Chapter Two

"Unfaithful Lovers and Malicious Sorcerers: Justice, Punishment and the Body"

In the first half of the sixteenth century, less than twenty years after the Spanish arrival in modern-day Michoacán, Mexico, the Spanish Viceroy to Mexico, Antonio de Mendoza, commissioned a Franciscan friar to record the customs of the region so that he could govern it more effectively. The friar employed indigenous noble informants, speakers of the Purhépecha language, whose oral contribution formed the text (which the friar divided into three parts, to which he added a prologue). He also engaged four native artists (discussed and identified in Chapter 1), who created the forty-four illustrations of the manuscript known today as the *Relación de Michoacán*. The *Relación* presented a unique opportunity for the indigenous collaborators to shape the Viceroy's views and carve a place in the new colonial society for themselves. Their agendas were not, however, uniform. Some of the contributors were members of the Pre-Columbian ruling family known as Uanacaze. The Uanacaze were the leaders of a group, referred to in the Relación as Chichimecs and Uacúsecha, who had allegedly migrated to Michoacán and conquered its local population. The other contributor, a non-Uanacaze noble, was a descendant of local priests from one of Lake Pátzcuaro's islands known as Don Pedro Cuiniarangari. By allying himself with the Spanish armies, he had become governor of the region during the early colonial period. The differing testimonies of both parties can be seen in the *Relación de Michoacán*. This chapter explores how the Uanacaze pursued their return to power through images depicting justice.

In a language inflated with praise for the mission of the Viceroy and of his own Franciscan order, the friar-compiler asserted in the Prologue to the *Relación* that the people native to Michoacán lacked books and moral virtues. The Viceroy's duty to govern the people of Michoacán was an arduous one, the friar explains, as their only virtue was generosity. They had no concept of chastity, temperance or justice, and in Purhépecha, their native tongue, they had to articulate such concepts in a roundabout way. Yet, in contradiction of the friar's claims, the *Relación* includes three images whose titles indicate that they depict justice ceremonies (Fig. 1-3). If not justice, one must ask what these images represent. In this chapter, I will argue that the first two images represent Purhépecha rather than Spanish concepts of justice. In these scenes, the artists focus on the delivery of speeches in which a Uanacaze priest retells the oral history of the area and admonishes the people. Purhépecha ideas of justice, as we shall see, were intricately connected to concepts of speaking, listening and obeying. The third image (Fig.3) shows the punishment of specific body parts (e.g. lacerating the ears of adulterers and lacerating the mouths and puncturing the eyes of sorcerers) that responded to Purhépecha concepts of the body. The crimes punished in all three of these images, however, were of particular interest to Spaniards, and the images' accompanying text, in the form of captions and chapters, sought to convert these Purhépecha concepts into judicial Spanish concepts. The three images, utilizing highly different means, all manifested and supported the power of the Uanacaze.

The first two images bracket the historical narration contained in Part Two of the *Relación* and depict the main priest at a ceremony for administering justice (Fig. 1-2).

The opening image of Part Two (Fig. 1) appears below the title "Here follows the history of how the Cazonci [main ruler] and his ancestors were lords in this province, and of the general justice carried out." Inside a rectangle that occupies about half the page, the artist provides a bird's-eye view of an open-air ceremony surrounded by an audience. The main priest stands with his mouth slightly open while holding his jeweled and feather-crested staff. The priest wears a maroon cloak with a white pattern painted on it. On his back he carries a turquoise-encrusted gourd with a red tip and golden plates on the sides. He sports bracelets on his arms and golden tweezers on his chest. Carefully written captions identify him as the "main priest/sacerdote mayor."

The other characters in the picture are also labeled. The main priest points to a "jailer/carcelero," who stands in the center of the picture. The jailer is clubbing a "bad woman/mala mujer," who lies on her stomach with her hands stretched over her head and her feet tied by a rope. Above her, a nude man sits on a small stool with his hands tied behind his back, tears flowing from his eyes. Below the woman stands a figure identified as "captain general/capitán general," who with an arrow in his right hand points to a group of crying nude figures. The captions identify them as "lazy ones/perezosos" and "sorcerers/hechiceros." Gathered at the edges of the image, the attentive audience watches the spectacle. Lip-plugs, stools and smoking pipes identify many of them as members of the upper classes. Small captions corroborate this, identifying a group in the left upper corner as "lords/señores," and another group along the bottom edge of the image as "chiefs/caciques."

The second image of this justice fiesta comes at the end of the main priest's speech (Fig. 2). In the image, he addresses an audience. Here, too, the priest wears a maroon and white cloak, carries a turquoise-encrusted gourd with small golden plates on his back, and sports golden tweezers on his chest. He wears red and black sandals, painstakingly drawn, and carries in his hands a striped staff with a blue disk surmounted by a pointed arrowhead from which dangle feathers and shells. The audience on the right of the image again includes a row of noblemen, identified by their lip-plugs, smoking pipes, green garlands on their heads, and stools.

José Corona Núñez, in the highly influential facsimile edition of the *Relación* edited by José Tudela, notes that this fiesta, identified in the text as *Equata-Cónsquaro* or fiesta of the arrows, appears at the beginning of the historical account rather than in the now missing Part One, which contained a discussion of all the other religious ceremonies (RM, 11, footnote 1). He attributes its "misplacement" to a novelistic style of narration that would commence the recounting of history with an unrelated event (RM, 14, footnote 5).⁴ However, rather than seeing the inclusion of this ceremony and its image as a misplacement, this deliberate choice can help unfold the intricate relationship that exists in the *Relación* between history, the administration of justice by a centralized power, and the public celebration of religious rites.

First, one must notice that the inclusion of this fiesta and its illustrations stands in stark contrast not only to the friar's complaint that these people lacked justice, but also to the sixteenth-century Spanish-Purhépecha *Diccionario Grande* (DG), which at first

glance seems to confirm the friar's assertion. Lacking an exact equivalent for "justice/justicia" in Purhépecha, the Diccionario translates it in a roundabout way and then ends up including the Spanish word "justice/justicia" in its Purhépecha definition anyway. The Dictionary thus defines "justice" as "Cez atsiperaqua justicia" (DG, t I, 424), which literally means the "well doing or having of justice." The Diccionario also translates "to carry out sentences/justiciar" as "Justicia himbo curanditahpeni" (DG, t I, 424), which literately means "to make them obey through justice." Curanditahpeni comes from the verb *curani*, to listen, and *curanditahpeni* can be translated as "to make somebody listen." The connection between listening and good behavior (i.e. obeying) in sixteenth-century Purhépecha is reinforced in terms such as *curandini*, which means both "to understand a language" and "to lead a peaceful life, to not harm anybody." Interestingly, the word *curanditahpeni* shows up again in the *Diccionario* as the definition for the Spanish words castigar, punir/to punish (DG, t II, 114 and DG, t I, 592). Thus, while Spaniards understood indigenous justice as a matter of judgment and punishment (physical and otherwise), the Purhépecha concept seems to focus on the acts of making somebody listen and obey, which the threat of physical punishment only reinforces. Thus, since specific concepts probably did not cross cultural and language barriers unaltered, in all likelihood visual representations did not aim at communicating identical concepts. One therefore should not expect a direct correlation in the *Relación* between the indigenous images and the Spanish text.

The artist of the images of justice bracketing the historical account shows the main priest with his mouth partially opened and his audience in the process of listening

(Fig. 1-2). The first scene deliberately captures the main priest at the very moment in which he is verbally narrating the history of the Uanacaze rise to power (Fig. 1). The close attention given to his costume and accourtements, his staff, the turquoise-encrusted gourd on his back, his bracelets and golden tweezers, make him the focal point of the scene, as do his size in proportion to other figures. According to the text accompanying the image, for twenty days prior to this fiesta he had sat on his stool from morning to noon as he listened to the charges against the accused and made the appropriate decisions concerning their cases. On the day of the fiesta, it says, he stood up, took his staff and recounted the history of the Uanacaze, just as he does in the illustration; the stool on which he had previously sat is still visible in the background.

The main priest as represented in this image is simultaneously a religious leader, a judge and the guardian of oral history. It is the act of speaking that fuses these roles and brings him center stage. The Purhépecha word for the main priest was *petamuti*, meaning the one who pronounces/speaks or determines with authority. He is the one in charge of making his audience listen and obey. His title derives from his ability to deliver, narrate, or speak, and his powers from his ability to recount history. History, the artist seems to say, is indivisible from speaking and making the audience listen and obey. History is presented by the *Relación*'s indigenous narrators and artists as a selective and purposeful narrative that seeks to generate a pattern of response: obedience. The recounting of history and making people listen and obey join forces as a complex concept in the *Relación* (and in this image in particular), which the friar, for lack of a more comprehensive word, translated for the Spanish audience as *justicia*.

The image and its labels further reinforce the union between historical events and making people obey (Fig. 1) by depicting the main priest giving his speech and the socalled "jailer" simultaneously clubbing a "bad woman," even though the text specifies that sentences were carried out after the main priest had finished his speech. Thus, the scene unites the oral narration of history with the punishment of criminals, both temporally and conceptually. Several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents use the Purhépecha word *catape* for "jailer." According to historian Felipe Castro Gutiérrez, catape may be an abbreviation of *catahpeti* or *catahperi*, meaning the one who captures or makes someone prisoner. Among Pre-Columbian cultures—and those living in Michoacán were no exception—the goal of warriors in battle was often to capture prisoners. In his sixteenth-century chronicle, Francisco Cervantes de Salazar explains that "brave men" dispensed the punishment of criminals throughout Mexico, 10 and in the Relación, the term "brave men" is used to describe warriors. It is therefore possible that the so-called "jailer" in the image stands as a brave man, a warrior who sacrifices the enemies of the Uanacaze. Furthermore, the text of the *Relación* states that people captured in war, when not sacrificed, became slaves. And the text accompanying this image mentions that slaves intended for sacrifice who had not yet met their fate were sacrificed on this date, thus equating criminals and prisoners of war.

The conceptual union between historical events and current criminals is further achieved by the presence of the "captain general," or *angatacuri*, in the bottom center of the image. ¹¹ While pointing at the criminals with an arrow he holds in his right hand, he looks out of the picture plane to the manuscript's audience. Standing in the foreground,

he becomes the connecting point, the lens through which we are to look at the criminals in the middle ground. The *Relación* describes him as the man in charge of the conquest of enemy towns, to which much of the historical account of the *Relación* is devoted. The bow and arrows he holds refer to his authority. They also connote the conquest of territories. In several images of the *Relación*, burning arrows announce the Uanacaze conquest of their enemies, and colonial documents often mention that arrows marked the rulers' lands. ¹² It was not without reason that this fiesta was called "*Equata-Cónsquaro*," which the friar translates as the fiesta "of the arrows."

In addition to representing Purhépecha concepts, the illustration addresses a Spanish-speaking audience through its small captions. Written by the editorial hand of the manuscript, presumably the friar-compiler, these captions serve as bridges between Purhépecha and Spanish concepts of justice. Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the process of communication through which an artwork is deciphered can help clarify the function of these captions. Bourdieu explains that when "reading" an image, *seeing* is a function of *knowledge*. The viewer must name visible things, expressing verbally what is otherwise coded visually. S/he must possess the cultural competence to know the specific visual code in order to be an effective reader in the process of communication. If s/he lacks knowledge of the specific code, s/he may feel lost and may not understand it. ¹³ In the case of this illustration, the captions provide the viewer with sufficient knowledge to decode it in a particular way. They structure the picture according to the participants in a Spanish trial. The captions identify a "jailer," his victim as a "bad woman," and the group of otherwise unidentified criminals as "lazy ones" and "sorcerers." They serve the

function of interpreter of this image for the Viceroy, and by extension for the modern audience. The editorial hand gains cultural capital by interpreting otherwise unrecognizable events. He makes the unfamiliar familiar and makes Purhépecha and Spanish concepts of justice intersect. To borrow Roland Barth's word, these captions seek to "anchor" the image's meaning.

The misconducts/crimes that the Petamuti—and by extension the Uanacaze condemn in this image were of particular interest to the Spanish authorities. By focusing on them, the Uanacaze gained status in the eyes of the Viceroy. These so-called crimes were frowned upon and prosecuted by both ecclesiastical and civil authorities during colonial times. The 1579 Relación de Chilchota, Michoacán, by the Spaniard Pedro de Billela, mentions that indigenous doctors were really "sorcerers" who tricked people into believing them. 14 These individuals cured, but also caused, ailments, and professed the ability to look into past and future events by means unfamiliar to Spaniards, who associated them with idolatrous practices and "pacts with the devil." ¹⁵ In effect, Royal edicts prohibited indigenous people from practicing medicine. 16 "Laziness," or as historian Felipe Castro described it, the unwillingness of the indigenous population to participate in recently introduced forms of labor (i.e. working in Spanish-run mines and plantations), was prosecuted because it hampered the development of the colonial economy. 17 This is not unusual in colonial ideologies. Furthermore, the "bad woman" being clubbed at the top of the picture in all likelihood was an adulteress, since the Relación often refers to adulteresses as bad women. Adulterers and people living together outside of marriage or with multiple partners were often persecuted in the colonial period

as the Spanish authorities sought to control indigenous sexuality. ¹⁸ Thus, guided by the captions, we may interpret the image of the Uanacaze priest as a punisher of transgressors of the Spanish code. By focusing on these crimes, the Uanacaze gained status in the eyes of the Viceroy.

Part Two of the *Relación* further blurs the line between past and current criminals in the Uanacaze priest's historical account. He accuses the Uanacaze's enemies of quarreling among themselves, others of impious behavior, some of excessive drinking, and the noble women of those groups of sexual misconduct (RM, 107-116). ¹⁹ This version of history created a dichotomy between the virtuous Uanacaze and their misbehaving enemies. It helped the Uanacaze nobility gain advantage by representing themselves as having replaced previous rulers who possessed the very moral flaws the Spanish sought to correct.

In this way, the act of bringing justice to the people of Michoacán would have validated Uanacaze power over them. ²⁰ Michel Foucault, in his analysis of medieval society, pointed out that during their rise, monarchic and state institutions represented themselves as new agencies of regulation and arbitration, replacing feudal societies that existed in states of conflict. ²¹ The language of the law served to justify their presence, as it does in the narrative offered by the Uanacaze main priest. The content of the main priest's speech presented the Viceroy with the narration of a familiar history, that of a society that had gone through a transformation and self-validation very much like Spain's. To deny the validity of Uanacaze rule would, by extension, negate the

monarchical system the Viceroy represented. Thus, the Uanacaze priest's narration reveals itself as a strategy aimed at justifying the Uanacaze return to power.

During the colonial period, much of the indigenous authorities' ability to govern depended on their capacity to administer justice, punish criminals and enforce Christian morals. Town governors had the authority to arrest and to ensure that children received a Christian education and attended Christian rites; they also informed ecclesiastical authorities of perpetrators of moral misconduct (single pregnant women, adulteresses, etc.). ²² In effect, indigenous governors and mayors fought Spanish functionaries for the right to judge crimes, arguing that otherwise they would "lose all of their authority." ²³ To present the Uanacaze as the bearers and arbiters of justice and moral standards was to argue for their return to the rulership of Michoacán.

These first two images, then, depict the delivery of a historical speech intended to make people obey, thus conveying the Purhépecha concept of justice (Fig. 1-2). The Spanish captions in the first image made it accessible to a Spanish-speaking audience and transformed the image into a Spanish-like trial. The crimes identified by the captions were prosecuted in colonial courts. On the one hand, the friar-editor gains cultural and political capital by interpreting and allying himself with the indigenous nobility. On the other hand, the Uanacaze priest, and by extension the Uanacaze whom he represents, stands as an arbiter of justice and guardian of appropriate conduct very much in tune with the Spanish colonial system.

Justice by the main ruler:

In contrast with the first two images of justice, in which the main priest and his speech are the main focus, a third image titled "Of the Justice Done by the Ruler" (Fig. 3) depicts the main ruler administering justice at the center of a bloody scene of corporal punishment. The friar-compiler explains that because not all crimes were included in the previous section, he includes them in Part Three of the *Relación*, the ethnographic section. The artist provides a bird's eye view of the courtyard of the ruler's house. The ruler, identified by his blue stool and headdress, appears twice, once inside his house and the second time in front of it (right-hand corner of the image), while pointing at a figure who shows him a cloth. Behind this person sit a woman and a nude man bleeding from their ears. Counter-clockwise from them, a figure who has lost an arm (held by another individual) lies on his stomach. Above him, one individual clubs another. Continuing in a counter-clockwise direction, a man employs a club with a spike protruding from it to puncture the anus of a contorted figure lying on the ground. Next to him, a victim whose mouth has been cut at the corners is being poked in the eyes with a narrow stick and dragged with a rope by his left foot by yet another figure. Directly below them, an individual punctures the genitalia of a figure lying on his back with another club-andspike weapon. The audience in this image is limited to two small groups of five people. One group is at the bottom edge of the image, diagonal and to the left of the ruler. The first person in the group points to the ruler. The other group peeks from the side of a small building on the left-hand side of the picture. The following analysis will show that by depicting some of the crimes in which the Spanish legal system was also invested, and by connecting them to punishments that draw upon indigenous concepts of the body, the artist supports the sociopolitical power of the Uanacaze.

According to the text of the *Relación*, within this justice system criminals were disciplined for the first three offenses; death punished the fourth. Although, according to the text, the Uanacaze main priest judged only the most serious of cases, some of which resulted in death sentences, the artist chooses to portray a variety of punishments for criminals who had not yet been dealt the death sentence. This busy image, with its bright reds and contorted bodies, is far from being self-explanatory. The text of the *Relación* reveals that the castigation of specific body parts marked specific crimes, thus creating a culturally identifiable visual language. Once again, it is only through the narrator's voice, as recorded in the text, that the viewer can begin to understand the relationship between specific crimes and specific physical punishments. For example, the text mentions that sorcerers had their mouths lacerated and were dragged around by the foot, as seen in the bottom left corner of the image. Adulterers had their ears lacerated and were stripped of their cloaks. Slightly off center and to the right, an offended husband, presumably having caught his wife and her lover in fragranti delecto, holds the lover's cloak up to the ruler as evidence of their affair, while sitting behind him the unfaithful pair bleed from the ears (Fig. 3).

The specific crimes the text identifies, sorcery and adultery, were both persecuted by the Spanish authorities (as discussed in the first part of this chapter). In addition, the public spectacle of punishment would have resonated with Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, who had commissioned the manuscript, since sixteenth-century Spanish law provided for

the public, corporal punishment of criminals. Indeed, in 1546 (only about five years after the *Relación* was finished) the Viceroy, along with the members of the Royal Audience (the Spanish judicial entity in Mexico), wrote a set of laws for the indigenous population listing specific crimes and their respective sentences, most of which included public chastisement. Thus, this image represented crimes and procedures that in a large sense were familiar to the Viceroy and of much interest to his judicial ambitions.

While the sentences the Viceroy and the other members of the Royal Audience designed varied little, consisting for the most part of a combination of prison time and public lashing, the artist depicts a greater variety of bodily punishments. The suffering body in this scene serves as a communication tool. It functions as the physical expression of justice. The mutilated bodies work as mnemonic devices. They register in the memory of the viewer the consequences of transgressing a social order that benefited the Uanacaze. Pain, torture, public humiliation, and their spectacle become the connecting experience for the audience of the manuscript (as it would have for those present at such an event, represented directly opposite the manuscript audience's viewing point). In viewing and imagining the pain, the audience experiences the meaning of the Purhépecha word *chechexequa*, meaning "authority and majesty," which literally translates, "that which induces much fear in the body." Thus, this image not only conveys a judicial code, but also seeks to communicate Uanacaze authority, an authority justified by the main priest's politically motivated historical speech (Fig. 3).

The symbolic function of the body seems to be in congruence with modern-day Purhépecha language. Linguists Mauricio Swadesh, Paul Freidrich, and Paul de Wolf have pointed out that Purhépecha speakers use body-related words to describe personal and social space.²⁵ Furthermore, anthropologist Tricia Gabany-Guerrero (1999, 142-3) has pointed out that Purhépecha speakers use the body not just metaphorically in speech, but also as a model or plan for the ideal construction of social relations and institutions. According to Gabany-Guerrero, in one of the modern-day oratory modes that very much resembles the Petamuti's speech, the speaker uses the human body as a model or "point of departure" for analogies about the world.²⁶

As in other parts of Mexico and Central America, the body in sixteenth-century Purhépecha thinking does not serve only as an analogy for social relations, but in fact seems to embody them. The Purhépecha words to express physical health refer not to a state of being, but to an individual's relationship with society. In the sixteenth century, the words for health referred to an individual's ability to follow expected behaviors. *Vraquan piquareraqua* (DG, t I, 639), one of the terms used for health, translates as *vraquan*, 27 meaning "to be frank, magnanimous and brave," and *piquareraqua*, "to feel intellectually those qualities." When characterizing health, modern-day Purhépecha people use words such as *cesi piquareraqua*, which they define as "to feel well with society, with the people of one's own town." Likewise, they use *cesi nitamani* and *cesi jangua*, translating them as "to be well, to live well together with others" and "to behave well morally, to be respectful," respectively. These words indicate that physical wellbeing depends on the individual's behavior and ability to relate to others following pre-established social norms.

The body's wellbeing is not a fixed concept, but instead a fluid idea that encompasses an ever-changing relationship between the community and the individual. Representations of the body fix in space and time what are otherwise fleeting interactions between the individual and his/her community. These body representations can be explored as the codification of social norms. That is, one can read them as metonymies that refer to the interaction between an individual and society, while addressing the manuscript's audience.

For the image "Of the Justice Done by the Ruler" (Fig. 3), the text of the *Relación* mentions that sorcerers were punished when they had put spells on or killed people (RM, Part 2, Chap. 1). The image shows a sorcerer with his eyes being poked and the corners of his mouth cut open. To understand how this punishment embodies the harm he has inflicted upon society, one must look at the role of sorcerers in sixteenth-century Michoacán. According to the 1579 Relación de Chilchota, Michoacán, in order to cure people sorcerers/indigenous doctors would fill a gourd with water, look into it, blow in it and look at the sky. Then, they would blow around the house, utter a few indecipherable words, and squeeze the flesh of the patient to get the ailment out of him/her. Don Pedro Cuiniarangari, one of the narrators of the *Relación*, may be forgiven for having confused the Catholic friars with indigenous doctors when he first saw them look into the wine chalice during mass (RM, 250). The *Relación* also mentions that indigenous doctors were able to see crimes committed by thieves by looking into a gourd full of water, and they settled the fate of troubled marriages by throwing grains of corn into a gourd with water and looking into them (RM, 217, see also Sepúlveda 1988, 101-102). The sixteenthcentury *Diccionario Grande* tells us that this practice was known as *ytsi eramanstani*, to see in the water, and gives *eramansri* (meaning the one who looks into water) as one of the words for sorcerer.²⁹ These indigenous doctors/sorcerers' role, then, depended on their ability to see illness, past conducts, and foresee the outcome of future events. It was their sight that gave them their power over society and allowed them to inflict good or evil. The act of uttering not only undecipherable words, but also sentences and diagnoses, allowed them to bring their powers to fruition.

Because the body was seen as the material reflection of the relationship between the individual and society, the sorcerer's eyes and mouth embodied an aspect of this relationship. In this scene, the sorcerer's mutilated eyes and mouth thus corresponded to his transgressions against society. The Uanacaze ruler, in ordering the castigation of these specific body parts, ensured that the correspondence between individual and society would be realized in the physical world, in effect causing the continuation of the "natural" order

Of all the crimes being punished in this image, text and iconography come together again in the representation of adultery. In the illustration, adultery is represented by a man holding a piece of cloth and a couple bleeding from their ears. The text explains:

And the husband who found his woman with another would lacerate their ears to both, to her and to the adulterer, as a sign that he had found them in adultery. And he would take away their cloaks and he would come to complain, and he would show them to the one in charge of carrying out justice and he was believed with that sign he brought (RM, 12).

The ruler's and the narrator's concern with this particular crime corresponds to a recurrent threat throughout the manuscript. The strictures laid out in the *Relación* limit women to one sexual partner of the same ethnic group by criminalizing adultery and regulating marriage, ensuring the perpetuation of distinct ethnic and filial lines.

Marriages were arranged between people from the same ethnic group. Those who had had sex before marriage, which was considered a disgrace, were only allowed to marry if they came from the same ethnic group (RM, 216). Community members were to carefully watch out for adultery, and during marriage ceremonies, women of both the noble and lower classes were reminded to be faithful to their husbands (RM, 212-214).

And while men could practice polygamy, only those who slept with married women were punished for having multiple sex partners, whereas women were always limited to only one. ³⁰

In the pages of the *Relación*, adultery is not punished evenly across social classes, revealing a lot about the desire of the Uanacaze to prove the legitimacy of their line. Adultery committed by one of the ruler's wives meant the immediate death of her consort, his family, and all those who lived in his house, as well as the confiscation of all property, fields, and insignia of nobility (RM, 201). Meanwhile, adulterers among all other classes were let off for their first three offenses, and death only punished the fourth. Thus, it appears that the legitimate birth of Uanacaze rulers was far more important than the faithful or unfaithful behavior of most women.

The main priest's oral history and six illustrations in fact includes a vignette about an unfaithful noble woman that exemplifies the threat illegitimate children represented

and how the Uanacaze would have dealt with it. The adulteress was from a non-Uanacaze group and had two-timed her husband, the Uanacaze ruler, an event one of the *Relación*'s artists depicts (Fig. 4). This disgrace provoked war between the woman's group and the Uanacaze, causing the death of many of her people. Eventually, the child of her adulterous relationship, raised among her people, became eligible to assume the Uanacaze throne. Due to his mother's high birth, he gained access to it, replacing his Uanacaze father, who was forced to cede to him. Only later, after the father's envoys assassinated his son, would the Uanacaze ruler regain control of the region (RM, Part 2, Chapt. 14-18). These images and the corresponding text (Part Two, Chap. 1, and 14-18) portray the Uanacaze nobles as the repositories of justice and represent them as the descendants of a legitimate bloodline, thus distinguishing them from all others and validating their governing positions in the eyes of the Spanish colonial government.

The *Relación* tells us that the Uanacaze rulers in fact married women from other ethnic groups, thus establishing powerful political liaisons. In the narration, they assured themselves the government seat as long as only they could claim direct descent from their god Curicaueri, who they believed was destined to rule the land (RM, 15). This suggests that their presumed control of sexuality along ethnic lines was really a discursive tactic aimed at demonstrating the existence of lineages that enforced their political power. Accordingly, they carefully watched over sexual conduct as a way of ensuring the survival of their hierarchical power during colonial times. To summarize this, in this part of the *Relación*, text and image work to get the Spanish reading audience to focus on the crime of adultery.

On the other hand, the artist's depiction of a seized cloak seems to have responded to indigenous practices. Spanish regulations only required the verbal account of the offended husband as evidence, and punished adultery with jail time and public lashes.³¹ However, during the colonial period indigenous husbands would seize the cloaks, hats or any other piece of clothing belonging to a daring lover that they could get a hold of and present it to the authorities, which indicates that this practice probably predated the arrival of the Spaniards. In a Mixtec account of a murder in 1684 in Oaxaca, Mexico, a man who had killed his allegedly unfaithful wife skipped town and left as evidence of her affair a cotton cloak that used to belong to her lover. The husband specified in a note he left with the cloak that he had taken it when he had found them *in fragrante delecto*.³² And in Michoacán, in 1597, when Pedro Cuiris found his wife with another man, he hit him in the head with a stone and took his hat, which he presented to the Spanish court as evidence of the affair.³³

Likewise, representing the adulterous pair bleeding from the ears seems to respond to Purhépecha concerns. It seems that ears and their adornments functioned as social symbols of religious devotion, markers of noble status and political allegiance. The artist chose to depict the adulterous couple bleeding from the ears because it indicated that the Uanacaze rulers and high priests had punished them by divesting them of their social status.

For the people of Central Michoacán, the ear was the focus of religious devotion in the form of bloodletting to the gods. When in 1530 the president of the First Royal Audience, Nuño de Guzmán, prosecuted a trial against Zinzicha Tangaxuan, the last

Uanacaze ruler, after days of severe torture, Nuño de Guzmán asked the ruler if the blood on two idols was from human sacrifices, to which the ruler responded: "...the blood on the aforementioned idol is blood from the ears of indians...."34 While Nuño only sought to determine whether or not a human sacrifice had been performed, the ruler's response specifically identified the source of the blood as ears. In one of the few glimpses of childhood provided by the *Relación*, a council of elder priests constantly urges a young child, who is the future ruler, to let blood from his ears (RM, 44). This ruler and his successors, as well as their subjects, would draw blood from their ears many times throughout their lives in the course of religious³⁵ and war ceremonies.³⁶ Through bloodletting, they fulfilled their duties to their god and divinized ancestor Curicaueri. In the words of the aforementioned ruler, "one fed the god" (RM, 53). This metaphor also appears in Pre-Columbian representations from Central Mexico such as the Codex Borgia (Fig. 5), which shows a man piercing his ear, the blood flowing into the mouth of a death divinity. The Uanacaze describe their ancestors in the *Relación* as having "ears fat and swollen from auto-sacrifice" (RM, 122). Pricked and inflamed ears marked them as devout and religiously upstanding.

This association between the ear and religious thought seems to have permeated Christian belief in the local imagination. In the later part of the sixteenth century, a Jesuit priest living in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán recorded an indigenous creation story that combines local and Christian elements, complete with earth deities, the Flood, and humankind being created from ashes. In the story, rather than blowing onto the ashes, one of the gods sprinkles them with blood from his ears.³⁷ As late as the seventeenth century,

the Franciscan friar and chronicler Alonso de la Rea could note that people in Pre-Columbian Michoacán wore small "plates" in their ears in imitation of a god.³⁸

These ear decorations not only helped to identify people with their gods, but marked people's noble status, as well. The narrators of the *Relación* held earspools in great esteem and described a revered elder ruler as wearing golden earspools (RM, 146). The primary gods Xaratanga and Curicaueri appeared in dreams to offer golden earspools to Uanacaze lords in exchange for favors and offerings (RM, 136-7). A number of the *Relación*'s images depict noble women with their earlobes stretched and pierced by thin bars (Fig. 6), and high-ranking men (Fig. 7 & 8), such as the ruler and his war captain, wearing large earspools.

During Pre-Columbian times sumptuary laws controlled the wearing of earspools. According to the *Relación*, the materials from which earspools were made varied, wood being used for those of lower economic status, gold and turquoise, as well as obsidian and turquoise, for the upper classes. Socio-economic status alone did not automatically result in the right to wear earspools. Fr. Isidro Félix de Espinosa, a Franciscan writing on Michoacán in the later part of the seventeenth century, reports that during Pre-Columbian times lords could not wear jewels, expensive clothing, or feathers until they had killed or captured their first prisoner of war. Only after accomplishing this feat could they wear the jewels, clothing and feathers that were "symbols of brave men." The so-called brave men in the *Relación* wear lip-plugs and earspools (Fig. 7 & 8) (RM, 178). Furthermore, the *Relación* explains that the Uanacaze ruler controlled the wearing of earspools and other jewels by municipal rulers. After a municipal leader died, his relatives returned the

deceased's earspools, lip-plugs, and bracelets, considered his insignia of authority, to the Uanacaze ruler. The Uanacaze ruler would then appoint a successor and give him/her these symbols of office (RM, 203).

In early colonial exchanges, the precious earspools of the nobility held their value. On May 4th of 1532, in a court document, the Spaniard Antonio de Teran would price the Uanacaze ruler's earspools at the considerable amount of more than 300 gold pesos. In the same document, Don Pedro Cuiniarángari (one of the narrators of the *Relación*) would state that he had given a Spanish interpreter golden earspools with the green stones of the kind "the Christians wanted." ⁴⁰

It seems that the ear was more than just a bodily appendage to be decorated. Through it one announced and performed one's devotion, social status, accomplishments, and even one's allegiance. To portray someone's ear being divested of its ornaments or damaged was to show that person's position in society being threatened and possibly permanently diminished. This is exemplified in the *Relación* in the depiction of people in enemy towns who fell to the Uanacaze ruler's army. In the image "When they put a population under fire and blood" (Fig. 9), which illustrates such an event, the Uanacaze army takes a group of enemies captive in the bottom right hand corner. These enemies are shown naked with their hands bound behind their backs, a rope tying them by their necks, and their insignia of rank—their lip-plugs, earspools, and breastplates—lying on the ground. Their political independence, like their accoutrements, has been removed. Like the divestment of the ear's ornament, the disfigurement of the ear, as seen in the image of justice being dispensed by the ruler (Fig. 3), announces not just the accuseds'

transgression of social norms, but also their precarious situation within the Uanacaze social system. Since adultery threatened the social system described in the *Relación*, the depiction of its peculiar form of punishment represented a direct attack to the adulterers' social status.

Images representing the Uanacaze judicial system codified the authority of the Uanacaze into an intelligible visual language. In indigenous thought, the body embodied the relationship of the individual to society, allowing the artist to use it as a semiotic tool through which he could express moral codes in the service of the Uanacaze. When disfigured, the body marked transgressors of social and sexual taboos.

Conclusion: The three images depicting the delivery of justice by members of the Uanacaze elite placed the Uanacaze at the top of a centralized judicial system, a key requisite for their return to colonial government. The first two images focus on the indigenous concept of justice, which combines the narration of history with acts that made people conform to a pre-established social system. In the first image, the main priest recounts history while at the same time a jailer punishes criminals. It conflates historical enemies with the contemporary transgressors of the social order, reenacting the bringing of justice to the area by the Uanacaze (Fig. 1). In the image of the Uanacaze ruler delivering justice, physical punishment, such as lacerating the ears of adulterers and gauging the eyes and cutting the mouths of sorcerers, marked the bodies of transgressors of a social order that presupposed the restoration of centralized rulership to the Uanacaze.

The script in the form of captions inside one of the images and its accompanying text transforms highly complex indigenous thoughts into judicial concepts understandable to the Spanish. They get a Spanish-speaking audience to focus on crimes (adultery, sorcery, laziness) that greatly concerned Spanish authorities, thus arguing the legitimacy of the Uanacaze rulership in terms relevant to the Spaniards.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Plate 19, Fol 61r, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero.



Figure 2. Plate 41, Fol. 133r, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de San Lorenzo Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero.



Figure 3. Plate 9, Fol. 20r, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero.

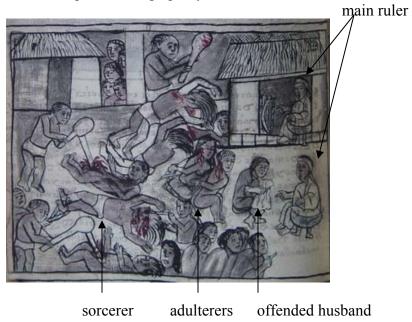


Figure 4.

Plate 26, Fol. 92v, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero



Figure 5. Codex Borgia



Figure 6. Plate 25 detail, Fol. 87v, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero.



Figure 7. Plate 18 detail, Fol. 46r, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero.



Figure 8. Plate 6 detail, Fol. 15v, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de San Lorenzo San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero.



Figure 9. Plate 7 detail, Fol. 19r, *Relación de Michoacán*, Monasterio de de El Escorial, Spain. Photograph by Marcelino de Otero.



Endnotes:

¹ Hans Roskamp, "El carari indígena y las láminas de la *Relación de Michoacán:* Un acercamiento," in *Relación de Michoacán*, 235-264 (Zamora, Mexico: El Colegio de Michoacán and Gobierno del Estado, 2000); Angélica Afanador Pujol, "Patron, contributors and artists in the *Relación de Michoacán*," in "The Politics of Ethnicity: Reimagining Indigenous Identities in the Sixteenth-Century Relación de Michoacán" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, n.d.).

² Elizabeth Boone has pointed out that Spanish writers often denied the existence of books and writing among indigenous peoples to justify colonization. Elizabeth Boone, *Stories in Red and Black* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 4.

³ José Tudela, ed., *Relación de Michoacán*, 13. All references to the *Relación de Michoacán* in this chapter refer to José Tudela's 1956 facsimile edition, unless otherwise specified. I will cite them as RM in parenthetical references.

⁴ One could, however, as easily argue for the relevance of this ceremony to Part Three, "Of the Government These People Had Among Themselves," which in fact deals with the administration of justice by the main ruler, the subject of the third image being discussed in this chapter.

⁵ I am grateful to Tata Benjamín Lucas from Cuanajo, Michoacán for the many hours we spent together going over these definitions. This chapter has benefited from his wealth of knowledge and from his infinite patience helping me translate these terms to identify their literal meaning.

⁶ "Hacerse obedecer con justicia," personal conversation with Benjamín Lucas. Other related terms include "to do justice/justicia hacer," which the *Diccionario* translates as "*Cez atsipeni justicia*" and "*niyatatpeni justicia*," literally meaning "to do justice well" and "to grant justice," respectively (personal conversation with Alicia Mateo, julio de 2008)

⁷ Fray Maturino Gilberti, *Vocabulario en Lengua de Mechuacán*, ed. transcription Agustín J. Zavala (Zamora and Mexico City, Mexico: El Colegio de Michoacán and Fideicomiso Teixidor, 1997), 73. Modern day speakers define *curandini* as "to be obedient/*ser obediente*," personal conversation with Alicia Mateo, julio 2008.

⁸ According to Francisco Hurtado Mendoza, the word petamuti derives from *petamoni*, meaning to pronounce, plus the adgentive *-ti*. Thus, Hurtado translates petamuti as the one who pronounces/speaks, dictates or determines with authority. José Corona Núñez (RM, 13, footnote 2) translates it as "announcer," and Pedro Márquez Joaquín reads it as

"the one who utters or pronounces words." See Francisco Hurtado Mendoza, *La Religión Prehispánica de los purhepechas: Un testimonio del pueblo tarasco*, 104; and Pedro Márquez Joaquín, "El significado de las palabras p'urhépecha en la *Relación de Michoacán:* Glosario de voces p'urhépecha," in *Relación de Michoacán*, 714 (Zamora, Mexico: El Colegio de Michoacán and Gobierno del Estado, 2000). Translation from Spanish to English mine.

Publicistas, 1991), 680.

⁹ Felipe Castro Gutiérrez, *Los Tarascos y el imperio español*, *1600-1740* (Mexico City and Morelia: Universidad Autónoma de México and UMSNH, 2004), 126.

 ¹⁰ Crónica de la Nueva España, MS 2011 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, capítulo 25. Viewed at the Ex-Convento de Tiripetío. According to Francisco Cervantes de Salazar these "brave men" became *alguaciles*/constables during the colonial period.
 11 Angatacuri: guardián, el que custodia, vigila algo de lo que está al lado. Alicia Mateo. Anga-: estar parado, estar de pie; -ta-: al lado.

¹² See for example, Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de Pátzcuaro (AHCP), Caja 132-1, 25f. Year 1625.

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans.
Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), 3.
¹⁴ José Corona Núñez, ed., *Relaciones geográficas de la diócesis de Michoacán*, 1579-1580 (Guadalajara, Mexico: Colección Siglo XVI, 1958), 24.
¹⁵ Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, ed., Martín de Riquer (Barcelona: Editorial Alta Fulla, 1998). See also Tricia Gabany-Guerrero,
"Deciphering the Symbolic Heritage," 178-9, and J. Benedict Warren, paleographer, *Diccionario Grande de la Lengua de Michoacán* (DG) (Morelia, Mexico: Fimax

¹⁶ In spite of all the epidemics that swept through Mexico in the sixteenth century, in 1545 Mexico City had only four certified doctors (Risse 1987, 31; cited in Gabany-Guerrero 1999, 179). It was not until 1578 that a chair of Medicine was established at the University in Mexico City. Thus, according to Tricia Gabany Guerrero, for the majority of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries medical practice remained in the hands of indigenous doctors. Tricia Gabany-Guerrero "Deciphering the Symbolic Heritage of the Tarascan Empire: Interpreting the Political Economy of the Pueblo-Hospital of Parangaricutiro, Michoacán" (Ph.D. dissertation, University at Albany, State University of New York, 1999).

¹⁷ See Felipe Castro, Los Tarascos y el imperio español, 218 and 250-263.

¹⁸ See for example, AHCP, Caja 3, Exp. 78, 4f, (cited in Rodrigo Martínez Baracs and Lydia Espinosa Morales, *La vida michoacana en el siglo XVI*, 1999, 138); and AHCP, Caja 5 bis, Exp 73, folios 1-6; AHCP, Caja 4, Exp. 55; AHCP, Caja 2bis, Exp. 82, 1569; AGN, Ramo Indios 2, Exp. 727, f. 166r, published in Carlos Paredes Martínez, ed., *Y por mi visto...*, 214-5; and the Spanish "Ordenanzas Reales Sobre los Indios (Las Leyes de 1512-1513)" in *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 13 (9), 1956, 434; and the "Ordenanza para el gobierno de indios, 1546," in *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación* 11 (2), 1940, 185-186. Also, Maria Lourdes Kuthy-Saenger names among the crimes persecuted by Spaniards against indigenous people during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "...absenteeism from the work place, and unkept working agreements; disputes over unpaid tribute, religious 'misdemeanors' or ciminal behavoirs defined by Spanish law (i.e. drunkness, theft, laziness, polygamy) that also reflected crimes committed against Catholic religious principles...." Maria Lourdes Kuthy-Saenger, "Strategies of Survival, Accomodation and Innovation: the Tarascan Indigenous Elite in Sixteenth Century Michoacán" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1996), 40-41.

¹⁹ Likewise, Part Three of the *Relación* tells us that the ruler Zuangua justified the Spanish conquest of Central Mexico citing Central Mexicans' inappropriate worship of their gods (only songs and no burning of fires).

²⁰ This is also confirmed in the *Codex Plancarte* in a speech quoted from one of the Uanacaze lords, in which he announces the bringing of justice to the town of Carapan to rationalize turning it into a subject city: "...and he announced to them how soon there will be a new law and in that law no lazy people, nor adulterers, nor deceitful people, nor liars, nor sorcerers would be allowed." José Corona Núñez, *Tres Códices Michoacanos* (Morelia: UMSNH, 1986), 56.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage 1978), 86-7.

²² Felipe Castro Gutiérrez, Los Tarascos y el imperio español, 115 and 121-2.

²³ Archivo General de la Nación, México (AGN), Indios, Volume 4, Exp. 148, f. 47v-48r, in Carlos Paredes Martínez ed., *Y por mi visto*... (Mexico City and Morelia: CIESAS and UMSNH), 278-279. See also Felipe Castro, *Los Tarascos y el imperio español*, 126.

²⁴ Felipe Castro Gutiérrez, *Los Tarascos y el imperio español*, 26. Castro Gutiérrez also cites the word *chemazqua*, meaning "authority and majesty" and having *cheni* for a root, which he translates as "to fear and to scare."

²⁵ Wolf, "El cuerpo humano en la Sufijación verbal del Tarasco," *Seis estudios lingüísticos sobre la lengua phorhé* (Zamora, Mexico: El Colegio de Michoacán and

Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 1989), 47-110. See also Swadesh 1969, Freidrich 1969, 1984, 60; Cited in Gabany-Guerrero 1999, 142-3.

²⁶ Tricia Gabany-Guerrero, "Deciphering the Symbolic Heritage," 34-35.

²⁷ Vraquan comes from the root vraqua (DG, tome II, 746) and the suffix –ni. Vraqua means frankness, magnanimity and braveness, and the suffix –ni converts this noun into a verb. The word piquareraqua means intellectual senses (DG, tome II, 432). En la actualidad, la palabra vraqua viene del verbo *urani*, sacudir, y se utiliza para describir algo fuerte que resiste el ser sacudido, Alicia Mateo, July 2008.

²⁸ Other terms include *sesi pajperakua* and *sesi arhijperani*, meaning to get along well with everybody, to accept everybody, and to try to live well with everybody. This information was collected by the author from the medicine women attending the Universidad Intercultural Indígena de Michoacán, December, 2007.

²⁹ The *Diccionario Grande* translates *erasmansri* as "sorcerer who looks into auguries," but according to Benjamín Lucas (personal conversation Dec. 2006) its literal translation is "the one who looks into the water."

³⁰ Although polygamy was supposedly not accepted by the colonial system, Uanacaze lords seem to have continued the practice. Don Antonio Huitzimengari, governor of Michoacán between 1545 and 1562, for example, had many children outside his Catholic marriage. See Delfina López Sarrelangue, *La nobleza indígena de Pátzcuaro en la época virreinal* (Morelia, Mexico: Morevallado Editores, 1999), 207-228.

³¹ See Ordenanzas 1546, 185; and AGN, Ramo Indios 2, Exp. 727, f. 166r, published in Carlos Paredes Martínez, ed., *Y por mi visto...*, 214-5. See also AHCP 4, #39, year 1558, Pátzcuaro, cited in Kuthy 1996, 239.

³² See Kevin Terraciano, "Crime and Culture in Colonial Mexico: The Case of the Mixtec Murder Note," *Ethnohistory* 45, no. 4 (1998): 720-1.

³³ AHCP, Caja 5B, doc. 73, año de 1597. Notice that in both of these cases the offended husband only took the cloth piece from the lover and not the wife. And while the text of the *Relación* tells us that the offended husband took the cloaks of both lover and wife, the artist represents only the lover naked.

³⁴ "la sangre que están [sic] en el dicho ídolo es de sangre de las orejas de indios que se sacrificaron..." France V. Scholes, and Eleanor B. Adams, *Proceso contra Tzintzicha Tangaxoan el Caltzontzin, formado por Nuño de Guzmán, Año de 1530*, (Mexico City: Porrúa y Obregon, 1952): 66.

³⁵ As an adult, that ruler is described letting blood from his ears in a ceremony dedicated to the gods Curicaueri and Punguarancha, a war deity. In this ceremony, he stands in stark contrast to two men from the noble house of Itxiparámucu who sleep with his wife and then cut their own ears and blame him for having punished them in vain and having lied about their sleeping with his wife. Thus, not only does the ear serve to mark his devotion, but to differentiate him from other lords whose behavior is not deemed appropriate by cultural standards. Tudela, *Relación de Michoacán*, 70.

³⁶ Tudela, ed., *Relación de Michoacán*, 151. For other examples of ear sacrifice in the *Relación* and other colonial documents see Véronique Darras, "La obsidiana en la *Relación de Michoacán* y en la realidad arqueológica: del símbolo al uso o del uso de un símbolo," Chap. 4 in *Génesis, culturas y espacios en Michoacán* (México: Centre Français d'Études Mexicaines et Centraméricaines, 1998): 68-70.

³⁷ See Francisco Ramírez, "Relación sobre la residencia de Michoacán (Pátzcuaro) hecha por el Padre Francisco Ramírez," in Feliz Zubillaga (coord.), *Monumenta Mexicana 1581-1585* (Rome: Apud. Monumenta Historica Soc. IESU, 1959): vol. II, 492-4.

³⁸ Alonso de la Rea, *Crónica de la orden de N. Seráfico P.S. Francisco provincia de San Pedro y San Pablo de Mechoacan en la Nueva España*, ed. Patricia Escandón,1996, 83 ³⁹ Fr. Isidro Félix de Espinosa, *Crónica de la Provincia Franciscana de los Apóstoles San Pedro y San Pablo de Michoacán* (Mexico City: Editorial Santiago, 1945): 45.

⁴⁰ Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Justicia, Legajo 229, f. 2v and f. 6r. May 4th, 1532. See also AGI, Justicia, Legajo 226, No. 2, Ro. 2, "Relacion sacada una probanza hecha por pedimento de guzman..." for a list of exchange items between the Nuño de Guzmán, President of the First Real Audiencia, and the Uanacaze ruler including golden earspools.

⁴¹ According to the text, after capturing them the army took the enemy lords to the capital for an audience with the Uanacacaze ruler. There these lords gave him presents and swore allegiance to him. Tudela, ed., *Relación de Michoacán*, 197-8.