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## THE PASSION ACCORDING TO THE WOODEN DRUM: THE CHRISTIAN APPROPRIATION OF A ZAPOTEC RITUAL GENRE IN NEW SPAIN\*

### INTRODUCTION

S ometime after the summer of 1703, a strange traveler journeyed to several Zapotec-speaking communities nestled in the rugged geography of Villa Alta—an *alcaldía mayor* northeast of Oaxaca City in New Spain. He wore a pectoral ornament around his neck—a gift from the Benedictine friar Ángel Maldonado, a newly appointed bishop who had arrived in Oaxaca in July 1702—and was received throughout Villa Alta with “great noise and expressions of joy.”<sup>1</sup> Upon his arrival in each locality, he would gather the townspeople and proclaim an offer of amnesty from the bishop: in exchange for registering a collective confession about traditional ritual practices at the administrative seat of San Ildefonso, and turning in their ritual implements—such as alphabetic ritual texts and wooden cylindrical drums—each Zapotec community would receive a general amnesty from ecclesiastical prosecution for idolatry. The identity of Maldonado’s messenger added a note of urgency to these proclamations—after all, he was one of 32 defendants convicted of insubordination, murder, and idolatry after a 1700 riot in San Francisco Cajonos that resulted in the execution of two informants who had denounced an unorthodox celebration to the resident Dominicans. In January 1702, 15 of these rebels had been hanged and quar-

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<sup>1</sup> This vivid detail was provided in a report to the Crown written circa 1710 against Maldonado by Antonio de Torres, Procurator General of the Dominican Order in Oaxaca, Archivo General de Indias (AGI) México 880. Although Maldonado wrote a point-by-point rebuttal of this report, he remained suspiciously silent on the subject of this most peculiar emissary.

tered after being sentenced to death without appeal, and their remains had been placed along the main road to Oaxaca.<sup>2</sup> The remaining 17 defendants were given a suspended death sentence, but Maldonado obtained a commutation from the Audiencia, tried 11 of them for idolatry, and selected one of the former “teachers of idolatry” to proclaim his clemency across the region.

Bishop Maldonado’s innovative approach to idolatry eradication, which he also pursued through two visits he made to Villa Alta between 1702 and 1704, triggered an unprecedented native response. Between September 1704 and January 1705, the elected officials of 15 Bijanos Zapotec, 27 Cajonos Zapotec, 26 Nextizo Zapotec, 29 Mixe and 7 Chinantec towns—representing a total native population of about 60,000, according to Maldonado—journeyed to San Ildefonso to register a communal confession about their local ritual observances before Joseph de Aragón y Alcántara, one of the most experienced idolatry extirpators in the diocese. Many, but not all, of the Zapotec officials also surrendered 103 booklets (*cuadernos*) containing alphabetic texts in Cajonos, Nextizo, and Bijanos Zapotec. 99 of these booklets contained, among other writings, a list of each of the 260 day names in the Zapotec ritual calendar—called *piyè* in Valley Zapotec and *biyè* in Villa Alta—which was similar in structure to the 260-day divinatory day counts in other Mesoamerican societies.<sup>3</sup> The authors of this textual genre called it “the time count of our ancestors and fathers,” or *biyè xotao xoci reo*. The remaining four booklets contain alphabetic transcriptions of 15 Christian songs and 22 songs devoted to local Zapotec ancestors and deities that were performed to the beat of a wooden, two-tone cylindrical drum—known as *nicachi* in Zapotec and *teponaztli* in Nahuatl (see Figure 1). These texts, along with the better known Maya books of Chilam Balam, are the two largest extant corpus of clandestine ritual texts produced by native authors in colonial Spanish America. Therefore, their potential to illuminate the clandestine realms of ritual and writing practices in colonial indigenous communities is rather extraordinary.

If Maldonado had followed habitual procedure regarding the confiscated collections of “diabolical characters,” he would have staged a public burning of texts—a strategy that idolatry extirpators such as Gonzalo Curiel and Gon-

<sup>2</sup> See Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de Oaxaca (AHAO), Mártires de Cajonos, Exp. S-4, pp. 615-631, and Eulogio Gillow, *Apuntes históricos sobre la idolatría e introducción del cristianismo en Oaxaca* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, [1889] 1990), pp. 174-181.

<sup>3</sup> For an influential appraisal of the Zapotec calendar and Zapotec religion, see Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). For a detailed discussion of recent developments in the study of the Zapotec ritual calendar and Pre-Columbian Zapotec writing, see Javier Urcid, *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing. Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology*, Number 34 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001).

Pa to con ton toco co tim to coton to  
 quithi tin quithi tin quithi 190 <sup>664</sup> <sup>664</sup>  
 Cosan to pa pa beyoni la chi' cuina  
 colahui da xini nazoma bios xoa  
 ni queze laonyo bezaha la chi' loo qui  
 a li bene a thi xi' lah ni cui na be fao  
 ayao ayau coola o d'iza beani loxi  
 nah nazoma goxan xini nazoma  
 bios Roani queze laonyo bezoala  
 chi' loo quia li bene a thi xi' lah ni  
 cuina be fao ayao ayau go dice  
 queog beoni zah naxi lee ya ya  
 hui li chi' bios bezah la chi' loo quia  
 li bene a thi xi' lah ni cui na be fao  
 ayahu ayau to la uini chi' fak  
 que la li xi' quiza bios heag li la chi' qui  
 li bene a thi xi' lah ni cui na <sup>be</sup> fao  
 ayao ayau lah lah ni chi' sa que la  
 li xi' quiza bios gapa tza hui bene  
 a thi ayao ayau = fo li xini bios  
 xocego xi' que la h la chi' go xaca  
 ce zexo la tem coomia que ni bene a thi  
 ayao ayau

Figure 1: The entire Nextizo Zapotec text of Song 1 from Booklet 102. AGI México 882, 664r. (Illustration courtesy of Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain).

zalo de Balsalobre had embraced in 1633, 1635, and 1654.<sup>4</sup> However, these texts were spared from the flames due to a conflict between the bishop and the Dominicans of Oaxaca regarding Maldonado's proposal to create eleven new curates in Villa Alta,<sup>5</sup> which led Maldonado to submit a voluminous dossier to the Council of the Indies in support of his request to the Crown. This dossier, which contained the Villa Alta collective confessions and the 103 booklets in no particular order, was eventually incorporated into the holdings of the Archive of the Indies in Seville as *legajo* 882 from the *Audiencia de México*.

While the general dynamics of this campaign and the contents of a few of the calendrical texts have been discussed elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> the Zapotec ritual songs transcribed in Booklets 100, 101, 102, and 103 have never been published or translated. These songs are not merely archaic tokens of Zapotec colonial devotions. Since they are perhaps the only surviving transcriptions of ritual genres that were performed collectively in Mesoamerican communities during the seventeenth century, their study and translation will make a contribution in three separate domains of inquiry: native intellectual responses to colonial evangelization projects, the analysis of a local religious sphere in colonial Spanish America, and the study of Mesoamerican calendrical and ritual practices. This essay discusses the contents of 15 Zapotec songs confiscated by Maldonado and presents a translation of one of them in Appendix 1, as a first stage in a long-term, multidisciplinary translation project that encompasses the entire Villa Alta ritual song corpus. In order to elucidate the contents of these songs, this analysis opens with a comparative glance at other Mesoamerican ritual song genres. After a discussion of the social context in which these songs were surrendered, the essay will turn to an appraisal of the relationship between the 15 Christian songs in Booklets 102 and 103 and the doctrinal Zapotec corpus through a discussion of rhetorical and lexical choices made by the songs' authors. Finally, this article asserts that an emerging colonial doctrinal genre—the

<sup>4</sup> See AGI Indiferente, vol. 3000, no. 217; Archivo General de la Nación, México (AGN) Inquisición, vol. 437, part I.

<sup>5</sup> See AGI México, vol. 881.

<sup>6</sup> See José Alcina Franch, *Calendario y religión entre los zapotecos* (Mexico: UNAM, 1993); idem, "Mapas y calendarios zapotecos; siglos XVI y XVII," *Historia del Arte en Oaxaca*, vol. 2 (Oaxaca: CONCA, Gobierno de Oaxaca, 1998), pp. 173-191; Arthur Miller, "Transformations of Time and Space: Oaxaca, Mexico, circa 1500-1700," in *Images of Memory. On Remembering and Representation*, eds. Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 141-175; idem, "Espacio, tiempo y poder entre los zapotecos de la sierra," *Acervos: Boletín de los Archivos y Bibliotecas de Oaxaca* 10:3 (1998), pp. 17-20; David Tavárez, "Colonial evangelization and native resistance: The interplay of native political autonomy and ritual practices in Villa Alta (New Spain), 1700-1704," *Interpreting Colonialism*, eds. Byron Wells and Philip Stewart (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 2004), pp. 209-230.

Zapotec *libana* (elegant speech)—resulted from two converging “horizons of expectations”<sup>7</sup>—the restrictions imposed by the structure of a preexisting (and “idolatrous”) Zapotec ritual genre known as *dij dola* (song), and the choices that had been made by several generations of Dominican doctrinal authors in order to refer to Christian entities and notions in a circumscribed register of language that may be termed “doctrinal Zapotec.”

#### CLANDESTINE TEXTUAL GENRES IN NEW SPAIN: AN INTRODUCTION

There exists a small but significant number of surviving colonial texts produced in a clandestine manner that hint at the diversity of ritual and devotional genres in Mesoamerican languages. The majority of these texts were composed in Yucatec Maya, and have been published in part or in whole in critical editions that present a variety of translation approaches and competing interpretations.<sup>8</sup> Although an impressive and unparalleled number of historical, doctrinal and devotional colonial Nahua genres have survived, various traditional genres—such as the formalized speeches called *huehuehtlahtolli* (Words of the Ancients) or the ritual songs called *cuicatl*—were carefully transcribed and amended by Christianized native authors and mendicant authors, and circulated with the implicit or explicit consent of ecclesiastical authorities. There are, however, a few examples of Nahua textual genres that were produced at a distance from the scrutiny of ecclesiastical or civil colonial authorities and for a primary audience of indigenous readers, and this group includes local historical narratives contained in *títulos primordiales*,<sup>9</sup> Christian devotional texts subject to limited scrutiny by ecclesiastical editors<sup>10</sup> or produced independently by members of Nahua confraternities,<sup>11</sup> and Nahua interpreta-

<sup>7</sup> This notion is discussed below, and is drawn from Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> See Ramón Arzápalo, *El ritual del los bacabes* (Mexico: UNAM, 1987); Alfredo Barrera Vásquez, *El libro de los Cantares de Dzitbalché* (Mexico: INAH, 1965), idem, *El libro de los libros de Chilam Balam* (Mexico: FCE, 1969); Munro Edmonson, *The ancient future of the Itza: The book of Chilam Balam of Tizimin* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); idem, *Heaven born Merida and its destiny: the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Ralph Roys, *Ritual of the Bacabs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965); idem, *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> See Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); Kevin Terraciano and Lisa Sousa, “The ‘Original Conquest’ of Oaxaca: Nahua and Mixtec Accounts of the Spanish Conquest,” *Ethnohistory* 50:2 (2003), pp. 349-400, and Stephanie Wood, *Transcending Conquest. Nahua Views of Spanish Colonial Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Louise Burkhart, “The Amanuenses Have Appropriated the Text: Interpreting a Nahuatl Song of Santiago,” in *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, ed. Brian Swann (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), pp. 339-355.

<sup>11</sup> Louise Burkhart, “The Voyage of Saint Amaro: A Spanish legend in Nahuatl Literature,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 4 (1995), pp. 29-57.

tions of the early modern European almanac genre known as *reportorio de los tiempos*.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, almost no transcriptions of Nahuatl ritual genres clearly regarded as idolatrous by ecclesiastics survive; the most significant exception is a corpus of 66 Nahuatl incantations—called *nahualtocaitl* (Shape-Changer Names)—transcribed by the parish priest Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón in the early seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup>

The Villa Alta song corpus represents two distinct ritual genres. In Booklet 100, the songs performed by ritual singers (called *belao*) are termed *dij dola*, which could be rendered as “song.”<sup>14</sup> This genre label may be applied to the 22 songs contained in Booklets 100 and 101, which are written in Cajonos Zapotec and make no overt reference to Christian entities. On the other hand, the designation *libana*—a word whose Valley Zapotec equivalent (*lipàana*) is glossed as “admonition” (26r), “courtly speech” (298v), “elegant dialogue” (316v), and “sermon” (324v) in the most exhaustive colonial Zapotec dictionary, compiled by the Dominican Friar Juan de Córdova<sup>15</sup>—is an explicit title for 3 of the 15 songs contained in Booklets 102 and 103, written in Nexitzo Zapotec.<sup>16</sup>

The Villa Alta testimonies suggest that the *dij dola* genre was performed throughout Villa Alta in the seventeenth century. In a testimony collected in November of 1704, the imprisoned diviners Fabián and Martín Nicolás described the communal ritual practices in their town of Santiago Laxopa as follows:

For these sacrifices, the town made arrangements so as to give us turkeys and little dogs for our sacrifices, and copal for censuring the idol. After having engaged in idolatry, we all went to play the teponastli drum, which is called

<sup>12</sup> Alfredo López Austin, “Un repertorio de los tiempos en idioma náhuatl,” *Anales de Antropología* 10 (1973) 285-296; David Tavárez, “La idolatría letrada: Un análisis comparativo de textos clandestinos rituales y devocionales en comunidades nahuas y zapotecas, 1613-1654,” *Historia Mexicana* 194, 49:2 (1999), pp. 197-252.

<sup>13</sup> J. Richard Andrews and Ross Hassig, *Treatise on the Heathen Institutions that Today Live Among the Indians Native to this New Spain (1629)* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984); Michael Coe and R. Whittaker, *Aztec Sorcerers in Seventeenth-Century Mexico* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> See Juan de Córdova, *Vocabulario en lengua Çapoteca* (Mexico: Pedro de Ocharte and Antonio Ricardo, 1578), p. 69v, where the Valley Zapotec expressions *tij*, *ticha tij*, and *tij tólani* are translated as “song.” The element *tòla* is included in the verb *tòllaya*, which meant both “I beat on drums” (ibid., 44r), and “I sing” (ibid., 70v). There may be a semantic link between this term and a different item with similar spelling, *tòla*, which in Pre-Columbian times designated pieces of straw that were used to draw blood from one’s tongue as a sacrifice before a Zapotec priest (*pigana*). *Tòla* was recruited by the Dominicans as the translation for the term “sin” in Valley Zapotec (ibid., 228v).

<sup>15</sup> Córdova, *Vocabulario*, 1578.

<sup>16</sup> One of this songs, devoted to God the Father, contains the variant “song and elegant speech” (*dij libana*) as a genre designation (AGI México 882, Booklet 103).

nicachis [sic] in our Zapotec language; while people got drunk, some of us sang and played rattles, and everyone danced to the beat of a turtle shell—men and women both, as it always has been and still is done in all this jurisdiction and in other provinces, due to the lack of Fathers and parish priests, who have not yet uprooted all these evil things, which we have not stopped practicing since the conquest.<sup>17</sup>

All of these instruments—the cylindrical drum, the rattles and the tortoise shell, along with the standing drum and the whistles—are traditional Mesoamerican musical instruments associated with communal ritual singing and dancing by Diego de Landa and Sánchez de Aguilar in Yucatan, and by Acosta, Motolinia, Pérez de Ribas, and other authors among the Nahuatl.<sup>18</sup> Some of these communal ritual songs were intoned to the beat of the cylindrical drum—called *nicachi* in Zapotec, *teponaztli* in Nahuatl, and *tunkul* in Yucatec Maya—and carried a label derived from the generic term for “song”—*cuicatl* in Nahuatl, and *kay* in Yucatec Maya. It should be noted that, besides the documentation that emerged from Maldonado’s 1704 extirpation campaign, there exist few specific references to the social contexts in which the Zapotec *dij dola* were performed. One exception is Friar Francisco de Burgoa’s description of the wedding ceremony held for one of Yanhuitlán’s noble ladies; during this occasion, the Dominican author notes, the attending Mixtec and Zapotec lords “came out performing the dance of the *teponaztli*.”<sup>19</sup>

The Zapotec *dij dola* corpus bears some resemblance to two other corpora of colonial Mesoamerican ritual songs: a corpus of *cuicatl* now known as *Cantares Mexicanos*, 91 songs transcribed between 1550 and 1585 by Nahuatl elites in the Valley of Mexico, and the *Cantares de Dzitbalché*, 15 *kay* (songs), transcribed in late eighteenth-century Yucatec Maya orthography in the town of Dzitbalché in Campeche.<sup>20</sup> However, one should resist the temptation to treat these series of ritual genres and subgenres as equivalent or interchangeable. A comparative assessment of these genres may benefit from Hanks’ approach to the notion of genre, developed through an analysis of sixteenth-century elite Yucatec Maya texts: he argues that genres “can be defined as the historically specific conventions and ideals according to which authors compose discourse and audiences receive it.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> AGI Mexico 882, 296v-297r

<sup>18</sup> John Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 72-74.

<sup>19</sup> Francisco de Burgoa, *Geográfica descripción*, vol. I (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, [1674] 1989), p. 371.

<sup>20</sup> See Barrera Vázquez, *Cantares de Dzitbalché*, 1965.

<sup>21</sup> William F. Hanks, “Discourse genres in a theory of practice,” *American Ethnologist* 14:4 (1987), p. 670.

Thus, if there exist any overarching conventions in Mesoamerican ritual song genres, they must be rendered explicit in order to perform a useful comparison. Two of the most significant conventions that the Zapotec and Nahuatl song genres share is a pairing of particular songs or stanzas with specific percussion patterns, and the performative definition of stanza boundaries. Each of the 15 Zapotec songs of Villa Alta with Christian content begin, just like the *Cantares Mexicanos*, with an alphabetic transcription of a percussion pattern that employs the syllables *ti*, *qui*, *co* and *to*. Moreover, in both the Nahuatl and the Zapotec compositions, the end of each stanza is marked with a chain of syllables with no lexical content—*ayao*, *hiya*, *hoya*, etc.—which were sung during the performance; occasionally, the stanza end is marked by a well-formed sentence—such as “Sing, you brothers” (*in tla xicuicacan annicahuan*) in Song 67 from *Cantares Mexicanos*, or *Santa Maria alleluya* in Song 3 from Booklet 102. Both elements seem anchored in a larger performative framework that defines songs and song sections through specific percussion patterns, and that separates stanzas—the basic linguistic unit in these genres—through a recurring phrase or nonsensical syllable group. However, these two features—percussion patterns and end-of-stanza nonsensical syllables—do not appear in the Yucatec songs; the closest equivalent of a nonsensical syllable is the use of *ay ay* in the middle and end of one stanza in Song 8 of Dzitbalché. On the other hand, unlike the *Cantares Mexicanos*—which were transcribed by highly educated Nahuas who had an association with Franciscan and/or Jesuit authors and teachers—both the songs of Dzitbalché and Zapotec Booklets 100 and 101 were probably composed and transcribed by local authors, and feature repeated references to Yucatec or Zapotec deities that were not expurgated by any editor.

Karttunen and Lockhart<sup>22</sup> and Bierhorst<sup>23</sup> have argued that the Nahuatl *Cantares Mexicanos* feature a stanza structure that combines recurring combinations of verses in a predictable pattern. In particular, Bierhorst described three stanza elements: a first section—which contains new information, and which he calls “verse,”—a second, highly repetitive section, which he designate as “refrain,” and a third element, which he calls “litany.” However, all of these three designations come from poetic traditions with genre conventions that greatly differ from those of Mesoamerican song genres. In order to stress the performative orientation of the Villa Alta songs, a modification of Bierhorst’s scheme is employed in Appendix 1. Since any phrase that is not used to perform a stanza’s boundary (a “boundary marker”) either intro-

<sup>22</sup> Frances Karttunen and James Lockhart, “La estructura de la poesía náhuatl vista por sus variantes,” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 14 (1980), pp. 15-65.

<sup>23</sup> Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 1985, p. 42.

duces a new theme or repeats one or more previous statements, the former is designated as “theme,” and the latter, as “refrain.” The cyclical alternation of new topics with recurring refrains suggest that genre expectations do not call for a completely uniform refrain pattern, and imply that improvisation played a role in the performance of these songs.

ECCLESIASTICAL MEASURES AGAINST ZAPOTEC RITUAL PRACTICES  
IN VILLA ALTA, OAXACA

Villa Alta was a colonial jurisdiction located to the northeast of the Oaxaca Valley administered by a resident *alcalde mayor* in the town of Villa Alta of San Ildefonso, and it encompassed about 104 towns inhabited by speakers of Zapotec, Chinantec and Mixe. While each Zapotec town used a local speech variant, there existed dialectal differences between the linguistic groups of Cajonos, Bijanos, and Nexitzo Zapotec, which have subsisted until the present. This division is confirmed by a recent glottochronological study<sup>24</sup> and is essential to my analysis. Linguistic and residential compartmentalization are important factors in the social history of the region. Villa Alta’s geography is dominated by a mountain landscape, and human settlements have traditionally been dispersed throughout valleys and piedmonts. Such a landscape placed substantial restrictions on travel and communication among the various Zapotec communities of Villa Alta, and between them and the Valley of Oaxaca. Furthermore, the Zapotec towns of Villa Alta constituted a rather loose group of independent communities whose interactions were influenced by commercial relations, their subordination to several *cabeceras de doctrina*, and competing claims among neighboring communities regarding the possession or use of lands and forests.<sup>25</sup>

Ever since the first stages of colonization, the Zapotec Sierra was regarded as a region in which doctrinal projects faced native hostility. In Burgoa’s words, in Villa Alta, “due to its roughness and inhospitableness, the errors were harsher, and the barbarity was less civilized; the land was more receptive to idolatry, and the people were more prone to superstition.”<sup>26</sup> The Dominican Friar Pedro Guerrero began the first known systematic idolatry extirpation campaign in the region in 1560, when he convinced scores of natives to turn in their idols, achieving his objectives through

<sup>24</sup> Juan José Rendón, *Diversificación de las lenguas zapotecas* (Mexico: CIESAS, 1995), pp. 157-199. Terrence Kaufman’s recent work, cited below, seems to confirm these groupings.

<sup>25</sup> For a thorough discussion of the establishment of colonial institutions in Villa Alta, see John K. Chance, *The Conquest of the Sierra* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

<sup>26</sup> Francisco de Burgoa, *Palestra Historial* (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, [1670] 1989), p. 96.

indiscriminate use of the whip.<sup>27</sup> The punitive measures taken by the Dominicans of Villa Alta, Tetiquipa, and the Mixteca motivated the censure of the Crown and the *Audiencia* of Mexico in 1562,<sup>28</sup> and again in 1576.<sup>29</sup>

During the seventeenth century, the Dominicans of Villa Alta confronted three major challenges: the scarcity of doctrinal literature written in Cajonos or Nexitzo Zapotec; the small number of resident priests; and the geographical and pragmatic difficulties of making regular visits to all the communities assigned to each main town with a resident minister. In spite of the establishment of six Dominican doctrinal districts (*cabeceras de doctrina*) with resident ministers between 1570 and 1623, Villa Alta had only one secular curate until these districts were secularized due to the efforts of Bishop Maldonado. Thus, Villa Alta hardly experienced the gradual insertion of secular priests into formerly mendicant parishes throughout the seventeenth century elsewhere in the dioceses of Oaxaca and Mexico. Secular priests played an important role as extirpators of idolatries, however. Indigenous subjects had been removed from the Inquisition's jurisdiction when the first inquisitorial tribunal was established in New Spain after 1571.<sup>30</sup> It was then that bishops, archbishops, and their *provisores de indios* began granting jurisdiction over idolatry and sorcery accusations against natives to a select group of secular priests with relevant linguistic competence.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, bishops Friar Tomás de Monterroso and Nicolás del Puerto began taking more energetic measures against idolatry. Bishop Monterroso's concern for the idolatrous tendencies in Oaxaca was such that he wrote a long epistle to Pope Clement X in 1676, in which he reported a stern campaign against idolatry conducted in 1665, and sought permission to whip recidivist ritual specialists.<sup>31</sup> In fact, an arrangement that under other circumstances would have been regarded as a violation of ecclesiastical jurisdiction allowed the Villa Alta *alcaldes may-*

<sup>27</sup> AGI Mexico 358, exp. 3 bis.

<sup>28</sup> AGI Mexico 336 A, 76v-77r.

<sup>29</sup> AGI Mexico 69, ramo 4, no. 47

<sup>30</sup> See Solange Alberro, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571-1700* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988); Richard E. Greenleaf, "The Inquisition and the Indians of New Spain: A Study in Jurisdictional Confusion," *The Americas* 22:2 (1965), pp. 138-166; idem, *The Mexican Inquisition of the Sixteenth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969); and idem, *Inquisición y sociedad en el México colonial* (Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas, 1985). For a comparative periodization of idolatry extirpation campaigns in the dioceses of Mexico and Oaxaca, see David Tavárez, "Ciclos punitivos, economías del castigo, y estrategias indígenas ante la extirpación de idolatrías en Oaxaca y México," in *Nuevas perspectivas sobre el castigo de la heterodoxia en la Nueva España. Siglos XVI-XVIII*, ed. Ana de Zaballa (Bilbao: Servicio Editorial Universidad País Vasco, 2005), pp. 37-56.

<sup>31</sup> Archivo Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Segreteria di Stato Vescovi e Prelati, no. 62.

ores to preside over a dozen trials against native ritual specialists between 1665 and 1736. This group of civil extirpators included, at the very least, four *alcaldes mayores*: Villegas y Sandoval Castro,<sup>32</sup> Velasco y Castilla, Castillo Mondragón, and Muñoz de Castilblanque.<sup>33</sup>

Isidro Sariñana, del Puerto's successor, was the first bishop of Oaxaca to support extirpation efforts with the establishment of a new punitive institution in Oaxaca City: a prison devoted to the permanent seclusion of recidivist idolaters which would be known as the *prisión perpetua de idólatras*<sup>34</sup>—a “perpetual prison” erected between 1688 and 1692 with financial support from the Crown.<sup>35</sup> However, the prison building barely survived Oaxaca's 1696 earthquake, and Maldonado, Sariñana's successor, rebuilt this prison on a lot behind the Dominican monastery of Santo Domingo,<sup>36</sup> at the same time that he undertook his offensive against traditional ritual practices in Villa Alta.

#### THE PROVENANCE OF THE VILLA ALTA SONG CORPUS

While the provenance of Booklets 100 (18 ff) and 102 (10 ff) may be easily ascertained, Booklets 102 (2 ff) and 103 (7 ff), which are discussed below, must be assigned a tentative provenance. Booklet 100 contains 13 songs, and belonged to Fernando Lopes, from Lachirioag, who bought it from Pedro de Bargas, from the town of Betaza.<sup>37</sup> Booklet 101 has 9 songs, and belonged to Pedro Gonzalo, also from Lachirioag. The songs from Booklets 100 and 101 bear no specific reference to Christian entities; in fact, they propitiate a veritable constellation of local founding ancestors, regional

<sup>32</sup> Villegas y Sandoval Castro presided over three trials: Archivo del Poder Judicial del Estado de Oaxaca (APJO), Villa Alta Criminal 19, APJO, Villa Alta Criminal 22, and APJO, Villa Alta Criminal 23. For an analysis of Criminal 23, see David Tavárez, “Idolatry as an ontological question: Native consciousness and juridical proof in colonial Mexico,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 6:2 (2002), pp. 114-139.

<sup>33</sup> APJO, Villa Alta Criminal 25, AGI México 357, Archivio Generale dell'Ordine dei Predicatori (AGOP) XIII, no. 12760, APJO, Villa Alta Criminal 49.

<sup>34</sup> Sariñana may have been inspired by inquisitorial precedent. In Mexico City, in the early seventeenth century, the Holy Office erected a *prisión perpetua* for proselytizing Jews and heretics; see Alberro, *Inquisición*, 1988, pp. 203-205. In the Archbishopric of Lima, a prison for idolaters called *Casa de Santa Cruz* was finished in 1618, and ceased to exist as such before 1639; see Iris Gareis, “Repression and cultural change: The ‘Extirpation of Idolatry’ in colonial Peru,” in *Spiritual Encounters: Interactions Between Christianity and Native Religions in Colonial America*, eds. N. Griffiths, and F. Cervantes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 234.

<sup>35</sup> AGI Mexico 357.

<sup>36</sup> AHAO, sección Libros de Cabildo, años 1696-1702.

<sup>37</sup> Lachirioag town officials identified Fernando López as one of the three leading “teachers of idolatries” in their community, and López stated he had bought his songbook from Pedro de Bargas of Betaza. According to the testimony of Pedro's son Fabián de Bargas, his father refused to teach him about divination practices, arguing that he was afraid of being discovered as a practitioner, and decided instead to pass on his ritual knowledge to his oldest son (AGI México 882).

deities, and Zapotec deities that had been worshipped throughout Oaxaca at least since Postclassic times.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, Booklet 102 contains 3 brief songs: a song celebrating the sacrifice of God ‘s only child (6 stanzas; this song’s entire text appears in Figure 1), a song about the Virgin Mary (5 stanzas), and a song entitled “Elegant Speech about Saint Francis” (*libana queani* S[an] Fran[cis]co, 4 stanzas). Booklet 103 contains 72 stanzas, divided into 12 songs of variable length that address redemption, the passion of Christ, the mysteries of the Virgin, and celebrate Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Three Wise Men, God the Father, and Saint John the Baptist. A crucial dialectal feature of Booklets 102 and 103 is the usage of the voiceless alveolar affricate (IPA [ts], Americanist [ç]) in Zapotec words such as *guetze* (town) or *tzela* (a coordinating conjunction), which characterizes colonial and contemporary dialects of Nexitzo Zapotec. In colonial Cajonos Zapotec—the dialect in which Booklets 100 and 101 were written—this phoneme is realized as the voiceless alveopalatal affricate (IPA [tʃ], Americanist [č]) in the same words, yielding the orthographic variants *gueche* and *chela*. These two variants define an isogloss that divided colonial central Villa Alta into two minimally defined linguistic communities: the Nexitzo variants to the north and west, and the Cajonos variants to the south.

Since it can be established that Booklet 102 and 103 were composed by speakers of Nexitzo Zapotec, their provenance may be surmised through indirect evidence. In the records produced during Bishop Maldonado’s campaign, there is only one instance in which the residents of a Nexitzo Zapotec town mention the surrender of “wooden drum songs”: the confession in behalf of the people of Yalahui. On November 24, 1704, a communal confession signed by Yalahui town officials was presented to Judge Aragón y Alcántara. This confession stated that Juan Martín, son of Yalahui mayor Miguel Martín, owned “a booklet with *teponaztli* songs”; it was also reported that both Miguel and another town official had consulted this booklet. The Yalahui officials also confessed that no communal sacrifices had taken place in their town after the deaths of two of their “teachers of idolatry” 20 years earlier.<sup>39</sup> While Juan and Miguel Martín may have been the last known owners of Booklets 102 and 103, it cannot be asserted that they were the authors of these songs. Although both booklets appear to have been com-

<sup>38</sup> The next stage in this translation project will examine the local worship of these deities through the cross-referencing of the Villa Alta song and calendrical corpus with existing ethnohistorical and linguistic sources from the Valley of Oaxaca and the Sola region.

<sup>39</sup> AGI 882, 430r.

posed by two similar hands, it may well be the case that these are copies of texts that were first composed in the mid-seventeenth century, or even earlier. In fact, the recurrence of highly irregular orthographic representations of Spanish lexical items—such as *xanata Maria* for *Santa Maria*, *zodio* for *judío*, *Ahisaso guiristo* for *Jesu Christo*, *balacisco* for *Francisco*, and *hesarusale* for *Jerusalem*—suggests that, at some point in the transcription history of these texts, native speakers of Zapotec made copies of these songs away from the direct supervision of Dominicans.

#### APPROPRIATING A ZAPOTEC GENRE: RHETORICAL STRATEGIES AND TRANSLATION CHOICES

I have argued elsewhere that, while mendicant authors approached doctrinal translation choices with great care and deliberation, the native reception of these translations was highly variable, and could be particularly impervious to neologisms and descriptions, as evidenced by the emergence of various translations of the notion of the Trinity into Nahuatl.<sup>40</sup> Given the paucity of direct evidence about the likely owners of Booklet 102 and 103, or about their use in a collective performance, the content, rhetorical and translation choices represented by these songs must be evaluated using internal evidence. In order to place this evidence within a broad sociocultural and linguistic context, a framework that illuminates the rhetorical character of these songs must be proposed. In the following section, such a framework is advanced using various lines of evidence: the depiction of basic tenets of the faith in Nexitzo Zapotec testaments, the rhetorical choices made in various Nexitzo and Valley Zapotec influential doctrinal texts, and specific comparisons of the translation choices used in Booklets 102 and 103 with similar elements found in a broad array of genres—doctrinal texts, wills, letters, and petitions—written in colonial variants of Cajonos, Nexitzo, and Valley Zapotec.<sup>41</sup> The sections below discuss three broad themes: the discursive

<sup>40</sup> David Tavárez, "Naming the Trinity: From Ideologies of Translation to Dialectics of Reception in Colonial Nahua Texts, 1547-1771," *Colonial Latin American Review* 9:1 (2000), pp. 21-47.

<sup>41</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from the Zapotec are my own. A rather unpolished translation of Booklet 102 appeared in David Tavárez, "De Cantares zapotecos a 'libros del demonio': La extirpación de discursos doctrinales híbridos en Villa Alta," *Acervos: Boletín de los Archivos y Bibliotecas de Oaxaca* 17 (2000), pp. 19-27, but the present version must be regarded as a vast improvement. In order to produce a translation of Booklets 102 and 103, three major colonial Nexitzo and Cajonos Zapotec sources were employed: the only known colonial Nexitzo doctrinal imprint, Francisco Pacheco de Silva, *Doctrina Christiana* (Mexico: Francisco X. Sánchez, 1687); Gaspar de los Reyes' *Arte de la Lengua Zapoteca Serrana*, (Oaxaca: Imprenta del Estado, [1704] 1891); and Juan Martín's *Vocabulario de la lengua Castellana y zapoteca nexitza* (Newberry Library (NEW), Ayer 1702, ca. 1696). I also consulted a selection of testaments, letters and petitions drafted between 1610 and 1786 in Cajonos and Nexitzo-speaking towns. The Valley Zapotec sources employed here—besides Juan de Córdova's

convergence of Christian and Zapotec notions about the cosmos, the depiction of Mary, and the portrayal of Christ's suffering.

#### COSMOLOGICAL REALMS IN COLONIAL ZAPOTEC GENRES

An appraisal of the basic intentions of the composers of Booklets 102 and 103 could begin with an inquiry about their portrayal of cosmological beliefs—a broad topic that encompasses various aspects of the interaction between cosmologies of Late Postclassic and early modern Christian origin. The latter set of beliefs remains, of course, much more accessible to us. A testament dated to June 1677 from the Nexitzo-speaking community of Yat-zona depicts the basic beliefs that Zapotec-speaking Christians were expected to be familiar with as mature adults in the following manner, with words of Spanish origin highlighted in italics:

Naha tza *miercoles* cochineag tza laça Beoh *Jonio de mil geciento sethenta* 1677 *anios* nigaa lichiya bida *alls. rexidor leni fiscal leni Escribano* Ronia *testamento* quea neda felipe baotista tzela naha riquebi lachi tao hua yela cochi lao xana reho *Dios* B.o yeeloo yela nabani quea niga yetze lao yoo tzela neda nacaya christiano bareaglij lachia toci *Dios* balij B.o leni bareaglij lachia

monumental *Vocabulario en lengua çapoteca* and *Arte en lengua çapoteca*, both from 1578—include Cristóbal de Agüero, *Misceláneo Espiritual en el idioma Zapoteco* (Mexico: Francisco Rodríguez Lupericio, 1666); Pedro de la Cueva, *Parábolas y exemplos sacados de las costumbres del campo* (Bibliothèque National de France [BNF], Collection Pinart, Fonds Américain 70, ca. 1600); Pedro de Feria, *Doctrina christiana en lengua castellana y çapoteca* (Mexico: Pedro Ocharte, 1567); Leonardo Levanto's *Catecismo de la doctrina christiana en lengua zapoteca* (Mexico: Ediciones Toledo, [1776] 1989); Alonso Martínez, *Manual breve y compendioso para empear a aprender lengua çapoteca* (John Carter Brown Library [JCB] Codex Ind. 70, [1633] 1872); Antonio Peñafiel, ed., *Gramática zapoteca de autor anónimo* (Oaxaca: Ediciones Toledo, 1981); and Juan Francisco Torralba's *Arte Zapoteco* (NEW, Ayer 1699, 1800). Contemporary sources include some recent works on contemporary Zapotec variants: Ines Butler, *Vocabulario zapoteco de Yat-zachi el Bajo* (Mexico: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano, 1997); Brook Lillehaugen, *The Categorical Status of Body Part Prepositions in Valley Zapotec Languages* (Master's thesis, Linguistics Department, UCLA, 2003); Rebecca Long and Sofronio Cruz, *Diccionario zapoteco de San Bartolomé Zoogocho, Oaxaca* (Coyoacán: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano, 1999); Filemón López, Filemón, and Ronaldo Newberg, *La conjugación del verbo zapoteco: zapoteco de Yalálag* (Mexico: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano, 1990); and Pamela Munro et al., *San Lucas Quiavini Zapotec Dictionary* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, 1999). My approach to Feria and Córdoba was greatly facilitated by George Aaron Broadwell, "The conjunctions of Colonial and Modern Valley Zapotec: Evidence from Feria (1567)," (Paper delivered at the American Society for Ethnohistory Meetings, Quebec City, 2002); Terrence Kaufman, *Proto-Zapotec reconstructions* (Manuscript, 1994–2004, 77 pp.); Thomas Smith-Stark, Sergio Bogard and Ausencia López Cruz, *Searchable electronic file of Juan de Córdoba's Vocabulario en lengua çapoteca* (Word Perfect 8, 7.7 MB, 1993); Thomas Smith-Stark, "La ortografía del *Vocabulario* de fray Juan de Córdoba," (Paper delivered at the III Conferencia de Estudios Oaxaqueños, Oaxaca City, 1998); and idem, "Dioses, sacerdotes, y sacrificio: Una mirada a la religión zapoteca a través del *Vocabulario en lengua Çapoteca* (1578) de Juan de Córdoba," in V. de la Cruz and M. Winter, eds., *La religión de los bini gula'sa'* (Oaxaca: Fondo Editorial IIEPO, 2001), pp. 89-195.

guiyona *persona* Beaca toci *sanctizima trinidad* leni bareaglij lachiya yogo *articulos mandamiento sacramento* yogo xiquitza *Dios* chita yela lij lachi tao hua cati goreenabania nigaa yetze lao yoo leni coyeaeglij lachiya xonasi dao *sancta maria* chia yehua yebaa [...]<sup>42</sup>

Today, on the day of *Wednesday*, on the eleventh day during the month of *June* of one thousand six hundred seventy, 1677 years, the *alcalde, regidor, fiscal* and *escribano* came here to my house, and I made my testament, I, Felipe Bautista. Now I perceive (my heart sees) my death before *God* deity, Lord of us all; my life ends here in the town on the land. Moreover, I was a Christian and I believed in a single true *God* deity, and I believed in the three *persons*, [which] all are a single one, and I believed in all the *articles, command, sacrament*, in all of *God's* riches, the fourteen truths, my heart did when I lived here in this world, and I believed in the Great Noble Lady *Saint Mary*, who is at the palace of the sky.

This brief statement reflects a number of basic Christian beliefs rendered in Nexitzo Zapotec—with the exception of the Ten Commandments and the Five Commandments of the Church, which were inserted in the Spanish gloss that accompanied this will—using routinized rhetorical expressions that appear throughout various Zapotec doctrinal genres. First of all, two separate realms for humans and Christian deities are clearly demarcated. The “Great Noble Lady Saint Mary” (*xonaxi dao sancta maria*), is said to reside in “the palace of the sky” (*yehua yebaa*), a doctrinal translation of the notion of the Christian heavenly kingdom that resembles the corresponding formula in colonial Mixtec “the kingdom (literally, ‘the mat, the seat’), the rulership in the sky” (*yuhui tayu toniñe andehui*).<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Felipe Bautista declares he lived on *yetze lao yoo*—a Zapotec expression that literally means “the community or town on the land,” and which refers to the inhabited surface of the earth, as opposed to the sky and the underworld. Ever since Feria’s 1567 *Doctrina*, the Valley Zapotec expressions *gueche la yoo*, or the variant *quela queche la yoo*—glossed as “worldly things”—was used to denote the World, in a Christian devotional sense, in contraposition with Heaven—a realm above us inhabited by the major actors in Christian narratives. Thus, at the beginning of his *Doctrina*, Feria (4r) warned its readers, “You [shall not] follow all the vices and delights that are at the town on the land” (*checolagalo quita loo quela huexihuy quela coquite tuatij gueche la yoo*), reminded them a few pages later (11r) that “God, Lord of us all, is he who created all the sky, the town on the land, and the great waters (the

<sup>42</sup> APJO, Villa Alta Civil 25, 28r.

<sup>43</sup> Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 298.

ocean)” (*ni pezaa B[ejoannana] Dios q[uita]à quiebaa, que[ch]e la yoo, loo niça too la*), and stated that “the true lineage lord of both the sky and the land is Our Lord God” (*coquij nalij quiebaa la, la yoo la, xibejoa[n]nana Dios*). In contrast with the sky and the “town on the land,” a third realm—the underworld—was presented as one which belonged to the Devil. Thus, Feria informed his audience that they should count themselves lucky not to have been born “in old times, [when] the earth belonged to the devil” (*colaça loo xilayoo bezeloo*), for “if you died then, you would have gone to the underworld then” (*tebela niatito chicani, loo lij cabilla niyeto chicani, 23v*); furthermore, he characterized this underworld as “the home of the devil” (*lichi bezeloo, 62v*).

Certainly, this tripartite contrast between an upper realm, “this world,” and the underworld is not a novel one in devotional text, as it bears some similarity with the distinctions among being located “in the sky” (*ilhuicac*), “upon the land” (*tlalticpac*) or “at the land of the dead” (*mic-tlan*) frequently used in devotional Nahuatl texts. However, this tripartite distinction in doctrinal Zapotec referred to a cosmological order that was not exclusively Christian; in fact, it indexed a distinction among three realms that were seen, as late as 1704, as closely linked with the divinatory 260-day count by Zapotec ritual specialists in Villa Alta. The structure of this calendar is best understood as a series of cycles linked with specific cosmological realms. The main cycle in this calendar was composed by a pairing of a numeral between 1 and 13 with one of 20 day signs, which provide a unique identification for each of 260 consecutive days, forming an infinitely recurring cycle with no fixed beginning or end.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, each group of 13 consecutive days composed a calendrical unit known as *trecena* in Spanish, *cocij* in Valley Zapotec,<sup>45</sup> and *lani* in Cajonos and Nexitzo Zapotec, and the entire count thus contains 20 trecenas. In most Villa Alta calendars, each trecena was associated with one of three “houses”: either the “house of the sky” (*yoho eba*), the “house of earth” (*yoho leo*), or the “house of the underworld” (*yoo gabilla*).<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, this 260-day count also divided into 4 periods of 65 days each—called *piyê* and

<sup>44</sup> See Urcid, *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing*, 2001, for a full discussion of the reconstructed Zapotec 260-day calendar from late Formative to Classic times, and Alcina Franch, “Mapas y calendarios zapotecos,” 1998, for a tentative reconstruction of this calendar’s structure in colonial Villa Alta.

<sup>45</sup> Córdova, *Vocabulario*, 1578, 115v.

<sup>46</sup> Each of the 20 thirteen-day periods is linked with a revolving circuit through each of the three levels: Trecena 1 is associated with the House of Earth, Trecena 2 with the House of the Sky, Trecena 3 with the House of Earth, Trecena 4 with the House of the Underworld, Trecena 5 with the House of Earth, and so on until Trecena 20, yielding 10 trecenas associated with Earth, and 5 trecenas each linked to Sky and the Underworld.

characterized as a deity (*cocijo* or *pitao*) in Valley Zapotec,<sup>47</sup> and *goçio* in Cajonos and Nexitzo Zapotec—and each day was associated with one of four cardinal directions, which in the Villa Alta calendars were often transcribed as *xilla*, *zobi*, *chaba* / *tzaba*, and *niti*.

The best graphic representation of the Zapotec cosmos, as understood by colonial ritual specialists, is provided by a simplified sketch drawn by the anonymous authors<sup>48</sup> of Calendar 11, shown in Figure 2. This drawing shows the “house of the sky” (*yoo yaba*), separated by nine small circles—which represented levels or realms—from the “house of the town on the land” (*yoo yeche la yo*), which in turn was depicted as being nine circles away from the “house of the underworld (*yoo gabilla*). These succinct examples from a complex calendrical corpus indicate that, in Zapotec Villa Alta, “sky” (*yeba/yaba*), “town on the land” (*guetze/gueche lao yoo*), and “underworld” (*gabilla*) indexed three cosmological realms that were simultaneously inhabited—according to doctrinal Zapotec and to local calendrical knowledge—by both calendrical and Christian entities.

This ambivalent portrayal of the cosmos may explain why the first stanza in Booklet 102 (see Figure 1) stresses the Christian god’s ownership of “the town on the land”:

Booklet 102, Song 1, Stanza 1:

It was the Holy Father who begged God Himself for a mediator, called the beloved son of God, the Lord of the town on the land

You generously granted the true light to humankind: the servant of God Himself<sup>49</sup>  
ayao ayau

El santo papa *beyonilachij cuina bedao colahui La xini natzona Dios xoani guetze lao yo*

*bezahalachiloo qui[a] li beneachi xilani cuina bedao*  
ayao ayau

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 116r.

<sup>48</sup> Alcina Franch, in his *Calendario y religión entre los zapotecos*, p. 239, claims that Calendar 11 was turned in by the town officials of Santo Domingo Roayaga. However, since the current order of the calendars and the collective confessions in *legajo* 882 may have shifted since these materials were compiled in 1705, the only valid criteria for provenance are linguistic data and relevant annotations found in the calendars. The day list of Calendar 11 was written by a speaker of Cajonos Zapotec, and some annotations regarding auguries for the various days were written by a speaker of Nexitzo (or Bijanos) Zapotec. Since most of the calendars are written in either Cajonos or Nexitzo / Bijanos Zapotec, Calendar 11’s dialectal diversity suggests that it circulated across the Cajonos-non-Cajonos dialect boundary in southern Villa Alta.

<sup>49</sup> Alternative translation: “You, the servant of God Himself, generously granted the true light to humankind.

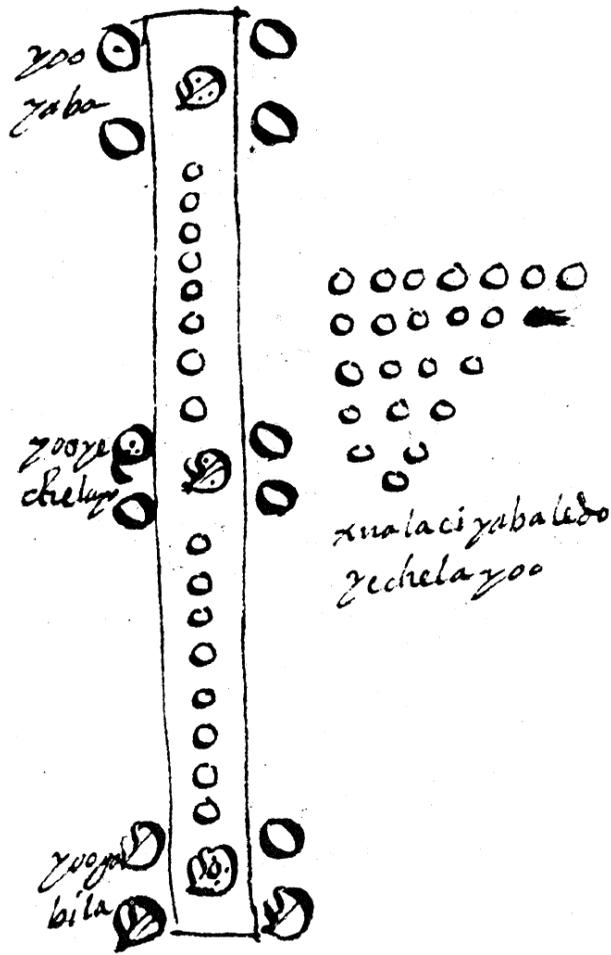


Figure 2: A late seventeenth-century depiction of the Zapotec cosmos. Villa Alta Calendar 11, AGI México 882, 384v. (Illustration courtesy of Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain).

The authors of this text chose a local variant of a hierarchical title to render God's rule over the world understandable to speakers of Nexitzo and Cajonos Zapotec: they used the term *xoa* (also written *xua*), glossed as *principal*, or local native ruler, as in the expression "all the town's *principales*" (yogo **xua** yeche), used in a document from the Cajonos-speaking town of Betaza.<sup>50</sup> God's ownership of the earthly realm is emphasized by the use of the third person pronoun *-ni* in the expression *xoa-ni guetze lao yo*.

<sup>50</sup> APJO, Villa Alta Criminal 117.

In fact, Booklets 102 and 103 repeatedly emphasize the return of various Christian entities—such as Jesus and the Virgin Mary—to the human world. Thus, Song 2 of Booklet 102 closes every stanza with the recurring refrain “You will return to Earth” (*gabij lao yo loy*) or “He/she/they will return to Earth” (*gabij lao yo ni*), as in the following stanza:

Booklet 102, Song 2, Stanza 5:

He is at the palace located in the sky<sup>51</sup>  
 with the Mother of Generous Giving  
 Oh, You shall return to Earth!  
 Santa M[ari]a alleloya

*chiaie yahui lani quebaa*  
*lao xina quela hue[ç]a lachij*  
*gabij lao yo e loy*  
 Santa M[ari]a alleloya

#### THE ZAPOTEC MARY

The authors of colonial Nahuatl, Zapotec, and Mixtec doctrinal texts emphasized the role of the Virgin Mary as mother of humankind’s savior, and exalted her compassion, and obeisance to God the Father. In fact, it could be argued that her qualities and importance to Christians were stressed to an unusual degree in these texts. Thus, Lockhart<sup>52</sup> has noted that Nahuatl devotional writings establish Mary’s role at a level “parallel to the father God”; on the other hand, Terraciano<sup>53</sup> emphasizes parallels between Mixtec depictions of God the Father and Mary as paramount deities, or even as a creator couple, in the tradition of the *yuhui tayu*—the joint rulership over a Mixtec community (*ñuu*) by a male-female pair who belonged to traditional lineages. Moreover, Burkhart<sup>54</sup> observes the range of socially prominent titles given to Mary

<sup>51</sup> In this song, the orthographic representation *lani* is somewhat ambivalent, as it may represent either a locative expression or a coordinating conjunction. The latter option would yield the translation “He is at the palace and [he is] in the sky.” However, the Villa Alta songs seem to employ *yahui lani quebaa* as a reified reference to the Christian heaven in syntactic contexts in which a coordinating conjunction would not be expected. A variant of this expression appears in the testament genre; the Yatzona will cited above (APJO, Villa Alta Civil 25, 1689) uses *chia yehua yebaa*, “she is at the palace of the sky,” and a 1721 will from Coyotepec (cited in Lillehaugen, *Categorical Status*, 2003, p. 41) has *tielilaachij guela nabanij selij lanij guehuij quijebaa*, “I believe in the eternal life located in the palace of the upper world.” As Lillehaugen observes, *lanij* was essentially a body part employed as a locative; thus, Córdoba, *Vocabulario*, 1578, 52r) translates “belly” as *làni*.

<sup>52</sup> James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 252.

<sup>53</sup> Terraciano, *Colonial Mixtec*, 2001, p. 301.

<sup>54</sup> Louise Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature* (Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, SUNY-Albany, 2001), p. 11.

in Nahua doctrinal texts, which call her “noblewoman” (*cihuapilli*), “female lord” (*cihuatecuhtli*), and “female ruler” (*cihuatlahtoani*).

In doctrinal Zapotec, however, a subtle distinction that may be read as hierarchical obtains between the figure of God the Father and Jesus Christ on the one hand, and Mary on the other. While both the Christ and his father are identified as servant-owning lords—and, more rarely, as lineage lords—Mary is generally designated as a “lady,” through a designation that does not emphasize lineage or servants.<sup>55</sup> In all variants of Zapotec, “God the Father” is rendered, quite literally, as *Bixoce Dios*, and both the Father and the Son are usually designated as “Our Lord” in both Valley (*Bejoanna-na*) and Nexitzo or Cajonos Zapotec (*Xana-reo*), with a strategic use of the inclusive first-person plural pronoun (*-na / -reo*), which literally translates as “the lord of us all (including this utterance’s addressees).” Since Córdoba’s *Vocabulario* (24v) translates *pejoanna* as a title for a male or female “lord who owns slaves,” the Dominicans who first coined this usage in the mid-sixteenth century may have chosen this title to convey the rapport between humans and both the Father and the Son as similar to that between a lord and his slaves in Late Postclassic Zapotec society. On the other hand, the canonical designation for Mary in all Zapotec variants is *Xonaxi*, which is one component of a series of composite title used by Córdoba to translate the European terms “Queen” (*Coqui xonàxi lechèla rey*, 349v), “Princess” (*Coqui xonàxi*, 327v), “Lady from a great lineage” (*xonàxi coqui tàò pejoàna*, 377v), “Lady from a lineage” (*xonàxi pejoàna*, 377v), and “Matron, principal lady” (*Pèni gònna nacòla, cica xonàxi*, 261v). This title component, which applied only to females, may be glossed as “Lady,” and is the only Zapotec title applied to the Virgin, other than the vocative “Oh Lineage Lady!” (*A xana e*), which opens the Hail Mary prayer. A rare exception to this pattern is Feria’s *Doctrina* use of the expression “Lineage Lord of the Sky” (*coquij quiebaa*) to refer to both God the Father (66v) and Mary (56v).

Other than *Xonaxi*, the most frequent appellation of the Zapotec Mary is “mother of generous giving” (*xinaa quela huezaa lachi*), which is used to translate the canonical devotional expression “Mother of Mercy” by all devotional authors. This characterization may be profitably compared to the Nahua term *tetlaocoyaliztli*, “feeling sad on someone’s behalf”—a reference

<sup>55</sup> Córdoba provides an extremely succinct characterization of Late Postclassic Zapotec titles. For a more detailed characterization of the labeling of Zapotec lords as *coqui* and *xoana* in a corpus of pictographic depictions with glosses—the *lienzos* of Petapa and Guevea—see Michel Oudijk and Maarten Jansen, “Changing History in the Lienzos de Guevea and Santo Domingo Petapa,” *Ethnohistory* 47:2 (1999), pp. 281-331.

to compassion, which, rather than mercy, is “the quality that most defines the [Nahua Virgin’s] relationship to other humans,” according to Burkhart.<sup>56</sup> However, the Zapotec Mary’s preeminent characteristic in the Villa Alta songs seems to be generosity rather than empathy. While Valley Zapotec has a term that is closely aligned with the Nahua term given above, “feeling one’s sadness of heart,” (*quela huechibàa lachi*, in Córdova’s *Vocabulario*, 82r), this particular term is not used in Zapotec doctrinal texts. Instead, these texts accentuate the Virgin’s charity (translated, like “mercy,” as *quela huezaa lachi*), and the generous giving of her own self to God’s designs, as suggested by the following stanzas from Booklets 102 and 103:

Booklet 103, Song 6, Stanza 3:

On the Christmas holiday, You were born from Lady Saint Mary,  
the Mother of Great Generous Giving  
She is at the palace located in the sky  
Ayao ho hua hi ya he

*lanij natiuitatee golagloy xonasi xanata M[ari]a*  
*xinaa guela hueça lachi xene*  
*chia yahui lani guieba*  
*Ayao ho hua hi ya he*

Booklet 102, Song 2, Stanza 1:

She existed once, the Azalea from the Sweet Water, the Palace Enclosure of the  
House of God  
You generously granted the true light to humankind: the servant of God Himself.  
ayahu ayau

*godice queag beo nizah naxij lleeya yahui lijchij dios*  
*bezahlachij loo quia lij benaachij xilahni cuina bedao*  
*ayahu ayau*

Why did the doctrinal authors of the stanza below decided to call Mary a “Palace Enclosure” (*lleeya yahui*, which may also be rendered as “Palace Garden”)?<sup>57</sup> This epithet, which clearly stands out as a designation of a Chris-

<sup>56</sup> Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe*, 2001, p. 149.

<sup>57</sup> “Palace Garden” is a tentative translation of *lleeya yahui*. Córdova’s *Vocabulario* glosses *léea* as “orchard” (222v), “patio” (305v), and in several Villa Alta testaments, *leya* and *lea* are glossed as “patio,” with the sense of “enclosure.” *Yahui* is probably a local Nexitzo Zapotec cognate of the Valley Zapotec term *quéhui* or *quihui*, rendered as “palace, royal house” (341v), and as “courteous, regal” (80v, 98r, 212r). The 1677 Yatzona will quoted above has the orthographic variant *yehua*. Córdova (27v-28r) glosses *yáhui* as “something old or ancient” but the infrequent use of this item in his dictionary may support the proposal that this was an archaic rendering of the aforementioned Valley Zapotec term *quéhui*.

tian entity, may echo a metaphorical reference in the Song of Songs (4:12) to the beloved as an enclosed orchard (*hortus conclusus* in its Latin phrasing). Winston-Allen<sup>58</sup> argues that, by the 12th century, Marian texts had embraced this evocative image as a standard designation for Mary's womb, unblemished by regular human conception.<sup>59</sup> This appellation mirrors a Marian epithet employed by one of the most resourceful and inquisitive compilers of doctrinal Nahuatl texts, the Franciscan Friar Juan Bautista Viseo. In a Nahuatl sermon from a 1606 work<sup>60</sup> produced through the collaborative work of Bautista Viseo and various Nahuatl authors, including Agustín de la Fuente, Mary is called "God's sacred flowery enclosure, his sacred flowery land" (*in iteoxuchitepancaltzin Dios, in iteoxuchitlaltzin*), which bears a semantic resemblance to the Dominican Zapotec formula "Palace Enclosure of the House of God." The same epithet seemingly recurs, in a more complex form, in a line from a Marian hymn in Quechua composed by Juan Pérez Bocanegra and printed in 1631; in this work, Mary is depicted as a flowery garden closed off by five different types of Andean vines (*patacllancu, tecsauillasca, hahuaisaca, tintin*, and *villcu*) "woven into your beautiful web-like fence" (*Añai llica quenchaiqui [..] millunacuscan*).<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, Booklet 102's Marian epithet "Azalea, Sweet Water" (*queag beo nizah naxij*) could be understood in terms of a rhetorical strategy influenced by the depiction of both Jesus Christ and Mary as blooming flowers from the tree of Jesse in early modern European iconography.<sup>62</sup> A reference to Jesse's tree appears in Isaiah 11:1-2, a selection commonly interpreted as a promise from God the Father that the Messiah—Jesus Christ, and, by implication, his mother Mary—would emerge from a branch in the family tree of King David, son of Jesse. A brief comparison with colonial Marian devotional texts in Nahuatl and Quechua provides a revealing point of reference. Burkhart notes that a Nahuatl prayer depicting Mary's conception in an early

<sup>58</sup> See Anne Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), which is quoted in Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe*, 2001, p. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Note that Córdova (157v) lists two Valley Zapotec possibilities for the expression "to become pregnant": one that is used to speak about the Virgin's pregnancy (*tàca lào xínia*), and four variants used to refer to any other woman's pregnancy (*tiyóo xíni lània, ticáa xínia, ticá tàoya, ticcàa lào xínia*).

<sup>60</sup> Juan Bautista Viseo, *Sermonario en Lengua mexicana* (Mexico: Diego López Dávalos, 1606), transcribed and translated in Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe*, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>61</sup> Juan Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario e institución de curas para administrar a los naturales de este reyno los santos sacramentos* (Lima: Jerónimo de Contreras, 1631), pp. 704-706. This hymn was translated and analyzed as part of an extensive study of colonial Quechua doctrinal genres in Alan Durston, *Pastoral Quechua: The History of Christian Translation in Peru, 1550-1650* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2004), pp. 494-498.

<sup>62</sup> Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 89.

seventeenth-century Jesuit manuscript (*Santoral en mexicano*) calls out to Mary, “you are the sprout of the fine heart-flower tree” (*tiyyecyolloxochiquahuitzmolinaltzin*), and “you are the straight lily-flower (*azucena*) of Jesse” (*tiymelaucaaçucenaxochitzin in Jesse*).<sup>63</sup> The same strategy—employing imagery rooted in indigenous rhetorical genres to translate a canonical Marian epithet—recurs in the Quechua hymn previously quoted; the exact phrasing is “Jesse’s esteemed and royal descendent, golden younger child of his flowering” (*Iesep yupai Capac pitan çicascampa cori sullcan*).<sup>64</sup>

However, since the Villa Alta songs do not explicitly refer to Jesse’s tree, an alternative explanation is that flower imagery had a deep resonance in traditional Zapotec rhetoric. *Gueag beo* is probably a colonial version of the contemporary Cajonos Zapotec cognate *yej pi’o*, or “azalea.”<sup>65</sup> Moreover, in various songs in Booklets 102 and 103, both Mary and Jesus receive epithets that incorporate the term “flower.” Besides “azalea,” Mary is also called “sweet flower” (*gueag naxi*), while the Christ is called a “good flower” (*gueag tzahui*) and “the dear flower [who was] born on the town on the land” (*gueag natzona golag guetze lao yoo*). The stative “it is sweet” (*naxij*), on the other hand, had a long-standing association with characterizations of Mary in devotional Zapotec texts. For instance, in his version of the *Salve Regina*, Feria’s *Doctrina* (56v) calls the Virgin “Oh life, sweetness” (*quela nabanniè, quela naxiè*), and Pacheco de Silva’s *Doctrina* (35r) uses *naxij* in such expressions as “the sweet, pure womb of the Lady of us all, the Virgin Mary” (*lehe naxij niaaari quie Xonaaxi quie reheo Rabaani Maria*). The relative abundance of designations of Christian entities as “flowers” suggest a parallel between Zapotec rhetorical usage and the well-documented “flower world” that Jane Hill<sup>66</sup> has identified in various Uto-Aztecan languages. However, in the absence of systematic appraisals of colonial Zapotec rhetoric, we can only characterize the colonial Zapotec epithets that involve the term “flower” as a marked rhetorical strategy that highlighted for a local Zapotec audience the unusual qualities and attributes of Mary and her son.

#### THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN THE WOODEN DRUM SONGS

Christ’s sacrifice for humankind is a recurring topic in the Zapotec songs of Booklet 102 and 103. He is repeatedly characterized as “the true light of

<sup>63</sup> Burkhardt, *Before Guadalupe*, 2001, p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> Durston, *Pastoral Quechua*, p. 496. The original Pérez Bocanegra text has *Ioseph* instead of *Iesep*.

<sup>65</sup> Long, *Diccionario zapoteco*, 1999, p. 299.

<sup>66</sup> Jane Hill, “The Flower World of Old Uto-Aztecan,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 48 (1992), pp. 117-144

humankind” (*guia lij beneathi*), and at least two rhetorical devices—a specific verbal choice, and syntactic parallelism—foreground his suffering for a Zapotec audience, as in the following stanza:

Booklet 103, Song 3, Stanza 5:

The only one son of God the Father,  
 He suffered patiently; He was afflicted in Jerusalem  
 for the sake of humankind  
 ayao ayau

*tocij xini dios xoce*  
*goxijquelah lachie goxacacie Zerosalem*  
*coo niaqueani beneathi*  
*ayao ayau*

This stanza conveys a verbal choice—the use of “He was afflicted,” *goxacacie*—that resonates with other doctrinal Zapotec texts. For instance, an early seventeenth-century Valley Zapotec manuscript containing several sermons and exemplary speeches relating to various points of the Christian doctrine, Pedro de la Cueva’s 1600 *Parábolas y exemplos sacados de las costumbres del campo*, employs exactly the same verb—*goxacacini*—to refer to Christ’s suffering. Moreover, Feria’s *Doctrina* incorporates this verb into the Credo’s canonical phrase “He suffered under the power of Pontius Pilate” (*coxacazijni, ni petogo xiticha[n]i Pilato*, 41r). This verb has a heightened connotation in doctrinal Zapotec, since it indexes a form of suffering that doctrinal authors reserved for the souls of the condemned in the Christian hell—described as “great suffering” in both Feria (*guela zacazij tètèni*, 62v) and Pacheco de Silva (*ielà rezaccazij xene*, 44v).

Furthermore, this stanza designates Jesus’ physical ordeal with a verbal pair—“He suffered patiently / He was afflicted” (*goxijquelah lachie goxacacie*)—that inscribes this expression within the Mesoamerican rhetorical tradition of employing expressions that exhibit semantic, syntactic, and/or morphological parallelism. Such constructions are a well attested rhetorical device in Mesoamerican oral genres.<sup>67</sup> Although the study of colonial Zapotec rhetoric is still in its early stages, it can be asserted that, in Book-

<sup>67</sup> See Miguel León-Portilla, “Cuicatl y Tlahtolli: las formas de expresión en náhuatl,” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 16 (1983), pp. 76-77, where he argues that, in Nahuatl poetry, ideas are expressed in a parallel form which is syntactically or semantically parallel, and rhetorical commonplaces are often composed by two terms that refer to a third term in a metaphorical or metonymic fashion—a device that may be termed *difrasismo*.

lets 102 and 103, syntactically and semantically parallel expressions occur in several stanzas, although in a somewhat episodic manner.

The Dominican rendering of Christ's passion could not be complete without a reference to the two human actors that were traditionally portrayed as Christ's tormentors in early modern devotional plays: Pilates and the Jews—the latter rendered as “Jewish people” (*bene zodio*) in the Villa Alta songs:

Booklet 103, Song 3, Stanza 5:

Pilate gave his evil judgment, his command to the Jews.

They came, they gathered<sup>68</sup> on a mountain before the Son of God; the Jews whipped him.

The son of God suffered for the sake of humankind on the town on the land  
*ha ha hioyo Ecce homos*

*gothogo xihui pilato titza beani bene zodio*

*bijdahe betopa guiag lao xini dios co[lo]tini bene zodio*

*bizacazij xini dios la niagueani beneathi guetze lao yo*

*ha ha hioyo ecce homos*

This stanza stresses the actions of the *bene zodio* through a syntactically parallel formula—“They came, they gathered on a mountain before the Son of God” (*bijdahe betopa guiag lao xini dios*). One of the canonical expectations of early modern passion plays and representations—an emphasis on the role of the Jews in Christ's ordeal—is certainly met in this stanza; in fact, the Jews are mentioned in five separate stanzas in two songs from Booklet 103, while Pilate's name is mentioned only once in the song corpus. This stanza probably refers to the scourging of Christ at the pillar (John 19:1), which is commonly identified as the second sorrowful mystery of the Passion. The authors of this stanza rendered Christ's suffering in terms that were easily accessible to its intended audience by employing a common verb that designates whipping in Nextizo Zapotec.<sup>69</sup> This verb—*gootini(e)*—refers to a seemingly ordinary instance of whipping in a 1690 complaint to the *alcalde mayor* written by some officials from the Nextizo Zapotec town of

<sup>68</sup> “They gathered” is a tentative translation of *betopa*. In doctrinal Zapotec, this verb is clearly associated with the activities that took place as a preamble to the Crucifixion. Thus, Pacheco de Silva (1687) uses it in his versified rendering of Mary's second sorrowful mystery as “they gathered on a great mountain” (*betoppa guiag xene*, 132v).

<sup>69</sup> Córdoba's *Vocabulario*, 112r, gives *totijaya*, a form that may be etymologically related to this verb, which he translates as “hitting with a stick or a whip.”

Tanetze: “Then, I told the [*alguacil*] *mayor* to whip him” (*naha gochiiya Mayor gotinihe*).<sup>70</sup>

#### THE QUESTION OF DOMINICAN AUTHORSHIP

The Villa Alta *libana* occasionally assume a didactic tone that forces its performers to celebrate the Dominican evangelization enterprise, as depicted in the following stanza:

Booklet 103, Song 9, Stanza 2

We all shall say and recite well God’s riches:

The elegant words of the Holy Gospel that the Dominican fathers are teaching  
Aleluya Aleluya

*gola gona tzahui [r]aho xiguitza dios*

*liba[na] gue santo ybagelio Rolohui bexoçiy Santo lomigo*  
Aleluya Aleluya

Although the identity of the composer of these lines cannot be ascertained, it may be argued that these songs were part of a Dominican doctrinal strategy that resorted to public performance genres in order to illustrate various aspects of the Christian doctrine for Zapotec audiences. As the Dominican Gaspar de los Reyes states in the preface to his comparative grammar of Cajonos and Valley Zapotec,<sup>71</sup> no printed devotional texts in Cajonos or Nexitzo Zapotec were produced in the seventeenth century, with the exception of Pacheco de Silva’s 1687 *Doctrina*; one could only surmise—as he does at length—that, since Dominicans were known to have preached sermons in Villa Alta from the late sixteenth century onwards, manuscript copies of these sermons must have been composed and preserved in the region. The Villa Alta *libana* are the only tangible proof that Reyes’ assertions were not merely a bold defense of the Dominican evangelization enterprise. On the other hand, according to Dominican chroniclers and nineteenth-century bibliophiles, there existed a small but influential number of Dominican missionaries who composed doctrinal pieces, primarily in Valley Zapotec, that were performed in a theatrical setting throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. One of the most celebrated authors of Zapotec-language doctrinal dramas was the Dominican Vicente de Villanueva, who was the vicar of

<sup>70</sup> APJO, Villa Alta Civil 28, 1r.

<sup>71</sup> Reyes, *Arte*, [1704] 1891.

Teotitlán del Valle in the 1560's. According to the Dominican chronicler Burgoa, Villanueva

rendered with great ease the mysteries of our Holy Faith in the poetic meter of the Indians' language, and he taught the Indians to stage performances about these mysteries using verses. Since the Indians themselves were characters and preachers in the theaters, the fruits that these performances in verse bore among the Indians were plentiful . . .<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, Friar Alonso de la Anunciación composed and staged a Zapotec-language biblical drama in 1575 in his parish of Etlá. One of Burgoa's teachers, Friar Melchor de San Raimundo, composed a Zapotec-language play in verse about the martyrdom of St. Catherine in Etlá.<sup>73</sup> Finally, there are some references about some doctrinal dramas in Zapotec and Spanish composed by Friar Martín Giménez, who worked as a missionary in Chocho-speaking areas and died in 1624.<sup>74</sup> A Dominican minister who sought to follow in the steps of any of the doctrinal authors mentioned above could have composed the contents of Booklets 102 and 103 in collaboration with speakers of Nexitzo Zapotec. Such a model was often employed in the Valley of Mexico, as shown by the voluminous output of manuscript and printed Nahuatl devotional texts composed by Nahua elites in collaboration with several generations of mendicant authors.<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, one can only speculate as to the relation between the Villa Alta *libana* and the plays composed by Villanueva, Anunciación, San Raimundo, or Giménez, as there remain no known extant copies of the work of these authors, a situation that contrasts with the relative abundance of colonial Nahua devotional plays.<sup>76</sup> Thus, our understanding of Zapotec devotional works with dramatic or poetic dimensions is, for the time being, confined to a rather circumscribed textual universe, which includes the 15 *libana* of Villa Alta, the versified joyful and sorrowful mysteries published by Pacheco de Silva in his 1687 *Doctrina*, and the exemplary dialogues and speeches compiled by Cueva in his 1600 *Parábolas*.

<sup>72</sup> Burgoa, *Geográfica descripción*, [1674] 1989, vol. 2, p. 126.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 267.

<sup>74</sup> Peñafiel, *Gramática*, 1981, p. xxix.

<sup>75</sup> See Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

<sup>76</sup> See Fernando Horcasitas, *El teatro náhuatl* (Mexico: UNAM, 1975); Louise Burkhart, *Holy Wednesday: A Nahua Drama from Early Colonial Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Barry Sell and Louise Burkhart, *Nahuatl Theater. Volume 1. Death and Life in Colonial Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

It is tempting to assume that the Dominicans who authored these songs used as a model a transcription of the song genres recorded in *Cantares Mexicanos*. However, since the *dij dola* ritual genre transcribed in Booklets 100 and 101 possesses at least two crucial performative traits in common with the *Cantares Mexicanos* genres—the use of non-lexical phrases that mark stanza boundaries, and the alternation between new information and repetitive refrains—it is more parsimonious to contend that the anonymous authors of the Villa Alta *libana* employed Zapotec ritual genres—such as those transcribed in Booklets 100 and 101—as a rhetorical and poetic model.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The Dominican appropriation of a Zapotec ritual genre historically associated with the worship of non-Christian entities was a rather singular intellectual experiment. It may be argued that some of the songs in the *Cantares Mexicanos* corpus, or that the elegant speeches that Friar Andrés de Olmos compiled and Bautista Viseo published under the general designation of *huehuehtlahtolli* in 1600 belong within this paradigm of appropriation; after all, these two genres are characterized not only by structural conventions and rhetorical strategies of Late Postclassic origin, but also by the strategic insertion of references to Christian beliefs and entities. One potential motivation for the transcription of the Nahuatl *cuicatl* and *huehuehtlahtolli* was the concern—epitomized by Sahagún's encyclopedic compilation of Nahuatl speech genres—that traditional, courtly rhetorical performances were slowly but inexorably disappearing from Nahuatl common usage by the late sixteenth century.

The Villa Alta songs, on the other hand, arose from a highly distinctive social context of production. Throughout the seventeenth century—and particularly in the wake of the 1660 Tehuantepec rebellion—Villa Alta was regarded by the Dominicans as a region prone to insubordination and idolatry. In Maldonado's assessment, a recognizable form of Christian worship had not taken root in the region "because the Catholic faith was only a ceremony to them, and because they bear in their hearts the ceremonies and rituals of idolatry."<sup>77</sup> The production of Christian *libana* may be regarded as an innovative and ecumenical attempt to appropriate and rewrite a traditional ritual genre that was far from becoming an archaic practice in many Villa Alta towns. Moreover, the intended audience of this innovative devotional genre was limited to a local, Nexitzo-speaking audience, which may have had a limited exposure to Christian indoctrination, whereas the Nahuatl

<sup>77</sup> AGI México 882.

*cuicatl* and *huehuehtlahtolli* were produced in collaboration with Nahua noblemen, and for an audience that was no longer regarded as neophyte.

The rhetorical strategies and translation choices discussed above suggest that the anonymous authors of these Zapotec songs envisioned a novel “horizon of expectations”<sup>78</sup>—a series of assumptions and beliefs with which audiences may have approached particular genres—that differed from the preexisting horizon of expectations for the non-Christian wooden drum songs, as well as from the set of expectations surrounding the production of established Zapotec doctrinal genres, such as the *doctrina*, the *catecismo*, and the *confesionario*. On the one hand, certain devotional themes—such as the characterization of Jesus as “humankind’s true light” and the promise that Christian entities would “come back to Earth”—were emphasized through a strategic usage of the refrain’s recursivity in the canonical *dij dola* stanza. As a concession to foundational expectations in this genre, each stanza introduced only one new topic in succinct terms, and the percussion patterns for each song were duly recorded through a syllabic notation, and paired with specific songs and stanzas.

As part of his analysis of colonial Yucatec Maya letters and land surveys, Hanks<sup>79</sup> has argued that a variety of devices—such as indexical grounding, metalinguistic framing, code-switching, diglossia or polyglossia—may have been used by the authors and readers of these Maya textual genres in order to place them in a precise and meaningful sociocultural context. A similar interpretive maneuver—which he calls the “centering of the text”—was performed by the authors of the Christianized *libana* as they grounded Christian or human entities in concrete spatial contexts through a constant reference to Zapotec cosmological realms (Sky, Town on the Land). They introduced a peculiar neologism, “Palace Located in the Sky,” to index the distinction between the Christian heaven and the Zapotec upper world—which traditional ritual specialists associated with the ordering of time at least until the early eighteenth century. Perhaps by necessity, these authors also embraced a diglossic approach. Many of the terms they employed to refer to Christian beliefs and entities—Christian teachings as “God’s riches,” the verbs employed to refer to Christ’s suffering, and the canonical hierarchical titles for God the Father, Christ, and Mary, for instance—were borrowed from pre-existing Valley Zapotec devotional genres. Syntactic and semantic parallelism—a rhetorical strategy used by doctrinal authors at least since the time

<sup>78</sup> Jauss, *Aesthetic of Reception*, 1982, pp. 19, 23.

<sup>79</sup> See William F. Hanks, *Intertexts: Writings on Language, Utterance and Context* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

of Feria's 1567 *Doctrina*—was used to foreground certain events in the Passion narrative—such as Christ's suffering, or the actions of the Jews. On the other hand, some of the translation choices that were adopted—such as the “Sweet Water Azalea” epithet for Mary, or the use of Nexitzo variants to refer to the scourging of Christ—appropriated regional speech patterns in Villa Alta's Zapotec communities, thus embedding the description of Christian entities in a local language register.

The Villa Alta *libana* are the sole extant representatives of a Dominican doctrinal strategy that sought to compete with the proliferation of traditional Zapotec calendrical texts and ritual songs in Villa Alta in the very scriptural and rhetorical terrain they occupied. We will never know whether these songs were relinquished by their Nexitzo Zapotec owners because they were regarded as a legitimate exemplar of the “diabolical characters” that Maldonado and his messengers demanded, or because this surrender was an attempt to prevent the confiscation of other traditional ritual and calendrical texts that never surfaced. This paradoxical action—a surrender of Christian devotional songs that could now be perceived as being coterminous with the traditional Zapotec genre they mimicked—can only be understood within the context of a profound shift in extirpation and evangelization policies in Oaxaca. This transformation began with Maldonado's 1702-1705 campaign, continued with the rebuilding of the “perpetual prison for idolaters” in Oaxaca City, and was perhaps completed with the establishment of Spanish-language schools in some indigenous communities—a policy spearheaded in Oaxaca by Bishop Santiago y Calderón, Maldonado's successor, in the early 1730's,<sup>80</sup> and by Archbishop Lanciego y Eguilaz in Mexico from 1720 onwards.<sup>81</sup> These shifts resulted in the abandonment of a bold evangelization experiment that emerged at an earlier moment in the evangelization dialogue, when mendicant authors still believed that replacing local deities with Christian entities could be accomplished merely by giving Christianity a rhetorical foothold in the performative realm of the wooden drum.

*Vassar College*  
*Poughkeepsie, New York*

DAVID TAVÁREZ

<sup>80</sup> AGI México 877.

<sup>81</sup> William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 334, 706.

APPENDIX  
A TRANSLATION OF BOOKLET 102, SONG 1 (AGI 882, 664R)

**Percussion pattern, 22 beats:**

ti [co] to con ton to co co tin to co ton to co qui tin tin guin ti tin gui tin

*Stanza 1*

**THEME 1** *El santo papa beyonilachij cuina bedao colahui La  
It was the Holy Father who begged God Himself for a mediator  
called*

xini natzona *Dios* xoani guetze lao yo  
*the beloved son of God, Lord of the town on the land*

**REFRAIN 1** bezahalachiloo gui[a] li beneachi xilani cuina bedao  
*You generously granted the true light to humankind: the servant  
of God Himself.<sup>82</sup>*

**BOUNDARY MARKER** ayao ayau

*Stanza 2*

**THEME 2** coo lao ditza beanilo xinah natzona goxan  
*With your words, you ordered the Dear Mother to give birth to*

xini natzona *dios* Xoanij quetze lao yoo  
*the beloved son of God, Lord of the town on the land*

**REFRAIN 1** bezaalachijloo guia Lij beneachi xilahni cuina bedao  
*You generously granted the true light to humankind: the servant  
of God Himself.*

**BOUNDARY MARKER** ayao ayau

*Stanza 3*

**THEME 3** godice gueag beo nizah naxij lleeya yahui lijchij *dios*  
*She existed<sup>83</sup> once [?]: Azalea, Sweet Water, Palace Enclosure of  
the House of God*

**REFRAIN 1** bezaahlachijloo guia lij beneachij xilahni cuina bedao  
*You generously granted the true light to humankind: the servant  
of God Himself.*

<sup>82</sup> Alternative translation: "You, the servant of God Himself, generously granted the true light to humankind."

**BOUNDARY MARKER** ayahu ayau

*Stanza 4*

**THEME 4** la lauinij chidah quela lij xiquitza *dios*  
*Moreover, amidst the fourteen truths, God's riches:*

**REFRAIN 1a** tzeagljlachi guia lij beneachi xijlani cuina bedao  
*You shall believe that the true light of humankind is the servant of  
 God himself.*

**BOUNDARY MARKER** ayao ayau

*Stanza 5*

**THEME 5** lah lanij chita guela lij xiguitza *dios*  
*Moreover, these fourteen truths, God's riches*

**REFRAIN 2** gapatzahui beneachij  
*Humankind shall keep them well*

**BOUNDARY MARKER** ayao ayau

*Stanza 6*

**THEME 6** tocij xini *dios* xoce  
*The only one son of God the Father,*

**REFRAIN 3** goxijquelahlachie<sup>84</sup> goxacacie<sup>85</sup>  
**(COUPLET)** *He suffered patiently, he was afflicted*

*Zerosalem coo niagueani beneathi  
 in Jerusalem for the sake of humankind.*

**BOUNDARY MARKER** ayao ayau

<sup>83</sup> AVA Civil 274, Tabaa, 1764, 10r: “niga **godie** yoho chaga patrio” (a onde estubo la ca[s]a que linda con Patricio); AVA Civil 231, Yatzachi el Bajo, 1755, 16r: “niga **godie** lani bichi xotahua” (en donde bivio con el hermano de mi Abuelo).

<sup>84</sup> Córdova, *Vocabulario*, 297r, “Padecer o passar con pacie[n]cia [...]. **Ticiguèlali**ja quitóbi làchia”; 390v: “Sufrirlos con paciencia. [...] **ticijguèlali**ja.”

<sup>85</sup> Pacheco, *Doctrina Christiana*, 4r, **Goxaccazije** laotitza etto gothiogo Xihui Poncio Pilato, “pade-ció debajo del poder de Poncio Pilato...”; Cueva, *Parábolos y exemplos*, 16v: **coxacazijni** . . .