

Guadalupe hidalgo paper

Religion



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Our Lady of Guadalupe Cult and Hidalgo's Mission s July 16, The introduction of Roman Catholicism to Mexico led to the complex interplay between local belief system and the new Christian orthodoxy. The formation of syncretic or merely native-influenced cults of saints was one of the expressions of such interaction. Arguably the most famous and important of such cases may be the development of the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which has become one of most notable saintly cults for Catholic Mexicans. The history of Our Lady of Guadalupe is both simple and complicated. According to official hagiography, a certain Juan Diego, an Indian peasant from Cuauhtitlan near Mexico, saw a Marian apparition on the Hill of Tepeyac, on December, 9, 1531. As the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated across Spanish holdings on that day, the vision of Virgin Mary was considered to be especially symbolic and powerful. Juan Diego was told by the Virgin, who manifested as a young girl, that she wished that a church be built and consecrated in Her honor on the Hill. When Juan approached the Archbishop of Mexico, the latter requested that he present to the Church the evidence of the Divine character of his vision. Juan Diego found the Castilian roses on the Hill of Tepeyac, putting them into his cloak. When he opened the cloak to the Archbishop, the visage of Virgin Mary was imprinted on it. Hence, the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe was born – or, at least, so it is told in the orthodox legend. The exact origins of the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe seem to be rather more complicated. The Hill of Tepeyak used to be the holy place of an Aztec mother-goddess, Tonantzin, housing her temple until the latter was destroyed by the Spaniards. Nevertheless, the Spanish conquerors decided to utilize the temple's place for the needs of their own religion, and the shrine to Virgin Mary was soon consecrated there. The local Indians, who

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were forcibly converted by the Catholic Church, took advantage of this decision to preserve some of their religious traditions, as they came to pray at the temple, addressing Virgin Mary as 'Tonantzin' in their own language, the Nahuatl¹. This greatly irritated the local Franciscan missionaries, who tried to extinguish any remaining traces of the Indian polytheistic religion, by preaching that the true God does not need adoration of images made in earthly materials². Nevertheless, in 1566 it was reported that the Archbishop of Mexico, Alonso de Montufar, held a sermon, in which he called upon all the faithful to pay homage to the supposedly miraculous painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which was found in the chapel at the Hill of Tepeyac. The painting was made on the inner side of the tilpa, a peasant cloak allegedly worn by Juan Diego. The Franciscans tried to complain to the Viceroy of Mexico that the Archbishop unduly encouraged quasi-pagan superstition among the native converts; however, eventually, the matter was solved in the Archbishop's favor, and the Franciscans were deprived of the custody of the chapel. Subsequently, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe started being publicly venerated at the shrine. The case of Our Lady of Guadalupe was just one of the forms of introduction of the cult of images into the New World, which was carried out by the mainly Dominican missionaries. Unlike the Franciscans, who strove to return to the primitive purity of early Christianity, the Dominicans, such as Alonso de Montufar, believed that the Church would be better served by the emulation of the West European pilgrimage cults that were closely connected with the respective saints³. As such cults were especially well developed in Spain, it is no great wonder that the Spanish conquerors transplanted them into the American soil. The cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe experienced a new flowering in the late 17th century, when the

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image was elevated to the status of the copy of the image of Virgin Mary seen and described by John the Evangelist⁴. This doctrine, propounded by Miguel Sanchez, a Mexican theologian, had a great impact on the cultural elevation of the Our Lady of Guadalupe cult among Mexican lay persons. It was actually Sanchez who provided a canonic description of the miracle allegedly manifested to Juan Diego, with the latter being turned, in his interpretation, in a sort of Mexican Moses or St. James. Accordingly, the Hill of Tepeyac was regarded as the sort of Mexican Zion⁵. The account of Our Lady of Guadalupe's significance to Mexico was, therefore, the first expression of the patriotic tendency in Mexican theology and, consequently, the beginning of the cult's association with the fledgling national identity. The 18th to 19th centuries saw further advancement of the prestige enjoyed by Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1709, the new cathedral was constructed at Tepeyac, which was in direct contrast with the previous humble shrine situated there. The magnificent building was specifically aimed to bolster the prestige of Our Lady of Guadalupe, contributing to its further elevation. In 1746, Our Lady of Guadalupe was acclaimed as the patron saint of the Kingdom of New Spain (the official Spanish designation for the territory of Mexico), thus becoming an integral part of the new iconography. When the Mexican War of Liberation began in 1810, the iconography of Our Lady of Guadalupe was frequently used by the rebels in Hidalgo's army to stress the spiritual connection between the popular Catholicism embodied by Our Lady's cult and their national-liberationist inspirations. Miguel Hidalgo de Costilla, a parish priest who led the rebellion at its first stage, gave an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe to his supporters as the battle flag, and soon the battle cry " Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe and death to the gachupinos!"

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(the Spanish-born colonial elite) became a quasi-official slogan of Mexican national movement⁶. With the expulsion of the Spaniards, the Our Lady of Guadalupe cult retained its significance, despite all the secularizing reforms of Mexican republican governments. The name of ' Guadalupe' became a part of many locations' names, as the moniker of the village where the treaty concluding the Mexican-American War, Villa de Guadalupe-Hidalgo, testifies. Nowadays, the Our Lady of Guadalupe veneration has taken on new qualities. As it was noted by the modern theologian Virgilio Elizondo, the Virgin of Guadalupe became a representation of ' faith-memory' of the Mexican people, the embodiment of " birth/resurrection experience" of the " natives, the Africans, and their mestizo and mulatto children" ⁷. In such a way, Our Lady of Guadalupe becomes an embodiment of Mexico itself. Works Cited Brading, D. A. Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Espinosa, Gaston, and Mario T. Garsia, eds. Mexican American Religion: Spirituality, Activism and Culture. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.