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Introduction

The Two Tariacuris

Look how you promised a great thing: that you would make the seedbeds for our god Curicaueri and you promised the cinch and the axe, so that you would carry firewood for his temples, and that you would be at the backs of his battalions, so that you could aid in the battles . . . Now Curicaueri has pity for you in this year in which we find ourselves. (Alcalá 2000:528)

And they garroted him [the King] and like that he died. And they put a lot of firewood around him and burned him. And his servants went around collecting his ashes, and so Guzmán had them thrown in the river. And the people fled because of his death, out of fear, although some servants carried those ashes and buried them in two places: in Pátzcuaro and in another place. (Alcalá 2000:689–690)

The two quotes above both come from an Early Colonial (ca. 1540) document commonly known as the *Relación de Michoacán*.¹ The quotations generally sum up the state of indigenous society at the time in what had been, before the arrival of the Spaniards twenty years earlier, the second most powerful empire in Mesoamerica—the Tarascan kingdom of West-Central Mexico (see map 1.1). The second quote is a remembrance of the death of the last fully autonomous indigenous king of the Tarascan kingdom. That king, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, had been killed as a result of a politically motivated trial in 1530 that was orchestrated by Beltrán Núño de Guzmán, the highest-ranking Spanish official in New Spain (the president of the First Royal Audiencia of New Spain).² His death occurred roughly eight years



MAP 1.1. The location and extent of the Tarascan kingdom at its height ca. 1520, with the names and borders of modern Mexican states included for context. The extent of the kingdom is indicated by the light-gray shading. Reproduced with permission from School for Advanced Research Press from Haskell 2015.

after the entrance of Spanish forces into Tarascan territory. The first quote is commonly attributed to the indigenous chief priest, though who actually spoke and/or wrote these words is unclear (as I address below). What is more certain, however, is that the author of these words was speaking to either an actual audience or at the very least the audience constituted by the readers of the document. He is speaking roughly ten years after Tzintzicha Tangáxoan's death and during the early years of the imposition of a Spanish colonial system that was contentious and multifaceted. Here the priest mourns the fate and treatment of the primary deity of the state ideology, Curicaueri, due to the fact that the lords in particular and the people more generally are not willing to fight for the old gods, and perhaps by extension the old ways. In the earliest years of the colonial encounter, everything was in flux and open for negotiation: the status of the gods, the nature of ultimate authority and who would wield it and why, and the relative statuses of nearly everyone involved in this encounter. Various individuals jockeyed for position while indigenous peoples were simultaneously trying to pick up the pieces, just as the kings' servants and followers picked up the last kings' ashes, and do what they could do to adjust to the new order and work to preserve and weave into the new order what they could of the old, indigenous order.

The document from which these quotes are drawn, the *Relación de Michoacán*, is of paramount importance for understanding these historical processes in the earliest years of the Spanish Colonial era. The *Relación de Michoacán* is critical for understanding the prehispanic Tarascan kingdom for two reasons. The first is the extent of its content. This document is the closest thing modern scholars have to an encyclopedic account of Tarascan culture, the prehispanic past, and the functioning of the Tarascan state. This is true even if it falls short of, for example, Bernardino de Sahagún's *Florentine Codex*, which describes Aztec culture and society in the Basin of Mexico in the first few decades of the colonial experience. The second reason why the *Relación de Michoacán* is so important is that the corpus of other documents pertaining to the prehispanic Tarascan state or indigenous lives during the late prehispanic and Early Colonial Periods is quite small compared to the Central Mexican corpus. While some excellent historians are doing their best to search out and investigate documentary sources pertaining to Tarascan state and culture, the number of documentary sources available to scholars studying Tarascan culture, society, and history will likely never catch up to the state of affairs in Central Mexico. Understanding the *Relación de Michoacán* and the goals and intentions behind it and reflected within it is therefore of utmost importance; not only does no document approach its wealth of information but precious few documents exist that can variably corroborate or contest it. In short, it is the best single source for modern scholars who want to understand the prehispanic past—both in terms of social processes as they played out over roughly the last few centuries before Spanish contact as well as the culture of the Tarascans and functioning of the Tarascan kingdom in the recently passed “ethnographic present” on the “eve” of Spanish contact.

The main problem in properly contextualizing and understanding the document and in particular its second section, which purports to describe the history of the Tarascan state, is that this legendary history of the Tarascan royal dynasty, the Uacúsecha, has not been analyzed in a way that fully problematizes how and why it represented the past as it does. This book engages the legendary history of the Uacúsecha from an explicitly anthropological point of view by drawing on the theoretical literature concerning “historicity.” Historicity is the theoretical view that other cultures have different reasons for and ways of organizing representations of the past compared to Western historiography. These differences go beyond simply casting the representations of other cultures, and particularly their elites, as exemplars of Western conceptions of “propaganda,” or simply a “biased” and “one-sided” account, or reductive analytic categories such as “myth” and “history.” A similar problematic term is “legend”; while the priest's narrative is often used as a stand-in for history, this use is accompanied by the caveat that it is “legendary history,” a term that is nevertheless rarely examined or its implications not carried to their fullest extent (these issues

are discussed below). This study is thus situated within the wider and ongoing debate over the meaning and mission of the field of ethnohistory. The work of ethnohistory has always been a dual one (Krech 1991; Sturtevant 1966). According to one mode, ethnohistorians write the unwritten past of non-Western peoples. Where representations of the past are available, ethnohistorians sort through these representations to discover “what really happened” in the past. In the other mode, present at the outset of ethnohistory as an academic and practical field though given less importance, ethnohistorians concern themselves with understanding the non-Western ways in which the past and time more generally are understood and represented. The basic question becomes how culture influences temporal representation. In this formulation, “Ethnohistory,” as the endeavor with which the present work is engaged as applied to Tarascan representations of the past, must “also practice the ethnography of historical consciousness” (Whitehead 2003:x).

The main goal of this book, then, is to investigate the guiding principles or logic behind the narrative concerning the ancestors of the king that the priest told in the context of the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*. These principles and logics are understood in reference to two contexts. The first is his personal and historically situated motivations. The second is the place of his actions and formulation of his narrative within wider but culturally influenced understandings of how the past relates to the present. The relationship between these two contexts is investigated as a recursive one; therefore I also examine how his production of his narrative was intended to shape the course of history moving forward by shaping how the past should be understood. The priest sought to influence the course of history by shaping how the past was represented, essentially reformulating the past for this novel opportunity offered by the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*. The priest reformulated the past to make one character, Taríacuri, the focal point of the entire narrative and the point of reference around which revolved both the processes of state formation and the ideologically formulated paradigmatic category of “kingship.” I argue that he did this in order to advocate for Don Francisco Taríacuri to assume the position of highest indigenous authority in colonial Michoacán at the time of the document’s production. The end result is that the priest actively constructed the past in order to shape the present and future. At the same time as he was embarking on producing the effect of Taríacuri’s centrality and novel signifiatory power, he was also doing so in fairly conservative Mesoamerican ways by embracing the culturally constructed cyclicity of time and events. In order to examine the logics that went into the priest’s novel representation of the past—what I call a “concretization” (see chapter 3)—I analyze in depth the structure of the narrative in terms of the selection and sequential arrangement of its elements. The understanding of the narrative resulting from this investigation of its processual

structure is then understood in relation to the social structural factors and the institutionalization of remembrances of the past from which the priest drew on as he formulated his narrative. I argue that the narrative was composed of what might have been actual historical events, and/or possibly somewhat fabricated events, but that the recollection of “the real past” was *not* the priest’s aim. Rather, events from the past were selectively chosen and ordered by the chief priest so that he could communicate overt messages to the Spaniards and both overt and covert messages to the indigenous people who he felt should still consider themselves subjects of the Uacúsecha royal dynasty. Essentially, the surface content of the narrative—its plot—as well as its logical ordering comprise an eloquent explication of the nature of kingship in the Tarascan kingdom, its place as an organizing principle of indigenous society, and finally its function as a full-throated call for the people to rally around Don Francisco Tariacuri in the chaotic time of the Early Colonial Period.

In this way the approach in this book rejects investigating the representation of the prehispanic past as something that was static; such an approach is exemplified in the old practice of viewing the priest’s narrative as simply a retelling of a fixed “text” (Kirchhoff 1956). Engaging the past, as the priest was doing, was an agentic action in which the past and its potential to both make sense of the present and impact the present were all skillfully woven together, and this process of weaving leaves evidence of its processual logic and skill in its final form. I also reject interpreting the priest’s narrative as somehow emblematic of the historical and rhetorical skills of an entire culture. The priest drew on cultural knowledge, ideologies and philosophies of time and the past, and structurally constituted knowledges of the past, but he must be understood as a single and incredibly skillful agent responding to the events swirling around him. With his narrative, the priest entered that swirling fray and became a part of it—this was definitively not some traditional or stereotypical act of cultural conservatism. The priest’s interests and motivation should not be viewed as isomorphic with other members of indigenous society in the early years of the colonial encounter—it must be recognized that his position and role led him to formulate not only a historically unique concretization of the past but perhaps also a uniquely ideologically oriented and loyalist narrative. This research follows other recent detailed understanding of the agencies recoverable through detailed analysis of the *Relación de Michoacán* and other colonial documents (Afanador-Pujol 2010, 2015; Espejel Carbajal 2008; Fernández 2011; Monzón, Roskamp, and Warren 2009; Roskamp 2003, 2010a, 2010b, 2012, 2015; Roskamp and César-Villa 2003; Stone 2004). This book is necessary in large measure because “our record of histories has expanded much farther than our understanding of the historicities that create them, and this disjuncture in our understanding has produced a rather defective framework of analysis in anthropology” (Whitehead 2003:xi). As

I stated above, this is certainly the case for the priest's narrative in the *Relación de Michoacán*. Simply put, this narrative presents problems for modern scholars who seek to understand it, and this lack of understanding in turn entails that what we think we know about the prehispanic past of the Tarascan kingdom is inherently flawed. In order to address this shortcoming in how historicities are investigated and analyzed, I apply a method of narrative analysis that has been described as "an important and indispensable tool" (Willis 1982:xiii; see below and chapter 3). This method of analysis enables an understanding of how and why the priest composed his narrative of the history in the form that he did—in other words the underlying logic of his composition.

THE CONTENTS OF THE *RELACIÓN DE MICHOACÁN* AND THE PRIEST'S SPEECH

The *Relación de Michoacán* was written by an anonymous friar and presented to Antonio de Mendoza, viceroy of New Spain, in 1541. Cynthia Stone (2004:7) believes the largest time frame in which the *Relación de Michoacán* could have been in production was between the years 1538 and 1541 (other research and views on the timeline of the document's production can be found in León 1984:265–271; Warren 1977: 439–457; see also Oviedo [1537–1548] 1959, 4:252–253). The identity of the anonymous friar has been the source of some debate, though J. Benedict's Warren's (1971) suggestion that Jerónimo de Alcalá produced the document has gained general acceptance to the extent that a recent publication of the *Relación de Michoacán* cites him as the author (Alcalá 2000). The document was produced with the aid and testimony of numerous indigenous informants, scribes, and artists, leading Stone (2004) to eschew referring to Alcalá as the "author," instead choosing to refer to him more appropriately as the "friar-compiler" (and the role of "editor" and planner must also not be overlooked; see discussions in Stone's [2004] own work as well as in Espejel Carbajal [2008] and Fernández [2011]).

The friar-compiler's prologue explains that the *Relación de Michoacán* originally consisted of three parts (not including the prologue) (Alcalá 2000:330). Each part is then divided into chapters that contain related information or, in the case of the priest's narrative, related "events." The first part, which according to the prologue, told of the gods that the people of Michoacán worshipped and other religious practices, has since been lost, save for one folio. The third and final section of the *Relación de Michoacán* describes the responsibilities of state officials and members of the priesthood; recorded certain ethnographic facts such as marriage practices, mortuary rites, and military tactics; and tells the story of the Spanish "conquest" up

until the death of the last indigenous king in 1530. The picture of the Tarascan kingdom that emerges from this third section concerning the “ethnographic present” of the Tarascan kingdom on the eve of the Spaniards’ intrusion into Michoacán and into the earliest years of the colonial encounter is one of a highly centralized kingdom in which the ruler’s authority was unquestioned.³

The second part, the part that this book focuses on more than any other, is described in its first chapter as the story of “how the ancestors of the king came to this land and conquered it” (Alcalá 2000:330; all translations from Spanish are mine, except where otherwise noted). This section of the document is comprised of seventy-eight folios, the majority of these folios possessing writing on the front and back. In addition, it contains painted illustrations, just as the rest of the document, that depict some of the events described in the narrative. The story of the ancestors of the king was, the document tells us, recited once a year at a religious festival as a preamble to the punishment of wrongdoers (see figures 1.1a and 1.1b). During that festival it was the job of the high priest, the Petámuti, to tell this story, and other members of the priesthood would travel throughout the kingdom and recite the story in the towns of the kingdom. Essentially, the story relates how the Uacúsecha lineage began with a character named Hireticatame who arrived at Zacapu. Through the generations, his direct descendants moved into the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, settling first at Uayameo, then Pátzcuaro, and eventually Ihuatzio and Tzintzuntzan. The story details their relations with the peoples of central Michoacán and in particular the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin and its immediate surroundings; such relations focused on skirmishes and disputes but also intermarriage with certain groups. Throughout the story, the Uacúsecha are destined for greatness, and eventually they manage to subjugate these peoples and institute a unified kingdom with capitals at Pátzcuaro, Ihuatzio, and Tzintzuntzan, where apparently coreigning factions of the Uacúsecha lineage resided.

In this second part of the document, there are also sections that are not part of the priest’s narrative. Two sections help frame this narrative in its cultural context by describing the religious festival at which it was told and then the “summation,”⁴ as it could be described, in which the priest speaks directly to his audience and relates the point of telling the story to the context of the here and now. As Stone (2004:127–132, 135) points out, this part of the priest’s speech likely is in reference to the Early Colonial context in which the people and the king (or governor who had been acting in his place) had been subjugated by the Spaniards. The priest shames the audience because they have not been diligent and vigilant in their defense of the king and of the deity Curicaueri, the patron deity of the Uacúsecha royal dynasty and therefore the state as a whole. This could be similar to whatever form such a summary took in the prehispanic era (and the Tarascan kingdom



FIGURE 1.1. Depictions of Priest giving speech. (A) Depiction in the *Relación de Michoacán* by indigenous artists of the festival Equata cónsquaro. At this festival, wrongdoers were called before secular and religious authorities, and punishment was meted out. As part of this festival, the chief priest, the Petámuti, recited the “history” of the king’s ancestors. The chief priest is shown wearing his characteristic garb, including his metal “tweezers” on his chest supported by a necklace, and holding his sacred staff. It is a version of this “history” that comprises almost all of the second part of the document, the analysis of which is the subject of this book. This image follows the “chapter” heading that introduces the

narrative and precedes any of the text that tells that narrative or relates details concerning the festival. Gathered nobles, marked by the blue dots representing their turquoise lip plugs and their smoking pipes, appear to watch both the chief priest and the actual punishments. (B) Depiction in the *Relación de Michoacán* by indigenous artists of the chief priest relating his speech in front of a group of gathered people. At least some—the front row—are nobles of the Tarascan kingdom. They are marked as nobles by their lip plugs and their stools. This depiction comes at the end of the lengthy, multiple-chapters-long narration of the history of the Uacúsecha in the second part of the document. The illustration follows the chapter heading that introduces the text as essentially a “summation” of the point of telling the story and reminding those in attendance of the sad state of the god Curicaueri and precedes any of the actual text of that chapter of the document. Compositionally, it depicts largely the same thing as the illustration of figure 1a, except that here nothing else except the chief priest and the audience is shown; the narration appears abstracted out of its cultural context.

appears to have been engaged in frequent enough warfare that such rhetoric would not have seemed out of place), but in light of the subjugation and humiliation the royal dynasty had suffered, it certainly relates well to the Early Colonial Period. In both the prehispanic and Early Colonial contexts, the clear purpose is to legitimize

the state and the royal dynasty. The fact that in the two illustrations of the Petámuti speaking (Alcalá 2000:333, 525), he is doing so in front of the assembled lords of the realm in one illustration and in the other is accompanied by scenes of the punishment of criminals makes it clear that this speech is about the possession of power and the right to rule.

It is essential to note in regard to this discussion that we lack important information concerning the actual audience of the priest's testimony/narrative. The text of the *Relación de Michoacán* itself simply slides into the priest's narrative, saying that "the chief priest used to begin thusly" (Alcalá 2000:340). The narrative then follows this brief introduction. This construction of the context and subsequent narration omits who the narrator of the actual account recorded in the document was. It could have been the chief priest himself or it could have been another, lesser priest. The idea that a "pure" version told by "a" or "the" chief priest within the folios of the *Relación de Michoacán* lives on in the very common practice of referring to the narrative contained within the *Relación de Michoacán* as "the chief priest's narrative" (e.g., Kirchhoff 1956; Martínez Baracs 2005; Michelet 1989; Stone 2004),⁵ even though there is precious little information as to whether the chief priest actually narrated the version contained in the *Relación de Michoacán* or even if such an individual was alive at the time of the production of the document. We also have no idea if any Spaniards witnessed this narration in its original (at least as described) cultural context and the larger ceremony of the punishment of wrongdoers of which it was a part, nor how the friar-compiler found or asked a priest to recount or retell (or recreate) the narration for the purposes of producing the *Relación de Michoacán* itself. The context of the production of this narrative could have included a rather small audience composed only of the friar-compiler and other indigenous informants and scribes involved in the document's production.

On the other hand, whoever narrated the story contained in the *Relación de Michoacán* likely had a wider audience in mind. The document was presented to Viceroy Mendoza in 1541 (an event depicted in the frontispiece of the document itself), and judging by the friar-compiler's own prologue, the presentation of the document to the viceroy as a means of further converting the indigenes of Michoacán to Catholicism and pacifying them under Spanish rule was a goal at the outset of the production of the document. It could therefore be reasonably surmised that the indigenous persons who aided in its production and served as informants knew at least this proximate destination of the manuscript in the hands of Viceroy Mendoza. This could have led to their taking advantage of having such a powerful audience as the viceroy, in effect taking the opportunity to advocate certain positions to the viceroy in the context of this document (how this unique opportunity to speak directly to the viceroy was taken advantage of by the artists

that painted the illustrations is examined by Afanador-Pujol [2014, 2015]). It is also not rare in the context of the production of documents in colonial Mexico that information would be tailored to audiences that the document might be expected to encounter. In this regard, Stone (2004:14, 128–132) believes the narrator of the story contained in the *Relación de Michoacán* to have been speaking directly to the indigenous nobility in his prelude and summation, in effect chastising them for their lack of support of the king and the god Curicaueri. I agree that these passages take on a certain tone of admonishment and firmly ground the narration within the present context of the production of the document as a whole; it is worth noting again, however, that we have no evidence for whether or not these spoken words met directly with a public audience composed of the native nobility.

It is interesting to note, however, that Stone's investigation of the physical document and comparison with another Early Colonial document that contains passages almost identical to the *Relación de Michoacán* led her to conclude that "of the several drafts of the *Relación de Michoacán* produced from about 1538 to 1541, it is likely that at least one remained in the possession of the indigenous nobility" (Stone 2004:35). She also notes that a figure standing behind Viceroy Mendoza was subsequently painted over (see figure 1.2), and that "what makes this individual particularly compelling is his similarity in terms of size, clothing, and hairstyle to the sons of the Cazonci—Don Francisco Taríacuri and Don Antonio Huitziméngari—pictured in plate 27 [the illustration of the family tree within the document]" (Stone 2004:61) (see figure 1.3 for the illustration of the Uacúsecha royal dynasty / family tree as depicted in the *Relación de Michoacán*). While Stone (2004:62) hedges somewhat in her suggestion that this painted-over individual was a son of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, Rodrigo Martínez Baracs (2005:299) states more assertively his opinion that this figure must have been Don Francisco Taríacuri. In his interpretation of the "double significance" of the frontispiece in its original form, Martínez Baracs suggests that on one level, the more apparent and official (due to the erasure of the individual from view) level, the illustration depicts the transfer of the book, and the information it contains, from a Spanish friar to the Spanish viceroy. On the second level, however: "the governor [Don Pedro] and the three Indian priests . . . delivered to the future governor, Irecha or Cazonci, a manuscript that contained, for the first time in written form, the complete history of the gods of Michoacán, the festivals, the conquest of the territory and the formation of the kingdom, as the Petámuti had narrated it" (Martínez Baracs 2005:299).

The fact that the individual next to Mendoza was eliminated from the picture censored this aspect of Indian-to-Indian communication visible in the document but which nonetheless was likely a goal of indigenous informants who participated in the document's very production.



FIGURE 1.2. Line drawing of the frontispiece of the *Relación de Michoacán*. The illustration depicts the anonymous friar, Don Pedro Cuinierángari, and indigenous elders presenting the document to Viceroy Mendoza. A fish in Don Pedro's hat has been interpreted as an iconic indicator of his namesake (Saint Peter) but also his Islander identity. The hair and parts of the garments of the figure standing behind/above Viceroy Mendoza, the majority of this figure having been erased from the image, are emphasized in this drawing.

In addition to these framing chapters, the second part contains three additional chapters that relay “historical” information. Two tales follow the priest’s summation. The first (Alcalá 2000:533–534) tells the story of one of the great hero Táriacuri’s



FIGURE 1.3. Depiction in the *Relación de Michoacán* of the ancestors of the last indigenous Tarascan king, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, in the form of a family tree. Tzintzicha Tangáxoan is pictured at the top in the center of the figure, flanked by his sons Don Francisco Tariácuri (to the right of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan) and Don Antonio Huitziméngari (to the left). At the base is Hireticatame; a red line or string established something of a line of succession as given in the narrative of the *Relación de Michoacán*. Most of the members of the Uacúsecha are depicted according to the manner in which they were killed. Note the position of Tariácuri, at the midpoint of the tree but off-center on the right; he is below Don Francisco Tariácuri.

sons, Tamapucheca, who is barely mentioned in the priest's larger narrative, but is related in an ancillary way to the initiation of the conquests that created a unified kingdom. The second story, that of how a daughter of Taríacuri killed a nobleman from a rival town (Alcalá 2000:537–540), is introduced within the document as a story that a priest of Curicaueri had learned from a “grandfather.” This could mean a literal grandfather or, more likely, an elder and more knowledgeable person, as kinship terms are frequently used metaphorically in the document. The priest relays this tale upon a trip to Coríngaro, and has now told the friar (presumably) so that the friar could include it within the document. Finally, following these two tales is a chapter that names the Uacúsecha members who had ruled in the capitals following the initial establishment of the kingdom down through the years until the arrival of the Spaniards (Alcalá 2000:541–543). The fact that these episodes were remembered by the indigenous priesthood and perhaps nobility more generally and yet were purposefully left out of the priest's narrative as contained in the majority of the second part of the document is essential to my argument in this book. It demonstrates that the priest selected from a wide array of known or remembered events; I contend that there was a consistent underlying logic behind that process of selection and arrangement, and that this logic which points to Don Francisco Taríacuri succeeding his father as both the preservation of indigenous social and ideological structure and as the outcome of a coherent vision of a historical-looking chain of events is what the priest's narrative is really all about.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE PRODUCTION OF THE *RELACIÓN DE MICHŌACÁN*

The production and presentation of the document took place less than twenty years after the submission of the last native king, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, to the presence and supremacy of the Spaniards in his territory. As explained by Warren (1985), it is nearly impossible to speak of the “conquest” of Michoacán, or of the lands ruled over by Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, as a single event. There was no war, no battle, and no official surrender between the Spaniards and the indigenous government. Rather, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan acquiesced to the Spaniards' presence and actions in his capital of Tzintzuntzan and in time throughout his kingdom. Importantly, however, he also continued to exercise his own authority over his subjects, and this authority included receiving tribute and requiring the lords of his realm to attend court frequently and for long stretches of time (Warren 1985). Such practices, and the inherent instability of what was more or less an arrangement of two different authorities (the Spanish and the indigenous) that could not help but clash over certain issues, was brought to a tragic end when Beltrán Nuño de Guzmán, president of the First

Audiencia of New Spain, tried and then executed Tzintzicha Tangáxoan in 1530 (see Krippner-Martinez 2001; Scholes and Adams 1952; Warren 1985).

Don Pedro Cuinierángari had married a woman from the king's palace,⁶ and therefore because an adopted "brother" at least partially due to this status as an affine. Following Tzintzicha Tangáxoan's execution, Cuinierángari was made indigenous governor of the province after being supported by Spanish authorities.⁷ Don Pedro later became one of the primary informants in the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*, but it is important to emphasize that he was not properly of the king's lineage. Instead, Don Pedro was regarded as an "Islander" (this term, and the evidence for such a characterization will be explained through the course of the narrative and the analysis thereof; Stone [2004:157, 160] and Afanador-Pujol [2015] also discuss some of the evidence for Don Pedro's characterization as such and how this is represented in the document). Don Pedro was chosen because none of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan's sons were old enough to assume the office of leadership. Nonetheless, the rupture in kingly succession and the social inversion of having a formerly subordinate "Islander" assume the preeminent position of indigenous leadership was a point of contention in indigenous society, one that seemingly only grew in importance as the king's sons grew old enough to replace their father (see also Afanador-Pujol 2015).

Vasco de Quiroga, who first came to Michoacán as *oidor* of the First Audiencia of New Spain (1530–1538) (Martínez Baracs 2005:164) and would later become the first bishop of Michoacán (1538–1565), was also radically transforming the religious and political landscape at the time of the production of the *Relación de Michoacán* (Martínez Baracs 2005). One of his first acts was founding a *pueblo-hospital* at the site of the indigenous town of Uayameo, or Santa Fe as it would become known. Apparently this action was met with some enthusiasm by many indigenous nobles (Stone 2004:148–149). Don Pedro also played a major role in this event by giving Quiroga the land for the construction of the *pueblo-hospital*—land that could very well have come under his administration thanks to his marriage to numerous members of the royal family upon the arrival of the Spaniards in the first place. In this particular case, Afanador-Pujol (2015:137) notes that Don Pedro's wife, Doña Inés, complained in the contemporaneous legal dispute involving Juan de Infante (see below on this figure's importance) that some of the lands in question she had brought with her as part of her dowry in her marriage to Don Pedro, and that some of these lands had in turn been given to Quiroga. The largest upheaval occurred when Quiroga moved the seat of the diocese of Michoacán from Tzintzuntzan, capital of the Tarascan kingdom, to Pátzcuaro in 1538–1539 (Martínez Baracs 2005:chap. 6). Pátzcuaro had been an important place in the prehispanic era, and possibly was the most sacred site in the kingdom even at the time of the Spaniards'

arrival (Alcalá 2000:363–365). Quiroga had his own motivations for the transfer, and his role in the (re)founding of Pátzcuaro saw the development of a mythology of its own (which are beyond the scope of the current book). Among the indigenous nobility the transfer either created or exposed large fissures. Some nobles favored the move, while others, presumably more loyal (or more closely related) to Tzintzicha's lineage in Tzintzuntzan strongly opposed the move, and members of both sides lined up to offer their testimony on the issue. The Spaniards themselves were hardly monolithic, as the Franciscans (as well as Mendoza himself) opposed Quiroga. In the end, Quiroga won, and the seat of the diocese was moved.

Another legal issue of great magnitude—the status of a large and possibly fraudulent *encomienda* (a colonial grant of land and native inhabitants to provide labor service on or related to that land) claim by Juan de Infante—was being fought over at the time of the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*. This fight endured for many years and involves a significant number of back-and-forth judgments and reversals; here I will briefly summarize its salience for understanding the priest's narrative. First and foremost, this case was likely the most pressing issue for Viceroy Mendoza, and it was a significant motivation in his many visits to Michoacán and was related to the impetus for the production of the document. Its resolution was in many ways going to set important precedents for the colony of New Spain and how it would be run and by whom. At issue was essentially whether Juan de Infante had the right to claim numerous towns within the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin as parts of his *encomienda* or alternatively if all of the towns of that lake basin essentially constituted *barrios*, or segments of the capital (see Warren 1963, 1985; see also Afanador-Pujol 2015:12). Indigenous nobles contended that the entire lake basin was one unit and could not be split apart; from their point of view, especially from the point of view of the descendants of the king and his closest allies, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan had peacefully acquiesced to the presence of the Spaniards and their imposition of authority in what had been provincial areas of the kingdom were tolerable so long as the lake basin remained in his and his family's possession (Afanador-Pujol 2015:102–104). The integrity of the lake basin was also imagined by Hernán Cortés, who took the basin as his own personal *encomienda* (and later the lake basin had become a possession of the Spanish Crown directly after Cortés had fallen out of favor for various reasons that are tangential to the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*). While the final results are not specifically consequential to the production of the *Relación de Michoacán* and in fact this legal struggle extended past its production, the combined effect of this fight and the fight over the move of the diocese to Pátzcuaro created a highly complex colonial situation in which various groups were simultaneously at odds with and allied with other groups, depending on which issue in particular is being considered and how each of those struggles

was going at any particular moment. For example, Quiroga had gotten in the good graces of some members of the indigenous nobility by fighting against Juan de Infante, even threatening or perhaps actually taking up arms against the *encomendero*, even as they resisted his proposal to move the diocese (Afanador-Pujol 2015:102; Martínez Baracs 2005; Warren 1963, 1985; Warren and Monzón 2004). Quiroga and Franciscan friars, who were the most significant agents of religious conversion in the earliest years of the colonial encounter, demonstrated rifts among the colonizers themselves; the Franciscans advocated for the diocese to remain in Tzintzuntzan, where they had established their first chapel. Among indigenous peoples, those loyal to Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, or more precisely his heirs, were forced to simultaneously work with Don Pedro in the production of the *Relación de Michoacán* in order to present a united front that would preserve the integrity of the Pátzcuaro Basin as a single political unit even as they fought against Don Pedro and strongly implicated that due to his “Islander” and therefore subordinate status he was essentially unfit to hold the office of governor, a point made by Afanador-Pujol (2015:13, 22, also 93).

The legal fights and status of possessions and questions of leadership were also taking place at the same time that the heirs of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan were reaching an age when they could fight for what many viewed as their birthright. The eldest son of the last king was named Don Francisco Taríacuri, and along with his brother Don Antonio Huitziméngari he had served as a page in the court of Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza since 1535 (Afanador-Pujol 2010; 2015:25). As the eldest son of the last king, Don Francisco had already begun to become a player in local and regional politics, returning to Tzintzuntzan from Viceroy Mendoza’s court to protest Quiroga’s proposed movement of the seat of the diocese to Pátzcuaro in person in 1538 (López Sarrelangue 1965:170). He and his brother Don Antonio are shown apart from, and smaller than, a group of indigenous noblemen in an illustration (painting 9) of deliberations over the move contained in Pablo Beaumont’s *Crónica de Michoacán* (1932 [1778–1780], written in the eighteenth century but based on earlier sources (see Roskamp 1997).

Documentary evidence indicates that Don Francisco Taríacuri was treated as a *ladino*, a term that was applied to indigenous peoples, mostly descendants of the prehispanic aristocracies who could take advantage of their position and ancestry, who had learned Castilian and furthermore gained rights otherwise restricted to Spaniards through the Spanish colonial legal system. Afanador-Pujol (2010:301; translations those of Afanador-Pujol) writes that “Don Francisco knew Spanish legal traditions and used them effectively” and discusses the testimony of Viceroy Mendoza in support of Don Francisco Taríacuri’s *probanza* (a legal document that is a collection of evidence in support of, or as a petition for, a legal status or privileges),

in which the viceroy states that Don Francisco “always ‘dressed in Spanish clothes’” and “‘dealt like a Spaniard.’” In this way, Don Francisco Taríacuri was largely in step with most members of the indigenous nobility in pursuing the best possible arrangements for themselves under the imposed Spanish colonial system. The strategy of these elites was essentially one of accommodation and acquiescence to that system and its new rules. Members of the indigenous nobility engaged in such a strategy in order to keep what wealth they still had and could reasonably hope to maintain against various encroachments and the effects of new legal and economic realities, as well as distinguish themselves from the commoners by seeking privileges that Spaniards enjoyed (just as Don Francisco had done; see also Kuthy 1996, 2003; López Sarrelangue 1965). Tarascan elites were thus not significantly different from elites throughout Mesoamerica, who similarly seemed to have sought wealth and privileges based on their lineage, whether real or fabricated, as well as the extent to which they embraced the arrival of the Spaniards as a chance to remake their place in society.⁸ Part of the aim was to prevent the collapse of the distinction between nobles and commoners, a collapse which the K’iche’ Maya author or authors of the *Popol Vuh* (see Christensen 2007), for example, explicitly mourned roughly a decade and a half after the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*. Oftentimes Tarascan nobles, again like members of the indigenous nobilities of societies throughout Mesoamerica, sought those privileges through the Spanish court system and as such had to present themselves as deserving subjects of the Crown’s justice—and therefore in the process represent themselves as willingly subservient and loyal subjects of that Crown. In other words, these nobles, including Don Francisco Taríacuri, had no reserve about maximizing their position and status in the developing colonial order by petitioning and taking on the Spanish legal system and at times the Crown itself, but did so according to the Crown’s rules of engagement.

On some level the priest’s narrative constitutes an act of covert resistance, or at least by calling for Don Francisco Taríacuri to accede to the governorship he is hoping that indigenous society and its political structure can be conserved if not restored in some form. Surely this would have been against the Spaniards’ goals, and so it is important to consider among the large amount of evidence for indigenous accommodation among the political elites and nobility of the Spanish colonial system, instances in which actions by indigenous peoples contested the encroaching Spanish hegemony. There are a few instances of engagement and resistance in Michoacán that fall outside of the realm of the Crown’s preferred battlefield, the imposed legal and official system the rules of which it could ostensibly control. One example is the backdrop to the trial spearheaded by Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán that ended in Tzintzicha Tangáxoan’s death. Guzmán was at the time leading a military expedition into what is today Jalisco to conquer the peoples of the region (see

recent discussions of the efforts to “pacify” that region in Weigand 2015a, 2015b). Success in this endeavor was reliant on indigenous allies, just as indigenous allies had played a significant role in earlier Spanish conquests throughout Mesoamerica (Restall 2004; Matthew and Oudijk 2007; Yannakakis 2011). Some of the questions put to Tzintzicha Tangáxoan and other members of the Tarascan nobility concerned the possibility of an ambush of Tarascan soldiers based on rumors that Guzmán had heard; his mission could ill afford dissension among the ranks of indigenous allies, let alone open rebellion. Other questions put to the Tarascan king and other nobles also concerned whether or not he or his subordinates were responsible for the deaths of a few Spaniards in his kingdom during that uneasy period when both power structures vied for their existence and for supremacy. We will likely never know what role if any Tzintzicha Tangáxoan played in such deaths, nor whether there ever was an actual threat of ambush on the road into present-day Jalisco, but the fact that these events existed in the realm of possibility for Guzmán and at least some of his fellow Spaniards could indicate that in certain regards or at certain times, acts of open rebellion by the Tarascan elites were at least not unthinkable. Even the act of gathering up the ashes of the dead king from the Lerma River, carried out by numerous indigenous peoples following his trial and execution (as in the second quote that opens this book), was from a juridical point of view a rebellious one—it violated Guzmán’s explicit desire that there be nothing left of the king that could serve as a rallying point or foment rebellion among the indigenous populace (Alcalá 2000:689–690; Scholes and Adams 1952; Warren 1985)—if not also a symbolic one.⁹

The *Relación de Michoacán* itself states that after the death of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, the people had to be put in prisons to keep them from fleeing (Alcalá 2000:690). Later, chroniclers of the region in the eighteenth century would claim that due to the death of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan indigenous peoples “renounced the Spanish government and Michoacán was temporarily lost ‘to God and to the King’” (Afanador-Pujol 2015:163; the quote is from Moreno 1989). Guzmán is a dichotomous figure in Mexican history and has been ever since his ouster (Afanador-Pujol 2010; Martínez Baracs 2005; Warren 1985), in large part because of actions such as the trial and execution of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, and so political motivations to reflect poorly on the man cannot be ruled out in these after-the-fact reports of the consequences of Guzmán’s actions. If such reports are true (and political motivations do not necessarily indicate that they are not), there is a sense that certain drastic actions could be and in some respects were met with indigenous defiance of the process of imposing a colonial order.

In addition, the supposed presence of armed indigenous warriors that accompanied Quiroga’s actions in forestalling an act of possession by Juan de Infante should

not be minimized; whether or not such a force existed, Infante apparently believed that it was within the realm of possibility. While such an armed force of indigenous warriors (if it existed) was acting in concert with a Spaniard, and a powerful one at that in Quiroga, and perhaps those warriors might not have been willing to take up arms against Infante without Quiroga playing a role in the affair, I suggest that at certain times and in regards to certain issues, extrajudicial (or legally highly ambiguous) actions and the threat of violence were believed to be possible.

In sum, the context of the production of the *Relación de Michoacán* was a highly contentious one in which numerous individual agendas and the presence of multiple factions with competing interests renders a simple dichotomy between “conquerors” and “conquered” misleading. Furthermore, the individuals and factions allied themselves with one another in a manner that was quite transitory and limited to specific goals—not only were these alliances liable to shift at a moment’s notice but they crosscut one another at any single point in time. For any particular individual or faction, delineating goals and priorities was itself a culturally and historically mediated process, such as the desire of the indigenous nobility to preserve not merely a gap in wealth between themselves and former subordinates, but a social gap marked by different privileges and bodily adornment and modes of being (e.g., wearing Spanish-style clothing and hairstyles and obtaining the right to own and ride a horse). Kuthy’s (1996; see also 2003) study demonstrates that one strategy employed by Tarascan elites for preserving their privileges and offices in the Colonial era was to rotate offices among themselves and thereby keep lower elites from assuming them. These were not merely social concerns but also reflected ideological beliefs in the nature of hierarchy and the interrelationship between sociopolitical position and the spiritual essence of personhood—rulers had the right to rule because spiritually or ideologically they were different kinds of people (see especially López Austin 1973, 1988 for Mesoamerica in general and Martínez González 2010, 2011 for Michoacán in particular). For them, preserving a social system was about economics and privilege, but it also had significant undertones that related to very basic understandings of how the cosmos worked and how the social world of humans fit into and reflected more totalizing ideas concerning how that larger cosmos worked.

Turning toward the issue of ideology and religion, little is explicitly known concerning the impacts of the imposition of the colonial order on the indigenous people relied upon to mediate or interpolate between the human world and the cosmos, namely, the indigenous priesthood. Priests in indigenous society clearly held respected positions above the commoners, but they were not members of the aristocratic class strictly speaking for the simple fact that they had no claims to land in the same manner as the native nobility. They appear in the *Relación de*

Michoacán to have been essentially members of the state bureaucratic field and to have lived off of the state's largesse in the form of "temple lands," though of course differentiated from the lay bureaucracy (Alcalá 2000:568–569). They tended to the temples and the idols of the gods and their accouterments, performed rites and ceremonies of a purely religious nature, officiated politically motivated rites of passage such as marriages that cemented alliances between the king and subordinate lords, spoke on behalf of the king, and made speeches in preparation for war and even fought in war as both warriors and bearers of flags or standards as well as the god idols themselves (Alcalá 2000:568, 584). The subject matter of those occupations—namely, theological and philosophical understandings of the cosmos—was of course the target of intense efforts at eradication on the part of both secular and religious Spanish officials in the new colonial order. Without anything resembling an indigenous state apparatus, moreover, the priesthood must have lost its primary source of patronage. The at least nominal conversion of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan to Christianity and his baptism into the new faith, along with the baptism of the other members of the nobility including the king's sons, was likely also problematic for the indigenous priests. These different but interrelated processes could only have brought into stark clarity the reality that their role was severely threatened. In this way, while the priesthood was officially the keepers of tradition and history in the Tarascan kingdom, and it is important to remember that in Mesoamerica as in many societies "tradition" and "history" are bound up with ideological ideas concerning how human history *should* work as it must fit with larger cosmological precepts (Boone 2000, 2007; Gillespie 1989; see chapter 2), their experiences and viewpoint with respect to the encroaching colonial order was unique and different in significant respects from any other class or faction of indigenous peoples. This fact only underscores the necessity to examine the ways in which "historicity" is multiple and unavoidably operates with respect to social position and the differential outlooks on various modes of social action in the flow of time (see chapter 3).

LITERALIST ASSUMPTIONS AND THE PROBLEM OF TARÍACURI

In this respect, it is essential to provide background regarding how native historical traditions have been treated in Mesoamerican studies. Investigations of the ethno-historic record of Michoacán have been part and parcel of these larger trends, and below I detail specifically how understandings of the priest's speech in the *Relación de Michoacán* in particular have been grounded in the same implicit predispositions and biases. The search for and claims of having found unproblematic, historical information that characterized early studies of the *Relación de Michoacán* and ethnohistoric documents throughout Mesoamerica were aided in large part by the

nature of Mesoamerican societies themselves. Mesoamerica as a culture area was home to complex societies that produced and kept records concerned with the past, in contrast to other areas encountered by European colonialists. As such, indigenous informants drew upon a rich tradition of relating the past within the present in their responses to Spanish colonial authorities, often using, interpreting, and reinterpreting existing documents. The fact that Mesoamerica was composed of cultures that possessed such a rich written and literary tradition when it came to their past—and additionally that this tradition was produced within entirely different assumptions of meaning, temporality, and evidence—makes it an important anthropological site for different case studies. Tarascan society has at times been seen as having a problematic relationship to the rest of Mesoamerica and by extension its literary traditions (Anawalt 1992; Pollard 1993a; Roskamp 1998; Stone 2004), but this is changing in favor of accepting more of a cultural literacy that produced written (or painted—see chapter 2) documents than was previously acknowledged. At the very least we can say that Tarascan society possessed a rich tradition of oral history and oratory, codified particularly within the indigenous priesthood, which was likely buttressed to some extent by physical documents (see below). Such variation and particularities of practice only add, furthermore, to the complex but rewarding task of attempting to understand how Tarascan practitioners regarded and engaged their histories in the task of making, remaking, and relating their past to the present, and thus how they relate to the larger Mesoamerican tradition.

Past scholarship on Mesoamerican societies' relations with their pasts has typically had its own agenda of taking indigenous testimonies and historical representations and distilling out the "real" historical past from indigenous sources. In this regard Tarascan culture and history, and the *Relación de Michoacán* in particular, have been examined very much within this mainstream. Investigating some "true" prehispanic past has entailed dividing such representations into presumably or "demonstrably" (using historical methods such as source criticism and confirmation in multiple sources) historical parts and mythical parts. In some instances, whole documents were classified as "mythic" or "historical" in orientation (see discussion in Gillespie 1989), and the priest's narrative in the *Relación de Michoacán* has for a long time been implicitly treated as a historical source. Isolated characterizations of the "deeper past" in the narrative as "mythic" and other episodes in the more recent past as allegory aside (such characterizations are footnoted along with the presentation and analysis of the narrative in chapter 4), this narrative has for many reasons been treated as a reasonable approximation of the real prehispanic past (Haskell 2013, 2015; Kirchhoff 1956; López Austin 1981; Martínez Baracs 2005; Roskamp 2010a, 2011). At the very least it is often presented as the past and the historical events that produced the Tarascan kingdom, with little to no mention of the assumptions behind its use as such.

This interpretive framework has been increasingly recognized as a deeply flawed one. By dichotomizing between myth and history, scholars do a severe disservice to the creative products of highly skilled indigenous scholars in literature and history. In the hands of Western scholars, “historical” sources are contaminated by “mythic” material or alternatively historical events become “garbled” mythological ideas or concepts. “Mythic” sources are purely, or nearly so, the products of an indigenous mentality in which events are subordinated to ideology and indigenous scholars thereby reproduce their culture, boiled down to an ideology that cosmological structure perpetuates itself at the expense of historical events. Implicitly, the dichotomy robs indigenous scholars of their own agency, and their own *kinds* of agency. On the one hand they are seen as embodiments of Levi-Strauss’s oft-criticized “cold” societies in which history’s events barely enter the equation and ideology reproduces itself even without agency on the part of these scholars.¹⁰ On the other hand indigenous scholars could be categorized as “historically minded,” in the same sense as modern Western historians, scholars who unimaginatively recite events from the past in the same order that they happened. In the most extreme form of such “historicism” as applied to the priest’s narrative, some modern scholars presume that the priest was merely a vehicle for tradition, reciting a fixed and unalterable narrative that had been passed down to him over generations of fellow priests (as in Kirchhoff’s view, discussed below). Either way, there is no room for indigenous agency, and this is a result of a lack of anthropological imagination, a “defective framework of analysis in anthropology” (Whitehead 2003:xi), rather than a reflection of the actual abilities of past practitioners of what we have come to call “historicity”—the active production of the relation between the past, present, and future.

Literalist or historicist readings of the priest’s speech in the *Relación de Michoacán* can be traced back to at least the turn of the twentieth century, and indeed they might be implicit in the understandings and goal of the friar that guided the production of the document. Due to the human-centric (rather than deity-centric¹¹) nature of the priest’s narrative and the admittedly immense level of detail it contains, in coordination with the rise and dominance of “literal-mindedness” (Burke 1990) among historians, the priest’s narrative was interpreted at the outset of serious scholarly inquiry as “historical.” More recent investigations of the narrative and the document as a whole have undertaken a more nuanced approach to the document, detailing how the specific words and phrases used reveal biases and struggles for power between the many factions involved in its production. In addition, the instrumental nature of the narrative as the priest who told it used the occasion to have his telling recorded in such an important document is being increasingly recognized and made the focus of scrutiny. In spite of these advances, however, there remains a bias toward regarding the narrative as “historical.”

An early “father” of the modern study of the prehispanic Tarascan kingdom and its history was Nicolás León. Writing in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, León leaned heavily on the *Relación de Michoacán* in order to write his “Tarascan Kings” (Reyes tarascos [1903]). By doing so, León effectively assumed that the document was authoritative and accurate in terms of its representation of the prehispanic past. A half-century later, in his “preliminary study” of the *Relación de Michoacán*, which accompanied its 1956 publication, Paul Kirchhoff codified and defended the logic behind this assumption. Kirchhoff (1956: xx) states that we are dealing with a text whose parts “have the character of words fixed by tradition. Observe, in the first place, the great historical narration of the chief priest that, it seems, is reproduced word for word.” If these tales and narrations are “fixed by tradition,” then what is being reproduced “word for word” is not simply what the chief priest is telling the friar, but what that priest had learned from his predecessors as part of that fixing. This is all to say that Kirchhoff interpreted the enormous amount of detail in the priest’s version of the history recorded in the *Relación de Michoacán* as evidence that the narrative was memorized and passed down from generation to generation, as an unalterable text.¹²

León’s basic assumption, codified by Kirchhoff, that the priest’s narrative was a fairly faithful representation of the prehispanic past went mostly unchallenged for decades. More recently, however, the *Relación de Michoacán* as a whole and the priest’s narrative specifically have been the subject of interrogation. One vein of this examination has been the investigation of the mismatch of word choice and rhetoric in the document in contrast to what was going on in the larger context of the document’s production. Thus a “bias” toward the Tzintzuntzan faction of the Uacúsecha (the Uanacaze) has been identified due to the fact that the document refers to Tzintzuntzan as “Michoacán,” implying the title of “Ciudad de Michoacán.” This title was, however, one that Tzintzuntzan could no longer claim, due to the fact that Bishop Quiroga moved the seat of the diocese in 1538, thereby also moving the colonial and indigenous governments to Pátzcuaro. As part of this move, Pátzcuaro now claimed the title “Ciudad de Michoacán.” To refer to Tzintzuntzan as such was to make a point concerning this transfer and its propriety or lack thereof (Bravo Ugarte 1962b; Martínez Baracs 1989, 2005; Roskamp 1998; see also summary in Stone 2004:123–124). The appreciation that, at least in such minutiae, the *Relación de Michoacán* was produced to reflect certain positions is thus a departure from Kirchhoff’s (1956) earlier analysis in which speeches were passed down and related to the friar “word for word.” Like Kirchhoff, however, the advocates of this “Tzintzuntzanist” position still adopt a historicist view of the narrative, that is, that it does describe some version of the “real” past, just from a biased viewpoint with an axe to grind.

Roskamp has done much work to advance the state of research into representations of the Tarascan past in recent years and generally takes the view that Tarascan narratives of the past constitute what he calls “sacred history” (Roskamp 2012:124).¹³ His work has shone an essential light on the presence of a distinct historical tradition among a community of noble Nahua speakers in Tzintzuntzan who present themselves in one document as essential to the transition of power to Tzintzuntzan and the ascendancy of King Tzitzispandáquare, the grandfather of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, there (Monzón, Roskamp, and Warren 2009; Roskamp 2010a, 2012, 2015; see also Haskell 2013). More recently he has compared the version of the past presented in the *Relación de Michoacán* by the priest with this Nahua tradition concerning Tzintzuntzan, another Nahua tradition from the southern copper-mining area of Michoacán in the form of the *Lienzo de Jicalán*,¹⁴ and other Purhépecha (Tarascan) language or Purhépecha community primordial land titles (*Títulos Primordiales*) (Roskamp 2010b, 2015; see table 1.1 for a listing of the documents and the Uacúsecha members mentioned in each). He notes the differences between these land titles and the priest’s “official” version recorded in the *Relación de Michoacán* but focuses more on the similarities that they all possess. In contrast, I believe that the differences manifested in these documents are salient to an understanding of how historicity was practiced by various communities in Michoacán, particularly insofar as they list Uacúsecha characters (some of whom reportedly functioned as kings) out of order, introduce names not found in the *Relación de Michoacán*, delete names found in that document, at times discuss Uacúsecha members as ruling at the same time or being brothers in ways that differ from the *Relación de Michoacán*, and finally attribute greatness or critically important events (such as founding towns) to different Uacúsecha members. Note in table 1.1 that Taríacuri’s status as the main Uacúsecha character is far from universal, and in many documents he is completely absent. In almost all of the documents any genealogical relationships between members that are mentioned in the *Relación de Michoacán* are different in the other sources.

It is furthermore crucial to note that in spite of the proclamations of caveats that the priest’s narrative is problematically “legendary history,” “biased,” and contains “mythical” or “allegorical” elements, when it comes down to “writing” or “describing” the prehistory of Michoacán, such caveats are forgotten and the version of “history” presented in the *Relación de Michoacán* is re-presented as the prehispanic past, as if the priest’s narrative is good enough as a historical source to use it as the main, or sole, basis of reconstructions of that past. Most commonly this process of re-presenting the priest’s narrative as a stand-in for “the” prehispanic past is straightforward and presented in a style of history familiar to Westerners as a sequence of events or actions. Frequently the characters of the deep past, beginning with

TABLE 1.1. List of ethnohistoric documents from Purhépecha communities and the *Uacúsecha* leaders/kings that they mention, along with sources that discuss and in some cases reproduce the documents.

<i>Ethnohistoric Document</i>	<i>Uacúsecha Kings</i>	<i>Source(s)</i>
<i>Relación de Michoacán</i>	Hireticatame, Sicuirancha, Paucume, Uapeani, Curátame, Uapeani, Pauacume, Aramen, Cetaco, Taríacuri, [†] Tangáxoan,* Hiripan,* Curátame, Hiquíngaxe,* Tzitzispandáquare, Ticatame, Hiquíngaxe, Zuangua, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan	Alcalá 2000
Códice Plancarte (Carapan)	Rey Haramé,* Rey Vacusticatame,* Rey Tzitzispandáquare,* Rey Tziuanqua, Rey Taríacuri, Rey Sicuirhancha, Rey Carapu, Rey Thagajoan tzintzicha	<i>Códice Plancarte</i> 1959; see also Roskamp 2003, 2015
Genealogía de los Caciques de Carapan	Calapu, Uacusticatame, Sicuirancha, Tzitzispandáquare, Zuangua, Don Francisco Tsitsicha Dag	León 1903; Roskamp 2003
Lienzo de Pátzcuaro, Lienzo de Carapan	Haramé, Uacusticatame, Carapu, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, Pauacupe	Roskamp 2003
Coats of Arms of Tzintzuntzan, 1593	Haramé, Uacusticatame	Roskamp 1997, 2002
Coat of Arms of Tzintzuntzan, early eighteenth century	Sinsicha, Chiguangua (Zuangua), Chiguacua	Beaumont 1932; Roskamp 2011
Lienzo de Nahuatzen	Yrecha Tsintsicha	Roskamp 2004
Lienzo de Aranza	Possible depiction of Yrecha Tzintzicha, only visible in a drawing by Pablo García Abarca in the late nineteenth century and the location of which in the original is unclear	Roskamp and César Villa 2003 (on the possible doubt surrounding the depiction of Tzintzicha see pg. 235)
Primordial Title from Jarácuaro, version 1	Chupitante,* Cacua,* Vipinchuan,* Hareme,* Gusman,* Tsintsichan,* Tsipetaqua,* [†] Phanguarequa,* Quitsique, Sinderindi	Roskamp 2010b; see also discussion in Roskamp 2012; León 1906
Primordial Title from Jarácuaro, version 2	Ziuanqua, [†] who has three sons, (from oldest to youngest) Tzintzicha, Tzitzispandáquare, Taríacuri	Roskamp 2010b; see also discussion in Roskamp 2012; León 1906

* Kings who are said to have existed at the same time / ruled jointly within each respective document.

[†] Importance/greatness in cases in which one king or character is clearly more important than others. I point out this inescapable fact not to cast aspersions on Tarascan historicity, as to our Western eye these data appear to be a jumbled mess. On this point I would simply say that this would be a result of expecting Tarascan historicity to conform to Western historicity, which it does not seem to do; this basic

continued on next page

Table 1.1 continued

statement is part of the point of this book. More specifically to the point, moreover, we must recognize that Tariacuri's prominence in the *Relación de Michoacán* becomes something to be investigated rather than assumed as historical fact for the actual prehispanic past. Seeing Tariacuri's prominence in the assumed prehispanic past is, I argue, largely the result of interpreting the priest's narrative in the *Relación de Michoacán* as the "official" state history and as (therefore) good enough for the "real past." The guiding assumption is that because it is the "official" state history, the priest that told the narrative must have been in the best position to draw on the institutionalization of education and memory, and therefore that the narrative constitutes the "best" and/or "fullest" account of the real past. Concomitant with this implicit view is the belief that it is likely to be the closest approximation of both the real past and a prehispanic version of a narrative of the Uacúsecha's origins and exploits in the formation of a unified kingdom that we will likely never have available to us. Roskamp (2015:125–126) displays such historicist assumptions concerning the Priest's Speech by holding it as a benchmark against which to evaluate these other documents: "Whereas some documents include accurate and extensive references that coincide with elements from the official history of the lineage (recorded in the petámuti's discourse), others include information that is less certain." Note here how Roskamp assumes that the priest's narrative is the most factual, but that this contention is not demonstrated nor explicitly defended on theoretical grounds. I take the point of view that the priest's narrative and the Priest that formulated it had the most at stake—the future of the royal dynasty and what overarching political organization it still symbolized and headed—and therefore might be the *most* unconventional or the most significant departure from the prehispanic and Early Colonial representations of the past that had existed up until that time.

the founder of the Uacúsecha, Hireticatame, are called "mythical" or "legendary." Martínez Baracs (2005:96–98), for example, calls this founding character "mythic" but proceeds to give dates ("ca. 1340–1360") to his son Sicuirancha and for every Uacúsecha member that follows. This basic approach, of finding some dividing line between a past that is presumably too far gone to have been represented faithfully and a recent past as represented in narrative in a way that is believed to be close enough to the real past is universal across discussions of the prehispanic past of the Tarascan state. Only the particular boundary line between "legendary" and "historical" shifts, and even then it only shifts slightly, insofar as interpretations only vary by a generation or two in terms of when they see "history" as beginning in the *Relación de Michoacán*. Furthermore, Kirchhoff (1956) and Alfredo López Austin (1981) go beyond mere representation and base their interpretations of the rise of the state as the result of the economic and military bases and capacities of the feuding factions/polities as described in the priest's narrative.

THE RISKS OF RECENT EMPHASES ON HYBRIDITY IN THE *RELACIÓN DE MICHOCÁN*

Contemporary ethnohistorians, influenced by developments in postcolonial theory and studies of the relationship between colonial-era ethnohistoric documents and the context in which they were produced, have recently begun to emphasize the inescapably colonial nature of the document and the priest's role in its production.

This is a productive line of inquiry, and there is much to be said for approaching the *Relación de Michoacán* as an inescapably hybrid document (Afanador-Pujol 2010, 2015; Espejel Carbajal 2008; Fernández 2011; Stone 2004). It is the product of a number of agencies, as reflected in the difference of the sources for the two quotes—one (the narrator of the history of the Uacúsecha) a priest and likely a frustrated advocate of the old order and the other (Don Pedro Cuinierángari) an individual whose newfound status was entirely due to the fluidity of the colonial encounter itself. It is undoubtedly a predominantly Spanish document, as a Franciscan friar was asked by the viceroy of New Spain to produce such a document, this friar appears to have chosen those who participated in its production, he exercised editorial control over its contents, and most obviously of all the document was written in Spanish. More than this, the *Relación de Michoacán* was a complex amalgamation of goals, intentions, viewpoints, and collaborations. It was furthermore likely influenced by a much wider cultural dialog and interchange that is now being investigated in its many manifestations and implications by a number of scholars working from various disciplines.¹⁵ I do not deny that the priest who told his story for its production was a historically and politically situated actor; in fact this point is a central part of my argumentation. The manner in which he was brought into the project shaped the ultimate form of the *Relación de Michoacán* and so too must this opportunity to tell “a” or even “the story of the royal dynasty” (as it would come to be, given the prominence of the document, a fact the priest very well might have appreciated) shaped his narrative as he sought to influence, in an authoritative way, the historical moment in which he found himself. His allegiances and alliances with the indigenous nobility, his relationship with the indigenous gods, and perhaps certain Spaniards all likely shaped his narrative as well. Those shaping processes thus makes the narrative hybrid in many complex and interwoven ways.

The fact that the priest’s exhortation to his people in the quote that opens this book is an agentic act has been recognized (Stone 2004). Similarly, certain disparate passages of the priest’s narrative and other passages based on indigenous testimony have recently been viewed as agentic acts on the part of these indigenous persons in the face of attempts to impose Spanish hegemony; the same can be said for the illustrations of the document (Afanador-Pujol 2015). However, it is something of a tragic irony that contemporary investigations of the subtleties of cultural dialog in the Early Colonial dialog between cultures, interpretations of collaboration and tension evident in such projects (Afanador-Pujol 2010, 2015; Stone 2004), and hybridity or even the modeling of the priest’s words on European forms of rhetoric and argumentation (Espejel Carbajal 2008; Fernández 2011), run the risk of downplaying or detracting from the voices of the indigenous people.¹⁶ Such voices are complex, as are their relations to such projects, and I do not wish to minimize

this complexity (nor return to a naive indigeneity that it is intended to correct; see Quiroa 2011). However, as anthropologists and historians have sought to investigate agency and alternative and even complementary processes of accommodation and resistance in the imposition of a colonial order, an admirable goal, such efforts have been undercut in part due to this new emphasis in which everything is hybrid and novel, and nothing can be called “authentically” indigenous. Such a viewpoint fails to incorporate advancements in anthropological theory ever since the “historical turn” that view culture as always in flux. “Authenticity” is problematic in such a theoretical view so long as “authentic” is used to mean “static” (Ohnuki-Tierney 2001, 2005). Simply because the context of production is ineluctably tied up in colonialist power relations and historical contingencies does not necessarily imply that individual and agentic protestations and responses to such processes are not “indigenous” so long as “indigenous” incorporates some theoretical room for culturally influenced agency, praxis, and improvisation (e.g., in the manner of Bourdieu 1977; see chapter 3 in this book).

Such an emphasis on hybridity in its many manifestations also fails to engage the hierarchical nature of culture and particularly of the symbolic forms that exist in a recursive relationship with it. For this particular study of narrative, Terence Turner’s work is the explicit literature of reference concerning the hierarchical nature of culture (Turner 1969, 1977, 1985; this oeuvre on narrative draws on Piaget’s structuralism, which is thoroughly hierarchical—see Turner [1973] on the adaptation of Piaget’s work in anthropology). In such an understanding of culture, hybridity can and does exist, but it can exist at various levels. A Spanish or European element can be used but at the level of “surface content,” while the deeper-level structure can remain much as it had before. Of course, one of Marshall Sahlins’s (1981, 1985, 2004) main points is that in time the substitution at the surficial level has deeper-level consequences, but his other point is that this is precisely the object of analysis—how culture changes over time but now with the recognition that changes in different phenomena happen at various levels at various times (see also, e.g., Fausto and Heckenberger, 2007; Gillespie 1989; Hill 1988; Ohnuki-Tierney 1990a, 1990b; Ohnuki-Tierney 2005; Parmentier 1987; Rosaldo 1980a, 1980b).¹⁷ Bringing this argument to the realm of the concrete and the case at hand, it is inescapably true that in many ways the *Relación de Michoacán* and the priest’s narrative within it are hybrid products. The document, and presumably the friar who interjects in the midst of the priest’s narrative, is explicit on this point: the narrative from the point of the friar’s own early interjection onward is going to be different than the priest would have told it, indeed as he began to tell it before that interjection (Alcalá 2000:341). This is the clearest and most explicit influence, but there are undoubtedly others up to and including the facts that the narrative would

have been told to indigenous lords as opposed to a Spanish friar and that it would have served to legitimate the rule of the indigenous king rather than (as I contend) advocate for a new king. These indications of hybridity are clear and self-evident. It would also be a mistake, however, to presume that such hybridity—the infiltration of Spanish influence and the contingent facts of history—left its mark and did so to the same extent at all levels of cultural/symbolic production on the part of the indigenous participants in the document's production. Searching for "pure" and/or prehispanic indigeneity as manifested in symbolic forms is the wrong analytic tack. Instead, we can investigate the opposite end of the equation—how far away is a given representation from what we know of the Spanish cultural matrix at that point in time, and just as important, at what cultural level or depth are these departures from those Spanish and contextual impingements. By investigating in this direction and at various/deeper levels I contend that indigenous voices—not unchanged or unaffected to be sure, but indigenous in some way such as intent, larger level structures of meaning, and a cognizance of formulating histories and futures explicitly at odds with Spanish visions of both¹⁸—can and should be identified and analyzed. In this way the present study is similar in its approach to the *Relación de Michoacán* and "hybridity" to Afanador-Pujol's (2015) analysis of the paintings of the document. Her approach engaged in very detailed analyses of the hands and painting styles (including appropriation of Spanish and European artistic conventions and innovations) to identify specific agents and their relation to this larger hybrid project and the even larger cultural interchange in which both indigenous peoples and Spaniards were engaged. The difference is one not of goals but of subject matter. She paid close attention to the details of the artistry and composition of the paintings. I pay close attention to the composition and structure employed by the priest to produce his narrative's many episodes and the logic of the transformations of the nature and sequences of actions in which the characters engage themselves and in which one figure, Taríacuri, produces his own transformation into the embodiment of supreme authority.

Outside of Michoacán and among the more literarily productive cultures of Mesoamerica—namely, the Aztecs (Nahua), Maya, and peoples of Oaxaca—contemporary scholars have made and continue to make significant advances in appreciating the decidedly non-Western and typically pictographic, cartographic, and/or mixed textual and image-based approaches to producing and representing the past and its temporal flow of cultural events.¹⁹ In this way they are using "hybridity" in a productive manner. Their work for the most part escapes the potential risks of such a focus on a naïve indigeneity by using sophisticated methodologies to identify and investigate particular and specific practices and agencies and the extent to which they interrelate with the goals and nature of the projects in which

they are incorporated and even the colonial contexts writ large. Such studies bring us closer to an indigenous approach by bypassing or importantly contextualizing and situating documents produced using the media of representation imposed by the Spaniards, namely, lengthy written testimonies. This development is to be applauded, but we should also not completely leave behind such lengthy testimonies, due largely to epistemological issues. Camilla Townsend (2012) notes that these studies frequently involve the glosses in some way and contends that such alphabetic documents are the epistemologically most secure way of appreciating and understanding what the indigenous and/or mestizo persons of the Early Colonial Period were saying (even as they were interpreting nonnarrative forms of record keeping). In this way written documents “let[ting] historical subjects speak for themselves” (Townsend 2012:184). She writes, furthermore, that “we need to hear words—long, intricate strings of words with subordinate clauses and ranging notions of predicativity—to know others deeply.”²⁰ In much the same vein, Tedlock (2010:1) complains that when it comes to the rich and lengthy Maya writing tradition, much “decipherment” of Maya texts has taken place, but much “translation” of such texts, particularly in terms of understanding their literary qualities in ways that get us closer to the original and intended meanings, has yet to be achieved.

I fully acknowledge that in working with the priest’s narrative, much information concerning indigenous conceptions of time and historical processes has been lost because it exists only as it has been translated to Spanish within the context of the *Relación de Michoacán*.²¹ In the best of scenarios, listening to the priest and understanding him “deeply” would mean listening and understanding his narrative in its original language. However, I contend that the fact this narrative is translated into Spanish should not preclude an appreciation of at least some of the skill in its crafting as well as its overarching meaning. The method of narrative analysis that I utilize was developed by the anthropologist Terence Turner (1969, 1977, 1985), and as noted above has been called “an important and indispensable tool” (Willis 1982:xiii).²² Within his discussion of this method, Turner (1977:123) has pointed out that narrative possesses qualities above the level of other aspects of language, such as phonology and syntax, that are amenable to analysis and particularly to investigating the indigenous construction of temporality and human agency through time. Therefore I make no claim to know the priest and the full range of culturally grounded knowledge and skill made manifest in his narrative completely and authoritatively, but I do believe that the appreciation of the artistry and meaning uncovered in the present work is an improvement over previous works. Therefore while the original indigenous language and therefore complexity of the priest’s narrative as recorded in the *Relación de Michoacán*, and therefore in Spanish, can never be recovered, I examine the ways that larger-order linguistic

structures are also constitutive of meaning and therefore help us better understand what the priest is doing in his narrative.

THE MEANING OF TARÍACURI IN THE *RELACIÓN DE MICHOACÁN*

The political chaos in both the indigenous world and the Spanish one, and of course the difficulty of merging the two into a single colonial society, spurred those involved to make sense of the new arrangements and evaluate the intense social posturing occurring based on any and all available conceptualizations of how society and the cosmos ought to work. More than this, new leaders were required that could evaluate the possible avenues for action and transform or help set the terms on which the various factions vying for power would engage one another. Clearly in the indigenous political system, as it had been transformed into a subordinate colonized administrative system, there was likely a crisis of leadership. Indigenous peoples, and the nobles in particular, had to adjust to a new system of governance in which the office of governor (as were the other offices in the indigenous system as it had been established by the Spaniards) was not only an elected one but one for which elections were held regularly. Thus not only was the primary indigenous authority in the new system divorced from the prehispanic power structure in terms of the personages that filled it, but the nature of the office was a far cry from the prehispanic power structure predicated upon a king who ruled for life and an office of kingship that was hereditary or at the very least confined to a candidate within the Uacúsecha.²³ Kuthy (1996, 2003) has demonstrated that in the Early Colonial Period the indigenous upper nobility in Michoacán managed to maintain a hold on these offices such that possession of the offices was in effect rotated among the more powerful families that comprised the upper nobility. This arrangement was, however, only in its infancy, if it had begun to be formulated at all by those involved in 1538–1541, when the *Relación de Michoacán* was being produced—remember that rotating the officeholder of the supreme indigenous authority was only necessary beginning in 1530 upon the death of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan. It is also important to remember that as far as we know, Don Pedro Cuinierángari, an “Islander” or traditionally subservient member of the king’s royal house, had served as governor for most of the time since Tzintzicha’s death until the production of the document. I suggest that rather than adapt to the imposed colonial structure of governance, the priest who related his narrative for inclusion in the *Relación de Michoacán* envisioned a novel, transformative figure who could effectively reset the terms of the colonial arrangement, if not separate the indigenous society from the Spanish colonial system and reconstitute it as an autonomous one. In this respect I agree with Stone (2004:135) that the priest’s narrative is concerned primarily with pointing out

who this individual is. “When the petámuti asks where more Chichimecs [lords/warriors; see below] are to come from . . . [t]he unspoken corollaries are: Who is destined to follow in the footsteps of Taríacuri? Who will serve to unite the powers of the solar god Curicaueri in his various manifestations, with those of the goddess Xarátanga and other lunar deities? Who will have the power to symbolically reconstitute the iréchequa [the indigenous word for kingdom], to bring order out of chaos?”

Stone (2004:148) suggests that the priest believes Quiroga to be that person, and the evidence she cites does have some merit, which I discuss in detail in chapter 5 because it involves specific episodes of the priest’s narrative and other sections contained in the *Relación de Michoacán*.

I argue, however, that the structure and content of the narrative indicate Don Francisco Taríacuri to be that figure who can reconstitute indigenous society and the grounds on which it relates to Spanish society. Don Francisco Taríacuri was, I suggest, the same kind of dual figure who the original Taríacuri is said to be in the priest’s narrative, a figure who could inhabit two different social worlds and work to stitch those worlds together.²⁴ As early as 1525, Tzintzicha Tangáxoan, who had been baptized and taken the name “Don Francisco” as his Christian name himself, agreed that some of the sons of the indigenous nobility should be educated in the Christian faith, though this apparently involved children other than his own going to Mexico City to learn from the Franciscans there (Warren 1985:82–83). Don Francisco Taríacuri himself had begun to learn the Christian doctrine early in his life at the Monastery of Saint Francis of the Province of Michoacán, constructed in Tzintzuntzan (Jiménez 2002:137; López Sarrelangue 1965:170). However, Nora Jiménez (2002:137) believes that such efforts at missionization by the earliest Franciscans should not be exaggerated because they were not very successful in converting the indigenous peoples of Michoacán prior to 1535. As noted above, Don Francisco became a page in Viceroy Mendoza’s court, in Mexico City. He had been taken there by Don Pedro Cuinierángari and other nobles in 1535, and the express reason for Don Francisco and his brother Don Antonio being removed from Tzintzuntzan to Mexico City was as hostages to help guarantee the loyalty and compliance of the leaders of indigenous society in Michoacán (López Sarrelangue 1965:170). However, the experience was also an exercise in “intense cultural acculturation” (Jiménez 2002:137) to Spanish and Catholic practices and beliefs. While in Mexico City, he learned Castilian and Latin grammar. Documents from this period state that Don Francisco dressed as a Spaniard and was always treated as such (López Sarrelangue 1965:171). He also married a Spanish woman in 1542 (López Sarrelangue 1965:171), though it is important to note that this union occurred after the production of the *Relación de Michoacán* and its presentation to Viceroy Mendoza.

Therefore I suggest that Don Francisco was “the best of both worlds,” perhaps quite literally. He was the oldest son of the previous king and therefore the legitimate heir to the kingship, or whatever version of the indigenous kinship existed or which he could fashion for himself in the Early Colonial Period. His birthright to the kingship is likely reflected in his not-so-subtle use of the title Caltzontzin, the Nahuatl-cum-Spanish name of choice for the king of Michoacán (see discussions of the etymology of Cazonci/Caltzontzin in Martínez Baracs [1997, 2003]), as a surname. He also would have been comfortable within the Spanish colonial world, having been educated within it and to some extent being regarded as a Spaniard himself. In these regards he was an indigenous Spaniard; he united two contrary and antagonistic worlds and societies within his person.

These qualities, along with his name, he shared with the character Taríacuri as related in the priest’s narrative. While Stone has certain reasons for believing that Quiroga is the person being indicated through allusions within the priest’s narrative as the one who will reconstitute and lead indigenous society forward (which I note in the course of chapter 5 as they appear in the narrative), it is interesting to ask why she, or any other commentator for that matter, has not seen parallels between the two Taríacuris.²⁵ I suggest it is because Don Francisco Taríacuri is, in our modern understandings of the priest’s narrative and its relation to the political chaos of the time at which it was produced, hiding in plain sight. He remains hidden because of the underlying assumption that the priest’s narrative was a fixed oration, or that it is at least a faithful enough representation of the past that we should believe that a real Taríacuri existed in the past and performed the deeds that are attributed to him. Even in the recognition of the *Relación de Michoacán* as a “hybrid” and “biased” document, the reigning (though implicit) assumption is that the story written down in the *Relación de Michoacán* is largely the same as it existed in the pre-hispanic except for changes in wording and minor details intended to make points in favor of certain factions. At any rate, if Taríacuri really existed in the manner in which he is described in the priest’s narrative (which almost if not all interpretations either implicitly assume or fail to question), the relation between him and his namesake five generations later has been regarded as an unproblematic matter of history—simply the way things actually happened. This relationship becomes quite interesting and a problem to be investigated if we do not assume historical veracity and instead allow for the active construction of the narrative and Taríacuri within it to suit the times. This is reflected in the differences among Purhépecha documents such as land titles (see above; Roskamp 2010b, 2015) as well as in the results of the analysis presented here.

Taríacuri is obviously an important character throughout much of the narrative, and his actions, more than the actions of any other character, result in the formation

of the Tarascan kingdom. Táriacuri emerges as the cause and embodiment of the kingdom not only through the plot (events) of the narrative, however, but also through its structure. Táriacuri constructs but also embodies the kingship according to the indigenous cultural logic of hierarchy and legitimate authority. This cultural logic is dependent upon constructing two “elementary categories” (Haskell 2008a; Sahllins 1985), the “Islanders” and “Chichimecs.” These categories have certain structural similarities to the categories at play in other Mesoamerican narratives, namely, the “autochthons” and “foreigners” in general and as they are specifically manifested in the Mexica and other Central Mexican narratives, the “Culhua” and the “Mexica” (and other “Chichimec” groups) (Gillespie 1989; Graulich 1997; López Austin and López Luján 2000; Martínez González 2010; see chapter 6 for a more in-depth discussion). This complementary dualism is also a widespread and deep-rooted construction of cosmology and kingship in Mesoamerica. For example, the “Feathered Serpent,” an obvious conflation of opposed but complementary categories, was an important symbol at the Classic Period metropolis of Teotihuacán and from that time forward throughout much of Mesoamerica. If it wasn’t at the very beginning at Teotihuacán, Feathered Serpent imagery quickly came to embody the cosmos writ large, the totality of power within that cosmos, and in a synecdochic relation, came to stand for the paradigmatic category of kingship as a microcosm of that power that simultaneously drew on that power but also helped ensure its ordering and preservation (Gillespie 1989; this draws on analyses of “sacred kingship,” e.g., Feeley-Harnik 1978).

Narratives such as the priest’s narrative construct the kingship as a production of symbolic hierarchy based on a cultural logic of encompassment (Haskell 2008a, 2008b, 2012; Sahllins 1985). The construction of hierarchy as the novel third term that encompasses or incorporates two complementary but opposed elementary categories is common to those constructions of authority that fall under Sahllins’s term “Stranger King” (see chapter 4; Haskell 2008a). In such a “cultural logic” (Haskell 2008a) of kingship, the novel encompassing term combines and thus can stand for both original terms; therefore it also simultaneously subordinates those terms while elevating itself above them. Táriacuri’s pivoting—his reversal from a stereotypically “Chichimec” character to an “Islander” character that works out sequentially his dual ambiguity that has always been latent in the symbolic content of his nature (see chapters 3 and 4)—constructs him as one who can embody both the Chichimec and Islander categories. This ability is only achieved by the personage of Táriacuri strictly speaking, and it is only made manifest in the action of the narrative (i.e., in contrast to his lineage and foretold greatness) sequentially. He can only be one status or quality at a time, even if through the course of the narrative, he can and does take on both Chichimec and Islander identities. After Táriacuri’s pivoting

and sequentially demonstrated ability to be both Islander and Chichimec, as well as his acquisition and incorporation of the wives and feminine wealth of the Islander category (i.e., the land and lake) in addition to his Chichimec nature, Taríacuri is enabled to reproduce that ability to embody both categories as a paradigmatic arrangement embodied by multiple characters simultaneously. The first such transformation takes place when he searches for and finds his nephews, Hiripan and Tangáxoan, followed by the transformation of Zapiuatame from a sacrificial victim to a productive ally, and ending with the addition of Hiquíngaxe to his two nephews. Taríacuri is instrumental in all of these events. In this way he stands for the encompassing duality achieved within the Uacúsecha not merely because he is the character that achieves it but also because he reproduces that duality in the succeeding generation.

The analysis presented here thereby demonstrates that the process of construction is more complex than a simple dualism in such “Stranger King” narrative structures, including the story of Taríacuri. This is the case because the novel encompassing term originates as one of the original two complementary but opposed elementary categories. In the priest’s narrative it is the “Chichimec” category embodied by Taríacuri and the Uacúsecha as a whole that encompasses and appropriates, through the nature of Taríacuri’s character and his actions—namely, his pivoting—that thereby becomes the novel third term, the term of kingship or sovereignty. In other words “Chichimec” means something very different at the end of the priest’s narrative from what it does at the beginning, in concordance with Marshall Sahlins’s (1985) insistence that structure is dynamic and processual. Taríacuri is simultaneously the result of that process of construction but was also its motivating factor; it was his own actions by which he came to be both Islander and Chichimec. He is thus a paradigmatic category, but a category that has as its semantic content an operational/transformational capacity. In this key aspect, he is not a static or simple symbol but fits into Terence Turner’s (1985:52–53) discussion of “symbols [that] have an internal structure, not only of static oppositions but of coordinated transformations of the relations among their constituent meaningful features.” This character of operational transformation is manifested most strikingly by his Chichimec ability to shoot the hummingbird at the urging of Zurumban, the act which sets his pivoting in motion. He, just like the narrative that relates his deeds, is an autopoietic (self-producing; see chapter 3) character and symbol of the poiesis by which society around him takes shape as a result of his actions.

In this vein, the priest’s narrative does more than simply relate variations on the composition of the Uacúsecha as a set of imperfect, but increasingly correct, arrangements of Uacúsecha characters until the ascendancy of Hiripan, Tangáxoan, and Hiquíngaxe. As a set viewed synchronically, the multiple variations and the

relations among them demonstrate the essential characteristics in terms of the elementary categories necessary in what ultimately is the proper arrangement for the establishment of the kingdom and the kingship. This understanding, however, shortchanges the character of Táríacuri and his meaning as not merely a symbol but an operational symbol. "The temporal or sequential form of narrative cannot therefore be dismissed . . . merely as a convenient device for the serial presentation of a complex paradigmatic structure" (Turner 1969:34). It is essential that, particularly in the latter half of the narrative, Táríacuri is the one who determines the composition of the Uacúsecha through the actions enumerated above. Concomitantly, the first half of the narrative can also be read in this fashion as the sequentially organized *production* of Táríacuri (a production in which he himself takes part, when possible) as a dually composed—both Chichimec and Islander—figure who would possess such agency. Having been thus properly constructed, Táríacuri goes on to actively produce the correct combination of Uacúsecha leaders, partly out of his own self-referential actions (his self-production), out of his own person in the case of his son Hiquíngaxe (Hiquíngaxe is presented as a reproduction of Táríacuri's Islander nature), and to his decisions and actions with regard to his nephews and whom he pairs with them. He is the operative principle by which the correct arrangement of characters and categories is recognized and subsequently is made manifest. This paradigmatic quality of the past Táríacuri is precisely what was needed in the context of the present Táríacuri, Don Francisco, as indigenous society sought to resynthesize itself in the face of, and probably by partly appropriating aspects of, Spanish society.

The symbolic content of Táríacuri and his sequentially manifested agency has yet further ramifications as revealed by the syntagmatic relations within the priest's narrative. Táríacuri's act of pivoting becomes the axis upon which the narrative folds back upon itself in terms of its syntagmatic arrangement and concomitant paradigmatic relations (as demonstrated and discussed in chapter 4). This is much more significant than simply saying that Táríacuri is the focal point of the action of the narrative. Through the merger of the pivoting of Táríacuri with the pivoting of the total sequence of the narrative, the person of Táríacuri and the "surface" meaning of the narrative (the story of the creation of the Tarascan kingdom) are fused into one. This equivalency of Táríacuri with kingship and the kingdom established through both the plot and the structural arrangement of paradigmatically related episodes is even manifested at the small scale within the last episode of the narrative in which the Uacúsecha triumvirate conquers the towns of the region thereby establishing the kingdom. In a telling syntagmatic juxtapositioning, Táríacuri dies in the midst of the conquests, and specifically after the towns Zacapu and Tiararan are named in separate lists of conquests. Zacapu, as the town where the Uacúsecha are said

to have originated, and Tarianan, as the longtime seat of the goddess Xarántanga (a prominent female fertility goddess who complements the Uacúsecha patron deity Curicaueiri) in the narrative, together signify the two complementary categories upon which the kingdom would be founded and the two categories that the narrative has taken pains to join together. Once these two places are conquered, the kingdom itself is a dually composed entity, and Tariácuri as the personification of the duality that had existed before it and worked so hard to bring it to fruition can meet his end. One form of the combination of the elementary categories (Tariácuri) is transformed into the other (the kingdom). Tariácuri is both the state and the process of state formation personified, which is to say he is the manifestation of a supreme transformational capacity within a single character.²⁶ The autopoietic nature of Tariácuri and the autopoietic nature of the narrative itself are produced as metaphors for one another, and merged through the identity of Tariácuri's pivoting as *both* a reversal of the content of his character and his relations with other groups of the Pátzcuaro Basin (particularly the Islanders) *and* the pivoting of the story in its mirror-imaging of salient paradigmatic themes and transformations. Again this makes complete sense as, particularly before the mention of Tariácuri and his birth, the story has its own autopoietic qualities in its system of logical reversals, but this autopoietic quality is precisely in the service of producing Tariácuri. After Tariácuri's arrival in narrative time, of course, his autopoietic construction and the narrative's autopoietic construction are actually identical as he drives the sequence and nature of the interactions. In this way, even casting Tariácuri as state formation personified is insufficient. If Tariácuri and the actions of the narrative, which are in the end the actions of a range of characters interacting with one another, are fused into one through the structure of the narrative, then Tariácuri becomes the manifestation of all transformations, and therefore all agency. If he is *all* agency, then he is also the *only true agent*. I believe, once more, that the surface events of the narrative also serve to establish this characterization of Tariácuri, as he is everywhere in the narrative. He is always a factor, even if a latent one, as he advises other characters, carries out negotiations "off-stage" through the course of the narrative, and has his greatness foretold before his birth (i.e., before he exists as a character).

In this way the priest's narrative shares much in common with more widespread conceptualizations of rulership in Mesoamerica. It is common in Mesoamerican political ideologies, as manifested in artworks throughout the culture area, to represent the king as the central axis that constructs the cosmos around him. A common motif in Maya art is to merge kings with sacred trees that define the center (Freidel 1992:120; Schele and Freidel 1990:67; Schele and Miller 1986:108–109), and in chapter 4 I note how Tariácuri is represented at the midpoint of the oak upon which the Uacúsecha family tree in the *Relación de Michoacán*, effectively

producing the same merger and centering function. Another example closer in time and space to the Late Postclassic / Early Colonial Tarascan context illustrates this conflation of rulership with time and the temporal process. Echoing a proposal by Emily Umberger (1988), David Stuart (n.d.), identifies the central face on the famous Aztec Sun Stone as having certain features that identify it as an Aztec (Mexico) ruler, likely Moteuczoma II. This face constitutes the majority of the *Olin* (“movement”/“earthquake”) glyph that is the central element of the entire monument, and which represents the fifth sun/age that follows and is the culmination of the previous suns, the glyphs of which are themselves embedded in the *Olin* glyph as its protruding box elements. Viewed together, what visual art in Mesoamerica often does through visual or compositional juxtapositions of “costumes,” names, depictions of enactments, roles in sacrifices, and so on, to conflate rulers with totalities of time (and/or the sacred forces that control or compose it), narrative does in the relationship of the paradigmatic character with the syntagmatic unfolding of the action (Turner’s [1977: see chap. 3] relativization of the paradigmatic axis with the syntagmatic axis in which the former takes on properties of and becomes synonymous with the properties of the latter).

Tariacuri’s agency, manifested as his characteristic “Chichimecness” and the semantic load of coordinated transformations it carries, is in stark opposition to the Islanders through much of the narrative, particularly the second half. While the Islanders as a category play an ennobling role in relation to the Chichimecs in the first half, part of the significance of Tariacuri’s pivoting at the midpoint of the narrative is to paradigmatically invert the dimensions and categories (and who will occupy those categories) of the narrative in its second half, and from this point onward the Chichimecs no longer need the ennobling actions, wealth, and larger ennobling role of the Islanders. In fact, the action of the second half largely revolves around relations within the Uacúsecha, and we see that when they are included, Islander characters are the subjects of decisions made by the Uacúsecha, such as the inclusion of Zapiuatame with Tariacuri’s nephews, and the acquisition of sacrificial victims from Pacandan, and that they are epitomized finally by the subordinate role as either allies or victims in the conquests that create the unified kingdom.

In terms of the context in which the priest formulated and told his narrative, furthermore, the colonial-era version of the Tarascan kingdom had been governed by Don Pedro Cuinierángari for almost a decade following Tzintzicha Tangáxoan’s death in 1530. Recall from above that Don Pedro was an “adopted” brother, having married a woman of the last king’s lineage. He and his own brother, Huitzitziltzi, had played an increasingly important role in negotiating relations between the king and the Spaniards as the latter encroached into Tarascan territory and subsequently sought to establish suzerainty over it. The problem was, particularly following the

death of Tzintzicha Tangáxoan and from the point of view of the established ruling class, the Uacúsecha, and (their) history, that Don Pedro was an “Islander.” As an obvious contrast to Don Pedro and his governorship, Don Francisco Tariácuri was not only a Uacúsecha Chichimec but the rightful heir to his father’s position of supremacy. Thus he should assume the position of indigenous governor due to his parentage as well as his class and the social distinction that went with it. In addition, however, is the specific relation to his namesake as a transformative character that had the power to bridge cultures by means of the ability to transform himself and therefore transform the social landscape. As an Islander, so the indigenous priest’s case stated, Don Pedro had no such ability. He was dictated to; he was a passive agent. In contrast, Don Francisco Tariácuri’s Chichimec and Spanish nature gave him the capacity to transform the chaos and subjugation of the indigenous people occurring up to that point into an order more favorable for indigenous society. The origins of that dual character must be recognized—that Spanish nature had been realized by way of that Chichimec nature, as Don Francisco Tariácuri had been chosen by Viceroy Mendoza due to his parentage and therefore his inherently Chichimec birthright and character, and he had subsequently impressed the viceroy due to those same Chichimec qualities.

Don Francisco Tariácuri’s presence in the present as the best hope for some kind of negotiation and possible reconstitution of an indigenous kingdom makes him the touch point around which a past Tariácuri is constructed, and just as important the advocacy of this present Tariácuri necessitates the concretization of this past Tariácuri as not simply a great leader but as the literal and symbolic embodiment of the kingdom. There is not enough evidence to suggest that Don Francisco Tariácuri was named after the past Tariácuri—that is, that a notion of a past Tariácuri was completely unheard of. I am also not suggesting that the idea of a Tariácuri was a completely novel idea. The symbolic content of Tariácuri as a centering figure and a dually composed character, judging by the likely rich symbolism of the name as well as other forms of evidence such as the name of the mountain that borders Tzintzuntzan and which exists in the center of the Lake Pátzcuaro Basin, is likely to be a prehispanic concept in some form. I consider “Tariácuri” as an idea or a bundle of symbolic relations constitutive of kingship or of some cosmic import in Tarascan culture to have a prehispanic origin. The fact that Tariácuri’s various locations and markedly different importance in other representations of the prehispanic past, however, indicates that “Tariácuri” occupied no fixed point and no fixed importance within remembrances and concretizations of the past (see in this chapter, explicitly as demonstrated in table 1.1). The narrative and the context of its production imply that it is the past Tariácuri that is the symbolic projection of the present Tariácuri (Don Francisco). At the very least, drawing on established and temporally

persistent ideas about kingship in Mesoamerica as composed of dual figures or entities, there was in Michoacán this idea of kings as dual figures who were microcosms of cosmic powers writ large, that such figures were powerful because they could negotiate various “social worlds” and that in the context of the colonial encounter, the fact that such a dual figure is not only necessary but sitting right there (after having been forced to sit on the sidelines as a “pretender” to how his father’s authority had run things for the majority of the time) worked in tandem to produce in essence both Taríacuris, past and present. In other words a Taríacuri in the past that likely was a broadly held cosmological ideal of what Tarascan kings were supposed to be was adapted and pinned down in the past and pinned to a figure who shared Don Francisco Taríacuri’s name at precisely the time that Don Francisco himself was emerging as a potential and potentially powerful player in the ongoing development of the colonial encounter/power struggle. The priest manages to mythologize, so to speak, Don Francisco in the present not directly but by mythologizing a past Taríacuri. The indirect nature of this process reveals the power of narrative to resignify and produce coherent arguments for future-oriented action surreptitiously. Furthermore, the results of the analysis and this approach to the Priest’s Speech is a different tack from saying that there was in prehispanic Tarascan “sacred history” an already preconstituted Taríacuri (with all of these attributes, including importantly that particular name) whom then the priest simply through his narrative projects onto Don Francisco. In order to make Don Francisco into the leader the priest wanted him to be, the priest took it upon himself to make this past Taríacuri whom he wanted *him* to be.

This cyclical notion of time thus becomes in the Priest’s Speech and the colonial encounter more generally not a straightjacket of prescribed action but rather more of a resource, an ideological framework to draw upon as historicity is practiced. This is akin to Sahlins’s (1999:408) useful phrase “the inventiveness of tradition” and focuses the analytic project on actions in real time that attempt to make sense of the past, present, and future as one thread or wheel of time in which the most powerful concretizations will be constructed in concordance with larger cosmological precepts, even as those cosmological precepts are themselves reworked slightly in the process.

NOTES

1. The full title of the document as originally written is “Relación de las ceremonias y ritos y población de la provincia de Mechuacan, hecha al Ilustrísimo Señor Don Antonio de Mendoza, Virrey y Gobernador de esta Nueva España, por su Majestad.” The document is simply referred to in most if not all scholarship with the abbreviated title of *Relación de Michoacán*, which I will use throughout this book.

2. As discussed most cogently by Angélica Afanador-Pujol (2010) there are discrepancies in the historical sources regarding how this last king died at the orders of Nuño de Guzmán. The second quote that begins the current book is a statement from Don Pedro Cuinierángari, an indigenous governor of Michoacán and an interested party who did not want his position questioned. At issue is whether or not Tzintzicha Tangáxoan received a “pagan” or a “Christian” death sentence; in the former he would be immediately burned to death while in the latter he would first be strangled and then burned, with the garroting allowing his soul to escape to heaven as he suffocated and before being burned. Once again, as explained by Afanador-Pujol, the manner of death had serious consequences for the “estate” of the last king. If he had died as a pagan, his property could be legally acquired or confiscated by the Spanish Crown and its representatives. If he had died as a Christian, such confiscation would be illegal.

3. As pointed out by Stone (2004:62–71), an editorial hand changed some of the verbs from present tense into past imperfect tense. This indicates a concern for representing that indigenous practices and beliefs were things of the past that no longer were ongoing. Such a concern for the politics of representation, however, likely indicates that at least some indigenous practices were still ongoing and that this process of rendering them as things of the past was focused on casting the colonial effort of converting and governing the indigenous peoples in the best possible light.

4. Franco Mendoza (2000:277) characterizes the discourse of the Petámuti within the emic framework of modern Purhépecha words: *Iórhijpikua* is a convocation or official announcement; *aiámpekua* is the information, the main contents of the discourse; *arhíjtspekua* is the argumentative exhortation; and *Ka Jurámukua* is the orders that are presented in the manner of conclusions. What I refer to as the “summation” in particular can be understood as a combination of the last two categories.

5. For example, in her discussion of the priest’s narrative, Stone states that “The place where the petámuti delivers his oral performance is of crucial importance to the argument advanced in this chapter, which rejects the friar-compiler’s framing of part two of the *Relación de Michoacán* as a ceremony frozen in time” (Stone 2004:112). Later, she begins her discussion of this section of the document as follows: “As the petámuti stood, circa 1538–1539, most likely in the ruins of the patio of the royal palace that represented the sacred organization of the fourfold kingdom, he symbolically reenacted for his audience” (Stone 2004:114). Such statements or surmising are not merited by the information contained within the document, which as stated above does not relate where, when, or in what company the narration that is included in the document was told. Rather than simply a framing of a ceremony frozen in time, in the service of colonialist interests as Stone presents them, the friar’s introduction in the imperfect past tense of how the chief priest “used to begin” is the most honest presentation of how the narrative actually used to be presented in the past, assuming that his informant was actually retelling what he believed to be fixed text concerning the

origins of the king's ancestors and the kingdom they created. While I have not studied the Escorial manuscript itself, perhaps it is telling that this case of the use of the imperfect is not included in Stone's (2004:62–71) own analysis of the many instances in which the original use of present-tense verbs are changed to the imperfect verb tense, perhaps indicating that the use of the imperfect in the presentation of the priest's narrative was the first (and only) description of the relation of the priest's narrative to the present time.

6. That is, "royal house"; see Cristina Monzón and Andrew Roth-Seneff (Monzón and Roth-Seneff 2016; see also Monzón 1996, Castro Gutiérrez and Monzón García 2008; Castro Gutiérrez 2015) on the possible applicability of the model of a lordly or royal "house" similar to the Nahuatl *teccalli* or "lord(ly) house." See also Gillespie (2000a, 2000b) and Joyce and Gillespie (2000) on "houses" as kinship groups and associated practices in Mesoamerica and further afield. I do not have the time or space to dedicate to a discussion of how Tarascan kinship appears to have operated, particularly among the noble families, but I feel that the works cited above for Michoacán fit well with applications of the "house model" as in the other citations. Thus the Uacúsecha as a whole, I suspect, could be regarded as one big noble/royal "house," or, more likely, the Tzintzuntzan, Ihuatzio, and Pátzcuaro "lineages" could be understood as allied and endogamous amongst themselves noble "houses" with the Tzintzuntzan "house," the so-called Uanacaze, having achieved preeminence among the three by the time the Spaniards arrived in Mesoamerica. At any rate what appears to have definitively been the case is that subordinates who served the leaders of these noble houses, that is, the kings and highest nobility of the kingdom, appear to have been proud to have been affiliated with the house as *servants* / *subordinates*, the relationship of subservience being inherent to their relationship with, and membership within, the royal house (Monzón and Roth-Seneff 2016; Castro Gutiérrez and Monzón García 2008; Castro Gutiérrez 2015; this is similar to Gillespie's [2000a] discussion of Maya "nested houses" as containing the "family" members but also subordinates and servants within this idiom of membership and identity).

7. Martínez Baracs (2005:156) notes that Don Pedro assumed the governorship in 1530 and held it until his death in 1543, though there are some years in which documentation is poor and other indigenous nobles appear to have held the office, for example, Don Alonso Ecuángari o Tzapícaua, who was governor in 1538. On political alliance achieved through marriage relations and resulting conceptualizations of such affinal relations as fraternal kin relations within the broader context of Tarascan state/elite culture, see Roberto Martínez González (2011; see also Haskell 2008b, 2012).

8. On accommodations and assimilation to the Spanish colonial system (especially judicial system, founded as it was on recognitions of lineage and privilege) in Michoacán specifically, see Afanador-Pujol (2015); Delfina López Sarrelangue (1965); Maria de Lourdes Kuthy (1996, 2003); Martínez Baracs (2005); and Hans Roskamp (1997, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2010b, 2012, 2015; Roskamp and César Villa 2003). Indigenous alliance with the Spaniards and subsequent use of the legal bases of the Spanish colonial and system, including casting

themselves as—and playing the part of—loyal and assimilated subjects, are well established. See, for example, Florine Asselbergs (2006); Louise M. Burkhart (2001); Charles Gibson (1964); Robert S. Haskett (1991, 1996); Robert Hill (1991); James Lockhart (1992); Laura Matthew and Michael Oudijk (Matthew and Oudijk 2007); Dana Velasco et al. (Murillo, Lentz, and Ochoa 2012); Matthew Restall (1997); Yannakakis (2008). In such a complex, fluid, and variable process as colonization, it is necessary to acknowledge that these terms—accommodation, assimilation, resistance, and so on—are problematic and that practices that could be characterized as one could and did slide into another analytic category, or that the same practice could be fit into more than one category depending on perspective, (temporal) scale, and the problematic relationship between intent and effect. For instance, the use of European iconography and language in documents or the adoption of European dress could simultaneously be seen as accommodation and assimilation as well as mere precursors or proximate behaviors to achieve more ultimate goals of contestation and/or resistance. “Hybridity” (as in the case at hand, see Afanador-Pujol [2015] and Espejel Carbajal [2008]; more generally see Ohnuki Tierney [2001, 2005]) as a concept that due to its historicization as opposed to a homogenizing analytical framework can hold together many of these simultaneous contradictory perspectives or implications in colonial contexts has great analytic value in this regard.

9. The Spaniards were well acquainted with the importance of bodily remains, as numerous Catholic pilgrimage sites across Europe prominently featured remains of saints. However, they might have managed to underestimate the importance of the physical remains of the king in indigenous cultures. As Susan Gillespie (1989:227) writes, “the notion that possession of the king’s body is a prerequisite for succession is also revealed in the Aztec stories of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, who carefully searched for the bones of his father, Mixcoatl/Camaxtli/Totepeuh, after the latter had been slain and installed them in a shrine, the Mixocatepetl, prior to killing his father’s murderers on top of that shrine and rightfully taking his father’s throne.” It is interesting to note that the *Relación de Michoacán* (Alcalá 2000:654) contains in the third part of the document a story that is very similar to the myth variants concerning Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl cited by Gillespie. In the myth in the *Relación de Michoacán*, the deity Cupanzieeri plays the ball game against another deity named Achuri hirepi, and the latter wins and sacrifices the former. The son of Cupanzieeri recovers his father’s remains but before he can kill Achuri hirepe, he is startled, drops the remains, and miraculously the remains of the father transform into a “deer” with a mane and long tail that the Spanish were understood to be mounted upon.

10. I draw on the discussions and critiques of numerous scholars working in “historicity” and indigenous historical traditions in Mesoamerica (particularly Boone 2000 and Gillespie 1989, 1998, 2007b, 2008; see also Bricker 1981; Hill 1991; Quiroa 2011) and South America (Fausto and Heckenberger, eds. 2007; Hill 1988; Rappaport 1998; Salomon 1982; Urton 1990; Whitehead 2003). See also Trouillot (1995) for a discussion of historicity in Haiti.

11. As I discuss also in another work (Haskell 2015), the very human-centered nature of the narrative should not necessarily be seen as a purely indigenous point of view due to the fact that the friar-compiler interjected himself into the priest's narrative. The friar-compiler explains right at the beginning of the second part of the *Relación de Michoacán* that in the narrative, it was a common practice for the narrator to state that the god Curicaueri had done such-and-such thing, but the friar's interjection and explanation and the manner in which he continues the story strongly suggest that he required the narrator to include the names of the human characters (Alcalá 2000:341). The exact way in which this altered the narrative is unknowable, however. The manner in which Curicaueri was rendered to be the primary agent in an indigenous version of the narrative could have taken many forms, including simply implying (repetitively so) that the god had willed the actions of the characters into existence. Additionally, it could have been simply understood by an indigenous audience that the god Curicaueri should be recognized as a source of aid for the Uacúsecha, a resource to draw on within their own actions and plans (for a discussion of a somewhat similar phenomenon in Amazonia, see Carlos Fausto and Michael Heckenberger's discussion of historicity "in a shamanic key" [Fausto and Heckenberger 2007]). Still, the fact remains that the narrator was able to produce a fairly large range of named characters (the repetition of Xoropiti and Tarequetzingata as men from a town near and very probably subordinate to Coríngaro and almost immediately afterward as their function as place-names involved in actions involving men from Coríngaro notwithstanding; see chapter 4), and this could suggest that the narrator did not simply fabricate characters and events on an improvised basis when pushed by the friar-compiler to do so. This returns us to the likelihood that in some sense, the priest's narrative was the result of a form of indigenous historiography and involved what I refer to above as institutional and institutionalized knowledge of the past.

12. This bias is, I would contend, still reflected in the practice of referring to the narrative contained in the *Relación de Michoacán* as "the Petámuti's speech" in spite of the fact that the document states that the version recorded in its own pages was the testimony of a priest who knew this history rather than "the," or "a," Petámuti. The document does state that the "official history" was told at a yearly festival in the capital as a preamble to the punishment of wrongdoers and that, moreover, members of another priestly order were dispatched to the towns of the province to recite that history in local, provincial, contexts. The illustration of the oration of the history of the Uacúsecha does depict the Petámuti speaking to a group of nobles. This does not necessarily indicate that the Petámuti is speaking in the context of the present of the Colonial era to such a group of congregated nobles, or again if the Petámuti told this story in public at all in the Colonial era. On that note it is important to recognize that, similarly, in the case of the *Cazonci's* burial ceremony, Afanador-Pujol (2015:chap. 6) has argued convincingly that the image is essentially an idealized representation that "recreates" a past that did not necessarily exist, or at least did not exist in such a stereotypic and

straightforward manner. A largely similar point is made by Stone (1994) in her discussion of the royal funeral. Returning to the point at hand, by unconsciously but still erroneously attributing another priest's narrative to "the" Petámuti, however, the assumption remains that the version recorded in the *Relación de Michoacán* is somehow the same as the version told by the Petámuti in years previous, or, at the very least, is the same version that would have been told by the Petámuti had he been available to offer his testimony for the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*.

13. Immediately following his use of the term "sacred history," Roskamp (2012:124; italics in original) includes a parenthetical clause: "others use the term *myth*." Such disagreements and characterizations are part of the reason why I consider it important to explicitly define "myth" and "history" (see chapter 3), even though this debate is largely seen as an old (and unproductive) one in contemporary anthropology. Rather, I take the position that the priest's narrative in the *Relación de Michoacán*, according to my analysis, manages to still confound (in very interesting ways) the specific and supposedly refined etic frameworks for analysis and comparison discussed in chapter 3.

14. Previously this document was known as the *Lienzo de Jucutacato*, but Roskamp (1998) has shown that it originated from Jicalán, or prehispánic Xiuhquilan.

15. Afanador-Pujol (2010, 2015); Claudia Espejel Carbajal (2008); Rodolfo Fernández (2011); Kuthy (2003); Martínez Baracs 2005; Cristina Monzón, Hans Roskamp, and Benedict Warren (Monzón, Roskamp, and Warren 2009); Monzón and Andrew Roth-Seneff (Monzón and Roth-Seneff 1999); Carlos Paredes Martínez (1997); Roskamp (1997, 1998, 2015); Stone (1994, 2004); Warren (1963, 1985).

16. See also the discussion in Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn (Dean and Leibsohn 2003).

17. See also John Comaroff (1982); Jean Comaroff and Comaroff (1991–1997); Fausto and Heckenberger (2007); Gillespie (1989); Hill (1988); Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (1990a); Renato Rosaldo (1980a, 1980b); Terence Turner (1988a, 1988b); Neil Whitehead (2003).

18. In theorizations of ethnicity/identity, often formulations of what the group is not—that is, a contrast with an other—are powerful demarcations of ethnicity and an important process in the identification as the definition of the negative pole ("what we are not") influences the formulation of the positive pole ("what we are"). See, e.g., Barth (1969); and particularly in how narratives concerning the past and historicity play into the formulation of ethnicity and identity see, e.g., Elizabeth Boone (2000); Gibson (1964):31–34; Gary Gossen (1974); Gillespie (1998); Michael Harkin (1988); Hill (1988); Shepard Krech (2006); Susan McKinnon (1991); Edward Schieffelin and Deborah Gewertz (Schieffelin and Gewertz 1985); Stephen Hugh-Jones (1989); James Peacock (1969); Peter Nabokov (2002); Nestor Quiroa (2011).

19. See, e.g., Florine Asselbergs (2006); Boone (2000, 2007); Boone and Walter Mignolo (Boone and Mignolo 1994); Lori Diel (2008); Eduardo Douglas (2010); Leibsohn (2009);

Roskamp (1998, 2003, 2004); Dennis Tedlock (2010); Robert Williams (2009); Stephanie Wood (2003).

20. This should not be taken to mean that I advocate investigating indigenous historicity solely through documents written in Latin letters, which indigenous scribes adopted fairly quickly (but in the indigenous world also remained less highly valued than more indigenous forms). As Boone (2000) in particular discusses, the ambiguity of the indigenous pictographic systems was an essential aspect of the indigenous practice of historicity. However, the flip side must also be true, that lengthy narratives (of precisely the kind that were written down in Latin letters) or performances that “read” or “interpreted” the ambiguous documents were also part of the indigenous practice of historicity. Only by taking both into account can we come to appreciate the complexity of the entire range of practices. Townsend herself indicates this perspective when she notes that the studies she is reviewing—notably Diel (2008), Eduardo Douglas (2010), and Leibsohn (2009)—do incorporate the many glosses written within/on pictographic documents. By combining “glyphs” and “words,” we can indeed know Mesoamerican peoples more deeply. At any rate, the extent to which such issues of working within pictographic documents and documents produced using Latin letters are problematic in the Tarascan area is an open question, as discussed in this chapter.

21. On the importance of language and its specificities in interpreting narrative or any engagement of the past, see, e.g., Allen Christensen (2007); Shelly Errington (1979); Michael Harkin (1988); Dell Hymes (1981); Rena Lederman (1986); and Tedlock (1983, 2010).

22. This “important and indispensable tool” has, however, not been applied widely at all. Turner (1969, 1977, 1985) develops and utilizes it, and Mary Dillon and Thomas Abercrombie’s (Dillon and Abercrombie 1988) analysis of an Andean myth similarly examines the syntagmatic properties of the myth. Ronald Engard (1988) employs it in a study of a myth in the grasslands of Cameroon. Pierre-Yves Jacopin (1988) has also published an explicitly syntactic approach to a South American myth. The present work was originally a reappraisal of my own MA thesis (Haskell 2003) that was part of a session at the 2009 meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory and subsequent work toward an edited volume in collaboration with Susan Gillespie, Jalh Dulanto, Nestor Quiroa, and Carl Wendt. We all used Turner’s method to some extent in our explorations of Mesoamerican and Andean narratives, but the collaborators’ excellent studies have not yet been published.

23. According to the Priest’s Speech and other information in the *Relación de Michoacán*, succession to the kingship passed from father to son almost exclusively, though there are times when it passes to a member of the Uacúsecha that is not a son of the dead king/leader. For example, following Táriacuri’s own death, his nephew Hiripan took on oversight of the god Curicaueri and the maintenance of his treasures as opposed to Táriacuri’s second son, Hiquíngaxe. I have elsewhere (Haskell 2008b) explained this as his opting for the clearly more “Chichimec” Hiripan over the “Islander” Hiquíngaxe. Elsewhere (Alcalá 2000:631) the *Relación de Michoacán* gives a summation of the deliberations on electing, if that is the

right word, a new king that is rather anonymous and portrayed as a “stereotypical” deliberative session. This representation is then brought into a concrete historical moment following the death of Zuangua, in which Zuangua’s son Tzintzicha Tangáxoan suggests that Paquingata, lord of Ihuatzio, should assume the kingship rather than him (Alcalá 2000:659). Whether or not this is an example of displaying the sort of “modesty” that was expected of lords and rulers, it is perhaps nonetheless instructive that it was at least a possibility for this to happen; by the same token it is instructive that Tzintzicha Tangáxoan suggested the lord of Ihuatzio and not of some other place as the potential heir.

24. My analysis reaches many of the same conclusions as that of Afanador-Pujol (2010, 2015); working independently and paying close attention to different media within the document—she on the paintings that illustrated it, primarily, and I on the priest’s narrative—we largely agree that Don Francisco Taríacuri is the implicit referent for much of the document’s depictions and descriptions. Her analysis of the burial of the last king (Afanador-Pujol 2015:chap. 6) demonstrates that this effort of “ethnographic representation of the past” was constructed to represent king-to-son succession as the normal and preferred way of selecting an heir (thus favoring Don Francisco Taríacuri in the context of its production), even if the text of the document suggests that there might have been a practice of selecting the next king from a pool of eligible Uacúsecha lords (Alcalá 2000:631).

25. On a related point, Afanador-Pujol (2010:fn20) writes that “the possible involvement of Don Francisco and Don Antonio [in the production of the *Relación de Michoacán*] has not yet been explored.”

26. Additionally Gillespie (2007a) has examined the contrastive ways in which Mesoamerican artists represented actors (most prominently rulers) who would have occupied three-dimensional space but occupy these artworks in such a way that they have been the subjects of choices concerning which dimension (either depth or verticality) to emphasize. As such, they represent different modes of representing rulers, action, and the temporal process within which the rulers and their actions unfold. Particularly illuminating is her discussion of the Cross Group temples at Palenque and their artwork, which she interprets as indicating that a sacred tree acts as a sort of portal allowing the ruler to interact with his past self. If rulers are equivalent in some ways to trees via their ability to center and thus create the world, and trees at the center enable persons to access other times, then it is perhaps likely that Maya rulers’ persons enabled such access as well. In fact, Maya rulers’ access to the ancestors and sacred beings in other space-times on behalf of society seems to have been a major part of their ritual function.