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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Tropical Mudejar: Mosque-type Chapels in Mexico and their role in early Spanish America.

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

By

Luis Carlos Barragán Castro.

Under the supervision of

Dr. Ellen Kenney

May 2017

The American University in Cairo

DEDICATION

For Sara Ahmed.

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ABSTRACT

American University in Cairo.

Tropical Mudejar: Mosque-type Chapels in Mexico and their role in early Spanish America

Luis Carlos Barragán Castro.

Supervisor: Ellen Kenney.

Mudejar Art, the architectural style that emerged in Spain during the Reconquista, is relatively common in Spanish Colonial architecture in America, but it was merely an echo of the contemporary buildings constructed in Spain during the years of the colony. The presence of completely Islamic structures, however, such as the Mosque-type chapels, defy that observation, because the hypostyle plan had not been used in Spain for at least a hundred years. This research compares five chapels built in Mexico during the sixteenth century that follow a hypostyle plan, which resemble mosques in almost every aspect. It also proposes that these Mosque-type churches were a creative solution to accommodate the indigenous population, their patterns of worship and their number during the early years of the colony. These Islamic-inspired designs precede the open-air chapels, which became a common feature in sixteenth century Mexican architecture. An additional transcultural element given by the main users and builders of these chapels enrich the panorama of Mudejar art, mixing Native American religion and culture with an already rich Spanish Mudejar taste.

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INTRODUCTION

It is hard to believe that artistic forms that originated in the Middle East can be found today in the American continent, dating from the colonial period, from Chile to the south of the United States. These include wooden screens and ceilings, towers, decorative shapes in building façades, tilework, brickwork and furniture. All defy the perception of Latin America as inheritor of only native, west African and European cultures, and add an Islamic component that even though provisional, peripheral and modest, survives. Even more surprising is the fact that buildings resembling mosques were erected in Mexico during the first century of the Spanish colony. Although the chapel of San José de los Naturales in Mexico City does not survive, records tell us that it used to be a square structure with a forest of columns organized in seven aisles, covered with a wooden roof; a building that scholars like Manuel Toussaint considered completely Mudejar. Alternatively, the Royal Chapel of Cholula does survive, although with several modifications and completed in the seventeenth century. It surprised chroniclers such as the Jesuit Father Cobo, who compared it with the Great Mosque of Cordoba. A third building shares these characteristics, though only a small room survives in its original form: the open chapel of San Pedro and San Pablo in Jilotepec, having also an example of Mudejar wooden ceiling, common in many other chapels and churches all over the continent. Less known examples of the mosque-like design are the Chapel of Toluca and the Chapel of Etzatlán, studied as such by some authors but with even fewer references (See map Fig. 1.1, 1.2).

In Mexico, the desire of the crown and the church to indoctrinate the enormous number of natives led to innovative typologies of religious architecture. Evidence of the reciprocity and competitiveness of the Spanish towards the native religions, manifested in a form of architectural translation, is the fact that, for example, the Chapel of Cholula was built over a temple for the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. It is thought that the friars and architects chose the mosque as a model because it had sufficient grandeur to compete with the memory of the temples of this important religious center.¹ Were there elements of Aztec symbolism and patterns of worship in these new buildings? Why was it decided that they should look like mosques? Who were the architects? Were they Moriscos (Muslims who converted by force after the fall of Granada) who traveled to the new world? In brief, why are these uncommon mosque-looking buildings in America?

The conquest of the American territory coincides with the expulsion of Spanish Muslims in the early sixteenth century: the prohibition of their religion, their traditions and their language. Access to America was forbidden to them, as well as to their descendants. Recent studies, like that of Karoline Cook and Hernán Taboada have shown that many managed to avoid the restrictions: Moors, converts and Jews entered America in secret. Their presence and influence are hard to track especially regarding arts and architecture, but this is not indispensable to explain the presence of Islamic art in America. The Christian Spaniards who played a part in the conquest were the inheritors of a mixed culture. Hundreds of years of both peaceful and violent convivence with Jews and Muslims gave them a Mudejar taste, not just in arts and architecture, but in clothing,

¹ Bailey, *Art of Colonial Latin America*, 219.

food and music. The sixteenth century saw a profound struggle between the traditional Mudejar nationalistic pretention, against the European Renaissance and Baroque styles, which were considered foreign, but desired by the Spanish monarchy. The presence of these vestiges in America is the evidence of that struggle, but it is also the evidence of a process of appropriation with religious and political purposes.

An examination of the usual Mudejar art that migrated to America, and the Mudejar practices in Spain, show that the hypostyle plan was not a common feature in Spain during the sixteenth century. The mosque-type chapels are then a revival, crafted upon the image of well-remembered monuments, just as other churches were commissioned to be copies of Spanish originals.² The complex nature of these buildings reveal a tense fabric of forces pushing against one another: an appropriation done by the indigenous builders, European designs from revived Islamic originals, a permeation of the rites of the host culture in the new one, a creative solution for huge numbers of converts, a humanistic approach to the new “others”, and a scar of a cataclysmic demographic depletion.

² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 158.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

My intention with this research is to reveal three points. First, the relation between the perception of the Europeans and the transmission of architectural forms from one culture to the other in the construction of these kind of chapels. Second, the role of Moriscos or crypto-Muslims in the propagation of such ideas, or travelers who were used to this type of building. And third, the translated meaning of those elements in the hands of Amerindians, who were most of the craftsmen and builders, and how both, the Amerindian diverse cultures and the Islamic elements, assimilated in mosque-type chapels in the context of the early conversions. Through a close examination of the sources and studies, I will try to demonstrate that Islamic art and architecture was not only echoed in the distant New World, but it was re-interpreted, and its elements gained a new symbolism in the contact with the native population of Mexico.

I will mostly follow the Historical Method, looking for authorship, provenance, and making comparisons from primary sources and studies that have previously connected those sources. I will address the questions of this thesis considering multidisciplinary studies, and the different agents involved in the construction of these chapels. A first step will be to outline the biography of the monuments in their context, considering the perspective of the settlers who went to America during the first years of the colony: their cultural baggage in regard of Islamic culture and architecture, especially in the case of Spanish missionaries and architects who went to Mexico, their perception of the indigenous people, and the problems that arose during the first years of the missionary work. Some of the earliest descriptions of the Amerindians matched that of the Spanish

Muslims in an overlapping process between two different worlds; this work will clarify whether these friars had any trace of that perception, and how could it have permeated in their behavior or their decisions in the field of architecture. Since the existence of these buildings is still a mystery and only one of them fully survives, much of the evidence comes from the chroniclers, soldiers and friars who experienced them. Primary sources, therefore, are important for this study, especially those from the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, for reasons of time and space, I must largely remain limited to the sources that have been published, which are numerous, unpublished documents from archives will only be considered when quoted or reproduced by a secondary source.

We can consider the possibility of Moriscos being related to the construction of the buildings themselves. Building hypostyle churches was not common in Spain during the sixteenth century; that explains their rarity and circumscription to México, and necessarily leads us to think that one or various architects saw mosques in Spain and echoed them. Secondary sources have traced Moorish presence in America, but more documents will be needed regarding their construction and the people who could have commissioned it. Scholars such as Toussaint and McAndrew suggest that the model was the mosque of Cordoba, but other hypostyle mosques such as the one in Almonaster la Real or the synagogue of Santa María la Blanca which were transformed into churches during the Reconquista, could also be the original source. To find the connection between them and America is a priority for this research. Many other early buildings house examples of Mudejar traces; some of them are located close by, and some belong to the same time span of the mosque-type chapels, which might give us an answer to the Islamic question. Part of the relation of the buildings with the Mudejar form of

architecture is also a technical problem. Were the materials and technology used in the construction of the chapel of Mudejar origin? I will then compare the information that I gather and relate it to other forms of Mudejar technology used in that area, and others found in Spain.

The last question completes our understanding of the mosque-type chapels, and it regards the indigenous population: the workers and craftsmen who learnt the constructive techniques from the Spanish settlers. Were some of the Mudejar techniques adapted to the available local technology? To understand the environment in the time of the construction, we also need to understand the religious nature of the Amerindian culture in the times of these early conversions. The Aztec patterns of worship and their symbolism in the architectural level and their perception of the divine will give us a clue about how those were adapted to these chapels. After all, the friars allowed some of these cultural elements to adapt and transform to gain the trust of the Amerindians, making concessions, allowing Aztec elements in their convents and churches generating a symbolic and technical syncretism. Cholula is one of the most interesting examples; the city used to be a major worship area, and the mosque-type Royal Chapel was built on top of a destroyed temple for Quetzalcoatl, one of the most important deities in the Mesoamerican pantheon. The shape of the building, and the name *de los Naturales*, of the natives, often related to this kind of chapel, coincide with a perception of Indians as Moors and might give us a hint about its importance and why it was thought to be preferable for the conversion of natives.

LITERARY REVIEW

The primary sources are pivotal for this study. The most important ones are the chronicles and letters of the friars and writers of the sixteenth century, Pedro de Gante, Jerónimo de Mendieta, Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, Alonso de Zorita, who among others described or mentioned the mosque-chapels and the conditions in which they appeared. The first scholar to write a comprehensive review of Mudejar Art in América was Manuel Toussaint, who mentions buildings from all around the continent, from Chile to Mexico and the south of the USA, including the Caribbean, with very surprising examples. Manuel Toussaint is considered one of the fathers of the modern school of art historians of Mexico. He was interested in almost every possible topic, with a critical and sharp eye, and in an early almost postmodern way of understanding the relation between cultural assimilation and art. Toussaint mentions both the mosque-type Chapels of San José de los Naturales and the Chapel of Cholula very briefly in *Mudejar Art in Latin America*. Yet the person who studied Cholula and added most of the scholarship that we have today was Francisco de la Maza, a former student of Toussaint. In 1959, he published his very complete *La ciudad de Cholula y sus Iglesias*, a monograph on the history of that city, based on a good number of primary sources. De la Maza was also the author of a shorter article about the “Chapel of San José de los Naturales and Friar Pedro de Gante”, which clarifies the relation between the priest and the chapel, but some of the fundamental questions are still unanswered and the possibilities offered by most of the scholars now still seem weak and clumsy. The fever for Mudejar and early Spanish colonial scholarship sparkled again, with the mention of the chapel of Cholula in the

article “La Capilla Real de Cholula y su mudejarismo,” by another Mexican scholar, Rafael Manzano Martos.

A great contribution to the field was done by John McAndrew. In his very comprehensive text *Open Air Churches of XVI Century Mexico*, published in 1965, he placed the mosque-type chapels in the greater panorama of the open-air churches, including both in the same narrative, surveying both San José de los Naturales and the Chapel of Cholula, and adding the Chapel of Jilotepec, and two other candidates, the church of Toluca and the Church of Etzatlán. None of these buildings survive in their original form, but they are traceable through primary sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

To understand the complete panorama of architecture during the sixteenth century one cannot ignore the fundamental work of George Kubler in his wide-ranging volume *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century*, published in 1948. It masterfully connects architecture with the great plagues that shook the American continent, the orders of friars, the main political events and the European sources of the designs that flourished in Mexico during the sixteenth century. It surveys almost every single monument, and has been constantly updated correcting errata through the reeditions. For this purpose, I am using the 2016 edition.

Modern scholarship has added little to the old questions about these buildings. An exception is the work of an important scholar Dr. Rafael Lopez Guzman. Two of his works will be considered in this study, *Arquitectura y Carpintería Mudejar*, a work oriented to the study of ceilings, and his seminal work, *Arquitectura Mudejar, Del Sincretismo Medieval a las Alternativas Hispanoamericanas*, which does the great labor of surveying

most Mudejar architecture, especially from Spain, which situates American Mudejar in perspective with its Iberian origin.

Yet reviewing material about Spanish and Mudejar architecture will give us only one perspective of the narrative, thus I will include the work done by historians of pre-Columbian cultures flourishing in the towns where the monuments stand, because the rich Cholulteca, Tlaxcalteca and Mexica cultures, although we think were silenced, kept on existing. This survival was evidenced in the Nahuatl pictograms, the different use of masonry building, and the incorporation of rites that friars, such as Pedro de Gante, allowed to assemble with Christianity in an already complex cultural fabric. The work of Mercedes Olivera, Francisco Hermosillo, and Enrique Florescano and Lysa Hochroth's *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*, which will be important in relating religion, funerary rites, sacrifices, space and architecture. The analysis of these rites and cosmology, in the context of the architecture of the chapel, is a discussion that few scholars have explored.

A curious publication, done by the administration of the Church of Cholula, challenges the Islamic origin of these chapels. Instead, Dr. Rafael Amador proposes that the church is an adaptation of the cosmological and numerological Nahuatl interpretation of space applied to a building. Other popular sources agree, but, there isn't much evidence. If true, this would be a groundbreaking contribution, and a unique example of convergence in two different universes, but the proposal is dwindling, and requires more work. The sources are few and many simply repeat the work of Francisco de la Maza or John Andrews, and the same primary sources; other information is harder to find and there is very limited space for discussion because the topics haven't been

explored thoroughly. There is a great need for understanding these monuments in an ample context from a multidisciplinary perspective; both Colonial-Mudejar and pre-Columbian studies, and it is also important to see the hidden elements that colonial priests and architects used at the time, but today are erased or understudied.

TERMINOLOGY

This thesis, written to obtain my degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies, meets at the edge with the field of Colonial architecture in America; many terms will not be familiar to the reader, and others will be used in a slightly different way. **America** will refer to the whole American Continent. I will call it **West Indies** alternatively.

Some colonial institutions will also be important, it is the case of the **Encomienda**: an institution created by the Spanish crown to administer the land in a feudal system. The *encomenderos*, mostly native Spanish or *criollos*, were those designated to enforce and manage the indigenous workforce, bearing the responsibility of delivering the royal tribute and other taxes, infamous because of their cruel methods to enforce discipline and stimulate production.

The racial system of Spanish America was very important for several reasons: the distinction between **Indio** and **Spanish** was so radical, that the steps that divided them became whole distinctive communities. Depending on this distinction they were destined to different careers and had access to different parts of the society. The term **Indian** is a matter of debate, it is well known that when Columbus reached America, the Spaniards were so lost, they thought that the islands of the first “discovery”, today Cuba and Santo Domingo, were part of India. The term “Indian” forced an identity, and could, like many other terms, be interpreted as part of a racist past, but there is no consensus, and some have considered that the native population have assimilated and appropriated the term, so I will keep it for this thesis. **Nahua** is a more specific way to refer to the Indians of Central Mexico, whose language was **Nahuatl**.

Spanish people born in America were called **Criollos**. They were considered of less status than peninsular migrants, but greater than any other native or mestizo in the Colonial hierarchical society: they could have access to several instances of power, but rarely elected for public office, like viceroy, or bishop. A **Mestizo** was a mix between a Spanish and an Indian. It was a scandal even until the nineteenth century that mestizos had any position of power, like Benito Juarez, who became the president of Mexico in 1858. There were several names given to the intermediate states between Indian and Spanish, each being appreciated depending on the percentage of white or Indian blood, but those degrees won't be important for this study.

Spain also had its own racial set of parameters to distinguish the different types of people that lived in the peninsula. The term **Old Christian** was reserved for the people from the north who hadn't lived under Islamic rule, or for those who came from families that were Christian even before the Islamic conquest after the battles of Guadalete and Poitiers, which mark the beginning and end of the Islamic conquest. Old Christians were thought to be white and descendants of the Visigoths who had been in Spain from the 5th century, though they were already mixed with the Roman and Celtic inhabitants.

Old Christians who kept on living in the occupied Islamic territories were called **Mozarabs**. After living for several centuries under Islamic rule they were Arabized, to the point that their Christian liturgy was said in Arabic or the Mozarabic language, a mix of Latin and Arabic. During the Reconquista, new terms were introduced; **Mudejar** became the name of those Muslims who stayed under Christian rule, and it comes from the word *Mudayan*, which means domesticated, and which became the name of the art style that they produced. When the Catholic kings expelled the Jews and the Muslims in the last decade of the 15th century and first decade of the sixteenth, **crypto-Jews**, people who

had converted to Christianity but kept on celebrating their Jewish traditions in secret, were called **Marranos**, which literally means pigs. Converted Muslims, crypto-Muslims or not, were called **Moriscos**. Both kinds of converts, Jews and Muslims, were also called **New Christians**, an appellative with pejorative undertones.

The modern state of Mexico was called then **New Spain**, and it included also the modern states of California, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, New México, Arizona, Texas, Oregon, Washington, Florida and parts of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Kansas, Oklahoma and Luisiana. Other terms will be explained in the chapters.

Chapter 1

The sixteenth century.

A background for the Mosque-type chapels

This chapter seemed necessary as a comprehensive introduction to the subject, to understand the context in which the mosque-type chapels appeared in Mexico: the many and complex processes that took place during the sixteenth century, when the Spanish Empire took possession and advanced in the administration of its colonies, coming up with some creative, and other disastrous solutions for the problems they faced upon their conquests. First, we need to see a curious phenomenon that happened at the beginning of the conquest, in which Amerindians and Muslims were equated; the processes of evangelization, and the perception of their identity overlapped.

The Christians had started assimilating the repertoire of Islamic architecture during the Reconquista and by the beginning of the sixteenth century it was almost fully incorporated. In a second part of this chapter we will see what were the Islamic Andalusian elements that travelled to America during the large campaign of construction, and whether the craftsmen and architects had any sort of Islamic origin or not.

Lastly, I will introduce the problems that arose during the second half of the sixteenth century related to the continuous plagues and the decline of the population, and the effects it had in the field of architecture, which partially explain the mosque-type chapels.

It is also important to introduce very briefly some aspects of the history of Spain, first, to consider that most of Spain was under Islamic rule until the Battle at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, when the crown of Aragon, Castile, Navarra, Portugal and the French volunteers defeated the Almohads. The battle at Las Navas de Tolosa is regarded as rare, and one of the few “real” events of the Reconquista, fought with crosses and papal banners on one side and Muslims on the other. One by one the Andalusian cities fell to the Christians: Cordoba in 1236, Valencia in 1238 and finally Seville, the Almohad capital in al-Andalus, in 1248.³ The only surviving Islamic kingdom was Granada, which was taken two hundred years later. The kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, headed by Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, the Catholic Kings, concluded the war in 1492 and the Nasrid king, Mohamed IX, relinquished the Alhambra and thus put an end to the Reconquista. Yet, it is possible to argue that the Reconquista did not finish in 1492, but in 1507, when Ferdinand of Aragon took Oran and Algiers, and that the conquest of America did not start until 1510, or that the Reconquista never actually came to an end, and it is a period subject to many interpretations depending on the author and the political aims.⁴ This started the first period of expulsion of Muslims and forced

³ Menocal, *Ornament*, 47.

⁴ Gibson, “Conquista and Reconquista”, 26.

conversions in 1501. Only a few years later would the conquest of America start formally, and the great Spanish empire be born.

Isabella and Ferdinand, the Catholic Kings, governed the kingdom of Spain from 1474 to 1516. They had a daughter named Joann, called the Mad, who married Philip I the Handsome, son of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Germanic Empire. Although they were not kings in Spain, their son, Charles V (I for Spain, V for the Germanic Empire) inherited both the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, most of Europe and all América, becoming the largest empire in the world to their date. The first half of the sixteenth century was a time of great religious fervor and patriotism. During this half century, Spain deployed all its powers to conquer América, and the north coast of Africa. Ferdinand and Isabella chose the path of “ethic unity and harmony, which is largely intolerant of contradiction.”⁵ The old world of Al-Andalus was one in which many contradictions coexisted. A single-nation, single-religion, single-language new national project was to wipe it out. Charles continued this project while trying to keep parts of the empire together as well as fighting the Maghrebi Muslims and the Ottomans on the east border. He ruled from 1516 to 1556, when his son Philip II took the crown.

Philip fills the second half of the sixteenth century until 1598. During his reign, Spain faced some of the most terrible challenges: the war against the Ottomans became fiercer, the incursions of pirates more common and the war of the 80 years, against the Calvinists of the Netherlands, a disaster. His rule is also marked by two great events that will be relevant for this thesis: the battle of Lepanto, which marks the first victory of the Holy League against the Ottoman threats, and the rebellion of the Muslims of Alpujarras

⁵ Menocal, *Ornament*, 241.

from 1568 to 1570, followed by the complete expulsion of Muslims and Moriscos from Spain in 1571 (a task only completed in the seventeenth century with Philip III). Both events are connected: there were many Muslims and Moriscos who conspired with the Ottomans against the crown. Rumors of a full-scale invasion of the peninsula were widespread, and Philip II had no other option but to force the expulsion.⁶ Thus, this work is set in this timeframe, between the first expulsion, in 1501, and 1571, a time in which Muslims and Moriscos were still somehow allowed in Spain and America to a certain degree, and when the Mudejar culture of the previous centuries was still alive.

A. From Moors to Indians.

Translation of perception and the missionaries.

How is it possible that buildings resembling mosques were built in America during the sixteenth century? The sixteenth century was the century of conquest and the very early years of the colony. The Spaniards were mostly Christians, if not fully, at least nominally, and the state was at arms against the Spanish Muslims. Gauvin Alexander Bailey answers, in his book on Latin American Art:

When a band of Spanish adventurers saw an Inca temple in the sixteenth century they called it a mosque, and when the missionaries built the first churches for

⁶ Peñas, "El desplazamiento," 2080.

the Nahua Indians, they sometimes used the design of the great mosque of Cordoba, thinking naively that it would be more similar to them.⁷

It is somehow common to find scholarly work that connects both the *Reconquista* of the Spanish territory from the Muslims, with the *Conquista* of América.⁸ Often the Conquest of Granada is seen as a precedent for the politics, the techniques and the procedures in which the Conquest of América happened. After all, the most symbolic date of both processes is 1492, and some of the characters who fought the campaigns of Granada, who were familiar with the Mudejar world, and originally from the same territories and social classes, starred also in the conquest of America.⁹ The connection between Muslims and Amerindians starts from the very first voyage of Columbus. From his letters to the Kings of Spain, we can conclude his anti-Islamic tone, his allegiance to the papal authority and the motivations of his medieval-political plans: to get in contact with the Great Khan, to form an alliance with Prester John and to use the riches from the trade to finance the reconquest of Jerusalem.¹⁰ The fact that during the fourth voyage there were two Arabic interpreters, tells us about the mentality of the conquistadores: if they could not understand the language of the Amerindians, maybe the Amerindians spoke Arabic! If they were not Jews or Christians, they had to be Muslims! This has been interpreted as a way of imposing the identity of the “other” inside of Spain – Muslims – into the “other” outside – the Amerindians.¹¹ It is plausible to consider that, since the Europeans had no idea of what they had found when they found América, the only way

⁷ Bailey, *Art of Colonial Latin America*, 44.

⁸ Garcia-Arenal, “Moriscos e indios”, 154; Taboada, *La sombra del islam*, 191.

⁹ Garcia-Arenal, “Moriscos e indios”, 161.

¹⁰ Taboada, *La sombra del islam*, 95-96; Garcia-Arenal, “Moriscos e indios”, 159; Colon, *Relaciones y cartas*, 254, 255, 271, 333, 430.

¹¹ Taboada, *La sombra del islam*, 96.

they could understand it, was adding the concepts of the known universe, in other words, they used their previous knowledge to try to understand their new reality.

The term “conquista” and “conquistador” come from the war against the Spanish Muslims, these were honorific titles given for example to Jaime I of Aragon, after taking Valencia during the 13th century. The great feats of those “heroes” were compared in America, as if defeating the Amerindians was like defeating the Muslims. The famous character Santiago Matamoros was transformed soon into Santiago Mataindios.¹² Hernán Cortez, in his letters to Charles V, also referred to the Mexica temples as mosques, the Aztec priests as Faqihs, he mentions “Moorish rooms”, calls corn a Turkish grain, the city of Tlaxcala reminded him of Granada, and called the market of Mexico an *alcaicería*, the name of the market of Granada. During the expedition of Hernández de Córdoba, the first city they erected was called The Great Cairo. Interestingly, other comparisons were done with respect to the Amerindians’ “Jewish” lifestyle, the traditions, ceremonies and superstitions, all of them being “very Hebrew”.¹³ Martín del Barco Centenera and Johannes of Laet reported supposed “Mohamedans” in Río de la Plata, today Argentina, and Francisco López de Gómara wrote of the rumor of some Amerindians “who live like sodomites, speak like Moors and look like Jews”.

Other chronicles are even more surprising: “I think these gentiles are similar to the Moors in some regards: they have many women, pray before sunrise, and commit the sin against nature (which must refer to sodomy) which is said to be very common over there, just as it is in this land”.¹⁴ The suspicion of the Amerindians speaking like Muslims would

¹² Ibid, 192.

¹³ Garcia-Arenal, “Moriscos e indios,” 162; Gibson, “Conquista and Reconquista,” 20.

¹⁴ Taboada, *La sombra del islam*, 129-30; Translated by the autor; *Pero Correia, informe sobre usos y licencias sexuales de los indios* (1551) I did not consult this material; Ribeiro, *La fundación de Brasil*, 24.

reappear when the language of the Guaraní was thought to have some similarities with Arabic.¹⁵ There are many other examples of this strange comparison, which at the time should have seemed natural; after all the conquerors thought they had reached India, or perhaps the Arabic Peninsula, or perhaps China. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, the chronicler of Indias in 1535, affirmed that the New World was actually the Hesperides, named like that after Hespero, the twelfth king of Spain who in myths had travelled to remote lands and acquired them, so those who identified the Canary Islands with the Hespérides were wrong, and so the Hespérides had to be La Española or Cuba, and these lands had been part of the Spanish kingdom 3000 years ago, which would make the conquest of America but the last chapter of the Reconquista.¹⁶ An image that shows this time of confusion is the *Adoração dos reis magos* (Fig.1.3), by the Portuguese painter Vasco Fernandes, the visit of the Magi is usually depicted by characters who seem “oriental”, who wear Islamic clothes, and who are usually identified with the east and the Islamic world. The painting by Fernandes changes the identity of the magi for one of an Amerindian in a very early stage of the conquest, depicting him as an indigenous man wearing feathers and offering a gift to the just born Christ, among more Renaissance-styled characters.

Another way of seeing this reciprocity was on the actual processes in both military and religious conquests. For years, for example, it was thought that Cortés had been the genius behind the success of the administration of Mexico, but recent scholarship has shown that he owned and used a book called *Las Siete Partidas*, by Alfonso X The Wise, which comes directly from the difficult circumstances during the war against the

¹⁵ Taboada, *La sombra del islam*, 129.

¹⁶ Gibson, “Conquista and Reconquista”, 25-6.

Muslims, and proposes solutions in the organization of the country which Cortés took for this new conditions.¹⁷ If many of the conquistadores were veterans of Granada, and grew up in the aftermath, it is obvious that at least their experience in the field and strategy of war had to travel with them. When the armies of Ferdinand and Isabella camped in front of the city of Granada, they sketched the plan of the campsite forming a squared grill of streets, which eventually would become the town of Santa Fe, and which would be the model for Mexico City, among many other settlements.¹⁸ The name of the city itself was used frequently to name new cities in América such as Santa Fe de Bogotá, Santa Fe in Argentina, and the foundations of Vasco de Quiroga.

The case of Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy of New Spain (1535-1550) is very interesting. He came from a family who had been in constant contact with Islam; his grandfather had fought the Muslims, his father was the first Christian governor of Granada, and his mother had Islamic and Jewish antecedents. He was raised in the Alhambra, and was very used to the Islamic fashion, food, furniture and architecture. Many other migrants to America had names that alluded to episodes of the Reconquista, and belonged to communities such as the one that transferred the bell of the church of San Miguel of New México, which was forged during the wars against the Muslims of Spain around 1356. Names of places and characters would be reused, histories from a world in the borders between Moors and Christians glorifying deeds and a knightly life, derived in a Moresque and knightly perception of America.¹⁹ The expeditionary legions called an Amerindian guide: the Turkish, a certain dog was called “La Morisca”, a certain

¹⁷ Garcia, “Moriscos e indios”, 161.

¹⁸ Ibid, 163.

¹⁹ Taboada, *La sombra de islam*, 199-200.

tribe was called “the Moors”. Sayings, proverbs and nicknames enriched that vision, it was the evidence of the years of shared acculturation: terms, techniques, trends, psyche. Even the food traditions traveled, like cilantro, eggplant, chickpeas and meatballs. And music traveled too, as it is evident in the Mozarabic chant, and the zamacueca which came from the Zambra.²⁰

The idea of the conquest as a continuation of the Reconquista has also many detractors, arguing that much interest came from the Genoese and that the generation that conquered America was different from the one that fought against Granada. For instance, the conquest of Mexico happened from 1519-1521, almost thirty years after the “discovery” in 1492. Reconquista was a term invented during the eighteenth century, and it is only historians who presented all the period from 1212 to 1492 as somehow homogenous, when the reality is far more complex, and most would agree saying that Granada was not a reconquest, but a conquest, and others even wonder what period of the full conflict from 718 to 1492 can be considered a Reconquista.²¹ A continuation or not of the Reconquista in the Conquista, the elements in common are numerous, especially in the case of architecture. Who were those who carried the architectural ideas, and thus, those who carried and executed the strategies and programs that lead to the spiritual conquest of Mexico? The friars, at least at the beginning.

In 1508, the Pope conceded the Spanish crown the right and responsibility to evangelize and administer the religious duties in América, the privilege of the tithe, and the right of designating the agents that would fulfill the ecclesiastical assignments. Due

²⁰ Taboada, *La sombra del islam*, 236; Barros, “El Islam en la cocina mexicana,” 30.

²¹ Gibson, “Conquista and Reconquista”, 20-4.

to the insistence of Hernán Cortés, the chosen ones for this enormous task were the mendicant friars. They were given the special investiture to act as priests and with it, implement absolute power on religious matters in América. The three orders that finally exercised this power were the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Augustinians. This means that the power of the secular clergy, (the non-ordered clergymen) was ignored, and that the interests of the crown prevailed over the interests of the Vatican.²²

It was the friars who planned the new towns, who governed in faraway areas, who built churches, monasteries and schools, and who ultimately “educated”²³ and transformed the character of the native population, and it was in those centers of conversion and study that the colonial culture emerged. Contrary to the secular clergy, and other catholic orders, Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians rejected the opulence of the church and preached poverty, renunciation, and a lifestyle like that of Christ and his apostles, or what they thought it was. Yet the power and authority that these orders amassed in Latin América in general, and in Mexico in particular, turned out to be problematic for both civil and clerical authorities; the missionaries basically had no limits, and abusing this power became a source of constant complaint. Sometimes bad treatment of the indigenous population, sometimes taking justice by their own hands, and sometimes usurping the power of the civil entities was a reality. Their power became almost absolute, impeding the migrant civilians from taking over territory with concepts such as the Roman prohibition of private property.²⁴

²² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 47.

²³ “Educated” could be considered insulting, some people would consider this process more destructive than educational, but I keep the term to make things short.

²⁴ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 46-8.

The financial power of these orders came in part from the *encomenderos*, who were obliged to sustain the religious foundations in their jurisdiction, but the real source of power came from the Royal Patronage of the Church in America, which gave them, as we mentioned, the tithe and other royal favors.²⁵ Due to the scale of the monuments that were built during their jurisdiction one can say that, for mendicant friars, these buildings were very sumptuous, which subsequently indicates the scale of their earnings also, as well as the numbers of workers at their disposal – paid and unpaid.

The process of evangelization started officially in 1524, with the first twelve Franciscan friars, followed by the Dominicans in 1526 and the Augustinians in 1533. Their number was always reduced compared to the rest of the population; in 1570 they were only 800 from the 7000 Europeans who lived in Mexico, compared to the close to 3.5 million indigenous individuals.²⁶ Of these groups the Franciscans were the first to create a network of friaries, and are the most important for this thesis because the buildings relevant for this document were established by them.

The first twelve Franciscans – known simply as “the twelve” – that went to Mexico in 1524 belonged to a group founded by Fray Juan de Puebla, who represented the thought and practice of the Cardenal Cisneros, an influential man who gave Catholic Christianity, especially the Spanish Church, a messianic touch and a hope for universal conversion. He also called for the definite obliteration of Islam, the reestablishment of the primitive church and the retaking of Jerusalem, with the Spanish as the appointed carriers of the word of God.²⁷ To understand this fever for conversion, we should note that other

²⁵ Ibid, 46.

²⁶ Ibid 46.

²⁷ García-Arenal, “Moriscos e indios,” 159.

conquests were inspired by him, for example the conquest of Oran and other territories of Algeria in 1509, with the Portuguese following them to besiege the coast of Morocco in 1513. The case of the taking of Oran was apparently addressed by Cisneros and had religious connotations, but other territories taken in the same period, like Bugia, Algiers, Tenes, Tlemcen and Tripoli, were legitimized using old treaties, and followed the commercial and imperial interest of Ferdinand, as much as other territories were thought to have belonged to the Visigoths.²⁸

The friary where the twelve Franciscans came from was established in Granada, in the territory of Sierra Morena and Hornachuelos, introducing a reform to reinforce the evangelizing character of the order, reaching the communities of the mountains whose religious education had not been taken care of. They preached poverty, spiritual retreat, abstained from cooked food and dairy products, and had to flagellate themselves three times per day. When Fray Juan de Puebla died, he was succeeded by Fray Juan de Guadalupe, who introduced stricter rules, like walking bare footed. In 1496 they worked to evangelize the Muslims of Granada, but the enmity of the *observant* branch of the order got the Pope to expel them, and they left to Portugal. After Guadalupe's death they were absolved and went to Castile where they founded two custodies, one, the Custody of the Santo Evangelio of Castile, from which the twelve Friars came. This group was the first to start the evangelization of the Muslims of Granada, and at least two of the friars who accompanied Juan de Guadalupe in Granada, Andrés de Córdoba – effectively from Córdoba – and Martín de Valencia, travelled to Mexico among the 12; their importance will be clarified in the second chapter.²⁹

²⁸ Gibson, "Conquista and Reconquista," 24.

²⁹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 50-2.

The next generation of Franciscans came with new ideas, mostly influenced by the thoughts of Erasmus, Thomas More and Lull, the philosophers that were changing the aspect of Spanish Catholicism. One of those Franciscans, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, became the bishop of New Spain in 1527; he was a humanist (although his practices did not demonstrate this) and considered by some, a person from the Renaissance, he defended the limitless diffusion of the Christian doctrines, and introduced the *philosophia Christi* in Mexico. Accompanying Zumárraga was Vasco de Quiroga, a disciple of Thomas More who became the bishop of Michoacán, and who, inspired by both Erasmus and Thomas More's *Utopia* (considered today a book of early science fiction), sought to create a utopic Christian society, and founded several communities: the hospital town of Santa Fé in Michoacán, and the Hospital of Santa Fe de la Laguna – Santa Fe as we said was the name of the campsite in front of Granada – were both the incarnation of those ideals. The indigenous population living in both hospital towns had a share in communal property, didn't have to pay the tributes, and were free of forced work. This was Quiroga's response when he was commissioned to create centers for indigenous graduates that would link the indigenous pagan world and the Christian one.³⁰

Although it did not last, Zumárraga created the famous School of the Holy Cross of Tlatelolco which helped prepare missionaries and translators in Nahuatl language, so that the process of conversion was easier and more respectful to the indigenous culture.³¹ Together with Vasco de Quiroga they introduced the printing press in New Spain, and shared with other missionaries such as Francisco Andrés de Olmos and

³⁰ Ibid, 54-8

³¹ García-Arenal, "Moriscos e indios", 165.

Bernardino de Sahagún the same humanist thought,³² their interest in learning the local language, understanding the local culture and allowing the native population to keep their traditions, which made Christianity more familiar and welcoming.

All these stories converge. When Zumárraga asked for the support to found his school in Tlatelolco, he explicitly mentioned in his letter that his intentions were merely to reproduce a successful model, “as it had been done in Granada” – he wrote – “... the Catholic Kings of glorious memory, and grandfathers of your majesty, who endowed monasteries, hospitals and universities”.³³ What was he referring to? The key character in this case is not the mission of the Franciscan friars founded by Juan de Puebla and continued by Fr. Juan de Guadalupe in Granada. It is another man, Hernando de Talavera, also a follower of the doctrines of Lull, whose aim was to expand the Christian conversion not for the sake of it, or the territorial and political benefits, but for the ‘love to the truth’ and the ‘love to the neighbor’. Fray Hernando belonged to the order of Saint Jerome; he became the bishop of Granada, and during his administration he fostered the evangelization of the recently taken Granada. His form of evangelization required the respect of the Islamic communities, especially their language, which he learnt in order to teach Christianity to the Arabs with the same intentions as his counterparts in America, who learnt Nahuatl and Quechua. He also allowed diverse cultural Islamic manifestations, to the point of including Zambras and other Islamic dances during the celebration of the *Chorpus Christi*, and financed a dictionary/catechism in Arabic. His *modus operandi* is a direct prototype of the missions in America. The knowledge of his work was known at

³² Ibid, 166.

³³ Garrido, *Moriscos e indios*, 80-81; García-Arenal, “Moriscos e indios,” 168; Zaragoza, *Cartas de Indias*, 3.

least by Zumárraga, who had in his personal library, in Mexico, together with Moro's Utopia and the works of Lull, the works of father Hernando de Talavera.³⁴

A great example of this resonance of the Moorish problem in the American problem can be seen in the comparison of both the *Sínodo de Guadix*, a catechism made for Muslims, and the first chapters of the *Primer concilio provincial de Mexico*, which shares an almost identical repertoire of ideas. It will not be surprising then to note that the author of the latter, called Alfonso de Montufar, had been born in Loja, Granada, where he worked in the holy office, and met Martín de Ayala, the author of the former, and who also worked in the composition of a Catechism in Arabic.³⁵ Several scholars³⁶ have found that a high percentage of the friars, including Jesuits, who worked in missions in Granada and Valencia just like the friars of the Mission of Albaicín, ended up having prolific careers in América. Much work is required in studying the profiles of the friars and the documents used for the catechism at both ends of the world to compare them, but they all point to a great convergence. Other aspects are similar in the efforts for conversion in both Granada and América: conversion was done through education, directed especially to the younger ones from higher classes, who were easier to introduce and convert, and more influential than others. The missions intended to form clerics from the indigenous populations, so that they preached in their original languages. With this evidence,³⁷ we can firmly say that the early missions of the sixteenth century in America are, in many

³⁴ García-Arenal, "Moriscos e indios", 166-168.

³⁵ Ibid, 170.

³⁶ García-Arenal, "Moriscos e indios", 173, García mentions the work of Vincent, B.: "Jesuitas y moriscos (1545-1570)". *Minorías y marginados en la España del siglo XVI*. Granada, 1978, pp. 101-118. And the work of Griffin, N.: "Un muro invisible: Moriscos and Cristianos viejos in Granada". *Studies in Honour of P. E. Russell*. Oxford, 1981, pp. 146-147. I did not consult this material.

³⁷ One of the best and most complete works to date on this subject is Garrido, *Moriscos e indios*. It is a monograph that compares the methods of evangelization in Granada and America.

regards, the translation (and a parallel process) of the experience gained with the Muslims in Granada.

Eventually, the hope for universal conversion was displaced by the counterreformation as the mendicant orders were expelled from the monasteries and replaced by the secular clergy and the Jesuits. The Franciscan friars complained in long letters to the King, explaining the problems that the Indians would face with the expulsion of the friaries, but they could achieve little.³⁸ At last, the “Holy” Inquisition was established in the Americas in 1571. Similarly, Philip II also forced the Mendoza family out, who had traditionally good relations with the Muslims, and in 1567 declared the complete prohibition of the use of Arabic, written or spoken, Islamic traditional clothing, the use of their Islamic last names, their use of public baths and the celebration of feasts; this led to the rebellion of the Alpujarras which was crushed in Spain, also in 1571. The human treatment and the intention to gain new converts, making the effort to understand the local culture, language and traditions, together with the possibility of a utopic Christian society were replaced, and even though some echoes could be heard afterwards in both Spain and the Americas, the hopes for Utopia and humanism were lost.³⁹

³⁸ Zaragoza, *Cartas de Religiosos*, 176-86.

³⁹ Garcia, “Moriscos e indios”, 170-3.

B. Mudejar in America

The migration of a technique.

The sixteenth century saw in America an explosion in construction. Between 1520 and 1580, for example, 323 religious complexes were built to supply the religious program aimed at the indigenous population in Mexico alone, a magnitude of construction which, if compared with the rest of the world, stands unmatched.⁴⁰ The repertoire included the same techniques and styles common in the Iberian Peninsula: the last vestiges of Gothic architecture, even of the late flamboyant Gothic, Manueline,⁴¹ Renaissance architecture, and Mudejar. In a later stage the baroque style would become prominent, amalgamating all the styles, including the varied indigenous elements, but also wiping away the originality of many buildings and changing them to the monotonous European style.

That is how we find, from Chile to the South of the United States, remains of the Mudejar style: wooden ceilings (*alfarjes*), polylobed arches, muqarnas, twin windows, Mudejar cloisters, geometric decoration in painting, wood, stone, and brick. *Mashrabiya*s, wooden furniture, chests and doors inlaid with ivory and bone, luster wares, balconies and even full *mosque*-type buildings, which are the object of this study.

⁴⁰ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 11.

⁴¹ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 9. Manueline is a Portuguese form of gothic. It mixed flamboyant gothic with Mudejar and elements from the places that the Portuguese conquered during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, like India. It was prominent in times of Portuguese King Don Manuel. The monastery of Batalha, in Portugal is a good example.

Manuel Toussaint published the first book on the subject in 1946. In the introduction, he narrows the field of study, and recognizes that many of the elements should be seen carefully, and differentiated from those that are reproduced and repeated vaguely with no stylistic intention. Two examples of this possible mismatching of the term Mudejar with techniques popular in America are polylobed arches and tilework revetment. Tile work is undoubtedly of Islamic origin, but was incorporated in European architecture and therefore reproduced in several monuments in America. These would not be considered Mudejar unless they have some sort of Islamic ornamental motif. The same happens with polylobed arches, which cannot be always considered Mudejar and only those that remind us of the Islamic originals in the Iberian Peninsula would be considered.⁴²

Strangely, we find some works of fantastic craftsmanship, hidden in faraway towns, sharing space with Gothic and Renaissance elements, and unidentified by the locals as Mudejar or of any Islamic precedence. I will now briefly survey the Mudejar elements that can be found in America, with preference for those that lie close to Cholula, Mexico City and Jilotepec, where the mosque-type chapels were erected.

The Mudejar wooden ceiling, or *alfarje* is the most common Mudejar element in América. The reason for this lies in the weather, which is warm and humid in many areas; the abundance of wood, especially in Ecuador, Colombia and the Caribbean; and the relative poverty of the architecture, because it is cheaper to cover a building with a wooden structure than with vaults (when wood is not scarce).⁴³ This does not apply everywhere, and it has been shown that often the selection of a Mudejar covering was

⁴² Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 8-12.

⁴³ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 19.

aesthetic, rather than economic.⁴⁴ The alfarjes, although not canonical in Renaissance architecture, had become incorporated completely in Spain. Some of the better-known examples are in the Alhambra, in the Golden Room for example (Fig. 1.4).⁴⁵ And the migration of that technique gave rise to fantastic wooden ceilings in México, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia. These structures, also called *armaduras de par y nudillo*, could be simple works of wooden slabs, held together by tie-beams raised over the rectangular structure of the buildings, forming an octagonal structure. Others can be very complex knotted slabs forming geometrical patterns with stars, pentagons, hexagons, often painted with Christian motifs. *Muqarnas* were also common, in the form of single round stalactites descending like a cone, mostly gilded, which are known in Spanish as *piñas de mocárabes*, or muqarnas pineapples (fig. 1.5). The craftsmen dedicated to this task were called *lacersos*, and in a treatise of carpenters, wood carvers and assemblers, proclaimed in México in 1568, it defined the work of the “geometricians” who should know how to make muqarnas (mocárabes), and domes (*media naranja*).⁴⁶

One of the greatest testimonies of the way these common ceilings were made rests on a rare manuscript, located at the University of Texas and written by the architect Andrés de San Miguel (1577-1644): a complete treatise from the early seventeenth century on Mudejar carpentry including illustrations of geometrical designs of great complexity (Fig. 1.6).⁴⁷

⁴⁴ López Guzman, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 422.

⁴⁵ López Guzman, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 349.

⁴⁶ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 31-2.

⁴⁷ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 32; Idem, “Fray Andrés,” 5-14; Andrés de San Miguel, manuscript, Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin, no. 31775792, 295 Folios. I had no access to this material. See Andrés (de Segura), and Eduardo Báez Macías. *Obras de fray Andrés de San Miguel*, (México, 1969), I also, did not consult this material;

Perhaps the Mudejar masterpiece is the alfarje over the choir in the Church of San Francisco in Quito, Ecuador (Fig. 1.7). It is set over a rectangular building, and consists of a complex network of knotted ribbons, interlocking stars, geometrical patterns, and eight gilded muqarnas cones surrounding a large coffer with muqarnas, set over a wooden structure with chamfered corners. The architects and date of this masterpiece is unknown, but scholars in the field suggest that it was done during the second half of the sixteenth century and probably related to Sebastián Dávila, who had done Mudejar drawings on his personal copy of Serlio, bought in 1578, two years before the church was finished.⁴⁸ Quito has other great ceilings of this type, less complex but still of great quality, the church of the Jesuits, Saint Augustin, the cathedral and the church of the Dominicans are all good examples.⁴⁹ The *alfarje* on the Church of San Francisco, in Bogotá (1590-1611), is a rich surviving one.⁵⁰ There is a wonderful wooden dome covering one of the staircases of the Franciscan Convent in Lima, of intricate and beautiful stars and geometrical patterns of ten, eight and twelve knots, reminiscent of the wooden dome in the Alcazar of Sevilla. After suffering serious damage in 1940, the dome in Lima was rebuilt in 1973 and restored recently (Fig. 1.8). There was another dome of this type in Mexico, in the Hospital de Jesús, from 1567.⁵¹ Some fantastic ceilings with muqarnas survive in Bolivia (Fig. 1.10). The Caribbean offers other examples: Cuba has some wooden alfarjes of very simple profiles, and there were in Santo Domingo. The most interesting ceilings for this study are, certainly, the *alfarjes* done in México, in the vicinity of the Mosque-type chapels.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 74. López Guzmán, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 475-6.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 75-9. López Guzmán, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 476-8.

⁵⁰ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 65-8.

⁵¹ Ibid, 82; López Guzman, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 423-4, 433.

Toussaint points out the paradox that in Mexico, which was the Viceroyalty of New Spain and a place that had so many *alfarjes*, very few survive, compared to the number of surviving examples in South America. The most probable answer to this is the poverty of the other regions and their inability to renovate their ceilings with vaults in a later period. From the drawn plan of Mexico City executed by Luis Gomez de Trasmonte in 1628, we know that at least nine of the churches had alfarjes: San Francisco, San Augustin, La Casa de la Profesa of the Jesuit fathers, the convent of the Carmelites, and the convent of la Merced, San Pablo, also Santa Clara and Santa Inés.⁵² None survive in the city, but others do in smaller towns. The most important one is in Tlaxcala, which interestingly is close to Cholula, Puebla and Mexico City. It is a perfect wooden construction, with long ribbons, decorated with golden stars and intricate geometric patterns that go along the single nave, and tie beams forming rhomboid figures. We do not know the time in which it was built, but it was already described in 1585 by the traveler Father Ponce (Fig. 1.11, 1.12). Another surviving alfarje is still installed in the church of San Diego of Huejotzingo, very close to Puebla, also decorated with stars and knotted wooden ribbons, dating probably from the sixteenth century, given its archaic look.⁵³

A different wooden structure, known as *artesonado*, was also very popular in America, there is some confusion in regard to the difference between alfarje and artesonado. I will refer as alfarje to structures with tilted beams like the Ceiling in San Francisco in Quito, and artesonados will refer to flat wooden ceilings, with coffers or interlacing patterns. Here I present two that are surprising: the ceiling in the Franciscan

⁵² Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 33.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 35-6.

convent of Tzintzuntzan (Fig. 1.13), although not dated, and the ceiling of the Temple of the Hospital of Jesus in Mexico City (fig. 1.14) in the form of octagonal coffers, reminiscent of those used in the mausoleum of Qalawun in Cairo. Yet another fantastic wooden ceiling survives in South America, in the Church of La Concepción in Bogotá, Colombia (Fig.16).⁵⁴

Another form of Mudejar ceiling is the vault with crossed arches, common in Andalusian architecture. One example is the vault in the Camerín of the Church of our Lady of Loreto in Tepotzotlán, Mexico (fig. 1.17), adorned with many baroque motifs, but retaining the structure,⁵⁵ seen, for example, in the Church of Christ of the Light, formerly the mosque of Bab al-Mardum, in Toledo (Fig. 1.18).

The tilework that can doubtlessly be considered Mudejar can be seen in Lima, Perú, at the convents of San Augustin and San Francisco, made in 1620s by Alonso Godinez and which have a close resemblance to the Islamic ones, with geometrical and floral motifs in the tradition of Seville (fig. 1.17).⁵⁶ But since we are concerned with Mexico and the region of the mosque-type chapels, we should mention Puebla because of the buildings' facades downtown, with geometrical decoration of tile and brick in forms that also suggest Islamic decoration (fig. 1.21, 3.34). Toussaint says that many Moriscos must have lived here, and the traditional *alfajores*, Moorish sweets made of honey, cinnamon and almond, suggest that such was the case.⁵⁷ The walls of many buildings in Mexico City were also ornamented with geometrical grills of mortar from the seventeenth century, and have an antecedent in some houses in Segovia, Spain. Some of these façades are still

⁵⁴ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 65. My favorite artesonado.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid* 41.

⁵⁷ *Ibid* 41.

standing (fig. 1.20) and famous examples include “La casa del Judío” (The House of the Jewish Man), which was represented in a lithography, and had other interesting Mudejar elements.

Mexico has other rare examples of Mudejar architecture. The tower of El Rollo (T.A.Q 1580), in Tepeaca vividly recalls the Torre de Oro, in Sevilla, with twin windows in each of its eight sides, adorned with lion heads of indigenous style adorning the corners (fig. 1.23). A tower of this style could have existed in Tlaxcala, as recorded in a manuscript.⁵⁸ Another fully Mudejar building is the Franciscan church of Angahua (fig. 1.22), in Michoacán, which was rediscovered in 1942 after the activity of a new volcano, Parícutin, in a place that had no record of previous volcanic activity. Its alfarje is not extant, but the façade has a rare mix of Mudejar and indigenous motifs; the top shows an extravagant polylobed arch and the frame, which rises beyond the top part of the arch showing an interlacing motif common in Andalusian architecture. The style of the carving, however, is evidently indigenous, as is the shape of the flowers that embellish it.⁵⁹

The convent of Chiapa de Corzo offers the closest analogs to horseshoe arches, as does the monumental fountain in the middle of the town (Fig. 1.24 and 1.25), built by the Dominican Friar Rodrigo de León from 1563 to 1565. It has an octagonal plan, and it is made of brick, uncovered, arranged in a beautiful brickwork pattern common in Spanish Mudejar,⁶⁰ a technique that would be echoed in the eighteenth century in the Church of San Francisco in Cali, Colombia. In the latter, one can see a horseshoe arch in the lateral

⁵⁸ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 27. The manuscript mentioning the tower is called *Introducción de la Justicia en Tlaxcala*; literally Introduction to Justice in Tlaxcala. I did not consult this material.

⁵⁹ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 29.

⁶⁰ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 28.

entrance (fig. 1.26), a very rare apparition, and a Mudejar tower in very elaborate brickwork with a trilobed arch window on the third floor, and a few tiles of the same colors and shapes used in Almohad and Nasrid architecture as in the Baño de Comares at the Alhambra (fig. 1.29) or in Spanish Mudejar as in the Cathedral of Zaragoza (fig. 1.27).

Few muqarnas elements made their way to America, except for the muqarnas pineapples in the alfarjes. Similarly, almost no horseshoe arches, no stucco work, or tile mosaic and almost no stone carving in the Mudejar style appear here.⁶¹ A couple of interesting exceptions, however, show a process of assimilation by the local craftsmen. Such is the case of a small window in the hospital of Urapan (fig. 1.30); the already mentioned Façade of the Church of Angahua; and the lateral door of the Franciscan temple of Tecamachalco (fig. 1.29) also from the sixteenth century, which has a trilobed profile with carved figures in an elegant style that was hardly ever reproduced again.⁶²

Other forms of Mudejar made their way with more insistence, such as mashrabiya balconies. One can be seen in the Church of San Juan de Dios (early seventeenth century) in Mexico City, but this form was more abundant in Lima, with windows that had to be opened vertically creating shadows, and that look absolutely Islamic. Those which survive in the original form are in the palace of Torre Tagle (1715) (fig. 1.32), but many others in the street of Valladolid and the street of Escribanos and Botoneros used to have the same kind of balconies. The palace Torre Tagle contains another Mudejar hint; the courtyard's second floor is framed with arcades of polylobed profile, which could be considered baroque instead of Mudejar, but arranged in a way that reminds one of

⁶¹ Zahar, "Presencias y Ausencias," 52.

⁶² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 475; Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 42.

Islamic courtyards: large arches separated by smaller ones (Fig. 1.3), which can be seen in the Alhambra.⁶³

It is worth mentioning that other smaller arts of Islamic origin also travelled to America. Boxes, furniture and doors, inlaid wood with bone and ivory made their way to many colonies. We are told that, with Cortés, during his campaign, came three carpenters whose early works included an altar and a chair which served as decoration in Moctezuma's palace. When the first viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza, mentioned earlier for his links with Granada and the Islamic world, arrived in New Spain, he surely brought Mudejar furniture with him. Inlaid chairs, desks and boxes of intricate craftsmanship were a fashion that Mexico would acquire for its expressive capacities and relatively cheap execution. This means that, not only were some objects brought to the Americas, but the techniques were imported too and early on furniture was being made in this style in American soil: chairs, book stands, drawers, doors, chests and tables (Fig. 1.34). By the seventeenth century all the furniture required to supply Spanish taste was readily available. There are records of a brilliant Amerindian craftsman, Juan Carlos de la Cruz, whose chests and tables inlaid with Islamic patterns were very appreciated in New Spain.⁶⁴ One of the great masterpieces of inlaid wood is in the choir of the Cathedral of Puebla (Fig. 1.35) which was finished by the last decade of the seventeenth century.

In order to convey the variety of Mudejar work that was made in America, I have selected some of the most interesting examples, but many more monuments are described in the pages of Toussaint and Lopez Guzman. Furthermore, we can imagine that numerous works are lost now after the successive earthquakes, fires, deterioration

⁶³ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 83.

⁶⁴ Zahar, *Taracea*, 69.

and renovation programs that tried to refurbish the buildings to the newest European styles. The presence of these numerous architectural features in Mexico, Perú, Ecuador, Colombia, the Caribbean, including Cuba and Puerto Rico, the south of the United States, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay, raise one question: why?

To some, the Mudejar element seems quite surprising in America and to explain this phenomenon, some authors have tried to link it with Muslims or recent converts, Moriscos. Although the results can be inconclusive, an extraordinary amount of information has come from these efforts in recent years. Karoline Cook published her dissertation about Muslims and Moriscos in America, and Hernan Taboada has contributed as well, finding that the presence of Muslims and converts in America, regardless of the continuous and rigorous bans, was a fact.⁶⁵

Let's start by saying that the document for the capitulation of Granada signed in 1491, between the Catholic kings and Mohamed XII, set the conditions for a peaceful retreat of the Nasrids, and no damage was done to the population or to the buildings.

The agreements of the capitulation included the following article:

Their highness and their successors will ever afterwards allow (the Granadans) to live in their own religion, and not permit their mosques to be taken away, nor their minarets nor their muezzins, nor will they interfere with the pious foundations or endowments which they have for such purposes, nor will they disturb the uses and customs which they observe.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Taboada, "El moro en las Indias", 117.

⁶⁶ Menocal, *Ornament*, 244.

But in 1499 there was a Moorish rebellion, and in 1502 everything changed abruptly; the Muslim population had to either convert to Christianity or face expulsion. In 1501 the Catholic kings were already recommending not to allow any Moor or Jew in the West Indies.⁶⁷ In 1525 Charles the V closed all the mosques. The expulsion was ordered later not only for the population of Granada, but for all the kingdom. In 1513, 1530, 1531 and 1536 the prohibition of the Muslims' access to the Americas was repeated, this last time including the offspring of converts, and in 1543 and 1550 it included that moors and Moriscos already settled in the Americas were to be sent away, and that white slaves – Spanish Muslims or those from the Levant – could not be traded anymore. A more severe prohibition was proclaimed in 1571, after the rebellion of the Alpujarras, which outlawed migration under special permission.⁶⁸ This means that every settler had to be tested for purity of blood and faith. Together with Muslims; Jews, Gypsies, blacks (except for slaves) and reformed heretics, as well as the children and grandchildren of these heretics were all banned from the New World.⁶⁹

The fact that the decree of prohibition to the Americas was repeated so many times shows how unsuccessful the restrictions had been, and how constant the reports about Moriscos in America were. To obey the orders was not that easy. For example, a certain Licenciado Serrato, in Guatemala, reported in 1552 that many Moriscos were married to Indians or Spanish women and he did not know how to handle them. A similar case in Peru was simply dismissed because of the great demand of labor force.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Taboada, "El moro en las Indias", 117.

⁶⁸ Taboada, "El moro en las Indias", 116-9.

⁶⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 8.

⁷⁰ Taboada, "El moro en las Indias", 116-9. Paso, *Epistolario de Nueva España*, 125-36.

The difficulties in hunting Moors or Moriscos both in America and Spain were varied; Morales de Pedraja wrote in 1638, about Moriscos in Spain:

They were apparent Christians and truthfully moors. Attending more often to the ceremonies of their sect than to the law of Christ... they bathed at least in December... and baptized their children to fulfill the law, but afterwards would wash their heads with hot water and named them with Moorish names. Women would go out... wearing borrowed Christian dresses and at home they would undress and wear like Moors... And learned the Christian prayers because the priests would examine them.⁷¹

When they were traded as slaves, their color was never listed as black or white (white slaves normally being moors), so that the authorities would not notice. Even though the restrictions were taken care of, many had licenses of traders or sailors. To add to the difficulty, they were impossible to distinguish: in a letter to the King, the Indian Huamán Poma wrote that they were as Spanish as the old Christians, and that they spoke as clear as Spanish people do.⁷²

There are some very well documented and surprising cases of Muslims in America during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Ibrahim ibn Ahmad al-Marbas who journeyed to the Americas without anybody knowing, and later wrote a treatise on artillery in Spanish, is one of them. Captain Zapata, a Turkish adventurer from Istanbul, made his fortune in the silver mines of Potosí, today Bolivia, where he lived from 1558 to 1573. The mine he discovered was called Zapatera, honoring his name. Zapata went back to Istanbul where he met with Murad III, who made him captain of his ships, and later

⁷¹ Zahar, *Taracea*, 59.

⁷² Taboada, "El moro en las Indias", 120.

was made king of Argel, under Mehmet III, although this last part hasn't been proved.⁷³

Alejo de Castro was accused of being a Muslim in the records of the inquisition in Mexico City, in 1648. Afterwards he confessed to be a Muslim, the son of a Moorish woman from Spain, living most of his life in the Philippines, married to a Bengali Indian woman. There were many receipts of white slaves being purchased in Lima and Arequipa around the 1540s, and baptism certificates. Between 1532 and 1549, at least 300 Morisco slave women were brought to Lima. It was the owners of Morisco slaves who were the first to protested the mandates against them, arguing that those "white slaves" were not the source of any trouble.⁷⁴

Perhaps the most surprising case is the adventure of a Morisco, a runaway slave owned by two Canarian brothers who settled in the coasts of Venezuela. He was found afterwards, in 1544, living among Amerindians as a war captain and householder with several wives.⁷⁵ Other rumors pointed to the Green County, an Islamic community by the Hudson river, which was the enterprise of an Egyptian called Nasser al-Din by the end of the sixteenth century.⁷⁶

Faruq Abdallah, doctor in Arabic and Islamic Studies, connects the tradition of the Green County to Francis Drake, who rescued 200 Muslims from an attack in Cartagena where they were held as slaves, and took them to the Colony of Roanoke. Drake stopped there before taking most of them back to the Mediterranean (a matter verified by the

⁷³ Orsúa, *Historia de la villa imperial*, 117-8; Taboada, "El moro en las Indias", 120; Bazán, "Don Ricardo Palma y un musulmán," 625-628.

⁷⁴ Cáceres Enríquez, "La mujer morisca," 569, 571-6; Taboada; "El moro en las Indias", 124-7; Idem, *La sombra del islam*, 114-8.

⁷⁵ Taboada, *La sombra del islam*, 134-5.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 135; Taboada cites "Los primeros árabes en el nuevo mundo" Medio Oriente Informa 15, 38-39. I couldn't find this material.

amount of data recollected by the survivors). However, he argues, but not with sufficient evidence, that some Muslims stayed in North America and could have left Roanoke with the Indians. As the story has it, they probably integrated with the Croatan tribe in North Carolina, which Abdallah connected with the Lumbee people, or the Melungeon people.⁷⁷

Black Muslim slaves from West Africa are also heard of with very consistent evidence. Sylviane Diouf's seminal work on this regard has followed slaves in both south and north America. She has studied biographies, letters in Arabic and copies of the Quran, as well as obscure suggestions of syncretism in the religions of Candomble, in Brazil, Santería, in Cuba, and Voodoo, in Haiti. Most of the Islamic legacy in black communities was not material, except perhaps for amulets. In some of these religions the Islamic trait was recognized as such by the believers who were aware of the name Allah, or mention the Muslims, or Arabic. Others, however, are oblivious of the connections between their customs and Islam. Most borrowings were words from Arabic, considered words of power, or even the integration of Allah in a polytheist pantheon as it happened in the deity Obatalá, or Obat-Allah, "the lord Allah," in Santería, a religion of Yoruba origin, but that merged with Catholicism. Obatalá cannot be represented, his day is Saturday and the divination system could correspond with the Islamic geomancy.⁷⁸ Candomble, in Brazil, also of Yoruba origin, integrates Allah directly in its pantheon. Candomble integrates a series of Orixas, or gods and equates them with catholic Saints. Orixá-Allah, like Obatalá, could not be represented. A chant of such

⁷⁷ Abdallah, "Turcos, Moros y Moriscos," II.

⁷⁸ Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, 259-61.

religion included the following verse: “La-ilaha Ill-allah.”⁷⁹ These are all interesting connections, but for obvious reasons not linked with the Mudejar tradition of Spain.

The presence of Moriscos is very well documented through chronicles, inquisitorial processes, and protocols which describe them in large numbers. They were soldiers, bodyguards, artisans, slaves, concubines, people who practiced sorcery, healing or interpreting dreams, which in Spain was already associated with them.⁸⁰ Some had high rankings, like Diego Romero, an encomendero in Nueva Granada, today Colombia. Others participated in the conquest, like the famous case of Estevanico, a convert and slave who survived the wreckage of Cabeza de Vaca’s Journey.⁸¹

Few links have been established between the architecture or other Mudejar heritage in the American continent and real Moriscos or crypto-Muslims. There are legends, the most interesting one for this thesis being that the open-chapel of Cholula was a crypto-mosque. We will review this in the third chapter. Looking for Moriscos as the reason for Mudejar art existing in America is very hard because Moriscos adopted Christian names, which were just like any other Spanish names and it requires much research in the archives to trace the origin of each.⁸² Even though there might be Moriscos behind some features, however, Mudejar in America can be explained without that direct relationship. After all, the Andalusian culture had left a deep mark in the Spanish culture of the fifteenth century, Christians had already assimilated it, reinterpreted it, and through them it was transferred to the New World.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ibid, 62.

⁸⁰ Taboada, “El moro en las Indias”, 122.

⁸¹ Cook, *Forbidden Passages*, 4-5.

⁸² Cáceres Enríquez, “La mujer morisca,” 567.

⁸³ López Guzman, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 423-4.

The key to answering the question is in the Spaniards themselves. As we saw in the first part of this chapter, Christian Spaniards were already part of the Mudejar culture, and had a Mudejar taste. The years of coexistence during the caliphate of Cordoba had Arabized the Christians, and during the Taifas, when the Caliphate fell and the regions became fragmented, the culture of tolerance for the other remained. Thus, Alfonso VI in 1085, after taking the city of Toledo, allowed the Muslims to stay in the city, to retain their property, and to worship publicly. A similar proclamation was done in 1267, when the Christian king of Valencia permitted Muslims to enter the city and remain there and practice their craft under his protection. Even though the term Mudejar refers to the *Muddayan*, “those who stay”, primarily Muslims who remained under Christian rule, we now know that Muslims, Christians and Jews worked together in Mudejar projects and arts,⁸⁴ and that the appropriation of Islamic motifs and techniques was almost complete. Instead of destroying the Islamic heritage, the Christians appropriated it, converting mosques into churches and minarets into bell towers.⁸⁵

When the Castilians entered the conquered areas during the slow processes of the Reconquista, they were approaching a densely-populated area with rural and urban economies of great complexity, and they did not have the specialized workers and technicians they needed to upkeep the industries, the complicated irrigation systems or to rebuild infrastructure. They were forced to make use of the conquered population, which was already trained, and whose technological development was superior to that of the conquering armies. The result was a huge Mudejar influence, especially in urban areas; the new Castilian occupants lived in Andalusian houses built for the purposes of

⁸⁴ Sheren, “Transcultured Architecture,” 138-9.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 142.

their previous residents, and the new houses were built by Mudejares, with carpets, geometric decorative designs, furniture, tilework and kitchen utensils typical of Andalusian lifestyle. Gastronomic taste, fashion trends and even musical traditions were heavily influenced.⁸⁶

After all this transcultural game, opposition to adopt Renaissance style during the sixteenth century in Spain should be understood as a form of resistance from the people and even from the nobles. They refused to leave the syncretism of Islamic and Mudejar styles that they inherited after centuries of “convivence” and conflict, and which can be seen as a nationalistic expression and as a completely Spanish style. Contrary to the will of the monarchy, the taste of the people could not be changed by decree. Numerous and valuable Spanish examples of Mudejar arts from the sixteenth century show that rejection. Seville, Córdoba, Valencia, several towns of Murcia, of Badadoz, have wooden ceilings in the Mudejar style, accompanied by towers, wooden screens, tilework, pointed arches with *alfiz* (a typical rectangular frame around the arches), brickwork and palaces reminiscent of older Islamic ones, like the Casa de Pilatos, and the palace of the Dueñas.

This struggle between the national and foreign, traditional and modern, had an echo in America during the sixteenth century. On one side, many structures reproduced the Mudejar taste, complying with the speed, cost and beauty required during this early period of construction, but the monarchy and the crown had seen in America the perfect spot to recreate itself from scratch. It was here where all the unaccomplished catholic dreams that could not be done due to the already rough history and lack of space of the Peninsula could suddenly be done in the “virgin” space of the New World in the ideal

⁸⁶ Garcia, “Moriscos e indios”, 155.

image of Europe in its Renaissance, baroque and neoclassical styles. There was no space for the Gothic or Islamic deformity in America. This will make us understand that the Mudejar element was seen from the beginning as a provisional one, which was disarticulated and edited, and which was applied mostly to provincial structures, and still survives in the periphery where there was less money to transform alfarcjes into vaults and comply with the ideal program of Christian utopia.⁸⁷

How were the techniques transferred? We have many records of the *modus operandi* that gave us these buildings. From 1560 to 1650 we can tell that most of the workforce was indigenous. The master architects, carpenters and other technicians were Spanish and were required in great numbers to accomplish the constructive tasks of the early period, in the role of directors.⁸⁸ The laws that regulated the guilds of artisans in New Spain stipulated that only Old Christians of pure blood could take the position of master craftsmen, but soon enough these positions would be taken by criollos and mestizos. The guilds were formed relatively early. In Lima, the carpenters had formed their guild by 1549, and in 1557 the guilds of painters and wood carvers of New Spain formed their own, followed by the carpenters, wood carvers and assemblers in 1568 in the City of Mexico, with the regulations of the guilds being published again in Puebla in 1570. There was a correlation between the guild system and the previous structure of indigenous artisan groups, organized by neighborhood. This in turn became the base for the Colonial structure of guilds of Spanish, African and indigenous craftsmen.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Zahar, "Presencias y Ausencias," 51-2.

⁸⁸ López Guzmán, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 422-3.

⁸⁹ Zahar, *Taracea*, 66.

The process of learning had a very rigid hierarchy. It started at the age of 9 as an apprentice. One continued as an official, and then there was an exam, which required, for the carpenters of ceilings, a demonstration of their capacities to build alfarjes, a cover with muqarnas, and knotted surfaces. The learning process was oral and practical, restricting creativity and promoting efficiency. Although the manuscript by Andrés de Segura shows numerous technical details of the construction of alfarjes, most notable architects could be virtually illiterate and have no theoretical knowledge.⁹⁰ It was not until 1550 that specialized carpenters and builders arrived to New Spain. The artisans in charge of building the early structures for the conquistadores before this date were indigenous with few exceptions. These artisans mastered several local construction techniques and adapted them to Spanish taste. They knew, better than the Spanish, the possibilities of local materials. The urgency of Spanish needs gave a base to a new urban character. These early hybrid constructions provided evidence of a very qualified workmanship that the Spanish recognized, and after 1550 could be used for Renaissance arcades, Gothic vaults and Mudejar carpentry.⁹¹ It is also worth mentioning that the indigenous population was not only the workforce, but in few examples the directors of the projects, as is the case of an indigenous leader called Tláhuac, who directed the construction of a church around 1540.⁹²

Ila Sheren's article proposes that, since the Mudejar work was done by indigenous craftsmen under Spanish supervision, we must first ask ourselves

⁹⁰ Ibid, 67.

⁹¹ López Guzman, *Arquitectura mudéjar*, 455-6.

⁹² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 360.

whether these survivals fit in the category of Islamic art or even Mudejar Art, and second, we must reevaluate the role of the indigenous population in this transference of architectural styles. We know that the Mudejar was the Christian appropriation of a foreign element, using it for very Christian purposes, we also know that the adoption of Spanish architecture in America was a colonial imposition of both state and religion. Sheren wants us to rethink that colonial relation, adding to the discourse the concept of transculturation, meaning that in the event of a cultural clash between two civilizations, a completely new category is born. The Amerindian craftsmen not only dominated the techniques of construction, but understood the local materials and integrated their traditions in it and they could arguably relate the Spanish Mudejar elements to their own tradition of geometric shapes and abstract patterns. In other words, they made of Mudejar their own expression.⁹³ Some of the previous monuments show that kind of hybridity, and I want to add one more that I experienced firsthand, and that combines perfectly a very Islamic polylobed arch, and two obvious pre-Columbian motifs that I compared with a 15th century wooden drum (fig. 1.36, 1.37). It is a lintel in the lateral chapel of the Church of San José in Tlaxcala, a municipality that kept their sculpture tradition for a long time, and which displays many other forms of Mudejar-Indian hybridity.

⁹³ Sheren, "Transcultured Architecture," 146-7.

C. The Plague

The character of missionary architecture in Mexico during the sixteenth century.

Architecture in Mexico, because of the very particular conditions in which it arose, was the nest where two atypical architectural structures were born. One of them is the mosque-type chapel, and the other one is the open chapel. As with the crafts of carpentry, assembly or masonry, architecture itself was also learned by oral tradition. It has been pointed out that friars were not very well trained in technical tasks, and it is possible that they got their inspiration from book illustrations, or from designs coming straight from their imagination. There were trained architects and they were mostly appointed to great urban structures, while more improvised solutions were taken in the countryside. It was not until 1554 that references to classical architecture were published for the first time and mentions of architecture books appear in 1569. Only in the next decade a couple of books by Serlio and Alberti made it to the Americas. This lack of rulebooks gives us a timespan of much original creation, even if the friars or artisans were learned in Renaissance style of construction and design.⁹⁴

Even though bishop Vicente de Palafox in the seventeenth century affirms that the plans for the construction of Mexico were sent from Spain, George Kubler argues that

⁹⁴ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 154-6.

none of them were applied. In his testament, for example, Cortes wrote that the plans for the construction of the Chapel of the Hospital of Our Lady of the Conception were done in Mexico and there is enough evidence of the plans used for the earliest buildings being executed by resident artisans in Mexico. The viceroy Mendoza wrote to his successor in 1550 that there was nobody competent in the field of architecture. Bishop Zumárraga also complained to Philip II in 1547, saying that there was no architect prepared enough to do the foundations of the cathedral. Kubler argues that perhaps this lack of trained personnel and written or visual forms of transmission was the cause of the richness, variety and originality that flourished in Mexico during the sixteenth century.⁹⁵

From the numerous churches built in Mexico during the sixteenth century, the most popular plan was the single nave church. Most of them had a certain military character that responded to a lack of fortified walls in towns. Many of them had no transept, or only a very small one, and a polygonal chancel. Churches built in rich areas were covered with high walls and rib vaulting, and in poor areas with barrel vaults or Mudejar wooden ceilings. Almost all had a stone apse, which can be traced to Spanish Architecture from the period of the Catholic Kings, but with the slight difference of not having lateral chapels, with some exceptions.⁹⁶ There were fewer churches following the basilica plan used very early by the mendicant friars and also for monumental projects, like the first cathedral of Mexico, and the Cathedral of Puebla, which was considered one of the most

⁹⁵ Ibid, 156-8.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 290. The church of Molango, in Hidalgo has lateral chapels.

magnificent of the time when it was built, and other buildings during the last quarter of the century, which were heavily influenced by Renaissance architecture.⁹⁷

Open-air chapels.

Most of the single nave or basilica churches, vaulted or covered with Mudejar wooden ceilings were built for Spanish families, in a style familiar to them. A third group of buildings, the open-air chapels constitute the most interesting and original of what was produced in Mexico during the Spanish Colony, one which has been considered the “most dramatic American architectural innovation before the skyscraper.”⁹⁸ They followed the style of San José de los Naturales, before it acquired its hypostyle format, chapels for Indians that would host far numerous congregations, outdoors, in front of an open chancel.⁹⁹

Father Motolinía wrote about them:

The patios in this country are very spacious and generous, as the number of people is large and the churches are too small to accommodate them, that is why they have their chapels out in the patio, so that everybody attends Holy Mass every Sunday and feast day, whereas the churches are used only during weekdays.¹⁰⁰

Most open-churches are basically porticoes, single standing apses, or chancels that were used as provisional churches, integrated with atriums instead of vaulted covered naves to house large numbers of Indians. They could all have started as thatched roofs in

⁹⁷ Ibid, 358-64

⁹⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, VII.

⁹⁹ Moffitt, *The Islamic Module*, 146.

¹⁰⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 340; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 388; Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*, I, 69.

perishable architecture, but from 1540 to 1570 they acquired permanent and monumental forms, as they survive today. It is difficult to study and separate the terminology because many monuments that belong to other categories have been classified as such, including the mosque-type chapels, or even porticoes or entrances. Some of them were provisional structures used while the definitive church was constructed. This is the case with the early stage of San José de los Naturales, before it acquired its mosque-like appearance, using the atrium for the congregation and a very poor portico for the mass. Others were built as an auxiliary chancel for large celebrations; an early example of this type is the open-chapel of Tlaxcala (Fig. 1.38). It is the earliest such chapel after San José, and it has the first vaulted structure built by Amerindians, but supervised by Europeans. This chapel is on top of a very steep stairway. When I visited this building, I found it uncomfortable to attend a mass while standing on steps, but Kubler compares it with a *teocalli*, the traditional Nahua pyramid-like structure for worship. There, the high priests would stand on a higher platform, and the community would be on the lower ground watching the rituals being performed, a great example of cultural translation, adapting the Catholic cult to the Nahua cult (fig. 1.39).

Other open open-chapels were the only and main monument of the convent, with no conventual church, as happened in Yucatan and in the case of the convent of Dzibilchaltun.¹⁰¹ One of the best examples of this structure is the open chapel of Teposcolula, finished between 1575 and 1580, which has a more complicated plan including a Gothic hexagonal rib dome, three naves and two floors, as well as an

¹⁰¹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 389-90, 397, 398.

enormous scale (fig. 1.40, 1.41). Yet, for this study, I should mention another open chapel, one with a less complicated plan but an intriguing painted barrel vault: the chapel of Atlatlahucán, in the state of Morelos, built in 1570. The interior keeps the original paintings which date to the sixteenth century, and from the picture it is very clear that there was a Mudejar intention in its execution (fig. 1.42).¹⁰²

There are some exceptions, yet McAndrew, who studied the chapels thoroughly, concludes that the open chapels were a regular element in the architecture of the early years of the Great Conversion, and almost every monastery had one.¹⁰³ The number and originality invested in the different designs, and the abrupt halt in their construction by the last quarter of the sixteenth century raises many questions. By 1576, the use of these chapels decayed, popular devotion had decreased, and the chapels were used only during important celebrations such as Christmas, when it was necessary to celebrate mass outside. The most probable cause for their lack of use is a decrease in the size of the indigenous population and the increase in the number of priests and religious foundations, distributing the population that used to be accommodated in one single church into several.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Bobadilla, "Presencia de la Arquitectura," 38.

¹⁰³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 348.

¹⁰⁴ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 389; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 348.

Demographic problems.

The demographic problems were so serious that their effects can be seen today in the disproportion between the small size of many towns and their large religious foundations. The enormous and unfinished church of Culiapán lacks a town around it, only ruins survive. There are few remains of the old town that used to sustain the sumptuous Augustinian convent that stands in Nuevo Laredo; these single standing churches and convents, and many other examples are the physical evidence of densely populated areas that decayed and died, or populations that probably migrated or succumbed during the ferocious plagues and vicious behavior of the conquerors.¹⁰⁵ The creativity and number of open-chapels, mosque-type chapels and abandoned monasteries and churches testify to the urgency of the vast campaign of religious conversion. At a time in which the population was larger, friars had utopic pretensions, and religion was the only positive contact between the new rulers and the conquered ones.

Data during the first years of the colony in Mexico is not accurate and there are several theories about the total amount of the population at the time of the conquest, but the accounts of the reconstruction of Mexico City and the early years are frightening. Motolinía wrote that “During the first years, more people were busy in the work than in the building of the Temple of Jerusalem in the time of Solomon. So many were working on the buildings... that a man could hardly pick his way through the streets... Many were killed by falling beams or by falling from a height; others lost their life under buildings they were taking down in one place to put up in another, especially when they

¹⁰⁵ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 68.

dismantled the chief temples of the Devil. Many Indians died in this work and many years passed before these temples were completely destroyed...”.¹⁰⁶ The King did not give Cortes a position as a Viceroy and instead the Audiencia Real dispatched a government of four, including Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico. Invested with semi-inquisitorial powers, Zumarraga arguably produced the cruelest government in the history of Mexico. It forced the tribute to exhaustion, thousands were murdered: 15,000 Indians were traded as slaves and sent to Santo Domingo – a region in which indigenous inhabitants had been annihilated because of the hard conditions –, one hundred men were traded for a horse, one boy for one block of cheese. Ordinary Indians began to emigrate from the cities to the hills, scared of Spaniards. The estimations suggest that half a million died from 1524 to 1527.¹⁰⁷

This data corresponds very well with the controversial Black Legend, popularized by the Dutch during the Eighty Year War, between separatist, Calvinist Netherlands and Spain, which was doing everything in its hands to keep it part of the empire. The main source for this theory is the Dominican friar, and bishop of Chiapas, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, and his treatise *Breve relación de la destrucción de las Indias Occidentales*. This theory proposes that the demographic dramatic changes were due to the systematic cruelty and forced labor applied to large sectors of the indigenous population. His book is a catalogue of horrors, centered specially in the Antilles, where, out of the three million inhabitants that lived there during the discovery, only 200 survived in 1552.¹⁰⁸ Yet, de las Casas talks about many places he did not visit himself in the time in which he

¹⁰⁶ Motolinía, *Historia de los Indios*, 17-8; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Zaragoza, *Cartas de Indias*, 94; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Las Casas, *Brevísima relación*, 15.

wrote the book such as Cholula, where he registered that from 1518 to 1530, 30,000 Indians had been murdered. Kubler and other scholars argue that he couldn't have known the numbers, simply because there were no records or reports of what he was talking about. He surely saw a lot of cruelty perpetrated by the Spaniards but we do not know his sources.¹⁰⁹

Even if we doubt the exaggerations of de las Casas, popularized for the political purposes of the numerous enemies of Spain, as much as for the humanists, defenders of Indians or the anti-feudal, anti-encomendero groups, what de las Casas reports has at least some truth. Other chroniclers mention similar situations, and relate them to the economic extortion that Spain imposed on the local population. The dramatic depopulation is related to the transformations that New Spain was suffering. It was an immense cultural shift, New Spain becoming a mercantilist and Christian society linked to an absolutist state. Most probably many of the Spaniards in New Spain were not mean or greedy but the process to achieve this enormous change could not happen without victims. The violence and the living conditions must have been bad enough for cases of mass suicide to happen, such as one registered in Michoacán by Alonso de Zorita,¹¹⁰ as well as forced abortions, infanticide and explicit prohibition of sexual relations with the hopes of making a tribe disappear fast enough so as to not to have another generation of Indians subject to the Spanish rule, living like slaves. Other causes of depopulation are related to the frequent revolts that tried to bring Spanish rule down through short and violent outbreaks, such as one which occurred in Mixtón in 1541, in

¹⁰⁹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 90-1.

¹¹⁰ Grijalva, *Crónica de la Orden*, 217; Zorita, *Breve y sumaria relación*, III, 173, 192-95; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 95 citing Quiñones, *Lebrón de, Visita a Colima 1551-1554*, from the unpublished manuscript. I did not have access to this document.

Oaxaca in 1547 and 1548 and the periodical ones in the region of Llerena-Sombrerete, in 1560s, all of which were put down by the colonial forces who subsequently wiped out entire regions of their inhabitants.¹¹¹

Furthermore, the colonial officials had good records of the population of every mission, most of it coming from the census of 1547, 1571 and 1595-1596. There were many difficulties in censusing the population accurately due to the high levels of migration, and there must be a degree of skepticism towards the political intention of the censors: the encomenderos wanted to register more Indians to be receptors of more money from the tribute, while the friars registered less to ease the difficulties of the Indians¹¹². The analysis of this information shows a low level of population in 1547, then an exponential growth in 1571, and a dramatic drop in 1596. This analysis coincides with the great plagues that devastated Mexico during the sixteenth century, one in 1545-1548 with enough space for the population to recover for the census of 1571 and other in 1576, followed by smaller ones in 1587-1588, 1592-1593 and 1597.¹¹³ Many chroniclers of the mid sixteenth century reflect on the devastating proportions of these plagues. Jerónimo López recorded that 400,000 Amerindians died in seven months in 1545.¹¹⁴ Father Motolinía talked extensively about the ten plagues that hit Mexico, the first being measles and smallpox, and Mendieta thought that the Indians would be extinct if the plague continued.¹¹⁵ Sahagún, other chronicler, claimed to have buried more than 10,000 people, before falling ill himself, during the same year. He adds that this devastation was enormous and universal, and that most of the people who lived in

¹¹¹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 91, 95.

¹¹² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 85.

¹¹³ Assadourian, "La despoblación indígena en Perú y Nueva España," 421.

¹¹⁴ Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario de Nueva España*, IV, 232.

¹¹⁵ Motolinía, *Historia de los indios*, 13-4; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 75.

New Spain died.¹¹⁶ Then, during 1576 the plague would be even worse (with 100 people dying every day).¹¹⁷ In addition to the victims of the diseases themselves, people also died of hunger and lack of care, because for that time charity had been exhausted. Sahagún added that if the epidemic continued at that rate for three or four years, all natives would be dead, and the land would be retaken by wild beasts.¹¹⁸ In Michoacán, 23 of 20 towns answered in a survey¹¹⁹ that the causes of the depopulation had been the pestilence and the plagues, rather than violence.¹²⁰

After years of intense research, heated debates and several proposals on the numbers of deaths, it is not possible yet to estimate the real magnitude of the demographic catastrophe. Robert McCaa compared many of the theories, many which use detailed information, chroniclers, tax receipts and census, and concludes that, numbers apart, all researchers have much in common in that the population must have experienced a 50 percent loss in some territories, and in others an 80 percent, overall during the sixteenth century.¹²¹ It is hard to understand the scale of this terrible depletion of population. Typhus, smallpox and measles affected mostly the indigenous population. The Spaniards were virtually immune, although many were affected due to the rebellious Indians who threw corpses in deposits of drinkable water or kneaded bread with the blood of the dead in an act of revenge. The Spaniards were preoccupied with the situation even though plagues were not so uncommon for them, and were part

¹¹⁶ Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas*, III, 328, 334-5.

¹¹⁷ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 89.

¹¹⁸ McCaa, "¿Fue el siglo XVI una catástrofe," 227; Sahagún, *Historia de las cosas*, III, 355-61. McCaa, however, shows evidence of an earlier epidemic in 1520, which was even worse than the later ones. We cannot consider it now because it didn't have a measurable impact on architecture.

¹¹⁹ *Relaciones geográficas* was a series of elaborate questionnaires that were sent to all the lands controlled by Spain during the reign of Philip II between 1579 to 1585.

¹²⁰ McCaa, "¿Fue el siglo XVI una catástrofe," 232.

¹²¹ McCaa, "¿Fue el siglo XVI una catástrofe," 236.

of the normal conditions of the society in Europe at that time, but the measures taken by the settlers were aimed at fixing the social and economic problems produced by the depopulation, instead of trying to avoid the causes of the diseases.¹²² Gonzalo Gomez de Cervantes concludes by the end of the sixteenth century, that only one Indian survived of every ten that lived when the Spanish came.¹²³

The most evident link between the demographic catastrophe and architecture is in the shift in the volume of constructions after 1570s. Kubler listed the buildings completed in towns during the sixteenth century; the dramatic halt in construction after the mentioned decade is very clear. The expansion of the orders was fast; it started decreasing during the seventies and by 1585 it stopped completely. The Franciscan constructions are parallel to the demographic fluctuation, halting also at the crisis of 1545. Several construction campaigns were stopped in 1576 due to the plague. That is the case of Texcoco, which was stopped by decree favoring the Indians, and another report recommended treating the indigenous population with kindness due to the great threat of death they faced.¹²⁴ However, the dramatic change in the expansion of the orders coincides not only with the plague of 1576, but with the secularization of the clergy, mentioned earlier, and the effects of the counterreformation, which marked the shift from the idealistic and humanistic approach of the church, abandoning the messianic hope for universal conversion, and the installation of the Holy Inquisition in 1571.

¹²² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 89.

¹²³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 351-2.

¹²⁴ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 105-113, Including the graphics showing the periods of building activity of 220 religious foundations.

The chronicles that describe the convents during the last decade of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth, do not describe the open-air chapels any longer; if they are noted, their function is not specified. After the sixteenth century people began to forget what the open chapels were for; quite naturally because the great congregations they served were not there any longer.¹²⁵ This said, we can argue that the open-air chapels, the mosque-type chapels, and the period of syncretism and mutual influences in construction belong to an era of early originality. A time in which Andalusian taste was kept alive and merged with the indigenous culture before it was suppressed by the “corrective” Baroque and Renaissance style, homogenizing the Spanish project as the Habsburg dynasty intended. The Chapel of San José de los Naturales, Cholula and Jilotepec were the efforts of the ordered clergy to convert a population that exceeded the amount that could be held inside a church. They are the memory of a population that disappeared, standing as monuments and memorials for their numbers and for the tragic shock that occurred when both worlds met.

¹²⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 351.

Chapter 2

The Chapel of San José de los Naturales.

Manuel Toussaint ascertains that, while there were no complete Mudejar buildings in America, some can be compared very closely with those made by the Muslims in Spain. He offers only two examples: the Chapel of Cholula and the Chapel of San José de los Naturales, adjacent to the Church of San Francisco in México city. The latter was a seven-aisle church with a completely open façade and a ceiling supported on wooden columns in a plan similar to that at the Great Mosque of Cordoba.¹ There were no other structures of this type in America; it was a novelty.

The Chapel of San José de los Naturales, together with the Church of San Francisco, were the first religious foundations built in Mexico City by the original twelve Franciscan friars who arrived in 1524. It became the center of Franciscan life and of the evangelization program, and it was from here that the new missions were deployed to the rest of America. San José de los Naturales was also the first open chapel, the monument

¹ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 83.

that set the bases for the new architectural typology that would soon expand all around Mexico.²

We are used to seeing the indigenous population as subdued to the colonial powers, yet McMahon argues that San Francisco and the Chapel of San José became a repository for the memory of both the Franciscans and the Indians. The character it acquired over time represented the appropriation and empowerment of the indigenous over the monument. Its spatial configuration evoked the still fresh memories of the Aztec ritual centers,³ and it kept on being the center of culture and indigenous agency, where both cultures merged symbolically, politically and religiously. As we saw in the first chapter, the Franciscan friars were influenced by the ideas of universal conversion of Cardinal Cisneros, the *Philosophia Christi*, the ideas of Erasmus, Thomas More and Lull, and the previous experiences of the Franciscans evangelizing the Muslims of Granada. The treatment that the indigenous people received was an orchestrated effort to introduce Christianity as if it was the obvious continuation of the Aztec cult, and the mastermind behind this articulation in the Convent of San Francisco was a friar called Peeter van der Moere, better known as Fray Pedro de Gante.

² McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 11; Chauvet, "Church of San Francisco," 13-4.

³ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 12.

A. Pedro de Gante. Construction and Hybridism.

San José de los Naturales was the first chapel built specifically for Indians. It was so successful that the layout, containing the convent, the atrium, the chapel, the shrines, and the practices, were all copied everywhere else in New Spain: the convents of Huejotzingo, Atlixco, Tochimilco, Cholula, Jilotepec, Etzatlán, Tlaxcala, Culiapán, Teposcolula, to name a few, follow the same scheme. The Chapel of San José was preferred over the cathedral or any other church, and it was so prominent that every new chapel built specifically for Indians was called a “San Jose.”⁴ Indians were so attached to their chapel that, when some Indians were assigned a different church, they boycotted it, and when all the Indians were further divided to attend neighborhood churches, they rioted.⁵

The mind behind this successful model was Pedro de Gante. Born in Ghent in 1480, and son of either Emperor Maximilian I of the Holy Roman Empire or Frederick III, he was the uncle or great-uncle of Charles the V. He was educated at one of the schools of the Brothers of the Common Life. Both there and at the university of Louvain he mastered philosophy, theology, mathematics, medicine and music. He also probably met Erasmus at the university. He then entered the Franciscan monastery in Ghent, and probably spent several years as an observant in Bruges. Pedro de Gante and two other Franciscan friends,

⁴ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 393.

⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 368.

Jehan of Auwera and Johan Dekkers of Toict, after hearing about the New World from the letters of Cortés, asked to be sent there as missionaries. Cortés had already sent a large treasure to Spain with all sorts of exotic goods and even some Amerindians for the show, and Bartolomé de Las Casas, had already preached against the behavior of the Spaniards in the Indies in the Spanish court.

The three Franciscan friars arrived in Spain right at the time the third letter of Cortés was made public, which narrated that Tenochtitlan had fallen to the Spaniards. Pedro and his friends then sailed to New Spain in 1523.⁶

These three Franciscans came first, before the famous 12 others. They witnessed the early years of sacking and temple desecration as well as the hunt for treasure. Gante stayed in a palace of Texcoco learning Nahuatl, which he did quickly and masterfully, to the point that, during the rest of his stay, people said that his Nahuatl was better than his Spanish, and his Dutch became so rusty that his letters to his friends were written in Latin. Gante and Johan of Toict eventually wrote a catechism together in Nahuatl, and a dictionary which used Latin script with a corresponding transliteration system. When the twelve Franciscan friars arrived, nine months later, they found out that Fray Pedro had already baptized a major political figure, the prince of Ixtlilxochichtl. Fray Pedro's understanding of Nahuatl was good enough for him to understand the Indian mentality, their problems and their needs. His way of thinking led him to believe that the Indians were children of God who needed salvation, not mere animals or free workforce as other Europeans saw them. This difference was crucial for the early years of conversion,

⁶ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 369-70. *Códice Franciscano*, 221.

because Gante found creative ways to attain the largest number of converts with minimum friction, and Indians saw in religion the only beneficial European element which they could understand and trust.⁷

Pedro had seen how dances and songs were part of the indigenous celebration, and when he moved to the Franciscan convent and built the school and chapel of San José de los Naturales, he soon wrote songs and plays in Nahuatl, staged festivities with costumes, large theatre plays, and music shows which adapted traditional symbols of the Aztec religion and Christianized them. Pedro de Gante worked assiduously, teaching music, theology, painting, reading and writing, and organizing syncretic events. The school was so dependent on him that when he died, in 1572, it stopped working.⁸

His decisions were probably taken into consideration for the planning of the building, but it also depended on the Franciscan foundation, the site, and its periods of construction and reconstruction. The enormous character it acquired, even more important than the Cathedral during the sixteenth century, might have raised the interest of other actors in the planning of the building. Its grandeur came to be such that the chapel housed the body of Cortés, it hosted the funerary monument of Charles the V, of Fray Pedro de Gante and even some relatives of Moctezuma.

Upon arrival, the twelve Franciscan friars must have found it impossible to build anything. The city of Mexico Tenochtitlán was still being pacified, and assembling Indian labor was difficult. Fray Diego de Torquemada argued that the first Franciscan Church had

⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 370-1.

⁸ *Códice Franciscano*, 221, 224; La Maza, "Fray Pedro de Gante," 106; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 371-3.

been close to the Cathedral, if not in the same place, but it was moved to the present location in 1525, closer to the population that they wanted to convert. The first church was probably not a new building, but just a reused hall in the palace of Montezuma in which they performed mass. It was called San Francisco el Viejo – The Old – simply because it had housed Franciscans, but was used afterwards only as a cemetery.⁹ The place where they chose to build the convent was the aviary and zoo of Monctezuma which had impressed Cortés: it was a large park with all sorts of birds and animals, and 300 servants cleaning, feeding and healing the animals, with ponds of salt water for fish from the coast and fresh water for those from the rivers, as well as “monstrous” people for exhibition in a different section.¹⁰

Another chronicler, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, eye witness of the conquest of Mexico, recorded the splendor and pomp of the Aztec elite, who had access to the magnificent zoo. He also linked the zoo to the human sacrifices which happened in the great Pyramid. He informs that when most of the bodies of the victims were eaten by the great priests, the remains were thrown to the beasts at the zoo.¹¹

The relation between the zoo and its bloody character, and the convent of San Francisco, would have an echo in the celebrations at the church, which enact the sacrifice of Christ whose body and blood – metaphorically eaten – are considered the salvation of mankind. The metaphor of Christ as the ultimate sacrifice must have been the keystone in

⁹ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 21-2; Chauvet, “The Church of San Francisco,” 15-17; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 375.

¹⁰ Cortés, *Cartas de Relación*, 180.

¹¹ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 24; del Castillo, *Historia Verdadera de la conquista*, 233-235.

the conversion process in a society that saw the blood of human sacrifice as the supporter of the cycles of the universe, an example of the rather active process of cultural exchange and continuation, rather than submission.¹²

The Church of San Francisco was built in 1525, according to Father Motolinía. It was small but with a high vaulted ceiling designed by a stonemason from Castile, and from the top it was possible to see the large pyramid – referred to as the “temple of the devil” by the priest. The comparison between the churches and the pyramids had the intended effect of appropriating sacredness and capacity to gather the community. The convent was not built on top of the actual Aztec temple – as it happened in Izamal where the convent, church and atrium were built on top of an ancient Mayan platform, or in Castillo de Teayo and Cuauhtinchán, where the Catholic mass was performed on top of the Aztec temples,¹³ and in the Coricancha in Cusco, Perú, where the church of Santo Domingo was built on top of the most important Inca temple. Agustin de Vetancurt notes that the stones used for the construction of the church came from the staircase of the great pyramid, probably out of material necessity, but also in a way to claim the glory of the previous empire. This can also be seen as a way to substitute the memory of a place with another through the ritualistic nature of *spolia*, which was also common in the Aztec world.¹⁴

¹² McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 34.

¹³ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 9.

¹⁴ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 26; Vetancurt, *Crónica de la Provincia*, IV, 32; Chauvet, “The Church of San Francisco,” 20.

It isn't hard to imagine that this transference happened in both symbolic and physical terrains: all the urbanistic and construction work was done mainly with indigenous workforce, and rarely with the support of the Spanish or the encomenderos.¹⁵

The principal benefactors we have are the Indians of this City of Mexico, who have bestowed and do bestow many and generous alms. They constructed this convent and the Chapel of St. Joseph: they do us great charity continually; they have been and are the main support of this house [San Francisco], and altogether the Indians of this country love with great devotion, doing us a great deal of good and giving many alms: they built up all our monasteries.¹⁶

Motolinía, one of the twelve, wrote that "it was the custom of this land, not the best in the world, that the Indians do the work and search for the materials at their own expense, and pay the stonecutters and the carpenters. If they don't bring their food they must go without."¹⁷ Gerónimo Mendieta wrote, also in the sixteenth century "that in those times and for many years after, the Indians were not paid for their work on the church edifice . . . though food was given to the workers in the monastery."¹⁸ It would be strange to think that the indigenous population was willing to submit to long hours of work with no payment, but there is a radical difference between the Spanish and the pre-Columbian cultures: in pre-Hispanic Mexico, all the communal activities had a ritual significance. There was no difference between work and ceremony; they did not

¹⁵ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 14.

¹⁶ Chauvet, "The Church of San Francisco," 21; *Cartas de Religiosos*, 180.

¹⁷ Motolinia, *Historia*, 91-92.

¹⁸ *Cartas de Religiosos*, 180; trans by McMahon, *Fragmented Memory* 18.

understand the European monetary system. Per the writings of Bernardino de Sahagún, who detailed the way they worked, they did not destine their goods for indiscriminate selling, but for a specific purpose, and any form of “work” was accompanied with constant rituals and religious invocations.¹⁹

Pedro de Gante must have moved from the school of Texcoco in 1526,²⁰ and the chapel must have been built during the same year. Although this chapel of Saint Joseph came to be immense, with many aisles and large enough to house thousands of people, it started off as a simple portico or a thatched shed – a model for all open-air chapels to be built. As was usual, it was built by the Indians. We do not have a definite date for the chapel of San José de los Naturales, Truitt proposes the date of 1532,²¹ as is by the letter Pedro de Gante wrote to Charles V, in which he mentioned that “corrals inside our house - convent -, a school and chapel where 500 to 600 boys are taught” had been built in the complex of San Francisco.²² The Franciscan codex holds a reference from 1558 to the same provisional construction “It was made of straw like a poor portal.”²³

While Kubler restrains himself from calling this early portico the chapel of San José de los Naturales, and thinks that we can only call it such in its later stage of construction, McAndrew thinks that its construction happened in 1526, and thinks that the very first vault referred to by Cortés in 1525 was here in the Church of San Francisco, so that the

¹⁹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 94; 207-209; McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 18.

²⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 371.

²¹ Truitt, *Nahuas and Catholicism*, 41; Zaragoza, *Cartas de Indias*, 51-3.

²² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 572; Zaragoza, *Cartas de Indias*, 99; Errata in McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 31: The source does not match.

²³ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 572; *Códice Franciscano*, 232, “Solía ser de paja, como un portal pobre.”

Chapel of San José was erected next to it perhaps a year after the arrival of the twelve Franciscans.²⁴ The best evidence for this claim is a letter Pedro de Gante sent in 1552 to Charles V writing that San José was “the first church built in this land”.²⁵ This could be an exaggeration. Motolinía wrote that the Church of San Francisco was built in 1525, and as seen before, Pedro de Gante moved only in 1526. Therefore, it must have been the second church, built in 1526. We have no other choice but to agree with McAndrew and Chauvet,²⁶ who agree with this date, and consider that Kubler made a mistake in not regarding the same name for a monument in two stages.

The chapel suffered another transformation before acquiring its monumental stage. A letter from 1539, written by Zumárraga to his nephew, indicates that the chapel was suitably arranged, and it had a corridor, a chancel and an oratory, which can be translated a one aisle deep portico and an apse in the middle of the wall, so that it had undergone a transformation between 1526 and 1539.²⁷ The most probable date for this transformation is 1538, when a “wooden temple” was erected, stated by an Indian chronicle²⁸ that does not mention the name “San José” explicitly, but we know from later reports that it had wooden columns and an intricate wooden ceiling. This must be it. McAndrew prepared some conjectural plans for this early stage, but nothing suggests that it was hypostyle at this moment (fig. 2.1).

²⁴ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 375.

²⁵ Zaragoza, *Cartas de Indias*, 98. Errata Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 571: Kubler writes that the letter was for Philip II, but it was written to Charles V.

²⁶ Chauvet, “The Church of San Francisco,” 22.

²⁷ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 31; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 376.

²⁸ Codex Aubin, 37, 90; Anales Ramírez, fol. 433. *Nica moquetz cuauhteocalli* “Se levantó el templo de madera” Trans by Chimalpopoca, in Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 572.

Kubler, using a mistranslated copy of *The Codex Aubin*, originally written in Nahuatl, mentions that the chapel had collapsed because of an earthquake in 1547.²⁹ Francisco de la Maza re-examined the translation and saw that the word used in that passage actually means “to found” or “to build.” There was indeed an earthquake in 1547, and the Chapel of San José was begun the same year, which suggests more a rebuilding than a repair. There is some confusion regarding this reconstruction. A few pages later the same chronicle records that the chapel was built in 1556.³⁰ However, it must be apocryphal because a letter, written by Gante in 1552 mentions that the chapel was built again and of good craftsmanship,³¹ and in a letter to Philip II, in 1558, in the Franciscan Codex adds that the chapel was now very attractive, very well done, and could house ten thousand men and fifty thousand in the courtyard and was used as a school for children.³²

Cervantes de Salazar agreed on the size of San José; in his dialogues of Mexico in 1554 he writes that “it is arranged in such fashion that the whole crowd of Indians, great as it is, who flock from everywhere on festal days are able to see without obstruction and hear the priest as he performs the holy sacrifice.”³³ He wrote also that it was “big enough to host all the Spanish population in feast days.”³⁴ Since the description of Salazar from

²⁹ La Maza, “Friar Pedro de Gante,” 104, Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 57; *Codex Aubin*, 37, 90; *Anales Ramírez*, fol. 432: *Nica momamal in Sant José Icuac*: “se hundió el templo de madera” translation by *CHimalpopoca* in Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 572. In English: “the wooden temple was built.” (My translation).

³⁰ La Maza, “Friar Pedro de Gante,” 104; Andrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 377; *Anales uno pedernal*, 67-68.

³¹ Zaragoza, *Cartas de Indias*, 99: “Y esta capilla de San Joseph, la han hecho de nuevo buena y bien labrada, para celebrar con toda solemnidad los oficios diuinos, donde al presente se celebran, y los confiesan y les predicán y les bautizan, y se haze con ellos toda caridad.” (My translation).

³² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 572; McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 32; *Códice Franciscano*, 232-3: “Empero agora es una capilla muy buena y muy vistosa, y caben en ella diez mil hombres y en el patio caben más de cincuenta mil, y en ella tengo mi escuela de niños donde se sirve Dios nuestro Señor muy mucho.”

³³ Cervantes, *Life in the Imperial*, 54.

³⁴ Cervantes, Mexico en 1554, 131-3; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 572.

1554 already notes the hypostyle plan, we can conclude that the chapel acquired its mosque shape between the earthquake of 1547 and 1552.

The atrium was wide and it was planted with trees that made it a very pleasant sight, just like the courtyards in the Spanish mosques, from which they were arguably inspired.³⁵ These atriums became so prominent that Father Mendieta wrote about them:

All monasteries here in New Spain have large walled patio placed in front of the church... and usually they are adorned with trees (usually orange-trees) set in orderly rows... The patios were made to be used mainly on holidays, so that when all the townspeople are gathered together, they can hear Mass and be preached to in the patio, since... (due to their number) they will not fit inside the body of the church.³⁶

There was a 60 meters tall cross that could be seen from any street; so tall it seemed it touched the sky, as recorded in the Dialogues of Salazar.³⁷ The tree used to make it was the tallest cypress in Moctezuma's gardens, and its incorporation to the church could have reenacted the memory of the past Aztec glory. The Atrium was also surrounded by four small shrines, which were used during processions as stops to make offerings and pray. The Chapel of San José was "behind a wooden trellis" perhaps a mashrabiya screen on the front bottom. Its roof, "at a far height from the ground, is supported by tall, slopping wooden columns, the material enhanced by the

³⁵ McAndrew and Moffitt agree on the Islamic precedence of the Atrium.

³⁶ Moffitt, *The Islamic Design*, 145.

³⁷ *Códice Franciscano*, 224; Cervantes, *Life in the Imperial*, 54; Cervantes, *Crónica*, 323-4, Cervantes, *Tumulo imperial*, 185.

workmanship.”³⁸ This description is completed later in Salazar’s later volume *Túmulo Imperial*, and the *Chronicle of New Spain*, where he specifies that the chapel is striking because it is covered with an elaborate wooden roof, which was also supported by wooden columns; we can infer that the ceiling had some sort of Mudejar alfarje with intricate geometric designs. The chapel had seven naves, with the central nave adorned with lateral masonry arches (fig 2.2). Salazar adds that the arches were “well made” that they were low, and “that serve more for ornament than for shelter or support.”³⁹ Fig. 2.3 shows an ideograph – common in books illustrated by Amerindians – from the Codex Mexicanus which shows a possible crisscrossed wooden design on the façade.⁴⁰ The most detailed description comes from 1620: the façade was 64 meters long, and every corridor was 27.4 meters deep, it comprised 49 sections, meaning that it was also seven aisles deep (Fig. 2.2).⁴¹ There were transformations between 1547 and 1620, but since the description still mentions a 7 nave plan, we can argue that the dimensions of the building didn’t change.

The building suffered a transformation again in 1560 when a 21m tall funerary monument (fig. 2.4) for Charles V, who had died in 1558, was installed in the atrium of the Chapel of San José. This indicates the prestige of the chapel, but it was chosen also because the Metropolitan Cathedral was too small to shelter it and to host the ceremony; the atrium of San José was, after all, one of the largest, if not the largest open space in the

³⁸ Cervantes, *Life in the Imperial*, 54, 51.

³⁹ Cervantes, *México en 1554*, 55.

⁴⁰ Cervantes, *Túmulo imperial*, 185.

⁴¹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 400; Vetancourt, *Teatro mexicano*, IV, 44-41.

city. The changes were designed by Claudio de Arciniega, the architect of the new, and still standing Cathedral. The renovation required a great amount of stone for heavy pillars and arches. What were those arches and pillars for? It was not recorded, but it was probable that they were needed for the funerary monument.

Ornaments

What we know is that the masonry arches that adorned the central aisle were taken off and placed again aligned on the façade, because they interrupted the view of the monument, either arranged two per aisle, with a total of 14 (fig. 2.5) Or simply making a lower row of seven arches under the possible high arches of the façade. We will see this in detail later.⁴² We also know that the wooden pillars were decorated with jasper for the occasion,⁴³ and it eventually had a lot of other locally crafted treasures: a mirror made of Tlachinol, a local stone mastered by the Indians, which was said to be more beautiful than jasper or alabaster.⁴⁴ Fountains, the baptismal fountain and doorways were made of jasper and alabaster. Doorknobs, door jams and the crucifix were made of silver. The devotion of the indigenous supporters manifested in the combination of their masterful crafts, filled with material Aztec symbolism combined with Catholic European iconography.⁴⁵

⁴² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 573; McMahon, *Fragmented Memory* 41; Cervantes, *Túmulo Imperial*, 184, 199.

⁴³ Cervantes, *Túmulo imperial*, 185.

⁴⁴ Vetancourt, *Teatro mexicano*, 65.

⁴⁵ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 35; Vetancourt, *Teatro mexicano*, I, 23.

Minor details were added in the following years. The steps to the altars got new stone steps, and the main altar was decorated with obsidian (1564). The building had deteriorated severely by 1574, and some wooden columns were demolished. Parts of the wooden structure collapsed in 1577 and then a reconstruction took place between 1587 and 1590, when the church was used again by the children of the school. Lastly a bell tower was added in 1591 by the architect Francisco de Gamboa, the architect of the new Church of San Francisco, which had collapsed completely in 1590. The collapsed conventual church forced the Spanish population to use the Chapel, given that the spaces were segregated, and the Spaniards used to pray in the single nave church besides it. The height of the new Church of San Francisco was elevated to match the same level of the chapel. The sacristy of San José was also rebuilt, and an old wall was pulled down. The amount of activity shows the high value of the building and the constant use it had.⁴⁶

Father Mendieta, a Franciscan father from the Basque country, confirms that in 1595 the chapel was still seven aisles long, with seven altars, all of them at the east. All divine offices and festivities were celebrated, as they were in any cathedral, and he mentions also the processions that took place during Easter, with innumerable attendants, organized by confraternities, displaying lavishly decorated flags and images of the Virgin and Christ.⁴⁷ Fray Juan de Torquemada, a Franciscan ethnographer, and engineer, notable for his monumental multivolume *Monarquía Indiana*, wrote in 1608-9, about the chapel.

⁴⁶ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 573; *Codex Aubin*, 115, 131, 132; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 379.

⁴⁷ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica*, III, 103-4.

At the monastery of San Francisco, close by the north side of the church, stands an impressive chapel dedicated to glorious Saint Joseph... notable for its most curious building, and for its size and capacity. There is no other church nor other room in all México large enough to hold so many people. The chapel has seven naves, and for them there are seven altars, all at the east end, with the high altar in the middle and three on either side.⁴⁸

The depth of San José

McAndrew revised carefully the primary sources to find the missing pieces of information. The first mystery, not explained clearly in the sources, is the date at which the chapel acquired its mosque design. The plan presented by Kubler (Fig. 2.2) shows a congruent evolution; the sources, however, do not indicate that the first chapel, before 1547, was high, or that it had seven aisles. It could well have had one, three, five or seven, speculating that a main aisle would accommodate the altar. The chapel could have grown with every addition. In 1555, the Ecclesiastical Council met there, and they chose the chapel above all the other churches in the city. McAndrew argues that by this time the Chapel had to be already large enough for it to hold the Council. Cervantes de Salazar in his *Túmulo Imperial* already describes the seven aisled façade, but says nothing about its depth; McAndrew takes the information that Salazar offers regarding the disposition of the attendees sitting, and concludes that by this stage it already had to be more than one

⁴⁸ Torquemada, *Monarquía indiana*, 227-8; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 381.

aisle deep.⁴⁹ Pedro de Gante said, perhaps exaggerating, that it had a capacity for ten thousand people. If we assume that 4 people fit in a square meter, we find that we need a space of 50 square meters. De la Maza found that such a building would fit the Franciscan atrium, and that the seven by seven plan would fit this description. The only reason we have to believe this, is that the other hypostyle chapels in Cholula and Jilotepec both were seven aisles deep.

Agustín de Vetancurt offers the only measurement of the chapel, when it had already been reduced to five naves, and the open façade had been closed. He wrote in 1690 that the chapel “used to have many naves, for the people were many, but in time it was reduced to five, each of which is 30 varas⁵⁰ long (26 meters) and 10 wide (8.64 meters) and it was given four great doors; it was the first parish church in the Indies...”⁵¹ If we assume that the depth of the building did not change in a century, we can accommodate seven aisles in depth each of 4 meters by 8 meters. This disproportion was considered in the conjectural plan of Kubler and McAndrew (fig. 2.2 and fig. 2.6).

The Arches

Another great problem in the description is the row of arches. Salazar wrote that the arches were interrupting the view and were moved to the front, but it doesn't specify whether the arches were placed in the façade. All the courtyard was decorated “until the row of arches.” McAndrew concludes that there are two possibilities: the first is that the

⁴⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 382.

⁵⁰ A measuring unit used in Spain and colonial America. Conversion taken from [http://www.convertunits.com/from/meters/to/vara+\[South+America\]](http://www.convertunits.com/from/meters/to/vara+[South+America])

⁵¹ La Maza, “Friar Pedro de Gante,” 106; Vetancurt, *Crónica de la provincia del Santo Evangelio*, IV, 41.

columns were moved away from the main monument and that the monument for Charles V was placed between the row of arches and the façade of the chapel (fig. 2.6-187). It is also possible that, when the monument was taken out, new wooden columns were erected to complete the seven aisles until the row of arches. The other possibility is that the row of fourteen arches was placed there during the ceremony and then simply moved to the façade after the event.⁵² Francisco de la Maza thinks that it sounds ridiculous to move the arches, and he believes that the text of Cervantes de Salazar, which describes this, must have had an error in the printing. The arches must have been always at the façade of the building; what was moved was the monument. The document of Cervantes, however, is very clear, when it says that “The arches were taken away and moved forward.” I regard the argument of La Maza with much suspicion.⁵³

Nothing suggests that the mosque-chapel grew constantly, and since the greatest alteration it suffered happened after 1547, all the chronicles mention many columns and seven aisles, and that it held important events, I propose that it acquired its monumental dimensions between 1547 and 1554, and that it didn't become colossal by the beginning of the seventeenth century, as suggested by McMahon and Kubler. The only reason they have to propose this is because the measures appear for the first time in Vetancurt in 1690, and the description of 1590 of Mendieta when he writes that it was “notable for its size and grandeur and most quaint design, so much so that there is not in all Mexico another church or hall to accommodate so many people”. The lack of data makes it

⁵² McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 384.

⁵³ La Maza, “Friar Pedro de Gante,” 105.

unclear, but the safest we can say is that it was large enough for it to be admired for its size already in 1554, and for it to host all the Spanish population of the city. I don't think it changed in size from 1547 to 1590.

B. The Mexican Mosque and Aztec Hybridism.

The plan of San José de Los Naturales is not the plan of a chapel, or a church, which as we said in the first chapter, were normally a one-nave plan or a basilica plan. A hypostyle plan can only have come from one source. Given that the colonizers were European, and mostly Spanish, there is little doubt that it was conceived following the model of a mosque. Kubler⁵⁴ and McAndrew agree with this theory, but it is hard to prove. In this section I will evaluate the previous hypothesis, and argue which one seems the most accurate.

Most elements of this chapel, besides the plan, do resemble a Spanish mosque, but others are even more unique. The relation between the chapel and the atrium recalls the courtyards of the great mosques of al-Andalus, like El *Patio de los naranjos* annexed to the cathedral of Seville, or the Courtyard of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. Moffitt and McAndrew think that it was indeed inspired by them; after all, those courtyards were next to enormous hypostyle halls built by the Almohads, between 1172 and 1176 in the case of Seville, and during the Caliphal Period in the case of Cordoba.

⁵⁴ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 400.

The ornamental arches that were once in the main nave and then moved to the façade during the funerary celebration of Charles V could also correspond with the red and white double arches in the interior of the mosque of Cordoba (Fig. 2.8) which run perpendicular to the qibla wall, and which in San José de los Naturales established a direction towards the chancel that otherwise has no orientation, since there were no arches and the wooden columns were not connected.

The description of Cervantes de Salazar indicates that there were wooden screens on the front, a practice that is still in use in mosques in the Maghreb, like the Qarawiyyin Mosque in Fez, Morocco, the Great Mosque of Tlemcen in Algeria or the Bu Inania Madrasa. We should not forget of the practice of using wooden screens, although not grills, is still common in churches, setting a division between the exterior and the interior of a church. The wooden screen running on the front of San Jose as probably sets of doors that could be opened during the service, in that sense there are even less parallels in Spanish architecture. The adjacent bell tower, built in one of the corners of the church, also resembles the Islamic tradition of placing the minaret in one of the corners of the mosque,⁵⁵ and the fact that it had three walls only, the front being completely open, and that the courtyard was surrounded by a wall associates it also with the great mosques, not only in Spain but in most of the Islamic world.

Other aspects of this building are completely alien to both Islamic and Christian architecture in Spain, namely the fact that it was completely made of wood, except for the

⁵⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 371.

three walls. This means that the columns were connected directly to the ceiling and there were no arches, so that the façade, and all the building, had a flat ceiling, as fig. 2.5 shows. To my knowledge, no structure of this type was ever built in Spain or the Maghreb and the closest structures are more common in Anatolia, Iran and Central Asia. Wood is a perishable material, and it is especially vulnerable to fire, making possible precedents harder to find. The historical evidence found by Kenneth Hayes shows that at a certain point, wooden columns came to be considered unsuitable for building mosques in the central Islamic lands; a decision taken in the early Islamic period.⁵⁶ There are wooden mosques in Anatolia from the Seljuk period, a great example being the Sahip Ata Cami (1258), in Konya, but with a more regular plan and a large masonry portal. There are also huge wooden ceilings supported by many wooden columns in Iran, two of them from the Safavid period, the *talar* structure in the Ali Qapu palace (1591), and the portico of the famous Chihil Sutun (1647), both in Isfahan.

The Bala Hauz Mosque, in Bukhara (fig. 2.9) is, I suggest, the closest existing building in plan, material and shape, considering Kubler's plan. This portico has 11 naves and is 2 aisles deep while San Jose was 7x7, if we stick to Kubler's and McAndrew's ideas.⁵⁷ Both, Bala Hauz and San José, have three walls; the front is open except for woodwork on the base – with doors, also. Both wooden ceilings are flat, and both are intricately decorated, a great coincidence. Perhaps the ceiling of San José would have looked more like the alfarje examples that were used elsewhere in America.

⁵⁶ Hayes, *Wooden Hypostyle*, 27.

⁵⁷ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 400.

There is no relation between them beyond the formal. To suggest an architectural link between Central Asia and Mexico sounds farfetched and nothing survives to indicate that Spain had developed anything similar. The *talar*-like structures and wooden mosques in Central Asia continued a local pre-Islamic tradition, most probably Sogdian.⁵⁸ Another possible match is the Apadana palace in Persepolis, as suggested by Moffitt,⁵⁹ but one that is very difficult to prove. The first Persian embassy to Europe happened by the end of the sixteenth century, and only reached Spain by 1602, when Philip III was in power.

There is only one opinion against this observation: Francisco de la Maza takes the glyph in the Codex Mexicanus (fig. 2.3) to argue that the façade of the building could have been built of stone arches. Nobody described the façade of the building in detail, but considering that there are no buildings of that type in Spain, it would make sense to relate it to the known examples. I have prepared a conjectural elevation of the façade based on Kubler's considering the crisscrossed design of the Codex Mexicanus (fig 2.7). In Salazar's *Túmulo Imperial*, the arches that are moved to the front are 14. De la Maza takes this to propose that these arches constitute the façade, and that the 14 arches are not distributed as fig 2.5 suggests having two per aisle, but that there are seven that are low, which are ornamental, and seven that are tall and constitute the façade.⁶⁰

Are there European precedents for this kind of chapel? Besides the four other chapels that will be explored in the next chapters, no other Christian building were

⁵⁸ Hayes, *Wooden Hypostyle*, 26.

⁵⁹ Moffitt, *The Islamic Module*, 148.

⁶⁰ La Maza, "Friar Pedro de Gante," 105; Salazar, *Crónica*, 324; Idem, *Túmulo imperial*, 184-5.

constructed in the hypostyle plan in Mexico. Not in Mexico, nor in the rest of Spanish America and not even in Spain, or in Spanish Andalusia, were ever churches built in this guise, quoting mosque architecture so directly. As we previously saw, Mudejar art was well-integrated with the rest of Spanish art and architecture, but the repertoire repeated wooden ceilings and domes, forms of arches, towers, and used brick, stone carving and other materials to recall the mixed and long rooted Mudejar tradition, but it was mostly decorative, and it never included plans for buildings or structural elements. Mudejar in America did not revive Islamic elements that were not common in Spanish Mudejar. For example, it is very difficult to find horseshoe arches in America because they were already out of fashion, although not impossible. The eighteenth-century Church of San Francisco in Cali does have a horseshoe arch (fig. 1.26) but most of the Mudejar models repeat what we saw in chapter 1.B. San José de los Naturales and the other chapels did not reflect the Mudejar tradition, but Islamic architecture directly.⁶¹

Why then, was it built like this? Who revived a plan associated with the Muslims, the conquered enemies of Spain? There are no records of who the architect was in any of the other examples, at least not in the published primary sources. Pedro de Gante might have had a say in the design of the early open chapel, and probably even in the mosque design of 1547, but there are no records of him giving instructions, or what is more, having any technical knowledge of architecture.⁶² He also probably never saw a mosque in his life (his stay in Spain was too quick), before embarking to the New World. His importance in the

⁶¹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 389.

⁶² McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 371.

design must come from his stay in Texcoco, where he stayed for three and a half years. By that stage he probably understood very well that new converts would be more pleased and comfortable in an open space than in a regular church, following their pre-Hispanic tradition of worshipping outdoors in front of a pyramid and facing the sun.⁶³

McAndrew regards Cordoba, or the Mosque of Granada, to be not only the model of San José, but of all the mosque-type chapels. He is not considering that there were other hypostyle mosques. The last mosques were closed in 1525 by orders of Charles V,⁶⁴ which means that many old mosques had been transformed into churches by that time, while the recently conquered ones were already being used as such. In 1523 the Italian traveler and ambassador to Spain, Andrea Navagero wrote:

Since it has been recent that Granada belongs to the Christians, there are few churches there; the one for Santa Isabel can already be seen, founded by the Catholic Queen on top of the Alcazaba; it is a handsome nunnery. The cathedral is being built on the flat land, it will be very large: by now the mosque that belonged to the Moors is used as a church.⁶⁵

It is very possible that the Chapel of San José was based on a hypostyle mosque that the architect, or the commissioner, had seen in Spain before going to the New World. There are several other constructions that were built following the design of certain buildings from Spain. For example the Cathedral of Mexico City was, in an early stage, intended to be based on the Cathedral of Seville. When Father San Román communicated

⁶³ La Maza, "Friar Pedro de Gante," 104.

⁶⁴ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 389.

⁶⁵ Martínez Nespral, *Un juego de espejos*, 199. (My translation).

his desire to build the Temple of the Augustinians in the same city, in 1544, he wanted to reproduce the plans of the convent of the Order of Saint Jerome in Salamanca. In 1585 the Dominicans built the School of Saint Louis of Puebla based on the School of Saint Gregory in Valladolid. More important than any plan or written description, the greatest form of transmission came from the memory of the admired buildings from the peninsula, which set the model for the ideals of the New World,⁶⁶ and it would not be improbable to think that someone wanted to reproduce a mosque, for its size and capacity, especially then, when most of them had already been appropriated and transformed into churches.

Hypostyle buildings in Spain, possible sources of inspiration.

If we are looking for a prototype of the chapel in Mexico, we need to pay attention to the hypostyle buildings that the Spaniards could have seen in the Peninsula, which leaves us with the mosques that were still standing before 1547. Yet, hypostyle mosques were not as common as we suspect. Many mosques transformed into churches were basilicas, or with the reorientation were transformed organically into basilicas. Mosques several aisles long and only three aisles deep towards the *qibla*, for example, changed when the reorientation took place. The mihrab, oriented to the south east, would normally be sealed off and a chancel and apse would be built oriented to the east, transforming the three aisles deep into three aisles long, becoming a basilica.⁶⁷ Such is the case of Santiago del Arrabal in Toledo or the tenth century Ermita de la Virgen de Gracia in Archidona, Málaga, which suffered a reorientation: in 1462 it was originally five naves,

⁶⁶ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 158.

⁶⁷ Epalza, "Mutaciones urbanísticas," 509.

three aisles deep, and became three naves, five aisles deep. Other mosques were already built in the basilica plan, like the Nasrid mosque of Fiñana, in Almería,⁶⁸ the neighborhood mosque of the Fontanar,⁶⁹ in Cordoba, from the caliphal period, or the convent of Santa Clara, from the tenth century.⁷⁰

The Mosque of Cordoba suffered its greatest transformation in 1523 when the cathedral was inserted in the middle, in the times of Charles V, but the construction was slow because it was often interrupted.⁷¹ Any of the 12 apostles of Mexico could have seen it in its original form. The Franciscans who travelled later in 1527, although maybe not allowed to enter because of the constructions, would have remembered it, as well as most of the middle-aged travelers who went to America during the 1530s and 1540s. Just as it happened with Cordoba, it happened with many other buildings. The chart in Annex 1⁷² lists hypostyle buildings that were still standing between the late fifteenth century to the mid sixteenth.

From the chart, we can note that none of these were built during the 15th century, and only the mosque of San Salvador de Albaicín of Granada had alterations in the 14th. Most were built before the 12th century, and many were Christianized early by the date their host cities were conquered in the early stages of the Reconquista. All of them were eventually converted into churches, therefore, we can assume that for the people who grew in these provinces, it could have been natural to think that hypostyle buildings were

⁶⁸ Calvo, *Las Mezquitas*, 500.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 575.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 578.

⁷¹ Kubisch, "Architecture," 221.

⁷² See appendix. Last page.

just another shape of church architecture and that it had no relation whatsoever with other religions. Not in all cases, though. As late as 1583, Almonaster la Real, a 5x5 hypostyle hall was considered, by a team that registered the building during a campaign set by Philip II, of "...small naves standing on 10 columns like a Moorish building."⁷³

We can also notice that the building that resembles San José the closest by the number of naves and aisles is Santa María de la Granada, in Niebla, with seven naves long. The size of the mosque would be unimportant, given the versatility of the hypostyle plan, being able to extend it indefinitely, but all the other mosque-type chapels, except for Toluca, were also a seven naves long. I also present the plans of all the mosques in fig. 2.11-2.15. From the comparison, it is possible to say that the position of the minaret of the Mosque of Seville is also the most similar to the position of the bell towers, being at the corner of the hypostyle hall between the doors and the courtyard, if McAndrew is right. The bell-tower in San José of Mexico, however, is the work of Gamboa; a later architect, he could have or have not been influenced by Islamic architecture. Moffitt argues that the model for the mosque-type chapels is the great Mosque of Ibn' Adabbas, in Seville, built by Abd al-Rahman II, in 829, which was arranged as a hypostyle hall until 1671, when it was demolished. He argues that, since Seville was granted the Monopoly of Trade with the New world, almost every traveler had to pass by its port, and if they had the chance probably go to mass there. Nothing indicates that this was indeed the model, but it is a plausible suggestion.⁷⁴

⁷³ Calvo, *Las Mezquitas*, 618 (my translation).

⁷⁴ Moffitt, *The Islamic Module*, 153.

Architects.

We do not really know if anybody in Mexico consciously connected or planned to build the church in the shape of a mosque. Islam hadn't been practiced in a generation in Spain and nobody in Mexico knew much about Islam. Andrew concludes that the designer of San José must have seen an expropriated and converted mosque, like the examples in Chart 1.⁷⁵ The architect must have been very ingenious and creative, not restricted by the styles of his time, – a perfect example of what happened in the early years of the colony before any professional architect arrived in Mexico.

We must bear in mind that the translation of architectural techniques happened at the beginning in a very organic way. The first books of architecture didn't reach Mexico until 1569. The absence of written and graphic sources helps explain not only the Chapel of San José, but many other original architectural typologies that appeared during the sixteenth century, like the open chapels.⁷⁶ The funerary monument built for Charles V of 1560 was the first Renaissance structure to be built in America, built by the very first Renaissance Architect, Claudio de Arciniega.

Let us then think of the early travelers who could have seen a Mosque and be familiar with it. Of the 12 apostolic Franciscans that arrived in Mexico in 1524, one was from Cordoba and other was from Seville,⁷⁷ and they must have seen at least three of these hypostyle buildings, just as Juan de Palos, who lived in Seville and must have been

⁷⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 391.

⁷⁶ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 159.

⁷⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 388.

familiar with the Mosque of 'Adabass; we discard him because he died in 1527. We must add that Andrés de Córdoba and Martín de Valencia were part of the group that evangelized in Granada before going to Mexico under the orders of Fray Juan de Guadalupe, which means that they had seen the great mosque of Granada used as a church since 1499. We can associate their work there, in Granada, with the work they did in Mexico, after all they spent several years in Granada, familiar with the hypostyle buildings, using them, and interacting with the locals in their own terms. A translation of processes in evangelization from Moors to Indians could have happened at this point.⁷⁸

Many other friars arrived later, before the completion of the hypostyle San Jose and probably many of them were southerners. One of them, Alonso de Montufar, became the Archbishop of Mexico, and, as we saw in the first chapter, was born and lived in Granada for a long time. He wrote the *Primer concilio provincial de Mexico*, the catechism for the Nahuas which copies the catechism done for the Spanish Muslims. His presence in Mexico, however, dates from 1551. Since the date at which San José acquired its hypostyle form is not conclusive we cannot discard him. Many friars were credited with planning parishes, and some of them were indeed trained at least in the basics of architecture. Such is the case of Fray Juan de Alameda, who arrived in 1528, and designed the settlement of Huejotzingo, or Fray Diego Tembleque, who designed the aqueduct of Zempola, and was an active constructor from 1541 to 1557.⁷⁹ Andrés de Cordoba was also regarded as a constructor of churches.⁸⁰ A last name to take into consideration is Toribio de Alcaraz, a

⁷⁸ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 50-2;

⁷⁹ Ibid 56;

⁸⁰ Vetancurt, *Teatro Mexicano*, IV, (Menologio), 23.

professional architect who arrived in New Spain in 1543. He was the master of works of many convents, and was definitely active when the Chapel of San José was erected, or remodeled, after the earthquake of 1547. There are several candidates that could well be the architect of both San José and Etzatlán, but the truth is that we are still missing a vital part of the information to make an accurate selection.

Moriscos involved

We can also suspect that the hypostyle plan came along as part of the mixed culture that Spanish were used to, as I described before. Moorish taste in food, furniture and even dress code, as seen in the illustration of an encomendero with a turban in the Codex Yanhutlan (fig. 2.10), was widespread. We cannot discard the option of a Morisco behind the plan, but it is a remote possibility for two reasons: first, that no other building has been recorded as having such an architect, and second, that to be part of the church and have an important role in it, it was required for the priests to be descendants of old Christians. We can recognize the many records of Moriscos in early Spanish America, already mentioned in the first chapter, some of them had special permits, because they were married to Christians, or because they were professional builders, carpenters or practiced a trade, or simply slaves, which was advantageous for the Spanish settlers. A royal decree allowed them to practice if they mastered a construction skill. This doesn't necessarily mean that they were specialized in Mudejar architecture, first, and if they were, hypostyle constructions were already out of fashion, and do not belong to the same

Mudejar tradition.⁸¹ The election of a hypostyle plan was then, not necessarily, one of ethnic memory. The result was a creative solution, more than a direct copy.

An organic appropriation.

We can also imagine a different, and more organic process of architectural Islamization. The conquests and expropriation of mosques in Spain was so common that they should have been somehow interchangeable; accommodating Christians in mosques makes it possible to think that some new churches acquired mosque-like proportions in Spain. The shape of large mosques like the mosque of Cordoba does not have a single focal point; the mihrab indicates the *qibla* but most of the attendants would not be able to see the Sheikh performing the *khutba* (as Christians require to celebrate Mass when they see the priest, singers, acolyte and other performers of the rite).⁸² Because of the new use of these buildings, before the mass popularization of the Italianate style, the Christian liturgical visuals became less important and the voice became prominent. The basilical plan would then have lost its height, the columns would come nearer, obstructing the sight, but improving the sound. Perhaps, some churches built after 1492 in both Spain and America were more appropriate for Islamic cult than for the Christian ritual, including many basilical churches.⁸³

This argument could work for the Chapel of Cholula, which in my experience gives the feeling that the Chancel and the visual element of the rite were not important; it is

⁸¹ Moffitt, *The Islamic Module*, 150.

⁸² Epalza, "Mutaciones urbanísticas," 506-7.

⁸³ Martínez Nespral, *Un juego de espejos*, 199-100; Epalza, "Mutaciones urbanísticas," 506.

very hard to see the altar behind its 48 columns. The writings of Salazar, however, contradict this statement in his dialogue of 1554, when he notes that the Indians in San José could “see without obstruction and hear the priest as he performs the holy sacrifice.”⁸⁴ The wooden columns could certainly have been slimmer than the columns in Cholula, or it could be that Cervantes never actually attended mass in the hypostyle hall and gave his appreciation from outside; after all, Spaniards were to attend mass in the adjacent, and smaller, Church of San Francisco.

The practices associated with the buildings.

Though Spanish mosques and the mosque-type chapels are formally similar, their uses were not. The mosque is considered simply a place for praying and gathering, while a church is “the house of God” and must be consecrated. The courtyards of the mosques were arguably used for the ritual ablutions, and certainly as a charming place for meetings,⁸⁵ but not to accommodate people to witness the rituals, as it was in the atrium of San Jose de los Naturales, though maybe during the Friday prayer.⁸⁶ There might have been an overflow into the courtyard. The mihrab did not comply with the same function of the apse, which was rather part of the visuals in the performance of the mass. In general, mosques did not have a place that would be the focus of the building where a ceremony would be performed, like the chancel, and special attention was given to the horizontality, rather than verticality, so that more people would be closer to the qibla

⁸⁴ Cervantes, *Life in the Imperial*, 54.

⁸⁵ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 93.

⁸⁶ In general, mosque courtyards were used for prayer, but was it the case in Spain? Friday mosques have a large covered space to give shade to all the attendants, hardly could the attendants hear the prayer from the courtyard.

wall.⁸⁷ In the case of San Jose, the chapel and atrium eventually became not just a place for the holy ceremony, but a school and a community center for the Indians,⁸⁸ and the atrium also staged theatre plays that were crucial in the early years of conversion. It is very ironic, then, to note that while the mosque plan was revived in America, in Spain they were being obliterated and radically transformed.⁸⁹

The hall of the 100 columns

There is another possible source for the plan of San José de los Naturales mentioned by McAndrew; the plan of the hall of the 100 columns described in the third book of Serlio's architectural treatise (fig. 2.16), a 9x9 hypostyle plan. This is hard to prove, and I would suggest that this is the least plausible explanation for the chapels of San José, Cholula and Jilotepec. The book was published for the first time in Italy in 1540, thus the version of the chapel of 1538, which was already the "chief sight of the land", could not have had a hypostyle plan. The Spanish version of the third volume of Serlio's architecture treatise appeared in 1552, five years after San José was built, if we keep the date of 1547.⁹⁰ Kubler argues that since the classical tradition became influential in Spain only at a later stage; its weight became prominent in America only after the second half of the seventeenth century. Claudio de Arciniega was influenced by the Classical tradition, and was the first professional architect in the New World. He did not bring books, that we know of, but he studied the Renaissance model before his arrival around 1545. However,

⁸⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 390-1.

⁸⁸ McMahan, *Fragmented Memory*, 36.

⁸⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 392.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 393.

Arciniega was 25 years old when the hypostyle hall of the chapel was built, but his only works on the chapel are cited in the funerary monument for Charles V in 1560, and one would expect other interventions to be cited, given his importance.⁹¹ Moffitt thinks that Arciniega was the architect,⁹² though he has no evidence. I would argue that if Arciniega was the architect, he would have chosen a Renaissance plan for the building, a mosque being considered discordant and polluted, compared to the proportions and perfection claimed by Renaissance architecture. The plan of the hall of the 100 columns, first, was never executed in Spain. Second, San José has walls, and an apse, and no towers with staircases support the ceiling within the hall. Third, he was never mentioned as the architect, contradicting his fame. If he had undertaken a project of the size of San José, he would have become prominent. Cervantes de Salazar would have mentioned him in 1554, or in his booklet about the monument. Fourth, the shape of the monument: fig. 2. 4 shows the style that Arciniega had in mind, with pediments, pilasters, and all sorts of classicist details, which does not correspond with the shape and looks of San José. Arciniega would not have built with wooden alfarjes or wooden columns; nothing was farther from classicism than Mudejar art.

We do not have an architect, and we do not have a commentary linking San José with Spain, but we can safely conclude that the Spanish mosques served as a model and were revived in the mosque-type chapels in Mexico, and the main reason for this adoption

⁹¹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 154.

⁹² Moffitt, *The Islamic Module*, 153.

must have been the large population, which was definitely more numerous than in later years.

The argument of Bailey and Aztec hybridity.

Let's take a second look to the argument of Gauvin Alexander Bailey in his book about Colonial Art in Latin America:

When a band of Spanish adventurers saw an Inca temple in the sixteenth century they called it a mosque, and when the missionaries built the first churches for the Nahua Indians, they sometimes used the design of the great mosque of Cordoba, thinking naively that it would be more similar to them.⁹³

Bailey makes an incorrect interpretation: the friars had done a great job learning Nahuatl and making all the efforts to understand the culture of the Natives. In fact, San José de los Naturales is a fine example of transculturation and reinterpretation of history. The cases of cultural translation mentioned in the first chapter were isolated, and occurred more in the very early stages of contact. The friars who went to America must have had some experience of what the moors were, since many of the friars had been evangelizing them in their own cities before going to the Indies, and probably the mosque-type chapels were something they picked from their experience in the early buildings. By 1547, it must have been very clear that the Aztec religion was not Islam, and even clearer, that the pyramids or *teocallis* had no relation whatsoever with mosques. The

⁹³ Bailey, *Art of Colonial Latin America*, 44.

understanding of those differences is evident in the hybrid practices embedded in the culture and techniques of the building.

That hybrid character of the building might have started with its construction. The techniques used in most of colonial New Spain were normally the same used by the indigenous architects, except for the use of vaults and other advanced processes. Thus, the remains of the Aztec tradition still survive integrated in those colonial walls. The walls of San José do not survive, but it is safe to argue that, just like many other buildings, the techniques and fashion was the same that was used in pre-Columbian structures, consisting of piling rocks, flattened only on the visible side, and a rough rubble core filled with mortar made of volcanic sand, lime and clay, reinforced with small stones. The same technique was used for the pyramids as can be noted in the valley of Mexico and the Great Temple in the city.⁹⁴ The material came normally from ruined pre-hispanic temples and platforms, and the adjacent Church of San Francisco is recorded to have been built with the spolia from the stairs of the great Aztec temple. This was a practice with ideological purposes: Spanish settlers considered that using spolia from Aztec temples represented the triumph of Christianity over paganism.⁹⁵

We already studied the relation between ritual human sacrifice and the blood of Christ, as well as the ritual aspect of the work as a sign of piety for the Nahua community. We can add that the atrium had four small shrines called posas, they represented the four

⁹⁴ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 34.

⁹⁵ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 216; McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 26; Vetancurt, *Crónica de la Provincia* 32; Chauvet, "The Church of San Francisco," 20.

neighborhoods in which the city was divided in pre-Hispanic times, which was also a model of the cosmos in the Aztec cult, and the representatives of each had different attires during dances and processions happening in the atrium. This can be understood as an active search for memory to be reinstalled in the space of the new religion, keeping the Nahua identity instead of obliterating it.⁹⁶

McMahon stresses her opinion of the Church as a reincarnation of the pyramid using certain architectural and spatial continuations. For example, San Jose and San Francisco were on a platform which was accessed through several steps, just as there were two small buildings on top of a Mexica platform. The community assembled in an open area, as it happened in front of a pyramid.⁹⁷ Even in the seventeenth century, an Indian chronicle refers to San José as a *teocalli*, the word to designate the pre-Hispanic temples.⁹⁸ An illustration of mestizo missionary Fray Diego Valades (1533-1583) shows the perception of the pyramid and the church as homologues, the open chapel topping the pyramid (fig. 2.17). The case of the Royal Chapel of Cholula is even more complex: the usurped mosque converted into a church topping the Cholulteca pyramid. This was the ultimate sign of victory from the Reconquista – the mosque – on top of the most important symbol of the Amerindians and the Conquista. The Moors and Amerindians were defeated and San José and the other chapels are the ultimate synthesis of Spanish victory in the sixteenth century.

⁹⁶ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 36; Cervantes, *México in 1554*, 42.

⁹⁷ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 26, 30.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 42; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 380.

There are even more elements of hybridity that the friars set to make connections and inspire the Indians to convert. For instance, the friars learnt very soon about the Aztec foundational myth: the story goes that the Aztecs left their mythological city in Aztlán and started an exodus following the orders of their main god, Huitzilopochtli. After many years of wandering they finally saw a divine sign: an eagle standing on a cactus with a snake in its beak. Mexico Tenochtitlan was understood as a promised land, given to them by the gods, creating a rightful empire. As such, Tenochtitlan was also a place of peregrination, and the rituals associated could be equated to the practices related to Jerusalem. This was an opportunity that the Friars could not let pass. Jerusalem was also a promised land, there were ritual peregrinations to the city; biblical descriptions of Jerusalem seemed to be very interesting for the Nahuas and analogous to their own practices. Motolinía, one of the twelve Franciscans, compared the early conquest of the Aztec empire with the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. They saw themselves as the carriers of the Ark of the covenant, which in this case were the holy sacraments, and putting them in the Church of San Francisco, which would be an imitation of the first Temple of Solomon of the New World: the holiest temple in America, and the definite competitor of the Aztec teocalli. With the edification of the church, and the insertion of the myth of both Aztlan and the biblical references, Motolinía considered he had transformed a whole pagan city into Jerusalem, and the Aztecs started seeing their conversion to Christianity as a divine appointment.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Lara, "City," 99; McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 13-15, 43.

This translation probably continued to be part of the collective memory of both friars and Indians. The first theatre play – of many which would become crucial in the process of mass conversion – was performed in 1531 in the atrium of San José de los Naturales, it was titled “The Last judgement.” More than 800 performers, 16 spoken roles – in Nahuatl and Latin – and a fabulous arrangement of costumes, dances, music and puppetry, finally transformed the whole city into the stage of the play: Jerusalem. It was a masterful mix of Aztec dramaturgy and European representations that were familiar to Pedro de Gante, and Andrés de Olmos, the playwright, like the celebration of the Holy Blood in Bruges.¹⁰⁰ This Jerusalem obsession is a great irony if we consider that San José and its atrium were inspired by Islamic models, that Jerusalem was in the hands of Muslims, and that the initial mission of Columbus was to contact Christian allies to, one day, retake Jerusalem.

Now we can be sure that Bailey is wrong; the mosque-type chapel was not a misinterpretation of the local idiosyncrasies. The complexity of this showcase of hybrid elements could only have happened with a very well and studied perception of the locals. San José de los Naturales became more than a chapel, it was used as a community center, as a stage of ritual performance, and as a memory vessel. It also came to be a center for the political, religious, social and administrative purposes of the Amerindians, and during the early years of the colony, the epicenter of indigenous life.¹⁰¹ Islamic, European and indigenous elements created a new typology of building and interaction, and from here

¹⁰⁰ Schuessler, “Precursores iconográficos,” 208; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 369; McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 69-70. Such theatre plays were called *exemplum*.

¹⁰¹ McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 36.

the indigenous population, although colonized and humiliated, exercised the last of their powers in assimilating a new culture, in a new building. It was theirs, maintained by their gifts and work, it identified them with the past, instead of setting them apart. No wonder the Indians revolted when it was taken from them.

C. Reconstructions

When the enormous 60-meter-tall cross, which crowned the atrium, fell in 1601, the long and painful process of degradation started.¹⁰² The secularization of monasteries attempted to take control of the religious institutions away from the friars, and interrupted their economic privileges. After an earthquake, the seven aisles were reduced to five and the very first line of columns was replaced with a normal wall, which was damaged after an earthquake in 1611. In 1622 the chapel was still in use by the Indians, though no longer as an open chapel, or a school, but as a normal church.¹⁰³ We also have a record of an interesting event: the remains of Hernán Cortés were transferred in 1629 to the Church of San Francisco, a movement of legitimization, perhaps? After all Cortés was a link to the history of modern Mexico from the start. His body remained there only 87 years before being moved once again.¹⁰⁴ The seventeenth century came with many additions to the conventual complex. The chapel suffered even more in 1649 and many wooden columns of the chapel were replaced with stone columns, but it retained its

¹⁰² Ibid, 44.

¹⁰³ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 398.

¹⁰⁴ McMahan, *Fragmented Memory*, 49. His remains are today in the altar at Purísima Concepción and Jesús Nazareno Church, in Mexico City. Jan Martínez Ahrens, "The secret grave of Hernán Cortés."

status as a chapel for the Indians. The Bourbonic reforms of Charles III secularized all the parishes of New Spain. Finally, in 1769 all that was left was pulled down and apparently was in ruins until the plot was sold to the Servites in 1791, another mendicant order. The once 7x7 naved chapel, and one of the most original buildings in New Spain was reduced to a basilica and renamed “The Chapel of the Servites,” but its construction was only finished later in 1803.¹⁰⁵

The complaints of the Indians were heard early in this process of secularization. They preferred to travel long distances to go to San José because the clergy in the new churches was not competent: the new priests didn’t speak Nahuatl and forced the Indians to speak Spanish; forcing their identity out. Franciscans made impressive efforts to keep their parishes. There are many petitions from that time, but at the end the secularization was inevitable, and the construction of the new chapel finally destroyed the memory that was linked to this building.¹⁰⁶

The Chapel of the Servites had an oratory dedicated to Saint Joseph, a reminder of what the space had been. Yet the area was doomed, and in 1861, after the War of the Reform, which sought to eliminate, among others, ecclesiastical power, the liberal government, in the head of President Benito Juárez, expropriated all ecclesiastical assets: the Chapel of the Servites was demolished.¹⁰⁷ There is a drawing showing what this later

¹⁰⁵ Chauvet, “The Church of San Francisco,” 28; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 398.

¹⁰⁶ McMahan, *Fragmented Memory*, 52-4.

¹⁰⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 398.

church looked like during the demolition (Fig. 2.18), but there are no traces of what it used to look like when it was the Chapel of San José.

The rest of the Franciscan convent was savagely segmented. Parts of it were eventually used as the Chamber of Congress, a circus, a bookshop, a billiard, shops, a cocktail bar called *La Cucaracha*, and the cloister was given to the Methodist church in 1873. In 2017 when I visited the cloister, the Methodists were still there. The street that runs today through what used to be the Chapel of San Jose is now called, in his honor, Pedro de Gante Street. This plan (fig. 2.19) shows how the streets cut the elements of the convent in the way they used to be arranged before 1861.

Chapter 3

The Royal Chapel of Cholula.

...y certifico a Vuestra Alteza que yo conté desde una mezquita cuatrocientas treinta tantas torres en la dicha ciudad y todas son de mezquitas.

- ... And I certify to your highness that I counted from a mosque four hundred towers in the aforementioned city and all were of mosques –

Hernán Cortés, 1520

Cholula is a small town, one hundred twenty kilometers east from Mexico City. The newly built, nearby city of Puebla, established as an exclusive city for Spaniards in 1531, grew so that today Cholula looks more like a neighborhood of Puebla. Regardless of its size and its quiet nature, this town is arguably the oldest city in America that has been inhabited uninterruptedly, as testified by its very large pyramid – the largest in volume

and area in Mexico, not in height – built in four stages that cover more than two thousand years.¹

Archeological evidence of the great pyramid suggest that the earliest stages of construction correspond with the early period of the Teotihuacan culture, around the first century of the common era, however, the stories that the chroniclers heard of the Indians registered only a fragment of that time span. According to Bernardino de Sahagún, Cholula was founded by the Toltecs who were running away – with no explanation – from the city of Tula. Another commenter, Father Durán, asserted that the original inhabitants of that area were giants, who angrily defended their territory, but the Nahuas – In this case – finally won the battles and drove the giants out of their land. The new inhabitants were known afterwards as Cholultecas.²

The word Cholula, per the translation of Angel María Garibay, means *Place to Run*, more concretely, *place of those who flee*. Sahagún could be right at least, in the purpose of the name, but as he notices, this escape from Tula could have happened three hundred years before, covering only a small fragment of the history of Cholula.³

The first Spaniard to describe Cholula was Cortés, mentioning that there were more than 400 mosques (*mezquitas*), referring to the teocallis, and that people wore more clothes than the neighboring Tlaxcaltecas. Francisco López Gómara adds that they wore Islamic clothes, and that there were as many temples (*templos*, not *mezquitas* anymore)

¹ De la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 23-24; Kubler, “La traza colonial,” 1; Web Urbanist, “Senior City-zens: World’s 10 Oldest Still-Inhabited Cities,” online.

² De la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 14.

³ De la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 13-14.

as the days of the year. Cortés made some interesting observations, for example that there was such a large number of Indians that there was not a piece of land that wasn't tilled, and that even in those circumstances, there were still beggars who had nothing to eat, just like in Spain. Gómara adds that among the cities of that region, Cholula was the most religious one, and that many Indians from those towns made pilgrimages to the city, which justified the vast number of temples in Cholula.⁴

Cortés entered the town in 1519, followed by his army, including some Tlaxcaltecas and other Indians. He had been told in Tlaxcala that the Cholultecas were against him, after all they were tributary of the Mexicas, the enemies of Tlaxcala, so he was already prejudiced against them. Depending on the source one wants to believe, it is possible that Cortés might or might not have learnt about a plot to attack the Spanish army. Whether this was true or not, Cortés called the governors of the town, tied them and locked them in a room, then called for all the town to meet in the plaza of Quetzalcoatl. The Spaniards took the gates of the plaza, and after the sound of gunpowder they attacked the Cholultecas, who were not armed nor could imagine what would happen to them. Cortés wrote: "in two hours more than 3000 men died." De la Maza speculates that each Spaniard had to kill at least six Cholultecas. Still unappeased, Cortés set some towers and houses on fire, and fought down the streets until he pushed all the people out of the city. Cortés adds in his letter that, after fifteen days of fight, Cholula was peaceful. Never had the Spanish attempted a massacre of that size in America.⁵

⁴ Cortés, *Cartas y relaciones*, 75; Gómara, *Historia de la conquista de México*, 124.

⁵ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 31-4; Cortés, *Cartas y relaciones*, 72-4.

This story is cited in many of the chronicles with variations. Bartolome de las Casas considered this a political maneuver with no provocation, but he exaggerates in saying that this was a common practice of the Spaniards when conquering new territory. Cortés relates that a Cholulteca woman told the Spaniards about a Mexica army ready to ambush them, which Cortés took as a provocation, and realized that it was better to prevent than to be attacked. Sahagún, however, argues that the intention of the massacre had been planned from Tlaxcala, the town the Spaniards were coming from. Some of the chronicles say that they received food in Cholula, and that all the people came out to greet them, other say that all the inhabitants stayed inside their houses and the Spaniards received no food whatsoever, another reason for provocation, perhaps. Bernal Díaz del Castillo contradicts Bartolomé de las Casas and states that this punishment was necessary because, otherwise, they would have perished. Gómara added some cruel details: all the houses were burnt, the only thing the Spaniards stepped on were bodies, and that they sacked the city, destroying everything they could., Although the details can be debated and contested, it is without a doubt that the massacre of Cholula truly took place.⁶

The first building to be demolished was the Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the plot was given to the Franciscans so that they could build their convent, where the mosque-chapel stands today.⁷ This founding massacre committed by the conquistadors is important because the name of the convent commemorates it. The remaining Indian royalty of

⁶ López de Gómara, *Historia de la conquista*, 122; Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 72-4; del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 295; la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 32-36; Sahagún, *Historia de la conquista de México*, 17-9; las Casas, *Brevísima relación*, 56-9; Aguilar, *Relación breve de la conquista*, 51.

⁷ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 38.

Cholula asked the name of the city to be changed to San Gabriel in 1537, given that the day of the massacre, in 1519, had been the day of the archangel. Even though the Spanish authorities accepted the reclamation, the name of the city was kept as San Pedro de Cholula, but the convent came to be known as San Gabriel.⁸

A. Construction.

The Royal Chapel of Cholula, in the convent of San Gabriel, is the only surviving mosque-type chapel. It has suffered several transformations, but both its exterior and interior resemble a Spanish mosque in every element (fig. 3.19, 3.18 and 3.25) as it did when it was built. With the domes that were added during the eighteenth century, however, it started resembling other buildings, like the Great mosque of Bursa; a coincidence, but also a result of a shared architectural language (fig. 3.39). The plan as it stands today (fig. 3.6) is a nine-nave plan by seven aisles deep. All the 63 bays are vaulted. Most of them have domes, but the bays on the two lateral naves are covered with cross vaults and have been sealed on the side parallel to the entrance wall to make altars (fig. 3.23).

The story of its construction is a lot simpler than San José's, and it could well be based on this latter model, but nothing written implies this connection. The first mention of the

⁸ Ibid, 68.

convent is in a report in which Zumárraga, the Bishop of Mexico, elects Fray Alonso Xuarez to be guardian of the monastery, in 1529. In 1531 Licenciado Salmerón went to the area of Puebla, and reported to have visited the province of Puebla, Tepeaca and Cholula, where “Fray Francisco de Soto lives with two other friars, who oversee the necessary matters of Puebla”. Motolinía clarifies that when Puebla was founded, the Indians related to neighboring convents went there to work, among those, the people from Cholula.⁹

In 1538, it is reported that some religious institutions were about to be closed due to the scarcity of friars, San Gabriel among those. The surprising number of 800 to 1000 Indians, said Motolinía, protested passionately so that the friars were not dismissed.¹⁰ It sounds contradictory that the Indians, who 20 years before were massacred in such a brutal way, were asking for Spanish overseers; perhaps this can be attributed as a mass case of Stockholm Syndrome. We know, however, that during the early years of the colony, the defenders and protectors of the Indians from the encomenderos were the mendicant friars, the only Europeans who did an effort to understand the Amerindians.¹¹ Against the wishes of the Indians, the convent became a Vicaría, an institution that would not protect the Indians.

On the other hand, foundation and construction are two different things. The monastery must have been a very poor building of adobe and a thatched roof in its earliest stage. A document from 1650, in the appendix of Francisco de la Maza’s *La Ciudad*

⁹ Ibid, 61-62.

¹⁰ Ibid, 62; Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de Nueva España*, 153.

¹¹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 45.

de Cholula, titled *Relación de la fundación del convento de Cholula*, indicates that the convent and church were built between 1549 and 1552. Fray Blas de la Torre, the writer of the manuscript, saw an inscription on an arch of the choir with the date – it isn't there any longer – stating also that the first stone was placed by don Martín de Hojacastro, the bishop of Tlaxcala.¹² This refers to the main Church of San Gabriel, and the convent, but it is not necessarily the date of the hypostyle Royal Chapel. The complex, just as in the Franciscan complex in Mexico City, includes a church, a convent with a cloister, an atrium in front of which stands the open chapel, a stone cross in the center of the atrium and four small shrines around the wall of the atrium. San Gabriel has also a small church between the chapel and the main Gothic church (fig. 3.2). Note that the Royal Chapel was built with a different orientation than the rest of the complex.

Given the dates, Toussaint is almost certain that the architect of the church was Toribio de Alcaraz, the first professional architect known in the Spanish colonies, and who, by orders of the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, designed many early monasteries and churches of the second half of the sixteenth century.¹³ The main church of San Gabriel is a one nave plan of excellent Gothic vaulting in four sections, yet very simple and clean of ornamentation in its original form. Today, however, it is covered in neoclassic ornaments (fig. 3.3. 3.4).

¹² La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 63, 141.

¹³ Toussaint, *Arte colonial de Mexico*, 81; La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 63.

One interesting detail of this church is its lateral door (fig. 2.68), which is richer in ornament than the main one. It is made in a rich Plateresque¹⁴ style, of a quality seen in late churches in Spain, as if – says art historian Diego Angulo – this was an Andalusian church.¹⁵ Could this rich detail establish the link between the architectural style of the mosque-chapel, an Andalusian model, and the Plateresque door?

Unfortunately, there is less information about the Royal Chapel. The first document that mentions it comes from 1581, in the *Relación de Cholula* by Gabriel de Rojas, the governor of that city. The relation and the map contained in it were done for the large cosmographic project in times of Philip II, in which the governors of all the New World had to answer a series of questions about their provinces.¹⁶

There is in this city a monastery of the Order of Saint Francis, the monastery building, cloister, and church very sumptuous and well made... As the great concourse of natives did not fit into this church, next to it and within the same circuit of walls, they made a large *casilla*, almost a square, supported by many arches, and with towers at its sides. After it had been vaulted, in order to celebrate a feast in it impressively, the centering of the arches and vaults was taken down; and because the mortar had not set, that night all the vaulting fell to the ground, leaving nothing standing but the walls. It was a miracle that God made it fell at night, for had it been the day before, there would have been great havoc as there were more than four thousand people in the building. It has since lain in ruins because the Indians are now so many less that

¹⁴ An architecture style that blends flamboyant gothic, early Renaissance and Mudejar. It reached its peak in the times of Charles V.

¹⁵ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 67.

¹⁶ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 141.

they have not taken up the work of rebuilding. This structure was the most sumptuous that the Indians have built hereabouts.¹⁷

That vaulting system consisted of 9 parallel double layered barrel vaults, made of brick, that ran perpendicular to the “qibla” wall. The traces of those vaults can be seen in a photograph of the roof (fig 3.16). Most of the large Spanish mosques, like Cordoba, have aisles that are perpendicular to the qibla, although they were many times covered with a wooden ceiling. Today the vaulting system of the mosque cathedral of Cordoba shows a vast array of vaulting techniques: Gothic vaults, Renaissance and wooden barrel-profile ceilings (fig. 3.7). These vaulted aisles are the best comparison for the 9 vaulted corridors of Cholula. The manuscript of Fray Gabriel de Rojas contains a map of Cholula from 1581 with a schematic drawing of the chapel (fig. 3.8, 3.9) showing it before the many domes were installed, so that it was possible to see the vaults from outside, interrupted and covered on the front. The wonderful drawing prepared by the architect Miguel de Messmacher shows with accuracy what the open chapel must have looked like when the front was not covered, and the result is undeniably Islamic (Fig. 3.10).

In its early stage with the barrel vaults, the chapel was the largest vaulted structure built in the New World. It must have been an original decision to cover the aisles with that kind of vaults, light, with only two layers of brick. The imagination that produced this vaulting system was not equivalent to the structural experience, since the experiment failed.¹⁸

¹⁷ Rojas, *Relación de Cholula*, 169; la Maza, 75; Trans. McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 400.

¹⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 406.

Fray Alonso Ponce saw the chapel five years after the report of Gabriel de Rojas, and told the same story, but with a slight variation:

Beside the monastery of Cholula, the Indians made a very large chapel with nine naves, all of stone and mortar and arches, and in this they heard Masses and sermons and received the Most Holy Sacrament; it was slightly and showy, but not very stable or strong as it turned out, for one night all the arches and vaults fell in, leaving the pillars and walls standing the way they are now.¹⁹

The texts contradict each other, while Gabriel de Rojas argues that the vaults fell right after its construction when the centers were removed, Ponce suggests that the chapel had been used for masses and sermons, and then “one night,” all the arches and vaults fell. We have more reasons to believe the account of Gabriel de Rojas, first because he spoke perfect Nahuatl, and second, because to write the *Relación Geográfica de Cholula* took him three years to complete, from 1579 to 1581, while he was living and working in the town he wrote about. Additionally, his methodology was systematic, asking directly to the Indians, as opposed to the widespread practice of his contemporaries, copying what they read.²⁰

The Date.

Dr. Francisco de la Maza argues that, because the text by Gabriel de Rojas mentions the reduction in the number of Indians, the building must have been built before 1541, or before 1576, the years of the great devastating plagues of the sixteenth century. He then

¹⁹ Ponce, *Relación breve y verdadera*, I, 162-3; trans. McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 400.

²⁰ Grunberg, “La relación geográfica,” 281-3.

suggests that it should have happened before 1540 when the population was still numerous. Gabriel de Rojas estimated that before the conquest, the population of Cholula was of 40,000 people, that the epidemic of 1541 reduced the population to 15,000,²¹ and the one of 1576 left only 9,000 inhabitants. If the population was of only 15,000 after 1541 – argues de la Maza – terrorized and reduced by the epidemics, would they have thought of building a chapel of such magnitude? On the other hand, San José de los Naturales was, if we stick to the chronology of 1538, as the date of the transformation into a hypostyle chapel, at the peak of its popularity. The Chapel of Cholula must be, if not a copy, at least inspired by San José. There is no definite proof of this relation, but both chapels belonged to the same mendicant order with priests that knew each other. Both convents were also set in a similar layout with the atrium, the shrines and the convent. De la Maza argues that it should have been built before 1540 because it's hard to imagine that the chapel was imitating a model that was already out of use, so we can reject that it could have been built before 1576. Another argument in his favor is that, the story of the vaults falling would not be credible in later times, and it surely shows lack of experience in construction.²²

²¹ The accounts of G. de Rojas seem accurate. Cholula was given the rank of city in 1537, when there were said to be 37,000 people, very close to his estimated 40,000. McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 401; In the period between epidemics, Kubler, using information from the parishes that were censused between 1569 to 1574, reports that Cholula had 12,000 in 1569, close to the 15,000 of Gabriel de Rojas. Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 69. One can argue that the numbers given after 1576 must be right, since he was the *Corregidor* of Cholula during that period. But also, McAndrew thinks that these numbers represent only the number of men, and doesn't count women or children.

²² La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 75.

Several objections can be made to this reasoning. For example, the date of San José de los Naturales is not clear; there is evidence that the chapel was built anew after the earthquake of 1547 and probably finished in 1552, so that the model was still popular.

John McAndrew also objects the considerations of De la Maza. He points out at the transformation of the Monastery into a *Vicaría*, that of which those Indians complained in 1538.²³ We don't know when was it returned to the Franciscan friars. With the plague of 1540, and a smaller one registered in 1544, it would have been impossible to build the chapel, and perhaps only until 1548 or 1549 a healthier population might have undertaken it. The chapel of Cholula had to be large, argues McAndrew, because it was the main church of one of the largest Indian cities. Most of the population was Indian with only a handful of Spanish residents. The congregation cannot have been small if 4,000 people were celebrating under the vaults of the chapel – as far as we know the number of 4,000 was given by Gabriel de Rojas, who wasn't there when the collapse happened, and the congregation could not have been poor. All the conquistadors and chroniclers describe it as a very rich city, even more beautiful than any city in Spain.²⁴ The Indians were giving huge donations to the Franciscan monastery.²⁵ For instance, the name Royal Chapel, *Capilla Real*, most probably indicates that it was financed by the surviving Cholulteca aristocracy, just like the open Chapel of Tlaxcala, which carried the same name, and was

²³ Mendieta, *historia eclesiástica Indiana*, 329.

²⁴ Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 75.

²⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402; *Códice franciscano*, 137-8. When the Franciscan chapter met in Cholula in 1568, there was no need to ask the Indians for accommodation or food, since the church had enough previous gifts from them.

intended to imitate the Spanish custom.²⁶ Conditions at Cholula, concludes McAndrew, favored religious building.²⁷

McAndrew establishes that the church is completely different from the chapel, and they do not even share any decorative detail. The orientation of both buildings keep no relation, so that must mean that they were not built in the same period (1549-1552). It can't be before because those would be the years of the plague, so it must be after. Then we know that the Franciscan chapter met here in 1568, and that this reunion to choose representatives required a lot of space, which was only available in Cholula, the second largest Chapel after Saint Francis at the capital.²⁸ In 1569 there were five resident friars administering to 60,000 residents.²⁹ A large chapel was surely needed for feast days, if we consider that the convent was also in charge of smaller surrounding towns, as noted later in 1580. For all these reasons McAndrew considers that the church must have been built in the early 1560s.³⁰

His reasoning, however, is not conclusive. The buildings do share some similarities. If we examine the back of the chapel (fig. 3.30), and the uncovered side of the church (fig 3.4) both edifices were built of the same material, and by the same technique.

Furthermore, both buildings have crenellations, although there is a fundamental

²⁶ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 75.

²⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402.

²⁸ Codice Franciscano, 137. "El Capítulo último pasado del año de sesenta y ocho se celebró en *La ciudad de Cholula*, porque después de México no tenemos otra casa de más aptitud que aquella para el efecto, así en capacidad de aposentos para los capitulares, como en el mantenimiento necesario"; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 559; Vetancurt, *Teatro mexicano*, IV, 30.

²⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402; Codice Franciscano, 25.

³⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402.

difference; while the church of San Gabriel has all the sides of the parapet covered with crenellations, the royal chapel only has the crenellations on the front, and we know that the front changed at least once. The lateral windows of the church have round arches and, although today the Royal Chapel has windows with segmented arches, some sealed windows in the backwall do have round arches with the same profile (fig. 3.30). Both buildings have buttresses but of different kinds: the buttresses of San Gabriel are large, also because they resist the weight of the large Gothic vaulting, while the buttresses of the chapel are small. Another reason given by McAndrew to argue that both buildings were built at different stages is that the chapel is not properly aligned with the rest of the complex, and, more importantly, with the rest of the city, although it does match the front gate, at least closely. Regarding the orientation, note that many churches were traditionally oriented to the east, while the mosque-chapel is oriented to the south east, (as if it was oriented towards Mecca!). But the most probable reason for this difference is that either the church, or the chapel, are taking advantage of the foundations of a previous temple or church. Many other parishes had the same lack of symmetry, and uneven orientation: Metztlán, Epazotucan, Acatlán, etc. This, and the fact that the entrance of the convent doesn't lead to the main temple suggests that the layout obeyed a different rationale: to guide the public towards the open chapel or to the atrium.³¹ Kubler also found that the map of Cholula (fig. 3.8), in the report of Gabriel de Rojas, shows many divergences with the reality and he concludes that this map was not depicting the reality, but the plans of how the town was intended to be. Rojas says that

³¹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 388.

many buildings were being demolished to build new houses in the Spanish style, so that the plan shows an intermediate state. The map does not record the divergence in the orientation of the Chapel and the church in the convent of San Gabriel, and Kubler concludes that the buildings could be, either following the orientation of the pre-Hispanic layout, or that it corresponds to earlier attempts to plan the city in different orientations. A remarkable feat, however, is that the church of San Gabriel is oriented towards the position of the sun during the 24th and 25th of March, which are the days of San Gabriel and the Annunciation, coinciding with spring equinox.³²

Given the importance of the indigenous population in Cholula, the few Spaniards, and the very small number of priests, the chapel should have been built, if not before, at least at the same time. To cater to the Indians was much more important than to the few Spaniards and the resident friars. All of this would be true if the Conventual church was exclusive for Spaniards, but the comment of the witness Diego Velazquez to ask the government for the new covering of the chapel, says that only a tenth of the Indian population fit in the church of San Gabriel,³³ which suggests that the Indians had already used the chapel before, and that the racial exclusiveness was not imperative. If the chapel was built first, and the vaults fell right after the construction of the chapel, wouldn't it make sense to cover the chapel instead of building a whole new church next to it?

³² Kubler, *Traza Colonial*, 5-7.

³³ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 78; Unpublished documents in the National Archive in Mexico City, Ramo de Indios, Vol. 6 Parte I. Exps. 1010 and 1057, and vol 16. Part I, Exp. 62.

The answer is right in the first mention of the building. Gabriel de Rojas wrote in the *Relación de Cholula*: “As the great concourse of natives did not fit into this church, next to it and within the same circuit of walls, they made a large casilla.” This commentary clarifies that it was built afterwards. The safest assumption is that the chapel was built between 1553 and 1568, the date at which the Franciscan chapter met.

The wooden ceiling.

The Chapel of Cholula was unroofed until the end of the sixteenth century, when Alfonso de Nava, the governor of that region, informed the viceroy in 1595, that the “principal” Indians wanted to roof the chapel again. Luis de Velasco, the viceroy at that time, answered:

...again, you will do it – roof the chapel – and gather information, from Indians and from Spaniards, whether they want to voluntarily or by necessity to attend the chapel for such necessity, and depending on the information you gather, you will call Luis de Arciniega, who is in charge of the construction of the cathedral of Puebla of the Angels, so that he can stipulate the cost of roofing the mentioned chapel by the *traza* (price chart?) he was given in the letter of the 21 of April of this year.³⁴

Luis de Arciniega was the brother of Claudio de Arciniega, the architect of the Metropolitan Cathedral and the funerary monument of Charles V. Luis was born in Burgos in 1537, and arrived in New Spain in the 1550s and earned some fame as an altar and

³⁴ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 76; the document containing this letter is not published, but La Maza reports that it was given to him by the scholar Heinrich Berlin, who found it in a private archive.

retable designer, some which survive in Tepeaca, Tula and Malinalco. A famous retable in the monastery church in Cholula was probably his too. He moved to Puebla, where he was entrusted with the building of the Cathedral (1589), a twin of the Cathedral of Mexico, and the church with the tallest bell towers in all colonial America.³⁵ It was during this time that Luis was contacted, as ordered by the Viceroy, and he reported that he went to Cholula to see and plan the reconstruction of the vault. Arciniega estimated the cost of the new vaults at 10,000 pesos. In the response, Arciniega wrote that the chapel was almost done, and that the only thing that was missing was the pillars, arches and the roof. He added that “besides the town being in much need of such construction, the Indians are very eager to do it, and there are many officials and with no obligation in earning anything, because the only thing they gain is food... I think that without much work it will be finished, if our Lord wills, in two years or a little more.”³⁶

The petition was found by Heinrich Berlin. In this document, an Indian called Diego Velazquez says that the natives gathered there to attend mass, and hear the sermon, and since only a tenth of the people fit in the Church of San Gabriel, and there was no other place where they could gather, they needed to roof the chapel. They complained because they had to be there on Sundays and holidays from six to eleven in the morning, under the sun and rain, and winds “that have caused and causes many diseases, of which many end up dying.” So that when it rains or it is windy not many Indians attended the rituals, or that if it starts raining everybody would leave running to go under cover. The wind

³⁵ McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches*, 406.

³⁶ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 77; see note 131.

blew out the candles and forced the priests to shift from one place to the other, to cover themselves from it. Besides these picturesque remarks, the petition adds that there were enough materials, carpenters and stonemasons at their disposal, and that the work would not be costly for that reason.³⁷

The complains of the Cholultecas seem exaggerated, especially when one notices the large amount of open chapels in México in which they all must have experienced similar hardship: wind blowing the candles and too much sun. The neighboring town of Huejotzingo also had an open chapel; they never complained. Having had once a large roofed chapel, they must have recalled the comfort it provided, and considered the outdoor and syncretic masses completely obsolete.³⁸

The Chapel was almost completely covered by 1601 with a large Mudejar wooden ceiling. Most of the work must have been ordered by Arciniega but finished by Juan Pérez, with a contract for two thousand pesos for a wooden cover on the central nave with wooden ribbons in 1608.³⁹ Arciniega had died in 1599, unable to do it himself. During this period, the chapel must have looked exactly like a Spanish mosque, which were also covered with wooden ceilings. Two examples of this kind of ceiling can be proposed, one at the ex-synagogue of Santa María la Blanca, in Toledo, with a very basic alfarje (fig. 3.11) or the flat wooden artesonado used at the great Mosque of Cordoba (fig. 3.12).

³⁷ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 78; Unpublished documents in the National Archive in Mexico City, Ramo de Indios, Vol. 6 Parte I. Exps. 1010 and 1057, and vol 16. Part I, Exp. 62. I did not have access to these files.

³⁸ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 408.

³⁹ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 79; Unpublished document in the Archive of Puebla. Archivo de Notarías, paquete de 1590 a 1599, legajo 1596, foja 36. Credit to Efraim Castro Morales; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 559; Bandelier found an inscription in one of the steps leading to the chapel with the number 1608. *Papers for the archeological Institute of America*, II, 111-112.

The work of Arciniega can arguably be seen on the façade, in the Plateresque finials in the shape of candelabra and on top of the columns that divide each door (fig. 3.15, 3.14, 3.15). McAndrew says that these elements remind one of the kind that one would find in a retable, and one that was used in a temporary monument he put up for Lent in 1595 in the Cathedral in Puebla.⁴⁰ These finials, however, are present in the drawing made for the Report of Gabriel de Rojas in 1581 (fig. 3.8) and thus we should consider them original, and not the work of Arciniega.

The Domes.

A report says that this large Mudejar covering was already rotting by 1661. Some parts were uncovered and badly damaged, and there were three brick domes, from the construction campaign of Arciniega, we suspect, that were considered old fashioned. A new construction campaign to cover all the building with domes was started that year, but the same report complains about the Indians, who this time didn't want to work if they weren't paid and because if they went to join this work their cattle would die.⁴¹ One of the reasons why the Indians didn't want to work might be related to the administration of the parish. The convent had been secularized in 1642, and as we have seen before, the secular clergy was less interested in caring for the Indians.⁴² The secularization had been ordered by the Bishop Palafox, so that the indoctrination of the Indians went to the hands of the priests, but the Indians revolted. The protests escalated rapidly, and turned violent

⁴⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 407.

⁴¹ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 79. The document was written by Niño de Castro, but De la Maza doesn't cite his source.

⁴² McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 409, or it was secularized in 1640, according to Vetancurt, *Teatro mexicano*, IV, 56.

when the Franciscan friars, armed with knives and sticks, broke into the conventual church to steal a statue of the Virgin, and cut the ropes of the bells so that nobody could call the alarm.⁴³

One of the witnesses of the construction, Don Antonio Rojas, governor of Cholula, also wrote a report on the chapel. He contradicted the previous one saying that the wood of the roof was in good shape, and that they destroyed it with no other reason than to embellish the chapel, a campaign which was most harmful for the people. To cover the chapel with vaults was very expensive, at least one hundred thousand pesos, and it would take at least ten years to finish. The construction of the domes was, apparently, a source of disputes and complaints: many Indians had to work continuously baking bricks, cutting wood for the centers, and carrying material with no remuneration. To the contrary, the Indians had to pay every week one peso and a half to the clergy, and if they didn't pay it, they would be punished with lashes. Due to this terrible practice, many Indians eventually left Cholula.⁴⁴ Rojas complained about the treatment of the Indians, and managed to stop the work at the chapel, but soon the bishop of Puebla, Palafox, imposed his will and works at the chapel were resumed.

The construction was very uneven and slow to the point that it was only finished in 1731, two hundred years after the foundation of the Franciscan parish. Fray Blas de la Torre wrote in an intermediate period, when 45 of the 63 domes were finished. His text is

⁴³ Sáenz, *Vida cural doméstica*, 16.

⁴⁴ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 79. Archivo General de la Nación. Ramo indios, Vol. 19, Exp. 409. Credit to Heinrich Berlin.

interesting because he is not sure about the reason why the wood slabs were changed for vaults, supporting the argument that the change was virtually useless and perilous for the population.

When the Chapel was finished, at last, it was recounted in the news. This is the report from the *Gaceta de México* from March 1731.

Cholula. –In this city, the Chapel has been renovated with much care and beautifully painted by the natives, and dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady and the Archangel Saint Gabriel, patron of the city, and by influence of its priest, Miguel Gutiérrez Godínez... and the Mayor of the city, Don Alejandro López Monsalve... who have cooperated in this work with the desire that the Holy Sacrament be placed in such sumptuous and magnificent temple, composed of 60 varas in length and 72 in latitude, in which seven naves are well distributed with 74 columns that support 73 pendentive domes – *bóvedas vaídas* – and by one and the other side 14 altars; the front has 7 altars, and the largest one can be seen from any position without obstruction...⁴⁵

By this stage, the chapel already looked the way it does today, with the main dome covered in glazed bricks and the separated altars on the side naves. We can be more specific about the building in its present state. There are 24 octagonal columns, and 12 stone cylindrical columns (fig. 3.19). The 14 vaults on the lateral naves, now divided altars, are covered with cross vaults, as we said before (fig. 3.23). There are 49 shallow domes on pendentives on the naves, and five domes. All which make 63, not 73 as stated in the gazette. Twenty-three of these domes are topped with lanterns, and the large

⁴⁵ *Las Gacetas*, I, 317; La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 82. (My translation).

dome on top of the chancel has a drum with 8 windows with curved pediments, double pilasters between each window and inverted corbels (fig. 3.24). The altars in front have all disappeared. At a later stage, the now 7 open gates of the chapel were closed, and pierced with windows of segmented arches (fig. 3.25).

There is, however, one mystery left to solve. The central gate of the façade is in a less decorated style, which could correspond either with the Herrerian style (fig. 3.28),⁴⁶ developed in Spain during the second half of the sixteenth century under Philip II, or the neoclassical style of the eighteenth century. The central gate has two medallions on the spandrels of the arch, both with Franciscan imagery: one with the five bleeding wounds of Christ, and one with the hand of St. Francis and the hand of Christ. Since the seven naves were open, it can't be considered very old, argues de la Maza, and perhaps it is a neoclassical addition, which corresponds with the moment in which the church was taken back by the Franciscan Order in 1770.⁴⁷ No other documents regarding the construction remain, yet it is possible to think that the gate could also be the work of Luis de Arciniega, and I say this because the step towards the simplicity of the Herrerian style is already evident in the façade of the Cathedral of Puebla, which was his masterpiece (fig. 3.27). That means that the additions could have been done during a time in which the chapel was still under construction. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that it doesn't belong to the first stage of construction: the stone work of the divisions, from

⁴⁶ A stage in which all the ornamentation of the Plateresque of Charles V and the Catholic Kings changed for a more sober and cleaner use of space, with less ornamentation.

⁴⁷ Sáenz, *Vida curial doméstica*, 16; La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 86.

which the finials spring are made of are of a completely different kind of masonry (see fig. 3.28).

B. The Great Mosque of Cholula.

Islamic Elements

Legend has it that the Chapel of Cholula was a crypto-mosque, used by the Moriscos who practiced Islam in secret. The orientation towards Mecca helps support it. It would be fantastic if it was true, but no contemporary sources claim it.⁴⁸ In 1630, however, Jesuit Spanish priest and writer, Bernabé Cobo, sent a letter to a friend in Perú describing Cholula. He assured that this was the largest city he had ever seen in his life, and described the chapel, saying inaccurately that it had 8 naves, while recognizing that it was done “in the style of the Mosque of Cordoba.”⁴⁹

All the stages of the building contribute to its Islamic aspect: the plan and the elevation, more horizontal than vertical are the most obvious ones. Its façade, which can be compared to the front of the Mosque of Cordoba (fig. 3.29) - but that any of the large had in relation to their courtyard – is Islamic in inspiration. The barrel vaults had also been used before to cover some aisles of the mosque Cathedral of Cordoba, the wooden

⁴⁸ Taboada, “El moro en las Indias,” 121.

⁴⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 410. De Espinosa, *Descripción de la Nueva España*, 204; Moffitt, *The Islamic Module*, 153.

ceiling, artesonado or alfarje, was a Mudejar favorite, and it could have been similar to the Chapel of San José de los Naturales, which also had a wooden Mudejar ceiling. The front and rear wall of the chapel shows water sprouts that coincide with the 8 valleys of the parallel vaults that once covered the chapel, useless now because the level of the roof is lower than those original vaults. The Great Mosque of Cordoba has similar gutters at the ends of the parallel valleys of the pitched roofs (fig. 3.29).⁵⁰

We can imagine that, in addition to the direct influence of the Chapel of San José de los Naturales, the original architect, the people who could have been involved in the construction as well as, perhaps Luis de Arciniega, had seen other mosques in Spain, those mentioned earlier in Chart 1. John Moffitt, who briefly surveyed the material concerning the Open Chapels and other Mudejar examples, analyzed the plan of Cholula, and proposed that it was planned to use similar proportions as they were in the Cathedral Mosque in Cordoba, using rudimentary but well known geometry, but perhaps too basic to prove an actual relation⁵¹.

Of those examples, the hypostyle ex-Synagogue of Santa María la Blanca in Toledo resembles the Chapel of Cholula the most, not only because of the same perception of space, but because the columns are also octagonal and painted white (fig 3.32). Octagonal columns being a Mudejar trait too.⁵² In addition, the floor of Santa María la Blanca has a brick pattern with tiles (fig. 3.33) that can be found in the façades of some houses in

⁵⁰ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 405.

⁵¹ Moffitt, *The Islamic Module*, 156-7.

⁵² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 365; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 405, 409.

Puebla, just a mile and a half away from Cholula (fig. 3.34). This kind of decoration is typical of Puebla, and it is reasonable to think it has a Mudejar origin, Toussaint agrees, and it was also fostered by the success of the factories of ceramics experienced during the seventeenth century.⁵³ Even more surprising, the name given to the particularly good quality ceramics from Puebla is “Talavera”. The name comes from the city of Talavera de la Reina, a city close to Toledo which produced a very original and famous kind of ceramic of Islamic origins, and was further improved by artisans, such as Jan Floris, who introduced Italian techniques.⁵⁴ Originally just blue on white, the ceramics from Talavera de la Reina reached a beautiful polychromic variety. Many of these techniques managed to travel to the New World. The most widely accepted version of the story of this relation is that monks could have introduced the technique in Puebla by 1520; some of those could have been from Talavera, but the only proved case is Diego Gaytán, who was originally from Talavera, and who moved to Puebla in 1604, but that is too late in our chronology.

To further link the convent of San Gabriel with Toledo, Toussaint tells us that the main gate of the Church of San Gabriel (fig. 3.37) presents a combination that is common in that Spanish city. The lintel is made of stone blocks with a round relieving arch between two Gothic pinnacles, topped with an oculus or a Gothic rosette.⁵⁵ A good example of this combination is Santa María de la Asunción in Ocaña, Toledo, whose gate in plateresque style must date from the sixteenth century (fig. 3.35). Another example is the gate of the church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción (formerly a mosque), in El Cubillo de Uceda,

⁵³ Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, 41.

⁵⁴ Pleguezuelo, “Juan Flores,” 19.

⁵⁵ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 79; Toussaint, *Supervivencias góticas*, 55.

Guadalajara, barely one hundred kilometers from Toledo, but with additions from the sixteenth century, including the portal (fig. 3.36). I don't have any definite proof, but I propose that Cholula, although inspired by San José de los Naturales in plan and function, had also a Toledan inspiration. While, San José had very tall columns made of wood, wooden screens and a front with double arches, which can be linked to Islamic architecture indirectly, the aspect of the Chapel at Cholula is wider, the columns are not as tall, keeping a proportion with that of Santa María la Blanca, which I think is not only the closest, but the best related to our chapel.

All the evidence shows that the building was planned following the design of a mosque, and probably, given that nearly all the inhabitants of Puebla were Spanish, with so many Mudejar traits, it could be that some of them proposed or influenced the building, having Toledan buildings in their minds.

That on the side of Islamic influence, but what happened with the building in American territory? This time there was a notorious difference from San José; the mosque design does top a Nahua temple, one that was the center of a huge cult, was there any further syncretism?

C. The Cult of Quetzalcoatl

The large population of Cholula and its importance, being the center of the cult of Quetzalcoatl, which at the time could have been considered as important or even superior

to Tenochtitlan, were the chief reasons to choose the plan of a prestigious building. If San José de los Naturales was by 1547 the chief sight of Mexico City, and the largest Christian religious structure, Cholula deserved a comparable chapel. Another reason for the priests to build an impressive building could have been to compete and supplant the memories of the previous and grander cult of Quetzalcoatl.⁵⁶

The myth of Quetzalcoatl is not completely clear yet. Bernardino de Sahagún tells us that Quetzalcoatl, whether god or king, lived in Tula, where he was rich and powerful, living in palaces made of emerald, silver and feathers. In other tradition, he was playing the ball game with Tezcatlipoca, another god, when the latter simply became a tiger and pursued him from one town to the other until he made it to Cholula, where he lived for many years, although later he was expelled from there and sent to the coast, where he was burnt and died.⁵⁷ Although a legend, other sources stated similar effects, for example that the great Pyramid had been erected to commemorate a captain who brought the people to the city from a faraway land in the west. Quetzalcoatl has been interpreted both as a hero and a god, with thousands of different cultural manifestations, found in all Mesoamerica; a powerful mythical figure with the power to be reborn during every era with a different face. The word literally means feathered serpent, and it represents both heaven and earth and the victory of fertility over death. Over time the creative and destructive power of the gods, which were evidenced in the rainy and dry seasons, had to be appeased so that Quetzalcoatl could be victorious. This was obtained through religious

⁵⁶ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 402.

⁵⁷ Sahagún, *Historia de las cosas de nueva España*, II, 36; Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica*, I, 88; La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 14-5.

ceremonies executed by those who governed, endowed with especial powers, and represented in carved relieves many times with corn plants growing from their heads. During the classical Mayan period, fertility was the main purpose of the Feathered Serpent, but in later periods, in the times of the Toltecs and the Aztecs, his name became associated with military and political power.⁵⁸

In the Toltecs' city of Tula, during a period from 900-1160, Quetzalcoatl became associated with conquered territory, and regarded as a legendary hero that integrated the priestly and governing class. Under his command, supposedly, hunger was eradicated and arts flourished.⁵⁹ This could connect very well with both the fall of Tula and the story told by Mendieta. The cult of Quetzalcoatl in Cholula was extraordinary. "When Cortés arrived at the coast of Veracruz, Cholula was the second most important city in Mesoamérica." Tenochtitlan was larger and more important, but it was a lot younger than Cholula, and it was not founded by Quetzalcoatl himself, although they had their own foundational myth as we saw in Chapter 1. The early chroniclers all point at the numerous temples, four hundred, according to Cortés, only one hundred according to Bernal Diaz del Castillo. We are not certain of the number, but we know that these remarks fed the legend that in Cholula there were as many temples as days in the year.

The largest temple was dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, which was the most frequently visited, but the large Pyramid is dedicated to a water deity. If we consider that the Spanish custom was to build churches on top of temples, it makes sense to think that other

⁵⁸ Florescano, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*, 4-5, 45.

⁵⁹ Florescano, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*, 5.

Teocallis had chapels on top, probably made of the same stones of the pyramids. This means that the process of appropriation and replacement happened everywhere. That reinforces what Aldous Huxley, who visited Cholula, and wrote in 1934: “even today one can still see almost as many ‘towers of mosques.’ But the mosques are no longer mosques of Quetzalcoatl and Tonantzin and Huitzilopochtli. They are the mosques of St. Joseph and St. James, of St. Francis and St. Dominick, of the Holy Trinity and our Lady of Guadalupe. The Spaniards, it is evident, must have built a church, or at least a chapel, on the site of every pagan temple in Cholula. It was a sanitary precaution, a process of magical disinfection.”⁶⁰ And for the show, the church of Our lady of the Remedies, on top of the great Pyramid of Cholula (fig. 3.40).

According to chronicler Fray Diego Durán, two dates were celebrated with particular devotion in Cholula, which were 7 Cane and 1 Cane, marking the death and rebirth of the god. During these festivals, all the community celebrated its feathered patron⁶¹. Other text affirms that at the end of a cycle of fifty years, people came from all the towns to visit and pay tribute to the temple out of devotion.⁶² Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, Gabriel de Rojas, López de Gómara, and Bernal Diaz del Castillo all testify the existence of this large cult to Quetzalcoatl, they said that the most religious town in that region was Cholula, describing processions of “infinite” pilgrims. They saw, as the conquistadors, hundreds of temples, two hand-made hills, and 800 idols.⁶³ If this

⁶⁰ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 38, Huxley, *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, 296.

⁶¹ Florescano, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*, 58.

⁶² Florescano, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*, 45.

⁶³ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 20-22; del Castillo, *Verdadera historia de la conquista*, 291-2.

important temple was raided and replaced with the Franciscan convent, one would expect the locals to be very antagonistic towards the new building, and think that the process of evangelization would be very hard. From the very beginning the conquistadors pointed at their culture as evil and preached against it. Several times, Cortés talked to the priests of Cholula, as he did in other towns, demanding that they stopped human sacrifice, cannibalism, sodomy or any form of idolatry. Del Castillo tells with horror that five or six Indians were sacrificed every day, the priests offered the Indians' hearts to the idols, rubbing their blood on the wall, cutting their legs and arms and eating them as if they were cows at a butchery. The Aztec priests and governors replied that it was not good to leave their gods, because they brought them health and good harvest. During the visit of Cortés and the army to Cempoal, for example, the Spaniards ordered the Indians to stop the sacrifices, the *Caciques* replied negatively and the Spaniards attacked one of the pyramids. After beating 50 Aztec soldiers, they Spaniards threw the idols down the steps of the pyramid, which left the *Caciques* and natives crying, on their knees, surrendering to the new religion. This was, no doubt, a common practice.⁶⁴

The mendicant friars were not as violent and impulsive as Cortés and his army. As we saw, they tried to make a conversion that was more humane, that understood the native culture and that made Christianity more familiar. We can imagine that the same processes that occurred in San José in Mexico City happened in Cholula. Fray Blas mentioned that in the convent of San Gabriel, the friars used to translate sermons and dictionaries into the local language and into "Nexcuitiles" which, he says, people do not

⁶⁴ Del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista*, 188-190, 280.

remember anymore. During the Sundays of Lent, these Nexcuitiles were represented by Indian singers, to encourage repentance or provoke devotion in the Indians. This Nexcuitiles and representations were important, remarks Fray Blas, because “the Indians learn only from examples, especially from representations. The Indians, were brought here by force to the doctrine and the mass, in particular the Cholultecas, who are less stable than others, and prouder than most, so that the works and difficulties the friars faced in setting the Gospel here are remarkable.”⁶⁵

As it was in San José de los Naturales, the chapel was built by Indians, and the walls were made in the same technique as the pyramids were (fig. 3.30, 3.31). The atrium maintains the pre-Hispanic pavement of the temple of Quetzalcoatl, although recent efforts have been made to change it.⁶⁶ Is there any further link between the chapel and its atrium with the pre-Hispanic past or the period of conversion?

In a publication of the parish of San Gabriel of Cholula, there is an awkward interpretation of the chapel. It says that its plan wasn't based on a mosque, but on the Nahua Calendar. The chapel has 49 domes, but during processions only 48 of those are used, because the large one with the drum has the chancel. The multiplication of the 48 stages by the 13 Aztec heavens is equal to the sum of the two calendars used in pre-Hispanic Cholula, one of 260 days, and one of 364. The publication of the parish has no sources, and it is not taking in consideration that the domes were added and finished almost two hundred years after the initial construction. It then says that the 9 naves

⁶⁵ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 144.

⁶⁶ La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 7; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 405.

represent the levels between heaven and earth, and the seven aisles deep represent Chicomecóatl, 7 *Serpent*, Mother Earth. This interpretation is far-fetched and clumsy; it ignores the existence of a previous building with the same characteristics in San José de los Naturales, it is not based on actual scholarship and it is the myth that the locals tell tourists, ignoring also the mosque-like characteristics of the chapel. The only credit we can give it is that it is part of their collective memory, and that it appeals to their pre-Columbian identity.

Calendars are, however, very important until today in the region of Cholula, and they are linked in a different way to the Royal Chapel. Calendars in this region are not necessarily exact, and that further complicates attempts to trace the historic origin. These religious calendars have the characteristics of a ritual, they put people together, allow them to communicate with the divine and are repeated every year, in cycles. Most of the rituals of the calendar are related to catholic religious celebrations, like Easter or Christmas, but they also have a rural component, many of the linked to the Mesoamerican cycle of corn.⁶⁷

Every fourth Monday of Lent, the Royal Chapel hosts an event called the *Tlahuanca*, or Mass for Drunkards, *Misa de borrachitos*. People gather inside the chapel to pray for the ancestors, and then drink pulque, a traditional alcoholic beverage made of agave (fig. 3.40). They do this to foster fertility and to call for the rain. There are processions inside the chapel and the atrium. The host gives crosses to the guests with large candles and

⁶⁷ Sánchez, "Significación del Espacio," 221-2.

treats everybody to a meal. Few studies have given any documented origin to the tradition. Unofficial sources say that this was a syncretic practice created by the Franciscans to assemble pre-Columbian rites associated with the pulque, which during the celebration is placed in a huge wooden vessel, with a capacity for 300 liters. Archeological evidence, however, has confirmed that the veneration of the gods of pulque took place in Cholula. Ritual burials from the postclassic period included paintings of the gods of Pulque. A famous mural painting found close to the pyramid shows a scene in which men and women communicate between the human and the divine through drinking pulque (fig. 3.41). Finally, Paul Kirchhoff, founder of the National School of Anthropology and History in Mexico, found that the dates of both the gods of Pulque and the rain coincided, and some scholars, like Ashwell, think that there is a clear relation between Pulque and rain, adding that Cholula was always known to be a city where rain and water were worshiped. Thus, to drink pulque is associated with fertility.⁶⁸

The Tlahuanca is related to the next festivity celebrated in the Royal Chapel, the Altepeilhuitl, celebrated on the Sunday before the day of the ascension of Christ, and it is done, according to Sánchez, in honor of The Virgin of Guadalupe. They decorate the images of the Saints and the angels with picturesque arrays of vegetables and fruits to propitiate a good harvest and carry them in a procession around the atrium of the Chapel (fig 3.42, 3.43).⁶⁹ There is a mention to this festivity in an early document by Fray

⁶⁸ Sánchez, "Significación del Espacio," 226; Ashwell, "Cholula," 6; Rodríguez, "El mural de los bebedores," 32-37; Los Paraísos Tropicales. Blog. <https://dsomellera.wordpress.com/la-tlahuanca/> on the Tlahuanca of 2014. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PSxPUTp23M>.

⁶⁹ Sánchez, "Significación del Espacio," 226.

Bernardino de Sahagún, according to him, the people of the town would make statues of the “hills” in the shape of children using amaranth leaves, rubber and sticks. Every statue had two faces, one of a man, and one a snake. During the night, they would take some sort of hay hoops to the river, accompanied by an orchestra of clay whistles and seashell flutes. Next day they would put the images, somehow arranged with the hoops, in altars in their oratories, and offer them food: tamales, chicken or dog soup. Rich people would sing and drink pulque, poor people would only offer food. Sahagún describes the names of the hill-spirits, and tells us that they were adorned with crowns made of paper, or a similar material. During one of these celebrations two women and one man were sacrificed on top of one of the temples, they were taken there carried on litters while others played music in a procession. After they were sacrificed, the bodies were taken to the neighborhoods they came from, and some days later they were eaten by the neighbors.⁷⁰

The images of those “hills” resemble very well the images of the saints used today. It’s easy to see why people say that this celebration was related to the fertility of the land, so that today the offerings to the gods became offerings to the saints. Natives of Cholula called a Madonna, Tonantzin. Were they worshipping the Aztec mother goddess with a new statue?⁷¹

An interesting consideration is that, the way the celebration is done today, the images must have corn on their sides. The Quetzalcoatl that the Cholultecas worshiped

⁷⁰ Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas*, 185-7.

⁷¹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 53.

was a syncretic deity, he was the god of the wind, associated with corn and fertility. From the writings of Sahagún and the discoveries of the hills and gods of water and pulque, we don't know if any of these rites were related directly to the cult of Quetzalcoatl, but they are the closest.⁷² Verónica del Rocío, asked the people in the celebrations about the origin and meaning of what they were doing, but they could only articulate that they "do them because they are traditions". She also notes that the dates change, even though the calendar used in Cholula is the Gregorian, sometimes they move the day of the feast to the next Sunday so that their children, who now live in Mexico City or in other towns, can go.⁷³ We don't have a good documentation of the festivities and their evolution, linking the structure to its past, and to the arrangements done by the priests to accommodate for these celebrations to be part of the Christian tradition. Could these two celebrations be the ancient celebrations of 7 Cane and 1 Cane, described by Fray Diego Durán, marking the death and rebirth of the Quetzalcoatl? Both celebrations, however, still happen in the Royal Chapel of Cholula, and even if the cult of Quetzalcoatl has been terribly modified perhaps into the Altepeilhuitl, or has been erased completely, the symbolism that was once at the center of this ancient cult still ties a community together. Just as in the case of San José de los Naturales, the Royal Chapel of Cholula recalls for the pre-Hispanic past, and works as a repository of a communal memory. Its use was not to erase their past and replace it completely with a European cult, but to modify their memory: it invited the

⁷² Florescano, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*, 43.

⁷³ Sánchez, "Significación del Espacio," 224.

locals to remind their roots, but linking them with Christianity, although, without many of them knowing, inside a mosque.

Even though these rituals, still happening every year, take place in the Royal Chapel, we can't yet link the

memory of the building with them, but they are, at least, a vivid reminder of their past, connected to this one building.

Chapter 4

Other Mosque-Type Chapels.

A. San Pedro and San Pablo of Jilotepec

Jilotepec, located today in the State of Mexico (fig. 1.2), and barely a hundred kilometers from Mexico City, was an *Otomí* frontier post with the *Chichimeca* territory. The Otomies were of a different ethnicity and spoke a different language, they were considered, by the Visitador Obando, less civilized than the Mexicas, but were tributary to them. 'Chichimeca' was a term used by early chroniclers, both Spanish and natives, to refer to the, less refined, nomad immigrants from the north. The term 'Chichimeca' did not refer to their ethnic origin or language, because they spoke Nahuatl, but to the European perception of the "savage" as contrasted by "civilized," which in this case was identified with the Aztecs. The Chichimecas were compared, and this is not new, to Arabs. In a manuscript by Gonzalo de las Casas, the comparison refers to their nomadic lifestyle,

saying that they are like animals, hunting together.¹ Cervantes de Salazar also compared them to Arabs, as did Obando, and considered that the Spanish had been sent by God, especially the friars and priests, to show them and enlighten them on their erroneous ways.²

Jilotepec was Christianized early. The ruler was a tributary of Moctezuma, and became an ardent Christian who expanded and played a key role in the Christianization of some Chichimecas in that area. The conversion of the Indians only started after 1529, when two Franciscan friars, Fray Alonso Rangel and Fray Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo, were appointed to that town.³ Rangel learned Otomi and Nahuatl; Mendieta narrated that Rangel preached in both Jilotepec and Tula, that he baptized the Indians and destroyed all the idols from the pagan altars. Rangel almost got killed twice because of this.⁴

Unfortunately, the sources about the Franciscan convent in Jilotepec are scarce, there is essentially no information about the convent between 1536 to 1549, but it would be arguable that there was at least a poor foundation in which the friars could sleep, and even a small church where they could preach to the natives.

The Franciscan convent used to have a mosque-type chapel, although today only traces remain. The most probable reason for the erection of this building must be, as in the previous cases, related to the large population. It was a smaller city, a lot smaller and

¹ Santamarina, "Salvajes y Chichimecas," 42-3. The manuscript by Gonzalo de las Casas is called *Tratado de los chichimecas de Nueva España*, it lies in the Library of El Escorial, I did not consult this material; Zaragoza, *Códice Franciscano*, 18.

² Santamarina, "Salvajes y Chichimecas," 44; Cervantes, *Crónica*, I, 128.

³ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 567; Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana*, III, 485.

⁴ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica*, IV, 112; Salas, *Fundación franciscana*, 78.

poorer than Cholula. Jilotepec was of such substantial poverty that the tribute was reduced in 1553, but it was populous enough to send 600 settlers to a new mine north in Zacatecas in 1560, while Tlaxcala had disobeyed the order to do so arguing that they did not have enough people to spare. In 1574, two years before the plague, a report tells that the town had 35,000 people, although unclear if only men. The next report, from 1576 says that Jilotepec was at the hub of a 30-mile round farmland with 25,000 people with only two priests. Thus, a large church was evidently in need.⁵

Marcela Salas has determined that there were at least three phases in the construction of the convent: the first one must have been in the period of Rangel, from 1259 to 1537, when he was appointed in Tula, and where he also helped build the convent. There are no records of any building during this period, but it is natural to think that there were at least a couple of buildings inside the convent that should have been built before he left for Tula. The second stage of construction must have happened during the late 1560's. The best evidence for this is the comment of the Cacique of Jilotepec, who in 1576 bought a monstrance, the luxurious repository of the eucharists, mentioning that he was very tired of the construction of the chapel of the town and the church.⁶ The third stage of construction would be 1580s, when according to the Codex of Jilotepec, the conventual church was finished, specifically in 1585.⁷

⁵ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 411-2.

⁶ Salas, "Fundación franciscana," 78.

⁷ Salas, "Fundación franciscana," 82; *Códice de Jilotepec*, 33.

Fray Antonio de la Ciudad Real, who accompanied Father Ponce in his travels across every Franciscan convent from Mexico to Nicaragua from 1584 to 1589, wrote one of the few descriptions:

Xilotepec... has vocation for San Pedro... and there is a town with the same name with a large population of Otomi people... the convent is finished, with its cloister, church, dorms and garden... next to the convent there is a large and sumptuous *ramada* (thatched shed), where the Indians are put together, and where they are preached and given the mass.⁸

This *ramada* or thatched roof, stood north in the convent and north from the church, just as in the layout of the Franciscan convents in Cholula and Mexico City (Fig. 4.1, 3.5, 2.19). All of them retain many similarities: the layout of the convent, the atrium and the chapel are in the same place. The atrium is larger in front of the chapel, giving it more importance than the church. Enough arches and beams are standing to think that the chapel used to be seven naves long and five deep, covered with a wooden roof, carried on slender columns as it was in San José de los Naturales, in Mexico City. The northeastern tower fully survives, just like the eastern stone wall and the foundations of the western façade, showing that this mosque-type chapel was smaller than its predecessors (45m by 27m). The main nave was slightly larger than the rest, with a height of 7 m and width of 6m. The building has been severed and rearranged in a way that only some fragments are in use. Some of the columns are still standing and only a part of the hallway integrates the sacristy, while the main nave is the main courtyard of the public

⁸ Bobadilla, "Presencia de la arquitectura mudéjar," 41-2; Ciudad Real, *Tratado curioso y docto*, 137.

school. Although smaller, this was still one of the biggest buildings during the sixteenth century.⁹

Since there are no visible foundations for heavy vaulting, it is thought that the chapel was covered with wood, which makes it plausible to deduce that it was also based on San José de los Naturales. It may have been similar, among other reasons, because the encomenderos of that region were closely related to the Franciscan friars from the capital. Cortés gave this town as a gift to Juan Jaramillo when he married Doña Marina; she was the translator that accompanied Cortés from the Gulf coast and played an important role during the conquest. When Jaramillo died, in 1550, the town was inherited, not by their daughter, but by Jaramillo's daughter from a second wife. She was an important patron of the Franciscans, using the money from her inheritance for this purpose. Her disproportionate share of the inheritance, compared to the corresponding part of her half-sister, daughter of Doña Marina and Jaramillo, became the source of a dispute, which was only settled in favor of the former in 1552. McAndrew uses this date to argue that only after her title as heiress was secured that she could sponsor construction in Jilotepec, but other documents cited by Salas say that the inheritance went to her only after 1555.¹⁰ This helps set a terminus post quem, and coincides with the range that could be established after San José acquired its hypostyle plan, in 1547. McAndrew also proposed a candidate for the designer of the chapel. Fray Diego de Valadés, a disciple of Fray Pedro de Gante and probably a teacher at the school, was active in Jilotepec between 1560's and

⁹ Bobadilla, "Presencia de la arquitectura mudéjar," 42; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 413; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 568.

¹⁰ Salas, "Fundación franciscana," 74; Gerhard, *Geografía*, 392,93.

1571 through his mission of evangelizing Chichimecas. Being familiar with the chapel of San José, he could have suggested its design. Salas however argued that this is impossible since Valadés was travelling to Europe at that time. Once again, we can't be certain of the architect's identity.¹¹

There is a drawing of the chapel from a sixteenth-century manuscript, the Codex of Jilotepec, showing the façade of the building next to a Franciscan friar and a man that could possibly be the encomendero or the mayor of the city (fig. 4.4). If we agree on the inspiration from San José, and it was probably the case, we should consider that the façade was also imitating it, which corroborates my opinion and de la Maza's on the arcaded front made of stone, as proposed on fig. 2.7, which was also the case of Cholula. With this, we can already discard the theory of the apadana design of San José.

The report of Obando in the 1570's made it evident that the guardian priest of Jilotepec took the confessions of both Indians and Spaniards, and that he spoke both Nahuatl and Otomí.¹² This also corroborated the general feeling of the Franciscans, learning the local language, and probably assembling locals in theatre plays and festivals in the atrium, recalling their native culture in the process, instead of destroying it.

¹¹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 412; Salas, *Fundación franciscana*, 84.

¹² Codex Franciscano, 19.

B. Etzatlán

The Franciscan convent of La Purísima Concepción.

Conflicts with the Chichimecas escalated very quickly. In 1529, Nuño de Guzman had set foot with an army of Spaniards, Mexicas and Tlaxcaltecas, towards the northwest. The six-year campaign was bloodier and crueler than all the previous ones. Guzman's policy was to terrorize the Indians with often unprovoked killings and enslavement. Later, in 1539, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado prepared a large expedition in search of the mythical Seven cities of Cibola. There was already a predisposition for apostasy and rebellion that finally exploded in 1540 with the murder of an encomendero, and the violent assault of friars in Xalpa, Tlaltenango and Juchipila. The result was the war of Mixtón between nomad Chichimecas, allied with the local community of the Caxcanes, and the Spaniards. The Indians incorporated guerrilla strategies, attacking isolated Spanish villages, killing all the inhabitants and burning down the buildings. The war had an anti-Christian connotation. Friars were killed; churches, monasteries and crosses were burnt. The Indians advanced as far as Guadalajara, which was some kilometers away from Etzatlán (fig.1.2). Guadalajara was besieged until the troops of Cristobal Oñate dispelled the Indians. The rebellions were threatening enough for the Viceroy Mendoza to head a full military expedition to the region, which ended in victory in 1542.¹³ The Indians, however, were still rebellious and several attacks happened after the pacification. They

¹³ Graziano, *The millennial New World*, 110-11.

were pacified only after 1552, when many of them were already attending mass at the convents.¹⁴

Etzatlán was a border town with the Chichimeca territory; it was sheltered by a valley and close to the area of conflict. The person destined for the Franciscan foundation in Etzatlán was Fray Francisco Lorenzo, who preached in the towns of that area, together with Brother Juan Francisco, a disciple of Fray Pedro de Gante. The later was founded by Nuño de Guzman in a nearby town, Ahuacatlán (in 1527) where he was preaching to the natives before the war.¹⁵ This shows that there was a religious presence in the area before the advance of the armies. The convent, however, wasn't founded until 1534, and apparently built later, of masonry and carved stone, "the way it stands today (1650)" by the initiative of Fray Antonio de Cuellar, a Friar from Salamanca, who was pivotal for the evangelization of the area of Etzatlán. It was one of the "well-made temples of New Spain," strong enough "to be used as a fortress." The Indians from the hills used to attack the provinces around, and since there were no other convents after Etzatlán, it became the area of concentration for both armies and friars, where they could take shelter.¹⁶

Tello explained that the works of the convent-fortress had begun in the times of the captain Don Antonio de las Casas and were finished in times of Don Diego de Zúñiga. Captain Diego Vásquez de Buendía was also an important contributor to the construction. McAndrew agreed with some authors from the seventeenth century who think that the

¹⁴ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 414.

¹⁵ Tello, *Crónica Miscelánea*, II, 224; Beaumont, *Crónica de Michoacán*, 283-4.

¹⁶ Tello, *Crónica Miscelánea*, II, 309.

construction should have started in 1540. The fact that two friars, martyred by the Chichimecas were buried under the chancel of the church in 1541 suggests that, at least, there had to be something solid by that date, but the convent was probably not finished until 1550.¹⁷ All the chroniclers describe a building that was strong and fortified, illustrious and famous. Tello mentioned that “there was information among the natives that a lay brother, whose name they do not remember... was sent to the convent of Etzatlán, because he was a great architect.”¹⁸

The church and convent as they stand today do not match those grandiose descriptions. McAndrew observed that the walls of the conventual church, although strong, are far from fortified. We do not find the usual crenellations, as we do in really fortified buildings, such as for example the church of San Gabriel in Cholula, Actopán or Atlatlahuca. Few real forts were built in inland America during the Spanish Colony, but in Mexico the custom of building a fortified temple in the middle of the city, instead of fortifying the periphery of the town, was widespread. Occasionally, temples could be used as fortified shelters from which it was possible to hold the defense from a rebellious siege of the same town or foreign intruders.¹⁹ A similar artifact was needed in Etzatlán, but it is hardly the church that survives. Instead McAndrew believed that these compliments were not directed to the church, but to the Open Chapel, a building that had to be big, and impressive.

¹⁷ Ibid, 309.

¹⁸ Ibid, 116.

¹⁹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 144.

We have a huge limitation with this chapel: nobody described the chapel, there are no chronicles, no letters, nor any other accounts. The only information that suggests this possible mosque-type chapel comes from McAndrew, who in 1945 visited Etzatlán, and described a building opposite to the church, in the west side of the plaza, (which used to be the atrium of the Franciscan convent). He says that at that time there was an array of 18 columns that were used in a church of the eighteenth century dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, still standing (fig. 4.6). It has a plaque bearing the date of 1793. McAndrew heard that there was a hospital for Indians before the church was erected on the same spot, and rumor has it that before the conquest it was the site of a pyramid dedicated to the moon, while the conventual Church was the site of the Sun pyramid, and as we saw, building churches on top of pyramids corresponds to the contemporary practice of the Spaniards.²⁰ I have not found, however, any records to support that mention. The building was more altered than that of Jilotepec, but more material survived. With some imagination and a paleontological eye, it is possible to identify the remains of a hypostyle hall, five or seven naves long and five deep, similar to the one in Jilotepec, and smaller than San José or Cholula. From the outside, there is no evidence of this arrangement, but a picture from google maps shows the small temple opposite to the conventual church, and, again, with some imagination, one can see that the interior of the chapel has a plan that extends horizontally, more than what it would be natural, and then ends with a one nave extension (fig. 4.7).

²⁰ On the website of the government of Jalisco, <http://app.jalisco.gob.mx/InfoTurismo.nsf/9f140a2cf3aeb36d062571ed007751dd/adac7bd91daddf5106257274006480e7?OpenDocument&Highlight=0,GUADALUPE,ETZATLAN> Consulted on 20/04/2017.

Other arguments in favor of this are that, first, The population, between 17 or 18 thousand Indians, and the few friars that administered it, should have needed a chapel for Indians. Second, the population of Etzatlán consisted of both Spaniards and Indians, which would require proper accommodation for both. And third, there are no other open chapels in this town.

If this chapel was a large building, fortified and designed in a hypostyle plan, the presence of the friar Andrés de Cordoba in Etzatlán, is very intriguing. Agustín de Vetancurt regarded him as a builder of churches, though we don't know which ones are his work. We mentioned him before and reviewed his connections with Juan de Guadalupe in Granada, his origins, making him familiar with the great mosque of Cordoba. Was he the constructor or designer of both San José and Etzatlán? Vetancurt narrates that Fray Andrés de Cordoba was killed by Chichimecas in 1567 close to Etzatlán, and his bones are in the main Chapel of that city, using the word *Capilla*, which could refer to the mosque-type chapel.²¹ The connection is interesting but we do not know for how long he was in Etzatlán before being killed. If a hypostyle chapel was built there, it should have happened after 1547, when San José was established and it could be taken as an example, however it couldn't have been built during the war in 1541-2. The presence of Fray Andres de Córdoba fits the chronology, especially when the most likely date for the chapel of Cholula is around 1557.

²¹ Vetancurt, *Teatro Mexicano*, IV, (Menologio), 23.

The reflections of McAndrew are consistent with the possibilities of the sixteenth century, even when it's the only mosque-type chapel truly distant from Mexico City and its area of influence. The evidence, however, is too scarce, and the existence of a chapel of this sort must be proved excavating in the area, and using the latest archeological techniques. For now we can only consider it an interesting possibility.

C. Toluca.

Toluca, 64 kilometers away from Mexico City (fig 1.1), apparently had a mosque-type chapel too. The convent was almost destroyed in 1874 during the War of the Reform, when it was attacked by a mob, although it is feasible to identify its plan and its resemblance to San José through documents.²²

The first contact between the friars and the locals of Toluca arguably happened very early, around 1525.²³ We also know that the resources, materials and the land for the construction of the first constructions came from the converted cacique Juan Fernando Cortés Coyotzín, who demolished his palaces to donate the construction materials to the friars. Mendieta, who lived in the Franciscan convent in Toluca, explained that Coyotzín was also the first Christian of that tribe, and his name suggests that Hernán Cortés was his godfather.²⁴ A document from 1533 stated that a cacique, called Cortés, and other Indians

²² McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 416.

²³ Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 31; Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica*, III, 216, 248.

²⁴ Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 31, 37; Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica*, IV, 429; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 417. The document that gives the information on the resources is a letter signed by Fay Alonso de Hita, 1688, from a private archive, reproduced in full in: Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 36.

with Christian names, owned some lands in Toluca. It also mentioned that there were some difficulties in finishing the "holy temples" that were being built.²⁵ From this we can infer that at least by the last years of the 1520s, there had been an important Franciscan presence, but also there must have been some pre-Hispanic temple desecration, and construction of provisional buildings for the friars.²⁶

There was one serious limitation in the conversion of that area: The language. The first friar to dominate the complicated Matlatzinca was Andrés de Castro. He arrived in New Spain in 1541 and died in Toluca in 1577. We do not have a more precise notice of its foundation, and evidence that in 1569 three friars were working to evangelize 5000 Indians from 30 or more villages.²⁷ Father Ponce visited the town in 1585, and said that the convent was well built and finished with a cloister of two floors, church, dormitories, and orchard. The convent offered studies in theology, which hosted many students, and four resident friars.²⁸

There was an arcade embedded in the wall, accompanied by an inscription in Spanish and Nahuatl, which associated the arcade with an earlier building, built between 1552 to 1578. The church surely stood next to that arcade which was probably the façade of the open chapel.²⁹ A document from 1770 stated that the first mass in the new church

²⁵ Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 32; Archivo General, ítem. 2742, Ramo tierras. I did not have access to this document.

²⁶ Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 33

²⁷ Códice Franciscano, 221.

²⁸ Ponce, *Relación breve*, 31; Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 590.

²⁹ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 417.

happened in 1575,³⁰ which means that mass was conducted before the buildings were completely finished.

It is possible, however, that the construction started years earlier. There is a letter, written to the King and signed by Fray Francisco de Guzman in the convent of San Francisco of Toluca, on May 10, 1551, so that the convent had to have existed already for that time.³¹ The declaration of 1644 that relates the cacique Coyotzín with the materials and construction of the monastery also says that columns which supported both stories of the cloister of the monastery came from the palace that was demolished, so did the pavement that covered the lower part of the cloister and the *de profundis* room. In return, the Franciscans honored their patron by giving him a special area of the “temple” so that he and his family could listen to the mass, and gave them a prominent area in the church to be buried. The friars did not start the mass without him, and he was accompanied by a troupe of men who played the trumpets to announce his passing by the streets of Toluca.³² Salinas, who has studied Toluca thoroughly, proposes that the convent probably used material from the pyramid that once stood in a nearby hill.

The plot used by the Franciscans occupied the center of the city, contains elements that are similar to all the other Franciscan convents; an atrium, the Church of San Francisco, the mosque-type chapel of “San José” and the convent with its cloister. The

³⁰ Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 39 (Razón clara y distinto de lo perteneciente a esta parroquia de San José de Toluca, para que en todo le conste en su santa visita al Ilmo. Sr. Dr. Francisco Antonio Lorenzana, por la gracia de Dios y de la Santa Sede Apostólica, Arzobispo de México. This document is in the archive of don Federico Gómez de Orozco).

³¹ Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 35; Cuevas, *Documentos para la historia*, 167.

³² Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 38; see note 205.

chapel of the Third Order was added later, as in Cholula. Everything was surrounded by a stone wall and with not one, but three crosses in the middle of the atrium (fig 4.8). In the case of Toluca, we also know that there were stables and an orchard, and that the atrium and the back of the church were used as cemeteries.³³

Salinas had the opportunity to talk to people who had seen the chapel before it was destroyed and desecrated. According to them, the chapel of San José of Toluca was a portico of five arches, the central one taller than the rest, and inside there were other two parallel lines of arches, which gives us a 5X3 hypostyle building, with the peculiar feature of being the only mosque-type chapel with arcades that run parallel to the chancel wall. On that wall, there was an altar dedicated to Saint Francis, and many large paintings that were damaged when the chapel was transformed into a barrack during the war of the Reform. As in the other cases, this chapel was reserved for the Indians, and during Sundays, children and adults attended the catechism in one of its corners.³⁴

A lithograph from the nineteenth century shows the arcade next to it. A model of the building was recently made by a young architecture firm, for the ex-Franciscan convent, and the result shows the integration of the convent with the open chapel, where Indians celebrated mass, weddings and baptisms for over 300 years (fig 4.10).³⁵ This was the smallest reproduction of San José de los Naturales, and a version that also challenges our understanding of the mosque-type chapels because it is smaller than the conventual

³³ Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 44-5.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 48.

³⁵ In Habitat Lux, <http://habitatlux.com/project/maqueta-del-ex-convento-franciscano-de-nuestra-senora-de-la-asuncion-toluca-mexico/> seen on 26/04/2017, they based their model on Salinas, *Iglesia y convento*, 26-65.

church, and maybe in this case, only a small percentage of the Indians could be under cover, and most would be listening to the services from the atrium.

As in the preceding cases, there were numerous decorative objects of great value, namely curtains, a silver lamp, carpets, monstrance and paintings. The appropriation of the space as eminently indigenous, seems to have been the case, not only of the chapel, but also the church and the rest of the convent. The continuation of the cult and the royal attributes are not unique. The Chapel of San José in Mexico City was also on top of a building associated with royalty, and it shows that in the conversion, Spaniards were as important as local leaders.

D. The role of Mosque-type chapels in open-air chapels

So far, we have reviewed all the mosque-type chapels that we know of. They all had some elements in common:

1. An open façade with an arcade.
2. 5 or more naves long.
3. 3 or more aisles deep.
4. A larger or somewhat emphasized main nave.
5. Built in front of the atrium of the convent.
6. Belonged to a Franciscan complex.
7. Built for large Indian congregations.

8. Built between 1547 – 1580's.

Most of the scholars have linked all the mosque-type chapels to an original first chapel in the convent of San Francisco, in Mexico City. These connections can be drawn: all the Franciscans were briefed at the Franciscan convent in Mexico City, many of them knew or were disciples of Fray Pedro de Gante, and probably spent some time in the open chapel of San José de los Naturales. Ultimately, there is no evidence of that connection; we don't have letters explicitly mentioning that any chapel was made to imitate San José, but given the dates and the importance of that first foundation, and that San José is the earliest example, and that it also presents for the first time all the elements that would become prominent in conventual architecture, like the shrines, the atrium and the cross, and finally, that some of them were also called "San José," is enough evidence for this.

Portico chapels

Were there any further modifications of the mosque plan in American soil? Or did it simply die off as an unsuccessful experiment? I think there is enough evidence to suggest that the open-air chapels are a variation of the mosque plan. Let us note, first, that the open-air chapels are contemporary with the mosque-type chapels. The first reconstruction in a larger scale of San José de los Naturales is from 1538. The open chapel of Tlaxcala is arguably from 1539-41,³⁶ and the open chapels in all its diverse forms blossomed during the second half of the sixteenth century until the decade of 1580s, just like the mosque-type chapels.

³⁶ Motolinía, *Historia*, 81; Kubler, *Arquitectura Mexicana*, 589; McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 436-7.

While the open-air chapel of Tlaxcala looks like a half hexagonal portico with an apse and two columns (fig. 1.38), other buildings that could be based on this model became similar to simple porticoes with an apse. Such is the case of Atlahuetzía (1538-44) (fig. 4.12) with a vault which, because of its similarity, must have been built by the same team that did the chapel of Tlaxcala. The open chapel of Tepeyanco de las Flores (1543) (fig. 4.13) is a portico of four arches with gutters like in Cordoba, and Cholula.³⁷ It is very tempting to link this kind of chapel to the hypostyle chapels, especially those with more than three arches long; after all they occupy the same space in front of the atrium, have the same function, and it only takes some imagination to extend the 5 to 7 arcades long by one bay deep into three or more bays deep, resulting in a mosque-type chapel. One building that closely resembles the open chapel of Toluca is the open chapel of the convent in Zinacantepec, with five arches leading to a chancel, and only one bay deep. The exterior profile of the arches is the exact same of Toluca with a larger central arch (compare fig 4.11 and 4.14), as if it was pointing at a larger nave, the way it is in Cholula, projecting an imaginary aisle, and giving prominence to the altar. The same happened in the open chapels of Calimaya (fig. 4.15), Otumba (Fig. 4.16), all with a polygonal chancel in the center of the back wall and the same gutters on the front.³⁸ A larger example is the open chapel at the convent of Tlalnepantla de Baz (fig. 4.17), which looks simply like an arcade of a gateway, but was used as a chapel before the back part was occupied by the convent. Just like San José and Jilotepec, this chapel has 7 arcades, although all of them of

³⁷ McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 426-7.

³⁸ In Calimaya the entrance to the monastery was on one of the sides of the chancel niche. The niche was replaced with a door. The arrangement is not symmetric, but it still highlights the chancel. McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 574.

the same size and only one aisle deep. The originality of these constructions saw its peak in 1560 with the creative and innovative open chapel of Tlalmanalco,³⁹ which was an independent construction from the convent and conventual church. It's a portico with a trapezoidal plan and a square apse, open through a line of five arches of rich Plateresque style, which do not support any ceiling.⁴⁰ This construction is very original: an abstraction of the mosque-type if it was, with an apse/mihrab that in the old photographs looks like an iwan with a pishtaq and rosettes on the spandrels (fig. 4.18), another impossible connection with Persian architecture. This construction was apparently never finished, or that could have been the wrong interpretation that took the restorers to complete the level of the chapel (fig 4.19) with the "pishtaq." This fantastic chapel is full of indigenous carvings representing dozens of skulls and bones, one of the most interesting representations of death in Colonial Mexico, which Curiel Mendez associated with "death dances" from pre-Hispanic representations (fig. 4.20).⁴¹

These examples have a niche in the middle corresponding with the apse of the chapel; we are used to see apses in churches that are integrated with the main nave, but here they are niches in the middle of a wall, resembling mihrabs more than apses. The idea of a single-niche-chapel standing in front of the Atrium was also popular, and they make for the second category of open-air chapels. They might not derive from the mosque-type chapels, with no arcades, but they could also have an Islamic origin.

³⁹ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 401.

⁴⁰ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 397. 403-4.

⁴¹ Wrigley, *La muerte disfrazada*, 10.

Single cell chapels.

Speaking of impossible Persian connections, one of the largest single cell chapels is indeed a real iwan. The open-air chapel at the convent of San Nicolas de Tolentino (in Actopan, 80 kilometers away from Jilotepec), is a 17-meter high barrel vault chamber with three walls and facing the atrium (fig. 4.21).⁴² This apse/chancel/iwan is covered with paintings that imitate architectural elements and some scenes from the bible. This is one in many examples of single cell chapels that were used in New Spain during the same period. There are many shapes; some are monumental, like the previously mentioned, while others are humbler, such as the Open chapel of Tepeji del Río, or the open chapel at Epazoyucan (fig. 4.22, 4.23), annexed to the conventual church, and topped with crenellations that contribute to its Islamic character. I do not intend to describe these chapels in detail, but I do want to discuss the possible buildings in Spain that could have inspired them.

Many scholars have, inconclusively, argued about the origin of the open chapels. While Kubler and McAndrew would point at San José de los Naturales as a primary source, others, like Alfredo Morales, argue that the origin is necessarily Spanish, and he insisted that it must be this way because there are a few possible open chapels in Perú.⁴³ Morales presents three examples of open chapels in Spain to be the predecessors of the American open chapels. The first one is a building that was only planned, but not executed. It was a project that Fray Juan Navarro, the guardian of the convent Casa Grande of San Francisco,

⁴² Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 402.

⁴³ De Mesa, "La exteriorización del culto" 973.

presented to the municipality of Seville. The text in which the mention appears, and was published by López Martínez,⁴⁴ suggested to the mayor that if a door at the convent, in front of the central square was kept clean of transit, it was possible to make an altar with a fence and serve the mass, and that the mayor would be able to attend mass from the square before entering the municipality.⁴⁵ Morales deduced the date of the letter to be from around 1570, which coincides with the general dispositions of Viceroy Toledo in the viceroyalty of Perú, which allowed them to build some open-air churches there. It would sound a coincidence that it was also the guardian of a Franciscan convent who proposed this, but the late date would only tell us that an open-air chapel might have been a possibility in the mind of contemporary Spanish friars.

The link with the Franciscans is also interesting because another such convent in Valladolid, facing the central square too, had an open chapel in a second floor. It doesn't exist, due to the laws of secularization during the nineteenth century, but it can be seen in a drawing from the seventeenth century from the illustrated *Historia de Valladolid*, by Juan Antolínez de Burgos (Fig. 4.24). The drawing, nonetheless, shows a building that replaced a previous one, and was built new in 1561, after the catastrophic fire that destroyed the main square of Valladolid.⁴⁶ This "open chapel" is just an interpretation of the drawing. The apparition of a Franciscan friar on top of the building is not necessarily a friar offering a mass in public to the people in the square. Even if it was true, the date of

⁴⁴ López, *Maestros mayores*, 141-142.

⁴⁵ Morales, *Nuevos datos*, 455.

⁴⁶ Morales, *Nuevos datos*, 458.

1560 is already too late to set a precedent, when the first proper open chapel in Mexico dates from 1538.

The second open-air chapel proposed by Morales is a sealed gate on the side of a rural church, the Ermita of San Roque, in the village of Alcalá de Guadaira. It has indeed some elements that could link it to Mexican architecture, but the date of construction is already 1570, which automatically disqualifies it as a precedent (fig. 4.25).⁴⁷

The last example, I believe, is the only one with any significance for this discussion. It's a canopy erected in Cordoba, close to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fuente Santa, to commemorate the place where an image of the virgin was found miraculously in 1442, or to cover a well with healing water. The actual chapel was built in 1493. It's a square with pointed arches that used to house the statue of the virgin (fig. 4.26), but that was soon moved elsewhere and, during the days of great religious activities, great congregations would gather to listen to the sermon. As early as 1494, a big portion of the Cordoban population went there to pray to their patroness asking for divine intervention. The description, however, of what was celebrated at that canopy resembles more a procession than a mass.⁴⁸

The late dates of the first three examples make it unlikely for them to be the precedents of the open chapels in America. Conversely, there were other kinds of structures that date from earlier periods that congregated large multitudes, just as they did in Mexico. As big as they were, the Friday mosques could not house all the Islamic

⁴⁷ Ibid., 459-61.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 463; Ramírez, Paseos por Córdoba, 199.

population during Eid al Adha or Eid al Fitr, and both could only be held in a larger area: a *musalla*. Many Moroccan cities had one, and many sources point at the existence of musallas in Andalusian cities as well. Such structure was a simple mihrab, both provisional or permanent, embedded in a wall, sometimes with a minbar, and installed in the outskirts of the city, in open areas close to cemeteries or to the gates of the city walls.⁴⁹

The use of the musalla was also associated to the prayer for water, when there were droughts in the land. As such we have that in 966, caliph Abd al Rahman III ordered the Qadi of Cordoba to pray in the *Musalla al-Rabad*. Surrounded by a multitude, the qadi humiliated himself in front of Allah, crying for water. Before that day was over there was a generous downpour. The custom was continued by the Moriscos, and it was practiced in case of extreme drought. All believers would go out of their houses after a general call, and people would walk in a processional way to the outskirts of the town, because the ceremony had to be practiced outdoors, away from streets or squares. Preceded by an imam, the faithful would form lines and do the noon prayer.⁵⁰

There were two musallas in Cordoba. One was in the esplanade next to the Guadalquivir river, where 'Abd al-Rahman I won the battle against Yusuf al-Fihri that allowed him to enter Cordoba. We know that in 918 'Abd al-Rahman III ordered to build a mihrab in that musalla.⁵¹ The other musalla was on the other side of the Guadalquivir, south of the city and close to a cemetery that eventually took its name from that musalla.

⁴⁹ Balbás, *Musalla y Saria*, 169.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 170.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 171; Levi-Provencal, *Histoire de l' Espagne musulmane*, I, 73, 115 y 374, original source in arabic, Ibn Idarl, *Bayan*, II, pp. 182 y 213, I did not consult the original source.

It was founded by al-Samh, who arrived in Spain in 719-720. It was also used to ask god for water in 915, because the ongoing drought had left the markets empty and the price of the groceries was rising dangerously. This time both musallas were used.⁵² South of Seville there was another musalla, where the gardens that kept its name were, *Yannat al-Musalla*. They were planted with sugar cane. There was another in Archidona, and another in Tortosa. Malaga had its musalla by the gate of Funtanallah, northwest of the urban settlement, next to a cemetery. Another name used for musalla in Spain and Morocco is Saria, written sometimes Xaria. There were gates in several cities that bore that name, as in Murcia, Valencia and the Alhambra in Granada: Bab al-Saria. The latter indeed lead to the open-air oratory. And in Fez, Marrakesh and Taza there are gates that bear the same name.

If there is a structure that is similar to a Mexican open chapel, that would be a single standing mihrab of a musalla, but all of these references seem too old, and none survive to this day, so how do we know that there was any standing in the sixteenth century? Pere Antoni Beuter, (1490-1554) a Spanish historian from Germany who spent most of his life in Valencia described the Saria of that city. "This Xarea was a house of worship with a fortified fence, which took some houses (maybe some houses were inside the fence) in the way of a suburban area, in front of the city gate... a place that now is called the *Santetes*".⁵³ The information is complemented by Father Teixidor, writing that Los

⁵² Ibn al-Qutiyya, *Ta'rikh iftitah*, 12-13; Balbás, *Musalla y Saria*, 171.

⁵³ Balbás, *Musalla y Saria*, 174; Beuter, *Crónica general de toda España*, I, chap XXXIII, Fol CXI, "Fue real ala Xarea, que era el lugar do los Moros hazian justicias, y estaba allí un oratorio que los moros tenían en mucha devoción." (My translation); Beuter, *Crónica general de toda España*, II, 205.

Santetes was a chapel for the holy kings, “tall and strong with its vault,” in front of the door of the Church of the Congregation, which was demolished in 1736. From the description one can deduce that the Saria was surrounded by a wall, and that there was a mihrab with a vault. There was, apparently, a wall surrounding the musalla of the city of Jativa, when Jaime I took that city in 1248.⁵⁴ Could this also be the inspiration for the atrium in the Mexican convents?

The overgrowth of the cities made other musallas become peripheral neighborhoods, as it happened in Granada in the 13th century and in Almería in the 11th. There are many other mentions of musallas in al-Andalus that Torres Balbás compiles in his excellent article; neighborhoods, towers, cemeteries and parks were named after the existence of an old musalla. He also mentions the connection between the musallas and the open-air chapels in the New World. I would add that, considering the effort spent in the conversion of Muslims, perhaps some friars who, living among Muslims, like the group of Juan de Guadalupe, which included Fray Andrés de Córdoba and Martín de Valencia, understood the use and the advantages of the musalla, took the model and used it again in Mexico. The open-air chapels do look like what we imagine to be a musalla. The Hafsid musalla of Tunis had crenellations, just like the open chapel of Epazoyucan (4.22), and the musalla of Tlemcen was a cube with a mihrab. Two last observations could make this relation more feasible, first, that mihrabs in Spanish mosques are whole rooms, which also

⁵⁴ Balbás, *Musalla y Saria*, 179-80.

corresponds with the apses of the Mexican mosques, and second, the remark of the Augustinian friar Grijalva saying that the Indians “formed in lines” like Muslims.⁵⁵

We do not have anything more concrete, but given the evidence, I think the relation between the conventual complexes in the new world and Islamic architecture, be that in the form of sahn, mosques or musallas is, if not a fact, at least the most possible inspiration and explanation that we have of these original architectural feats.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 174.

Conclusions

It is possible that more buildings followed the hypostyle plan in México, but earthquakes, renovations and simple collapse have left us with a scarcity of material that makes the task very difficult to trace. Compared to the number of Franciscan foundations, hypostyle plans are rare. Was there a connection between the use of the plan and the original foundation of San José de los Naturales in Mexico City? If there was, this could have had two purposes: first, to emulate a successful model for the spiritual conquest of Mexico, and second, to link the new foundations with the grandeur of the original San José. The number of hypostyle buildings, however, shows that the model was not very effective. Of the nearly 80 open chapels that we know of, only the 5 that I surveyed follow such a plan. Manuel Toussaint added that the use of a mosque plan as open chapel, or chapel of Indians, solved the problems of evangelization in an imperfect way. The sheer number of people did indeed fit, and those who didn't at least experienced the rites from the atrium, but they could not see the performance. Even inside, people could only see it

with difficulties, due to the number of columns, and this is perhaps the reason why mosque-type chapels were not very successful.⁵⁶

Recapitulating the questions of this thesis, now we can say that the origin of these buildings was surely Islamic as there is vast evidence for it. The selection of this model was a strategic way of integrating the outdoor cult and housing the large numbers of Indians that existed before the plagues in an early stage during the spiritual conquest, when there was also a scarcity of friars. These convents not only hosted the local population, but also the population of a great number of surrounding villages and towns.

We have also proved that the mosque-type chapels evidence a three-way combination of cultures and religions. While it surely represented the messianic Christian ideal of universal conversion, it was also combined with the ideas of the Renaissance through humanists who sought to understand and modify Christian doctrine. Thus, these men gained converts while partially respecting the local culture, instead of obliterating it completely. The chapel of Cholula, or San José de los Naturales, standing on pre-Hispanic constructions recalled the pre-Columbian as did the pagan celebrations that were to match the Christian calendar, with modified dances and costumes, like the *Altepeilhuitl*. We also know that the role of the friars was crucial for this syncretism to take place; they made a great effort learning Nahuatl or Otomi to understand the locals better. It was their creativity that allowed these three cultures to be used and re-interpreted to meet the ends of the “spiritual needs” of the crown.

⁵⁶ Toussaint, *Arte Colonial de Mexico*, 23.

The Islamic elements seem to be more accidental. The friars who had worked evangelizing Muslims brought new knowledge from that experience, but so did many other Spaniards from the sixteenth century, the latter being used to the Islamic taste. Even though the mosque-type plan was a revival, more so than part of the Mudejar tradition, many of these buildings did enjoy Mudejar traits, like wooden ceilings or octagonal piers. To find Moriscos behind the construction is unlikely, perhaps less in the technical work than the design. It is clear that Mudejar art was not linked to Islam any longer, and had become, by that time, more of an original Spanish national style.

The unfamiliar apparition of a Christian “mosque” topping a Mexica pyramid is, as previously stated, the best way to show Spanish victory during the sixteenth century. That the Spaniards felt they could appropriate the characteristic building of a defeated nation, on top of the characteristic building of another defeated nation is a sign of this entitlement. We cannot forget that all these wonderful and varied results came from a will to destroy “paganism”, to subjugate, and conquer, and eventually drain the population through taxes. To make things more ironic, it would be worthy to note that the taxes collected from America were used to finance, among others, the wars against Islam. Charles V confiscated the gold and silver from Perú to finance his campaign against Tunisia in 1535. The war against Granada during the revolt of the Alpujarras was heavily financed with money from the Indies, and in 1571, the battle of Lepanto, against the Ottomans, not only was financed with American money, but there were American ships fighting in the

battle. In the same way, American money financed the war against the Dutch and the Muslims in the Philipines.⁵⁷

Colonial Spain was indeed violent, and although the friars tried to be friendly and benevolent towards the Indians, their work was still colonial: friars felt their religion was the correct one while the pagan beliefs were meant to be eradicated. They put such an effort into this task that by the end of the sixteenth century most of America was Christian. Kubler has demonstrated that no building could have been built without having the population settled, and to urbanize a settlement required destroying the ethics and culture of such populations, as it was in the case of the nomad Chichimecas.⁵⁸ Colonial architecture in America is the architecture of a defeated nation, and the symbol of the destruction of their history. We can deem this as violent with our postmodern eye, and argue that to think in terms of tolerance was impossible for people of the sixteenth century, but Spain had had a period of relative tolerance for the difference before the Catholic Kings for several centuries. Thus, we should not abstain from judging them: the colonial authorities who eradicated that culture, language and religion, are guilty of intolerance. It takes, however, just a look at the current news to see that this intolerance hasn't been eradicated yet.

⁵⁷ Taboada, *La sombra de islam*, 152-3.

⁵⁸ Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 114.

New Fields of Study.

I must recognize that this study has many limitations and many aspects are not clear. The research about the chapel of San José de los Naturales has included few, if any archival work. No archeological initiatives have explored the area of the Franciscan convent, just as in the case of the chapel of Etzatlán and it is surprising in its lack of information and studies; it definitely deserves a full research.

Archeological tools could also be used to find the pre-Hispanic foundations of the Royal Chapel of Cholula, and find whether the church or the chapel are in the same orientation of the original temple of Quetzalcoatl. The transformation of the cult of Quetzalcoatl in Cholula is also not very well documented; it seems like Quetzalcoatl stopped being important and that the remaining rites of Altepeilhuitl and the Tlahuanca are not necessarily linked to the Mesoamerican god. This is a task that belongs more to the area of anthropology, but it could answer the relation between the chapel and the rites associated with it, to this day.

The name of the architects of the buildings is a problem that might never have a solution, and I offer in the appendix a list of architects that were active during the sixteenth century. I'm inclined to think that Andrés de Córdoba was the architect of both San José de los Naturales in Mexico City, and the mosque-type chapel in Etzatlán, but the evidence is not sufficient. Another topic deserving of research is the background and the specifics of the translation between the friars who were present in Granada and then

travelled to the new world, which are not clear yet. Studying particular friars that evangelized both in Granada and in America, could prove that the open-air chapels derive from musallas or mosques.

One last thing that requires further research is the possible relation between Toledo and Cholula. This could be done by both comparing the architects and examining the precedence of the citizens of Puebla during the times of the construction. If I continue this topic on a PhD Level, I would be glad to clarify these points.

On the other hand, the latest comprehensive book on Mudejar Art in Latin America was written by Toussaint in 1946, and the new takes on the same topic are very limited, or take Latin America in a single chapter, but not as a main work. A new and revised study covering all the continent and all the techniques is in much need. Particular attention should be given to Perú, Bolivia and Ecuador, where wonderful Mudejar ceilings are still extant, and haven't been studied thoroughly. The Church of San Francisco in Cali, Colombia, with the only horseshoe arch in Spanish America, as well as clear Mudejar brickwork and tilework is a case that requires more scholarship.

Perhaps harder to find, or in the realm of popular culture and anthropology, the syncretism that emerged from the contact of African Muslim slaves with all the other inhabitants of America, as fantastic as they sound, are very promising. Amulets, words, music, dances, incantations, have all been understudied, and we should start recognizing those as part of the field of Islamic art. I do think that both fields, Colonial art and architecture of Latin America and Islamic art and architecture, have much to share and

require attention. The possibility of transversal and interdisciplinary studies offer us a completely different panorama of Islamic Art, or of its far ramifications, and lastly, they will give us a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic art and the reaches of the Islamic civilization.

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FIGURES



Fig. 1.1 This map shows the position of Mexico City, Toluca to the south, Tlaxcala, to the east. Cholula is not on the map, but since we can consider it a neighborhood of Puebla, it is directly south from Tlaxcala.

Source: Mapas de Mexico. <http://www.map-of-mexico.co.uk>.

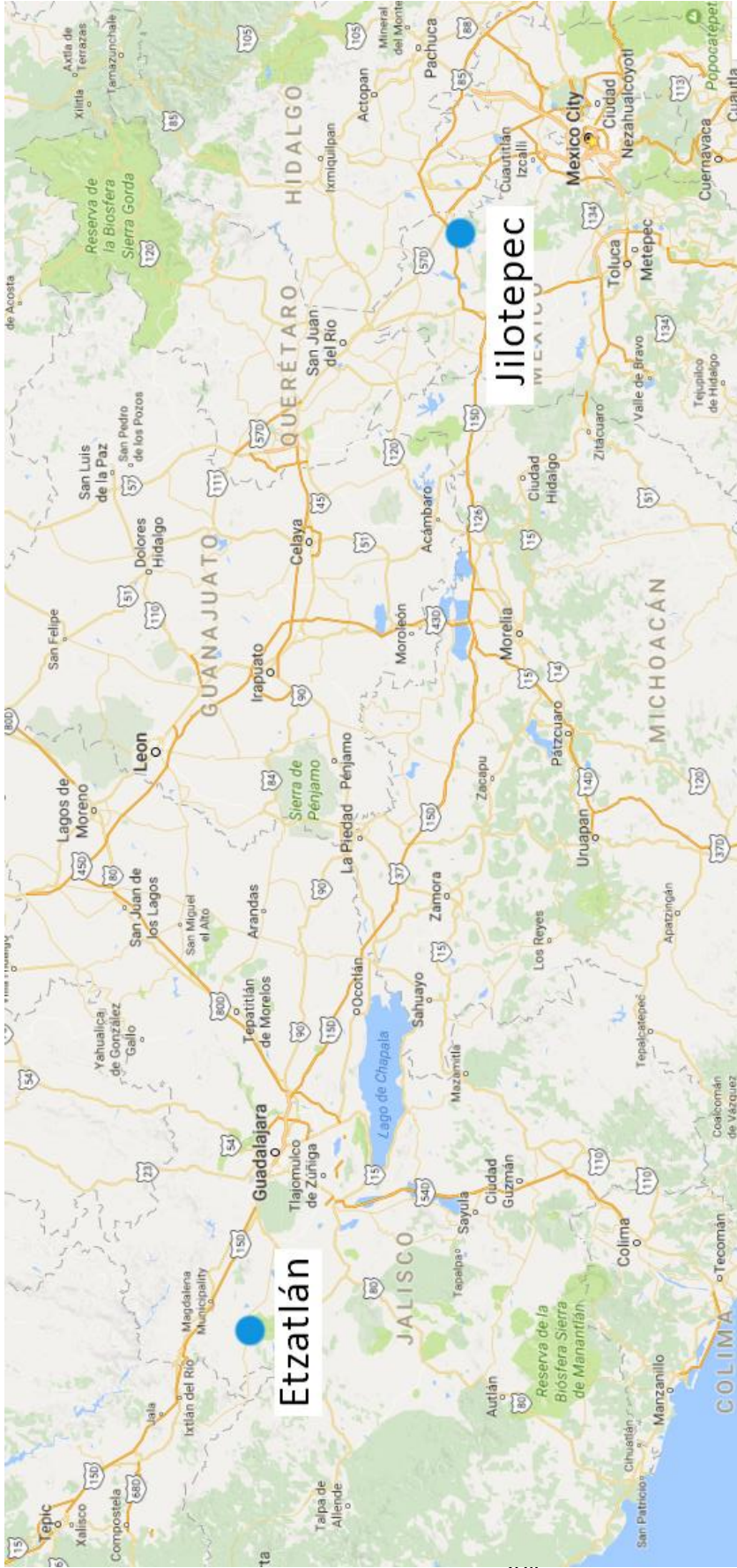


Fig 1.2. This map shows the position of Jilotepec, Mexico City, and Etzatlán in the far west, close to Guadalajara.

Source: Google maps.



Fig. 1.3
Adoração dos reis magos, Vasco Fernândes.
C. 1501 – 1506.
Museu Grão Vasco
Source: <http://rotadosonhos.blogspot.com.eg>



Fig. 1.4. Alfarje in the Golden Room, Alhambra, Granada.

Completed under the reign of Mohamed V.

1362–1391

Source: Francesc Morera, <http://www.francescmorera.com/galeriasLugares/alhambra.html> (accessed on 05/052017).

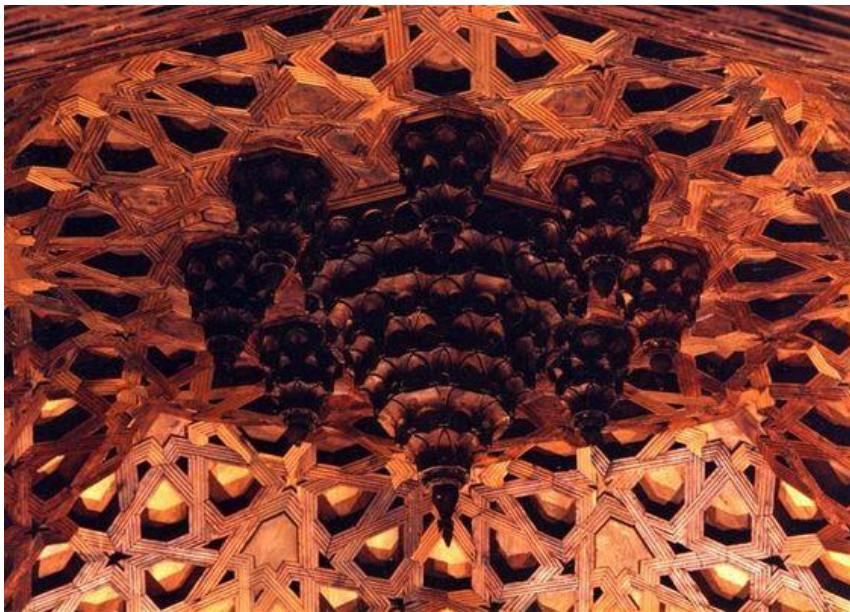


Fig. 1.5.

In alfarje at the convent of La Merced, in Granada. Piña de Mocárabes. Or Muqarnas Pineapple.

Source: Taujel.com and

<https://co.pinterest.com/pin/138767232246252533/>

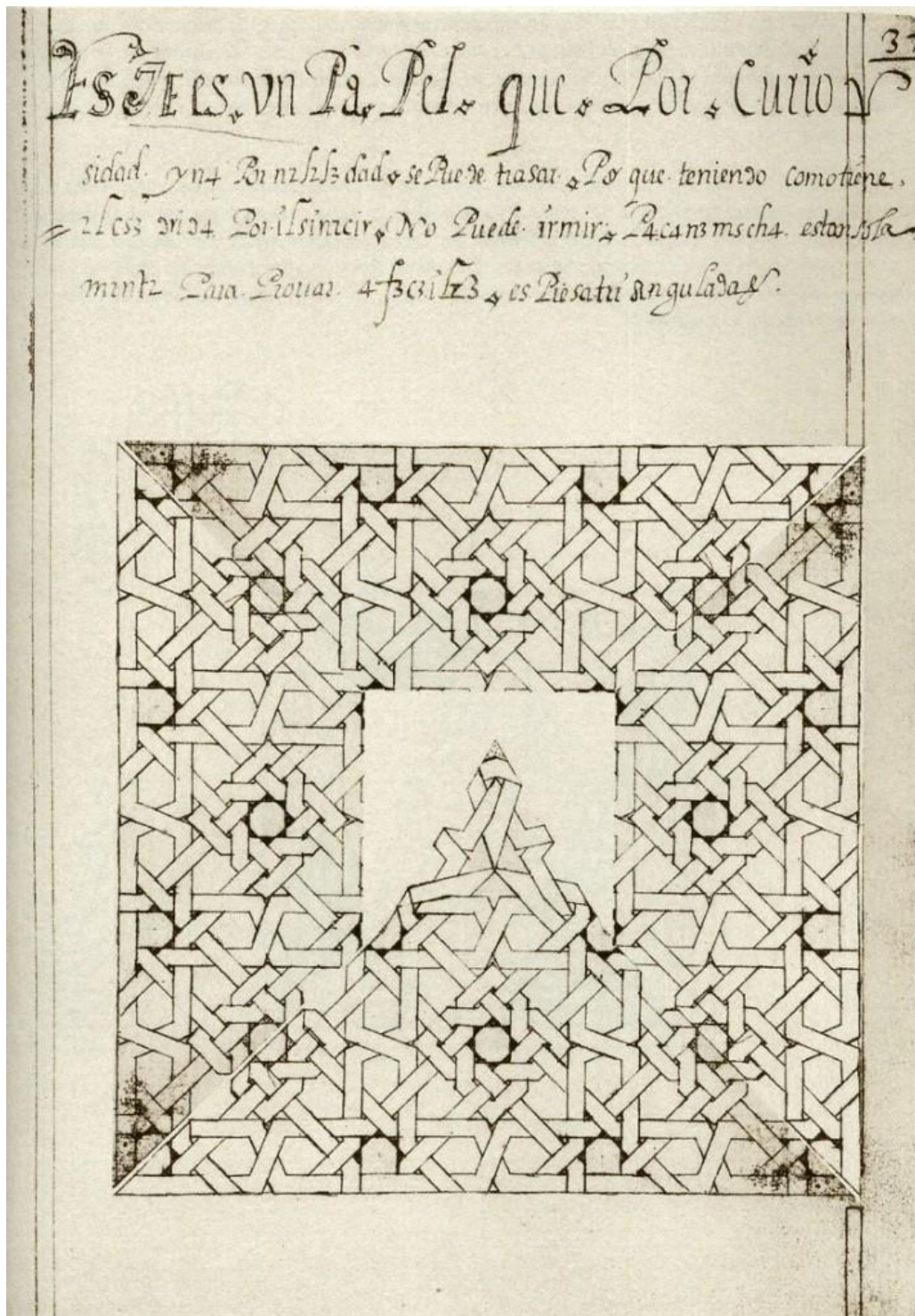


Fig. 1.6.

A page from Fray Andrés de Segura's Manuscript on Mudejar Architecture.

Source: Nuere, "La carpintería de lo blanco," <http://enrique.nuere.es>

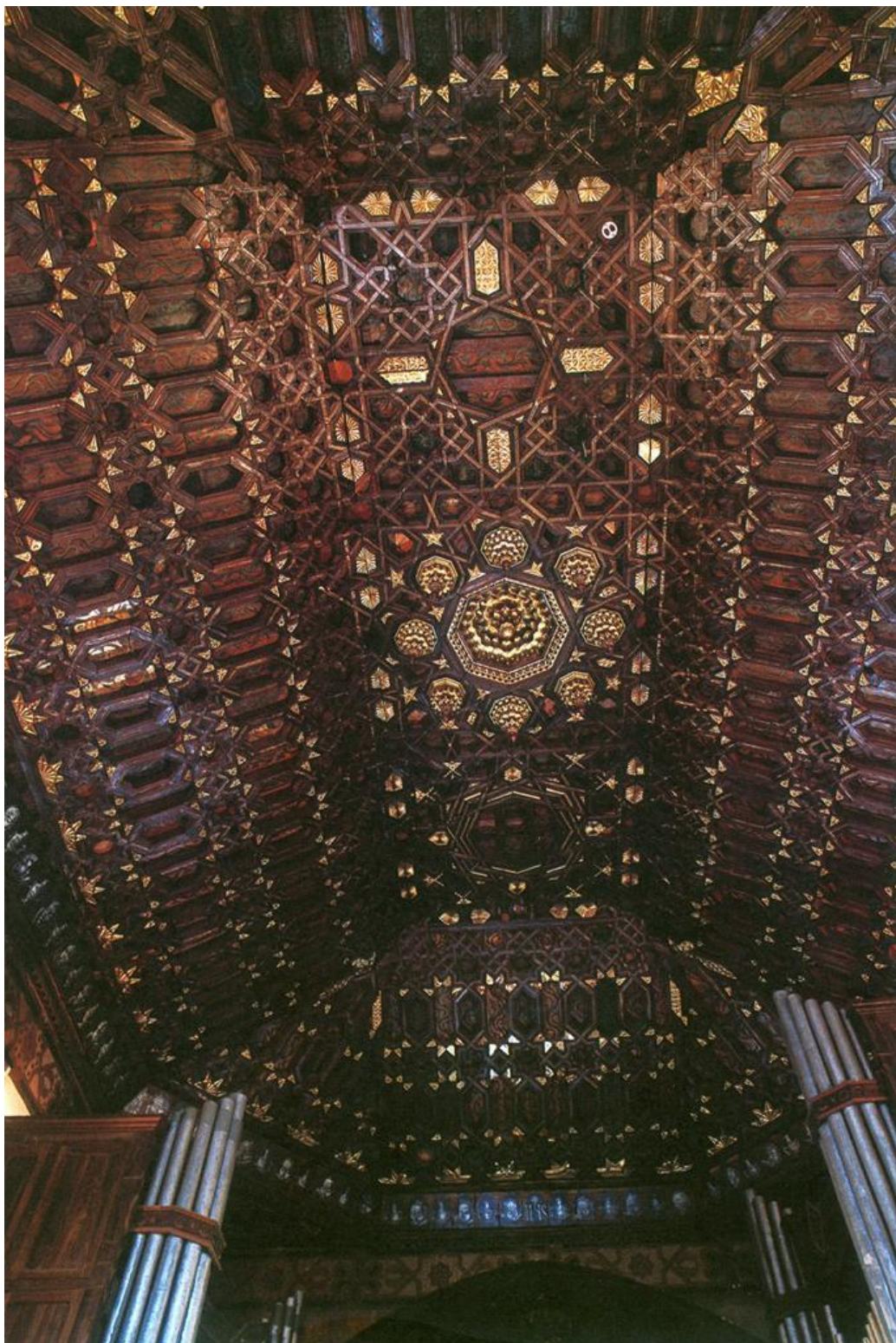


Fig. 1.7. Alfارje covering the choir of the Church of San Francisco, Quito, Ecuador. Probably second half of XVI century.

Bailey, Art of Colonial,

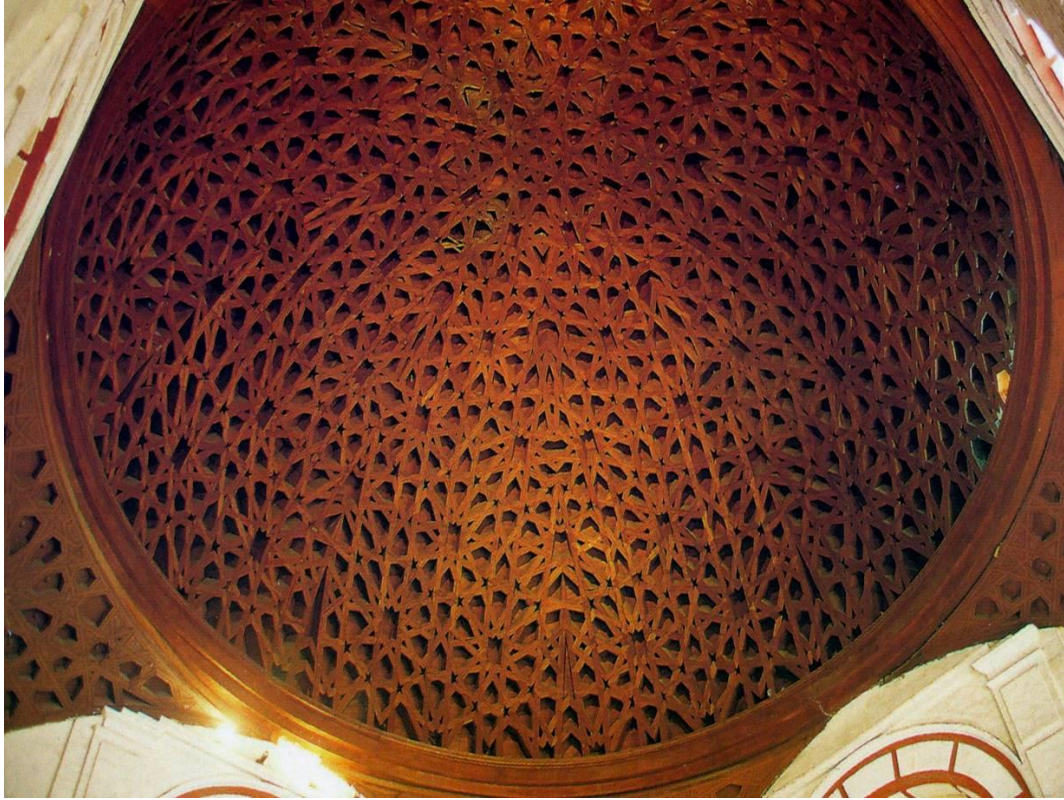


Fig. 1.8. Wooden dome at the Franciscan convent in Lima, Peru.

Source: Nuere, "La carpinteria de lo blanco," <http://enrique.nuere.es>

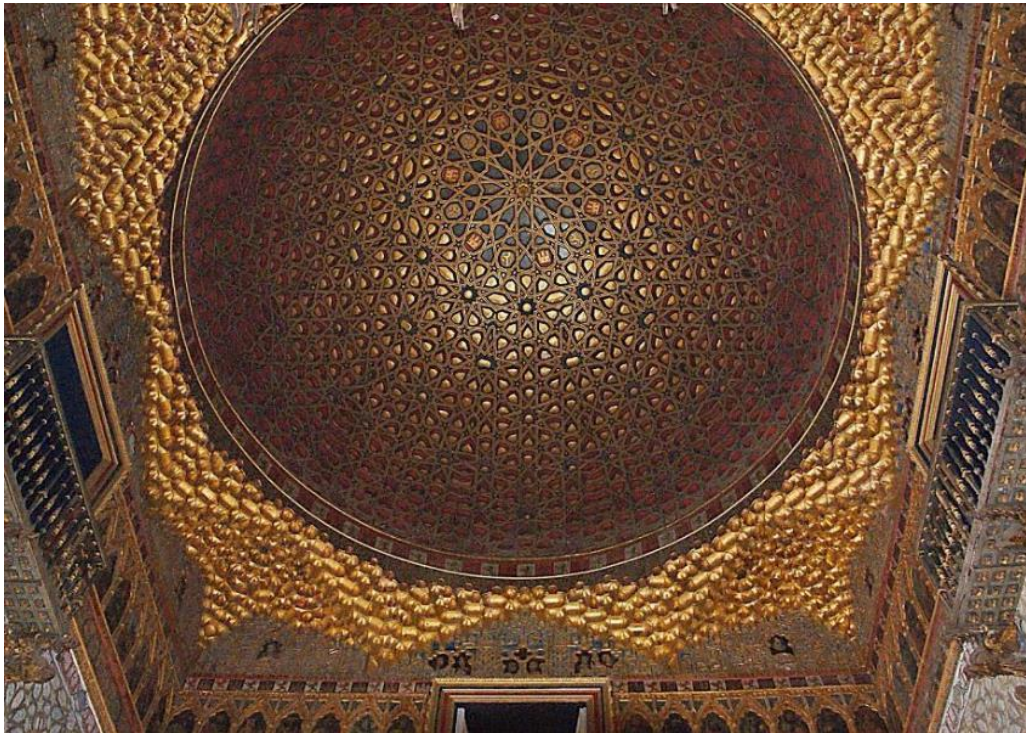


Fig. 1.9. Wooden dome in the Alcazar, in Seville.

<http://www.islamichistoryandtravel.com>

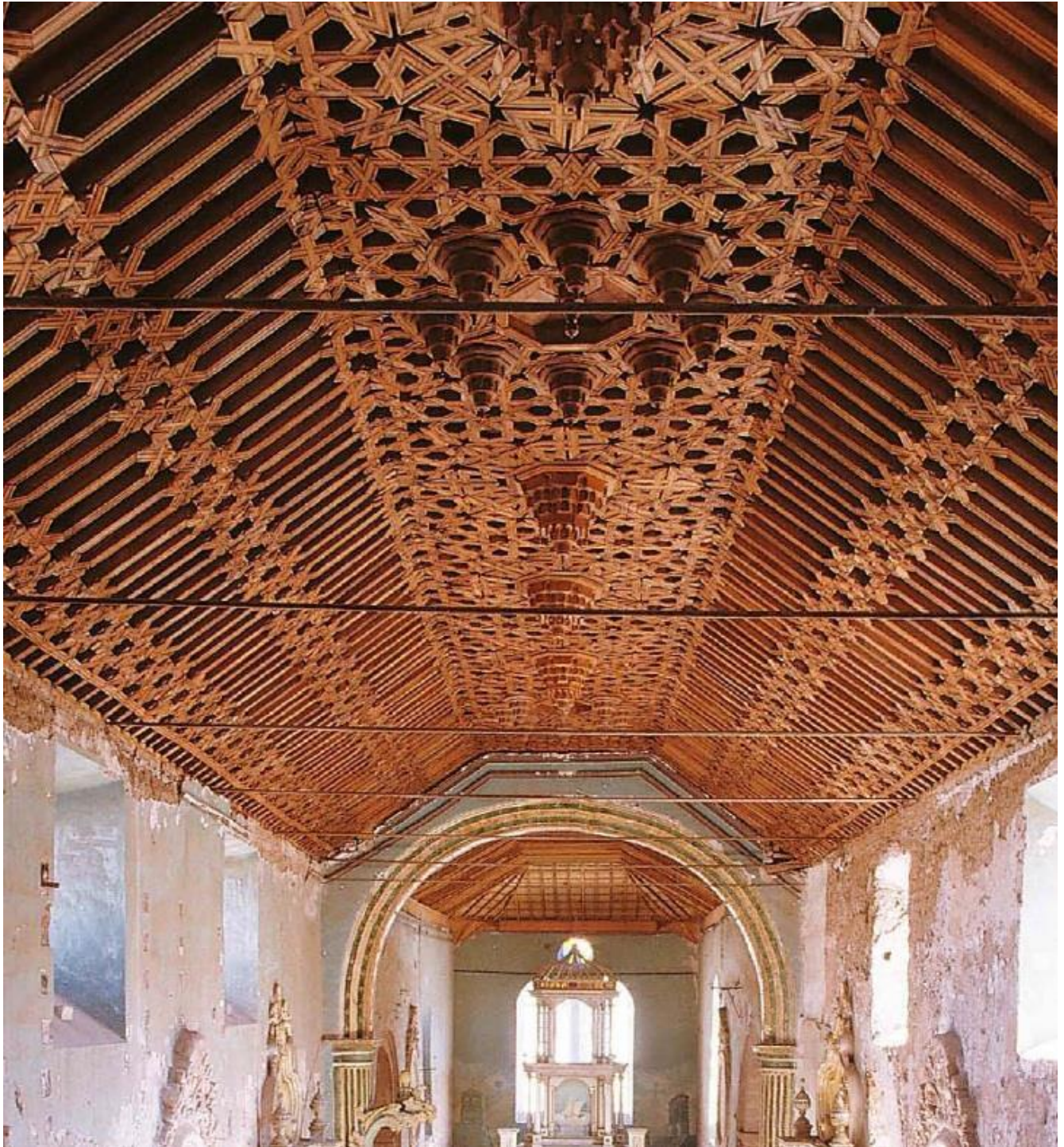


Fig. 1.10.

Church of La Merced, in Potosí, Bolivia.

Source: Rayaces, "Potosí y el Cerro Rico," online.



Fig. 1.11. Alfarje of the Franciscan Cathedral of Tlaxcala. Mexico.

TAQ 1585. Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 1.12. Artesonado under the choir of the Franciscan Cathedral of Tlaxcala. Mexico.

TAQ 1585. Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 1.13. Franciscan convent of Tzintzuntzan.

Toussaint,
"Reminiscencias," 34,

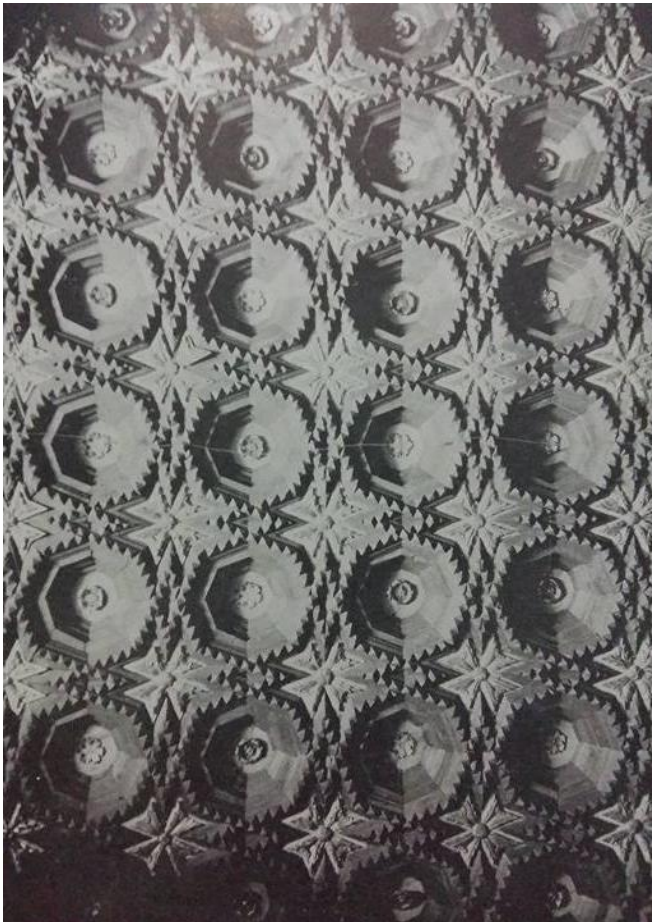


Fig. 1.14. Coffered ceiling (artesonado) from the Hospital de Jesús, Mexico City, probably eighteenth century.

Source: Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, PI XXXIII.



Fig 1.15. Salon of Charles V in the Alcazar of Seville. The coffered ceiling offers a possible prototype.

Source: García, *Real Alcazar*, *online*.



Fig. 1.16 Iglesia de la Concepción, Bogotá, Colombia. Source: by L. Barragán.



Fig. 1.17 Vault of
crossed arches at the
Church of Our Lady of
Loreto in Tepetzotlan,
Mexico.

1679.



Fig. 1.18 Christ of the
light. Mosque

Toledo. Same vaulting
system as previous fig
15.

999 C.E.

Source: Toledo
Monumental. Online.



Fig. 1.19. Convent of San Francisco Lima.

Tilework from 1620.

Source: "El impresionante Complejo Franciscano," <http://forosdelavirgen.org>



Fig 1.20. A house from the early seventeenth century. Mexico City.

This house is surveyed in Toussaint, *Arte Mudejar*, plate XLVII

Source: L. Barragán.

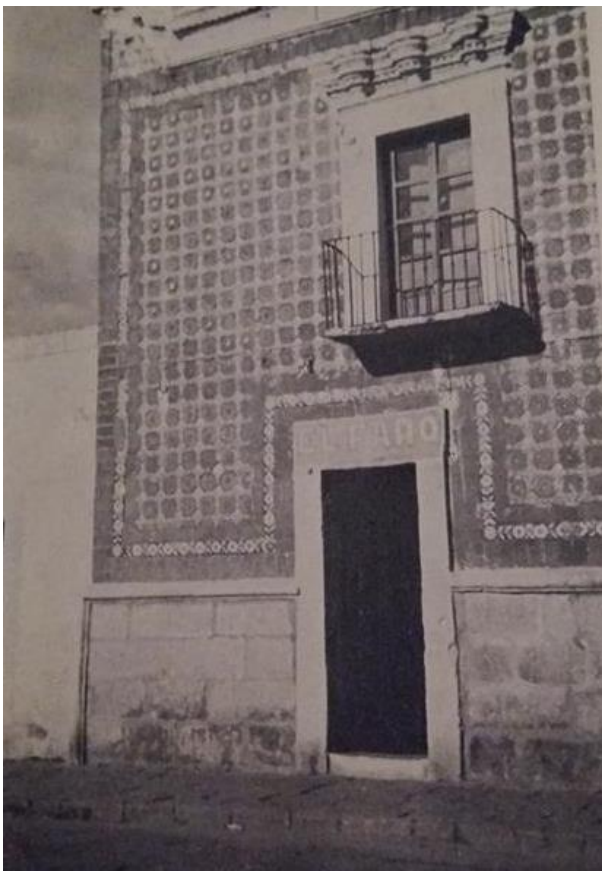


Fig. 1.21. A typical house in Puebla, Mexico. Source: Toussaint, *Arte mudéjar*, plate XLV

Fig. 1.22. Façade of the Church of Saint Francis in Angahua. Mexico.

Presenting not only a rare polylobed arch, but spandrels decorated in the Andalusian style with indigenous motifs.

Toussaint, "Reminiscencias," 41.





Fig 1.23. El Rollo. Tepeaca. (Taq 1585).

Source: Toussaint, "Reminiscencias," 41.



Fig 1.24. Fountain at Chiapa de Corzo, (1563-1565)

Source: Ramón Morales, "Lugares Turísticos en Chiapa de Corzo," <http://todochiapas.mx>



Fig 1.25. Interior of the fountain.

Source: Jaime A, Chiapa de Corzo, <http://todochiapas.mx>



Fig. 1.26.
 Lateral portal of the Church of San Francisco in Cali, Colombia. mid XVIII century.
 Jose Ferri, Voyage addicted, Blog. <https://voyageaddicted.com/2012/02/06/cali-ay-ay-ay/p1080926-copiar/>



Fig. 1.28 Tower of San Francisco Cali, Colombia. Mid eighteenth century. Source: Jose Ferri, Voyage addicted, Blog.



Fig 1.27. Detail of the exterior of the Cathedral of San Salvador of Zaragoza, in Aragón, Spain. 1376
 Richter, Joel, Mudejar Brick & Tile II: La Seo Zaragoza (2008)



Fig 1.29. Baño de Comares, Alhambra.
 Hattstein, Islam, 287.



Fig. 1.30. Small window in the hospital of Urapan, Michoacán, Mexico. 1535-1555. Source: Perry, Richard D., "Missions of Michoacán."



Fig. 1.31 Lateral door to the Franciscan temple in Tecamachalco. Mexico. 1557.

Source: Zahar, "Presencias y ausencias," 49.



Fig 1.32. Palacio Torre Tagle. Façade.



Fig 1.33 Palacio Torre Tagle. Interior courtyard.



Fig. 1.34. Boxes, bookstand, chest and chair, all from seventeenth and eighteenth century New Spain.

Franz Mayer museum. Mexico.

Zahar, *Taracea*, 43, 53, 55, 66, 72.

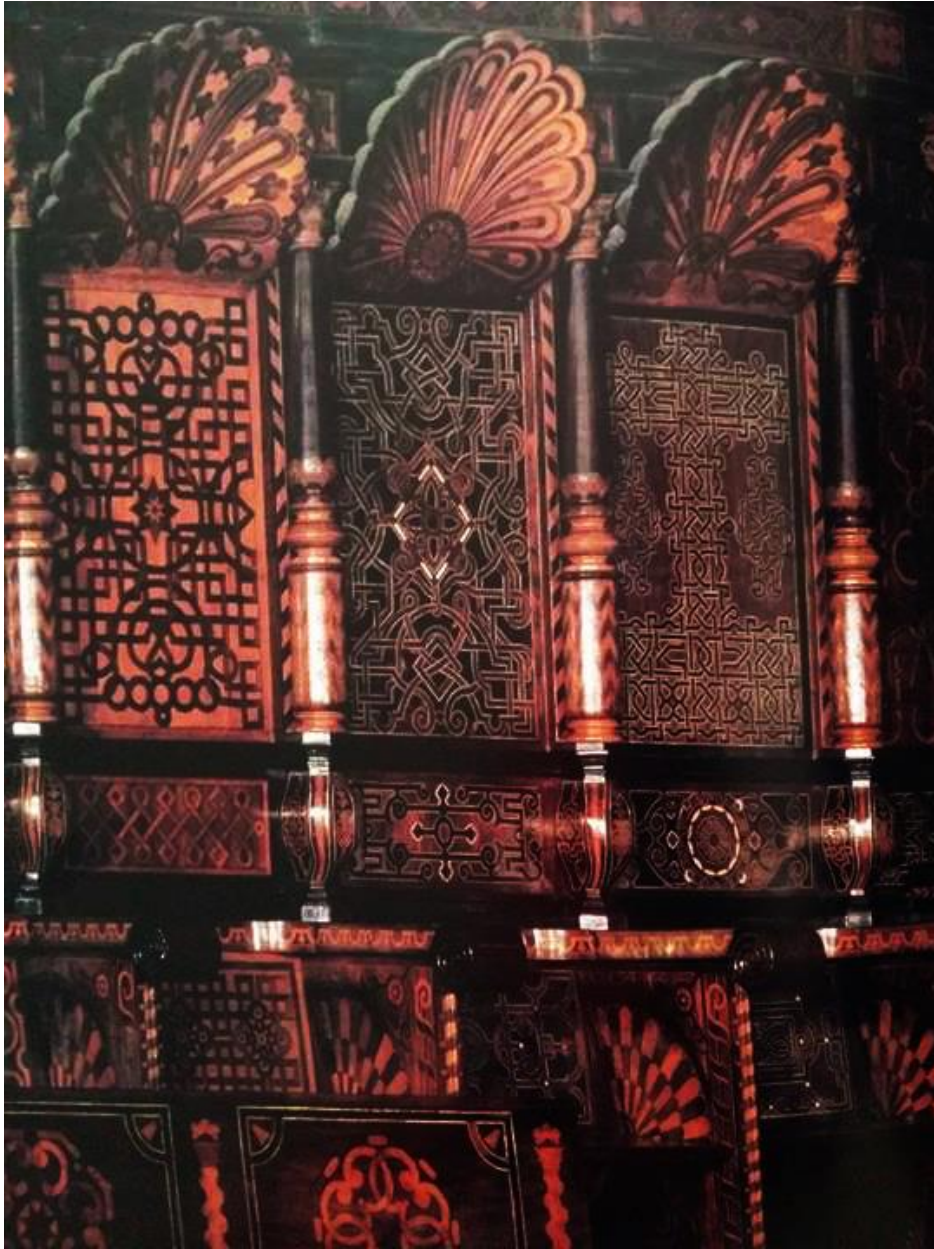


Fig. 1.35. Choir chairs, Cathedral of Puebla.

Source: Zahar, "Presencias y ausencias," 56-7.



Fig. 1.36. Arcuated stone lintel in the lateral chapel in the Church of San José, Tlaxcala.

Eighteenth century perhaps earlier. Source: L. Barragán.

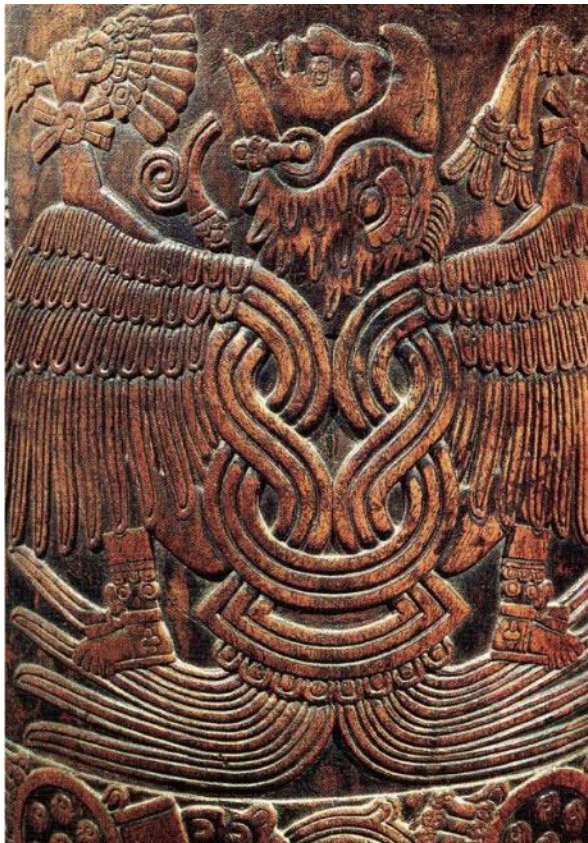


Fig. 1.37.

Aztec wooden drum. 15th century. Mexico.

Source: "Aztec War Drum," Mexicolore, Online.

Originally from Marquina, Ignacio, *Arquitectura Prehispánica* (Mexico City, 1951) 215. I didn't have access to the original material.



Fig. 1.38. Open Chapel of Tlaxcala.

Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 1.39.

3d render of the Chapel of Tlaxcala, by the INAH. The layout of the chapel raised over a platform with a staircase resembles an Aztec pyramid with the high priest on the chapel and the congregation on the ground. Kubler,



Fig 1.40 Open Chapel of Teposcolula.

1575-1580

Ruta por las misiones de Oaxaca,
http://www.playasmexico.com.mx/articulo_playas.php?id_article=4858

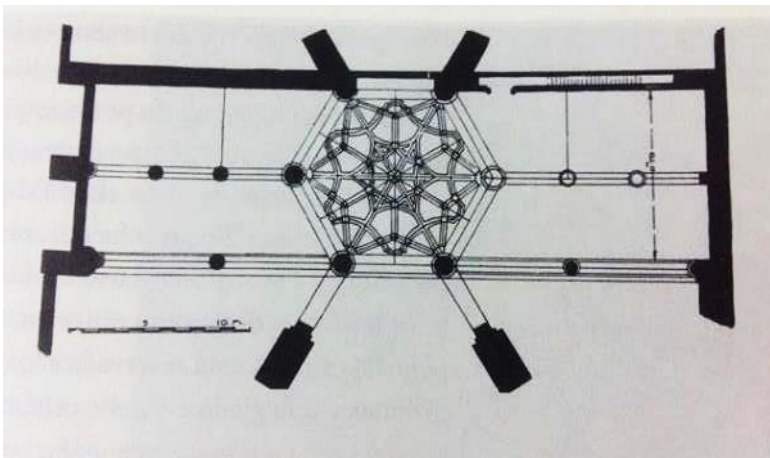


Fig 1.41 Plan of the Open Chapel of Teposcolula.

1575-1580

Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 405



Fig. 1.42. Open Chapel of Atlatlahucan, 1570.

Sources: Bobadilla, "Presencia de la arquitectura," 40.

Daniel Salinas Córdova,
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/danielsalinas00/93417927>
40





182 CONJECTURAL PLANS OF SAN JOSÉ in 1527 (bottom and middle), 3 or 5 bays wide, and in 1539 (top), 7 bays wide with a small new apse

Fig. 2.1. Conjectural plans of San José before 1547.

McAndrew, *Open-Air Chapels*, 385.

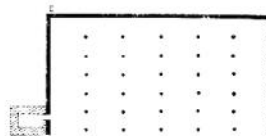
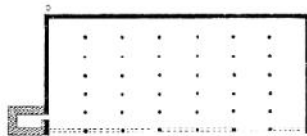
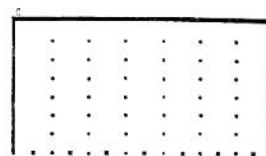
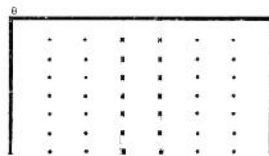
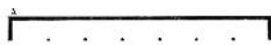


Fig. 2.2. Conjectural plans of San José.

Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 376.

Figure 10: The original San José de los Naturales (1525 – no longer extant), built next to the church of San Francisco, established the open chapel typology in México. Stages of development: a. 1525 ca.-1547 b. 1559-74 c. 1574-1587 d. 1590 e. 1697. See Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 330.

184 AN INDIAN IDEOGRAM OF SAN JOSÉ

(after *Codex Mexicanus* 23-24, 1570/71)

This occurs above the glyph for the year 1547. The cross on the top may represent either a cross crowning the chapel or the gigantic atrio cross. The four arches (or possibly only two — the original drawing is damaged) need not mean that there were that number on the facade. The criss-cross frieze may refer to the wood lattice, which was far more likely between than above the columns.

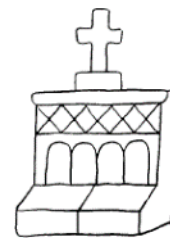


Fig. 2.3. Ideogram from *Codex Mexicanus*, 24

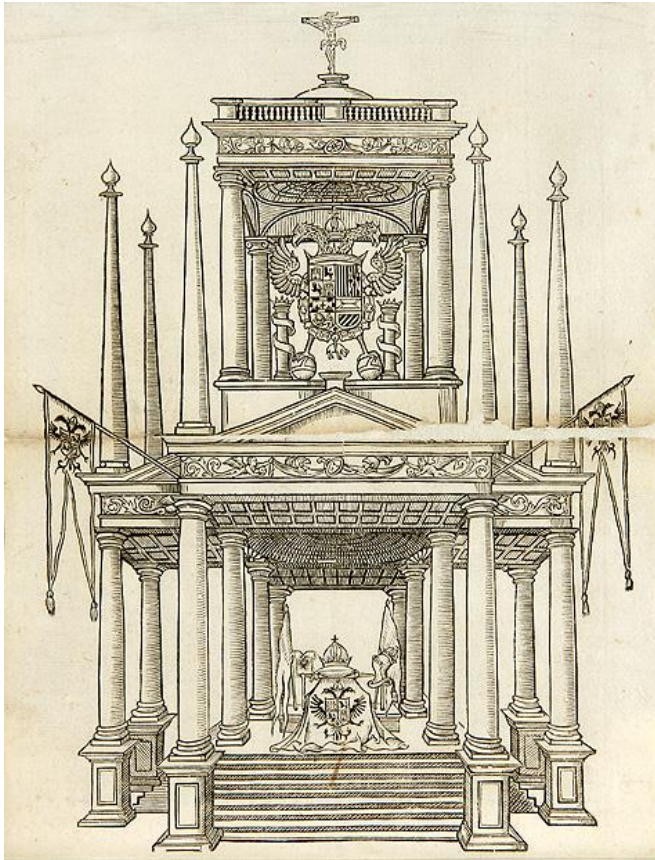


Fig. 2.4. Funerary monument for Charles V.

From Salazar, *Túmulo Imperial*, 187.

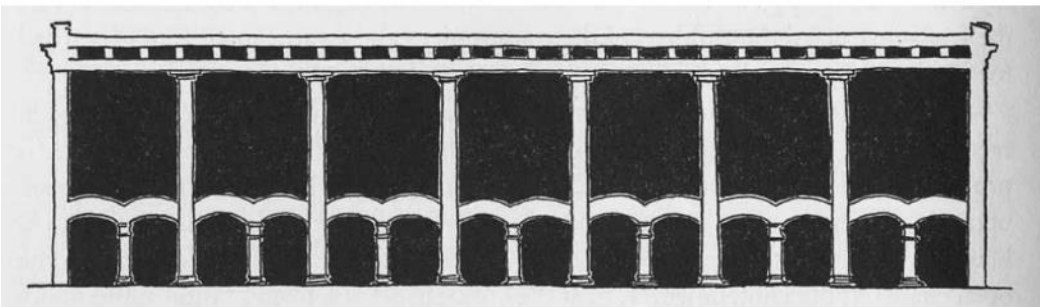
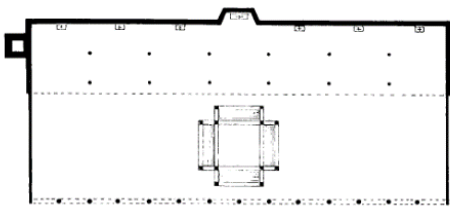
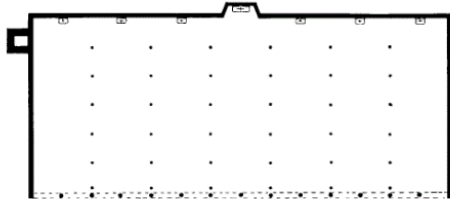


Fig. 2.5. Conjectural façade of San José per 1560 according to Kubler.

Kubler, *Arquitectura Mexicana*, 400.



187 CONJECTURAL PLAN OF SAN JOSÉ IN 1559
The Túmulo is set between a shallow chapel and the 14 stone arches reerected 85 feet from the back wall of the chapel, in the location where they could later have been incorporated into the facade of a deepened chapel.



188 CONJECTURAL PLAN OF SAN JOSÉ IN 1563 after it had reached its final depth of 85 feet and the 14 stone arches had been incorporated into the facade, just in front — presumably — of the front row of wood columns.

Fig. 2.6. Conjectural plan of San José, if the arches were moved to the front and then the covered area was extended.

McAndrew, *Open-Air Chapels*, 385.

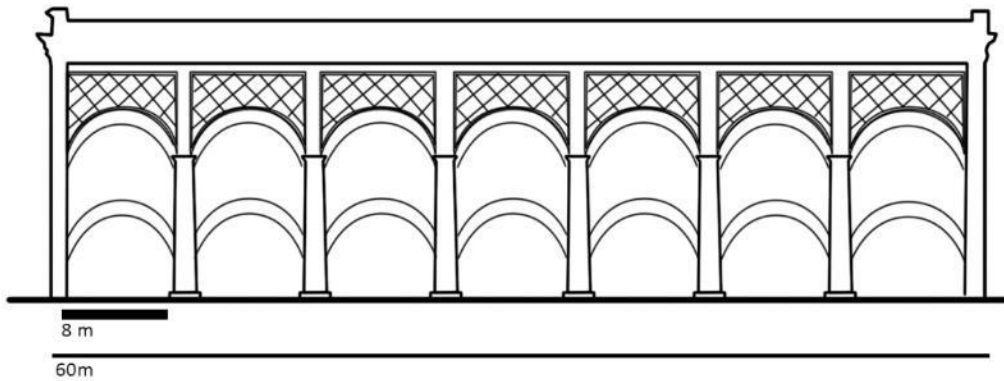


Fig. 2.7 Conjectural elevation of San José, considering the glyph in the codex Mexicanus and reinterpreting the 14 arches as one on top of the other. By L. Barragán.



Fig. 2.8. Decorative arches in the great mosque of Cordoba.

Source: The builder Blog.
https://thebuilderblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/01/mosque_interior_119_jpg.jpg



Fig. 2.9. Bala Hauz mosque in Bukhara. 1712.

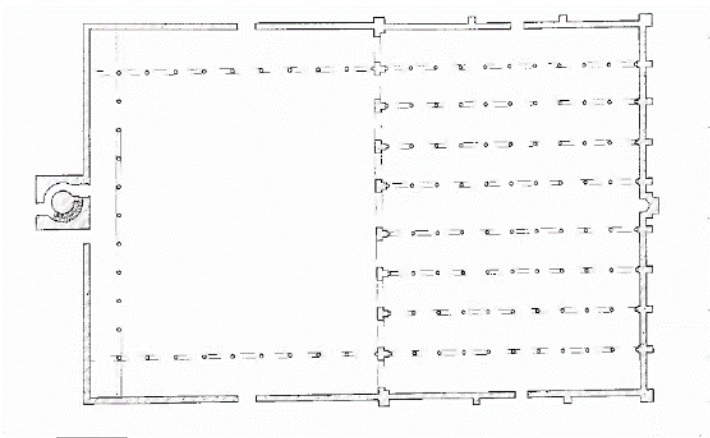
Source: Yassu Tour. <http://www.bookinguz.com/monuments-in-bukhara/371-mosque-bolo-hauz>



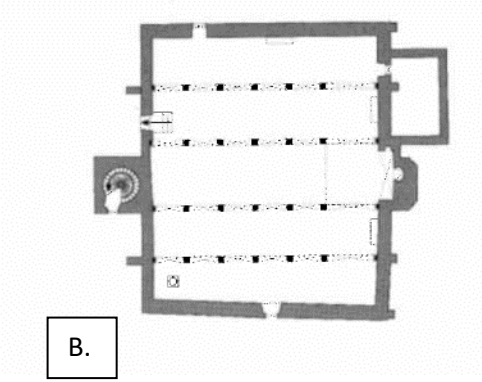
190 THE ENCOMENDERO OF YANHUITLÁN IN HIS TURBAN
(Códice de Yanhuitlán, c1545/50)

Fig. 2.10.
Encomendero of
Yanhuitlán in his
turban.

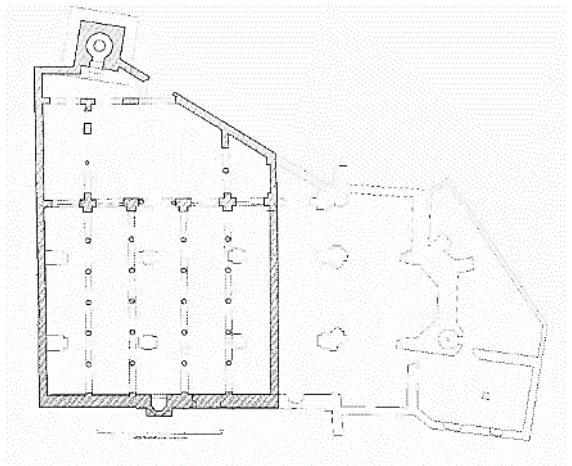
McAndrew, *Open-Air
Chapels*, 389.



A.

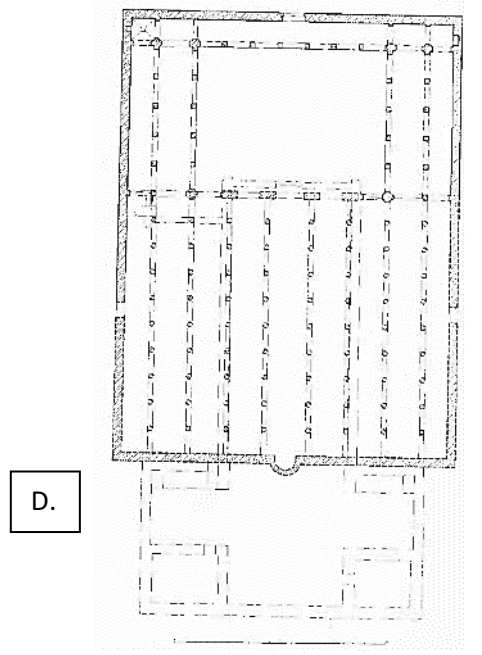


B.

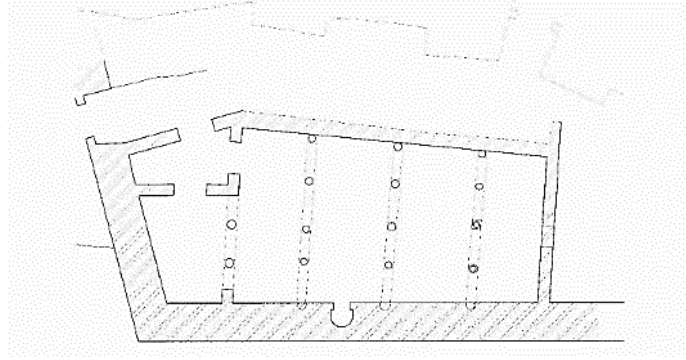


C.

Fig. 209: Niebla (Huelva), Santa María de la Granada.
Planta de la mezquita (reconstrucción de la segunda fase de la mezquita) (Antonio Almagro)



D.



E.

Fig. 2.11

- A. Mosque of Ibn 'Adabass. Seville, 73.
- B. Mosque of Mertola, 384.
- C. Mosque of Santa María de la Granada, Niebla,
- D. Mosque of San Salvador of Granada in Albaicín, 592.
- E. Mosque of Vascos, Toledo, 691

Plans from Calvo, *Mezquitas de Al-Andalus*. Numbers correspond with page.

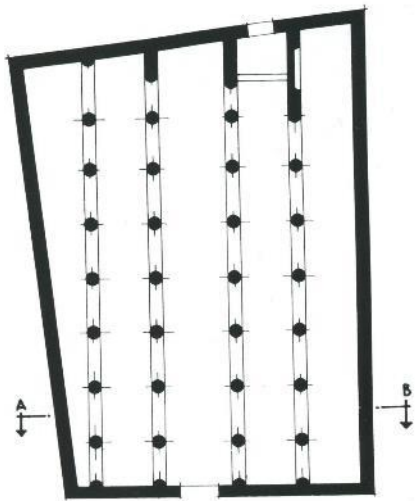


Fig. 2.12 Synagogue of Santa María la Blanca, Toledo.

Source:

<https://co.pinterest.com/pin/533465518331269618/>

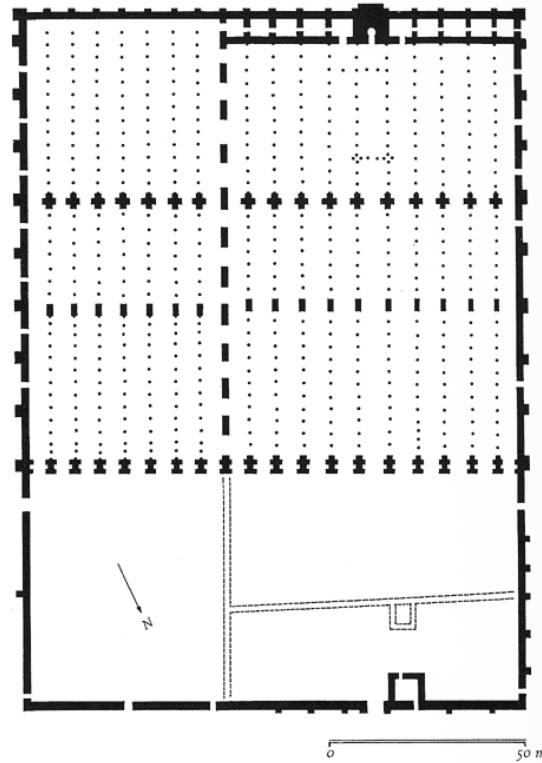


Fig. 2.14 Great Mosque of Cordoba, before the additions of 1523. Calvo, *Mezquitas de Al-Andalus*, 501.

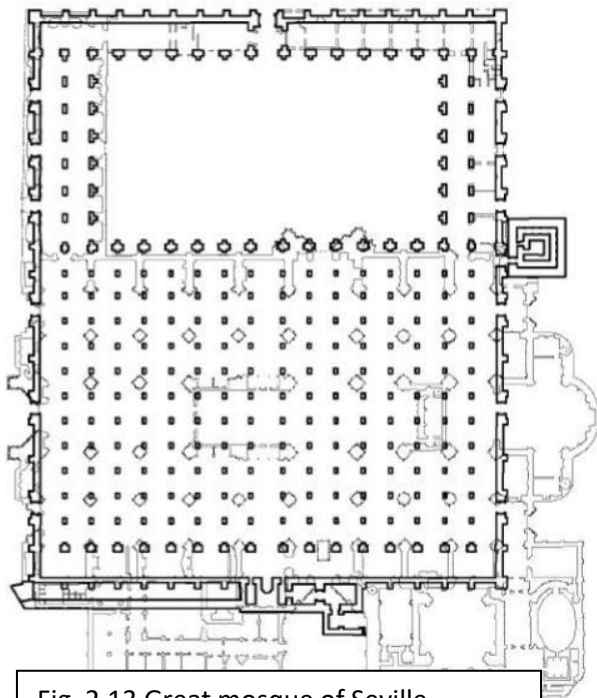


Fig. 2.13 Great mosque of Seville.

Source Calvo, *Mezquitas de Al-Andalus*, 501

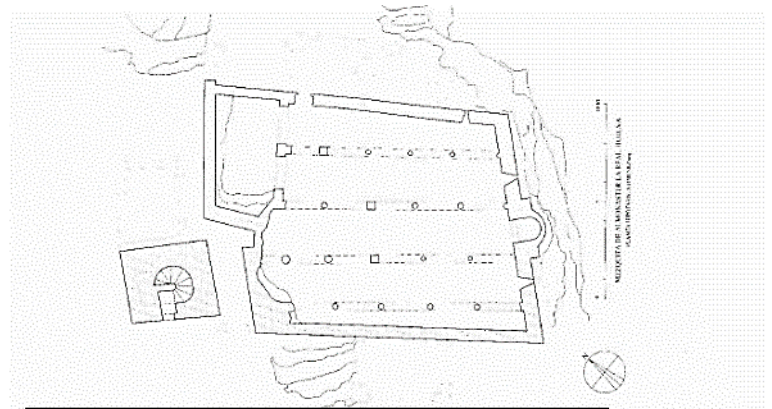


Fig. 2.15 Mosque of Almonaster la real, Nuestra Señora del Castillo.

Calvo, *Mezquitas de Al-Andalus*, 615.

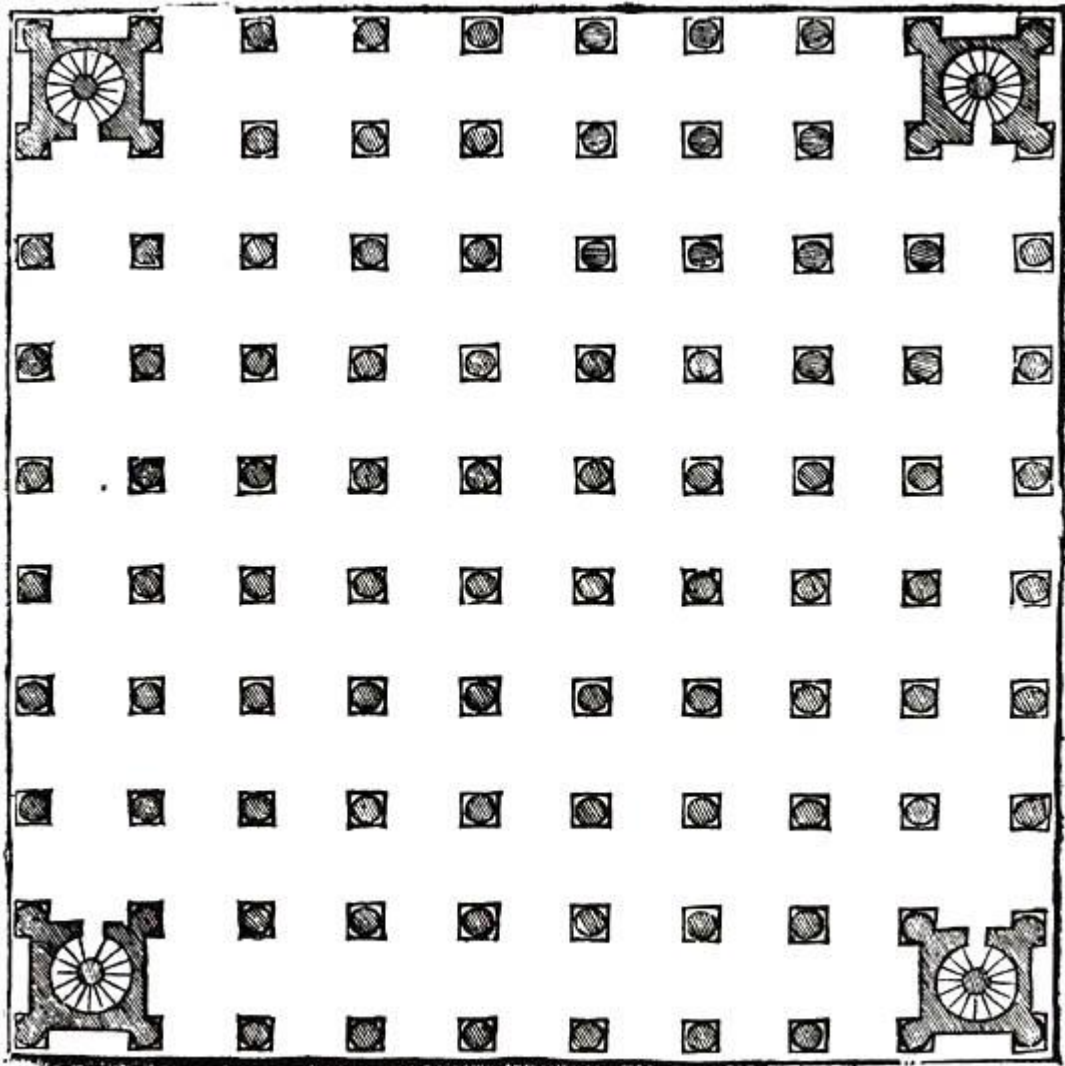


Fig. 2.16. Hall of the 100 Columns.
McAndrew, *Open-Air Chapels*, 392.



Fig. 2.17. Fray Diego de Valades. Ideal open church, standing on top of a teocalli, in an illustration of the mid sixteenth century.

McMahon, *Fragmented Memory*, 105.

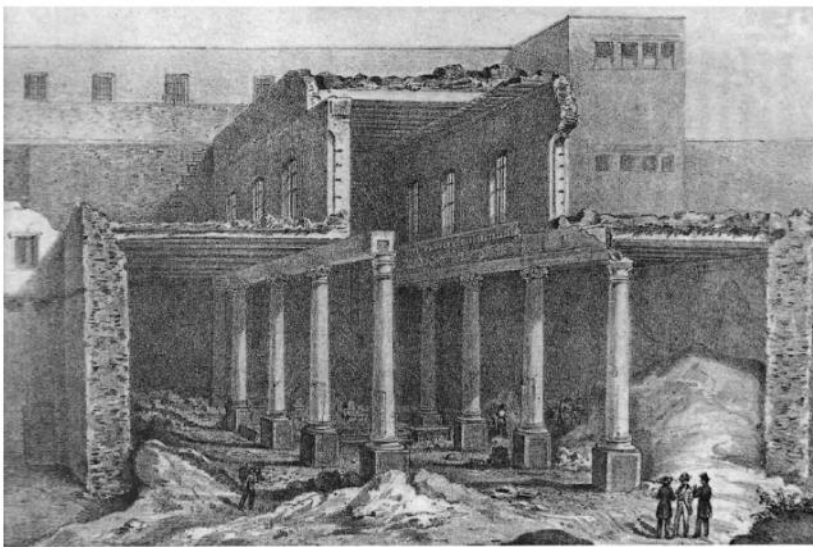
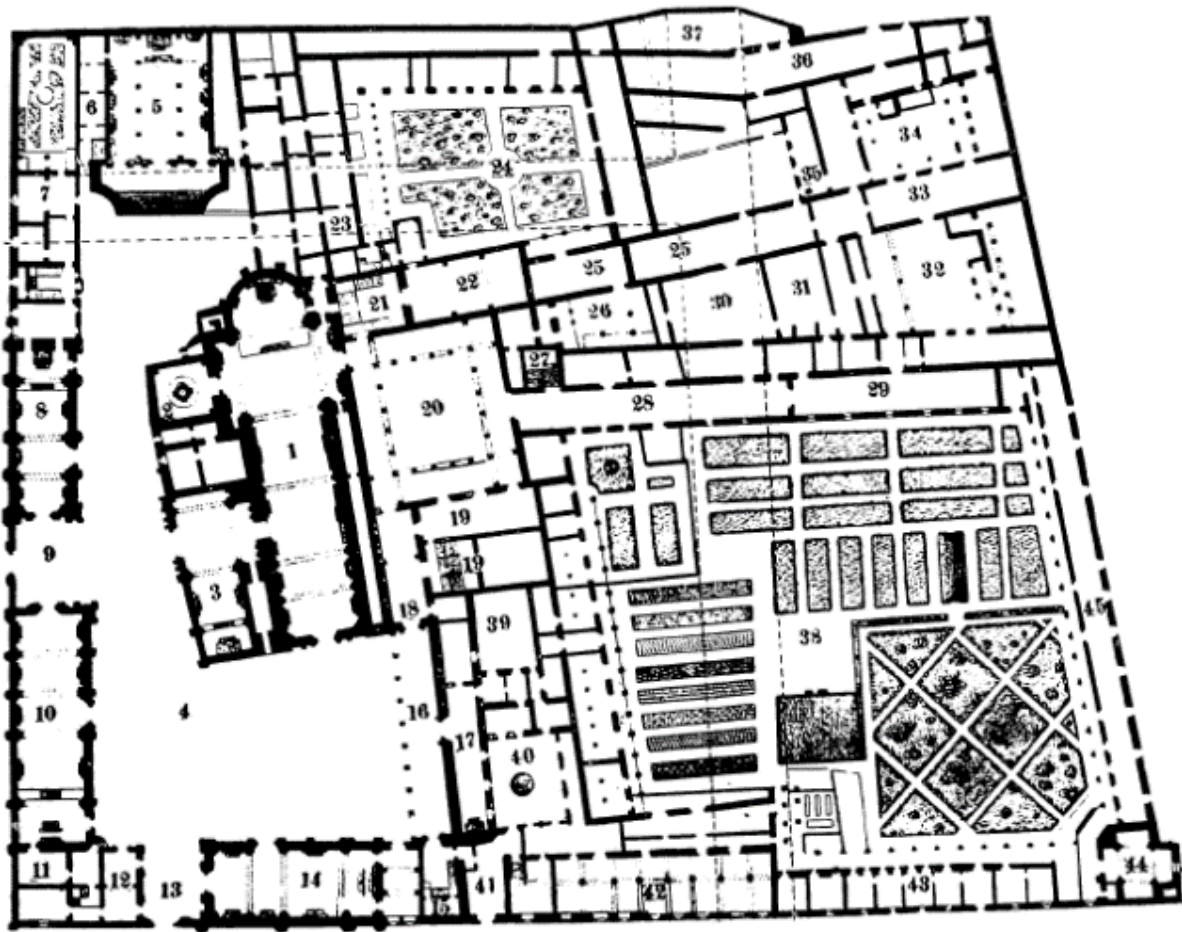


Fig. 2.18 Chapel of the Servites in ruins.

Tovar de Teresa, *City of Palaces*, 19.



193 PLAN OF THE MONASTERY OF SAN FRANCISCO AT THE TIME OF THE EXPROPRIATION

The dotted lines near the top, behind the apse of the main church (1), show where the new Calle Pedro de Gante will be cut, slicing off the end of the Chapel of the Servites (5) in the upper left corner. The left edge marks the present Avenida Madero; the lower edge the Calle San Juan de Letrán; and the dotted lines toward the right show where the Avenida 16 de Septiembre will be cut.

Fig. 2.19. Map presenting the parts of the Franciscan convent as they were segmented by the new streets.

Source: McAndrew, *Open-Air Chapels*, 399.



Fig. 3.1 Felix Parra, Matanza de Cholula. 1877. A painting that commemorates the massacre of Cholula by F. Parra, director of the Academy of San Carlos. Source: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, Portal Académico: <http://historiasua.wikispaces.com/file/view/6web.jpg/432610060/800x544/6web.jpg> (Accessed on 15/03/2017)



Fig 3.2. Google maps view of the convent of San Gabriel. The atrium, walled and dotted with three shrines – posas on the corners–, the multi-domed Royal Chapel, the Church of San Gabriel, the cloister of the convent and the cruciform church of the third order. Source: Google maps. (Accessed 03/05/2017)



Fig. 3.3. Interior of the Church of San Gabriel.



Fig 3.4 The Church of San Gabriel. Exterior.

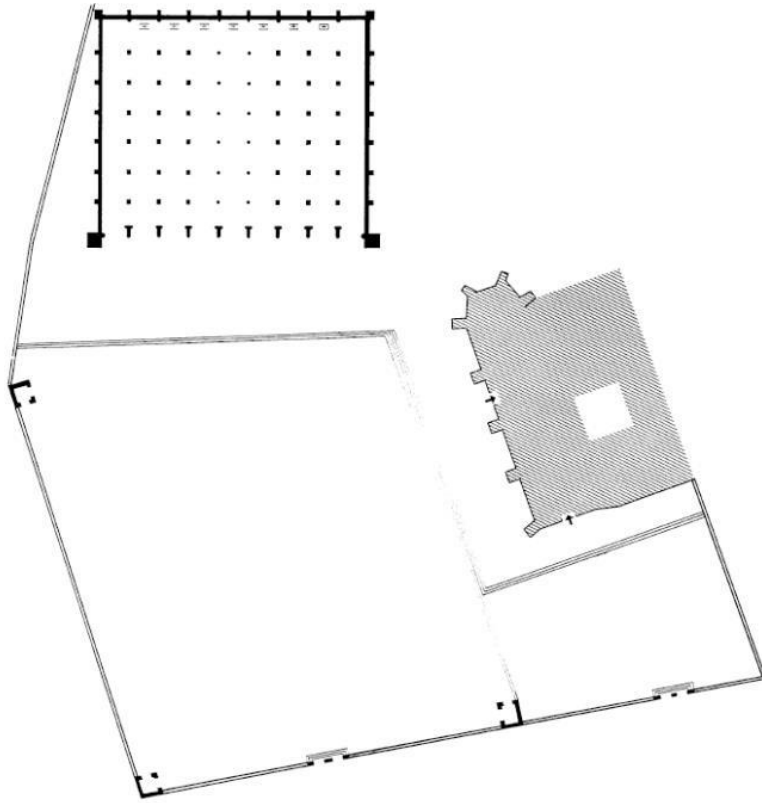


Fig. 3.5. Plan of the Convent. The plan of the Chapel when it was covered with wood. Note the difference in the orientation.

McAndrew, *Open-Air Chapels*, 404.

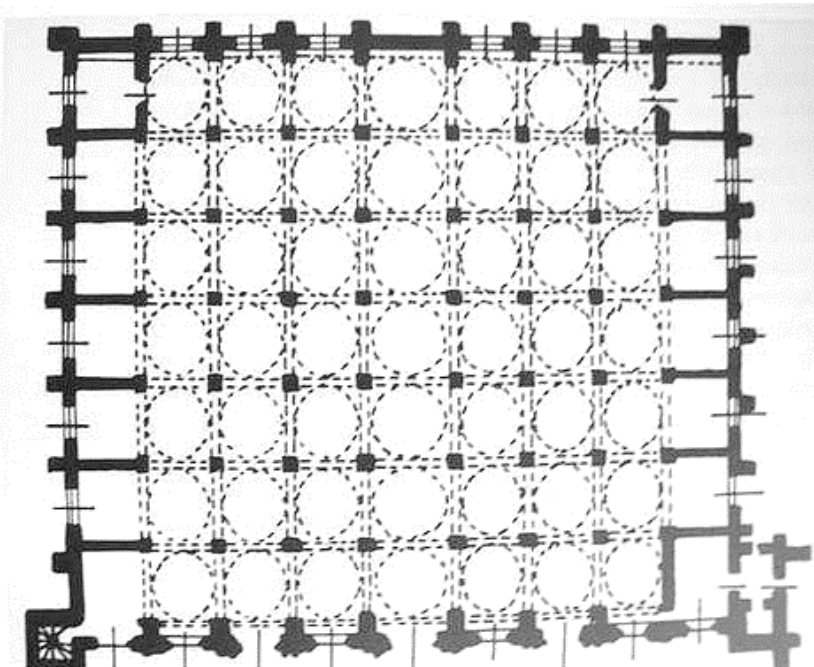


Fig 3.6. Plan of the Chapel, the way it stands today.

Source: Imagined Museum of Cordoba, <http://museoimaginadodecordoba.es/2009/la-gran-mezquita-novohispana-de-cholula?lang=en>

A similar plan in La Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 83.



Fig 3.9. Detail of the Royal Chapel and the Church of San Gabriel in *Relación de Cholula*, Gabriel de Rojas.

De la Maza, *La Ciudad de Cholula*, Fig 4.

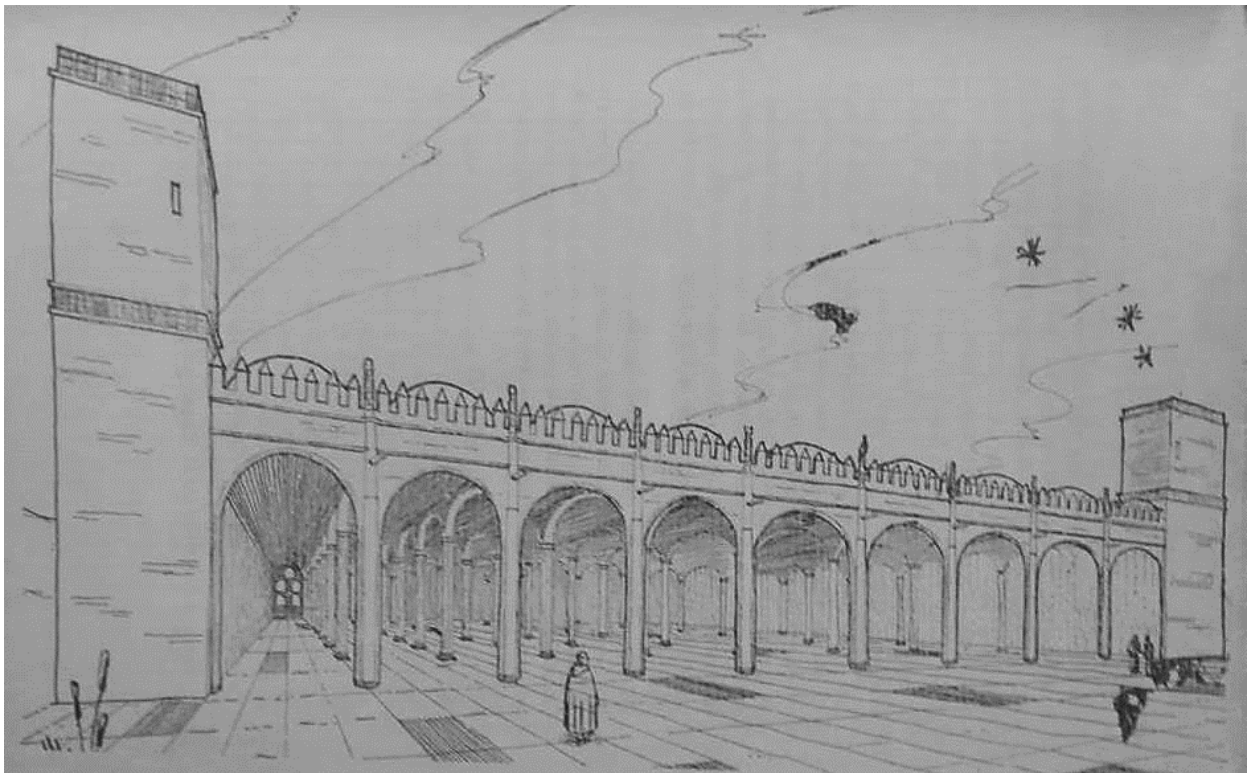


Fig 3.10 Drawing of the chapel when it had the barrel vaults. Drawing by Miguel Messmacher. De la Maza, *La ciudad de Cholula*, 85.



Fig. 3.11. Santa María la Blanca, Toledo. Wooden ceiling.

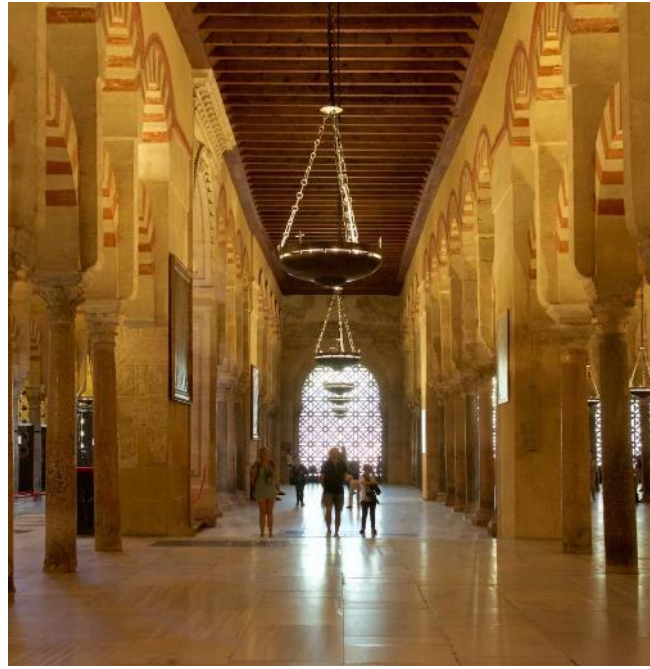


Fig 3.12. Great Mosque of Cordoba. Wooden ceiling.



Fig 3.13. Plateresque lateral door of the Church of San Gabriel.

Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.14. Dividing columns with gutters probably from the original construction. Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.15. Gutter and finial.



Fig. 3.16. Traces of old vaults.

Photo by John O'Leary, in Amador, Capilla real, Capilla de Naturales, Pamphlet of the Franciscan parish.



Fig. 3.17. Back of the stone pier dividing each gate.

Source: L. Barragán.

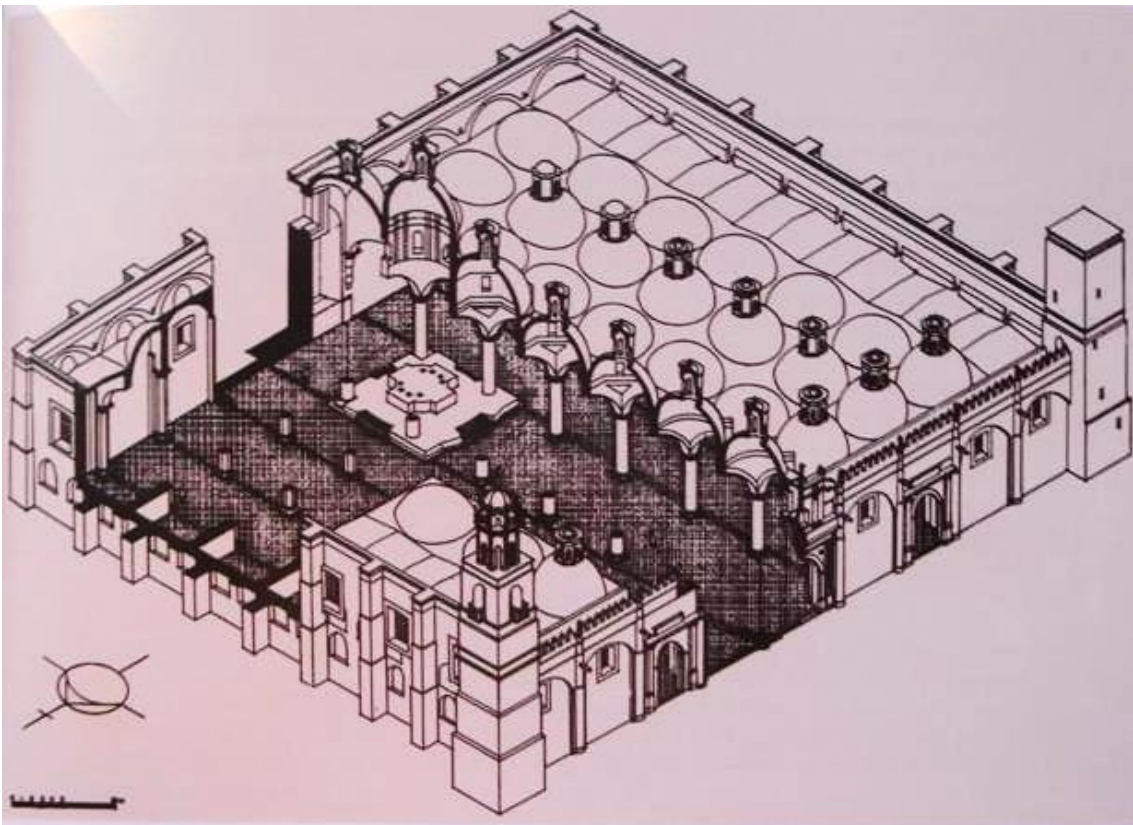


Fig. 3.18.
Axonometric plan showing main aisle.



Fig. 3.19. Interior of the chapel. Source



Fig. 3.20. Dome covered with tilework.



Fig. 3.21. Oval dome in the last aisle. Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.22. Round dome with lantern. Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.23. Cross vault on side nave. Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.24. Domes



Fig. 3.25. Façade of the Royal chapel of Cholula. The convent was given back to the Franciscans, that day there was a retreat for young Catholics, who were meditating at the atrium. Source: L. Barragán



Fig. 3.26. The Franciscan Medallion, showing the hand of Christ and the hand of St. Francis, both with the stigmata. Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.27. The Façade of the Cathedral of Puebla. Juan Carlos Sanchez, Wikipuebla, <http://wikipuebla.poblanerias.com/angeles-y-campanas-de-la-catedral-los-custodios-de-puebla/#prettyPhoto>. (Accessed 20/042017)



Fig. 3.28. Main gate of the Chapel with Franciscan medallions on the spandrels. Notice the different kind of masonry on the dividing columns with the gutters, and the gate.

Source: L Barragán.



Fig. 3.29. Arcaded entrance to the Mosque of Cordoba showing frontal gutters in action.

David Pedrero in Flickr.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/9098706@N06/5243185757>



Fig. 3.30 Rear wall of the Chapel, showing sealed windows, buttresses and masonry.
Source: L. Barragán



Fig. 3.31. A small pyramid in the site of Teotihuacan.
Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.32. Santa María la Blanca, Toledo. The White octagonal columns are just like those used in the Royal Chapel of Cholula.

Source: Tres Culturas: La Otra Historia del Reino de Toledo
<http://ciudadelastresculturastoledo.blogspot.com.eg/2015/09/las-sinagogas-en-el-toledo-judio.html>



Fig. 3.33. Brick and tilework decoration on the floor of Santa María la Blanca, in Toledo.

Wikiwand, Santa María la Blanca,
<http://www.wikiwand.com>



Fig. 3.34. Brick and tilework decoration on the wall of a house in Puebla. This one looks fairly new, but according to Toussaint, this is an old tradition in this city.

Source. L. Barragán.



Fig. 3.35. Plateresque gate of Santa María de la Asunción in Ocaña, Toledo.



Fig. 3.36. Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, in El Cubillo de Uceda, Guadalajara.



Fig. 3.37. Main gate of San Gabriel of Cholula.
Source: L. Barragán.



Fig. 2.38. 3d render of the Royal Chapel, and chapel of the Third Order.

Source Google maps.



Fig. 3.39. Ulu Cami, Bursa, Turkey, 1396-1399.



Fig. 3.40. Pulque being served during the Tlahuanca celebrated at the Convent of San Gabriel in 2014.

Source: Vive Cholula. "La Tlahuanca," Online.

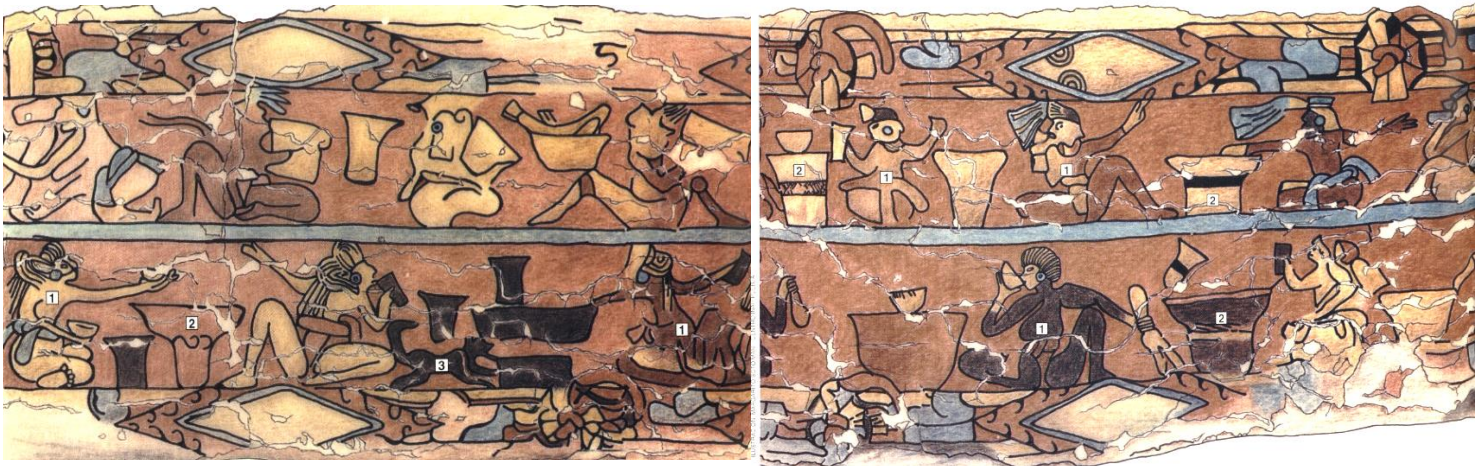


Fig. 3.41. The mural painting of the drinkers.

Rodríguez Cabrera, "El mural de los bebedores," 34-6.



Fig. 3.42. The statue of Saint Joseph during the Altepeilhuitl inside the Royal Chapel.

Source: Juárez Herrera, "Cristóbal Mártir," <https://www.flickr.com>.



Fig. 3.43. Procession at the Atrium of the convent during the Altepeilhuitl.

Source: Tlapaltotli, "Fiesta del Pueblo".



Fig. 3.44. The church of our lady of the remedies on top of the great pyramid of Cholula .
Pueblados22.mx, "La historia de la Iglesia de la Virgen de los Remedios."



Fig. 4.1.
Satellite view of the Franciscan convent of Jilotepec. In green the chapel.
Google Maps, my edition.

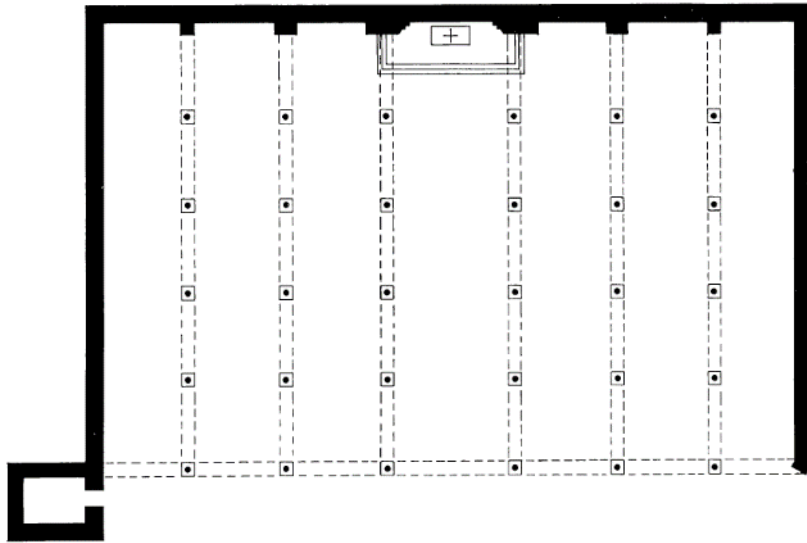


Fig. 4.2.
Conjectural plan of
the Chapel of
Jilotepec.

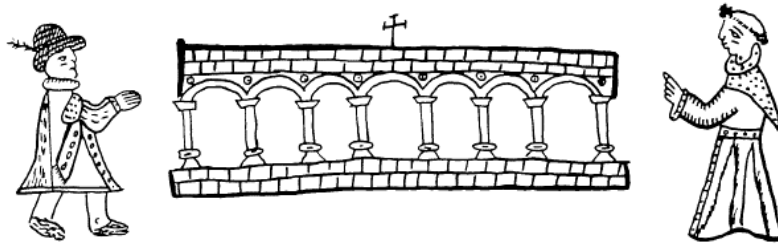
McAndrew, *Open-
Air Churches*, 413



Fig. 4.3.

The church of San Pedro y San Pablo from the courtyard, on the left the surviving tower of the chapel.

Source: Figueroa, Mel, *Exterior de Convento de Jilotepec*,



202 THE OPEN CHAPEL AT JILOTEPEC

A sixteenth-century drawing, also showing the encomendero (or mayor?) and a Franciscan friar.

Fig 4.4. The drawing from the sixteenth century from the Codex of Jilotepec, also showing a Franciscan friar on the right and the encomendero or the mayor on the left.



Fig 4.5. Interior of the church, and only remaining covered area of the Open chapel.

Bobadilla, "Presencia de la arquitectura mudéjar," 43



Fig 4.6. Façade of the temple of Guadalupe in Etzatlán, formerly a Indian hospital, and probably a Mosque-type chapel.

Google Street view.

<https://goo.gl/maps/GXT3L8y3Y832>



Fig. 4.7. Satellite view of the ex-Franciscan church, and the seventeenth century temple of Guadalupe. The mosque-type chapel must have been in front of the church.

Google maps.

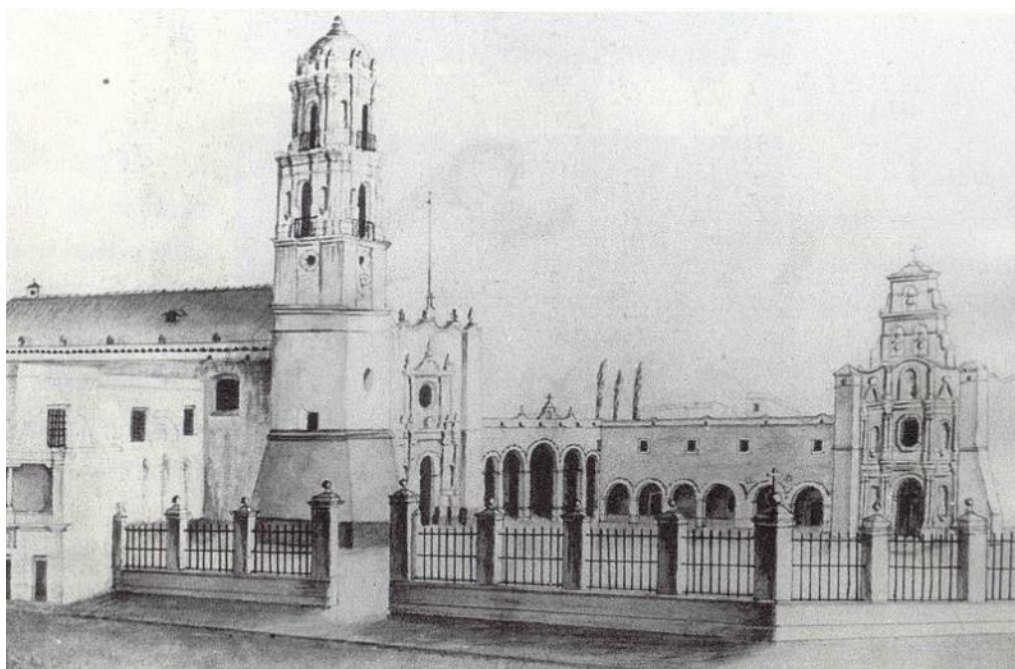


Fig 4.10. Nineteenth century lithograph showing the Franciscan complex of Toluca.

Source: Salinas, "Iglesia y convento," 46.



Fig 4.11. Model of the mosque-type chapel of Toluca.

Source. Habitat Lux, Maqueta – ex convento franciscano.



Fig. 4.12. Open Chapel Atlihuetzia.

Source: Mexico en Fotos, Capilla abierta anexa al Ex-convento del siglo XVI.



Fig. 4.13. Open chapel at Tepeyanco de las Flores.

Source:

Mapio. User: Marvel 1, <http://mapio.net>



Fig. 4.14.

Open chapel at Zinacantepec.

Source: Viaja Bonito, Cinco pueblos con encanto que debes conocer del Edomex, <http://www.24-horas.mx>,



Fig. 4.15.

Open Chapel at Calimaya.

Source: Thelmadatter, "Open chapel of Calimaya, Mexico State."



Fig. 4.16. Open Chapel at Otumba. Source: Rangel, Ismael Gomez, <https://www.panoramio.com>



Fig. 4.17. Open Chapel at Tlalnepantla de Baz Source Catedral Metropolitana de Tlalnepantla <http://es.mobilytrip.com>



Fig. 4.18. Open Chapel at Tlalmanalco. Photo. Kubler, *Arquitectura mexicana*, 404

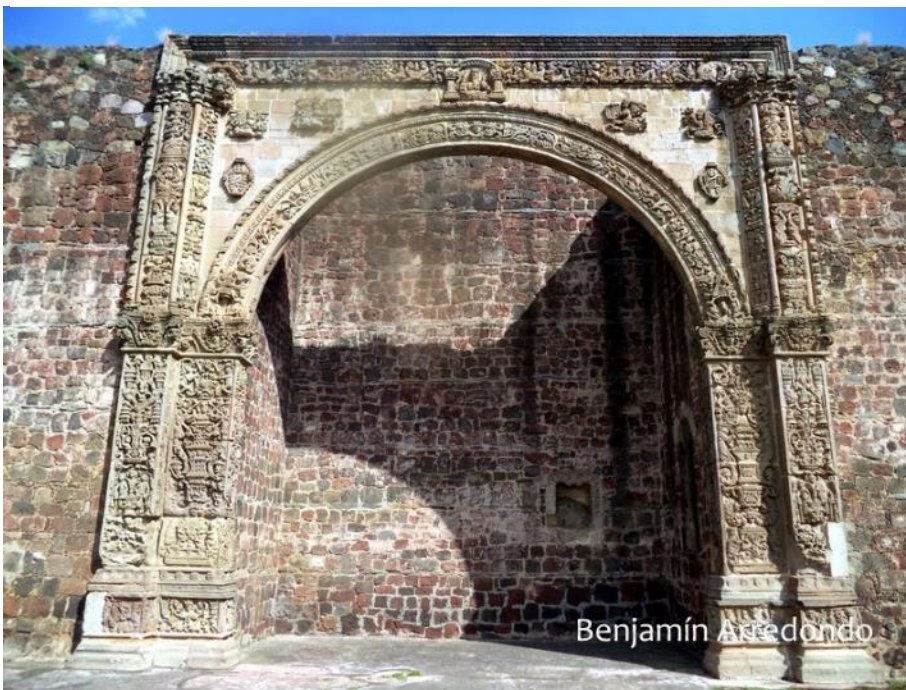


Fig. 4.19. Open Chapel at Tlalmanalco after restoration.

Photograph from
Arredondo, Benjamín,
Vamonosalbable
<http://vamonosalbable.blogspot.com.eg>



Fig. 4.20. Open Chapel at Tlalmanalco. Source: Brooker, <http://mexico.photium.com/photo970341.html>



Fig. 4.21. The open chapel at the convent of San Nicolas de Tolentino in Actopan. Source: Villafranco, "Templo y exconvento", <https://www.flickr.com>.

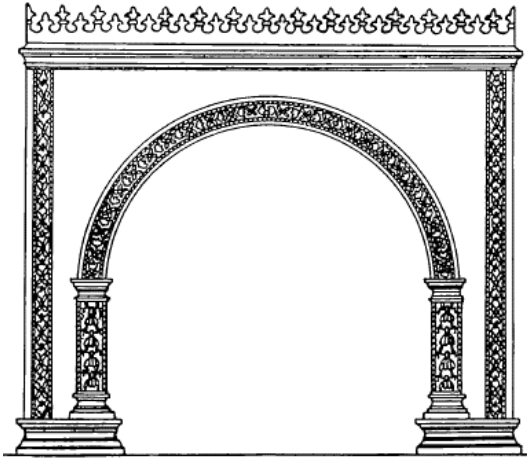


Fig. 4.22. Drawing of the open Chapel at Epazoyucán, showing the crenellations, McAndrew, *Open-Air Churches*, 471.



Fig. 4.23. Open Chapel at Epazoyucan. Source: BLXM, Epazoyucan, <https://www.flickr.com>

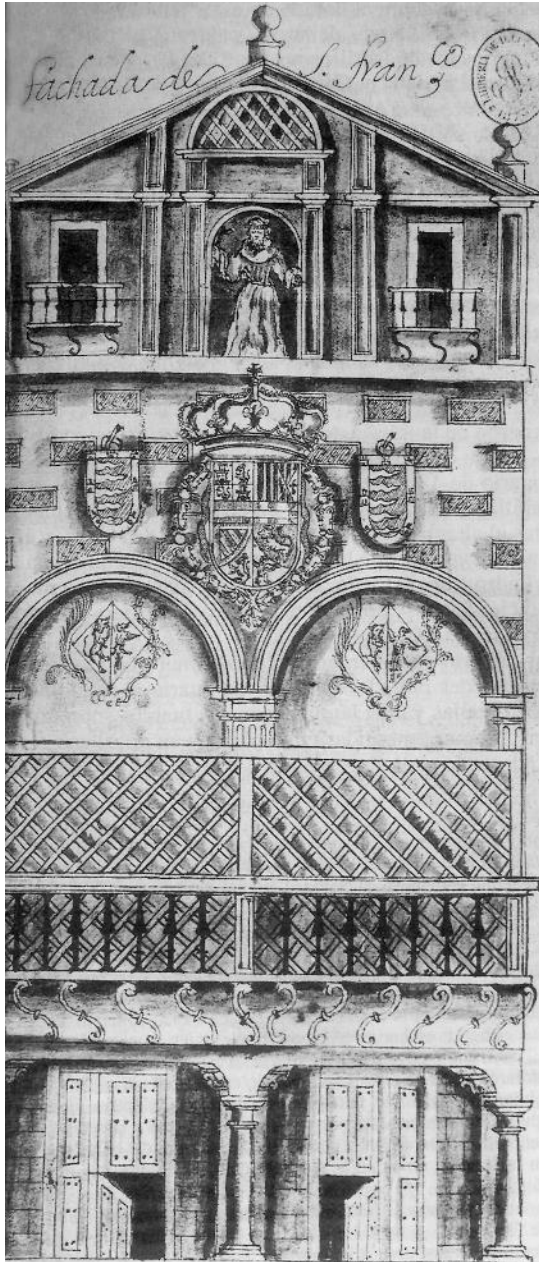


Fig. 4.24. Drawing of the façade of the Franciscan convent in Valladolid, for the book: *Historia de Valladolid*, by Juan Antolínez de Burgos.



Fig. 1. Alcalá de Guadaira. Ermita de San Roque. Vista del conjunto.

Fig. 4.25. Ermita of San Roque in Alcalá de Guadaira. Morales, *Nuevos datos*, fig. 1

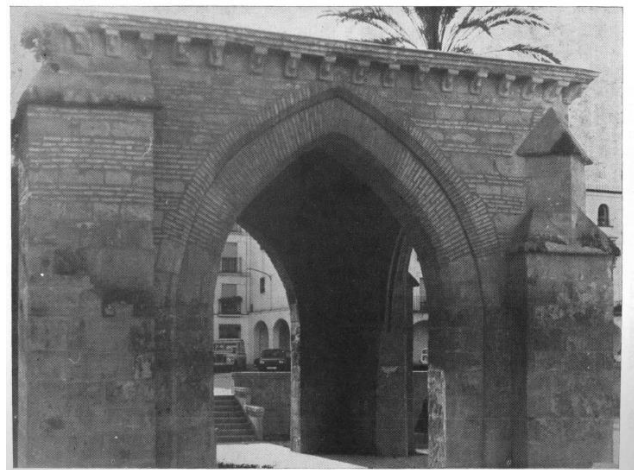


Fig. 4.26. Sanctuary of Nuestra señora de Fuensanta, Cordoba.

Source: Morales, *Nuevos datos*, 460, fig 3

APPENDIX

Annex 1.

Extant Spanish hypostyles buildings between fifteenth century to mid sixteenth century.

Name.	City/ Location.	Naves and aisles.	Construction	Demolition or conversion	Ref. ¹
Salvador de Albaicín	Granada	9 x 10, open to courtyard.	13 th to 14 th century.	Converted into church 1499. Demolished mid 16 c.	591
Nuestra señora del Castillo.	Almonaster la Real, Huelva.	5X5, open to small courtyard.	10 th century.	Conquered by Portuguese 1251. Castilian domain 1267, construction of apse. Extant.	614
Santa María de la Granada.	Niebla, Huelva.	5/7x 6	10th c.	It must have kept its hypostyle plan until early 16 C. now a basilica church.	618.
Nossa Senhora da Anunciação	Mertola, South Portugal, border Spain.	5x6	12c early 13c.	It was converted into church in 1239, but the building kept the hypostyle plan until the beginning of 16c.	653.
Great mosque of Ibn' Adabbas. First Friday mosque of Seville.	Seville.	9x10	829.	Demolition in 1671 ² Now, Iglesia Colegial del Salvador	655
Jami mosque of Seville. Today Cathedral of Santa María.	Seville	17 x 13	1169-1198	It was Christianized in 1252. The demolition was a slow process starting in 1401 and finished in 1528.	658
Jami Mosque	Vascos, Navalmoralejo, Toledo.	5X4	930-50 ³	It became a church in by the end of the 11 th century after Christian conquest. Hypostyle hall still extant, in ruins.	689
Mosque Cathedral	Cordoba.	19x34	785-988	The construction of the cathedral took place in 1523.	
Santa María la Blanca- Synagogue	Toledo.	5x8	Early 13 th c.	Still extant. Converted to church in the beginning of 15 th C. ⁴	

¹ Page number in Calvo, *Las Mezquitas*.

² Mendoza, "La Iglesia del Salvador," 125.

³ Discover Islamic Art.

http://www.discoverislamicart.org/database_item.php?id=monument;ISL;es;Mon01;11;en (accessed on 03/04/2017)

⁴ Kubisch, "Arhitecture", 266.

