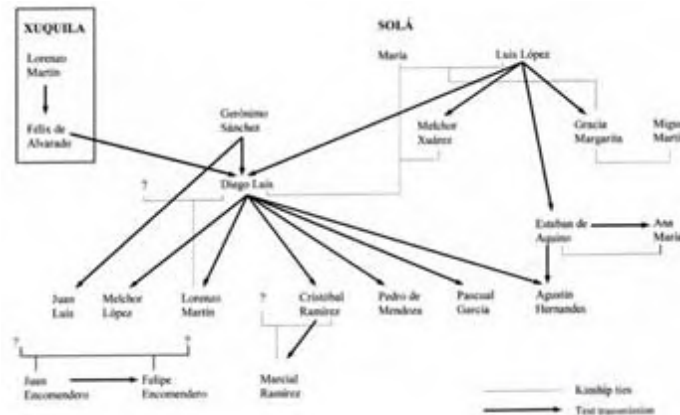


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## Social Reproduction of Late Postclassic Ritual Practices in Early Colonial Central México



**Research Year:** 1997

**Culture:** Nahuatl and Zapotec

**Chronology:** Late Post Classic and Colonial

**Location:** México

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(Chapter 5 of dissertation in progress entitled *Invisible Wars: the Extirpation of Idolatries and the Dynamics of Writing and Ritual Knowledge in Nahua and Zapotec Communities, 1585-1747*)

## **Literate idolatries: A comparative analysis of the emergence of a clandestine ritual and devotional literature in Nahua and Zapotec communities, 1613-1654.**

### **Introduction**

The transition from ignorance of alphabetical writing—and its irreducible cultural context—to its appropriation by Nahua and Zapotec communities in Central México has been customarily analyzed through textual genres which favor the representation of a community's history and cultural identity: land surveys and maps (Galarza 1979; Kellogg 1995), primordial titles and Techialoyan land surveys (Gruzinski 1993), and pictorial narrative or alphabetic historical accounts (Galarza 1980, 1989; Lockhart 1992; Oudijk 2000; Schroeder 1991; Whitecotton 1990). However, except for some recent works (Berlin 1988; Burkhart 1992, 1995; Tavárez 1996, 1998), native Central Mexican ritual and devotional texts have attracted few analyses that go beyond surveys or critical editions. This reticence is perfectly justified, given the fact that these texts tend to be fragmentary, devoid of significant social context, and that it is extremely difficult to place them, given the paucity of data, within a textual or performative context of related texts or ritual practices (Hanks 1984, 1987).

This essay, however, will address the production and circulation of native ritual and devotional texts in colonial Central México between 1614 and 1656, which is in all likelihood a crucial period in the native use of writing for ritual and devotional purposes rather than for legal or community purposes.<sup>1</sup> For "ritual texts", I mean incantations or calendrical records, Christian or not, used for specific propitiatory or divination objectives. For "devotional texts", I mean texts that were meant to be used in a private manner by Christians to strengthen a personal relationship between them and a divine entity through personal acts of piety. In order to survey such a vast horizon, my analysis will focus on three case studies that may provide a good point of departure for cross-genre and cross-cultural comparisons:

(a) The simultaneous oral and written reproduction of a Nahua oral genre, the *nahualtocaitl*, by ritual specialists in the Coahuixca-Tlalhuica region (to the southwest of the Valley of México) in 1614-1629 ([Table 1.1](#), [Table 1.2](#), and [Table 1.3](#)).

(b) The production of devotional Náhuatl miscellanies in mid-seventeenth century Central México, and the Nahua appropriation of European calendrical data from Spanish-language *reportorios de los tiempos*. This case study will focus on Fonds Mexicain 381, a manuscript held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

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<sup>1</sup> In any case, according to the findings of Gruzinski 1993 and to the three-tiered development of Náhuatl legal texts and wills advocated by Lockhart 1992, one would expect this period to be important for the appropriation of writing and the transformation of native-language lexicons in Central México.

(c) The circulation of calendrical records and divination texts in the Oaxacan township of San Miguel Sola among literate Zapotec ritual specialists and some of their clients in 1629-1656 ([Table 1.4](#); [Figure 1.1](#)).

Given their diversity, these case studies will respectively emphasize three different topics: oral versus written reproduction of ritual knowledge, the selective native appropriation of Christian devotional and divinatory practices, and the existence of social networks for the diffusion of clandestine ritual texts.

Submitted 06/01/2000 by:  
David Eduardo Tavárez

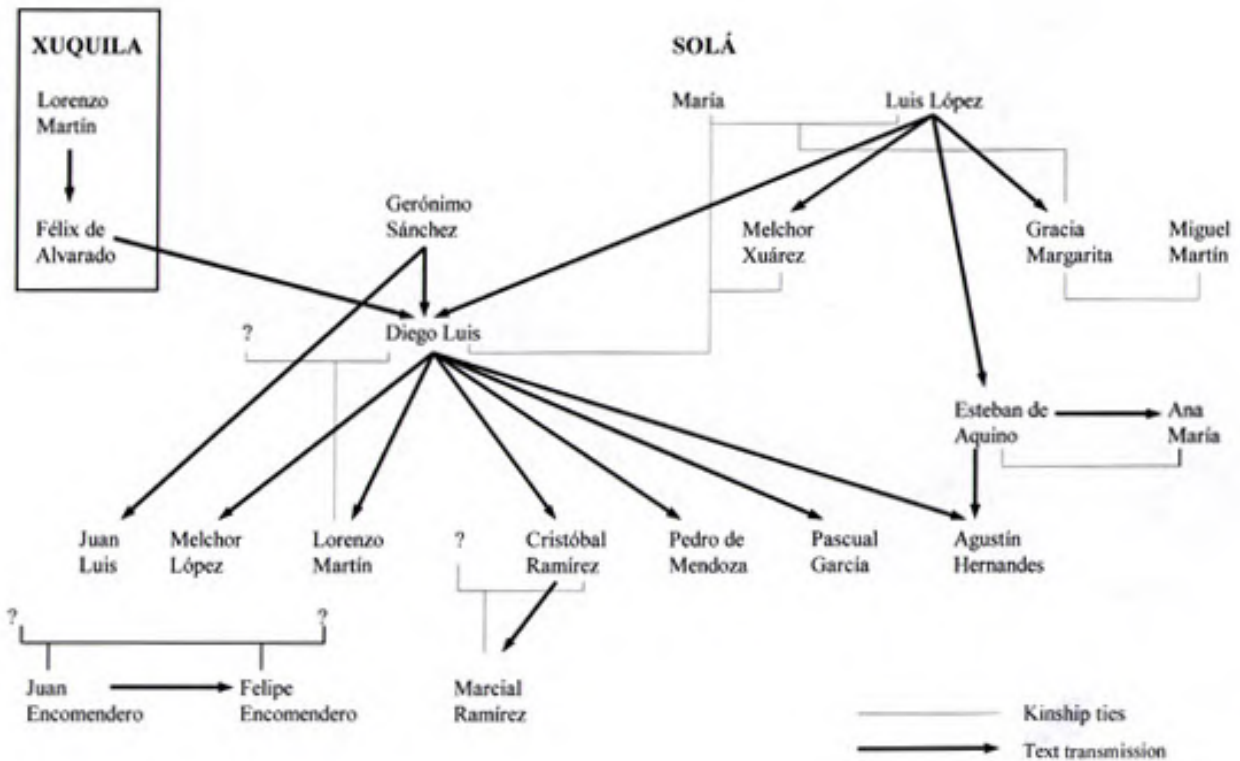


Figure 1.1: Clandestine circulation network for ritual texts in Solá, 1629-1654.

### Ruiz de Alarcón's written incantations

The extirpation campaigns led by Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón stand out as the most ambitious effort in seventeenth-century Central México to gain an understanding and

keep a record of the native ritual practices that were being suppressed. Ruiz de Alarcón recorded the ritual oral practices discussed in this section in a manuscript treatise (*Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas...*) written between 1614—the year he began punishing idolaters—and 1629—the last year recorded in the text. He drew his material from about eleven male and eighteen female informants designated by their proper names, and from an unknown number of unnamed informants, all of whom lived in thirty different localities in the Coahuila-Tlaxcala region, which included parts of the current states of Guerrero, Morelos, and Puebla. This treatise contains about sixty-six different transcribed incantations with various propitiatory or divining functions, which belong to a Nahuatl oral genre known as *nahuatlacaitl* (Sorcerer Names), whose linguistic and social features will be analyzed in detail in my dissertation.

In his commentary to these incantations, Ruiz de Alarcón alludes to at least five different written incantations that were produced independently by literate ritual specialists, out of a total of sixty-six incantations ([Table 1.1](#)). The most egregious example is an incantation used for carrying loads and propitiating safe travel that was discovered after one of his informants chanced upon a written text of it. According to Ruiz de Alarcón, Francisco de Santiago, an inhabitant of Santiago who had been raised in Ruiz de Alarcón's home, picked up a text that had been left on a stretch of road and brought it to his benefactor, who had no difficulty in establishing its origin because it was signed by its owner, the deacon of Cuetzacoatlán. Ruiz de Alarcón summoned the deacon, who confessed that the original text had been lost, and that he had no information about its author (Ruiz de Alarcón 1892: 157). While it is reasonable to doubt the informant's intention, it is clear that the text was produced by a literate Nahuatl in a position of responsibility at a local parish.

Another mention of an independently produced text occurs in Ruiz de Alarcón's discussion of an incantation to hunt deer with a snare. While most of the incantations recorded in this treatise have two to four sections, this one is the longest, with 22 separate sections, and its author may have chosen to commit it to writing due to its length. This text included metalinguistic instructions for the performance of certain parts of the incantation. For example, at the end of the incantation's seventeenth section, it is noted:

It then says on the paper: *Otlamic: nauhcampa toyohuaz. Tic yehecoz*; [which means] that, once the incantation has finished, you shall shout very loudly toward the four directions, as it is said in what follows next (Ruiz de Alarcón 1892: 164).

A further metalinguistic direction is written in italics in Ruiz de Alarcón's original manuscript, to differentiate it from the body of the incantation: "If after this they have not come, they are ordered—*yoyohuaz coyotzaziz quitoz*—to howl repeatedly and to say *tahui*." (BMNA, Col. Gómez Orozco, *Tratado...*, 42 v).

The only literate ritual specialist Ruiz de Alarcón mentions by name is a woman: Petronilla, a healer from Tlayacapan—a former tributary of Xochimilco—who cured tertian fever with an incantation:

For tertian fever, she would give out a drink, which was *coanepilli* and rue dissolved in water, and she added another incantation similar to the preceding ones. According to the paper on which she had this incantation written, it began with *ica motlatlauhtia in atl*, which in Spanish means "With this prayer, one begs the water for something." (Ruiz de Alarcón 1892: 217).

This incantation, only three clauses long, propitiated the water deity *Chalchihuitl Icue*. However, its author employed tropes that occur frequently in Náhuatl doctrinal discourse: the patient was called "God's creature" (*Dios itlachihualtzin*), and the fever pain became "heavenly justice" (*in ilhuicac justicia*).

A fourth incantation seized in written form by Ruiz de Alarcón also bears traces of Christian formulae memorized through the teaching of the doctrine. In an incantation to induce sleep in a victim in order to perform theft or sexual assault, an anonymous hypnotist,<sup>2</sup> after claiming to be Tezcatlipoca, Xolotl, Moquehqueloatzin (Mocker of Himself, an epithet for Tezcatlipoca), Moyohualihatoatzin (Night Speaker, an epithet for Xipe), and Yohuallahuantzin (Inebriated at Night, an epithet for Xipe), closes the spell with the truncated Latin formula *in nomine domini* (Andrews & Hassig 1984: 78-80).

A fifth and final example of a written incantation may feature non-alphabetical signs inserted in the text. In order to transcribe an enigmatic incantation for bleeding which names all the participants in the performance—veins, hands, needle, blood, water, illness—with epithets, Ruiz de Alarcón labeled each epithet with a letter. When he comes to the epithet for the illness to be remedied by bleeding, Ruiz de Alarcón adds a description of a character in the original text after his translation:

They place this character X, and with it they signify the Enemy or Belzebut, so he may—as a superior being—cast away from the patient's side what they call the wild or lesser deities. Therefore, they call [these deities] "Green Ones", and also "Green Spiders," and there they place another character which refers to the demons' spiders... (Ruiz de Alarcón 1892: 208).

This character appears as a large X, and may have been a non-alphabetic representation of the illnesses called "spiders" (*tlahzoltocatl*) in the manuscript. Furthermore, an unspecified character represented the term "demon spider." These comments suggest that Ruiz de Alarcón copied this incantation from a text featuring both a transcribed incantation and an iconic (or pictorial) depiction of a propitiated deity.

### **Oral and written reproduction of Nahua ritual knowledge: the tobacco epithets**

By far, the parallel epithet with the widest distribution in these incantations is the one used for the *piciyetl*—*Nicotiana rustica*, an herbaceous species of tobacco (Andrews & Hassig 1984: 251) that was used performatively in so many ritual practices that Ruiz de

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<sup>2</sup> López Austin (1966, 1967a, 1967b) claims this incantation was the one used by the infamous *temacpalihtotiqueh*, the thieving Aztec hypnotists described by Sahagún (Anderson & Dibble 1979).

Alarcón called it "the stray dog who comes to all the wedding feasts." The broad distribution of this epithet allows for an interesting comparison regarding the reproduction of a key feature of the *nahualtocañtl* genre—parallelistic epithets—through oral and written means in a fifteen-year period (1614-29) in Coahuila and Tlalhuica communities in Central México.

The canonical form of the *piciyetl* epithet, as attested from seven variants drawn from six different incantations (see [Table 1.3](#)), can be defined as a two-part parallel template. The first part is a numerical form, "Nine-Times,"<sup>3</sup> which occurs in both initial sections of the parallel epithet. The second part is an element that usually indicates a pounding action. The first and second epithets in the parallel construction cannot bear the same verbal stem. Two of the epithet variants are found in one of the written incantations discussed above—a spell for trapping deer with a snare—and differ only in the insertion of the particles *in* (with various semantic and deictic roles) and *tlah* (an intensifier). The remaining five variants are quite similar in morphological terms to the two written variants. In fact, setting aside the variable use of a range of nominal suffixes by different incantation authors (*-tli*, *-li*, *-tzin* or none), it appears that the parallelistic epithet for the *piciyetl* is customarily constructed with a limited range of four verbal stems: *tzohtzon-* (pounding), *capan-* (slapping), *matelo-* (crumbling), and the more unusual *patlan-* (flying). In [Table 1.2](#), a less canonical version of the *piciyetl* epithet is shown: the first part is comprised of a color (green), and the second part is variable, being composed by either a "pounding" verbal stem, or a noun. However, this template is followed only by two of the nine different variants of the *piciyetl* epithet found in the *Tratado*.

The impact of literacy skills on the transmission of specific elements of ritual knowledge by these specialists was slight—after all, only five out of sixty-six, or about 7% of the incantations reported in the *Treatise* were written texts. Indeed, the examples given above portray the variability that one would expect from a group of ritual specialists who were attempting to replicate the template of an epithet that had been transmitted orally from one generation to another. Nevertheless, even the epithet variants transcribed in two separate texts—the deer-hunting incantation and the spell for tertian fever—by two different literate specialists partook of the morphological and semantic variability that one would expect from an epithet form transmitted exclusively in an oral manner. It appears as if the reproduction of a specific oral performance were a goal shared without contradiction by both literate and illiterate ritual specialists.

Finally, it should be noted that Ruiz de Alarcón's attitude toward ritual texts contrasted sharply with that of other inquisitors. Unlike other ecclesiastical authorities, he did not take the usual measure of burning such unauthorized texts in public, and did not seek additional penalties for the authors or owners of written incantations. As the third case study shows, this liberal attitude toward clandestine ritual and devotional texts was not the norm for seventeenth-century ecclesiastical authorities or their agents.

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<sup>3</sup> This semantic content may refer to the *piciyetl*'s association with the presence of nine tiers in the Nahua cosmos (López Austin 1973).

## A seventeenth-century Nahua devotional miscellany: Fonds Mexicain 381

A set of strict Tridentine measures against the possession and circulation of unauthorized manuscript copies of devotional and doctrinal works emerged from the First (1555) and Third (1585) Mexican Church Councils. However, some indigenous groups of readers appear to have avoided Tridentine scrutiny by circulating or sharing manuscript copies in a clandestine manner among discreet circles of readers. While few extant examples exist of the devotional works in native languages that may have circulated in this manner, a brief glance at some of the known specimens affords a limited characterization of this type of literature. First, these works tended to be produced as a miscellaneous collection of genres and works, written by several scribes, and read and annotated by several readers. For instance, the Náhuatl manuscript known as Fonds Mexicain 381 of the National Library of Paris contains a sermonary, sections of doctrine, a translation of a Latin treatise on just governance, and a short monologue in which a religious image explains to Nahua worshippers that images should be venerated as representations, and not as real deities. The clandestine nature of this miscellanea, which bears the date 1559, is suggested by folios 62v-63r: they open up to reveal a Spanish text which bears no relation to the Náhuatl sermonary into which they are inserted, and could have hidden the volume's content from inquisitorial glances.<sup>4</sup> Second, although the circulation of the manuscripts was clandestine or unauthorized, its contents did not necessarily challenge or distort devotional Christian discourses. For example, the text known as Codex Indiarorum 7 of the John Carter Brown Library, although apparently produced and owned by members of a Nahua confraternity in the Valley of México, contained a range of sermons, devotional texts, and perhaps most interestingly, a Náhuatl account of the voyages of Saint Amaro in the imaginative cartographies of early modern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

In this section, I will provide a brief overview of Fonds Mexicain (Fonds Mexicain) 381 of the National Library of Paris, a manuscript Náhuatl miscellany of devotional and divinatory texts.<sup>6</sup> Two criteria render this unusual text relevant to my analysis: first of all, it shows the broad range of genres and topics that clandestine Náhuatl texts could have addressed; second, since its production and usage is roughly contemporary with both the Ruiz de Alarcón incantations and the Sola divinatory texts, its contents reflect the intentions of a group of native readers whose interests contrasted with those of the ritual specialists represented in the other two case studies.

Fonds Mexicain 381 is a sixty-page manuscript which was once part of the collection of the eighteenth-century Italian scholar and historian Lorenzo Boturini. It is likely that it was bought in México—along with other former components of the Boturini collection—by the French scholar and collector Joseph-Marie Aubin, who took his priceless

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<sup>4</sup> Another relevant example is Codex Indiarorum 7 of the John Carter Brown Library. While it contains a collection of Náhuatl devotional texts which belonged to a confraternity located in the Valley of México at the close of the sixteenth century, the volume also features a Náhuatl version of the voyages of Saint Amaro (Burkhart 1995).

<sup>5</sup> An English translation of the Saint Amaro text is given in Burkhart 1995.

<sup>6</sup> A facsimilar reproduction of this manuscript was apparently published under the title *Ayer MS Planetary Calendar en Lengua Náhuatl del año 1639* by the Maya Society (Publication 17, Baltimore, 1935). A photographic reproduction of uneven quality is kept at the Newberry Library as Ayer MS 1675.

collection with him to Paris in 1840. While it is not absolutely certain that this miscellanea existed in its present form before joining Boturini's collection around the 1730's, the fact that it features three alternating hands, with Hand 1 being responsible for an initial section and the final section of the manuscript, suggests that the manuscript has kept a certain integrity of content.

A remarkable feature of Fonds Mexicain 381 is the diversity of genres it contains. The manuscript begins with a set of Náhuatl prayers for meditation, a devotional enumeration of the thorns in Christ's crown, a bilingual (Otomi and Náhuatl) *persignum crucis*, a Náhuatl translation of a Latin text about the life of Saint Nicholas Tolentino, a correlation between the Gregorian and the Tarascan calendars, a list of holy days, a set of Latin prayers recorded in the equivocating transcription of a scribe who was a native speaker of Náhuatl, assorted prayers in Latin, Spanish and Náhuatl, and, most striking of all, a brief text on the signs of the Zodiac and on their correlation with the days and months of the Christian calendar. The manuscript closes with a short doctrinal text about the Eucharist.

This miscellanea appears to have been in use from the early 1630's to the mid 1650's: on page 24, one finds a list of holy days with the annotation "a[ñ]nus 1633;" on page 45, there is a note about the feast of the Assumption in 1639; on the margins of the correlation between the Tarascan and Gregorian calendars, a note indicates that a certain Caterina fled from home in 1654. Unfortunately, as is the case with other miscellaneous works, it is impossible to ascertain either the authors' identity or the exact location in which it was produced. While Náhuatl predominates in the text, the presence of Otomi and Tarascan elements suggests that the manuscript was produced by Náhuatl-speaking authors who lived close to Otomi and Tarascan speakers in the regions west and northwest of the Toluca Valley. Three such linguistically diverse regions lie in the jurisdictions of Querétaro, Metepec and Temascaltepec (Gerhard 1972).

The list of holidays on page 24, and the correlations between days of the week, planets, months, and signs of the zodiac on pages 47 to 54 suggest that these sections were inspired by a manuscript or printed copy of a *reportorio de los tiempos*. This early modern genre shared some traits with the book of hours<sup>7</sup> genre—a correlation between days of the months and days of the week (indicated by letters *a* to *g*), a list of Christian holidays, and the canonical correlation between months and signs of the zodiac—but also included extensive information on the correlations among planets, months, days of the week, and signs of the zodiac, provided a characterization of personality types by zodiac signs, and usually included tables detailing moon phases for a particular time period (1495 to 1550, for example), and for a specific geographical location (Barcelona, Madrid, México City, etc.). Some *reportorios* even included instructions on common early modern healing practices, such as bleeding and cupping. Among the most influential examples of printed *reportorio* editions, one could cite Bernat de Granollach's 1485 Catalan-language *Lunari*, Andrés de Li's 1495 *Reportorio de los tiempos*

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<sup>7</sup> There exist many examples of the genre; a good one is d. 22715 Cluny, a 15<sup>th</sup>-century book of hours featuring illuminated miniatures at the Musée de Cluny in Paris.



(reproduced and analyzed in Delbrugge 1999), Bartolomé Hera y de la Varra's 1584 *Reportorio del mundo particular, de las spheras del cielo y orbes elementales*, and the best known *reportorio* produced for a New Spain readership: Henrico Martínez's 1606 *Reportorio de los tiempos e historia natural de Nueva España* (reprinted as *De la Maza* 1948).

Nahua readers seem to have studied, copied, and attempted to assimilate both the *reportorio* and the book of hours genres. The most salient example of the refashioning of a book of hours by Nahua scribes is found in the first eight pages of the *Codex Mexicanus* (BNP Fonds Mexicain 23-24). In this text, each of these pages corresponds to a month in the Christian calendar, and the codex's surviving pages run from May to December. On each page, the days of the week are represented by letters, and important saints' days are spelled out in pictograms with a phonetic content.<sup>8</sup> This manuscript also includes a chart with the twelve signs of the zodiac. Another Nahua attempt to interpret the European zodiac that presents a series of parallels with Fonds Mexicain 381 is an eight-page manuscript appended to a printed copy of Peter of Ghent's 1553 *Doctrina christiana en lengua mexicana*. This Náhuatl text, entitled *Reperdorío de los dienpos* [sic], was transcribed by an anonymous sixteenth-century hand. López Austin's (1973) transcription, translation and analysis of this *Reperdorío* allow a comparison with the contents of Fonds Mexicain 381. Both texts contain predictions about agricultural practices, health, and well-being for each of the twelve months of the Latin calendar, which are paired with signs of the zodiac, and both offer the characterizations of personality types by signs of the zodiac that are a mainstay of the *reportorio* genre. Unlike the *Reperdorío*, Fonds Mexicain 381 offers prediction for each of the days of the week, contains several calendrical lists, and shows a series of correlations among primordial elements, days, months, and zodiac signs.

While pages 47-54 of Fonds Mexicain 381 are not organized in the typical fashion of a *reportorio*, some elements suggests that its Nahua author leafed through such a book, for it features a brief text on the cardinal winds, a correlation among days of the week, signs of the zodiac, and primordial elements, and a correlation between months and zodiacal signs. Some elements in this Nahua appropriation of the zodiac suggest that the author of this section consulted a *reportorio* featuring the canonical images for the twelve zodiac signs with no help or supervision from a non-indigenous reader. In the primarily visual reading of the signs of the zodiac by this anonymous Nahua interpreter, the eight signs represented by relatively accessible animal or human icons (Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricornio, Aquarius, Piscis) are given a more or less accurate Náhuatl gloss. However, the icons for three signs are rendered equivocally in Náhuatl: the twins of Gemini become Wise Men, or *tlamatinime*; Libra's scales are read as Merchant, or *pochtecatl*, and Sagittarius' centaur turns into Deer Man, or *tlacamaçatl* (BNP Fonds Mexicain 381: 49). Surprisingly, there are faint echoes of this ambivalent reading in the zodiac sign glosses provided by the Nahua chronicler Chimalpahin. At the end of a manuscript section dedicated to the Mexica month count,

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<sup>8</sup> For example, "San Francisco" is represented with an adobe wall (*xan-*), a flag (*pan-*), a pair of buttocks (*tzin-*), and an earthen pot (*co[m]-*). For further discussion, see Galarza 1979.

Chimalpahin provides a Náhuatl translation for each zodiac sign that employs Spanish lexical items and Náhuatl glosses (Schroeder 1997: 128-129). Thus, he translates Libra with the Spanish term *balança*, and Sagitario with both Spanish and Náhuatl terms—*centauro* and *tlacamaçatl*. As for Gemini, Chimalpahin provides a lengthy explanation that refers in an indirect manner to twin brothers: "The astrologers render it as two children who embrace each other. Thus, they say that, when the two are born, they therefore love each other much; they therefore never quarrel."<sup>9</sup>

The Náhuatl text about the signs of the Zodiac in Fonds Mexicain 381 does not seem to be a literal rendition of a Spanish *reportorio de los tiempos*; it rather seems that the authors were leafing through the pages of a *reportorio* and making partial notes on its contents. However, there are some lexical clues suggesting that these Náhuatl students of the zodiac were using a printed or manuscript version of Andrés de Li's popular *Reportorio de los tiempos*, printed under his name in Zaragoza in 1495. In Li's *Reportorio*, after a brief discussion of months, hours, and planets, there begins a section about the correlations between the nine heavens and the seven planets (Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn). This section opens with the following words:

Siguen se los planetas

Del primer cielo & del septimo planeta que es la luna, que tiene enel su asiento.

El primer cielo es donde tiene su asiento la luna, que es el inferior planeta & seteno, el qual esta constituydo en el mas baxo circulo dela sphaera. & en espacio de ocho años consume su círculo, & es señor del seteno y ultimo clima (Delbrugge 1999: 57; my emphases)

On the other hand, after stating the correlations between months and zodiac signs (with the Náhuatl glosses discussed above), a new section in Fonds Mexicain 381 begins with the following mixture of Náhuatl and Spanish words:

Domi[n]go. **Sigue se llos planetas.** primero gramatica ca tlatohuani lunes el segoto mercielo **planetas ques la llona que tiene en el su asie[n]to** tetzacatl martes. el tercero ytel marius. tercero planetas cabalero miercoles. el segoto ciello ytel melgorio que es planetas ticitl yetz (BNP, Fonds Mexicain 381: 49-50; my emphases).

It appears as if the Náhuatl authors incorporated the expressions "Siguense los planetas" and "que es la luna que tiene en el su asiento," found verbatim in Li's *Reportorio*, into a jumble of notes in Spanish and Náhuatl.<sup>10</sup> In any case, in their role as amateur European astrologers, the Náhuatl author(s) attempted to grasp the

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<sup>9</sup> My translation departs slightly from that of Anderson (Schroeder 1997: 129) because I read the beginning of Chimalpahin's explanation of Geminis as *Ipân quicuepa in ilhuica[tla]matinimeh...*, rather than as *Ipân quicuepa in ilhuicamatimeh...*, which does not seem to contain the verbal compound *ahquimatih*, "they do not know it," implied in Anderson's reading. Molina (1992: 37v) translates *Ilhuicatlamatini* as "astrologer."

<sup>10</sup> A translation of the above selection from Fonds Mexicain 381 would be: "Sunday. The planets follow below. First, grammar, a true lord. Monday. The second *mercielo*[heaven?] planets [sic], which is the moon, and is located in [this heaven]. Sterile. Tuesday. The third *ytel marius* [Mars?]. Third planets [sic] knight. Wednesday. The second heaven *ytel* [?] Mercury, which is planets [sic]. The healer will go."

correlations between signs of the zodiac, periods of time, and primordial elements—Earth, Wind, Fire and Water—by consulting a *reportorio* that may have been based on Li's text. However, the contents of Fonds Mexicain 381 do not provide a section-by-section parallel to Li's *Reportorio*, and introduce topics that are not treated in this text. Since its Nahuatl author(s) were apparently not interested in providing a literal translation of the *reportorio* that was consulted, it would be difficult—if not impossible—to link their work with a single printed or manuscript *reportorio* edition.

This Náhuatl text thus seems to follow its own peculiar logic. For example, a section on page 49 shows that each day of the week is related to one or two signs of the zodiac, to primordial elements, and to a particular archangel. Furthermore, an entire section is devoted to the following correlation between signs and elements:

(1) *Primero Planeta*. Nica[n] pohuallo yn izqui *si[g]nos*: yn iquac *aries* tle ticpacticate, yn iquac *leon* tlanepa[n] tlaticate, yn iquac *sagittarius* t[il]etl yn tzi[n]tlaticate yn izqui [i]llhuitl tlahuica[h], yn iquac *taurus* tlalticpacticate, yn iquac *Virgon* tlallinepa[n]tlaticate, yn iquac *capricornios* tlalli yn ci[n]tlaticate, yn iquac *Seminis* yehecatl ti[c]pacticate, yn iquac *libra* yehecatl nepa[n]tlaticate, yn iquac *aquarius* yehecatl tzintlaticate, yn iquac *ca[n]cer* atl ticpacticate, yn iquac *Secorbius* atl nepa[n]tlaticate / yn iquac *pilcis* atl tzintlaticate (BNP Fonds Mexicain 381: 48-49)

(1) *First Planet*.<sup>11</sup> All of the *signs* are counted here: During *Aries*, they are on top of Fire; during *Leo*, they are in the middle of it; during *Sagittarius*, they are at the bottom of Fire, and they bring all the holidays; during *Taurus*, they are on top of Earth; during *Virgo*, they are in the middle of Earth; during *Capricorn*, they are at the bottom of Earth; during *Gemini*, they are on top of Wind; during *Libra*, they are in the middle of Wind; during *Aquarius*, they are at the bottom of Wind; during *Cancer*, they are on top of Water; during *Scorpio*, they are in the middle of Water; during *Pisces*, they are at the bottom of Water.

The main section of the zodiac-related text in Fonds Mexicain 381 contains seven paragraphs dedicated to the days of the week, beginning with Sunday. Each paragraph gives a brief discussion of the planet and zodiac sign born on that day, often describes the particular features of the sign, gives a forecast applicable to people born on that day, and points out whether illnesses may be easy or difficult to cure on that particular day. For example, the text's author(s) make the following remarks about Sunday:

(2) Yn ica micuiliuhtica yn izqui tlama[n]tli *yplanetas* ytlacatiliztli, yn queni[n] çan *leportorion* ypa[n] tlacatli nican motenehuan yn iquac Domingo tlahuizcalpa[n] motocayotia *la primera ola* yoan onca tlatati yn tlatoque ymacenuhualli tlacatiz yoan ytla[h] ytequiuh mochihua[z] nica[n] t[il]alticp[a]c yn iquac tlatati ypiltzintli nima[n] notzaloz yn quimatia *ylepordorion* qitemelahuiliz yn queni[n] *leon* yn ipa[n] tlacat[il]i quihualcuitaci yn inacayo huel mahuiztic chalchihuitl teoxihuitl

<sup>11</sup> The words in italics appear as Spanish or Latin terms in the original text.

quetzaliztli yn ixtelolo temamauhti yn inacayo cenca chichiltic. Auh yn ic nemi y[n] t[ɬaltic]p[a]c cenca ymacaxoni cenca yxteyo yn iquac mococohua huel[ɬ]apaloz yn iquac macoz yn tlaquali amo quicahuaz ça[n] tequi[tɬ] tlaquatoz ytlah[ɬ] ypa[n] pehuaz. yn itoca *leon* niman ic iuhca miquiz ahuel patiz yn tlatilizpa[n] (BNP Fonds Mexicain 381: 50).

(2) With this, one writes about the birth of all the planets. In this manner, in the *reportorio*, it is recounted here [that], on this day, when *Sunday* is in the light of dawn, it is called *the first wave*, and on that day the lords' servant will be born, and some of his work will be done here on earth. When his child is born, he will then be summoned; he knows his *reportorio*, he will explain it to others. In this manner, *Leo* comes to possess him on this day. His flesh is very wondrous: precious stone, turquoise, emerald. His eyes are something frightful; his flesh is very red. Thus, he lives on earth, deserving much respect, with much fame. When he gets sick, he will sop his bread well; when he is given food, he will not leave it as soon as he goes to eat it. Something will begin on this [one] called *Leo*; in this manner, one will die; it will not be possible to heal on this birth.

A peculiar syntax and the ambiguity of these characterizations call for a translation open to several interpretations. For example, it is difficult to say whether the final admonition refers to the impossibility of healing a patient under Leo's influence, recovering from an illness contracted under Leo's influence, or to the observation that a person born under Leo will regain health only with great difficulty. It should be stressed, however, that both this text and the anonymous Náhuatl *Repordorio* fragment analyzed by López Austin (1973) agree on the characteristics of people born under Leo. In Fonds Mexicain 381, it is said that people born under Leo will live "deserving much respect, with much fame." The *Repordorio* states the following about people born under Leo (López Austin 1973: 290): *yn imixpan nepechteco yuán cencayollo tlapallihui yollochicahuaque*; "One bows before them; they are young men with a great heart, they are courageous." In fact, the characterization of people born under Leo that appears in Henrico Martínez's 1606 *Reportorio* has certain parallels with the previously quoted passage from Fonds Mexicain 381:

Los que en su nacimiento tienen a León en el ascendente, suelen ser de hermosa estatura, los ojos zarcos y naturalmente atrevidos, altivos y de grande ánimo e ingenio y aprovechan mucho en las letras, si se dan a ellas, y asimismo en cualquier ejercicio ingenioso, suelen ser amigos de seguir su voluntad y de cumplir su palabra; también suelen ser algo tristes y sujetos a peligros y afligidos de dolores de estómago. [...] (De la Maza 1948: 23).

The appropriation of a Spanish *reportorio* and its adaptation to a Nahuatl cultural context bears witness to the great interest which the authors and users of the Codex Mexicanus and the Fonds Mexicain 381 had about European divinatory practices. However, the differences between the context of production of a *reportorio* and that of Fonds Mexicain 381 kept this act of appropriation from becoming a simple transfer of contents. In transcribing, glossing and reinterpreting the contents of a Spanish *reportorio*, the anonymous Nahuatl scribe(s) had neither the possibility nor the interest of replicating the

intention or encoded cultural assumptions which characterized the "horizon of expectations"—to use Jauss' (1982: 19, 23) lucid term—of the *reportorio* genre. Paradoxically, such a selective appropriation of the European zodiac resulted in the emergence of a novel textual genre—the clandestine Nahua *reportorio*—whose horizon of expectation was still in the formative stages.

This concern with the use of European ritual techniques seems to indicate a process of substitution of the *tonalamatl* (Mexican ritual calendar text) and other Nahua divinatory techniques—which could even have been regarded as "idolatrous" by the users of Fonds Mexicain 381—with a new textual genre based on Christian divinatory techniques. In an attitude that contrasts with this tendency, other native cohorts of readers continued to use transcriptions of Mesoamerican calendars. In the next section, a circulation network for Zapotec calendars contemporaneous with the production of Fonds Mexicain 381 will be discussed.

### **The circulation of ritual texts in southern Oaxaca, 1629-1656**

In Oaxaca, some of the evidence for the clandestine circulation of ritual texts in indigenous communities in the seventeenth century comes from a rather marginal area: two Amuzgo-speaking towns in the jurisdictions of Igualepa and Xicayan, in the southwestern Oaxaca coastal area. While very little can be ascertained about this case, it is known that the priest Gerónimo Curiel, who was appointed *beneficiado* of the Amuzgo towns of Xochistlahuaca and Xicayan in 1616, later obtained an appointment from the Bishop of Oaxaca, Fr. Juan Bohorques, as a "general judge" of idolatries in 1622. In this capacity, he toured his parish,

discovering many other places of idolatry, and seizing idols, *books, characters*, and other instruments of idolatry which the idolaters used [...]. In the year of [1]633, while he was carrying out this ministry, having learned that a *cacique* in that region was a great idolater and a sorcerer who employed many forms of sorcery, attempting to indoctrinate those who were not like him, [Curiel] arrested him and conducted a trial, seizing the *books, characters* and instruments which he employed, and sentenced him to serve His Majesty in the Fort of Acapulco... (AGI Indiferente General 3000, no. 217; my emphases)

Although this passage provides little biographical or narrative details about literate ritual specialists, it does suggest the existence of textual artifacts that went beyond pictorial representation (*books, characters*), and their use by a leading political figure in one of the two Amuzgo communities in which Curiel served.

On the other hand, two years after Curiel tried and punished the anonymous Amuzgo ruler, Gonzalo de Balsalobre, a young priest in the town of San Miguel Sola in south central Oaxaca, had his first confrontation with a literate ritual specialist called Diego Luis. Diego Luis had in his possession a ritual text written in Chatino, a language genetically related to proto-Zapotec, which he had translated into Solteco, the variety of

Zapotec spoken in Sola. Apparently, the original text had come from Lorenzo Martín, *principal* of the Chatino-speaking town of Xuquila, who had given it to Félix de Alvarado, who had passed it on to Diego Luis. When Balsalobre learned about this fact, he brought Diego Luis to trial, confiscated the offending text, and had it burned before the door of Sola's church, after parading Diego Luis as a penitent. As a precautionary measure, Balsalobre banned the idolater from the township of Sola for an unspecified period of time.

However, this sentence would by no means put an end to the circulation of ritual texts in Sola. A surprised Balsalobre learned nineteen years later, in February of 1654, as he was taking a declaration from Lorenzo Martín, son of Diego Luis, that the texts had been transcribed by the specialist's son and had thus escaped the flames:

[Lorenzo Martín's] father had a book in the Chatino language which he received from don Félix Albarado, and this book of the devil was translated into the language of Sola. Upon his father's orders, this confessant made a transcription so he would learn to employ the said book. When they found the original in his father's hands, his transcription remained in his possession, [...] and he saw the original burn before the gates of the parish church in the presence of all the inhabitants of the region on the day that Diego Luis was punished [...] [Lorenzo Martín] did not produce his transcription before the local priest, and [Lorenzo Martín] returned it to his father after he had completed his sentence and returned to the region... (AGN Inquisición 456, 592v-593r).

In fact, the Balsalobre trials and investigations of idolatry in the Sola township, conducted between 1653 and 1657, could hardly have been possible without the confrontation between Balsalobre on the one hand, and his star informant, witness and nemesis Diego Luis. After the 1635 trial and punishment of Diego Luis, who appears to have specialized in acts of divination related to the maize harvest, childbirth, and the death of elders, there were no reports of Balsalobre's extirpation activities until December 1653, when he began an investigation of Diego Luis for his reincidence in idolatrous practices. During the course of the inquiry, Diego Luis, who was by this time 88 years old, decided to incriminate and give ample information about close to a hundred clients and specialists who consulted him or had access to his ritual texts (Balsalobre [1656] 1892: 241). The information provided by him resulted in the instruction of at least 18 separate legal proceedings against idolaters, and in a trial involving 36 officials of Sola for propitiating the goddess Nohuichana before fishing trips.

### **Social networks and the circulation of ritual texts in the Sola township**

Heinrich Berlin's (1988) survey of the Balsalobre trial materials provides a good overview of the thirteen-god pantheon of Sola, and the principal recorded ritual practices. However, his description of the social network of ritual text authors, users and owners will be expanded here in order to address the main concerns of this essay. To provide a tentative overview of this network, [Table 1.4](#) lists thirty-eight users of ritual

texts, including their names, places of residence, dates of activity, and indicating whether they were text providers or recipients. However, my analysis does not abide by one of Berlin's crucial assumptions. While he believed that every identification of a native specialist in the sources as literate (*letrado*) indicated that he or she owned a ritual text, I have taken a conservative view here. Therefore, I have listed only those specialists of which it is unequivocally stated that they owned ritual texts. According to this criterion, Berlin's group of sixty-one letrados may be reduced to a list of thirty-eight ritual text owners.

Paradoxically, these sources allow a relatively detailed perspective of social networks for the exchange of ritual texts which have not been preserved; while some data are available on their users, there is no information on their contents. There are, however, some descriptions that suggest that these texts contained calendrical tables and the names of the thirteen gods in the local pantheon. On the other hand, there is no specific mention of incantations, spells, songs, or other verbal performances. For example, in a statement made by Melchor López—an illiterate inhabitant of San Francisco Sola, who had obtained a copy of a ritual text from Diego Luis—the following description of the text's contents is given:

... After comparing the said book with the other one found in Lorenzo Martín's possession, it appears to be one and the same, except for some *symbols* or *characters* which the second book bears on its last pages... (AGN Inquisición 456, 577 r-v).

The presence of these "lines and characters," added to the manner in which the book was used, suggest that these texts were calendrical records. It may be surmised that they were similar in size, variety and content to the ninety-nine manuscript copies of calendrical records seized from the inhabitants of the Villa Alta jurisdiction in Oaxaca in 1704.<sup>12</sup>

The Sola ritual texts appear to have been kept within the immediate family of their specialist authors or owners, and to have been passed on as treasured possessions from one generation to another. According to Marcial Ramírez, an apparently illiterate cantor at the town of Los Reyes near Sola, Diego Luis had made a copy of a ritual text for his father Cristóbal Ramírez, which he had inherited along with his father's papers:

... A transcription of the Devil's book kept by Diego Luis and owned by Cristóbal Ramírez—Marcial's deceased father—which had been given to him by said Diego Luis, remained in the possession of Cristóbal's inheritors after his death [...] About two years ago, when [Marcial's] father died, [Marcial] found said book among some of the deceased's papers, and seeing that it was an evil, he immediately tossed it into the fire, where it burned (AGN Inquisición 456, 558 r-v).

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<sup>12</sup> This is an assumption made also by Alcina Franch (1993).

Other inheritors of ritual texts appear to have kept the texts, even when they were themselves illiterate, or when they apparently made little use of the text. In the trial of the illiterate ritual specialist Gracia Margarita—who made no use of ritual texts for her practice—and her husband Miguel Martín—who was literate, but did not work as a ritual specialist—Miguel recounts how the book of his dead father-in-law, the *letrado* Luis López, was kept in the family long after his death, until it was seized by Balsalobre's agents in April 1654:

... Through the interpreter, [Miguel Martín] declared that about seven years ago, when Diego Luis was in his home—in which [Diego Luis] lived because he had married [María], his mother-in-law and the mother of his wife—his wife opened a box and took out a small book written entirely by hand. She showed it to said Diego Luis, saying that it was the book of the devil that his father Luis López had left them, and which her foster father Melchor Xuárez had used, for after the death of said Luis López [Melchor] had married her mother, and he was also a *letrado* and gave consultations to the Indians. Then, Diego Luis leafed through said book and recognized the handwriting, and said it belonged to Luis López, and was just like one he used himself ... (AGN Inquisición 456, 547r).

In fact, this passage exposes an interesting axis of relationships through which ritual knowledge was passed on among ritual specialists who were members of the same generation, and successive heads of household, as shown in Figure 1.1. The eldest ritual specialist was Luis López, a literate ritual specialist resident of San Juan Sola, married to a woman known as María, and father of Gracia Margarita. Luis López passed on ritual knowledge and a book containing "the thirteen gods of the Gentiles" (AGN Inquisición 456, 544v) to his neighbor, Esteban de Aquino, and probably gave a ritual text to Diego Luis as well. Diego Luis had also received a Chatino text from Lorenzo Martín—an official from the Chatino town of Xuquila—through the mediation of Félix de Alvarado. Diego Luis gave or sold copies of ritual texts to at least 7 clients in Sola.

In spite of the fact that María was neither a specialist nor an author of ritual texts, three of the main literate specialists of Sola lived in her household. After the death of Luis López circa 1629, María was remarried to Melchor Xuárez; Aquino began a practice as ritual specialist, and passed on specialist ritual knowledge to his wife Ana, who was also consulted for divination occasionally, when Aquino was drunk or unavailable (AGN Inquisición 456, 545r). Melchor Xuárez not only inherited Luis López's widow, but also his ritual text, which he used for divination purposes. At some point between 1629 and 1647, Melchor Xuárez died or left María, and she married a ritual specialist for the third time, Diego Luis, who came to live in her house. After the death of Esteban de Aquino by 1652, his widow Ana inherited the copy of the ritual text he had obtained originally from Luis López.

The Sola ritual texts circulated not only among specialists and clients linked by kinship or friendship ties, but were also copied for a reasonable fee. According to one of Diego Luis' depositions—which was later disputed by his client's brother—he had made a copy of the "book of thirteen gods" for one of his clients, the *letrado* Pedro Mendoza, and charged him one peso as payment for his work:



... about two years ago, the aforementioned Pedro Mendosa asked [Diego Luis] for a copy of his book about the thirteen gods, pleading that he taught him how to use it. Within the following fifteen days, this witness went back to Pedro's house, gave him a copy and taught him the manner in which [Pedro] would use it, because said witness knows how to read and write. Upon receipt of said book, [Pedro] paid him one peso for his work; three or four months later, [Diego Luis] went back to Pedro's house upon his request so he would teach him again how to use such book, and this witness taught him. However, since this is difficult, he thinks that [Pedro] was not able to learn it ... (AGN Inquisición 457, 67r).

This passage suggests that being able to elicit information from and interpreting the calendrical record and/or ritual texts authored by Diego Luis and other specialists was a skill that went beyond simple literacy. In the example above, although Pedro Mendoza happens to have been fully literate, he took lessons from Diego Luis in order to learn to interpret the records, and appeared to have failed in this attempt in spite of his efforts. Some less experienced ritual specialists seem to have valued ritual texts enough to have owned a copy, even if they were not fully capable of interpreting them. Similarly, an illiterate student of Diego Luis, Melchor López, admitted in his declaration that he had not been able to comprehend all the contents of his book; however, he was skilled enough to divine an appropriate day for the harvesting the first ears of corn and for the offering of alms at the church; more difficult cases called for consultations with Diego Luis (AGN Inquisición 456, 577r). Circa 1634, Diego Luis made a copy of a ritual text for the *letrado* Cristóbal Ramírez. However, after owning this copy for 14 years, Cristóbal confessed to his son Marcial that he had not been able to fully understand the manner in which the text should be interpreted. Although Cristóbal did not pass on even his limited understanding of the text to his son, he left it in the household as part of the inheritance (AGN Inquisición 456, 558r).

### **Conclusions: Ritual texts and their readers in seventeenth-century Central México**

These three case studies afford, albeit in a somewhat disjointed manner, an overview of clandestine writing and reading practices in some Nahua and Zapotec communities in the first half of the seventeenth century. The diversity of literacy and authorship experiences depicted in these sources calls for an adjustment of our post-Enlightenment perspectives on these matters so that we may gain a better understanding of the relationship between ritual knowledge and alphabetical writing in Central Mexican native colonial communities. It should not come as a surprise that Post-Classic ritual knowledge and Christian divinatory practices were so readily reproduced in writing by indigenous ritual specialists by the early seventeenth century. Some of the texts were produced in locations that had been under the influence of secular priests or regulars for several decades. Petronilla, the literate healer from Tlayacapan, lived in the shadow of the Dominican convent of Tepoztlán, established by 1556 (Gerhard 1972: 96); in the Sola region, there had been resident secular priests at Exutla and at San Miguel Sola since about 1570 (Ibid: 50, 72).

The contrast between the scarcity of clandestine ritual texts in the communities investigated by Ruiz de Alarcón before 1629 and the relative abundance of such texts in Sola twenty years later suggests not only an increase in the influence of literacy in indigenous communities, but also differences in the cultural adaptation of Nahuatl and Zapotec communities which merits further study. Even if the diffusion of ritual texts confiscated by Ruiz de Alarcón and Gonzalo Curiel between 1613 and 1633 may be regarded as an initial period in the spread of literacy to remote indigenous communities, only detailed research on the spread of literacy in both isolated and integrated native communities in Central México during the latter half of the sixteenth century may lead to a more definitive conclusion.<sup>13</sup>

In terms of the rapport between social status and production of clandestine ritual texts, there appears to be some correlation between membership in the lower tier of the local parish and ownership of ritual texts. In the Coahuila area, it was the deacon of Cuatlahuac who signed his name on his transcribed incantation; in Sola, at least five church cantors, one principal, and a former alcalde and cantor could be counted among thirty-eight owners of ritual texts mentioned in Balsalobre's proceedings ([Table 1.4](#)). In fact, just like some of their contemporaries—the Yucatec Maya *maestros cantores* (Farriss 1984: 341)—these specialists appear to have led a dual existence as leading members of the public Christian sphere and as owners and readers of clandestine calendrical and divination texts of Post-Classic origin. Both in Cuatlahuac and in Sola, the activities of these Christianized literate native officials linked the public sphere of orthodox Christian practices with marginal social spheres—located in a social space that went beyond the domestic sphere without fully belonging within a public sphere—in which various forms of ritual knowledge, Christian or not, circulated clandestinely through texts. The clandestine nature of these spaces linked the unorthodox divinatory practices of Spaniards, Creoles and *mestizos* with those of native ritual specialists.

What was the effect of literacy on the content of native ritual practices, and on its oral dimensions? While this question continues to be an essential one, the three case studies presented here depict a plurality of interactions between letters and idolatries that suggests the impossibility of committing to a monolithic answer, or adhering to a purely epistemological analysis. Although some analysts have presented the impact of literacy and evangelization on native populations colonized by the Spanish as a dramatic epistemic confrontation between Western writing and native practices of orality and writing (Rafael 1988, pp. 44-54, 121), my analysis leads to two conclusions that do not agree with the well-known Derridian certainties about the reproduction of orality through the assumptions embedded in Greco-Latin writing systems.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Due to the relative abundance of legal texts written in Nahuatl communities in Tlaxcala and in the Valley of México, researchers have privileged the study of these texts in historical surveys about the spread of literacy in Central México (Karttunen and Lockhart 1976, Lockhart 1992).

<sup>14</sup> Derrida's theory of logocentrism and about the radical difference between orality and the written sign rests on a Heideggerian survey of the properties of writing that goes from Plato's *Phaedrus* to Rousseau's *Essai sur l'Origine des Langues* (Derrida 1967). However, one of Derrida's crucial assumptions—the absence of linguistic signs prior to the emergence of writing—is based on a Greco-Latin conception of writing that excludes, in both historical and epistemic terms, the Mesoamerican writing systems. Although the scope and limitations of this essay exclude a

First of all, as suggested by the circulation of calendrical texts in Sola and in Villa Alta, the particular features and assumptions of a textual genre of Pre-Columbian origin—the Zapotec 260-day ritual calendar—informed the native appropriation of the Latin alphabet. This little-known dialectic, however, deserves further research that cannot be supplanted by a simplistic epistemic analysis. Second, as shown by the transcription of the Náhuatl epithets for the *piciyetl*, some Nahua ritual specialists employed the Latin alphabet as a powerful vehicle for the inscription of a latent oral performance. In other words, the transcription of these epithets by Nahua specialists reinforced, rather than effaced, the oral qualities of these epithets. The simultaneous reproduction of a ritual oral genre—Ruiz de Alarcón's *nahualtocaitl*—through written and oral means demonstrates that the transcription of ritual knowledge did not result in the sudden demise of oral transmission of such knowledge, and suggests that the relationship between orality and alphabetic transcription in seventeenth-century native communities was variable and inherently dialectic.

In fact, the Maniquean vision of "oral" and "literate" cultures rests on an aprioristic analysis popularized by Goody (1987) and Ong (1982) that does not reflect the complex rapport between orality and textuality that existed both in Renaissance Europe and in the New Spain. In spite of the social and conceptual gaps that separated the reading of devotional texts in Europe and the interpretation of ritual texts by colonial Mesoamerican specialists in the seventeenth century, two similar elements governed both reading practices: the rhetorical act of interpreting a text orally, and the inevitable variation in the interpretation of a text by individuals with varying competence and within different social contexts. According to Michel de Certeau's eloquent evocation, these readings implied an intense oral and physical interaction with a sacred or devotional text that led to its bodily appropriation:

Only over the last three centuries has reading become an ocular gesture. [...] To read without uttering the words aloud or at least mumbling them is a "modern" experience, unknown for millennia. In earlier times, the reader interiorized the text; he made his voice the body of the other; he was its actor (Certeau 1984:175-76).

All in all, the strong link between the oral performance of a text and its interpretation—which existed both in Baroque Spain and in Coahuixcatlalpan and Sola—suggests an emphasis on the role of orality in the interpretation of ritual and devotional texts that cannot be eliminated *a priori*.

In his discussion of reading practices in early modern and Renaissance Europe, Chartier emphasizes the differences in reading practices among different groups of readers based on degree of literacy, social environment and expectations, and suggests that the oral elicitation of the written text could play a significant role in different readings of it (Chartier 1992: 4-5). One could arrive at a similar conclusion when considering the diversity of reading practices in early seventeenth-century Nahua and Zapotec

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detailed analysis of this issue, an incipient "Mesoamericanist" critique of Derrida's theory of logocentrism has appeared in Mignolo 1996.

communities. To arrive at a fuller comprehension of the diffusion of these native ritual texts, one should embrace the notion of alternative modes of literacy,<sup>15</sup> both alphabetic and non-alphabetic, coexisting in the same social spheres without contradiction. We have seen that the skill of divining through the calendar can be independent of full alphabetic literacy, that ritual text owners may have varying competences, and that even fully literate native speakers of Solteco had to go through an apprenticeship in order to interpret calendrical records. In and of itself, this diversity was not peculiar to colonial Central México; in Elizabethan England (Watt 1991), and in Golden-Age Spain (Chartier 1997), the owners of and audience for printed books included readers who read with difficulty or who supported their interpretation through a perusal of the illustrations which accompanied the text.

The emergence of cohorts of readers in Nahua and Zapotec communities through the clandestine circulation of ritual and devotional texts was an important consequence of the unexpected alphabetization of idolaters. The circulation of *Fonds Mexicain 381* and the exchange of texts in Sola suggest that, much like the groups of readers created by the circulation of *pliegos sueltos* in Spain, chapbooks in England, and the *Bibliothèque bleue* in France, such communities of native readers and manuscript authors were diverse in terms of socio-cultural background, literacy skills, and modes of appropriation of the text (Chartier 1996: thirteen 8-39). These groups of readers maintained a certain integrity through the circulation of texts in a social space defined by the absence of the *licencia del ordinario*, the measures of control prescribed by the Mexican councils and the Council of Trent, and the periodic extirpatory interests of friars and secular priests. Located as they were at the margin of public Christian native practices, the clandestine ritual manuscripts provided an essential textual core for the reproduction of a common clandestine social space in which some groups of native readers reinterpreted European divinatory and ritual practices, while other native cohorts of readers transcribed and transmitted divinatory practices of Postclassic origin. In spite of several campaigns of evangelization and extirpation of idolatry, during the first half of the seventeenth century, a measure of literate idolatry prospered in the ample interstices in the Spanish monarchy's fractured social body through the work of Protean writers, obstinate readers, and driven translators.

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<sup>15</sup> This notion was explored by a collection of essays on pre-Columbian recording systems (Boone and Mignolo 1994).

**Table 1.1 - Incantations seized in written form by Ruiz de Alarcón, 1614-29**

Specialist	Purpose	Entities addressed	Piciyetl epithet	Length	Source
1. Anonymous deer hunter	Deer hunting with snare	Piciyetl, Xochiquetzal, earth, rope, deer, hands	9-times Stone-Pounded-One 9-times Stone-Slapped-One	22 sections	Andrews & Hassig (A & H) 94-105
2. Deacon of Cuetaxochitla	Carrying loads and travelling	Piciyetl, road, load	Green Honorable Stone-Slapped-One Green Honorable Stone-Pounded-One	7 sections	A & H 84-86
3. Anonymous hypnotist	Inducing sleep before theft or rape	Sleep, victim, knife	None	3 sections	A & H 78-80
4. Petronilla, from Tlayacapan	Curing tertian fever with rue & <i>coanenepilli</i>	Water, pain, patient	None	1 section	A & H 197-98
5. Anonymous healer	Curing illnesses through bleeding	hands, needle, blood, water, illness	None	2 sections; incomplete?	A & H 180-82

**Table 1.2 - Non-canonical variations of the piciyetl (lime tobacco) epithet**

Macrons transcribing vowel length in Náhuatl have been deleted from the online version of Table 1.2.

First element: Color	Second element: Variable	Syllable number	Epithet context	Source
xoxo huic Green	<i>tlatecapani-l-tzin</i> Hon. Stone-Slapped-One	9	<b>Written</b> incantation for carrying loads and travelling	A & H 85
xoxo huic Green	<i>tlatetzohzonal-tzin</i> Hon. Stone-Pounded-One	9		
cozauhqui Yellow	tlamacazqui Priest	7	Incantation for forearm-measuring divination	A & H 147
xoxouhqui Green	tlamacazqui Priest	7		

**Table 1.3 - Template for the canonical piciyetl epithet**

Macrons transcribing vowel length in Náhuatl have been deleted from the online version of Table 1.3.

<b>First element: Number 9</b>	<b>Second element: Pounding action</b>	<b>Syllable number</b>	<b>Epithet context</b>	<b>Source</b>
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatetzohtzon-alli</i> Stone-Pounded-One	8	<b>Written</b> incantation for hunting deer	Andrews & Hassig (A & H) 94-104
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatecapanilli</i> Stone-Slapped-One	8		
<i>in chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatecapanilli</i> Stone-Slapped-One	9	<b>Written</b> incantation for hunting deer	A & H 94-104
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlah-tlatetzohtzon-alli</i> Stone-Pounded-One	9		
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatecapanilli</i> Stone-Slapped-One	8	First incantation for divination through forearm-measuring	A & H 144
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlah-tlamatelolli</i> Hand-Crumbled-One	8		
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatetzohtzon-tli</i> Stone-Beaten-One	7	Third incantation for divination through forearm-measuring	A & H 149
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlamatelolli</i> Hand-Crumbled-One	7		
<i>chiucnauhpa</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatetzohtzon</i> Stone-Beaten-One	7	Incantation for curing headaches	A & H 168
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlamatelolli</i> Hand-Crumbled-One	7		
<i>chiucnauhpa</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatetzohtzon-alli</i> Stone-Pounded-One	9	Incantation for curing headaches	A & H 165
<i>chiucnauhpa</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlamatelolli</i> Hand-Crumbled-One	8		
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>tlatetzohtzon-al</i> Stone-Pounded-One	7	Incantation for curing with needle pricklings	A & H 194
<i>chiucnauh</i> Nine [times]	<i>pahpatlan-tzin</i> Honorable Flier	6		

**Table 1.4 - Ritual text authors and owners in the Sola / Ejutla / Lachixio region, 1629-1656**

Specialists	Dates of activity	Residence	Gave or obtained texts	Biographical data	Language of text	Sources
1. Lorenzo Martín	Before 1635	Xuquila	Gave text in Chatino to Felix de Alvarado	<i>Principal</i> of Xuquila	Chatino text	AGN Inq 437-I-3
2. Felix de Alvarado	Before 1635	Xuquila ?	Gave Chatino text to Diego Luis, who translated it	None	Chatino text	AGN Inq 456
3. Diego Luis	First trial 1635; Second trial 1653-1654	Barrio S Ana of S Miguel Sola	Gave texts to L. Martín, P. García, M. López, C. Ramírez, A. Hernandez & P. Mendoza; obtained texts from F. de Alvarado & Luis López	<i>Maestro</i> , literate, 88 years old in 1654; Maria's third husband	Chatino text to Zapotec	AGN Inq 437-I-3 Balsalobre 1656
4. Lorenço Martín	Tried in 02.1654	S Miguel Sola	Obtained text from father Diego Luis	Literate; cantor & <i>escribano</i> of S Miguel	Zapotec	AGN Inq 456
5. Gerónimo Sánchez	fugitive 13.03.1654	Loxicha, Sola resident	Gave text to cantor Juan Luis; obtained text from father D. Bayo	Son of <i>Maestro</i> Diego Bayo	"Language of Coatlan"	AGN Inq 431, 438-2 Balsalobre 1656, AGN Inq 438-2
6. Juan Luis, cantor	Tried 13.03.1654	S Miguel Sola	Obtained text from Geronymo Sanchez	Literate	Zapotec	Balsalobre 1656
7. Diego Bayo	Tried by Córdoba in 1630's	Loxicha / Xuchiatego	Gave text to son Gerónimo Sánchez	<i>Maestro</i>	Zapotec	AGN Inq 438-2
8. Luis López	Dead by 1629	S Juan Sola	Gave texts to Diego Luis, M. X Suarez & E. de Aquino	cantor and <i>Maestro</i> ; Maria's first husband, Gracia's father	Zapotec	Balsalobre 1656, AGN Inq 456
9-10. Gracia Margarita & husband Miguel Martín	Tried 19.03-10.04 1654	S Juan Sola	Obtained text from father Luis López	Gracia: illiterate <i>Maestra</i> ; Martín: bilingual	Zapotec	AGN Inq 456-13 Balsalobre 1656
11. Esteban de Aquino	Dead by 1652	S Juan Sola	Obtained text from Luis López; gave text to Agustín Hernández, wife	<i>Maestro</i> , Guichila	Zapotec	AGN Inq 456, 571 Balsalobre 1656
12. Ana Maria, E. Aquino's widow	Alive in 1654	S Juan Sola	Obtained text from husband Esteban de Aquino	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 456, Balsalobre 1656

**Table 1.4 - Ritual text authors and owners in the Sola / Ejutla / Lachixio region, 1629-1656** (continued)

Specialists	Dates of activity	Residence	Gave or obtained texts	Biographical data	Language of text	Sources
13. The elder Melchor Xuarez	1630's	S Juan Sola	Obtained book from Luis López	<i>Maestro</i> ; Maria's second husband	Zapotec	AGN Inq 456-13
14-15. Pedro and Agustín de Mendoza	Tried 2.03.1654	S Juan Sola	Obtained book from Diego Luis for 1 peso	bilingual	Zapotec	AGN Inq 457-4, Balsalobre 1656
16. Lucas Pedro Huesechi	Tried by Córdoba ca. 1630; dead by 1654	S Juan Sola	?	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 573
17. Baltasar Martín	Died in 1645	S Juan Sola	?	Maestro	Zapotec	AGN Inq 573
18. Melchor López	Tried in 1654	S Francisco Sola	Obtained text from Diego Luis in 1636	Bilingual, illiterate, with no trade	Zapotec	AGN Inq 456
19. Francisco López	Alive in 1654	S Francisco Sola	?	Cantor of S Francisco	"language of Santa Cruz" (Zapotec)	Balsalobre 1656
20. Pascual García	Tried in 1654	S Francisco Sola	Obtained text from Diego Luis	Cantor, former <i>calde</i> of S Francisco, organist, <i>alguazil</i>	Zapotec	Balsalobre 1656, AGN Inq 584-3
21. Alonso Pérez Hueseé	Punished by 1614; dead by 1656	S Ildefonso	?	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 437-I-3
22. Cristóbal Ramírez	Dead by 1652	Pueblo de los Reyes (Sola)	Obtained text from Diego Luis	letrado	Zapotec	AGN Inq 456-13
23. Marzial Ramírez	Alive in 1656	Pueblo de los Reyes (Sola)	Obtained text from father, Cristóbal Ramírez	illiterate, cantor, 43 years old	Zapotec	Balsalobre 1656, AGN Inq 456
24. Felipe Encomendero	Died in 01.1658	S Maria Sola	Obtained text from brother Juan Encomendero	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 575
25. Juan Encomendero	Dead by 1648	S Maria Sola	Gave text to brother Felipe Encomendero	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 575



**Table 1.4 - Ritual text authors and owners in the Sola / Ejutla / Lachixio region, 1629-1656** (continued)

Specialists	Dates of activity	Residence	Gave or obtained texts	Biographical data	Language of text	Sources
26. Felipe Guelalaa	Dead by 1656	S Maria Sola	?	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 573
27. Julian Osorio	Dead by 1656; active ca. 1622	S Maria Sola	?	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 571
28. Domingo Hernández Lalaa	Escaped in 1654	S Maria Sola	?	Maestro, sorcerer and Colani	Zapotec	AGN Inq 573, AGN Inq 571-13, Balsalobre 1656
29. Juan Mesquita	Dead before 1656	Ejutla	?	?	Zapotec	Berlin 1988
30. Bartolome García	Tried in 1657	S Vicente (S Cruz)	?	Colani since 1627; Maestro	Zapotec	AGN Inq 573
31. Luis Martín	Alive in 1654	S Vicente (Ejutla)	?	Maestro	Zapotec	AGN Inq 437-I-3
32. Domingo de la Cruz	Alive in 1657	S Sebastián	?	?	Zapotec	Berlin 1988
33. Baltasar Ramírez Xaa	Died in 1654	S Sebastián (S Cruz)	Taught by <i>Maestro</i> Marcos Xee	Maestro	Zapotec	AGN Inq 571-13
34. Marcos Xee	Alive in 1642	Lachixio	?	Maestro	Zapotec	AGN Inq 571
35. Gabriel Coxo	Alive in 1657	Lachixio	?	Maestro	Zapotec	AGN Inq 571-13
36. Agustín Hernández	Dead by 1657	Pueblo de los Reyes (Sola)	Obtained texts from Diego Luis, Esteban de Aquino	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 571
37. Miguel de Quiroz	Alive in 1654	S Miguel Sola?	Obtained text from Diego Luis in 1652	Fiscal	Zapotec	AGN Inq 437-I-3
38. Lorenzo Nachinaa	Tried ca. 1614 by Córdoba	S Miguel Sola	?	?	Zapotec	AGN Inq 573

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AGN: Archivo General de la Nación, México  
BNP: Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, France  
FM: Fonds Mexicain, BNP  
BMNA: Biblioteca del Museo Nacional de Antropología, México  
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