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# COLORS BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

THE *FLORENTINE CODEX*  
OF BERNARDINO DE SAHAGÚN

Edited by

GERHARD WOLF AND JOSEPH CONNORS

in collaboration with

LOUIS A. WALDMAN



Kunsthistorisches Institut  
in Florenz  
Max-Planck-Institut



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FLORENCE

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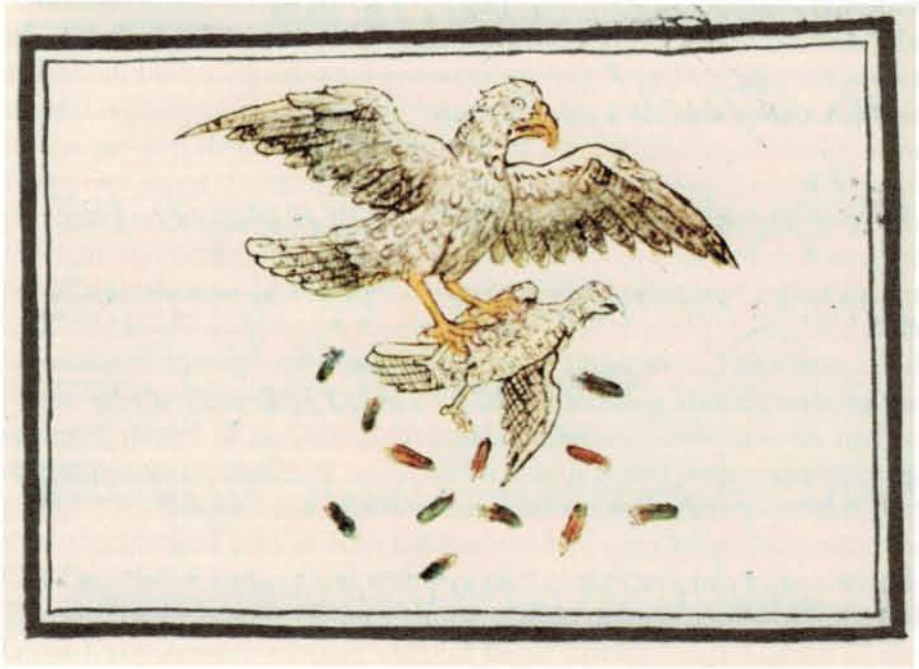


Fig. 1. A *quauhtlotli* capturing a prey, *Florentine Codex*, book 11, fol. 47v.

## POSTFACE

# Uncatchable Colors

ALESSANDRA RUSSO

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A *quauhtlotli*, or “hawk-eagle,” has just captured its prey on folio 47v of book 11 of the *Florentine Codex*, and under the impetus of its open wings, a panoply of twirling blue, red, and green feathers fall from the body of the white and grey quarry (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> A few folios earlier, another predator, the dreadful *tzoniztac* or “white head,” is shown holding the neck of one multicolored parrot while another flies freely and, seen from a different perspective, displays different chromatic effects of plumage.

Throughout the pages of the present volume, the colorants used to paint the *Florentine Codex*, along with those minutely described in its book 11, have been put in dialogue with the *materie prime*—the minerals, plants, seeds, and insects that went into their making, as well as the artificial compounds already in use in Mesoamerica or imported from Europe. Thanks to the scientific observation of the pigments under the microscope and to the interpretations of the scholars involved in this groundbreaking research, we now know rather more about the making of one of the most prominent artworks of Early Modernity, a *collective* artwork, undertaken by a team of what scholars have indentified as twenty-two painters and eight scribes working with the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún in the College of Santa Cruz of Tlatelolco.<sup>2</sup> Up to now, the study of the images contained in this masterpiece has been mostly iconographic, with the pictures treated as illustrations of the text, or as images relating to pre-Hispanic pictography or to engravings available to the *tlacuiloque*. However,

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1. The original foliation of the *Florentine Codex*, numbered by book, is used here.

2. The number of painters and the number of scribes involved in the *Florentine Codex* have been identified, respectively, by Diana Magaloni Kerpel and her collaborators, and by Marina Garone Gravier. See their contributions in this volume (MAGALONI KERPEL, “Painters of the New World,” p. 52; GARONE GRAVIER, “Sahagún’s Codex and Book Design,” p. 185).



fig. A. A *tzoniztac* capturing a parrot. *Florentine Codex*, book 11, fol. 5v.



deeper creative layers now appear to us on the more than twelve hundred folios of the codex. Each color applied to paper encapsulates a world, and as Diana Magaloni Kerpel has convincingly proposed, each instance of a color or tonality—in all of the 2686 images—is a bearer of meaning.

This “scientific” advance has been accompanied by a critical historical and anthropological approach. In the face of the rich taxonomy involved in both the Náhuatl and the Castilian names for the materials used to “make colors,” something eludes facile matching of the sort, “color x = origin y = meaning z.” How can one grasp the significance of the names given to stones, plants, birds, and other natural entities when all these elements and their qualities—shape, tonality, fragrance, textures—were continuously intertwined in the Mesoamerican world? *Quetzalitzli*, literally the “obsidian of quetzal,” in fact refers to a stone whose colors vary from black to green, and the bird *xihuitzili* takes its name from the word *xihuitl*, the blue-green stone often translated as “turquoise,” here denoting the color of that species. As Claude Lévi-Strauss points out, elements pertaining to different species, classes, or kingdoms in the modern scientific sense are here related to one another as “stages, or moments, of a continuous transition.”<sup>3</sup> Colors offer invaluable bridges in such transitions.

Another example, perhaps the most striking, of a moving taxonomy, which became even more complex with the arrival of the new “things” from abroad, is that of the words for “red” in Náhuatl, *chiltic*, “similar to a chili,” *tlapalhualiztli*, or *tlatlahuqui*.<sup>4</sup> However, the material differences between one “red” and another easily challenge any effort of chromatic classification. The tonalities obtained with the local cochineal<sup>5</sup> and

3. LÉVI-STRAUSS, *La pensée sauvage*, p. 705. For this reason, the classification of the natural world introduced by Sahagún in book 11 of the *Florentine Codex*—dividing plants, minerals, animals, etc.—cannot help but reveal the continuous passages between these categories. See also the specific case of flowers, studied by ALCÁNTARA in her essay for this volume (“In Nepapan Xochitl”).

4. See SALVADOR REYES EQUIGUAS, “Plants and Colors in the *Florentine Codex*,” in this volume, especially pp. 136–142; see also FERRER, “El color entre los pueblos nahuas.” The dictionary of MOLINA (1571) attests two other words for red: *quacocoztic* and *tlapal*. But in the Náhuatl/Castilian part of the dictionary, the first term only means “person of red hair,” and the second is specifically associated with the color of red wine (*tlapal vino*: vino tinto). On the chromatic language of Mexican art in relationship with Náhuatl terminology, see the chapter “Color” in ŠÉGOTA, *Valores plásticos*. Here, the author also discusses the description of the rainbow colors in the *Florentine Codex* (book 7, fol. 12r–v); see n. 28 in this essay.

5. Several tonalities of cochineal are identified by BAGLIONI ET AL., “The Pigments of the *Florentine Codex*,” in this volume, p. 90. The authors also remind us that *palo de Campeche* wood was used to produce a red pigment.

those obtained from European *minium*, which has a more orange hue, carry completely different stories and references to radically diverse times. Their combination in the rainbow of the *Florentine Codex* indicates the beginning of the new era inaugurated by the landing of the Spaniards.<sup>6</sup> One might even wonder if, as they grappled with a mineral mined since antiquity from the Minius River on the frontier between Portugal and Spain<sup>7</sup> and with the new red obtained from it, the painters of the Tlatelolco workshop did not also invent a new word.<sup>8</sup>

All of these slippages between meaning and translation are of the same order as those colorful plumes suddenly escaping the claws of the hawk. Their variegated colors might, in one reading, represent feathers violently plucked by the *quauhtlotli* to eat its prey, as mentioned in the Náhuatl text,<sup>9</sup> but they could also refer to the unexpected colors of a hidden part of the bird, suddenly revealed by light and movement. They evoke a world of appearances that cannot be reduced to rigid taxonomies or subjected to one-sided interpretations. They suggest the irreducibility of painting in New Spain, or indeed of art anywhere, to a fixed paradigm of unchanging gestures, knowledge, and recipes.

As a Postface for the present volume, I would like to propose some reflections on the mutability of color effects celebrated in those pages of the *Florentine Codex* that describe the natural palette of birds and their relationship with the art of feather painting, called *ihuitica tlacuillo* or

6. I here refer to MAGALONI KERPEL'S interpretation of the presence of both *minium* and cochineal reds in the calendar session of book 4 of the *Florentine Codex* and in the rainbow portrayed in book 7 (see “Painters of the New World,” p. 69 and pp. 75–76). Another demonstration of the thoughtful utilization of the different reds comes from the *De la Cruz-Badiano Codex*, where it is only used to draw the margins of the pages and some subtitles, but is not found in the illustrations (see, in this volume, ZETINA ET AL., “The Encoded Language of Herbs,” pp. 237 and 242).

7. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE writes that “Mineus fluvius Galliciac nomen a colore pigmenti sumpsit qui in eo plurimus invenitur” (*Etymologiae*, XIII, 21, 33). The term also gave the name to the word “miniature.” It is not surprising that when Mesoamerican pictography was mixed with the European art of the miniature, this constitutive material of the *tekné* was rapidly borrowed.

8. ROCÍO BRUQUETAS GALÁN emphasizes that in the sixteenth century, at least in Spanish, a crucial distinction is found between “colores de la tierra” and “colores de Castilla” (“Local and Imported Colors,” p. 289).

9. The Náhuatl text of the *Florentine Codex* (book 11, fol. 47v) reads: “... and when it can eat it, first it pluck out the bird's feathers” (“Auh in iquac uel tlaqua: chtopa qujuiuitla, in huiuo tototl”).

*amantecayotl* in Náhuatl.<sup>10</sup> There is another reason to connect the *Florentine Codex* with the art of feather painting, one related to its later history. When the three volumes of the *Historia* arrived in Italy, a great variety of objects created with this sophisticated *tekné* was already circulating in the peninsula. It is tempting to imagine that some of those with privileged access to both the codex and to feather paintings would draw the connection between them. One might suppose that the *Florentine Codex* was consulted by collectors as a source of information regarding the objects displayed in their collections. For example, in his *Ornithologiae* of 1599, Ulisse Aldrovandi celebrates the artistry of the feather mosaics that had arrived in the Italian peninsula and in his museum, while a decade earlier he had enthusiastically mentioned images of birds, especially *peregrini*, or hawks, that he saw in a “ricchissimo libro di Spagna.” As Giovanna Rao argues, he is probably referring to the *Florentine Codex*, which was already in Florence since 1587 at least.<sup>11</sup> An even more likely connoisseur to draw the connection is Ferdinando de’ Medici,<sup>12</sup> whose collection included a dozen feather mosaics along with *tre libri dell’Indie*.

### CHROMATIC TRICKERIES, ARTISTIC TRUTHS

Accompanied by a tiny image, and using the present tense, folio 44 of book 10 of the *Florentine Codex*, which is devoted to the vices and virtues of the “Indians of New Spain,” reads (fig. 2):

(Spanish column) El official de plumas se cuenta entre los mercaderes.  
Y el que es buen official, tiene en mucho las plumas, y las trata y guarda

10. In the *Florentine Codex*, the *amanteca*, the feather artists, are described as those who “paint with feathers, play with feathers” (“In ihuitica tlacuiloani, in ihuitl quimauiltia”) (book 10). As is well known, the last part of book 9 is entirely dedicated to the *amanteca*; this is discussed in, among others, BERDAN, “Glyphs of Amantccayotl in the *Florentine Codex*”; PETERSON, “Crafting the Self”; and RUSSO, “Image-plume, temps reliquaire?”

11. See GIOVANNA RAO’s contribution to this volume (“Mediceo Palatino 218–220,” pp. 42–43). Aldrovandi’s letter mentioned by Rao is dated 12 December 1589 (see n. 50 of her essay), and not 1579 as in previous scholarship. This would make it more probable that Aldrovandi referred to the *Florentine Codex*. Markey remains cautious regarding a direct relationship between Aldrovandi and the *Florentine Codex* (see, in this volume, MARKEY, “Sahagún’s Codex at the Medici Court,” p. 204). For the first mention of the *Florentine Codex*, which RAO found in Ferdinando de’ Medici’s inventory dated 1587, see “Mediceo Palatino 218–220,” pp. 40–41.

12. MARKEY, “Sahagún’s Codex at the Medici Court,” p. 214.



Fig. 2. Vices and Virtues of the *official de plumas*, Florentine Codex, book 10, fol. 44.

muy bien. Su officio es vender plumas, estimadas de todos generos de aves, de todas colores, las plumas muy verdes, y las que son muy preciadas, que tienen corvada la punta y las que relumbran haciendo unas aguas como tornasol. Y el que no es tal hace plumas falsas y las viejas nuevas, con colores falsas, color pardilla, o deslavada y blanquisco, color postiza, al fin color falsa.

(Náhuatl column) The feather seller is a feather worker, a merchant—the man with the basket. The good feather seller is a feather worker—one who esteems his wares, who is dedicated. He sells various feathers—precious feathers; he sells fine feathers, chili-green feathers, those curved at the tip, the feathers of young birds. He sells [feathers] of trogonorous, the troupial, the blue cotinga. The bad feather worker is a fraudulent embellisher of feathers, a treater of feathers with glue. He sells old, worn feathers, damaged feathers; he dyes those which are faded, dirty, yellow, darkened, smoked.<sup>13</sup>

13. For the Náhuatl, I use the English translation of book 10 of the *Florentine Codex* by Anderson and Dibble: SAHAGÚN, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, book 10, p. 61.

The feather seller (here called *official de plumas*) is the one who is able to collect and sell the richest variety of different natural colors, and especially those feathers that even change color and shine, "making water effects like *tornasol*." The poor or bad feather seller (and artist) is the one who makes false plumes with "fake colors"—in other words, the one who dyes them. Interestingly, when referring to dyed feathers, the Spanish text does not use the word "artificial" but rather chooses a stronger adjective: "false." In this way, the text goes beyond a pure technical question and reaches a theoretical level about the object or image to be created: one that is false, or one that is true. But the text also addresses an ethical question concerning the difference between the good and the bad *official de plumas*. The good one is the one who seeks, and is faithful to, the ontological Truth of this material: its ever-changing color. The bad one, on the contrary, dyes the feathers, giving them an unnaturally over-stable, matte, un-vivid, un-lively chromatic effect.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sources ranging from the *Relazione* of the Venetian Ambassador Gasparo Contarini to the Dominican *Apologética Historia* of Bartolomé de las Casas, and from Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Ornithologiae* to the numerous entries in inventories, all address this specific quality of the feather objects produced in New Spain. Contarini, for instance, had already noted in 1525:

Lavorano poi lavori di penne d'uccelli miracolosi. Certamente non ho veduto in queste parti alcun ricamo né altro lavoro tanto sottile, como sono alcuni di quelli di penna, li quali hanno un'altra vaghezza perché paiono di diversi colori secondo ch'hanno il lume, come che vediamo fatti nel collo d'un colombo.<sup>15</sup>

14. The virtues and vices of the painter are also listed in book 10: "El pintor. Su officio, saber usar de colores, y debuxar o señalar las imagines con carbon, o hacer buena mezcla de colores y saberlas muy bien moler y mezclar. El buen pintor tiene buena mano y gracia en el pintar y considera muy bien lo que ha de pintar, y matiza muy bien la pintura y sabe hacer las sombras, y los lejos y pintar follajes. El mal pintor es de malo y boto ingenio, y no responde a la esperanza que da la obra: ni da lustre en lo que pinta y matiza mal, todo va confuso, ni lleva compas, o proporción por pintarlo de prisa" (*Florentine Codex*, book 10, fol. 18v).

15. "They create works with the feathers of miraculous birds. Never have I seen here any embroidery or handiwork that can rival the quality of some of their featherwork. It possesses its own *vaghezza* due to the varying nature of its colors which, like the neck of a pigeon, change with the light" (Contarini, "*Relazione del Contarini ritornato ambasciatore dell'imperatore Carlo V*," fol. 676v).

In spite of the fact that the excerpt quoted above addresses the ethical qualities of a feather trader and feather artist, while Contarini's *Relazione* refers to the aesthetics of a *lavoro di penne*, both sources insist on the same glowing chromatic effect. I have analyzed elsewhere how brightness in the Mesoamerican world was intimately related to the concept of *tonalli*, a complex term translatable as "heat of the sun," "irradiation," or "sign of the day." *Tonalli* was the energy connecting the terrestrial and the cosmic, while brightness was the tangible aspect of such a vital source, which stabilized the cosmic and the terrestrial orders by linking the human with the sacred. In this sense, feather objects were essential in Mexica society to ensure passage between the human and the divine during sacrificial performances. Feathers, with their metamorphic quality, were the perfect material to enhance the ever-changing chain of meanings performed in these ceremonies, where the sacrificed was simultaneously the "victim" and the "god" to whom the sacrifice was addressed.<sup>16</sup>

However, we must now return to the vocabulary chosen by the Venetian ambassador. He employs *vaghezza*, literally "vagueness," but meaning beauty, grace, and charm in the Italian of the sixteenth century, in order to describe "the varying nature of its colors which, like the neck of a pigeon, change with the light." Contarini attributes a *miraculous* quality to birds, while his text evokes and demonstrates the poetry of a passage in Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, book 2:

Praeterea quoniam nequeunt sine luce colores  
esse neque in lucem existunt primordia rerum,  
scire licet quam sint nullo velata colore;  
qualis enim caecis poterit color esse tenebris?  
lumine quin ipso mutatur propterea quod  
recta aut obliqua percussus luce refulget;  
pluma columbarum quo pacto in sole videtur,  
quae sita cervices circum collumque coronat;  
namque alias fit uti claro sit rubra pyropo,  
inter dum quodam sensu fit uti videatur  
inter caeruleum viridis miscere zmaragdus.<sup>17</sup>

16. Russo, "Plumes of Sacrifice."

17. "Besides, since colours cannot be, sans light,  
And the primordials come not forth to light,  
'Tis thine to know they are not clothed with colour—

Quoting this classic author, even in a ghostly way, Contarini seems to say that the natural color range of a pigeon's neck, varying from ruby to sky blue and vibrant emerald, already celebrated by Lucretius, can now be found in works of art.<sup>18</sup>

Terms such as *vaghezza* or *tornasol* are capable of translating the prismatic qualities of the colors found in feather art in the same way that *versicolor* does in Aldrovandi's Latin text of the *Ornithologiae*.<sup>19</sup> Other sources, such as the Medici inventories, utilize turns of phrase such as "piume di più colori."<sup>20</sup> This expression was long-lived in the Medici collections, appearing at least up to an inventory of the Uffizi dated to 1769 that lists two feather pieces.<sup>21</sup> It is also interesting to note the mutual effects that these objects could exert, once they were mounted with other materials noted for *changeant* colors. In an inventory of 1613 we find, "Otro retrato de la passion de pluma de india en tabla que son tres puertas

Truly, what kind of colour could there be  
In the viewless dark? Nay, in the light itself  
A colour changes, gleaming variedly,  
When smote by vertical or slanting ray.  
Thus in the sunlight shows the down of doves  
That circles, garlanding, the nape and throat:  
Now it is ruddy with a bright gold-bronze,  
Now, by a strange sensation it becomes  
Green-emerald blended with the coral-red."

(LUCRETIVS, *De Rerum Natura*, book 2, lines 795–805; translation by WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD.) See also ERKINGER SCHWARZENBERG, "Colour, Light and Transparency," pp. 15–34.

18. His Venetian origins could have made him sensible to light matters. For the trade of colors in the Serenissima, see LOUISA C. MATTHEW's contribution to this volume ("The Pigment Trade in Europe during the Sixteenth Century").

19. ALDROVANDI, *Ornithologiae*, p. 3 and pp. 655–657.

20. "951. Quadretto uno in sull'asse entrove la Mandonna con Nostro signore in collo fatto di *piume di più colori*, con ornamento d'ebano alto braccia 1/3, largo braccia 1/4 in circa numero 1." "Inventario dello stanzino della Madama," 1638, published in BAROCCHI and BERTELÀ, eds., *Collezione Mediceo e storia artistica*, vol. 2, tomo 2, p. 645.

21. In the "Camera di Madama detta degli Idoli": "2876. Uno detto in tavola alto soldi 5.4, largo 1/6, *fattovi di piuma di più colori* la Madonna Santissima con Gesù Bambino in collo, con un pomo nelle mani, con adornamento d'albero scorniciato liscio, e tutto dorato e suo cristallo sopra." Another feather painting is listed in the "stanza volgarmente detta 'dell'ermafrodito': "2174. Un quadretto in tavola alto soldi 7.8, largo soldi 4.8, entrove di *piuma di più colori* S. Giovanni Battista con una pecorina sopra d'un libro che tiene nelle mani, con veduta di due tempi in lontananza e cristallo sopra, con adornamento d'ebano scorniciato a onde." See "Inventario Generale di tutte le preziose antichità." See also the late Medici inventories quoted in HEIKAMP, *Mexico and the Medici*, p. 36.

con tafetan tornasolado que estan dorados."<sup>22</sup> Here it seems that the back of the feather triptych was covered with *taffeta*, a fabric made of silk, and the term *tornasolado* is used in reference to its effects.<sup>23</sup> Soon exported to New Spain and eventually produced there, silk fabrics with their chromatic scale appear in the sources. The use of *tornasol* in the sense of a silk changing color is also documented in Peru in the same years, as the entry found by Elena Phipps in the Aymara dictionary of Ludovico Bertonio (1612) attests.<sup>24</sup> In the *Florentine Codex* itself, some Mesoamerican "divinities" are already wearing what seems to be a *tornasol* fabric. The blue and rose trousers of an astonishing Huitzilopochtli could be made of the same material as Capac Yapanqui's mantle in Murúa's *Historia de los Incas* (1616), masterfully named *torneazul* by Guaman Poma de Ayala (compare with fig. 15 of Elena Phipps's essay).<sup>25</sup>

#### TO A NATURAL PALETTE, A CRAFTY LANGUAGE

Words such as *versicolor*, *tornasol*, and *vaghezza* attest therefore to the challenge of "pinning" in black and white—that is, in a written text—the

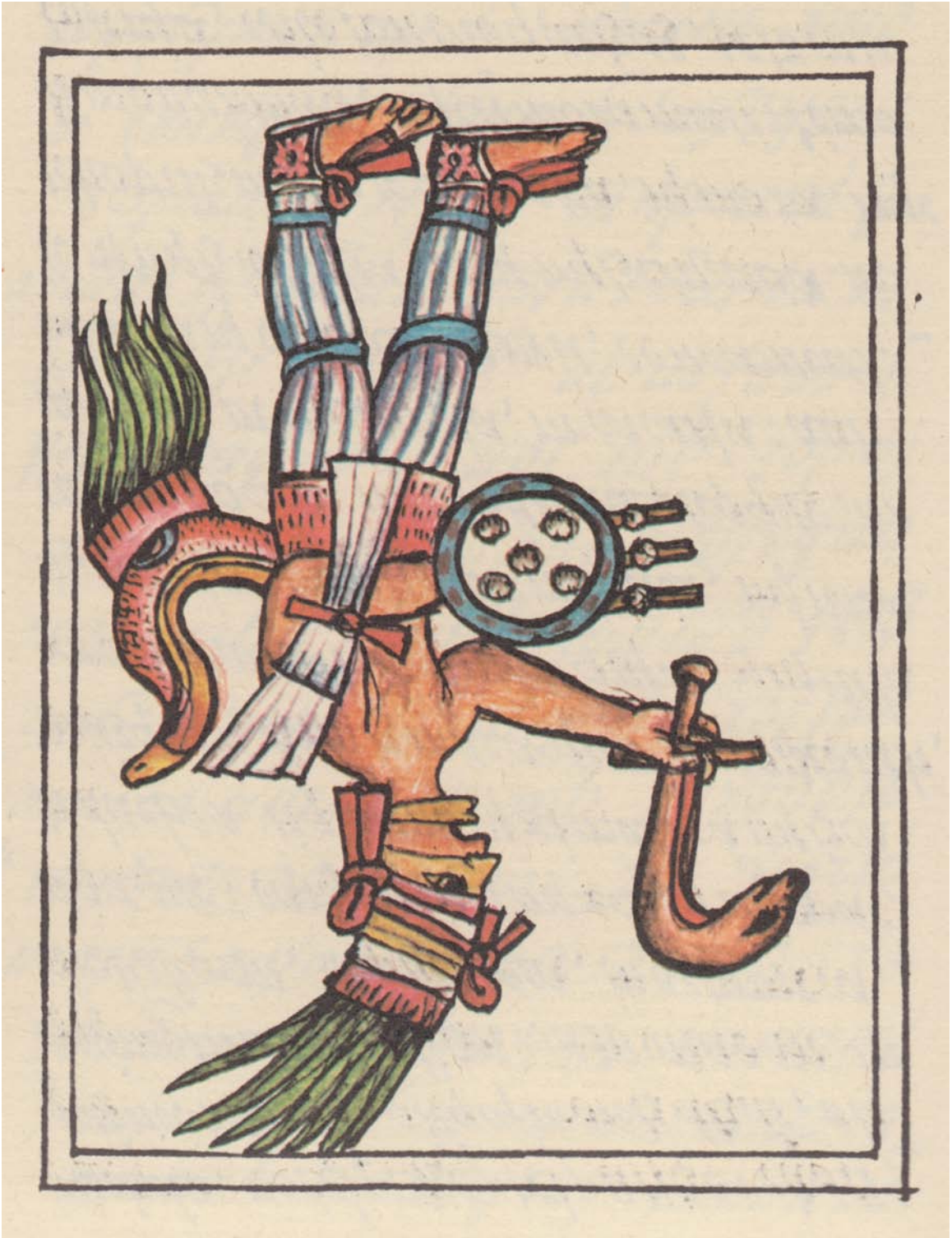
22. Madrid, 1613, fol. 612v, quoted in HELMSTUTLER DI DIO, "Federico Borromeo and the Collections of Leone and Pompeo Leoni," p. 11. This entry could perhaps refer to the feather triptych housed today in Écouen.

23. As ROLAND KRISCHEL reminds us, *tornasol* is also a colorant juice extracted from the turnsole plant, and conserved on pieces of textile (see "The Venetian Pigment Trade in the Sixteenth Century," in this volume, p. 326) which served as a litmus test to detect a liquid's acidity. In the fourth edition of the *Vocabolario della Crusca* we learn that for the same purpose, at least in the eighteenth century, the cochineal coming through Constantinople, mixed with other acids, was used: "Tornasole, si dice anche una tintura, o in pasta, o incorporata in alcune pezzette di seta, che serve a tingere varj liquori per iscoprir l'acido, che in loro si trova. Quella, che viene di Costantinopoli, è fatta di cocciniglia, e d'alcuni acidi; quella, che viene d'Olanda, o di Lione, è fatta de' frutti della pianta detta anch'essa 'Tornasole, o Girasole' (*Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca*, vol. 5, pp. 104–105)

24. See PHIPPS, "Textile Colors and Colorants in the Andes," in this volume, p. 277. It is interesting to analyze what "*Huateca Isi*" (translated by Bertonio with *tornasol*) would literally mean in Aymara: Gabriela Siracusano has indicated to me that the term could be related here to the idea of confusing (colors), a perfect definition for a *tornasol* fabric (see these entries in Bertonio's dictionary: "*Huatecaqui ccaataqui arufi*: no habla claro, dize a vno para picar a otro"; "*Huatecaquito ccaataquito*: no me habla claro, efa echando barillas contra mi"; "*Huatecaqui faranaqueto*: con dobleza trata conmigo" [BERTONIO, *Arte de la lengua Aymara*, p. 105]). On Bertonio's terminologies, see also SIRACUSANO's essay in the present volume, "Colors and Cultures in the Andes," p. 369.

25. PHIPPS, "Textile Colors and Colorants in the Andes," pp. 274 and 278. On Murúa's manuscript, and on the relationships with Guaman Poma's *Nueva Corónica*, see CUMMINS, "I Saw It with My Own Eyes," in the present volume.

Fig. B. Huitzilopochtli. *Florentine Codex*, book 4, fol. 38v.



chromatic effects produced by feathers under the light. The use of a special vocabulary to characterize this artistic material is also at work in book 11 of the *Florentine Codex*, in the Náhuatl and Spanish descriptions of the natural realm from which the art originates. The terms *chictlapanqui* and *cui(h)cuiltic*, meaning “varicolored,” “multicolored” or “particolored,” are found, respectively, for the descriptions of the plumages of the *tzinitzcan tototl* and the *açolin*.<sup>26</sup> *Tlatlapalli* is also used in the same years to mean “multicolored.” A verse of the *Cantares mexicanos* uses words formed with both *tatlapalli* and *cuicuiltic* to express the variety found in nature: *tlatlapalcamaxochitl tozcuicuiltzetzelihui* (“varicolored baby-maize-ear flowers scatter down as particolored painted parrots”).<sup>27</sup>

However, other linguistic particularities of the Náhuatl description in the *Florentine Codex* bring the passage between one color and another to life.<sup>28</sup> Take for instance the paragraph devoted to the *quetzaltototl*, on fol. 19v:

On the tail, the feathers which grow on it are called quetzalli. Those which are on its tail are green, herb-green, very green, fresh-green, turquoise-colored. They are like wide reeds: the ones which glisten, which blend. They become green, they become turquoise. They bend, they constantly bend; they glisten. The tail of this one is black, dark. These feathers cover and underlie the quetzalli feathers. These are also green, glistening. These feathers are only on the interior side. They are rather long, wide, smoky,

26. The passage on the *tzinitzcan tototl* reads: “On its breast and its underwing it is varicolored, half black, half green....” Here, and in the following quotations, I use the English translation of book 11 of the *Florentine Codex* done by Anderson and Dibble: SAHAGÚN, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, book 11. I also refer to their identification of Náhuatl names for birds with modern classifications.

27. *Cantares mexicanos*, fol. 43, 4. Here I follow the translation in English by BIERHORST (p. 275), except that I reinforce the meaning of the verb *tozcuicuiltzetzelihui* composed by *cuicuiltic*.

28. The question of the passages between one color and another is not unproblematic. Dúrdica Šégota proposes that in Mesoamerican pictography, each color was contained by a black line in order to maintain its essence. This is why, according to Šégota, the rainbow, with its “*cromia discontinua*” (discontinuous shade of colors), was considered a dangerous omen, since its colors were melting into one another (ŠÉGOTA, *Valores plásticos*, pp. 85–86). Note that even in the *Florentine Codex*, a black line was supposed to separate the different colors of the rainbow, but the pigments had then been spread on those lines without respecting the borders. See also Andean interpretations of the rainbow in SIRACUSANO, “Colors and Cultures in the Andes,” *passim*; and SIRACUSANO, *El poder de los colores*, chap. 4.

blackish, sooty. They cover, they protect the quetzalli feathers; they become smoky, dark, green, glistening.<sup>29</sup>

Here the use of three different terms—*quiltic* (“herb-green”), *xiuhltic* (“fresh green”), and *ximmaltic* (“turquoise or blue/green stone-colored”)—bring the initial “green” (xoxoctic) and the subsequent “very green” (xoxocpatic) into three other intermediate stages of chromatic transformation. The verbalization of colors (“they become green, they become turquoise”) and the use of their different forms can be also found in the description of the *xiopalquechol*, on fol. 22: “*Xoxouia, xoxoctia, quappachihui, quappachtli*” (“It becomes green, it is green, it becomes tawny, it is tawny”). In this description, the Spanish column, instead, chooses only one term, *leonado* (“lion-colored”) for *quappachtic*. Changing the verbal form (“it becomes tawny”) into an adjective, the text stabilizes the variety of moving effects indicated in the Náhuatl syntax.<sup>30</sup>

The same phenomenon (namely the synthetic and unilateral adjectivization) appears in the Spanish version of a variety of Náhuatl verbs, in a description of the *quappachtototl* (fol. 22v.). The Spanish column reads, “es de color leonado todo su cuerpo,” while the Náhuatl specifies: “It is tawny, completely tawny; smoky, even-colored, well textured. It is smoked; it is smoky; it turns smoky.”<sup>31</sup> Here the term “leonado,” while indicating the *simultaneous* presence of different colors, is chosen over the variety of *consecutive* effects of the feathers’ transformative appearance (“smoked/smoky/it turns smoky”—in Náhuatl, *pocheoa, poctia, pocti*).

The description of the *zacuan* (troupial) on fol. 21 is, instead, a triptych of nouns evoking the shining effects of its tail plumage:

29. SAHAGÚN, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, book 11, p. 19.

30. Moreover, the Náhuatl term derives perhaps from the color and possibly the texture of the *cuappahzoltic* plant and even more specifically from those of the matted roots of the *cuappahzoltic* tree, and not from those of a lion’s skin, as suggested by the term *leonado* (“De color rubio oscuro, semejante al del pelo del león,” after the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*).

31. SAHAGÚN, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, book 11, p. 22.

When it spreads its tail, then the yellow shows through. The black ones show splendor, radiate like a flame (iuhquin tletl); like embers (tlexochtlī), like gold (teucuatl) they show through.<sup>32</sup>

Here, the Spanish text tries to remain as close to the original description as possible, noting that “así aparecen como llama de fuego, como oro,” but renouncing the intermediate evocation of embers.

At other times, hyper-creative words attempt to capture the chromatic properties of plumage. For instance, the verb *tepcancacalqui*, also in its passive form *motepcacacali*—literally, “shot/to be shot with mirror-stones”—is used to describe the tail feathers of the *ayoquan*. This mirror effect is rendered in Castilian as *ametalado*, “mixed or covered with metal”: “las (plumas) de la cola tienelas ametaladas, con blanco y verde.” The same adjective is also chosen in the description of the *yollototl* (fol. 25) and is used again to translate the expression *iztacuiuiltecqui*, “white (and black) are mixed,” which become “ametaladas.” Another term, *cuitlatexotic*, is translated in Spanish as silvery (“plateado”), for instance to describe the *ixmatlatotl*. In Náhuatl the word composed by combining *texohtic* (blue) and *cuitlatl* (that which, when paired with a color, can give the sense of a metallic quality) would mean more specifically “blue as metal.”

The reference to colors found locally in nature is also frequent. The *aiopalhuitzili* hummingbird “is light brown, the color of the prickly pear cactus” (*tlapalcamiltic*, *nochtic*), while the Spanish reads: “son de color morado claro.”<sup>33</sup>

We cannot reduce the Spanish column to a simplification of the Náhuatl column, however. Occasionally, a genuine effort was made to obtain the same spectrum of luminosities in the two languages. For instance, in the description of the scarlet macaw (*alo*) on folio 23, the Náhuatl text reads:

Its tail, its wing [feathers] are ruddy, reddish, a well-textured, even color. They are called cueçalin. The wing coverts and tail coverts are blue, becoming ruddy, reddish, bright reddish, orange.

32. *IBID.*, p. 21.

33. The white of the *aztatl* (snowy egret, *Leucophox thula*) is instead described both in the Náhuatl (*cehpayauhtic* deriving from *cepayahuil*) and in the Castilian as being “as snow.”

The Spanish text, instead, reads:

Las plumas de la cola y de las alas tienen bermejas casi coloradas: llamanse estas plumas cueçalin. Que quiere decir llama de fuego: la coberdura de las alas que cubre las estremidades de las plumas grandes y también las que cubren las estremidades de la cola, son açules, con unos areboles de colorado.

In this case, the Spanish version enhances the Náhuatl text in different ways. The chromatic effects listed as “ruddy, reddish, a well-textured, even color” are here described as “con unos areboles de colorado.” The term *a(r)rebol* designates the flaming red color that clouds take on when traversed by the rays of a sunset.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the same paragraph provides the translation of *cueçalin* as *llama de fuego*, which is to say “fire’s flame,” pointing not only to the color of fire but also to an elongated, sharp shape together with rising movement.<sup>35</sup>

Making it even more difficult to rank the species and their chromatism according to a stable taxonomy, one bird often possesses the feathers of another. Take the Spanish description of the eagle (fol. 42).

Las plumas del cuello, y de los lomos hasta la cola, son de hechura de conchas, llaman tapalcatl. Las alas de esta ave se llaman ahaztli o mamaztli: a la cola llaman quauhquetzalli, las plumas que tienen debaxo de las plumas grandes son blancas como algodón, llamanlas quauhtlachcaiotl.<sup>36</sup>

Each part of the bird is named by a different term, which refers at the same time to its texture and color. *Quauhquetzalli*, for instance, uses *quetzalli* to express the precious feathers of the eagle, whose chromatic

34. The *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* attests to the meaning in 1611: “Arrebola artículo rebol, quasi rubol, de rubor, por la color roxa y encendida, y esta toman las nubes en la puesta del Sol, heridas con sus rayos” (COVARRUBIAS, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, fol. 91).

35. The Spanish version of this description could help in associating this term—as well as *quetzalli*—with the verb *quetza* (to raise, to lift, to stand), referring to the particular mobile position of the wing or tail feathers.

36. For the transcription of the Náhuatl, and its translation into English, see SAHAGÚN, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, book 11, p. 40.



qualities were similar to those of the quetzal bird.<sup>37</sup> Once again, thanks to the wider imaginative poetics of an agglutinant language, Náhuatl vocabulary can create words combining the evocative qualities of disparate elements. This makes it possible to name the “quetzal-like” greening effect of an eagle tail, while the Spanish text remains silent on this detail; it could have reverted, here as well, to the word *tornasol*. However, the idea is the same. The chromatic effect of feathers does not fit into any stable category. The associative chain activated by words such as *quauhquetzalli*, *tornasol*, *vaghezza*, or *versicolor* captures what we might call the inner artistic Truth of such a material.

### ART AND SACREDNESS IN NEW COLORS

The Christian world is also rapidly transformed by the creativity of the Náhuatl language, which gives Nature the power to create new species. This occurs in the *Cantares mexicanos*, which mention a strange, colorful bird, a *chalchihuitlapaltotl Jesu Christo*, or “Jesucristo, the red-stone bird.”<sup>38</sup> We can understand the imaginative somersault of this verse better if we remember that, as I proposed at the beginning of this essay, the chromatic range of feathers exceeded any preconceived taxonomy, and that the potentially infinite chain of symbolic associations and transformative effects brought out the inner Truth of birds’ plumage and of the images composed by the *amanteca*. This *vaghezza*, where one color transforms into another, “transubstantiating” material substances, evokes the core dogma of Christian theology. It is not by chance that the majority of Christian feather objects represent a Eucharistic iconography, such as the *Mass of Saint Gregory*, or were used during the celebration of the Mass, such as miters or covers for chalices.<sup>39</sup>

The *factura* of these masterpieces is of central importance. The written sources insist on it, and the images of the *Florentine Codex* that highlight the gestures, secrets, and artistry of the *amanteca* (see, for instance, fig. 1 of Marina Garone Gravier’s essay) run parallel to the European discourse of the period on the artist’s hand and personal mastery. In spite of the medieval allure of feather paintings, which evoke *acheiropoieta*

37. Parts of the plumage of the *quetzaltecolocton*, or common teal (*Anas crecca*, Linnaeus), are also “quetzal feather-like.”

38. *Cantares mexicanos*, 71, 24.

39. Russo, “Plumes of Sacrifice”; and WOLF, “Incarnation of Light.”

images, they were not only made by human hands but were created in a part of the world where a new kind of sacredness had been invented. Here, the artist’s hand was capable of keeping alive an inner, irreducible Truth for any audience.

We have an unusual source that addresses the stupefying response to the arrival of these images on the part of several prestigious recipients. In the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, published in Seville in 1590, the Jesuit José de Acosta consecrates a chapter to the “special birds of the Indies.” While describing the ornithological variety of the territory, and parenthetically mentioning the sixteenth-century commerce in birds from China to America, Acosta refers to the work of the *amanteca*:

En la Nueva España hay copia de pájaros de excelentes plumas, que de su fineza no se hallan en Europa, como se puede ver por las imágenes de pluma que de allá se traen, las cuales con mucha razón son estimadas y causan admiración que de plumas de pájaros se pueda labrar obra tan delicada y tan igual que no parece sino de colores pintadas, y lo que no puede hacer en pincel y las colores de tinte, tienen unos visos miradas un poco a soslayo tan lindos, y tan alegres y vivos, que deleitan admirablemente. Algunos indios, buenos maestros, retratan con perfección de pluma lo que ven de pincel, que ninguna ventaja les hacen los pintores de España. Al Príncipe de España, D. Felipe, dio su maestro tres estampas pequeñas, como para registros de diurno, hechas de pluma, y su Alteza las mostró al Rey D. Felipe nuestro señor, su padre, y mirándolas su Majestad, dijo que no había visto en figuras tan pequeñas cosa de mayor primor. Otro cuadro mayor en que estaba retratado San Francisco, recibéndole alegremente la Santidad de Sixto Quinto y diciéndole que aquello hacían los indios, de pluma, quiso probarlo trayendo los dedos un poco por el cuadro para ver si era pluma aquella, pareciéndole cosa maravillosa estar tan bien asentada, que la vista no pudiese juzgar si eran colores naturales de plumas, o si eran artificiales de pincel. Los visos que hace lo verde y un naranjado como dorado, y otras colores finas, son de extraña hermosura; y mirada la imagen a otra luz, parecen colores muertas, que es variedad de notar.<sup>40</sup>

After having admirably described the chromatic effects displayed by the multicolored *imágenes de plumas* coming to Europe from New Spain,

40. ACOSTA, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, chap. 37, pp. 284–285.

Acosta narrates two episodes that demonstrate the tricky and uncatchable essence of such objects. In the first, Prince Philip (the future Philip III) as a child is shown by his teacher three feather images, called *estampas pequeñitas*, most likely meaning that they were made after or on engravings, as tiny as if they were miniatures of a Diurnal prayer book ("*registro de diurno*"). Curious, he shows them to his father, King Philip II, who says that he has never seen such a major achievement in such a small thing.

If we date this episode to 1587, when Acosta had arrived in Madrid and could have witnessed it, the prince would have been eight years old. Perhaps it was Acosta himself who had brought these spectacular images to the court from New Spain, where he was in 1586. Most probably, when he sailed back to the Old World, he took the best that New Spain had to offer.<sup>41</sup> In the page of the *Historia natural y moral*, the feather paintings traverse the social hierarchy as they come closer to the crown—from the overseas missionary to the instructor at court to the prince to the king, following the thread from royal son to royal father. At the end of their "journey," the artworks, recognized as such, reverse at the top (king) and at the origin (father) the aesthetic measurement of small and large ("no había visto en figuras tan pequeñas cosa de mayor primor"). Celebrating the reduced scale of these great works of art, Philip II seems also to comment on the promises of his young son's potential for grandeur.

In the second episode, a large feather painting of Saint Francis is received with great enthusiasm by Pope Sixtus V. Incredulous, the pope wants to touch the pigments spread over the surface to convince himself that it is not painted with artificial colors but really made of natural feathers ("naturales de pluma o artificiales de pincel"). We can imagine once again that Acosta himself had offered this feather painting to the pope upon his arrival in Rome in October 1588.<sup>42</sup>

Far from being a simple anecdote about artistic quality, the pope's gesture suggests a link between the material and chromatic qualities of the object and its iconography, with a scriptural reference in the background. The interrelatedness of these elements stimulates the viewer to see the colors of feather art as a powerful attractor, one that challenges

41. On the constitutive association between New Spain and feather artworks, see RUSSO, "Cortés's Objects and the Idea of New Spain."

42. The essential reading for the links between Mexico, Madrid, and Rome is JEANNE, *Mexico-Madrid-Rome* (on the relationships between Philip II, Acosta, and Sixtus V, see especially chap. 9, pp. 631–632).

the pope both perceptually and theologically. His spontaneous gesture underscores the tension in this art between nature and artifice, between material and creation, between divine hand and human hand. The competition between feather and paint is deep-rooted and it is difficult to say which achieves a more natural result, though at times, paradoxically, feather mosaic seems more pictorial than painting, and it does so at a time when oil painting was fielding a major technical challenge, the depiction of light. Furthermore, Sixtus V's gesture, especially the way Acosta tells it, echoes the famous episode of the incredulity of the Apostle Thomas, who needed an invitation from Jesus to put his hand into the wound in order to believe in the Resurrection.<sup>43</sup> Acosta's narrative raises issues that will recur whenever the sources on feather art address the incredulity of the viewer, who discovers, in a gesture similar to that of Sixtus V, the materiality and corporeal nature of the image and senses the tension between physical reality and iconography, especially when the subject is Saint Francis, "*alter Christus*."

If we cannot be certain that one of the surviving feather paintings of Saint Francis is the one admired by Sixtus V,<sup>44</sup> we can still imagine that he would have admired the splendid feather miters with infulae owned by Ferdinando de Medici. In the inventory of the goods owned by Ferdinando when he was a cardinal in Rome, which he had shipped to Florence (*Guardaroba medicea*, n. 79), folio 49v lists his "episcopal miters of several types" ("mitrie episcopali di piú sorte") (fig. 4). After mentioning three white damask miters, two feather miters are carefully described:

Un Mitria composta di penne staccato da una banda quella dinanzi la trinitá e sotto san pietro e basso nel capo la Cena e dalla banda di dietro la assunzione della Madonna Santissima e ne pendoni San Pietro e san Paulo guarnita d'oro avuta da S.S. Illma recó M. Biagio Pignatti.

43. I have developed in this sense an analysis of Acosta's passage in Russo, "Image-plume, temps reliquaire?"; and Russo, "Un arte contemporáneo desde la Nueva España."

44. There are at least five extant feather paintings of Saint Francis: at the Capilla Ochavo (Puebla), Museo de Guadalupe (Zacatecas), Museo Franz Mayer (Mexico City), Colección Espinoza, and Colección Uvence. The triptych currently in Écouen and the Virgin of the Rosary of the Museo Franz Mayer also include a representation of the saint. For an inventory of the more than 160 surviving feather mosaics, see Russo, "Inventory of Extant Featherwork from Mesoamerica and New Spain."

Una mitria simile et da una banda un Christo crocifisso e dal altra la sconficcatione guarnita d'oro et foderata di raso rosso avuta da S.S. Ill.ma, consegnó M. Biagio Pignatti adí 21 di novembre 1586.<sup>45</sup>

A miter composed with feathers, on the face side the Trinity and below Saint Peter and in the lower part the Last Supper, and on the other side, the Assumption of the Holy Virgin and in the infulas Saint Peter and Saint Paul, adorned with gold, received from His Illustrious Seignory; M. Biagio Pignatti brought it.

A similar miter, and from one side Christ Crucified and from the other the Deposition, adorned with gold and covered with red satin, received from His Illustrious Seignory; M. Biagio Pignatti delivered it on 21 November 1586.

The second feather miter corresponds without doubt to the one displayed today in the Museo degli Argenti in Palazzo Pitti: *Cristo crocifisso* (the *Crucifixion*) is represented on one side, and the *Sconficcatione* (*Deposition from the Cross*) on the other (fig. 4).<sup>46</sup>

The presence of the two miters in this document attests that they were part of Ferdinando's Roman collection, and that only in 1587 (the "6" in "1586" is probably an error of the scribe),<sup>47</sup> when he became Grand Duke of Tuscany, did they arrive in Florence, along with the "libro di pittura

45. Here I heartily thank Lia Markey for sending me the original page of Ferdinando's inventory where the miters are listed (*Guardaroba medicea*, n. 79). These are also listed on fol. 49r of the same document as "due Mitrie di penne dell'indie dentrovi piu santi composte di dette penne mandate come sopra." HEIKAMP transcribes the entries concerning the two feather miters in the inventory in *Mexico and the Medici*, p. 36.

46. In an article dated 1925, CALLEGARI proposed that the miter was initially offered to Clemente VII by Charles V ("Mitra e Manipolo di Firenze," p. 509). This erroneous information was repeated in the catalogue of the *Mostra medicea* of 1939. Cristina Piacenti Aschengreen found the entry in Ferdinando's inventory (*Guardaroba medicea*, n. 79), but referred to it as an inventory of 1571, whereas the document should be dated between 1571 and 1588. The same misleading scenario is repeated in all the literature on the miter (including Russo, *The Arts in Latin America*, pp. 151–152). Based on a letter written by Giulio Battaglino, Ferdinando's secretary at the Madrid court, Butters affirms that he had sent the miter to the cardinal by 1586 (BUTTERS, "Arte colonial messicana," p. 223; see also MOSCO, *Il Museo degli Argenti*, p. 170). Markey also quotes another letter, by Battaglino, which is preoccupied with the fact that the miter didn't arrive in Rome because of a shipwreck (MARKEY, *The New World in Renaissance Italy*, p. 175).

47. In the same inventory of the *Guardaroba medicea* (n. 79), on fol. 49r, the miters are said to have been sent (from Rome) on 26 November 1587.

delle Indie" mentioned in the same inventory (*Guardaroba medicea* 79, fol. 203)<sup>48</sup> and the "tre libri"—that is to say, the *Florentine Codex*. Another important element appears from an attentive reading of the entire page of the inventory.<sup>49</sup> The fact that the two feather miters are listed after his white damask miters (that is, the miters that cardinals could wear in the presence of the pope) implies that Ferdinand could also have worn the feather miters for special ceremonies in the presence of Sixtus V. A detail photograph of the Pitti miter confirms that the artistry in works of this kind, minute in detail and yet grandiose in scale, would have been beyond the ken of any recipient (figs. 5, 6).<sup>50</sup>

My mention of Sixtus V's appreciation for these objects complements the research of Lia Markey on the translation into Italian of the first five books of the *Florentine Codex*, seemingly completed by 1588,<sup>51</sup> which is preserved today at the Hispanic Society of America in New York.<sup>52</sup> It also complements the discovery in a letter of a reference to a copy of a "Libro a penna delle cose notabili delle Indie" that Ferdinando de Medici commissioned for Sixtus V. This evidence confirms the intense interest that the *cosas de la Nueva España* ("things of New Spain") met upon arrival in the Italian peninsula, especially in the Roman context. The copying of the *Libro* for Sixtus V demonstrates that the manuscripts were not

48. RAO, "Mediceo Palatino 218–220," p. 41; and MARKEY, "Sahagún's Codex at the Medici Court," p. 210.

49. Unfortunately, the study of inventories listing New World objects often decontextualizes the place these pieces had in the collections in relationship with other items. See RUSSO, "Cortés's Objects and the Idea of New Spain"; and the other essays in KEATING and MARKEY, eds., "Captured Inventories."

50. The monk kneeling in front of an apparition of a Christ surrounded by light, portrayed in the miter on the bottom of the letter "H" of the Monogram *Christus* (reproduced here, fig. 6), is not easily identifiable (GALLORI, "From Plumes to Paper," n. 8). His tunic seems to point to a Saint Francis, but the red color of his forehead and hands evoke the stoning of Saint Stephen, another saint frequently represented in feather paintings (Tokyo, National Museum). In her essay for the present volume, Clara Bargellini discusses the similarity between the angels shown in the *Annunciation* on one of the Pitti infulae (reproduced here, fig. 7) and one painted in Huaquechula (reproduced in her essay as fig. 2). See BARGELLINI, "The Colors of the *Virgin of Guadalupe*," pp. 6–7.

51. GIOVANNA RAO has found a reference to the same translation of the first five books of the *Florentine Codex* in the inventory of 1588 compiled by the Librarian Domenico Mellini ("Mediceo Palatino 218–220," pp. 41–42). We can infer that, if it was in the Medici inventory when Ferdinando came back from Rome, the translation today in the Hispanic Society was not the "copy" offered to Sixtus V; the pope could have received not a partial but an entire copy of the original "libro".

52. MARKEY, "Sahagún's Codex at the Medici Court," p. 205.

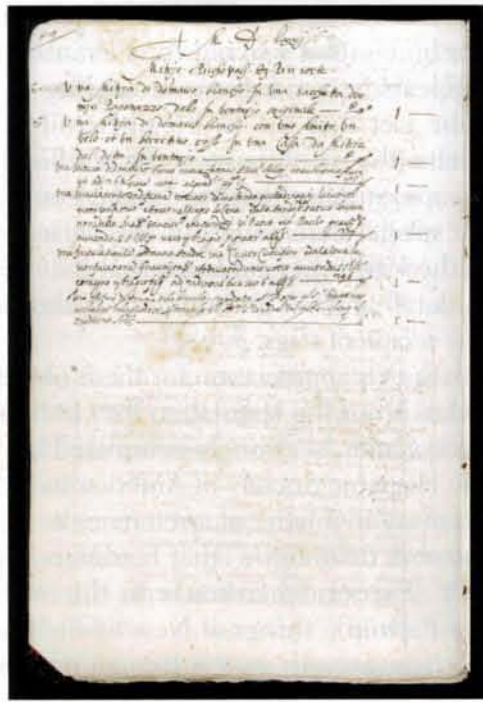


Fig. 3. Inventory of Ferdinando's miters sent from Rome to Florence (Guardaroba Medicea, n. 79, fol. 49v.), Archivio di Stato di Firenze.

mere objects of curiosity but were treasured for their contents, even at one remove from the precious manuscripts themselves.<sup>53</sup> We might even wonder whether Sixtus V himself had asked for a copy in order to comprehend the nature of the objects that had come, literally, into his hands. In any case, if the *Florentine Codex* was in Rome with Cardinal Ferdinando, there is ample possibility for the pope to have seen the “tre libri dell’Indie.”<sup>54</sup> Both responses—to touch the feather mosaic and to have

53. *IBID.*, p. 213.

54. As recalled in several of the essays in the present volume, the circumstances surrounding the arrival of the *Florentine Codex* in Ferdinando’s collection remain obscure. Markey has proposed the hypothesis that the three books were sent by Sequera to Ferdinando, since the cardinal was Protector of the Franciscan Minor Observants (MARKEY, “Sahagún’s Codex at the Medici Court,” p. 212). I would hazard another hypothesis, however. Philip II hastily recalled the manuscript from New Spain with the aim of controlling the circulation—not prohibiting the gathering—of the information contained in it. He probably feared that it might be printed



Fig. 4. Feather Miter, The "Sconficazione", New Spain, sixteenth century, feather mosaic on agave, cloth, metal thread, 40.5 x 29 cm (16 x 11 in.), Museo degli Argenti, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

in Flanders by the same Protestant publishers who were propagating the Black Legend (SERGE CRUZINSKI, personal communication). After recalling it, he asked his council to examine it scrupulously. Reassured and perhaps even persuaded about the high quality of the work, Philip himself might have then sent Sahagún's books to Rome, either to Ferdinando, perhaps via Battaglino, or directly to the pope. Before they left Madrid, the books were re-bound in Spain from four volumes into three "in order to achieve a more uniform book block" (RAO, "Mediceo Palatino 218–220," p. 31). It was most likely during the rebinding that the dedication to Sequera, which, as one can read in the extant copy of the *Manuscrito de Tolosa*, did not show Philip II in the best light (see MARCHETTI, "Hacia la edición crítica," p. 23), was excised (RAO, "Mediceo Palatino 218–220," p. 37). These facts reinforce the hypothesis of a "reformatted" diplomatic gift at the highest level from Spain to Rome.



Fig. 5. Feather Miter, *The Apparition of Christ to a Monk*, detail of work reproduced in figure 4.

Fig. 6. Feather Miter, *The Virgin of the Assumption*, detail of work reproduced in figure 4.

parts of the books from New Spain copied or translated—witness the deep involvement of the recipients with their precious novelties.

Thanks to Ferdinando's collecting activity, both the feather miter showing the *Crucifixion* and *Deposition* and the *Florentine Codex*, objects obtained while he was a cardinal in Rome, are now a short distance apart in Florence. One can therefore experience the striking chromatic range of the miter in Palazzo Pitti and then cross the Ponte Vecchio to appreciate the palette employed, illustrated, and described with such artifice in the pages of the *tre libri* kept in the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana.