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DANGER IN DEVIANCE
*COLONIAL IMAGERY AND THE POWER OF INDIGENOUS
FEMALE SEXUALITY IN NEW SPAIN*

BY
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INTRODUCTION

In order to complete my undergraduate work in Art History and Gender and Women's studies I chose to write a combined senior thesis on indigenous women during the early colonization of New Spain - an era and a culture I had little previous experience with but was highly interested in. After a course load focused on critical postcolonial, gender, race, and visual theory in the United States, Europe, Middle East and India, and a semester studying at the National University of Costa Rica (UNA), I became increasingly curious about the complexities of gender, sexuality, race and class in Latin America. My two majors positioned me particularly well to research the complex relationships between visual media, history and constructions of identity. Much like the approach of sociologist Avtar Brah and art historian Annie Coomes, my method in studying indigenous female sexuality and imagery became, "an interdisciplinary approach as a structural necessity rather than a gratuitous eclecticism."¹ Since my training has focused on gender theory and art history, with an interest in post-colonial, trans-national feminist, and critical race theory, I owe a great deal of my conceptual foundation to scholars such as Judith Butler, Chandra Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, Magali Carrera and Clyde Taylor, among many others.

¹ Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coomes, *Hybridity and Its Discontents Politics, Science, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000).
<http://ccl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/claremont/Doc?id=2002429>. p.2

The primary objective of this work is to understand the importance of the indigenous, female body in early New Spain through the study of visual media from the first two centuries of colonization: specifically looking at illustrations from Book 10 (of 15) in the *Florentine Codex* and images of indigenous Christian wedding ceremonies such as the painted folding screen *Indian Wedding and a Flying Pole* (c.1690). I argue through visual, theoretical and historical analysis that regulating indigenous female sexuality was a critical component to in the creation of colonial New Spain and that imagery played an essential role in this regulatory process.

By considering images depicting indigenous women in addition to textual records of their actual physical presence in society I hope to extend and complicate the discussion of New Spanish *colonial bodies*. The notion of colonial bodies assumes the dependence of New Spanish society on the individual appearance and conduct of every one of its inhabitants. As Alejandro Cañeque has written, “the commonwealth [of New Spain] was conceived of as a living organism and thus systematically compared with the human body... [the] ‘bodification’ of the ‘state’ [explains] the absence of any conception of the ‘state’ as an abstract personification beyond its members.”² Unlike our modern understanding of the state as a pre-established, politically unified and relatively homogenous population

² Alejandro Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico*, New World in the Atlantic World (New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2004). p.21

inhabiting a set geographical area,³ the colony of New Spain depended upon the continually regulated actions of its constituents to construct and sustain its existence. The residents of New Spain served as visual symbols of the success and failure of the greater Spanish monarchy as well as the functioning colony. In his study of viceregal power in Mexico, Cañeque notes that New Spanish constituents, “to the extent that they were constituted as ‘bodies’... represented royal power in its fullness.”⁴ With Aztec women inhabiting the powerful position of birthing the New Spanish population, and with “the multiracial character of Mexico City’s inhabitants [seen] in the eyes of the authorities [as] a potential agent of disorder,”⁵ controlling the indigenous female body was essential to maintaining the colony of New Spain.

As art historian Magali Carrera argues in her discussion of race in 18th century *casta* paintings,⁶ using visual media to study colonial bodies helps clarify “how certain artistic practices... visually conceptualized specific social and political constructions of the people [in] urban New Spain.”⁷ These visual constructions

³ "Nation state" *Dictionary and Thesaurus - Merriam-Webster Online*. Web. 20 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nation+state?show=0&t=1366487968>>.

⁴ Cañeque, p.142

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.224

⁶ Magali Marie Carrera. *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*. 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003). Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture. Carrera here speaks of the concept of race using the terms *raza* and *calidad* in order to necessarily nuance the construction of physical difference in 18th century New Spain.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xvi. As elaborate sets of family and single portraits, *casta* paintings were used to demonstrate and delineate different racial constructions in the increasingly integrated social landscape of New Spain. While Carrera develops the idea of the colonial body in relationship to eighteenth-century constructions of race, gender, and power, I am here applying a similar framework to presentations of gender and sexuality in the slightly earlier time period of 16th – 18th century New Spain.

then become a lens through which to understand the socio-political ideals of those in power and the expectations for each colonial body depicted. The illustrations of deviant indigenous female sexuality in the *Florentine Codex* and marriage imagery like *Indian Wedding and a Flying Pole* provide an opportunity to critically analyze the presentations and associations of the indigenous female body in New Spain. Through a theoretical lens similar to Carrera, I argue that a polarized construction and strict regulation of the female, indigenous colonial body was essential to the socio-economic organization of early New Spain as desired by both the Spanish and indigenous elite.

When working within a historical time period involving the complexities and constant changes of colonization, a discussion of terms and language is necessary. The peoples living in present-day Mexico City before the arrival of Hernán Cortés were made up of distinct socio-political factions that used the common language of Nahuatl.⁸ However, in the early 16th century, Montezuma and the Aztec nobility at Tenochtitlán held primary power within what was known as the regional “Triple Alliance.”⁹ Through the waging of wars and forging of alliances between disparate local groups, the concentration of people into urban centers, and the

⁸ Burke, Peter. *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Picturing History Series. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2001.

⁹ Lori Boornazian Diel, “Women and Political Power: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Noblewomen in Aztec Pictorial Histories,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 47 (April 1, 2005): pp.83 “By the time of the Spanish conquest, Tenochtitlan, home of the Mexica people, was clearly the reigning force in the Aztec empire. The second most powerful city was Texcoco, capital of the Acolhua domain, and the third was Tlacopan. Together the three headed what is called the Triple Alliance, a confederacy under which a number of secondary city states were subjected.”

homogenizing perspective of the Spanish who freely used the term “Aztec,” this diverse indigenous population that participated in the creation of New Spain became known as Aztec – the term I have chosen to use for my research.¹⁰

The Spaniards, who were quickly the dominant hegemonic force in the Americas, also came from a diverse society. The reign of Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon was more of a political unification of two disparate economies than a creation of a uniform country called Spain, and the people arriving on the American continent demonstrated this lack of uniformity. The *conquistadores* (conquerors) were a particular and unique population. Primarily male, from the areas of Castile, Aragon, Extremadura, Galera and Basque Country, these men were usually not of noble rank and sought wealth and dominion in a land far from the increasingly structured post - Reconquest Iberian rule.¹¹ However, for the sake of clarity, I will henceforth broadly refer to those who claimed control over the indigenous population and land as the Spanish.

Attendance to the specificity of language also is particularly important when considering the increasing sexual relationships between the Spanish and Aztec peoples after initial contact. Following the highly visible cross-cultural relationship between Hernán Cortés and the bi-lingual Aztec Malintzin (also

¹⁰ Louise M. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989). p.4 Burkhart believes that “it is here more fitting to speak of Nahua culture, the culture of peoples speaking the Nahuatl language, than to distinguish the Mexica from their neighbors or to speak of ‘Aztecs’ – a vague term that is better applied to the pre-Conquest Mexica empire than to the particular ethnic groups that composed, and outlived, that organization.” I chose to use Aztec because of my focus on the time in which explicit Aztec political structures negotiated with the conquest.

¹¹ Burkholder

known as Doña Marina and La Malinche),¹² procreation between indigenous women and Spanish men became a consistent and controlled reality in the New Spanish colony. These relationships produced an expanding population of varied cultural background that was primarily arranged according to constructed and changing concepts of race.¹³ For the purposes of this investigation, the people who I discuss as Spanish and Aztec/ indigenous are assigned these titles based on a combination of their socio-political loyalties, accepted categorization at the time, and consequent economic, political and social experience.

The geographical and political terms of this study also need to be linguistically specified. The Spanish militaristically gained control of a large and diverse area controlled by the Aztec peoples, including the capital city of Tenochtitlan (modern-day Mexico City). Established shortly after the initial conquest, the Viceroyalty of New Spain included the territories of present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and even parts of the southwestern United States. Because this thesis looks at the strategies and products of the explicit Spanish colonial process, the focus will be on the geographical area conquered through political, religious or militaristic means initially under the name of Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand, and will be addressed accordingly as New Spain.

Lastly, it is important to expose how the language(s) I am using in my research are part of colonialist histories. Most of my research was done in English, already once removed from the Castilian Spanish spoken in Mexico today - reiterating the

¹² Burkholder, p.53

¹³ See Carrera for further discussion

current hierarchy of language and knowledge present in academia. To complicate the issue of translation further, “the very language of the [original] interaction, what is now called Classical Nahuatl, was adopted from native upper-class usage and preserved by the friars.”¹⁴ Therefore, this research is linguistically removed from the actual interactions of early New Spain by three separate instances of translation and cultural colonization. First, through the Nahuatl of a privileged class, then to the Spanish of the conquerors, and finally to the English currently privileged in today’s global society. To reiterate an important question asked by Brah and Coomes, “to what extent [is it] possible to claim an effective anti-colonial critique while writing in the language of the oppressor [?]”¹⁵ So though precise linguistic, and consequently cultural, translation is extremely difficult, it does not warrant the abandonment of the subject and therefore I will proceed, acknowledging these complications, and paying attention to the potential nuances of translation.

This investigation is interested in the New Spanish construction of raced and gendered colonial bodies (specifically the indigenous female) through visual means as an integral aspect of the colonial process. Therefore, attention to social, religious and artistic productions of the Aztecs, such as visual media and ritual practice, are used to understand negotiations of colonial power, and *not* to construct any Aztec pre-colonial histories. Feminist and postcolonial theorist

¹⁴ Burkhart, p.7

¹⁵ Brah and Coomes, p.10

Gayatri Spivak warns of the contemporary dangers of attempting to construct a pre-colonial past, stating that “the pre-colonial is always reworked by the history of colonialism, and is not available to us in any pristine form that can be neatly separated from the history of colonialism.”¹⁶ Thus, this thesis does not claim an understanding of pre-conquest indigenous culture beyond the archival records that facilitated the interdisciplinary scholarship used to analyze productions of Spanish colonialism. The specific goal is a critical analysis of the ways indigenous female sexuality functioned in, and not before, the Spanish colonial process.

There is a key difference, however, between constructing a mythical pre-colonial past and acknowledging the agency of the Aztec people in the formation of New Spain. Disease, warfare and forced urban relocation caused a rapid decline and destabilization of pre-colonial indigenous society. This change created the space to develop a new indigenous culture that negotiated and contributed to the colony.¹⁷ Also, New Spain was a unique colony in that there was generally considerable negotiation and cooperation between the Aztec nobility and Spanish conquistadores. According to historian Susan Kellogg, “Far from simply being passive victims of the Spanish Conquest, the Mexica and other central Mexican groups proved to be significant social actors who helped shape the history of the early colonial state.”¹⁸ While the collaboration of cultures cannot be cleanly dissected, especially considering the “highly asymmetrical relations of domination

¹⁶ Ania Loomba. *Colonialism-postcolonialism*. (Psychology Press, 1998). p. 21

¹⁷ Philip L. Russell. *The History of Mexico: From Pre-conquest to Present* (New York: Routledge, 2010). p.43

¹⁸ Susan Kellogg as cited by Russell, p.42

and subordination”¹⁹ of any conquest, it is necessary to acknowledge the participation of both Aztec and Spanish people in producing New Spain.²⁰ In this work therefore, the products and records of New Spain are understood as a window through which to analyze Spanish strategy and intent, a screen with which to sift through mixed Spanish-Aztec culture, and a “prism” of pre-conquest indigenous reality.²¹ Images like those in the Florentine Codex and *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* surely contain important historical information even if it has been inevitably distorted and complicated by the colonial process.

To specifically address the art historical method of my investigation, my study of the *Florentine Codex* illustrations and *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* focuses more on the power and presence of these images in early colonial society and less on their aesthetic and technical accomplishments. I am in agreement with art historian Claire Farago, that “art history would benefit from paying greater attention... to the historical construction of ideas. We focus too much on objects without examining the conceptual nature of their social existence.”²² Why and where were did these images exist? What work did they do in day-to-day society?

¹⁹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1992). p.4

²⁰ I am straying from the term *hybrid* here, because as discussed by Avtar Brah and Annie Coomes, “hybridity is constituted and contested through complex hierarchies of power, particularly when used as a term which invokes the mixing of peoples and cultures.” p.2

²¹ Pete Sigal. “Imagining Cihuacoatl: Masculine Rituals, Nahua Goddesses and the Texts of the Tlacuilos,” *Part of Special Issue: Historicising Sexuality and Gender* 22, no. 3 (November 2010). p. 542

²² Claire Farago. “Object in the Era of Globalization” in *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art Since the Age of Exploration*. Bettie Allison Rand Lectures in Art History. (Chapel Hill [N.C.]: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). p.36

Through what frameworks were they created? These are only some of the questions my investigation begins addressing. This thesis will therefore be critically analyzing the imagery²³ of New Spain as products of, and agents in, the process of socio-cultural and religious colonization.

Analyzing imagery is integral to any study of New Spanish society because images were highly prevalent in early colonial life. Spanish and Aztec systems of communication combined in the colonial process to create a society drowned in imagery. Pre-conquest Aztec society already had a well-established pictorial tradition before the arrival of the Spanish. And, as art historian Elizabeth Boone argues, “the Spaniards had little choice but to accept the painted world of the Nahuas if they were to administer the land and people effectively.”²⁴ Indigenous court documents, land titles and genealogies continued to be recorded in the pictorial tradition throughout the colonial process. Imagery held so much power and legitimacy in Aztec society that it was still an essential expression of power and desirable social order during the early colonization of New Spain.²⁵

In 1564, while the evangelicals established missions in the Americas, the European Catholic church “declared the legitimacy and efficacy of using images to

²³ Also in agreement with Peter Burke, “This essay is concerned with ‘images’ rather than with ‘art,’ a term which only began to be used in the West in the course of the Renaissance, and especially from the eighteenth century onwards, as the aesthetic function of images, at least in elite circles, began to dominate the many other uses of these objects.” *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, Picturing History Series (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2001). p.124

²⁴ Elizabeth Hill Boone. “Pictorial Documents and Visual Thinking in Postconquest Mexico” in *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World: a Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 2nd Through 4th October 1992* (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998). p.192

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.193

spread the faith” during the Council of Trent.²⁶ Codifying the strategies already in use by the Franciscan order, and common to pre-colonial indigenous society, this declaration reified the importance of the visual in the creation of New Spain.

Mendicant orders continued to rely on images “as effective [multi-dimensional] tools for teaching Christianity.” As described by Boone:

“In order to instruct the great numbers of potential converts they encountered, the friars set up large paintings that represented major points of Christian doctrine, such as the Articles of Faith, Ten Commandments, symbols of the Apostles, Seven Cardinal Sins, Seven Works of Mercy, and Seven Sacraments. Preaching in front of the paintings, the friars pointed to the appropriate representations to bring home the oral message; [and also] afterward, those in the audience who understood the images and the lecture then helped explain the points to the others.”²⁷

The images therefore worked both as momentary teaching aids and more permanent reminders of social expectations in Christian New Spain. Through “woodcuts, paintings, and murals, Christian morals and codes of conduct were constantly visually reiterated,”²⁸ making visual media an integral socio-political influence on the new colony.

In fact, Serge Gruzinski explains that imagery was not only a common colonial tool, but also a preferred one. As he describes, “the Counter-Reformation Church which resulted from the Council of Trent always considered the written word with grave suspicion – for this might cause heresy and deviation – and vastly preferred

²⁶ Elizabeth Hill Boone. “The Multilingual Bivisual World of Sahagún’s Mexico” in *Sahagún at 500: Essays on the Quincentenary of the Birth of Fr. Bernardino De Sahagún*, Publications of the Academy of American Franciscan History v. 3 (Berkeley, Calif: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2003). p.157

²⁷ Ibid., p.156

²⁸ Burkhart, p.22

images: painted, sculpted, or wrought under her careful eye.”²⁹ But the powerful presence of images in New Spanish colonial life needed to be monitored. Religious images influenced colony life to such an extent that “a long series of edicts issued by the ecclesiastical authorities and the Spanish Crowns sought... to examine religious images made and used by native people and confiscate any deemed inappropriate.”³⁰ Such visual regulation speaks to the fact that works such as Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex* and *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* must have strictly conformed to the socio-political ideals of those in power.

The overwhelming presence of imagery in colonial New Spain is well recorded. Gruzinski goes so far as to say, “colonial Mexico became a society invaded by and as it were choked with images – massively so by religious images, and not only in sanctuaries and chapels. Houses and streets, crossroads and paths, jewelry and clothing.”³¹ Considering that images were already important to Aztec and Euro-Christian traditions, and “penetrated every corner of churches, convents and private homes”³² during the colonial period, studying imagery is vital to understand the socio-political construction of New Spain.

This power of the visual extended past literal images to include public ceremonies and events. Ritual in colonial society was another constant, repetitive

²⁹ Serge Gruzinski. Colonization and the war of images in colonial and modern Mexico. *International Social Science Journal* 44, 1992. p.505

³⁰ Louise M. Burkhart. “Pious Performances: Christian Pageantry and Native Identity in Early Colonial Mexico” in *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World: a Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 2nd Through 4th October 1992* (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998). p.375

³¹ Gruzinski, p.512

³² Kristine Ibsen, “The Hiding Places of My Power: Sebastiana Josefa De La Santisima Trinidad and the Hagiographic Representation of the Body in Colonial Spanish America[a],” *Colonial Latin American Review* 7, no. 2 (December 1998): p.257

reminder of social ideals and new moral values. Spectacles such as ceremonial dances, theatrical performances and marriages are all examples of common and influential rituals commonly witnessed by the residents of New Spain. Beyond the expectations of entertainment, the elite in New Spain actually “depended on these rituals because their power was constituted through them.”³³ In fact, Cañeque considers “pomp and pageantry, spectacle, and splendor... as integral parts of the political process and the structure of colonial power.”³⁴ It was in these public ceremonies that socio-political hierarchies were visually established and reinforced.³⁵

Indigenous female sexuality was especially regulated through public rituals like Christian marriage and other religious ceremonies. Upon the arrival of the mendicant preachers, women were excluded from spectacles of dance and drama because of new Christian codes of conduct concerning sexuality.³⁶ Lori Boornazian Diel ascribes this public regulation of indigenous female sexuality to the fact that “in both the Spanish and Nahua worlds, the female body was a potent symbol of transgression and potential power, but for the Spaniards this power had to be

³³ Cañeque, p.155

³⁴ Ibid., p.119 In fact, “These rituals were mostly borrowed from the ritual vocabulary of the Church. In Catholic thought as elaborated in the Middle Ages, rituals had the ability to enact, to bring something into being, to make something present (the consecrated Host did not represent the body of Christ; it *was* the body of Christ). It should be no surprise, then, that in the quintessential Catholic monarchy, the Spanish monarchy, power was thought to be enacted through ceremonial performances.” and that these “rituals embody the very production and negotiation of power relations.” p.120

³⁵ Ibid., p.120

³⁶ Burkhart (1998), p.364

neutralized so that a successful Christian conversion could take place.”³⁷ Hence Aztec women being explicitly excluded public rituals that did not coincide with evangelical beliefs.

Now that the specificities of method and language have been established, and the powerful presence of imagery throughout New Spain has been detailed, the regulation of the indigenous female colonial body can be more thoroughly contextualized and explained. Chapter One will elaborate upon the historical frameworks through which the Spanish and Aztec people participated in the creation of the New Spanish colony. Chapter Two will look directly at illustrations of deviant indigenous female sexuality in Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex*. And Chapter Three will analyze the importance and visual power of indigenous participation in Christian marriage through the LACMA screen *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole*.

³⁷ Lori Boornazian Diel, “Clothing Women: The Female Body in Pre- and Post-contact Aztec Art,” in *Woman and Art in Early Modern Latin America*, ed. Richard E. Phillips and Kellen Kee McIntyre (Brill Academic Publishers, 2006.), p.223, <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/10.1163/ej.9789004153929.i-451.52;jsessionid=93kaodq9l8ojc.x-brill-live-01>.

CHAPTER ONE

POWER AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPANISH COLONIAL BODIES

A historical and contextual analysis of the era from the initial contact of the Spanish and Aztec peoples in 1519 until the end of the 17th century is now necessary to understand the construction of the indigenous female colonial body as related to greater New Spanish society. This chapter aims to situate various colonial bodies of New Spain (namely: female, male, Aztec and Spanish)³⁸ in the multiple histories and social systems that influenced this colonial process. The first step is looking at the framework within which the conquistadores understood their position on the American continent, and the ways they framed the indigenous peoples and cultures they encountered. The most important influences on the Spanish colonial mindset for the purposes of this investigation are: the circulating concept about external legibility of morality, the Spanish Reconquest; the Spanish Inquisition (particularly witch-hunting); and the expanding evangelist enterprise³⁹ of the Catholic Church.

The notion that outside appearance served as a “telltale transcript of the identity it housed” was present in both Spanish and Aztec societies before the conquest. In fact, historian Sonya Lipsett-Rivera claims that late 15th century Aztec society already relied on external characteristics as legible signs of social status,

³⁸ African and Asian people also constituted a significant and influential part of the population of New Spain from the 16th century onwards. In a necessary simplification, I will be focusing specifically on interactions between indigenous and Spanish populations in my research.

³⁹ Enrique D. Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism Toliberation (1492-1979)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981). p.49

particularly related to honor. Lipsett-Rivera argues that in Tenochtitlan, “the body was a symbol for the inner person; [and therefore] the way a woman or man dressed expressed their connection to moral norms and prevailing ideas about their honorable conduct.” The European connection between outward characteristics and “inner moral and ethical character”⁴⁰ paired with the pre-conquest Aztec belief in external legibility of honor, made New Spain’s hierarchical social structure highly dependent on the visual presentation of each colonial body.

At the start of the colonial process, rules were quickly established to mark each member of the population according to their new social status. Indigenous people, for example, were typically forbidden to ride horses or wear European style clothing, as that would visually associate them too closely with the higher ranking of the Spanish.⁴¹ Aztec nobles however, enjoyed the privilege of wearing Spanish clothes, riding horses, carrying swords, and becoming priests due to their superior social status.⁴² External characteristics were clearly an important tool in the colonial process of New Spain to designate every level within the developing social structure.

Additionally, the exterior, visual characteristics of each colonial body were expected to align with the image of the king’s loyal subjects. As contemporary Latin American historian Susan Schroeder describes, “Castile’s Queen Isabel declared that the natives of the Americas were her subjects and that they were to

⁴⁰ Sonya Lipsett-Rivera. Language of Body and Body as Language: Religious Thought and Cultural Syncretism, in *Religion in New Spain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007). p.68

⁴¹ Russell, p.41

⁴² Russell, p.43

be taught to read and write and to be good Christians,” just as was expected of the Spanish.⁴³ Whether it was the missionaries, the noble class, or indigenous women, all colonial bodies signified the success or failure of Spanish colonial rule. The use of external appearances to connote the powerful and successful structure of the Spanish monarchy therefore applied equally to the Aztec people under colonization as it did to the Spanish themselves.

Another essential contribution to the mentality and context of the Spanish colonization of central Mexico was *la Reconquista*, or the Spanish Reconquest. This politically, economically, and religiously fueled military endeavor to rid all Spanish territory of non-Christian peoples ended in 1492 with the official expulsion of all Muslims and Jews in the Iberian Peninsula by Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand. The final event in a string of ideological conquests begun 500 years earlier with the first Crusades, the Spanish Reconquest shaped the socio-political landscape of the newly united country of Spain. Inevitably the mindsets and strategies of the Spaniards entering Mesoamerica were shaped by this Reconquest ideology. As historian Mark Burkholder explains, “the Reconquest created a cultural legacy that the conquistadores and settlers carried to the New World.”⁴⁴

The effect of this “Reconquest legacy” was most evident in the Spanish methods of justifying their invasion. First, military expeditions in the peninsular Reconquest were directly related to the acquisition of property – whether it was

⁴³ Susan Schroeder and Stafford Poole., ed. *Religion in New Spain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007). p.14

⁴⁴ Burkholder, p.24

land, minerals, natural resources or sacred sites. This drive to acquire property was equally encouraged in New Spain, as warfare and plunder became standard practice in the conquistadores' insatiable thirst for natural resources and mineral wealth. The final capture of the castle in Granada, Spain with the defeat of the Muslims in 1492 only served to "reinforce the booty mentality" honed throughout the many expeditions that claimed important sites and resources throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor.⁴⁵ Many of the Spanish arriving in central Mexico were involved in the military activities of the Reconquest, and at its close, continued to crave the adventure and sense of purpose inherent in a political and ideological invasion. Also, when the religious warfare ended, so did any opportunity for upward class mobility through military participation. The unification and stabilization of Isabel and Ferdinand's post Reconquest Spain created an fixed socio-economic hierarchy that left little room for movement between classes. This decreasing social mobility only encouraged ambitious young men to seek land, titles and wealth in the Americas.

The second major influence of the Spanish Reconquest on the colonization of New Spain was consistent religious justification of conquest. Just as the Crusades and Reconquest explicitly stressed the superiority of Christianity, colonizing central Mexico was authorized and encouraged by Christian ideology. For example, every Spanish military encounter on Aztec territory began with the reading of the *requerimiento*, a Spanish document that described the "chain of

⁴⁵ Burkholder, p.24

command from God to the pope to the emperor to the conquistadores.”⁴⁶ This document directed the Aztecs “to lay down their arms and accept the Spanish king and Christianity or suffer the consequences.”⁴⁷ Shaped by the legal and religious doctrine of Europe during the Crusades, the *requerimiento* reflected the belief that Europe, particularly Christian Europe, “had the right to occupy the territory of the *heathen* if they assumed the responsibility for evangelizing those living there” (emphasis added). For this reason, the conquest of the Americas was often referred to it as a “just war.”⁴⁸ Despite the fact that the requirement was rarely, if ever, understood by the Nahuatl-speaking Aztecs, and could not usually be heard from across battle lines, it served as an official disclaimer and authorization for the violent military actions of the Spanish in central Mexico. A legacy of the Spanish Reconquest therefore, was the mindset that successful colonization was dependent on the religious conversion of its subjects to Christianity.

The indigenous subjects of New Spain were initially exempt from the suspect eye of the Inquisition, established in the mid 16th century, because of their status as newly converted Christian subjects. However, the impact of the Inquisition, particularly the phenomenon of the European witch-hunt, is an important contextual component when studying the impetus to regulate the colonial female body. Many of the Spanish friars arriving to teach Christianity to the indigenous population came directly from Inquisitorial trials in Spain. These friars, therefore,

⁴⁶ Russell, p.18

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.18

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.20

were keenly aware of the importance of Christian adherence to the Spanish monarchy, and were undoubtedly rigid about the importance of religious devotion to a successful Spanish colony. When the indigenous population was considered under the purview of the Inquisition later on, it only strengthened the impetus for the Aztecs to conceal or shape their own beliefs within and outside the parameters of Christian ideology, as the Spanish friars were often the primary intermediaries between the Aztec gentry and civic authority.⁴⁹

The religious fervor in Spain created by the Crusades, heightened in the Spanish Reconquest and continued throughout the Inquisition, fostered an enterprise of evangelism that greatly shaped the colonization of New Spain. Because mendicant workshops were primary locations of artistic production and ritual practice, this missionary zeal is crucial context for my study. With the first missionaries arriving on the heels of the initial conquest in 1519, “the spiritual conquest of Mexico”⁵⁰ was an inextricable component of the Spanish colonial process. Religious conversion and domination of indigenous ideologies were the primary means through which pre-existing Aztec power structures and social organizations could be renegotiated to promote the new colonial agenda. And though many socially disparate indigenous groups in central Mexico during the arrival of the conquistadores had already become colonial subjects of Aztec hegemony, the Spanish insistence on their own language and culture was a uniquely new imposition. After the *Fuero Real* laws in 1225, the Spanish monarchy was considered the official interpreter of

⁴⁹ Russell, p.59

⁵⁰ Russell, p.58

the will of the divine and “assumed responsibility for both the spiritual and temporal well being of [its] subjects.”⁵¹ The Christian missionaries were primarily charged with this royal duty “because the ecclesiastics controlled the universities, the secondary and primary schools, and the printing and distribution of literature.”⁵² Mendicant friars therefore became the main group responsible for the religious, lingual and cultural conversion of indigenous peoples.

While missionaries often became important allies for the indigenous population in the face of Spanish colonial rule, they also were known to treat “Indians in a paternalistic and sometimes abusive manner.”⁵³ This power dynamic inherent in the relationship of the Christian missionary and indigenous population is a crucial factor when discussing the colonization of New Spain and the visual arts created during this process. As discussed by art historian María García Saíz, “supremacy of narrative, and particularly religious themes, was conveyed from the first moment the Spanish landed in America, where the importance of the evangelization process accentuated ... an interest in matters always heavy with symbolic content.”⁵⁴ The attention paid to visual production by “the enterprise of evangelization”⁵⁵ was because of, and shaped by, their ideas about the superiority and necessary dispersal of the Christian faith. In fact, historian Louise Burkhart

⁵¹ Ibid., p.28

⁵² Dussel, p.43

⁵³ Russell, p.59

⁵⁴ Mariá García Saíz. Portraiture in Viceregal America in Museo del Barrio, and San Antonio Museum of Art. *Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits*. (San Antonio, Tex: San Antonio Museum of Art, 2004). p.74

⁵⁵ Dussel, p.49

argues that the position of the Christian mendicant depended upon the perceived inferiority of the Aztecs. Burkhart states;

“The friars never characterized their native congregations as fully competent practitioners of the Catholic faith. If they were to do so, they would not only blur the vital border between ‘us’ and ‘them’ but would also render themselves obsolete, for they were evangelizers charged only with establishing the church in the conquered territories, not with overseeing its affairs indefinitely.”⁵⁶

Now matter how similar indigenous Christian practices were to those of the Spanish, they were always viewed through a framework of inferiority in order to justify evangelical efforts.⁵⁷ It is therefore essential to realize that the imagery produced during the early colonial process is motivated by incentives of social, cultural and religious conversion.

Beyond the broader historical context, the motivations of the conquistadores themselves were another significant influence on the Spanish conquest and colonization of New Spain. Coming from various Spanish socio-cultural backgrounds and locations, the initial colonial forces arriving in central Mexico at the start of the 16th century were united more in purpose than origin. Hernán Cortés, for example, the leader of the first expedition, was a young man born in the Western province of Extremadura who “saw himself as the feudal vassal of a medieval monarch [,] and the instrument... of a God-directed enterprise.”⁵⁸ His

⁵⁶ Burkhart (1998), p.369

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.364

⁵⁸ Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, N.J.), *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987). p.52

motivation was personal glory justified by peninsular interests and the expansion of Christianity. After the final expulsion of the Moors from Spain in 1492, “fighting the infidel no longer offered a path to status and wealth in Spain,”⁵⁹ leaving the conquest of the Americas as one of the last opportunities for economic gain and class mobility within the Spanish society. One record of the conquest details that the Spanish conquistadores traveled to the Americas “to bring light to those in darkness, and also to get rich, which is what all of us men commonly seek.”⁶⁰ This quote demonstrates the way in which religious discourse was used by the conquistadores to obscure their true hope - economic, political and social success.

The hope for economic gains by conquering central Mexico was quickly realized, as the Spanish monarchy privatized all its subject lands in the Americas because “the cost of maintaining a standing army and conquering the enormous territory of the Americas exceeded its very limited financial means.”⁶¹ These lands were gifted to those prominent soldiers and political figures that achieved the wealth desired by the Spanish monarchy. While taxes and duties were still leveled on new resources, the creation of *encomiendas*, or property-based rewards for “conquest contributions” that included indigenous labor and tribute, provided opportunity to gain more wealth and status than would be possible back in Spain.⁶²

⁵⁹ Russell, p.15

⁶⁰ Expedition member Bernal Díaz del Castillo, as cited in Russell, p.16

⁶¹ Russell, p.16

⁶² Himmerich, Robert y Valencia, 1991 as cited in Russell, p.31. The *encomienda* system served as incentive only until the New Laws of Charles V ended the practice in 1541.

The Spanish also brought their conception of a proper family to central Mexico at the beginning of the 16th century. This model encouraged a family that paralleled and metaphorized a miniature model of the state – with the father possessing “complete authority over [his] wife and children”⁶³ that replicated the absolute and divinely granted authority of the Spanish monarchy over its subjects. Because of the immediate and considerable sexual encounters between the Spanish settlers and indigenous women during the conquest of central Mexico,⁶⁴ maintaining this family model required the regulation of indigenous female sexuality.

Generally, procreation between indigenous women and Spanish male colonial subjects was usually perceived as a beneficial expansion of the colonial state as long as it did not interfere with questions of blood lineage and social hierarchy. The Aztec and Spanish elite both relied heavily on systems of blood lineage to determine the continuation of the noble class. The Aztecs were known to marry off noble daughters to the leaders of the societies they conquered before the arrival of the Spanish,⁶⁵ and are recorded as using intermarriage to structure a system of power and control between the Aztec and Spanish elite.⁶⁶ In fact, “descent through the female line became more common in the colonial period”⁶⁷ partially because of dramatic population loss and constant shifts in power. The Spanish

⁶³ Russell, p.51

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.53

⁶⁵ Sigal, p.545

⁶⁶ Boornazian Diel (2005), p.102 “After the Spanish defeat of Tenochtitlan, the highest-ranking Mexica noblewoman, Isabel Motecuhzoma, married a Spaniard, symbolically creating a new political alliance between the Mexica and the Spanish.”

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.100

Reconquest, with the identification and expulsion of the Spanish Muslims, also fostered a social hierarchy valuing purity of blood and lineage. Therefore, while procreation between indigenous women and Spanish men was considered a positive expansion of colonial power and influence in New Spain, it needed to be controlled because of concerns of lineage and rightful positionality with the social hierarchy.

The majority of the power of indigenous female sexuality lies in the importance of this social hierarchy. Central Mexico had an agricultural economy which made land and labor the most important property and the owning of land a privilege. As with the feudal system of medieval Europe, the pre-colonial Aztec agricultural society functioned within a strict system of class hierarchy that was re-enforced (though also inevitably restructured) upon the arrival of the Spanish. Asunción Lavrín notes, “the main objective of the familial honor was to guarantee the legitimacy of the children, essential to sustaining the socioeconomic position of the family.”⁶⁸ Yet female sexuality was not restricted in the same way as the Europeans. According to Aztec historian Peter Sigal,

“Nahuas did not make such a clear distinction [between romantic engagements and bodily pleasures], and certainly did not condemn the ‘pleasurable life’ as damaging to the soul. When Catholic clerics in the sixteenth century attempted to assert such a binary distinction, they had great difficulty following the logic used in Nahua thought, which promoted pleasure as a necessary part of life.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Asunción Lavrín, ed., *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). p.6

⁶⁹ Sigal, p.227

But as the Spanish colonial powers established themselves at the top of the social hierarchy with the cooperation of the surviving Aztec nobility, honor, power and legitimacy became inextricably linked. As understood by postcolonial historian Ann Twinam, “honor was the ethos which rationalized the existence of the colonial hierarchy. It included those self-conscious differences of birth and conduct that distinguished people who had it from those who did not.”⁷⁰ This notion of legitimacy and honor was reinforced through religion as well, such as with the expectations of a newborn child as recorded in The Florentine Codex: “One’s child; [that is,] the legitimate child, the child born within the household, the child born within the habitation, the spiritually acceptable child.”⁷¹ Only the legitimate child born was considered spiritually and socially honorable. Beyond the issue of material inheritance, honor (as gained initially through legitimacy) guided day-to-day conduct of early colonial society, molding “intra-élite relationships, as those who had honor recognized it in others and treated these peers with an attention and respect that they denied the rest of colonial society.”⁷² Thus honor, as related to class, was an essential, legible component of elite power in early New Spain.

When the honorable lineage was broken by illegitimate relations, “it produced family members who were blood kin but lacked the prerequisites of honor.”⁷³ It therefore became of utmost social, political and religious importance to restrict

⁷⁰ Ann Twinam, *Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America*, in Lavrín, p.123

⁷¹ Sahagún, p.2

⁷² Twinam, in Lavrín, p.123

⁷³ Ibid, p.124

these illegitimate relationships – creating serious interest in the regulation of indigenous female sexuality. To continue Twinam’s discussion, “questions of honor, female sexuality, and illegitimacy thus become inextricably linked. Women who engaged in premarital or extramarital sexual relations not only lost personal reputation and honor, but could beget additional family members whose illegitimacy excluded them from family honor,”⁷⁴ not to mention the creation of entire lines of illegitimate relations that fell outside the acceptable class categories and therefore threatened the stability of the highly stratified social structure.⁷⁵

As the Aztec woman inhabited the curiously powerful role of creating and raising the emerging colonial body, the regulation of indigenous female sexuality soon became an important subject of discussion. As Serge Gruzinski so aptly describes, “we have the development of a discourse centered on sex and the flesh; upon it revolved both power and knowledge.”⁷⁶ The expectations of indigenous female sexuality (such as depicted in *The Florentine Codex* and *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole*) therefore, as translated and framed by members of the elite and religious class, become a tool through which the importance of regulating the indigenous female body in colonial New Spain can be understood.

⁷⁴ Twinam in Lavrín, p.124

⁷⁵ Lori Boornazian Diel, “Till Death Do Us Part,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 18, no. 02 (2007). p.259
“Wives, daughters, and mothers, noblewomen were [also surely] a necessary component of the Aztec political system because of its focus on legitimate decent and hereditary rule.”

⁷⁶ Serge Gruzinski, *Individualization and Acculturation: Confession among the Nahuas of Mexico from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* in Lavrín, p.96

The construction of deviant sexualities was one of the most frequent, and important, methods of regulating indigenous female sexuality in New Spain. Deviant sexuality in the early colonial period can be defined as any manner of expressing sexuality that threatened the stability of the colonial hierarchy. Because the desired colonial state was primarily through the Spanish patriarchal, family structure, any reproduction that took place outside this model threatened the monitored creation of the colonial population. Unregulated indigenous female sexuality was partially framed for Spanish through their understanding of witchcraft. Like European witches, indigenous “women were particularly feared for what was believed to be their seductive natures.”⁷⁷ This thesis will look specifically at the representations of deviant and acceptable female, indigenous sexuality in order to better understand the importance and execution of this regulation.

In conclusion, there were a variety of social, historical and cultural influences that converged to create the culture of early colonial New Spain. Both the Aztec and the Spanish contributed histories and ideas that shaped the construction of the various colonial bodies. And in a space where language was not often shared, and religious and cultural ideologies were strong on both sides, visual representation became a primary colonial tactic. Whether it was the day to day

⁷⁷ Lori Boornazian Diel, “Clothing Women: The Female Body in Pre- and Post-contact Aztec Art,” in *Woman and Art in Early Modern Latin America*, ed. Richard E. Phillips and Kellen Kee McIntyre (Brill Academic Publishers, 2006). p.221, <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/10.1163/ej.9789004153929.i-451.52;jsessionid=93kaodq9l8ojc.x-brill-live-01>.

reading of external characteristics to interpret social rank, or the creation of propaganda and images to regulate indigenous female sexuality, as will be addressed in Chapters Two and Three, visual imagery became an important product of New Spain, and cannot be fully analyzed without knowledge of the variety of frameworks through which it was created.

CHAPTER TWO

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SEXUAL DEVIANTS IN THE FLORENTINE CODEX

Visual images were absolutely essential to the success of the Spanish in the early colonization of Aztec society. Just as we see in modern election campaigns, imagery is one of the easiest ways to popularize and communicate a new social vision during a shift in power and political control. This fact becomes especially relevant during the construction of a new society based upon people of multiple cultures and languages and by a colonial power interested in the enforcement of specific religious and cultural ideologies. Considering the consistent presence of imagery in early colonial life, it is important to understand the complex social vision encouraged by those commissioning and creating visual media. This chapter looks at the depictions of deviant indigenous female sexuality, specifically *The Procuress*, *The Harlot* and *The Chicle Chewer*, in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's work *General History of the Things of New Spain* (also known as *The Florentine Codex*) to discuss the ways indigenous female bodies were framed and regulated by those in power in order to benefit the emerging power structure of early New Spain.

As discussed by feminist post-colonial theorist Ania Loomba, all types of historical products can "be analyzed to reveal not just an individual but a historical consciousness at work."⁷⁸ *The Florentine Codex*, though complex in purpose and origin, is no exception. At its most basic, this codex is a bilingual (Nahuatl and

⁷⁸ Loomba, p.37

Spanish) document of Aztec daily life and customs, that includes illustrations.

Starting with detailed descriptions of Aztec deities, *The Florentine Codex* spends several chapters discussing norms of Aztec daily life and social roles, and ends with an account of the conquest at Tenochtitlán. Commissioned in late 1558 or early 1559 by Fray Franciscan de Toral, *The Florentine Codex*, was a project conducted by Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún in collaboration with Aztec students from the Franciscan school to write a work in Nahuatl “useful for the indoctrination, the propagation and perpetuation of the Christianization of these natives of this New Spain, and as a help to the workers and ministers who indoctrinate them.”⁷⁹ The codex was sent to Europe in 1580, where it remained in the National Library of Florence until its academic rediscovery in the 20th century.⁸⁰ Despite its original purpose and goals, Sahagún’s project became a complex record of Aztec religion and culture.⁸¹ This codex is useful for understanding the expectations and ideas of the elite and religious classes for New Spanish society.

The simple existence of this bi-lingual document demonstrates the importance of the mendicant orders to the developing power structure of the Spanish colonial system. Sahagún’s attempt to translate, both literally and figuratively, the culture of the Aztecs into a hybrid Spanish-Aztec book format to aid the Spanish colonial

⁷⁹ Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 1:53, as cited by Ellen T. Baird. “Sahagún and the Representation of History” in *Sahagún at 500: Essays on the Quincentenary of the Birth of Fr. Bernardino De Sahagún*, Publications of the Academy of American Franciscan History v. 3 (Berkeley, Calif: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2003). p.118

⁸⁰ Baird, p.117

⁸¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). p.235

powers implicates the Franciscan evangelicals in the explicit colonial process. In fact, as art historian Elizabeth Boone states,

“Manuscripts like these were created, circulated, and copied by the mendicants and their Nahuatl assistants. They were passed around and shared as tools for conversion in the same way that the scripted dictionaries, grammars, and native-language confessionals were. Considering that a dozen or so of these cultural encyclopedias have survived, there must have been quite an industry in them in the mid-sixteenth century.”⁸²

Though it may seem obvious, it is important to point out that this text was not made to help the general Nahuatl-speaking population understand Spanish language or culture, but instead to facilitate their integration by the Spanish into colonial society. As described by art historical theorist Peter Burke, “it is by means of analogy that the exotic is made intelligible, that it is domesticated.”⁸³ In this case, the translation of Aztec culture into an encyclopedic mode of Spanish narration was part of the process of domesticating it. In the words of Loomba, “this [translation] is a crucial point, for colonial attempts to classify, record, represent and process non-European societies... [are] attempts to re-order worlds that were often incomprehensible to the masters and make them more manageable, [and] comprehensible for imperial consumption.”⁸⁴ Baird even notices that, “although the *Florentino* focuses on indigenous culture, many of the illustrations are heavily Europeanized,”⁸⁵ meaning the images were made to facilitate European understanding. As the primary places of artistic production, the evangelical

⁸² Boone (2003), p.165

⁸³ Burke, p.124

⁸⁴ Loomba, p.88

⁸⁵ Baird, p.117

workshops become important sites where Aztec culture was fit into colonial society through translation.

It is because of this inextricability of church activity and the official colonial process that one can interpret *The Florentine Codex* as a document containing the ideal goals of the elite for a successful, integrated, colonial society. As stated by gender and postcolonial theorist Asunción Lavrín, because of the interwoven nature of church and state in the early colonization of New Spain, “regardless of their feasibility, the norms set by the church are essential to our understanding of the cultural constrictions imposed on the daily lives of the laity.”⁸⁶ And visual media was a prominent method of communicating these norms.

However, the work of Sahagún is useful in an analysis of early colonial culture only if the specific complexities of the *Florentine Codex* are acknowledged. As a project intended to aid in the evangelization of the Nahuatl-speaking people, the *Florentine Codex* demonstrates Sahagún’s interest in serving “an intermediary role between the two cultures.”⁸⁷ The initial impetus to dedicate so much energy to studying Aztec pre-colonial culture was like “the study by a doctor of the cause of a disease. He claimed that just as doctors needed to know the cause of a disease, a priest, as a doctor of souls, needed to know the cause of idolatrous superstitions before he could cure the idolater.”⁸⁸ His work was linked to structuring the daily

⁸⁶ Lavrín, p.48

⁸⁷ Todorov, p.221

⁸⁸ Russell, p.60

culture and belief system of the colonial population. As Sahagún explains himself in the codex prologue;

“It is in order to obey the orders of my prelado mayor that I have taken it upon myself to describe in the Mexican language what seems to me to be the most useful to dogma, to culture, and to the permanence of Christianity among the natives of New Spain, and what would be, at the same time, most likely to serve as a prop to the ministers and collaborators who instruct them.”⁸⁹

Though his work was commissioned as an aid to the process of colonization in New Spain, his careful interest in and attention paid to Aztec culture quickly prompted controversy.

Sahagún served under a broader religious system of power as a Franciscan friar, and therefore his work on The Florentine Codex took place “at the mercy of his hierarchical superior, who [could] encourage him as well as render his endeavor impossible.”⁹⁰ While the work remains in some parts unfinished, its general structure shows Sahagún’s evolving project motives. It is really only the first three sections written on Aztec deity figures and religious ceremonies that correspond directly to the initial project. The subsequent sections on Aztec social customs and the conquest of Tenochtitlán are of Sahagún’s personal initiative. Increasingly confronted with the religious standards coming out of the Council of Trent (1545-63), which particularly denounced “such hybrid religious forms” as unnecessary attention paid to indigenous culture, Sahagún’s interest in recording Aztec systems of belief brought about opposition “from those who feared that recording

⁸⁹ Bernardino de Sahagún. *General History of the Things of New Spain: The Florentine Codex*. Prologue. As cited in Todorov, p.222

⁹⁰ Todorov, p.221

‘idolatrous’ practices would perpetuate their use.”⁹¹ In 1577, King Felipe II even formally “forbade research on Indian history and religion” under the fear that studying indigenous culture would serve more to “perpetuate Indian beliefs and rites, rather than eliminating them.” This official stamp of “royal disfavor”⁹² brought Sahagún’s work to a hurried close – quietly preserving a unique translation of indigenous culture that was framed by the circulating ideas of the early colonial elite.

As this study focuses on the imagery of indigenous female sexuality within The Florentine Codex to understand the position of the native female body in the colonial process, it is important to discuss the perspective and privilege of Sahagún’s Nahuatl-speaking contributors. Bernardino de Sahagún, through a type of early anthropological strategy, compiled his information on Aztec culture and the Nahuatl language through several categories of intermediaries. His primary contacts were Aztec men of the noble class who attended the Franciscan College of Santa Cruz where he taught. These students then reached out to selected elders in the community using questionnaires to record oral histories relating to pre-, and early colonial Aztec culture.⁹³ Both stages of indigenous informants, the students and elder oral historians, comprised primarily of the male, upper class. The use of a noble indigenous population becomes apparent with the negative use of the word “commoner” in the codex itself. Book Six, for example, describes appropriate

⁹¹ Eloise Quiñones Keber, ed. American Society for Ethnohistory, *Representing Aztec Ritual: Performance, Text, and Image in the Work of Sahagún*, Mesoamerican Worlds (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002). p.14

⁹² Russell, p.61

⁹³ Todorov, p.223

male conduct: “Do not, just of thy own accord, bring dishonor upon thyself... Do not be a commoner; do not lower thyself.”⁹⁴

In addition to being of the elite population, it is essential to realize that “even native informants were almost certainly all male, and therefore were unlikely to present a complete and impartial view of gender differences within their own culture and ideology,”⁹⁵ as noted by art historian Virginia Miller. While their Aztec heritage likely made indigenous informants inherently lower in the developing social hierarchy of New Spain, the gender and noble ancestry of these Nahuatl-speaking contributors placed them in relatively high positions of power and prestige, especially when discussing female indigenous sexual deviants. Therefore, while the dynamics of early colonial society were inevitably in part Spanish, the regulation and demonization of indigenous female sexuality as understood through the *Florentine Codex* was certainly a collaboration between noble Aztec and Spanish systems of power and belief.

For the purposes of this discussion, female sexual deviance is defined as sexual actions that defy the acceptable code of relations between men and women, and potentially produce a child that cannot be comfortably fit into the strict class hierarchy of early New Spain. While there are many approaches to restricting socially unacceptable sexual relations, one essential strategy of those in power in

⁹⁴ Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex*, V.7. Monographs of the School of American Research no. 14, pt. 1-13 (Santa Fe, N.M. : Salt Lake City, Utah: School of American Research ; University of Utah, 1950). p.95

⁹⁵ Virginia Miller, ed. International Congress of Americanists, *The Role of Gender in Precolumbian Art and Architecture* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988). p.xi

colonial New Spain was to strictly construct and regulate acceptable expressions of indigenous female sexuality – demonizing any sexual conduct that did not serve the expansion of a hierarchical state. Sahagún’s *The Procuress*, *The Harlot* and *The Chicle Chewer* all illustrated deviant sexualities as dangerous and harmful to indigenous women and the colony itself. Although pre-colonial Spanish and Aztec culture did have different discourses around female sexuality, in the formation of a combined system, “both cultures agreed on the need to impose the concept of mastery over the body to reinforce, among other goals, their control over society.”⁹⁶ The manner in which pre-existing indigenous and Spanish imagery concerning female sexuality was blended to serve this interest of the emerging colony is particularly evident in these three illustrations in *The Florentine Codex*.

The Procuress, *The Harlot*, and *The Chicle Chewer* are all illustrated in pen and ink, placed within the original text and contain little extraneous detail or decoration. Despite being set on relatively flat, uniform backgrounds, the style of the figures in these three drawings demonstrates an interest in perspective and three-dimensionality that speaks to the European training of the Aztec noble artists. Besides of the overarching trend towards traditional Spanish methods of manuscript drawing and representation, each of these images utilizes unique visual cues meant to exemplify the dangerous problem of deviant indigenous female sexuality.

⁹⁶ Gruzinski, in Lavrín, p.100

THE PROCURESS⁹⁷



The first image, *The Procuress*, depicts two women in profile standing beside each other while a red, otherworldly, horned figure faces the viewer directly from behind the woman on the left. The woman on the left comfortably touches the elbow of the woman on the right while simultaneously pointing behind her – a gesture of conversation and conviction that marks her as the procuress. The woman on the right gestures with one hand open and the other pointed towards the ground, as if affirming her conviction to stay exactly where she is. Though neither figure’s mouth is open, their interaction is clearly a conversation. The red, horned figure standing behind the procuress and pointing towards the woman being solicited is certainly a variant of the devil of European, Christian tradition. This is not a surprising presence considering colonial Latin American historian

⁹⁷ All images from: “General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino De Sahagún: The Florentine Codex - World Digital Library”, n.d., <http://www.wdl.org/en/item/10096/>. Accessed April 26th 2013.

Boornazian Diel's statement that "for Spanish clergy, who tended to see things in terms of moral absolutes, sexuality was identified with sin and the devil himself."⁹⁸

The position of this devil-like figure behind the procuress serves to divide the composition of the illustration into two opposing sides. The left is inhabited by evil and danger, as personified by the devil, and the right by the chaste and righteous woman. The procuress primarily exists in the left, evil, side of moral problem, but in her attempt at conviction, must move briefly to the side of righteousness. Though there is a tenuous middle ground, *The Procuress* illustrates the polarization of indigenous female sexuality in early New Spain. The two clearly marked spaces available are that of the entirely chaste and righteous, or that of the evil sexual deviant. The devil-like figure even confronts the viewer with direct eye contact as if to prompt his or her own immediate and absolute decision. As Anne Twinam notes of colonial New Spain, "a woman was either 'in' sexual control, or 'out' of such control, and society did not recognize anything 'in between.'" For that reason, single women who lost their virginity, or wives who strayed, lost any claim to respectability. They were 'out of control' and approximated the moral, if not the actual, state of the prostitute."⁹⁹ This illustration strives to emphasize these polar-opposite decisions of the sexual indigenous female. The side of the procuress, and therefore unregulated indigenous female sexuality, is blatantly associated with evil and corruption through the presence of the devil-figure. In contrast to the shifted weight of the

⁹⁸ Boornazian Diel (2006). p,221

⁹⁹ Twinam, in Lavrín, p.120

procuress, the solicited stands firmly on two feet, even appearing slightly taller, in order to emphasize her position of stability and righteousness.

As described by Sahagún, the procuress is “a deceiver, a perverter, a provoker, a deranger, a corrupter, a destroyer of others.”¹⁰⁰ Her position as an encouragement to deviant indigenous female sexuality made her such a threat to the newly forming colonial state that she was explicitly connected with the European-like devil. Ruth Behar observes that “Michelle Rosaldo and other feminist anthropologists have pointed out, in most societies women are denied culturally legitimate authority in the public sphere. Thus, whatever power women do have is thought to be illegitimate, negative, and disruptive.”¹⁰¹ The procuress here, though possessing the freedom to speak and approach others in a public space, is a negative and disruptive influence on the righteous woman being solicited. By greatly simplifying the acceptable social manifestations of indigenous female sexuality, *The Procuress* reinforces the elite interest in demonizing any expressions of female sexuality not related to the production of a socially stratified and honorable state.

¹⁰⁰ Sahagún, p.57

¹⁰¹ Ruth Behar, *Sexual Witchcraft, Colonialism, and Women's Powers: Views from the Mexican Inquisition*, in Lavrín, p.181

THE HARLOT¹⁰²



The next illustration, *The Harlot*, is especially helpful in understanding the combinations of indigenous and European symbolism created to communicate the dangers of sexual excess in early colonial society. “The general... attitude of the church toward sexual union [was] repressive, stressing restraint and control over release and fulfillment.”¹⁰³ Consequently, the harlot is depicted as the least restrained, and therefore most dangerous, personification of deviant indigenous female sexuality. The illustration of *The Harlot* in Sahagún’s codex contains one female figure standing on vegetation in the center of the composition, wearing elegantly patterned and colorful clothing, with her hair loose and holding bunches of flowers and plant-like matter. The plant on which she stands and holds in her hand is an Aztec water glyph “used symbolically for the syllable [a]...to indicate that [she is] the sort of wom[an] denoted by a word that begins with that syllable,

¹⁰² World Digital Library.

¹⁰³ Lavrín (1989), p.52

namely *ahuiyanih*, ‘prostitutes.’”¹⁰⁴ Even though this text was made for a European audience, it demonstrates the ways Aztec visual motifs were appropriated to help communicate Christian morals.

The detailed attention to her garment here is also important as it speaks to the association of sexual and material excess in early colonial New Spain. While textiles were considered valuable offerings in indigenous society, and the elite class in New Spain was known to dress elegantly, the harlot is best demonized by the church through a parallel comparison with material excess. The position of Sahagún as a Franciscan friar is very important here. The power of the mendicant preachers in early colonial society likely fostered a popular discourse of piety that conflicted with the actual practices of the entire population - from laity to elite. “Gaudiness was associated with sexual license in the Christian tradition,”¹⁰⁵ and regardless of its real implications, the association of the harlot with material excess clearly marked her as amoral in a society under considerable evangelical influence. Sahagún makes this connection even more explicitly when he alternately condemns the excessive sexual and material habits of the bad daughter and maiden. He describes the bad daughter as “proud; a whore, she is showy, pompous, gaudy of dress, garish; she is a loiterer, given to pleasure; a courtesan.”¹⁰⁶ While the bad maiden is also “one who yields herself to others – a prostitute, a seller of herself, dishonored, gaudy. She goes about shamelessly, presumptuously,

¹⁰⁴ Karttunen, Frances. “Indigenous Writing as a Vehicle of Postconquest Continuity and Change in Mesoamerica.” in *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World: a Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 2nd Through 4th October 1992* (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998). p.430

¹⁰⁵ Margaret Campbell Arvey, *Women of Ill-Repute in the Florentine Codex*, in Miller, p.184

¹⁰⁶ Sahagún, p.3

conspicuously washed and combed, pompously.”¹⁰⁷ The colorfully patterned dress of the harlot in the codex illustration therefore, serves to symbolize and highlight the woman’s excessive sexuality – equally socially dangerous and self-serving as excessive material consumption.

Her visibly loose and flowing hair also emphasizes the harlot’s lack of restraint. Probably marking age and marital status in earlier indigenous society, and recalling European witch-imagery popularized during the Inquisition,¹⁰⁸ hair became an important symbol of sexual deviance in early New Spain. Rosemary Joyce elaborates, “Controlling hair marked control of adult sexuality. It does not seem coincidental that the negative stereotype of the female prostitute described for Spanish clerics singled out long, unbound hair as one of the signs of this practice.”¹⁰⁹ Peter Sigal specifies this association by stating “by beautifying herself in these ways, she became concerned only with pleasure.”¹¹⁰ The combined “gaudy” clothing, untamed hair, and Aztec glyphs highlight the dangerous lack of restraint practiced by the harlot – making her a significant threat to the social hierarchy of New Spain.

¹⁰⁷ Sahagún, p.13

¹⁰⁸ Klein, Cecelia F., “Wild Woman in Colonial Mexico: An Encounter of European and Aztec Concepts of the Other,” in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). p.252

¹⁰⁹ Rosemary A. Joyce, *Gender and Power in Prehispanic Mesoamerica*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). p.157

¹¹⁰ Sigal, p.225

Besides referencing Christian sin, the elaborate costume, hair, demeanor and even makeup¹¹¹ associated with the harlot were connected by the Spanish colonial powers to the forbidden Aztec pre-colonial practice of human sacrifice. Described by Sahagún, the harlot “lives like a bathed slave [and] acts like a sacrificial victim... much besotted; dejected, perverse; [like] a sacrificial victim... a captive; full of affliction, mortal.”¹¹² Her presence attracts equal public attention as the central figure in an important and highly visual Aztec ceremony. Though likely derivative of the Aztec tradition of dressing up victims before ritual sacrifice, this parallel demonstrates that the sexual deviance of the harlot could instill similar horror and fear in the Spanish nobility as the idea of a bloody Aztec sacrifice.

¹¹¹ “She paints her face, variously paints her face; her face is covered with rouge, her cheeks are colored, her teeth are darkened – rubbed with cochineal. [Half] of her hair falls loose, half is wound about her head. She arranges her hair like horns.” Sahagún, p.56

¹¹² Ibid, p.56

THE CHICLE CHEWER¹³



The last illustration, *The Chicle Chewer*, demonstrates the dangerous visibility of the sexually deviant indigenous female in early colonial New Spain. Much like visual power of public ritual in New Spain, the public presence of women was increasingly dictated by codes of Christian morality. Depicting a lone woman securely moving in profile, placing *chicle* (gum) into her open mouth, and flipping her shawl behind her with her hand, *The Chicle Chewer* shows a female brazenly occupying unnecessary space. As Lavrín notes, “a woman of high class, whether on foot or in chairs or coaches, was always accompanied. She could ride a horse with a man, if he was her husband. An indigenous woman of low birth, a slave, or a

¹³ World Digital Library.

poor white woman had the freedom of the street and the market, whether accompanied or alone. Her economic situation demanded that she be free to make a living."¹¹⁴ Yet the co-mingling of elite men and lower class women in public spaces created opportunity for illegitimate sexual activity - an undesirable situation for the nobility of New Spain, whose power depended on upholding strict social stratifications.

This illustration in the *Florentine Codex*, therefore, accompanies the text's negative portrayal of a woman's dangerously independent occupation of public space. "She chews chicle - she clacks chicle. She lives on the water - in the streets; she goes about disgracing the streets, frequenting the market place, as if a part of the market place."¹¹⁵ The danger of the chicle chewer's power lies in her public visibility and presence. It is important to distinguish that the act of chewing chicle is not necessarily forbidden, but rather "her violations of decorum are linked to her lack of a proper place."¹¹⁶ As Lavrín explains,

"Men and women had specific physical spheres within the streets as well as in the home. Social demarcations also applied to the space that women of different social and ethnic affiliation occupied. So, while a woman of high birth was within her boundaries at home and at church, the public spaces between home and church demanded a special behavior under certain conditions."¹¹⁷

The woman in *The Chicle Chewer* absolutely defies these codes of social behavior as she loudly, visibly and independently occupies public space. The chicle chewer

¹¹⁴ Lavrín (1989), p.159

¹¹⁵ Sahagún, p.56

¹¹⁶ Joyce, p.161

¹¹⁷ Lavrín (1989), p.159

is not only a representation of deviant indigenous female sexuality, but also presents the dangerously visible position outside of the acceptable social hierarchy of New Spain.

Though all with their own unique emphasis, the illustrations of deviant indigenous female sexuality in *The Florentine Codex* serve to reify the powerful and stratified class system of early New Spain. In a cultural system highly dependent on legitimacy, lineage and honor, Sahagún's unique work highlights the prominent social interest of the elite in demonizing unacceptable sexual relations through a focus on the indigenous female as means of maintaining the production of an organized and hierarchical colony.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIANITY, INDIGENOUS MARRIAGE AND PUBLIC RITUAL



Folding Screen with Indian Wedding and Flying Pole (Biombo con desposorio indígena y palo volador)
Mexico, circa 1690. Oil on canvas. 66 x 120 in.¹¹⁸

In New Spain it was just as important to clarify the role of the good, indigenous woman as it was to ostracize the bad. How important the regulation of indigenous female sexuality was to the colonial process is evident in the energetic enforcement of a rigid standard of acceptable sexual expression in Christian marriage. As marital customs became increasingly controlled by the Catholic church in 16th century Europe, they were transferred to the soil of New Spain as a tactic of social control.

¹¹⁸ *Folding Screen with Indian Wedding and Flying Pole (Biombo Con Desposorio Indígena y Palo Volador*. Accessed April 26, 2013, <http://collections.lacma.org/node/209529>.

The importance of analyzing the constructions of acceptable sexuality lies in the strict polarization of sexual expression in New Spain. Whether harlot or wife, each social position for indigenous female sexuality was highly structured to benefit the organization and colonization of the developing Viceroyalty of New Spain. Because of the polarized nature of the Aztec female colonial body, the respectable actions of indigenous women are equally worth study because acceptable sexual expression always contextualized deviance. In addition, through the New Spanish Christian colonial lens the actions of the good wife and mother were always considered tenuous. Exemplifying the unstable position of the female colony body is the fact that “single women who lost their virginity, or wives who strayed, lost any claim to respectability... [and were considered] ‘out of control’... approximat[ing] the moral, if not the actual, state of the prostitute.”¹¹⁹ It is critically important, therefore, to investigate the ways in which officially sanctioned expressions of sexuality were shaped and encouraged through imagery in order to understand the need to construct and control the indigenous female body in the New Spanish colonial process.

Though the early society of New Spain was a definite mix of cultural and social traditions, the Spanish conquistadores certainly tried “to replicate their own society in colonial Mexico.” This included instating central tenets of Spanish social and political structure like “estate hierarchy, patriarchy, honor and legitimacy, and

¹¹⁹ Twinam in Lavrín (1989), p.120

devotion to the Catholic faith.”¹²⁰ When marriage became more rigidly regulated by the Catholic church and increasingly intertwined with lineage, power and hierarchy back in Spain, it was imposed upon New Spain as a critical tool through which European systems of hierarchical power could be translated and ingrained into a new population.¹²¹

As the conquered Aztec lands were transformed into New Spain, the European Catholic church grew increasingly interested in the regulation of marital traditions as a means to exert widespread social control. Latin American colonial scholar Lisa Sousa notes that,

“While some in the church may have been sympathetic to the validity of the indigenous institution of marriage in pre-conquest times, they agreed that Christian marriage, as dictated by canon law, must be encouraged under colonial rule. Thus the friars upheld the Christian sacrament of marriage as a model of virtue and civilization.”¹²²

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), and especially the Tametsi Decree in 1563, ended the relatively unofficial and diverse marital practices of Europe. The primary change was that now marriages were only recognized if witnesses and a clergyman were present.¹²³ This “regularization of sexual relations” was accompanied by a widespread campaign to disseminate the ideas of the Catholic church among the geographically and socially diverse people of Europe.¹²⁴ Lavrín, scholar of gender and sexuality in colonial Latin America, discusses the beginnings of this religious

¹²⁰ Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith. *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*. (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA 2009). p.6

¹²¹ Lavrín (1989), p.4

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.37

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.6

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4

campaign in Europe and how “after the Council of Trent solved once and for all the format of the marriage ritual, the church made a concerted effort to make its teachings on the nature and objective of male-female relationships better known to the laity.”¹²⁵ The marriage of the European general population became a focus of the interconnected powers of church and state, an interest that was soon transferred to Spanish America where “the rulings on betrothal, marriage rituals, and mutual consent began to be expounded in the provincial councils taking place in Lima in 1582 and New Spain in 1585.”¹²⁶ Legislation was even passed in New Spain to ensure community approval of procreative relationships, like the Royal Pragmatic on Marriages in 1778 that “permitted parents to oppose marriages of their children to ‘unequal’ partners, by which was meant people of suspect hybrid backgrounds or blacks.”¹²⁷ Christian marriage, therefore, greatly aided the colonial process in New Spain as it ingrained the notions of racial, cultural and class hierarchy into the social fabric of acceptable sexual relationships of the emerging society. Now, marriage was no longer an exclusively European activity, in fact, “the main preoccupation of canon lawyers and theologians [starting in] the sixteenth century was the acceptance of Christian marriage by the indigenous society.”¹²⁸

As discussed previously, legitimacy was of utmost importance to the success of the New Spanish colony. In fact, “the establishment of the legitimacy of the marital union to secure the allocation of inheritance and the division of benefits

¹²⁵ Lavrín, (1989), p.48

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.7

¹²⁷ Katzew and Deans-Smith. p.8

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.4

among spouses and offspring was of cardinal importance.”¹²⁹ The direct link of marriage, sexuality, and the production of a new population created incentive for colonial authorities to popularize European marriage. Marriage and sex were so inextricably linked through the Council of Trent that one could, for example, revoke a verbal promise of marriage now only “provided no sexual intercourse had taken place. The centrality of the physical union was paramount,”¹³⁰ though these standards of physical contact were likely preached more than followed. In order to regulate procreation according to the desires of the Spanish nobility, and therefore control elite lineage and power, the indigenous female body’s placement within the structure of Christian marriage was a familiar and practical necessity for the powers of New Spain. The popularization of Christian marriage as an acceptable structure for indigenous female sexuality was therefore an integral aspect of colonial development making the image of the Aztec female body an essential component of building a combined hierarchical, colonial state.

The mendicant preachers, as important agents in the colonial process, worked hard to integrate these Catholic ideas of marriage into the social fabric of New Spain hoping that these ideas would regulate the growth of the expanding population. In fact, “the unbounded sexuality of the expanding heterogeneous population became one of the main concerns of the Inquisition after its transfer to the New World.”¹³¹ Therefore, “establishing the sacrament of marriage became a

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.3

¹³⁰ Lavrín (1989), p.5

¹³¹ Ibid., p.4

key focus of the church and its mission of conversion.... [and] the early friars spent much of their time teaching the new Christian converts the sanctity of marriage as well as the ‘degrees of carnal and spiritual relationship permitted.’¹³² Here, marriage had the explicit purpose of promoting socially acceptable sexual relationships, regulating and disciplining indigenous sexual practices and restricting sexual relationships only to those officially sanctioned by the church – primarily through regulation of the indigenous female body. It is through the imposition of Christian marriage that Spain could replicate its own socio-political structure on a new continent.

Imagery of Christian marriage ceremonies such as the late 17th century panel painting *Folding Screen with Indian Wedding and Flying Pole*¹³³ is an ideal source for understanding the significance of representing indigenous marriage for the colonial project. *Biombos*, or painted screens were a popular commission for elite households in the new colony.¹³⁴ The subject matter of Aztecs participating in a Christian marriage ceremony was also a common image among the Spanish and New Spanish upper class.

¹³² Boornazian Diel (2006), p.239

¹³³ *Folding Screen with Indian Wedding and Flying Pole (Biombo con desposorio indígena y palo volador)*, c.1690. Los Angeles County Museum of Art: Latin America. <http://collections.lacma.org/node/209529>. Accessed 25 March 24, 2013.

¹³⁴ Ilona Katzew. “Indian Wedding and Flying Pole” in Philadelphia Museum of Art, Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso (Museum), and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *The Arts in Latin America, 1492-1820*, 1st ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006). p.398 “The first *biombos*, or screens, were introduced to New Spain from Japan through the legendary Manila Galleons at the end of the sixteenth century... Subsequently, *biombos* were created in Mexico City and Puebla, and by the seventeenth century they had become a standard and fashionable decoration in elite households.”

The screen contains an indigenous couple walking out of a Christian marriage ceremony on one end, and various depictions of celebratory indigenous rituals scattered throughout the rest of the composition, located in what appears to be a type of town square. The indigenous ritual events include a costumed *mitote* (or Montezuma) dance, an acrobatic performance on a flying pole and a foot juggler – all activities foreign to the eyes of the Spanish. As described by LACMA curator of Latin American Art Ilona Katzew, though “the screen’s two coats of arms are almost completely lost, they likely belonged to a Spanish family, suggesting that the work was intended to be exported to Europe and to provide a glimpse – even if mediated – of colonial life.”¹³⁵ The organized composition and attention to spectacle in the work speak to the fact that this painting was carefully constructed to communicate an image of the New Spanish colony back to Europe, making it an extremely helpful tool to look at the ways indigenous marriage, and ultimately the control of Aztec female sexuality, were vital to the creation of colonial New Spain.

According to art historian Elisa Vargas Lugo de Bosch, “this iconography was converted into a sort of formula, [evidenced by] the fact that the two screens known plus four other paintings deal specifically with the representation of an Indian wedding.”¹³⁶ Generally, these images displayed “marriages with figures in extremely rich attire, floral crowns worn over the bride’s veil and the groom’s hat,

¹³⁵ Katzew Ilona, “Remedo de la ya muerta américa’: The Construction of Festive Rites in Colonial Mexico.” in Katzew, Ilona, ed., Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and Museo Nacional de Antropología (Mexico), *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011). p.170

¹³⁶ Elisa Vargas Lugo De Bosch, Jaime Morena and Pedro Ángeles “Indian Nuptial Festivities” in “Images of the Natives in the Art of New Spain: 16th to 18th Centuries” Fomento Cultural Banamex, Elisa Vargas Lugo De Bosch, Jay I. Kislak. Mexico: Mexico City. 2005. p.483

people holding bunches of marigolds and other flowers, or with candles also adorned with flowers, and with the presence of the godparents, equally bedecked, flanking the couple.”¹³⁷ Several images of indigenous marriage ceremonies following this format still hang on the walls of European and American museums.¹³⁸

Not only can one be sure *Indian Wedding and a Flying Pole* was commissioned by and for those of the noble class, but considering the norms of artistic training and painterly production in New Spain, it is also important to note that the work was likely produced by a workshop of upper-class artisans much like the *Florentine Codex*. Colonial Latin American historian Susan Deans-Smith, in her discussion of race classifications in the colony describes how “the majority of painters... were Spanish or ‘passed’ as Spanish; [and] some could lay claim to high status, as in the case of Indian *caciques* (hereditary Indian nobles).”¹³⁹ The majority of artwork produced within the upper social echelons New Spain, therefore, came from the hands of people who were already racially privileged by the existing social hierarchy. And even if the painters themselves were not precisely upper-class, they certainly had more direct access to upper rankings of power as “occupational and family networks... provided painters with access to the colonial elite, and to

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.483

¹³⁸ See: *Desposorio de Indios*. Attributed to Rodríguez Juárez, Juan (act. 1675-1728). Red Digital De Colecciones De Museos De España - Museos,” accessed April 26, 2013. <http://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>.

¹³⁹ Deans-Smith, Susan. “Dishonor in the Hands of Indians, Spaniards, and Blacks” in Katzew and Deans-Smith. p.47

powerful secular and ecclesiastical authorities.”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, from multiple angles *Indian Wedding* becomes fitting evidence of the European perception of New Spain as desired, and produced, by its most powerful.¹⁴¹

Finally, the importance of this image cannot be underestimated in a time when communication between continents was few and far-between. Considering that “since the sixteenth century Spain had zealously guarded its American colonies, [and] prohibit[ed] official travel by foreigners,”¹⁴² any image of the faraway land was greatly coveted. It is clear that the international image of New Spain was carefully guarded and of utmost importance to the elite power structure. In fact “Spain’s obsession with restricting access to information about the colonies and their administration was legendary” despite, or perhaps because of, “a huge hunger for news about the continent largely motivated by economic interests.”¹⁴³ Whether it was to satisfy curiosity, suspicion or disbelief abroad, images of indigenous Christian marriage like *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* are helpful in understanding the importance of imagery showing successful indigenous participation in Christian marriage rites. “The historical significance of the screen is double: on the one hand, the subject satisfied Europeans’ curiosity about the customs and rituals of the far-flung peoples of the New World; on the other, it

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p.47

¹⁴¹ In their joint essay “Indian Nuptial Festivities,” p.146, Lugo De Bosch, Morena and Ángeles vaguely attribute this painting to a European artist because of the exquisite and realistic attention to detail – particularly in the clothing. Considering the medium and subject matter are known to be common in early New Spain, however, this work continues to be relevant to my argument about the visual participation of Aztec people in Christian marriage.

¹⁴² Deans-Smith, Susan in Katzew and Deans-Smith, p.73

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.85

proved that the native population of New Spain fully partook of an important Christian sacrament – marriage – thereby conveying the notion of a ‘civilized’ land.”¹⁴⁴ If “civilized” implied a socio-political structure like that of 17th century Spain, then Christian marriage was a key component of colonial success. For viewers in central Mexico and back in Europe, these paintings visually reiterated the ritual of Christian marriage that was essential to regulate indigenous female sexuality and maintain a hierarchical power structure like that of the European continent left behind.

Marriage served as the primary, if not only, acceptable residing place for respectable indigenous female sexuality in the emerging society of New Spain. In both Europe and its colonies, “the emphasis given to betrothal and the move towards making it a public, not a personal, contract were based on the assumption that secrecy could prevent the exertion of social pressure to formalize the marriage.”¹⁴⁵ Yet the popularization of Christian marriage rituals could not have been done without the acknowledgment and incorporation of previously existing Aztec traditions. As historian James Lockhart describes, “existing Nahua patterns were what made the quick apparent success of Spanish modes possible.”¹⁴⁶ The activities involved in Christian marriage ritual had to be understood and seen as legitimate by indigenous participants in order to genuinely supplant pre-existing

¹⁴⁴ Katzew, p.398

¹⁴⁵ Lavrín (1989), p.5

¹⁴⁶ Katzew in LACMA. p.151

social traditions. Many activities associated with marriage in early New Spain therefore, were combined with traditional Aztec celebratory rituals. According to Sousa, the activities of “gift exchange, feasting, and dancing [described as part of a wedding] provided an element of continuity in native spiritual practices and forms of legitimating agreements and transactions.”¹⁴⁷ These ritual activities were by no means unusual to the indigenous people of central Mexico. Tenochtitlan, in fact, was an important ceremonial center up to the point of the conquest.¹⁴⁸ A variety of historical records show that “the indigenous communities of Central Mexico had had ample experience with highly ostentatious forms of ritual since pre-Hispanic times,”¹⁴⁹ making the imposition of the Christian ritual of public marriage that much easier within the boundaries of New Spain.

In fact, the blending of European marriage celebration with pre-existing Aztec ritual activities managed not only to make a Christian ritual more familiar to the indigenous population but also tapped into the power of ritual and “the highly visual nature of public festivals”¹⁵⁰ that existed before the arrival of Cortés. For example, “after taking their prisoners to Tenochtitlan, the Mexica brought in aristocrats from Tlaxcala and other rival states to witness the sacrifices, which might include their own people... the guests learned a political lesson that transcended the ceremony’s religious content: Rebellion, deviance, and opposition

¹⁴⁷ Lisa Sousa. *Tying the Knot*, in Schroeder, p.41

¹⁴⁸ Katzew in LACMA. p.151

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.151

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.169

to the [existing] Aztec state were extremely dangerous.”¹⁵¹ In ceremonies like this and others, ritual activities in Tenochtitlan effectively punished deviance, while also reinforcing acceptable social behavior through other religious and community rituals.

The incredibly powerful position ritual had in maintaining social hierarchy within Aztec society caused the Spanish powers to quickly realize the incorporation of indigenous practices was crucial to the success of the new colonial social structure. Art historian Ilona Katzew describes this powerful and pervasive presence before the conquest, “These [ritual] events often related to life’s milestones, such as marriage, childbirth, sickness, and death, but they also encompassed more mundane seasonal or occasional events, such as planting, harvesting, and traveling. Ritual in Aztec life was ubiquitous and constant, quite literally all around and all the time,”¹⁵² echoed in the way Christian marriage ceremonies in New Spain were enacted as “a complex ritual consisting of several moments.”¹⁵³ The Montezuma dance performed in *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* for example, helped Spanish colonial powers tap into the pre-existing visual power and legitimacy of Aztec ritual. This ceremonial indigenous dance, according to Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, represents “the conquest of Mexico by Hernán Cortés

¹⁵¹ Burkholder, p.17

¹⁵² Keber, p.13

¹⁵³ Jaime Morena. “Indian Nuptials” in “Images of the Natives in the Art of New Spain: 16th to 18th Centuries” Fomento Cultural Banamex, Elisa Vargas Lugo De Bosch, Jay I. Kislak. Mexico: Mexico City. 2005. p.477

troops and the subjugation of Moctezuma to the Spanish crown.”¹⁵⁴ The presence of the Moctezuma dance during a wedding is therefore integrating indigenous traditional practices with Christian sexual codes of conduct while joyfully recalling the moment this colonial society began. Here, the appropriation of Aztec ritual power and enforcement of Catholic understandings of sexuality have combined to visually regulate indigenous female sexuality.

For the Spanish audience, integrating European marriage ceremonies and Aztec ritual traditions also showed the process of religious and social conversion happening in the colony. The imagery of successful colonial efforts made for Spanish elite abroad and the New Spanish nobility, was absolutely necessary for the success of New Spain. The Spanish colonial process was dependent upon communicating the idea that the Aztecs “were ‘perfectible’ humans, and that once they had passed through all stages of development they would become fully civilized Christian citizens,”¹⁵⁵ with marriage as one of the most important steps. As Katzew reiterates, “the incorporation of indigenous traditions as part of a wedding scene held a powerful meaning: it demonstrated that the native population of New Spain fully partook of an important Christian sacrament, thereby conveying the notion of a ‘civilized’ land. This is important because many Europeans were bent on questioning the capacity of the inhabitants of the New

¹⁵⁴ Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, “La danza de ‘Los Moctezumas,’” *Anales del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, no. 18 (1965) as cited by Lugo De Bosch, Morena and Ángeles, p.483. “Once the religious ritual of marriage was over, the bride and groom received crowns and necklaces made of *cempasúchiles* [marigolds] and on the way to the house of the newlyweds, where the banquet was to be held, the couple witnessed the Indian dance known as the ‘dance of Moctezuma.’”

¹⁵⁵ Deans-Smith in Katzew and Deans-Smith, p.75

World in general to become 'true' Christians, thus calling into question their ability to be civilized."¹⁵⁶ The simultaneous visual presentation of indigenous and Christian ritual not only aided the familiarization of the Aztecs with European practices but also showed Europeans at home and abroad that the colonization of New Spain was possible, and that those in power were succeeding.

While the Christian canon of marriage was spread significantly through oral and written communication, such as published treatises and spoken sermons,¹⁵⁷ the representation of indigenous marriage through visual mediums served an important purpose in the colonial process of New Spain. Because it avoided issues of lingual translation, and replicated the actual visual nature of ritual, representing Christian marriage through artwork, illustrations and other visual propaganda was an essential strategy of conversion. It was equally as important to punish deviance as it was to circulate images of acceptable positions for the indigenous female in the hierarchical society of New Spain. In fact, "paintings illustrating the seven sacraments of the church, including matrimony, were routinely exhibited in churches, as an eighteenth-century painting inscribed in Nahuatl to facilitate indigenous understanding."¹⁵⁸ Through this constant visual reiteration, it was made clear the only acceptable position of female indigenous sexuality was within a socially sanctioned Christian marriage.

¹⁵⁶ Katzew in LACMA. p.173

¹⁵⁷ Lavrín (1989), p.7

¹⁵⁸ Katzew in LACMA. p.170

When considering that representations of indigenous marriage ceremonies gained popularity around the turn of the 18th century¹⁵⁹ and that *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* was likely produced by and for a noble audience, to be sent back to Europe, the panel painting is a perfect demonstration of how important communicating the successful regulation of indigenous female sexuality through Christian marriage was to the colonization of New Spain.

Lastly, the necessity of regulating indigenous female sexuality for the success of colonial New Spain is demonstrated by the attention to ritual participation in *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* exemplified by “the importance given to attire and to the definition of racial types”¹⁶⁰ over the reality of the scene itself. One of the main focuses of this work is the “the detail in the luxurious clothes they wear,”¹⁶¹ highlighting the presence of people from all social classes and their joyous participation in colonial society.

The unspecific background following European, conventions of landscape painting also confirms the desire to communicate diverse community participation in the new functioning colony. As Katzew describes, “The indeterminate landscape in the background reflects Flemish pictorial conventions and is European in tone, but it is offset by the native maguey plant in the far right, which signifies the land.”¹⁶² While including references to the real appearance of New Spain, the landscape primarily makes use of European artistic customs. And while

¹⁵⁹ Katzew in LACMA, p.170

¹⁶⁰ Morena in Lugo De Bosch and Kislak, p.477

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.480

¹⁶² Katzew in LACMA, p.170 “The water across the backdrop also situates the scene within the city of Tenochtitlan, which was famed for its series of elaborate canals as an island in the middle of a lake.”

this reference to Flemish landscape painting was partly done out of familiarity and convenience, in comparison to the detailed, costume and prop specific rendering of each indigenous ritual taking place (including the marriage ceremony), it proves that the focus of this work was not scene specific. Instead, *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* was designed as an idealistic representation of New Spain for a noble audience that emphasized the presence of indigenous ritual alongside the socially important Christian concept of marriage, and not one historical event.

With onlookers of various race and class blended together in observation, “the screen represents the ‘perfect’ union of the Indian and Spanish republics.”¹⁶³ The indigenous couple is bedecked in elaborate wedding attire and the Spanish are “distinguished by seventeenth-century capes,”¹⁶⁴ all visually supporting the successful conversion and regulation of indigenous female sexuality in a healthy and sustainable the colony. As an example of the increasingly popular images of indigenous weddings in New Spain, this panel painting “not only documented aspects of colonial life but also served to convey a particular message about the colony as an exemplary devout place. Indian participation, with all its paradoxes, was key in making this notion palpable.”¹⁶⁵

Indian Wedding and Flying Pole is an excellent example of the multifaceted importance of visually representing indigenous marriage as the only acceptable position of Aztec female sexuality in New Spain. As a critical strategy to control

¹⁶³ Katzew in LACMA. p.170

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.398 “One of them is dressed in black with a sword and cane, who could be the Spanish authority of the locality.”

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.173

the expanding colonial body, the imagery of indigenous participation in Christian marriage ritual tapped into the power inherent in pre-conquest Aztec ritual tradition, and reaffirmed the success of the Spanish colonial process for the local and foreign elite. At the center of indigenous participation in Christian marriage, however, was the regulation of the indigenous female body and how procreation was officially restricted by the colonial power structure to only those couples that could attain social approval through clergy and witnesses. Imagery of the Aztec female body therefore, maintained a critical position in the success of the Spanish colonial process through both exhibitions of social deviance and compliance.

CONCLUSION

Imagery of indigenous female colonial bodies is a vital source of information for understanding the complexities of the colonial process in New Spain. Though there are inherent cautions necessary when studying colonization, particularly when focused on populations imbued with lesser agency like that of indigenous women, complicating and expanding colonial history is a undeniably important endeavor.

This thesis argues that the regulation of indigenous female sexuality was an essential component of creating New Spain and that visual imagery was a critical tool in this process. Starting with a foundational understanding of the complications of language and inextricable colonialist histories, I argue that analysis of the visual is essential to research the early colonization of New Spain, particularly “the church progressively marshaled the means for a colonization through imagery,”¹⁶⁶ and the church was primarily responsible for socio-political conversion of indigenous peoples. I then go on to document the historical and theoretical frameworks through which the Spanish and Aztec populations approached the creation of a new colony. These influences include, the Spanish Reconquest, Inquisition and evangelical enterprise and the importance placed on externally legible morality and lineage by both Aztec and Spanish power structures. Because “the kinds of historical information and the forms of their

¹⁶⁶ Gruzinski (1992), pp.504

presentation were fully invested with a variety of contemporary colonial needs,¹⁶⁷ this historical background is necessary in order to fully understand imagery of indigenous female sexuality.

Following this theoretical and historical groundwork is an explicit analysis of constructions of deviant female indigenous sexuality through the illustrations in *The Florentine Codex*. Bernardino de Sahagún's work, though certainly a complex record of mendicant and Aztec morality, serves as an incredibly helpful tool to analyze the constructions of sexual deviance in early New Spain. Of particular interest is the ways in which European notions of witchcraft and Aztec pictorial traditions were combined to create an image of deviance that was legible to both populations of the new colony. These images help clarify what was considered dangerous expressions of indigenous female sexuality in New Spain, and how the polarization of Aztec female sexuality supported the construction of a combined socio-political hierarchy.

The argument then shifts to focus on the constructions of acceptable indigenous female sexuality, specifically through the role of Christian marriage. While marriage was already used in Aztec society to forge political alliances before the conquest, the imposition of the Christian marriage ceremony was particularly important to Spanish colonial powers because it required the indigenous population to follow more strict codes of sexual conduct. The numerous images of

¹⁶⁷ Cummins, Tom "Native Traditions in the Postconquest World: Commentary" in *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World: a Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 2nd Through 4th October 1992* (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998). pp.450

indigenous participation in Christian marriage, and the visual and public nature of the ceremony itself also reiterated this adherence to Christian moral codes and the successful integration of the new colony.

Looking at the complicated role of indigenous female sexuality in early New Spain raises many interesting questions about the current nature of the church, gender relations, and understandings of sexuality in Latin America today. Now knowing that the imposition of Catholicism on the indigenous population was explicitly part of the process of colonization, in what ways are the church and government of Central and South America still dependent on each other today? Does the Catholic church continue to uphold the social and political system of Mexico? Also, considering the importance of controlling indigenous female sexuality in the early colony, what are the ways Catholicism and the Spanish colonial process still frame perceptions of female sexuality in Central and South America? I believe that it is highly likely that the exoticization, and frequent demonization, of the indigenous-looking woman in contemporary media, and discrimination in healthcare, owes its origins to this historically dangerous and powerful position of the indigenous female as the producer the new colonial population.

On a more specific note about the power of visual media in studying colonial histories, the recent growth of interest in the texts of Sahagún and early colonial

paintings like *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* speak to the reemerging desire to sift through these complex processes of colonization, and re-write the histories of the colonizers to include examples of the agency and participation of indigenous populations. Now that the *Florentine Codex* and *Indian Wedding and Flying Pole* are available to a broader academic audience online, they can be used and interpreted by audiences beyond the walls of the National Library of Florence, or the LACMA. This availability demonstrates a growing initiative to include those not privileged by European colonialism in the creations and interpretations of colonial history.

Studying the complications of sexuality and colonialism, therefore, raises important interdisciplinary questions about the formation and maintenance of power structures that continue to affect global socio-economic systems today. Though located within the interlocking oppressions of race and gender, the indigenous female body actually exerted enormous power over the creation of New Spain. This powerful position of producing the new colonial population was the key to maintaining the strict social hierarchy of the Spanish and Aztec elite and needed to be regulated. Through and represented by imagery, indigenous female sexuality was polarized to demonize any actions that disturbed the socio-political system and encourage adherence to the Christian norms of procreation and familial structure that served the goals of the Spanish elite.

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