

How to Write the  
History of the New World  
*Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in  
the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*

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*To Sandra, who has sheltered me through the fiercest storms.  
To Sebastián and Andrea, whose eyes caress my soul.  
To Claudio and Consuelo, who gave birth to me twice.*

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## The Making of a “Patriotic Epistemology”

While in exile in Italy and after having read scholars such as Cornelius de Pauw and William Robertson, the Jesuit Juan de Velasco (1727–1792) decided to finish the natural and civil histories of the “Kingdom of Quito” that he had begun to write sometime in the 1750s. Velasco dusted off his notes collected during years of pilgrimages up and down the Ecuadorian Andes to study plants, insects, manuscripts, and indigenous oral traditions. In 1788–89, he submitted for the approval of the Spanish authorities three volumes in which he painstakingly refuted the views of European writers on the Americas. Velasco not only attacked the peddlers of negative representations of the lands and peoples of the New World but also sought to prove the stubborn continuity of the “Kingdom of Quito” in the face of many challenges, including two invasions by the Caran-Shyri (ca. 980 C.E.) and the Incas (ca. 1487 C.E.). Although his history had to wait until the mid nineteenth century to be published, his observations trickled through the presses of late-colonial Quito in the 1790s to inspire local patriots.<sup>1</sup> Misunderstanding his works, nationalists have used Velasco to create the historiographical foundation of Ecuador.<sup>2</sup> It is true that Velasco’s history sought to endow the Creole colonial society of Quito with a glorious past. Yet his idealized north Andean ancient polities were not “nations,” that is, fraternities of virtuous citizens, but “kingdoms,” societies made up of corporate social estates.

Velasco typifies scores of Spanish American antiquarians who both in Europe and in the colonies attempted to refute the views of skeptical northern European authors. David Brading has for many years been perhaps the most astute reader of these Spanish American antiquarians. In *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, for example, Brading has studied the work of one of Velasco’s Jesuit brethren, Francisco Clavijero, concluding that the latter wrote, not only to refute Cornelius de Pauw, the abbé Raynal, and William Robertson, but also to provide Creole patriots with legitimating historical narratives. According to Brading, Creole patriotism originated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the American-born descendants

of Spanish conquistadors complained that the crown was turning its back on its original commitment to foster a class of grandees in the New World. As the monarchy phased out the grants of Amerindian tribute and labor (*encomiendas*) given to the conquistadors in the most economically dynamic areas of Mexico and Peru, Creoles lost the right to be a privileged landed nobility surrounded by communities of Amerindian retainers. The Creoles then turned to the Church, whose secular branch they gradually came to dominate. Enscathed in universities, cathedral chapters, nunneries, and parishes, Creoles produced countless patriotic sermons and treatises that praised the wealth of their ecclesiastical establishments, as well as their own learning and piety, including that of the many New World saints that the Church had canonized, or should have canonized. The historiography that the clerical Creoles produced sought to transform the “colonies” into “kingdoms,” part of a loosely federated Spanish universal monarchy, each endowed with a glorious past. Clavijero’s history of ancient Mexico was no exception.<sup>3</sup>

Brading has argued that it was this tendency that made Creole historiography unpopular in the nineteenth century, a period of *nation* building. The Creole project of an orderly polity composed of hierarchical social orders in nested subordination failed to attract Mexican intellectuals in the wake of the wars of independence (1810–21). Over the course of the colonial period, the most economically dynamic areas of Mexico, the geographical crescent surrounding the capital, developed more fluid social structures, in which upward social mobility partially did away with the corporate restrictions of the colonial core. It was here that forms of popular liberalism (or republicanism) became deeply rooted and that a social order based on universal participation of male citizens emerged. Mexico’s liberalism captured the imagination of most nineteenth-century literate Spanish American elites, who therefore had little taste for Clavijero’s musings. The patriotic histories of the Aztecs written in the late-colonial period found little resonance in the postcolonial age, at least until the Mexican Revolution of 1910. It was only after the Revolution that *indigenismo* (the cult among mestizos of things Amerindian) finally rendered the historiography of Creole patriotism more palatable to the republican traditions of popular liberalism.<sup>4</sup> Scholars working on nineteenth-century Peru have echoed Brading’s insights into the failure of late-colonial Creole historiography to inspire new generations of nineteenth-century intellectuals. A similar preoccupation with creating postcolonial liberal republics led Peruvian elites to underemphasize the rich colonial historiographical tradition initiated by the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega that sought to reconstruct a classical Inca past for the vicerealty of Peru.<sup>5</sup>

The views of scholars like Brading have helped guide my readings of the countless works produced by late-colonial Spanish American historians and antiquarians who wrote to criticize the new northern European historiographies of the New World. This chapter and the next explore the epistemological and methodological assumptions that authors such as Velasco and Clavijero brought to bear in their writings. These authors crafted an epistemology that can be called "patriotic." Drawing on the insights of Brading, I argue that patriotic epistemology was a discourse of the ancient régime that created and validated knowledge in the colonies along lines that mimicked and reinforced wider public principles of socio-racial estates and corporate privileges. Seeking to refute northern European histories of the New World and its peoples, these authors also crafted persuasive critiques of the genre of conjunctural history. More important, they articulated an original analysis of the epistemological limitations of the "traveler" that foreshadowed many of our contemporary postcolonial insights. In this chapter, I first clarify the rules of the discourse of patriotic epistemology. Then, I explore Creole authors who by the mid eighteenth century began to articulate some key insights of this discourse as they set out to refute biased travel accounts and sought to demonstrate the privileged status of the testimonies of Amerindian and Creole-clerical elites. In the third section, I study the writings of Creole Jesuits in exile who brought this discourse to maturity. The chapter ends with an analysis of how the logic underpinning this discourse helps illuminate the nature of the seemingly contradictory colonial representations of the "Indian," who was both despised and admired.

### Patriotic Epistemology: An Overview

The histories of the Incas and the Aztecs written by the likes of Velasco and Clavijero were a reaction to Enlightenment paradigms and techniques developed in philosophical compilations of travel accounts and conjunctural histories. It is tempting to argue, therefore, that these histories were simply a return to the methods and attitudes of the Renaissance. Both Velasco and Clavijero, for example, claimed that their accounts were thoroughly grounded in native sources. Already in the early seventeenth century, the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and the Franciscan friar Juan de Torquemada had claimed privileged access to Amerindian testimonies and sources. But the epistemological agenda of Velasco and Clavijero did not consist merely of taking up where Garcilaso and Torquemada had left off. While the latter two built on a tradition of sixteenth-century Indo-Spanish humanism to show the complexity

and historical depth of indigenous politics, the two Jesuits wrote to undermine the epistemological and critical principles of eighteenth-century northern European historians. Along with many others, Velasco and Clavijero developed an approach to the problem of assessing the credibility of testimonies and of validating knowledge that can be called "patriotic epistemology."

The discourse of patriotic epistemology validated the historical knowledge produced only by learned clerical observers and by precolonial and sixteenth-century Amerindian nobles. Like the humanist epistemology deployed by Garcilaso and Torquemada, eighteenth-century patriotic epistemology privileged the testimony of Amerindian oral traditions and written sources, but unlike its sixteenth-century counterpart, it also sometimes dismissed these sources outright. The humanist epistemology of the sixteenth century emerged in an early-colonial landscape of complex indigenous politics that, although demographically and culturally battered, maintained the sharp differentiation between commoners and rulers that had characterized precolonial highland societies. Sixteenth-century colonial intellectuals sought to collect and translate into European historiographical idioms conflicting historical traditions relayed by Amerindian rulers. Over time, however, as those rulers disappeared, this reliance on the testimonies of Amerindian elites began to be questioned. To observers in the late eighteenth century, Amerindian communities looked socially undifferentiated. Although some indigenous elites adapted to the new colonial conditions, taking Castilian names and becoming the new caretakers of Christian temples and saints, the rich tapestry of social hierarchies that had characterized past Amerindian politics underwent considerable simplification.<sup>6</sup> For most late-colonial observers, Amerindian communities seemed homogeneous collectivities of wretched commoners. It was in this context that clerical writers sought to distinguish carefully between sources produced by reliable precolonial and early-colonial indigenous elites and those produced later by unreliable commoners. From this perspective, the Creole clerical project appears as one of restoration, a return to the simpler times in which virtuous Amerindian nobles had embraced the teachings of the Church.

The discourse of patriotic epistemology also privileged the knowledge and credibility of the representatives of the Church. With Amerindian nobles considered virtually an extinct species, representatives of the Church, whose intimate acquaintance with the land and indigenous communities supposedly made them impervious to deception and misrepresentation, now assumed responsibility for reporting credibly on natural and ethnographic phenomena in the Indies.

In the discourse of patriotic epistemology, the foreign observer appeared as nemesis of learned clerical witness. Foreign travelers were portrayed as helpless victims of Amerindian cunning, who in any case paid only short visits to the lands they studied and were therefore unable to discover much about them. They also lacked the time and inclination to develop lasting attachments to communities and were incapable of penetrating beneath the surface of local social phenomena. Travelers were at the mercy of communities that gulled foreigners and laughed at their expense. Moreover, since travelers did not know the Amerindian languages, they were forced to rely on translators and secondhand interpretations.

Patriotic epistemology not only offered an epistemological critique of the perceptual limitations of both Amerindian commoners and philosophical travelers, it also targeted the reliability of Spanish colonists. Late-eighteenth-century clerical authors tended to differentiate between the testimony of the clergy and that of lay colonists, who were often found guilty of bias, whether conscious or unconscious. This clerical critique of the colonists had illustrious antecedents in the sixteenth century, when the religious had constantly fought "greedy" lay colonists. "Spaniards" were far from being a homogeneous group: colonists, clergy, and royal magistrates clashed incessantly over, among other things, the right to control Amerindian lands and labor.<sup>7</sup> Each group in turn was divided. The Church, for example, was an institution in which the seculars fought the religious and Creoles fought Peninsulars over the control of parishes, monasteries, nunneries, cathedral chapters, and universities.<sup>8</sup> These tensions had already sparked historiographical debates between colonists and clerics by the early sixteenth century; parties accused each other of manipulating evidence for the sake of agendas of greed and exploitation.<sup>9</sup> This tension somewhat subsided with the rise of the secular Church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but by the late eighteenth century, the policies of the monarchy had considerably undermined the judicial, political, and economic power of the secular clergy, setting off an anticlerical wave led by provincial bureaucrats and some local communities. Bureaucrats (intendants, *alcaldes*, and *subdelegados*) sought to take the economic assets of parishes and sodalities from clerical control, as well as to limit the clergy acting as civil magistrates. Some communities also got involved in the anticlerical charge and snarled parish priests in endless litigation over ecclesiastical fees and the latter's rights to punish and discipline.<sup>10</sup> This heightened tension between laity and clergy partly revived former clerical claims to greater credibility.

Mestizos, or *castas*, the products of miscegenation among Amerindians,

poor Spaniards, and blacks, were at the bottom of the scale of credibility devised by the discourse of patriotic epistemology and were consistently targeted for criticism by clerical writers. Such interbreeding was thought appropriate only when it involved the upper classes. Whereas the mating of upper-class Amerindian women with high-born Spaniards had been welcomed in the early days of the Conquest, the miscegenation that later united commoners of different races was another matter. *Vulgar mestizaje* was seen as a threat to the existence of idealized hierarchical politics. Mestizos were consistently portrayed as evil and out of control, responsible for introducing vicious lifestyles, including a culture of lies and deception, into Amerindian communities that the clergy sought to keep unsoiled.<sup>11</sup>

The patriotic epistemology described here cannot be ascribed solely to Creoles. Spanish bishops who served terms in the colonies, for example, were among its leading representatives. The discourse of patriotic epistemology appears therefore broadly clerical rather than merely Creole, which is the reason for the awkward, sometimes redundant, term "clerical-Creole."

Clerical-Creole historiography was a reflection of aristocratic, racialized longings of members of ancien régime politics, not modern nation-states. Nineteenth-century national projects in Latin America, to be sure, also offered very limited definitions of citizenship. Yet these exclusionary projects were committed to ending the colonial traditions of corporate privileges and socio-racial estates, the twin principles upon which clerical patriots sought to build utopian colonial kingdoms. But in spite of differences between the historiographies of the colonial and national periods, they remained connected by the concept of the nation-state. Although a recent arrival on the historical scene, the nation-state has managed to present itself as eternal, as Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm have noted. By helping tailor collective memories, history has been a powerful nationalist legitimating resource, and it is deployed in educational systems and the public sphere to this end.<sup>12</sup> Clerical-Creole historiography helped rescue and preserve narrative traditions that would later give the freshly minted Spanish American nation-states a patina of eternity.

A remarkable distance separates our modern and postmodern sensibilities from the views of these clerical authors, many of whom inhabited strange mental landscapes that have not yet been fully explored. My intention is to provide a reading of late-colonial Spanish American culture that, I hope, will challenge a Eurocentric historiography obsessed with discovering the precursors of modernity in the former Spanish colonies. A secular, liberal, modern interpretation of late-colonial culture tends to offer stereotypical and

America and devoted his life to proving them wrong. In a work that mobilized a vast network of correspondents and provincial intellectuals, Eguíara y Eguen set out to demonstrate that the Spanish American colonies were not intellectually barren. In his *Bibliotheca mexicana*, he assembled a list of published and unpublished works produced in Mexico after the Conquest (with short biographies of the authors). Although the *Bibliotheca* suffered the fate of many of the works it catalogued (only one volume was published), a lengthy preface did come out. As a typical patriot, Eguíara y Eguen used the preface to list the accomplishments of the Creole mind, including the extraordinary feats of memory of a handful of university scholars. He described the exceptional linguistic and academic qualifications of the average parish priest; the many works on mathematics, theology, history, politics, law, rhetoric, grammar, linguistics, and medicine written in Mexico; and the many outstanding libraries available in New Spain. Moreover, Eguíara y Eguen also cited the political and intellectual virtues of the ancient Mesoamerican peoples. The novelty of Eguíara y Eguen's thesis lay, however, in his criticism of the epistemological foundations of European knowledge of the Indies. In his preface, Eguíara y Eguen outlined the clerical discourse of patriotic epistemology, emphasizing the inability of outsiders ever to comprehend America.

Eguíara y Eguen zeroed in on Martí's views as part of his larger argument against armchair philosophers and travelers, attacking the genre of travel accounts that since the late seventeenth century had specialized in "orientalizing" Spanish America by presenting the colonies as riddled with corruption, sexual promiscuity, ignorance, cruelty, and pagan superstition.<sup>15</sup> To counter this view and especially to prove that the religion of the colonies was not dominated by survivals of Amerindian idolatry, the biographical sketches in Eguíara y Eguen's *Bibliotheca* dwelt on the piety and morality of the Creole intelligentsia, as well as of learned Native Americans who had served clerical scholars as translators, interpreters, and guides in the sixteenth century or become distinguished parish priests in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Although Eguíara y Eguen constantly used the testimony of "foreign" authors (including Peninsular Spaniards) to strengthen the credibility of his thesis, he acknowledged only travelers who had used learned Creoles as guides. Thus, for example, he cited the testimony of the Italian traveler Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, who had briefly visited Mexico in the late seventeenth century. According to Eguíara y Eguen, Gemelli Careri reported ac-

anachronistic readings of the authors studied, thus making a universal master narrative out of local, provincial European experience.<sup>16</sup> This chapter and the next will make clear the density and originality of intellectual debates in colonial Spanish America. Once the rules of the discourse are understood, the depth and creativity of late-colonial Spanish American authors should become apparent. It is very telling that the bulk of the scholarship critically addressing the epistemological and methodological proposals of the Enlightenment did not come from the British American colonies but from Mexico. Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin did not offer any comprehensive methodological response to the negative views of America proposed by authors such as Buffon, de Pauw, Raynal, and Robertson.

In the next section, I study three mid-eighteenth-century authors, Juan José de Eguíara y Eguen (1696–1763), Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Vértiz (1718–1780), and José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez (1734–1794), who, I argue, first outlined many of the insights of the discourse of patriotic epistemology.

### The Making of Patriotic Epistemology: Mexico, 1750–1780

#### *Juan José de Eguíara y Eguen*

The arrival in the Indies of works by Nicolás Antonio (1617–1684) and Manuel Martí (1663–1737), two of the most important Spanish neo-Latinists of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, created a major intellectual upheaval. Antonio and Martí sought to renovate Spanish intellectual life through the diffusion of Italianate humanist values. They held the Creole culture of the colonies in contempt, and the 1735 and 1742 (posthumous) editions of Martí's and Antonio's letters, respectively, include remarks denigrating New World peoples. In notes addressed to pupils grappling with whether to migrate to the Indies, Antonio and Martí encouraged their young friends to move instead to Rome, because the Spanish American colonies, with no libraries and no authors of note, had little to offer inquisitive minds. From Quito to Mexico, the clerical establishment reacted with indignation, seeing Antonio and Martí as the culmination of some two hundred years of Peninsular arrogance and misinformation about America. Juan José de Eguíara y Eguen typified the clerical authors who penned angry responses.<sup>17</sup>

A powerful cleric, holder of the chair of theology and dean of the University of Mexico and appointed bishop of Yucatan (a post he declined), Eguíara y Eguen became the most outspoken critic of Antonio and Martí in

curately on Mexican antiquities and on clerical educational establishments, largely because he had followed information provided by the great Creole polymath Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645–1700).<sup>16</sup> Eguíaara y Eguen also acknowledged the testimony of "outsiders" with long-term residence in the Indies. Believing that exposure to "the American experience [was] educational," Eguíaara y Eguen concluded that foreigners who had lived many years in America were trustworthy.<sup>17</sup> As a matter of principle, Eguíaara y Eguen dismissed Peninsular authors who collected their information en route to somewhere else. This, Eguíaara y Eguen argued, was the reason for the only partially accurate passages on Mexico in the *Geographia histórica* published in Madrid in 1752 by Pedro Murillo Velarde (1696–1753). Although it described Mexico City's numerous and wealthy educational establishments, which was, of course, music to Eguíaara y Eguen's ears, Murillo Velarde's *Geographia* referred slightly to colonial literary styles and asserted that although Creoles were mentally precocious, they degenerated early. Eguíaara y Eguen ascribed these calumnies to the fact that Murillo Velarde had quickly assembled his data on Mexico while en route to Manila.<sup>18</sup>

Only reliance on trustworthy local interpreters could provide solid knowledge about America, Eguíaara y Eguen thought, and he accordingly exalted the Amerindian Christian culture that the Franciscans had created in the sixteenth century at the College of Santa Cruz of Tlatelolco. Eguíaara y Eguen praised the Latinate Amerindian intelligentsia that once walked the halls of the college for having preserved and translated sources that were the foundation of all trustworthy historical knowledge about ancient Mesoamerica, including that of Franciscans such as Bernardino de Sahagún.<sup>19</sup> This emphasis on the value of local interpreters led Eguíaara y Eguen to call into question the work on Mesoamerican scripts by the learned seventeenth-century German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, who in his *Oedipus aegyptiacus* (1652–54) had argued that Mexican writing was childish. Kircher's interpretation of Mexican writing was wrong, Eguíaara y Eguen argued, because it was uneducated. "The opinion of this extraordinarily erudite man would have been different," Eguíaara y Eguen maintained, "had he had access to the writings of our indigenous writers or had he found an interpreter who would orally have explained to him those paintings he failed to comprehend."<sup>20</sup> Had Kircher relied on the knowledge of the Amerindian historians of the sixteenth century, he would have not failed to understand the true character of Mesoamerican scripts. According to Eguíaara y Eguen, Mexican writing resembled that of the ancient Egyptians in that it was divided into

paintings that could be understood by commoners and hieroglyphs whose deep, arcane symbolism could only be comprehended by learned priestly elites.

Throughout the preface, Eguíaara y Eguen also implied that the heirs of the Amerindian aristocracy of the precolonial period and the early sixteenth century were the Creoles, making them the only surviving credible interpreters of American realities. Eguíaara y Eguen applauded Kircher for having correctly identified the arcane symbolism hidden behind the representation of the Mexica deity Huitzilopochtli, but maintained that the German's interpretation was based on the information he had obtained from Creole Jesuit brethren.<sup>21</sup>

Struggling against the facile characterizations of colonial culture in European literature on the New World, typified by Antonio and Martti, Eguíaara y Eguen outlined a patriotic epistemology that denied that transient reporters possessed the ability to come up with insights of any value into the lands they visited, and that privileged the epistemological authority of post-colonial Amerindian nobles and their intellectual heirs among contemporary Creole clerics. A few years later, in a history of Mesoamerica and its peoples, Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia would develop Eguíaara y Eguen's argument.

#### Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia

Mariano Echeverría y Veytia was the scion of a powerful bureaucratic family in the city of Puebla. After obtaining a fine education and a degree in law, he toured Europe and eventually settled in Madrid. One day in 1744, an Italian stranger knocked at his door; it was Lorenzo Boturini, who, after having been imprisoned in Mexico, had been sent back to Spain to face charges. For two years, Echeverría y Veytia welcomed the stranger into his household, where Boturini worked on his great historiographical project calling for a complete reconceptualization of the history of Mesoamerica using new sources, the *Idea de una nueva historia general de la América Septentrional*. While at Echeverría y Veytia's, Boturini introduced his host to the fascinating world of Amerindian antiquities. When he was called back to Mexico in 1750, Echeverría y Veytia promised the Italian to send him copies of indigenous documents in his collection that lay sequestered in New Spain. By the time Echeverría y Veytia got around to fulfilling his promise, however, it was too late. Boturini had died. With some of Boturini's ideas brewing in his head, and copies of Boturini's wonderful collection of indigenous sources,

famine, plagues, and civil wars, the Chichimecs sent parties led by Xolotl to resettle the land. Those Toltec groups who still clung to the land fought back and were crushed. Some, however, intermarried with the newcomers, establishing new dynasties. According to Echeverría y Veytia, three new northern groups, the Tepanec, the Otomi, and the Acuilhua, moved down in 168 C.E. to further complicate the ethnic and dynastic landscape of central Mexico. The last northern group to arrive consisted of seven Mexica families. They settled in central Mexico in 1298 C.E., founded Tenochtitlan in 1327 C.E., and took over the region in 1428 C.E.

Like Boturini, Echeverría y Veytia thought that ancient Mesoamerican sources were abundant and reliable, and that the Chichimecs and Toltecs had kept an accurate recollection of the stories of Creation, the Flood, and Babel, confirming each and every one of the elements of the biblical narrative. Moreover, through a comparative analysis of Amerindian and Old World chronologies, events in the Bible such as the correct date of death of Christ could be elucidated. Echeverría y Veytia shared Boturini's interest in clarifying Amerindian chronologies to shed light on significant biblical events. Cracking the obscurities of Amerindian calendrical systems became a means to settling disputes between the contradictory versions of the Bible (that is, the Vulgate and the Septuagint). Echeverría y Veytia, for example, used references to ancient eclipses in native sources to calculate Christ's true birth date, which he argued had been in the year 4,034 after Creation.<sup>30</sup>

Echeverría y Veytia did not, however, follow Boturini blindly. For one thing, he came up with a slightly different interpretation of Mesoamerican calendrics. More important, he refused to read myths as allegories of ancient social revolutions. Although Echeverría y Veytia explicitly insisted that the analysis of the meaning of words was a resource yet to be tapped, his use of etymology was rather different from Boturini's. Echeverría y Veytia implicitly rejected Boturini's evolutionary metanarrative of society and the mind.<sup>31</sup> The postlapsarian savages who in Boturini's *Idea* coined the names of gods to express dramatic changes in social conditions are nowhere to be found in Echeverría y Veytia's history. Nor are there any heroes whose poetic expressions in hieroglyphs, myths, and songs reveal the tensions of their class-ridden societies. Rather, for Echeverría y Veytia, the history of Mesoamerican polities was one of a decline from monotheism to polytheism. Full-fledged humans, whose natural reason had once led them to design accurate calendars and to worship a single, abstract deity, evolved into superstitious brutes. So convinced was Echeverría y Veytia of the relatively recent appearance of "idolatry" and "superstition," that he maintained that although the

Echeverría y Veytia began to write a history of his own, which remained uncompleted at his death in 1780.<sup>32</sup>

Echeverría y Veytia's history of ancient Mexico seems to have been written circa 1769, after many years of studying indigenous sources and grappling with Boturini's ideas.<sup>33</sup> Like Boturini, Echeverría y Veytia was suspicious of theses that emphasized cultural diffusion, and he therefore sought to highlight the independent development of the Mesoamerican civilizations. In Boturini's and Echeverría y Veytia's accounts, the natives developed their great civilizations largely in isolation. According to Echeverría y Veytia, a mere 104 years after the destruction of Babel (ca. 2,133 years after Creation, that is, 1797 B.C.E.), seven Chichimec families had established the city of Ixluchetlapallan near the Colorado River.<sup>34</sup> Along with these Chichimecs, Giants also arrived in the New World. These settled further to the south, only to be wiped out by a hurricane in the year 3,433 after Creation (601 B.C.E.).<sup>35</sup> The northern Chichimecs discovered the length of a year (365.25 days), reformed their calendrical system, and introduced the concept of leap years as early as the year 3,901 after Creation (133 B.C.E.).<sup>36</sup> This empire also became the cradle of the civilizations that later emerged in the Central Valley of Mexico, as splinter groups swarmed the south at different time periods. The first wanderers were the Olmecs, Xicalanca, and Zapotecs, who moved eastward to the Gulf and eventually reached Veracruz by sea. As they moved into the interior, these peoples killed off the few surviving Giants. In the case of the Olmecs, they settled in central Mexico and built the great city of Cholula in 51 B.C.E.<sup>37</sup> Not until the heyday of the Olmecs did an Old World visitor arrive: the apostle St. Thomas, whom the natives called Quetzalcoatl. St. Thomas introduced the natives to the mysteries of the Trinity, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, as well as to the sacraments of baptism, confession, communion, and priestly ordination. He also taught them the concepts of penance (bloodletting, self-flagellation, fasting) and charity, and introduced stern laws to punish homicide, perjury, theft, and adultery. Distance from Rome, however, soon led the priestly corps to distort St. Thomas's original teachings.<sup>38</sup> Development in isolation continued, and a second splinter group swarmed central Mexico. According to Echeverría y Veytia, seven Toltec families abandoned their parent Chichimec culture after staging a revolt in 583 C.E.<sup>39</sup> The Toltecs, mixed with the Olmecs, Xicalanca, and Zapotecs, built Tollan in 719 C.E., and convened a council of elders around 800 C.E., led by Huematzin, the Toltec Moses, who put together a Pentateuch-like book, the Teomoxli, or great book of civil and sacred histories. When news reached the northern empire that Tollan and the Toltecs had collapsed in 1116 C.E. as a result of



Chichimec reform of the calendar dated back to 155 B.C.E., the pagan names of the twenty days and eighteen months of a typical Mesoamerican calendar were relatively recent.<sup>32</sup> Echeverría y Veytia believed that idolatry had appeared in Mexico only around 750 C.E., some 2,500 years after the foundation of the city of Huehuetlapalan,<sup>33</sup> and that it had been deliberately introduced by merchants and priests seeking to attract pilgrims to struggling urban centers.<sup>34</sup> He saw moral decline in ancient Mexico as intimately linked to elite behavior. The concupiscence of a single Toltec ruler, Topiltzin, who violated the taboo against polygamy, for example, led to the sexual corruption of the entire Toltec clerical corps, which in turn led to widespread social corruption and generalized unrest. According to Echeverría y Veytia, the fall of the Toltecs could be blamed squarely on Topiltzin's immoral behavior.<sup>35</sup>

Although Boturini put together one of the greatest collections of written indigenous sources ever to be assembled in Mexico, he ultimately did not pay much attention to them. Boturini thought that the reconstruction of the human age had largely been accomplished, and that his contribution lay in the reconstruction of the age of the gods and the heroes. Echeverría y Veytia was also particularly interested in reconstructing these ages, but he thought that they were not as obscure as Boturini had once argued, for there was abundant written documentation. For Echeverría y Veytia, the source of Boturini's interpretative errors lay ultimately in the physical distance imposed by exile between the Italian and his own formidable collection of literary sources.<sup>36</sup>

The following pages focus on the way in which Echeverría y Veytia elaborated the discourse of patriotic epistemology first presented by Eguíara y Eguren. Unlike Eguíara y Eguren, Echeverría y Veytia did not write explicitly to address European misrepresentations of the New World, and his history had no obvious polemical intent. Yet Echeverría y Veytia's history was organized around a set of critical and epistemological principles that complemented those presented by Eguíara y Eguren. The task of the historian, Echeverría y Veytia argued, consisted in returning a core of reliable precolonial and early-colonial sources to their pristine original condition. According to Echeverría y Veytia, these sources had been altered, mainly by the democratization of access in Amerindian communities under colonial rule to hitherto closely guarded interpretation and sources, the willful manipulation of historical narratives by Amerindian elites, and the transformation of indigenous grammars and vocabularies. Echeverría y Veytia's epistemology condemned as untrustworthy the historical accounts of Amerindian commoners in all periods, as well as those of late-colonial indigenous interpreters,

irrespective of their social standing. As he sought to reconstruct the original Amerindian sources, Echeverría y Veytia privileged the scholarship of Amerindian historians such as Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, a member of the dynastic lineage of Texcoco who, as noted in Chapter 2, had befriended Torquemada, and whose writings Echeverría y Veytia sought to recover and imitate. I argue that the scholarship of these two authors cannot be easily distinguished, and that historians who have sought to present the "Indian" and "Spanish American" populations as two separate and distinct homogeneous monoliths are wrong. At least at the elite level, these two populations shared more than one cultural value. Finally, I argue that Echeverría y Veytia advanced a critique of foreign observers that, although not as coherent and fully developed as Eguíara y Eguren's, nevertheless focused on the epistemological limitations of travelers.

### *Three Processes of Distortion*

Unlike the typical northern European accounts that emphasized the burning of irretrievable Amerindian texts by fanatical Spanish friars, Echeverría y Veytia argued that the destruction of Amerindian books had not led to their eradication; they simply had gone underground. Having witnessed the burning of entire archives housed in the courts of Texcoco and Mexico during and after the Conquest, Mesoamericans decided to conceal their documents, guarding them jealously from strangers. This was all the more justified, Echeverría y Veytia contended, because not even those learned Spaniards who later mastered Nahuatl and studied extant indigenous sources had managed to cast off their persecutory mentality where Amerindian documents were concerned. Torquemada, for example, disqualified the study of the entire genre of calendrical sources on the grounds that they were demonically inspired.<sup>37</sup> The Amerindians knew this and hid their archives. It was at this crucial moment, Echeverría y Veytia argued, that reliable Mesoamerican historical documents began to be misread and misinterpreted.

Building on the methodological writings of Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Echeverría y Veytia maintained that the hiding of documents in Amerindian communities had democratized access to them. This in turn led to anarchy, because commoners who lacked knowledge of the traditional exegesis of Mesoamerican scripts introduced their own spurious readings. Citing a case described by Alva Ixtlilxochitl of an Amerindian upstart from the town of Coahuatepec (Coatepec?) who argued that his hometown was the original cradle of the Aculhuan lineage, Echeverría y Veytia sought to exemplify the

modifications and distortions introduced by commoners. Alva Ixtlilxochitl, who represented the views of Texcoco, a rival Aculhuan town, had confronted the commoner with contrary documentary evidence, but to no avail.<sup>39</sup> Echeverría y Veytia cited Alva Ixtlilxochitl's anecdote to make the point that the hiding of sources in the context of the collapse of indigenous social hierarchies had led to profound distortions, which later surfaced in the writings of Europeans.<sup>40</sup>

This approach allowed Echeverría y Veytia to weigh the credibility of sources and to apportion credit to the narratives of Amerindian and European writers. He was, for example, confronted with multiple enumerations of Mesoamerican historical ages. According to the myth of "solar ages," three successive catastrophes had destroyed the earth, and a fourth and final solar age was soon going to end. Boturini had once argued that floods (the sun of Water), earthquakes (the sun of Earth), hurricanes (the sun of Air), and a forthcoming apocalyptic conflagration (the sun of Fire) represented, in that order, the correct succession of ages. Echeverría y Veytia disagreed with Boturini's interpretation of one of Alva Ixtlilxochitl's texts and cited an earlier work by the same author. According to this version, hurricanes, not earthquakes, had followed the Flood. Facing two different accounts by the same author, Echeverría y Veytia chose one partly on rational grounds. According to Echeverría y Veytia, Mesoamerican natives had a cosmology in which the four elements were organized in ascending hierarchical order: Water, Air, Earth, and Fire. Echeverría y Veytia concluded that this cosmology was also the organizing principle of the natives' history, and that the chronological succession of ages should therefore mimic the ascending hierarchical order of the elements. After the Flood (Water), Echeverría y Veytia argued, came the ages of hurricanes (Air), earthquakes (Earth), and the forthcoming final conflagration (Fire).

If reasoned hypothesis served Echeverría y Veytia to elucidate the order of ages, his clinching argument rested on who had authorized each of the accounts presented by Alva Ixtlilxochitl. According to Echeverría y Veytia, a list of Amerindian elders and rulers had vouched for the reliability of the earlier account, whereas the later account did not have such authoritative support. To emphasize the importance of using only authoritative sources, Echeverría y Veytia compared his list of solar ages with the sixteenth-century enumeration of not four but five ages by Francisco López de Gómara, who, Echeverría y Veytia argued, had either been deliberately misled or had used a "vulgar" informant.<sup>41</sup>

According to Echeverría y Veytia (and Alva Ixtlilxochitl), the second

mechanism that introduced distortions in the original core of indigenous primary sources lay in the willful manipulation of the sources by the Amerindian elites. Drawing again on Alva Ixtlilxochitl's writings, Echeverría y Veytia quoted the example of an elderly informant from a leading family in the city-state of Tepetlaoztoc who recounted the events surrounding the birth of the fifteenth-century Aculhuan ruler Ixtlilxochitl, father of the philosopher king Nezahualcoyotl. The elder argued that Ixtlilxochitl had hatched from an eagle's egg, and that mesmerized by such preternatural birth, the Aculhuan had selected him as their ruler. When challenged by a skeptical Amerindian historian, the elder responded that he had decided to mislead all those approaching him, especially if they were Spaniards constantly seeking interview. Echeverría y Veytia cited this story to argue that deliberate distortion by fired ruling elites who did not see any concrete advantage in their initial partnership with Spaniards should be counted as yet another major factor that had led to the distortion of the original Amerindian primary sources.<sup>42</sup>

Echeverría y Veytia identified yet a third mechanism of distortion of indigenous documents, namely, the failure of later indigenous interpreters to understand the language of their earlier peers. As James Lockhart has shown, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the indigenous communities of central Mexico came into closer cultural contact with the Hispanic world (which included mestizos), sixteenth-century Nahuatl underwent profound transformations. Not only were Spanish words introduced, but Nahuatl syntax and grammar were also changed.<sup>43</sup> The end result of these linguistic shifts, Echeverría y Veytia argued, was that later indigenous interpreters, independently of their social status, could no longer understand sixteenth-century Nahuatl. Those authors who relied on contemporary Amerindian translators to read precolonial and sixteenth-century Amerindian documents were bound to introduce misrepresentations.<sup>44</sup>

That Echeverría y Veytia was so weary of indigenous documents of late-colonial vintage should not be surprising, because by the time he wrote, central Mexico was flooded with forged documents. Beginning with the Conquest, colonial magistrates had accepted documents recorded in ideograms, logograms, and paintings in litigation, and courts had hired specialized interpreters to translate them. Lawsuits about indigenous dynastic rights and control of communal lands, and Amerindian denunciations of overzealous and exploitative *encomenderos*, or provincial crown bureaucrats, were often presented in the form of traditional indigenous paintings, which were later glossed by court interpreters and scribes. In fact, a substantial percentage of the extant Mesoamerican codices are of such provenance. When

the Amerindian demographic collapse of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries finally bottomed out in the mid eighteenth century, the number of land disputes in central Mexico skyrocketed. With greater pressure on scarce resources, Amerindian pueblos began to fight to halt the loss of land to Spaniards and mestizos and armed themselves with false charters (*títulos primordiales*),<sup>44</sup> which have recently attracted scholarly attention. Mesoamerican communities used forged *títulos* to identify their origins with the building of Christian churches or visitations by patron saints, reflecting a profound change in historical consciousness. Local Amerindian notaries and scribes sought in these charters to recreate what they thought were the languages and visual forms of the sixteenth century, while endowing communities with new historical narratives.<sup>45</sup> Such efforts to reproduce sixteenth-century forms led to obvious anachronisms. Urban charter-forging factories became quite sophisticated, however, deliberately aging paper and introducing extinct grammatical forms of classical Nahuatl.<sup>46</sup>

"I have drawn my history from documents with the required authority, solidity, and trustworthiness," Echeverría y Veytia declared, citing the mechanisms that had led to the distortion of Amerindian primary sources to discredit rival interpretations. He dismissed all previous European accounts. "My sources are the same [sources] upon which [many Spanish] and foreign authors have based theirs. [They, however] have disfigured and dislocated the sources."<sup>47</sup> Typical of this approach to the criticism of previous European accounts and of Amerindian sources of late-colonial provenance was his study of Quetzalcoatl among the Olmecs.

Echeverría y Veytia's thesis that Quetzalcoatl was none other than St. Thomas the apostle, on a visit to Mexico some sixty years after the death of Christ, was directly contradicted by historians such as Torquemada and Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, who identified this elusive figure as a Toltec who had flourished around 800 C.E. Torquemada had drawn uncritically on the bewildering array of contradictory indigenous sources, Echeverría y Veytia countered, leading him to characterize Quetzalcoatl contradictorily as both a sage and a villain, a pious priest and a cunning magician. Herrera, for his part, had used erroneous etymologies to identify Quetzalcoatl as a deity, the "god of the air," rather than as the historical figure that he was. Echeverría y Veytia concluded that Torquemada and Herrera had been misled by informants who were either ignorant or deliberately deceptive.<sup>48</sup>

According to Echeverría y Veytia, it was treacherous to build on written indigenous documents of the colonial period to prove that St. Thomas had visited Mesoamerica. Although he cited the testimony of a handful of priests

who claimed to have seen Amerindian "books" with the mysteries of the faith painted in them, Echeverría y Veytia sought to avoid such shaky evidence. He thus refused to introduce as his sole evidence a manuscript penned in Mexico in the 1670s by the Jesuit Manuel Duarte, who had interpreted an Amerindian "map," a large cotton sixteenth-century canvas, which most likely was drawn in a pueblo in Oaxaca as part of a land litigation process, as an allegorical rendition of the history of St. Thomas's migration to America. According to Duarte, the map also included St. Thomas's teachings, namely, the stories of Creation, Eden, the Fall, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. Duarte even managed to identify the Virgin Mary among the cast of characters overflowing the giant cloth. Echeverría y Veytia obtained a copy of this bizarre manuscript (it had been given as a gift along with the map to Sigüenza y Góngora) while searching through the papers of Boturini's collection. Unable to find the map itself to check whether it was truly ancient or a later Amerindian concoction, Echeverría y Veytia decided not to pay much heed to Duarte's manuscript. He suspected the map to be a worthless colonial document.<sup>49</sup>

To ascertain the real identity of Quetzalcoatl, Echeverría y Veytia privileged iconography, etymology, and cultural and material artifacts over European and indigenous colonial literary sources. A comparative etymological analysis of the names for Thomas in Hebrew and Nahuatl, Echeverría y Veytia argued, revealed that St. Thomas and Quetzalcoatl were the same person, for both referred to a "learned twin."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, an engraving on the supposed tomb of St. Thomas discovered by the Portuguese in Mylapore, India, depicted what appeared to be a quetzal, or "American peacock," as though St. Thomas's followers in India had decided to memorialize him symbolically with the Amerindian name he had acquired in Mexico (Fig. 4.1). But the ultimate proof of St. Thomas's visit, Echeverría y Veytia maintained, lay in the many cultural and material artifacts he had left behind, including a host of Mesoamerican religious institutions that eerily resembled Christian ones; handprints on stones; and the many ancient crosses that had marked the Mesoamerican landscape prior to the European arrival.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Fernando de Alba Ixtlikochitl*

Besieged by spurious interpretations and documents of suspicious provenance, Echeverría y Veytia relied on a select group of sources that he thought were trustworthy—namely, the histories written by sixteenth-century Amerindian historians from ruling families who had been conversant with

traordinarily thorough researcher. He collected and preserved studies by other Aculhuan sixteenth-century historians, such as Juan Bautista Pomar's *Relación de Texcoco* (1584) and the letters and *Memorial* (ca. 1557) of the governor of Texcoco, Hernando Pimentel, as well as the works of non-Aculhua historians, such as the *Historia de la conquista de México* (1548) by Tadeo de Niza de Santa María (Flaxcalan).<sup>54</sup> Alva Ixtlilxochitl also assembled accounts from several indigenous communities that often contradicted one another. It is possible that the several narratives he left were merely compilations of these many competing accounts he was trying to reconcile.<sup>55</sup> Be that as it may, when he died, Alva Ixtlilxochitl left a smooth and continuous narrative history in Spanish that sought to prove that all the peoples of Mexico had common Chichimec-Toltec roots.<sup>56</sup> The history moved teleologically, plotting the ascent of the Aculhua of the city-state of Texcoco until, in the fifteenth century, they gave the world the philosopher-king Nezahualcoyotl, allegedly one of the most noteworthy rulers ever to appear in Mesoamerica.<sup>57</sup> Alva Ixtlilxochitl's *Relaciones* consistently cast the Texcocan rulers as the faithful allies of the Spaniards, dismissing Texcocan leaders who took the side of the Mexica as illegitimate.<sup>58</sup> Texcoco actually rose to power and fame only in the fifteenth century, after a long subordination to Coatlilchan, a city-state whose rulers alone could legitimately claim "ancient" Aculhua lineage.<sup>59</sup> As Enrique Florescano has argued, Alva Ixtlilxochitl's history was written from the perspective of native ruling families who, in the great turmoil that followed the Conquest, justified their rights to the tribute of Amerindian commoners by producing legitimating historical accounts.<sup>60</sup>

Typical of several Amerindian ruling families of Mexico, Texcoco, and other powerful city-states of precolonial central Mexico who chose to assimilate the European conquerors by intermarrying with them, Alva Ixtlilxochitl was culturally a Creole. Not only was he the first to portray Quetzalcoatl as an ancient Olmec sage who resembled a Christian apostle, an idea that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Creoles like Echeverría y Veytia later developed, but he may have also been behind the Creole patriotic cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe.<sup>61</sup> He enjoyed excellent relations with the secular Church and dedicated one of his unpublished manuscripts to the archbishop of Mexico, Juan Pérez de la Serna (d. 1631), who took refuge in Teotihuacan, an Amerindian town under the jurisdiction of Alva Ixtlilxochitl's family, when fleeing from a mob in Mexico City in 1624.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Alva Ixtlilxochitl's brother Bartolomé (fl. 1634–41) was a learned seventeenth-century parish priest who wrote several doctrinal works in Nahuatl.<sup>63</sup> Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl typified the fashion among indigenous elites of adopting

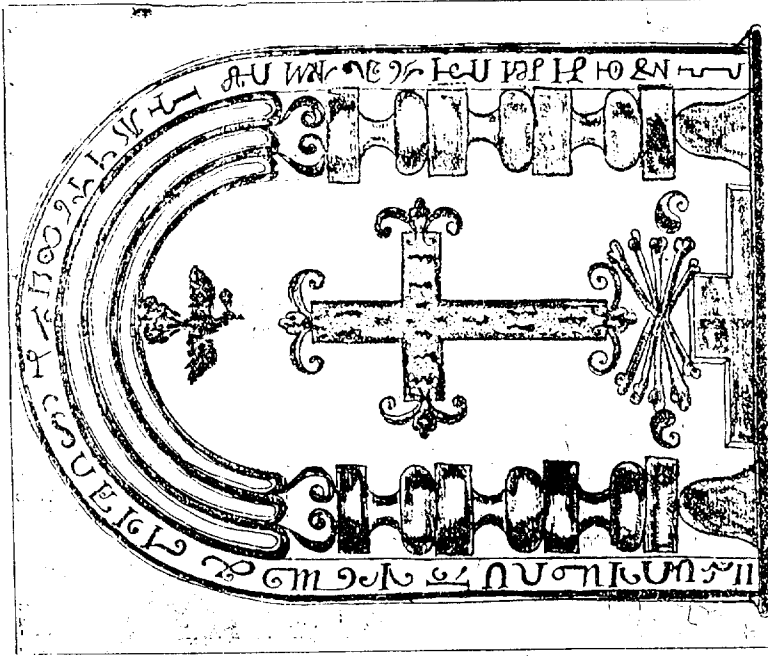


FIGURE 4.1. Alleged tomb of St. Thomas the Apostle in Mylapore, India. Echeverría y Veytia identified the bird on top of the cross as a quetzal, a logographic representation of Quetzalcoatl. St. Thomas's supposed Nahuatl name. From Manuel Duarte, "El apostol Santo Tomás en el Nuevo Mundo" (1670s).

the native languages and scripts. These historians were typified by Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, whose writings guided most of Echeverría y Veytia's history. Although that his various accounts in Spanish sometimes contradicted one another,<sup>64</sup> Alva Ixtlilxochitl had subjected his findings to the evaluation of Amerindian town councils, which had vouched collectively before notaries for their reliability.<sup>65</sup>

Little is known about the evolution of Alva Ixtlilxochitl's writings. His Texcocan (Aculhua) perspective claims a long-enduring Toltec-Chichimec dynastic lineage for the rulers of this city-state. Alva Ixtlilxochitl was an ex-

Spanish names to distinguish themselves from Amerindian commoners in the new colonial society.<sup>64</sup> After being appointed governor of several Amerindian towns, Alva Ixtlilxochitl was later given a position of interpreter in the courts of New Spain.<sup>65</sup> His antiquarian research left a lasting imprint on colonial historiography, which has not yet been fully assessed. Thus, for example, Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Texcocan-Acullhuan bias was adopted by Torquemada, through whom it came to dominate the colonial historiography of New Spain.<sup>66</sup>

Alva Ixtlilxochitl's second lasting impact came from his efforts as a collector. Diego de Alva, Fernando's son and heir to the governorship of Tzotihuacan, donated Alva Ixtlilxochitl's collection to Sigüenza y Góngora sometime in the late seventeenth century, after the latter helped to block a challenge from commoners in Tzotihuacan seeking to deny upper-class "mestizos" such as Alva Ixtlilxochitl the right to rule the town.<sup>67</sup> One of the most influential Creole polymaths of the colonial period, Sigüenza used Alva Ixtlilxochitl's writings to correlate Amerindian and European calendars through the study of ancient astronomical phenomena.<sup>68</sup> When Sigüenza died, Alva Ixtlilxochitl's collection ended up in the archives of the Jesuits. Parts of it eventually surfaced among Boturini's collections and were therefore available to Echeverría y Véytia. Although Echeverría y Véytia was weary of the multiple and contradictory accounts left by Alva Ixtlilxochitl, he adopted the latter's Texcocan-Acullhuan perspective, dwelling endlessly on the deeds of Texcocan rulers. Echeverría y Véytia's incomplete history of ancient Mexico, for example, concludes with a eulogy of the philosopher-king Nezahualcoyotl.

For all practical purposes, Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Echeverría y Véytia inhabited identical cultural and historiographical worlds, and their lives challenge attempts to draw radical distinctions between the "Indian" and "Creole" populations of Mesoamerica. Both enjoyed close links with the Creole-clerical establishment, both supported the thesis that St. Thomas the Apostle visited Mexico, both were significant players in the spread of the Creole cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and, finally, both saw Mesoamerican history as having developed largely in isolation from the Old World.

Along with the writings of Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Echeverría y Véytia also used the works in Nahuatl of other sixteenth-century Amerindian historians, including those by the Tlaxcalan Diego Muñoz Camargo (ca. 1529–1599), whose account of the arrival of the Olmecs, Xicalanca, and Zapotecs on the Gulf coast Echeverría y Véytia repeated.<sup>69</sup> It is therefore plausible to argue that Echeverría y Véytia sought to create a single narrative that would inte-

grate the numerous, sometimes contradictory, histories offered by Amerindian historians of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, such as Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Muñoz Camargo, Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc (Mexico) (fl. 1598), and Francisco de San Antón Muñón Chimalpain Cuauhtlehuauitzin (Chalcan).<sup>70</sup>

#### *Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri*

Echeverría y Véytia contended that the untrained eye could not easily distinguish between reliable sources and spurious ones. Through an analysis of the way Echeverría y Véytia dealt with a peculiar set of colonial indigenous documents, namely, calendrical wheels, I summarize his critical techniques and show that they ultimately prompted him to elaborate an epistemological critique of the value of travelers' testimony.

The understanding of Mesoamerican calendars and chronologies became something of an obsession with Echeverría y Véytia, consuming most of his scholarly energies. Much, of course, rode on the deciphering of Mesoamerican calendrical mechanisms, including the possibility of settling scholarly disputes over the dating of crucial events in biblical history. The translation of indigenous memories into European historiographical models of linear narrative was also at the mercy of calendrical interpretation. Be that as it may, when confronted with a multiplicity of contradictory accounts of Mesoamerican chronology by European witnesses, Echeverría y Véytia fell back on seven calendrical wheels that he found in Boturini's impounded collection, which allowed Echeverría y Véytia to dismiss all previous interpretations, including Boturini's.

When Echeverría y Véytia wrote, there were many conflicting interpretations of the order of the calendrical signs of the years in a 52-year cycle (four that each repeated thirteen times), of the months in an annual cycle (eighteen signs), and of the days in a 365-day cycle (twenty signs, organized in "weekly" series of thirteen). According to Echeverría y Véytia, the origin of this multiplicity of conflicting accounts stemmed from the European attempt to translate the circular indigenous presentation of calendrical signs into a linear series. Echeverría y Véytia used wheel number four of his collection of seven to prove this point (Plate 3). The outer circle represented a 52-year cycle, the native equivalent of a European century; the inner circle stood for a yearly cycle of eighteen months. Aside from the position of the head of the snake surrounding the wheel, there was no obvious way of determining the beginning and the end of either circle.<sup>71</sup> Europeans had chosen the first cle-

ment of their linear series at random, creating a bewildering variety of interpretations.

Echeverría y Veytia deployed the wheels, clearly of colonial provenance, to unlock the mysteries of Mesoamerican calendrics. He used wheel number five, with its Spanish glosses and paintings in European style, to determine the order of the eighteen months (Plate 4). The wheel moved clockwise (which no precolonial wheel would have done) from "Atemoztli" to five "intercalary" days used to round off the 365-day annual cycle (located in the wheel in an additional nineteenth space that would have never appeared in precolonial wheels). Echeverría y Veytia did not, to be sure, follow the document blindly. A reasoned analysis of the etymology of the names of the months revealed that the wheel offered the only plausible correct order, given the agricultural and weather phenomena the names signified.<sup>72</sup>

Echeverría y Veytia used the wheels to undermine Boturini's *Ciclografía*, a thesis the Italian had first sketched in the *Idea*. Boturini argued that each Mesoamerican century had four possible leading year symbols (Flint, House, Rabbit, and Cane), and that the order of the years therefore differed every century within the larger cycle of 208 years. For Echeverría y Veytia, this led to intolerable chaos in the interpretation of chronological records, and he argued that the natives had always used the same leading sign. The wheels, he maintained, supported his interpretation.

The snake biting its tail in wheel number four (Plate 3) symbolized the eternal continuity of the series of years in a Mesoamerican "century," Echeverría y Veytia contended.<sup>73</sup> It also indicated, however, that Echeverría y Veytia's reasoned hypothesis of a hierarchical succession of yearly signs from Flint (Fire) to House (Earth) to Rabbit (Air) to Cane (Water) was wrong, for the head of snake was over the element Air (Rabbit), not over Fire (Flint).<sup>74</sup> Echeverría y Veytia solved the apparent contradiction by postulating that the Mexica and Toltec had different leading years: the original Toltec calendar began in Flint, but the Mexica calendar did so in Rabbit, to commemorate the year in which they had arrived in central Mexico.<sup>75</sup> Echeverría y Veytia used wheel number one (Plate 5) to demonstrate that the dates of the historical events recorded in the upper section of the wheel (describing the southbound path of migrations of the Mexica) would have been different had natives used a different leading year symbol every 52-year cycle.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, Echeverría y Veytia used wheel number six (Plate 6) to argue against Boturini's ordering of the series of days in a month. The Italian maintained that Crocodile (*cipactli*) was the leading day of every month.

Echeverría y Veytia, however, used the wheel to demonstrate that there was no possible way of determining the initial element of the series, and that the character of the year ultimately determined the leading sign of each month.

Echeverría y Veytia did not blindly follow the evidence of the wheels; after all, he knew that these were colonial sources, which might be spurious. Ultimately, most of his interpretation of Mesoamerican calendrical systems rested on indirect evidence; namely, etymological analyses of indigenous names and reasoned hypotheses. For example, he argued that the leading sign of the days of the month changed according to the nature of the leading sign of the year (Flint, House, Rabbit, Cane) because the natives had an ascending hierarchical view of the four elements.<sup>77</sup> Such guarded reliance on documentary sources forced him to confront a wheel published in the seventeenth century by the Italian traveler Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri.

Gemelli Careri visited Mexico in the late seventeenth century as the last leg of a trip that also took him to Siam, China, and Japan. To the account of his travels through New Spain, he appended a series of illustrations from indigenous codices that the Creole polymath Sigüenza y Góngora had given him. It is very difficult to know whether Gemelli Careri's interpretations accurately reflect the antiquarian knowledge available in the colonies. It seems that he both distorted and accurately conveyed information. In any case, he served as a conduit to transmit to European audiences a seventeenth-century Creole historiographical tradition that, beginning with Torquemada, had cast the Mexica as a sort of inverted mirror image of the Hebrews. According to this tradition, the Aztecs and Hebrews were both peoples who had migrated in search of a Promised Land. The latter, however, had worshipped the true God whereas the former, led by Satan, had practiced ritual cannibalism and mimicked many of the rituals of the Catholic Church. Gemelli Careri offered a copy of a map of the migrations of the seven Mexica families (Fig. 2.10) and introduced cabalistic analysis of the names of the ten Mexica monarchs, from "Acamapichtli" to "Quauhlimoc" (Cuauhtemoc) to demonstrate that their names added up to 666, the number of the Beast in the Apocalypse. He also introduced a hydrographic map of the Central Valley of Mexico whose rivers and lakes resembled the shape of the beast, including its horns, belly, and claws (Fig. 4.2b). He obtained all these documents in Mexico. But even as Gemelli Careri accurately relayed this Creole historiographical tradition, he also introduced changes in the interpretation of some illustrations he received from colonial savants. For example, he mistakenly presented a series of paintings of Texcocan monarchs that had belonged to Alva Ixtlixochitl

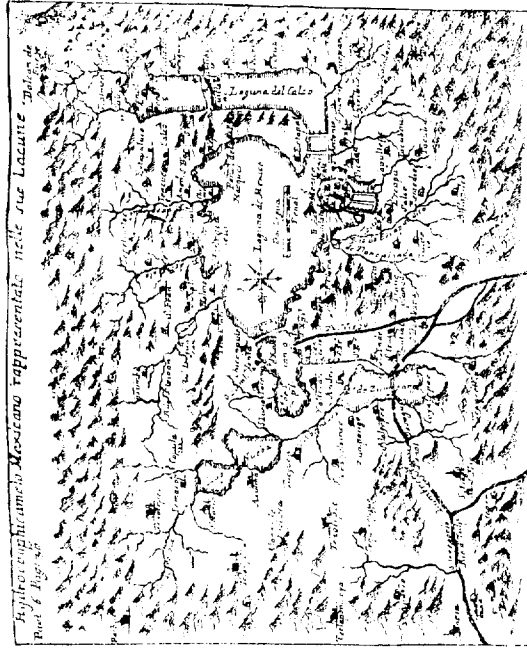


FIGURE 4.2. (a) Rivers and lakes reproduce the shape of the beast in Revelation 13, including its horns, belly, and claws, in this early seventeenth-century hydrographic map of the Central Valley of Mexico, demonstrating that even the Mexican landscape was shaped by the devil. From Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, *Giro del mondo* (Naples, 1699–1700). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, R.I. (b) A portrait of the Texcocan philosopher-king Nezahualcoyotl, that Gemelli Careri wrongly identified as Moctezuma Xocoyotzin (r. 1502–20 in the Codex Mendoza), citing Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora as his source. This immediately aroused suspicion about his reliability, because the Mexican Creole polymath would never have made such a mistake.

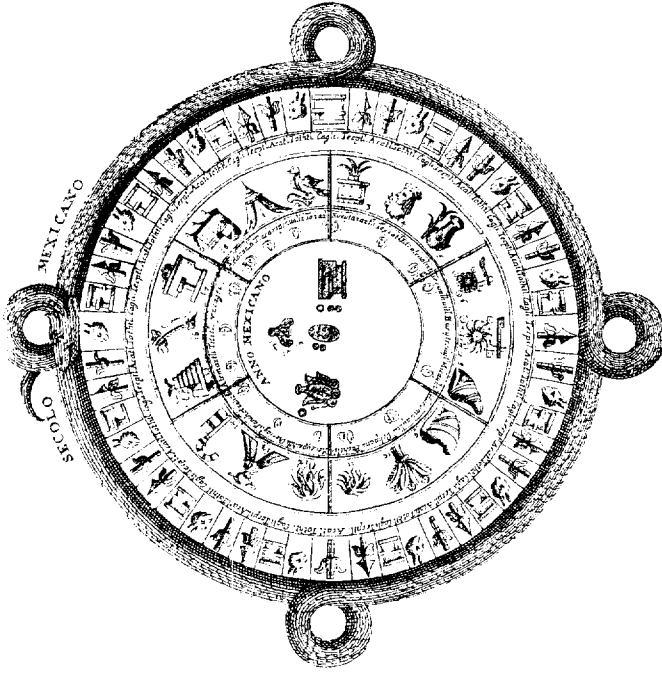


FIGURE 4.3. Like the wheel shown in Plate 3, this calendrical wheel represents a 52-year cycle and an 18-month annual cycle. Unlike the wheel in Plate 3, however, this wheel gives the phases of the moon in its inner circle, leading Boturini to claim that the 20-day Mesoamerican month was necessarily connected to the cycles of the moon. This wheel also has the serpent moving clockwise, but the order of the months is different. Antonio de León y Gama used the two wheels to call attention to the flaws in Francisco Clavijero's *Historia antigua de México*. From Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, *Giro del mondo* (Naples, 1699–1700). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, R.I.

as portraits of Mexica rulers (Fig. 4.1b). It was in this context that Echeverría y Veytia subjected to scrutiny the Italian traveler's interpretation of a calendrical wheel (Fig. 4.3).<sup>78</sup>

Gemelli Careri's wheel explicitly contradicted Echeverría y Veytia's ordering of the eighteen Mexican months. Boturini had accepted Gemelli Careri's calendar wheel, which included representations of lunar phases, along with the signs of the months, but had criticized most of Gemelli Careri's interpretations as simple-minded and misleading. Like Boturini, Echeverría y Veytia refused to believe that Gemelli Careri accurately con-

veyed Sigüenza's insights into Mesoamerican calendrics. The wheel sported numbers in the inner circle that ordered the months clockwise beginning with 'Tlacaxipehualxtiltli (or Cohuauhtliltli in Tlaxcalan versions), not Atemoztli, the leading month of the year, according to Echeverría y Veytia.<sup>79</sup> Echeverría y Veytia dismissed this ordering as spurious, a late-colonial concoction and concluded that Gemelli Careri had altered Sigüenza's insights by uncritically following glosses introduced into the document by ignorant scribes.<sup>80</sup>

According to Echeverría y Veytia, Gemelli Careri's shortcomings had little to do with personal flaws and everything to do with his status as traveler. Echeverría y Veytia used Gemelli Careri to highlight the epistemological limitations of foreign travelers. The Italian, he argued, had been doubly removed from the sources, given his limited knowledge of both Spanish and Nahuatl. Equally problematic, he thought, was the fact that he had visited Mexico only briefly.<sup>81</sup>

Echeverría y Veytia fleshed out the emerging discourse of patriotic epistemology first outlined by Eguíara y Eguren. His skeptical attitude toward seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Amerindian sources contrasts sharply, however, with his uncritical embrace of the historiography of sixteenth-century Amerindian historians, culminating in the writings of Alva Ixtlilxochitl. Eighteenth-century Creole antiquarians saw themselves as heirs to the historiographical tradition inaugurated by these latinized upper-class Amerindian scholars of the sixteenth century. Figuiera y Figueren and Echeverría y Veytia both emphasize the crucial role played by learned interpreters acquainted with the extinct languages and historical traditions of the indigenous populations and highlight the epistemological shortcoming of foreign observers.

This late-eighteenth-century patriotic epistemology was not, however, exclusively Creole. The *Tardes americanas* of José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez, a Franciscan from Málaga and would-be bishop of the northern dioceses of New Spain in Sonora and Durango, proves that this discourse was embraced, and even formulated, by acculturated Peninsulars.

#### *José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez*

José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez's *Tardes americanas: Gobierno gentil y católico . . . noticia de toda la historia indiana . . . desde la entrada de la gran nación tulteca . . . hasta los presentes tiempos* (1778) has failed to attract the attention of scholars largely because it is not easily characterized. Its author was related to José de Gálvez, minister of the Indies and the primary enactor

of the Bourbon reforms that sought to "reconquer" the New World from corrupt Creoles and power-hungry Jesuits, and the book is dedicated to him. Paradoxically, however, *Tardes americanas* is a staunch defense of the Creole mind and piety. In it, Granados y Gálvez predictably sought to justify the right of the crown to raise taxes and to transform Creole clerical culture. Yet he also derided those who portrayed Creoles as corrupt and Amerindians as inherently stupid. Making use of typical Creole patriotic tropes, Granados y Gálvez reviewed the many saintly clerical figures who, whether alive or dead, had performed miracles. He also described the vast colonial market in relics of saintly Creoles, which included nails, hair, fingers, noses, and earlobes. As part of his review of this cast of saintly figures, Granados y Gálvez defended the right of Creoles to claim Mexico as the birthplace of Felipe de Jesús (1572–1597), murdered in Japan along with other Franciscans and canonized by the Church. By the same token, Granados y Gálvez highlighted the patriotic significance of the miracle of Our Lady of Guadalupe and exalted the grandeur of the precolonial Mesoamerican past.

Clearly a study of this paradoxical figure is long overdue. My intention here is, however, to focus on the epistemology of *Tardes americanas*, which has two sections, one devoted to precolonial history and the other to the colonial past. Granados y Gálvez uses a fictional dialogue between a Spaniard and an Indian to convey his complex message. Amerindian and Spaniard, in turn, take skeptical positions as they seek to persuade each other. Significantly, the Spaniard repeatedly declares himself unable to write the history of America and its peoples, largely because of the many contradictory accounts he has encountered or because he cannot understand and interpret Mesoamerican scripts.<sup>82</sup> The Amerindian, on the other hand, represents himself as having mastered, not only the writings of Alva Ixtlilxochitl, Alvarado Tezozomoc, Chimalpain Cuauhtlehuamitzin, and other sixteenth-century native interpreters of Mesoamerican paintings, but the ancient books themselves as well.<sup>83</sup> After teaching the Spaniard how to interpret calendrical wheels and to read scenes and dates in indigenous annals, the Amerindian sets out to convince the Spaniard that the documents prove the greatness of the Mesoamerican past (Fig. 4+4).

The Amerindian presents Mesoamerican civilizations as more pious, politically sophisticated, and morally upright than those of classical Rome and Greece. The skeptical Spaniard, however, argues that such literary portrayals find no support in the extant material remains. According to the Spaniard, the few puny ruins of Mexico prove that the Indian's claims are exaggerations. The slothful, miserable, and ignorant nature of contemporary



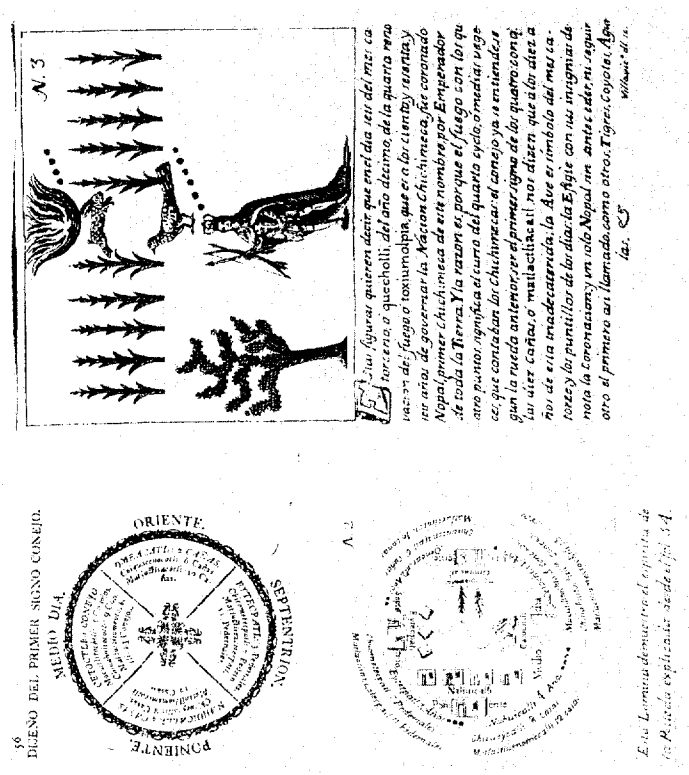


FIGURE 4-4. Calendrical wheels and an entry in an indigenous document allegedly recounting the coronation of Lord Nopal in the year 10 Rabbit, day 6 of the month Quecholli in the fourth Chichimec century (represented by the "bundle" or "bonfire" above). From José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez, *Tardes americanas: Gobierno gentil y católico* . . . (México, 1778). Granados y Gálvez sought to use these made-up images to show that the Mesoamerican peoples had reliable documentation preserved by accurate systems of writing and chronology.

Amerindians indicates that the thesis of past Amerindian grandeur is merely an idyllic invention.<sup>84</sup> The Indian, as expected, lashes out against the prevalent skepticism of the age and claims that the lack of material evidence cannot be used to deny the truthfulness of any historical written tradition.<sup>85</sup> As for using wretched contemporary natives as negative evidence, the Indian, again as expected, insists that the behavior of living commoners cannot be used to judge the historicity of the hierarchical polities of the past. Over and over, the Amerindian decries the process by which indigenous elites were eliminated, particularly by the weakening or virtual abolition of the sixteenth-century

Amerindian colleges, where a latinized Indo-Christian culture had once flourished.<sup>86</sup>

The Amerindian repeatedly confronts the skeptical Spaniard with a dual scale of credibility, distinguishing between the knowledge of upper-class Native Americans and that of commoners. The Spaniard, for example, doubts whether the Amerindians knew much about geology and meteorology (including an understanding of the workings of volcanoes, subterranean waters, earthquakes, thunder, and lightning). Insisting that his ancestors rivaled classical Greece in astronomy, mathematics, rhetoric, music, theater, and other areas of knowledge, the Amerindian replies that what the Spaniard fails to realize is that the Mesoamerican priestly class kept most of their scientific and religious insights hidden from the masses. The Spaniard mistakenly judges ancient civilizations by the superstitious behavior of contemporary Amerindian plebeians.<sup>87</sup>

The faith of Granados y Gálvez's Amerindian in the written testimony of the ancient elites at times demanded that readers suspend their critical faculties. The Spaniard, for example, challenges the credibility of the dynastic genealogies presented by the Amerindian. How is one to believe that rulers could have lived and governed for 160 years, as the Amerindian claims? The Amerindian counters that physical deterioration triggered by the many changes brought about by colonization (changes in diet, loss of status, alcoholism, and so forth) has considerably shortened the Amerindian life span from hundreds of years to mere decades.<sup>88</sup>

The views that he put in the mouth of the Amerindian show that for Granados y Gálvez there was no clear demarcation between Creoles and upper-class Amerindians. The Indian, for example, takes Creoles to task for failing to find inspiration in the ancient Amerindian rulers, who were sages in the art of statecraft, and he calls on Creoles to copy them, pointing out that these rulers were their own ancestors.<sup>89</sup> Remarkably, the Amerindian regards the continuity between Creoles and the ancient Mesoamerican ruling class as not merely cultural but racial as well. In this Granados y Gálvez was not alone. Doris Ladd has shown that numerous Spanish and Creole grandees in Mexico boasted of their mestizo heritage. The counts of Moctezuma, Javier, and Cuara and the duke of Granada in Spain and titled grandees of New Spain such as the Aguayo, Alamo, Jaral, Miravalle, Salinas, Salvatierra, Santa Rosa, Santiago, Valle Oploca, and Valle de Orizaba all claimed descent from precolonial Aztec rulers. The family palace of the counts of Santiago (Calimaya), a block off the Zócalo in Mexico City, used a great precolonial feathered-serpent head as a cornerstone.<sup>90</sup> The historiographical ma-