Colonial Christianity: The Language of Evangelization Through the Levanto 1766 Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary Poems

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Abstract

This thesis presents a translation from Colonial Valley Zapotec to English of the five poems based on the biblical Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary found in the 1766 Christian catechism attributed to Dominican friar Leonardo Levanto. I analyze the construction of the linguistic strategies revealed by the translation (periphrasis, semantic bifurcation, neologisms, calques, and metaphors) as well as examine the extent to which these constructions were poetic innovations versus drawing on already-established language. Together, the translation and analysis of the Levanto (1766) Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems illuminate how language was used as a tool for evangelization in colonial Oaxaca, Mexico while at the same time constituting a means of resistance to total assimilation through its facilitation of the blending of Christianity with pre-existing Zapotec language and culture.

Keywords: linguistics, Zapotec, translation, Oaxaca, Mexico

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1. Introduction

This thesis presents a translation from Colonial Valley Zapotec, henceforth CVZ, to English of the five poems based on the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary (important biblical events in the lives of Mary and Jesus) found in the 1766 Christian catechism attributed to the Dominican friar Leonardo Levanto. This text is part of the Haverford College Libraries special collections as well as publicly available through the Ticha Project. These five Joyful Mysteries poems, along with the remaining 10 poems in the text (five based on the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary and five based on the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary) that I do not translate here, are the earliest-attested rhyming poems in Zapotec (Lillehaugen et al. 2016). The goal of this work is to illuminate what these poems say and provide an analysis of the linguistic strategies therein and how they both facilitate the communication of Christian concepts in CVZ and position the poems as an example of linguistic and cultural syncretism rather than a total assimilation of Zapotec to European Christianity.

While the arrival of Europeans in the Americas is often viewed as a one-sided affair, language can reveal a different story through inspiring a decolonial shift in perspective from the idea of complete "conquest" to the idea of hybridity. When penning the poems translated herein, the poet[1] would have had to confront the challenge of communicating unfamiliar Christian concepts to the Indigenous people. Yet as my translation and analysis of linguistic strategies illustrate, in this communication of Christian concepts in CVZ, it was Zapotec that "conquered Christianity and put it to a new use" (Wasserman Soler 2010), not just the other way around. In this way, the Levanto (1766) Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems provide one example of how language was used as a strategy for attempting to evangelize the Indigenous people of colonial

[1] In this thesis, I refer to the writer of Levanto (1766) poems as "the poet" but assume that multiple poets were the reality, as these Indigenous language texts were often attributed to Europeans but written by uncredited native scribes (Farriss 2018).

Oaxaca while simultaneously existing as a means of resistance to assimilation in its blending of Christianity with existing Zapotec concepts and grammatical structures.

I begin with introducing the Zapotec language family, CVZ, and the CVZ corpus, as well as establishing my glossing conventions in §2. In §3 I give an overview of the history of evangelization and catechesis in Oaxaca, as well as provide background on the Mysteries of the Rosary and their presence in Mesoamerican Indigenous language catechisms, including the Levanto (1766) catechism. In §4 I touch on poetic form, explain the orthographic variation in CVZ texts, and present my translation of the Levanto (1766) Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems. I analyze the linguistic strategies found in these poems in §5 in terms of meaning and construction. I also address the extent to which they are innovative using concordance data from the FLEx database (see §2.2 for information on the database). Lastly, I discuss my conclusions and areas for further research in §6.

2. Zapotec Languages and the Colonial Corpus

2.1. Zapotec Languages

Zapotec is a language family within the Otomanguean language family, as well as a marker of ethnic identity to refer to the Zapotec people (Munro et al. 2022). The Zapotec language family today comprises as many as 60 languages, almost all of which are endangered (Munro et al. 2022). Zapotec is and has been primarily spoken in what is now southern Mexico, particularly in the state of Oaxaca. Today there are Zapotec speakers living throughout Mexico and the United States (Lillehaugen et al. 2016). In terms of writing, pre-colonial Zapotec people recorded information logographically, with the alphabetic writing of Zapotec implemented by the Spanish later on to support evangelization efforts (Munro et al. 2022).

Valley Zapotec languages are part of the Central Zapotec branch of the larger Zapotec language family (Smith Stark 2007), and are likely the direct descendants of CVZ (Broadwell & Lillehaugen 2013). Modern Valley Zapotec languages are spoken largely in the Tlacolula Valley of central Oaxaca in at least a dozen different towns, as well by immigrants in the U.S., particularly in California (Munro et al. 2022). The influence of Spanish present in CVZ is also seen in modern Valley Zapotec languages, which contain numerous Spanish borrowings (Munro et al. 2022).

2.2. Colonial Valley Zapotec and the Corpus

Colonial Valley Zapotec belongs to the Central branch of the Zapotec language family (Lillehaugen et al. 2016) and has VSO word order (Lillehaugen 2016). It refers to the version of Zapotec attested in the corpus of texts that span the dates of 1565 (Oudijk 2008) to at least 1808 (Vellon 1808)[2], and perhaps even later (Van Doesburg 2022). The corpus contains some features that suggest that CVZ is a written form that was not representative of any particular variety of spoken Zapotec in the Valley of Oaxaca at the time (Smith Stark 2003). For more on CVZ as it was written in the Latin alphabet, see §4.2.

There are an estimated 10,000 surviving texts, both printed and handwritten, written in Indigenous languages during the Mexican colonial period, at least 900 of which are Zapotec texts written in the Latin alphabet (Oudijk 2008). The CVZ corpus consists largely of documents falling within two categories: evangelical texts on the one hand and wills and testaments on the other (Lillehaugen et al. 2016), many of which have been digitized and are available online though the Ticha Project. Many of these texts were produced at the behest of the Catholic Church

[2] I am calling this text a candidate for the most recent CVZ text based on it being the most recent text in the Lillehaugen et al. 2016 corpus on Ticha. What is actually the most recent CVZ text cannot be said for certain.

by non-native speakers, although almost certainly with the uncredited help of native scribes, yet some were also written by and for native people without the support of the Church (Broadwell & Lillehaugen 2013).

Morphological analysis of this extensive corpus is facilitated primarily by the database developed by Broadwell & Lillehaugen 2025 using the software FLEx (Fieldworks Language Explorer), which was the main translation tool used in this thesis. In terms of the current size of the corpus, as of December 2025 the FLEx lexicon contains 50,384 entries, which includes spelling variants. There are 738 texts in the database, which vary widely in length, with some that would be a single text materially, such as a book, broken up into multiple FLEx texts. FLEx statistics reports that there are 20,986 sentences, 37,984 unique words in Zapotec, and 165,308 total words in Zapotec.

2.3. Glossing

Throughout this thesis, I present corpus data using a three-line interlinear gloss, except for my translation of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems, which have a Line 0, explained in §4.3. Line 1 shows my analysis of word and morpheme boundaries with modernized typography and standardized capitalization. In Line 1, spaces represent word boundaries, dashes "-" delineate affix boundaries, and equal signs "=" define clitic boundaries. Line 2 provides an English gloss for every Zapotec morpheme, and Line 3 is my translation of the Zapotec into English.

I have glossed the morphemes and translated words and phrases based on my own research using the data available in the Lillehaugen & Broadwell unpublished CVZ database created on the software FLEx (Broadwell & Lillehaugen 2025, as described in Broadwell & Lillehaugen 2013), as well as in the Cordova *Vocabulario en lengua çapoteca* (Cordova 1578b),

primarily consulted through the digital interface[3] (Oudijk, with Miceli 2015), unless otherwise indicated in the footnotes. The following abbreviations are used in the the glossing:

- morpheme boundary
= clitic boundary
? unknown/unclear meaning
1s = first person singular
1pl = first person plural
2s = second person singular
2pl = second person plural
3 = third person
AGN = agentive
AND = andative
CAUS = causative
EMPH = emphatic
HAB = habitual aspect
IRR = irrealis aspect
NEG = negative
NOM = nominalizer
ORD = ordinal
POS = possessive
PRF = perfective aspect
RE = reiterative
REL = relativizer
STA = stative
VOC = evocative

When citing data from the Cordova *Vocabulario,* I provide the folio number and whether the entry is on the front of the page (recto) or the back of the page (verso), as both the front and back of the pages in this text are numbered the same. 'r' corresponds to columns 1-2, on the front of the page, and 'v' to columns 3-4, on the back of the page, as seen on the Oudijk (2015) digital interface. I have translated the definitions from the *Vocabulario* from the original Spanish. For data from texts in the FLEx database, I include a citation below the translation line using the

[3] Links to data from the Oudijk (2015) digital interface for the Cordova *Vocabulario* are included throughout this work.

name of the author the text is attributed to if known and the date of the text. The numbers that follow may not be relevant to those without access to the database, but the first number that follows the date refers to the page where the data is found in the text and the second number is a FLEx-internal reference referring to the line number of the data within the FLEx file.

3. History of Evangelization in Oaxaca and the Mysteries of the Rosary

3.1. History of Evangelization in Oaxaca

The Spanish missionaries who came to what is now Oaxaca during the Mexican colonial period were primarily friars from the Dominican and Franciscan orders (Farriss 2018), and to carry out their mission to convert the Indigenous people to Christianity, Christianity itself and the language used to communicate it were adapted to fit into an indigenous framework (Wasserman Soler 2010, Hanks 2010, Christensen 2014).

Early attempts at communication between the Spanish and the natives involved semiotic communication. For example, gestures included pointing up at the sky or down at the ground to signify heaven and hell (Farriss 2018), which were not universally understood and inadequate for conveying complex Christian concepts that were completely foreign to the Indigenous people. In terms of images, the use of pictures to teach doctrine was already well-established in Europe as a way to communicate with the masses, as literacy was for the most part a privilege of the elite class. Mesoamerica also had a long history of visual communication through logographic writing systems (Farriss 2018), which may have helped facilitate the use of these evangelical didactic images. Visual evangelization took numerous forms, including *estampas* (small prints or engravings) and *lienzos* (canvas paintings), which were commissioned from native artists by the Spanish (Farriss 2018). However, images were also inadequate for conveying the complexities of

Christianity, and early missionaries quickly realized that language-learning was key for evangelization.

At first, translation was largely a multi-step process, involving at least one if not more interpreters. If European colonizers were familiar to some extent with any Mesoamerican language, it was Nahuatl, the most-used lingua franca of New Spain (Farriss 2018). It was common for intermediaries called *nahuatlatos,* bi- or multilingual native interpreters, to translate speech from Indigenous languages such as Zapotec into Nahuatl, and then translate from Nahuatl into Spanish (Farriss 2018). As for the Spanish, some of them were able to learn Nahuatl through their missionary training or by virtue of arriving in Oaxaca as children or even being born there, but the majority of them possessed inadequate Indigenous language skills. The Crown wanted Spanish to be the proselytizing language, but friars argued that in order to save the most native souls, it was more efficient for them to learn Indigenous languages (Farriss 2018). In doing so, the Spanish in Oaxaca, as well as missionaries in other Mesoamerican Indigenous communities, engaged in a form of "doctrinal flexibility" (Burkhart 1989) as they adapted Christianity into the Indigenous languages they learned. Even when Christianity was heavily imposed, Indigenous ways of life persisted, so for these missionaries, making the native people into Christians went hand in hand with "remaking themselves" (Burkhart 1989) in order to adapt their message to the indigenous context.

The 1530s marked the beginning of European colonizers engaging in systemized learning of native languages like Zapotec (Farriss 2018). At first, this was without any grammars, dictionaries, or other language-learning aids – they learned from the Indigenous people themselves (Farriss 2018). By the early eighteenth century, the Dominicans had established a system in which friars were assigned to a *doctrina*, or native parish, to learn the local language(s)

for six months. This language-learning included practicing language skills with the native people, tutoring from friars who had already studied the local languages, and even the occasional oral exam to monitor a student's progress (Farriss 2018). By the Third Mexican Provincial Council in 1585, it was a formal requirement for priests to have achieved some level of language proficiency in the vernacular before they could be ordained, a rule the Dominicans had already instated among themselves, having appointed examiners for Nahuatl, Zapotec, and Mixtec by 1558 to carry out language proficiency tests (Farriss 2018).

By this point, the Latin alphabet had started to be used to write Indigenous languages, with the first known CVZ alphabetic text dating to 1565 (Oudijk 2008). The rendering of these languages in alphabetic script led to the growth of an enormous Indigenous language written corpus, although there were certainly limits to how accurately scribes were able to represent Indigenous languages in the Latin alphabet, discussed further in §4.2. These written documents included language-learning materials, such as word lists, dictionaries, and grammars (Farriss 2018). In terms of CVZ specifically, among the most notable of these documents are the *Arte de Lengua Zapoteca,* a grammar of CVZ attributed to Dominican friar Leonardo Levanto (Levanto 1732), the *Arte en lengua zapoteca,* also a grammar of CVZ, which is attributed to Dominican friar Juan de Cordova (Cordova 1578a), and the *Vocabulario en lengua çapoteca,* a bilingual CVZ-Spanish dictionary attributed to Cordova (Cordova 1578b), all of which served as useful language-learning resources. Another especially significant body of texts resulting from the inception of alphabetic literacy were religious texts, such as catechisms, *sermonarios* ("collections of sermons…to help the less linguistically adept preach the word of God in the vernacular" (Farriss 2018)), and *doctrinas* (texts explaining the essential tenets of Christian doctrine). In addition to the 1766 Levanto catechism, notable CVZ religious texts include the

Miscelaneo espiritual, en el idioma zapoteco, a book attributed to the friar Cristóbal de Aguero and made up of multiple other books including a catechism and a confession manual (Aguero 1666), and the *Doctrina christiana en lengua castellana y çapoteca*, a CVZ-Spanish explanation of Christian doctrine attributed to Dominican friar Pedro de Feria (Feria 1567). This corpus of religious documents, catechisms in particular, were also language-learning resources for both the Europeans and the natives, as well as instrumental in the Spanish's evangelizing mission.

In their proselytizing attempts, the Spanish employed multiple linguistic strategies to adapt Christian ideas and terminology to the indigenous context, such as semantic extension (extending the meaning of existing Zapotec words to Christian concepts), calques (literal translations of Spanish loan words into Zapotec), periphrases (explanatory glosses), and Spanish loans words (Farriss 2018). Doublets, a pairing of two similar words in hope that the semantic overlap would help convey a specific meaning, were also used (Farriss 2018), likely drawing inspiration from the *difrasismo*, a Mesoamerican rhetorical strategy (Tavárez 2022).

But even with the advent of alphabetically-written resources, how well were Spanish friars really able to communicate their message to the Indigenous population? Although it was expected that resident clergy would deliver a sermon every Sunday, many read from books of sermons written by their more proficient contemporaries, and even then they surely did not have accurate pronunciation due to the inaccurate representation of Zapotec phonology in grammars and pronunciation guides (Farriss 2018). Mispronunciation, as well as minimal recognition of regional variation, were very likely significant impediments to the colonizers' goals (Farriss 2018), demonstrating that even with some Indigenous language proficiency and these communication strategies, evangelists still produced Spanish-CVZ translations that were likely as much of a hindrance as they were an aid to spreading Christian doctrine.

While the idea of friars "remaking themselves" (Burkhart 1989) and accommodating Indigeneity within Christianity as opposed to viewing evangelization as the complete eradication of Indigenous ways of life somewhat reduces the perceived harm of missionary activity, it must not be forgotten that evangelization in what is now Oaxaca was still very much a part of the violence that occurred across New Spain with the arrival of the Spanish. Native people were indoctrinated into Christianity at the expense of their own cultures and religions, often forcibly. Although this indoctrination does not have to be viewed as total (Burkhart 1989, Wasserman Soler 2010), it does not erase the fact that forced assimilation to Christianity in Oaxaca at the time involved multiple "extirpation campaigns" (Tavárez 2011) to eliminate idolatry, which included a prison for those found guilty, trials targeting idolaters and ritual specialists, and the confiscation and burning of texts such as Zapotec calendrical manuals (Tavárez 2011). This destruction of Indigenous texts went hand-in-hand with the promotion of the Latin alphabet to write Indigenous languages. Over time, the systems of logographic writing present in pre-colonial Mesoamerica were rendered obsolete (Farriss 2018), constituting another example of the suppression of Indigenous ways of life.

However, the Indigenous people of Oaxaca were not simply compliant when it came to required religious instruction and these attempted suppressions of their religions and ways of life. Indigenous resistance to evangelization included trying to limit the duration of priests' stays in their communities so as to hinder their learning of native languages as well as hiding their children from the friars so that they would not be subject to the mandatory schooling for sons of Indigenous nobility (Farriss 2018). Furthermore, among the native people, literacy in the Latin alphabet was mostly restricted to the elite, who were educated in convent schools, and some of these literate natives appropriated the Latin alphabet to write their own "heretical" texts,

recording sacred Indigenous knowledge such as divinatory calendars. Thus, the Latin alphabet, a vehicle for the promotion of Christian doctrine, also became a tool for recording the very things that colonizers tried to destroy (Farriss 2018). Furthermore, there is evidence of Sierra Norte Zapotec people attempting to guarantee their continued use of these illicit texts by hiding them from extirpators seeking to seize and destroy them. Such concealment strategies included burying texts and creating fake title pages (Tavárez 2011), giving Indigenous knowledge and rituals a better chance of being preserved through these clandestine activities. There are no known surviving texts of this nature in Valley Zapotec though.

It should also not be forgotten that the Christian-educated Indigenous people played an important, even essential role in parishes throughout the diocese of Oaxaca, with some holding significant power and influence. In hopes of converting more people, teaching catechism was sometimes delegated to educated natives (Farriss 2018), who could communicate with their communities much better than the Spanish could. Indigenous church assistants were known to have carried out tasks such as record keeping, singing or playing instruments, and making copies of religious texts (Farriss 2018), although ultimate authority and the overseeing of these tasks was in the hands of *peninsulares*, and later *criollos*, those of European descent who were born in New Spain (Farriss 2018). Preaching was generally seen as fit for only the European clergy, but a couple of noble natives did become ordained (Farriss 2018), placing them in a position of spiritual power, as preaching involved not just recitation, but explaining and interpreting doctrine.

Because the native elite were educated in the languages of evangelization (Spanish and Latin) and received a much more in-depth instruction in Christian doctrine, they were integral to the production of texts, religious and otherwise. These native scribes were “rarely acknowledged

but often equal partners" in the creation of texts from dictionaries to catechisms (Farriss 2018), the lack of acknowledgement stemming from a distrust of native abilities as well as the diminished credibility of native authorship (Farriss 2018). Although their contributions went largely unacknowledged, Indigenous roles in local churches and the production of texts demonstrate that the Indigenous people were not completely without power or agency in a Christianized Mexico. The fact remains that the actions of the Spanish in Oaxaca and Mesoamerica more broadly were at times violent and oppressive, yet not completely destructive. Indigenous ways of life persisted, and were in part preserved through language. This thesis presents one text that evidences this preservation of Indigeneity, even fully within the context of Christianity, to make a contribution to attempts to paint a more nuanced picture of Christianity in Mesoamerica during the colonial period (Burkhart 1989, Wasserman Soler 2010, Hanks 2010, Christensen 2014), which did not consist of the replacement of one religion with another, but rather the blending of two traditions as European Christianity adapted to and incorporated existing Zapotec language and culture.

3.2. The Rosary and the Marian Mysteries

The Rosary is "a ritually repeated sequence of prayers accompanied by meditations on episodes in the lives of Christ and Mary" (Mitchell 2009). The term "rosary" refers both to the devotional practice of reciting the Rosary prayers and to rosary beads, which are used as a counting device to help keep track of the repetitions of prayers. Although over time there have been numerous versions of the Rosary and variations of the amount of repetitions of the prayers involved (Winston-Allen 1997), praying the modern Rosary consists of repetitions of the Hail Mary/Ave Maria, the Paternoster/Our Father, the Glory Be/Gloria Patri, and the Creed (Mitchell 2009). The events in the lives of Mary and Jesus, known as the Mysteries of the Rosary or the

Marian Mysteries, are meditated on while reciting each decade, or set of ten Hail Marys, meditating on one mystery per each decade (Wills 2005).

The Mysteries of the Rosary are split into three groups of five according to theme, with the groups being the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, and the Glorious Mysteries. The Joyful Mysteries consist of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation, and the Lost Child Jesus Found in the Temple. The Sorrowful Mysteries are the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion. The Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, the Assumption of Mary, and the Coronation of Mary make up the Glorious Mysteries (Winston-Allen 1997). There is now a fourth set of mysteries, called the Luminous Mysteries or the Mysteries of the Light, added by Pope John Paul II (Wills 2005), although the Levanto catechism long precedes this addition and therefore only contains the first three sets. There is no known evidence that praying the Rosary involved meditating on the Mysteries in addition to repeatedly reciting the Rosary prayers prior to the 14th century (Winston-Allen 1997). Exactly when, how, and by whom meditations on the Mysteries became incorporated into the Rosary remains uncertain and debated, and is beyond the scope of this project.[4] However, it is known that these meditations, ranging in number from anywhere between five and 200 in prayer books throughout history, were formally established as 15 in number, as Levanto would have known them to be, via a proclamation by the pope in 1569 (Winston-Allen 1997).

The Rosary developed over time out of a desire for "'vernacular religion'" (Mitchell 2009), as laypeople wanted their own form of ritual devotion that would be accessible even to the uneducated (Wills 2005). The Rosary, with its repetitions of short, hyper-canonical prayers

[4] See Chapter 1: Early Rosaries (pp. 13-30) of Anne Winston-Allen's *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* for a full discussion of attempts to discern the origin of the Mysteries as part of the Rosary.

that every Christian was already expected to know, had a wide appeal in Europe, as "the prayers could be easily memorized and recited in either Latin or the vernacular" (Mitchell 2009), which would in theory have also made them more accessible to the non-literate masses of Indigenous people in Oaxaca. Because the Mysteries of the Rosary aspect of praying the Rosary involves individual meditation, the Rosary is also conducive to flexibility, allowing the devotee to "customize the mysteries to suit his or her own situation in life" (Mitchell 2009), giving the Mysteries the potential to be meaningful even to those outside of the spheres of Europe and Christianity. The fact that the Rosary is accessible, flexible, lends itself well to memorization, and serves as a condensed overview of some of Christian doctrine would have made the Rosary and its Mysteries more approachable to native people unfamiliar with Christianity, and therefore would have been a practical section to include in the Levanto catechism, whether or not these were actually the motivations for this inclusion.

Furthermore, the Rosary would have allowed catechumens not only to become familiar with some of the most integral Christian prayers and biblical events, but to learn Christian values. Each Mystery could be linked to specific virtues; for example, the carrying of the cross could teach patience (Winston-Allen 1997). Given the preoccupation of the Spanish friars with eliminating what they saw as heresy among the native people, evident in the multiple cycles of extirpations against idolatry and clandestine rituals (Tavárez 2011), a form of devotion that taught virtues would have been an asset to evangelization efforts. All of the aforementioned aspects of the Rosary that would have made it useful for proselytizing could also have been the motivation for the expansion of the Mysteries from simply a reference to an event into poems, which would have allowed for elaboration and therefore increased understanding of what each Mystery entailed.

3.3. Catechisms and Catechesis

A catechism is a text containing the most fundamental aspects of Christian doctrine, and is intended to serve as a tool for teaching and learning those essential tenets. Those fundamental teachings of Christian doctrine included, among other things, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Virtues, the Seven Mortal Sins, the Seven Sacraments, the Fourteen Articles of Faith, and prayers such as the Our Father and Hail Mary (Farriss 2018). Catechisms may also contain a question and answer section, explicitly stating the answers to the most basic questions of Christianity, such as "Who is Christ?", a question found in the Levanto catechism (Levanto 1766). Furthermore, in colonial Mexico, where teaching doctrine and literacy went hand in hand, catechisms were sometimes bilingual in Spanish and an Indigenous language and included an *abecedario*, which listed possible combinations of letters and aided in the learning of literacy.

Both the Dominicans and the Franciscans established schools for educating the Indigenous, namely the sons of the native elite, in matters of Christian doctrine and literacy in Latin, Spanish, and their own native language(s). The children of commoners received education as well, although they were taught only the basics of catechism (called *doctrina breve*, 'brief doctrine'). Some of the children of the nobility were taught specialized skills via apprenticeship, such as European music, in order that they might serve their local churches by singing in the choir, for example. These educated, literate sons of the Indigenous elite were highly useful for the functioning of local parishes, as they served as assistants to the European clergy, and could even teach catechism classes themselves, aiding the Spanish in their evangelizing mission (Farriss 2018). It was required for all children to attend daily catechism classes and for adults to attend only a one to two hour catechism class on Sundays or feast days, as they were seen as more forgetful and not as worth the time to teach as children, who were viewed as more

impressionable and could grow up to serve the local churches. Such classes were not about interpretation, but about rote memorization of doctrine via repeated chanting and recitation (Farriss 2018). In other words, to learn was to memorize, meaning that most of the Indigenous people, especially if they were commoners and received an abbreviated religious education, had a much more limited understanding of doctrine than what was ideally expected of them.

3.4. The Mysteries of the Rosary in Indigenous Language Catechisms

The Levanto (1766) catechism is embedded within a larger circulation of evangelical materials, which may or may not have influenced its creation. In New Spain during the 18th century, by far the most well-known and well-translated Catholic catechism was the *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana*, attributed to Gerónimo de Ripalda and originally published in 1591.[5] The Ripalda catechism was so ubiquitous throughout New Spain that it was sometimes referred to simply as “the catechism" (Rocha Larson 2021), and was adapted into multiple Indigenous languages, including Zapotec. Because of the popularity of the Ripalda *Catecismo*, as well as the fact that it contained the Mysteries of the Rosary, it is possible that it could have been the vehicle for bringing Zapotec people into the tradition of Marian devotion and familiarizing them with what the events of the Mysteries are, although there is no direct evidence of this.

While the Ripalda catechism contains the Mysteries of the Rosary as a list of events in three sets of five, the Levanto catechism expands on the content of the Mysteries by presenting them not as a list, but as 15 rhyming poems of eight lines, also organized into sets of five. Interestingly, this expansion on the Mysteries of the Rosary to poems from a list seems to be unique to Zapotec language adaptations of Christian catechisms. Many catechisms translated

[5] Luis Resines, an expert on New Spain catechisms, claims that Ripalda is not actually the author of the catechisms published under his name. The contents of the Ripalda 1591 catechism are identical to the contents of Gaspar de Astete’s 1589 catechism, suggesting that Astete is the true author (Rocha Larson 2021).

from Ripalda into Mesoamerican Indigenous languages such as Mixtec (Ripalda 1719), Yucatec Maya (Ripalda 1847), and Nahuatl (Ripalda 1878) omit the section on the Mysteries of the Rosary entirely, as do later Spanish reprintings of the Ripalda catechism (Ripalda 1616, 1808, 1855). However, in both the Aguero (1666) *Miscelaneo* as well as in the 1687 and 1689 editions of the Nexitza Zapotec catechism attributed to Francisco Pacheco de Silva and translated from Ripalda, the section on the Mysteries of the Rosary is not only retained, but expanded on. Aguero (1666) expands on the Mysteries through prose, but both of the editions of the de Silva catechism contain a section on the Mysteries of the Rosary elaborated on in prose and followed by a section of each of the three sets of Mysteries in verse. There we see poems of eight lines, which appear to be rhyming, although with different rhyme schemes than the poems in Levanto. Given that the de Silva catechisms were published before the Levanto catechism, it is possible that Vilches, the Dominican friar to whom Levanto attributes the poems (Levanto 1766), and the Zapotec scribe(s) who presumably aided him in his composition, could have been influenced by the de Silva poems if they were familiar with Nexitza Zapotec in addition to Valley Zapotec.

Furthermore, according to David Tavárez, a scholar whose research focuses largely on evangelization in colonial Mexico, the poems credited to Vilches in the Levanto catechism might have passed through other writers before publication in Levanto, and therefore may not be completely original compositions. Aside from the Levanto catechism, there are two surviving instances of Rosary songs written in Valley Zapotec, one in what Tavárez terms the HSA-*Gramática*, a grammar from 1680 now in the possession of the Hispanic Society of America, as well as a few manuscripted song fragments preserved by an individual called Wichells (Tavárez 2017). The HSA-*Gramática* fragments diverge from those in Levanto in terms of the number of lines per mystery and number of mysteries in each of the three categories, while

the fragments contain a possible early version of the Sorrowful Mysteries as they appear in Levanto, albeit with some missing verses (Tavárez 2017). Tavárez (2017) claims that although we cannot be sure whether these three instances were adapted from a common source, one possibility is that "Vilches's Rosary songs were copied in Wichells's fragments, excerpted and edited in the HSA-*Gramática* manuscript, and eventually published in Levanto" (Tavárez 2017). If this claim holds, the fact that Vilches's Rosary poems potentially passed through two other documents makes it even more probable that the poems in Levanto are a combination of the voices of multiple poets, many of whom are likely uncredited native scribes. In any case, while we may not know the full history of the Mysteries of the Rosary in the Levanto catechism or in New Spain evangelical materials in general, it seems that, for whatever reason, the Mysteries of the Rosary in poetic form may be unique to Zapotec-language catechisms.

4. Levanto Mysteries of the Rosary

4.1. Poetic Form/Genre of the Levanto Mysteries

The Levanto (1766) catechism contains 15 poems total, split into three sets of five. Although I am not working with them in this thesis, the remaining 10 poems follow the pattern of the five Joyful Mysteries poems in terms of features (number of lines, presence of rhyme). All five of the Joyful Mysteries poems have an ABBACDDC rhyme scheme with anywhere between 7-10 syllables per line (Truitt 2017). As I explain further in §4.3, my translation is not in accordance with the original poetic style.

In terms of genre, it has been suggested by Truitt (2017) that the Levanto Mysteries of the Rosary are based on the *villancico*. The *villancico* is a Spanish poetic genre with either secular or religious content, with religious *villancicos* sung during church services and often being about Christmas (St. Amour 1940). Because the structure of the *villancico* is very free and highly

variable in terms of number of lines and syllables per line (Sánchez Romeralo 1969), it is hard to define the genre of the Levanto (1766) Rosary poems for certainty, and much work remains to be done on the poems' form and style.

4.2. Orthographic Variation

CVZ did not start to be written in an alphabetic writing system until the 1530s (Farriss 2018), and the ones who pioneered the writing of Zapotec via the Latin alphabet were the Spanish, not native Zapotec speakers. Before working with Indigenous languages such as Zapotec, many Spanish priests had learned some Nahuatl, which served as a lingua franca, and the way Classical Nahuatl was rendered in the Latin alphabet was likely extended to Zapotec orthography, which can account for why the orthography does not always accurately represent Zapotec phonemes (Broadwell 2013). Nahuatl was much easier to record in the Latin alphabet since most of its sounds had close matches with Spanish sounds, while CVZ phonemes and tones not present in Spanish or Nahuatl presented more of a challenge for the Europeans to identify (Farriss 2018). This proved to be a challenge that many were simply unwilling or unequipped with the linguistic knowledge to confront, instead writing CVZ in the Latin alphabet anyway with inadequate acknowledgement of its phonetic differences from languages they were familiar with, namely Spanish, Latin, and Nahuatl. Some even placed the blame regarding the difficulty of alphabetically writing CVZ on native speakers, who they viewed as having "'equivocal

enunciation'" (Farris 2018).[6] This lack of knowledge and acknowledgement of the structure and features of CVZ led to extensive variations in spelling throughout the corpus.

Also accounting for the numerous spelling variants of CVZ words is the fact that Zapotec, both during the Mexican colonial period and today, exhibits significant regional variation, which often went unrepresented by the friars. Instead of attempting to account for this variation, many simply chose to use the most dominant variety of Zapotec in the place they were working in for a wider reach, but some friars such as Feria may have have worked around the frustration of trying to represent regional variation in orthography via amalgamation (Farriss 2018). This "strategy" attempted to neutralize variation by combining multiple variants in the hopes of making the friars' work comprehensible to a wider range of native speakers, and would have also generated extensive spelling variants.

One of the most well-known colonial linguists was Fray Juan de Cordova, known for the dictionary attributed to him, the 1578 *Vocabulario en lengua çapoteca* (Cordova 1578b), which exemplifies the following phonological and orthographic variations present in CVZ texts, including the Levanto (1766) catechism:

- Vowels: CVZ words in the *Vocubulario* as well as most other CVZ texts from the 16th and 17th centuries often just contain the vowels <a, e, i, o>, with vowels expected to be

[6] However, it is important to note that a lack of representation of Zapotec phonology in orthography might not have been entirely a result of a failure of the Spanish to hear, distinguish between, or understand those features. In fact, it could have been a conscious choice "because of a lack of graphic resources or how to employ them" (Farriss 2018), as well as the fact that "the typesetters struggled with languages unknown to them and with an abundance of unfamiliar diacritical marks" (Farriss 2018). Even today, native speakers and linguists knowingly omit certain phonological characteristics from the orthographies they develop. For example, in the orthography used in the online textbook *Cali Chiu: A Course in Valley Zapotec* developed by Munro et al. (2022) for San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec, a modern Valley Zapotec language, tones, vowel length, and vowel phonation are not represented (although these features are made clear in the pronunciation guide provided for each word). This choice not to represent every phonological feature of the language in the orthography is in part for reasons of simplicity and ease of learning (Munro et al. 2022), a rationale that could have been shared by Spaniards in colonial Oaxaca.

/u/ based on modern cognates written most of the time as <o> (Broadwell 2013). <u> is in fact found in the Levanto Mysteries in environments other than qu-, for example, where it is not unexpected. For example, the perfective prefix *co-* is seen in the Levanto Mysteries as both *cu-* and *cuy-*.

- /s/ is a phoneme in all modern Zapotec languages, as well as in Spanish, but is rarely found in CVZ orthography; <ç> or <z> are used instead (Broadwell 2013). In the Levanto Mysteries, we do not see orthographic <ç>, but we do see <z> on multiple occasions. <s>is not found outside of words that are not Spanish borrowings, and even then it is only used in the word *Jesus*; <ſ> is used for all other borrowings, such as *Myſterio* and *Perſona*, among others.
- Double vowels: Dominican friar Pedro de Feria often doubled vowels in his 1567 *Doctrina christiana en lengua çapoteca,* potentially as an effort to represent vowel length (Farriss 2018), a phenomenon we see in the Cordova *Vocabulario* as well, also not for an explicitly stated reason. The doubling of vowels is seen repeatedly, although not completely consistently, throughout the Levanto Mysteries for <a, e, i, o>. The doubling of consonants <l>and <n> is frequent as well.
- Accents: Although he does not explain exactly what they mean, Cordova uses multiple different diacritics in the *Vocabulario* (Farriss 2018), namely the acute (´) and grave (`) accents, both of which are found in the Joyful Mysteries in the Levanto catechism.
- Fortis vs Lenis distinctions: While modern Valley Zapotec languages make distinctions between fortis and lenis consonants, Cordova most often does not, instead believing the locals to have been erring when they made these distinctions in their pronunciation (Broadwell 2013). This is likely due to the influence of Nahuatl, which exhibits a lack of

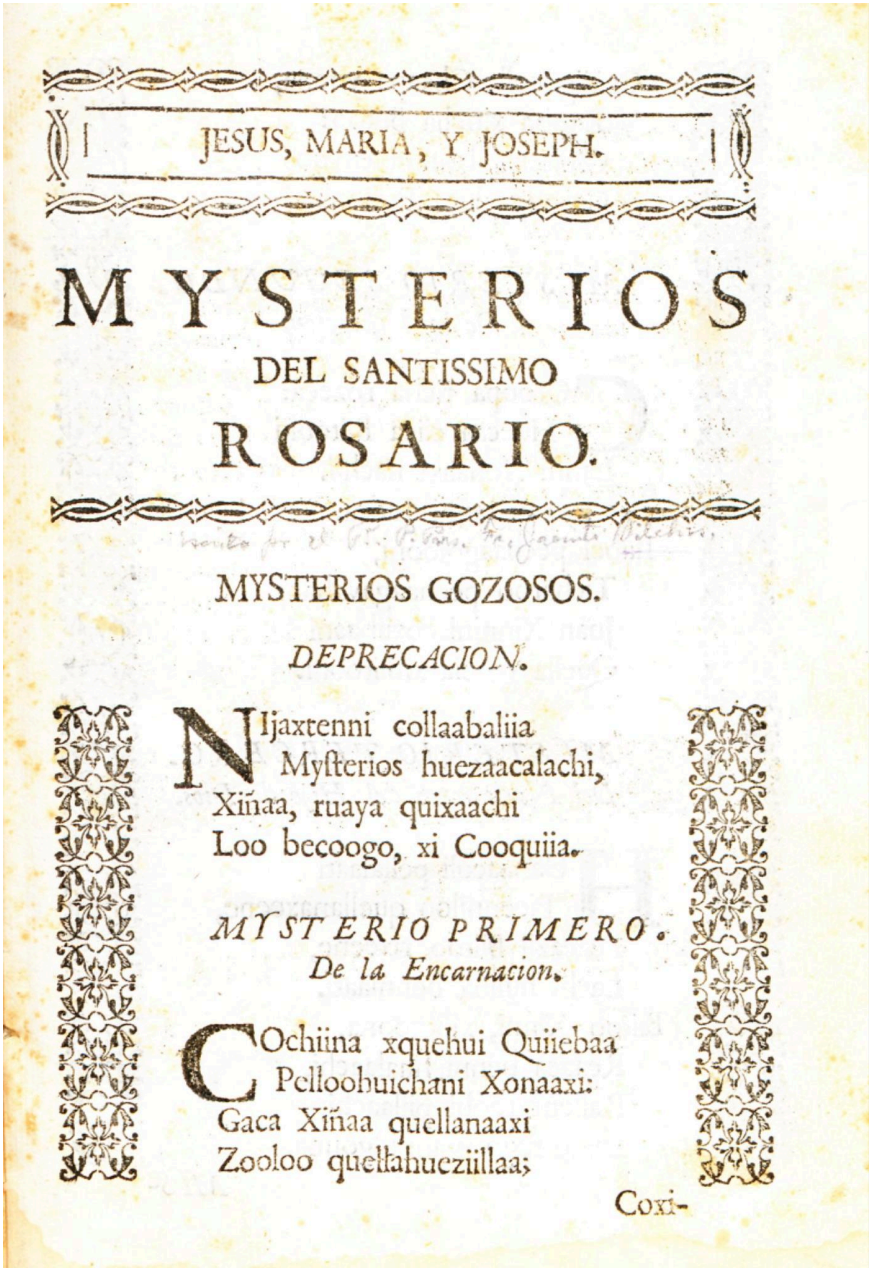
<b,d,g,r>, and which may account for why the phonemes /b,d,g,r/ are much less frequently recorded as <b,d,g,r> in CVZ texts (Broadwell 2013). However, the Levanto Mysteries do not show as much of an underrepresentation of lenis phonemes, especially stops, as Cordova does. For example, while *pitoo* meaning 'deity' is found extensively in Cordova, it consistently appears as *Biitoo* in Levanto, a spelling that is not seen for any entry in Cordova meaning 'deity' or 'God'.

4.3. Interlinear Gloss and Translation of the Poems Based on the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

In this section, I present my translation of the Levanto (1766) Mysteries of the Rosary poems from CVZ into English. The titles of the poems are faithful to how they are in the Levanto catechism, with an English translation added for understanding. A description of the event of each Mystery is not provided in Levanto, but I have provided a summary of each event, excerpted from the scriptures, to support the reader's knowledge of each poem's context. I use a four line interlinear gloss, adding a Line 0 above Lines 1, 2, and 3, as described in §2.3, in order to represent additional paleographic detail. This Line 0 is referred to as the diplomatic transcription line, representing word boundaries as they are in the original text, as well as preserving the original punctuation, capitalization, and letters such as <ſ>, an archaic version of <s>. The marginalia to the right of some of the lines indicate the linguistic strategies present in those lines and in which subsection of §5 that analysis can be found.

My focus when doing this translation was on staying true to the lines' original structure in CVZ. I have tried whenever possible to preserve the original arguments - i.e., keeping subjects as subjects, transitive verbs as transitive verbs, etc. in order to produce an English translation that reflects the morphological and syntactic construction of the original Zapotec. This means that my

translation does not capture the artistry that is present in the poems as they are in CVZ, including the rhyme scheme, potential play with meter through the syllable counts of each line, or possible word play with the ambiguity between locative and existential readings of CVZ positional verbs.



JESUS, MARIA, Y JOSEPH.

MYSTERIOS
DEL SANTISSIMO
ROSARIO.

MYSTERIOS GOZOSOS.

DEPRECACION.

Nijaxtenni collaabaliia
Mysterios huezaacalachi,
Xiñaa, ruaya quixaachi
Loo becoogo, xi Cooquiia.

MYSTERIO PRIMERO.
De la Encarnacion.

COchiina xquehui Quiiebaa
Pelloobuichani Xonaaxi:
Gaca Xiñaa quellanaaxi
Zooloo quellahueziillaa;

Coxi-

Figure 1: The title page for the Mysteries of the Rosary poems from the Levanto (1766) catechism, which shows part of the first Mystery as well as an entreaty to Mary (Levanto 1766, 46).

4.3.1. Mysterio Primero, De la Encarnacion. The First Mystery: The Incarnation (Levanto 1766, pages 46-47)

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth…And the angel said to her [Mary]...'behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High…and of his kingdom there will be no end'" (Luke 1:26-33 Revised Standard Version).

(1) **Cochiina xquehui Quiiebaa** — Periphrasis §5.1; Semantic Bifurcation §5.2; Calque §5.4
co-chiina x-quehui quiiebaa
PRF-arrive POS-palace sky/heaven
(He who) arrived from heaven (lit. sky's/heaven's palace)

(2) **Pelloohuichani Xonaaxi:**
pe-lloohuicha=ni xonaaxi
PRF:CAUS-speak=3 lady
He spoke to the lady

(3) **Gaca Xiñaa quellanaaxi** — Calque §5.4; Metaphor §5.5
g-aca xiñaa quella=naaxi
IRR-be mother NOM=sweet/fruit
The mother of sweetness will exist

(4) **Zooloo quellahueziillaa;**
zooloo quella=hue-ziillaa
begin NOM=AGN-save
Salvation begins

(5) **Coxiigueella Chaapa yoona,**
co-xiigueella chaapa yoona
PRF-agree young.woman holy
The holy young woman agreed

(6) **Zooba xiticha Biitoo:** Metaphor §5.5
zooba[7] xi-ticha biitoo
STA.be.located POS-word deity
and the word of God existed

(7) **Chiiquee lannini cuyoo**
chiiquee lanni[8]=ni cu-yoo
then stomach/in=3 PRF-be.contained

(8) **Coroopa liica Perʃona.**
co-roopa-lii=ca persona
ORD-two-true=EMPH person
Then the true Second Person[9] was inside her[10]

4.3.2. Mysterio Segundo, De la Viʃitacion. The Second Mystery: The Visitation (Levanto 1766, page 47)

"In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah…and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'" (Luke 1:39-42 RSV).

(9) **COroopa ticha rozeea:**
co-roopa ticha r-o-zee=a
ORD-two word HAB-CAUS-illustrate=1s
The second word I illustrate:

[7] Positional verbs in CVZ can also have non-locative uses, such as heading existential clauses (Foreman & Lillehaugen 2017), which is why I have translated *zooba* as an existential here. In this line, *and* has been added even though it is not overtly present to establish lines (5)-(6) as coordinated, as in CVZ asyndetic coordination can be achieved via juxtaposition (Plumb 2019). The *and* clarifies that the word of God existed as a result of Mary's agreement, as opposed to the lines meaning that Mary is in agreement that the word of God existed.
[8] CVZ has a grammatical category known as "body part locatives," of which *lanni* is one (Lillehaugen 2006). Referentially, *lanni* means 'stomach', as in the literal human body part, but locatively it is used to mean 'in' or 'inside of' (Lillehaugen & Broadwell 2024).
[9] The 'Second Person' refers to Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, which consists of the Father (God), the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit.
[10] This line could also be translated as *Then the true Second Person was inside her belly.* Due to the nature of pregnancy, *lanni* in this line is ambiguous between locative 'in' or 'inside of' and referential 'stomach.'

(10) **Huecaa ciica Biitoolii**
hue-ca ciica biitoo-lii
PRF-be.sticking[11] thus deity-straight/true
Thus the true God was

(11) **Lanni Xonaaxi nachii.**
lanni xonaaxi nachii
stomach/in lady beloved
In the beloved lady

(12) **Cuyeeni tanni Judea.**
cuy-ee=ni tanni Judea
PRF-go=3 hill Judea
She went to the mountains of Judea

(13) **Iʃabel pechaagolooni,**
Isabel[12] pechaa-goloo=ni[13]
Isabel relative-old=3
Isabel her older relative

(14) **Ticharoo pechaagayahani** Metaphor §5.5
ticha-roo pe-chaagayaha=ni
word-great PRF:CAUS-admire=3
She admired the great word

(15) **Juan xinnini coxiibaani**
Juan xinni=ni co-xiibaa=ni
Juan child=3 PRF-wake.up.someone=3
Her child John was awoken

[11] There is no singular 'be located' verb in CVZ. Instead, CVZ has a class of positional verbs, which express the 'be located' meaning along with more specific information about the orientation of a figure in relation to the ground (Foreman & Lillehaugen 2017). Although we can't be completely sure about historical meanings, apparently the 'be sticking' positional verb was used to describe a fetus in a womb. In translation though, positional verbs just assert location, which is why I don't translate this line as *Thus the true God was stuck*.
[12] *Isabel* refers to the person who in anglicized versions of the Bible is called Elizabeth, and *Juan* refers to her son, John the Baptist.
[13] Here we would expect *pechaa* to be *peche* and *goloo* to be *gola*, so both are somewhat unexpected in terms of vowels.

(16) **Quella gracia xiBiitooni.**
Quella=gracia xi-biitoo=ni
NOM=grace POS-deity=3
(By) his God's grace

4.3.3. Mysterio Tercero. Del Nacimiento del Hijo de Dios. The Third Mystery: The Birth of the Son of God (Levanto 1766, page 47)

"And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn…And in that region there were shepherds…And an angel of the Lord…said to them '...for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord'...the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened'" (Luke 2:4-12 RSV).

(17) **HUanaacoli pellalaati** Neologism §5.3
hua=naa-coli[14] pella-laati
PRF=STA-be.manifest body-flesh
The body was manifest

(18) **Pieenniloo quellanaxeene,**
pi-ee=nni loo quella=na-xeene
PRF-go=3 face[15]/to NOM=STA-be.simple
It went to simplicity

(19) **Peacazii Biitoo rixeene,**
pe-aca-zii biitoo rixeene
PRF:CAUS-be-? deity ?

[14] From the Cordova *Vocabulario toçoleea*, meaning 'to clarify, to manifest' (Cordova 1578b, 077v), which is not perfectly cognate with *-coli*, but would make sense translation-wise given the content of this particular Mystery.
[15] *Loo* is another example of a body part locative. Its locative meanings are 'in front of, before, on, in.' It can also be used as a non-locative preposition to mean 'to, through, from, by' (Lillehaugen & Broadwell 2024).

(20) **Lachi huiiña benniaati.**
lachi huiiña[16] benniatti
? ? people

(21) **Biitoo Xinni, xiBiitoona,**
biitoo xinni xi-bittoo=na
deity child POS-deity=1pl
The god child, our God

(22) **Reaaca benni hualaachi,**
re-aaca benni hualaachi
HAB:RE return person native (to a place)(of a person)
The native people returned

(23) **Ralleni toobi pillaachi,**
r-alle=ni toobi pillaachi[17]
HAB-be.born=3 one ?
He was born…

[16] I do not know for sure what this phrase means, but I think it could mean 'wise people'. This would make sense thematically, as part of the Nativity is that people come to see the newborn Christ, and in the gospel of Matthew, these people are described as "wise men" (Matt. 2:1 RSV). *Lachi* is found in phrases such as *peni lachiqui-chijño* 'very wise man who knows many sciences and jobs that God values' (Cordova 1578b, 371v), indicating wiseness and a religious connotation. *Huiñaa* is found in Cordova as 'doctor' (Cordova 1578b, 261v), someone presumed to be a wise person. While *lachiqui-chijño* is not perfectly cognate to *lachi huiiña,* it is close enough to use for conjecture. However, while this guess would fit in with the story of this Mystery, it does not fully make sense, because if this phrase does mean 'wise people', it is strange that there is no verb for the phrase to be the subject of and to indicate what the people are doing.

[17] *Pillaachi* is found as a day name (Cordova 1578a 4r 2.3.2 3.1), although it is unclear as to any possible significance of this particular day or what day it might correspond to on the Gregorian calendar. With that meaning, this line could translate to 'He was born (on) one Pillache'. While this is a possibility, it is an unlikely one, as in the *Arte* Cordova uses the alternative word for 'one' *chaga* (Cordova 1578a 121v) instead of *toobi* 'one' seen in line (23), suggesting that *pillaachi* is not being used as a calendrical name. A second possibility comes from Whitecotton & Whitecotton 1993 page 31, *billache* 'era'. If *pillaachi* means 'era', the line could translate to 'He was born (in) era one', which could make sense given that the birth of Christ marks the transition from BC (Before Christ) to AD (Anno domini, 'in the year of the Lord'). However, because consulting the Zapotec calendar was considered sinful (Tavárez 2011), it would be very surprising for a Zapotec day name/word for 'era' to be used in a Christian catechism, nevermind to refer to a day as sacred as Jesus' birthday. In the Cordova *Vocabulario*, we see *pillachi* 'era of vegetables that are already done' (Cordova 1578b, 177v) as well as *pillaachipene* 'era of lettuce, chives, or the like' (Cordova 1578b, 177v), which makes it seem like *pillaachi* could also be referring to a season.

(24) **Laatè rago manni gonna.**
laatè r-ago manni gonna
place.where HAB-eat animal plow
Place where the oxen eat

4.3.4. Mysterio Quarto, De la preſentacion en el Templo. The Fourth Mystery: The Presentation in the Temple (Levanto 1766, page 48)

"And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord…and to offer a sacrifice…Now there was a man…whose name was Simeon…And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ…and when the parents brought in the child Jesus…he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace'...and Simeon blessed them [Mary and Joseph] and said to Mary his [Jesus'] mother, 'Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed'" (Luke 2:22-35 RSV).

(25) **HUateete corua chii,**
hua-teete co-rua chii
PRF-pass ORD-forty day
The fortieth day had passed

(26) **Nicolle chichi Patoo,**
Ni co-lle chichi[18] patoo
REL PRF-be.born treasured newborn.baby
That the treasured? newborn baby was born

(27) **Cuyoo goona loo Yobotoo,** Neologism §5.3
cu-yoo goona loo yoho-too
PRF-enter offering face/to house-great
The offering entered the church

[18] Although I was unable to find the word *chichi*, I hypothesize that it may mean 'treasured' based on *pichichi*, translated as 'treasure' in the free translation (Feria 39r 1.1), *pichichicache*, 'any gold' (Cordova 1578b, 295r), and *pichichi* 'money or currency' (Cordova 1578b, 140v). However, of more note is the word order in this line. Nouns usually precede the adjectives modifying them (Munro et al. 2018), which is not the case here. The poet could be playing with the syntax for poetic purposes, but other possibilities are that *chichi* could be part of a noun-noun compound, *chichi-patoo* 'treasure-baby', or that *chichi* could be an adverb modifying the *be born* verb, as it is in the right position to do so. While this possibility would make the most sense syntactically, it would be semantically odd. *Chichi* is found as an adverb meaning 'strongly' (Cordova 1578b, 197v), meaning that the whole phrase would translate to 'be strongly born'.

(28) **Pechiiga Xiñaa nachii.**
pe-chiiga xiñaa nachii
PRF:CAUS-provide mother beloved
(that) the beloved mother provided

(29) **Huexobaticha Maria,**
hue-zobaticha Maria
PRF-be.obedient Mary
Mary was obedient

(30) **Cuyeeni quellariaati,**
cuy-ee=ni quella=ri-aati
PRF-go=3 NOM=HAB-die
He?/she? went to?/towards? death[19]

(31) **Zaá yacà xiiti cocaati**
zaá yacà xi-iti co-caati
Possibly NEG what-NEG PRF:CAUS-kill
?

(32) **Loo coxaana xquellaquiia.**
loo coxaana x=quellaquii=a
face ? POS=sin=1s
?

4.3.5. Mysterio Quinto, Del Niño Perdido, y Hallado. The Fifth Mystery: The Child, Lost and Found (Levanto 1766, page 48)

"Now his [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it…and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:41-47 RSV).

[19] Although I am unsure what this line or the next two translate to, the appearances of the words 'death' and 'kill' mean that they could potentially be referring to Simeon's forthcoming death now that he has seen Jesus Christ, or could be a reference to Simeon's prophecy that a sword will pierce Mary's soul.

(33) **COoyo Myʃterio rennaani:**
coo-yo mysterio re-nnaa=ni
ORD-five mystery HAB:RE-say=3
The fifth mystery, it says:

(34) **Ciica pecaachi Cubiicha,**
ciica pe-caachi cubiicha
Thus PRF:be hidden sun
Thus the sun was hidden

(35) **Yacà quieennitii, cahuiicha**
yacà qui-ee-nnitii cahuiicha
NEG IRR-go-disappear[20] three.days
(It?) didn't go and disappear. (For?) three days

(36) **Jesvs riquiille Xiñaani.**
Jesus ri-quiillee xiñaa=ni
Jesus HAB-search.for mother=3
Jesus' mother searched for him

(37) **Pezaacalachi Xonaaxi,**
pe-zaacalachi xonaaxi
PRF:RE-delight.in lady
The lady delighted that

(38) **Xinnini Biitoo picheela,**
xinni=ni biitoo pi-cheela
child=3 deity PRF-be.found
Her child of God was found

(39) **Loo xchiña, ni nonnaguella**
loo x-chiña ni n-o-nnaguella[21]
face POS-work REL STA-CAUS-be.predestined
At?[22] his predestined work

[20] Here there is no subject where we would expect one, as CVZ is a VSO language. There is no subject anywhere else in the line either.
[21] From Whitecotton & Whitecotton 1993, page 203: *nonaguela* 'predestined for heaven'.
[22] Here it would make the most sense for *loo* to translate to 'at'. However, 'at' is a previously-unattested locative meaning for *loo*, which can mean 'in front of, before, on, in, to, through, from, by' (Lillehaugen & Broadwell 2024).

(40) **Rozeeteni ticha naaxi.** Metaphor §5.5
r-o-zeete=ni ticha naaxi
HAB-CAUS-learn=3 word sweet
He learned the sweet word

5. Analysis of Linguistic Strategies Employed in Translating Catholic Concepts into Zapotec

As mentioned in §3.1, a wide array of linguistic strategies were used in colonial religious texts in an attempt to communicate Christian concepts in CVZ. I center my analysis on these strategies, focusing on how periphrasis (§5.1), semantic bifurcation (§5.2), neologisms (§5.3), calques (§5.4), and metaphors (§5.5) are employed in the Levanto (1766) Mysteries of the Rosary poems. In the following sections, I provide a description of these phenomena as well as an analysis of their construction and meanings. I also address the extent to which the specific phrases I highlight are poetic innovations versus the poet drawing on already-established language using concordance data from the FLEx database. All of the morphological analyses in the complementary corpus data I present (beyond the Joyful Mysteries poems in the Levanto catechism) are from the Broadwell & Lillehaugen 2025 FLEx database. When relevant, I include both the free and literal translations of the corpus data. The free translation refers to a translation that is present in the original text (translated here from the original Spanish). The literal translation indicates that the translation was done by scholars of CVZ, and is not contemporaneous with the CVZ documents. All translations in this thesis are literal translations unless otherwise indicated.

5.1. Periphrasis

Periphrasis is "the phenomenon where a multi-word expression plays the grammatical role normally played by a single word" (Bonami 2015), or in other words, it is a circumlocution

strategy that consists of communicating a word via an explanation of that word, and it is common crosslinguistically. For example, in English there is not a special word meaning ‘older sister’ – we have to give name to this concept periphrastically – whereas Mandarin does have a specific word for ‘older sister’, 姐姐 *jie jie*. The context of contact with the Spanish and with their evangelization efforts led to the introduction of many new Christian concepts, and given that these concepts are quite philosophical by nature of being religious ideas, it makes sense that periphrasis would be employed as a means of both giving name to those concepts in CVZ and communicating their meanings to the native people. An example of periphrasis is seen in line (1) as a way to say ‘angel’, referring to the archangel Gabriel who comes to tell Mary she will become pregnant with Jesus.

Line (1) co-chiina x-quehui quiiebaa
PRF-arrive POS-palace sky/heaven
(He who) arrived from heaven

CVZ is a VSO Language (Lillehaugen 2016). If line (1) were a matrix clause, we would expect that the verb *cochiina* ‘arrive’ would be followed by a subject, which it is not, indicating that it can be interpreted as a headless relative clause, i.e. ‘(he who) arrived from heaven’.

The use of periphrasis in CVZ is not unusual because Zapotec, both colonial and modern, allows for periphrastic nouns in the form of headless relative NPs. For example, in San Lucas Quiaviní Zapotec (SLQZ), a modern Zapotec language spoken in the Valley of Oaxaca, we see multiple examples of NPs that are headless relative clauses, a few examples of which are presented below:

41) ni r-culo zhily SLQZ (Munro et al. 2022: Lesson 19)
REL HAB-takes.care.of sheep
shepherd (literally: who takes care of sheep)

42) ni r-guieb lady SLQZ (Munro et al. 2022: Lesson 19)
REL HAB-sews clothes
tailor (literally: who sews clothes)

An example from the colonial corpus can be seen below. This example is interesting, as it is an NP that is just a perfective form of the verb 'plow'. It is also a headless relative without a relativizer, unlike the SLQZ data, but like line (1).

43) cò-na yòo[23]
PRF-PRF.plow
plower, laborer
(Cordova 1578b, 076r)

Given that this phenomenon is acceptable within Zapotec grammar, the use of periphrasis being used to form a headless relative clause as a way to say 'angel' in line (1) is fitting. However, the lack of a relativizer in the colonial data is puzzling, as CVZ relative clauses do appear with a relativizer (Munro 2002). Whether it is grammatical for headless relative clauses in CVZ to appear without relativizers has not been studied, so it is unknown whether the constructions in (43) and line (1) are allowable or if, in the case of line (1), the lack of a relativizer was a deliberate choice by the poet, perhaps for reasons having to do with the syllable count of each line.

Line (2) also has to do with the angel, and literally translates to 'he spoke to the lady (Mary)'. Here we see the expected VSO word order, meaning that this could be a complete clause:

[23] The interpretation by Smith Stark, seen to the left of the original Cordova text on the Oudijk (2025) interface, does not interpret this entry as a headless relative. However, the way this entry (Cordova 1578b, 076r) is presented in the original Cordova is ambiguous as to whether or not the entry can be interpreted as a headless relative NP, as it is unclear whether *còna yòo* is meant to stand on its own or be joined to *peni* 'person', which would constitute a head. I argue for an interpretation of *còna yòo* as a headless relative because we see *coona* standing alone in a sentence in Feria 1567, 4v 1.1 and translated as 'laborer' in the free translation. Given this evidence, *còna yòo* in Cordova should also be able to stand alone without *peni*, meaning it can be analyzed as a headless relative.

Line (2) pe-lloohuicha=ni xonaaxi
PRF:CAUS-speak=3 lady
He spoke to the lady

However, there is a third person singular clitic in line (2), which clearly refers to the angel given the content of this Mystery, and which I argue can be co-indexed with line (1), which can also be translated as simply 'the angel', i.e. '(he who) arrived from heaven's palace'. This would mean that the headless relative clause that is line (1) can be interpreted as the subject for line (2), which is possible because CVZ allows XP VSO topicalization for the purposes of emphasis (Lillehaugen 2016). When lines (1) and (2) are put together and the translation simplified, they can be interpreted as follows:

	TOPIC			VERB=S	O
Lines (1-2)	co-chiina	x-quehui	quiiebaa	pe-lloohuicha=ni	xonaaxi
	PRF-arrive	POS-palace	sky/heaven	PRF:CAUS-speak=3	lady
	'<u>The angel</u>, he spoke to the lady				

While the poet could have borrowed the word *angel* from Spanish, the rendering seen in line (1) not only refers to the angel, but serves as an explanation for what an angel is, which would have been useful considering this poem is part of a catechism intended for teaching Christian concepts to the Indigenous people. Furthermore, because this way of referring to the angel is dependent on an existing Zapotec phenomenon (headless relative NPs), it constitutes an example of Christianity being assimilated into Zapotec, as the communication of Christian ideas is built upon a Zapotec grammatical framework.

Aside from line (1), we see 'angel' listed in the *Vocabulario* as a headless relative, also without a relativizer, meaning that what we see in line (1) was not a unique poetic creation:

44) co-china quiepaa
PRF-arrive heaven
Free: *angel*
Literal: *(one who) arrived (from) heaven*
(Cordova 1578b, 028v)

The most common way to refer to an 'angel' in the corpus is with the Spanish loan word *angel*. The Spanish borrowing *archangel* is also used.

45) Angel lanii quiiebaa chellaa nii pe-zaa=nii quiiraa-lii=caa=ttoonoo
angels in sky and REL PRF:CAUS-create=3 all-true=EMPH=1pl
The angels in heaven and who truly created all of us
(Testament of Pedro Gomez 1740, Tes 740-B 9.1)[24]

46) Archangel sant Gabriel
Archangel saint Gabriel
The archangel Saint Gabriel
(Feria 1567, 56r 2.2)

A third way to say 'angel' that is found in the corpus is presented here:

47) Angel xi-co-chiña Dios
Angels what-be.standing-arrive God
Angels who arrived (from) God
(Feria 1567, 56r 2.2)

Feria was known to combine loan words with a short gloss to help clarify the loan's meaning in hopes that over time just the loan would be used (Farriss 2018), and this example demonstrates this strategy, joining a loan word with a relative clause. The translation *angels who arrived (from God)* parallels that in Levanto line (1) *(he who) arrived (from) heaven*, except that the Feria (1567) data in (47) is a full relative clause while the Levanto line (1) data is a headless relative clause. Thus, while we do not see the complete construction used in line (1) anywhere

[24] Archival manuscripts such as this testament and other testaments cited in this paper are not listed in the bibliography, as much of the metadata needed for citation is unknown and some of these texts are not publicly available. The standardized reference codes I include contain metadata on how to find these archival materials in the FLEx database. To view any of these materials not available on Ticha, contact the Ticha team.

else, the linguistic strategy we see in line (1) is not completely innovative due to the attestations of a similar headless relative to mean ‘angel’ in (44) from Cordova (1578b) and the use of a periphrastic description to help explain the concept of an angel seen in example (47) from (Feria 1567).

5.2. Semantic Bifurcation

Semantic bifurcation, also known as semantic split, is a type of semantic change “ by which a word acquires another meaning that relates in some way to the original meaning” (Crowley & Bowern 2010). The poem describing the first Mystery, the Incarnation, contains an example of semantic bifurcation, whereby an existing Zapotec word is appropriated to communicate a Christian concept. Returning to line (1), the phrase *xquehui quiiebaa* literally means ‘sky’s palace’ in Zapotec, but is translated as ‘heaven’ (see §5.5 for more on *quehui* ‘palace’ in conjunction with ‘heaven’).

Line (1) co-chiina x-quehui quiiebaa
PRF-arrive POS-palace sky/heaven
(He who) arrived from heaven

In the corpus, we see that *quiiebaa* ‘sky’ by itself is used to mean ‘heaven’ multiple times, demonstrating how the original meaning, ‘sky’, became semantically extended to refer to the Christian concept of ‘heaven’, a specific concept existing in the sky.

48) Anna chana xonasi coqui quiebaa=e
Hail honored.one lady noble heaven=VOC
Hail, honored one, oh, noble lady (of) heaven!
(Feria 1567, 113r 3.1)

49) pe-api=ni quiebaa
PRF-rise=3 heaven
He (Jesus) rose to heaven
(Vellon 1808, 117 8.1)

Because Christian and Zapotec cosmology differ, it was useful for the evangelizers' mission to find the words to teach the Zapotec people about concepts like heaven and hell, and so words like *quiiebaa* that had existing meanings conducive to Christian semantic extension began to be assigned new significance. Like Christianity, the ancient Zapotec conceptualization of the cosmos and the afterlife had multiple levels, although they were not linked to moral vs amoral behavior as in Christianity (i.e. heaven is for virtuous believers and hell is for sinners) (Farriss 2018).

Tavárez (2005) presents a drawing of the Zapotec cosmos from a Sierra Juárez ritual text from the 17th century, which depicts a hierarchical diagram of the three major cosmological domains, which are (from top to bottom): *yoo yaba* 'house of sky', *yoo yeche layo* 'house of earth', and *yoo gabila* 'house of the underworld' (Tavárez 2005). It is likely that Zapotec deities resided within these major cosmological levels or the intermediary levels also present in the diagram, although exactly which deities might have been thought to reside where is uncertain (Lind 2015). *Yoo gabila* was considered a place of afterlife for people, although not one of eternal suffering as in the Christian hell (Farriss 2018).

It is necessary to note that the text presented in Tavárez 2005 is a Northern Zapotec, not Valley Zapotec, text, but it would not be unthinkable for ancient Zapotec religion in the Valley to have also involved a similar cosmos. What is important is the fact that there exists an attestation of a hierarchical cosmos, the levels of which may have been inhabited by deities and those in the afterlife, paralleling, to some extent, the Christian cosmos. This is all to say that *quiiebaa* 'sky' or *xquehui quiiebaa* 'sky's palace' both being able to mean 'heaven' are not just examples of semantic bifurcation, but semantic bifurcation influenced by an existing Indigenous conception of the cosmos. Even the phrase 'sky's palace' draws on the pre-existing name 'house of sky',

facilitating the translation of the Christian idea of ‘heaven’ into Zapotec through creating a parallel to existing Zapotec beliefs.

5.3. Neologisms

A neologism is defined as a “newly formed linguistic expression (word or phrase) that is recognized by at least part if not all of a language community as the way to denote a new object or state of affairs” (Bussmann 1996). The Levanto (1766) poems contain two examples of religious neologisms, new words created from existing Zapotec words for the purpose of conveying Christian ideas that would have been novel to the Zapotec people.

The first religious neologism in the poems is *pella-laati,* which means ‘body’ but is literally translated as ‘body-flesh’:

Line (17) hua=naa-coli pella-laati
PRF=STA-be.manifest body-flesh
The body was manifest

Tavárez (2022) argues that *pellalaati* was introduced by Dominican friar Pedro de Feria in the 1567 *Doctrina* attributed to him as an attempt to convey the Christian conception of the human body as a vessel for the soul (Tavárez 2022). *Pellalaati* is composed of the words *bela* ‘flesh’ (Cordova 1578b, 073v) and *lati* ‘body’ (Cordova 1578b, 102r). However, *lati* can also be translated as ‘husk’ (Cordova 1578b, 077r) or ‘clothing’ (Cordova 1578b, 364r), both things that cover or encase, thereby giving a new, didactic Christian connotation to the word for ‘body’ through the creation of this neologism.

Pellalaati is not a singular occurrence, as it is seen multiple times throughout the corpus across many different texts, a few examples of which are presented here:

50) bixos[e] gopa bitto g-o-cachi=ni xi-pelalati=a
father priest IRR-CAUS-be.buried=3 POS-body=1s
Father priest, he will bury my body
(Juana Hernandez Testament 1633, An633 10.1)

51) quelaa-guichaa ni re-nabea Bejuanna Dios lani x-pelalati=a
NOM-be.sick REL HAB:RE-order Lord God in POS-body=1s
The sickness that the Lord God orders in my body
(Teotitlan Testament 1758, Tv 758 4.1)

The second neologism that appears in the poems is *yohotoo*, which means 'church' but has a literal composition of 'house-great'.

Line (27) cu-yoo goona loo yoho-too
PRF-enter offering face/to house-great
The offering entered the church

Again, the use of existing Zapotec morphemes to create a word for 'church' in Zapotec is not only practical in the sense of having a Zapotec word to denote that concept, but is also useful for communicating the religious importance of a church as a 'great house (of God)'. *Yohotoo* is not limited to this text, but is found many times in the colonial corpus outside of the Levanto (1766) poems. A few additional examples are presented here, both predating the poems in Levanto significantly:

52) chá=ono yóhotáo
IRR.go=1pl church
We go to the church
(Cordova 1578a, 2.8.5 4.1)

53) xini=to, che-que-cete=ni doctrina yootoo
child=2pl AND-IRR-learn=3 doctrine church
Your children, they will go and learn the doctrine at the church
(Feria 1567, 10r 12.1)

5.4. Calques

A calque, or loan translation, is "a word taken into a language from the translation of a word in another language" (Steible 1967), whereby the meanings of the component parts of the word or phrase in the source language are literally translated into the target language piece by piece. For example, French *gratte-ciel*, literally 'scrapes-sky', is a calque from English 'skyscraper'. Calques are especially useful when adapting a word into a language where the thing or concept the word represents is not native to the area of the receiving language, and have been attested in many Mesoamerican languages (Campbell et al. 1986), so it is not surprising to find calques of Christian concepts in CVZ. However, there is not strong enough evidence that anything in the Levanto poems can be definitively classified as a calque as opposed to a translated metaphor, but here I present two data points that are at least near calques.

We return yet again to line (1) and the phrase *xquehui quiiebaa* 'heaven's palace', repeated below:

Line (1) co-chiina x-quehui quiiebaa
PRF-arrive POS-palace sky/heaven
He who arrived from heaven (lit. sky's/heaven's palace)

Although it would not be a word-for-word translation, it is plausible that *xquehui quiiebaa* 'heaven's palace' may have been influenced by exposure to the biblical phrase 'kingdom of heaven', of which there are at least a dozen tokens in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 3:3, 5:3, 13:44 RSV, etc.). For a discussion of whether this phrase is a one-off occurrence or not, see §5.5.

A second example of a potentially calqued phrase is found in line (3):

Line (3) g-aca xiñaa quella=naaxi
IRR-be mother NOM=sweet/fruit
The mother of sweetness will exist

The primary meaning of *naaxi* is ‘sweet’ (Cordova 1578b, 147v) (for more on *naaxi* as ‘sweetness’ see §5.5), but it can also mean ‘fruit’(Aguero 1666, 75 6.2). In the corpus, there are instances of *naaxi* ‘fruit’ used by both Feria (1567) and Levanto (1766) in the phrase ‘fruit that you gave birth to’, which is not an exact calque, but may have been influenced by the phrase ‘el fruto de tu vientre’, ‘fruit of your womb’ (Luke 1:42, *La biblia* 1622), a Christian metaphor used to refer to Jesus.

54) quella=naaxi ni co-xaana=lo bejuanna=na Jesu Christo
NOM=fruit REL PRF-give.birth=2s lord=1pl Jesu Christo
Free: …*the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*
Literal: *The fruit that you gave birth to, our lord Jesus Christ*
(Levanto 1766, 2.5 1.6)

Given this metaphorical meaning for ‘fruit’, I argue that it is possible that *quellanaaxi* ‘fruit’ could stand alone to still mean ‘fruit of the womb’ if used within a religious context, as is seen in line (3), especially since the Zapotec phrase meaning ‘the fruit that you gave birth to’ is found in the Feria (1567) *Doctrina*, which precedes the Levanto (1766) catechism. Aside from some slight spelling variations, the phrase in Feria is constructed morphologically and syntactially identically to what we see in line (3). Since (54) is from the same text as the Mysteries of the Rosary poems, a precedent of *quellanaaxi* ‘fruit’ as part of a partial (potential) calque of a metaphor referring to Jesus has already been established. I have ultimately chosen to translate line (3) as ‘the mother of sweetness will exist’ because of the primacy of ‘sweet’ over ‘fruit’ as the meaning for *naaxi*. However, since I posit that, when used in a religious context, it is possible for *quellanaaxi* ‘fruit’ to hearken back to the already-established ‘fruit that you gave birth to’ phrase in CVZ without including the ‘that you gave birth to’ part, line (3) could alternativity be translated as ‘the mother of the fruit of the womb will exist’, i.e. Mary will become pregnant with Jesus.

5.5. Metaphor

The strategy for communicating Christian concepts in CVZ that occurs most frequently within the Levanto Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems is metaphor. A metaphor is a linguistic strategy defined as when a "word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable" (Oxford English Dictionary) and "allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another" (Lakoff 1980). The construction of metaphors is not random, but a reflection of cultural values. For example, for many cultures, the idea of good vs bad is communicated linguistically through up/down orientational metaphors (Lakoff 1980). Lakoff (1980) gives the example of *More is better*, which "is coherent with MORE IS UP and GOOD IS UP" (Lakoff 1980). In terms of religion, we see cultural values mapped onto up/down metaphors in Christianity, with heaven (GOOD) up in the sky and hell (BAD) down below. The metaphors presented below are examples of the syncretic language of Christianity seen in these poems, as they are a means of communicating the values of the dominant culture at the same time as they remain firmly grounded in a Zapotec context.

The first metaphor we see is the phrase *xquehui quiiebaa* in line (1), literally translated as 'sky's palace' to serve as a metaphor for heaven.

Line (1) co-chiina x-quehui quiiebaa
PRF-arrive POS-palace sky/heaven
(He who) arrived from sky's palace

We already know that *quiiebaa* being used to mean 'heaven' in addition to its original Zapotec meaning 'sky' is well-attested (see §5.2); however, there is evidence from the corpus that this metaphor is not an innovation because of other religious texts preceding the Levanto catechism that also use *quehui* 'palace' is conjunction with *quiiebaa* 'sky' to form a metaphor as a way to refer to heaven in Zapotec. I present examples from Feria (1567) and Aguero (1666):

55) quehui lanni quiiebaa
palace in sky
Palace in the sky
(Aguero 1666, Ros 001v-Joyful 38.1)

56) x-quehui lichi=ni quijebaa
POS-palace house=3 sky
His palace-home (in) the sky
(Aguero 1666, 4.1)

57) lani quehui quiebaa
in palace sky
In palace-sky
(Feria 1567, 116r 8.4)

None of the above examples are exactly the same as the metaphor in line (1) of Levanto (1766). In (55) from Aguero (1666), we see that the body part locative *lanni* 'stomach/in' is used to join 'palace' and 'sky' together to form the metaphor. (56), also from Aguero, is notable because it shows 'palace' as possessed, which it also is in the Levanto catechism, although in this example 'palace' is not possessed by 'sky/heaven' as it in Levanto, but by someone, presumably God or Jesus. (57) from Feria (1567) does not show 'palace' as possessed, but interestingly demonstrates 'palace' as forming a compound with 'sky' to mean 'heaven'.

The attested usages of 'palace' and 'sky' used together metaphorically supports the argument that the usage of 'the sky's palace' to mean 'heaven' in line (1) of the Levanto (1766) catechism was not invented for the purposes of that poem – the poet was employing something already in use. Although I was not able to find any example exactly like the data from Levanto where 'sky/heaven' is the possessor, this doesn't seem like enough of a deviation from previous usages to be considered a new innovation, so I conclude that this metaphor in Levanto is not a one-off occurrence, but a metaphor that was already a part of the language of Christianity developed for CVZ.

The second metaphor that occurs in Levanto Mystery poems is in line (3), translated as *The mother of sweetness will exist*, where it would make sense for *quellanaaxi* 'sweetness' to be a metaphor for Jesus.

Line (3) g-aca xiñaa quella=naaxi
IRR-be mother NOM=sweet/fruit
The mother of sweetness will exist

There are no other attestations in the corpus of the phrase 'mother of sweetness' or 'sweetness' to refer to Jesus outside of the 'fruit of the womb' examples as mentioned above in §5.4. In those examples, *quellanaaxi* 'fruit' or 'sweetness' clearly refers to Jesus, one example of which I repeat below:

58) quella=naaxi ni co-xaana=lo bejuanna=na Jesu Christo
NOM=fruit REL PRF-give.birth=2s lord=1pl Jesu Christo
Free: …*the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*
Lit: *The fruit that you gave birth to, our lord Jesus Christ*
(Levanto 1766, 2.5 1.6)

Since this example uses 'sweetness' in the same religious context, 'sweetness' in line (3) can be interpreted as a metaphor for Jesus. Interestingly, there is an attestation in the corpus of 'sweetness' clearly referring to Mary, which demonstrates that in CVZ the figurative meaning of 'sweetness' was not fixed, since it could refer to either Mary or Jesus.

59) chana xonasi, coqui quiebaa-e xina quela=hue-zaalachi-e
honored.one lady noble heaven-? mother NOM-PRF:RE-?-?
quela=na-bani-e quela=naxie-e
NOM=STA-be.alive-? NOM=sweet-?
Honored lady, lady of Heaven, Mother Mercy, Life, sweetness
(Feria 1567, 113r 3.1)

There is further evidence in the corpus of 'sweet' being used in a non-literal way, as shown below:

60) tòbi chàpa naxii nayaa celii coconia yoona, ni làa S Maria
one young.woman sweet ? eternal virgin holy REL be.named Saint Maria
One sweet young woman, eternal holy virgin, that is named Saint Mary
(Aguero 1666, Ros 001v-003v Joyful 5.1)

In this example, 'sweet' is used as an adjective to describe Mary's character, in a way that is clearly not about taste and therefore a figurative usage, providing more support for the plausibility of 'sweetness' as a religious metaphor.

There are no examples in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible of the word 'sweetness' to figuratively refer to anybody, which makes it less likely that the poet of the Levanto (1766) poems is making use of an already-established biblical metaphor. However, because there is evidence of 'sweet' being used figuratively in a religious context as well as 'sweetness' referring to a person in Aguero (1666), which precedes the Levanto catechism, the metaphor in line (3) is not a completely new innovation either.

The third metaphor occurs in line (6), which is about the immaculate conception of Jesus.

(6) zooba xi-ticha biitoo
STA.be.located POS-word deity
and the word of God existed

In this line, the phrase *xiticha biitoo* 'the word of God' seems to be a metaphor for Christ, given the context of Mary agreeing to become pregnant (see line (5)). Because there is often ambiguity between locative and existential readings of positional verbs (Foreman & Lillehaugen 2017), the exact translation of lines (5)-(6) is uncertain, meaning that an alternative translation could be *The holy young woman agreed that the Word of God would be located (there).*

Line (5) *The holy young woman agreed*

Line (6) zooba xi-ticha biitoo
STA.be.located POS-word deity
and the word of God existed/that the Word of God would be located (there)

Lines (7-8) *Then the true Second Person was inside her.*

The use of 'the Word' to refer to Jesus, which is common in the Bible, as seen in the following examples in the New Testament:

- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1 RSV).
- "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14 RSV).
- "But the word of the Lord came to me, saying…" (1 Chronicles 22:8 RSV).

John 1:1 establishes the Word as a way to refer to God, while John 1:14 expresses the belief that God assumed a human nature in the form of Jesus Christ, who is also known as "the Son." 1 Chronicles further reinforces the metaphor 'the word' as a being by demonstrating that "the word" is able to speak. Line (6), translated as 'The word of God exists' parallels the verse 'And the Word became flesh' (John 1:14 RSV), suggesting that this metaphorical 'Word' found in the Bible is also being employed in Zapotec. This metaphor is clearly calqued, as the word *ticha* used in line (6) means 'word or words' (Cordova 1578b, 297v).

However, in the corpus, there is no strong evidence of *xiticha biitoo* being used to metaphorically refer to God or Jesus. There are two tokens of *ticha biitoo* in the *Miscelaneo* (Aguero 1666, 20.1 & 15.1), but their meaning is inconclusive, as there is not enough morphological analysis of those sections of the text to be able to translate them fully. The similar phrase *ticha dios*, which uses the Spanish loan *dios* 'God' instead of the CVZ word *biitoo*

'deity', is found frequently throughout multiple texts in the corpus, but probably not in reference to God or Jesus. I present a few of these examples below:

61) Quela cheelij lachi=ni quiraa x-ticha Dios
NOM believe heart=3 all POS-word God
Lit: *Belief in all the words of God*
(Aguero 1666, 2.1)

62) tobi=ci quelacotobaniça tapa ni chelacani tobi=ci ticha Dios
one=only baptism four REL ? one=only word God
Free: *they only have one baptism and only one same law of God*
(Feria 1567, 44r 2.3)

63) pi-chaga=ti xonasi Sancta Maria xiña=ni, beni-niquio: cani xi-ticha Dios spiritu
PRF-join=NEG lady holy Maria mother=3 person-male but POS-word God Holy
sancto cocani t-enà co-tobi xibaa nitij
Spirit ? HAB-say ORD-one article this
Free: *the virgin Mary our Lady His mother did not know any male: if not for work, and virtue of the Holy Spirit, this work was done of what the first article says*
(Feria 1567, 29v 1.1)

(61) uses *xticha Dios* to refer to God's literal words, presumably his teachings in the Bible. (62) uses the same phrase to refer to God's law, likely referencing God's teachings or commandments. (63) uses *xiticha Dios* in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, possibly to refer to the Holy Spirit's impregnating abilities, which is a surprising usage if so. In any case, while it is not completely clear what all these examples mean, they show that the phrase *Word of God*, while found in the corpus, does not seem to mean 'God' or 'Jesus' anywhere else except for in Levanto (1766), an interesting finding given that this phrase appears widely in the Bible.

The fourth metaphor, which is found in line (14), is *ticharoo*, translated as 'the great word', another phrase that is potentially a metaphor for Jesus, again with *ticha* 'word' calqued from the biblical "Word".

Line (14) ticha-roo pe-chaagayaha=ni
word-great PRF:CAUS-admire=3
She admired the great word

Given the aforementioned usages of "the Word" in the Bible, we would expect this use of 'word' to also metaphorically refer to Jesus. This makes sense for line (14), as Mary, who is pregnant with Jesus, has come to visit Isabel, who declares both of them blessed (Luke 1:39-42 RSV).

In the corpus, there is evidence of *ticharoo* used both within and outside of religious contexts, although in none of the religious texts do we see clear evidence that *ticharoo* could mean Jesus.

64) ticha roo
word great
important thing
(Aguero 1666, 5.2)

65) quelani quitaa ticha roo, ticha xenne canî na-yoo yye-li lanni
because all word great word damaged this STA-be.contained writing-true in
x-quijchi Sancto Evangelio
POS-paper holy evangelist
Lit: because all the scripture (?) these [?] are located in true writing in the book of Holy Evangelist
*(*Aguero 1666, 4.11)

In (64) we see *ticharoo* used in a literal, non-religious context, demonstrating that it is not uniquely a religious phrase. (65) is notable because it seems that *ticharoo* could potentially be referring to the Bible, as the CVZ words for 'writing' and 'paper' are mentioned and the text is a doctrinal one. However, 'Great Word' to refer to the Bible is not seen in the Bible or in the *Vocabulario*, and in line (14) the Bible meaning would not make as much sense as if *ticharoo* refers to Mary or Jesus. Thus, *ticharoo* having a religious connotation is not a singular occurrence in the corpus, but there is not enough evidence to definitively say whether its use in

line (14) as seemingly being a metaphorical way to say ‘Jesus’ is indeed the case or, if so, if it is a unique usage or not.

The fifth and final potential metaphor found in the Levanto Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems is the phrase ‘sweet word’ in line (40):

Line (40) r-o-zeete=ni ticha naaxi
HAB-CAUS-learn=3 word sweet
He learned the sweet word

Because the context of this Mystery is Jesus learning from the teachers in the temple, it would make sense if ‘the sweet word’ figuratively refers to the Bible or scripture. However, *ticha naaxi* only appears in the corpus in line (40) of this poem, and there is also no evidence in Cordova that the Bible can be referred to in this way. However, we already know that ‘sweet’ and ‘sweetness’ can be used figuratively in giving name to religious concepts (see §5.4 as well as the above discussion of line (3) *The mother of sweetness will exist*) and that *ticha* ‘word’ is used in phrases potentially referring to scripture (see *ticharoo* in §5.5), so it would not be implausible for *ticha naaxi* ‘sweet word’ to refer to scripture here. If *ticha naaxi* is a metaphor for scripture in line (40), this would constitute a one-off occurrence, meaning that this metaphor is a poetic innovation in CVZ.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have presented a translation of the five poems based on the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, as found in the Levanto (1766) catechism. I also argue for my interpretations of specific lines and phrases as being examples of periphrasis, semantic bifurcation, neologisms, calques, and metaphors. My analysis of the degree to which these linguistic strategies were poetic innovations unique to these specific poems versus drawing on already-established language examines how the Levanto (1766) Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

poems both drew from and further contributed to the syncretic language of Zapotec Christianity that developed in Oaxaca throughout the Mexican colonial period.

This work leaves much room for continued study. The most apparent avenue for further research is translating the remaining 10 poems in the Levanto catechism. Moreover, as mentioned in §4.3, my translation was focused on structure, not artistry, leaving the possibility of another translation focused on maintaining the original poetic form and rhyme scheme of the poems. Though Truitt (2017) has done a preliminary analysis of poetic genre, meter, and rhyme, there is still more investigation to be done regarding the style and form of the poems. Truitt (2017) also provides an analysis of syllable count in the poems, but the motivations for the syllable counts per line remain unclear. For example, in line (35) where we expect a bound subject clitic, there is none – could the poet have deliberately decided on a null subject for purposes of syllable count, so as to fit the line into a certain meter or number of syllables? The syntax of these poems also deviates at times from CVZ's typical syntactic patterns, as in line (26), where what is seemingly an adjective appears unexpectedly prenominally, again eliciting the question of whether such divergence was intentional for poetic purposes. Furthermore, I have not analyzed the Levanto (1766) Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems through a religious studies lens, and it would be fruitful to explore the content and interpretations of these poems in the context of Christian theology and the scriptures, as well as how they fit into the larger Marian devotional tradition.

Even with much room for further study, the translation of these poems and analysis of how the Christian concepts they contain were attempted to be communicated in CVZ are very useful for understanding the relationship between language and "colonization" in Oaxaca. As established by my analysis of the linguistic constructions found in the poems,

Indigenous-Spanish contact was not one-sided, but rather a complex, mutually-influential interaction between Zapotec language and Christian thought. This analysis problematizes the idea that the arrival of the Spanish meant the total suppression or destruction of Indigenous people and their ways of life, and instead underscores the role CVZ played in the creation of a Zapotec form of Christianity that emerged in Oaxaca during the colonial period, as evidenced by the language used to describe it. Emphasizing creation and syncretism is not at all intended to disregard the violence that did very much occur, but to highlight language as a means of resistance through an exploration of these linguistic strategies that demonstrate that the arrival of the Spanish did not mean complete assimilation to Christianity for the Zapotec people or for CVZ. Rather, these Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary poems show that evangelization in Oaxaca was built upon – in fact dependent upon – existing Zapotec words, grammatical structures, and cosmological beliefs. In other words, the linguistic and cultural divide was not conquered, but blurred.

7. References

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