

# Introduction

The physician cannot advisedly administer medicines to the patient without first knowing of which humour or from which source the ailment derives. Wherefore it is desirable that the good physician be expert in the knowledge of medicines and ailments to adequately administer the cure for each ailment. The preachers and confessors are physicians of the souls for the curing of spiritual ailments. It is good that they have practical knowledge of the medicines and the spiritual ailments.

This is the opening paragraph of the first prologue to *Universal History of the Things of New Spain* (ca. 1577-1579), a twelve-book encyclopaedic work on the Nahuas.<sup>1</sup> Fray Bernardino de Sahagún

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1. The original paragraph, written by an indigenous amanuensis in sixteenth-century Spanish and at times with inconsistent diacritic and idiosyncratic marks, reads: “El medico no puede Acataadamente aplicar Las medicinas al enfermo sin que primero conozca: de que humor, o de que causa proçede la enfermedad. De manera que el buen medico conuiene sea docto en el conocimiento de las mediçinas y en el de las enfermedades para aplicar conueniblemente a cada enfermedad la mediçina contraria. Los predicadores, y confesores, medicos son de las animas para curar las enfermedades espirituales: conuiene tengã esperitia de las mediçinas y de las enfermedades espirituales.” This quote appears in the *Florentine Codex*, the surviving manuscript of *Universal History of the Things of New Spain* (*Historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España*), which is hereafter referred to as *Historia universal*. “Universal” was the title page but it has been superseded in modern editions by “general.” This issue and the dates of composition are discussed in chapters II and III of this study. The title *Florentine Codex*, in allusion to the library where it was found, was suggested by Joaquín García Icazbalceta in *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVI* (1886), see 1954, pp. 358-359. The *Florentine Codex* comprises two columns; on the right, the original text in the Nahuatl language—the lingua franca of the Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan—, and on the left, its translation into Spanish. For a list of contents, see appendix I. This study quotes

begins with a simile on preachers and confessors as physicians of the soul in order to argue that, in the same manner that physicians cure by detecting a disease and applying appropriate medicines, churchmen must be able to identify and heal spiritual illnesses; the harmful, “idolatrous” beliefs that sickened the Nahuas. Sahagún’s fellow missionary, Fray Andrés de Olmos, reiterates this simile and argument in his prologue to *Tratado de hechicerías y sortilegios* (1553), urging the “spiritual physicians” to employ the admonitions of this work as “medicines to better cure or discuss” indigenous superstition.<sup>2</sup> The medicines that both Franciscans were dispensing was the Christian faith, inculcated through sermons and the administering of the sacrament of penance, two crucial proselytizing activities that required not only a sound knowledge of Nahuatl, but also of the Nahuas’ world in order to address them in a persuasive manner from the pulpit, and ask and understand their answers during confession. The physician-churchman comparison, established by the Church Father St. Augustine of Hippo in Book I of *De doctrina christiana* (ca. 426), concerning the Christian orator’s role for the conveyance of the evangelical message, was used by Pope Gregory the Great in his seminal treatise on the clergy’s duties *Cura pastoralis* (591). The simile was repeated throughout the centuries by other influential figures, like the French theologians Alain de Lille in his predication manual *De arte praedicatoria* (ca. 1199), and Jean

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the edition and translation into English of the prologues, written only in Spanish, and of the Nahuatl text and its translation into English by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, and is hereafter referred to by the abbreviation *Flor. Cod.* (for *Florentine Codex*), by Prologues or Book, and page; see Sahagún 1950-1982. A digitalized version of the *Florentine Codex* is available in the World Digital Library. As for the Spanish text of the *Florentine Codex*, this study quotes the edition of Josefina García Quintana and Alfredo López Austin, using the abbreviation of the title of their edition, *Hist. gen.* (for *Historia general*), also by Book and page; see Sahagún 1988.

2. The relevant quote reads: “[E]spirituales médicos [tienen esta] medicina [...] para mejor curar o hablar desto,” Olmos, 1979, p. 24. Translations into Spanish are hereafter the author’s unless otherwise stated. This treatise is a free translation from Spanish into Nahuatl of the Franciscan Martín de Castañega’s *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías* (1529). Castañega and Olmos’s texts are inscribed in the tradition of witchcraft manuals like Henry Kramer and Jacob Sprenger’s *Malleus maleficarum* (1486) and expound heretical beliefs and activities, such as the witches’ worship of the Devil.

Gerson in his predication and confessional *Opus tripartitum* (ca. 1408), and the Spaniard Martín de Azpilcueta in his confessional *Manual de confesores y penitentes* (1549).<sup>3</sup> Sahagún and Olmos's use of the comparison reveals their connection to an evangelization tradition that they were continuing in New Spain. *Historia universal* and *Tratado de hechicerías y sortilegios* are products of a collaborative effort to compose works that best suited their mission, and which ranged from grammars, vocabularies, and dictionaries that codified the indigenous languages, to translations of doctrinal and liturgical texts and the creation of new ones. In this regard, Sahagún explains that a grammar with an appended vocabulary, a "history" (*Historia universal*), a collection of chants, and another of sermons were the resulting works of the 1558 commission he received from his Franciscan Order to write "in the Mexican language that which seemed to me useful for the indoctrination, the propagation and perpetuation of the Christianization of these natives of this New Spain," emphasizing again that all these works were conceived as "a help to the workers and ministers who indoctrinate them."<sup>4</sup>

3. Tentler, 1977, pp. 100-102, Bustamante García, 1989, p. 653; 1992, p. 272.

4. "[E]n lengua mexicana, lo que me pareciese, ser vtil: para la doctrina, cultura, y manutencia, de la cristiandad, destos naturales, desta nueua españa, y para ayuda, de los obreros, y minjstros, que los doctrinan," *Flor. Cod.*, Prologues, p. 53. Sahagún names these works as "arte de la lengua mexicana, con un vocabulario apendiz," "historia" or "doze libros," "canticos" or "cantares," and "postilla" in *ibid.*, pp. 54-55, 71. Traditionally, scholars refer to the "cantares" and the "postilla" as part of Sahagún's "doctrinal encyclopaedia," a term that enters into opposition with the "historia," for *Historia universal*; an encyclopaedia of the world of the Nahuas. See for instance Schwaller, 2003, p. 265, and Hernández de León-Portilla, 2011, p. 91. The grammar and the vocabulary are lost and the collection of chants or "cantares" could be *Psalmodia christiana y sermonario de los sanctos del año* (1583), the only work that Sahagún saw published in his lifetime. It has been edited and translated into English by Anderson, see Sahagún 1993b, and into Spanish by José Luis Suárez Roca, see Sahagún 1999. The "postilla" is catalogued in the Edward E. Ayer Collection of the Newberry Library as comprising a *Sermonario* or *Sermones de dominicas y de sanctos en lengua mexicana*, "Ejercicios quotidianos," "Veynte y seis addiciones," and an "apendiz;" see Schwaller, 2003, p. 265. The last three parts have been edited and translated into Spanish as *Adiciones, apendice a la postilla y ejercicio quotidiano* by Anderson, see Sahagún 1993a. In his 1999 article, nevertheless, Anderson expresses doubts about the survival of the "postilla" that Sahagún mentions; see pp. 43-44. Other works attributed to Sahagún include *Colloquios y doctrina christiana*, *Evangeliaro* or *Evangeliarium*, *epistolarium et lectionarium aztecum sive mexicanum*, *Arte*

Of the corpus of texts for the “physician of the soul” that came about from Sahagún’s 1558 appointment, *Historia universal* has been the centre of attention of a massive bibliography from the twentieth century onwards. At times both this work and Sahagún have been de-contextualized and another simile has been created, that of Sahagún as a pioneering anthropologist, ethnographer, and ethnologist. The evolution of his status from sixteenth-century missionary to first anthropologist of New Spain and, by extension, father of modern anthropology in the New World, started with Alfonso Toro’s 1922 conference paper on the linguistic and ethnographic value of Sahagún’s work and with Wigberto Jiménez Moreno’s 1938 edition of *Historia universal*.<sup>5</sup> Jiménez Moreno observes that Sahagún applied to his collection of data “the most demanding method an ethnographer could use,” conducting research as a “conscientious ethnographer.”<sup>6</sup> Ángel María Garibay Kintana followed suit in *Historia de la literatura náhuatl*, dedicating a chapter to “missionary-ethnographers” that includes Olmos, Sahagún, Fray Toribio de Benavente-Motolinía, and Fray Diego Durán.<sup>7</sup> Garibay Kintana praised Sahagún in particular for his monumental “*Encyclopaedia on the culture of the Nahuas of Tenochtitlan*,” describing him as a “brilliant forerunner of scientific anthropology and ethnography both for the general conception and for the execution.”<sup>8</sup> In subse-

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*adivinatoria, Calendario mexicano, latino y castellano, and Manual del christiano*. For a study of contents and editions, see Bustamante García 1989 and 1990. The Franciscan chronicler Juan de Torquemada lists further works, now lost. These are *Vocabulario trilingüe* and *Vida de San Bernardino de Siena*, and other texts that are clearly associated with the administering of sacraments, such as *Plática para despues de el bautismo de niños, Regla de los casados, Impedimento de el matrimonio* and *Los mandamientos de los casados*. See Torquemada, 1975, III, p. 488, Zulaica Gárate, 1939, pp. 197–200, and Bustamante García, 1990, p. 214. In their 1973 studies of Sahagún’s works, Cline and Nicolau d’Oliver also offer an exhaustive list of editions and translations.

5. Toro delivered his talk “Importancia etnográfica y lingüística de las obras del Padre Fray Bernardino de Sahagún” at the *XX Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*; see Toro, 1923.

6. “El más exigente método que un etnógrafo [...] pudier[a] usar [...] [y actuó como] concienzudo etnógrafo,” Jiménez Moreno, 1938, pp. xiv–xv.

7. Georges Baudot elaborated on Garibay Kintana’s chapter and converted it into a monograph, see 1995.

8. “*Enciclopedia de la cultura de los nahuas de Tenochtitlán* [...]. [G]enial precursor de la antropología y la etnografía científicas [t]anto por la idea general como por su ejecución,” Garibay Kintana, 1953–1954, II, pp. 65, 67.

quent decades an accumulation of works has continued to echo Jiménez Moreno and Garibay Kintana's statements in biographies of Sahagún, and edited volumes and articles on Sahagún and *Historia universal*.<sup>9</sup> What is more, the attribution of the title of anthropologist is not restricted to scholarly studies; it has been disseminated among the general public through commemorations and institutional awards. In Mexico, the academic prize *Premio Fray Bernardino de Sahagún* is annually awarded by the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* to the best work in ethnology and social anthropology, and in Spain, since 1966, a memorial plaque in one of the oldest buildings of the University of Salamanca—where Sahagún studied—, and a statue in his hometown, have these words engraved respectively: “To the memory of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún [...], distinguished researcher of the language and culture of the ancient Mexicans, and father of anthropology in the New World;” “missionary and educator of peoples, father of anthropology in the New World.”<sup>10</sup>

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9. See, amongst others, the biographies written by Florencio Vicente Castro and José Luis Rodríguez Molinero, *Bernardino de Sahagún: Primer antropólogo en Nueva España (siglo XVI)* (1986), and by Miguel León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún: Pionero de la antropología* (1999, published in English as *Bernardino de Sahagún: First Anthropologist*, 2002); edited volumes like J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Henry B. Nicholson, and Eloise Quiñones Keber's *The Work of Bernardino de Sahagún: Pioneer Ethnographer of Sixteenth-Century Aztec Mexico* (1988); and several articles, like José Antonio Jáuregui's “Bernardino de Sahagún: pionero de la antropología social” (1994), León-Portilla's “Fray Bernardino de Sahagún y la invención de la antropología” (2002), and William Kavanagh's “Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: El precursor, tan escasamente conocido, de la antropología sociocultural” (2012). León-Portilla's defence of Sahagún as “the father of ethnological investigation in the New World” is also found in his 1974 essay, p. 243, and in his 2000 article “¿Qué nos dice hoy Bernardino de Sahagún?,” translated into English in 2003 as “Bernardino de Sahagún: Pioneer of Anthropology.” More recently, in his inaugural lecture of the third colloquium “El universo de Sahagún: Pasado y presente,” (Puebla, 6-7 October, 2011), León-Portilla insisted that Sahagún was “not only a missionary, but [also] an outstanding ethnologist, linguist, and expert of the culture of Mexico [...]. [He] developed a method that anthropologists use nowadays” (“no solo fue un misionero, sino que fue un destacado etnólogo, lingüista y conocedor de la cultura de México [...]. Él desarrolló un método que ahora usan los antropólogos,” cited in Paula Carrizosa's 2011 online article).

10. “A la memoria de fray Bernardino de Sahagún [...] [,] investigador insigne de la lengua y la cultura de los antiguos mexicanos [,] padre de la antropología en el nuevo mundo;” “misionero y educador de pueblos [,] padre de la antropología en el nuevo mundo,” Ballesteros Gaibrois, 1973, pp. 124-125.

Three main recurrent reasons can be put forward to understand why Sahagún has been perceived as a pioneering anthropologist, or for that matter, as an ethnographer and ethnologist, since there is no consensus to situate him in one or another category. The first reason rests on the fact that, on some occasions, Sahagún expresses a sincere and profound admiration for the Nahuas' rhetorical and physical skills, education, medical knowledge, and solemnity of their religious cult, even to the point of regarding some of their lost policies as superior and regretting the destruction to which the Spaniards subjected them.<sup>11</sup> Sahagún's recognition of the Nahuas' value and level of perfection, in his own words "quilate" (carat), has been compared to an anthropologist's fascination with the cultural Other.<sup>12</sup> His motive for being in New Spain and committing to the composition of *Historia universal* seems to be put side by side with an attitude proper of *indigenismo* that celebrates the cultural Other on its own.<sup>13</sup> The second reason that has positioned Sahagún as a pioneering anthropologist has to do with the contents of *Historia universal*. Undeniably, its twelve books compile a variegated range of material—on gods, ceremonies, mythology, astrology, rhetoric and moral philosophy, fauna and flora, and the description of the life and duties of kings, lords, and merchants—, all of which is reminiscent of the subject matters studied by social anthropologists, namely; other peoples' "ecologies, their economics, their legal and political institutions, their family and kinship organizations, their religions, their technologies, their arts, etc."<sup>14</sup> Many scholars from France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Spain, and the United States have drawn on this encyclopaedia on the world of the Nahuas for

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11. For a juxtaposition of Sahagún's condemnation and praise of the Nahuas' beliefs and customs, see Sahagún's first prologue to Book I, *Flor. Cod.*, Prologues, pp. 47-50, and the Spanish version of chapter XXVII of Book X, which has been translated into English by Anderson and Dibble, *ibid.*, pp. 74-85.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

13. León-Portilla speaks of Sahagún's *indigenismo*, arguing that "in his eagerness to know the culture of the Other, [Sahagún] came to appreciate them and even to admire them for what they were" ("en su afán de conocer la cultura del Otro, llegó a apreciarlo, más aún a admirarlo por sí mismo," 1999, p. 212). For a similar argument, see also León-Portilla, 2003a, p. 6.

14. This is Edward E. Evans-Pritchard's list of fields of research in social anthropology; cited in Asad, 1973, p. 11.

their anthropological studies, which reinforces the notion that, if modern anthropology is concerned with the same themes as Sahagún was, *Historia universal* is a testament of pioneering interest in anthropological research and Sahagún, as his compiler, one of its precursors.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the nature of *Historia universal* makes it an unparalleled source; contrary to other so-called “missionary-ethnographers” like Motolinía or Durán, Sahagún wanted to leave a written record of how the Nahuas spoke and did not tamper with the Nahuatl text as openly as his contemporaries, who eventually composed their “ethnographic” works in Spanish.<sup>16</sup> In this vein, León-Portilla argues that Sahagún organized material into an encyclopaedia “without altering or distorting in any way his texts.”<sup>17</sup> His work is “purer,” so much so given the method that he applied to his collection of data in the Nahuatl language, whereby he enquired Nahua elders, whose answers were transcribed by several Nahua assistants or “colegiales”—former students at the Imperial College of Santa Cruz in Santiago de Tlatelolco—working under his direction.

This method of data collection has raised two controversial arguments. The first bestows upon the Nahuas—elder respondents and assistants—the authorship of the early Nahuatl manuscripts of *Historia universal*; the *Códices matritenses*.<sup>18</sup> Garibay Kintana cham-

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15. Some of the many anthropological and ethnographic studies that have relied on the contents of *Historia universal* are Saville 1920, Kirchhoff 1940, Schultze-Jena 1950, Davies 1988, and Ortega Ojeda 2008.

16. Sahagún initially envisaged the creation of a three-column page work—with the original text in Nahuatl in the central column, the translation into Spanish on the left, and scholia or lexicographic notes on the right. The first to be finished was the Nahuatl text in 1569, which was transferred to the right-hand column of the *Florentine Codex*. Further discussion on this matter appears in chapters II and V of this study.

17. The relevant quote reads: “[A]fter a long process of analysis—without altering or distorting in any way his texts—[he structures] everything that has been collected into an encyclopaedia” (“tras largo proceso de análisis—sin alterar o violentar de alguna forma sus textos—estructur[a] todo lo allegado al modo de una enciclopedia” León-Portilla, 1999, p. 207).

18. The *Códices matritenses* are divided between the library of the Royal Palace (Biblioteca del Palacio Real) and that of the Royal Academy of History (Real Academia de la Historia) in Madrid. They comprise the *Primeros memoriales* of Tepepulco (ca. 1559-1561) and the *Manuscrito de Tlatelolco* (1561-1565), including the “Segundos memoriales” (ca. 1561-1562), the “Memoriales en tres columnas” (ca. 1563-1565), and the “Memoriales con escolios” (ca. 1565); see Cline and Nicolau d’Olwer, 1973, pp. 190-191, and Dibble, 1982, pp. 12-13. Paso y

pioned this assertion in his introductory study to the 1956 edition of *Historia universal*. He maintains that while the translation into Spanish of the *Florentine Codex* is Sahagún's, the early texts, and it can be presumed those that were copied in the Nahuatl column of the codex, are "undeniable testimony of what the indigenous people said and wrote; [these texts] are more their work than Sahagún's."<sup>19</sup> Informed by this contention, Garibay Kintana and León-Portilla initiated the series "Fuentes indígenas de la cultura náhuatl: Textos de los informantes de Sahagún" ("Indigenous sources of the Nahuatl culture: Texts of Sahagún's informants.")<sup>20</sup> Garibay Kintana edited his translation into Spanish of the religious songs of chapter I of the *Primeros memoriales* as *Veinte himnos sacros de los nahuas* (1958), and León-Portilla several paragraphs of the same chapter, on gods, ceremonies, and attires, as *Ritos, sacerdotes y atavíos de los dioses* (1958).<sup>21</sup> In his appendix to this edition León-Portilla high-

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Troncoso published a partial facsimile reproduction of the *Códices matritenses*; see Sahagún 1905-1907, and the Biblioteca Digital Mexicana has made the codex of the Royal Palace available online. For an examination of contents, see Ballesteros Gaibrois 1964 and Bustamante García 1990, and for a description of the manuscript of the Royal Academy of History in particular, see Ruz Barrio 2010, and relevant articles in Hidalgo Brinquis and Benito Lope 2013.

19. "[Es] indudable testimonio de lo que dijeron y redactaron los indios, es obra de éstos más que de Sahagún," Garibay Kintana, 1956, I, p. xi. This is also Klor de Alva's view. "[A]uthorship and authority," he claims, "must be primarily attributed to the informants and trilingual native scholars, the *colegiales*, who worked with [Sahagún]," 1988, p. 34.

20. It needs to be noted that the meaning of the term "informants" leads at times to confusion. It is applied either to both the Nahua elders and the assistants or, as the majority of scholars does, only to the elders, who provided Sahagún with information during his enquiries; see for example Dibble, 1982, p. 13, Lockhart, 2004 (first edition 1993), p. 28, Rabasa, 1993, p. 103, Nicholson, 1997, p. 13, León-Portilla, 1999, p. 206; 1999a, p. 74, and more recently Alcántara Rojas, 2007, p. 123.

21. To these publications followed Garibay Kintana's *Vida económica de Tenochtitlán: Pochtecáyotl (arte de traficar)* (1961) and López Austin's *Augurios y abusiones* (1969). Articles that similarly stress the authorship of the "informantes" are Estrada Quevedo 1960, and León-Portilla 1990. Donald Robertson and Jesús Bustamante García took issue with the attribution of the *Códices matritenses* to the "informantes." Robertson argued that Garibay Kintana and León-Portilla were overlooking Sahagún's main role as active, dominant, and controlling mind of the whole enterprise, and Bustamante García that their claim mirrored nationalist interests; see 1966, p. 625, and 1990, p. 237, respectively. Entering into dialogue with Robertson, León-Portilla indicated that the texts were attributed to the informants "in order to point out with precision the source from which the friar obtained the



lights the purity of these early texts because it is in them that readers can appreciate “the mentality and the words of the natives”—who were given an opportunity to speak up—, in opposition to Sahagún’s translation into Spanish, which shows his.<sup>22</sup>

The second controversial assertion on Sahagún’s method of data collection is that it represents, as suggested by Toro and Jiménez Moreno, “the most demanding an ethnographer could use.” This idea has since been voiced by several scholars throughout the decades and constitutes the third and most widespread reason to support the simile of Sahagún as a pioneering anthropologist. In no attempt to mislead readers, these scholars firmly admit that Sahagún’s proselytizing purpose was quite distinct from that of the modern anthropologist.<sup>23</sup> Hence, “the aptness of this label,” as Henry Nicholson states, “derives from his use of a technique for obtaining information about the native culture that remarkably anticipated what is currently recognized as one of the most effective methods of recording accurate ethnographic data.”<sup>24</sup>

Nicholson’s contemporary reading of Sahagún’s method calls for a revision of the manner in which Sahagún describes his *modus operandi* in the second prologue to *Historia universal*. Overall, the whole process consisted of three “cedaços” or “escrutjnios,” that is, sieves or examinations that involved the systematic collection, comparison, and writing of data and its arrangement in three different locations; Tepepulco (Hidalgo), Tlatelolco, and Mexico City.<sup>25</sup> During his stay in Tepepulco, from 1558 to 1561, Sahagún composed a “minuta o memoria” (“an outline or summary of all the topics to be

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narratives, and also to emphasize his method of fieldwork,” 1974, p. 246. As for Bustamante García’s comment, León-Portilla refuted it by focusing on citing those passages in which Sahagún attests to having collected oral and pictorial information from Nahuatl elders; see 1999, pp. 111–112.

22. The relevant quote reads: “[I]n order to know directly the mentality and the words of the natives it is necessary to turn to the informants’ texts, and in order to appreciate Sahagún’s thought [...] his *Historia* [in Spanish] must be consulted instead” (“para conocer directamente la mentalidad y las palabras de los indios es necesario acudir a los textos de los informantes; para apreciar en cambio el pensamiento de Sahagún [...] debe consultarse su *Historia*,” see Sahagún, 1992, p. 164).

23. See, for instance, Nicholson, 1997, p. 3, and León-Portilla, 2000, p. 730; 2002, p. 16, and 2003a, p. 5.

24. Nicholson, 1997, p. 3.

25. *Flor. Cod.*, Prologues, p. 55.

considered,") and then requested the lord and leaders of the town to assign him "capable and experienced people" who knew, he says, "how to give me the information regarding that which I should ask of them."<sup>26</sup> Sahagún explains that the information supplied by this group of Nahuatl elders was collated and transcribed by the group of Nahuatl assistants who had been his former students at the College of Tlatelolco. He returned to Tlatelolco in 1561, where he and his assistants gathered further material from another group of knowledgeable elders so that, he specifies, "all I brought written from Tepepulco was amended, explained, and expanded."<sup>27</sup> Finally, in 1565, Sahagún moved to the Friary of San Francisco in Mexico City where "for three years, alone," he remarks, "I examined and re-examined my writings [...] [,] amended them and divided them into Books."<sup>28</sup> Sahagún notes in passing that in Mexico City he again obtained more data from a new group of respondents, whom he names the Mexicans. These, he says, "amended and added many things to the twelve Books" as the assistants were writing a clear copy.<sup>29</sup>

The interpretation of this passage by Luis Nicolau d'Olwer, Manuel Ballesteros Gaibrois, and León-Portilla—three of Sahagún's biographers who have studied how his 1558 commission unfolded in the three different locations—is that Sahagún was the "creator of the method of anthropological investigation," that he enquired the Nahuatl elders time and again "not because of human mistrust, but because he had scientific sense," and that "because of his outline, method, and achievements of his investigation [...] he has been named with reason the father of anthropology in the New World."<sup>30</sup> These

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26. The original text reads: "[U]na minuta o memoria de todas las materias de que habia de tratar," "[y pedi] personas habiles, y experimentadas con qujen pudiese platicar: y me supiesen dar razon de lo que los preguntase," *ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

27. "[S]e emendo, declaro, y añadio, todo lo que de tepepulco truxe escrito," *ibid.*, p. 54.

28. "[P]or espacio, de tres años, pase, y repase, a mjs solas todas mjs escripturas: y las torne a emendar: y diujdilas por libros," *ibid.*, p. 55.

29. "[Los mexicanos] emendaron, y añadieron muchas cosas, a los doze libros," *ibidem.*

30. Nicolau d'Olwer's biography of Sahagún was first published in French in 1949. His quote in Spanish reads: "[C]reador del método de investigación antropológica," cited by León-Portilla, 1999, p. 15, from a 1952 translation printed in Mexico City by the Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia. Ballesteros Gaibrois's quote reads that Sahagún is dissatisfied with the elders' answers in one place: "[N]o por

opinions are briefly developed by Nicolau d'Olwer and Howard F. Cline who, borrowing modern terminology, posit that Sahagún “designed a strikingly modern questionnaire, [...] carefully selected the best-equipped informants [...], crosschecked his data [...], [and] empirically used a rigorous method of ethnographical research, a method that might be called interview/roundtable agreement.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, Sahagún is said to have himself selected the group of “informants,” with whom he discussed matters related to their culture following a “modern questionnaire” in a relaxed “roundtable agreement.” This approach raises certain reservations. It is true that since Sahagún was interested in recording vocabulary in texts that would illustrate the Nahuas’ manners of speech, he would at times have allowed them to respond to his questions more or less freely. However, on other occasions, Sahagún enquired the Nahuas on their pre-Hispanic deities, ceremonies, and beliefs, which he condemned as diabolical and zealously wanted to obliterate. This fact does not help to conjure up the image of relaxed interview sessions during which the Nahuas would have replied without measuring their words and Sahagún would not have dwelt on questioning the data that he found unsatisfactory. It is in regard to Sahagún’s attitude that Klor de Alva adopts an even more debatable stance than Nicolau d’Olwer and Cline’s, claiming that upon doing “fieldwork,”

Sahagún struggled against the boundaries of his scholastic training [...]. His methodological and ideological approach [...] marks the beginning of an objective and thorough ethnographic procedure that justifies calling its first consistent practitioner the ‘father of modern ethnography’ who, anticipating twentieth-century attitudes, [...] was conscious of the fact that meaningful research in the field implied the study of reality as free from preemptive judgments as Christianity permitted.<sup>32</sup>

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desconfianza humana sino por sentido científico,” 1973, p. 102, and León-Portilla’s that: “[C]on razón—por su esquema, método y logros en su investigación—ha sido llamado él [...] padre de la antropología del Nuevo Mundo,” 1999, p. 212. León-Portilla reiterates this idea in several studies, including 1974, p. 243; 2000, pp. 727-723; and 2002, p. 22, translated into English in 2003a, p. 8. This popular statement of Sahagún as “father of anthropology in the New World” is also found in the latest collected volumes devoted to Sahagún and *Historia universal*; see León-Portilla, 2011, p. 51, Connors, 2012, p. xii, and Ladero Quesada’s 2013 prologue.

31. Cline and Nicolau d’Olwer, 1973, pp. 188-189.

32. Klor de Alva, 1988, pp. 37-38.

For Klor de Alva, Sahagún attempted to trespass across his own ideological presuppositions rather than to abide by them. The mission that took him to New Spain and kept him engaged in the evangelization of the Nahuas for the rest of his life, although acknowledged, can be relegated to a secondary stage. Klor de Alva and other scholars who brand Sahagún as a pioneering ethnographer take into account, to a more or less extent, Sahagún's clerical training and the environment in which he operated. However, once this "caveat" has been mentioned, they shift their focus of attention to superficial coincidences that are shaped by twentieth-century premises. Sahagún behaved in a manner similar to that of a modern-day anthropologist because he lived with the Nahuas, mastered their language, conducted fieldwork by designing questionnaires and interviewing informants in three different locations, and eventually reported collated results in a unique encyclopaedic work that covers the same subject matters that are of interest to present-day anthropologists.

Scholars who have questioned these coincidences and the accuracy of categorizing Sahagún as an anthropologist appeal to the anachronism of the term. Influenced by the historian Jesús Bustamante García, Walden Browne openly contends that Sahagún's work is born out of "a context that was alien to the nineteenth-century disciplinary organization of knowledge in which anthropology introduced itself into a university setting," and that the reason behind this anachronistic label lies on some scholars' intent, above all León-Portilla's, to legitimize "nationalistic claims of Latin American invention of a scientific discipline."<sup>33</sup> If scholars accept that Sahagún is a missionary and pioneering anthropologist, they have to count on the misinterpretations and the pitfalls that this simile contracts for both anthropology and Sahaguntine studies. Tzvetan Todorov is adamant that although Sahagún put "his own knowledge in the service of the preservation of the native culture," which has been and will be beneficial to anthropological studies, the fact that *Historia universal* is a

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33. Browne, 2000, pp. 54-55; see also Bustamante García, 1989, pp. 216-217; 1990, p. 237. The anachronism is also highlighted by Louise M. Burkhart and John F. Schwaller in their reviews of León-Portilla's biography of Sahagún—see Burkhart, 2003a, pp. 351-352, Schwaller, 2003a, p. 145—, and by David Mauricio Solodkow in his 2010 article; see p. 204.

precious source in the study of Mesoamerican anthropology does not make Sahagún an anthropologist.<sup>34</sup> In this sense, Lockhart believes that the contents of *Historia universal* “had a great deal in common not with the ethnographic tradition but with the current of interest in texts and ‘tropes’ that is so strong today in anthropology.”<sup>35</sup> Sahagún wished to preserve full original texts on topics that have been classified in our time as of anthropological value, not because he was a pioneering ethnographer but rather as a sixteenth-century philologist who wanted to illustrate the Nahuas’ vocabulary, concepts, commonplace metaphors, and idioms. As Solodkow also maintains, Sahagún is a missionary fulfilling conversion purposes; he is not “rescuing” the indigenous word and recording objective information on the world of the Nahuas to preserve it for its own sake. His title of “father of anthropology” is ironic, paradoxical, and counterproductive for the origins of the discipline because Sahagún is applying his own Eurocentric perception of the world to the portrayal of the Nahuas’ culture, which becomes an object to transform and even to make disappear.<sup>36</sup>

In Browne’s opinion, crediting Sahagún with the foundation of modern anthropology has had a detrimental effect on Sahaguntine studies in that at times this attribution has diverted scholars’ attention away from the fact that Sahagún’s socially constructed knowledge of reality belonged to a different time and place. A proper understanding of the man and his work requires contextualizing him in his sixteenth-century mindset, insisting on his confines of Spanish Catholicism and the prejudices that “supplied the terms of his interpretation,” and forgetting anthropology and ethnography, which “create

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34. Todorov, 1984, p. 237. He continues arguing that “Sahagún is not an ethnologist, whatever his modern admirers may say [...]. [H]is work [*Historia universal*] rather relates to ethnography, to the collecting of documents, that indispensable premise of ethnological work,” *ibid.*, p. 241.

35. Lockhart, 2004, pp. 28-29.

36. Solodkow, 2010, pp. 204-209, 219-220. He draws these conclusions following John Keber, José Rabasa, and Walter Mignolo’s focus on Sahagún’s prejudices during the implementation of his so-called “scientific” method of data collection and the writing of *Historia universal*. Johannes Fabian, 1983, and Carlo Ginzburg, 1989, have also warned that the superficial connections between anthropology and the gathering of information about the Other in inquisitorial trials and colonial encounters undermine the scientific approach for which anthropology aims.

interpretive blind spots and close off discussion before it even gets started.”<sup>37</sup> Amongst a number of studies focusing on Sahagún and his socio-cultural milieu, those by Robertson, Bustamante García, and Browne deserve to be mentioned for having broken new ground.<sup>38</sup> Robertson associated Sahagún’s organization of contents with the medieval encyclopaedia of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, and Bustamante García examined the links of *Historia universal* with Ambrosio Calepino’s lexicographic work *Cornucopiae*, and with the rhetorical recommendations and encyclopaedic models of Augustine in *De doctrina christiana* and *De civitate dei contra paganos*. As for Browne, he has demonstrated the manner in which Sahagún struggled to give form to all his material within a medieval “pagan *Summa*,” which made sense of the new and alien environment that the world of the Nahuas meant for him and his European contemporaries.

Continuing Bustamante García and Browne’s line of investigation, the purpose of the current study is to contextualize the three main reasons underpinning Sahagún’s title of pioneering anthropologist within the socio-political and ideological structures of sixteenth-century Spain and America. Thus, Sahagún’s sincere and profound admiration of the Nahuas’ level of perfection or “quilate” is framed within the achievements and aspirations of the College of Tlatelolco, and conceived as part of the debates, on both sides of the Atlantic, on the rational capacity and natural ineptitude of the indigenous peoples. *Historia universal* will be argued as a work that inserts the Nahuas into the subject matters of the Christian Universal History, and also as one of Sahagún’s 1558 intended doctrinal works; a reference text for preachers and confessors that combines the contents and categorization of knowledge found in encyclopaedias, dictionaries, collections of sermons, treatises of vices and virtues, and confession manuals. These were all texts that he fully consulted for the first time while taking his vows at the Friary of San Francisco in Salamanca, and which he felt were needed in New Spain for the conversion of the Nahuas. Sahagún’s sixteenth-century missionary experiences buttress that during his gathering of

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37. Keber, 1988, pp. 53–54, Browne, 2000, pp. 7, 55.

38. See Robertson 1966, Bustamante García 1989; 1992, and Browne 2000.

data he conducted research, not only in the manner of a philologist who wished to codify the Nahuatl language the way it was spoken, but also as a confessor and inquisitor-like friar who interrogated penitents and offenders of Christianity, and whose method of data collection is informed by confession and inquisitorial techniques. Notwithstanding the importance of Sahagún's respondents and, primarily, of his assistants for the creation of *Historia universal*, the contention of this study is that Sahagún is the heart of the whole project. He designed a content outline and elaborated the questionnaires in order to elicit the information he judged relevant, asked questions to different respondents, ensured that the collation and writing of the texts in the Nahuatl language met the linguistic and content quality he demanded, and adjusted material to his intellectual taxonomies.

In the understanding that when fulfilling all these tasks Sahagún did not do anthropology, this study aims to suggest a new overarching label that covers every step of the composition process of *Historia universal* and that, contrary to the title of pioneering anthropologist, can be assigned without reservations. Paradoxically, theoretical problematizations of anthropology and ethnography, the very fields that are said to have obstructed further consideration of Sahagún and his work, lead the way to this new label. In their introduction to *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* James Clifford and George E. Marcus explore the manner in which ethnography decodes and encodes foreign cultures, and compare the production of ethnographic writings with the act or process of translating. This view was expressed already in the 1950s by the anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt. Ethnographers, keen to grasp and interpret cultural Others, adapt and confine them outside their real context. In doing so, the problem of describing

how members of a remote tribe think then begins to appear largely as one of translation, of making the coherence primitive thought has in the languages it really lives in, as clear as possible in our own [...]. Eventually, we try to represent their conceptions systematically in the logical construct we have been brought up to use.<sup>39</sup>

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39. Cited in Asad, 1986, p. 142. He quotes from Lienhardt, 1954, p. 97.

According to Lienhardt, the comprehension of the cultural Other—or, as he notably calls it by the custom of the time, “the primitive”—means accommodating it within the target language and the ethnographer’s cultural parameters. Drawing similarities between ethnography and translation, Talal Asad and Vincent Crapanzano likewise state that ethnography is an act of cultural translation, and that their practitioners behave as translators who interpret the world they are living in and render the foreign familiar.<sup>40</sup> Like translators, ethnographers provide written results in accord to their societies’ cultural and literary conventions. It could not be otherwise because, as Asad observes, their texts are “addressed to a very specific audience, which is waiting to read *about* another mode of life and to manipulate the text it reads according to established rules, not to learn *to live* a new mode of life.”<sup>41</sup> The translators-ethnographers’ observations exist within their own textual constructs, and they find it difficult to separate from or transcend the conventions of representation laid down by their discipline, institutional life, and contemporary society. Therefore, ethnographers and translators use, and might abuse, their authority when making their interpretation of the cultural Other convincing for the target audience with whom they wish to create or maintain a bond, which results in texts that are “incomplete, only partially committed to truth.”<sup>42</sup>

For its part, translation studies adopted the phrase “cultural translation” to broaden and deepen the understanding of translation as process and product. Reflecting on Asad and Crapanzano’s arguments, Ovidi Carbonell i Cortés holds that translation is a cultural contact “a superior level of interaction [that] takes place whenever an alien experience is internalized and rewritten in a culture where that

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40. Crapanzano alludes to the German translator and philosopher Walter Benjamin, who in his 1923 article “The Task of the Translator” holds that “all translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages,” Benjamin, 1969, p. 75. In this sense, Crapanzano asserts that ethnography is a way of giving sense to unfamiliar languages, cultures, and societies; the ethnographer is a messenger who “presents [them] in all their opacity, their foreignness, their meaninglessness; then, [...] he clarifies the opaque [...] and gives meaning to the meaningless. He decodes the message. He interprets,” 1986, p. 51.

41. Asad, 1986, p. 159.

42. Clifford and Marcus, 1986, p. 6.



experience is received.”<sup>43</sup> Translation implies not only the analysis of the source text and its transcodification into the target text, but also the rendering of a culture, a unit of translation in itself, into another. The act of translating becomes an interaction and a process that demand sensitivity to the broader issues of context, history, and convention, which affect the way in which translators encode and decode messages.<sup>44</sup> The study of cultural translation, as a transaction and a process that shape the writing of a text, casts translators into a wider social situation and involves the analysis of a number of extra-textual constraints. These comprise the ideology of the translator; the roles of the commissioner, the source-text producer, and the target receiver or user with culture-specific knowledge and expectations; and the purpose or *skopos* of the translation.<sup>45</sup> Ethnographers and anthropologists, aware of how these extra-textual constraints can be detrimental to representing the cultural Other in an objective manner, might struggle against their preconceptions, whereas cultural translators see themselves entitled to and are expected to recur to them.

Colonial encounters throw light upon an invaluable field to explore the development of cultural translations and the extra-textual constraints that dictated them; the sixteenth-century encounter of the Old World and the New emerging as an illustrative scenario.<sup>46</sup>

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43. Carbonell i Cortés, 1996, p. 81. He similarly defines cultural translation as “the semiotic, anthropological, ideological, sociological, and even artistic and political process that occurs when certain cultural manifestations are reinterpreted in another context” (“el proceso semiótico, antropológico, ideológico, sociológico y hasta artístico y político que se da cuando unas manifestaciones culturales se reinterpretan en otro contexto,” 2004, p. 59).

44. This is for example Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere’s view, see 1990.

45. For further reference on this so-termed functional approach to translation, see Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer 1984, and for a study on translation as a transactional process, see Justa Holz-Mänttari 1984. Bassnett draws upon these existing theories in order to list the extra-textual constraints under which translations are conditioned as: “How a text is selected for translation, for example, what role the translator plays in the selection, what role an editor, publisher or patron plays, what criteria determine the strategies that will be employed by the translator, how a text might be received in the target system,” see 1998, p. 123.

46. Alvarez Rodríguez and Vidal Claramonte, 1996, pp. 2, 6, Carbonell i Cortés, 1997, pp. 67-71. Carbonell i Cortés has paid particular attention to the cultural translation of the Orient as studied by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. A case in point is that of Silvestre de Sacy, commissioned by the Institut de France in 1802 to contribute to the *Tableau historique de l'érudition française*. Sacy selected

A number of conquerors, chroniclers, and missionaries incorporated the colonized peoples within their universal scheme and conceived “new” territories and inhabitants according to their Christian, medieval, and classical tradition, ultimately complying with the power strategies and desires of the empire at the service of which they operated.<sup>47</sup> Their works ensured the survival of knowledge that otherwise would have fallen into oblivion, and at the same time have retained the colonizer’s discourse, purposes, and invented image of the “New World.” Sahagún and *Historia universal* belong to this context. Behaving as a cultural translator, he relocated the world of the Nahuas, in itself a translation unit, into his target culture by adhering to a series of extra-textual constraints; namely, his scheme of knowledge and beliefs and his commissioners, audiences, and purposes.<sup>48</sup> The intention of this study is therefore to reconsider his so-called pioneering ethnographic method and the ethnography-like contents of *Historia universal* as pertaining to a cultural translation process that, under these extra-textual conditions, can be divided

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Oriental texts of different kinds, from geographical works to Arabic poetry, and annotated, codified, arranged, and commented on them according to his mindset. In doing so, he canonized a biased view of the Orient, leaving an anthology of texts that passed down through generations of students and scholars. See Said, 1978, pp. 126–129, Carbonell i Cortés, 1996, pp. 83–89.

47. Edmundo O’Gorman 1961 (first edition 1958), Margaret T. Hodgen 1964, and John H. Elliott 1970 were first to suggest this line of enquiry. The list of scholars who have followed is very prolific and includes, amongst others, Antonello Gerbi 1985 (first edition 1975); Anthony Pagden 1982 and 1993; Tzvetan Todorov 1982; Anthony Grafton 1992; José Rabasa 1993; Walter Mignolo 1995; Barbara Fuchs 2001; David Lupher 2003; and Sabine MacCormack 2007. For edited volumes on this matter, see also Fredi Chiappelli et al. 1976; Rachel Doggett et al. 1992; Jerry M. Williams and Robert E. Lewis 1993; and Wolfgang Haase and Meyer Reinhold 1993–1994.

48. Mercedes López Baralt has applied the label of “translator of cultures” (“traductor de culturas”) to Fray Ramón Pané, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, and Guaman Poma de Ayala; 2005, p. 21. In a more recent study she states that El Inca Garcilaso, in particular, is a translator of cultures; an anthropologist *avant la lettre* who rescued the memory of his mother’s world and laid the foundations of ethnology like Pané, Sahagún, and Guaman Poma, see 2011, p. 16. Rather than “anthropologist *avant la lettre*,” the current study proposes the term “cultural translator” in the understanding that, at least in Sahagún’s case, associating the method of data collection and the “rescue” of the word of the Nahuas with pioneering anthropology, ethnography or ethnology incurs, as aforementioned, problems of interpretation for both Sahaguntine studies and these disciplines.

into three main interrelated stages, sometimes occurring simultaneously. These are the design of a content outline and a series of questionnaires; the gathering, comparison, and codification of data; and its arrangement into a written text.

The interpretation that this study makes of Sahagún's own account of the composition process of *Historia universal* stands as follows. In 1558, commissioned to elaborate a body of texts in the Nahuatl language for the evangelization of the Nahuas, Sahagún designs a *minuta*, the content outline from which the subject matters of his entire project derive. One of his planned works is a wide-ranging description or "history" of the world of the Nahuas. For its production he lays out a series of questionnaires that are based on his *minuta*, and which originate from the compartmentalized template of knowledge that is necessary in order to present the Nahuas in a recognizable and coherent manner to his first target audience of preachers and confessors. In Tepepulco and Tlatelolco, the Nahua elders' answers and accounts undergo an accommodation to Sahagún's cultural beliefs and classification of knowledge, as collected material is filtered, drafted, and organized by the Nahua assistants under his supervision. In Tepepulco, he commands them to confine data into paragraphs, single-line definitions, and lists of vocabulary. In Tlatelolco, he expands this information and envisages the composition of a three-column page work that he thinks best adjusts to its proselytizing aims—with the Nahuatl source, lexicographic glosses, and translation into Spanish. Finally in Mexico City, Sahagún structures all the manuscripts into an encyclopaedia of twelve books to which, after the enquiring of a third group of Nahua respondents, he says that more data was added. The twelve books in the Nahuatl language constitute the product of the translation process, which, embedding the world of the Nahuas into his Christian discourse, proselytizing purposes, and audience of churchmen, he submits to a Provincial Chapter for approval around 1570. The continuation of the work from 1575, a two-column page manuscript in Nahuatl and Spanish, responds to a different audience and purpose, that of Spanish officials of the Council of the Indies who are gathering information about New World territories and peoples.<sup>49</sup>

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49. The scope of this study is to concentrate on the relocation of the world of the Nahuas into an encyclopaedia and does not deal with Sahagún's translation of

The title of this study, *Translation as Conquest*, serves as a two-fold metaphor that associates translation, conquest, and conversion and claims the role of Sahagún as the controlling mind of the translation process and as the editor of the cultural translation product.<sup>50</sup> First, *Historia universal* is Sahagún's appropriation of the Nahuatl world; it is a compilation of data that was relocated within a new ideological space defined by his sixteenth-century authoritarian scrutiny and perceptions. Second, since *Historia universal* was produced to support the apparatus of colonial power exercised by the Spanish Empire, Sahagún placed his knowledge in its service, participating in the colonization of the Nahuas. The accumulation and classification of data for the composition of *Historia universal* is inextricably linked to the equation of power and knowledge. It is Sahagún's colonial position to create a corpus of works that would subject the Nahuas to his Christian culture that propelled the translation of their world into a doctrinal reference text.<sup>51</sup> Needless to say, this study disputes neither the value of *Historia universal* as an inestimable and exhaustive source about the Nahuas nor the involvement of the Nahuatl elders and, above all, of

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the Nahuatl version of *Historia universal* into Spanish. For an overall analysis of the New World missionaries' approach to translation, see Brotherston 1992 and Zimmermann 2005, and for Sahagún's translation, in particular of Books I, VI, and XI, see Máynez 1991; Sautron 2000; Palmeri Capesciotti 2001; and Ríos Castaño 2009. The Nahuatl text of the *Florentine Codex* is currently being translated more literally into Spanish by a group of scholars under the direction of León-Portilla and the co-ordination of Pilar Máynez Vidal and José Rubén Romero Galván. Some of these translations have been published in the journal *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*; see for instance Máynez 2013.

50. The semantic connection between the words translation, conquest, and conversion is highlighted by Vicente L. Rafael, who sees in them an act of "changing a thing into something else," a process of "crossing over into the domain—territorial, emotional, religious, or cultural—of someone else and claiming it as one's own," 1988, p. ix. The idea is also suggested by Illarregui, 1996, pp. 175, 182.

51. The equation of power and knowledge is reminiscent of Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, in which he contends that the birth of sciences was not supposed to lead humankind to truth and freedom but to control and discipline so as to render people docile and servile, see 1977, pp. 27-28. For a similar argument on Sahagún's work, see Keber, 1988, pp. 62-63, Rabasa, 1993, p. 162, Solodkoff, 2010, p. 206, and above all Martiarena Álamo, 1998, pp. 197-198, 210-211.

Sahagún's assistants in its composition. Rather, it strives to give a fuller understanding of the problematic nature of Sahagún's legacy.

Chapter I offers an overall picture of the translator's ideology, centring on Sahagún's scholastic and early humanist education, his religious instruction, and the missionary environment that he imbibed before leaving for the New World. The forging of his cultural presuppositions is explored in order to examine how he was to understand the Nahuas and shape the writing of *Historia universal* the way he did. The chapter starts by outlining the sixteenth-century Spanish curriculum at grammar schools and at the University of Salamanca, where Sahagún probably attended the Faculty of Arts. It looks at courses that he is likely to have studied as well as the influence exerted by the renowned professors who taught at Salamanca at the time. A second section of the chapter is concerned with Sahagún's religious schooling and missionary training in the Friary of San Francisco in Salamanca, a distinguished Franciscan centre of studies even after the imposition of the *Strictissima Observantia* rule. An analysis of the missionary work that the Franciscan Order undertook in the Canary Islands, in conquered Muslim lands like Granada, and in the New World is intended to assist in the understanding of how Sahagún was to conduct himself as an active member of the conversion of the Nahuas. Consequently, chapter II deals with Sahagún's contribution to the proselytizing project masterminded by the first Bishop of Mexico, Fray Juan de Zumárraga. Thus, it examines Sahagún's role as a tutor at the Imperial College of Santa Cruz in Santiago de Tlatelolco and the evolution of his approach towards the composition of works in the Nahuatl language. Two of the arguments that have been put forward to name Sahagún a pioneering anthropologist—Sahagún's praise of the Nahuas and, contrary to other "missionaries-ethnographers" like Motolinía or Durán, his decision to write the text in the Nahuatl language in order to preserve the purity of the documents—are put into context by unpacking the extra-textual elements surrounding the production of *Historia universal*; namely, the patrons, the instructions or "cultural translation" brief, the target audiences, and the purposes. These lead to the presentation of the work as being constructed upon three interrelated axes. First, within the framework of the Spiritual Conquest, *Historia universal* is an auxilia-

ry reference book for preachers and confessors that also codifies Nahuatl as the language of evangelization; second, within the debates on the “uncivilized” indigenous peoples, it is a document that proves the virtuous qualities of the Nahuas and their value to become Christians; and third, within the royal requests for accounts of the New World, it is a work that complies with colonial demands at the Council of the Indies.

After this contextualization of Sahagún and *Historia universal*, the subsequent three chapters focus on the cultural translation process that Sahagún describes in his second prologue. To begin with, chapter III explores the first and third stages of the translation process; the intellectual and literary sources Sahagún considered for the design of the content outline in which he was to categorize the world of the Nahuas, and upon which he also modelled the arrangement of material into a final twelve-book encyclopaedia. Following Bustamante García’s statement that Sahagún did not follow one model in particular but amalgamated different ones, this chapter looks at some of the conventions of representation that he could have used as a template, including classical and medieval encyclopaedias and doctrinal texts.<sup>52</sup> The exposition of links and comparisons between *Historia universal* and these archetypes are succinct and perfunctory, based on titles of books, chapters, and relevant paragraphs. However, this study opens up discussion about different religious models that could have influenced Sahagún, such as confession manuals and treatises of vices and virtues, which might stimulate further research on the matter. Added to this, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that the themes of *Historia universal*, coinciding with those dealt with by present-day anthropology, ethnography, and ethnology, echo Christian doctrine and works of encyclopaedic nature in which churchmen had to be fully instructed for their evangelical mission. Chapter IV similarly unveils Sahagún’s method of data collection, which only on the surface equates to that of present-day ethnography, as informed by confessional and, above all, inquisitorial techniques. This argument is based on the fact that in the same manner as Sahagún resorted to the intellectual models that he knew for the composition

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52. Bustamante García, 1989, p. 716.

of doctrinal works, he imitated the contemporary methods of enquiry and data collection with which he was well acquainted. In proving it, this chapter analyses the influence exerted by Olmos, inquisitor and first missionary to compose texts on the indigenous peoples' cultures, and Sahagún's involvement in inquisitorial practices. The chapter also tries to describe the first and second stages of the translation process, speculating on how Sahagún designed questions by drawing on the intellectual archetypes of his outline, and how these questions might have been asked and answers received. His method of data collection is therefore portrayed as an imposition of his Eurocentric stratification and conceptualization of knowledge, rather than formed free of ideological strictures and ethnographic in the modern sense.

Finally, chapter V engages with the second and third stages of the cultural translation process; the relocation of source-culture information into Sahagún's target text. The first section of the chapter provides an insight into the Nahuatl elders and assistants' background, social status, and cultural knowledge, which aims to contribute to the exploration of the roles that they played during the translation process. The section attempts to show that, already during the composition of the *Códices matritenses*, data was very likely censored by the Nahuatl elders and inescapably omitted, partially registered due to the impossibility of transferring the totality of oral and visual codes into a written one. Furthermore, oral and pictorial data was filtered through Sahagún's questionnaires, recorded in writing, collated, and drafted by his assistants according to a Eurocentric taxonomy of hierarchical encyclopaedias and religious texts that was palatable to the work's target audience of churchmen. The product of the cultural translation process with which this chapter is concerned, the Nahuatl texts of the *Códices matritenses* and the *Florentine Codex*, is a striking testimony of polyphony; the fusion of the voices of the Nahuatl elders, Sahagún, and his assistants. Nevertheless, those voices are not represented on equal terms for it is Sahagún and his assistants who have the ultimate say. Thus, a second section of this chapter continues to unravel their manipulation of the Nahuatl text of the *Florentine Codex* and examines the Eurocentric references that they entered throughout its folios.