Naming the Trinity: From Ideologies of Translation to Dialectics of Reception in Colonial Nahua Texts, 1547–1771*

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Introduction

After more than 60 years of well-deserved prominence, Robert Ricard's seductive characterization of Central Mexican evangelization projects as a "spiritual conquest" has gradually given way to a number of detailed ethnohistorical and linguistic studies in which the dialectical nature of evangelization attempts and the considerable variety of missionary results and native responses erode the certitude of such a triumphant metaphor (Aramoni 1992; Aguirre Beltrán 1963; Boone and Mignolo 1994; Burkhart 1989, 1992, 1996; Farriss 1984; Gruzinski 1988, 1993; Lockhart 1992). Instead of depicting colonial evangelization as a single event in which Christian meanings and behaviors were implanted on native populations, these studies present various facets of what may be seen as a social, ideological and linguistic experiment of colossal proportions. As both object and medium of evangelization campaigns, native languages played a leading role in this experiment. In fact, by opening the door to evangelization and litigation in indigenous languages in New Spain during the 1520s and 1530s, Spanish ecclesiastical and civil authorities set in motion an unmasterable series of translation projects whose dialectics, stakes and outcome may have become comprehensible to all parties involved only after several generations of indigenous converts took stock of these translations and incorporated them in their devotional practices.

Throughout the sixteenth century, a handful of missionaries to New Spain faced a formidable task. Not only were they burdened with the indoctrination of millions of natives, but they faced a threefold challenge: breaking through multiple language barriers, understanding indigenous cultural categories, and producing viable descriptions of indigenous languages through the transcription and grammatical practices afforded them by the intellectual repertoire of early Renaissance Europe. This momentous collision between native cultural categories and early Renaissance intellectual culture was negotiated by the early missionaries through educational projects that required a degree of compromise and transformation from both instructors and pupils. Jacob of Tastera, a French missionary who in 1529 abandoned a coveted teaching position in Seville to participate in the evangelization of Mexico, characterized the hardships of this

process with two evocative metaphors. In a 1533 letter to Charles V after a Franciscan conclave that took place in Huexotzinco, Tastera fustigated those who criticized the uncertain early results of the Franciscan educational enterprise with the following words:

> … because such a door was not opened for them to come in and look at these people's secrets […], [because] they would not take the trouble of learning their language, and did not have the zeal to break that wall to enter their souls and search with candles for the wonders that God works in their hearts; since they have not filed down their own teeth to speak the language of the Indians, may they now be silent and seal their mouths with bricks and mud. (Cartas de Indias 1877, 62–66)

In describing the linguistic barrier between evangelizers and Indians as a wall to be bored through, and through his description of Franciscan efforts to learn Nahuatl as a painstaking process that resulted in permanent physical mutation,[1] Tastera presciently provided us with two vivid characterizations. During the remainder of the sixteenth century, missionaries would establish a passage through the conceptual abyss that separated Christian terms and Nahua categories only through great effort and determination, and this labor would leave a permanent mark on newly coined Nahuatl terms.

The relative abundance of Nahuatl doctrinal texts from the mid-sixteenth century onwards renders the study of their translation dynamics a promising research topic which may yield insights applicable to other native languages with a more limited presence in the historical record. The multiple possibilities of this type of research are richly illustrated by the work of Burkhart (1989, 1992, 1996), who has produced the most comprehensive analysis to date of the recasting of Nahua moral concepts into a Christian mold during the second half of the sixteenth century. However, these issues have not been explored solely in the realm of Nahuatl evangelization. Hanks (1986, 1987) has developed a number of exacting readings of colonial Yucatec textual genres which contextualize the rhetorical elements used by Yucatec native elites, and trace the construction of Yucatec doctrinal neologisms by Franciscan missionaries. As a contribution to this line of research, this essay will analyze the various missionary attempts to render into Nahuatl a fundamental Christian notion—the Holy Trinity—from about 1550 to the first decade of the seventeenth century,[2] as well as some evidence regarding the Nahua reception of these translations during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Instead of circumscribing this analysis to epistemic or theological hypotheses about the dynamics of doctrinal translation, this essay will investigate through a longitudinal case study specific instances of the Nahua linguistic and pragmatic reception of missionary efforts to translate the notion of the Trinity. A review of the linguistic procedures used by missionaries to translate Christian concepts such as "sin", "God" and "Eucharist" in the sixteenth century will be followed by a study of the difficulties in providing an unambiguous Nahuatl translation for the concept of the Trinity, as attested by a line of evidence stretching from Peter of Ghent's *Doctrina Christiana* (1547) to Nahuatl-language wills from the 1760s.

It should be noted that the translation efforts on behalf of a cornerstone of Renaissance Christianity constitute an issue that has been largely overlooked by scholars of Nahuatl or students of Spanish colonial evangelization.[3] My decision to focus on a term as troublesome as the Trinity responds to both empirical and conceptual concerns. In empirical terms, there exists a line of evidence showing that the authors of doctrinal works in Nahuatl were deeply concerned with producing an adept and unambiguous translation of this Christian notion. In theoretical terms, the study of the linguistic production of a concept completely alien to Nahua cosmology illustrates in detail a linguistic and conceptual boundary where ambitious missionary evangelization projects gave way to a dialectical process of production and reception in which neither colonial nor indigenous cultural categories had enough linguistic or cultural purchase to maintain the upper hand. This case study should provide evidence not only about the cultural dialectics of rooting an alien concept in a native language, but also about the dialectics of reference and naming, which all but ensured the ambivalent nature of any results obtained by the missionaries.

A Translated Christianity

Three Generations of Nahuatl Lexicographers, 1520s-1610s

From the 1520s to the 1540s, in order to proceed with their evangelization projects in New Spain, Franciscan and Dominican missionaries devised a number of verbal and nominal constructions in indigenous languages for key concepts in Christian doctrinal discourses, such as "God", "shame", "Trinity", "sin", and "savior". The resulting lexical terms emerged in the earliest extant printed doctrinal texts in Nahuatl.[4] In their attempt to render such concepts into Nahuatl, Christian missionaries created a special register of language—hereafter, "doctrinal Nahuatl"—which may have seemed redundant for Nahuatl speakers in early colonial times (Burkhart 1989, 191). The irony, of course, was that this register of language strongly influenced other Nahua textual genres—letters, petitions, wills—in early colonial times, and what were originally neologisms were eventually absorbed into these genres.

For the purposes of this essay, one could group the various missionaries who produced Nahuatl texts in the sixteenth century into broad cohorts. The most prominent authors of the first generation, who were active in 1520–1550, were the Franciscans Peter of Ghent, Andrés de Olmos, Alonso de Escalona, Francisco Ximénez, Juan de Ribas, Juan de Romanones, Jean Focher and Arnold Basace.[5] During the second generation (roughly 1550 to 1590) the production of Nahuatl missionary texts and the range of genres they comprised—catechisms, sermons, moral treatises, historical narratives, translations of devotional works, rewordings of pre-Hispanic songs—reached its apex through the works of various Augustinians, Franciscans and Dominicans: Domingo de la Anunciación, Juan de la Anunciación, Alonso de Escalona, Juan de Gaona, Jerónimo de Mendieta, Alonso de Molina, Bernardino de Sahagún, Alonso de Truxillo, Miguel de Zárate, and an anonymous group of Dominicans (Bautista Viseo 1606; Clavijero 1945). The third generation (1590s–1620s) never reached the

production level set by their predecessors; however, they revised the Nahuatl translations of earlier generations, and inherited—particularly in Bautista's case—a number of doctrinal writings which were polished and modified before their publication. Among these authors, Pedro de Arenas, Juan Bautista Viseo, Martín de León, Juan de Mijangos, and Antonio del Rincón produced some of the most salient works.[6]

From Divine Words to Nahuatl Nouns

Seeking to anchor native understandings of alien Christian concepts in Nahuatl, the missionaries of the first and second generations attempted to refer to Christian concepts through pre-existing Nahua stems or lexical items through two processes of lexical invention which could be called *recruitment* and *neologism formation*. Lexical items that could not—or would not—be rendered into Nahuatl, were substituted by Spanish or Latin lexical items. A paradigmatic case of the recruitment of a pre-existing root to express a novel concept in Nahuatl occurred when missionaries attempted to render the concept of "sin" into doctrinal Nahuatl. The nominal root -[i]*htlacōa*, which originally meant "to spoil or damage", was recruited as early as 1548 by the Dominican authors of the Nahuatl *Doctrina* in order to build the following terms (Burkhart 1989, 33):

1.   ø   tla   htlacōa;   tla   htlacō—l — li[7]
Original sense: *he/she   something   damages;   something   damage -d*
New sense: "*He/she sins*";   "*sin*"

Although the writings of Sahagún (1961) and Molina ([1569] 1984) suggest that this root maintained a wide range of meanings throughout the sixteenth century, the above neologisms were adopted by Sahagún and other authors as the received translations for "sin".

    Occasionally, previously existing roots were combined to form neologisms that conveyed some of the semantic content of a new term through Nahua morphemes. For example, by the late sixteenth century, the term "Eucharist" was translated with the neologism *teōtlaxcalli*.[8] This term combined the common root *teō-*, meaning "divine", with *tlaxcalli,* the Nahuatl word for the flat, unleavened bread now known as "tortilla". This neologism did not come into use until the second half of the sixteenth century, for in a 1559 anonymous collection of sermons in Nahuatl we find the Eucharist described simply as "white tortilla":

2.   yn iquac missa mitoua   ca yeuatzin nelli dios
    When during mass it is said: "*Indeed He is the true God*"

    macivi   **Iztac tlaxcaltzintli**   yc neçi:
    *although   [as a]   **little white tortilla***   *it appears*

    ca amo **tlaxcalli**   ca inacayotzin tt.o i. x.o
    Indeed it is not a **tortilla***,*   *indeed it is the flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ* [9]

    As a matter of fact, the recruitment of the particle *teō-* required an acceptance of a certain degree of ambiguity on the part of the Franciscan lexicographers. In pre-Hispanic times, *teōtl* could refer not only to a deity, but also to an object of

cult transformed through ritual action, to a deity impersonator participating in a public state ritual,[10] or to a deified ancestor. This multiplicity of referents is exemplified by a historical narrative that Sahagún elicited from an old informant during the 1560s:

> Thus the old men said: he/she who died, *teōt*-ed; it was said: "Truly he/she *teōt*-ed"; it means, truly he/she died. And thus they confused themselves, perhaps so that the lords were obeyed: many were taken as *te tl* when they died. Some represented the sun; others represented the moon.[11]

This lucid passage brings into focus the various possibilities that existed for the root *teō-* in pre-Hispanic Nahua speech: it could be used to form verbs, and it did not necessarily refer to the established divinities of the Mexica pantheon. In spite of this ambiguity, the Franciscans appropriated this root to refer to the Christian God (as in the sentence *in icēl huel nelli **teōtl** Dios*, "the one true *teōtl* God), and to form the pervasive modifier ***teō**yotīca* (which could be glossed as "in a divine way", "in a divine state"), which gave a Christian imprimatur to the Nahua nouns or verbs it qualified. However, some missionaries who were aware of the ambivalence attached to this root referred to the Christian deity by inserting its Spanish name into Nahua clauses, as illustrated by Peter of Ghent's 1547 doctrine (Ghent 1547, 42v):

3.	yehica	ca çan iceltzin	in totecuyo	**dios**	in ce[n]quizca	qualli
	Because	*truly he alone,*	*Our Lord*	***God**,*	*[is] perfectly*	*good*

A Survey of Translations of the Trinity into Nahuatl, 1548–1611

Rendering the Trinity into Nahuatl, 1548–1583

Although the need to refer to the dogma of the Holy Trinity in Nahuatl posed a delicate problem for missionary authors, it should be noted that this concept played a rather minor role in everyday native Christian practices. There were two primary sites of Christian practice which required indigenous peoples to understand and make use of this concept: the everyday exercise of crossing oneself (*persignum crucis*), and the momentous occasion of opening one's testament with an invocation of the Trinity. These two sites of devotional practice afford us a diachronic insight into missionary attempts to ground this concept in Nahuatl.[12]

The *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Española y Mexicana* (1548) was essentially a translation of the Spanish-language doctrine written by the Dominican Pedro de Córdoba before 1521, with the addition of some sections for the benefit of newly baptized Christians. In this text—presented as the collective work of Nahuatl-speaking Dominicans—the concept of the Trinity was introduced in a fairly literal fashion before the *persignum crucis* through enumeration and description (Dominicans 1548, 132r):

4.	in *dios* tēta[h]tzin	in *dios* tēpiltzin	ihuān	*dios Spiritu Sancto*
	God the Father	*God the Child*	*and*	*God the Holy Spirit*
	yēintin *personas*-meh	zan cē	huel nelli	*dios*
	three persons,	*only one*	*true*	*God*

25

For his 1553 *Doctrina Christiana en lengua Mexicana*, Peter of Ghent expanded the doctrinal texts he had published in his 1547 *Doctrina*, and added vespers, matins and short doctrinal dialogues. In this text, the concept of the Trinity was introduced at the beginning of a summary of the doctrine by using the Dominican formula with slight modifications and a reiterative ending:

5. in *dios* tēta[h]tzin   ihuān   *dios* tēpiltzin ihuān   *dios Spiritu Sancto*
    God the Father   *and*   *God the child* *and*   *God the Holy Spirit*

    yēintin *persona*-meh zan huel   cē   nelli teōtl   ahmō ōme ahmō ēy[13]
    three persons,   *only really* *one* *true god,*   *not two*   *not three*

In his *Doctrina breve y compendiosa* (1565) the Dominican Domingo de la Anunciación was the first to use a peculiar morphological feature of Nahuatl—gross number plural—in his translation (Anunciación 1565, 7v):

6. Auh   in **im-ēix-tin-tzin**   *personas*-meh zan cē   huel nelli *dios*
    And   **they-are-three-Honored-ones** persons   *only one* true God

This strategic use of the gross number plural—by definition, a construction that refers to an undivided group—instead of a plural noun would recur again in the doctrinal writings of the Franciscan Juan Bautista Viseo in the early seventeenth century. It will be argued below that this grammatical solution constituted a radically different approach toward the translation of the Trinity from the enumerative approaches that were favored by sixteenth-century missionary lexicographers.

In fact, it is fair to say that most first- and second-generation missionary lexicographers rarely concerned themselves with a detailed Nahuatl description of the Holy Trinity, except for the Augustinian Juan de la Anunciación (1575, 12), who wrote the following in his *Doctrina christiana muy cumplida*:

7. Yēceh   in ēy *persona*-tin   in zan ītechpa[n]tzinco   moetzticateh
    Although   *the three persons*   *only located in*   *exist*

    in cē teōyōliztli   inīc *persona*-tin   huel moxeloticateh
    in one divine being *as persons*   *they truly are divided*

This phrase could be glossed as "Although the three persons exist in one divine being, as persons they truly are divided." This is one of the more complex descriptions in Nahuatl of the Holy Trinity produced in the late sixteenth century, for it stresses both the unity of the Trinity as a bounded subject and the separate existence of the persons who compose it.[14]

Wisely, neither of the two pre-eminent Nahuatl linguists of the second generation—Alonso de Molina and Bernardino de Sahagún—addressed in detail the notion of the Trinity through their translations. It is likely that prudence and a desire to render Christianity in simple and familiar terms for the Nahua motivated this translation choice. In the 1569 Nahuatl *Confesionario Mayor* written by Molina—probably the most widely circulated Nahuatl doctrinal text during the latter half of the sixteenth century[15]—we find a simple list of the

names of the three Trinity components which mirrors the 1548 Dominican solution. Thus, Molina (1569, 3r) opens his confessional with the words:

8. īca in ītōcātzin   *Santisima Trinidad,*   tēta[h]tzin   tēpiltzin
    In the name of   *the Holy Trinity,*   *someone's father* *someone's child*

    ihuā[n]   *Spiritu sancto*
    and   *the Holy Spirit*

In lieu of making an explicit reference to the Trinity as an encompassing entity or attempting to explain its composition in Nahuatl, Molina quietly borrowed the Spanish term. His template for drafting a will—which was diligently used by many generations of Nahua speakers, as well as by speakers of other indigenous languages[16]—began with the above formula, minus the Spanish borrowing *Santisima Trinidad* (Molina 1569, 61r). In his discussion of the spiritual preparations required for taking communion, Molina once again used the above enumeration and the Spanish borrowing in order to refer to the Trinity (*ibid.*, 73v).

In his 1583 *Psalmodia Christiana*—the only doctrinal text published in his lifetime—Sahagún exercised a similar precaution: in his introduction of the *persignum crucis*, he used the same enumeration found in the example cited above. Unlike the Dominican authors of 1548 and 1565, Sahagún did not translate into Nahuatl the common phrase "three persons, only one God". For Sahagún, the *persignum* was not the most suitable opportunity for addressing a central mystery of the new faith, but a daily practice that would have to be explained in native terms. Thus, Sahagún ([1583] 1993, 19–20) added the following appreciation after giving the Nahuatl formula for crossing oneself:

9. Inin quetzallalpiloni, mumuztlae ic muchichiua in ipilhoa sancta Iglesia
    The children of the Holy Church make this quetzal-feathered headband
    [for themselves] everyday

This prudent translation policy is carried out throughout the rest of the *Psalmodia*. Instead of coining neologisms or recruiting Nahuatl terms for the conveyance of Christian notions, Sahagún inserted more than 180 Spanish and Latin borrowings in his Nahuatl text. The only significant exceptions to this approach were the use of *mictlān* (underworld) for "hell" and *tlācatecolōtl* (shape-changing sorcerer) for "devil" (*ibid.*, xxxiv). The same prudence regarding the Trinity was exercised in *Coloquios y Doctrina Cristiana*, a manuscript that purportedly describes a moral dialogue between some Mexica priests and the first 12 Franciscan missionaries to Mexico, which Sahagún drafted and edited in the 1560s (Sahagún 1986). In this text, while God the Father and God the Son were mentioned, there were no explicit references to the Holy Spirit or to the Trinity. As one will see below, it appears that the third generation of authors of Nahuatl doctrinal works, caught up as they were in the animus of ecclesiastical and doctrinal reform of the Council of Trent, found the prudent approach of Molina and Sahagún insufficient at best and ambiguous at worst.

Counter-Reformation Policies and the Production of Doctrinal Texts

The relative diversity of Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian approaches to the problem of rendering the Trinity in Nahuatl from the 1550s to the 1580s reflects the considerable degree of pedagogical, doctrinal and linguistic experimentation which characterized evangelization projects in Central Mexico until the conclusion of the Council of Trent in Rome and the Third Mexican Council. It may be argued that this experimentation stage was coming to an end by the close of the sixteenth century. In fact, during Pedro de Moya y Contreras' tenure as archbishop of Mexico (1573–1591), a number of institutional and ecclesiastical factors—such as the consolidation of the Holy Office Tribunal of New Spain, the proliferation of secular ministers and a resulting tension between them and the mendicants, and the early application of directives issued from the councils of Trent and Mexico[17]—resulted in greater ecclesiastical and political restrictions for ongoing educational and doctrinal projects.

Since doctrinal works circulated in both printed and manuscript form, the development of institutional and judicial means of control over their production and circulation in the second part of the sixteenth century strengthened and formalized a review mechanism of doctrinal texts written in native languages. The printing and selling of books in New Spain was closely regulated by inquisitorial and secular authorities, who diligently sought out copies of books forbidden by the inquisitorial indices, as well as any books not bearing the authorization of an ecclesiastical authority with proper jurisdiction (the *licencia del ordinario*). After the First Mexican Council (1555), manuscript copies of translations of doctrinal works in indigenous languages were the focus of intense regulation: it was stipulated that all doctrinal works in native languages in circulation be removed from native hands, that any new translations bear the approval of an ecclesiastical language expert, and that any such works be signed with the author's name.[18] The 1585 Third Council enforced this directive by threatening to excommunicate anybody involved in the circulation of doctrinal works translated into native languages which had not been authorized by the *ordinario* (Lorenzana 1769b, 14). This measure was intended to regulate all non-clandestine attempts at translating doctrinal texts into native languages through a series of ecclesiastical and linguistic reviews.

Juan Bautista Viseo and the Native Intellectual Milieu of Tlatelolco, 1598–1607

Paradoxically, it was in this rather limiting Counter-Reformation environment that the Franciscan Juan Bautista Viseo compiled, edited and authored—with the assistance of a network of former students from the Franciscan Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco[19]—at least 18 manuscript and printed doctrinal works in Nahuatl and Spanish, of which about nine have survived into the present. In his 1606 *Sermonario en lengua Mexicana*, Bautista lists 17 printed works that he authored, edited or compiled.[20] To this list, one should add an incomplete translation into Nahuatl of Thomas à Kempis' *De imitatione Christi*. This work—also known in Bautista's time as *De Contemptu Mundi*—was the result of a collaboration between Bautista, the Franciscan Luis Rodríguez, and Fran-

cisco Bautista de Contreras, Nahua governor of Xochimilco and an alumnus of the Colegio de Santa Cruz.[21]

As author and educator, Bautista appropriated and published some of the doctrinal materials released in manuscript form by members of the productive second generation of Franciscan authors, and thus ensured their circulation as approved imprints. Born around 1555 in New Spain, Bautista took the habit of Saint Francis in 1571 in Mexico City, and trained as a scholar of Nahuatl under the commanding figures of Miguel de Zárate and Jerónimo de Mendieta. His activities as author and compiler were supported in institutional terms by his distinguished career in the Santo Evangelio Franciscan province. By 1597, he had been named Guardian of the convent of Texcoco, and he served as Guardian of the convent of Tlatelolco between 1598 and 1603, rising to the position of *Definidor* in 1603–1605. In 1605–1607, he served as Guardian of the convent of Tacuba, and by 1607 he was back again in Tlatelolco as Reader in Theology. Bautista probably died between 1607—the date of his last known collaborative work, the *Comedia de los Reyes*—and 1613—the date of completion of Torquemada's *Monarquía Indiana* ([1615] 1969), which mentions Bautista's death.[22]

Bautista's years in Tlatelolco (roughly 1599–1607) corresponded to the height of his activity as author, compiler and editor. This was not a casual connection, for Bautista often sought the advice and assistance of several Nahua elite members educated at the Colegio de Santa Cruz who had kept close ties with that institution. In his 1606 *Sermonario*, Bautista mentions a group of eight Nahua writers, copyists and teachers who may have provided him with hard-won insights about the difficulties of translating Christian terms into Nahuatl: Hernando de Ribas (who also assisted Molina and Gaona), Don Juan Bernardo, Don Diego Adriano, Don Francisco Baptista de Contreras (Nahua governor of Xochimilco), Esteban Bravo, Don Antonio Valeriano (Nahua governor of Mexico and a renowned Latinist), Pedro de Gante and Agustín de la Fuente (Nahua teachers at the Colegio de Santa Cruz). With the exception of Don Juan Bernardo, all of them were graduates of Santa Cruz. This fact suggests that Bautista's intended audience included not only Nahuatl-speaking priests, but also a small number of literate Nahuas living in the Valley of Mexico whose doctrinal education could be improved by reading not only simple iterations of the doctrine, but also Nahuatl translations of popular devotional texts such as the *Imitatio Christi*.

Ambiguous Nahuatl Renderings of the Trinity: Bautista's Arguments

In his 1600 *Advertencias para los confesores de los naturales*, Bautista outlined what he regarded as two errors made in their translations of the Trinity by the two earlier generations of Nahuatl-speaking missionaries. The first one was an error about the intrinsic unity of the Trinity, and the second one was about the separate character of the three divine persons (Bautista Viseo 1600, 51v). Although Ricard relegated this concern to a mere aside (Ricard 1966, 279–80), we will now read over Bautista's shoulder, so to speak, in order to examine these two translation issues. Using contemporary terms, the first problem could be

defined as one of scope ambiguity, and the second one as a semantic confusion between possessing three names and being three entities.

Ever since the beginning of Franciscan doctrinal education in the 1520s, the missionaries used a question-and-answer method in order to ascertain that Indians had grasped a particular Christian teaching. This method derived from a set of piercing questions which were translated into native languages in order to allow ministers with minimal linguistic skills to perform confessions, and to impress the astounding diversity of Christian categories of sin in the minds of native Christians (Gruzinski 1989). Bautista noted that, when Nahuatl speakers were asked, "How many persons are there in our Lord God?" they responded with the conventional answer, "Our Lord is indeed three persons." However, when they were asked the following question, which made a distinction between a deity in the singular and in the plural,

10. Inīn   *persona-s*-meh   ø   **quezquintin**   tēteoh ?
     These   *person-s*   *[are]* **how many (plural)** *deities?*

Bautista noted that some Nahuas responded in the plural by saying, "They are *three* deities" (*ēy in tēteoh*), a palpable heresy, since it declared the Trinity to be three separate deities, instead of one unified God. On the other hand, Bautista observed that the following answer—derived from translations given in the 1548 Dominican doctrine and in Ghent's doctrine—was thought by many to be an appropriate response:

11. ēy   *personas*,   zan cē,   huel nelli   teōtl   *Dios*   tlahtōani
     Three *persons*,   *only one* *true*   *deity*   *God*   *ruler*

Bautista remarked that, as it stood, this Nahua sentence had two possible senses, one legitimate, and one which he called "amphibological"—a term used in Bautista's time for sentences that had two senses not because of the words involved, but because of their placement. The first sense would be "Three persons, but only one true God altogether" and is the one Bautista intended to reproduce. The second sense was not intended by the Franciscan missionaries: "Three persons, *only one* of them being a true god." To translate this problem into a contemporary framework, one could say that the Nahua numeral quantifier *cē*, "one", has two possible scopes in this sentence: a wide one—which refers to the entire preceding noun phrase as a whole (*ey personas*)—and a narrow one—which may refer to only *one* of these "three persons."[23] In any case, Bautista argued that some Nahua neophytes gave this sentence a narrow scope, and thus believed that only one of the three persons was the true God.[24]

Bautista noticed a problem of a different sort with another doctrinal term. He observed that many priests believed the following term to be a translation of "trine" into Nahuatl:

12. m - ē - tē -   ihtō - t - īca
     Self *three* *someone*   *call*   *thus*

The literal meaning of the term was "he/she is called in three different ways". The belief in the correctness of this term must have been widespread, since

Molina's 1571 Nahuatl–Spanish *Vocabulario* defined a related term as "it is trine in persons" (Molina 1571, 28r).

13. ē - iht[ō] - ti - t - īca
     Three *call* *cause* *thusly*

Literally, this second term meant "he/she is caused to be called in three ways". In this case, the problem with the term stemmed from the fact that it was an incomplete Nahuatl description of the Holy Trinity. Bautista regarded the use of this term as a heresy, since it established the difference between the three persons of the Trinity on the basis of name and not of essence, and because this term could be understood by Nahuas as meaning "one divine person with three names".

The Trinity as a Description: Bautista's Solutions

Bautista proposed two solutions to the problem of naming the Trinity in Nahuatl which made use of description and reduplication in order to solve problems of reference and scope. He proposed that Nahuas respond to question 10 above by saying:

14. In Dios,   ca   Tēta[h]tzin,   Tēpiltzin,   Spiritu sancto,   ēy personas
     God *[is]* *truly*   *Father,*   *child,*   *Holy Spirit,*   *three persons*

     zan   cē   huel nelli teōtl   Dios   in huel   im-ēix-tin-tzitzin
     only *one* *true*   *deity*   *god*   *indeed*   *they-are-three-Very-*
                                                            Honored-Ones

An idiomatic English translation could be "God indeed is Father, Son, Holy Spirit, three persons, only one true God, indeed they are three very honored ones." Noting his satisfaction with the appropriateness of this formula, Bautista added, "with this reduplication, all doubts are removed" (Bautista Viseo 1600, 52v). Bautista's reiterative translation of the Holy Trinity as *imēix-tin-tzitzin* ("They are three Very Honored Ones") made use of exactly the same gross number plural first proposed by the Dominican Domingo de la Anunciación in 1565. According to J. Richard Andrews, a contemporary grammarian of Classical Nahuatl, gross number plurals are used in Nahuatl for total, full or inclusive enumerations, and are usually applied to human referents when the speaker wants to emphasize the totality or inclusiveness of their number (Andrews 1975, 183–85). With this formula, Bautista aimed to neutralize the latent scope ambiguity of the phrase *zan cē huel nelli teōtl Dios* ("only one [is] true god") with a Nahuatl gross number plural that would unambiguously indicate that, since the entity in question was a plural ("three very honored ones"), the numeral "one" referred to the entire entity rather than to one of its components.

Bautista advocated a final alternative description to fix the referent of the Trinity in Nahuatl. As a response to a tricky question that deployed the troublesome term *mētēihtōtīca* ("he/she is called in three ways"), Bautista instructed priests to teach their Nahua charges the following answer:

15. Ca   niman ahmō   mētēihtōtīca in ītōcātzin: yehīca   ca   ēy *persona-s*- meh
     Truly *not at all*   *its name is called in three ways*   *because*   *truly*   *three persons*

     cēcecni   quīz-ti-cate-h   in cē-ce-meh   persona-s
     separately   *they are coming out*   *each one*   *person* [*sic*]

This formula may be translated idiomatically as "Indeed its honored name is not at all called in three ways, because truly the three persons are each coming out separately." The choice made by Bautista required an elaborate description through accumulation of terms and redundancy: it was stressed that the group of divine persons *divided* into three separate entities (Bautista Viseo 1600, 53v–54r).

The Trinity as a Nahuatl Name: The Dominican Solution

While Bautista preferred to use a description in order to render the notion of the Trinity in Nahuatl, other linguistic reformers proposed the adoption of a new Nahuatl name. In his 1611 manual for priests called *Camino del Cielo en Lengua Mexicana*, the Dominican Martín de León published a weighty formalized opinion (*parecer*) which proposed the substitution of all existing Nahuatl designations of the Holy Trinity with a neologism in the tradition of "divine tortilla" (*teōtlaxcalli*). The 12 signatories—which included the Prior and the Superior of the Dominican convent in Mexico—proposed that "Holy Trinity" should be rendered in Nahuatl as follows (León 1611, vi r):

16. teō - tlācatl
     divine human being

In what could have been a Dominican maneuver against Franciscan attempts to establish an official term for the Trinity in doctrinal Nahuatl, a closely reasoned text accompanied this proposal. First of all, in what could be regarded as a semantic policy of sorts, the Dominicans argued that any names—and especially divine ones—must establish a concrete reference rather than an abstract one. Then, the Dominican reformers argued that the neologism *teōtlācatl* was the most appropriate translation of the term "Holy Trinity" based on two criteria: first, it was not tied to any other possible meaning in Nahuatl, and second, it was an unambiguous rendering of the term "divine person".[25] As we shall see below, this opinion appears to have been embraced by some Nahua speakers in the Valley of Mexico by the early eighteenth century. This distinction between description on the one hand (Bautista's proposal) and naming on the other (the Dominican proposal) is a crucial one from the viewpoint of contemporary semantic theories of reference, and I will come back to the consequences of this distinction in the conclusion to this essay.

The Trinity as a Neologism: A Secular Solution

Neither the Franciscan description nor the Dominican neologism was persuasive enough for some authors of Nahuatl doctrinal texts. For example, Joseph Pérez de la Fuente y Quixada, a rather obscure Creole author of doctrinal texts, devotional songs and plays in Nahuatl from Amecameca, decided to coin a neologism that was closer in its morphological construction to the Latin term

Trinitas. In a Nahuatl translation of a Latin antiphon dedicated to the Holy Trinity circa 1714, he refers to the Trinity as

17. In cen teō-chipāuhca-tzintli Yēi-til-yōtl (*SSma Trinidad*)
    The wholly divinely-pure-Honored three-ity (Holy Trinity)

This neologism mirrors the morphological structure of *Trinitas*. Just as the Latin word is composed of a nominal root derived from "three" (*trini-*) and a common ending for abstract nouns (*-tas*), Pérez de la Fuente employed two comparable Nahuatl elements: the root for the numeral three (*yēi-*) and a common abstract noun ending (*-yōtl*). They were joined together by a rarely used irregular connective particle, (*-til-*).[26] This neologism is probably the most literal translation of the word "Trinity" into Nahuatl on record, but it could also have been one of the least meaningful ones for a native reader. In fact, its very author seemed compelled to add a Spanish gloss to it in order to render it recognizable for the reader. Since this neologism does not recur in any other Nahuatl doctrinal text, it appears that this term was not adopted by either priests or parishioners.

The Nahua Reception of the Translations of the Trinity

The *Comedia de los Reyes*

The various translation approaches formulated by Juan Bautista Viseo were grossly contradicted by a well-known Nahuatl play from the early seventeenth century in which a misapprehension of the notion of the Trinity was evident. In the famous *Comedia de los Reyes*, a Nahuatl play about the visit of the Magi to baby Jesus from the first decade of the seventeenth century—dedicated to its compiler, Juan Bautista Viseo—the following exchange is recorded between the Virgin Mary and one of the Magi: "I thank you, Baltasar, on behalf of my precious child: his precious honored father *the Holy Trinity* has sent you here" (Horcasitas 1975, 314; Lockhart 1992, 402). In this utterance, the Nahuatl-speaking author employs the name "Holy Trinity" as if it had a single referent in the singular—God the Father. While this play may possibly be associated with the writings of the Nahua author Agustín de la Fuente, the extant copy of this text was produced by a less knowledgeable Nahua writer whom we may still regard as anonymous. Indeed, it is rather unlikely that Agustín de la Fuente himself was the perpetrator of this particular error, for Bautista himself reports that de la Fuente, a native of Tlatelolco, was a teacher at the Franciscan college of Tlatelolco, and a respected copyist and type composer who collaborated not only with Bautista, but also with Sahagún and Oroz (Bautista Viseo 1606, v–ix r).

Naming the Trinity in Nahua Testaments, 1694–1763

While the above example from the *Comedia de los Reyes* provides anecdotal evidence about the way in which a single Nahua writer handled the concept of the Trinity, there exists a fragmentary but significant line of evidence in a colonial Nahua textual genre that was practiced by many Nahua property owners: the testament. Almost every testament drafted in Spanish or in an

indigenous language in colonial times opened with a reference to the Trinity. Some wills drafted in Nahua, Zapotec, and other native languages went on to ascertain that their authors had learned the Christian doctrine and kept the Church's commandments during their lifetime.[27] Even if Nahua testaments were more formulaic than those drafted by other native subjects, and even if influential doctrinal texts such as Molina's *Confesionario Mayor* provided native scribes with a set template for naming the Trinity in Nahuatl, a sampling of individual Nahua wills reveals that there existed several substantial differences in the Nahuatl rendering of the notion of the Trinity. These differences may allow us to discern a measure of the Nahua reception of the vehement linguistic arguments and the translation solutions advocated by at least three generations of doctrinal authors.

Since the universe of extant colonial Nahuatl-language wills is in fact rather large and unwieldy, a circumscribed regional approach will be used here in order to arrive at a preliminary estimate of the Nahua reception during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the various doctrinal solutions for naming the Trinity in Nahuatl. Due to a recent reorganization of the Historical Archive of the Archdiocese of Mexico (AHAM), a significant cache of Nahuatl-language testaments from the Toluca Valley region has become available to researchers. In order to profit from these underutilized sources, as well as from readily available sources, this section will focus on a sampling of 25 Nahua wills from a distinct socio-political region—the doctrinal jurisdiction of the city of Toluca, located about 60 kilometers west of Mexico City—which will be contrasted with samples drawn from the Chalco-Amecameca region (southeast of Mexico City), the Tulancingo region (northeast of Mexico City), and from Mexico City itself. It should be noted that, while these samples do not constitute an exhaustive study of the Nahua reception of the naming of the Trinity in colonial wills, they are substantial enough to exemplify major trends in the drafting of colonial Nahua wills.

The 25 testaments from the Valley of Toluca discussed here were drafted by Nahua scribes between the years 1694 and 1737. A majority of these wills demonstrate a preference for Molina's 1569 testament template, which gives no explicit reference in Nahuatl to the Trinity as an entity, consisting only of an enumeration of three sacred names:

18. Mā mocenquīscā- yēctēnēhualo yn ītla[h]zomahuiztōcātzin
    May it perfectly be praised his dear precious honored name

    yn *Dios* tēta[h]tzin yhuān *Dios* tēpiltzin yhuān *Dios Espiritu Santo*[28]
    God the Father and God the child and God the Holy Spirit

The only improvement that the scribes in this majority group of 18 wills made on Molina's formula was the addition of the phrase *ma mocenquiscayectene-hualo*, which was meant to translate the expression "May it be blessed."

On the other hand, only four wills from this group include the enumeration listed above plus the Spanish name *Santísima Trinidad*. An even smaller number—only two testaments—include an overt description of the Trinity in

TABLE 1. Naming the Trinity in Nahua wills from the Toluca Valley, 1694–1737

Trinity translation solutions	Number of wills	Towns of origin	Dates	Author's gender
Listing the names of the three Trinity persons	18	San Antonio, San Cristóbal, Santa Clara Cozcatlan, Santa Bárbara Xolalpa, San Sebastián, Santiago, San Juan Bautista, San Miguel Aticpac, San Juan Evangelista, San Bartolomé Tlatilolco, San Felipe y Santiago Tlamimilolpa [12]	1694–1737	11 M, 7 F
Use of Spanish name	4	San Juan Bautista, San Pedro Tototepec [2]	1735–1737	4 M
Description in Nahuatl	2	San Bartolomé Tlatilolco, unknown location [2]	1715, 1737	2 M
No mention of Trinity	1	San Miguel [1]	1736	1 M

Nahuatl, which happens to be precisely the one Bautista had denounced as ambiguous in 1600:

19. y[n] *Dios* tēta[h]tzi[n]   yhuā[n]   *Dios* tēpiltzi[n]   yhuā[n]   *Dios Espirito Sa[n]to*
     God the Father   *and*   *God the child*   *and*   *God the Holy Spirit*

     yēytzintzin   yn *personas* y[n] sa[n] çē huel ne[l]li teōtl *Dios*[29]
     three honorable   *persons*   *only* *one true* *God*

Finally, only one testament from the Toluca Valley sample omits any mention of the Holy Trinity altogether, an unaccountable absence which may be due to scribe oversight. The data drawn from this testament sample are summarized in Table 1.

On the other hand, in other Nahua communities located in the Valley of Mexico and its hinterland, the Dominican neologism *teōtlācatl* advocated by Martín de León was used as a name in conjunction with a gross number plural in the opening section of indigenous testaments. Lockhart noted that this manner of naming the Trinity was reproduced with little variation in a sampling of testaments from some regions west and east of the Valley of Mexico.[30]

For example, a 1712 will from Mexico City had this form:

20. yn yēintintzitzin   **teō-tlāca**-tzi-tzin-tin   *personas,*
     Three most honored,   *most honored* **divine persons**   *persons*

In a 1730 will from the Tlalmanalco area, and in a 1768 will from Tulancingo (now in Hidalgo State), we read the form:

21. yēintzitzin   **teō-tlāca**-tzi-tzin-tin,
     three most honored   *most honored* **divine persons**

In a 1763 will from the Chalco area, we find a form that combines, in a single

clause, the gross number plural introduced by Anunciación and Bautista with León's neologism:

22. imēixtintzin   i[n] **teō-tlāca**-tzi-tzin-tin   in *personas*
    They are three honorable,   *most honorable **divine persons*** persons

These Nahua testament writers used a numeral and a neologism in order to form a proper name for the Trinity. The first part of the proper name consists of a numeral, which could be a simple or a gross number plural; the second part is the Dominican neologism "Divine Persons". According to León's 1611 proposal, *teō-tlāca-tl* was a singular noun that carried the absolutive singular suffix *-tl*. However, these three attestations were in fact plural forms of the Dominican neologism, as indicated by the plural suffix *-tin*. In fact, the Nahua wills quoted above reinterpreted the Dominican neologism, rendering it in the plural in order to maintain number agreement in the clause, which would read "they are three most honorable divine person-**s**" rather than "they are three most honorable divine person".

Although these data are but the beginning of an analysis of the reception of these translations by Nahua writers and authors, the contrast between testament data from the Toluca Valley and from areas east of Mexico City may be tentatively explained by educational factors. The use of León's neologism to refer to the Trinity in Nahuatl in the towns of Chalco, Tlalmanalco and Amecameca may be due to the direct influence of Dominican teachings in this region. After all, the Dominicans kept a convent and a school in Amecameca, and their educational influence may have persuaded the authors of the testaments quoted above to favor León's neologism. One should note that, although the Franciscans also had a base in Tlalmanalco, the Tlalmanalco sample quoted above embraced the Dominican solution.

The Franciscans wielded considerable educational and social influence in many Nahua towns located in the Toluca Valley, as attested by the frequent request by Nahua testament authors to have their corpses tied up with a replica of the cord and knot that Franciscans used around their waists.[31] Unlike Juan Bautista, parish priests and Franciscans in this region seem to have had little interest in correcting or improving the way in which their parishioners referred to the Trinity in Nahuatl. Judging from the most popular formula used by both men and women, the simple enumeration of the names of the three Trinity persons was regarded as sufficient proof that Nahua testament writers understood this Christian dogma.

Distant Receptions: Some Unorthodox Nahua Ways of Naming the Trinity

While it is true that Nahua testaments provide the most complete line of evidence about the various ways in which fairly educated Nahuas responded to the missionary translations of the Trinity, there exist a few traces of evidence that some Nahuas appropriated the notion of the Trinity in ways that were neither expected nor tolerated by their educators. One of the most fascinating pieces of evidence about unorthodox Nahua appropriations of the Trinity comes from a sentence handed out on 23 July 1727 by Juan Ignacio de Castorena y

Ursúa, *Provisor* and Vicar General for Indians and Asians in the Archbishopric of Mexico. The person convicted by this sentence was one Bartolomé Martín, a Nahua ranch hand who worked at the estate of San Antonio—located near the town of Metepec—and who had been turned in to the local ecclesiastical judge by the ranch owner, Juan Antonio de Aramburo.[32]

According to local rumors, Bartolomé Martín was known as a sorcerer because he cast spells against hail, a common ritual specialist occupation in towns located near the various mountain ranges of the Valley of Mexico which was known in Nahuatl as *teciuhtlazqui*.[33] When confronted in jail with those accusations, rather than denying them, he embraced them using a most peculiar theological justification:

> He declared that it was true that he was called a sorcerer, although he was not one. In fact, although he cast spells against hail, that was a favor that had been given him by the three Persons, Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, for one day there was a rainstorm while he was looking after some oxen, and a bolt of lighting had fallen on him, wounding him from haunch to foot on his left side and leaving a burnt area. When he came to his senses, three angels appeared before him. They gave him strength, and told him they were envoys from the Holy Trinity, and that they were bringing him the grace of casting spells against hail; then, they went back to Heaven. These people had told him he should cast his spells in the name of the said three Persons; as soon as he cast his spell, the clouds went away, and he did the same in the name of the Christ of Chalma, and Our Lady of Guadalupe of Los Remedios.[34]

Due to this creative way of employing the name of the Trinity, Bartolomé Martín was paraded in an *auto de fe* at his own parish, given 100 lashes in public on 10 November 1727, and sentenced to two years of semi-indentured labor on a local ranch.

However, not all Nahuatl speakers treated the Nahuatl names of the Trinity with the respect encoded in the use of honorific suffixes or traditional ritual practices. According to the *oidor* Antonio de Rivadeneira y Barrientos—who wrote a detailed response to the language and evangelization policies issued by the 1771 Fourth Mexican Church Council—missionaries also had to be aware of certain irreverent modifications to the Nahuatl terms for the Trinity which Nahua parishioners occasionally used:

> To explain the Mystery [of the Trinity], when the good Mexicans are asked, "Who is the Holy Trinity?" they respond: *Yehuatzin Dios Tetatzin Dios Ypilton, yhitum* [*sic*] *Dios Espiritu Santo.* "God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit." Instead of calling the Second Person *Dios Ypilton*, the evil Mexicans say *Dios tepiltu*, which refers to an obscene thing among the Indians,[35] and thus God becomes indignant. Others say *Dios Tepitzi*, which means "God, the Little One," which goes against the undivided immensity of the three Divine Persons. All of this does not depend on the language, but on the Teacher, and if the Indian says those things, it is because that was what he was taught to say. (JCB, Codex Ind. 52, 240v–241r)

Conclusions

From Indigenous Responses to the Dialectics of Reference

Even if missionary translation procedures in the sixteenth century gave way to a fractured Nahua reception of the Trinity in the eighteenth century, the case study developed in this essay cannot support the argument that a poor translation or failed educational efforts on behalf of this Christian dogma crippled Franciscan and Dominican missionary efforts in New Spain. Failures in translation did not defeat doctrinal projects, promote indigenous rebellion, or encourage acts of native resistance. However, one need not be a theologian to realize that, in matters of doctrinal translation, the devil often was in the details. Even if the instances of translation explored in this essay are marginal in terms of their importance to the ensemble of evangelization projects in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New Spain, this case study should serve as an illustration of the linguistic and cultural boundaries that ambitious missionary projects eventually reached after decades of expansion and experimentation.

In its emphasis on the linguistic complexity and uncertain results of the dialectics of reception which such projects triggered, this essay has avoided romanticizing or overstating any evidence of native resistance to colonial evangelization projects. Taking a different approach, some theorists have chosen translation issues in colonial indoctrination processes as a launching ground for sweeping theoretical assertions. A case in point is Rafael's (1988) compelling but uneven review of the problems attending the translation of Christian doctrine into Tagalog in the colonial Philippines. In this work, Rafael depicted Spanish translation projects as a hegemonic outgrowth of Nebrija's insistence on the regulation of voices through orthography. Following a well-worn theoretical path, Rafael interprets Nebrija's orthographic project as an enforcement of the logocentric rapport between voice and letter that, according to Derrida's (1967) (in)famous thesis, has permeated Western thought since Plato.[36] Such a project elicited, in Rafael's view, an equally widespread resistance from the Tagalogs; according to Rafael, the untranslatability of certain terms was actively reformulated by Tagalalogs so that they could read into Christianity "a surplus of referents with which to reserve for oneself a position from which to face those at the top of the hierarchy" (Rafael 1988, 121).

Rafael's analysis is constrained by three analytical postures that have been avoided in this essay. First of all, he chooses to depict the project of translating Christianity into Tagalog as a momentous epistemological battle between alternative ways of representing "voices"; I prefer to begin with a detailed consideration of such a project within its linguistic and social context of production before moving on towards a characterization of its dialectics of production and reception. Secondly, the disjunction he sees as epistemological is better characterized as a cultural divide between Renaissance linguistics and indigenous writing systems.[37] Thirdly, his argument for a continuous Tagalog resistance to doctrinal discourses through referent accumulation appears to rest on theoretical preoccupations rather than on a substantial number of documented instances of Tagalog linguistic engagement with doctrinal translations.

How may one avoid such a Manichean epistemic view of colonial hegemony

and indigenous resistance in an analysis of colonial doctrinal translations? In detailing the dialectical formation of translation solutions to naming the Trinity in Nahuatl—and in surveying the reception of these solutions by a small but representative number of Nahua wills—I have attempted to show that the problem of rendering this notion in a native language was not one of untranslatability, but one of ambivalence. As shown by their frequent usage in wills, spells, and word games, Nahuas were able to apprehend and deploy their own particuar notions about the Trinity, and often applied the solutions advocated by their Franciscan and Dominican educators. Except in the case of willful manipulation for satirical effect recorded by Rivadeneira y Barrientos (JCB, Codex Ind. 52, 240v), any "surplus of referents" to the notion of the Trinity derived not from Nahua attitudes, but from the dialectics of reception of a series of translation attempts in which the implied referent was anything but stable.

Until now, I have focused my attention on what one may term the *external dialectics* of the translation process: the protracted linguistic experimentation and reformation, the ecclesiastical arguments, and the actual usage and appropriation of these solutions by various generations of Nahua recipients. However, the *internal dialectics* of the modes of translation may have hinged, as shown by the arguments of Bautista and León, on the referential properties of particular translation solutions. In the following section, this type of dialectics will be dissected from the standpoint of contemporary analytical philosophy to show why the differences in the Dominican and the Franciscan ways of naming the Trinity were not only a matter of theological drive and political might, but also one of referential propriety.

Naming the Trinity in Nahuatl: From Description to Proper Name

In order to shed light on the referential boundaries that constrained the translation of the Trinity into Nahuatl, I will now discuss the relevance of the distinction between referring to the Holy Trinity as a Nahuatl *description*—Bautista's solution—and referring to it as a Nahuatl *proper name*—the solution advocated by Ghent, Molina and León. My discussion will build upon a lucid analysis of naming and designation outlined by the analytical philosopher Saul Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* (1980).

In this work, Kripke established a crucial distinction between rigid and non-rigid designators. He defined a rigid designator as something that designates the same object in all possible worlds, and proceeded to posit proper names as rigid designators—for example, the proper name "Nixon" (Kripke 1980, 48). He made the distinction between a *rigid designator* like "Nixon" and a *description* such as "the President of the U.S. in 1970" on the basis of their referential properties. The proper name "Nixon" is in and of itself a rigid designator, for it designates one and only one referent under any utterance conditions and in any possible worlds. On the other hand, the descriptive clause "the President of the U.S. in 1970" could possibly apply to more than one referent. First of all, under different historical circumstances, someone else could have been the President of the U.S. in 1970. Furthermore, such a description could have been proffered by

somebody who believed Johnson was the President in 1970; thus, that person's referent would not match the historical referent. Therefore, according to Kripke, this description is not a rigid designator for the historical character whom we know as "Richard Nixon".

Kripke's discussion of rigid designators illuminates the peculiar problems that resulted from a Franciscan attempt to translate the term "Holy Trinity" into doctrinal Nahuatl. Bautista noticed that a given description of essential qualities in Nahuatl did not necessarily pick the one referent that was meant to be chosen: "Three persons, only one [of them] true God" carried a scope ambiguity; "He/she is called three ways" referred to separate proper names and not to separate persons. In other words, the conditions under which these descriptions picked the intended referent depended not only on truth conditions, but also on how the necessary properties of the Trinity were translated in doctrinal Nahuatl. In the process of translating the essential qualities of the Trinity into Nahuatl in order to fix one and only one referent, the question of whether or not the essential qualities of the Trinity were accurately and exhaustively translated into Nahuatl and understood as essential became an empirical problem that was to be addressed from the viewpoint of Nahua speakers. To echo Kripke, "whether an object has the same property in all possible worlds depends not just on the object itself, but on *how it is described*" (*ibid.*, 41).

The success of a rigid designator—such as the proper names "Nixon" or "Holy Trinity"—depends, according to Kripke, on an initial act of reference which is successful only if a community of speakers shares the same association between proper name and referent. This is what Kripke calls a "baptismal act" (*ibid.*, 35). The naming of the Trinity through the proper Nahuatl names of its three components—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—in the Dominican 1548 doctrine and Molina's 1565 confessional was meant to be a baptismal act. Furthermore, León's 1611 *parecer* proclaiming *teōtlacatl* the Nahuatl proper name for the Trinity and Pérez de la Fuente's usage of *Yēitilyōtl* as a proper name were meant to be new baptismal acts that would replace the earlier Franciscan christenings.

However, Kripke noted that naming does not occur in a vacuum, and that the linkage between proper name and description is always socially and culturally mediated. The Nahuatl reception of Molina's, Bautista's and León's solutions suggests that there was a certain preference for proper names—which are, after all, semantically empty components that must be given meaning through a social contract of sorts. This preference was motivated by the fact that both the proper names of the components of the Trinity and the Dominican neologism acted as *rigid designators* of the Trinity in Nahuatl. On the other hand, Bautista's descriptions, which were not a rigid form of designation, were not adopted by other missionaries or Nahua authors. According to my sample of 29 Nahua wills from 1694 to 1763, Nahua scribes rejected Bautista's descriptive solution. Twenty-two of them preferred an enumeration of the proper names of the Trinity persons, with or without a mention of the Spanish proper name. On the other hand, four of them preferred the Dominican neologism. A small minority—only two scribes—embraced a descriptive solution, and even in this case they reverted to the relatively simple descriptive translation used by Ghent and in the 1548

Dominican doctrine, and appeared to be blissfully unaware of Bautista's criticisms.

In other words, what Tastera visualized as a single conceptual barrier proved to be a double boundary, for doctrinal authors not only faced the challenge of finding a suitable translation of the Trinity into Nahuatl, but also had to confront the consequences of choosing between a rigid and a non-rigid form of designation. Even when they made the most ambitious choice—as was the case for Bautista—they faced the challenge of producing a description that could in fact fix a single referent for Nahuatl speakers. Paradoxically, the path of least resistance—the naming of the Trinity through proper names—was as successful in terms of acceptance as it was potentially troublesome from a theological standpoint: it may have succeeded in fixing a unique referent, but at the cost of enumerating the names of the Trinity persons without further explanation, or of coining an awkward neologism—"Divine Human Being"—which referred to the Trinity as if it were a human entity.

From the notarial and judicial evidence reviewed in this essay, it is clear that the missionaries succeeded in evoking a referent through one or more Nahuatl names. However, in their attempt to render the notion of the Trinity into Nahuatl words and into functional Nahua cultural categories, the first three generations of missionaries in New Spain had in fact to settle—except for Bautista and Juan de la Anunciación—for a distant linguistic echo of the Trinity. This diffuse and deeply ambiguous reception allowed for the coexistence of Nahua naming and devotional practices that did not contradict each other in their heterodoxy. While some certifiably devote Nahuas invoked on their dying day three wondrous names—whom they could still have regarded as three separate deities—Nahua ritual specialists attempted to master natural phenomena through the utterance of the same three holy names. In the end, Tastera's metaphors proved to be almost prophetic: as they followed St. Jerome's example of filing one's own teeth to master a difficult language, missionaries discovered that the adaptation of Christian concepts to Nahua linguistic forms required drastic modifications which were as definite and irrevocable as a deliberate act of mutilation.

Notes

[1] According to the editors of Cartas de Indias (1877), the image of filing down one's teeth is a reference to St. Jerome, who, according to tradition, filed down his teeth in order to improve his pronunciation of Hebrew.

[2] This was a crucial period for doctrinal education projects. The middle of the sixteenth century is marked by the publication of four early Nahuatl doctrinal texts (1539–1548). The first decade of the seventeenth century is characterized by a rise in the number of secular clergy, and by their participation in idolatry campaigns (Tavárez 1999).

[3] Besides the passing mention of translations of the Trinity in Ricard (1966) and Pury Toumi (1992), I know of no analysis of the issue besides my own work.

[4] Zumárraga's 1539 *Breve … Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Mexicana y Castellana*, Molina's 1546 *Doctrina christiana breve traducida en lengua Mexicana*, Peter of Ghent's 1547 *Doctrina christiana en lengua mexicana*, and the Dominicans' 1548 *Doctrina christiana en le*[n]*gua Española y Mexicana.*

[5] However, there exist surviving Nahuatl texts only from Escalona, Ghent and Olmos.

[6] For a review of the careers of these and other doctrinal authors, see León-Portilla (1988) and Zulaica y Gárate (1991).

[7] Authors of Classical Nahuatl texts did not systematically transcribe two salient phonological Nahua features—vowel length and glottal stops—that make a difference in the sense of a word. In this essay, although many quoted Nahuatl texts will not be regularized, I will transcribe Nahuatl words in detail when discussing specific translation examples. Following Andrews (1975) and Karttunen (1983), long vowels will be indicated with macrons (ā) and glottal stops with the letter *h.* All translations from the Nahuatl are my own.

[8] The wisdom of calling something so sacred a "divine tortilla" was eventually questioned. After the 1771 Fourth Mexican Church Council, Rivadeneira y Barrientos defended *teōtlaxcalli* as a proper translation into Nahuatl which could not be improved by inserting the Spanish term into Nahuatl as a lexical borrowing (JCB, Codex Ind. 52, 241r).

[9] Fonds Mexicain 367, *Sermones en Mexicano*, 276r. This anonymous collection of texts could have been authored by Nahua members of the Franciscan Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco.

[10] In the Florentine Codex, it is said that the bones of war captives that had been dressed up during a feast of the 260-day ritual calendar were called *malteōtl*, or "captive's *teōtl*". Furthermore, during another feast, the Mexica ruler addressed one of the participant deity impersonators as "my dear *teōtl*". See Hvidtfeldt (1958).

[11] Sahagún 1961, 192. The original text reads, "Ic quitoque in vevetque: in aqujn oonmjc *oteut*, qujtoaia: ca *onteut*, q, n, ca oonmjc. auh injc motlapololtique, in aço ic tlacamachozque in tlatoque catca: mochintin mo*teot*ocaque, in jquac mjcque. Cequjntin qujnmjxiptlatique tonatiuh: cequjintin metztli."

[12] Given the dearth of surviving doctrinal texts by first-generation authors, this case study will focus on translation examples taken from second- and third-generation sources.

[13] Ghent 1553, 69v. This formula is repeated almost verbatim within a prayer to the Holy Cross in 101r.

[14] Anunciación's Spanish gloss is "De manera q[ue] las tres personas que estan en una deydad y ese[n]cia diuina, en qua[n]to son personas bien se distinguen." One should note here the role of the locative construction *ītechpantzinco.* Although it could be translated as "in regard to" (Burkhart 1999, personal communication), Anunciación uses an idiosyncratic locative term composed of three deictic elements (*ītech-*, "next to, on, attached to"; *-pan-*, "on"; *-co* "in, among") to translate the Spanish locative construction *estar en* ("to be located in"). Another example of this usage is found earlier in the same paragraph (Anunciación 1575, 12): *Dios tepiltzin yn cemicac* **ytechpatzinco** *moquixtitzinotica yn Dios tetatzin*; "… Dios Hijo el qual eternamente **esta** y procede de Dios Padre …".

[15] Serge Gruzinski, personal communication, 1998. The first edition of Molina's *Confesionario* appeared in 1565; there also was a second (1569) and a third edition (1578), which was unusual for an early native doctrinal text.

[16] For example, an eighteenth-century text in Quiché Maya found by German scholar Leon Reinisch contains a Quiché translation of Molina's doctrinal formula for joining Indian couples in matrimony (Fonds Mexicain 405, 19r–20v).

[17] For a detailed discussion of these factors, see Alberro (1988) and Lebroc (1969).

[18] Lorenzana 1769a, 143–44. An example of this shift in attitude is found in the censorship of Fray Maturino Gilberti's moral dialogues, written in Tarascan and intended for a native audience. In 1559, Gilberti's work was seized by orders of the bishop of Michoacán, and the censors appointed by him argued that there existed substantial differences between the Tarascan and the Spanish text, as well as "things impertinent and ill-sounding to our ears" (AGN Inquisición, vol. 43, no. 6, 197r–230v).

[19] For a concise historical review of the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco, see Burkhart (1996).

[20] Bautista Viseo 1606, xii r–v. This list includes only eight extant imprints: *Confesionario en lengua mexicana y castellana* (1599), *Huehuehtlahtolli* (1600), the two volumes of *Advertencias*

para los confesores de indios (1600), *Libro de la miseria y brevedad de la vida del hombre …* (1604), *Vida y milagros del bienaventurado Sanct Antonio de Padua* (1605), and the two volumes of the *Sermonario* (1606). There remain no originals of the other nine works.

[21] Both Mendieta and Vetancourt describe the collaboration of Rodríguez with Bautista, and Bautista himself mentions receiving assistance from Baptista de Contreras in his 1606 *Sermonario.* However, the sole surviving manuscript copy of their version of the *Imitatio Christi* (Codex Ind. 23, John Carter Brown Library) is a truncated version, for it ends abruptly in Chapter XII, Book Three. Bautista's *Imitatio* was in fact a second attempt to render this work into Nahuatl. There exists an earlier illuminated version (Manuscript d.IV.7, Real Biblioteca de El Escorial), which was brought to Spain as a gift for Juan de Ovando by Mendieta *circa* 1570. This version was probably prepared by Alonso de Molina (Campos y Fernández de Sevilla 1993, 59–66).

[22] These biographical data are taken from Zulaica y Gárate (1991, 217–21), and from Bautista's introductions to the *Confesionario*, the *Libro de la Miseria*, and the *Sermonario*.

[23] The syntactical frames in which quantifiers have a wide or a narrow scope differ from language to language. A fuller analysis of this issue should include a survey of restrictions on quantifier scope in doctrinal Nahuatl. However, such an analysis goes well beyond the purpose of this essay.

[24] Instead of widening the scope of *cē* with a syntactical modification, Bautista resorted to a commonplace for frustrated colonial grammarians. Taking Latin grammar as grid, he blamed this ambiguity on the absence of gender marking in Nahuatl, and noted that there was no ambiguity in the Latin due to gender suffixes (Bautista Viseo 1600, 52r).

[25] The Dominicans were somewhat misled on both counts. First of all, while *teōtlācatl* is indeed a neologism, the etymologically related term *Tlācateōtzin* ("Honorable Human Deity") was the proper name of the second ruler of Tlatelolco and the son of Quaquapitzahuac, according to Nahua chronicler Chimalpahin (Schroeder 1997, 59, 111–15). Secondly, *teōtlācatl* literally means "divine human being", not "divine person", a fact that leads the Dominican proposal away from any direct connection with the Christian rhetorical use of the term "person".

[26] Fonds Mexicain 303, 74v, 75r. It is unclear why Perez de la Fuente chose the connective *-til-*; other feasible, more regular options were *Yēi-ti-yōtl* or *Yēi-ca-yōtl*.

[27] An early appreciation of the linguistic data contained in Nahua wills is found in Karttunen and Lockhart (1976), and the social data found in these sources are judiciously employed in Cline and León-Portilla (1984) and in Lockhart 1992. Two recent publications that showcase the richness of the linguistic, social and economic data found in Mesoamerican and Andean colonial indigenous wills are Restall and Kellogg (1998) and Rojas et al. (1999).

[28] AHAM, Box 1, No. 1, 1r: Testament of Juan Crisóstomo from Santa Bárbara Xolalpa, 14 May 1701.

[29] AHAM, Box 23, No. 343: Testament of Ambrosio Lorenzo from San Bartolomé Tlatilolco, October 23, 1715. AHAM, Box 24, no. 359, Testament of Francisco Pedro, 8 May 1737, omits the clause "three honorable Persons".

[30] The following examples from eighteenth-century wills are taken from Lockhart (1992, 553).

[31] The usual phrasing is *y*[n] *notlalnacayo yhuan yc ninolpitias yn i*cordon*tzin ynotlaçotatzin* San Francisco, "I will have my corpse tied with the cord of my dear father Saint Francis." For an example, see AHAM, Box 1, no. 1.

[32] For a summary of the legal mechanisms involved in the prosecution of idolaters in Central Mexico, see Greenleaf (1965; 1985) and Tavárez (1999).

[33] Molina 1571, 92 v. There is also the variant *teciuhtlazani*.

[34] AHAM, Box 15, no. 215, 1r–v.

[35] *Tē-pil-ton* means "somebody's little child"; its minimal pair *tepil-ton* means "small vagina" (Molina 1571, 103r).

[36] Derrida's theory about the radical difference between orality and the written sign rests on a Heideggerian survey of the properties of writing which spans from Plato's *Phaedrus* to Rousseau's *Essai sur l'Origine des Langues* (Derrida 1967). However, one of his crucial assumptions—the absence of linguistic signs prior to the emergence of alphabetic writing—is based on a Greco-Latin notion of writing which excludes, in both historical and epistemic terms,

Mesoamerican writing systems. An incipient "Mesoamericanist" critique of Derrida's thesis appeared in Mignolo (1996).

[37] Rafael (1988, 44–54) argues that the Spanish rejection of the Tagalog pre-colonial writing system (*baybayin*) was motivated by an epistemic drive to control the production of the "voice" through an alphabet, an argument rooted in Derrida's notion of logocentrism rather than in an exhaustive survey of textual and linguistic evidence. An alternative hypothesis would be that the *baybayin* in fact reflected Tagalog phonological categories, and that the Spanish grammarians, constrained as they were by Latin grammatical and phonological categories, could not discern the logic of the Tagalog writing system and preferred to replace it. Tagalog in fact seems to have what linguists call "natural classes": that is, one or more vowels in a given word may change if they are preceded or followed by a word containing vowels from the same "natural class". Since the Tagalog script assumed a native speaker's knowledge of these phonological changes, it did not bother to make them explicit—a feature that troubled Spanish grammarians to no end. This explanation would in fact dissolve "the rift between a written word and its vocal reproduction" which existed, according to Rafael (1988, 53), in the *baybayin* script. It should be noted that one cannot dismiss the common linguistic analytical terms "phonological category" and "natural class" as mere manifestations of the omnipresence of Greco-Roman logocentric thought without entering into a circular argument whose drive leads exactly nowhere.

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Nahuatl document box, no. 4b: Testament in Nahuatl by Agustín Pedro, from San Cristóbal (near Toluca), 11 November 1732. 1 f.

Nahuatl document box, no. 6: Testament in Nahuatl by Pedro Pablo, from Santa Clara, 3 February 1694. 1 f.

Box 1, no. 1: Testament in Nahuatl by Juan Crisóstomo, from Santa Bárbara Xolalpa, 14 May 1701, translated into Spanish. 1 f.

Box 2, no. 14:	Testament in Nahuatl by Pascual de los Reyes, from San Sebastián, 26 July 1703. 1 f.
Box 4, no. 49:	Testament in Nahuatl by Maria Estrada Morales, from Santiago, 10 May 1707. 1 f.
]Box 5, no. 55:	Testament in Nahuatl by Pascual Francisco, from San Juan Baptista, 21 December 1710. 1 f.
Box 18, no. 267:	Testament in Nahuatl by Isabel María, widow of Marcos Francisco, from Santa Clara Cozcatlan, 3 November 1731. 1 f.
Box 20, no. 299:	Testament in Nahuatl by Luis Francisco, from Santa Clara, 7 August 1731. 1 f.
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