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Aerial Views of Central America's Río Lempa Basin in the
Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala, 1768-1770

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

by

Carlos Aníber Rivas

2022

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Aerial Views of Central America's Río Lempa Basin in the
Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala, 1768-1770

by

Carlos Aníber Rivas

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black, Chair

This dissertation investigates the thirty-seven entries in the *Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala (DGM)* that correspond to present-day El Salvador and the Río Lempa basin. Each of these entries is a description of a parish in the diocese and includes census data, ethnographic reflections, and watercolor aerial views that operate as maps for each parish. Informed by the latest advancements in decolonial methodologies and critical race studies, I offer the first art historical reading of these aerial views and contextualize them among other Spanish colonial cartographical technologies. I situate the *DGM's* images among contemporaneous cartographical production to show that this was the most ambitious visualization of Central America yet attempted. In addition, I evaluate Cortes y Larraz's subjectivity in America -- imagined in the early modern

period as the “New World” -- to understand biases in the historical record that affect even census data. In contrast to previous scholarship, which has taken much of Cortes y Larraz’s census at face value, I offer a more nuanced view of eighteenth-century racial politics that included a complex set of negotiations between church officials, colonial administrators, and inhabitants of color. I show that the racial diversity in the Río Lempa basin was far too complicated for eighteenth-century information technologies to properly record. Consequently, works such as the *DGM* accelerated and promoted *mestizaje*.

keywords: Colonial Latin America, Central American Studies, El Salvador, Guatemala, Latin American Art History, Visual Studies, Manuscript Studies, History of Cartography, Surveillance, Geography, Decolonial Studies, Liberation Philosophy, Experimental Critical Theory

The dissertation of Carlos Aníber Rivas is approved.

Kevin Terraciano

Dell Upton

Charlene Villaseñor Black, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

para mi padre,
mi madre,
y todos
los nietos del jaguar
del pulgarcito de América

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations.....	viii
List of Illustrations.....	ix
List of Maps	xvii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xxii
VITA	xxvi
Introduction. <i>Q'anil</i> : Experimental Decolonial Epistemologies for Colonial Central American Art History.....	1
Historical and Ecological Significance of the Río Lempa	17
Theoretical Framework and Methodology: <i>Q'anil</i>	22
Literature Review	42
Central American Studies and Literature for Conceptions of Central American Identity and Postmemory	52
Chapter Overviews	57
Chapter 1. The People of the Río Lempa Basin	60
The People of the Río Lempa Basin	64
Xib'alb'a, or the Spanish Colonial Period	76
Chapter 2. Historiographical Overview of the Art History of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala during the Bourbon Reforms.....	82
Art at Santiago de los Caballeros, Seat of the Archbishop of Colonial Guatemala.....	87
The <i>DGM</i> in Scholarly Literature	99
Chapter 3. Metonymy and Aeriality: The Production of the Maps of the <i>DGM</i> within the Context of Early Modern Colonial Cartography	104
The Political Map/Landscape.....	109
Constructed Aeriality through Metonymy and Modularity: The Encyclopedic Sequence of Maps/Landscapes in the <i>DGM</i>	115
Cartographical Precedents	142
Flight of the Phoenix and Final Remarks	166
Chapter 4. Seeing Black and Indian in Eighteenth-Century El Salvador: Cortes y Larraz's Ethnographic Notes.....	174
Ladinos, Afrodescendants, Mestizaje and the Conundrum of Race.....	185
Cortes y Larraz's Ethnographic Descriptions and Census Keeping	188

Racial Ambiguity	199
Conclusion.....	201
Future Studies	209
Indigenous Knowledge(s) in the Colonial Artifact.....	211
APPENDIX A. Maps corresponding to present-day El Salvador in the <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala, 1767-1771</i>	218
APPENDIX B. Maps corresponding to present-day southern Guatemala in the <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala, 1767-1771</i>	258
BIBLIOGRAPHY	330

Abbreviations

DGM *Descripción Geografico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala*

San Salvador Institutions

UES Universidad de El Salvador

UCA Universidad Centroamericana, "José Simeón Cañas"

MUPI Museo de la Palabra e Imagen

AGN Archivo General de la Nación

Guatemala City Institutions

USCA Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala

UFM Universidad Francisco Marroquín

MPV Museo Popol Vuh

AGCA Archivo General de Centro América

Seville Institutions

AGI Archivo General de Indias

PARES Portal de Archivos Españoles

Los Angeles Institutions

GRI Getty Research Institute

List of Illustrations

Figure 0-1. The Río Lempa Watershed Basin.....	2
Figure 0-2. View of the Río Lempa from Puente San Marcos Lempa “Puente de Oro.” San Marcos Lempa, El Salvador. Photo by author, 2016.....	2
Figure 0-3. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Title page, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES).....	3
Figure 0-4. Unknown, <i>Portrait of Pedro Cortes y Larraz (1712-1787)</i> , detail, c. 1800-1830. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Santa Iglesia Catedral Basílica Metropolitana de Santiago de Guatemala. Guatemala City, Guatemala.....	4
Figure 0-5. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Olocuilta, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES).....	5
Figure 0-6. Population of Central America at the eve of Spanish Conquest. Source: Caroyln Hall and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, <i>Historical Atlas of Central America</i> (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).	7
Figure 0-7. Limits of the diocese and major parishes during Cortes y Larraz’s <i>visita pastoral</i> . Adrián Recinos, “Introducción.” In <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , edited by Adrián Recinos. Biblioteca “Goathemala” 20. Guatemala City, Sociedad de Geografía e Historia, 1958.....	8
Figure 0-8. Casta Painting (with hierarchy), 18th century. Oil on canvas, 148 x 104 cm. Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Mexico City, Mexico.	17
Figure 0-9. Jorge Lazo, Aerial photograph of the Río Lempa, 2015.	19
Figure 0-10. Population Densities at the Beginning of the 16th Century in Central America. Source: Caroyln Hall and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, <i>Historical Atlas of Central America</i> (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).....	19
Figure 0-11. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Mapa del curato de San Salvador, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES.....	26
Figure 0-12. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Mapa del curato de Apaneca, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	27

Figure 0-13. Francisco Ximénez, <i>Popol Vuh</i> , 1700-1715. Manuscript, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. Ref F 1465 P817 1700a.....	33
Figure 0-14 Maya glyph for <i>Q'anil</i>	36
Figure 0-15. Roque Dalton's 1960 Arrest Record	56
Figure 1-1. Maya polychrome pottery, San Jacinto, El Salvador. Drawn by John Held. American Museum of Natural History, New York. Source: Samuel Lothrop, <i>Pottery Types and Their Sequence in el Salvador</i> , vol. 1.4 Indian Notes and Monographs (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1927): 188.....	66
Figure 1-2. Structure 1, Cerén, El Salvador. Classic Maya, c. 750 CE. Image courtesy of Fundación ILAM.	67
Figure 1-3. Nahuat (Pipil) pottery types, Postclassic. San Jacinto and Hacienda Consolación, El Salvador. Source: Samuel Lothrop, <i>Pottery Types and Their Sequence in El Salvador</i> , vol. 1.4 Indian Notes and Monographs (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1927): 194.	70
Figure 1-4. Pottery types from present-day El Salvador. a = Chorotegan (Cacaopera), b = Nahuat (Pipil), c = Maya, d = Nahuat (Pipil). Source: Samuel Lothrop, <i>Pottery Types and Their Sequence in El Salvador</i> , vol. 1.4 Indian Notes and Monographs (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1927): 193.....	70
Figure 1-5. <i>Primeras Migraciones</i> . Infographic, 2021. Museo de la Palabra e Imagen, San Salvador, El Salvador (MUPI). Image courtesy of MUPI. ...	74
Figure 1-6. <i>Primeras Migraciones</i> , detail. Infographic, 2021. Museo de la palabra e imagen, San Salvador, El Salvador (MUPI). Image courtesy of MUPI. .	75
Figure 2-1. Political Jurisdiction of Central America, 1732-1785. Source: Carolyn Hall and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, <i>Historical Atlas of Central America</i> (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).	83
Figure 2-2. Plan of the square block where government buildings are to be constructed, 1784. San Salvador, El Salvador. Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Audiencia de Guatemala, Legajo 575. Source: Sidney David Markman, <i>Colonial Architecture of Central America</i> , vol. 2 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1995), 244.....	86
Figure 2-3. Plan of the customshouse, <i>aduana</i> , 1791. San Salvador, El Salvador. Archivo General de Centroamérica (AGCA), A 3.5 (1791) 1522-77, fols 57-58. Source: Sidney David Markman, <i>Colonial Architecture of Central America</i> , vol. 2 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1995), 245.	87
Figure 2-4. View of the City of Santiago de los Caballeros, Guatemala	89

Figure 2-5. Plan for New Guatemala City, 1776. Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Audiencia de Guatemala Legajo 463, MP 220. Source: Sidney David Markman, <i>Colonial Architecture of Central America</i> , vol. 1 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1995), 245.....	90
Figure 2-6. Dr. Juan Antonio Dighero, title page of <i>El Pantheon real, fúnebre aparato a las exequias, que en la ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala se hicieron por el alma, y a la piadosa memoria de nuestra catholica reina, y señora, doña Maria Amalia de Saxonia</i> , 120 pages, 1 folded leaf of plates, 21 cm., Guatemala, 1763. Getty Research Institute (GRI), 86-B17072, Los Angeles, California.	91
Figure 2-7. Dr. Juan Antonio Dighero, page from <i>El Pantheon real, fúnebre aparato a las exequias, que en la ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala se hicieron por el alma, y a la piadosa memoria de nuestra catholica reina, y señora, doña Maria Amalia de Saxonia</i> , 120 pages, 1 folded leaf of plates, 21 cm, Guatemala, 1763. Getty Research Institute (GRI), 86-B17072, Los Angeles, California.	92
Figure 2-8. Antiguan Baroque at the <i>Convento de Santa Clara</i> , 1705, rebuilt 1734. Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala.....	94
Figure 3-1. Carta de Pedro Cortes y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis de Guatemala a S.M., ES.41091.AGI/26/GUATEMALA,948,N.X, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain..	107
Figure 3-2. Carta de Pedro Cortes y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis de Guatemala a S.M., ES.41091.AGI/26/GUATEMALA,948,N.X, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain	107
Figure 3-3. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	119
Figure 3-4. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	119
Figure 3-5. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Izalco, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	121
Figure 3-6. Photograph of Izalco, El Salvador	121
Figure 3-7. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, <i>Map of Quezaltepeque</i> , detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville,	

Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)	122
Figure 3-8. Photograph of Basilica de Nuestro Señor de Esquipulas, Esquipulas, Guatemala, 2005. Courtesy of Jan Pesula.	122
Figure 3-9. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)	124
Figure 3-10. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	124
Figure 3-11. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	125
Figure 3-12. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	125
Figure 3-13. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Nonualco, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	127
Figure 3-14. Satellite Image highlighting the area shown in the DGM Map of Nonualco. Source: Google Maps	128
Figure 3-15. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Nonualco, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	128
Figure 3-16. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Sonsonate, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	129
Figure 3-17. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Jacinto, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	129
Figure 3-18. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Quezaltepeque, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and	

watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	130
Figure 3-19. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	132
Figure 3-20. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	132
Figure 3-21. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	133
Figure 3-22. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Santa Ana, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	133
Figure 3-23. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Quetzaltenango, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	134
Figure 3-24. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Quetzaltenango, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	134
Figure 3-25 Map of the route from Puerto de Caballo (Honduras) to the Gulf of Fonseca (El Salvador), sixteenth century. Archivo General de Indias, Seville	135
Figure 3-26. Map of the route from Puerto de Caballo (Honduras) to the Gulf of Fonseca (El Salvador), detail, showing grid and metonymy that stands in for a "pueblo de indios," sixteenth century. Archivo General de Indias, Seville	135
Figure 3-27. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES	136
Figure 3-28. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Mejicanos, detail, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i> , 1768-1771. Ink and	

- watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES137
- Figure 3-29. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Miguel, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES138
- Figure 3-30. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Ereguayquin, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES138
- Figure 3-31. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Vicente, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES139
- Figure 3-32. View of the Valle de Jiboa, containing the town of San Vicente with Chinchontepic in the background.140
- Figure 3-33. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Vicente, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES141
- Figure 3-34. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Vicente, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES141
- Figure 3-35. Digital Restoraton of the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan. Image courtesy of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín (UFM), Guatemala City, Guatemala.147
- Figure 3-36. Julio Sicán, photograph showing a 1:1 replica of the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan. Source: Julio Sicán, "Réplica de Lienzo de Quauhquechollan describe el proceso de la conquista en Guatemala," *Prensa Libre*, July 24, 2018, sec. Ciudades.....147
- Figure 3-37. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Verspuccii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.149
- Figure 3-38. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Verspuccii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, detail. Ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x

- 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.150
- Figure 3-39. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Verspucii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.152
- Figure 3-40. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Verspucii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.154
- Figure 3-41. *Portolan atlas*, f. 1v-2r. Parchment, 280 x 390mm, 1547. HM 29. Rare Books, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.....157
- Figure 3-42. *Portolan atlas*, f. 1v, detail. Parchment, 280 x 390mm, 1547. HM 29. Rare Books, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.158
- Figure 3-43. Jacques Nicolas Bellin, *Description géographique des isles Antilles possédees par les anglois*. L'imprimerie de Didot, Paris, 1758. F2131 .B44. Jay I. Kislak Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. ...159
- Figure 3-44. Pinturas (Maps) of the relaciones geográficas, New Spain, 1579-85. Source: Donald Robertson, "The Pinturas (maps) of the Relaciones Geográficas, With a Catalog" in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. Howard F. Cline, vol. 12, Guide to Ethnohistorical Sources, Part 1 (Austin; University of Texas Press, 1972).....162
- Figure 3-45. Unknown Mixtec artist, Mapa de Teozacualco, paint on twenty-three sheets of European paper, 142 x 177 cm. Benson Library, University of Texas, Austin.163
- Figure 3-46. Mariano Martí, Title Page, *Relación y Testimonio integro de la visita general de este obispado de Caracas y Venezuela hecha por el ilustrisimo señor Don Mariano Martí*, Manuscript 1771. Colección Documental Antigua de la Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela.170
- Figure 3-47. Francisco Álvarez, *Plan and Elevation for a Fortress at Omoa, Honduras*, 42.6 x 55 cm, 1760. ES.41091.AGI/MP-GUATEMALA,57, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.171
- Figure 5-1. Carolyn Cole, Photograph of the San Gabriel Mission showing severely damaged roof. Source: Richard White, "Op-Ed: What the Fire at San Gabriel Mission Left Behind," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2020, sec. Opinion.214
- Figure 5-2. Nathaniel Percy, Photograph showing interior damage of San Gabriel Mission during 2020 fire. Source: Brian Rokos and Nathaniel Percy, "4-

Alarm Fire Destroys Most of Mission San Gabriel," *The Mercury News*, July
11, 2020, sec. News.215

List of Maps

Source: Carta de Pedro Cortes y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis de Guatemala a S.M., ES.41091.AGI/26//GUATEMALA, 948, N.2. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain

Map 1. Curato de San Petapa	218
Map 2. Curato de Esclabos	219
Map 3. Curato de Conguaco	220
Map 4. Curato de Ahuachapan.....	221
Map 5. Curato de Apaneca	222
Map 6. Curato de Nahuizalco	223
Map 7. Curato de Sonsonate	224
Map 8. Curato de Caluco	225
Map 9. Curato de Izalco.....	226
Map 10. Curato de Guaimoco	227
Map 11. Curato de Ateos	228
Map 12. Curato de Mejicanos	229
Map 13. Curato de San Salvador.....	230
Map 14. Curato de San Jacinto	231
Map 15. Curato de Texaguangos.....	232
Map 16. Curato de Olocuilta	233
Map 17. Curato de Mazahuat.....	234
Map 18. Curato de Nonualco	235
Map 19. Curato de Zacatecoluca.....	236
Map 20. Curato de Usulután.....	237
Map 21. Curato de Ereguaiguín.....	238

Map 22. Curato de San Miguel.....	239
Map 23. Curato de Conchagua.....	240
Map 24. Curato de San Francisco Gotera	241
Map 25. Curato de Ozicala	242
Map 26. Curato de Titiguapa	243
Map 27. Curato de San Vicente	244
Map 28. Curato de Cojutepeque	245
Map 29. Curato de Suchitoto	246
Map 30. Curato de Chalatenango	247
Map 31. Curato de Tejutla	248
Map 32. Curato de Tonacatepeque.....	249
Map 33. Curato de San Juan Opico.....	250
Map 34. Curato de Texistepeque.....	251
Map 35. Curato de Santa Ana.....	252
Map 36. Curato de Chalchuapa	253
Map 37. Curato de Jutiapa	254
Map 38. Curato de Jilotepeque	255
Map 39. Curato de Mita	256
Map 40. Curato de Metapán	257
Map 41. Curato de Quezaltepeque	258
Map 42. Curato de Jocotan	259
Map 43. Curato de Chiquimula	260
Map 44. Curato de Zacapa	261
Map 45. Curato de Acasaguastlan	262
Map 46. Curato de San Agustín de la Reina Corona	263
Map 47. Curato de Zalama.....	264

Map 48. Curato de Taltique	265
Map 49. Curato de San Cristóbal	266
Map 50. Curato de Cobán	267
Map 51. Curato de Carcha	268
Map. 52 Curato de Cahbon	269
Map 53. Curato de Rauinal.....	270
Map 54. Curato de Cubulco	271
Map 55. Curato del Chol	272
Map 56. Curato de Salcabaha.....	273
Map 57. Curato de Uspantan	274
Map 58. Curato de Neuah	275
Map 59. Curato de Jocopilas.....	276
Map 60. Curato de Quiché	277
Map 61. Curato de Chichicastenango.....	278
Map 62. Curato de Zacualpa	279
Map 63. Curato de Xoyabah	280
Map 64. Curato de Xilotepeque.....	281
Map 65. Curato de Zumpango	282
Map 66. Curato de San Pedro Zacatepequez.....	283
Map 67. Curato de Pacicla.....	284
Map 68. Curato de Comalapan	285
Map 69. Curato de Patzum.....	286
Map 70. Curato de San Miguel Totonicapan	287
Map 71. Curato de San Cristóbal Totonicapan.....	288
Map 72. Curato de Momostenango	289
Map 73. Curato de Malacatan	290

Map 74. Curato de Huehuetenango	291
Map 75. Curato de Zoloma.....	292
Map 76. Curato de Jacaltenango	293
Map 77. Curato de Chiantla.....	294
Map 78. Curato de Culico.....	295
Map 79. Curato de Tejutla	296
Map 80. Curato de Zacatepeques.....	297
Map 81. Curato de Ostuncalco.....	298
Map 82. Curato de Quezaltenango	299
Map 83. Mapa de los curatos de San Pedro, Sololá, Panajachel, Atitlán	300
Map 84. Curato de Tepanguathemala	301
Map 85. Curato de Chimaltenango	302
Map 86. Curato de Texar	303
Map 87. Curato de Yzapan	304
Map 88. Curato de Alotenango	305
Map 89. Curato de Santiago Zacatepeques.....	306
Map 90. Curato de San Juan Zacatepeques	307
Map 91. Curato de Mixco	308
Map 92. Curato de la Hermita	309
Map 93. Curato de Amatitan	310
Map 94. Curato de Xinacantan.....	311
Map 95. Curato de Chiquimulilla	312
Map 96. Curato de Guazacapan	313
Map 97. Curato de Taxisco.....	314
Map 98. Curato de Tacuilula.....	315
Map 99. Curato de Guanagazapan	316

Map 100. Curato de Escuinta.....	317
Map 101. Curato de Garcia	318
Map 102. Curato de Mazatenango	319
Map 103. Curato de Cuilotenango	320
Map 104. Curato de Retaluleuc.....	321
Map 105. Curato de Zapotitan.....	322
Map 106. Curato de Zamayaque	323
Map 107 Curato de San Pablo Xocopilas.....	324
Map 108. Curato de Suchitepeques	325
Map 109. Curato de Atitlán	326
Map 110. Curato del Paulu	327
Map 111. Curato de Cusmalguapam.....	328
Map 112. Curato de Nexapam	329

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Introduction - *Q'anil*: Experimental Decolonial Epistemologies for Colonial Central American Art History

No longer limited to the confining space of aesthetics, art has been allowed its claim on social and individual domains hitherto supposed to be beyond the reach of art history. Images, too, have begun to receive their due. Not just seen in terms of art, they have been endowed again with the plenitude of function that arises not simply from context, but from the exchange between context and visibility. It is in the area of this exchange that the distinctive work of the art historian lies.¹

This dissertation examines early global and Spanish colonial geopolitics and imperialism in the Río Lempa watershed region and raises new insights and questions regarding how ecclesiastical authorities codified race, space, and place in the archival records and cartographical images of this diverse region of the Central American isthmus (Figure 0-1 and Figure 0-2).² Through a close-examination of images and text in an eighteenth-century census-atlas that surveyed the Río Lempa region, the *Descripcion Geografico-Moral de la Diocesis de Goathemala* (hereafter referred to as the *DGM*), I demonstrate that colonial Central American history and art history provide bridges across discourses for necessary research that reshapes mainstream understandings of contemporary

¹ David Freedberg et al., "The Object of Art History," *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 3 (1994): 394.

² My decision to frame the geographical region that I examine based on its natural topographical features (the Río Lempa) as opposed to contemporary or colonial borders is intentional as I believe it avoids some of the problems that arise when utilizing a framework based on nation-state boundaries. Nevertheless, for the practical logistics of this study, the Río Lempa watershed region is synonymous with the densely populated region that today comprises the southern half of contemporary Guatemala and the entirety of El Salvador.

coloniality in the region today (Figure 0-3).³ The following chapters closely consider thirty-seven entries within the *DGM* (out of a total of one hundred thirteen) and their accompanying images.



Figure 0-1. The Río Lempa Watershed Basin



Figure 0-2. View of the Río Lempa from Puente San Marcos Lempa “Puente de Oro.” San Marcos Lempa, El Salvador. Photo by author, 2016.

³ My thinking on coloniality borrows heavily from the work of Peruvian intellectual Aníbal Quijano and his notion of a colonial nexus of power persisting into “modernity.” See Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Neplanta* 3 (2000): 533–80.

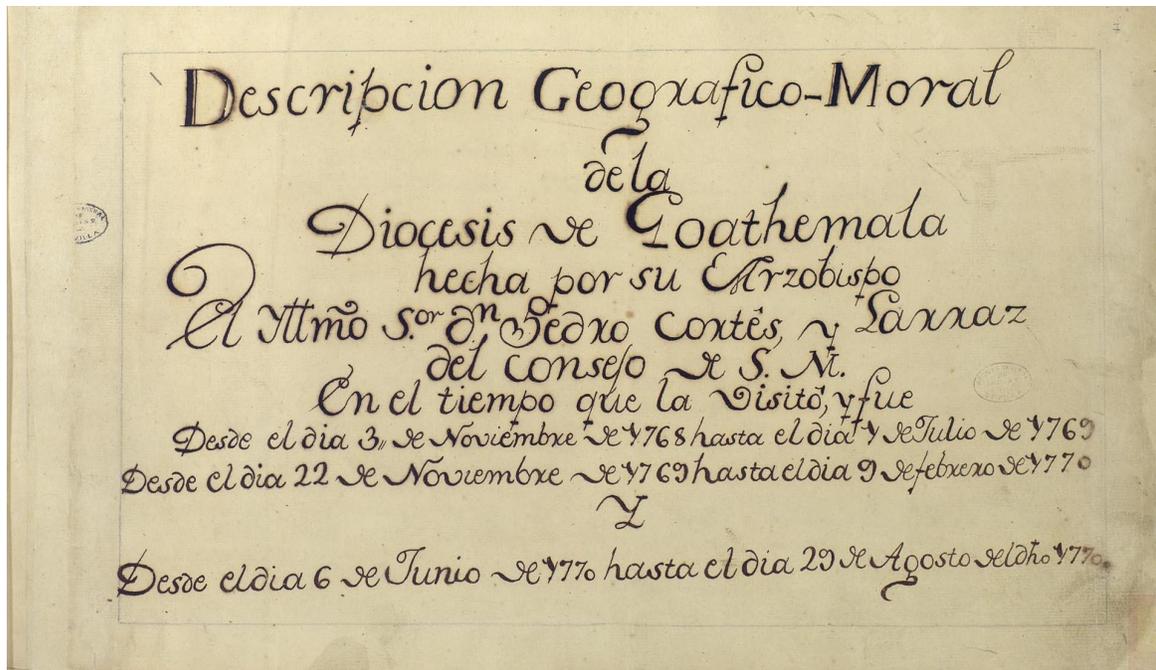


Figure 0-3. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Title page, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES).

The *DGM*, written by the Spanish-born Archbishop Pedro Cortes y Larraz, is a lengthy manuscript that survives as the most comprehensive primary source for eighteenth-century Salvadoran and Guatemalan history (Figure 0-4). It is the result of the tremendous *visita pastoral*, or pastoral visit, undertaken by Archbishop Cortes y Larraz and in it he provides demographical information and anecdotal reflection about each parish of the colonial diocese of Guatemala in northern Central America. It is organized as a sequence of entries, each one detailing a parish and each one containing one illustration, a map/landscape of the parish (Figure 0-5). It was produced between 1768-1771 and my study is the first to comprehensively review and analyze this manuscript's images using art historical methodologies. Moreover, this dissertation is among the first in the

discipline devoted exclusively to Central American art from the colonial period filling a major gap in the field. I situate the images within the history of Spanish colonial cartography specifically as well early modern cartography more generally. In doing so, I analyze the pictorial techniques employed by the images' artist and show that the *DGM* images were the most detailed visualizations of the Río Lempa region produced up until that point by colonial administration. Indeed, together the images provide a detailed bird's-eye-view of the entire diocese, a vast region comprising much of present-day southern Guatemala and virtually all of present-day El Salvador.



Figure 0-4. Unknown, *Portrait of Pedro Cortez y Larraz (1712-1787)*, detail, c. 1800-1830. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Santa Iglesia Catedral Basílica Metropolitana de Santiago de Guatemala. Guatemala City, Guatemala.



Figure 0-5. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Olocuilta, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)

The *DGM* manuscript is housed today in Seville's Archivo General de Indias (AGI) and belongs to a humanist tradition of early modern encyclopedic discourses on the Americas.⁴ Its pages measure approximately 23 x 29 cm each. Broadly defined, it is both a natural history in the Plinyian sense and a *relación geográfica*,

⁴ Such discourses in Europe began with the 1535 publication in Seville of Oviedo's *General and Natural History of the Indies* which is often thought of as the first encyclopedic chronicle of the New World. See Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia general y natural de las indias, islas y tierra firme del mar océano*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Imprenta de la real Audiencia de la Historia, 1851). For scholarly commentary on Oviedo's *Natural History*, see Jaime Gonzalez, "La significación de las indias para la historia de España, según Oviedo," in *América y la España del siglo XVI*, ed. Francisco y Fermín del Pino de Solano, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Madrid: C.S.I.C. Instituto Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, 1983), 77-84; Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, "La descripción del nuevo mundo en la primera mitad del siglo XVI: Pedro Mártir de Anglería y Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo," *Catharum: Revista de ciencias y humanidades* 9 (2008): 17-28.

though it certainly resembles the latter much more.⁵ Within the tomes of the *DGM* are extant a total of one hundred and twelve (out of an original one hundred and thirteen) ink and watercolor maps/landscapes of the parishes whose jurisdiction fell under the colonial diocese of Guatemala. The image illustrating the city of Santiago de los Caballeros is the only missing image, now lost to history. These images will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

As its title suggests, the *DGM* is first and foremost intended to be a description of the colonial diocese of Guatemala. The diocese was the most important in Central America and contained the majority of its inhabitants (Figure 0-6).⁶ Although the limits of the diocese were redefined throughout its history, by 1768 it extended northward from Santiago to reach the limits of the Petén, westward to the Pacific, and southeasterly to the Gulf of Fonseca (Figure 0-7).⁷ Addressing Charles III directly, Cortes y Larraz's primary interest in the lengthy *DGM* is to provide the crown information regarding the diocese's general state of affairs as well as an evaluation of Catholic orthodoxy as practiced by the diocese's diverse inhabitants, which by 1768 included bilingual and monolingual indigenous communities such as Maya-Kaqchiquel, Maya-Quiché, Maya-Q'anjobal, Maya-

⁵ For an overview of eighteenth-century sources on colonial Central America in this tradition see Catherine Poupeney Hart, "Entre historia natural y relación geográfica: el discurso sobre la tierra en el reino de Guatemala (siglo XVIII)," in *Lecturas y ediciones de crónicas de Indias. una propuesta interdisciplinaria* (Madrid and Frankfurt: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2004), 441–60. The *relaciones geográficas* were a series of questionnaires sent to colonial administrators that they would in turn answer. These efforts were undertaken to centralize the collection of information and maps about a given area within the Spanish empire.

⁶ John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue and Co., 1854).

⁷ Peter Gerhard, "Colonial New Spain, 1519-1786: Historical Notes on the Evolution of Minor Political Jurisdictions," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. Howard F. Cline, vol. 12, Guide to Ethnohistorical Sources, Part 1. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 63–137.

Chortí, Nahuat, and Lenca groups as well as African slaves and their descendants. Moreover, two centuries of racial mixing meant that settlements once solely indigenous had by the mid eighteenth century become quite racially diverse, leading to an entangled nexus of cultural heritages difficult to classify.⁸ As such, observing how the Catholic religion was practiced and the degree to which the diocese’s numerous inhabitants followed it correctly proved to be Cortes y Larraz’s primary preoccupation. This is the “moral geography” he wished to capture.

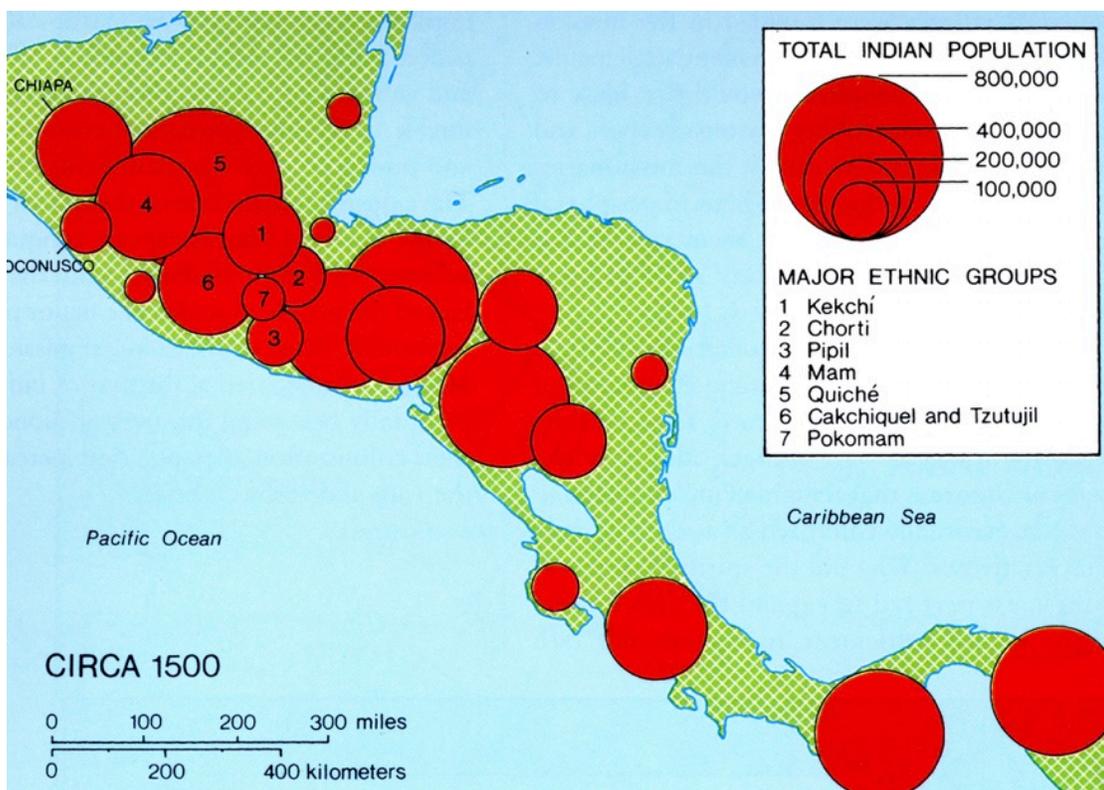


Figure 0-6. Population of Central America at the eve of Spanish Conquest. Source: Carolyn Hall and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *Historical Atlas of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

⁸ For a discussion of this, see Sidney David Markman, “Extinct, Fossilized, and Transformed Pueblos de Indios in the Reino de Guatemala, 1540-Ca. 1800,” in *Settlements in the Americas: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Ralph Bennett (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993): 53-77.

century persist today and they demand an analysis of the period informed by this understanding.⁹ That is to say, we must look at parts of eighteenth-century coloniality with the understanding that that some of these parts persist to this day. Indeed, the racialization of urban space today in the Río Lempa region exists largely as it had already been organized by the eighteenth century. This time-bending approach allows us to formulate research questions that look for links between the past and the present that help understand the trajectory of coloniality in the region. By making the historical connections between the region's Spanish colonial past with the present moment, one can uplift urgent calls demanding that migration across the continent be recognized as a human right, for example.¹⁰ This is because the conditions for forced migration today are the legacy, in no small part, of the colonialist and imperialist logics well established and in operation by the eighteenth century. Awareness of this timeline augments the reasoning behind today's increasing demands for peace and end to imperialism in the region that are a critical component of recent Central American Studies.¹¹

⁹ The bicentennial of El Salvador's independence (September 2021), for example, was met with increased critiques of the concept of "independence" given persistence oppression, violence, and coloniality.

¹⁰ Colonial Central American art history must look forward because Central American Studies must look back. While many scholars cite contemporary violence as justification for these human rights calls (i.e., the right to flee violence), few are looking at the recurring patterns of historic violence in the region that date back to the sixteenth century. Reparations for such violence have never been made, and historical amnesia only perpetuates the severity of contemporary violence.

¹¹ Ábrego writes, "Migration should be a human right. Safe transit across borders should be guaranteed. All people should have the option to remain and thrive in their homeland. These conditions are entirely absent for poor and racialized Central Americans throughout the isthmus and hemisphere." Leisy Ábrego, "Narratives of Migration and Integration of Central American Migrants in the US and Canada," Research Paper (Montreal, Canada: World Refugee & Migration Council, November 2021). Ábrego and Villalpando further explain that global neoliberal capitalism (which I and others argue is deeply rooted in Spanish colonialism) is one of the main culprits behind the negative racialization of Central Americans today in the isthmus and diaspora. See Leisy Ábrego and Alejandro Villalpando, "Racialization of Central Americans in the United States," in *Precarity and*

The goal of this dissertation requires the contradictory task of embracing altogether the spirit of the humanities, which is to advance knowledge on human society and culture, while at the same time questioning even the most fundamental (western) academic assumptions about the human itself (and therefore society, culture, space and time) that have come to shape the humanities. This is the challenge demanded by decolonizing methodologies, perhaps the most important tendency emerging today in the study of colonial Latin American art.¹² Therefore I utilize experimental epistemologies informed by critical indigeneity to call into question how the discipline of history itself has incorrectly relegated colonialism in Central America to the “past” when in reality it has been operating under both neocolonial and neofascist tendencies, themselves transformations of power structures introduced during the Spanish colonial period.¹³ My approach requires breaking from temporal categories

Belonging: Labor, Migration, and Noncitizenship, ed. Sylvanna Falcón et al. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 51. I claim that the racialization that allows for Central Americans’ perpetual subjugation to violence is a byproduct of the Spanish colonial order.

¹² Scholars across the academy are increasingly adopting frameworks informed by decolonizing methodologies. For a recent essay that discusses these issues as they relate to art history and curricula formation and proposes efforts that address the legacies of colonialism and racism, see Anne Marie Butler and Christine Hahn, “Decolonize This Art History: Imagining a Decolonial Art History Programme at Kalamazoo College,” *London Review of Education* 19, no. 1 (2021): 1–15.

¹³ Ideologies coming from discourses that sought to legitimize nationalist rule in the nineteenth century are in large part the main culprit for these misunderstandings. My decision to evoke contemporary neofascism in the region despite my primary object of study in this dissertation being an eighteenth-century manuscript is deeply political as I believe the early global world sheds far more light into the present than it is usually given credit for. For an analysis of the rise of neofascism in El Salvador, for example, see the June 2020 statement distributed across Central American Studies in the United States written by Steven Osuna, Carlos Rivas, Jennifer Cárcamo, and Yesenia Portillo (published anonymously as Diasporic Salvis), “An Open Letter Response from the Salvadoran Diaspora to the Nayib Bukele Administration’s COVID19 Measures and First Year in Office,” *Diasporic Salvis*, June 22, 2020, https://diasporicsalvis.com/2020/06/22/eng_bukelecovid/. The use of the term “neofascism” and not “fascism” to describe sociopolitical reality in Central America was made after multiple debates lasting weeks and is based on the premise that today’s material conditions in Central America and violence are the result of perpetual global capitalist crises with deep origins in the region’s Spanish colonial period. For some of the theoretical underpinnings driving our decision

associated with early modern studies that rely on linear understandings of time. While reshaping notions of time in art history is nothing new, my thinking is informed by a decolonial approach that uniquely privileges indigenous Mesoamerican understandings of time for a revisionist scholarship.¹⁴ My intervention comes during a major turning point in the field of colonial Latin American art history as recent interdisciplinary philosophical inquiries are reshaping how scholars understand the legacy of the colonial period (and its study) in the Americas with the aim of decolonizing discourse about it.¹⁵ As young art historians in the field have commented, decolonizing methodologies are still extremely rare in the discipline of art history yet are required today to correct Eurocentric bias.¹⁶ Ultimately, my study aims to show that any colonial Central American art history must be informed by these developments but also the groundbreaking interventions coming specifically from Central American Studies, an emerging interdisciplinary and transnational field of study with origins in both Ethnic Studies (Chicanx/Latinx Studies) as well as area studies (Latin American

to use this terminology see Steven Osuna, "Transnational Moral Panic: Neoliberalism and the Spectre of MS-13," *Race & Class* 61, no. 4 (2020): 3–28. Here Osuna uses Marx's theory of surplus population as a framework to demonstrate how both domestic and foreign neoliberal policy in Central America have scapegoated the crisis of capitalism to a "criminal" class all while further marginalizing and demonizing them. This helps pave the way for neofascism and authoritarianism disguised as populism, an alarming global trend as seen even in the United States during the Donald Trump administration.

¹⁴ Of particular relevance for the field of colonial Latin American history is Kubler's assertions that time must be centered to move art historical analyses beyond mere stylistic categorizations. See George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

¹⁵ For a summary of some of these pressing conversations and their urgent relevance to the humanities see Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Editorial Commentary: Decolonial Aspirations and the Study of Colonial Art," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 3, no. 4 (2021): 5–11.

¹⁶ Yve Chavez, "Indigenous Artists, Ingenuity, and Resistance at the California Missions After 1769" (PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles, 2017), 5.

Studies). Epistemological reflections concerning the production of knowledge and history are particularly important to draw from for they dictate what studies and approaches are most direly needed today in the context of the study of Central America amid the ongoing refugee crisis.¹⁷ Central American art history must, therefore, be fearlessly interdisciplinary or it will repeat (now outdated) Eurocentric notions of Central America, its people, its history, and its future.¹⁸

Scholars of Central America demand a community-centered approach that includes the voices and needs of those historically disenfranchised from the academy.¹⁹ They also acknowledge the institutional limitations that have

¹⁷ The most expansive vision for Central American Studies is laid out in Karina O. Alvarado [Alma], Alicia Estrada, and Esther Hernandez, "Critical Reflections on U.S. Central American Studies for the Future," in *U.S. Central Americans: Reconstructing Memories, Struggles, and Communities of Resistance*, edited by Alvarado [Alma], Estrada and Hernandez (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2017), 221–30. See also Leisy Ábrego, "#CentAmStudies from a Social Science Perspective," *Latino Studies* 15, no. 1 (2017): 95–98. For one of the most meta-analytical reflections about research in the academy and Central Americans and the blurring between researcher and object of study see Leisy Ábrego, "Research as Accompaniment: Reflections on Objectivity, Ethics, and Emotions," in *Out of Place, Power, Person, and Difference in Socio-Legal Research*, ed. Lynnette Chua and Mark Massoud, 2021, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/34v2g837>. For further reflection on some of the problems associated with knowledge-production, including academic work during the era of fake news, see also Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Diversity in Academia in a Post-Truth World," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1, no. 3 (2019): 3–7.

¹⁸ Central American Studies' scholars have called for the urgent attention that must be paid to Central America, especially in the United States, as a violent and fundamentally racist foreign policy in the region perpetuates forced migration, a migration that is then criminalized by the United States and has led to the irrational expansion of the surveillance state and the inhumane imprisonment of entire families and, in the worst cases, forced separation of children from their mothers. This urgent call was witnessed most recently by the 2019 decision (led by student and faculty efforts) to expand the name of the César E. Chávez Department of Chicana/o Studies at UCLA to now include Central American Studies. More recently, at the time of the submission of this dissertation in early 2022, Central American students at UC Berkeley are demanding the formation of a Central American Studies department, and students forming part of the Central Americans for Empowerment collective have organized amongst themselves a course called "Central American History: Precolonial to Neocolonialism" and have successfully petitioned the administration to allow it to count for official units. Other scholars that helping form the field of Central American Studies include Jorge Cuéllar, who recently published one of the few studies devoted to the older generation of Salvadoran refugees from the 1980s and 1990s who are now aging, retiring, and facing their own set of challenges. See Jorge Enrique Cuéllar, "Vital minimums: El Salvador between youth and old age" in *Latino Studies* 19 (2021): 518-540.

¹⁹ Leisy Ábrego writes that her "vision of Central American Studies (CAS) remains rooted in community." Ábrego, "#CentAmStudies from a Social Science Perspective," 95.

prevented Central American Studies from emerging in the first place and the challenges that scholars of the region, its people, and diaspora face.²⁰ Thus, while my project is a historical examination concerning the lives of eighteenth-century Central Americans, it is framed as a history of the *diaspora* of Central Americans and their descendants living outside the isthmus and estranged from their homelands. Central Americans now comprise one of the largest groups of the Latinx demographic living in the United States and their exodus out of the isthmus is the product of centuries of imperial activity in the region. A significant percentage of this specific demographic can trace their ancestry directly back to the densely-populated Río Lempa region. A colonial, early modern object/artifact such as the *DGM* is uniquely positioned to bridge discourses across these various fields of study and the methodological tools and visual analysis of art history allow for a deep, comprehensive interdisciplinary examination of the *DGM*.

In the context of Central American art history, decolonial understandings are vitally important to fully comprehend the layers of history and meaning in operation in an object such as the *DGM*. It is both a product of modernity and coloniality and encapsulates the essence of both.²¹ Thinking of decoloniality as

²⁰ Steven Osuna writes, "Through a racialized, gendered, and especially class-specific project, academic institutions have privatized and restricted knowledge production to elites and those from the upper classes. Any knowledge production by the lower orders of society has been interpreted as illegitimate, backward, or nonscientific, thereby allowing the knowledge produced through academic institutions by intellectuals to mask power relations through claims of objectivity and positivism" in Steven Osuna, "Class Suicide: The Black Radical Tradition, Radical Scholarship, and the Neoliberal Turn," in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, ed. Gaye T. Johnson and Alex Lubin (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2017), 27–28. Osuna goes on to explain that the scholar today must, in a sense, commit "class suicide" at the academy by working against the established modus operandum of profit-driven research.

²¹ See Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, & Colonization*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

another side to modernity is in keeping with recent expansions of early modern studies that focus on the global south. Indeed, some have proposed the name “early global studies” for this field to signify a shift in attention to the global.²² The UCLA CMRS Center for Early Global Studies embraces five research axes: sustainability/repurposing, fluidity/permanence, bodies/performance, conversion/mobility, and communication/archive. My project is very much aligned with these emerging visions and I am particularly invested in questions concerning formation of the archive and the repurposing of manuscripts such as the *DGM*.

In this spirit of decolonial thought, I utilize a framework called *Q’anil* which I will detail further in the following pages.²³ It is informed, in part, by environmentalism and the ecological humanities by centering not political boundaries, but one of the most important resources (and sources of life) in northern Central America, the Río Lempa. The Río Lempa is one of the longest and most ecologically significant rivers in Central America.²⁴ Honoring its significance and importance is an act of decoloniality as it moves away from Enlightenment-era thinking that would otherwise center human societies and is in keeping with indigenous Mesoamerican values, customs, and spirituality.²⁵ *Q’anil*

²² Jonathan Riggs, “Reimagining the Scope and Approach of the UCLA Center for Early Global Studies,” *UCLA Newsroom*, December 15, 2021, <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/zrinka-stahuljak-early-global-studies>.

²³ *Q’anil* refers to one of the twenty *nawales* of the Maya Q’uiche Cholq’ij calendar and corresponds to *lamat* in the Maya Yucatec tradition and *tochtli* in the Central Mexican Nahuatl tradition. The *nawales* are the spirits and driving energies behind each day, and there is a cycle of twenty of them that last one day each. This is the basis of the ritual Mesoamerican calendar.

²⁴ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Water Resources Assessment of El Salvador* (Mobile, Alabama: Mobile District & Topographic Engineering Center, 1998), 2.

²⁵ Perhaps the most famous (and scathing) critique of Enlightenment-era thinking came from Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s 1944 book-length essay on the topic. They identify that Enlightenment-era thinking (i.e., the dialectic of enlightenment) allows for the west to perpetually create

is also based on one of the most important epistemological systems from indigenous Mesoamerica, the Maya calendar. Such a framing facilitates the movement away from dialectics of enlightenment to dialectics of liberation.²⁶ In this regard I am inspired by scholars such as Roberto Cintli Rodríguez who have embraced indigenous Mesoamerican epistemologies (which often privilege the non-human) and experimental methods to reshape understandings of Mexican-Americans in the United States.²⁷ New understandings of Central Americans, similarly, are direly needed to counteract harmful, racist, and ontologically incorrect mainstream narratives about Central Americans that serve only to dehumanize and to justify violence against Central Americans, physical, legal, or

destruction, oppression, and more perfect modes of domination over both humankind and nature, all disguised as progress. And although the modes of domination they critique arose specifically out of fascism in Nazi Europe, their critiques and analysis of power most certainly apply to the modes of domination introduced centuries prior during the Spanish colonial period in Central America and are also useful to study the neofascism emerging today in the same region. To see enlightenment as myth, and myth as enlightenment, as they would argue, requires a constant interrogation of western thought. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 2000), 43–45.

²⁶ Adorno famously proclaimed that “the premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again. Its priority before any other requirement is such that I believe I need not and should not justify.” See Theodor W. Adorno, “Erziehung nach Auschwitz / Erziehung zur Mundigkeit,” in *Vorträge und Gespräche mit Hellmuth Becker 1959 – 1969*, ed. Gerd Kadelbach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1970), 92–109. Similarly, there is great demand for Central American Studies discourses and responsibility in that they must aid calls for the immediate halt of the imprisonment and detainment of families and they must call for the dismantling of the imperial order in the region. See Alvarado [Alma], Estrada, and Hernandez, “Critical Reflections on U.S. Central American Studies for the Future.” See also Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969). I am also greatly informed by contemporary commentary on the Frankfurt School, such as the biannual conferences on Herbert Marcuse which now regularly feature a panel devoted to decoloniality and the Frankfurt School. Ricardo Vega León, “Decolonizing Herbert Marcuse: The Dialectic of the ‘Third World’, Eurocentrism and Latin American Critical Theory,” in *Critical Theory from the Americas* (Critical Theory in Dark Times: The Prospects for Liberation in the Shadow of the Radical Right, Herbert Marcuse Conference, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2019).

²⁷ Roberto Cintli Rodríguez, *Our Sacred Maíz Is Our Mother: Indigeneity and Belonging in the Americas* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2014).

ontological.²⁸ I borrow heavily from thinkers in Chicana Studies who have engaged in this type of innovative scholarship. I am indebted and inspired by scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, who have challenged academic paradigms through theorization of the self and subjectivity, which in the Latinx context is a self that is othered, racialized and of double consciousness.²⁹ In the late 1990s, the poet Maya Chinchilla was among the first to write some of the most critical and provoking (re)conceptions of the Central American self through her examination of the very category of “Central American” as an identity. In her poem “Central American-American,” Chinchilla explores, for example, the paradox of being a Central American and yet not being considered “American” in the United States.³⁰

In thinking through various disciplines, I came to find that many discourses from colonial Latin American art history were extremely pertinent to discourses in Latinx/Chicana Studies, particularly those concerning the formation of race and *mestizaje* which necessarily involve historical considerations as the categories of race in use today have their origins in the colonial period. One needs only to think of the famous paintings of *castas* to understand why this topic has been routinely explored in colonial Latin American art history (Figure 0-8). This is why I devote a chapter before the conclusion of the dissertation to this topic, as the *DGM* lends

²⁸ One need only to remember some of the harmful, hyper-visible rhetoric employed by the White House during the Trump administration, 2016-2020. Latinxs (especially Mexicans and Central Americans) were the main targets and were scapegoated and blamed for problems in the U.S. economy.

²⁹ Mohammad H. Tamdgidi, “I Change Myself, I Change the World’: Gloria Anzaldúa’s Sociological Imagination in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza,” *Humanity & Society* 32, no. 4 (November 1, 2008): 311–35.

³⁰ Maya Chinchilla, *The Cha Cha Files: A Chapina Poética* (San Francisco: Kórima Press, 2014).

itself to these types of questions as it is filled with racialized census data and ethnographical observations of the inhabitants of the Río Lempa region by Archbishop Pedro Cortes y Larraz.



Figure 0-8. Casta Painting (with hierarchy), 18th century. Oil on canvas, 148 x 104 cm. Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Mexico City, Mexico.

Historical and Ecological Significance of the Río Lempa

The Río Lempa's watershed basin corresponds to contemporary El Salvador and southern Guatemala today (and parts of Honduras), and stretches from the river's sources in between the Sierra Madre and the Sierra del Merendón in southern Guatemala and flows southwards for 30.4 kilometers (18.9 miles) before entering Honduras where it flows for 31.4 kilometers (19.5 miles), crosses the border with El Salvador, and flows for another 360 kilometers (220 miles) eastward and southward into the Pacific Ocean (see Figure 0-1). It is Central America's third longest river and is navigable (Figure 0-9). It has also served as a natural boundary between peoples and regions since humans first arrived to the isthmus. The river's watershed covers 18,246 square kilometers, and it extends to over half of the land surface of El Salvador today. Approximately 77.5 percent of Salvadorans live within this river basin.³¹ For this reason, the history of what is now El Salvador is intimately tied to the history of the Río Lempa. The basin's fertile soil and consistent rain cycles has made this region one of the most densely-populated areas in the western hemisphere for at least a millennia. Indeed, when the Spanish first arrived in the region in the sixteenth century they found one of the most densely populated indigenous communities in the Americas (Figure 0-10).³²

³¹ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Water Resources Assessment of El Salvador*, 7.

³² For some of the earliest chronicles of the Río Lempa region during the colonial period, see Pedro Alvarado, "Pedro de Alvarado's Letters to Hernando Cortés," in *Invading Guatemala: Spanish, Nahua, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars*, ed. Matthew Restall and Florine Asselbergs (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1524), 23–47.



Figure 0-9. Jorge Lazo, Aerial photograph of the Río Lempa, 2015.

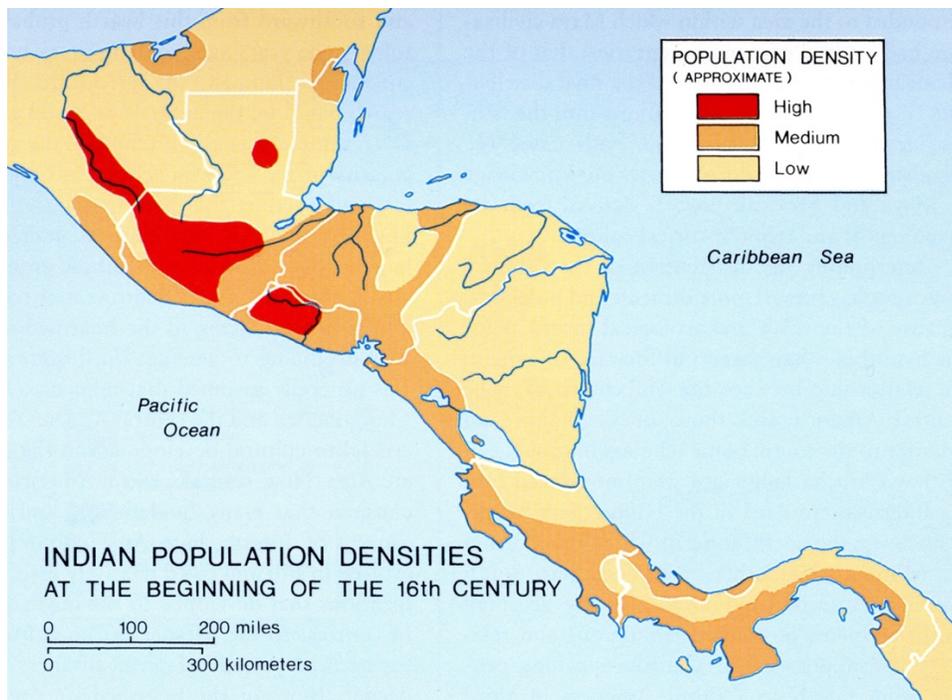


Figure 0-10. Population Densities at the Beginning of the 16th Century in Central America. Source: Carolyn Hall and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *Historical Atlas of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

Due to its vast fauna, fishing has allowed the people that live near the river to subsist and trade. Its waters make the land near the river quite fertile allowing for bountiful agriculture which has existed in the region for millennia.³³ Immediately after the Spanish conquest of what are today Guatemala and El Salvador in the 1530s, the slave trade and colonialism brought various peoples from around the world to the Río Lempa region who all contributed to and adapted to life there under Spanish colonial rule. The influence of the Catholic Church was total as it was responsible for evangelizing indigenous and African populations and integrating them into Spanish colonial society as new subjects of the Spanish crown.³⁴

Often settling in the *reducciones*³⁵ (or reduction towns intended for indigenous inhabitants) founded by the Spanish, the most recent peoples to arrive to the Río Lempa basin include Africans and their descendants, brought as slaves, as well as European *conquistadores* and settlers (mostly from Iberia until after

³³ The domestication of corn is widely-understood to have occurred millennia ago in what is now Central Mexico. Ancient Mesoamericans there domesticated, through selective-breeding, the wild grass known as *teosinte* to yield the large and bountiful grain *maíz*, or corn. Mesoamerican societies were structured, in large part, around the annual planting-harvesting cycle of corn.

³⁴ The history of the Catholic Church in Latin America is best laid out conceptually in Enrique Dussel, *Hipótesis para una historia de la Iglesia en América Latina* (Barcelona: Editorial Estela, S.A., 1967). Dussel provides a conceptual framework based on a triad of nodes: indigeneity, Europeanness, and adherence to Catholicism.

³⁵ A recent overview on *reducciones* is Jeremy Ravi Mumford, *Vertical Empire: The General Resettlement of Indians in the Colonial Andes* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2012). Mumford compares the scope and size of the General Resettlement to the collectivization programs of the Soviet Union in the twentieth century (1-5). According to Mumford, few primary sources have survived that detail the program, and so scholars have written about the General Resettlement only in general terms. The officials who carried out the resettlement left little documentation of how they did so, and few observers described it in writing at the time. See also Alfonso Ortiz Crespo, "The Spanish American Colonial City: Its Origins, Development, and Functions," in *The Arts in Latin America: 1492-1820*, ed. Joseph Rishel and Suzanne Stratton-Puit, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2006), 23-38.

independence from Spain).³⁶ When the Spanish arrived after their conquest of the Mexica (Aztec) in the Valley of Mexico and several Maya chiefdoms to the north in Guatemala, the basin region was home to various Lenca and Maya city-states as well as to the Nahuat-Pipil civilization which had been there for the majority of the Postclassic.

Despite centuries of racial diversification during the colonial period, nevertheless nation-state mythologies and narratives from after this region's independence from Spain in 1821 often obfuscated the entire existence of ethnic populations and identities in the region, most notably the Black and Afro-descendant population. Indeed, by the twentieth century the Salvadoran state, through its culture industry, was invested in erasing not only Blackness but indigeneity altogether by placing it completely in the past in its attempt to construct the myth of a homogenized *mestizo* nation and culture. This along with violent persecution of indigenous communities led to an incorrect yet popular understanding that there were no indigenous communities remaining in El Salvador, a fact quickly refuted. Similarly, there was a widespread conception that Blacks had never arrived to present-day El Salvador.

An overview of colonial documents such as the *DGM* allows for an understanding of the history of this erasure and easily contradicts any notion of homogeneity (cultural or racial) that the myths of the "mestizo nation" would later

³⁶ For an early study on race, place, and urbanism in colonial Central America see Sidney David Markman, "Pueblos de españoles y pueblos de Indios en el Reino de Guatemala," *Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas y Estéticas* 12 (1971): 76–97.

claim existed.³⁷ And yet, a close reading of colonial sources informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) reveals that early modern racial biases were facilitating the erasure of Black and brown bodies long before independence by inconsistently conflating *mulato* members of the population with *mestizos*, a subject I will cover in the fourth chapter of this dissertation. This phenomenon can be seen by closely examining census records with their anecdotal reflections, which leaves us today with contradictory evidence even in the same document. At the same time, different indigenous communities are themselves homogenized under the colonial category of *indio* (literally “Indian”) that erase the specificities of the diversity of indigenous inhabitants of the Río Lempa region. Unpacking this convoluted history is a necessary task to understand the region’s eighteenth-century inhabitants better. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how and why racialized coloniality persists today in the isthmus and the establishment of paradigms that allowed for the development of racialized capitalism in the region. This analysis contributes to and is relevant for studies today on the history of race and racialization in Central America coming out of Latinx Studies.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology: Q’anil

This dissertation is the result of archival research in Spain and Central America, rigorous art historical training in the early global world and indigenous arts of the Americas, extensive organizing and attendance at Central American

³⁷ Wolfgang Effenberger, “La invisible herencia africana de El Salvador,” *El faro académico*, April 21, 2014, <https://elfaro.net/es/201404/academico/15281/La-invisible-herencia-africana-de-El-Salvador.htm>. See also Virginia Tilley, *Seeing Indians: A Study of Race, Nation, and Power in El Salvador* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005). Tilley provides a book-length overview of the invisibility that indigeneity faced in El Salvador during the twentieth century.

Studies conferences and symposia, and conversations with colleagues across the humanities and social sciences about Central America, history, memory, migration, decoloniality, indigeneity, art, and activism. This grounded my foundation for an interdisciplinary project and gave me the challenge of writing for a diverse and varied audience across the academy. I moved between what Chon Noriega has called the “sociopolitical border between the academy and the community” which proved rewarding for the intellectual formation of this dissertation, if every bit as challenging.³⁸ Living in the city of Los Angeles -- home to more Central American refugees than any other city in the world -- demanded that I pay attention to developments in the Central American community especially regarding responses to repressive legislation and forced migration. Community engagement is a core tenet of Central American Studies and this allowed me to join numerous academic activities and projects associated with Central American Studies’ scholars not just at UCLA but across the University of California and California State University more generally. It is clear to me that the diaspora is eager to discuss and learn more about Central American history. Among these conversations, unpacking/deconstructing how Spanish colonialism shaped the historical trajectory and development of the Central American identity remains and important topic.

As an art historian devoting considerable attention to the meaning of the *DGM*’s images illustrating Central America, my research depended in great part

³⁸ Chon A. Noriega, “Director’s Note,” in *Knowledge for Justice: An Ethnic Studies Reader*, ed. Charlene Villaseñor Black et al. (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center Publications, Asian American Studies Center Press, Chicano Studies Research Center Press, and the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, 2020), 19.

on recent high-resolution scans of the entire *DGM* manuscript by the staff of the AGI in Seville. There I transcribed previously unpublished and undigitized letters by eighteenth-century colonial officials including correspondence from the Alcalde Mayor de San Salvador written to the crown that helped illuminate my understanding of the complexity of the colonial administration in the region, competition for power, and the ways race was talked about by colonial officials and codified in the archival record. I will examine some of these documents in the next chapter. As the largest archive of Spanish colonial material, the AGI's extensive records allowed me to also examine cartographical material of the isthmus from throughout the colonial period, including numerous maps used by the Spanish crown, some of which will be featured in the third chapter.

My inquiry identifies the *DGM's* images as art belonging to the *landscape* genre (a little-studied field in Latin American art history) and I argue that since they are landscapes, we must treat the images not as representations but rather politicized impressions of the actual land encountered by the *DGM's* author and contributors (Figure 0-11). I borrow heavily from the thinking of W. J. T. Mitchell to frame my analysis. Mitchell's assumptions about the politically-advanced nature of the landscape leads me to situate them among a myriad of early modern colonial conventions that made up the landscape, what Mitchell calls "instruments of cultural power."³⁹ I suggest we treat the textual entries, which each image illustrates, as also being extensions of these impressions the *DGM's* author and contributors encountered. I treat the contents of the *DGM* as "text" subject to

³⁹ W. J. T. Mitchell, "Introduction," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 28.

literary criticism and as an archive from which to understand cultural currents in the time period but also to question them. From an art historical point of view, I find this approach essential to emphasize as too often discursive narratives such as those found in the *DGM* are granted greater authority and validity than the visual images that illustrate them, which often construct a different narrative altogether.⁴⁰ This has long been the case for the images in the *DGM*, which have virtually been ignored in discussions on eighteenth-century Central America while its text has received the bulk of the scholarly commentary.⁴¹ I demonstrate, however, that in the *DGM* both image and text operated in tandem to construct a colonial imagining of the Río Lempa region, an imaginary that would become the historical record. It describes what had been the summation of two centuries of Spanish colonialism in the Río Lempa region and offers profound insight onto how land and population were controlled by the colonial state. Moreover, it reveals the various ways different racial ethnicities and identities were *seen* and *recognized* by the state, or not recognized and left out of the historical record. Who exactly is included in the *DGM*, and whose lands are highlighted or showcased?

⁴⁰ The cumulative work of scholars that have worked on the *Florentine Codex*, among the most widely analyzed of the colonial Mesoamerican manuscripts, clearly shows that the images that illustrate the text (which is provided in both Nahuatl and Spanish) add nuance and different layers of meaning to the text itself. This is not to mention the discrepancies between the Nahuatl and Spanish texts which purport to narrate the same details. See Kevin Terraciano, "Three Texts in One: Book XII of the Florentine Codex," *Ethnohistory* 57, no. 1 (2010): 51–72.

⁴¹ See Poupény Hart, "Entre historia natural y relación geográfica: el discurso sobre la tierra en el Reino de Guatemala (siglo XVIII)," 451.



Figure 0-11. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, *Mapa del curato de San Salvador*, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES.

With regard to cartography, the *DGM* is an important place to look at when examining the Spanish colonial map and landscape, especially in Central America, for it utilizes all the significant tendencies and developments found in colonial cartography from its early beginnings at the onset of the sixteenth century, then combines them with a bird's-eye view or aerial vantage point to fulfill the Spanish colonial map's increasing descriptive (and discursive) demands as political landscape. These maps/landscapes are anything but objective. Consequently, my examination is just as concerned with the unseen, that which is not included, as much as what the images actually portray.⁴² In these imagined aerial views, what

⁴² These types of considerations are reflected upon in Dell Upton, "Seen, Unseen, and Scene," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Todd W. Bressi and Paul Groth (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 174-79.

is exaggerated, distorted, highlighted, and how do they oscillate between “map” and “landscape” (Figure 0-12)?



Figure 0-12. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Mapa del curato de Apaneca, Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

The region of Central America has unfortunately received little attention in colonial Latin American studies, no doubt due to its perceived remoteness, inaccessibility or missing archival records, and a violent political climate that discourages travel to and study of the region. Until recent digitization efforts even Central American historians working in the isthmus had very little access to vital colonial records housed in the AGI in Spain, the largest repository of colonial Latin American documents. This is not to undermine the work that has been done, however. Historians in El Salvador have long written insightful histories of the

colonial period; chief among them is Jorge Larde y Larín, who published a number of the most authoritative histories in the middle of the twentieth century.⁴³

Although Central America is smaller and contains fewer large urban centers than the more widely-studied regions of Mexico and Peru, the lack of attention on Central America inaccurately relegates it to a periphery, when in fact it was an important geopolitical location for the Spanish colonial project and was home to rich indigenous civilizations. My dissertation fills some of these tremendous voids and gaps in the field of study and helps us better comprehend the complexity of the colony of New Spain to which the Río Lempa basin belonged to.

To begin constructing a framework for my research, I looked to Central American Studies to understand how the category of “Central American” was taking shape in the discourse as well as how the identity of “Central Americans” was becoming understood. I see my work as part of these conversations as I provide a useful historical backdrop that informs these important threads of thought. I was particularly informed by Karina Alma’s conceptualization of *la Ciguanaba* (a mythical indigenous folk legend from Nahuatl culture that tells of a woman who lures lusty men to madness), as a powerful, site-specific and feminist framework to look at women in resistance in El Salvador.⁴⁴ I was empowered by the possibility to look to indigeneity to frame narratives such as she had done. She writes:

⁴³ Chief among these works is Jorge Larde y Larín, *El Salvador: historia de sus pueblos, villas, y ciudades* (San Salvador: Ministerio de Cultura, 1957).

⁴⁴ Karina O. Alvarado [Alma], “A Gynealogy of Cigua Resistance: La Ciguanaba, Prudencia Ayala, and Leticia Hernández-Linares in Conversation,” in *U.S. Central Americans: Reconstructing Memories, Struggles, and Communities of Resistance*, ed. Karina O. Alvarado [Alma], Alicia Estrada, and Esther Hernandez (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2017), 98–121.

A narrative that may seem to replicate patriarchal hegemony and the dominant cultural regime can actually serve a counterhegemonic function that bridges eras and countries while disrupting scripts of gender/racial submission.⁴⁵

Here Alma reminds us of the inherent potential for subversion that exists even in something deeply rooted in coloniality. This was particularly relevant as a colonial manuscript was the object of my research.

Central American Studies had clear origins within Latin American Studies as research (such as mine) focused primarily on Central Americans *in the isthmus*. At the turn of the twenty-first century, however, a flood of publications birthed a second wave of Central American Studies that focused on the diaspora, which drew heavily from Ethnic Studies especially Chicana/Latina Studies. This second wave is often traced to Norma Chinchilla and Nora Hamilton's landmark book *Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles*. The clear and organic dialogues possible between both waves of Central American Studies has made *transnationalism* one of the defining features of this emerging field. Furthermore, this dramatic turn toward Ethnic Studies during periods of mass forced migration means that Central Americans have moved from becoming a foreign subject of study to a domestic one. This raises all kinds of implications for my project, for as mentioned above, I am studying the isthmians in the eighteenth-century as the ancestors, *antepasados*, to the massive waves of refugees that settled in the United States at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first.

⁴⁵ Alvarado [Alma], 98.

Informing my research on the *DGM* are some of the most recent advancements in Critical Race Theory and decolonial methodologies. This soon became one of the most important parts of my project, as I would be one of the first art historians to write about colonial Central American art and decoloniality.⁴⁶ Decolonial methodologies have become one of the most pressing topics in recent literature on colonial Latin American art history. Indeed, perusing recent panels at CAA confirms that this is a trend across the discipline and not just the field of Latin American art. As a project about Central American colonialism I immersed myself in learning anti-colonial thought and thought of ways to “decolonize” my project as much as possible, knowing always, however, that it was a utopic goal. Anne Marie Butler and Christine Hahn have recently proposed that

any approach to decolonizing [art history] must take into account the frameworks and methods of the knowledge systems it employs, must continually assess, reflect and hold accountable those who participate in its implementation and maintenance, and, importantly, must recognize that decolonization work is a necessarily messy and ongoing process.⁴⁷

This goal is much easier stated than accomplished and requires critical examination of vast bodies of thought and historic currents within the discipline. Though not explicitly linked to decoloniality, critiques of the canon have existed in art history for quite some time which have lended themselves to critique of the discipline and serve as an important precedent for decolonizing discourse.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ For a discussion about this challenge see Villaseñor Black, “Editorial Commentary: Decolonial Aspirations and the Study of Colonial Art.”

⁴⁷ Butler and Hahn, “Decolonize This Art History: Imagining a Decolonial Art History Programme at Kalamazoo College,” 1.

⁴⁸ Mónica Amor, “On the Contingency of Modernity and the Persistence of Canons,” in *Antimonies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, ed. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008), 83–96. Amor uses case-

Linda Tuhiwai Smith has written a very influential outline of strategies to facilitate decolonial methodologies for the contemporary scholar, particularly when research relates to indigenous peoples. She writes,

one of the strategies that indigenous peoples have employed effectively to bind people together politically asks that people imagine a future, that they rise above present-day situations which are generally depressing, dream a new dream and set a new vision. The confidence of knowing that we have survived and can only go forward provides some impetus to a process of envisioning.⁴⁹

This passage and Tuhiwai Smith's thinking in general proved extremely important in the early development of this dissertation. Decolonial methodologies encourage us to politically ground our research, as any notion that knowledge production is objective has long been abandoned.⁵⁰ Instead, decolonial methodologies encourages scholarship as a political project that asks that we recognize that it is not enough to merely "fill in the gaps" in knowledge, but rather seek ways to produce knowledge that is fundamentally transformative in the struggle for liberation and self-determination. This mandate has a parallel emergence in certain branches of mid-twentieth century philosophy as well and has been embraced in Chicana Studies for decades.⁵¹

studies from Latin America to interrogate the issues of the canon and their persistence in art history. Scholars of Asian art have explored similar problems. See David Clarke, "Contemporary Asian Art and the West," in *Globalization & Contemporary Art*, ed. Jonathan Harris (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 245–52.

⁴⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (London: Zed Books, 2000).

⁵⁰ I am also informed and empowered by indigenous storytelling traditions, which are flexible community-centered knowledge systems. See Chi'Xapkaid, "Decolonizing Through Storytelling," in *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, ed. Waziyatawain Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird, Native America Series (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research, 2005), 127–38.

⁵¹ I am eternally indebted to the field of Chicana Studies for numerous brilliant pieces of scholarship that simultaneously serve to empower and liberate the reader. I think of, for example, Anzaldúa's powerful book on the borderlands, itself very experimental, to describe the condition of

This task becomes particularly challenging when working with colonial documents such as the *DGM* that forms the object of my study. What is the role of colonial art within these calls for decoloniality? Tuhiwai Smith reminds us that indigenous peoples employ strategies of togetherness to imagine a (postcolonial/decolonial) future that transcend present-day strife. With regard to the struggle in Central America, I am reminded of Giovanni B'atz's recent chilling assessment of the nation-state of Guatemala. He writes, "Guatemala is Xib'alb'a, and the government and its agents, such as the President, are the lords of this underworld which fosters fear, pain, sickness, starvation, destitution, and death."⁵² Here B'atz draws from the *Popol Vuh*, one of the most sacred texts within Maya Quiche cosmology, to compare contemporary reality in Guatemala to Xib'alb'a, the underworld in Maya cosmology (Figure 0-13). From an indigenous cosmology perspective, which views time as cyclical and non-linear, today's nation-state of Guatemala *is* Xib'alb'a, operating as a free-zone for some of Central America's most corrupt leaders that maintain the status quo of extreme

inbetweenness so commonly experienced in Latinx communities. See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987). Most recently, works exploring the intersections of Chicanx and Latinx identities have proved especially rewarding to read. See for example Daniel Enrique Pérez, "Toward a Mariposa Consciousness: Reimagining Queer Chicano and Latino Identities," in *Knowledge for Justice: An Ethnic Studies Reader*, ed. Charlene Villaseñor Black et al. (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center Publications, Asian American Studies Center Press, Chicano Studies Research Center Press, and the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, 2020), 269–94.

⁵² Giovanni B'atz, "Guatemala Is Xib'alb'a," *Plaza Publica*, December 7, 2020. See also Giovanni B'atz, "Ixil Maya Resistance against Megaprojects in Cotzal, Guatemala," *Theory & Event* 23, no. 4 (2020): 1016–36.

poverty for a majority of Guatemalans and extreme marginalization of Maya indigenous communities.⁵³

Despite the trials and possibility of death at every stage of the underworld, the *Popol Vuh* tells us that a set of twins – known popularly as the “hero twins” – descended into the underworld to avenge their father’s death and emerge triumphantly as the sun and moon, providing the necessary light to sustain life on Earth.⁵⁴ Under this cosmovision, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and the Maya will emerge out of Xib’alb’a.

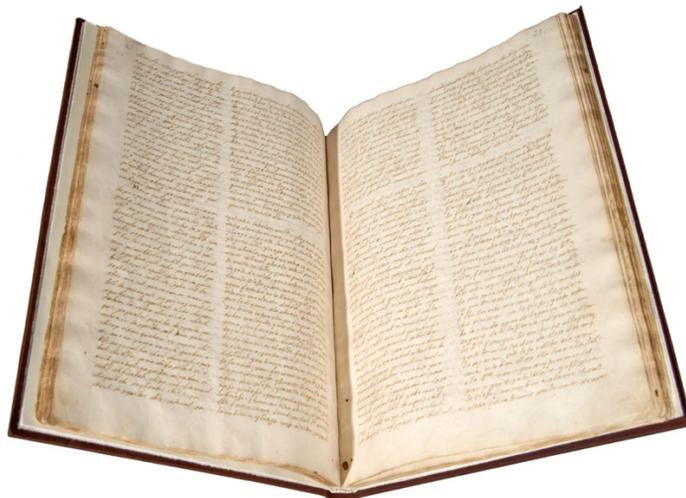


Figure 0-13. Francisco Ximénez, *Popol Vuh*, 1700-1715. Manuscript, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. Ref F 1465 P817 1700a

Roberto Lovato also used references to the underworld recently in his memoir that details his upbringing in San Francisco’s Mission District as a U.S.-

⁵³ Maya communities in Guatemala have faced severe persecution, with an estimated 250,000 indigenous people killed during the 1980s by government death squads in what is one of the largest modern genocides on the American continent. The U.S. academy must reconcile with the fact that funding for these modern horrors have been financed extensively by the United States through imperial foreign policy that seeks to maintain hegemonic control over the region no matter the cost to life.

⁵⁴ For an overview of the *Popol Vuh*, see Adrián Recinos, Delia Goetz, and Sylvanus G. Morley: *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché Maya* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950).

Salvadoran navigating gangs, forced migration, and the civil war back in El Salvador. Lovato describes the journey of unpacking Salvadoran history, painful for most, specifically as a journey into the underworld and back.⁵⁵ The concept of the underworld, while taken in these contexts directly from Mesoamerican cosmology and spirituality, proves a useful framework for describing the current sociopolitical reality, both because it emphasizes a bleak reality *and* offers the possibility of transcendence and emergence out of the underworld, as detailed by the *Popol Vuh*. Indigenous Central Americans are united in their collective journey to transcend Xib'alb'a. When did Central America become Xib'alb'a? Some would argue 1492, or 1524 when Pedro de Alvarado invaded northern Central America with indigenous allies from the north.

Decolonial discourse on colonial Central America must open up space to allow for indigenous cosmologies such as those found in the *Popol Vuh* to coexist with more traditional western understandings of history *and must be treated as valid forms of knowledge*.⁵⁶ Cyclical notions of time, in other words, must be accommodated and must be validated, for there was a time once when western thought justified violence against indigenous communities for believing in the words and cosmology of the *Popol Vuh*.⁵⁷ This is what Césaire would call the

⁵⁵ Roberto Lovato, *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas* (New York: Harper, 2020). In addition to citing the dive into Salvadoran history as a trip to the underworld, Lovato includes a short, metaphorical unnumbered chapter recounting Nahuatl indigenous cosmology and the underworld.

⁵⁶ Postmodern theory opened the possibility for multiple realities to coexist at the same time, and in many ways argued against the absolutism of prior critical theory. In this spirit, indigenous thought – the product of thousands of years of collective experience – should be respected and treated as valid as western (academic) thought.

⁵⁷ Linear time is a Eurocentric concept central to Judeo-Christian thought.

“barbarism” of western society.⁵⁸ In its urge to “civilize” others, the west became ever more decivilized and “barbaric” by imposing its rule and violently preventing alternative thought. If the present period of Xib’alb’a began in the sixteenth century, then the current sociopolitical reality in Central America (and the southern U.S. border) is but another trial that needs to be faced and overcome. The emergence out of Xib’alb’a will occur when the violent colonial order begun in the sixteenth century comes to an end. Is this possible? Indigenous thought says yes, and decolonizing methodologies demand that we consider indigenous futurities. Thus, as in Mesoamerican cosmovision, the present reality in Central America is but a mere step in a cycle. If time is cyclical we must consider the future in addition to the past, because the past and the future are intertwined. And while history-writing has not concerned itself with the future, because it has not happened (allegedly), decolonized history is very much concerned about the future as now or the past. And while this is not entirely possible in the traditional academic sense given the logistical goals of dissertation research that depend on positivism and empirical evidence, I believe that adhering to an abstract framework called *Q’anil* allows the researcher today to take steps closer to achieving this goal. Decoloniality is a process, not a moment. *Q’anil* refers to the day in the sacred Maya Quiche Cholquij (Tzolkin) calendar reserved for planting seeds, intentions, and goals (Figure 0-14). It is a day for the preparation of projects, for things that one wishes to see grow. While we may not know what a seed will look like exactly when it sprouts and matures into a plant, we know that

⁵⁸ Robin D. G. Kelley, “A Poetics of Anticolonialism,” in *A Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 7–28.

with our labor it has the potential to grow into something fruitful. While only one way to achieve decolonized discourse, I believe this approach will result in more nuanced work sensitive to previously ignored (indeed persecuted) cosmologies that prove just as adequate as Enlightenment thinking in framing Central American history.

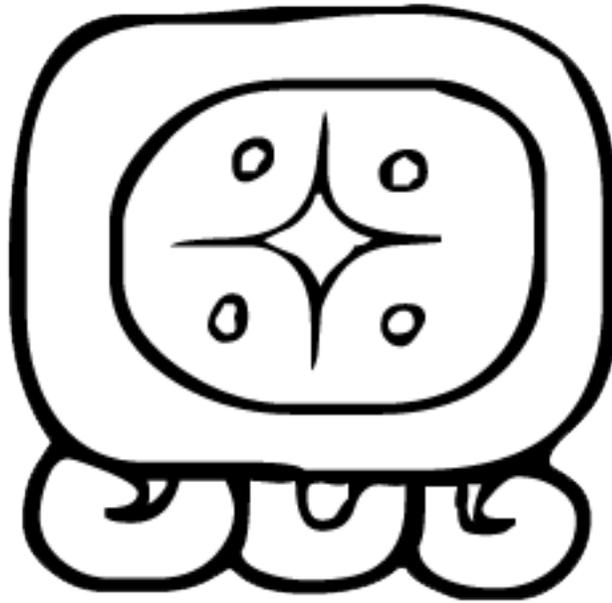


Figure 0-14 Maya glyph for *Q'anil*

To build this decolonial theoretical framework, *Q'anil*, I was inspired by methodologies built around indigenous thought in Chicana Studies. I think of, for example, the important notion of *nepantla* in Chicana academic writing. *Nepantla* is a Nahuatl word which means "in the middle of it" or "little" and refers to the concept of in-between-ness." I was empowered by writers using these concepts in serious academic work but found them lacking in work that deals with historical subjects as they have been embraced by scholars working on research projects

about the contemporary topics.⁵⁹ Eurocentric thinking has placed all of human history on a fixed, linear timeline, but indigenous (Mesoamerican) thinking allows us to see “history” as a more flexible practice where past, present, and future are interconnected and influencing each other all at once.

There is a real danger of anachronism that exists when thinking about the past in terms of today. These are limitations that must be acknowledged. History writing is supposed to be about things that have already happened, after all. Yet countless of scholars have shown time and time again that history is a construction that most often says more about the writers than the actual subjects of the history. In early modern studies this danger becomes all too real, because as historians we must be careful to not project contemporary definitions or modes of categorization onto the past. We cannot for instance, as Ananda Cohen-Aponte reminds us, assume that racial categories today mean the same things as they did during the Spanish colonial period.⁶⁰

These anxieties over anachronism and the desire to eliminate temporal biases are important considerations to grapple with, yet I also find that the search for similarities between past and present is a valid one. My dissertation by and large conforms to the conventions in early modern studies, with careful consideration of terminology used to avoid anachronism, but I also adhere to new notions coming out of Ethnic Studies that argue, for example, that Blackness from

⁵⁹ For an example, see Maylei Blackwell, “Líderes Campesinas: Nepantla Strategies and Grassroots Organizing at the Intersection of Gender and Globalization,” *Aztlan* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 13–47.

⁶⁰ Ananda Cohen Suarez, “Making Race Visible in the Colonial Andes,” in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela A. Patton (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 187–212.

the onset of slavery to today has been marginalized and otherized perpetually.⁶¹ This was every bit true in the colonial period as it is today.

My thought process behind *Q'anil* can best be described as an alternative to more nihilistic thought coming from certain strands of postmodern theory, particularly post-humanism. While post-humanism correctly critiques Enlightenment definitions of the human and removes the human from its pedestal on top of a fictional great chain of being, post-humanism too often dooms humankind and offers little hope.⁶² And while postmodern theory expanded the scope of possibilities of what humans are, too often they rely on Eurocentric conceptions of the human while ignoring the role of nature in human societies. Indigenous thought has always integrated humankind within Nature. Not humankind as the master of nature (as is the case with Enlightenment thinking) but humankind as coexisting with nature and with nature taking precedence. Post-humanism is therefore limited by philosophical underpinnings based on Eurocentric psychological assumptions about humans that are specific to the Eurocentric experience under the fiction of "modernity." Indigenous cosmovisions offer alternatives to these basic assumptions about humans (as well as space-

⁶¹ See Paul Joseph López Oro, "A Love Letter to Indigenous Blackness," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 53, no. 3 (2021): 248–54.

⁶² An example is Michael Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr, Posthumanities Series (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Influential philosopher Michel Serres's work uses explores how human relations are identical to that of the parasite to the host body. Influenced by chaos theory, Serres holds that parasites are not useless, but that they establish communication between different spheres and transform the picture of the whole. As useful as this conceptual framework can be, demoting the human to the role of parasite (a term with negative connotations) can be problematic as this can lead to the isolation of specific groups (i.e., racialized individuals) as parasites.

time).⁶³ These are intellectual and ideological alternatives once violently persecuted. I do not abandon western psychology altogether. Ignacio Martín Baró, perhaps the most famous practitioner of liberation psychology, offers one of the most useful ways to understand postcolonial societies as his thinking is based upon his time in El Salvador. Assassinated in 1989 by the Salvadoran state along with five other Jesuit professors on the campus of Universidad Centroamericana in San Salvador (UCA), Martín Baró is a martyr in El Salvador who proclaimed that colonial societies must strip themselves of social programming introduced by centuries of colonialism to advance liberation and collectively heal. This type of psychology not only believes in the liberation of humankind, but also demands it. This is in stark contrast to some of the psychological assumptions that philosophical European (continental) thought has been predicated upon.

Throughout my study, I employ the first-person tense to make as transparent as possible my own personal ties to the Río Lempa basin as I trace my own ancestry and heritage to the *reducciones* (reduction towns) of El Salvador. I am informed by the politics of empowerment emerging out of Chicanx and Latinx Studies that encourage a radical reimagining of knowledge production and history/herstory writing, and my commitment to the field of Central American Studies in particular has allowed me to formulate this project as one simultaneously about history and memory, the past and the present, modernity and coloniality. My parents fled Quezaltepeque, El Salvador, in the early 1980s at the start of the civil war there. The exodus of one million Salvadorans and other

⁶³ Jessica Hernández, *Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes through Indigenous Science* (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2022).

Central Americans means that issues of legality, belonging and citizenship plague the Central American diaspora, as well as state violence and power. Martín Baró wrote that collective anxiety and war trauma meant that individuals' mental health problems had to be solved collectively at the societal levels because they were not, in fact, individual mental health problems but collective ones requiring liberation from the forces of oppression.

As the twenty-first century marches forward there appears to be greater hegemonic control over Central American mobility in the Río Lempa region than ever before. For example, the Guatemala-El Salvador borders are militarized by the United States in attempts to surveil and punish the bodies of refugees fleeing violence, poverty, and despair.⁶⁴ Therefore questions concerning power and state violence are at the core of my thinking about the Spanish colonial period, a period of history that first attracted me because of its role in filling in my own lost memories, my own reconciliation as a child of the diaspora. The (his)story of the people of the Río Lempa region is the repeating story of people denied access to ancestral homelands and forced to survive in the global economy, through Spanish colonialism or twenty-first century U.S. imperialism. This experience haunts me, and frankly, haunts the entire field of Central American Studies. Recently, Salvadoran art historian Kency Cornejo proclaimed a "decolonial-guanaca hood perspective" for writing art histories from below.⁶⁵ Cornejo cites her own

⁶⁴ My thinking on surveillance as a feature of coloniality comes from Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Michel Foucault, "Interview: Space, Knowledge, and Power," ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Christian Hubert (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982). See also Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

⁶⁵ Kency Cornejo, "Writing Art Histories From Below: A Decolonial Guanaca-Hood Perspective," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1, no. 3 (2019): 72-77.

subjectivities, informed by experiencing and witnessing violence as a U.S.-Salvadoran in working-class Compton, California, as directly related to the questions she asks about the her subjects of study. And although the connection between contemporary lived experience and with the contemporary art she explores may be much more obvious than say with colonial history, it is my position that a Central American studying the past will encounter themselves in the body of work and will have to grapple with this self-identification. The line between researcher and subject of study is blurred. This is why Lovato refers to examining Salvadoran history as a trip to the underworld, because his subjectivity and social location are so deeply the result of a violent past brought about by coloniality. He frames the exploration of history as memory, one that requires not just the act of remembering, but quite literally unforgetting.⁶⁶ This requires embracing the personal and actively enunciating from the position as formerly-colonized subjectivity challenging hegemonic thought that continues to reproduce the world (and people) into oppressive hierarchies.

I therefore celebrate history and the writing of history writing not as a process of setting something down in stone, but as a continual dialogue with the past, and in having this dialogue, shaping and re-shaping what the past is. As such, at the risk of sounding anachronistic I must proclaim that the story of colonialism in eighteenth-century Río Lempa region *is the story of today*. And because as Central Americans we are often invisibilized, the type of historical work I undertook in this dissertation has been deeply empowering and I can only hope

⁶⁶ Lovato, *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas*.

that more Central Americans have access to the types of archives, materials, and primary sources I immersed myself in. I also challenge those of us with ancestry from the Río Lempa region to think of ourselves not as Salvadorans, Guatemalans, or Hondurans, but simply as the people of the Río Lempa, which has always sustained our ancestors for millennia.

Literature Review

Informing my research is a diverse body of literature stemming from many fields. My trans-historical approach to my examination of the *DGM* meant that I needed to look outside of art history and draw from other disciplines, some of which I will outline below, as art historical methods were not sufficient to fully answer my research questions and build a framework that would put me in dialogue with Central American Studies. I nevertheless began in art history and became familiar with the growing body of literature on colonial Latin American art which gained more attention after the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's landing in 1992. Within these I paid attention to studies on colonial manuscripts, maps, and race, and found an increasing movement towards decolonizing methodologies as well as for examining areas outside of the centers of the Spanish American colonies. Charlene Villaseñor Black and Mari-Tere Álvarez provide an up-to-date review of the field of colonial Latin American art that details the historical trajectory of the field from Latin America and Spain to its position as among the most cutting-edge fields within art history by the 2000s in the United

States.⁶⁷ And while this field concerns itself with the study of the material and visual world, I found enriching, thoroughly researched articulations of race during the colonial period in Latin America, discourses that I find extremely relevant towards understanding race today.

Numerous art historians have served as tremendous models for the interdisciplinary nature of my work as well. As someone looking at nonwestern and “hybrid” cultures within a Eurocentric discipline, I drew extensively from the recent methods utilized by art historians critically looking at Latin American material and visual culture using new perspectives or methods.⁶⁸ At the beginning of my research I was particularly inspired by Carolyn Dean’s bold proclamation at the start of her 2010 book *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock*. In a discussion about the parameters of the discipline of art history, and, to be more specific, the parameters of “art” and the objects of study possible within the discipline, Dean dutifully noted that western civilization and language had no appropriate terminologies and concepts to adequately translate Quechua and Inca understanding of stone and rock material from the Andes in South America.⁶⁹ As

⁶⁷ Charlene Villaseñor Black and Mari-Tere Álvarez, “Materialities and Archives,” in *The Routledge Hispanic Studies Companion to Colonial Latin America and the Caribbean (1492–1898)*, ed. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel and Santa Arias (Routledge, 2020), 309–10.

⁶⁸ Cecelia Klein wrote that the invention of the category of “Pre-Columbian,” for example, seems to have emerged out of object studies. The category was necessary as a way to talk about the contemporary and the construction of modernity and everything it represents. One needs only to think of the associations of “Pre-Columbian” with *primitive*, the opposite of modern. This is attested to the groupings of such radically different subfields such as the arts of Oceania and Australia with those of ancient African and the Americas as the “primitive arts.” This framing only helped to strengthen the notion that modernity emerging out of the Eurocentric world is on the opposite end of an imposed (and fictional) binary, of advancement of technology as “progress.”

⁶⁹ In an influential essay published a few years earlier, Dean had interrogated the category of “art” itself and proclaimed it to be a western construct thus problematizing what is called “art” made by peoples of the non-west. See Carolyn Dean, “The Trouble with (the Term) Art,” *Art Journal* 65, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 24–33.

such, Dean devised a system of classification that used the very same Quechua words employed by the Inca themselves without translation.⁷⁰ Similarly, Stella Nair's studies on Andean architecture uses classification schema derived from the Quechua language itself, such as *pirca* (wall), *pacha* (place and time), *pampa* (plaza),, *punku* (doorway), *uasi* (house), *pata* (platform), *llacta* (community).⁷¹ This abandonment of western categories and even language was in keeping with the spirit of art historians such as David Summers who have thought of inventive ways to revise traditional art historical classification schema when studying the nonwest. In his experimental survey of world art *Real Spaces*, Summers abandons even the most fundamental classification schema (geography, time, etc.) and divides artistic monuments and objects with aesthetic value from around the world based on whether they simulate space (e.g. paintings, two-dimensional art) or actually take up *real* space (sculpture, relief carving, etc.). This simple classification schema allows Summers to juxtapose ancient nonwestern art with modernist European art to reconcile western art history to artistic cultural production around the world from all time periods. In the book, Summers disregards traditional formal and iconographical art historical models, aiming to explore cultural traditions from around the world within their own terms. In sum, Summers breaks the rules of art history to create something uniquely original and thought-provoking.

⁷⁰ Carolyn Dean, *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁷¹ Stella Nair, *At Home with the Sapa Inca* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

However, there appears to a thread of literature uncomfortable with such radical reinventions of the category of “art.” As Dean points out in her book, art historian James Elkins’s review of *Real Spaces* chastised Summers for writing something “no longer resembling art history” precisely for its use of so many foreign categories of art. I, like Dean, reject discourses that dictate what art history can or cannot look like in favor of revisionist methods looking to expand the discipline to new horizons. I believe we have to be extremely cautious when talking about nonwestern art (and by extension art labeled “hybrid a point I will get to below) as we must remember that art history, its methods and institutions, were framed around a Eurocentric canon. As Dean has pointed out in other writings, there is no universal definition for the concept of “art” as it is primarily a phenomenon of western culture.⁷² The fact remains, however, that art historians have raised such a multitude of concerns over these core issues that the discipline is fragmented and has opened up as an arena for competing systems of explanation and thought. I do not necessarily think this is a bad thing, but I am skeptical of discourses that rank methodologies based on Eurocentric tradition.

Art history has come far from its early days based in the writings of European intellectuals such as Vasari, and many of these developments have come from those studying the non-west. The images that make up my object of study lie somewhere between “world art” and the traditional Eurocentric canon, for they are drawn using exclusively European conventions and pictorial techniques. The very easily relate to the objects of study typically studied in the

⁷² Dean, “The Trouble with (the Term) Art,” 24–28.

field of colonial Latin American art history and such an object could easily be called a “hybrid” object given the intersecting temporalities of its creation.

For some time now, generations of art historians have noted the problems of studying hybridity within colonial art history, as too often western categories of art and classification are incompatible with the material and artistic output of indigenous civilizations. Indeed, these are the central problems that Dean so acutely responds to in *A Culture of Stone*. However, several problems still plague the field of colonial Latin American art history, including the very notion of *hybridity* especially when applied to race. Dean and Dana Leibsohn pointed out that recognizing hybridity is contingent on temporally-specific readings. They write,

The argument presented here—that it is impossible to write a ‘general history of world art history’—rests on two convictions: first, that the concept of ‘art’ is inadequate to describe the variety of visual practices currently encompassed by this term, and second, that this inadequacy calls for a systematic re-examination of the concepts and practices through which the ‘history of art’, as an academic discipline, continues to present ideological constructs as historical facts. A possible alternative to the mystifying discourse of ‘art history’ would take the form of a multidisciplinary approach to visual representations (using concepts and methods from such disciplines as history, anthropology, semiotics, psychoanalysis and hermeneutics), never losing sight of the processes through which interpretation defines and constantly re-creates its object.⁷³

Here Dean and Leibsohn essentially argue that art history must borrow concepts and methods from outside the discipline to demystify (though I would add to “decolonize” as well) frameworks and discourses associated with art history. One

⁷³ Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, “Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 12, no. 1 (June 1, 2003): 5–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609160302341>.

very clear proclamation they make is that new scholarship on colonial studies must not erase or neglect colonialism's force and legacy. This dissertation therefore frames the Spanish conquest of the Americas as an invasion, one that was less a "meeting" of worlds but a destruction of them.⁷⁴

Issues of hybridity apply to my dissertation as well. Geospatial knowledge about the geography of Guatemala and El Salvador came first to Europeans directly via verbal communication from Nahuatl-speaking indigenous allies from the Valley of Mexico.⁷⁵ The very word Guatemala comes from "Goathemala," a colonial hispanization of a Nahuatl word which translates literally into "place with many trees" or "forested place."⁷⁶ This is an important consideration to pause and reflect upon, for doing so extends an important discussion regarding indigenous labor and what Dean and Leibsohn have called "invisible hybridity."⁷⁷ Dean and Leibsohn demonstrated that colonial objects with hybrid authorship, such as is the

⁷⁴ Influential scholar William Robinson has written at length about the destruction brought about by sixteenth-century colonialism and early capitalism. He periodizes the development of capitalism into major epochs, the first of which is defined by rapid colonial expansion. He writes: "This imperative to expand led to a period of colonialism and imperialism involving the conquest and subjugation by European powers of the other peoples and societies. Latin America was first conquered, colonized, and incorporated in this expanding world capitalist system between 1492 and the 1530s...Many raced and ethnic groups literally disappeared from the face of the earth, exterminated. Entire societies were disrupted and turned upside down" in William I. Robinson, *A Theory on Global Capitalism*, Themes in Global Social Change (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 3. Most recently, Robinson's work has examined how the global capitalist logic is building an increasingly-powerful police and surveillance state today. See also William I. Robinson, *The Global Police State* (Pluto Press, 2020).

⁷⁵ Pedro Alvarado, "Pedro de Alvarado's Letters to Hernando Cortés, 1524," in *Invading Guatemala: Spanish, Nahuatl, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars*, ed. Matthew Restall and Florine Asselbergs (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2007), 23-47.

⁷⁶ W. George Lovell, "Surviving Conquest: The Maya of Guatemala in Historical Perspective," *Latin American Research Review* 23, no. 2 (1988): 25-57.

⁷⁷ Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 12, no. 1 (2003): 21.

case in their examination of a 1578 map of Azcapotzaltongo produced by both indigenous and European hands, often present hybridity to contemporary viewers;⁷⁸ in fact, this hybridity is invisible in most objects. This is an important consideration when looking at the maps within the *DGM*, because if ethnic-hybrid authorship is invisible, then so too could indigenous contributions and indigenous labor altogether be illegible or invisible to the contemporary eye. What at first glance may appear as entirely European authorship may in fact be informed or molded from indigenous knowledges. I therefore must take into consideration how Cortes y Larraz would have obtained the information necessary to successfully complete the manuscript. I must ask how an indigenous contribution may be present -- even if not explicitly visible -- and how such indigenous contributions may be understood by today's viewers. Indeed, the search for such contributions has been central to the methodology of art historians of colonial Latin America for decades now, what George Kubler famously called the search for a "deep-lying shipwreck."⁷⁹ This task -- though noble -- has not been without its problems. Early art historians once believed that the ethnic race of the artist could even be determined by close examination of the hand of any given work, that craftsmanship was delineated by genetics.

* * *

My research on the *DGM* manuscript comes during what I consider to be a major revival in interest in the study of Spanish colonial Mesoamerican

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

⁷⁹ George Kubler, "On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Pre-Columbian Art," in *Essays in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology*, ed. Samuel K. Lothrop *et al.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 14.

manuscripts. For example in 2014, Diana Magaloni Kerpel published an art historical analysis of a section of Bernardino de Sahagún's sixteenth-century *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*, better known to art historians as the *Florentine Codex* manuscript. Assembled as a multi-volume encyclopedic overview of indigenous Mexica/Aztec society, it is often regarded as one of the most important of the early Mexican colonial manuscripts for its comprehensive coverage of Central Mexican Nahuatl daily life and beliefs before Spanish colonization. Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* is invaluable because it was produced by both Spanish and indigenous scribes, revealing worlds of information about pre-colonial indigenous technical pictorial traditions and practices. Kerpel's careful analysis of the *Codex* reveals the importance of deconstructing visuality in these manuscripts, for she found that the scribes who made the *Florentine Codex* used indigenous glyphs and pictorial metonyms to represent and stand-in for color in the absence of pigment and paint during Mexico City's smallpox plague while the work was being assembled.⁸⁰

The *Florentine Codex* is the manuscript to receive the most attention in recent years. Kevin Terraciano and Jeanette Peterson have recently edited a landmark volume devoted to *The Florentine Codex* with essays written by a treasure-trove of scholars.⁸¹ This adds on to the work already done by Terraciano,

⁸⁰ Diana Magaloni Kerpel, *The Colors of the New World: Artists, Materials, and the Creation of the Florentine Codex*, Getty Research Institute Council Lecture Series (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2014).

⁸¹ See overview of project in Kevin Terraciano, "Introduction. An Encyclopedia of Nahuatl Culture: Context and Content," in *The Florentine Codex: An Encyclopedia of the Nahuatl World in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, ed. Kevin Terraciano and Jeanette Peterson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019), 1–18.

Kerpel, and others that have meticulously analyzed and commented upon the most important sixteenth-century manuscript for the study of indigenous Central Mexican culture.⁸² Studies such as theirs exemplify how Spanish colonial manuscript studies naturally lends itself to collaborative research, as the expertise of ethnographers, art historians, historians, and conservationists is needed to adequately provide comprehensive analysis. Often, the findings of conservationists and teams of scientists provide some of the contextual and material information necessary for other scholars. The sixteenth-century *Codex Mendoza* has received similar such treatment, especially in the 1990s, as groups of scholars led by Frances Berdan and Patricia Anawalt led to a number of publications and edited volumes.⁸³

Angélica Afanador-Pujol published in 2015 a book on the sixteenth-century *Relación de Michoacán*, an examination that revealed how indigenous artists learned European drawing conventions and techniques and strategically employed them for political advantage. And from my own department I must mention the work of Helen Ellis whose recent dissertation on the *Codex Borgia*, a Pre-Columbian manuscript that escaped the burning and pillaging of the invasion, analyzes references to corn and grass imagery in the manuscript to demonstrate how the pre-Hispanic Nahua understood the history of the domestication of maize

⁸² Kevin Terraciano, "Three Texts in One: Book XII of the Florentine Codex" in *Ethnohistory* 57.1 (2010): 51-72; Magaloni Kerpel, *The Colors of the New World: Artists, Materials, and the Creation of the Florentine Codex*.

⁸³H. B. Nicholson, "The History of the Codex Mendoza," in *The Codex Mendoza*, ed. Frances Berdan and Patricia Anawalt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

from the teosinte plant.⁸⁴ Ellis's analysis greatly complicates how historians and scientists have understood the history of maize in Mesoamerica and brings to light indigenous ideologies regarding maize previously not considered. The seventeenth-century *Atzaqualco* manuscript, which combines pre-conquest pictographic indigenous writing and European conventions, received a monumental collaborative study led by Elizabeth Boone and published by Dumbarton Oaks.⁸⁵

The preference for sixteenth-century material is no coincidence, for Latin American colonial art history has long favored the search for pre-Hispanic indigenous symbols, imagery, or drawing techniques and styles within the corpus of surviving colonial Latin American material and visual culture.⁸⁶ Nowhere within this surviving corpus of material is one more likely to find "pre-Hispanic" indigenous authorship and/or techniques than with sixteenth-century material. I believe, however, that art historians run the risk of over-fetishizing such objects

⁸⁴ Helen Ellis, "Maize, Quetzalcoatl, and Grass Imagery: Science in the Central Mexican Codex Borgia" (PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, California, University of California, Los Angeles, 2015).

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Hill Boone, Louise M. Burkhart, and David Tavárez, "The Atzaqualco Catechism and Colonial Mexican Catechismal Pictography," in *Painted Words: Nahua Catholicism, Politics, and Memory in the Atzaqualco Pictorial Catechism*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone, Louise M. Burkhart, and David Tavárez, *Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology* 39 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2017), 1–34; Louise M. Burkhart, "Deciphering the Catechism," in *Painted Words: Nahua Catholicism, Politics, and Memory in the Atzaqualco Pictorial Catechism*, 161–216; Elizabeth Hill Boone, "A Merger of Preconquest and New Spanish Systems," in *Painted Words: Nahua Catholicism, Politics, and Memory in the Atzaqualco Pictorial Catechism*, 35–52.

⁸⁶ The following are an overview of significant studies in sixteenth-century colonial manuscripts with discussion of issues pertinent to art historians: Ellen Baird, *The Drawings of Sahagún's Primeros Memoriales: Structure and Style* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Frances Berdan and Patricia Anawalt, eds., *The Codex Mendoza*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Gisele Diaz and Alan Rodgers, eds., *The Codex Borgia: A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993); Zelia Nutall, ed., *The Codex Nutall: A Picture Manuscript from Ancient Mexico* (New York: Dover Publications, 1975); Donald Robertson, *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: The Metropolitan Schools* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Perla Valle, "Códices coloniales," *Arqueología mexicana* 7, no. 38 (1999): 6–13.

as somehow more purely indigenous. These objects consequently go on to have more value ascribed to them. Indeed, the late art historian and prominent Pre-Columbianist George Kubler once referred to this task as the “search for a lost shipwreck.”⁸⁷

Central American Studies and Literature for Conceptions of Central American Identity and Postmemory

The story of the people of the Río Lempa region in the eighteenth century can be framed as history, but it can also be framed as memory and postmemory of the Río Lempa descendants themselves. This includes those of us in the diaspora. Karina Alma has greatly theorized Central American diasporic postmemory in her work on U.S.-Central Americans artists and writers.⁸⁸ Her overview of how artists have explored critical issues relevant to Central American identity such as trauma and indigeneity is brilliantly developed through a cultural memory framework. Alma writes that

Cultural memory work actively remembers narratives as strategies that sustain and revive marginalized histories within official history, a particularly important project for women, communities of color, and Central American diasporas in the United States. Black Lives Matter, the immigrant rights movement, Third World Women, and Black and Chicana feminist scholarship signify some of the counterhegemonic, counternarrative, and countermemory spaces disrupting the hegemonic stance that continues to center white, masculinist, heteronormative, capitalist, and Protestant privilege, as evidenced by President Donald Trump. While official history commemorates an institutionalized past,

⁸⁷ George Kubler, “On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Pre-Columbian Art,” in *Essays in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology*, ed. S.H. Lothrop (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 14–34.

⁸⁸ Karina O. Alvarado [Alma], “Cultural Memory and Making by U.S. Central Americans,” *Latino Studies* XV, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 476–97. Here she writes on a trio of artists whose works explore issues from trauma to indigeneity and who represent a tendency to embark on projects that signify Central America through a lens of the imagined from the United States.

collective memory of nonhegemonic communities becomes a form of speaking back and of refusing erasure...For U.S. Central Americans, counterpoetics, countervisuals, and counternarratives speak directly to what is left out by what is institutionalized as standard, official, dominant, majority, and therefore, hegemonic.⁸⁹

Alma's discussion of cultural makers has been very influential in my own thinking about U.S. Central American narratives, and I would offer counterhistories as another form in addition to her beautiful overview of the triptych of counterexpressions she explores. As a descendant of a sixteenth-century *reducción* town (Quezaltepeque, El Salvador) in the Río Lempa basin raised in the diaspora, I was very much interested in the counterhistories not known to me of the people that I descend from. This informed my search for sleight of hand in census and demographical information in the archival material that I explore in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. In this regard I was also informed by the struggle of the heroes of the Río Lempa basin, from Anastacio Aquino who led an indigenous revolt in the nineteenth century to Farabundo Martí, who organized a communist-indigenous peasant insurrection west of the Río Lempa that was brutally repressed through a genocide of nearly 30,000, all so that dictator Maximiliano Martínez Hernández could win the approval of the United States through a massive display of anti-communist persecution.⁹⁰ The fight against colonialism and later capitalism has been ongoing and academic discourse must support these efforts.

⁸⁹ Alvarado [Alma], 478.

⁹⁰ Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza*, 1st ed. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).

In my decolonial framing of the present-day El Salvador and southern Guatemala as the “Río Lempa Region” and its inhabitants “the people of the Río Lempa” I turned not only to Central American Studies but also to Central American literature. Central American literature explored identity-formation issues for diasporic Central Americans before academics did.⁹¹ Central American creative authors and poets, in exploring the self, have raised what is at stake discussing Central Americanness. And so the current fate of the people of the Río Lempa has been relevant to this dissertation.

The Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton left us perhaps the most somber -- and yet accurate -- portrayal of Salvadorans (i.e., people of the Río Lempa) in the years leading up to the 1980s Salvadoran civil war in his poem titled “Poema de Amor,” first published in 1974 (Figure 0-15). The poem is composed of numerous verses that obliquely describe Salvadorans, each verse a different take on the Salvadoran experience. Together, they have the effect of forming a portrait of Salvadoranness. Despite Dalton’s abased, sometimes crude frankness in each verse, I know of no shorter collection of words that so poignantly describes the Salvadoran condition more endearingly than “Poema de Amor.” Dedicated to his fellow compatriots, Dalton begins his love poem to Salvadorans:

Those who widened the Panama Canal
(and were classified as “silver roll” and not as “gold roll”)
those who repaired the Pacific fleet in California’s bases,
those who rotted in prisons in Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras,
Nicaragua, for being thieves, smugglers, scammers, for
being hungry,
those who are always suspicious of everything
those who filled bars and brothels in all the region’s capitals (“the blue

⁹¹ I find this especially evident in the early work of Maya Chinchilla. Arturo Arias, “EpiCentro: The Emergence of a New Central American-American Literature,” *Comparative Literature* 64, no. 3 (2012): 300–315.

grotto," "El calzoncito," "Happyland")⁹²

Each verse begins with the word "those" and is followed by references to Salvadorans in foreign contexts. We see a picture of Salvadorans as laborers toiling to construct some of North America's largest industrial projects such as the Panama Canal. By addressing his compatriots as laborers in the region's industrial projects, Dalton paints a picture of hard-working, laborious, but above all a highly-exploited people. Salvadorans are those people suspicious of everything, perhaps because the system has worked against Salvadorans since colonial times. Dalton makes it seem almost as if they were strangers in their own land. He continues on:

those kings of the red page,
those who no one ever knows where they're from,
those who are the best artisans in the world,
those who were shot down when crossing the border,
those who died of malaria from scorpion bites or yellow fever
 in the banana infernos,
those who cried drunkenly for the national anthem under
 Pacific typhoons or under the snow of the North,
those perpetually on their knees, the beggars, the stoners
those sons of bitches guanacos,
those that barely made it back,
those that had a bit more luck,
those who are eternally undocumented,
those that do-it-all, that sell-it-all, that eat-it-all
those that are the first to take out their arms,
those that are the saddest sad people in the world,
my fellow citizens,

⁹² English translation my own. Original: Los que ampliaron el Canal de Panamá / (y fueron clasificados como "silver roll" y no como "golden roll"), / los que repararon la flota del Pacífico en las bases de California, / los que se pudrieron en las cárceles de Guatemala, México, Honduras, Nicaragua por ladrones, por contrabandistas, por estafadores, por hambrientos / los siempre sospechosos de todo("me permito remitirle al interfecto por esquinero sospecho soy con el agravante de ser salvadoreño"), / las que llenaron los bares y los burdeles de todos los puertos y las capitales de la zona ("La gruta azul", "El Calzoncito", "Happyland")

my brethren.⁹³

Dalton's words have a relevance today every bit as much as when they were written. Written before the long civil war, perhaps only now can Salvadorans fully grasp and understand the prophetic nature of Dalton's words, as the subaltern condition he describes is not only still true, but amplified further today under U.S. imperialism and hegemony in the region.



Figure 0-15. Roque Dalton's 1960 Arrest Record

With regard to the Central American experience more specifically, perhaps no one has managed to articulate this phenomenon better than Maya Chinchilla,

⁹³ English translation my own. Original: los reyes de la página roja, / los que nunca sabe nadie de dónde son, / los mejores artesanos del mundo, / los que fueron cosidos a balazos al cruzar la frontera, / los que murieron de paludismo de las picadas del escorpión o la barba amarilla en el infierno de las bananeras, / los que lloraran borrachos por el himno nacional bajo el ciclón del Pacífico o la nieve del norte, / los arrimados, los mendigos, los marihuaneros, / los guanacos hijos de la gran puta, / los que apenas pudieron regresar, / los que tuvieron un poco más de suerte, / los eternos indocumentados, / los hacelotodo, los vendelotodo, los comelotodo, / los primeros en sacar el cuchillo, / los tristes más tristes del mundo, / mis compatriotas, / mis hermanos.

who in her 1999 poem “Central American-American” interrogates like no one else these colonial identities. Chinchilla sums it up best in the opening:

Centralamerican American
does that come with a hyphen?
a space?

Here Chinchilla sums up the question at hand.⁹⁴

They want us out of this country
they say we don't belong here
vamos pa' el norte
they tell us the American dream is the truth
but that our stories of escape from horror are not.
When can we rest from running?
When will the explosions in my heart stop
and show me where my home is?

This is one of the fundamental questions faced by the Central American diaspora, the question of home. Where is home? For the Central American diaspora, the longing for the motherland is passed on even to children born in the United States. This longing, caused by forced exile and intergenerational trauma, is part of what has driven my own research to find myself and ancestors in the archive. The treasure trove that is the *DGM* provided me within expansive opportunity to search for home, despite all contradictions.

Chapter Overviews

Chapters One and Two examine colonial Central American history and art history with particular attention paid to the colonial period in the Río Lempa region of El Salvador. I avoid colonial (or contemporary) racial and ethnic labels and, in

⁹⁴ Chinchilla, *The Cha Cha Files: A Chapina Poética*, 52.

keeping with the utopic ends of *Q'anil*, I group together the diverse peoples of the region under the simple category of "people of the Río Lempa basin." This is based on indigenous cosmologies related to the relationship between human and nature where land does not in reality belong to any one but rather people belong to the land.

Chapter Three draws from art historical methodologies and focuses specifically on analyzing the thirty-seven images contained within the thirty-seven entries of the *DGM* that compose the parameters of this dissertation. These are grouped together for logistical purposes of the dissertation as a case-study for they correspond to the territory of El Salvador today but also serve as a sample by which to understand all of the images in the *DGM*. I unpack the artistic conventions that were utilized to paint the images and situate them art historically among early modern cartography as well as landscape in Latin America. And while the images are landscapes that are very obviously drawn as bird's eye views, I propose a decolonial term, the phoenix's eye view, to better describe how the *DGM*'s images belong to multiple temporalities at the same time. More specifically, like the mythological phoenix that arises from its own ashes (rebirth) these aerial views that were once classified documents of the church and state are now viewable by the descendants of the people of the Río Lempa.⁹⁵ The ancestors who were surveilled in the *DGM* can be redeemed by their descendants who can now benefit from the study of these images once prohibited to them.

⁹⁵ I am indebted to my colleague Dr. JoAnna Reyes Walton who inspired me to look towards mythological creatures after I listened to her research presenting the chimera as a conceptual tool to both understand hybridity and present an alternative.

Chapter Four closely examines racialized language in the text of the *DGM* as well as descriptions of both indigenous and Black isthmians. This chapter draws extensively from Ethnic Studies, specifically critiques on race and Latinidad, and argues that Spanish colonial categories of race (such as “*indio*” or “Black”) are innately unstable categories in the Río Lempa region. This chapter, I argue, is a necessary intervention given art history’s historic neglect of these inquiries.

The fifth and last chapter concludes this study with final reflections of the eighteenth-century efforts that led to the *DGM* project and its appropriation of indigenous geospatial knowledges. I also consider future work yet to be done and I insist on the relevance of the Spanish colonial period, or Xib’alb’a, for Central Americanists working on contemporary topics.

The dissertation ends with appendices that include all of the extant images from the *DGM*, each of which was manually cropped digitally by me from the original photographs provided by the AGI.

Chapter 1. The People of the Río Lempa Basin

The Lempa river basin has a great variety of ecosystems distributed in its more than 2,800 meters of altitude difference and almost 18,000 square kilometers of area distributed between Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. These ecosystems represent a large part of the Central American natural heritage, hosting thousands of species that need a common commitment to the conservation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to ensure their survival. The Lempa River basin is in crisis due to the overexploitation of the services it provides and the degradation of its rivers, forests, and wetlands.¹

This dissertation rests on the position that the nation-states that govern Central America today perpetuate the colonial logic of the Spanish empire. Therefore, to move closer toward decolonizing discourse, new frameworks that move beyond histories of the nation-state are required for studying the region's past. When Archbishop Pedro Cortes y Larraz, author of the *DGM*, arrived in the vast watershed region of the Río Lempa in 1768 (the region corresponding to contemporary El Salvador and southern Guatemala), the sociopolitical and demographic landscape he found there was the result of over two centuries of cultural and racial miscegenation primarily between Nahuatl,² Lenca, various Maya indigenous communities, African slaves and their descendants, as well as Spanish *peninsulares* and *criollos*, all of which began after the Spanish conquest of the region in 1524. Furthermore, Taino and Afro-indigenous populations made their

¹ Global Water Partnership, "Central American Awareness Campaign to Rescue Lempa River," *Global Water Partnership*, May 11, 2021, <https://www.gwp.org/en/About/more/news/2021/central-american-awareness-campaign-to-rescue-lempa-river/>.

² Also spelled *Nawat*.

ways onto the Atlantic shores of Central America after displacement in the Caribbean as late as the eighteenth century, though the Río Lempa region lies closer to the Pacific and may not have received as many of these communities exiled from the Caribbean.³ Nevertheless, by the eighteenth century this region was a multiethnic and multi-lingual nexus of various communities living under Spanish colonialism. These communities were governed by both the Roman Catholic Church and the colonial state, locally by the *Alcaldía Mayor de San Salvador* and regionally by the governor/captain general who lived north in the city of Santiago de los Caballeros (known today as Antigua Guatemala). The governor oversaw the Captaincy General of Guatemala, the southernmost unit of New Spain that was administered largely independently from the viceregal government in Mexico City. The Captaincy began in Chiapas and extended southward to Costa Rica.⁴ In scholarly literature and popular use, the Captaincy is also referred to as the *Reino de Guatemala* or Kingdom of Guatemala; this refers to this same southern region of New Spain. The *Audiencia de Guatemala* corresponds to the legal administrative branch that oversaw legal and judicial affairs.⁵ The Río Lempa was one of many important rivers in the northern half of the Captaincy.

³ The Garifuna are an Afro-Carib people that were exiled from the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean during the eighteenth century. They made their refuge first on the island of Roatan in present-day Honduras and later reached the mainland and settled all along the Caribbean coasts of Honduras, Guatemala, and Belize.

⁴ The area corresponding to contemporary Panama was not part of the viceroyalty of New Spain but of the viceroyalty of New Granada. After the nineteenth-century independence movements, Panama was actually part of Colombia until United States intervention carved it out of the Colombian nation-state to facilitate U.S.-construction and ownership of the Panama Canal.

⁵ Gerhard, "Colonial New Spain, 1519-1786: Historical Notes on the Evolution of Minor Political Jurisdictions."

Beginning in 1524, Spanish colonialism severely altered society in the Río Lempa region through the genocide inflicted by foreign disease, which nearly wiped-out indigenous communities altogether as well as through the introduction of African slavery. Spatially, society was forever changed through massive population-relocation campaigns in the sixteenth century which laid the footprint for the urbanism and population centers of the region that still exist today, with many towns in the region, indigenous or otherwise, tracing their origins to the sixteenth century.⁶ The colonial period was arguably the most violent period in the region's entire history, though by the eighteenth century much of this large-scale physical violence had dissipated.⁷ During this time, violence was instead increasingly cultural, structural, and legal, with various actors within the colonial enterprise (especially the Catholic Church) seeking to erase local culture and (especially) "unorthodox" spiritual practices and beliefs.⁸ As elsewhere, the Roman Catholic Church in Central America was administered via several dioceses overseen by archbishops. The colonial diocese of Guatemala, which contained 113 parishes, included within its borders the Río Lempa region and was the most populated of the Central American dioceses, the others being the dioceses of

⁶ Markman, "Pueblos de españoles y pueblos de indios en el Reino de Guatemala," 1971. See also Sidney David Markman, "Extinct, Fossilized, and Transformed Pueblos de Indios in the Reino de Guatemala, 1540-ca. 1800," in *Settlements in the Americas: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Ralph Francis Bennett (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 53–77.

⁷ It would not be until United States' imperial intervention in the twentieth century that large-scale, widespread state physical violence and destruction would return to the Río Lempa region.

⁸ One of the primary reasons behind Cortes y Larraz's *visita pastoral* was to document unorthodox practices from indigenous spirituality, a difficult task given its highly clandestine nature in the eighteenth century.

Chiapas, Comayagua, and Nicaragua.⁹ For the scholar today, the Catholic Church's surviving colonial-era records are of paramount importance for gleaning what went on, and perhaps no document is more significant than the *DGM*.

The *DGM* is the most detailed single encyclopedic primary source on the eighteenth-century Río Lempa region described in the Introduction and is essential for understanding the colonial history of what would become El Salvador. Because El Salvador's centralized national archive of colonial documents burned down in the nineteenth century, most of El Salvador's colonial records lie today at the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Seville and at the Archivo General de Centro America (AGCA) in Guatemala City. There are, however, still colonial records that date from 1664 in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in San Salvador as well as in smaller local church archives.¹⁰ This means that a great deal of El Salvador's colonial records have been lost, making the *DGM* even more significant and its present state of preservation remarkable. Still, with what has survived much is known about the colonial period in El Salvador in what has been a niche and highly-specialized field dominated by historians working in El Salvador. Study of the *DGM* requires properly contextualizing it within this general history of the Río Lempa region and Guatemala/El Salvador. Moreover, as an illustrated manuscript subject to art historical criticism, positioning it within Central American art history is also essential for it reveals the major gaps in our present understanding of visual and material culture of the Río Lempa region and of colonial Central America

⁹ Jorge Luis Arriola, *Diccionario enciclopédico de Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 2009).

¹⁰ Larde y Larín, *El Salvador: historia de sus pueblos, villas, y ciudades*.

more generally. This chapter will oscillate back and forth between these two aims after a historical overview of the region and its people. In doing so this chapter will also provide commentary on the complexity of terms such as “Salvadoran” and my preference for a place-based approach devoid of national boundaries. This allows for decolonizing methodologies to shape my analysis on the *DGM* and its images in the next chapter.

The People of the Río Lempa Basin

I will begin by giving attention to Lenca, Nahuat, and Maya peoples of the Río Lempa region whose voices, memories and traditions deserve to be centered given the tremendous, perpetual violence they have faced (and continue to face). The Lenca and Maya civilizations are traditionally remembered today as the first inhabitants of the Río Lempa region of southern Mesoamerica.¹¹ The Río Lempa served as the natural boundary between their lands, with the Lenca living to the east of the Lempa (and extending into present-day Honduras) and the Maya living to the west, with territories extending northward into what is today Guatemala. Archaeological evidence shows that there are older settlements in the Río Lempa basin, some of which may relate to the Olmec who predate the Maya and Lenca.¹²

¹¹ Mesoamerica is not synonymous with Central America. It translates literally to “Middle America” and refers to the Pre-Columbian cultural region whose northern extremes lie roughly in what is today the U.S.-Mexico border and southern extremes in what is today Nicaragua, though today scholars debate the exact parameters of the region. It was first defined as a concept in Paul Kirchhoff, “Mesoamérica: sus límites geográficos, composición étnica y caracteres culturales,” *Acta Americana* 1, no. 1 (1943): 92–107. Here Kirchhoff famously outlined the characteristics that define indigenous Mesoamerican civilizations, such as the harvesting of corn, construction of stepped platforms (pyramids), and adherence to a sacred ritual calendar composed of 260 days, among other key traits.

¹² Christopher M. White, *The History of El Salvador*, The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 23.

As elsewhere in Central America, the Maya in the Río Lempa basin built remarkable cities and produced some of the most important art in ancient America (Figure 1-1).¹³ Of all the Pre-Columbian civilizations of the Río Lempa basin, the Maya have received the most scholarly attention. This is due in large part to the impressive Classic-era constructions left behind by the Maya west of the Río Lempa. Maya monumental civic and religious architecture such as the platforms (“pyramids”) at San Andrés reveal the presence of a sophisticated, highly organized and stratified society (Figure 1-2). On the other hand, the archaeological site at Cerén features well-preserved domestic Maya architecture, buried under volcanic ash during the Classic and dubbed “the Pompeii of America.” These monumental ruins in present-day El Salvador are still being studied by archaeologists and anthropologists and offer tremendous information on Mesoamerican society.

¹³ For the classic overview of Pre-Columbian Maya civilization, see Robert J. Sharer and Loa P. Traxler, *The Ancient Maya*, 6th ed. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006).

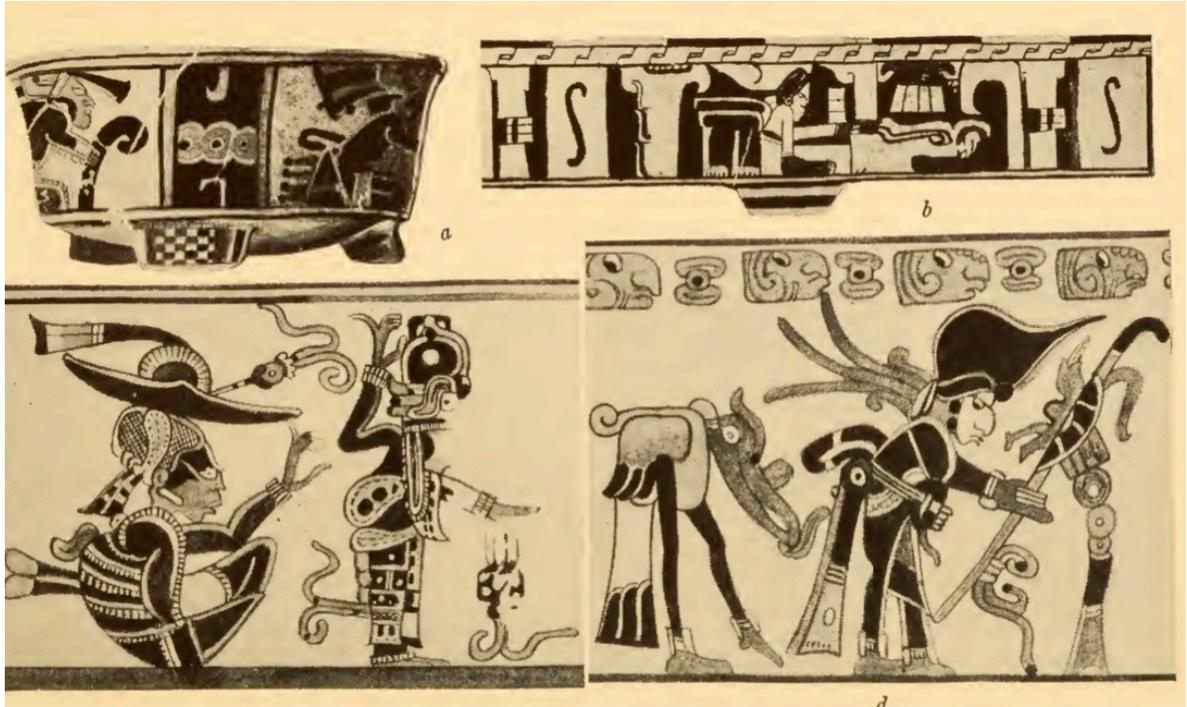


Figure 1-1. Maya polychrome pottery, San Jacinto, El Salvador. Drawn by John Held. American Museum of Natural History, New York. Source: Samuel Lothrop, *Pottery Types and Their Sequence in el Salvador*, vol. 1.4 *Indian Notes and Monographs* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1927): 188.



Figure 1-2. Structure 1, Cerén, El Salvador. Classic Maya, c. 750 CE. Image courtesy of Fundación ILAM.

The Nahuatl civilization, known also as the Nahuatl-Pipil or simply Pipil, entered the region relatively recently.¹⁴ The Nahuatl migrated into the western Río Lempa basin near the start of the Postclassic, sometime around 900-1000 CE.¹⁵ They were originally from the Toltec region in Central Mexico and spoke a dialect of the classical Nahuatl known today as Nahuatl, or Pipil. These migrations lasted

¹⁴ The name "Pipil" derives from the Nahuatl *pi piltin* which means "nobles" or "children." The term has often been explained as a derogatory reference by the indigenous Central Mexicans allied with the Spanish who presumably regarded Nahuatl as a childish version of their own dialect.

¹⁵ Explained succinctly, Mesoamerican history can be divided into the chronological categories of Preclassic, Classic, and Postclassic, each of which represents major turning points that affected civilizations across the region. The Postclassic ends with the arrival of Europeans in 1492.

decades and anthropologists and archaeologists are still debating how exactly they happened and are learning more and more about them as research into this area expands. These Pre-Columbian migrations have also been the subject of much contemporary poetry and literature and serve as a reminder that migration has always existed in Central America.¹⁶ These migrations were large in scale. Offshoots of these Toltec-communities in migration from Mexico continued their journey further southward beyond the Río Lempa basin into what is today western Nicaragua and settled there as well. This group is known today as the Nicaraos and their version of Nahuatl is also known as Nicarao.¹⁷ Further offshoots continued southward into what is today Costa Rica as well. This means that several indigenous communities across Central America trace their ancestral lineage directly from the Toltec civilization of Mexico, though the long distances between them meant their dialects and customs had evolved transforming them into unique and different communities by the time the Spanish arrived five centuries afterward.

History, tradition, and archaeology all inform us that these Toltec communities left Mexico around the time of the collapse of the city of Tula, the most important Toltec regional center.¹⁸ Tula had come to prominence after the collapse of Teotihuacan and other important Mesoamerican urban centers, such

¹⁶ Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, *Los nietos del jaguar* (San Salvador: Biblioteca Básica de Literatura Salvadoreña, 1996).

¹⁷ William Fowler, *Cultural Evolution of Ancient Nahua Civilizations: The Pipil-Nicaraos of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

¹⁸ S. H. Lothrop, *Pottery Types and Their Sequence in El Salvador*, vol. 1.4, *Indian Notes and Monographs* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1927), 217.

as Tikal, at the end of the Classic period. Tula's days were short-lived, however, and its collapse was the result of a civil war caused by a problem in the dynastic succession to the throne of Tula.¹⁹ The losing faction in this war, commanded by the famous Topilzin (whose followers believed him to be a reincarnation of the god Quetzalcóatl) found no alternative than to travel southward in what I can only describe as an epic and collective Pre-Columbian refugee journey. This is how the Nahuatl arrived in the western Río Lempa region and assimilated among the Maya there, creating what is known as a "hybrid" Maya-Nahuatl or Maya-Pipil society. Both communities shaped each other, though the exact nature of this process is unknown. For example, surviving art from the period reveals that the Nahuatl brought with them several Central Mexican deities.²⁰ This can be seen in some of the pottery types in the archaeological record of the region, where bottles representing Tlaloc, the Mesoamerican rain god, were excavated in some numbers around the western Río Lempa basin in present-day El Salvador (Figure 1-3).²¹ Art such as this closely resembles similar artistic production from what is today Jalisco, Mexico.²² Artistic production during the Postclassic led to the development of distinct pottery types among the various indigenous groups, such as the Lenca and Chorotegan-speaking (e.g., Cacaopera) communities east of the Río Lempa (Figure 1-4).

¹⁹ Fowler, *Cultural Evolution of Ancient Nahua Civilizations: The Pipil-Nicarao of Central America*.

²⁰ Lothrop, *Pottery Types and Their Sequence in El Salvador*, 1.4:192.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

²² *Ibid.*, 194.



Figure 1-3. Nahuat (Pipil) pottery types, Postclassic. San Jacinto and Hacienda Consolación, El Salvador. Source: Samuel Lothrop, *Pottery Types and Their Sequence in El Salvador*, vol. 1.4 Indian Notes and Monographs (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1927): 194.



Figure 1-4. Pottery types from present-day El Salvador. a = Chorotegan (Cacaopera), b = Nahuat (Pipil), c = Maya, d = Nahuat (Pipil). Source: Samuel Lothrop, *Pottery Types and Their Sequence in El Salvador*, vol. 1.4 Indian Notes and Monographs (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1927): 193.

As mentioned above, the Toltec migrations have been the subject of numerous contemporaneous cultural productions, including a famous 1977 poem by the poet-scholar Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, *Los nietos del jaguar* (The Jaguar's Grandchildren).²³ I have yet to find any piece, prose or otherwise, that better encapsulates the experience of the migrating ancestors of the Nahuat into the Río Lempa basin. The opening stanzas in this lengthy poem are as follows:

Los nietos del jaguar

Anduvimos errantes
años, años, años anduvimos errantes
la ventisca el granito los violentos vendavales
las grandes bestias devoradoras
nada pudo detener nuestros pasos
cruzamos ríos
montes
abismos de terror
cumbres a las que nadie se atreviera antes
pavorosos desiertos
nada pudo detener nuestros pasos
en tierra arena rocas dejamos hondas huellas
junto al mar caminamos
sobre las altas sierras
de día caminamos
de noche
sin detenernos

caminamos naciendo y caminando
soñando y caminando
pariendo y caminando
caminamos cantando y caminando

nada pudo detener nuestros pasos
con nuestra casa a cuestras
enterrando fechas
estableciendo muertos
caminando
con el sol en los ojos

²³ Rivas was an important Salvadoran scholar active in the mid-twentieth century, writing on linguistics and Pre-Columbian history in addition to his own creative poetry. See Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, *La lengua salvadoreña: el español que hablamos en El Salvador*, Colección Biblioteca Popular 48 (San Salvador: Secretaría de la Cultura, 1998).

con el sol a las espalda
sudorosos
hambrientos
caminando
negros de sueños
heridos por la sed
sin luna tropezando
duros de frío
caminando
de grito en grito estableciendo el rumbo
caminando
sobre navajas bárbaras
caminando
dolor afuera
caminando
directos al destino
caminando
creciendo en esperanzas
caminando

años años años
caminando caminando caminando²⁴

The Jaguar's Grandchildren

We wandered
years, years, years we wandered
blizzard granite violent gales
great devouring beasts
nothing could stop our steps
we crossed rivers
hills
abysses of terror
summits that no one dared before
creepy deserts
nothing could stop our steps
on land sand rocks we left deep footprints
by the sea we walked
over the high mountains
during the day we walked
at night
without stopping

we walked and we were born and we walked
dreaming and we walked

²⁴ Rivas, *Los nietos del jaguar*.

giving birth and we walked
we walked singing and walking

nothing could stop our steps
with our house in tow
burying dates
establishing the dead
we walked
with the sun in our eyes
with the sun to our backs
sweaty
hungry
we walked
black from dreaming
wounded by thirst
stumbling under no moon
hard from the cold
we walked
shouting and shouting setting the course
we walked
over barbarian knives
we walked
exterior pain
we walked
straight to the destination
we walked
growing in hope
we walked

years years years
we walked we walked we walked²⁵

Rivas's poem is the fusion of indigenous oral history, his own anthropological and linguistic research, and postmemory.²⁶ In a stream-of-consciousness style devoid of punctuation, these words give the reader a sense of the reality of what migrating from Central Mexico into Central America would have been like during the Postclassic. Although he somewhat romanticizes the journey by highlighting the resiliency and determination of the ancestors of the Nahuatl, the journey was

²⁵ Translation my own.

²⁶ I use the term postmemory here as Karina Alma does in her work.

by any understanding extremely perilous. More recently in 2021, the Museo de la Palabra e Imagen (MUPI) in San Salvador created an infographic illustrating this migration journey with a short excerpts from *Los nietos del jaguar* (Figure 1-5 and Figure 1-6). This image gives us a sense of the scale of this migration. Furthermore, it invites us to contemplate the massive twentieth-century migrations, which saw the people of the Río Lempa region migrate *northward* to the United States and beyond.



Figure 1-5. *Primeras Migraciones*. Infographic, 2021. Museo de la Palabra e Imagen, San Salvador, El Salvador (MUPI). Image courtesy of MUPI.



Figure 1-6. *Primeras Migraciones*, detail. Infographic, 2021. Museo de la Palabra e Imagen, San Salvador, El Salvador (MUPI). Image courtesy of MUPI.

By the time the Spanish arrived in what is today El Salvador, the Nahuatl language dominated the western Río Lempa region except for pockets in the northwestern part of the country near the border of contemporary Guatemala that preserved their Maya-Chorti and Maya-Pokomam languages. The Nahuatl formed the densely-populated *Señorío de Cuzcatlán*, or Lordship of Cuzcatlán, around 1200 CE, a polity that extended from the Paz River eastward to the Lempa River,

that is, it covered present-day western and central El Salvador. In present-day Guatemala, the Nahuatl founded Isquintepeque (present-day Escuintla) and were influenced by the Maya populations there (Cakchiqueles, Quichés, and Zutujiles). In what is now Honduras, the Nahuatl settled in the valleys of Comayagua, Olancho and Aguán and in Choluteca, and were influenced by Maya Chortí and Lenca inhabitants already there.²⁷ The arrival of the Nahuatl is among the most significant events to have occurred during the Postclassic at the Río Lempa, as they forever shaped artistic and cultural production there. It would not be until the European invasion and colonization that the Río Lempa basin would experience such large-scale change again.

Xib'alb'a, or the Spanish Colonial Period

Gil González Dávila and Andrés Niño first explored the coast of El Salvador in 1522 as they sailed northwest along the Pacific coast of Central America from Panama, and briefly landed in the Bay of Fonseca in the eastern Río Lempa region.²⁸ This region laid between rival conquests launched southward from Mexico under the command of Hernán Cortés and one of his closest men, Pedro de Alvarado, who led the conquests southward, as well as conquests moving northward from Panama under the command of Pedro Arias Dávila.²⁹

²⁷ Lyle Campbell, *The Pipil Language of El Salvador*, Mouton Grammar Library 1 (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985); Próspero Arauz, *El pipil de la región de los Izalcos* (San Salvador: Ministerio de Cultura, 1960).

²⁸ For primary sources on the conquest of northern Central America, see *Invading Guatemala: Spanish, Nahuatl, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars*, ed. Matthew Restall and Florine Asselbergs (University Park, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

²⁹ W. George Lovell, "Surviving Conquest: The Maya of Guatemala in Historical Perspective," *Latin American Research Review* 23, no. 2 (1988): 25–57; for a more recent overview see Matthew Restall

During the Spanish colonial period, the Nahuatl proved to be an important group, for their language allowed for easy communication between the Spanish (who had Nahuatl-speaking indigenous allies helping them form the new colony) and the numerous other groups that lived in the Río Lempa basin and beyond that spoke languages not related to Nahuatl. This fascinating history has recently received more attention, and Nahuatl has been described as the lingua-franca for the region during the early colonial period.³⁰ Stella Nair's own work on Inca architecture has traced the use of Nahuatl words in the Andes that influenced the lexicon there during the expansion of the Spanish empire across the American continent in the sixteenth century.³¹

There is a tendency in the history of Latin America to frame the conquest as an encounter between two cultures or worlds, omitting the fact that millions of Africans were brought to America as slaves. This is true in the 1994 edition of the *Historia de El Salvador*, the most widely circulated history book in El Salvador, where part 2 is called "The Difficult Encounter Between Two Cultures."³² This erases the African presence and homogenizes all indigenous culture existing as a

and Florine Asselbergs, eds., *Invading Guatemala: Spanish, Nahua, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007); for primary sources, see Alvarado, "Pedro de Alvarado's Letters to Hernando Cortés"; Restall and Asselbergs, *Invading Guatemala: Spanish, Nahua, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars*.

³⁰ Laura Matthew and Sergio Romero, "Nahuatl and Pipil in Colonial Guatemala: A Central American Counterpoint" 59, no. 4 (2012): 765–83. Matthew and Romero analyze a corpus of forty-six Nahuatl Central American documents from 1549–1666. Most of these documents date from the turn of the sixteenth century and are in the Central American Nahuatl dialect of Nahuatl (or Pipil). Matthew and Romero conclude that Nahuatl in colonial Central America was significantly impacted by indigenous Nahuatl (or Pipil). See also Laura Matthew, *Memories of Conquest: Becoming Mexicano in Colonial Guatemala* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

³¹ Nair, *At Home with the Sapa Inca*, 128–29.

³² Patricia Alvarenga et al., *Historia de El Salvador*, 1st ed. (San Salvador: Ministerio de Educación, 1994), 40.

binary against European (Iberian) civilization. The second edition remedies the situation (though perhaps creates new problems) by renaming this section of the volume "The Encounter of Two Worlds."³³ This framing is problematic as it undermines the invasion and conquest that pillaged the hemisphere and led to one of the worst genocides in human history. Nevertheless, the history of Africans in the Río Lempa basin is covered in much greater detail in this much more revised edition from 2009.

The slave trade in the Río Lempa basin is tied to policies designed to regulate or altogether dismantle the oppressive *encomienda* system, which allowed conquistadores to essentially enslave the inhabitants living in their possessions. These *encomiendas* and *repartimientos* were abolished in the mid-sixteenth century, when a definitive reorganization of the Spanish colonies was carried out with the application of the so-called New Laws of 1542, which abolished the slavery of the natives, but promoted the slavery of Africans.³⁴ The sixteenth century therefore witnessed the brutal proliferation of slavery in the Río Lempa basin while paradoxically it was the beginning of the adoption of important elements of African culture and trade, such as the harvesting of plantains and bananas, that would later come to be associated with Central America.

The arrival of slaves to present-day El Salvador occurred through the Alcaldía Mayor de Sonsonate, which was a commercial center for the global slave

³³ Patricia Alvarenga et al., *Historia de El Salvador*, ed. Luis Guillermo Bernal Ramírez, 2nd ed. (San Salvador: Ministerio de Educación, 2009), 40.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

trade.³⁵ Slaves would arrive from present-day Guatemala destined to Lima in present-day Peru and its market, and also traffickers from the rest of the provinces in the Río Lempa basin came to buy slaves for the towns and villages that demanded them. There was great demand for slaves east of the Río Lempa basin, and much of the colonial history of urban centers such as San Miguel is deeply tied to a strong presence of Afrodescendants and Black populations, later invisibilized by nationalist discourses.

The importation of new slaves to the Río Lempa basin diminished quickly after the sixteenth century, as local administrators perceived the Black population as a threat to the social order. This is because there were numerous slave revolts in the sixteenth century, and officials did not want an increase in the slave population. This is partially why indigo cultivators continued to employ indigenous labor (despite its prohibition) as the importation of new slaves essentially halted in the seventeenth century.³⁶

The history of the Río Lempa region is the result of centuries of Spanish colonialism which in the sixteenth century violently connected it to the emerging early global world. Eduardo Galeano likened this connection to the arteries and veins of the human body that carry necessary oxygen and nutrients throughout the body. These veins crossed the Atlantic, funneling material resources from “New” to “Old” Worlds. However, Galeano also called them the “open veins of Latin America” as the wounds of colonialism ran deep and are left unhealed in the

³⁵ Alvarenga et al., *Historia de El Salvador*, 93.

³⁶ Ibid. See also William L. Sherman, *Forced Native Labor in Sixteenth-Century Central America* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

contemporary moment.³⁷ This of course was true in the Río Lempa region, as the forces of imperialism and early capitalism extracted tremendous amount of material resources, labor, and capital for the benefit of the global economy.

The Río Lempa has made possible a diverse population with a history that spans millennia. It has been home to migrating Postclassic indigenous communities from Central Mexico, while in the present moment it has also seen their descendants experience forced migration -- once again due to imperialism -- creating a global diaspora of people who trace their roots to the Río Lempa region.³⁸ In the centuries that would follow the Spanish conquest, this area would prove to be a valuable region in the colony if for no other reason than the fact it was densely populated which provided access to labor, and because of fertile soils and predictable and reliable rain cycles that made large-scale plantations possible for the global market. In the next chapter I will continue the art historical overview of the *DGM* and will focus specifically on the images that serve as its illustrations. Using a sample of images from the *DGM* that correspond to the Río Lempa basin, I will provide art historical analysis and contextualize them within the history of visualizations of the landmass of the Central American isthmus. As watercolor landscapes they belong to the tradition of Spanish colonial cartography and to the early modern landscape genre more generally.

³⁷ Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

³⁸ Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Ábrego, "Legal Violence: Immigration Law and the Lives of Central American Immigrants," *American Journal of Sociology* 117, no. 5 (March 2012): 1380–1421. This essay is among the most cited in Central American Studies and details the issues faced today by migrating Central Americans out of the isthmus.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the people of the Río Lempa are a people with a rich, ancient history. The various communities that comprise the demographics in the region have survived some of the worst events in human history, including European colonialism, slavery, and most recently, U.S. imperialism and intervention. Their stories are ones of dignity, strength, and resilience, and deserve to be studied further to understand the development of geopolitics in the hemisphere, one which imperial, capitalist ambitions have shaped for centuries.

Chapter 2. Historiographical Overview of the Art History of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala during the Bourbon Reforms

Antigua Guatemala, the old capital, thirty miles to the westward of the new, is still a place of considerable importance, and in its time was far superior to the present capital in size and appearance. Previous to its destruction in 1773 there were but two cities on the American hemisphere which compared with it in population, wealth, and magnificence. These were the City of Mexico, and Lima, Peru. New York was then a commercial infant, Boston a mere village, and Chicago yet unknown.¹

When Archbishop Cortes y Larraz arrived in Central America in the eighteenth century, politics there were being defined to a large degree by the demands of the Bourbon reforms dictated by the Spanish Crown. On the one hand imperial ambition and on the other bureaucratic systematization on a global scale, the reforms were enacted after the Bourbon dynasty took power in Spain in the eighteenth century and were meant to make colonial administration more efficient and to promote the economic, commercial and fiscal development of the colonies (Figure 2-1). Spain faced several economic crises as a result of the cost of near-perpetual war in Europe (and elsewhere), which meant it faced financial ruin if it did not streamline its rule and revenue in the colonies, which themselves faced economic challenges. In the Río Lempa region, for example, indigo production and exports had long been declining. In addition to efforts to boost the economy, a consequence of the Bourbon reforms was the diminished power of the Catholic Church, culminating most dramatically in the forced expulsion of the entire Jesuit

¹ William Eleroy, "Guatemala City: The Capital of Guatemala," in *The Capitals of Spanish America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888), 60–61.

order from the colonies in the 1760s, who had otherwise had by then a long-established presence in the Americas and were influential in shaping society. This tremendous and rapid economic change, as well as limits to the authority of the Church, served as the historical backdrop encountered by Pedro Cortes y Larraz when he became Archbishop in 1767 in Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala, a city already over two hundred years old even before the United States formed as a nation.²



Figure 2-1. Political Jurisdiction of Central America, 1732-1785. Source: Carolyn Hall and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *Historical Atlas of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

² Tomado de Lutz, *Santiago de Guatemala: historia social y económica, 1541-1773* (Guatemala City: Editorial Universitaria, USAC, 1983).

The Bourbon reforms represent the influence of France regarding strategies to stimulate or facilitate economic growth, given the French origins of the Bourbon family. In the Río Lempa basin, the reforms were intended to specifically stimulate the production of indigo.³ In Central America, indigo, or *añil*, was known as *xiquilite* and the colonial sources often refer to it that way.⁴ Between 1760 and 1792 the cultivation and export of indigo increased tenfold.⁵ The Bourbon reforms alone did not stimulate this growth, however. The industrial revolution in Europe resulted in increasing demands for raw materials such as indigo from all over the world.⁶ Indigo cultivators were able to participate in this tremendous growth and policy set by the Bourbon reforms ensured the state would facilitate transportation, and in 1760 commerce was authorized between the port of Omoa (present-day Honduras) and La Habana.⁷ This would result in a second golden age of indigo production, reaching its second peak around 1800 before declining in the nineteenth century after the introduction of synthetic alternatives to indigo.⁸

This stimulated economy meant that several colonial administration centers needed to be renovated or rebuilt in important cities such as San Salvador. This in turn led to new architectural and artistic projects. In 1784, for example, an

³ Alvarenga et al., *Historia de El Salvador* (San Salvador, Ministerio de Cultura, 1994), 143.

⁴ Manuel Rubio Sánchez, *Historia del añil o xiquilite en Centro América*, 2 vols. (San Salvador, El Salvador: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Publicaciones, 1976).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 108

⁶ Robert S. Smith, "Indigo Production and Trade in Colonial Guatemala," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (1959): 181–211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

entire city block was remodeled to house government buildings in San Salvador (Figure 2-2).⁹ Similarly, the nearby *aduana* or customs house was rebuilt in 1791 (Figure 2-3).¹⁰ These projects helped bring needed updates to infrastructure that had largely been kept the same since the sixteenth century, increasing capacity and efficiency. This period led to increase in wealth among the elite, and women became especially active patrons of the Catholic Church and by doing so helped shape artistic development in the region.

Artistic production in the Río Lempa region during the eighteenth century was dominated by this type of civic and ecclesiastical patronage. To the north, Santiago de los Caballeros was the artistic capital of colonial Central America and was the richest city north of Panama. In order to understand the production of the *DGM* manuscript that so thoroughly visualized the Río Lempa basin, we must get a sense of Santiago de los Caballeros, the capital of the General Captaincy of Guatemala of which the Río Lempa basin was an important part.

In this chapter, I will provide a historiographical overview of the art of baroque city of Santiago de los Caballeros. This will provide the general artistic context in which to situate the *DGM*, the most important manuscript produced in eighteenth-century Santiago de los Caballeros.

⁹ Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Central America*, vol. 2 A Geographical Gazetteer of Primary Documentary, Literary and Visual Sources (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University, 1995), 244.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

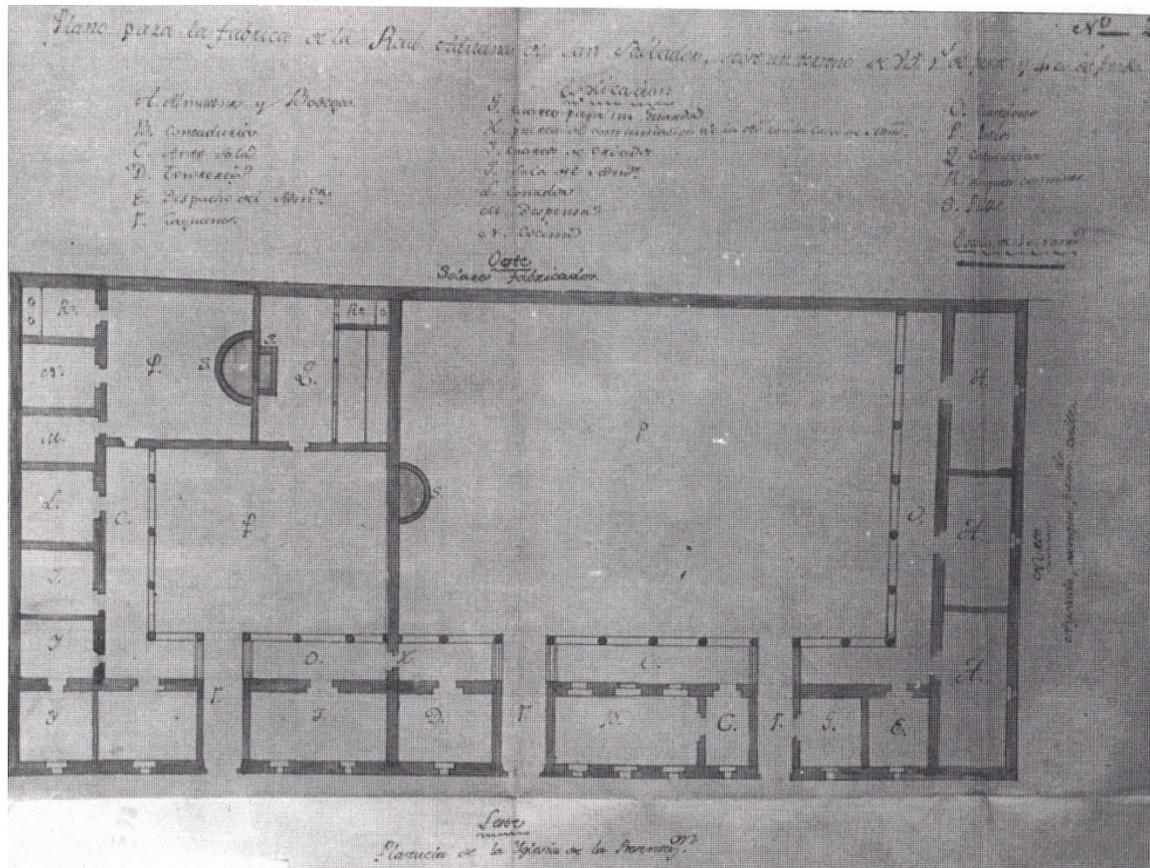


Figure 2-3. Plan of the customhouse, *aduana*, 1791. San Salvador, El Salvador. Archivo General de Centroamérica (AGCA), A 3.5 (1791) 1522-77, fols 57-58. Source: Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Central America*, vol. 2 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1995), 245.

Art at Santiago de los Caballeros, Seat of the Archbishop of Colonial Guatemala

Not counting the Pre-Columbian era, Central American art history after the conquest is a small field with relatively few scholars devoted to its study.¹¹ Of particular relevance for this dissertation is the artistic center of Santiago de los Caballeros, the seat of the Archbishop of the colonial diocese of Guatemala. Today

¹¹ To date the majority of research concerning Central America has focused primarily on twentieth-century civil wars and pre-conquest Maya art, history, and culture.

the city is known simply as Antigua (Figure 2-4). This is where the *DGM* was assembled and finished before being sent to Spain. Founded as Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala (commonly referred to simply as Santiago de Guatemala in primary sources), this city was among the largest and most lavish in all of Latin America for centuries. It was founded by Pedro de Alvarado on the feast day of St. James, hence its name. The city suffered many earthquakes (it was located near the foothills of active volcanoes) and was rebuilt constantly. In 1773, a massive earthquake led to a decision on behalf of the Spanish Crown to move the capital to a new site, and within a few years work began on Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, which became the new colonial capital of Central America and remains the capital of Guatemala today (Figure 2-5).¹² It is commonly referred to as Guatemala City in English. When the capital moved to “New” Guatemala, the old, abandoned city became “Old” Guatemala, or *Antigua*.¹³ And as Central America’s largest city, Santiago de los Caballeros was home to the region’s only printing press. During archival research conducted at the Getty Research Institute’s Special Collections, I found a rare unbound 1763 publication titled *El Pantheon Real, Funebre Aparato* printed to document the commemorations in Santiago de los Caballeros associated with the death of the Queen of Spain (Figure

¹² For a concise history of Guatemala City and all its iterations, see David F. Marley, “Guatemala,” in *Historic Cities of the Americas: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005). For a description of the city and the earthquake, see Felipe Cadena, *Breve descripción de la noble ciudad de Santiago de Los Caballeros de Guatemala, y puntual noticia de su lamentable ruina ocasionada de un violento terremoto el día veintinueve de Julio de 1773* (Guatemala City: Imprenta de Luna, 1858).

¹³ For a chronicle of the works of art that were moved from Antigua Guatemala to Nueva Guatemala, see Johann Estuardo Melchor Toledo, “El arte religioso de la antigua Guatemala, 1773-1821: crónica de la emigración de sus imágenes” (PhD Dissertation, Mexico City, UNAM, 2011). For a general overview of twentieth-century restoration efforts in Antigua see José María Magaña Juárez, “Breve historia de la restauración en la Antigua Guatemala” in *Antigua: capital del “Reino de Guatemala,”* ed. Javier Aguilera Rojas (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura, y Deporte, 2002), 41–51.

2-6). A remarkable engraving in the work depicts a temporary structure that was erected in Santiago de los Caballeros to mark the passing of the Queen (Figure 2-7).



Figure 2-4. View of the City of Santiago de los Caballeros, Guatemala

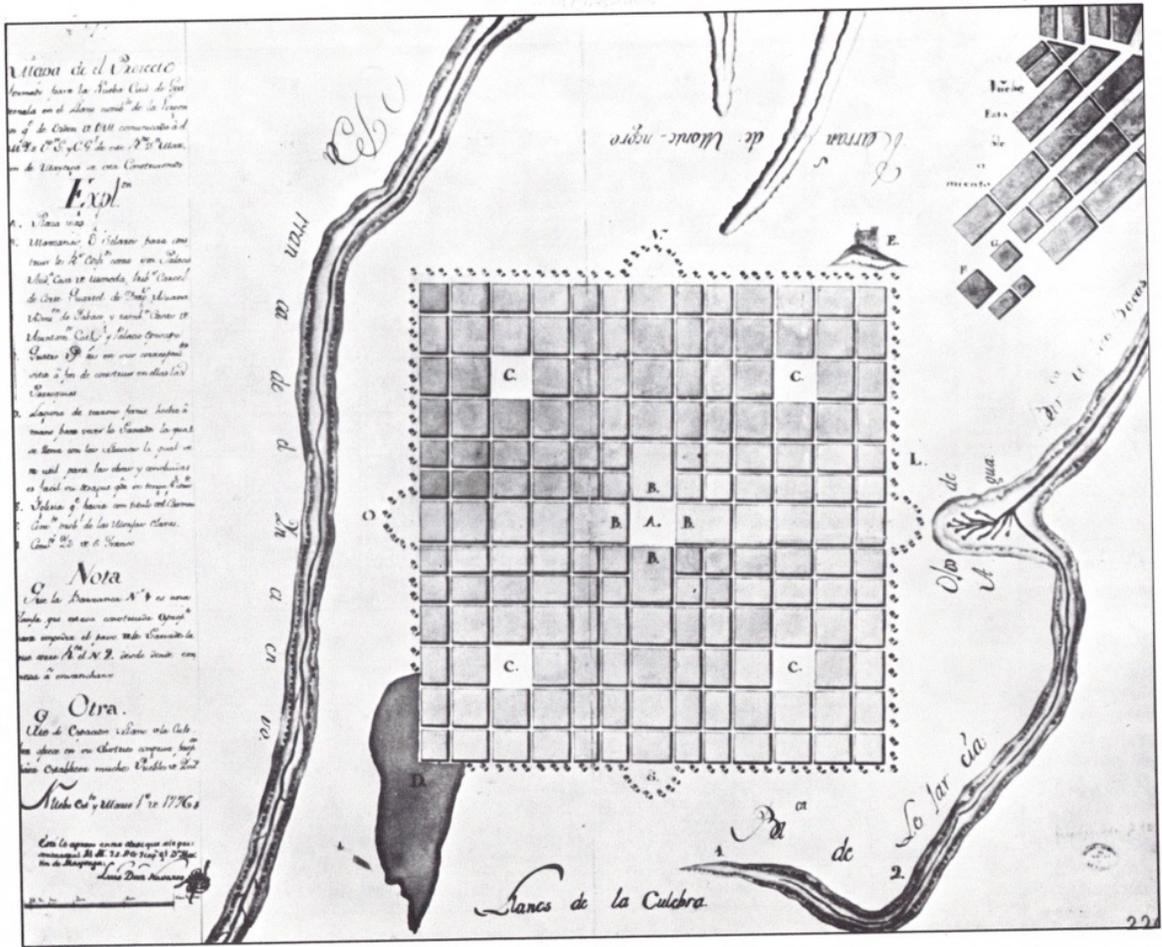


Figure 2-5. Plan for New Guatemala City, 1776. Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Audiencia de Guatemala Legajo 463, MP 220. Source: Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Central America*, vol. 1 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1995), 245.



Figure 2-6. Dr. Juan Antonio Dighero, title page of *El Pantheon real, fúnebre aparato a las exequias, que en la ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala se hicieron por el alma, y a la piadosa memoria de nuestra catholica reina, y señora, doña Maria Amalia de Saxonia*, 120 pages, 1 folded leaf of plates, 21 cm., Guatemala, 1763. Getty Research Institute (GRI), 86-B17072, Los Angeles, California.



Figure 2-7. Dr. Juan Antonio Dighero, page from *El Pantheon real, fúnebre aparato a las exequias, que en la ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala se hicieron por el alma, y a la piadosa memoria de nuestra catholica reina, y señora, doña Maria Amalia de Saxonia*, 120 pages, 1 folded leaf of plates, 21 cm, Guatemala, 1763. Getty Research Institute (GRI), 86-B17072, Los Angeles, California.

All of the primary genres associated with the study of Latin American colonial art (ecclesiastical painting, figural sculpture, architecture, retables, cartography, manuscripts, books, etc.) are to be found in Santiago with important examples for each.¹⁴ Santiago was also home to the most lavish churches in Central America. Markman's survey of colonial architecture in the city is still the most definitive and catalogues all the extant churches in the city, though the survey by Verle Lincoln Annis published just two years later also deserves recognition.¹⁵

By the eighteenth century Santiago de los Caballeros featured a host of richly-decorated churches and convents and from where emerged a distinct, local manifestation of the baroque that influenced the region with many examples that survive to this day (Figure 2-8). Known now as *el barroco antigüeño*, or Antigua baroque, this style proved influential in the region.¹⁶ Santiago was also the center

¹⁴ For a general overview of some of these artworks see the following: Heinrich Berlin, *Ensayos sobre historia del arte en Guatemala y México* (Guatemala City: Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1952); Heinrich Berlin, *Historia de la imaginería colonial en Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1952); Victor Manuel Castellanos Hernández, *La "sección de oro" en la pintura barroca del Reino de Guatemala: Thomas de Merlo y Algunos Anónimos* (Guatemala City: Universidad de San Carlos, 1952); Luis Luján Muñoz, *La Pintura de Cristobal de Villalpando En Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Editorial Académica Centroamericana, 1983); Manuel Rubio Sánchez, *Grabadores de Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Banco de Guatemala, 1975); Miguel Álvarez Arévalo, *Algunas esculturas de la Virgen María en el arte Guatemalteco* (Guatemala City: Impresos Industriales, 1982); Gustavo Alejandro Avalaos Austria, *El retablo guatemalteco: forma y expresión* (Guatemala City: Tredex Editores, 1988). For an overview of art after the founding of New Guatemala City, see América Alonso Rivera and Cecilia Zurita Fuentes, *Evolución urbano arquitectónica de la Ciudad de Guatemala, 1776-1976* (Guatemala City: Editorial Parens, 2021).

¹⁵ Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Antigua, Guatemala* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1966). Verle Lincoln Annis, *The Architecture of Antigua Guatemala, 1543-1773* (Guatemala City: Universidad de San Carlos, 1968).

¹⁶ Mario Raúl Ramírez de León, "La arquitectura de la Antigua Guatemala: Joseph de Porres (1635-1703)" (PhD Dissertation, Mexico City, UNAM, 2013); Melchor Toledo, "El arte religioso de la Antigua Guatemala, 1773-1821: crónica de la emigración de sus imágenes."

of sculptural production in colonial Central America. As elsewhere in the Iberoamerican world, the Catholic Church decorated its aisles, chapels, and *retablos* with lifelike polychrome wooden sculptures depicting saints, the Virgin Mary, and Christ. Workshops at Santiago produced sculptures that were installed in churches throughout Central America, including most famously the sculpture of the *El Cristo Negro de Esquipulas*, the *Black Christ of Esquipulas*, housed today in an enormous eighteenth-century Basilica that lies just off the banks of the Río Lempa river in present-day Esquipulas, Guatemala.¹⁷

Santiago's role as the artistic hub occurred not so much because it was the administrative center of the Captaincy, but because it was home to a remarkable amount of convents and monasteries of various orders of the Catholic Church, and so an economy surrounding the arts had been well established.



Figure 2-8. Antigua Baroque at the *Convento de Santa Clara*, 1705, rebuilt 1734. Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala.

¹⁷ For an overview of colonial Guatemala sculpture, see Antonio Gallo Armosino, *Escultura colonial en Guatemala: evolución estilística de los siglos XVI, XVII, XVIII* (Guatemala City: Dirección General de Cultura y Bellas Artes, 1979). See also Miguel Álvarez Arévalo, *Iconografía aplicada a la escultura colonial de Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Fondo Editorial "La Luz," 1990).

The art of Santiago de los Caballeros is featured prominently in Guatemalan art history books. There are two Central American art history survey texts that focus on Guatemala. These are art historical surveys framed chronologically as “ancient to modern” in the fashion of western art history surveys (i.e., *Gardner’s*, *Janson’s*). These two surveys are Ernesto Chinchilla Aguilar’s¹⁸ and José Móbil’s.¹⁹ The “cave to modern” approach is useful for learning the known artistic record, though often the destructive role of colonialism is underemphasized in these grand narratives. These texts have created a “canon” of sorts of Guatemalan art history, that is to say an established list of artworks and monuments derived from the extant collection of ancient, colonial, and contemporary art in Guatemala.²⁰ This canon, however, tends to have a preference for either the indigenous or the European, and less interest appears to be paid to “hybridity” compared to other parts of Latin America such as Mexico, where “hybrid” art has arguably received just as much if not more scholarly attention. Outside of this canon of Central American art lies the *DGM*, for the Guatemalan cartography and landscape has been scarcely discussed in art history.

Another feature of both Chinchilla Aguilar’s and Móbil’s texts is their nationalistic exclusivity. Whereas most survey texts have gone “global,” these now older surveys remain tied to nationalistic understandings of history and

¹⁸ Ernesto Chinchilla Aguilar, *Historia del arte en Guatemala: arquitectura, pintura y escultura*. 2 ed. (Guatemala City: Ministerio de Educación, 1965).

¹⁹ José A. Móbil, *Historia del arte guatemalteco*. 12 ed. (Guatemala: Serviprensa Centroamericana, 1996).

²⁰ The formation of canons has been deeply questioned in art history as well. See, Michael Camille, Zeynep Çelik, John Onians, Adrian Rifkin, and Christopher B. Steiner, “Rethinking the Canon” in *Art Bulletin* 78.2 (1996): 198-217.

categorization of space. The limitations are that all artworks and monuments lie within the contemporary borders of Guatemala and exclude material made in El Salvador and Honduras that would otherwise make it more complete. What is needed is a survey text for the entire Central American region, since during the colonial and pre-Hispanic periods the contemporary nation-states and their borders did not exist. The sections on Maya art in these texts, for example, exclude what is perhaps the greatest Maya sculpture (to be found in Classic-era Copán in Honduras), even though monuments made at the same time are included. This only serves to decontextualize the complexity of the region and takes away from the richness of the diversity of the interactions of all the different cultures that have lived in Central America. Furthermore, neither text properly discusses the influence of African culture during the colonial period.

Outside of Guatemala, survey books such as Diego Angulo Íñiguez's monumental *Historia del arte hispanoamericano* devoted sections to Guatemala.²¹ Pál Kelemen's *Baroque and Rococo in Latin America* also included the region's arts.²² More recent surveys, such as the 2006 catalogue and collection of essays *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820* contain a few examples of polychrome sculpture from Guatemala.²³ Many general survey books on baroque and/or rococo art, however, have left out the arts of Latin America and focused exclusively on Europe. Even recent books on the topic, such as Gauvin Alexander

²¹ Diego Angulo-Íñiguez, *Historia del arte hispanoamericano*, 3 vols. (Barcelona: Salvat, 1945). See especially the second volume.

²² Pál Kelemen, *Baroque and Rococo in Latin America*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1967).

²³ Joseph J. Rishel and Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, eds., *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006).

Bailey's 2012 *Baroque & Rococo*, leave out the spectacular baroque art of Guatemala altogether.²⁴ This is unfortunate, as it is in these types of general survey books, after all, that the arts of colonial Latin America may reach the widest audience.

The 1773 earthquake at Santiago, did not actually *destroy* Santiago de los Caballeros as many historians often write; in fact, the city is full of perfectly preserved and lavish baroque ecclesiastical and secular architecture, while the ruins of other buildings are spectacular sites to behold in and of themselves. Roofs may have caved in, but many façades still stand. The official abandonment of the city, however, prevented further development in the recent era and so Santiago de los Caballeros/Antigua Guatemala is considered among the best preserved colonial cities in Latin America.

The most prominent art historian of Santiago de los Caballeros (and of colonial Central America generally) was Sidney David Markman.²⁵ Markman received his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1941 and was trained as a classicist. From 1941-1945, he worked as Professor of art history and Archaeology at the National University of Panama where his research interests shifted from the ancient Mediterranean to the Spanish colonial architecture of Central America, no doubt because of the wealth of colonial churches in the region he would have visited and the scarce scholarly literature available about them. In 1947, Markman began teaching at Duke as Associate Professor of art history and Archaeology. He retired

²⁴ Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Baroque & Rococo* (London: Phaidon, 2012).

²⁵ Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Antigua, Guatemala*.

in 1981 as Professor Emeritus. During his career, he published numerous books and articles on Central American architecture and urbanization during the colonial period²⁶ as well as the still-definitive bibliography for colonial Central American primary sources.²⁷ A prolific scholar, Markman was deeply immersed in the debates within the emerging field of Latin American art history and his work participated in many of the debates in the field associated with George Kubler.²⁸ Significantly, Markman produced his scholarship and research before the outbreak of the various armed conflicts that would come to plague the region in the latter part of the twentieth century.²⁹

Markman's most significant contributions to the field, however, were three survey books on architecture and urbanism in Central America, each progressively with a wider scope. His landmark *Colonial Architecture in Antigua, Guatemala*, published in 1966, is a survey of the influential baroque architecture of the colonial capital and was the first art historical monograph (in English) devoted to Central

²⁶ Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Central America*, vol. 1 Primary Documentary and Literary Sources, 2 vols. (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University, 1995).

²⁷ Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Central America: A Bibliography* (Tempe, Arizona: Center for Latin American Studies, 1977).

²⁸ Sidney David Markman, "The Gridiron Town Plan and the Caste System in Central America," in *Urbanization of the Americas from Its Beginning to the Present*, ed. Richard P. Schaedel, Jorge E. Hardoy, and Nora Scott-Kinzer (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1978), 471–90. See especially Sidney David Markman, "Pre-Columbian Survivals in Colonial Hispano-American Art and Architecture," *Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas y Estéticas*, no. 19 (December 19, 1974): 43–56. The issue of "Pre-Columbian survivals" was one of the most heated debates in the study of ancient indigenous arts of the Americas during the 1970s and 1980s.

²⁹ During the middle of the twentieth century and continuing on until the 1990s, most regions of Central America experienced armed conflict. The civil war in Guatemala lasted from the 1950s-1990s, the one in El Salvador from 1980-1992 (though violence was omnipresent during the 1970s as well), and in Nicaragua during the entire decade of the 1980s. The armed conflicts discouraged (or altogether prevented) scholars outside the region from traveling there, hence hindering study.

American colonial architecture.³⁰ This book was followed by one on colonial Chiapas³¹ and one devoted to all of Central America.³²

The art of Santiago de los Caballeros deserves far more attention and recognition than it has received. While other major artistic centers across colonial Latin America have received more study as the field has developed, scholarship on Santiago de los Caballeros and the Antiguan baroque is minimal, save for local historians working in Guatemala and historians of Central America based in Mexico.³³ Now that I have provided an overview of the significance of artistic production in the city and the scholarship that surveys it, I will devote the next few pages to an overview of the historiography of the *DGM* manuscript before devoting the next chapter to a close-reading of its images.

The *DGM* in Scholarly Literature

The *DGM* is the most important manuscript that was produced at the vibrant artistic center of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala. It has been one of the most important sources for the writing of eighteenth-century Central American history. This is true for Guatemala but is especially true for El Salvador, since it is a relatively small region and had fewer encyclopedic works like the *DGM* devoted to its description. The most famous history work on El Salvador, for

³⁰ Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Antigua, Guatemala*, 1966.

³¹ Sidney David Markman, *Architecture and Urbanization in Colonial Chiapas, Mexico* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984).

³² Sidney David Markman, *Architecture and Urbanization of Colonial Central America: Primary Documentary and Literary Sources*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Tempe, Arizona: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1993).

³³ Ramírez de León, "La arquitectura de la Antigua Guatemala: Joseph de Porres (1635-1703)."

example, relies almost entirely on Cortes y Larraz's first-hand account to describe eighteenth-century daily life and sociopolitical (and socioreligious) reality.³⁴ The Ministry of Education's *Historia de El Salvador*, recently updated though still largely the same text, conveys the importance of Cortes y Larraz's *visita pastoral* to what is present-day El Salvador because he documented and captured a complex picture of civil society. Absent in most works such as the *Historia de El Salvador*, however, are any mentions of images.³⁵

The *DGM* was first published in the 1950s in Guatemala, making it accessible for the first time outside of the archive.³⁶ Split into two paperback volumes, this landmark publication remains the most widely-accessed version of the *DGM*. This edition, unfortunately, includes only small low-quality reproductions of the microfilm copies of the images, and they are reproduced as negatives, greatly distorting the original images and not allowing viewers to appreciate their tremendous detail. Edited by Guatemalan historian Adrián Recinos, this edition is extremely valuable as Recino provides an overview of Cortes y Larraz's expedition into the diocese.³⁷

³⁴ Alvarenga et al., *Historia de El Salvador*, 1994.

³⁵ Alvarenga et al., *Historia de El Salvador*, 2009.

³⁶ Pedro Cortes y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, ed. Adrián Recinos, 2 vols., Biblioteca "Goathemala" 20 (Guatemala City: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia, 1958).

³⁷ Adrián Recinos, "Introducción," in *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, ed. Adrián Recinos, 2 vols., Biblioteca "Goathemala" 20 (Guatemala City: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia, 1958), v-xviii.

More recently, the *DGM* text was published again in its entirety in an edition produced in Spain, this time in a single volume.³⁸ Although printed on better paper than the 1958 edition, this edition does not include any reproductions of the images.

The historian José Alejos García has provided one of the most useful overviews of the ethnographic descriptions in the *DGM*.³⁹ He focuses on what is today Guatemala, however, which reflects the persistence of parameters bound to conceptions of the nation-state. His analysis nevertheless shows the complexities of late colonial society in the region. He writes that the *tejido social* there, or social fabric, is the unique product of continuous interaction between the various groups in the region and notes that Guatemala today still carries the damages and wounds from the past that mark some of the violence that define the region today.⁴⁰ This is in direct dialogue with some of my own thoughts about the persistence of coloniality in the region.

Other works on the *DGM* have looked at it as a repository for eighteenth-century lexicon and *americanismos*, or Americanisms in the Spanish language derived from indigenous words. José Luis Ramírez Luengos has undertaken a groundbreaking analysis of the entries in the *DGM* that correspond to El Salvador and has identified indigenisms as an example of contact with indigenous peoples. In doing so he has underlined the process of dialectalization of this linguistic level

³⁸ Pedro Cortes y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, Corpus Hispanorum de Pace 9 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2001).

³⁹ José Alejos García, "Los guatemaltecos de 1770 en la Descripción de Pedro Cortés y Larraz," *Estudios de Cultura Maya* 19 (1992): 215–68.

⁴⁰ Alejos García, 268.

that can already be discovered in the Spanish of the region at the end of the eighteenth century.⁴¹ This type of research is incredibly useful and helps us understand the history of Central American Spanish and its evolution across the centuries.

In addition to this type of work, other scholars such as Sylvia Sellers-García have closely analyzed specific topics or themes in the *DGM*. Drawing from Cortés y Larraz's direct observations and comments, Sellers-García has examined the issue of "distance" and "remoteness" as a challenge to colonial administration.⁴² In the jungles of Central America, this would have been all the more real for colonial administrators foreign to the land. The sensation of being in desolate, remote areas is amplified by seemingly impenetrable dense, tropical vegetation. This type of analysis, gleaned by the *DGM's* text alone, provides readers with a sense of eighteenth-century social space in Central America.

I have situated the study of the *DGM*, among the most important colonial sources on Guatemala and El Salvador, in its art historical and historiographical context. As a richly illustrated text, it deserves far more scholarly attention than it has currently received. This is partly due to increased attention paid to sixteenth-century manuscripts, which are often deemed far more historically and culturally significant. But the *DGM's* neglect also results from general neglect of colonial Central America in the scholarly literature. This was recently remedied

⁴¹ Jose Luis Ramírez Luengo, "La descripción geográfico-moral del Arzobispo Cortés y Larraz (1770) y la historia léxica de Centroamérica: algunos datos salvadoreños," *Cuadernos de lingüística de el Colegio de México* 6, no. 1 (2019): 1–30.

⁴² Sylvia Sellers-García, "Dangerous Distance: A Visita by Archbishop Cortés y Larraz" in *Distance and Documents at the Spanish Empire's Periphery* (Palo Alto, Stanford University Press: 2014): 55–76.

partially by the inclusion of a sample of the *DGM's* text in *The Guatemala Reader*, translated into English.⁴³ And although its words have long been utilized in the writing of Central American histories, its images have received scarce attention. The next chapter will be devoted exclusively to understanding the images of the *DGM* within their specific art historical context.

⁴³ Pedro Cortes y Larraz, "Fugitive Indians" in *The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Greg Grandin, Deborah T. Levenson, Elizabeth Oglesby (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014): 94-100.

Chapter 3. Metonymy and Aeriality: The Production of the Maps of the *DGM* within the Context of Early Modern Colonial Cartography

aeriality, n.
Aerial quality; airiness; insubstantiality.¹

The two previous chapters have provided historical context for the people of the Río Lempa region and the historical backdrop of art and colonialism necessary to understand the *DGM* manuscript. This chapter will move now towards examining the manuscript proper.

Within a year of beginning his appointment as Archbishop of the diocese of Guatemala, Pedro Cortes y Larraz embarked on his *visita pastoral*. It was not a single trip, however, as the diocese proved too vast to safely complete the journey in just one trip because the rainy season would make travel tremendously difficult. Cortes y Larraz embarked therefore on three separate excursions planned around the rainy season to visit each of the more than one hundred parishes within the diocese's limits. As detailed by the Archbishop himself, the first and longest trip lasted from November 3, 1768 to July 1, 1769. The second trip lasted from November 22, 1769 to February 9, 1770. The third and final trip was shorter and

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, "Aeriality, N." (Oxford University Press). This is the most up to date definition from 2008. The previous definition, from the 1989 edition, is slightly different: "Aerialness; airiness, unsubstantiality." An interesting dynamic appears surrounding the use of this word as it has two distinct definitions, both of which can readily be applied to images. On the one hand aeriality can refer to the degree of which an "aerial" quality exists in something, on the other hand, the same term may refer to the quality of "airiness." Indeed, the first time the word was utilized in *Art Bulletin* was in fact in reference to airiness, which is the second definition provided by the *OED*. See José López-Rey, "On Velazquez's Portrait of Cardinal Borja," *Art Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (1946): 273.

lasted from June 6, 1770 to August 29, 1770. Each trip began and ended in Santiago de los Caballeros.²

During these excursions the Archbishop met with the local parish priests to collect the questionnaires he sent to them far in advance of his visit. In this regard the method and purpose of his *visita pastoral* resembles the sixteenth-century *relaciones geográficas*, which I will discuss later in this chapter, though there are many departures as well.³ Whereas the *relaciones geográficas* were intended to compile as much information about Spain's newly-conquered lands as possible, by the eighteenth century these journeys took on the character of *assessments* of this conquered land. This can be seen through Cortes y Larraz's desire to capture the "moral"-geography of the diocese (i.e., the degree to which orthodox Catholicism was being practiced).

The result of Cortes y Larraz's lengthy travels is the manuscript known today as the *DGM*. It is just over one thousand five-hundred pages in length including all the original images.⁴ Via the port of Veracruz, the *DGM* was sent to the Spanish crown as the *Carta de Pedro Cortes y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis*

² Adrián Recinos, 2 vols., Biblioteca "Goathemala" 20 (Guatemala City: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia, 1958), v-xviii.

³ The best place to start initial research on the sixteenth-century *relaciones geográficas* of New Spain is in *The Handbook of Middle American Indians*, the most ambitious ethnographic project at the time of its completion. See Donald Robertson, "The Pinturas (Maps) of the Relaciones Geográficas, with Catalogue," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. Howard F. Cline, vol. 12, Guide to Ethnohistorical Sources, Part 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 243-78. In the decades since then, Barbara Mundy's work remains the most comprehensive and authoritative. Barbara Mundy, *The Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas of New Spain, 1579-c. 1584* (New Haven: Yale University, 1993).

⁴ Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES), Archivo General de Indias, GUATEMALA, 948, N.2 and GUATEMALA, 948, N.3. The maps are also catalogued individually in MP-GUATEMALA, 74-120, GUATEMALA, 121-122, and MP-GUATEMALA, 157-186,

de Guatemala a Su Majestad, or Letter from Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Archbishop of the diocese of Guatemala, to His Majesty.⁵ Cortes y Larraz signed the work on May 1, 1771, and it appears to have been received in Spain on September 11, 1771. Originally configured as three tomes, the manuscript was reassembled in the 1970s into two tomes and is stored that way today in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville.⁶

Each page of the manuscript measures approximately 23 x 39 cm. This results in a wide format and so the text is arranged in two columns for legibility (Figure 3-1). This wide format, however, is also appropriate for the images as it was convention well-established by the eighteenth century to utilize a wide format for maps (Figure 3-2). In utilizing these wide sheets of paper, Cortes y Larraz's images become all the more cartographic. As I will show in my analysis after briefly discussing the nature of the maps/landscape, the use of this type of paper is just one of a series of politicized techniques designed to elevate the authority of the images within the *DGM* and convince the viewer of their faithfulness and accuracy. This chapter will utilize a comparative approach to touch on these various inquiries as they pertain to the eighteenth-century *DGM* maps. This chapter conducts the first close-reading of these maps/landscapes, which, although long appreciated by historians of Central America, have not yet been closely examined by art historians or scholars of the visual.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

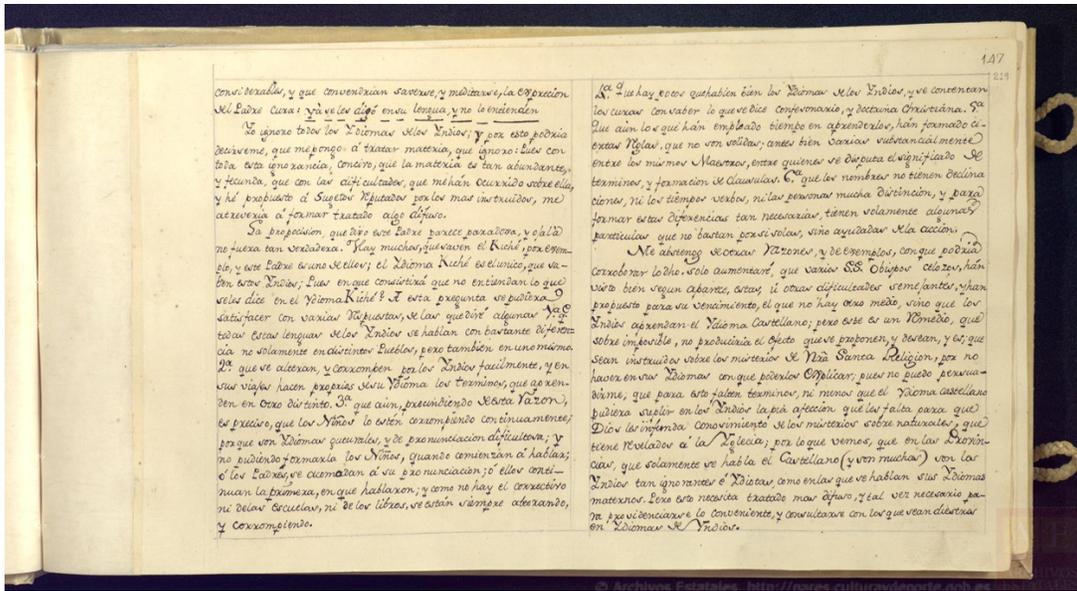


Figure 3-1. Carta de Pedro Cortes y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis de Guatemala a S.M., ES.41091.AGI/26/GUATEMALA,948,N.X, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain..



Figure 3-2. Carta de Pedro Cortes y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis de Guatemala a S.M., ES.41091.AGI/26/GUATEMALA,948,N.X, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain

The exact authorship of these images is still unknown and they are all unsigned. Throughout Cortes y Larraz’s narration in the *DGM*, it is clear that the

images were either already completed or close to completed at the time of his writing as he occasionally refers to them specifically in-text, such as in the entry for Santiago de los Caballeros where he states that the location of the various monasteries and convents in the city are labeled accordingly in the corresponding map.⁷ In other words he had access to the images as he drafted the final version of his text. Remarkably, however, almost no scholar has taken up the issue of who painted the images, and most discussions on the *DGM* appear to take the existence of the maps for granted and fail to acknowledge the tremendous labor and local geospatial knowledge required to produce them. Most discussions on the *DGM* in fact do not even mention the maps. This is probably because the images have been inaccessible until recent digitization efforts at the AGI and because only those who have had access to the physical manuscript would have gleaned their tremendous significance. Adrián Recinos, who provided a concise summary of the *DGM*'s contents in his introduction to the 1958 edition, makes no mention of them, even though he otherwise provides a detailed overview of the contents of the manuscript's text.⁸

I have speculated that Cortes y Larraz may have received artistic training during his education in Spain, making him a likely candidate for the author of these images. However, it is just as likely that Cortes y Larraz would have hired a skilled draughtsman in the city of Santiago de los Caballeros and brought him

⁷ Unfortunately, the map of Santiago de los Caballeros is missing, the only image out of the original one hundred thirteen that is now lost to history.

⁸ Adrián Recinos, "Introducción," xi. Recinos provides an overview of the expansive geographical data found in the *DGM*'s text, such as Cortes y Larraz's frequent mentions of volcanoes, roads, rivers, streams, valleys, etc., but Recinos fails to mention the maps and the tremendous geographical and geospatial data they contain.

along during the expedition. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Santiago was a major artistic center. This was especially the case during the eighteenth century when numerous monasteries, convents, and churches were erected or renovated with all the sculpture and painting necessary to decorate them.

The Political Map/Landscape

This dissertation defines a map as a visual representation of space on Earth -- real space or not -- that organizes, presents, and communicates spatial and distance information visually.⁹ Maps are both material and immaterial (social), real and physical products that reflect the cultural concerns, values, and communication technologies (and arts) of the societies that produced them.¹⁰ In this regard, maps are visual artifacts subject to art historical analysis and textual criticism. In the introduction to the first volume of the landmark *History of Cartography* series begun in 1987, J. Brian Harley and David Woodward consider maps to be “visual embodiments” of space and a primary medium for transmitting ideas and knowledge about space and time.¹¹ That is to say that maps are

⁹ I draw on the work of Henri Lefebvre to differentiate between the synonymous – but not identical – concepts of space and place. This dissertation is concerned with the visualization of space as and how these visualizations inform us about the places contained within these spaces, social or otherwise. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998). Lefebvre’s central thesis is that all space is socially produced and it is actually the result of three separate phenomena that intersect with one another: conceived space, perceived space, and lived space. The designers (normally governments) conceive the space, the layman perceives it, and the lived space is the combination of the perception of the space along with knowledge of what the space is meant to be (the conceived space).

¹⁰ Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, “Introduction,” in *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 2011). Their definition of maps is in line with the school of cartographical history established formally by Harley and Woodward in the 1980s, though by no means started by them.

¹¹ J. Brian Harley and David Woodward, “The Map and the Development of the History of Cartography,” in *History of Cartography*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987), 1.

embedded with signs that point to a real, physical space in time. According to Harley and Woodward, such a definition highlights “the way maps store, communicate, and promote spatial understanding.”¹² Jordan Dym and Karl Offen remark on the influence of Harley’s and Woodward’s expansive definition and note that it inspired a generation of scholars from many disciplines to rethink the nature and power of maps.¹³ With regard to historical maps such as those produced during the early modern period, Dym and Offen note that new questions arose around the 1980s concerning why maps were made, who used them or viewed them, and what purpose(s) they were serving. This new era of scholarship complemented existing literature that was primarily concerned with technological innovation, the science of printing, and the spread of cartographical technologies.¹⁴ Dym and Offen give credit where it is due, noting that the shift in interest from issues concerning technology to unpacking issues concerning epistemology stem from concerns that came out of political critiques arising in Latin America and parts of the global south and formerly-colonized world, namely critiques of coloniality.¹⁵ As laid out in the introduction, this dissertation, too, is informed by fundamental epistemic questions concerning the nature of coloniality/decoloniality as they pertain to understanding the visual and colonial epistemologies.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dym and Offen, “Introduction.”

¹⁴ Dym and Offen.

¹⁵ I use the term coloniality in this dissertation as it is defined by scholars such as Aníbal Quijano and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, which is to say it is a challenge to the concept of *modernity* as traditionally defined as a temporal period in linear history rather than one based on colonial power.

In many regards, early modern visualizations of the Americas in cartographic records are almost always the direct result of imperial expansion and colonialism. Even in the context of the academic maps intended for publication and education and not for military strategy, early modern maps of the Americas were nevertheless possible due to violence that arose after or as a result of the voyages of discovery. Imperial expansion collected the information and data that these maps visualized. Decolonizing methodologies challenge us today to acknowledge their connection to a brutal past and (re)think how to unpack and reclaim their historical significance. Indeed, Central American maps from the early modern period are as important today as they were when they were originally made, for they help fill in what are often major gaps in an understanding of Central American cultural, social, and material history.

W. J. T. Mitchell so poignantly reminds us in his famous reflection, "landscape is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other. As such, it is like money: good for nothing in itself, but expressive of a potentially limitless reserve of value."¹⁶ And again, "landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package."¹⁷ Using semiotics, Mitchell reminds us that landscape is not entirely a western phenomenon, for a rich tradition exists in Asian art and he delineates some

¹⁶ W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

tendencies that distinguish them. He notes that in the west, nature is depicted as a unified scene and enjoyed for its own sake whereas in eastern landscape, nature is closely bound up with an almost mystic reverence to underscore the powers of nature.¹⁸ The landscape in eastern art has also been identified as inherently political, and scholars note how it was used in twentieth-century China, for example, to glorify the socialist regime.¹⁹

Denis Cosgrove has also served as an influential thinker on the landscape and wrote many important essays and books on the topic.²⁰ Cosgrove also examined cartography specifically and likewise wrote influential surveys of early modern examples.²¹ Cosgrove, like many of his generation, convincingly asserted that the landscape is a mode of human signification, informed by, and itself informing social, cultural and political issues.²² The landscape -- especially as it has developed in the west -- is therefore a political phenomenon often tied to culturally-specific conceptions of space, place, nature, and political ambition.

¹⁸ W. J. T. Mitchell, "Introduction," 30, note 11. Mitchell cites the article "Landscape Painting" in the *Oxford Companion to Art* as the source for his reasoning. See Harold Osborne, "Landscape Painting," in *The Oxford Companion to Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

¹⁹ Kathy Mak, "The New Look of Mountains and Rivers: Landscape and the Imagining of Socialist China during The Seventeen Years Period (1949-1966)" (dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles, 2018). For a discussion of traditional Chinese landscape, see also Kathy Mak, "Sun Zhi: Landscape," in *The Artful Recluse: Painting, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century China*, ed. Peter Sturman and Susan S. Tai (Santa Barbara, California: Prestel, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2012), 124-25.

²⁰ Denis Cosgrove, "Introduction: Iconography and Landscape," in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representations, Design and Use of Past Environments*, ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1-10.

²¹ Denis Cosgrove, "Images of Renaissance Cosmography, 1450-1650," in *The History of Cartography*, ed. David Woodward, vol. 3., Cartography in the European Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 55-98.

²² Cosgrove, "Introduction: Iconography and Landscape," 3-4.

Malcolm Andrews has also greatly contributed to the discussion on landscape. He has argued that if land is the raw material, then art is created by turning this raw material into landscape, which becomes art.²³

Regarding the various *DGM* landscapes discussed ahead, they represent attempts to provide visualizations on a scale not attempted since the sixteenth-century *relaciones geográficas*, discussed later in this chapter. Andrews's thoughts are useful then to consider how the land of the Río Lempa region represented "raw material" that had to be converted into something digestible, consumable to an eighteenth-century viewer, all within the confines of two-dimensional imagery. This reminds us of what novelist Joseph Conrad once called the "darkness," those regions not yet known, appearing blank in maps.²⁴ And while Conrad was concerned with expeditions in nineteenth-century Africa, the context of colonialism is similar in the eighteenth-century Río Lempa region.

My own thoughts on space and mapping the unknown are influenced by Yi Fu Tuan, who wrote that "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value."²⁵ This means that

²³ Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford History of Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–5. Andrews provides the widest possible survey of the western landscape, including painting, gardening, panorama, poetry, and general photography.

²⁴ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Tribeca Books, 2010).

²⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). Tuan writes: "In experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. "Space" is more abstract than "place." What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the location (place) qualities of space. The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (6). In other words, we might think of space as area: the physical extent or area between two or more points in a two- or three-dimensional plane. Place is more specific, place is a spot, a location, or a describable region. One moves through spaces, but

geophysical space requires a process of exploration (either real or virtual) to become known, and this in turn results in the creation of value. Perhaps there is no better application of this than within the context of the colonization of America and of Africa. What exists as darkness, “blackness,” a void not yet filled, is left to be imagined or constructed. Within the context of Latin America, Dana Leibsohn has written that

Because land and its control were seminal to all residents of New Spain, maps were never neutral images. The settings in which indigenous cartographic records circulated underscored this point. By far the greatest number of maps were legal documents proffered during contests for natural resources and territory. Most commonly, maps were commissioned by administrators and submitted with binding oral and written testimonies before authorities in land grand applications, official inquiries, and congregaciones.²⁶

Here again we see the insistence on the political nature of the map. In the colonial context, this is especially true, for as Leibsohn points out there is a violent subtext to the production of maps. Maps could not be neutral for embedded within their seemingly objective representations of spaces/places were political claims of land ownership.

Landscapes in Latin America would, even after the colonial period, continue to reproduce politicized notions of land ownership that erased the violent colonial subtext. Emmanuel Ortega has continued the discussion of the landscape politic

memories and experiences happen in places. Though elaborating on these definitions may seem redundant, I believe that to deconstruct and analyze any given place -- such as the *reducciones*, cities and countryside in the landscapes of the *DGM* -- being able to identify and distinguish between different spaces and places will allow for a richer and more nuanced understanding of how the place overall operates and the experiences that they set the stage for.

²⁶ Dana Leibsohn, “Colony and Cartography: Shifting Signs on Indigenous Maps of New Spain,” in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 267-68.

and how it helped shape Latin American nationalisms and nation-state formation after the colonial period. In a recent *Art Bulletin* essay on the nineteenth-century Mexican picturesque in landscape, Ortega argues that what appear as innocent landscape scenes actually promote sentiments of national pride in a process veiled by the inherent charm of the landscape itself.²⁷ This celebrates a sanitized history that obfuscates the conquest/European invasion and celebrates land as belonging to the “nation” despite the “nation” excluding indigenous communities. Thus images such as those examined by Ortega enact specific goals through a rhetorically complex set of visual practices that rely on established western landscape conventions. And although the Enlightenment ideals of the picturesque proper are not necessarily present in the *DGM* images that concern this dissertation, the aestheticized representations of the Río Lempa land surface nevertheless are an important part of how the images conveyed meaning to eighteenth-century viewers and beyond.

Constructed Aeriality through Metonymy and Modularity: The Encyclopedic Sequence of Maps/Landscapes in the *DGM*

No other extant series of images provides as much information about geography and land-use in the eighteenth-century Río Lempa basin as do the images of the *DGM*. They were indeed the most detailed images produced of the

²⁷ Emmanuel Ortega, “The Mexican Picturesque and the Sentimental Nation: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Landscape,” *Art Bulletin* 103, no. 2 (2021): 129–55. For more discussion on time and landscapes, see Veronica Della Dora, “Lifting the Veil of Time: Maps, Metaphor, and Antiquarianism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Time in Maps: From the Age of Discovery to Our Digital Era*, ed. Kären Wigen and Caroline Winterer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 103–26. Della Dora writes that “Maps outline futures and make pasts visible. As projects on territory, they give visual expression to what has yet to come; as historical records, they open windows onto bygone worlds. Urban plans and maps of territorial partitions have the power to shape the land, or simply to conjure up new spatial orders in our mind. Historical maps, for their part, help translate time into space” (103).

region up until the time of their creation. While individual images have been consulted to accompany specific historical research projects, usually histories of a specific town or city in Guatemala or El Salvador, there is little understanding of how the entire sequence of images functioned together as a set and how they form part of this important visual genre.²⁸ And while the *DGM*'s two tomes are both catalogued in the AGI's database, the one hundred and twelve images found within are also accessioned individually in the Maps section of the AGI's vast catalogue. Without a very thorough search, one can stumble upon one of the *DGM* maps without knowing it forms part of a sequence.²⁹ And yet viewing them as a sequence, I argue, is absolutely crucial to understand not only how the maps originally operated, but also to give us greater insight into their production and the great ambition to capture detailed spatial, ethnographic, and geographic information, even if not always entirely accurate. The encyclopedic sequence is part of the experience itself, and so each image compounds meaning when viewed in this original context.³⁰

This chapter will demonstrate that the *DGM*'s images alone are of considerable historical significance and unprecedented for their encyclopedic

²⁸ The most important work devoted to Central American cartography features only a detail from the San Salvador map taken from a much older photograph that is not color corrected. See Carolyn Hall and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *Historical Atlas of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 250.

²⁹ I was first introduced to PARES in Dr. Charlene Villaseñor Black's and Dr. Mari-Tere Alvarez's seminar at UCLA on materiality in the early modern Iberoamerican world, which emphasized the importance of consulting primary documents.

³⁰ I thank Dr. Christopher Johnson who introduced me to the encyclopedic impulse in print culture in his seminar on early modern encyclopedic Writing about the Americas. And while we looked at texts, not images, the encyclopedic impulse is very much the driving factor behind such a creation of images as those found in the *DGM*.

coverage that deserve far more scholarly attention than they have currently received.³¹ As visual artifacts, they require a nuanced methodology to both identify and see beyond early modern biases and colonialist mentalities embedded within. I also ask new questions about the images and their production and intention. How does each image serve not only to illustrate the text of the *DGM*, but how do they make meaning on their own? How do they function rhetorically as an encyclopedic set? What do they tell us about the nature, or at least perceived nature, of the colonial settlements and reducciones in the Río Lempa basin and their diverse inhabitants? How accurate are these images in portraying the land and settlements they presume to portray? And, most importantly, how did two-dimensional visuality aid in both the creation and populating of colonial settlements in El Salvador and their “assessments” by church officials as they developed over time?

I will focus my analysis on general themes and iconographical and cartographical elements persistent across the maps to give the reader a sense of how they operate. Due to the great number of images contained within the *DGM*, I have limited my analysis to a sample of images that roughly correspond today

³¹ The text of the *DGM* was first transcribed and published by the Sociedad de Geografía e Historia in the 1950s, now the Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala. See Pedro Cortes y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 2 vols., Biblioteca “Goathemala” (Guatemala: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia, 1958 [1771]). The text was published again in its entirety in Cortes y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*. The text was partially published in Pedro Cortes y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, Biblioteca de la Historia Salvadoreña 2 (San Salvador, El Salvador: Dirección de Publicaciones e Impressos, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y el Arte, 2000). This edition contained only the entries in the *DGM* that correspond to the contemporary territory of El Salvador. Until the recent digitization of the entire *DGM*, these books were the most accessible way to read the contents of the *DGM*. However, the 1958 edition reproduced the maps only as small, black and white thumbnails in negative format (i.e., reversed colors). The 2001 editions omits the maps altogether, while the 2000 Salvadoran edition reproduces the maps faithfully in full color, but only those corresponding to the contemporary territory of El Salvador. To date there is no publication that reproduces all of the maps in a single volume.

to the nation of El Salvador. A few additional maps of major cities in Guatemala also form part of this sample, such as Quetzaltenango and Esquipulas.

As is true with medieval mapping traditions, including those from Iberia, the maps in the *DGM* emphasize what Harvey has called the “sensual rather than the rational and objective qualities of spatial order.”³² Because there is more “raw material” (i.e., land) than Cortes y Larraz could ever have hoped to accurately visualize, certainly not without a specialized cartographical team and equipment, to make visualization possible each map is drawn using elements that repeat throughout the sequence. These elements, such as renderings of individual church-buildings or smaller structures, serve to form a modular system, the various elements of which could be mixed and matched or combined to form the experience of a new landscape or view in every image, despite not actually showing verisimilitude (Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4). Arranged differently in each scene, only upon close inspection can one see that Cortes y Larraz used repeating motifs -- operating as metonyms -- to create the illusion of the bird’s eye view, one drawn from an extremely high vantage point. Indeed, some images are drawn from such a high vantage point as to approach the types of visualizations associated with contemporary satellite images or aerial photography from airplanes.

³² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1989), 243.



Figure 3-3. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-4. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

Each map varies considerably in terms of scale, as each one depicts a different parish which all varied tremendously in size. Despite the use of repeated elements throughout the sequence, in some places the attention to detail is

nevertheless astonishing. Church-buildings, for example, are drawn with facades that while standardized often match their real-life counterparts. If we turn to the map of the town of Izalco, El Salvador (Figure 3-5) for example, we find that the church drawn in the map closely resembles the actual church of Izalco, already erected when Cortes y Larraz arrived (Figure 3-8). An even better example of this myopic attention to detail is the depiction of Esquipulas's famous eighteenth-century basilica (Figure 3-7 and Figure 3-8), which is home to the miraculous sixteenth-century Cristo Negro de Esquipulas (Black Christ) crucifix, said to heal the physical ailments of devout believers and today the largest pilgrimage site in Mesoamerica after the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City. Already a popular pilgrimage destination in the eighteenth century, Cortes y Larraz notes in his textual anecdotes that Esquipulas's fame overshadows the actual parish center, nearby Quezaltepeque, Guatemala.

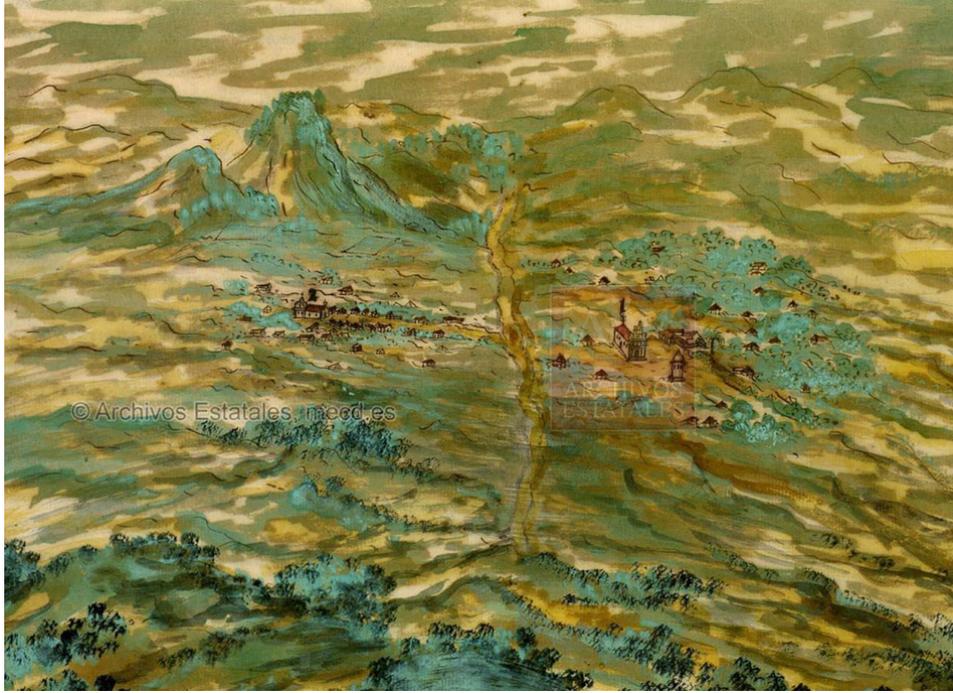


Figure 3-5. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Izalco, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-6. Photograph of Izalco, El Salvador



Figure 3-7. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Quezaltepeque, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)



Figure 3-8. Photograph of Basilica de Nuestro Señor de Esquipulas, Esquipulas, Guatemala, 2005. Courtesy of Jan Pesula.

In addition to their striking detail, one of the most remarkable features of the *DGM* maps is their aerial vantage point, the so-called “bird’s eye view.”³³ This greatly contributes to the illusion of verisimilitude and helps convince the viewer that they were drawn from life, from presumably high vantage points, such as hilltops, and creating the illusion of three-dimensionality. This is true despite that sometimes the maps contain entirely two-dimensional elements, such as in the drawing of rivers horizontally across the sheet of paper to the very edge of the image’s border. A river in the far right of the map of Texistepeque is a clear example of this (Figure 3-9). Whereas the portion of the river in the bottom half of the image, the area closest to the viewer, is rendered three-dimensionally with a detailed river embankment (Figure 3-10), the same river is rendered completely flat near the top of the image (Figure 3-11). It no longer recedes into the distance but continues abruptly into the image’s edge. The same map of Texistepeque visualizes a second river, this one to the far left of the image, that recedes into the distance behind a mountain (Figure 3-12). These are conflicting modes of perspective that accomplish numerous things. Two-dimensional rivers drawn across the image resemble their counterparts in conventional maps drawn from above without depth or perspective. This therefore makes important geographical features of the landscape appear scientifically drawn.

³³ For recent considerations of the western aerial image since the Renaissance, see Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin, *Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, ed. Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013). Useful also is the thorough work of Reps, see John W. Reps, *Bird's Eye Views: Historic Lithographs of North American Cities* (New York: Prince Architectural Press, 1998).



Figure 3-9. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES)



Figure 3-10. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

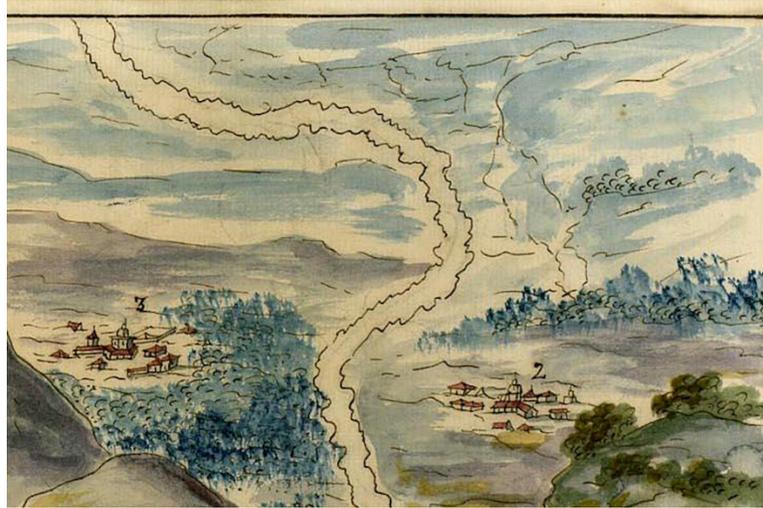


Figure 3-11. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-12. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Texistepeque, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor

on paper, 23 x 39 cm. [Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES](#)

Two-dimensional elements such as rivers are accompanied by naturalistic, if simplified, three-dimensional renderings of the landscape's natural features from the aerial vantage point. Volcanoes, mountains, hills, lakes, beaches, etc., are rendered in full color in a juxtaposition of different perspectives next to the two-dimensional rivers (Figure 3-13). The flattened rivers give the impression that the landscape has been drawn using isometric perspective, with no vanishing point and no converging lines. This is augmented by the fact that the maps rarely have defined horizons or depictions of the sky. Thus, we the viewer are not only at a high vantage point, but we are looking down on the land, not so much into the distance. This again is evocative of the experience of viewing satellite imagery. And yet side-by-side comparisons reveal just how enlarged each element of the landscape is, for if we compare the *DGM* map of Nonualco with a contemporary satellite image, we find that despite their great detail, the images are still abbreviated versions of everything contained within the physical space as it exists in actuality (Figure 3-14). Numerous inconsistencies throughout the images appear random, such the rendering of ocean water which is at times filled in with blue wash (Figure 3-15) or in other cases left blank without fill as would appear on conventional maps (Figure 3-16). In one instance I found an incorrect depiction of the ocean, which was rendered as land but should have been left either blank or filled with blue wash to represent the ocean. This is the case in the Map of San Jacinto, as the towns labeled 6 and 7 (today's Puerto de La Libertad)

belong on the coastline (Figure 3-17). This leads to my speculation that the maps were not painted in situ.



Figure 3-13. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Nonualco, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

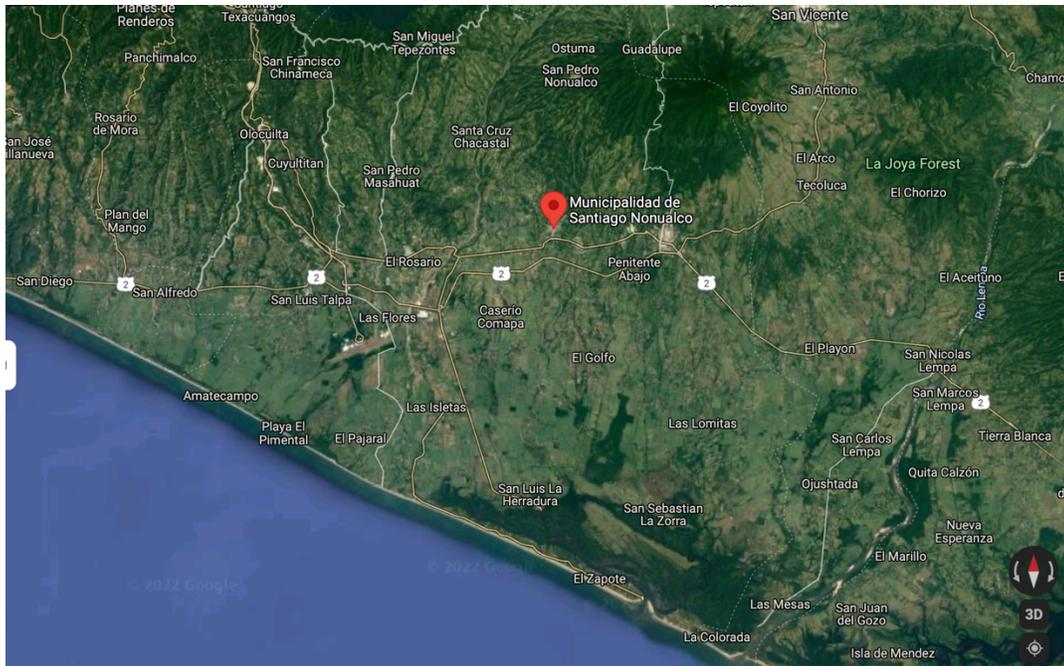


Figure 3-14. Satellite Image highlighting the area shown in the *DGM* Map of Nonualco. Source: Google Maps

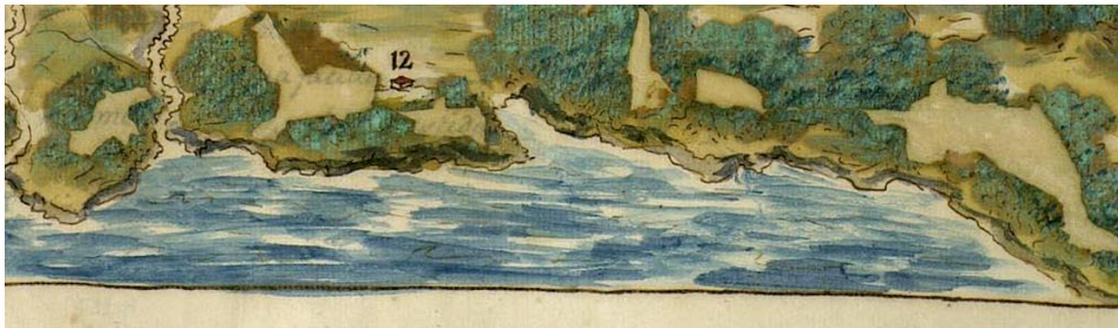


Figure 3-15. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Nonualco, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-16. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Sonsonate, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-17. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Jacinto, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

Some of my other observations include the very rare inclusion of a white opaque medium -- possibly gouache -- in some maps that may have served as corrections to erase what was underneath as the watercolor medium is otherwise transparent. This can be seen in a hill located between the parish center of

Quezaltepeque, Guatemala and the town of Esquipulas, labeled "1" and "2" respectively (Figure 3-18).

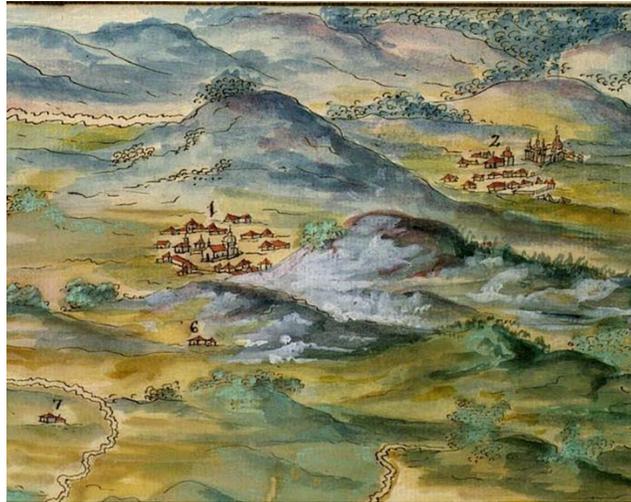


Figure 3-18. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Quezaltepeque, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

The various edifices represented in these maps, such as individual nondescript buildings or distinct church-buildilngs, are used to indicate human settlement. Humans are otherwise absent from these images save for these structures and representations of agriculture, which indicate population centers. Haciendas are represented with single, small dwellings that appear domestic (Figure 3-19). Towns are often represented by a single church structure surrounded by a cluster of buildings, such as is found in the representation of the towns of Nejapa and Quezaltepeque in El Salvador, labeled 5 and 6 respectively in the Map of San Salvador (Figure 3-20, not to be confused with the town of Quezaltepeque, Guatemala, mentioned above). Major cities are represented with the inclusion of a cluster of buildings surrounding the church arranged as a grid, such as in San Salvador (Figure 3-21) or Santa Ana (Figure 3-22) in present-day

El Salvador, or in the very important city of Quetzaltenango in Guatemala (Figure 3-23). Agriculture is depicted in a few maps through the presence of abstracted fields of crops drawn as small rectangles with a solid wash (Figure 3-24). These representations of farms are actually extremely important for they convey the history of agriculture/plantations across the diocese and tell us about colonial land use. The various elements operate as signifiers that form a multidimensional meaning. Regarding their use Dana Leibsohn has been able to demonstrate that

After 1550 various combinations of churches and grids became the prime signifiers for indigenous communities; yet as signs, churches and grids behaved quite differently. Churches proliferated on maps, insinuating themselves into the landscape in multifarious ways. The grid, on the other hand, was less conspicuous and its use was always circumscribed. In spite of this divergence the two signs intertwined, and, taken together, they illuminate a process wherein European record-keeping practices were brought together with prehispanic-style presentations. In the semiosis of maps, signs of European and indigenous origin were each reframed by the other.³⁴

As described by Leibsohn, the grids in the *DGM* maps operate similarly to how previous mapmakers in Central America (and elsewhere in the Spanish colonial context) used metonymic strategies to convey urbanized spaces.³⁵ A map from the end of the sixteenth century shows the largely north-south route between the Puerto de Caballos, Honduras, and the Gulf of Fonseca near the diocese's southeasterly limits (Figure 3-25 and Figure 3-26). The map, with north oriented toward the left of the map, indicates this route across the width of the isthmus

³⁴ Dana Leibsohn, "Colony and Cartography: Shifting Signs on Indigenous Maps of New Spain," 267.

³⁵ For more on the gridded city in Latin America, see Graziano Gasparini, "The Pre-Hispanic Grid System: The Urban Shape of Conquest and Territorial Organization," in *Settlements in the Americas: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Ralph Bennett (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 78–109. See also Humberto Rodríguez Camilloni, "Utopia Realized in the New World: Form and Symbol of the City of Kings," in *Settlements in the Americas: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Ralph Bennett (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 28–52.

from left to right. At first glance this may not even look like a map, at least not a conventional map, and thus we can see just how far Spanish colonial cartography had developed locally in the centuries that followed the conquest.³⁶



Figure 3-19. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-20. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

³⁶ Furthermore, we can see that this single map is made out of three large sheets of paper. Because of the great length between Caballos and the Gulf of Fonseca, approximately 440 kilometers, fitting everything onto a single page would have inhibited the detail possible.

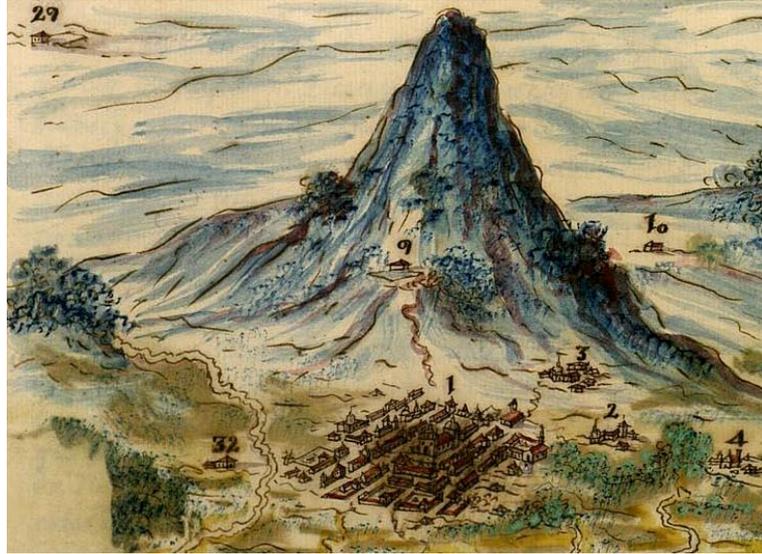


Figure 3-21. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-22. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Santa Ana, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-23. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Quetzaltenango, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-24. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Quetzaltenango, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

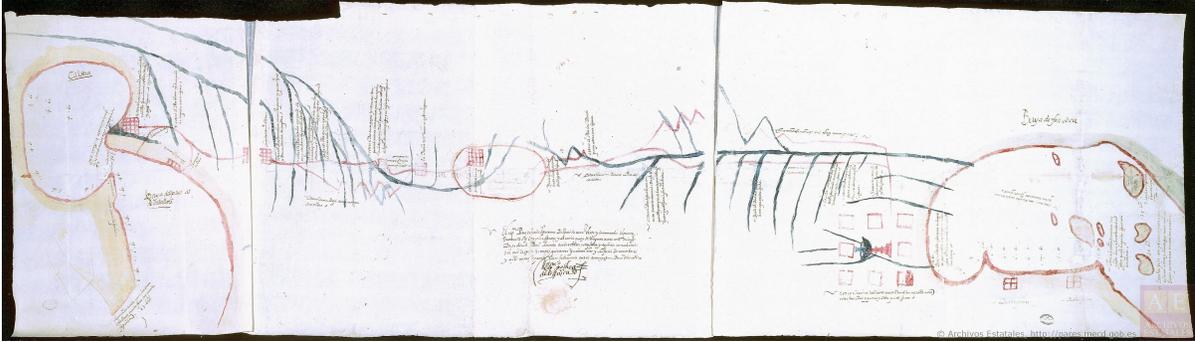


Figure 3-25 Map of the route from Puerto de Caballo (Honduras) to the Gulf of Fonseca (El Salvador), sixteenth century. Archivo General de Indias, Seville

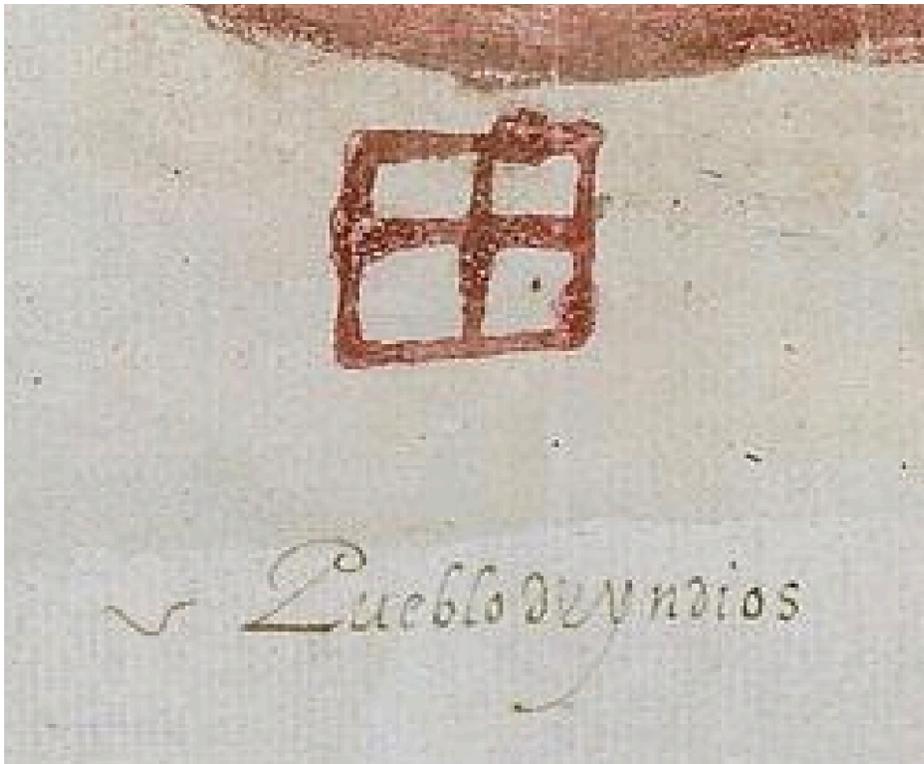


Figure 3-26. Map of the route from Puerto de Caballo (Honduras) to the Gulf of Fonseca (El Salvador), detail, showing grid and metonymy that stands in for a "pueblo de indios," sixteenth century. Archivo General de Indias, Seville

In addition to metonymy and modularity, various pictorial techniques were utilized to achieve depth that by the eighteenth century were widespread across Europe. For the most part, all the maps convincingly convey a receding landscape

into distance through the technique of adding a blue tint to distant elements in a landscape scene and rendering these elements with less clarity and less contrast to create the illusion of far depth. Known as atmospheric perspective, or aerial perspective, the technique requires that artists render the background with less distinct edges using a paler color scheme with a blue cast, as can be seen in maps such as San Salvador's (Figure 3-27). Also note the move from warm foreground to cool backgrounds -- this aids in creating a sense of spatial recession. It's drawn from seventeenth-century landscape formulae. This mimics the optical effects produced by disruption of light waves as they move through the air and reach our eyes. In some images, the blue tint is absent but a lighter wash is used to depict distance (Figure 3-28).



Figure 3-27. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Salvador, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-28. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Mejicanos, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

We get a sense of the logic driving the artistic choices and liberties taken in these maps by examining the two maps associated with the San Miguel region of El Salvador. Here are two maps, one of the parish of San Miguel (Figure 3-29) and the other of nearby Ereguayquín (Figure 3-30), which at first glance appear very similar in composition and arrangement. At the center of both compositions is the massive Chaparrastique, or Volcán de San Miguel. The San Miguel map on the left orients north at the top, while the Ereguayquín map places south at the top. Because conical volcanoes are the most prominent features of Central America's physical landscape, the volcano of Chaparrastique, which has been greatly simplified and abstracted, is in the center of the compositions. In the San Miguel map, the settlements appear north of the volcano, in the foreground, while

in the Ereaguayguín map, the settlements appear in the background. These decisions were therefore practical and necessary to fit and label each settlement.

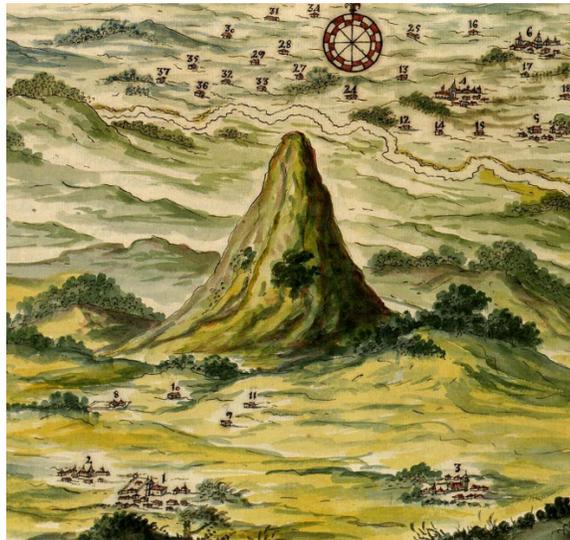


Figure 3-29. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Miguel, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

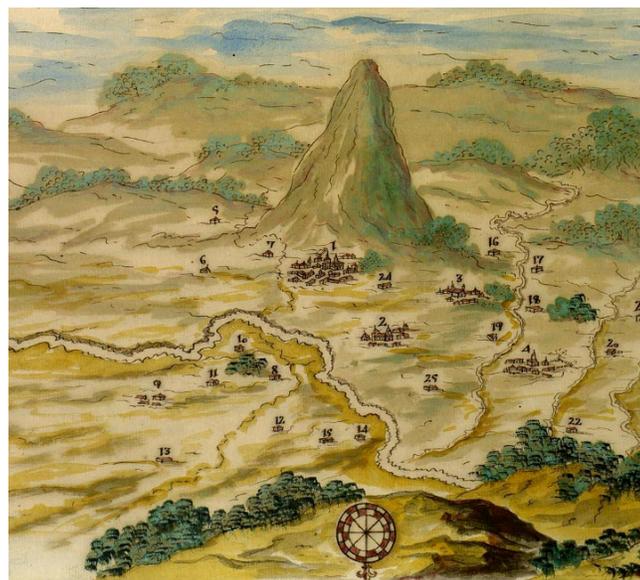


Figure 3-30. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of Ereaguayquin, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

To get a closer look at how scale works, we can look at the map of the parish of San Vicente, then as now one of El Salvador's more prominent cities (Figure 3-31). Drawn from the north looking southward towards San Vicente and the twin peaks of Chinchontepec, or the Volcán de San Vicente, we can see how the artist exaggerates proportions — relatively increasing in size some elements of the landscape, such as the town and structures, while decreasing others such as the volcano. This greatly increases the legibility of the image. Comparing it with a photograph of roughly the same scene, taken from the Panamerican highway, gives you a sense of just how much space is distorted and warped in order to draw, paint, and fit all the information within the image (Figure 3-32).



Figure 3-31. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Vicente, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES



Figure 3-32. View of the Valle de Jiboa, containing the town of San Vicente with Chinchontepec in the background.

All in all, the *DGM* images contain all the elements of modern landscape and cartography, which by the eighteenth century were beginning to become standard. Nearly every map has a distance scale, representing one league, or 3.45234 miles or 5 kilometers, and the few that omit it may have done so through error (Figure 3-33). In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the images all have a compass rose, which is for the most part consistently the same size in all of the images (Figure 3-34). Prior to the early modern period maps and charts usually placed east at the top, as the direction towards Jerusalem received primacy, but in these maps the compass rose points varies between each image and points in all directions. Semiotics helps us understand the significance of the compass rose here. The compass rose was a well-established signifier of cartography by the eighteenth century, and was generally included in maps, not landscapes. Thus, while as I have mentioned before these maps are certainly landscapes, the intentional inclusion of the compass rose in each individual image gives credibility to the image's accuracy. The image is elevated, so to speak, from

landscape to map, and we are supposed to believe that these maps depict the land surface and geography accurately and we are viewing precisely-drawn scientific images.

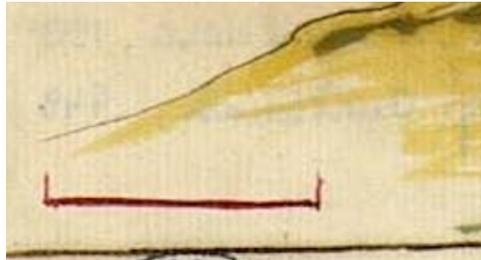


Figure 3-33. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Vicente, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

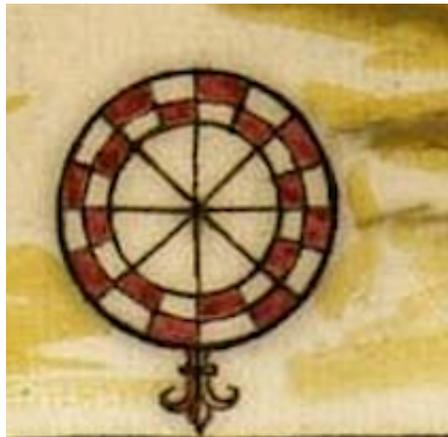


Figure 3-34. Pedro Cortes y Larraz, Map of San Vicente, detail, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*, 1768-1771. Ink and watercolor on paper, 23 x 39 cm. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. Under public domain and accessed via PARES

The Río Lempa basin landscapes in the *DGM* discussed above incorporate well-established western landscape conventions and cartographical techniques to visualize a version of Central America under complete control and oversight of the Spanish colonial administration and the Roman Catholic Church. The *reducciones*, or reduction towns such as Nejapa and Quezaltepeque outside San Salvador that

were founded in the sixteenth century, appear orderly, well-managed and documented, accounted for (see Figure 3-20). As one observes the maps as a sequence, flipping from one to another and seeing hundreds of towns, hundreds of churches, one gets the sense that the diocese has reached every single inhabitant in the region. Yet, this was not entirely true. In the southern highlands of present-day Guatemala many remote indigenous communities lived outside of purview of the colonial-church state and remained largely autonomous and monolingual. The *DGM* landscapes in this sense, then, obfuscate the more complicated reality of urbanity and human settlement in this region of Central America. By excluding certain communities altogether, these landscapes place them outside of colonial time. And by doing so, the maps enact what Emmanuel Ortega has called “a strategy in the visual culture of exploration, discovery, and invasion, and is reducible to fantasies of who *occupies space* and who can *occupy time*” in his work on nineteenth-century Mexican landscapes.³⁷

Cartographical Precedents

The remarkable sensation of virtually observing the Río Lempa region and the greater diocese of Guatemala from above was achieved using a myriad of conventions well established by the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, careful planning and familiarity with the actual land, possible by Cortes y Larraz’s first-hand observation of much of the entire diocese, was required to faithfully, if not always accurately, portray the physical geography and settlements so that the

³⁷ Ortega, “The Mexican Picturesque and the Sentimental Nation: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Landscape,” 135.

images could function as maps as well. These astounding images, I argue, form one of the most important efforts in a long history of visualizing the land of Central America. These range from European scientific and navigational charts used for transatlantic voyages to maps and charts made locally for different purposes and by varying parties. I will provide an overview of some of these visualizations in the pages that follow to situate the *DGM* within the context of early modern and Spanish colonial cartography.

No global power before or since ever conquered as much uncharted territory as rapidly as did the Iberian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon at the end of the fifteenth century.³⁸ The voyages of Columbus that began in 1492 and the expeditions of conquest in the decades that followed meant that in the span of a lifetime nearly the entire continent of America would be claimed by the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, with England and France claiming major territories in North America. For the Spanish crown, this acquisition brought with it vast administrative, military, and political challenges at a scale never faced by any European power.³⁹ Among these problems was the tremendous task of charting and mapping such vast territory previously unknown to the Old World. In 1503, just eleven years after Columbus's first voyage to America, the Catholic Monarchs Isabelle and Ferdinand established in Seville the *Casa de la Contratación* (or House of Trade) which among its many duties would include overseeing and regulating the production of all maps and all sea charts of the Americas. In 1523, their

³⁸ David Buisseret, "Spanish Colonial Cartography, 1450–1700," in *History of Cartography*, vol. 3 (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 2007), 1143–71.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1143–1144.

grandson Charles V established the *Consejo de las Indias* (or Council of the Indies) and it would have thereafter have jurisdiction over the *Casa de la Contratación*. This occurred at a time that many scholars have identified was a catalyst for the advancement of the cartographic technologies. As David Harvey has written,

the voyages of discovery produced an astounding flow of knowledge about a wider world that had somehow to be absorbed and represented. They indicated a globe that was finite and potentially knowable. Geographical knowledge became a valued commodity in a society that was becoming more and more profit-conscious. The accumulation of wealth, power, and capital became linked to personalized knowledge of, and individual command over, space.⁴⁰

As the notion of an unknown “new space” dazzled the minds (and pocketbooks) of European explorers, merchants and monarchs, maps became of the utmost importance during the European colonial expeditions. As Harvey explains above, the technology of cartography in the west developed out of the necessities created by the various colonial projects established throughout the globe but in America in particular. Maps made navigating into the dark, unknown abyss of the Atlantic less dangerous and therefore made actually reaching America more likely.⁴¹ And because of the great potential for capital and financial gain that reaching America meant, the Spanish crown wished to keep other nations from trading with or settling in the their American territories, and so all charts and all accompanying descriptive information in any form became state secrets, to be centrally controlled and not divulged without permission.⁴²

⁴⁰ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 244.

⁴¹ Buisseret, “Spanish Colonial Cartography, 1450–1700.”

⁴² Ibid.

Central America's physical geography has been at the heart of its politics, economics, and imperial exploitation ever since Europeans first arrived at the dawn of the early modern period.⁴³ Its most unique feature is its status as an isthmus, or land bridge, connecting North and South America. This feature was of great interest to various imperial powers because the isthmus contains the narrowest stretch of land between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, allowing cargo or passengers travelling from one ocean to cross by land and continue their transoceanic route on the other side. Nowhere else in the Americas could this be achieved as quickly as here. Thus, this would prove to become one of the most coveted regions in the Americas because whoever controlled this region would also maintain control of transoceanic shipping networks. And yet perhaps the most curious aspect of this defining characteristic of Central America is the fact that it must be viewed via cartographical representation to get an understanding of its significance. The narrowness of the geography and the proximity of both oceans in Panama cannot properly be understood without two-dimensional visualizations of the landmass and ocean surrounding it on either side. Maps of Central America were therefore crucial pieces of technology for Spanish colonial officials for they allowed their viewers to understand the geopolitical significance of the region as well as the necessity for its defense against foreign powers, especially in the Caribbean Sea to the east of the isthmus. The creation of maps was of the utmost significance for Spanish colonial rule and their production was kept a secret of the state, a duty overseen by the Casa de la Contratación in Seville. Maps of all types

⁴³ Hall and Pérez Brignoli, *Historical Atlas of Central America*.

were important and highly sought after, from precisely drawn nautical navigation charts covering thousands of miles to bird's eye views of much smaller distances, such as the view of a village and surrounding countryside from above. The technology of cartography in the west developed out of the necessities created by the various colonial projects and voyages of discovery and they worked in tandem to other emerging technologies, such as the astrolabe, that made transoceanic voyages possible.

What has often been called the oldest "map" of Guatemala after the arrival of Europeans is the sixteenth-century *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* ("Cloth⁴⁴ of Quauhquechollan," Figure 3-35 and Figure 3-36). Combining indigenous Mesoamerican style with the demands of the conquistadores, the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* exemplifies the ways various modes of visualization began to be combined: Amerindian and European. Unfortunately, the *Lienzo* has scarcely been discussed by art historians in United States, though an online exhibition by Dumbarton Oaks has made it more accessible to English-speaking audience.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ In Mesoamerican art history a *lienzo* refers to a sheet of cloth painted with indigenous pictorial writing.

⁴⁵ Dumbarton Oaks, "Lienzo de Quauhquechollan, Virtual Exhibit" (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, n.d.), <https://www.doaks.org/resources/online-exhibits/capturing-warfare/lienzo-de-quauhquechollan>.

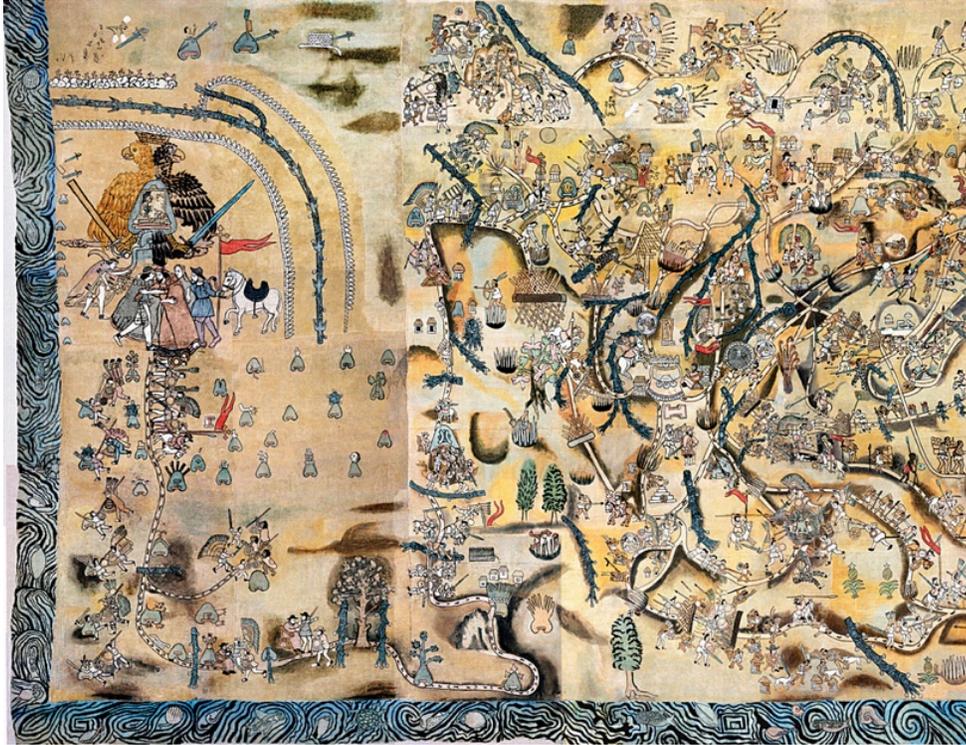


Figure 3-35. Digital Restoraton of the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan. Image courtesy of the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín (UFM), Guatemala City, Guatemala.



Figure 3-36. Julio Sicán, photograph showing a 1:1 replica of the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan. Source: Julio Sicán, "Réplica de Lienzo de Quauhquechollan describe el proceso de la conquista en Guatemala," *Prensa Libre*, July 24, 2018, sec. Ciudades.

The *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* depicts the long march of Pedro Alvarado and his indigenous allies from Mexico to Guatemala in a continuous narrative. It uses indigenous pictographs that refer to specific place-names that let the viewer know where the narrative is taking place in any given location. A monumental work of art such as the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, practical for the combination of narrative and space, was not practical for the purposes of colonialism and conveying the type of geospatial information required by colonial administrators, given the scope of the continent they were colonizing. Maps such as the *Lienzo* are evocative of the types of images, charts, and maps produced by indigenous artists and contributors to the *relaciones geográficas*, to be discussed in more detail below.

While the *Lienzo* was being completed in in the 1530s-1540s in New Spain, back in Europe cartography was quickly developing and becoming an integral part of western expansion and colonialism. In fact, it was through the process of mapmaking that the continent of America first got its name. Although it is commonly known that the name America is derived from the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci, the details of how this name became disseminated and so widespread are not so well known.⁴⁶ The discovery of a “new” continent from the Europeans’ point of view presented a new challenge to mapmakers who were faced with the task of incorporating the landmass onto the world map and presenting it visually to viewers. The solution was to dramatically alter the medieval world map by skewing the entire “Old World” to the right half (eastern

⁴⁶ For a summary of this history, see Martin Lehmann, “Amerigo Vespucci and His Alleged Awareness of America as a Separate Land Mass,” *Imago Mundi* 65, no. 1 (2013): 15–24.

hemisphere) of a two-dimensional visualization. The name America came about after a logistical necessity to label the “new” continent to the west during the production of the 1507 *Waldseemüller* map, the first world map in Europe to visually depict the Americas (Figure 3-37).⁴⁷ Thus, the honor of naming newly-found land went not to the conquerors and first European explorers of America, but to the cartographers who first visualized it on a world-scale (Figure 3-38).⁴⁸ This map offers a useful counterpoint to the representations of Central America in the maps found in the *Relaciones* (to be commented on in more detail below) or the *DGM*.



Figure 3-37. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Verspucii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁷ John Hébert, “The Map That Named America: Library Acquires 1507 Waldseemüller Map of the World,” *Library of Congress Information Bulletin* 62, no. 9 (2003).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*



Figure 3-38. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Verspucii alioru[m]que Iustrationes*, detail. Ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.

The book that was printed along with the *Waldseemüller* map in 1507, the *Cosmographiae Introductio*, or *Introduction to Cosmography*, clearly states its purpose as an “introduction to the world that we have depicted on a globe and on a flat surface.”⁴⁹ The “flat surface” refers to the *Waldseemüller* map, which was

⁴⁹ Qtd. in Hébert, “The Map That Named America: Library Acquires 1507 Waldseemüller Map of the World.”

printed on twelve separate sheets of paper to be pieced together on a flat surface, while the “globe” refers to a smaller version of the map that was designed to be cut out and pasted onto a ball – making it Europe’s first ever commercially-printed globe and demonstrating, contrary to popular belief, that the European intellectual class knew perfectly well that the world was spherical rather than flat even before the transatlantic voyages of discovery. Significantly, the map itself portrays the Pacific Ocean west of America by imagining and abbreviating much of the Pacific Coast (Figure 3-37). The text also explains the rationale behind the naming of the continent, which it claims was discovered by the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci.⁵⁰ A portrait of Vespucci holding a mathematician’s compass is shown near the top right of the image artfully embedded within the cartouche, an allusion to medieval depictions of God as architect of the universe which forever immortalized Vespucci’s legacy (Figure 3-39). His portrait is opposite of a portrait of Ptolemy, who represents the ancient or classical understanding of looking at the world. This was quite a political claim – elevating the Italian Vespucci to the level of Ptolemy – who created the system of latitude and longitude to accurately depict specific points in space – and giving credit to the Florentines. Since other continent names were feminine in Latin -- Europa, Africa, Asia -- the authors

⁵⁰ These words were the cause of contention for centuries to come. The Spanish friar Bartolomé de la Casas, who in the first half of the sixteenth century said it was an “injury and injustice” to Columbus, whose voyages to America predated Vespucci’s. But although Columbus’s four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean started in 1492, when he encountered the islands of the Caribbean, he only touched continental soil on his third journey in 1498. Contrarily, according to a letter dated 1504 from Vespucci to Duke Renè that was reprinted in *Introduction to Cosmography* and describes his four voyages from 1497 to 1504, he reached the mainland a year earlier than Columbus. Historians have called the authenticity of this letter into doubt, but Waldseemüller and Ringmann took Vespucci’s letter at face value, basing their naming of the new continent on its contents. See Martin Lehmann, “The Depiction of America on Martin Waldseemüller’s World Map from 1507—Humanistic Geography in the Service of Political Propaganda,” *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2016).

reasoned that the name of this new land should also be feminized into “America,” after its alleged discoverer.⁵¹



Figure 3-39. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Vespucii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.

The 1507 *Waldseemüller* world map was significant because of its tremendous influence in later visual depictions of Central America in relation to the rest of the Earth. Although few copies exist today, at least one thousand were printed and circulated across intellectual and humanist circles in Europe.⁵² It set the precedent of visualizing the Mediterranean as the “center” of the world when

⁵¹ Lehmann.

⁵² The Library of Congress has the only extant copy in the Americas.

depicted two-dimensionally and placing north (not east) at the top of the map. More importantly, it established the practice of denoting the missing information or parts of the Americas not yet explored by the use of blank landmasses with sharp, straight edges surrounded by ocean (see Figure 3-39). The *Waldseemüller* map is also the first map to show the isthmus of Central America within the world context, shown not as a single land bridge, but with a channel of water running through the middle of it (see Figure 3-37). Interestingly, within the upper cartouche there is a smaller depiction of the world using a different projection that separates the two hemispheres as if viewed from different viewpoints from space. In this second depiction, the Central American isthmus is depicted as a single landmass *without* the channel of water running through it and is depicted as it exists in actuality as a bridge that connects North and South America (Figure 3-40). These conflicting representations are the result of limited information available to the mapmakers who pieced together conflicting reports of information and descriptions.⁵³ Much speculation exists as to how quickly information from the voyages of discovery (Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and otherwise) circulated to Europe's intelligentsia. It is commonly accepted, for example, that the first European to set eyes on the Pacific Ocean was Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who saw it from a mountain top in Panama -- six years after the printing of the *Waldseemüller* map -- in 1513. Yet the Portuguese allegedly sent their own explorers to the Americas in secret around the same time so as to escape the attention of the Spanish. Were the makers of the *Waldseemüller* map

⁵³ Lehman.

extraordinarily skilled, or did they have access to reports from alleged Portuguese voyages to the other side of the continent, kept secret because they crossed over into Spanish waters and now lost to history?⁵⁴

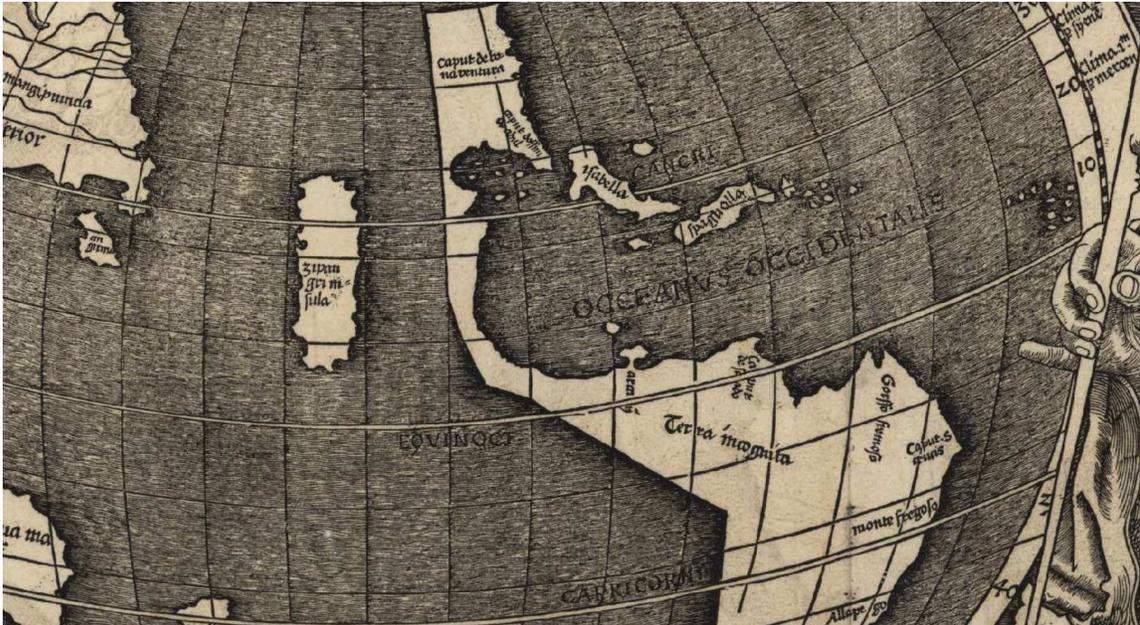


Figure 3-40. Martin Waldseemüller, *Universalis cosmographia secundum Ptholomaei traditionem et Americi Verspucii alioru[m]que lustrationes*, ink on 12 sheets of 46 x 63 cm. paper, overall dimensions 128 x 233 cm, 1507. G3200 1507 .W3 Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.

The *Waldseemüller* map offers us just a glimpse into the myriad of questions (and problems that arise) when studying the earliest modern maps of the Americas particularly when looking at Central America. It also serves as a point of departure – this map is not at all like the maps drawn under the auspices of Cortes y Larraz that concern the rest of the chapter. Comparing and contrasting them both technically and epistemologically is worth consideration as they lead to

⁵⁴ Martin Lehmann asserts that the representation of America on Martin *Waldseemüller's* 1507 world map follows by no means primarily geographical knowledge. He argues that it must be understood as a politically and economically motivated representation with the purpose to serve the interests of the Portuguese Crown as well as those of the upper German trading houses. See Lehmann, "The Depiction of America on Martin Waldseemüller's World Map from 1507—Humanistic Geography in the Service of Political Propaganda."

further comprehension about how maps were utilized in the early modern period and the highly politicized ways they were created and utilized. The *Waldseemüller* map is the result of collaboration between Martin Waldseemüller and Matthias Ringmann, two scholars working in eastern France, that sought to depict more of the world than had ever been previously attempted. When the twelve sheets that their map is printed on are assembled together in a 4 x 3 grid, the map measures 1.4 x 2.4 m, a truly monumental scale that matched the ambitions of its makers. It can really only be seen all at once and appreciated if mounted on a wall. As such, it is also a pedagogical tool; someone familiar with the map can use it to teach others about geography. The maps in the *DGM* measure only around 23 x 39 cm and are bound in a manuscript meant for a very limited audience: the King of Spain and the Council of the Indies.⁵⁵ They formed part of a private, confidential document since then declassified. Hence, maps such as the *Waldseemüller* map could be reproduced and used for private study but were also meant for much more social and open settings, while Cortes y Larraz's maps were meant strictly to inform a specific and limited audience.

Cortes y Larraz's maps do not function independently. Their inclusion in the *DGM* makes the manuscript into an atlas, and the maps are meant to be viewed sequentially in the order that Cortes y Larraz visited each parish.⁵⁶ Whereas the

⁵⁵ The Council of the Indies was the most important administrative entity of the Spanish Empire for the Spanish colonies in the Americas and the Philippines. The crown held absolute power over the colonies, and the Council of the Indies was the administrative and advisory body for those overseas realms. It was established in 1524 by Charles V to administer "the Indies," Spain's name for its territories.

⁵⁶ The atlas as a genre was popularized by the Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator in the sixteenth century. Mercator is most remembered as the developer of the Mercator projection, which was the most common projection used in two-dimensional maps up until the twentieth century when

Waldseemüller covers the whole globe, and offered invaluable information regarding spaces, distances, and the general shape of landmasses with relation to each other, the maps of the *DGM* cover much smaller surface areas and are meant to provide the viewer with information about the social space to be found in the area covered, not so much general geography, although they also are invaluable today for some of what they tell us about Central America's physical geography.

We can see an attempt to combine both these cartographic goals in another significant representation of Central America, found in the Portolan atlas (often called the Nicolas Vallard atlas after its first documented owner) of 1547 for it is one of the first to show the isthmus with detail (Figure 3-41). The atlas, of unknown authorship, was painted perhaps by a Portuguese cartographer or modeled after a Portuguese prototype.⁵⁷ This map is intended for navigation purposes and includes nautical lines in the ocean with the names of ports and their locations along the land. This map demonstrates the isthmus's physical geography as a narrow land bridge connecting North and South America. Interestingly, North points downward in this map providing the contemporary viewer with a unique take of the American continent. In a map such as this, figural human representations adorn the landmasses and reproduce colonial visions of contact that obscure the true, violent nature of the conquest (Figure 3-41 and Figure 3-42).

the Robinson projection became more popular. See John Snyder, *Flattening the Earth: 2000 Years of Map Projections* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993).

⁵⁷ HM 29, The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



Figure 3-41. *Portolan atlas*, f. 1v-2r. Parchment, 280 x 390 mm, 1547. HM 29. Rare Books, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.



Figure 3-42. *Portolan atlas*, f. 1v, detail. Parchment, 280 x 390 mm, 1547. HM 29. Rare Books, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

The *DGM* as a discursive genre closely resembles the format of similar feats of cartography in the French context, such as the work of F. Pierre Phillippe Choffard's in his 1758 *Description géographique des Isles Antilles possedees par les Anglois* (Figure 3-43). The use of landscape to illustrate a specific location was becoming well-established in print and it is this type of presentation that Cortes y Larraz emulated in the *DGM*. During Cortes y Larraz's education in Zaragoza, Spain, he would have had come across to these types of discursive texts and no doubt modeled his own *Descripción* after established convention. His format is virtually identical to works such as Phillip Choffard's.

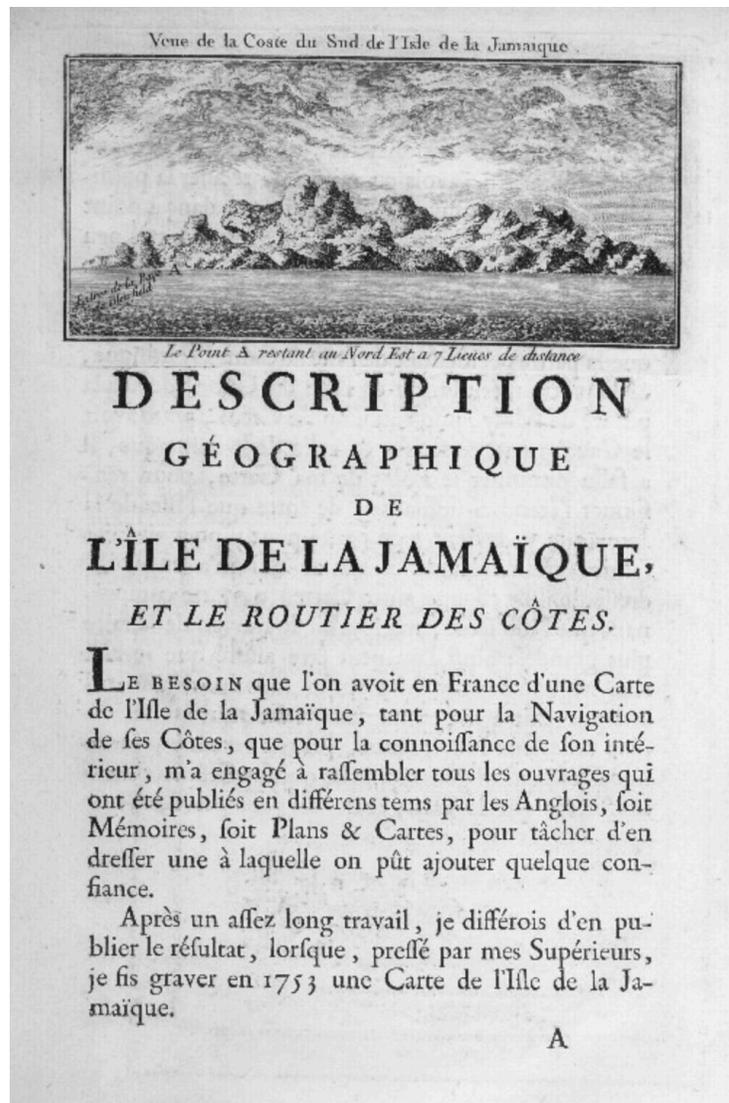


Figure 3-43. Jacques Nicolas Bellin, *Description géographique des isles Antilles possédées par les anglois*. L'imprimerie de Didot, Paris, 1758. F2131 .B44. Jay I. Kislak Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The surviving maps of greater Central America are relatively few, but there are many surviving maps of present-day Panama, certainly due to the isthmus's role as a central communications point between Spain's possessions in the Atlantic and those in the Pacific. But many have not survived, due to either archival accidents or accidents that occurred even before they reached the archives. We

thus can never accurately know the total extant of Spanish colonial cartography in Central America.

Turning now to maps made in New Spain, scholarly attention on Spanish colonial cartography has been a persistent interest since the dawn of the field of colonial Latin American art history, and in fact their study predates the field as ethnographers, anthropologists, and historians were the first to take up their study. The tradition of cartography in the Americas can be said to have its origins in the rich tradition of Spanish peninsular and European cartography under the Habsburgs, which has largely been overshadowed in recent scholarly literature by interests in the achievements of Spanish mapmakers in the New World.⁵⁸ Yet Spain's cartographers, came out of similar institutions, relied on the same long-established conventions of pictorial representation, called on the same rich scientific knowledge, and in many cases developed similar solutions to their respective cartographic problems.⁵⁹

By the eighteenth century, a journey such as Cortes y Larraz's expedition throughout the diocese to compile much-needed ethnographic and demographic information was nothing new in the Spanish colonies. The *visitas pastorales* were routinely undertaken by archbishops who wished to survey their dioceses and assess the state of affairs, though the information they compiled varied greatly from expedition to expedition. Cortes y Larraz's *visita* at the end of the 1760s is significant because of the very systematic approach he used to collect as much

⁵⁸ David Buisseret, "Spanish Colonial Cartography, 1450–1700," in *History of Cartography*, vol. 3 (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 2007), 1069.

⁵⁹ Buisseret, "Spanish Colonial Cartography, 1450–1700."

information as he could. His methodology followed that established by the precedent set forth by the sixteenth-century *relaciones geográficas*.⁶⁰ *Relaciones geográficas* were a series of elaborate questionnaires distributed to the lands of the Spanish crown in the Viceroyalty of New Spain in the sixteenth century, 1579–1585.⁶¹ This was a direct response to the reforms imposed by the *ordenanzas* of 1573.⁶² Mandated by Felipe II, these sought to regulate the discoveries, populations and pacifications in the locations of already consolidated provinces and future advances to found the new populations in America. This included the production of maps. These maps utilized the expertise of local indigenous inhabitants who often participated in their production and painting, resulting in immediately-identifiable “hybrid” images. They were produced in the northern part of New Spain, with only a few examples coming from what is now Central America (Figure 3-44).

⁶⁰ Howard F. Cline, “The Relaciones Geográficas of Spain, New Spain, and the Spanish Indies: An Annotated Bibliography,” in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. Howard F. Cline, vol. 12, Guide to Ethnohistorical Sources, Part 1. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 370–95.

⁶¹ Howard F. Cline, “The Relaciones Geográficas of the Spanish Indies, 1577-1648.”

⁶² Robertson, “The Pinturas (Maps) of the Relaciones Geográficas, with Catalogue.”

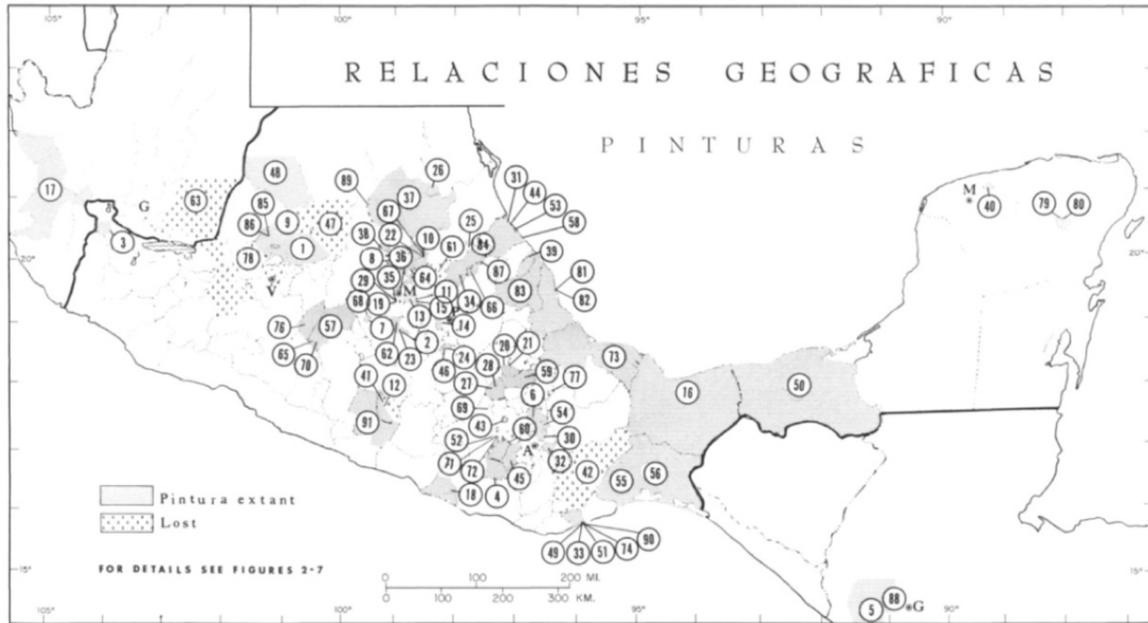


Figure 3-44. Pinturas (Maps) of the relaciones geográficas, New Spain, 1579-85. Source: Donald Robertson, "The Pinturas (maps) of the Relaciones Geográficas, With a Catalog" in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. Howard F. Cline, vol. 12, Guide to Ethnohistorical Sources, Part 1 (Austin; University of Texas Press, 1972).

Barbara Mundy's work on the *relaciones* remains the most authoritative literature on Spanish colonial cartography for art historians. Through her examination of the *relaciones*, she has spent decades analyzing, contextualizing, and presenting them to the field of study, making her one of the most important scholars today and her work among the most cited in the field.⁶³ Her overview of indigenous mapping traditions that informed the creation of the *relaciones geográficas* has helped shape discourses regarding their study and interpretation. These maps were drawn to help colonial administrators better understand the recently conquered land that expanded the dominions of the Spanish empire in the Americas. She analyzes differences between the maps drawn by non-

⁶³ Mundy, *The Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas of New Spain, 1579-c. 1584*.

indigenous artists and those drawn by indigenous hands, such as the monumental Map of Teozacualco (Figure 3-45).⁶⁴ In her analysis she found that around 65 of the works associated with the *relaciones* were executed by an indigenous hand. Most importantly, however, is her finding that the maps drawn by European hands are often “perfunctory, awkward, almost careless” in contrast to those drawn by indigenous hands.⁶⁵

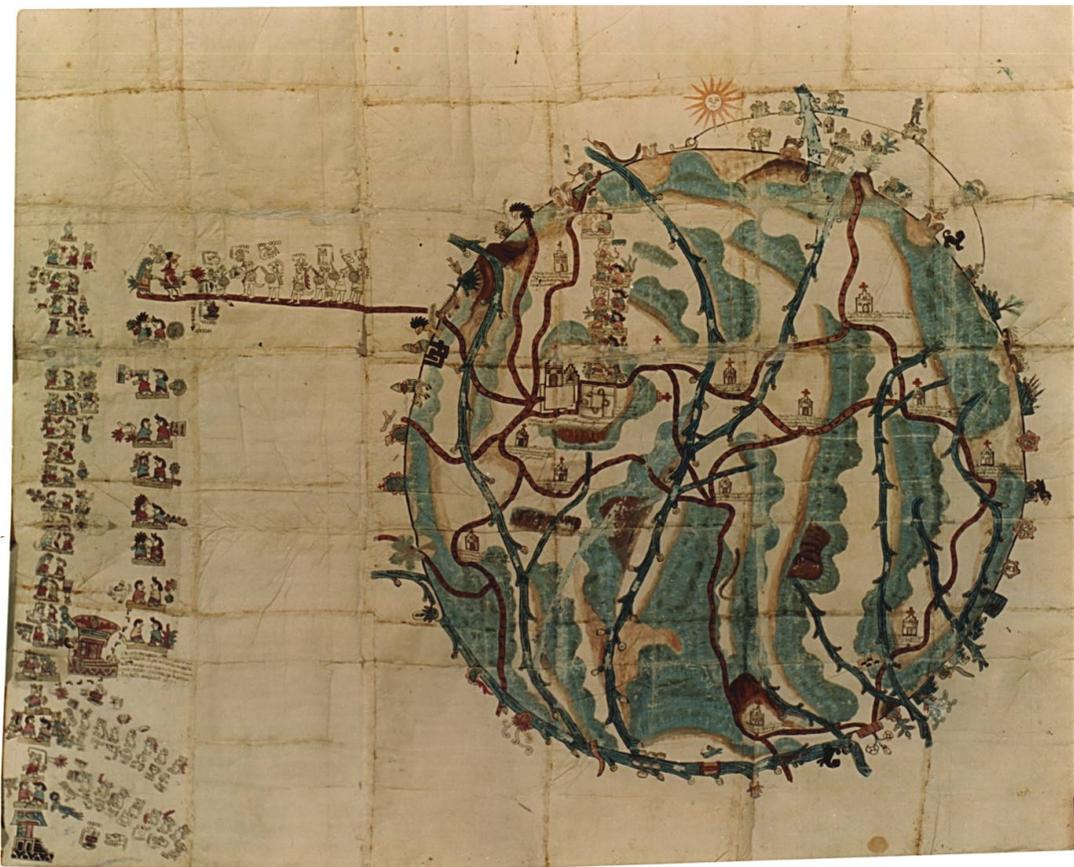


Figure 3-45. Unknown Mixtec artist, Mapa de Teozacualco, paint on twenty-three sheets of European paper, 142 x 177 cm. Benson Library, University of Texas, Austin.

⁶⁴ Works such as the Teozacualco map are often “rosetta stones” that help decipher Central Mexican pictographic writing systems.

⁶⁵ Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas*, 30.

Significantly, Mundy's work acknowledges the influence of both European and pre-colonial cartographic traditions in creating the indigenous maps of the *relaciones geográficas* and considers the implications of these maps for the diverse society which they reflect.⁶⁶ Mundy's book includes studies of the etymology of place names and the importance of both alphabetic and logographic script from indigenous writing.⁶⁷ In this regard, the sixteenth-century *relaciones* are important sources for understanding indigenous knowledge systems and their use well into the Spanish colonial period.⁶⁸ Most of them are remarkably different than the *DGM* landscapes as they had their own set of specific politics and visual techniques that were employed.

Maps such as those found in the *relaciones* and later the *DGM* exemplify how important the epistemic technology of land-visualization was during the early

⁶⁶ Mundy, "Ch. 1: Spain and the Imperial Ideology of Mapping" and "Ch. 5: The Native Mapping Tradition in the Colonial Period."

⁶⁷ Mundy, "Ch. 2: Mapping and Describing the New World," in *The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Mundy discusses the use of alphabetic script in the maps as alternately nominative, descriptive or historical in nature while the logographic script extends beyond monodimensional images into a multilayered discourse. Pictorial devices discussed by Mundy include placement on the page and the use of determinative or classificatory logographs. According to Mundy's reading of the maps, the meaning of a logograph would have changed according to the context of the map such that, in certain instances, a hill drawn on a map would indicate the physical geography of the land while in other instances it would be a symbolic representation of a town. The placement of the image was thus as important as the image itself. The interpretation would depend upon the knowledge of the reader, enabling a polyphonic reading of the map, according to the context in which it were read and the level of pictorial and/or alphabetic literacy of the reader.

⁶⁸ This type of research is exemplified by scholars such as Elizabeth Boone who has worked on colonial manuscripts and deciphering knowledge systems within them. See Boone, "A Merger of Preconquest and New Spanish Systems." See also Burkhart, "Deciphering the Catechism"; Elizabeth Hill Boone and Louise M. Burkhart, "The Pictographic Vocabulary: Ideography, Phonography, and Syntax," in *Painted Words: Nahua Catholicism, Politics, and Memory in the Atzaqualco Pictorial Catechism*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone, Louise M. Burkhart, and David Tavárez, *Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology* 39 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2017), 53–66.

modern period. It is remarkable that for documents produced for such a specific use and limited audience that they still are operating as intended – to provide the viewer with geospatial (and social) information about the spaces they purport depict. The *DGM* maps, like the sixteenth-century *relaciones*, were meant for a specific audience and were coveted documents that aided not only European explorers in their voyages of conquest, but also aided European humanists and intellectuals in comprehending the land surface of the Earth and their place in it.⁶⁹ These types of maps informed larger, more scientifically precise cartographic projects meant to circulate throughout Europe, such as the *Waldseemüller* world map that purported to depict the entire (known) surface of the Earth. At the same time, however, because these maps featured Eurocentric visualizations of the Earth and its landmasses, they further reinforced the doctrine of discovery which held that the Americas, as newly-found land, was up for the taking (this doctrine served as an important predecessor for later doctrines such as Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth-century United States).⁷⁰

Compared to the single, well-organized geographic survey of New Spain in 1577-85 through the *relaciones geográficas*, the numerous eighteenth-century surveys form an array of primary source material, the study of which is often frustrating as noted by Robert C. West in his survey of them.⁷¹ West also notes

⁶⁹ Harley and Woodward, "The Map and the Development of the History of Cartography," 1–2.

⁷⁰ The doctrine of discovery was promoted by European monarchies in order to legitimize colonization and was further legitimized by the Roman Catholic Church via the Papal Bull *Inter caetera* of 1493 decreed by Pope Alexander VI. This idea allowed European entities to seize lands inhabited by indigenous peoples under the guise of discovering new land.

⁷¹ Robert C. West, "The Relaciones Geográficas of Mexico and Central America, 1740-1792," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, ed. Howard F. Cline, vol. 12, Guide to Ethnohistorical Sources, Part 1. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 440–52.

that at the time of his research, most of the sixteenth-century relaciones were available in printed form, but less than a fifth of the eighteenth-century material had been published, a figure that is more or less true today. This is compounded by the fact that except for the recently acquired microfilm collections in the Library of Congress, the manuscripts of the later surveys are difficult to access.⁷² Although West's list of eighteenth-century mapping projects in Central America is comprehensive and includes those undertaken by the Inquisition, the mapping project of the *DGM* is surprisingly absent from his list. This is despite the fact that it was produced in a comprehensive matter much like the other mapping projects of New Spain (i.e., collected answers to questionnaires sent across the region). Until recent digitization efforts, the *DGM* manuscript was also difficult to access requiring a trip to Seville. Copies in microfilm were in black and white and failed to properly capture the full detail of the maps/landscape. Perhaps the full cartographical significance of these maps and their rich detail had not been assessed at the time West published his survey. West has noted that:

It is surprising that under the Bourbon rule better geographical surveys of the colonies were not possible during the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, no matter how complex and difficult to use the eighteenth-century relaciones may be, they form a valuable corpus of information on population, ethnography, and the economy of Central America taken near the close of the colonial period, some two hundred fifty years after European contact.⁷³

Flight of the Phoenix and Final Remarks

⁷² West, "The Relaciones Geográficas of Mexico and Central America, 1740-1792."

⁷³ West, 450.

The maps in the *DGM* defy simple categorization. They are the cumulative product of an ecclesiastical expedition, a *visita pastoral* to be precise, that spanned three years and required carefully-coordinated data and information collection. By the eighteenth-century, such expeditions were not new to the Spanish colonies as there existed precedent dating back to the sixteenth-century *relaciones geográficas*. Given difficulty of travel in the region, especially by eighteenth-century standards, it is remarkable that Archbishop Cortes y Larraz toured the entire diocese, for he saw with his own eyes more of the Río Lempa basin and present-day Guatemala and El Salvador than most people do to this day.

To complete the ambitious task of surveying such a large region in the Tropics, Cortes y Larraz had to conduct a census of the diocese during his tour across the northern Central America, parish by parish, and included his findings within the text of the *DGM*. He was able to compile the census by asking each parish priest to conduct the census himself before his arrival to the parish. In this regard, Cortes y Larraz utilized a methodology similar to how the *relaciones geográficas* were produced, compiling the work of many authorities within the church.⁷⁴ Although the *DGM* would be remarkable even without the inclusion of maps, their presence transforms the manuscript beyond an encyclopedic depiction of the diocese and turns it into an atlas, providing a map of each parish and following each map with several pages of text describing the parish. This is consistent with the formatting of other colonial geographical treatises. Cortes y

⁷⁴ Mundy, "Ch. 2: Mapping and Describing the New World."

Larraz usually included a table near the beginning of the text to succinctly show the census data as well as distances between towns, haciendas, or other settlements contained within the parish. The *DGM* was therefore no small feat, for once compiled it contained an extraordinary wealth of information, presumably enough for someone who knew absolutely nothing about colonial Guatemala and El Salvador to have a good sense of what life was like there. This information was of immense value to Bourbon administration of Charles III and was direly needed. No systematic evaluation had been undertaken during the Spanish colonial enterprise to assess the state of the *reducciones* or *congregaciones* in the Río Lempa basin, certainly not one as comprehensive as Cortes y Larraz's. The resettlement of indigenous communities into centralized European-planned towns which began in the sixteenth century were the most distinctive settlement pattern in the Río Lempa basin, and they are all documented in the *DGM*.⁷⁵ The *DGM* came at a time when other manuscripts and documents of similar scope and intent were drafted across the Spanish Empire. We can turn, for example, to a similar project begun only a year after Cortes y Larraz finished his journey, the monumental manuscript that was the result of a nearly thirteen-year *visita* of colonial Venezuela by Mariano Marti, Archbishop of Caracas and former bishop of Puerto Rico (Figure 3-46).⁷⁶ The *DGM* is therefore part of a series of descriptive projects

⁷⁵ For some of the early chronicles across Central America, see Stephens and Catherwood, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*. Also useful is Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Central America*, 3 vols., *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft* (San Francisco, CA: The History Company, 1883).

⁷⁶ This manuscript was transcribed and published in Caracas; see Mariano Marti, *Relación de la visita general que en la diócesis de Caracas y Venezuela hizo el Ilmo. Sr. Dr. Dn. Mariano Martí, del consejo de su majestad*, 2 vols. (Caracas: Parra Leon Hermanos, 1928 [1771-1784]). Comparing Cortes y Larraz's *Descripción* with Marti's *Relación* yields fruitful discoveries, as one can see how the personal bias of each Archbishop informs the types of information recorded. Martí

undertaken during the Bourbon Reforms in Latin America, their authors part of a global network of ecclesiastical authorities and colonial administrators working throughout the Spanish Empire.⁷⁷ Just like Mariano Martí moved across the Caribbean from Puerto Rico to Venezuela right before his undertaking, Cortes y Larraz similarly moved across Mesoamerica from his previous appointment in Puebla, Mexico to Santiago, Guatemala bringing all his experiences and knowledges about one part of Spain's colonies to now another part.

provides, for example, greater detail on how mass and liturgy were being carried out, including references to the music played in church.

⁷⁷ West, "The Relaciones Geográficas of Mexico and Central America, 1740-1792."

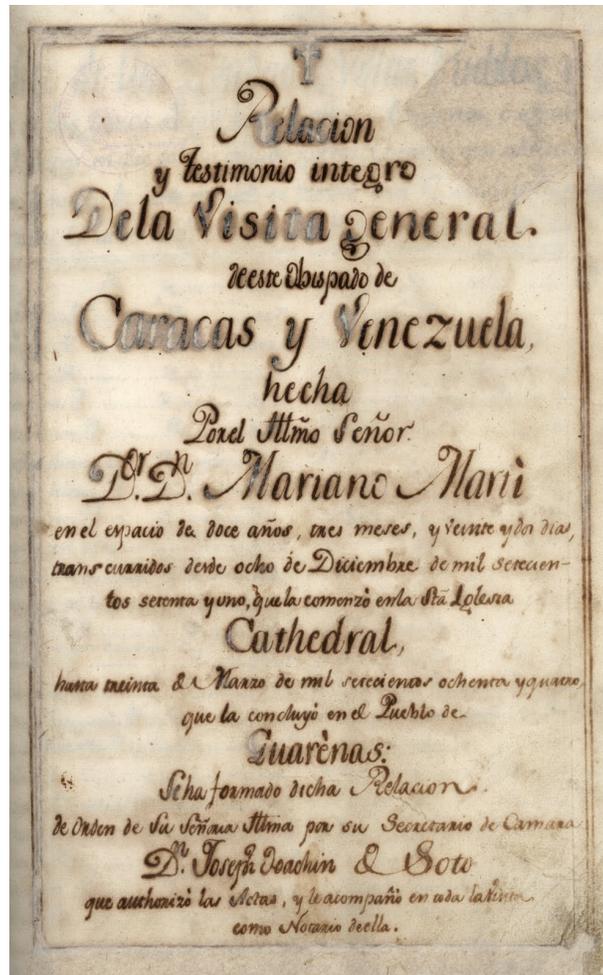


Figure 3-46. Mariano Martí, Title Page, *Relación y Testimonio integro de la visita general de este obispado de Caracas y Venezuela hecha por el ilustrísimo señor Don Mariano Marti*, Manuscript, 1771. Colección Documental Antigua de la Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela.

As a classified manuscript and possession of the state, the *DGM* offered significant data for informing eighteenth-century Bourbon imperial geopolitical strategic planning. Indeed, roughly around the same time as Cortes y Larraz's tour of the diocese the Spanish monarchy built various fortifications throughout Central America, especially on the Caribbean coast. The Fortress of Omoa in Honduras, for example, was quickly erected and strategically placed to ward off French and especially British privateers who fought fiercely and continuously to obtain access to the wealth of the Caribbean (Figure 3-47). Cartography of this

region, such as was provided by the *DGM*, was of paramount importance to Spanish colonial administration and military planning. The *DGM* maps visualize the organization of society and space.

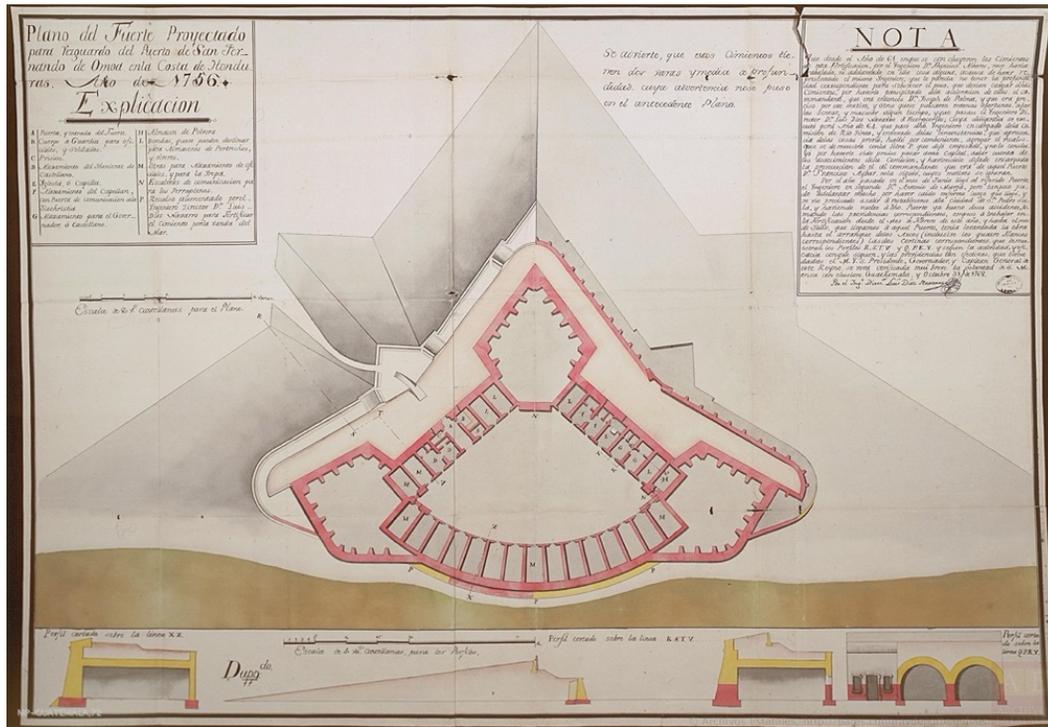


Figure 3-47. Francisco Álvarez, *Plan and Elevation for a Fortress at Omoa, Honduras*, 42.6 x 55 cm, 1760. ES.41091.AGI/MP-GUATEMALA,57, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

The *DGM* maps exemplify many aspects of eighteenth-century cartographical production and landscape drawing. For one, they rely extensively on imagined vantage points that encouraged the artist to take liberties with the depiction of the locations of entire towns. This artistic license means that they placed the images somewhere between map and landscape, and their depiction of land devoid of people is one necessary for the colonial imaginary. Despite the tremendous effort require to undertake such a monumental project, they were intended to be viewed only by a small and limited audience. The practice of

treating maps as secrets of the state was especially true in the Spanish and Iberoamerican context, as English and French maps were published more widely.

Decolonial approaches today allows for these maps to be reclaimed from their original colonial contexts. Although there are tremendous logistical and ethical considerations regarding the ownership, display, and access to the physical *DGM* manuscript itself that fall outside the parameters of this dissertation, suffice it to say that as digitized images released to the public domain, the maps are free to take on a life of their own. And indeed they have. Stored and gone unseen for most of their life-history, digital technologies today allow the landscapes of the *DGM* to gain new a new life, one never intended when they were created. Whereas once they were meant to inform imperial government about the peoples of the Río Lempa and the land and geography there, now they can be appreciated by the descendants of the Río Lempa region surveyed in the original project.

Recognizing oneself in history is an empowering and transformative act that enriches notions of selfhood and identity formation. On the other hand, a people that does know where it came from may not know where it is going. I therefore invite today's viewers of the *DGM* to see the landscapes as offering a way to meditate upon history and memory and to acknowledge the collective history of colonialism that shaped the societies that live in the Río Lempa region, all mapped out in the *DGM*. The landscapes in the *DGM* move from being mere bird's-eye-views, to phoenix's-eye-views. Like the phoenix that is born again from its ashes, meditation upon these images makes possible a new relationship between descendant and ancestor. This has certainly been the experience of those of us descendants that view these images such as myself, and we do so with great

interest, as we can find the specific hometowns where our ancestry derives from (down to the nearest hamlet) and learn a great deal about the history of urbanization of our homelands. Viewing representations of the Río Lempa region devoid of contemporary national boundaries is also a powerful exercise as it invites us to imagine a homeland devoid of borders.

Chapter 4. Seeing Black and Indian in Eighteenth-Century El Salvador: Cortes y Larraz's Ethnographic Notes

According to the latest census (2007), only 7,400 Salvadorans recognize their African roots, although it is claimed that this number does not reflect reality. Many people hid their true origin because of the fascist and racist policies of General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez during the 1930s, through a migration law "influenced by a mindset, a discourse, and practices that are based on scientific racism, which hierarchizes groups, constructs races, and places the white race as superior and the indigenous and black races as inferior." Since then, many Afro-Salvadorans have concealed their ethnic roots.¹

While the previous chapters have centered art historical considerations, in keeping with the interdisciplinary spirit of this project this chapter takes an ethnographic turn informed by pressing conversations emerging out of Latinx/Chicanx Studies, Black Studies, as well as Latin American philosophy more generally.² This chapter examines the text and discourse within the *DGM* to look for and interpret racial data and terminology with particular attention paid to the representation of Blacks and Blackness within the text as well as to the discursive treatment of indigenous inhabitants. My analysis sheds greater light onto racial diversity in the Río Lempa region during the eighteenth century and the Catholic Church's and colonial state's awareness of that diversity, a point I will return to later in this chapter. This ethnographic analytical turn is in

¹ Carlos Lara, "El Salvador Project Illustrates the 'invisible' African Roots of Common Latin American Words," trans. Anthony Sutterman, *Global Voices*, February 4, 2021. Carlos Lara is a gay Afro-Salvadoran artist based in San Miguel, El Salvador.

² I was also informed and greatly empowered by Dell Upton's recent book on monuments in the U.S. south, where he traces "whitewashing" of history as visualized in public monuments, sculpture, and space. Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015).

keeping with inquiries concerning the study of race in the humanities as well as current calls for greater awareness on the subject across the academy, including art history.³

My work analyzing the texts contributes to conversations within the fields of Chicanx/Latinx Studies that are closely interrogating the very categories of race that have shaped discourses now for decades.⁴ The *DGM* text has received scarce commentary, though it has been utilized many times as a primary source in the writing of Central American history. A key feature of the text is the use by Archbishop Cortes y Larraz of hyperbole, under the premise of objective observer, to describe unorthodox behavior he observes in the various urban centers around the Río Lempa basin which paint the inhabitants in a negative light. I believe then that students of the *DGM* must be simultaneously informed by advancements in Critical Race and Ethnic Studies to make sense of the text and unpack the early modern racialized biases. Only when such advancements in critical theory are properly considered does the bias reveal itself and complicate the version of history that is deduced from the *DGM*.⁵

³ Seph Rodney, "Why Are There So Few Black Full Professors of Art History in the US?," *Hyperallergic*, November 30, 2015, sec. Art: Interviews. In this interview, which predates even wider calls for attention to Blackness in the academy that would come after the 2020 murder of George Floyd, Professor Steven Nelson outlines some of the inherent challenges that have plagued the discipline for quite some time.

⁴ These conversations have emerged in critical indigeneity studies as well as Black Studies. See, for example Paul Joseph López Oro, "Refashioning Afro-Latinidad: Garifuna New Yorkers in Diaspora," in *Critical Dialogues in Latinx Studies: A Reader*, ed. Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas and Mérida M. Rúa (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 223–38; López Oro, "A Love Letter to Indigenous Blackness."

⁵ For some important works on race and Spanish colonialism, see Patricia Seed, "Social Dimensions of Race: Mexico City, 1753," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 62, no. 4 (1982): 569–606; Magali M. Carrera, "Locating Race in Late Colonial Mexico," *Art Journal*, Fall 1998, 36–45; Magali Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta*

Similarly, such considerations must also be taken into account when reading the passages about the diverse inhabitants of the region. I closely analyzed the text of the *DGM* to identify multi-layered Black and brown erasure in the Río Lempa region's historical record. This erasure has its origins in the late colonial period as a manifestation of social control and the empire's need for homogenous communities to better ensure a submissive population.⁶ According to the prevailing racial paradigm, closeness to whiteness and Europeanness moved one higher up the social ladder. Hence, subjects with mixed European ancestry were deemed more integrated and assimilated. This process, however, was never cut and dry. Already by the eighteenth century, race was seen (or not

Paintings, Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Endowment in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Rebecca Earle, "Luxury, Clothing and Race in Colonial Spanish America," in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, ed. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 219–27. For historiography, see Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Race and the Historiography of Colonial Art," in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela A. Patton (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 303–22. For race in the context of the Río Lempa region, see George Lovell and William R. Swezey, "Indian Migration and Community Formation: An Analysis of Congregación in Colonial Guatemala," in *Migration in Colonial Spanish America*, ed. David J. Robinson, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511522239.004>; Virginia Tilley, *Seeing Indians: A Study of Race, Nation, and Power in El Salvador* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Sidney David Markman, "The Gridiron Town Plan and the Caste System in Central America," in *Urbanization of the Americas from Its Beginning to the Present*, ed. Richard P. Schaedel, Jorge E. Hardoy, and Nora Scott-Kinzer (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1978), 471–90; Sidney David Markman, "Pueblos de españoles y pueblos de indios en el Reino de Guatemala," *Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas y Estéticas* 12 (1971): 76–97.

⁶ My thinking of colonialism is greatly informed by anti-colonial twentieth-century discourses that arose in the Négritude movement whose chief figures were Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. My understanding of the relationship between "colonizer" and "colonized" stems from Césaire's 1950 essay *Discourse on Colonialism* which has been described as both a "declaration of war" and a "third world manifesto" by scholars such as Robin Kelley. This is due to its radical rejection of Eurocentric understandings about the colonial project that exclude the voices and experiences of the colonial subject. See Robin D. G. Kelley, "A Poetics of Anticolonialism," in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 7. In this regard my line of thinking is in keeping with other art historians examining Central America. See, for example, Cornejo, "Writing Art Histories From Below: A Decolonial Guanaca-Hood Perspective" in *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1, no. 3 (2019): 72–77; Kency Cornejo, "'Does That Come with a Hyphen? A Space?': The Question of Central American-Americans in Latino Art and Pedagogy," *Aztlan* 40, no. 1 (2015): 189–210.

“seen”) differently by different sectors of colonial society across the isthmus. This meant that the colonial racial categories themselves, or *castas*, were inconsistently used in the historical record and prove to be quite unstable.⁷ This, coupled with the inherent limitations of early modern information technologies, I argue, simply could not capture the racial diversity of the people of the region because the prevailing racial paradigm privileged *mestizaje* among mixed-raced peoples at the expense of polyracial communities, thus making the latter invisible.

The study of race, as a central concern in the field of colonial Latin American art history, has received considerable interest in recent years and many art historians in the field have examined the issue.⁸ Most studies agree that although there is no consensus on how to understand race in the early modern world, there is an increasing call to steer away from dangerous binaries that replicate colonial systems of power and control. Moreover, scholars today such as Andrew Wells are recognizing the hegemony of the Atlantic world’s ideologies on race and their proliferation through the slave trade at the onset of global trade networks. According to Wells, the Atlantic world spread tendencies to think of race primarily in terms of slavery and skin color.⁹ Race was Atlantic, he argues. The African slave trade began before 1492 yet only became a large-scale enterprise once the enslavement of indigenous communities had been tried and largely abandoned.

⁷ For an overview of the categories of race known as *castas* see Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). See also Villaseñor Black, “Race and the Historiography of Colonial Art.”

⁸ For an overview of the literature on this topic, see Villaseñor Black, “Race and the Historiography of Colonial Art,” 310.

⁹ Andrew Wells, “Race and Racism in the Global European World Before 1800” in *History Compass* 13.9 (2015): 435-444

The primary reason for the importation of enslaved Africans was the rapid diminution of the indigenous population as a result of epidemic disease.¹⁰ Finally, the concentration on these three peoples – European, indigenous, and African – has made race predominantly a question of skin color. As Wells points out, skin color functioned in many ways in the Atlantic world but was most frequently a signifier of social status.¹¹ In Spanish and Portuguese America, elaborate representations of skin pigment were constructed in both the legal and artistic worlds (especially in *casta* paintings), but the range of categories and the availability of legal exemptions limited what one could assume about a person based on skin color alone.¹²

This type of white supremacist attitude was pervasive and a light-skinned person would have received more respect from a *peninsular* such as Cortes y Larraz. This is an inference further validated by Cortes y Larraz's unnecessarily derogatory tone and attitude in his descriptions of Ladinos and mulatos in particular. As can already be discerned with the examples above, he goes as far as to blame mixed-race people for ruined buildings in San Salvador that were most likely caused by earthquakes, not rowdy public behavior.¹³ There are enough instances such as these seemingly false accusations to determine that he exhibits

¹⁰ Ibid., 436.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The destruction caused by earthquakes in Central America is a phenomenon talked about at length by Sydney David Markman. See his *Architecture and Urbanization of Colonial Central America* (Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1995). See also Servicio Geológico Nacional, "Estadística de Registros. Cronología de sismos destructivos en El Salvador," Servicio Nacional de Estudios Territoriales (SNET). Suffice it to say that mixed-race peoples were not responsible for what earthquakes destroyed.

racial bias towards people of mixed race. Magali M. Carrera has written about the “great contempt for people of mixed ancestry” that existed among *criollos* in Mexico.¹⁴ These white supremacist attitudes and racial hierarchies were also present in the isthmus during the colonial period, manifesting even in the urban and spatial organization of communities.¹⁵ Ilona Katzew has written extensively on race in the Americas through her examination of *casta* paintings, images that depict the offspring of various combinations of racial miscegenation and provide their nomenclature, almost as scientific labels.¹⁶ She has found that during the colonial period race was a very complicated series of negotiations between various nexuses of power, negotiations that themselves changed over time. It should also be noted that in everyday Spanish, then as today, there are more adjectives to describe Afrodescendants based on how dark their skin pigment is, from *prieto*, meaning very dark skinned, to *mulato*, meaning lighter skinned. In Anglophone colonialism “Black” was applied to a person regardless of how light or dark their skin color was.¹⁷ Cortes y Larraz uses either *mulato* or *negro* when referring to Afrodescendants in the *DGM*. This means that Blackness was viewed along a spectrum in Spanish colonial thought, rather than a single, all-or-nothing category.

¹⁴ Magali M. Carrera, “Locating Race in Late Colonial Mexico,” *Art Journal* 57, no. 3 (1998): 36-45.

¹⁵ For a discussion of this, see Markman, “The Gridiron Town Plan and the Caste System in Central America.”

¹⁶ Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*.

¹⁷ Carolina Miranda, “Casta Paintings Were Weird Racial Documents That Broke Stereotypes,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2015, sec. Entertainment & Arts.

Regarding the images in the *DGM*, as my analysis shows in the previous chapter, the land was visualized in the Río Lempa region as terrain devoid of people and successfully *detribalized*, a fiction that persists to this day.¹⁸ Through an encyclopedic sequence of aerial views, the *DGM* visualized the Río Lempa basin as a valuable periphery of the Spanish empire to give the illusion of a pacified (racialized) population in submission.

The people mentioned in the *DGM* are the ancestors of much of today's diaspora out of El Salvador and Guatemala, a demographic that is now among the largest Latinx groups in the United States. Discourses emerging out of Latinx Studies, however, are increasingly interrogating the racialized category at heart of the field of study itself: *Latinidad*.¹⁹ This includes scholars such as Tatiana Flores who have written timely interventions on the topic and have explored what some have identified as an implicit anti-Blackness inherent in the category that

¹⁸ For a discussion of the complexity of indigeneity and colonial identities and their shaping into the present, see the essays in Maylei Blackwell, Floridalma Boj López, and Luis Urrieta, eds., "Special Issue: Critical Latinx Indigeneities," *Latino Studies* 15, no. 2 (July 1, 2017): 126–37, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-017-0064-0>. In this issue, Blackwell writes in "Indigeneity" that: "the political, spiritual, social, and discursive practices of original (aboriginal) peoples are embedded in cultural continuity within the living, transforming (and intervened upon) cultures of their ancestors. Many government officials and policymakers have tied this definition of continuity to a territorial framework, which fails to acknowledge that many indigenous groups had territorial bases that included seasonal settlement and migrations based on hunting, social and ceremonial gatherings, and trade. Further, many tribes and indigenous peoples have been forcibly removed for purposes of colonial settlement and its aftermath, including policies of relocation, termination, and urbanization. Other indigenous pueblos and nations have been falsely divided by colonial borders" (101).

¹⁹ Arlene Dávila explores some of the most fundamental issues concerning *Latinidad* in the twenty-first century U.S. context in *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2008). For discussions about *Latinidad* at the intersection of other identities see Juana María Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (New York: NYU Press, 2003); Ramon H. Rivera-Servera, *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012). For a discussion of *Latinidad* within the context of art and art history, see Arlene Dávila, *Latinx Art: Artists/Markets/Politics* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2020).

has gone previously ignored.²⁰ This is because there has been a close association between *mestizaje* (mixed European and indigenous ancestry) and Latinx identity, even though the Latinx identity in reality includes anyone that claims Latin America as their cultural heritage, regardless of their actual race. Recently scholars have also looked at the relationships between *Latinidad*, *mestizaje*, and nation-state formation across Latin America and the historical consequences of the erasure of Afrodescendant peoples and communities across the hemisphere, all topics relevant to this dissertation.²¹ Unpacking *mestizaje* is a trend that has also been evident in Central American Studies and continues to shape how various scholars frame their research.²² Exploring these issues is also an important part of understanding the *DGM* text because several important questions are raised regarding its authority on census and demographic data in eighteenth-century Central America.

The topic of *mestizaje* was the theme of *Aztlán's* Fall 2021 issue, which brought together different scholars who approached the subject from various angles to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of María Josefina Saldaña-

²⁰ Tatiana Flores, "'Latinidad Is Cancelled': Confronting an Anti-Black Construct," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 3, no. 3 (2021): 58–79.

²¹ Many scholars have talked about this phenomenon in the context of Mexico. Scholars such as Paul Joseph López Oro have looked at *mestizaje* in the Central American isthmus, however, and have argued that the Black Garifuna community in the Caribbean coast of Honduras, for example, were never included under the category of Honduran nationals and do not exist as such in the popular imagination in Honduras. As such the Garifuna are actually excluded from the category of Hispanic/Latino and in this context these categories enable Black erasure. See López Oro, "Ni de aquí, ni de allá: Garifuna Subjectivities and the Politics of Diasporic Belonging," in *Afro-Latin@s in Movement: Critical Approaches to Blackness and Transnationalism in the Americas*, ed. Petra R. Rivera-Rideau, Jennifer A. Jones, and Tianna S. Paschel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 61–83.

²² To date Virginia Tilley's monograph on indigeneity remains the most comprehensive examination of the erasure of racialized communities in El Salvador. See Virginia Tilley, *Seeing Indian in El Salvador* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2005).

Portillo's essay on the topic.²³ In the two decades since Saldaña-Portillo's landmark essay, a host of publications on the issue have resulted in a general consensus that *mestizaje* must be interrogated further to understand what the category has included and what it has excluded. Saldaña-Portillo and Simón Ventura Trujillo provide a working definition of the ideology of *mestizaje* that includes the various political projects and hegemonic forces in operation in its use. They write that "twenty years of reflection suggests that *mestizaje*...names domains of political economy, loss, relationalities, resistance, solidarity, and knowledge production."²⁴ They go on to explain how *mestizaje* names a political economy of indigenous extraction and appropriation.²⁵ Similarly, in Latin American regions with large Afrodescendant populations, *mestizaje* necessarily excludes or otherwise negates Blackness and in doing so contributes to antiblackness.²⁶ Ivonne del Valle has written a brilliant essay that explores the

²³ I thank Charlene Villaseñor Black for bringing these important essays to my urgent attention as I completed this portion of my research. Saldaña Portillo's 2001 critique of *mestizaje* came about after her research on the Zapatista indigenous movement in southern Mexico which ontologically seemed to lie outside of the liberation frameworks envisioned by early Chicano Studies. See María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán? Re-Writing *Mestizaje*, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandón," in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. Ileana Rodríguez (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001), 402–37. Here she critiques the political project (nationalism) that employs *mestizaje* to construct homogeneous Mexican society out of a heterogenous reality.

²⁴ María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo and Simón Ventura Trujillo, "Introduction: What Does *Mestizaje* Name?," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 46, no. 2 (2021): 149. See also Simón Ventura Trujillo, "Mestizaje, Captivity, and Jimmy Santiago Baca's Poetics of Escape," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 46, no. 2 (2021): 209–20; Alberto Lourdes, "Mestizaje desde abajo: Zapotec Visual Cultures and Decolonial *Mestizaje* in the Photography of Citlali Fabián," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 46, no. 2 (2021): 235–50; Inés Hernández-Ávila, "A Creative Meditation on the Aesthetics of *Mestizaje*: The Promise of Kinstillatory Relations," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 46, no. 2 (2021): 221–33.

²⁵ Saldaña-Portillo and Trujillo, "Introduction: What Does *Mestizaje* Name?," 150.

²⁶ Saldaña-Portillo and Trujillo, 150–51.

implications of mestizaje within liberation movements across multiple temporalities, including the eighteenth century and twentieth century. She brings different episodes of history together -- such as the 1780 rebellion in Peru and the 1994 formation of the FZLN Zapatista movement in Mexico -- as important markers to think through the implications of the mestizaje project across the former colonies of Spain.²⁷

This chapter contributes to the type of historical research identified as necessary for understanding Black and indigenous oppression and its evolution since the global slave trade in the Río Lempa region. Today, the term “antiblackness” has gained popularity to think through systems of oppression that have targeted specifically Afrodescendants for centuries. The premise is that through the global slave trade of the early global period, Blackness was *othered* to justify the violence and dehumanization required to operate the slave trade. Indeed, it was. However, Black scholars such as Michael C. Dawson have criticized ahistorical definitions of antiblackness that minimize or ignore the defining roles that the history of global colonialism and racial capitalism have played in creating the structures of oppression experienced by Blacks and Afrodescendants. Scholars such as Dawson believe that in the United States there has been a tendency to universalize the Black experience (based on the history of Blackness in the United States) and project it back onto other Black communities (such as those from the Río Lempa region), a tendency that he argues is a central merit of Afro-pessimism, one of the most contentious schools of thought to emerge out of Black Studies in

²⁷ Ivonne del Valle, “Playing with Fire: Mestizaje Run Amok,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 46, no. 2 (2021): 195–208.

the past decade and one that favors conceptualizing Blackness as a universal ontological experience lived by descendants of all African peoples. Critics of Afropessimism such as Dawson insist that white-supremacy and antiblackness are byproducts of political economy, though they also exist in culture independently of political economy itself.²⁸ Afropessimists argue that Blackness exists completely outside the logic of western civilization altogether, a point rejected by its critics.²⁹ My own approach neither refutes or denies these core ideas surrounding Afropessimism, as such a debate falls outside the scope of this dissertation, but I nevertheless find that examining *antiblackness* within the *DGM* is a useful analytical goal. Since the *DGM* is a colonial document, however, I also take into consideration Dawson's critiques and carefully analyze the *DGM* within its historical context to contribute to these discourses in Central America.

Dawson writes that "the ontological centering of the experiences of people of African descent in the U.S. radically and incorrectly homogenizes the history and conditions of the peoples of Africa and those in the African Diaspora."³⁰ In other words the sociocultural and temporal specificities of different communities

²⁸ Michael C. Dawson, "Against Afropessimism," *Ideology, Theory, Practice*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.ideology-theory-practice.org/blog/against-afropessimism>. He writes: "Afropessimism incorrectly centres the experiences of people of African descent that were enslaved within the U.S. This results in the homogenisation of the experiences of peoples of African descent, and, equally importantly, mischaracterises and belittles the oppression of non-African colonised subjects. While I agree that anti-Blackness *is* a central structural feature of global white supremacy that emerged with the mid-15th-century Iberian slave trade, I argue that it is not the *only* critical structural feature that historically defined white supremacy. Further, the ontological centring of the experiences of people of African descent in the U.S. radically and incorrectly homogenises the history and conditions of the peoples of Africa and those in the African Diaspora." Black radical scholars such as Angela Davis and Robin Kelley hold a similar position to Dawson and disagree with some of the central tenets of what is known as Afropessimism.

²⁹ Frank B. Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (New York: Liveright, 2020). See also Jared Sexton, "People-of-Color-Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery," *Social Text* 28, no. 2 (2010): 31–56.

³⁰ Dawson, "Against Afropessimism."

of African diaspora must be understood and acknowledged to obtain more historically-accurate understandings of the Black experience across the Global South. Dawson's claim, one also made by scholars like him, is to say that there is no universal Black experience, despite the universality of anti-Blackness within globalization.

As in most of the hemisphere, Africans were brought to the Río Lempa region through the African slave trade that defined the transatlantic economy for centuries. Racial identities and corresponding state classification schema expose the systematic erasure of indigenous but especially Afrodescendant heritages and communities throughout the region, and the *DGM* is such a document that uses the classification schema in question. I will examine discrepancies between Archbishop Cortes y Larraz's census numbers and his anecdotal reflections to argue that both Black and indigenous erasure in the Río Lempa basin region was indeed occurring as early as the eighteenth century. My query addresses severe gaps in the scholarship with regard to race in this part of the Central American isthmus. By comparing language in the *DGM* to other eighteenth-century archival documents that discuss indigenous and Black inhabitants in the Río Lempa region, I hope to reveal the complexity of racial politics and the disparity between ecclesiastical views on race and colonial officials' views on race in the eighteenth century.

Ladinos, Afrodescendants, Mestizaje and the Conundrum of Race

Although there is a growing literature on Blackness and indigeneity in Central America, there are scarce few studies that examine Blackness in what we

today call El Salvador and the Río Lempa region specifically. Discussions on race in El Salvador have largely explored indigeneity and issues surrounding mestizaje. There are, however, many ideas that can be borrowed from the exploration of the topic in other parts of Latin America, especially Mexico, a region with a shared history.

This dearth in the topic is due in no small part to nationalist discourses surrounding race that were extremely influential. It is not uncommon to hear ahistorical assertions such as “race does not exist in Central America.” By the beginning of the twentieth century, the nation-state project in El Salvador was largely successful in manufacturing the illusion of a “mestizo nation” devoid of indigenous *or* Black communities. The premise was that indigenous culture had “disappeared” through assimilation throughout the history of colonialism. Another premise was the factually-incorrect notion that El Salvador lacked a Black population because slavery never existed in El Salvador.³¹ Examining the nature of this erasure and its enduring legacy is a central tenet in studies on race in Latinx Studies today as these policies from long ago shaped how the Latinx identity came to be. Early modern texts such as the *DGM* illuminate how such systems of classification were the product of their time and allows us to speculate on their relevance today.

Adding to the conundrum is the common usage of the word *Ladino* in the region, especially in present-day Guatemala. Generally speaking, Ladino people are a mix of mestizo or otherwise “Hispanicized” peoples. *Ladino* is a term

³¹ According to the most popular version of this myth, because of El Salvador’s lack of a Caribbean coastline (the only Central American nation without one), there were no slaves (and therefore no Afrodescendants) in present-day El Salvador. Such a notion fails to recognize that El Salvador was part of a larger political unit during the colonial period that did include Atlantic coastlines.

invented during the colonial era to refer to those Spanish-speakers who were not Peninsulares, Criollos or indigenous peoples. In later uses the term seems to encapsulate people that are culturally non-indigenous, though mestizaje (non-Blackness) is assumed. Afrodescendants therefore fall outside the realm of what is commonly believed to be included under *Ladinos*.

Virginia Tilley, who has written one of the most authoritative books on the subject of race and indigeneity in El Salvador, has long recognized the problems with contemporary racial politics in El Salvador particularly as they relate to nationalism. She writes in *Seeing Indian: A Study of Race, Nation, and Power in El Salvador* how a nationalist doctrine (implicit even in El Salvador's foreign relations) has brought Salvadoran society to naturalize the indigenous disappearance as a "central point of distinction for the national identity." That is to say that there is no room for indigenous bodies in the national ethos because the national ethos specifically excludes them, placing them in the past. This is a parallel reality to what has happened with African bodies, which were also erased extensively by national discourses that promoted El Salvador as a nation with no Black history. This was a claim made possibly because of widespread dissemination of the myth that El Salvador's lack of an Atlantic/Caribbean coastline (the only nation in Central America without one) meant that El Salvador never received slaves and did not partake in the transatlantic slave trade. She goes on to write:

Today, in their humble stick and mud-brick homes, on the quiet footpaths through the backwoods that link their hamlets, Salvadoran Indians have been living out their part in Salvadoran nationalist doctrine by remaining unseen and unheard. Denied, erased from public vision, they enable the nationalist claim of complete racial fusion and associated modernity and

dignity. Tucked conceptually into an unreachable past, they absolve the nation of any collective guilt or further action following the Matanza. El Salvador's claim of national unity as well as impunity partly depend on their staying in that past -- quaint relics, at most, of a glorified mythohistory.³²

This included nineteenth-century policies that banned Blacks from migrating into present-day El Salvador and later bans in the 1930s and 1940s that prevented Blacks from even passing through El Salvador.³³ These harmful policies greatly shaped political, nationalist discourse in the region and serve as reminders of how quickly political regimes can rewrite history to stay in power. Today one of the most important scholars writing on race and Blackness in Central America is Paul Joseph López Obrador who has contributed to interventions regarding the racialization of Central Americans, both in the isthmus and diaspora.³⁴

Cortes y Larraz's Ethnographic Descriptions and Census Keeping

Throughout Cortes y Larraz's journey in the diocese of Guatemala he wrote down numerous observations and comments about particularities of the diverse ethnic communities he encountered. Linguist José Luis Ramírez Luengo analyzed the entries of the *DGM* that correspond to El Salvador and notes that the text is notable for its rich lexicon and incorporation of *Americanismos*, or words

³² Tilley, *Seeing Indians: A Study of Race, Nation, and Power in El Salvador*, 24.

³³ During World War II, the Maximiliano Martínez dictatorship in El Salvador prohibited the passage of Black U.S. soldiers through El Salvador on their way to the Panama Canal.

³⁴ López Oro, "Refashioning Afro-Latinidad: Garifuna New Yorkers in Diaspora."

originating in the Spanish colonies.³⁵ The text is therefore a treasure trove of data useful for many disciplines.

Regarding Afrodescendants, Cortes y Larraz makes numerous references to Blacks (*negros*) and especially *mulatos* throughout his journey. One of the earliest such instances is when he passes through the parish of Sonsonate near the Pacific Ocean. After remarking that the parish includes Sonsonate and four surrounding towns, he provides a table with some general census data. In the words that follow, Cortes y Larraz provides evidence for the existence of “mulato towns” as well as how he collected this data. And so the official census tallies exist with his ethnographic commentary. He states:

De que resultan en esta feligresía familias 844 con 3,684 personas; debiendo prevenir que las de Sonsonate y San Francisco son de españoles y mulatos y las de San Miguel [Sonsacaste], San Antonio y Santa Isabel de indios. También prevengo que en las haciendas Trapiches y Salinas *puede haber* muchas familias y personas, de quienes no se dio memoria alguna, ni tengo por conveniente el preguntar, porque todo sería una pura mentira como dije en las reflexiones y servirá de regla para todo este escrito, en que si se me dice las que hay en semejantes sitios, sin preguntarlo, las pondré, pero en el conocimiento de que por lo común no es verdad, ni se puede saber (emphasis my own).³⁶

³⁵ José Luis Ramírez Luengo, “La Descripción geográfico-moral del arzobispo Cortés y Larraz (1770) y la historia léxica de Centroamérica: algunos datos salvadoreños” in *Cuadernos de lingüística de el colegio de México*, 6.1 (2019): 1-30. Ramírez Luengo aims to counter the lack of studies on the lexical history of Central American Spanish by analyzing the *Americanisms* in the *DGM*. In doing so, he provides one of the few linguistic studies that uses the *DGM* as a source to trace the development of what would become Salvadoran Spanish.

³⁶ Cortes y Larraz, 94. My translation: “From what results in this membership is 844 families with 3,684 people; it should be noted that those of Sonsonate and San Francisco belong to Spaniards and mulattoes and those of San Miguel [Sonsacaste], San Antonio and Santa Isabel belong to Indians. I also warn that in the Trapiches and Salinas haciendas *there may be* many families and people, of whom no memory was given, nor do I consider it convenient to ask, because everything would be a pure lie as I said in the reflections and will serve as a standard for all this writing, in that if I am told what there are in similar places, without asking, I will put them, but in what is known that usually it is not true, nor can it be known.”

Across his reflections, Cortes y Larraz makes the important distinction between what he calls Indian towns and Spanish (white) and *mulato* towns. He very importantly notes that there *may be* many families and persons living in the cane and salt facilities, which he notes are 1.5 leagues apart from each other in the corresponding table. He was not given any information (“de quienes no se dio memoria alguna”). He lists six haciendas with trapiches (mills, for cane) and two with salinas (salt facilities).³⁷ This is quite an extensive area, and presuming that large fields were being used for the cultivation of sugar cane in this very flat region of the Río Lempa basin, numerous laborers would have been required to harvest the cane but also transport it to the facilities (a laborious task as raw cane is heavy and, logistically, requires numerous trips to the mills from the fields using wagons pulled by horses or donkeys). There are more Afrodescendants that were not accounted for. Cortes y Larraz was correct in his speculation that people probably lived here, but he did not have the data for this area so leaves it officially as unpopulated. In the same passage above he states that he did not bother to ask the local priests about the population there as he suspects they would have made up information to tell him (“ni tengo por conveniente el preguntar, porque todo sería una mentira”).³⁸ This mistrust of the priests is elaborated on by Cortes y Larraz during the previous visit, Nahuizalco, where he observed that what they

³⁷ David Browning affirmed that at the end of the colonial period, sugar cane was cultivated in numerous parts throughout the Río Lempa basin small plantations. The large-scale sugar cane production that El Salvador would later become famous for began in the postcolonial era. Sugarcane came to this region via Mexico. See David Browning, *El Salvador, la tierra, y el hombre* (San Salvador: Ministerio de Educación, 1975). Cortes y Larraz also makes references to sugar cane when describing agriculture in the parishes.

³⁸ Cortes y Larraz, 94.

told him in person did not match up with their answers to the survey-questionnaire they filled out prior to his visit.³⁹

Towns with racially homogeneous population in this part of the isthmus were of course common in the region. Indeed, the majority of the parishes visited by Cortes y Larraz were founded as Indian *reducciones* in the sixteenth century. Sydney David Markman traced the trajectory of Indian reduction towns and found they often had one of three fates by the end of the colonial period: they either suffered abandonment, were unchanged, or economically transformed into racially heterogeneous towns.⁴⁰ By Cortes y Larraz's visit in the eighteenth century, he would have encountered both homogeneous and heterogeneous towns. Unfortunately, however, as with many other entries he lists only total number of families and people without any further breakdown of ethnicity. So, for example, when he lists six hundred and forty-four families comprising two thousand eight hundred and thirty-six persons as the inhabitants of San Miguel Sonsacate, we do not get a clear sense of how many of these families he would have considered "español," "mulato," or mixed.

³⁹ Prior to his Sonsonate visit, while in Nahuizalco, Pedro Cortes y Larraz remarked that he felt that he kept coming across priests who were not trustworthy with regard to his questions and their answers. He writes, "Yo no puedo excusarme a decir, que aquí es imposible averiguar la verdad y para esto sí que no hay remedio alguno; y lo prevengo porque aveces se ofrece decir contra lo que manifiestan los curas en sus respuestas, lo que se ha sabido por conversaciones particulares de los mismos curas; bien que en esto se usará de toda moderación y solamente en los casos precisos." My translation: I cannot excuse myself to say that here it is impossible to find out the truth and for this there is no remedy; and I warn him because sometimes he offers to say against what the priests manifest in their answers, what has been known by private conversations of the same priests; well that in this it will be used in all moderation and only in precise cases." Ibid., 92.

⁴⁰ López Oro, "Refashioning Afro-Latinidad: Garífuna New Yorkers in Diaspora"; López Oro, "A Love Letter to Indigenous Blackness."

This leads to one of the biggest problems when understanding Cortes y Larraz's references to Afrodescendants. Although many of his textual anecdotes describe the presence of Afrodescendants, he rarely gives us a sense of exact numbers. This problem is perhaps most notable in one of the most important entries, San Salvador. During this visit some time after Sonsonate, Cortes y Larraz writes:

La ciudad de San Salvador está situada en llanura a la falda de un volcán muy empinado, llamado por su nombre, el volcán de San Salvador. Está la ciudad en hermosa posición, con calles bien formadas, buenas casas y plazas, no obstante que se ven varios edificios arruinados, o por causa de los temblores, o porque hay mucha gente pobre y ociosa pues se compone (menos de indios) de la de toda especie de españoles, Ladinos, mulatos, entre los que hay muchos vagos y haraganes.⁴¹

He describes the city as situated beautifully on the skirts of Quetzaltepec (Volcán de San Salvador), but suffering from ruined buildings caused by either earthquakes or vagabond behavior among the inhabitants. He describes the city as diverse, composed of Spaniards, Ladinos, and mulatos. In this entry, unlike the entry for Sonsonate examined above, he specified the ethnicity of the families in each town. He lists, for example, one hundred thirty-four Indian families residing in the town of Cuscatancingo and one hundred fifty-six families of *Ladinos* in Quezaltepeque. Nearby Paleca, Apopa, Nejapa, and Guazapa are all comprised of Indian families. We run into some problems with the numbers for San Salvador, which lists nine hundred and one families of Spaniards and *Ladinos*, without

⁴¹ Cortes y Larraz, 119. My translation: "The city of San Salvador is situated on a plain at the foot of a very steep volcano, called by its name, the San Salvador Volcano. The city is in a beautiful position, with well-formed streets, good houses and squares, despite the fact that several ruined buildings are seen, either because of the earthquakes, or because there are many poor and idle people, that make up the city (not Indians): Spaniards, Ladinos, mulattoes, among whom there are many vagrants and lazy."

further specificity. Where are the mulatos he described in his reflection on San Salvador? Why are there no specific numbers to quantify how many Afrodescendants he encountered? Were the local priests, who executed the census before Cortes y Larraz, identifying people differently than Cortes y Larraz? This undercounting happens in virtually all of the entries that include anecdotal reflection on Afrodescendants in the region.

Let us examine a rare exception to Cortes y Larraz's data collection. When he arrives to the parish of San Vicente, then one of El Salvador's most important ecclesiastical centers, he notes that the head priest appears honest, but unable to correct the bad behavior of some of the parish's inhabitants of color. He notes:

De aquí se infiere, que pues ignoraba el cura estas cosas, ignora con siguientemente aún las más públicas yatroces, porque de estos principios se deduce en los negros, mulatos y Ladinós una vida perversa yabandonada, sin temor de Dios, ni del rey ysiendo la mayor parte de gente de esta parroquia yde todas las provincias de Sonsonate, San Miguel, San Salvador, Santa Ana y cuasi todas a excepción de los Altos, Verapaz y Quiche de semeiante raza, se puede conjeturar cuál estará todo el territorio yque es cierto lo que el cura dice que se halla poco menos que el infierno, en donde todo es desorden y ningún orden.⁴²

This is the second instance in the San Vicente entry where Cortes y Larraz uses both terms "negros" and "mulatos" to distinguish between African descendants and people of mixed descent. In the census information he provides he lists the residents of San Vicente as comprising fifty-six Spanish families and two hundred

⁴² Cortes y Larraz, 195. My translation: "From this it can be inferred that since the priest was ignorant of these things, he subsequently ignores even the most public and atrocious ones, because from these principles one deduces in Blacks, mulattoes and Ladinós a perverse and abandoned life, without fear of God or the king and being the greatest part of the people of this parish and of all the provinces of Sonsonate, San Miguel, San Salvador, Santa Ana and almost all except for Los Altos, Verapaz and Quiche of similar race, it can be conjectured what the whole territory will be and that what is true is true. The priest says that there is little less than hell, where everything is disorder and no order."

and eighty-four “familias de Ladinos y negros.”⁴³ This is one of the few instances that Afrodescendants are included in the census data, though there is still ambiguity because his tally groups Ladino and Black families together and we do not know how many of these two hundred and eighty-four families are Ladino, or Black, or both. Furthermore, we see again Cortes y Larraz’s use of hyperbole when describing Black and brown bodies. Did Cortes y Larraz mean to homogenize all peoples of mixed descent as a single category, that is “other”? As a *peninsular* Cortes y Larraz would have inherited many early modern Iberian ideas on race and blood centered on white supremacy.

Scholars such as Luciana da Cruz Brito have looked at the broader implications of colonial period miscegenation in Latin America including its legacy into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, she has found that racial miscegenation in Latin America was used as an excuse to understand poverty in Latin America, similar to the way the argument was used in favor of racial segregation in the United States.⁴⁴ This colorism is an attitude already present among Spanish colonial officials such as Cortes y Larraz, which blamed any failures of the economy on the mixed people and the priests that were in charge of their education and integration in colonial society.

We gain further insight into the racial politics of the day by examining Cortes y Larraz’s description of the indigenous communities. In the first third of

⁴³ Cortes y Larraz, 192.

⁴⁴ Luciana da Cruz Brito, “The Crime of Miscegenation: Racial Mixing in Slaveholding Brazil and the Threat to Racial Purity in Post-abolition United States” in *Rev. Bras. Hist.*, 36.72 (August 2016): 107-130, <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0102-01882016000200107&lng=en&nrm=iso>. accessed on 04 Aug. 2020. Epub Aug 08, 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1806-93472016v36n72_007.

his journey through the Río Lempa basin he encountered mostly Pipil inhabitants that speak what he refers to as “mexicano,” which is the common name for Nahuatl during the colonial period. The Pipil actually speak a variant dialect of classical Nahuatl called either “Nawat, “Nahuat” or “Nawat-Pipil.”⁴⁵ Despite so many inconsistencies in what he chooses to record, Cortes y Larraz almost always points out if the indigenous inhabitants speak castellano or mexicano, and sometimes notes the facility with which they can speak Spanish or not. When he visits Almolonga, near the start of his journey just beyond Santiago de Guatemala, he writes that there

El idioma que se habla en esta administración es corrientemente el castellano, pero el materno es mexicano y la renta que produce asciende a más de 2,000 pesos. La gente anda algo desnuda y me pareció que no hay el recato y pudor correspondiente en las mujeres y que aun siendo indias tienen bastante vanidad.⁴⁶

Here we see a number of things going on. He reports that the people there speak Spanish but almost as a second language, because their mother tongue is mexicano (Nawat). Of special interest is that he describes them as going about “somewhat naked” and that the women are vain, despite being Indians. He does

⁴⁵ Nahuatl has often been described as a lingua franca in colonial Central America, but this conclusion has rested on a narrow range of Spanish and Nahuatl-language documents. Laura Mathews expanded the corpus of documents examined and concluded that Nahuatl in colonial Central America was significantly impacted by indigenous Pipil. As a vehicular language, Pipil was as useful as the central Mexican Nahuatl of the invaders, and it developed its own written standard. In general, Nahuatl of all kinds served as a vehicular language in colonial Central America for only about a century after conquest and followed the path of the invaders. See Laura Mathew and Romero, “Nahuatl and Pipil in Colonial Guatemala: A Central American Counterpoint” in *Ethnohistory* 59.4 (2012): 765-783.

⁴⁶ Cortes y Larraz, 61. My translation: “The language spoken in this administration is currently Spanish, but the mother tongue is Mexican [Nahuat-Pipil] and the income it produces amounts to more than 2,000 pesos. People go around a bit naked and it seemed to me that there is not the corresponding prudence and modesty in women, and that even though they are Indians they have a lot of vanity.”

not follow up with further explanation as immediately after this passage he moves on to talk about agriculture in Almolonga.

Nakedness and nudity are topics that have received some attention. Since the 1950s, scholars have noted the inherent preoccupation in the west to distinguish between the "nude" and the "naked."⁴⁷ Other scholars have examined this phenomenon and have traced it to the discovery of ancient Greek and Roman nude statues as well as the colonial encounters with civilizations that did not follow the same clothing customs as Europe. In her examination of nakedness in the colonial imagination, Philippa Levine has written that

A lack of clothing among colonized individuals has connoted primitiveness and savagery since at least the seventeenth century. While the sculptures and the statuary of ancient Greece that celebrated the heroic, naked male body were, and often continue to be, read as the pinnacle of a civilized aesthetic, the unclothed African, Australian, Aboriginal, or Pacific Islander signified rather an absence of civilization.⁴⁸

Levine reminds us here that nakedness is not the issue. Early modern Europeans had little problem with, for example, the nudity they encountered in classical art. Indeed, this was precisely the aesthetic that had long been undergoing revival during what Giorgio Vasari would call the *rinascita* in Italy, a revival that had well made its way into Iberia by the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ There is a double standard in early modern Eurocentric ideals about the body, as it is only the "other" body that cannot achieve aestheticized *nudity*, but instead only savagery. If we look

⁴⁷ Kenneth Clark distinguished between nudity and nakedness in a book-length discussion in Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959).

⁴⁸ Philippa Levine, "States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination" in *Victorian Studies* 50.2 (Winter, 2008): 189-219.

⁴⁹ Giorgio Vasari, Julia Conway Bondanella, and Peter Bondanella, *The Lives of the Artists, The Lives of the Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

again at how Cortes y Larraz narrates another encounter with Nahuat Pipil indigenous community when he arrives to Caluco, just a few weeks after his stay in Almolonga, we find that he places great emphasis on their lack of clothing by associating it with savagery:

Desde la Villa de Sonsonate al pueblo de Caluco hay dos leguas de sur a norte, con inclinación al oriente; todo el camino es de subida, pero suave y sin malos pasos, a un lado y otro del camino hay mucho matorral y bastantes árboles por donde salían los muchachos desnudos, como unas fieras entre los bosques.⁵⁰

Here he is again associating nakedness with savagery, a common literary trope in early modern Europe, by comparing the indigenous he sees as he journeys through the road to “beasts in the woods.” This type of language is common but not the rule in the eighteenth-century Río Lempa basin. Letters sent from *alcaldes mayores* in San Salvador to the crown even earlier in the eighteenth-century rarely speak of indigenous inhabitants in such a way.⁵¹ What we see is that the optics of nakedness among indigenous communities in the eighteenth century operated in a multifaceted way. To a peninsular ecclesiastical such as Cortes y Larraz it was unacceptable, as nakedness is forbidden in the Catholic tradition. Yet because he found it with some regularity in the lower Río Lempa basin region, I believe nakedness was part of the cultural syncretism that the local priests on the ground were allowing. Colonial administrators did not appear to have a

⁵⁰ Cortes y Larraz, 97. My translation: “From the Villa de Sonsonate to the town of Caluco there are two leagues from south to north, with an inclination to the east; the whole path is uphill, but smooth and without bad steps, on both sides of the path there is a lot of bushes and quite a few trees through which the naked boys came out, like wild beasts in the woods.”

⁵¹ The following bundles contain correspondence from the Audiencia de Guatemala and the Alcaldía Mayor de San Salvador and are authored from various locales near the Río Lempa basin, such as San Vicente and San Salvador: Archivo General de Indias, 378(1); Archivo General de Indias, 378(2); Archivo General de Indias, 378(3); Archivo General de Indias, 378(4); Archivo General de Indias, 378(5).

problem with it. When he visits the port at Acajutla in the Sonsonate parish, during the arrival of a frigate ship from Peru, Cortes y Larraz remarks with the disdain at the amount of men entirely nude on the shores “without occupation and without shame.”⁵² He then writes that he actually complained to the local priest and the *alcalde mayor* of Sonsonate, asking them how and why they allow such multitudes of “abandoned people” to go about so freely and naked.⁵³ Their response is to simply say they are unable to provide any remedy due to the sheer number of people and that the port’s activities draws crowds of indigenous folks. What a moment Cortes y Larraz encountered, an instance where Pipiles were encountering globalization perhaps before they fully encountered modernity.

These passages illustrate the variable but fundamentally pessimistic attitude Cortes y Larraz held about Afrodescendants, mixed peoples, and indigenous communities. His concerns were the Catholic Church’s concerns. His entire assessment of these people is based on the goals of the Church to evangelize the entire continent and integrate/assimilate indigenous society into the empire, as subjects of the Spanish crown. He was assessing the project begun by the Church (and empire) well over two hundred years prior to his arrival. Were the spatial politics of the Indian reduction towns successful at integrating indigenous communities and African slaves? Cortes y Larraz’s writings reveal that the Church (and colonial authorities) were never entirely successful at eliminating indigenous agency for indigenous culture survived in multiple ways, and African culture deeply influenced society in the Río Lempa region.

⁵² Cortes y Larraz, 95.

⁵³ Ibid.

Racial Ambiguity

This chapter has demonstrated some of the key issues at stake when examining Blackness in eighteenth-century Central America and Latin America more broadly. Debates in the field will undoubtedly continue in the years to come and will benefit from additional consideration and analyses of colonial sources such as the *DGM*. Further examining Cortes y Larraz's discursive strategies, lexicon and documentation efforts in the *DGM* will yield even more considerations to help unpack the history of Blackness in northern Central America. As I have demonstrated, my own findings reveal the slippery category of race in the Río Lempa region and the general inadequacy of early modern colonial racial classification, even one as complicated as the *castas* system employed in eighteenth-century New Spain, because such systems fail to capture the specificities of the communities they purport to describe. The Spanish colonial system of racial classification instead is based on delineating and establishing proximity (or distance) to whiteness via blood quantum rather than honoring specific ancestral lineages, a task made even more unpredictable by the subjective nature of racial classification and the racism and colorism no doubt exhibited by Spanish colonial officials.

This should be an integral conversation to Central American Studies. As the neofascist tide unfolds so, too, must our lenses of study adapt to reverse the erasure of peoples/identity. Early modern/early global studies must draw from Latinx studies and Ethnic Studies more broadly as the events of the early modern period are relevant still today, as I hope this chapter has shown. The obfuscation

of Black bodies in the census data, intentional or not, is a product of an already ongoing process of Black invisibility. The converse of this is that Cortes y Larraz saw the indigenous community, the naked bodies he so visually describes, as the true “problem” of this region due to their lack of civility as defined by him and the Church.

Conclusion

Colonial measurements can impede our ability to (un)learn and see/feel/hear beyond. When we honor and protect the land as sacred, energy becomes altered, but it cannot be necessarily measured. How do you measure consciousness? How do you measure spirituality? How do you measure dreams? How do you measure the powerful impact that your ancestors' prayers have on you? Some states cannot be measured.¹

This dissertation examined the eighteenth century in the Río Lempa basin in northern Central America, corresponding roughly to El Salvador and southern Guatemala. Using art historical methodologies informed by discourses emerging from Chicana and Central American Studies, the primary object of study in this dissertation has been the *DGM*, a lengthy eighteenth-century Central American manuscript. And although there can easily be many more dissertations written about the *DGM* to continue to unpack its historical and art historical significance, the aims of this dissertation were to provide an art historical overview of the manuscript's images to serve as a starting point for future research, a seed, or *Q'anil*, for further contemplation and study. To accomplish this, I surveyed trends in Salvadoran history, Central American studies, and colonial Latin American art history as I adopted decolonizing methodologies in accordance with recent trends in the field(s). This allowed me the opportunity to continue the rich tradition of self-reflexivity so often employed by art historians in Latin American studies.² This

¹ Joanna Beltrán Girón, "A Land-Based Pedagogy on Pain, Trauma, Healing, and Research" in *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* (forthcoming).

² In this regard I thank scholars such as art historian Carolyn Dean for poignantly addressing some of the theoretical limitations of the discipline and field while at the same time adopting innovative yet sound methodologies to remedy these. For example, Dean develops a classification system

project has embraced interdisciplinary conventions and was therefore at the intersection of both area and Ethnic Studies. As a result, the theoretical framing of my research positions the *DGM* as both a product of early modernity and coloniality. Modernity and coloniality are both sides of the same coin, and awareness of their interconnection is an important aspect of the thinking that drives my project.³ Similarly, the “past” is both history and memory.

The first chapter of this dissertation critically examined the history of the people of the Río Lempa, the primary region I focused on in this research. I framed the parameters of my research around the Río Lempa basin in a move towards decoloniality, rejecting contemporary borders of nation-states. Focusing on the Spanish colonial period but providing overview of the Pre-Columbian era, In the second chapter, I provide a historiography of visual and material culture in Santiago de los Caballeros, the artistic hub of Central America and the location where the *DGM* was written and painted. In this chapter I highlighted the pioneering work of art historian Sydney David Markman, who, as a specialist of colonial Central America, contributed greatly to pressing discourses in Latin American art history using Central American case-studies when he was active as a scholar in the middle of the twentieth century. Central American art history is still a relatively nascent field in the U.S. academy, yet demographic shifts in the

based on Quechua words to describe the different types/uses of stone in Andean culture. In doing so, she bypasses the need for a “western” understanding of this specific manifestation of Andean material culture and encourages us to understand it on its own terms. See Dean, *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock*. Generally speaking, art history since the middle of the twentieth century has been self-reflexive, as both the object(s) of study in the discipline have evolved as well as theoretical understandings of them.

³ I am indebted to scholars such as Mignolo who have expounded upon such considerations before. Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

U.S. will undoubtedly make this a rapidly growing field in the coming decade.⁴ Despite the small-size of the Central American territory relative to some of the major centers in Latin America, as I demonstrated in this dissertation the geopolitical significance of this territory for global empire was significant. And while there are longstanding critiques of the problems associated with “center-periphery” binary constructions, I would hope that my study adds to this understanding by demonstrating the limits of thinking of Latin America solely in terms of geographical or population classifications or as a series of distinctive temporal periods.⁵ This means thinking beyond disciplinary-boundaries that would otherwise keep the study of the history of the Río Lempa region compartmentalized into ancient, colonial, and modern/contemporary. And because Northern Central America was (and continues to be) a major site of global imperial activity, understanding the macrohistory of the region across time is essential to deconstructing colonial paradigms and constructing/envisioning a

⁴ I owe a considerable amount of thanks to Jennifer Amparo Cárcamo, currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of History at UCLA. She is writing a dissertation about activism against fascism in Central America which she shows has origins that date to the 1920s, much earlier than previously believed. Conversations with her enriched my own understanding of the trajectory of Salvadoran history and the topics generally covered in the field. Moreover, Cárcamo’s documentary project *Eternos indocumentados* sums up, perhaps more succinctly than any other single work, the devastating role of U.S. imperialism in the region. See Jennifer A. Cárcamo, *Eternos Indocumentados: Central American Refugees in the United States*, Documentary (América Productions, 2018). See also Leisy Ábrego and Jennifer A. Cárcamo, “Misrepresented Insecurities: An Annotated Interview about Displacement and Resistance of Central America’s ‘Eternos Indocumentados,’” *Latin American Law Review*, no. 7 (2021): 123–42.

⁵ John Scott, “Centre-Periphery Model,” in *A Dictionary of Sociology*, 4th ed. (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2014), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199683581.001.0001/acref-9780199683581-e-239>. The center-periphery model is a spatial metaphor that describes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan center and a less developed periphery.

horizon free of oppression. Likewise, the search for home in the past is an empowering meditation for Central Americans searching for their roots.

Shifts in the general discipline of art history, including increased interest in diasporic contemporary art, will mean that this area will continue to attract scholarly endeavors in the years to come.⁶ These future endeavors will no doubt need to consider the history of coloniality in the region and my dissertation and future publications that arise from this project will contribute greatly to these considerations of Central America's past.

The third chapter of this dissertation closely analyzed a sample of thirty-seven images from the total of one hundred and thirteen to describe how the images in the *DGM* operate to construct colonial imagining and historical record. Using art historical methodologies, I contextualize their trajectory in the history of Spanish colonial cartography and early-modern map-making more broadly. I unpack the artistic conventions that were utilized to paint the images. While the images are landscapes that are very obviously drawn as bird's eye views, I propose a decolonial term, the phoenix's eye view, to better describe how the *DGM's* images belong to multiple temporalities at the same time. Like the mythological phoenix that arises from its own ashes (rebirth), these aerial views that were once classified documents of the church and state are now viewable by the descendants of the people of the Río Lempa. The antepasados who were

⁶ Saloni Mathur, "Introduction," in *The Migrant's Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora*, ed. Saloni Mathur, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), vii–xviii. In this introduction, Mathur outlines key issues in the study of art in the context of globalization and more specifically migration. Future Central American art historical studies will contribute to this key area of the discipline as shifts in U.S. demographics, the art market, and the museum are demanding further reconfigurations of the discipline of art history and the meaning of "art" itself. See Dean, "The Trouble with (the Term) Art."

surveyed/surveilled in the *DGM* can be redeemed by their descendants, who can now benefit from the study of these images, which the antepasados were prohibited from accessing. I argue that this awareness of the future fates of the people surveyed in the *DGM* allows for a writing of history in direct conversation with Central American Studies dealing even with the diaspora of the Río Lempa region in the twenty-first century.⁷

Situating the *DGM* within Central American art history proved a necessary task which fills major gaps in the field of study of colonial art more generally. To date, some of the most noteworthy studies of Central American colonial art rarely include landscapes, as architecture and sculpture have enjoyed more scholarly attention. An exception is Luisa Elena Alcalá's recent study on a colonial painting of a reduction town in Nicaragua and another painted in Guatemala of the same genre.⁸ Understanding the artistic culture of this region proves necessary to realize the full extent of the culture of visibility in New Spain and offers a counterpoint to discuss more widely-examined colonial material production. In the classroom, for example, the images in the *DGM* can (and should) be brought into discussions of the sixteenth-century *relaciones geográficas* for a more nuanced understanding of how territory was visualized in New Spain. The remarkable preservation of the *DGM*'s images and their tremendous detail make them a bottomless source of information for the art historian, and my work demonstrates

⁷ This is because the anti-imperial struggle for liberation is still alive today.

⁸ Luisa Elena Alcalá, "A Call to Action: Visual Persuasion in a Spanish American Painting," *The Art Bulletin* XCIV, no. 4 (2012): 594–617. For the painting about Guatemala see Luisa Elena Alcalá, "Conquest and 'Reducción' of the Indians of the Paraca and Pantasma Mountains in Guatemala," in *The Arts in Latin America: 1492-1820*, ed. Joseph Rishel and Suzanne Stratton-Puit, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2006), 430–31.

how the images employ early modern techniques used in cartography and landscape (such as metonymy and modularity) to achieve a representation of the entire land-surface of the colonial diocese of Guatemala -- a monumental task even if undertaken today.

The fourth chapter provided an analysis of racialized language in the text of the *DGM* as well as discussion of some of its descriptions of both indigenous and Black isthmians (Central Americans) in the colonial period. This chapter draws extensively from Ethnic Studies, specifically critiques of Latinidad. My findings show that racial terminology was inconsistently used in the eighteenth century, and via sleight-of-hand, terminology such as "mestizo" or "Ladino" was preferred, gestures that erased Blackness or Afro-indigeneity. This chapter contributes to a long tradition of scholarly discourse on race in colonial Latin America, discourses which have been at the core of Latin American art history. Scholars have long-established the precariousness of colonial categories of race and indeed it is a topic that is impossible to avoid.⁹ My research adds to this corpus of work, and, while not pretending to resolve some of the major debates in the study of racial history, suggests that colonial categories of race in Central America were inconsistently used even in the most authoritative sources.

Today, the Rio Lempa basin falls within what is popularly called the "Northern Triangle" which refers to the tri-nation region of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. This term, with origins in United States' military planning, is now

⁹ David Cahill, "Colour by Numbers: Racial and Ethnic Categories in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1532-1824," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 2 (1994): 325-46. I thank Dr. Stella Nair for introducing me to Cahill's important work. Like many scholars in the field, Nair has also pointed out this issue; see note 112 in Stella Nair, "Localizing Sacredness, Difference, and Yachacuscamcani in a Colonial Andean Painting," *Art Bulletin* LXXXIX, no. 2 (2007): 211-38.

generally avoided in Central American Studies. As I have done throughout the dissertation, I prefer calling this region simply “northern Central America.”

After the colonial period and continuing onto the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, northern Central America witnessed some of the most violent regimes in the hemisphere that were responsible for the continent’s greatest tragedies. In 1932, the Salvadoran government was responsible for the genocide of an estimated 30,000 Nahuat in western El Salvador, with rural regions within the department of Sonsonate experiencing the greatest loss of life. It is no coincidence that Sonsonate remains the poorest region in El Salvador today and has the highest rates of malnutrition and extreme poverty in the nation.

This type of extreme violence would continue throughout the century, culminating most tragically in the 1980s when the Guatemalan government employed the most brutal of scorched-earth policies that resulted in the death of an estimated 250,000 Maya inhabitants in the southern highlands during the civil war there. The trauma associated with these genocides/ethnocides is still being processed today, even after multiple generations, and these events have been the driving force behind the early waves of mass exodus out of the region. Scholars have noted that this trauma has resulted in cultures of silences, with parents often unable to talk to their children about their lived horrific experiences.¹⁰

¹⁰ Scholars such as Ester Trujillo have shown how the children of the diaspora are very much interested in recovering this history. While high levels of war-related trauma among Central American refugees creates a culture of silence, Trujillo’s research reveals that their children collect (and construct) narratives with the memory fragments shared during conversations with their families. See Ester N. Trujillo, “Rupturing the Silences: Intergenerational Construction of Salvadoran Immigrant War Necronarratives” in *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies* 11, no. 1 (2021): 75-92.

Earlier in the dissertation I referred to the Spanish colonial period as Xib'alb'a, and I insisted on the relevance of Xib'alb'a for understanding the contemporary moment. The atrocities mentioned above were the most extreme manifestations of the legacy of colonialism, which concentrated power into the hands of a small, non-indigenous, and non-Black elite class determined to repress any form of social upheaval that threatened the hegemony enjoyed by the elite classes. Throughout the colonial period, this type of social control was pervasive, and today the descendants of the people of the Rio Lempa are still under surveillance amidst the growing tide of neofascism, and still grieving the loss of so much life. This is why I insist that we understand the Central American Spanish colonial period in terms of *today*. Much can be gleaned about today's systems of powers by analyzing their roots centuries ago. In addition, for social scientists researching transnational communities, much is to be gained by understanding the types of urban spaces that their research subjects come from, the spaces depicted in the *DGM* and so thoroughly commented upon by Cortes y Larraz. And while scholars researching contemporary Central American communities distinguish whether their places of origin are urban or rural, they rarely pay attention to the colonial history of the places their research subjects come from. Are they from former *reducciones*, for example? I would urge Central Americanists to consider these issues as they formulate research projects for they will shed greater light onto how the past informs the present.

Decolonial feminist psychologist Joanna Beltrán Girón best sums up the reality for many Central Americans today. She writes:

As a survivor (and daughter and granddaughter of survivors) of interpersonal violence and state violence, the path toward personal-

ancestral-historical healing has been extraordinarily hard and deeply painful. It hurts to open/see my wounds and process the shame, guilt, and rage that often prevents me from accessing and connecting to my soft center. However, turning toward the land and the universe has allowed me to breathe, relax, and dance with my creativity and imagination--my soft center. As an organizer and scholar who is exposed to various events, memories, content, and experiences of state violence, it has been critical to have an intentional communication with the soil and the sky for it has offered me ways to process painful emotions and write about trauma in more humanizing and affirming ways.¹¹

Beltrán Girón and scholars in the decolonial journey are increasingly turning to the land not only for answers regarding questions of belonging, but for healing. I hope to have conveyed the importance indigenous-informed pedagogy such as Beltrán Girón's in my own framing of my region of study as the "Rio Lempa basin."

Future Studies

The art discussed in this dissertation is multivalent and complex. An encyclopedic sequence of images from the eighteenth century that purport to depict the entire land surface of the colonial diocese of Guatemala requires much analysis in order to fully comprehend and discern its meaning, present and/or historic. The *DGM* is certainly worthy of further consideration because it presents one of the most important primary sources for both El Salvador and Guatemala and quotidian life there for its inhabitants during the late colonial period. Additionally, the landscapes in the *DGM* -- representations of real geographical terrain -- reveal that nuanced attention to colonial space and time is a required, if challenging task for the scholar studying the images today. To quote Michel de

¹¹ Joanna Beltrán Girón, "A Land-Based Pedagogy on Pain, Trauma, Healing, and Research."

Certeau, “every story is a travel story -- a spatial practice.”¹² Navigating the colonial past of Central America requires travel through different spaces, temporalities and futurities at once. It may seem daunting, and even painful. Major thinkers in Central American studies have likened this examination of history to a visit to the Mesoamerican underworld -- a place of trials and tribulations ruled by dark overlords. Decolonial thinking -- which questions basic assumptions taken for granted in western thought -- is a vital component necessary to navigate (and emerge out of) this underworld.

The most pressing work yet to be done on the *DGM* includes further material evaluation of the manuscript. We do not know, for example, if local materials were used in the painting of the images, though we may presume that at least some of the pigments have their origin in Europe. This work is important for both understanding the material production of the *DGM* but also for understanding the artistic toolkit, so to speak, available to an archbishop in colonial Central America. Further archival and artistic research can provide clues to the artists living in Santiago de los Caballeros that could have assisted Cortes y Larraz in painting these maps, for their authorship remains unknown.

In addition, there is still a great deal of art historical analyses to be done with individual images. Future scholars intimately familiar with some of the geographical locations represented in the *DGM* will undoubtedly find a plethora of details to discuss within individual images amidst a rich diversity of further topics to be considered. For example, I wish to devote a future research article to

¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

analyzing the two representations of Lake Atitlan in the *DGM*, Guatemala's largest and most famous lake and today known as the home to a resilient Maya community that suffered immensely during the 1980s state-sponsored attacks on indigenous peoples.

There is also great deal of work to be done employing the methods (and technologies) brought about by Digital Humanities.¹³ This future work will reveal otherwise difficult to discern aspects of the *DGM*. A future concordance, for example, will reveal the location and frequency of key words used in the document. This work can greatly enrich our understanding of the ways that racialized words, for example, are utilized in the document, greatly contributing to the work I laid out in the third chapter of this dissertation.

Indigenous Knowledge(s) in the Colonial Artifact

Art historians of colonial Latin America have been fiercely debating how to study colonial art for decades now.¹⁴ Whereas once these debates argued about

¹³ In a widely-cited manifesto for Digital Humanities, Jeffrey Schnapp wrote that in "The first wave of digital humanities work was quantitative, mobilizing the search and retrieval powers of the database, automating corpus linguistics, stacking hypercards into critical arrays. The second wave is **qualitative, interpretive, experiential, emotive, generative** in character. It harnesses digital toolkits in the service of the Humanities' core methodological strengths: attention to complexity, medium specificity, historical context, analytical depth, critique and interpretation." See Jeffrey Schnapp, "The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0," 2011, p. 2, https://jeffreyschnapp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Manifesto_V2.pdf. Given scarce studies devoted to the *DGM*, there is still much work to be done in what can be called this first wave of digital humanities. Feeding the *DGM*'s text through textual-analysis software can reveal much about the linguistics and poetics used in the work. Similarly, digital cartographical projects aimed at education can create computer applets that overlay the landscapes in the *DGM* with photographs of their real-world counterparts using Google Earth and similar software. Projects such as these will only further enhance our understanding of the *DGM* and manuscripts like it produced during the eighteenth century.

¹⁴ This has been true for scholars of both ancient and modern Latin America. For a recent succinct summary of some of the most pressing concerns today, see Cecelia Klein, "Introduction: The State

key philosophical considerations such as the hybrid nature of colonial art (and the nature of the colonial gaze required to recognize this hybridity¹⁵), recent debates have taken a more radical turn and question the usefulness of the study of colonial art in the first place. These radical debates emerge in the context of an increasingly decolonial turn in popular culture and mainstream thought, which in its extreme forms have sought to destroy colonial art altogether.¹⁶ And while the demolition or removal of art such as public memorial statues dedicated to colonial historical figures like Columbus have become commonplace in major cities in the United States (and around the world), other colonial figures or historical episodes remain more widely contested. A recent incident that hit close to home that exemplifies these debates was the 2020 fire at the Mission San Gabriel just outside Los Angeles, which was suspected to have been intentionally set in the weeks after the George Floyd protests in the early summer of that year (Figure 5-1 and

and Future of Pre-Columbian Visual Culture Studies," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1, no. 1 (2019): 87–93.

¹⁵ Dean and Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America*." Other debates that defined the field include the supposed dichotomy between western and non-western, and pervasive myths about the west that in turn lead to myths about the non-west. See Cecelia Klein, "Not Like Us and All the Same: Pre-Columbian Art History and the Construction of the Nonwest," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 42 (2002): 131–32.

¹⁶ These also come during radical ideological shifts in the academy as well as a shifts in values concerning knowledge production, some of which I have outlined in my introductory chapter at the start of this dissertation. This includes an increasing obsession with what Tom Cummins has described as "presentism," that is the preoccupation with the present world in opposition to "deep dives' in history. See Tom Cummins, "Pre-Columbia: Wherefore Art Thou Art?," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 1, no. 1 (2019): 94–95.

Figure 5-2).¹⁷ This incident furthered fueled already tumultuous debates.¹⁸ On the one hand, the mission is the physical manifestation of the Roman Catholic Church during the Spanish colonial period, responsible for the forced conversion of the ancestors of today's Tongva community. As such, the mission represents violence, displacement, and ethnocide. This is the type of coloniality that is popularly rejected today. And yet for others, including current members of the Tongva community, the missions represent the labor of their ancestors and an important legacy of their material and historical culture. As scholars such as Yve Chavez

¹⁷ Andrew J. Campa, "No Answers yet in Ongoing Investigation into San Gabriel Mission Fire," *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 2020, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewiGverB6tz1AhV0JUQIHdMkAQ0QFnoECCMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.latimes.com%2Fcalifornia%2Fstory%2F2020-07-22%2Fsan-gabriel-mission-fire-investigation-story&usg=AOvVaw1VNe4bdAOnK1NZvLc_PB-n. See also Richard White, "Op-Ed: What the Fire at San Gabriel Mission Left Behind," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2020, sec. Opinion.

¹⁸I was fortunate enough to be in conversation with some of the most important scholars in the field of California Mission Studies at the 2019 conference "American" Art and the Legacy of Conquest at UCLA, a conference that came out of the University of California's Critical Mission Studies project tasked with rewriting the history of the California Missions and overseen by Charlene Villaseñor Black, Jennifer Schepher Hughes, Renya Ramirez and Ross Frank, along with four California Indian Research Partners, Yve Chavez, Jonathan Cordero, Valentin López, and Stanley Rodríguez. The panel titled "Art at the California Missions" provoked serious discussion, but most importantly revealed that there is no single position regarding the heritage of colonial art, even amongst indigenous peoples. This is because some colonial art, maybe much of it, was indeed made by indigenous hands and featured what Yve Chavez has called "Indigenous ingenuity." Colonial art was not only a manifestation of imposed domination, but in fact featured contributions by indigenous hands and thought. The papers that composed this panel, "American" Art and the Legacy of Conquest, University of California, Los Angeles, 2019, were: Luis Javier Cuesta Hernandez, "Art and Devotion at the Missions in Baja California"; Pamela Huckins, "The Art of Persuasion: Cultural Transference in the Alta California Missions"; and Clara Bargellini, "What Actually Is In the Collections of the California Missions?" See also Yve Chavez, "Indigenous Artists, Ingenuity, and Resistance at the California Missions After 1769" (PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles, 2017). Important publications resulting from this conference include Renya K. Ramirez and Valentin Lopez, "Valentin Lopez, Healing, and Decolonization: Contesting Mission Bells, El Camino Real, and California Governor Newsom" in *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, 2.3 (2020): 91–98; Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Rethinking Mission Studies" in *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2.3 (2020): 3–7. Here Villaseñor Black writes that "Decolonial theory helps to dismantle Eurocentric framing. Furthermore, we situate the California missions not only against the backdrop of global early modern colonization but also within a framework of US settler colonialism. Finally, relational ethnic studies helps us understand the interactions of the various communities associated with the missions in the past and today" (5). Additional publications include Clara Bargellini, "The California Missions in Art History" in *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2.3 (2020): 60–66; Yve Chavez, "Remarkable Native Paintings: Indigeneity and Exhibitions of California Mission Art" in *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2.3 (2020): 99–108.

(Tongva) have argued, the complexity of cultural and material production of colonial art such as in mission sites demands that we recognize indigenous ingenuity and innovation.¹⁹ How can we accomplish this if we burn down the buildings?



Figure 5-1. Carolyn Cole, Photograph of the San Gabriel Mission showing severely damaged roof. Source: Richard White, "Op-Ed: What the Fire at San Gabriel Mission Left Behind," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 2020, sec. Opinion.

¹⁹ Chavez, "Indigenous Artists, Ingenuity, and Resistance at the California Missions After 1769."



Figure 5-2. Nathaniel Percy, Photograph showing interior damage of San Gabriel Mission during 2020 fire. Source: Brian Rokos and Nathaniel Percy, "4-Alarm Fire Destroys Most of Mission San Gabriel," *The Mercury News*, July 11, 2020, sec. News.

At the risk of sounding didactic, I wish to close this dissertation with these thought-provoking questions, which have been relevant to my own study of the *DGM* since I first encountered the object in my fieldwork. Like members of the Tongva community who legitimately recognize the presence of their cultural heritage in colonial art, I, too, see myself and my own community deeply "present" in the images of the *DGM*.²⁰ Although a manuscript such as the *DGM* –

²⁰ Every time I have shared images from the *DGM* with Central American Studies' scholars working in fields that are remote from colonial art history, the response has been overwhelmingly positive,

– written just a few years before the erection of California’s missions – is on an epistemological and material level radically different than a church-building, there are parallel considerations to be made. The *DGM*, as an object made by the Catholic Church to be used by the Spanish crown, represents the colonial violence and imperialism that came to devastate the people of the Río Lempa region for generations. And yet – like mission architecture and decoration but perhaps less obvious – it contains vestiges of indigenous knowledge all at the same time. Is this not the invisible hybridity theorized by Dean and Leibsohn?²¹

The *DGM* compiled within a single work geospatial knowledges that once belonged to the diverse inhabitants of the Río Lempa region. As detailed in the earlier in this dissertation, Archbishop Pedro Cortes y Larraz requested that each priest at each parish fill out a questionnaire for him to collect during his parish visits. This represents a chain-of-command that culminates with the Archbishop and colonial state, but begins with the indigenous informants that aided each priest at each parish in collecting the data. As imagined aerial views, the landscapes in the *DGM* reflect not only what Cortes y Larraz saw, but also what he was *told*.

Filtering through what Cortes y Larraz was told, what he wrote down, and what he visualized has been one of the primary goals of my dissertation. In the context of the Central American diaspora displaced by the violence in the

largely because people are shocked to see representations of their families’ (or their own) hometowns, many of which are rural hamlets and villages with little to no historical information available. The *DGM* is therefore a temporally hybrid object, one that can be reclaimed from its colonial origins.

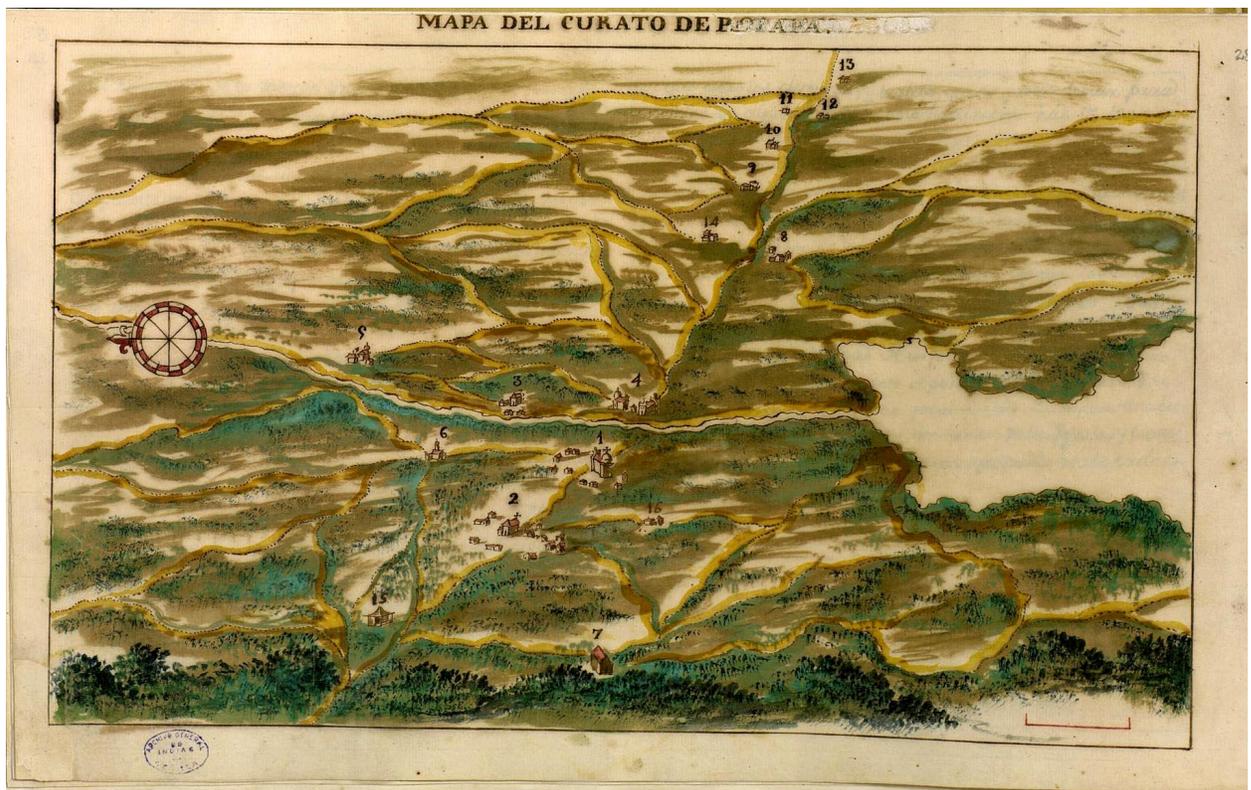
²¹ Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, “Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 12, no. 1 (June 1, 2003): 5–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609160302341>.

isthmus's recent past, the people of the Río Lempa region are today divorced from their own history. As 1.5- and second-generation immigrant youth come of age in places such as the United States, the thirst for knowledge about Central America, past and present, will only continue to grow. Studying colonial Central America -- paradoxically -- requires decolonial praxis. In the case of the *DGM*, it requires centering the people who lie at its very heart: the people of the Río Lempa region.

APPENDIX A. Maps corresponding to present-day El Salvador in the *Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala, 1767-1771.*

All maps from:

Source: Carta de Pedro Cortes y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis de Guatemala a S.M., ES.41091.AGI/26//GUATEMALA, 948, N.2. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.



Map 1. Curato de San Petapa



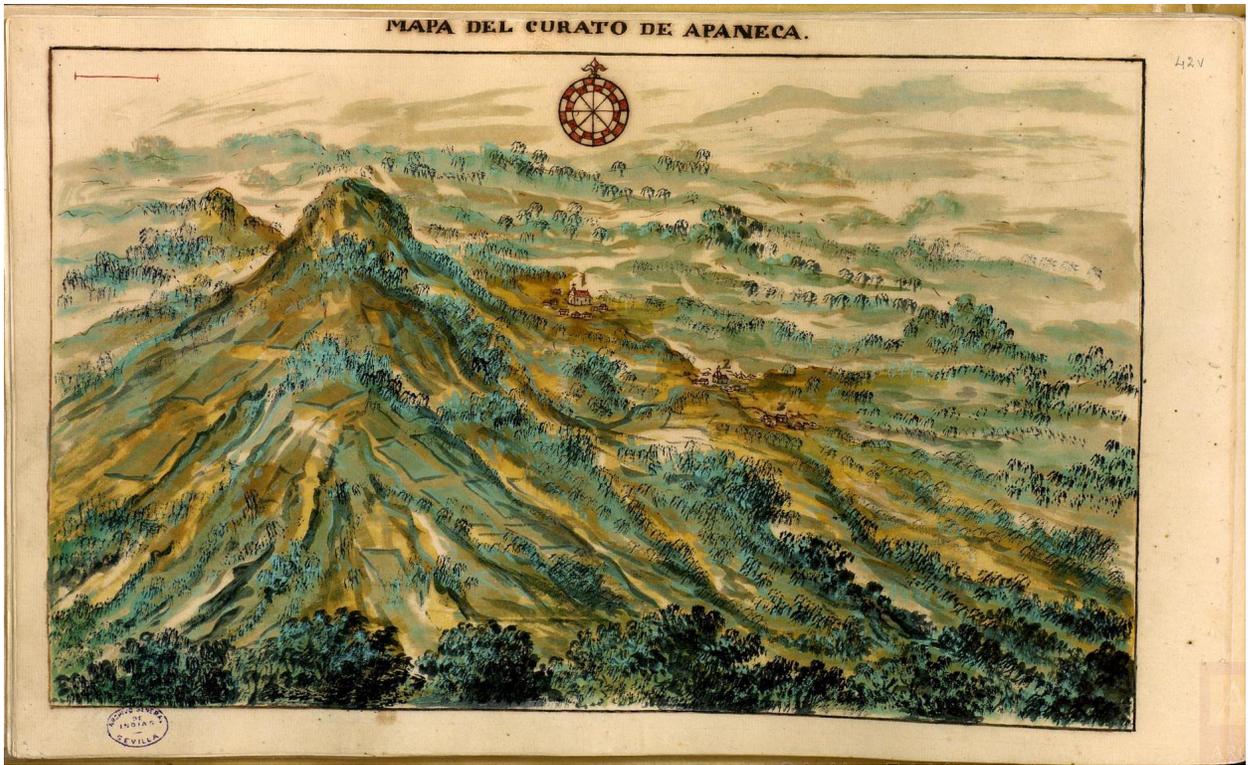
Map 2. Curato de Esclabos



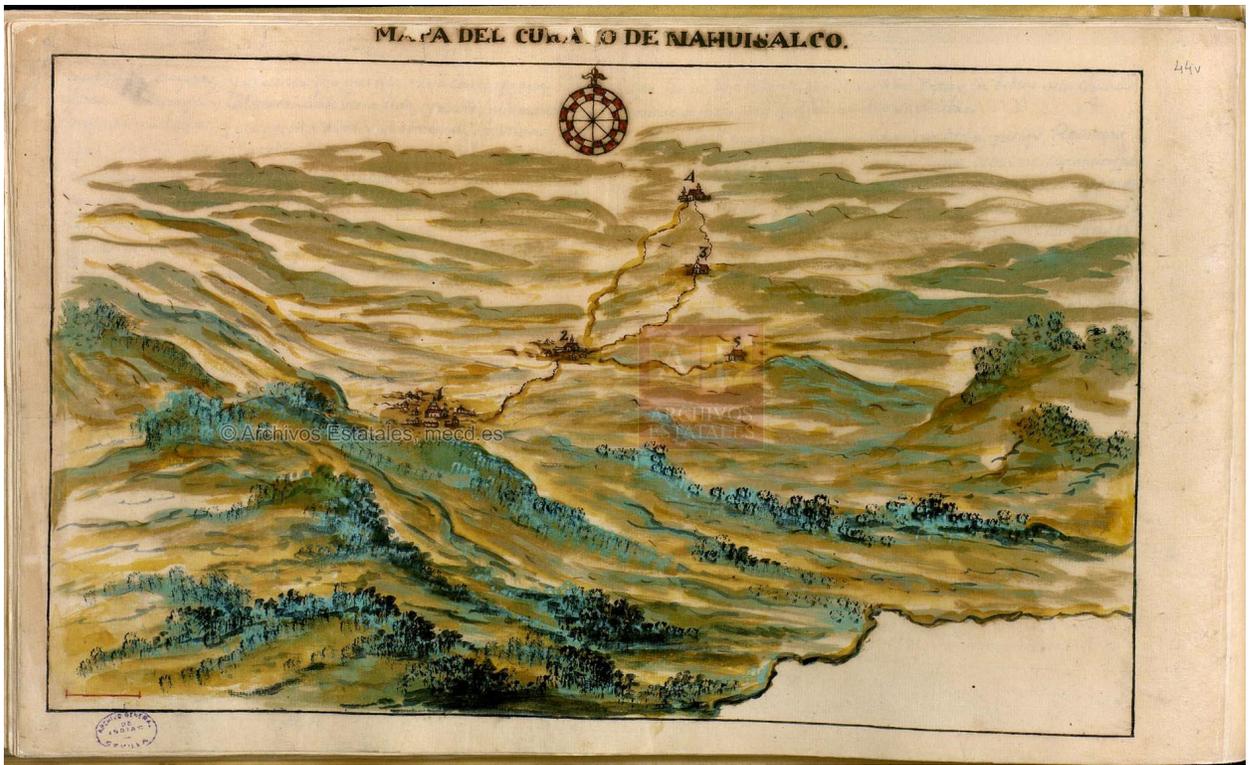
Map 3. Curato de Conguaco



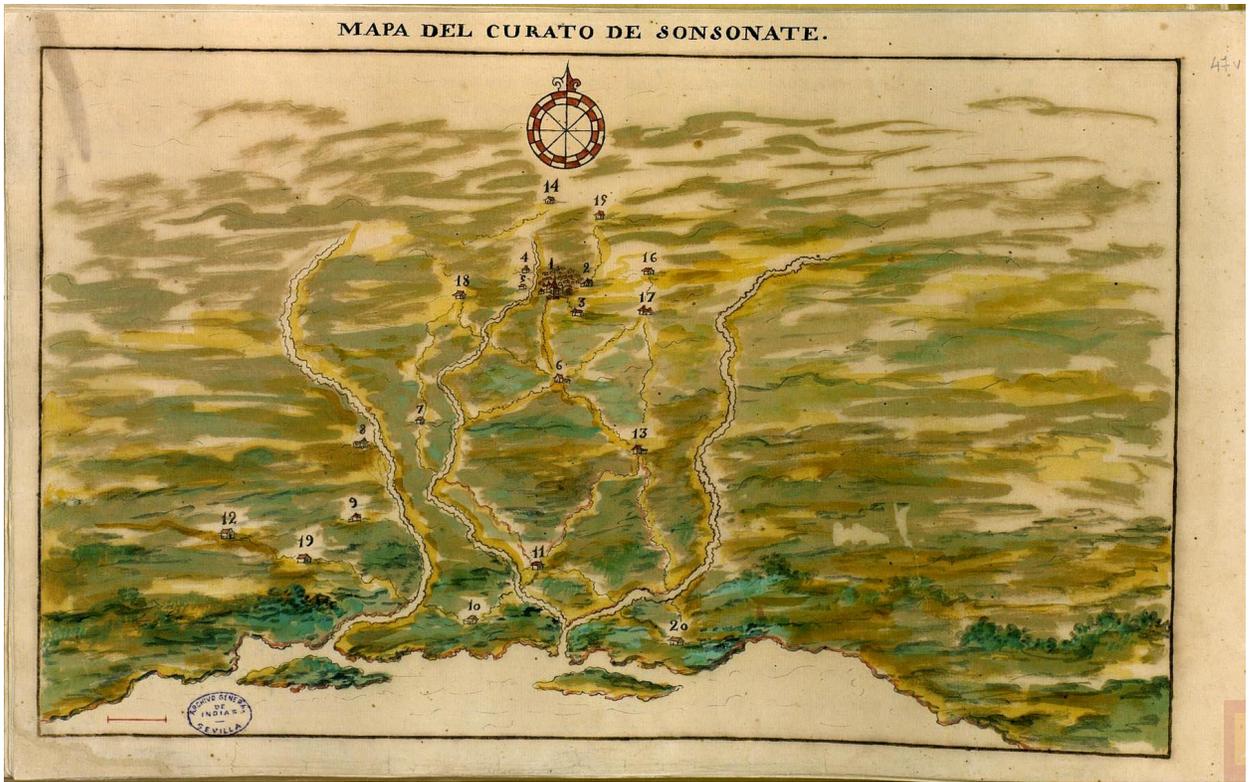
Map 4. Curato de Ahuachapan



Map 5. Curato de Apaneca



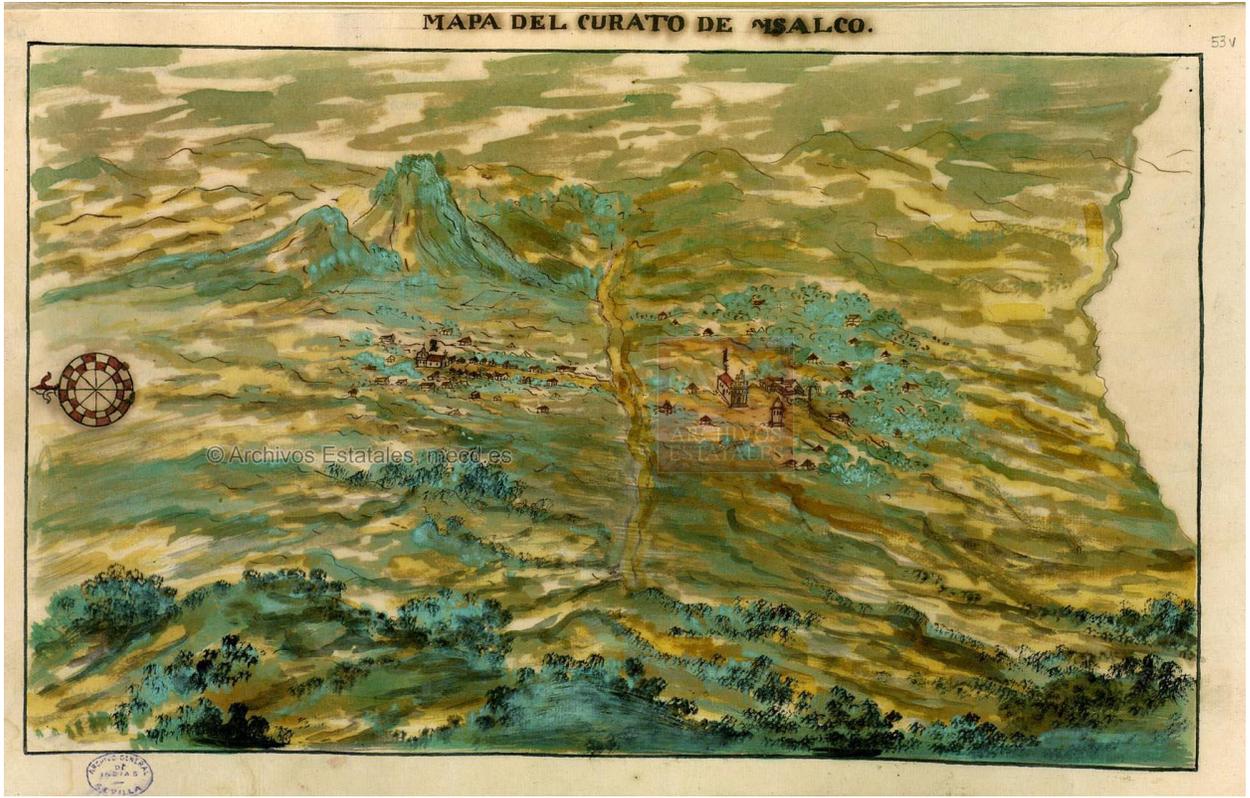
Map 6. Curato de Nahuizalco



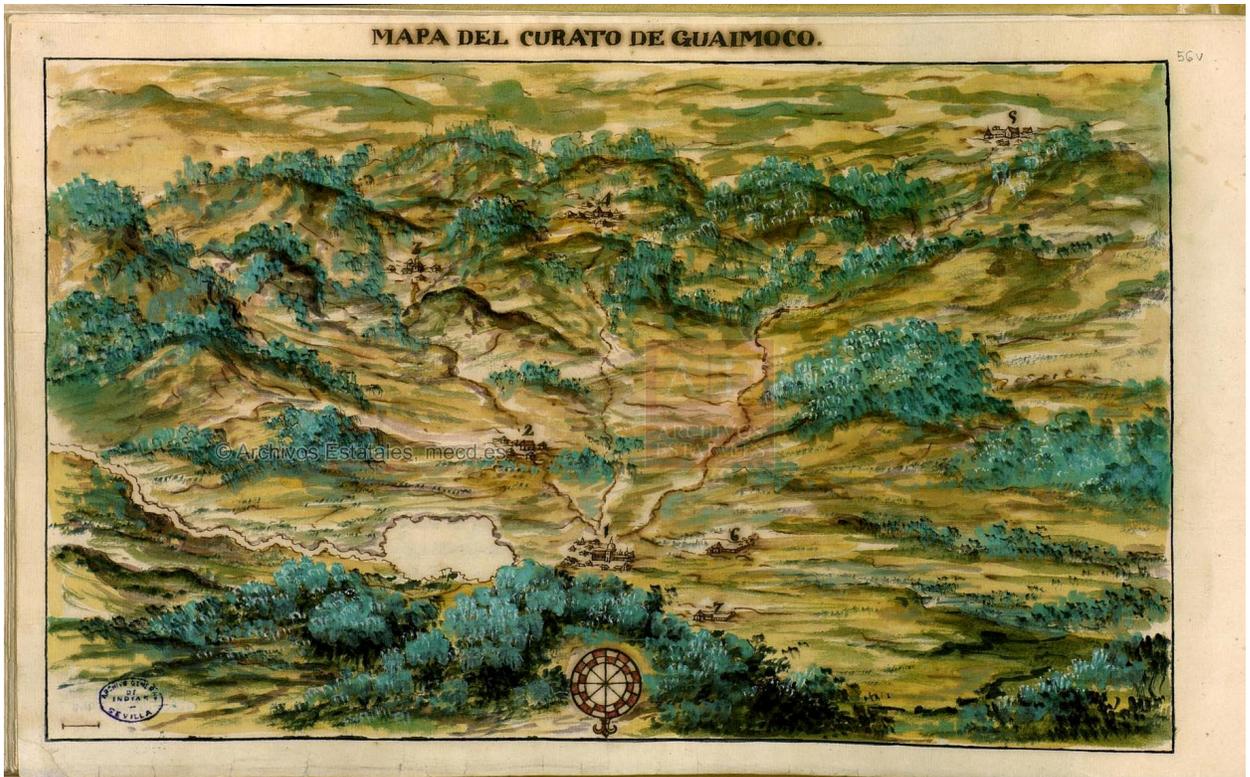
Map 7. Curato de Sonsonate



Map 8. Curato de Caluco



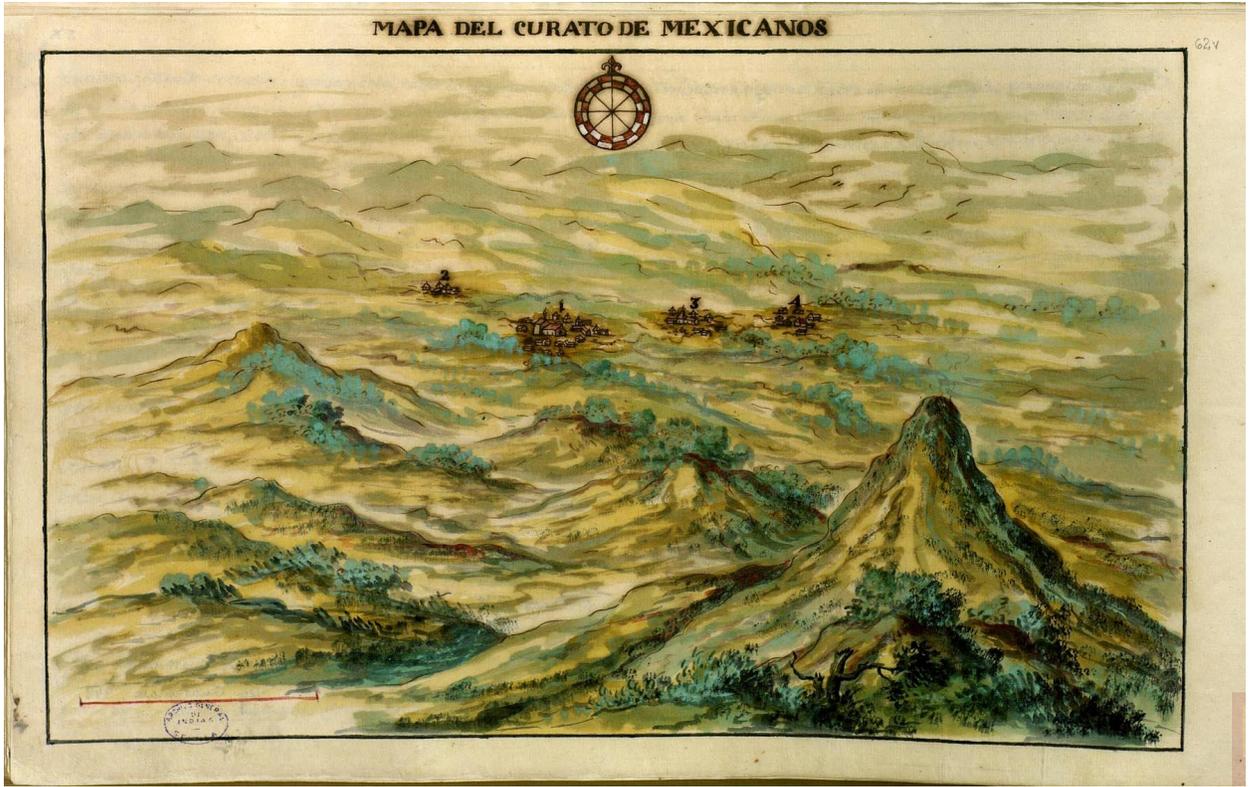
Map 9. Curato de Izalco



Map 10. Curato de Guaimoco



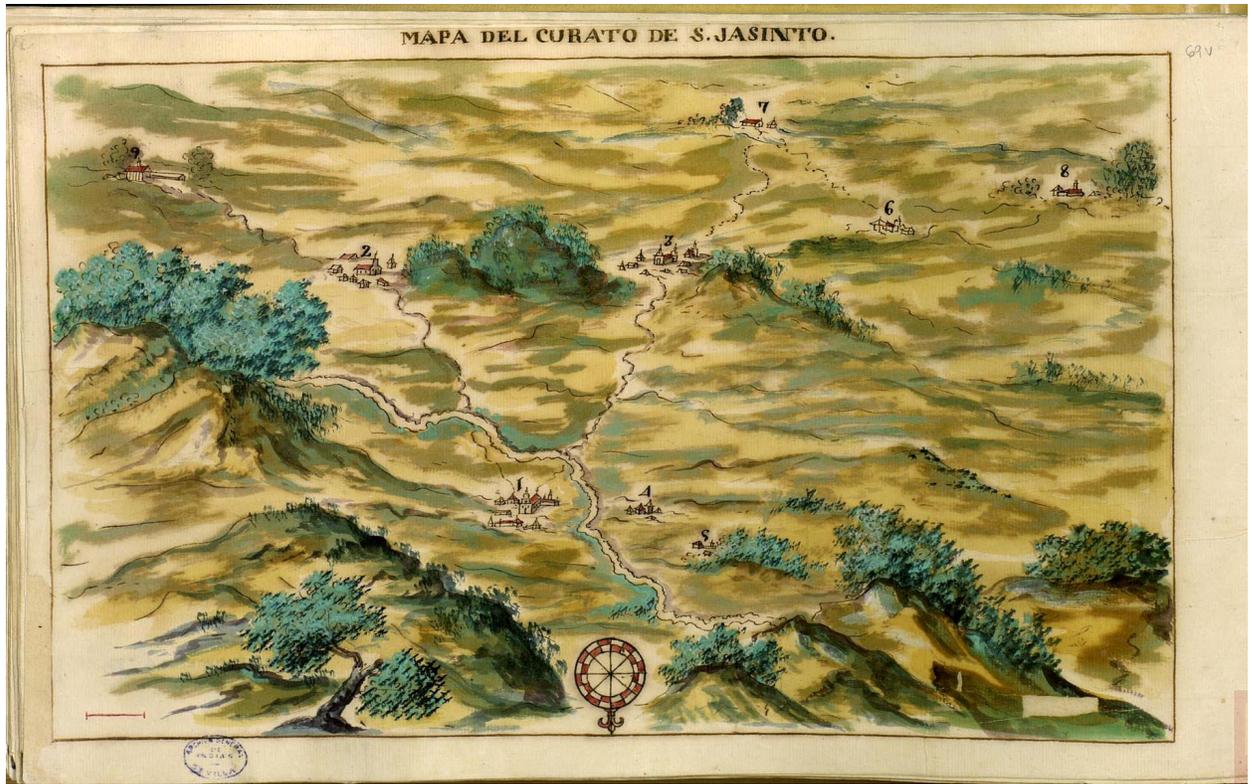
Map 11. Curato de Ateos



Map 12. Curato de Mejicanos



Map 13. Curato de San Salvador



Map 14. Curato de San Jacinto



Map 15. Curato de Texaguangos



Map 16. Curato de Olocuilta



Map 17. Curato de Mazahuat



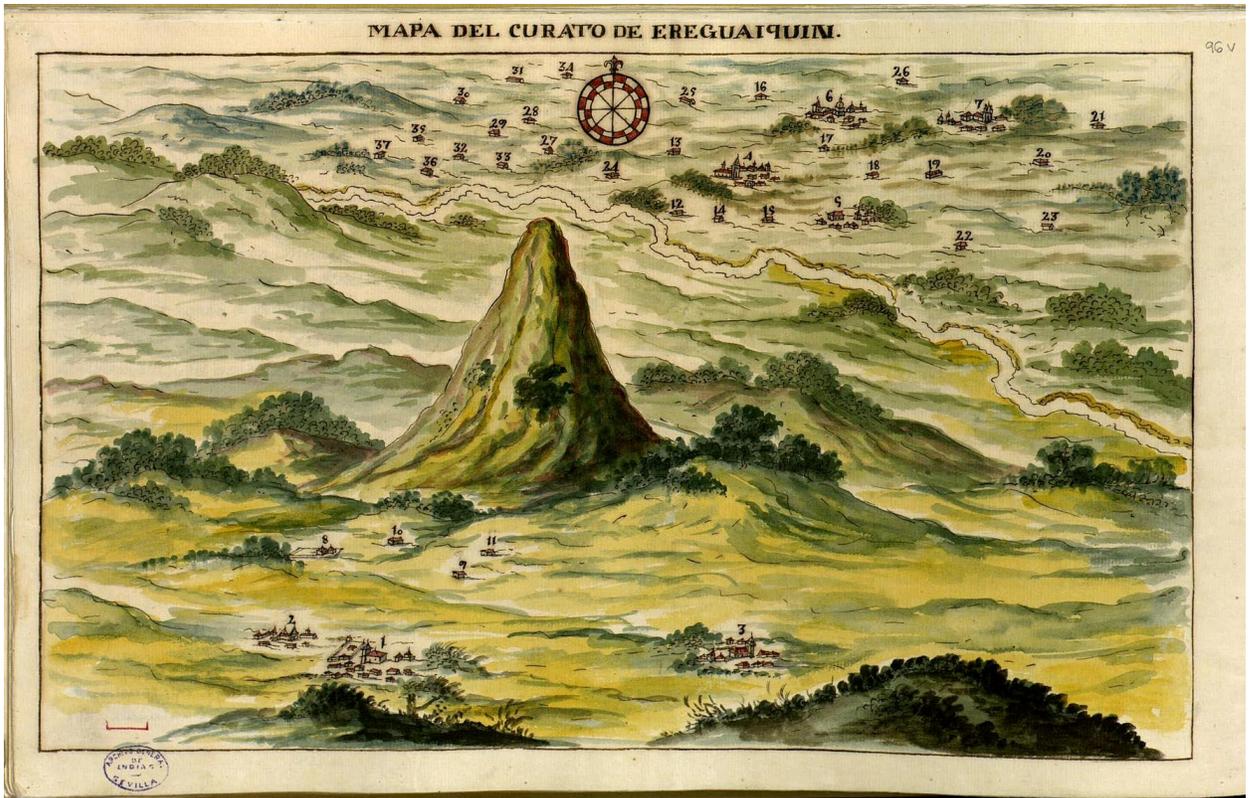
Map 18. Curato de Nonualco



Map 19. Curato de Zacatecoluca



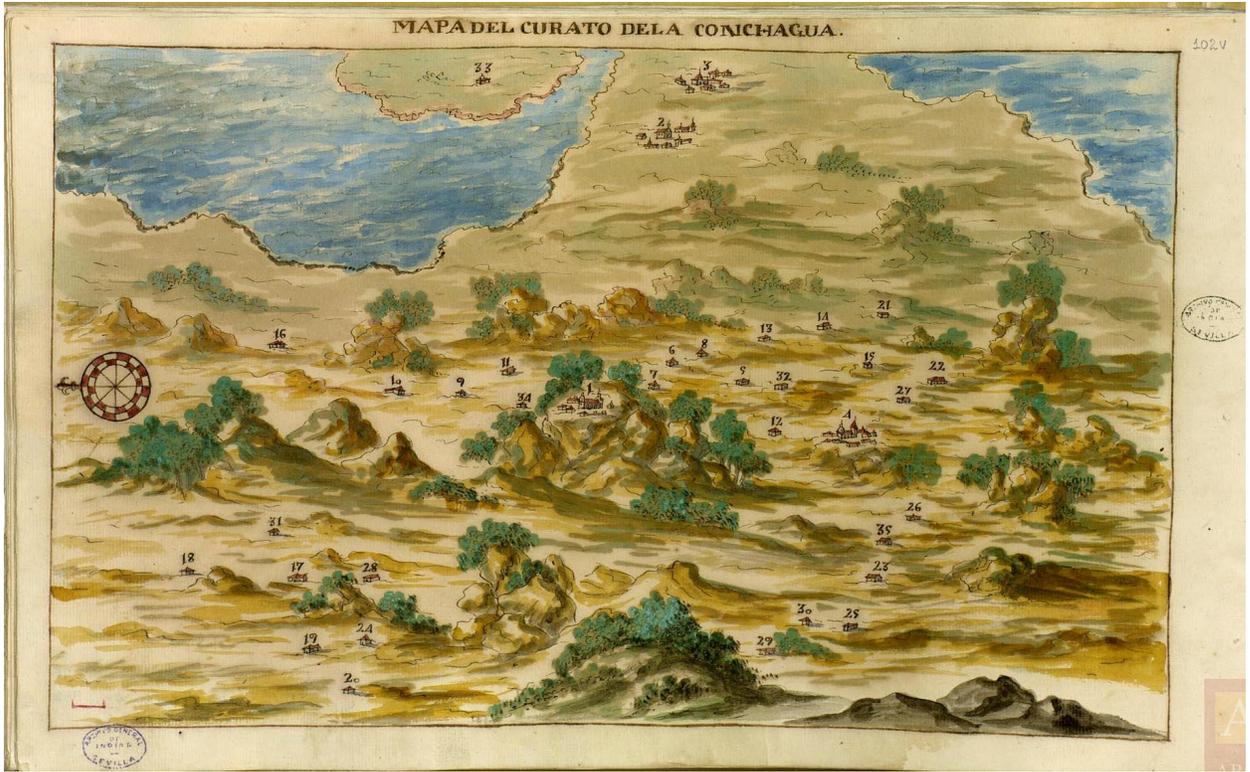
Map 20. Curato de Usulután



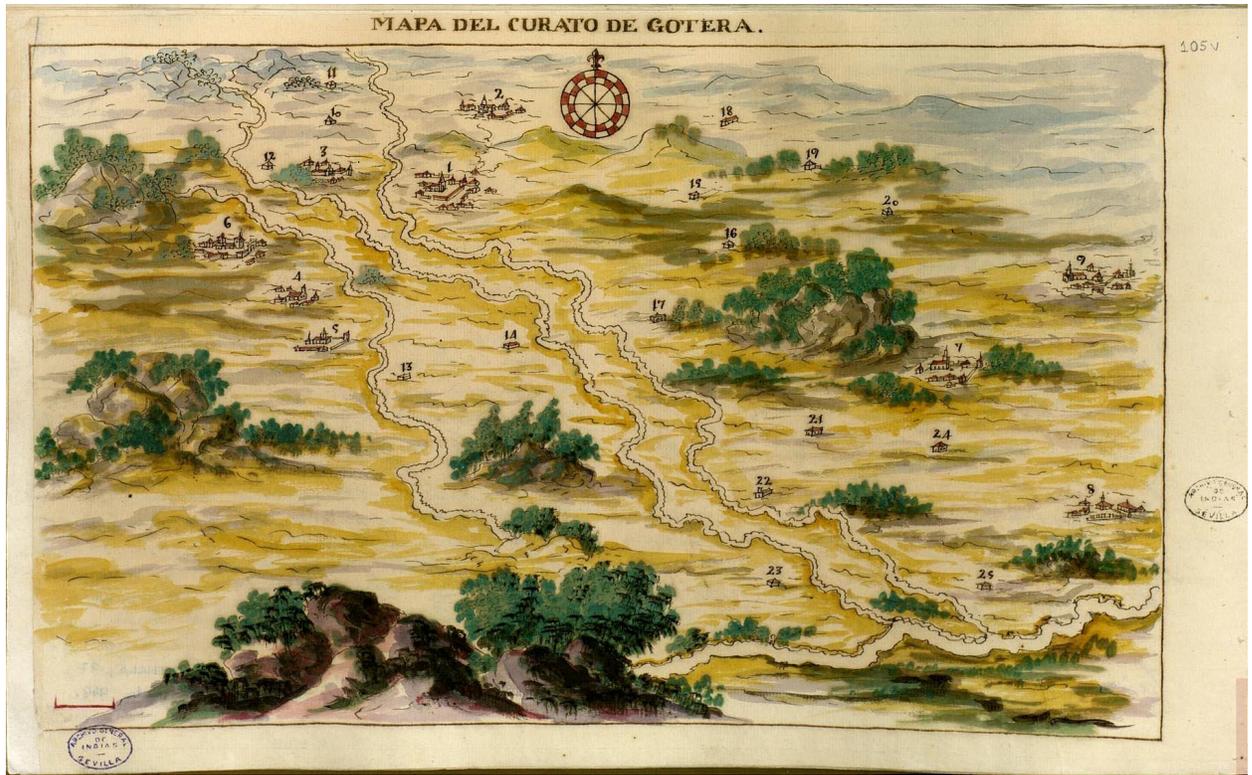
Map 21. Curato de Ereguaiguín



Map 22. Curato de San Miguel



Map 23. Curato de Conchagua



Map 24. Curato de San Francisco Gotera



Map 25. Curato de Ozicala



Map 26. Curato de Titiguapa



Map 27. Curato de San Vicente



Map 28. Curato de Cojutepeque



Map 29. Curato de Suchitoto



Map 30. Curato de Chalatenango



Map 31. Curato de Tejutla



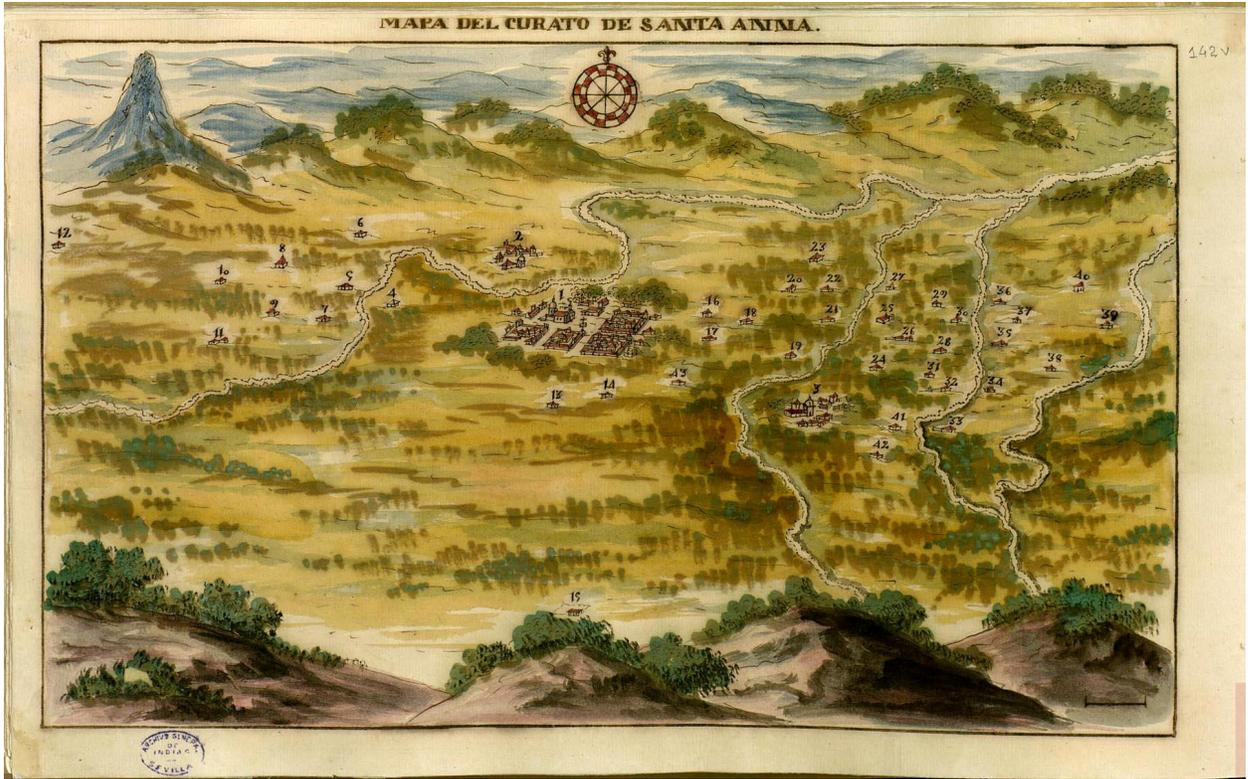
Map 32. Curato de Tonacatepeque



Map 33. Curato de San Juan Opico



Map 34. Curato de Texistepeque



Map 35. Curato de Santa Ana



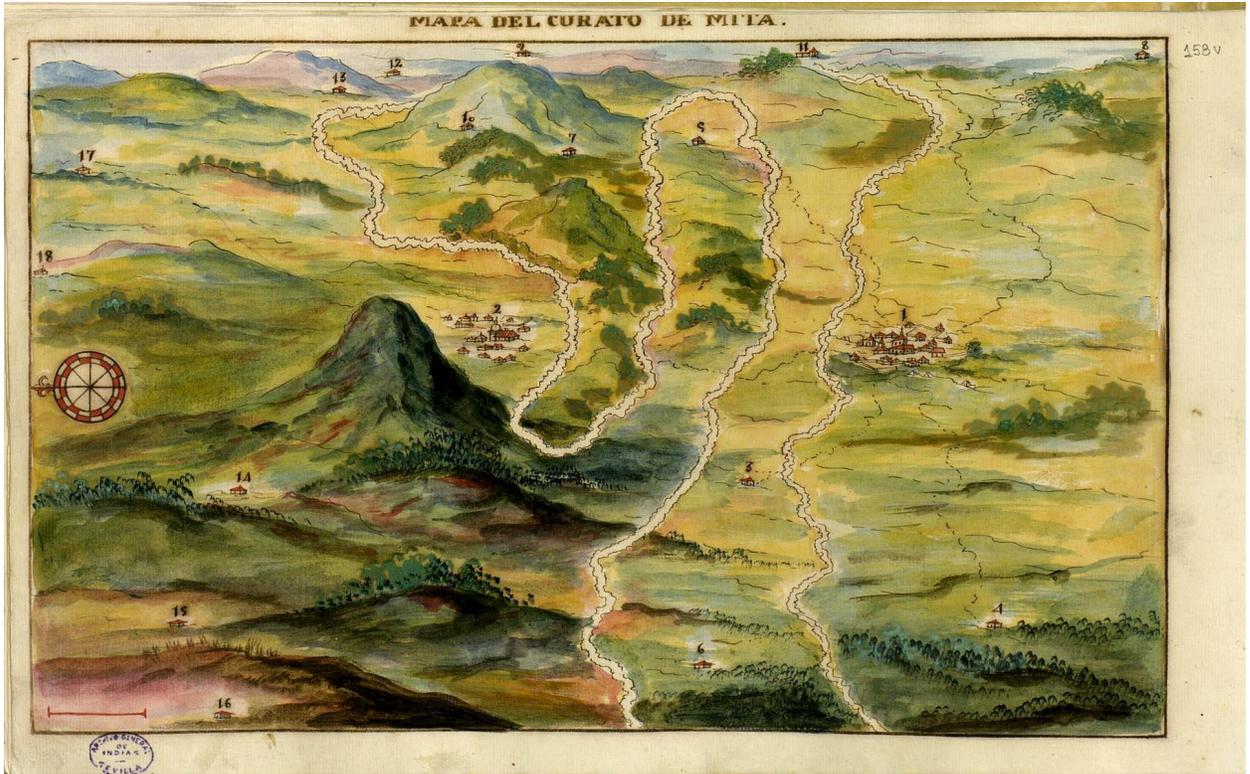
Map 36. Curato de Chalchuapa



Map 37. Curato de Jutiapa



Map 38. Curato de Jilotepeque



Map 39. Curato de Mita



Map 40. Curato de Metapán

APPENDIX B. Maps corresponding to present-day southern Guatemala in the *Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala, 1767-1771*.

All maps from:

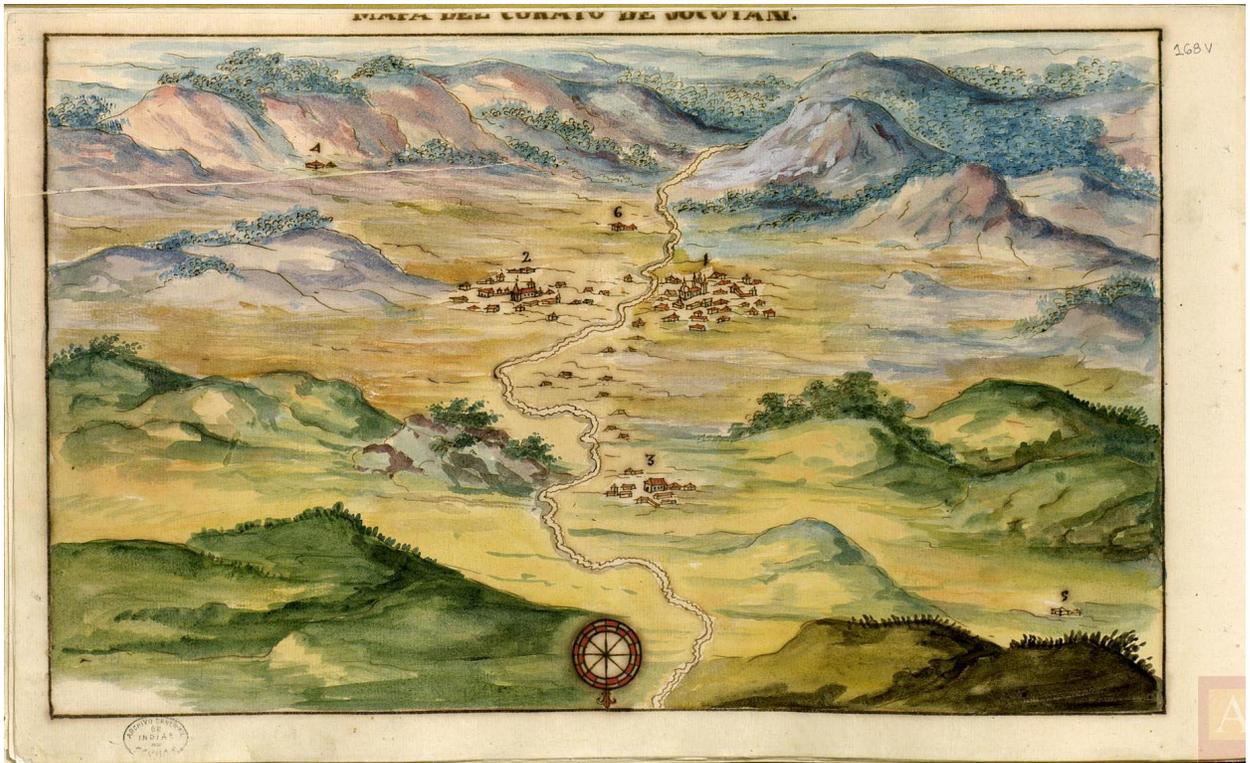
Source: Carta de Pedro Cortés y Larraz, arzobispo de la diócesis de Guatemala a S.M., ES.41091.AGI/26//GUATEMALA,948,N.3. Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.



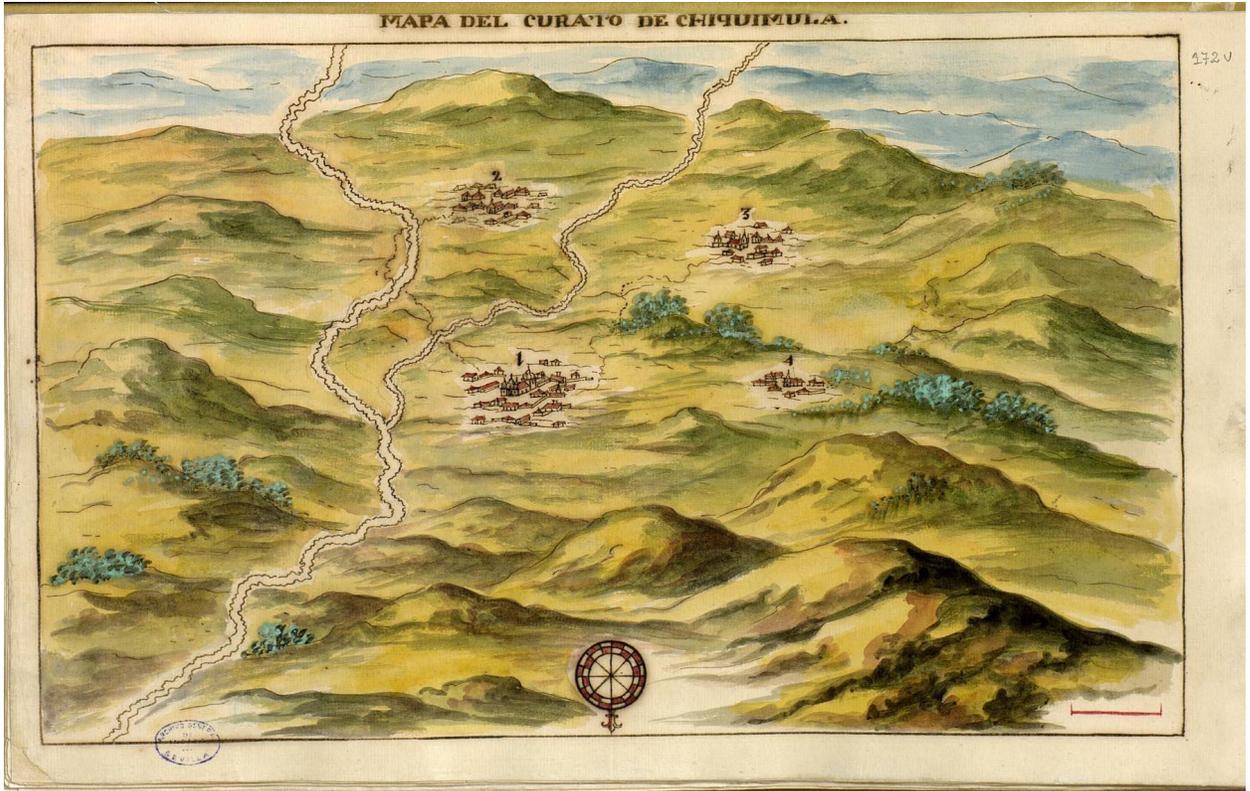
Map 41. Curato de Quezaltepeque



Detail of Basilica del Señor de Esquipulas (Cristo Negro de Esquipulas), Guatemala



Map 42. Curato de Jocotan



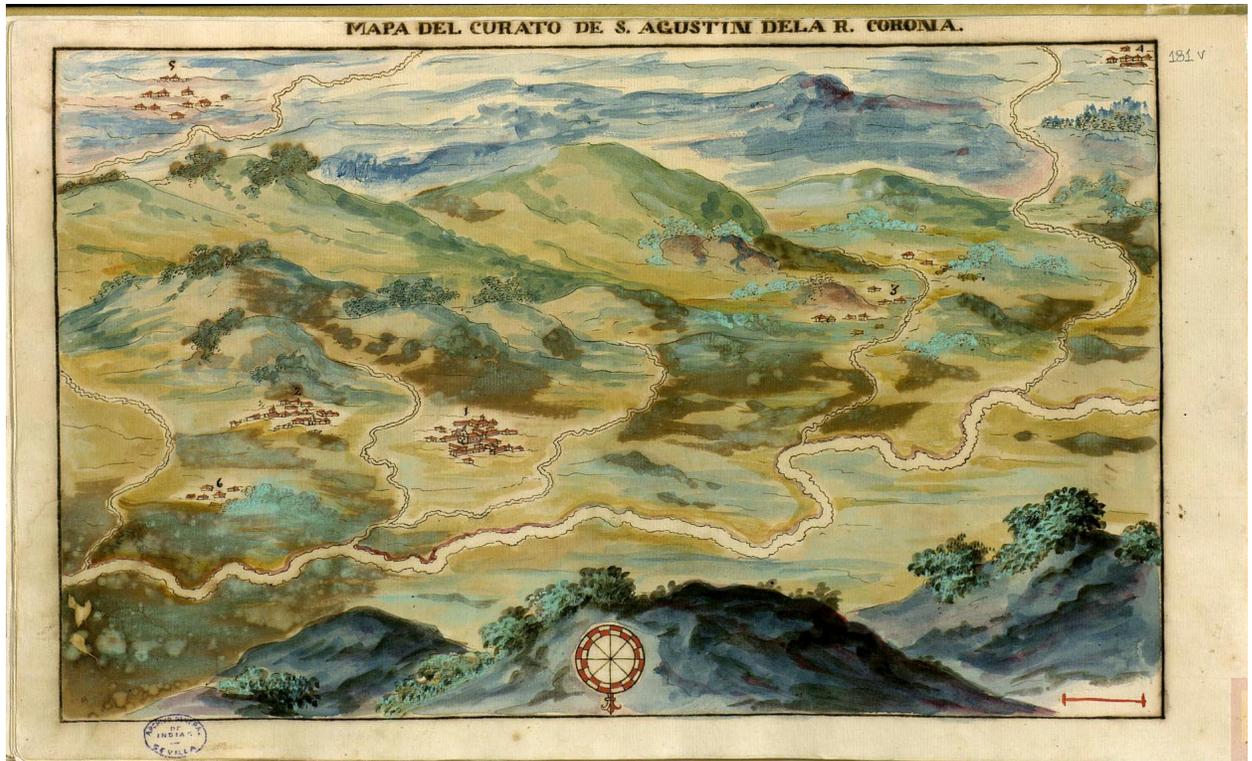
Map 43. Curato de Chiquimula



Map 44. Curato de Zacapa



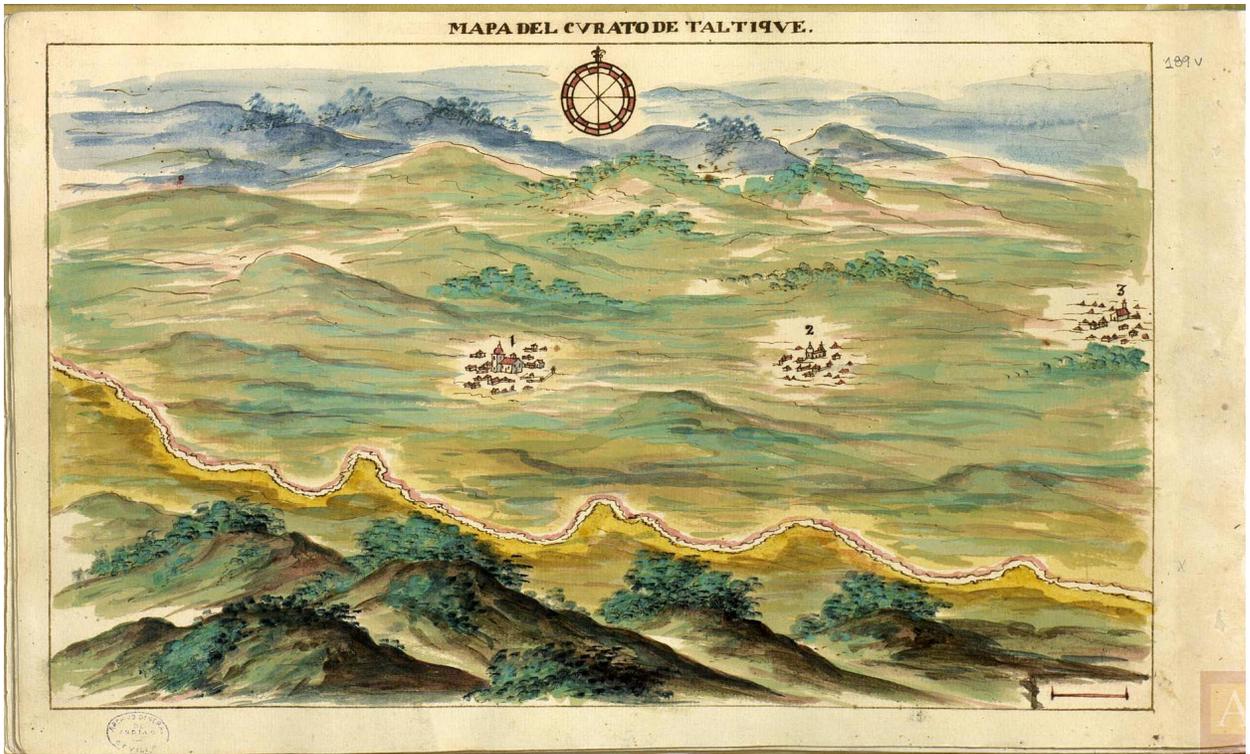
Map 45. Curato de Acasaguastlan



Map 46. Curato de San Agustín de la Reina Corona



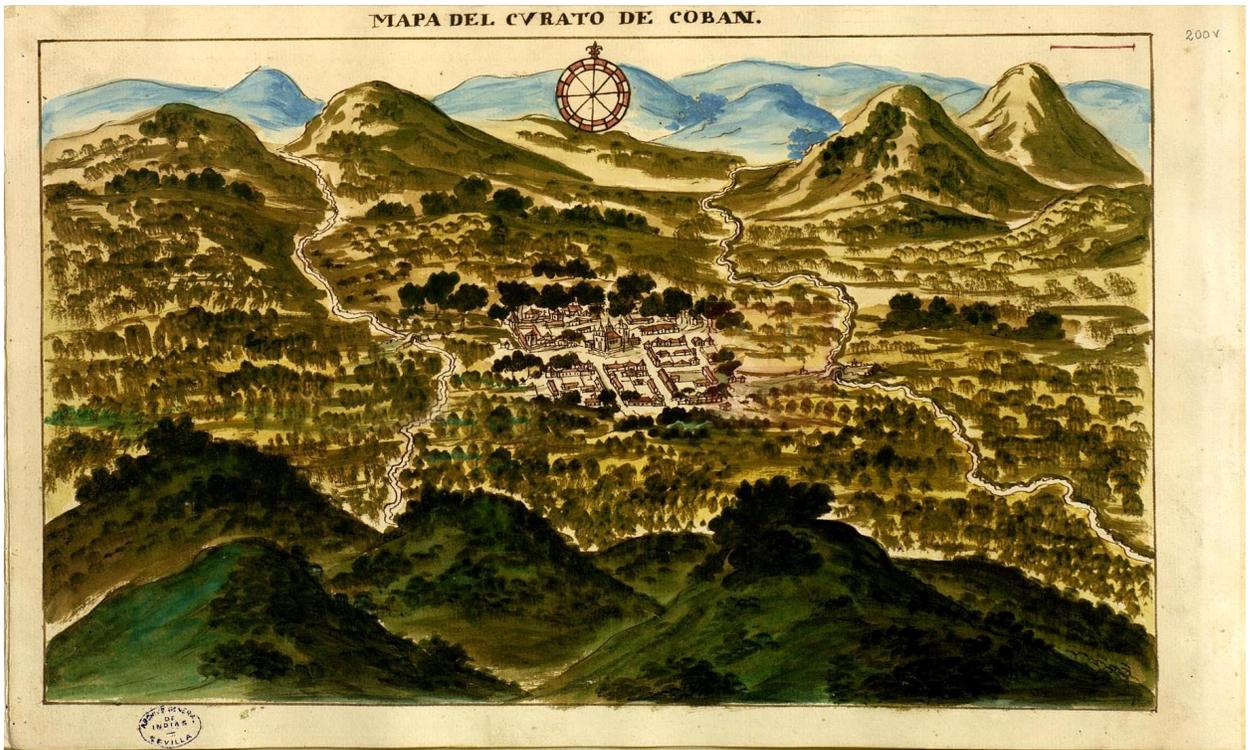
Map 47. Curato de Zalama



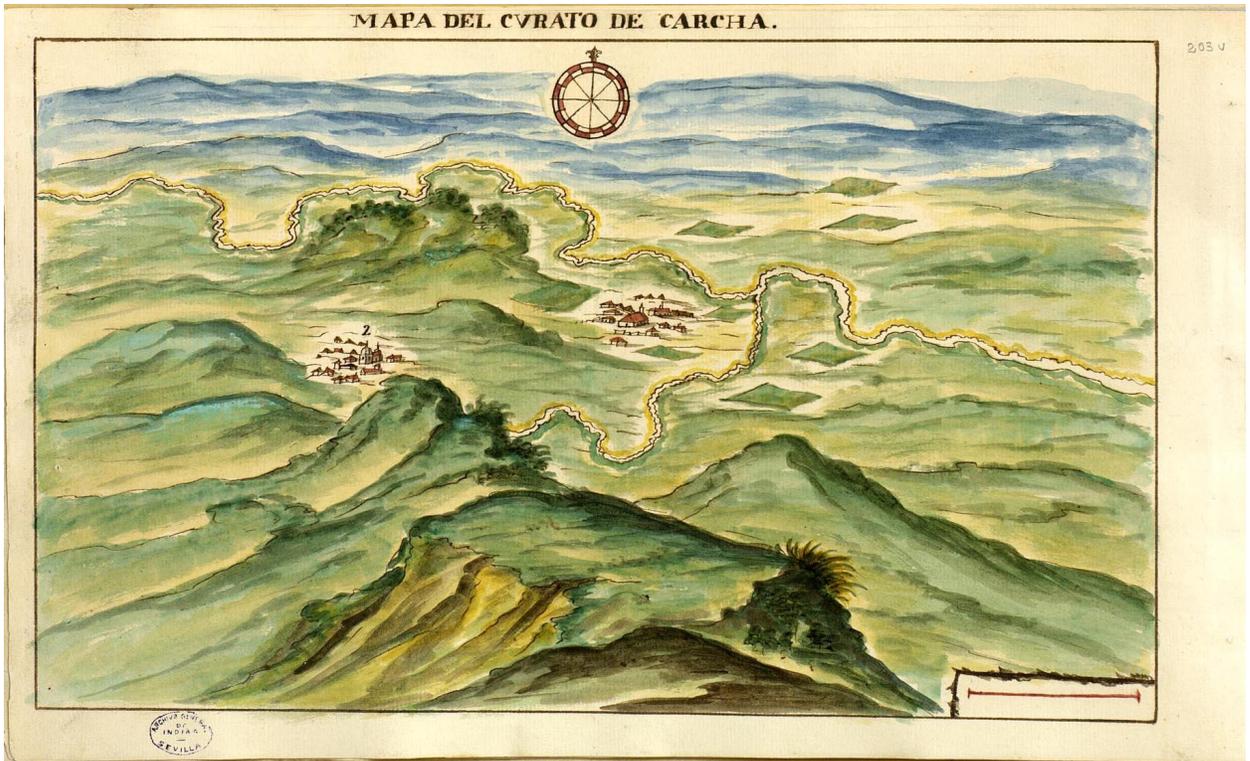
Map 48. Curato de Taltique



Map 49. Curato de San Cristóbal



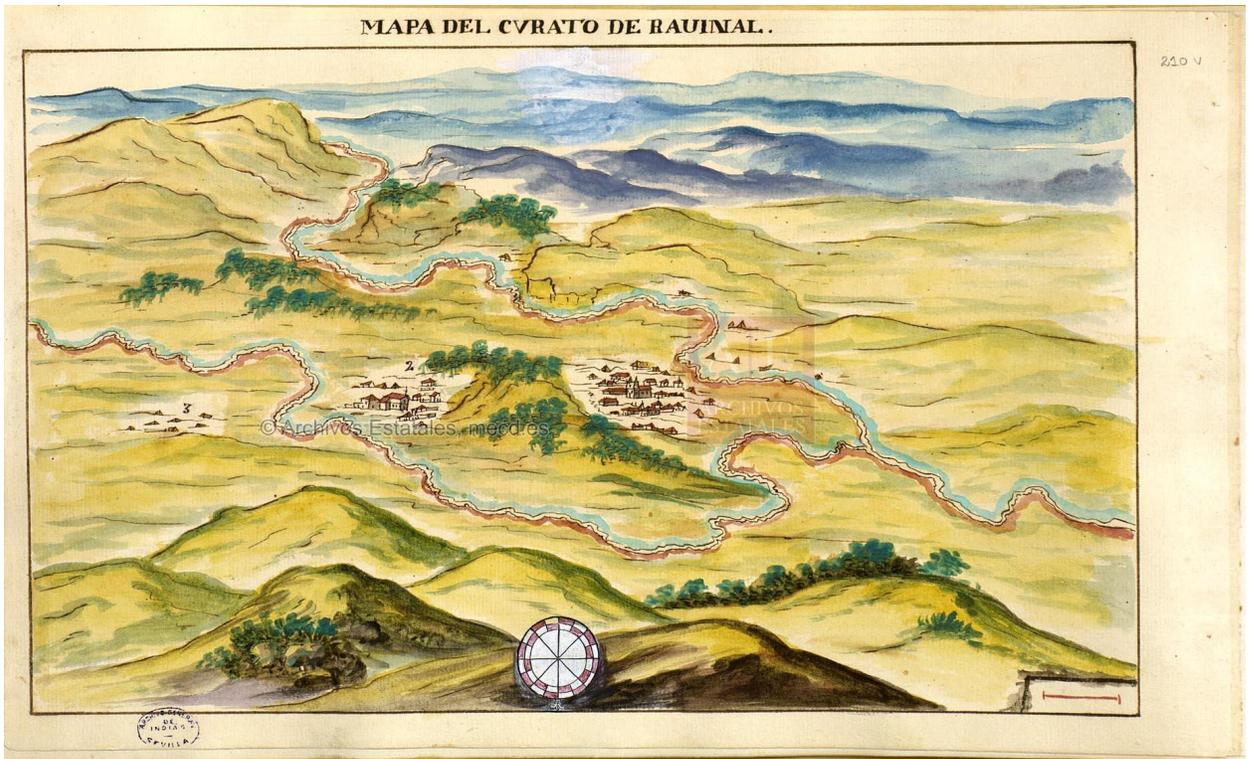
Map 50. Curato de Cobán



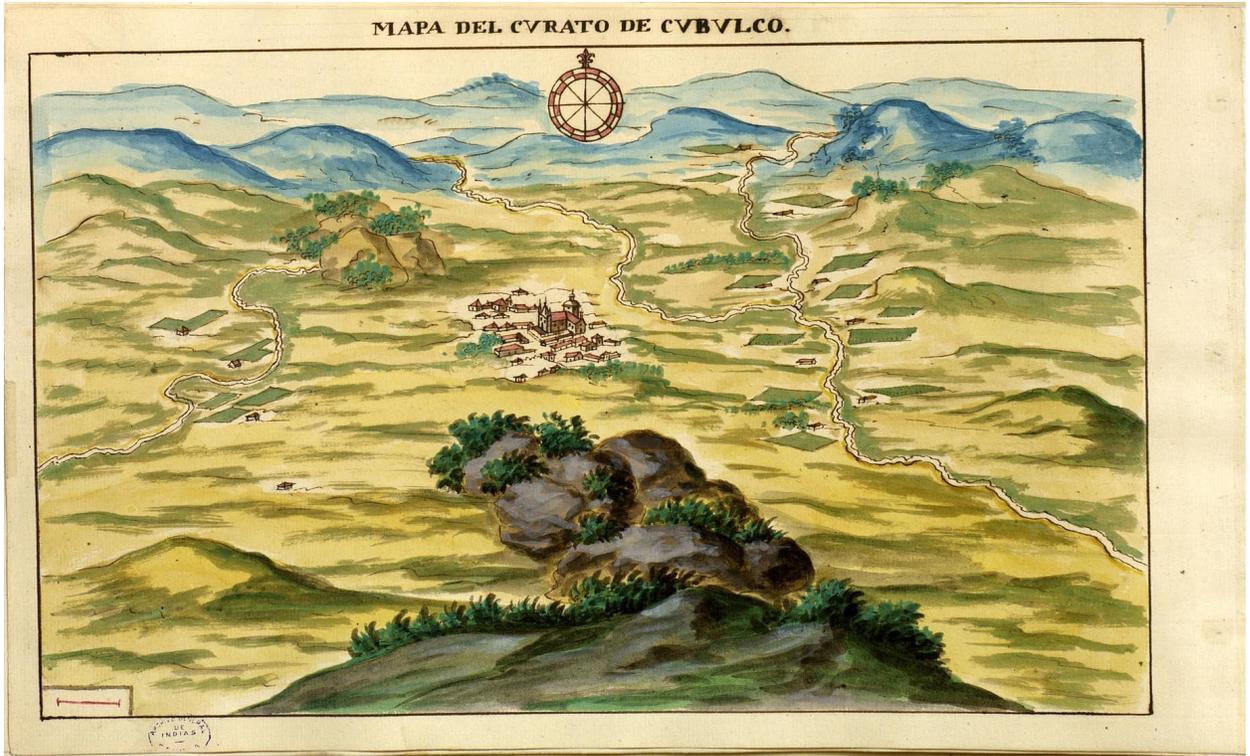
Map 51. Curato de Carcha



Map. 52 Curato de Cahon



Map 53. Curato de Rauinal



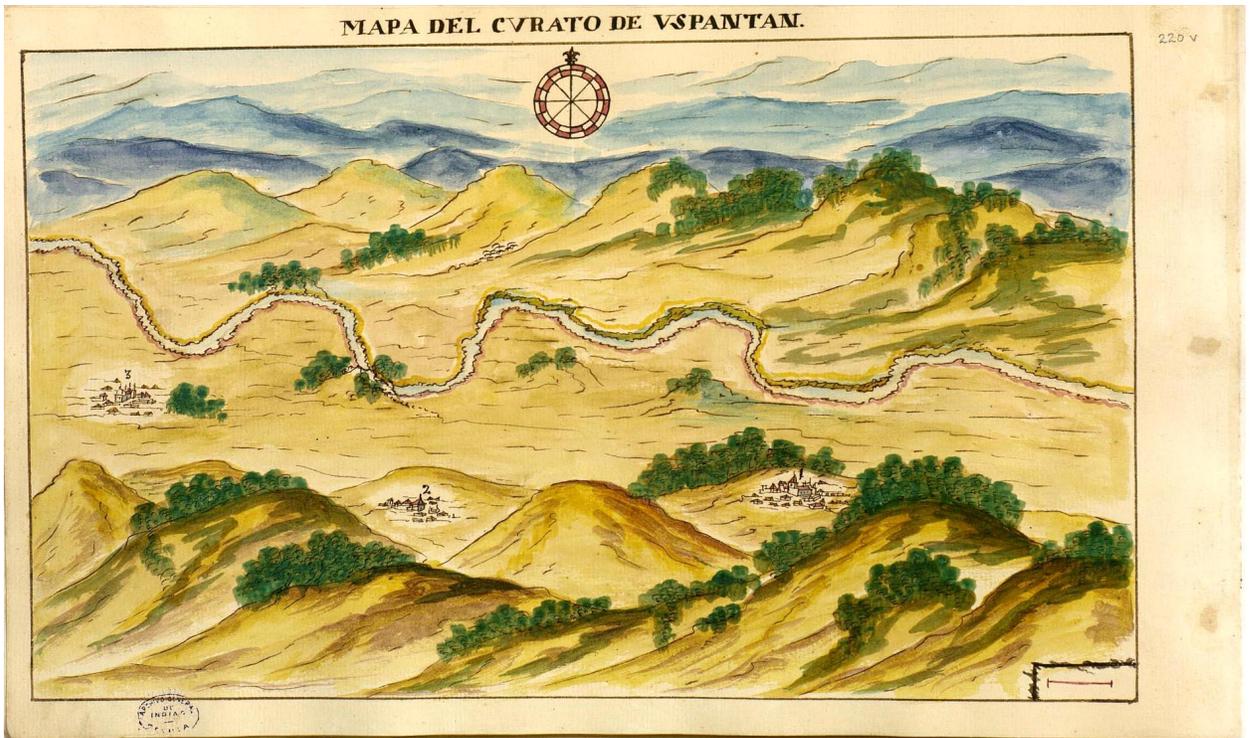
Map 54. Curato de Cubulco



Map 55. Curato del Chol



Map 56. Curato de Salcabaha



Map 57. Curato de Uspantan



Map 58. Curato de Neuah



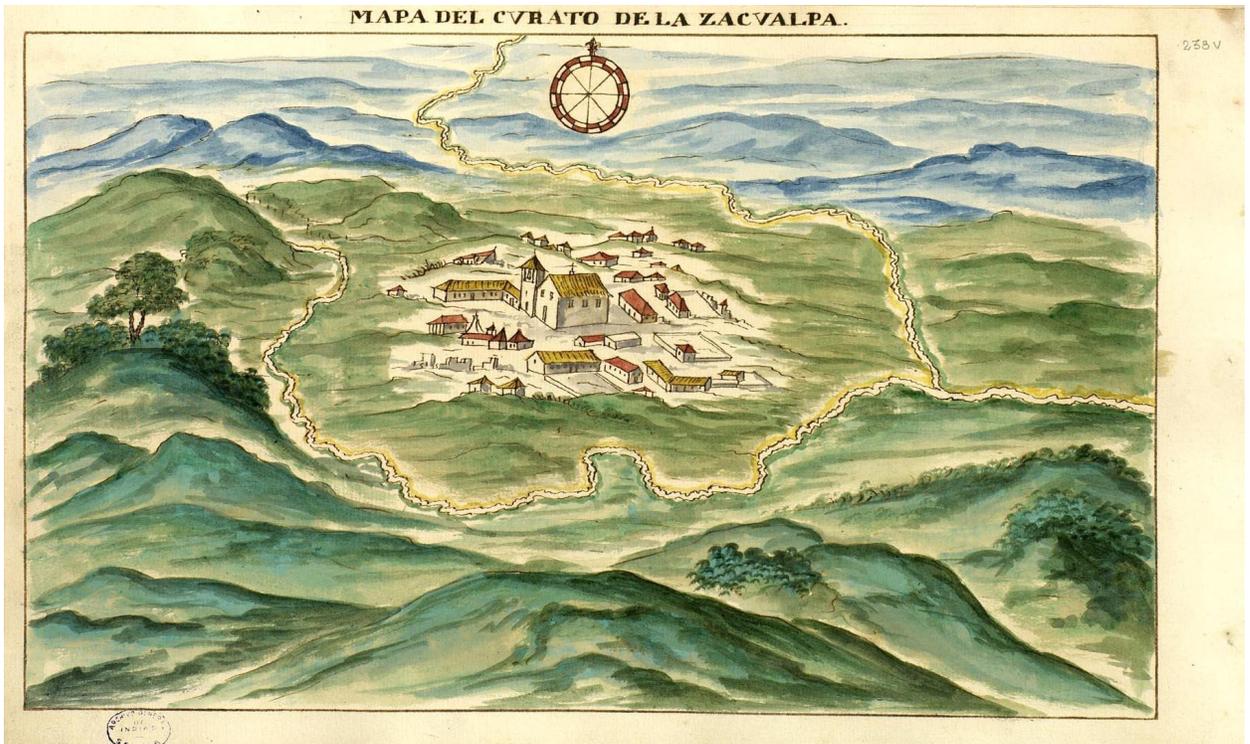
Map 59. Curato de Jocopilas



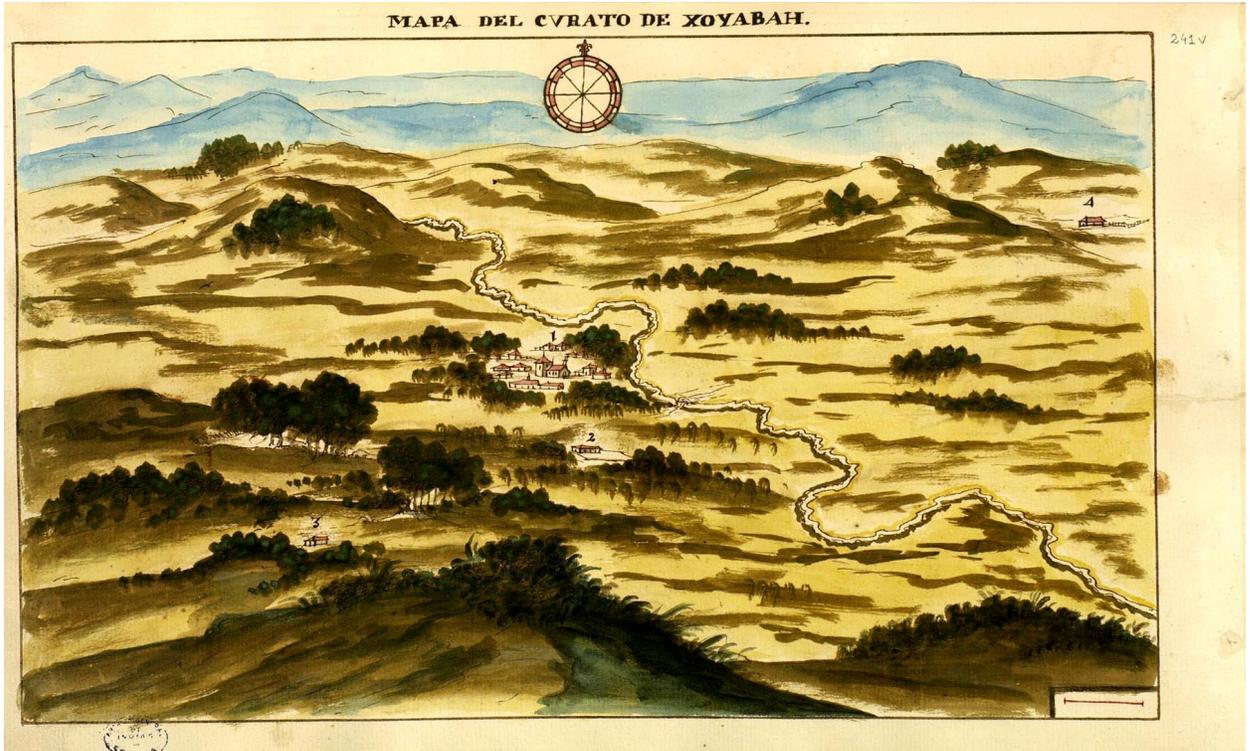
Map 60. Curato de Quiché



Map 61. Curato de Chichicastenango



Map 62. Curato de Zacualpa



Map 63. Curato de Xoyabah



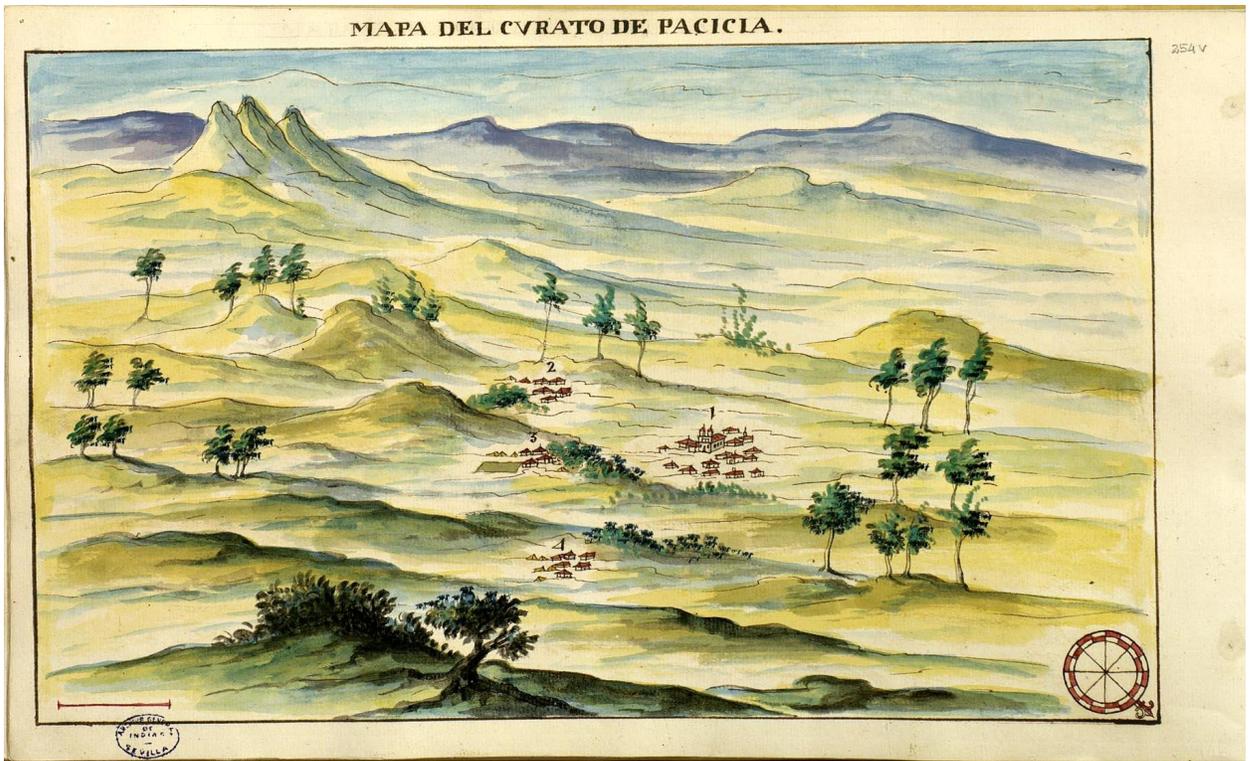
Map 64. Curato de Xilotepeque



Map 65. Curato de Zumpango



Map 66. Curato de San Pedro Zacatepequez



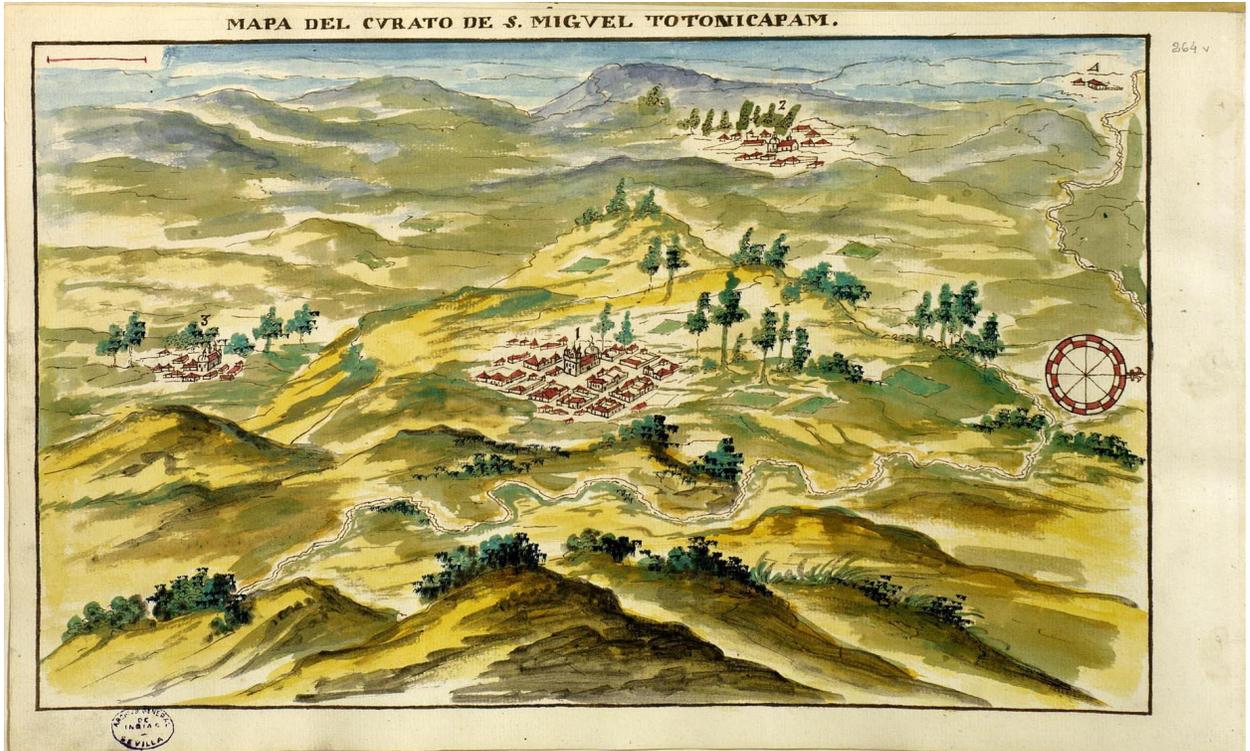
Map 67. Curato de Pacicla



Map 68. Curato de Comalapan



Map 69. Curato de Patzum



Map 70. Curato de San Miguel Totonicapan



Map 71. Curato de San Cristóbal Totonicapan



Map 72. Curato de Momostenango



Map 73. Curato de Malacatan



Map 74. Curato de Huehuetenango



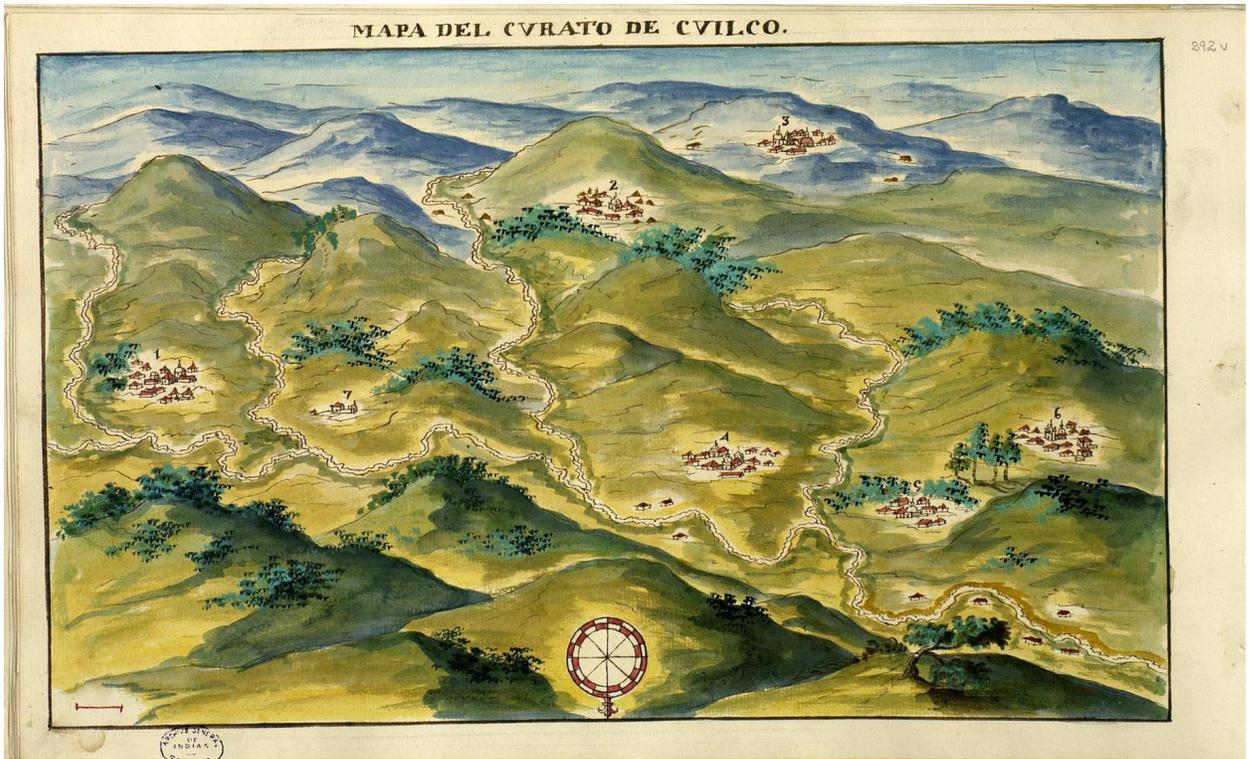
Map 75. Curato de Zoloma



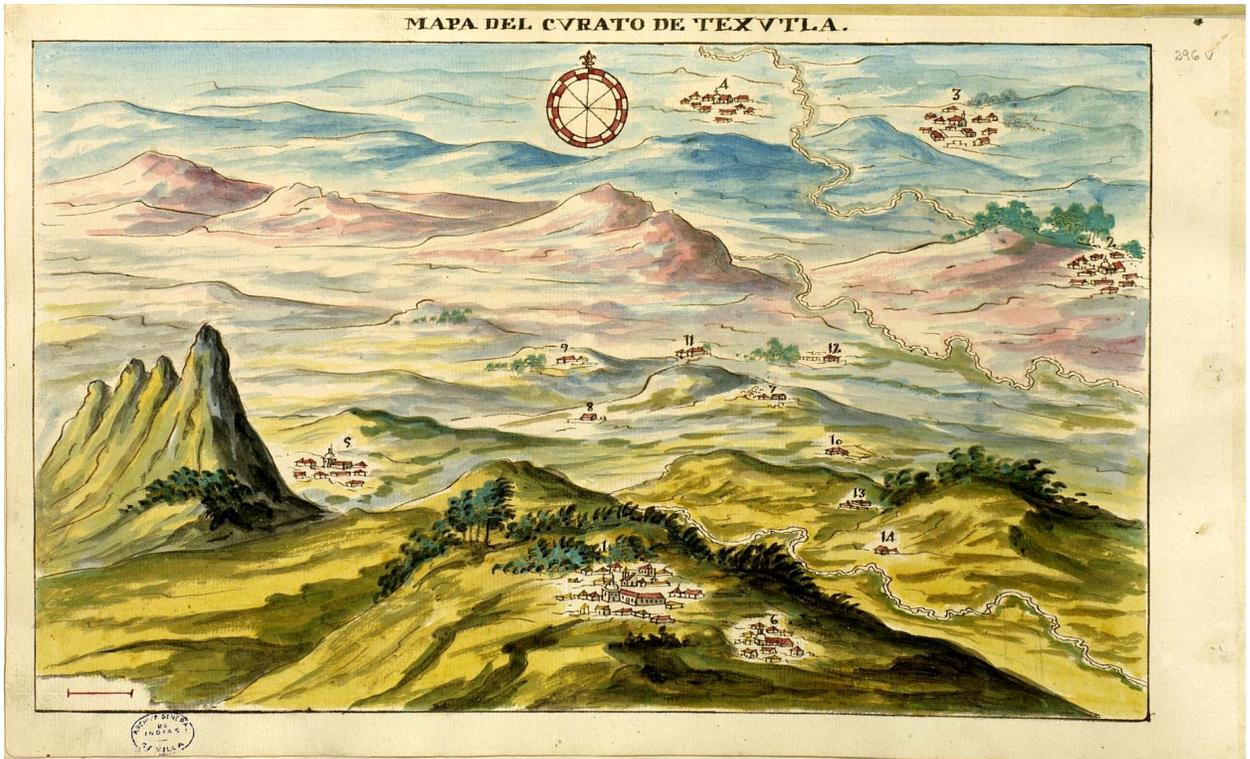
Map 76. Curato de Jacaltenango



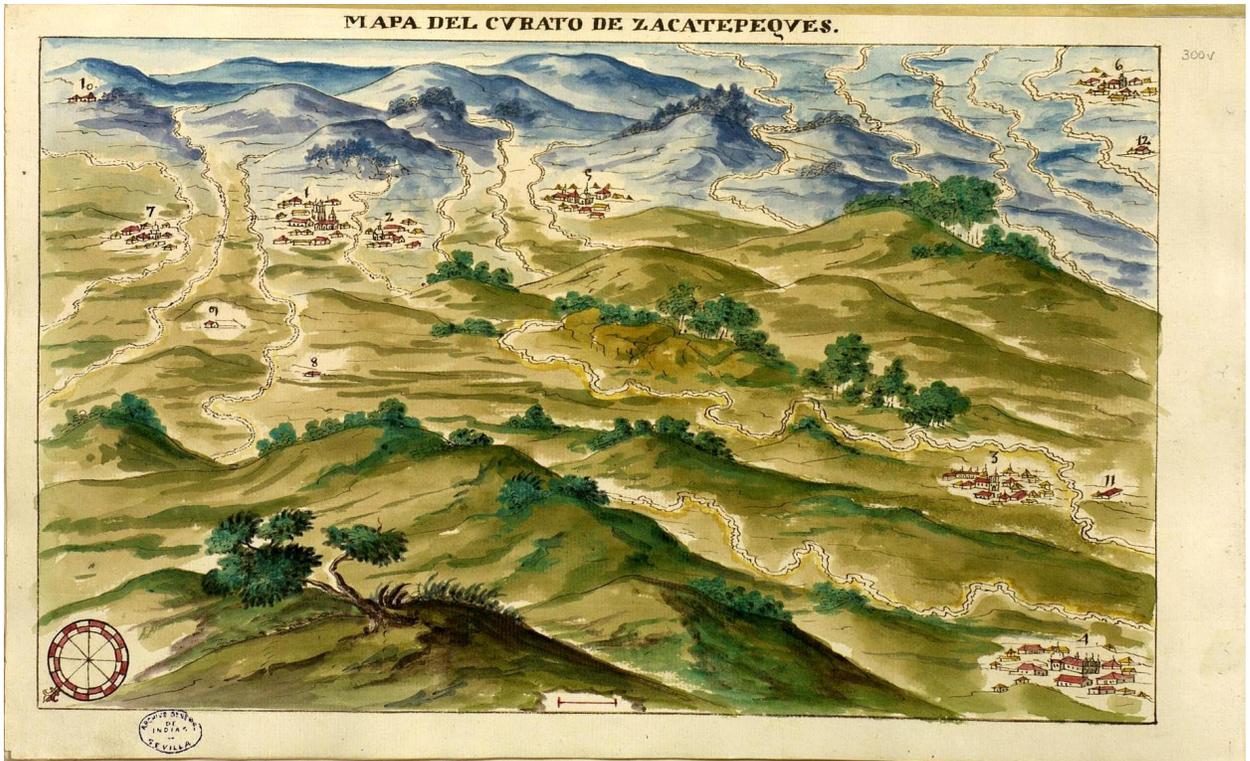
Map 77. Curato de Chiantla



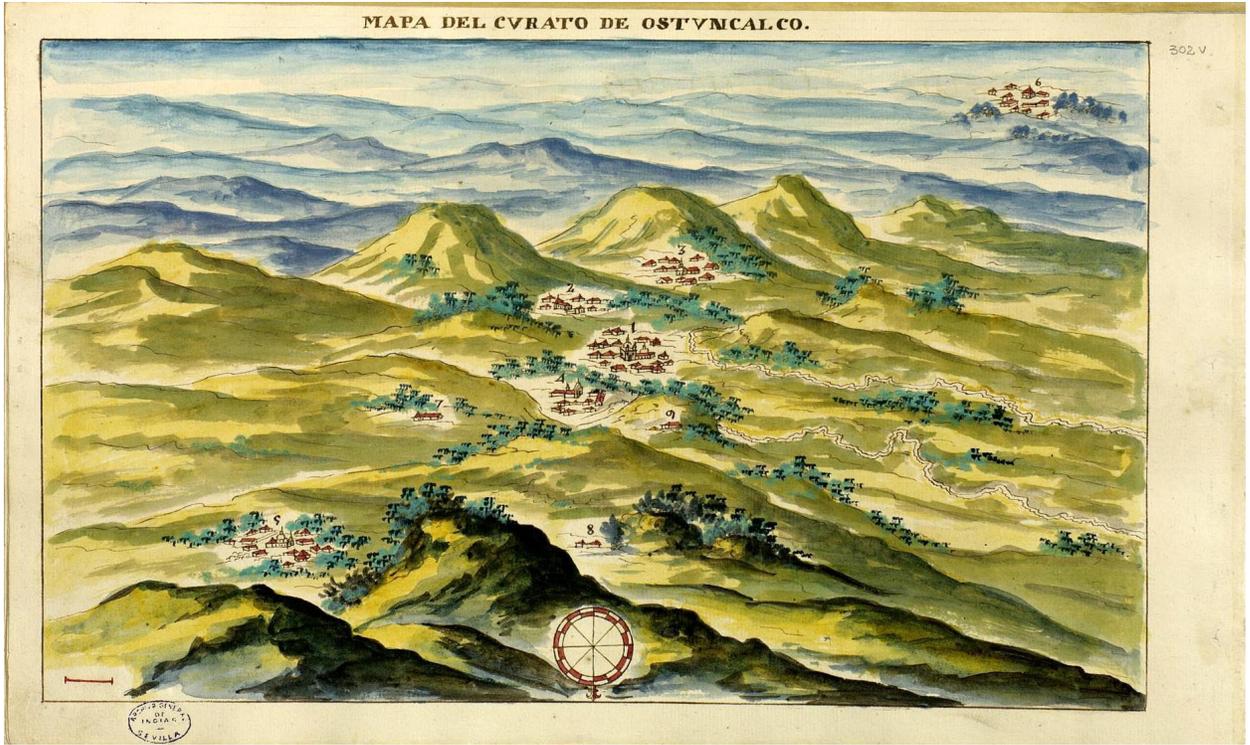
Map 78. Curato de Culico



Map 79. Curato de Tejutla



Map 80. Curato de Zacatepeques



Map 81. Curato de Ostuncalco



Map 82. Curato de Quezaltenango



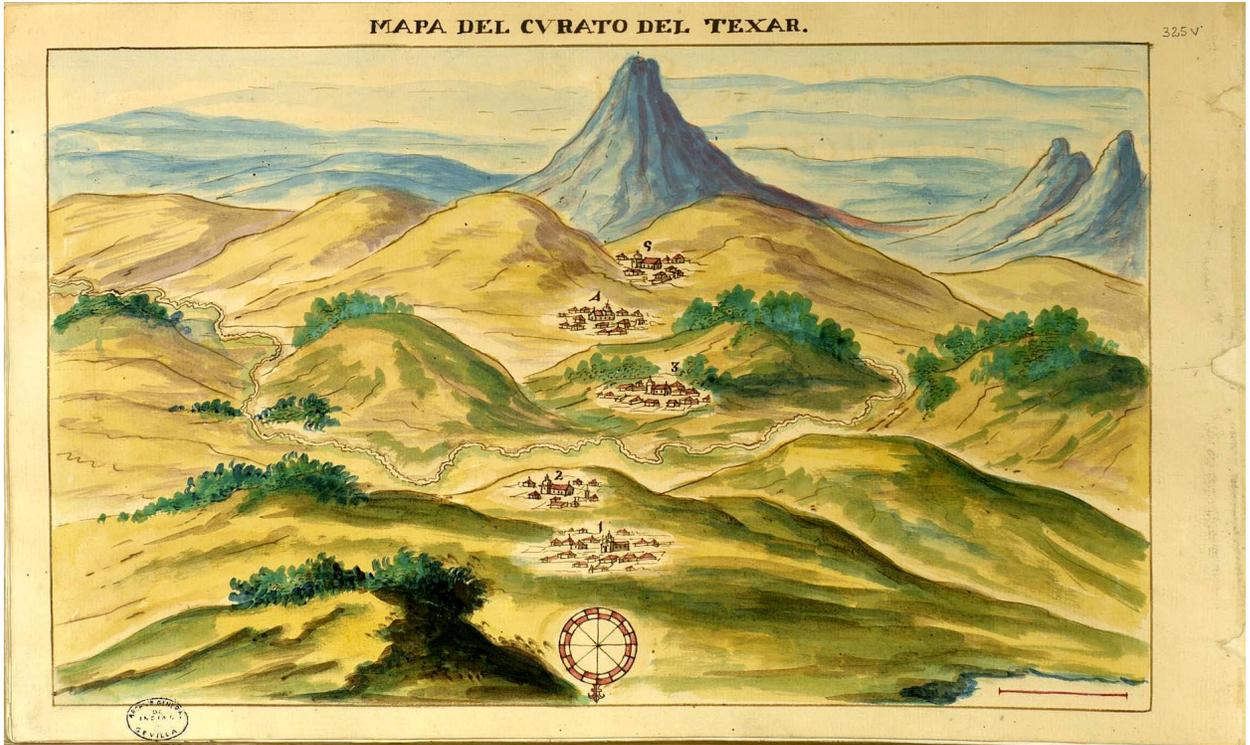
Map 83. Mapa de los curatos de San Pedro, Sololá, Panajachel, Atitlán



Map 84. Curato de Tepanguathemala



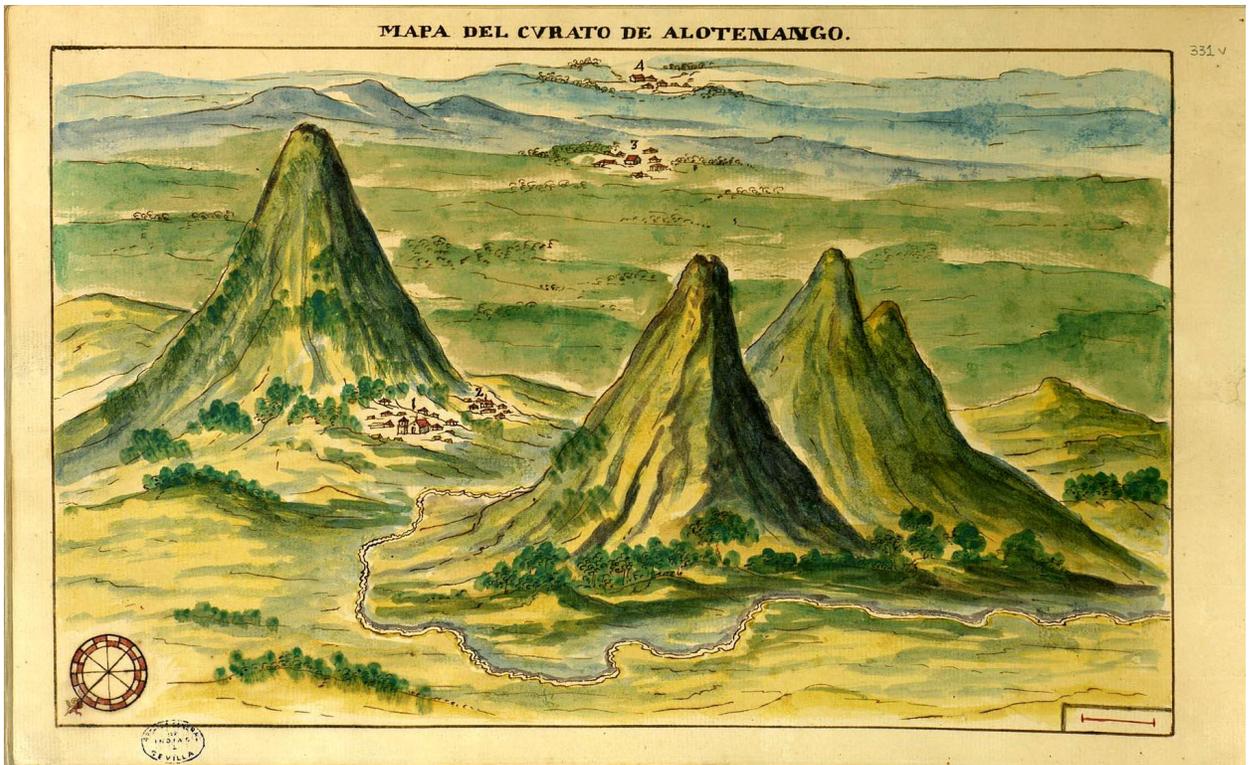
Map 85. Curato de Chimaltenango



Map 86. Curato de Texar



Map 87. Curato de Yzapan



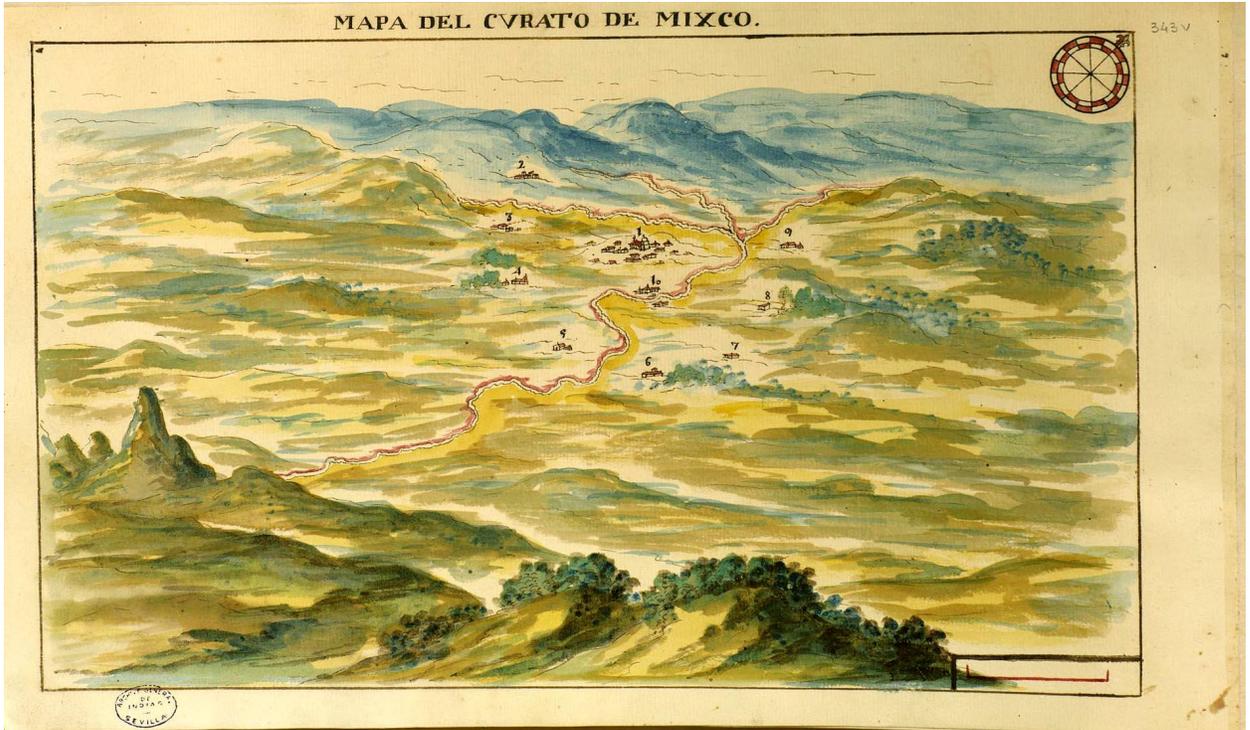
Map 88. Curato de Alotenango



Map 89. Curato de Santiago Zacatepeques



Map 90. Curato de San Juan Zacatepeques



Map 91. Curato de Mixco



Map 92. Curato de la Hermita



Map 93. Curato de Amatitan



Map 94. Curato de Xinacantan



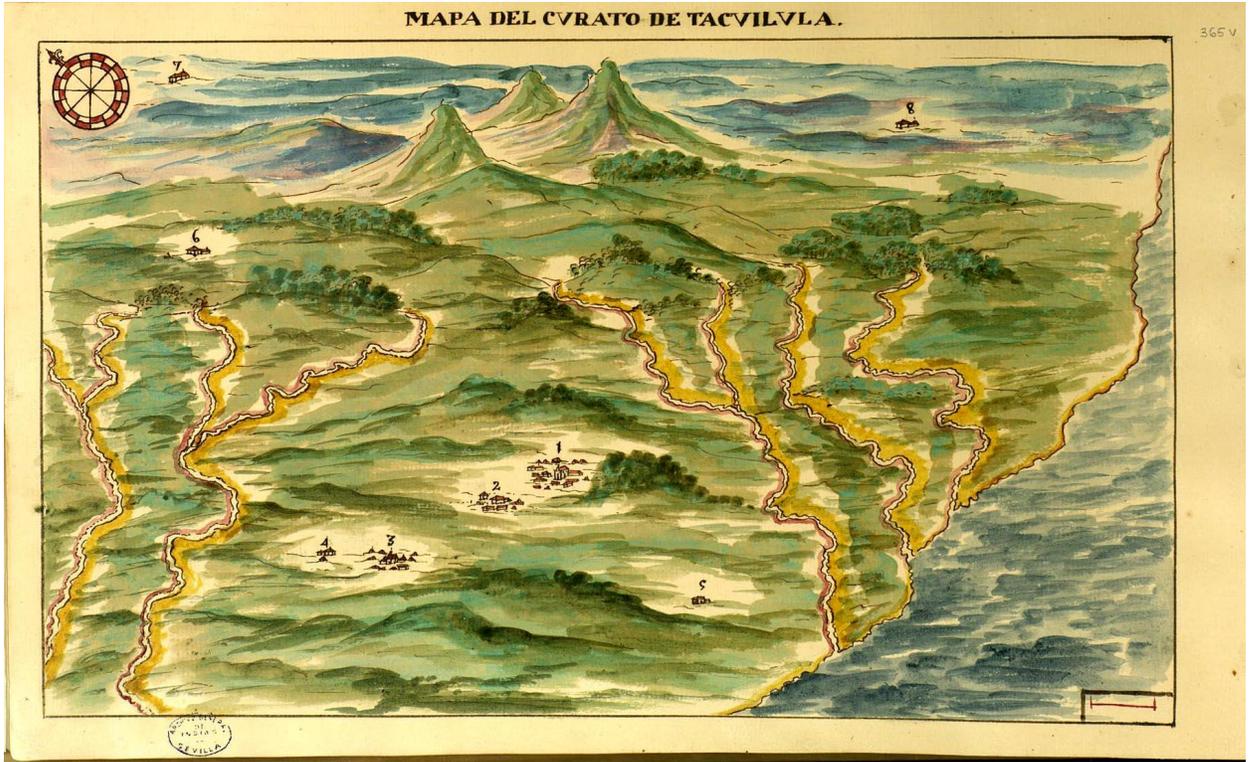
Map 95. Curato de Chiquimulilla



Map 96. Curato de Guazacapan



Map 97. Curato de Taxisco



Map 98. Curato de Tacuilula



Map 99. Curato de Guanagazapan



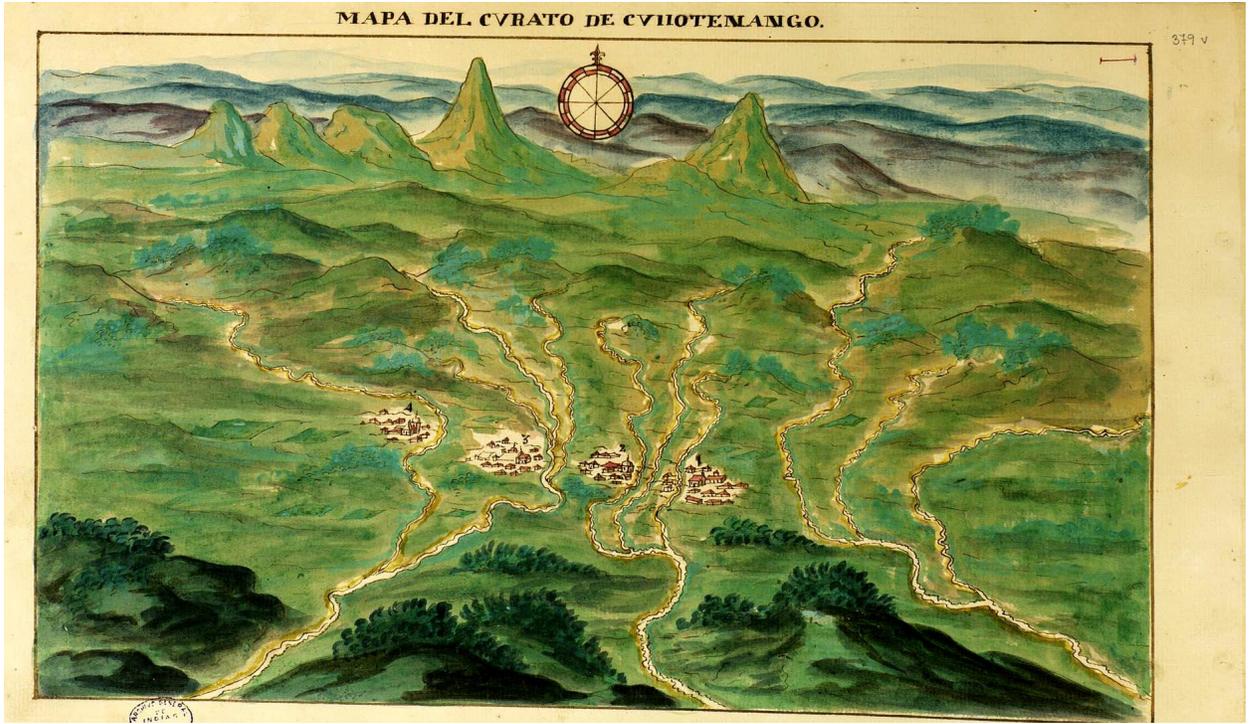
Map 100. Curato de Escuinta



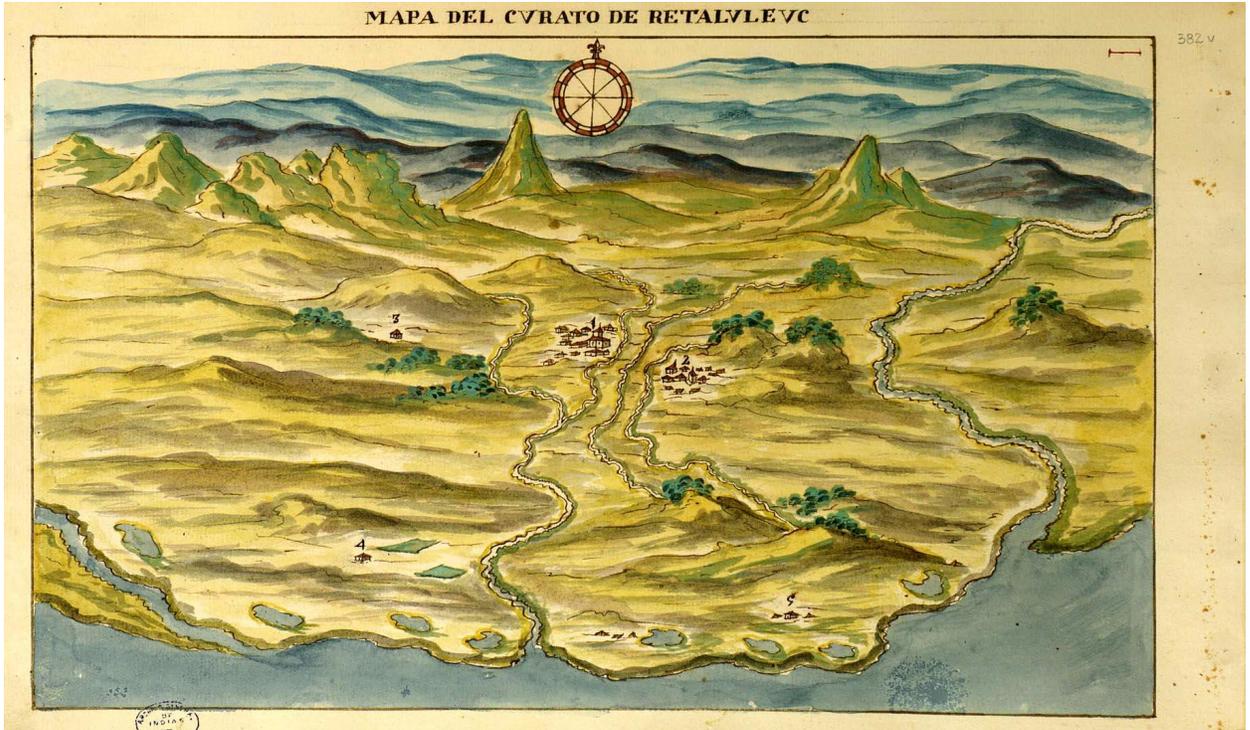
Map 101. Curato de Garcia



Map 102. Curato de Mazatenango



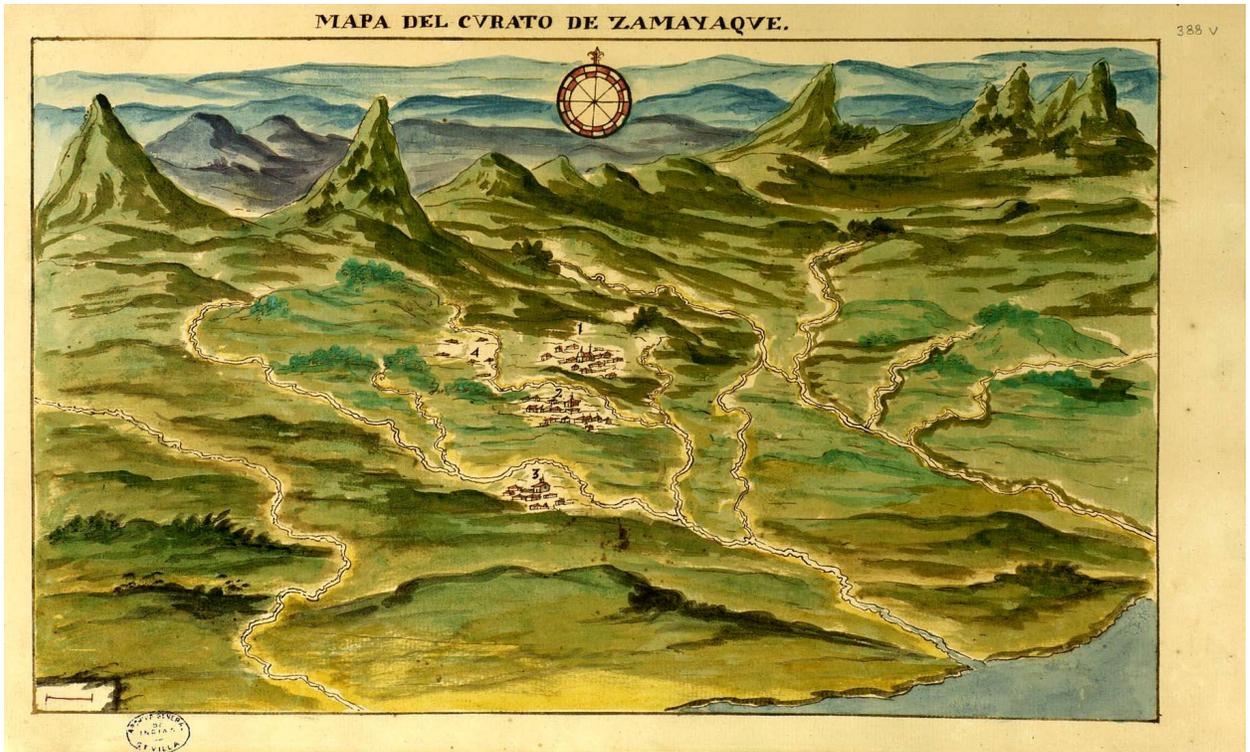
Map 103. Curato de Cuilotenango



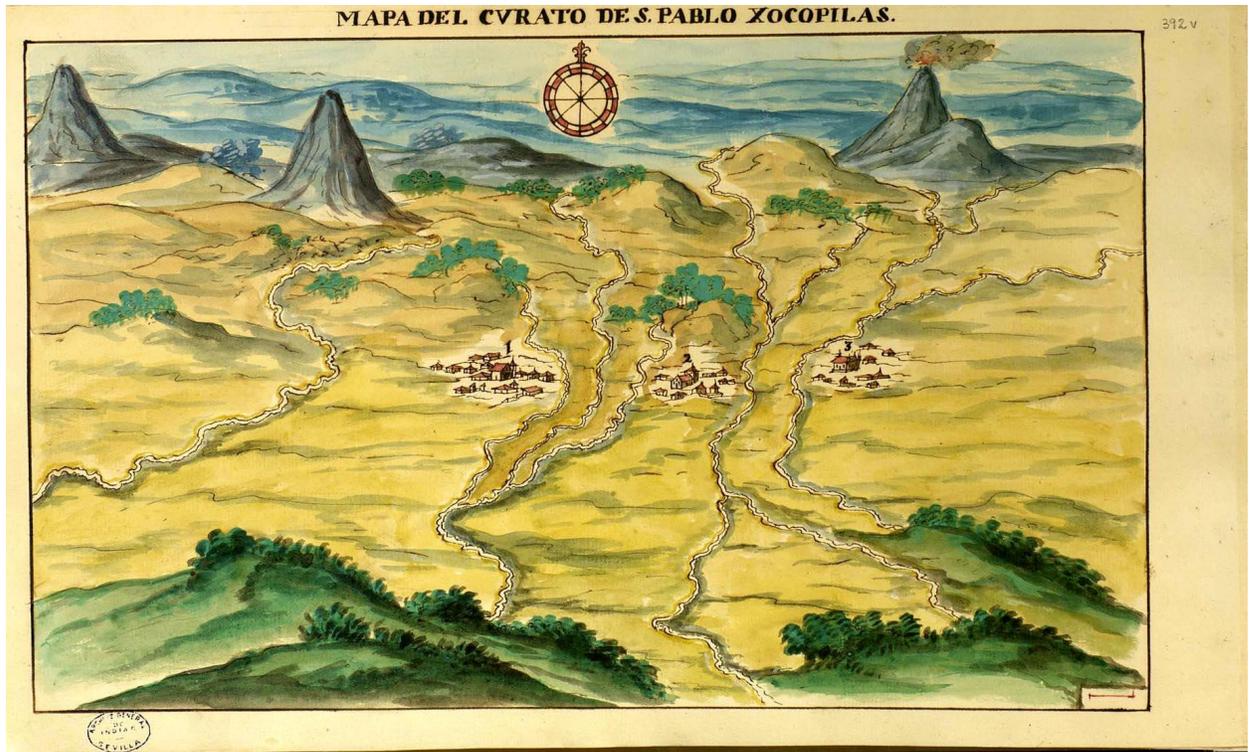
Map 104. Curato de Retaluleuc



Map 105. Curato de Zapotitan



Map 106. Curato de Zamayaque



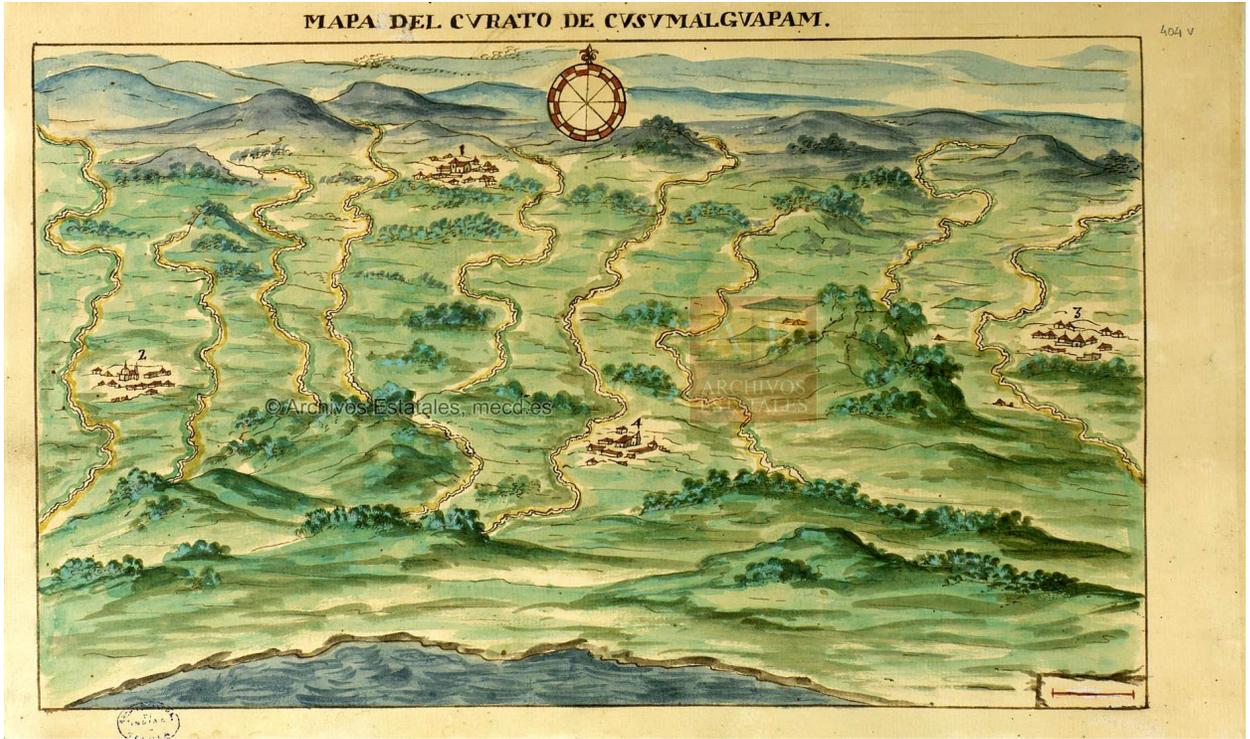
Map 107 Curato de San Pablo Xocopilas



Map 109. Curato de Atitlán



Map 110. Curato del Paulu



Map 111. Curato de Cusmalguapam



Map 112. Curato de Nexapam

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