

Our Lady of Guadalupe

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Our Lady of Guadalupe (Spanish: *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*) is a celebrated 16th-century icon of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. The image, also known as the **Virgin of Guadalupe** (Spanish: *Virgen de Guadalupe*) represents a famous Marian apparition. According to the traditional account, the image appeared miraculously on the front of a simple peasant's cloak. The image still exists; it is on display in the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It is perhaps Mexico's most popular religious and cultural image, and the focus of an extensive pilgrimage. The feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe is December 12. She is said to have appeared to Saint Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac near Mexico City between December 9 and December 12, 1531.

The Virgin of Guadalupe is a symbol of significant importance to Mexican Catholics. The Virgin Mary in this aspect has been given the title: "Patroness of the Americas". According to Bishop Francesco Giogia the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City was the most visited Catholic shrine in the world in 1999, followed by San Giovanni Rotondo and Our Lady of Aparecida.^[1]

The Virgin of Guadalupe has also symbolized the Mexican nation since the Mexican War of Independence. The armies of Miguel Hidalgo, Emiliano Zapata and Subcomandante Marcos all marched beneath flags bearing the Guadalupan image, and Our Lady of Guadalupe is generally recognized to be a symbol of all Catholic Mexicans.

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An image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

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History

Account of the apparitions



Juan Diego. 18th century painting by Miguel Cabrera.

According to official Catholic accounts of the Guadalupan apparitions, during a walk from his home village to Mexico City early on the morning of December 9, 1531,^[2] Juan Diego saw a vision of a young girl of fifteen to sixteen, surrounded by light. This event occurred on the slopes of the Hill of Tepeyac. Speaking in the local language of Nahuatl, the Lady asked for a church to be built at that site in her honor. From her words, Juan Diego recognised her as the Virgin Mary. When he told his story to the Spanish bishop, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, the bishop asked him to return and ask the lady for a miraculous sign to prove her claim. The Virgin then asked Juan Diego to gather some flowers from the top of Tepeyac Hill, even though it was winter when no flowers bloomed. There, he found Castilian roses (which were of the Bishop's native home, but not indigenous to Tepeyac). He gathered them, and the Virgin herself re-arranged them in his tilma, or peasant cloak. When Juan Diego presented the roses to Zumárraga, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe miraculously appeared imprinted on the cloth of Diego's tilma.

A series of articles on
Roman Catholic Mariology



The image

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is often read as a coded image. Miguel Sanchez, the author of the 1648 tract *Imagen de la Virgen María*, described the Virgin's image as the Woman of the Apocalypse from the New Testament's Revelation 12:1: "arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Mateo de la Cruz, writing twelve years after Sánchez, argued that "the Guadalupe possessed all the iconographical attributes of Mary in her Immaculate Conception".^[3] Likewise, a 1738 sermon preached by Miguel Picazo argued that the Guadalupe was the "best representation" of the Immaculate Conception.^[3]

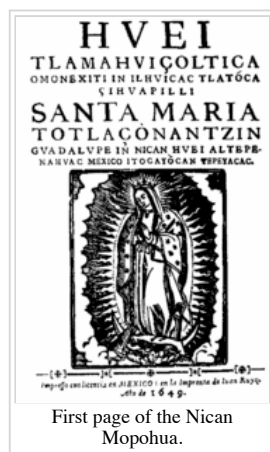
Many writers, including Patricia Harrington and Virgilio Elizondo, describe the image as containing coded messages for the indigenous people of Mexico.^{[4][5]}

"The Aztecs...had an elaborate, coherent symbolic system for making sense of their lives. When this was destroyed by the Spaniards, something new was needed to fill the void and make sense of New Spain...the image of Guadalupe served that purpose."^[6]

Her blue-green mantle was described as the color once reserved for the divine couple Ometecutli and Omecihuatl;^[7] her belt is interpreted as a sign of pregnancy; and a cross-shaped image symbolizing the cosmos and called *nahui-ollin* is said to be inscribed beneath the image's sash.^[8]

Yet another interpretation of the image is offered by the historian William B. Taylor, who recounted that Guadalupe has also been "acclaimed goddess of the maguey [agave]" and pulque was drunk on her feast day. A 1772 report described the rays of light around Guadalupe as maguey spines.^{[9][10]}

Documentation



First page of the Nican Mopohua.

A number of documents support the apparition account. In 1648 Miguel Sanchez, a diocesan priest of Mexico City, published the book *Imagen de la Virgen Maria, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe*. This version was written in Spanish and contains the first known account of the Mexican appearances of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Sanchez's story was written mainly for Mexican-born Spaniards and contains long sections of biblical analogy.

However, the most important version of the apparition account may be the Nahuatl-language *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* ("The Great Event") which contains Nican mopohua ("Here it is recounted"), a tract about the Virgin which contains the aforementioned story. It also includes two other sections: Nican motecpana ("Here is an ordered account") which describes fourteen miracles connected with Our Lady of Guadalupe and Nican tlantica ("Here ends") which gives an account of the Virgin in New Spain. *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* closely mirrors the Sánchez narrative, but contains no biblical analogies. It is also composed of a more fully developed dialogue due to Nahuatl custom and manners in speech patterns. *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* is said to have been written by Antonio Valeriano in 1556; it was printed in Nahuatl by Luis Lasso de la Vega in 1649.

The Codex Escalada, a painting on deerskin which illustrates the apparition and discusses Juan Diego's death, was discovered in 1995 and used during Juan Diego's 1990s canonization process. Critics, including Stafford Poole and David A. Brading, find the document suspicious—partly because of when it was discovered, and partly because it contains the handiwork of both Antonio Valeriano (a man many apparition partisans believe to be the true author of the Nican mopohua) and the signature of Bernardino de Sahagún, the Franciscan missionary and anthropologist. Brading said that:

"Within the context of the Christian tradition, it was rather like finding a picture of St. Paul's vision of Christ on the road to Damascus, drawn by St. Luke and signed by St. Peter".^[3]

Historicity debate and controversies

The historicity of the apparition account has been controversial since the first publications of the apparition accounts in 1647, and a considerable amount of literature has been published discussing the problems that arise when attempting to understand the apparition as a historically accurate account.

An important argument against the historicity of the accounts is that at time of the apparitions in 1531, Zumárraga was in fact not yet bishop of New Spain; he would not be formally consecrated until 1533, and became an Archbishop in 1547. There is no explicit mention of Juan Diego nor the Virgin in any of Zumárraga's writings. Furthermore, in a "catechism" published in New Spain before his death, it was stated: "The Redeemer of the world doesn't want any more miracles, because they are no longer necessary."^[11]

As early as 1556, Francisco de Bustamante, head of the Colony's Franciscans, delivered a sermon before the Viceroy and members of the Royal Audience. In that sermon, disparaging the holy origins of the picture and contradicting Archbishop Alonso de Montúfar's sermon of two days before, Bustamante stated:

"The devotion that has been growing in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady, called of Guadalupe, in this city is greatly harmful for the natives, because it makes them believe that the image painted by Marcos the Indian is in any way miraculous."^{[11][12]}

Some historians consider that the icon was meant to syncretically represent both the Virgin Mary and the indigenous Mexican mother goddess Tonantzin (Tepeyac is also believed to have been a pre-Columbian worship site for this goddess), providing a way for 16th century Spaniards to gain converts among the indigenous population of early Mexico. It may have provided a method for 16th century indigenous Mexicans to covertly practice their native religion, although the contrary was asserted in the canonization process of Juan Diego.^[13]

In 1611, the Dominican Martín de León, fourth viceroy of Mexico, denounced the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a disguised worship of the Aztec goddess Tonantzin.^[11] The missionary and anthropologist Bernardino de Sahagún held the same opinion: he wrote that the shrine at Tepeyac was extremely popular but

General articles

Overview of Mariology •
Veneration of the Blessed Virgin •
History of Mariology

Key Marian apparitions

(approved or worthy of belief)

Guadalupe • Miraculous Medal •
La Salette • Lourdes • Pontmain • Laus •
Banneux • Beauraing • Fátima • Akita

Expressions of devotion

Art • Music • Architecture

Specific articles

Apparitions • Saints • Popes • Dogmas
and Doctrines • Movements & Societies



Codex Escalada.



Bishop Juan de Zumárraga.

worrisome because people called the Virgin of Guadalupe Tonantzin. Sahagún said that the worshipers claimed that Tonantzin was the proper Nahuatl for "Mother of God" — but he disagreed, saying that "Mother of God" in Nahuatl would be "Dios y Nantzin."^[14]

19th-century historian Joaquín García Icazbalceta, an authority on Fray Juan de Zumárraga was also very hesitant to support the story of the apparition and stated, in a confidential report to Bishop Labastida in 1883, that there was never such a character as Juan Diego.^[15]

Many historians and some clerics, including the U.S. priest-historian Fr. Stafford Poole and former abbot of the Basilica of Guadalupe, Guillermo Schulenburg, have rejected the historicity of the apparition accounts. Schulenburg in particular caused a stir with his 1996 interview with the Catholic magazine *Ixthus*, when he said that Juan Diego was "a symbol, not a reality."^[16] Schulenburg was not the first to disbelieve the traditional account nor the first Catholic prelate to resign his post after questioning the Guadalupe story. In 1897, Eduardo Sánchez Camacho, the Bishop of Tamaulipas was forced to leave his post after expressing similar disbelief.^[17]

In 2002, art restoration expert José Sol Rosales said he examined the icon with a stereomicroscope and that he identified calcium sulfate, pine soot, white, blue, and green "tierras" (soil), reds made from carmine and other pigments, as well as gold. Rosales said he found the work consistent with 16th century materials and methods.^[18]



Guadalupe of Extremadura

Norberto Rivera Carrera, Archbishop of Mexico, commissioned a 1999 study to test the tilma's age. Leoncio Garza-Valdés, a pediatrician and microbiologist who had previously worked with the Shroud of Turin, claimed, upon inspection of photographs of the image, to have found three distinct layers in the painting, at least one of which had initials painted on it. He also stated that the original painting showed striking similarities to the original Lady of Guadalupe found in Extremadura Spain, with the second painting showing another Virgin with indigenous features. However he could cite no other independent observer who sees the same features.^[19] Garza-Valdés also claimed that the fabric on which the icon is painted is made of conventional hemp and linen, not agave fibers as is believed.^[18] Gilberto Aguirre, a colleague of Garza-Valdés who took part in the 1999 study, examined the same photographs and stated that, while agreeing the painting had been extensively tampered with, he disagreed with Garza-Valdés' conclusions and claims the conditions for conducting the study were inadequate.^[20]

Several similar icons have appeared through Mexican history. In the town of Tlaltenango, in the state of Morelos, a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe is claimed to have miraculously appeared in the inside of a box that two unknown travelers left in a hostel. The owners of the hostel called the local priest after noticing enticing aromas of flowers and sandalwood coming out of the box.

The image has been venerated on September 8 since its finding in 1720, and is accepted as a valid apparition of an image by the local Catholic authorities.^[21]

Symbol of Mexico



Etching by Jose Guadalupe Posada, depicting St. Juan Diego and image of the Virgin imprinted on the cloth.

The Virgin of Guadalupe has symbolized the Mexican nation since Mexico's War of Independence. Rebel armies waged war underneath Guadalupean flags, and *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* is generally recognized as a symbol of all Catholic Mexicans.

Guadalupe's first major use as a nationalistic symbol was in the writing of Miguel Sánchez, the author of the first Spanish language apparition account. Sanchez identified Guadalupe as Revelation's Woman of the Apocalypse, and said that

"this New World has been won and conquered by the hand of the Virgin Mary...[who had] prepared, disposed, and contrived her exquisite likeness in this her Mexican land, which was conquered for such a glorious purpose, won that there should appear so Mexican an image."^[3]

In 1810 Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla initiated the bid for Mexican independence with his *Grito de Dolores*, yelling words to the effect of "Death to the Spaniards and long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!" When Hidalgo's mestizo-indigenous army attacked Guanajuato and Valladolid, they placed "the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which was the insignia of their enterprise, on sticks or on reeds painted different colors" and "they all wore a print of the Virgin on their hats."^[22]

When Hidalgo died, leadership of the revolution fell to a zambo/mestizo priest named Jose Maria Morelos who led insurgent troops in the Mexican south. Morelos was also a Guadalupean partisan: he made the Virgin the seal of his Congress of Chilpancingo, stating

"New Spain puts less faith in its own efforts than in the power of God and the intercession of its

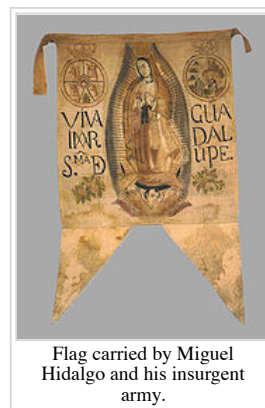
Blessed Mother, who appeared within the precincts of Tepeyac as the miraculous image of Guadalupe that had come to comfort us, defend us, visibly be our protection."^[22]

He inscribed the Virgin's feast day, December 12, into the Chilpancingo constitution, and declared that Guadalupe was the power behind his military victories. One of Morelos' officers, a man named Felix Fernandez who would later become the first Mexican president, even changed his name to Guadalupe Victoria.^[22] Simón Bolívar, noticed the Guadalupean theme in these uprisings, and shortly before Morelos' death in 1815 wrote:

"...the leaders of the independence struggle have put fanaticism to use by proclaiming the famous Virgin of Guadalupe as the queen of the patriots, praying to her in times of hardship and displaying her on their flags...the veneration for this image in Mexico far exceeds the greatest reverence that the shrewdest prophet might inspire."^[3]

In 1914, Emiliano Zapata's peasant army rose out of the south against the government of Porfirio Díaz. Though Zapata's rebel forces were primarily interested in land reform — "tierra y libertad" (land and liberty) was the slogan of the uprising — when Zapata's peasant troops penetrated Mexico City, they carried Guadalupean banners.^[23]

More recently, the contemporary Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) named their "mobile city" in honor of the Virgin: it is called Guadalupe Tepeyac. EZLN spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos wrote a humorous letter in 1995 describing the EZLN bickering over what to do with a Guadalupe statue they



Flag carried by Miguel Hidalgo and his insurgent army.

had received as a gift.^[24]

Mestiza culture and Mexican identity



Virgin in a maguey.

Some historians believe the icon syncretically represents both Virgin Mary and the indigenous Mexican goddess Tonantzin. Others believe the Virgin was a simplified and sanitized version of Coatlicue, the Aztec mother goddess. This syncretism may have provided a way for 16th century Spaniards to gain converts among the indigenous population of early Mexico; it may also have provided a method for 16th century indigenous Mexicans to covertly practice their native religion.

Guadalupe is often considered a mixture of the cultures which blend to form Mexico, both racially^[25] and religiously^[26] Guadalupe is sometimes called the "first mestiza"^[27] or "the first Mexican".^[28] In the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Mary O'Connor writes that Guadalupe "bring[s] together people of distinct cultural heritages, while at the same time affirming their distinctness."^[29]

One theory is that the Virgin of Guadalupe was presented to the Aztecs as a sort of "Christianised" Tonantzin, necessary for the clergymen to convert the Indians to their Faith. As Jacques Lafaye wrote in *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe*, "...as the Christians built their first churches with the rubble and the columns of the ancient pagan temples, so they often borrowed pagan customs for their own cult purposes."^[30]

Some theologians also associate the Virgin of Guadalupe with a special relationship between the indigenous peoples of the American continents and the Catholic Church. This perspective developed as the scriptural terms of truths "hid ... from the wise and prudent" but "revealed...unto babes" (Matthew 11:25), but later developed into the "spiritual mestizaje of the Americas",^[41] and the "option for the poor" provided by Liberation theology.

The author Judy King asserts that Guadalupe is a "common denominator" uniting Mexicans. Writing that Mexico is composed of a vast patchwork of differences—linguistic, ethnic, and class-based—King says "The Virgin of Guadalupe is the rubber band that binds this disparate nation into a whole."^[28]

This sentiment was echoed by two celebrants interviewed in the New York Times at the Virgin's feast day in 1998: "We say that we are more Guadalupanos than Mexicans," said the Jesuit Brother Joel Magallan. "We say that because our Lady Guadalupe is our symbol, our identity." David Solanas, another feast-goer, agreed, saying "We have faith in her. She's like the mama of all the Mexicans."^[31]

The origin of the name "Guadalupe" is controversial. According to a sixteenth-century report the Virgin identified herself as Guadalupe when she appeared to Juan Diego's uncle, Juan Bernardino.^[32] It has also been suggested that "Guadalupe" is a corruption of a Nahuatl name "Coatlaxopeuh", which has been translated as "Who Crushes the Serpent."^[33] In this interpretation, the serpent referred to is Quetzalcoatl, one of the chief Aztec gods, whom the Virgin Mary "crushed" by inspiring the conversion of indigenous people to Catholicism. However, many historians believe that the 1533 Guadalupan shrine was dedicated to the Spanish Lady of Guadalupe in Extremadura—not to the Mexican Virgin venerated today. Thus, while the name "Guadalupe" would have had certain connotations to Nahuatl speakers, as noted above, its ultimate origins would be the Arabic-Latin term "Wādī Lupum", meaning "Valley of the Wolf" or "Wad(i)-al-hub", that means "River of Love", name that the Moors given to a river in the Spanish region of Extremadura for the supposedly aphrodisiac qualities of its water.^[34]

The Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes once said that "...one may no longer consider himself a Christian, but you cannot truly be considered a Mexican unless you believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe."^[35]

Nobel Literature laureate Octavio Paz wrote in 1974 that "the Mexican people, after more than two centuries of experiments, have faith only in the Virgin of Guadalupe and the National Lottery".^[36]

Beliefs and Miracles



Eighteenth-century painting of God fashioning the image

Many consider it miraculous that the tilma has maintained its structural integrity over nearly 500 years, since replicas made with the same type of materials normally last only about 15 years before disintegrating.^[37] In addition to withstanding the elements, the tilma is said to have resisted a 1791 ammonia spill that made a considerable hole, which was reportedly repaired in two weeks with no external help. In 1921, an anarchist placed an offering of flowers next to the image. A bomb hidden within the flowers exploded and destroyed the shrine. However, the image suffered no damage.^[38]

Photographers and ophthalmologists have reported images reflected in the eyes of the Virgin.^{[39][40]} In 1929 and 1951 photographers found a figure reflected in the Virgin's eyes; upon inspection they said that the reflection was tripled in what is called the Purkinje effect. This effect is commonly found in human eyes.^[37] The ophthalmologist Dr. Jose Aste Tonsmann later enlarged the image of the Virgin's eyes by 2500x magnification and said he saw not only the aforementioned single figure, but rather images of all the witnesses present when the tilma was shown to the Bishop in 1531. Tonsmann also reported seeing a small family—mother, father, and a group of children—in the center of the Virgin's eyes.^[37] In response to the eye miracles, Joe Nickell and John F. Fischer wrote in *Skeptical Inquirer* that images seen in the Virgin's eyes are the result of the human tendency to form familiar shapes from random patterns, much like a psychologist's inkblots—a phenomenon known as religious pareidolia.^[41]

Richard Kuhn, who received the 1938 Nobel Chemistry prize, is said to have analyzed a sample of the fabric in 1936 and said the tint on the fabric was not from a known mineral, vegetable, or animal source.^[37] In 1979 Philip Serna Callahan studied the icon with infrared light and stated that portions of the face, hands, robe, and mantle appeared to have been painted in one step, with no sketches or corrections and no apparent brush strokes.^[42]

Guadalupe in the Catholic Church

Pontifical pronouncements on the Virgin of Guadalupe

With the Brief *Non est equidem* of May 25, 1754, Pope Benedict XIV declared Our Lady of Guadalupe patron of what was then called New Spain, corresponding to Spanish Central and Northern America, and approved liturgical texts for the Holy Mass and the Breviary in her honour. Pope Leo XIII granted new texts in 1891 and authorized coronation of the image in 1895. Pope Saint Pius X proclaimed her patron of Latin America in 1910. In 1935 Pope Pius XI proclaimed her principal patron of the Philippines and had a monument in her honor erected in the Vatican Gardens. Pope Pius XII declared the Virgin of Guadalupe "Queen of Mexico and Empress of the Americas" in 1945, and "Patroness of the Americas" in 1946. Pope John XXIII invoked her as "Mother of the Americas" in 1961, referring to her as Mother and Teacher of the Faith of All American populations, and in 1966 Pope Paul VI sent a Golden Rose to the shrine.^[43]

Pope John Paul II visited the shrine in the course of his first journey outside Italy as Pope from 26 to January 31, 1979, and again when he beatified Juan Diego there on May 6, 1990. In 1992 he dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe a chapel within St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. At the request of the Special Assembly for the Americas of the Synod of Bishops, he named Our Lady of Guadalupe patron of the Americas on January 22, 1999 (with the result that her liturgical celebration had, throughout the Americas, the rank of solemnity), and visited the shrine again on the following day. On July 31, 2002, he canonized Juan Diego before a crowd of 12 million, and later that year included in the General Calendar of the Roman Rite, as optional memorials, the liturgical celebrations of Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin (December 9) and Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12).^[43]

Catholic devotions

Replicas of the tilma can be found in thousands of churches throughout the world, including Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, and numerous parishes bear her name.

The Virgin of Guadalupe is considered the Patroness of Mexico and the Continental Americas; she is also venerated by Native Americans, on the account of the devotion calling for the conversion of the Americas, and by people involved in the Pro-Life Movement.

Guadalupe was considered the "Patroness of the Philippines" from 1935 until 1942, and her feast day is still celebrated in the archipelago. The icon is especially invoked in the Philippines by people working against the passage of the Reproductive Health Bill.

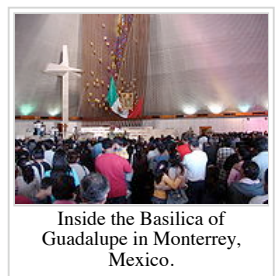
Buildings for Guadalupan devotion

- The Basilica of Guadalupe, a church in Mexico City
- The Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe a church in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco
- The Santuario de Guadalupe, a church in Guatemala City
- The Basílica de Guadalupe in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico
- The Cathedral Santuario de Guadalupe in Dallas, Texas.
- The Our Lady of Guadalupe Unfinished Cathedral in Zamora, Michoacán
- The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin
- The Archdiocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Makati City, Philippines
- The Guadalupe Church, Cebu City, Philippines
- Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia.

See also

- *Maravilla Americana*
- penance

Notes



- ¹ ^ Zenit News (<http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/ZSHRINE.HTM>)
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- ⁴ ^{a b} Elizondo, Virgil. *Guadalupe, Mother of a New Creation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997
- ⁵ ^a "The Image." [1] (<http://www.interlupe.com.mx/6-e.html>) , accessed 3 December 2006
- ⁶ ^a Harrington, Patricia. "Mother of Death, Mother of Rebirth: The Virgin of Guadalupe." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 56, Issue 1, p. 25-50. 1988
- ⁷ ^{a b c} "La Virgen de Guadalupe," panam.edu [2] (<http://www.panam.edu/dept/lrgvarchive/virgen.html>) , accessed 30 November 2006
- ⁸ ^a "The Lady of Guadalupe. An Invented Myth or a Strange Reality?" laermita.org[3] (<http://laermita.org/ladyguad.htm>) , accessed 30 November 2006
- ⁹ ^a Taylor, William B. Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages. Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1979.
- ¹⁰ ^a Bushnell, John. "La Virgen de Guadalupe as Surrogate Mother in San Juan Aztingo." *American Anthropologist*: Vol 60, Number 2, p. 261. 1958
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- ¹³ ^a Guerrero Rosado, José L. (1991). *Los dos mundos de un indio santo*. Coyoacán, Mexico: Ediciones Cimiento. OCLC 26199807.
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- ¹⁶ ^a Daily Catholic. December 7, 1999. [5] (<http://www.dailycatholic.org/issue/archives/1999Dec/232dec7.vol.10.no.232txt/dec7nv4.htm>) , accessed November 30, 2006
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