



# The Complex Nuances of Mesoamerican Religion: Potential Monotheistic Developments in Aztec Religion

## Citation

Fuentes, Timothy Louis. 2024. The Complex Nuances of Mesoamerican Religion: Potential Monotheistic Developments in Aztec Religion. Master's thesis, Harvard University Division of Continuing Education.

## Permanent link

<https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37378491>

## Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

## Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.  
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

The Complex Nuances of Mesoamerican Religion: Potential Monotheistic Developments in Aztec  
Religion

Timothy Fuentes

A Thesis in the Field of History  
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

May 2024



## Abstract

This thesis examines the complexities of Aztec religion throughout the Aztec Empire (1350 – 1521 AD) to evaluate potential monotheistic tendencies. This thesis uses Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's theory on *Tloque Nahuaque* and Miguel León-Portilla's theory on *Ometéotl* to examine the potentiality of Mesoamerican monotheism in the Aztec religion. Currently, most Mesoamerican scholars describe Aztec religion as polytheistic due to arguing that the Aztecs believed in various deities that oversee different aspects of life, i.e., Tlaloc governing rain and water or Huitzilopochtli being the Aztec patron god of warfare and the sun. Also, it is often recognized that many historical sources view Aztec religion from a primarily European lens; two prominent examples include Bernal del Diaz Castillo's *The Real History of the Conquest of Mexico* or Bernardino de Sahagún's *General History of the Things of New Spain*. Yet, what happens if we analyze monotheism from a Mesoamerican point of view? This thesis aims to investigate Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's theory of *Tloque Nahuaque* and León-Portilla's theory on *Ometéotl* as possible forms of Aztec monotheism by identifying their forms of monotheism and then combine both theories for a broader understanding of monotheistic phenomena on a global scale through a Mesoamerican perspective.

## Dedication

I would like to first thank Dr. J. Gregory Given for his fantastic feedback and support throughout this project. He gave me a chance as my thesis director and gave my thesis the much-needed knowledge and insight for discussions of monotheism versus polytheism in ancient civilizations. Lastly, he gave his time to ensure I was on the right path for my thesis. I am profoundly grateful for all his time and effort.

I would also like to thank Pedro Morales for inspiring me to author this thesis, which I did after collaborating with him on various essays on Aztec religion and culture as an undergraduate. His critical analysis of my earlier writings pushed me to reevaluate my writing process and arguments on Mesoamerican anthropology, which I have not considered tenable.

I would also like to thank Harvard University for allowing working adults like me to undertake a research project like this. These opportunities were crucial for me to do this research.

Finally, I thank my father, Vincent M. Fuentes, for brainstorming some of my theorizations for this thesis, such as Mesoamerican monotheism, polytheism, and the importance of decolonization in analyzing Aztec religion. From his collaborations, I could consider the potential of Mesoamerican monotheism from a decolonized perspective.

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	iv
Chapter I. Introduction.....	1
Historical Background .....	3
Historiography .....	10
Implications of the End Goal for this Thesis .....	18
Methodology and Research Limitations .....	19
Thesis Overview .....	21
Chapter II. Analyzing Monotheism .....	23
Introduction.....	23
Investigating the Global Religious Phenomenon known as Monotheism .....	24
The Presumed Origin of Monotheism: The Middle East.....	24
The Origin of The Term “Monotheism:” .....	26
The Spectrum of Monotheism .....	28
Potential Identification of Monotheism to Mesoamerican Religious Thought.....	30
Chapter III. The Two Strongest Cases of Alleged Aztec Monotheism .....	31
Introduction.....	31
Sixteenth-century: Alva Ixtlilxóchitl’s <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> .....	32
Introduction.....	32
<i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> before Alva Ixtlilxóchitl .....	33
Chronicling the History of the Acolhua Tribe .....	36

Nezahualcoyotl: Potential Mesoamerican Monotheist .....	38
Core Beliefs and Practices .....	40
Twentieth-century: León-Portilla's <i>Ometéotl</i> .....	42
Introduction.....	42
Potential Historical References to <i>Ometéotl</i> before León-Portilla .....	43
León-Portilla's Theorization on Nahuatl Philosophy .....	45
The <i>Tlamatinime</i> : Potential Monotheistic Sect in Aztec Religion.....	46
Core Beliefs and Practices .....	48
Chapter IV. Analysis of <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> and <i>Ometéotl</i> .....	50
Introduction.....	50
Breaking down <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> .....	51
Reflecting the Sixteenth-century Spaniard Perspective on Mesoamerican Religion.....	51
Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's Exclusive Monotheism.....	52
Europeanization of <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> and Nezahualcoyotl.....	54
A Native Chronicler or a Mestizo Writer?.....	56
Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's Preservation of <i>Ometéotl</i> in <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> .....	59
Reanalyzing <i>Ometéotl</i> .....	61
Current Debate: León-Portilla's Monotheism versus Haly's Polytheism..	61
Interpreting <i>Ometéotl</i> as an Inclusivist Monotheistic Deity .....	62
Decolonizing Monotheism: Comparing <i>Ometéotl</i> with Zoroastrianism....	63
Discussion on the word <i>Teotl</i> .....	65
The Nahua Philosophy of Duality.....	69

The Transculturation of <i>Ometéotl</i> into <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> .....	71
Analyzing the Framework of Transculturation .....	71
Baudot’s Efforts in Illustrating Alva Ixtlilxóchitl’s Transculturation .....	73
<i>Ometéotl</i> as the Original Mesoamerican Monotheistic Deity .....	74
Alva Ixtlilxóchitl’s Adaptive Transculturation of <i>Ometéotl</i> into Christianity .....	75
Counterargument: <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> as Tezcatlipoca .....	78
Conclusion .....	81
Chapter V. Conclusion .....	83
The Importance of Decolonizing Our Understanding of Aztec Religion .....	83
Monotheism as a Global Religious Phenomenon .....	84
Analyzing <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> and <i>Ometéotl</i> as Theories .....	85
Reviewing <i>Tloque Nahuaque</i> and <i>Ometéotl</i> as Proposed Forms of Aztec Monotheism .....	86
Expansion of a Premise: León-Portilla’s Overlooked Proposition .....	88
Closing Thoughts .....	89
Bibliography .....	91



## Chapter I.

### Introduction

For decades, various anthropologists, historians, and archaeologists asserted that the Post-Classic Mesoamerican civilization known as the Aztec Empire (1431-1521) was primarily polytheistic. For example, American historian and Mesoamerican anthropologist David Carrasco proposes that the Aztec polytheistic cosmology of human sacrifice was based on reciprocating all the gods' efforts to create and sustain the cosmos through human sacrifice to fulfill the *nextlahualiztli* (debt-payment).<sup>1</sup> Another example is the various monumental depictions of deities in Aztec architecture that honor multiple deities, i.e., an earth deity carved on a slab and attached to the Templo Mayor.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, more minor Aztec artifacts depict deities such as statues of Cihuacōātl (fertility goddess).<sup>3</sup>

Yet, on the one hand, historical sources like sixteenth-century Mestizo historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (1564) or sixteenth-century Mestizo historian Juan Bautista Pomar's *Romances de los señores de Nueva España* (1541) propose an example of Aztec monotheism by the Acolhua *tlatoani* (ruler) Nezahualcoyotl worshipping only one God that did not demand *nextlahualiztli* but only

---

<sup>1</sup> Bernal Díaz del Castillo and David Carrasco, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 459–60.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Toby Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America: Archaeology and Culture History*, Third edition (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 520.

<sup>3</sup> Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America*, 450–51.

offerings of poetry and flowers.<sup>4</sup> Also, evidence suggests another example of Aztec monotheism via the Aztec deity named *Ometéotl* being worshiped as one God worshiped in many forms, as endorsed by Mexican anthropologist and historian Miguel León-Portilla in his book *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* (1959).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Latin American scholars like Leisa Kauffmann suggest that Ixtlilxóchitl mythologized Nezahualcoyotl's account as an Aztec "King David" for making a possible connection to Catholicism.<sup>6</sup> Carrasco also argued that the Mesoamericans viewed the Christian God and Jesus Christ as other gods during Spaniard colonization and enacted transculturation to preserve their beliefs within Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

Transculturation means to incorporate religious elements of a colonized culture into the colonizer civilization, such as the Mesoamericans transculturing European Christianity with Mesoamerican spiritual elements, i.e., a jaguar cub instead of the lamb in the *cofradía* to Saint Juan within Santiago Atitlan for the Mayan deification of their "Lord of the Wild Animals."<sup>8</sup> Arguably, transculturation is an evolutionary response of the Mesoamericans intertwining their symbols into Christianity due to the centuries-old tradition of syncretizing deities from differing Mesoamerican civilizations, such as the Aztecs worshipping the central Mexican deities Tlaloc and Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, which

---

<sup>4</sup> Alfredo Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, vol. 1 (Mexico: Oficina tip. de la Secretaria de fomento, 1891); John Bierhorst, *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain: The Codex Romances de Los Señores de La Nueva España* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/15/oa\\_monograph/book/17286](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/15/oa_monograph/book/17286).

<sup>5</sup> Miguel León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl: estudiada en sus fuentes*, Undécima edición (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2017), <https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/filosofia/nahuatl.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Leisa Kauffmann, "Figures of Time and Tribute: The Trace of the Colonial Subaltern in Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Historia de La Nación Chichimeca," *The Global South* 4, no. 1 (2010): 31, <https://doi.org/10.2979/gso.2010.4.1.31>.

<sup>7</sup> David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, Second edition (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2014), 150–51.

<sup>8</sup> Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 174–81.

were influential Central Mexican deities worshipped centuries prior in significant sites within the Basin of Mexico such as Teotihuacan.<sup>9</sup>

The unaddressed problem is that we must reevaluate our understanding of monotheism as a potential religious phenomenon in the Aztec empire by addressing the following concerns. First, neither Alva Ixtlilxóchitl nor León-Portilla explicitly stated in their major works that *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* were theories on Aztec monotheism. Second, neither theory is classified according to their exact form of proposed monotheism. Third, there is a limited comparison of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Tloque Nahuaque* and León-Portilla's *Ometéotl* only to sixteenth-century European Christianity. Fourth, *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* are arguably still dismissed as Christianized monotheistic interpretations of Aztec polytheistic phenomena. My end goal for this thesis is to address these concerns in light of recent advancements in scholarship on monotheism and the decolonization of Mesoamerican religion and philosophy for reevaluating Alva Ixtlilxochitl's *Tloque Nahuaque* and León-Portilla's *Ometéotl* as possible theories for Aztec monotheism from a Mesoamerican perspective. Before discussing the implications of this endeavor, we must review the historical background of the Aztec Empire and the historiography of the scholarship on Aztec religion.

### Historical Background

The Aztec Empire comprised three tribes: The Mexica, the Acolhua, and the Tepanecs. Although these tribes had different *altepeme* (city-states), they were

---

<sup>9</sup> Bernardino Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book III: The Origin of the Gods.*, vol. 3, 3, accessed August 3, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667848/>.

considered sister cultures due to sharing a common language (Nahuatl) and a common religion, including deities such as Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca, or Tlaloc according to *The Florentine Codex*.<sup>10</sup> The first tribe of this Triple Alliance in the Basin of Mexico was the Tepanecs; according to sixteenth-century Mestizo chronicler Fernando Cortez de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, they were a Chichimec group that settled in 1012 AD in Azcapotzalco, the western region of Lake Texcoco, along with several other tribes from northern Mexico such as the Tlaxcala or Xochimilco tribes.<sup>11</sup> The second tribe, the Acolhua, also claimed to be descendants of the Chichimec tribes that wandered from arid northern Mexico and settled in the Basin of Mexico.<sup>12</sup> Unlike their Tepanec brethren, the Acolhua did not grow into prominence but rather were under the Tepanec influence due to their rapidly increasing empire; this Tepaneca Empire grew under the *tlatoani*, Acolnahuacatl when he took control of Azcapotzalco and expanded their territories within the surrounding area during his reign 1284-1371.<sup>13</sup> During his reign, the final tribe of the Aztec Empire, the Mexica tribe, entered the region from the north to the Basin of Mexico in 1325 AD.<sup>14</sup>

According to the mythico-history of the Mexica, recorded in sources such as Tezozómoc's *Crónica Mexicáyotl*, the Mexica entered the Basin with guidance from Huitzilopochtli to the future settlement of Tenochtitlan in Lake Texcoco by Copíl, a treacherous Mexica who revealed their location to existing Chichimeca tribes fearful of

---

<sup>10</sup> Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America*, 457–58.

<sup>11</sup> Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, ed. José Ramirez, vol. 1 (Mexico: J.M. Andrade y F. Escalante, 1867), chap. Capítulo III. De la llegada de los Mexicanos a esta tierra de México y de los sucesos y acontecimientos que tuvieron antes de llegar a ella.

<sup>12</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:41.

<sup>13</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:601.

<sup>14</sup> Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc and Adrián León, *Crónica mexicáyotl*, Primera serie prehispánica 3 (México: Universidad nacional autónoma de México, Instituto de investigaciones históricas, 1992), 69.

Mexica aggression.<sup>15</sup> When he betrayed the Mexica, they killed him and threw his heart in western Lake Texcoco, where they saw a sign of their future *altepetl*, Tenochtitlan. This sign was a cactus growing on a rock, where the heart had been thrown, and an eagle with a snake in its mouth on the rock, whom they identified as Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl.<sup>16</sup> From this sign, they settled into the region. Still, they only kept worship of Huitzilopochtli to themselves while reinforcing human sacrifice as an essential part of Aztec religion due to the offering of human hearts to this god.<sup>17</sup> Also, warriors, priests, and kings wore parts of sacrificed victims captured in warfare and engaged in ritual anthropophagy, an essential staple of Aztec religion.<sup>18</sup>

However, Durán recorded a belief in a god he refers to as “Señor de lo Criado” (Lord of all created things), who is first referenced when being thanked, along with Huitzilopochtli, by the Mexica for giving their vision of Tenochtitlan.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of including this deity in the central Mexican Pantheon, the Mexica worshiped Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl and the other gods under the first *tlatoani* of the Mexica, Acamapictli, who started the construction of the Mexica *altepetl* of Tenochtitlan (modern-day Mexico City) from 1325-1350 AD atop a drained lakebed in Lake Texcoco.<sup>20</sup> Under his reign, the Mexica expanded their territory but as subordinate vessels to Tezozomoc, Acolnahuacatl’s son, who rose into power in 1371 at the age of twenty-three and

---

<sup>15</sup> Alvarado Tezozómoc and León, *Crónica mexicáyotl*, 31.

<sup>16</sup> Alvarado Tezozómoc and León, *Crónica mexicáyotl*, 43–44.

<sup>17</sup> Alvarado Tezozómoc and León, *Crónica mexicáyotl*, 32.

<sup>18</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:79.

<sup>19</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:64.

<sup>20</sup> “Codex Mendoza,” Library Database, Hollis+, 1542 1541, Folio 7, <https://hollis.harvard.edu>.

expanded the empire to cover nearly all of the Valley of Mexico as well as parts of the Toluca and Morelos valleys from 1371-1426 AD.<sup>21</sup>

The northern part of the Basin of Mexico remained controlled by the Acolhua of Texcoco due to conquered tribes such as the Otomi fleeing to Texcoco. To strengthen ties with the Mexica, Tezozomoc married his daughter Ayauhcihuatl to the second Mexica *tlatoani* Huitzilihuitl.<sup>22</sup> After this marriage solidified ties between the Tepanecs and the Mexica, an Acolhua *tlatoani* named Ixtlilxochtli declared himself Chichimecatl, or Ruler of all Chichimec descendants, which caused a war for supremacy between the Acolhua and the Mexica/Tepanec alliance in 1414.<sup>23</sup> After Ixtlilxóchitl was killed in 1418, Tezozomoc unsuccessfully tried to assassinate Ixtlilxochitl's son Nezahualcoyotl, who was nephew to the fourth Mexica *tlatoani* Itzcoatl (1428-1440 AD) via his mother Matlalcihuatzin the daughter of Huitzilihuitl, (Itzcoatl's half-brother)—two years after Tezozomoc's death in 1426 AD, Nezahualcoyotl and Itzcoatl created the Aztec Empire by establishing the Triple Alliance, which combined the Mexica, Acolhua, and Tepanec tribes into the Aztec Empire after a decade of warfare.<sup>24</sup>

Not surprisingly, the leaders of each tribe were Itzcoatl of the Mexica in Tenochtitlan, his nephew Nezahualcoyotl of the Acolhua in Texcoco, and Totoquihuatzin I of the Tepaneca in Tlacopan.<sup>25</sup> The wars ended in 1431 AD when Nezahualcoyotl conquered Texcoco and, according to Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, would develop Texcoco into an *altepetl* renowned for education, philosophy, and the arts while restructuring the

---

<sup>21</sup> Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America*.

<sup>22</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:81.

<sup>23</sup> Raúl Varela, "Códice Xolotl," Folio 7, accessed August 3, 2023, <https://pueblosoriginarios.com/norte/suroeste/chichimeca/xolotl.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:147.

<sup>25</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:677–79.

hydrological architecture of Tenochtitlan.<sup>26</sup> From Itzcoatl's leadership, the Mexica *tlatoani* became the *huey tlatoani* (emperor) of the Triple Alliance and divided the spoils from the war as such: Tenochtitlan received 40%, Texcoco received 40%, but Tlacopan only received 20% due to incorporating a third pillar of structure to stabilize the empire.<sup>27</sup> In regards to religion, León-Portilla proposed that Itzcoatl and his nephew Tlacaelel rewrote Aztec belief by incorporating their mythico-history of their origin, which introduced the Mexica patron god of sun and warfare, Huitzilopochtli, to the Aztec Pantheon while reinforcing the significance of human sacrifice and anthropophagy.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, a belief divide occurred between the Mexica *Huey Tlatoque* (emperors) Motecuzoma Ilhulcamina (MI) and his grandson Axayácatl versus the Acolhua *tlatoani* Nezahualcoyotl. Itzcoatl's nephew Motecuzoma Ilhulcamina (MI) came into power in 1440 AD, and MI began his rule by expanding the empire for glory and prestige while securing human sacrifices in Central Mexico.<sup>29</sup> Herein, MI continues the state-issued religion first created by Itzcoatl and Tlacaelel throughout his reign.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, Nezahualcoyotl did not focus on securing sacrifices but instead on reforming Texcoco in many ways, i.e., creating eighty laws to show law and order for the Acolhua.<sup>31</sup> Also, at this point in history, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl recorded Nezahualcoyotl's monotheistic belief in *Tloque Nahuaque* as the result of spiritual searching when faced with war with the Chalca

---

<sup>26</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:697–700.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Tsouras, *Warlords of Ancient Mexico: How the Mayans and Aztecs Ruled for More than a Thousand Years* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014), 63–64.

<sup>28</sup> Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, Expanded and updated ed (Boston, Mass: Beacon, 2007), xliii.

<sup>29</sup> Bernardino Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book VIII: Kings and Lords.*, vol. 8, 6, accessed August 3, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667853/>.

<sup>30</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:160.

<sup>31</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:711–13.

in 1464.<sup>32</sup> Yet, before dying in 1472 AD, Nezahuacoyotl instructed his sons to keep the belief in *Tloque Nahuaque* a secret and to allow human sacrifice in his realm after his death due to keeping appearances with the predominant polytheism.<sup>33</sup> In addition, although choosing Axayácatl to reign after MI's death in 1469, we do not see Nezahualcoyotl choosing him out of religious reasons but to reinforce the political ties between Texcoco and Tenochtitlan.<sup>34</sup>

Contrary to the beliefs of Nezahualcoyotl, Axayácatl continued the polytheistic religious trend of the Aztecs and maintained a tradition called a “flowery war” (*Guerra de Flores*), which was a season of ritualistic warfare instituted by MI and Tlacaelel to secure human sacrifices by capturing prisoners to sacrifice to the gods.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, after many victories, his vigor for spiritual conquest was cooled when he lost to the Tarascans in 1478. He died in 1481 AD at thirty-one after a flowery war with the Huastecs.<sup>36</sup> His death led to a significant shift of religious zealotry with the remaining five *huey tlatoque* (plural of *tlatoani*) before European conquest, starting with his brother, the fourth *huey tlatoani* Tizoc.<sup>37</sup>

Before he died in the fifth year of his reign, Tizoc did not wage war with any other nations or secure any successfully captured captives for human sacrifice.<sup>38</sup> The Aztec citizens demanded a *huey tlatoani* from a different bloodline when Tlacaelel promoted Tizoc's younger brother Ahuitzotl because they wanted one who would ensure

---

<sup>32</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:747–49.

<sup>33</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:796.

<sup>34</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:789.

<sup>35</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:240.

<sup>36</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:290–302.

<sup>37</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:301–4.

<sup>38</sup> Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex. Book VIII: Kings and Lords.*, 8:252.



territorial expansion was successful and guaranteed human sacrifices for the gods.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, their demand was rebuffed by Nezahualpilli, Nezahualcoyotl's son and reigning *tlatoani* of Texcoco, who supported Tlacaelel's claim due to his ceremonial status as the official nominator of the Mexica *tlatoani*.<sup>40</sup> Through this support and Tlacaelel's guidance as regent, Ahuitzotl became one of the greatest Aztec rulers due to his successful military exploits and religious zeal.<sup>41</sup> Under his reign, the zealotry for human sacrifice and anthropophagy was renewed significantly when Ahuitzotl rebuilt the Templo Mayor and dedicated numerous human sacrifices at its completion.<sup>42</sup> Also, under his leadership, Aztec territory expanded to the south, as far as Guatemala and the Pacific Coast of Chiapas. In contrast, trade by *pochteca* grew further than the Aztec Empire's territorial expansion, even into the highlands of Guatemala.<sup>43</sup> Tenochtitlan was rebuilt with significant streets, canals, temples, and palaces being constructed or improved to accommodate the constant flow of captives for human sacrifices.<sup>44</sup>

When he died in 1502, his nephew, the sixth *huey tlatoani* Moctezuma Xocoyotzin (1502-1520 AD), expanded the empire through conquests through his successful ventures into the Mixtec and Zapotec Kingdoms.<sup>45</sup> During his reign, there were omens of impending doom, such as stars falling and plagues that broke out across the land.<sup>46</sup> Whether it was coincidence or not, these omens foretold that the end of the

---

<sup>39</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:323.

<sup>40</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:324–25.

<sup>41</sup> Tsouras, *Warlords of Ancient Mexico*, 63.

<sup>42</sup> Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, 1:353.

<sup>43</sup> Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America*, 520.

<sup>44</sup> Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America*, 516.

<sup>45</sup> Tsouras, *Warlords of Ancient Mexico*, 179–80.

<sup>46</sup> León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, 3–10.

Mesoamerican way of life was nigh due to the arrival of the Spaniards, led by Hernán Cortés, who came to Tenochtitlan in 1519. The religious significance of the Spaniards' arrival in Mexico was the predicted return of Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the worshiper of the god Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, who promised to return to the Aztecs to rule them in paradise after losing to the god Tezcatlipoca beforehand.<sup>47</sup>

As a result, the Aztecs identified Cortés as Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl due to his facial characteristics, the previously mentioned omens, and the sacred date that predicted the Spaniards' arrival to Mexico in 1519.<sup>48</sup> Their deification of Cortés proved to be their undoing due to Cortés holding Moctezuma hostage to control the empire.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the Aztecs rebelled, leading to Moctezuma's death and an outright war between the Aztecs and the Spaniards in 1520 AD.<sup>50</sup> Cuitláhuac, Moctezuma's brother, took over for eighty days before dying from Smallpox, which led to the ascension of the final *huey tlatoani* Cuauhtémoc, who led the Aztecs against the Spaniards in 1520-1521 AD.<sup>51</sup> In the end, on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1521, Cuauhtemoc surrendered to the Spaniards and their native allies, which started the colonization of Mexico and forever ended the way of life for all Mesoamericans.<sup>52</sup>

## Historiography

---

<sup>47</sup> Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y islas de Tierra Firme*, ed. José Ramirez, vol. 2 (Mexico: J.M. Andrade y F. Escalante, 1880), chap. Capítulo VI. El reino.-Las creencias.-Ce-ácatl Quetzalcoatl.-La reforma.-Segunda teocracia.-Luchas religiosas.-Tercera teocracia.-Sacrificios .-La destrucción deTóllan .-El último Huemac.

<sup>48</sup> Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 78–79.

<sup>49</sup> Bernardino Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico.*, vol. 12, 12 vols., accessed February 15, 2024, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667857/>.

<sup>50</sup> Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex. Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico*, vol. 12, chap. 23.

<sup>51</sup> Díaz del Castillo and Carrasco, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, 235.

<sup>52</sup> Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex. Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico*, vol. 12, chap. 40.

Now, we review centuries' worth of historical documentation and academic interpretation of Aztec religion to understand better the significance of my end goal for my thesis. Scholarly analysis of Aztec religion began with recording Aztec religious beliefs, practices, and iconography by Conquistadors, Spaniard religious authorities, Mestizo descendants of Aztec nobility, and the indigenous populace in mid-sixteenth-century Mexico. For example, two significant texts include the *Florentine Codex* (1577) by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún and *La Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de Tierra Firme* (1581) by Dominican friar Diego Durán, which were extraordinary due to the texts recording oral histories of Aztec society before European contact, i.e., documenting Aztec polytheistic pantheon and daily rituals.<sup>53</sup> Through Sahagún and Durán in their academic studies of Aztec religion, we see the portrait of a polytheistic culture through their organization of the pantheon and its integration into Aztec history. Their polytheistic portrayal of Aztec religion was reinforced by several indigenous codices that record their pre-conquest history and their polytheistic religious beliefs, i.e., *Anales de Tlatelolco* (the 1540s) or the *Codex Ramirez*.<sup>54</sup>

While personal expressions of belief in Aztec religion are lacking in their texts, such expressions can be found in collections of Nahuatl poems and songs in works such as the *Cantares Mexicanos* (1499-1590) or *Romances de los señores de Nueva España* (1582) by Mestizo historian Juan Bautista Pomar.<sup>55</sup> In contrast with supporting documentation from Spaniard academic investigation and various indigenous codices, these personal expressions of belief via poetry and hymns illustrate potential deviation

---

<sup>53</sup> León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, xlvi–xlvii.

<sup>54</sup> León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, xix.

<sup>55</sup> John Bierhorst, ed., *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985); Bierhorst, *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain*.

from polytheism to monotheism – especially whenever poems or hymns that were attributed to be written by Nezahualcoyotl.<sup>56</sup> Despite these differing accounts, the Aztec religion was initially presented as purely polytheistic by various Spanish and indigenous authors recording Aztec mythology.

In the seventeenth century, the authorship trend continued with manuscripts in a new generation of Mestizo historians, chroniclers, etc. At the same time, recognition of Mexico's Aztec heritage increased. One prime example of seventeenth-century manuscripts is Fernando de Alva Cortés Ixtlilxóchitl's *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (1625). *Historia de la nación chichimeca* supplies the Acolhua perspective within the Aztec Empire, from their claim as descendants of the Chichimeca dating back to 1100 AD to the Spanish conquest of the Empire and postconquest events dating around 1540 AD.<sup>57</sup> In this account, Ixtlilxochitl displays Nezahualcoyotl as a possible monotheist due to worshipping a god known as *Tloque Nahuaque*, or the Lord of the immediate vicinity, only offering hymns and flowers for sacrifices, and built a temple for worshipping this deity.<sup>58</sup>

Although his historical account captured the perspective of the Acolhua tribe in the Aztec empire, this presentation of potential Aztec monotheism would be overshadowed by illustrating Aztec polytheistic culture to seventeenth-century Mexicans and audiences worldwide. One example came in the form of Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero's *La Historia Antigua de México* (1780–1781), where he creates a historiographic analysis of the history of the Aztecs from their migration of Chicomoztoc

---

<sup>56</sup> Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 103–5.

<sup>57</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:555.

<sup>58</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:785–86.

to their last *huey tlatoani* Cuauhtémoc. This work was written to reduce negative perspectives on Aztec culture, i.e., their “barbaric” polytheism in contrast to the “civilized” European monotheism.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, in 1790, archaeological excavations beneath the Zócalo, or Main Square, of Mexico City revealed the Aztec calendar stone and a statue of Coatlicue. According to Mexican anthropologist Antonio de León y Gama in his work *Descripción histórico y cronológico de las dos piedras* (1792), these artifacts display Aztec polytheism due to the glyphs and representations of pagan gods and their roles in Aztec society.<sup>60</sup> The trend of recording Aztec religion ended in this century, and scholarly interest in subsequent centuries pivoted towards discovering manuscripts and artifacts and creating academic theories on Aztec culture and religion based on manuscripts and archaeology. The dominant view of Aztec religion as a polytheistic religion remained unchallenged for the next two centuries.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Mexican historians and anthropologists continued this viewpoint while discovering Aztec codices or creating copies while setting the foundation of Mesoamerican scholarship on Aztec culture and religious thought. One example of a completed copy of an Aztec codex is the *Codex of Mexican History from 1221 to 1594* (1748 to 1799), which was known to be an eighteenth-century copy of an unknown Aztec codex.<sup>61</sup> Such discoveries provided firsthand accounts to create eighteenth and nineteenth-century virtual histories of the Aztec Empire and laid the

---

<sup>59</sup> Stephanie Rohner, “La Historia Antigua De México De Francisco Javier Clavigero Y La Educación Indígena En Nueva España,” *Hispanic Review* 88, no. 2 (2020): 133–55, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hir.2020.0014>.

<sup>60</sup> Antonio de León y Gama, *Descripción histórica y cronológica de las dos piedras*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C., 1832), 9–10, [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:48409292\\$1i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:48409292$1i).

<sup>61</sup> José Antonio Pichardo, “Codex of Mexican History from 1221 to 1594.,” compressed data, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, 1748, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668121/>.

groundwork for the next few centuries of Mesoamerican research. One example is when German scientist Alexander von Humboldt wrote *Views of the Cordilleras and Monuments of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas* (1810), a historiographic analysis of the environment's impact on Mesoamerican cultures, including their polytheistic religion being shaped by the mountains and sun.<sup>62</sup> This academic treatise influenced nineteenth-century American historian William Prescott in writing *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843), one of the fundamental scholarly works on Mexican history of its era.<sup>63</sup> Prescott's investigation of the Aztec empire before European contact dedicated a chapter to exploring Aztec religious thought and how they first exhibited monotheistic tendencies via their concept of a supreme creator God. Still, he argued that these monotheistic tendencies evolved into polytheism due to the Aztecs' difficulty comprehending monotheistic beliefs. He then proposed that this supreme deity appointed lower-level deities to sustain all aspects of creation.<sup>64</sup> Eventually, these copies of Aztec manuscripts and written works on Aztec society created the academic foundation for which twentieth-century Mesoamerican scholars continued where eighteenth and nineteenth-century Mesoamerican scholars left off.

Throughout the twentieth century, we see the early modern development of academic theories surrounding Aztec religion and philosophical thought. Yet, after four centuries of the dominance of Aztec polytheism in Mesoamerican research, another controversial theory of a possible monotheistic interpretation of Aztec religion came

---

<sup>62</sup> George Ticknor, *Life of William Hickling Prescott* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1863), [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Life\\_of\\_William\\_Hickling\\_Prescott/\\_8UEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Life_of_William_Hickling_Prescott/_8UEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en).

<sup>63</sup> Ticknor, *Life of William Hickling Prescott*, 156.

<sup>64</sup> William Hickling Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico: With a Preliminary View of the Ancient Mexican Civilization and the Life of the Conqueror, Hernando Cortez*, 26th ed., vol. 1, 3 vols. (Boston, Mass: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1856).

through León-Portilla in his magnum opus *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* (*The Nahuatl Philosophy studied in its Sources*) (1956). León-Portilla's primary intention for writing *La Filosofía Náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* was to recreate Nahuatl philosophy from a Mesoamerican perspective. One significant contribution is reconstructing Nahuatl philosophy and its effects on Mesoamerican cosmology. Still, he argued that the Aztecs worshiped only *Ometéotl*, and it appeared to the Spaniards as polytheism due to glorifying many aspects of this one deity as separate entities.<sup>65</sup> He also argued that *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* are the same deities and claimed that Nezahualcoyotl worshiped *Ometéotl* as *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>66</sup> To this end, León-Portilla's reconstruction of Nahua philosophy and proposing *Ometéotl* as the main deity in Aztec religion was an early attempt to decolonize Aztec religion for the modern audience.

Despite León-Portilla's contribution to Nahuatl philosophy, many scholars argued that the Aztec religion was polytheistic for the following reasons. First, this interpretation was reinforced through the archaeological discoveries of Aztec artifacts and examination of Aztec temples with depictions of various deities performing their duties. One example was when excavations in Mexico City revealed proposed evidence of Aztec polytheism due to idolization of the Central Mexican rain deity *Tlaloc* and the Mexica patron god of war *Huitzilopochtli* in the Templo Mayor.<sup>67</sup> Second, twentieth-century American historical anthropologist Ross Hassig reintroduced the importance of the Aztec tradition

---

<sup>65</sup> León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, xlvi–xlvii.

<sup>66</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 211.

<sup>67</sup> Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, "Archaeology and Symbolism in Aztec Mexico: The Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 4 (December 1985): 797–813, <http://ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0000958107&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

of Flowery Wars for Aztec warriors to capture captives for human sacrifices for feeding their deities with spiritual energy to sustain the world with their power continually.<sup>68</sup>

Third, twentieth-century Mesoamerican scholar Richard Haly, in his article “Bare Bones: Rethinking Mesoamerican Anthropology” (1992), argued against León-Portilla’s *Ometéotl* on the grounds of misinterpreting *Ometéotl* from historical sources and as an attempt to create a “Christianized” God out of Aztec philosophy.<sup>69</sup> As a result, archaeological discoveries, theories like Hassig’s, and critiques like Haly’s fortified the dominant view of Aztec polytheism while overshadowing potential theories of Aztec monotheism like León-Portilla’s theory of *Ometéotl*.

Twenty-first-century scholarship on Aztec religion continues the trend of twentieth-century scholarship with anthropological approaches and historical research. Some scholars still propose Aztec monotheism, or at least a potential form of Mesoamerican monotheism, from their interpretation of specific texts. Japanese professor Yukitaka Inoue argued in his article, “Thesis regarding the pre-Hispanic Cult to Only One God: According to Two Indigenous Chroniclers of Central Mexico” (2000) that Pomar’s *Los Romances de los señores de Nueva España* and Ixtlilxóchitl’s *Historia de la nación chichimeca* point to a pre-Hispanic Chichimeca monotheistic cult worshipping one god.<sup>70</sup> Also, he refers to Leon-Portilla’s argument that *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl*

---

<sup>68</sup> Ross Hassig, “Aztec Warfare. (Cover Story),” *History Today* 40, no. 2 (February 1990): 17, <http://ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9003190180&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Haly, “Bare Bones: Rethinking Mesoamerican Divinity,” *History of Religions* 31, no. 3 (February 1992): 271–74, <https://doi.org/10.1086/463285>.

<sup>70</sup> Inoue Yukitaka, “Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México : [Thesis Regarding the Pre-Hispanic Cult to Only One God : According to Two Indigenous Chroniclers of Central Mexico],” Journal Database, Kansai Gaidai University Institutional Repository, 2000, [https://kansai.gaidai.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages\\_view\\_main&active\\_action=repository\\_view\\_main\\_item\\_detail&item\\_id=5475&item\\_no=1&page\\_id=13&block\\_id=21](https://kansai.gaidai.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=5475&item_no=1&page_id=13&block_id=21).



are the same by examining the fusion of the Christian God and Ometeótl by Ixtlilxochitl, to which he concludes that he is not sure why Ixtlilxochitl makes this fusion.<sup>71</sup> Still, Inoue does indicate Pomar's and Ixtlilxochitl's potential purpose of promoting Texcocan religious superiority in Nueva España in their texts. Lastly, despite this conclusion, Inoue maintains that their identification of the Mesoamerican supreme god with the Christian God was to help their European readers understand Aztec religion while illustrating this cult's possible existence within Aztec religion.<sup>72</sup>

Much like Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and León-Portilla, Inoue's contribution to Mesoamerican anthropology and history was overshadowed by the dominant theory of Aztec polytheism. One such example is the development of the term "cosmovision" in understanding Mesoamerican culture, which helps explain how human sacrifice drove the Aztec empire to secure captives to appease the gods. According to Dr. Catharine Good Eshelman, it is a unique anthropological term in its conceptualization of encapsulating the identical beliefs shared by all Mesoamerican civilizations, i.e., identical gods, similar titles that identify power over physical elements and spiritual realms, and architecture.<sup>73</sup> Carrasco breaks down the aspect of human sacrifice within Mesoamerican cosmovision into three main parts in his article "Human Sacrifice/Debt Payments from the Aztec Point of View" (2012): the gods' obligation of giving the gift of life to humans for worship, the humans' obligation to accept life by existing, and the obligation called *nextlahualiztli*

---

<sup>71</sup> Yukitaka, "Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México," 216.

<sup>72</sup> Yukitaka, "Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México," 220.

<sup>73</sup> Alfredo López Austin and Alejandra Gámez Espinosa, *Cosmovisión Mesoamericana. Reflexiones, Polémicas Y Etnografías*, 1st ed. (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015), chap. Chapter 4: Las cosmovisiones, la historia y la tradición intelectual en Mesoamérica, <http://archive.org/details/gamez-lopez-austin-coords.-cosmovision-mesoamericana.-reflexiones-polemicas-y-etnografias-ocr-2015>.

(debt-payment) to reciprocate the gods through human sacrifice.<sup>74</sup> He argues that this cosmovision drove the Aztecs' expansion of their empire to secure prisoners of war for human sacrifices to their gods, thus reinforcing a polytheistic understanding of Aztec religion due to sustaining all the gods with spiritual energy captured from human sacrifice. Ultimately, the dominant view of the Aztec religion being polytheistic has lasted for over five hundred years despite challenges from Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Tloque Nahuaque* and León-Portilla's *Ometéotl*.

#### Implications of the End Goal for this Thesis

Due to the dominance of Aztec polytheism in Mesoamerican anthropology, there are significant implications for reevaluating Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Tloque Nahuaque* and León-Portilla's *Ometéotl* as possible theories for Aztec monotheism. The first implication is reevaluating the original intention of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and León-Portilla for writing their significant works and how their successes made them respected authorities on Aztec history and religion. Understanding their significance to Aztec history and religion validates their insight and knowledge in illustrating potential forms of Aztec monotheism. The second implication is creating a stronger argument for Aztec monotheism as a religious phenomenon by identifying the forms of monotheism represented by *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl*. Understanding the exact form of monotheism proposed by each theory provides a more robust framework for comprehending each theory. The third implication is creating fruitful comparisons to monotheistic religions other than Christianity, such as Judaism or Zoroastrianism. These comparisons enable more

---

<sup>74</sup> Díaz del Castillo and Carrasco, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, sec. Human Sacrifice/Debt Payments from the Aztec Point of View.

significant comprehension of possible Aztec monotheistic phenomena by finding similar worship practices, religious philosophy, and cosmology in other monotheistic religions outside Christianity. The fourth implication is decolonizing our understanding of Aztec religious phenomena from a Eurocentric perspective by showing either theory as feasible for Aztec monotheism from a Mesoamerican perspective. Decolonizing the dominant Eurocentric perspective on Aztec religious phenomena contributes to a more excellent reconstruction of the Mesoamerican cosmovision by reducing the Eurocentric framework on Mesoamerican religions. As a result, reevaluating Alva Ixtlilxochitl's *Tloque Nahuaque* and Leon-Portilla's Ometeótl as possible theories for Aztec monotheism would be revolutionary to Mesoamerican anthropology by illustrating how monotheism is not only a Mediterranean/Near Eastern phenomenon but can be found in other regions such as Mesoamerica before European contact. Still, how do we achieve this end goal?

### Methodology and Research Limitations

My methodology used the functionalist research process to formulate this thesis to achieve the end goal.<sup>75</sup> There are three stages to successfully employ this process: exploration, research design, and research execution.<sup>76</sup> In the exploration stage, I analyzed the current problem concerning Aztec monotheism by evaluating the available historical and archaeological sources from the Aztec Empire/Colonial Mexico and the scholarly analysis of Aztec religion. After my analysis, I formulated the foundation of this thesis on *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometeótl* as possible theories of Aztec monotheism

---

<sup>75</sup> Anol Bhattacharjee, *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*, Second edition, Textbook Collection 3 (Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, 2012), 16.

<sup>76</sup> Bhattacharjee, *Social Science Research*, 20.

from Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (1540) and León-Portilla's *La Filosofía Náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* (1956).<sup>77</sup> Using this foundation, I entered the research design stage by creating my operationalization for measuring the feasibility of *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* as monotheistic theories. The operationalization evaluated the conceptualization of monotheism as a global religious phenomenon and its intricate details, incorporating comparative religion analysis with other monotheistic religions and overall scholarly analysis of *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl*. Lastly, this thesis represents the completion of the research stage by collecting my data, analyzing, and presenting my research results.

However, despite my efforts, my research limitations were the following. First, many Náhuatl records were destroyed to reduce pagan tendencies in New Spain.<sup>78</sup> The lack of ample Nahuatl records forces me to attempt to recreate the Mesoamerican perspective from a theoretical standpoint. Second, most sixteenth-century – seventeenth-century Spanish sources primarily illustrate Aztec religion as polytheistic. This fixed perspective within these sources further limits the ability to recreate the Mesoamerican perspective on Aztec religion due to the constant comparison to Christianity. Third, I had to rely on translators with potential bias to translate Nahuatl into Spanish or English. These translators included historians and anthropologists such as Diego Durán Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, León-Portilla, and John Bierhorst. Lastly, due to the dominance of Aztec polytheism, scant academic interpretations favor Aztec monotheism in primary sources. I had to search for obscure sources like Inoue's investigation of the works of Pomar and Alva Ixtlilxochitl. Regardless of these research limitations, I completed this thesis using

---

<sup>77</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*; León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*.

<sup>78</sup> Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America*, 526.

the functionalist theoretical framework to answer how potential monotheistic developments occurred in the primarily polytheistic Aztec Empire.

### Thesis Overview

In chapter two, I start this thesis by exploring the conceptualization of monotheism as a global religious phenomenon. This exploration includes reviewing concepts such as the earliest examples of monotheism, the origin of the term monotheism, and the variations of monotheism. Then, I investigated Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Tloque Nahuaque* and León-Portilla's *Ometéotl* as the most robust cases of monotheism in Aztec religion in chapter three. This investigation includes researching why Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and León-Portilla wrote their texts and the original context in which *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* were presented in their texts. After that, I analyzed both theories as separate theories of Aztec monotheism in chapter four. I also reevaluated León-Portilla's earlier premise of *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* as one in this chapter. I conclude this thesis in chapter five by introducing a stronger proposition of Aztec monotheism via a reinforced form of Leon-Portilla's premise of *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* as one deity. I came to this conclusion by finding similarities between *Ometéotl/Tloque Nahuaque* and the Middle Eastern monotheistic religion called Zoroastrianism, proposing how Alva Ixtlilxochitl transcultured *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* using Christianity, and illustrating the man Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl and Nezahualcoyotl as *tlacatecolotl* (Owl Man) that physically embody the priestly and shamanic aspects of *Ometéotl*. Therefore, expanding the study of monotheism from its acclaimed dominance in the Mediterranean/Near Eastern region to proposing other forms

of monotheism across the globe, such as the focus of this thesis on reevaluating the possibility of monotheism in Aztec religion within Mexico.

## Chapter II.

### Analyzing Monotheism

We need to explore the following concepts to understand how monotheism is a global religious phenomenon: The earliest examples of monotheism, the origin of the term, and its variations.

#### Introduction

Monotheism has shaped the face of global history via its paramount influence on the development of Western civilization. For example, the influence of Christianity trickled into almost all colonial expeditions by European powers, especially the Spaniards, because one of their main reasons for colonization was spreading the Gospel.<sup>79</sup> Yet, contrary to the Gospel message, Mesoamerican civilizations were forcefully coerced to adopt Christianity from their Spaniard colonizers. This fact would make it hard to supply monotheistic tendencies before European contact with Mesoamerican cultures, based on the argument that monotheism is primarily a European religious concept. Herein, I first analyze the earliest examples of monotheism, the definition of monotheism, how it is distinguished from polytheism and recognized variations of monotheism. Afterward, I discuss the sixteenth-century Spaniard view on monotheism, its possible application to Mesoamerican religious thought, and the current scholarly debate on Mesoamerican monotheism between León-Portilla and Haly. Thus, exploring

---

<sup>79</sup> Katharine Gerbner, "Theorizing Conversion: Christianity, Colonization, and Consciousness in the Early Modern Atlantic World: Theorizing Conversion," *History Compass* 13, no. 3 (March 2015): 134–47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12227>.

the roots of monotheism and the European/Western beliefs and theorizations of monotheism will supply a greater understanding of the potentiality of Aztec monotheistic tendencies from Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's and León-Portilla's controversial theories on Aztec religion.

## Investigating the Global Religious Phenomenon known as Monotheism

### The Presumed Origin of Monotheism: The Middle East

Monotheism has existed for millennia in various parts of the world as a religious phenomenon. Some scholars, like twentieth-century famed psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, argued that the birthplace of monotheism is in the Middle East due to the rise of the Abrahamic monotheistic religions such as Judaism or Islam.<sup>80</sup> Despite the lack of proof of this claim, the most recognized monotheistic religions come from the Middle East. The first example is the ancient Iranian monotheistic religion of Zoroastrianism, which dates back to the 17th-15th Century BC.<sup>81</sup> After two thousand years of development in Persia (modern-day Iran), Zoroastrianism became the state religion of the Achaemenian Empire (550–330 BC), an ancient Iranian empire established by King Cyrus the Great, a renowned king in Middle Eastern history for being just and wise.<sup>82</sup>

The second example is the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which are referred to as “Abrahamic” since the concept was connected to the

---

<sup>80</sup> W. W. Meissner, “Notes on Monotheism • Origins,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 7, no. 1 (1968): 43–60, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01532177>.

<sup>81</sup> Mario Ferrero, “From Polytheism to Monotheism: Zoroaster and Some Economic Theory,” *Homo Oeconomicus* 38, no. 1–4 (December 2021): 83, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41412-021-00113-4>.

<sup>82</sup> Ali Ansari, “A Royal Romance: The Cult of Cyrus the Great in Modern Iran,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 3 (July 2021): 410–13, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186321000195>.



common ground of their reverence of their monotheistic progenitor Abraham as postulated by Sufi philosopher Ibn Masarra Moors (883–931 A.D.) and Sephardic Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1138–1204 A.D.) in Al-Andalus (modern-day Spain).<sup>83</sup> Judaism became the state religion of Israel during the mid or early second-century B.C.<sup>84</sup> Although some scholars argue that Judaism was introduced before Zoroastrianism, recent evidence suggests that Judaism was not genuinely monotheistic until it was reinstated as a state religion in Jerusalem during 200 B.C. – 100 A.D.<sup>85</sup> Christianity sprang out of Judaism and became widespread during the Roman Empire during the first century A.D. while eventually becoming the state religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine the Great in 313 A.D.<sup>86</sup> Our final example is the last Abrahamic religion, Islam, which originated in Mecca, Arabia during the early 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>87</sup> Some scholars like John Toland debated for a Judeo-Christian inspiration for Islam due to similar themes of apocalyptic messages of repentance with salvation from God via belief in him and his ordinances.<sup>88</sup>

Despite the earliest examples from the Middle East, other non-Abrahamic monotheistic religions exist in different countries. In India, the monotheistic religion of Sikhism, which originated in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Punjab, manifested as a shift in religious

---

<sup>83</sup> Sarah Stroumsa, “The Father of Many Nations: Abraham in al-Andalus,” in *Medieval Exegesis and Religious Difference: Commentary, Conflict, and Community in the Premodern Mediterranean* (Fordham University Press, 2015).

<sup>84</sup> Yonatan Adler, “The Origins of Judaism Reappraised,” in *The Origins of Judaism, An Archaeological-Historical Reappraisal* (Yale University Press, 2022), 189, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2z0vv3c.12>.

<sup>85</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, “‘Ancient Jewish Monotheism’ in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 4, no. 3 (2013): 380, <https://doi.org/10.13109/jaju.2013.4.3.379>.

<sup>86</sup> Eusebius and Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius--the Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 373–75.

<sup>87</sup> Manfred Sing, “Where Do the Multi-Religious Origins of Islam Lie? A Topological Approach to a Wicked Problem,” *Entangled Religions* 9 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.13154/er.9.2019.165-210>.

<sup>88</sup> Francisco F. Del Río Sánchez, “The Deadlocked Debate about the Role of the Jewish Christians at the Birth of Islam,” *Religions* 12, no. 10 (September 22, 2021): 789, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100789>.

thought from Hinduism to Islamic influence.<sup>89</sup> In Africa, American professor Thaddeus Metz and South African philosopher Motsamai Molefe suggest that traditional African religion is monotheistic but not comparable to the Abrahamic faiths.<sup>90</sup> In China, nineteenth-century sinologist James Legge hypothesized Chinese monotheism from drawing similarities between the ancient Chinese monotheistic deity *Di/Shang Di* and the Christian God.<sup>91</sup> As a result, regardless of presumed origin, monotheism is a religious phenomenon that has influenced various civilizations and does not belong to any specific ethnicity. However, the question remains: where do we get the term monotheism from?

#### The Origin of The Term “Monotheism:”

Although monotheism has existed for millennia, polytheism was defined centuries before monotheism.<sup>92</sup> According to twenty-first-century French philosopher Étienne Balibar, polytheism originates from the Greek words *Poly-* (Many) and *Theos-* (Gods); it defines the belief in multiple deities and other low-ranking entities in religion and mythology.<sup>93</sup> Here, Balibar states that polytheism was an older practice throughout the centuries with an established history in contrast with monotheism’s obscure history.<sup>94</sup>

Although polytheism has its Greek roots, the usage of the term and its application in the

---

<sup>89</sup> Daljit Kaur, “Guru Nanak Dev and Origin of Sikhism,” *RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary* 6, no. 6 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.31305/rrijm.2021.v06.i06.006>.

<sup>90</sup> Thaddeus Metz and Motsamai Molefe, “Traditional African Religion as a Neglected Form of Monotheism,” *The Monist* 104, no. 3 (July 1, 2021): 393–409, <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onab007>.

<sup>91</sup> I-Hsin Chen, “From God’s Chinese Names to a Cross-Cultural Universal God: James Legge’s Intertextual Theology in His Translation of *Tian*, *Di* and *Shangdi*,” *Translation Studies* 9, no. 3 (September 2016): 268–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2016.1188022>.

<sup>92</sup> Ferrero, “From Polytheism to Monotheism,” 83.

<sup>93</sup> “Polytheism,” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (United Kingdom: Encyclopædia Britannica Inc, 2020), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/polytheism>.

<sup>94</sup> Étienne Balibar, *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism: Critical Hypotheses on Religion and Politics, European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 71.

description of other religions dates back to the days of Aeschylus in 540 BC.<sup>95</sup> According to twentieth-century German scholar Michael Frede and Greek historian Polymnia Athanassiadi, this term was conceptualized in European civilizations during the Byzantine Empire when Christian elites used the word “polytheia” (many gods) as a derogatory term concerning the Greco-Roman religion.<sup>96</sup>

Many centuries later, the term monotheism was first created in English during the 1660s when seventeenth-century English philosopher Henry More used it in his text *Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660).<sup>97</sup> More made this term from the Greek words *Mono-* (One) and *Theos-* (God) to represent the belief in one deity above all others while rendering other gods as nonexistent and as lower-level (i.e., angelic or demonic) entities.<sup>98</sup> In *Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660), written to connect his Christian Platonism with seventeenth-century science, More used monotheism in a satirical manner when attacking the monotheistic belief of the world as God and when attacking any form of pagan monotheism.<sup>99</sup> This term was eventually used to define religions with monotheistic tendencies. Furthermore, evidence suggests that Enlightenment scholars, such as Sir Isaac Newton and Henry More, reinforced our understanding of monotheism by illustrating its theological, scientific, and cosmic

---

<sup>95</sup> Balibar, *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism*, 71–72.

<sup>96</sup> Maria Beatrice Bittarello, “Western Suspicion of Polytheism, Western Thought Structures, and Contemporary Pagan Polytheisms,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 3, no. 1 (2010): 68–102, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187489209X478319>.

<sup>97</sup> Balibar, *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism*, 71–72.

<sup>98</sup> Jens-André P. Herbener, “On the Term ‘Monotheism,’” *Numen* 60, no. 5–6 (2013): 616–48, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685276-12341296>.

<sup>99</sup> Henry More, “An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness, or, A True and Faithfull Representation of the Everlasting Gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Onely Begotten Son of God and Sovereign over Men and Angels by H. More,” 1660, 46, 109, <https://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240965151/12165689?parentSessionId=iOPdyh1hSjPStmQ3%2BEwP9dmH6ERGUEW32OrX590cUbs%3D&accountid=11311>.

implications in academia.<sup>100</sup> Due to More's initial usage of monotheism, Balibar emphasizes that monotheism is primarily associated with Christianity, Western civilization's most prominent monotheistic religion.<sup>101</sup>

Scholars such as twenty-first-century Hebrew Studies professor Debra Ballantine have questioned Balibar's concept due to the usual dichotomization between monotheism and polytheism instead of illustrating how monotheism is now a spectrum of religious thought that does not pertain to only Christianity.<sup>102</sup> For example, she iterates in her studies on Judaic monotheism that we need to reevaluate our understanding of monotheism due to its roots in the Enlightenment era while expanding our singular knowledge of monotheism to include various forms of monotheistic thought.<sup>103</sup> Thus, despite being defined centuries after polytheism, the term monotheism is first used as a Christian apologetics attack against pagan monotheism, then is used to describe monotheistic religions like Christianity. Still, this perspective is challenged by a new perspective to view monotheism as a spectrum of similar religious thought and belief systems.

### The Spectrum of Monotheism

Currently, various forms of monotheistic thought are recognized in religious studies in contrast to the singular view of monotheism being only one form of religious belief. The most recognized form of monotheism is known as exclusive monotheism.

---

<sup>100</sup> Debra Scoggins Ballantine, "'Monotheism' and the Hebrew Bible," *Religion Compass* 16, no. 1 (January 2022): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12425>.

<sup>101</sup> Balibar, *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism*, 69.

<sup>102</sup> Ballantine, "'Monotheism' and the Hebrew Bible," 2.

<sup>103</sup> Ballantine, "'Monotheism' and the Hebrew Bible," 3.

This variation of monotheism embodies its original definition by deifying the most powerful entity and making all other entities lower-level spirits. The most famous examples are the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to Italian anthropologist Maurizio Bettini, this monotheistic exclusivity is called the “Mosaic Distinction,” in which Judaism monotheism inspired Christianity and Islam to be distinctly exclusive of all other gods and worship only one true God.<sup>104</sup>

In contrast, inclusive monotheism, also known as summodeism (Latin *summa-* all and *deus-* God), is more extensive by the supposition of one God being represented in multiple forms, i.e., some scholars consider Christianity as a form of inclusive monotheism from its trinitarian doctrine of God.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, from this monotheistic variation, the forms of this one God are infinite and take various representations, such as specific displays of weather phenomena or even a group of gods that are deifications of aspects of this one God.<sup>106</sup> One non-Abrahamic example is Zoroastrianism, which proposes that Ahura Mazda is the one true god but has an evil half named Angra Mainyu as a form of summodeism via the duality of good and evil in one god.<sup>107</sup>

However, there is one last religious concept like monotheism: monolatry. Although this word means “one worship,” from Greek words *Mono-* (One) and *latreia* (worship), this practice specifies the worship of only one god but acknowledges the existence of other gods.<sup>108</sup> Followers of monolatric religions or cults recognize the presence of other gods but only choose to worship one god; one example that is often

---

<sup>104</sup> Maurizio Bettini and Douglas Grant Heise, *In Praise of Polytheism* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2022), 36–40.

<sup>105</sup> Barbara Newman, “Toward a More Inclusive Monotheism,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 5, no. 2 (September 2005): 214–20, <https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2006.0002>.

<sup>106</sup> Herbener, “On the Term ‘Monotheism,’” 630.

<sup>107</sup> Ferrero, “From Polytheism to Monotheism,” 84.

<sup>108</sup> Herbener, “On the Term ‘Monotheism,’” 626.

used for monolatric tendencies is the Pre-Exilic Israelites in worshipping YHWH but also acknowledging the existence of other gods, such as Asherah or Moloch.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, by understanding how monotheism is a spectrum through exploring some of its variations, we can grasp the potential of religious developments in various cultures as monotheistic without having one specified criterion.

#### Potential Identification of Monotheism to Mesoamerican Religious Thought

From our research into monotheism, I argue for a higher possibility of finding evidence for monotheism in the Aztec Empire for the following reasons. First, monotheism is a globally recognized religious phenomenon in various non-Western civilizations centuries before and after the rise of Christianity in European countries. Second, monotheism is perceived as primarily Western because “monotheism” was explicitly made for Christian apologetics and was nominally used centuries later to describe religions that deify only one entity. Third, the sixteenth-century conceptualization of monotheism evolved into a twenty-first-century spectrum of monotheistic phenomena, such as inclusive monotheism, exclusive monotheism, or monolatry. As a result, this collected data suggests a higher probability of finding evidence of Aztec monotheism from monotheism being a global phenomenon and illustrating the various categories in the spectrum of monotheism.

---

<sup>109</sup> Christian Frevel, “Beyond Monotheism? Some Remarks and Questions on Conceptualising ‘Monotheism’ in Biblical Studies,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 2 (September 5, 2013): 7 pages, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i2.810>.

## Chapter III.

### The Two Strongest Cases of Alleged Aztec Monotheism

The conceptualization of monotheism as a global phenomenon has opened the discussion to the two most substantial theories of Aztec monotheism: the sixteenth-century theory of *Tloque Nahuaque* and the twentieth-century idea of *Ometéotl*.

#### Introduction

Despite the dominant theory of Aztec polytheism, the development of these two monotheistic theories, the deity *Tloque Nahuaque*, which Alva Ixtlilxóchitl proposed in his work *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (1561), and the deity *Ometéotl*, León-Portilla in *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* (1984), have shaped the face of Mesoamerican anthropology by challenging the academic status quo through textual evidence and scholarly interpretation of specific texts. To analyze both theories, I employ this methodology with the following steps. The first step is researching the primary sources before formulating their theories. The second step is analyzing the reasons for Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and León-Portilla writing their respective texts to see the original context in which both *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* were written. The third step is reviewing the primary figures associated with worshipping these deities. The final step is reconstructing these deities' beliefs and worship practices outlined in their source material. Therefore, analyzing *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* in their sources and developing each theory shall reveal how each deity was viewed as monotheistic and why.

## Sixteenth-century: Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Tloque Nahuaque*

### Introduction

*Tloque Nahuaque* has been debated for centuries due to the various interpretations of the source material and the author's mindset. For example, most primary historical sources on *Tloque Nahuaque* were written by sixteenth-century Mestizo authors instead of the Spaniards or any representative of the Mexica or other indigenous tribes.<sup>110</sup> This fact suggests potential conflicts of interest in writing about their indigenous ancestry due to Spanish oppression and adding a likely European coloring to their texts. As a result, I will start with a deeper analysis of the primary source materials for *Tloque Nahuaque* before Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, which are Pomar's *Las Romances de Los Señores de Nueva España*, *Los Cantares Mexicanos*, and *Relación de la ciudad y Provincia de Tezcoco*. Secondly, I explore Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's primary purpose for writing *Historia de la nación chichimeca*. Thirdly, we must then review the central historical figure that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl associated with the worship of *Tloque Nahuaque*: the Acolhua *tlatoani* (ruler) Nezahualcoyotl. Lastly, building up on the historical sources and Nezahualcoyotl's practices, we will discuss this monotheistic tendency's core beliefs and practices. In summation, we shall see the complexity of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's illustration of *Tloque Nahuaque* from understanding its earliest historical references, the foremost worshipper, and the beliefs and rituals surrounding this deity.

---

<sup>110</sup>Manuel Carrera Stampa, "Historiadores indígenas y mestizos novohispanos. Siglos XVI - XVII.," *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* 6 (January 1, 1971): 1-3, <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/REAA/article/view/REAA7171110205A>.



*Tloque Nahuaque* before Alva Ixtlilxóchitl

Although Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's work was the first seventeenth-century text to illustrate the belief in *Tloque Nahuaque* within a historical context, four texts from the sixteenth century directly influenced his work. The first example is Juan Bautista Pomar's *Romances de los señores de Nueva España* (1541), which collects various writings of Nahua poets before the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. Most famously translated by twentieth-century American folklorist and translator John Bierhorst, we see the development of the belief in *Tloque Nahuaque* being described with other names such as *Moyocoyatzin* "Self-Maker," listing various conceptualizations of this deity while listing rituals to appease it.<sup>111</sup> For example, Bierhorst translated a possible reference to *Tloque Nahuaque* from the sentence fragment "*titloq tinahua ay dios,*" which he translates to say, "O' Ever Present, O Ever Near, oh God."<sup>112</sup> In Mesoamerican cosmovision, the names of deities often carry their power over physical elements or realms in the spiritual world, such as Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl (Plumed Serpent who is the Wind), the deity in charge of the wind (plumes of quetzal birds) that slithers through the sky to bring life to the world (serpent).<sup>113</sup> Since this source is dated almost a hundred years before Alva Ixtlilxochitl's text, I propose that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl first gleaned the name "*Tloque Nahuaque*" from this sentence fragment to identify this recorded deity for his text.

---

<sup>111</sup> Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 52.

<sup>112</sup> Bierhorst, *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain*, 84–85.

<sup>113</sup> Élodie Dupey García, "Creating the Wind: Color, Materiality, and the Senses in the Images of a Mesoamerican Deity," *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2, no. 4 (December 18, 2020): 14–31, <https://doi.org/10.1525/lavc.2020.2.4.14>.

The second text is *Cantares Mexicanos* (1564), another collection of Nahuatl poetry from the indigenous Nahuas but with an unknown author. Although Bierhorst was praised for an accurate translation in 1985, scholars like León-Portilla, who created the Spanish translation of the *Cantares Mexicanos* years later, criticized his commentary of the *Cantares Mexicanos* as a Mesoamerican precursor to the Ghost Dance rebellions of the Plains Indians in the nineteenth-century.<sup>114</sup> This text contains poems attributed to Nezahualcoyotl or others, possibly written by him in similar language to other poems, such as praising *Tloque Nahuaque* with flower offerings, incense offerings, and adoration with songs.<sup>115</sup> What is unusual in this collection of Nahuatl poetry is that human sacrifice was not presented as a practice of worshiping *Tloque Nahuaque*. Recall from the historiography that human sacrifice is one of the main aspects of Mesoamerican cosmology. From this source, we see why Alva Ixtlilxóchitl recorded the worship practices of offering flowers and incense with adoration through songs for *Tloque Nahuaque* instead of human sacrifice.

The third example is a historical text written by Pomar called *Relación de la ciudad y Provincia de Tezcoco* (1580), which focuses on the *altepetl* (city-state) of Texcoco, one of the three significant *altepeme* in the Aztec empire. Through various examples, Pomar illustrated the importance of *Tloque Nahuaque* in Acolhua society in Texcoco. One example was Pomar claiming that the Acolhua attributed the multiple titles of *Tloque Nahuaque* to other gods since they saw the gods as various manifestations of

---

<sup>114</sup> Miguel León-Portilla, “¿Una nueva interpretación de los cantares mexicanos? La obra de John Bierhorst,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 1986): 129–44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1051996>.

<sup>115</sup> Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 191.

*Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>116</sup> Another example, according to Latin American professor Alejandro Viveros, is when Pomar presents Texcoco as a “virtuous, monotheistic community” with *Tloque Nahuaque* as their one deity.<sup>117</sup> As a result, this text can be seen as a predecessor of Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s work from the earlier recording of Acolhua history but on a smaller scale.

The fourth example is *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, a sixteenth-century Náhuatl manuscript that describes the history of the Toltec tribe, the so-claimed “ancestor” tribe of the Aztecs, and Chichimec tribe from their migration of the legendary *Chicomoztoc* (Seven Caves) to the colonial era of 1544.<sup>118</sup> According to nineteenth-century German-Mexican anthropologist Paul Kirchhoff, who made the complete translation of *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* in 1972, states that this manuscript is also an invaluable record of the ancient Chichimeca city of *Cuauhtinchan* (House of the Eagle), the comparison with the Chichimeca calendar and Spaniard calendar, and other tribes such as a comprehensive list of the Moquiuxca governors that reigned for a few centuries.<sup>119</sup> The first instance in which *Tloque Nahuaque* is referenced is when the Toltec *tlamacazqui* (priest) Couenan begs for water for his people and its will to guide them to their future home, Tollan, in northern Mexico.<sup>120</sup> In this same passage, there is a significant reference to Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl but not as a deity; instead, as the man Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl but labeled as the *tlacatecolotl* (Owl-Man), a necromancer or witch, who answers on behalf of *Tloque*

---

<sup>116</sup> Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Pomar y Zurita: Pomar. Relación de Tezcoco : Zurita. Breve relación de los señores de la Nueva España : Varias relaciones antiguas : (Siglo XVI)*, vol. III, Nueva Colección de Documentos para la historia de Mexico (Mexico: F. Diaz de leon, 1891), 82.

<sup>117</sup> Amber L. Griffioen and Marius Backmann, *Pluralizing Philosophy’s Past: New Reflections in the History of Philosophy* (Cham, SWITZERLAND: Springer International Publishing AG, 2023), 236, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/harvard-ebooks/detail.action?docID=7218132>.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca* (México, D.F.: CISINAH, INAH, SEP, 1976).

<sup>119</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 11.

<sup>120</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 141.

*Nahuaque* and leads the Toltec tribe to Tollan.<sup>121</sup> The second reference is when the Toltecs petitioned *Tloque Nahuaque* to protect them from the Xochimilca tribe and make them lose the war against them.<sup>122</sup> As a result, I argue that Alva Ixtlilxochitl infers the importance of *Tloque Nahuaque* to the Toltec tribe and the emergence of Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as an influential and supernatural figure in Chichimeca history.

Despite this poetic and historical documentation of *Tloque Nahuaque* before Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, there is no archaeological evidence of any effigies or idols or even the temple where Nezahualcoyotl worshiped *Tloque Nahuaque* as described by Alva Ixtlilxóchitl.<sup>123</sup> The lack of religious iconography is a severe departure from one of the most common practices in Aztec religion: creating material iconography of the deities they worship, such as idols, masks, reliefs in caves, etc.<sup>124</sup> Thus, until further notice, the earliest references to *Tloque Nahuaque* that influenced Alva Ixtlilxóchitl to write *Historia de la nación chichimeca* are *Las Romances de las señoras*, *Cantores Mexicanas*, *Relación de la ciudad y Provincia de Tezcoco*, and *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*.

### Chronicling the History of the Acolhua Tribe

The primary purpose of writing *Historia de la nación chichimeca* was to chronicle the entry of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's ancestors, the Acolhua tribe, into the Basin of Mexico (modern-day Mexico City), their role in the Aztec Empire, and their perspective of the conquest of Mexico by Cortez. According to nineteenth-century Mexican archaeologist

---

<sup>121</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 141.

<sup>122</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 156.

<sup>123</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:751.

<sup>124</sup> Joel W. Palka, "Mesoamerican Warfare, Protecting Divinities, and Fortified Sanctuaries," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 79, no. 1 (March 1, 2023): 69–77, <https://doi.org/10.1086/723080>.

Alfredo Chavero, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was commissioned by the Viceroy of New Spain in 1608 to record the history of the Acolhua population in New Spain.<sup>125</sup> Although Alva Ixtlilxóchitl wrote other texts on this subject, Chavero and other scholars consider this work to be his most famous due to being the primary chronicler for the Acolhua tribe during pre-Hispanic Mexico, and especially the Acolhua subtribe known as the Texcocans.<sup>126</sup> In regards to our discussion, this text is arguably the most important due to Alva Ixtlilxóchitl providing a historical contextualization of *Tloque Nahuaque* by detailing how Nezahualcoyotl encountered this god, performing worship practices for this god, and excluding all other gods in favor of *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>127</sup>

Why would the Viceroy of New Spain choose Alva Ixtlilxóchitl to write this document? According to American historian John Frederick Schwaller, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was recognized for his ability to translate between the Spaniards and the Nahuatl populace and his connections to the Acolhua communities as a mestizo.<sup>128</sup> He was also regarded for his prestigious education at the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco, a renowned university in Nueva España that produced many significant scholars such as Sahagún and Bautista.<sup>129</sup> Despite his credentials, scholars such as Professor Jongsoo Lee

---

<sup>125</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:528.

<sup>126</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:5–6.

<sup>127</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:751–52.

<sup>128</sup> John Frederick Schwaller, “CHAPTER 2 The Brothers Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Bartolomé de Alva: Two ‘Native’ Intellectuals of Seventeenth-Century Mexico,” in *Indigenous Intellectuals*, ed. Gabriela Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis (Duke University Press, 2020), 48, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376743-005>.

<sup>129</sup> Aysha Pollnitz, “OLD WORDS AND THE NEW WORLD: LIBERAL EDUCATION AND THE FRANCISCANS IN NEW SPAIN, 1536–1601,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (December 2017): 123, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440117000068>.

from North Texas University criticized Alva Ixtlilxochitl's work as Europeanized from the proto-Christianity of *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>130</sup>

In contrast, I claim his efforts were successful because various scholars have cited his work throughout the centuries as a collection of Nahuatl history from the Acolhua perspective. One example of this importance was eighteenth-century Mexican Jesuit historian Francisco Javier Clavijero's claim that Alva Ixtlilxochitl, as a "Noble Indio" (Indian Noble), wrote some erudite and appreciable works that were used in Clavijero's major work *La Historia Antigua de Mexico* (1780), one of the earliest attempts to chronicle ancient Mexican history before the fall of the Aztec Empire.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, despite his misgivings, Lee conceded that Alva Ixtlilxochitl provides the most detailed account of Nezahualcoyotl out of all colonial chronicles.<sup>132</sup> Regardless of the future controversy with *Tloque Nahuaque*, the main reason Alva Ixtlilxochitl wrote *Historia de la nación chichimeca* was to record the history of the Acolhua tribe and his ancestor Nezahualcoyotl due to being chosen as a veritable Mestizo scholar, whose work has been indispensable to our understanding of the Acolhua tribe and Nezahualcoyotl.

#### Nezahualcoyotl: Potential Mesoamerican Monotheist

Regardless of the authors' mindset or source material, many scholars agree that the primary historical figure associated with this monotheistic tendency is

---

<sup>130</sup> Jongsoo Lee and Galen Brokaw, *Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and His Legacy* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 3, [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/208/edited\\_volume/book/44851](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/208/edited_volume/book/44851).

<sup>131</sup> Francisco Xavier Clavijero, "Historia antigua de Mejico, sacada de los mejores historiadores españoles, y de manuscritos y pinturas antiguas de los indios. Dividida en diez libros, adornada de cartas geográficas y litografías, con disertaciones sobre la tierra, animales y habitantes de Méjico," 1853, IV–V, <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/historia-antigua-de-mejico-sacada-de-los-mejores-historiadores-espanoles-y-de-manuscritos-y-pinturas-antiguas-de-los-indios-dividida-en-diez-libros-adornada-de-cartas-geograficas-986136/>.

<sup>132</sup> Lee and Brokaw, *Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and His Legacy*, 3.

Nezahualcoyotl (1402-1472 AD).<sup>133</sup> Alva Ixtlilxóchitl describes his ancestor in a favorable light in various ways to depict him as a noble king. According to Schwaller, Ixtlilxóchitl compares this treatment to a similar treatise of the Persian King Cyrus by the Greek historian and warrior Xenophon in which he depicts Cyrus as a good and noble king; to this end, Ixtlilxóchitl endeavored to do the same for Nezahualcoyotl.<sup>134</sup> For example, it was recorded that Nezahualcoyotl was renowned for being a just ruler who created a strict but fair code of laws (not unlike the Code of Hammurabi).<sup>135</sup> Also, he was credited with being an engineer for constructing his palace in Texcoco, the Chapultepec aqueduct, and the botanical garden of Texcotzingo.<sup>136</sup> Lastly, as a leader, he expanded the Aztec Empire by conquering smaller *altepeme*, restructured the division of power by creating the *huey tlatoani* (emperor) position, and reduced Tepaneca power due to making mischief during his reign.<sup>137</sup>

Despite the favorable description, Alva Ixtlilxochitl also describes him as a proto-Christian monotheist after his encounter with *Tloque Nahuaque*, which changed his religious stance from adhering to the polytheistic Aztec religion.<sup>138</sup> Alva Ixtlilxóchitl recalls this account of *Tloque Nahuaque* coming to Nezahuacoyotl in a dream in which if he served this god for the rest of his days, he would be guaranteed victory in the battle for Chalca, peace, and prosperity for his kingdom.<sup>139</sup> Additionally, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl claimed

---

<sup>133</sup> Jongsoo Lee, *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl: Pre-Hispanic History, Religion, and Nahua Poetics* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 193, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/169/monograph/book/6188>.

<sup>134</sup> Schwaller, "CHAPTER 2 The Brothers Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Bartolomé de Alva," 48.

<sup>135</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, vol. 1, chap. XXXVIII.

<sup>136</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:767.

<sup>137</sup> Evans, *Ancient Mexico & Central America*, 484.

<sup>138</sup> Peter B. Villella, "The Last Acolhua: Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Elite Native Historiography in Early New Spain," *Colonial Latin American Review* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2013.877249>.

<sup>139</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:749.

that Nezahualcoyotl spoke prophecies from speaking of things to come to the regent of his successor Nezahualpilli, reassuring him that all items are in the hand of God.<sup>140</sup> This last claim suggests that Nezahualcoyotl performed the functions of a priest-king by direct interaction with a god via dreams and ruling Texcoco through prophecies.

In academia, combining both the favorable and monotheistic descriptions of Nezahualcoyotl led some scholars to view him as an Aztec “King David” due to characteristics he shared with King David, i.e., the devoted poet-warrior king who reigns with justice and mercy and spoke prophecies.<sup>141</sup> This comparison has been criticized as a Europeanized account of the near-identical comparison between King David and Nezahualcoyotl. Thus, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl portrayed Nezahualcoyotl as a Davidic warrior-poet monotheist king who ruled with justice and mercy and prophesied of things to come according to the will of his only god, *Tloque Nahuaque*.

#### Core Beliefs and Practices

The core beliefs and worship practices for deifying *Tloque Nahuaque* share similarities and differences with the Mesoamerican cosmovision that traditional Aztec religion follows. One similarity is the usage of various names attributed to this deity. Recall that an essential aspect of Mesoamerican cosmovision is that the names often carry their control over physical elements and spiritual realms beyond the physical plane. This god has many other Nahuatl names, such as *dador de vida* (Life Giver) or “He who paints things with beauty” within Nahuatl poetry due to its role in giving life and

---

<sup>140</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:759.

<sup>141</sup> “Nezahualcoyotl, the King David of Mexico,” *The Christian Statesman*, May 21, 1885, Nineteenth Century Collections Online, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/YLMIPPE355806169/NCCO?sid=bookmark-NCCO&xid=b6826fd5>.



beauty.<sup>142</sup> Lastly, as mentioned previously, *Tloque Nahuaque* translates to “The Ever Present, the Ever Near,” emphasizing this deity’s omnipresence and omniscience. Additionally, Bierhorst argued that the various names that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl attributed to *Tloque Nahuaque* were used before as references to Tezcatlipoca in the *Florentine Codex*.<sup>143</sup> Recall Pomar’s explanation from a few past sections when he claimed that the Acolhuas viewed the rest of the Aztec pantheon, including their different titles and powers, as other manifestations of *Tloque Nahuaque*.

One difference is that, unlike many Aztec gods, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl reports that *Tloque Nahuaque* only needed offerings of poems and flowers instead of human sacrifices.<sup>144</sup> This depiction negates the traditional belief in *nextlahualiztli* due to the lack of replenishment of the divine energy of the gods through human sacrifices. This emphasis on beauty and life shows the focus of this deity on providing things to humanity instead of requiring things from society. In contrast, the worshiper must give offerings that glorify and reflect the beauty of *Tloque Nahuaque*. For example, in adoration of *Tloque Nahuaque*, Nezahualcoyotl offered flowers, incense, and songs while ignoring other deities after his promised victory in Chalca by *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>145</sup>

Another difference is that despite Alva Ixtlilxochitl's claim that a temple was built in honor of *Tloque Nahuaque*, no such evidence of a temple, idols, or any form of iconography is associated with this *Tloque Nahuaque* in any archaeological sites related to the Acolhuas.<sup>146</sup> This recording is a departure from Aztec religion and, in turn, from

---

<sup>142</sup> Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 137.

<sup>143</sup> Bierhorst, *Cantares Mexicanos*, 38–39.

<sup>144</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:752.

<sup>145</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:748–51.

<sup>146</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:751–52.

Mesoamerican cosmovision from the need for more material iconography for their deities. Still, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl also states that *Tloque Nahuaque* did not instruct Nezahualcoyotl to make specific effigies or other forms of iconography.<sup>147</sup> Thus, these core beliefs and practices recorded by Alva Ixtlilxochitl suggest a potential form of monotheism by Nezahualcoyotl deifying *Tloque Nahuaque* and ignoring all other gods after his victory in Chalca. Still, this recording of possible Aztec monotheism significantly differs from its different and more recent theorization: *Ometéotl* by Leon Portilla in *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes*.

#### Twentieth-century: León-Portilla's *Ometéotl*

##### Introduction

The second theory of monotheism, Leon-Portilla's *Ometéotl*, has various theories surrounding its importance in the Aztec pantheon, ranging from it being an actual deity to an abstract idea of duality in Aztec metaphysical philosophy. I first review the potential historical origin of *Ometéotl* in sixteenth-century Aztec mythology or twentieth-century scholarly theorization. For example, some scholars derive the name *Ometéotl* from the gods Ōmetēcuhtli and Ōmecihuātl, who are the creator gods in their residence of Ōmeyōcān, which is the highest heaven in Aztec mythology according to the *Florentine Codex*.<sup>148</sup> After, I will analyze the reasoning for León-Portilla for writing *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* to see how *Ometéotl* was conceptualized and why. Then,

---

<sup>147</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:751.

<sup>148</sup> Bernardino Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book VI: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy.*, vol. 6, 357, accessed August 3, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667851/>.

I will examine the worshippers of *Ometéotl*, the *Tlamatinime*, to know whether they existed and their roles in Aztec society. Lastly, I will scour the historical records and scholarly presentations on possible beliefs and core practices surrounding the worship of *Ometéotl*. In conclusion, we shall see the complexity of León-Portilla's theory of *Ometéotl* by understanding its historical origins, the foremost worshippers, and the beliefs and rituals surrounding this deity.

#### Potential Historical References to *Ometéotl* before León-Portilla

Like *Tloque Nahuaque*, *Ometéotl* has been potentially set up as a deity in sixteenth-century documents. Yet, unlike *Tloque Nahuaque*, *Ometéotl* was not found in books of poetry but interpreted in specific texts of academic studies of Aztec religion such as *The Florentine Codex* or poetic collections such as *Cantares Mexicanos*. León-Portilla conceived this theorization from *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* by deriving the name *Ometéotl* from the line “*ay ōmeteōtl ya tēyōcoyāni*” which he translates as “twin god, creator of humanity.”<sup>149</sup> Kirchhoff supports this translation by illustrating Garibay's translation in his footnotes, which says *el dios de la dualidad, Creador del hombre, Espejo que hace relucir las cosas* (god of the duality, creator of humanity, mirror that makes things shine).<sup>150</sup> León-Portilla surmises that the name of *Ometéotl* is from the combination of the gods *Ōmetēcuhtli* and *Ōmecihuātl*, who, according to Sahagún, are the creator gods that made humanity in their residence of *Ōmeyōcān*.<sup>151</sup> According to Aztec mythology, *Ōmeyōcān* is the highest heaven over the nine heavens and thirteen

---

<sup>149</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 166.

<sup>150</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 164.

<sup>151</sup> Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex. Book VI: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy.*, 6:357.

hells in the Aztec cosmos.<sup>152</sup> As such, León-Portilla theorizes that *Ometéotl* is the supreme god of all the gods in the cosmos.<sup>153</sup>

There are several evidentiary difficulties with León-Portilla's theory. First, the supposition of *Ometéotl* as a deity has caused much more controversy because of the lack of outright references to the god in any of the sixteenth-century texts. Second, Haly's attack on León-Portilla's translation of *Ometéotl* from the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* by interpreting "ay *ōmeteōtl*" as "juicy maguey deity" and interprets the passage from creating life to sharing joyful inebriation.<sup>154</sup> León-Portilla's counterargument was in his analysis of the *Anales de Cuauhtitlán*, to which he proposes that *Ometéotl* was secretly acknowledged and worshipped by the Aztec *tlamatinime*, or wise men, and the ordinary people worshipped the other various aspects of *Ometéotl* as gods.<sup>155</sup> This natural objection makes it challenging to prove *Ometéotl* as an actual deity due to referring to a few written sources with scarce references. Another consideration is the lack of material evidence of *Ometéotl* as a worshiped deity in the Aztec pantheon. Like *Tloque Nahuaque*, there has yet to be concrete evidence of any possible architecture, such as temples or effigies in all the referenced texts in honor of *Ometéotl*. Thus, the historical origins of *Ometéotl* are questionable at best due to being theorized from León Portilla's interpretation of specific texts and the lack of material iconography on archaeological sites.

---

<sup>152</sup> Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex. Book VI: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy.*, 6:357.

<sup>153</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 135.

<sup>154</sup> Haly, "Bare Bones," 276.

<sup>155</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 195.

## León-Portilla's Theorization on Nahuatl Philosophy

The main reason why León-Portilla wrote *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* was to expand our understanding of Aztec religious and philosophical thought. According to Mexican Catholic priest and historian Ángel María Garibay K., the mentor and former professor of León-Portilla, his focus was recreating Nahuatl philosophy for the academic community due to its lack of focus by philosophers and historians that were much occupied with other forms of philosophy and religions, such as Greek philosophy and theology.<sup>156</sup> For example, León-Portilla searched through various sources to illustrate the concept of duality and its significance to Aztec philosophy by their belief that the cosmos is substantiated by the power of opposing and equal dualities. The most common example of duality that he illustrates is the duality of man and woman and how they affect the Aztec cosmos by shaping the earth, reproduction, and adoration of the gods. Here, León-Portilla argues that the most potent conceptualization of duality is the supreme god *Ometéotl* and how it is manifested in various forms via various male and female deities that fashioned the cosmos and sustain it with the conflicting energies from various dualities, i.e., life and death, fire and water, male, and female.

However, despite the controversial conceptualization of *Ometéotl*, was he successful in expanding our understanding of Aztec philosophy? In the early 1960s, according to American anthropologist William T. Sanders, León-Portilla's work provided significant contributions to increasing our understanding of Aztec philosophy and its impact on their religion, such as an in-depth reconstruction of Aztec philosophy and the

---

<sup>156</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 14.

theorization of *Ometéotl* as the Aztec supreme deity.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, León-Portilla was recognized for his later contributions to Náhuatl studies and Aztec philosophy and awarded by several academic institutions, such as the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), for his contributions to Nahuatl philology, history, and philosophy, like receiving the Living Legend Award in 2013 from the U.S. Library of Congress for being the foremost expert on the subject.<sup>158</sup> Thus, regardless of the controversy of *Ometéotl*, León-Portilla's main reason for writing *La Filosofía Nahuatl en Sus Fuentes* (1959) was to increase our understanding of Nahuatl philosophy and religion, to which acclaimed scholars and institutions recognized his efforts as a pioneer in Mesoamerican anthropology and advancing our comprehension of the indigenous populace of Mexico.

#### The *Tlamatinime*: Potential Monotheistic Sect in Aztec Religion

According to León-Portilla, the main worshippers of *Ometéotl* were a collective of individuals throughout the Aztec Empire known as the *tlamatinime* (wise men). He proposes that they were wise men in Aztec society who preserved the ancient religious conceptualizations of their acclaimed ancestors, the Toltecs, and were presented with the secret knowledge that *Ometéotl* was the true god.<sup>159</sup> The primary source he relies upon for substantiating the *tlamatinime* is Book X of the *Florentine Codex*, in which Sahagún describes them as Aztec religious intellectuals and community leaders who provided

---

<sup>157</sup> William T. Sanders, review of *Review of Aztec Thought and Culture*, by Miguel Leon-Portilla, *American Antiquity* 31, no. 5 (1966): 759–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2694518>.

<sup>158</sup> “Miguel León-Portilla to Receive Living Legend Award at Celebration of Mexico, Dec. 12,” web page, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, accessed January 20, 2024, <https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-13-206/León-Portilla-to-be-named-living-legend/2013-11-20/>.

<sup>159</sup> León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, xlii.

sound wisdom, were guides to better living, and writers who recorded knowledge and history.<sup>160</sup>

Still, on the one hand, scholars such as Lee argue that the *tlamatinime* were European changes of the Aztec *tlamacazque* (priests).<sup>161</sup> This Europeanization of the *tlamacazque* by Sahagún raises inquiries concerning León-Portilla's usage of *tlamatinime* due to adapting this Europeanization of Aztec priests. For example, the Aztec *tlamacazque* were mediators between the spiritual and physical realms on behalf of the Aztec people.<sup>162</sup> Not even Alva Ixtlilxóchitl mentioned the *tlamatinime* worshipping *Tloque Nahuaque* with Nezahualcoyotl when describing the worship practices in the temple.<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, scholars such as American ethnohistorian Elizabeth Hill Boone argued in favor of Sahagún's usage of *tlamatinime*. She translates *tlamatini*, the root word of *tlamatinime*, as a gender-neutral word for a wise person and applies to women and men.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, despite the possible authentication of *tlamatinime* in academia, there are few references to them as worshippers of *Ometéotl* outside the theorizations of León-Portilla.

---

<sup>160</sup> Bernardino Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book X: The People, Their Virtues and Vices, and Other Nations.*, vol. 10, 21, accessed October 18, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667855/>.

<sup>161</sup> Jongsoo Lee, "The Europeanization of Prehispanic Tradition: Bernardino de Sahagún's Transformation of Aztec Priests (Tlamacazque) into Classical Wise Men (Tlamatinime)," *Colonial Latin American Review* 26, no. 3 (September 2017): 297–305, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2017.1350469>.

<sup>162</sup> Lee, "The Europeanization of Prehispanic Tradition," 304.

<sup>163</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:749–52.

<sup>164</sup> *Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes* (Duke University Press, 2014), sec. Foreward, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822376743>.

## Core Beliefs and Practices

Unlike *Tloque Nahuaque*, *Ometéotl* is shown to be aligned with Mesoamerican cosmovision due to its more Mesoamerican characteristics. Starting with León-Portilla's analysis of *Cantares Mexicanos*, *Ometéotl* embodies the translation of its name by creating the other gods as extensions of itself, establishing all of creation, and creating humanity.<sup>165</sup> As a reminder, per Leon-Portilla's translation, *Ometéotl* translates to *twin god, creator of humanity*. In the first action, León Portilla argues that *Ometéotl* is the only deity worshiped in the Aztec pantheon, and its duality is reflected through the various deities in the pantheon. León-Portilla uses the example of the sky deities *Citlalinicue* and *Citlallatónac* as *Ometéotl* performing both male and female roles when creating the stars and the sun.<sup>166</sup> For the second action, *Ometéotl* creates the universe through the various aspects of gods as the mother and father of all gods, which are extensions of himself to enact creation.<sup>167</sup> The final action of creating humanity was referenced by Sahagún when Aztec mothers told their children during bathing that they were created by the gods *Ōmetēcuhtli* and *Ōmecihuātl*, who were interpreted to be the female and male aspects of *Ometéotl*.<sup>168</sup>

A curious factor is León-Portilla's attributes to *Ometéotl*, such as omnipresence from the title *Tloque Nahuaque* or the "God of the Immediate Vicinity."<sup>169</sup> This is the same name that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl attributes to Nezahualcoyotl's god, which results in León-Portilla proposing Nezahualcoyotl is worshipping *Ometéotl* but under a different

---

<sup>165</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 137.

<sup>166</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 211.

<sup>167</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 137.

<sup>168</sup> Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex. Book VI: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy.*, 6:357.

<sup>169</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 211.



name.<sup>170</sup> Additionally, other powers he endows on *Ometéotl* through various titles of other gods, such as *Yohualli-ehécatl* (using Sahagún’s definition as “invisible and impalpable”) for Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl or even identifies another god as another identity of *Ometéotl* like *Xiuhtecuhtli* (Lord of time and fire).<sup>171</sup> From these first two paragraphs, we see that León-Portilla is referring back to the Mesoamerican principle in which whenever a deity is named, they assume control of the physical elements and physical domain that specific name is associated with.

Yet, unlike with *Tloque Nahuaque*, there are no exact differences in the practices of worshiping *Ometéotl* and the other gods. For example, León-Portilla does not differentiate the worship of *Ometéotl* in the Aztec pantheon nor provide specific ritualistic practices for worshiping this deity. From this detail, we can infer that the practice of human sacrifice still applies to the worship of *Ometéotl*. Thus, although there are clearly defined beliefs, there are no exact differing practices in worship in León-Portilla’s theory on *Ometéotl*.

---

<sup>170</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 214–15.

<sup>171</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 221–25.

## Chapter IV.

### Analysis of *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl*

After analyzing *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* as theories, it is time to provide an in-depth analysis of the feasibility of both theories being potential forms of Aztec monotheism or whether they are the same theory.

#### Introduction

Despite both theories being potentially identified as monotheistic, there are several concerns about whether they are monotheistic religions or something else entirely. Recall that our first theory is Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's *Tloque Nahuaque* as the singular god to Nezahualcoyotl (1402-1472 AD) in his work *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (1608 AD) and our second theory is Miguel León-Portilla's *Ometéotl* as the transcendental singular god of the Aztecs with various forms in his work *La filosofía náhuatl: estudiada en sus fuentes* (1956). To address the problems for each theory, I have divided the chapter into two sections to address each theory individually. Despite the different approaches, the model for analyzing each theory will consist of the following steps. I will first identify what form of monotheism each theory proposes according to the currently recognized spectrum of monotheism in academia. Determining the form of monotheism will provide a better illustration of how monotheism can be identified within the textual evidence for either theory. Second, I address the most pressing concerns of each theory and their singular impacts on each monotheistic theory. Addressing these concerns will provide a better perspective on how each theory stands to be criticized and whether or not there are sufficient counterarguments to defend each theory. Some

examples of concerns include mutual concerns about the Europeanization of Aztec beliefs by the theorizers or singular problems such as the advancement of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's tribe through *Historia de la nación chichemeca* to secure better treatment by the Spaniards. Lastly, I will summarize the analysis of each theory and the conclusions from each study. Ultimately, this chapter will answer whether or not *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* are separate theories or better understood as one theory for Aztec monotheism.

### Breaking down *Tloque Nahuaque*

#### Reflecting the Sixteenth-century Spaniard Perspective on Mesoamerican Religion

To better understand Alva Ixtlilxochitl's *Tloque Nahuaque*, I argue that in Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's time, the sixteenth-century Spaniards' perspective of religion was an exclusivist monotheistic interpretation. For example, the Spaniards referred to the Aztecs' gods as "devils" when Cortes and his conquistadors met Moctezuma II in the Templo Mayor and requested a cross to replace the idols of *Huitzilopochtli* and *Tlaloc*.<sup>172</sup> Their belief in other gods as devils stems from the First and Second Commandments, which state that there shall be no images of God nor worship of any other gods but Him.<sup>173</sup> Although Alva Ixtlilxóchitl wrote about *Tloque Nahuaque* in *La Historia de la Nación Chichemeca* before he died in 1650, the Spaniards still used their military and political

---

<sup>172</sup> Díaz del Castillo and Carrasco, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, 178–79.

<sup>173</sup> C. I. Scofield and Doris W. Ridders, eds., *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, Red letter ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), v. Exodus 20:1-6.

power to replace the “polytheistic” indigenous religion with Christianity after successfully colonizing the Americas.

They achieved this goal through various methods. One method was using *corregidores de Indios* (Indian judges) to limit the indigenous populace's activities in pagan worship by outlawing the worship of their religion and forcefully converting natives to Catholicism.<sup>174</sup> Another method was the continual efforts of Spanish priests and missionaries to convert the indigenous populace to Christianity, such as teaching sermons in Náhuatl.<sup>175</sup> A final method was educating the Nahua populace in European liberal arts and Christian theology, including translating the Bible into the various languages of Nueva España, i.e., Náhuatl, Spanish, and other indigenous languages, and framing Náhuatl into the Latin alphabet.<sup>176</sup> As a result of their efforts, the Spaniards changed the course of history from their exclusivist monotheistic perspective on religion, which resulted in various actions to eradicate all traces of Mesoamerican religion from their colonies and forcefully convert the indigenous populaces to their exclusivist monotheistic interpretation of religion.

#### Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's Exclusive Monotheism

From this theorization of the sixteenth-century Spaniards' perspective, I argue that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's presentation of *Tloque Nahuaque* reflects the sixteenth-century exclusivist monotheistic perspective of the Spaniards for the following reasons. First,

---

<sup>174</sup> J. H. (John Horace) Parry and Robert G. Keith, *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Books : Hector & Rose, 1984), sec. The Licenciate Castro's ordinances for the *corregidores de indios*.

<sup>175</sup> Mark Z. Christensen, “The Use of Nahuatl in Evangelization and the Ministry of Sebastian,” *Ethnohistory* 59, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 691–92, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-1642716>.

<sup>176</sup> Dries De Crom, “Alfonso de Castro on Vernacular Bible Translation and Christian Education,” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 7, no. 1 (May 27, 2020): 72, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jemc-2020-2018>.

Nezahualcoyotl is recorded as worshipping Tloque Nahuaque and ignoring other deities after his promised victory in Chalca by *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>177</sup> From a Spaniard perspective, Nezahualcoyotl follows the First Commandment, which states that no other gods exist before God. Second, the various names and titles that were attributed to *Tloque Nahuaque*, such as *dador de vida* “Life Giver” or *Moyocoyatzin* “Self-Maker,” identify the unlimited powers that *Tloque Nahuaque* possesses, i.e., omnipotence or omnipresence. This belief is similar to Christianity because the Spaniards recognize Jesus with names and titles that display his power, i.e., Lord, Lamb of God, Prince of Peace, Immanuel, Savior, and Redeemer. Third, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl records the lack of effigies to *Tloque Nahuaque* to claim that *Tloque Nahuaque*, as the *Dios Incognito*, is invisible to human eyes and cannot be represented in physical form. From this claim, the Spaniards could see similarities with the apostle Paul’s argument for Christianity on the Areopagus with the Unknown God in Acts 17:23.<sup>178</sup> Lastly, the offering of incense, flowers, and song to *Tloque Nahuaque* is arguably similar to the burnt offerings and free will offerings of praise and thanksgiving given to God by the Israelites in the Old Testament.<sup>179</sup>

However, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl wrote that despite this belief in this one God, Nezahualcoyotl allowed human sacrifices to other Aztec deities but did not attend the rituals himself.<sup>180</sup> This action enables the possibility of monolatry by the sole worship of one deity but not disregarding the existence of multiple gods. Still, according to Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, Nezahualcoyotl did say to his sons before he died in 1472 AD, most notably his successor Nezahualpilli, that they were only to worship Tloque Nahuaque and not

---

<sup>177</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:748–51.

<sup>178</sup> Scofield and Ridders, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. Acts 17:23.

<sup>179</sup> Scofield and Ridders, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. Psalms 40:6-8.

<sup>180</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:750.

worship any other gods.<sup>181</sup> Once more, Spaniards would see a parallel via King David's command to his successor, King Solomon, to honor the Lord your God before his death.<sup>182</sup> These final words potentially denote a continual devotion to *Tloque Nahuaque* from his request for his sons to continue his monotheistic religion.

Yet, a final objection would be, despite recording these beliefs, why doesn't Alva Ixtlilxóchitl theorize Nezahualcoyotl's religion more explicitly? Recall that his original purpose was to chronicle the history of his ancestor Nezahualcoyotl and his tribe, the Acolhuas, not propose a specific religion. Also, remember that the term "monotheism" was not coined in the common vernacular of early modern European language until 1660 by More. Thus, despite Nezahualcoyotl permitting human sacrifices during his reign, I argue that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was proposing an Aztec exclusivist monotheistic religion of *Tloque Nahuaque* being the invisible, omnipotent, and omniscient deity with multiple names that is worshiped through offerings of psalms and flowers.

#### Europeanization of *Tloque Nahuaque* and Nezahualcoyotl

Various 20<sup>th</sup> and twenty-first-century scholars argue that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was Europeanizing *Tloque Nahuaque* and Nezahualcoyotl to gain political favor for himself. Recall that in our exploration of the sixteenth-century Spaniard mindset of religion, they outright nearly exterminated all traces of the Aztec religion due to being an offense to God and would forcefully convert or kill any indigenous believers in their religion. Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was in a position of power to change this for the Acolhua tribe because he

---

<sup>181</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:766.

<sup>182</sup> Scofield and Rikers, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. First Kings 2:1-4.

was a noble in the Acolhua tribe due to being a direct descendant of Nezahualcoyotl.<sup>183</sup> Regardless of his status of Acolhua descent, he also had to show proof of his Spaniard descent because the Spaniards used their casta (caste) to control their colonies, a racial caste system in which social advancement was primarily based on their blood ties to Spaniards.<sup>184</sup> As a mestizo, he worked for decades to have the Spanish court in Nueva España legitimize his status in their colonial society through various occupations, such as acting as a translator between the Spanish colonial court and the indigenous populace.<sup>185</sup> By proving his lineage was noble, prestigious, and possessing a religious likeness to Christianity, it could curry Spanish favor via special privileges and less persecution as a “pagan heathen” for the tribe itself or their descendants like Alva Ixtlilxóchitl.<sup>186</sup>

American historian Peter B. Villela argued that this agenda was previously advanced by Pomar, who wrote *Los Romances de los señores de Nueva España* and the predecessor of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, through his work, *Relacion de Tezcoco* (1583), for promoting Acolhua religious superiority and proposing Nezahualcoyotl was a proto-Christian monotheist.<sup>187</sup> Second, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl declares that Pomar was a significant influence in his work due to being a source of information about the Acolhua tribe and Nezahualcoyotl.<sup>188</sup> Third, Mexican historian Miguel Carrera Stampa noted how Alva

---

<sup>183</sup> Clementina Battcock and Jhonnatan Zavala, “Las disputas por las memorias de la conquista: la crónica de Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl,” *Memoria Americana. Cuadernos de Etnohistoria* 30, no. 1 (June 27, 2022): 61, <https://doi.org/10.34096/mace.v30i1.10387>.

<sup>184</sup> Carlos Federico Campos, “LOS CRIOLLOS NOVOHISPANOS FRENTE A LA TEORÍA DE LA DEGENERACIÓN: DE LA APOLOGÉTICA A LA REIVINDICACIÓN,” *Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, En-claves del pensamiento*, 11, no. 21 (2017): 18–22, <https://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/enclav/v11n21/1870-879X-enclav-11-21-00015.pdf>.

<sup>185</sup> Schwaller, “CHAPTER 2 The Brothers Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Bartolomé de Alva,” 48.

<sup>186</sup> Galen Brokaw and Jongsoo Lee, *Texcoco: Prehispanic and Colonial Perspectives* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014), chap. 10: Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Texcocan Dynasty, [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/173/edited\\_volume/book/31173](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/173/edited_volume/book/31173).

<sup>187</sup> Villella, “The Last Acolhua,” 13.

<sup>188</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:768–69.

Ixtlilxóchitl glorifies his ancestors and their role in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, which would lead him to state that it needs to be compared to other sources for a more veritable account.<sup>189</sup> Fourth, Mexican scholar Hector Costilla Martinez proposes that the transformation of Nezahualcoyotl as an Aztec King David aids in this legitimization due to establishing a noble legacy filled with just and fair rulers overseeing the indigenous population's ruling while being submissive to Spanish authority.<sup>190</sup> Thus, at a glance, the evidence and interpretation of the evidence paint a specific portrait that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl is primarily recognized as a mestizo historian who Europeanized his ancestry and recorded a proto-Christian monotheistic religion in his account to gain favor in the Spanish court.

#### A Native Chronicler or a Mestizo Writer?

There has been some dispute about the ethno-racial identity of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl as a native chronicler or a mestizo writer, which would put into question the purpose of the Europeanization of his record and potentially reaffirm the historical authenticity of his account. For the last few centuries, the historical identification of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl as a native chronicler or a mestizo writer has been disputed due to ascertaining his writings' purpose. For example, twenty-first-century Canadian historian Jason Dyck highlights this tension by questioning the scholarship on Alva Ixtlilxóchitl from the scholarly confusion of his ethno-racial identity as either a “Native Chronicler” or a “Mestizo writer.”<sup>191</sup> On

---

<sup>189</sup> Stampa, “Historiadores indígenas y mestizos novohispanos. Siglos XVI - XVII.,” 229.

<sup>190</sup> Hector Costilla Martinez, “La reinvenion de Nezahualcoyotl desde el discurso juridico en Historia de la nacion chichimeca de Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl,” *EHumanista* 33, no. Regular (2016): 425–36, [https://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.span.d7\\_eh/files/sitefiles/ehumanista/volume33/10%20ehum33.costilla.pdf](https://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.span.d7_eh/files/sitefiles/ehumanista/volume33/10%20ehum33.costilla.pdf).

<sup>191</sup> Jason Dyck, “Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and the Mexican Archive,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 18, no. 1 (2017): para. 5, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/655212>.



the one hand, as in the portrait in the last paragraph, scholars like Villela and Martinez view Alva Ixtlilxóchitl as a mestizo writer using his historical record of his ancestors to bolster his political status. On the other hand, American history professor Camilla Townsend noted how other scholars, such as Mexican historian Edmundo O’Gorman and British historian David Brading, have shown Alva Ixtlilxóchitl’s ethno-racial identity as more Indigenous with a Spaniard touch in his bloodline that advanced the new Mexican identity from the *mestizaje* (mixing) of Indian and Spaniard identities.<sup>192</sup> Yet, anthropology professor Gordon Whitaker proposes that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was a Castizo (son of a Spaniard father and Mestizo mother) but was torn between his Spanish and indigenous identities.<sup>193</sup> For instance, he argues that although Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was legally recognized as a Spaniard and viewed himself as a Spaniard, he still worked to correct the distortions of the views of his fellow Spaniards by presenting what he believed to be the accurate and truthful account of his ancestor Nezahualcoyotl and his tribe the Acolhua.<sup>194</sup>

This juxtaposition of his Spaniard and Acolhua identities suggests if there is a European coloring to his writings, especially in his portrayal of *Tloque Nahuaque* and Nezahualcoyotl, it can be attributed to appeasing his Spaniard identity while writing historical works for recording his indigenous ancestry. Amber Brian argues that Alva Ixtlilxochitl used European historiographical models and native knowledge of Prehispanic and Colonial Mexican history to establish himself as a veritable historian and

---

<sup>192</sup> Camilla Townsend, “Introduction: The Evolution of Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Scholarly Life,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2013.877248>.

<sup>193</sup> Lee and Brokaw, *Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and His Legacy*, 65.

<sup>194</sup> Lee and Brokaw, *Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and His Legacy*, 65–66.

write his works on Nahuatl history.<sup>195</sup> It is important to remember that Alva Ixtlilxochitl was chosen to write *La Historia de La Nacion Chichimeca* due to his efforts in the community between the Spaniards and the Nahua populace and for being an erudite scholar from the prestigious Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco. Furthermore, although Spaniard monks translated Christianity into Nahuatl and recorded various aspects of Aztec society, the Europeanization of Aztec society and its religion to fit European understanding of Aztec society is not surprising.

Recall our example of Lee arguing that Sahagún is accused of using the term *tlamatinime* (wise men) as a Europeanization of the Aztec *tlamacazque* (priest). The main difference between Sahagún and Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was Sahagún's purely European perspective of analyzing a colonized civilization, whereas Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's hybrid perspective of balancing the Spaniard lifestyle and his Texcocan heritage. As a result, despite the Europeanization of *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Nezahualcoyotl*, it is possible to suggest that his historical records written about *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Nezahualcoyotl* are accurate due to noting the European historiographical models and the native knowledge used in his account as a Castizo scholar of the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco. According to Andrew Laird, professor of Hispanic Studies at Brown University, this education is also reflected in Alva Ixtlilxochitl's knowledge of the Bible and Ancient Greek history, i.e., Xenophon's account of King Cyrus and usage of Platonic philosophy to argue for a Christianized version of Aztec cosmology.<sup>196</sup> Still, since *Tloque Nahuaque*

---

<sup>195</sup> Amber Brian, *Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Native Archive and the Circulation of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016), 107, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/167/monograph/book/46880>.

<sup>196</sup> Andrew Laird, "6 Universal History and New Spain's Indian Past: Classical Knowledge in Nahua Chronicles," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 37, no. S1 (2018): 89–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.12792>.

was dressed in European clothing, what would the original form of this Mesoamerican monotheism look like, and where would it have originated from if not from Alva Ixtlilxóchitl?

#### Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's Preservation of *Ometéotl* in *Tloque Nahuaque*

As mentioned previously, it is arguable that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl dressed *Tloque Nahuaque* and Nezahualcoyotl with Europeanization due to Europeans not understanding Mesoamerican monotheism without it. According to Japanese professor Yukitaka Inoue, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and Pomar's identification of *Tloque Nahuaque*, or as Inoue calls the "Mesoamerican supreme god," with the Christian God was to help their European readers understand Aztec religion while illustrating this cult's existence within Aztec belief.<sup>197</sup>

For example, Inoue points out that in Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's account, the faith in *Tloque Nahuaque* was ancient teaching from the legendary *hombre-dios* (Man-God) Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl, who is portrayed as a Christ-like bearded white man who preached the gospel to the Olmecs and Xicalanca tribes before going to another part of the world, promising his return after the end of the fourth age.<sup>198</sup> According to Carrasco, a *hombre-dios* is especially important to the Mesoamericans because the term means any individual possessed with potent amounts or qualities of divine essence and could become a famous warrior, poet, etc.<sup>199</sup> The *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* proposes the Mesoamerican form of *hombre-dios* by labeling Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl the *tlacatecolotl* (Owl-Man) and recording how he spoke on behalf of *Tloque Nahuaque* led the Toltec tribe to Tollan, and

---

<sup>197</sup> Yukitaka, "Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México," 209.

<sup>198</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:20–21.

<sup>199</sup> Díaz del Castillo and Carrasco, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, 470.

ruled for many years before he left.<sup>200</sup> Regardless of Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl being recognized as the *hombre-dios* or *tlacatecolotl*, many scholars found that various tribes universally acknowledged the legendarium of Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl, which led to the Aztecs identifying Cortes as Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl from possessing his facial characteristics and by specific omens and sacred dates that predicted the Spaniards' arrival to Mexico in 1519.<sup>201</sup>

Initially, as many scholars proposed beforehand, Inoue does note that both Pomar and Alva Ixtlilxóchitl used their writings to boost their social status in Nueva España to survive.<sup>202</sup> However, he argues for the historical accuracy of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's account by claiming that he played an active role in the historical discourse of the Prehispanic era by preserving the Mesoamerican cult of *Ometéotl* in the Europeanized *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>203</sup> This claim means that he is reasserting León-Portilla's earlier claim that *Ometéotl* and *Tloque Nahuaque* are the same deity from their identical names and how the names demonstrate the philosophical concept of duality in Aztec religion.<sup>204</sup> Like León-Portilla, he points out the usage of the name *Tloque Nahuaque* by Alva Ixtlilxóchitl as another description of *Ometéotl*. Furthermore, Inoue's extension of León-Portilla's footnote of synthesizing *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* together is a promising enterprise by illustrating potential Mesoamerican monotheism through the

---

<sup>200</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 141.

<sup>201</sup> Díaz del Castillo and Carrasco, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*, 470–71.

<sup>202</sup> Yunitaka, "Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México," 221.

<sup>203</sup> Yunitaka, "Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México," 221.

<sup>204</sup> Yunitaka, "Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México," 215.

transculturation of Aztec monotheism (*Ometéotl*) into European monotheism (*Tloque Nahuaque*).

Since León-Portilla and Inoue proposed that *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* were the same, I expand this theory by exploring how Alva Ixtlilxóchitl transcultured *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* for decolonizing monotheistic phenomena from a Mesoamerican perspective. This exploration includes a deeper discussion of transculturation, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's usage of Christianity to preserve Mesoamerican religious concepts, a theorized recreation of the original cult of *Ometéotl*, and addressing any objections. Yet, before exploring this possible synthesis, it is vital to explore all the facets of *Ometéotl* and how they will mesh into this synthesis.

### Reanalyzing *Ometéotl*

#### Current Debate: León-Portilla's Monotheism versus Haly's Polytheism

As mentioned previously, León-Portilla challenged this dominant viewpoint on Aztec polytheism by conjecturing that the Aztecs worshiped only *Ometéotl*, and it appeared to the Spaniards as polytheism due to them honoring many aspects of this one deity as separate entities.<sup>205</sup> Also, León-Portilla says that *Ometéotl* embodies the metaphysical representation of duality via various forms with dual epithets such as “*Nuestra madre, nuestro padre/El Señor y la Señora de la dualidad* (Our father and our mother/The lord and lady of the duality).<sup>206</sup> Still, like *Tloque Nahuaque*, one of the major objections to *Ometéotl* was the comparison to Christianity by Haly's first rebuttal being

---

<sup>205</sup> León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, xlvi–xlvii.

<sup>206</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 237.

León-Portilla trying to create a “Christianized” God from Aztec philosophy to promote understanding of complex Aztec philosophical conceptions to contemporary Mesoamerican scholars.<sup>207</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, the second rebuttal was León-Portilla’s translation of *Ometéotl* from the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* by interpreting “*ay ōmeteōtl*” as “*juicy maguey deity*” and interprets the passage from creating life to sharing joyful inebriation.<sup>208</sup> Unfortunately, both rebuttals have raised enough controversy to discourage contemporary and future Mesoamerican anthropologists and historians from considering *Ometéotl* the only deity in Aztec religion.

#### Interpreting *Ometéotl* as an Inclusivist Monotheistic Deity

Nevertheless, in light of recent scholarship, Haly’s argument against this comparison is challenged when interpreting León-Portilla’s *Ometéotl* as an inclusive monotheistic deity. Using our example in the previous paragraph, we identified *Ometéotl* as the only Aztec deity and embodying duality via infinite dual forms in the Aztec cosmos.<sup>209</sup> This interpretation promotes greater decolonization of Aztec religious phenomena by expanding beyond the sixteenth-century exclusivist monotheistic mindset established by the Spaniards centuries prior. Furthermore, despite Haly’s attack on the comparison to Christianity, some religious scholars, such as Barbara Newman, consider Christianity an inclusivist monotheistic religion from the interpretation of the Holy Trinity in which God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons in one

---

<sup>207</sup> Haly, “Bare Bones,” 272.

<sup>208</sup> Haly, “Bare Bones,” 276.

<sup>209</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 237.

Godhead.<sup>210</sup> To this end, Haly's objection is negated by applying the concept of inclusive monotheism to the duality of *Ometéotl* and the Christian Holy Trinity.

However, why was *Ometéotl* not initially seen as an inclusivist monotheistic deity? I argue that in Leon-Portilla's time, inclusive monotheism was not yet conceptualized as an alternative form of monotheism. For example, he considered that *Ometéotl* was a form of Aztec pantheism but changed his mind when he conceptualized the implications of *Ometéotl* as the sole Mesoamerican transcendental God with various forms.<sup>211</sup> Despite this consideration, he compares the duality of *Ometeótl* to the Christian trinity from the sixteenth-century Spanish exclusivist monotheistic perspective on Aztec religion. This comparison weakened Leon-Portilla's argument for *Ometéotl* from lacking the structured framework to reinforce the decolonization of Aztec religion via the theorization of *Ometéotl* and any supporting comparison with other monotheistic religions. Thus, I propose that León-Portilla's theory on *Ometéotl* as an inclusivist monotheistic religion is best understood with a comparison with another inclusive monotheistic religion that predates Christianity by a few millennia: Zoroastrianism.

#### Decolonizing Monotheism: Comparing *Ometéotl* with Zoroastrianism

This comparison decolonizes the theory of *Ometéotl* by replacing the exclusive monotheistic comparison of sixteenth-century AD Christianity with the inclusive monotheistic comparison with 17th-15th century BC Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism is an inclusive monotheistic religion that shares more similarities with *Ometéotl* than

---

<sup>210</sup> Johannes P. Deetlefs, "Divine Attributes in a Trinitarian Key," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43, no. 1 (October 13, 2022): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2665>.

<sup>211</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 224.

Christianity due to three identical beliefs. First, Zoroastrianism and Aztec religion have a similar cosmology based on duality. Zoroastrianism is based on the duality of their deity Ahura Mazda and his evil counterpart Angra Mainyu, which permeates all things in equal opposition and harmony.<sup>212</sup> Similarly, *Ometéotl* embodies duality in all things in similar opposition and harmony, i.e., male and female or life and death. The theological difference between Zoroastrianism and *Ometéotl* is their conceptualization of duality by the Zoroastrian inclusion of objective morality in the duality of the cosmos, i.e., purity good and pollution bad. This inclusion differs from the Aztec conceptualization of amoral duality, i.e., life and death, male and female, clean and unclean as opposing forces in harmony. In stark contrast to Zoroastrianism and *Ometéotl*, as mentioned before, Christianity has a triune theology based on the Holy Trinity of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The second similarity is the worship of one deity in infinite forms. The Zoroastrian worship of the material and spiritual Yazatas (lower-tier entities) is seen as worshipping Ahura Mazda via honoring his creations.<sup>213</sup> According to German Zoroastrian scholar Almut Hintze, this worship of Yazatas included all the Iranian gods from the older Iranian polytheistic religion as creations/extensions of Ahura Mazda.<sup>214</sup> This belief is identical to León-Portilla's postulation of *Ometéotl* being worshiped in multiple forms via the deities in the Aztec pantheon as extensions of *Ometéotl* creating the universe, creating humanity, and sustaining the universe.<sup>215</sup> Unlike Zoroastrianism and *Ometéotl*,

---

<sup>212</sup> Ferrero, "From Polytheism to Monotheism," 84.

<sup>213</sup> Almut Hintze, "Monotheism the Zoroastrian Way," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, no. 2 (April 2014): 244, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186313000333>.

<sup>214</sup> Hintze, "Monotheism the Zoroastrian Way," 244.

<sup>215</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 137.



Christianity has specific manifestations of the Holy Trinity, i.e., fire, dove, etc., and excludes all other deities and lower-level entities.

Lastly, sanitation and ritual purity are essential to Zoroastrian and Aztec religions. Zoroastrians believed in maintaining one's purity and the overall cleanliness of the world, as Ahura Mazda's creation, to combat the weapons of Angra Mainyu, such as pollution or disease.<sup>216</sup> The Aztecs similarly upheld the sacredness of ritual purity and sanitation via every citizen bathing two or three times a day, recycling human waste for crops, and using steam bathhouses (*temascales*) ritual purity ceremonies to improve overall health and cleansing pregnant women after birth.<sup>217</sup> Once more, unlike Zoroastrianism and *Ometéotl*, Christianity does not possess specific purity rituals but stresses moral purity in everyday living.<sup>218</sup> In conclusion, this comparison reinforces León-Portilla's postulation of *Ometéotl* by noting similar beliefs in the worship of one deity, duality being the foundation of the cosmos, the inclusion of worship of other gods or entities as extensions of the sole deity, and the necessity of ritual purity and overall cleanliness.

#### Discussion on the word *Teotl*

Using the framework of inclusive monotheism, we can neutralize two objections of *Ometéotl* from León-Portilla's usage of the word "*teotl*" to signify "deity." This

---

<sup>216</sup> Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism," ProQuest, 1986, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1306222887?accountid=11311&parentSessionId=KDdBvFRDhrQP7X4t1SYsy4ZQxlf8z4Alfvk6XXaxq4I%3D&pq-origsite=primo&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals&imgSeq=4>.

<sup>217</sup> J. E. Becerril and B. Jiménez, "Potable Water and Sanitation in Tenochtitlan: Aztec Culture," *Water Science & Technology: Water Supply* 7, no. 1 (March 2007): 151–53, <https://doi.org/10.2166/ws.2007.017>.

<sup>218</sup> Moshe Blidstein, "Purity and Defilement," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Abrahamic Religions*, ed. Adam J. Silverstein and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford University Press, 2015), 11, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199697762.013.44>.

definition dates back to Sahagún's translation of the word in the *Florentine Codex*.<sup>219</sup> As I mentioned in the last chapter, León-Portilla drew on this concept when he devised “*Ometéotl*” to mean “two gods” from his translations of *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* to identify the Mesoamerican transcendental singular god. In contrast, the two objections define *teotl* in two ways: a monistic deity in a pantheistic religion and any entity representing a set of specific cultural criteria and meanings in Aztec society.

American professor James Maffie raises the first objection in his book *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (2005) that *Teotl* does not fit the description of León-Portilla's current description of *Ometéotl* because he postulates that *Teotl* is a monistic deity within a pantheistic religion in which all living and non-living things are parts of *Teotl*.<sup>220</sup> Maffie attacked León-Portilla's prior conceptualization of *Ometéotl* by arguing that no Mesoamerican supreme god or any deity in general exists, just different representations of *Teotl*. Still, unlike León-Portilla's usage of *teotl*, Maffie's supposition of *teotl* and its monistic deity position in an Aztec pantheism has yet to be expressively found in archaeological or textual evidence. Belgian philosopher Michel Weber notes that despite focusing on philosophical aspects of the text, he notes Maffie's lack of references to practices in Aztec religiosity or shamanism to reinforce his arguments.<sup>221</sup>

In contrast, translating *teotl* as a deity strengthens León-Portilla's postulation of *Ometéotl*. Recall that León-Portilla's *Ometéotl* was initially conceived as a pantheistic

---

<sup>219</sup> Molly H. Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 89–90, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/15/monograph/book/42718>.

<sup>220</sup> James Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014), chap. 2: Pantheism, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/173/monograph/book/29005>.

<sup>221</sup> Michel Weber, “A Process Interpretation of Aztec Metaphysics,” *Process Studies* 44, no. 1 (March 2015): 60–61, <https://doi.org/10.5840/process20154413>.

deity, much like Maffie's *teotl*. Still, León-Portilla perceived it better to conceptualize *Ometéotl* as the only deity in the Aztec religion from the interpretations of specific texts he found in his research on Nahua philosophy. As mentioned previously, *Ometéotl*'s actions include manifesting itself as various dual deities that created the universe, created humanity, and continually sustained the universe. Pantheism differs significantly from inclusive monotheism by the supposition of all nonliving and living things being God in infinite forms, whether the form is a tree or a human, versus the postulation in inclusive monotheism of a singular deity with endless forms but is an entity separate from nonliving and living things.<sup>222</sup> To this end, utilizing inclusive monotheism as a framework reinforces León-Portilla's *Ometéotl* by illustrating it as an inclusive monotheistic deity that actively participates in Aztec cosmology through various dual deities.

Molly H. Bassett raises the second objection in her book, *The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies* (2015), that there are no deities in Aztec religion, but rather *teotl* represents five specific criteria and cultural meanings.<sup>223</sup> These Nahua criteria and meanings include concepts such as *axcaitl* (possessions, property), *tonalli* (heat; day sign; fate, fortune, privilege, prerogative), or *tlazohca* (valuable, beloved).<sup>224</sup> Based on Bassett's argument, *Ometéotl*, or any deity in Aztec religion, would not be considered a *teotl* due to her claim that deities do not exist in Aztec belief. Any perceived "deities" only exist as representations of *axcaitl*, *tonalli* and *tlazohca* for conceptualizing naturalistic phenomena for Aztec religion. Regarding Bassett's theory, Maffie reviewed

---

<sup>222</sup> István Aranyosi, "Logical Pantheism," *Philosophy Compass* 17, no. 7 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12857>.

<sup>223</sup> Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, 127.

<sup>224</sup> Bassett, *The Fate of Earthly Things*, 127.

Bassett's book and questioned the "collective efficiency" of her requirements for *teotl* due to removing its agency, vitality, and power in Aztec religion.<sup>225</sup> Furthermore, American professor of Latin American history Leon Garcia-Garagarza noted a similar absence of the power and agency in *teotl* when he saw that Bassett did not refer to the concept of *tecuhтли* (Lord) when discussing *teotl* nor any reference to the ritual blood offerings in Aztec society that would have increased her understanding of the animacy in the Aztec *teteoh* (plural for *teotl*).<sup>226</sup>

These objections raised by Maffie and Garcia-Garagarza reinforce the inclusive monotheistic framework for Leon-Portilla's usage of *teotl* in *Ometéotl* for the following reasons. First, using *teotl* to define a deity would actualize *Ometéotl* as a deity that does not require to meet a specific set of criteria or cultural meanings to exist in Aztec religion. Second, referring to Garcia-Garagarza's illustration of *tecuhтли* (Lord), *Ometéotl* reigned over all living and nonliving things in the Aztec cosmos as the sole deity in Aztec religion. Third, referring to Maffie's recognition of the agency of *teotl*, but with the lens of inclusive monotheism, the key idea is that *Ometéotl* exercises its inherent agency to manifest itself in the forms of various dual deities to maintain the cosmos. Therefore, utilizing the inclusive monotheistic framework, Leon-Portilla's usage of *teotl* in *Ometéotl* asserts its agency and dominion as the sole deity in Aztec religion with multiple forms in various dual deities not bound by cultural meanings or criteria to existing.

---

<sup>225</sup> James Maffie, "The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies," *Colonial Latin American Review* 25, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 397, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2016.1237736>.

<sup>226</sup> León García Garagarza, "The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies," *Ethnohistory* 63, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 445–46, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-3455619>.

## The Nahua Philosophy of Duality

Now it is time to discuss one final objection to *Ometéotl*: whether it is the inclusive monotheistic supreme deity in Aztec religion or is only a god of duality. One concept that most scholars concur with is *Ometéotl* playing a significant role in Aztec metaphysical philosophy as the concept and deity of duality, in which all things were formed through and sustained by opposing and equal energies, usually expressed as male and female, in the universe.<sup>227</sup> For example, the duality of female and male is evident throughout the Aztec pantheon, such as the male and female deities *Citlalinicue* and *Citlallatónac* of creating the stars and the sun or the male and female deities of death, *Mictlāntēcutli*, and *Mictēcacihuātl*.<sup>228</sup>

Yet, scholars such as Colombian professor Juan Camilo Hernández Rodríguez perceive that *Ometéotl* is a god of duality but either as a transcendental pantheist deity or a henotheist deity.<sup>229</sup> Rodríguez compares *Ometéotl* as the “*concepto de Absoluto dual*” (concept of absolute dual) to the Yin and Yang philosophy in Daoism as intertwining within the fabric of the Aztec cosmos with opposing and equal forces to sustain the cosmos.<sup>230</sup> Taking this further, the scarce evidence to suggest otherwise was attacked by Polish associate professor Katarzyna Mikulska when she reviewed any textual evidence for *Ometéotl* in Nahuatl codices, such as the Codex Vaticanus A, where folio 1 shows a possible reference to *Ometéotl* by the name *Hometeule* written in the text.<sup>231</sup> She

---

<sup>227</sup> Juan Camilo Hernández Rodríguez, “El Ometeotl: la dualidad como fundamento metafísico trascendental,” *Perseitas* 7, no. 2 (June 21, 2019): 248–73, <https://doi.org/10.21501/23461780.3290>.

<sup>228</sup> León-Portilla, *La filosofía náhuatl*, 211.

<sup>229</sup> Hernández Rodríguez, “El Ometeotl,” 268.

<sup>230</sup> Hernández Rodríguez, “El Ometeotl,” 267.

<sup>231</sup> Katarzyna Mikulska, “Destronando a Ometeotl,” *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 31, no. 1–2 (2015): 60–62, <http://ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATL Ai5IE180813001872&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

concluded that if we continue to hold onto concepts such as *Ometéotl*, we may lose our understanding of Mesoamerican religious and philosophical phenomena such as duality.<sup>232</sup>

In contrast, Chinese assistant professor of comparative literature Zairong Xiang argues in his article, “The (De)coloniality of Conceptual Inequivalence: Reinterpreting *Ometéotl* through Nahua Tlacuiloliztli” (2016), that *Ometéotl* needs to be recognized as the Aztec transcendental supreme non-binary deity that switches genders and has no gender simultaneously.<sup>233</sup> He refers to the famous *Coatlicue Mayor* statue to show how this statue represents *Ometéotl*, pointing out the dual snake heads and top part of the body as showing the duality of *Ometéotl* and the rest of the body showing gender fluidity and no exact gender identification.<sup>234</sup> Unlike Rodriguez or Mikulska, Xiang aligns with León-Portilla by citing *Ometéotl* as the transcendental supreme deity that needs to be decolonized by understanding *Ometéotl* in Mesoamerican conceptualizations, such as perceiving *Ometéotl* on the *Coatlicue Mayor* through the Nahua pictorial writing called *tlacuilociztli*.<sup>235</sup> This proposed Aztec iconography for *Ometéotl* not only suggests that *Ometéotl* was the Mesoamerican supreme deity in the Aztec pantheon but also that they acknowledged *Ometéotl* as an actual deity that was given iconography for deification, albeit in another form: *Coatlicue*. Thus, by utilizing Xiang’s interpretation of current iconography, such as the *Coatlicue Mayor* statue, we could review the existing

---

<sup>232</sup> Mikulska, “Destronando a Ometeotl,” 100.

<sup>233</sup> Zairong Xiang, “The (De)Coloniality of Conceptual Inequivalence: Reinterpreting Ometeotl through Nahua Tlacuiloliztli,” *Decolonial Approaches to Latin American Literatures and Cultures*, 2016, 39, [https://www.academia.edu/24711174/The\\_De\\_Coloniality\\_of\\_Conceptual\\_Inequivalence\\_Reinterpreting\\_Ometeotl\\_within\\_Nahua\\_Tlacuiloliztli](https://www.academia.edu/24711174/The_De_Coloniality_of_Conceptual_Inequivalence_Reinterpreting_Ometeotl_within_Nahua_Tlacuiloliztli).

<sup>234</sup> Xiang, “The (De)Coloniality of Conceptual Inequivalence,” 47.

<sup>235</sup> Xiang, “The (De)Coloniality of Conceptual Inequivalence,” 50.

archaeological evidence for the potential representation of *Ometéotl* as the inclusive monotheistic Aztec deity.

### The Transculturation of *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque*

Now it is time to see how *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* are the same via the transculturation of *Ometéotl* into Christianity as *Tloque Nahuaque*.

### Analyzing the Framework of Transculturation

As mentioned in the introduction, Carrasco informed us that transculturation is when an indigenous populace picks specific elements of their culture and mixes them with aspects of the invasive culture to create new combinations.<sup>236</sup> In our case, we see the Mesoamericans as a collective culture doing this in tandem by reincorporating elements of their indigenous culture into the Spaniards' invasive culture at the time of their colonization. American Mesoamerican researcher Robert S. Carlsen expanded on transculturation by identifying three forms of transculturation: Resistance, Subversion, and Adaptation.<sup>237</sup>

Although they were listed as separate forms, these stages are chronological for this thesis. For example, the first stage is resistance, in which we see the Mesoamerican culture, as a whole, naturally resisted Spaniard colonization due to their invasive culture that sought to destroy Mesoamerican expression utterly and thought. Look no further than the Spaniard conquest of Mexico against the Aztec Empire, where the Aztec Empire

---

<sup>236</sup> Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 156.

<sup>237</sup> Robert S. Carlsen, "Transculturation," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures* (Oxford University Press, 2001), para. 3, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780195108156.001.0001/acref-9780195108156-e-671>.

turned against Cortes in 1520 AD before their eventual defeat in 1521 AD, and the Spaniards sought to eliminate all traces of their religion. The second stage, subversion, is when the indigenous population subverts the current cultural climate imposed by the invasive culture to their advantage. One great example of this is seen in the activity of women within the early centuries of Nueva España, such as Beatriz de Padilla, a Mulatta mistress and mother who manipulated the social standards that limited Spaniard women to her advantage by ensuring her social status and property rights were protected by Spanish law.<sup>238</sup> Like Carrasco's definition, the third and final stage is adaptation, in which the Aztecs pick specific cultural elements and mix them with aspects of the Spanish culture to create new combinations.<sup>239</sup>

For this thesis, I am using the framework of adaptive transculturation to analyze Alva Ixtlilxochitl's transculturation of *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* for the following reasons. First, throughout all the texts, there is little evidence to suggest resistive transculturation. Second, although evidence suggests subversive transculturation, adaptive transculturation is more appropriate due to the adaptation of Christian theology and doctrine to *Ometéotl* instead of the subversion of Christian theology and doctrine. Thus, I argue that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl used transculturation to hide the belief of *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque*. Before reconstructing *Ometéotl* as the original inclusive monotheistic deity, we must discuss an earlier attempt at tracking Alva Ixtlilxochitl's transculturation of *Tloque Nahuaque*.

---

<sup>238</sup> Solange Alberro, "Beatriz de Padilla: Mistress and Mother," in *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), 247–56, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520343047-017>.

<sup>239</sup> Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 156.



## Baudot's Efforts in Illustrating Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's Transculturation

In 1992, French anthropologist Georges Baudot investigated Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's transculturation of *Tloque Nahuaque* into Christianity to illustrate the adaptation of Christian theology to Aztec religion. In his article, SENTIDO DE LA LITERATURA HISTÓRICA PARA LA TRANSCULTURACIÓN EN EL MÉXICO DEL SIGLO XVII: FERNANDO DE ALVA IXTLILXÓCHITL, he investigates all the historical texts written by Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and observes two transculturations of Aztec religion. The first one was the humanization of Quetzalcoatl.<sup>240</sup> For example, he identifies Quetzalcoatl as Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the famed ruler of the Toltecs in Tollan, who spoke for *Tloque Nahuaque* to the Toltecs and became worshiped as a god before leaving.<sup>241</sup> The second way is the adaptation of *Tloque Nahuaque* into Jesus Christ with the following epithets: *Jesu Cristo Ipalnemoani ~ Tloque Nahuaque (Jesus Christ, the Giver of Life, O Present O Ever Near)* or *Ipalnemoani in yohuaui in ehecatl* (the Giver of Life, who is the night, who is the wind).<sup>242</sup> From Carlsen's categorization, this is an early example of identifying Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's adaptive transculturation throughout all of his works.

However, Baudot's approach was too narrow for the following reasons. First, he did not make the connection of *Ometéotl* as the original Mesoamerican form of *Tloque Nahuaque*. He only referred to *Tloque Nahuaque* as one of the names of *Ometéotl* but not

---

<sup>240</sup> Georges Baudot, "Sentido De La Literatura Histórica Para La Transculturación En El México Del Siglo Xvii: Fernando De Alva Ixtlilxóchitl," in *Reflexiones Lingüísticas y Literarias*, ed. Rafael Olea Franco and James Valender, 1st ed., vol. 26, Volumen II : Literatura (El Colegio de Mexico, 1992), 127, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv47wf58.10>.

<sup>241</sup> Baudot, "Sentido De La Literatura Histórica Para La Transculturación En El México Del Siglo Xvii," 127.

<sup>242</sup> Baudot, "Sentido De La Literatura Histórica Para La Transculturación En El México Del Siglo Xvii," 131.

as *Ometéotl* itself.<sup>243</sup> Second, he does not identify Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as the *tlacatecolotl* (Owl-Man), the Mesoamerican version of the *hombre-dios*. Lastly, he does not make the connection of Nezahualcoyotl as a worshiper of *Tloque Nahuaque* during his reign. Thus, I use Baudot's example as a road map for expanding Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's transculturation of *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque*.

### *Ometéotl* as the Original Mesoamerican Monotheistic Deity

As theorized by León-Portilla, *Ometéotl* was the original Mesoamerican monotheistic deity before being converted into *Tloque Nahuaque* by Alva Ixtlilxóchitl centuries prior.<sup>244</sup> To reconstruct this original deity, I shall incorporate the following results from my prior discussions on *Ometéotl*. First, I restate my earlier proposition of *Ometéotl* as the Mesoamerican inclusivist monotheistic deity that created and sustained the cosmos with dualistic properties, i.e., male and female extensions of deities such as the god and goddess of death *Mictlantecuhtli* and his wife, *Mictecacihuatl*. Second, Xiang's interpretation of the Aztec iconography of *Ometéotl* via the *Coatlicue Mayor* decolonizes the European belief in an unseen god by demonstrating the Mesoamerican belief in having physical representations for all their deities. Third, the *nextlahualiztli* of human sacrifice and other practices, such as ritualistic cannibalism, which can be interpreted, by extension, to worship *Ometéotl* due to the various dualistic male and female pairings of deities being differing manifestations of *Ometéotl*. As noted, human sacrifice was one of the most prominent practices in all Mesoamerican religions, in

---

<sup>243</sup> Baudot, "Sentido De La Literatura Histórica Para La Transculturaación En El México Del Siglo Xvii," 130.

<sup>244</sup> Yুক্তitaka, "Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México," 215–16.

contrast with the European hatred of it from a Christian perspective. Thus, we can propose a Mesoamerican monotheism in its original form via *Ometéotl* as the inclusivist monotheistic deity with dualistic properties in various forms, i.e., male and female, the materiality of the *Ometéotl Coatlicue Mayor*, and the proposition of human sacrifice and other forms of *nextlahualiztli* as the primary form of worship.

#### Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's Adaptive Transculturation of *Ometéotl* into Christianity

Now, using Baudot's earlier research as a road map and León-Portilla's theorization, several pieces of evidence illustrate Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's adaptive transculturation of *Ometéotl* in *La historia de la nación chichimeca* as *Tloque Nahuaque*.

First, as Baudot mentions, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl used Christian-associated labels for *Tloque Nahuaque* in various texts. In *Historia de la nación chichimeca*, one specific Biblical label is “*Dios no conocido*” or *Dios incognito* (Unknown God) when he recorded Nezahualcoyotl building the temple to *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>245</sup> In particular, this reference comes from Acts 17:23, where the apostle Paul notes the Grecian altar to the “Unknown God” while he sojourned to the Areopagus.<sup>246</sup> This transculturation is reinforced by Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's description of the lack of idols to *Tloque Nahuaque* to emphasize its proto-Christian association with Christianity by having no idols.

Second, the mirroring of Nezahualcoyotl's personality and experiences of *Tloque Nahuaque* with the Israelite king David and his experiences with God, such as having visions of this deity and a desire to build a temple to *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>247</sup> According to

---

<sup>245</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:751.

<sup>246</sup> Scofield and Rikers, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. Acts 17:23.

<sup>247</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:749–53.

the Bible, David was renowned for having personal experiences with God, such as his constant inquiries about battles and his desire to build a temple to God.<sup>248</sup> The mirroring extends to the avoidance of human sacrifice by Nezahualcoyotl and commanding his heir Nezahualpilli to worship *Tloque Nahuaque*, which echoes David's devotion to the Mosaic law and commanding his heir Solomon to worship God.<sup>249</sup>

The third point is the Christianization of Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as a noble ruler who preached the gospel through the institution of the Cross known as *dios de la lluvias y de la salud, y árbol del sustento ó de la vida* (god of the rain and health, and tree of sustenance or life).<sup>250</sup> One biblical reference is the Tree of Life, planted in the Garden of Eden and granted eternal life if anyone ate its fruit.<sup>251</sup> The concept of the *tlacatecolotl* as a necromancer or witch suggests that Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl was the appointed shaman that communicated directly with *Tloque Nahuaque*, or by its original name, *Ometéotl*.<sup>252</sup> Building off Baudot's research, we see the profound impact of removing the label of *tlacatecolotl* and changing him into a proto-Christian who taught men how to be good and to find the Christian God in the form of *Tloque Nahuaque*.

The fourth point was the change of the sacrificial rites of human sacrifice and other such practices for honoring *Ometéotl*, and its various forms are thus changed to free-will sacrifices of worship, incense, and offerings of flowers to *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>253</sup> This change echoes Psalms 40:6-8 how God told them that sacrifices He did not desire

---

<sup>248</sup> Scofield and Ridders, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. First Chronicles 17:1-2.

<sup>249</sup> Scofield and Ridders, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. First Chronicles 28:9-19.

<sup>250</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:30.

<sup>251</sup> Scofield and Ridders, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. Genesis 3:22.

<sup>252</sup> Kirchhoff et al., *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*, 141.

<sup>253</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:752.

sacrifices or offerings but obedience to His will.<sup>254</sup> Nevertheless, the subtle Mesoamerican reference to human sacrifice to *Ometéotl* was Alva Ixtlilxóchitl writing that Nezahualcoyotl did not stop the sacrifices to other gods, which, by extension, would prevent continual human sacrificial offerings to *Ometéotl* in its various manifestations to the Nahua populace while appeasing Spaniard readers by writing how Nezahualcoyotl refused to partake in the sacrifices once he came into the knowledge of *Tloque Nahuaque*.<sup>255</sup>

Lastly, the concept of human sacrifice could still be preserved in *Tloque Nahuaque* due to the Christian theological importance of the human sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity. Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, as a Castizo, was exposed to colonial Catholic catechism texts that teach about the importance of the human sacrifice of Jesus Christ, such as the *Doctrina Christiana en Lengua Española y Mexicana* (*Christian Doctrine in Spanish and Mexican Languages*) (1548).<sup>256</sup> Since Jesus is also God in the flesh, according to the apostle Paul, the concept of the gods sacrificing themselves to sustain the universe was seen in Aztec creation myths, like the god Nanahuatzin sacrificing himself to be the sun.<sup>257</sup>

Therefore, I propose that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl used adaptive transculturation to convert *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* in *La Historia de la Nacion Chichimeca* by adapting attributes of the Christian God, Christianizing Nezahualcoyotl and Ce Acatl

---

<sup>254</sup> Scofield and Rikkers, *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*, v. Psalms 40:6-8.

<sup>255</sup> Chavero, *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*, 1:749.

<sup>256</sup> Juan Pablos, *Doctrina christiana en lengua española y mexicana: : hecha por los religiosos de la orden de Santo Domingo*, ed. José Fernando Ramirez (Fue impressa en esta muy leal ciudad de Mexico : En casa de Juan Pablos..., 1550), sec. Sermo XIII (pgs. 90-100), <http://archive.org/details/doctrinachristia00pabl>.

<sup>257</sup> Karl A. Taube, "Creation and Cosmology: Gods and Mythic Origins in Ancient Mesoamerica," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mesoamerican Archaeology*, ed. Deborah L. Nichols (Oxford University Press, 2012), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195390933.013.0055>.

Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, and mimicking Christian beliefs, iconic figures, and miracles in the Bible.

Counterargument: *Tloque Nahuaque* as Tezcatlipoca

Still, one potential controversy is the argument of *Tloque Nahuaque* as Tezcatlipoca in *La historia de la nación chichimeca* due to *Tloque Nahuaque* being one of the names of Tezcatlipoca. Kaufmann revisits this argument in two articles, “Alva Ixtlilxóchitl’s Colonial Mexican Trickster Tale: Nezahualcoyotl and Tezcatlipoca in the *Historia de la nación chichimeca*” (2014) and “Las transformaciones de Nezahualcóyotl en la obra de Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl: dos perspectivas” (2017). In the first article, she attests that despite Tezcatlipoca’s absence in the text, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl uses Nezahualcoyotl to embody Tezcatlipoca in various ways, from performing acts of sorcery or divination, due to his status as the patron god of the Acolhuas.<sup>258</sup> In the second article, she continues this trend by further illustrating Nezahualcoyotl embodying the archetype of Tezcatlipoca as *El Rey Embozado* (The Cloaked King) and as a *hombre-dios* representing Tezcatlipoca in Nahua history.<sup>259</sup> From both her arguments, it can be said that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl transcultured Tezcatlipoca into *Tloque Nahuaque* and Nezahualcoyotl by Christianizing Tezcatlipoca into *Tloque Nahuaque* while writing Nezahualcoyotl as a Davidic character whose prophetic visions, hidden adventures, and courage in battle mirrors these identical archetypes and actions of Tezcatlipoca.

---

<sup>258</sup> Leisa Kauffmann, “Alva Ixtlilxóchitl’s Colonial Mexican Trickster Tale: Nezahualcoyotl and Tezcatlipoca in the *Historia de La Nación Chichimeca*,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2013.877252>.

<sup>259</sup> Pablo García Loaeza and Leisa Kauffmann, “Las transformaciones de Nezahualcóyotl en la obra de Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl: dos perspectivas,” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 53 (January 1, 2017): sec. Nezahuacóyotl, El Rey Embozado, <https://nahuatl.historicas.unam.mx/index.php/ecn/article/view/77827>.

Nevertheless, León-Portilla claimed roughly two decades prior that Tezcatlipoca is another form of *Ometéotl*. In his article, “*OMETÉOTL, EL SUPREMO DIOS DUAL, Y TEZCATLIPOCA ‘DIOS PRINCIPAL’*” (1999), he proposes *Ometéotl* being Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror) from his interpretations of texts such as the *Florentine Codex* and *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas* with supporting interpretations from other scholars like Mexican scholar Ángel María Garibay and Mexican scholar Alfonso Caso.<sup>260</sup> His main argument is that Tezcatlipoca embodies the metaphysical, hidden, and transcendental aspect of *Ometéotl* as the opposite of Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, who was the god that directly intervened in the creation of the world and humanity, the divine cosmogony and its intricate relations with society and the gods.<sup>261</sup> Considering this, León-Portilla incorporates the duality of Tezcatlipoca (hidden) and *Quetzalcoatl* (manifested) aspects of divinity into *Ometéotl*. By extension, this would include all the titles attributed to Tezcatlipoca to *Ometéotl*, which provides for *Tloque Nahuaque* and *El Dios Principal*.

This discussion reinforces the adaptive transculturation framework of *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* for three distinctive reasons. The first links the historical patronage of Tezcatlipoca by the Acolhuas to *Ometéotl* by illustrating Tezcatlipoca as the hidden half of *Ometéotl*. In the last chapter, as Bierhorst noted, Pomar used the various titles of Tezcatlipoca to identify *Tloque Nahuaque*. According to Sahagún, the title *Tloque Nahuaque* has been used to identify Tezcatlipoca due to attesting his omnipresence as “*El Dios Principal*” (the Main God) in the Aztec pantheon. Pomar’s

---

<sup>260</sup> Miguel León-Portilla, “Ometeotl, el supremo dios dual, y Tezcatlipoca ‘Dios Principal,’” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 30 (December 30, 1999): 144–49, <https://nahuatl.historicas.unam.mx/index.php/ecn/article/view/9201>.

<sup>261</sup> León-Portilla, “Ometeotl, el supremo dios dual, y Tezcatlipoca ‘Dios Principal,’” 148.

prior assertion was that the Acolhuas worship *Tloque Nahuaque* by attributing each idol and god, including Tezcatlipoca, to different forms of *Tloque Nahuaque*. This assertion promotes the idea of *Ometéotl* being *Tloque Nahuaque* by Pomar, illustrating that Tloque Nahuaque has the same inclusive monotheistic property of one deity with infinite forms as *Ometéotl*. This linkage provides more historical evidence of *Ometéotl* by confirming another form of *Ometéotl* in the pantheon: Tezcatlipoca, which is the hidden and shamanic aspect of *Ometéotl*.

Second, as observed prior, Kaufmann's proposition of Nezahualcoyotl as a *hombre-dios* of Tezcatlipoca could present Nezahualcoyotl's original form as a famous Acolhua warrior-king with a connection to the gods via shamanic powers of divination and shape-shifting. This conceptualization would then reinforce the Europeanization of Nezahualcoyotl by transculturing his original historical form into a Davidic character connected to a proto-Christian deity: *Tloque Nahuaque*. To take this further, it is appropriate to state that Nezahualcoyotl is an incognito *tlacatecolotl* from the association with divination and shape-shifting. Thus, we see Nezahualcoyotl as the *tlacatecolotl* of Tezcatlipoca, a physical embodiment of the unrevealed shamanic aspect of *Ometéotl*.

Third, Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl is the *tlacatecolotl* representing the manifested priestly aspect of *Ometéotl*. For example, as illustrated by the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, he is shown as the *tlacatecolotl* representing the manifested priestly aspect of *Ometéotl* as the mouthpiece of *Tloque Nahuaque* (*Ometéotl*) for religion, politics and so on. In Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's account, we see him being evident as the proto-Christian who preaches the gospel with the adoration of the Cross in Tollan. Alva Ixtlilxóchitl also asserts that he is the inspiration of the god Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl. As a



result, Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, as the opposite of Tezcatlipoca, represents the manifested priestly aspect of *Ometéotl* with Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl.

### Conclusion

From the analysis of both *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl*, we have the following investigations on the theorization of monotheism in the Aztec religion.

The first investigation identified *Tloque Nahuaque* as an exclusive monotheistic deity that reflected the sixteenth-century Spanish exclusivist monotheistic mindset on religion. This mindset was reflected in the specific worship practices that highlighted theological parallels to Christianity, i.e., free offerings of songs and flowers, exclusion of all other deities, and having no physical form. Lastly, although emphasizing Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl initially, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl primarily focuses on Nezahualcoyotl as the main worshiper comparable to King David.

The second investigation identified *Ometéotl* as the original inclusivist monotheistic deity with multiple forms in the Aztec pantheon. Due to the importance of duality, I referred to Zoroastrianism as a decolonizing comparison that improved our understanding of Aztec monotheism from being a non-Abrahamic inclusivist monotheistic comparison to *Ometéotl*. Unlike *Tloque Nahuaque*, there is no distinction of worship practices to *Ometéotl* because worshipping any deity in the Aztec pantheon is honoring *Ometéotl* by extension. Finally, from the counterargument discussion, we see how Tezcatlipoca is the unrevealed shamanic aspect of *Ometéotl*, and Nezahualcoyotl is his *tlacatecolotl*. On the other side, Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl is the manifested priestly aspect of *Ometéotl*, and Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl is his *tlacatecolotl*.

The third investigation expanded León-Portilla's proposition using the adaptive transculturation framework to theorize how Alva Ixtlilxochitl transcultured *Ometéotl* to *Tloque Nahuaque*. Using Baudot's earlier attempt as a roadmap, I addressed the following transculturations. First, Christian labels for Tloque Nahuaque were adapted from the Bible. Second, the Christianization of Nezahualcoyotl from *tlacatecolotl* as an Aztec King David for Spaniards to relate to. Third, the Christianization of Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl from *tlacatecolotl* to a proto-Christian that planted the seeds of worshipping *Tloque Nahuaque* and, by extension, worshipping the Christian God in a Mesoamerican form.

These investigations provide a stronger argument for Aztec monotheism by revitalizing León-Portilla's proposition of *Ometéotl* and *Tloque Nahuaque* being one deity. *Ometéotl* was the original inclusive monotheistic deity of the Aztecs. Tloque Nahuaque is its Europeanized exclusive monotheistic counterpart. Alva Ixtlilxóchitl using adaptive transculturation to change *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* in *La historia de la nación chichimeca*. In conclusion, this thesis proposes a decolonized form of León-Portilla's *Ometéotl/Tloque Nahuaque* theory as a more robust theory for Aztec monotheism.

## Chapter V.

### Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I investigated Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's theory of *Tloque Nahuaque* and León-Portilla's theory on *Ometéotl* as possible forms of Aztec monotheism by identifying their forms of monotheism and then combine both theories for a broader understanding of monotheistic phenomena on a global scale through a Mesoamerican perspective. For example, the data suggests that Aztec monotheism is a potential religious phenomenon from expanding León-Portilla's proposition of Ometéotl and Tloque Nahuaque being one deity. How did this conclusion come about? I start with one of the most important endeavors I had to undertake: decolonizing my understanding of Aztec religion.

#### The Importance of Decolonizing Our Understanding of Aztec Religion

After scanning over five hundred years of sources, scholarly interpretation, scholarly translation, and argumentation into monotheism, polytheism, and Aztec religion, we review the importance of decolonizing our understanding of Aztec religion through a Eurocentric lens. It is essential to see how European conceptualization of Aztec religion, regardless of recording the beliefs from the Nahuatl populace like Duran or Sahagún, remains prominent within academia today. For instance, their understanding of Aztec religion was within a Eurocentric Christian perspective that severely limited our understanding of Mesoamerican religious concepts due to Christianizing Aztec religious terms or beliefs so that European readers could have an easier comprehension of Aztec

religion. Additionally, we still conceptualize Aztec religion as polytheistic from the European perspective in contrast to a Mesoamerican perspective.

Nevertheless, as evidenced in our research, the recent scholarly trend of decolonization of Mesoamerican religion within academia has provided practical interpretation of archaeological and textual evidence; one example was León-Portilla's efforts for the past sixty years as a pioneer in reconstructing Nahuatl philosophy from a Mesoamerican perspective. For this thesis, breaking out of Eurocentric perception was necessary to expand our understanding of Aztec religion and, in turn, our understanding of Mesoamerican religion by proposing Aztec monotheism from a Mesoamerican perspective. To achieve this decolonization for this thesis, I had to illustrate monotheism as a global phenomenon, not a religious monopoly by the inherently Western cultural reference to Christianity, to suggest a higher probability for Mesoamerican monotheism from a Mesoamerican perspective.

### Monotheism as a Global Religious Phenomenon

Monotheism was not limited to a purely Eurocentric Christian perspective when analyzing Indigenous religious beliefs before European contact. For example, although the term's origin has its foundation in Henry More's usage of Greek roots to create the term for Christian apologetics, monotheism as a concept itself predates Christianity from the older monotheistic religions of Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Additionally, referring to older forms of monotheism, such as Zoroastrianism, for a greater understanding of the origins of monotheism has provided a broader implication as to how monotheism is a globally religious phenomenon and not only Abrahamic. This thesis has dramatically benefited by comparing potential monotheism in the Aztec empire with other

monotheistic religions outside Christianity. This comparison means that the decolonization of monotheism from a Eurocentric Christian perspective enabled the expansion of broader conceptualizations of the potential monotheistic phenomenon via comparison to different monotheistic religions. Furthermore, reevaluating monotheism as a spectrum expanded the possibility of detecting other forms of monotheism in civilizations where monotheism was not considered tenable. Overall, researching the concept and the term monotheism provided a greater comprehension of monotheistic phenomena by illustrating different monotheistic religions, the origin of the term, and the reevaluation of monotheism as a spectrum instead of an exclusive category.

#### Analyzing *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* as Theories

From a historical standpoint, it is vital to understand every culture's original religion and philosophical theorizations to better grasp civilizations' development and impact today in the twenty-first century. Alva Ixtlilxochitl and León-Portilla understood this importance and made different attempts to capture or rediscover the Aztec Empire's original religion and philosophical theories. Alva Ixtlilxochitl's *Historia de la nación chichimeca* (1608) was a successful record of the mythical-history of his ancestor tribe, the Acolhuas, from their journey to the Basin of Mexico to the Spaniard conquest of the Aztec Empire. León-Portilla's *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* (1959) successfully theorized Aztec religion and philosophy. This effort resulted in the proposition of the underlying duality of Nahuatl philosophy interwoven in the Aztec cosmos.

Analyzed as separate theories, *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* are entirely different entities in their conceptualization, historical evidence, belief structure, and

worship practices. *Tloque Nahuaque* is found in historical documents written by Alva Ixtlilxochitl and his predecessor, Pomar. It also possesses an elaborate form of worship by offering flowers, incense, and psalms in a temple built in its honor. However, in León-Portilla's theorization of Nahuatl philosophy, Ometéotl was theorized as the god of duality and elevated to the Mesoamerican supreme god with differing forms in the Aztec pantheon. Unlike *Tloque Nahuaque*, little textual evidence and a lack of identification of worship practices make *Ometéotl* distinct from the other Aztec deities. Nevertheless, both lack substantial material evidence to honor each deity. Bearing this in mind, I then examined *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* for the most likely form of monotheism that was recorded or theorized using the criteria for monotheism I formulated prior.

#### Reviewing *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* as Proposed Forms of Aztec Monotheism

Analyzing Alva Ixtlilxochitl's and León-Portilla's accounts with a monotheistic lens provided greater clarity by identifying whether they substantiate monotheism in their accounts. For Alva Ixtlilxochitl, I proposed the form of monotheism interwoven into his text as exclusive monotheism to understand his claim about Nezahualcoyotl's deification of *Tloque Nahuaque*. This proposition reinforces the conceptualization of the sixteenth-century Spaniard exclusivist monotheistic perspective on religion by recording *Tloque Nahuaque* as a proto-Christian monotheistic deity. As Inoue concluded beforehand, the Europeanization of Mesoamerican ideals into a Christian form permitted Spanish readers to grasp some understanding of Aztec religion.

In contrast, due to the underlying principle of duality, León-Portilla's account of Ometéotl is best understood as an inclusive monotheism similar to Zoroastrianism due to the comparison to a monotheistic religion that is substantiated by the concept of a dual

deity (Zoroastrianism) instead of a triune deity (Christianity). This comparison produced various similarities, such as the fruitful comparison of *Ometéotl* to Ahura Mazda due to being similar singular deities that embody universal duality, accepting the worship of themselves when worshipping any of their endless forms in their respective pantheons, and the necessity of ritual purity. Illustrating *Ometéotl* as the original inclusive monotheistic deity of the Aztecs benefited greatly from the decolonized comparison with Zoroastrianism by finding similarities with non-Abrahamic monotheistic religions. Without this comparison, I could not expand beyond the limitations of the confines of the comparison with Christianity.

Still, as analyzed, both theories have similar and different counterarguments that were only possible with a new theory. On the one hand, both were contested for the Europeanization of their accounts, extravagant misinterpretation of historical texts, and lack of physical evidence. For example, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl was mainly postulated as Europeanizing his account to legitimize his claim as a noble in colonial society. In contrast, León-Portilla's supposed Europeanization of the priests (*tlamacazque*) as wisemen (*tlamatinime*) and the theory of the duality of *Ometéotl* akin to the Holy Trinity in Christianity for an easier understanding of Aztec religion. Additionally, both theories attest to the lack of material evidence due to *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl* not having any idols or architectural evidence due to being invisible and all-powerful deities. On the other hand, Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's account was questioned due to the controversy surrounding his identity as a Mestizo or Castizo writer and how that impacted the writing of his account. At the same time, León-Portilla's account was questioned due to the usage

of *teotl* in *Ometéotl* and the interpretation of Nahua philosophy concerning *Ometéotl* as the embodiment of duality in Aztec religion.

Nevertheless, despite some counterproposals, such as proposing material evidence of *Ometéotl* or the purpose of Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's reasons for his account as a Castizo chronicler for the Acolhua tribe, these counterarguments caused sufficient doubt in potential Aztec monotheism to not be considered tenable in academia. Thus, it led me to Inoue's article, which showed me the possibility of reevaluating León-Portilla's theory of *Ometéotl* and *Tloque Nahuaque* being the same deity as the key to resolving the problems relating to both theories.

#### Expansion of a Premise: León-Portilla's Overlooked Proposition

Expanding León-Portilla's overlooked proposition with Inoue's iteration in this thesis has provided the following results.

First, the lack of evidence is resolved by identifying different forms of *Ometéotl*, such as *Coatlicue* and *Tezcatlipoca*, through Xiang's interpretation of the Coatlicue statue and León-Portilla's interpretation of Tezcatlipoca. Identifying other forms of *Ometéotl* with recognized iconography using these methods reinforces the deification of *Ometéotl* via inclusive monotheism by providing physical evidence of *Ometéotl*'s different forms. It also reaffirms Pomar's association of the Acolhuas worshipping *Tloque Nahuaque* as the Europeanized *Ometéotl* in various forms.

Second, we can theorize how Alva Ixtlilxóchitl transformed *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* through the adaptive transculturation of the Mesoamerican characteristics of *Ometéotl* into identical Europeanized attributes of the Christian God. Tracking this change also shows us how Alva Ixtlilxóchitl changed an inclusive monotheistic religion



into an exclusive monotheistic religion. The ability to theorize the original belief of *Ometéotl* and track the changes Alva Ixtlilxóchitl made to create *Tloque Nahuaque* in his account enables us to see the duality of *Ometéotl* in its authentic Mesoamerican self and its Europeanized form *Tloque Nahuaque*.

Third, the interpretation of Kaufmann's supposition of Nezahualcoyotl being the *hombre-dios* representing Tezcatlipoca enabled the theorization of the following: Tezcatlipoca as the unrevealed shamanic aspect of *Ometéotl*, Nezahualcoyotl as his *tlacatecolotl*, Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl as the manifested priestly aspect of *Ometéotl*, and Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl as his *tlacatecolotl*.

### Closing Thoughts

Synthesizing both Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and León-Portilla's theories may be the key to providing enough possible evidence of Mesoamerican monotheism. The theories of *Tloque Nahuaque* and *Ometéotl*, by themselves, were flawed and lacked certain aspects that would have made both more credible, such as León-Portilla's postulation of *Ometéotl* lacking the historical context of *Tloque Nahuaque* in various texts that Alva Ixtlilxóchitl had. By proposing that *Ometéotl* is the same god as *Tloque Nahuaque*, we then can provide a historical context of *Ometéotl* by Pomar and Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, preserving the belief of *Ometéotl* within a Europeanized version of itself for Spaniards to understand.

Additionally, we see Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, representing the Mesoamericans, supplanting the faith of the Christian god by endowing *Ometéotl* with Christian characteristics to appear that they are the same, i.e., removing the references of *Ometéotl* being masculine and feminine and overemphasizing the similar attributes it shares with

the Christian god, such as being the only invisible, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent deity. Using the adaptive transculturation framework provided an in-depth investigation of how Alva Ixtlilxóchitl transcultured *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* in *La historia de la nación chichimeca*.

Still, another paper would be required to fully substantiate my expansion of León-Portilla's theory. For now, here is a decolonized version of León-Portilla's theory of *Ometéotl/Tloque Nahuaque*: *Ometéotl* being the original Mesoamerican inclusive monotheistic religion self and its subverted Europeanized exclusive monotheistic counterpart, *Tloque Nahuaque*, via Alva Ixtlilxóchitl's adaptive transculturation of *Ometéotl* into *Tloque Nahuaque* for the preservation of *Ometéotl* in *Historia de la nación chichimeca*.

## Bibliography

- Adler, Yonatan. "The Origins of Judaism Reappraised." In *The Origins of Judaism*, 189–236. An Archaeological-Historical Reappraisal. Yale University Press, 2022.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2z0vv3c.12>.
- Alberro, Solange. "Beatriz de Padilla: Mistress and Mother." In *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America*, 247–56. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020.  
<https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520343047-017>.
- Alvarado Tezozómoc, Fernando, and Adrián León. *Crónica mexicáyotl*. Primera serie prehispanica 3. México: Universidad nacional autónoma de México, Instituto de investigaciones históricas, 1992.
- Ansari, Ali. "A Royal Romance: The Cult of Cyrus the Great in Modern Iran." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 3 (July 2021): 405–19.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186321000195>.
- Aranyosi, István. "Logical Pantheism." *Philosophy Compass* 17, no. 7 (2022): e12857.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12857>.
- Balibar, Étienne. *Secularism and Cosmopolitanism: Critical Hypotheses on Religion and Politics*. European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Ballentine, Debra Scoggins. "'Monotheism' and the Hebrew Bible." *Religion Compass* 16, no. 1 (January 2022): e12425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12425>.
- Bassett, Molly H. *The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/15/monograph/book/42718>.
- Battcock, Clementina, and Jhonnatan Zavala. "Las disputas por las memorias de la conquista: la crónica de Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl." *Memoria Americana. Cuadernos de Etnohistoria* 30, no. 1 (June 27, 2022): 46–66.  
<https://doi.org/10.34096/mace.v30i1.10387>.
- Baudot, Georges. "Sentido De La Literatura Histórica Para La Transculturación En El México Del Siglo Xvii: Fernando De Alva Ixtlilxóchitl." In *Reflexiones Lingüísticas y Literarias*, edited by Rafael Olea Franco and James Valender, 1st ed., 26:125–38. Volumen II : Literatura. El Colegio de Mexico, 1992.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv47wf58.10>.
- Becerril, J. E., and B. Jiménez. "Potable Water and Sanitation in Tenochtitlan: Aztec Culture." *Water Science & Technology: Water Supply* 7, no. 1 (March 2007): 147–54. <https://doi.org/10.2166/ws.2007.017>.
- Bettini, Maurizio, and Douglas Grant Heise. *In Praise of Polytheism*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2022.
- Bhattacharjee, Anol. *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*. Second edition. Textbook Collection 3. Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, 2012.
- Bierhorst, John. *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain: The Codex Romances de Los Señores de La Nueva España*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009.  
[https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/15/oa\\_monograph/book/17286](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/15/oa_monograph/book/17286).

- , ed. *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- Bittarello, Maria Beatrice. “Western Suspicion of Polytheism, Western Thought Structures, and Contemporary Pagan Polytheisms.” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 3, no. 1 (2010): 68–102. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187489209X478319>.
- Blidstein, Moshe. “Purity and Defilement.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Abrahamic Religions*, edited by Adam J. Silverstein and Guy G. Stroumsa, 0. Oxford University Press, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199697762.013.44>.
- Brian, Amber. *Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Native Archive and the Circulation of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016. <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/167/monograph/book/46880>.
- Brokaw, Galen, and Jongsoo Lee. *Texcoco: Prehispanic and Colonial Perspectives*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014. [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/173/edited\\_volume/book/31173](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/173/edited_volume/book/31173).
- Campos, Carlos Federico. “LOS CRIOLLOS NOVOHISPANOS FRENTE A LA TEORÍA DE LA DEGENERACIÓN: DE LA APOLOGÉTICA A LA REIVINDICACIÓN.” *Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, En-claves del pensamiento*, 11, no. 21 (2017): 15–40. <https://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/enclav/v11n21/1870-879X-enclav-11-21-00015.pdf>.
- Carlsen, Robert S. “Transculturation.” In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures*. Oxford University Press, 2001. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780195108156.001.0001/acref-9780195108156-e-671>.
- Carrasco, David. *Religions of Mesoamerica*. Second edition. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2014.
- Chavero, Alfredo. *Obras históricas de don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl*. Vol. 1. Mexico: Oficina tip. de la Secretaria de fomento, 1891.
- Chen, I-Hsin. “From God’s Chinese Names to a Cross-Cultural Universal God: James Legge’s Intertextual Theology in His Translation of *Tian*, *Di* and *Shangdi*.” *Translation Studies* 9, no. 3 (September 2016): 268–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2016.1188022>.
- Choksy, Jamsheed K. “Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism.” ProQuest, 1986. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1306222887?accountid=11311&parentSessionId=KDdBvFRDhrQP7X4t1SYsy4ZQxlf8z4Alfvk6XXaxq4I%3D&pq-origsite=primo&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals&imgSeq=4>.
- Christensen, Mark Z. “The Use of Nahuatl in Evangelization and the Ministry of Sebastian.” *Ethnohistory* 59, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 691–711. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-1642716>.
- Clavijero, Francisco Xavier. “Historia antigua de Mejico, sacada de los mejores historiadores españoles, y de manuscritos y pinturas antiguas de los indios. Dividida en diez libros, adornada de cartas geográficas y litografías, con disertaciones sobre la tierra, animales y habitantes de Méjico,” 1853. <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/historia-antigua-de-mejico-sacada-de-los-mejores-historiadores-espanoles-y-de-manuscritos-y-pinturas-antiguas-de-los-indios-dividida-en-diez-libros-adornada-de-cartas-geograficas-986136/>.

- De Crom, Dries. “Alfonso de Castro on Vernacular Bible Translation and Christian Education.” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 7, no. 1 (May 27, 2020): 61–84. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jemc-2020-2018>.
- Deetlefs, Johannes P. “Divine Attributes in a Trinitarian Key.” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43, no. 1 (October 13, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2665>.
- Del Río Sánchez, Francisco F. “The Deadlocked Debate about the Role of the Jewish Christians at the Birth of Islam.” *Religions* 12, no. 10 (September 22, 2021): 789. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100789>.
- Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, and David Carrasco. *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008.
- Durán, Diego. *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y Islas de Tierra Firme*. Edited by José Ramirez. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Mexico: J.M. Andrade y F. Escalante, 1867.
- . *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y islas de Tierra Firme*. Edited by José Ramirez. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Mexico: J.M. Andrade y F. Escalante, 1880.
- Dyck, Jason. “Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and the Mexican Archive.” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 18, no. 1 (2017). <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/655212>.
- Eusebius, and Paul L. Maier. *Eusebius--the Church History: A New Translation with Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999.
- Evans, Susan Toby. *Ancient Mexico & Central America: Archaeology and Culture History*. Third edition. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2013.
- Ferrero, Mario. “From Polytheism to Monotheism: Zoroaster and Some Economic Theory.” *Homo Oeconomicus* 38, no. 1–4 (December 2021): 77–108. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41412-021-00113-4>.
- Frevel, Christian. “Beyond Monotheism? Some Remarks and Questions on Conceptualising ‘Monotheism’ in Biblical Studies.” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 2 (September 5, 2013): 7 pages. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i2.810>.
- Garagarza, León García. “The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies.” *Ethnohistory* 63, no. 2 (April 1, 2016): 445–46. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-3455619>.
- García, Élodie Dupey. “Creating the Wind: Color, Materiality, and the Senses in the Images of a Mesoamerican Deity.” *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture* 2, no. 4 (December 18, 2020): 14–31. <https://doi.org/10.1525/lavc.2020.2.4.14>.
- Gerbner, Katharine. “Theorizing Conversion: Christianity, Colonization, and Consciousness in the Early Modern Atlantic World: Theorizing Conversion.” *History Compass* 13, no. 3 (March 2015): 134–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12227>.
- Griffioen, Amber L., and Marius Backmann. *Pluralizing Philosophy’s Past: New Reflections in the History of Philosophy*. Cham, SWITZERLAND: Springer International Publishing AG, 2023. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/harvard-ebooks/detail.action?docID=7218132>.
- Haly, Richard. “Bare Bones: Rethinking Mesoamerican Divinity.” *History of Religions* 31, no. 3 (February 1992): 269–304. <https://doi.org/10.1086/463285>.
- Hassig, Ross. “Aztec Warfare. (Cover Story).” *History Today* 40, no. 2 (February 1990): 17. <http://ezp->

- prod1.hul.harvard.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9003190180&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Herbener, Jens-André P. "On the Term 'Monotheism.'" *Numen* 60, no. 5–6 (2013): 616–48. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685276-12341296>.
- Hernández Rodríguez, Juan Camilo. "El Ometeotl: la dualidad como fundamento metafísico trascendental." *Perseitas* 7, no. 2 (June 21, 2019): 248–73. <https://doi.org/10.21501/23461780.3290>.
- Hintze, Almut. "Monotheism the Zoroastrian Way." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, no. 2 (April 2014): 225–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186313000333>.
- Hollis+. "Codex Mendoza." Library Database, 1542–1541. <https://hollis.harvard.edu>.
- Hurtado, Larry W. "'Ancient Jewish Monotheism' in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 4, no. 3 (2013): 379–400. <https://doi.org/10.13109/jaju.2013.4.3.379>.
- Icazbalceta, Joaquín García. *Pomar y Zurita: Pomar. Relación de Tezcoco : Zurita. Breve relación de los señores de la Nueva España : Varias relaciones antiguas : (Siglo XVI)*. Vol. III. Nueva Colección de Documentos para la historia de Mexico. Mexico: F. Diaz de leon, 1891.
- Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes*. Duke University Press, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822376743>.
- Kauffmann, Leisa. "Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Colonial Mexican Trickster Tale: Nezahualcoyotl and Tezcatlipoca in the *Historia de La Nación Chichimeca*." *Colonial Latin American Review* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 70–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2013.877252>.
- . "Figures of Time and Tribute: The Trace of the Colonial Subaltern in Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's *Historia de La Nación Chichimeca*." *The Global South* 4, no. 1 (2010): 31. <https://doi.org/10.2979/gso.2010.4.1.31>.
- Kaur, Daljit. "Guru Nanak Dev and Origin of Sikhism." *RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary* 6, no. 6 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.31305/rrijm.2021.v06.i06.006>.
- Kirchhoff, Paul, Lina Odena Güemes, Luis Reyes García, and Bibliothèque nationale de France Mexicain 46-58. *Historia tolteca-chichimeca*. México, D.F.: CISINAH, INAH, SEP, 1976.
- Laird, Andrew. "6 Universal History and New Spain's Indian Past: Classical Knowledge in Nahua Chronicles." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 37, no. S1 (2018): 86–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.12792>.
- Lee, Jongsoo. *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl: Pre-Hispanic History, Religion, and Nahua Poetics*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008. <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/169/monograph/book/6188>.
- . "The Europeanization of Prehispanic Tradition: Bernardino de Sahagún's Transformation of Aztec Priests (Tlamacazque) into Classical Wise Men (Tlaminime)." *Colonial Latin American Review* 26, no. 3 (September 2017): 291–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2017.1350469>.
- Lee, Jongsoo, and Galen Brokaw. *Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and His Legacy*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016. [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/208/edited\\_volume/book/44851](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/208/edited_volume/book/44851).

- León y Gama, Antonio de. *Descripción histórica y cronológica de las dos piedras*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C., 1832.  
[https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:48409292\\$1i](https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:48409292$1i).
- León-Portilla, Miguel. *La filosofía náhuatl: estudiada en sus fuentes*. Undécima edición. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2017.  
<https://historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/filosofia/nahuatl.html>.
- . “Ometeotl, el supremo dios dual, y Tezcatlipoca ‘Dios Principal.’” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 30 (December 30, 1999).  
<https://nahuatl.historicas.unam.mx/index.php/ecn/article/view/9201>.
- , ed. *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*. Expanded and Updated ed. Boston, Mass: Beacon, 2007.
- . “¿Una nueva interpretación de los cantares mexicanos? La obra de John Bierhorst.” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 1986): 129–44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1051996>.
- Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. “Miguel León-Portilla to Receive Living Legend Award at Celebration of Mexico, Dec. 12.” Web page. Accessed January 20, 2024. <https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-13-206/leon-portilla-to-be-named-living-legend/2013-11-20/>.
- Loaeza, Pablo García, and Leisa Kauffmann. “Las transformaciones de Nezahualcōyotl en la obra de Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxōchitl: dos perspectivas.” *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 53 (January 1, 2017): 175–203.  
<https://nahuatl.historicas.unam.mx/index.php/ecn/article/view/77827>.
- López Austin, Alfredo, and Alejandra Gámez Espinosa. *Cosmovisión Mesoamericana. Reflexiones, Polémicas Y Etnografías*. 1st ed. México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015. <http://archive.org/details/gamez-lopez-austin-coords.-cosmovision-mesoamericana.-reflexiones-polemicas-y-etnografias-ocr-2015>.
- Maffie, James. *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2014. <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/173/monograph/book/29005>.
- . “The Fate of Earthly Things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies.” *Colonial Latin American Review* 25, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 396–97.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2016.1237736>.
- Manfred Sing. “Where Do the Multi-Religious Origins of Islam Lie? A Topological Approach to a Wicked Problem.” *Entangled Religions* 9 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.13154/er.9.2019.165-210>.
- Martínez, Hector Costilla. “La reinención de Nezahualcōyotl desde el discurso jurídico en Historia de la nación chichimeca de Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxōchitl.” *EHumanista* 33, no. Regular (2016): 425–36.  
[https://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.span.d7\\_eh/files/sitefiles/ehumanista/volume33/10%20ehum33.costilla.pdf](https://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.span.d7_eh/files/sitefiles/ehumanista/volume33/10%20ehum33.costilla.pdf).
- Matos Moctezuma, Eduardo. “Archaeology and Symbolism in Aztec Mexico: The Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 4 (December 1985): 797–813. <http://ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0000958107&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

- Meissner, W. W. "Notes on Monotheism • Origins." *Journal of Religion and Health* 7, no. 1 (1968): 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01532177>.
- Metz, Thaddeus, and Motsamai Molefe. "Traditional African Religion as a Neglected Form of Monotheism." *The Monist* 104, no. 3 (July 1, 2021): 393–409. <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onab007>.
- Mikulska, Katarzyna. "Destronando a Ometeotl." *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 31, no. 1–2 (2015): 57–127. <http://ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI5IE180813001872&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- More, Henry. "An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness, or, A True and Faithfull Representation of the Everlasting Gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Onely Begotten Son of God and Sovereign over Men and Angels by H. More," 1660. <https://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240965151/12165689?parentSessionId=iOPdyh1hSjPStmQ3%2BEwP9dmH6ERGUEW32OrX590cUbs%3D&accountid=11311>.
- Newman, Barbara. "Toward a More Inclusive Monotheism." *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 5, no. 2 (September 2005): 214–20. <https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2006.0002>.
- Pablos, Juan. *Doctrina christiana en lengua española y mexicana: : hecha por los religiosos de la orden de Santo Domingo*. Edited by José Fernando Ramirez. Fue impresa en esta muy leal ciudad de Mexico : En casa de Juan Pablos..., 1550. <http://archive.org/details/doctrinachristia00pabl>.
- Palka, Joel W. "Mesoamerican Warfare, Protecting Divinities, and Fortified Sanctuaries." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 79, no. 1 (March 1, 2023): 51–101. <https://doi.org/10.1086/723080>.
- Parry, J. H. (John Horace), and Robert G. Keith. *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century*. 1st ed. New York: Times Books : Hector & Rose, 1984.
- Pichardo, José Antonio. "Codex of Mexican History from 1221 to 1594." Compressed data. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, 1748. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668121/>.
- Pollnitz, Aysha. "OLD WORDS AND THE NEW WORLD: LIBERAL EDUCATION AND THE FRANCISCANS IN NEW SPAIN, 1536–1601." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (December 2017): 123–52. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440117000068>.
- Prescott, William Hickling. *History of the Conquest of Mexico: With a Preliminary View of the Ancient Mexican Civilization and the Life of the Conqueror, Hernando Cortez*. 26th ed. Vol. 1. 3 vols. Boston, Mass: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1856.
- Rohner, Stephanie. "La Historia Antigua De México De Francisco Javier Clavigero Y La Educación Indígena En Nueva España." *Hispanic Review* 88, no. 2 (2020): 133–55. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hir.2020.0014>.
- Sahagún, Bernardino. *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book III: The Origin of the Gods*. Vol. 3. 12 vols. Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667848/>.



- . *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book VI: Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy*. Vol. 6. 12 vols. Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667851/>.
- . *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book VIII: Kings and Lords*. Vol. 8. 12 vols. Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667853/>.
- . *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book X: The People, Their Virtues and Vices, and Other Nations*. Vol. 10. 12 vols. Accessed October 18, 2023. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667855/>.
- . *General History of the Things of New Spain by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: The Florentine Codex. Book XII: The Conquest of Mexico*. Vol. 12. 12 vols. Accessed February 15, 2024. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667857/>.
- Sanders, William T. Review of *Review of Aztec Thought and Culture*, by Miguel Leon-Portilla. *American Antiquity* 31, no. 5 (1966): 759–60. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2694518>.
- Sarah Stroumsa. “The Father of Many Nations: Abraham in al-Andalus.” In *Medieval Exegesis and Religious Difference: Commentary, Conflict, and Community in the Premodern Mediterranean*. Fordham University Press, 2015.
- Schwaller, John Frederick. “CHAPTER 2 The Brothers Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Bartolomé de Alva: Two ‘Native’ Intellectuals of Seventeenth-Century Mexico.” In *Indigenous Intellectuals*, edited by Gabriela Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis, 39–59. Duke University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376743-005>.
- Scofield, C. I., and Doris W. Ridders, eds. *The New Scofield Study Bible: The New King James Version*. Red letter ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Stampa, Manuel Carrera. “Historiadores indígenas y mestizos novohispanos. Siglos XVI - XVII.” *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* 6 (January 1, 1971): 205–43. <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/REAA/article/view/REAA7171110205A>.
- Taube, Karl A. “Creation and Cosmology: Gods and Mythic Origins in Ancient Mesoamerica.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Mesoamerican Archaeology*, edited by Deborah L. Nichols, 0. Oxford University Press, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195390933.013.0055>.
- The Christian Statesman*. “Nezahualcoyotl, the King David of Mexico.” May 21, 1885. Nineteenth Century Collections Online. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/YLMIP355806169/NCCO?sid=bookmark-NCCO&xid=b6826fd5>.
- Ticknor, George. *Life of William Hickling Prescott*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1863. [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Life\\_of\\_William\\_Hickling\\_Prescott/\\_8UEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Life_of_William_Hickling_Prescott/_8UEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en).
- Townsend, Camilla. “Introduction: The Evolution of Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Scholarly Life.” *Colonial Latin American Review* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2013.877248>.
- Tsouras, Peter. *Warlords of Ancient Mexico: How the Mayans and Aztecs Ruled for More than a Thousand Years*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014.

- Varela, Raúl. “Códice Xolotl.” Accessed August 3, 2023.  
<https://pueblosoriginarios.com/norte/suroeste/chichimeca/xolotl.html>.
- Villella, Peter B. “The Last Acolhua: Alva Ixtlilxochitl and Elite Native Historiography in Early New Spain.” *Colonial Latin American Review* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 18–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609164.2013.877249>.
- Weber, Michel. “A Process Interpretation of Aztec Metaphysics.” *Process Studies* 44, no. 1 (March 2015): 48–62. <https://doi.org/10.5840/process20154413>.
- Xiang, Zairong. “The (De)Coloniality of Conceptual Inequivalence: Reinterpreting Omteotl through Nahua Tlacuiloliztli.” *Decolonial Approaches to Latin American Literatures and Cultures*, 2016, 39.  
[https://www.academia.edu/24711174/The\\_De\\_Coloniality\\_of\\_Conceptual\\_Inequivalence\\_Reinterpreting\\_Omteotl\\_within\\_Nahua\\_Tlacuiloliztli](https://www.academia.edu/24711174/The_De_Coloniality_of_Conceptual_Inequivalence_Reinterpreting_Omteotl_within_Nahua_Tlacuiloliztli).
- Yukitaka, Inoue. “Tesis Sobre El Culto al Dios Único En La Época Prehispánica : Según Dos Cronistas Indígenas Del Centro de México : [Thesis Regarding the Pre-Hispanic Cult to Only One God : According to Two Indigenous Chroniclers of Central Mexico].” Journal Database. Kansai Gaidai University Institutional Repository, 2000.  
[https://kansai.gaidai.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages\\_view\\_main&active\\_action=repository\\_view\\_main\\_item\\_detail&item\\_id=5475&item\\_no=1&page\\_id=13&block\\_id=21](https://kansai.gaidai.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=5475&item_no=1&page_id=13&block_id=21).