The Echo of Voices after the Fall of the Aztec Empire

Alex Hidalgo

Abstract The recent quincentennial of the Mexica forces' defeat at the hands of a Spanish-led coalition invites us to reflect on the changes in the region's acoustic ecology, the layers of sound that reverberated across geographic spaces. Expressions of sound allow us to consider the actions of past actors in relation to their physical surroundings, the stimulation of the senses, and patterns of religious conversion that guided social behavior. Vocal sounds produced by people of various ethnic and racial backgrounds formed part of this aural environment, and they carried meaning that has often escaped the attention of scholars. An analysis of routines of indoctrination centered on vocal modulations reveals that authorities hierarchized different forms of sounds, from singing and praying—which they encouraged—to screams and muffled noises such as murmur and chatter—which they attempted to silence. These routines took shape during daily masses, theater presentations, civic and religious rituals, confession, and, in some cases, formal training.

The women's screams haunted Francisco de Aguilar. Tired and frail from chronic episodes of inflammatory arthritis, the 80-year-old former soldier had abandoned a profitable grant of labor (*encomienda*) that he had earned as a reward for his service in the war against the Triple Alliance (1519–21), the coalition of city-states known commonly as the Aztec empire, in favor of a life of monastic devotion. The old man's Dominican brethren urged him in the early 1560s to write down his experience of the war before death came knocking at his door. Aguilar fulfilled this task by narrating a sobering reflection of his activities during the brutal affair.[1] The most dramatic incident unfolded shortly after Spaniards executed the highest-ranking members of the Triple Alliance's

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1. See Camelo, "Francisco de Aguilar."

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political and military elite.[2] Around ten o'clock on the evening of June 30, 1520, he observed from his rooftop post in Axayacatl's palace compound as a large group of women carrying torches approached the gates of the Spanish garrison within the city of Tenochtitlan. The gruesome scene that greeted the women when they arrived elicited the most terrifying cries. "As the women identified their relatives and loved ones" among the dead bodies strewn across the floor, he recalled, "they keeled over with great pain and suffering, giving way to the loudest clamor and weeping; [so much so] that it caused dread and fear." The shrieks of despair he heard that night crowded Aguilar's memories, leading the friar to assert without irony that hell surely sounded like the Tenochca women. "I confess that during the entire war," he wrote, "despite all the hardships I experienced, I never felt more fear than when I heard those terrible cries."[3]

Aguilar's narrative reminds us that the war and its aftermath haunted the memories of its Spanish, Indigenous, and African participants. The cries that the former conquistador remembered in old age carried meaning shaped by cultural background and shared experience. The recent quincentennial of the Mexica forces' defeat at the hands of a Spanish-led coalition invites us to reflect on the dramatic changes in the region's acoustic ecology, the layers of sound that reverberated across geographic spaces.[4] Expressions of sound allow us to consider past actors in relation to their physical surroundings, the stimulation of the senses, and patterns of religious conversion that guided social behavior. Vocal sounds produced by people of various ethnic and racial backgrounds formed part of this aural environment, and they carried meaning that has often escaped the attention of scholars of Latin America's colonial period. An analysis of routines

2. Among the dead were the Indigenous rulers of Texcoco and Tlacopan as well as the governor of Tlatelolco. Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*, 226.

3. Aguilar, *Relación breve*, "Séptima jornada."

4. The 18-month period leading up to August 2021 unleashed a flood of books, articles, editorials, and digital projects. New work from seasoned scholars urged us to reconsider established narratives of Spanish invincibility, to ask new questions of well-studied sources, and to apply new lenses to old themes of encounter. Townsend, *Fifth Sun*; Navarrete, *¿Quién conquistó México?*; Restall, *When Montezuma Met Cortés*. The Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México documented the Spanish incursion into Tenochtitlan through the Twitter account @noticonquista and its accompanying website, https://www.noticonquista.unam.mx/. Authorities in both Mexico and Spain used the moment to promote political agendas and engage in nationalist rhetoric that caricatured Spaniards as heroes or villains and Indigenous peoples as victims or victors. Raphael Minder and Elisabeth Malkin, "Mexican Call for Conquest Apology Ruffles Feathers in Spain. And Mexico," *New York Times* (New York), 27 Mar. 2019.

of indoctrination centered on vocal modulations reveals that crown and religious authorities hierarchized different forms of sounds, from singing and praying—which they encouraged—to screams and muffled noises such as murmur and chatter—which they attempted to silence. These routines took shape during daily masses, theater presentations, public civic and religious rituals, confession, and, in some cases, formal training at a school or university. The voice's sonic capability served as a tool of empire for molding the attitudes and behavior of Indigenous society that Indigenous people could as easily deploy in subtle and explicit ways to subvert authority.

My work draws on the vibrant field of sound studies, which brings together historians of the senses, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and architectural historians who analyze the classification, perception, regulation, and manipulation of sound.[5] The echo, a repetition that reflects from a surface to the listener, serves as a metaphor to examine vocal modulations that resonated across Mexico City. "An echo," as Joan Wallach Scott proposes, "spans large gaps of space (sound reverberates between distant points) and time (echoes aren't instantaneous), but it also creates gaps of meaning and intelligibility."[6] This rings true when considering how the trumpeting of criers, preaching, and singing each served as a platform to express such emotions as joy, sorrow, and remorse, to communicate religious doctrine, news, and warnings of impending danger, or even to make petitions and negotiate with secular authorities and divine entities. An analysis of town council records, chronicles, Indigenous-language vocabularies, confessional manuals, catechisms, and Nahua songbooks helps to articulate how authorities promoted the collective use of voices and how they silenced and prohibited other forms of vocal sounds. Reading these sources for their sonic dimensions means learning to think with a historical ear, a form of critical analysis that identifies, classifies, and historicizes sounds and their meaning. The documentary record repeatedly captured nuances of the acoustic environment. In some cases it did so incidentally, as part of commonly understood features of daily life, while in others it recorded important sonic codes and cues that shaped the aural world of colonial society. Reconstructing and contextualizing the echo that reverberated across an acoustic ecology made up of auditory boundary markers—churches, markets, or plazas—where concentrations of sound rang the loudest helps delineate the way that voices shaped notions of space and place.

5. Smith, *Acoustic World*; Rath, *How Early America Sounded*; Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality*; Bender, Corpis, and Walkowitz, "Sound Politics"; Atkinson, *Noisy Renaissance*; Stoever, *Sonic Color Line*; Steingo and Sykes, *Remapping Sound Studies*.

6. Scott, "Fantasy Echo," 291.

Acoustic Ecology

Composer and sound theorist Barry Truax asserts that a key difference between the past and the present is that the industrial age drowned out a large portion of the smaller sounds that surrounded people. For societies of the preindustrial era, the absence of the constant hum of electric devices or large machines meant the ability to discern minor sounds in greater detail and to distinguish those originating at a greater distance, the composite of which Truax described as acoustic ecology.[7] Bruce Smith's pioneering *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* took Truax's ideas and applied them to an era before recording. Smith proposes that in early modern London, aggregations of human, animal, and manufactured sounds in a given region had a range, a horizon over which people could discern them, that formed overlapping and evolving acoustic communities rooted in what he calls "soundmarks," spaces where sound rang the loudest. These same principles apply to the study of other early modern regions, where different moments of the day produced their "own distinctive panoply of sounds, even in the same place."[8] In the context of sixteenth-century Mexico City, paying attention to the elements that made up the region's acoustic ecology represents an important opportunity to consider key shifts in listening patterns and sound production that resulted from the fall of the Mexica.

The urban experience of Tenochtitlan prior to contact stimulated the senses in fascinating and terrifying ways. With a population of over 200,000 people at the city's peak, inhabitants lived in extended or joint family compounds along its many canals and pathways.[9] Organized around at least five calendars of various durations, Tenochtitlan hosted numerous, primarily outdoor celebrations in the various complexes of the city's ceremonial center.[10] These rites sought to bring balance to the cosmos through ritual killings and offerings to deities associated with war and agriculture, celestial bodies and natural phenomena, childbirth and healing, and pleasure, dancing, and flowers. The city's splendor and the political uses of ritual violence by high-ranking Mexica officials and priests functioned as constant reminders to allies and foes that cooperation carried rewards while opposition often led to sacrificial death. "The Mexica appetite for the most conspicuous consumption of the riches of

7. Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, 65–66.

8. Smith, *Acoustic World*, 55–56.

9. Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, 24.

10. These calendars included "a divinatory calendar of 260 days, a solar calendar of 360 days with 5 'dangerous days' at the end, a 52-year calendar, an 8-year calendar, and a 4-year calendar, all of which were related to one another in Aztec calculations of time and ritual." Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, 82.

empire in ritual extravaganzas," observed Inga Clendinnen, "was fuelled by the identification of those great performances not only as representations of Mexica power, but as actualizations of Mexica authority."[11] Sound played a key role in shaping that authority.

Conceptions of the city's prominence often rested on the Mexica's ability to generate or abstain from making sound. Nahua intellectuals collaborating with Bernardino de Sahagún in the middle of the sixteenth century pointed out that prior to contact, sentinels guarded strategic city spaces, including causeways, temples, and royal palaces, to ensure that no enemy entered without being noticed. In the *telpochcalli*, institutions of education for young men, students were selected to sing through the evening hours so that "in case the enemy approached at night, they could listen from afar" and thus guard the city.[12] Rituals took place in the morning, during the day, and in the evening. The Mexica offered fruit, fowl, and bread to their gods during prayer, kneeling while "sobbing and crying and asking forgiveness for their sins."[13] In Aztec society, tears and weeping formed part of what Kay Read describes as "a carefully formed, nonverbal, but nevertheless noisy language that was intended to both express emotion and create or re-create morally good orders on a number of cosmic and human levels."[14] Crying served to petition deities, support good governance, shape moral behavior, and express a range of emotions associated with joy, sadness, despair, and frustration.[15] Ritualized crying formed an intimate part of the city's soundscape.

Silence likewise played a powerful role. Aguilar observed during the old ritual celebrations interludes of collective silence among the congregants, a practice that unnerved the aging veteran. "The silence and the crying and weeping," he remembered, "were so deafening that it frightened and terrified us."[16] It is possible that when he referenced silence Aguilar witnessed rituals associated with Ochpaniztli, the last month of the harvest season, when weeping was strictly forbidden. In the main rite honoring Tonantzin, an earth goddess associated with fertility, a young woman walked to her death in absolute silence, having been tricked into believing "she would sleep with a great lord."[17] After the

11. Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, 43.

12. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, vol. 8, *De los reyes, y señores, y de la manera: que tenian, en sus elecciones: y en el gouierno de sus reinos*, ca. 1577, fol. 40v, https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.wdl/wdl.10619.

13. Aguilar, *Relación breve*, "Octava jornada."

14. Read, "Productive Tears," 59.

15. See Read; Graña Behrens, "El llorar"; Escalante, "Sentarse."

16. Aguilar, *Relación breve*, "Octava jornada."

17. Read, "Productive Tears," 59. See also DiCesare, *Sweeping the Way*.

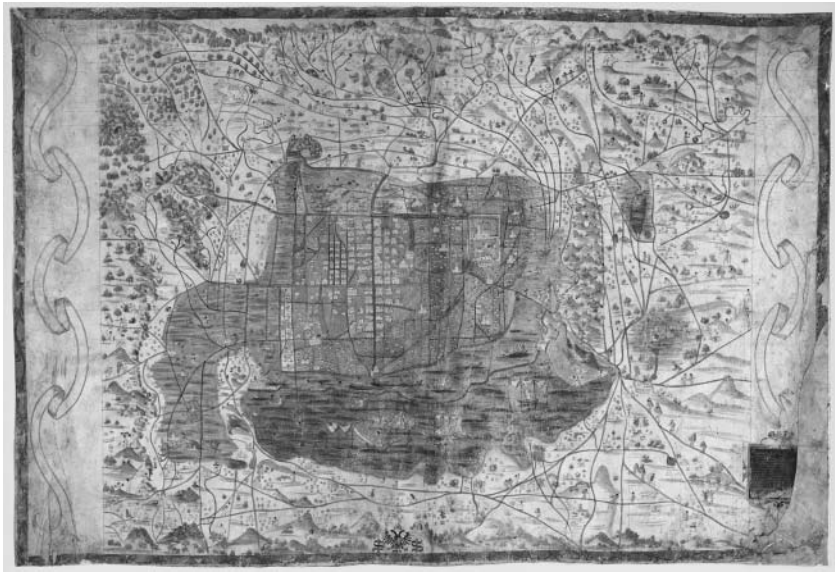

Figure 1. Map of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, ca. 1550, known as the Uppsala Map, World Digital Library. The physical map is housed at the Uppsala University Library.

solemnity of the rituals, people gathered in temple courtyards to listen to and take part in festivities that included singers, musicians, and dancers in ritual attire who performed for thousands. Percussive instruments such as rattles, as well as marine shell trumpets and ceramic flutes, accompanied the singers in a series of songs that started off slow and in low tones but gradually increased in tempo and pitch.[18] After the war, Spanish colonization transformed the physical, religious, and cultural landscape of the Valley of Mexico along with people's experiences with and understandings of sound.

The Uppsala Map of Mexico-Tenochtitlan (figure 1), the most detailed visual register of life in the former Mexica capital, helps document changes in the region's acoustic ecology. Painted around 1550 by an Indigenous mapmaker on two connected pieces of parchment, the 75-by-144-centimeter map surveys the Valley of Mexico's physical environment, fauna, economic activities, and people.[19] The depiction of Tenochtitlan-Mexico, as the city was known at

18. On Nahua musical instruments, see Both, "Aztec Music Culture."

19. The Uppsala Map is also known as the Alonso de Santa Cruz map, a reference to the written inscription in the lower right-hand corner that indicates that the king's royal cosmographer, Santa Cruz, authored the map. Careful analysis by art and architectural

midcentury, reveals the chaos and order in the rapidly changing metropolis.[20] In the center of the map, an urbanized area with large buildings fell into quadrants divided by x- and y-axes, an aspect of the urban design known as the *traza* (grid) adopted by Spanish authorities to impose order on their overseas possessions.[21] Spanish ordinances mandated that colonists lay out streets evenly in relation to a central plaza that brought together the buildings of church and state as well as the residences of the most distinguished citizens. This defining feature of urban design, which had its roots in antiquity, traveled the routes of colonization that led to the rise of cities and towns throughout Spanish America.[22] The map shows that during this early period of Spanish colonialism, most of the traza's quadrants lacked the neatly designed layout that would characterize the city in later years. Instead, one found uneven and curved streets that connected with discrete groupings of houses, many anchored by churches. Outside the main quadrant, the traza was merely an illusion.

The important street named Tacuba fell along the y-axis, represented in the Uppsala Map by a thick vertical line (figure 1). A canal down the center of the wide cobblestone avenue interrupted the traffic of people moving from east to west. "How long and wide! How straight! How even!" observed a fictional character known as Alfaro in one of Francisco Cervantes de Salazar's Latin dialogues written in 1554.[23] Cervantes, a professor of rhetoric at the newly founded Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, wrote about the city from the perspective of a first-time visitor and his eager guide. "Such attention to the process and timeline of moving and connecting people, paper, goods and ideas in walks or sails through specific geographies," proposes Jordana Dym, "remained fashionable into the era of professional history in the nineteenth century."[24] Cervantes's description of the urban landscape serves as a companion to the map that helps to amplify acoustic elements of everyday life within and beyond the mapmaker's gaze. "How noisy and what a boisterous multitude of people on foot

historians has demonstrated that the map could not have been made by anyone other than an Indigenous painter with intimate knowledge of the Basin of Mexico. López, "Indigenous Commentary"; Saracino, "Shifting Landscapes"; León-Portilla and Aguilera, *Mapa de México Tenochtitlan*.

20. Mundy, *Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan*, 130–38.

21. Indigenous mapmakers in various parts of New Spain made use of the grid design to represent spatial organization; see Hidalgo, *Trail of Footprints*, 81. For the use of the urban grid to segregate individuals, see Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race*, 31–35.

22. Nuttall, "Royal Ordinances."

23. Cervantes de Salazar, *México en 1554*, 89.

24. Dym, "Taking a Walk," 5.

and on horse," observed Alfaro about the movement on Tacuba, where carpenters, cobblers, blacksmiths, weavers, and barbers established their shops. A nearby clock in a tower struck on the hour for everyone to hear.[25]

The sound of flowing water represented the city's most ubiquitous acoustic marker and a geographic feature that carried over into the Spanish period, before a series of projects attempted to drain the lakes. Alfaro observed that "the abundance of boats and merchant vessels designed to transport goods is so impressive that there is no need to long for Venice."[26] Alfaro referenced the district of San Juan in the city's southwestern quarter, a space that the maker of the Uppsala Map also took care to detail. San Juan bordered the edge of the lake on the center left of the map. The presence on the map of three men each navigating a boat in the lake alludes to the district's reliance on fluvial transportation. The constant movement of water served as a backdrop to a host of birds and animals that formed part of the region's acoustic ecology.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the chirps, whistles, croaks, rattles, and drumming of eagles, herons, and geese overlapped with the grunts, snorts, squeals, and clucking of European animals such as horses, pigs, cows, and chickens.[27] Pigs and dogs roamed freely on the city's streets in the 1520s and 1530s, causing damage to crops and cattle as they did in cities and hamlets across Europe.[28] Residents of the city complained, for instance, that people failed to care for their dogs, to which the town council (*cabildo*) responded by requiring all dog owners to tie down their pets.[29] Besides minimizing crop destruction, this policy had the added benefit of curbing the incidence of biting and disease that resulted from encounters with dogs as well as limiting the unwanted noise generated by barking.[30]

The plazas and open-air markets represented some of the city's loudest soundmarks. In Cervantes's dialogue, the guide, Zamora, urges his guest not simply to see the array of shops and merchandise in the *plaza mayor* but to listen "to the murmur of the multitude of people."[31] As Cervantes's text moves on to

25. Cervantes de Salazar, *México en 1554*, 93 (quote), 95.

26. Cervantes de Salazar, 141.

27. Cervantes de Salazar, 287.

28. Stewart, "Man's Best Friend?," 21.

29. Bejarano, *Actas de cabildo*, 2:175.

30. The insights from a modern study of stray dogs reflect the sorts of difficulties that early modern societies faced: "The uncontrolled procreation of dogs leads to overabundant population that results in dog–human conflicts, dog bites, road traffic accidents, other troubles due to their escalated fights, blind chase of one another on the roads, barking and soiling." Chandran and Azeez, "Stray Dog Menace," 59.

31. Cervantes de Salazar, *México en 1554*, 101.

San Juan, one of the city's key entry points and one of its three major markets, the character Alfaro observes, "What a great number of Indigenous people of all classes and ages come to buy and sell!" The dialogue praises the ordered nature of the market as well as its wide selection of goods.[32] The market at Tlatelolco catered to the city's northern population. On the Uppsala Map, viewers can immediately glean the importance of Tlatelolco by the size of its temple and the fact that its market, the only one of its kind clearly labeled on the map, encompassed the same amount of space as the Franciscan convent grounds (figure 1). In Cervantes's dialogue, Zamora confirms the map's representation of the Tlatelolco market, describing it as "square and so large that no land would be needed to build a city there."[33] Three decades earlier, Hernando Cortés himself commented on the market's variety: animals, herbs, roots, timber, coal, cloth, earthenware, and grain as well as services from barbers, apothecaries, and restaurateurs who catered to customers' needs.[34] People also had difficulty escaping the noise and disturbance that accompanied the weekly affairs. Complaints by a few local residents in the western portion of the city managed to temporarily shut down the market at San Hipólito, where on Wednesdays and Thursdays vendors supplied their goods. Ironically, the complaints grew louder when residents realized that the absence of the outdoor market affected them more than its presence.[35]

Churches bound every corner of the urban grid. A key feature of these religious buildings was their use of bells, large iron-made ringing devices that produced one of the loudest sounds that a person from the period could hear. Bells represented the most significant change to the Valley of Mexico's acoustic ecology. The ringing of bells structured the elements of everyday life more than any other early modern device. Bells called people to mass and other celebrations, alerted people of danger, and delivered good news. As Alain Corbin observes for the nineteenth-century French countryside, bells "imparted a rhythm to the ordinary functioning of the community."[36] Missionaries required bells in churches to summon and announce. During the religious construction boom of the sixteenth century, Iberian metalworkers, weaponsmiths, and manufacturers of gunpowder already in the Americas transitioned to casting bells.[37] According to Toribio de Benavente, one of the first friars to arrive after the fall

32. Cervantes de Salazar, 141.

33. Cervantes de Salazar, 151.

34. Cortés, *Cartas y relaciones*, 103–5.

35. Espinosa de los Monteros, *Actas de cabildo*, 6:15.

36. Corbin, *Village Bells*, xi.

37. Nieves Molina, "Fundidores de campanas," 115. Recent work on religious architecture includes Frassani, *Building Yanhuitlan*; Crewe, *Mexican Mission*.

of the Triple Alliance, Indigenous people also "cast some good bells of very good sound; this is one of the trades they excelled in."[38] When cathedral authorities in Mexico City required a bell in 1536, they appealed to Cortés to donate a cannon from his arsenal to provide the metal for the new instrument.[39] It cost the metropolitan church the princely sum of 500 pesos to have a seven-ton bell cast for the cathedral in 1578.[40] By midcentury, dozens of churches throughout the city rang their bells to make announcements, an audible feature of religious buildings that colonists and missionaries helped establish in spaces beyond the Valley of Mexico.

Civil and religious authorities developed guidelines and policies designed to both monitor and coordinate the tolling of bells. Officials of the Archbishopric of Mexico, New Spain's highest ecclesiastical authority, mandated that "in said holy church [the cathedral], and in all the other cities, villas, and places under our archbishopric and province, [sacristans are] to ring the Ave Maria, in triplet, nine strikes with an interval, after the sun has set, when it starts to get dark. When our bell ringer of our holy church sounds the bells of the Ave Maria, all the other sacristans of the other churches and monasteries should respond with haste."[41] This type of legislation formed one customary practice by which, as Niall Atkinson has pointed out for Renaissance Florence, authorities "grounded their presence over the city by giving aural form to both important and quotidian events."[42] In some cases, city council members used the ringing of bells to regulate unwanted behavior. In 1537, the city's residents suffered an outbreak of violence and theft as a result of a sheriff who refused to patrol the streets at night. Officials agreed that for the people's safety, a curfew would go into effect at nine every evening. Bells, they instructed, should ring for 30 minutes to allow individuals to return home. Those found on the streets after hours would have their weapons confiscated and could face imprisonment.[43] Through the bells,

38. Benavente, *Historia de los indios*, 216.

39. Instruction for prelate to inform the king of the poor state of the cathedral building, Tenochtitlan-Mexico, 1 Mar. 1536, Archivo del Cabildo Catedral Metropolitano de México (hereafter cited as ACCMM), Actas de Cabildo, libro 1, fol. 002v (MEX 79000002), accessed via Musicat.

40. Simón and Juan Buenaventura finished the bell known formally as Santa María de la Asunción in 1578. Doña María, as it has been known since at least the seventeenth century, today hangs in the cathedral's east tower. Advance payment to cast a bell, Mexico City, 12 Aug. 1578, ACCMM, Actas de Cabildo, libro 3, fol. 059r (MEX 79000305), accessed via Musicat.

41. *Constituciones del arzobispado*, xvi (recto).

42. Atkinson, *Noisy Renaissance*, 121.

43. Orozco y Berra, *Actas de cabildo*, 4:70.

authorities had the ability not simply to make announcements but to convey a range of emotions including happiness, sadness, and fear. Practices of sonic control extended beyond the realm of infrastructure and objects and into the training and policing of human-made sounds. Authorities targeted most forcefully those produced with the voice.

Why Voices?

Voices formed a key component of Mexico City's acoustic ecology. Vocal cords produce various types of sounds, from verbal expressions such as words and phrases to nonverbal ones including cries, screams, whistles, and laughter. While closely tied to speech and communication, the voice has received very little attention as a category of analysis in its own right.[44] Voices must be understood "not simply as words uttered but instead as sounds shaped, heard, evaluated, and then transcribed in a variety of sources."[45] In the archive, voices speak through letters and words, the building blocks associated with language and communication. But voices also deliver loud bursts of sound or deafening moments of silence that are often memorialized in the records, even if they are largely ignored by modern readers. Different forms of vocal sound and speech employ different volumes and intonations, elements that were then socially endowed with positive and negative qualities. When Francesco Gonzaga cautioned clerics in 1583 that failure to observe silence in convents could bring about "discussions of little value, jesting, dissension, murmur, and detraction," he made an explicit case against dangerous sounds that threatened to sow confusion.[46] *Truhanería*, or jesting, encompassed action that, when paired with laughter and other vocal noises, ridiculed and mimicked. "Murmur," a term associated with dissension, conveyed dissatisfaction under a veil of anonymity.[47] In each case, the antidote was silence, the ability to abstain from producing vocal sounds.

Ironically, Spanish colonialism relied on a ubiquitous figure whose sole purpose was to emit vocal announcements: the *pregonero*, or town crier. A chief mediator between authorities and the residents of a town or city, criers institutionalized imperial policies as well as regulations developed and implemented

44. A strand of recent works suggests that scholars are changing this. See Chávez Bárcenas, "Voz, afecto y representación nahua"; Finley, *Hearing Voices*. Cf. Feldman, "Fugitive Voice."

45. Bender, Corpis, and Walkowitz, "Editors' Introduction," 3.

46. Gonzaga, *Carta de avisos y apuntamientos*, n.p.

47. Sizer, "Murmur, Clamor, and Tumult," 12.

by local cabildos. They did so through *pregones*, public notifications or proclamations of important mandates and information. Trumpeting, the vocal modulations used by town criers to get attention and deliver announcements of various kinds, depended on more than a person's ability to speak to crowds "in a loud voice," as Sebastián de Covarrubias indicated in his definition of the position.[48] As Gustavo Illades Aguiar observes, the performative aspect of the proclamations helped distinguish between the different forms of information conveyed to the public. "The social ear," he proposes, "would have enjoyed a refinement difficult to imagine today. By simply listening to the town crier's vocal inflections, merchants and clients of this or that market could anticipate the general nature of the announcement."[49] Pregoneros communicated with the city's residents about policies that regulated commerce, public administration, land, agriculture, social behavior, rituals, and infrastructure.[50] In the Iberian world, no policy went into effect until a town crier proclaimed it in public for everyone to hear.

In the case of Mexico City, town council minutes help to detail with precision the importance of criers in disseminating information. As the public arm of the cabildo, pregoneros operated in the most densely populated outdoor spaces, such as markets and plazas, so that proclamations could reach the widest audience. The plaza mayor served as the city's principal venue for announcements. Colonizers adopted this feature of urban design in virtually every new space they settled, which allowed them to standardize diverse ecological and human settings. Criers often moved through plazas to trumpet a proclamation several times for maximum exposure. For instance, on September 1, 1552, Hernando Díaz announced on the corner of Tacuba and again on the corner of the plaza mayor that intersected with Saint Augustine Street the regulations for selling food products.[51] Sometimes criers disseminated information outside the cathedral as congregants left mass, and sometimes they stood in front of the entrance to the audiencia, the viceroyalty's main judicial body.[52] On other occasions, criers made announcements in specific locations related to certain groups—"on the corner at the intersection where the nut vendors who sell cacao live," for example, or "underneath the marquee of the merchants"—especially when the policies announced pertained to these groups.[53] Pregoneros

48. Covarrubias, *Tesoro*, 594v.
49. Illades Aguiar, "Esbozo del pregonero," 46.
50. Paleta Vázquez, "Pregones y pregoneros."
51. Espinosa de los Monteros, *Actas de cabildo*, 6:62–63.
52. Bejarano, *Actas de cabildo*, 1:16.
53. Espinosa de los Monteros, *Actas de cabildo*, 5:289, 6:60.

Table 1. Mexico City's town criers, 1524–1560

Name	*Years active*
Francisco González	1524–30
Juan de Ervas	1525
Francisco Sánchez	1528
Esteban Vicente	1530–33
Francisco Príncipe	1531
Juan Berrocal	1531
Juan González	1531–32, 1538, 1541–42, 1545
Juan de Montilla	1533–38
Juan de Ronda	1533, 1535, 1540
Gonzalo Díaz	1538
Hernando Díaz	1538–39, 1550, 1552–53
Hernando de Armijo	1541–42, 1544–46, 1548
Juan Senescal	1550–51
Francisco Díaz	1552–55
Antoniles de Medina	1554–55
Diego Luis	1556
Hernando Ruiz	1556, 1560
Juan de Simancas	1557
Pedro Rodríguez	1558

Source: Bejarano, *Actas de cabildo*; Espinosa de los Monteros, *Actas de cabildo*; Orozco y Berra, *Actas de cabildo*.

often walked the streets broadcasting information, especially prior to important feast days, when criers instructed residents to sweep in front of their houses and to make shared public space attractive for the feast day procession.[54] No matter where the pregoneros communicated information, witnesses and a scribe who verified proclamations always loomed in the background taking note. In this way, the plaza and the interconnecting streets imagined by urban designers functioned as routes for disseminating essential information through specific administrative agents and in specific oral and written form.

Nineteen different criers appeared in the Mexico City cabildo minutes during the formative years from 1524 to 1560, when the capital grew rapidly (table 1). These duties were almost exclusively carried out by Spaniards, who often held on to the post for several years at a time.[55] Discretion was a key

54. Espinosa de los Monteros, 5:93.

55. The cabildo entry for January 2, 1531, identified Francisco Príncipe as *negro* (Black). Príncipe died shortly after his appointment; authorities replaced him with Juan Berrocal on April 14, 1531. Bejarano, *Actas de cabildo*, 2:76, 100.

requirement for the role, since pregoneros were privy to private conversations between council members. When Esteban Vicente became crier in 1530, for instance, he swore to "keep the secrets of the council."[56] In this year authorities leased the rights to the office to the highest bidder, a move that sought to limit the power of some criers, such as Francisco González, who profited from the position by demanding extra payment for services.[57] While details of the pregoneros' privileges in Mexico City are hard to find, we know that in Lima, the other viceregal capital in sixteenth-century Spanish America, pregoneros could earn three pesos for auctioning the goods of private parties, one peso for auctioning goods sequestered by the government, three tomines for each person summoned, and half a peso for each pregón.[58] In Mexico City, Francisco González received a salary for 1528 of 30 pesos, paid in three installments, though by the time the cabildo assigned Juan de Montilla his salary in 1538, it had shrunk to 6 pesos.[59] In some cases, criers also worked as porters for the town council, for which they received an additional salary.[60] Elsewhere in the Iberian world, criers were also jailers or executioners, combinations that gave the job a negative reputation.[61] By the time that the Real Academia Española published its 1737 edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua castellana*, it categorized the trade as "very vile and low."[62] Despite this characterization, pregoneros voiced the mandates and stipulations designed to structure everyday life.

Criers must have elicited a wide range of emotions alternating from indifference and annoyance to anger and resentment. Every week they delivered new mandates, announced revised policies, and gave reminders of various kinds, including for land auctions and important deadlines. Their notifications sometimes responded to complaints. For instance, when people protested that butchers did not select the healthiest cattle for slaughter to sell to patrons, the cabildo had to remind butchers via the pregoneros to provide fresh meat. The cabildo likewise had to deliberate and make determinations announced publicly by pregoneros when bakers sold bread that did not meet appropriate weight standards or when merchants regularly attempted to avoid setting fixed prices on merchandise.[63] In instances such as these, trumpeting functioned not simply to

56. Bejarano, 2:107.

57. Bejarano, 2:50.

58. Mendiburu, *Apuntes históricos*, 32.

59. Bejarano, *Actas de cabildo*, 1:158; Orozco y Berra, *Actas de cabildo*, 4:116.

60. Francisco González, Esteban Vicente, Francisco Príncipe, and Juan Berrocal all carried out both positions.

61. Illades Aguiar, "Esbozo del pregonero," 47.

62. *Diccionario de autoridades*, vol. 5 (1737), s.v. "pregonero."

63. Espinosa de los Monteros, *Actas de cabildo*, 6:16, 50–51, 153.

establish new protocols but also to publicly admonish rule breakers and cheats. The frequent reissuance of mandates signals that people continued to find ways to defy authorities.

The notarial registries made when criers led public property auctions shed further light on the aural contours of public spaces. Unlike when criers read proclamations aloud in the presence of witnesses, auctions demanded that scribes acknowledge the intervention of multiple actors beyond the crier: those making bids to acquire an item or rights to a service. Auctions relied above all on the crier's ability to trumpet and help raise the auctioned item's price. Consider the 1531 auction of a roadside inn. "In this city's plaza, in the presence of many people present," observed the notary who recorded the event, "Esteban Vicente, public crier, brought this public auction to a start in a high and loud voice." Detailed instructions of the sale's terms preceded the bidding war, which started at 58 pesos to be paid annually by the eventual buyer ("a censo perpetuo"). "Certain people showed up and made certain bids," the notary continued, "ones over others, until Martín Pérez, carpenter, showed up. He said he would give, and he gave, 98 gold pesos for the inn, forever and ever." The phrasing "forever and ever" (para siempre jamás) hints at potential bluster and posturing by Pérez in an attempt to silence his opponents and win the bid. The fact that Pérez told the cabildo days afterward that "he would be happy if someone made a higher bid" suggests that the carpenter perhaps experienced a bit of buyer's remorse following the sale.[64] Pérez's intervention, along with the responses of the other unnamed bidders, marked a key component of a city's acoustic ecology under Spanish rule; public auctions were a practice with deep roots in Europe that spread throughout America, beyond the viceregal capital.

These examples document the complexities of building a city from the ashes of Tenochtitlan but also the need for authorities to communicate effectively with the people. In another respect, they point to the importance that historical actors placed on listening to and producing sound. Murray Schafer's assertion that listening gave way to seeing as a result of the printing press and the Renaissance's visual output is correct if one considers the movement of time from afar.[65] But when examined up close, the work of town criers reveals the deeply intertwined worlds of hearing, sight, and writing. The cabildo records analyzed in this section represent one example of this. A crier's voice served as the key conduit between authorities and populace. Trumpeting shaped the urban experience by centering vocal modulations as the principal method for delivering information. In response, the city's populace learned to listen.

64. Bejarano, *Actas de cabildo*, 2:138–39.
65. Schafer, *Tuning of the World*, 10.

Voices from the Pulpit

Bells called the faithful to daily masses, but within the walls of the church, priests used their voices as instruments of indoctrination. Preaching, the delivery of a religious sermon to a congregation, was the main means by which clerics instructed newcomers in the faith. Through preaching, priests also continuously reinforced the tenets of Christianity to souls already converted. But importantly, the sound of this preaching and accompanying singing during the mass reverberated indoors, a dramatic and loud change from the Mexica rituals often held outdoors. All of this meant that masses would represent an important soundmark characteristic of Iberian settlements in America.

The relationship between preacher and public was an auditory one that required confirmation and interaction. The mass had established protocols for speaking and listening that endowed power to a select few who controlled speech when addressing congregations from the pulpit.[66] Juan Ozcariz's *Ceremonial, y rúbricas generales*, a manual published in Mexico City after the Council of Trent (1545–63) reformed the celebration of the mass, helps amplify the sonic experience of the Catholic ritual. Geared toward clergy, the 1579 manual covered every aspect of the mass, from corporal gestures to prayers and singing. Voices were central to the performative aspect of the mass. In Ozcariz's view, priests required a good voice in order to be effective. When describing almost every vocal component of the mass he reiterates that "all these things must be said in a clear voice . . . understood by all the attendees present during mass"; when priests made the sign of the cross, for instance, he instructed that, "in a clear voice that can be understood," they "say 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'"[67] For some portions of the mass, Ozcariz observed, voices required adjustments in volume in order to create different moods and effects: in sung mass the priest should "sing in a high voice Glory to God in the Highest," and for solemn occasions he should read the letters from the apostles "in a low voice with the ministers."[68]

This emphasis on using a clear voice simplifies and obscures the trauma of public speaking that some priests experienced. Friars' chronicles and memorials about their orders shed light on the feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and fear that afflicted some preachers. Agustín Dávila Padilla, who wrote about the Dominicans' missionary experience in Oaxaca, revealed that Francisco de Aguilar, the friar who narrated this article's introductory example, never preached because

66. Smith, *Acoustic World*, 247.
67. Ozcariz, *Ceremonial, y rúbricas generales*, 29, 32.
68. Ozcariz, 32, 37.

"he could not overcome his fear of speaking in public."[69] One of the most distinguished Nahuatl scholars of his generation, the Franciscan Gerónimo de Mendieta, experienced great difficulty at the pulpit because of a speech impediment. Mendieta's disciple, Juan Bautista Viseo, commented that even though his mentor "was impaired and somewhat blocked in the Spanish language, at the pulpit he spoke the [Nahuatl] language with such clarity, intonation, and elegance that it caused admiration."[70] The importance of an ideal voice to the missionary enterprise explains why its lack caught the attention of those who wrote. Preachers prized clarity and fluidity, and they avoided broken speech because it disrupted the aural feedback so important to evangelization.

The first friars in Mexico also paid close attention to Indigenous voices for preaching. It is well known that a faction within the Franciscan order encouraged the ordination of Indigenous priests early in the sixteenth century. They did so in large part because of Indigenous peoples' capacity for oration. Pedro de Gante, who crucially shaped the early phase of evangelization in Mexico, stated with confidence to Charles V in 1532 that Indigenous people were "good scribes and preachers or orators, with immense fervor."[71] As Martín de Valencia, the leader of the Twelve Apostles, a group of Franciscans who arrived in Mexico in 1524, explained to Charles V a few weeks after Gante, such teaching aimed "to eliminate the root" in these children of the Indigenous elite of the "unfortunate memory" of being removed forcibly from the care of their parents: "We took all their boys, sons of caciques and leaders principally," and "taught them to read and write, sing plainsong and polyphony, pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and officiate mass."[72] Almost a half year after Gante and Valencia, Jacobo de Testera wrote to the king praising Indigenous people's vocal skills, noting, "They preach the sermon we have taught them to the masses, and they say it with good spirit."[73] For a brief moment in the sixteenth century, Indigenous people shared the privilege of speaking in the most important forum of daily life.

A priest expected parishioners to listen intently to his voice and to respond when necessary. Diego Valadés captured this principle in one of the illustrations of his *Rhetorica christiana*, a 1579 manual designed for Franciscan missionaries bound for central Mexico (figure 2). The engraving shows a priest in a pulpit

69. Dávila Padilla, *Historia de la fundación*, 487.

70. Bautista Viseo, *Sermonario*, prologue, ij (verso).

71. Pedro de Gante to Charles V, Mexico City, 31 Oct. 1532, in Ministerio de Fomento, *Cartas de Indias*, 52.

72. Martín de Valencia to Charles V, Cuautitlan, 17 Nov. 1532, in Ministerio de Fomento, *Cartas de Indias*, 56.

73. Jacobo de Testera to Charles V, Convento de Huejotzingo, 6 May 1533, in Ministerio de Fomento, *Cartas de Indias*, 65.

Figure 2. ''Ad sensus aptat coelestia dona magister, Aridaq eloquij pectora fonte rigat,'' in Valadés, *Rhetorica christiana*, following p. 110. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/s/471v75.

preaching to a crowd as he points to a series of panels that run across the top of the page concerning the Passion of Christ. Valadés illustrates in this engraving how missionaries used images as didactic tools to teach Indigenous populations about Christianity. But while the priest gestures to one of the panels with a rod, the congregation continues to fix its attention squarely on the priest. Congregations learned to affirm the preacher's message by uttering words such as *amen* (so be it) in response to a sermon or by praying out loud together.[74] The codified body positions for praying, especially kneeling with folded hands, but also for praising (raised head and arms) and penitence (bowed head) resulted from sonic cues delivered vocally by the priest during different portions of the mass. Parishioners learned to listen for these acoustic markers in order to respond accordingly. The feedback between the priest and the parishioners resembles what Carolyn Birdsall has theorized for another context as "affirmative resonance," a sonic exchange that validated the relationship of those present as part of a community.[75] The process points to the way vocal cues can trigger physical memories when people are assembled in large groups.

In some cases, public response required more than uttered words. Testera admitted to Charles V that friars were forced by their limited numbers to confess Indigenous penitents en masse but that he felt moved when hearing their "sighs, wails, and tears" as they asked for forgiveness.[76] Prescriptions about behavior formed an intimate component of the Catholic ritual. In his bilingual confessional in Nahuatl and Spanish published in Mexico City in 1565, Alonso de Molina instructed parishioners "to look for and examine all your sins and wrongdoings. Once you have remembered them, great remorse, sadness, and weeping [must] overtake you."[77] It is no surprise, then, that the collective confession described by Testera formed part of an affirmative resonance based on vocal sounds.

The high ceilings of the churches constructed in Mexico during the sixteenth century served as the perfect acoustic instrument to amplify a priest's voice and those of the congregants when called to respond. Monastic single-nave churches constituted the most common type of religious edifice in sixteenth-century central Mexico. "Great altitude upon a narrow plan," observed George Kubler of the design principle of this religious architecture.[78] But amplification

74. For a concise lesson plan for congregants that included major prayers, sins, commandments, and sacraments, see *Cartilla para enseñar a leer*.

75. Birdsall, "Earwitnessing," 174.

76. Testera to Charles V, Convento de Huejotzingo, 6 May 1533, in Ministerio de Fomento, *Cartas de Indias*, 66.

77. Molina, *Confesionario breve*, 2v.

78. Kubler, *Mexican Architecture*, 231–32.

came at a cost: as Richard Rath observes of medieval and early modern European churches, reverberation across the nave, the central part of the building that stretched from the main entrance in the rear to the space around the altar known as the chancel, meant that "sounds bounced around echo upon echo upon echo rather than reaching the listener's ears all at once," which "created a powerfully moving effect, one that amplified the voice and enriched the tone, but at the cost of clarity."[79] A building's acoustic properties could enhance rituals, ceremonies, and artistic productions of various kinds, but they could also frustrate these same events.[80] Amplification also picked up other, unwanted sounds, including sneezing, coughing, laughing, crying, and chatter, that disrupted the religious ritual and contributed to the muddied echoes of people's voices. The use of high ceilings in the Catholic churches that spread across the routes laid out by Spanish explorers and missionaries unwittingly ensured that similar patterns of listening plagued ceremonies in other regions.

In complaints and observations that missionaries shared in their writing, one can glean the way that voices could also serve to disrupt, tools of resistance that gained strength in numbers. Aguilar declared disappointedly that Indigenous peoples did not demonstrate an appropriate measure of respect and veneration when attending mass. "Having been baptized," he recounted for his readers, "they come to the churches, almost all of them or many of them by force and with very little reverence or fear, chattering and talking; they leave during the best moment of the mass [the Consecration of the Host] and [during] the sermon."[81] The friar's account sheds light on how missionaries assigned meaning to different vocal modulations: when the voice showed remorse, they praised weeping and crying; chatter and yakking represented disruption and disrespect. Alonso de Molina, a Franciscan grammarian who specialized in Nahuatl, instructed missionaries to ask people in confession whether they paid attention in mass or whether they spent their time "saying *chuzas* or yakking with some."[82] Indigenous people across the Americas—not just those in the Valley of Mexico—tormented Spanish priests with such irreverent behavior that reflected anger, frustration, and perhaps a dose of boredom with having to conform to Christian rules. Moreover, the missionaries' inability to impose silence, to limit people's voices, reflects the challenges they faced when discharging their duties.

79. Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, 100.
80. Clarke, *Echo's Chambers*, 3.
81. Aguilar, *Relación breve*, "Octava jornada."
82. Molina, *Confesionario breve*, 8r.

Transforming the Voices of the Converted

Singing, the production of musical tones with the voice, formed part of religious and political rituals as well as public celebrations that had strong roots in Mesoamerica and Europe. Missionaries in the sixteenth century and throughout the early modern period incorporated musical education into their campaigns of evangelization, a feature of Spanish colonialism that extended beyond central Mexico and influenced other European kingdoms across America.[83] Missionaries praised Indigenous people who distinguished themselves as singers and songwriters. As an instructor of Indigenous youth at the school of San José de los Naturales, Pedro de Gante taught boys and young men to sing in the European style. "I can say quite confidently," he wrote to Charles V in 1532, "that there are . . . cantors who could sing very well in Your Majesty's chapel; one has to see it to believe it."[84] It should come as no surprise that Gante drew on both sight and hearing to express his experience: these represented the most important senses associated with European rational thought.[85] Valadés, a disciple of Gante and a talented artist and engraver, depicted Gante at work with students in an atrium, the walled courtyard in many early convent buildings used to instruct Indigenous peoples (figure 3). Valadés played an important part in codifying Franciscan evangelical methodology, not only for training young cantors but also for teaching about the creation of the world, doctrine, penitence, confession, and the sacraments.

It is unclear how many out of the 500 students in Gante's school learned to sing, but it is clear that those who did excelled in plainsong and polyphony.[86] Testera, who evangelized in Yucatan, Michoacan, and the Valley of Mexico, exclaimed, "What can we say about the Indigenous people of this land? They write, read, sing plainsong, polyphony, and counterpoint, write choir books, [and] teach others the joy of ecclesiastical music."[87] A common method used in

83. See Toelle, "Mission Soundscapes"; Filippi, "Sound Doctrine"; Goodman, "'But They Differ from Us'"; Mann, *Power of Song*; Russell, *From Serra to Sancho*; Koegel, "Spanish and French Mission Music"; Turrent, *La conquista musical*.

84. Gante to Charles V, Mexico City, 31 Oct. 1532, in Ministerio de Fomento, *Cartas de Indias*, 52. See also Ferer, *Music and Ceremony*.

85. Clarke, *Echo's Chamber*, 4; Sacristán-Ramírez, "Audible Paintings."

86. Plainsong is a compositional format that follows a single unaccompanied line of melody. Polyphony is the combination of two or more lines juxtaposed in harmony against each other. See also Valencia to Charles V, Cuautitlan, 17 Nov. 1532, in Ministerio de Fomento, *Cartas de Indias*, 56.

87. Testera to Charles V, Convento de Huejotzingo, 6 May 1533, in Ministerio de Fomento, *Cartas de Indias*, 65.

Figure 3. Cantors. Valadés, *Rhetorica christiana*, following p. 106. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/s/77ldz8. (The image has been cropped to focus on the cantors specifically.)

Europe to teach music since the eleventh century consisted of plotting scales on one's palm (figure 4). Known as the Guidonian hand, after Benedictine monk Guido d'Arezzo (ca. 991–1050), this mnemonic device plotted on the palm the hexachord, a six-tone pattern that followed the notes of the major scale. The device started at the top of the thumb with the lowest note and then moved downward to the fleshy part of the hand known as the thenar muscle; from there, the notes moved up and along the top of the palm, through the creases of the little finger, and counterclockwise across the remaining fingers in a spiral motion.[88] Cantors used this device to sight-read by practicing singing runs of descending scales from lowest to highest, known as *solfeo*.[89] Diagrams in printed books of devices such as the Guidonian hand, meant to be sung out loud, remind us that textual artifacts could involve users in active ways beyond silent reading. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Indigenous cantors had achieved a great deal of independence from parish priests to schedule paid bookings and select music; they also enjoyed a steady stipend and paid half the amount of tribute.[90]

As in other aspects of evangelization and vocal instruction, dissonant tones and voices intervening out of place created challenges for authorities. Diego Jiménez Arias observed that "cantors should not sing disproportionately, nor should they sing things mockingly, but they should sing like the Greeks, who barely open their mouths; [cantors should] sing gracefully and by their

88. See also Berger, "Hand and the Art."
89. On musical education in the Iberian world, see Mazuela-Anguita, *Artes de canto*.
90. Truitt, "Adopted Pedagogies," 321.

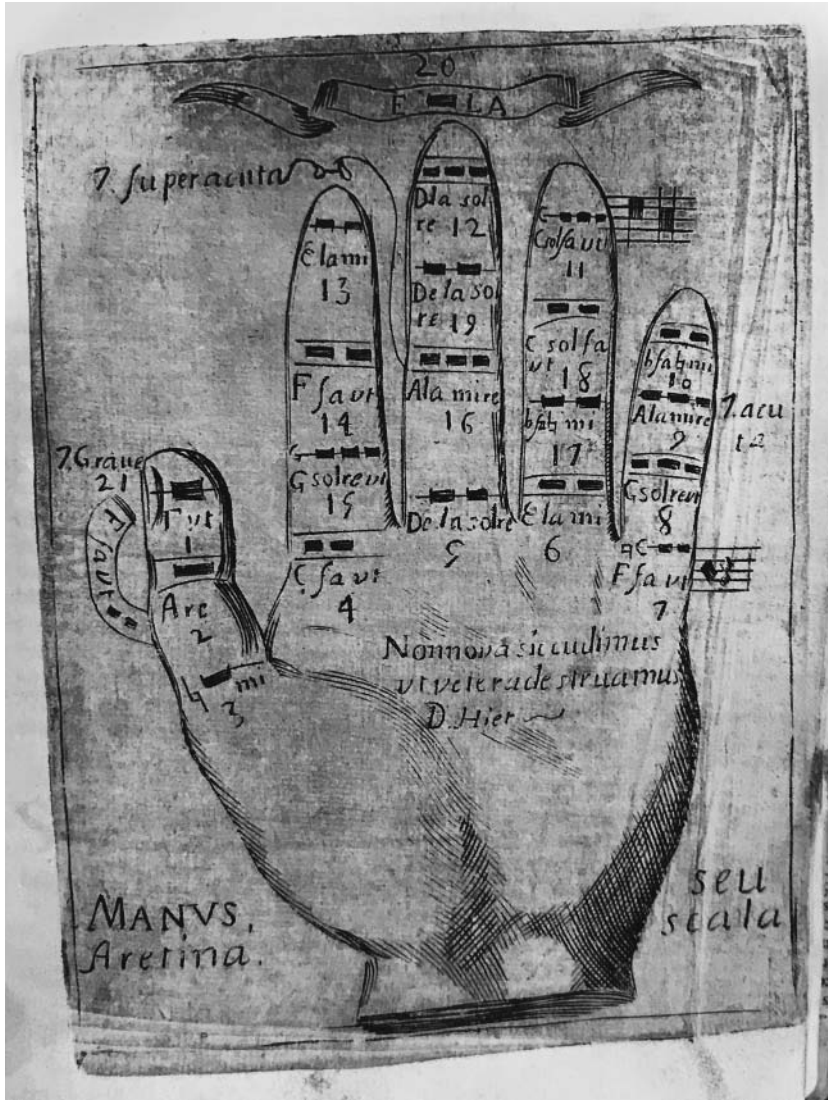

Figure 4. Guidonian hand. Sánchez, *Regla de N. S. P. S. Francisco*, following p. 52. Colonial Spanish America Collection, Texas Christian University, Mary Couts Burnett Library, Special Collections.

modest action elicit devotion."[91] When ecclesiastical officials of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico attempted in the mid-sixteenth century to standardize mass across the Valley of Mexico, they were particularly concerned about the discordant tones generated during the sung portions. They implied that cantors contributed to disorder by failing to show up on time, talking during the mass, and dressing inappropriately.[92] No doubt, as Ben Anderson observes in his study of the relationship between music and memory, singing served to praise but also to trigger memories and set moods.[93] If those responsible for the musical components of the mass could not perform their duty, a great deal of the solemn ritual would be lost.

In the decades after the downfall of the Aztecs, singing spilled into the city's plazas and public spaces. Indigenous singers performed in Mexico City in "confraternity processions, feast day celebrations, theatrical performances, marriages, and burials, among other occasions."[94] Voices gave structure to the celebrations. Singers created intervals between songs, measured time during celebrations, and helped reaffirm social and cultural bonds by inviting others to join in with their own voices. While transcriptions of the verses in the songs have survived in alphabetic form, we know little else about their phonic aspects—those tied to enunciation, volume, melody, and time signature—or their corporeal aspects, such as gestures and body movements.[95] Singers intoned songs about valiant warriors and loss, a form of epic poetry that captured aspects of religious life, love, and suffering. According to Toribio de Benavente, composers prepared new songs for ritual holidays and special occasions such as an important wedding or victory in war, and after the conquest they wrote about loss and despair.[96] "Before the wars," he observed, "when they celebrated with liberty, the largest towns would bring together three or four thousand or more to dance. After the conquest, half, and ever since that number dwindled and lessened."[97]

Religious authorities actively policed the private uses of singing, music, and dancing. Missionaries studied Indigenous songs and dances because they prevented converts from attending mass and did not allow them to let go of the old deities. "Did you stop by the places where they danced, or got drunk, or to the feasts, making light of mass," Molina instructed clerics to ask those seeking

91. Jiménez Arias, *Lexicon ecclesiasticum*, 81.
92. *Constituciones del arzobispado*, xiii (verso).
93. Anderson, "Recorded Music," 13. See also Birdsall, "Earwitnessing," 175.
94. Truitt, "Adopted Pedagogies," 315.
95. León-Portilla, "Estudio introductorio," 257.
96. Benavente, *Memoriales*, 340.
97. Benavente, 341.

confession.[98] Friars suspected that due to the language barrier that separated Nahua from most Spaniards, singing represented an important vehicle through which idolatrous beliefs continued to thrive. Diego Durán summarized this suspicion well when he said that Spaniards should watch Indigenous people closely because they praised their idols through song "when they know that those watching cannot understand. But as soon as they see someone who understands [Nahuatl], they silence the song and they sing another song composed for Saint Francis, complete with a hallelujah, to cloak their wrongdoing."[99] Sahagún's 1583 collection of Christian hymns in Nahuatl attempted to offer an alternative to the ancient songs. "I published the songs in this volume," he wrote in the prologue, "so that they will all stop the ancient songs."[100] The Third Mexican Provincial Council of 1585, an ecclesiastical gathering that deliberated on the policies developed by the Council of Trent to address the Protestant Reformation, recommended Sahagún's collection as a way to rid communities of the "old songs."[101] Policing of music and dance continued well into the colonial period, albeit with a shift in focus: during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, authorities targeted dances and lyrics for ridiculing religious and secular authorities and promoting licentious movement and erotic language.[102]

Voices, Memory, and Imagination

The strategies used to evangelize—catechism, musical education, confession, and preaching—engendered a culturally imagined soundscape of good and evil where voices played a central role. Spaniards described heaven as a place "characterized by the perpetual liturgical music sung and played by the angels and the blessed." Central to paradise were aural characteristics such as large choirs of angels and musical ensembles that each enjoyed divine skill.[103] Negative spaces such as hell and purgatory echoed with agony and suffering, with voices constantly wailing in despair. Seventeenth-century theologian José Boneta described the cries from purgatory as encompassing "all the pain of all the women who have given birth throughout the world, all the abuses suffered by captives and the enslaved, all the ways that justice torments criminals, [and] all the anguish and

98. Molina, *Confesionario breve*, 8r.
99. Durán, *Historia de las Indias*, 122.
100. Sahagún, *Psalmodia christiana*, prologue.
101. León-Portilla, "Estudio introductorio," 157–58.
102. Marín López, "Conflicted Relationship."
103. Filippi, "Sonic Afterworld," 189. See also Sacristán-Ramírez, "Audible Paintings."

anxieties of those on their deathbed."[104] Boneta pointed out to his readers that the pained voices one heard there belonged to parents, relatives, or friends, "who wailing, call you by your name from the fire in which they burn in anguish."[105] Friars brought this ideological dimension to bear on their teachings in central Mexico. Molina instructed his brethren to emphasize the need for confession in order to avoid the pits of hell. "If you do not confess now," he wrote, "[God] will cast you to hell, where you will dwell forever punished by devils who will torment and afflict you, and you will never leave that place."[106] One of the notable ways in which the devil tormented the damned was by amplifying the terrible wailing and cries that only voices could produce.

At the beginning of this article, Francisco de Aguilar compared the cries of the Tenochca women upon encountering the bodies of the executed elites to the voices that screamed in hell. He did so in part to convey the fear that he felt but also to express the difficulty of living with and assimilating the brutal memory of the episode. Fear often drove how missionaries assimilated complicated situations, including confronting inexplicable sounds by explaining them as demonic utterances.[107] The Dominican's candid account reveals how sound memories, the way that auditory experience informs remembering and first-hand reports, played an especially prominent role in inscribing voices with positive or negative values.[108] Besides the voices of the widows and daughters of the slaughtered leaders, the 80-year-old veteran remembered that when squaring off against the fierce Tlaxcalan army in 1519, the "howls, screams, and shouts they made instilled in us tremendous fear and shock, so much that many Spaniards asked for confession."[109] Members of the expedition turned to religious authorities after experiencing such sonic terror not simply from fear of death but also from the uncertainty of the afterlife. Seeking confession provided an opportunity to get one's affairs in order, as it would in the sacraments that missionaries later preached about in the postwar period. Remembering Tenochtitlan on the eve of the battle that temporarily expelled Spanish-led forces from the island city, Aguilar could not escape the "estruendo y gritería" (uproar and yelling) from Tenochcas prepared for battle.[110] "The yelling was so loud," he recalled, "that it engulfed the entire city."[111]

104. Boneta, *Gritos del purgatorio*, 3.
105. Boneta, prologue.
106. Molina, *Confesionario breve*, 2r–v.
107. Toelle, "Mission Soundscapes," 71.
108. Birdsall, "Earwitnessing," 170.
109. Aguilar, *Relación breve*, "Tercera jornada."
110. Aguilar, "Séptima jornada."
111. Aguilar, "Tercera jornada."

Clamor, or *la grita*, described an assortment of deafening voices that allowed the former soldier to convey the disorder and chaos of a city under siege. According to the sixteenth-century linguist Sebastián de Covarrubias, the term described the use of "strong voices to complain, threaten, or warn."[112] In the context of war, la grita surfaced in the moments prior to battle or during pivotal episodes of confrontation, when the struggle for life and death reached its peak. The sonic dimension of la grita extended beyond human voices to include the drums, fifes, and trumpets accompanying marching orders and cries of war. It also included the explosion of cannons and rifles. Aguilar complained bitterly about those Spaniards "who never heard clamor or war" but who claimed the spoils of victory and received profitable encomiendas.[113] He was not alone. A far less introspective Bernal Díaz del Castillo equally derided upstarts who benefited from the spoils of war without playing a role in securing new lands and tribute "through their sweat and blood."[114] War represented for Aguilar a sonic experience defined by shouts and yelling whose echoes left unseen scars. Historians treat those who wrote about the events of the conquest as informants and chroniclers who in later years pushed their own agendas. Seldom, however, do we consider these writers as veterans of war who experienced significant trauma. Facing trauma for a Spaniard such as Aguilar meant confronting terrifying memories and squaring them with the ideological framework of Catholicism.

Sonic Fragments

Just as the echo returns fragmentary portions of sound to the listener, the documentary record yields an incomplete but audible history of the colonization of voices. Cartographic devices such as the Uppsala Map help us understand the relationship between urban design and sound production. Town council records, literary accounts, and construction receipts from ecclesiastical archives help amplify the material dimensions of sound, including not simply bells and voices but design features in buildings and infrastructure such as plazas, choirs, pulpits, and steeples. In training the historical ear, we learn that colonists and missionaries almost always registered in writing the sonic elements of colonization. The countless catechisms, confessional manuals, and other religious treatises printed by Mexico City's publishers leave definitive roadmaps about the importance of voices, music, and bells but also about how

112. Covarrubias, *Tesoro*, 450v.
113. Aguilar, *Relación breve*, "Octava jornada."
114. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, quoted in García, "Noticias bio-bibliográficas," xliii.

to manipulate, stage, and choreograph sonic elements to gain the best effect. The period of time surrounding the downfall of the Triple Alliance allows us to see that vocal sounds carried meaning shaped by cultural heritage but also by the geographic context of the Americas. An analysis of voices yields evidence of authorities regulating bodies to conform to prescribed notions of propriety.

The acoustic elements that shaped early social interaction in New Spain's capital point to a rather startling revelation: the institutionalization of colonial power relied on sound to achieve its purpose. In conjunction with the machinery of fleets, notaries, explorers, judges, provincial bureaucrats, and translators that enabled the movement of Spaniards and the so-called pacification of new lands, town criers made colonization possible by yelling into crowds. This feature of European society took root in the Americas beyond the lands settled by the Spanish, and it formed part of an infrastructure of sound centered on bells that regulated time and movement. These changes, along with the shift from outdoor to indoor rituals favored by European priests, represent the most dramatic adjustments to the Americas under Spanish rule. Christian masses, in particular, helped instill and affirm the rules for speaking and listening. Paying attention to the elements of the region's acoustic ecology provides an important opportunity to consider how noise, chatter, music, laughter, screaming, and crying relate to the histories of discipline, education, religion, and imperial expansion.

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Alex Hidalgo is a social and cultural historian of colonialism and empire in Latin America. He is associate professor of history at Texas Christian University and a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow for the 2022–23 academic year. Hidalgo is the author of *Trail of Footprints: A History of Indigenous Maps from Viceregal Mexico* (University of Texas Press, 2019), and he has published articles in the *American Historical Review*, *Ethnohistory*, and the *Journal of Latin American Geography*. His second monograph, a work tentatively titled "Mexican Soundscapes of the Colonial Era," explores the way that cultural difference, linguistic diversity, and human categorization shaped people's interpretation of the acoustic environment.