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# REMOTE STORIES, LOCAL MEANINGS: *Knowledge Transfer and Acculturation Strategies in Nahua Sociocultural History*

ABSTRACT: In this paper I carry out a microphilological study of a section of the *Codex Indianorum 7,* a colonial devotional manuscript in Nahuatl preserved in the John Carter Brown Library. It contains wisdom teachings derived from the biblical Book of Tobit and directed to both parents and their children. I argue that this hitherto unstudied text reveals the Native author's liberty to creatively mold and adapt a culturally remote European prototype into the Native genre of oratorical art—the *huehuehtlahtolli*, or "words of the elders." The author also skillfully embedded and contextualized the content of the biblical instruction in local cultural meanings understandable and valid to an Indigenous audience. As an example of cross-cultural translation and colonial textual production, this source provides new insights into Native forms of agency, intellectual autonomy, and acculturation strategies reflected in creative dialogues with European traditions, developed and maintained despite the seemingly substitutive Christianization policies imposed on Indigenous people in the sixteenth century.

KEYWORDS: Nahuatl, Nahuas, Indigenous agency, acculturation, cross-cultural translation, culture contact, wisdom teaching, Old Testament

In his *Relación de la Nueva España*, Alonso de Zorita, jurist of the Spanish crown, wrote:

> In addition to raising their children with discipline and care . . . the parents had to give them many words of good counsel. These are preserved by Indigenous nobles in memory through their paintings. A long-serving friar active in this land who always dealt and communicated with these people, and instructed them, translated these [words of counsel] from their language. . . . He did not alter the content of what they gave him except for dividing it into smaller units so that the oration could be better understood, and he advised them to change the names of their gods and put the name of the true God and our Lord so that it can be clearly seen that they [the Indigenous people] are not . . . so much deprived of reason."[1]

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1. Alonso de Zorita, *Relación de la Nueva España,* Vol. 1 (Mexico City: Cien de México, 1999), 374. All translations, except those quoting a translation from English editions of a specific source, are mine.



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Zorita, who, among his many functions, served as a judge of the Audiencia court of Mexico from 1556 to 1564, here refers to Fray Andrés de Olmos and his compilation of *huehuehtlahtolli*, or "words of the elders." In fact, Zorita included the Spanish translation of some of these traditional discourses, known today through the 1600 edition of huehuehtlahtolli by Fray Juan Bautista Viseo. In this short passage, Zorita describes rather superficially the complex process of 'Christianization' of this Indigenous genre: according to him it was achieved simply by removing the names of their deities and replacing them with that of the only true God.

For Zorita, the purpose was to show that their Native authors were not "so much deprived of reason" as commonly claimed by his contemporaries. Prolonged debates about the rationality of the Indigenous people were by no means resolved by the famous encyclical *Sublimis Deus* promulgated by Pope Paul III on June 2, 1537, which announced that inhabitants of America were fully rational human beings capable of receiving the faith. Indeed, this papal bull was rendered ineffective by Charles V, who forced the pope to issue a brief *Non indecent videtur* annulling all of his previous pronouncements on the Indies, while the viceroy of New Spain was instructed to collect and destroy all extant copies of the decrees.[2]

The questioning of Indigenous people's intellectual and spiritual capacities gave rise to the enduring and widely applied division between *gente de razón* and *gente sin razón*—discriminating racial and social categories that outlived the colonial period. In accordance with the anti-Indigenous stance that characterized Spanish debates regarding the nature and capacities of the Native people and the legitimacy of European rule in the Americas, the aforementioned categorization imposed a fundamental distinction between the colonizers and the colonized, or, more precisely, the civilized and those identified as barbarian heathens or, at best, superficially Christianized Natives, lacking maturity and moral capacities.[3]

Notably, as seen in the testimony by Zorita, this enduring and powerful discourse concerning the status of Indigenous people does not overshadow his conspicuous admiration for the local genre of huehuehtlahtolli. Even more important, he overtly describes the necessary adaptations that made it possible for the

2. Peter Stamatov, *The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013), 51–52.

3. Kent G. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2005), 68–70; Barbara L. Voss, *The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis: Race and Sexuality in Colonial San Francisco* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 101–102, 113.

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huehuehtlahtolli speeches to continue performing their essential cultural and social roles in the Native society, as some of them were perpetuated in written form, successfully navigating religious censorship in New Spain and gaining the appreciation of the Europeans. As he describes the words of counsel given by a mother to her daughter, Zorita concludes that their values of honesty, chastity, committed service, and love for a husband fully correspond to the teachings that the biblical Sarah received from her parents when marrying Tobiah, a widely recognized authority of wisdom teaching in the Christian world.[4]

Indeed, such parallels and linkages were possible not only due to perceived cross-cultural universals, but also because of ongoing multifaceted exchange and exploration between the two sides of contact. In complete disregard for the emergent and unremitting symbolic violence classifying them as gente sin razón, Native intellectuals and erudites began to probe the many new sources of knowledge available to them. And despite the ongoing process of Christianization that gradually penetrated their own cultural system and beliefs, metamorphosing it in both overt and covert ways, they were able to participate in this process on their own terms. It was through their curiosity and agency that intercultural exchanges and interpretations crossed the Atlantic in more complex ways, and beyond the paths established or controlled by the Europeans. Just as Spanish newcomers were challenged by the complex traditions and sophisticated lore of the local people, the latter also explored, discussed, and assimilated cultural imports from the old continent as they saw fit. To this extent, when translated into Indigenous languages, the remote stories from Europe acquired new meanings and a new vitality on the American continent.

My goal in this paper is not only to explore the details and results of this process, but also to better understand its driving mechanisms, with special regard to the cultural agency of Indigenous actors. In my interpretation, I draw on insights offered by the theory of acculturation and the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality, arguing that they provide useful tools for explaining the processes of cross-cultural endeavors that developed in the early phase of Indigenous-European contact. Finally, I propose to reappraise the value and utility of the microphilological analysis of cross-cultural texts created in early New Spain by the Native people as essential sources for deep, contextualized understandings of the processes shaping the sociocultural realities of the Americas. In other words, I intend to view these materials as a necessary complement to other kinds of sources traditionally employed in reconstructions

4. Zorita, *Relación,* 381.

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of colonial history, thus facilitating access to those aspects of life, sociocultural values, and mentalities that remain largely invisible in other historical records.

## THE BOOK OF TOBIT IN THE *CODEX INDIANORUM 7*

Many of the fascinating trajectories of Christian sources available to Indigenous audiences can be traced in the so-called *Codex Indianorum 7*, a late sixteenth-century manuscript presently held at the John Carter Brown Library. A rich and heterogeneous compilation of diverse devotional materials, it contains apocryphal texts selected by literate Nahuas—the most probable authors of the document—from a variety of available sources. As argued by Louise Burkhart, who analyzed Marian miracles described in this manuscript, these stories had a strong resonance for Nahua culture.[5] No less pertinent to the Indigenous tradition was the story of Judas—at first glance, culturally and geographically remote—modeled on the life of Oedipus and perpetuated in a number of editions of the *Flores Sanctorum* derived from Voragine's *Golden Legend*. When retold in Nahuatl in the *Codex Indianorum 7*, it conveyed messages that were locally meaningful for Indigenous readers, transcending geographical and cultural distance and reverberating with their own concepts and traditions. I have proposed that these points of cross-cultural proximity operated as loci of meaning, revealing the textual agency of their Indigenous authors.[6] It would be wrong to assume that the Nahuatl translation from the Spanish original—faithful as it were—did not leave space for Native (re)interpretation; on the contrary, specific elements of remote stories often provided the local audience with sites for the construction of meaning, where apparently neutral elements in the narratives could potentially open culturally and religiously significant spaces of understanding.

Furthermore, European genres of literary production were also being assimilated into Indigenous textual practices, where they were equipped with local meanings by establishing "points of identity between key events in Christian history—as embellished by widely known legends—and the local past."[7] Quite often, the production of Native translators, who differed in their levels of understanding of the Spanish language—and, even more so, of Catholicism and Christian

5. Louise M. Burkhart, "'Here Is Another Marvel': Marian Miracle Narratives in a Nahuatl Manuscript," in *Spiritual Encounters: Interactions between Christianity and Native Religions in Colonial America*, N. Griffiths and F. Cervantes, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

6. Justyna Olko, "The Nahua Story of Judas: Indigenous Agency and the 'Loci of Meaning,'" in *Words and Worlds Turned Around, Indigenous Christianities in Colonial Latin America*, D. Tavárez, ed. (Boulder: Colorado University Press, 2017).

7. Louise M. Burkhart, "Ethnohistory 2014 Presidential Address: Christian Salvation as Ethno-ethnohistory: Two Views from 1714," *Ethnohistory* 63:2 (April 2016): 230.

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FIGURE 1

*Landscape with Tobias and the Angel*, Jan Breughel II, c. 1595, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (public domain)

lore—resulted in significant unorthodoxies. These emerged as Nahua authors struggled to make alien concepts and medieval stories understandable locally by situating them within their own cultural and social reality and merging Christian characters with their own role models.[8]

In this article, I probe the mechanisms and results of 'domesticating translation' in a section of the *Codex Indianorum 7* derived from the biblical Book of Tobit (fols. 19-22), and subsequently link them to broader acculturation processes within the sociocultural history of the Indigenous people of early New Spain. Going beyond Zorita's mid sixteenth-century observation that huehuehtlahtolli could be successfully adapted to new Christianized contexts, I will argue that this Native genre furnished a conceptual and explanatory framework for cross-cultural transfers and translations, while continuing to serve as an important repository of Indigenous concepts and values in colonial contexts. The Book of Tobit provides a fertile site for this kind of study. Presumably originating among

8. Mark Christensen, "The Use of Nahuatl in Evangelization and the Ministry of Sebastian," *Ethnohistory* 59:4 (Fall 2012); Mark Christensen, *Nahua and Maya Catholicism: Texts and Religion in Colonial Central Mexico and Yucatan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

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FIGURE 2
*Tobias and the Angel*, Adam Elsheimer (1578–1610), Rosenwald Collection (public domain)

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FIGURE 3

*The Expulsion of the Evil Spirit and the Prayer of Tobias and Sara*, attributed to Maarten van Heemskerck and Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert, between 1547 and 1549, Collection Voorhelm Schneevoogt (public domain)

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Aramaic-speaking Jews of the Diaspora, it was most likely composed between 225 and 175 BC.[9] Although the text remains canonical for Roman Catholics and most Orthodox traditions, there is no evidence that it was ever 'canonical' in the Jewish tradition.[10] Not particularly well known today, this ancient Hebrew text was quite popular in the 1500s and 1600s for its moral teachings, as is abundantly reflected in the writings and art of this period.

The fictive plot of the book, unrelated to any actual historical situation, was deliberately chosen by the author as a pedagogical example of Jewish narrative theology and as a means of strengthening the ethnic identity of Jews living in the Diaspora.[11] After the invasion of the Kingdom of Israel, Tobit/Tobias and his relatives were carried captive to Assyria. While in exile, in contrast to other members of his tribe, Tobit continued his religious duties according to biblical law: he refrained from eating the food of the heathen, helped the poor, and buried the dead. He married his kinswoman Anna, who bore a son, Tobiah (or Tobias). Blinded by bird droppings that fell into his eyes, the pious old Tobit was supported by his wife and his son Tobiah, who set off on an adventurous trip to Media (northwestern region of present-day Iran) to collect his father's money. The whole story has many elements of an entertaining folktale, including "defecating birds, meddling fish, menacing demons, and disguised angels."[12]

As has been pointed out, however, "the book of Tobit . . . is also an acutely theological work of literature."[13] It has long been known and studied as Jewish wisdom literature: beneath the surface of an entertaining narrative, it poses deep theological questions about the source and purpose of suffering, the benefits of righteousness, and the value of religious tradition.[14] The sapiential instructions are especially straightforward in Tobit's advice to Tobiah before his departure for Media.[15] These fatherly words of counsel, which highlight the importance of prayer, fasting, and works of charity, are transmitted to Tobiah when he sets off on his long journey, the outcome of which is uncertain. A key component of the paternal instruction is "acts of remembering" that entail

9. Geoffrey D. Miller, *Marriage in the Book of Tobit* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 207.

10. Micah D. Kiel, *The "Whole Truth": Rethinking Retribution in the Book of Tobit* (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2012); Michał Wojciechowski, "Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Tobit," *Biblical Annals* 4:2 (2014): 381–395.

11. Renate Egger-Wenzel, "Jewish Self-Awareness, Religious Identity and Acts of Resistance As Reflected in the Book of Tobit," in *Tobit and Judith: The Feminist Companion to the Bible*, Athalya Brenner-Idan, ed., with Helen Efthimiadis-Keith (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 5–6.

12. Francis M. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions in the Book of Tobit* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 255.

13. Jill Hicks-Keeton, "Already/Not Yet: Eschatological Tension in the Book of Tobit," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132:1 (2013): 97.

14. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions. . .*; "Acts of Charity as Acts of Remembrance in the Book of Tobit," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 23:1 (2013): 69–82.

15. Tobit 4.

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appropriate action and conduct: Tobit exhorts his son not only to remember God all the days of his life, but also the examples of his ancestors and the sufferings of his mother when she carried him in her womb.[16]

It was precisely these wisdom teachings, more than the adventurous story of the Book of Tobit, that attracted the attention of the Nahua author and made it the source for the Nahuatl text in the *Codex Indianorum 7*. While the story of Tobit and Tobiah is absent from any of the known direct prototypes of specific sections of this manuscript, such as the pre-Tridentine Spanish *Leyendas de los santos*, it was nevertheless widely explored in the post-Tridentine *Flos Sanctorum* by Alonso de Villegas, published in 1589 in Madrid. This text provides references to the marriage and life of Tobit and Anna, as well as Tobiah and Sarah, but does not include the wisdom teachings. It is rather unlikely that the Indigenous author relied directly on the Bible for his translation of these teachings of Tobit. The earliest edition of the Bible available in Spanish, the so-called *Biblia de Oso* or *Biblia de Casiodoro de Reina* was a Protestant edition printed in Basel in 1569. However, two quotations from Latin inserted into the Nahuatl text prove that the author was not familiar with this language, and therefore that he could not have derived his text directly from the Latin editions of the Old Testament that were available at the time.

The Tobit section starts on fol. 19v with the introductory text in Nahuatl: *Ƴzcatqui ỹ queni õquimachtiayan yn Sancto dobias yn ipiltzin*, or "Here is [told] how Saint Tobias instructed his son." It is followed by *Doce filiũ tuũ neitor. Canpitine illios ostedas dẽ ven. dxx*. This insertion is a distorted and incomplete quote from the Book of Ecclesiasticus: *doce filium tuum et operare in illum ne in turpitudinem illius offendas*, "Be strict with your son, [and persevere with him] or you will rue his insolence."[17] The second fragment, derived from the Latin version of the Book of Tobit, appears in the section on almsgiving in fol. 20v, attesting to the author's failure not only to write correctly most of the Latin words, but also to divide well the strings of words (for example, "*neitor. canpitine*" for "*ne in turpitudinem*").[18]

It is worth noting that the insertion of Latin quotes from the Bible was common for Spanish-language devotional texts and sermons that circulated in print from the

16. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions*, 302–304; *Acts of Charity*, 69–72.

17. Ecclus 30:13, *Revised New Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., 2018).

18. Fol. 20v: *Omere mosina oniv mi peccato . Et . amor te . Elei parib erat et nopãciencian xi . dios . inie anima tua mitepras : tobia[s?] 4. quia fit ofra magna orticora sumo deo . elemosino . onnivos* [sic, *for omnibus*] *fau deniiv geo*. Compare with: *Quoniam elemosyna ab omni peccato et a morte liberat et non patietur animam ire in tenebras. Fiducia magna erit coram summo Deo elemosyna omnibus qui faciunt eam* "For almsgiving delivers from death and saves people from passing down to darkness. Almsgiving is a good offering for all those who do it in the presence of the Most High." (Tobit 4:10-11). English translation after *Revised New Jerusalem Bible*.

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sixteenth century on. The Nahuatl text contains only several Spanish loanwords (e.g. *dios*, *diablo*, *purgatorio*, *vino*), while *Sancto Tobias* is from Latin.'[19] Nonetheless, the most probable scenario is that it was based on some Spanish sermon focusing on the moral examples derived from the Book of Tobit.[20] This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the sequence and arrangements of the words of counsel in the *Codex Indianorum 7* are different from those in the original Book of Tobit: some are omitted, while other pedagogical instructions have been added. Although I have been unable to identify the exact prototype, Tobit's wisdom teachings proliferated in religious texts, such as commentaries to the catechism and, above all, sermons.[21]

Moreover, many different versions of the Book of Tobit exist and the relationships between them pose considerable challenges to the historians of Judaism. Nonetheless, the second Latin quote copied into the Nahuatl text makes it possible to link the Latin base of the intermediate Spanish source to the version of the *Codex Amiatinus*, the earliest surviving complete manuscript of the Vulgate Latin Bible, produced around 700 AD.[22] An earlier study of the translation of the story of Judas contained in the *Codex Indianorum 7* revealed that the translation followed almost verbatim the pre-Tridentine Spanish edition of *Leyenda de los santos,* yet it provided space for the inclusion of local meanings and local readings.[23]

This kind of word-for-word comparison cannot be made in the case of Tobit's wisdom teachings contained in the manuscript under study. However, based on the content of the biblical Book of Tobit, I argue that the author of the Nahuatl text adopted a distinct strategy, taking much liberty in remodeling and readapting the original source text. His cultural agency is in fact manifest in every single passage of the instruction.

## The Wisdom Teachings of Tobit and Their Nahua-Christian Resonance

The instruction begins with an admonition to parents to instruct their children in the Christian faith and a good way of life based on the direct inspiration of God and following the praiseworthy example of Tobit, "the beloved of God":

19. The patriarchs, prophets, and certain other Old Testament figures were recognized and honored as saints in the liturgical tradition of the Catholic Church. See for example *Catechismus ex decreto Concilii Tridentini, ad parochos, Pij V. Pont. Max. iussu editus* (Rome: in aedibus Populi Romani, 1574).

20. Tobit 4:3-21.

21. Good examples are commentaries by Bartholomé Carranza de Miranda, the archbishop of Toledo (1558), fol. 358, and sermons by Fray Jaime Rebullosa (1616), Part II, fol. 168.

22. Stuart Weeks, Simon Gathercole, Loren Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Book of Tobit: Texts from the Principal Ancient and Medieval Traditions* (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 142.

23. Olko, "The Nahua Story of Judas."

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> This is truly the word of our lord God, the Holy Spirit, with which he addresses fathers and mothers; he tells them: "All you mothers, all you fathers, instruct your children well in goodness, so that they do not sin. If you do not educate your children well, you will offend the one deity, God. You should deter them from a bad way of life. And you should assign good and righteous duties to them; and parents' children should be obedient. It is very important that all people follow the example of Saint Tobit, the beloved of God."[24]

Neglect of parental duties will amount to a divine offense and will result in the offspring straying away from the path of righteousness. In this fragment, which is not directly based on the Book of Tobit but probably follows the structure of the translated source, most likely a sermon, the Indigenous author follows Nahuatl conventions of polite, elegant speech. The doublet referring to parents, *in tetahhuan, in tenanhuan*, 'people's fathers, people's mothers' was a common manner of address in polite modes of reference.[25] It is used in traditional huehuehtlahtolli as the collective form of reference for admonishing parents, and in colonial dramas based on traditional forms of expression.[26] In the traditional huehuehtlahtolli, the doublet can also appear as "we who are your mothers, we who are your fathers": *ca timonaoan, ca timotaoan in timitznotza, in timitztzatzilia: ma xiccui, ma xicana in totlatol, ma xicmopialti* ("For we are your mothers, we are your fathers who speak to you, who cry out to you. Take our words, grasp them, guard them").[27]

Typical for 'Christianized-Nahua' discourse, the Nahuatl Tobit text also employs such expressions as *cualli nemiliztli* and *amo cualli nemiliztli*, 'good life' and 'bad life,' respectively, often seen in a broad range of Christian doctrinal texts in Nahuatl, such as sermons, treatises, or confessional materials.[28] The opening admonition in our text is followed by a brief introduction of Tobit and his son Tobiah. Tobit is described as a person of "an entirely righteous heart" because

24. Fol. 19v: *Ynin huell itlatoltzin yn to.º D. spũto . S.ancto ynic quinnotza yn tetahuã yn tenãhuã quinmolhuillia yn amehuãtin yn ãtenahuã yn ãtetahuã. huel xiquinmachticã yn qualli yn amopilhuã ynic amo tlatlacozque Intlacamo xiquimizcallican yn amopilhuan ca yc ãquimoyollitlacalhuizque yn icel teotl yn dios . anquincahualtizque yn amo quali nemilliztli . Auh ye anquintequitizque yn qualli yectli yhuã tetlacamatizque yn inpilhuã yn tetahuan yn tenahuan Cenca monequi . mochi tlacatl ytech mixcuitizque Yn Sancto dobias Yn itlaço yn dios .*

25. Frances Karttunen, "Conventions of Polite Speech in Nahuatl," *Estudios de Cultura* Náhuatl 21 (1990): 284. 'Father' and 'mother' are kinship terms, and as such in Nahuatl must always be possessed. When a more general meaning is intended, as is the case in this quote, the non-specific human possessive prefix *te-* (people's) is used.

26. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain* [hereafter FC], Bernardino de Sahagún, and Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J. O. Anderson, eds. and trans. (Santa Fe, NM; Salt Lake City: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1950-1982), Book 6: 135, 209, 213; Fernando de Horcasitas, *Teatro náhuatl,* Vol. 1 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2004), 419.

27. FC, Book 6: 100.

28. For example, see Louise M. Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 35; Fray Juan de Gaona, *Colloquios de la paz y tranquilidad christiana* (Mexico City: Pedro Ocharte, 1582); Fray Andrés de Olmos, *Tratado de hechicerías y sortilegios* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, [1553] 1990); Fray Alonso de Molina, *Confesionario mayor* (Mexico City: Antonio de Espinosa, 1569), fol. 16r.

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of his marital conduct: keeping his chastity, contracting marriage in a good way, and obeying God's commandments.[29] Above all, however, the biblical personage is evoked because of the way he raises his son through his wisdom teachings: "He was telling him: now you who are my son please heed to the words of me, your father. Be truly inspired by them, truly counsel yourself with them, truly grow with them so that you may truly live virtuously on earth, so that God may truly show you mercy, so that you may truly order your life with virtue."[30]

The form of reference, *in tinopiltzin*, "you who are my son," is often used in traditional huehuehtlahtolli and songs, and it has also found its way into Nahua Christian discourse.[31] In fact, not only this expression, but the whole parental invocation uttered by Tobit is reminiscent of the solemn beginning of the traditional huehuehtlahtolli directed by a father to his son, as included by Sahagún in his collection of traditional orations in Book VI of the *Florentine Codex*: *In tinopiltzin, in tinotelpuch: tla xiccaqui in tlatolli*, "You who are my son, you who are my youth, please listen to the words."[32] Sometimes it forms part of a traditional metaphorical triplet in which the son is identified as a valiant warrior who must actively face adversities and shape his own life: *tla xicmocaquiti in tinoquauh, in tinocelouh, in tinopiltzin,* "Listen to it you who are my eagle, my jaguar, my son."[33] Another detail that evokes affinity with the traditional 'words of the elders' is the verb *cuecuentilia*, [literally: 'to repeatedly put something into a row' (from *cuemitl,* or furrow)], that is, to arrange something in order, also attested in the *Florentine Codex*, with a reference to 'putting things in order.'[34] The author of the Nahuatl adaptation of the teachings of Tobit employs this verb in a reflexive form (*timocuecuentilliz*) combined with the relational word *qualtilliztica* ('by means of goodness') as an

29. Fol. 19v-20r: *Cenquizca mellahuac yn iyollo Cenca chipahuac Yn inemilliz Ca monamictiuh qualtilliztica mopixtinenca . quicenpixtinēca yn itenahuatiltzin yn dios Cenca quimoyectenehuillitinemia . quimotlaecoltillitinēca Auh ca onquimomaquilli yn dios. Yn ipiltzin yn quitocayotique yn itatzin dobias . Auh yn ipiltzin çano dobias . Auh yn iquac yn ye qualtõ yn piltzintli yn dobias . mochipa quimomachtilliaya yn itatzin Yzcatqui yn quimolhuiliaya:* "His heart was entirely righteous and his conduct was very pure because he entered into marriage with virtue, keeping his chastity. Everywhere he went he perfectly kept God's commandments, praising him very much, and serving him. And God gave him a son whom they named after his father Tobias. And his son was also Tobias. And as the boy Tobias matured, his father was constantly instructing him. This is what he was telling him."

30. Fol. 20r: *quimolhuilliaya yn axcã tla xicmocaquilti yn tinopiltzin y notlatol y nimotatzin huel xicmoyolloti huell ipa ximononotza huell ic ximozcal---li ynic huel qualtilliztica timonemiltiz . yn tlal.*[c] *ynic huel mitztlaocolliz yn dios . ynic huel qualtilliztica timocuecuentilliz*.

31. For example, FC, Book 6: 61, 105, 113; John Bierhorst, *A Nahuatl-English Dictionary and Concordance to the Cantares Mexicanos*: *With an Analytic Transcription and Grammatical Notes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 493, 537, 623; Barry D. Sell and Louise M. Burkhart, *Nahuatl Theater: Our Lady of Guadalupe* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 204; and Juan de Osorio, *Apología y declaración en diálogo en la lengua mexicana del símbolo de san Atanasio y confesionario breve* (Mexico City: Juan Ruiz, 1653).

32. FC, Book 6:113. See also FC, Book 6:105.

33. FC, Book 6:107.

34. FC, Book 6:46.

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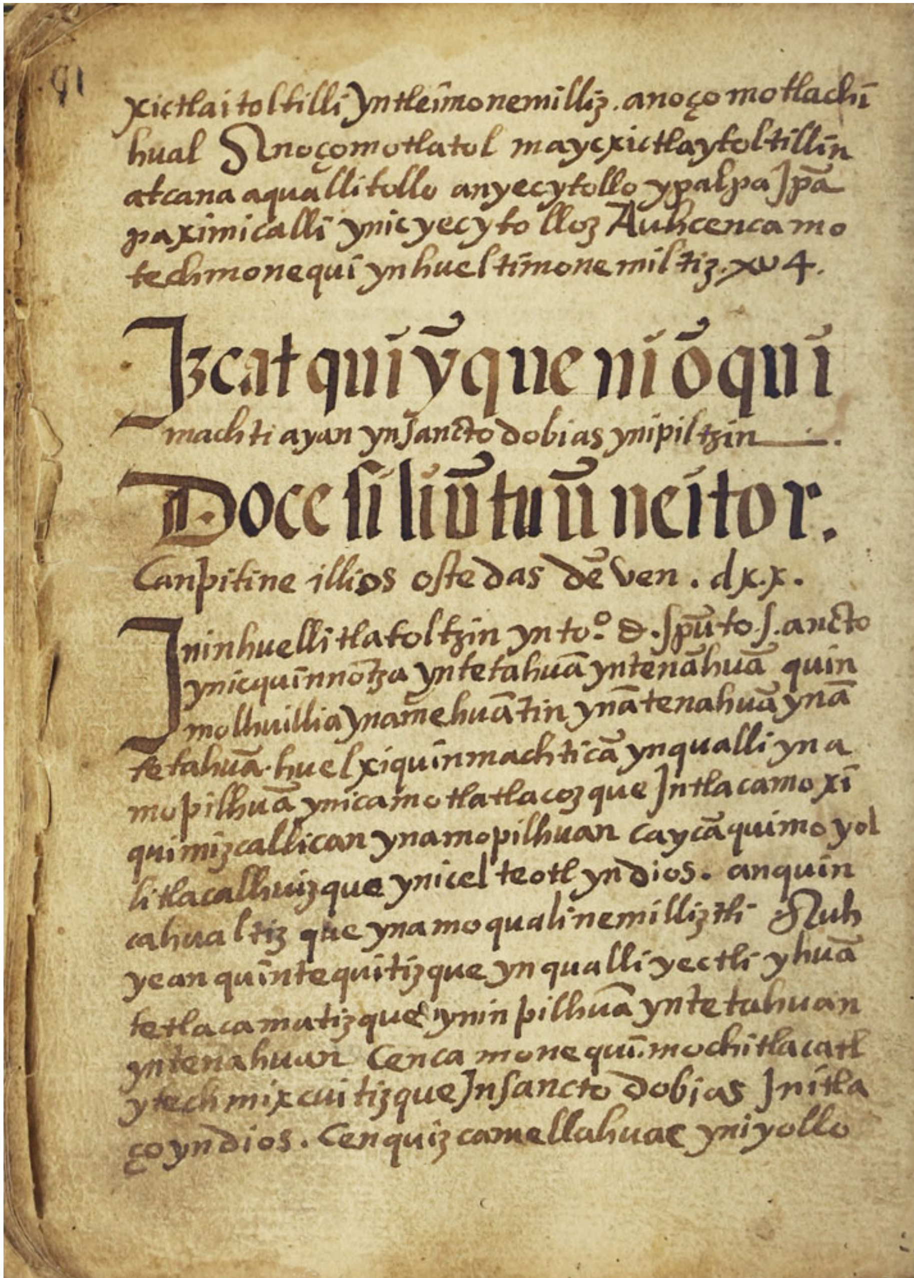
FIGURE 4

Codex Indianorum 7, fol. 19v, courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library


xictlaitoltilli yntleimonemilliz . anoço motlachi
hual Anoçomotlatol mayexictlaytoltillin
atcana aquallitollo anyecytollo ypalpa Jpa
paximicalli ynicyecyto lloz Auhcenca mo
techimonequi ynhuel timonemiltiz . xv4 .

Izcatqui yquenioqui
machtiayan yn Sancto Dobias ynipiltzin .

Doce filiu tuu ncitor .

Canpitine illios oste das de ven . dx.x .

Ininhuelli tlatoltzin ynto . d . spu to . s . ancto
ynicquinnotza yntetahua yntenahua quin
mollhuillia ynamehuatin ynatenahua yna
tetahua . huel xiquinmachtica ynqualli yna
mopilhua ynicamo tlatlacozque Intlacamo xi
quimizcallican ynamopilhuan caycaquimo yol
litlacalhuizque ynicel teotl yndios . anquin
cahualtiz que ynamoqualinemillizthi Auh
yean quintequitizque ynqualli yecthi yhua
tetlacamatizque ynin pilhua yntetahuan
yntenahuan Cenca monequi mochitlacatl
ytech mixcuitizque Insancto Dobias Initla
coyndios . Cenquiz camellahuac yniyollo

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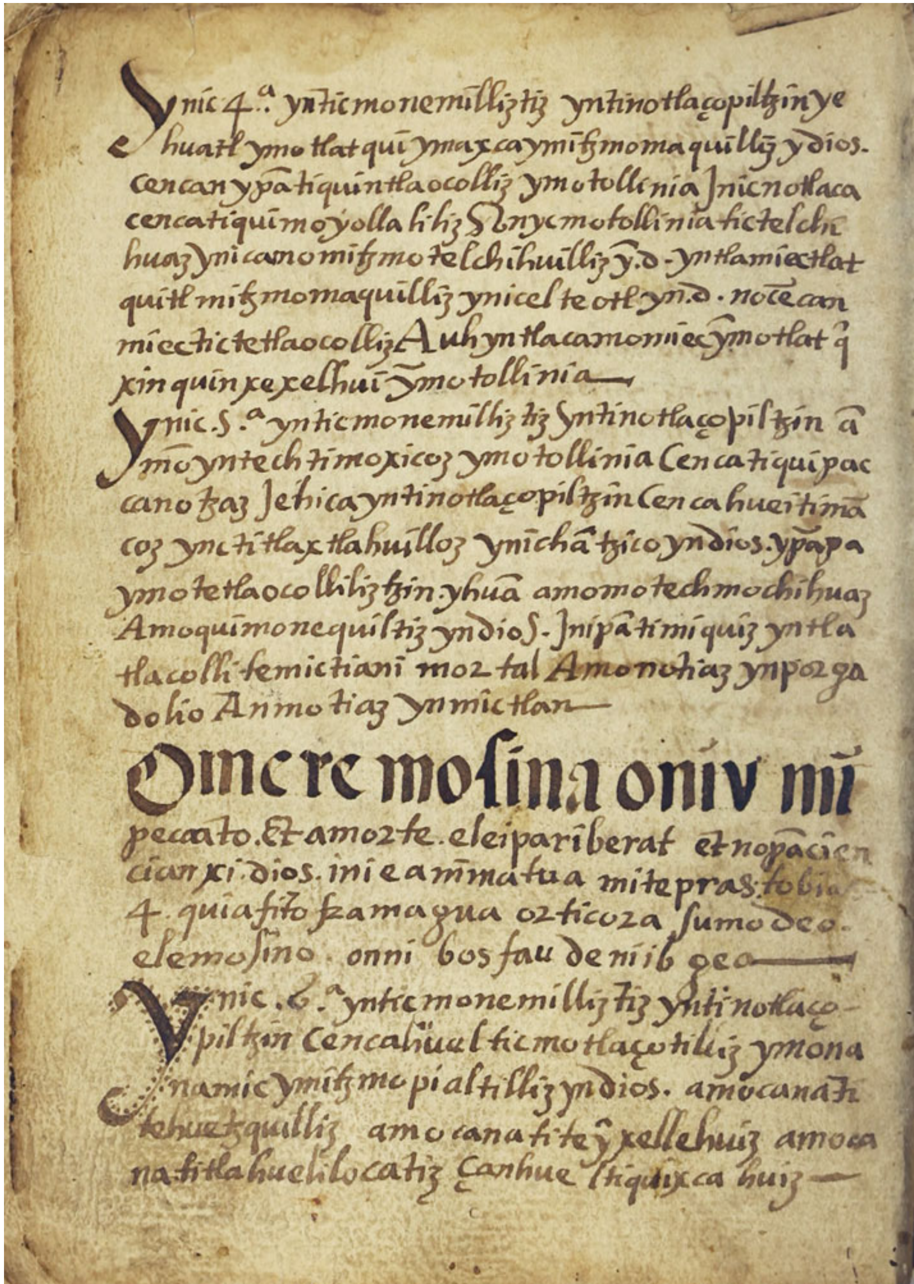
FIGURE 5

Codex Indianorum 7, fol. 20v, courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library



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elegant metaphorical expression conveying the sense of 'putting oneself constantly in order by means of virtue'.

In the pieces of advice that follow, Tobit instructs his son to, literally, "live remembering" God in all his daily activities such as sleeping, eating, and working. It is through this remembrance and praise that God will strengthen him so that he will not "fall into devils' hands." This correct way of living also entails observing the Ten Commandments.[35] This fragment of the Nahuatl text, though clearly related to the Book of Tobit, diverges from its prototype in several meaningful ways.[36] Pious Tobit in the biblical text urges his son to remember the Lord "all your days," but, unlike the Nahuatl version, without listing any specific activities, such as eating or working. He is also to avoid sin and transgression of divine laws, performing good deeds. It is acting in truth that will make his son succeed in his endeavors. The Nahuatl adaptation follows the general rhetoric of Christian instruction of the time, such as avoiding sin and acquiring strength as remedies that avail against the devil's traps; however, it is more specific and easier for a Native audience to relate to. Interestingly, the biblical prototype does not contain any reference to devils or hell. Likewise, the Ten Commandments are not mentioned in the Book of Tobit, but they are very much present in the context of typical sermons and basic Christian instruction in New Spain.

In addition, the verb 'to strengthen' featured in the Nahuatl passage is not present in the related fragment of the Book of Tobit. While this term is often employed in Nahuatl Christian texts as an equivalent of the Spanish concept of *reforzar* (to strengthen) or *dar fuerza* (to give strength), it may also be a typically Nahua concept introduced by the author. The convergence of the Native and Spanish concepts, in fact, could have contributed to the use of this term in the Indigenous-Christian terminology. The Nahuatl verb 'to strengthen' (*chicahua*) and the derived noun 'strength' or 'strengthening' (*chicahualiztli*) refer to a fundamental Native concept denoting both the spiritual and physical capacity and the ability to act, reinforced by appropriate conduct, instruction, or religious practice. Abundantly attested in early colonial Indigenous texts of

35. Fol. 20r: *Ynic . 2.ª yn ticmonemilliztiz yn titlaçopiltzin Cemicac tiquilnamictinemiz y moteuoh y motlatocatzin y mo*[co]*chian y motlaquayan Y motlatequipanohuãyan Ayc ticmolcahuilliz mochipa ticmoyectenehuillitinemiz ynic mitzmochicahuilliz ynic ac amo ỹmac tihuetziz yn diablome Ynic . 3.ª yn ticmonemilliztiz yn tinotlaçopiltzin huel ticcẽpixtinemiz yn teonahuatilli atle tiquilcahuaz y matlactetl:* "The second [counsel] that you, my beloved, should live by: you always be mindful of your God, your ruler, everywhere you go: in him you sleep, in him you eat, in him you work. You will never forget that you are always to praise him everywhere you go, so that he will give you strength, so that you will not fall into the devils' hands. The third [counsel] that you, my beloved, should live by: you will fully keep the divine commandments everywhere you go, you will forget none of the Ten [Commandments]."

36. Compare with Tobit 4:5-6.

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different genres, it also survives today as an essential concept in traditional Nahua communities.

The verb '*chicahua*' and forms derived from it abound in traditional huehuehtlahtolli. For example, the *Bancroft Dialogues* is a collection of traditional dialogues and polite speech delivered on different occasions, compiled (or recorded) in the seventeenth century in the Jesuit circles of Horacio Carochi and preserved in Berkeley's Bancroft Library.[37] It contains 23 attestations of the verb *chicahua* and its derivations, most referring to a person's 'strengthening' at God's behest and conveying the sense of both strength and health. Thus, in these colonial Native texts, the usage of specific terminology, such as that relating to 'strengthening,' incorporated fundamental Native concepts into the text while also aligning nicely with Christian terminology.

The next fragment of Nahua wisdom teaching reflects the order and content of the relevant section of the Book of Tobit that refers to almsgiving.[38] Tobit instructs his son to favor and console the poor and orphans with the earthly goods bestowed by God: if the earthly goods one thus receives are numerous, then their almsgiving should likewise be generous. However, if someone does not have much property, they should "divide it among the poor": *Auh yntlacamo miec ỹ motlatq̃ xinquinxexelhui ỹ motollinia*, "And if your property is not great, divide it among the poor." This seems to be a departure from or perhaps a misunderstanding of the original biblical counsel to persons of limited means to give whatever alms they can afford with goodwill and no shame. The sixteenth-century meaning of the verb used in this context, *xexelhuia*, leaves space for some ambiguity, as it means both "to divide something between others" or "to divide/share something with others."[39]

The teaching continues with an admonishment not to speak against the poor but to treat them compassionately; it is through this compassion that one will gain a reward from God, protect oneself from falling into mortal sin, and, consequently,

37. Ángel María Garibay, "Huehuetlatolli, Documento A," *Tlalocan* 1:1 (1943): 31–53; Frances Karttunen and James Lockhart, "The "Huehuehtlahtolli" Bancroft Manuscript: The Missing Pages," *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 18 (1986): 171–179; Frances Karttunen and James Lockhart, eds., *The Art of Nahuatl Speech: The Bancroft Dialogues* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).

38. Tobit 4:7-11.

39. Fray Alonso de Molina, *Vocabulario en la lengua castellana y mexicana*, Vol. 2 (Mexico City: Antonio de Espinosa, 1571), fol. 158v (*repartir algo a otros. o partir algo con otros*); *Codex Indianorum 7*, fol. 20v: *Ynic 4.ª yn ticmonemilliztiz yn tinotlaçopiltzin yehuatl y motlatqui y maxca y mitzmomaquilliz y dios. cencan ypã tiquintlaocolliz y motollinia Yn icnotlaca cenca tiquimoyollaliliz Anyc motollinia tictelchihuaz ynic amo mitzmotelchihuilliz ỹ . d . yntla miec tlatquitl mitzmomaquilliz yn icel teotl yn d . no cẽcan miec tictetlaocolliz Auh yntlacamo miec ỹ motlatq̃ xinquinxexelhui ỹ motollinia:* "The fourth [counsel] that you, my beloved son, should live by: you will greatly favor the poor and the orphans with the goods and property that God bestows on you. You will console them greatly. You will never despise the poor so that God will not despise you. If the one God gives you much property, you will also favor people with much of it. And if your property is not great, divide it among the poor."

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avoid the gloomy perspective of ending up in purgatory (*porgadolio*) or in hell (*mictlan*).[40] The Nahuatl text is much more sophisticated with regard to the desired treatment of the poor, whereas the reference to hell is a modification of the original biblical statement that almsgiving protects from death and the descent of one's soul "into the darkness."[41] The level of detail in specifying the undesirable afterlife destinations of the human soul no doubt originates in the context of Christian instruction in early New Spain, highlighting the imminent threats awaiting unruly recruits to the new faith. The passage ends with an illegible Latin quote (discussed earlier in this paper), which bears some distant genetic relationship to the Latin version of the Book of Tobit, but apparently is employed as a kind of a ritual or magic formula, thus enhancing the legitimacy and rhetorical efficacy of the Nahuatl text.

## PRESCRIBED SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

Within the wisdom teachings based on the Book of Tobit, special focus is given to marriage. The book praises the purity of marriage as an institution established by God, who bestows blessings upon married couples. Accordingly, the laudable example of Tobiah and Sarah became part of a well-established canon of Christian instruction for married couples.[42] The Book of Tobit also presents a traditional Old Testament perspective on gender roles in society, although for Judaism it does also include some quite exceptional roles assumed by women, addressing the multifaceted nature of spousal interactions.[43] The guidance with regard to marriage as an institution approved by God must have had a particularly strong resonance among the Indigenous people, who had to face profound changes with regard to marital relationships and the imposition of Christian values and norms. The abolishment of polygamy, replete with violence and persecution, led to a very deep change in the fabric of Indigenous society, affecting all groups, but particularly the elites.[44]

While we are very far from having any complete picture of resistance toward the imposition of monogamy, the earliest sources at our disposal, the Cuernavaca

40. Fol. 20v: *Ynic . 5.ª yn ticmonemilliztiz yn tinotlaçopiltzin ãmõ yntech timoxicoz y motollinia Cenca tiquipaccanotzaz Jehica yn tinotlaçopiltzin Cenca huei timãcoz yn [i?]c titlaxtlahuilloz yn ichãtzico yn dios . ypãpa y motetlaocolliliztzin . yhuã amo motech mochihuaz Amo quimonequiltiz yn dioS . Yn ipã timiquiz yn tlatlacolli temictiani mortal Amono tiaz yn porgadolio Anmo tiaz yn mictlan:* "The fifth [counsel] that you, my beloved son, should live by: you will not get cross with the poor, you will speak to them gleefully. Thus you, my beloved son, will be given very much, you will be rewarded in the house of God because of your compassion. And it will not befall you nor will God wish you to die in mortal sin, nor go to purgatory, nor to hell."

41. Tobit 4:10.

42. Miller, *Marriage,* 132.

43. Miller, *Marriage,* 160–204, 210–211.

44. Patricia López Don, *Bonfires of Culture: Franciscans, Indigenous Leaders, and the Inquisition in Early Mexico, 1524–1540* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010); Lisa Sousa, *The Woman Who Turned Into a Jaguar, and Other Narratives of Native Women in Archives of Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

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censuses and Inquisition trials, reveal that in the 1530s and early 1540s local people often did not fully comply with the imposed rules, or interpreted them in their own ways.[45] While we do not know how much of this resistance toward Christian marriage continued in subsequent decades, a monogamous way of life figured prominently in the key strategic components of the friars' instruction to the neophytes. These teachings also found their way into traditional Nahua speeches and oratory art, as attested in the *Bancroft Dialogues,* which contain a number of references to "the sacrament of our Lord, by which our Mother the Holy Church has united them in matrimony."[46]

In two fragments of his text, the Nahua author of the *Codex Indianorum 7* elaborates on the correct way of contracting marriage and the proper manner of treating a spouse. Tobit is presented as a person who led a "pure life," "entering marriage with virtue" and "keeping his chastity (*mopixtinenca*)."[47] Another fragment further emphasizes the importance of a monogamous and faithful marriage, by avoiding "the company of others" and not desiring other women.[48] The emphasis on chastity may be directly inspired by the biblical text where Tobit instructs his son to "avoid all loose conduct."[49] Nevertheless, the area of marital conduct also provided an essential point of encounter with Indigenous preconquest social norms, under which adultery was not only impermissible but reportedly also subject to severe punishment.[50] Due to the existing practices of polygamous relationships, this code of behavior could have been perhaps much more rigorously demanded of women, as it was in the colonial (as well as Spanish) system with its double standards regarding acceptability of extramarital affairs among men.[51] It is noteworthy that advice similar to that found in the Nahuatl-Tobit teaching features in one of the huehuehtlahtolli of the *Florentine Codex*, in the oration delivered by a mother

45. Sarah Cline, *The Book of Tributes: Early Sixteenth-Century Nahuatl Censuses from Morelos* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1993).

46. Kartunnen and Lockhart, *The Art*, fols. 2v, 3v.

47. Fol. 20r: *Cenca chipahuac Yn innemilliz ca monamictiuh qualtilliztica mopixtinenca . Quicenpixtinẽca yn itenahuatiltzin yn dios Cenca quimoyectenehuillitinemia . Quimotlaecoltillitinẽca . Auh ca onquimomaquilli yn dios . Yn ipiltzin yn quitocayotique yn itatzin dobias*: "His life was very pure because he entered into marriage with virtue, keeping his chastity. Everywhere he went he perfectly kept God's commandments, praising him very much, and serving him. And God gave him a son whom they named after his father Tobias."

48. Fol. 20v: *Ynic . 6.ª yn ticmonemilliztiz yn tinotlaçopiltzin cenca huel ticmotlaçotiliz y monamic y mitzmopialtilliz yn dios . amocana titehuetzquilliz amocana titeỹxellehuiz amocana titlahuelilocatiz çan huel tiquixcahuiz*: "The sixth [counsel] that you, my beloved, should live by: you will greatly love the spouse that God entrusts to you. You will absolutely not flirt with another, nor covet another, nor give yourself to another, you will dedicate yourself only to your spouse."

49. Tobit 4:12.

50. Punishment for adultery has been recently discussed by Sousa, *The Woman Who Turned Into a Jaguar*, 158–169. However, since almost all sources used to reconstruct preconquest practices are colonial and potentially inspired by Spanish laws, it is in fact difficult to distinguish between pre- and post-contact norms and assess how deeply local traditions were transformed by Christian norms and Spanish legal codes.

51. Robert Haskett, "Activist or Adulteress? The Life and Struggle of Doña María Josefa of Tepoztlan," in *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, S. Schroeder, S. Wood, and R. Haskett, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 155–156; Sousa, *The Who Turned Into a Jaguar*, 168–169.

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to her daughter: "Let yourself not have allowed your heart the evil of directing itself elsewhere. Never at any time abuse your helpmate, your husband. Never at any time, never ever betray him; as the saying is said, do not commit adultery."[52]

Chastity and abstinence were also part of the instruction directed to male offspring in traditional Nahua speeches. In one of the huehuehtlahtolli, a father of royal or noble status "exhorted his son in order to provoke him to chastity (*nepiyaliztli*). Here he said that the gods befriend, love much, those who can be abstinent."[53] It is because "the pure life is considered as a well-smoked, precious turquoise; as a round, reed-like, well-formed precious greenstone. There is no blotch, no blemish. Those perfect in their hearts, in their manner of life, those of pure life are like the precious greenstone, the precious turquoise, which are glistening, shining before the lord of the near, of the nigh. . . . They are those of pure life, those called good-hearted."[54] Similar instruction is found in the huehuehtlahtolli published by Fray Juan Bautista Viseo and in the sermon on marriage contained in Sahagún's collection of sermons.[55] While the exact extent of the postconquest religious and social impact on these traditional speeches is impossible to assess, there is no doubt that the huehuehtlahtolli recorded in the colonial period underwent numerous adaptations to the Christian context, however subtle or covert such modifications may have been.

Even though it was admissible for young unmarried males to have premarital relationships, the virtue of abstinence could also have been—at least to a certain degree—a component of preconquest Nahua culture, included in the oratorical rhetoric that formed part of noble upbringing.[56] Such prescriptive behavior was probably grounded in the Native concepts of pollution and filth that threatened the safe equilibrium of ritual and social relations.[57] Thus, the Christian moral teachings conveyed in the Tobit section of the *Codex Indianorum 7* could have evoked Indigenous social values, transmitted and perpetuated through traditional oratorical practices and resonating in culturally relevant ways to local audiences.

52. FC, Book 6:102. *Ma oc ticahavillacanec in moiollo, ma oc nen canapa itzcaliuh: ma ica, auh ma queman ica timoquavitec in motlavical, in monamic: ma nen ica, ma nen queman ipan tia, in iuh mitoa tlatolli: ma tictlaxin*.

53. FC, Book 6:113. *Quinotzaia in ipiltzin, ynic quicuitlaviltiaia in nepializtli: vncan quitoa, ca in teteu, cenca quinmocniuhtia, quintlaçotla in vel mopia*.

54. FC, Book 6:113. *Ca conitotivi ca teuxivitl vel popoca: ca chalchivitl ololivic, acatic, vel icucic momati in chipaoacanemiliztli: acan ceio, acan hecauhio, vel quizqui in iniollo, in innemiliz, in chipaoacanemiliceque: iuhqui o, in chalchivitl, in teuxivitl cuecueiocatica, tonatica, in ixpan tloque, naoaque . . . in chipaoacanemiliceque: in mitoa qualli iniollo*.

55. Anderson, "Aztec Wives," in *Indian Women of Early Mexico,* S. Schroeder, S. Wood and R. Haskett, eds., 74–75.

56. Anderson, "Aztec Wives," 74.

57. Louise M. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 95–101.

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In addition to emphasizing spousal fidelity, the Nahuatl teachings of Tobit elaborate on other desirable aspects of marital relationships, such as "greatly loving the spouse" entrusted to a man by God. Even more interestingly, in the Nahuatl instruction Tobit addresses his son with regard to his future wife by focusing on the emotional aspects of their bond: "You will never wish her ill, you will never look on her with anger, you will never beat her, you will love each other very much, you will provide for each other, you will help each other, you will strengthen each other in spiritual matters (*teoyotica a*[*n*]*mochicahuazque*)."[58] This elaborate advice emphasizing good treatment, mutual support, and a lack of violence between spouses finds no counterpart in the Book of Tobit. It might have been provided by the hypothetical Spanish material employed as a direct source by the Nahua author; however, once again, the author's use of the verb *chicahua* (to strengthen) seems striking given its fundamental role in Native culture. At the same time, however, the reference to spiritual development reverberates with the Christian instruction offered to Indigenous neophytes, while the emphasis on mutual love is also found in sermons produced in the same epoch.[59] But the cross-cultural anchoring of the teaching becomes salient in the principle of spousal complementarity, evoking reconstructed models of gender relationships in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica.[60]

Moreover, it is notable that the emphasis of the biblical prototype referring to taking "a wife from the stock of your ancestors"—a point that was particularly relevant in the Old Testament Jewish context—is omitted due to its lack of relevance to the Nahua cultural and social perspective. One may assume that Spanish efforts to introduce this criterion—demonstrated, for example, in Fray Alonso de Molina's confessionary where he interrogates men about having sexual relations with non-baptized women (*yn ayamo moquatequia ciuatl*) who identified as Jewish, and Chichimec or pagan women (*yn judia, yn chichimecatl*)—had a rather limited impact on Indigenous inter-ethnic relationships, at least in the early phase of the colonial period.[61]

58. Fol. 21r: *Yn monamic Ayc tincocolliz Ayc tiquallancayntaz Ayc ticmictiz cenca huel amonepãtlaçotlazque Amonepantlaecoltizque Amonepãpallehuizque . teoyotica Amochicahuazque*.

59. For example, Anderson, "Aztec Wives," 75.

60. While many forms of complementarity and parallelism between men and women existed both before and after the Spanish conquest, gender complementarity did not exclude gender hierarchy and difference that often resulted in women's subordination in specific areas of life. See for example Stephanie Wood and Robert Haskett, "Concluding Remarks," in *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, S. Schroeder, S. Wood, and R. Haskett eds., 330; Sousa, *The Woman Who Turned*, 13–14.

61. Molina, *Confesionario*, fols. 80r-80v.

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## DESIRABLE MORAL CONDUCT

The paternal instruction continues in close correspondence to the biblical prototype.[62] It warns against conceit and pride (*Ayc timopouhtinemiz*, "you will never go about being conceited") and advocates for a "humble and modest way of life (*icnonemillizyotl*): you will go about living humbly (*timopechtecatinemiz*) . . . you will live modestly (*timocnonemiltiz*)."[63] Notably, some of the same expressions are employed in official Christian instructions to the Nahuas regarding desirable moral conduct, for example, in the Nahuatl ordinances compiled by Fray Alonso de Molina and published in 1552: "so that no one will go about haughty and arrogant and envious here" (*ynic ayac mopouhtinemiz moxicohtinemiz nican*).[64] However, rather than merely operating as a direct Christian import, the prescribed and valued models of humble behavior are likewise rooted in preconquest Indigenous culture, as revealed by extensive sets of admonishments and words of counsel conveyed in the genre of huehuehtlahtolli.

Notably, this genre reveals a very close terminological and rhetorical affinity with the Nahuatl wisdom teaching of Tobit. The fundamental concepts are expressed by the reflexive verb *pechteca* ('to bow'), conveying a sense of humble conduct and such terms as *icnonemiliztli* ('modesty,' 'humbleness') and *icnonemi* ('to live in a humble way'), both employing the compounded noun *icnotl* (meaning 'orphan' or 'poor'). Examples of such traditional discourses are to be found in the *Florentine Codex*, where the noble father "admonished his son that he should look to the humble life (*icnonemiliztli*), to the bowing (*nepechtecaliztli*), to the knowledge of one's self in order to be pleasing to the gods and to man."[65] Thus, personal value and honor should be sought through exemplary modest conduct: "the more they were honored, the more they wept. . . . They became most humble (*mopechtecaia*), most meek (*mocnomatia*), most contrite (*mocnotecaia*)," replacing boasting with an unpresuming way of living.[66]

These valued modes of conduct were no doubt reinforced by their concordance with the attitudes promoted by the friars. Indeed, such similarities are reflected

62. Tobit 4:14.

63. Fol. 21r: *Ynic . 7.ª yn ticchihuaz Yn tinotlaçopiltzin Ayc timopouhtinemiz Ayc timoqualitotinemiz Anmopantlaçaltocatinemiz Cenca huel ticmocuitlahuiz . yn icnonemillizyotl timopechtecatinemiz yn ixpãtzinco yn dios . timocnonemiltiz*: "The seventh [counsel] that you will carry out, my beloved son: you will never go about being conceited, you will never go about boasting about yourself, you will never go about seeking praise. You will keep a humble life, you will live humbly before God, you will live modestly."

64. Fray Alonso de Molina, *Nahua Confraternities in Early Colonial Mexico: The 1552 Nahuatl Ordinances of Fray Alonso de Molina, OFM*, Barry D. Sell, ed. and trans. (Berkeley: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2002), 88–89.

65. FC, Book 6:105.

66. FC, Book 6:107; FC, Book 6: 109.

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in the ways of recording traditional speeches in colonial texts. This process involved different modes of collaboration between Natives and Europeans, illuminating the most relevant elements of cross-cultural recognition and convergence. Yet, the legitimacy and cultural resonance of these core cultural values and behaviors, expressed through sophisticated and elegant language conventions and rooted in the preconquest upbringing of Indigenous youth, were preserved in the new postconquest reality.

Subsequent passages of moral instruction might, at first sight, appear to directly express Christian moral values, but surprisingly, they were not modeled on the Book of Tobit. Accordingly, one may speculate that they convey Indigenous personal and social norms, rather than those imposed by the friars. Thus, the son is cautioned by his father to never lie, to never deceive people nor conspire against them. Interestingly, however, such righteousness extends to the admonition against accusing other people of sin or revealing their sins–an attitude hardly reconcilable with the common practice of inquisitional processes and other kinds of religious investigations common in New Spain: "You will not accuse people of sin, you will not reveal people's sins."[67]

The next counsel brings us back to the more canonical content of the Book of Tobit: speaking about not being tempted to steal and the duty to offer fair remuneration to workers or servants. However, in addition to reminding his son to provide payment for services, the Nahua Tobit further elaborates on the nature of this duty, going beyond the biblical prototype: "You will indeed provide remuneration for this person's service" (*huel tiquixiptlayotiz yn itlatequipãnolliz*).[68] The key term here, *ixiptlayotia,* is a verb derived from the inalienably possessed noun *-ixiptla*, signifying 'substitute.' Notably, this term was used in precontact times in reference to ritual embodiments of deities or sacred objects. In colonial sources *-ixiptla* not only described sacred images, deputies, or representatives, but was also used in reference to the exchange value of commodities and as an equivalence value for land.[69] Even though

67. Fol. 21r: *Ynic . 8.ª yn ticchihuaz Yn tinotlaçopiltzin Ayc tiztlacatiz ayac tiquiztlacahuiz Cenca melahuac yez y motlatoltzin Amo teca timononotzaz Amo teca tinmocentlalliz amo titechicoytoz Amo tetech tictlamiz yn tlatlacolli Amo titetlatlacolpantlaçaz.* "The eighth [counsel] that you will carry out, my beloved son: you will never lie, you will never deceive anyone, your word will be entirely righteous. You will not slander people, you will not conspire against people, you will not gossip about people, you will not accuse people of sin, you will not reveal people's misdeeds."

68. Fol. 21r: *Ynic . 9.ª yn ticmonemiliztiz yn tinotlaçopiltzin amo tictecuilliz ỹ teaxca yn tetlatqui . amon tichtequiz Auh y motlaquehualhuã huel cencan tiquintlaxtlahuiz yn intlatequipannolliz Anoço yn aqui mitztlatequipãnilhuiz . huel tiquixiptlayotiz yn itlatequipãnolliz:* "The ninth [counsel] that you, my beloved, will live by: you will never take someone's property nor will you steal. And you will pay your servants well for their services. Or perhaps if someone works for you, you will indeed provide remuneration for this person's service."

69. For example, *¿Cómo te confundes? ¿Acaso no somos conquistados? Anales de Juan Bautista*, edited and translated by Luis Reyes García (Mexico City: CIESAS, Biblioteca Lorenzo Boturini Insigne y Nacional Basílica de Guadalupe, 2001), fols. 14r, 14v, 22r, 30r, 32r; and Reyes García et al., eds., *Documentos nauas de la Ciudad de México del siglo XVI* (Mexico City: CIESAS, Archivo General de la Nación, 1996), 184.

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Molina defines *ixiptlayotia* only as "to make something in someone's image or similarity" ("hazer algo a su imagen y semejanza") or, in its reflexive form, as "to delegate or substitute someone" ("delegar. o sostituyr a otro en su lugar"), its use in the Tobit text, meaning "to provide someone with remuneration," (literally, "to provide someone with an equivalent for their work") is clear.[70] Thus, whereas the biblical original talks about paying due wages without delay, the Nahuatl text conveys the concept of an exchange value, as rooted in the Indigenous economy and the social relationships that influenced colonial-period transactions and procedures.

## SERVICE TO THE LIVING AND TO THE DEAD

The author of the Nahuatl text entirely omits the biblical counsel to avoid drunkenness and continues instead with advice relating to personal behavior toward other people. This includes feeding the poor and providing clothes to those in need, consistent with the Old Testament prototype. However, he once again modifies the original by omitting a reference to almsgiving, emphasizing instead that one should sit by the side of the poor and eat with them. Translations of the Book of Tobit commonly refer to "giving your bread to the hungry."[71] However, the 1569 Spanish translation specifically mentions "eating with" those who are hungry and in need.[72] Thus, it is probable that the Spanish prototype available to the Nahuatl author also contained a similar version of that counsel. However, the emphasis on this detail also appears to reflect the Native importance of offering a shared meal within the space of one's household as a way of creating and replicating social bonds, as well as fulfilling both ritual and economic duties toward other community members. As such, it is fundamentally different from the more depersonalized act of simply providing someone with food or money.[73]

Notably, obligations towards others are not limited to the living but also extend to the dead, as is highlighted in the subsequent counsel that appears in both the Bible and the *Codex Indianorum 7*. To this extent, the biblical prototype mentions scattering bread and spilling wine over the tombs of the righteous ones, and

70. Molina, *Vocabulario*, Vol. 2, fol. 45v.

71. Tobit 4:16.

72. Tobit 4:17; "Come tu pan con los hambrientos y menesterosos": Casiodoro de Reyna, *La Biblia, que es, los sacros libros del Viejo y Nuevo Testamento. Trasladada en español* (Basel: Tomás Guarinus,1569), 996.

73. Fol. 21r: *Ynic io.ª yn ticmonemiliztiz yn tinotlacopiltzin* [for *tinotlaçopiltzin*] *yn iquac yn ti[qui]m̃tlaqualtiz motla tiquintlalliz yn motollinia motlan tlaquazquen Auh ỹ motollinia yn mopetlahuiltitinemi tictlaquentiz:* "The tenth [counsel] that you, my beloved son, will live by: when you feed the poor, you will sit them beside you; they will eat at your side. And as to the poor who go about naked, you will provide them with clothing."

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not those of the sinners.[74] Once more, the Nahuatl text departs from the prototype in certain significant ways. For example, Tobit urges his son to "pray greatly for those who are in purgatory, show great mercy for their sake, leave your wine and your corn in the temple on their behalf so that God will favor them promptly."[75]

Extending offerings to the souls of those in purgatory reflects a probable Christian modification of the Old Testament original; likewise, purgatory figured prominently in religious instruction in New Spain and was a common Spanish loanword in Nahuatl texts. More important, however, the libation described in the Bible bears a strikingly close parallel to Indigenous rituals for the dead, offering a common ground for cross-cultural translation. An integral part of Nahua burial ceremonies were offerings of food, especially corn. Such offerings were made repeatedly during the four years following a funeral, when the dead were believed to be in particular need of support in the Otherworld.[76] Various forms of sacrifice and offerings, including food, were performed during annual festivals for the dead, such as Miccailhuitl, or the Feast of the Dead, celebrated in preconquest Tenochtitlan, and then, under the same name, in colonial and modern times in Nahua communities.

These fundamental sacrificial practices associated with the dead continued after the Spanish conquest, while incorporating some Christian elements. Indeed, in many Nahua communities they have survived to the present day. For example, among the Nahuas in the Huasteca of Veracruz, offerings to dead kinsmen form an essential component of ritual life at both the community and household level, typically involving corn, beans, alcohol, soft drinks, and candles. Moreover, cyclical offerings are made throughout the four-year period following a funeral, with a major sacrifice made one year after death.[77] The returning *tonalli*, or spirits of the deceased, are also fed during the annual Xantolo festival between October 31 and November 2 or November 3, during which time offerings of food and drinks are first placed on altars within individual households and then on the graves of family members. Additional

74. Depending on the version, it is Tobit 4:17 or Tobit 4:18.

75. Fol. 21v: *Ynic . xi . yn ticchihuaz Yn tinotlaçopiltzin Cencan ynpanpa ximoteochihua yn porgatorio cante [cateh] cencan ypanpa xitetlaocolli ỹ movino Y motlaol ypanpa ticcahuaz yn teopan Yn mimicque yn iqu içiuhcan quintlaocolliz yn dios:*

> "The eleventh [counsel] that you, my beloved son, will carry out: pray greatly for those who are in purgatory, show great mercy for their sake, leave your wine and your corn in the temple on behalf of the dead so that God will favor them promptly."

76. FC, Book 3:44-45.

77. Alan Sandstrom, *Corn is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

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offerings are made for the souls of those who might have been forgotten by their kin, because neglected tonalli may become dangerous.

Thus, these celebrations and offerings are not only intended to honor and remember the dead, but also to maintain a safe relationship with their spirits and thus a harmonious life for those still on earth.[78] To this extent, the Book of Tobit offered Nahua readers an important bridge between ancient Jewish rites and their own. For example, this was achieved by including the context of *teopan* (or church area, usually including the courtyard) where Indigenous people were often buried in the colonial period, and by replacing references to bread with that of corn (*tlaolli*) while specifying that this offering would help the dead in their Otherworld existence, gaining them the favor of God. In these ways, the Nahua author transformed the Jewish libation rite into a Native offering to the dead.

## MATERNAL BURDENS AND CARING FOR PARENTS

The final components of the wisdom teachings of Tobit, in which he instructs his son to follow the advice of the wise ones, could also have had strong cultural resonance with traditional Nahua child-rearing practices and the moral advice given to the youth.[79] However, in addition to listening to "the words of the teachers, the wise ones," the Nahuatl text recommends avoiding the company of wicked ones, whether by socializing with them or receiving them in one's household. Such instructions are absent from the Book of Tobit.[80] It is also the final counsel that breaks significantly from the biblical prototype. At this point, the Nahuatl text returns to the beginning of Tobit's teachings to his son, in which he refers to burying his father, honoring and accompanying his mother who carried him in her womb, and then, after her death, burying her alongside her husband.[81]

The Nahuatl version is much richer in details: "And now you, my beloved son, see that I, your father, have become old. When I die, bury my body in a good place at

78. Anuschka van 't Hooft, *The Ways of the Water: A Reconstruction of Huastecan Nahua Society through Its Oral Tradition* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2006), 60–63.

79. Tobit 4:18-19.

80. Fol. 21v: *Ynic . 12.ª amo ỹtlan tinemiz yn tlahuelliloque amo yntech timomatiz amo tiquicallaquiz ỹ mochan Amo tiquinotzaz Ynic amon mitztlapolloltizque ynic amo mitztlatlacoltizque Cenca xiquintemotinemi yn qualli ỹ yollo yn tla ximonemilti xiquicaquilli yn itlatoltzin yn temachtinanni in tlamatinimẽ Amo tiquintelchihuaz*

"Twelfth, you will not keep the company of the wicked ones, you will not become attached to them, you will not allow them into your home nor summon them, lest they confuse you and cause you to sin. Always be looking for the good of heart. Please live heeding the words of the teachers, the wise ones. Do not despise them."

81. Tobit 4:2-3.

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the church. And you will pray for me to God very much. And you will respect your mother very much, you will greatly be thankful for and remember how much she suffered when you were for nine months inside her, how she nourished you with her milk, how she raised you and carried you about on her back, how she brought you up. And when your mother dies, you will pray very much for her."[82]

Likewise, maternal burdens and duties such as having a child in the womb, breastfeeding, and carrying a baby on one's back, all of which are described in the Nahuatl text, significantly depart from the biblical prototype; they reveal not only Native practices, but also Indigenous ways of conceptualizing mothers' roles and how these roles were expressed in traditional speeches. Notably, the language of the Tobit instruction in Nahuatl regarding maternal duties bears strong resemblance to the huehuehtlahtolli genre, where salient references to breastfeeding are found in a salutation to a queen following the birth of her son, as recorded in the *Bancroft Dialogues*.[83] Similarly, a mother's speech to her daughter, reported in the *Florentine Codex*, offers a close parallel to Tobit's teachings in the *Codex Indianorum 7*: "And behold a second word which I give you, which I say to you, my child, my little one. Look to me, for I am your mother. I carried you for so many months. And when they were ended I was lulling [you] to sleep. I was laying you in the cradle; I was placing you on my thigh. And certainly with my milk I gave you strength."[84]

An equally detailed and expressive description of maternal merits is provided in the speech uttered by parents and other relatives to children upon their entrance to the *calmecac* school: "Truly your mother gave you strength; with you she endured fatigue, weariness; with you she nodded half asleep; she was soiled by [your] excretions; and with her milk she gave you strength."[85] Hence, the transformation of the biblical prototype not only rendered it meaningful for an Indigenous audience, but also placed the wisdom teachings firmly in the local tradition of huehuehtlahtolli and its sociocultural goals. Likewise, the final part of this section of the manuscript is not derived from the Book of Tobit, yet it provides an elegant and appropriate closure for traditional orations. Transmitting fundamental Indigenous values under a Christian veneer, it

82. Fol. 21v: *Auh yn axcan Ɏn tinotlaçopiltzin Ca tinechmotillia Ca Oninohuehuetilli y nimotatzin yniquac ninomiquilliz Onpa teopan qualcan tictocaz y nonacayo Cen*[ca] *nopanpa ticmotlatlauhtilliz yn dios. Auh ỹ monãtzin cenca ticmahuizmatiz. Cenca tictlaçocamatiz Cenca tiquilnamiquiz yn queni cenca mopanpa motlaocolti y monãtzin ynic chiuhcnahui metztlin yn itic ticatca Ɏn quenin omitzmohuapahuilli yn ichichihuallayotica Ɏnic omitzmozcaltilli omitzmomamallitinnẽca Ɏnic onmitzmohuapahuilli Auh yn iquac ỹ momiquilliz y monantzin Cenca ypanpa timoteochihuaz*.

83. Karttunen and Lockhart, *The Art of Nahuatl Speech*, 100.

84. FC, Book 6:100. Translation by Dibble and Anderson, slightly modified; *Auh izcatqui ic oncamatl, nimitzmaca, nimitzilvia noconetzin, tepitzin: xinechitta ca nehoatl in nimonan, in onimitzitquic in quezqui metztli: auh in omotlan nicochiaiaticatca, in onimitzcocoçoltecac, in onometzpan nimitztlatlaliticatca: auh in quemeca naioiotica onimitznotetzavili.*

85. FC, Book 6:213. Translation by Dibble and Anderson, slightly modified; *Quemaca omitzmotetzavili in monantzin, ca omotlan quihiiovi, omotlan quiciauh, omotlan cochiaiaticatca, oaxixpalanticatca: auh iiaiotzin inic omitzmotetzavili*.

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highlights the central importance of parental instruction to children to assure that they live a righteous life and avoid straying into the path of evil.[86]

## CULTURAL MIXING, ACCULTURATION, AND AGENCY

As I have attempted to argue in this paper, the wisdom teachings derived from the Book of Tobit and composed in Nahuatl by a sixteenth-century Native intellectual, not only conveyed Old Testament values adapted to the content of Christian instruction in New Spain, but also transferred many values and concepts proper to what can be conceived as traditional Nahua culture. This textual agency, resulting in the creation of numerous 'loci of meaning' or points of cultural resonance for the Native addressees of the text, involved the transformation, reinterpretation, and re-elaboration of the prototype text, so that it reflected local cultural and social meanings. It is also clear that the author was careful about conveying messages congruent with the content of recent Christian instruction directed toward the Indigenous people. Notwithstanding, he reinterpreted and transformed several key dimensions of the wisdom teachings, including the concepts of family and marriage, the significance of both paternal and maternal instruction in the upbringing of their offspring, the merits and deeds of Indigenous mothers, models of good conduct and ways of supporting the poor, the concept of remuneration and economic exchange, and offerings for the dead.

However, the cross-cultural adaptation is not limited to the specific content of Tobit's wisdom teachings and the Native author's masterful employment of traditional expressions and rhetorical conventions that were typical of huehuehtlahtolli, 'the words of the elders.' The author also deeply transformed the structure of the biblical prototype, rendering it into a numbered sequence of specific instructions, from one to 12. This ordering finds direct parallels in traditional huehuehtlahtolli recorded in the *Florentine Codex*. For example, the speech in which a ruler advises his sons is structured in points, starting with *inic cententli*, 'the first' (word), followed with the second and third words (*inic oncamatl, inic ecamatl*).[87]

86. Fol. 22r: *Auh ynin quēmach huel yehuatl yn S . do dobias . ynic quimachtiyaya Υn itlaçopiltzin Υn queni cenca qualli tepapaquilti . Υnic yntech tlachiazque yn . c͠mc . tetahuã yniqu itech momachiotizque Υnic no yuhqui ỹpã quichihuazque yn inpilhuan Cencan tlapannahuiã Υnic monequi No yuh quimachtizque yn inpilhuan yn tentahuã Υn tenãhuã ynic amo quitzacotiazque* [for *quitzauctiyazqueh*] *mictlan Jesus maria Υe yxquich yn intlatlatollo yn Sncto dobias . yn itlaço yn dios* . . .

> "And this is indeed how Saint Tobias was teaching his beloved son; it was very pleasing. And with it parents from all over the world will watch over [their children], in this way they will take example from it, they will make [their children] excellent, as it should be. Thus, mothers and fathers will instruct their children in order to not end up sending them to hell. Jesus Mary, this concludes the words of Saint Tobias, the beloved of God."

87. FC, Book 6:91-92.

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When referring to 'traditional Nahua culture' in my quest for locally meaningful elements resonating with Indigenous values and understandings in the Tobit wisdom teachings, I am in no way speaking of 'preconquest' culture or any allegedly 'pure' form unaffected by contact. At least in the context of alphabetic sources, claims to the retrievability of preconquest 'authenticity' are at best problematic, since the clear-cut division between Indigenous versus European elements seems often impossible or highly risky. Such an endeavor would also suffer from the lack of ecological validity, taking into account the constant flux and mutability of cultural traits and understandings in social realities, especially under the conditions of intense culture contact. Thus, it would be a harmful and highly deceptive notion to limit the scope of recognition as 'Indigenous' to being or looking "pre-Hispanic" to freezing Native people in the past as "relics of a bygone, romanticized era."[88]

Acknowledgment of the many forms and paths of transformation and evolution of Native societies does not mean that we cannot explore traditional Indigenous cultures and their numerous manifestations in the colonial period and reconstruct, even if painfully and with an extreme amount of caution, their 'core' constituting elements—and, more broadly, their ontology—stemming from preconquest times but constantly evolving in changing environments. What can be deemed 'Indigenous culture' has been shaped and reconstituted by both internal and external factors and parameters of continuity and change up to the present day, whereas the lines between 'authentic' or 'original' versus 'hybrid' or 'syncretic' are inevitably blurred.[89]

Therefore, studying different facets of Indigenous history and culture as part of colonial reality is inexorably implicated in the problem of 'cultural mixing' and the vast scholarship dealing with its mechanisms, results, and consequences. Key explanatory terms usually employed to name both the process and its results—such as 'syncretism,' 'fusion,' 'mixture,' 'blending,' and 'hybridity'—have permeated lively discussions concerning colonial art, writing, and other forms of expression over the past several decades. Among countless colonial texts, scholars have traced many forms of European inspiration in the *Florentine Codex*, coming from theological, biblical, and humanistic sources, though mainly focusing on its iconographic dimension.[90]

88. Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 12:1 (November 2003): 14–15.

89. See for example Russell N. Sheptak and Rosemary A. Joyce, "Hybrid Cultures: the Visibility of the European Invasion of Caribbean Honduras in the Sixteenth Century," in *Material Encounters and Indigenous Transformations in the Early Colonial Americas*, Corinne Hofman and F. Keehnen, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 221; and Camilla Townsend, *The Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

90. See for example John F. Schwaller, ed., *Sahagún at 500: Essays on the Quincentenary of the Birth of Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún,* Franciscan Publications in Nahuatl Series, no. 3 (Berkeley: Academy of American Franciscan History, 2003); and Jeanette Favrot Peterson, "Translating the Sacred: The Peripatetic Print in the Florentine Codex, Mexico (1575–

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In this paper I have relied prolifically on the huehuehtlahtolli contained in Book 6 of this work created by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún along with his Indigenous collaborators. My aim was to point out a number of parallels with the section of the *Codex Indianorum 7* containing Tobit wisdom teachings, with special regard to concepts that I identify as proper or meaningful to Indigenous culture as well as its ritual and social practices. Actually, this has been facilitated by the fact that the appearance of those elements constitutes a discrepancy or divergence from the biblical prototype and reveals the cultural agency of the Indigenous author of the text.

Interestingly, European influence is particularly strong in the iconographic content of Book 6 of the *Florentine Codex,* given that its focus on rhetoric and traditional speeches lacks a preconquest pictorial precedent.[91] However, the cross-cultural impact seems to have been much more subtle, though clearly present, in the textual part because it represents a deeply ingrained Indigenous genre whose vitality continued unabated despite colonization and Christianization and is indeed recognized to be "among the most authentically Nahua in language and concepts."[92] The strength of this tradition is attested by its power to shape expressions beyond the huehuehtlahtolli genre proper, such as the wisdom teachings analyzed in the present paper and other Nahua-Christian religious texts. For example, it has been recently argued that Sahagún's *Psalmodia Christiana,* rather than a "hybridizing mixture," should be viewed as a consciously designed composition containing discursive and conceptual elements coming from different traditions closely interacting with each other, while drawing heavily on the tradition of the huehuehtlahtolli to "domesticate" Christian concepts within the Indigenous universe of meanings and values.[93] Thus, while adoptions and adaptations in the huehuehtlahtolli were inevitable—as correctly noted even by Spanish observers such as Zorita, who is quoted at the beginning of this paper—I believe this mode of expression and its social functions also provided essential forms of resistance toward colonial impositions and the disruptions that they caused in local ways of life.

It is no doubt true that the concept of 'hybridity' (and other cognate terms) "carries so many problems that it can obscure more than it illuminates."[94] And the main reason behind this is that such notions refer primarily to "surface effects," and

1577)," in *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Religious Art*, C. Göttler and M. Mochizuki, eds. (Boston: Brill, 2018).

91. Peterson, "Translating the Sacred," 200.

92. Jeanette Peterson, "Rhetoric as Acculturation: The Anomalous Book 6," in *The Florentine Codex: An Encyclopedia of the Nahua World in Sixteenth-Century Mexico*, J. Favrot Peterson and K. Terraciano, eds. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019), 167.

93. Berenice Alcántara Rojas, "Los textos cristianos en lengua náhuatl del periodo novohispano: fuentes para la historia cultural," *Dimensión Antropológica* 26:76 (May–August 2019): 64–94.

94. Daniela Bleichmar, "Painting the Aztec Past in Early Colonial Mexico: Translation and Knowledge Production in the Codex Mendoza," *University of Southern California Renaissance Quarterly* 72 (Winter 2019): 1367.

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thus fail to address both the mechanisms and human agency involved in cross-cultural processes.[95] Therefore, "to recognize superficial difference without exploration of its social generation is to colonize colonial culture . . . and so dispossess indigenes of the ability to adapt, coopt, and fit European things to non-European (or partially European) ways of creating culture."[96] In the case of the oratory content contained in the *Florentine Codex*, Jeanette Peterson has recently probed the mechanisms of the cross-cultural process of its creation, evoking the concept of "rhetoric as acculturation," derived from studies on Classical antiquity and the formational role of rhetorical education. She concluded that the Nahua authors and painters of the *Florentine Codex* rather than "being transformed" or "migrating from one culture to another" were creative "in amalgamating the visual and textual languages available to them."[97] More precisely, however, I propose that both in the case of this source and to a large extent also with regard to the wisdom teachings contained in the *Codex Indianorum 7*, it was the old rhetorical tradition that provided an operating matrix for integrating new elements into the vital Indigenous system, and not the other way around.

The sociocultural mechanisms behind this process are accurately described by the acculturation theory developed in the social sciences over the past several decades. The outcomes of acculturation processes are typically described as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Assimilation implies an abandonment of the heritage culture and is typical for situations in which a subordinate group merges with the dominant one (or is forced to do so), often in order to gain social or economic advantages or adopt a more desirable social identity. Integration refers to the simultaneous retention of the original culture and acceptance, to varying degrees, of the new culture. Finally, in the strategy of separation, the original culture is retained but the new culture and cross-cultural communication is rejected, whereas marginalization refers to culture loss alongside failure to participate in the new culture and/or become part of the dominant outgroup.[98]

A key factor in this process is the ethnolinguistic vitality of a given group, which may offer or, conversely, constrain social advantages in intergroup interactions.[99]

95. Dean and Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents," 8, 23.

96. Dean and Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents," 26–27.

97. Peterson, "Rhetoric as Acculturation," 180.

98. John W. Berry, "Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation," in *Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some New Findings*, Amado Padilla, ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Berry, 1980), 9–25; Richard Bourhis, Lena Celine Moise, Stephanie Perreault and Sacha Senecal, "Towards an Interactive Acculturation Model: A Social Psychological Approach," *International Journal of Psychology* 32 (December 1997): 369–86.

99. Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, S. Worchel and W. G. Austin, eds. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), 2–24; Howard Giles, Douglas Bonilla, and Rebecca B. Speer, "Acculturating Intergroup Vitalities, Accommodation and Contact," in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, J. Jackson, ed. (Routledge, 2012), 245–249.

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If applied to Indigenous Mexican history, it can be proposed that at least in the first two centuries of contact, successful integration strategies driven by strong group vitality and the desire to assure cultural continuity coexisted with separation in more remote or less accessible areas. Indigenous communities pursuing different forms and degrees of integration, while preserving their sociocultural integrity and ethnic identity, actively participated in exchanges with Spanish culture. At least in the initial period of coexistence, Native communities were able to retain their forms of sociopolitical organization and many facets of culture, with their language remaining in vibrant use and expanding into new spaces, such as alphabetic writing, the Spanish legal system, and the Christian cult. Many Indigenous communities demonstrated considerable resilience and high ethnolinguistic vitality during the colonial period, but the situation changed drastically in late colonial and modern times when assimilation and marginalization became prevalent.[100]

Thus, acculturation theory provides a useful theoretical construct for better understanding both the mechanisms and results of cross-cultural interactions, including the translation and production of knowledge in early colonial Mexico. The integration model provides important clues for increased comprehension of the phenomena whose surface effects were described as 'syncretic,' 'mixed,' or 'hybrid.' It does so by helping to recognize the fundamental roles of the underlying Indigenous matrix as well as the associated cultural agency of social actors, conditioned by Native sociocultural paradigms but driven by the new opportunities, necessities, challenges, and expectations created by contact and the colonial system. Moreover, this approach makes it possible to appreciate the potential of studying culture texts for the purpose of refining our understanding of those aspects of the sociocultural history of Indigenous people that are irretrievable from other historical sources. In our specific case these implications extend also to a line of research that can be perhaps conceived of as early family studies.

Significantly, the fragment of the *Codex Indianorum 7* analyzed in this article gives full authority and agency to Indigenous parents in the education and socialization of their offspring, in accordance with their own culture-sensitive ways and norms, but providing it with the legitimacy offered by an external source of knowledge: biblical wisdom brought by the colonizers. By doing so, it entirely omits the role and authority of the friars in this process, despite their claims to the leading role in pursuing efficient Christian instruction and nurturing the spiritual development of Indigenous youth. This clear message is succinctly affirmed by the closing section of the instruction: "Thus, mothers and fathers will instruct their

100. See also Justyna Olko, "Language Attitudes and Educational Opportunities: Challenging a History of Oppression and Assimilation among Indigenous Communities in Mexico," *Dutkansearvvi dieđalaš áigečála/Journal of the Sámi Language and Culture Research Association* (1/2019).

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children in order to not end up sending them to hell. Jesus Mary, this concludes the words of Saint Tobias, the beloved of God."

It is then traditional parental instruction that is given the primary role, rather than the indoctrination by friars that was imposed on the Indigenous people with the clear agenda of eradicating the influence of home-based education rooted in 'preconquest idolatry,' values, and practices. In the early colonial period, the tensions between Indigenous parents and friars who undermined traditional parental authority could take on particularly drastic forms, leading to open conflicts and violence.[101] Thus, the mobilization of the resources offered by wisdom teachings, grounded both in the traditional huehuehtlahtolli and an external source of knowledge, should be perhaps seen not only as an example of a successful integration strategy in a cross-cultural colonial context, but also as a testimony of resistance to the friars' attempts to appropriate the fundamental prerogatives of Indigenous parents in educating their children in culturally and socially sensitive ways.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It seems justified to conclude that the hitherto unstudied section of the *Codex Indianorum 7,* a devotional manuscript composed through the translation, compilation, and adaptation of European textual prototypes, comprises a wisdom teaching directed to both parents and their children and modeled on the Book of Tobit, but assuming the form, structure, and purpose of the traditional huehuehtlahtolli. As such, it demonstrates the Native author's agency in creatively molding and adapting a culturally remote European prototype—be it directly through the Book of Tobit or a sermon or an instruction derived from it—into the Native genre of oratorical art.

As I have argued in this paper, acculturation theory coupled with the ethnolinguistic vitality of a specific group as an important predictor of the outcomes of cross-cultural interaction with an outgroup, constitutes a theoretical framework that helps to explain the mechanisms behind this process. The strategy of the author of Tobit's wisdom teaching in Nahuatl can be best described as integration, and it is characterized by the strong vitality of his Indigenous identity and by his open attitude toward integrating culturally remote elements.

Moreover, I have shown, as was my intention, that 'microtextual' or 'microphilological' studies of Indigenous culture texts from the colonial period

101. See for example Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 33–37; and Andrea Martínez Baracs, *Un gobierno de indios: Tlaxcala, 1519–1750* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, Colegio de Historia de Tlaxcala, and CIESAS, 2008), 112–119.

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offer an important and much needed complement to microhistorical research based on other genres of sources. As is widely recognized, mundane documents such as petitions, wills, letters, and court proceedings originating from countless Native communities have enriched our understanding of the colonial reality by revealing Indigenous agents as dynamic and skillful actors on the historical stage. However, in much the same way as do explorations of Indigenous microhistori (es), microtextual studies uncover the values, concepts, needs, and concerns of specific people living in a specific place and time. Complex textual productions resulting from the cross-cultural translation, interpretation, and transformation of different prototypes open up many aspects of past sociocultural realities and historical processes that would otherwise be difficult for us to detect, document, and understand. Hence, contextualized analyses of those texts carry a strong potential for contributing to different subfields of Latin American history, and especially to Indigenous cultural and social history.

Forms of Indigenous agency may be quite salient in culture texts, as in the one explored in the present paper. As the wisdom teaching of Tobit transformed into a Native huehuehtlahtolli demonstrates, the Nahuas maintained their cultural integrity despite aggressive policies of assimilation and were capable of engaging in creative dialogues with European traditions on their own terms and using their own cultural matrix. And as I proposed, the author of the Nahua oration based on the prototype provided by the Book of Tobit, challenges the early colonial education system and the symbolic violence implemented by the friars, restoring full agency to Indigenous parents.

Such texts and their messages provide us with new windows for peering inside Indigenous households to learn more about social reality at the microlevel of the family. Quite surprisingly then, the Nahua wisdom teaching based on the culturally remote Book of Tobit may become a resource that sheds light on early gender history and the sociology of family, since it confirms the key role of Indigenous families as fundamental units of socialization, transfer of knowledge, and resistance to colonial expropriation.

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