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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no other aspect of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica has engendered more interest than the sanguinary practices for which the Mexica of central Mexico (the so-called Aztecs) are particularly infamous. Since the arrival in the early sixteenth century of Spanish conquistadors and, soon after, Spanish Christian missionaries, descriptions and depictions of human sacrifice have held a special place in the literature describing Mexico's aboriginal inhabitants. Worried that the native population continued to practice "idolatrous" and sacrificial rites—perhaps even in the guise of Christian pageantry—the mendicant friars paid special attention to understanding indigenous ritual practices. To this end they initiated an extraordinary series of manuscripts, many of them illustrated, that aimed to document Mexican calendars, associated calendrical rituals, and the nature of the aboriginal "gods." These sources span the first century of Spanish presence in central Mexico. Although some studies, like those of the famed Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, also exhibit marked interest in recording the substantial cultural achievements of pre-hispanic Mexico, these colonial accounts of indigenous sacred practices were intended particularly to serve as models by which the friars might better recognize and, therefore, more effectively extirpate any lingering idolatry.[1]

The series of eighteen spectacular, often grisly public festivals celebrated during the 365-day Mesoamerican year elicited particular attention from these Christian missionaries. This annual cycle, known as the *xihuitl* in Nahuatl (the lingua franca of central Mexico at the time of conquest), was observed across Mesoamerica. It comprised eighteen "monthly" periods that have been dubbed *veintenas* because of their twenty-day length, along with five uncertain, unnamed days known as the *nemontemi*. As scholars currently understand the cycle, each twenty-day period had its own particular festival enacted in elaborate public dramas. Some veintena feasts were devoted to rites propitiating agricultural entities like Tlaloc, an ancient earth deity linked with rain and storms, and Chicomecoatl, "Seven Serpent," patroness of maize, queen of Mexican crops. Others had a more martial cast, as in the festival known as Tlacaxipehualiztli, the "Feast of the Flaying of Men," which in the Mexica capital at Tenochtitlan (modern-day Mexico City) celebrated particularly the Mexican warrior class. This period involved dramatic gladiatorial combats in the city's sacred precinct, along with human sacrifice, flaying, and the donning of those sacrificial victims' flayed flesh. Still other rites were held in honor of special tutelary deities; in Tenochtitlan, this was so particularly for Huitzilopochtli, the Mexicas' tribal deity of the sun and warfare.

Incorporating human sacrifice, flaying, ritual cross-dressing, mock warfare, and elaborate sweeping and cleansing rites, the autumn celebration known as Ochpaniztli, "Sweeping the Way," has proven to be among the most intriguing of these annual ritual dramas. The period was dedicated especially to a goddess of human sexuality and fertility known by a variety of epithets, including Toci, Teteoinnan, and Tlazolteotl. Physicians and midwives were among her devotees, along with parturients, adulterers, and diviners. During the Ochpaniztli proceedings, the power and presence of this sacred entity were evoked through various celebrants and effigies arrayed in the ritual attire of the goddess. She wore a headdress of cotton, had rubber smeared on her mouth and cheeks, and typically bore ritual implements that included a straw broom and a shield. A Mexican woman arrayed in this paraphernalia was eventually killed, decapitated, and then flayed. In the aftermath of her death, other celebrants and/or inanimate armatures were adorned with her paraphernalia, now including the skin of the dead woman. Brooms played a significant role in this ceremony, "Sweeping the Way," and were used in purification rites or wielded as blood-covered weapons by midwives engaged in mock battles. In Tenochtitlan, Ochpaniztli's activities had sacred and mythic dimensions and, as I will suggest, its curative and cleansing aspects helped

to reestablish cosmic and communal harmony. What is more, these aspects were intertwined with the more mundane realms of politics, militarism, and economics of the Mexica tribute empire.

This study examines the extant corpus of representations, pictorial and textual, through which scholars have come to understand the annual Ochpaniztli celebration and its attendant deities. These sources were mostly created in the sixteenth century, in an unusual situation of collaboration and accommodation between the Spanish Christian friars, at whose behest the chronicles were begun, and the native Nahuas whose outlawed rites and proscribed deities the manuscripts describe. They reframe and describe the pre-Columbian central Mexican Ochpaniztli celebration and its patron goddess in ways significant to both European colonists and aboriginal Mexicans.

It is unclear, however, whether the extant colonial veintena illustrations are based on an indigenous tradition of illustrating the annual festivals from sources that are now lacking through accidents of survival or whether the form they take was a post-conquest invention. Thus, the particular problem of this study concerns how to effectively use these collaborative, colonial manuscripts to investigate pre-Columbian ritual. Given the longevity and sophistication of the pictorial manuscript tradition in Mexico and its continued importance into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in this study I propose to give more sustained emphasis to the pictorial elements of the extant veintena corpus, privileging them as a fundamental source of information about the nature of Nahua ritual practices, concepts of the sacred, and the function of sacred images within a performative ritual context.

The Spanish Christian missionaries' reports on indigenous calendars and calendrical festivals were part of a much wider network of ethnohistoric chronicles delineating the political, economic, social, and religious structures of Spain's new territories.[2] They compiled these in the decades following the incursion by combined Spanish-native forces that had resulted in the siege and eventual demise of the Mexica capital at Tenochtitlan. The viceregal administration sponsored the creation of a variety of documents intended to benefit secular and religious authorities alike, as Christian Spain brought the material goods, labor, and souls of indigenous Mesoamerica into her domain. The quotidian aspects of pre-Columbian life were the purview of documents created for the government

of New Spain, as it sought to understand the nature, makeup, and extent of its new territorial holdings and its existing financial and governmental institutions. Maps and questionnaires established existing territorial boundaries, and tribute documents described the goods that had flowed from subject provinces into Tenochtitlan. Viceregal sociopolitical histories gave information about history, local rulers, the structures of rule and succession, warfare, and economics.

Because the Church was concerned especially with understanding the nature of native ritual observances, the sixteenth-century mendicant friar-chroniclers composed lengthy commentaries describing aboriginal religious institutions and timekeeping systems, along with the rites, sacrifices, and sacred imagery that were associated with them. These are the particular focus of this investigation. The resultant treatises have long constituted an essential resource for modern scholars investigating pre-hispanic rituals and imagery. Important sources for understanding the annual cycle of veintena festivals include religious and historical accounts with textual descriptions of the festivals as well as glossed and annotated pictorial calendars that depict scenes of the festival's performance and its ritual celebrants. Pictorial information also appears in quotidian documents including tribute lists and calendar wheels.

It is by now well known that these ethnohistoric chronicles, compiled under the auspices of evangelizing friars, are beset by their significant biases and agendas with regard to indigenous religion and ceremony, and by their substantial misapprehensions and misrepresentations of the nature of Mexica sacred entities. There also exists among the colonial texts a good deal of heterogeneity of detail: locales, patron deities, dates, and even some of the festival names vary widely from source to source. The textual sources are even further complicated by their synthetic, essentializing nature. Although pre-hispanic Mexico comprised myriad independent ethnicities and communities with a variety of distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions, the friars tended to represent native Mexicans as a monolithic "Indian" entity. Consequently, diverse local traditions, rituals, and gods related to the 365-day year were synthesized into single, coherent historical accounts that represent the annual rituals as if they were a set of unchanging events. Indeed, some of the friars are notorious for having deliberately omitted information that did not allow for the creation of a coherent narrative; the Dominican friar Diego Durán even admitted that, although he had obtained different versions of similar events and activities, he only included in his chronicles those "things on which I found my informants agreed."[3] The legacy of these

kinds of documentary strategies has caused an array of interpretive difficulties for modern scholars.

It may therefore be useful to privilege more fully the extensive resources that native Nahuas themselves provided to the mendicant friars about their histories, traditions, rituals, and sacred concepts. Viceregal chronicling projects allowed, and even required, that the missionaries learn indigenous languages and ally themselves with the aboriginal population. In the generations following the conquest, Christian missionary-chroniclers frequently teamed up with native informants, scribes, interpreters, and artists to create their extensive ethnohistoric compendia. Informants provided the friars with testimony and imagery describing cultural memories, oral traditions, and local histories. Perhaps the best-known example of this is Sahagún's work with a number of highly educated Nahuas, scholars who had been educated at the College of Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco and were fluent in Spanish and Latin as well as Nahuatl.[4] Modern scholars now believe that Sahagún and his Franciscan colleague Andrés de Olmos gathered information from community elders through preconceived questionnaires. Of all the chroniclers, Sahagún was the most descriptive of his working methods, and unlike most of the mendicant chroniclers, he even named some of his collaborators. He describes, for example, how he "assembled all the leaders with the lord of the village, named Don Diego de Mendoza . . . very expert in all things courtly, military, governmental, and even idolatrous. . . . They told me I could communicate with them, and they would give me answers to all that should ask them. . . . / With these leaders and grammarians, who were also leaders, I conferred many days, close to two years, following the sequence of the outline which I had prepared."[5] Indeed, Sahagún has been referred to as the "father of modern ethnography" and a "pioneer ethnographer" because of the interrogation method he used.[6]

This was combined with information gleaned and adapted from surviving indigenous pictorial sources. By the time the first Christian missionaries arrived in Mexico in the early 1520s, there was already in place a sophisticated, centuries-old Mesoamerican tradition of creating pictorial manuscripts. There are now only sixteen or so extant pre-Columbian manuscripts (generally, although erroneously, referred to as "codices") from all of Mesoamerica, most of which come from outside the Nahuatl-speaking areas of central Mexico; nevertheless, it does appear from colonial adaptations, descriptions, and a handful of surviving examples that there had been quite an array of manuscript genres.[7] Pre-hispanic pictorial documents contained information about economics, territory, and local

histories, as well as calendrical systems and associated rituals. Quotidian documents included lists of tribute, tax, and census information, but these did not survive the conquest and are known only through descriptions and post-conquest examples.[8] Maps and cartographic histories depicted territorial distribution, the nature of its occupation, and ethnic migrations; often fused forms, these kinds of pictorials described the ways in which humans had occupied physical territories at particular historical moments and emphasize the conceptual intersection of time and space. Although there are no pre-conquest survivals of this category, colonial maps may well preserve aboriginal concepts of space, time, and human interactions with the landscape.[9]

There was also a tradition of political histories that delineated elite genealogies, dynastic successions, and local histories. Pre-hispanic examples of this genre do survive among the handful of screenfolds known as the Mixtec codices, named for that region of southern Mexico from which they are now believed to have come.[10] These manuscripts record information of a historical and genealogical nature especially important to a group of small, independent kingdoms in Oaxaca. Mixtec manuscripts like the Codices Bodley and Zouche-Nuttall, for example, are painted with long genealogical sequences describing the political and martial exploits of figures like the famed Lord Eight Deer.[11] It must be emphasized, however, that history was not a conceptual category wholly distinct from what might be termed mythic, sacred, or religious themes. Rather, one manuscript might combine a variety of different types of information. Communal histories were quite often linked with sacred origin stories, and a pictorial dominated mostly by local history or a genealogical sequence might also have a significant religious or mythic dimension. In addition to its ancestral information, the Codex Zouche-Nuttall, for example, recounts important "mytho-historic" and sacred events, whereas the Codex Vienna depicts a series of genealogies on one side and key Mixtec creation stories on the other.[12]

These kinds of sources were complemented by a tradition of ritual, divinatory, and calendrical pictorials that recorded the structures of sacred rites as well as esoteric lore about the calendars and the cosmic forces believed to impact peoples' daily lives. These topics dominate the pictorial screenfolds known collectively as the Borgia Group, named for the group's most exquisitely painted member.[13]

In central Mexico, manuscripts were the province of the specialized scribe-painter, known in Nahuatl as the *tlacuilo*. The term evokes both painting and writing. Sahagún records that the Nahuatl word for "scribe" was "tlacuilo," for

whom "writings, ink [are] his special skills. [He is] a craftsman, an artist, a user of charcoal, a drawer with charcoal; a painter who dissolves colors, grinds pigments, uses colors."[14] In the central Mexican pictorial system, "text" and "image" did not exist as discrete categories. Rather, the use of a single term to describe both indicates that they were intertwined concepts. The tlacuilo did not utilize an alphabetic script but relied instead on a complex visual language. Information about identity, time, space, and place were visually conveyed through a combination of pictographs, ideographs, and phonetic elements.[15] For example, bodies in pre-hispanic pictorials were treated as a conceptual assemblage of separate, meaningful elements placed against the two-dimensional space of the page, the functions and associations of lavishly adorned characters conveyed through the details of posture, gesture, dress, and adornment. Images of landscapes and maps did not attempt to create mimetic, illusionistic renderings of actual topographical forms but provided instead conceptual clues to navigating one's way through space, territory, and time.

It is important to understand the graphic conventions of pre-Columbian pictorial manuscripts because they were linked, in turn, with the oral, performative contexts within which the manuscripts' contents were elucidated. Prehispanic manuscripts had served as physical repositories for communal histories and ritual-calendrical information, but they were not meant to stand entirely on their own. Rather, these manuscripts also implicated a substantial oral tradition. Many pictorial genres functioned as points of departure, whose contents were read or performed by an interpreter with specialized training in the details and poetics of the story to be told.[16] The manuscripts' images therefore required standardized representations for pictorial forms and provided signals and mnemonic devices designed to stabilize memory and cue the trained speaker/singer/performer. Pre-hispanic pictorials have sometimes been referred to as "prompt books" or scripts, akin to sheet music in supplying a visual armature to be orally and, perhaps, physically (re)enacted.[17] This performative context applied to the historical genres as well as to the ritual-calendrical books, which relied on diviners or augurers known as the *tonalpouhque* to read the signs in the almanac.[18] Thus Thelma Sullivan writes, "The picture codices contained only the bold outlines of religious concepts, historical events, and social practices. . . . It was the words of the orators that brought alive and kept alive the traditions of the people."[19]

The chroniclers' sixteenth-century ethnohistories were immeasurably enhanced by native pictorial manuscripts that survived the ravages of conquest.

Doubtless many of the Nahua were loath to show their few surviving manuscripts to the Spaniards, who, they understood, were intent on destroying their traditional way of life; nevertheless, a number of friars were given access to them. In the colonial context, knowledgeable informants and specially trained interpreters illuminated for the ecclesiastics the contents of surviving pictorials in a wide variety of genres through verbal recitations and performances. Although these continued to draw on learned oral traditions, the native system was fundamentally transformed by being permanently fixed in written texts authored by Spanish, Nahua, or mestizo scribes. Indigenous interpretive strategies were therefore adapted in order to make the contents of the pre-hispanic pictorials comprehensible to the varied beholders that constituted the viceregal audience.

Indeed, it is crucial to maintain awareness of the uneven power relations that obtained in this colonial milieu, which saw horrific violence and oppression. A number of scholars have written about the violence inherent in this colonial ethnohistoric project, which appropriated and ineluctably transformed an aboriginal system of oral and pictorial components that was intended to be fluid and open-ended, but which ultimately fixed the information into single narratives within an alphabetic text. Jorge Klor de Alva describes the effect of the colonial inscription of Nahuatl oral traditions into an alphabetic script as a process of standardization and transformation that resulted in a "flattening out of the Nahua literary taxonomy."[20] The ethnohistories describing the rites and ceremonies of the pre-conquest past describe a defunct world of idolatrous rites and pagan entities; although many of the friars also evince a humanistic interest in recording the sophistication and erudition of these cultures, nonetheless these chronicles were sponsored by Christian authorities intent on bringing the Nahua into the Christian fold, which required rooting out and, insofar as was possible, eradicating any lingering superstition and idolatry.

Yet it must also be emphasized that native Nahuas and mestizos were active agents in compiling these ethnohistories. Many of them were probably highly educated members of the indigenous nobility, who were able to wield a variety of intellectual traditions in re-presenting Mexican cultural traditions within the vastly changed world of post-conquest Mexico. There are a number of instances in which Nahua interpreters assisted in interpreting and adapting the pictorial contents of native manuscripts for written chronicles. The early colonial *History of the Mexicans according to their Paintings*, for example, inscribes in alphabetic text an oral transcription that was provided by a native informant interpreting a

native pictorial source.[21] The "Annals of Cuauhtitlan" also functions in this way, recording information of a historical character in a textual account based on a native annals history.[22] Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta records that Andrés de Olmos "did it this way: having seen all the pictures that the chiefs and nobles in these provinces had of their antiquities, and the oldest men having given him an answer to everything he wished to ask them, he made of it all a very full book."[23] Sahagún likewise reports that "we have understood their antiquities" from information that was communicated to him "by means of paintings."[24] Indigenous books "written in symbols and pictures" also proved invaluable to the Mexican history compiled by the Franciscan Fray Toribio de Benavente, known as Motolinía.[25] Writing in the late-sixteenth century, the Jesuit friar Juan de Tovar was particularly impressed by the interpretive performance through which informants elucidated the manuscripts' contents. He admired the sophisticated interplay that obtained between native pictorial documents and oral history. Indeed, he was sufficiently impressed as to describe the process at length, noting that the "different figures and characters" of the Indians' pictorial manuscripts—although "not so perfect as our own letters"—nonetheless allowed for eloquent oral expositions, during which the natives "did not omit a word when they quoted what was written."[26]

Still another major source of information on the pre-hispanic past comprises the artistry of colonial Nahua tlacuilos in post-conquest central Mexico. Native Mexican artists working in the generations after the conquest provided for the friars' ethnohistoric chronicles an expansive corpus of images documenting their own sacred rituals and autochthonous traditions. Scholars have long recognized that the Mexican manuscript tradition remained vital and vigorous well into the seventeenth century, as native draftsmen and painters creatively adapted and negotiated a variety of pictorial conventions in meaningful and highly original ways. This topic has been taken up in a substantial body of modern scholarship.[27]

But what makes the post-conquest veintena feast illustrations especially significant and compelling is the dearth of reliably pre-Columbian pictorial representations of that annual cycle of celebrations. Only a single pre-hispanic source, the Codex Borgia, has been suggested to contain any veintena representations at all, although not in a full cycle of eighteen monthly festival images comparable to the series routinely depicted in the colonial sources.[28] Otherwise, the details of Ochpaniztli's public celebrations are known mainly through the pictorial and textual representations that were compiled in the century after conquest

and colonization. As primary sources created by Nahua artists living in central Mexico, it is imperative to more fully integrate their contents into investigations of pre-hispanic ritual practices.

What is more, in many cases the colonial veintena imagery was actually placed on the page *before* the accompanying glosses and descriptions, such that the pictorial element may have contributed directly to the formation of textual accounts. Ellen Taylor Baird has shown, for example, that a number of veintena illustrations supplied for Fray Sahagún's Primeros Memoriales, compiled ca. 1559–1561, were placed on the page before the accompanying Nahuatl textual descriptions that appear in columns alongside the imagery, reflecting a "primarily informative function" for the illustrations.[29] Elizabeth Hill Boone observes this to be the case for any number of significant sixteenth-century central Mexican manuscripts that document the cultural, historical, and religious traditions of the Nahua. Because these manuscripts are "as pictorial as they are textual," and because the native tlacuilos' images often preceded the Nahuatl or Spanish texts, Boone asserts that the illustrations therefore "represent the foundation for any other information that was added. . . . The pictorial component was always a fundamental feature of these encyclopedias."[30] In other instances, the pictorial imagery may have functioned independently of the written descriptions. Betty Ann Brown has shown, for example, that the ceremonial participation of women in the veintena rituals pictured in the Sahaguntine manuscripts is described rarely—if at all—in the accompanying textual accounts.[31]

These kinds of observations are crucial, for they highlight the essential role that the tlacuilos played in generating these cross-cultural manuscripts. The difficulty inherent in analyzing this situation is that the identities and ethnicities of the artists involved are, with few exceptions, unknown to us today. On the other hand, although acknowledging that sixteenth-century Mexico was quite ethnically diverse, the circumstances surrounding this particular ethnohistoric project—chronicling the sacred rites and calendrical traditions of pre-Columbian Mexico—are quite specific, and the artists were probably ethnically Nahua or mestizo, and, moreover, probably indoctrinated in Christianity to some degree.

In privileging the corpus of Ochpaniztli images as a major source of information, I seek to complement the body of modern scholarship that has examined the festival primarily or even exclusively through the alphabetic textual descriptions. Scholars have long turned to the post-conquest ethnohistories for information, and these have immeasurably enriched current understanding of

pre-hispanic Mexican history, politics, socioeconomic structures, and religion. Among the wide array of extant treatises on native religion and ritual, from the early sixteenth-century chronicles of the Franciscan Fray Toribio de Benavente, known as Motolinía, to the early seventeenth-century compilations of Fray Juan de Torquemada, scholars have consulted most frequently the writings of the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún. His voluminous *General History of the Things of New Spain* of the late 1570s dedicates an entire book to describing the annual calendrical ceremonies, those "feasts and sacrifices by which these natives honored their gods in their state of infidelity."[32] Previous studies have done much to elucidate the larger structures governing the organization and operation of the veintena cycle as a whole, particularly in and around Tenochtitlan. Specialized studies from a variety of disciplines have isolated major facets of the Ochpaniztli festival, particularly its seasonal and fertility aspects;[33] its sacrificial and martial overtones, which are especially important in accounts that can be linked with the capital;[34] and the intertwining of these themes.[35] The cleansing and transformative overtones of Ochpaniztli, a major concern of this study, have also been considered in modern scholarship, although previous scholars have primarily examined these issues in relation to seasonal and agrarian concerns.[36]

Despite long recognition of the importance of pictorial representations as a vital communicatory mode among the peoples of central Mexico, however, most of the pictorial sources representing Ochpaniztli have not been thoroughly considered in modern investigations. But scholars may be overlooking a potentially rich and illuminating source of information about the festival by failing to fully examine these images. Inasmuch as pictorial imagery had been the primary Mexican means for communication, the indigenous veintena images may help to clarify the nature of the patron goddess and the ritual foci of the annual veintena ceremonies.

When imagery has been included in the discussion of Ochpaniztli, it has usually been the illustration in the early colonial manuscript known as the Codex Borbonicus (figs. 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3). The Borbonicus is a lavishly illustrated pictorial screenfold, named for its current location in the library of the ex–Bourbon Palace in Paris. It is a fine example of a painted indigenous document from central Mexico. Although its provenance is not known and has long been a matter of debate, it was perhaps produced in or near the metropolitan capital shortly after the conquest.[37] The manuscript is mostly pictorial, containing only a handful of scattered Spanish glosses added at an unknown time. It is generally held to be of

native authorship, primarily because of its stylistic affinities with the painting conventions of pre-Columbian central Mexico. Indeed, although most scholars now accept its early colonial date, it was long believed to be the sole surviving example of a pre-Columbian manuscript from the Valley of Mexico.[38] The Borbonicus is therefore a major source for Mexican manuscript studies.

However, the Borbonicus also poses substantial problems of interpretation. Scenes of the veintena feasts make up the third of its four sections (pp. 23–37). Although textual descriptions have done much to clarify the contents of this chapter, direct comparisons between textual accounts of the veintenas and the Borbonicus images have also been problematic and even misleading, since much of the pictorial imagery represents ritual activities and celebratory foci that do not precisely accord with any particular account. A number of scholars have demonstrated the really unusual nature of this manuscript and the need to consider it on its own merits.[39] Betty Ann Brown, for example, notes numerous instances in which the Borbonicus veintena imagery diverges considerably from other pictorial representations.[40] In spite of this, as Christopher Couch observes, "[r]ather than focussing on the unique characteristics of the Borbonicus illustrations, previous studies have tended to treat them as though they were illustrations of the later textual accounts. Some of the drawings do match the later descriptions of the ceremonies quite closely, and have been published time and again as illustrations of them. Others vary greatly from the descriptions, but these differences have usually been ignored."[41] It is perhaps ironic that, although the Codex Borbonicus has been privileged as a major indigenous pictorial resource, it has frequently been fitted into an interpretive model based, first, on textual accounts.

The Codex Borbonicus veintena depiction believed to represent the Ochpaniztli festival has no peer in pictorial richness or detail. It is also the most lavish and expansive imagery in the entire manuscript. But I submit that the Codex Borbonicus imagery of Ochpaniztli, splendid though it is, has unduly influenced modern scholarly interpretations. The scene represents an agricultural rite dedicated to deities of rain and maize. In concert with its autumn date and descriptions of similar figures in the major late sixteenth-century accounts authored by Sahagún and Durán, this agricultural emphasis in the Borbonicus has led to the common assumption that Ochpaniztli was an agrarian rite; it has been most often interpreted as the harvest festival. Yet the evidence for this is equivocal, and there is substantial disjunction between the ritual focus of this festival

image and numerous other representations, pictorial and textual alike, that focus consistently on a goddess who is linked with human sexuality, midwifery, parturition, and healing and cleansing rites. This deity is identified in the texts variously as Toci, Teteoinnan, and Tlazolteotl, and although she is present in the Borbonicus scene, it is in a position clearly secondary to that of the maize gods, as Christopher Couch and Cecelia Klein have both noted.[42] However, in spite of the uniqueness of its contents, the Borbonicus representation has frequently been positioned as the prototype for understanding the Ochpaniztli festival as a whole. What is more, the privileged position of the Borbonicus has often meant that numerous other sources have been marginalized or even dismissed as shorthand or simplified descendants of this more complex native document.

I propose to approach the corpus of Ochpaniztli images differently. First, I draw a distinction between this Borbonicus imagery and the other pictorial sources, since the singular nature of the Borbonicus precludes its functioning as an authoritative model for most colonial representations. I treat it, instead, as a separate, unique manifestation of the festival. Second, I argue that it is crucial to reclaim the rest of the colonial corpus of images as meaningful resources for investigating indigenous ritual practice. Moreover, it is my position that the discrepancies and inconsistencies between these images and the famed Ochpaniztli scene in the Codex Borbonicus need not be smoothed away or glossed over in examining the feast—to the contrary, examining these discrepancies closely might ultimately allow for a much more complex vision of the festival to emerge, since, in spite of the friars' essentializing narratives, it seems clear that these festivals were open-ended and changeable, responding to local and contemporary needs.

It is not my intention to deny the importance of the textual accounts, however. Modern understandings of the pre-hispanic world would be spare indeed without the abundant extant corpus of ethnohistoric texts, most particularly those compiled by Bernardino de Sahagún, who spent decades learning Nahuatl and studying all aspects of indigenous culture. In spite of their substantial limitations, these textual sources were also compiled in collaboration between friar-chroniclers and indigenous informants, scholars, and scribes, and they are fundamental to any investigation of pre-Columbian ceremony or sacred imagery. But the textual veintena commentaries and the pictorial images have frequently been treated separately. And in some respects perhaps it is vital to treat them this way, at least in part: for Europeans, the written word did supersede the importance of

the image, whereas, conversely, pictorial imagery in Mesoamerica had been the ancient means by which information of all kinds was recorded and transmitted. On the other hand, the pictorial and textual sources were initially conceived and designed to be apprehended together. What is more, they were, together, generated as part of a much larger network of interconnected texts and images contributing to the colonial discourse about the nature of Mexico's aboriginal inhabitants. As such, there are some fundamental points of intersection between text and image, and these might allow the texts to clarify and illuminate the manuscripts' significant, meaningful pictorial elements. Finally, the slippages between text and image are a potentially rich source of information about how different viceregal participants in this chronicling project conceptualized the sacred rites and performative practices of pre-Columbian Nahua culture.

This book has therefore been conceived as a series of case studies, each of which reflects in some way on the theme of transformation. The first two chapters are substantively related, interrogating the historical character of the Ochpaniztli representations. The first chapter positions the veintena images as distinctly colonial products and considers some of the difficulties inherent in investigating them as issues of sources, authoritative models, and authenticity continue to be debated. The second chapter surveys the corpus of Ochpaniztli illustrations in the colonial ethnohistories and considers how the Nahua manuscript painters went about picturing autochthonous gods and rites within a distinctly Christianizing viceregal milieu. It emphasizes particularly the contents of these post-conquest illustrations, reflects on the special importance that the native tlacuilos gave to the goddess's paraphernalia and accoutrements, and examines how Nahua and Spanish beholders alike might have understood them.

The larger ritual, social, and ceremonial significance of these adornments and regalia are the focus of the discussion in chapter 3. These are mentioned only in passing, if at all, in the textual accounts accompanying the veintena illustrations. But I suggest that when these ceremonial implements are examined in light of Nahua performative conventions and aboriginal concepts of the sacred, they may actually reveal something more about the goddess's identity and roles in the festival than what is contained solely in the texts. Pictorial and textual sources together reveal the central role of ritually attired celebrants and effigies that manifested the presence and power of the divine patron. The theme of transformation

plays an especially important role in this analysis as a fundamental component of the Ochpaniztli rituals.

For the friars, the enactment of these calendrical rituals was framed by the specter of pagan, classical-style gods and demons. In chapter 4, I argue that the particular goddess evoked and celebrated during Ochpaniztli also became inextricably bound up with the friars' significant anxieties and misapprehensions about Mexican "idolatry," such that they ultimately transformed the goddess's complex identity as a signifier of multiple cosmic and earthly forces to a univalent symbol of benevolent motherhood, or else of debauchery and depraved, libidinous behavior. But consistency in the pictorial illustrations supplied by the native artists actually belies the fracturing of her identity through these texts. Although these kinds of representations emerge from polarized Christian categories of "good" and "evil," I contend that in this case they might also be informed by the contemporary circumstances surrounding the friars' evangelical project, since they worried that cults to these pagan Mexican mother goddesses had become implicated in contemporary Nahua devotions to holy Christian mother figures.

The fifth and final chapter concludes the study where many investigations routinely begin (and, indeed, at the place where this author's own interest in the topic began): with the festival scene in the Codex Borbonicus. It rethinks the traditional harvest-festival interpretation for Ochpaniztli. Rather than subjugate the period's lustral activities, described at length in chapter 3, to the clear agrarian overtones that appear in a handful of major sources, I treat the agricultural themes as significant information about a separate, extraordinary, and historically specific event. This ceremony implicated the transformation of the ritual landscape through the construction of lavish temples, hilltop shrines, and ritual pathways for celebrating and propitiating the gods in response to damaging changes—in the form of frosts, droughts, and famines—visited by the gods upon the surface of the earth. Specifically, I propose that these activities are related to widespread rites celebrating Chicomecoatl and Tlaloc in response to devastating environmental conditions that plagued the population of central Mexico and, worse, appeared to recur cyclically.

I have limited the focus of my investigation to depictions of one well-known pre-Columbian calendar festival in order to consider a broader set of questions. The attendant deity of this festival has also garnered a considerable amount of modern scholarly attention, and questions about her identity and the nature of native Mexican sacred entities and images are inextricable from these veintena

festival representations. Underlying this study is the presumption that scholars may be able to discern something about pre-Columbian ceremonial practices and concepts of the sacred from these post-conquest depictions of native ritual.[43] But they do not, and I believe they cannot, allow for a single, tidy, overarching narrative that weaves together all the disparate threads into a seamless whole, and it is not my goal to construct one. Rather, it is imperative to interrogate these sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century sources within the distinctly colonial, Christianizing milieu for which they were produced. Colonial Nahuas, probably Christianized and educated at the mission schools, faced the task of representing their forebears' outlawed rites and gods, mostly for the eyes of Spanish mendicant friars intent on eradicating them. What the Ochpaniztli sources—textual and pictorial alike—do best is to provide us with myriad possibilities for assessing the ways in which a variety of viceregal constituents visualized the aboriginal gods and rites of pre-Columbian ritual practice.