

Article

Race and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico City: Architecture and Urbanism at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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Abstract: This article analyzes the urban and architectural transformations in the Villa de Guadalupe, the site where the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe originated, in present-day Mexico City, on behalf of Creole architects, urban planners, and clerics. The article argues that members of Mexico City's Creole elite played a critical role in fabricating a fervent cult of a dark-skinned Madonna while orchestrating dramatic changes to the site of the apparitions, which transformed it from a humble Indigenous village into the religious and spiritual heart of New Spain. The essay focuses its attention on the town's urban and architectural changes during the eighteenth century, which is when the village of Guadalupe was transformed into a veritable "villa", a special designation for an urban establishment in the early modern Hispanic world, which vested it with certain legal autonomy. The story of the urban and architectural transformations and innovations at this site is fascinating, given the ambition on behalf of Mexico City's Creoles to appropriate it and its success in promoting it as the source of Mexico City's and New Spain's claims to exceptionality by divine designation. The Virgin Mary's appearances to a humble young Indigenous man in an impoverished Native village near Mexico City, which became the spiritual center of New Spain, became a potent narrative wielded by the Creole elite, as they sought to assert their political claims in the face of staunch opposition from Spanish-born administrators and clergy. At the Villa de Guadalupe, as this essay reveals, Creole elites tested their political, urban planning, and architectural skills, asserting their cultural and political relevance in 18th-century Mexico City.

Keywords: architecture; urbanism; Guadalupe; New Spain; colonial Mexico



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1. Introduction

The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, located 6 km (4 miles) to the north of Mexico City's *Plaza Mayor*, today popularly known as *Zócalo*, is the most visited religious pilgrimage site in the Americas, and one of the most popular religious sites in the world (Giuriati and Kan 1998, p. 9). Its origins date to 1531, when, according to tradition, the Virgin Mary made a series of apparitions to a young Indigenous peasant named Juan Diego, a recent Christian convert. The Virgin urged Juan Diego, in his native tongue, Nahuatl, to convince the city's ecclesiastical authorities to build her a chapel at the apparition site, an Indigenous village north of Mexico City named Tepeyac. In the sixteenth century, Tepeyac was nothing more than a humble village on the banks of Lake Texcoco and at the foot of Tepeyac Hill, and divided by the lake from the town of Tlatelolco, the famous sister city to Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, both cities toppled by the Spanish conquistadors in 1521 (see Figures 1 and 2). As evidence of the Virgin's desires and Juan Diego's claims, the young man presented his *tilmatli*, an Indigenous clothing piece not unlike a cloak, to New Spain's archbishop, Juan de Zumárraga (1468–1548). On it, miraculously, a depiction of a dark-skinned Virgin Mary had been carefully and beautifully rendered.¹



Figure 1. Detail from the Alonso de Santa Cruz map at Uppsala University, Sweden, ca. 1550. The map (oriented with north to the right) shows the village of Tepeyac or Tepeyacac around the mid-sixteenth century, at the edge of the lake (on the right hand), and the church and barrio of Santiago de Tlatelolco (on the left hand) on the other side of the lake and connected via the pre-Hispanic Tepeyac causeway or *Calzada de Tepeyac*. Courtesy of Carolina Rediviva Library, Uppsala University, image in the public domain.



Figure 2. Detail from a map of Mexico City by architect and surveyor Ignacio Castera in 1794 (oriented with north to the left). The detail shows the barrio of Santiago (Tlatelolco), on the right hand and, separated by water, Tepeyac sits to the left (outside of the map's limits) connected via two avenues. Library of Congress, Parallel Histories: Spain, the United States, and the American Frontier, Washington DC. Call number: G4414.M6 1794.A3. Rights: <https://www.loc.gov/item/00560609/> (accessed on 3 December 2023).

Throughout the sixteenth century, devotion to this Marian icon remained modest and local, appealing to Spaniards and not to the Indigenous or mestizo populations (Taylor 1987, p. 12). The cult to the Virgin of Guadalupe remained regional until the latter part of the seventeenth century. She became the patroness of Mexico City in 1737, and by 1754 the

cult had spread viceroyalty-wide when Guadalupe became the official patroness of New Spain by papal decree (see Figure 3), appealing at that point to all racial groups or castes in the viceroyalty.²



Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Figure 3. Bird’s eye view of Mexico City looking from the East, ca. 1760, by Carlos López del Troncoso. A vignette of the scene in which the Virgin’s image, miraculously rendered, is presented to the bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga, by Juan Diego, is seen at the top, center of the map’s frame. The vignette is part of the map’s frame as it symbolically represents the patronage that the Virgin of Guadalupe exercised over the city. The Virgin of Guadalupe became Mexico City’s patroness in 1737 and patroness of New Spain in 1754 by papal decree. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

The process by which Tepeyac went from an impoverished pre-Hispanic Indigenous settlement to becoming the most culturally and religiously significant site for New Spain and, later, modern Mexico is an intriguing story. For the cult of the Virgin to have been officially instituted, for the icon to have been popularized, and for the shrine to have been built, credit must be granted to the diverse and countless people who contributed to it, from the clerical bureaucracy at the Vatican, to the Spanish ecclesiastical authorities and Crown officials, to the legions of Indigenous laborers who built the shrine. However, the shrine of Guadalupe holds a particularly intimate link to the concept of *criollismo* or “Creolehood” and to the Creole community of Mexico City. The Creoles in colonial Spanish America were the offspring of Spanish colonizers or Spaniards who settled in the Americas and identified as Americans. *Criollismo* can be defined as the cultural and political project that took the form of literary, scientific, and artistic works that upheld and promoted their intellectual works, moral values, and cultural practices as equally valid or even superior to those of the *peninsulares* or Iberian-born Spaniards.

An essential element of *criollismo* was the continuous praise of their homeland’s endless abundance and natural beauty. Another characteristic of *criollismo* was co-opting the Indigenous historical past, recognizing pre-Hispanic cultures as civilized and complex, thus providing New Spain with a glorious and long history, which Creoles adopted as a part of their cultural heritage. The *criollismo* project was, at least in part, triggered by the discrimination and prejudices they experienced from their Spanish counterparts. In effect, Creoles were barred from occupying some of the top colonial administration posts in their own land and were the target of prejudiced beliefs of environmental determinism, a belief that Americans were inferior, intellectually and physically, to their European counterparts

simply for having been born or for living in the Americas. Perhaps more importantly, *criollismo* was the vehicle through which Creoles articulated their claims of legitimate political power over New Spain in the face of Spanish imperial authority.³

By the eighteenth century, a Creole sense of identity matured and flourished, giving way to a Creole sense of nationhood as the reaction to counter those attitudes. Creole values and belief systems were a mixture of Iberian cultural frames of reference mixed with local and regional customs and traditions, particularly influenced by Native cultures, which developed into a growing sense of otherness that became critical in the development of a future Mexican State.⁴

Employing *criollismo* as a guiding thread, this essay will analyze the architectural and urban history of Our Lady of Guadalupe's Shrine, as reimagined and transformed by the colonial Creole elite to employ the site as a part of their larger project of *criollismo*. The history of racial dynamics in colonial Mexico, which is to say the role played by the Native population in the history of Guadalupe's cult, the aspirations of the Creole population in vying for political power and historical legitimacy over New Spain, and the division of New Spanish society into castes, are all intricately woven into the history of the shrine.

While devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe originated as a small, local cult, from its earliest beginnings *criollismo* was an inherent part of it and the driving force to transform it into a proto-nationalist and ethnically inclusive symbol (Peterson 1992, p. 40). In the Guadalupian historiography, the image of Guadalupe as an icon, the painting as an iconographic object, its meaning to the colonized and modern peoples of Mexico, and the legitimacy of the apparitions have occupied most of the scholarly literature on the topic.⁵ However, the site's architecture and the role urban planning played in helping define the colonial Creole cultural project at Tepeyac requires further attention.⁶

The essay first analyzes how the architecture employed to design the Shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Chapel of the Well, and other landmarks in the complex are of an eminently Creole nature by design and style. The second part discusses the history of the site's urban and environmental transformations by Creole architects and clerics. Guiding the discussion is the argument that architecturally, the Creoles developed a distinct late-colonial architectural vernacular style that expressed their cultural, social, and political aspirations. Ultimately, the Villa of Guadalupe, which became the town's official title, including the shrine complex, was seen by New Spanish Creoles as a site selected by divine designation, which, as they saw it, legitimized their aspirations to take a leadership position in the political destiny of their homeland. In their eyes, they were the legitimate heirs of the land—as they saw themselves as the descendants of the Europeans who had conquered the land. While faithful to Imperial authority and the Spanish Crown, their political ambitions included the claim to political superiority over the Native populations of New Spain, whose historical past the Creoles selectively and continually co-opted as part of the historical legitimation to those political ambitions. In this context, the Villa of Guadalupe and the shrine acted as a site of exchanges amongst Mexico City's varied ethnic communities.

2. The Myth and the Shrine

The essence of the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe's apparitions is well-known. On Saturday, 9 November 1531, a young woman appeared to a humble Indigenous peasant named Juan Diego Cuahatlatoatzin (ca. 1474–1548). She asked the young man to plead with the Archbishop of New Spain, the Spanish Franciscan friar Juan de Zumárraga (1468–1548), to build her a chapel at the site of the apparition, Tepeyacac or Tepeaquilla Hill, today known as Tepeyac Hill.⁷ Tepeyac Hill is a topographical elevation that is part of a mountainous range called Sierra of Guadalupe, located to the north of the Basin of Mexico. During the colonial era, Tepeyac sat close to the edge of Lake Texcoco, famous for being the site of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, and its neighbor city, Tlatelolco (see Figures 1 and 2) (Urquijo Torres 2009, pp. 80–82). The hill was scarcely populated in pre-Hispanic times. However, Tepeyac Hill was a religiously significant site in pre-Hispanic

times, where a deity was adored, which might account for the decision to establish a Catholic shrine shortly after the conquest (Aguilera 2000, pp. 31–35).

The Virgin appeared to Juan Diego three more times over the course of the next four days, but despite Juan Diego's efforts, Archbishop Zumárraga would not believe his account until, on December 13 of that same year, Juan Diego, under the Virgin's instructions, was told to collect Castilian roses (not endemic to Mexico) from the hill's summit, normally barren given the time of the year, placing the roses in his cloak or *tilmatli*. Juan Diego, as instructed, took the roses to the archbishop, and when dropping them on the floor at Zumárraga's feet, the people present realized that the cloak had been imprinted with the icon of a dark-skinned Virgin Mary (de Florencia 1895, pp. 22–24).

According to Jeannette Favrot Peterson, Guadalupe's iconography borrows heavily from European representations of the Immaculate Conception from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which in turn employed symbols from the Book of Revelations 12:1, specifically, the description of a woman foreboding the end of times, described as "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet" (Peterson 1992, p. 12; Coogan et al. 2010, Revelation 12:1, p. 2168). This aligns with the apocalyptic and providential associations drawn by Juan de Goicochea, a Jesuit priest who wrote a sermon given on the day the 1695 shrine was inaugurated; Miguel Sánchez, a Creole priest who wrote the first published chronicle of the apparitions; and the Creole Jesuit priest Francisco de Florencia, another chronicler of the apparitions, all of whom provided exegetical and theological interpretations of Our Lady of Guadalupe's apparitions. Strong parallels and associations between Our Lady of Guadalupe–Tepeyac and the Temple of Jerusalem, Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, and other biblical sites and apocalyptic symbols became an inherent part of the Guadalupean icon transmitted into the shrine in architectural form (de Florencia 1895, p. 160 and ss.; Goicochea 1695, pp. 5–6; Sánchez 1648, pp. 6, 72). The name Guadalupe, it should be noted, is borrowed from a shrine located in a monastery of the same name, in the village of Guadalupe, in the province of Extremadura, in central-eastern Spain. The revered sculpture in the Extremaduran shrine differs in appearance from its Mexican counterpart in terms of iconography, form, and artistic techniques and styles, perhaps the only thing in common between them being the fact that both Madonnas are dark-skinned.

Shortly after the Virgin's first apparition, an improvised chapel was built to house the painting rendered on Juan Diego's *tilmatli* by Archbishop Zumárraga's orders (Amerlinck de Corsi 2010, p. 8). A procession was carried out on 26 December 1531, transporting the image from the cathedral to its location on Tepeyac Hill.⁸ By 1557, Zumárraga's succeeding archbishop, Alonso de Montúfar, was recognized as a Guadalupean devotee who funneled alms into the chapel (Poole 1995, pp. 58–59). In 1576, Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, the famed missionary and researcher of Mesoamerican Indigenous cultures, had decried that Natives were pilgrimaging to Tepeyac to adore a pre-Hispanic deity called Tonantzin (Aguilera 2000, p. 31). This iteration of the chapel was improved around mid-century, and in 1600, it was decided that a larger and more sumptuous church building should be built, given the increasing number of faithful who visited the site (Amerlinck de Corsi 2010, p. 8).

The works for the first shrine continued until 1621, and the church was dedicated the next year. While this building was under construction, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was sheltered in a humble chapel built on the slopes of the hill where the first apparition was said to have taken place. This building was later named the Chapel of the Indians or Capilla de Indios (Amerlinck de Corsi 2010, pp. 8–12). A few years after the consecration of the first shrine, in 1629, Mexico City suffered the worst flood in its colonial history. The image of Guadalupe was transferred to the Mexico City Cathedral, where the locals prayed for the Virgin's intercession in assuaging the flood. The image remained at the cathedral until 1634.

After returning the image to Tepeyac, the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe thrived as the icon gained popularity, officially obtaining the status of a shrine as its cult spread throughout central New Spain (Amerlinck de Corsi 2010, pp. 8–9). By the 1690s, plans were underway to start works on a new shrine, ever more grandiose and spectacular

than the previous one. Through the sponsorship of wealthy Creoles, the Medina Picazo family, and Captain Pedro Ruiz de Castañeda, and the backing of Archbishop Aguiar y Seijas and Viceroy Gaspar de la Cerda y Mendoza, Count of Galve, the new edifice began its construction in 1695 ([Amerlinck de Corsi 2010](#), p. 12; [Sigaut 2006](#), p. 102).

3. The Architecture of the Villa de Guadalupe Shrine Complex

Initially, the design for the new shrine was entrusted to the famed Creole architects José Durán de Alendranejo (1652–ca. 1707) and Diego de los Santos (see Figure 4). The original architectural plan for the project is kept at the Archivo de Indias, in Seville, Spain, which is signed by Durán ([Amerlinck de Corsi 2010](#), p. 12). Durán represents a critical figure in the development of late colonial Creole architecture. He was not only the mentor of the Creole architect Pedro de Arrieta (1660–1738), another central figure in Creole New Spanish architecture, but he was also the father of Miguel Custodio Durán (1682–ca. 1748) and grandfather of Ildefonso Iniesta Bejarano y Durán (1716–1781) ([Amerlinck de Corsi 2010](#), p. 12), who, together with the work carried out by other important Creole architects, such as Diego de la Sierra and Francisco Guerrero y Torres, represent the pinnacle of a century and a half of Creole architectural developments, whose essence, in many ways, is found at the complex of Our Lady of Guadalupe's Shrine.

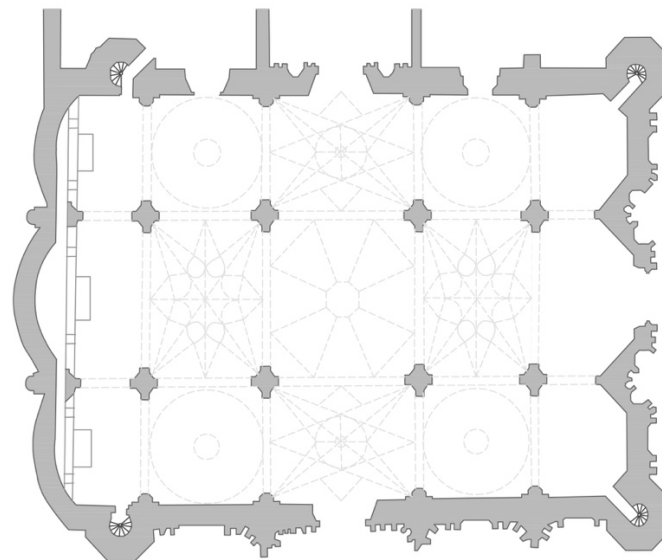


Figure 4. The original design for the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe (ca. 1694) by the Creole architect José Durán de Almendranejo (1652–ca. 1695), a mentor to Creole architect Pedro de Arrieta, who saw to the shrine's completion after Durán's passing and made changes to the plan's design. Durán also planned a cloister attached to the shrine. This site is now occupied by the Capuchin convent built from 1792–1797 and designed by the Creole architect Ignacio Castera (ca. 1750–1810). Drawing by author, not to scale, based on the original plan kept in the Archivo de Indias, Seville.

The plan design by Durán for the new Guadalupe shrine constituted an attempt to articulate a novel (in the eyes of New Spanish architects) summary of differing architectural sources ([Bérchez 1992](#), pp. 122–23, 135–36, 177–85; [Cuesta Hernández 2009](#), pp. 108–26; [Fernández 2003b](#), pp. 384–92). The variegated architectural citations expressed the Creole architects' cosmopolitanism and knowledge of European models, particularly from Spain and Italy. The design's eclecticism did not hamper the crafting of a harmonious architectural plan that would transmit the aspirations of Creole inventiveness while acknowledging European precedents ranging from Bramante to, possibly, Juan de Herrera ([Cuesta Hernández 2009](#), p. 109). Durán's plan displays efforts at reconciling such apparently discordant elements as Gothic ribbed vaulting with a basilical model that is, somehow, also a centralized plan. The ensemble of four peripheral, spherical domes, which are rounded off with the larger, centralized, hexagonal dome, the four-cornered octagonal

towers, and the mixture of straight and curved lines, particularly that of the main altar wall, constitutes a unique building plan that would evoke innovative and timeless sources all at once. The references to the Temple of Solomon are inevitable, given the loaded and long history of this architectural precedent in the early modern world, which was particularly widespread in New Spain (Fernández 2003a).

Durán would not see the building of the new shrine completed. It appears that his death placed Pedro de Arrieta, Durán's protégé, as the lead architect in the construction of the building and the man who saw it to completion in 1709 (see Figures 3 and 4) (Fernández 2003b, pp. 385–86; Cuesta Hernández 2009, pp. 105–6). Although some scholars have tried to downplay the importance of the 1709 Shrine of Guadalupe in the context of Mexico City's religious architectural scene in the late seventeenth century, the price of construction tells a different story (Conover 2011, p. 254 and ss.). According to estimates, the cost of building the Guadalupe Shrine ranged from five hundred thousand to eight hundred thousand pesos, an exorbitant amount of resources for one single structure compared to the cost of contemporaneous religious buildings of that era.⁹ This points to the importance that the Guadalupe Shrine held for the population of Mexico City and for its Creole elite.

Pedro de Arrieta would, later in his career, author such innovative buildings as the Church of the Professed House built for the Society of Jesus (1714–1720), the church for the Convent of Santo Domingo (ca. 1736), and the Palace of the Inquisition (1733–1737), all in Mexico City. The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe was a key early work that served as an important precedent for his future career, in which Arrieta employed a design style characterized by trapezoidal framings in door and window frames, while intricate profiles delineated the front façade in plan, employing rhythmically arranged engaged columns for composing the portal, all framed by the distinctive four corner turrets of the shrine (see Figures 4–8). The Church of the Professed House, built a few years after Tepeyac's shrine had been completed, reflects Arrieta's altarpiece-like treatment of the upper body of the façade at Tepeyac. While at Tepeyac, he framed a relief of the scene in which the Virgin appears to Juan Diego (see Figure 8); at the Professed House, the scene is Ignatius's vision at the Storta Cave, a famous passage of his life.

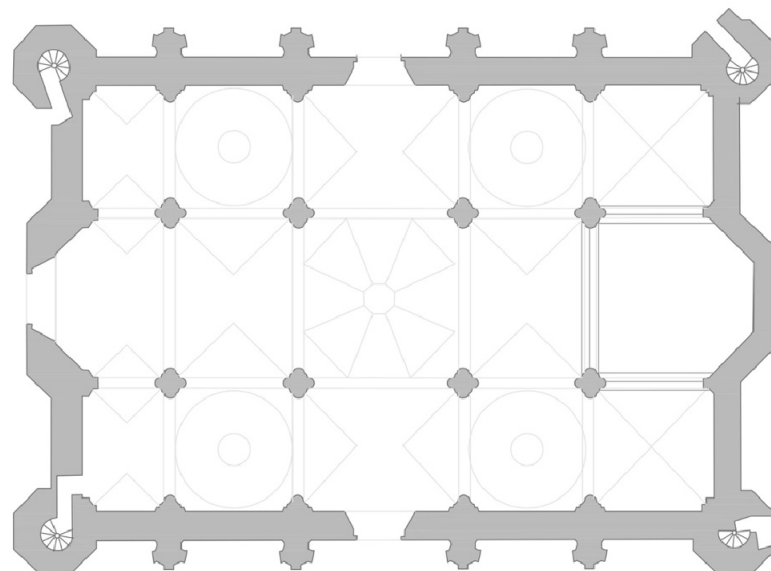


Figure 5. The modified plan, which is based on the design by José Durán (see Figure 3) of the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as it was originally built. The construction began in 1695, and it was seen to completion in 1709 by Pedro de Arrieta. Nineteenth-century additions and modifications have greatly altered this layout. Drawing by the author, not to scale, based on Saldaña Solís (2017).



Figure 6. *Mapa de la villa insigne y Real Colegiata del Santuario de Santa Maria de Guadalupe dista una legua de Mexico*, 1760 (“Map of the Notable and Royal Collegiate Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, A League Away from Mexico City”). Author: Juan del Prado, cartographer. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington DC. Call number: G4414.M6A35 1760.P7. Rights: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017588136/>, accessed on 1 August 2023.

In the treatment of rhythmically arranged, engaged columns, Arrieta’s main façade of the Guadalupean temple recalls the lower levels of Roman Baroque temples, such as Santa Susanna, by Carlo Maderno (completed by 1600), Sant’Andrea della Valle by Giacomo della Porta (completed by 1650), or the church of Saints Vincenzo and Anastasio by Martino Longhi (completed by 1650); although it is unclear whether Arrieta would have seen engravings of Baroque Roman churches, it is quite possible that he would have had access to engravings of such famed structures as the Roman Il Gesù. The contrast to the Roman counterparts is the strongly geometrical octagonal entry portal and the characteristic treatment of the second level with the framed scene of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s apparition to Juan Diego. The portal’s second level is topped by a series of sculptural, triangular finials, which have been incorporated into a pediment that was likely built in modern times and which has altered the façade’s overall appearance.

The employment of the local *Chiluca* stone for the principal ornamental elements, such as the engaged columns and the sculptural reliefs, intermingled with the porous, reddish volcanic *tezontle* stone to infill planar surfaces on façades and lateral walls, was a characteristic trait of Mexico City’s seventeenth and eighteenth-century architecture, which revealed the local craft traditions to which Arrieta was paying homage. In plan, Arrieta maintained most of the characteristics of Durán’s design, such as the central-basilical character, preserving the lateral naves’ dynamism. The four corner octagonal towers, which lent it its Solomonian temple character, remained unchanged while maintaining the same number of domes and their placement within the plan but replacing the gothic groin vaults with sail vaults (see Figures 4–8).



Figure 7. A detail from “Virgin of Guadalupe” by Juan de Villegas, which shows a rare view of the shrine as it was being built, with the walls and piers erected, and the roof and dome missing, ca. 1701. Oil on canvas, 210 × 104 cm, inventory number 00041. Photo by author. Courtesy of Museo de América, Madrid.



Figure 8. A view of the seventeenth-century shrine’s front elevation, designed by Pedro de Arrieta and José Durán de Alendranejo, as it stands today. The building has undergone many changes to its structure. The main portal and the corner turrets, however, remain almost intact. Photo by author.

The new shrine, completed in 1709, represents a summary of Creole architecture that collects influences and traditions from the latter part of the seventeenth century: namely, theatrical façade designs punctuated by stark geometric elements (particularly the semi-octagonal portal); a restrained use of ornamental elements (whether floral or vegetative) in spandrels, cornices, fasciae, etc.; an ordered use of Mannerist columnar orders, in Arrieta's case usually pedestaled; and fidelity to vernacular expressions in the use of materials, namely the Chiluca stone for window framings, reliefs, gates and sculptural pieces, and the reddish Tezontle stone for infilling walls. Around 1895, the shrine building underwent deep transformations. Its volume was extended in length, with the addition of two modular bays toward the north and two chapels attached to the eastern wall that removed its original squared proportion and the centralized character in plan.

The next outstanding building in the complex is the *Capilla del Pocito* or Little Chapel of the Well, the work of architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres (1727–1792), built between 1777–1791, which constitutes further confirmation of the Creole community's investment in physically shaping the Guadalupe shrine complex. Guerrero y Torres is one of the most fascinating figures of the Creole architectural scene of the late colonial period. He was a native of the Villa of Guadalupe, which surely made him familiar with the shrine building, and likely influenced his architectural tastes as a future architect. In many ways, Guerrero y Torres, the son of a wealthy miner, embodied the aspirations of the Creole community. He was privileged thanks to the extractive economy of New Spain and the cheap Native labor, well-learned and educated and, for a good part of his adult life, a successful entrepreneur. His architectural catalog is numerous. He worked as supervisor of several buildings in his town of Guadalupe, working also in nearby Mexico City at the remodeling works of San Ildefonso College, in the 1750s and 1760s (Loera Fernández 1982, p. 61). He passed his exam to become a “maestro mayor” in architecture in 1767. He is better known for building ostentatious residences for the Creole elite, such as the Palacio for the Marquis of Jaral de Berrio, and the Palacio of the Counts of Santiago de Calimaya which, together with other high-profile residences in the city, constitute the pinnacle of his architectural career. He also designed an exceptional religious building, the Templo de La Enseñanza, all in Mexico City.

His masterpiece, however, is the Little Chapel of the Well or *Capilla del Pocito*, located in the Guadalupe shrine complex, some 175 yards or 160 m to the northeast of the shrine building (see Figures 9–15). According to tradition, on the Virgin's fourth apparition to Juan Diego, at the site where he had picked the roses that he later took to the archbishop, a miraculous water well appeared, to which popular tradition attributed healing properties. A pavilion had been constructed there in the mid-seventeenth century, but toward the late eighteenth century, thanks to crowdfunding efforts, wealthy donors, and the patronage of the Mexico City archbishopric, a new structure was commissioned to Guerrero y Torres (Patton 1958, pp. 128–29).

The resulting edifice is one of the most intriguing buildings in colonial Mexico. The chapel's plan is inspired by an engraving in Serlio's Third Book of an unidentified ancient Roman temple (Serlio 1544, p. XXXI). The plan is centralized and elliptical, with an octagonal central room (see Figure 9). The central prayer hall is the largest space, while its two ends constitute a hall that houses the well at one end and a sacristy at the other. The central chapel space is reminiscent of the Pantheon in its circular, domed form. The interior dome is profusely decorated with frescoes of a heavenly chorus of putti while, underneath, paired columns divide the bays of the circular space into altarpieces and doors (see Figure 13). However, its formal and ornamental solutions constitute the chapel's most innovative aspect. Guerrero y Torres domed each of the three spaces in the chapel: well hall, prayer hall, and sacristy. The entirety of the domes' exterior surfaces are covered with blue and white tiles that form a zigzagging pattern, lending the domes a sense of perpetual movement.

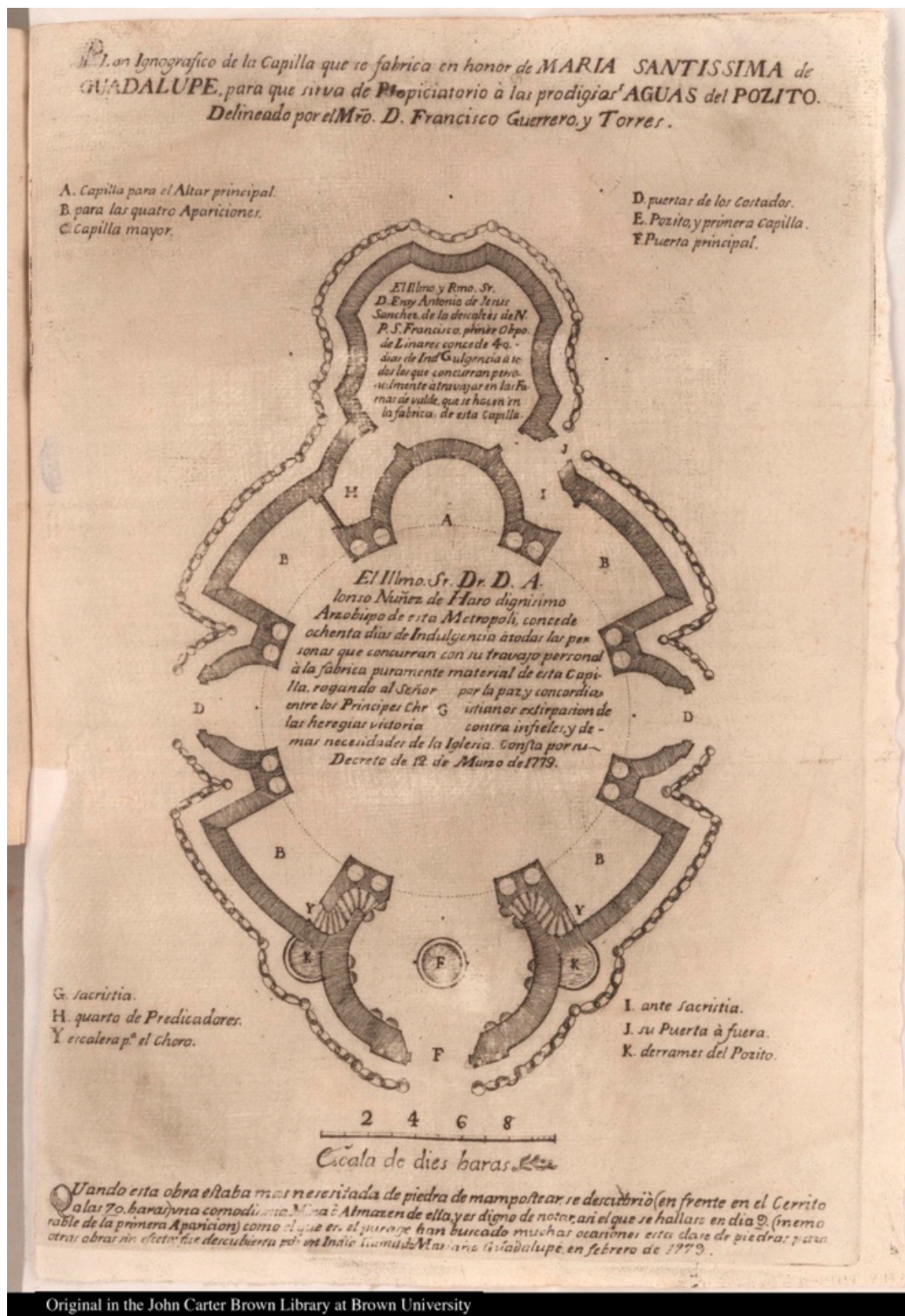


Figure 9. Architectural plan of the El Pocito or Little Well chapel at the Tepeyac shrine complex of the Virgin of Guadalupe, by architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres, ca. 1790. Drawn to scale in Castilian *varas* and annotated. Engraving, 29.8 × 20.2 cm (platemark), published by Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

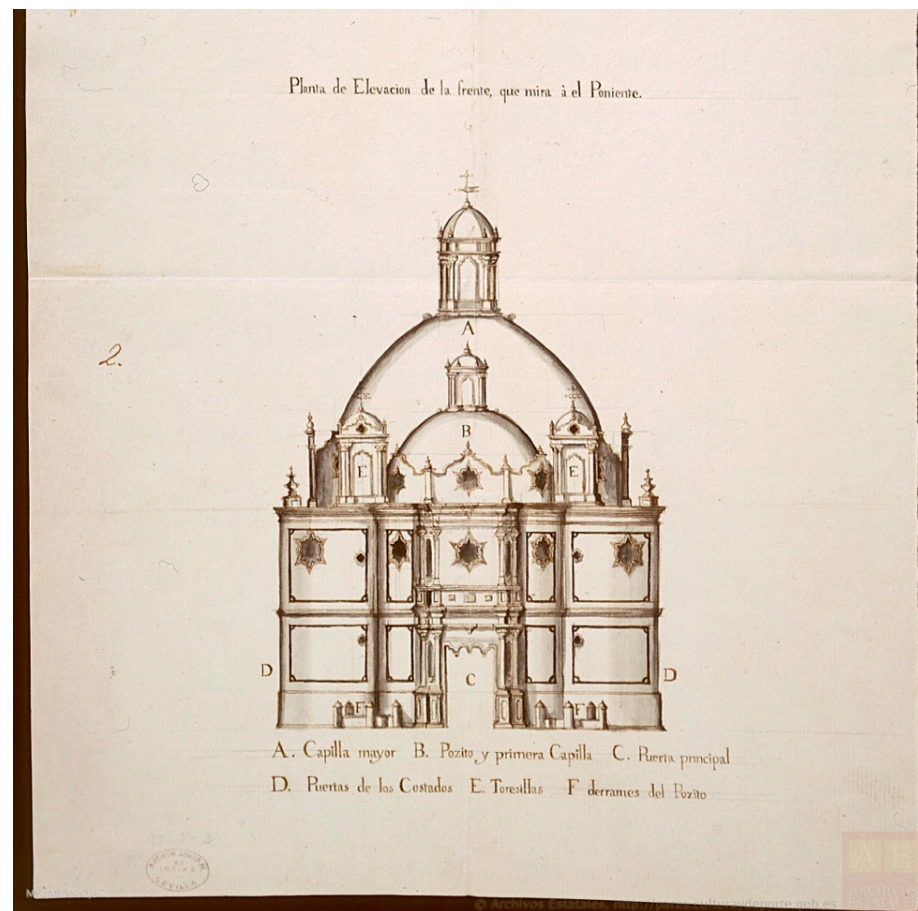


Figure 10. The main façade of the Chapel of the Well or El Pocito, looking toward the West. Design and drawing by architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres, 1782. Archivos Estatales de España, Archivo General de Indias. Reference code: ES.41091.AGI//MP-MEXICO,377. Used with permission.

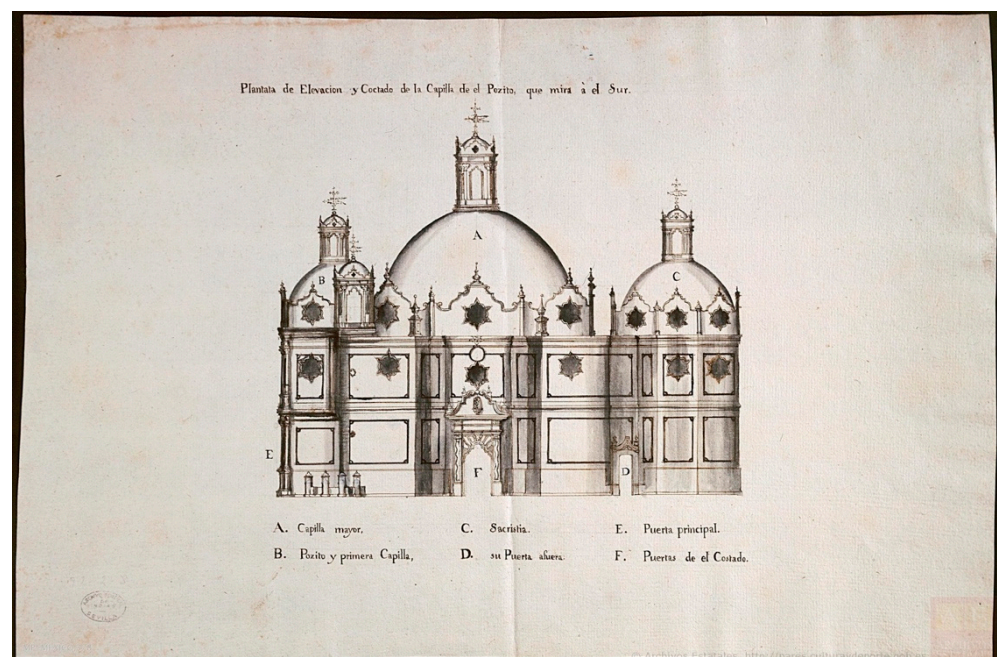


Figure 11. The south façade of the Chapel of the Well, or El Pocito. Design and drawing by architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres. Reference code: ES.41091.AGI//MP-MEXICO,378. Archivos Estatales de España, Archivo General de Indias. Used with permission.



Figure 12. The front elevation (west) of the Chapel of the Well or *El Pocito*, by architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres. Photo by author.

The chapel's elevations are finished with a combination of Chiluca stone and Tezontle stone for infilling non-ornamented planar surfaces. The gray Chiluca stone is employed for all carved ornamentation, profuse at the façades, and to frame the lateral surfaces. The chapel boasts star-shaped bullseye windows on the domes and on the lower floor and a perfectly integrated, playful bell gable on its lateral façade. The façades, on the other hand, particularly the main one, are a perfectly choreographed mixture of attached columns, pedestals, and entablatures, which frame an array of vegetative motifs, geometrical lace patterns, and even putti, in a curious mix of classical, baroque, and mudéjar resonances. The engaged columns on the upper body of the main façade belong to what González Galván termed *Tritóstilo*, a columnar order characterized by a column shaft, in its third lower portion, ornamented with vegetative forms (González Galván 2006, pp. 190–91). The vegetative ornamentation around the central five-point-star-shaped window on the upper body and its counterpart above it, on the mixed-lined pediment fronting the domes, plus the zig-zagging tiled domes, lend a Mudéjar air to this wondrous chapel. The chapel by Guerrero y Torres, who worked pro-bono for this project, furthers the argument of how meaningful this site was for the Creole community, of which he was a role model, and how

he manages to convey a sense of academic and vernacular sources, in a hybrid combination that expresses another facet of Creole New Spanish architecture.

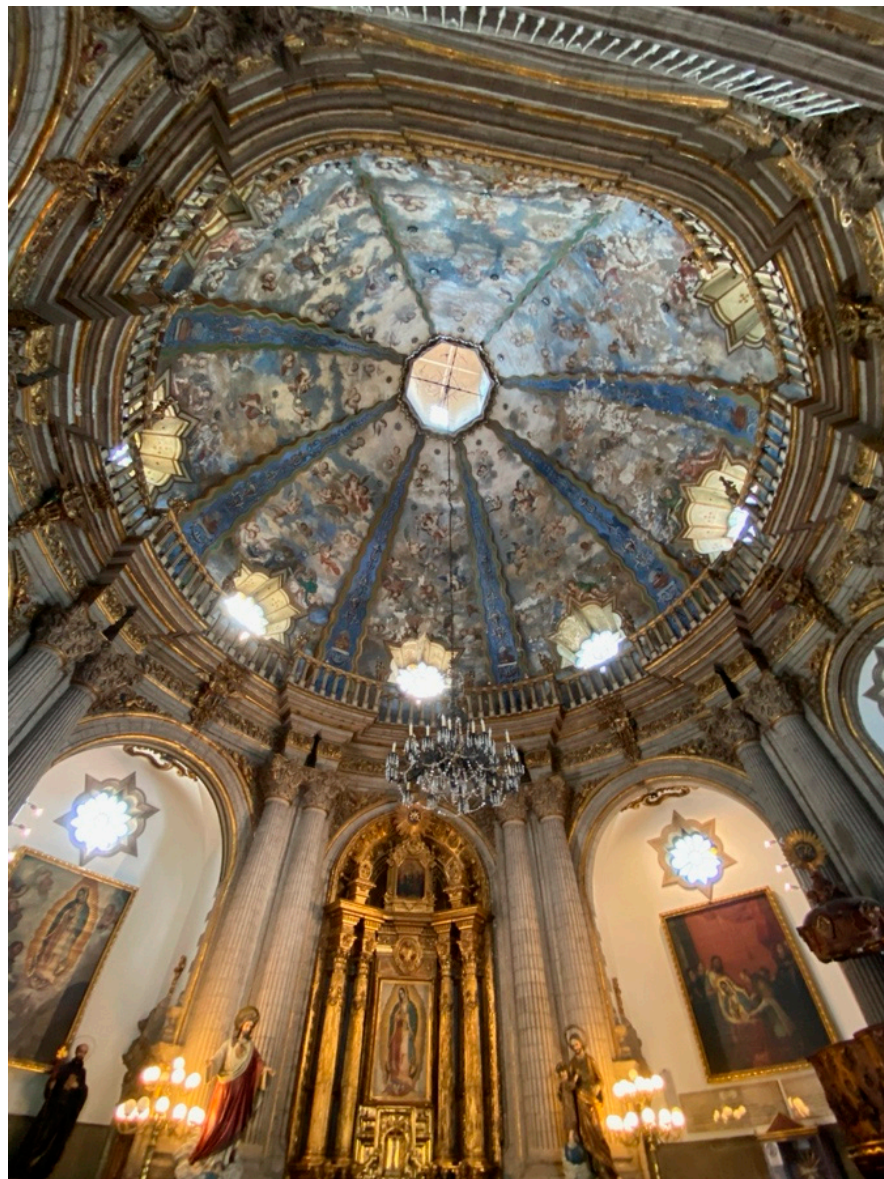


Figure 13. Interior of the Capilla del Pocito or Chapel of the Little Well, by Francisco Guerrero y Torres, built ca. 1777–1791. Photo by author.

Arguably, the most important architectural element constructed in the late eighteenth century at Tepeyac, the one that binds the entire complex in a symbolic manner, is the scenic, stepped ramp designed by Francisco Guerrero y Torres around the year 1782, of which a set of drawings are kept at the Archivo de Indias, in Seville (see Figures 14 and 15). The steps replaced an older stepped ramp that started at the back of the shrine, winding up to the top of Tepeyac Hill on its western slope. The hilltop is the site where the first two apparitions of the Virgin to Juan Diego occurred and where a chapel was built to commemorate the event. This structure is called Capilla del Cerrito or Chapel of the Little Hill, and its façade, remodeled sometime in the latter part of the eighteenth century, is attributed to Guerrero y Torres as well.¹⁰ Guerrero y Torres' stepped ramp starts at the Chapel of the Well, his architectural masterpiece, winding to the top of the hill on its eastern side. Through the construction of these steps, Guerrero y Torres connected the Shrine, the Chapel of the Natives or Capilla de los Naturales, the Chapel of the Well, and the Chapel

of the Little Hill or Capilla del Cerrito in a single processional promenade. The steps are flanked by walls in the form of inverted arches, and halfway up, on the hill's slope, is a monumental sculpture in the form of a sailing ship, an ex voto built following a design by Guerrero y Torres, honoring the desire of some sailors who braved a fierce storm by praying to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The offering still exists in a reconstructed version, as the original was destroyed by a storm in the 1940s (Sentíes R. 1991, p. 164).



Figure 14. The south elevation of the monumental steps that lead up to the summit of Tepeyac Hill, the site of the Virgin's apparitions, 1782. The monumental steps were designed by Francisco Guerrero y Torres. Archivos Estatales de España, Archivo General de Indias. Reference code: ES.41091.AGI/ /MP-MEXICO,379BIS. Used with permission.

The significance of these steps cannot be understated. By designing this ramp, Guerrero y Torres connected all the main landmarks at the complex through an itinerary, thereby effectively linking all the main sites at Tepeyac in a promenade that started with a visit to the shrine to see and pray to the Virgin's icon—the highlight of the visit. The itinerary proceeded with a visit to the Chapel of the Natives, which incorporated the Indigenous population into the Guadalupian narrative, and proceeded to the Chapel of the Well, a landmark that highlighted the site's topographical sacredness, as it was built on the site where the Virgin produced a water well that, as tradition tells, possesses miraculous properties. The final act constitutes a hike up to the hill's summit, to personally visit the site of the first apparitions, marked by the Chapel of the Little Hill.

This way, the Tepeyac complex should be viewed as a sacred religious complex marked by an itinerary whose geography and topography were carefully articulated through the architecture produced by Creole agents and donors. In effect, Tepeyac was transformed from a humble Indigenous village, through outstanding architectural interventions, into the holiest and most symbolically significant place in New Spain.

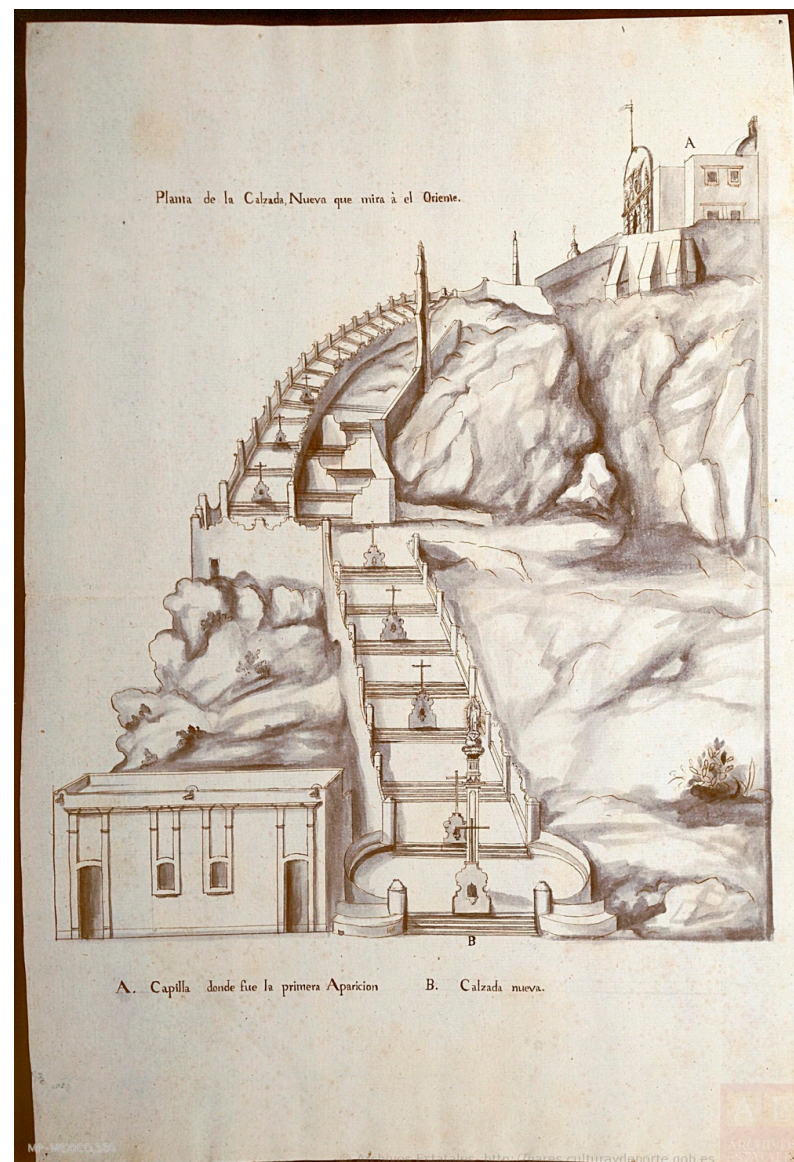


Figure 15. The east elevation of the monumental steps leading to the summit of the Tepeyac Hill, drawing and design by architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres. Archivos Estatales de España, Archivo General de Indias. Reference code: ES.41091.AGI//MP-MEXICO,380BIS. Used with permission.

4. The Urban Transformation of the Villa de Guadalupe

In 1572, a Spanish envoy from the Jeronomite Order sent King Philip II a report that determined that Tepeyac was an extremely unfit site to host the religious cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as it was too close to the lake, its soil too arid, too far from Mexico City, and lacking access to potable water (Álvarez Álvarez 2006, pp. 402–3). This report highlights the disadvantages and the improbability, from a geographic and environmental point of view, of making the Villa of Guadalupe a thriving town, the center of a popular religious cult, and the spiritual heart of *criollismo*.

And in effect, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Creole elite of Mexico City carried out a series of tremendous efforts to manipulate the environmental and urban conditions of the town of Guadalupe to transform the humble settlement into a veritable “villa”, a term reserved for urban settlements that received a charter by royal decree after fulfilling certain legal requirements, such as possessing a town council made up of inhabitants of the locality. In turn, a town council, as per the Laws of the Indies, had to be made up of Spaniards for a Spanish settlement, or of Indigenous men, in the case of

a Native villa, like the Villa de Tlaxcala. Legal complications arose, however, given the town was mostly inhabited by Natives, so for Guadalupe to become a villa, the Indigenous inhabitants would have to be granted the privilege of forming a council, while few Creoles and native Spaniards lived in Guadalupe—not enough to form a council. Creole activism pushed for the granting of a royal decree to turn Guadalupe into a villa anyway, and it was granted, but for the Indigenous inhabitants, who formed their own council. For this reason, Creoles promoted the move of Creole inhabitants to the villa, to be able to form a Creole and Spanish council (López Sarrelangue 2005, pp. 121–24). Files of various efforts on behalf of Creoles in Mexico City are kept at the Mexico City Historical Archive, chronicling their efforts to promote Guadalupe as an attractive town for Creoles and Spaniards, to stimulate the local economy and to expand its tax base.¹¹

Before the arrival of Europeans, the site, as mentioned, was scarcely populated, due to the lack of potable water, its barren conditions, and its proximity to Texcoco Lake, which placed the humble settlement in constant danger of flooding (see Figures 1, 2 and 16) (López Sarrelangue 2005, pp. 15–16). The small town occupied a key location, however, as Tepeyac was a gateway from the ancient *altepetl*¹² of Tlatelolco to many lakeside communities in the northern part of the Basin of Mexico, which connected to major roads leading to the Gulf of Mexico and Puebla. Further, Tepeyac's importance was also focused on being connected by the long and wide avenue called the Calzada de los Misterios or Calzada de Tepeyac, which dated to pre-Hispanic times, and joined Tepeyac's topography—which was similar to that of a small peninsula—with Mexico City proper, and also served as a dike (see Figure 1) (Martínez Baracs 2000, pp. 56–59). After the conquest of the Mexica and the Tlatelolcans, the settlement became known as Tepeaquilla by the early Spanish settlers until 1563, when it was decided to change the name of the small settlement to Guadalupe (Senties R. 1991, p. 8). When the settlement sought to acquire the title of “villa”, the requirements for such a title required that the population be segregated into a section designated for Europeans and another section for the Natives (Senties R. 1991, p. 8). The wealthiest inhabitants, Spaniards and Creoles, settled around the shrine complex grounds, while the Native inhabitants, for the most part, settled in the peripheries, forming their own barrios, such as San Lorenzo and San Bartolomé de las Salinas (Senties R. 1991, p. 19).



Figure 16. Vista de la Plaza mayor de la Villa de Guadalupe inundada en septiembre del año de 1819 (“A View of the Main Square of the Villa of Guadalupe, flooded on September of the year 1819”). Author: D. José Mariano Domínguez de Mendoza. Real Academia de la Historia. Colección: Sección de Cartografía y Artes Gráficas. Signatura: C-001-107. N° de registro: 00044. (Public Domain Mark 1.0: <http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/>). Accessed on 4 August 2023.

However, as with the ostentatious architecture at the site, the efforts at urbanizing the town and connecting it to the center of Mexico City were compelling in many ways. Several urban planning projects were drawn up by Creole architects who imagined the redesign of Tepeyac into a veritable urban center with a clearly delineated urban design to match Mexico City's (see Figure 17). Although none of the projects was completely realized, many elements of the projects were fulfilled, including the central plaza that mimicked Mexico City's, the articulating of two important avenues that connected the villa with Mexico City's center, the aforementioned Calzada de los Misterios (or Calzada de Tepeyac) and the Calzada de Guadalupe. Another important piece of infrastructure was the 8000 m long (5 miles) aqueduct to supply the town with potable water (see Figure 18) (Chargoy Ruiz 2020, pp. 25–32). Together, the unrealized projects and the accomplished urban improvements reveal a tremendous effort at transforming the natural geography of the once humble Native town and pay testament to the desire for the Creolization of the settlement, exposing the vision they had for the Villa of Guadalupe, which was to become a relevant spiritual center for New Spain.

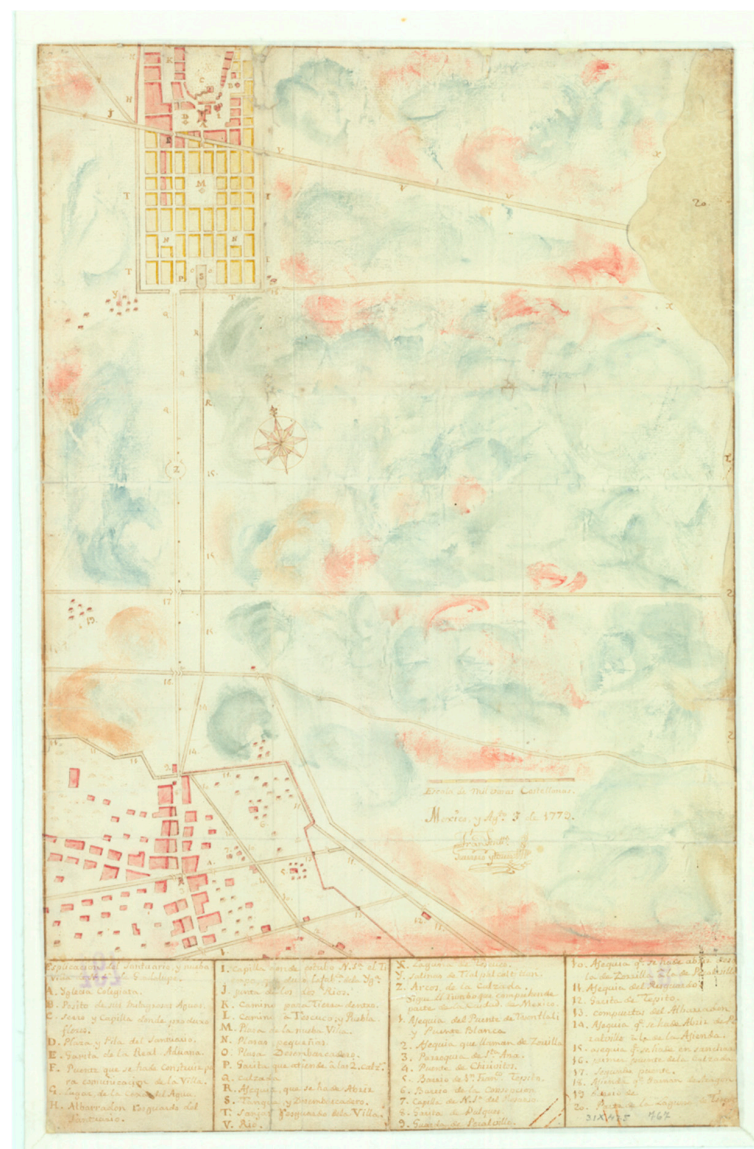


Figure 17. *Santuario y nueva villa de nuestra señora de Guadalupe* (“Shrine and new Villa of Our Lady of Guadalupe”) an urban project by architect Francisco Guerrero y Torres, ca. 1779, which shows the re-designed town on the upper part of the image, tethered to Mexico City by the two avenues connecting them. Of note is the exacting gridded design imagined by Guerrero y Torres. Scale 1 to 1000 Castilian *varas*. 98 × 32 cm. Courtesy of Mapoteca Manuel Orozco y Berra, Mexico City.

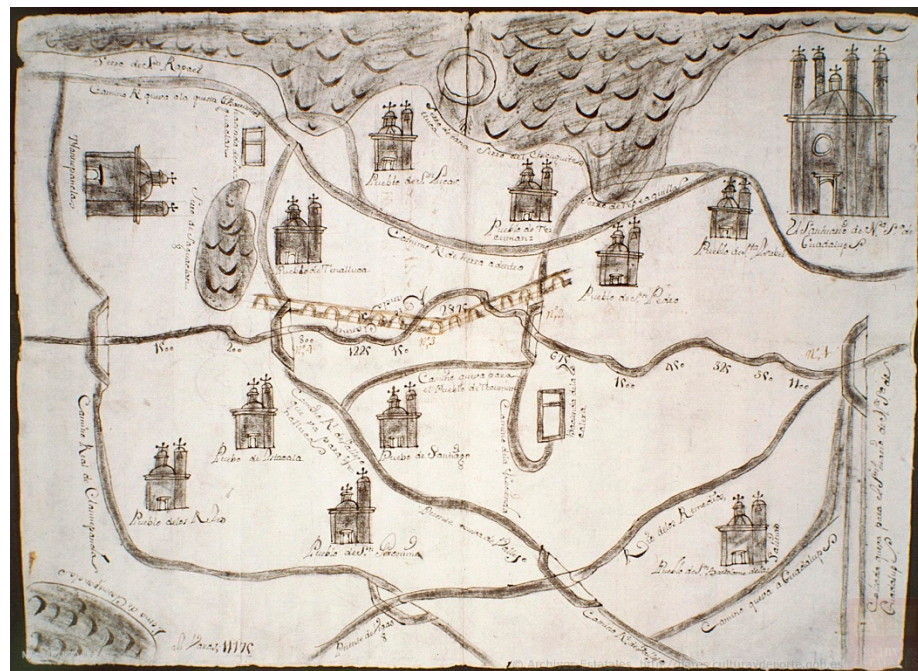


Figure 18. *Diseño de la obra de conducción de agua al Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y de los pueblos y caminos próximos* (“Design of the waterworks to provide water to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and its environs”), plan drawn by José Buenaventura de Arellano, 1748. Archivos Estatales de España, Archivo General de Indias. Reference code ES.41091.AGI/ /MP-MEXICO,163. Used with permission.

Various Creole architects drew up plans for the villa, among them Luis Díez Navarro (1736), Felipe Feringán (1748), Manuel Álvarez with Eduardo de Herrera (1750), and Francisco Guerrero y Torres with Ildefonso de Iniesta y Bejarano (1779). Perhaps the most intriguing plan is the one is by Guerrero y Torres and Ildefonso Iniesta y Bejarano (see Figure 17). Their project reveals the intention to employ the River of Guadalupe (also called River Oztotitlán)—which used to run in an east–west direction, merely some 400 yards from the shrine building—as a border that would divide the settlement from the existing Native village, into another, new settlement to the south of the river and the shrine complex, which would have been characterized by an ordered and gridded layout.

This part of the town would be exclusive to the Creole and Spanish population, leaving the scattered settlements of the Natives on the east and west ends of the shrine complex seemingly untouched. The plan by Francisco Guerrero y Torres and Ildefonso de Iniesta y Bejarano reveals a clear influence from Baroque urban planning, such as centralized plazas, ordered grids, radial avenues, and the standardization in terms of form and dimensions of urban blocks. According to this unrealized vision (only the blocks delineating the village’s main plaza were orderly), Tepeyac would be the site of an ordered, gridiron urban design, its urban space shaped and controlled by the aspirational Creole elite, who looked for urban precedents in Spain to reimagine the town of Guadalupe’s urban form and renew its direct urban link to Mexico City.¹³

5. Conclusions: The Social and Racial Dynamics at Tepeyac, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and *Criollismo*

In the late sixteenth century, theories regarding the physical and mental degeneration of the Spaniards born in the Americas due to environmental circumstances of the continent, such as the hot and humid climate, became common. Joseph de Acosta (1539–1600), a Spanish Jesuit theologian, went even further and posited that a combination of the constellations and the breast milk from Indigenous wet nurses contributed to the moral and physical degeneration of Creoles (Martínez 2008, p. 138). These derogatory musings,

together with the legal restrictions that prevented Creoles from occupying important civic and religious posts, which were reserved instead for recent arrivals from the Iberian Peninsula, fostered a sense of resentment by Creoles toward native-born and recently arrived Spaniards. Despite some allowances made by the Crown for Creoles to join mid-level clerical and civil positions, by the seventeenth century, they had not only adopted the word *criollo* as a proud and self-identifying term¹⁴ but had also embarked on building what Anna More terms the Criollo Archive.

This project called for the construction of an archive made up of objects and documents by certain Creole scholars that would legitimize a long historical lineage harking back to pre-Hispanic times. In this historiographical (re)vision, Creoles saw themselves as the descendants of brave conquistadors and evangelizers, but they also contemplated themselves as the inheritors of the Indigenous past, as they became, through the systematic study of antiquities and scholarship, the keepers of Native knowledge. For Creole scholars, knowledge of the land and its ancient cultures was a rich source of material that allowed them to forge connections to Indigenous Mexicans and other ethnic castes of New Spain. By exalting New Spain, the land they all shared, through its rich history, geography, and cultural history, the Creoles forged forms of proto-nationalism, regionalism, and a sense of *nación* (nationhood) and *patria* (homeland). Together, these celebrations reinforced a Creole sense of community, and prompted the mapping, documenting, and reappropriating of New Spanish symbols, landscapes, territories, and objects. In this process, New Spain was represented as a promised land, a paradise, or a land chosen by divine order.

A phrase taken from Psalm 147 of the Vulgate, and quoted by Archbishop Lorenzana in a sermon praising the Virgin of Guadalupe, *non fecit taliter omni nationi* (He [the Lord] did not do such [things] for all nations), was meant to express such a sense of exceptionalism in the Virgin's choosing of New Spain as the site of her appearance (Taylor 1987, p. 14). In effect, the icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe has been widely accepted as one of the symbols that were appropriated by the Creole community to heighten their sense of divine destiny (see Figure 19). However, while many scholars have devoted their studies to the way the icon was employed as a symbol for the colonial and modern Mexican populations, the site's transformation and appropriation on behalf of the Creole elite during the viceregal period have remained neglected in the historiography.

In the context of a burgeoning Creole community becoming increasingly influential in the cultural and political spheres of Mexico City and New Spain, the belief that the popular Guadalupian devotion originated from Indigenous worship of the icon due to racial identification, resulting in Our Lady of Guadalupe's transformation into a symbol of unity for the racially diverse population of New Spain, does not hold any water (Conover 2011, pp. 252–53; Peterson 1992, p. 39). The Creole elite of Mexico City was instrumental in its growth as the most revered religious image in Mexico and beyond. The Creoles involved in the articulation of Guadalupe's cult, mostly clerics, scholars, and intellectuals, boosted the Guadalupian devotion by producing the chronicles of the Virgin's apparitions,¹⁵ championing her cause as a protectress of Mexico City among the clerical elite of New Spain, Spain, and Rome,¹⁶ and communicating its providential nature through sermons and chronicles.¹⁷ These actions went hand in hand with the aspiration to transform Tepeyac into the spiritual center of New Spain, to the point that the development of *criollismo* as nationhood would be intimately linked to the urban and architectural changes at the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The Shrine of Guadalupe should be taken as an urban and architectural complex made up of the shrine church, the Chapel of the Well, the Capuchin female convent, the Chapel of the Natives, and the plans for its urban development. Taken as a whole, all these assembled elements represent the spiritual heart of *criollismo*, particularly the shrine which, as Luis Javier Cuesta has argued, can be contemplated as a cathedral for and by Creoles, to emulate the city's very own see, with its tremendous dose of redemptioner and apocalyptic undertones stemming from its associations to such potent symbols as the heavenly Jerusalem or the Temple of Solomon (Cuesta Hernández 2009, pp. 124–26).

The story of Tepeyac's geographic, environmental, urban, and architectural transformation is in every respect outstanding, and the way the Creole community appropriated an arid and poor settlement and transformed it into the spiritual center of the entire Valley of Mexico, and later of the entire future nation, is nothing short of amazing. Starting in the seventeenth century, the viceroys of New Spain began using the shrine, which had been elevated to the status of a collegiate church¹⁸ in 1709, for official receptions and other official events (Lafaye 2015, p. 296). Despite the occasional appropriation of the site on behalf of the Spanish viceroys, the articulation of the shrine complex and its prodigious symbolic references as the site of Creole nationhood was achieved via architecture and urban planning. And although the urban transformations for the Villa of Guadalupe were only partially realized, their ambitions were, in no uncertain terms, representative of the Creole desire to represent themselves as a chosen people. However, despite the Creolization of the site through architecture and urbanism, it is also undeniable that the pious tradition of Guadalupe, which was at least initially closely linked to the local communities of the area, eventually came to be seen by the Natives as a continuation of their piety toward a deity associated with interrelationships between the Earth, the topography, and the landscape, originally understood in pre-Hispanic times as part of the cult of the deity Tonantzin.



Figure 19. A view of Mexico City during a plague with the Virgin hovering in the sky. Probably based on an original artwork by José de Ibarra, engraved by Baltazar Troncoso in 1743 and published by la Viuda de José Bernardo de Hogal in 1746 in Mexico City. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

Despite the appropriation and cooption of the Guadalupe shrine complex by the Creole elite, the Indigenous communities carried out their *mitotes* yearly in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The *mitotes* were festivities characterized by euphoria and expressions of piety. Chronicles of such events, like that of Francisco Florencia, a Jesuit priest writing in 1688, highlight the festive character of the celebrations in which the Villa de Guadalupe's main square was appropriated by the Native communities. Their *mitotes* included mock battles and ritual dances, with participants wearing opulent pre-Hispanic attires, including Quetzal feathers in headdresses, sumptuous robes, and footwear, accompanied by theater plays in Nahuatl recreating Juan Diego's epiphany, and *copal* or ritual incense burning (de Florencia 1898, pp. 167–68). As Jacques Lafaye has argued, those colonial *mitotes* are the precedents for the modern-day devotions to Our Lady of Guadalupe, which attracted more than 4 million visitors on 12 December 2021 (La redacción de El Economista 2021). Regardless of the political and social uses of the icon of Guadalupe and its worship throughout its history, the festivities, forceful expressions of religious gravitas and joy, will belong to the people of Mexico and Latin America forever.

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Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The narrative of the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe comes from four primary works written in the colonial period. Together they are considered, to this day, the sources for Guadalupe's apparitions and for the role played by Juan Diego and other characters in the narrative, as well as the role played by the site of Tepeyac Hill. The first narrative was written by the Creole priest Miguel Sánchez in 1648. Sánchez equated Guadalupe with the woman mentioned in the Book of Revelations. The next work, from 1649, is perhaps the most widely read to this day, as it is argued that it was based on Indigenous accounts of the apparitions and miracles performed by the Virgin. It is attributed to Antonio Valeriano, an Indigenous scholar. However, the account was published by Luis Lasso de la Vega, and many attribute the authorship of this account, popularly known as Nican Mopohua, Nahuatl for "Thus It Is Told", to Lasso himself, who was a Creole priest and lawyer. The third canonical text was written by the Creole scholar and erudite Luis Becerra Tanco in 1666. It was his revised version of the events that he claimed were based on primary manuscripts and documents. The fourth text, widely cited and studied too, was written by the Jesuit Creole priest Francisco de Florencia in 1688, which he based, in turn, on a manuscript that belonged to the Creole scholar Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. Overall, it is evident how the role played by Creole clerics and scholars was critical in the articulation of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. See: (Sánchez 1648; Valeriano 1649; Becerra Tanco 1675; de Florencia 1895).
- ² The scholar Stafford Poole set 1648 as the key year in which Guadalupe became part of a clearly Creole cult that was not associated to the Indigenous population, while other scholars like Cornelius Conover believe its cult only took off until the 1760s thanks to the Creole community, remaining only a marginal worship until that period. William Taylor, on the other hand, sticks to 1754, the year of the Pope's official confirmation of the Virgin's role as patroness of New Spain, as the date in which her cult became diffused to the rest of the viceroyalty. Yet others, like Jeannette Favrot Peterson, asserted that the Guadalupian devotion was born a Creole one, and only took up amongst the "disenfranchised" population of Mexico until the nineteenth century. See: (Poole 1995, p. 10; Conover 2011, pp. 251–79; Peterson 1992, p. 39; Taylor 1987, p. 12).
- ³ In my definition of *criollismo*, I employ the work of several authors, from Edmundo O'Gorman, a preeminent Mexican historian, who coined the term *criollismo*, to the Mexican scholars Solange Alberro and Antonio Rubial, and English-speaking scholars, such as David Brading, Anna More, among others. The list of authors consulted is too long to reference here. The work by More and her concept of the "Creole Archive", the body of writings, objects, attitudes, architecture, and more, that they crafted and which speak of their collective identity, is particularly illuminating, as were the writings by Alberro, who skillfully described the history of cultural and religious sensitivities of Mexican Creoles in her work, while the writings by O'Gorman, Brading, and Rubial, all contributed clear historical references to track the development of *criollismo* throughout the viceregal Mexican period. See: (Alberro 1992; Brading 2003, chaps. XII through XXIX, pp. 283–728; O'Gorman 1975; More 2013, Introduction, pp. 1–28; Rubial García 2010, Sections II through V, pp. 59–464).

- 4 The topic of *criollismo* is so vast and has been researched by such a great deal of scholars, at a Spanish American level and at regional levels too, particularly in colonial Mexico, the Caribbean region, and the Andean nations, that it goes beyond the scope of this essay to review the literature. A few basic sources to delve into this topic for New Spain are: (Brading 2003, chap. XIV: Los patriotas criollos, pp. 323–44; Brading 2015, chap. III. Peregrinos en su propia patria: Patriotismos criollo e identidad en la América española, pp. 84–124; Cañizares-Esguerra 2001, chap. 4: The Making of a “Patriotic Epistemology,” pp. 204–65; O’Gorman 1975, pp. 84–99; More 2013, pp. 1–28; Rubial García 2010, chap. III.2. Los encomenderos criollos sueñan la conquista, pp. 131–39, chap. IV.1. Los paraísos terrenales en las patrias criollas).
- 5 The cult to Our Lady of Guadalupe has fascinated researchers for generations. The literature on the topic being enormous, the following works are but a small sample of anthropological, historical, art historical, and theological frameworks through which the icon has been analyzed: (Burkhardt 2001; Peterson 1992; Gruzinski 1994; Lafaye 2015; Taylor 1987; Poole 1995).
- 6 The architecture of the original shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and of other landmarks that are part of the shrine complex built during the colonial period has received some attention from art and architectural historians, mostly in Spanish by Mexican or Hispanic scholars. While they all acknowledge the critical role played by Creole agents in the making of this shrine complex, from high clerical administrators to lay priests, members of religious orders, particularly the Jesuits, and architects, no study has looked at the site in its entirety from a *criollismo* framework to understand it as a whole, but rather as different buildings, while the site and its urban development have been studied separately from the architecture. For some of the most relevant writings on this topic, see: (Amerlinck de Corsi 2010; Cuesta Hernández 2009, 2015; Fernández 2011, 2003b; López Sarrelangue 2005; Toussaint 1967).
- 7 See note 2 above.
- 8 Scholars, such as Edmundo O’Gorman and Francisco de la Maza, who are skeptical of the shrine’s origin story as told by chroniclers such as Florencia and Sánchez, have speculated that a shrine existed at Tepeyac since the early 16th century, maybe built by Franciscan missionaries, and perhaps populated by the image of the Guadalupe icon from Extremadura, which was later replaced by the Mexican Guadalupe image. See: (Watson Marrón 2012, pp. 53–54, f.n. 32).
- 9 For a point of reference, Cuesta argues that the Professed House, a large and luxurious religious building that included a church building and a professed house next to it built by the Jesuit Order, cost one hundred and twenty thousand pesos (Cuesta Hernández 2009, p. 104).
- 10 Although attributed to Guerrero y Torres, the Chapel of the Hill’s façade and its estípite-based decorative arrangement, popularized by Lorenzo Rodríguez in Mexico City and his Cathedral’s Sagrario from the mid-eighteenth century, is unusual for Guerrero y Torres (Senties R. 1991, p. 168).
- 11 Two files kept at the Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de México (AHCM) testify to the Shrine Collegiate Council’s attempts to have the Spanish Crown and the Mexico City Council name the town of Guadalupe into a veritable Villa. In them, long pleas filled with arguments in favor of the Villa’s creation, despite the Crown’s pushback given the lack of a large tax base due to a small population and a lack of natural resources, shed clarity on how important the project was to the Creoles behind the project. Together with the urban plans drawn by Creole architects such as Guerrero y Torres, Iniesta Bejarano, and Felipe Feringán, among others, and pleas to have the cigar factory moved from Mexico City to the town of Guadalupe and other solutions proposed by the Collegiate Council of the Guadalupe Shrine to concretize the Villa of Guadalupe project, it is evident that the project was critical to the Creole community. AHCM, Ayuntamiento, Villa de Guadalupe, volume 4297, File 5, 1742; Ayuntamiento, Villa de Guadalupe, Volume 4299, File 15, 1787.
- 12 *Altépetl*, is a Nahuatl term composed of the words *atl* (water) and *tépetl* (mountain or hill). It is closely associated to the Western notions of a city or urban settlement, but are not quite equivalent, in that an altepetl considers the interrelation between the natural and built environments, and the notion of polity and population, as being interrelated. The term refers, in poetic terms, to the relation between the element of water as a source of life and a sacred mountain, an *axis mundi* that in Mesoamerican culture points toward the relationship between the heavens and the earth. For further clarification see: (Fernández Christlieb and García Zambrano 2006, pp. 31–100).
- 13 Specifically, in a file found at the Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de México, a document authored by the Abott and the council of the Colegiata de Guadalupe, or Collegiate Council of the Guadalupe Shrine, cites two precedents in Spain to argue in favor of Guadalupe’s urban reforms and its imbricated relationship with Mexico City. One is the town of Caudete, in the region of Valencia, which is a small town connected to the town of Villena by way of a long avenue. Caudete displays an ordered grid in its urban design, similar to the plans by the Creole architects for Guadalupe. The second precedent is the town or suburb of Zaramalama, northwest of Segovia, Spain. This small town is also connected to the bigger settlement, Segovia, via a long avenue. AHCM, Ayuntamiento, Villa de Guadalupe, expediente 15, vol. 4299, 1787, 15–16.
- 14 Spaniards originally employed the word as a derogatory label, and it was originally used to refer to Black slaves.
- 15 See note 2 above.
- 16 From the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe expressed by the second Archbishop of Mexico, Alonso de Montúfar, in the sixteenth century, to the late seventeenth-century lobbying by the Creole elite to build a new shrine, to the Creole boosting of Guadalupe’s status to the patroness of New Spain, the negotiations between the Spanish high clergy and the Creole community were key to the building of Guadalupe’s cult. See: (Poole 1995, pp. 58–59, 172; Watson Marrón 2012, p. 171 and ss.).

- ¹⁷ A great number of sermons were written during the colonial period, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The literature on them is vast. As an example, Jorge Traslosheros analyzes three of them in this article: (Traslosheros 1998).
- ¹⁸ A collegiate church is one that is run and administered by a collegiate body or council of priests, who oversee rituals that are similar to those of a cathedral.

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