

'The People from Heaven'?: Reading indigenous responses to Europeans during moments of early encounter in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, 1492-c.1585

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## Abstract

This study examines how indigenous groups and individuals responded to and identified Europeans in moments of early encounter in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Whilst the narrow issue of whether Mesoamericans viewed the arriving Europeans as ‘White Gods’ has dominated scholarship considering indigenous views of Europeans during first encounter, this study departs from this simplistic ‘god’/‘not god’ binary. Instead, it explores the wide and complex spectrum of indigenous responses to these newcomers – from flight to fight, trade and exchange to provision of aid – and asks how such responses reflected the nature and stability of cross-cultural relations. By exploring Taíno and Nahua worldviews, this study highlights the multiple and diverse categories of identity into which indigenous groups may have placed the Christian strangers. In telling multiple, smaller stories of these early meetings – from multiple perspectives – the intricacy, fluidity, and fragility of the contact situation emerges.

In the following reading of European accounts and indigenous-authored pictorial texts – the ‘purest’ sources for Nahua perspectives – I take a microhistorical approach, focusing on interpersonal relationships. I deconstruct personal, face-to-face encounters between Taínos and Christopher Columbus, Nahua groups and Hernando Cortés, as well as the unique experiences of indigenous and European individuals caught between – individuals who occupied in-between states and in-between spaces. Throughout the study, particular attention is given to the methodological challenges arising from the uncovering and reading of indigenous voices and actions in the (ethno)historical record. Significantly, by examining the early encounters using a methodology based on transcending Westward-facing perspectives, the evidence from my case studies highlights the action and agency of indigenous groups and individuals, and, above all, positions Taíno and Nahua agents not as ‘vanquished,’ but as powerholders.

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## Abbreviations

BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
FAMSI	Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc.
INAH	Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
JCB	John Carter Brown Library
NMDC	New Mexico Digital Collections
NMHM	New Mexico History Museum
UFM	Universidad Francisco Marroquín
WDL	World Digital Library

## Glossary

<i>Altepetl</i>	Nahuatl term for the city-state (pl. <i>altepeme</i> )
<i>Anthropophagy</i>	the custom or practice of consuming human flesh by human beings
<i>Apotheosis</i>	the elevation or transformation of a man into a god
<i>Beachcomber</i>	a European individual who came to live in indigenous society for a prolonged period, often as a result of being shipwrecked, lost, or captured
<i>Behique</i>	a Taíno shaman or priest; a spiritual healer
<i>Bohío</i>	Taíno term for ‘home’; one name for house
<i>Cacicazgo</i>	a Taíno village or province, ruled by the <i>cacique</i>
<i>Cacique</i>	a male (female <i>cacica</i> ) indigenous ruler in Spanish-speaking Latin America and Caribbean
<i>Caniba</i>	‘Columbus’ name for the “people of the Grand Khan”; <sup>1</sup> ‘he came to believe that the Caniba were enemies of the Taíno. Columbus did not believe that the Caniba ate human flesh. He justified what he heard as the Taíno belief in Caniba anthropophagy as due to the failure of Taíno captives to return after they were taken by the Caniba’ <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William F. Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth and Practice: the Arrival of the Stranger King* (Gainesville, Massachusetts: University Press of Florida, 2007), p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> William F. Keegan, ‘Myth and the First Encounters’, in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. by Robert L. Paquette & Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), p. 29.

<i>Caníbales/Caribe</i>	‘mythical beings associated with transporting the dead to the afterlife. The name has come to be associated with anthropophagy because these spirits ‘consumed’ the life of the dead’. <sup>3</sup> ‘Columbus and his men were initially identified as Caribes/Caníbales because they were travelling to the east, wore clothing, bore arms, and carried Taínos off from their villages’ <sup>4</sup>
<i>Cannibals</i>	‘natives who refused to submit to the Spanish were called cannibals. They were characterised as idolaters and consumers of human flesh who could not be converted to Christianity and were therefore suitable for enslaving. It was suggested as early as 1520 that the name <i>cannibal</i> derived from <i>canis</i> , the Latin word for dog’ <sup>5</sup>
<i>Carib</i>	‘one of the three mythical islands of the Taínos, the one associated with men. The Spanish confused this term with their own notion of geopolitics and identified the Caribs as real people who were the enemy of the Taínos and were subjects of the Grand Khan. The Spanish use of the term eventually expanded to include all native peoples who opposed their rule and who were characterised as the consumers of human flesh’ <sup>6</sup>
<i>Caribs</i>	also referred to as ‘Island Caribs’; indigenous inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles
<i>Cielo</i>	Spanish term meaning both ‘sky’ and ‘heaven’
<i>Guanín</i>	(1) a gold-copper alloy; (2) ‘the Taíno mythical island of sexual union, completing the insular sexual triad’ <sup>7</sup>
<i>Ixiptlatl</i>	a deity impersonator in Mesoamerican cosmivision (pl. <i>ixiptla</i> ); sacrificial victim

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>7</sup> Keegan, ‘Myth and the First Encounters’, p. 27.

<i>Manitou</i>	Algonquian term referring to power, principally spiritual power; a force for both good and evil
<i>Matinínó</i>	‘meaning literally ‘without fathers’, it is the Taíno mythical island inhabited only by women’ <sup>8</sup>
<i>Nepantla</i>	a Nahuatl term meaning ‘in-between space’
<i>Nepantlera</i>	‘threshold people’ who experience the nepantla space, who mediate between different cultural groups <sup>9</sup>
<i>Taínos</i>	indigenous inhabitants of the Greater Antilles; literally, ‘noble’ or ‘good’
<i>Teotl</i>	a Nahuatl term often translated as ‘god’; however, ‘teotl’ referred to divinity (or connections to divinity) in a much broader sense, including designations of sorcerers or deity impersonators ( <i>ixiptla</i> )
<i>Teotlatquítl</i>	deity belongings in which the <i>ixiptlatl</i> was adorned, through which they visually imitated the god’s appearance
<i>Tlacuilo</i>	traditional Mesoamerican painter-scribe (pl. <i>tlacuiloque</i> )
<i>Tlatoani</i>	‘he who speaks’; ruler of a pre-Conquest <i>altepetl</i> in Central Mexico (pl. <i>tlatoque</i> ); Tenochtitlan’s <i>tlatoani</i> became known as the <i>huey tlatoani</i> or great ruler in the late fifteenth century
<i>Turey</i>	Taíno word literally meaning ‘from the heavens’
<i>Tzompantli</i>	Nahuatl term for skull rack
<i>Viracocha</i>	Quechua term for the great creator deity or supreme god of the pre-Incas and Incas

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Gloria E. Anzaldúa, ‘(Un)natural Bridges,’ 1, quoted in AnaLouise Keating, ‘Shifting Worlds, una entrada’, in *Entre Mundos/Among Worlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*, ed. by AnaLouise Keating (New York & Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 1.

*Zemí*

Taíno term for spirit and the spirit's representation in objects or idols, made from stone, wood, or bone, usually in zoomorphic form (pl. *zemís*); other spellings include *cemís* and *cemíes*

## A note on naming

Throughout this study, the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean are referred to as ‘Taínos.’ Whilst this is the most commonly used and workable term, using ‘Taíno’ as a cultural or ethnic designation does come with complications, especially in that it implies homogeneity across the communities of Hispaniola, and the Greater Antilles more widely, misrepresenting their diversity.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I wish to highlight here that collective uses of ‘Taíno(s)’ in this study do not intend to homogenise indigenous communities of the Caribbean; the study acknowledges – and demonstrates – the communities’ difference and individuality.

Similarly, this study also refers collectively to ‘Nahuas’ – the main Mesoamerican group this study considers. Meaning ‘Nahuatl speaker,’ ‘Nahua’ is a commonly used designation in scholarship to refer to indigenous peoples of Central Mexico after the Spanish conquest, and, like ‘Taíno,’ encapsulates wide-ranging and diverse communities. This study examines a number of different Nahua groups in detail, and will be specific in this regard when appropriate. These groups are namely the Tlaxcalteca (of Tlaxcala), the Quauhquecholteca (of Quauhquechollan), and the Mexica (of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco). The study also uses ‘Aztec’ as a cultural or ethnic designation; ‘the Aztecs’ refers to the diverse peoples who were incorporated into the empire of the Triple Alliance (the alliance formed between the cities of Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, and Texcoco in the late 1420s).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*, p. xiv. For the debated usage of ‘Taíno,’ see also José R. Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols: the Web Spun by Taíno Rulers between Hispaniola and Puerto Rico* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), pp. 6-7, pp. 27-28; Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua: the Mythological World of the Taínos*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2006), p. xliii; Samuel Wilson, *Hispaniola: Caribbean Chiefdoms in the Age of Columbus* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés: the True Story of the Meeting that Changed History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018), pp. 359-360; Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría & Deborah L. Nichols, ‘Aztec Studies: Trends and Themes’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Aztecs*, ed. by Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría & Deborah L. Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 3. In some scholarship, ‘Aztec’ refers principally to the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan (see Caroline Dodds Pennock, *Bonds of Blood: Gender, Lifecycle and Sacrifice in Aztec Culture* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. xii-xiii). It should also be noted that the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan specifically are referred to as ‘Tenochca’ by some (see, for example, Rodríguez-Alegría & Nichols, ‘Aztec Studies’, p. 3; Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. xiii). ‘Aztec’

Throughout the study, collective designations of ‘Europeans,’ ‘Christians,’ or ‘Castilians’ are used to refer to the diverse groups of people from across European (principally Iberia) who travelled to the Caribbean and Central Mexico in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century. ‘Christians’ has been used mainly in the Caribbean context, where it is found as a descriptor of Christopher Columbus and his crew(s) in primary source documents; ‘Castilians’ has been used primarily in the Mesoamerican context, and my use of this term will be examined in greater detail in ‘Methods & Sources’.

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has been disputed by scholars – mainly on grounds of its lack of contemporaneous origins, as well as the popular misconceptions it prompts – but it has remained enduringly relevant. See, for example, Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. xiii; Clendinnen, *Aztecs An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 1 (titled *Aztecs* despite her preference of ‘Mexica’).



## Introduction

‘[The Taíno] all believe that power and good are in the heavens, and they are very firmly convinced that I, with these ships and men, came from the heavens, and in this belief they everywhere received me [...] and they are always assured that I come from heaven [...] running from house to house and to the neighbouring towns, with loud cries of, ‘Come! Come to see the people from heaven!’

– *Christopher Columbus*.<sup>1</sup>

Writing on the return journey of his first voyage across the Atlantic in February 1493, Christopher Columbus, Admiral of the Ocean Sea, presents the idea that the Taíno, the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, thought that he and his fellow crewmates were from the heavens. Columbus propagates his supposed perceived divinity elsewhere in his writings, too, particularly in the *Diario* – the daily journal he kept throughout the first voyage. After all, what else could explain the Taínos’ warm welcome; their touching of the Christians’ faces, hands and feet; and their cheering and raising their hands to the sky?

Focused on moments of early encounter in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, this comparative study examines indigenous responses to the European newcomers whom they encountered on their shores and in their lands. The issue of whether indigenous peoples viewed the Christian strangers as ‘gods’ or ‘not gods’ has occupied a central place in scholarship, and it was this historiographical debate that inspired this study. Both developing and departing from White Gods-oriented scholarship, this study asks: how may indigenous groups have identified

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Columbus, ‘Letter of Columbus’, in *The Voyages of Christopher Columbus: being the journals of the first and third, and the letters concerning his first and last voyages, to which is added the account of his second voyage written by Andrés Bernaldez*, trans. & ed., with introduction and notes, by Cecil Jane (London: Argonaut Press, 1930), p. 10.

these strangers? As traders, far distant neighbours, or enemy warriors? As shamans, exotic emissaries, or cannibals? As friend or foe? As ‘gods’? With the aim of gaining a deeper insight into potential identifications, this study thus maps the complex and diverse spectrum of ways in which indigenous groups and individuals responded to/behaved towards Europeans in moments of early cultural encounter. What can such responses – such as flight or the abandonment of homes, fighting or threats of war, gift giving or the exchange of items – reveal about the indigenous actor/s’ perceptions of the Christian strangers in question? And significantly, how can indigenous voices – or, perhaps more feasibly, actions – be ‘read’ in the historical record, especially in sources written by Europeans, or else produced in the post-contact, colonial context? Whilst European ideas of indigenous peoples are well documented and more readily accessible to scholars, what methods or approaches can be adopted to explore *indigenous* sides of the story of these first cultural encounters?

### A historiographical survey

‘Many [Indians] came to gape at the strange men [...] and at their attire, arms and horses, and they said, “These men are gods!”’

– *Francisco López de Gómara*.<sup>2</sup>

#### i. *Approaching the White Gods*

When Hernando Cortés arrived on the shores of Central America in 1519, popular opinion holds that he and his men – like Columbus and his crew – were received as gods by the indigenous people. Cortés was believed to be the native god Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent) who was, coincidentally, prophesied to return from his travels in the East in the year 1519, or One Reed. He was not the only European said to be mistaken as divine during the age of discovery, either: along with Columbus, Francisco Pizarro, Henry Hudson and James Cook have all been presented as gods or god-like following their encounters with different indigenous populations.<sup>3</sup> Emerging from the European need to justify actions of conquest, and from indigenous attempts to retrospectively reclaim agency in the early stages of the fall of Tenochtitlan, the White Gods

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<sup>2</sup> Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortés: the Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary, Francisco López de Gómara*, ed. & trans. by Lesley Byrd Simpson from the *Istoria de la conquista de México*, printed in Zaragoza, 1552 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of the White Gods myth, see Claudia Rogers, ‘Christopher Who?’, *History Today*, 67:8 (2017), 38-49 (pp. 40-42).

‘myth model’ gained currency in subsequent encounters, and quickly became the typical framework through which Europeans perceived their encounters with non-Western societies.<sup>4</sup> This ‘White Gods’ narrative gained particular popularity in the late twentieth century, and it has been suggested that it has a greater place in society today than it had during the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> A number of modern scholars accepted, propagated, and used the White Gods as an explanation for conquests and encounters: for Tzvetan Todorov, the Aztec emperor or *huey tlatoani* Moctezuma II and his men were unable to accommodate the radical difference the Castilians presented, and therefore gave way to the ‘god’ Cortés; David Carrasco similarly argues that the fall of Tenochtitlan was ‘enhanced by an abdication of sovereignty [...] inspired by the mythologem of Quetzalcoatl’s return’; elsewhere, Marshall Sahlins analyses the Hawaiian encounter with Captain Cook and his crew purely in terms of the notion that Cook was received as the returning god Lono.<sup>6</sup> The list goes on.

Moreover, the narrative has contributed productively to the film and TV industry: in Ridley Scott’s *1492: Conquest of Paradise* (1992), the character of Columbus remarks that ‘because of our appearance, we [the Europeans] have been mistaken for gods.’<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Walt Disney’s *Pocahontas* (1995) portrays a Native American tribe’s reaction to the arrival of Captain John Smith and his crew as one of shock and awe, whilst *The Road to El Dorado* (DreamWorks, 2000) follows the adventures of two Spanish explorers who, upon discovering a hidden city, are mistaken for gods by the devout Indians.<sup>8</sup> Showered with gifts, praised and worshipped by the people, the explorers – the ‘mighty lords’ – marvel at their good fortune, exclaiming: ‘it’s an entire city of suckers!’<sup>9</sup> Moreover, just as presenter Michael Wood did in the BBC documentary *Conquistadors* (2001), historian David Olusoga colourfully re-tells the Cortés-Quetzalcoatl

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<sup>4</sup> For apotheosis myths as justifications of conquest, see Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 112-15; for Cortés-Quetzalcoatl myth as an *indigenous* explanation for Tenochtitlan’s fall, see James Lockhart’s analysis of the *Florentine Codex* in James Lockhart, *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 16-21; for the origins and durability of the Cortés-Quetzalcoatl myth, see Camilla Townsend, ‘No One Said it was Quetzalcoatl: Listening to the Indians in the Conquest of Mexico’, *History Compass* 1 (2003), 1-14; for European ‘myth models’ and the expansion of the apotheosis myth, see Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 3, pp.10-11, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Restall, *Seven Myths*, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. by R. Howard, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1992); David Carrasco, *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 151; Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), particularly chapter 4.

<sup>7</sup> *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, film (directed by Ridley Scott, 1992), 1:07:00.

<sup>8</sup> *Pocahontas*, animated film (Walt Disney, 1995); *The Road to El Dorado*, animated film (DreamWorks, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> *The Road to El Dorado*, 0:30:30. Towards the end of the film, the high priest realises the explorers are human, as Miguel cuts his face playing the ball game and bleeds (‘Gods don’t bleed’, 0:59:40). Comparatively, *Pocahontas* presents a perceived lack of blood as an indication of savagery or lack of humanness; the Native American warriors sing that the English are ‘savages, savages,’ and ‘wonder if they even bleed,’ 1:04:50.

narrative as fact in the BBC's *Civilisations* documentary series (2018): after all, who doesn't love a good story?<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to popular opinion, however, the 'White Gods' are now generally agreed to be a post-conquest invention: there is little evidence that Cortés and his men were received as gods by Native Americans, and – whilst Quetzalcoatl was a god in the pre-Hispanic indigenous pantheon – the story that the feathered serpent was to return from his Eastern travels in 1519 existed only *after* the Conquest, as Susan Gillespie aptly demonstrates.<sup>11</sup> The works of Miguel León-Portilla, Todorov, and other twentieth-century scholars who accepted and promoted the White Gods narrative have received increasing scrutiny by historians – namely Susan Gillespie, Camilla Townsend, and Louise Burkhart – focused on deconstructing the invention and development of this pervasive myth, seeking to gain a more nuanced understanding of cultural encounter, and of how and why the White Gods became so entrenched in history.

For example, in her deconstruction of apotheosis in the Cortés-as-Quetzalcoatl case, Townsend emphasises the ambiguity of the Nahuatl term *teotl* in indigenous descriptions of Europeans; comparably, Evan Haefeli highlights the misinterpretation of the Algonquian term *manitou*. Although both terms were originally translated as 'god' or 'god-like' by Europeans, their meanings were much more diverse: *teotl* could refer to sorcerers or deity impersonators (*ixiptla*), and indicated a charge or degree of vital force or power; likewise, *manitou* was a force for both good and evil, referring to *power* – spiritual, moral, political, psychological – not 'divinity' in the European sense.<sup>12</sup> Corresponding misunderstandings surround the 'true' meanings of the native Caribbean term *cielo* and the Quechua term *viracocha*, which have also triggered heated academic debate.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, these troublesome grey areas reveal much wider

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<sup>10</sup> *Conquistadors*, 'The Fall of the Aztecs', episode 1, documentary film (BBC, 2000), 0:11:00-0:12:10; 0:34:20; *Civilisations*, 'First Contact', documentary film (BBC, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Susan Gillespie, *The Aztec Kings: the Construction of Rulership in Mexica History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), especially pp. 173-207. For Cortés-as-Quetzalcoatl as a *post*-conquest narrative, see also Townsend, 'No One Said', pp. 1-2; Camilla Townsend, 'Burying the White Gods: New Perspectives on the Conquest of Mexico', *American Historical Review* 108:3 (2003), 659-87 (pp. 659-60 & throughout); Louise Burkhart, 'Meeting the Enemy: Moteuczoma and Cortés, Herod and the Magi', in *Invasion and Transformation: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Conquest of Mexico*, ed. by Rebecca P. Brien and Margaret A. Jackson (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado), pp. 11-24; Molly Bassett, 'Meeting the Gods: Apotheoses and Exchanges of the Early Encounter', *Material Religion*, 8:4 (2012), 416-439 (p. 421).

<sup>12</sup> Townsend, 'Burying the White Gods', pp. 670-72; Francis Berdan, *Aztec Archaeology and Ethnohistory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 230; Evan Haefeli, 'On First Contact and Apotheosis: Manitou and Men in North America', *Ethnohistory*, 54:3 (2007), 407-43 (pp. 420-22).

<sup>13</sup> Restall, *Seven Myths*, pp. 111-12; Olivia Harris, "'The Coming of the White People": Reflections on the Mythologisation of History in Latin America', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 14:1 (1995), 9-24 (pp. 12-14). The debate over the reading of *cielo*, a Spanish term meaning both/either 'sky' or 'heaven' will be discussed in chapters II, III, and IV.

issues of cultural (mis)understanding and (mis)representation during the moments of early encounter explored in this study, which shall be returned to in due course.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, whilst earlier scholarship focused on the narrow issue of whether indigenous groups viewed the Europeans as ‘gods’ or ‘not gods’ – with polarised assessments of Europeans as ‘gods’ or ‘humans’ often dominating analyses – there is a growing body of scholarship that explores other potential categorisations, like semi-divine statuses or those with connections to the spiritual world, such as sorcerers, soothsayers, or *ixiptla*, as well as different roles in mortal society, such as warriors or chiefs. In the Pacific context, Obeyesekere reasons that James Cook may have been received as a chief as opposed to a deity; in a similar vein, Haefeli and Inga Clendinnen both explore how different indigenous actions or behaviours (such as exchanging goods) may have been mistaken as ones reserved for gods, in North America and Mesoamerica respectively.<sup>15</sup>

Considering the fluid nature of the distinction between gods and men in Mesoamerican thought, Gillespie identifies how Cortés may have been recognised as a *representative* of Quetzalcoatl, as Moctezuma was a representative of the god Huitzilopochtli.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, as Molly Bassett develops in her work on the first meeting and gift exchange between Cortés and Moctezuma, Cortés underwent complex transformations in both European worldview (Cortés as a god) and concomitantly in Mesoamerican cosmivision (Cortés as an *embodiment* of a god or *ixiptlatl*). Significantly, Bassett draws out the nuances of these different perspectives: whilst the Europeans viewed Cortés’ supposed apotheosis as reflective of the Nahuas’ ‘simple-minded religiosity’ and, thus, their own power, the Mexica saw Cortés’ transformation into an *ixiptlatl* as part of a ‘ritual scenario’ in which ‘he could become a prisoner of war and sacrificial victim.’<sup>17</sup> Bassett’s work addresses both the need to explore the nuances between indigenous and European worldviews, and the nuances of different roles or categories of identity; the concept of *ixiptlatl* complicates the ‘god’ or ‘human’ binary.

Likewise, Olivia Harris is among the few to identify the simplistic nature of the gods-or-not-gods approach, highlighting instead the productiveness of using ‘existing categories of otherness and ways of representing the alien and exotic.’<sup>18</sup> However, although Harris notes that ‘this might be epitomized by wilderness, or by neighbouring tribes,’ she does not offer any further analysis or use these categories in primary source investigation herself. Stephanie Wood’s *Transcending Conquest* (2003) is a notable study in this regard: her eloquent and critical analysis

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<sup>14</sup> Obeyesekere, *Captain Cook*, pp. 121-22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; Haefeli, ‘On First Contact’, p. 427; Inga Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’: Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico”, *Representations*, 33 (1991), 65-100 (pp. 70-1).

<sup>16</sup> Gillespie, *The Aztec Kings*, p. 229.

<sup>17</sup> Bassett, ‘Meeting the Gods’, p. 420. Bassett’s work on the exchange between Moctezuma and Cortés will be returned to in more detail in chapter II.

<sup>18</sup> Harris, “‘The Coming of the White People’”, p. 17.

of sixteenth-century, indigenous-authored pictorial images of Europeans is structured around diverse and wide ranging categories of identity – ‘the invader’, ecclesiastics, civil and economic figures, for example – and disengages from narrow arguments of whether one was or was not a god or human.<sup>19</sup> Surveying portraits of Spaniards in codices, Wood explores ‘native views of Europeans as possibly ‘different’ kinds of beings, the flip side of most standard inquiries. What kind of Spaniards appear? How are they portrayed?’.<sup>20</sup>

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Using the White Gods debate as a way into an examination of indigenous perceptions of Europeans, this study will both develop and depart from historiography seeking to deconstruct apotheosis myths: taking inspiration from Wood in particular, this study seeks to highlight the importance of recognising *existing* categories of dissimilarity in indigenous thought; diversify the range of potential identifications by transcending the simplistic un/god binary; and locate and implement such categories in primary source analyses. As will quickly become apparent, this often requires a disentanglement of indigenous concepts from European worldviews or (mis)understandings or (mis)representations of ‘equivalent’ notions.

The White Gods debate has been a useful starting point for this study in quite a different sense, too. As apotheosis myths have plagued narratives of first encounters across the globe, a comparative synthesis of historiography has provided a useful framework with which to begin concurrently exploring the moments of early encounter in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica that form the focus of the following research. Outside of the body of scholarship dealing with the White Gods, comparative study of the early Caribbean and Mesoamerican encounters is limited. Significantly, this study seeks to address this lack of comparative study with regard to moments of early encounter: there is no study focused on a comparative analysis of indigenous meetings with Columbus *and* with Cortés, or other conquistadors in Mexico (to the best of my knowledge).

Methodologically and conceptually, this comparative study thus takes inspiration from an approach seen in nissology, or island studies (a relatively new discipline that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s), which has become known as ‘thinking with the archipelago’ (abbreviated to TWTA forthwith). TWTA understands islands as interconnected, relational and entangled – rather than disconnected, isolated and static – and seeks to empower island histories by re-focusing attention away from mainland narratives to island-centred discourses. Godfrey Baldacchino is among numerous nissology scholars to highlight the ‘fractal’ nature of islands,

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<sup>19</sup> Stephanie Wood, *Transcending Conquest: Nahuatl Views of Spanish Colonial Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), p. 136, and chapter 2: ‘Pictorial images of Spaniards: the *other* Other?’, pp. 23-59.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

and reminds readers that ‘with larger magnification, what may have been a small island off a mainland itself becomes “the mainland” for even smaller islands.’<sup>21</sup>

Whilst I do not seek to empower island histories of the Caribbean *over* that of mainland Mesoamerica, I do, like island studies scholars, challenge the division between islands and mainland – often identified by the land’s relationship to water – that is certainly apparent in scholarship considering early encounter, where the Caribbean encounters and those taking place on the Mesoamerican ‘mainland’ are nearly always considered as separate phenomena, despite the interconnectedness the two spaces had at the time.<sup>22</sup> Recognising how island chain and mainland are interconnected by their shared experience as ‘spaces of encounter’ (a conceptual frame explored later in this introduction), this study seeks to transcend the boundedness of island/mainland dichotomies with regard to the Caribbean and Mesoamerica. Just as island spaces should be considered as ‘inter-related, mutually constituted and co-constructed,’ as ‘generative and inter-connective spaces of metamorphosis,’ so too should moments of early encounter.<sup>23</sup>

Bearing this in mind, but speaking to the current fall of scholarship, the following part of this historiographical survey is unavoidably divided geographically, between scholarship addressing first meetings in the Caribbean, and to that considering those in Mesoamerica.

## ii. *The Caribbean*

An interesting quirk of scholarship considering the early encounters between the Taíno and the Christian strangers in 1492 is its often supplementary nature (for want of a better term): as a conclusion to works on the expansion of medieval Europe or an introduction to New World ‘discovery’ and conquest, the 1492 encounter frequently functions as a temporal start or end point of enquiry. Falling either in or somewhere between the ‘late medieval’ or ‘early modern’ periods – depending on one’s inclination – the encounter is usually either considered in terms of what it reveals about the development of medieval or pre-Columbian worldviews, or its culminations in the colonial period. This observation is not intended as a criticism of such scholarship or to be

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<sup>21</sup> Godfrey Baldacchino, ‘Studying islands: on whose terms?’, *Island Studies Journal*, 3:1 (2008), 37-56 (p. 47).

<sup>22</sup> For the relationship between land and water as a defining feature of island and mainland spaces, see Elaine Stratford et al., ‘Envisioning the Archipelago’, *Island Studies Journal*, 6:2 (2011), 113-30 (pp. 115-16). For changing perceptions of seas and oceans during the Age of Discovery, see John Gillis, ‘Taking history offshore: Atlantic islands in European minds, 1400-1800’, in *Islands in History & Representation*, ed. By Rod Edmond & Vanessa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 19-31; Anthony Pagden, ‘Politics, Possession and Projection: Changing European Visions of the World’, *Gegenwarten der Renaissance* 20:1, (2004), 181-206.

<sup>23</sup> Stratford et al., ‘Envisioning the Archipelago’, p. 113, and throughout; Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari (1986), quoted in Jonathon Pugh, ‘Island Movements: Thinking with the Archipelago’, *Island Studies Journal*, 8:1 (2013), 3-8 (p. 11).

suggestive that the encounter lacks scholarly attention – far from it; it is raised simply to highlight the multiple directions from which historians and archaeologists have grappled with this moment.<sup>24</sup> And, of course, there are exceptions.

The key monograph to have to highlight in this regard is David Abulafia's *The Discovery of Mankind* (2008) – one of the central historical works that influenced the original conception of this study.<sup>25</sup> *The Discovery of Mankind* articulately traces European encounters with indigenous peoples across the Atlantic World, beginning in the Canary Islands before moving the New World. Significantly, Abulafia seamlessly connects the Taínos' encounter with Columbus to the context of the Old World, as well as to the continuing 'discovery' of the New – namely that of the Atlantic shores of South America.<sup>26</sup> Focusing on European perceptions of the indigenous peoples who met them, Abulafia's examination is wide-ranging, exploring medieval understandings of the ends of the earth (in terms of both people and places), how such presuppositions informed and affected explorers' real-world experiences (and vice versa), and what accorded (or was perceived or reasoned to justify) Europeans' treatment of different indigenous peoples. Examining a variety of sources from the historical (and archaeological) record, Abulafia undoubtedly presents a critical and thorough narrative of the early Atlantic encounters.

Within the vast corpus of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century scholarship exploring European perceptions of and encounters with exotic Others (both real and imaginary) in which *The Discovery of Mankind* falls, one should also note – from a medievalist's perspective – the important historical research exploring the late medieval encounters in the East, in particular Kim Phillips' *Before Orientalism* (2014) and Mary Campbell's *The Witness and the Other World* (1988), both of whom consider the impact of travel writing in terms of medieval Europe's vision of Asia.<sup>27</sup> Of similar interest is the scholarship tracing the movement of the monstrous races in medieval *mappae mundi*: work by Evelyn Edson, Paul Harvey, and John Friedman, among others, have collectively enabled a re-evaluation of *mappae mundi* as didactic and cultural items (rather than unsuccessful geographical enterprises), highly reflective of European ideas of the known

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<sup>24</sup> The presentation in certain scholarship of the Antilles as 'stepping stones' to the 'real' America is critiqued as reductionist by Jalil Sued Badillo, 'The Island Caribs: New Approaches to the Question of Ethnicity in the Early Colonial Caribbean', in *Wolves of the Sea: Readings in the Anthropology of the Native Caribbean*, ed. by Neil L. Whitehead (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995), pp. 61-90 (p. 61).

<sup>25</sup> David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> For the encounter, conquest and colonisation in the Canary Islands, see also Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonisation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> Kim M. Phillips, *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245-1510* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Mary Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988).

world.<sup>28</sup> Complimenting his work on medieval cartography, Friedman's *Monstrous Races* (1981) traces the displacement of the monstrous races from the edges of world maps to the New World, that is to say, from unknown places to known place.<sup>29</sup> Three decades after its publication, *Monstrous Races* remains a cornerstone monologue when considering the creation of the Amerindian Other: one of the few historians to explicitly, and seamlessly, connect the fabulous races of the Old World to the exotic Others perceived to exist in the New World, Friedman explores how fantastical expectations from travellers' homelands might have affected their real experiences of America, and what psychological purposes the 'invention' of man-eating men and other exotic peoples served.

The power of expectations during encounters with foreignness and strangeness should, therefore, not be underestimated: as Hayden White considers, 'observation is the outcome of a negotiation between expectation and experience.'<sup>30</sup> For Columbus, and the explorers who followed him, the New World undoubtedly became a 'testing ground' for European fantasy, with anthropophagi, cynocephali, Amazons, and wild men being just some of the fabulous beings that were part of the 'cultural furniture' the explorer took with him – as scholars such as Campbell, Valerie Flint and Peter Hulme have demonstrated.<sup>31</sup> This study, however, takes a different angle: considering how far preconceptions governed Columbus' perception of the real places and people he encountered, it is essential to similarly interrogate the extent to which Columbus and his crew corresponded to *indigenous* expectations of new arrivals, of strangers travelling to them from

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<sup>28</sup> Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed their World* (London: The British Library Publishing Division, 1997), & 'Travelling on the Mappamundi: the World of John Mandeville', in *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and their Context*, ed. by P. D. A. Harvey (London: The British Library Publishing Division, 2006), pp. 389-403; P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London: The British Library Publishing Division, 1991); John B. Friedman, 'Cultural Conflicts in Medieval World Maps', in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. by Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 64-95; Ricardo Padrón, *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Jeremy Harwood, *To the Ends of the Earth: 100 Maps that Changed the World*, with an introduction by Sarah Bendall (Cincinnati, OH: David & Charles, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> John B. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Syracuse University Press, 1981). For *Monstrous Races*, see also Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: a Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970); *The Wild Man Within: an Image in Western thought from the Renaissance in Romanticism*, ed. by Edward Dudley & Maximillian Novak (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972). For cannibals in particular, see William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology & Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); Neil Whitehead, 'The Historical Anthropology of Text: the Interpretation of Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana*', *Current Anthropology*, 36:1 (1995), 53-74; Neil Whitehead, 'Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism', *Hispanic American History Review*, 80:5 (2001), 721-752. The figure of the 'Cannibal' will be discussed in detail in chapter III.

<sup>30</sup> Hayden White, 'The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an idea', in *The Wild Man Within*, pp. 3-38 (p. 53).

<sup>31</sup> Phillips, *Before Orientalism*, p. 173. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World*; Valerie Flint, 'The Medieval World of Christopher Columbus', *Parergon*, 12:2 (1995), 9-27; Peter Hulme, 'Tales of distinction: European ethnography and the Caribbean', in *Implicit Understandings*, pp. 157-197.

other lands. Who, exactly, did the Taínos think the Christian newcomers were, and in what ways did the Taínos incorporate them into their pre-existing categories and worldviews?

As the following chapter discusses, the absence of written sources from fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Caribbean natives undoubtedly complicates any attempt to explore Taíno expectations; however, rather than preventing scholars from ascertaining the indigenous point of view completely, the lack of written evidence has stimulated an innovative corpus of research aiming to uncover the indigenous perspective. By combining anthropological, ethnographic, and archaeological evidence, scholars have built up a vibrant picture of pre-Columbian life (including religious beliefs, society, class structure and everyday living). Archaeological research has been essential in disentangling pre-1492 history, and particularly informative in deconstructing the early Taíno-European meetings; it is also a fast-moving field, regularly revealing new information about Taíno society pre- and post-encounter.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in constructing a detailed view of Taíno society, the European encounter can be contextualised within the long history of Taíno society.<sup>33</sup> In an especially poignant reminder that the Taínos' history did not start – or end – at Columbus' arrival, Stevens-Arroyo places his work on Taíno spirituality and mythology, *Cave of the Jagua* (1988), within the context of the 1992 native protests and 'the emergence of movements that sought to define a new Taíno identity for Caribbean peoples.'<sup>34</sup>

Taking a similar approach to the encounter as Abulafia, Samuel Wilson traces the encounters of 1492 on Hispaniola through to the collapse of the Taíno chiefdoms in the early sixteenth century: examining historical and ethnohistorical sources, as well as archaeological artefacts, *Hispaniola* (1990) effectively places the events of late fifteenth-century Hispaniola in both the context of pre-Columbian life and that of the Old World. Furthermore, Wilson's approach to – and valuation of – European-authored sources has been particularly informative for this study, and shall be returned to shortly. William Keegan's *Taíno Indian Myth and Practice* (2007) – the structure of which, rather uniquely, is initially presented as a play – also combines evidence from

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<sup>32</sup> For the context of this study, *The Oxford Handbook of Caribbean Archaeology*, ed. by William Keegan, Corinne Hofman & Reniel Rodríguez Ramos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) has been a key edited collection, especially: the editors' 'Introduction', pp. 1-18; Peter Siegel, 'Caribbean Archaeology in Historical Perspective', pp. 21-46; William Keegan, 'The "Classic" Taíno', pp. 70-83; Louis Allaire, 'Ethnohistory of the Caribs', pp. 97-108; Joost Morsink, 'Exchange as a Social Contract: a Perspective from the Microscale', pp. 312-28; Angus A. A. Mol, 'Studying pre-Columbian Interaction Networks, Mobility and Exchange', pp. 329-46; Joshua M. Torres, 'Rethinking Chiefdoms in the Caribbean', pp. 347-62. From *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual & Religion*, ed. by Timothy Insoll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), see: Chris Fowler, 'Personhood and the Body', pp. 134-150; Peter G. Roe, 'Walking Upside-Down and Backwards: Art and Religion in the Ancient Caribbean', pp. 519-540; Pierre de Maret, 'Divine Kings', pp. 1060-66. Recent archaeological research on the island of Mona has revealed incredible new insights into fifteenth-century religious encounter in the Caribbean: see Jago Cooper et al., "'The Mona Chronicle": the Archaeology of Early Religious Encounter in the New World', *Antiquity*, 90 (2016), 1054-71.

<sup>33</sup> See in particular Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*; Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*; Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*; Wilson, *Hispaniola*.

<sup>34</sup> Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*, pp. x-xi (p. xi).

archaeological and ethnohistorical research: considering the relationship between Taíno mythology and social behaviour, Keegan explores how the Taínos' interactions with Europeans were considerably structured by their existing beliefs and worldviews.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, José Oliver's *Caciques and Cemí Idols* (2009), which explores the Taínos' relationship with *zemís* and *zemí* power, is praised by one reviewer for measuring human actions 'with a native yardstick. Not a Western academic tradition, but from the Taíno worldview.'<sup>36</sup>

The importance of transcending, and critically deconstructing, European perceptions to access indigenous views or actions is notably reflected in scholarship concerning the Arawak/Carib binary. This 'pervasive couplet' of Carib (the ferocious cannibal) and Arawak (lazy Indian or noble savage) is 'variously articulated in all European accounts,' Hulme writes, and is reflective of a 'radical dualism of European response to the native Caribbean.'<sup>37</sup> Critical interrogations of how and why these ethnic stereotypes have developed (and survived) are undoubtedly essential in considerations of the indigenous-European relationship in the Caribbean; a point especially pertinent to this study is the self-fulfilling nature of the Arawak/Carib binary, in that, from the European perspective, anyone peaceful must 'be an Arawak,' whereas a perpetrator of violence or hostility must 'be a Carib.'<sup>38</sup> Although Hulme and Neil Whitehead have articulated the problematic nature of these classifications for indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, the use of these terms in popular and academic writing often continue to allude to their previous pervasive stereotypes.<sup>39</sup> In terms of this study, the pervasiveness of the Carib/Arawak stereotypes (in both historical sources and historiographical research) are damaging when it comes to reading indigenous responses to Europeans, which – as the following analyses will demonstrate – were multiple and diverse: there was no simplistic division between 'good' and 'bad' indigenous responses to the Christian strangers. Whilst Columbus may have attributed violent responses to 'Caribs' – a designation which will receive critical attention in chapter III – for example, the same

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<sup>35</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*. For the structure of the book as a play, see p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> L. Antonio Curet, 'Review: *Caciques and Cemí Idols: the Web Spun by Taíno Rulers between Hispaniola and Puerto Rico*, by José R. Oliver, 2009', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 21:1 (2001), 142-43 (p. 142). Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1986), p. 46. For uses/designations of 'Carib' and 'Island Carib' in historical scholarship, see Peter Hulme & Neil Whitehead, *Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day, an Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4; Neil Whitehead, 'Introduction: the Island Carib as an Anthropological Icon', in *Wolves from the Sea: Readings in the Anthropology of the Caribbean*, ed. by Neil Whitehead (Leiden, KITLV Press, 1995), pp. 9-10, pp. 16-20; Neil Whitehead, 'Ethnic plurality & cultural continuity in the native Caribbean', in *Wolves from the Sea*, pp. 91-92; Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*, p. xlix.

<sup>38</sup> Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 66. See also Whitehead, 'Ethnic Plurality and Cultural Continuity in the Native Caribbean', in *Wolves from the Sea*, p. 91. This self-fulfilling binary is even seen in the sources from Columbus' first and second voyages, and will be thus returned to in chapter III.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson similarly views the Arawak/Carib designations as an 'oversimplification': see Samuel Wilson, 'The Cultural Mosaic of the indigenous Caribbean', in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Europe and the Americas, 1492-1650*, ed. by Warwick Bray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 37-66 (p. 59).

indigenous group is often recorded to respond in other ways, too, such as participating in the exchange of items. The continual focus on the Carib/Arawak binary in historical research today arguably contributes to this distortion, albeit unintentionally.

Given the value placed on *indigenous* worldviews, works by Keegan, Wilson, and others have been especially influential in the formation and development of the following study, which aims to place indigenous perspectives at the fore. To do so, this study therefore promotes a synthesis of this scholarship focused on indigenous preconceptions, with that focused on European preconceptions, namely work by Abulafia and Hulme. As this survey has sought to highlight, the position of this study is that considerations of both medieval and pre-Columbian worldviews are necessary for a critical reading of the narratives written by Columbus and other explorers in conjunction with archaeological research, and especially for an analysis that is revealing of Taíno responses to the Christian strangers during early encounter. Within these rich areas of scholarship there is – to the best of my knowledge – no work specifically focused on mapping the spectrum of such responses, and, significantly, it is this gap that this study seeks to address.

### iii. *Mesoamerica*

Over the past two and a half decades, our understanding of the conquest and colonisation period of Central America has been deeply altered: the rise of revisionist ‘The New Conquest History’ (NCH) has challenged the traditional narrative of Spanish military and religious triumph over helpless native groups, and instead highlighted the complexity of conquest narratives by uncovering ‘lost’ indigenous accounts and stories, of both individuals and groups.<sup>40</sup> Through the examination of colonial period Mesoamerican language sources – made possible by the work of scholars in the School of New Philology – NCH has successfully begun the task of returning agency to Native Americans; exploring the roles, responses, and perspectives of indigenous people and communities, the history of the conquest is now reflecting the intricacy of the multiple, diverse narratives that constitute it.<sup>41</sup>

Typically, the development of NCH scholarship is delineated across three or four key stages. Writing at the conception of NCH in the late early 1990s, James Lockhart – perhaps the most influential scholar of New Philology and NCH – identified three waves of historians: the

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<sup>40</sup> Matthew Restall identifies that the phrase ‘The New Conquest History’ was potentially coined by Susan Schroeder in 2000: see Matthew Restall, ‘The New Conquest History’, *History Compass* 10:2 (2012), 151-160 (p. 151).

<sup>41</sup> For an eloquent summary of the state of NCH, including key historiographical works and trends, see Restall, ‘The New Conquest History’, pp. 151-160. See also Matthew Restall, ‘A History and New Philology and the New Philology in History’, *Latin American Research Review* 38:1 (2003), 113-34.

first wave consisted of historians – namely William H. Prescott in the nineteenth century, but dating back to Hernando Cortés and sixteenth-century chroniclers – writing narrative histories of the conquest, focusing on simplistic military victories/defeats as told through the Spanish chronicles.<sup>42</sup> In this triumphalist version of history, the Nahuas of Tenochtitlan were portrayed as barbarians, Castilian victory was assumed, and Castilian perspectives – presented as the only perspectives – were privileged.<sup>43</sup> These ‘epic historians’ were succeeded by those centring their (often straightforward or naïve) analyses on reports created by those of formal institutions, like friars, priests and officials.<sup>44</sup> Robert Ricard led this movement of ‘early institutionalists’, who ‘tended to see the quick replacement of indigenous elements or structures as European equivalents.’<sup>45</sup> Certainly, Ricard’s studies on the Franciscans in Mexico spearheaded what has become known as ‘The Spiritual Conquest’ perspective, which – like that of the ‘epic Spanish Conquest’ – presents a heavily triumphalist view of events.<sup>46</sup>

This ‘displacement model’ or ‘Ricardian view’ was soon challenged, with scholars moving to give more weight to the indigenous side of the story.<sup>47</sup> This effort (the third wave) was pioneered by Charles Gibson, whose work demonstrated the wide-reaching indigenous survival in the post-conquest period, and the essentialness of existing indigenous mechanisms for the structures implanted by the Castilians.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, ‘the extent of [Spanish] success depended precisely upon the acceptance and retention of indigenous elements and patterns that in many respects were strikingly close to those of Europe.’<sup>49</sup> As Gibson concludes his examination of Tlaxcala, although indigenous society no longer existed independently post-conquest, ‘it could still function as before,’ and did so up till the late sixteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Significantly, Gibson explores Tlaxcalan ‘responses’ to Cortés, as well as their ‘choices’ during and after the conquest – choices that spoke to the Tlaxcalteca’s ‘willingness’ to pursue ‘complex methods of withdrawal

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<sup>42</sup> James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 2; Restall, ‘The New Conquest History’, p. 152. William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, ed. by John Foster Kirk, 2 vols (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901 (1st pub. 1843)).

<sup>43</sup> Susan Schroeder, ‘Introduction: the Genre of Conquest Studies’, in *Indian Conquistadors: Indigenous Allies in the Conquest of Mesoamerica*, ed. by Laura E. Matthew & Michel R. Oudijk (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Restall, ‘The New Conquest History’, p. 152; Schroeder, ‘Introduction’, p. 4. Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: an Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523-1572*, trans. by Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966).

<sup>47</sup> Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, p. 3 & p. 4, respectively.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4; Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1952 (reissued 1967)).

<sup>49</sup> Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Gibson, *Tlaxcala*, p. 192.

or rebuttal.<sup>51</sup> In other words, Gibson begins to chart the agency and action of Tlaxcalteca in their 1519 encounter with the Castilians, though predominately in the colonial period.

Following Gibson came other scholars who, as Restall acknowledges, ‘anticipated NCH approaches to a degree that arguably inspired them.’<sup>52</sup> Lockhart’s wealth of works falls here, as does Inga Clendinnen’s *Ambivalent Conquests* (1987) – a pioneering work that is ‘multi-visioned’ (to borrow from Greg Denning) in its approach to encounter, presenting numerous Spanish perspectives to the conquest, as well as an indigenous one.<sup>53</sup> Louise Burkhart’s foundational work *The Slippery Earth* (1989) is similarly notable for its deconstruction of the ‘Spiritual Conquest,’ with Burkhart’s examination of Nahuatl, Latin and Spanish documents revealing Nahua understandings of Catholicism, and the deeper complexity of the spiritual encounter.<sup>54</sup> Returning to Lockhart’s work, *We People Here* (1993) is particularly notable. As Restall highlights again in his eloquent review of the development of NCH, in this work Lockhart ‘took the potential’ of Miguel León-Portilla’s *The Broken Spears* (1962) ‘and fully realised it’; whilst *The Broken Spears* had told the story of the conquest of Mexico from Nahua perspectives, the way in which it presented its sources meant that it was both used and misused, in scholarship and in the classroom.<sup>55</sup> Drawing on the examples of Lockhart and Clendinnen, Restall’s work is key for students and scholars alike: of particular mention are *Maya Conquistador* (1998), *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (2003) – one myth being that of the White Gods.<sup>56</sup>

For Schroeder, this scholarship fell into two broader, emerging categories or trends: ‘Loser History, or the Conquest of Mexico as a Nonevent’ that challenged the triumphalist narrative of Spanish conquest(s), and ‘the Indians as the Conquerors,’ which focuses on the stories of Indians who joined forces with the Spaniards during and after the conquest of Tenochtitlan – ‘those who

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<sup>51</sup> Gibson, *Tlaxcala*, p. 193.

<sup>52</sup> Restall, ‘The New Conquest History’, p. 152.

<sup>53</sup> Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings, Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, and Self* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 226.

<sup>54</sup> Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989). See also Restall, ‘The New Conquest History’, p. 153; Schroeder, ‘Introduction’, p. 8. For religious syncretism, see also Pete Sigal, *The Flower and the Scorpion: Sexuality and Ritual in Early Nahua Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: the Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> Restall, ‘The New Conquest History’, p. 153; Miguel León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992). For Wood, Nathan Wachtel’s *Vision of the Vanquished* (1977) ‘strikes a similar tone’ to *The Broken Spears* with regard to its title, as does Bonilla’s *Los Conquistados*: see Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 7. Nathan Wachtel, *The Vision of the Vanquished: the Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes, 1530-1570*, translated by Ben & Siân Reynolds (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1977).

<sup>56</sup> Matthew Restall, *The Maya World: Yucatec Culture and Society, 1550-1850* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Matthew Restall, *Maya Conquistador* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998); Restall, *Seven Myths*.

went to conquer enemy Indians by being model colonizers.<sup>57</sup> Research on the Indian Conquistadors (or *indios conquistadores*) has been especially informative for this study: Laura Matthew and Michel Oudijk's *Indian Conquistadors* (2007) merits highlighting here.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the essays in *The Conquest All Over Again* (2010) strongly contribute to NCH's effort, which 'boldly shifts attention from the familiar, singular Spanish version of what transpired [...] and compliments, but challenges, it with a new, vital literature produced by and for the natives themselves.'<sup>59</sup>

Emerging as a recognisable school in the decade and a half since 2000, NCH has undoubtedly informed, and inspired, much of this study.<sup>60</sup> Matthew Restall's latest monograph *When Montezuma Met Cortés* (2018), published in the very final stages of this project, reflects the continuing strength of this field.<sup>61</sup> In deconstructing the triumphalist narrative of the conquest of Mexico and the Cortésian legend – along with other 'myths' like Cortés as a god, Moctezuma as fearful – Restall uses the meeting of Moctezuma and Cortés as a focal point, tracing the representation of this meeting in contemporary sources and those produced in the centuries that followed. Of particular mention with regard to this study is Restall's examination of Moctezuma's zoo for new insights to the *tlatoani*'s response to the Castilian newcomers: for Restall, Moctezuma was a 'collector' who actively sought to draw the strangers in, 'as collected guests, as unwitting zoo specimens.'<sup>62</sup> Essentially, this hypothesis reflects a shift towards examining *initial* indigenous responses to the Castilians, framing (a powerful) Moctezuma's actions within existing structures, and on indigenous terms.

In this regard, this study shares a very similar approach to that taken by Restall, in that it seeks to trace indigenous responses to European newcomers, theorise what such responses may reveal about indigenous perceptions or identifications of the newcomers, and, in doing so, challenge notions of European power and authority during the encounter. Yet, whilst Restall examines representations of Moctezuma and Cortés' meeting over the centuries that followed – a new, innovative approach to the study of the conquest – this study remains focused on more contemporary accounts. In seeking to uncover indigenous responses to, and perceptions of, the

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<sup>57</sup> Schroeder, 'Introduction', pp. 9-13 and pp. 13-24, respectively (p. 21).

<sup>58</sup> *Indian Conquistadors: Indigenous Allies in the Conquest of Mesoamerica*, ed. by Laura E. Matthew & Michel R. Oudijk (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007). Florine G. L. Asselbergs, 'The Conquest in Images: Stories of Tlaxcalteca and Quauquecholteca Conquistadors', pp. 65-101, has been an especially informative essay during this study.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Schroeder, 'Introduction', in *The Conquest All Over Again: Nahuas and Zapotecs Thinking, Writing, and Painting Spanish Colonialism*, ed. by Susan Schroeder (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic press, 2010), p. 8. In this collection, Travis Barton Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion: Sixteenth-Century Tlaxcalan Pictorials in Response to the Conquest of Mexico', pp. 41-73, has been particularly key for this study.

<sup>60</sup> Restall delineates NCH into three stages: 'the centuries of conquest history and historiography that led up to 1990; the formative period of the 1990s; and the decade since 2000, when the NCH coalesced as a recognizable school': Restall, 'The New Conquest History,' p. 151.

<sup>61</sup> Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222. For Moctezuma's zoo and collector identity, see chapter 4 in particular.

European strangers – the *people* – they encountered during moments of early contact on a personal, one-to-one level, this study thus takes a different angle to wider NCH scholarship focused on indigenous responses to, and perspectives of, the *processes* of conquest and subsequent colonisation. Accordingly, this study is *not* a general history of first encounters or conquest (the ‘bigger’ picture), nor does it examine later indigenous responses (like accommodation or passive and active resistance, or indigenous agency in terms of cultural, religious and societal survival) to the new colonial order: it is a study of strangers, of unfamiliar faces, meeting for the first time (the ‘smaller’ picture), and how their early responses to, and relationship/s with, each other are portrayed in the historical record.

### Conceptual Frameworks: the Other & Space

One of this study’s main aims is to approach indigenous perceptions of European newcomers on their *own* terms. In doing so, a deeper understanding of indigenous ideas of strangeness or difference during early moments of encounter is found, and a more nuanced presentation of the contact situation is achieved. To do this, I have taken a number of measures to ensure that indigenous perspectives remain at the fore, namely by critiquing the application or use of ‘the Other’ in the study of indigenous views, and through exploring how the very space in which the early moments of encounter took place can be defined. This conceptual work aims identifies ways in which indigenous agency and power can be more effectively realised and presented, in this study and in historical writing more widely.

#### i. *The Other*

Above all, during this study I have taken a conscious decision to move away from uses of the Other/Othering to describe indigenous perceptions of the Christian strangers they encountered: developed within the context of European history, of Europe’s relationship with peoples and places near and far, the Other/ing is somewhat steeped in Eurocentrism. Accordingly, this study takes a new approach and explicitly argues that theories of Othering, and/or designations of the Other, should not be applied to non-Western peoples’ views of those different to themselves. Edward Said’s cornerstone work *Orientalism* (1978), which follows the work of Hegel – who, in the late eighteenth century, first conceptualised the Other as a component of the Self – and other thinkers, has been particularly influential in thinking concerning the Other (or the invention of

the Other).<sup>63</sup> The Other has come to occupy a central place in historical studies, with the term widely used to examine relationships between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ of domination and subordination, and to present the idea that a person, group or culture (the Self) defines their identity in opposition to another’s. As has been noted already, for example, the Other is prevalent in scholarship concerning medieval Europe’s preconceptions of the edges of the earth, particularly in the development of the monstrous Carib or Cannibal figure.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Columbus’ initial ethnographic descriptions of the Taíno have often been explored through the framework of the Other, as have those written by later explorers who landed on different shores.

Similarly, the notion or language of Otherness is detectable in a range of scholarship focused on the early encounters in Mesoamerica, most clearly in the debate over the extent to which indigenous groups could assimilate the European newcomers. Comparable to the division between indigenous categorisations of Europeans as ‘gods’ or ‘not gods,’ scholarly approaches to indigenous perceptions of Europeans have also been divided along the lines of radical difference and sameness. A general trend is that scholars who accept and promote the apotheosis myth – such as León-Portilla, Todorov, and Villoro – present the encounter as one of ‘unacceptable otherness’ that ‘immobilized’ indigenous groups, in which one or neither side can accommodate the other’s differences; conversely, those who deconstruct the myth tend to recognise similarities between the two encountering cultures, focusing more on incorporation and sameness than radical difference.<sup>65</sup> Of course, there are scholars who stand apart from this pattern: Inga Clendinnen, for example, refutes the idea that Cortés and his men were received as gods by the Indians, yet emphasises the ‘unassuageable otherness’ of the two groups.<sup>66</sup> In terms of incorporation and sameness, the idea of extreme otherness contrasts the aforementioned work of Gillespie, Bassett, and others, that promotes notions of assimilation; Spaniards were placed within *existing* roles and categories of identities.

This paradigm of ‘everyday encounter,’ if you will, is strongly advocated by Lockhart: arguing that there is no evidence in everyday life that indigenous groups responded to the arrival of Europeans in shock or awe, Lockhart foregrounds the notion that Spaniards were taken as part of the existing world.<sup>67</sup> There was, for Lockhart, no new Other; the world was perceived in terms

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<sup>63</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894); Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1978).

<sup>64</sup> For criticism of Said’s theory, see, for example, Homi K. Bhabha ‘The Other Question... Homi K. Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse’, *Screen*, 24.6 (1983), 18-36 (pp. 24-28); James Clifford, ‘On Orientalism’, in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, ed. by James Clifford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 225-76. See also Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> Luis Villoro, ‘Unacceptable Otherness’, *Diogenes*, 159 (1992), 57-68 (p. 1). For a summary of the view of Todorov and others, see Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, pp. 15-18.

<sup>66</sup> Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’”, p. 94.

<sup>67</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 5. For a summary of Lockhart’s position, and those who have adopted it, see Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, pp. 18-19.

of ‘we’ and ‘they’ – ‘we’ being those from one’s own *altepetl*, ‘they’ being those from another.<sup>68</sup> Rather than being a radically different Other, the Spaniards were instead just another *altepetl* vying for power, ‘woven fairly seamlessly into the [historical] tapestry [...] – not usually as monsters or gods.’<sup>69</sup> Indeed, as this study will demonstrate, indigenous responses to the arrival of the Christian strangers ranged from aggression to indifference – or, indeed, complete silence. Outside of the narratives produced in Tenochtitlan or Tlatelolco, for example, other indigenous groups seem more concerned about Mexica inroads than Spanish ones: for Jorge Klor de Alva, like Lockhart, ‘each saw all others who were not their allies as the “other”, whether Indian or Spanish.’<sup>70</sup>

Placing the indigenous-European early encounters within the larger context of encounters and conquests that came before is undoubtedly important; the indigenous-European encounters were, of course, one of many encounters Native Americans had with strangers, albeit the most ‘extreme’ one. Some scholars, such as Harris, have gone so far as to critique the focus given to the ‘coming of the white people,’ and the use of the conquest of Mexico as a defining tool for the periodisation of Central American history (pre-conquest; conquest; post-conquest).<sup>71</sup> Haefeli goes further, arguing that the notion of ‘first’ encounter should be eschewed altogether.<sup>72</sup>

In a study focused upon a comparative reading of ‘first’ encounters, it is difficult to not place emphasis on European arrival; likewise, considering the commonplace of pre/post-conquest and similar designations in scholarship, it would be both challenging and confusing to avoid using such terms altogether. However, it is important to acknowledge issues of periodisation, here: as for the Caribbean scholarship, it seems that Eurocentric definitions of historical periods is potentially damaging in efforts to explore indigenous perspectives. One wonders, perhaps, if instead of a late medievalist or early modernist, studying pre- or post-conquest Mesoamerican history, one could identify themselves as a historian of the Fifth World? Sadly, probably not, as it would be unlikely that scholars outside of Mesoamerican studies would know what it was you were doing. In sum, though, this study adheres to the view that early moments of encounter between indigenous groups and Europeans were part of the *continuous* history of Mesoamerica (following Lockhart’s approach), as opposed to representing a rupture. Yet, the division of scholarship between ‘encounter as rupture’ and ‘encounter as seamless continuity’ seems almost too polarised: could the difference of Europeans be accommodated into the indigenous worldview without representing a rupture in perceptions of time? The notion of radical difference and historical continuity are arguably not mutually exclusive phenomena.

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<sup>68</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 13-14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>70</sup> J. Jorge Klor de Alva, ‘Forward’, in *The Broken Spears*, p. xxi; Lockhart, *We People Here*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>71</sup> Harris, “‘The Coming of the White People’”, pp. 10-11, p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> Haefeli, ‘On First Contact’, p. 413.

With that said, let us refocus our attention back to the Other. Presenting native views of Europeans as ‘possibly “different” kinds of beings,’ Wood frames her exploration of indigenous-authored portraits of Spaniards as a ‘search for a possible *other* other.’<sup>73</sup> This phrasing of the ‘*other* other’ is of particular note; it conveys the Lockhart school of thought with regard to Spaniards as ‘just another *altepetl*,’ but concurrently indicates that there was an increased sense of dissimilarity between the Spaniards and other, more familiar out-groups. This is the position this study most closely aligns with: indigenous groups came to terms with the Christian newcomers by incorporating them into their thought world, but, at the same time, the exacerbated strangeness of the Christians should not be ignored or reduced; they were more different than others.

The lowercase ‘o’ in ‘other(s)’ should be highlighted here; as already outlined, this study seeks to transcend the use of uses of the Other (as theory) as far as possible: not only does its basis in Eurocentric perspectives make its applicability to non-Western views of different people questionable, but it is a concept seemingly unsuited to the study of the early moments of encounter that this study considers in a more general sense, too. This unsuitability follows two main threads: firstly, in categorising a person or people as the Other, that person or people is effectively reduced to a single, homogenous entity. For Homi Bhabha, the Other (often a stereotype) prompts an ‘arrested, fixated form of representation’ or simplification that ultimately ‘den[ies] the play of difference.’<sup>74</sup> In turn, I argue that the fixity or rigidity so inherent in notions of the Other problematically reduce the diversity and complexity of the early cross-cultural interactions at the heart of this study, and effectively constrict us from reading the multiple ways in which these encounters were represented. As such, the following analyses are much less about the construction of stereotypes, and much more about uncovering the multiplicity of responses.<sup>75</sup>

Secondly, the Other/Othering are notions that have largely been seen to operate in colonial or imperial contexts, where the relationship between the (dominant) coloniser and (subordinate) colonised are, broadly speaking, well-established. Similarly, early European accounts of the New World ‘discoveries’ – like that of Columbus – have been analysed through the frame of Othering, somewhat teleologically, as we have already established. Certainly, colonial discourse is ever-present in such accounts, with conquistadors focused on justifying their actions towards the (supposedly) subordinate indigenous peoples (presented as the Other) they encountered – as the following chapters will elucidate. However, this study places a strong challenge to the notion that the balance of power between the various indigenous groups and the European newcomers was clearly defined during the early moments of encounter. Reading against the colonial discourse

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<sup>73</sup> Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Bhabha, ‘The Other Question’, p. 27. For Bhabha’s critique of Said’s work more widely, see pp. 24-28.

<sup>75</sup> Notably, chapter IV works to *deconstruct* the stereotypical view of Malintzin, revealing the *multiple* ways she has was represented.

inherent in European accounts (and combining this reading with sources produced by indigenous authors), I will argue that the power balance in such moments was ever-shifting; in identifying instances of indigenous agency and action, it will be demonstrated that it was often the *indigenous* actor(s) who were in power-holding positions. The balance of power was fragile, mutable, and was one that ebbed and flowed from one group to another. Often, in the profusion of perceptions of one's self and others, it is hazy and difficult to ascertain who held a position of dominance. With usage of the Other/Othering implying a clear, well-established dichotomy of dominate/subordinate, coloniser/colonised, transcending such language or frameworks is an important step towards reaching a more nuanced understanding of these early contact situations.

In addition to this critique of the Other, choice of terms and voice certainly affect readings of indigenous perspectives more broadly, with linguistic choices potentially 'lead[ing] to the *suppression* of agency in a text.'<sup>76</sup> With this in mind, I have consciously sought to avoid using the passive voice – a voice that so often distances indigenous agents from their actions – when exploring the responses of indigenous groups and individuals.<sup>77</sup> By using an active voice, the actions, agency, and power, of indigenous peoples are more clearly (and more fittingly) conveyed. Thinking further about methods of foregrounding indigenous voices and non-Western worldviews, it is notable, too, that a handful of scholars have used indigenous epistemological categories to describe people and places, as opposed to the nouns given by Outsiders. Dening, for example, refers to the Marquesas Islands as 'Te Fenua' (the Land), the Marquesans as 'Te Enata' (the Men), and those who came to the Pacific islands as 'Te Ao' (Outsiders, Strangers).<sup>78</sup> Dening's consistent use of indigenous categories throughout his work is refreshing; it effectively re-empowers indigenous voices and foregrounds non-Western worldviews, strengthening Dening's claim of writing what he has termed 'double-visioned' or 'multi-visioned' history.<sup>79</sup> At the very least, the use of indigenous categories reflects that there is more than one way of knowing and understanding the world, and highlights how the indigenous perceived their own world before – and after – European encounter. For Dening, using indigenous categories returned 'something of their [Enata's] own identity [...] but more importantly, how they structured their identity in the opposition of native (enata) and stranger (aoe).'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Roberto Franzosi, Gianluca de Fazio, & Stefania Vicari, 'Ways of Measuring Agency: An Application of Quantitative Narrative Analysis to Lynchings in Georgia (1875–1930)', *Sociological Methodology*, 42 (2012), 1-42 (p. 29).

<sup>77</sup> Michael Billig, 'The Language of Critical Discourse Analysis: the Case of Nominalization', *Discourse & Society*, 19:6 (2008), 783-800 (p. 785). As well as passivisation, Billig also assesses the impact of nominalisation and reified language in reading for agency.

<sup>78</sup> Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Dening, *Beach Crossing*, p. 17, p. 226.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

In Mesoamerican historiography, James Lockhart was the first to identify Nahua indigenous categories in a similar way: in Nahuatl sources, Spaniards are called a variety of names, including *xpianome* (Christians), *caxtilteca* (Castilians), and *caxtillan haca* (Castile People); Restall, too, has identified that Spaniards more often called themselves Castilians, and how accordingly, for the Nahuas, the Castilians' *altepetl* was Caxtillan, 'making them Caxtilteca, with Cortés as their *tlahtoani*.'<sup>81</sup> Lockhart also identifies the most general category for Nahuas' vision of themselves as *nican tlaca*, meaning 'Here People.'<sup>82</sup> As Lockhart explains, *nican tlaca* could refer to any 'local, native inhabitants of Central Mexico and specifically those inhabitants in distinction to the Spaniards.'<sup>83</sup> However, the actual use of Nahua categories in NCH is small – if not detectable at all. Indeed, after identifying how the Nahua referred to themselves and the Spaniards, the indigenous categories are hardly used elsewhere in Lockhart's writing (Nahuas remain 'Nahuas'); likewise, Spaniards remain 'Spaniards' in *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, with 'Caxtilteca' only applied at intervals, and inconsistently.<sup>84</sup>

Whilst this study does not go so far as to refer to the Castilians as 'Caxtilteca,' it does use 'Castilian(s)' as its preferred designation for Cortés and his party, and other Spaniards. One wonders whether the use of *nican tlaca* could be taken up consistently in analyses of Nahua perspectives, as Te Enata is in Dening's work, and, if so, what other indigenous categories could potentially become common usage. Though this study will not refer to Nahuas by their own designation of *nican tlaca*, it will provide Taíno and Nahua terms when opportunities arise, and, in doing so, it is hoped that such language will serve as small yet significant reminders to foreground indigenous perspectives throughout. Furthermore, as chapter III elucidates in particular, using (and understanding) indigenous terms is essential in realising the variety of different categories of identity operating in indigenous worlds.

## ii. *Space*

From shores to interiors, islands to mainland, villages to cities, moments of early encounter in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica occurred in a vast multiplicity of places. Despite their aesthetic and topographical differences, the spaces that witnessed initial moments of encounter shared certain qualities; occupied by strangers, these spaces were ambiguous, liminal, and fluid (and, as this study has found, difficult to define conceptually). To gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding

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<sup>81</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 14; Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, p. 204.

<sup>82</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 13.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> Restall renames the conquest of Mexico as the 'Spanish-Aztec War' in order to challenge triumphalist narratives; however, the conflict between the Tlaxcalteca and the Castilians is dubbed the 'Caxtilteca-Tlaxcalteca war': see *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, p. xxix and p. 207, respectively.

of these spaces of encounter, the following section explores different spatial concepts, and asks: how can this invisible, in-between space of early encounter be ‘defined’?

Critically assessing different ways in which the space/s of encounter have been comprehended in historical scholarship forms an important foundation for the following chapters, for a number of reasons: firstly, ‘defining’ the space of encounter falls within the study’s wider aim of transcending Eurocentric terms and perspectives; the following analysis will thus arrive at a definition of the space that is more ‘neutral’ in its outlook, and thus more accommodating of indigenous views, agency, and power. Secondly, in deepening our understanding of the characteristics of this space, one can also gain a deeper understanding of those who traversed it. The relationship between the shared space of the contact situation and its occupants – especially those represented to foster ambiguous, ‘in-between’ identities in the source material – will become apparent in the following chapters: indeed, in a chicken-and-egg scenario, one wonders whether the in-betweenness and fluidity of the space in turn nurtured in-between identities, or whether the experience and actions of the individuals who occupied the space in turn exacerbated its ambiguity.

This relationship between the space and its occupants has been – to my knowledge – largely neglected in scholarship on early encounters. This study seeks to bridge this gap between conceptual ideas of the invisible space, and the qualities of the space as evidenced visibly on the bodies of those who traversed it, taking inspiration namely from Doreen Massey’s notion of the co-creation of space. For Massey, it is profitable to think about space ‘not as some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations,’ as ‘social relations “stretched out”’.<sup>85</sup> This idea that space and social phenomena are interlinked – that social phenomena do not merely ‘exist in’ (a singular) space – reflects why it is essential to consider the make-up of the space in which moments of early encounters took place, before turning to examine the encounters themselves. Above all, space should not be viewed as separate or detached from social phenomena, ‘as a dimension devoid of effect or implications.’<sup>86</sup>

In researching spatial concepts relevant to early encounter, I first turned to the contested term ‘frontier’. Although Frederick Jackson Turner’s ‘frontier’ has undergone many reformulations in North American historiography over the last few decades, transformed by ‘new western historians’ as ‘a zone of intercultural penetration’ that acknowledges the two-way nature of encounter, it is a problematic term that remains inextricably connected to Eurocentric perspectives, bearing connotations of a triumphalist and Eurocentric narrative of conquest.<sup>87</sup> As

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<sup>85</sup> Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Jeremy Adelman & Stephen Aron, ‘From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History’, *The American Historical Review*, 104:3 (1999), 814-841 (p. 814). Adelman and Aron also consider Herbert Eugene Bolton’s ‘borderland’ as a spatial model, pp.

Mary Louise Pratt highlights, the ‘colonial frontier’ is ‘grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe).’<sup>88</sup> As a place more often perceived as occupying the edges of the *European* known world rather than the ends of the indigenous known world, ‘frontier’ is a term unfitting for the following analyses of encounter. Indeed, looking West to East rather than East to West is an important conceptual tool for exploring the two-way nature of early encounter, as Daniel Richter demonstrates in his thought-provoking work *Facing East from Indian Country* (2001).<sup>89</sup>

Departing from the problematic connotations borne by the frontier, Pratt presents the notion of ‘contact zones,’ or ‘social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today.’<sup>90</sup> Importantly, the space in question operates in a state of flux, in constant negotiation, in which the different cultures involved are attempting to understand one another. Although this concept is focused predominately on the colonial context, the recognition Pratt gives to the ‘interactive, improvisational dimensions’ of the encounters is particularly useful for the earlier encounters.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, as ‘an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures,’ Pratt’s contact zones effectively recognise the mutual nature of the space of encounter, and its unique quality as a space for the meeting of many different kinds of strangers.<sup>92</sup>

This mutual sharing of the space of encounter by strangers is similarly reflected in Greg Dening’s ‘islands and beaches’ metaphor. This metaphor poetically describes islands and beaches as expressive of ‘the different ways in which human beings construct their worlds and for the boundaries that they construct between them.’<sup>93</sup> In the natural world of the Pacific – the ‘Sea of Islands’ – from which the metaphor was developed, one must enter and leave island realms via beaches; the same is true of the Caribbean, and other archipelagos. Dening describes these crossings as transient moments, and the space crossed as ‘in-between’ and ‘double-edged,’ reflective of the difference of both sides.<sup>94</sup> Accordingly, islands and beaches are more cultural than physical metaphors: islands are constructed by the categories, identities, and societal roles

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814-15. Considering the rapidly changing nature of known worlds in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the notion of the borderland is unfitting for this study, too; it seems to function solely in the later imperial context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North America, between developing colonial powers rather than between indigenous and European groups.

<sup>88</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing & Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>89</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>90</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Dening, *Islands & Beaches*, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Dening, *Beach Crossings*, p. 16.

and institutions envisioned by people (men and women, individuals and groups), whilst beaches, made of the people's understandings of 'us' and 'them,' are established around such islands, encompassing them.<sup>95</sup>

Taking the metaphor further, Denning argues that the wet sand created by the limits of high and low tide is 'the true beach': as 'an in-between space in an in-between space,' the void between land and ocean is exceptionally transformational, especially ambiguous.<sup>96</sup> Like Pratt's contact zones, Denning's beach echoes the borderless and fluid nature of the space of encounter and the liminality of the contact situation – for both sides. Moreover, it is a concept that counters damaging notions of space as static or immobile – notions that Massey vehemently argues against a decade and a half later – in favour of dynamism.<sup>97</sup> Rather than facing a one-directional frontier, the beach reflects the multi-directional stretch of space explored by indigenous groups and Europeans across the globe. The space of the beach is, in a way, a boundary. However, it is not a static line thinly drawn in the sand; it is dynamic, flowing, and unbounded. Moreover, Denning's 'multi-visioned' approach to the history of Pacific encounter will have undoubtedly shaped this 'islands and beaches' metaphor, as it realises the needs to envision encounters – and the space of encounter – as *multidirectional*, transcending Eastward-/Westward-facing perspectives:

'There is no "other side of the beach", no "this side of the beach" in a history of this all-impinging past. Such a history needs to be inclusive. Each side can only tell its own history by also telling the other's.'<sup>98</sup>

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Through the synthesis of numerous spatial concepts, then, certain characteristics or properties of the space in which early moments of encounter took place emerge: it is a borderless meeting place, that should escape Eurocentric connotations; it is about relationships and 'copresence'; it is improvisational, entangled, and espouses connectedness; it is not static, but fluid, ambiguous, and multidirectional. The double-visioned metaphor of 'islands and beaches' is particularly useful for this study on early moments of encounter, and, moreover, Denning's beach presents the invisible space of encounter as one reflective of interconnectedness, ambiguity, in-betweenness and fluidity – characteristics that, at times, are mirrored on the bodies of those who experienced it.

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<sup>95</sup> Denning, *Islands & Beaches*, p. 3; Denning, *Beach Crossings*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> Denning, *Beach Crossings*, pp. 16-17. Similarly, island studies scholar Gillian Beer calls (tangible) islands 'shifting entities,' whose boundaries are never quite defined: 'the shore and the sea coexist in a shifting liminality as the tide recedes and reclaims the land.' Gillian Beer, 'Island Bounds', in *Islands in History*, p. 33.

<sup>97</sup> Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, pp. 1-4 (and throughout).

<sup>98</sup> Denning, *Beach Crossings*, p. 226 & p. 13, respectively.

So: imagine a single moment of early encounter, such as Christopher Columbus' meeting with the Taíno cacique Guacanagarí; according to Denning's metaphor, this meeting takes place on a beach between each party's cultural island. Picture another encounter, perhaps Hernando Cortés' meeting with Montezuma; this takes place on a beach, too, as the participants similarly attempt to cross into one another's islands. These contact moments map out a complex constellation of meetings, occurring at different times and in different places, but all connected by the beach, or the space of encounter. As the following chapters will reflect, understanding and 'defining' the properties of the invisible space in which early moments of encounter took place can refresh our understandings of those who traversed it, whose experiences of it were often marked visually in accounts and representations of their ambiguous and in-between outward appearance. Indeed, space 'is an ever-changing social geometry of power and signification.'<sup>99</sup>

### The structure of the study

Following on from this Introduction's historiographical survey and explanation of conceptual frameworks, the first chapter of this study provides an outline of the key sources examined in the following chapters, which are divided into two 'types': alphabetic sources and pictorial sources. In doing so, it also identifies the main methodologies this study has utilised in reading European- and indigenous-authored sources for indigenous action, agency, and perspectives. These include Clifford Geertz's 'thick description,' quantitative analysis, and the use of digitised manuscripts. The main body of the study is then divided into three main chapters – 'Allies' (II), 'Enemies' (III), and 'In-betweens' (IV) – before providing a conclusion (V). Notably, the chapters are not organised in a strictly chronological or geographical order; instead, the analyses and discussions are organised thematically, flowing freely between the Caribbean and Mesoamerican early meetings.

Both chapters II and III principally focus on mapping the range of indigenous responses to Europeans, with 'Allies' exploring responses that may be interpreted as more 'positive' or amicable, and 'Enemies' considering those that indicated hostility, fear, or suspicion. Accordingly, chapter II examines the formation of friendly relations during early moments of encounter, especially through the exchange of items between indigenous actors and Europeans, whilst chapter III analyses more 'negative' responses and unfriendly relations, such as flight and violence, as well as working to complicate and deconstruct perceived friendships. In exploring friendly to hostile relations in this way, a fuller spectrum of indigenous responses emerges, as does the diversity of indigenous perceptions of the European newcomers. Chapter IV takes a

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<sup>99</sup> Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 3.

different angle, and focuses on the space and state of in-betweenness during early moments of encounter. Its principal protagonists are Europeans who came to live in indigenous communities (usually as a result of shipwreck), who I refer to as ‘beachcombers,’ and indigenous individuals who found themselves caught between the different sides of early encounters, or ‘nepantleras’ – most famously Malintzin, an indigenous woman who acted as Cortés’ translator. The indigenous in-between individuals feature across the previous two chapters, and, ultimately, are figures whose experiences epitomise many of the key themes explored in this study: indigenous agency and action, the mutability of indigenous responses, and the sharing or separation of cultural symbols.

In sum, this study asks: how did Taíno and Nahua groups and individuals respond to the European newcomers during moments of early encounter, and what insights do such responses give as to indigenous perceptions of the strangers’ identities? In response to this question, the study argues that it is essential to deconstruct and transcend Eurocentric narratives of – and approaches to – early encounter, firstly in order to view the first meetings on *indigenous* terms, and secondly to reveal instances of indigenous agency. The study will demonstrate that the contact situation was highly fragile, that indigenous responses were mutable, and indigenous perceptions of the Europeans changeable. In reading for indigenous responses in European- and indigenous-authored sources, it presents indigenous actors as *powerful*, and challenges notions of European security. It reflects the importance of exploring indigenous worldviews for understanding the interplay during early meetings, as well as their invaluableness in dismantling misinterpretations and misrepresentations of such meetings in the source material. Indeed, moments of early encounter are shown to be far from simple affairs, but messy, dynamic, and complicated.

## I

## Methods &amp; Sources

‘The old stereotype of abject and muted Indians is permanently erased and the canon debunked.’

– Susan Schroeder.<sup>1</sup>

Focusing on the first meetings of strangers, this study takes a microhistorical approach to the examination of cultural encounter. It reduces the scale of observation down to the level of personal interactions and individual experiences, concentrating on these ‘smaller’ stories.<sup>2</sup> As microhistory proponent Giovanni Levi writes, generally well-understood subjects can ‘assume completely new meanings by altering the scale of observation,’ with narrow dimensions of exploration producing more nuanced understandings of broader phenomena.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, in analysing the microscopic details of early moments of encounter with a ‘sensitivity to the specific’ (how did this certain indigenous individual respond? What can this certain gesture tell us about the actor’s perception of the gesture’s intended recipient?), this study aims to reveal previously unobserved factors in the documentary evidence, and, in turn, draw wider conclusions about the indigenous-European

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<sup>1</sup> Schroeder, ‘Introduction: the genre of conquest studies’, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Levi, ‘On Microhistory’, in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke (Gateshead: Polity Press, 1991), p. 95; Lara Putnam, ‘To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World’, *Journal of Social History*, 39:3 (2006), 615-30 (p. 615); Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Levi, ‘On Microhistory’, p. 98. For a historiographical survey of ‘the new microhistory,’ see Matti Peltonen, ‘Clues, Margins, and Monads: the Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research,’ *History & Theory*, 40 (2001), 347-348 (p. 347). Peltonen identifies two waves of key microhistorical works: that of c. 1975 (namely Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s *Montaillou* (1975), E. P. Thompson’s *Whigs and Hunters* (1975), Natalie Zemon Davis’ *Culture and Society in Early Modern France* (1975), and Carlo Ginzburg’s *The Cheese and the Worms* (1976)), and that in the early 1980s (namely Natalie Zemon Davis’ *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), and Giovanni Levi’s *Inheriting Power* (1984)). For a synthesis of the development of microhistory, see Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedschi, & Anne C. Tedeschi, ‘Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know About It’, *Critical Inquiry*, 20:1 (1993), 10-35.

encounter.<sup>4</sup> With a particular focus of microhistory being the study of those at the margins (and, while doing so, rejecting ethnocentric approaches), it is certainly a method that speaks to this study's recovery of indigenous actions and agency.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the following chapters seek to complicate the early moments of encounters they examine; like other microhistories, the study 'rejects simplifications, dualistic hypotheses, polarizations, [and] rigid typologies' in favour of fluidity, plurality, incoherencies, and peculiarities.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, to borrow from Jacques Revel, 'why make things simple when one can make them complicated?'<sup>7</sup>

Whilst the geographical scope of this study is very large, encompassing the Caribbean and Central Mexico – and even, in chapter IV, to the northern rim of the Gulf Coast and the Iberian Peninsula – the observational scale is very small.<sup>8</sup> Alphabetic and pictorial accounts and representations of early meetings between indigenous individuals and groups and Europeans will be mined for what certain gestures, body language and positioning, certain behaviours and interactions, may tell us about indigenous responses to, and perceptions of, the Christian newcomers.<sup>9</sup> It is in these minute details that deeper, more nuanced understandings of the spectrum of indigenous responses can be reached; it is these minute details and particular intricacies that elucidate the spectrum in its fullest sense. Bearing this in mind, what follows is an introduction to the primary sources which have been central to this study, the challenges they present to their readers, and how they have been approached.

In this outline of sources and methodology, I should begin by clearly stating the position this study takes with regard to the substantial historiographical debate about the use of European historic and ethnographic sources, as well as post-conquest indigenous-authored sources produced largely under European aegis, for accessing indigenous voices – and later African voices – across the Americas.<sup>10</sup> In this vast methodological minefield, I argue (like many others) that European sources *can* offer important insights into indigenous perspectives *if they are read critically and carefully*, with a high awareness of the inherent biases and colonial undercurrents that may have affected their accuracy and presentation of the people, behaviours, or events in

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<sup>4</sup> Peltonen, 'Clues, Margins, and Monads', p. 354; Levi, 'On Microhistory', p. 98; Putnam, 'To Study the Fragments/Whole', p. 616.

<sup>5</sup> Peltonen, 'Clues, Margins, and Monads', pp. 351-352; Putnam, 'To Study the Fragments/Whole', p. 615. For microhistory's 'rejection of ethnocentrism,' see Ginzburg et al., 'Microhistory', p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Levi, 'On Microhistory', p. 110 (quote); p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Revel (1989), quoted in Levi, 'On Microhistory', p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> For the tension between large scope and small scale, see Putnam, 'To Study the Fragments/Whole', which examines the use of microhistorical inquiry in Atlantic history.

<sup>9</sup> Morsink, 'Exchange as a Social Contract', argues for the essentiality of microanalysis in understanding the archaeological record, too.

<sup>10</sup> For the approach to Central American sources, see Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Clendinnen, *Aztecs*; Lockhart, *We People Here*; Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*; Wood, *Transcending Conquest*. See also the excellent collection of essays in *Indian Conquistadors: Indigenous Allies in the Conquest of Mesoamerica*, ed. by Laura E. Matthew & Michel R. Oudijk (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

question.<sup>11</sup> During the discussion on the pictorial sources, consideration will be given to the definition of ‘writing,’ and to an appraisal of the use of digitised pictorial sources – adhering to microhistory’s incorporation of the research process into its narrative frame.<sup>12</sup> Firstly, though, we turn to an outline of the key alphabetic accounts examined throughout the following chapters.

## II.I Alphabetic sources

This study explores a number of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century alphabetic texts that record moments of early indigenous-European encounter. For the most part, these sources are authored by Europeans, and therefore pose difficult challenges for historians reading for indigenous perspectives.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, this study has utilised certain methodological approaches to reach indigenous views, particularly those focused on reading ‘between the lines’ of European-authored sources. Clifford Geertz’s ‘thick description’ has been particularly informative: as part of his wider anthropological theory, Geertz – following Gilbert Ryle – identifies the need to understand culture as ‘a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures,’ containing ‘piled-up structures of inference and implication’ (thick description), rather than as an assortment of un-interpretive facts (thin description).<sup>14</sup> It is these multi-layered structures of meaning that the cultural historian must interpret, whilst considering the ways in which they interlink and overlap. According to Geertz, ‘analysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification [...] and determining their social ground and import’: it is an *interpretive* study of the flow of social discourse, exploring *microscopic* description.<sup>15</sup> It is not simply identifying the mute act, but placing the act in a framework of cultural meanings.<sup>16</sup>

Geertz’s theory has, of course, been subject to criticism over the years since its publication, as well as it being subject to simplification or uncritical use.<sup>17</sup> This study, though, continues to take inspiration from Geertz, as, from the 1970s, his work opened up ways to understand small details and fragments as meaningful, as symbolic of the wider ‘imaginative

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*, xiv-xv; Wilson, *Hispaniola*, pp. 7-14; Margarita Zamora, *Reading Columbus* (London: University of California Press, 1993), throughout.

<sup>12</sup> Levi, ‘On Microhistory’, p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> The exception is the Nahuatl text of the *Florentine Codex* (Book XII) that is considered in chapter III.

<sup>14</sup> Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9, pp. 20-1 (my emphasis).

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, ‘A touch of the real’, *Representations*, 59, Special Issue: The Fate of “Culture”: Geertz and Beyond (1997), 14-29 (p. 15).

<sup>17</sup> For an appraisal of thick description, see Greenblatt, ‘A touch of the real’. For notes on reading Geertz, see Renato I. Rosaldo Jr., ‘A note on Geertz as a cultural essayist’, *Representations*, 59, Special Issue: The Fate of “Culture”: Geertz and Beyond (1997), 30-34. For a critique of thick description, see Vincent Descombes, ‘A confusion of tongues’, *Anthropological Theory*, 2:4 (2002), 433-466.

universe' that they were recorded in.<sup>18</sup> Like Stephen Greenblatt – who critically appraises thick description – this study searches 'to find in the past real bodies and living voices, and,' as Greenblatt continues, 'if I knew that I could not find these – the bodies having long moldered away and the voices fallen silent – I could at least seize upon those traces that seemed to be close to actual experience' through the adoption of Geertz's approach.<sup>19</sup> Notably for this study, too, is the opinion that 'Geertz takes the barriers erected by cultural difference more seriously than most observers': people are seen to inhabit different worlds, hold different views of these worlds, be governed by different concepts, yet, for Geertz, the possibility of communication between these divergent worlds prevails.<sup>20</sup> In a study of early moments of cultural contact, where strangeness and difference were exacerbated, this possibility of connecting disparate worlds is essential.

In researching methods to access indigenous perspectives, I also explored James Scott's work on 'hidden transcripts' – a characterisation of discourse that 'takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by powerholders' – and research in the field of subaltern studies – most famously concerning Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'.<sup>21</sup> However, developed and utilised in a largely colonial setting *where power relations are generally well-established*, these methods of reading subordinate voices are arguably unfitting for this study. Echoing the earlier critique of the Other, I wish to reemphasise that such established power relations are not the case in the moments of early encounter this study examines, where power was often in the hands of indigenous agents. Whilst this study agrees that European-authored accounts – especially in the Caribbean context – may be what Scott characterises as the dominant or public transcripts, it urges readers to consider that the power these sources hold today is arguably not reflective of power relations during the contact situation itself. In the search for indigenous action and agency, this nuance is essential going forward.

Microanalysis and thick description are particularly important in the Caribbean context; with no indigenous-authored accounts, the European texts are our main source of information about the early encounters in 1492-1494 (i.e. during Columbus' first and second voyages). Alongside letters authored by himself and other crew members (namely Diego Alvarez Chanca), this study principally explores Columbus' *Diario* as a case study. This daily journal recording the first voyage is an immensely rich account, although one that sadly does not survive in its original form: with both the original log and the direct copy (known as the Barcelona manuscript)

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<sup>18</sup> Greenblatt, 'A touch of the real', p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Rosaldo Jr., 'Geertz as a cultural essayist', p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 4. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by P. Williams & L. Chrisman (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 66-111.

produced in 1494 lost, the *Diario* only survives through copies made by Columbus' son, Ferdinand, and Bartolomé de Las Casas. These copies partially quote and partially paraphrase the Barcelona copy, meaning that not only do historians need to deconstruct the layers of meaning preserved in the surviving text itself, but also the additional layers of interpretation created by this partial editing of the original text. Accessing Taíno views through this source, then, is undeniably challenging, and riddled with yet more methodological pitfalls than other sources for which we do have the original text, like the letters.

Nevertheless, I am in agreement with Samuel Wilson, who, after a lengthy assessment of the context in which Columbus' letter and journal from the first voyage were originally written (and later transcribed and edited), states that 'these two documents are of the most value for an analysis of the Indians of the Caribbean' – especially when combined with an interdisciplinary approach, using pre-Columbian archaeological evidence of Taíno material culture to support analyses and conclusions where possible.<sup>22</sup> The context of production should, of course, be kept in mind, but it should not prevent such sources from being used in a critical manner. As such, David Henige's *In Search of Columbus* (1991) is a useful accompaniment to any considered reading of the *Diario*: a detailed study of the context, writing, 'categories of error' and production of the sources for the first voyage, the work also traces how the primary material has been handled by modern scholars, appraising and critiquing different efforts.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this study is indebted to Henige's and other scholarly efforts with regard to critiquing the integrity, credibility, production, and so forth, of Columbus' *Diario*, which have unarguably provided important context for any research involving the source. It should be highlighted, though, that such a heavy focus on methodological issues has meant that the richness of the *Diario*'s narrative has become a secondary consideration. Therefore, whilst engaging with the methodological debates surrounding this source – and other European accounts – this study addresses this neglect, prioritising a detailed exploration into the rich and complex narrative of the *Diario* in an attempt to uncover Taíno actions and perspectives.

In order to get as close to the original source as possible, I have chosen to work from Oliver Dunn and James Kelley's edition of the *Diario*, which is now generally accepted as the definitive edition of the text: featuring a new, highly-detailed transcription of the Las Casas manuscript alongside an English translation, the original text can be referred to at ease.<sup>24</sup> Whilst I have largely relied on Dunn and Kelley's translation, I have checked the original text in instances

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson, *Hispaniola*, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> David Henige, *In Search of Columbus: the Sources for the First Voyage* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Columbus, *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493*, abstracted by Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, transcribed and translated into English with notes and a concordance of the Spanish by Oliver Dunn & James E. Kelley, Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

where I felt it necessary to examine the exact language or implications of the text. The same applies to other alphabetic accounts, and I am indebted to the efforts of other scholars that have made largely excellent translations available to the wider research community.<sup>25</sup> On the (rare) occasion where I have taken issue with a translation, I have stated so clearly, and explained my reasoning accordingly.

It is in the analysis of the *Diario* that this study will principally explore another method of tracing indigenous perspectives: quantitative analysis.<sup>26</sup> In identifying ‘types’ of indigenous responses (such as flight or exchanging items) and measuring the number of times or instances each response is recorded, a complex picture of the *Diario*’s presentation of indigenous actions emerges. As the following chapters will demonstrate, this form of analysis is not only useful as a representation of the diverse spectrum of indigenous responses recorded in the *Diario*, but also highlights the ways in which such responses are clouded by its author/editors’ discourse. This is an argument that, I assure you, will become clearer upon examining the data in the coming chapters. When combined – and only when combined – with the qualitative reading of individual instances of given responses, this method is a highly effective tool for deconstructing colonial discourse, measuring the range of indigenous responses, and, thus, revealing indigenous agency.<sup>27</sup>

For the early moments of encounter in Mesoamerica, the key European-authored sources are the letters composed by Hernando Cortés, recording his account of the conquest of Mexico.<sup>28</sup> As for those of the Caribbean encounters, Cortés’ letters will be read on a microscopic scale, focusing on small details of the face-to-face meetings between himself and indigenous figures, on gestures, signals, and symbolic action. Cortés’ account, particularly the second letter, have been selected as a case study as, significantly, they are the only ‘true’ primary sources available for the early encounters of 1519-21: all other eye-witness accounts are produced many years – even decades – after the fact. Nonetheless, this study has drawn upon a number of these

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<sup>25</sup> Of particular note is James Lockhart’s translation of both the Spanish *and* Nahuatl texts of Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*, in Lockhart, *We People Here*, pp. 48-255, as are the edited collections *The Conquistadors: First-Person Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico*, trans. & ed. by Patricia de Fuentes (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993) and *Invading Guatemala: Spanish, Nahua, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars*, ed & trans. by Matthew Restall & Florine Asselbergs (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix I for all data. Quantitative analysis was also conducted on the accounts of Diego Alvarez Chanca and Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca.

<sup>27</sup> My starting point for this method was Jeremy Mikecz, ‘An incomplete and partial conquest: a spatial history of the first decade of the Spanish invasion of Inka Peru (1532-42)’, presented at the *American Society for Ethnohistory Annual Meeting*, panel 4 (10<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Nashville TN). For the methodology of computer-assisted Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA) and the quantitative ‘measuring’ of agency, see Roberto Franzosi, Gianluca De Fazio and Stefania Vicari, ‘Ways of Measuring Agency: An Application of Quantitative Narrative Analysis to Lynchings in Georgia (1875—1930)’, *Sociological Methodology*, 42 (2012), 1-42.

. It should be noted that I have not used computer software to conduct the data collection in this study.

<sup>28</sup> Hernando Cortés, *Letters from Mexico (Cartas de relación)*, ed. & trans. by Anthony Pagden, with an introduction by John H. Elliott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

retrospective accounts for depth, breadth and balance, particularly that of Bernal Díaz de Castillo, and – for the later conquest of Guatemala – the letters of Pedro de Alvarado.<sup>29</sup> Cortés had his own motivations for writing, after all – just as all authors, European or indigenous, did.

Fortunately, in the case of Mesoamerican encounters, European-authored texts can be explored alongside indigenous-authored sources – as well as archaeological findings.<sup>30</sup> As the following part of this chapter details, this study has focused here on sixteenth-century pictorial manuscripts that depict early meetings between indigenous groups and Europeans. As the method of writing that existed before European arrival, these sources are widely regarded as the ‘purest’ records of indigenous views. Accordingly, this study has privileged pictorials above alphabetic Nahuatl histories produced by indigenous or mestizo writers. The exception to this is the consideration of Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*’s Nahuatl text (translated into English by James Lockhart), which is explored mainly in chapter III. Lastly, chapter IV considers one final ‘type’ of alphabetic account: those written by beachcombers, or Europeans who found themselves in positions of in-betweenness. Significantly, this study follows Denning’s argument that these texts offer unique insights into indigenous responses to the European strangers who worked to integrate themselves into indigenous society, offering very different perspectives to accounts produced by outsiders.<sup>31</sup>

In its careful and critical reading of European-authored, alphabetic texts, then, this study aims to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of such ethnographic accounts through the implementation of Geertz’s thick description and Scott’s reading of hidden transcripts. Such methods are used as a platform for gaining access to moments of indigenous actions and thoughtfulness through attention to microscopic detail, but are not taken wholesale. In the colonial context of subaltern studies, methods like Scott’s hidden transcripts tend, by nature, to assume or imply that power relations are concrete and well established, rather than fluid and dynamic as those of early moments of encounter were. As the following chapters will demonstrate, a combined quantitative and qualitative reading is an effective and useful means of concurrently deconstructing colonial discourse in European-authored texts and revealing instances of indigenous agency, as well as of gathering a clearer understanding of the diverse spectrum of indigenous responses to the strangers who arrived on their shores. In addition, any reading for indigenous responses in European texts should be combined with evidence from indigenous

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<sup>29</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. by John M. Cohen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963); Pedro de Alvarado, ‘Letter Written in the Occupied K’iche’ Maya Capital of Utatlán, April 11, 1524’, in *Invading Guatemala*, pp. 27-35 & ‘Letter Written in the Occupied Kaqchikel Maya Capital of Iximche’, July 28, 1524’, in *Invading Guatemala*, pp. 36-47. Other accounts include Fray Francisco de Aguilar, ‘The Chronicle of Fray Francisco de Aguilar’, in *The Conquistadors*, pp. 134-64; Gómara, *Cortés*; Diego Durán, *The Aztecs: the History of the Indies of New Spain*, trans. with notes by Doris Heyden & Fernando Horcasitas (New York: Orion Press, 1964).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the excellent collection of research in the *Oxford Handbook of the Aztecs*.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Denning, *Beach Crossings*, p. 270.

perspectives, and, accordingly, this interdisciplinary study explores archaeological findings and, for the Mesoamerican encounters, indigenous-authored records. It is to these pictorial sources that the discussion will now turn.

## II.II Pictorial sources

‘Any search for indigenous Mexican views of the Spanish invaders and settlers should [...] start with native colonial pictorial records.’

– *Stephanie Wood*.<sup>32</sup>

Alongside the aforementioned alphabetic texts, this study explores a number of sixteenth-century, indigenous-authored pictorial manuscripts that depict moments of early indigenous-European encounter in a visual form. As will be seen shortly, these manuscripts come in various forms, varying in size (23cm in width to 5 metres), material (*amatl* or bark paper, European paper, and cloth), and structure (time-oriented, event-oriented, and cartographic). The pictorials or painted books (as they are often termed in scholarship) were created by the *tlacuiloque* or indigenous painter-scribes, and ‘compose a graphic system that keeps and conveys knowledge [...] that presents ideas.’<sup>33</sup> Aztec and Mixtec pictorials are therefore of a semasiographic nature, in that they convey meaning/s ‘directly to the reader without usually having to form words’; they also have phonetic components (usually in the form of name glyphs or place signs), with meaning also conveyed through more arbitrary marks and abstractions.<sup>34</sup>

The forms of visual expression used across pictorials has been a particular point of contention in scholarship, especially with regard to whether such expression is a form of writing. Such scholarly debates have been exacting and precise, with positions on how ‘writing’ should be defined differing between different fields. Writing specialists studying the history of writing, for example, argue that writing is inextricably tied to spoken language, propagating the (very western) notion that writing is limited to recorded speech.<sup>35</sup> Scholars of Aztec and Mixtec pictography, however, have confronted this commonly held idea of writing as alphabetic script,

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<sup>32</sup> Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Hill Boone, ‘Introduction: Writing and Recording Knowledge’, in *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*, ed. by Elizabeth Hill Boone & Walter D. Mignolo (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 3. Most *tlacuiloque* were men, but there is evidence of women taking this role in the *Codex Telleriano Remensis*: see Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black*, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, p. 31, pp. 31-32. See also Hill Boone, ‘Writing and Recorded Knowledge’, pp. 16-19.

<sup>35</sup> Hill Boone, ‘Writing and Recorded Knowledge’, p. 5.

with particular zeal for the notion that alphabetic writing is a ‘universal cultural goal.’<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Hill Boone is a leading figure in the search for ‘a broader, more encompassing definition of writing, one that embraces nonverbal systems,’ – including today’s musical, choreographic, cartographic and mathematic notations, amongst other systems – and challenges the treatment of Mesoamerican pictography as a form of preliteracy, lying somewhere at the beginning, or outside, of the evolutionary ladder to alphabetic script.<sup>37</sup> Her challenge to such denials of pictographic systems as writing is best presented in Hill Boone’s own words, as

Based on harmfully narrow views of what are *thoughts* and *knowledge* and what constitutes the expression of these thoughts and this knowledge, and they summarily dismiss the indigenous Western Hemisphere [...] An expanded epistemological view would, and should, allow all notational systems to be encompassed.<sup>38</sup>

This study certainly supports such scholarly efforts to reappraise standard, limited definitions of writing, and the ethnocentricisms that surround them. Evolutionary models of writing reflect, above all, that writing is an ‘entire cultural category’ that has often been utilised to define civilised societies from barbaric or primitive ones: it is not simply a notational system.<sup>39</sup> In presenting Mesoamerican pictography as non-writing, indigenous Americans have, in turn, been subjected to such determinations in past scholarship; pertinently, Todorov’s denial of writing sat well with his rhetoric of conquest that pitted the inadequate, indigenous Other against the superior European.<sup>40</sup> This is certainly not the impression this study wishes to give. It is with this in mind that the above summation of the *alphabetic*, written sources explored in this study includes the caveat of ‘alphabetic’: importantly, rather than classing the corpuses of primary material as ‘written’ or ‘pictorial,’ this choice of descriptor speaks to Hill Boone’s call for a broader, more inclusive definition of ‘writing.’ In short, this study sees both European-authored, alphabetic accounts and indigenous-authored, pictorial histories as *written* documents.

In seeing the images in pictorials as the text of the manuscript, as a form of writing, it can be more fully understood as ‘a system with its own vocabulary and grammar, its own signifiers, and structures.’<sup>41</sup> There is a growing abundance of scholarship focused on this more practical aspect of ‘reading’ the pictorials, increasingly in coordination with broader scholarly efforts to recover the indigenous voice using Nahuatl texts. Hill Boone’s work on Aztec and Mixtec

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, p. 29. For a critical summation and evaluation of scholarship regarding the evolutionary trajectory of writing, see Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, p. 4, p. 29; Hill Boone, ‘Writing and Recorded Knowledge’, pp. 4-14.

<sup>38</sup> Hill Boone, ‘Writing and Recorded Knowledge’, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> Todorov, *The Conquest of America*; Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, p. 29.

pictography has been particularly informative for the context of this study. As well as critically positioning pictorials within debates about ‘writing,’ Hill Boone’s work ranges from examinations of the conventions and structures of pictorials, to provision of practical guidance on general laws of reading them for modern readers – guidance that has been essential throughout this study.<sup>42</sup>

In seeking to develop a typology of more than 160 extant pictorial documents in her book *Stories in Red and Black* (2000), Hill Boone follows the scholarly traditions of Donald Robertson, whose ground breaking work *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period* (1959) provided the first classificatory system for colonial-era pictorials (based on painting styles), and H. B. Nicholson, who was the first to develop a typology that encompassed the full spectrum of Central American pictorials.<sup>43</sup> This study will examine pictorials from all three of Robertson’s (and thus Hill Boone’s) main stylistic categories: time-oriented histories (following a timeline, like annals), event-oriented histories or *res gestae* (following a sequence of events), and place-oriented histories (organised around geographical location, like cartographic histories).<sup>44</sup> There are also documents that fall into another category identified by Hill Boone, or rather, that fall into more than one of the three categories: a number of colonial pictorials combine different presentation forms, with *tlacuiloque* or painter-scribes blending event-oriented and cartographic styles, or annals and event-oriented styles, to circumvent certain restraints each style comes with.<sup>45</sup> We will turn to the specifics of these pictorials shortly.

Importantly, the work of Robertson, Nicholson, and Hill Boone, has drawn pictorials more fully into scholarly approaches to colonial history and discourse, as have the efforts of others, namely, Mary Elizabeth Smith, Joyce Marcus, Dana Leibsohn and Barbara Mundy.<sup>46</sup> Such scholars of pictography would certainly be in opposition to Lockhart – in this instance – for

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<sup>42</sup> Hill Boone, *Red and Black*; Hill Boone, ‘Writing and Recorded Knowledge’; Elizabeth Hill Boone, ‘Pictorial Documents & Visual Thinking in Postconquest Mexico’, in *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World: a symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> October 1992*, ed. by Elizabeth Hill Boone & Tom Cummins (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library & Collection, 1998), pp. 149-200. For the ‘revolution of modes of expression – the passage from pictograph to alphabetic writing’ in the early colonial period, see Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: the Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, trans. by Eileen Corrigan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), especially pp. 6-69.

<sup>43</sup> Donald Robertson, *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: the Metropolitan Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) (see also the latest edition with a foreword by Elizabeth Hill Boone (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1994)); For Hill Boone’s summary and assessment of Robertson’s and Nicholson’s work, see Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, pp. 6-10; Hill Boone, ‘Pictorial Documents & Visual Thinking’, p. 149.

<sup>44</sup> Robertson, *Mexican Manuscript Painting*; Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, pp. 82-85.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Elizabeth Smith’s *Picture Writing from Ancient Southern Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973) is still considered a key work with regard to Mixtec pictography’s conventions and structure. Another much-used text is Joyce Marcus’ *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth, and History in Four Ancient Civilizations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), which eloquently explores pictorial sources from four different cultures – Aztec, Mixtec, Zapotec, and Maya.

suggesting that painted books were merely ‘handouts’ or supplementary aides to memory for the oral telling or performances of the histories they capture.<sup>47</sup> In taking a number of pictorials as case studies, this study is in line with this broader work to incorporate painted histories into the telling of the history of early moments of encounter, and aims to highlight their value to a fuller understanding of indigenous responses to Europeans. In this study, pictorials are not considered as supplementary sources or as side notes; they are a central point of enquiry. As will be demonstrated, the histories that the *tlacuiloque* tell are not a visual representation of other (European) alphabetic accounts; they tell their own, unique stories from their own, unique perspectives. Neither (alphabetic nor pictorial) is ‘superior’ or more ‘correct’ than the other; both types of histories require a careful and critical reading.

This study chose pictorial histories as a key corpus of primary material from the outset, mainly due to their continuity with indigenous tradition. Adopting the mode of writing and record-keeping used by Nahuas prior to the conquest, post-conquest pictorials are largely seen to provide a ‘more “authentic” vision’ of the past, and ‘have properly been judged as the “purest” sources we have’ – as Caroline Pennock and Inga Clendinnen highlight, respectively.<sup>48</sup> Such remarks emerge from the growing criticism of indigenous Nahuatl testimonies, which have come under increasing scrutiny for their distortion of ‘authentic voices’: scholars such as Enrique Florescano, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, and Walter Mignolo have led the charge that alphabetic texts are one or more steps removed from the indigenous voice, presenting the notion that ‘even the “purest” Nahuatl text is radically transformed by becoming alphabetic’ – as Hill Boone summarises.<sup>49</sup> There has, unsurprisingly, been a subsequent swathe of scholarship responding that rigorous work *can* uncover indigenous voices in alphabetic texts. Pennock is a strong proponent of this argument in her excellent work on pre-Hispanic Aztec culture, *Bonds of Blood* (2008), emphasising that such a recovery requires a ‘careful and critical use of the documents available.’<sup>50</sup> As previously elucidated in the summary of this study’s use of alphabetic accounts, this is certainly the position this study adopts, taking the notion that ‘careful and critical’ reading can reach indigenous perspectives – or, at least, actions.

Of course, being the ‘purest’ source of indigenous perspectives does not mean that pictorials are without their methodological challenges. Resonating the phrase ‘a picture speaks a thousand words,’ pictorial images can provoke myriad interpretations, some being much closer

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<sup>47</sup> Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, p. 335. For Hill Boone’s critique of Lockhart’s statement, see ‘Pictorial Documents’, pp. 192-193. For the counter-notion that the oral expression was accessory to the document itself, see Hill Boone, ‘Pictorial Documents’, pp. 192-193; Hill Boone, ‘Aztec Pictorial Histories: Records Without Words,’ in *Writing Without Words*, pp. 71-72. That said, the skill of eloquent speech was valued in Nahua society: see Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, p. 399.

<sup>48</sup> Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. 3; Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, p. 402.

<sup>49</sup> Hill Boone, *Red and Black*, pp. 6-7 (p. 6).

<sup>50</sup> Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. 9.

to the *tlacuilo*'s original intent than others. The 'text-oriented' nature of western society certainly makes the reading of visual sources even more challenging.<sup>51</sup> Yet, with the work of pictography specialists, scholars' confidence in ascertaining approximations of intended meanings of gestures and poses, of identifying encoded details, has grown; as Wood writes, this careful interpretative work is conducted with full awareness 'that the loss inherent in not trying makes the risk of failure worthwhile' – a sentiment conveyed by Pennock in her work on alphabetic texts, too.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Wood continues, 'truth and meaning – however multiple, relative, tentative, or illustrative they may be – are still highly worthwhile objects of pursuit, whether they hide behind words or behind images.'<sup>53</sup>

Alongside the interpretative challenges presented by the pictorial writing system, this study also draws to light multiple ways in which the content of each pictorial is shaped by those who produced it. Whilst pictorials are considered to be the least influenced by European aegis, the 'Europeanisation' of post-conquest codices cannot be contested: there are undoubtedly changes in their format and style (not to mention the very material they were painted on), as well as the needs they responded to in the colonial era.<sup>54</sup> European influence in pictorials was recognised back in the late 1950s by Robertson – whose assessment of painting style considered the pictorials' colonial nature – and has been a prominent theme in scholarship; Travis Barton Kranz's work on the development of the Tlaxcalan pictorials has been particularly informative during this study, and is explored at various points throughout the main analysis.<sup>55</sup> It is also essential to be aware that just as pictorials served the needs of an indigenous administration before the conquest, the painted manuscript tradition continued to function as 'an elite enterprise directed upward toward, or used by, those in authority' after the conquest.<sup>56</sup> Throughout its examinations of pictorials, this study therefore critically explores the purpose or function(s) of a given pictorial, and consider the extent to which such purpose or function(s) may have affected its content.<sup>57</sup> Incorporating key historiography along the way, it also asks: to what extent may authors have benefitted from portraying events in certain ways, or even, in cases, from omitting certain events altogether? What indigenous responses are found, or lost, in a given pictorial? Indeed, it is worth

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<sup>51</sup> Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, p. 393.

<sup>52</sup> Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 11; Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Gordon Brotherston, *Painted Books from Mexico: Codices in UK Collections and the World They Represent* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), p. 17.

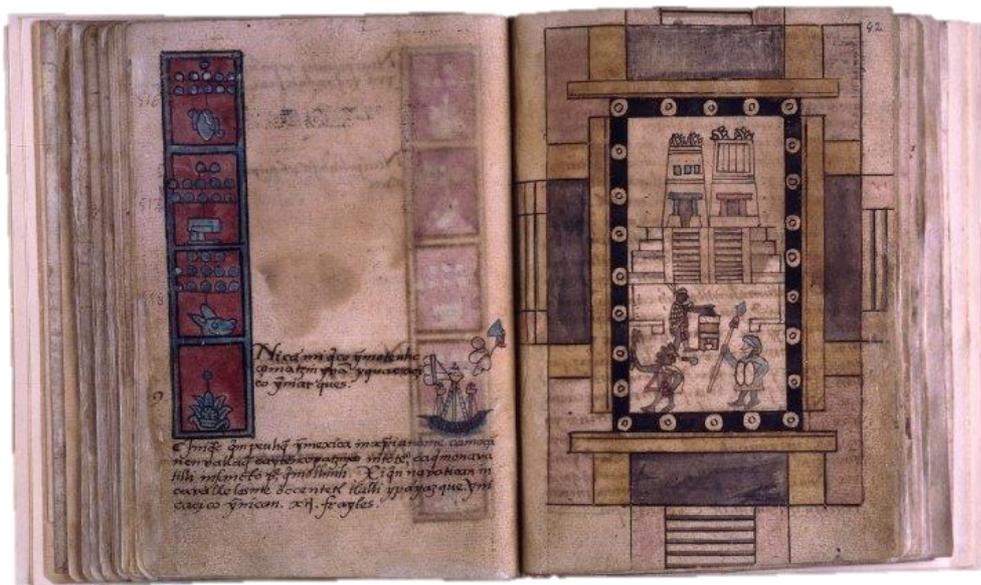
<sup>55</sup> Robertson, *Mexican Manuscript Painting*; Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion'; Kranz, 'Sixteenth-Century Tlaxcalan Pictorial Documents on the Conquest of Mexico', in *Sources and Methods for the Study of Postconquest Mesoamerican Ethnohistory*, ed. by James Lockhart, Lisa Sousa, and Stephanie Wood (Eugene, OR: Wired Humanities Projects, University of Oregon): <<http://whp.uoregon.edu/Lockhart/index.html>> [accessed 12 April 2018].

<sup>56</sup> Hill Boone, 'Pictorial Documents,' p. 165.

<sup>57</sup> *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World*, ed. by Hill Boone & Cummins, and *Writing Without Words*, ed. by Hill Boone & Mignolo are two key edited collections of essays that critically consider such methodological issues.

reiterating that being the ‘purest’ source of indigenous perspectives does not mean that pictorials should be dealt with any less critically than any other primary document.

Importantly, this study has sought to contribute to the efforts of the aforementioned scholars who are drawing pictorials more fully into the approaches to the colonial past. As Wood expresses, ‘we historians can be overdependent upon the written word, rooted as we are in the analysis of textual documents, often preferably of European genres.’<sup>58</sup> In exploring sixteenth-century, pictorial representations of early moments of indigenous-European encounter, this study, like Wood’s work, hopes to ‘tap into such pictorial records for insights possibly overlooked in the more usual textual sources.’<sup>59</sup> It asks: what responses to European presence do indigenous painter-scribes record, or omit, and why? Do painted records reveal any ways in which indigenous groups may have identified the European strangers? Significantly, the following chapters argue that the fullest spectrum of indigenous responses (and potential categories of identity) can only be mapped through a comparative study not just of different perspectives, but of different types of sources – archaeological, alphabetic, and pictorial.



**Fig. 1.1:** *Aubin Codex* (1576), f. 41v-f. 42r

British Museum, Am2006, Drg.31219. British Museum Collections online

<[http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details/collection\\_image\\_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=237347001&objectid=3008812](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=237347001&objectid=3008812)> [accessed 15 May 2018]

As with the alphabetic texts, this study takes a number of pictorials as case studies, conducting a detailed analysis of these documents across the main chapters. The pictorials chosen are mainly event-oriented, as this structure presented the most potential for tracing indigenous

<sup>58</sup> Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

responses; time-oriented histories, or annals, will be drawn upon as complementary (or contrary) examples, but their restrictive structure means that moments of encounter are substantially condensed. For example, whilst the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* records a detailed story of the Tlaxcaltecas' encounter with the Castillians, the *Aubin Codex* encapsulates the 1519 or One Reed encounter into one, more conventionalised depiction (a ship), with one supplementary representation on the following page (fig. 1.1). Whilst the selection of what events to record in such time-restricted annals is certainly of interest to this study, it follows that, due to their condensed nature, annals do not occupy as central a position as event-oriented histories.

A central group of event-oriented histories to this study are those produced by Indian Conquistador groups, particularly those by the Tlaxcalteca – the most famous of the *indios amigos*. The Tlaxcalteca authored a series of pictorials detailing the 1519 meeting with Cortés and the Spaniards, and their subsequent conquest of Tenochtitlan (and other polities): the first is a small, single leaf of *amatl* paper (21cm in width), known as the *Texas Fragment* or the *Tizatlan Codex*, produced in the 1530s; the second, the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, was a large painted cloth (2m in width, 5m in height) produced c. 1552; and the third is a book on European paper containing both images and alphabetic text, edited by Tlaxcalan historian Diego Muñuz Camargo in c. 1580-85 (Glasgow Hunter MS 232), entitled the *Descripción de la ciudad y provincial de Tlaxcala de la Nueva España*. As chapter II explores in detail, the story of the encounter is developed across these three pictorials, undergoing significant changes in each retelling.<sup>60</sup> Accordingly, it is the first two, earlier documents (documents less affected, albeit affected nonetheless, by the colonial gaze) that are focused upon.

Whilst the *Fragment* is extant, it is important to note that the *Lienzo* only survives through tracings and a carefully coloured copy taken from the original cloth (or cloths, as it is debated as to whether one or three cloths were produced). These tracings were developed into a facsimile of the *Lienzo* in 1892 by Alfred Chavero; unfortunately, since the facsimile's publication, the tracings have also been lost, and, accordingly, the 1892 lithographs are the best source of information on, or representation of, the sixteenth-century *Lienzo*.<sup>61</sup> There have been excellent scholarly efforts to regain distance to the original *Lienzo*, though, most recently in the ever-growing field of digital humanities: significantly, the *Mesolore* project – created by Liza Bakewell and Byron Hamann – digitally recreates the *Lienzo*, based on the tracings preserved in the 1892 facsimile. Far from simply making the facsimile available online, this recreation tackles the main issue of the facsimile: its presentation of each scene on a separate page, surrounded by blank

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<sup>60</sup> Travis Barton Kranz is the leading authority on the development of the Tlaxcalan pictorials. See, for example, Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion'; Kranz, 'Sixteenth-Century Tlaxcalan Pictorial Documents'.

<sup>61</sup> Liza Bakewell & Byron Hamann, 'Introduction to the Lienzo de Tlaxcala', *Mesolore*, <<http://www.mesolore.org/tutorials/learn/19/Introduction-to-the-Lienzo-de-Tlaxcala-/54/History-and-Publications>> [accessed 17 January 2017].

space. *Mesolore*'s digital recreation takes the scenes and restructures them according to the *Lienzo*'s original format – a seven-by-thirteen grid positioned under a large main scene, which stretches across all seven columns and is a third of the cloth's overall length. This rejoining of the *Lienzo*'s pieces is essential, allowing modern readers to explore 'how its creators used the seven-by-thirteen grid to create complex visual connections between different scenes.'<sup>62</sup> Seeing the *Lienzo* in its original structure has been invaluable to this study; indeed, its visual organisation has been a highly informative aspect of the analysis of the *Lienzo* in the following chapters.

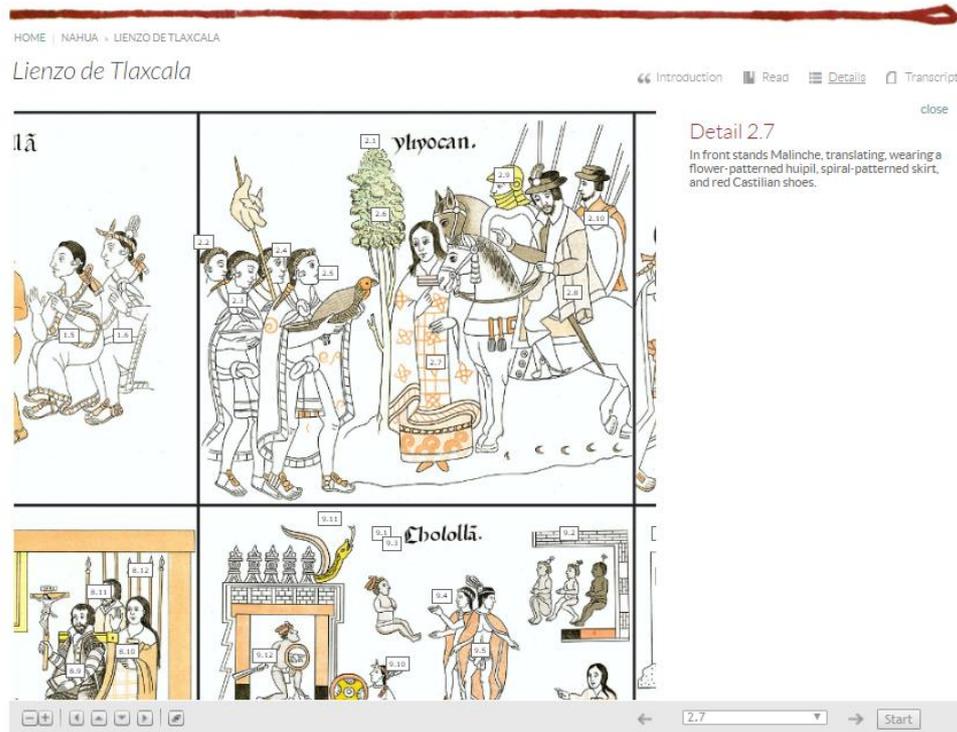


Fig. 1.2: *Mesolore* interface

<<http://mesolore.org/viewer/view/2/Lienzo-de-Tlaxcala#>> [accessed March 2018]

Moreover, the *Mesolore* project is part of a trend emerging more broadly in digitisations of pictorial sources: along with providing important contextual and bibliographic information about the *Lienzo*, *Mesolore* guides viewers in the reading of the pictorial, by highlighting key features and providing details about them (fig. 1.2). Readers can choose whether to read the pictorial with or without these details, and can easily zoom in to view individual scenes and out to view multiple scenes together. The *Mapas Project* – a database of digitised pictorial manuscripts created and edited by Stephanie Wood – has been another key resource during this study, through which I have examined the *Fragment* (and many of the other pictorials it holds). Although viewers will notice its markedly different interface, the *Mapas Project*, too, guides readers through individual pictorials; readers can select key features or details of the pictorial in

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

question, for which editors of the database (scholars and students of Mesoamerican pictorials) have provided information and insights (fig. 1.3).



Fig. 1.3: *Mapas Project* interface

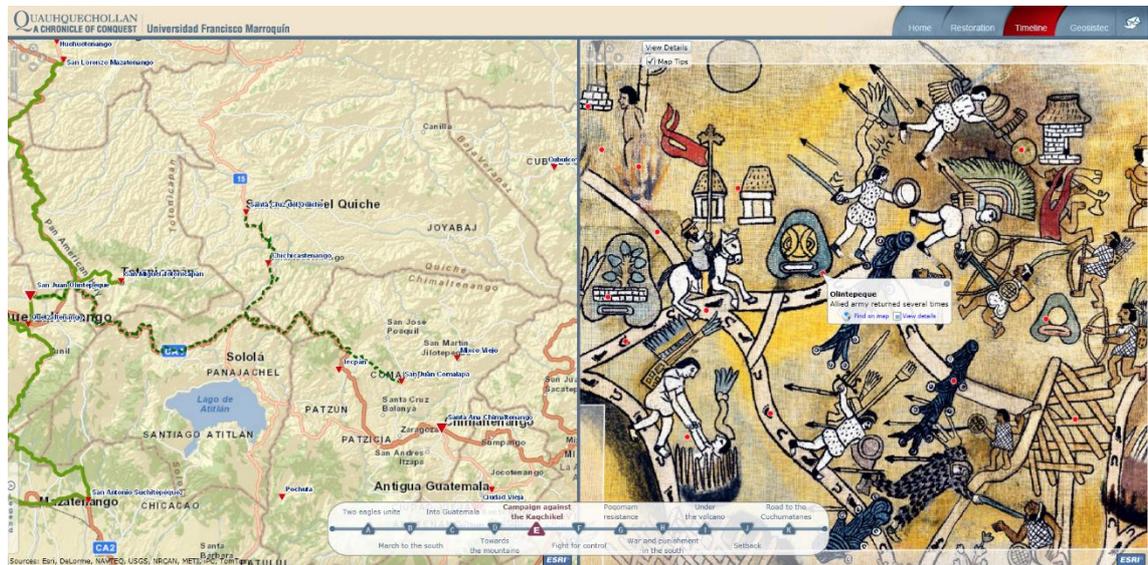
<[http://mapas.uoregon.edu/imt/index.lasso?&mapaid=tlax&sections=no&books=no&mapaSection\\_idenfier=000&mapaSection\\_label=>](http://mapas.uoregon.edu/imt/index.lasso?&mapaid=tlax&sections=no&books=no&mapaSection_idenfier=000&mapaSection_label=>) [accessed March 2018]

This 'walkthrough' format is similarly seen in the Universidad Francisco Marroquín's (UFM) project on the *Lienzo de Quauquechollan*, too. This huge cloth measures 2.45m (width) by 3.2m (height), and was produced by the Quauquecholteca, another Indian Conquistador group, c. 1530; this cartographic history details the first meetings with Cortés and the Quauquecholteca lords, and is the only extant indigenous-authored account of the conquest of Guatemala, 1527-1530.<sup>63</sup> What is particularly interesting about this digitisation is that it is actually a digital restoration of the original *Lienzo*, going even further than digital reproduction. Conducted by a huge team of experts in restoration, history, anthropology, archaeology, epigraphy, ethnobotany, and digital transformation (the list goes on), the extent of the restoration is staggering, and has had a significant impact on our understanding of the *Lienzo* today. As well as making its scenes and symbols much more readable than those of the very faded, stained, and torn original, the digital restoration process also revealed (from underneath the first main, and largest, scene) the pentimento or first sketches often used to guide the final painting, which, in this case, was substantially smaller than the finalised scene. One wonders why the

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*: The right side of the original *Lienzo* was cut off; accordingly, experts suggest that the original was up to one third wider than its current size.

Quauhquechollan painter-scribes may have chosen to inflate the size of this scene so dramatically from its original conception.<sup>64</sup>

In terms of reading this *Lienzo*, there is a variety of ways to interact with its digitally restored version; mainly chronologically (via a timeline) or geographically (via a map plotting the route taken), but also through the identification of key elements, as for *Mesolore* and the



**Fig. 1.4:** *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* Project interface  
UFM, Guatemala City, Guatemala (2009)

<<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/view-the-lienzo/view-the-lienzo/>> [accessed March 2018]

*Mapas Project* (fig. 1.4). The functionality of the resource UFM have created is certainly praiseworthy, and, importantly, speaks to wider efforts to not just make pictorials more accessible to scholars, but to the wider public. The project sought to make the *Lienzo* available in an illustrated book, digital narrations, narrated videos, and as a physical exhibit, all with an aim to make the *Lienzo* ‘readily available to Guatemalans, so,’ as the project team writes, ‘we could learn from this primary source about the history of our country.’<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the open access nature of digitised pictorial sources more widely is hugely inclusive in terms of accessibility; readers do not even need to create an account (or have institutional ones), as all that is required is internet access.

From a personal perspective, the digitised pictorials have been time-friendly and cost-effective sources to study: with sixteenth-century Mesoamerican pictorials scattered across libraries, museums, and other institutions across the globe, this study would not have been

<sup>64</sup> For more details on the restoration and the process of restoration, see UFM project team, ‘Why a Digital Restoration?’. UFM <<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/restoration/why-a-digital-restoration/>> [accessed 24 May 2018].

<sup>65</sup> UFM project team, ‘Why a Digital Restoration?’ <<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/restoration/why-a-digital-restoration/>> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018].

possible without these digital resources to hand. Aside from UMF's project, *Mesolore*, and the *Mapas Project* (the 'walkthrough' resources), this study has benefitted hugely from digitised pictorials made available by the British Museum, the World Digital Library (WDL), and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), among others. The British Museum's collection is particularly 'usable'; the quality of the image is excellent, and, importantly, a ruler and colour/contrast charts are usually provided next to the manuscript, so that features are easier to measure and scale can be calculated more easily.<sup>66</sup> Differently, the BnF and the WDL fall into the more 'experiential' category of resources: rather than presenting a grid of thumbnail images (one for each folio of the pictorial in question) as the British Museum does, these digital catalogues allows users to 'read' the pictorial codices on screen by 'turning over' their pages (fig. 1.5).<sup>67</sup> I certainly encourage readers of this study to explore these wonderfully innovative resources.<sup>68</sup>

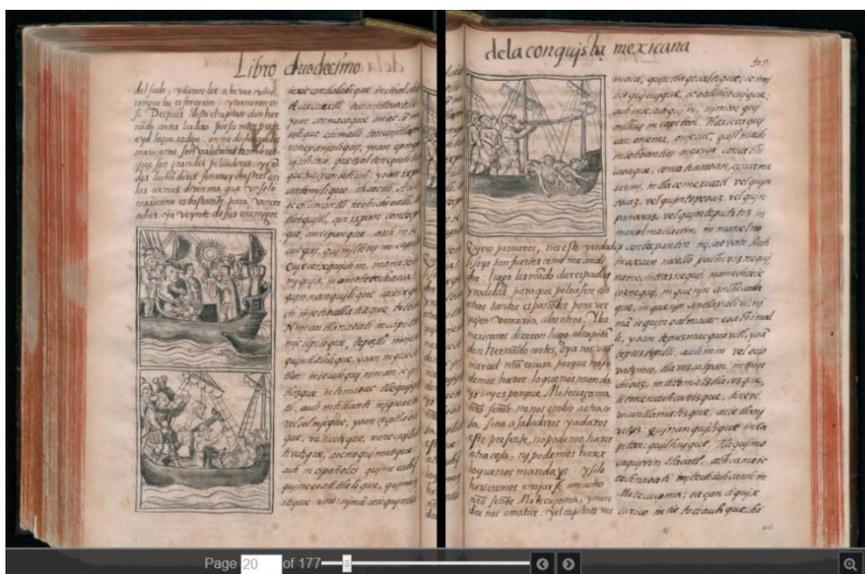


Fig. 1.5: World Digital Library interface  
<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/20/> [accessed March 2018]

No matter how good the image quality or catalogue user interface is, though, it is important to take a critical approach to using digitised sources, as some aspects can be missed in the digitisation process. The *Tovar Codex*, which is available digitally through the John Carter Brown's (JCB) Archive of Early American Images – an incredibly rich database of digitised visual sources, from the Caribbean to North America – and the WDL, is a good example to

<sup>66</sup> The British Museum digitise both original manuscripts and facsimiles (to a good resolution); on other resources you might find they focus solely on the direct digitisation of original pictorials, or on making facsimiles available online. Both are helpful, but I often find that digitisations of facsimiles are lower quality images, and are thus harder to examine digitally (as is the case on FAMSI, for example).

<sup>67</sup> See also *Códices de México: Memorias y saberes* digital exhibition, <http://www.codices.inah.gob.mx/pc/index.php> [accessed 16 April 2018].

<sup>68</sup> For readers who are particularly technologically savvy, there is even an app for the *Codex Boturini*, which takes users on a journey through this beautiful pre-Hispanic pictorial.

illustrate the limitations of digital facsimiles. I viewed the Tovar Codex in person during my visit to the JCB; I was interested in the only portrait of a Spaniard in the Codex, who features in the last section of the manuscript (the Calendar). This Calendar section is quite clearly written in a different hand, and noticeably diverges from the earlier contents in that it is ‘messier’ and not as neatly drawn or formatted. Such visual aspects are, of course, visible on the digital version. However, an examination of the original codex revealed that the thickness and texture of the paper used for this last section differed from that of the preceding contents: the paper changed from thin and delicate to thicker and coarser. This was brought to my attention by JCB curator Dr. Ken Ward, and it is his theory that this section was perhaps not part of the original codex. This case reflects that, on occasion, digital versions of pictorials – and manuscripts more widely – may fall short; indeed, the physical ‘feel’ of manuscripts is really quite difficult to translate into a 2D, digital image.

Similarly, it is essential to consider the additional layers of interpretation that come with digital reproductions. Whilst the guided nature of walkthrough resources (i.e. labelling key elements and provide corresponding details) is undoubtedly a positive addition, allowing and encouraging student or ‘non-experts’ to engage with the manuscript in question, it could also be considered a hindrance. Echoing issues very familiar to those inherent in a curator’s selection of artefacts in museum exhibits or organisation of an archive, one may ask: how have the key elements of a given pictorial been selected, and the level of corresponding detail decided? Who chooses what is (and is not) important or significant of the reader’s attention?<sup>69</sup> Do such decisions affect how a reader interacts with or studies the pictorial in question? I experienced such issues firsthand when working on pictorials for publication on the *Mapas Project* – an experience that has undoubtedly affected my use of digitised pictorials; it was only upon digitising (in part) a pictorial myself that I came to reflect upon these deeper methodological challenges. This study has, therefore, not simply ‘used’ digital versions of the pictorials in question, but has done so with an evaluative and critical approach. There is certainly value in interrogating the ‘digital medium’ through which digitised pictorials are presented, and in reading them with an awareness of how they have been digitised.

Before concluding this chapter, there is one more key pictorial to outline: the *Florentine Codex*, or the *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*. Like the aforementioned pictorials, the original manuscript can be viewed online via the WDL, and (differently to the aforementioned) there are a number of printed editions of the *Codex*, translated in various ways.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000); Paul O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

<sup>70</sup> Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, Book XII: ‘The Conquest of Mexico’, trans., with notes and illustrations, by Charles E. Dibble & Arthur J.O. Anderson

The thirteen-book work was compiled over many years, from around the 1540s to the 1570s, by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún – known by some as the ‘Father of Anthropology’ – and a small group of young Nahuas (some his students). Through interviewing a vast array of anonymous indigenous informants, Sahagún and his team ascertained information on Aztec society, culture, and religion, on medicines, flora and fauna, and – most pertinently to this study – the Mexica-Spanish encounter and the conquest of Tenochtitlan (the subject of Book XII). This ‘tremendous collaborative effort’ is undoubtedly a key source – if not *the* key source, as Pennock argues (among others) – for the ethnohistorical study of Aztec society.

There are, of course, challenges in reading the *Codex*’s texts, as Pennock airs openly, with ‘the corrupting potential of the colonial context in which it was produced’ affecting the *Codex*’s popularity over the time. Certainly, Sahagún’s ‘conscientious, even anthropological, approach’ to the study is something to be remarked upon, although the limitations of his perspective have, too, been a concern – a matter examined in detail by Pennock.<sup>71</sup> Issues with the selection of material and translation problems are also central to scholarly debate about the veracity of the *Codex*; as Clendinnen summarises, the *Codex* was ‘produced by male survivors of the erstwhile ruling group; further distanced from the actuality we seek to glimpse by its idealizing tendency and its Spanish eliciting and editing; abducted into English.’<sup>72</sup> Yet, Clendinnen continues, ‘it is nonetheless the best source we have for Mexica views, and for accounts of Mexica action as described by Mexica groups.’<sup>73</sup> This inescapable tension between the *Codex*’s value as a rich, extant document and its limitations as a colonial product are examined at length by Lockhart, who cautions readers to bear in mind that whilst the *Codex* ‘purports to speak directly of actions, speech acts, and emotions of the Nahuas’ during and immediately after the conquest, it is ‘highly suspect, for the versions we know, having been written down many years after the events, show numerous signs of legend formation.’<sup>74</sup> This distortion over time, and other

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(Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1975); *Book XII of the Florentine Codex*, trans. by James Lockhart in *We People Here*, pp. 48-255; Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de nueva España* (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence), 1577, available via the WDL, <<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/#q=florentine+codex+XII&qla=en>> [accessed 12 April 2018].

<sup>71</sup> Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>72</sup> Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, p. 390. For issues regarding the selection of material in the *Codex*, see Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, pp. 394-395; Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, pp. 6-9 (regarding gender issues and the inclusion of women, in particular). For translation issues pertinent to the *Codex*, see Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, pp. 396-397 (regarding the untranslatability of concepts); Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. 8. For scholarly debates over the influence of the colonial gaze on the production of the *Codex*, see Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, pp. 7-9. For a summary of Sahagún’s methodology, see Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, pp. 5-7; Miguel León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún, First Anthropologist*, trans. by Mauricio J. Mixco (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), pp. 259-61; *Sixteenth Century Mexico: the Work of Sahagún*, ed. by Munro S. Edmonson (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1974).

<sup>73</sup> Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, p. 390.

<sup>74</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 5.

distortions, will be a key consideration in the following chapters, not just for the *Florentine Codex*, but of other indigenous-authored narratives – namely the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* – too.

The *Codex* itself is comprised of three narratives: Nahuatl text, Spanish text, and pictorial scenes – 2,686 of them across twelve books, according to Diana Magaloni Kerpel.<sup>75</sup> The pictorial section of the *Codex* has been a source of heated debate among scholars, as there is disagreement as to whether the pictorial scenes are ‘actual’ pictorials, or simply accompanying illustrations to the alphabetic texts – echoing (and furthering) the divisive issue of how ‘writing’ is defined. The scholars of the latter opinion are heavily dismissive of this part of the *Codex*, with Clendinnen calling them ‘beguiling little drawings’ that served ‘purely as illustrations of the Spanish and Nahuatl texts,’ echoing Lockhart’s summation that ‘they are essentially a backformation from the alphabetic text rather than the primary elements.’<sup>76</sup> This standpoint is supported by the late addition of the scenes to the manuscript (only a few of which were coloured), positioned in the spaces created by the differing lengths of the two concomitant alphabetic texts (with some spaces remaining unfilled).<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the style of the drawings themselves have been critiqued as ‘too Europeanized,’ and their importance subsequently further dismissed.<sup>78</sup>

Such evaluations of the pictorial scenes have subsequently prompted the neglect of these images as sources for the indigenous past, with many modern editions of the *Codex* published without the pictorial scenes. Whilst this study concedes that the *Codex*’s – specifically Book XII’s – pictorial scenes are not a ‘typical’ pictorial narrative (in that they are interspersed across two substantial alphabetic narratives), it argues that this visual narrative should not be dismissed as supplementary illustrations. Instead, following Magaloni Kerpel, the pictorial scenes should be recognised as ‘self-contained visual narratives that sometimes revealed and sometimes concealed a world of their own.’<sup>79</sup> Magaloni Kerpel’s work is of particular note here; her identification of the (very well-trained) ‘four masters,’ who were responsible for planning and painting the *Codex*’s more complex images, and their apprentices (22 artists in total) reflects that, whilst

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<sup>75</sup> Diana Magaloni Kerpel, ‘Painters of the New World: the Process of Making the *Florentine Codex*’, in *Colors Between Two Worlds: the Florentine Codex of Bernardino de Sahagún*, ed. by Gerhard Wolf & Joseph Connors (Florence: Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2011), p. 47. In contrast, Marina Garone Gravier counts 2,468 illustrations across 12 books: see Marina Garone Gravier, ‘The Visual Construction of a Historical Narrative: Book Design and Calligraphy of the Florentine Codex’, in *Manuscript Cultures of Colonial Mexico & Peru: New Questions & Approaches*, ed. by Tom Cummins, Emily A. Engel, Barbara Anderson, & Juan M. Ossio (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2014), p. 162.

<sup>76</sup> Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, p. 390; Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Magaloni Kerpel, ‘Painters of the New World’, p. 48.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

unfinished, the pictorial component of the *Codex* should not simply be dismissed as an unconsidered or arbitrary enterprise.<sup>80</sup>

Accordingly, this study's examination of the pictorial scenes of Book XII seeks to highlight the complexities of this visual narrative, identifying details in the painters' composure of the scenes that reveal valuable insights into indigenous perceptions of the Mexica-Spanish encounter. Acknowledging the ways in which the pictorial scenes interlink with the alphabetic texts, the study draws supporting evidence from the Nahuatl account (on premise that the Nahuatl account is less removed from indigenous perspectives than its Spanish counterpart) on several occasions. The focus of the analysis will remain, though, on the pictorial nuances and intricacies that emerge through a deep and measured consideration of the (thus far largely neglected) visual narrative. Indeed, a full examination of sixteenth-century Nahuatl accounts of the encounter would be another study all together.

### I.III Conclusion

In summary, this study considers both alphabetic and pictorial sources to be 'written' documents, and examines these written texts for what they reveal about indigenous responses to and perceptions of European newcomers. I take a microanalytical approach to both types of source, exploring their (mis)representations of moments of early encounter on an interpersonal, one-to-one level. Despite the Eurocentric perspectives in European-authored texts, this study demonstrates that through a careful and critical reading, such sources do give insights into indigenous action and agency (especially those produced by beachcombers). In the case of the *Diario* in particular, quantitative analysis will be utilised alongside qualitative analysis as a method for deconstructing the prevalent colonial undercurrents of the text. Pictorial texts have been chosen above Nahuatl texts (with the exception of the *Florentine Codex*, Book XII) due to their continuation of pre-conquest traditions, and are thus generally considered the 'purest' sources for indigenous perspectives. That said, the following chapters highlight the influences behind the production of pictorial depictions of early moments of encounter, and critically present the notion that indigenous-authored sources – like European-authored sources – are far from free of methodological challenges.

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<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 'Painters of the New World,' pp. 49-53. For a summary of the disagreement over the production of the images (regarding whether they were copied by Sahagún's assistants or produced by local artists), see Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. 7.

## II

# Allies

‘I have established warm friendship with the king of that land, so much so, indeed, he was proud to call me and treat me as a brother.’

– *Christopher Columbus*.<sup>1</sup>

‘We had with us many of our Indian friends.’

– *Hernando Cortés*.<sup>2</sup>

### II.I Making friends: an introduction

On Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October 1492, Christopher Columbus and his crew arrived on the shores of Guanahaní, an island somewhere in the Bahamas. Carrying the royal standard, Columbus took possession of the island in the name of the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile, renaming it San Salvador. This landfall was quickly followed by Columbus’ first encounter with the Taínos, who greeted him on the beach. The *Diario* tells that, after approaching the Christians on the shore, the Taínos later swam out to the ships, and traded parrots, balls of cotton and javelins for European glass beads and bells. This exchange was a great success, according to Columbus, as the Taínos ‘took so much pleasure’ in the items the Europeans gave them that they ‘became so much [their] friends that it was a marvel.’<sup>3</sup>

During such early encounters in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, sources from European and indigenous perspectives tell of how their authors (or their author’s predecessors) came to

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<sup>1</sup> Columbus, ‘Letter of Columbus’, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Hernando Cortés, ‘Second Letter’, in *Letters from Mexico*, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Thursday 11 October’, p. 65.

make friends with the strangers they faced. Through the exchange of items, gift giving, and provision of aid, cross-cultural friendships were established – of varying degrees, and to varying ends. Formed, at times, on the conception of a mutual enemy, amicable relationships extended to defensive alliances; for some, military alliance was the very foundation of the bond. This chapter is an exploration of the formation of these friendships – big and small, brief and long-lasting. Focusing principally upon exchange-based responses, or instances in which indigenous actors respond to the European newcomers by exchanging or gifting items, the following analysis seeks to deconstruct accounts and representations of ‘friendships’ presented in the primary source material. It asks: in what ways were friendships perceived by those involved? Did exchange-based responses always signal amicable relations? Did indigenous actors have ulterior motives in the giving of items or gifts? Did perceptions of friendships differ between those involved? To what extent are stories of amicable relations consistent across different sources (textual and visual) and different perspectives? What might influence an author’s presentation of a friendly relationship? What indigenous responses reflect a categorisation of the Christian strangers as friends, and how far do such responses reveal indigenous agency and power? Concurrently, the chapter seeks to ascertain which categories of identity indigenous individuals and groups may have placed the Christian newcomers into, should they have been received as friends: for example, were they seen as traders, foreign emissaries, exotic kings, or deity representatives?

In participating in trade and exchange activities with Taíno locals upon his arrival on 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1492, Columbus and his crew entered a large, dynamic, and complex exchange network. This network spread across the archipelago, connecting island with island, community with community, neighbour with neighbour – both near and far, familiar and less familiar.<sup>4</sup> As this chapter will discuss, the strength of these existing exchange systems is demonstrated by the movement of European items, which often found their way to Taíno communities before the Europeans themselves, and the relatively fast integration of the foreign, European items into existing notions of value. Whilst Columbus’ commencement of trade (and search for gold) is often cited as the beginning of the Columbian exchange, it is largely within this pre-Columbian context of Taíno networks that the following analysis falls, and builds upon. Of course, Alfred Crosby’s fundamental argument that the movement of organisms went across the Atlantic in *both* directions is pertinent; in a similar sense, this chapter examines the *two-way* nature of indigenous-European exchanges, albeit on a much, much smaller scale.<sup>5</sup> It will explore what items were exchanged by each party (from balls of cotton, beads, and bells, to jewellery and regalia), and

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<sup>4</sup> Richard T. Callaghan, ‘Archaeological Views of Caribbean Seafaring’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Caribbean Archaeology*, pp. 283-95; Mol, ‘Pre-Colonial Interaction Networks’; Keegan, ‘The “Classic Taíno”, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (London: Praeger, 2003 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1972)).

how each party received or responded to the items in question (by seeking further trade, or by wearing or adorning themselves in items). This chapter is primarily focused on how the indigenous-European exchanges fitted into *existing* networks of exchange, keeping indigenous perspectives at the fore.

Exchange in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean (c. 1000-1492) is the focus of Angus Mol's work, *Costly Giving, Giving Guaízas* (2007). Mol adopts the multidisciplinary approach of what he calls 'archaeological anthropology,' and theorises a model of exchange based on gift theory, costly signalling theory, and notions of reciprocity (positioning his work in relation to that of Durkheim, Mauss, Godelier, Bourdieu, and others).<sup>6</sup> Mol's work on the giving of *guaízas* or shell masks has been very useful in the following analysis, and will be discussed in more detail at various points accordingly. Of particular note here, though, is Mol's stipulation that 'there is always much more in the exchange itself than in the things exchanged' – a notion that is central to this chapter, in both the Caribbean and Mesoamerican contexts.<sup>7</sup> What did a certain exchange signify? What meanings or significances were manifested in the items given, and in the act of giving itself? Where they the same for both indigenous and European parties?

Continuing to think broadly about exchange theory, it should be raised that this study does not seek to develop its own theory of exchange, as Mol did, nor does it overtly apply exchange theories to the material. Placing Mol's work to one side, I have found such exchange theories to be problematic when it comes to the moments of early encounter explored in this study, mainly due to the limitations of the source base. The notion of reciprocity is particularly unwieldy, as the primary source accounts often prevent their readers from ascertaining the level of reciprocity of a given exchange. This issue will be examined in greater detail in the following analysis, yet it is important to raise here that certain theoretical frameworks simply do not 'fit' and are simply not useful or applicable. Columbus, for example, regularly omits whether he received items in return for those he gave, or vice versa, and therefore analysing such exchanges within restrictive frameworks that imply (or are even founded on) giving-for-giving is troublesome.<sup>8</sup> What is more, the interplay of different culture concepts of 'value' surely complicates any assessments of reciprocity in cases where two-way exchanges *are* documented. Accordingly, whilst Mol's work on *guaízas* as costly signals will be drawn upon at various intervals, heavily theoretical frameworks are largely placed to one side.

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<sup>6</sup> Angus A. A. Mol, *Costly Giving, Giving Guaízas: towards an organic model of the exchange of social valuables in the Late Ceramic Age Caribbean* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2007), p. 10. For a detailed historiographical survey of gift exchange theories and their development, see Mol, *Costly Giving*, pp. 17-56.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>8</sup> Mol highlights the difficulty of ascertaining 'what exactly has been returned for what,' in *Costly Giving*, p. 156. The obligation to give receive, *and reciprocate* is central in Maussian exchange theory. See Mol, *Costly Giving*, p. 20; p. 156.

In a similar way to placing Taíno-European exchange within the pre-Columbian context, the following analysis likewise contextualises Nahua-European formations of friendship within pre-conquest systems or practices of gift exchange, considering how the European newcomers entered into the existing relationships each *altepetl* had with one another. Importantly, relationships between *altepeme* were often shifting in the Post Classic period (c. 900-1521), with instability ‘probably more the rule than stability’ when it came to alliances.<sup>9</sup> The Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, and Texcoco was itself formed out of the political upheaval of c. 1428, and, even then, the creation of alliances for such political or military benefit was not a new concept.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, it was not just Tenochtitlan’s enemies that moved against the city during its fall in 1521; even Texcoco deserted its ‘avowed ally’ during the later stages of the conquest.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter focuses mainly on perhaps the most famous Indian Conquistador group, the Tlaxcalteca – established enemies of the Triple Alliance who had maintained their independence from the expanding empire. The Tlaxcalteca sought to build an amicable relationship with the Castilians, seeing an alliance as an opportunity to move against their existing enemy. At the same time, Cortés’ failed friendship with Moctezuma II will also be explored; in this way, this chapter reflects that amicable responses do not always lead to amicable relationships (instead, in Moctezuma’s case, to imprisonment and the conquest of the city he ruled). Indeed, this chapter aims to highlight the sheer fragility of the initial contact situation, and reflect upon the deeper complexities of early cross-cultural friendships.

In attempting to map the spectrum of the seemingly amicable indigenous responses to European as friends, the importance of comparative study quickly becomes apparent. As this chapter highlights, certain narratives give preferential treatment to certain amicable responses whilst offering total silence on others; such manipulated or limited presentations of amicable responses occur significantly in *both* European- and indigenous-authored sources. Accordingly, this chapter explores a diverse corpus of primary material (alphabetic and visual), taking a number of key sources as case studies. For the Caribbean, the *Diario* is the principal alphabetic source analysed, taking *guázas* or shell masks as the key archaeological artefact. For Mesoamerica, the principal alphabetic account is Cortés’ second letter, and several sixteenth-century conquest pictorials are examined. Particular attention is given to pictorials produced by the Tlaxcalteca (namely the *Texas Fragment* and the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*), and the Quauhquecholteca (being the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*).

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<sup>9</sup> Francis F. Berdan, ‘Structure of the Triple Alliance Empire,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of the Aztecs*, ed. by Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría & Deborah L. Nichols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 449.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 439.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 449.

As this chapter focuses on exchange-based responses, it should be briefly clarified as to why sources such as the Colón shipping list (1495) and the inventory of indigenous items acquired at the end of the first letter (1519) have not been incorporated.<sup>12</sup> Whilst the list and inventory themselves indicate the sheer diversity of the items given in quantitative measures – for the letter, including a large gold wheel, *pesos de oro*, feather work, headgear, clothing and jewellery, for example – they do not contain information on the circumstances in which these items were acquired, or from whom.<sup>13</sup> As such, these inventories are sadly not at all revealing in terms of indigenous actions or agency during moments of interpersonal encounter with Europeans, and therefore of limited use for this study.<sup>14</sup>

Following this short introduction, the chapter is organised into three main parts. The first part is, in effect, a case study of amicable responses in the *Diario*, primarily focusing on what I have termed ‘low-level’ exchange, i.e., exchange of items between indigenous locals and Columbus/his crew that does not involve – so far as we can tell from the *Diario* – a *cacique* or other high-ranking figure. In other words, low-level exchanges could be characterised as ‘grassroots’ responses to the European newcomers. Whilst such grassroots responses are often difficult to retrieve in the source material (indeed, with some accounts, namely the letters of Cortés, particularly silent), the following analysis will demonstrate that they are highly valuable in revealing indigenous agency and initiative during these early moments of encounter. Significantly, such exchanges reflect that ‘high-level’ gift exchange between Caribbean *caciques* (and, later, Mesoamerican *tlatoque*) represent the tip of the iceberg of cross-cultural exchange more widely.

The second part turns to the high-level exchanges between leading conquistadors (Columbus and Cortés) and indigenous lords (namely Guacanagarí on Hispaniola, Moctezuma in Tenochtitlan, and Xicotencatl in Tlaxcala) that comparatively dominate the primary source material, as well as scholarly research. It will be argued that the ceremonious and deeply symbolic nature of high-level gift giving reflects an absorption of Christians into *existing* systems or traditions, and strongly reflects the power of indigenous forms – in both the Caribbean and Mesoamerican contexts. As for low-level exchange, these exchanges will thus be explored for

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<sup>12</sup> Puertocarrero & Francisco de Montejo, ‘The First Letter’, in *Letters from Mexico*, pp. 40-46. The actual first letter of Cortés is lost: ‘The First Letter’ here is a notarial copy of a letter from the municipal council of Vera Cruz, surviving in the Vienna Codex (discovered in 1777). For more information, see Pagden, ‘Introduction’, in *Letters from Mexico*, pp. liii-lviii.

<sup>13</sup> For a breakdown of the quantities of (selected) items in the Colón shipping list, see Mol, *Costly Giving*, p. 84 (figure 12).

<sup>14</sup> In agreement with Mol, the Colón shipping list is invaluable in terms of what it reveals about the Taínos’ growing familiarity of European ideas of value, reflected in the increased giving of gold as the contact situation developed later. See Mol, *Costly Giving*, pp. 77-80; pp. 85-88.

what they reveal about indigenous agency and power, especially through the foregrounding of indigenous worldviews.

The third and final part of the analysis is an exploration of the creation of in-between identities that emerge from these high-level, exchange-based negotiations. In exchanging and wearing (or wielding) items from one another's culture, the friends Columbus and Guacanagarí, Cortés and Moctezuma, Cortés and Xicotencatl, likely bore strange outward appearances. By considering the meaning and significance of the items exchanged or symbols shared, a more nuanced understanding of the encounter – and the resulting ambiguous appearances of those involved – can be reached. Particular attention will be given to the adoption of indigenous items or symbols by Columbus and Cortés that have largely been overlooked in scholarship (which has focused principally on the indigenous uptake of European symbols), and what this uptake of indigenous symbols tells us about the power dynamics of the contact situation. In exchanges between leaders, the items given held deeper meanings that reflected potential categories of identity. Yet, aside from the items, the accompanying behaviours were of special significance, too – especially the physical intimacy gift exchange required, and the adornment of one another's bodies in symbols from their cultures. Furthermore, the ambiguous outward appearances of the newfound friends echo the liminality of the space in which these friendships were formed.

Overall, then, this chapter will argue that a deeper understanding of indigenous actions and agency can be reached by a detailed examination of the formation of these early cross-cultural friendships, most commonly formed through the exchange of items. In studying both high *and* low level exchanges, a fuller picture of indigenous responses to the European newcomers can be drawn; what is more, a close reading of accounts and later representations of the development of these friendships showcases the complexity, dynamism, and fragility of the contact situation. Indeed, were indigenous-European amicable relations really as friendly as they first appear?

## II.II Balls of cotton for beads & bells

### *Low-level exchange in the Diario*

The first exchange on the decks of the ships in the waters of Guanahaní island on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October signalled a trend for the rest of voyage. With thirty-eight instances documented in the *Diario*, low-level exchange of Taíno and European items is by far the most common recorded interaction between the two groups, even without combining it with the additional fourteen occasions where the Taínos exchanged food stuffs and/or water with the Christians (see Appendix I, chart 1). The exchange of goods was often a step towards developing friendly Taíno-European relationships, indicating that the Taínos felt somewhat comfortable with Spanish presence.

Columbus certainly viewed the Taínos' initiation and/or partaking in exchange as a positive response; through such means their friendship could be secured, and, accordingly, the Taínos could be more effectively converted to Christianity 'by love [rather] than by force.'<sup>15</sup>

Although Columbus documents a vast variety of objects and materials that were exchanged, there are issues with the *Diario* that combined quantitative and critical discourse analyses bring to light. Firstly, Columbus is repeatedly vague about some of the items different Taíno groups and individuals gave to the Christians, using phrases like 'something of what they possessed,' 'other things,' or 'what they had.'<sup>16</sup> Although he is similarly unclear about European items at times – for example, collectively describing items as 'things from the trade goods' – the vagueness about indigenous items is more frequent in relative terms (see Appendix I, charts 4 and 5/table 1).<sup>17</sup> At times, Columbus does not seem too concerned about detailing the items the Taínos gave in the exchanges at all, writing on only the second day of the encounter that 'it would be tiresome to write down' the extent of what they gave.<sup>18</sup>

The exceptions to this uninterest, unsurprisingly, are items of/containing gold, which unfailingly catch Columbus' eye. He takes great care to record whenever Taínos offer it in exchange – which they did so 'willingly' – or had it displayed visibly on their person, hanging from their ears or noses.<sup>19</sup> In comparison, other popular items like cotton are named with no further description, apparent interest or engagement. Columbus' specific desire for gold is made obvious in his request to his crew not to exchange items in return for cotton or 'other things,' to convey to the Taínos that he wanted 'nothing but gold.'<sup>20</sup> He also rebuked members of his crew for not taking the opportunity to trade with an indigenous man they met for the piece of engraved gold in his nose.<sup>21</sup> Of course, Columbus' hunt for gold was an essential part of his voyage: locating the Eastern goldfields would constitute a huge success, and would both justify his sponsors' expenditure, and encourage support for future voyages. It is unsurprising, therefore, that this particular item is prominent throughout the *Diario*, its presence most likely exaggerated, with rumours of gold often amounting to nothing.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 11 October', p. 65. See also Columbus, 'Letter of Columbus', p. 8: 'I gave a thousand handsome good things [...] in order that they might conceive affection, and [...] might become Christians.' Similarly, Hernando Cortés records his search for riches in the South Seas in the 'Third Letter', in *Letters from Mexico*, p. 167.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 23 December', p. 269; 'Wednesday 17 October', p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 29 November', p. 189; 'Friday 21 December', p. 253. If counted as an 'item', Columbus' unclear/vague comments equate to 23% of indigenous items, in comparison to 20% of European items.

<sup>18</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Saturday 13 October', p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 21 October', p. 109; 'Sunday 16 December', p. 231.

<sup>20</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 1 November', p. 127.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Wednesday 17 October', p. 95.

<sup>22</sup> For Columbus following rumours of where the goldfields are, see, for example, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 4 November', p. 133; 'Monday 12 November', p. 145.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, another key issue is the increased attention Columbus gives to European items, which are named on more occasions than indigenous items (forty-eight and thirty-seven occasions, respectively): no fewer than eleven different European items are named, with glass beads (fifteen occasions) and bells (ten occasions) occurring the most (see Appendix I, chart 5/table 1). Perhaps reflecting his need to demonstrate European generosity and endeavour to gain the friendship of the indigenous communities, Columbus makes a concerted effort to detail (at least seven) occasions where he and the crew gave items for nothing in return (which, of course, may or may not have been the case).<sup>23</sup>

Although Columbus posits his own generosity in exchanges as positive – to reflect his efforts to befriend the Taíno communities who met with him – the Taínos' generosity is not presented as a redeeming characteristic. When Columbus records exchanges with the Taínos, he often remarks that they 'gave of what they had very willingly' or 'gave all that they had for anything that was given to them,' or similar, insinuating a degree of naivety and uncritical awareness.<sup>24</sup> Margarita Zamora has argued that whilst such generosity was, at first part, of Columbus' 'spiritual idealisation' of the Taínos, their failure to recognise the 'true' (i.e. European) value of items soon became a way to critique Taínos' intelligence, essentially dehumanising them.<sup>25</sup> Such dehumanisation reverberates through the language Columbus uses to describe the Taínos' physical features: their coarse hair was 'almost like a tail of a horse,' and straight 'like horsehair.'<sup>26</sup> Certainly, for Columbus, Indians with greater skills of bartering were considered to be of greater intelligence. The people of the island of Fernandina, for example, were seen as 'somewhat more civilized and given to commerce and more astute' than those of the islands of San Salvador and Santa María, as 'they know better how to bargain payment than others did.'<sup>27</sup> What is more, they wore 'cotton cloths made like small cloaks' and women covered themselves with a piece of cotton, reinforcing Columbus' perception that the people of Fernandina were 'more intelligent.'<sup>28</sup>

The general imbalance of the exchanges in terms of value is remarked upon by Columbus, and it is clear that he interprets the Taínos' valuing of European items as miscalculations. Correspondingly, attention to the unequal nature of exchanges quickly became a conventional

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<sup>23</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 29 November', p. 189; 'Wednesday 12 December', p. 216; 'Sunday 16 December', 'Wednesday 12 December', p. 231; 'Tuesday 18 December', p. 243; 'Friday 21 December', p. 253, p. 255; 'Thursday 10 January 1493', p. 323.

<sup>24</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 11 October', p. 65 & 'Monday 3 December', p. 197, respectively. See also 'Wednesday 26 December', p. 283; 'Saturday 22 December', p. 265.

<sup>25</sup> Margarita Zamora, *Reading Columbus* (London: University of California Press, 1993), p. 169.

<sup>26</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 11 October', p. 67; 'Saturday 13 October', p. 69.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Tuesday 16 October', p. 89.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

tool in European travel literature to demonstrate indigenous peoples' intellectual inferiority.<sup>29</sup> In the *Diario*, this lack of intelligence is reaffirmed in the language used to describe the exchanges: whilst the Christians 'paid' for or 'bought' items from the Taínos, such transactional terms are not used to describe the Taínos' acquisition of European items.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the Christians gave out 'trifling little strings of glass beads' and worthless items of 'broken glass cups and pieces of clay bowls.'<sup>31</sup> Simultaneously, there is a prevailing sense of amazement in the *Diario* that groups or individual Taínos would give pieces of gold for just one bell.<sup>32</sup> Although Columbus recognises that the Taínos considered metal lace-ends to be of 'the greatest excellence,' or 'any little things given to them' as 'great marvels,' he deems this a misjudgement of 'value,' as a reflection of poor intelligence.<sup>33</sup> As Stephan Greenblatt notes, colonial discourse often ignores any notion of *relative* economic value; i.e., the notion that a hawk's bell was, in fact, rare and precious in indigenous communities is not apparent from a cursory reading of the *Diario*.<sup>34</sup>

The recognition of relative economic value in scholarship is certainly an important step towards understanding goods exchange from an indigenous perspective. 'It is very dangerous,' Mol writes, 'to assume costliness on the basis of western material and aesthetic qualities.'<sup>35</sup> Perhaps, Mol stipulates, looking at production costs and craftsmanship skills could provide a better insight into systems of value, as could an exploration of the 'object narratives' or ideas behind the artefacts (which could have been of greater value than the object itself).<sup>36</sup> Yet, current historiography's focus on the *value* of goods and (in)equality of exchanges means that the sheer variety of exchanges – and even the dynamics of the exchanges themselves – have been comparatively neglected. Similarly, discussions of 'value' should move to explore the reasoning behind the Taínos' valuation of European items, and seek to trace the intentions that may have guided indigenous actions. Whilst bearing in mind the ways in which discourses of indigenous intellectual inferiority (and other ideologies implemented to subordinate indigenous groups) may

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<sup>29</sup> Zamora, *Reading Columbus*, p. 169; Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: the Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 110. See also Guitar, 'Negotiations of Conquest', p. 116; Hulme, 'Tales of Distinction', 60.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Friday 21 December', p. 257; 'Sunday 13 January', p. 333. This is not a consistent theme across early European accounts, however: Diego Chanca, for example, uses the term 'barter' to describe indigenous acquisition of European items. See Diego Álvarez Chanca, 'Letter of Dr Chanca, written to the City of Seville' (1493), in *The Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, p. 60 & p. 64.

<sup>31</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 21 October', p. 107; 'Monday 22 October', p. 109. My emphasis.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Wednesday 26 December', p. 283. In the 'Letter of Columbus', Columbus conversely remarks that he 'forbade that [the Taínos] should be given things so worthless,' (p. 8) most likely to preserve his moral character.

<sup>33</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Tuesday 16 October', p. 109; 'Sunday 21 October', p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions*, p. 110. For a summary regarding 'value', here, see Rogers, 'Christopher Who?', p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> Mol, *Costly Giving*, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67. Mol also highlights the invisibility of organic materials in the archaeological record, which further complicates attempts at identifying the value of material items (pp. 67-68).

have influenced the exchanges of items recorded in the *Diario*, explorations of low-level exchange should seek to gain a more nuanced understanding of the contact situation by highlighting the diversity of exchange-based indigenous responses to European presence – something that a quantitative analysis goes some way towards recognising. Combined with a qualitative reading of the exchanges that took place, this approach results in a fresh interpretation of events that is particularly revealing with regard to indigenous agency.

As a quantitative breakdown of the items exchanged reflects, Taíno communities gave an array of items to the Christian strangers during low-level exchanges. No fewer than ten different indigenous items are documented in the *Diario*, the most popular being balls of cotton (named on ten separate occasions), small pieces/sheets of gold (eight occasions), parrots (four occasions) and javelins (four occasions) (see Appendix I, chart 4/table 1). Although indigenous items are given less attention than European items, there is a detectable tone of indolence in descriptions of indigenous items (with the exception of gold), and Taínos (assumed to miscalculate the value of items) are presented as unintelligent partakers in such exchanges, a careful and critical reading of instances of low-level exchange in the *Diario* reveals traces of indigenous agency and initiative in such trade-based negotiations. Indeed, unlike the Eurocentric *Diario* generally implies, Taíno groups and individuals made economically savvy exchanges, acquiring European items in diverse exchanges that would be to their benefit, and with a sense of purpose.

Similarly, Columbus records that the Taínos approached the Christians' ships in groups or individually on no less than twenty-three occasions (see Appendix I, chart 1) – a response clearly reflecting indigenous initiative and purposefulness. On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October, for example, one Taíno man sailed out alone in his canoe to the European ships, in order 'to trade a ball of cotton.'<sup>37</sup> Columbus' narrative turns to focus on his/the Christians' good treatment of this solo cotton trader, who is sent back to land with many gifts – a red bonnet, green glass beads and two bells, to be exact. In his examination of this incident, Wilson postulates that this man may have been a messenger, reflecting the established systems of inter-island communication.<sup>38</sup> For Wilson, the Taínos' increasing ability to barter as Columbus progresses through the islands is due to such communication systems, as news of the Europeans often preceded their arrival.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, when Columbus is anchored outside the solo cotton trader's village the next day, many Taínos came in canoes to exchange water and other unremarked items for European beads and brass jingles, because (to Columbus' delight) the man had given 'so many good reports' to his community about

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<sup>37</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Monday 15 October', p. 81.

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, *Hispaniola*, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50. Columbus regularly takes Taíno men and women prisoner, sending them back to their villages with European items as gifts in attempts to spread a positive image of themselves: see, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Wednesday 12 December', pp. 219-21 & 'Thursday 13 December', p. 25.

the Christians.<sup>40</sup> Yet, the very nature of the man's approach to the ships should be remarked upon here, too: travelling alone and carrying cotton to trade, the man's actions suggest a sense of purpose, of agency, and a desire to seize an exchange-related opportunity.

Later in the voyage, similar instances of indigenous initiative unfold specifically around the desire for certain European items:

[...] another canoe came from another place bringing certain pieces of gold which they wished to give for one bell, because they desired nothing else as much as bells [...] for they are on the point of going crazy for them.<sup>41</sup>

Here, to return to discourse of inequality and the critique of indigenous intelligence, Columbus was clearly baffled by the Taínos longing for bells, and again reinforces the idea that they are unintelligent and simple. However, the Indians' *purposeful* approach to the European ships in order to trade *specifically* for bells reflects an endeavour by Taíno individuals to attain European goods for their own purposes – be that to trade on for greater wealth, or to retain and use to heighten social status. Moreover, this fervency for bells demonstrates that this particular item had found its way into the network of elite, high value items, which, at times, preceded the Christians' arrival at new places.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, this incorporation into existing trading networks – and into indigenous worldviews – is highlighted in Columbus' remark that the Taínos had their own name for the bells: *chuq chuque*.<sup>43</sup>

Why, then, might *chuq chuque* and other European items have been so highly prized among Taíno groups? As anthropologist William Keegan explains, the Taíno worldview gave special significance to exotic things, which were believed to come from the sky, or *turey* (which was also a synonym of 'heavenly').<sup>44</sup> Rather than economic value in the European sense, it was the foreign origin of the item in question that prescribed its value; the mysticism of its realm of origin, beyond the horizon, was imbued in the exotic object.<sup>45</sup> The significance placed on objects from elsewhere is demonstrated clearly in the case of gold: the Taíno associated gold with the mythical island of Guanín (the island symbolising sexual union), and foreign gold or *guanín*

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<sup>40</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Tuesday 16 October', p. 87. See also 'Sunday 16 December', p. 231.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Wednesday 26 December', p. 283.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Hispaniola*, p. 4. For the elites' incorporation of new materials brought by the Europeans (like rhino horn or glass beads) and their construction of 'trans-cultural' artefacts, see Roe, 'Walking Upside-down and Backwards', p. 534. For the reuse of European clothing and fastenings by indigenous populations in the Caribbean, see Cooper, "'The Mona Chronicle'", p. 1055.

<sup>43</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Wednesday 26 December', p. 283.

<sup>44</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth and Practice*, pp. 44-45. See also Roe, 'Walking Upside-down and Backwards', pp. 531-32, who explains that the Sky World or *turey* was one of the three levels of the Taíno cosmos (the others being the Earth World and Underworld).

<sup>45</sup> Mol, *Costly Giving*, pp. 55-56.

(originating in the sky) was incredibly precious.<sup>46</sup> To return to the small gold ornaments Columbus often saw being worn in the nose or the ears of Taíno individuals, Keegan identifies these as *caracol*, interpreting them to have been considered as ‘equivalent to *turey* and...most precious.’<sup>47</sup>

Whilst the Christians attached economic meanings to gold, then, it is essential to recognise that for the Taínos it was its origin from elsewhere that prescribed its importance, as the case of *caracol* demonstrates. As Diego Alvarez Chanca records in his account of the second voyage, the Taínos similarly perceived the items Christians brought to be ‘from heaven [*cielo*], for they call everything *turey*,’ indicating the items’ prescribed value.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, framing the Taínos’ desire for bells within this framework allows the Eurocentric narratives of indigenous naivety to be transcended, and a sense of indigenous agency restored to the acquisition of such exotic goods. Indeed, when the Christians returned to the Caribbean archipelago on the second voyage later in 1493, the extent of the Taínos’ procurement of European items becomes clear: Chanca records how the Christians found many European items in some of the Taínos’ houses, including a Moorish mantle, cloth, and an anchor of the *Santa María* (Columbus’ shipwrecked caravel).<sup>49</sup> Although Chanca is suspicious as to how these items were acquired – a series of events which will be turned to in due course – it is important to recognise that Taínos clearly had a desire to possess them, which they acted upon; such items subsequently entered Taíno households, and by extension their exchange networks and value systems.

In this search for indigenous agency, it becomes increasingly clear that whilst there *is* evidence of agency, we must also recognise that there was manipulation on both sides of the encounter, and that the *Diario* conveys an essentially positive portrayal of such low-level exchanges. This is a portrayal that should (and must) be deconstructed. Like his overstatements regarding the prevalence of gold and other profitable resources, it would not be surprising if Columbus presented his account of the first Taíno-European trade-based negotiations through a rose-tinted lens, too. Firstly, and most obviously, it is important to observe that the Taínos may not always have traded as ‘willingly’ as Columbus records, despite his use of phrases suggesting this, which feature in numerous descriptions of low-level exchange.<sup>50</sup>

A careful reading of one instance that took place on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December alludes to the notion that exchange may not have been a positive experience, or even intentional, for Taíno groups:

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<sup>46</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth and Practice*, p. 48. For the origin narrative of guanín see also Mol, *Costly Giving*, p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth and Practice*, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> Chanca, ‘Letter’, pp. 66-67 (p. 67).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>50</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Thursday 11 October’, p. 65. ‘Sunday 21 October’, p. 109.

[The Taínos] came to the ship, *without bringing anything with them*, although a few wore small pieces of fine gold in their ears or in their noses, and they gave it quickly and willingly.<sup>51</sup>

Here, the Taíno groups/individuals had not brought items to exchange, but were in a situation in which they gave some of their personal possessions that adorned their bodies to the Christians. Furthermore, the *Diario* does not detail any items given in return for the gold nose/ear ornaments, raising the question whether this transaction was reciprocal. Why did they give them ‘quickly,’ and how ‘willing’ were these transactions? Were the transactions perhaps out of fear, uncertainty, or even a sense of panic? Were the transactions made under duress, or freely? Such questions cannot be definitively answered; it does not matter how careful the reading, the *Diario* will not reveal the emotions or mind-set of the Taínos with any certainty here. Nonetheless, it remains essential to interrogate and deconstruct the historical narrative in this way if a more nuanced understanding of the indigenous side of the encounter is to be reached.

To transcend the *Diario*’s rose-tinted presentation of exchanges further, the account for Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December – the day Columbus’ men visited the freed Indian woman’s village – should be read in a similarly critical manner:

[...] because the Indians that [Columbus] brought to the ship had understood that the Admiral wanted to have some parrots, it seems that the Indian who went with the Christians told the natives something about this, and so they brought many parrots to them [...] without wanting anything for them.<sup>52</sup>

Whilst the *Diario* again reinforces the trope of Taíno generosity as reflective of naivety and simplicity, it was probably not the case that they gave the parrots without any expectations, or for nothing at all in return. Indeed, Columbus’ ulterior motives for entering into exchanges with the Taínos are abundantly clear throughout the *Diario*. Accordingly, it seems fair to assume that the Taínos had their motives, too, even if these remain largely hidden in the text. By communicating the European desire for parrots to this indigenous community, the Taíno interpreter provides them with a means of creating a positive rapport with Columbus and his crew, or, alternatively, a way of appeasing the Christians’ appetite for Taíno items. By finding and exchanging items that they knew the Christians wanted – in this case the parrots – the indigenous group demonstrated resourcefulness, and most likely enabled this exchange for their own benefit.<sup>53</sup> Of course, whether this was motivated by a desire to befriend the Christians or as a measured response to appease a threat posed by these strangers remains somewhat ambiguous.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 16 December’, p. 231. My emphasis.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Thursday 13 December’, p. 223.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

In deconstructing this particular exchange further, a deeper understanding can be reached by considering the value of parrots or *guacamayas* in the context of Taíno culture. As Wilson outlines, parrots were highly-prized goods, often given as gifts between *caciques*; accordingly, the multi-coloured birds could arguably reflect the Taínos' recognition of Columbus' high status.<sup>54</sup> A focus on the specific items exchanged is a fruitful way of uncovering indigenous perceptions of the Christians: for example, did the exchange of javelins, bows and arrows (detailed on seven occasions) signal that certain groups of Taíno were comfortable enough with the strangers' presence to include their own weapons in the exchanges? In theory, certainly; the majority of these weapons trades remained peaceful. One exchange of weapons, however, quickly escalated into a skirmish on the shore, after the indigenous party (who are accordingly assumed to be the violent Caribs) did not want to give more of their weapons.<sup>55</sup> Whilst this is a standalone incident in the *Diario* – most likely included to demonise the Carib perpetrators – it is important to recognise that exchanges could rapidly transpire into less amicable situations (or, indeed, were not as amicable as the *Diario* posits in the first place). This mutability and instability of Taíno responses will be returned to in detail in the following chapter. For now, it is important to consider the extent to which changing responses reveal indigenous agency, action, and, again, the diversity of trade-based exchanges.

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That low-level exchange was not mutually exclusive with less amicable responses is similarly seen in later accounts of early encounter. Shifting to the mainland context and the Christians' exploration of Yucatan, the first letter of Hernando Cortés details a comparable incident. Here, attempts to exchange European items for gold were unsuccessful and resulted in an indigenous attack, in which many Castilians were injured (one man fatally).<sup>56</sup> Yet, conversely, exchange could also aid in the neutralisation of potentially violent situations, reinforcing it as a key dynamic in establishing more amicable relations. While travelling up a river from the coast in 1519, the Christians were faced with a force of indigenous warriors; speaking via one of the indigenous interpreters, the captain Juan de Grijalba encouraged a group of twenty warriors to approach the ships, stating he intended only to trade. The next day, the indigenous group brought gold ornaments to exchange for European items that Grijalba 'thought appropriate.'<sup>57</sup> The role of interpreters in these mutable situations is highly significant in both the mainland and Caribbean contexts, with similar interventions from indigenous interpreters recorded in the *Diario* – interventions that will be explored in detail in chapter IV.

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<sup>54</sup> Wilson, *Hispaniola*, p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 13 January', pp. 333.

<sup>56</sup> Columbus, 'Letter of Columbus', p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9 (p. 9).

By the time of the 1519 encounters between Cortés and Nahua groups, there are signs in the European accounts that low-level exchange with local communities had become an established way to build more amicable relations, and one that the Christians prepared for. Speaking (again through the interpreter) to an indigenous group who had gathered on the beach, Grijalba ‘had a table brought on which he laid his goods,’ after which the Indians brought cloth and some gold ornaments to exchange.<sup>58</sup> However, whilst indigenous interpreters were increasingly used and the exchange was somewhat formalised through a (European) market-style set-up, for instance, what becomes less clear is what European items were exchanged. Although Columbus was often vague or generalising, he *did* identify commonly exchanged items, whereas such identifications are considerably lacking in the *Letters* of Cortés. In the second letter, for example, European items given in exchanges are only mentioned on six occasions (out of the two dozen exchanges recorded), and are usually (in four of the six occasions) referred to vaguely as ‘things from Spain’ or ‘some few things.’<sup>59</sup> The two exceptions are the case of Hernando Cortés’ necklace which he gives to Moctezuma – which will be examined shortly – and the situation in Hueyotlipan in Tlaxcala, where Cortés remarks that the Indians would only accept gold in exchange for provisions.<sup>60</sup> Although unidentified, Cortés emphasises the value placed on the indigenous recipient/s’ perceptions of these European items, which were held in ‘great esteem,’ as in the *Diario*.<sup>61</sup> This lack of detail certainly makes it difficult to ascertain the level of reciprocity in the indigenous-European exchanges that took place, and – with the exception of Hueyotlipan – limits our understanding of what European items in particular indigenous groups on the mainland may have sought or valued.

Turning to items indigenous communities gave to Cortés, there are at least a dozen different types of gift noted across the course of the second letter (Appendix I, chart 6).<sup>62</sup> In terms of low-level exchange, there is one instance that stands out: after leaving the city of Cholula, Cortés is greeted by Nahuas of some villages in the state of Huejotzingo, ‘who gave [Cortés] some female slaves and clothing and some small pieces of gold.’<sup>63</sup> As will be established, the unusualness in this example does not lie in the items given – female slaves were given on at least four other occasions; clothing on at least eight; and gold was by far the most commonly identified item – but in the absence of a chief/s or dealings with a person/s in a position of power. Significantly, with the exception of this episode, all the exchanges Cortés records in the second letter are between himself and indigenous persons of authority (or their representatives).

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<sup>58</sup> Puertocarrero & Francisco de Montejo, ‘The First Letter’, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, p. 54 & p. 79; p. 81 & p. 122.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85; p. 143.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79. See also p. 54.

<sup>62</sup> Puertocarrero & Francisco de Montejo, ‘The First Letter’, pp. 40-46.

<sup>63</sup> Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, pp. 79.

In this examination of low-level exchange, then, it becomes increasingly clear that the *Diario* contains particular detail and richness with regard to this indigenous response in comparison to later accounts. The focus of later sources is high-level exchanges with chiefs or *caciques*, with persons in greater positions of power or authority, rather than exchanges operating on a lower level with indigenous individuals or small groups. Whilst high-level exchanges with *caciques* certainly gain increasing attention in the *Diario* itself as Columbus' first voyage progresses, consideration of low-level exchange continues concurrently in the text. In both contexts, unsurprisingly, European accounts place clear importance on these negotiations and exchanges with indigenous lords. A consequence of this shift, though, is the apparent loss of amicable grassroots responses to the first encounter with European strangers (i.e. exchange), particularly in later accounts from the mainland. Such grassroot responses are not only relegated in European accounts; it is worth noting comparatively that low-level exchanges do not feature in indigenous-authored pictorials of the first encounters, either. As our attention turns to the exchanges between Europeans and indigenous lords – the Tlaxcalan lords, the *huey tlatoani* Moctezuma, and the Taíno *cacique* Guacanagarí, respectively – it is important to remember that these high-level exchanges represent the tip of the iceberg of a much wider spectrum of amicable, exchange-based indigenous responses. Without this awareness, by focusing solely on high-level exchanges, we arguably miss the breadth and depth of early cross-cultural exchange – and, hence, of indigenous responses to Europeans more widely.

### II.III Meeting chiefs & making alliances

#### *High-level gift giving in moments of early encounter*

On his journey to Tenochtitlan in 1519, Cortés records several meetings between himself and indigenous rulers. The first high-level exchange of the letter is described in some detail and is considered a success. In this exchange, an unnamed chief gave Cortés clothes, precious stones and feather work, along with the assurance that 'he and all his subjects were very well pleased to be [...] [Cortés'] friends.'<sup>64</sup> In return, Cortés gave the chief 'some things from Spain,' which pleased him – so much so, apparently, that when other Castilian ships arrived at a later date, the chief offered them aid, and sent women and food to them.<sup>65</sup> Here, the exchange of items is reciprocal, and an amicable relationship is seemingly established. Before reaching Tenochtitlan,

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Cortés records five more incidents of gifting, in which the indigenous lords similarly give items of gold, garments, and female slaves.

Whilst Cortés clearly gives preference to these more elite exchanges over those at a lower level, there are similar limitations in his records that are important to highlight. For example, only two records of exchanges with lords on the road to Tenochtitlan disclose, vaguely, that Cortés gave ‘things’ in return, leaving questions over the level of reciprocity of the exchanges. He uses similarly vague language when describing other early encounters with Nahua communities that, significantly, do not explicitly involve gift exchange. Instead, he chose the phrase ‘well received’ (or similar) on at least eight occasions to describe his reception/treatment in different towns and provinces.<sup>66</sup> Generally, this phrase is broadly associated with the provision of food and/or lodgings by the indigenous community in question, yet it could involve gifting, too; during Cortés’ stay in Huejotzingo, this phrase is paired with the giving of female slaves, clothing and gold pieces.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, gifts may have been exchanged between Cortés and local lords during these seemingly amicable meetings, even though they are not explicitly mentioned – exchanges that the vagueness of Cortés’ account conceals.

This absence of exchange in the second letter is most clearly demonstrated in the case of the negotiations between Cortés and the Tlaxcalan nobles Xicotencatl the Younger and Maxixcatzin, lord of Ocotelolco. Cortés’ initial reception in Tlaxcala was not a positive one; the Castilian and indigenous forces from Cempoala were met with hostility by Tlaxcalan warriors, with a number of battles ensuing before peace was brokered – violent events that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.<sup>68</sup> When Xicotencatl and fifty of his men went to meet with Cortés at his camp, Cortés records how Xicotencatl asked for forgiveness on behalf of himself and Maxixcatzin, and assuredly conveys the fault of the Tlaxcalan lord and the unjustified nature of the Tlaxcalans’ actions to the reader.<sup>69</sup> A few days after this meeting the Tlaxcalan chiefs invite Cortés and his men to the ‘remarkable [...] almost unbelievable’ city, which he describes in great detail – from its infrastructure to the food, from the market place and its wares to the grooming of its inhabitants in barber-style shops and baths.<sup>70</sup> What remains unmentioned in Cortés’ account, however, is the high-level exchange that took place between himself and the Tlaxcalan lords.<sup>71</sup>

We learn of this high-level exchange from a number of sources, including other alphabetic accounts of the meeting. Contemporary Spanish historian Francisco López de Gómara

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54; p. 55; p. 56; p. 57; p. 74; p. 79; p. 82.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-63.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>71</sup> That said, Cortés records other actions indicative of friendship: for example, he writes that Maxixcatzin goes to great lengths to capture and punish a thief who stole gold from a Castilian. See Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, p. 68.

records how the Tlaxcalan messengers brought an array of food to the Castilian camp following Xicotencatl and Cortés' meeting, as well as inviting Spaniards to their houses.<sup>72</sup> Upon Cortés and his men's arrival in the city 'they were unable to move' for the amount of people who had come to greet them; they were provided with food and lodgings, and were offered daughters of the Tlaxcalan lords as 'a token of true friendship.'<sup>73</sup> Like gift giving, marriage was a common method of establishing or developing ties between groups in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, at all levels.<sup>74</sup> In the much later chronicle *The History of the Indies of New Spain* (c. 1581), Diego Durán similarly records how Tlaxcalan messengers had presented Cortés with 'turkeys, maize breads, fruit, and other edibles,' and, upon his arrival in the city – complete with dances and celebrations – the Castilians were given women and other servants, too.<sup>75</sup> In addition, Durán writes of how during the initial meeting, before Cortés was invited to the city, the Tlaxcalan lords gathered the 'best gifts' they could obtain; they did Cortés much reverence when the gifts were offered, hanging garlands of flowers around his neck and giving a speech aimed at establishing peaceful relations.<sup>76</sup>

Durán's attention to the initial giving of gifts during the establishment of the Tlaxcalan-Castilian 'friendship' is shared with other sources recording the meeting, including pictorials produced by the Tlaxcalteca themselves. In the second scene of the *Texas Fragment*, the lord of Tizatla, Xicotencatl (the Elder) – identified by his feathered red and white twisted headband, the insignia of rulership in Tlaxcala – greets Cortés on a path of foot- and hoof-prints; he clasps Cortés hand, whilst Cortés (now dismounted from his horse) lifts his hat from his head (fig. 2.1).<sup>77</sup> In the following scene, Xicotencatl and Cortés are seated in European curule chairs, engaged in conversation through the intercession of Malintzin. The scene depicts an abundance of food, which is even provided for the Castilians' horses (fig. 2.2). The fourth and final scene confirms the amicable relationship that had been developed between Xicotencatl and Cortés: the Tlaxcalan lords present the Castilians with gifts and women, including five daughters of Tlaxcalan lords (most notably Doña Luisa, Xicotencatl's daughter) (fig. 2.3). The gifts are lavish, and include gold, feather work, precious stones and woven cloths – some of the most typical items Cortés records other lords giving him. As Travis Barton Kranz argues, this scene of marriage and gift giving documents the 'ceremonial contract' established between the Tlaxcalteca and the Castilians, i.e. the formation of their military alliance and new political relationship.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Gómara, *Cortés*, 'chapter 54', p. 117.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>74</sup> Kranz, 'Sixteenth-century Tlaxcalan pictorial documents', p. 7. Robinson A. Herrera, 'Concubines and Wives: Reinterpreting Native-Spanish Intimate Unions in Sixteenth-Century Guatemala', in *Indian Conquistadors*, pp. 127-144.

<sup>75</sup> Durán, *The Aztecs*, 'chapter LXXIII', p. 284.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 'chapter LXXIII', p. 283.

<sup>77</sup> For the Tlaxcalan twisted headband and the pictorial's deference to Xicotencatl above the other Tlaxcalan lords, see Kranz, 'Sixteenth-century Tlaxcalan pictorial documents', pp. 5-6.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7; Barton Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion', pp. 58-59.



**Fig. 2.1:** Cortés (left) meets Xicotencatl (right) in the *Texas Fragment*, scene 2

Ex-Stendahl Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin (c. 1540)

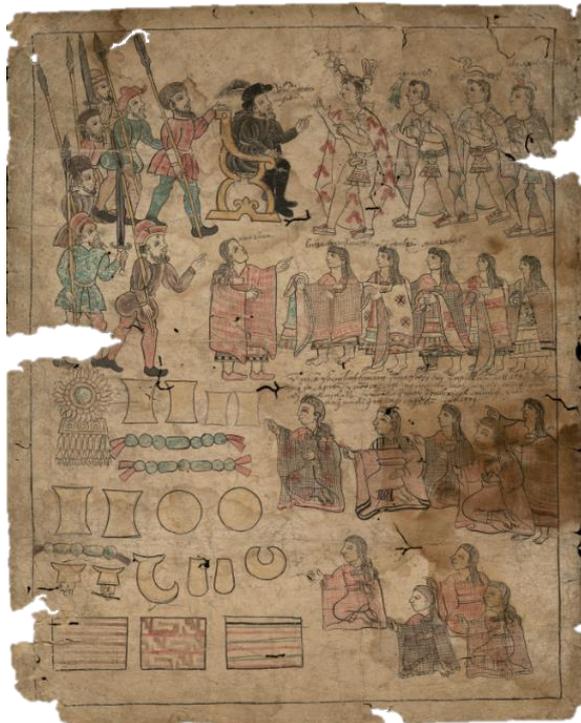
Contributed to the Mapas Project by the Benson Library at the University of Texas

<[http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa\\_single\\_intro.lasso?&mapaid=ltlax](http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa_single_intro.lasso?&mapaid=ltlax)> [accessed 15 April 2018]

**Fig. 2.2:** Malintzin (left), Cortés (centre), and Xicotencatl (right) depicted in the *Texas Fragment*, scene 3 (image rotated 90 degrees anti-clockwise)



**Fig. 2.3 (right):** presentation of gifts in the *Texas Fragment*, scene 4





**Fig. 2.4:** Cortés receives gifts from emissaries (above), and adorns himself in the *teotlatquilt* (below) in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico', f. 8v, scenes 12 & 13 (1577)

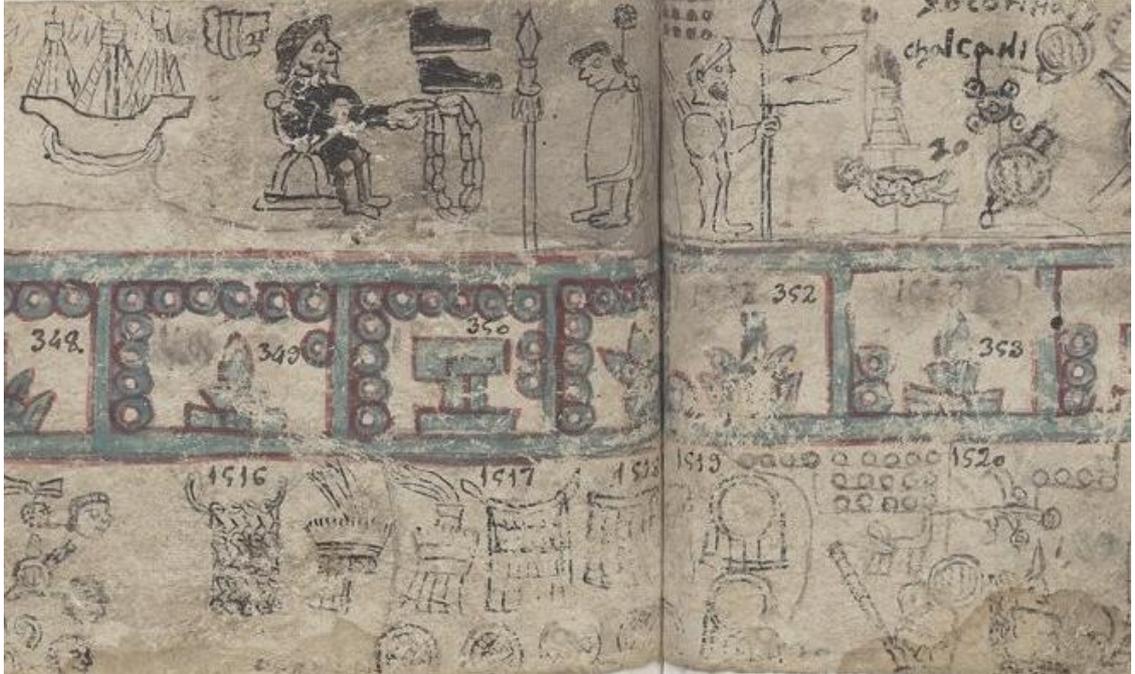
Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence  
 <<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>>  
 [accessed 15 April 2018]

Why Cortés does not comment on the gift exchange between himself and the Tlaxcalan lords remains uncertain. However, Cortés clearly values gift giving as a means of securing amicable relations with other indigenous lords, as his particularly detailed account of his first meeting with the Aztec *huey tlatoani*, Moctezuma, demonstrates. Unlike the encounter with the Tlaxcalan lords, Cortés emphasises the ceremonious nature of this meeting, and the overall grandness of the occasion; many richly dressed, important persons greeted him on the causeway, placing their hands on the ground and kissing it. Once Cortés had crossed the bridge, Moctezuma greeted him on a wide street in the city, with another two hundred lords who walked in a two-column procession. After being addressed by each of the lords, Cortés presented Moctezuma with his own cut-glass and pearl necklace, which he placed around Moctezuma's neck. Following this, Moctezuma placed necklaces of red snails' shells embellished with gold around Cortés' neck. They continued up the street, and there, Cortés writes, '[Moctezuma] took me by the hand and led me into a great room [...] And he bade me sit on a very rich throne.'<sup>79</sup> Soon after, Moctezuma presented Cortés with 'many and various treasures of gold and silver and featherwork, and as many as five or six thousand cotton garments, all very rich and woven and embroidered.'<sup>80</sup> These

<sup>79</sup> Cortés, 'The Second Letter', pp. 84-85 (p. 85).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

gifts, of course, came after many other gifts previously sent to Cortés via Moctezuma's emissaries.<sup>81</sup> Cortés goes on to richly describe even more gifts he received from Moctezuma later in the letter, including items crafted from gold and silver, jewels and feather work, 'and many other things which are too numerous to describe.'<sup>82</sup>



**Fig 2.5:** Cortés (seated) and his gifts to Moctezuma (above calendar), and Moctezuma's gifts to Cortés (below calendar), in the *Codex Mexicanus* (c. 1590) Mexicain 23-24, Département des Manuscrits, BnF <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55005834g/f56.item>> [accessed 15 April 2018]

The gifts given by Moctezuma are richly described in the alphabetic narratives of Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*, especially in the Spanish text (surprisingly). These gifts are recorded visually in Book XII, too, which contains two pictorial scenes portraying Mexica emissaries gifting a mantle and two necklaces to Cortés (fig. 2.4). The greatest visual insight into the gifts is provided by another pictorial, the *Codex Mexicanus* – the only pictorial manuscript to depict the gifts given by both Moctezuma and Cortés.<sup>83</sup> In this manuscript, an emissary receives a gift of shoes, a necklace, and a lance from Cortés, who is seated on a curule chair; beneath him, and the calendar, the rich array of Moctezuma's gifts are portrayed, including headdresses, cloaks, mosaics, shields, and a necklace – as Hill Boone identifies (fig. 2.5).<sup>84</sup> That this exchange was

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Cortés, 'The Second Letter', p. 69; Gómara, *Cortés*, 'chapter 49', pp. 107-108.

<sup>82</sup> Cortés, 'The Second Letter', pp. 100-101 (p. 101). Gomara and Díaz describe the gift exchanges in more detail, with Díaz paying particular attention to the additional gifts Moctezuma gave to Cortés' immediate retinue. See Gómara, *Cortés*, 'chapter 66', p. 140; Durán, *The Aztecs*, 'chapter LXXIV', p. 290.

<sup>83</sup> For a comparative analysis of the portrayals of this gift exchange in the *Florentine Codex* and the *Codex Mexicanus*, see Molly Bassett, *Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015), pp. 29-38.

<sup>84</sup> Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black*, p. 232.

one aimed towards securing amicable relations is most strongly reflected in the gifting of the necklace; in pictorial texts like these, a necklace acts as ‘the conventional sign of declarations of peace.’<sup>85</sup>

Whilst Cortés seemingly viewed Moctezuma’s bestowment of gifts as ‘gestures of submission’ reflective of his own status, or efforts of bribery, this was assuredly not the case.<sup>86</sup> Moctezuma was, after all, required to provide Cortés with a suitable welcome by Mexica rites of hospitality. Gift giving was an integral part of the Mexica’s life, and thus, in presenting Cortés with gifts, Moctezuma was adhering to traditional systems. As Bassett highlights, ‘rituals of exchange and bodily adornment emphasized the powerful relationships forged between Mexicas and peripheral rulers’ – not just in the welcoming of visitors, but war declarations, ‘petitions for peace, state burials [...] all required gift exchange.’<sup>87</sup> Similarly, in pre-conquest society, tribute was tactically offered as a means of effectively retaining autonomy from a dominant power, who, accordingly, usually left the *altepetl* in question alone, contented with the tribute. Was this the system Moctezuma intended to fulfil when he sent his emissaries with gifts to the European newcomers and their allies, before he later met with Cortés on the causeway?<sup>88</sup> Most significantly, though, when it comes to the causeway meeting itself, Inga Clendinnen convincingly argues that ‘Moctezuma’s gifts were statements of dominance, superb gestures of wealth and liberality made the more glorious by the arrogant humility of their giving.’<sup>89</sup> For the Mexica, the inadequacy of the gifts Cortés gave in return perhaps spoke to an absence of power or lack of status. Indeed, if gifts and gestures were metaphorical words used by Amerindian leaders to communicate their power, as was the grandeur of their emissaries, what did Cortés’ (as an ambassador to the Spanish crown) lack of splendour reflect?<sup>90</sup>

Diego Durán’s recording of the law codes issued by Moctezuma I (ruler of Tenochtitlan c. 1441-1470) provide us with further clues to the intended meaning of Moctezuma II’s gifts to Cortés. The codes – sumptuary laws that tied status to garments and other attire – stated that only the *tlatoani* and *tecuhtli* or great lords could wear jewellery crafted from gold or precious stones, like jade.<sup>91</sup> Men who earned honour as soldiers but were not nobles were only permitted to wear ‘common garlands,’ and were limited to adorning themselves ‘with necklaces of bone *and of*

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<sup>85</sup> Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, p. 34.

<sup>86</sup> Clendinnen, ‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’, p. 70. See also Ida Altman & Reginald D. Butler, ‘The Contact of Cultures: Perspectives on the Quincentenary’, *The American Historical Review*, 99:2 (1994), 478-503 (pp. 490-491).

<sup>87</sup> Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, p. 32.

<sup>88</sup> Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, p. 34.

<sup>89</sup> Clendinnen, ‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’, 70.

<sup>90</sup> James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press 1992), p. 66; Clendinnen, ‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’, p. 70; Altman & Butler, ‘The Contact of Cultures’, pp. 490-491.

<sup>91</sup> Durán, *The Aztecs*, ‘chapter XXVI’, p. 132.

*small snails*, small scallop shells, bones of snakes, and common stones,' but not of gold.<sup>92</sup> Although the necklace Moctezuma gave to Cortés was embellished with gold (according to Cortés' account), the main component of red snail shells suggests that Moctezuma received Cortés as a valiant warrior – one he perceived to hold a lower status to himself.<sup>93</sup> Only he, the *huey tlatoani*, was of high enough status to dress in gold.

Cortés' misinterpretation of Moctezuma's gifts, then, undoubtedly signals a vast cultural difference, in which gifts were valued by both parties but in very different ways. Altman and Butler apply James Lockhart's concept of 'double mistaken identity' to help explain the perceived meanings of gifts between the two strangers.<sup>94</sup> Lockhart defines this concept as:

a process [...] whereby each side takes it that a given form or concept is essentially one already known to it, operating in much the same manner as its own tradition, and hardly takes cognizance of the other side's interpretation.<sup>95</sup>

In other words, the richness of gifts given could signal both the power of the giver and the recipient at once; the gifts were a mirror through which both sides saw their own status as powerholders reflected. For Cortés, receiving such rich gifts without giving so much in return was a testament to his superiority, whilst for the *tlatoani*, the lavishness of his calculated bestowment symbolised his own authority, if not strengthening it further.

Returning to the extravagance of the gifts recorded visually in the Tlaxcalan *Texas Fragment*, and later in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, the application of this perspective helps achieve a deeper reading of these indigenous-authored sources of indigenous-European gift exchange, too: the gifts were not only being read by Europeans as demonstrative of their own 'superiority' and deference, they acted as symbols of the Tlaxcalteca's own position as power-holders in this cultural negotiation. This line of thought follows for another conquest pictorial, too, this time authored by the Quauhquecholteca. The *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* begins with a sizeable depiction of a first meeting between indigenous lords of Quauhquechollan and Castilians (suspected to be Cortés and one of the Alvarado brothers or Cristóbal de Olid) (fig. 2.6).<sup>96</sup> Here, the Castilian who we assume to be Cortés is embraced by one of the indigenous lords, who hands Cortés a piece of jewellery; as for Moctezuma's gifts, this single item is most likely representative

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<sup>92</sup> Durán, *The Aztecs*, 'chapter XXVI', p. 132. My emphasis.

<sup>93</sup> Descriptions of the necklace Moctezuma gave Cortés vary in later accounts. Gómara, *Cortés*, 'chapter 65', p. 139, describes two necklaces made of 'eight gold shrimps'; Durán, *The Aztecs*, 'chapter LXXIV', p. 290 records the necklace as 'golden [...] inlaid with precious stones.'

<sup>94</sup> Altman & Butler, 'The Contact of Cultures', p. 491. See also Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, p. 31.

<sup>95</sup> Lockhart, *The Nahuas*, p. 445. See also James Lockhart, 'Some Nahuatl Concepts in Postconquest Guise', *History of European Ideas*, 6 (1985), 465-82.

<sup>96</sup> As suggested by Florine G. L. Asselbergs, *Conquered Conquistadors: the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan: a Nahuatl vision of the Conquest of Guatemala* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2008), p. 130.

of an array of gifts.<sup>97</sup> Above the five figures is the Habsburg eagle, clasping an indigenous sword and a Castilian sword in its left and right claws, respectively. This depiction of Quauhquechollan-Castilian meeting, embrace and gift giving under the Habsburg coat of arms represents the establishment of their new military alliance, in a very similar manner to the *Texas Fragment*, as well as the later *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*.<sup>98</sup>



**Fig. 2.6:** Quauhquechollan rulers (left) meet the Castilians (right), in the main scene/top left of the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* (c. 1530) Digitally restored by the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* Project, UFM, Guatemala City, Guatemala (2009) <<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/view-the-lienzo/view-the-lienzo/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]

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As both alphabetic and pictorial accounts reflect, then, high-level gift giving between indigenous lords and Castilians was an important indigenous response to European presence in Mesoamerica. It was utilised as a key strategy during negotiations to establish (and retain) amicable relations by different indigenous groups, and, moreover, to demonstrate indigenous power. Such episodes of high-level exchange between indigenous groups and Europeans can be traced right back to Columbus' first voyage, reflecting the breadth of this indigenous response across both time and space. Columbus' first encounter with the chiefs of Hispaniola commences on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December 1492, and ends with his departure on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> January 1493; during this time, a number of ceremonious exchanges of elite items take place, both publically and privately. In particular, historians David Abulafia, Luis Ramos Gomez, Margarita Zamora and archaeologist José Oliver, have suggested that the exchanges between Columbus and Guacanagarí (Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> December – Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January) mark the formation of a friendship and/or alliance. This study suggests that this friendship was formed in a very similar way to those between Castilians and Nahuatl groups (although in comparison to the Mesoamerican context, this notion has received

<sup>97</sup> For the synecdochial function of Moctezuma's necklace, see Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, p. 34.

<sup>98</sup> Asselbergs, *Conquered Conquistadors*, p. 131.

less coverage in Caribbean historiography more widely). Significantly, a critical reading of this formation of friendship reveals substantial insights into instances of indigenous agency. Firstly, though, we must briefly outline of the events of this encounter:

After dining with a number of *caciques* over the previous week – occasions which at times culminated in an exchange of elite items (for example an embellished belt, parrots and gold plates, for amber beads, orange flower water and red shoes) – Columbus finally arrived at the lands of Guacanagarí on Hispaniola. Here, he and the crew were warmly received by the local communities, whilst Guacanagarí himself sent a belt and an embellished gold mask or *guaíza* to Columbus.<sup>99</sup> Shortly after these first instances of high-level gift giving, on 25<sup>th</sup> December, disaster struck Columbus' fleet, as one of his ships (the *Santa María*) was destroyed on a reef. Fortunately, with the assistance of Guacanagarí's men – who wept over the affair, as did Guacanagarí himself – the contents of the ship were brought safely to land and stored in some of the village's houses.<sup>100</sup> It was certainly Columbus' lucky day.

The next day, the king dined with Columbus, and similar elite items were exchanged; this time, though, there was also discussion about the threat posed by the Caribs, followed by a demonstration of European weapons.<sup>101</sup> Columbus had heard rumours of the Caribs from other Taíno groups earlier on during the voyage: from what he understood, they were a group of ferocious man-eaters, who came by sea to raid Taíno villages and steal their women – an understanding we will return to in the following chapter. As recorded in the *Diario*, '[Columbus] told [Guacanagarí] by signs that the sovereigns of Castile would order the Caribs destroyed [...] [and Columbus] ordered a lombard and a spingard to be fired, and when the king saw the effect of their force and what they had penetrated, he was astonished.'<sup>102</sup> Following this demonstration, Guacanagarí 'brought [Columbus] a large mask that had large pieces of gold in the ears and eyes and on other places [...] with other jewels.'<sup>103</sup> In addition, on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> December Columbus was invited ashore by Guacanagarí, where further elite items were exchanged in a highly ceremonious fashion.

When Columbus departed from Guacanagarí's land on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1493, thirty-nine of Columbus' men were left behind to establish the settlement of La Navidad – the first European settlement in the New World. In return for Guacanagarí's acquiescence, the remaining Europeans would provide protection to Guacanagarí's people from the Caribs, via their use and provision of (superior) weapons. According to Columbus, this meeting had therefore been an overwhelming

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<sup>99</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 16 December', pp. 231-35; 'Tuesday 18 December', pp. 241-47; 'Saturday 22 December', p. 263. For initial encounters with Guacanagarí, see 'Saturday 22 December', p. 263; 'Sunday 23 December', pp. 271-73.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Tuesday 25 December', 279-81.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Wednesday 26 December', 285-87.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

success, as he had formed a friendship with an important Taíno *cacique*, and – in his opinion – shown the strength of the Europeans. Indeed, Columbus attributes the shipwreck to the Lord, who intended for a settlement to be founded in that place.<sup>104</sup> Columbus presents this turn of events as a reinforcement of his own power, and as reflective of European superiority (graciously saving the helpless Taíno victims from the Caribs). He even remarks that ‘truly it was not a disaster, but great luck’ that the *Santa Maria* was wrecked.<sup>105</sup> Columbus left the island feeling secure in his friendship with Guacanagarí, who apparently ‘showed much love for the Admiral,’ and confident of his men’s safety.<sup>106</sup>

However, in the events of/following 25<sup>th</sup> December, Columbus vastly misunderstood – or actively misrepresented – his own security, and that of Guacanagarí and his people. The idea of a cannibalistic people who came to raid the peaceful islanders’ homes is highlighted in scholarship as favourable to the European cause (painting them as ‘protectors’ and ‘civilisers’), and Columbus had a vested interest in playing up what he believes to be indigenous insecurity (the threat of the Caribs), downplaying the threat to his own security the loss of the *Santa Maria* posed. However, Ramos Gómez rightly recognises the real ramifications of Columbus’ situation: with only one remaining ship present, there was no recovery possible without the help of Guacanagarí’s men, who, by far, held the superior position. Indeed, Columbus’ fate was dependent on Guacanagarí’s will: left with only the *Niña* (as the third ship, the *Pinta*, had been taken on an authorised search for gold by captain Pinzon), Columbus had little choice but to riskily abandon thirty-nine of his men on Hispaniola.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, Oliver outlines how Guacanagarí was not necessarily preparing for an overseas threat, but one much closer to home: for Guacanagarí, the alliance was about gaining an advantageous position over Caonabó and Behechio, paramount chiefs on the island who had previously stolen Guacanagarí’s women.<sup>108</sup>

Taking the opportunity, then, to utilise this situation and develop his relationship with Columbus, the exchanges made by Guacanagarí can be seen as highly pragmatic, and deserve scholarly attention as examples of indigenous agency, rather than as a ‘defenceless’ Taíno being ‘protected’ by merciful Europeans. Zamora is one of the few scholars to examine the negotiations between Columbus and Guacanagarí in this way, and her fresh approach makes clear the importance of returning agency to the Taínos during encounter.<sup>109</sup> By more deeply deconstructing

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287. My emphasis.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Wednesday 2 January’, p. 301.

<sup>107</sup> Luis J. Ramos Gómez, *Cristobal Colón y los Indios Taínos (de octubre de 1492 a diciembre de 1494)* (Valladolid: Seminario Americanista de la Universidad de Valladolid, 1993), pp. 146-155.

<sup>108</sup> Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, p. 151.

<sup>109</sup> Margarita Zamora, “‘If Cahonaboa learns to speak...’: Amerindian voice in the discourse of discovery”, *Colonial Latin American Review* 8:2 (1999), 191-205. Disappointingly, while noting that there ‘already exists an interesting bibliography on [the] subject [of communication between Columbus and the Amerindians]’ (p. 191), only one specific work related to this encounter is named in the

the presentation of European ‘protection’ of Taíno ‘victims’ in the *Diario*’s telling of the Christmas shipwreck, indigenous responses of alliance and collaboration with the strangers can be recognised. Such responses were initiated by the Taínos – namely by Guacanagarí – themselves, to increase their own power against an enemy group.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, the insecurities the thirty-nine Christians faced on the island proved fatal: when Columbus returned to the settlement on his second voyage, he found it burnt to the ground, and all the Christian settlers dead. As we know from the account of the fleet’s surgeon, Dr Diego Chanca, the Christians spent much of their time on Hispaniola trying to work out what had happened: they questioned a very suspicious Guacanagarí, who, surely enough, named Caonabó and Behechio as the perpetrators of the attack.<sup>111</sup> The lack of power held by the remaining Christians – and, conversely, the power of indigenous agents – is undoubtedly captured in this outcome, as is Columbus’ misjudgement of the situation and his misrepresentation of himself in the *Diario* as power-holder extraordinaire. In other words, truly it *was* a disaster.<sup>112</sup>

In this context, Columbus’ presentation of Guacanagarí’s crying should similarly be highlighted as potentially problematic. Certainly, the *Diario* implies a sense of vulnerability with regard to the weeping of indigenous actors: in the events immediately following the wrecking of the *Santa María*, the *Diario* tells how, when he heard of the wreck, Guacanagarí ‘cried and sent all his people from the town with many large canoes to unload everything from the ship.’<sup>113</sup> Later, ‘from time to time [Guacanagarí] sent one of his relatives to the Admiral, weeping, to console him, saying that he should not be sorrowful or annoyed because *he would give him all that he had*.’<sup>114</sup> Here, the *Diario* implies weakness through Guacanagarí’s generous assistance during the Christians’ misfortune: in offering them canoes, hands, and unspoilt goods as they wept, Guacanagarí and his people are presented as almost *too* generous or accommodating (like those participating in low-level exchange). This idea that weeping implied (willing) compliance is cemented later in the same journal entry, which reads that ‘[Guacanagarí] and the whole town were weeping; to such a degree, the Admiral says, are they *loving people*, and *without greed*, and *docile in everything*.’<sup>115</sup> The act of weeping is thus subtly, yet damagingly, presented as reflective of the Taínos’ submission to the Christians.

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corresponding footnote (Maria Vittoria Calvi, ‘Communication between Spaniards and Indians in Columbus’s Journal’, *Annals of Scholarship: An International Quarterly in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8:2 (1991), 181-200).

<sup>110</sup> For the concept of the romantic triad of knights (Europeans), damsels (Taínos), and monsters (Caribs) in early accounts of Caribbean encounter, Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>111</sup> Chanca, ‘Letter’, pp. 44-62.

<sup>112</sup> For a summary of this analysis of the Christmas shipwreck, see Rogers, ‘Christopher Who?’, pp. 48-49.

<sup>113</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Tuesday 25 December,’ p. 281.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Tuesday 25 December,’ p. 281.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

However, the Mesoamerican context may help us in answering, or at least in critically posing, questions about the *Diario*'s portrayal of weeping. For example, in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex* – as in Spanish accounts – Nahua figures, including Moctezuma are depicted as 'crying' or weeping, tears falling down their cheeks, apparently in response to hearing of the power of the Castilians and their allies (fig. 2.7).<sup>116</sup> Towards the end of the conquest, the allied forces set fire to the temple at Tlatelolco, and the Nahuatl text reads that 'when [the Mexica] saw the temple burning, there was weeping and people greeted one another tearfully.'<sup>117</sup> Importantly, Susan Kellogg relates portrayals of weeping in Book XII to those in the *Codex*'s earlier books, in which rulers' weeping reflect failures in strategy, loss of family or allies, or knowledge of forthcoming death.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, in certain circumstances, there was an *expectation* for leaders to weep. Moreover, Kellogg highlights that, as a behavioural norm for both Nahua individuals and groups, 'crying was, if anything, more masculine than feminine behaviour.'<sup>119</sup>



**Fig. 2.7:** Moctezuma and Mexica individuals weep in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico', f. 13r, scene 21 (1577)  
Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence  
<<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]

Placing weeping within Nahua understanding is therefore essential in reading this response; whilst Moctezuma's crying at a crucial point of the conquest makes sense in terms of pre-contact Nahua political and community contexts, different cultural understandings of weeping

<sup>116</sup> Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, trans. by Lockhart in *We People Here*, 'Chapter 9', p. 84.

<sup>117</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, 'Chapter 36', in *We People Here*, p. 220. Pictorial scene 159.

<sup>118</sup> Susan Kellogg, 'An Emotions History of the Conquest', in 'Ethnohistorical Spaces/Historiographical Places', roundtable discussion at the American Society for Ethnohistory Annual Meeting (Nashville, TN: Thursday 10 November 2016, session 11).

<sup>119</sup> Kellogg, 'An Emotions History of the Conquest'.

(presently and historically) could certainly blur our understandings here. As much is clear in Cortés' account of Moctezuma's crying that follows the 'verbatim' speech to the lords from nearby provinces, in which Moctezuma declares Cortés to be 'the same lord for whom we have all been waiting' (often assumed to mean Quetzalcoatl), and submits to him.<sup>120</sup> Cortés remarks:

All this [Moctezuma] said weeping with all the tears and sighs that a man is able; and likewise all the other lords who were listening wept so much that for a long time they were unable to reply. And I can assure Your Holy Majesty that among the Spaniards who heard this discourse *there was not one who did not have great pity for him.*<sup>121</sup>

Not only did Cortés tie the lords' crying to a pronouncement of his own supposed divinity in Moctezuma's speech, and their subsequent submission to him, but the assumption of weeping as weakness is further emphasised through the comment that such crying was viewed as pitiable by the Castilian onlookers.

Therefore, through reading responses of Moctezuma's weeping in both pictorial and alphabetic sources, it becomes clear that there are multiple interpretations of this behaviour. Whilst Cortés viewed the behaviour in terms of weakness or pity, weeping was not unusual for Nahua rulers, nor was it solely connected to sadness; it functioned in a much wider context.<sup>122</sup> This wider context is, understandably, difficult to trace. Again, as Kellogg rightly highlights, reconstructing individual emotional responses or experiences is a challenging task for ethnohistorians – a challenge reflected in a general lack of scholarly engagement in Mesoamerican emotions history (the key exceptions being Clendinnen and Pennock), especially in comparison to the growing field of emotions history of early modern Europe.<sup>123</sup> The work of Barbara Rosenwein is of particular note, here. Rosenwein proposes the existence of 'emotional communities,' or groups that 'adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions.'<sup>124</sup> These communities are multiple, and may change over time, or displace one another.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, even in the contexts of medieval and early modern

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<sup>120</sup> Cortés, 'Second Letter', p. 98.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99 (my emphasis).

<sup>122</sup> Kellogg, 'An Emotions History'. For a further example of pictorial depictions of weeping, see the *Tlachco Codex*, which portrays indigenous men crying as they carry the wives of Spanish colonial officials in hammocks. This sixteenth-century pictorial functions as an inquiry into tributes and labour issues concerning indigenous labourers in the mines in Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico; weeping, in this instance, reflects the indigenous men's torment/dissatisfaction of their labour situation. *Tlachco Codex*, available via the *Mapas Project*, <[http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa\\_single\\_intro.lasso?&mapaid=tlachco](http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa_single_intro.lasso?&mapaid=tlachco)> [accessed 27 March 2018].

<sup>123</sup> Kellogg, 'An Emotions History'; Clendinnen, *Aztecs*; Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*.

<sup>124</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 2. See also Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: a History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>125</sup> Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, p. 2.

Europe, Rosenwein urges readers to be aware that some emotional communities dominate the available sources, and others, consequentially, ‘are almost entirely hidden from us’.<sup>126</sup> This is a point that resonates strongly with the context of early encounters in Mesoamerica, where the extant indigenous-authored sources were so often produced under European aegis.

The situation is undoubtedly complicated further in the Caribbean, as we do not have indigenous-authored sources to draw upon in the instance of the weeping Taínos as we do for the Mexica. Yet, considering the different views of Moctezuma’s weeping does offer inspiration for a more critical reading of Columbus’ account of Guacanagarí’s crying, and it is essential to at least attempt to draw out nuances between the different perspectives of the emotional response in question. Could Guacanagarí’s weeping reflect a ‘ritualistic’ or measured response to unfortunate events, especially considering that he sent relatives to Columbus to cry from time to time? Did weeping solely indicate sadness or sorrow, or was it connected to other emotions? How similar or divergent were the Taínos perceptions of weeping to that of the Christian strangers? Although these questions cannot be answered at this time, this study insists that Guacanagarí’s weeping in the *Diario* should, at least, be read critically and inquisitively.

#### II.IV Giving gifts & sharing symbols

##### *The creation of in-between identities in the formation of friendships*

Although the La Navidad alliance seemingly broke down on Columbus’ return to the island, its formation through the exchange of elite items reflects an original desire, from both parties, to establish an amicable relationship. Whilst Columbus never records agreements between himself and *caciques* as ‘pacts’ or ‘treaties’ explicitly, Ramos Gómez argues that the ceremonial and symbolic nature of the exchanges implies some level of negotiation and agreement between the two parties.<sup>127</sup> Similarly for Abulafia, ‘Columbus and Guacanagarí became firm allies’ after the events of 25<sup>th</sup> December, whilst their ‘ready understanding of each other’s tastes and preferences’ during gift exchanges affirmed their friendship.<sup>128</sup> This amicable cross-cultural relationship can

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Ramos Gómez, *Cristobal Colón*, p. 149; see also pp. 142-158. Notably, John Cohen (‘Life of the Admiral by his Son, Hernando Colón’, *The Four Voyages*, p. 94) translates Ferdinand Columbus’ account of the friendship between Guacanagarí and Columbus as a ‘treaty’, but this is not the case. In Ulloa’s Italian translation of the original Spanish, Ferdinand writes that Columbus reasons or discusses with Guacanagarí. See Ferdinand Columbus, *Historie del S.D. Fernando Colombo: nelle quali s’ha particolare, & vera relatione della vita, & de’ fatti dell’Ammiraglio D. Christoforo Colombo, suo padre: et dello scoprimento, ch’egli fece dell’Indie Occidentali, dette Mondo Nuovo, hora possedute dal Sereniss.*, translation of the original Spanish ms., which was never published, by Alfonso de Ulloa (Venetia, 1571), p. 71, available via the Internet Archive

<<https://archive.org/stream/historiedelsdfer00coln#page/n185/mode/2up>> [accessed 25 May 2018].

<sup>128</sup> Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind*, p. 169 & p. 171, respectively.

best be explored through three specific episodes of elite exchanges between the Taíno chief and the Admiral – episodes that give particular consideration to the symbolic and ceremonious nature of the exchange in question. Importantly, by deconstructing the balance of power between the two parties and assessing the impact such exchanges may have had on the participants’ cultural identities, a more nuanced reading of high-level gift giving recorded in the *Diario* can be reached. Furthermore, such a reading exposes the extent to which these symbolic exchanges reveal Guacanagarí’s subaltern actions.

Firstly, on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> December – the day Ramos Gómez identifies as the beginning of the Guacanagarí-Columbus defensive alliance – the chief continues to wear the shirt and gloves that Columbus had given him around the village.<sup>129</sup> After dining and discussing the threat of the Caribs, Guacanagarí’s men brought a large mask embellished with gold, which Guacanagarí gave to Columbus, ‘with other gold jewels that he himself had put on the Admiral’s head and neck.’<sup>130</sup> The way in which Guacanagarí himself places the indigenous jewels upon Columbus indicates that a strong personal connection has been made. As this directly followed the discussion of the Caribs, it is certainly arguable that this adornment symbolised some form of agreement, or acted as a way of confirming it, as Ramos Gómez suggests.

This notion is supported by the later accounts of first meetings in Mesoamerica: like Columbus, Cortés placed special significance on the physical contact between himself and Moctezuma when placing necklaces on each other’s necks, and by Moctezuma taking him by the hand. The importance of this contact is increased when considering that Cortés remarks that when he first went to embrace Moctezuma, before the exchange of necklaces, ‘the two lords who were with [Moctezuma] stopped me with their hands so that I could not touch him.’<sup>131</sup> This suggests that physical contact, in this instance, was something to be earned. Significantly, the giving of necklaces was similarly enacted by Indian Conquistador lords (to Cortés), as pictorial images of the conquest depict. In the case of the *Texas Fragment* and the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, the visual representation of this physical contact during gifting symbolised the friendship that the *tlacuiloque* were strategically stressing, making the connection between such interpersonal gift giving, physical contact, and alliance abundantly clear.

The exchanges also provide significant insights into how the indigenous group in question identified the leaders of the Christian strangers. As Bassett explains in her excellent study of the exchange between Moctezuma and Cortés, ‘Moctezuma gives Cortés gifts appropriate for the *teixiptla* [representative or localised embodiment] of a *teotl* [god], a ritual action with implications that exceed a simple welcome’; the *tlatoani*’s gifts ‘may have proffered

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<sup>129</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Wednesday 26 December’, p. 285

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 285-87. Guacanagarí also gave presents to the other crew members who were present.

<sup>131</sup> Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, p. 84.

peace, but they also gave occasion for Cortés to dress (or be dressed) as a *teotl*'s embodiment.<sup>132</sup> Within the cultural context of traditional Mexica gift exchange, this gift of *teotlatquitl* or deity belongings had deep symbolic meanings, beyond their visual imitation of the god's appearance.<sup>133</sup> Cortés' adornment in the *teotlatquitl* is depicted pictorially in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*, in which he wears feathers in his hat, anklets with bells, and a necklace (fig. 2.4). Bassett posits that these gifts transformed Cortés into a *ixiptla*, or even that, in wearing them, he initiated a ritual in which he became a sacrificial victim.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, when he accepted the luxurious gifts from Moctezuma, did Cortés have any idea of their true significance?

In the case of Guacanagarí, this exchange also provides significant insights into how the Taíno chief(s) identified Columbus. Comparable to Mesoamerican gift exchange, it was the symbolic power of the item that was especially critical to the Taíno gift-givers (in contrast to the Christians, who dispensed items to gain profit from minimum expenditure).<sup>135</sup> As José Oliver explains, the face mask or *guaíza* Guacanagarí gave to Columbus had great spiritual significance in the context of Taíno beliefs, in which a person's soul was located in the face: the giving of a *guaíza* or a 'face of the living' was not just about value, but about conferring a potent part of one's personhood or living soul.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, Fray Ramón Pané records in his *Account* (1498) that 'when a person is alive, [the Taínos] call his spirit *goeíza*, and when he is dead, they call it *opía*.'<sup>137</sup>

Importantly, *guaízas* were the preferred gift to be given to caciques from different lands. For Oliver, the giving of a *guaíza* to Columbus therefore confirmed his categorisation as a foreign *cacique*, albeit a stranger one.<sup>138</sup> This identification is supported by the gifting of parrots (*guacamayas*), too, which – unlike the *guaízas* – could take place on a lower level (although they were often given as gifts between *caciques*, as well).<sup>139</sup> The Taíno communities' gifting of parrots to Columbus (occurring on at least four occasions) not only reflects indigenous initiative, to develop trading relations or otherwise, but also supports the notion that some Taíno groups may have identified Columbus as a foreign *cacique*.<sup>140</sup> Yet, as postulated with regard to the giving of the parrots on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December, this should not necessarily be read as a Taíno concession to an all-powerful Columbus. Following Mol's argument, the gifting of the *guaíza* may reflect a sacrifice by the giver 'to protect something much more from the receiver... exchanging the *guaíza*

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<sup>132</sup> Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, p. 29 and p. 34, respectively.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27, p. 38.

<sup>135</sup> Altman & Butler, 'Contact of Cultures', p. 491.

<sup>136</sup> Oliver, *Caciques and Cemí Idols*, pp. 148-9. See also Wilson, *Hispaniola*, pp. 65-6; Mol, *Costly Giving*, pp. 97-101 (p. 98). Mol undertakes an in-depth study of *guaízas* in Mol, *Costly Giving*, pp. 93-146.

<sup>137</sup> Fray Ramón Pané, *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians: a new edition with an introductory study, notes, and appendixes*, ed. by José J. Arrom & trans. by Susan C. Griswold (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), 'chapter XIII', p. 19.

<sup>138</sup> Oliver, *Caciques*, p. 149.

<sup>139</sup> Wilson, *Hispaniola*, p. 61.

<sup>140</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 13 December', p. 223.

is *gaining control in order to pacify*, rather than *pleasing in order to pacify*.<sup>141</sup> For the Taíno, for Guacanagarí, the *guaíza* may have been, in effect, a means of control over the strange men who had crashed onto his shores.

Following the giving of the *guaíza* on 26<sup>th</sup> December, Guacanagarí's development of his relationship with Columbus continues two days later, when Columbus arrives at the village to oversee the construction of the Spanish fortress. Here, Columbus was at first greeted by the king's brother, who took him to one of best houses of the village, 'where they had prepared for him a dais of palm fronds where they made him sit.'<sup>142</sup> Guacanagarí soon arrived, placed a large plate of gold on Columbus' neck, and remained there with him until later that day. A further two days later, on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> December, Columbus was given a similar reception at the same house (seated on the dais), but this time five other kings – all subject to Guacanagarí – were also present for the gift exchange that ensued: '[Guacanagarí] took off the crown from his own head and put it on the Admiral's. And the Admiral took off from his own neck a collar of fine agates [...] and put it on the king.'<sup>143</sup> After this, Columbus also dressed the king in the red cape he was wearing, a silver ring, and sent for some shoes to be brought to him.<sup>144</sup>

Here, the way in which the chief and Columbus dress each other in their own regalia – necessitating fairly intimate physical contact – further indicates that some form of relationship has been established. Certainly, the ceremonious nature of the exchange (with the palm frond dais, for example, and the presence of other kings) indicates that it may have symbolised the formation of a more formal diplomatic alliance. Significantly, Oliver stipulates that Guacanagarí's 'crown' may have been a different type of *guaíza*, this time worn as a diadem on headgear rather than on an armband or belt. If Oliver is correct, this gifting provides further support for the idea that Guacanagarí was exchanging high value gifts with the man who he judged to be 'the *cacique* of the Spaniards.'<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, whilst Columbus may have conveyed his 'coronation' as a 'transference of Guacanagarí's fealty' to both him and Castile in the *Diario* – painting himself as the superior power-holder – the giving of his cape in return likely implied a similar meaning of deference towards Guacanagarí and the other chiefs, from their perspective.<sup>146</sup> Thus, the exchange was loaded with symbolism from the perspective of *both* participating parties.

Intriguingly, two of the other kings at this meeting similarly presented Columbus with pieces of flattened gold, perhaps signalling wider recognition of him as a foreign *cacique*: did they, too, want to be part of this developing Taíno-European alliance?<sup>147</sup> Or were they competing

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<sup>141</sup> Mol, *Costly Giving*, p. 143; p. 156.

<sup>142</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Friday 28 December', p. 293.

<sup>143</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 30 December', pp. 295-97.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>145</sup> Oliver, *Caciques*, p. 152.

<sup>146</sup> Wilson, *Hispaniola*, p. 71.

<sup>147</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 30 December', p. 297.

against each other, vying for power between themselves? Certainly, as Wilson highlights, there was ‘intense’ competition between local *caciques* to secure amicable relations with the Christian strangers, particularly on Hispaniola.<sup>148</sup> As the quantitative analysis of the *Diario* shows, local, high-ranking persons (including Guacanagarí) met with Columbus on at least twenty occasions (as well as six other meetings with members of his crew) during December 1492 and January 1493, gifting items such as parrots, pieces or sheets of gold, and embellished gold items (see Appendix I, table 1). The presence of the other, subordinate kings at the meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> December may also reflect an attempt on Guacanagarí’s part to emphasise his own power to Columbus. To develop Ramos Gómez’s argument that the chief was in a position of superiority after the shipwreck incident, the fact that this particular gift exchange took place in a house *belonging to Guacanagarí* reflects his control over the negotiations. Moreover, the very way in which the alliance was confirmed – by a *ceremonious and symbolic* exchange of items often after the exchange and consumption of food, rather than the signing of a written document – echoes the power of indigenous forms in this contact situation. Unbeknown to Columbus – like Cortés – by sitting down to eat as he did, and by partaking in the exchange of gifts afterwards, he inadvertently fulfilled Taíno ritual order.<sup>149</sup>

The point at which Columbus may have most likely felt at the whim of indigenous power would have been during dining with the chief; the precarious, visual in-betweenness of their outward appearance could have been manifested on a more physical level, too. As Rebecca Earle has demonstrated, early modern Iberians believed that it was food, above all, that created the differences between European and Amerindian bodies, to the extent that the intake of indigenous food could ultimately alter the very bodies of the explorers (and vice versa).<sup>150</sup> Considering how Guacanagarí and Columbus both ate each other’s food on a number of occasions, then, how far was this in-between identity perceived to be associated with physical composition – at least from the European perspective?

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<sup>148</sup> Wilson, *Hispaniola*, pp. 66-67 [p. 66].

<sup>149</sup> For the significance of the order of ceremony and food, see Wilson, *Hispaniola*, pp. 63-5.

<sup>150</sup> Rebecca Earle, *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race & the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 2-3 and throughout.



**Fig. 2.8:** selection of tribute depicted in the *Matrícula de tributos*, f. 13 (c. 1519) INAH, *Códices de México: Memorias y saberes* digital exhibition <<http://www.codices.inah.gob.mx/pc/index.php>> [accessed 15 April 2018]

Considering both these aspects, this episode should also be critically read in terms of Columbus (both knowing and unknowing) compliance with indigenous systems, and to a powerful Guacanagarí, rather than simply reflecting Columbus' achievement of gaining the help of a 'powerless' Taíno chief. Comparably, as Kranz highlights, the visual evidence of the ritual of marriage and the accompanying celebratory gift giving presented in the *Fragment* similarly fulfilled Mesoamerican tradition: the *Fragment* 'offers traditional visual evidence of a traditional alliance formation between an altepetl and another group,' between the Tlaxcalteca and the Castilian newcomers.<sup>151</sup> In this indigenous-authored source, the depiction of tradition forms and ceremony places the power firmly in the hands of the Tlaxcalan lords, and the Castilians are somewhat absorbed into Mesoamerican tradition. There are further, subtler visual indicators/pictorial strategies that convey Tlaxcalan authority in the *Fragment*, too. Take the meeting of Xicotencatl and Cortés in scene two, for example: Xicotencatl is (14%) taller than Cortés, whose dismount from his horse and raising of his hat could be read as signs of deference or respect to this indigenous lord.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, although the influence of European painting styles is detectable, the *Fragment* retains a considerable amount of pre-conquest pictorial conventions (such as the inclusion of toponyms, name glyphs, and symbolic insignia) in

<sup>151</sup> Barton Kranz, 'Sixteenth-century Tlaxcalan pictorial documents', p. 7.

<sup>152</sup> The indigenous lord in scene one is significantly larger (80% larger) than (a mounted) Cortés.

comparison to its later counterpart, the *Lienzo*.<sup>153</sup> This preservation of pre-conquest style is clearly seen when comparing the ‘emphatic,’ larger-than-life depiction of gifts in scene four to the tributes recorded in the *Matrícula de Tributos*, composed c. 1519 (fig. 2.8).<sup>154</sup> Being painted on native bark paper, the very material of the *Fragment* itself evokes its indigeneity.

Such visual indicators of power (through the invocation of indigenous tradition, forms, and pictorial strategies) are reflective of the broader purpose of the Tlaxcalan images of conquest: to document the role of the Tlaxcalteca in the conquest of Mexico. As has been well-established in recent scholarship, these pictorials acted as ‘pictorial petitions’ (to borrow from Kranz) that substantiated the Tlaxcalteca’s claims to the role they played in securing victory over the Mexica.<sup>155</sup> As petitions, these pictorials were designed to highlight the Tlaxcalteca’s cooperation and friendship with the Castilians – particularly through their (supposedly warm) welcome given to the Castilians, their military alliance (through marriage and gifting), and (in the latter two pictorials) the conversion of the Tlaxcalan lords to Christianity. Indeed, whilst retaining indigenous pictorial traditions, the *Fragment’s tlacuiloque* demonstrated an effort to engage effectively with the document’s small, intended audience of colonial government officials by incorporating European practices, such as modelling (see Cortés’ clothing, for example, which departs from the pre-contact style of flat, unmodulated colour usage).<sup>156</sup> There are other strategies used to communicate their alliance with the Castilians, too: in both the *Fragment* (fig. 2.2) and the *Lienzo*, Xicotencatl is seated on a *European*, wooden curule chair like Cortés, rather than an indigenous *icpalli* or reed mat. Significantly, this sharing of symbols visually marks the alliance between the two men and their people.

As Kranz’s excellent comparative examination of the Tlaxcalan conquest images reveals, the pictorial strategies used by the Tlaxcalan *tlacuiloque* are not static, but develop over time in response to their increasing understanding of what the Spaniards would respond to: ‘the Tlaxcalteca adjusted their visual arguments to better serve their interest in making claims.’<sup>157</sup> In particular, to summarise a key point of Kranz’s analysis, this development is reflected in the increasing minimisation of the ritual giving of daughters and gifts across the documents, and the increasing attention given to portraying a (rather unlikely) early religious conversion of the Tlaxcalan lords and provision of military assistance.<sup>158</sup> From being named and depicted in detail

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

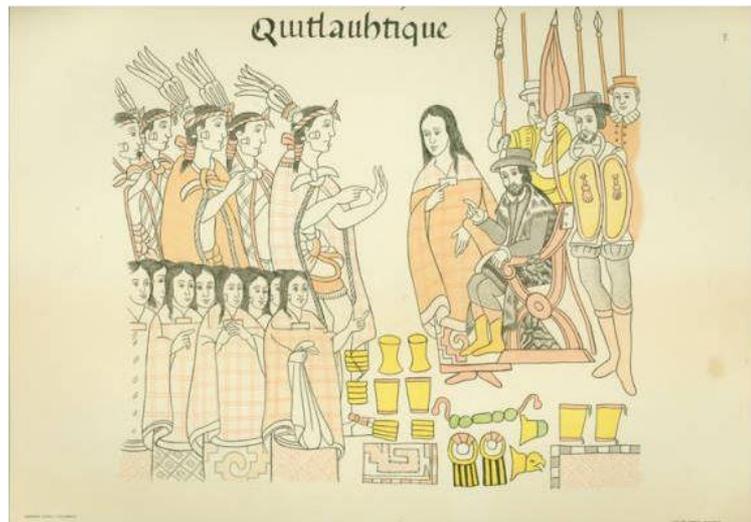
<sup>155</sup> Kranz, ‘Visual persuasion’, p. 54. This is well-established in scholarship of the Tlaxcalan pictorials; see Hill Boone, ‘Pictorial Documents and Visual Thinking’, especially pp. 158-60; Gibson, *Tlaxcala*, especially pp. 158-169.

<sup>156</sup> Kranz, ‘Visual Persuasion’, pp. 56-57.

<sup>157</sup> Barton Kranz, ‘Visual Persuasion’, 60.

<sup>158</sup> For the religious conversion of the lords, see scene 8 of the *Lienzo* & drawing 33 of the *Descripción*: Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala de las indias y del mar océano para el buen gobierno y ennoblecimiento dellas*, with a preliminary study by René Acuña (México:

in the *Fragment* (fig. 2.3), the gifted women become bunched together and unnamed in scene 7 of the *Lienzo* (fig. 2.9), and reduced to a party of two in drawing 34 of the *Descripción*.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, the lavishly documented gifts of the *Fragment* are less carefully itemised in the *Lienzo* and the *Descripción*, and take up far less space.<sup>160</sup> This dynamism in the different representations of the first Tlaxcalan-Castilian encounter certainly serves as a reminder that, just as for the influences or motivations of European accounts, so too must the undercurrents of these indigenous-authored documents be considered and deconstructed. Indeed, the ways in which the Tlaxcalteca manipulate the narrative of events in the pictorials – particularly in the *Lienzo* – will be of continuing interest across the course of this study.



**Fig. 2.9:** Tlaxcalan lords present gifts to Cortés in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 7

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[accessed 15 April 2018]

\*

The sharing of symbols in Tlaxcalan images of conquest forms part of the *tlacuiloque*'s wider visual strategy to gain and/or demonstrate their power. As we have touched on already, one strategy was to highlight the Tlaxcalan lords' early conversion to Christianity; the unlikelihood of such an early conversion as depicted in scene 8 of the *Lienzo* – and its absence from the *Fragment* – further stresses the importance placed upon this eventuality by the Tlaxcalteca in the 1550s (fig. 2.10). As well as the conversion scene itself, scene 5 of the *Lienzo* depicts a meeting between the Tlaxcalan lords and Cortés (who make physical contact) in front of a large,

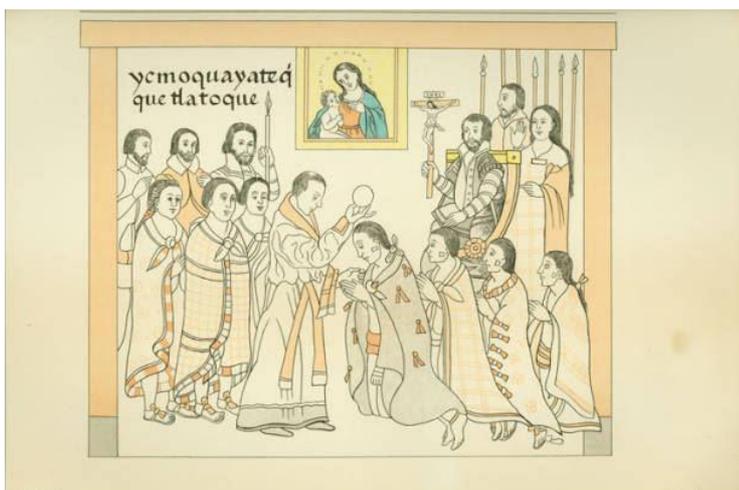
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Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1981). For a critique of the occurrence of an early conversion date of the Tlaxcalan lords, see Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion', p. 60, building on the work of Gibson, *Tlaxcala*, p. 30.

<sup>159</sup> Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción*, drawing 34.

<sup>160</sup> Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion', pp. 58-60.

domineering crucifix – a crucifix notably absent from the corresponding scene in the *Fragment*.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, an even taller crucifix features at the centre-bottom of the main scene of the *Lienzo*: here, the four Tlaxcalan lords oversee its erection (carried out by three Castilians), which takes place under an image of the Virgin Mary. Incorporated alongside other European symbols of political power, such as the coat of arms and royal regalia that also feature in the main scene, it has been well-established in scholarship that the inclusion of Christian symbols was thus part of a wider indigenous strategy to reflect allegiance to the Castilians.<sup>162</sup>



**Fig. 2.10:** Tlaxcalan lords converting to Christianity under the image of the Virgin Mary in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 8  
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 <<http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/achl/id/1609/rec/36>>  
 [accessed 15 April 2018]

This very Christian-centric presentation of the first meetings was undoubtedly designed to speak to the power situation in the early colonial period, mainly by demonstrating the lords' wilful/voluntary acquiescence to the new religion. However, the *tlacuiloque's* clever use of Christian symbols concurrently worked to boost the power of the newly-converted Tlaxcalteca, too. Significantly, the conversion scene in the *Lienzo* is heavily juxtaposed to the following scene that records the Cholula massacre, in which a mounted conquistador tramples over dismembered bodies of Cholulan citizens at the foot of an *indigenous temple* (fig. 2.11). From a willing and peaceful conversion to a violent re-conquest of religious space, the apposition of these scenes by the *tlacuiloque* clearly reflects a visual strategy to differentiate the Tlaxcalteca from their neighbours. This is further supported by a second juxtaposition to the conversion scene, this time

<sup>161</sup> Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion,' p. 60.

<sup>162</sup> Federico Navarrete, 'La Malinche, la Virgen y la montaña: el juego de la identidad en los códices tlaxcaltecas', *História*, 26:2 (2007), p. 291; Amy G. Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora: the Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and the New Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press 2014), p. 286.

to the scene directly below it: in scene 15, an image of the Virgin Mary is burnt in the midst of battle within the walls of the Aztec capital (fig. 2.12). Reflecting the complex interplay of warfare and religious conversion, this scene tactically foregrounds the Mexica's sacrilegious treatment of Christian symbols in contrast to the Tlaxcalan lords' conversion.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, the *tlacuiloque's* structural positioning of scenes 8, 9 and 15 may have arguably been designed to convey that the Tlaxcalteca had more than mutual enemies with the Castilians; they shared in (and respected) Christian symbols, too – something which their enemies did not. Indeed, the significance placed on the Virgin by the Tlaxcalteca is highlighted in her later ascension to patron of the province.

That Christian symbols were important to the Castilians – and should be respected as such – would have surely been recognised/known to the Tlaxcalteca, even during the time of the first meetings themselves. On his journey to Tenochtitlan, Cortés rededicated many indigenous temples to Mary, and used her image in his efforts to encourage conversion among the indigenous communities he encountered. On the island of Cozumel, for example, Cortés is recorded to have given Christian instruction to the chieftains, and, to help them follow the Catholic faith, he left them a wooden cross (fixed atop a building) and an image of the Virgin Mary.<sup>164</sup> When he reached Tenochtitlan, Cortés writes of his visit to the Great Temple:

I had [the idols] taken from their places and thrown down the steps; and  
I had those chapels where they were cleaned, for they were full of blood  
sacrifices; and I had images of Our Lady and of other saints put there,  
which caused Mutezuma and the other natives some sorrow.<sup>165</sup>

In replacing indigenous 'idols' with images of the Virgin Mary, Cortés is, importantly, continuing traditions of the conversion of religious space from Iberia. As Amy Remensnyder has shown, from the Christian victory at Toledo (1085) to the Fall of Granada (1492), twenty-six mosques were re-dedicated to the Virgin, reflecting how non-Christian sacred architecture could be usurped by the presence of Mary's images. Indeed, there was 'no other holy figure to whom so many mosques were rededicated' than Mary, the most famous perhaps being the conversion of the main mosque at the Alhambra Palace.<sup>166</sup> In agreement with Angus MacKay, 'the late

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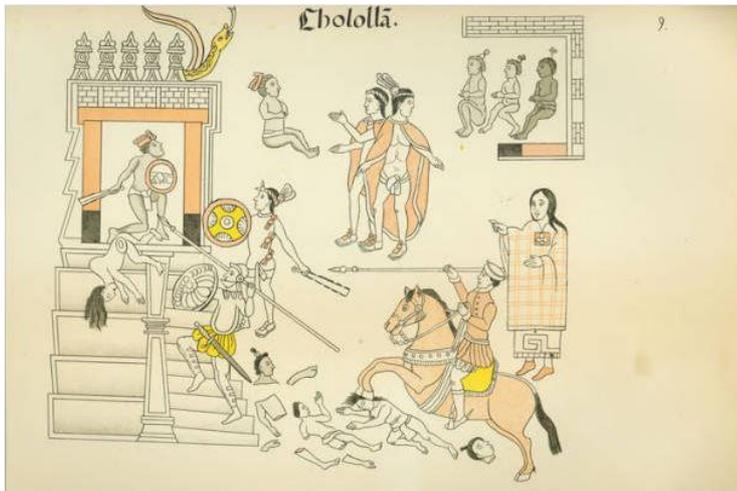
<sup>163</sup> Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 275, interprets this scene as one that perhaps serves 'as a visual code reminiscent of the burning temple glyph, an improvised symbol for the defeat of the Spaniards and their *alteptl*.' Occurring in the run up to the Spaniards first and failed attempt to conquer Tenochtitlan, this reading would reflect the Tlaxcalteca's wider, yet subtle, initiative to present the Spaniards as unsuccessful/weak.

<sup>164</sup> Puertocarrero & Francisco de Montejo, 'The First Letter', p. 18. See also p. 23.

<sup>165</sup> Cortés, 'The Second Letter', p. 106. For the burning of idols, see the Cortés, 'The Third Letter', p. 202 & p. 223.

<sup>166</sup> Amy Remensnyder, 'The Colonization of Sacred Architecture: the Virgin Mary, Mosques and Temples in Medieval Spain and Early Sixteenth-Century Mexico,' in *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religious Expression and Social Meaning in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Sharon Farmer & Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 195.

medieval frontier was a Mariological one,' and this arguably continued across the Atlantic.<sup>167</sup> Indeed, Mary continued to appear on conquistadors' battle standards in the New World, just as she had in the Old – including Cortés' own battle standard.<sup>168</sup>



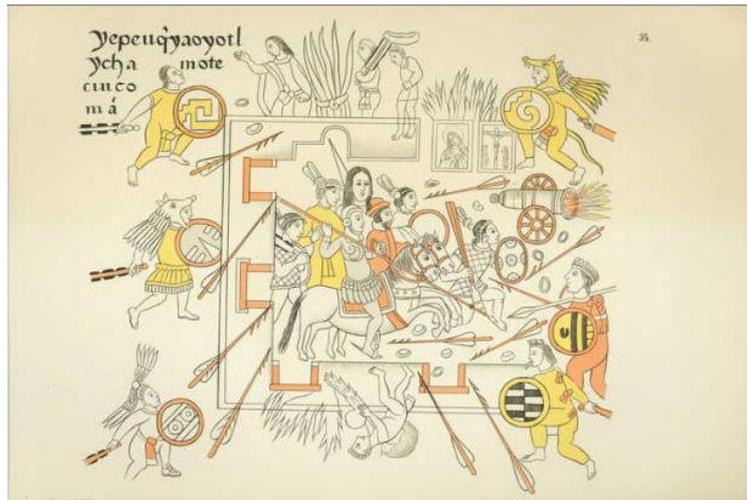
**Fig. 2.11:** the Cholula massacre depicted in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 9  
 Bourne Book Collection - Homenaje á Cristóbal Colón 972 MexH (c. 1550)  
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 [accessed 15 April 2018]

The prevalence of the Virgin's image during early encounters is also evidenced in pictorial sources, in particular the *Huexotzinco Codex*, which contains one of the earliest surviving, indigenous-authored images of the Virgin (fig. 2.13). In this document, Mary appears on a highly ornate war banner created by the *altepetl* of Huexotzinco for the conquistador Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, alongside a pictorial depiction of the excessive tribute demanded from the Huexotzinca by Guzmán in 1531. Moreover, pictorial evidence also shows that the Tlaxcalteca were not the only Indian Conquistador group to utilise the image of this female saint to demonstrate their amicable relationship between their *altepetl* and the Castilians. The seventeenth-century *Mapa de Cuauhtlantzinco*, for example, presents the Cholulteca of this small village as eager to ally with Cortés and convert to Christianity, with a statue of the Madonna and Child occupying a central position in the scene depicting their conversion.<sup>169</sup> This echoes scene 8 of the *Lienzo* (fig. 2.10), which, too, includes an image of the Virgin and Child at its centre.

<sup>167</sup> Angus MacKay, 'Religion, culture, and ideology on the late medieval Castilian-Granadan frontier,' in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. by Robert Bartlett & Angus MacKay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 230.

<sup>168</sup> Mary Rubin, *Mother of God: a History of the Virgin Mary* (London: Penguin 2010), p. 387; Amy Remensnyder, 'Christian captives, Muslim maidens, and Mary,' *Speculum*, 82:3 (2007), p. 646. For Cortés' own standard, see Linda B. Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior: the Virgin in Spain and the Americas* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. 61; Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 254.

<sup>169</sup> Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 279. *Mapa de Cuauhtlantzinco*, panel 19 (c. 1650-1700), available via the *Mapas Project* <[http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa\\_single\\_intro.lasso?&mapaid=cuah](http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa_single_intro.lasso?&mapaid=cuah)> [accessed 27 March 2018].



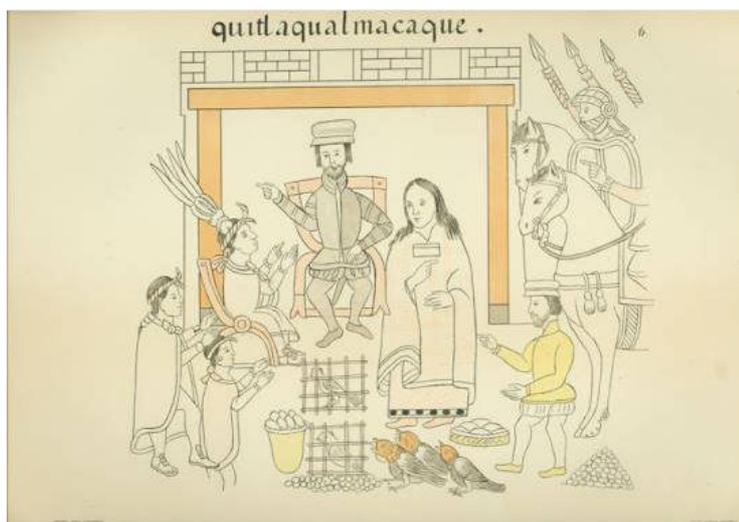
**Fig. 2.12:** an image of the Virgin Mary and child burns in the walls of Tenochtitlan in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 15  
 Bourne Book Collection - Homenaje á Cristóbal Colón 972 MexH (c. 1550)  
 Contributed to NMDC by the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, NMHM  
 <<http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/achl/id/1609/rec/36>>  
 [accessed 15 April 2018]



**Fig. 2.13:** the Virgin Mary depicted in the *Huexotzinco Codex* (1531)  
 Contributed to the WDL by the Library of Congress, Harkness Collection  
 <<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/2657/#q=huexotzinco+codex>> [accessed 15 April 2018]

Returning to scene 8 of the *Lienzo*, it is important to draw attention to other similarities between the Tlaxcalteca and the Castilians – aside from their shared vehemence for Christian symbols of the Virgin and crucifix. Significantly, this is the only scene in the *Lienzo* in which the Tlaxcalan lords are not wearing their headgear; instead, they each kneel before the priest with their hair tied in a simple ribbon at the nape of their neck. Although still barefoot and wearing their own garments, the Tlaxcalan lords' outward appearance bears a much greater similarity to

the Christians in this particular scene, in comparison to the rest of the *Lienzo*. Sharing their religion, the lords' allegiance to the Castilians is therefore marked somewhat visually on their persons by the absence of one of their own identifiers. This absence of indigenous symbols for more 'European' appearances is similarly evidenced in the incorporation of the European-style chair, on which Xicotencatl is seated in both the *Lienzo* (scene 6) and the corresponding scene of its antecedent, the *Fragment* (scene 3), as opposed to a traditional, Mesoamerican seat (figs 2.2 & 2.14, respectively). The integration of the curule chair, though, is not unique to the *Lienzo* – it is a symbol adopted more widely across sixteenth-century pictorials – whereas the absence of the lords' headgear is much more particular to this document.<sup>170</sup>



**Fig. 2.14:** Xicotencatl and Cortés seated in curule chairs in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 6

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 [accessed 15 April 2018]

This peculiarity prompts a deeper consideration of the notion that different Indian Conquistador communities may have used and/or favoured different pictorial strategies in their relation of their first meetings with the Christians, especially with regard to the sharing of symbols – challenging Asselberg's more formulaic reading. In the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, for example, religion does not take a prominent place in the relation of events, unlike the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*. Rather than Christian symbols, the Quauhquechollan *tlacuiloque* use colours to distinguish the Quauhquecholteca's alliance with the Spaniards: the Quauhquecholteca are depicted with white skin, like the Castilians, whilst their enemies are largely painted with brown or red (fig. 2.15). As Asselberg identifies in the study of this lienzo, *Conquered Conquistadors* (2004), this colouration indicates that 'the Quauhquecholteca related themselves more to the

<sup>170</sup> For the appearance of curule chairs in sixteenth-century pictorials, see Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 33, pp. 54-55.

world of the Spaniards than to that of the indigenous groups they defeated.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, Quauhquechollan captains are often portrayed bearing European swords, which again reflected their identification with the Castilians, and, as special permissions were required to carry this weapon, went some way towards legitimising their position in the new colonial world.<sup>172</sup> Like the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* was all about proving the value of the Quauhquecholteca's military contributions, this time in the conquest of Guatemala, led by Jorge de Alvarado – as Asselbergs' study of unpublished manuscripts, witness documents and accounts clearly demonstrates.<sup>173</sup>



**Fig. 2.15:** pale-skinned, sword-wielding Quauhquecholteca warriors face their darker skinned enemies in the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* (c. 1530) Digitally restored by the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* Project, UFM, Guatemala City, Guatemala (2009) <<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/view-the-lienzo/view-the-lienzo/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]

In the initial departure of the army from Quauhquechollan (directly underneath the main scene), there is another interesting case of shared symbols: Jorge de Alvarado leads the party on horseback, followed by a Spaniard carrying a lance and the red standard of the Spanish crown, and, behind him, a man portrayed with many cross-cultural markers. The man wears indigenous armour and sandals, carries a shield and sports a backrack, yet he also has a beard, wields a Spanish sword, and wears a Spanish helmet. This ambiguous figure is followed by four Quauhquechollan captains, who wear indigenous warrior costumes, sandals, shields and backracks; they also carry Spanish swords, but do not have beards or helmets (fig. 2.16). In agreement with Asselbergs, the third figure between the Spanish and indigenous lords reflects the merging of the Spanish and Quauhquecholteca armies, as he bears practically all identifying

<sup>171</sup> Asselbergs, *Conquered Conquistadors*, p. 76.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94 & p. 132

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

characteristics from both cultural groups.<sup>174</sup> With such an ambiguous outward appearance of exemplary in-betweenness, it is certainly difficult to establish with certainty whether this man was indigenous or European: one would assume indigenous, as he is not dressed in Spanish clothing, however depictions of indigenous individuals with beards are more unusual. Just across from this bearded, indigenous man is a second figure in indigenous costume and sandals, with a backrack, spear and shield, also wearing a beard (fig. 2.16). Such individuals present an interesting challenge to ideas of the beard as a strictly European identifier, in both pictorial and alphabetic accounts.<sup>175</sup>



**Fig. 2.16:** sharing of symbols in the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* (c. 1530)  
Digitally restored by the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan Project, UFM, Guatemala City, Guatemala (2009)  
<<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/view-the-lienzo/view-the-lienzo/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]

In addition to the sharing of swords, white skin, and the beard, Quauhquecholteca warriors share one further European symbol: the red banner of the Spanish crown. Whilst the banner is predominately carried by (usually mounted or seated) Castilians (on nine occasions), there are three occasions in the *Lienzo* in which indigenous warriors hold it. Such representations of these banner-bearing indigenous warriors – wielding swords, sporting backracks, and wearing

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>175</sup> Elliott Horowitz, 'The New World and the Changing Face of Europe', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28:4 (1997), 1181-1201.

indigenous clothing and sandals – convey the power of the Quauhquecholteca during this conquest. The warriors are presented as allies to the Castilian force through the sharing of symbols, yet also as powerful actors in their own right, who achieve military victories under the Spanish banner but without the Castilians themselves. This would have been an important component in this manuscript's function as a pictorial petition, as would the overall numbers of Quauhquecholteca warriors in comparison to Castilian forces. Quite significantly, there are over twice as many warriors (numbering over one hundred) as Castilian figures across the *Lienzo*.

In agreement with wider historiography concerning the Indian Conquistador pictorials, such strategies of power are certainly reflective (or consequential) of the overall purpose of the pictorials. However, it is important to recognise that different communities use/favour these strategies differently, and to different extents; this comparative aspect is something current studies seemingly neglect. When comparably studying the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, and the *Lienzo de Analco* (another Tlaxcalan pictorial), Asselbergs focuses solely on the similarities between the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, somewhat reducing their individuality.<sup>176</sup> By comparing the sharing of symbols across the two lienzos of the Tlaxcalteca and Quauhquecholteca, it becomes increasingly clear that, whilst both pictorials act as evidence of their communities' alliance with the Castilians, each group of *tlacuiloque* convey this alliance in markedly different ways – through choices made in representing outward appearance, accompanying items and adornment of cultural symbols. Whilst the Quauhquecholteca's alliance is reflected mainly in their skin colour and use of swords, the Tlaxcalteca emphasise their warm reception of Christianity through the central placement of Christian symbols.

In comparing the different pictorial strategies across the two lienzos, the diversity of perceived indigenous responses to the Castilian strangers is certainly more deeply revealed. Sharing in Castilian religious and cultural symbols – including outward appearance and, for the Quauhquecholteca, physical composition – the *tlacuiloque* responsible for these pictorial representations of indigenous actors take great measures to reflect the amicableness of relations with the Christians. Significantly, both groups' enemies are easily identifiable by a *lack of* the corresponding symbols or identifiers – whether that be their dark skin or sacrilegious burning of Christian images. In both documents, then, the gifting of gifts and formation of alliances between indigenous lords and Spanish conquistadors culminates in highly visual shared identities, and – at the extreme – shared bodies.

There is a further development to be made here. The focus of scholarly analyses of these two lienzos thus far has been representations of the uptake of *Castilian* symbols by *indigenous*

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<sup>176</sup> Asselbergs, 'The Conquest in Images: Stories of Tlaxcalteca and Quauhquecholteca Conquistadors', in *Indian Conquistadors*, pp. 65-101.

actors; considering the ways in which the Indian Conquistador groups evidenced their allegiance with the Castilians through such visual strategies, such a focus is neither unsurprising or unreasonable. However, what about contrary instances in which *Christians* are depicted with *indigenous* items? Indeed, Cortés' account of his meeting with Moctezuma presents an ambiguous image of himself wearing necklaces of red snails' shells, decorated with gold shrimps, proceeding into the city with the Aztec emperor (similarly adorned with Cortés' necklace of pearls and cut glass), as does the *Florentine Codex* in both its textual and pictorial narratives.<sup>177</sup> Durán describes Cortés' meeting with the Tlaxcalan lords as one involving them adorning Cortés with garlands of flowers.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, the *Diario*'s record of the Christmas alliance paints a vivid image of Guacanagarí arranging gold jewels around Columbus' neck, and, later, placing his crown on Columbus' head.<sup>179</sup> Although such instances of Europeans actually *wearing* indigenous items are quite unusual across the Indian Conquistador pictorials, featuring only twice in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and not, to my knowledge, in others, it is important to consider how these images functioned within the wider context of the pictorial in question. As was stipulated for the 1492 meeting – as well as for the *Florentine Codex*'s pictorial depiction of the 1519 meeting with Moctezuma – could the pictorial presentation of a Christian uptake of indigenous symbols reflect a strategy that subtly suggested Christian acquiescence to indigenous forms?

Scene 25 of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* records the allied forces eastward march to Tonanixpan. Encountering enemy warriors, a mounted Cortés carries a Huastec Hawk Scratch shield into battle, wields a metal spear, and bears a Claw battle standard on his back that he has captured from his enemy (fig. 2.17).<sup>180</sup> Here, Cortés' military success is represented in lieu with pre-conquest traditions, i.e., by the possession of the backrack. Later in the *Lienzo*, in scene 48 (the defeat of the Mexica), Cortés is again portrayed with symbols associated with Mesoamerican tradition (fig. 2.18). At the centre of this scene, two Mexica nobles surrender to Cortés, who is seated on a Spanish chair; his European-style hat, however, is adorned with green quetzal plumes. In their studies of the later image in the *Florentine Codex* of Cortés wearing feathers in his hat (fig. 2.4), Bassett and Alexandra Russo both emphasise the significance of featherwork; whilst for Bassett the feathers demonstrate Cortés' role as sacrificial victim, for Russo the feathers signal his transformation into a 'future ruler.'<sup>181</sup> That the feathers in the *Lienzo* may hold similar symbolic meaning certainly fits within the context of the scene: whereas the image of his

<sup>177</sup> Cortés, 'The Second Letter', p. 85.

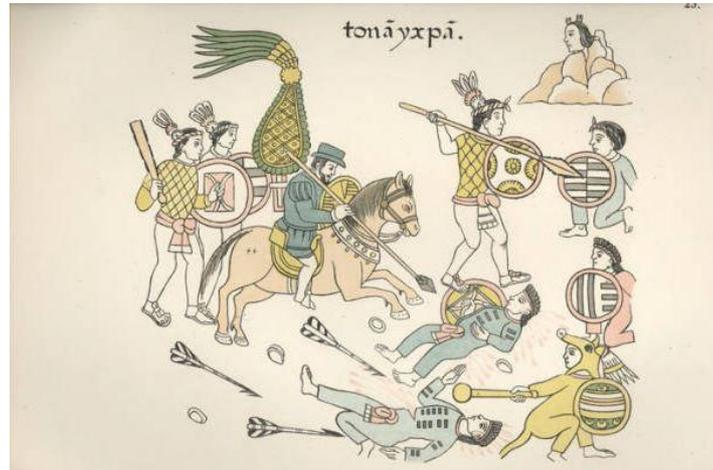
<sup>178</sup> Durán, *The Aztecs*, 'chapter LXXIII', p. 283.

<sup>179</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Wednesday 26 December', p. 287; 'Sunday 30 December', pp. 295-97.

<sup>180</sup> Type of shield and backrack as identified by Byron Hamann, 'Detail 25.4', *Mesolore*, <<http://mesolore.org/viewer/view/2/Lienzo-de-Tlaxcala>> [accessed 17 May 2018].

<sup>181</sup> Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, p. 38; Alessandra Russo, 'Plumes of Sacrifice: transformations in sixteenth-century Mexican feather art', *RES: Anthropology & Aesthetics*, 42 (2002), p. 234.

feathered hat in the *Codex* came *before* Tenochtitlan was conquered, it features *after* the fall of the city in the *Lienzo*'s scene – the scene of the Mexica's surrender.



**Fig. 2.17:** Cortés (centre, on horseback) sports an indigenous-style backrack in *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 25

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 [accessed 15 April 2018]



**Fig. 2.18:** Cortés (left, seated) wears green quetzal plumes in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 48

Furthermore, a reading of the house and place glyph *directly below* Cortés' seat tells that this meeting is taking place at the palace of Aztacoatzin, again following pre-conquest pictorial traditions.<sup>182</sup> The *tlacuiloque*'s structural arrangement of this scene certainly emphasises the continuing power of these traditions, placing Cortés firmly within them – even as amenable to

<sup>182</sup> Place glyphs are used throughout the *Lienzo*, usually directly neighbouring the Latin place name/inscription.

them. Through the *tlacuiloque*'s portrayal of Cortés as sharing in items from the culture of their homeland – the quetzal feathers and battlefield regalia – the Castilian aspect of Cortés' identity is somewhat relegated in favour of such symbols. In both scenes, this 'indigenisation' of Cortés ultimately creates an ambiguous, highly visual in-between identity. As is the case for representations of indigenous actors with European symbols, Cortés' in-betweenness perhaps functioned as a tool to convey the friendship between the two groups, too, and further as a tool to bolster indigenous power. Indeed, the *Florentine Codex* supports this implication of indigenous power: considering that Book XII portrays the Castilians as enemies – as the next chapter explores – the comparable pictorial depiction of Cortés wearing the *teotlatquitl* reflects that this visual sharing of symbols consistently signals the dominance of indigenous forms – for friends and enemies of the Castilians alike – and, thus, conveys the perceived power of the Mexica, and the Tlaxcalteca, over Cortés.

## II.V Conclusion

This notion that indigenous individuals, groups, and forms were *powerful* during formations of early friendships has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, which has sought to critically deconstruct the idea that the Europeans were the principal powerholders in first contact situations. This deconstruction has been achieved through the exploration of numerous threads, all centred on (or connected to) the exchange of items. Through a comparative analysis of European- and indigenous-authored texts, a clear picture of friendship-through-exchange emerges, with both authors placing value on a key set of responses: exchange of costly items, physical contact, and the adornment of bodies in these items or symbols from one another's culture. Ambiguous, shared identities thus culminated from such exchanges, and the (likely strange) outward appearances of those involved acted as visual displays of friendship. Of course, although sharing in these three main actions, representations of these friendships are far from homogenous: significantly, this chapter has demonstrated that pictorial strategies differed from pictorial to pictorial, with the Quauhquecholteca using different mechanisms to highlight their friendship with the Castilians (namely shared skin colour and weapons) than the Tlaxcalteca (namely shared religion). Accordingly, the sharing of symbols was a significant part of making friends in moments of early encounter, but such sharing was diverse, fluid, and complex – as low level exchange also proved – and more deeply reflects the in-betweenness of the space of encounter.

Thinking about the *two-way* nature of the exchange of cultural items also works to dismantle the notion of European security during moments of early encounter – a finding that reflects that the *European* adoption of *indigenous* symbols deserves greater attention in historiography more widely. In participating in the associated ceremonies and rituals of gift

exchange, led by the indigenous lords, Columbus and Cortés ultimately acquiesced to indigenous forms. This acquiescence is hidden in European-authored accounts, heavy in colonial discourse as they are, but it is traceable nonetheless. What is more, indigenous gift giving did not signal a concession of greater power to (or domination by) the European recipients, but arguably reflected indigenous control of (or acted as a means to gain control over) the contact situation in hand. Indeed, contrary to Columbus' account, the wrecking of the *Santa María* was undoubtedly a disaster, which he only recovered from with the gift of aid and land from Guacanagarí, who may have formed his alliance with Columbus not because of their supposed shared enemy (the Caribs) but because of a threat closer to home. Similarly, Moctezuma likely gave Cortés lavish gifts not as a sign of the stranger's power, but of his own. Lockhart's concept of 'double mistaken identity' is particularly informative in these formations of friendships, with their ambiguous and paradoxical nature seen to reflect one's own power, for both the gift giver and the recipient at once.

Aside from high-level relationships, there were many other actions and responses, too, in which indigenous power can – and should – be read: a Taíno community may have given Columbus parrots in order to prompt his departure, not to welcome him, for example. However, with the exception of the *Diario*, it is especially difficult to trace grassroots responses like this one in the source material (European- and indigenous-authored alike), which is largely focused on the formation of friendships between those of higher statuses. Yet these grassroots responses are important: they demonstrate a high degree of indigenous action and agency, and, moreover, reflect the mutability of responses, where friendly exchanges could take place after initial indigenous responses of flight, or quickly escalate to hostility – responses that the next chapter considers. Furthermore, such mutability highlights the sheer fragility of the contact situation – a fragility that was not limited to low-level exchanges. As such, the next chapter will also take a deeper exploration of the mysterious fall of La Navidad, the deterioration of Moctezuma and Cortés' relationship, and the shaky start of the Tlaxcalteca's relationship with the Castilians.

Lastly, this chapter has sought to demonstrate the importance of understanding early moments of encounter on *indigenous* terms, namely through the examination of Taíno and Nahuatl worldviews. Significantly, in foregrounding indigenous worldviews, different concepts of 'value' emerge – like *turey* – as do deeper understandings of certain items' symbolism and meanings – like the *guaíza* masks and the *teotlatquitl*. Retrieving such meanings is essential for reading first meetings on indigenous terms, and allows us to consider indigenous perceptions of the Europeans' identity(s): in giving parrots and *guaíza* masks, did Guacanagarí and the Taíno communities view Columbus as a *cacique* from another land? In giving *teotlatquitl* to Cortés, did the Mexica identify him as a potential *ixiptlat* or sacrificial victim? In adorning him in indigenous regalia, did the Tlaxcalteca present Cortés as an 'indigenous' warrior, albeit a particularly strange one? In all

cases, the power of indigenous forms, values, and meanings has been shown to be abundantly clear.

## III

# Enemies

‘Such Indians as did appear there went about very stealthily, and they did not dare to approach our men, but ran away.’

– *Diego Álvarez Chanca*.<sup>1</sup>

‘And when the Spaniards had gone [...] the homes of the devils [the temples] were fixed up and ornamented; they were swept and cleaned out, and the earth was removed.’

– *Florentine Codex*.<sup>2</sup>

### III.I Making enemies: an introduction

In sharp contrast to indigenous-European friendships that were built during moments of early encounter through the provision of aid, gift giving, and exchange of items, the Christians were, of course, seen as enemies by many indigenous individuals and groups who faced them. Taking flight, hiding, and committing threatening or physically violent acts are all responses indicative of a negative categorisation of the European strangers by indigenous communities. This chapter is an examination of these responses, and asks: to what extent can indigenous agency be read in these responses to the European strangers? Alongside the more ‘overt’ responses of flight or fight, what other responses reflect that Christians were perceived as dangerous foe? Developing the previous chapter’s findings, how openly did different indigenous actors show their perceptions of the Christians as enemies, and could outward friendships conceal inner identifications of

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<sup>1</sup> Chanca, ‘Letter’, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, ‘Chapter 27’, in *We People Here*, p. 176.

animosity? To what extent are stories of unfriendly relations consistent across different sources (alphabetic and visual) and different perspectives? What do more ‘negative’ responses reveal about the (in)stability of the contact situation, or of the cross-cultural relationships in question?

Whilst the previous chapter centred strongly around exchange-based responses, this chapter will cover a much greater breadth of unfriendly indigenous actions towards the European newcomers, from fight or flight-based responses to caution and suspicion, from the abandonment of their homes to the sweeping of their temples. Indeed, identifying subtler actions – like sweeping – alongside more obvious hostile responses – like skirmishes – complicates the spectrum of negative responses, and reflects that feelings of animosity towards Europeans took a diverse range of forms, with varying degrees of detectability. The analysis that follows also seeks to further complicate the findings of the previous chapter: paying particular attention to the fragility of relationships, it will explore how friendly relations could (and did) quickly deteriorate, or were not quite as they seemed in the first place. Accordingly, just as friendly responses are shown to be fluid and dynamic, the negative responses this chapter examines are certainly not straightforward – they are mutable, changeable, and reflective of agency.

The most obvious indigenous response that reflected a categorisation of the Europeans as enemies was warfare. Over the course of June 1520 to July 1521, the conquest of Mexico saw a huge loss of life – from battles and disease – on both sides, as well as the destruction of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital. However, whilst the following chapter explores *some* of the events of this conquest – namely the Toxcatl massacre, a turning point in Mexica-European relations – as well as other battles – namely between the forces of Xicotencatl the Younger and Cortés – or violent acts, this chapter is not a ‘grand history’ of the conquest; the study’s microhistorical focus continues, selecting small moments of this much wider phenomenon of conquest to examine.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, the study stays true to its aim of drawing deeper understandings of this macro-level event from micro-level details.

Similarly, whilst *some* violent acts committed by Europeans against indigenous peoples are considered – and are contextually essential to this chapter – they are not the central focus of the analysis. This study acknowledges that the acts of violence discussed in the following pages were substantial and highly damaging to indigenous people and communities, but does not take a moral viewpoint.<sup>4</sup> When Europeans’ atrocities are examined, it is mainly in terms of how such behaviour may have influenced indigenous responses, and how representations or records of

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<sup>3</sup> For a cultural and religious history of the conquest and early colonial period, see Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico*. For an analysis of the conquest with regard to military tactics and strategy, see Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press 1988), especially pp. 236-251.

<sup>4</sup> For a similar acknowledgement in the study of the slave trade, see Manuel Barcia & Effie Kesidou, ‘Innovation and entrepreneurship as strategies for success among Cuban-based firms in the late years of the transatlantic slave trade’, *Business History*, 60:4 (2018), 542-561.

European acts of violence may have reflected indigenous perceptions of the perpetrators. Accordingly, readers will not find, for example, an analysis of Michele de Cuneo's nauseating description of his rape of a young Taíno woman in the following pages, or an analysis of the number of indigenous deaths by European hands.<sup>5</sup> Instead, instances of indigenous agency and action *in response to* violence against their person will remain the focus, as will the methodological challenges in reading such responses. As will be shown, the available European-authored sources are often riddled with silences and sugar-coating of unsavoury behaviours, in which the potential violence perpetrated by the author is somewhat glossed over. How can indigenous perceptions be reached through such a clouded historical record?

On a similar note, as for the previous chapter, the benefits of comparative study quickly become clear; more widely (outside of Europeans' atrocities) multiple perspectives are required when attempting to map the full spectrum of indigenous responses to Europeans as enemies, mainly as the various narratives involved seemingly neglect, emphasise, and manipulate different responses, depending on the author/s' perspective – for both indigenous- and European-authored accounts. Like the previous chapter, there are a number of key sources used in the following analysis. For the Caribbean, the *Diario* continues to be the principal written source analysed, followed by Diego Alvarez Chanca's account of the second voyage. For Mesoamerica, Cortés' second letter remains the principal alphabetic narrative; the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* are again considered, however, the main pictorial narrative of interest is that of Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*.

The chapter begins with a deconstruction of the perhaps most infamous category of foe in European sources: the Cannibal. However, whilst Columbus readily theorises that the Taínos mistook him and his crew for their man-eating neighbours (the Caribs), a consideration of pre-Columbian worldviews reveals how the European conception of the Cannibal did not exist in the Taíno world. Accordingly, it asks: what negative or potentially dangerous out-groups may the Christian strangers have actually been placed in, should the Taíno have identified them as enemies? As a case study of the *Diario* will demonstrate, identifications of the Christians as enemies are most clearly shown in responses of flight or fight, and it is these responses that are turned to first. However, the idea that these responses are in anyway straightforward or merely reactionary will be challenged; it will be shown that these responses are deeply reflective of indigenous agency. Moreover, the extent to which initial responses of flight – namely through the active intervention of Indian interpreters – could be developed into more positive relationships will be explored.

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<sup>5</sup> Michele de Cuneo, 'Michele de Cuneo's Letter on the Second Voyage, 28 October 1495', in *Journals and Other Documents on the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, ed. by Samuel E. Morison (New York: Heritage Press, 1963), pp. 209-28.

Similarly, as an examination of the deterioration of the Columbus-Guacanagarí relationship will express, indigenous communities could also ‘re-categorise’ once friendly Europeans as enemies, too. Indeed, as time elapsed between the first and second voyages, the fragility of this early cross-cultural relationship was irrevocably magnified – a magnification that will be shown to reflect the mutability of indigenous responses. This fragility of relations is similarly demonstrated in cases where indigenous actors or authors manipulated or misrepresented certain responses to the Europeans, involving a high level of agency, and power. In omitting more unsavoury responses to Cortés and his men, indigenous communities like the Tlaxcalteca are found to be somewhat ‘false friends,’ further complicating representations of gift giving. Indeed, how sincere, ‘true,’ or successful, was the Tlaxcalteca-Castilian friendship?

The final part of this chapter is framed around acts of violence committed by Castilians (and, in some cases, their indigenous friends), and seeks to determine what purpose pictorial depictions of such violence served, and, significantly, what such depictions can reveal about indigenous responses to these acts. The act of sweeping the city after the Castilians had left Tenochtitlan is a particularly unique response to Castilian violence and subsequent warfare, found only – as far as I am aware – in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*. Accordingly, this response will be given special attention; through an exploration of pre-conquest worldviews, it will be argued that sweeping is highly revealing of the type(s) of threat the Mexica may have perceived the Castilians to pose.

Developing the findings of the previous chapter regarding the sharing of symbols in formations of friendship, this chapter considers how enemies of the Castilians constructed their identity by *differentiating* themselves from them – through *not* adopting Castilian symbols, like the curule chair, or by presenting physical contact as a *negative* interaction. Significantly, it will be argued that indigenous authors distanced themselves from the Spaniards namely by the unprecedented acts of violence the Castilians committed against Nahua groups and individuals. Taking representations of the Toxcatl massacre and dog attacks as key case studies, it will ask: how did these ‘new’ types of violence function within existing Nahua frameworks or understandings of violence? Significantly, gruesome representations of such violent acts are found in pictorials produced by both the Castilians’ friends (the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* and the *Manuscrito del aperreamiento*) and enemies (Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*) – an unexpected finding of this study. What purposes, then, do such depictions serve, and what can they tell us about indigenous agency? How far do they serve to reflect indigenous power?

Overall, then, this second part of the chapter seeks to gain a more nuanced understanding of depictions of Castilian acts of violence by focusing on what such representations may reveal with regard to indigenous agency, ideas of identity, and perceptions of power. Developing themes from the previous chapter, the following analysis focuses on the fragility of the contact situation,

and looks to complicate seemingly amicable responses to the European strangers even further. Furthermore, in identifying a wide range of negative or unfriendly responses, the breadth and fluidity of the spectrum of indigenous responses will be highlighted, as will the variety of ways in which the Europeans may have been identified by Taíno and Nahua groups, through the exploration of pre-contact worldviews and systems.

### III.II Escaping the Cannibal

#### *Understanding existing notions of dangerous identities in the Taíno worldview*

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1492, Columbus records how a group of Taíno had identified him and the other Christians as cannibals when they first saw them. The ‘cannibals,’ as he understands, live on the islands of Bohío and Carib, and are greatly feared by the Taíno due to their man-eating tendencies and aggressive raids on Taíno islands.<sup>6</sup> This negative categorisation is in stark contrast to the Christians’ assumed god-like status, yet unsurprising.<sup>7</sup> Columbus learnt about the ‘cannibals’ from Taínos whom he had, after all, taken aboard his ship, most likely against their will – just like the enemies from other lands had done in raids before. Towards the end of the first voyage, a group of Indians attacked and attempted to capture members of Columbus’ crew, with such aggressive actions leading the Christians to believe that the attackers were the ferocious man-eaters they had heard about. Writing in his *Diario*, the Admiral remarks ‘without doubt’ that the perpetrators were ‘evildoers’ who ‘would eat men.’<sup>8</sup>

However, just as the category of ‘White God’ was deconstructed in order to more fully recognise indigenous worldviews, so too does Columbus’ idea that he was identified as a ‘cannibal.’ Importantly, the deconstruction of the Cannibal falls within a wider effort to highlight the significance of indigenous preconceptions of other peoples – preconceptions that have been substantially neglected in comparison to the abundance of scholarship considering *European* preconceptions of Others and other lands. This seems especially so with the Cannibal figure, who, from Christopher Columbus’ very first meetings with the Taíno Indians of the Caribbean, has become a central figure in discourses regarding the European-Native American encounters. Indeed, considering the attention given to this elusive being throughout the Age of Discovery, such scholarly attention is hardly surprising; contemporary sources transmitted the association between indigenous peoples and the eating of human flesh to all edges of the newly discovered lands, from the Caribbean to South America, then on to the Pacific. Back in Europe, the savage,

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<sup>6</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Friday 23 November’, p. 167. See also ‘Tuesday 11 December’, p. 217.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Thursday 13 December’, p. 223. This juxtaposition will be returned to in chapter IV.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 13 January’, p. 335. For the self-fulfilling prophecy of the Carib stereotype, see Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 68.

bestial image of the Native American was promoted through works of art – such as engravings by Lorenz Fries (fig. 3.1) – whilst the publication of ‘eyewitness’ accounts of cannibalism were received with similar intrigue. Américo Vespucci’s account tells of ‘inhuman’ people (or rather ‘beasts’) who ‘eat little [...] but human flesh,’ and Hans Staden’s captivity journal – which quickly became an international bestseller – vividly describes his capture by the (allegedly cannibalistic) Tupinambá Indians of Brazil in 1549, complete with graphic woodcuts (fig. 3.2).<sup>9</sup> Since the notion of him featured in sources from Columbus’ first and second voyages, the man-eating, woman-stealing Carib has become an ‘enduring icon of anthropological thought, standing for the permanently wild, savage, and cannibalistic,’ often positioned in stark contrast to his counterpart – the peaceful, somewhat effeminate Arawak (as discussed in the Introduction to this study).<sup>10</sup> However, who exactly was this ferocious Cannibal? Did the figure of the Cannibal – as presented in European sources – even exist for the Taíno?



**Fig. 3.1:** ‘Cannibals on a Caribbean Island,’ woodcut, hand coloured by Lorenz Fries (Strasbourg, 1525). Held at the John Carter Brown Library, accession number 17183. Photograph author’s own (November 2015)

<sup>9</sup> Américo Vespucci, ‘Account of his first voyage, 1507’, in Paul Halsall, *Modern History Sourcebook* (1998), <<http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1497vespucci-america.asp>> [accessed 28 January 2015]. Hans Staden, *True Story and Depiction of a Country of Wild, Naked, Grim, Man-eating People of the New World, America* (1557), trans. by Malcolm Letts, *Hans Staden: the True Story of His Captivity, 1557* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1929). For Hans Staden and cannibalism, see Heather E. Martel, ‘Hans Staden’s Captive Soul: Identity, Imperialism, and Rumours of Cannibalism in Sixteenth-Century Brazil’, *Journal of World History*, 17:1 (2006), 51-69; Whitehead, ‘Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism’; Donald W. Forsyth, ‘Three Cheers for Hans Staden: The Case for Brazilian Cannibalism’, *Ethnohistory*, 32:1 (1982), 17-36.

<sup>10</sup> Whitehead, ‘Introduction: the Island Carib as Anthropological Icon’, p. 9, p. 12. For a critical examination of the Carib/Arawak dichotomy, and its function in European discourse, see Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, pp. 46-68. See also Whitehead, ‘Ethnic Plurality’, pp. 91-2; Wilson, ‘The Cultural Mosaic of the indigenous Caribbean’, pp. 37-66.



**Fig. 3.2:** woodcut in Hans Staden, *True Story and Depiction of a Country of Wild, Naked, Grim, Man-eating People of the New World, America* (1557), trans. by Malcolm Letts, *The true history of his captivity 1557* (New York: McBride & Company, 1929), p. 100

As the Introduction to this study established, there is a vast corpus of scholarship focused on the examination of Europeans' perceptions of exotic Others (both real and imaginary). Considering Friedman's work in particular, early explorers' experiences of America were affected by their somewhat fantastical expectations from their homelands – stories of fabulous races of men, monsters, and creatures who occupied the edges of the known world. To reiterate White's important standpoint: observation is not only dictated by the experience itself, but by the *expectation(s)* of the experience.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Columbus was surely not alone in his surprise to find that the Caribbean natives were not physically monstrous in any way, 'as [many] had expected,' and his own expectations shaped his outlook on these newly found people in a significant way.<sup>12</sup> Heavily influenced by Marco Polo's *Travels*, among other travel accounts, and guided by the geographical calculations of Italian cosmographer Paolo Toscanelli, Columbus originally set sail to find a westward passage to Asia: his belief that he had reached the lands of the Great Khan is continually evidenced throughout his *Diario*, often clouding his view of the (new) lands he was exploring and people he was negotiating, not to mention confusing his written

<sup>11</sup> White, 'The Forms of Wildness', p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> John B. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 198-99. Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, pp. 47-48. Wilson, *Hispaniola*, pp. 53-6. For a detailed examination of Columbus' own preconceptions and beliefs, see Flint, 'The Medieval World of Christopher Columbus', pp. 9-27.

narrative, too.<sup>13</sup> The striking similarity between the Admiral's descriptions of the men living on Bohío – 'one-eyed men, and others, with snouts of dogs, who ate men' – and the rumours Marco Polo heard of monstrous men during his travels through Asia is one example of how his preconceived ideas of the edges of the earth may have affected what he chose to see or hear of during his voyages.<sup>14</sup> Columbus, and the explorers who followed him, certainly travelled with some heavy duty cultural furniture (to borrow from Kim Phillips).<sup>15</sup>

Considering the extent to which preconceptions are understood to have governed Columbus' observations, and experience, of the Caribbean, it is surely essential to similarly interrogate how far Columbus and his crew matched *indigenous* expectations of strangers (strangers perceived as dangerous or threatening, in the case of this chapter) travelling from other lands – and, indeed, to explore what these expectations may have been. For example, in his re-examination of Columbus' first voyage and the Christians' interactions with Taíno caciques, Keegan alludes to the idea that Columbus may have been perceived as a new 'stranger king'.<sup>16</sup> Whilst the idea of Columbus as a stranger king is only briefly suggested in Keegan's narrative, it is a notion perhaps deserving of greater attention: if Columbus *was* identified in this way, it could be argued that, ultimately, he was contextualised within the Taíno belief system, or seen in terms of pre-Columbian worldviews. Whilst the term 'stranger' has connotations of foreignness, alienness and difference, by identifying Columbus (or other new arrivals) as a stranger king – a pre-Columbian, familiar category of difference or identity – the 'stranger' is placed within *existing* indigenous knowledge and worldviews, and is thus paradoxically familiarised. By gaining a deeper understanding of pre-Columbian indigenous categories of difference, then, further historical research could shed light onto how Europeans were accommodated or categorised within Taíno mental frameworks, and reflect the extent to which such categories of identity influenced the Taíno-European encounter. However, this study takes some issue with the use of 'king,' here: arguably, the term 'king' posits a certain Eurocentrism, and in this sense its connotations may not be ideal to describe the way the Taíno viewed or understood Columbus.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 21 October', p. 109; 'Tuesday 30 October', p. 125; 'Monday 26 November', p. 177; 'Tuesday 11 December', p. 217; 'Sunday 13 January', p. 331. See also William F. Keegan, 'Myth and the First Encounters', pp. 20-1; Wilson, *Hispaniola*, 36-8.

<sup>14</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 4 November', p. 133. See also 'Friday 23 November', p. 167; 'Monday 26 November', p. 177. Marco Polo, *The Travels*, trans. & with an introduction by Ronald Latham (London: Penguin, 1958).

<sup>15</sup> Phillips, *Before Orientalism*, p. 173.

<sup>16</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*, p. 1, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Similarly, *tlatoani* should not be translated as 'king', due to its implication that the position is hereditary/based on primogeniture. Genealogical origin was essential in establishing legitimacy as a noble in Mesoamerica, but *tlatoque* were often the brothers or nephews of previous *tlatoque* – not simply sons. See Michael E. Smith & Frederick Hicks, 'Inequality and Social Class in Aztec Society', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Aztecs*, pp. 423-36.

Is there a way to describe this category that escapes terms like ‘king’, and privileges Taíno terms? At the least, perhaps a stranger *cacique* is more fitting.

To draw on another pertinent example from Keegan’s work, whilst Columbus’ descriptions of the feared one-eyed, dog-headed cannibals on Bohío have been widely examined in terms of their linkage with European myth (the cynocephali), this description may also speak to categories of difference in Taíno belief: exploring the significance of the Caribe spirits and other guardians of the dead – including the *doglike zemí Opiyelguobirán* – in Taíno cosmology, Keegan concludes a complex analysis by arguing that ‘it is no accident that one-eyed men, dog faces, and eating human flesh are conjoined’ in such descriptions.<sup>18</sup> Here, Keegan again clearly establishes the importance of uncovering Taíno worldviews, belief systems and perspectives, which were so often misunderstood by Europeans, and/or conflated with Europeans’ own expectations. Significantly, the profitability of such an approach is effectively demonstrated in the deconstruction of the colonial Cannibal figure, which has dominated scholarship centred on the Taíno-European encounter thus far. Thanks to the scholarly efforts of Hulme, Keegan, Whitehead and others, it is now generally understood that the European idea of the ferocious Carib was not quite the same as the Taínos’, and was produced from a series of misinterpretations and miscommunications during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century contact situation – beginning with those in Columbus’ first voyage.<sup>19</sup>

Above all, it seems it was Columbus’ and other Christians’ failure to distinguish myth from reality that contributed to the creation of the monstrous Cannibal in European thought, especially with regard to the (misunderstood) Taíno term ‘Carib.’<sup>20</sup> Whilst there was an island called Carib that was associated with men, it was a *mythical* island mistaken as a real place by the Christian strangers.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Carib was one of three islands that existed in the Taíno belief system, the other two being Matinínó (inhabited only by women, which was soon conflated with the European myth of the Amazons) and Guanín (that symbolised sexual union).<sup>22</sup> As Keegan explains, Columbus and his crew believed the (mythical) men of Carib to be tangible, corporeal people of *this* world, who the Taíno saw as enemies.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Taíno *spiritual* beings called ‘Caribe’ were also mistakenly understood as corporeal beings by the Christians. What is more, as

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<sup>18</sup> Keegan, ‘Myth and the First Encounters’, pp. 23-4.

<sup>19</sup> This is not to say, however, that cannibalism did not occur in native societies; I am referring strictly to the *idea* of the monstrous Carib. It is generally accepted that cannibalism occurred in some religious/ceremonial contexts (see Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 40, for example).

<sup>20</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*, p. 36. For the linguistic morphology of the term ‘cannibalism’, see Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, pp. 46-68; Whitehead, ‘Ethnic Plurality’, pp. 91-106.

<sup>21</sup> Keegan, ‘Myth and the First Encounters’, p. 18. For Columbus’ understanding of the islands, see *The Diario*, ‘Monday 14 January’, p. 337; ‘Tuesday 15 January’, p. 339.

<sup>22</sup> The notion of an island inhabited only by women is similarly noted by Cortés, who learns of it from the lords of the province of Ciguatán. Cortés, ‘The Fourth Letter’, in *Letters from Mexico*, pp. 298-300.

<sup>23</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*, pp. 203-4. For a summary of Columbus’ misunderstanding here, see Rogers, ‘Christopher Who?’, pp. 43-47.

Columbus believed he was in Asia, he mistakenly deduced that the Caribs ‘must have been under the rule of the Grand Khan’ – the ruler Columbus had intended to meet.<sup>24</sup> Columbus knew the people(/soldiers) of the Grand Khan as ‘Caniba,’ and postulated that these were the man-eating people committing the raids on Taíno lands, stealing their women.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Columbus’ conflation of such similar terms ‘for beings who behaved in similar ways but were clearly not the same’ certainly added to the confusion, resulting in the creation of the Caniba/Carib/Caribe amalgam.<sup>26</sup> Not to mention, the continued misuse of these terms in modern scholarship has somewhat complicated the matter even further.

So what did ‘the Cannibal’ look like in Taíno eyes – if he existed at all, that is? Unlike the Europeans, the Taínos did not have one specific category for cannibals; instead, performances of cannibalism occurred in a number of categories of difference, namely those that stimulated fear/represented danger. In transporting Taínos to the afterlife, Caribe spirits (or ‘Caníbales’) ‘consumed’ their flesh, travelling between realms (a power also held by Taíno chiefs); mythical men from Carib could raid Taíno lands, steal women, and eat their captives; meanwhile, ‘real’ neighbouring tribes may have practised cannibalism. Indeed, in his cornerstone work *Cave of the Jagua* (1988), Antonio Stevens-Arroyo suggests that ‘cannibalism actually practiced by [the Taínos’] neighbours may have provided a stimulus for conceptualizing anthropophagy as a symbol for social relations.’<sup>27</sup> By exploring pre-Columbian beliefs and worldviews, then, it can be established that the Taínos did not perceive the same Cannibal European explorers did: for the Taínos, eaters of human flesh had both a real world presence and cosmological existence, whilst the behaviour existed in many different monstrous out-groups – Caribe, Carib raiders, and cannibalistic neighbours. European images of the monstrous, cannibalistic Other, therefore, were not reflective of the wider contact situation; the single entity of the ferocious Cannibal figure only truly existed in the European thought world through which it was created.<sup>28</sup>

Recognising the complexity of such cannibalistic categories of identity in pre-Columbian thought is, therefore, a significant step in escaping the colonial Cannibal, which has so far dominated historical analyses: importantly, the man-eating men should be understood as part of various *indigenous* categories of difference, not just as a European Other. Moreover, great care and consistency should be taken with terminology when examining different beings with such similar names so as not to confuse the issue further, and also, importantly, to reflect the complexity and heterogeneity of the Taínos’ monstrous out-groups. It follows to consider how prominent the idea of man-eating men was in the Taíno-European encounter: if Columbus was

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<sup>24</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Monday 26 November’, p. 177.

<sup>25</sup> Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>26</sup> Keegan, ‘Myth and the First Encounters’, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*, p. 14. See also Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> For summary of the idea of Columbus as a ‘Cannibal’, see Rogers, ‘Christopher Who?’, pp. 42-43.

received as a ‘stranger king’ by some Taíno groups, as Keegan postulates, could he have been categorised into one of these monstrous identities by others, too? Quite possibly. Drawing out Columbus’ similarities with the Caribe in particular is important; after all, the Christians had travelled from the East – the direction with which the feared Caribe were associated – and the Taínos they took captive could have never returned to their community – as those taken by the Caribe could not. Accordingly, what indigenous responses might signal that the Taíno identified the Christians as Caribe, or, indeed, as any pre-Columbian ‘type’ of man-eater?

In view of the dangerous disposition attributed to these man-eating out-groups in Taíno thought (Caribe, raiders from Carib, ‘real’ neighbouring tribes who may have practised cannibalism), it follows that any strangers categorised as raiders or man-eaters would be likely to stimulate responses of fight or flight from the indigenous community they were encountering. In short, ‘negative’ categories of difference prompted indigenous responses centred on perception of and responses to potential threats, whilst in turn such responses reflect negative categorisations. Whether Columbus and his crew were perceived as raiders, a warring tribe or neighbouring cannibals – or even as a stranger king and retinue coming to subjugate a community – I reiterate my argument that the possible uses of these categories by Taínos to understand their encounters with strangeness could ultimately illustrate how the European newcomers were incorporated into indigenous worldviews – not just as friends, but as enemies or dangerous, threatening beings, too.

### III.III Flight & fight

#### *‘Negative’ indigenous responses to Europeans in the Diario*

On Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October 1492, the first ‘negative’ indigenous response is recorded in the *Diario*: during an expedition inland to find water, Columbus and his men came across a nearby village, ‘and the people of it, when they heard [them], took to flight and left the houses and hid their clothes and what they had in the bush.’<sup>29</sup> A few days later, at another village, the locals again fled at the arrival of the Christians – despite them being accompanied by an Indian acting as an interpreter, who had travelled with them from island to island – ‘abandoning the houses with everything they had.’<sup>30</sup> These instances represent typical scenarios of responses reflective of poor relations with the European newcomers: as a quantitative analysis of the *Diario* shows, Columbus records nineteen instances in which indigenous groups or individuals fled at the sight of the approaching Christians, taking and/or hiding their possessions on five occasions (see Appendix

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<sup>29</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Sunday 21 October’, p. 107.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Monday 29 October’, p. 121.

I, charts 1 & 3).<sup>31</sup> However, such responses were not simple, static, or straightforward: they were fluid, dynamic, and changeable, and complicated by the ways in which they were used in combination with other responses and strategies. As the following analysis aims to highlight, responses of flight, as well as hiding and the pre-emptive abandonment of homes, were often just one part of the Taíno individual or group's developing relationship with the Christian newcomers, and, at times, are revealing of indigenous agency.

Of course, before continuing further, the difficulty of reading and 'measuring' the frequency of such responses should be noted. In the diary entry for 21st December, for example, Columbus remarks that 'in the other places all the men make their women hide from the Christians out of jealousy; but there [in the community the Christians were visiting that day], no' women were hidden, reflecting that not only possessions went into hiding.<sup>32</sup> Quite significantly, this is the only mention of Taínos hiding from the Christians in the *Diario*, despite Columbus clearly stating that this was a common response 'in the other places,' with this particular community *without* women hiding presented the exception.<sup>33</sup> The reasoning of the situation is interesting, too, particularly in the context of European self-fashioning as 'the good guys'; the hiding of women is presented as an unfounded reaction of jealousy on the part of the Taíno men, rather than as an acute response to the perceived threat of the Christians more generally. Whilst fleeing was often noted by Columbus, then, hiding was most certainly not – and it is unclear why. Perhaps it was seen as 'unimportant'; perhaps it was deliberately excluded; perhaps it was an occurrence edited away by Las Casas. The absence of this particular indigenous response yet again highlights the limitations of Columbus' records, as well as reaffirming the need for a combined approach of both quantitative *and* qualitative readings.

Turning to more frequently presented responses, it was the Taínos' abandonment of their homes ahead of the newcomers' arrival that was perhaps the most unsettling for the Christians. On at least seven occasions, Columbus and/or members of his crew arrived in deserted Taíno villages, emptied of people and possessions.<sup>34</sup> Just as the first negative response of flight was recorded on 21<sup>st</sup> October, so was the first instance of an empty home: here, Columbus writes how

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<sup>31</sup> For instances of flight, see, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Thursday 15 November', p. 155; 'Wednesday 28 November', p. 187; 'Thursday 29 November', p. 187; 'Saturday 15 December', p. 229; 'Saturday 12 January', p. 327. For instances of abandonment, see Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 21 October', p. 105; 'Sunday 28 October', p. 117; 'Tuesday 27 November', p. 181; 'Wednesday 28 November', p. 187; 'Thursday 29 November', p. 187; 'Friday 30 November', p. 189; 'Thursday 13 December', p. 221.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Friday 21 December', p. 255.

<sup>33</sup> This is not to say Columbus and his crew did not encounter women during the voyage: Columbus describes them in an ethnographic-style in a number of entries for *The Diario*, for example, 'Thursday 11 October', pp. 65-67.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Sunday 21 October', p. 105; 'Sunday 28 October', p. 117; 'Tuesday 27 November', p. 181; 'Wednesday 28 November', p. 187; 'Thursday 29 November', p. 187; 'Friday 30 November', p. 189; 'Thursday 13 December', p. 221.

he ‘went ashore, where there was no other settlement than one house. In it I found no one, for I believe that they had fled with fear, because in it was all their household gear.’<sup>35</sup> Similarly, on 28<sup>th</sup> October Columbus ‘reached two houses which he thought belonged to fishermen who had fled in fear.’<sup>36</sup> These first two instances are quite small in scale in comparison to what was to come later, though: from 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November, Columbus and his crew ‘found large settlements and the houses empty because everyone had fled.’<sup>37</sup> The extent of the abandonment of small and larger settlements on these occasions strongly reflects group or community decisions to leave their homes ahead of Christian arrival.

More often than not, flight and the abandonment of homes were accompanied by other negative responses to the Christians, reflecting the complexity of the contact situation. Significantly, the abandoned village recorded on 27<sup>th</sup> November was explored by Columbus’ crew after an unfavourable confrontation on the shoreline:

[Columbus] saw a great number of men come to the seashore shouting, all naked, with their javelins in their hands. He desired to speak with them [...] The Indians made gestures threatening to resist them and not to let [the launches] land [...] three Christians got out [...] but finally all [the Indians] took to flight [...] [The Christians] did not find anyone or anything in any of [the houses].<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, Columbus notes that further across the bay he saw more large settlements, where ‘there appeared much smoke.’<sup>39</sup> Smoke signals were a pre-Columbian method used across the Caribbean archipelago (and in Mesoamerica) to warn neighbouring communities of approaching threats – in this case, the Christians.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Columbus himself understands the meaning of the smoke as ‘warnings of some people with whom they were at war,’ but seems less aware or willing to acknowledge that such signals may be a response to his presence.<sup>41</sup> This is made particularly clear in the entry for 9<sup>th</sup> December, in which an indigenous community fled at the sight of the Christians, taking with them ‘all that they had and made smoke signals like people at war.’<sup>42</sup> Importantly, the combination of these negative responses reflects a more reactionary and immediate response, but also a response designed to forewarn other communities using

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 21 October,’ p. 105.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 28 October,’ p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Wednesday 28 November,’ p. 187.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Tuesday 27 November,’ pp. 179-181.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Tuesday 27 November,’ p. 181.

<sup>40</sup> Lynne A. Guitar, ‘Negotiations of Conquest’, in *The Caribbean: a History of the Region and its Peoples*, ed. by Stephan Palmié & Fransisco A. Scarano (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 115-29. For the Aztecs’ use of smoke signals at times of war, see Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>41</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Thursday 6 December,’ p. 203. See also ‘Sunday 9 December,’ p. 213; ‘Saturday 15 December,’ p. 229; ‘Thursday 20 December,’ p. 251; ‘Sunday 13 January,’ p. 335.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December,’ p. 213.

established methods – a forewarning the community fleeing *at the sight of* the Christians may not have had. Undoubtedly, the threat of the European newcomers perceived by the Taínos was thus addressed through known systems.

The initial confrontation on the shoreline on 27<sup>th</sup> November was one of three more unsavoury encounters between the two groups of strangers recorded in the *Diario*. The encounter of Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December was very similar to that of 27<sup>th</sup> November, in that the confrontation did not (reportedly) escalate into physical violence or bodily harm, for either side. The events leading to the confrontation are slightly different, though, as they involve a period of negotiation: after an Indian interpreter had convinced some members of the fleeing village to meet Columbus and his men, the two parties exchanged items, and Columbus returned to where he had left the launches, satisfied he had left them ‘feeling secure.’<sup>43</sup> Before he could return to the ship, however, many Indians advanced towards the launch, raising their hands and shouting whilst one man gave a long speech:

The Admiral thought that they were [...] pleased by his coming; but [...] the Indian he had with him [...] trembled greatly, saying by signs that the Admiral must go away [...] because the Indians wanted to kill him.<sup>44</sup>

In this instance, then, Columbus’ apparently successful encounter with some members of one of the island’s villages had not had the desired influence: initially fleeing, the Indians returned to fight, not barter, regardless of Columbus’ earlier negotiations. Significantly, this failed friendship reflects the complexity of the contact situation, and the dynamism of indigenous responses to European presence.

Whilst exchange most commonly signalled the establishment or desire for a positive relationship between the Taíno and the Christians, it is also important to consider that it may also have been used to gain control of what the Taíno perceived to be a threatening situation. Indeed, the use of exchange as an indigenous strategy to satisfy the Christians and move them along was discussed in the previous chapter, with the unlikelihood of Taínos gifting parrots *without wanting anything in return* highlighted. Accordingly, could the Taíno community in question here have used the exchange of items to buy time to consider their options? Could they have used the exchange to put the Christians on the backfoot, cleverly manipulating an amicable response to their advantage? Although these questions ultimately remain unanswerable, it seems reasonable to stipulate that the Taínos could have given the Christians a sense of security through exchange, using the Christians’ assumption of stability to enact their threatening confrontation. After all, Columbus had recorded that he left the village ‘feeling secure.’<sup>45</sup> It is therefore important to

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Monday 3 December’, p. 193.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

highlight, again, the complexity of each community's response to the European newcomers: whilst indigenous responses can be categorised by the ways they speak to how the Taínos identified the Europeans (as 'friends' or 'enemies') – these responses could be manipulated and used creatively by Taíno agents, especially as a way to respond to what they perceived to be a threatening and unstable situation.

Following the threatening speech by the warring men on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, further escalation was prevented by the Indian interpreter who was with Columbus in the launches: he took both a Spanish cross bow and a sword and showed them to the other Indians, telling of their power – actions that 'put all of them to flight.'<sup>46</sup> Whilst it is difficult to ascertain the interpreter's 'true' voice in this episode (not to mention how willing he was to act as an intermediary), this display of agency is quite remarkable: here, the Indian is actively performing the role of the interpreter, situating himself between the two opposing groups.<sup>47</sup> From the perspective of the *Diario*, the flight of the Indian warriors that followed the interpreter's display of European weaponry marks a simple victory for the 'superior' Christians. Similarly, on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1493, the *Diario* records the one shoreline confrontation that is noted to have resulted in physical violence quite graphically, particularly – and unsurprisingly – the damage inflicted on the Indians by European weapons, and how 'the Indians, having seen by this that they were able to achieve little [...] took flight so that none remained.'<sup>48</sup>

However, the flight of Taíno warriors did not necessarily indicate a European victory. Firstly, the Taíno concept of war was markedly different from Europeans': the point of warfare in Taíno society was to prove your strength over that of the enemy – it was not about fighting to the death, but rather about demonstrating the futility of fighting against their forces.<sup>49</sup> A retreat of troops, therefore, did not necessarily signal a defeat from the indigenous perspective.<sup>50</sup> Rather, in this case and others, a display of violence followed by flight reflects how the Taínos responded to the threat posed by Columbus and his crew by placing the situation within their existing knowledge of warfare – just as they did with the smoke signals.<sup>51</sup> By responding to the newcomers' presence in these familiar ways, then, the Taínos incorporated the strangers into their existing worldview, seemingly approaching them as they would any other enemy out-group.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>47</sup> Elsewhere in *The Diario*, Indian interpreters are noted to have been involved in other difficult contact situations, in which they often influenced a change in indigenous response to the Christians – not just in the calming of negative relations, but in cultivating more amicable interactions (see, for example, 'Thursday 1 November', p. 127). The importance of the Indian interpreters will continue to be touched on during this chapter, before turning to a focused exploration of their role in chapter IV.

<sup>48</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Sunday 13 January', p. 333.

<sup>49</sup> Guitar, 'Negotiations of Conquest', p. 119.

<sup>50</sup> A comparable case of defining 'successful' warfare here is that of Mesoamerican warfare, in which the aim was to *capture* enemies, rather than kill them on the battlefield. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Tuesday 27 November', pp. 179-81.

Indeed, the performance of the Indian interpreter on 3<sup>rd</sup> December reveals deeper intricacies of this, already complicated, contact situation. Positioning himself between the two groups, and communicating largely on behalf of the Europeans, his actions reflect the complexities of inter-island relations at the time; the Taínos were not simply one, homogenous in-group, but a constellation of many different groups, with varying relationships with one another – including that of enemies.

Not all responses of flight resulted in unamicable confrontation, or with no further relations, however. After initial responses of flight, the indigenous group sometimes chose to (cautiously) return to the village and greet the Christians, again illustrating how indigenous responses to strangeness was not static, but dynamic and changeable. Reflecting on this particular format of encounter or turn of events, fleeing and later returning to the village could essentially illustrate an attempt by the Taínos to regain control of the contact situation: taken by surprise by the Christians at first, communities may certainly have fled in order to regroup, strategise, and approach the newcomers on their *own* terms. For example, after initially fleeing from the Christians, the Taíno Indians who encountered Columbus on 21<sup>st</sup> October later approached Columbus and his crew, albeit hesitantly. The *Diario* describes how Columbus gave one man ‘some bells and some small glass beads and he was very pleased and happy,’ and that soon more locals came to the beach and exchanged fresh water for more glass beads.<sup>52</sup> This Taíno group, then, firstly retreated from the immediate threat they perceived the strangers to pose, and, after consideration, tentatively approached the Europeans. Once they were sure no danger was imminent, many members of the community took advantage of the situation by exchanging goods with Columbus and others – as previously discussed.

Certainly, the exchange of goods and gift giving were key methods Columbus could utilise to encourage a fearful indigenous group to respond more positively to European presence – a tactic Columbus himself is aware of. On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December, for example, three of Columbus’ men came across ‘a large band of people, all naked [...] to whom they called [...] but the Indians took flight’; chasing after them, the sailors caught one woman and brought her back to the ship, as Columbus had ordered, so that she could be treated ‘courteously,’ and ‘lose [her] fear.’<sup>53</sup> After she had been given gifts of glass beads, bells, and brass finger rings, the woman was returned to land and set off back to her village, trusted to give a good report of Columbus and his crew. Negotiating with the woman’s village was not quite as straightforward, though, for when the group of men sent by Columbus arrived there the next day the villagers fled inland, ‘leaving

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 21 October’, p. 107.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Wednesday 12 December’, p. 219.

everything that they had.’<sup>54</sup> On this occasion, one of the Indians who had been aboard the Spanish ships needed to intervene:

[he] ran after them shouting, telling them not to be afraid, that the Christians were not from Caniba but instead were from the heavens and that they gave many nice things to all those whom they found.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, it is certainly questionable as to whether this was what the Indian actually proclaimed in this instance (note, for example, the reference to Spaniards as gods, the self-serving emphasis on their kindness and goodwill, not to mention the use of the term ‘Caniba’); however, the episode does demonstrate Columbus’ understanding of the need to change how the crew have been perceived and identified in the first instance – as enemies – in order to develop their relationship with the community. Upon the locals’ cautious return to their village to meet the Christians, goods and food were exchanged, and the Taíno-European relationship began to develop on an increasingly amicable level.<sup>56</sup> The situation was further improved when the woman the crew had captured the day before returned with her husband and others – who carried her on their shoulders – securing the friendship of the village.

The exchange of goods, then, plays an important role in the ‘re-categorisation’ of the arriving Christians by indigenous communities; however, the role of the Indian intermediaries in such contact situations should not be neglected. As the next chapter (IV) will emphasise, it is arguable that without the interpreter’s intervention on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December the fleeing villagers might not have returned at all, and thus the development of the relationship through an exchange of items would not have been possible. Whilst it is, of course, difficult to hear the interpreters’ own voices in sources such as the *Diario*, this should not prevent scholars recognising their unique position in European-Taíno negotiations: often accompanying Columbus and other crew members on inland expeditions, the Indian interpreters have a powerful and significant role in European-Taíno contact situations, yet one that is too easily overlooked. Similarly, it is essential to not simply dismiss Taíno responses of flight or fight as straightforward or unrevealing, as – through a deep and critical reading of the texts – they are arguably reflective of indigenous agency, of Taínos taking control of the contact situation at hand. The sheer range of these responses – and their outcomes – strongly speaks to the multitude of ways in which different groups and communities responded to the Christian strangers who had arrived on their shores.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Thursday 13 December’, p. 222.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223; see also ‘Sunday 21 October’, p. 107.

### III.IV Suspecting strangers & false friends

#### *Fluctuations and manipulations of indigenous responses to Europeans*

As the episodes examined have thus far demonstrated, initial indigenous responses of flight or fight were not completely static and unchanging; on numerous occasions, ‘negative’ responses could develop into more positive, friendly responses – often through the exchange of goods and/or the intervention of an Indian interpreter. However, the *Diario* also reveals that initial responses of friendliness expressed by indigenous communities could be similarly reversed, sometimes irretrievably. Indeed, after exchanging a few items on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1493, the indigenous party attacked the crew, and subsequently fled.<sup>57</sup> This change from amicableness to hostility is most clearly evidenced in the fluctuation of responses between Columbus’ first and second voyages, especially regarding the fate of La Navidad – a fate that strongly reflects the growing complexity of the contact situation as the duration of the encounter extended.

As chapter II detailed, La Navidad was established on the island of Hispaniola after the *Santa María* (Columbus’ largest caravel) was wrecked off the coast on Christmas Day, 1492. Importantly, Columbus left the island feeling secure about the state of affairs on the island and the remaining thirty-nine Christians’ relationship with the *cacique* Guacanagarí. This feeling of positivity was one conveyed about the Taíno-Christian relationship in general, throughout the *Diario*: although the Taíno are recorded to have responded negatively on some occasions, such responses of flight, abandonment of homes, smoke signals, and violent actions were vastly outweighed by recorded instances of more positive, friendly responses of warm welcomes and exchange of gifts. As the quantitative analysis of the *Diario* reveals, indigenous responses deemed to be ‘positive’ total 166 occasions, whilst ‘negative’ reactions are recorded just 41 times (see Appendix I, charts 2 & 3). With positive responses supposedly outnumbering negative responses 4:1, the representative nature of the narrative presented in the *Diario* is certainly questionable. Moreover, as the charts reflect, there is a much greater variety of positive responses recorded in the *Diario*, both suggestive and supportive of the friendly nature of the encounter. Again, considering Columbus’ motivations and intended audience, the reasons behind the presentation of an overwhelmingly positive encounter are evident.

This positivity that Columbus shrouds his first voyage in is soon shattered on his return to the Caribbean archipelago later in 1493. Columbus’ account of the first voyage is significantly undermined by the disastrous fate of La Navidad, but also by Dr Diego Alvarez Chanca, the fleet’s

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 13 January’, p. 333.

physician, whose narrative account of the voyage survives. Throughout his narrative, Chanca critically questions the state of Columbus' relationship with Taíno communities, especially those on Hispaniola. This is not a subtle message in Chanca's account, but openly remarked upon, most obviously on the landing party's approach to Guacanagarí's (burnt down) village:

Such Indians as did appear there went about very stealthily, and they did not dare to approach our men, but ran away. This did not look well to us, for the admiral had said that on arriving at that place, so many of their canoes would come alongside the ships to see us that we should not be able to keep them off, and that so it had been on the other voyage, and as we saw now that they were suspicious of our men, it did not seem well to us.<sup>58</sup>

Here, Chanca makes clear that the expectation of an amicable welcome by the indigenous community was not experienced, and, what is more, emphasises a reaction of suspicion on the part of the Taínos. This instance of suspicion and flight was not the only occasion where indigenous groups responded negatively to the return of the Christians: Chanca records six responses of flight, three instances of empty villages, two instances of fleeing groups taking and/or hiding possessions, another instance of suspicion (marked by maintaining a certain distance between themselves and the Christians), and one violent skirmish (see Appendix I, chart 9). Considering the short length of Chanca's account in comparison to the *Diario*, the relative presence of these more negative responses is striking, with such responses totalling 42.5% (or 17/40 responses), as opposed to 19% (or 41/215 responses) in the *Diario*.

Alongside the frosty welcome on Hispaniola, the amity between the Christians and Guacanagarí is placed in substantial doubt when the fate of La Navidad is discovered. In short, the returning Christians found the settlement burnt to the ground, with none of the thirty-nine Christian settlers surviving. Guacanagarí and his relatives gave many different reasons for this disaster, mainly concerning disease, quarrels, and most significantly an attack on Guacanagarí's lands by two other *caciques* on the island, Caonabo and Mayreni (*not* 'the Caribs,' as Columbus had anticipated).<sup>59</sup> There were also reports that the Christians were killed as a 'result of jealousy,' for they took a number of Indian women for themselves.<sup>60</sup> The inconsistency of the lords' stories triggers suspicion among the Christians and Chanca himself; clearly, suspicion was a response produced by both groups of strangers who met – some for the second time – on Hispaniola. Guacanagarí was perceived as particularly dubious by Chanca after the surgeon examined the *cacique*'s leg, which was supposedly wounded in the violence between himself and Caonabo and

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<sup>58</sup> Chanca, 'Letter', p. 50.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-60.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Mayreni, yet bore no visible sign of injury.<sup>61</sup> Whilst the actual events that unfolded at La Navidad remain uncertain, the disastrous nature of the outcome itself points to a breakdown in the relationship that Columbus was so sure was amicable and secure.

With the locals' initial reaction to the returning Christians being one of suspicion, it is possible that the remaining thirty-nine settlers were re-categorised as enemies by their Taíno neighbours for their improper behaviour, or, considering the notion that some died from disease, as a group that posed a threat or danger.<sup>62</sup> If Guacanagarí's enemies had attacked them, this response similarly reflects a categorisation of the Christian strangers as foes; yet, they may have been identified in this way by their association with Guacanagarí. This *cacique* had saved them from the disastrous shipwreck, after all. That said, it remains unclear who was allied with who, though, if at all: Christians and Guacanagarí versus Caonabo and Mayreni; Guacanagarí, Caonabo and Mayreni versus the Christians; or, all against one another. Indeed, the Christians were absorbed into the complex state of inter-island politics from the outset – especially after the formation of the initial Guacanagarí-Columbus alliance.

Interestingly, it seems that both Columbus and Chanca saw mutual or shared enemies as a valuable factor in developing relationships with indigenous groups, and interwove themselves into existing un/friendly relations accordingly. Attributing his alliance with Guacanagarí to their mutual disdain for and concern over 'the Caribs,' Columbus' first destination on the return voyage is to (what he believes) are the Carib islands, where their mutual enemy resided.<sup>63</sup> Chanca confirms their discovery of the Caribs' lands by the presence of human bones in the houses they passed through, offering vivid descriptions of gnawed body parts, and of body parts cooking in pots, as evidence to his audience.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the man-eating, women stealing raiders were ostracised further by the addition of crimes of infanticide, and the mutilation and dismemberment of young boys.<sup>65</sup> The evidence for this behaviour is thus provided in the form of three castrated boys, who, fleeing from the Caribs, had come to the Christians (along with other prisoners).<sup>66</sup> The Caribs' practice of holding concubines is similarly confirmed by conversations with women who had been held prisoner by the Caribs, who the Christians took from one of the villages.<sup>67</sup> Significantly, Chanca records how after the women learnt that the Christians 'abhorred' those who performed that 'evil custom' of consuming human flesh, 'they rejoiced greatly,' and

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> Indeed, later in the voyage Chanca notes that 'in four or five days, a third of the men have fallen sick. I believe that the chief cause of this has been the labour and privations of the voyage; further, the changes of climate.' Chanca, 'Letter', p. 60.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

thereafter helped the crew identify who were Caribs.<sup>68</sup> Chanca certainly saw this as a positive development in their relationship; the women continued to provide valuable information as they travel from island to island.<sup>69</sup> They had seemingly made friends, so to speak, over the sharing of an enemy – just as Columbus had done with Guacanagarí.

Further into the voyage – after the discovery of La Navidad’s fate – the supposed friendship with the women prisoners falls apart, in a significant turn of events that also sees a further break down in the Guacanagarí-Columbus relationship. Two days after Chanca had examined Guacanagarí’s mysterious wound, Guacanagarí’s brother and a group of locals boarded the ship, bartering a good amount of gold. However, that night the ten women prisoners ‘threw themselves very quietly into the water and made their way ashore... They swam more than half a league,’ and only four were recaptured.<sup>70</sup> Chanca records how ‘that brother of Guacamari talked with them; as we believe, he told them to [escape].’<sup>71</sup> Surely enough, the next day Columbus sent a party to Guacanagarí, to demand the return of the women: instead, upon their arrival in the village, the Christians ‘found the village abandoned...so that there was not a soul in it.’<sup>72</sup> Columbus, it appeared, had been duped: under the guise of exchange, Guacanagarí’s brother had enacted a coordinated plan encouraging the women to escape, and the locals to take flight – all under the cover of darkness.

This abandonment of the *cacique*’s village after the escape of the prisoners is somewhat unexpected when the actions of indigenous groups immediately preceding it are considered. The abandonment follows a number of exchanges between Guacanagarí, other elites and Columbus, who had dined together, too; the crew had also seemingly rebuilt the trust with the locals through the exchange of items and information. Yet, whilst the indigenous group and individuals responded in ways that made the Christians feel secure (mainly through exchange), their eventual response of flight highlights the actual insecurity of this contact situation, and, significantly, a potential manipulation of responses by the community for their own ends. Just like the giving of parrots as gifts to Columbus ‘without want for anything’ during the first voyage, here the indigenous community seemingly stabilised the situation through the enactment of outwardly favourable responses; under the surface, though, these responses did not necessarily reflect a positive perception of the strangers. The eventual flight of the indigenous community may suggest that they engaged in exchange to secure time to consider their position, and illustrates strategic attempts to regain control of the unfolding encounter – as for the response of flight itself. Alternatively, the multiple instances of exchange may indeed be indicative of a willingness of

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>69</sup> For the women providing information, see Chanca, ‘Letter’, p. 32, p. 34, p. 40.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Taíno groups and individuals on Hispaniola to receive the Christians as friends (again), to rebuild their ‘alliance’, but this was proved unattainable.

Whilst the motivations behind such responses cannot be definitively identified, and there are obvious gaps in our understanding of the events as scholars today, we can say with certainty that indigenous responses were fluid and dynamic, in both the first and second voyages, and during individual contact situations: through the exchange of goods the Christians could be re-categorised into more positive identities, such as that of passing traders; equally, relationships could quickly turn sour, sometimes irreparably so. During his account of the second voyage, Chanca ties this irreparableness to the suspicion both parties have of one another – a response that was not obviously accounted for in the *Diario* – for which the fate of La Navidad was undoubtedly one of the key triggers. What happened at La Navidad in Columbus’ absence that prompted the Taíno community to react so cautiously to the returning Christians? Has Columbus over exaggerated their friendship, or had something affected it during the months between the voyages?

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Significantly, indigenous responses of flight following friendly responses – like that of Guacanagari’s community – are clearly evidenced in later European accounts of the encounters in Mesoamerica, too. When Hernando Cortés and his men arrived at the Chontal Maya town of Potonchán on the Grijalba river in the spring of 1519, he was not warmly welcomed: the indigenous community refused to permit him entry into their town, and, after an exchange of arrows and gunshots soon occurred, the Christians took possession of the village.<sup>73</sup> The following day, however, two emissaries brought gifts of gold ornaments with a message from the local chiefs, advising that the Christians should take these trinkets and leave their land without further harm.<sup>74</sup> Despite the Christians’ refusal to leave the land at the community’s request, the Christians saw this negotiation as an arrangement of friendship – for which they were quickly proven wrong. When a group of four captains and their retinues were searching the town for food a few days later, ‘a large number of Indians [...] shot at them with arrows and wounded twenty’ of them, rather than bringing food supplies as they had (supposedly) promised.<sup>75</sup> The next day, there was a much larger and longer battle between the two forces; peace negotiation talks began once the fighting had ended, which resulted in ‘all [becoming] good friends.’<sup>76</sup>

In this turn of events, it becomes clear that the giving of gifts was part of an indigenous strategy to encourage Cortés and his men to leave their land, reflecting a categorisation as foes

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<sup>73</sup> Puertocarrero & Francisco de Montejo, ‘The First Letter’, pp. 18-19. It was in Potonchán that Cortés met Malintzin.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20, p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22 (p. 22).

rather than friends – the relation most usually connected to gift exchange. As well as fight, the use of negotiations or gift exchanges as a delaying tactic by indigenous groups often led to responses of flight, too. When Pedro de Alvarado arrived in the Xinca town of Atiquipaque, south of the Guatemalan highlands, for example, he was well-received by the lords, but, ‘at sunset, without any reason, [the town] was suddenly depopulated and cleared out,’ leaving no one to be found.<sup>77</sup> The next day, in the town of Tacuilula, the same series of responses occurred: Alvarado was received in peace, but the town was quickly emptied ‘an hour afterward.’<sup>78</sup> These indigenous responses are both measured and pragmatic; again, the communities in question seemingly create a sense of security in the eyes of the Europeans – responding to them in the ‘correct’ or desired way – using their outward behaviour to conceal feelings of animosity.<sup>79</sup>

Just as this study recognises the problematic nature of categorising responses into the basic groups of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ – with these categories reflecting ‘good’ and ‘bad’ perceptions of the Christians accordingly – it should be emphasised that the European witnesses did, at times, acknowledge the complexity of the strategies of the indigenous groups they were encountering (albeit after the fact). In his *Third Letter*, Cortés records how the indigenous community of Xochimilco, for example, entered peace negotiations but continued to fight, noting that

at last we realised that they were doing it for two reason: first, so that they might *salvage their property* while we talked, and, second, *to gain time for help to arrive* from Mexico and Temixtitan.<sup>80</sup>

Comparably, Andrés de Tapia records how, on the river journey to Tabasco, a group of Indian warriors asked for a day’s leave to reply to Cortés’ offer of peace: ‘as it turned out,’ Tapia writes, ‘they had asked for deferment *in order to take out their belongings,*’ for when Cortés arrived in their land the next day, the Indians were ‘arrayed for war’ and attacked.<sup>81</sup> The Christians, therefore, often learnt (a little too late) that a ‘positive’ response from an indigenous group or individual did not necessarily mean that they perceived the Christians as friends. Furthermore, whilst the importance of friendly receptions and/or gift exchange in securing amicable relations as recognised in European (and Mesoamerican) accounts has already been established, it should be highlighted that its importance was also seen in actions performed by Europeans that ultimately contributed to the compromise of its effectiveness. Most notably, Pedro de Alvarado remarks that

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<sup>77</sup> Pedro de Alvarado, ‘July 28, 1524’, p. 39.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>79</sup> Restall & Asselbergs posit that the communities’ flight at dusk ‘may have been to avoid feeding the hundreds of Spaniards, their African slaves, and the thousands of Nahuatl, Kaqchikel, and other native warriors that made up the bulk of Alvarado’s forces. Lovell and Lutz, “Pedro de Alvarado,” 55.’ Restall & Asselbergs, *Invading Guatemala*, p. 39, note 32.

<sup>80</sup> Cortés, ‘The Third Letter’, p. 199. My emphasis. See also p. 184, p. 248, p. 257.

<sup>81</sup> Andrés de Tapia, ‘The Chronicle of Andrés de Tapia’, in *The Conquistadors*, p. 22. My emphasis.

he hoped to capture the lords of one town, ‘contriving to approach them *through the presents [he gave them]* to secure [his] plan,’ after which he seized them and held them prisoner.<sup>82</sup> The manipulation of positive responses, therefore, was a strategy performed by both groups of strangers.

Such manoeuvring of amicable responses is also evidenced in indigenous-authored pictorial accounts, where friendly relations are analogously used to conceal negative responses, but to different ends. The most notable example here is the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*: readers will see how the narrative begins with a friendly meeting in the second scene, and continues to tell the story of the powerful alliance between the Spaniards and the Tlaxcalteca – as explored in Chapter II. However, as we learn from other accounts from Europeans and other indigenous groups, the relationship between the Tlaxcalteca and the Christians did not begin so positively. Significantly, the *Lienzo* completely omits the Tlaxcalteca’s initial reception of the Christians, which was one of violence and warfare. On his entry into the province of Tlaxcala, Cortés writes of a confrontation with a band of warriors, who ‘fought so fiercely [...] they killed two horses and wounded three others and two horsemen.’<sup>83</sup> The next day, Cortés was faced with ‘a large number of Indians, heavily armed, who with a great shout began to attack [...] with many javelins and arrows.’<sup>84</sup> Over the following days, Cortés burned a number of villages, took prisoners, and the fighting with the Tlaxcalteca warriors continued. The Tlaxcalteca even sent spies to assess their oppositions’ camp, under the guise of bringing messages of friendship from the *caciques*, and bringing food – a ruse that was uncovered by men from Cempoal, who had allied with Cortés.<sup>85</sup>

The bloody clashes that occurred on Tlaxcala’s eastern frontier are recorded in graphic images in the *Huamantla Roll*, which was produced shortly after the conquest in the *altepetl* of Huamantla, just east of that frontier. Indeed, the reader will quickly spot the mounted Spaniards spearing indigenous warriors to the floor with their lances, and the dismembered indigenous bodies that litter the blood-covered ground (fig. 3.3).<sup>86</sup> That the Tlaxcalteca first identified the Christians as enemies is similarly recorded in other indigenous-authored accounts, particularly those written by other groups of Indian Conquistadors, who were keen to sully the Tlaxcalteca for their own gains. The ‘Tlaxcalans indeed helped’ the Castilians, but the people of Huejotzingo

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<sup>82</sup> Pedro de Alvarado, ‘April 11, 1524’, p. 32. My emphasis.

<sup>83</sup> Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, p. 58.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61. Cortés cut off the hands of all fifty of the Tlaxcalteca who entered the camp under this guise. The events preceding the alliance between Cortés and the Tlaxcalan lords are also recorded by Aguilar, ‘The Chronicle’, pp. 139-141; Gómara, *Cortés*, pp. 97-114; Díaz del Castillo, *The Conquest*, pp. 140-165, among others.

<sup>86</sup> Brotherston, *Painted Books from Mexico*, p. 36. See also Camilla Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices: an Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), pp. 66-67.

‘admonished them’ for ‘they made war and fought for fifteen days’: ‘nowhere did we [of Huejotzingo] attack them.’<sup>87</sup>

So, why did the Tlaxcalan painter-scribes ignore this part of their communities’ relationship with Cortés? Gordon Brotherston relates this omission to Tlaxcalan texts more widely, which ‘say little or nothing about what was going on before Cortes arrived and hence about the history the Spaniards entered.’<sup>88</sup> This notion assuredly relates back to the very purpose of the *Lienzo* and other documents produced by Indian Conquistador groups: to function as pictorial petitions, as ‘promotional literature,’ detailing their community’s alliance with the Spanish to gain rights in the new colonial order.<sup>89</sup> As Lockhart eloquently highlights, accounts composed many years after the events in question are often highly suspect, and contain distortions: ‘distortions, that is, if we are interested in Nahuatl reactions of 1520 or 1525, as opposed to the attitudes of certain Nahuatl in certain places writing between 1545 and 1565 [...] and looking back to the events of the earlier period.’<sup>90</sup> Whilst Lockhart is referring to the literature produced by the Mexica of Tenochtitlan/Tlatelolco here, his point is pertinent to the study of the first reactions of

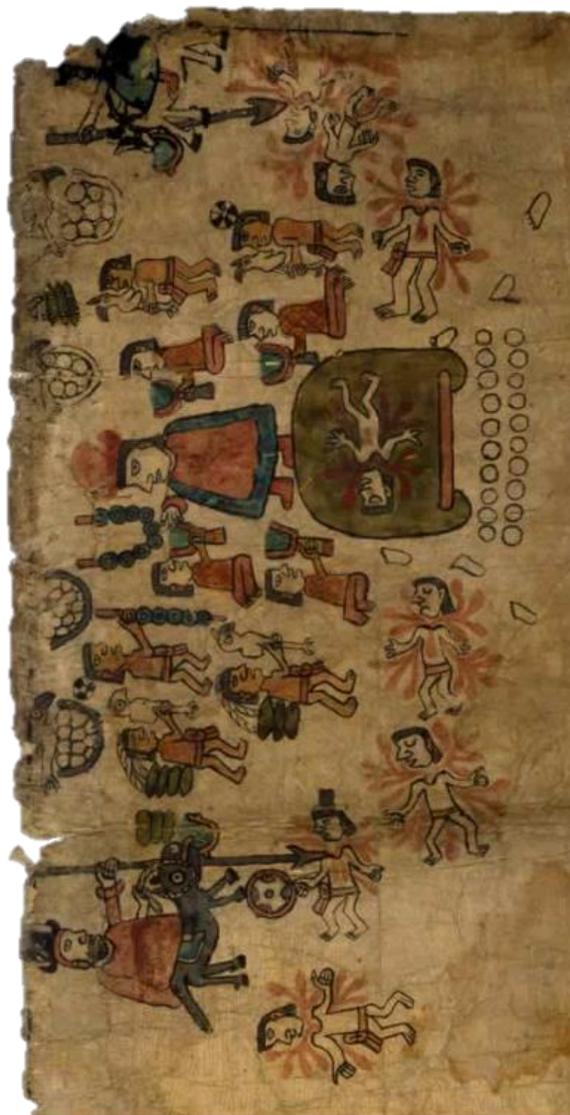


Fig. 3.3: *Códice de Huamantla*, fragment 6  
 INAH, *Códices de México: Memorias y saberes*  
 digital exhibition  
 <<http://www.codices.inah.gob.mx/pc/index.php>>  
 [accessed 16 April 2018]

the Tlaxcalteca – and other ‘friends’ of the Christians – too. Significantly, in *their* history of the encounter, the full spectrum of the Tlaxcalteca’s responses to Cortés, the Christians, and other indigenous allies, is concealed. The *Lienzo*’s (and even the earlier *Texas Fragment*’s) omission

<sup>87</sup> *Letter of the Cabildo of Huejotzingo to the King* (1560), trans. from the Nahuatl by Lockhart, *We People Here*, pp. 289-297 [p. 291].

<sup>88</sup> Brotherston, *Painted Books*, p. 36.

<sup>89</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

of the initial battles, attacks, and violence between the two groups obscures the Tlaxcalteca's original categorisation of Cortés as an enemy, not a friend – an understanding that can only be gained from a comparative reading of (ethno)historical accounts.

A similar altering of events is also evident in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*; this, time, though, it is an addition of material rather than an omission. Chapter One of Book XII commences by reciting the eight omens that supposedly foretold the arrival of the Spaniards, and the events that followed: the omens included a comet, a weeping woman, and two-headed men, and – combined with the presentation of Cortés as the returning god Quetzalcoatl – paralysed Moctezuma with fear.<sup>91</sup> However, following the work by Lockhart, Clendinnen, and Townsend, among others, it is generally agreed that these omens – and, indeed, the events preceding the Toxcatl massacre – form part of an ‘unabashed mythic history, a telling of what “ought” to have happened (along with a little of what did).’<sup>92</sup> Whereas the material from the Toxcatl massacre onwards aligns with other histories of the conquest – namely the *Annals of Tlatelolco* and the *Codex Aubin* – the first part of Book XII appears to be ‘reconstructed from the merest fragments of authentic oral tradition [...] and incorporates recent legend formation as well as, apparently, a great deal of simple embroidery.’<sup>93</sup> Quite fittingly, there are *eight* omens, ‘the canonical number of any set of things in the Nahuatl world,’ whilst Restall has identified details in the omens drawn from medieval European literature; similarly, Fernández-Armesto has highlighted the omens’ striking parallels to particular Greek and Latin texts known to have been available to Sahagún’s students.<sup>94</sup> Most significantly, though, the omens do not feature in any other Nahuatl source.<sup>95</sup>

Considering this, Townsend interrogates why Sahagún’s assistants may have eagerly constructed such a captivating narrative about omens: descendants of Tenochtitlan’s elite citizens (priests and nobles) at the time of the conquest, these sons and grandsons were intimately connected (by family and/or class) to those who may have been thought to be at fault, should it be the case that they had no idea of the Castilians’ existence before their arrival in One Reed.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, as Townsend writes:

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<sup>91</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, ‘Chapter 1’, in *We People Here*, pp. 50-56. For the pictorial depiction of the omens, see Book XII, scenes 4-10 (there is no corresponding image to the fifth omen). Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’”, p. 69.

<sup>92</sup> Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’”, p. 69. Lockhart, *We People Here*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>93</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 17. See also Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’”, p. 77.

<sup>94</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 17; Restall, *Seven Myths*, p. 114; Felipe Fernández-Armesto, “‘Aztec’ auguries and memories of the conquest of Mexico”, discussed in Townsend, ‘Burying the White Gods’, p. 667.

<sup>95</sup> The omens feature in Muñoz Camargo’s Spanish-language account, the *Descripción* (1580): in telling that his city, Tlaxcala, was preoccupied with the foretelling of the White Gods’ arrival, he provides a set of omens as proof. As Lockhart and Townsend argue, however, he knew of, and was influenced by, the work of Sahagún, and ‘the repetition of details shows that Muñoz Camargo clearly copied straight from the Florentine.’ Townsend, ‘Burying the White Gods’, p. 667 (quote); Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Townsend, ‘Burying the White Gods’, p. 667.

It begins to seem not merely unsurprising, but indeed necessary, that Sahagún's elite youths should insist that their forebears *had* read the signs and had known what was to happen. In their version, the Truth was paralyzing and left their forebears vulnerable, perhaps even more so than they might have been.<sup>97</sup>

That the omens were a culmination of the two or three decades following the conquest is similarly reflected upon by Lockhart, who states that 'the truth seems to be that the Tlaxcalans and others had nothing to explain and far less to regret, so they did not look back for omens.'<sup>98</sup> This is certainly pertinent for the case of omens, but, as previously highlighted, the Tlaxcala *did* have something to explain (or, more fittingly, explain away): their first unsavoury encounters with the Christians. What seems to be emerging clearly, therefore, is again the notion that different indigenous authors – including those of the Tlaxcalteca and Mexica – altered their 'version' of events of the first meetings to suit their own ends. Whether they were falsely presenting a flourishing friendship from the start, or using myth and prophecy to create an impression of knowing for their forebears, indigenous-authored codices present first responses to the Christian strangers through a deceptively cloudy lens.

There are other limitations to accessing the wider spectrum of indigenous responses to the Christians in indigenous-authored pictorials more broadly, too. As this chapter has touched on already, indigenous responses of flight, abandonment of homes, hiding, and the lighting of smoke signals are found in the writings of Cortés and other Christian conquistadors. However, such responses are not – to my knowledge – depicted in any pictorial account of the first meetings. Of course, pictorial documents are limited to the 'attitudes of *certain* [people] in *certain* places,' but the complete lack of such responses featured in the pictorial corpus is significant. It seems that the pictorial representations of the first meetings are either centred on friendship (as per Chapter II) or on warfare, with the response of flight neglected in favour of fight. Whilst the reason for such a widespread omission may be hypothesised – could it be, for example, that flight was seen as an undesirable response, as opposed to the 'heroism' of fight? – what is clear is the need for a comparative synthesis of both written and pictorial sources when reading for the full scope of indigenous responses.

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<sup>97</sup> Townsend, 'Burying the White Gods', pp. 667-668.

<sup>98</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 17.

### III.V Depicting disparity

#### *The separation of symbols and of actions in Mesoamerican pictorials*

Reflecting further on the representations of the conquest of Mexico in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*, another significant trend emerges. Whilst the previous chapter demonstrated how ‘friends’ of the Castilians depicted their meetings as amicable through the sharing of symbols and physical contact, the authors of the pictorials in Book XII seemingly show their enmity with the Castilians through a reversal of these very strategies. In contrast to Xicotencatl and Cortés both being seated on *Spanish* chairs during their early meetings as depicted in the *Texas Fragment* (fig. 2.2), for example, Book XII portrays indigenous nobles sitting on *indigenous*-style thrones, in sharp contrast to Cortés and his curule chair (figs. 3.4 & 3.5). That Moctezuma does not share in the curule chair is particularly notable: in the early scenes of the Book, Moctezuma is seated on a traditional throne, as he is later – following depictions of other messengers and nobles meeting with Cortés, who, when seated, always sits on a curule chair – in the scene of his arrest when a Castilian places him in irons (fig. 3.6).



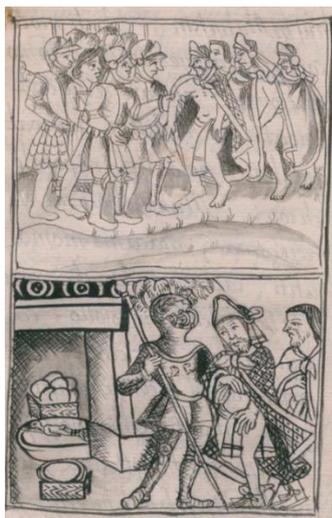
**Fig. 3.4:** Moctezuma seated on an indigenous-style chair in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, ‘Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,’ f. 5r, scene 11 (1577)  
Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence  
<<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 3.5:** Cortés seated in a curule chair in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, ‘Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,’ f. 21v, scene 30 (1577)



**Fig. 3.6:** Moctezuma's arrest depicted in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 36r, scene 74. Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence  
<<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 3.7:** Castilians take Moctezuma to the great palace in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 26v, scenes 45 & 46



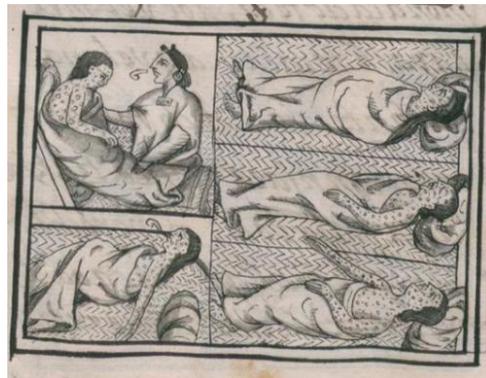
**Fig. 3.8:** the first meeting in Tenochtitlan depicted in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 26r, scene 44

Similarly, Book XII realises a different representation of physical contact to that of pictorials produced by Indian Conquistador groups, too. Like the shared use of the Spanish chair by indigenous nobles and Cortés, the Tlaxcalan and Quauhquechollan pictorials use depictions of touch – particularly embraces – to mark the supposed friendship between the two parties, as evidenced in Chapter II. In Book XII, however, physical contact between Moctezuma and the Spaniards is anything but a sign of amicable relations: immediately following Moctezuma's first meeting with the allies at Xoloco, scenes 45 and 46 depict the Spaniards seizing Moctezuma by the arm, and taking him by force to the great palace (fig. 3.7). The brute force used against the Mexica lord in these scenes is clear, as is the notion that touch did not mark friendship or reflect positive relations in this pictorial. Indeed, the complete lack of more 'friendly' touch in their first meeting exacerbates this idea; rather than embracing (like the Quauhquecholteca lords and Cortés, for example), Moctezuma and the Mexica are completely separate from Cortés and Malintzin (fig. 3.8). This separateness is particularly significant considering the emphasis Cortés placed on physical contact between himself and Moctezuma in his own account – again, as this study discussed in the previous chapter. Considering that the portrayal of physical contact was likely a strategy used by Indian Conquistador painter-scribes to emphasise their friendship with the

Castilians, could the authors of Book XII have similarly chosen to highlight *separateness*, to reflect a lack of friendship and increase a sense of animosity?<sup>99</sup>



**Fig. 3.9:** sweeping of the Templo Mayor in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 51v, scene 112  
Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence  
<<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>>  
[accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 3.10:** epidemic depicted in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 52r, scene 115

Reflecting on Book XII's presentation of the Castilians as enemies further, there is one response that is particularly unique: the act of sweeping. After the Castilians left Tenochtitlan under the cover of night on the Noche Triste (Tragic Night, June 30<sup>th</sup> or July 1<sup>st</sup> 1520) retreating to Tlaxcala, the Mexica celebrated, throwing 'a very great festivity for all their gods.'<sup>100</sup> They cast Christian images out of the temples, and redecorated with their own ornaments; 'they did this in gratitude to their gods for having freed them from their enemies.'<sup>101</sup> In preparing for the festivities, scene 112 portrays the refurbishing of a temple in the city, with four Mexica individuals sweeping the steps with brooms (fig. 3.9).<sup>102</sup> The act of sweeping worked to reclaim the space, and, importantly, combatted the filth that the Castilians had brought; it is one of the clearest indicators that the Castilians were perceived as threatening or dangerous.

As Rebecca Dufendach has demonstrated, for the Mexica there was a clear correlation between the perceived filth and polluting actions of the Castilians and the subsequent ill-health of their people.<sup>103</sup> The following chapter of Book XII details the smallpox plague that afflicted

<sup>99</sup> This is not to imply, of course, an assessment of accuracy of Cortés' account over that of the *Florentine Codex*, with regard to whether the first meeting included physical contact.

<sup>100</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, 'Chapter 28,' in *We People Here*, p. 179.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>102</sup> The act of sweeping is not mentioned in the Nahuatl text, and thus is a response only gleaned from the pictorial narrative.

<sup>103</sup> Rebecca Dufendach, 'Fright, Filth, and Illness in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*', paper presented at the *American Society for Ethnohistory* Annual Meeting (Nashville, TN: Thursday 10 November 2016, session 18).

the Mexica after the Castilians had left – an epidemic that weakened their warriors, leaving them vulnerable when the Castilians returned. The Nahuatl text tells of the severity of the disease, that ‘brought great desolation,’ and how ‘the Mexica warriors were greatly weakened by it’:

Large bumps spread on people; some were entirely covered [...] They could no longer walk about, but lay in their dwellings and sleeping places, no longer able to move [...] And when they made a motion, they called out loudly.<sup>104</sup>

Scene 114 offers a visual portrayal of the disease, showing five Mexica covered in pustules, lying immobilised on reed mats; an indigenous woman tends to one of the afflicted (fig. 3.10).<sup>105</sup> Immediately following this scene are three scenes depicting the return of the Castilians and Indian Conquistadors, emphasising the ill-timing of the epidemic.

So, what was this filth that polluted the city? The Nahuatl text of Book XII uses heavily sensory language to describe the sweat, stench, and dirt brought by the Castilians; it describes how, after the Toxcatl massacre (which took place at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan, c. 16<sup>th</sup> May 1520), ‘the ground was almost slippery with blood, and the stench of it rose.’<sup>106</sup> The pictorial narrative provides a visual portrayal of this dirt: smoke pours from the mouths of canons and guns, and spittle flies from horses’ mouths (figs. 3.11 & 3.12).<sup>107</sup> Once the Castilians had retreated, sweeping was therefore an essential response that acted to balance out the polluting actions of the Castilians, their weapons, and their animals. Indeed, it was the *balance* of filth and cleanliness that was central to Nahua worldviews: although filth and *tlazolli*, or ‘trash,’ were impure in Nahua ideology, they were a necessity, a counterpart to fertility and cleanliness. After all, the fertile earth – emanating all life forces – was made up of *tlazolli*, and thus, oxymoronically, life and creation were produced from death and waste.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, ‘Chapter 29,’ in *We People Here*, p. 182.

<sup>105</sup> As previously noted, Moctezuma’s immediate successor, Cuitlahuac, died of illness after a rule of only 80 days; he is completely omitted from the *Florentine Codex*.

<sup>106</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, pp. 134-136. Dufendach, ‘Fright, Filth, and Illness’, argues that this sensory language is particular to Nahuatl narratives, rather than Spanish accounts. Whilst this study agrees with Dufendach’s assessment of the intensity of sensory details in Book XII’s Nahuatl text, it finds that some Spanish accounts include sensory or experiential language. See, in particular, Aguilar, ‘The Chronicle’, pp. 153-154, p. 160.

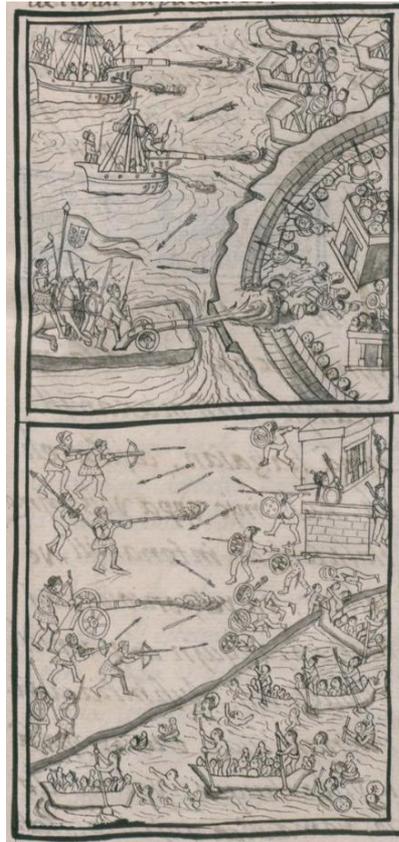
<sup>107</sup> For spittle, see scene 35; for canon smoke, see *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, scenes 18, 118, 120, 121, 141, 149; for gun smoke, see scenes 14, 39, 82, 118, 160.

<sup>108</sup> Sigal, *The Flower and the Scorpion*, pp. 22-24. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, p. 37, p. 87.



**Fig. 3.11:** spittle flying from horses' mouths in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 22v, scene 35

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 [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 3.12:** Gun and canon smoke in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 56r, scenes 120 & 121

Considering this, the sweeping of the temple steps should not necessarily be interpreted as a mere reaction to Castilian presence: as Mary Douglas highlights, 'eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment.'<sup>109</sup> In the act of sweeping, the Mexica actively combatted the dangerous, polluting forces the Castilian had brought into their city, correcting the balance between order and disorder according to their worldviews.<sup>110</sup> Sweeping was a particularly important action in Nahuatl daily life, for houses of gods and local households; in the morning, before dawn, the housewife would sweep away the night's debris, and, in doing so, 'surely saw herself as an actor in the regeneration of order [...] protecting her family from dangerous forces.'<sup>111</sup> Moreover, *ichpana*, or 'to sweep,' was not only a task for mortals, but for gods, too: Tlazolteotl and Toci, for example, both carried brooms, and Toci's

<sup>109</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 2. Douglas also explores how ideas of dirt and pollution differ between cultures (for example, menstruation), and the challenges scholars face in this regard. See, Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 9; p. 119.

<sup>110</sup> For the co-existence of order and chaos in the cosmos in indigenous belief, see, for example, Sigal, *The Flower and the Scorpion*, p. 55; Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, p. 41.

<sup>111</sup> Louise M. Burkhart, 'Mexica Women on the Home Front', in *Indian Women in Early Mexico*, p. 34.

festival was *ochpaniztli*, or ‘Sweeping the Roads.’ During this festival, mock battles were enacted, with the ‘warriors’ using inverted brooms as weapons.<sup>112</sup>

The use of brooms as weapons in *ochpaniztli* forms part of a wider conceptualisation of the broom and sweeping in Nahua ideology. Responsible for cleansing the home of dirt, brooms were powerful objects; they were left outside the home, and children were instructed not to play with them.<sup>113</sup> As Burkhart eloquently highlights, ‘a woman with a broom in her hands stood at the intersection of chaos and order’; utilised by the housewife as a defence against the ‘invading’ dirt (i.e. disorder), Burkhart argues that ‘the broom *was* a weapon.’<sup>114</sup> This idea of the broom as a weapon will be returned to in the following chapter, but, for now, it is important to emphasise the power of this object, and especially its conceptualisation as a weapon and perceived importance in warfare. Certainly, housewives were increasingly diligent in their sweeping whilst men were away at war, as the balance of order and disorder at home was perceived to be connected to the state of affairs on the battlefield.<sup>115</sup>

Accordingly, the response of sweeping the temple steps in scene 114 of Book XII is significant in more ways than one. Firstly, it reflects that, for the Mexica, the dirt and disorder brought by the Castilians was dangerous, their polluting actions a threat to the balance of the cosmos. Secondly, in the act of sweeping, the Mexica actively tackle the threat posed by the filthy Castilians in a way that was in-keeping with their existing worldviews, reflecting indigenous agency; indeed, that this sweeping is recorded in a pictorial produced nearly 60 years after the fact demonstrates the continued importance of this response. The sweeping was not only a response to the filth the Castilians brought, but to the consequences of that filth: disease, and a dangerous unbalancing of the cosmos. Through exploring the conceptualisation of the broom in indigenous thought, it becomes clear that this action was, too, a response connected to the battlefield; in sweeping, one was handling a powerful weapon. With the act of sweeping not featuring at all in the Indian Conquistador pictorials, it seems that this response by the broom-wielding Mexica was certainly one reflective of an indigenous perception of (the filthy) Castilians as dangerous enemies.

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<sup>112</sup> Burkhart, ‘Mexica Women on the Home Front’, pp. 34-35. For a detailed study of the festival of *Ochpaniztli*, see Catherine R. DiCesare, *Sweeping the Way: Divine Transformation in the Aztec Festival of Ochpaniztli* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2009).

<sup>113</sup> Burkhart, ‘Mexica Women on the Home Front’, p. 35.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>115</sup> Burkhart, ‘Mexica Women on the Home Front’, p. 37. See also Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, pp. 36-37, pp. 45-46; Berdan, *Aztec Archaeology & Ethnohistory*, p. 225. For gender relations in Tenochtitlan more widely, see Susan Kellogg, ‘The Woman’s Room: some aspects of gender relations in Tenochtitlan in the late pre-Hispanic period’, *Ethnohistory*, 42:4 (1995), 563-75. For the controversial argument that Mexica women were increasingly subordinated as the Aztec empire expanded, see June Nash, ‘The Aztecs and the Ideology of Male Dominance’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 4:2 (1978), 349-62.



**Fig. 3.13:** the Toxcatl massacre depicted in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 33r, scenes 66 & 67. Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence <<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]

The Toxcatl massacre is undoubtedly subject to the most gruesome description and depiction in Book XII, with the dirt and stench from the allies' violent act emphasised. Significantly, the pictorial representation of the massacre is the only portrayal in Book XII of bloodied or dismembered warriors; scenes 66, 67, and 68 show sword-wielding Castilians slaying Mexica who were partaking in the Feast of Toxcatl, dancing in honour of the god Huitzilopochtli (fig. 3.13), in stark contrast to other scenes of warfare. Indeed, generally warriors retain their full bodies in Book XII's combat scenes, aligning closely with pre-conquest presentations.<sup>116</sup> However, depictions of mutilations and dismemberments in post-conquest, indigenous-authored pictorials are seen across post-conquest, indigenous-authored pictorials, with Navarrete (following Maite Málaga) suggesting that it was the clean-cutting effectiveness of European swords that may have inspired such images.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, the known Postclassic codices –

such as the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall* – do not feature mutilated warriors in scenes of warfare; this is a portrayal only typically seen in/after paintings of the conquest.<sup>118</sup> In the latter part of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, for example, the reader is presented with (particularly graphic) battle scene after battle scene of dismembered body parts, decapitations, and blood gushing from cleanly-diced corpses.

So, why did the artists of the pictorial scenes of the Toxcatl massacre in Book XII move away from pre-conquest tradition, and choose to depict dismembered bodies? The level of

<sup>116</sup> For the Toxcatl massacre, see *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, scenes 65-67. Scenes 3, 75 and 110 are the other exceptions to this general trend, showing dismemberment of warriors (the latter scene is the most similar to the format of mutilation scenes in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*). A similarly gruesome portrayal of the Toxcatl massacre is seen in the *Codex Rios (Vaticanus 3738 A)*, f. 89r, available via FAMSI, <<http://www.famsi.org/research/loubat/Vaticanus%203738/thumbs0.html>> [accessed 18 May 2018].

<sup>117</sup> Federico Navarrete, 'Beheadings and Massacres: Andean and Mesoamerican Representations of the Spanish Conquest', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 53/54 (2008), 59-78, p. 65.

<sup>118</sup> Navarrete, 'Beheadings and massacres,' p. 65. *Codex Zouche-Nuttall*, British Museum, Am1902,0308.1. British Museum Collection Online, <[http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details/collection\\_image\\_gallery.aspx?assetId=20707001&objectId=662517&partId=1#more-views](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=20707001&objectId=662517&partId=1#more-views)> [accessed 18 May 2018].

violence could certainly be part of their reasoning, as just one small excerpt from the accompanying Nahuatl demonstrates:

They surrounded those who were dancing [...] they struck a drummer's arms; both of his hands were severed. Then they struck his neck; his head landed far away [...] They split open the heads of some, they really cut their skulls into pieces, their skulls were cut up into little bits. And some they hit on the shoulders; their bodies broke open and ripped.<sup>119</sup>

As well as conveying the gruesomeness of the act, this language may have served as a strategy to highlight the moral implications of the atrocity.<sup>120</sup> As Clendinnen writes, 'the Mexicans had very precise rules about violent assaults on the body, as the range of their sacrificial rituals makes clear, but the notion of a "preemptive massacre" of warriors was not in their vocabulary.'<sup>121</sup> At a sacred place ('the axis mundi of the Mexica universe'), involving unarmed civilians, this massacre – and the wider 'uninhibited' killing by Castilians – contravened indigenous expectations and worldviews.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, for the Nahuas, war was a 'sacred contest,' with honour playing a central role; warriors should be actively engaged in battle in order to receive a noble death (either on the battlefield or at the sacrificial stone).<sup>123</sup> Inflicting injury or death from afar (with guns), or outside of the battlefield was not to put one's own life at risk, and accordingly Castilian tactics – so focused on accumulating body counts and gaining territory – were likely seen as 'shameful' to an Indian warrior.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, taking place outside of the battlefield, and not adhering to the rituals of sacrifice, the killings may, in turn, have been perceived as murder – a serious transgression that brought dishonour and chaos.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, 'Chapter 20', in *We People Here*, p. 134.

<sup>120</sup> Pablo García Loaeza, 'Telling Violence: the Toxcatl massacre at the *Templo Mayor* in sixteenth-century sources,' *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 22:2 (2016), 109-123; Navarrete, 'Beheadings and massacres', pp. 64-66.

<sup>121</sup> Clendinnen, "'Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty'", p. 81.

<sup>122</sup> Clendinnen, "'Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty'", p. 80; Anja Bröckler, 'Revising the Conquest of Mexico: Image and Text in the Florentine Codex (1578–80)', *The Medieval History Journal*, 12:1 (2009), 47-76, [p. 67].

<sup>123</sup> Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, especially pp. 14-40; Caroline Pennock, 'Mass Murder or Religious Homicide?: Rethinking human sacrifice and interpersonal violence in Aztec society', *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 37:3 (2012), 276-303, p. 289. The motivations for human sacrifice have been widely debated in scholarship. This study follows Pennock and other scholars (e.g. Michel Graulich, 'Aztec Human Sacrifice as Expiation', *History of Religions*, 39:4 (2000), 532-71) who argue for the significant role religion played in the practice of sacrifice. For the controversial argument that sacrifice was motivated by ecological or nutritional reasons, see Michael Harner, 'The Ecological Basis for Aztec Sacrifice', *American Ethnologist*, 4:1 (1977), 117-35. John M. Ingham ('Human Sacrifice at Tenochtitlan', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26:3 (1984), 379-400) and Elizabeth M. Brumfiel ('Huitzilopochtli's Conquest: Aztec ideology in the archaeological record', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 8 (1998), 3-13) argue that sacrifice was politically motivated.

<sup>124</sup> Clendinnen, "'Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty'", p. 81.

<sup>125</sup> For murder as a transgression, see Pennock, 'Mass Murder or Religious Homicide?', p. 292.

Considering the purpose of the images and written descriptions of the massacre in Book XII, Navarrete suggests that, in showcasing the atrocities of the allied forces, they may have aided a claim of some form of redress in the new colonial order – quite comparable (albeit on a smaller scale) to the function of pictorial petitions like the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and *Quauhquechollan*.<sup>126</sup> As has – and will be – discussed with regard to the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, Navarrete, among others, has also sought to contextualise the imagery of the Toxcatl massacre in Book XII in the Mesoamerican and medieval European pasts. Navarrete cites medieval representations of the Christian saint Santiago Matamoros as a likely European precedent, which generally feature beheaded and/or mutilated bodies of the defeated infidel.<sup>127</sup> As the following chapter will examine in greater detail, scholars have highlighted indigenous appropriation of Santiago, especially by communities who assumed the role of conqueror, like the Tlaxcalteca; the figure of the lone, unnamed Castilian horseman in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* could thus (with the consideration of other evidence) be interpreted as representation of the saint.<sup>128</sup>

However, whilst the following chapter largely agrees with the significance of Santiago's influence in such portrayals of the conquest, Navarrete's link between European images of decapitated infidels at the hand of the saint and those in the *Florentine Codex* seems tangential: again, as will be discussed in due course, although the connection between the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and Santiago is well-evidenced, a connection between the saint and Book XII cannot simply be consequentially assumed, especially considering that vast differences in the authorship and purpose of the two documents, not to mention their vastly different experiences of the conquest, and so forth. With no clear evidence provided as to how or to what extent the Book's *tlacuiloque* were influenced by such European images, Navarrete's contextualisation here is unconvincing.

With regard to the Mesoamerican past, Navarrete and others have argued that the Mexicas defeat could be explained by existing notions regarding the connection between the power of certain ethnic groups and the succession of cosmic eras, that the Mexica themselves had used to legitimise their domination over other *altepeme*.<sup>129</sup> At the foot of the Templo Mayor lay a stone sculpture of the *dismembered* goddess Coyolxauhqui. Her body was mutilated by her brother, Huitzilopochtli, after she – with her four hundred brothers – attempted to attack him before his

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<sup>126</sup> Federico Navarrete, 'Beheadings and Massacres: Andean and Mesoamerican Representations of the Spanish Conquest', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 53/54 (2008), 59-78 (p. 67).

<sup>127</sup> Navarrete, 'Beheadings and Massacres', p. 67. In terms of contextualising the accounts of the Toxcatl massacre (including that of Book XII), Pablo García Loaeza argues that 'shades of first-crusade historiography in works by Bernardino de Sahagún and Diego Durán link them to the discourse of the militant church developed in the Middle Ages,' with 'descriptions of the massacre produced by or under the auspices of missionaries [...] [influenced by an] interpretive matrix [including] biblical episodes and crusade historiography.' See García Loaeza, 'Telling Violence', p. 110 & p. 119, respectively.

<sup>128</sup> See Navarrete, 'Beheadings and Massacres', pp. 62-64.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

birth, when he was still in his mother Coatlicue's womb.<sup>130</sup> Huitzilopochtli's victory demonstrated his power, and, significantly, 'marked the dawning of a new cosmic era under his domination.'<sup>131</sup> With this in mind, Navarrete argues that following the 1521 conquest, the Mexica identified with Coyolxauhqui, lying dismembered at the foot of the temple dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, 'implicitly admitting that the era of the domination of their god Huitzilopochtli was finished,' with him and his people succeeded by new conquerors.<sup>132</sup> Anja Bröchler, too, explores how the fall of the Templo Mayor may have been understood by the Mexica as a failed renewal of the connection between the ruler (Moctezuma) and his patron god (Huitzilopochtli); with the violations perpetrated by the allies, Moctezuma had effectively failed to legitimise his rule in the annual Toxcatl festivities.<sup>133</sup>

Amy Remensnyder draws upon a particular detail with regard to Book XII's portrayal of the Toxcatl massacre that may substantiate this notion further: in his 1529 court declaration, Alvarado tells that his informants told him of plans to kill Castilians at the festival, after which they would overthrow the new image of Our Lady that had been erected in the temple, replacing it with the image of Huitzilopochtli.<sup>134</sup> According to Alvarado, he had gathered his men to protect Mary from the Mexica, and 'spun for his judges a story that cast him as a hero fighting to rescue the Virgin from idolaters and to save Spanish lives.'<sup>135</sup> Yet, although it is likely that the Mexica *did* long to restore Huitzilopochtli's image – supported by witness testimonies during the court proceedings – Sahagún's informants' memories of the event included no mention of any attempt to remove Mary from the temple during the festival (or after).<sup>136</sup> Was there, in fact, no contest over the images? Or did the noblemen of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco choose to 'forget' it?

Certainly, as Remensnyder argues, by the time of Book XII's authorship 'the Christianised Mexica would have found it convenient to forget they had conspired to eliminate an image of Mary ensconced in their city by the conquistadors.'<sup>137</sup> Scorning such an image, even decades ago, would surely have undesirable repercussions on the new colonial order. Significantly, the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, as we have already seen, places a notable challenge to the Mexica silence on Mary and the temple: in scene 15, an image of the Virgin and Child, and another image of the crucifix, burns in the aftermath of the massacre, with the flames marking the Tlaxcalteca's foes as enemies of Christianity.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps, then, the gruesome portrayal of the

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<sup>130</sup> For a summary of this myth, see Graulich, 'Aztec Human Sacrifice', pp. 364-365.

<sup>131</sup> Navarrete, 'Beheadings and massacres', p. 66.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>133</sup> Bröchler, 'Revisioning the Conquest of Mexico', pp. 67-68. Bröchler places this failure within her wider examination of Moctezuma's fall, and the subsequent blame placed upon him for the conquest.

<sup>134</sup> Pedro de Alvarado, quoted in Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 274.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

massacre in Book XII speaks to a strategy to present the Mexica as noble victims of (immoral) violence committed by the allies, a strategy that could also be seen to deflect from the contest over the presence of Mary at the temple. The different portrayals of this event undoubtedly make it very difficult to ascertain the ‘true’ indigenous responses to the Castilians in Tenochtitlan, or to their Lady. Assessing the Nahuatl text of Book XII, Lockhart describes it as ‘an authentic expression of indigenous people, above all the Tlatelolca, containing lore and attitudes *both from the time of the events and from the time of composition*.’<sup>139</sup> This sentiment assuredly applies to the production – and fragility – of its images, too, and captures this study’s ever-present need for a critical awareness when reading them, as well as those of other pictorials.



**Fig. 3.14:** sacrifice of Castilians in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, ‘Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,’ f. 67v, scene 155

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 [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 3.15:** *tzompantli* displaying Castilian and horse heads, depicted in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, ‘Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,’ f. 33r, scenes 66 & 67

Bearing this in mind, this analysis of the massacre will be concluded by questioning scholars’ contextualisation of Book XII’s images of the broken and mutilated Mexica bodies in the Toxcatl massacre as reflective of a defeat of Huitzilopochtli, and challenge the notion that the massacre should be read as a ‘new form of sacrifice’ (as Navarrete presents). To do so, a comparison must be drawn between portrayals of Castilians dismembering Mexica at the Templo Mayor and other incidents of violence in Book XII – a comparison that offers important insights to the issue at hand, and has, to the best of my knowledge, been overlooked in historiography. Towards the end of the narrative of events, in Chapters 34 and 35, a number of Castilians are

<sup>139</sup> Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 33.

taken prisoner by distinguished warriors (scenes 152-154), stripped of their battle gear and armour, and slain; scenes 155 and 156 depict the sacrifice of the fifty-three Castilians, as well as indigenous allies, in accordance with tradition – on the sacrificial stone (fig. 3.14).<sup>140</sup> The proceedings culminate in the decapitated heads of eight Castilians and four horses being gruesomely displayed on a *tzompantli* or skull rack, in scene 157 (fig. 3.15).<sup>141</sup> As Ross Hassig outlines, this was ‘more than simple show or religious devotion’; it was a calculated intimidation of their enemies, showcasing their ‘military prowess’ through their enemies’ defeat.<sup>142</sup>

Yet, in contrast to scenes of the violence committed by the Castilians during Toxcatl – and more generally within the context of their immoral or shameful participation in the war – these depictions of Mexica violence may also arguably represent a pictorial strategy aimed towards exacerbating the conquerors’ immorality. By juxtaposing the Castilians’ disrespect for the ‘rules of the game’ with their own adherence to traditional forms of warfare (i.e. taking prisoners and enacting sacrifices), the Mexica distanced the Castilians’ ‘new’ violence through their own observance of tradition. The Mexica’s treatment of Castilian captives reflects not only a visual and tangible display of their physical power, in this instance, but may speak to their perceptions of their moral strength, too, giving the Castilians the ‘idealized’ or honourable death those slain at Toxcatl were denied.<sup>143</sup>

Significantly, this foregoing of sacrificial death may arguably have been seen by the Mexica as bringing further cosmological chaos than the palpable dirt and filth the Castilians

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<sup>140</sup> For the treatment and sacrifice of captives in Aztec warfare, see Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, especially pp. 14-18; Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, pp. 119-121.

<sup>141</sup> The number of skulls contained in the *huey tzompantli* or great skull wall is contested. See Pennock, ‘Mass Murder or Religious Homicide?’, p. 283-84; Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, ‘Counting Skulls: Comment on the Aztec Cannibalism Theory of Harner- Harris’, *American Anthropologist*, 85.2 (1983), 403-6. See also Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, p. 121, pp. 205-207, pp. 119-120. In 2015 the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia uncovered the *huey tzompantli* or great skull wall of the Templo Mayor during a dig at the edge of Mexico City’s Metropolitan Cathedral. See ‘Descubren el gran Tzompantli de México-Tenochtitlan’ (20 August 2015),

<<http://www.inah.gob.mx/es/boletines/545-descubren-el-gran-tzompantli-de-mexico-tenochtitlan>>

[accessed 14 February 2018]. By summer 2017, over 650 skulls had been excavated, including, significantly, those of women and children. The base of the structure is yet to be uncovered. See J. Weston Phippen, ‘Archeologists in Mexico Find an Aztec Tower of Skulls,’ *The Atlantic* (3 July 2017), <<https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/07/archeologists-in-mexico-find-an-aztec-tower-of-skulls/532584/>> [accessed 14 February 2018].

For the archaeological findings at the Templo Mayor more widely, see Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, ‘Archaeology and Symbolism in Aztec Mexico: The Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 53:4 (1985), 797-813; Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, ‘The Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan: history and interpretation’, in *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: Center and Periphery in the Aztec World*, ed. by Johanna Broda, David Carrasco, & Eduardo Matos Moctezuma (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 15-60.

For Andrés de Tapia’s description of the *huey tzompantli*, see Tapia, ‘Chronicle’, p. 42.

<sup>142</sup> Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, p. 250.

<sup>143</sup> Pennock, ‘Mass Murder or Religious Homicide?’, p. 287. Pennock highlights that dying on the battlefield or at the sacrificial stone were ‘honourable or even desirable fates’ of warriors, ‘for [...] they led one to a privileged afterlife.’ Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, p. 18; see also pp. 36-38.

brought to the city; by not taking and sacrificing captives, the Castilians were committing dangerous transgressions, and were not participating in a ritual central to the cycles of sustenance.<sup>144</sup> Accordingly, describing the massacre as a ‘new form of sacrifice’ seems unfitting, as such a characterisation seemingly ignores the importance of ritual sacrifice and cosmological order in the Mexica (and more widely Nahuatl) worldview. Book XII’s portrayals of the Toxcatl massacre seem much more significant when read as a subtle yet effective criticism of the conquistadors, who brought filth and disorder in more ways than one.<sup>145</sup>

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Placing the Toxcatl massacre to one side, there are other ‘types’ of atrocity committed by Castilians that sixteenth-century indigenous *tlacuiloque* highlighted to their audience, which had likely not been seen before: namely hanging and death by dog attack. With regard to the former, the most infamous hanging is undoubtedly that of Cuauhtemoc, Moctezuma’s main successor and *tlatoani* or ruler of Tlatelolco since 1515, 10-Reed, who – according to Book XII – is the leading *tlatoani* in the surrender to Cortés.<sup>146</sup> In 1525, Cuauhtemoc was hanged by Cortés (and Malintzin) – without questioning – from a ceiba or *pochotl* tree in Acallan, with two other lords, Coanacoch of Tetzaco and of Tlacopan, after being taken by surprise by soldiers after dinner.<sup>147</sup> Significantly, these three *tlatoque* were representatives of the former Triple Alliance, and, as Cortés’ *Fifth Letter* and other European-authored sources record, had been accused (by someone named Mexicatl, or similar) of masterminding a plot to kill Cortés and banish the Castilians.<sup>148</sup>

Like many events this study has considered so far, the presentation differs from source to source: whilst the European sources (like Cortés) ‘justify’ the hanging of the *tlatoque* by way of their supposed conspiracy and treason, indigenous-authored sources present the hanging of Cuauhtemoc and company as unjust. For example, during his analysis of the List of Rulers (part of the *Annals of Tlatelolco*), Kevin Terraciano emphasises the significance of the (repetitively mentioned) detail that the lords were hanged on a *pochotl*, ‘a sacred tree in Mesoamerican lore.’<sup>149</sup> ‘Ironically,’ Terraciano continues, ‘a Nahuatl difrasis involving the ceiba tree, *in pochotl in*

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<sup>144</sup> For sacrificial rituals as re-enactments of mythic histories, see Graulich, ‘Aztec Human Sacrifice’, throughout. Graulich also argues that expiation was ‘central’ to sacrifice [p. 371, and throughout]. For the notion of blood debt, see also Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>145</sup> Navarrete, ‘Beheadings and Massacres’, p. 64. See also Kevin Terraciano, ‘Three Views of the Conquest of Mexico from the *Other Mexica*’, in *The Conquest All Over Again*, p. 23.

<sup>146</sup> Moctezuma was succeeded by Cuitlahuac, but he only ruled for two and a half months, as he died from the small pox outbreak in December 1520. Cuitlahuac’s short reign was then succeeded by Cuauhtemoc in January 1521. For the surrender to Cortés in the *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, see chapters 40 and 41, in *We People Here*, pp. 246-254.

<sup>147</sup> For a more detailed retelling of events surrounding Cuauhtemoc’s hanging, see the ‘List of Rulers’ in the Nahuatl-language chronicle *The Annals of Tlatelolco*, eloquently summarised by Terraciano, ‘Three views of the conquest’, pp. 15-18.

<sup>148</sup> Cortés, ‘The Fifth Letter’, pp. 366-67; Diego Durán, *The Aztecs*, ‘chapter LXXVIII’, pp. 322-23; Gómara, *Cortés*, ‘chapter 179’, pp. 355-357. Terraciano, ‘Three Views of the Conquest’, p. 22.

<sup>149</sup> Terraciano, ‘Three Views of the Conquest’, p. 22.

*ahuehuetl* (“ceiba tree, cyprus tree”), was used in reference to a lord’s shading (i.e. protecting) his people.<sup>150</sup> Certainly, that the hanging took place on this tree is seen in pictorial depictions of the event, as elucidated in the *Codex Rios*, for instance. Contrastingly, Book XII – in both the texts and pictorial narrative – omits the hanging altogether, stopping short of this event and concluding with the surrender of Cuauhtemoc to Cortés and the arrangement of tribute.

We could easily go through many violent acts committed by the Castilians; trace how they are (or are not) depicted across different sources, from different perspectives, especially thinking about how indigenous authors presented the events, and for what reasons. For this analysis, though, focus will now turn to Castilians (alongside indigenous agents, at times) committing killings by dog attacks. Significantly – and surprisingly – pictorial depictions of dog attacks generally (all, even, to the best of my knowledge) feature in manuscripts produced to reflect *amicable* relations with the Castilians, rather than to present them as foe. That these *tlacuiloque* chose to depict the committal of such



**Fig. 3.16:** dogs depicted in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, ‘Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,’ f. 22r, scene 32  
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[accessed 18 April 2018]

violent acts challenged my initial supposition that when writing and researching this chapter on ‘Enemies,’ the focus would remain limited to that of pictorials produced by the Mexica, and others who fought against the allies; that it would be those communities who would depict the violence of the Castilians, rather than those seeking to be their ‘friends.’ As the cases of dog attacks reflect, however, portrayals of this violence were much more complex.

The cases included here form part of a wider phenomenon of canine violence during imperial expansion, in which indigenous communities were devastated by dogs – particularly mastiffs – trained to track, subdue, and even kill indigenous peoples by Castilians.<sup>151</sup> The ferocious nature of these Iberian dogs is seen in Book XII, in which the *Codex*’s authors capture their (dangerous) dispositions: as the allies left Cholula (after the Cholula massacre) and continued to Tenochtitlan, the Nahuatl text reads that the Castilians’ dogs were ‘coming ahead of them, keeping to the front, panting, with their spittle hanging down’ – saliva being a signifier of

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>151</sup> Tyler D. Parry, ‘Man’s Best Fiend,’ *History Today*, 66:12 (2016), 50-53 (pp. 51-52).

anger.<sup>152</sup> Elsewhere, the dogs are described as ‘huge creatures, with their ears folded over and their jowls dragging. They had burning eyes, eyes like coals, yellow and fiery.’<sup>153</sup> The dogs are portrayed in three of the pictorial scenes; here they are not actively engaged in attack, but, as the Nahuatl text similarly alludes to, their participation in the allies’ force is undoubted (fig. 3.16).<sup>154</sup>



**Fig. 3.17:** *Codex Coyoacán / Manuscrito del aperreamiento* (c. 1560)  
Mexicain 374, Département des Manuscrits, BnF  
<<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10508374m/f4.image>>  
[accessed 18 April 2018]

Significantly, portrayals of canine violence are most notable in pictorials produced by communities seeking to portray the supposed amicability of their relations with the Castilians. The most notable instance is that of the *Codex Coyoacán* or *Manuscrito del aperreamiento* (c. 1560) – *aperreamiento* meaning ‘a dogging,’ where a person is killed by being mauled by dogs. The pictorial portrays Cholulteca noblemen, who, after refusing to convert to Christianity and

<sup>152</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, ‘Chapter 11’, in *We People Here*, p. 96. Clendinnen examines saliva as a signal of anger for the Mexicans in the case of Spanish horses in battle. See Clendinnen, “Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty”, p. 82.

<sup>153</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, ‘Chapter 7’, in *We People Here*, p. 80. Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 32.

<sup>154</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, scenes 1, 24, and 32.

submit to the Castilians' authority, were publically executed by dog attack in 1523 (fig. 3.17).<sup>155</sup> Here, Cortés and Malintzin (who grasps a rosary) oversee the killing of an indigenous priest (hands bound), who is attacked by a dog. It is a gruesome scene, with blood spilling from the neck of the priest, which is in the jaws of the hound, and the hound's front paws hitting the priest's torso. To the right of the scene, six more indigenous men (with warrior hairstyles) are chained together, awaiting their fate.

During her examination of this pictorial, Lori Boornazian Diel begins by highlighting that the typical response of today's viewers – being one of anger at the killers and sympathy for those killed – was 'most likely not the original intention of the painting, which was likely more mundane and political.'<sup>156</sup> This is an important point for readings of portrayals of violence like this one, echoing Wood's warning regarding assumptions that present day notions and responses correspond to those of the time; such a reading conceals or distorts the manuscript in question's original purpose or message.<sup>157</sup> Instead, then, Diel works to place the events depicted within the Spanish legal context and the tradition of *auto de fé*; Diel explores the repercussions of such a brutal public execution, particularly with regard to the mutable authority of those involved. Diel's reading offers an eloquent examination of the manuscript's pictorial forms, identifies the agents involved, and places these within a wider political and religious context. Rightly, Diel highlights the different ways the dogging may have been perceived by both the Castilians and the Nahuas: as 'a reiteration of Cortés' social and royal prerogative,' and as 'a usurpation of traditional power structures,' respectively.<sup>158</sup>

Significantly, Diel argues that the manuscript's original intention was not to indict Cortés (by way of portraying his orchestration of this brutal killing), but, 'instead, was created to serve local interests, namely the legitimacy of don Rodrigo Xochitototzintli's rule over Cholula' (positioned at the bottom left of the pictorial, conversing with Andrés de Tapia, Cholula's *encomendero*).<sup>159</sup> Diel provides convincing support for this argument: for example, don Rodrigo is more modestly dressed than the rebelling indigenous men in line for execution, with his hair cut short and traces of stubble on his face – sharing in symbols associated with a more 'Iberian' identity. Moreover, he has a Christian name, which he would have received upon baptism. All these signs reflect that he was 'more accepting of the Spaniards and their religion,' legitimising his appointment as ruler.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> For the dating of the manuscript, see Lori Boornazian Diel, 'The Spectacle of Death in Early Colonial New Spain in the *Manuscrito del aperreamiento*', *Hispanic Issues On Line*, 7 (2010), 144-163 (p. 146).

<sup>156</sup> Diel, 'The Spectacle of Death', p. 145.

<sup>157</sup> Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 32.

<sup>158</sup> Diel, 'The Spectacle of Death', p. 156.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50 (p. 149).



**Fig. 3.18:** dog attacks conducted against rebelling indigenous groups, overseen by a seated Castilian figure, in the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* (c. 1530)  
Digitally restored by the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan Project, UFM, Guatemala City, Guatemala (2009)  
<<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/view-the-lienzo/view-the-lienzo/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]

Whilst pictorial depictions of actual executions by canines are fairly rare in sixteenth-century sources, it is notable that they are included in the cartographic histories of the *Lienzo de Analco* and the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* – both produced by Indian Conquistador groups.<sup>161</sup> Diel identifies that, like the *Manuscrito de aperreamiento*, the dog attacks are conducted against rebelling indigenous groups; towards the bottom right corner of the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, a seated Castilian figure oversees the attack of three local indigenous men by three white dogs, the dogs' jaws clasp their legs (fig. 3.18). As for the *Manuscrito*, the purpose of this image may likewise serve to highlight authority in the new colonial order, to act as a warning to groups set upon rebellion.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, the appearance of dog attacks in these lienzos supports the notion that *aperreamiento* may have had particular value in documents that were designed to function in an evidentiary capacity – in the *Manuscrito*'s case, to support the legitimacy of don Rodrigo. This aspect of Diel's argument will be developed further in the following chapter of this study through a close reading of Malintzin's portrayal in the manuscript: importantly, Malintzin's portrayal in the *Manuscrito* is highly comparable with depictions of her figure in pictorials produced by Indian Conquistador communities, and thus offers further support to the notion that this manuscript had a similar evidentiary function.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154. Despite sustained efforts during this study, it has not been possible to attain a 'readable' image of the *Lienzo de Analco*, and so the focus here will remain on the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*. For a comparative study of the *Lienzo de Analco* with the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* and *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, see Asselbergs, 'The Conquest in Images'. Death by dog attack also features in the *Anales de Tlatelolco*: see Lockhart, *We People Here*, p. 273.

<sup>162</sup> For the ancient precedent of dog attacks and rebellion, see the historiographical overview in Diel, 'The Spectacle of Death,' p. 157.

Thinking back to the findings of the previous chapter regarding pictorial strategies of the Tlaxcateca and Quauhquecholteca *tlacuiloque*, it could be considered that the portrayal of the dog attack in the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* may not only serve as a way of highlighting the perceived wrongdoing of those attacked, but, perhaps, as a subtle critique of the Castilians, in line with other strategies.<sup>163</sup> Certainly, the brutality of the killings was extreme, and echoes the broader context of colonial violence of, and following, the conquest. Indeed, whilst this study follows the position of Wood and Diel in that images should not be taken out of their original contexts or be interpreted through the gaze of the present day, Diel's presentation of the *Manuscrito* as a document serving local interests and *not* as an indictment of Cortés seems too divided or polarised: are the two mutually exclusive, or could the *Manuscrito* serve as both a legitimisation of don Rodrigo *and* as a subtle criticism of Cortés? Especially considering the ways in which the Indian Conquistador pictorials reflect the amicability of indigenous relations with the Castilians, *as well as* offering a critical or 'negative' view of the newcomers. Although the *Manuscrito* is not a pictorial produced by the 'friends' of the Castilians, that the *aperreamiento* took place in Coyoacán – in the wider state of Cholula, where Malintzin supposedly uncovered a plot to kill Cortés and his men – surely compounds the notion that the gruesome scene depicted beneath a commanding Cortés may have served a secondary, more critical function.

### III.VI Conclusion

This idea that presentations of dog attacks acted as pictorial strategies to subtly critique the Castilians speaks to the broader themes of this chapter in multiple ways. Firstly, dog attacks were one of the many 'new' forms of violence the Castilians brought to the New World, which largely contradicted existing systems of violence and warfare – especially in Mesoamerica. The contrasting presentation of the Toxcatl massacre with that of capture and sacrifice of the allied forces in Book XII is a clear example of *tlacuiloque* separating the (immoral) actions of the Mexica's enemies from the Mexica's own, in order to highlight the animosity between the two groups. Indeed, the Mexica's actions followed traditional forms and systems regarding honourable or idealised death, and, importantly, the maintenance of cosmic order.

Significantly, it was not just actions or behaviour that the *tlacuiloque* separated, but cultural symbols, too: whilst the previous chapter found that the sharing of symbols often marked the formation of friendship, the presentation of Moctezuma's early meetings with Cortés supports

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<sup>163</sup> For use of the carnage caused by dogs as a denouncement of Spanish atrocities, see Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. & trans. by Nigel Griffin, with an introduction by Anthony Pagden (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 17.

the notion that these very symbols could be separated to reflect enmity. Moctezuma sat on an *indigenous* throne, and did not touch Cortés – the pair separated by a swathe of empty space in the pictorial images of their meetings. Secondly, portrayals of dog attacks found in pictorials produced by indigenous communities who had allied with the Castilians highlight that critiques of the ‘new’ forms of violence the Castilians brought were not limited to sources produced by their enemies. This was a surprising and significant finding during the research for this chapter: it supports the ideas presented in the previous chapter surrounding the uses of different pictorial strategies to reflect the strength or power of the authors’ community, and further showcases the fragility – and complexity – of early cross-cultural friendships.

This sense of fragility is another theme that has guided this chapter, which has further demonstrated the instability of the contact situation. For the Caribbean, quantitative analysis reveals a wide range of ‘negative’ indigenous responses to European presence, from flight and the abandonment of homes, to threats of violence and skirmishes. Furthermore, this fresh, quantitative reading has effectively highlighted the problematic representation of responses recorded in the *Diario*, which undoubtedly privileges ‘positive’ responses over those deemed more negative or unfriendly. In turning to Chanca’s account and Columbus’ return to the Caribbean, a much more unstable picture of the supposed friendship with Guacanagarí emerges, leaving readers questioning the security of this friendship in the first place.

In both the first and second voyages, it is notable that responses are, again, mutable, and often occur in conjunction with other responses. What is more, in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, exchange-based responses were not necessarily enacted by indigenous communities to secure friendships, but quite the opposite: such friendly responses could be successfully manipulated to prompt European departure, or to provide more time for the community to prepare for their own departure from their homes. Thinking particularly of Mesoamerica, the need for comparative study of such responses through a new synthesis of sources has been confirmed: responses of flight or the abandonment of homes or hiding do not feature at all – to the best of my knowledge – in pictorial depictions of early encounter, which heavily favour responses of fight. And, just as European accounts manipulate their presentation of events, so too did indigenous *tlacuiloque*, who sought to depict alternate versions or visions of the past to suit their own ends. For the Mexica, this is mainly evidenced in the addition of omens, precursors of the encounter; for the Tlaxcalteca, their omission of their initial response of violence and warfare is especially significant. This was a response that they assuredly did not wish to be remembered, and so it was not.

Lastly, this chapter has aimed to highlight the importance of foregrounding indigenous worldviews and existing systems of knowing. In the context of the Caribbean, it becomes clear that the European conception of the ‘Cannibal’ figure did not exist in the Taíno worldview.

Indeed, Columbus was wholly mistaken to categorise himself and his crew as ‘cannibals’: the Taíno may have identified them with Caribe spirits or raiders from neighbouring lands, but certainly not with the Cannibal that was created through the interplay of European misinterpretation, preconceptions, and imagination. Similarly, in Mesoamerica, an exploration of Nahua worldviews highlights the subtle yet significant response of sweeping to the Castilians’ arrival in Tenochtitlan. In sweeping away the dirt and filth from the steps of Templo Mayor after their enemies’ departure, the Mexica sought to rebalance their world, where a balance of order and chaos was essential. This balance was not only challenged by the filth and disease the Castilians brought to the city, but by their lack of adherence to existing structures of warfare and sacrifice. Accordingly, sweeping away the dirt, and the capturing and sacrificing of Castilians in adherence to established rituals, can be read as responses imbued with indigenous agency, as the Mexica actively sought to restore the balance of their home. Such responses reflect Mexica perceptions of the newcomers as bringers of polluting forces and disorder, and support this study’s wider argument that the extent to which the Nahuas – and Taínos – identified the European strangers as foes can only truly be begun to be understood through deeper explorations of their worldviews. It is only within these worldviews where more nuanced and precise categories of identity can be found.

## IV

### In-betweens

‘the Indian that the Christians brought ran [...] shouting, telling them not to be afraid, that the Christians were not from Caniba but instead were from the heavens.’

– *Christopher Columbus*.<sup>1</sup>

‘my interpreter, who is an Indian woman.’

– *Hernando Cortés*.<sup>2</sup>

‘I walked lost and naked through many and very strange lands.’

– *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*.<sup>3</sup>

#### IV.I In-betweens & in-betweenness: defining terms and concepts

As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, indigenous responses to Christian strangers were diverse and complex, with different groups and individuals responding in different ways, to different ends, and for different reasons. Whilst ‘positive’ responses of trade and exchange often signalled the establishment of ‘friendly’ relations, indigenous actors may have manipulated such actions for their own benefit, and were not necessarily indicative of friendship. Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Thursday 1 November’, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación* (1542), in *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: His Account, His Life, and the Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez*, vol. 1, trans. & ed. by Rolena Adorno & Patrick C. Pautz (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 19.

numerous indigenous ‘friends’ were enemies at first, initially responding to the Christians with violence; concurrently, some indigenous ‘friends’ quickly became enemies as contact situations developed. Whilst the fluidity and changeability of indigenous responses has been touched upon in the preceding analyses, this chapter will firstly explore instances of such changeability in greater depth. What – or, more pertinently, *who* – prompted the change of a given indigenous individual or group’s response? As well as examining indigenous individuals who acted as intermediaries during moments of early encounter between indigenous groups and the European newcomers, European individuals who found themselves in an in-between state will be explored, with an aim to assess what can be learnt about indigenous responses to the contact situation from their experiences. Considering both indigenous and European experiences of in-betweenness, this chapter asks: how far can the stories of intermediaries and go-betweens be traced in the available sources? And to what extent are their experiences revealing of indigenous responses to the Christian strangers?

Before turning to an examination of the cultural intermediaries themselves, it is essential to interrogate how such individuals can or should be ‘defined’, and consider the terminology and conceptual framework that this analysis will use. The very multitude of terms used to describe in-between individuals in the scholarship I have synthesised is staggering: mediators, translators, intermediaries, intercessors, interpreters, go-betweens, negotiators...to name just a few. Like this thesis, scholars often flit between different terms during their writing, purely (from what I can gather) for variety, with ‘interpreters’ and ‘mediators’, for example, acting as synonyms. Some nuances of the terms should, however, be acknowledged: for example, the term ‘translator’ is distinguishable as one less fitting for this thesis, as it implies a certain level of accuracy in the interpretation of cross-cultural conversations (lessening its applicability to the earliest moments of encounter), and that the role of the in-between person is limited to that of conveying spoken language. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, the person ‘translating’ often interpreted much more than spoken language, including gestures, actions, and cultural protocols. The wide remit of the role of in-between individuals therefore prompts the use of broader terms of mediator, intermediary, negotiator, and so forth, during the following analysis. It is also important to highlight that some experiences of in-betweenness explored in this chapter are not primarily based on interpreting or mediating, but are based on the occupation of an in-between space or state.

Navigating through different uses of terminology describing those in-between, understanding each term’s nuances, subtleties, and inferences, and – significantly – locating and/or placing such terms appropriately within a broader conceptual structure of ‘in-betweenness,’ has been a challenge throughout this study. Whilst terms such as mediator (and synonyms) can function outside of specific conceptual frameworks, other terms are irrevocably

intertwined with certain spatial and/or temporal notions. This is most clearly demonstrated with the case of ‘nepantla,’ a Nahuatl word meaning ‘in-between space,’ that is ‘neither one thing or another, yet potentially both.’<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with this term, Gloria Anzaldúa coined the term ‘nepantlera’ to describe those people who experience the nepantla space – mediators who are ‘threshold people,’ ‘in-betweeners,’ ‘who facilitate passages between worlds.’<sup>5</sup> Just as like the space of nepantla, nepantleras occupy a position ‘simultaneously inside and outside numerous groups,’ and reflect a potentially transformative liminality.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, Anzaldúa’s nepantleras are ‘the supreme border crossers,’ who ‘act as intermediaries between cultures and their various versions of reality.’<sup>7</sup>

Anzaldúa’s conception of what it meant to occupy this space or state of nepantla is an emotive one: as Keating explains in her synthesis of Anzaldúa’s work, nepantla entails a shattering of worldviews and ideas of self-identity; it is ‘painful, messy, confusing and chaotic.’<sup>8</sup> Whilst an emotions history for late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century experiences of nepantla is outside the remit of this thesis (and, indeed, would be highly challenging in and of itself), it is an important dimension of the state of nepantla to highlight nonetheless, for so much of the time emotional experiences remain unarticulated or unacknowledged completely. Despite the contemporary focus of Anzaldúa’s work on nepantleras – a response to issues of identity in contemporary society, aimed towards highlighting the ‘fiction of monoculture,’ the difficulty of fitting oneself neatly into categories, as well as the pressures on self-division and allegiance – her, and her subsequent proponents’, definition(s) of ‘nepantlera’ is highly applicable to the in-between individuals during the moments of early encounter this study explores.<sup>9</sup> Most pertinently, the notion of nepantleras as ‘supreme border crossers’ and ‘threshold people’ with *unique* perspectives are certainly fitting for both indigenous and European intermediaries who made and facilitated crossings between the indigenous and Christian worlds in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century.<sup>10</sup>

The appropriateness of this application is supported by existing scholarship (albeit a small corpus) that has explored nepantla as a concept in examinations of early cross-cultural encounter

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<sup>4</sup> AnaLouise Keating, ‘From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras: Anzaldúan Theories for Social Change’, *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowing* 4, special issue (2006), 8; Eyda M. Merediz, ‘Traveling Icons: the Virgin of Candelaria’s Transatlantic Journeys’, *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, 5 (2001), 115-132 (p. 118).

<sup>5</sup> Gloria E. Anzaldúa, ‘(Un)natural Bridges’, 1, quoted in Keating, ‘Shifting Worlds’, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Keating, ‘Shifting Worlds’, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Anzaldúa, ‘Speaking Across the Divide’, quoted in Keating, ‘From Borderlands’, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Keating, ‘From Borderlands’, p. 8 (quote); Keating, ‘Shifting Worlds’, p. 2. Similarly, Michael Palencia-Roth stipulates that the term ‘nepantla’ has broader uses than for borderland studies, Chicana literature, and identity studies: Michael Palencia-Roth, ‘Nepantla, Cross-cultural Encounters, and Literature: Latin America, Indian, Japan,’ *Diogenes* (2016), 1-15 (p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> For unique perspective of those in-between, see Gloria Anzaldúa, quoted in Keating, ‘Shifting Worlds’, p. 1.

in Mesoamerica, particularly in the context of religious conversion. Jorge Klor de Alva places nepantla within the context of spiritual conflict in early colonial New Spain, describing nepantlaism as ‘confused participation in both types of rites,’ as being ‘in the middle’ of two faiths.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, when Fray Diego Durán questioned an indigenous man about the continuation of the ‘old’ ways shortly after conquest, he answered “‘father, do not be astonished; we are still *nepantla*.’”<sup>12</sup> Thinking about the subtleties of the term, Klor de Alva emphasises that nepantlaism was not the same as syncretism, as nepantlaism was an ‘anomic position’: with the structural base of indigenous faith dismantled, ‘most people could *neither convert nor keep from appearing Christian*.’<sup>13</sup>

Klor de Alva builds upon Miguel León-Portilla’s work, and describes nepantlaism as ‘that situation in which a person remains suspended in the middle between a lost and disfigured past and a present that has not been assimilated or understood.’<sup>14</sup> Significantly, this explanation reveals a temporal dimension to the condition of nepantla: it is not just about occupying space or state between two things (in this instance Nahua and Christian religion), but also occupying a space or state between two *times*. As Luis León writes, in the context of religion, at least, nepantla refers to a ‘paradoxical place that is neither the world of pre-Hispanic traditions or entirely the religious world of the Hispanic, *but is both at once*.’<sup>15</sup> The state of nepantla is, therefore, one of significant in-betweenness. This is certainly propagated more broadly in the work of Eyda Merediz, who describes the Canary Islands as an ‘Atlantic Nepantla’, as ‘a physical and symbolic space where Europe, the Americas and Africa have repeatedly converged, intertwined and interacted.’<sup>16</sup>

Most recently, Michael Palencia-Roth has similarly expanded discussions of the phenomenon of nepantla outside of the religious context, considering nepantla in cross-cultural encounters more broadly. For Palencia-Roth, a focus on nepantla can channel critical attention towards the informing consciousness of and reactions to such encounters.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, Palencia-Roth also stipulates the remit of nepantla, in that ‘it occurs primarily in the persons or societies *being encountered* rather than in the conquering, colonizing, or invading culture.’<sup>18</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> J. Jorge Klor de Alva, ‘Spiritual Conflict and Accommodation in New Spain: Toward a Typology of Aztec Responses to Christianity’, in *The Inca and Aztec States, 1400-1800: Anthropology and History*, ed. by G. A. Collier et al (New York & London: Academic Press, 1982), p. 355.

<sup>12</sup> Diego Durán, *Book of the Gods and Rites: and the Ancient Calendar*, trans. & ed. by Fernando Horcasitas & Doris Heyden, with a forward by Miguel León-Portilla (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), pp. 410-11; Luis D. León, *La Llorona’s Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Klor de Alva, ‘Spiritual Conflict’, p. 354. See also León, *La Llorona’s Children*, p. 27: León clarifies how, for Klor de Alva, syncretism was the consequence of nepantla, ‘when it is resolved under conditions that make a full conversion [to Christianity] impossible.’

<sup>14</sup> Klor de Alva, ‘Spiritual Conflict’, p. 353; León, *La Llorona’s Children*, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> León, *La Llorona’s Children*, p. 27. My emphasis.

<sup>16</sup> Merediz, ‘Traveling Icons’, p. 118.

<sup>17</sup> Palencia-Roth, ‘Nepantla’, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Palencia-Roth, ‘Nepantla’, p. 2. My emphasis.

is an important nuance to draw out, as it speaks to the analogous, strong connection drawn between *nepantleras* and *mestizas* by Anzaldúa.<sup>19</sup> The impression given by these scholars, among others, is that *nepantla* is a state or space largely experienced – or, at least, much more strongly felt – by the indigenous groups and individuals, rather the European newcomers. The autochthonous roots of the term are certainly not lost here.

Considering such scholarship on *nepantla* as a foundation, then, this thesis will explore the in-between state of moments of early cultural encounter between indigenous and European groups and individuals – encounters often mediated by those on the threshold of the two worlds, capable of crossing between them. Like the Atlantic *Nepantla* of the Canary Islands, these encounters similarly take place ‘at the crossroads of histories’; they, too, are ‘sites traversed’ (to borrow from James Clifford).<sup>20</sup> Thinking about the state of *nepantla* as both in/visible spaces between cultures and as a paradoxical place in time, the fittingness of *nepantla* – and *nepantlera* – during these encounters will be strongly reflected during the following analysis. Importantly, the notion of *nepantla* as an in-between space is analogous to Dening’s metaphor of ‘islands and beaches’ upon which this thesis bases its conception of the ‘space of encounter,’ as it shares in many of the same qualities of in-betweenness, ambiguity, and liminality. That said, it is essential to recognise the connotations of the term ‘*nepantla*’ with *indigenous* experience – a connotation not so strongly associated with the ‘islands and beaches’ metaphor. Accordingly, the use of ‘*nepantlera*’ will therefore be reserved to describe the *indigenous* men and women who acted as intermediaries during these moments of encounter.

This distinction is important, as this chapter will also consider *European* individuals who experienced in-betweenness during early moments of encounter. Indeed, the encounter did not only stimulate changes to indigenous identities, but to those of the strange newcomers, too. As the preceding analyses have reflected, scholarship has tended to neglect the *two-way* process of exchange and sharing of cultural symbols: it was not only indigenous actors who adopted European identities, but Europeans took on indigenous cultural symbols as well. Going beyond Columbus and Cortés’ adornment in indigenous regalia, among other examples, this chapter explores more ‘extreme’ cases in which Christians adopted indigenous signifiers of identity and ways of living, sometimes completely shedding signifiers of their Iberian heritage, in order to survive – or, in some cases, to thrive – in the situation they were in. Like *nepantleras*, these in-between individuals also came to occupy a unique position, and offer unique perspectives on the unfolding encounter situations in which they were placed.

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<sup>19</sup> For *nepantla* and *mestizaje*, see Palencia-Roth, ‘*Nepantla*’, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Merediz, ‘*Traveling Icons*’, p. 118; James Clifford, ‘*Traveling Cultures*’, in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, & Paula A. Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-116 (p. 103-104).

This argument surrounding the uniqueness of European in-betweens (as comparable to that of nepantleras) arises from, and is supported by, scholarship from quite a different context from that of the Caribbean and Mesoamerica: that is, scholarship considering the special role of ‘beachcombers’ in the Pacific. Alongside his work on ‘islands and beaches’, Dening explores the unique experience of those individuals who crossed the beach alone and unsupported, inspired by the work of Henry Maude. Maude was the first scholar to recognise the potential of narratives written by such individuals in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century, whom he calls ‘beachcombers.’ Maude employs Hallowell’s 1963 study of ‘Indianization’ – a phenomenon he describes as ‘the North American equivalent to beachcombing’ – to define this in-between state of the Pacific beachcomber. Accordingly, Maude’s beachcombers are ‘transculturalities,’ individuals who, throughout history, ‘are temporarily or permanently detached from one group, enter the web of social relations that constitute another society, and come under the influence of its customs, ideas and values to a greater or lesser extent.’<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, Maude highlights how beachcombers’ accounts can ‘give us an immediate insight into native life in the Pacific, while still relatively untouched by westernization, that one can obtain nowhere else,’ with the exception of narratives from some of the early island writers.<sup>22</sup> Noting how explorers’ brief stays on the islands only gave them insight to the people in a state of excitation rather than daily routine, Maude emphasises how beachcombers could access different realms of island life, and experience the indigenous community in a deeper way.<sup>23</sup> Whilst ships and crews were transient, beachcombers were ordinary men to those of the island (albeit stranger, perhaps improper ones).<sup>24</sup> Indeed, for Dening, too, ‘to see across the beach, beachcombers’ eyes saw more than most,’ for, in order to survive, ‘they had to be able to read gestures and understand the ways in which power and class and gender can be in a colour or a shape or a look.’<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, the unique knowledge beachcombers had allowed them to take on the role of ‘cultural mediator’, to act as go-betweens for indigenous and European parties during later encounters. These mediatory roles assumed by beachcombers were diverse, ranging from interceding on behalf of a chief and leading diplomatic missions, to interpreting Western culture for communities preparing for change.<sup>26</sup> The remits of the beachcomber’s role were dependent on

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<sup>21</sup> A. Irving Hallowell, ‘American Indians, White & Black: the Phenomenon of Transculturation’, *Current Anthropology*, 4 (1963), 519-31 (p. 523), quoted in Henry Maude, ‘Beachcombers and Castaways’, in *Of Islands and Men: Studies in Pacific History*, ed. by Henry Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 135. See also Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Indian and the White Man* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964).

<sup>22</sup> Maude, ‘Beachcombers’, p. 167.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>24</sup> Dening, *Islands & Beaches*, p. 129.

<sup>25</sup> Dening, *Beach Crossings*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> See Francis X. Hezel, ‘The Role of the Beachcomber in the Carolines’, in *The Changing Pacific: Essays in Honour of H. E. Maude*, ed. by Neil Gunson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 261-272.

the time, place, and need of the people involved. Above all, though, beachcombers created opportunities for communication and aided negotiation, in ways that locals and visitors to the islands could not. Certainly, the insightful perspectives of in-between persons are recognised in both beachcomber and nepantlera scholarship. Similarly, there is recognition that occupation of the in-between may not be by choice, but an unavoidable position resulting from a certain turn of events. Maude's definition of castaways as 'involuntary beachcombers' is a case in point here, and, during the following analysis, it is this category that *most* of this study's in-between Europeans fall into.<sup>27</sup>

Beyond the Pacific context of beachcombers, following work on North American transculturalities, in-between Europeans in South America have been well-studied, too, with scholars exploring the cases of a number of Frenchmen who came to live among the Tupinambá tribes of Brazil during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Commonly known as 'Norman Interpreters' (*truchements de Normandie*), these individuals learned the native language, intermarried, began families, and practiced the Tupinambá customs and way of life; they let go of their Christian, European identity – to many Europeans' disgust – and 'went native.'<sup>28</sup> The most famous narrative is that of Hans Staden, who was taken captive by the Tupinambá during his second trip to the New World (1550).<sup>29</sup> During his captivity, Staden learnt the language, observed the community's customs, and came to act as a healer, of sorts – a role that helped him escape his original fate of being feasted on by the (allegedly) cannibalistic tribe. Significantly, scholars such as Neil Whitehead have emphasised the unique value Staden's account has in understanding this cultural encounter – like Maude, Denning and others have stressed for beachcomber accounts of the Pacific.<sup>30</sup>

Considering the position of scholars studying beachcomber narratives in the Pacific, South and North America, then, I argue that the perspectives and experiences of Spanish castaways who found themselves imprisoned or taken-in by Central American native groups can, and should be, explored on similar grounds. Whilst these in-between individuals have been greatly overlooked in NCH scholarship seeking to understand indigenous perspectives of encounter, this chapter aims to highlight their usefulness in understanding early moments of cultural encounter. Following Maude, Denning, and other scholars who have recognised the value of beachcomber narratives, the following analysis will explore beachcombers' experiences in Central America as a way to uncover indigenous perspectives, particularly with regard to their

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<sup>27</sup> Maude, 'Beachcombers', p. 135.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Martel, 'Hans Staden's Captive Soul'; Janet Whatley, 'Savage Hierarchies: French Catholic Observers of the New World', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 17:3 (1986), 319-30.

<sup>29</sup> Hans Staden, *True Story*.

<sup>30</sup> Whitehead, 'Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism'. See also Martel, 'Hans Staden's Captive Soul'; Forsyth, 'Three Cheers for Hans Staden'.

responses to the Christian strangers. Like the beachcombers of the Pacific, those of Central America crossed beaches, too.

To summarise, then: ‘nepantlera’ will be used to refer to indigenous in-between individuals, whilst European castaways who experience in-betweenness will be referred to as ‘beachcombers’. The use of these terms reflects the need to think critically about the special qualities such in-between positions entail, and how the experience of these figures can be conceptualised. Through this consideration of how to define in-betweens and in-betweenness, it has been clearly established that in-betweenness is a unique state, and those who experience it – both nepantleras and beachcombers – gain unique perspectives of the worlds they are between.

The following analysis is divided into three main parts, each considering a different in-between experience as a case study. Firstly, the analysis will explore nepantleras of the late fifteenth-century Caribbean; i.e., indigenous individuals who acted as interpreters during Columbus’ first two voyages. These nepantleras pose a particular challenge to historians, as no written accounts by their hand survive, and they remain unnamed and/or receive little attention (comparatively speaking) in European narratives. It is somewhat unsurprising, therefore, that these nepantleras often remain unconsidered in scholarship centred on Indian interpreters: whilst scholarship on Malintzin, for example, considers how her role speaks to the experiences of others, particularly Indian women, this scholarship generally encompasses Mesoamerica, rather than reaching back to comparable experiences in the Caribbean.<sup>31</sup> If any comparison is made outside of Mesoamerica, it is with North America, usually to the experiences of Pocahontas and Sacagawea. Whilst such comparative studies are useful and well-founded (I recommend, for example, Rebecca Jager’s *Malintzin, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea*, 2015), I argue that conversations about indigenous interpreters should go further to include those acting in the very first Caribbean encounters.<sup>32</sup> Their stories are undeniably much harder to reach, as both the ‘true’ voices of the interpreters and the willingness with which they acted as intermediaries are difficult to ascertain. However, this does not mean that their stories should not be attempted to be told. This analysis will highlight the important role Caribbean nepantleras played in mutable indigenous responses, and aims to highlight their agency and influence during their work as mediators.

Secondly, the analysis will turn to Malintzin, perhaps the most famous and well-studied nepantlera. After a synthesis of current research on Malintzin’s role as a cultural intermediary,

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices*. A further avenue of research may be to explore representations of Isabel’s, Moctezuma’s daughter’s, or Luisa’s, Xicotencatl’s daughter’s, experiences of in-betweenness during the early meetings. Of higher social status than Malintzin, Isabel and Luisa’s experiences could prove to be insightful comparisons.

<sup>32</sup> Rebecca Jager, *Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea: Indian Women as Cultural Intermediaries and National Symbols* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015).

her unique portrayal as a warrior woman in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* will be examined. The unique pictorial representations of Malintzin bearing arms in the midst of battle scenes in the *Lienzo* remain, so far as I am aware, largely neglected and understudied.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, such portrayals demonstrate that Malintzin's role as a mediator was not always peaceful and separate from scenes of warfare, nor mutually exclusive with violence – at least for the indigenous authors of the *Lienzo*. Accordingly, it will be argued that the scholarly focus on the dominant presentation of Malintzin as a *peaceful* cultural intermediary is in danger of reducing the deeply complex nature of indigenous representations of her role and identity, and, by extension, of the experience or representations of *nepantleras* more widely.

The last case study will examine experiences of beachcombers in Central America: Fray Ramón Pané, castaways Gonzalo Guerrero and Gerónimo de Aguilar, and Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, another victim of shipwreck who was similarly captured by Native American groups. With no first-hand accounts from Guerrero or Aguilar, the narratives of Pané and Cabeza de Vaca will be the focus of the analysis. As will be demonstrated, though, each of these beachcombers had different and unique experiences of in-betweenness, all of which provide valuable insights into indigenous responses to the European newcomers. As has been previously stated, this analysis seeks to bring the experiences of beachcombers into conversations on indigenous responses during early moments of cultural encounter, rather than dismissing them due to their non-indigenous authorship. Indeed, following Palencia-Roth, this chapter contends that

*Nepantla* history is [or should be] told neither from the perspective of the victor nor from that of the victim. It is the story of what happens between them, of the mediating strategies occasioned by their encounter.<sup>34</sup>

By comparably considering both *nepantleras* and beachcombers, this chapter tells these stories more fully, and more deeply.

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<sup>33</sup> Gordon Brotherston acknowledges depictions of Malintzin bearing arms in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* in Gordon Brotherston, 'How long did it take the Aztecs to realise that Cortes was not a god?', *Mexicolore* (April, 2005), <<http://www.mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/ask-experts/how-long-did-it-take-the-aztecs-to-realise-that-cortes-was-not-a-god>> [accessed 16/08/16] (paragraph 8). This is the only scholarly engagement I have found on this topic to date.

<sup>34</sup> Palencia-Roth, 'Nepantla', p. 2.

## IV.II Caribbean nepantleras

### *The role of indigenous interpreters during Columbus' first and second voyages*

On Monday 29<sup>th</sup> October, Columbus sent two launches to a Taíno settlement on the Rio de Mares: in one of the boats was 'one of the Indians that [Columbus] brought with him,' because, Las Casas summarises, 'now the Indians understood the Spaniards somewhat and appeared to be content with the Christians.'<sup>35</sup> Upon their arrival, the community fled, leaving the landing party to explore the settlement, for which great detail is provided. Seventeen days after the initial encounter on Guanahani, this is the first occasion for which the *Diario* explicitly mentions an indigenous individual taking on the role of interpreter. Of course, there had already been cross-cultural communication, often through gestures, with Columbus typically noting that knowledge was exchanged 'by signs.'<sup>36</sup> It is not until the 29<sup>th</sup>, however, that a Taíno specifically goes to occupy the in-between position between the two groups of strangers – that is, if the community had not fled, of course. Columbus' intention to use Taínos themselves as interpreters was made clear much earlier, though, on just the third day of the encounter: Columbus writes that he had taken seven Taínos aboard his ships, 'in order to carry them away [to Spain] to learn [the Spanish] language' – an intention that, undoubtedly, prompts (largely unanswerable) questions into the willingness of the Taínos interpreters to occupy the in-between positions they did.<sup>37</sup>

The degree of 'choice' is not the only challenge facing historians, here. Significantly, Palencia-Roth comments that 'in 1492, the *nepantla* moment on the part of the Indians is so brief, and so filtered through the Spanish language, that it almost escapes notice.'<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Palencia-Roth goes on to criticise Columbus' recording of indigenous voices, questioning how, due to language barriers, Columbus could accurately ascertain what was said. Although I agree with Palencia-Roth's criticism of Columbus' recording of indigenous voices – and the speech which Columbus attributes to Taíno interpreters will be reviewed in due course – I will demonstrate that there is much that *can* be gleaned from the Taíno nepantleras' experiences as recorded in the *Diario*, and other European accounts, despite their authorship. Of course, as this thesis has previously established, this can only be done through a careful and critical reading of the available texts. Importantly, though, in conducting a close, analytical reading of such narratives, with a focus on nepantleras, it becomes apparent that moments of nepantla are *not* brief, nor do they 'escape notice'; once identified, they are really rather significant.<sup>39</sup> As the

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<sup>35</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Monday 29 October,' p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Saturday 13 October,' p. 71.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Sunday 14 October,' p. 71. See also, Columbus, *Letter of Columbus*, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Palencia-Roth, 'Nepantla', p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Palencia-Roth gives two short paragraphs to the consideration of nepantla in the Caribbean, for which he is quite dismissive due to the absence of indigenous-authored sources. See Palencia-Roth, 'Nepantla', p. 3.

*Diario* records, there were at least thirteen instances during the first voyage where Taíno individuals acted explicitly as mediators between Taíno groups or communities and the Christian strangers. Columbus often notes offhandedly about information he learns from the nepantleras aboard his ships, too, suggesting that they had a greater presence than the recorded narrative reveals. Nevertheless, there is still much that can be extrapolated from the thirteen records of the Taíno mediators' actions contained in the *Diario*.<sup>40</sup>

One of the most significant findings is the connection Columbus (and editor Las Casas) draws between the nepantleras and the (alleged) perception of the Christians as gods during the *Diario*. Out of the ten instances in which Columbus purports notions of Christian divinity, five are in conjunction with presence and/or actions of nepantleras.<sup>41</sup> On the very first occasion Columbus records his reception as a 'god' he goes into great detail, describing how the Taínos came to the beach, 'giving thanks to god,' shouting, throwing themselves to the ground and raising their hands to the sky.<sup>42</sup> Later in the voyage, on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November, the *Diario* records how different Taíno communities touched the Christians' hands and feet, kissing them, or placed their hands on the Christians' heads ('a sign of great reverence and friendship'), and provided them with food.<sup>43</sup> This time, though, 'the Indian who went with [the Christians] informed the others of the way the Christians lived,' and told 'that they were *good people*.'<sup>44</sup> Afterwards, women in the community came to kiss the Christians' hands and feet again, 'attempting to see if they were, like themselves, of flesh and bone.'<sup>45</sup>

Here, the physical contact, exchange of food, and the nepantlera's positive assessment of the Christians is a combination that – to the Europeans – speaks to their own divinity as supposedly perceived by the Taínos. On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December, the role played by nepantleras in further establishing European divinity becomes markedly clearer: chasing after Taínos who were fleeing from their village, 'the Indian that the Christians brought ran [...] shouting, telling them not to be afraid, that the Christians were not from Caniba but instead were *from the heavens* and that they gave many nice things to all those whom they found.'<sup>46</sup> After the nepantlera's intervention, the Taínos soon placed their hands on the heads of the Christians, gave food, and

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<sup>40</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Monday 29 October', p. 121; 'Thursday 1 November', p. 127; 'Tuesday 6 November', p. 137; 'Monday 3 December', p. 193, p. 195; 'Thursday 13 December', p. 221, p. 223; 'Sunday 16 December', p. 233, p. 235; 'Friday 21 December', p. 253; 'Saturday 22 December', p. 163; 'Sunday 23 December', p. 267; 'Sunday 13 January', p. 331.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Tuesday 6 November', p. 137; 'Monday 3 December', pp. 195-197; 'Thursday 13 December', p. 221; 'Sunday 16 December', p. 233, p. 235.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Sunday 14 October', p. 73.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Tuesday 6 November', p. 137; see also 'Thursday 13 December', p. 221.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137. My emphasis. For interpreters' use of 'good people' to describe the Christians, see also 'Thursday 1 November', p. 127; 'Monday 3 December', p. 193; 'Thursday 13 December', p. 221.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Tuesday 6 November', p. 137.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Thursday 13 December', pp. 221-223. My emphasis. For interpreters stating the Christians were not from Caniba, see also 'Thursday 1 November', p. 127.

participated in exchange, as they had done before. Later in the *Diario*, the nepantleras even conveyed the idea that the Christians – as well as the king and kingdom of Castile – ‘came from the heavens’ to Taíno caciques, too.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in the *Letter* of the first voyage, Columbus emphasises that the interpreters were ‘always assured that I come from Heaven...and they were the first to announce this wherever I went [...] with loud cries of “Come! Come to see the people from Heaven!”’<sup>48</sup>

There are many issues with this presentation of the nepantleras as colluding in the propagation of the supposed divinity of Columbus and his crew. Most obvious is the issue raised by Palencia-Roth, and many other scholars, with regard to language: Columbus could not have known, at this stage, what, exactly, the interpreters were saying to the Taínos they conversed with.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, as has been previously discussed, it is important to remember the Taíno concept of *turey*, here – the Taíno worldview which attributed special significance to exotic things (or people), that were accordingly thought to originate from the sky. Although ‘sky,’ ‘heavenly’ and *turey* were synonyms, they implied exoticness and foreignness, rather than ‘divinity’ in the Christian sense. Therefore, considering this worldview, if such an origin for the Christians was propagated, it did not necessarily entail their divinity. This nuance is essential, but not helped in language translation that scholars face today when reading the *Diario*, Columbus’ letter, and other Spanish sources; the Spanish term *cielo* ambiguously means both ‘heaven’ and ‘sky,’ with the former implying contentious religious/celestial connotations – the subject of much scholarly debate.<sup>50</sup> The second, and related, issue, is that the *Diario* seemingly uses the nepantleras as mouthpieces for positive propaganda about its ‘divine’ Christian subjects; the use of nepantleras in this way is presented most clearly through the concurrent instances of positive indigenous responses (physical contact, sharing food, and participating in exchange) and positive words of the nepantleras (the Christians were ‘good people’ ‘from the heavens’).<sup>51</sup>

However, whilst the problematic nature of words and beliefs of the nepantleras presented in the *Diario* should be recognised, the association Columbus makes between the Indian interpreters and positive receptions in Taíno communities is significant, and seemingly goes against the sense of dismissal conveyed in his generally brief recordings of the interpreters and their actions. The *Diario* typically acknowledges the successes of the nepantleras in changing

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Sunday 16 December’, p. 233, p. 235.

<sup>48</sup> Columbus, ‘Letter of Columbus’, p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> Palencia-Roth, ‘Nepantla’, p. 3; Restall, *Seven Myths*, chapter 5.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Restall, *Seven Myths*, pp. 111-12; Harris, “‘The Coming of the White People’”, pp. 12-14; Arrom, ‘Introduction to the English Edition’, in *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians*, p. xiii.

<sup>51</sup> For a variation of this idea, see Andrés Bernaldez’s narrative: ‘although the Indian interpreter [...] told [the people] that [the Christians] were *men of Castile*, they believed that Castile was Heaven, and that the king and queen [...] dwelt in the sky’ (my emphasis). Andrés Bernaldez, ‘History of Two Catholic Sovereigns, Don Ferdinand & Doña Isabella’, in *The Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, appendix 1, pp. 136-138; for Castile as the heavens, see also p. 156.

communities' responses to the Christian strangers, or, similarly, in developing already amicable relationships further, as following cases will illustrate. Indeed, on only one occasion does a nepantlera fail in securing a more amicable outcome, as, despite the presence of the mediator, the Taíno community fled and did not return.<sup>52</sup> Following this thesis' wider aim of deconstructing the White Gods myth, I argue that the this narrative should be transcended when reading interventions of the nepantleras in the *Diario*: whilst Columbus undoubtedly saw the Taíno mediators as mouthpieces to propagate the Europeans' identity as White Gods, this was not necessarily the case – just as the Taíno response of touching or kissing the Christians' heads, hands and feet can be identified as a friendly or respectful welcome, rather than of one reflecting worship or perceived divinity. What should not be dismissed consequently, though, is the actions of the nepantleras, or the importance of their role in the encounter relayed in the *Diario*'s overall presentation of the nepantleras as successful conduits of friendlier relations.

Placing the White Gods to one side, the tension between the success of the nepantleras and the typical brevity of the *Diario*'s reporting is demonstrated in the events of Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November, where, after seeing that locals had begun to flee at sight of the Christians' ships, Columbus sent one of the nepantleras ashore. Similarly to the examples above, the Taíno is recorded to have shouted after the fleeing locals that the Spaniards 'were not the Grand Khan's people but rather gave their own possessions on many islands,' as a means of reassurance – attributed speech which should, of course, be read critically.<sup>53</sup> The nepantlera was soon met by two men from the village, who 'took him by the arms and led him to a house where they questioned him.'<sup>54</sup> After this private questioning, 'more than sixteen dugouts or canoes came to the ships with cotton thread and other little things,' whilst the Christians 'confidently' went ashore.<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately (and frustratingly), the diary entry gives no detail about what happened to the interpreter during or after their interview; he simply disappears from the narrative record of the day. Despite his disappearance in the text, however, the nepantlera's conversation with the local men can, and should, be seen as the turning point in the village's response to, and relationship with, the Christians. Following this nepantlera's intervention, Columbus and his men were warmly welcomed, and were perhaps re-categorised as passing traders, or similar; as the previous chapter demonstrated, a classification as 'enemies' was not immutable. Furthermore, the meeting expresses multiple instances of indigenous agency, both in terms of the local men, who acted independently to assess the potential threat the Christians posed, and of the nepantlera, who mediated between the two groups of strangers.

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<sup>52</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Monday 29 October', p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Another, yet perhaps more striking, moment of nepantlera agency occurs during the confrontation of Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, in which a group of Indians approached Columbus' launches and one man gave a threatening speech, which was accompanied by aggressive body language and shouts from the larger group. Whilst Columbus thought that the Taínos were 'pleased by his coming,' the nepantlera who accompanied him quickly corrected him, 'saying by signs that the Admiral must go away [...] because the Indians wanted to kill him.'<sup>56</sup> With the nepantlera's face 'yellow as wax,' the intensity of, and danger posed by, this confrontation was evidently clear to him.<sup>57</sup> As the previous chapter highlighted, the nepantlera subsequently intervened, taking a cross bow, then a sword, in his hands, warning the warring group of the weapons' power, which 'put all of them to flight.'<sup>58</sup>

Situating himself between the two opposing groups, the interpreter's agency here should not be diminished by Columbus' somewhat derisive comment that he was 'still trembling from cowardice and faint heart' after defusing the situation.<sup>59</sup> Instead, the nepantlera should be recognised for successfully mediating between the two groups, with his actions ultimately resulting in a more amicable relationship.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, following this confrontation, Columbus instructed the crew to row to land, where he met the hostile group; exchange of food and other items (javelins for small beads) soon ensued, the tension accordingly dissipated, and Columbus yet again notes how the people 'believed that [he and his crew] came from the heavens.'<sup>61</sup>

Despite his important role, his identity remains uncertain, and this nepantlera seemingly disappears from the narrative of the day, like the interviewed nepantlera of 1<sup>st</sup> November. This uncertainty pertains not just to this nepantlera, or the interviewed nepantlera, but to all nepantleras in the *Diario*: Columbus never names these individuals, and it never becomes clear to the reader which nepantlera is doing what, or, exactly, how many Taíno individuals act in this capacity over the course of the voyage. The narrative is so clouded in this regard that the weapon-wielding nepantlera and the interviewed nepantlera may well be the same nepantlera, as it is impossible for the reader to distinguish between nepantleras from diary entry to entry. I raise this problem to highlight that whilst a critical reading of the *Diario* can recognise rather exceptional instances of agency on the part of the nepantleras, this can only go so far; it is not possible to know who to attribute this agency to. Out of the group of interpreters, were there one or two nepantleras who displayed particularly remarkable skills? In this sense, the limited content of the *Diario* prevents any further, more exact understanding of nepantlera individuals independently from one another.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Monday 3 December', p. 195.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>60</sup> For a comparable nepantlera's successful mediation (reassuring a group of Taínos in battle array) in the second voyage, see Bernáldez, 'History of Two Catholic Sovereigns', p. 124.

<sup>61</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Monday 3 December', p. 197.

There are further methodological challenges faced by historians when tracing the journeys of Taíno interpreters from the first to second voyages, too. After their significant work as cultural mediators during 1492, the Taíno *nepantleras* travelling with Columbus journeyed across the Atlantic; roughly half a dozen of these Taínos made it to Seville, whilst the others died during the voyage.<sup>62</sup> The arrival of the Indians in Seville (31 March 1493) was recorded by Bartolome de las Casas, who, at the age of eight, witnessed Columbus, his crew, and the Taínos walk through the town amidst the Palm Sunday celebrations. The crew carried beautiful red and green parrots, *guáiza* masks made from fish bone and pearl, pearl belts, with many fine gold items and other things never seen or heard of in Spain.<sup>63</sup> Columbus and his retinue similarly presented the people and riches of the New World at the royal court at Barcelona – later depicted in numerous paintings.<sup>64</sup> In such images the Taínos no longer occupied a position of in-betweenness; with no cultural difference to mediate after their transatlantic crossing – their metaphorical crossing of the Beach – they were instead presented as the Other, their difference exacerbated in the land so foreign to them.

Whilst the cross-cultural meetings and sightings of the Taíno Other that occurred in Seville and Barcelona caught the attention of many, little more is known about these Taíno travellers who made the journey to Spain, except that two of the *nepantleras* returned home later in 1493, accompanying Columbus on the second voyage (during which the other returning Indians died).<sup>65</sup> Sadly, there are no accounts written by either of these Taínos, and again their story is only traceable through European accounts. Furthermore, although Las Casas records that one of these Indians was baptised in Castile as Diego Colón, the difficulty of identifying which *nepantlera* was which during the following contact situations continues.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, ed. by Agustín Millares Carlo, with a preliminary study by Lewis Hanke (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1951), lib. 1, cap. 78, p. 332.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332. Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Only Way*, ed. by Helen Rand Parish, trans. by Francis Patrick Sullivan (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 12 (7-9 Taínos). See also, Lawrence Clayton, *Bartolomé de las Casas: A Biography*, Cambridge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 9-10 (8-10 Taínos).

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Joseph-Nicolas Robert-Fleury, *The Reception of Christopher Columbus by King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella of Spain in Barcelona* (watercolour, 1846); L. Prang & Co., *Columbus at the Court of Barcelona* (chromolithograph, published by The Prang Educational Co. in Boston, MA, 1893).

<sup>65</sup> Chanca, 'Letter', p. 59. For the potential/desired travel of other Taínos to Castile at the end of the second voyage, see Bernáldez, 'History of Two Catholic Sovereigns', p. 154 ('This man, with the other cacique whom [Columbus] had with him and whom he had seized, he sent to the king and queen, after he had come to Española from this voyage') & p. 164 (a cacique is recorded to say: "before you take from me my land and dominion, I desire to go with my household in your ships with you [Columbus] to see the great king and queen, your sovereigns [...] and to behold the wonders of Castile, which are many, as your Indian has told me." However, Columbus does not take him); Michel de Cuneo, 'Letter', p. 212 ('we sent [captives of the Caribs] to Spain to the King, as a sample').

<sup>66</sup> Las Casas, *Historia*, lib. 1, cap. 96. See also Bernáldez, 'History of Two Catholic Sovereigns', p. 122 (fn. 2).

As in the previous voyage, Columbus often sent the nepantleras ashore to mediate with the Taíno community in question. This time, though, there was something markedly different about the interpreters: they were clothed.<sup>67</sup> Harking back to the imagery of Columbus and Guacanagarí dressed in each other's regalia during the previous voyage, the in-between state of the nepantleras was outwardly displayed on their bodies – a notion we will return to again in the case of Malintzin. Such highly visible in-betweenness would certainly create a sense of ambiguity when it came to the identities of the nepantleras; indeed, one wonders how, exactly, they may have been received by the Taíno communities they went ashore to meet. Would indigenous perceptions of a returning nepantlera's identity change from that of in-betweenness to one of marked difference? Did their increasingly in-between appearance affect their reception by their communities, and those of other Taínos? Unfortunately, the surviving sources provide little information that can be drawn upon, in this regard; indigenous reactions to the returning nepantleras are – as far as I am aware – completely ignored and unrecorded.

What does become apparent in European accounts, though, is that the nepantleras' linguistic and mediatory skills had been fine-tuned during their time abroad, and, upon their return home, they continued to utilise their language skills during cross-cultural mediation, (re)occupying the middle ground. Bernáldez is especially praise-worthy of the language skills of the Taíno interpreters, commenting that they 'now knew Castilian well and also understood the Indians.'<sup>68</sup> Despite their proficiency, though, it seems that the nepantleras' judgement and ability were still questioned at times, and their role continued to be somewhat undervalued or unrecognised. Let us return, for example, to the mysterious fate of La Navidad, which Dr Chanca was trying to piece together: after a brother of Guacanagarí finally confirms that all thirty-nine Christians had died (following a series of conversations the Christians had held with other relatives, who had deceptively told them that most of the Christians were well), Chanca writes that

An Indian, one of those whom we had brought from Castile, who had been informed of it by the two Indians who had before come to the ship [...] had told us this already, [but] *we had not believed him*.<sup>69</sup>

Here, the nepantlera had been the first to secure this important news, and passed it on to the Christians accordingly; however, they had been sceptical about the information he had ascertained, and, whether that was doubt about the source of the information or its probability,

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<sup>67</sup> Chanca, 'Letter', p. 44: 'we sent on shore one of the Indians, who had been taken in the previous voyage, *clothed*, and carrying some trifles'. My emphasis.

<sup>68</sup> Bernáldez, 'History of Two Catholic Sovereigns', p. 122; see also p. 154.

<sup>69</sup> Chanca, 'Letter', pp. 48-50 (p. 50). My emphasis.

the disregard for the work of the nepantlera seems clear.<sup>70</sup> Significantly, this important episode also reflects a sense of agency on the part of the nepantlera, who sought out information about La Navidad from local Taínos on the Christians' behalf. Indeed, it seems that he, too, was searching for answers about what happened to this doomed settlement and the breakdown of Taíno-Christian relations.

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As this analysis has reflected, then, nepantleras in the late fifteenth-century Caribbean occupied the mediatory middle ground during cross-cultural meetings, with their role often including interpretation that enabled communication between the two groups. Their position was one of considerable in-betweenness – especially for those Taíno interpreters who survived the voyage to Spain and back, who returned with different appearances, with knowledge of a different tongue and culture. Whilst the importance of their actions is often neglected in European accounts, a careful and critical reading of the texts reveals instances of indigenous agency, and the significance of the interpreters' roles in the unfolding cross-cultural meetings.

Whilst this analysis has principally focused upon nepantleras who travelled with Columbus on his ships – and who clearly occupied positions which involved mediation and interpretation between the Christians and different Taíno communities – there were a multitude of other experiences of in-betweenness that arose during moments of early encounter; it is a brief consideration of such an experience I would like to finish this analysis with. Chapter III told of the events of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December 1492, in which three of Columbus' crew captured a Taíno woman, whom they brought back to the ship. Once on the ship, the woman conversed with the Indians already aboard; she was given trinkets (glass beads, bells, and brass finger rings), and was returned to her village, accompanied by three of the Taíno interpreters and other crew members.<sup>71</sup> The three Taínos returned later that night, telling that the villagers 'would now be reassured by the news that the woman would give.'<sup>72</sup> However, when a group of Christians visited the village the next day, all had fled: 'the Indian that the Christians brought ran after them shouting, telling them not to be afraid,' and soon the community was reassured, 'and there came in a body more than two thousand.'<sup>73</sup> Later, a crowd of people approached the Christians: they were carrying the woman whom Columbus had taken on their shoulders, and had come 'to give thanks to the Christians for the courtesy...and the gifts that [Columbus] had given her.'<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Michel de Cuneo does not mention the role of the Taíno interpreter in these events at all in his (albeit more concise) account. See Cuneo, 'Letter', p. 213.

<sup>71</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Wednesday 12 December', p. 219.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Thursday 13 December', p. 221.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

This episode is not only significant as an example of ‘re-categorisation’ of the Christian newcomers by indigenous communities, but as revealing of different experiences of in-betweenness. Firstly, the presence of the Taíno interpreters is relatively strong during this turn of events: they converse with the captured Taíno woman, and accompany her for part of the journey back to her community. Furthermore, without the interpreter’s intervention on 13<sup>th</sup> December, the fleeing villagers might not have returned at all, and accordingly, without his mediatory actions, the development of the relationship through an exchange of items would not have been possible – as chapter III highlighted. Secondly, whilst the captured woman did not act as a mediator, as such, her experience is arguably one of in-betweenness. She returns to her village with exotic trinkets – perhaps wearing the beads and rings – and tells of her experience. Clearly, her account was not as reassuring as Columbus had hoped, as the community initially fled before one of the interpreters intervened. The experience of abduction was, of course, not unique to this woman; many other Taínos were captured, taken to the ships, and similarly given gifts before returning to their home (if they returned at all). What is notable, though, is the celebration and veneration of this woman once more amicable relations had been established. Indeed, the story of this woman receives by far the most coverage of any women’s experiences recorded in the *Diario* (which are overall given little attention). Carrying her on their shoulders, the indigenous community seemingly recognised her experience of crossing the beach, and attributed special significance to it. Momentarily, this woman, too, had occupied a state of *nepantla*.

This consideration leaves one wondering about other Taínos who occupied in-between positions, but not necessarily ones that entailed direct mediation between Taíno groups and Christians. There are undoubtedly many more who crossed the beach, returning to their communities after encounters with the Christian strangers. How were they received? Did they return with unusual, exotic items, possibly worn on their bodies? Did possession of such items – evidence of their beach crossing – affect others’ perception of them/their identity? And how can such experiences – so briefly recorded and barely traceable – be effectively recognised in scholarship? Certainly, as this analysis has sought to demonstrate, there are already plentiful challenges in uncovering the stories of those individuals who experienced in-betweenness most visibly – the Taíno interpreters.

#### IV.III Malintzin

##### *An indigenous interpreter in peace and war, 1519-21*

Malintzin is perhaps the most famous indigenous interpreter of the early encounters in the New World. One of twenty indigenous women presented to Cortés by Tabascan *caciques* in 1519 –

along with other gifts of food, gold, and apparel – Malintzin first appears in historical records as part of an indigenous ‘diplomatic strategy’ aimed at ensuring an amicable working relationship with the European strangers.<sup>75</sup> Malintzin, just seventeen years old, was quickly baptised as ‘Doña Marina,’ and – like the other nineteen women – given to a Castilian captain, Alonso Hernandodez Puertocarrero.<sup>76</sup> Upon Puertocarrero’s return to Spain, Malintzin became intimately tied to Cortés for the rest of the conquest, later carrying his child. Her intelligence and linguistic aptitude was quickly recognised by the Castilians, and for the remainder of the conquest Malintzin served as one of the Spanish expeditions’ principal interpreters, informants, and cultural advisers.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, as Bernal Diaz writes: ‘Doña Marina had proved such an excellent person, and a good interpreter [...] Cortés always took her with him.’<sup>78</sup> The profoundness of Cortés and Malintzin’s connection becomes even more evident when we consider that some indigenous people often called them both by her name – ‘Malintzin’.<sup>79</sup>

Accordingly, scholarship on Malintzin has largely focused on her unique identity as a woman ‘in-between,’ a peaceful promoter and facilitator of dialogue during the initial stages of indigenous-European cultural encounter. Again, this task is complicated by methodological challenges: with no sources authored by her own hand surviving, scholars must piece together Malintzin’s story through the voices of others, rather than her own. Some of these voices are more acknowledging than others, causing further difficulties, with Hernando Cortés’ mere reference to Malintzin as ‘my interpreter, who is an Indian woman’ being a case in point.<sup>80</sup> In this regard, Malintzin is not the only indigenous interpreter ignored by Cortés: in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*, readers learn of a Cempoallan man named Tlacochealcatl, who ‘also came interpreting for [the Castilians], planning their route, conducting them, showing the way, leading and guiding them.’<sup>81</sup> This in-between figure remains unnamed in Cortés’ second letter, subsumed, it seems, under the vague descriptor of ‘the men of Cempoal.’<sup>82</sup>

Particular attention should be given to Camilla Townsend’s excellent biography of Malintzin – *Malintzin’s Choices* (2006) – in which she explores Malintzin’s fragmented identity as a ‘hybrid,’ highlighting her as a ‘bridge’ successfully supporting crossings between at least

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<sup>75</sup> Jager, *Malinche, Pocahontas, & Sacagawea*, p. 53; Clara S. Kidwell, ‘Indian Women as Cultural Mediators’, *Ethnohistory*, 39.2 (1992), 97-107 (p. 9).

<sup>76</sup> Jager, *Malinche*, p. 53.

<sup>77</sup> Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 34. Jager, *Malinche*, p. 53.

<sup>78</sup> Diaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>79</sup> Navarette, ‘La Malinche’, p. 300 (Navarette also connects Malintzin and Cortés’ attachment to the Mesoamerican concept of *ixiptla*); Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, p. 35; Brotherston, *Painted Books*, p. 34.

<sup>80</sup> Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, ‘Chapter 10’, in *We People Here*, p. 90. Tlacochealcatl may be the central figure in scene 24 of the Book XII, too.

<sup>82</sup> For ‘the men of Cempoal’ or variations of this descriptor, see, for example, Cortés, ‘The Second Letter’, p. 58, p. 60, p. 61, p. 68. The same is seen in Diaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*: see, for example, pp. 134-138.

three different cultures.<sup>83</sup> Elsewhere, Rebecca Jager and Francis Karttunen, among others, explore Malintzin as a symbol of national identity, critiquing how the almost stereotypical ways in which she is perceived in Mexican national consciousness may affect historical study of the woman herself.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, Malintzin features in case studies of individual pictorials, in particular those produced by the Tlaxcalteca, the most well-known of the Indian Conquistador groups: with parallels made between Malintzin and the Virgin Mary, she is often explored in terms of religious conversion.<sup>85</sup> Certainly, a synthesis of scholarship concerning Malintzin quickly reveals the multiple themes that the study of her figure intersects: as an Indian woman, as a (female) cultural intermediary, as an indigenous agent in the conquest, as a vehicle for native religious conversion, and as a (contested) symbol of national identity – to name only a few.

The following analysis explores sixteenth-century pictorial representations of Malintzin as a mediator. In their own way, these indigenous-authored, visual sources should themselves be recognised as reflective of indigenous responses to early encounter: how Malintzin is (or is not) portrayed – how she is represented in her occupation of *nepantla* – reflects a wide spectrum of indigenous understandings of in-betweenness, of the importance (or unimportance) of the *nepantlera*'s position, and how it related to them (the authoring community), albeit a few decades later. In conducting such a synthesis of sources, the nuances and diversity pertaining to depictions of this exemplary *nepantlera* began to emerge – nuances that have not yet, to my knowledge, been teased out in scholarship. Indeed, whilst the portrayal of Malintzin as cultural mediator is consistent across pictorials, Malintzin's positioning and outward appearance whilst performing this role does vary between individual manuscripts, and even within certain manuscripts themselves. This is the first area the following analysis seeks to address: significantly, the intricacies of her representation reveal a wide range of responses to/interpretations of Malintzin's role during moments of early cultural encounter, and reflect notions of how the *tlacuiloque*'s community – or at least the *tlacuiloque* themselves – perceived her during her occupation of the *nepantla* state.

Secondly, a closer scrutiny of the representations of Malintzin in indigenous-authored pictorials – particularly the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* – reveals further aspects of her identity that are yet to be considered in any great detail by scholars. With Malintzin's role as a female go-between, mediator and diplomatic negotiator dominating current analyses (reasonably and understandably so), the rarer, more unusual pictorial representations of Malintzin bearing arms in the midst of

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<sup>83</sup> Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices*, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Jager, *Malinche*; Francis Karttunen, 'Rethinking Malinche', in *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, pp. 291-312.

<sup>85</sup> Navarrete, 'La Malinche'; Byron E. Hamann, 'Object, Image, Cleverness: the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*', *Art History*, 36:3 (2013), 518-45.

battle scenes remain, so far as I am aware, largely neglected and understudied in scholarship.<sup>86</sup> The neglect of more ‘militant’ or combative representations of Malintzin is most likely consequential of her principal role as a ‘non-violent’ mediator, but it may also arguably arise from uses of one-dimensional gendered frameworks of analysis (‘peacefulness, mediation, female: violence, warfare, male’). Notably, the following analysis aims to demonstrate that Malintzin’s role as a *female* mediator was not always a *peaceful* role separated from scenes of warfare, and one not mutually exclusive with violence. Whilst unarguably well-founded, the focus on the dominant, single story of Malintzin as a peaceful, female cultural intermediary is in danger of reducing the deeply complex nature of indigenous representations of her role and identity.<sup>87</sup> The analysis will therefore engage with *both* aspects of her role (a diplomatic negotiator *and* a warrior woman), aim to tell multiple stories of her representation as a nepantlera, and recognise the deeper complexities of her perceived identity.

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Throughout sixteenth-century pictorial depictions of the first encounters in Mesoamerica, Malintzin recurrently appears in the company of Cortés, mediating the unfolding cultural encounters. In these indigenous-authored manuscripts, the ‘typical’ image of Malintzin is one of a mediator and interpreter: speaking on behalf of Cortés/the Castilians and indigenous nobles, Malintzin is often pictured between the two parties, or, alternatively, to the side of or slightly behind Cortés, sometimes mirroring him directly.<sup>88</sup> The centrality of Malintzin’s role and the importance placed upon her by the *tlacuiloque* is frequently emphasised further by her being of equal or larger size than Cortés and/or the Tlaxcalan nobles, and her constant presence in scenes of dialogue and negotiation, often gesturing or pointing. Moreover, Malintzin is often adorned in both indigenous and Castilian attire, with her outward appearance strongly reflecting her ‘in-between,’ intercessory identity.

In scenes of the *Texas Fragment*, Malintzin can therefore be quickly identified by her pink *huipil*, European-style shoes, her gestures (indicative of an act of conversation/translation), and her proximity to Cortés. In scenes 1 and 2, she is centrally positioned between Cortés and Xicotencatl, facing Xicotencatl, with her hands poised in a pointing gesture traditionally suggestive of speech/conversation (figs 4.1 & 4.2). Elsewhere, in the *Tepetlan Codex* (also known as the *Mapa de San Antonio Tepetlan*), this pointed gesture is accompanied by the pictorial glyph

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<sup>86</sup> Gordon Brotherston acknowledges depictions of Malintzin bearing arms in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* in Brotherston, ‘How long did it take’, paragraph 8. This is the only scholarly engagement I have found on this topic to date.

<sup>87</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, ‘The Danger of a Single Story’, *TEDGlobal* (July 2009) <[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)> [accessed 29 May 2018]. See also Bhabha, ‘The Other Question’, p. 27.

<sup>88</sup> For example, see scene 11 of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, as discussed by Navarette, ‘La Malinche’, p. 299.

for speech, further emphasising Malintzin's linguistic abilities and communicative actions.<sup>89</sup> The *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* depicts Malintzin as an interpreter in a very similar manner to its older counterpart, the *Fragment*, but with a number of variances: firstly, the larger size of the *Lienzo* allows for Malintzin to occupy a wider range of positions than in the (albeit shorter, and incomplete) *Texas Fragment*. Like the *Fragment*, Malintzin's most common placement is a central one, between Cortés and the indigenous nobles; in other scenes she is depicted to the side of Cortés (like scene 3 of the *Fragment* (fig 4.3)) but also behind him, and – on some occasions – alone, without Cortés. In all her positions in relation to Cortés/the nobles in the *Lienzo*, Malintzin is consistently shown as performing the act of interpretation, demonstrated through the positioning of her hands, which is where another variation in comparison to the *Fragment* is detectable. In the *Lienzo*, Malintzin's hands are often positioned across her body, as well as outwards in one direction, with her right hand pointing upwards towards her left shoulder, and her left hand lying horizontally across her abdomen – a two-way gesture seemingly mirroring the nature of Malintzin's role as mediator (fig 4.4).



**Fig. 4.1:** Malintzin (centre, below) depicted in the *Texas Fragment*, scene 1, translating between Cortés (left) and Tlaxcalan noble Xicotencatl (right)  
Ex-Stendahl Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin (c. 1540). Contributed to the Mapas Project by the Benson Library at the University of Texas <[http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa\\_single\\_intro.lasso?&mapid=tlax](http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa_single_intro.lasso?&mapid=tlax)> [accessed 18 April 2018]

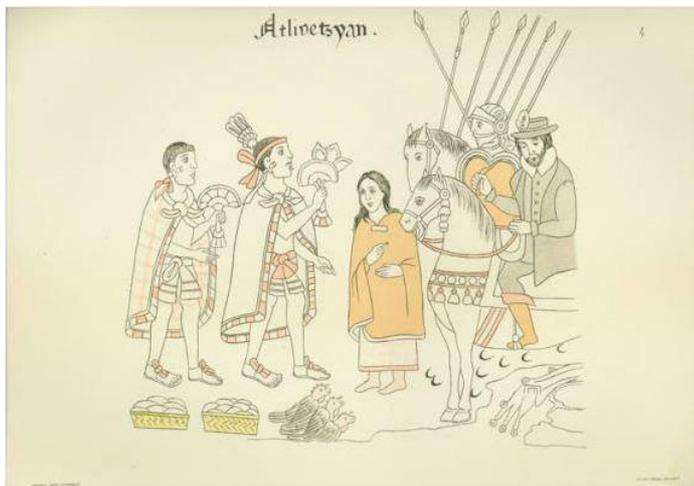


**Fig. 4.2:** Malintzin (centre, below) depicted in the *Texas Fragment*, scene 2

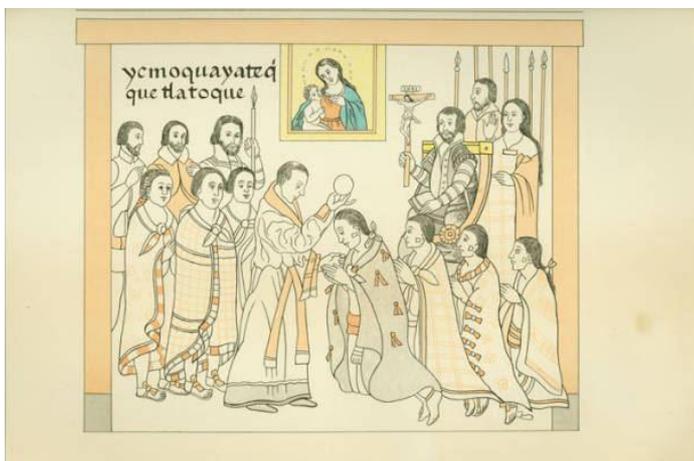
<sup>89</sup> *Tepetlan Codex*, in the *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, vol. 14, ed. by Robert Wauchope (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1975), pp. 206-207, & fig. 59. See also Wood, *Transcending Conquest*, pp. 34-35.



**Fig. 4.3:** Malintzin (left), depicted in the *Texas Fragment*, scene 3 (image rotated 90 degrees anti-clockwise)  
Ex-Stendahl Collection, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin (c. 1540). Contributed to the Mapas Project by the Benson Library at the University of Texas  
<[http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa\\_single\\_intro.lasso?&mapaid=tlax](http://mapas.uoregon.edu/mapa_single_intro.lasso?&mapaid=tlax)> [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 4.4:** Malintzin (centre) depicted in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 4  
Bourne Book Collection - Homenaje á Cristóbal Colón 972 MexH (c. 1550)  
<<http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/achl/id/1609/rec/36>> [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 4.5:** Malintzin (far right, standing), displaced from her central position by an image of the Virgin Mary, in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 8

There is another nuance that is quite particular to the *Lienzo*, too: Federica Navarrete proposes that Malintzin's identity becomes intertwined with that of the Virgin Mary through her connection with Christian symbols. In the only two scenes of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* in which she features but does not occupy a central position (scenes 5 and 8), Malintzin is replaced with a cross and – significantly – with an image of the Virgin Mary (fig 4.5).<sup>90</sup> As chapter II highlighted, the inclusion of Christian symbols and images of the Virgin was part of the Tlaxcalteca's wider strategy to reflect their allegiance to the Spanish, as was the incorporation of European symbols of political power.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Travis Barton Kranz examines how the Tlaxcalan pictorials 'changed over time to emphasize the claim that they had converted to Christianity soon after the first encounter with the Spaniards': for example, a Christian cross is present in scene five of the *Lienzo* but does not appear in the equivalent scene of the older *Texas Fragment*, and there is no evidence of an early baptism of the four Tlaxcalan lords in pre mid-century sources.<sup>92</sup> Notably, then, Malintzin's connection to Mary formed an essential aspect of the Tlaxcalteca's negotiations with the Spanish in the post-conquest world.

The association of Malintzin with symbols of Christianity can be identified in other pictorials produced by indigenous communities more widely, too, perhaps for similar reasons. Returning to the *Tepetlan Codex*, Malintzin is positioned near Christian churches, whilst in the *Codex Coyoacán* (the *Manuscrito del aperreamiento*) she is depicted holding rosary beads (fig 4.7). In these examples, however, Malintzin still occupies a central position, rather than being displaced by the symbols she is depicted with, as she is in the *Lienzo*. The reason behind this nuance is not clearly identifiable, but her total displacement in the *Lienzo* is perhaps linked to the Tlaxcalteca's particularly vehement devotion to the Virgin, who later became the patron of the province, assuming the intercessory role once occupied by Malintzin.<sup>93</sup> Speaking on behalf of the Spanish and indigenous groups, Malintzin's role as cultural intermediary is certainly analogous to that of the Virgin as an *abogada*, a lawyer negotiating with God for her worshippers.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Navarrete, 'La Malinche', pp. 296-300. For the *Lienzo* as 'a statement of colonial *altepetl* identity', see Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion', pp. 41-73 (p. 66).

<sup>91</sup> Navarrete, 'La Malinche', p. 291; Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 286.

<sup>92</sup> Kranz, 'Visual Persuasion', p. 60.

<sup>93</sup> Navarrete, 'La Malinche', p. 288, p. 301.

<sup>94</sup> Hamann, 'Image, Object, Cleverness', p. 535.



**Fig. 4.6:** Malintzin holds a rosary in the *Codex Coyoacán* (c. 1560)

Mexicain 374, Département des Manuscrits, BnF  
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10508374m/f4.image>  
 [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 4.7:** Malintzin (second from right) depicted in the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* (c. 1530)

Digitally restored by the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* Project,  
 UFM, Guatemala City, Guatemala (2009)  
<https://lienzo.ufm.edu/en/view-the-lienzo/view-the-lienzo/>  
 [accessed 18 April 2018]

Malintzin and Mary's connection arguably runs even deeper than the sharing of in-between spaces and intercessory identities. Townsend highlights how at each place the Spanish paused, a priest would give an introduction to Mary, accompanied by the ceremonious presentation of her image to the community; it was Malintzin who translated the priest's words.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, it would be unsurprising if the blurriness of the early contact situation produced confusion between Malintzin, who spoke about Mary, and Mary herself, the subject of Malintzin's addresses.<sup>96</sup> Alternatively, Townsend also suggests that the corporeal Malintzin may have been understood by indigenous peoples as a ceremonial god impersonator for the Virgin – clearly a

<sup>95</sup> Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices*, p. 78: 'The reverential form of the name "María" before the *r* sound was familiar would have been "Malintzin" – which, in a world where an *n* was often silent at the end of a syllable, could easily have been heard in the same way as "Malintzin".'

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

very powerful deity of the Spaniards – or perceived to act as her representative, especially considering the likeness of their reverential names.<sup>97</sup>

The connection between Malintzin and Mary may arguably explain Malintzin's prominence in scenes of the Tlaxcalan pictorials, especially considering the special significance Mary had to that *altepetl*. In contrast, her presence is reduced to only one appearance in the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* – the huge 2.35m by 3.25m pictorial produced by the Quauhquecholteca conquistadors, depicting their alliance with Jorge de Alvarado in the conquest of Guatemala.<sup>98</sup> Here, Malintzin (or the indigenous woman assumed to be Malintzin), is found second from the right in the initial scene, sandwiched between Cortés and another Castilian (identified by Florine Asselbergs to be either one of the Alvarado brothers or Cristóbel de Olid), who are meeting with two indigenous lords (fig 4.7).<sup>99</sup> With only her side profile partly visible, Malintzin's involvement in this initial indigenous-European meeting – whilst recorded – appears visually much less significant than in the Tlaxcalan pictorials. It is worth remarking, then, that although the Tlaxcalteca utilise Malintzin's figure as an essential means of conveying their position and relationship with the Castilians – 'who, by her very presence, confirms the viability of the new rules of the game' – such a manipulation of Malintzin is not a strategy found consistently across Indian Conquistador groups.<sup>100</sup>



**Fig. 4.8:** Malintzin speaking from a rooftop in Tenochtitlan, in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 29v, scene 51 (1577) Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence  
<<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]



**Fig. 4.9:** Malintzin (centre) depicted with speech glyph, two-way gesture, and wearing shoes, in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, 'Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,' f. 44r, scene 94 (1577)

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>98</sup> For an in-depth analysis and reading of this lienzo, see Asselbergs, *Conquered Conquistadors*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>100</sup> Brotherston, *Painted Books*, pp. 36-37.

There are also interesting variances in her portrayal in Mexica sources in comparison to those produced by Indian conquistador groups: in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*, Malintzin is clearly placed in a mediating, interpretive role, but it is noticeable that she is not quite as prolific in scenes of negotiation as she is in the *Lienzo*. In the *Codex*, Malintzin is present in only four of the one dozen pictorial scenes focused on indigenous-European meeting/negotiation, compared to her presence in *all* twelve negotiation scenes in the *Lienzo*. Despite her comparably limited appearance, though, the Mexica clearly recognised the importance of her role in the developing indigenous-European contact situation – not only as an ally to Cortés, ‘but as an actor in her own right,’ as Gordon Brotherston highlights.<sup>101</sup> Elsewhere in Book XII of the *Codex*, for example, she is depicted shouting demands from a rooftop: here, next to a meagre-looking Cortés, Malintzin holds her hand in a pointed gesture, and speech glyphs travel downwards towards an indigenous citizen below (fig 4.8).<sup>102</sup> In other pictorial scenes of the *Codex* in which she is present, Malintzin can be found positioned between Cortés and the indigenous lords; she is often presented with speech glyph/s emanating from her mouth, with either her arm outstretched and her hand in a pointed gesture, or with her arms across her abdomen in a two-way, pointed gesture (fig 4.9) – like that seen in the *Lienzo*.



**Fig. 4.10:** Malintzin (centre) depicted barefoot in Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, ‘Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico,’ f. 26r, scene 44 (1577) Contributed to the WDL by the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence <<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10623/view/1/1/>> [accessed 18 April 2018]

Continuing with a comparative analysis of Book XII and the *Lienzo*, there are further differences in Malintzin’s portrayals, most interestingly regarding her outward appearance: the Malintzin depicted in the *Florentine Codex* is less ‘European’, portrayed with her hair twisted up

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>102</sup> This ‘shocking breach of etiquette’ upon the roof (Brotherston, *Painted Books*, p. 34) is also recorded in the ‘Water-Pouring Song’ in the *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs*, trans. from the Nahuatl, with an introduction and commentary, by John Bierhorst (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), song 68.

in the indigenous style, rather than loose around her shoulders.<sup>103</sup> In the first two of the four negotiation scenes, Malintzin is also depicted barefoot, yet in the latter two scenes she appears to be wearing European-style shoes (figs 4.9 & 4.10). This alteration in Malintzin's footwear is also accompanied by an adjustment in her overall positioning in the negotiation scenes: whilst barefoot, Malintzin clearly occupies the central, in-between space, about halfway between the Spanish and indigenous groups. When wearing shoes, however, Malintzin is no longer detached from both parties, and instead stands to Cortés' left, with both figures overlapping.

Although the reason for this change within the pictorial scenes of the *Florentine Codex* may appear somewhat tangential, the shift in her presentation from barefoot to wearing shoes, whilst simultaneously merging with Cortés and the Castilian group, perhaps reflects that the *tlacuilo*'s perception of Malintzin changed as the events of the conquest progressed, or she was perceived differently from *tlacuilo* to *tlacuilo* (if there was a change in indigenous artist between the earlier and later images). Interestingly, as Rebecca Overmyer-Velázquez explores, the only woman associated with Castilian markers in Book X of the *Codex* was 'the Prostitute,' for which the markers had entirely negative connotations.<sup>104</sup> I am unsure how far to read into this with regard to Malintzin – and, indeed, aside from 'the Prostitute,' Book X associates Castilian clothing or 'Castilianness' more positively with masculinity – but it is a significant association worth highlighting.<sup>105</sup> Besides this, her portrayal in the *Florentine Codex* demonstrates that there are not only differences in representations of Malintzin across different pictorials, but her increasingly 'European' presentation reveals how inconsistencies and/or transformations can be detected within individual sources, too. Through a close scrutiny of her pictorial representations, it becomes clear that Malintzin's image as a cultural intermediary was not homogenous and consistent, but one that differed from pictorial to pictorial, and even from scene to scene, in physical appearance, positioning, and number of appearances.

\*

Malintzin's portrayal in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* as a Warrior Woman further reinforces the complexity of Malintzin's perceived identity, reflecting the fluidity of her representations across different manuscripts. In this pictorial, she not only occupies a variety of poises and positions in

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<sup>103</sup> The unruliness of her hair in the *Lienzo*, among other sources, could be interpreted in a number of ways: Jeanette Peterson explores the connection of unruly hair to the nourishing *malinalli* grass, that's twisted nature bore connotations or wrongdoing/danger/hostility. Moreover, considering European influences, loose hair bore associations with 'women of easy virtue' such as Eve or Venus. With unkempt hair being associated with the dangerous powers of female sexuality, in both (the converging) indigenous and European visual discourse, what are the *tlacuiloque* reflecting in their depiction of Malintzin's hair? See Cecelia Klein, 'Wild Woman in Colonial Mexico: an Encounter of European and Aztec Concepts of the Other', in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650*, ed. by Claire Farago (New Haven: Yale Univeristy Press, 1995), pp. 250-252.

<sup>104</sup> Rebecca Overmyer-Velázquez, 'Christian Morality Revealed in New Spain: the Inimical Nahua Woman in Book Ten of the *Florentine Codex*', *Journal of Women's History*, 10:2 (1998), 9-37 (p. 21).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

her dominant role as cultural intermediary, but is also depicted bearing arms, in the midst of battle scenes. Despite such appearances, Malintzin's presence in these scenes has remained largely overlooked, most significantly in structural analyses of the *Lienzo*. Byron Hamann has suggested that the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* can be divided into two distinct parts; significantly, basing this argument largely on Malintzin's appearances. According to Hamann, the first half of the *Lienzo* (up to and including scene 29) reflects a focus on dialogue and intercession, whilst the second half (after scene 29) is dominated by warfare.<sup>106</sup> All but two of Malintzin's appearances are on or before scene 29, and, accordingly, her dominant position as cultural intermediary reflects this corresponding change from peace to violence.<sup>107</sup> Developing the work of Federica Navarrete, Hamann emphasises that these two halves are reflective of the developing contact situation, and characterised by the contrasting images of Malintzin (whom personified Mary) and that of a mounted conquistador leading his fellow Spaniards and Tlaxcalteca into battle (an incarnation of Santiago Matamoros or St James, a Spanish 'warrior-saint' associated with battle/warfare).<sup>108</sup> Taking this spatial analysis of the *Lienzo* further, Hamann proposes that the structure is thus heavily gendered: the first half of the *Lienzo* is peaceful, filled with dialogue and negotiation, under the patronage of the Virgin – the 'feminine' half, so he seems to suggest – whilst the second half, under the patronage of Santiago, is dominated by warfare – accordingly, the 'masculine' half.<sup>109</sup>

This gendered analysis is unarguably fitting on a visual level; as outlined above, Malintzin appears in 20 of the first 29 scenes and only twice more after scene 29, despite her continued participation in the following events (diagram 4.1), whilst scenes 30-87 are contrastingly occupied by the male figure of the mounted conquistador. However, the complexity of the gendered roles of female interpreter and male warrior that Hamann describes needs to be interrogated, and indeed, as a closer examination of her representations in the *Lienzo* reveals, Malintzin herself presents challenges to the simplistic gendering of such roles. Although Malintzin is presented in her main capacity as a peaceful negotiator in twelve of the twenty-three scenes of the *Lienzo* in which she appears, her position as principal interpreter was not always a *peaceful* role separated from scenes of warfare.<sup>110</sup> Six of the remaining ten scenes in which Malintzin appears are violent battle scenes (diagram 4.2), in which she can be identified among the allied forces, significantly, on some occasions, holding a European sword and/or shield.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Hamann, 'Image, Object, Cleverness', p. 535.

<sup>107</sup> Scene 29 is the first of two 'centres' of the *Lienzo* (the 'Tlaxcalan centre'), the other being scene 42 (the 'Tenochtitlan centre'). Whilst, for Hamann, scene 29 divides the *Lienzo* in terms of gender (feminine/masculine), scene 42 does so by colouration (whiter/greener and yellow). See Hamann, 'Object, Image, Cleverness', pp. 529-30, pp. 534-35.

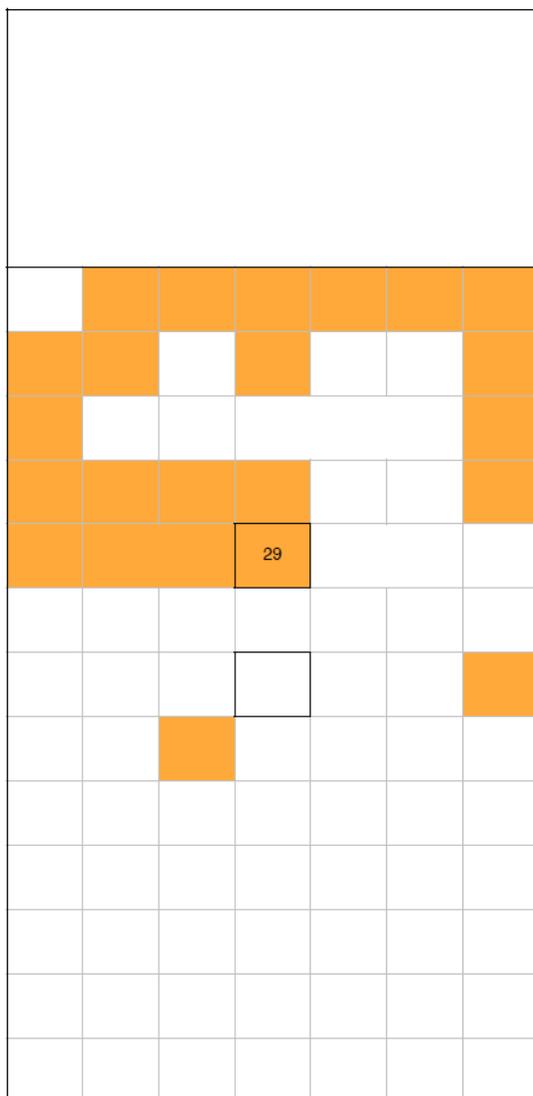
<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>110</sup> *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scenes 2-8, 11, 27-29 & 48.

<sup>111</sup> *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scenes 14, 15, 21, 22, 26 & 45.

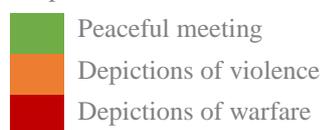
Furthermore, Malintzin is clearly present in scene 9, seemingly commanding the attack against the people of Cholula, and features in other scenes containing violent acts (fig. 4.11).



**Diagram 4.1:** Malintzin's presence in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*

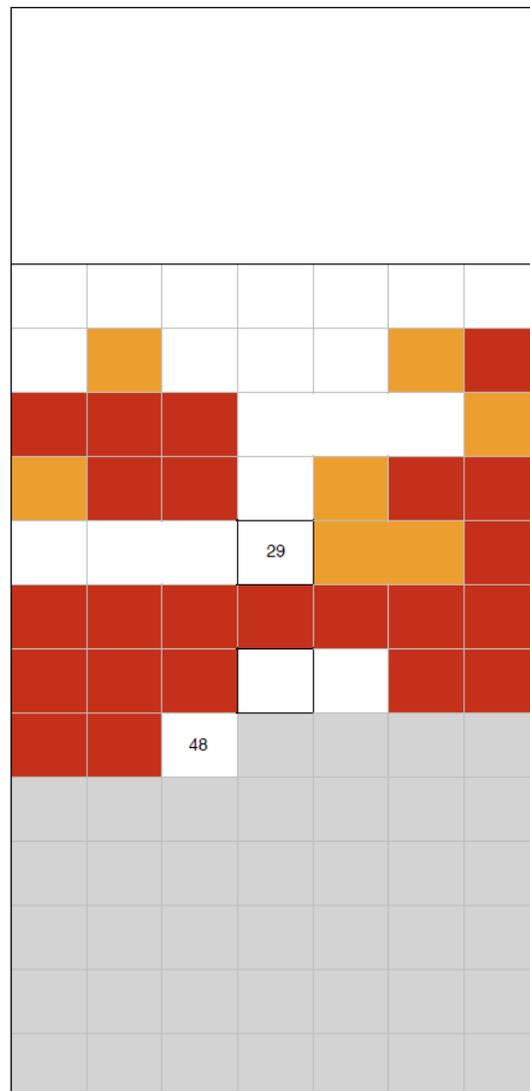


**Diagram 4.2:** 'Type' of scene in which Malintzin is present in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*

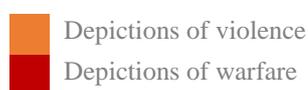


The neglect of these more 'militant' representations of Malintzin is an unsurprising consequence of the use of (simplistic) gendered frameworks of analysis seen in Hamann's – otherwise accurate and insightful – deconstruction of the *Lienzo's* spatial layout. Significantly, it should be highlighted that although the second part of the *Lienzo* is essentially dominated by scenes of warfare, depictions of violence (including battles, attacks, killings, and depictions of dead bodies – some in pieces and/or bloodied) are present in thirteen scenes before scene 29, and, moreover, in twenty-seven scenes before scene 48 (Malintzin's last appearance), albeit formatted

less schematically (diagram 4.3). The dichotomy of peace and mediation/violence and warfare assigned to the *Lienzo* therefore neglects the deeper complexity of this pictorial more widely, even without the accompanying gendered connotations.



**Diagram 4.3:** Scenes containing violence in the first half of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*



Staying focused upon Malintzin, though: how can her unique representation as a Warrior Woman be explained, and/or reconciled with her principal role as a ‘peaceful’ *nepantlera*? Aside from the anonymous ink drawings in Diego Muñoz Camargo’s *Descripción* that continue to depict Malintzin amongst the allied forces in battle, and, on some occasions, carrying a sword and/or shield, these more militant portrayals of Malintzin in battle are – to my knowledge – limited to

these two Tlaxcalan pictorials.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, in this case, turning to other pictorial sources yields little results. However, women as warriors can be found elsewhere in both the pre-Hispanic and Hispanic pasts, as seen through the participation of woman in warfare in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica – as well as figures of numerous Mesoamerican ‘female’ deities – and, from across the Atlantic, the Virgin Mary as a female conquistador, or ‘La Conquistadora.’ Considering the deeply cross-cultural context, placing Malintzin’s representation as a warrior in both these pasts is essential, and it is an approach strongly advocated by ethnohistorian Cecelia Klein, who uses both pre-Hispanic *and* European imagery to understand early colonial representations of the Mesoamerican deity Cihuacoatl.<sup>113</sup> Importantly, such female figures’ entanglement with violence and warfare reflect the possibility that one could be both a woman *and* a warrior.

Firstly, to contextualise Malintzin as Warrior Woman in the pre-Hispanic past. A consideration of Mesoamerican notions of gender is particularly important, as, although the Virgin as ‘La Conquistadora’ challenges ‘traditional’ gender roles – as later discussions will highlight – she was ultimately part of the Catholic Church’s ‘male-centric’ structure of authority, headed by a male-conceptualised God, and part of a wider patriarchal social order.<sup>114</sup> Across pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, though, there were different gender ideologies at play; studies have recognised that pre-Hispanic gender relations were typically reflective of notions of complementarity or parallelism. Such terms describe how men and women were perceived to complement each other, or highlight the existence of parallel lines of authority, although scholars have warned against equating such terms with the notion of ‘equality’.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, Susan Kellogg highlights this with regard to gender parallelism, which – particularly in politics and religion – did involve a degree of hierarchy, as the highest positions of authority were always held by males.<sup>116</sup> Accordingly, Louise Burkhart critically reflects on the (in)applicability of Western notions of ‘public’ (presumed to be superior) and ‘private’ (presumed to be inferior) spheres with regard to Mexica women’s roles, whilst Wood and Haskett highlight the tendency to make value judgements based on our own cultural experiences, especially in terms of men and women’s thoughts and actions.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Malintzin appears in battle amongst the allied forces in drawings 41, 42 & 48, sometimes with weapons (drawings 49, 53 & 71). For a comparative study of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and the *Descripción*, see Kranz, ‘Sixteenth-Century Tlaxcalan Pictorial Documents’.

<sup>113</sup> Klein, ‘Wild Woman in Colonial Mexico’, throughout.

<sup>114</sup> Susan Kellogg, *Weaving the Past: A History of Latin America’s Indigenous Women from the Prehispanic Period to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 78.

<sup>115</sup> Stephanie Wood & Robert Haskett, ‘Concluding remarks’, in *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, p. 318. For full definitions of ‘complementarity’ and ‘parallelism’, see Kellogg, *Weaving the Past*, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Susan Kellogg, ‘From Parallel and Equivalent to Separate but Unequal: Tenochca Mexica Women, 1500-1700’, in *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, p. 132.

<sup>117</sup> Louise Burkhart, ‘Mexica Women on the Home Front’, in *Indian Women in Early Mexico*, p. 25. Wood & Haskett, ‘Concluding remarks’, p. 327. Similarly, Joan Wallach Scott highlights that ‘the rhetoric of a “clash of civilizations” has further complicated the idea of gender equality as a universal principle with global application’, in ‘The Uses and Abuses of Gender’, *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 1 (2013), 70.

I include this brief historiographical summary to highlight that Mesoamerican notions of gender should be understood in their own terms, and the (un)intentional imposition of Western categories should be avoided as much as possible. Following Joan Wallach Scott, the meanings of ‘men’ and ‘women’ should not be taken as fixed when used as categories of analysis, nor should ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ be reduced to known quantities; rather, such (unstable) categories should be critically deconstructed, with their particular meanings placed within their own historical and/or cultural contexts.<sup>118</sup> This critical awareness is essential when exploring the issues surrounding perceptions of Malintzin’s purview as a *female* intermediary, who is portrayed at both peace and war.

Perhaps what is most striking is how Malintzin does not follow the usual pattern of Mesoamerican Woman Warriors: as Klein demonstrates, the Mesoamerican mythohistorical tradition painted ‘combative hostile women’ as unsuccessful, as inevitably defeated in battle.<sup>119</sup> For example, Toltec women and Tepanec women were said to have fought alongside (ultimately defeated) male warriors in the 1008 civil war and the 1428 battle against the Tenochca army, respectively.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, when Tlatelolco was attacked by forces from Tenochtitlan in 1473, the (losing) king of Tlatelolco sent women and young boys into battle. Diego Durán records the incident:

A large number of women were gathered, stripped of their clothing and formed into a squadron. They were made to attack the Aztecs who were fighting furiously. The women, naked, with their private parts revealed and their breasts uncovered, came upon slapping their bellies, showing their breasts and squirting milk at the Aztecs.<sup>121</sup>

There is some ambiguity between accounts recording this curious incident of Aztec mythohistory: D Hernando Alvarado Tezozomoc describes the women as ferocious, bearing shields and obsidian-bladed clubs, whilst the pictorial depiction accompanying Durán’s account sees the women throwing brooms, spindle whorls and other domestic utensils from a rooftop.<sup>122</sup>

Klein has conducted an excellent analysis of the various recordings of this incident, placing her work within the wider efforts to understand how female gender functioned in Aztec verbal and visual discourse on warfare, and how Aztec militarism functioned in gender

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<sup>118</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, ‘Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis?’, *Diogenes*, 225 (2010), 7-14;

<sup>119</sup> Cecelia Klein, ‘Fighting with Femininity: Gender and War in Aztec Mexico’, in *Gender Rhetorics: Postures of Dominance and Submission in History*, ed. by Richard Trexler (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), p. 115.

<sup>120</sup> Kellogg, *Weaving the Past*, p. 24.

<sup>121</sup> Durán, *The Aztecs*, ‘chapter XXXIV’, p. 159.

<sup>122</sup> Klein, ‘Fighting with Femininity’, p. 109.

discourse.<sup>123</sup> Her work draws upon that of Louise Burkhart, who explores the power of brooms: most pertinently, Burkhart argues that ‘the broom *was* a weapon,’ as it was utilised by the housewife as a defence against ‘invading’ dirt (i.e. disorder).<sup>124</sup> For both Burkhart and Klein, then, the imagery of the Tlatelolcan warrioresses hurling brooms from the rooftop allegorically reflected women’s role as ‘broom-wielding guardians of the home front.’<sup>125</sup> Therefore, without digressing too far into the relationship between the Aztec militarism and gender ideology, it is worth noting that although ‘actual’ Woman Warriors were in the minority, women were perceived as warriors in different ways – wielding a broom against the threat of dirt to their home, for instance. Similarly, a successful birth was comparable to a victory on the battlefield, whilst death during childbirth mirrored a warrior’s death.<sup>126</sup> Being a Woman Warrior in Mesoamerica did not just take place in the confines of the battlefield, but outside of it, too.

Malintzin was not quite like these Warrior Women, though: in the *Lienzo*, at least, as Malintzin-as-Warrior is on the side of the victors, fighting alongside the Tlaxcalan and Spanish forces. She carried a European-style sword and shield, not the indigenous, feminine symbols of the Tlatelolcan warrioresses. Whilst the Tlatelolcan warrioresses’ aggressiveness was perceived as ‘brazen and unfeminine,’ Malintzin’s portrayal fits within the alternative – yet concomitant – discourse that reflected ‘ideal femininity itself [...] characterised as brave, and as manly.’<sup>127</sup> Indeed, Díaz comparably comments that Malintzin, ‘although a native woman, possessed such *manly valour* that [she...] never allowed us to see any sign of fear in her, only courage passing that of a woman.’<sup>128</sup> Malintzin certainly seemed to be challenging this European’s perceptions of manliness and femininity.

Above all, by contextualising Malintzin-as-Warrior in the pre-Hispanic past, considering the interplay of discourses of warfare and gender, the full scope and complexity of this female figure’s role becomes clear, and the simplistic binaries of peace/warfare, female/male are challenged. A challenge to these binaries is also presented through a closer – and essential – examination of Malintzin’s connection to the Virgin Mary, especially given Mary’s importance to the Tlaxcalan *altepetl* after the conquest. In contrast to the trope of Mary(/Malintzin) as a mediator, there was a competing image of Mary in the New World’s non-Christian spaces: Mary as a warrior, or ‘La Conquistadora’.<sup>129</sup> This martial Mary was born in medieval Iberia, where,

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>124</sup> Burkhart, ‘Mexica Women on the Home Front’, p. 35.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-38 (p. 38); Klein, ‘Fighting with Femininity’, p. 137.

<sup>126</sup> Burkhart, ‘Mexica Women on the Home Front’, p. 37; Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, pp. 36-37, pp. 45-46; Berdan, *Aztec Archaeology & Ethnohistory*, p. 225.

<sup>127</sup> Klein, ‘Fighting with Femininity’, p. 140.

<sup>128</sup> Díaz, *The Conquest*, p. 153. My emphasis.

<sup>129</sup> For Mary’s strong connection to the conquest and conversion of non-Christian peoples – in both the Old World and the New – see especially Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, which examines the

from the eleventh century onwards, she was as much a patron of the *Reconquista* as St James (Santiago), Isidore of Seville, and other male military saints were.<sup>130</sup> Mary appeared prominently on battle standards, she was invoked during battlefield prayers, and her presence on the frontier was so strongly felt by those fighting she almost became a military conqueror herself.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, in 1272 Alfonso X even founded a Marian military order, Santa María de España (St Mary of Spain), which fought in Mary's name 'against the nefarious Saracens [...] and for the faith'.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, Mary as military leader was summoned across Europe in efforts to wage war against non-Christians: even in the small village of Denby (in Derbyshire, England), there are stories that the English crusaders visited the small church of St Mary on their way to the Holy Land, to pray for her aid and protection.<sup>133</sup>

Mary's worshippers not only prayed to her, but rededicated conquered religious spaces to her, too (as chapter II discussed), and by the Fall of Granada Mary's image as *la Conquistadora* was secure. As late fifteenth-century art reflects, the Virgin was often depicted as protector of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic monarchs who led the final part of the Reconquest, using her cloak to shield them from onslaught of demonic forces and other evils.<sup>134</sup> The artistic trope of Mary's cloak of protection was developed over the course of the sixteenth century to shelter the leaders of the imperial enterprise in the New World, too: as *The Virgin of the Navigators* (c. 1536) shows, Mary's mantle was perceived to protect conquistadors such as Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci, as well as Spanish ships of discovery.<sup>135</sup> Accordingly, Linda Hall identifies how 'in a real sense, [Columbus'] mission was a continuation, both spiritually and spatially, of the Spanish Reconquest of the Peninsula' – a notion now well-established in Marian scholarship.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, the second island reached on Columbus' voyage was named Santa María de la Concepción, whilst the ship he later lost on the reef was also named *Santa María*.<sup>137</sup> Both Hall and Remensnyder have examined how Hernando Cortés continued the Reconquest tradition from Spain by rededicating indigenous American temples to Mary on his way to Tenochtitlan – and in those of Tenochtitlan itself – reflecting how the Virgin continued to play an important role in the appropriation of non-Christian religious space.<sup>138</sup> In the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* her image is

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translation of Mary's image as *la Conquistadora* from the Reconquest of Granada to the conquest of the America.

<sup>130</sup> Remensnyder, 'The Colonization of Sacred Architecture', pp. 202-4.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-3; Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>132</sup> Manuscript from the Order of Santa María de España (1273), quoted in Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 52.

<sup>133</sup> Mark Fryar, *Some Chapters in the History of Denby* (Denby, Derbyshire, 1934), p. 18.

<sup>134</sup> Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 87.

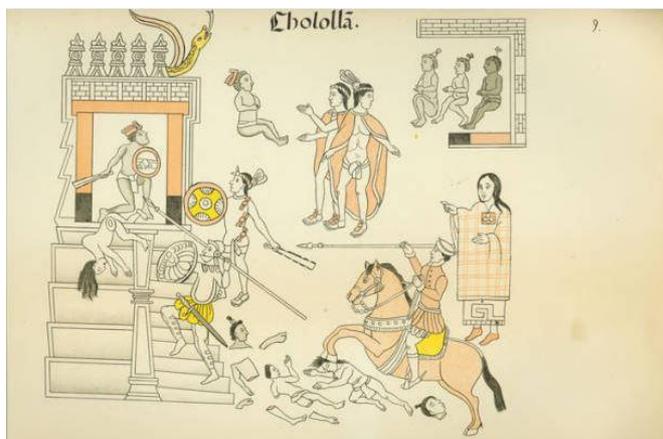
<sup>135</sup> Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 386.

<sup>136</sup> Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior*, p. 45.

<sup>137</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, 'Monday 15 October', p. 79; 'Tuesday 25 December', p. 279.

<sup>138</sup> Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior*, p. 57; Remensnyder, 'Sacred Architecture', p. 207; Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, pp. 244-5. For conquistadors' personal devotion to Mary, see Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior*, pp. 45-8; Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, pp. 209-10.

burnt in the midst of a battle within the walls of the Aztec capital, reflecting the complex interplay of warfare and religious conversion – as chapter II explored. Furthermore, Mary continued to appear on the conquistadors' battle standards in the New World, as the *Huexotzinco Codex* demonstrates.<sup>139</sup>



**Fig. 4.11:** Malintzin (far right) overseeing the Cholula massacre in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 9

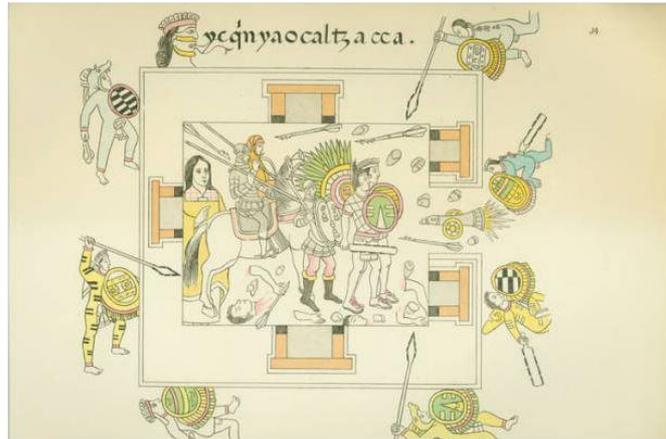
Bourne Book Collection - Homenaje á Cristóbal Colón 972 MexH (c. 1550)  
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 [accessed 15 April 2018]

By considering the Virgin's role as *la Conquistadora* in conjunction with portrayals of Malintzin as a warrior, Navarrete and Hamann's identification of Malintzin as Mary in the *Lienzo* can therefore be irrevocably strengthened. I argue that not only does Malintzin share Mary's qualities as a powerful intercessor, she shares in her presence in scenes of cross-cultural conflict. As diagrams 4.2 and 4.3 have already demonstrated, Malintzin's presence in such scenes is relatively prevalent, and, as a closer analysis demonstrates, significant. In the first scene where Malintzin is present amidst the perpetration of violent acts (scene 9, fig. 4.11), she is positioned to the right of the scene, larger than the mounted Spanish conquistador below, who tramples over dismembered bodies of Cholulan citizens at the foot of an indigenous temple; Malintzin's hand is outstretched in a pointed gesture, strongly suggesting that she was in command of the attack.<sup>140</sup> Malintzin's connection to Christianity is subtly strengthened by the contrasting nature of this scene – a violent reconquest of religious space – to the one preceding it – the conversion of the

<sup>139</sup> Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 387; Remensnyder, 'Christian Captives', p. 646. The image of the Virgin appeared on Cortés' own standard, too: see Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior*, p. 61; Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, p. 254.

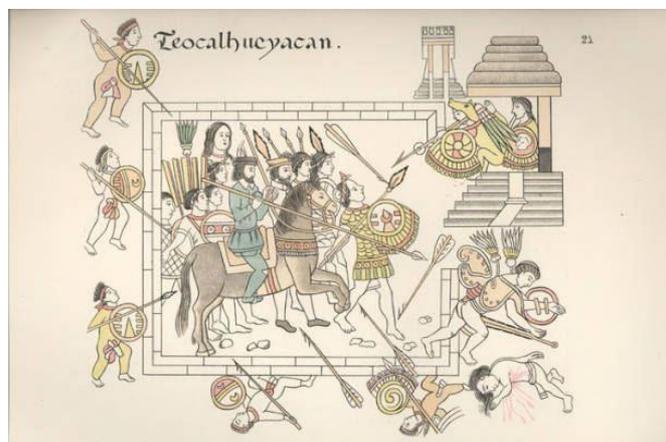
<sup>140</sup> Malintzin's actions regarding the Cholula massacre are often cited as the main reason for contemporary scapegoating as a traitor of the Mexican nation. The problematic nature of this scapegoating that 'smacks of misogyny' (to borrow from Stephanie Wood, 'Contextualizing Malinche', *A Journal on Social History and Literature in Latin America*, 4:3 (2007), 219-233 (p. 232)) is discussed by many scholars. As well as Wood, see Kartunnen, 'Rethinking Malinche', p. 297, p. 304, p. 311.

Tlaxcalan lords to Christianity. Indeed, the *tlacuiloque*'s strategy to emphasise the Tlaxcalan alliance with the Spaniards through the differentiation of themselves and their neighbours through religion is clear.

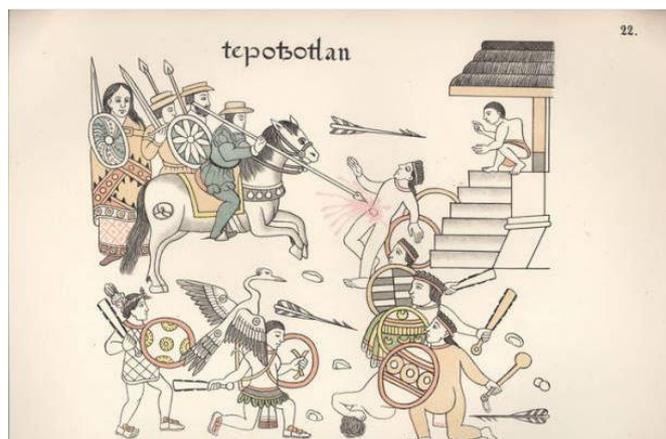


**Fig. 4.12:** Malintzin (far left), depicted in a battle scene in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 14

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**Fig. 4.13:** Malintzin (top right), depicted in a battle scene in *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 21



**Fig. 4.14:** Malintzin (far left), wields a European-style sword and shield in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 22

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 [accessed 15 April 2018]



**Fig. 4.15:** Malintzin (centre), wields a European-style shield on the causeway in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, scene 45

Moving to the fourteenth scene, Malintzin can be clearly identified by her brightly-coloured *huipil*, and again by her large size, which is greater than that of the Castilians. Positioned to the far left within the palace walls, Malintzin's right hand is held at the centre of her chest in a pointed gesture – perhaps a subtler suggestion of her commanding position than an outstretched arm (fig. 4.12). Amidst the shooting of arrows, hurling of stones and canon fire, Mexica bodies lie dismembered and gushing blood on the floor. Her presence amongst the allied forces continues in the following scene and scene twenty-one, where she continues to be depicted as the tallest of the figures; in the latter, Malintzin is again depicted with her hand raised in an instructive, pointed gesture (fig. 4.13). Her consistent, paramount presence in these scenes arguably enhances

Malintzin's likeness to the Virgin, as she watches over the military efforts of the allied forces, seemingly offering guidance and instruction.

It is in scene twenty-two of the *Lienzo* where Malintzin's more militant portrayal becomes particularly remarkable (fig. 4.14). Like the preceding scenes, Malintzin – in another beautifully ornate *huipil* – is taller than the allied forces she is accompanying; she stands to the far left, behind the forces to the left of and below her. Rather than pointing, however, Malintzin protects herself with a European-style shield and wields a European sword.<sup>141</sup> Her static stance leaves ambiguity with regard to whether she is acting in the physical defence of her person or in an attacking capacity; however, through the possession of weapons, Malintzin's role in battle has recognisably progressed from one limited to guidance and instruction, to that of a more active participant in battle. Significantly, then, this is the clearest scene suggestive of Malintzin usurping the Virgin's identity of 'La Conquistadora' – although it is not alone.

In scene twenty-six Malintzin is again found amongst the allied forces, and is most likely the carrier of a European shield positioned to her left; in scene forty-five, Malintzin also carries a European shield (fig. 4.15). This latter scene depicts the beginning of the allies' assault on Tenochtitlan, and it is here where Malintzin's roles as both mediator and warrior collide; whilst carrying her shield in her left hand, Malintzin's right arm is outstretched, her hand in a pointed gesture. Significantly, Malintzin occupies a central position on the causeway, situated *between* the leading Tlaxcalan warriors (in front of her) and the Castilian forces (behind her). Like the causeway she stands on occupies the space between two places, connecting them, this representation of Malintzin reflects her role as a bridge between cultures, as a mediator between the Tlaxcalteca and the Castilian.

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Moving towards the end of this analysis, it should be highlighted that the connection between Malintzin and Mary so prevalently portrayed in the *Lienzo* may also aid our understanding of the figures' absence from other pictorial depictions of the conquest – mainly that of the *Florentine Codex*. As has been noted, Malintzin is nowhere to be found in the pictorial scenes depicting battles and/or other violence in Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*, in which her role pertains solely to that of peaceful cultural mediation. Concomitantly, Mary fails to make any appearance at all in either the Nahuatl text or the pictorial scenes depicting the conquest; as Remensnyder, among others, suggests, it is understandable that Sahagún's Mexica informants would not have wanted to associate 'Our Precious Mother' with memories of the ruin of their home,

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<sup>141</sup> Burkhart ('Mexica Women on the Home Front', p. 45), sees the Mexica's construction of identity as 'a construct based not so much on intrinsic qualities as on attributes and accoutrements', as, at birth, girls are given spindle whorls, and boys given darts. With this in mind, could Malintzin's wielding of masculine symbols have been a determining factor in her gender identity?

Tenochtitlan.<sup>142</sup> Considering the connection of Mary and Malintzin's figures, could a similar reasoning be maintained for Malintzin's absence from the battlefield?<sup>143</sup> Whilst Malintzin *is* present for the defeat of the Mexica as told in Book XII, perhaps the limiting of her role to that of cultural intermediary is a means of separating her figure from the violence that occurred. Alternatively, does Malintzin's absence in violent scenes of the *Codex* reflect certain fabrications in the Tlaxcalan *tlacuiloque*'s representations of Malintzin, for whom she was a vehicle for demonstrating their allegiance with the Spanish? Such contradictions certainly reflect the ambiguity of the portrayals of Malintzin, and the variety of indigenous responses towards her perceived role(s) in the conquest.

Although images of Malintzin in battle are unique to the Tlaxcalan pictorials, Malintzin is present in the violent dogging depicted in the *Manuscrito del aperreamiento* – an incident explored in chapter III. In this pictorial, Malintzin is depicted behind Cortés (both standing), with her hair loose, wearing an indigenous *huipil* and European shoes, and grasping a rosary, which she holds up in front of her (fig 4.6 & 3.18). In her exploration of the manuscript's purpose, Diel argues that it 'was not originally intended as an indictment of Cortés, but, instead, was created to serve local interests, namely the legitimacy of don Rodrigo Xochitotzintli's rule over Cholula.'<sup>144</sup> As chapter III described, Diel identifies that doggings against rebellious indigenous groups similarly appear in the *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* and the *Lienzo de Analco*, suggesting that these violent acts were more typical in documents produced by Indian conquistadors as evidence of amicable relationships with the Spanish.<sup>145</sup>

However, Diel's argument could be further supported by a deeper consideration of Malintzin's portrayal in this pictorial, which is lacking in Diel's otherwise excellent analysis. Indeed, for Diel, Cortés is the 'director of events,' whilst Malintzin, standing behind him, is only considered in terms of her relationship to Cortés, who is given full agency – 'his indigenous translator, doña Marina,' and 'doña Marina remained in Coyoacan with Cortés to help him in his dealings with indigenous lords [...] hence her inclusion in the *Manuscrito*.'<sup>146</sup> When explored in her own right, though, Malintzin's wearing of shoes and holding of a rosary (a signifier of conversion) is remarkably comparable to her portrayal in Indian conquistador pictorials, in which her outward attire combines European and indigenous items, and where she is strongly associated with Christian symbols of power and religious conversion – similarities that arguably support

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<sup>142</sup> Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, pp. 276-77. See also Louise M. Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: the Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature* (Albany, NY: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, University of Albany, 2001), p. 3; Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior*, p. 110.

<sup>143</sup> Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora*, pp. 276-77. See also Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe*, p. 3; Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior*, p. 110.

<sup>144</sup> Diel, 'The Spectacle of Death', p. 157.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146. My emphasis.

Diel's proposition that the manuscript functioned in an evidentiary capacity, like the Tlaxcalan pictorials. Furthermore, considering Malintzin's perceived presence in moments of violence in the Tlaxcalan pictorials, her presence in this manuscript is arguably more than simply one of a passive sidekick; her appearance here again reflects the deeper complexities of her role as intermediary, a role that is not mutually exclusive to violence.

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Considering the complex and diverse representations of Malintzin across sixteenth-century pictorials, it therefore becomes increasingly clear that there was not a single, unified image of this remarkable *nepantlera*. As this comparative study has demonstrated, portrayals of Malintzin differ in terms of her outward appearance, size, positioning, and, most significantly, her role(s). The heterogeneousness of her representations deeply reflect the nature of indigenous responses to Malintzin, and perceptions of her identity and role in the conquest: complicated, multiple, and diverse. Certainly, Malintzin's identity as an Indian *woman* and cultural *mediator* was highly complex, and one that was perceived differently by different indigenous groups. Her mediating role was largely one of diplomacy and non-violent negotiation, but, for the Tlaxcalteca in particular, the role extended onto the battlefield, as scenes of Malintzin as a conquistadora reflect. This representation of Malintzin is rarer and more unique, but should arguably be incorporated as one of the many narratives of Malintzin's story.

Through the consideration of *both* aspects of her role (a diplomatic negotiator *and* a woman warrior), multiple stories of her representation can be told, and the deeper complexities of her perceived identity recognised. This broader exploration of Malintzin's experience reflects that her in-betweenness, her occupation of a *nepantla* state, was much more diverse than previously recognised – at least in the eyes of Indian Conquistador painter-scribes: Malintzin was not only a unique *nepantlera* who negotiated and mediated the cross-cultural meetings, but one whose role extended to the battlefield, too. Above all, recognising the broader remit of her role prompts a deeper consideration of the *nepantlera* experience more widely, suggesting that, perhaps, roles and agency beyond those surrounding the act of mediation should be explored.

#### IV.IV Beachcombers

##### *Castilians in-between in the New World, 1493-1537*

After the above explorations of indigenous in-between individuals, this final part of the analysis turns to European figures who came to occupy an in-between state during early moments of encounter. The first experience to be considered will be that of the 'humble friar,' Ramón Pané –

a surprise addition, if you will, to this chapter.<sup>147</sup> Unlike those who will be discussed later, Pané was not a castaway or ‘involuntary beachcomber,’ and for that reason I had not considered his experience for inclusion here until fairly late in the research process; in considering the material for this chapter, it quickly became apparent that Pané’s experience spoke to many of its key themes. After travelling to Hispaniola on Columbus’ second voyage, Pané lived for several years among the indigenous people on the island: with the help of an indigenous interpreter during his time in the lands of the *cacique* Guarionex, Pané came to learn the language of the Taínos of that island, and immersed himself in learning about their way of life. This immersion gave Pané a unique insight into the culture and worldview of the Taínos; it is this immersion that arguably reflects a crossing of the beach, and a sense that he occupied an in-between state. He *is* a beachcomber, of sorts.

Significantly, Pané authored an account of his experience: *Account of the Antiquities of the Indians* (completed around 1498). Following, and surpassing, Columbus’ mandate, the *Account* details what Pané was ‘able to discover and understand about the beliefs and idolatries of the Indians, and how they worship their gods,’ and goes further to describe the Taínos’ language, daily customs, and the (un)successfulness of the evangelisation of Hispaniola.<sup>148</sup> This narrative – the first European language text written in the New World – is among the few eyewitness accounts surviving from the early cross-cultural encounters in the Caribbean, and, as scholar José Juan Arrom highlights, ‘is the best source of information on the culture of the Taínos.’<sup>149</sup> Pané’s recordings have been explored in Arrom’s work *Mitología y artes prehispanicas de las Antillas* (rev. 2nd ed. 1989), and in Stevens-Arroyo in *Cave of the Jagua* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2006), among other works.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, the richness of the *Account* in terms of religious beliefs and culture has been securely established through the corroboration of other evidence, such as archaeological findings (artefacts of *zemís* and *cohoba* inhalers, for example) and anthropological understandings (such as of Amazonian myths of the Taínos’ South American relatives).<sup>151</sup> As Abulafia highlights, though, the *Account* must be read critically and carefully nonetheless, for ‘it is a record of both the Taíno and the European mentality,’ with Pané working to explain Taíno beliefs through European structures and worldviews.<sup>152</sup> Whilst scholarship has focused on the value of Pané’s *Account* in terms of enriching our understandings of Taíno religion and culture – providing a window into the pre-Columbian world – the *Account* is also revealing

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<sup>147</sup> Pané, *Account*, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3; José J. Arrom, ‘Introduction to the English Edition’, in Pané, *Account*, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>149</sup> Arrom, ‘Introduction to the English Edition’, p. xi. A similar sentiment is given by Abulafia, who describes the *Account* as ‘a record of a vanished people [that] is extremely precious.’ Abulafia, *Discovery of Mankind*, p. 137.

<sup>150</sup> José J. Arrom, *Mitología y artes prehispanicas de las Antillas* rev. 2nd ed. (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1989); Stevens-Arroyo, *Cave of the Jagua*.

<sup>151</sup> Arrom, ‘Introduction to the English Edition,’ p. xii.

<sup>152</sup> Abulafia, *Discovery of Mankind*, p. 137.

in terms of indigenous responses to the Christian strangers, and to ceremonies and objects associated with the Christians. These recordings are few in comparison to Pané's descriptions of Taíno religion and culture, but are nonetheless important.

Firstly, Pané's *Account* is revealing about the significance the informing Taínos attributed to the Christians' arrival. In describing the behaviour of the four-footed *zemí* Opiyelguobirán, Pané comments that '[the Taínos] tell that *when the Christians arrived* on the Island of Hispaniola, this *zemí* escaped [from the house and the rope it was tied in] and went into a lagoon.'<sup>153</sup> Whilst it remains unclear as to whether the Taínos saw this behaviour as consequential to the Christians' coming, in connecting the escape of the *zemí* to the Christians in this way, the Taínos seemingly used their arrival as a reference point in time. Further significance is placed upon the Christians' arrival shortly after this episode, when the Christians are connected to a prophecy, of sorts:

And [the Taínos] say that this *cacique* affirmed he had spoken with [the] Yucahugamá,<sup>154</sup> who had told him that those who remained alive after his death would enjoy their dominion but for a brief time because *a clothed people* would come to their land who would overcome them and kill them, and they would die of hunger. But at first they thought those people must be the cannibals [meaning the Caribs or Caribe]; but later, considering that the cannibals did nothing more than steal and flee, they believed the *zemí* must be referring to other people. Thus they now believe that the Admiral and his people are the ones.<sup>155</sup>

This 'prophecy' is one of many references to the appearance of 'clothed' people found across European accounts of the early encounters – in both the Caribbean and Mesoamerica. What is particularly significant with regard to the prophecy, though, is that it reflects the complexity of the Taínos' ascription of identities to those perpetrating violent acts.

Returning to the *Diario*, it is established that a group of Taínos were, at first, fearful of the Christians: they believed that, like the 'very well armed' 'cannibals' of Bohío, they would

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<sup>153</sup> Pané, *Account*, 'chapter XXII', p. 29. My emphasis.

<sup>154</sup> Arrom (note 131) notes that this 'Lord of the Yucca' is the same as Yúcahu Bagua Maórocoti in Pané's introduction (note 4) (for reference: there is a mistake in Arrom's cross-referencing here: in note 131, chapter V rather than the introduction is stated as the corresponding reference). Arrom, note 131, in Pané, *Account*, p. 31.

<sup>155</sup> Pané, *Account*, 'chapter XXV', p. 31. My emphasis. See also Las Casas, *Apologética historia de las Indias*, 'chapter CLXVII', extracted and trans. in Pané, *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians*, Appendix C, p. 66.

Keegan uses the change in whom the prophecy concerned to argue that 'it is therefore likely that the Taínos knew of these Caribs only through their mythology': Keegan, *Taíno Indian Myth*, p. 37. Arrom notes that 'they were really the Caribs' rather than 'cannibals': Arrom, note 132, in Pané, *Account*, p. 31. We therefore return to the ambiguity surrounding the cannibal/Caribe/Carib/Caniba amalgam discussed in chapter III. Whether defined as Carib (Arrom) or Caribe (Keegan), though, the following argument stands.

‘eat them’ and capture them during their raids on the Taínos’ homes.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, Columbus is keen to tackle this (supposed) case of mistaken identity later in the voyage: when one of the Indian interpreters is chasing after a group of fleeing Taínos, he supposedly shouts to the group ‘not to be afraid, that the Christians were not from Caniba but instead were from the heavens.’<sup>157</sup> Despite the similarity of the Christians behaviour to the Caniba/Caribs/cannibal amalgam – as explored in chapter III – Columbus wanted to disassociate himself and his crew from this established enemy group. The prophecy in Pané’s *Account*, however, somewhat amplifies the Taínos’ identification of Columbus and the Christians as a threat – a threat worse than that posed by the Caribs, who ‘did nothing more than steal and flee.’<sup>158</sup> In this later moment of early encounter, then, it seems that the informing Taínos not only associate the Christians with their existing enemies, but go so far as to replace their existing enemies with the Christians.

The Taínos’ categorisation of Christians as enemies is apparent elsewhere in the *Account*, too. For example: although Pané’s relationship with the *cacique* Guarionex was successful, at first (with Guarionex, and members of his household, learning Christian prayers under Pané’s instruction), the *cacique* ‘grew angry,’ and abandoned his Christian practice.<sup>159</sup> Pané goes on to blame other *caciques* for Guarionex’s dismissal of Christianity, ‘for they reproached him because he wanted to obey the law of the Christians, because the Christians were wicked and had taken possession of their land by force.’<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, they wanted Guarionex to ‘come to an agreement to conspire to kill the Christians.’<sup>161</sup> Here, it becomes apparent that the other *caciques* were attempting to convince Guarionex that they had a mutual enemy in the Christians, and encouraged him to dismiss his ‘alliance’ with them, and not to succumb to Christian practice.

After Guarionex’s change in attitude, Pané – and his baptised indigenous aid (for want of a better word), Juan Mateo (before baptism, Guatícaba) – left for another principal *cacique*, Mabiatué.<sup>162</sup> After their departure, Juan’s relatives built a house next to the chapel in Guarionex’s village, and a number thus persisted in their faith, acting as ‘custodians of the chapel.’<sup>163</sup> Pané records in displeasure how six of Guarionex’s men went to the chapel, and, despite protestations from the Christian converts, ‘entered by force, and they took the images and carried them away.’<sup>164</sup> This is where the story becomes complicated, and reflects Abulafia’s description of the

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<sup>156</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Friday 23 November,’ 167.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Thursday 13 December,’ 222-23.

<sup>158</sup> Pané, *Account*, ‘chapter XXV’, p. 31.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>162</sup> Pané had a particularly strong relationship with Juan, whom he considered ‘a good son and brother.’ Pané, *Account*, ‘chapter XXV’, p. 34.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

*Account* as ‘a record of European failure to understand what was being said’: undoubtedly, what followed was cross-cultural misinterpretation of fatal consequences.<sup>165</sup>

After taking the images from the chapel, the men buried them in a field and urinated on them, saying “‘Now your fruits will be good and great.’”<sup>166</sup> When those of the chapel informed Bartolomé Columbus of this, the men responsible were brought to trial, convicted, and publicly burned. Whereas Pané was quick to call the ‘destr[uction]’ and ‘mock[ing]’ of the images a ‘vituperation,’ Arrom highlights that this was part of an agricultural rite; it was a Taíno custom of burying a lithic representation of Yúcahu Bagua Maórocoti (the ‘Lord of the Yams’), in order for his figure to fertilise their cultivations.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, contrary to Pané’s opinion, it seems that the Taínos may have been incorporating the Christian images into their existing beliefs and rites, rather than disrespecting them.

More deaths followed the killing of the so-called perpetrators: Guarionex’s subjects killed four men, as well as the baptised Taínos Juan Mateo and his brother Antón.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, Guarionex’s men went to where the images had been hidden, and, this time, ‘destroyed them.’<sup>169</sup> In a highly contrived manner, Pané finishes this story by telling how, where the images had been buried, ‘two or three yams had grown...in the shape of a cross,’ which was taken to ‘be a great miracle.’<sup>170</sup> Here, the *Account* highlights the growing tensions between unconverted Taínos, converted Taínos, and the European Christians: the converted Taínos Juan and Antón are seemingly targeted for their adoption of Christianity, i.e. for their more amicable response toward Pané and the Christians. The blurredness of *why* these two men are targeted is evidenced in Pané and Las Casas’ contrasting explanations for their deaths. For Pané, religion is the principal reason; he writes that Juan and Antón, at their deaths, said “‘Dios naboría daca, Dios naboría daca,” which means “I am a servant of God,”” and strongly suggests that the men died as martyrs.<sup>171</sup> However, for Las Casas, the other Taínos killed the converts ‘because of the hate they had for the Spaniards... They did not kill them for [a religious] reason because no Indian ever did such a thing, but rather because [the converts] lived with the Spaniards and praised them or defended those whom everyone so hated.’<sup>172</sup> Perhaps the changing of their names after baptism – and possible similar adoptions of other Christian symbols or behaviours – did not help the persecutors’ perceptions of the indigenous converts.

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<sup>165</sup> Abulafia, *Discovery of Mankind*, p. 137.

<sup>166</sup> Pané, *Account*, ‘chapter XXV’, p. 36.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36; Arrom, note 155, in Pané, *Account*, ‘chapter XXV’, p. 36.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>172</sup> Las Casas, *Apologética historia*, ‘chapter CLXVII’, in *Account*, p. 66.

In this complex web of early cross-cultural relations, then, Pané's *Account* assuredly reflects the fragility of Taíno-European relations, and, indeed, relations between different Taíno groups and individuals, too. As well as an invaluable resource for pre-Columbian belief and Taíno culture, the *Account* provides telling insights into later moments of the early Caribbean encounter, and of indigenous responses to (European and newly converted indigenous) Christians and Christian symbols. Pané's immersion into the life of different Taíno communities on Hispaniola undoubtedly gave him a deeper access to their world than other Europeans, and, even though his narrative is clouded by the imposition of European structures of understanding, the *Account* is a highly valuable record of indigenous responses. Developing findings from the previous chapter, Pané not only learns that the Taíno groups he encountered may have perceived the Christians to be worse than their existing enemies of the Carib or Caribe, he learns of the worldviews that informed such perceptions – the behaviour of the *zemí* Opiyelguobirán, and the prophecy of the clothed people.

Furthermore, Pané's *Account* reflects the dangerous position occupied by those in-between during these early moments of encounter: Pané's movement from *cacique* to *cacique*, *cacicazgo* to *cacicazgo*, reflects households' and communities' changing position towards him, and, in turn, the fragility of the relationships Pané fostered. Those in the most danger, though, were Pané's aid, Juan, and his brother Antón, who, in converting to Christianity, were transported into a place of in-betweenness (one perhaps more exacerbated than Pané's). Their untimely fates assuredly reflect the precarious positions of those first, early converts, whose experiences – like those of the *nepantleras* – are difficult to trace.<sup>173</sup>

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As a figure in-between, as a beachcomber, Pané's uniqueness is exacerbated by the very fact that he produced an account. The same cannot be said of the next two (involuntary) beachcombers: the castaways Gerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero, who were shipwrecked off the Jamaican coast, and arrived in Yucatán in 1511. Upon their arrival in indigenous lands, these two men crossed the beach and adopted items, features and ways of living associated with indigenous identity, shedding signifiers of their Iberian heritage, in order to survive – or even to thrive – in the situation they were in. In European accounts, the change of the men's outward appearance was undoubtedly the most remarked aspect: in Díaz's summation of Aguilar's 'rescue' by the Cortés expedition in 1519, for example, he writes that a group of Spanish soldiers 'were close beside [Aguilar], [but] they could not distinguish him from an Indian, for he was naturally dark, and had his hair untidily cut like an Indian slave,' noting the 'ragged' cloak and 'tattered' loin

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<sup>173</sup> Jago Cooper et al., "The Mona Chronicle": the Archaeology of Early Religious Encounter in the New World', *Antiquity*, 90 (2016), 1054-71.

cloth he wore.<sup>174</sup> Cortés, too, had trouble recognising him – especially when Aguilar answered him by squatting down ‘in Indian fashion’ – and ‘at once ordered him to be given a shirt and doublet and breeches, and cloak and some sandals.’<sup>175</sup> Importantly, though, Aguilar had on his person ‘an object which proved to be a very old prayer-book’; for the Castilians, this object reflected that he had held on to religion, throughout his enslavement and testing ordeal.<sup>176</sup>

The situation was slightly different for Guerrero, however, who notably refused to return with the Spaniards when they came to ‘rescue’ him and his compatriot, Aguilar, in 1519. Guerrero’s adoption of indigenous cultural symbols was particularly pronounced: Aguilar relays to his rescuers how ‘he had asked [Guerrero] repeatedly to come with him but [he] refused, pointing out that his nose and ears were pierced, and his hands and face tattooed.’<sup>177</sup> Moreover, Guerrero had married an indigenous woman, with whom he had three children; accordingly, he has been dubbed the father of the mestizo nation.<sup>178</sup> In 1528, Guerrero again declined to leave with Francisco de Montejo’s expedition, which attempted to bring Yucatán under Castilian control; his changing of sides was further pronounced when early historians credited him with leading the Mayan resistance against the Spanish.<sup>179</sup>

The main difficulty in understanding Guerrero’s story is that it is told through voices other than his own: like Malintzin, there is no written testimony from Guerrero himself. Even the ‘first-hand’ account of the ordeal given by Aguilar is recorded in accounts written by others. What is more, whilst we learn of Aguilar’s subsequent actions as an interpreter in European accounts (translating Chontal Maya to Spanish, in coordination with Malintzin), it is difficult to identify him with any certainty in indigenous-authored pictorials of the early meetings; there are no known distinguishing features that could differentiate a possible Aguilar from other male, Castilian soldier figures. Rather than depicting the chain of interpretation that occurred (Malintzin to Aguilar, Aguilar to Cortés) the role of interpreter is visually represented in the figure of Malintzin alone – an absence that seem significant. To add to the complication of absent accounts (or

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<sup>174</sup> Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, p. 64. For Aguilar’s rescue, see also Puertocarrero & Montejo, ‘The First Letter’, p. 17; Aguilar, ‘Chronicle’, p. 137; Tapia, ‘Chronicle’, pp. 20-21; Gómara, *Cortés*, pp. 30-32; Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, pp. 63-65.

<sup>175</sup> Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, p. 64. See also Gómara, *Cortés*, p. 31.

<sup>176</sup> Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, p. 64. Romero notes that, in conveying to Cortés that only his body has changed, Aguilar ‘deconstructs the notion that religion and culture go hand in hand’: Rolena J. Romero, ‘Texts, Pre-texts, Contexts: Gonzalo Guerrero in the Chronicles of the Indies’, *Discussion Paper* no. 87 (January 1992, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), p. 17.

<sup>177</sup> Tapia, ‘Chronicle’, p. 21. Díaz’s narrative states that it was Guerrero’s ears and lower lip (rather than nose) that were pierced: Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, p. 65. Romero deconstructs Aguilar’s beliefs regarding Guerrero’s refusal to join the expedition as presented in Díaz’s narrative: Romero, ‘Texts, Pre-texts, Contexts,’ p. 12.

<sup>178</sup> Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, p. 65; Gómara, *Cortés*, p. 32.

<sup>179</sup> Romero critiques this notion, highlighting that ‘Guerrero’s name surfaces not in any description of battles but solely in relationship to Yucatán and the need for a translator,’ for both Cortés and Montejo’s expeditions. See Romero, ‘Texts, Pre-texts, Contexts’, p. 1.

absence in accounts), the early historians mention Guerrero ‘only briefly, and always with contempt,’ in accounts that are ‘riddled with discrepancies’: he is portrayed as a traitor, dubious, a sinner for marrying an indigenous woman.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, in deconstructing the early chronicles of the Indies, Romero argues that ‘the motives surrounding the conquest...affect the depiction, characterization, and ultimately, the “facts” of the Guerrero [experience].’<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, modern scholarship examined his character more as a mythic figure than as a real person; like Malintzin, Guerrero suffers similar scapegoating in historical narratives.<sup>182</sup> It is certainly arguable that he is La Malinche’s male counterpart.<sup>183</sup>

Considering this abundance of issues with both Guerrero and Aguilar’s experience, these are beachcombers from whom it is difficult to learn much of indigenous responses to them as cultural strangers, except that, with the right adoption of certain cultural symbols and outward appearances – discarding Spanish clothing, and in Guerrero’s case piercing his face and adorning himself in tattoos – strangers *could* be accepted by indigenous communities. Not only that, but, as Guerrero demonstrates, they could be integrated by marriage and rise to positions of power in the community – something that surely corresponded to a changed perception of the beachcomber. For now, therefore, the extraordinary story of these two beachcombers will be placed to one side, in order to consider another: that of Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca.

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Cabeza de Vaca was one of four men to survive the disastrous Narváez expedition to Florida in 1528, across the course of which six hundred men were lost. His surviving travel companions were two Spaniards, Andrés Dorantes and Castillo Maldonado, and a Moroccan ex-slave, Estevanico; the four men reached Mexico City in the summer of 1536, after eight years of wandering, covering approximately 1,000 miles, going from coast to coast. During their extraordinary journey, Cabeza de Vaca took a number of roles, from slave labourer, prisoner, to merchant. Most famously, Cabeza de Vaca and his companions gained a reputation as healers or shamans, who performed healing miracles with the aid of their God. Significantly, it was his difference and strangeness that came to give Cabeza de Vaca a privileged position; the four survivors could cross group boundaries and seemingly transcended existing ethnic dynamics. When he returned to Spain in 1537, Cabeza de Vaca recorded his lengthy experience of in-betweenness in the *Relación* – the text the following analysis examines.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1, pp. 13-15.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. (Original text reads: the “facts” of the Guerrero ordeal.)

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>183</sup> For Gonzalo Guerrero as an example of the bilateral cultural exchange, and as a ‘counter Malinche’ figure, see Romero, ‘Texts, Pre-texts, Contexts’, pp. 23-25.

<sup>184</sup> As outlined in the main introduction to this study, the following analysis uses the critical edition of the Zamora *Relación* (1542), ed. and trans. by Adorno & Pautz.

Tracing Cabeza de Vaca's relations with different indigenous groups and individuals, the *Relación* is a strikingly significant account in terms of its insights into indigenous actions. Thinking back to how a careful and critical reading of the *Diario* reveals Guacanagarí to be a strong powerholder in the contact situation, rather than a helpless victim, indigenous power is even more apparent in the *Relación* – especially as Cabeza de Vaca and his company are vastly in the minority. Whilst Columbus could paint his shipwreck in a more positive light, for example, the direness of Cabeza de Vaca's situation is not concealed from the reader. As Mariah Wade has rightly highlighted, 'the fate of the [European guests] depended *completely* on the actions of the [Native American host groups];' the *Relación* is perhaps most interesting to read not for what the four men did to survive, but for 'what they were *allowed to do* by the Native Americans.'<sup>185</sup>

Based on a quantitative and qualitative reading of the *Relación*, the following analysis will therefore explore recorded interactions that arguably reflect indigenous actions and agency during this unusual cross-cultural encounter. There are, of course, obstacles in reading for indigenous perspectives in this narrative, like other European-authored accounts this study has examined: it is necessary to deconstruct or read between the lines of Cabeza de Vaca's Christ-like self-portrayal, as well as his moralising practices, for example.<sup>186</sup> Yet, the *Relación* has, overall, an ethnographic tone, and contains careful, invaluable observations gained from Cabeza de Vaca's position as a beachcomber.<sup>187</sup> In reading for indigenous responses to European strangers, the account should certainly not be dismissed based on its non-indigenous authorship.

Accordingly, it is important to demonstrate that within the narrative of the *Relación*, a wide-ranging and diverse spectrum of responses can be traced: as detailed in chart 10 (see Appendix D), even a selection of the most commonly recorded responses speaks to the diversity of indigenous actions: indigenous agents deprived Cabeza de Vaca of food; his travels took him through empty and abandoned villages, with indigenous peoples fleeing and hiding; the Europeans were attacked, ambushed, and tracked; indigenous groups captured and killed other members of the Narváez expedition; they threatened Cabeza de Vaca, sometimes beating him. More amicably, indigenous groups and individuals exchanged knowledge and items with him; gave him and his company food; provided him with aid; and, on occasion, caciques greeted him. Indeed, Cabeza de Vaca was treated as both a friend and foe during his eight-year journey.

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<sup>185</sup> Mariah Wade, 'Go-Between: the roles of Native Women and Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca in Southern Texas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 112:445 (1999), 332-342 (pp. 332-33). My emphasises.

<sup>186</sup> Ilan Stavans, '1536, July 24: Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca,' in *A New Literary History of America*, ed. by G. Marcus & W. Sollors (London & Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>187</sup> Wade, 'Go-Between', p. 333, argues that 'the ethnohistoric and anthropologic value of the document outweighs the ethnocentric biases.'

As many of these responses have been identified in other sources and explored across the previous chapters, the main focus of this examination will be on unique, more unusual responses pertaining to the *Relación*, particularly those reflective of in-betweenness. Alongside the focus on instances of indigenous agency, the following analysis will explore how Cabeza de Vaca's experience as a beachcomber deepens our understandings of the sharing (or disassociation) of cultural symbols that has been a key part of the previous chapters. Like Aguilar and Guerrero, Cabeza de Vaca's (and his company's) outward appearance undergoes a transformation as he crosses the beach: he loses markers of his Spanish heritage, loses his clothes, and his skin tone and physique change as a result of the environment and (lack of) food. Considering, again, the qualities of the space of encounter, to what extent does Cabeza de Vaca's experience of in-betweenness – of walking in the wet sand – reflect about the state of the spaces in which his encounters with indigenous peoples took place?

Whilst Cabeza de Vaca's account is one of a beachcomber, his story gives valuable insights into indigenous individuals who also came to occupy an in-between position during his journey – those who acted as interpreters, as *nepantleras*. Early on in their journey, when the four survivors were still part of Narvaez's company, the *Relación* repeatedly remarks about the communication difficulties faced by the group, with Cabeza de Vaca considering their lack of an interpreter as a substantial hindrance. On top of the poor condition of the horses and the lack of provisions, Cabeza de Vaca states that 'above all we were travelling mute, that is, without interpreters, through an area where we could hardly make ourselves understood by the Indians or learn about the land.'<sup>188</sup> In presenting their inability to communicate as muteness, Cabeza de Vaca strongly conveys the need for the cross-cultural gap to be bridged. This need was so strong that soon three or four indigenous individuals were captured by the European party, and used as guides.<sup>189</sup>

Again, this behaviour reflects a number of themes this chapter has already explored: mainly, and frustratingly, the indigenous guides here remain unnamed, and although Cabeza de Vaca certainly sees them as vital, they do not feature prominently, or clearly, in the narrative. The next readers hear of guides is that, during an ambush, the perpetrating indigenous group 'captured the guide we [the Europeans] carried with us before we could get out of the lagoon.'<sup>190</sup> The sense of loss is detectable, reinforcing Cabeza de Vaca's conviction of the importance of indigenous guides. Yet, the reader is left wondering: who was this guide? Were they one of the three or four captured individuals previously referenced as guides? Or were those agents lost before, through their own actions or those of others? To what extent is the *Relación* reflective of the actual number

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<sup>188</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 41. See also p. 35.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

of indigenous individuals who came to guide the Europeans, unwillingly or through their own volition?

The dependence on indigenous guides continues throughout the *Relación*; when Cabeza de Vaca later gained fame as a healer, he remained somewhat dependent on indigenous aid in this regard. As will be examined in further detail shortly, when Cabeza de Vaca and his company were travelling as healers, indigenous individuals – namely women – would come from a village ahead to act as their guides.<sup>191</sup> Thinking back to Malintzin’s position (and the heightened in-betweenness of women in Mesoamerica), it is similarly important to highlight the special ability of women to cross between groups here, too. As Cabeza de Vaca records, women were often sent ahead or travelled with them, acting as guides, ‘because women can mediate even when there is war’; they could negotiate, make friends (even though, he concedes, ‘sometimes women are the cause of war’), and acted as peace-makers in more domestic contexts as well.<sup>192</sup> Cabeza de Vaca’s need for the women guides is demonstrated particularly clearly on one occasion (or maybe more, given the nature of the *Relación*’s narrative), in which he continues on his journey without the women guides, only to get lost; luckily, the women found him and redirected him appropriately.<sup>193</sup> Again, although it becomes apparent to the reader that women aided Cabeza de Vaca-as-healer on numerous occasions, the number of women who provided this aid remains unknowable, the turnover of guides and their willingness to act as such remains uncertain, and again, all the women remain unnamed.

Cabeza de Vaca came to be a healer during his time on Malhado island, following a great loss of life from illness; the *Relación* reports that the island’s population suffered from a stomach ailment, and over half of them died.<sup>194</sup> Cabeza de Vaca explains that, as the disease came after the Europeans’ arrival, the community first ‘thought that we were the ones who had killed them,’ echoing the connection between the Christian strangers and disease made by the Mexica during the conquest of Mexico. After dissuading the community from executing himself and the remaining Christians (for why would some of their own men die if they caused the illness?) Cabeza de Vaca writes that:

[The community] tried to make us physicians without examining us or asking for our titles, because they cure illnesses by blowing on the sick person, and with that breath of air and their hands they expel the disease from him. And they demanded that we do the same and make ourselves useful. We laughed about this, saying that it was a mockery and that we

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<sup>191</sup> See, for example, Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 193, p. 221.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217 & p. 183, respectively.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107. Wade, ‘Go-Betweens’, p. 337.

did not know how to cure. And because of this, they took away our food until we did as they told us.<sup>195</sup>

There are various strands to dissect here. Although Cabeza de Vaca takes a strongly opinionated, condescending tone, remarking that the job ascription as healer was ‘a mockery,’ little did he realise that fasting was a necessary prerequisite for the induction as healer; the withdrawal of food was not a punishment for the Europeans’ reaction.<sup>196</sup> The cultural misunderstanding here is more than apparent, with the withdrawal of food being another case of double mistaken identity (thinking back to chapter II). Furthermore, that the Europeans were attributed the role of physician signals that the members of the indigenous community incorporated the strangers through an established process, transforming them usefully into healers.

When acting as a healer Cabeza de Vaca’s ‘procedure’ involved some of his own methods (Christian signs and prayer), whilst partly following the traditional method of curing (blowing on the afflicted): he explains that ‘the manner in which we performed cures was by making the sign of the cross over them and blowing on them, and praying a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria.’<sup>197</sup> The prayers, he notes, were not only for the sick person, but also acted as a plea to God to move the community to treat him and the Europeans well.<sup>198</sup> Sadly, he does not remark on indigenous reactions to this unusual approach to healing, but it becomes apparent that responses to the act of healing followed existing protocol: after an individual (or group) had been cured, the healer (in this case Cabeza de Vaca) was given food, ‘and other things,’ or, ‘everything they possess.’<sup>199</sup>

A quantitative survey gives a strong insight into the range of foodstuffs and items Cabeza de Vaca receives in return for his work as a healer: prickly pears are the most commonly recorded foodstuff, with bows and arrows, beads, and animal skins featuring the most in terms of other items given (Appendix I, chart 11). Over the course of the *Relación*, at least ten different items given after curing are named, as well as three different foodstuffs, reflecting a wide diversity in what indigenous individuals were giving. That indigenous peoples gave such a variety of items has not, to the best of my knowledge, been considered in scholarship, despite the insights this gives to indigenous choice and agency operating within this type of exchange.

There are, of course, challenges in this reading, though. Like Columbus and Cortés, Cabeza de Vaca uses the phrase ‘other things’ or similar on numerous occasions, preventing the reader from attaining a fuller picture of the items and foodstuffs at times. Indeed, Cabeza de Vaca’s preferential treatment of items he perceives to be of greatest ‘value’ may simultaneously reflect his dismissal of items he may have considered of lesser importance. Whilst flints, for

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<sup>195</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 113.

<sup>196</sup> Wade, ‘Go-betweeners’, p. 336.

<sup>197</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 115.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

example, are only identified once in the *Relación*, Cabeza de Vaca takes time to emphasise that they were ‘an object of very great esteem’ among the community.<sup>200</sup> Yet, concurrently, Cabeza de Vaca’s position as beachcomber provides significant insights into these more ‘valuable’ items; notably, his focus on such items seems distinctively different from (and more well-founded than) Columbus’ obsession with items of gold.

The item most symbolically significant to Cabeza de Vaca is undoubtedly the gourds, which, like the flints, are judged to be of considerable importance. After being reunited with the women guides after his unsuccessful attempt at navigation, Cabeza de Vaca and his company were received warmly in a village, where indigenous individuals ‘carried pierced gourds with stones inside, which is the item of highest celebration.’<sup>201</sup> He continues: ‘they do not take [the gourds] out except to dance or to cure, nor does anyone dare to use them. And they say that those gourds have virtue and come from the sky.’<sup>202</sup> The reading of sky or *cielo* here is again problematic; as for the Taíno context, the term *cielo* may be ascribed cosmological significance as an explanation for the origin of flora, fauna, and people that were not autochthonous, but not in the same sense as the Christian concept of heaven.<sup>203</sup> Although not ‘heavenly’ as Cabeza de Vaca may have supposed, the perceived importance of the gourds was not lost on him. At another village later on in their journey, the Europeans were warmly greeted and given gourds by two of the community’ physicians: ‘from this point forward,’ Cabeza de Vaca emphasises, ‘we began to carry gourds with us, and we added to our authority this ceremony, which to them is very great.’<sup>204</sup>

Cabeza de Vaca’s detailed record of the item therefore provides considerable insights into how he was perceived by the community: the gourds symbolised that he had made the cultural transition into the role of a healer.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, a critical reading of the giving of gourds helps deconstruct the episode in terms of the *Relación*’s (Eurocentric) presentation of power. Whilst Cabeza de Vaca clearly presents the physicians’ giving of gourds as reflective of perceptions of his own, substantial power as a healer (as gourds were treated with such reverence), it could be considered that rather than acting as a symbol of *existing* power (as the *Relación* presents), perhaps the indigenous physicians gave Cabeza de Vaca the gourds in order for him to *gain or channel* power, which he may have otherwise been lacking. Indeed, to what extent did the power of healers rest within their accoutrements? Moreover, in incorporating the gourds into the curing

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195. See also p. 233 (‘all things that [the people] do not know the origin of, they say come from the sky’) & p. 237.

<sup>203</sup> Adorno, footnote 2, in Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 195.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205. See also p. 257, for the gourd as Cabeza de Vaca and his company’s ‘principle insignia and emblem.’ Adorno views Cabeza de Vaca’s presentation of the giving of the gourds as a foreshadowing of the benefits that would later come to the natives. See Adorno, *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*, volume II, p. 301.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

procedure, Cabeza de Vaca ultimately complies to *existing, indigenous* systems of value, as well as to *existing* healing protocols – albeit with a (likely strange) Christian twist.

Like the variety of the items and foodstuffs given in exchange for being treated, there were many different ailments presented to the European healers. When treating the group with the sleeping sickness, for example, Cabeza de Vaca goes so far as to treat one man who was already dead, still performed his curing protocol of prayers and signs. The Avavares – the indigenous group he was travelling with at the time – later brought news that ‘as many as [Cabeza de Vaca] had cured had become well,’ including, quite miraculously, the ‘one who had been dead.’<sup>206</sup> For Goodwin, among other scholars, this raising of a man from the dead is just one of the miracles told during the course of the *Relación* – others relating to mysterious figures, a spontaneously combusting bush, and, pertinent to this discussion on healing, Cabeza de Vaca’s removal of an arrowhead that ‘rested above [a man’s] heart.’<sup>207</sup> Goodwin outlines how such ‘novelistic passages and supernatural elements in the text have led to continual debate over the extent to which it may be treated as a true account,’ especially considering the biblical connotations of a burning bush and raising of the dead, and how such ‘miracles’ may have been used to reflect the author’s authority.<sup>208</sup> It is certainly arguable that Cabeza de Vaca presented his miraculous powers to create an *impression* of his own power and authority over the indigenous peoples involved (although, in actuality, he and his companions ‘were undoubtedly *not* the masters’ of these rites).<sup>209</sup>

Although well-founded, the scholarly focus on the ‘miraculous’ nature of these two healings has left explorations of the healings more broadly at the wayside. The *Relación* reveals that indigenous groups or individuals sought treatment for a range of ailments, and whilst Cabeza de Vaca most commonly describes the ailments as non-descript or general sickness (using phrases like ‘sick people’), he names a variety of cases specifically: stomach ailments, wounds, blindness, and a sleeping sickness all feature, with the most frequently recorded treatment (second to non-descript illness) being that of cripples. At times, one or two persons are treated, and on other occasions many people – it is unclear how many – present the symptoms (as for the sleeping sickness, and ‘some’ people who suffered a ‘malady of the head,’ for example).<sup>210</sup>

Likewise, there are a diverse range of other ways the (variously afflicted) indigenous groups responded to Cabeza de Vaca and his company as healers, different to the giving of items

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<sup>206</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 163.

<sup>207</sup> Robert T. C. Goodwin, ‘Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and the Textual Travels of an American Miracle’, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 14:1 (2008), 1-12. For the arrowhead, see Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación* p. 209.

<sup>208</sup> Goodwin, ‘Textual Travels’, p. 9.

<sup>209</sup> Adorno, *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*, volume II, p. 299. My emphasis.

<sup>210</sup> For sleeping sickness, see Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 163; for ‘malady of the head,’ see p. 155.

and foodstuffs. The key response discussed in historiography is that of ‘ritual pillage,’ a pattern which developed as the fame of the European healers spread:

[Cabeza de Vaca and company] saw a new custom, and it is that the [indigenous group] who were with us took from those who came to be cured their bows and arrows and shoes and beads if they brought them. And after having taken them, they placed those people before us, so that we might cure them [...] Those who came with us began to treat the others very badly, taking their possession and sacking their houses.<sup>211</sup>

Significantly, Rolena Adorno has compellingly argued that this ritual pillage was a form of exploitation of the Christians by the travelling Indians, to force tribute from their neighbouring tribes.<sup>212</sup> The travelling Indians would even go ahead of the Europeans, ‘preparing’ the next community for their visit. Yet, despite Cabeza de Vaca’s insistence on his power as a healer, I agree with Adorno that the four Spaniards were ‘catalysts to the exchange’ between the indigenous marauders and those pillaged, as opposed to the principal party.<sup>213</sup> A highly exploitative response to the Europeans’ presence, it was the marauders who held the power in this scenario of ritual pillage, which they commanded to their own benefit. And yet, in this show of indigenous agency, Cabeza de Vaca still manages to twist the narrative to his own ends, placing the moral burden of the pillage ‘squarely on the shoulders of the Indians,’ and, in doing so, negates their agency and power in favour of the Europeans’ Christian morals.<sup>214</sup>

Yet, whilst the general pattern of ritual pillage has been established by scholars, comparably little attention has been given to mapping the spectrum of different responses firstly to the healing, and later to the pillaging, or, to the best of my knowledge, to highlighting instances of indigenous agency. Before the custom of pillaging developed, responses to healing included ‘wonder,’ fear (and loss of fear), with dancing and celebration the most frequently noted.<sup>215</sup> During the ritual pillages, the decrease of amicable responses is noticeable; instead, the *Relación* tells of more ‘tactical’ responses and pre-emptive measures. For example, one village ‘hid some things’ before Cabeza de Vaca and the travelling Indians arrived, ‘since they knew the custom.’<sup>216</sup>

As has been discussed already, the diversity of items presented to the Europeans after healing also provides insights into indigenous choice. However, the response of ritual pillage complicates these findings: if the items are separated between those given in response to ‘normal’

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<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>212</sup> Rolena Adorno, ‘The Discursive Encounter of Spain and America: the Authority of Eyewitness Testimony in the Writing Of History’, *The William and Mary Quarterly* 49:2 (1992), 210-28. See also Goodwin, ‘Textual Travels’, p. 9.

<sup>213</sup> Adorno, ‘The Discursive Encounter’, p. 21.

<sup>214</sup> Adorno, *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*, volume II, p. 301.

<sup>215</sup> See, for example, Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 155, p. 161, p. 197

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

healing practices and those given in response to ritual pillage, the quantitative analysis presents that the latter are more diverse and seemingly ‘richer’ than the former. Both groups of items contain bows and arrows, hides, and non-descript items, but whilst the normal healing group is comprised mainly of foodstuffs (except for flints), the ritual pillage group contains beads, red ochre, little bags of silver, a copper bell, and other more unique items (see Appendix I, charts 12 & 13).

Accordingly, whilst the diversity of items does, in one sense, reflect indigenous choice, could it reflect a *lack of choice* in another, too? After all, it is unsurprising that the forceful actions of the marauders precipitated a wider range of items given during the healing exchanges of pillages, which resulted in the victims being left ‘without a single thing.’<sup>217</sup> This forcefulness is supported in the level of detail Cabeza de Vaca provides for each type of healing exchange, too: for every instance of ritual pillage 1.2 items are identified, whereas for normal healing the average is 1.0 items specified per treatment. That said, this increased level of detail may (concurrently or contrastingly) reflect Cabeza de Vaca’s own interest in the more unusual items exchanged under duress, or even speak to his own perceptions of his (supposedly) increasing power in the performance of the pillages. It is certainly a complicated picture that emerges, from which indigenous agency of those healed is difficult to untangle.

As well as considering the ritual pillage as an indigenous act of domination over the Christians – despite Cabeza de Vaca’s self-aggrandisement – and other indigenous groups, it is worth interrogating Cabeza de Vaca’s presentation of authority during the pillage further, from a different angle. After the custom was well-established, Cabeza de Vaca writes that

in order to conserve [authority and influence] we spoke to [the people] but few times. *The black man always spoke to them* and informed himself about the roads we wished to travel and the villages that there were and about the other things we wanted to know.<sup>218</sup>

In emphasising his ‘powerful’ position, Cabeza de Vaca seemingly distances himself from the role of go-between, of in-betweenness; he gives the impression that he perceives himself to have risen above it somewhat. Instead, it is Estevanico that comes to occupy a greater position of in-betweenness, falling between the other three Europeans and indigenous agents. Yet, although Cabeza de Vaca presents this position as lower than his own, Estevanico arguably occupies a highly influential role, responsible for communication and mediatory action. Significantly, Estevanico facilitated important knowledge exchange with indigenous individuals and groups. Certainly, the state of in-betweenness remained a powerful one.

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197. Following the pillage, the victims would often join the group of marauders, and would thus be compensated (for lack of a better word) for the sacking of their home.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233. My emphasis.

Perhaps Cabeza de Vaca's emphasis on his perceived authority and influence here is understandable, given the ordeal the European survivors had experienced to this point. As castaways, they were dependent on indigenous groups for their very survival; at times, this resulted in their imprisonment, beatings and starvation, as well as their exploitation in the practice of ritual pillage – ordeals that were not only mentally challenging, but physically challenging, too. Significantly, the men underwent a drastic physical transformation that came to visually mirror their experience of in-betweenness. Indeed, upon finding a group of (slave-raiding) Christians in 1536 – marking the beginning of the end of the four men's ordeal – Cabeza de Vaca notes that the Christians 'experienced great shock upon seeing me so strangely dressed and in the company of Indians' – a reaction not dissimilar to that of the men who found Aguilar in 1519.<sup>219</sup> Like for Aguilar, Cabeza de Vaca notes how he was given clothes by the governor of Compostela when he arrived, and even more when he was greeted by viceroy Antonio de Mendoza in Mexico (although, being unable to wear the clothes – or sleep anywhere but the ground – his difference remained for longer as he made the transition back to the culture he had left).<sup>220</sup>

The first major change in the four survivors' outward appearance was a result of a disastrous river journey while they were still part of the larger company, during which the men's raft was hit by huge waves and overturned. Three men drowned, and the rest were thrown back to the coast. The men had previously undressed during their labour to launch the raft in the first place, and the disaster exacerbated their physical condition: Cabeza de Vaca laments that 'naked as the day we were born and [we had] lost everything we carried with us. And although all of it was of little value, at the time it was worth a great deal.'<sup>221</sup> Lacking food and suffering from starvation, the men became 'so thin [...] [that they] appeared like the figure of death itself' – imagery that leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to their poor condition.<sup>222</sup>

Following the raft disaster, the surviving Europeans were approached by a group of Indians whom had greeted them amicably before the incident; they had brought food ('fish and roots and water and the other things we requested'), for which the Europeans gave beads and bells.<sup>223</sup> Yet, on their return, the group was 'so frightened that they withdrew,' only cautiously approaching after Cabeza de Vaca had called after them, and 'made them understand through gestures' how their raft had sunk.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, for Cabeza de Vaca, the frightened reaction was caused by the poor condition of him and the others, 'dressed so differently from the first time, and in such a strange state.'<sup>225</sup> Interestingly, then, Cabeza de Vaca perceived his lack of Spanish

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99. Cabeza de Vaca later tells how 'like serpents we changed our skins twice a year' (p. 171).

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

cultural markers (his lack of difference) as *more* strange than his nakedness – a perception that perhaps reveals more about Cabeza de Vaca’s inner turmoil over the transformation of his appearance than the reasoning behind the indigenous groups’ fright.<sup>226</sup>

Once their fright had subsided, and ‘on seeing the disaster that had befallen [the Europeans],’ ‘they all began to weep loudly and so sincerely,’ for over an hour and a half, reflecting, as Cabeza de Vaca understands, ‘the great grief and pity they felt on seeing us in such a state.’<sup>227</sup> Of course, as chapter II highlighted, it is important to consider what weeping may have signified to this indigenous group – something which Cabeza de Vaca himself gives an insight to later, during his lengthy stay on Malhado island. He observes that ‘weeping lasts a whole year’ after a child’s death, for example; ‘first the parents begin to weep, and after this the entire community also weeps,’ at daybreak and noon.<sup>228</sup> Shortly afterwards, Cabeza de Vaca also tells how the people have a custom that, ‘when they know one another and meet from time to time, before they speak they weep for half an hour,’ before the host gives some of their possessions to the visitor.<sup>229</sup> Like Ramón Pané’s account, the *Relación* offers a valuable ethnographic insight as a result of Cabeza de Vaca’s position as beachcomber. Rather than weeping at the physical condition of Cabeza de Vaca and the other survivors, then, could the indigenous group have been weeping in accordance with existing customs of meeting, albeit for longer? Or, perhaps, in mourning for the three deaths?

Following the weeping, Cabeza de Vaca asks the indigenous group for shelter, which they obliged. Their response here seems an extremely emotive one, and quite unique to the *Relación*’s narrative: they carried the Europeans ‘by clutching [them] tightly,’ ‘and because of the great cold,’ Cabeza de Vaca continues, ‘and fearing that on the road some of us might fall unconscious or die, they made provision for four or five very great bonfires places at intervals, and at each one they warmed us; and when they saw that we had regained some strength and warmth, they carried us to the next one, so rapidly that they almost did not let our feet touch the ground.’<sup>230</sup> It was in this manner that the indigenous group transported the Europeans to their village, where they danced at the Europeans’ arrival.<sup>231</sup>

This moving indigenous response stands out in the *Relación*’s narrative for its earnestness and sincerity. Whilst Cabeza de Vaca had emphasised his physical strangeness and perceived *difference* to readers of the *Relación*, what the indigenous group may have seen, above all, was his *sameness*. He had lost some of the key signifiers of cultural difference, like clothing and

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<sup>226</sup> Comparably, in Hans Staden’s *True Story*, Staden retains his beard in the woodcuts, even after the Tupinambá cut it off.

<sup>227</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 99.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-103.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

certain accoutrements – with the exception of language, of course – and in suffering from hunger, cold, and loss of compatriots’ lives, the sameness of the human condition came to the fore.<sup>232</sup> Certainly, this sameness through struggle is an insight quite unique to the *Relación*, out of the texts this study has considered. It is only through Cabeza de Vaca’s occupation of in-betweenness, in an extreme situation, that such an emotive indigenous response is presented so clearly in a testimony of early encounter. Indeed, the raft disaster is a striking contrast to Columbus’ manipulative presentation of the wrecking of the *Santa María* as ‘great luck.’<sup>233</sup> Unlike the *Relación*, the *Diario* offers no cultural insights into the weeping of the Taíno, as Columbus does not have the experience of in-betweenness, the same immersion in an indigenous community that Cabeza de Vaca does. Whilst Columbus remains focused on gold and economically valuable items, Cabeza de Vaca reflects on the changing perceptions of value that his ordeal prompted: although what they lost in the raft disaster ‘was of little value, at the time it was worth a great deal.’<sup>234</sup> Certainly, these two waterborne disasters were presented, and experienced, very differently by their victims, with the differences in narrative clearly speaking to the insightfulness of the beachcomber’s testimony.

#### IV.V Conclusion

As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, then, beachcomber narratives like that of Cabeza de Vaca offer unique perspectives into early moments of cultural encounter. Although readers must continue to be wary of narrative self-aggrandisement and – as for Pané’s *Account* – acknowledge the text’s European gaze, the *Relación* presents indigenous actions more transparently than other European accounts, especially when it comes to acts of kindness and the ‘humanness’ of the encounter. The huge contrast between Cabeza de Vaca’s relation of the raft disaster and Columbus’ account of the Christmas shipwreck highlights this: unlike Columbus, Cabeza de Vaca does not ‘spin’ this incident into a fortunate event, seeming well aware of the insecure situation he and fellow crewmates found themselves in. Whilst the Taínos aided Columbus in quite a similar way to the indigenous group who helped Cabeza de Vaca, the *Relación* conveys this experience emotively, in a way that speaks not only to the agency of the indigenous group who aided them, but to the dependence the washed-up strangers had on them.

In beachcomber experiences, the power of indigenous people and systems is certainly clearer than of those who did not fully cross the Beach, especially in terms of compliance to

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<sup>232</sup> Wade, ‘Go-Between’, p. 333: ‘C de V and his North American hosts perceive the sameness of the human condition (hunger, cold, death), outlined by signs of cultural difference (language, clothing, arrow points, and copper bells).’

<sup>233</sup> Columbus, *The Diario*, ‘Wednesday 26 December’, p. 287.

<sup>234</sup> Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, p. 99.

indigenous forms. For Cabeza de Vaca, the question remains whether the gourds represented his healing power or *granted* him power, yet – either way – his insertion into *existing* systems of understanding is apparent. Furthermore, the diversity of indigenous responses surrounding healing (and more broadly) is highlighted in the quantitative analysis of the *Relación*, prompting a deeper consideration of the spectrum of the acts and rituals of healing. For Geronimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero – and for Cabeza de Vaca and his companions, too – survival was dependent on their shedding of symbols of their Spanish heritage, and to integrate themselves into indigenous society. For Ramón Pané, a ‘voluntary’ beachcomber, the situation was different: Pané sought to bring symbols of Christianity across the Beach with him, yet his movements were seemingly dictated by the political situation between different *caciques* on Hispaniola, and his *Account* – filled with knowledge he had acquired about Taíno beliefs – reflects the power of *existing* worldviews nonetheless. Indeed, his conversion mission was ultimately far from successful.

Throughout this chapter, indigenous women’s occupation of in-between roles and spaces is another key theme that has emerged. In studying ‘the story of what happens between’ two groups of cultural strangers, we learn of the women who guided Cabeza de Vaca in the *Relación*, of the abducted Taíno woman in the *Diario*, and, most significantly, of Malintzin.<sup>235</sup> Through comparative study of pictorial representations of Malintzin, the multiple narratives of her story quickly reveal themselves. For the Mexica, she is more indigenous, wearing her hair in the indigenous style in the *Florentine Codex*, and whilst she does not take up arms, her identity as cultural intermediary is still highly complex, changing subtly throughout the *Codex*. Even within one pictorial, one telling of her story, nuances and variations can be traced, reflecting ambiguities in Malintzin’s perceived identity. The Tlaxcalan’s fusion of Malintzin and Mary is a unique quality of their story of Malintzin, yet her connection with powerful symbols of Christianity can also be identified elsewhere in the *Manuscrito del aperreamiento* and the *Tepetlan Codex*, in which such symbols may have been similarly utilised as a strategy to evidence the communities’ amicable relationships with the Spaniards.

Most significantly, Malintzin’s presence as a *conquistadora* in scenes of violence and cross-cultural conflict in the Tlaxcalan pictorials are essential for gaining a deeper, more nuanced understanding of Malintzin’s perceived identity in the sixteenth century. Depicted holding shields and/or swords, portrayals of Malintzin as a warrior woman strongly challenge the reductive dichotomy of ‘peacefulness, mediation, female: violence, warfare, male’ as a framework of analysis, and complicate (stereotypical) gender roles. Indeed, ‘the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story the only story.’<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Palencia-Roth, ‘Nepantla’, p. 2.

<sup>236</sup> Ngozi Adichie, ‘The Danger of a Single Story’.

Accordingly, whilst Els Maeckelberghe writes that ‘it is a complete illusion to think that you have a clearly defined figure if you just pronounce the name “Mary”,’ I would say it is also a complete illusion to think that you have a clearly defined figure if you just pronounce the name ‘Malintzin’ (or Malinche, or Marina).<sup>237</sup>

Despite Malintzin’s significant role in the early meetings, her story is difficult to trace. Like Aguilar, Guerrero, and – most substantially – for the Caribbean nepantleras, there are no accounts written in the hands of many of those in-between. Instead, their stories must be traced through narratives authored by others: it is difficult and challenging work, especially for indigenous in-betweens, but their stories should nonetheless be told, at least as far as they can be. Whilst Malintzin’s experience can be traced across a number of sources, the experiences of the Caribbean nepantleras, including those who traversed the Atlantic, are especially difficult to retrieve. Whilst we know Malintzin by name, the Caribbean nepantleras’ identities are lost in the cloudy, non-descript language of Columbus and others’ narratives. Likewise, we will never know the names of the women who guided Cabeza de Vaca.

Yet, although attributing agency to specific indigenous in-betweens is near impossible – an unwinnable game of *Who’s Who?* – this limitation does not prevent readings of indigenous agency – readings that this chapter has sought to highlight. This agency can be traced right back to the Caribbean nepantleras who occupied the in-between during Columbus’ first voyage: reading beyond Columbus’ presentation of the nepantleras as mouthpieces for his supposed divinity, it is clear that these individuals were essential in moments of early contact, especially in securing amicable relations and for their mediatory abilities. Their overall neglect in European accounts should not lead to their dismissal in studies of early encounter today; instead, their stories should be told, with their agency and power underlined

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<sup>237</sup> Els Maeckelberghe, quoted in Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior*, p. 16.

## V

## Conclusion

‘Stories matter. *Many* stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.’

– *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*.<sup>1</sup>

‘To know a culture is to know its system of expressed meanings. To know a culture in contact is to know the misreadings of meanings, the transformation of readings, the recognition of meanings.’

– *Greg Dening*.<sup>2</sup>

From the outset, this study has sought to tell multiple stories of moments of early encounter, from multiple perspectives. It has critically reconsidered European accounts of indigenous responses, alongside indigenous representations of their own responses – or, more fittingly, those of their communities’ close ancestors – to the Christian newcomers, and of the newcomers themselves. In doing so, the study has looked both ways across the Beach(es), from one side of a given meeting to the other, and interrogated the murky ambiguity and dynamism of the wet sand – of the space and state of the in-between. In taking this fresh approach, this study has explored tales of friendship, failed friendship, supposed friendship; of enmity, mutual enmity, imagined enmity; of stability and instability; of power, perceived power, and powerlessness; and of the creation and manipulation of identities, of oneself and of others. Indeed, early encounters in the Caribbean and

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<sup>1</sup> Ngozi Adichie, ‘The Danger of a Single Story’. My emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> Dening, *Islands & Beaches*, p. 4.

Mesoamerica have been shown to be messy, highly complex moments, leaving us with many threads to tie together.

In revealing the multiplicity of stories, experiences, and perceptions of early moments of encounter, the principal aim of this study has been to foreground indigenous action, agency, and power. In doing so, it has challenged the continuing pervasiveness of deep-rooted assumptions of ‘the superior destiny of the West’ or triumphalist presentations of the early meetings. Whilst European authors like Columbus and Cortés worked hard to (mis)represent their position in the cross-cultural dynamic as secure and superior, this presentation quickly unravels when reading their accounts for indigenous agency – even more so when comparatively exploring indigenous-authored representations of initial encounters, and considering pre-Columbian worldviews. Whilst it has been challenging to locate indigenous actions and voices due to limited extant sources and, pressingly, the prevalence of Eurocentric gazes, this study has continually recognised that revealing the agency and power of indigenous groups and individuals is essential for a nuanced telling of the history of these incredible encounters.

This recognition of indigenous action and perspectives is especially important today, at a time when commemorations of the European ‘discovery’ of the New World are increasingly contested. In the United States, protests over the celebration of ‘Columbus Day’ have seen a number of states move instead to commemorate ‘Indigenous Peoples’ Day,’ geared towards highlighting indigenous survival and the ultimate impact European arrival had on indigenous populations and their cultures. In connection with calls from activists to remove statues of confederate leaders (most famously in the events surrounding Charlottesville), statues of Columbus have been taken down in numerous cities – or, in the case of New York, will be addressed by providing additional plaques and other monuments – following debates largely argued in terms of political correctness.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, statues of James Cook (‘discoverer’ of Australia) have been continually vandalised in Melbourne and Sydney in recent years, with slogans of ‘no pride’ and ‘change the date.’<sup>4</sup> In April 2018, indigenous Australians protested at

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, S. Gay Stolberg & B. M. Rosenthal, ‘Man Charged After White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville Ends in Deadly Violence,’ *The New York Times* (12 August 2017), <[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/charlottesville-protest-white-nationalist.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/charlottesville-protest-white-nationalist.html?_r=0)> [accessed April 2018]; J. Fortin, ‘The Statue at the Center of Charlottesville’s Storm,’ *The New York Times* (13 August 2017), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/us/charlottesville-rally-protest-statue.html>> [accessed April 2018]; W. Neuman, ‘No Traveling for New York’s Columbus Statue, Mayor Decides,’ *The New York Times* (12 January 2018), <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/nyregion/no-traveling-for-columbus-statue-mayor-de-blasio-decides.html>> [accessed April 2018].

<sup>4</sup> ‘Captain Cook statue vandalised in Melbourne before Australia Day,’ *The Guardian* (25 January 2018), <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jan/25/captain-cook-statue-vandalised-in-melbourne-before-australia-day>> [accessed April 2018].

the opening ceremony of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games with chants of ‘no justice, no Games,’ and placards reading ‘Stolenwealth.’<sup>5</sup>

Yet, whilst such political action engages with the minefield of issues surrounding the commemoration of European ‘discovery,’ we must go further than emphasising European wrongdoing; we must frame our discussions around indigenous perspectives, and draw scholarly findings into the public sphere. As Ida Altman and Reginald Butler highlight, the Columbian Quincentenary prompted a range of responses – institutional and individual, including symposia, exhibitions, a wave of publications, and debates – and I hope that the Quincentenary of Cortés’ arrival in Tenochtitlan (8<sup>th</sup> November 2019) similarly promotes critical engagement with cultural contact, redressing imbalances in traditional narratives in both scholarly circles and popular culture.<sup>6</sup> Whilst Cortés may have been perceived, and treated as, an *ixiptlat*, he was not (at the time) identified as the returning god Quetzalcoatl, or considered ‘divine’ in the Christian sense – and neither was Columbus. Moctezuma and the Mexica were not paralysed by his arrival, nor would the conquest have been possible without the thousands of Nahuas who sided against the Mexica. Similarly, without the aid of the Taínos on Hispaniola, Columbus’ first voyage would almost certainly have ended in disaster.

On a broader level, then, this study has sought to challenge popular notions of conquistadors’ power, and to bury the White Gods (and other traditional narratives) for good.<sup>7</sup> In hypothesising *why* these more traditional narratives continue, Matthew Restall writes in his most recent work *When Montezuma Met Cortés* that narratives of encounters are collectively ‘untidy,’ and ‘replete with omissions, fabrications, and contradictions.’<sup>8</sup> Restall goes on to argue that, as a result of the unreliability of human memory, ‘a traditional narrative [...] tends to be privileged over others, an appealing tale to mask the unappetizing mess that is reality.’<sup>9</sup> Taking a microhistorical approach, it is this mask I have sought to deconstruct: to locate narratives speaking to *indigenous* power and agency, challenging the narrative of Columbus’ and Cortés’ success, this study has critically explored the complicated, ‘unappetizing mess’ of different accounts and representations of these moments, and embraced its complexity. It has done this largely through the microanalysis of ‘smaller’ stories of indigenous groups and individuals whose experiences have often been ‘left on the margins, forgotten, or never told.’<sup>10</sup> As Restall highlights, the stories of those left on the margins are important not just for the sake of inclusion, but for what they reveal as ‘tools’ that

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<sup>5</sup> M. Kelner, ‘Prince Charles opens Commonwealth Games amidst arrests of protesters,’ (4 April 2018), <<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/apr/04/prince-charles-opens-commonwealth-games-protesters-arrested-gold-coast-2018>> [accessed April 2018].

<sup>6</sup> Altman & Butler, ‘The Contact of Cultures,’ pp. 478-480.

<sup>7</sup> To borrow from Camilla Townsend’s article title, ‘Burying the White Gods.’

<sup>8</sup> Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

challenge the traditional narrative of conquest.<sup>11</sup> These smaller stories – a multitude of them – allow us to view these early moments of encounter from new angles, dismantling Eurocentric narratives in favour of a more nuanced understanding of the contact situation.

One of the main approaches this study has taken in its attempt to dismantle such narratives has been its findings regarding the sheer range and diversity of indigenous responses to Europeans – from flight to fight, exchanges of (many different) items to provisions of (many forms of) aid, formations of alliances to suspicion and mistrust, warm welcomes and celebrations to abandonments of homes. Reading this broad spectrum of responses has required a unique methodological approach to a heavily interdisciplinary source base – a base that has proven consistently challenging throughout the research process. To borrow from Richter, in many respects this study has been ‘as much about *how* we might develop eastward-facing stories of the past as about the stories themselves.’<sup>12</sup> The use of quantitative analysis in reading European accounts has been very valuable in this regard; not only has it allowed for the spectrum of indigenous responses in a given narrative to be represented more visually, it has elucidated the dynamics of the narrative itself. Through ‘measuring’ the responses recorded in the *Diario*, for example, its author’s (and editor’s) attention to Taíno responses they deemed ‘positive’ clearly precludes those less favourable to their position. In this way, quantitative analysis provides a window onto the tendencies of the narrative in question, through which its colonial discourse can be more effectively deconstructed.

Alongside this quantitative approach, qualitative or interpretative examination has been, of course, essential, especially in reading for instances of indigenous action, agency, and power during moments of early encounter. Quantitative methods may tell us that local Taínos traded with Columbus and his crew on thirty-eight occasions, but leave us wondering about the dynamics of the exchanges themselves (how many people were involved? Does the *Diario* record any notable actions? What was exchanged, and do we know the meaning or symbolism of that item(s)?). This kind of analysis came with its own set of challenges, especially when consolidating the evidence from different sources. After all, the encounters in question were ‘seen, understood, interpreted, remembered, and recorded in diverse ways, creating a picture far less simple than the *one* painted by Cortés,’ or Columbus, or the Tlaxcalteca, or the Mexica...<sup>13</sup> However trying, drawing together these ‘alternative memories, perceptions, and realities’ was essential in piecing together a more nuanced understanding of the meetings, and – vitally – in understanding a fuller, richer, spectrum of indigenous responses.<sup>14</sup> Whilst Europeans gave a rose-tinted view of events, so too did indigenous authors alter their narratives; in *both* European and indigenous writings,

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, p. 20. My emphasis.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

certain responses are manipulated, prioritised over others, or simply omitted altogether – so much so that there must be responses that were left unrecorded, completely lost to us today.

Let us take a moment to consider responses that are not lost altogether, but are certainly more hidden: the case study of Columbus' *Diario* revealed a vast array of indigenous responses, some more clearly identifiable than others. His positive spin on Taíno-Christian relations is clearly reflected in the staggering imbalance of positive and negative responses recorded in the text, and is further questioned by Chanca's account of the second voyage, which is riddled with suspicion and concerns over the mysterious fate of La Navidad. Yet Columbus' account provides valuable insights into one response in particular: low-level exchange between local Taínos, Columbus, and his crew. Although this grassroots response gradually faded in the *Diario*'s records as high-level exchanges with *caciques* increased, it is a response that strongly reflects the initiative, purposefulness, and agency of Taíno communities and individuals. Significantly, later European accounts (in both the Caribbean and Mesoamerica) focus mainly – if not completely – on gift exchanges with *caciques* and *tlatoque*, leaving individual interactions with locals at the wayside, although they must surely have continued.

Indigenous-authored pictorials are similarly focused on recording the relations – amicable or not – between *tlatoque* and Castilian leaders like Cortés and, later, Alvarado. In doing so, the pictorials are arguably even more limited than European accounts in terms of the range of indigenous responses recorded: whilst we learn from contemporary alphabetic accounts of local Nahuas fleeing their homes with supplies and their belongings, for example, this study has not found such grassroots responses portrayed pictorially. We must, therefore, be wary of the overall prioritisation of high-level relations in recordings of moments of early encounter, and work to tackle this imbalance through the comparative study of different sources and different perspectives.

Indeed, aside from Columbus' account of low-level exchange, the most effective – but extremely rare – sources for reading grassroots responses are arguably those authored by the beachcombers Ramón Pané and Cabeza de Vaca that have thus far been largely excluded from scholarly considerations of indigenous histories. The unique experiences of these two men – especially Cabeza de Vaca – are highly reflective of local dynamics, as each had to insert themselves into the indigenous communities who hosted them. Whilst each account involves dealings with local leaders – Pané's in particular, as he moved from *cacique* to *cacique* in his mission to convert – they are substantially revealing in terms of local interactions and responses. We learn from Pané of the first Taíno individuals who converted to Christianity, and the impact this had on their relations with the community; Cabeza de Vaca's account is especially rich in actions of indigenous individuals towards him and his party, and offers invaluable insights into

more emotive responses of aid (thinking particularly of the raft disaster) that are lost in the currents of colonial discourses so prevalent in accounts written by ‘outsiders.’

In mapping the spectrum of indigenous responses, some responses therefore seem to shine much more brightly than others in the (ethno)historical record, especially those involved in the formation of friendships (whether the friendship was ultimately successful or not). For Europeans, Taínos, and Nahuas, this study has found that establishing physical contact, exchanging items, and the wearing of each other’s cultural symbols were key actions in determining the amicability of relations. Complicating current scholarship that recognises Indian conquistador pictorials as petitions for rights and privileges in the new colonial order, this comparative study has found that different communities’ *tlacuiloque* used *different* strategies to portray their *altepetl*’s friendship with the Castilians. For the Quauhquecholteca, outward appearance – such as clothing, accoutrements, and, most notably, through shared skin tone – signals their cooperation with the newcomers, whereas it is religion that is central to the Tlaxcalteca’s vision of their amicable relationship. Significantly, this religious aspect is steadily more emphasised over time, increasing in prominence across the three Tlaxcalan pictorials. Accordingly, not only did different groups’ *tlacuiloque* use different visual strategies to convey their community’s positive relationship with the Castilians, but, for the Tlaxcalteca at least, these strategies were effectively developed as the new colonial order progressed. Furthermore, just as Tlaxcalteca and Quauhquecholteca *tlacuiloque* used visual strategies to convey friendship, the authors of Book XII used visual strategies to convey enmity: empty space divides the two parties, physical contact conveys aggression, not amicability, and Moctezuma does not share in symbols of Castilian heritage.

Therefore, whilst current scholarship has rightly recognised how these pictorials’ particular sets of aims may distort such accounts’ presentation of events, the comparative approach this study has taken has effectively highlighted the variety of pictorial strategies used to convey perceptions of/relationships with the Castilians during the first meetings. Drawing together pictorials produced by the Tlaxcalteca, Quauhquecholteca, and Mexica that are so often considered separately undoubtedly reflects the richness and complexity of indigenous-authored accounts. Significantly, by exploring these pictorials alongside more contemporary, European-authored accounts of early encounter – a further comparative angle – the connection between the adoption, or rejection, of one another’s cultural symbols and the nature of the cross-cultural relationship is clearly established.

Most notably, in developing the current scholarly focus on indigenous adoption of European symbols, this study has found that the sharing of symbols and the blurring of identities went *both* ways: Europeans, too, took up symbols of the groups who encountered them, with such uptakes recorded alphabetically in their own accounts and visually in indigenous-authored

pictorials. In their respective adornments of Taíno and Nahua apparel and accoutrements, both Columbus and Cortés arguably conformed – consciously or not – to indigenous forms; in their likely strange outward appearances, their adoption of indigenous cultural symbols ultimately reflected the power of the Taíno and Nahua groups who dressed them. This authority of indigenous forms spoke not only through the blurring of Europeans’ identities, but also through the highly ceremonious nature of the exchanges. Whilst Europeans misinterpreted lavish gifts as reflections of their own superiority, insights into indigenous worldviews reveal that, on the contrary, such gifts demonstrated the authority of the givers.

This study has also explored the sharing of symbols by indigenous and European individuals who found themselves in-between: in these cases, the sharing or disassociation of cultural markers was a largely necessary measure in terms of individuals retaining their security, and even – in the case of involuntary beachcombers – of basic survival. Whilst ethnohistorians have given much care and critical attention to Malintzin, constructing her history in highly commendable ways, this study has complicated her story through a microanalysis of indigenous-authored portrayals of her figure by different Nahua groups. In comparing her outward appearance and accompanying accoutrements across these pictorials (and within individual pictorials), multiple stories of Malintzin are told. Most notably, in drawing connections with the Virgin Mary’s identity as *la Conquistadora*, Malintzin emerges not only as an interpreter in times of peace, but as a warrior woman, intricately connected to violence perpetrated during the early encounters.

Taking inspiration from Malintzin’s story(s), this study aimed to uncover the agency of Caribbean nepantleras, whose significance has been substantially neglected in comparison. Retrieving their stories from the margins was especially challenging; the nepantleras were unnamed, and quite indistinguishable from one another in European accounts – even those who crossed the Atlantic are impossible to confidently identify and trace. Although this indistinguishability has meant that their experiences have become blurred almost into one collective tale, their presence, influence, and actions in moments of early encounter have proven to be abundantly clear. As this study has explored, early encounters were riddled with falsity, tentativeness and suspicion, with positively perceived relations often coming to catastrophic ends – the violence emanating from La Navidad and Tenochtitlan being key cases in point. Indeed, indigenous responses were highly mutable and dynamic, fluctuating through both time and (physical) space, revealing moments of early encounter to be far from static. It was this mutability and fragility that Caribbean nepantleras navigated, managing indigenous communities’ responses to, and relationships with, the Christian newcomers – in peaceful and violent situations. As well as Malintzin, then, we must consider the many others who came to occupy in-between roles and spaces during moments of early encounter. Certainly, there are undoubtedly more nepantleras

who have been lost to us today, as well as those for whom we can only catch tormenting glimpses of (like the Cempoallan interpreter, Tlacohtcalcatl).

Thinking about these in-between figures, as well as the experiences of those on either side of early encounters, this study has deeply explored the formation, manipulation, fragmentation, and recreation of identities, on a smaller, individual level. As Dana Leibsohn writes so eloquently,

individuals forge many kinds of identity over the course of their lives.

They draw upon symbols and act out rituals; in doing so they fashion a series of conflicting and overlapping identities. To speak of “identity” is to evoke a constantly shifting set of positions, a series of interlinked negotiations between the self and the world.<sup>15</sup>

This acting out of rituals, this multiple, ever-shifting sense of self is acutely seen in moments of first encounter, where identities have been shown to be malleable, fluid, and highly negotiable. On a conceptual level, this fluidity is mirrored in the (invisible) space in which these moments take place: on the Beach, where those who cross it, or dip their toes in the wet sand, reflect its flowing and changeable nature.

Thinking again to Greg Dening’s multi-visioned conception of the Beach, it is this understanding of the space of encounter as multidirectional (not simply Westward-facing) that has been essential in approaching the early meetings throughout this study. Like Dening in the context of the Pacific encounters, as well as Lockhart and Restall in the Mesoamerican context, I have similarly attempted to transcend Eurocentric narratives by incorporating indigenous terms throughout my writing and analysis. In doing so, it can be confidently concluded that explorations into Taíno and Nahuatl worldviews have been essential: not only do understandings of such worldviews enable a greater understanding of categories of identity into which indigenous groups may have placed Europeans, but, in considering how indigenous worldviews related to those of the strangers they encountered, these understandings help us to dismantle European misrepresentations of their perceived identity. Columbus may have received warm, even celebratory welcomes from Taíno communities, but the responses he interpreted as worship signalled amicability, not a proclamation of his supposed divinity. Likewise, the closest Cortés got to apotheosis is the Mexica’s categorisation of him as a *ixiptlat*. Moreover, terms like *turey* and *teotl* did not correspond to divinity in the Christian sense at all, and instead spoke to the value of exoticness and vital force or power, respectively.

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<sup>15</sup> Dana Leibsohn, ‘Primers for Memory: Cartographic Histories and Nahuatl Identity’, in *Writing Without Words*, p. 161.

Rather than ‘gods,’ then, it seems that indigenous groups more likely identified Cortés and Columbus as passing traders, emissaries or rulers from foreign lands, exotic neighbours (that could even be collected, as Restall theorises), or potential political or military allies.<sup>16</sup> Of course, there were more negative, potentially dangerous out groups into which Nahuas or Taínos could place the European newcomers, namely as raiders or enemy warriors. In the act of sweeping the steps of the Templo Mayor, the Mexica sought to combat the dirt and filth brought by the Castilians and their animals, reflecting their categorisation of the strangers as bringers of disorder, who accordingly unbalanced the universe. This more hidden response is only detectable through a deeper exploration of Nahua worldviews, clearly demonstrating that understanding indigenous worldviews produces a greater understanding of indigenous responses. Indeed, contrary to Columbus’ account – and those that followed him to the Caribbean – Taínos did *not* identify him and his Christian crew as cannibals; the Cannibal figure was a European creation, existing in European – not indigenous – minds. In deconstructing this image using the indigenous worldviews that Columbus so vastly misunderstood, other, truer, categories of identity emerge: in taking to flight, fighting, hiding, or threatening violence, Taíno communities potentially identified Columbus and his crew as raiders from neighbouring islands (not the mythical island of Carib), or associated them with Caribe spirits. They were certainly not facing, or escaping, cannibals.

The interweaving of indigenous terms and worldviews into my analysis has therefore been an essential part of this study. Combined with a move away from the concept of the Other/ing and a conscious use of the active voice when writing about indigenous actions and perspectives, I have developed an approach that deconstructs and transcends Eurocentric notions and narratives, and allows for a deeper, richer reading of indigenous actions, agency, and power in alphabetic and pictorial texts. Going forward, this framework could potentially be applied to other first encounters, to prompt fresh analyses and considerations of the spectrum of indigenous responses to perceptions of European newcomers – perhaps later to the North American, Canadian, Pacific, or Australian contexts, or even earlier to the Canary Islands. In the same timeframe as this study, of course, are the early encounters taking place in South America – a third geography that this study could not stretch to consider, but undoubtedly rich in material (from the letter of Pêro Vaz de Caminha, to the beachcomber experience of Hans Staden). Accordingly, there are a number of avenues open for future research. Applying this study’s innovative framework and approach to different moments of early encounter supports a wider, critical re-reading of indigenous responses to Europeans. Thinking about other smaller stories, other one-to-one interactions, this reading

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<sup>16</sup> Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, chapter 4, especially pp. 138-139.

emphasises indigenous action and agency, and positions indigenous groups and individuals as powerholders.

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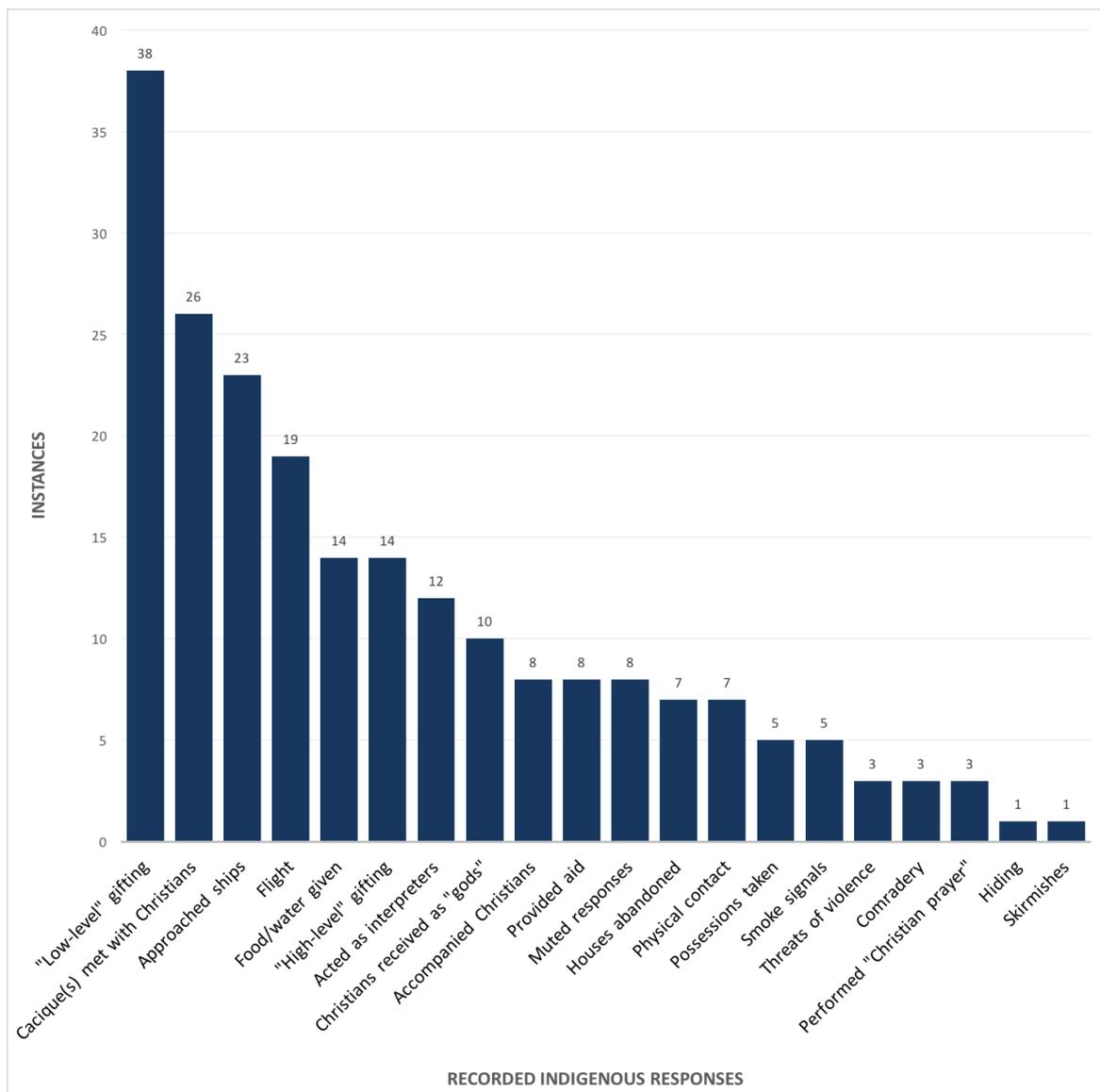
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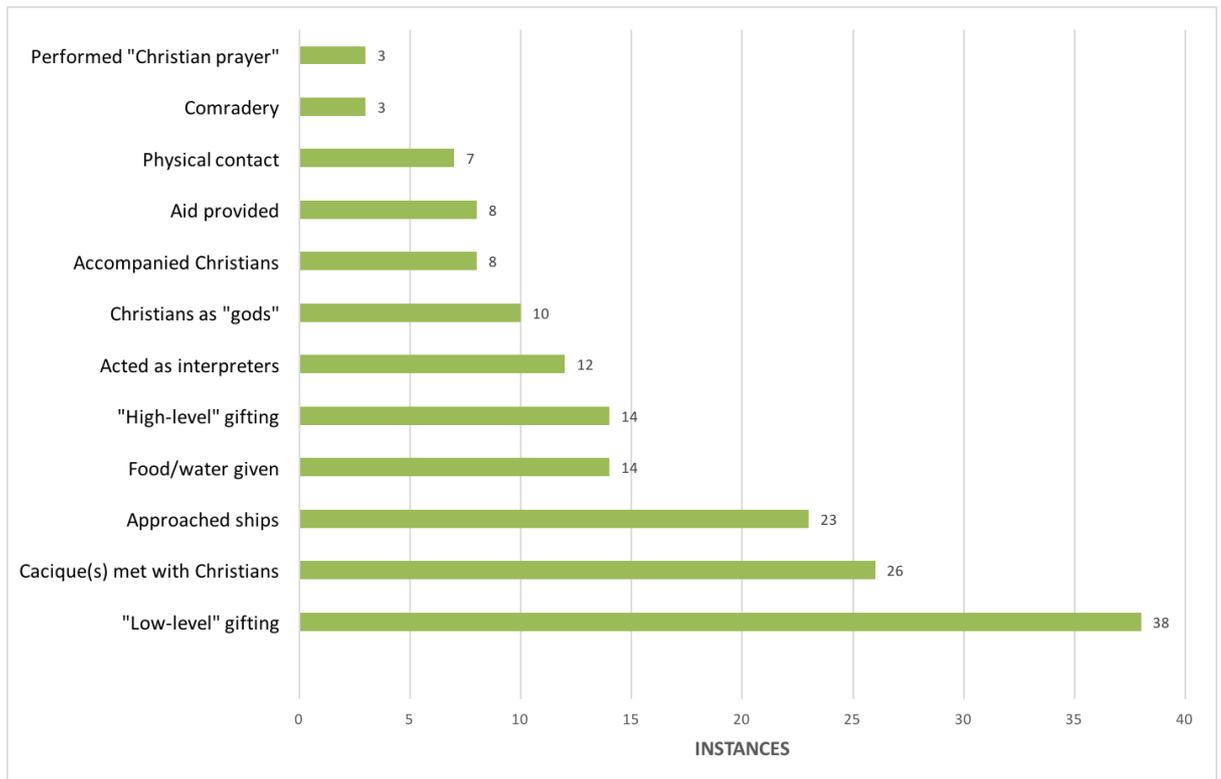
## Appendix I

**Chart 1:** overview of recorded indigenous responses to Europeans in the *Diario*

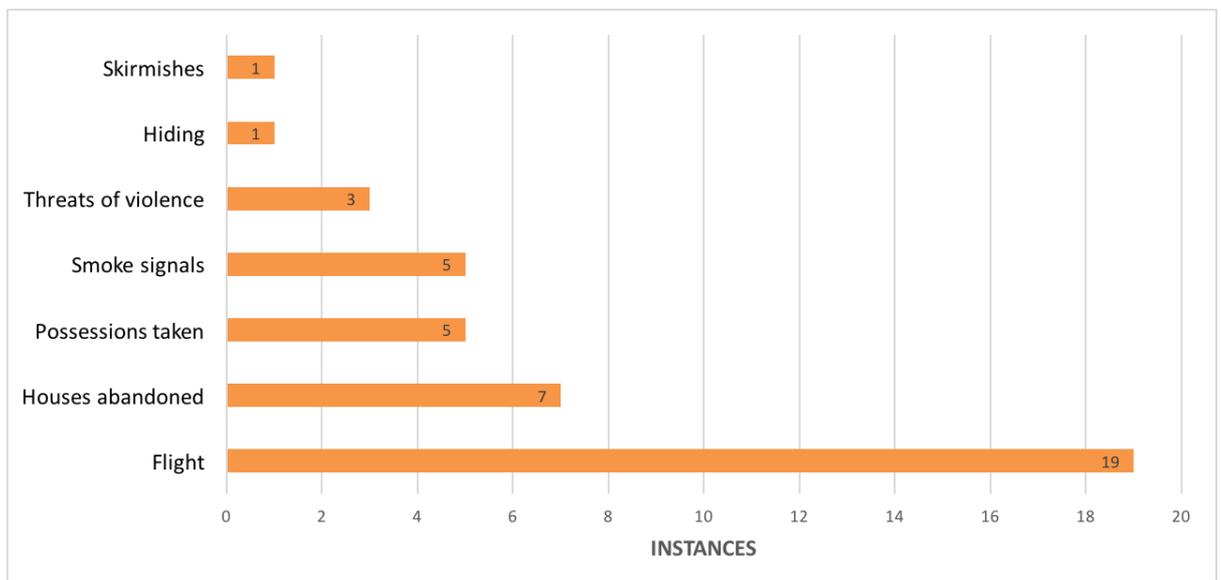


In this chart, and for the charts following, an 'instance' does not indicate the number of those involved. For example, a record of five Taíno taking flight together (i.e., in the same instance) is recorded as one instance.

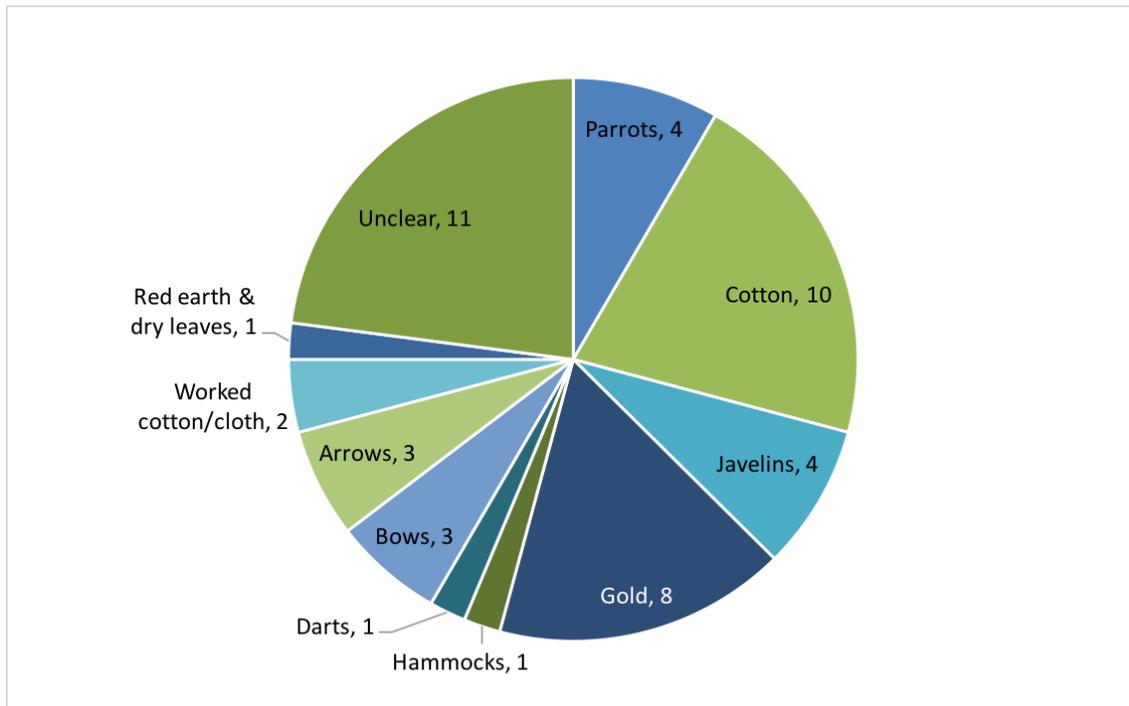
**Chart 2:** 'positive' recorded indigenous responses to Europeans in the *Diario*



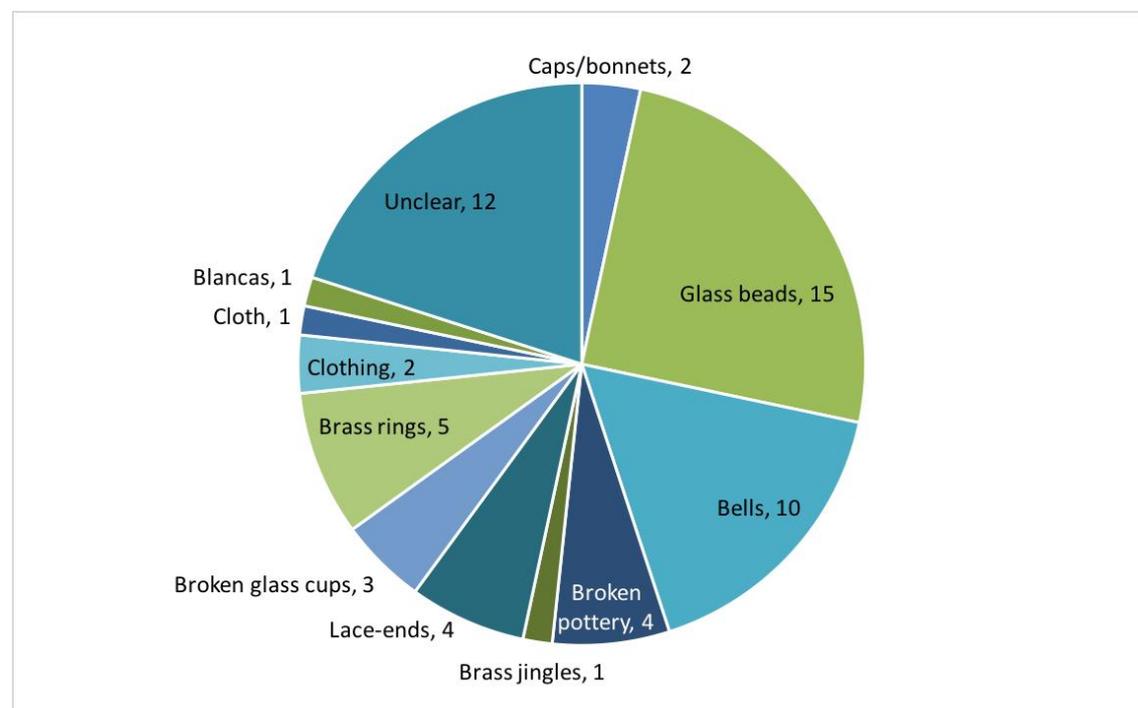
**Chart 3:** 'negative' recorded indigenous responses to Europeans in the *Diario*



**Chart 4:** breakdown of items given by Taínos in instances of low-level exchange, as recorded in the *Diario*



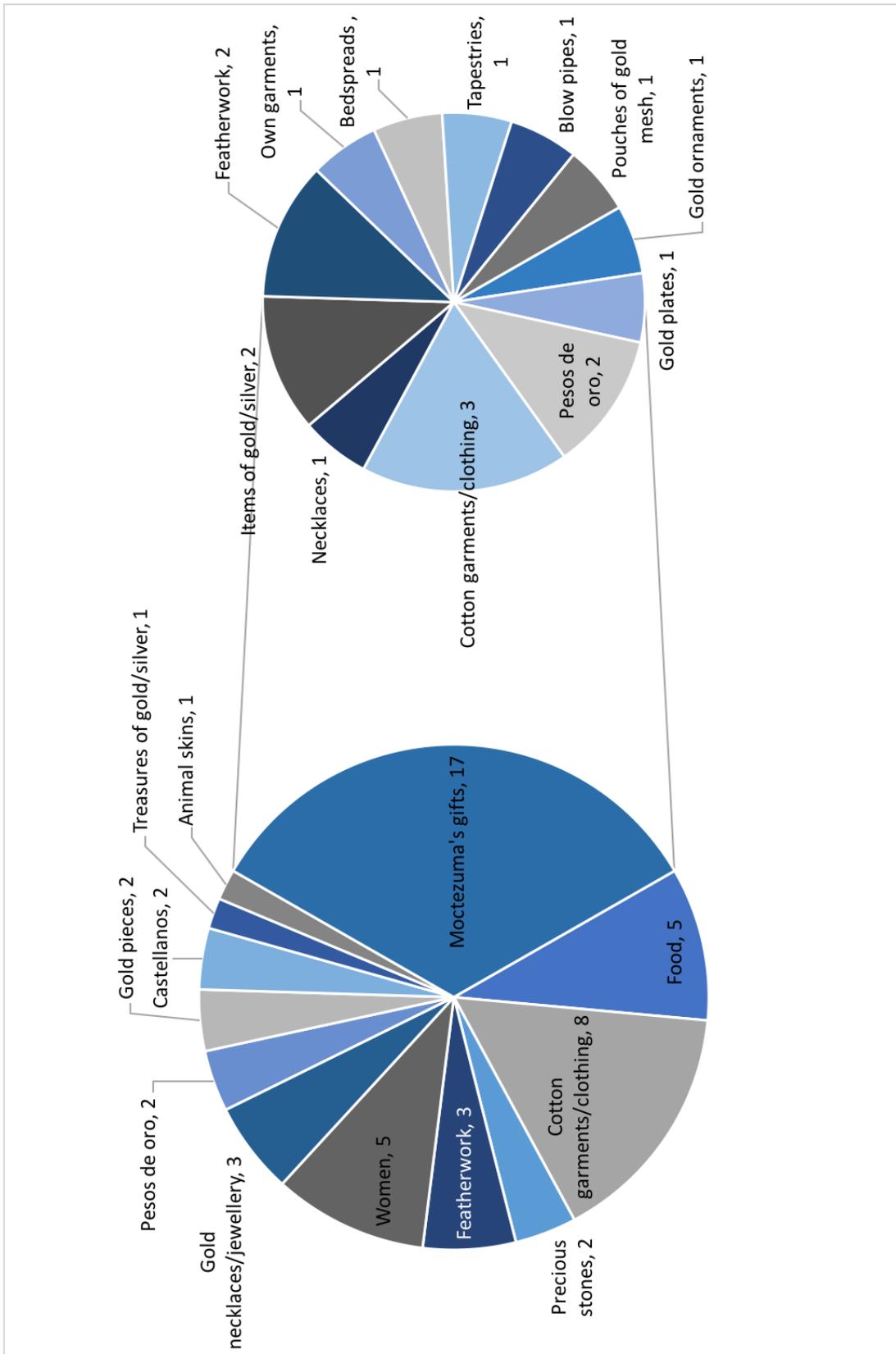
**Chart 5:** breakdown of items given by Europeans in instances of low-level exchange, as recorded in the *Diario*



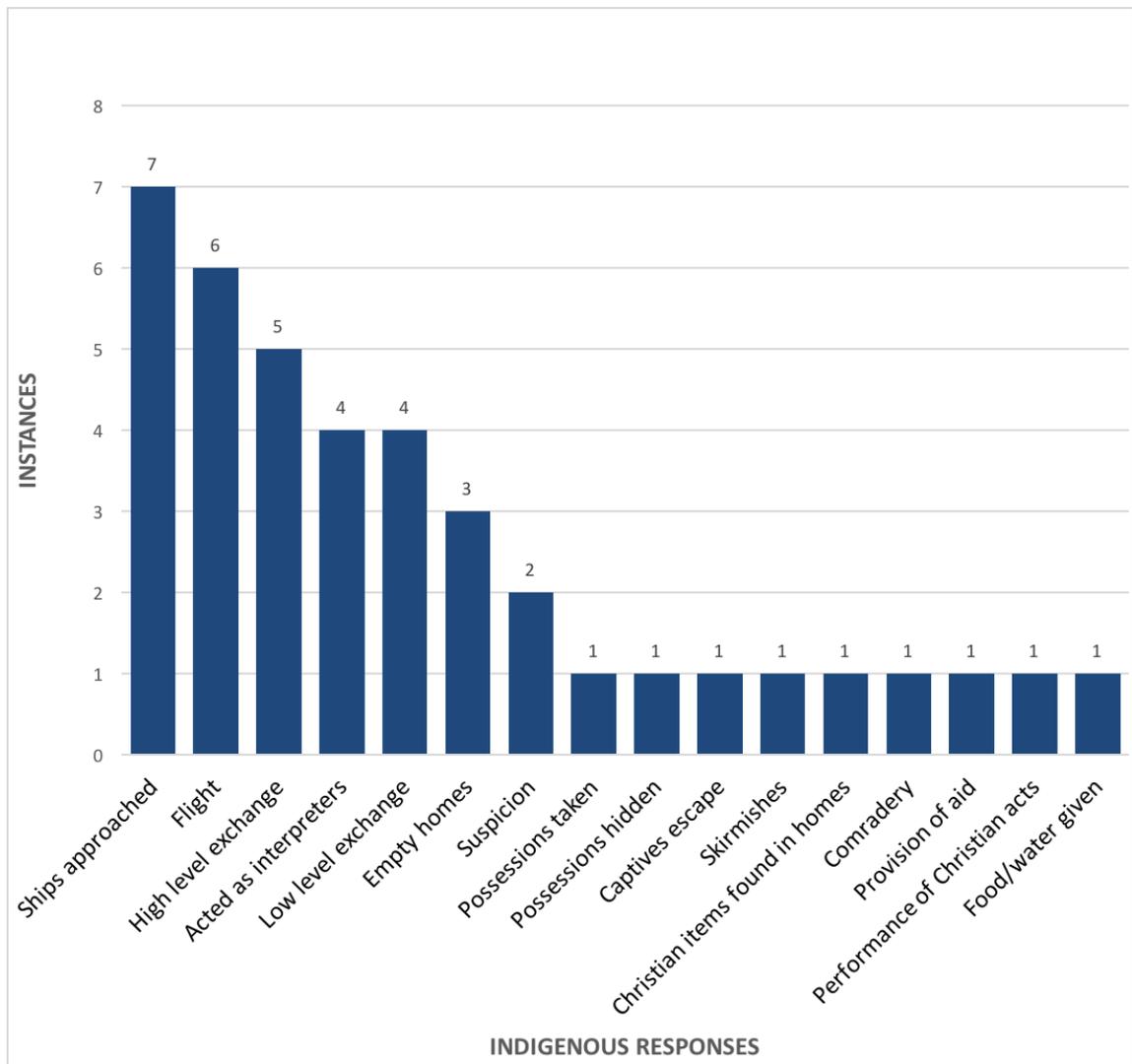
**Table 1:** itemisation and frequency of items given in exchange between Taínos and Europeans, as recorded in the *Diario*

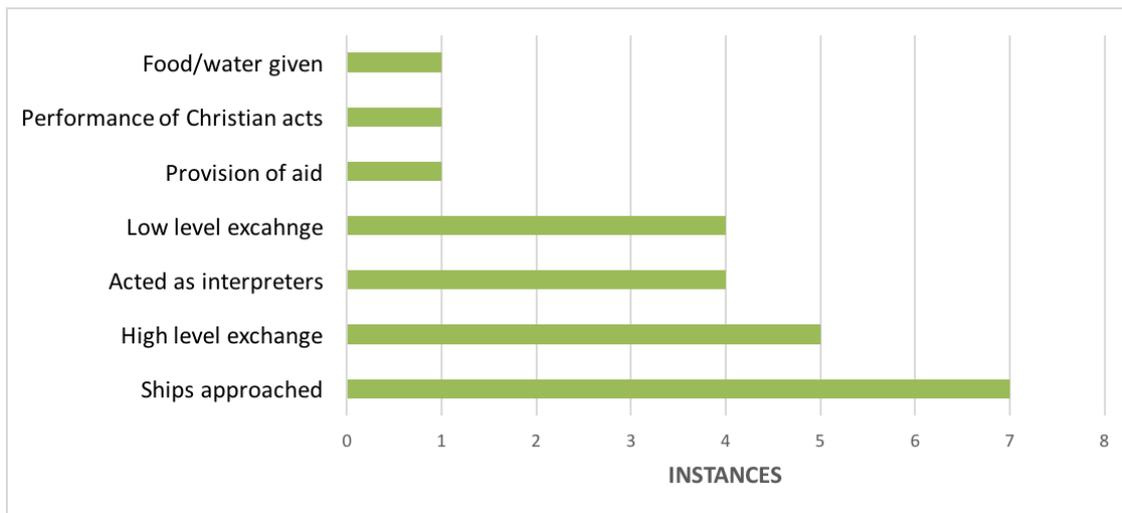
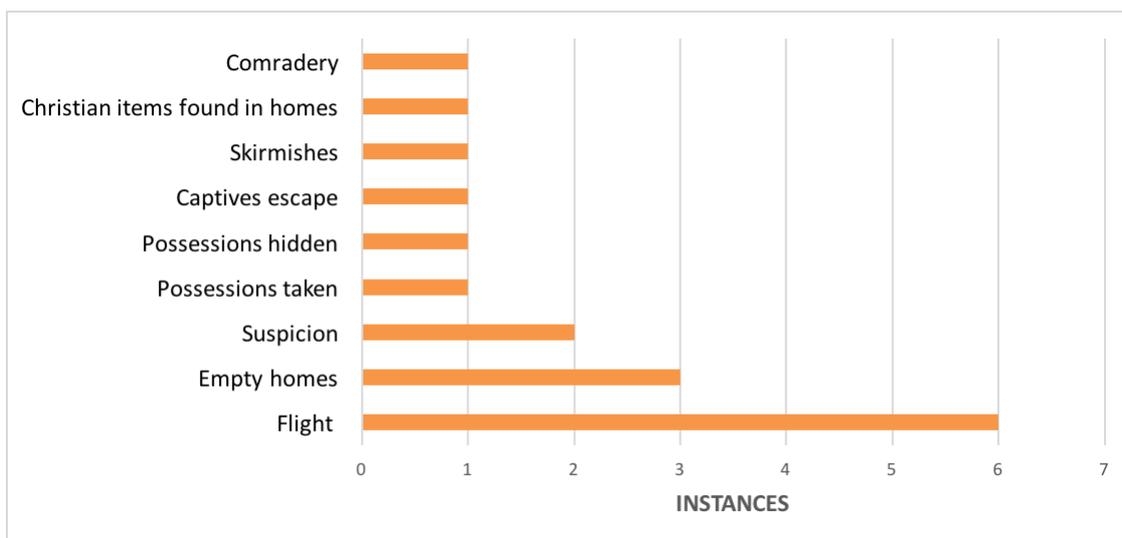
	Indigenous items		European items	
	Low-level exchange	Cotton	10	Glass beads
Pieces/sheets of gold		8	Bells	10
Parrots		4	Brass rings	5
Javelins		4	Broken pottery	4
Bows		3	Lace-ends	4
Arrows		3	Broken glass cups	3
Worked cotton/cloth		2	Caps/bonnets	2
Hammocks		1	Clothing	2
Darts		1	Brass jingles	1
Red earth & dry leaves		1	Cloth	1
			<i>Blancas</i>	1
Unclear		11	Unclear	12
Sub-total			48	
High-level exchange	Pieces/sheets of gold	4	Clothing	4
	Gold mask	3	Beads/agate	3
	Crown	2	Items from cabin	3
	Belt	2	Shoes	2
	Parrots	1	Caps	1
	Gold jewels	1	Orange flower water	1
	Beads	1	Silver ring	1
	Cloth	1		
	Unclear	1	Unclear	1
Sub-total		16		16
<b>Total</b>		<b>63</b>		<b>76</b>

**Chart 6:** gifts given to Hernando Cortés by indigenous lords as recorded in the *Second Letter*

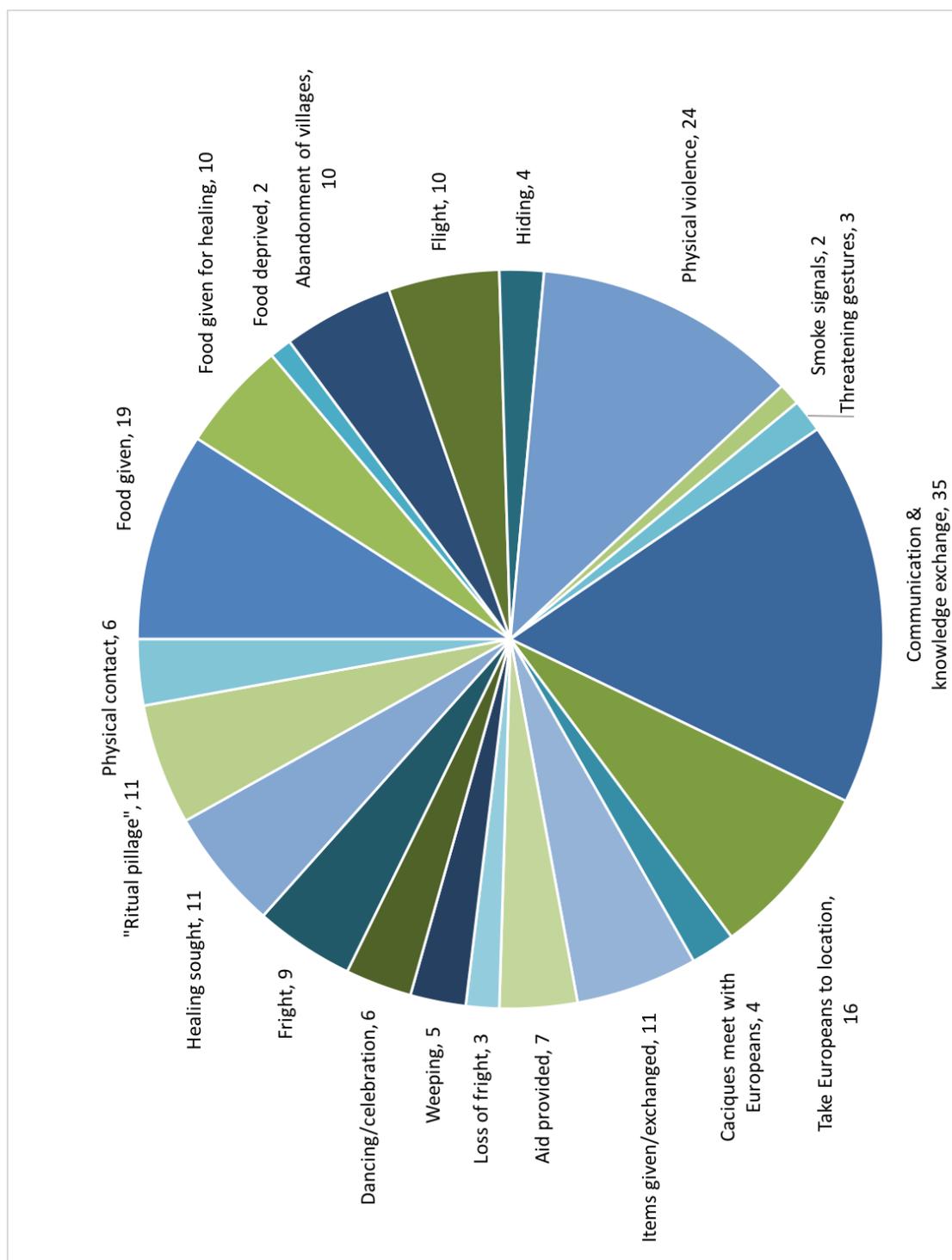


**Chart 7:** overview of recorded indigenous responses to Europeans in the *Account* of Diego Álvarez Chanca

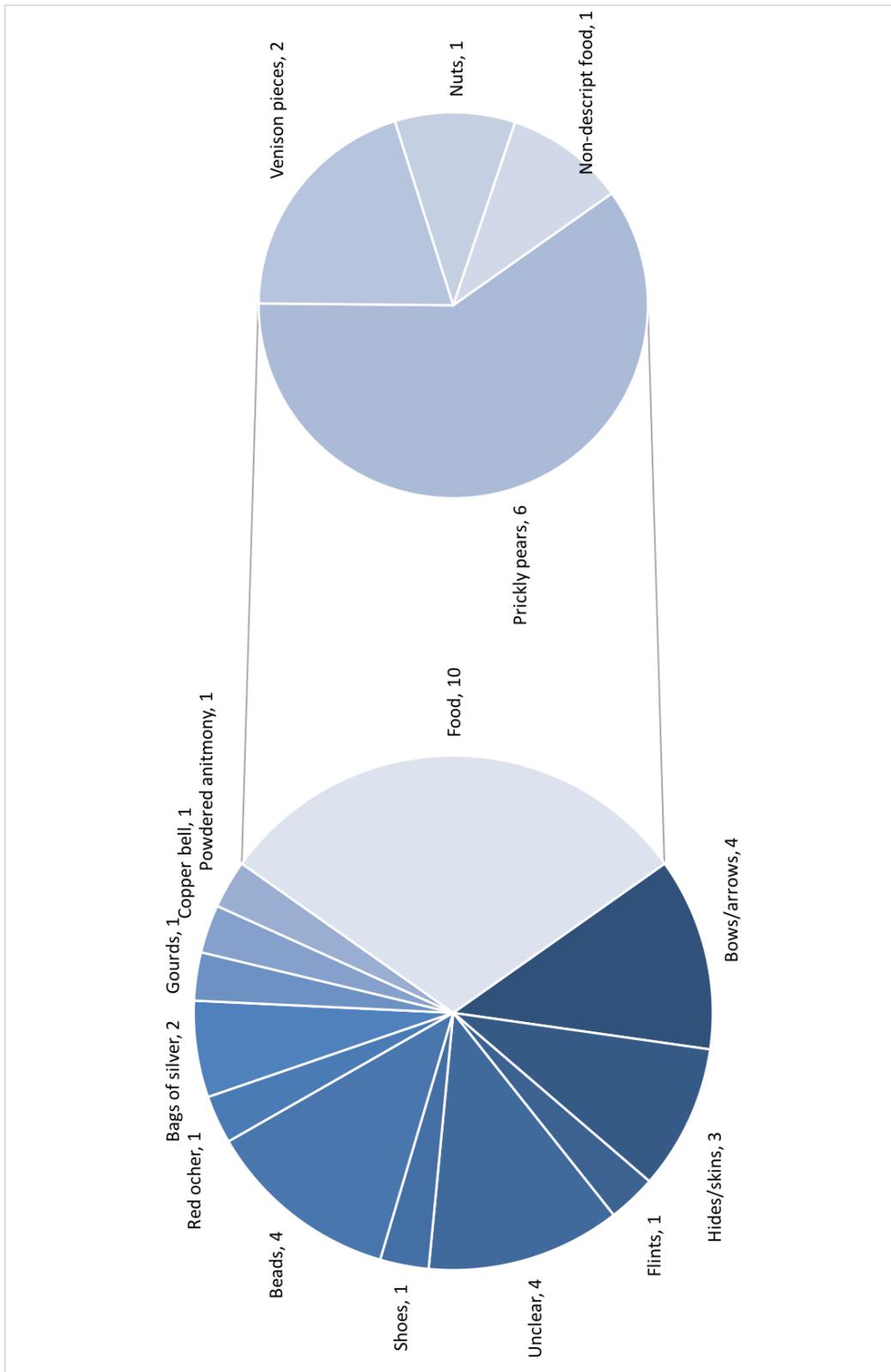


**Chart 8:** 'positive' recorded indigenous responses to Europeans in Diego Chanca's *Account***Chart 9:** 'negative' recorded indigenous responses to Europeans in Diego Chanca's *Account*

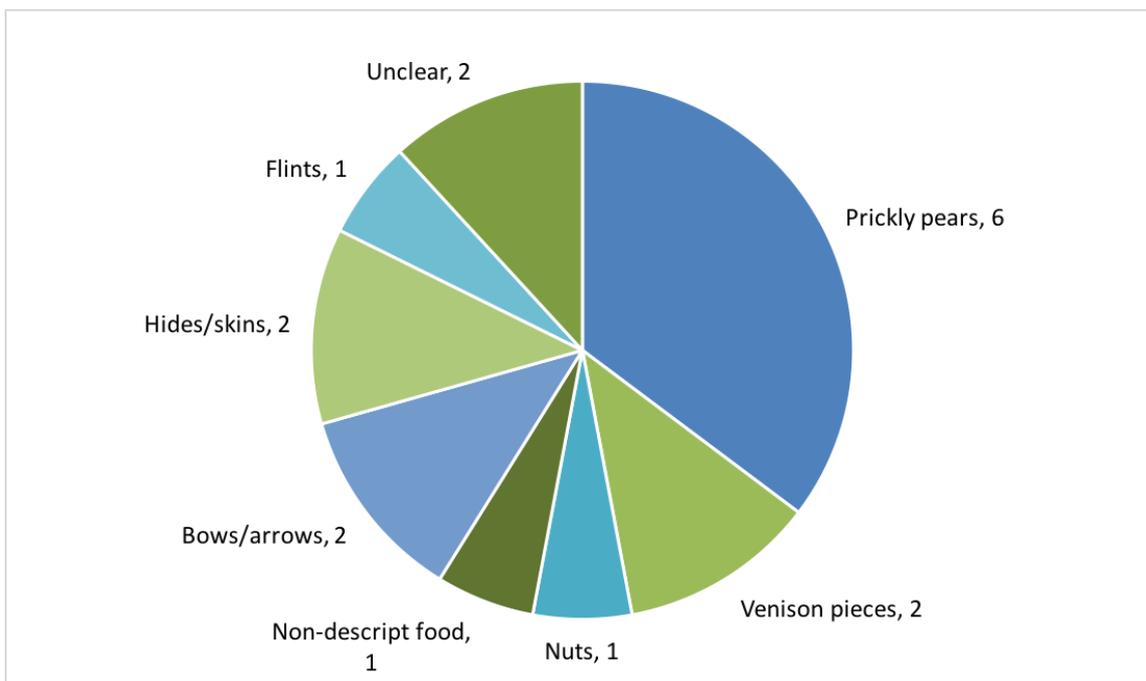
**Chart 10:** overview of (selected) indigenous responses to Europeans as recorded in Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación*



**Chart 11:** overview of items given in exchange for healing in Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación*



**Chart 12:** breakdown of items given in instances of ‘normal’ healing in Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación*



**Chart 13:** breakdown of items given in instances of ritual pillage healing in Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación*

