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CHRISTIAN AND NAHUA ARTS OF DEVOTION: A SONG OF THE NATIVITY FROM THE *CANTARES MEXICANOS*

ARTES DEVOCIONALES CRISTIANAS Y NAHUAS: *UN CANTO DE LA NATIVIDAD DE* CANTARES MEXICANOS

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Abstract

In the "Cozcacuicatl" *or* "Cozcatl Song"*, a Nahua song from the Cantares mexicanos, the noble Nahua song master, Francisco Plácido, sings of Christ, as encountered and understood from a distinctively Nahua Perspective. Innovating, Plácido fashions a clever system of parallels between Christian and ancestral arts and objects of devotion.*

Keywords: *Nahua song, song-dance, Christian devotion, Cantares mexicanos.*

Resumen

En el *"Cozcacuicatl"* o canto del *"Cozcatl"*, un canto nahua del manuscrito *Cantares mexicanos*, el noble nahua, Francisco Plácido, canta acerca de Cristo, mostrándonos como se encuentra con él y lo entiende desde una perspectiva distintamente nahua. Innovando, Plácido elabora un sistema de paralelos, al equiparar artes y objetos de devoción cristianos y nahuas.

Palabras clave: El canto nahua, el canto-baile, devoción cristiana, *Cantares mexicanos.*

Decades after Christianity was first introduced in Central Mexico, Nahuas continued to sing and dance ancestral songs with traditional sacred themes. The Mesoamerican genre of Nahua song (*cuicatl*) served a range of purposes in ancestral culture. Ceremonial song was a fundamental aspect of the ritual life of Nahuas and various other Mesoamerican peoples, serving as a form of offering or "divine nourishment" (Chinchilla Mazariegos, 2017: 70). The *yaocuicatl*, or songs of war, conveyed a Nahua military ethos. The *huehuecuicatl,* or songs of the elders, also transmitted "the memory of local history" (Megged: 2010, 205); and cultural memory (Szoblik: 2020: 513-514). Other pieces were composed and performed to honor, entertain, or even reprimand Nahua rulers and could also become part of a ruler's cultural property or legacy (León-Portilla*,* 1994: 16v, 39v, 72r, 73v; Chimalpáhin, 1998, vol. 2: 112-113; León-Portilla 1992: 261-262).

A range of early colonial texts document the ongoing importance of Nahua song, or song-dance, over the course of the sixteenth century. One of the most important colonial sources of Nahua song is the *Cantares mexicanos,* a compilation of song texts, in the Nahuatl language, that were collected at the behest of a Christian friar and transcribed alphabetically in a monastery scriptorium.[1] The introductory glosses that accompany a selection of these pieces in the manuscript describe performances, during the early colonial era, in the palace of a native governor or during Christian feast days (Bierhorst, 1985: 7; *Cantares,* 1994: 38v, 41r, 46r). Other colonial texts refer to the performance of Nahua song-dance for a range of events or occasions, including the celebration of the marriage of prominent Nahuas in 1564, and as festival celebration during a Spanish military campaign on the northern frontier in 1541 (Lockhart, 1992: 399; Megged, 2010: 205; Mundy, 2015: 183, 187-88; Sandoval Acazitli, 1866, vol. 2: 318).

While many of the texts in the *Cantares mexicanos* center on ancestral themes, some also incorporate Christian content, even as they maintain the genre conventions of Nahua song. According to Ángel María Garibay K., while certain pieces make only light references to Christian figures, in others: "Se toman temas antiguos y se adaptan a los nuevos pensamientos" (Garibay, 1965, vol. 2: XX). Berenice Alcántara Rojas has also described a process of adaptation that follows a reverse trajectory. Christian concepts, such as articles of faith, acquire native characteristics in the context of song texts that were composed during the early colonial era.[2] In such pieces, she also describes an interweaving of native and European themes (Alcántara, 2009: 148-49). Similarly, Louise Burkhart refers to Nahua song texts that situate Christianity "very much within the context of indigenous culture" (Burkhart, 1989: 57). In fact, the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, whom scholars have speculated may have commissioned the collection and alphabetic transcription of the *Cantares mexicanos* (León-Portilla, 1992: 26; Bierhorst, 1985: 7-9*),* identified precisely this category of song as a source of heterodoxy among Nahua converts: "Y si algunos cantares vsan, que ellos han hecho, despues aca de con conuertimjento, en que se trata de las cosas de dios, y de sus sanctos; van enbueltos cõ muchos errores, y heregias" (Sahagún, 1950-82, vol. 1: 81). Sahagún describes a re-conceiving or resituating of the Christian deity and saints, within the context of Nahua song, although he understands this as a pernicious source of ongoing idolatry, from his perspective as a man of his time and context.

My subsequent discussion centers on a single piece from the *Cantares mexicanos* that demonstrates this phenomenon of Christian figures or concepts, reconstrued in Nahua song. The "*Cozcacuicatl",* or "*Cozcatl* Song",[3] concerns the birth of Christ, according to the brief lines that introduce this piece in the manuscript pages of the *Cantares mexicanos.* These summary lines also identify the Nahua composer, or song master, Francisco Plácido, and the date of composition or "arrangement" as 1553. In this piece from the mid-sixteenth century, the baptized composer sings of Christ, as encountered and understood from a distinctively Nahua perspective. León Portilla, Silva Galeana, Morales Baranda, and Reyes Equiguas have described this song text as: "una muestra del nuevo género de composiciones de un tema cristiano en las que continuaron empleándose metáforas y formas

1 *Cantares mexicanos,* 1994: 6r; Bierhorst, 1985: 9-13; León Portilla, 1992: 25; Lockhart, 1992: 393.

2 The *Cantares mexicanos* dates seven such pieces, composed between the 1530s and 1560s (Bierhorst, 1985: 97-98).
3 Bierhorst translates "Jewel Song" (1985: 255). León-Portilla *et al*., translate "Canto precioso" (2011, vol. 2: 489).

de expresión frecuentes en las producciones de la tradición prehispánica" (León-Portilla *et al.,* 2011, vol. 2: 590). Yet the "*Cozcatl* Song" is a particularly compelling example of this song category. Plácido plays artfully upon the various meanings and metaphorical affiliations of the word "*cozcatl",* as a jewel, a string of gem stones, Christian prayer beads, a precious child or children, and song. The composer resituates elements of the Biblical Nativity story, invoking analogous figures and scenarios from ancestral tradition. Throughout, he also renders a clever system of parallels between Christian and ancestral arts and objects of devotion.

To begin, Plácido fashions his network of analogies and parallels to center and turn on the various meanings of a single word: "*cozcatl*". The Franciscan lexicographer Alonso de Molina defines "*cozcatl*" as a jewel or rounded precious stone, in his *Vocabulario* of 1571. He also registers the sense of "*cozcatl"* as a "necklace" in the compound noun "*quechcuzcatl".*[4] This signifies beads or jewels worn round the neck. Similarly, the related verb "*quechcuzcatia*" means to place a necklace of gold around one's neck (Molina, 1571, II: 88r). We find additional meanings for the term *"cozcatl"* both in the work of Molina and that of a second major colonial lexicographer and grammarian Horacio Carochi. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, the term "*cozcatl*" had additionally come to signify a Christian rosary, or "cuenta de rezar". Similarly, a "*cuzcamecatl*", "*cuzcatlatectli*", or *"cuzcatlauipantli"* was a string of "*cuentas*", or rosary beads. Molina also registers a common figurative meaning for this term. As combined with "*quezalli*" (quetzal feather or featherwork), the word "*cuzcatl*" refers to "hijos o hijas"; that is, to one's precious children (Molina, 1571, II: 32v, 27v). The Jesuit priest also registers a second figurative meaning of "*cozcatl*" as "song", with its interlinked verses or expressions. His *Arte de la lengua mexicana,* of 1645, cites a metaphorical reference to a string of "*cozcatl*" beads: "Nic chalchiuhcozcameca quenmach totoma innocuic" (Carochi, 1645: 480) (As if it were a string of greenstone gems, I untie my song). Carochi's Spanish-language translation of this phrase reads: "Voi de mil maneras desatando mi canto, como sarta de piedras preciosas" (Carochi, 1645: 480). Over the course of its five cantos, the "*Cozcatl* Song" plays on each of these meanings: jewel, rounded gemstone, necklace, rosary beads or string of stones, precious child, and song.

The "*Cozcatl* Song" concerns the "jewel" or "precious child" that is Christ. However, it also highlights the metaphorical sense of "*cozcatl"* as song expression. It is therefore about both the Christian Nativity and singing as an act of reverence. This "*cozcatl"* piece is figuratively composed of precious stones, strung together. The opening verses describe these gems, unfastened in phonic performance as a form of prayer.

> *Ma ontlatlauhtilo ya xicteoxiuhcozcatotomaca yn amotlayocol antepilhuan i ma chalchiuhcozcatl teocuitlacozcatl yn amocuentax y ma yca ya ticahuiltiti yn oyehcoc in Belem cemanahuaqui temaquixtiani tla tihuiya tlatlaquauh* çane (*Cantares*, 1994: 37v).
>
> Let there be going to make supplication (or prayers), *ya,* untie[5] your jewels of turquoise, your [expressions of] sorrow, oh princes, *i.* With greenstone jewels, golden jewels, your rosary beads, *y,* let us, *ya,* go to gladden the One who arrived in Bethlehem, the Savior of the World. May we go quickly, *ho*![6]

As in Carochi's reference to a string of gems "untied", Plácido – nearly a century earlier – refers also to gems "loosened" in song. Carochi, in the seventeenth century, acknowledges that this is a metaphor of "los indios antiguos" (Carochi, 1654: 480). It was also likely an established metaphor when Plácido incorporated it into this piece. Yet he distinctively aggregates a reference to an object of Spanish Christian material culture. Plácido indexes the recent use of the word "*cozcatl*" to signify "rosary beads", interjecting the Spanish loan word "*cuentax*" (*cuentas)*. Using a series of parallel expressions – a stylistic technique that is common in Nahua discourse and poetics[7] – Plácido places Christian

4 Molina uses a "u" in places of the "o" in "*cozcatl*".

5 Molina defines the transitive verb "*totoma*" as "*desemvolver*" (unwind, unwrap) or "*desatar*" (untie) (1571, II: 150v). The sense appears to be to untie, unwind, or unwrap and lay out a string of turquoise beads or jewels.

6 All translations from the Nahuatl are mine, unless otherwise indicated. My translation of the "*Cozcatl* Song" includes the vocatives that are present in the Nahuatl-language manuscript. I italicize these vocatives in translation. In the English-language translation, I also italicize the Spanish-language loan words that are part of the Nahuatl text.

7 See León-Portilla on "parallel phrasing" in Nahuatl songs

prayer beads in an analogous relationship with items of Nahua material culture: greenstones and golden gems. As such, the Christian act of praying the rosary, bead by bead, also becomes analogous to the ancestral act of "untying" a song, as if it were a string of jewels.

This piece, therefore, begins by enjoining Nahuas to offer prayers to Christ, much as their ancestors made sacred offerings of masterfully rendered song. A Mesoamerican metaphor and act of reverence help to make sense of a Christian practice of adoration. Of course, sacred song "untied", or expressed and offered in an ancestral context, is not identical to Christian prayer, as recited with a rosary. Yet Plácido aggregates synonymous, if distinctive acts, with no impulse to qualify their difference. His work emerges from a tradition of song, discourse, art, and ceremony that highlights relationships of similitude, if not equivalence, in clusters of correlating images, terms, or objects. As Gary Tomlinson has observed, each item in such a series, within the context of Nahua song, "[gains] its signifying powers through its contact with the others" (Tomlinson, 2007: 72). Meaning emerges from the composite grouping. As James Lockhart has also noted, Nahua song often "[achieves] coherent wholes through symmetrical arrangement of independent parts" (Lockhart, 1992: 394-95). Meanwhile, Plácido's presentation of parallel forms of sacred song and prayer, likening one tradition to the other –with no move to distinguish pagan "error" from Christian "truth"– was certainly part of what Sahagún identified as "heresy" in Nahua songs of this time and category.

Subsequent cantos and stanzas[8] similarly make sense of various aspects of the Nativity story with reference to Nahua tradition or cultural practice. They also manifest a Mesoamerican aesthetic that favors multiplicity and multivalence over singularity of image or meaning. At the beginning of the second canto, noblemen are to make an offering of song as gemstones to the deity. Yet this stylistically ancestral act incorporates a Christian object of adoration. As in the example from the first canto, these verses also incorporate the Christian rosary as a material object that correlates to the act of prayer. The rosary, or "*cuentax*" (prayer beads), guides or configures prayer recitation. In this stanza, the term *"cuentax"* pairs with items of Nahua culture, "*chalchihuitl*" (greenstones) and "*cozcatl*" (gems). As the composer strings these terms together, he invokes disparate traditions, presenting a blended form of sacred song offering:

> *Cuelcã cuelcan pipilte tomachuane y yahue tla toyayatihuia yn ixpan Tiox Xpo. Teocuitlaxåcalli manca tictotlilizque ticchalchiuhcuentaxcozcamacazque o anqui ye chauhquecholtlaztalehualtotonatoc*[9] *anqui ye oncan io ahe haoya yeha.* (*León-Portilla,* 1994: 37v).
>
> To the good place,[10] to the good place, oh, princes, our nephews, *y yahue!* Let us go unto the presence of *Dios,* of *Jesucristo,* to the golden thatched hut where he resided. We will greatly esteem Him! We will offer him gems, greenstone rosary beads. *Oh,* it is said, *ye,* that He is shining rosy pink, like a roseate swan, there, it is said, *yio, aye, haoya, yeha.*

In this call to worship, Plácido also re-envisions the site of the Christian Nativity, in keeping with Nahua aesthetic conventions, in which the rich, artisan adornment of a seat or site of power signals an elevated stature. The stable, therefore, becomes a hut of "gold", highlighting the divine nature of the newborn inside. Christ is also resplendent, a glistening native bird prized for its red-pink feathers.

References and comparisons to birds of sumptuous, colorful plumes are common in Nahua song and discourse. The *quecholli* or *tlauhquecholli*, specifically, has a solar affiliation, due to its fiery, dawn-colored hue. It's feathers also featured in the accoutrements or cult of the solar deity *Xochipilli* and the warrior and solar deity, *Huitzilopochtli* (Garibay, 1958: 161; Olivier and López, 2017: 186-187; Szoblik, 2020: 522). Indeed, with explicit emphasis on the color of Christ-as-quecholli, shining "pink" (*tlaztalehualli*), these verses would appear to underscore

(León-Portilla, 1992: 27); or James Lockhart on "double phrasing" in Nahuatl song, oratory, and polite conversation (Lockhart, 1992: 394).

8 I borrow from Bierhorst (1985) his use of the terms "canto" and "stanza" to describe the sections or divisions of the song texts in the *Cantares mexicanos*.

9 The manuscript reads "*chauh*quechol[li]". León-Portilla, *et al.* read this as an orthographical error that should instead be "*chan*quechol[li]" or "*tlauh*quechol[li]" (roseate swan) (León-Portilla, *et al.,* 2011, 2: 490, 561).

10 Or "in good time".

this solar affiliation. Meanwhile, Mexica rulers frequently wore *quecholli* feather headdresses in battle, in their guise as *Xipe Totec*, and this bird also more generally relates to warfare, nobility, and fallen, noble warriors (Olko, 2014: 198-200; Olivier and López, 2017: 165, 182, 186; Mikulska, 2021: 7-8). The figure of Christ-as-quecholli, or *tlauhquecholli*, may therefore additionally suggest a noble, warrior affiliation and – perhaps also – index his sacrificial death. In these ways, the song-text draws upon the repertoire of Nahua metaphor and sacred culture to represent the Christian deity. The Christ Child and his abode are symbolically transformed, within the context of Plácido's song composition.

As this canto progresses to the third stanza, Plácido begins to play on additional meanings and applications of the term "*cozcatl".* Christ as the object of reverence receives figurative song "gems" in offering. Yet He Himself is also a "gem":

> O anqui ye huel axca tlaçocozcatl quetzalliyã tonilpililoque motlacoconetzi can yio mochalchiuhmaquiz mocozcatzin i mochipa ichpochtle Santa Mariani y lilili ya huiya toyolio aye aye ahuiya nicaan a. (León-Portilla, 1994:38r).
>
> *Oh,* it is said that recently, this precious jewelry, this quetzal featherwork, *yã,* was fastened round us. It is your precious child only, *yio*, your greenstone bracelet, your revered jewel, *i,* Ever Virgin Santa Mariani, *i-li-li-li, yahuia.* Our spirits, *aye, aye,* are contented here, *a.*

Christ is the "*cozcatzin*", or "revered precious child" of Mary. Yet, like a string of gems or sumptuous featherwork, he also adorns or graces the newly baptized Nahua with Christianity. As this song genre allows, there is extraordinary fluidity with regard to what a single term may signify within this piece. In this stanza alone, the word "*cozcatl*" refers to an offering made to the deity, the deity himself, and an adornment that the deity bestows.

Meanwhile, the act of song offering takes its most explicitly Christian form at the end of the second canto:

> *Ỹ quetzalpetlatipan aya tonca ca ye mocha ilhuica Cihuapilli yehua nepapan in maquizteoxiuhcalitequi tõtlatlauhtiloyan tlapalchalchiuhihuitl moxochicuentaxtzin ticpouhtinemia ypã ypan aya timitztlatlaocoltemotinemiya ylilili yahuiya.* (León-Portilla, 1994: 38r).
>
> You are, *aya,* upon a [ruler or deity's] mat of quetzal featherwork. You are in your home, Lady of the Celestial Realm,[11] *yehua.* Various are they, within the turquoise house of bracelets, at the place where you are invoked with prayer. They are colored greenstone feathers, your florid rosary beads. We go reciting from them, upon these, *aya,* we go seeking you with [expressions of] sorrow, *i-li-li-li, yahuia.*

Here, the Virgin Mary is seated upon a lavishly adorned "reed mat" of "quetzal featherwork", as a stylistically Nahua sacred figure. Yet the verb "*pohua"* (read or recite) makes clear that rosary beads conceptually organize the act of song adoration with which Nahuas, in this stanza, revere the Virgin.

The third canto then develops the song theme of the Nativity to its fullest, before shifting to a parallel scenario from Central Mexican tradition, and to parallel objects of reverence. It begins with reference to the Heavenly host who announce the birth of Christ:

> *Yn nepapã tototl ỹ moquecholhuan tiox tzatzihua ya nicaa aqu huel iuhqui tlahuizcalli patlantinemia angeloti oncuiya.*[12] *Gloria in excelsis deo xahuiaca xompaquica ane.* (León-Portilla, 1994: 38r)
>
> There are various birds, your roseate spoonbills, *Dios.* There is loud proclamation, *ya*, here. Who can thus go flying through the dawn sky? *Angeles* sing: "Gloria in excelsis deo". Be joyful, be glad, *hey*!

The song composer refers unmistakably to the angels of the Nativity, with the Spanish loan word, *"ángel"*, to which he aggregates a Nahuatl plural suffix. He also borrows and inserts the Biblical Latin phrase, "Gloria in excelsis deo". At the same time, Plácido draws from Nahua tradition to transform this image of Judeo-Christian angels. In this stanza, the Heavenly host of the Nativity story become prized Mesoamerican birds, soaring through the sky. Theirs is a form of

11 Or "Queen of Heaven"

12 My translation presumes that "*cuiya*" should read "*cuica*" or "*cuicaya*". Prior translations also assume this (Bierhorst 1985: 256-257; León-Portilla, *et al.,* 2011, vol. 2: 494, 561).

proclaiming (*tzatzihua*) that can also refer to the singing of birds. With this transformation, the celestial winged creatures of this Bible story come to recall the celebrated war dead of Nahua tradition. Fallen or sacrificed warriors were thought to occupy the House of the Sun, in the celestial realm of Ilhuicac. There they transformed into birds. When the sun rose at dawn, they would go out before it, skirmishing and rejoicing (Sahagún, 1950-1982, bk. 3: 49; bk. 6: 162-63). Indeed, as Szoblik has noted, Nahua song texts frequently include references to fallen warriors as eagles, quetzals, or – as in this multivalent reference – roseate spoonbills (Szoblik, 2020: 516).

Plácido thus introduces the Nativity angels with ambiguity, permitting a double reading of their role and identity, from the lenses of both Christian and ancestral tradition. This reference to roseate spoonbills, who sing in the sphere of the rising sun, also interpolates their solar affiliation. In fact, the subsequent stanza develops this theme:

> O anquin huel iquac topantemoc yn ilhuicac tlanextli ya nepapã xochitl moyahuaya oncuica ay in moquecholhuan Dios Gloria in excelsis.
>
> *Oh,* it is said that precisely when the light of the heavens descended upon us, *ya,* various flowers spill forth. They go to sing, *ay,* your roseate spoonbills, *Dios*: "Gloria in excelsis".

These verses play on the Christian epithet, "Light of the World", suggestively identifying Christ with central Mexican solar deities.

In the stanzas that follow, the "*Cozcatl* Song" then introduces a new element of the Nativity story. The focus of this canto shifts from the Angelic Herald to the recipients of their message. Much as the second canto elevates the stable at Bethlehem, adorning it with gold, the final stanzas of the third canto ignore the detail of humble shepherds to focus instead on the noble figures and precious gifts of the Three Kings.

> *A in oquicaque in Oriente in teteuctini in ilhᶜpan on ilhuiloque aya tlpc. ca omonexti temaquixtiani teocuictlatl, copalli ya, Mirra concuique ye ic onacic oya im pelem coniximatque nelli tiox nelli oquichtli ya*. (León-Portilla, 1994: 38r).
>
> *Ah,* the lords of the *Oriente* heard it from the heavens. They were told, *aya:* "On Earth a Savior has appeared!" They took gold, *copalli*, *ya,* and myrrh, [13] *ye.* With this they arrived, *oya,* in Bethlehem. They met Him face to face, the true *Dios*, true Man, *ya*!

There is an implicit relationship of similitude between this stanza in Canto Three and the verses in Canto Two, in which Nahua lords offer gemstones, fine rosaries, or songs of prayer to Christ in his stable of gold. Plácido uses the loan word "*Oriente*" to clarify that these are foreign lords of Biblical tradition, rather than Nahua "*teteuctin*" or "rulers". The gifts of these kings, likewise, identify them with the Nativity story, even as Plácido finds in "*copalli*" a lexical cognate for "frankincense" that also has a parallel ceremonial use in Nahua tradition.

The fourth stanza goes on to reassert the role of the Christ Child as a precious "*cozcatl*" gem. "Yn attopa ya mitziximatque Tiox on cozcateuh quetzalteuh" (38r). ([They were] the first to meet you face to face, Dios, [esteeming you] as a jewel, as quetzal featherwork.) This verse repurposes a Nahuatl metaphor of parental love, as recorded and translated by Molina: "Quetzalteuh, cozcateuh ipan nimitzmati" (tener gran amor el padre al hijo) (Molina, 1571, II: 89r).[14]

By the end of the third Canto, Plácido implicitly introduces one last element of the Nativity story. After the Angelic Herald and the Three Kings comes a reference to the Holy Innocents, babes slain at Bethlehem and the first martyrs of Christian tradition.

> *Yn tla timochi titlamahuiçocã ticcahuane*[15] *onca belem huel ixpoliuhtoc*[16] *quetzalli yan cozcatl chalchiuhteuh oncã xamãque ỹ pipiltzitzinti papalmaquizcozcatica a motimolotiaque ylhᵗˡ ytec aya in tepilhuã ana.* (León-Portilla, 1994: 38r).
>
> Let us all marvel, we leave him, *hey!* There in Bethlehem they were quite vanquished, the quetzal

13 The Nahuatl uses the Spanish loan word "*mirra*".
14 "For the parent to have great love for the child". This phrase literally translates, "As quetzal featherwork, as a jewel, I look upon you".
15 With the change of one letter, the expression: "Ticcahuane" (We leave them, *hey)* would read instead: "Tiacahuane," as an address from a male speaker to "valiant men" or "warriors".
16 This verb is used in the *Anales de Tlatelolco* to describe the defeat that the Tenochca suffered in 1508 and that the Tlatelolca suffered by the Spaniards in 1521 (Tena, 2004: 112).

> feathers, *yan,* the jeweled ornaments. Like greenstones there they shattered, the little children.[17] With the bracelet gemstones of the talkative, they went rejoicing[18] within the heavens, *aya,* those children,[19] *ana*.

After the Wisemen of Christian lore depart, the Holy Family flees Bethlehem, narrowly escaping the slaughter of the Holy Innocents, toddlers and infants killed because Herod fears the rumored newborn King. Within the context of song performance, Nahua lords – like the Three Kings - contemplate Christ, and then figuratively depart. They shift their focus to a new cohort of precious children. These are the Holy Innocents, treasured as "gems" and costly "featherwork".

Plácido draws upon the figurative language of ancestral discourse, affiliating the Holy Innocents with young Nahua warriors, dead in battle.[20] Indeed, the babes at Bethlehem are slain by soldiers. Their death, therefore, has a military affiliation.[21] The composer interjects phrases that also appear in the third chapter of Book VI of the *Florentine Codex.* There, warriors dead in battle are the beloved of parents, nursed and coddled by mothers, but born for sacrifice. Mournful parents are reminded that their fallen sons now enjoy honor in the heavens: "Ca vncan xamantoque, in tepilhoan, in chalchiuhtin, in maqujztin, in tlaçoti ca vncan cozcateuh, quetzalteuh timotemanjlia…" (Sahagún, 1950-1982, bk. 6: 12). (There [on the field of battle] they went to shatter, the sons of nobles, the greenstones, the bracelets, the precious ones. There as jewels, as featherwork, You [Lord] arrange them…) The same passage later continues: "Auh in quezquj oticmomaceujli, manoço ivian, iocuxca itech onaciz in Tonatiuh" (Sahagún, 19150-82, bk. 6: 12). (And of all whom You have [thus] rewarded: may they in good time and with peace arrive unto the Sun.) This passage then goes on to describe the warrior's afterworld, "in jlvicatl itic" (within the Heavens) as a place of rejoicing and abundance (Sahagún, 1950-1982, bk. 6: 13). Plácido directly reproduces these figurative references to slain young warriors as beloved "featherwork" (*quetzal*), "jewels" (*cozcatl*), and "greenstones" (*chalchihuitl*). He also borrows the image of these precious items "shattered" (*xamani*) on the field of battle, and refers to the joy of the slain "in the Heavens" (ilhuicatl itec[22]). Plácido therefore finds within Nahua tradition a recognizable parallel for the role and sacred identity of the Christian child martyr, as first encountered in the Nativity story.

This is a clear example of what Alcántara Rojas has described, in the song texts of Plácido and other baptized Nahua song masters of his time, as an "interlacing" of "temas y recursos discursivos nativos con otros provenientes de Europa" (Alcántara, 2009: 49). Plácido further complicates this "interlacing of themes" by interjecting a Christian reference within the passage borrowed from ancestral discourse. The slain boys of Bethlehem go on to the celestial realm to rejoice, as do their Nahua counterparts, dead in war. However, their rejoicing takes the form of Christian prayer: "Papalmaquizcozcatica a motimolotiaque ylh[tl] ytec" (León-Portilla*,* 1994: 38r) (With the bracelet gemstones of the talkative, they went rejoicing within the Heavens.) Prior translators have read this first compound expression, as if the term *"papal"* were an error. They translate as if it reads instead, "*tlapapal*", a reduplicated form of "*tlapalli*", which relates to colors, the color red, or pigmentation. Bierhorst translates: "as multicolored bracelet jewels" (Bierhorst, 1985: 257), and León-Portilla, *et al.* translate: "con collares y bracaletes de colores" (León-Portilla, *et al.,* 2011, vol. 2: 497, 561). Such a choice in translation is logical, because "*papalmaquizcozcatica*", as written, is an unusual expression. More importantly, the next stanza repeats this phrase with a slight variation, such that it begins with "*tlapapal*" instead of "*papal*". Previous translators assume that these nearly identical expressions in paired stanzas should, in fact, be the same.

Yet this assumption of error overlooks the strong possibility that this difference between

17 The language here recalls a parallel passage in the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún, 1950-82, bk. 6: 12).

18 This translation presumes an orthographical error for "*timaloa.nino*" (*alegrarse*) (Simeon, 1977: 548).]

19 Or nobles, sons of nobles.

20 Bierhorst understands these verses to refer instead to military deaths of the Three Kings (Bierhortst, 1985: 457). While I disagree with this interpretation, my own reading concurs generally with Bierhorst's identification of a parallel reference to a scenario of Nahua warfare and war death.

21 Similarly, the colonial Nahuatl drama, *The Star Sign,* construes the slaughter of the Holy Innocents as warfare. Soldiers in the play plan to "arm for war" (*yaochichihua*) and "make war" (*yaotia*) against babies and toddlers in Bethlehem (Burkhart and Sell, 2009: 102, 112, 114)

22 Or "*itic*".

similar expressions may not, in fact, be an orthographical error. My translation reads this as a deliberate choice: a pun. The word "*papal*" means "*parlero*" (talkative) or "hablador que habla mucho" (one who talks a lot) (Molina, 1571, II: 67v, 92v). Meanwhile, the related noun "*papallotl",* means "*parlería"* or "verbosity" (Molina, 1571, II: 79v). The compound expression "*papalmaquizcozcatl",* therefore, would appear to be a neologism and play on words that achieves two purposes. It explains the material nature of the "*cozcatl*" as "*cuentas",* as a bracelet or string of stones. It also explains the ritual use of rosary beads for a foreign oratory practice that may have been striking to Nahuas because of its repetitive nature. The "*cozcatl",* as rosary beads, facilitated an especially verbose form of prayer. Rather than "colorful" (*tlapapal*) bracelet beads, they were the bracelet beads of a "talkative" (*papal*) art of devotion.".

Meanwhile, the parallel scenarios of Christian martyrdom and Mesoamerican war death serve Plácido as a point of thematic transition. The focus of this piece shifts exclusively, in the fourth canto, to ancestral history and ancestral modes of adoration. The second stanza of this penultimate canto begins:

> *Teocuitlacoyolihcahuaca ye nocuic huiya niquiyatemoa yn cozcateca ỹ nohueyohuan i nichalchiuhçoçoya intlatol niquimilnamiqui ye nelli yehuan o contlalitiaque yn atl o yã tepetli yaho yaho.* (León-Portilla, 1994: 38r – 38v).
>
> My song, *ye,* resounds like a golden bell, *huiya.* I seek out the Cozcateca, my great ones, *i.* I thread their words as green stones. I remember, truly, those, *oh,* who went to establish the water, *oh, yã,* the mountain (the city),[23] *yaho, yaho.*

The singer has now fully departed from the scene of the Christian Nativity. Moving his gaze from the Christ Child, he addresses a new "Great One". Doing so, he also introduces a new sense of the word *cozcatl,* as he honors the founding rulers of Cozcatlan, or Place of the *Cozcatl*.[24] The term *cozcatl* now connotes an ethnic identity, in addition to its other meanings. Addressing "Cozcateca" lords, the singer also more generally addresses Nahua ancestors. He figuratively "threads" (*çoço*) their words as if they were precious stones, resituating established phrases or metaphors of Nahua song, and fashioning his piece with ancestral components and wisdom.

As objects of reverence, Nahua lords of old become parallel figures to Christ. Yet the next stanza clarifies that these "Great Ones" are not deities to worship. Instead, they are figures of renown, elevated in the afterlife, lamented and honored by the living:

> *Yio ahua yiaoo hohuaye yaho aye ye moxiuhtomolcozqui ypan nitlatlayocolcuica nicnotlamatia ancatlique ỹ tepilhuan o catli yã quauhtl[i] ocelotl ynin ca ye micuilo atloyantepetl o nel yaque ximoaya.* (León-Portilla, 1994: 38v).
>
> *Yio, ahua, yiaoo, hohuaye, yaho, aye, ye,* upon your gemstones of turquoise I sing lamentations, I am saddened. Where are you, oh princes. Oh, where, *yan,* are the eagle and jaguar warriors? For the water, *oh, yan*, the mountain (the city) has already been written, *oh,* truly they have gone to the Place Where All Are Shorn.[25]

The singer seeks departed lords, "upon" or through the song genre that was theirs, and that they – as ancestors – bestowed. This stanza features the sense of "*cozcatl*" as song, an interlinked sequence of polished or precious expressions. At this point, in Canto Four, the song no longer corresponds to the Christian art of recited prayer. Instead, it becomes a new iteration of an ancestral art that originated with the princes of old and celebrates their deeds. Replicating a common theme of this genre, the singer pays homage to Nahua heroes, as he contemplates their passing. He also more broadly celebrates the history of ancestral place and people, suggesting that – through the fame of early lords – "adquirió renombre la ciudad" (León-Portilla *et al.,* 2011, vol. 2: 591).

The "*Cozcatl* Song" then closes with a final canto that returns to the theme of the Nativity. However, Plácido makes clear that the organizing principle of his song remains ancestral. He effectively sets aside the Christian rosary to fo-

23 Together, "*atl*" and "*tepetl*" connote "the city" or "ethnic state".

24 The Cozcateca, like the Mexica, emerged from Chicomoztoc and migrated south. By the time of Motecuzoma II, they were enemies of the Mexica (Umberger, 1996:170).

25 A reference to the afterlife.

cus instead on a Mesoamerican form of song adoration:

> *Yancuica[n] chalchiuhtl i nocuic tlacati niquelcahuaya nicempoaltecametl a nohueyohua ololihuic acatic cenquiztoc nichuipan ye yxpan nonquiztihuetzi icelteotl o anqui ye huell axcã tlaltech acic yehcoc ỹ belen yiaha yaha ylilili hao ahua ye nel a ma onnetotilo nican.* (León-Portilla, 1994: 38v).
>
> Newly, as a greenstone, *i,* my song is born. [And] I forget it, I a Cempoalteca, *a,* my Great One. [My expressions] are well rounded, cylindrical: finely crafted. I have arranged them all together, *ye.* I come forth quickly, before the One Deity. *Oh*, it is said that just now He has arrived on Earth, He has come to Bethlehem, *yiaha, yaha, ylilili, hao, ahua, ye.* Truly, *a,* let there be dancing here.

The singer now honors the Christian deity, "*Icelteotl*", the "Only God". He also invokes the arrival of Christ as a newborn babe. Yet while these thematic elements are Christian, and are therefore foreign to recent converts of the mid-sixteenth century, these verses identify the singer's role and mode of song expression as indigenous. The singer assumes a traditional identity, as a man of Cempoala. Such identification would appear to place him in a parallel relationship with the "lords of the Oriente". He becomes a man of the East, who has now come to worship a foreign child-deity. Additionally, the singer generates song in the traditional style, as a "jewel", or series of "jewels". These "*cozcatl*" expressions are finely-shaped, "rounded" and "cylindrical". In this reference, the composer recurs to a Nahuatl metaphor of artisan stonework that describes well-crafted discourse (Sahagún, 1950-82, bk. 6: 248). A Mesoamerican image of perfectly shaped "gems", laid out in song before the deity, replaces the images in earlier cantos of precious stones, strung and recited as a rosary. What is more, the singer now enjoins others to dance, as an integral feature of Nahua song art and ceremonial performance. The subsequent stanza also develops this sense of a traditional mode of adoration, with song expressions arranged in a native format, as if "*cozcapetlatipan*" (upon a reed mat of jewels).

With the same fluidity of subject position that, in a single stanza, allows the term "*cozcatl*" to refer to a mode of worship, object of worship, and gift that graces the worshipper, the final cantos position the singer to both revere departed lords and sing as a departed lord. In Canto Four, the singer honors Nahua heroes of old. Yet in the final two stanzas of Canto Five, he becomes stylized as a brightly colored bird, suckling nectar and spreading his wings in the celestial afterworld of ancestral warriors:

> *Chalchiuhizquixochitl ỹ manca nontlachichina ya nitlacuilolcozcaquetzaltototl nictzinitzcanAmatlapaltzetzeloan cuicayecahuiloyotica can nonpahpatlantinemio o ahuayia oo ay lili yanca ya.*
>
> Greenstone isthmus jasmines extended, and I suckle nectar, *ya.* I am a jewel-like quetzal bird, like a painted text. I flutter the wings of the trogon bird. With shadows of song, I just fly along, *oh, ahuayia, oo, ay, lili, yanca, ya.*
>
> *On nepapan in cozcanenelhuatica nicxeloa ye oncan noncuicapehpena ya nitlacuilolcozcaquetzaltototl nictzinitzcanamatlapaltzetzeloa cuicayehcahuiloyotica* çan *nõpåpatlantinemio o ahuayia oo.* (León-Portilla, 1994: 38v).
>
> *O,* various are they, with roots like jeweled necklaces, I separate them, *ye,* thence I choose songs, *ya,* I am a jewel-like quetzal bird, like a painted text. I flutter the wings (or pages) of the trogon bird. With shadows of song, I just fly along, *oh, ahuayia, oo*.

The singer in the last verses of the "*Cozcatl* Song" takes an avian form. He is a painted, jewel-colored quetzal, or a quetzal bird, here characterized through the material and symbolic qualities that this brightly-feathered bird shares with gems and painted texts. Within the compound phrase "*nitlacuilolcozcaquetzaltototl*" – which literally reads, "I am a painted text-jewel-quetzal bird" – the vivid colors of the quetzal recall the greens and turquoises of Mesoamerican gems, as well as the blue-greens and reds of codex pages. The precious quality of the quetzal, or quetzal plumes, also stands in parallel to the precious quality of both gems and finely painted books. Moreover, the quetzal, as a creature of song, becomes analogous to the painted text, as a conduit of enunciation.

The singer thus assumes the identity of a prized bird, whose nature – in color, with treasured plumes, or as a conduit of song-speech – is analogous to that of a painted text. Meanwhile, the terms "jewel" and "quetzal bird" also recall the metaphor "*cozcatl quetzalli*" or "precious child" which, in prior cantos, describes the Christ Child. In the context of the "*Cozcatl* Song", this compound expression may therefore also speak implicitly to the sacred affiliation between the Christ child and the singer, as a Christian convert.[26]

Plácido then echoes this apparent reference to painted text with a partner avian image. The singer is both a "quetzal" and a "trogon", who flutters his "wings" or "pages". The word "*amatlapalli*" may signify either: "ala de ave o de papel" (Molina, 1571, II: 4v). The singer, therefore, flutters the wings of a bird, or perhaps even figurative "wings" of paper. Plácido would appear to index both of these meanings, with reference to the textual element of Nahua song, as composed and alphabetically recorded in his day. He may also harken back to the ancestral genre of painted song books, as described in the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún, 1950-82, bk. 3: 67). The singer casts "shadows of song", intoning hymns as the ancestors did. He spreads the renown of bygone lords, as he figuratively spreads his wings to soar beside them. With artful verses, he also makes the pages of his "*cuica amatl*" ("Cancionero", Molina, 1571, II: 24r), flutter, taking flight in music and dance.

The song ends as it begins, with parallel phrases and compound expressions that permit multiple readings. The sense of Plácido's verses emerges from these composite, sometimes ambiguous articulations. Likewise, the nature of this category of Nahua song, by baptized composers, or song masters such as Plácido, is characterized by a conjoining of elements from Nahua and Christian sacred cultures; and of references to figures or events of both pre-Columbian and early colonial history. In this piece, Plácido invokes parallel traditions of song art, adoration, and – perhaps also – book culture. The "*Cozcacuicatl*" is neither wholly ancestral nor, as Sahagun identifies, Christian in an orthodox sense. However, Plácido composes as a song master schooled in a Mesoamerican art. Nahua aesthetics distinguish this text, with multivalent expressions and images, as well as sumptuosity in its representations of the deity and other revered figures. Also, while the Christian Nativity is the ostensible theme of this piece, the "*Cozcatl* Song" does not solely refer to the Christ Child with Biblical epithets. The first canto, e.g., refers to the "Savior of the World". The second refers to the "Lady of the Heavenly Realm", or "Queen of Heaven". The third also identifies Christ as "Savior" and appears to index and transform the epithet "Light of the World". Throughout, however, this piece also conceives of the Christ Child by means of Nahua metaphors. He is a roseate spoonbill, a flower, and – in multiple verses – a "*cozcatl*". These are terms with varied meanings and figurative affiliations that derive from Nahua sacred culture rather than Christian scripture. Nahua notions of sacred offering and adoration also make sense of song references to the Christian rosary, prayer recitation, or the gifts of the Wisemen. Furthermore, while Plácido refers to blended arts of prayer and supplication, song adoration within this piece takes a more prominently traditional form. This is especially so in the final cantos, in which Plácido explicitly identifies the singer's articulations with the song art of Nahua forebears. In these ways, the "*Cozcatl* Song" is less an example of "adaptation" to new forms of thought, as Garibay describes,[27] than it is a distinctive heralding of the new in the voice and from the perspective of an ancestral genre.

26 Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo has also written of an affiliation between Christ and Quetzalcoatl, the quetzal-serpent deity and Toltec princely priest, or "hombre-Dios," in various early colonial texts. He points to apparent analogies based on the element of sacrificial blood, birth legends, and the cycles of death and re-emergence that feature in the traditions of both Christ and Quetzalcoatl (Escalante, 2002: 78-79). This association may further qualify the role of the "quetzal bird" singer as a convert to Christianity.

27 Garibay, 1965, Vol. 2: XX

Appendix

Translation of the "*Cozcatl* Song"

[Folio 37v]

Nican ompehua Cozcacuicatl ytechpa yn itlacatilitzin totº Jesu xº. oquitecpan don franco placido ypan xihuitl 1553 años.

Here begins the jewel song about the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Don Francisco Plácido composed (or arranged) it in the year 1553.

Tiqui, tiqui, tocoto, tiqui, tiqui, tocoto, tiqui, tiqui, tiquiti, tiqui, tiqui, tiquiti.

Ma ontlatlauhtilo ya Xicteoxiuhcozcatotomaca yn amotlayocol antepilhuan i ma chalchiuhcozcatl teocuitlacozcatl yn amocuentax y ma yca ya ticahuiltiti yn oyehcoc in Belem cemanahuaqui temaquixtiani tla tihuiya[n] tlatlaquauh çane.

Let there be going to make supplication (or prayers), *ya,* untie your jewels of turquoise, your [expressions of] sorrow,[28] oh princes, *i.* With greenstone jewels, golden jewels, your rosary beads, *y,* let us, *ya,* go to gladden the One who arrived in Bethlehem, the Savior of the World. May we go quickly, *ho*!

Yn ma ontlachielo ya tomachvane ticcahua tlapalizquixochitl moyahua yehua oncan temoc yn itlayocol yehuaã Dioxi cemanahuaqui.

Let there be going to view [Him], *ya,* oh our nephews, we leave Him [rare and fragrant] *tlapalizquixochitl* flowers. They spill forth, *yehua*. There, the [Expression of] Sorrow, *yehuayan*, of *Dios*, *i*, descended to the Earth, *i*.

Yn quetzalcalitec hotenco ya oncan ye tonca yn tichpochtli Santa Mª. que[n]ço huel oncan ticyatlacatili yn Dios ypiltzin nepapan cozcatl ma yca ya man tlatlauhtilo ya.

Inside the house of quetzal featherwork, alongside the road, *ya,* there you are, you who are the Virgin Santa María. Oh, how you gave birth there to the revered Son of *Dios*! With various gemstones, *ya,* let Him be supplicated prayerfully, *ya*.

Çan timotimaloa ynic aya iuhquin cozcatl toyahuaya ye momactzinco moyetztica in Dios piltzintli nepapan cozcatl.

You are glorified, so that, *aya,* like jewels spilling forth, *ye*, in your arms rests the revered Son of *Dios*, [like] various jewels.

Titoco, toto, titocototo, titiquititi, titiquiti.

Cuelcã cuelcan pipilte tomachuane y yahue tla toyayatihuia yn ixpan Tiox Xpo. Teocuitlaxåcalli manca tictotlilizque ticchalchiuhcuentaxcozcamacazque o anqui ye chauhquecholtlaztalehualtotonatoc anqui ye oncan io ahe haoya yeha.

To the good place, to the good place, oh, princes, oh, our nephews, *y yahue!* Let us go unto the presence of *Dios,* of *Jesucristo,* to the golden thatched hut where He resided. We will greatly esteem Him! We will offer Him gems, greenstone rosary beads. *Oh,* it is said, *ye,* that He is shining rosy pink, like a roseate swan, there, they say, *yio, aye, haoya, yeha.*

Cuicoya tlapitzalcalitequi toncuicatinemi tleon mach y xochitl ahuiaxtimani a o anqui ya tlauhquecholtlaztalehualtotonatoc.

There is singing in the House of Flutes. We go along singing. What, *y,* is this flower that extends, giving fragrance, *a? Oh,* it is said, *ya,* that He is shining rosy pink, like a roseate swan.

28 León Portilla, *et al.* translate "*tlayocol*" as "*pensamiento*" or "*pensamientos"* (León Portilla, *et al.,* 2011, 2; 489). Bierhorst translates it differently, as "creation" (Bierhorst, 1985: 255). He appears to identify this noun as a variant of "*tlayocoyaliztli*" (inuencion, fabricacion, o formacion de algo; el acto de fabricar) or "*tlayocoyalli*" (cosa inuentada assi) (Molina, 1571, II: 122r). However, "*tlayocolli*" is a variant of "*tlaocolli*" (sorrow) which, in combined forms, means "sad" or "piteous" (Anderson *et al*., 1976: 36; Lockhart, 2001: 237). Molina defines the term "*tlaocolli*" in the context of compound expressions, e.g., "*tlaocolcuicatl*" (canto triste y lastimero) and, as a verb form, in the compound expression: "*tlaocolellelaxitia*" (entristecer y angustiar) (Molina, 1571, II: 229v). This second compound verb also appears in the *Primeros memorials* as a diphrastic expression that features "*tlaocolli*" as a noun: "in tlavcolli yn elçiçiuhtli" (sadness, sighs) (Sullivan, 1997: 240). I therefore translate with this sense, reading "*amotlayocol*" (your sorrow) as emotive expression in song. This verb also appears with the same sense in the subsequent stanza of Canto One as "*itlayocol"* ([His expression of] sorrow); at the end of the second canto – as a reduplicated, compound verbal expression – as "*tlatlaocoltemoa*" (to seek with [expressions of] sorrow); and in the fourth canto, as "*tlatlayocolcuica*" (sing lamentations), a reduplicated, verbal form of the compound expression "*tlaocolcuicatl*" (canto triste y lastimero).

[Folio 38r]

O anqui ye huel axca tlaçocozcatl quetzalliyã tonilpililoque motlacoconetzi can yio mochalchiuhmaquiz mocozcatzin i mochipa ichpochtle Santa Mariani y lilili ya huiya toyolio aye aye ahuiya nicaan a.

Oh, it is said that recently, this precious jewelry, this quetzal featherwork, *yã,* was fastened round us. It is your precious child, only, *yio*, your greenstone bracelet, your revered jewel, *i,* Ever Virgin Santa Mariani, *i-li-li-li, yahuia.* Our spirits, *aye, aye,* are contented here, *a.*

Ỹ quetzalpetlatipan aya tonca ca ye mocha ilhuica Cihuapilli yehua nepapan in maquizteoxiuhcalitequi tõtlatlauhtiloyan tlapalchalchiuhihuitl moxochicuentaxtzin ticpouhtinemia ypã ypan aya timitztlatlaocoltemotinemiya ylilili yahuiya.

You are, *aya,* upon a [ruler or deity's] mat of quetzal featherwork. You are in your home, Lady of the Celestial Realm,[29] *yehua.* Various are they, within the turquoise house of bracelets, at the place where you are invoked with prayer. They are colored greenstone feathers, your florid rosary beads. We go reciting from them, upon these, *aya,* we go seeking you with [expressions of] sorrow, *i-li-li-li, yahuia.*

Toquiti toquiti tiqui tiqui tiquiti tiqui tocoto.

Yn nepapã tototl ỹ moquecholhuan tiox tzatzihua ya nicaa aqu huel iuhqui tlahuizcalli patlantinemia angeloti oncuiya. Gloria in excelsis deo xahuiaca xompaquica ane.

There are various birds, your roseate spoonbills, *Dios.* There is loud proclamation, *ya*, here. Who can thus go flying through the dawn sky? *Angeles* sing: "Gloria in excelsis deo". Be joyful, be glad, *hey*!

O anquin huel iquac topantemoc yn ilhuicac tlanextli ya nepapã xochitl moyahuaya oncuica ay in moquecholhuan Dios Gloria in excelsis.

Oh, it is said that precisely when the light of the heavens descended upon us, *ya,* various flowers spill forth. They go to sing, *ay,* your roseate spoonbills, *Dios*: "Gloria in excelsis".

A in oquicaque in Oriente in teteuctini in ilhᶜpan on ilhuiloque aya tlpc. ca omonexti temaquixtiani teocuictlatl, copalli ya, Mirra concuique ye ic onacic oya im pelem coniximatque nelli tiox nelli oquichtli ya.

Ah, the lords of the *Oriente* heard it from the heavens. They were told, *aya:* "On Earth a Savior has appeared!" They took gold, *copalli*, *ya,* and myrrh, *ye.* With this they arrived, *oya,* in Bethlehem. They met Him face to face, the true *Dios*, true Man, *ya*!

Yn attopa ya mitziximatque Tiox on cozcateuh quetzalteuhtlamatque yn tlatoque aya contlatlauhtique aya yn ichpochtli Santa Maria aqui[n] huel yehuan conitquitaque moteyo ya nelli Dios nelli oquichtli ya.

The first to meet you face to face, *Dios*, [esteeming you] as a jewel, as quetzal featherwork,
the wise men, the lords, *aya,* went to pray, *aya,* to the Virgin Santa Maria.
They were the ones who went bearing your glory, *ya*, true *Dios,* true Man, *ya*.

Yn tla timochi titlamahuiçocã ticcahua [a]ne onca belem huel ixpoliuhtoc[30] quetzalli yan cozcatl chalchiuhteuh oncã xamãque ỹ pipiltzitzinti papalmaquizcozcatica a motimolo-tiaque ylhᵗˡ ytec aya in tepilhuã ana.

Let us all marvel, we leave him, *hey!* There in Bethlehem they were quite vanquished, the quetzal feathers, *yan,* the jeweled ornaments. Like greenstones there they shattered, the little children. With the bracelet gemstones of the talkative, they went rejoicing in the heavens, *aya,* those children, *ana*.

Yn choquizcuicatl momamalintoc tlayocolxochitica ay melelquica in motlaçohuan Dios tlapapalmaquizcozcatica y.

Songs of weeping are winding round, with flowers of sorrow, *ay,* your precious ones, *Dios*, express anguish, with colorful bracelet beads, *y.*

29 Or "Queen of Heaven"

Tico toco ticoti ticotoco ticoti tiquitititi tocotiti.

Nonohualco ye nicã in tlalhuacpan ic onchalchiuhyhcuilotihui ya in nonohualcatl teuctli ỹ don Diego y ye o nel yao ximohuayan i concauhtehuaco yn atl o yan tepetli yaho yaho yli yaho aye ma yca nichoca yio.

> In Nonohualco, here, in Tlalhuac, they go along painting with greenstones, *ya*. The Nonohualca lord Don Diego, *y,* already, *oh,* has truly gone to the Place Where All Are Shorn, *i.* He has gone and left the water, *oh, yan,* the mountain (the city), *yaho, yaho, yli, yaho, aye*. Let me weep because of this, *yio.*

Teocuitlacoyolihcahuaca ye nocuic huiya niquiyatemoa yn cozcateca ỹ nohueyohuan i nichalchiuhçoçoya intlatol niquimilnamiqui ye nelli ye-

> My song, *ye,* resounds like a golden bell, *huiya.* I seek out the Cozcateca, my great ones, *i.* I thread their words as greenstones. I remember, truly,

[Folio 38v]

huan o contlalitiaque yn atl o yã tepetli yaho yaho.

> those, *oh,* who went to establish the water, *oh, yã,* the mountain (the city), *yaho, yaho.*

Yio ahua yiaoo hohuaye yaho aye ye moxiuhtomolcozqui ypan nitlatlayocolcuica nicnotlamatia ancatlique ỹ tepilhuan o catli yã quauhtl[i] ocelotl ynin ca ye micuilo atloyantepetl o nel yaque ximoaya.

> *Yio, ahua, yiaoo, hohuaye, yaho, aye, ye,* upon your gemstones of turquoise I sing lamentations, I am saddened. Where are you, oh princes. Oh, where *yan,* are the eagle and jaguar warriors? For the water, *oh, yan,* the mountain (the city) has already been written, *oh,* truly they have gone to the Place Where All Are Shorn.

Totiqui titiquito totiquititiqui toti toti totoco totoco totocoto

Yancuica[n] chalchiuhtl i nocuic tlacati niquelcahuaya nicempoaltecametl a nohueyohua ololihuic acatic cenquiztoc nichuipan ye yxpan nonquiztihuetzi icelteotl o anqui ye huell axcã tlaltech acic yehcoc ỹ belen yiaha yaha ylilili hao ahua ye nel a ma onnetotilo nican.

> Newly, as a greenstone, *i,* my song is born. [And] I forget it, I a Cempoalteca, *a,* my Great One. [My expressions] are well rounded, cylindrical: finely crafted. I have arranged them all together, *ye.* I come forth quickly, before the One Deity. *Oh*, it is said that just now He has arrived on Earth, He has come Bethlehem, *yiaha, yaha, ylilili, hao, ahua, ye.* Truly, *a,* let there be dancing here.

On tlaçotlanqui cozcapetlatipan a nocoyectlalia nocuic niccenpohualtecametl a nohueyohua ololihuic acatic.

> As precious [strung] items, upon a reed mat of jewels, *a,* I arrange my songs, I, a Cempoalteca, *a*, my Great One. They are cylindrical, well rounded: finely crafted.

Chalchiuhizquixochitl ỹ manca nontlachichina ya nitlacuilolcozcaquetzaltototl nictzinitzcan Amatlapaltzetzeloan cuicayecahuiloyotica can nonpahpatlantinemio o ahuayia oo ay lili yanca ya.

> Greenstone isthmus jasmines extended, and I suckle nectar, *ya.* I am a jewel-like quetzal bird, like a painted text. I flutter the wings of the trogon bird. With shadows of song, I just fly along, *oh, ahuayia, oo, ay, lili, yanca, ya*.

On nepapan in cozcanenelhuatica nicxeloa ye oncan noncuicapehpena yanitlacuilolcozcaquetzaltototl nictzinitzcanamatlapaltzetzeloa cuicayehcahuiloyotica çan nõpåpatlantinemio o ahuayia oo.

> *On,* various are they, with roots like jeweled necklaces, I separate them, *ye,* thence I choose songs, *ya,* I am a jewel-like quetzal bird, a painted text. I flutter the wings (or the pages) of the trogon bird. With shadows of song, I just fly along, *oh, ahuayia, ooo*.

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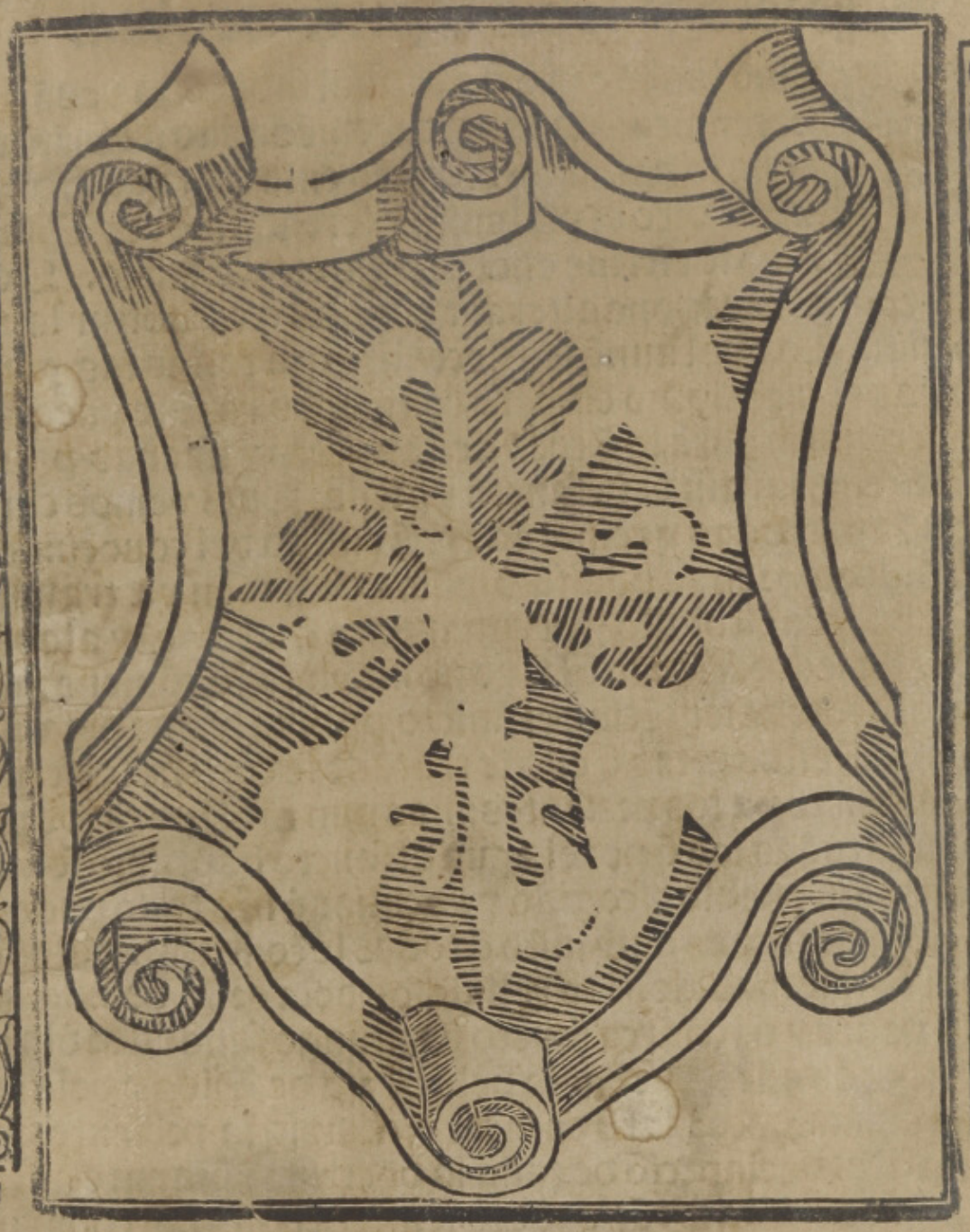
¶ Veritas domini manet in eternum.



Doctrina christiana

en lẽgua Española y Mexicana: hecha por los religiosos dela orden de sctõ Domingo.

Agora nuevamẽte corregida y enmẽdada. Año. 1550