revised thrice, with the Rule of 1223 is still in effect today.

¹⁴ As we shall see, the 1523 Instruction to the “Twelve Apostles” of Mexico, composed by Franciscan Minister General fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones, would reference this component of the Order’s charism. Mirroring the language of Francis, he writes: “...for this reason you have begged me with importunity, according to the spirit of our Rule, to send you to infidel parts, so that fighting thereat for Christ in their conversion, you might save the souls of your neighbor and your own, prepared to go to prison and to death for His sake and for their salvation.” Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 350.

¹⁵ Ruiz, “Lectures Notes for ‘The Terror of History’.” He pointed out during lecture that *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, a collection of pious tales compiled by Brother Ugolino di Monte Santa Maria in the fourteenth century, deliberately emphasized animals in the text. A subversive yet much cherished work, *The Little Flowers* was written to create a sense of unity amid a much-fractured Order as well as to emphasize the founder’s Christ-like nature.

¹⁶ Ruiz, “Lectures Notes for ‘The Terror of History’,” 23.

¹⁷ John M. D. Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica, Places in Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10. In this section I rely on Pohl’s introduction as well as the opening chapters of Michael Meyer, William Sherman, Susan Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, Eighth ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 10.

¹⁹ Meyer, *The Course of Mexican History*, 14.

²⁰ Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 9.

²¹ Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 9 relates that the significance of the 260 days has never been fully understood. Given Mesoamerica's environmental diversity which made large-scale regional coordination of planning and harvest times pointless, he proposes that kings and priests regulated the economy by linking trade to major feast days dedicated to the deities and to the ancestors.

²² Geoffrey G. McCafferty, "The Ceramics and Chronology of Cholula, Mexico" *Ancient Mesoamerica* 7, no. 2 (1996): 302.

²³ Cayetano Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo: construcción de la identidad regional Náuatl* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2000), 50.

²⁴ fray Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*, vol. II (México, DF: Editorial Porrúa, 2006), 5.

²⁵ See Fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]* (México, D.F.: Editorial Porrúa, 2001), 71. Motolinía's version of the Pyramid story is repeated in fray Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]* (México, D.F.: Editorial Porrúa, 1993), 86-87.

²⁶ Depending on the scholar, the number of construction stages ranges from three (Geoffrey McCafferty) to four (David Peterson) to five (John Pohl) to seven (Ignacio Marquina) to eight (Gabriela Uruñuela and Patricia Plunket). McCafferty provides the above statistic of Cholollan's size during the Classic period in "Re-interpreting the Great Pyramid of Cholula, Mexico": 2. His findings update those from a 1977 surface reconnaissance outlined in Peterson, "The Real Cholula;" This study concluded that in 500AD Cholollan extended just over two miles square with an estimated population of 30,000 to 60,000. Evidence indicates that by 600AD, however, the site had reduced in size to less than a mile square with 5,000 – 10,000 estimated residents. When the Spaniards arrived in 1519, Cholollan's population had rebounded to about 55,000 and the powerful altepetl would extend nearly five miles square. Although Peterson insists that Cholollan's spatial decline cannot be doubted, he does not provide any evidence to explain its decline.

²⁷ For more on the topic of Mesoamerican creation sites, see F. Kent III Reilly, "Mountains of Creation and Underworld Portals," in *Mesoamerican Architecture as Cultural Symbol*, ed. Jeff Karl Kowalski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Quoted in Gabriela Uruñuela, Patricia Plunket Nagoda, Amparo Robles Salmerón, "Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City," in *The Art of Urbanism: How Mesoamerican Kingdoms Represented Themselves in Architecture and Imagery*, ed. William L. Fash Jr. and Leonardo López Luján (Dumbarton Oaks: Research Library and Collection, 2009), 160.

²⁸ Geoffrey G. McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” in *Flowing Through Time*, ed. B. Cripps L. Steinbrener, M. Georgopoulos, and J. Cass Chacmool (2008), 21.

²⁹ David Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies of the Aztec Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 135 as quoted in McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21. Providing further evidence of this belief, mestizo writer Diego Muñoz Camargo relates in *la Historia de Tlaxcala* – which he penned in the 1580s – how Hernando Cortés’ indigenous allies from Tlaxcallan feared that an attack on Cholollan would so anger the deities they would open the Pyramid, allowing a flood to burst forth, destroying the enemy. See Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, ed. Germán Vázquez Chamorro, *Crónicas de América* (Madrid: Dastin, S.L., 2002), 209-210. In this way, Cholollan’s Tlachihuatepetl functions much like a Postectli (“Broken”) Mountain.

³⁰ McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 20. The Nahuatl word *altepetl* derives from these two words: *alt* (water) and *tepetl* (mountain) and specifies a Mesoamerican city-state. As McCafferty points out, Cholollan’s *Tlachihualtepetl* – in addition to being a perfect example of a water-mountain – might also have functioned as a serpent-hill, or *coatepetl*, as outlined by anthropologist Susan Gillespie. As she explains, the *coatepetl* represented a point of continuity between the earthly and heavenly realms and also possessed mediating qualities, since serpents were viewed as connectors of the vertical layers of the cosmos throughout Mesoamerica. See Susan D. Gillespie, *The Aztec Kings: The Construction of Rulership in Mexica History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 87.

³¹ McCafferty, “Ceramics and Chronology”: 310.

³² I base this paragraph on Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 169. For a primary source discussing the legitimation ceremony in Cholollan’s Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary, see the 1581 *Relación de Cholula* composed by Spanish *corregidor* Gabriel de Rojas in René Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas del siglo XVI: Tlaxcala*, vol. 2 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1985), 123-145.

³³ Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 350.

³⁴ Franciscanization is a term I employ throughout the dissertation to indicate a specifically Franciscan spirituality rather than a more general Early Modern Catholicism. In addition, I use “Cholollan” to reference the Mesoamerican period and “Cholula” to its identity it as a Spanish colonial city.

³⁵ Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 349.

³⁶ Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 349.

³⁷ fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, trans. Francis Borgia Steck O.F.M. (Washington DC: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1951).

³⁸ Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*.

³⁹ The best exposition of Mendieta's Millennial Kingdom remains John Leddy Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 2d ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970). He discusses the parable of Luke 14 on pages 6-8.

⁴⁰ fray Diego Durán, *Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain [1581]*, trans. Doris Heyden and Fernando Horcasitas (New York: Orion Press, 1964).

⁴¹ As previously noted, *The Oroz Codex* was published by the Academy of American Franciscan History in 1972.

⁴² Osvaldo F. Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 1.

⁴³ Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523-1572*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

⁴⁴ As historian and translator Lesley Byrd Simpson pointed out in his preface to the 1966 English edition, Ricard's model had "never seriously been challenged" Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, viii. It was not challenged, in fact, until the 1970s. For examples of art historians espousing this model, see the monumental (and foundational) tomes of George Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 2 vols. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1948), and John McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches of Sixteenth-Century Mexico: Atrios, Posas, Open Chapels, and Other Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

⁴⁵ Francisco Morales, O.F.M, Ph.D., "The Native Encounter with Christianity: Franciscan and Nahuas in Sixteenth-Century Mexico" *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* 65, no. 2 (2008). Francisco Morales, O.F.M, Ph.D., ed., *Ethnic and Social Background of the Franciscan Friars in Seventeenth Century Mexico* (Washington D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1973). Francisco Morales, O.F.M, Ph.D., *Franciscan Presence in the Americas: Essays on the Activities of the Franciscan Friars in the Americas, 1492-1900* (Potomac, Maryland: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1983).

⁴⁶ *Cholula: un vínculo y sabiduría y fraternidad*, Testimonios, Ritos y Tradiciones (Cholula: La Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, y la Provincia Franciscana del Santo Evangelio de México, 2002).

⁴⁷ John Frederick Schwaller, ed., *Francis in the Americas: Essays on the Franciscan Family in North and South America* (Berkeley: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2005). John Frederick Schwaller, ed., *The Church in Colonial Latin America* (Wilmington, DE: Jaguar Books, 2000). John Frederick Schwaller, ed., *Sahagún at 500: Essays on the Quincentenary of the Birth of Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún* (Berkeley: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2003).

⁴⁸ Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*.

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- ⁴⁹ Edwin Edward Sylvest Jr., *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory in Sixteenth Century New Spain Province of the Holy Gospel* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1975).
- ⁵⁰ Le Goff, *Saint Francis of Assisi*.
- ⁵¹ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*.
- ⁵² John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order From Its Origins to the Year 1517* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1968). Another helpful Franciscan source was Brother Ugolino de Santa Maria's *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, a collection of pious stories about the Poverello composed in the 1320s to unify the fragmenting Franciscan Order around the Christ-like figure of its founder. See Monte Santa Maria, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*.
- ⁵³ James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 203.
- ⁵⁴ Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 203.
- ⁵⁵ Anamaría Ashwell, *Creo para poder entender: la vida religiosa en los barrios de Cholula*, 2a ed. (Puebla, Puebla, México: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla; Gobierno del Estado de Puebla, 2002).
- ⁵⁶ Anamaría Ashwell and John O'Leary, *Cholula, la ciudad sagrada, Cholula, the Sacred City* (Puebla, México: Volkswagen de México, 1999).
- ⁵⁷ Ignacio Marquina, Jorge R. Acosta, et al, *Cholula ciudad sagrada*, vol. 140 (México, D.F.: Artes de México, 1971).
- ⁵⁸ Norma Angélica Castillo Palma, *Cholula sociedad mestiza en ciudad india: un análisis de las consecuencias demográficas, económicas y sociales del mestizaje en una ciudad novohispana (1649-1796)*, 1. ed., Colección CSH (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Plaza y Valdés, 2001).
- ⁵⁹ See Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), and , Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*.
- ⁶⁰ Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism*, and , Viviana Díaz Balsera, *The Pyramid Under the Cross: Franciscan Discourses of Evangelization and the Nahuatl Christian Subject in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005).
- ⁶¹ Martin Austin Nesvig, *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), and , Susan and Stafford Poole Schroeder, ed., *Religion in New Spain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

⁶² Nesvig, *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, 260.

⁶³ Francisco de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, vol. IX, Estudios y fuentes del arte en México (México, D. F.: Imprenta Universitaria, 1959), María Ester Ciancas, *El arte en las iglesias de Cholula*, 1. ed. (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1974).

⁶⁴ Atl, Manuel Toussaint, and José R. Benítez, *Iglesias de México*, vol. VI (México, D.F.: Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Hacienda, 1927).

⁶⁵ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*.

⁶⁶ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 337.

⁶⁷ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 431.

⁶⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*.

⁶⁹ Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion: Religious Architecture and Indian Artisans in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 2.

⁷⁰ Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*, 2.

⁷¹ Jaime Lara, *City, Temple, Stage: Eschatological Architecture and Liturgical Theatrics in New Spain* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

⁷² Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 13.

⁷³ Hernando Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*, trans. Anthony Pagden, Revised ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 75.

⁷⁴ As noted in the Introduction, the Tolteca-Chichimeca conquest took place in 1174 AD, seven years before the birth of Francis in Assisi. Whether or not the Franciscans knew about this history when they settled there is unclear, though certainly the connection would not have been lost on them had they known.

⁷⁵ The Franciscans have a long history of serving as guardians of sacred complexes, with the most important appointment being in the Custody of the Holy Land, a mission institutionalized by Clement IV in 1342; in 1520, the Franciscans opened their first school there. See “Franciscans and the Holy Land: Interview with Vicar of Custody,” Zenit: The World Seen from Rome, <http://www.zenit.org/article-12498?l=english>.

⁷⁶ David A. Peterson, “The Real Cholula” *Notas Mesoamericanas* 10 (1987): 97. Exact dates for Cholollan’s origins and development are difficult to determine, given its location on a valley floor and its nearly 3,000-year settlement history. For a concise synthesis of scholarship up until the late 1990s, see the work of archeologist Geoffrey McCafferty; for the latest research, see Mexican anthropologists Gabriela Uruñuela and Patricia Plunket Nagoda’s joint publications. Archeologist John Pohl has also published widely on Cholollan.

⁷⁷ Today, much of the former lake area is occupied by the campus of la Universidad de las Américas, or the University of the Americas (UDLA). McCafferty, “Ceramics and Chronology”: 302.

⁷⁸ Peterson, “The Real Cholula”: 97.

⁷⁹ Archeologist John Pohl disagrees with this dating, positing instead that Cholollan developed from a small village into a regional center much later, that is, between 600 and 700 AD. See Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 162. Directed at a general audience, the article does not cite evidence for this assertion.

⁸⁰ Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 49-50.

⁸¹ The original language and name of the settlement remains a source of scholarly debate. Felipe Solís and Verónica Velasquez suggest an initial Zapotec-related dialect, with the presence of proto-Popoloca language as of the third century AD, to be replaced by Nahuatl sometime between 800 and 1200 AD. See Felipe Solís, Gabriela Uruñuela, et al, *Cholula: la gran pirámide* (México, D.F.: CONACULTA: INAH: Grupo Azabache, 2007), 21. David Peterson proposes Mixteco as the primary spoken language before Nahuatl became dominant, pointing out that the etymology of the place-name “Cholollan” tells us little about its past. See Peterson, “The Real Cholula”: 95-96.

⁸² I base the information in this paragraph on Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 50.

⁸³ Local excavations confirm the extent of Olmeca-Xicalanca pottery production in the Middle Formative, since some of the most ancient artifacts uncovered in Cholollan date to this period. These pieces include ceramics discovered beneath the University of the Americas (UDLA) campus that match earthenware from the bottom of a local swamp and from several bell-shaped pits on its shore. See Uruñuela, “Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City,” 139. Their findings confirm McCafferty’s previous archeological discoveries, outlined in Geoffrey G. McCafferty, “Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid of Cholula, Mexico” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 7, no. 1 (1996).

⁸⁴ Pre-hispanic indigenous chroniclers identify the Olmeca-Xicalanca, or the “the historical Olmeca,” as regionally dominant traders not associated with the Olmeca who built La Venta, San Lorenzo, and other sites south of Veracruz and north of Tabasco in southeastern Mexico. See Solís, *Cholula: la gran pirámide*, 22.

⁸⁵ Such well-developed commercial and spiritual enterprises as well as the discovery of monumental architecture in three locations indicate that Cholollan was an emergent urban center by the Middle Formative. Indeed, based on scattered concentrations of both Middle and Late Formative artifacts, McCafferty proposes that Cholollan may have measured nearly a mile square by the end of the period, that is, sometime between 600 BC and 200 AD. See McCafferty, “Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid”: 2. As a graduate student at the UDLA (1980-84), McCafferty participated in a project to identify diachronic settlement patterns within the urban center of present-day Cholula. Searching for subsurface features via a visual inspection of construction trenches, he discovered a rich Middle Formative deposit associated with a cobble

platform in San Andrés Cholula, the municipality that is the site of Cholollan's original ceremonial center. Although several regional sites also employed mound construction at this time, McCafferty notes that the technique appears to have disappeared by the end of the period, at which point Cholollan had become the dominant regional center. See McCafferty, "Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid": 2. The sites he mentions by name are Coapa [sic], Acatepec, and Coronango. Similarly, Gabriela Uruñuela and Patricia Plunket identify Coapan, Colotzingo, Totimehuacan, and Xochitecatl as regional sites with formal public architecture by the Late Formative. See Uruñuela, "Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City," 140.

⁸⁶ McCafferty, "Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid": 2.

⁸⁷ Excavations beneath the Great Pyramid began in earnest in 1930 under the direction of archeologist Ignacio Marquina; for a discussion and analysis of the data collected between 1930 and 1970, see Marquina, *Cholula ciudad sagrada*. For the most recent scholarship on the Great Pyramid including a separate booklet with superimposed illustrations of several construction phases, see the 2007 publication edited by Felipe Solís, *Cholula: la gran pirámide*. Though most scholars agree that the Olmeca-Xicalanca envisioned and completed the first phase of the multi-layered Tlachihualtepetl, as to be expected, no one seems to agree upon a date for its original construction; proposed dates range from 500 BC (Late Formative) to 200 AD (Early Classic). McCafferty dates the Pyramid's origins to about 500 BC, arguing that though Cholollan shared ceramic and architectural styles with Teotihuacan they are distinctive enough not to mark it simply as a satellite of the Teotihuacan Empire as some scholars have purported. See McCafferty, "Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid": 2. Archeologist David Peterson references Ignacio Marquina's work for his dating of the Pyramid to 200 BC; see Peterson, "The Real Cholula": 79. Uruñuela and Plunket's 2009 research points to 200 AD for the beginnings of the Pyramid, that is, after Popo's devastating eruption in the middle of the first century, when it produced a twelve to nineteen mile column of ash. Their work may have been influenced in part by McCafferty, who observed in 1996 that the Popocatepetl volcano experienced a series of violent eruptions between 800 and 1,000 AD that may have affected Cholollan and its hinterlands, though he knew of no evidence that volcanic debris had been discovered at the site and urged further excavations that also took into account the effects of resultant ash and mud slides on affected population centers and agricultural lands. See McCafferty, "Ceramics and Chronology": 309, fn 304.

⁸⁸ Translation mine; Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]*, 71. The friar famously took his surname from the Nahuatl word for "the afflicted one" that the native peoples murmured upon seeing him and his Franciscan companions in their tattered habits; it was his first learned word in the language.

⁸⁹ Depending on the scholar, the number of construction stages ranges from three (Geoffrey McCafferty) to four (David Peterson) to five (John Pohl) to seven (Ignacio Marquina) to eight (Gabriela Uruñuela and Patricia Plunket). McCafferty provides the above statistic of Cholollan's size during the Classic period in "Re-interpreting the Great Pyramid of Cholula, Mexico": 2. His findings update those from a 1977 surface reconnaissance outlined in Peterson, "The Real Cholula;" This study concluded that in 500 AD Cholollan extended just over two miles square with an estimated population of 30,000 to 60,000. Evidence indicates that by 600 AD, however,

the site had reduced in size to less than a mile square with 5,000 – 10,000 estimated residents. When the Spaniards arrived in 1519, Cholollan's population had rebounded to about 55,000 and the powerful altepetl would extend nearly five miles square. Although Peterson insists that Cholollan's spatial decline cannot be doubted, he does not provide any evidence to explain its decline.

⁹⁰ In his article, "Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid of Cholula, Mexico," McCafferty addresses this chronological confusion and synthesizes information from previous studies with recent observations to reinterpret Cholollan's past. In it, he complains that the site's historical sequence has often been borrowed uncritically from the Valley of Mexico without consideration of the region's distinctive cultural development. His work attempts to rectify that.

⁹¹ The only ethnohistorical sources that reference the origins, construction, and structural alterations to Cholollan's Tlachihualtepetl date to the sixteenth century; fortunately, there are both Spanish and indigenous texts that provide written and pictorial information. They include the indigenous sixteenth-century Lienzo de Tlaxcala, El Códice Xólotl [1540s], La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca [1547-1560], el Códice de Cholula [1586], and mestizo writer Diego Muñoz Camargo's *Historia de Tlaxcala* [1585]. Spanish accounts include several Mendicant writers, such as fray Toribio Benavente Motolinía's *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España* [1541], fray Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias de la Nueva España* [1581], fray Gerónimo de Mendieta's *Historia Ecclesiastica Indiana* [1596], and fray Juan de Torquemada's monumental *Monarquía Indiana* [1615]. Additional information can be gleaned in the published report of Spanish corregidor Gabriel de Rojas, also known as *la Relación de Cholula* [1581]. For a recent interpretation and analysis of the ethnohistorical sources related to pre-hispanic and colonial Cholula, see Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*.

⁹² The origin myth recounted here can be found in chapter one of Durán, *Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain* [1581], 4-5. The Dominican friar ethnographer repeats the words of an ancient Cholulteca, a man one hundred years old who, from sheer age, walks bent over towards the earth. For the original Spanish, see Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*, 16-17. Durán is clearly reading the origin myth in light of Genesis. According to McCafferty, linking the Great Pyramid and the Biblical Tower of Babel persists in contemporary oral history in Cholula. See McCafferty, "Altepetl: Cholula's Great Pyramid as 'Water-Mountain'," 21.

⁹³ As Felipe Solís and Verónica Velásquez point out, the idea that the earth's first inhabitants were giants is so universal in the writings of those who described the Indies that it would seem odd were the authors not to mention the *quinametzin* (plural for *quinametli*, or "giant"). See Solís, *Cholula: la gran pirámide*, 22. Seventeenth-century mestizo nobleman Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl relates how upon arriving in the region of the Atoyac River, the Olmecas and Xicalancas encountered giants who had escaped the calamity of the Second Age and who proceeded to oppress them almost as slaves. Battling for their freedom, they eventually triumphed over the giants to become rulers of the land. See Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, *Historia de la Nación Chichimeca*, ed. Germán Vázquez Chamorro, *Crónicas de América* (Madrid: Dastin, S.L., 2000), 62. According to fray Diego Durán, the Cholultecas harassed, pursued, and drove the Giants from their lands, succeeding in killing them only through

deception: having invited them to a banquet, they ambushed and slaughtered them. See Durán, *Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain [1581]*, 12.

⁹⁴ The Spanish text uses *Iztac zulin inemian*. The literal translation of the place name is “where the white quail lives,” an expression indicating the West, for white was often associated with that direction; additionally, Durán likely encountered the legend in a codex that included an image of a white quail as a sign-place (Dr. León García Garagarza, email communication, June 17, 2010). The exact settlement Durán means here is unclear, though given the Tlachihualtepetl reference, we may assume he means Cholollan. The Nahuatl place name would have resonated with a Spanish audience, given a 1539 manuscript in circulation during the colonial period in which the conquistador Andrés de Tapia insists that the deity Quetzalcoatl – who had his principal seat in Cholollan – requested sacrificial offerings from the hunt rather than human sacrifice, especially quail. See Juan Díaz, Andrés de Tapia, Bernardino Vázquez, and Francisco de Aguilar, *La Conquista de Tenochtitlan*, ed. Germán Vázquez Chamorro, *Crónicas de América* (Madrid: Dastin, S.L., 2000), 92. For more on how Tapia’s description of Quetzalcoatl influenced the European imagination into the eighteenth century, particularly via visual representation, see Verónica A. Gutiérrez, “Quetzalcoatl’s Enlightened City: A Close Reading of Bernard Picart’s Engraving of Cholollan/Cholula,” in *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion*, ed. Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Issues and Debates* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010).

⁹⁵ In Durán’s attempts to fit the Cholulteca myth within the story of Genesis, traces of the original legend remain. Dr. León García Garagarza (email communication, January 19, 2010) observes that this is particularly true in the friar’s recording of the “inhabitants from heaven” who arrive from the four corners of the world to break the mountain, as it re-iterates a widespread Mesoamerican origin myth with different regional variants – the story of Cohuatepetl, or the “Bent Mountain” – a mountain that reached heaven but then was pressed down, or broken, by the creator gods, usually the four Tezcatlipocas. All riches, but especially water and corn, were stored within the mountain, so its bounty only rained down to earth after the breaking. García Garagarza notes that the Nahuas of Chicontepec, Veracruz, Mexico still venerate the *Postectli* (“Broken”) Mountain as their center of the world – the gods broke it, and then all its bounty, but also all its concealed ills, came down rushing to earth. The concept of the Postectli mountain can be found throughout the ethnohistorical literature, as in Alan Sandstrom’s *Corn is our Blood*, and the works of anthropologists Felix Baez-Jorge and Arturo Gómez Martínez.

⁹⁶ Durán here exhorts his readers to compare the above story with Genesis and relates his belief – like so many of his contemporaries – that the Indians belong to the lineage of God’s Chosen People, yet remain ignorant of their own origins. He then personally affirms the existence of giants in that region. See Durán, *Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain [1581]*, 5.

⁹⁷ Initially produced in the sixteenth century, the Códice Vaticano Latino 3738 contains an unusual combination of representations, since a Dominican friar named Pedro de Ríos copied the drawings from the original pictorial – known as the Códice Telleriano Remensis and now in the holdings at Oxford or Paris – and included an extensive accompanying manuscript in Italian. See Felipe Solís, and Verónica Velásquez, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas: relatos

míticos de la ciudad sagrada,” in *Cholula: la gran pirámide* ed. Felipe Solís, Gabriela Uruñuela, et al (México, D.F.: CONACULTA: INAH: Grupo Azabache, 2007), 22. Despite the legend’s clear reference to the Tlachihualtepetl as a clay structure, the corresponding image of the Great Pyramid in the Códice Vaticano Latino depicts a stone edifice exhibiting Late Post-Classic form, with five steep exterior levels, ten access stairs on its face, and on its summit a temple constructed of clay blocks. To explain this discrepancy, premier Mexican archeologist Felipe Solís suggests that the indigenous artist of this early colonial pictorial based his representation of the Great Pyramid on models available in contemporary codices from central Mexico. As he points out, the form and structural characteristics of the depicted Pyramid bear no resemblance to the architectural style of the original, which has been uncovered during numerous excavations. For a color reproduction of this image as well as a concise analysis of Cholollan and the Tlachihualtepetl in indigenous myth and pictorials, see Solís, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas.”

⁹⁸ Códice Vaticano Latino, Lámina 5 as quoted in Solís, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas,” 22. At this point in the text, it is unclear whether the Tzocuicxque, or “they [who] have tzocuil-birds’ feet,” survived the flood or were born of this human pair, though later it appears they survived the flood. Dr. León García Garagarza points out that though fray Alonso de Molina in his 1555 Nahuatl-Castilian vocabulary translates “tzocuil” as “xiguerito” (aka “jiguerillo”) the Spaniards in New Spain referenced any unfamiliar singing bird as “jiguerillo,” that is, as a common Goldfinch. García Garagarza, though lamenting that the tzocuil is not listed in Book Eleven of the Florentine Codex, notes that nineteenth-century Mexican historian Manuel Orozco y Berra translates “tzocuil” as “split-ends,” providing a clue about the tzocuil bird’s possible crown of split feathers. (Dr. León García Garagarza, email communication, June 19, 2010).

⁹⁹ Códice Vaticano Latino, Lámina 14 as quoted in Solís, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas,” 25. The legend of Xelhua survives in contemporary Cholula thanks to several state-sponsored booklets edited by Donato Cordero Vázquez and available for purchase in the bookstore atop the Pyramid as well as in the bookstore at the base of the Pyramid. For a revised version of the legend of Xelhua that includes five brothers and mentions the destruction of the tower by a lightning-induced toad-shaped stone hurled from the heavens, see *Cholula mítica y legendaria: leyendas de Cholula*, ed. Donato Cordero Vázquez (Puebla: CONACULTA y Secretaría de Cultural Puebla, 2007), 5-6. For a similar retelling of the Xelhua story but with a family of seven brothers, see the undated *Tollan Cholollan Tlachihualtepetl: origen de la zona arqueológica de Cholula, tradiciones y leyendas*, ed. Donato Cordero Vázquez (Puebla: CONACULTA y Secretaría de Cultural Puebla, sin fecha), 4. Compare this version with a nearly identical retelling in *Leyendas de Cholula*, ed. Donato Cordero Vázquez (Puebla: CONACULTA y Secretaría de Cultural Puebla, 2007), 14. It is worth noting that the artistic program painted by Fausto Salazar Arellano on the interior walls of the Municipal Palace in current-day San Pedro Cholula – and seen by this author – depicts the story of Xelhua and his role in the construction of the Tlachihualtepetl.

¹⁰⁰ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]*, 71. Motolinía’s version of the Great Pyramid story is repeated in Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 86-87. See also a mention of the Great Pyramid in fray Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana [1615]*,

vol. 3 (México, DF: Editorial Porrúa, 1969), 203. Motolinía's reference to a frog reflects the amphibian's appearance in several sixteenth-century indigenous codices depicting Cholollan. McCafferty suggests that a large carved stone face that today sits in the Patio of the Altars on the south side of the Pyramid – and which he argues is carved the shape of a frog, though this author has seen it and disagrees – once sat upon the top of the Pyramid forming an altar to Tlaloc, the rain deity. See McCafferty, "Altepetl: Cholula's Great Pyramid as 'Water-Mountain'," 21. John Pohl agrees that the stone has a frog-like face. See Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 163.

¹⁰¹ McCafferty, "Altepetl: Cholula's Great Pyramid as 'Water-Mountain'," 21. Several smaller ceremonial mounds indeed surround the Great Pyramid, are protected and preserved as cultural artifacts by Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), and continue to be the focus of archeological investigations today. The story of St. Michael the Archangel destroying the Pyramid appears in other sources, such as the 1586 *códice de Cholula*, on whose reverse side appear these Nahuatl words written on the road climbing the face of the Tlachihualtepetl: *ecaticpac onasia toltecatl tlachihualtepetl nican quixitinico totahztzin S Miguel quitaque yoayan tlaca*, that is, "The Tlachihualtepetl of the Toltecas was reaching higher than the air. Our father St. Michael came here to destroy it. The men who lived in darkness saw him" (English translation mine based on the authors' Spanish translation). See Francisco González-Hermosillo, and Luis Reyes García, *El códice de Cholula: la exaltación testimonial de un linaje indio: estudio, paleografía, traducción y notas* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2002), 80-82 and 121.

¹⁰² Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 95. Reyes García interviewed two men from San Francisco Cuapa in 1970: Rafael Cuatlacuatl and Santiago Xique. This author has visited Atlixco and an unnaturally thin and pointy mound visible from the city center does indeed resemble the top of a pyramid. Even so, upon inquiring of fray Miguel Ángel Berrocali, a friar from Cholula's Franciscan establishment who invited me to Atlixco he assured me that it was not a pyramid, just a natural hill. Not being locally-born, I would hesitate to privilege his answer over that of the men interviewed by García Reyes.

¹⁰³ In this section, I rely heavily on the information in Uruñuela, "Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City."

¹⁰⁴ Ross Hassig, *Trade, Tribute, and Transportation: The Sixteenth-Century Political Economy of the Valley of Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 32 as quoted in Uruñuela, "Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City," 159.

¹⁰⁵ Though Uruñuela and Plunket have not unearthed artifacts from any specialized workshops on or near the Pyramid site, the variation in size and composition of the adobes discovered alongside one another indicates the existence of more than one manufacturing loci. Uruñuela, "Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City," 160.

¹⁰⁶ Per Angel García Cook, "The Historical Importance of Tlaxcala in the Cultural Development of the Central Highlands," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians, Supplement 1*, ed. Jeremy Sabloff (Austin: University of Texas, 1981). Quoted in Uruñuela, "Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City," 160.

¹⁰⁷ Uruñuela, “Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City,” 160-161.

¹⁰⁸ McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 20.

¹⁰⁹ Durán, *Aztecs: The History of the Indies of New Spain [1581]*, 13. For the original, see Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*, 25-26. The sixteenth-century *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* refers to this deity as *Ipalnemouani*; as we shall see below, *Couenan* the Tolteca *tlamacazqui* (Mesoamerican ritual minister) adores *Ipalnemouani* in Cholollan in 1130AD, an event eventually ending Olmeca-Xicalanca dominance in the polity.

¹¹⁰ McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 20-21. This author has visited the site on several occasions and has never witnessed this act, nor has ever seen a posted sign or a guide present, indicating that this solemn activity is yet another aspect of local lore linking the sacredness of the site to its very foundations, that is, to the origins of the world.

¹¹¹ See McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21 who gives no specific citation for Durán’s advice.

¹¹² For more on the topic of Mesoamerican creation sites, see Reilly, “Mountains of Creation and Underworld Portals.” Quoted in Uruñuela, “Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City,” 160.

¹¹³ McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 20. The Nahuatl word *altepetl* derives from these two words: *alt* (water) and *tepetl* (mountain) and specifies a Mesoamerican city-state. As McCafferty points out, Cholollan’s *Tlachihualtepetl* – in addition to being a perfect example of a water-mountain – might also have functioned as a serpent-hill, or *coatepetl*, as outlined by anthropologist Susan Gillespie. As she explains, the *coatepetl* represented a point of continuity between the earthly and heavenly realms and also possessed mediating qualities, since serpents were viewed as connectors of the vertical layers of the cosmos throughout Mesoamerica. See Gillespie, *The Aztec Kings: The Construction of Rulership in Mexica History*, 87.

¹¹⁴ McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21.

¹¹⁵ Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies of the Aztec Tradition*, 135 as quoted in McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21. Providing further evidence of this belief, mestizo writer Diego Muñoz Camargo relates in *la Historia de Tlaxcala* – which he penned in the 1580s – how Hernando Cortés’ indigenous allies from Tlaxcallan feared that an attack on Cholollan would so anger the deities they would open the Pyramid, allowing a flood to burst forth, destroying the enemy. See Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, 209-210. In this way, Cholollan’s *Tlachihuatepetl* functions much like a Postectli (“Broken”) Mountain (see Note 23).

¹¹⁶ Uruñuela, “Cholula: Art and Architecture of an Archetypal City,” 161-163. In their investigations for the Tetimpa Project, Uruñuela and Plunket have discovered several “volcano shrines” in Cholollan and the surrounding area.

¹¹⁷ González-Hermosillo, *El códice de Cholula*, 55.

¹¹⁸ The exact dates of the *Códice Cuauhtinchan* and *La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* cannot be stated definitely, since they both contain a collection of maps produced throughout the early to mid-sixteenth century; *La Pintura de Cholollan*, however, is a single map dating to 1581. Nevertheless, the historian Wigoberto Jiménez Moreno dates *La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* to the years 1550-1560 given the types of glyphs it employs as well as its writing. See Solís, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas,” 26.

¹¹⁹ For the most comprehensive recent analysis of the second of these five maps, see David Carrasco, and Scott Sessions, ed., *Cave, City, and Eagle's Nest: An Interpretive Journey through the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

¹²⁰ For a full-color visual of this map including an enlargement of the Cholollan section, see Solís, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas,” 30. For a basic line drawing of the Cholollan representation, see Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 143. One may also discern a human torso and an eagle’s supine body sunk among the reeds in the marshy pool; whereas the eagle clearly references the map’s regional namesake, that is, *Cuauhtinchan* or home-of-the-eagles, I would argue that the person’s upper body alludes to the destructive flood that swept over the earth not long after its creation, and after which the surviving Giants constructed the Tlachihualtepetl. Here, then, is another link between the Pyramid and the origins of the world, another association with the divine.

¹²¹ For a full-color visual of the third map, see Solís, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas,” 32. For a basic line drawing of the Cholollan section, see Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 155.

¹²² For a full-color visual of these maps, see Solís, “Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas,” 27-29 and 34.

¹²³ For a full-color version of *La Pintura de Cholollan*, see Solís, *Cholula: la gran pirámide*, 44-45; an enlargement of the Tlachihualtepetl section appears on page 35.

¹²⁴ For a black and white copy of *La Pintura de Cholollan* and a detailed discussion of this and other indigenous maps produced in response to the 1577 Crown questionnaire and now collectively known as the *Relaciones Geográficas*, see Barbara E. Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹²⁵ Patricia de Fuentes, *The Conquistadors: First-Person Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico* (New York: Orion Press, 1963), 143.

¹²⁶ Geoffrey G. McCafferty, “Altar Egos: Domestic Ritual and Social Identity in Postclassic Cholula, Mexico,” in *Commoner Ritual and Ideology in Ancient Mesoamerica*, ed. Nancy Gonlin and Jon C. Lohse (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2007). Elsewhere McCafferty notes that whereas the Mexica deity Tlaloc was often associated with mountains, the calendrical equivalent of *Chiconauquihuitli* was associated with the female deity of earthly waters,

Chalchiutlicue (McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21.) There he also argues that the former Tlaloc altar piece now sits in the Patio of the Altars on the south side of the Pyramid.

¹²⁷ Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 132 and 142-143. This volume contains the full Spanish text of the *Relación de Cholula*.

¹²⁸ For a color image of these two maps, see Solís, *Cholula: la gran pirámide*, 28-29.

¹²⁹ Such was the friars’ attention to local religious tradition that they ordered the substitution of the Tlachihualtepetl’s hilltop dieties with La Virgen de los Remedios, also known as la conquistadora. See Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 54.

¹³⁰ It is McCafferty who suggests electrocution might have been deliberately employed for human sacrifice. Since both drowning and lightning victims were associated with the rain deity, Tlaloc, McCafferty suggests these sacrifices might have been offered to him. See McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21. Since both drowning and lightning victims were associated with the rain deity, Tlaloc, McCafferty suggests these sacrifices might have been offered to him.

¹³¹ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]*, 71. For Gabriel de Rojas’ reference to the lightning strikes, see Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 143.

¹³² For a close-up of this image from *La Pintura de Cholollan*, see Solís, *Cholula: la gran pirámide*, 35. The original text of the *Relación de Cholula* as well as the accompanying map, here referenced as *La Pintura de Cholollan* is housed in the Benson Library at the University of Texas-Austin, which the author has visited, studied, and photographed.

¹³³ McCafferty, “Altepetl: Cholula’s Great Pyramid as ‘Water-Mountain’,” 21.

¹³⁴ Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 52-53. The singular for *tlatoque* is *tlatoani*. Information about Cholollan’s ten leaders appears in the aforementioned *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, one of whose maps depicts the ten *tlatoque* housed in separate temples arranged around the Tlachihualtepetl. The details in each pictograph identify the individual and indicate his importance in Cholollan’s governing hierarchy. From this source we know that the principal twelfth-century *tlatoque* was Aquiach Amapame, or lord-of-what-is-above. Responsible for overseeing the deities and ceremonies involving rain and water, in the mid-twelfth century, Aquiach Amapame would have resided alongside the Great Pyramid, a clear indication of his superior rank. The second of Cholollan’s principal twelfth-century Olmeca-Xicalanca leaders was Tlalchiach Tizacozque, the lord-of-the-earth or lord-of-what-is-below. Represented by a white-beaded choker, he was known as “the great governor with the necklace of chalk beads.” In this period, Tlalchiach Tizacozque would have lived west of Cholollan’s ceremonial precinct in a site called Tecaxpan Tlatzintlan. The remaining eight Olmeca-Xicalanca *tlatoque* resided on the outskirts of Cholollan’s ceremonial center. For detailed information about Cholollan’s eight subordinate *tlatoque*, see Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 55-56. For a color image of this *Historia Tolteca Chichimeca* map, see Solís, *Cholula: la gran pirámide*, 29. A smaller, black and white image as well as black and white close-ups of each pictograph, the *tlatoani*, and

his place glyph appear in Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 67-77. For a small black and white map of the region of Cholula, see Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 24. For a larger colored map, see González-Hermosillo, *El códice de Cholula*, 28 and 29.

¹³⁵ For the ensuing discussion of the arrival of the Tolteca-Chichimeca in Cholollan, I rely heavily on Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 56-61.

¹³⁶ Because the wars to subjugate the remaining independent polities along the southern and southeastern flanks of Cholollan were so prolonged and violent, the Tolteca-Chichimeca were forced to ally themselves with the Mixteca-Popoloca people. *La Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* recounts how the Mixteca-Popoloca received Tolteca-Chichimeca women from their new allies and also traveled to what is today San Pedro Colomochco to build their own temple. Other historical sources indicate that additional groups of Mixteca settled in several important local centers, including Cuautinchan, Tlaxcala, and Huexotzingo. See Reyes García, *El Altépetl, origen y desarrollo*, 61.

¹³⁷ According to McCafferty, the Epiclassic Period, remains the most controversial stage in Cholula's history in part because interpretations have changed through time. See McCafferty, "Ceramics and Chronology": 309. Elsewhere he notes that though the Postclassic period of Cholollan's history is well-documented by archaeology and ethnohistory, the two don't often align. See McCafferty, "Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid": 3.

¹³⁸ David Peterson writes that Cholollan returned to power about 750 AD once nearby Cacaxtla was abandoned. See Peterson, "The Real Cholula". See also McCafferty, "Ceramics and Chronology": 309. For a full discussion of his argument, see McCafferty, "Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid".

¹³⁹ McCafferty, "Ceramics and Chronology": 310.

¹⁴⁰ Peterson, "The Real Cholula": 91.

¹⁴¹ McCafferty, "Ceramics and Chronology": 310.

¹⁴² For a color image of the page with the Cholollan glyph, see Solís, "Cholula en las crónicas y los códices indígenas," 23. The codex originates from Tetzco, a powerful altepetl belonging to the Aztec Triple Alliance and located on the shores of a lake of the same name near Tenochtitlan. Painted on amate paper, the Códice Xólotl chronicles the history and conquests of Xólotl, the deity of lightning and death until 1428 AD, including the activities of his descendents, the Acolhuas, who established a capital at Tetzco. For an introduction to the debate surrounding the validity of the Codex Xólotl given the discrepancies of its claims and the archeological record, see Edward E. Calnek, "The Historical Validity of the Codex Xolotl" *American Antiquity* 38, no. 4 (1973). A more recent look at this and other Tetzcoan pictorials can be found in Eduardo de J. Douglas, *In the Palace of Nezahualcoyotl: Painting Manuscripts, Writing the Pre-Hispanic Past in Early Colonial Period Tetzco, Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press).

¹⁴³ The early post-conquest Códice Mendoza also depicts the leg of a deer in reference to Cholollan. See Peterson, “The Real Cholula”: 102.

¹⁴⁴ “Place of flight” or “the fleeing place,” derives from “chololo,” the Nahuatl passive form of “choloa,” and “-tlan,” the locative suffix, meaning “place of.” This etymology resonates with a local legend that contradicts the previously-cited *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* by stipulating that when Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, was exiled from Tollan around 700 AD, he fled southward to found Cholollan.

¹⁴⁵ Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 169. Cholula’s sixteenth-century Spanish *Corregidor*, Gabriel de Rojas, discusses the legitimization ceremony in Cholollan’s Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary in his 1581 *Relación de Cholula*, which appears in Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 123-145.

¹⁴⁶ See Pohl, *Exploring Mesoamerica*, 170 for images of ritual piercings from these codices.

¹⁴⁷ Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 130-131.

¹⁴⁸ Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 236.

¹⁴⁹ “[Moctezuma] was served on Cholula earthenware either red or black.” Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, trans. A. P. Maudslay (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1956), 210. See also Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 144.

¹⁵⁰ The information in this section is largely derived from a detailed study of the 1519 Cholula massacre that I completed in 2003 as an M.F.A. Candidate in Creative Nonfiction at the Pennsylvania State University. Working under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Restall, I analyzed the event in four stages based on a cross-reading of six Spanish sources from the sixteenth century. See Verónica A. Gutiérrez, “The Battle at Cholula from Cortés to Bernal Díaz del Castillo: The Rhetoric of a Military Encounter 1520-1568,” (Unpublished essay, 2003). For a conference version of this paper revised under the direction of Dr. Kevin Terraciano at UCLA and including a comparison of the event from two versions of the same indigenous source, see Verónica A. Gutiérrez, “The Construction of an Attack: The Cholula Massacre from Cortés to the *Florentine Codex*,” (Unpublished conference paper. Sixteenth Century Studies Conference. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: 2004). For a “new” history of the Cholula massacre informed by feminist theory that suggests Malinche may have orchestrated the slaughter based on her ethnic ties to the Olmeca-Xicalanca, see Geoffrey G. McCafferty, “The Cholula Massacre: Factional Histories and Archaeology of the Spanish Conquest,” in *Entangled Past: Integrating History and Archaeology*, ed. J.C. Erwin M. Boyd, and M. Hendrickson (Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Archaeology Association of the University of Calgary, 2000).

¹⁵¹ Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, 178.

¹⁵² These sources include six penned by Spaniards: Hernando Cortés’ letter to Emperor Charles V in 1520, which was published in Spain in 1522; Cortés composed the letter one year after the events in Cholula and before he had resumed his siege against Tenochtitlán. Cortés’ secretary, the secular priest Francisco López de Gómara wrote a similar account in his 1552 *Historia de la*

Conquista de México. Gómara, of course, was hired by Cortés to write his biography, and so his account presents a favorable depiction of its patron. The third related version is *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de Nueva España*, by Cortés' fellow conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo. Díaz wrote his memoir as an old man in response to Gómara's book; it was published posthumously in 1632, though completed in 1568. Additional accounts written by Cortés' friend, the conquistador Andrés de Tapia (1539), the Dominican Las Casas (1552), and the conquistador-turned-Dominican friar Francisco de Aguilar (1565), highlight particular aspects of the Cholula massacre that for the most part do not receive attention in the first three sources. The native perspective survives in the Franciscan fray Bernardino de Sahagún's 1579 *Florentine Codex* and its subsequent 1585 revision. The *Florentine Codex* is a massive twelve-volume history of the New World composed by native writers under the supervision of fray Sahagún, who taught them to write Nahuatl in alphabetic script. Book Twelve, which discusses the Spanish Conquest, was one of the first books completed and dates from about 1555. The Cholula massacre appears in a brief chapter in the *Florentine Codex* and its details underscore the necessity of the massacre in Cortés' master plan.

¹⁵³ Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex*, trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, Monographs of the School of American Research (Santa Fe, N.M., Salt Lake City, Utah: School of American Research, the University of Utah, 1950), 29. The Cholula massacre appears in Chapter Eleven of the *Florentine Codex*. The chapter heading does not include reference to the massacre either here or in the 1585 revision. Sahagún's goal in the *Florentine Codex* was to understand Mexica life before and after the Conquest. He wrote with the aid of several Mexica informants, and meticulously cross-checked his material. It is important to note that the results are filtered through a Spaniard, who may have transcribed poorly, and that the informants may have reinterpreted their understanding of various events, intentional or not. They were, after all, living in a post-Conquest world. See Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortés, and the Fall of Old Mexico* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 777.

¹⁵⁴ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 29.

¹⁵⁵ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 30.

¹⁵⁶ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 30.

¹⁵⁷ Historian Hugh Thomas points out that Cortés' reference to rebellion here is "a remarkable statement, even in the age of the conquistadors. For the Cholulteca could scarcely be rebels, not having yet agreed to become vassals." See Thomas, *Conquest*, 257.

¹⁵⁸ See J.H. Elliott's Introduction of Anthony Pagden's translation of Cortés' letters for a brief overview of the conquistador's purpose in writing the second letter, including three major considerations: "...he still did not know what decision, if any, had been reached in Spain on his plea for retrospective authorization of his unconventional proceedings...he had by now heard the news of Charles's election to the imperial throne [and] he had won a new empire for Charles and had proceeded to lose it." Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*, xxvi-xxvii.

¹⁵⁹ López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, 127.

¹⁶⁰ López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, 127.

¹⁶¹ Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, 177.

¹⁶² Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*, 73. Francisco López de Gómara numbers the death toll at more than 6,000 men in two hours even though the Cholulteca were armed; in his chronicle the fighting lasts for five hours. See López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, 129. Francisco de Aguilar remembers 2,000 slain Cholulteca. See Díaz, *La Conquista de Tenochtitlan*, 168.

¹⁶³ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account [1552]* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 60.

¹⁶⁴ Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies*, 59.

¹⁶⁵ Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*, 74.

¹⁶⁶ Charles Gibson notes that “in fact a general pattern of initial conquest followed by alliance and military assistance was common to most of the peoples encountered by Cortés. It became true even of the Aztecs of Tenochtitlán, when they helped to suppress the Mixtón uprising of 1541.” See Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 158.

¹⁶⁷ See their findings in David A. Peterson, and Z. D. Green, “The Spanish Arrival and the Massacre at Cholula” *Notas Mesoamericanas* 10 (1987).

¹⁶⁸ Fray Francisco de los Ángeles is here addressing fray Martín de Valencia, who had been chosen as leader of the original twelve as well as been named guardian of the Holy Gospel Province in New Spain. See Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 355.

¹⁶⁹ As Franciscan scholar Marcela Corvera Poiré has pointed out, the first twelve friars in New Spain were Discalced (in Spanish *descalzos*, i.e., barefooted), not Observants, a point usually overlooked by historians of the Franciscan Order in New Spain. See Marcela Corvera Poiré, “The Discalced Franciscan in Mexico: Some Similarities and Differences with Two Sister Families, The Observant Franciscan of Mexico and the Discalced Franciscans of the Philippines,” in *Francis in the Americas: Essays on the Franciscan Family in North and South America*, ed. John Frederick Schwaller (Berkeley: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2005). This is the only published discussion of the Discalced Franciscans in New Spain that I have encountered.

¹⁷⁰ Cortés requested friars who would not demand tithes and would set a good example of Christian living. See Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 108. Monti provides an excellent overview of the factions that developed within the Franciscan Order and the Observant-Conventual tension in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

¹⁷¹ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 108. The author notes that the Custody of San Gabriel was formed in 1517 by the followers of Juan de Guadalupe, an aesthetic friar who, in 1496, received permission to follow the Rule of St. Francis in its strictest observance. Living in utter poverty, Juan de Guadalupe wore a distinctive patched habit, practiced itinerant preaching, and refused the use of shoes, hence becoming identified as Discalced. Franciscan historian Noel Muscat relates that this group of friars initially formed the Custody of the Holy Gospel in 1499, but when Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, Queen Isabella's confessor, attempted to eradicate all reformed friars outside the Regular Observance, this permission was revoked and the Order asked them to join an existing Observant house. When they refused, they received the Custody of Extremadura in 1515, which would be re-named the Custody of San Gabriel soon thereafter. See Noel Muscat O.F.M., "The Friars Minor Alcantarines or Discalced," *Franciscans of the Holy Land and Malta*, <http://198.62.75.1/www1/ofm/fra/FRAht07e.html>.

¹⁷² D. A. Brading, *The First America: the Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492-1867* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 104. Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros was a successful secular priest in his late forties when he renounced his worldly aspirations to join an Observant friary in Toledo. Despite seeking solitude and contemplation, in 1492 Isabella chose him as her confessor, an appointment accompanied with enormous influence at court. Three years later Isabella nominated him Archbishop of Toledo and inspector of all religious orders, a position he initially refused until he received a direct order from the papacy. Through this post he exerted political pressure on the Conventual houses in Spain to reform, even over papal objections. During his time in Toledo, fray Jiménez de Cisneros was instrumental in restoring the ancient Mozarabic Rite that has continued to this day. He also founded the University of Alcalá de Henares, where he worked with a team of scholars to produce a multi-volume polyglot bible dedicated to Leo X. In 1507 Ferdinand procured for him a cardinal's hat; that same year he was named Grand Inquisitor. See Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 86-87 and George Cyprian Alston, "Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15729b.htm>.

¹⁷³ Corvera Poiré, "The Discalced Franciscan in Mexico," 29.

¹⁷⁴ For an overview of the Franciscan enterprise in New Spain as seen through the eyes of the Nahuas they evangelized, see Miguel León-Portilla, *Los Franciscanos Vistos Por el Hombre Náhuatl: Testimonios Indígenas del Siglo XVI*, vol. 21, Serie Cultura Náhuatl Monografías (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1985).

¹⁷⁵ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 107.

¹⁷⁶ Though not the first friars in the Americas, the Twelve comprised the first official delegation commissioned by the Franciscan Minister General and arrived armed with extraordinary powers by the papacy. Not only were they preceded to Mexico-Tenochtitlán in 1523 by fray Pedro de Gante, Juan de Tecto, and Juan de Agora, but also by an unsuccessful mission of twelve Franciscans to Cumaná, Venezuela in 1516. As Jaime Lara notes, "Tragically, the friars were murdered by their own neophytes at Cumaná when Spanish slave traders interfered in the

project.” See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, FN 232, p. 225. Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta discusses this failed mission in Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 39-48.

¹⁷⁷ Brading, *The First America*, 102.

¹⁷⁸ Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 443, 449.

¹⁷⁹ Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 580. Moorman’s use of the passive construction, “blood was spilled,” makes it difficult to determine whether friars were merely injured or also killed.

¹⁸⁰ J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain: 1469-1716* (New York: New American Library, 1963), 102.

¹⁸¹ Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 583.

¹⁸² Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 22.

¹⁸³ Robert Padden, “The *Ordenanza de Patronazgo* of 1574: An Interpretive Essay” *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* 12 (1956): 33.

¹⁸⁴ Fray Francisco Morales dates the Franciscan presence in Cholula to 1524, the year the friars arrived, indicating that their ministrations to the Cholulteca began immediately. See Francisco Morales, O.F.M., Ph.D., “Los Franciscanos y Cholula,” in *Cholula: un vínculo de sabiduría y fraternidad* (Cholula, Puebla, México: La Universidad de las Américas, Puebla y la Provincia Franciscana del Santo Evangelio de México, 2002), 13.

¹⁸⁵ *Iglesias de visita* were small chapels in sites that were under the jurisdiction of a larger friary where the friars would actually reside. From their resident *conventos*, the Franciscans would visit the subject sites to say mass on Sundays and feast days, to administer the sacraments, and to otherwise participate in the Christian indoctrination of the local native community. Alongside the chapel would have been some private rooms for the repose of the friars, who would return to their place of residence at the conclusion of each day’s activities. Typically, sixteenth-century friaries in New Spain would have between ten to thirty *visitas* under their care, depending on the number of friars in the head *convento*. In contrast, a *doctrina* was a permanent structure dedicated to imparting Christian doctrine to native peoples. See Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 261.

¹⁸⁶ In this document, which is known as “The Obedience” and which was composed in Latin, the Franciscan Minister General is addressing the Twelve who had been selected to labor in the Holy Gospel Province in New Spain. See Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 350.

¹⁸⁷ Though debate remains, fray Alonso Xuárez is often identified as fray Juan Xuárez, who was listed in the 1523 “Obedience Given to the Twelve” composed by the Franciscan Minister General fray Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones; see Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 348. Ashwell and O’Leary, *Cholula, la ciudad sagrada, Cholula, the Sacred City*, 66 identify him this way. According to Franciscan record, fray Juan Xuárez – one of the Twelve – returned to Spain at the end of 1524 or the beginning of 1525, and then in 1527 accompanied Pánfilo de Narváez on his ill-fated expedition to Florida directly from Spain, dying in Texas the following year as bishop-

elect of Florida. See Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 189, and 283-285 ; footnote seven on page 284 addresses this confusion. I believe these friars were two different men, and that fray Alonso must have arrived in New Spain between 1525 and 1528, since evidence indicates that six friars arrived in 1525 followed by twenty more in 1526; see footnotes eight and nine in Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 284. Most likely, fray Alonso Xuárez would have been accompanied to the Cholula friary by one or even two additional friars, but that information is currently unknown.

¹⁸⁸ Throughout this chapter, “Cholollan” refers to the pre-hispanic period and “Cholula” indicates the Spanish colonial city. Mention of fray Alonso’s orders from bishop fray Juan de Zumárraga appears in a locally-published book I purchased in Cholula: Donato Cordero Vázquez, *Capilla Real de Cholula, Convento Franciscano* (Puebla: 2004), 5. As I will discuss, the earliest reference to fray Alonso Xuárez’s presence in Cholula can be found in Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *don fray Juan de Zumárraga: Primer obispo y arzobispo de México*, vol. II, Colección de escritores Mexicanos (México, D.F.: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1988), 166-167. This document – which complains of malicious lies several Franciscans have spread among the native peoples and accuses the friars of disrespecting the *Audiencia* – dates to early May 1529.

¹⁸⁹ Cholula resembles nearby Tlaxcala in this regard, whose first decade of colonial administration Charles Gibson describes as “in a preliminary and undeveloped stage.” See Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 64.

¹⁹⁰ Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 64-65.

¹⁹¹ AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 13, Foja 24f. Issued by the viceroy, Gaspar de Zuñiga y Acevedo, and dated December 31, 1597, this document calls upon Alonso de Nava, *corregidor* of Cholula, to assist in the election of *alcaldes ordinarios* of Puebla.

¹⁹² AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 15, Número 1044, Foja 86r.

¹⁹³ Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 423.

¹⁹⁴ For the text of the letter by Gabriel de Rojas, see Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 130-131. The Liturgy of the Hours – developed by early Christians in imitation of the Jewish tradition of praying at set times per day – serves as the official set of prayers prescribed by the Catholic Church to be recited at the canonical hours by clergy, religious institutions, and laity. Consisting primarily of the psalms, the prayers of the Divine Hours are also supplemented by hymns and readings and form the basis of prayer in Christian monasticism. Together with the mass, the Liturgy of the Hours constitutes the official public prayer life of the Church.

¹⁹⁵ Jaime Lara remarks that in his work, Motolinía portrays the native peoples as natural practitioners of Franciscan apostolic poverty. See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 66.

¹⁹⁶ Lockhart discusses how the Nahuas’s highly-developed religion lent itself easily to the introduction of Christianity in Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 203.

¹⁹⁷ Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*, 74.

¹⁹⁸ See Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, Rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 114 and Hugh Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors* (London: Cassell and Company, 2000), 124 and 423. Thomas also suggests León or Plasencia as the possible birthplace for Tapia.

¹⁹⁹ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 124. Thomas quotes Bernal Díaz, who states that Tapia was 24 years old in 1518.

²⁰⁰ In 1539 Andrés de Tapia wrote his own chronicle of the conquest, ending the story with the arrival of Pánfilo de Naráez. The work appears to have remained unpublished, though it may have been used by other colonial writers such as Francisco López de Gómara and Francisco Cervantes de Salazar. The manuscript was lost and then re-found in the Real Academia de Historia in Madrid, where it resided in the Muñoz collection as of the year 2000. See Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 129. Tapia's chronicle can be found in Fuentes, *The Conquistadors: First-Person Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*. For the original Spanish, see Díaz, *La Conquista de Tenochtitlan*.

²⁰¹ Don Andrés de Tapia Motelchiuhtzin was preceded by Diego Velázquez Tlacotzin, so named after the governor of Cuba who gave Cortés his commission to explore the coast and against whom he committed treason by setting out to conquer the mainland. See Rafael Tena, *Anales de Tlatelolco*, Cien de México (México, D.F.: CONACULTA, 2004). Apparently the two Spaniards from whom the native leaders took their names were related, for Velázquez's aunt married a Tapia. See Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 124.

²⁰² Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 128. Unfortunately, little is known about Cholula during the brief time Tapia held it in *encomienda*.

²⁰³ AGI, Audiencia de México 1088, Legajo 1, Folio 72v.

²⁰⁴ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 128-129.

²⁰⁵ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 129.

²⁰⁶ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 129. Although the tributes of Papantla had been received by Lope de Saavedra in the late 1520s, this *encomienda* passed from Andrés de Tapia to his son Cristóbal de Tapia in 1561, and then to his grandson, Andrés de Tapia Sosa, around the year 1600. See Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 218.

²⁰⁷ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 129. Thomas does not cite his source nor discuss the outcome of the viceroy's request.

²⁰⁸ AGI, Patronato, Legajo 64, Folio 13 as quoted in Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 129. Motolinía appears as a witness in the lengthy response to this *Información*, a case brought by the *fiscal* against Cristóbal de Tapia. This 200-page document is located in the AGI, Justicia 206, Número 2, Rollo 1.

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- ²⁰⁹ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 111 and 128. Thomas lists the year of his birth as 1447.
- ²¹⁰ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 111.
- ²¹¹ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 111.
- ²¹² Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 158.
- ²¹³ Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe: 1933), 225 as quoted in Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 23, 159.
- ²¹⁴ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 77.
- ²¹⁵ Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 159.
- ²¹⁶ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 50.
- ²¹⁷ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 111.
- ²¹⁸ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 111.
- ²¹⁹ Thomas, *Who's Who of the Conquistadors*, 111. Thomas does not specify whether this is San Francisco el Grande in Mexico City or another church, though I suspect the former. What is certain from the name is that the church was Franciscan.
- ²²⁰ AGI, Audiencia de México, 1088, Legajo 1, Folios 52v-53r.
- ²²¹ AGI, Audiencia de México, 1088, Legajo 1, Folios 160v-161r.
- ²²² Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 114. Diego Hernández Proaño is referenced as *alguacil mayor* of Cholula when fray Alonso Xuárez was guardian of the Franciscan *convento de San Gabriel* in 1529. See García Icazbalceta, *don fray Juan de Zumárraga*, 166-167. In 1531 Hernández Proaño appears in a 27-page document identified as *alguacil mayor* of Mexico City. See AGI, Justicia, 186, No. 5.
- ²²³ AGI, Audiencia de México, 1088, Legajo 1, Folios 211v-112v.
- ²²⁴ Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 8 and 11. Diego Hernández Proaño's case against the fiscal appears in AGI, Justicia, 186, No. 5.
- ²²⁵ AGI, Justicia, 186, No. 5 and Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 114. See also Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 82.
- ²²⁶ Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 14.
- ²²⁷ Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 70-71.

²²⁸ Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 114 and Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 67-68.

²²⁹ Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 67-68.

²³⁰ Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 68.

²³¹ In October 15, 1543 the joint *corregidor* of Cholula and Tlaxcala was Darias de Saavedra; see AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 4, Foja 255f. Beginning December 12 of that year, he appears in Volume Four under the appellation Hernando Rios de Saavedra; see AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 4, Foja 263v. On February 28, 1545, the *corregidor* of Cholula was Hernando Caballero; since he is not also listed as having jurisdiction over Tlaxcala, I assume the two had separated by this time. See AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 9f-10f. He thereafter appears in the minutes of Puebla's *cabildo* as *Justicia Mayor*.

²³² AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 13, Foja 24r.

²³³ "Carta al Emperador de los indios de Cholula," AGI, Papeles de Simancas, doc. 37.

²³⁴ Traditionally, June 29 is the feast day of St. Peter and Paul, and is so noted in Bernardino de Sahagún, *Psalmodia Christiana (Christian Psalmody) [1569]*, trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 187. The friars may have chosen St. Peter because it was on his feast day that they arrived to, or renamed, the site, but given that they appeared in the winter of 1528/29, it was more likely the connection to *Caput Mundi* [Capital of the World] and the Roman Catholic Church that influenced them.

²³⁵ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]*, 52-53. Sahagún's remarks appear in de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 23. Not only does Sahagún misrepresent Cholollan's history – the pyramid dates to the Classic period, built by the Olmeca-Xicalanca as the central sacred structure around which the polity radiated and hence was *not* built off-center to serve as a fortification – but Francisco de la Maza does not provide a citation for Sahagún's quotation.

²³⁶ Gabriel de Rojas, "Relación de Cholula," in *Relaciones Geográficas del Siglo XVI: Tlaxcala*, ed. René Acuña (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1985). In his discussion of the pyramid he repeats Sahagún's claim that it had been constructed as a fortification.

²³⁷ Francisco Javier Clavijero SJ, *Historia antigua de México [1780]*, 2 vols., vol. II (México, D.F.: Editorial Delfín, 1944), 154. Anahuác was the pre-contact Nahuatl name for the Valley of Mexico. Francisco de la Maza erroneously credits Clavijero as the first to associate Cholula with Rome, a link that appeared over two hundred years earlier in the work of Motolinía; see de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 21.

²³⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the strong Franciscan apostolic connection, see Verónica A. Gutiérrez, "'They Form a Path Like Ants: Institutionalizing Confession among the Nahuas in Sixteenth-Century New Spain,'" (Unpublished conference paper. American Society for Ethnohistory. Santa Fe, New Mexico: 2005).

²³⁹ Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 236.

²⁴⁰ It's possible the friars were referencing the infamous document the Spanish conquistadors used to establish native peoples as vassals of the king and claim their land. Developed during the Reconquista and known as "el Requerimiento" or "the Requirement," several versions existed by the fifteenth century. The edition Professor Kevin Terraciano uses in his courses at UCLA contain this line: "Of all these nations God our Lord gave charge to one man, called St. Peter, that he should be lord and superior of all the men in the world, that all should obey him, and that he should be the head of the whole human race, wherever men should live, and under whatever law, sect, or belief they should be; and he gave him the world for his kingdom and jurisdiction." The Spanish text can be found online at <http://www.ciudadseva.com/textos/otros/requeri.htm>.

²⁴¹ García Icazbalceta, *don fray Juan de Zumárraga*, 166-167. I have not located any documents detailing the outcome of the situation, nor any that discuss the accuracy of these claims.

²⁴² de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 62. See also Cordero Vázquez, *Capilla Real de Cholula, Convento Franciscano*, 5.

²⁴³ For a discussion of Franciscan involvement in founding the new city, see Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 319-323.

²⁴⁴ Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 115.

²⁴⁵ The Oroz Codex notes: "Right next to these churches of visitation are some rooms where the religious are lodged with all modesty and privacy." See Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 261. Donato Cordero Vázquez attributes the description of the dwelling to Gabriel de Rojas, though I could not locate it in the *Relación de Cholula*; possibly it is in another written source of which I am not familiar. Cordero Vázquez, *Capilla Real de Cholula, Convento Franciscano*, 5.

²⁴⁶ de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 38.

²⁴⁷ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 99. The city plan in 1581 appeared in the *Pintura de Cholula* that accompanies Gabriel de Rojas's *Relación de Cholula*, found in Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*.

²⁴⁸ See Gabriel de Rojas' *Relación de Cholula* in Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 132.

²⁴⁹ de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 16-19.

²⁵⁰ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 319.

²⁵¹ Nahuatl for place-where-serpents-leave-their-skins.

²⁵² AGI, Mexico 1088: L. 2, F.32r-46v. See also Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 222. The limits between Puebla and Cholula continued to be disputed throughout the colonial period, a quarrel that persists to this day as the growing Angelópolis threatens to swallow up the former indigenous holy site. Municipal documents reveal that in the colonial period the native Cholulteca repeatedly challenged the limits between Puebla and Cholula. In

AGM- P Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 118v-126v, which is dated March 26, 1546 and signed by various Spanish officials from both cities as well as *indios principales* from Cholula, the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza authorizes Antonio de la Cadena, Puebla's *juez de comisión*, together with Agustín Guerrero to examine the boundaries between Puebla and Cholula because the limits imposed by the native Cholulteca have been causing conflicts and complaints. The Spanish officials from Puebla are to witness the election of *alcaldes* in Cholula for the year 1546, then with the aid of an interpreter resolve the issue and place boundary markers within 20 days. The document notes that the city limits include Tlaxcala, the *barrio* of San Pablo, the *Camino Real* to Tlaxcala, the bridge on the *Camino* on the way to Atlixco, and Totimehuacan. The issue continues to be problematic, however, for on November 6, 1551, Puebla's *cabildo* again calls for boundary markers to be placed at the city limits with Cholula, Tlaxcala, Cuauhtinchan, and Totimehuacan; see AGM- P Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 6, Foja 170f. Three years later, Puebla's municipal government calls upon *regidores* Gonzalo Hidalgo de Montemayor and Alonso de Mata to accompany *Corregidor* Antonio Caballero in visiting the boundaries of the city with Cholula, Tlaxcala, and Cuauhtinchan; see AGM- P Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 7, Foja 14v; this document is dated on January 15, 1554.

²⁵³ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 319.

²⁵⁴ James Lockhart, Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil*, Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 91.

²⁵⁵ Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 222. For notice of the exemption to tribute for the Cholulteca living in Puebla, see AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 9, Foja 27f y v, which dates to January 7, 1564.

²⁵⁶ Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 222.

²⁵⁷ Lockhart, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil*, 91.

²⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion of the development of Santiago de los Cholultecas in the sixteenth century see my article, Verónica A. Gutiérrez, "A Satellite Community in a Spanish City: The Barrio of Santiago Cholultecapan in Colonial Puebla de Los Ángeles" *UCLA Historical Journal* forthcoming (2012).

²⁵⁹ The Franciscans use this date as the symbolic founding of the Franciscan *convento* in Puebla. See Eduardo Merlo Juárez, and José Antonio Quintana Fernández, *Las Iglesias de la Puebla de Los Ángeles*, vol. 1 (Puebla: Secretaría de Cultural Puebla y la Universidad Popular Autónoma de Estado de Puebla (UPAEP), 2001), 199.

²⁶⁰ Merlo Juárez, *Las Iglesias de la Puebla de Los Ángeles*, 199. Motolinía identifies "no more than 40" founding Spaniards. See Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 320. For the original text, see Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]*, 272.

²⁶¹ Merlo Juárez, *Las Iglesias de la Puebla de Los Ángeles*, 199.

²⁶² Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 320.

²⁶³ Prior to 1531, the Crown government exercised loose local rule from Mexico City. See Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 65. That same year saw the first composite *corregidor*. A former *conquistador* who had served with Cortés in Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala, Hernando de Elgueta chose to live in Puebla until his residency as a Crown official ended in 1538, at which point Puebla became self-governed by royal dispensation and did not require a *corregidor*.

²⁶⁴ For an overview of this debate including quotes from the sources, see Merlo Juárez, *Las Iglesias de la Puebla de Los Ángeles*, 200. For details about the *convento*'s founding and development, see pages 199-255.

²⁶⁵ For requests from Puebla's *cabildo* for indigenous workers from Cholula in the 1560s, see AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 9, Foja 28v and AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 9, Foja 69v.

²⁶⁶ For a brief discussion of Cholulteca involvement in constructing the cathedral in Puebla and hanging its bell in 1732, see Gutiérrez, "A Satellite Community in a Spanish City: The Barrio of Santiago Cholultecapan in Colonial Puebla de Los Ángeles".

²⁶⁷ Though Hernando de Elgueta is not listed as *corregidor* in the minutes of this *cabildo* session, it appears as if his appointment as joint *corregidor* of Puebla and Cholula continues through at least August 26, when he is identified as "corregidor de la ciudad," which I take to mean the city of Puebla; in this document he receives land near the marketplace (*tianguis*) to erect a hermitage dedicated to Christ and San Blas as long as he builds it before the end of the year; see AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 4, Foja 210f y v. Throughout Actas de Cabildo, Volume Three, Elgueta is identified as "*corregidor* de las provincias de Tlaxcala y Cholula;" the last entry of this volume is dated June 13, 1533. The document cited here, composed on May 13, 1538, is the first entry in Volume Four; there is no explanation for the missing five years.

²⁶⁸ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 4, Foja 16f-17f.

²⁶⁹ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 4, Foja 87v-88v.

²⁷⁰ Gabriel de Rojas mentions the 1540 epidemic and its reduction of Cholula's population in Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 126. For Cholula's population in 1531, see Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 115.

²⁷¹ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 9f-10f. This important document, dated February 28, 1545, was witnessed by the notary Antonio de Turcios, a royal scribe, registered by chancellor Juan de Salazar, and signed by Antonio de Mendoza and the city's other judges; thereafter Caballero appears in the *cabildo* documents as *Justicia Mayor*, or Chief Justice of Puebla.

²⁷² For more on the development of Santiago Cholultecapan and the distribution of plots to both native peoples and Spaniards, see Gutiérrez, "A Satellite Community in a Spanish City: The Barrio of Santiago Cholultecapan in Colonial Puebla de Los Ángeles".

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- ²⁷³ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 81v.
- ²⁷⁴ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 127f; this document is dated March 26, 1546.
- ²⁷⁵ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 138f; this document is dated April 12, 1546.
- ²⁷⁶ Mtro. Antonio Bravo Méndez, “Parroquia de Santiago Apóstol,” (Guia de Templos. Puebla, Puebla, México: Universidad Popular del Estado de Puebla).
- ²⁷⁷ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 7, Foja 101v is dated June 5, 1556, and AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 7, Foja 106v dates to June 19, 1546.
- ²⁷⁸ Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 329.
- ²⁷⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402.
- ²⁸⁰ Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 423.
- ²⁸¹ Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 126 and 131.
- ²⁸² Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 130-131.
- ²⁸³ AGI, Audiencia de México, 94, 2 folios.
- ²⁸⁴ AGI, Patronato Real, 180, Rollo 68, sin foja. Although the document is dated 1536, Francisco de la Maza gives 1537 as the date of this incident. See de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 39.
- ²⁸⁵ de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 39.
- ²⁸⁶ de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 39-40.
- ²⁸⁷ Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 143-145.
- ²⁸⁸ Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 144.
- ²⁸⁹ Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 145.
- ²⁹⁰ Reference to Cholula being granted its own indigenous *cabildo* appears in Francisco González-Hermosillo, “Macehuales versus señores naturales. Una mediación franciscana en el cabildo indio de Cholula ante el conflicto por el servicio personal (1553-1594),” in *Gobierno y economía en los pueblos indios del México colonial*, ed. Francisco González-Hermosillo, *Antropología Social* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional del Antropología e Historia, 2001), 117.
- ²⁹¹ de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 39. Regarding the coat of arms, de la Maza is here quoting the “Cholula (San Pedro)” entry in Volume Two of Manuel Orozco Berra’s *Diccionario universal de historia y de geografía*, a multi-volume work appearing in the 1850s,

which can be accessed online: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433082406277>. To view an image of San Pedro Cholula's current coat of arms, which match the description specified in the 1537 *cédula*, visit http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Escudo_San_Pedro_Cholula.svg.

²⁹² Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, 165.

²⁹³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 401. Manuel Orozco Berra mentions in his nineteenth-century dictionary that Viceroy Luis de Velasco titled Cholula. See Manuel Orozco Berra. "Diccionario Universal de Historia y de Geografía: Obra dada a luz en España por una sociedad de literatos distinguidos, y refundida y aumentada considerablemente para su publicación en Mexico; con noticias históricas, geográficas, estadísticas y biográficas sobre las Americas en general y especialmente sobre la Republica Mexicana [1853-1855]." ed Hathi Trust Digital Library. (Place Published: México D.F.: Imp. de F. Escalente y c.a.), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433082406277>. Orozco Berra further notes that Cholula's title was confirmed in four additional dispatches from Spain dated August 17, November 6, and December 6, 1787 and January 8, 1788. I will discuss Cholula's mid-sixteenth-century reception of its urban rank later this chapter.

²⁹⁴ The Anonymous Conqueror would in the sixteenth century describe Cholula as reminiscent of Valladolid. See Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 100.

²⁹⁵ *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 4, F 245v y 246f. Though the document dates to August 1, 1543, it states that the presentation of the royal *cédula* occurred before the Viceroy in Cholula on May 5, 1543, at which point, following protocol, he remitted it to the Puebla *cabildo*.

²⁹⁶ de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 38. See also McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 401.

²⁹⁷ As quoted in de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 38.

²⁹⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402-403.

²⁹⁹ AGI, Mexico 1088, Legajo 1, Folio 74. Interestingly, this letter was composed in Spanish, not Nahuatl, leading me to believe the local Franciscans had a hand in it.

³⁰⁰ AGM-P: *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 4, Foja 310v. Though the document itself dates to November 29, 1544, a scribe's note indicates that Cholula began paying its backlogged tribute on Monday, February 9, 1542 and that it had four days to pay its debt. For the attempt to collect tribute from Cholula on August 21, 1545, see AGM-P: *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 5, Foja 61f.

³⁰¹ See AGM- P: *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 5, Foja 107v, which dates to February 5, 1546. The two *cabildo* documents granting authority to Martín de Aguilar to collect tribute from Cholula can be found in AGM- P: *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 5, Foja 195f and AGM- P: *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 5, Foja 195v-197f. Four other men receive commissions for this same task in June 1547. See AGM- P: *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 5, Foja 201f and AGM- P: *Actas de Cabildo*, Vol. 5, Foja 214v-215f.

³⁰² Though the native Cholulteca received authorization from the Emperor in 1537 to become a city, apparently by 1552 they had not yet received the title. Their praise of their own handiwork and promises to build the city in Castilian style – which as we have seen was largely already accomplished by this date – fit within the genre of sixteenth-century indigenous letters from New Spain. I will analyze this letter at greater length in Chapter Three.

³⁰³ Unfortunately Cholula would continue to suffer population losses, for by about 1570 its native peoples had decreased yet again to 12,000 inhabitants, down from 15,000 following the aforementioned *cocoliztli* of 1544-1546. See Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 115.

³⁰⁴ AGI, Audiencia de México, 94, 2 folios. This letter is also quoted in Morales, “Los Franciscanos y Cholula,” 13. As I discuss below, in 1556 the native Cholulteca would reference this promise when they petitioned the cabildo in Puebla for access to a stone quarry.

³⁰⁵ AGI, Papeles de Simancas, Est. 59, Caja 1, Lec. 3 (Libro de Cartas). I would like to thank my Dr. Bradley Benton, for making me aware this letter, a copy of which he discovered in the Archivo Histórico del Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City (MNAH).

³⁰⁶ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 9, Foja 27f y v, which dates to January 7, 1564.

³⁰⁷ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 7, Foja 72f. George Kubler notes that in the pre-contact period, the native Cholulteca often constructed their homes of wood. See Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 153.

³⁰⁸ This document, dated July 29, 1555, appears in AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 7, Foja 69f y 69v.

³⁰⁹ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 7, Foja 109f y v.

³¹⁰ AGI, Audiencia de México, 94, 2 folios. I will discuss this letter in greater detail in Chapter Three.

³¹¹ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 7, Foja 109v-110f. Signatures on the petition include Cholula’s governor as well as the members of its *cabildo*, including Pedro de Prieto, Andrés de Mendoza, Diego de Castilla, Francisco Vasquez, Pedro de Zamora, Andrés Ortiz, and an *indio principal* named Simon de Buenaventura. The latter and his four brothers owned extensive landholdings in Cholula which were parceled off in the 1580s and 1590s.

³¹² AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 11, 108v, which is dated February 23, 1582.

³¹³ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 12, Foja 10f, dated March 12, 1585.

³¹⁴ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 12, Foja 12f, which dates to April 13, 1585.

³¹⁵ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 12, Foja 297f, dated September 2, 1594.

³¹⁶ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo. Vol. 12, Foja 314v, which dates to March 18, 1595.

³¹⁷ AGM- P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 14, Foja 37f, dated March 24, 1607.

³¹⁸ See his 1581 *Relación de Cholula* in Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 126.

³¹⁹ AGN Indios, Volumen 2, Número 567, Foja 131v.

³²⁰ The information in this paragraph is based on Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 280. As Gibson notes, the Spanish custom of common pasturage was supported by Mesta law in the colony. He further notes that the regular period set aside for grazing was December 1 to March 31, though the dates might fluctuate depending on the length of the growing season. See Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 280 and FN 125 on p. 545.

³²¹ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 281. According to Charles Gibson, slaughterhouses in indigenous towns were licensed to Spaniards and the evidence suggests they were invariably Spaniards. Whereas documents indicate native labor during slaughterhouses operations, he could cite no evidence for indigenous management. See Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346. Cholula, then, may have been a unique case.

³²² Gibson states that in colonial documents, by *vara* is generally understood the *vara de Castilla* or Burgos or Toledo, a textile measurement equivalent to .84 meters or 33 inches and was divided into three “feet” of about .28 meters each. See Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 257.

³²³ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346. According to fray Diego Durán, indigenous consumption of dogs and other foods horrified the Spaniards. See Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, FN 87, p.567.

³²⁴ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346.

³²⁵ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346.

³²⁶ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346.

³²⁷ AGN, General de Parte 1, Número 651, Folio 138.

³²⁸ AGN General de Parte 1, Número 903, Folio 174v.

³²⁹ AGN General de Parte 1, Número 1132, Folio 221v. This license would total about 624 sheep per twelve month period. Compare this to the license granted in Xochimilco that same year, which allowed the slaying of about 2,500 steers per year. Clearly beef remained the preferred meat in this period. See Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346.

³³⁰ AGN General de Parte 2, Número 40, Folio 30r. Gabriel de Rojas would eventually become Cholula’s *corregidor*, holding this office when Philip II’s questionnaire reached the New World

and producing what has been known as *La relación de Cholula* in 1581. For the complete text and the questions, see Rojas, “Relación de Cholula.”

³³¹ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 262.

³³² Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 345.

³³³ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 262.

³³⁴ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 345.

³³⁵ AGN, Indios, Vol. 2, No. 775, folio 176r.

³³⁶ AGN, Indios, Vol. 2, No. 567, folios 131v-132r.

³³⁷ See Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346.

³³⁸ AGN, Indios, Vol. 2, No. 567, 131v-132r.

³³⁹ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346. Gibson cites Diego de Durán’s *Historia*, Tomo II as well as Martín et al Fernández Navarrete, eds, *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España*, 112 vols., vol. LVII (Madrid: 1842-1895), 89.

³⁴⁰ Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 346.

³⁴¹ AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 1, Número 8, Fojas 646r y v.

³⁴² AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 5, Número 632, Fojas 359r y v. The date of this document is April 6, 1591.

³⁴³ AGN Indios, Volumen 5, Número 652, Foja 249r.

³⁴⁴ INAH-P, Sección Notarial, Número 678, Expediente 365.

³⁴⁵ AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 3, Número 284, Fojas 399v-400r.

³⁴⁶ AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 79v.

³⁴⁷ AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 5, Foja 114r and AM-P: Actas de Cabildo, Vol. 6, Foja 74r.

³⁴⁸ See Appendix A for a list of Franciscan friaries in the Bishopric of Tlaxcala in the year 1584.

³⁴⁹ For the best discussion of Cholula’s contemporary relationship with Catholicism and possible links to the pre-contact period, see the work of Anamaría Ashwell, especially Ashwell and O’Leary, *Cholula, la ciudad sagrada, Cholula, the Sacred City*. See also Ashwell, *Creo para poder entender: la vida religiosa en los barrios de Cholula*. I narrate my own experience with Cholula’s current Nahuatl-Christian ritual in the Epilogue.

³⁵⁰ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 123.

³⁵¹ Isabel Allende, *Inés of My Soul* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 25. Though Allende places the attack in late winter, historical sources indicate it took place in May.

³⁵² In this section I rely on Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 92-93.

³⁵³ Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 90.

³⁵⁴ Born in León and related to Spanish royalty by both his father and his mother, Cardinal Quiñones would become one of the most celebrated ecclesiastics of his day. As a young man he joined the Franciscan Order in the very strict Custody of Los Angeles, renouncing all worldly ties including his surname, which he replaced with that of the province.

³⁵⁵ While not directly related to the Franciscan enterprise in New Spain, the Capuchin reform would develop about this time, a breakaway group in the Observant branch so named because of their “little hoods” attached directly to the habit and lacking a cowl. During the 1525 Jubilee year an Italian friar named Matteo of Bascio would travel to Rome and receive permission to wear what he believed to be the primitive habit of the Order, as well as to engage in itinerant preaching. Though originally considered renegades with the Order and arrested, eventually the Capuchins would receive permission to hold their first chapter in 1529, during which they wrote the rules of their constitution. See Monti O.F.M. Ph.D., *Francis and His Brothers*, 90-91.

³⁵⁶ In this section I rely on an online database of Cardinals of the Catholic Church. See Salvador Miranda, “Quiñones, O.F.M., Francisco de los Ángeles (1475-1540),” Florida International University Libraries, <http://www2.fiu.edu/~mirandas/cardinals.htm>.

³⁵⁷ Miranda, “Quiñones, O.F.M., Francisco de los Ángeles (1475-1540).” The body of Cardinal Quiñones is buried in this church.

³⁵⁸ The editor of the Oroz Codex asserts that fray Quiñones believed his election was contrived by the Emperor and the Pope to prevent him from leaving Europe. See Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 353.

³⁵⁹ Known as the Obedience, this document appears in Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 349. Both the “Obedience Given to the Twelve” (composed in Latin and dated October 30, 1523) and the “Instruction Given to the Twelve” (composed in Spanish on the feast of St. Francis, October 4, 1523) appear with commentary in the appendix to the Oroz Codex. Both contain multiple references to scriptural authority as well as examples drawn from the life of Francis himself to justify the Franciscan mandate to evangelize in the New World. Also present is an overwhelming sense of urgency reflecting a Millenarian tendency popular among sixteenth-century Spanish Franciscans, which revived the medieval belief in their divine selection as necessary laborers in the Lord’s vineyard for the salvation of souls in the End Times. For a concise discussion of the historical context, see Kenneth and William B. Taylor Mills, *Colonial Spanish America: A Documentary History* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), 46-51.

³⁶⁰ In this section I rely on Chapter Two: “The Visual Imagination and the End of History” in Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 41-90. I consider this one of the best detailed discussions of the development of eschatology in the Judeo-Christian world and its impact on New Spain.

³⁶¹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 45.

³⁶² Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 44.

³⁶³ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 45-46.

³⁶⁴ Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 13.

³⁶⁵ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 53.

³⁶⁶ Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 14.

³⁶⁷ Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 15.

³⁶⁸ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 53.

³⁶⁹ As previously mentioned, fray Martín de Valencia was instructed to select twelve companions, but in the end one of them did travel to Mexico. In the words of Franciscan Minister General Quiñones: “And therefore at present I do not send more than one superior and twelve companions, because this was the number which Christ took in His company to carry out the conversion of the world. And St. Francis, our father, did the same in announcing the Gospel.” Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 357.

³⁷⁰ Franciscan Minister General Quiñones references this idea several times. To give two examples, he writes: “the day is far spent and passing away, which is the eleventh hour of which the gospel speaks” and also “to you, therefore, O sons, with the last end of the world at hand...” Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 349, 350.

³⁷¹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 66.

³⁷² Samuel Y. Edgerton thus describes Phelan’s argument in the *Millennial Kingdom*. He also notes in his book, Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*, 15 that Edwin Edward Sylvester challenges the thesis about apocalyptically-obsessed friars, arguing that they were more motivated by politics and practical concerns than by eschatology. See Sylvest Jr., *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory in Sixteenth Century New Spain Province of the Holy Gospel*.

³⁷³ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 262.

³⁷⁴ As quoted in de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 61. This petition may have been the first act of the new *cabildo*; it was certainly one of the first. One cannot help but wonder about the political motivations behind this indigenous request and if it was linked with their recently approved rise to city status. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate the original document so I do not know the date of its implementation. González-Hermosillo, “Macehuales

versus señores naturales. Una mediación franciscana en el cabildo indio de Cholula ante el conflicto por el servicio personal (1553-1594),” 117 mentions the establishment of Cholula’s *cabildo* in 1537. Unfortunately, he does not cite his source.

³⁷⁵ The original text of Isabel of Portugal’s reads: “por la presente declaramos a la dicha ciudad de San Pedro de Cholula con el título y advocación de San Gabriel, y para que lo hayan y tengan por patrón della, y el señor San Pedro, por nuestra voluntad y merced que le hacemos a la dicha cibdad” as quoted in de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 61.

³⁷⁶ Sahagún, *Psalmody Christiana (Christian Psalmody) [1569]*, 286-291.

³⁷⁷ For reference to Pedro de Alvarado and Bernardino Vázquez de Tapia’s September 1519 visit to Cholollan, see Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 114 and Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, 163.

³⁷⁸ Because I have not been able to locate the obscure original source, I make this assumption based on the high likelihood that Francisco de la Maza was not fluent in Nahuatl. His citation of this document reads: “*Iglesia de San Gabriel Cholula*, por Fidel Chauvet. Separata de los *Anales de la provincia del Santo Evangelio*. Año I, II serie, No. 1. México, 1953, p. 22.” See de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 61.

³⁷⁹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 103.

³⁸⁰ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]*, 71. In 1581 Gabriel de Rojas would argue that being placed upon the tallest structure in the area, the cross served as a lightning rod and thus received various heavenly strikes. For his *Relación de Cholula*, see Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*, 143.

³⁸¹ Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 113-114. This bull took the middle ground on indigenous marriage, ordering that native peoples sacramentally marry their first wives and not be allowed to choose, unless this was impossible to determine. For those native people who had many wives but had set some of them aside, they were to keep the one with they were co-habiting at the time of their conversion.

³⁸² Miguel León-Portilla reports that the native peoples were so confused at the in-fighting between the Franciscans and Dominicans and were so certain that they served their own gods rather than the same deity that they asked the friars to allow them to worship their own deities as well. See Miguel León-Portilla, “Testimonios Nahuas Sobre La Conquista Espiritual” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* Vol. XI (1974).

³⁸³ Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 253. For the original, see Pedro Oroz et al., *Relación de la descripción de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio: que es en las Indias Occidentales que llaman la Nueva España: hecha en el año de 1585*, Nueva ed. (México D.F.: Imprenta Mexicana de Juan Aguilar Reyes, 1947), 166.

³⁸⁴ AGI, Audiencia de México, 1088, Legajo 1, Folios 48v-49v. The *cédula* is dated August 24, 1529.

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- ³⁸⁵ AGI, Audiencia de México, 1088, Legajo 1, Folios 52v-53r. The *encomendero* at this time was Rodrigo Rangel.
- ³⁸⁶ AGI, Audiencia de México, 1088, Legajo 1, Folios 160v-161r.
- ³⁸⁷ AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 1, Número 22, Fojas 663-664r y v dated August 3, 1590.
- ³⁸⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 401.
- ³⁸⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 401. For Cholula's original population numbers, see Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 115.
- ³⁹⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 401. McAndrew cautions that this number does not include women and children. He also contends that it should be multiplied by at least five to include the native inhabitants in the surrounding areas within Cholula's jurisdiction.
- ³⁹¹ de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 62. See also Ignacio Cabral, *Arquitectura religiosa en San Pedro Cholula, Puebla* (Puebla: Universidad de las Américas-Puebla, 1994), 1. Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, 163. Cordero Vázquez, *Capilla Real de Cholula, Convento Franciscano*, 6.
- ³⁹² Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 119, 229.
- ³⁹³ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 96.
- ³⁹⁴ The so-called *Capilla Real* (Royal Chapel), more appropriately known as the *Capilla de los Naturales* (Native Chapel) that today shares the atrial space with the main church, would appear in the latter half of the sixteenth century.
- ³⁹⁵ Morales, "Los Franciscanos y Cholula," 13.
- ³⁹⁶ Cholula's *corregidor*, Gabriel de Rojas, would note in 1581 that the native Cholulteca were well-suited for European industry, participating in all Spanish occupations. For his letter, see Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*.
- ³⁹⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 282.
- ³⁹⁸ Cabral, *Arquitectura religiosa en San Pedro Cholula, Puebla*, 1. See also de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 62.
- ³⁹⁹ Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 206.
- ⁴⁰⁰ Ashwell and O'Leary, *Cholula, la ciudad sagrada, Cholula, the Sacred City*, 70.
- ⁴⁰¹ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 153.

⁴⁰² See Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 169. He dates his remark about the tile to 1581, and the brick sidewalks to 1585.

⁴⁰³ Quoted from AGI document cited in Morales, “Los Franciscanos y Cholula,” 13 ; translation mine.

⁴⁰⁴ See Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*, 116 which indicates the year 1536 for this designation. See also Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 32.

⁴⁰⁵ Interestingly, this letter is in Nahuatl rather than in Spanish. See James Lockhart and Enrique Otte, *Letters and People of the Spanish Indies, Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 163-172.

⁴⁰⁶ “Carta al Emperador de los indios de Cholula,” AGI, Papeles de Simancas, doc. 37; translation mine.

⁴⁰⁷ Orozco Berra. “Diccionario Universal de Historia y de Geografía: Obra dada a luz en España por una sociedad de literatos distinguidos, y refundida y aumentada considerablemente para su publicación en Mexico; con noticias históricas, geográficas, estadísticas y biográficas sobre las Americas en general y especialmente sobre la Republica Mexicana [1853-1855].” (Place Published.

⁴⁰⁸ For Cholula’s military contributions, see Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*.

⁴⁰⁹ See González-Hermosillo, “Macehuales versus señores naturales. Una mediación franciscana en el cabildo indio de Cholula ante el conflicto por el servicio personal (1553-1594).”

⁴¹⁰ AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 12, Número 973, Fojas 5v-6r, which dates to November 24, 1594.

⁴¹¹ AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 15, Número 1044, Fojas 86r, dated July 2, 1594.

⁴¹² By the 1590s it had also become an acceptable burial location for high-ranking native people, as I shall discuss in Chapter Four.

⁴¹³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402-403.

⁴¹⁴ The course in the humanities was fully underway by at least the 1580s. See Oroz et al., *Relación de la descripción de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio*, 166. Another source from 1585 states that “there always resided many religious” in Cholula’s *convento*. See Buenaventura Salazar, *Los doce primeros apóstoles franciscanos en México* (México: Imprenta Mexicana, 1943), 200.

⁴¹⁵ Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 252. As to the number of *visitas*, see McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402.

⁴¹⁶ Salazar, *Los doce primeros apóstoles franciscanos en México*, 191.

⁴¹⁷ Salazar, *Los doce primeros apóstoles franciscanos en México*, 200.

⁴¹⁸ As quoted in Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 17.

⁴¹⁹ Indeed, Jaime Lara suggests that the mendicant complex might be understood in some degree as an elaborate stage set for an eschatological drama. See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 36.

⁴²⁰ The scholars who have most influenced my thinking and whose works I will discuss here include Manuel Toussaint, George Kubler, John McAndrew, Samuel Edgerton, and Jaime Lara; see Verónica A. Gutiérrez, “From Architectural Guidebooks to Eschatological Landscapes: The Historiography of Religious Architecture in Sixteenth-Century Mexico, 1927-2003,” (Unpublished essay (UCLA), 2006).

⁴²¹ John McAndrew suggests that Cholollan’s Quetzalcoatl Sanctuary was extensive enough to provide building materials to the nearby Franciscan complex at Huejotzingo. See McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 183.

⁴²² Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*, 47.

⁴²³ Personal Communication, January 7, 2011, The American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.

⁴²⁴ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 108-109. Kubler notes that great errors had occurred in the erection of monastic establishments and public works due to the lack of architects and supervisors.

⁴²⁵ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 128 and 153.

⁴²⁶ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 145.

⁴²⁷ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 158.

⁴²⁸ For reference to Cholula’s quarry of “dark stone,” see Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 165. He gives no date as to the establishment of the quarry.

⁴²⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 312.

⁴³⁰ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 34.

⁴³¹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 31.

⁴³² Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 32. Lara notes several possible models for the single-nave Mexican churches: the monastery Church of the Order of the Hieronymites in Yuste, Spain, the Franciscan church of Santa Chiara in Assisi, the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican, and the two single-naved Carthusian churches that appeared in Spain on the eve of the encounter with the New World.

⁴³³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 192-193. Many sixteenth-century *conquistadors* express admiration for the manner in which the “cities” they encountered glistened in the sun in a manner unlike any they had seen in Europe.

⁴³⁴ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 33 and 135.

⁴³⁵ Atl, Toussaint, and Benítez, *Iglesias de México*, 73. Many have said that the appearance of the sixth and final volume of this series marked the beginning of the modern study of architecture in colonial Mexico. See Robert C. Smith and Elizabeth Wilder, eds., *A Guide to the Art of Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, 1948; reprint, Arno Press, 1971). As quoted in A. C. van Oss, *Inventory of 861 Monuments of Mexican Colonial Architecture*, CEDLA incidentele publicaties (Amsterdam: Centrum voor Studie en Documentatie van Latijns-Amerika, 1979), 7. See also George Kubler, who notes that S. Baxter’s 1901 collection of photographs with commentary, *Spanish Colonial Architecture in Mexico*, is the earliest known publication of this class; for this and a concise overview of architectural history relating to colonial Mexico, see Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 432-449. Though the notion of the fortified church would be challenged by architectural historians George Kubler and John McAndrew, it was persistent enough for twenty-first century art historian Jaime Lara to address it. See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*.

⁴³⁶ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 281. In this monumental two-volume work appearing in 1948, Kubler presented the art history world with the first synthetic examination of buildings in early New Spain, including architecture, painting, and sculpture. According to A. C. van Oss, the year 1948 was “a turning point in the historiography of Mexican architecture,” for it saw the publication of Kubler’s great work as well as Manuel Toussaint’s *Arte colonial en México*, which he describes as “one of the first serious attempts at a general survey.” See Oss, *Inventory of 861 Monuments of Mexican Colonial Architecture*, 7-8.

⁴³⁷ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 431. Though he claims the churches were occasionally used as fortified refuges from which a strategic defense – whether against outside enemies or a rebellious town, could be maintained – given their fragile and impermanent nature, he contends they were never used as safeguards against European weaponry. Even so, he suggests they may have provided shelter to native peoples from attacks by roving bands of Chichimecas.

⁴³⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 268. He dismisses as inaccurate conjecture the sixteenth-century literature discussing town raids and claims that churches served as fortresses. He points out eighteenth-century writers described *atrio* walls as defensible, not sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers who would have been better informed. As evidence that friars, in fact, were more useful in maintaining the peace than military structures, he cites the Franciscan Juan de Torquemada who wrote in 1612: “the monasteries with friars were worth more in the towns than fortresses with soldiers.” See McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 277. This is because, “the natives rarely resented or feared the friars. Nor did the friars often fear the natives.” See McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 262.

⁴³⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 268. This may have occurred when the Cholula friary was demoted in the 1538 Chapter.

⁴⁴⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 278.

⁴⁴¹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 37.

⁴⁴² Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 37-38.

⁴⁴³ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 39.

⁴⁴⁴ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 39. Lara notes that Bernard quotes Habakkuk 2:1: “I will stand at my sentry box and take up my post on the ramparts, keeping watch.”

⁴⁴⁵ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 167.

⁴⁴⁶ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 167.

⁴⁴⁷ Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 168.

⁴⁴⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 193, 404, and 405.

⁴⁴⁹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 18.

⁴⁵⁰ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 21 and 33. Samuel Edgerton suggests that the friars took advantage of the indigenous propensity to spectacle in order to further consolidate their Christian proselytization, and that the native people, from their subservient position, capitalized on the mendicant tolerance for spectacle in order to preserve their pre-contact traditions and rehearse political grievances through impersonation and parody. See Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*, 156.

⁴⁵¹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 39.

⁴⁵² Given that the *posas* are not incredibly similar or dissimilar to the church of San Gabriel, McAndrew questions whether they belong to the same building campaign, suggesting they may have been erected later.

⁴⁵³ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 29.

⁴⁵⁴ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 287. McAndrew suggests the additional three *barrios* may have been *visitias*, since Cholula was wide-spread in addition to its concentrated population in the city center. The term “open chapel” was coined by Manuel Toussaint in Atl, Toussaint, and Benítez, *Iglesias de México*. As Samuel Edgerton notes, this directional movement mimicked Mesoamerican ritual whereby the celebrants paid homage to the sun by symbolically following its diurnal and solstitial path through a tropical year. See Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*, 62. He further notes that he has found no evidence that this directional pattern existed in Christian Europe at least until the seventeenth century. See Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion*, 64.

⁴⁵⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 315. McAndrew sees stylistic similarities between Cholula’s *posas* and those of the friary in Tlaxcala.

⁴⁵⁶ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 340.

⁴⁵⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 400 and 402. Jaime Lara suggests it was already in use before the decimating plague of 1544. See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 142.

⁴⁵⁸ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 142-143.

⁴⁵⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402. McAndrew observes that because the *capilla* was constructed to accommodate the large numbers of native Cholulteca, it stands to reason that it would not have been built in the 1540s following the great *cocoliztli* of 1544-46. Hence, it was more likely erected shortly before the plague of 1576.

⁴⁶⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402.

⁴⁶¹ Jaime Lara touts Cholula's *Capilla Real* as the best example still extant of open chapels from sixteenth-century New Spain. See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 21.

⁴⁶² See Gabriel de Rojas's *Relación de Cholula*, which appears in Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*. Fray Alonso Ponce made a similar observation in his 1586 report; see McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 400.

⁴⁶³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 405.

⁴⁶⁴ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 143. Lara notes the similarity of Cholula's Royal Chapel to Solomon's Royal Temple in Jerusalem. He suggests that the friars in the New World may have been influenced by their memories of Temple iconography from their travels throughout Europe. Even so, he purports that the more proximate visual blueprint for Cholula's Royal Chapel was Nicholas of Lyra's illustrations of Solomon's Hall, whose two-story elevation depicts a flat crenellated roof with arched openings of equal size in the upper and lower floors, much like the second-story openings in Cholula. See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 145-146.

⁴⁶⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 407.

⁴⁶⁶ AN-P, Fondo Cholula, Caja 1, Cuaderno 28, Número 1584, Fojas 36r y v, which dates to February 2, 1601.

⁴⁶⁷ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 198.

⁴⁶⁸ Francis Borgia Steck, OFM, chooses 1495, David Brading offers 1500, Buenaventura Salazar poses 1499, and Edmundo O'Gorman suggests the years 1482-1491 as a good range. Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 1-2. See also Brading, *The First America*, 104 and Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España [1541]*, xxiii.

⁴⁶⁹ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 1.

⁴⁷⁰ For the above biographical sketch of Motolinía, I rely mainly on Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 1-5.

⁴⁷¹ As previously noted, the Twelve were by no means the first friars in the Americas, rather, they comprised the first *official* group of Franciscans. They were preceded to Mexico-Tenochtitlán in 1522 by fray Pedro de Gante and his two companions, as well as an unsuccessful mission of twelve Franciscans to Cumaná, Venezuela in 1516. As Jaime Lara notes, “Tragically, the friars were murdered by their own neophytes at Cumaná when Spanish slave traders interfered in the project.” See Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, FN 232, p. 225. Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta discusses this mission in Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 39-48.

⁴⁷² Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 4.

⁴⁷³ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 66. In this way, these friars were equated with the apostles.

⁴⁷⁴ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 66.

⁴⁷⁵ The section on Motolinía is taken from Verónica A. Gutiérrez, “From the ‘Golden Age’ of Motolinía to the ‘Silvery Winter’ of Torquemada: Destiny, Eschatology, and Franciscan Interpretations of the Conquest of Mexico,” (Unpublished essay (UCLA), 2006).

⁴⁷⁶ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 123.

⁴⁷⁷ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 123.

⁴⁷⁸ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 137.

⁴⁷⁹ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 137-138.

⁴⁸⁰ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 138.

⁴⁸¹ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 139.

⁴⁸² Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 198-199.

⁴⁸³ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 211.

⁴⁸⁴ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 213.

⁴⁸⁵ Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain [1541]*, 213.

⁴⁸⁶ Eventually the Golden Age of Evangelization would fade in the 1550s, as the friars lost their initial sense of euphoria and realized that baptism did not ensure faithful Christians. For an overview of this shift, see Verónica A. Gutiérrez, “From the ‘Golden Age’ of Motolinía to the ‘Silvery Winter’ of Torquemada.”

⁴⁸⁷ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*, 69.

⁴⁸⁸ The information in this paragraph is available in the introduction to Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*.

⁴⁸⁹ Lara, *City, Temple, Stage*.

⁴⁹⁰ Brading, *The First America*, 110-116.

⁴⁹¹ Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 74-76.

⁴⁹² Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 173.

⁴⁹³ This phrase – or a variant of it – appears in almost every testament in the Cholula corpus, whose twenty-six wills date from 1590-1601.

⁴⁹⁴ The name of the *india ladina* was Mariana Rodríguez. We know there is no interpreter present because she dictates her will “in the Spanish tongue.” See AN-P, Cuaderno 5, No. 315, folio 18v.

⁴⁹⁵ Carlos M. N. Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 107.

⁴⁹⁶ The first page of one of the Cholula wills is missing, but since every other testator indicates that he or she is ill, I believe it is safe to assume that this testator was also on his deathbed. For the information in the missing page I have relied on an extract published by Cayetano Reyes García, *Índice y Extractos de Los Protocolos de la Notaria de Cholula (1590-1600)*, vol. 8, Colección Científica, Catálogos y Bibliografías (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1973), 217-218.

⁴⁹⁷ For this section I rely heavily on Carlos Eire’s discussion of the art of dying in early modern Spain in Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 24-44.

⁴⁹⁸ Carlos Eire uses the literary example of don Quixote, who on his deathbed requests a priest to hear his confession and a notary to write his testament, “for at a grave moment as this no man should jest with his soul.” During the early modern period, testaments could be imbued with a transcendent religious purpose, so that the writing of the will could be considered a penitential act preparing the soul to accept death and detach itself from all earthly objects. See Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 19, 22. For a useful outline of a typical Spanish will from this period, see Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 36.

⁴⁹⁹ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 24.

⁵⁰⁰ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 23.

⁵⁰¹ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 29.

⁵⁰² The information in this paragraph is based on Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 29.

⁵⁰³ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 30-31. The rite of extreme unction – which was meant to guarantee the soul’s entrance into at least purgatory – was approached with a certain trepidation among the dying, for it was believed that if one recovered after receiving it, one was meant to

live a semi-monastic life, including sexual abstinence and refraining from walking barefoot. See Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 32.

⁵⁰⁴ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 33-34.

⁵⁰⁵ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 33-34.

⁵⁰⁶ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 39.

⁵⁰⁷ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 39.

⁵⁰⁸ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 39.

⁵⁰⁹ Susan Kellogg and Matthew Restall, *Dead Giveaways: Indigenous Testaments of Colonial Mesoamerica and the Andes* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 25.

⁵¹⁰ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*. See especially Book One: “Eager for Heaven.” In addition to a mendicant habit, Madrileños also requested burial in linen shrouds or in confraternity tunics.

⁵¹¹ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 105.

⁵¹² Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 109.

⁵¹³ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 109.

⁵¹⁴ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 110. See also Bonaventure, *The Soul’s Journey into God [1260AD]* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 317-318.

⁵¹⁵ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 107. This appears to be the preferred wording among the sixteenth-century friars themselves, who often wrote about the moment they took “the habit of the Father St. Francis.” For an example discussing the entry into the Order of fray Martín de Sarmiento, the second bishop of Tlaxcala, with this phrasing, see Oroz, *The Oroz Codex*, 227.

⁵¹⁶ Salvador Torres asks for the habit in both his wills. Since he is the same person I only count him once.

⁵¹⁷ See Reyes García, *Índice y Extractos de Los Protocolos de la Notaria de Cholula (1590-1600)*, 217-218.

⁵¹⁸ For a discussion of the use of the Virgin Mary and the saints as advocates in sixteenth-century Spanish wills, see Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 68-73.

⁵¹⁹ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 94.

⁵²⁰ Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*, 99-100.

⁵²¹ *Indios principales* were high-ranking native peoples whose lineage dated to the pre-conquest period but who were outranked by caciques. *Labradores* would have been what Charles Gibson

defines as “white farmers,” that is, low-ranking Spaniards in the agricultural enterprise who owned farm lands and had the right to indigenous labor to work them. For a brief overview of how Spanish *labradores* received native laborers, see Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 227.

⁵²² In the sixteenth-century, the *corregidor* would have been appointed by the Spanish Crown to represent the central government’s interests as well as the interests of the local municipality and generally hold office only for a few years in order to prevent them from becoming too powerful in the district or from privileging local interests above those of the Crown. See Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 30. Requesting a notary during one’s final illness was a standard request among the Cholula testators.

⁵²³ For a superb study of death and testamentary practices in early modern Spain, see Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory*. Requesting burial garments in one’s will was standard practice, as evidenced by Carlos Eire’s analysis of 436 testaments from sixteenth-century Madrid, a sizeable number of which request a shroud or a religious habit. The Cholula corpus is much smaller, consisting of twenty-six wills from 1590 to 1601; the collection includes both male and female Spaniards, one Portuguese male, an *india principal* (doña María Tlaltecayoa), and an *india ladina*, or Hispanized native woman. There are, in addition, eleven related documents including revocations, amendments, the naming of executors or heirs, and requests for a notary, but since these brief documents do not speak to the religious aspect of the death process and I have none of the original wills, I do not include them in this study.

⁵²⁴ The first Nahuatl testaments appeared in New Spain in the 1540s, an introduction made by the mendicant Orders in their efforts to evangelize native peoples. Though based on Spanish models, the Nahuas incorporated a storytelling element reflecting their strong pre-contact oral tradition. For a concise overview of the development, history, and peculiarities of Nahuatl testaments, see Rebecca Horn and James Lockhart, “Mundane Documents in Nahuatl,” in *Sources and Methods for the Study of Postconquest Mesoamerican Ethnohistory* (<http://whp.uoregon.edu/Lockhart/HornLockhart.pdf>, 2010). Published online provisionally, it will eventually appear in the supplementary material for *Handbook of Middle American Indians*. Numerous Nahuatl testaments and analyses have also been published; an early collection is Arthur J. O. Anderson, Frances Berdan, and James Lockhart, *Beyond the Codices: The Nahuatl View of Colonial Mexico*, ed. Johannes Wilbert, vol. 27, Latin American Studies Series, UCLA Latin American Center (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976). For a collection of testaments from various regions and in a variety of indigenous languages, see Kellogg and Restall, *Dead Giveaways*. Until recently, scholars believed the production of Nahuatl-language testaments virtually disappeared by the eighteenth century. Thanks to Miriam Melton-Villanueva’s discovery of a sizeable cache of Nahuatl wills from the Toluca Valley dating to the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, we now know the practice continued in some regions past independence. For a comparative discussion of this collection against an earlier corpus from the same region, see Miriam Melton-Villanueva and Caterina Pizzigoni, “Late Nahuatl Testaments from the Toluca Valley: Indigenous-Language Ethnohistory in the Mexican Independence Period” *Ethnohistory* 55, no. 3 (Summer 2008).

⁵²⁵ Because fellow testator Mariana Rodríguez declares in her 1592 will that she is an *india ladina*, that is, a Hispanized native person who speaks Castilian, dresses in a European manner, and in all essence operates as a cultural Spaniard, I do not consider her a native person but rather group her with the other European testators. For Mariana Rodríguez's testament, see AN-P, Cuaderno 5, No. 315, folio 18v-19r.

⁵²⁶ If there are additional Spanish-language wills from indigenous Cholulteca in sixteenth-century San Pedro Cholula, I have not come across them in the archives, nor have I seen any Nahuatl-language wills. There are, however, seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century Nahuatl-language testaments in the parish archive of San Andrés Cholula, the municipality adjoining San Pedro Cholula and in whose jurisdiction the Great Pyramid lies. Dr. Erika Hosselkus worked with these and other related documents in her dissertation. See Erika R. Hosselkus, "Living with Death Between the Volcanoes: Nahua Approaches to Mortality in Colonial Puebla's Upper Atoyac Basin" (Tulane University, 2011).

⁵²⁷ Having an audience of listeners present during the dictation of a last will and testament was a Nahua rather than a Spanish tradition. As Sarah Cline notes, the more public and familial nature of Nahuatl testaments was at variance with the European ideal outlined for New Spain. See Kellogg and Restall, *Dead Giveaways*, 20.

⁵²⁸ The *escribano conjuez* Juan Gómez Loçano's three names identify him as a Spaniard, however, his narrative notarial style suggests that he was trained by a native person in the Nahuatl testament tradition. As for the *alguacil*, or urban constable, during the colonial period this office was held by either a Spaniard or a native person; Cholula's *alguacil mayor*, or high constable, Nufio Manuel, was a Spaniard. Identified as a *labrador* in several other documents and as a notary (*escribano nombrado*) in 1604, he may have lived in the same neighborhood as doña María on the outskirts of Cholula and may even have interacted with her husband at the *repartimiento* center where, as fellow *labradores*, they would receive native workers for their fields. From other documents we know Nufio Manuel's lands adjoined those of native Cholulteca, that between 1590 and 1604 he both purchased and rented parcels of land in Cholula, and that in 1595 he founded a company with his brother to sell clothes imported from China in his mother's store. His presence on that afternoon speaks to doña María's status in the community, but also indicates her recourse to Nahua traditions, as I shall discuss below. Interestingly, Nufio Manuel's signature does not appear on any of the other wills in the Cholula corpus. Since doña María is the only high-ranking native person among the testators, it is reasonable to assume that he is present in order to honor one of Cholula's indigenous elite.

⁵²⁹ The presence of an interpreter does not necessarily signify that doña María did not speak Spanish. In fact, from the wording of the will it is unclear whether the notary and *alguacil mayor* spoke to her through the translator or merely in his presence. Instead, doña María may have requested or even hired the interpreter in order to add another layer of protection between herself and the Spanish colonial system, someone who could help her safeguard her interests and the interests of her community. We have at least one example of a Spanish-language testament from a colonial native woman in the Toluca region whose ability to speak Spanish is undeniable. This 1703 will states: "Even though she is competent in Castilian... he executed the office of interpreter." See Miriam Melton-Villanueva, "On Her Deathbed: Beyond the Stereotype of the

Powerless Indigenous Woman,” in *Documenting Latin America: Gender, Race, and Empire*, ed. Erin O’Connor and Leo Garofalo (Prentice Hall, 2011), 171. Furthermore, though we cannot determine the ethnicity of the three witnesses from the document, we do know that Spanish tradition mandated a trio of *testigos* – all males – to verify the legality of a will, though the men themselves did not need to be present during its dictation. In contrast, Nahuatl custom dictated that multiple witnesses of either gender remain present during the execution of the testament.

⁵³⁰ The document uses the verb “echar,” that is, to throw or cast out, though I have translated it more mildly as “escort.” Again, doña María’s desire for an audience of listeners – as well as for the presence of someone who will protect her interests – may reflect her recourse to the Nahuatl tradition of testament-writing. As Sarah Cline notes, excluding the testator’s relatives and co-residents during the dictation of the will was designed to give the testator freedom to speak without pressure from prospective heirs. See Kellogg and Restall, *Dead Giveaways*, 20.

⁵³¹ In a few other documents, doña María appears as “doña María Tlapapaltze” after her mother. See AN-P, Cuaderno 28, No. 1582, folio 30r-31v and AN-P, Cuaderno 28, No. 1582, folio 32r-33v. Doña María’s reference to her parents being *indios principales* from the *cabecera* (head town) of Santiago rather than from the *barrio* (neighborhood) of Santiago indicates her continued observance of pre-conquest jurisdiction. As Charles Gibson points out, the *cabecera* was identified as the capital town of a local indigenous ruler who bore the title *tlatoani*. See Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 34.

⁵³² Though the Church of San Gabriel was the principal sacred structure in Cholula’s Franciscan evangelization complex in the sixteenth century, it was not the only one. There stood beside it two smaller structures. The first was the *Capilla Real* (Royal Chapel), also known as the *Capilla de los Naturales* (Native Chapel), an open-air structure likely built in the 1540s or 1560s by Cholula’s indigenous nobility. Its roof had collapsed sometime before 1581 and on June 9, 1595, that is, the year prior to doña María’s will, a collection of *indios principales* and *indios macehuales* (commoners) from Cholula petitioned the viceroy, don Luis de Velasco, to fix it. The second structure was the Franciscan church of the Third Order, built at the native peoples’ expense on land between the *convento* and the *Capilla Real*. For more on the history of these two chapels, see de la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula y sus iglesias*, 74-90.

⁵³³ The Spanish wording is: “un hábito del bienaventurado San Francisco.” See AN-P, Cuaderno 18, No. 1276, folio 8r. Throughout the colonial period, native peoples often made this request. The Franciscan chronicler, fray Gerónimo de Mendieta, records in his 1596 chronicle the love the native peoples had for the habit of St. Francis. According to him, if a friar could not be assigned to an indigenous town the native inhabitants would request that at least they be sent a habit to elevate it on a pole on Sundays and holydays and pray that it preach to them. See Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana [1596]*, 330-331. Catarina Pizzigoni notes in her study of wills from the Toluca Valley that “among [indigenous] men [the request for] the habit of San Francisco is very common, accompanied by its rope.” Caterina Pizzigoni, *Testaments of Toluca*, UCLA Latin American Studies (Stanford, Los Angeles: Stanford University Press, 2007), 15. Ropes were important sacrificial items in pre-conquest society, often used for bloodletting during auto-sacrifice. None of my testators mention the cincture, though I assume it would be included with the habit. Importantly, only a bona fide, discarded habit from the Franciscans themselves

could be used as burial dress, hence the practice provided the friars with additional income. As for *cofradías*, in colonial Mexico they served various social, cultural, and spiritual purposes. Most were segregated by ethnicity, though some welcomed members who were Spanish or indigenous. For a concise discussion, see Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule*, 127-133. The collection of twenty-six wills from Cholula mentions three *cofradías*: the Sodality of the Most Blessed Sacrament, which is the most popular, the Sodality of the Holy True Cross (*cofradía de la Santa Veracruz*), and the Sodality of the Souls in Purgatory (*cofradía de las Ánimas del Purgatorio*). It is likely there were additional indigenous-only *cofradías*, but of those we have no record.

⁵³⁴ Doña María's generous donation of 100 *pesos de oro común* (common gold pesos) plus the "customary amount of alms" indicates her elevated social status in the community. Unfortunately, since many of the wills in the Cholula corpus ask that the "customary amount" of alms be given in exchange for petitioned masses, it remains difficult to determine exact amounts.

⁵³⁵ From this point until the will's closing, doña María lists her debts as well as any amounts owed to her, leaving a parcel of land called a "mecate" behind the church of St. Anton to Beatriz, "the female daughter of the said Juan Cardoso, my husband." Whether this is Cardoso's daughter from a previous marriage or extramarital relationship is unclear. It may be that as a native woman she is being careful to note that the girl is her husband's daughter rather than her daughter with another man, since "mecatl" – which means rope or cord – is a Nahuatl term for kin relations or lineage. Beyond this, doña María leaves 40 pesos to her brother, Francisco Tlaltecayoa, whose property adjoined that of Juan Cardoso, to whom he sold land in 1598 for 28 pesos, ostensibly after doña María's death. Although the bill of sale is dated September 2, 1598, I am assuming Juan Cardoso received or purchased the original piece of Tlaltecayoa family property upon his marriage to doña María. See AN-P, Cuaderno 23, No. 1404, folio 19r-20v. Though doña María's will is rich with this and other information relating to the social history of late sixteenth-century Cholula, that discussion falls outside the scope of this chapter and constitutes another essay in itself, an analysis that would also consider similar information from the other twenty-five testaments dating to this period.

⁵³⁶ I am excluding, of course, the lay Third Order, since neither she (nor any other testator from Cholula) mentions being associated with it, despite there being a Third Order church in Cholula's Franciscan complex. The current Third Order chapel dates to the eighteenth century, though the original would have been constructed by the native peoples at their own expense in the 1530s. See footnote thirteen. Traditionally, the Third Order was responsible for producing and repairing the habits of the local friars, though I have no documentation relating to the relationship between Cholula's Third Order and the friars in the *convento* de San Gabriel. It is not clear whether in Cholula the Third Order was open to Spaniards only or also to native peoples. Given that the structure was funded by the local Cholulteca, I would like to imagine they could become members. This, then, would mean they would have access to their own lay habits and need not request them on their deathbeds. Since there are no extant Nahuatl-language testaments from sixteenth-century Cholula there is no way of knowing. Given that doña María requests a habit, I have to assume she was not Third Order and thus did not have one of her own.

⁵³⁷ A 1581 report by the Spanish *corregidor* Gabriel de Rojas states that there were usually twenty friars in residence in Cholula's *convento*. See Rojas, "Relación de Cholula," 144. The official report of the Holy Gospel Province sent to the Franciscan Minister General in Rome in 1585 includes a brief two sentence description of the establishment in Cholula, mentioning twenty-two friars in residence. See Oroz et al., *Relación de la descripción de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio*, 166. Another source from 1585 states that "there always resided many religious" in Cholula's *convento*. See Salazar, *Los doce primeros apóstoles franciscanos en México*, 200. I am assuming the designation of preacher meant that one could speak the indigenous language.

⁵³⁸ Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest*, 206.

⁵³⁹ Kellogg and Restall, *Dead Giveaways*, 20.

⁵⁴⁰ See Melton-Villanueva and Pizzigoni, "Late Nahuatl Testaments from the Toluca Valley": 376 for reference to bell-ringing as a popular request in Nahuatl wills from the Toluca Valley by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their work implies that this request reflected continuity with an earlier tradition.

⁵⁴¹ Horn and Lockhart, "Mundane Documents in Nahuatl," 2.

⁵⁴² Horn and Lockhart, "Mundane Documents in Nahuatl," 4.

⁵⁴³ Personal communication, Miriam Melton-Villanueva, September 29, 2010.

⁵⁴⁴ For a concise overview of this work, see Sarah Cline, "Fray Alonso de Molina's Model Testament and Antecedents to Indigenous Wills in Spanish America," in *Dead Giveaways: Indigenous Testaments of Colonial Mesoamerica and the Andes*, ed. Susan Kellogg and Matthew Restall (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998). The full Spanish-Nahuatl text of the *Confesionario Mayor* is available online at <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/02585175333505284454480/index.htm>.

⁵⁴⁵ Cline, "Molina's Model Testament," 19. Indigenous men as well as Europeans could serve as notaries; in native towns, the notaries often were native men.

⁵⁴⁶ Cline, "Molina's Model Testament," 20.

⁵⁴⁷ Cline, "Molina's Model Testament," 20.

⁵⁴⁸ Personal communication, Dr. León García Garagarza, September 28, 2010. For this section I rely on his unpublished essay, especially the section called "Aztec Funeral Shrouds" in León García Garagarza, "The Year the People Turned into Cattle: the End of the World in 1558 New Spain."

⁵⁴⁹ Louise Burkhart, "The Solar Christ in Nahuatl Doctrinal Texts of Early Colonial Mexico" *Ethnohistory* 35, no. 3 (1988): 238.

⁵⁵⁰ Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta mentions the indigenous practice of wrapping corpses to protect them from these cold winds. See footnote three of “Aztec funeral shrouds in García Garagarza, “The Year the People Turned into Cattle.”

⁵⁵¹ See “Aztec Funeral Shrouds” in García Garagarza, “The Year the People Turned into Cattle.”

⁵⁵² The Franciscan chronicler fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinia mentions this custom in *Memoriales*. See “Aztec Funeral Shrouds” in García Garagarza, “The Year the People Turned into Cattle.”

⁵⁵³ Personal communication, Dr. León García Garagarza, September 28, 2010.

⁵⁵⁴ Personal communication, Dr. León García Garagarza, September 28, 2010.

⁵⁵⁵ Cline, “Molina’s Model Testament,” 25.

⁵⁵⁶ Carlos Eire discusses these ideas in detail in the first section of his book.

⁵⁵⁷ Fray Francisco Morales, respected colonial Mexican historian and current Provincial of the Holy Gospel Province, believes that the Procession of the Lanterns in honor of the Virgin of the Spanish Remedies – also known as the female conqueror – developed in the mid-twentieth century. Having resided in, researched extensively, and published about Cholula, he sees no evidence of the ritual’s colonial origins (Personal Communication, 2007). Even so, I would argue that it owes its conceptual origin to that complicated moment when native Cholulteca and Franciscan friar developed a Nahuatl-Christianity in the sixteenth century. Numerous images of the procession exist. Some of the best can be found in Ashwell and O’Leary, *Cholula, la ciudad sagrada, Cholula, the Sacred City*. A detailed discussion of the modern manifestations of Cholula’s Christianity appear in Ashwell, *Creo para poder entender: la vida religiosa en los barrios de Cholula*.

⁵⁵⁸ San Andrés Cholula became its own *municipio* in 1585; its limits reflect its former Olmeca-Xicalanca occupation. The boundaries of San Pedro Cholula reflect the Tolteca-Chichimeca settlement. The pyramid, which is the home of the Sanctuary of *Los Remedios*, lies within the jurisdiction of San Andrés Cholula.

⁵⁵⁹ Nahuatl for “our holy mother” and appropriated by the colonial Franciscans to refer to the Virgin Mary.

⁵⁶⁰ Gabriel de Rojas relates that Cholollan’s priests originated from this *barrio*, which is just behind the current location of San Gabriel. This would explain its Nahuatl name, since the friary faces the central plaza, where the *tianguiztli*, or marketplace, would be held.

⁵⁶¹ More than likely this is meant to be fray Bernardino de Siena, a XX century Italian friar.

⁵⁶² For a description of this pre-hispanic pilgrimage, see Gabriel de Rojas in Acuña, *Relaciones Geográficas*.

⁵⁶³ See Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*.

⁵⁶⁴ Cortés, *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*.

⁵⁶⁵ I repeat the legend as I read it on a flyer posted at the *convento de San Gabriel* in late August 2007. As I discovered by chance, the Franciscans actually oversee an elaborate ritual procession one week prior to August 31 whereby they bring the Virgin down from the pyramid with music, singing, and candles. For an excellent discussion of apparition literature and its tropes, see William A. Christian, *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

APPENDIX A

Franciscan Friaries in the Bishopric of Tlaxcala Modified from The Oroz Codex, 1585

La Puebla and City of Los Angeles – San Francisco	up to 40 professed friars; course of humanities with 15 students; 6 preachers
Totomioacan – San Francisco	2 priests; 1 preacher
Tlaxcala – Assumption of Our Lady	8 religious; 2 preachers
Totolla – San Juan Bautista	2 religious; 1 preacher
Cuixtla – San Felipe	2 religious; both preachers
Santa María Navitas	2 religious; 1 preacher
Topoyanco – San Francisco	2 religious; 1 preacher
Santa Ana	2 religious; 1 preacher
Quamantla – San Luis	10 religious; 6 clerical students studying Otomí
Atlancatepec – San Juan Bautista	2 religious; 1 preacher
Zacatlan – San Pedro y Pablo	3 religious; 1 preacher
Cholula – San Gabriel¹	22 friars; course of humanities; 2 preachers
Huejotzingo – San Miguel	6 religious; 4 preachers
Atlixco – Santa María de Jesús	4 religious; 2 preachers; secular pastor for Spaniards
Calpa[n] – San Andrés	3 religious; 1 preacher
Quauhquechula – San Martín	4 religious; 2 preachers

¹ San Andrés Cholula was canonically established between February 27 and October 24, 1585. When fray Alonso de Ponce, OFM visited on the latter date, it was a small house without a church; in the friary resided two religious.

Amozoc – Assumption of Our Lady	2 religious; 1 preacher
Quauhtinchan – San Juan Bautista	2 religious; both preachers
Tecalli – Santiago	3 religious; 1 preacher
Tepeyacac – San Francisco	5 religious; 2 preachers
Acatzinco – San Juan Evangelista	3 religious; 2 preachers
Santo Tomás de Acatzinco	2 priests; 1 preacher
Quechulac – Sta María Magdalena	3 religious; 1 preacher
Tecamachalco – Assumption of Mother of God	4 religious; 2 preachers
Tecacan – Conception of Our Lady	4 religious; 2 preachers
Xalapa – Nativity of Our Lady	4 religious; 2 preachers
La VeraCruz – San Francisco	4 religious; [no preachers]
La Habana, Cuba – San Francisco	4 religious; 2 preachers

Adapted from:

Pedro Oroz, Gerónimo de Mendieta, Francisco Suárez, and Fidel de Jesús Chauvet. *Relación de la descripción de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio: que es en las Indias Occidentales que llaman la Nueva España: hecha en el año de 1585*. Nueva ed. México D.F.: Imprenta Mexicana de Juan Aguilar Reyes, 1947.

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