Ancient Mesoamerica, **30** (2019), 75–88
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doi:10.1017/S0956536118000329

AN ANIMATING PRINCIPLE IN CONFRONTATION WITH CHRISTIANITY? DE(RE)CONSTRUCTING THE NAHUA "SOUL"

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Abstract

-Yolia is one of the principal indigenous terms present in Christian Nahua terminology in the first decades of European contact. It is employed for "soul" or "spirit" and often forms a doublet with *ánima* in Nahuatl texts of an ecclesiastical, devotional, or secular nature. The term *-yolia/teyolia* has also lived a rich and fascinating life in scholarly literature. Its etymology ("the means for one's living") is strikingly similar to that of the Spanish word *ánima*, or "soul." Taking into account the possibility that attestations of the seemingly pre-Hispanic *-yolia* can be identified in some of the written sources, we have reviewed historical, linguistic, and anthropological evidence concerning this term in order to revisit the Nahua concept of the "soul." We also scrutinize the very origin of *-yolia* in academic discourse. This analysis, based on broader historical and linguistic evidence referring to both pre-Conquest beliefs and Christianization in sixteenth-century central Mexico, is the point of departure for proposing and substantiating an alternative hypothesis about the origin of *-yolia*. Our precise focus has been to trace and pinpoint a pervasive Christian influence, manifest both in indigenous Colonial texts and conceptual frameworks of modern scholars interpreting them. We conclude that *-yolia* is a neologism created in the early Colonial period.

INTRODUCTION

Research on indigenous concepts and beliefs, especially pre-Conquest ones, inevitably provokes fundamental questions regarding methodological constraints and the validity of such studies. Is it possible confidently to reconstruct native beliefs and concepts based on Colonial evidence and modern data? Can we speak of continuity of an indigenous cultural nucleus after several centuries of contact and Christianization? What kind of methodological challenges must we confront? As it turns out, the theme we wish to address in this paper could be considered an especially sensitive and promising area for such probing questions. We believe this kind of study is even more necessary owing to the fact that existing reconstructions of pre-Conquest concepts of soul and afterlife are widely recognized, repeatedly employed in scholarly works, and, above all, unquestioned. Our focus is on *-yolia* (sometimes appearing with an indefinite human object prefix te- as *teyolia*), "an animistic entity that went to the world of the dead" (López Austin 1984:vol.I, p. 253, 1988:vol. I, p. 229; all translations of the passages from the *Cuerpo humano e ideología*: *Las concepciones de los antiguos nahuas* are by Thelma Ortiz de Montellano and Bernard Ortiz de Montellano) and set off on a "difficult and painful road toward the recycling" (López Austin 2000 [1994]: 218).[1] While evidence referring to this term is limited to early Colonial sources, it is generally assumed to represent both pre-Hispanic and modern beliefs, despite its striking—and recognized!—similarity to European concepts:

> In early colonial contexts, the Nahuatl concept of the yolia fulfilled, at least superficially, the primary functions of the European soul. It animated the body, and it also conferred a special and highly individual character consisting of personality, aptitudes, abilities, and desires. Native peoples said that the yolia survived after death and travelled to a postmortem existence (McKeever Furst 1995:17).

The parallels are salient, indeed:

> If the yolia kept the world and the individual alive, just as the Christian soul did, it also carried a specific character. Indeed, the Mexica held the yolia responsible for many attributes the West ascribed to personal identity […] Like the Christian soul, the yolia animates the body, partially provides character, and survives after death (McKeever Furst 1995:19, 22).

In scholarly reasoning, however, these similarities can allegedly be dismissed as superficial because:

> the yolia is actually quite different from the Catholic concept. […] The Mexica said that it also took the form of the breath, a shadowy double of the body, and a precious gemstone. Released from the flesh, the yolia was even embodied as a bird (McKeever Furst 1995:22).

The term *-yolia* has lived a rich and fascinating life in scholarly literature. In this paper, however, we scrutinize the very origin of *-yolia* in academic discourse and the contexts of its attestations in historical sources. This analysis, based on broader historical and linguistic evidence referring to both pre-Conquest beliefs and Christianization in sixteenth-century central Mexico, is the point

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[1] All the translations of originals sources, except when indicated, are by the authors.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536118000329 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of departure for proposing and substantiating an alternative hypothesis about the origin of *-yolia*. Finally, we also probe the pre-Conquest concept of "spirit" and its survival through Colonial times, arguing for the necessity of taking a highly rigorous methodological approach for this kind of study.

STATE OF THE ART

A generally accepted and shared view of Nahua "spiritual entities" and afterlife has been strongly influenced, if not shaped, by the reconstructions of López Austin, developed in his several groundbreaking works such as *Cuerpo humano* (López Austin 1984) and *Tlalocan y Tamoanchan* (López Austin 2000 [1994]). In *Cuerpo humano*, he argues for the existence of three "entidades anímicas" ("animistic entities"), *tonalli*, *teyolia*, and *ihiyotl*, and three corresponding "animistic centers" where the entities were concentrated: the head, the heart, and the liver. These entities are described as "structured units with the capacity of independence, in certain circumstances, from the place in the organism where they are located" (López Austin 1984:vol. I, p. 197, 1988:vol. I, p. 181). *Teyolia* is considered an "animistic entity whose fate is the clearest" (López Austin 1984:vol. I, p. 363, 1988:vol. I, p. 318): it was a pre-Conquest term for a spiritual essence located in the heart and therefore identified and subsequently paired with the Spanish *ánima*. López Austin claims that it is *-yolia* that leaves the body after death and sets off on an arduous journey to Mictlan. Death is seen as the moment of rupture and dispersion of spiritual components of an individual, opening the process in which "the teyolía or a soul inherited after a [divine] patron initiated its journey toward the otherworld" (López Austin 2008:54). It is in Mictlan where it is to spend the following four years while undergoing a purification process and personal identity loss. However, "in the time that elapsed between the passing away of a man and the disappearance of its individuality, the teyolía worked: its activities were either meteorological, or agrarian, or in service to the Sun" (López Austin 2008:55).

The model of the tripartite soul developed by López Austin owed much to his methodological assumptions that, until today, have inspired generations of scholars. At the basis of this methodology lies a concept of *núcleo duro*, the "hard core" of the Mesoamerican cultural system, an "articulated complex of cultural elements, highly resistant to change, which organize the cultural tradition and allow it to incorporate new elements in a way congruent with the cultural context" (López Austin 2001:59). Such an understanding of the *núcleo duro* has two major implications for the selection of sources in ethnohistorical research. Not only does it allow for comparing data that come from various ethnic groups, but it also encourages comparisons across time. According to López Austin (1984:vol. I, p. 25, 1988:vol. I, p. 16), in Mesoamerican societies "one can see, along with great differences due to varying degrees of development, the persistence of fundamental cosmological elements held in common (…), which obviously widens the prospects for research." Consequently, in his study on *teyolia* in the *Cuerpo humano*, López Austin combined data from early Colonial sources written in Nahuatl and Spanish in central Mexico, sixteenth-century Spanish reports from Guatemala and Nicaragua, and twentieth-century ethnographic research among the Nahuas, Tzotziles, Quichés, Jacaltecas, and Totonacs. This way of gathering material for analysis was subsequently adopted by followers of López Austin, most importantly for research on *-yolia,* by Martínez González (2007), who enriched the sample even more, adding to it numerous contemporary and older sources.

The identification of *-yolia* as one of the spiritual components of human beings (López Austin 1984:vol. I, p. 363) opened the way to further interpretations and reconstructions of Nahua beliefs related to "animistic entities," their destinies after death, and the place they had held within the Nahua worldview. Inspired by this interpretation, scholars have widely accepted *-yolia* to be a precontact Nahua animistic concept, although a large portion of the data employed for its (re)construction comes from twentieth-century non-Nahua cultures. The authors of this paper only recently began to adopt a more critical stance and directly question the pre-Conquest origin of *-yolia* (Olko 2017:161–162; Olko and Madajczak 2015). They initially accepted the existence of a pre-Hispanic concept of *-yolia* proposed by López Austin (Madajczak 2015:41; Olko 2010:240–246, 2014:181), while criticizing the validity of both his methodology and his model of the three "souls" (Madajczak 2015:39–42).

Martínez González took the first step toward reorienting this perspective. Although still working within the methodological framework established by López Austin, Mártinez González (2007) avoids the term *teyolia*, speaking instead of *almas-corazón*, "heart-souls," which form one of the four classes of souls observed in Mesoamerican societies. According to Martínez González, these classes of souls enter in various combinations with each other depending on the cultural context, but the most recurrent is the pattern of two souls or a single soul rather than the set of three souls promoted in the *Cuerpo humano*. Martínez González raises more questions that could lead to a potential deconstruction of the concept of *teyolia*. In his book *El nahualismo*, he suggests "it is well worth asking if, in reality, rather than with distinct animistic entities, we deal perhaps with different aspects of one complex and dynamic soul whose parts can carry diverse qualities of the whole" (Martínez González 2011:78). In a recent paper, he notes that there is not a single occurrence of the term *-yolia* in the Florentine Codex and he asks how it is possible that only souls went to the land of the dead if numerous alphabetical and pictorial sources show evidence that bodies were believed to go there too (Martínez González 2014:34, 40). Eventually, Martínez González does not, however, distance himself from the conceptual framework developed by López Austin. In the 2014 article, he acknowledges the most salient traits and functions ascribed to *-yolia* in the *Cuerpo humano* (Martínez González 2014:35–38).

McKeever Furst, often quoted by scholars who deal with the concept of *-yolia*, offers a seemingly different perspective. She positions her materialistic approach in the context of an intellectual tradition traced back to Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. She also draws on the works of early anthropologists, including James Frazer and Edward B. Tylor, as well as some later contributions, such as those by Marvin Harris. McKeever Furst (1995:174) claims:

> materialist explanations of religion express the belief that, for all their differences, people provide rational and intelligible explanations about their world that can be understood if we have access to the information they have about the world.

To this, she adds: "That culture grows from a specific environment does not devalue anyone's thoughts" (McKeever Furst 1995:175). The materialist approach, however, has been deemed devaluing and reductionist in hundreds, if not thousands, of anthropological publications. While observation of nature can be a source

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of a religious belief, such a claim has to be backed up by ethnohistorical information related to the culture that produced the belief, rather than by a Eurocentric reference to "reason" and "logic," which are themselves concepts of European origin. McKeever Furst uses López Austin's tripartite scheme as a point of departure for her search of the possibility of detecting *teyolia*, *tonalli*, and *ihiyotl* "in nature." She explores three ways in which *-yolia* was imagined: a winged creature, breath or a shadowy double, and stone. According to her, the origins of the association of winged creatures with *-yolia* are: the fact that "a deteriorating body attracts bugs that people may interpret as evidence of a winged soul"; "the observation of insects crawling from graves"; the "human heart [that] vaguely suggests the shape of a bird or butterfly"; and fluids that after death "settle into the lower parts of the body" producing a pattern that "roughly resembles a winged creature" (McKeever Furst 1995:37–41). The lack of ethnohistorical data that could speak in favor of these associations suggests that they should be attributed to McKeever Furst rather than to the precontact Nahuas. Bodies deteriorate and are buried (except for incineration practices, such as those of the Nahuas!) all around the world. If so, why are beliefs regarding human nature and afterlife so diversified?

The tripartite division of "Nahua souls" elaborated by López Austin and backed up by the conceptual framework provided by McKeever Furst is still amply used in scholarly projects. Most recently, it has been directly applied to the beliefs of the Otomis (Wright-Carr 2017:181–186). According to Wright-Carr (2017:192):

> the Otomi and the Nahua shared essentially the same beliefs about the three animic essences, usually bound to people's corporality, which could exist outside of the body, in a way that is partially analogous to the soul in the Christian tradition.

Several aspects of this analysis should be pointed out, however: (1) the fundamental piece of evidence is derived from the trilingual (Castilian-Nahuatl-Otomi) vocabulary by Fray Alonso Urbano, reporting two Otomi words as equivalents of the Nahuatl terms *teyolia* and *teyolitia*. In this Colonial source, however, the latter terms are part of the doctrinal Nahuatl nomenclature, for which Otomi counterparts had to be found or created for the purposes of Christianization; (2) there is little, if any, correspondence between Colonial and modern Otomi terminology used to support the argument, especially with regard to three alleged separate entities; and (3) semantic fields of particular concepts are quite broad and blurry, and they could fit into more than one specific Nahua category as defined by López Austin.

Summing up, it is our opinion that primary evidence for the existence and characteristics of *-yolia* should not be searched for in a Western author's "reason" or in observations of nature that are subsequently projected upon Nahua and other native cultures. Neither should it be looked for among the Mayas, Purépechas, or the Uto-Aztecan peoples of northern Mexico, nor even among contemporary Nahuas. This does not mean that we dismiss other Mesoamerican cultures, either sixteenth-century or modern (including modern Nahua culture), as a potential source of information about precontact Nahua concepts. They provide valuable data, but these data need to be analyzed and interpreted separately before they are woven into a misleadingly homogenous "Mesoamerican" fabric. In this paper, we limit ourselves to Colonial sources on Nahuatl-speaking people, rigorously applying to them methods of source criticism. Only after establishing what older sources really tell us about the precontact *-yolia* is it possible to compare the result with data from other regions, periods, or cultures.

WHAT THE SOURCES REALLY TELL US ABOUT "TEYOLIA"

The influential assumption regarding the existence of *-yolia* is based on several pieces of evidence, which we will examine closely. We will start with sources mentioned by López Austin (1984:vol. I, pp. 252–256, 363–367) in two chapters of his *Cuerpo humano*. Further, we will complement this material with data found by other authors in Colonial texts regarding Nahua culture and used in order to support the identification of *-yolia* as one of the three souls reportedly forming part of the precontact Nahua belief system.

The "Bird of the Heart": The Florentine Codex

A passage from Book 11 of the Florentine Codex is used by López Austin to support his claim that *-yolia* traveled to the world of the dead, in this case to the Heaven of the Sun. This place, called in Nahuatl *tonatiuh ichan*, "the Home of the Sun," was said to be the destiny of both women who died during their first childbirth and warriors killed in battle (Sahagún 2012:bk. 6, p. 162). The passage from Book 11 mentions a kind of bird, called *yollotototl*, "heart-bird": *Injc mjtva iollotototl: iuh qujtoa, in vmpa tlaca. Ca in jquac timjquj: qujmjxiptlatia in tviollo.* "The reason, why it is said it is a heart-bird, is that the people from there [Teotlixco] say that when we die, it becomes an *ixiptla* [embodiment or substitute] for our heart" (Sahagún 2012:bk. 11, p. 25). From this information, López Austin (1984:vol. I, p. 253) infers that *-yolia* was transformed into a bird in the Heaven of the Sun. As we can easily see, however, the Nahuatl text does not mention anything about the *tonatiuh ichan* or *-yolia*.

Before we turn to a more detailed analysis of López Austin's argument, it has to be pointed out that there are more textual references that suggest an association between "souls" and birds and this has not passed unnoticed by scholars. In the chapter titled "The Yolia as a Bird," McKeever Furst (1995:23–27) quotes data from Books 3 and 6 of the Florentine Codex, as well as from the Codex Vaticanus A. The Appendix to Book 3 claims that, after four years of accompanying the Sun, deceased warriors turned into butterflies, hummingbirds, and other similar kinds of birds, which sucked nectar on earth and "where they dwelled" (Sahagún 2012:bk. 3, p. 49). Book 6 describes the same belief, adding that these warriors drank from flowers and dwelled in the Home of the Sun (Sahagún 2012:bk. 6, p. 114). A little further on, the same book of the Florentine Codex reveals that deceased babies were also believed to suck nectar from flowers, adding *Ca mjtoa in conetzitzinti momjqujlia chalchiuhti, teuxiuhti, maqujzti: (…) vmpa vi in tonacatecutli ichan, tonacaquauhtitlan in nemj*, "It is said that deceased babies are precious greenstones, jades, bracelets. (…) They go to the home of the Lord of Sustenance; they live among the trees of sustenance" (Sahagún 2012:bk. 6, p. 115). The Codex Vaticanus A, an early Colonial source bearing a strong European influence, provides a very similar account, although the tree on which the children are fed is called *chichihualquahuitl*, "breast tree," and, consequently, what they drink is breast milk (Anders and Jansen 1996:51). While neither the Florentine Codex nor the Codex Vaticanus A explicitly mentions the transformation of babies into birds or butterflies, McKeever Furst (1995:25–27) observes that they feed themselves from the tree as if they were

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536118000329 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nectar-sucking creatures. Finally, Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta (2002 [1597]:vol. I, p. 209) makes a reference to a Tlaxcalan belief, according to which the souls of deceased noblemen turned into mist, clouds, birds of precious feathers, and precious stones, while those of commoners were transformed into weasels, foul-smelling beetles, animals whose urine stinks, and other despicable creatures (see also Torquemada 1983 [1615]:vol. III, p. 128).

A Western mind can easily imagine a belief in souls transforming into birds because European thought has a long tradition of associating souls or spirits (and angels) with birds (Burkhart 1992:94). This is probably why modern scholars tend to focus on the avian aspect of these transformations, although the data quoted above clearly show that, apart from birds, the dead, at least those of a noble position, could change into butterflies, precious stones, mist, or clouds. The choice is not accidental here: all of these beings form part of a landscape identified by López Austin with Tlalocan, the realm of the god of rain (e.g., Sahagún 2012:bk. 10, p. 187), and called "sacred garden" by Burkhart (1992:89). It was imagined as a land of fertility and riches where everything sprouted and blossomed, colorful birds fed on flowers, and there was plenty of food and an abundance of jewels, especially greenstones. At the same time, Tlalocan was humid, always in the midst of the rainy season. It was sometimes pictured as a mountain with its summit covered by clouds, the source of both rain and rivers (López Austin 2000 [1994]:182–186). Tlalocan, which the Nahuas also believed to be one of the afterlife destinations, was strongly identified with the Christian paradise after the Spanish Conquest to the point of merging the figures of angels and nectar-sucking birds in Nahuatl religious texts (Burkhart 1992). The author of the gloss about the "breast tree" in the Codex Vaticanus A refers to the lactating (?) babies-birds with the Italian term *puttini*, or "cherubs." He further Christianizes the account by claiming that what went to this Otherworld were the souls (*anime*) of children (Anders and Jansen 1996:50). In the same vein, Sahagún (2001:bk. 1, pp. 300, 510) tends to insert the Christian term *ánima* into Spanish versions of accounts that speak about transformations of the deceased into birds. In this way, the conflation of Tlalocan with paradise becomes so intense that it is easy to forget about its original precontact nature. As Burkhart (1992:89) points out, the Nahua ideal "garden" was not a place of eternal reward, but rather a sacred aspect of reality, not separate, as the Christian "garden" was, from the material world.

There is more evidence of transformations of the deceased that take place in connection with the "Tlalocan" landscape. Authors who write about *-yolia* use it to back up their arguments. Both López Austin (1984:vol. I, p. 376) and Martínez González (2014: 35) cite a passage from the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* describing the death of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl:

> auh mitoa yn iquac yn ye tlatla niman ye yc aco quiça in inexyo. auh yn neçiya yn quittaya mochi tlaçototome yn aco quiça yn ilhuicac quimonitta tlauhquechol xiuhtototl tzinitzcan ayoquan tozneneme allome cochome yxquich yn occequi tlaçototome auh yn ontlan ynexyo niman ye ic aco quiça yn iyollo quetzaltotl yn quitta auh yn iuh quimatia ylhuicac ya ylhuicac callac quitohuaya yn huehuetque yehuatl mocuep yn çitlallin yn tlahuizcalpã hualneçi.
>
> And they say that when he had burned, his ashes rose upward. And what appeared and what they saw were all the precious birds, rising into the sky. They saw roseate spoonbills, cotingas, trogons, herons, green parrots, scarlet macaws, white-fronted parrots, and all the other precious birds. When his ashes had burned, they saw the heart of a quetzal [or: Quetzalcoatl] rising upward. They understood that it was to the sky, that it had entered the sky. The old people said it turned into the star that appeared at dawn (Bierhorst 1992:12).

López Austin (1984:vol. I, p. 376) interprets this passage through his concept of man-god (*hombre-dios*), defined as a receptacle of divine force. According to him, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, who also belonged to this category of beings, experienced the fate of all men-gods: at death, his force returned to the realm of deities. In his book *Hombre-dios*, written before the *Cuerpo humano*, López Austin (1989:126) explains his view without yet using the term *teyolia*:

> Since [divine force] was located in the recipient heart of the man-god and the heart was the center of awareness—the entity that went to the world of the dead—the deceased took this entity with him and placed it together with the deity he had represented when still alive.

In the later *Cuerpo* he adds: "The mention of Quetzalcoatl's heart leaves no doubt that the animistic entity was the *teyolia*" (López Austin 1984:vol. I, p. 376, 1988:vol. I, p. 329). Although the text of the *Anales* speaks about the heart of a quetzal bird, both other sources (e.g., Torquemada 1983 [1615]:vol. III, p. 124) and strong associations of Quetzalcoatl with Venus suggest that it, in fact, (metaphorically?) refers to the heart of this deity.

In an attempt to understand the postmortem transformations of cultural heroes and rulers, López Austin juxtaposes the passage on Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl with the above-mentioned Tlaxcalan belief recorded by Mendieta and with the discussion of the etymology of "Teotihuacan" from the Florentine Codex. The latter source suggests that, in ancient times, rulers were believed to become gods (*oteot*) after death: some of them represented (*quinmixiptlatique*) the Sun, others the Moon, and so on. When they died, they were addressed by the living as if they had just awoken in the garden full of colorful birds and butterflies (Sahagún 2001:bk. 2, p. 869; 2012:bk. 10, p. 192). This account resonates with the passage of the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, in which the heart of Quetzalcoatl reportedly transforms into the morning star (Venus) right after his ashes rise and precious birds appear. López Austin also suggests that clouds and mist into which Tlaxcalan lords turn in Mendieta's account represent rain deities, allowing for a similar kind of interpretation. While all these pieces of evidence indeed have much in common, López Austin has a hard time explaining what seems to be a two-step transformation: into birds but, at the same time (or right after), into celestial bodies. He finally concludes that *teyolia* was of "divisible nature" (López Austin 1984:vol. I, pp. 377–378).

Instead of forcing the data into a preconceived model of a tripartite soul, we propose that each of the accounts discussed in this section is drawing an image of an Otherworld using culturally recognized elements: nectar-sucking creatures, flowers or clouds in the case of the sacred garden (Tlalocan), and foul-smelling animals in the case of Mictlan (for the latter, see Mikulska 2008:366–375). While it may be evoked for different reasons in origin stories, like the one about Quetzalcoatl or about the rulers of Teotihuacan, this image indicates that the action takes place in a sacred time/place. It should be stressed that the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* mention birds, butterflies, and precious stones as hallmarks of the Quetzalcoatl era in Tollan, by no means restricting this motif to the time of his death (Bierhorst 1992:8–9). When discussing

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destinies after death, on the other hand, the image of the Otherworld serves to show a change in the ontological status of a deceased person and his or her transfer to another dimension of the world.

There is yet another passage from the Florentine Codex, which Martínez González (2007, 2011:41) quotes among the pieces of evidence for the link between *-yolia*, or "heart-souls," and birds (see also López Austin 1984:vol. I, p. 256). It says, according to him, that "a bad painter had a sleeping bird in his heart" ("un mal pintor 'tenía un pájaro dormido en su corazón'"). In fact, the passage speaks about the feather worker and the bird in question does not have much in common with hummingbirds and butterflies of the sources discussed above, for upon closer inspection it turns out to be a turkey. (*In tlaueliloc amantecatl: tlaixpaniani, tlapâpanquani, motexictiani iolloquimilli totolin iitic cochticac.* "The bad feather worker is a hypocrite, a destroyer of good work, he looks down on people, he is heart-bundled, a turkey is sleeping inside him"; Sahagún 2012:bk. 10, p. 25). Although turkeys and hummingbirds fall into the same class of birds within the Western classification (while butterflies do not fit there), the texts previously analyzed suggest that the Nahua classification system was different and that it may have grouped animals based on such criteria as colorfulness and feeding on flowers. In such a case, hummingbirds and butterflies fall into the same class, which does not include turkeys. Moreover, according to Martínez González, this turkey was sleeping inside the heart of the bad artisan. The word, which Martínez González interprets as "heart," is, in fact, *yolloquimilli*, or "heart-bundle." In Book 10 of the Florentine Codex this term appears in another similar context, though this time with no turkey around: a bad scribe is characterized as *iolloquiquimil, tequalani, texiuhtlati*, "his heart is wrapped hard, he angers people, he bothers people" (Sahagún 2012:bk. 10, p. 28). Molina (1977 [1571]:vol. II, f. 40v) translates *yolloquiquimil* as "rude or stupid or careless." He also gives a similarly constructed term *ixquimilli*, literally "eye- (or face-) bundle" and metaphorically "careless and lazy" (Molina 1977 [1571]:vol. II, f. 47r). The concept of blindness and associated punishment was embodied by the deity of cold, Itztlacoliuhqui Ixquimilli, a belligerent and dangerous manifestation of the Maize God, Cinteotl, in his aspect of the morning star depicted with a band over his eyes and lethal weapons (Sullivan 1976). Apparently, the term *quimilli*, "bundle," combined with a body part associated by the Nahuas with mental capacities, like the heart or eyes (see López Austin 1991), served as a metaphor for laziness and incompetence. Similarly, "turkey," which is said to be sleeping inside the person rather than his heart, is a metaphor for stupidity or ignorance: in the same chapter of Book 10, a bad lapidary is described as *xolopitli, totoli*, "he is stupid, he is a turkey" (Sahagún 2012:bk. 10, p. 26). Thus, in the passage presented, both *yolloquimilli* and *totolin* function as pejorative epithets and have nothing to do with properties of the heart, let alone the soul.

Summing up, Nahua sources reveal multiple references that link birds to either the afterlife or spiritual components of a human being. Some of these data are mere projections of Christian symbolism into Nahua culture. Other, like the passage about the bad feather worker, should be dismissed as misinterpretations of modern scholars. Still, we are left with a reasonable body of evidence that allows us to study the Nahua concepts of personhood and the afterlife. Many Colonial-era texts suggest that a particular kind of "birds"—nectar-sucking birds and butterflies—formed part of the native imaginary of the "sacred garden," Tlalocan or Tamoanchan, although the exact conceptualization and the mutual relationship of these places should be subjected to more critical research. Within this context, some sources tell us that particular people or their hearts (*-yollo*) transformed into elements of the sacred garden at death. While both the sacred garden and the heart are recurring themes in Nahuatl writings, and a promising point of departure for further studies, the term *-yolia* does not ever accompany them. Therefore, the above-discussed evidence cannot serve to support the indigenous origin of this concept.

"The Meal of our Soul": Torquemada's *Monarquía indiana*

The second piece of evidence that actually features the term *-yolia* appears in the *Cuerpo humano* in the context of remedies to harm inflicted upon this "soul." López Austin quotes it after Fray Juan de Torquemada's (1983 [1615]:vol. III, pp. 129–130) *Monarquía indiana*, but the Franciscan friar copied it, along with the entire chapter titled "De muchos agüeros y supersticiones que los indios tenían," from an early source of Spanish authorship, either directly or through Mendieta's (2002 [1597]:vol I, pp. 224–225) *Historia ecclesiástica indiana*. The passage, referring to the customs of the Totonacs, describes seed and blood dough (*tzoalli*) in the following way: *Llamaban a esta masa toyoliaytlaquatl, que quiere decir manjar de nuestra vida.* "They called this dough *toyoliaytlaquatl,* which means a delicious food of our life." It renders *toyolia* as "our life," correcting the earlier translation, "our soul," present in the work by Mendieta. Another difference between the two accounts is the classification of the ritual as an indigenous "sacrament of Eucharist" by Mendieta, which is absent from the *Monarquía indiana*.

An association between rituals involving *tzoalli* and the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist was very common among Spanish friars, who tended to explain native cultural practices through parallels with their religious background (Pardo 2006: 156–158; see Madajczak 2017 for a similar treatment of confession). In this case, a superficial similarity was based on defining the Christian Eucharist as the flesh of God, while *tzoalli* was used for manufacturing *teteo imixiptlahuan*, or substitutes, of Mexican deities, most often bodies or bones. In both cases, worshippers consumed the "flesh" or "bones" of a god. The parallel was so striking for the friars that they not only explicitly mentioned it, but they also reinforced it, using Christian vocabulary in reference to indigenous practices. Fray Diego Durán (2006:vol. I, p. 35), for example, draws the attention of his readers to "devilish" similarities between Easter and a feast of Huitzilopochtli, whose *tzoalli*-related stage he describes in the following way:

> The priests and dignitaries of the temple took the dough idol and, taking off these adornments that he had, they broke him, as well as the pieces that had been consecrated as his bones and flesh, into many small bits and, starting with the elders, they distributed it as communion to all the people.

Torquemada (1983 [1615]:vol. III, p. 115) makes the same association when discussing this feast. A friar who authored some of the commentaries to the Codex Telleriano-Remensis also associated *tzoalli* with the Eucharist:

> They made a big loaf of amaranth seeds, which they called *tzoalli*, and honey, and once made, they blessed it in their way and they broke it into small bits and the great priest placed them in very clean vessels, and he took a maguey spine, and with it he took the pieces out one by one with great reverence and he put it in

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536118000329 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> the mouths of each and every Indian, as if it were communion (Quiñones Keber 1995:f. 5r).

This convention of describing *tzoalli*-related rituals is also visible in the text by Mendieta. Starting with baptism-like customs and ending with "communion," he unmasks the "true" nature of indigenous practices, designed by the Devil to mock Christian sacraments. *Toyolia itlacual* of the Totonacs is his example for the corrupted sacrament of the Eucharist, which he describes using terms such as *comunión* and *comulgar*.

Once we become aware of the cultural parallel that Mendieta (and, perhaps, his earlier source) drew, the very term *toyolia itlacual*, *manjar de nuestra alma*, reveals its Christian flavor. The term *manjar*, "feast," "delicacy," or "delicious food," was used in Spanish as a metaphor for the Eucharist. In Christian rhetoric, receiving communion was also frequently compared to spiritually feeding or nourishing oneself (Pardo 2006:131, 141–148). In fact, the reportedly precontact "food of our soul," which we can literally translate as *toyolia itlacual*, sounds like a perfect way to metaphorically describe the Eucharist. This degree of cultural parallelism is rather improbable. A more likely option is that *toyolia itlacual* represents yet another way of reinforcing the association between communion and *tzoalli* construed by the friars, and it is simply a calque of the Spanish metaphor for the Eucharist. The term *-yolia* used in the calque does not, therefore, represent any precontact Totonac concept of Nahua origin, as proposed by López Austin (1984:vol. I, p. 257) in his explanation of an intriguing fact that a Totonac sacred dough had a Nahuatl name. It had a Nahuatl name because it was named by a friar who resorted to Christian-Nahuatl vocabulary. The term *-yolia* refers here to the idea of a Christian soul nourished by the Eucharist, which has been projected onto a Nahua cultural practice.

"Souls Lost in Mictlan": The Crónica Mexicayotl

The term *-yolia* appears in the Crónica Mexicayotl in two passages authored by either Hernando de Alvarado Tezozomoc or Domingo Chimalpahin (Peperstraete and Kruell 2014:337): *ynic yehica yn ~~yehuantin in~~ ixpolihuia yn izquitzonxiquipilli in teyollia yn teanimashuan yn quinhuicaya ompa mictlan*, "and for this reason, numerous souls [teyolia, *ánimas*] were being lost, he [Huitzilopochtli] was taking them to Mictlan/hell," and *yhuan ynic quinhualmatizque in yehuātin españolesme. ynic quinnemilizcuepaquihui. yhuan ynic huel momaquixtizque yn inyollia yn imanimashuan*, "[God wanted] that the Spaniards come to know them [the natives], that they come to change their way of living and that their souls be truly redeemed" (Chimalpahin and Alvarado Tezozomoc 1997:66). López Austin (1984:vol. I. p. 253) and Martínez González (2014:35, n23) quote these fragments as evidence that the precontact concept of *-yolia* was, after contact, identified with the Christian concept of "soul," because both "went to the world of the dead" upon death. With regard to the same passage, McKeever Furst (1995:21) comments that "the yolia persisted after death and was often carried off to the Christian hell to be punished." All authors seem to notice that the indigenous writer uses the term *-yolia* in a Christian context and juxtaposes it with the Spanish term *ánima* in a doublet. They interpret this as an adaptation of the Nahua concept to the new cultural context, however, rather than, as we see it, as an entirely new creation.

The passages in question belong to the beginning of the Crónica Mexicayotl. Like the majority of Nahua accounts, it starts with migration episodes but the author immediately places them within Christian discourse. He claims that God planned for the *azteca* to leave their place of origin, disperse throughout the land, and eventually come to "New Spain." In this way, although the devil Huitzilopochtli succeeded in taking innumerable souls to hell, God put a stop to it, making the chronicler's ancestors meet the Spaniards and receive the true light of faith from them (Chimalpahin and Alvarado Tezozomoc 1997:66). This fragment contains several pre-Hispanic Nahuatl terms that have been appropriated by the Christian register: *mictlan*, *tlacatecolotl*, and *maquixtia*. The context, however, strongly suggests that the author understood them in an orthodox Catholic way, with no precontact Nahua undertones. It is not the sorcerer Huitzilopochtli taking *-yolia* to the world of the dead (as McKeever Furst claims) so that they could not be saved. It is the Devil taking souls to hell so that they could not be redeemed.

The doublet *-yolia -anima* was used extensively in Colonial Nahuatl sources with reference to the Christian soul. It appears in a variety of genres, such as wills, religious treatises, theatrical plays, annals, or petitions, accompanied by other, similarly constructed, Nahuatl-Spanish doublets. For example, in the Dominican *Doctrina cristiana* (1548:ff. 45r, 62v), we come across a doublet *mictlan infiernos*, while in the religious play *The Merchant* we find *diablo tlacatecolotl* (Burkhart and Sell 2004:262). In each of these cases, the Nahuatl word was chosen because someone (most probably Spanish friars) decided that it was suitable to render the accompanying Christian concept. Mictlan was a scary Otherworld, ruled by a bony lord and often described as situated below the earth, which was enough to compare it to hell (although it was not a place of eternal punishment). Tlacatecolotl resembled the Devil in that he was neither god nor a regular human being and inflicted misery upon people (Burkhart 1989:41; Griffiths 2006:33). It is, therefore, easy to conclude that *-yolia* was also paired with *ánima* because it referred to a superficially similar precontact Nahua concept. Spanish religious terms, however, were juxtaposed in doublets not only with extensions of Nahuatl vocabulary. In phrases such as *cenquizcaqualtlaneltoquiliztli la fe*, "the perfect right belief, the faith" (Chimalpahin 2006:264), *tetlechipahualoyan purgatorio*, "the place where people are purified by fire, purgatory" (Chimalpahin 2006:240), or *ilhuicac cenpapaquiliztli gloria*, "heavenly happiness, glory" (*Doctrina cristiana* 1548:f. XLIXv), the Nahuatl element is a neologism. As we argue below, this is also the case of *-yolia -anima*, and in fact, neologisms are the most common kind of words to be employed in doublets with Spanish loanwords.

Cristóbal del Castillo and the "Soul" of Huitzilopochtli

The Colonial-period evidence collected by López Austin has been cited widely by other authors. Martínez González (2014) additionally complements it with a passage from Cristóbal del Castillo's *Historia de la venida de los mexicanos y de otros pueblos*, where the term *-yolia* is seemingly used in a precontact context. It appears twice in speeches delivered by gods to Huitzitlin, the leader of the Mexicas, who will later transform into the god Huitzilopochtli. The gods inform Huitzitlin that his death is approaching and leave him final instructions, the main focus of which is the elaboration of a *tlaquimilolli*, or a sacred bundle, out of the leader's remains. The bundle will be used as a means of communication with the deities:

> But although you will die so that your soul [*moyolia*] will be with us, our elder brother Tetzauhteotl will not abandon you, for he will

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> settle in your bones, in your skull, from where he will speak on your behalf, as if you simply lived in there (Castillo 2001:120).

The initial steps of the fabrication of the *tlaquimilolli* are the following: "Command them [i.e., the Mexica] that when your soul [*moyolia*] leaves so that you will die, they should bury your body in a stone chest. Your bones will lie there for four years [until] your flesh rots completely [and] turns into earth" (Castillo 2001:120). As Navarrete Linares (Castillo 2001:37–39) points out, Castillo had high competence in fundamental concepts of a precontact Nahua worldview. Only through two brief fragments quoted above are we able to see that he was familiar with the tradition of making sacred bundles, as well as with the importance of the number four in Nahua ritual. Scholars also emphasize that the content of Huitzilopochtli's *tlaquimilolli* (i.e., bones) in the *Historia de la venida de los mexicanos* correlate with the generally "skeletal" character of this deity mentioned in the *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* and other sources (Bassett 2015:178–179; Garibay Kintana 2005:24, 29; Mikulska 2008:216–217). All of this increases the credibility of Castillo's account. Taking it at face value, López Austin (1989:126, 140) suggests that Huitzitlin was a man-god (*hombre-dios*), whose heart was filled with a divine force that left to the land of the dead upon his death. Navarrete Linares (Castillo 2001:39, 120, n97) repeats this when he interprets Castillo's *-yolia* in terms of an animistic entity. Strong evidence suggests, however, that the Nahua author's understanding of *-yolia* arose from his Christian breeding rather than from profound knowledge of precontact religious concepts.

Cristóbal del Castillo, like all Nahua Colonial chroniclers and annalists, was trained by Spanish ecclesiastics, most probably Franciscans, as some hints in his writings suggest (Castillo 2001:61). References to a Christian God are frequent in a few surviving fragments of Castillo's work, also mentioned as an inspiration for authoring the chronicle (Castillo 2001:130). This, of course, is not enough to doubt the precontact "authenticity" of his information or vocabulary: if it were, we should discredit all Colonial authors. It seems, however, that Castillo extensively uses Christian narrative structures and expressions to elaborate his version of the Mexica migration. As Christensen (1996) has shown, the account on the peregrination of the Mexica told by the *Historia de la venida de los mexicanos* is modeled on the biblical Exodus, with Huitzitlin/Huitzilopochtli resembling Moses too much to call it a coincidence. Castillo's Mexicas run from cruel rulers of Aztlan and set out for a long journey to a promised land, led by their leader Huitzitlin, who frequently consults with the god Tetzauhteotl. They go across a sea, whose waters part so that they can pass, and when they starve they miraculously receive food from the deity. Tetzauhteotl gives Huitzitlin a set of commandments and, when the death of the leader approaches, he passes to him final instructions on top of a mountain (Castillo 2001:87–123). It is in the context of these instructions, where the term *-yolia* appears. The way it is used suggests a Christian understanding of death. According to Castillo (2001:120), Huitzilopochtli's body is to lie for four years in a stone chest, during which time *occenca palani tlalli mocuepa in monacayo*, "your flesh rots completely and turns into earth." The reflexive verb *mocuepa* means "to return" or "to turn into" and the phrase *mocuepa tlalli* is reminiscent of the Biblical words of God "dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (Douay-Rheims Bible 1582–1611, Gen. 3, 19). In fact, similar phrasings occur in ecclesiastical texts in Nahuatl. For example, the early seventeenth-century Jesuit *Santoral en mexicano* says: *totlalnacayo (…) palani yn yaya tlalli mocuepa*, "our earthen bodies (…) rot, they stink, they turn into earth" (Burkhart 2001:108, translation by Burkhart). If Castillo's discourse on dying is Christianized to this point, it seems very likely that also the leaving of *-yolia*, or soul, that he pictures belongs to a European cultural framework.

The term *-yolia* would not be the only Christian-Nahuatl term interwoven by the Nahua author into the fabric of the "Mexica migration" narrative. Navarrete Linares notes that Castillo consequently refers to Mexica deities with the term *tlacatecolotl*, a Christian-Nahuatl translation of "devil." He also uses a neologism *iztlacateteo*, "false gods," when speaking of deities worshipped by other people (Castillo 2001:52–54). Castillo's contemporaries already grasped the Christian "flavor" of this terminology. Chimalpahin, who either copied passages of Castillo's account or used the same source, inserts the Spanish loanword *diablo* where *Historia* has *tlacatecolotl* (Chimalpahin 2016 [1991]:18–19; Castillo 2001:43, 86–87). Castillo (2001:116) also projects Nahua terminology referring to a Christian God, *totecuiyo*, or "our Lord," upon pre-Conquest deities. Thus, although many details prove Castillo's insights into precontact Nahua culture, both the Christianized model of his narrative and the vocabulary derived from the teachings of friars point to his use of the term *-yolia* in the vein of Christian, rather than pre-Christian, Nahuas.

The Nicaraguan *yulio*

Finally, according to López Austin (1984:vol. I, pp. 217–219, 1988:vol. I, p. 199) *-yolia* is attested among the Nahuas in Nicaragua who "make a distinction between the heart and the *teyolia*, the first being the organ, and the second, the animistic entity." This conclusion is based on references contained in the work by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (1855) indicating that the local "Nahuas" believed that, at the moment of death, an air resembling a person and called *yulio* leaves through the mouth. Martínez González (2011:36) also acknowledges this evidence with regard to beliefs linked to *-yolia*, closely related to those of the central Mexican Nahuas. Let us look closely at the source and the context of the key information provided therein.

The argument for the pre-Conquest concept of *-yolia* comes from the work *Historia general y natural de las Indias* by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés (1855:vol. IV, pp. 39–48) and, more specifically, from a chapter based on an interrogation carried out in 1528 in Nicaragua by a mercenary friar, Francisco de Bobadilla, at the behest of the governor, Pedrarias Dávila. The purpose of the inquiry was to provide evidence for the claims of the latter to reveal the failure of mass conversion by the previous conqueror (and Pedrarias' adversary), Gil González Dávila. This was achieved by means of a formal *probanza* carried out in the town of Teoca, in the jurisdiction of the *villa* of Granada, and designed not only to document the beliefs and rites of the local population speaking a Nahua language, but also to investigate "what [kind of] Christians they were before Pedrarias went to this land and what they felt about God and the immortality of the soul" (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, p. 39). With the help of three translators, the questions were translated into the local language and answers were then rendered back into Spanish. The chapter in the work of Oviedo follows an original questionnaire and the transcript of the replies: it is structured as a "dialogue" where indigenous respondents answer the sequence of the same or similar questions. The work by Oviedo, however, was only concluded much later, between 1540 and 1549 (and published in 1851–1855); he probably

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used a copy of a *probanza* either acquired directly from Bobadilla in Nicaragua or during one of his visits to Spain, where Bobadilla delivered his report to the king in 1529 (León-Portilla 1972: 22–23). As pointed out by León-Portilla (1972:24), by the time that Oviedo gave the final form to the part of his work containing information on Nicaragua, he had already accumulated a considerable amount of data about New Spain and the Nahuas; indeed, he makes explicit comparisons and parallels between the rites of Nicaragua and those of central Mexico. These circumstances call for cautiousness in the interpretation of the data contained in his account. In general, local leaders and elders who were interrogated appear to have had some initial contact with Christianity and perhaps even some basic instruction in the doctrine. Some admitted being Christians and that they "were poured water over [their] heads," but did not remember the name they had received upon baptism. One *cacique* affirmed it is good to be Christian because Christians told him that when one of them dies, he goes to paradise, whereas non-Christians go to hell with the Devil (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, p. 41). The strong impact of a Christian moral valuation of the afterlife destination, alien to pre-Conquest native culture, is visible in recorded testimonies referring to fate after death, where the good ascend to heaven to be with the gods, while the wicked descend to the underworld of the death god "named Mictanteot" (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, pp. 42, 46, 49).

The supposed evidence associated with *-yolia* comes with a series of questions concerning the immortality of the soul. When asked if the body also departs to heaven, one of the respondents says that upon death something "like a person" and called *yulio* leaves through the mouth and goes to the heavenly place of the male-female divine couple (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, p. 42). Needless to add, while adhering to the indigenous idea of a primordial couple of creator gods, the testimony also evokes a motif of an anthropomorphic soul leaving through the mouth, common in Christian imagery. The interviews included in the latter part of this account make it quite clear that the friar asked explicitly if it was the heart that left the body and what happened in the case when it was removed in a sacrificial rite ("si se saca el corazón, va arriba?"). Another elder, who declared himself to be too old to be Christian, first stated that "only the heart goes," but then, upon further interrogation, he said it is not the heart that leaves, but "this which makes them stay alive" (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, p. 44–45). The answers of several persons are surprisingly similar, suggesting a pre-established Spanish formula for that part of the *probanza*: "The heart does not go, but this which kept them alive and an air that comes out through their mouth which they call yulio" (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, p. 45).

The actual form and content of the key question, translated into a local language, is more fully reconstructed only in the final part of the report. After three days of interrogations, the friar and his helpers gathered 13 local leaders, nobles, and priests and asked: "The souls and hearts of those who are sacrificed, where do they go? Do the body and the heart and the *yulio,* and the soul [*ánima*] die?" (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, pp. 48–49). Thus, the question already contained the term *yulio* paired not only with the "heart," but also with the Spanish term *ánima*, which evokes the common doublet *-yolia -anima* used by the friars in central Mexico. It is therefore quite probable, judging by the very specific form of this question—in fact rather unusual for standard Christian terminology!— that a similar strategy was employed to translate the religious content of Spanish questions into an indigenous language, no doubt strongly influencing the elicited result. As a matter of fact, the answers obtained in the group interview are quite surprising. First, the participants state that "*ánimas y corazones*" ("souls and hearts") do not abandon the body but stay with it (contradicting other elicited answers; Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, p. 46) and then they affirm that, "if a person lived well, the *yulio* ascends to our gods and it dies and perishes with the body and there is no memory of it" if a person lived badly (Oviedo y Valdés 1855:vol. IV, p. 49). Thus, although the answers clearly contain some pre-Conquest beliefs, the concept of the afterlife that they convey is strongly Christianized, with wording elicited by the translation of Christian terms strikingly similar to the standard terminology established in central Mexican Nahuatl, including the doublet *-yolia -anima*. Deviations from Christian concepts, such as affirmations that a spiritual component(s) does not leave the body or that the evil soul perishes, not only contradict other elicited answers alluding to a more Europeanized fate of *yulio*, but may indeed express originally precontact ideas. After all, Fray Bobadilla, a founder of the Mercedarian convent in Nueva Ciudad de León, had already had some experience in baptizing, preaching, and instructing the native people in Panama and Nicaragua. Therefore, working with interpreters, he must have relied on some, at least basic, Christian vocabulary translated, perhaps *ad hoc*, into local languages, paralleling the huge translation experiment undertaken in central Mexico at about the same time. Moreover, conspicuously, on purely linguistic grounds, it is quite possible that the term *yulio* as it appears in the Spanish text should be identified as a misspelling of *-yollo*, "heart" (or a related form in the local language), rather than as *-yolia*. As such, it would much better correspond to the Spanish questions, explicitly addressing the nature and fate of the "heart." To conclude, it is clear that this source cannot be treated as providing any credible evidence of the pre-Conquest existence of the concept of *-yolia*.

Other Minor Pieces of Evidence

Along with the textual data discussed above, often quoted to support hypotheses regarding *-yolia* as a heart-soul, scholars also refer to other minor pieces of evidence, usually passages that do not include the word *-yolia* in any form but contain what modern authors believe to be indirect information on this animistic entity. In search of such data, López Austin (1984) leans upon his preconceived model of a soul located in the heart, which goes to the Otherworld after death. For this reason, he draws a direct relationship between-*yolia* and specific beliefs, rituals, and terminology regarding the heart, as well as the data on burial practices and ideas Mesoamericans had about the fate of the deceased. One example of this way of thinking was previously presented by us in the section "The Bird of the Heart: The *Florentine Codex*": *yollototl* was included in the *-yolia*-supporting evidence because in the Florentine Codex it was associated with both hearts and the Home of the Sun. When speculating about the origin of *-yolia*, López Austin (1984:vol. I, p. 254) suggests that it may have been given to babies by patron gods of an *altepetl*, metaphorically called *altepeyollotl*. Additionally, he points out that many other terms combine *yollotl* with words for a mountain (*tepeyollotl*), sky, lake, ocean, and so on. He concludes that since all these entities or beings were believed to have hearts, they also must have possessed *-yolia* (López Austin 1984:vol. I, p. 257).

Martínez González (2011:40–41) apparently follows this way of thinking when using a passage from Durán's *Libro de los dioses y ritos* to support his idea about three aspects of *-yolia*: ethereal, avian, and anthropomorphic. In his description of the sacrifice of the

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embodiment of Tezcatlipoca during the feast of Toxcatl, Durán (2006:vol. I, p. 44) says: "the priest cut open his chest and took out the heart and raised it with his hand as high as he could extend his arm and gave its vapor to the Sun." According to Martínez González (2011:40–41), this vapor implied the existence of "something gaseous in the heart," which he identifies with *-yolia*. There is no doubt that the vapor or smoke various items gave off was of great significance to the Nahuas. Durán (2006: vol. I, pp. 37, 41) himself suggests that it symbolized the pleas of the people addressed to the Sun and other deities, but Nahua sources speak of it as if it truly contained some kind of precious essence instead of being a mere symbol. Authors of the Florentine Codex describe precious stones as "breathing" and "giving off vapor" (Olko 2014:314; Sahagún 2012:bk. 11, p. 221; cf. Taube 2005:30–47). Some of them, like turquoises, were believed to be hot, "smoked"; others like greenstones, associated with cold and humidity, "breathed" vital essences that provoked growth of plants above the place they lay deposited. An idea that the beating heart of the sacrificial victim emitted some precious essence, which was then carried to the gods, seems plausible: the well-known ritual of substituting greenstone for the heart of a deceased person suggests a conceptual equivalence between the two. Nevertheless, the only hint that allows for the identification of this essence with *-yolia* is López Austin's idea that this animistic entity was located in the heart. Neither Durán nor any other sixteenth-century author provides a direct link between the "vapor of the heart" and the term *-yolia*.

Examples of inferring the nature of *-yolia* from beliefs about postmortem existence abound in the *Cuerpo humano*. In one of them, López Austin (1984:vol. I, p. 364) states that *-yolia* remained near a dead person for four days after death. Among the evidence he cites is a passage from the Florentine Codex referring to the feast of Panquetzaliztli and the accompanying sacrifice of slaves. It was believed that *in tlaaltilti in omjcque*, "the bathed ones, the dead," did not descend to Mictlan until four days after their death (Sahagún 2012:bk. 2, p. 150). Instead of the souls (*-yolia*) of the sacrificial victims, however, the text, as we can see, mentions the victims themselves.

Here ends the evidence brought up so far in favor of the existence of *-yolia* in pre-Conquest beliefs. Having reconsidered every piece of this evidence, we can safely conclude that it does not provide any basis for identifying *-yolia* as a pre-Hispanic term and concept. However, *-yolia* is a crucial word in Nahua-Christian terminology, however, which provides strong evidence dramatically surpassing any references to *-yolia* in pre-Conquest contexts.

Where *-yolia* is Attested and Where It Is Not

Whereas, as we have shown, textual evidence on *-yolia* in reference to pre-Conquest beliefs can be dismissed, this term is widely attested in the earliest known ecclesiastical texts, such as the *Doctrina cristiana en lengua española y mexicana por los religiosos de la orden de Santodomingo* of 1548 and the 1555/1571 dictionary by Fray Alonso de Molina. Molina's (1555:ff. 15v, 18v) entries in an earlier Spanish-Nahuatl part of the dictionary have 'alma o anima' and 'anima de alguno' rendered as *teyolia, teyolitia*. The expression 'Passion del anima' is rendered simply as *toyolia ycocoliz*, 'the sickness/pain of our soul' (Molina 1555:f. 190v). In the 1571 edition of the Nahuatl to Spanish part of the dictionary, the terms *teyolia* and *toyolia* are both explained as 'el alma, o anima' (Molina 1977 [1571]:vol. II, ff. 95r, 148v), while the Spanish to Nahuatl part adds *tetonal* and *totonal* to the entries for 'alma' and 'anima' (Molina 1977 [1571]:vol. I, ff. 8v, 10v). The evidence included in Molina's dictionary is often cited by authors who understand *teyolia* to be a precontact concept (e.g., López Austin 1984:vol. I, p.219; Maffie 2015:190; McKeever Furst 1995:17–18). The friar's use of a pre-Conquest term *-tonal* as one of the translations for *ánima* could indeed suggest that *-yolia* too was of pre-Conquest origin. It is important to reiterate, however, that, in addition to gathering extensive pre-Conquest terminology, Molina included in his dictionary the bulk of Nahua-Christian terms used by ecclesiastics as well as numerous neologisms: those employed in religious sources, those present in the spoken language, and those created *ad hoc* by him that neither passed on nor took root in everyday speech. An example of an entry, which combines the original Nahua terminology with a neologism, is *cuaresma*, "Lent," rendered as *neçahualizpan* ("in the time of fasting," a pre-contact term) but also as *nacacahualizpan* ("in the time of abandoning meat"), which explains the key practice during the Christian period of Lent.

It is significant that Molina brings up *-yolia* in a doublet with *-anima*, which was a common practice in ecclesiastical and mundane sources, especially in wills. The earliest known attestation of this construction appears in the 1549 will of don Pablo Çacancatl of Coyoacan (Lockhart 1992:553, n215). The standardized doublet, *in noyollia in naniman,* is often employed in sixteenth-century testaments, such as those of Culhuacan (Cline and León-Portilla 1984: 226), while its latest occurrence is recorded in the testaments from Metepec in the Valley of Toluca for 1810 and 1813, a time period when *-anima* alone is usually used with reference to the soul (Melton Villanueva 2012:54, 255). On the other hand, the presence of *-yolia* alone is not consistently linked to any pattern of use, including indigenous authorship of a text. For example, in the play of "Holy Wednesday," where native authorship and co-authorship is rather unquestionable (Burkhart 1996), all three combinations are used: *noyolliya*, *nanimatzin*, *yn noyolliya nanima*. In the 1548 *Doctrina cristiana*, *-yolia* is used both alone (*Doctrina cristiana* 1548:f. 47r) and as part of a doublet (*Doctrina cristiana* 1548:f. 45r), in each case in reference to the Christian concept of the soul.

More significant, however, is *-yolia*'s absence from some important primary sources. We do not find any presence of *teyolia* or *-yolia* in the Florentine Codex, either in reference to pre-Hispanic beliefs or to Christian concepts. The Christian soul is rendered simply as *-anima*, as in the case of a "wretched idolater" (*tlateotocanipol*) who revered a false god "who had no soul" (*in atle yanjima*; Sahagún 2012:bk. 1, p. 57); the wickedness of sinners who kill their own souls (*totlatlacultica totlavelilocaiotica ticmjctia in tanjma, mjctlan titlaça*, "with our sins, with our wickedness we kill our soul, we thrust it into hell"; Sahagún 2012:bk. 1, p. 62); or, the contrary, a good and humane soul (*ianima)* of an exemplary noble woman (Sahagún 2012:bk. 10, p. 50). The *ánima* alone is projected back onto pre-Conquest native gods: thus, the soul of Quetzalcoatl was thrust by God into the land of the dead (*auh yn janjma, oqujmotlatzontequjlili in totecujo dios, mjctlan, quimotlaxtili*; Sahagún 2012:bk. 1, p. 69). No doubt, in all these examples, the native word *mictlan* is used as a common early Colonial name for Christian Hell. Likewise, *-yolia* is not mentioned anywhere in the passages referring to the destiny of the dead in pre-Conquest beliefs, those departing to Mictlan, Tlalocan, and Tonatiuh Ilhuicac, or the "Heaven of the Sun God" (Sahagún 2012:bk. 3, pp. 41–49). The term "soul," rendered with a Spanish loanword, *jmanjmaoã in omjcque* ("souls of the dead") and *imanjman* ("their souls"), only appears in the title and the initial phrase of

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this chapter (Sahagún 2012:bk. 3, p. 41) as a general introduction to the topic. Thus, this fragment introduces the account about "the souls of those who died and went to Mictlan and how they were buried" (*yn imanjman in miquja in vmpa via mjctlan yoan in quenjn tocoia*), evoking the Christian meaning of Mictlan equated with Hell and the new custom of burying the deceased, which was not part of typical Nahua pre-Conquest funerary practices. It is therefore conceivable to view this passage as an explicatory statement made by Sahagún himself, well in the spirit of Christian theology and practice, assuming the separation of body and soul and the latter's departure to the land of the dead as well as the burial of bodily remains. We can search in vain, however, for content announced by Sahagún at the beginning of the chapter: not a single reference to the "soul" appears in subsequent parts of the account, no doubt provided by indigenous collaborators of the friar.

No less meaningful is the evidence from the so-called *Vocabulario trilingüe,* a manuscript copy of Elio Antonio de Nebrija's *Dictionarium ex Hispaniensi in Latinum sermonem* in the Newberry Library that provides Nahuatl equivalents of about 70 percent of the Spanish-Latin entries. It is highly probable that it was composed by an indigenous author for use among speakers of Nahuatl; additionally, it may be the earliest known Spanish-Nahuatl dictionary, possibly predating Molina's work (Clayton 1989, 2003; Gruda 2018). The term *-yolia* does not appear a single time in this source. Soul, described in Spanish as *alma por la qual biuimos* is translated as *tonalli*; accordingly, the term *ánima* is identified with *tetonal*. The author of the *Vocabulario trilingüe* also distinguishes the "soul through which we understand" and "the soul through which we remember," translated as *tlacaquiliztli* ("understanding") and *tlelnamiconi* ("the means of remembering something") respectively. Thus, the notion is either equated with a pre-Conquest concept of *tonalli*/*tetonal* or rendered with descriptive nouns or *ad-hoc* neologisms.

By now, we have seen the Nahua concept of *tonalli* standing for the Christian "soul" in two early Colonial dictionaries. Although after this initial period of coining the "doctrinal Nahuatl" (see Tavárez 2000), the term *tetonal* did not proliferate in written sources. Another term, *yollotl*, "heart," found its way to Christian discourse. In Book 1 of the Florentine Codex the Latin term *spiritus* is translated as possessed *-yollotzin* (Sahagún 2012:bk. 1, p. 66), while the title of Book 10 uses *toyollo* when expressing the Christian dichotomy of body and soul or spirit: *Inic matlactli amostli, itechpa tlatoa in historia general: in vncan moteneoa in nepapan virtudes qualtiuani, iectiuani: ioan in nepapan tlatlaculli in tonacaiotica chioalo ioan in ica toiollo i çaço aquique quichioa*. "The tenth book, which speaks about general history, where various virtues and various sins are mentioned, which are committed with our bodies and with our hearts, whoever practices them" (Sahagún 2012:bk. 10, p. 1; the Spanish version refers to these sins as "ansí espirituales como corporales"; Sahagún 2001:vol. II, p. 762). While the authors of the Florentine Codex establish no explicit terminological equivalence between *ánima* and *yollotl*, the latter term is employed in some sixteenth-century testaments in the doublet *-yollo -anima* in order to render the concept of *spiritus* (Sp. *espirito*), mimicking the much more common *-yolia -anima* (Cline and León-Portilla 1984:86; Karttunen and Lockhart 1976: 94; Lockhart 1992:553, n215). We suggest that these examples may reflect an early sixteenth-century ecclesiastical discussion about the proper way of rendering *ánima* into Nahuatl, which was ongoing in New Spain decades after *-yolia* was first introduced as part of the doublet with *-anima*. The omnipresence of *-yolia* in Christian contexts proves that it won the competition with its rivals, probably because *tonalli* and *yollotl* were too heavily charged with "heathen" meanings. Regarding *yollotl,* or heart, it seems to have been perceived in Nahua culture as a vital organ that deals with reproduction, animation, germination, and conceptualized as a "vital core" in many different contexts. This concept, however, requires separate and critical research.

WHAT KIND OF WORD IS *-YOLIA*?

In Book 6 of the *Monarquía indiana*, Fray Juan de Torquemada (2010:vol. III, pp. 68–70) quotes Saint Isidore of Seville, an early Christian author popular in the sixteenth century, on the matters of the soul. Saint Isidore, and Torquemada after him, differentiate between three terms: *ánima*, "the one through which we live," *ánimo*, "the one by which we are governed," and *espíritu*, "the one through which we breath." The similarity to the model created by López Austin is striking and, due to the common cultural background of the three authors, perhaps not entirely accidental. Although the original Nahua category of *tonalli* does not correspond etymologically to *ánimo*, the remaining two terms are completely parallel in both schemes. *Ihiyotl*, like *espíritu*, refers to breath, while *teyolia* can be translated as "one's instrument/means for living." Is it a coincidence that a Nahuatl term so perfectly renders a Christian concept?

The very understanding of the term *-yolia* has caused some confusion also on a purely linguistic level. Most recently, Wright-Carr (2017:183) explains *teyolia* as the derived form of the verb *yoli*, "to live," "with the indefinite human object prefix tē- and the causative suffix -ā (tē + yōli + ā [ā > a])." As a result, he deals with the term *toyōlia* as "apparently the causative root yōliā reinterpreted as a noun, with the first person plural possessive prefix to- (to + yōli + ā [ā > a]), meaning 'our source of life,'" also stating that Siméon, in his dictionary, proposes "reasonable derivations" assuming the existence of an absolutive form *yoliatl*. In fact, the only exception in the academic history of writing on *-yolia* appears to be the contribution of James Lockhart (1992:253), who, in a brief reference, correctly identified the meaning of *-yolia* as "(my) means of living, what makes me live" and described it as "what at first may have been the *ad hoc* explanation or circumlocution" of the Spanish *ánima*.

-Yolia- (Ø-yoli-ya-Ø) is a necessarily possessed instrumentive noun (Andrews 2003:345–347; cf. Launey 2011:165), which comes from the verb *yoli*, defined by Molina (1977 [1571]:vol. II, f. 39v) as to "revive, resuscitate, for an egg to be brooded" (*vivir, resucitar, avivar, o empollarse el huevo*) combined with the imperfect tense suffix *-ya* (hence, in the standardized orthography it should be correctly written as *-yoliya*). Another form of this term given in the *Vocabulario*, *teyolitia* ("it makes one live"), is the causative form of the verb *yoli* (*yolitia*, "to give life to someone," dar vida a otro; Molina 1977 [1571]:vol. II, f. 40r) combined with the indefinite human object prefix *te-*. It was perhaps understood as a present agentive noun (cf. Andrews 2003:347–348) meaning "it is an entity that makes one live." The unpossessed form of *-yolia* [*-yoliya*] would be *yoliloni*, simply "an instrument for living." In fact, such instrumentive nouns are not uncommon in early Colonial Nahuatl sources, especially abounding in the Florentine Codex and Molina's dictionary. Many of them appear to be pre-Conquest terms, especially those referring to bodily organs, mental functions, and senses or tools, like *-tequaya* ("[its] means/organ of devouring people," i.e., "[feline] mouth"), *-tlalnamiquiya* ("[one's] means for remembering, memory"), *-tlaihnecuiya* ("[someone's] sense of smell"), or *-tlahuanaya* ("[its] means of

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drinking," i.e., "[its] drinking vessel"). Many of the attested instrumentive nouns, however, are early Colonial words coined for new objects or concepts: thus, *ielimiquiya cuacuahueh* ("an oxen's instrument for tilling the land") is the name for a plough, while *itecentlahmachtiaya in dios* (literally "God's means of providing people with complete happiness") is a term for "eternal glory/beauty of God."

As these examples show, instrumentive nouns both in their unpossessed and possessed forms were a common way of creating neologisms, in much the same way as two types of active action nouns (Andrews 2003:351–360). An attestation of all such constructions appearing together in one and the same passage is found in the Dominican *Doctrina cristiana* of 1548 (f. 17v): the neologisms are based on the word *cualli* ("a good thing") and refer to different aspects of Christian "virtues": *Auh yuā quimomaquilia yn iq̄ltia yn xiuitl yn tlanelhua ynic uel quipatiz yn cocoxque* ("And he gives goodness to herbs and roots so that they can cure the sick people"). *Icualtiya* refers to one of the virtues, but also means "an instrument for healing, for becoming well," perfectly rendering the Christian context. The same passage contains *-cualtica* (active action noun type 1) and *cualtiliztli* (active action noun type 2), both meaning "wellness" or "goodness." As mentioned before, native neologisms and corresponding Spanish loanwords were often used next to each other as doublets or *difrasisimos,* which implies that the Nahuas considered them synonyms. In the context of language contact, the original function of the native element (i.e., neologism) in such pairs was probably to explain the meaning of the loan element. For example, the expressions *tetlechipahualoyan* and *tletechipahualoyan* ("the place where people are purified by fire") were coined to convey the Christian concept of purgatory in much the same way as *-yolia* explained the alien concept of *ánima*. Quite enlightening here is an example of such a doublet created by Chimalpahin (2006:240), *ymecanelpiayatzin ycordontzin,* for a rope belt worn by Franciscans. The expression consists of a neologism *-mecanelpiaya(tzin)*, which is nothing more than a possessed instrumentive noun (just like *-yolia*), meaning "an instrument for binding oneself with a rope." It is used as an explanatory synonym of the Spanish word *cordón* ("cord/rope belt"): *yn ica ymecanelpiayatzin ycordontzin totlaçottatzin S. Fran{co}. quinmopalehuilia quimonmoquixtilia yn ompa tetlechipahualloyan Purgatorio*. "With his cord girdle, his rope belt, our precious father San Francisco helps them and extracts them from the place where people are purified by fire, purgatory." Thus, *-mecanelpiayatzin -cordontzin* is exactly the same kind of Colonial construction as *-yolia -anima*, providing a firm piece of evidence for the identification of *-yolia* as a deliberately coined early Colonial neologism explaining the meaning of the Spanish *ánima*.

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD A NAHUA CONCEPT OF "SOUL"

Ever since Alfredo López Austin published his model of the tripartite Nahua soul, the concept of *-yolia* as he fashioned it has influenced innumerable scholarly studies, including our own previous research. Its powerful lure continues to have a strong bearing on most recent research. As we have argued in this paper, however, there is virtually no evidence that the pre-Conquest Nahuas believed in a soul called *-yolia* that was located in the heart and went to Mictlan or another Otherworld location after death. What is more, we have shown that it is a newly created Colonial term coined for Christian discourse as a translation of a key religious concept, the Spanish *ánima*. Once omnipresent in Colonial Nahuatl texts of different genres, it wanes in Nahua writing toward the end of the Colonial period at the expense of the Spanish loanword used on its own, rather than in a doublet with *-yolia*. Of course, we do not question the existence of pre-Conquest concepts of spiritual essence/s. Ample evidence demonstrates that the human body contained either a substance or an essence used in rituals, the best known of which was sacrifice by heart excision. While no data support the precontact origin of the concept of *-yolia*, multiple pieces of information point to such a function of *tonalli*, which is, in fact, a major indigenous concept surviving until now and sharing in its modern characteristics the core features and functions described after the Spanish Conquest. The current academic view of the pre-Hispanic *tonalli* is, however, also heavily influenced by the tripartite soul scheme developed by López Austin, which, as we have argued, does not have any validity for Nahua culture. Thus, in order to address fundamental questions concerning the spiritual nature and afterlife destiny of human beings—what was transmitted to gods through human sacrifice, what departed to the Otherworld upon dying, or whether the heart was an "animistic entity" in itself or a mere container for some kind of force—we should, above all, depart from original Nahua categories, no matter how difficult they are to reconstruct through Colonial and modern sources.

Scholars working and living "in the present," are, advertently or not, grounded in and make comparisons with concepts and paradigms close to them, be they "European," "Western," or "modern." McKeever Furst openly states that, "although European and indigenous traditions do not overlap completely, people in both hemispheres long believed that some entity or life force conveyed human identity and was at the same time more than the body" (McKeever Furst 1995:3). Therefore, the question we would like to raise is: to what degree did European models influence not only friars' renderings of native reality, but also—not without inadvertent dependence on sixteenth-century accounts—modern scholarly reconstructions? For example, a tripartite theory of the soul brings to mind the ideas of Plato, later followed by Aristotle, who believed that the soul was composed of a rational aspect located in the brain, a spirited or impulsive part located in the thorax, and an appetitive portion located in the abdomen (Solmsen 1983:361). On the other hand, Spanish Colonial texts tend to associate the (Christian) soul with the heart: Mendieta (2002 [1597]:vol. I, p. 336) writes that, upon receiving a papal order to go to New Spain, the soul of Fray Martín de Valencia "sang inside his heart a verse of David." While we are far from suggesting any kind of dependence, both the scheme of Plato and the expression used by Mendieta are quite evocative of the model proposed by López Austin.

We do not attempt to deny that completely eradicating the influences of the cultural background of a scholar on his or her research is impossible. Instead of trying to ignore present circumstances and assimilated paradigms, however, historians should be aware of them and attempt to avoid being unintentionally guided by them (Kalela 2012:15). It is precisely this problem that brought traditional historical research under strong attack by postcolonial studies on account of forcing, distorting, and reducing the past and/or culturally distinct experiences into the lenses of "Europe" or the "Western" world (e.g., Bhambra 2007; Chakrabarty 2000; Said 1978; Spivak 1988). While scholars are eager to acknowledge "ontological diversity" across human experience, our education, cultural patterns, and academic models do not enable us to grasp innate ontologies of those past experiences (Anderson 2015:789). Thus, making

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"sense of each past lifeworld in its own metaphysical environment" (Anderson 2015:790) is as much a desirable as a difficult goal because of an inherent and never-ending conflict: being bound to present and specific cultural traditions and seeking an understanding of ontology that is not our own. As we have shown in this study, however, presenting a fair description of the past reality or "doing justice to the past" is not possible without a rigorous application of source criticism and historical hermeneutics; taking into account the origin, context, and functions of pertinent sources, including the cultural and ideological background and goals of their authors; and recognizing the importance of a thorough study of the original native terminology, its contextual usage, and conceptual underpinnings. Therefore, we argue that there are serious methodological and content-related constraints of many so-called primary sources, considered to contain early, authentic, and reliable data referring to pre-Conquest reality and beliefs. We have also argued that alleged pre-Hispanic content was often profoundly remodeled or even (re)created by Colonial authors and informants whose degree of Christianization seems to have been much greater than assumed or, as the case of the Oviedo's account clearly shows, the data were deeply transformed by the methods of structured interviews and the terminology used by Spaniards and their translators. Subsequently, the content of these sources was forced into interpretative schemes developed by modern scholars, often supported with heterogeneous pieces of evidence associated with different Mesoamerican groups, dealt with in a "cumulative" manner, and without discerning temporal and cultural contexts. In other words, the native concept of the "soul" was submitted to Christian or European influences on many levels: native informants and authors could have used their newly acquired knowledge of Christianity, ecclesiastics construed parallels of Nahua and European cultural expressions (e.g., they filled in the gaps in their understanding of Nahua customs with what they knew about Greek and Roman mythology), and modern scholars apply their own, often inherited, cultural paradigms. Admittedly, our conclusion that *-yolia* was a newly invented term is just the tip of an iceberg in the (de)reconstruction of Nahua pre-Conquest beliefs concerning the afterlife.

RESUMEN

-Yolia es uno de los conceptos más importantes de la terminología nahua cristiana en las primeras décadas del contacto. Se usaba para designar 'ánima' y 'espírito', formando muy frecuentemente un difrasismo con la palabra 'ánima' en los textos eclesiásticos, devocionales y seculares escritos en náhuatl. Su etimología ("los medios de vivir de uno") se parece fuertemente a la de la palabra española ánima. Tomando en cuenta una posibilidad de que ejemplos del uso de *-yolia* en su sentido prehispánico podrían ser identificados en las fuentes escritas, hemos revisado las evidencias históricas, lingüísticas y antropológicas con el fin de reexaminar el concepto nahua de 'alma' para proponer y justificar una hipótesis alternativa acerca del origen de *-yolia*. Nuestro enfoque ha sido identificar la influencia cristiana, manifiesta tanto en los textos coloniales, como en los paradigmas conceptuales de los investigadores quienes los interpretaron. Llegamos a la conclusión que el término *-yolia* es un neologismo creado en la época colonial temprana.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013)/ERC grant agreement no. 312795. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are our own. We express our gratitude to Joe Campbell for sharing with us a long list of instrumentive nouns based on attestations in the Florentine Codex and Molina's vocabulary. We also thank Katarzyna Granicka and Szymon Gruda for sharing with us their unpublished research on the *Doctrina cristiana* and *Vocabulario trilingüe*.

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