

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries

D. A. Brading

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Mexican Phoenix

Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries

In 1999 Our Lady of Guadalupe was proclaimed patron saint of the Americas by Pope John Paul II. How did a sixteenth-century Mexican painting of the Virgin Mary attract such an unprecedented honour?

Across the centuries the enigmatic power of this image has aroused fervent devotion in Mexico: it served as the banner of the rebellion against Spanish rule and, despite scepticism and anti-clericalism, still remains a potent symbol of the modern nation. But devotion was also sustained by the tradition that in 1531 Mary appeared to a poor Indian named Juan Diego and miraculously imprinted her likeness on his cape. From the start this narrative was inspired by a scriptural theology in which Juan Diego figured as another Moses and the Virgin's image as the Mexican Ark of the Covenant.

The purpose of this book is to trace the intellectual origins, the sudden efflorescence and the adamantine resilience of the tradition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is a story that will fascinate anyone concerned with the history of religion and its symbols.

DAVID BRADING is Professor of Mexican History, University of Cambridge. His previous books include *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico 1763–1810* (1971), which was awarded the prestigious Bolton Prize, *Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío* (1978), *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution* (ed., 1980), *Prophecy and Myth in Mexican History* (1984), *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (1985), *The First America* (1991) and *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico* (1994). Professor Brading taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and at Yale University before returning to Cambridge.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries

D. A. Brading

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries

D. A. Brading

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# MEXICAN PHOENIX

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE:  
IMAGE AND TRADITION  
ACROSS FIVE CENTURIES

D. A. BRADING



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University’s mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521801317](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521801317)

© D. A. Brading 2001

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2001  
Reprinted 2002

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*  
Brading, D. A.

Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: image and tradition across five centuries / D. A. Brading.

p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 80131 1  
1. Guadalupe, Our Lady of. 2. Mary, Blessed Virgin, Saint – Apparitions and miracles – Mexico. 3. Mexico – Religious life and customs. I. Title.

BT660.G8 B67 2001  
232.917’097253–dc21 00–063061

ISBN 978-0-521-80131-7 Hardback  
ISBN 978-0-521-53160-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries  
D. A. Brading  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

For Celia Wu

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries  
D. A. Brading  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

And there appeared a great sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered . . . And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness . . . And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

REVELATION 12.1–2, 14; 21.2

The day in which the Virgin of Tepeyac is not adored in this land, it is certain that there shall have disappeared, not only Mexican nationality, but also the very memory of the dwellers of Mexico today . . . In the last extreme, in the most desperate cases, the cult of the Mexican Virgin is the only bond that unites them.

IGNACIO MANUEL ALTAMIRANO, *The Feast of Guadalupe*

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries  
D. A. Brading  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---



Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>Preface</i>	xv
Introduction	1
1 Image and typology	13
2 Myth and history	33
3 The Woman of the Apocalypse	54
4 Indian seer	76
5 Presence and tradition	96
6 Patron of Mexico	119
7 Divine idea	146
8 Heavenly painting	169
9 Myth and scepticism	201
10 The last resort	228
11 History and infallibility	258
12 The coronation	288
13 Juan Diego	311
14 <i>Nican mopohua</i>	342
15 Epiphany and revelation	361
<i>Notes</i>	369
<i>Bibliography</i>	406
<i>Index</i>	423

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries  
D. A. Brading  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Illustrations

	Our Lady of Guadalupe, photo Rafael Doniz, Basilica of Santa María de Guadalupe, Mexico City	frontispiece
1	St Luke painting the Virgin Mary. Engraving after Raphael, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid	page 27
2	Juan Correa, <i>Our Lady of Pilar with Santiago at Zaragoza</i> , photo Pedro Angeles, Church of Santiago del Río, San Luis Potosí, Mexico	38
3	Title page of Luis de Cisneros, <i>Historia de el principio y origen, progressos venidas a México y milagros de la Santa Imagen de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios</i> (Mexico, 1621)	49
4	Title page of Miguel Sánchez, <i>Imagen de la Virgen María, Madre de Dios de Guadalupe, milagrosamente aparecida en la ciudad de México</i> (Mexico, 1648). Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Condumex, Mexico City	56
5	The apparition of the image of Guadalupe before Juan de Zumárraga. Engraving from Sánchez, <i>Imagen de la Virgen María</i>	62
6	Our Lady of Guadalupe in her sanctuary. Engraving from Sánchez, <i>Imagen de la Virgen María</i>	67
7	Title page of Luis Laso de la Vega, <i>Huei tlamahuiçoltica</i> . . . (Mexico, 1649)	82
8	Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Tepeyec to Juan Diego. Engraving from Luis Becerra Tanco, <i>Felicidad de México</i> , 2nd edn (Mexico, 1675). Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City	94
9	Vision of St John the Evangelist on Patmos-Tenochtitlan, photo Manuel Zavala. Cartouche from illustration 11	100
10	Baltazar de Echave Orio, <i>Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> , 1606, photo Pedro Cuevas. Painting in private collection, Mexico City	105
		xi

xii                      LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

11	Our Lady of Guadalupe with St Michael and St Gabriel, photo Manuel Zavala. Seventeenth-century painting by unknown artist. Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City	109
12	Baltazar Troncoso y Sotomayor, <i>The City of Mexico pleads for the Intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe during the Plague of 1737</i> . Engraving after sketch of José de Ibarra. Frontispiece of Cayetano de Cabrera y Quintero, <i>Escudo de Armas de México</i> (Mexico, 1746). Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City	126
13	J. S. and J. R. Klauber, <i>Benedict XIV recognizes Our Lady of Guadalupe as Patron of New Spain</i> , 1754, photo Jesús Sánchez Uribe. An engraving, Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City	134
14	St Luke painting the Virgin of Guadalupe, flanked by St John the Evangelist, Duns Scotus and Sor María de Agreda. Relief carving on the Franciscan College of Guadalupe at Zacatecas. Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City	144
15	The Holy Family with Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe, c. 1800, photo Jesús Sánchez Uribe. Anonymous painting, private collection, Mexico City	151
16	Joaquín Villegas, <i>God the Father painting Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> , photo Arturo Piera. Eighteenth-century painting, Museo Nacional del Arte, Mexico City	157
17	Antonio Baratti, <i>The Soul of the Virgin Mary is Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> . Engraving after sketch of Cayetano Zampinus. Frontispiece of Francisco Javier Lazcano, SJ, <i>Opusculum theophilosophicum de principatu . . . de navitate Virginis Mariae</i> (Venice, 1755). Author's collection	161
18	Baltazar Troncoso y Sotomayor, <i>St Michael, surrounded by Angels and Apostles, bears Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> . Engraving after design of Miguel Cabrera. Private collection, Mexico City.	174
19	Miguel Cabrera, <i>St Francis Holds aloft Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> . Painting in the ex-college of Guadalupe at Zacatecas. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico	176
20	José de Ribera y Argomanis, <i>Our Lady of Guadalupe as Patron of New Spain</i> , 1788, photo Gilberto Chen. Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City	177
21	Juan Manuel Yllanes del Huerto, <i>St Thomas the Apostle as Quetzalcoatl preaching in Tlaxcala</i> , 1791, photo Ernesto Peñaloza. Watercolour on paper. Museo Nacional del Arte, Mexico City	203
22	Ramón Torres, <i>Archbishop Alonso Núñez de Haro y Peralta and Abbot José Félix Colorado</i> , c. 1785, photo Manuel Zavala. Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City	209

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS xiii

23	Pedro Gualdi, <i>The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> , engraving in Pedro Gualdi, <i>Monumentos de Méjico</i> (Mexico, 1841)	241
24	Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, photo 1889, Archivo Casasús, Mexico City	254
25	Joaquín García Icazbalceta. Painting by unknown artist, Museo Nacional de Historia, Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City	259
26	Fortino Hipólito Vera, bishop of Cuernavaca. Photo taken from <i>Album de la coronación de la Santísima Virgen de Guadalupe</i> , ed. Victoriano Agüeros (Mexico, 1895)	277
27	Silvio Capparoni, <i>Abbot José Antonio Plancarte y Labastida</i> , photo Jesús Sánchez Uribe. Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City	293
28	Gonzalo Carrasco, SJ, <i>The Coronation of Our Lady of Guadalupe on 12 October 1895</i> , photo Jesús Sánchez Uribe. Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City	296
29	A Cristero flag, c. 1926, photo Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Ramón Cuadriello collection, Mexico City	315
30	Cristero mass at Coalcomán, 12 December 1928. Contemporary postcard. Ramón Cuadriello collection, Mexico City	316
31	Miguel Cabrera, <i>True Portrait of the Venerable Juan Diego</i> , 1751, photo Jesús Sánchez Uribe. Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City	332
32	The modern basílica of Guadalupe, 1977, architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, photo Marco A. Pacheco, from <i>Guadalupe. Maravilla Americana. Homenaje a Monseñor Guillermo Schulenberg</i> , ed. Manuel Olimón Nolasco, Centro de Cultura Casa Lamm (Mexico, 1998)	336
33	Ernesto Tamariz, <i>John Paul II</i> , 1982, photo Ernesto Peñaloza. Monumental bronze statue in the atrium of the basílica of Guadalupe, Mexico City	339
34	José Luis Neyra, <i>Wonder Woman</i> , photo Neyra Collection, Mexico City	346
35	<i>Nican mopohua</i> . . . , initial page, from Luis Laso de la Vega, <i>Huei tlamahuiçoltica</i> . . . (Mexico, 1649)	354
36	Our Lady of Guadalupe, photo Julie Coimbra, Mexican alabaster statue, eighteenth century. Private collection	364

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-80131-7 - Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries  
D. A. Brading  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Preface

In 1993 I returned to Mexico and there, in the idyllic surroundings of the Centre for the Study of the History of Mexico at Condumex, I immersed myself in reading a profusion of baroque sermons preached in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe. So enthused was I by these panegyrics that I persuaded Condumex to publish in facsimile form *Seven Guadalupean Sermons 1709–1765* as their book for that year. In *The First America* (1991), I had already included a chapter on the Virgin entitled ‘Mexican Phoenix’. Inspired by Francisco de la Maza’s classic work, *Mexican Guadalupanism* (1952), I there emphasized the patriotic motivation of Miguel Sánchez, the first chronicler of the Virgin Mary’s apparitions to Juan Diego, even if it was obvious that he was also a profound theologian. What the sermons revealed was the extent to which preachers drew on the Greek Fathers of the Church to elaborate a neo-platonic theology of the Mexican image. Here was the starting point of my research and the explanation of why this book begins in the ancient rather than in the New World.

Distracted by a vain attempt to define the relation between patriotism and nationalism, I did not begin to write this general account of the Guadalupe tradition until 1996. By then I had already delved into the extensive works of Clemente de Jesús Mungía, the nineteenth-century bishop of Michoacán, and, much earlier, in *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, first published in Spanish in 1973, had described the idiosyncratic intervention of Servando de Mier, the insurgent ideologue. What soon became clear was that in almost every generation since the middle years of the seventeenth century something of note or interest had been written about the Virgin of Tepeyac. The materials for a study of the cult and tradition of the Guadalupe are abundant but heterogeneous. They range from weighty treatises, polemical disquisitions and critical pamphlets to panegyric sermons, illustrated albums and detailed descriptions of public celebrations, not to mention pastoral letters, papal pronouncements and iconographical assessments. The causes and occasions of these publications were diverse. But it should be noted that devotion to the Virgin has played a major role in Mexican history, be it in the achievement of independence or as a symbol of the Church’s resistance to political intervention. On another plane, the historical credibility of the apparition narrative has been a source of contention since the beginning of the nineteenth century. To trace the development of the tradition of Our Lady

of Guadalupe is thus no easy task, since it is imperative to eschew any diversion into general history or embroilment in partisan polemic.

A word about method and terminology may prove helpful. The introduction provides a conspectus of the subjects covered in the chapters which follow. The order is essentially chronological, starting in the seventeenth century and reaching the present day. The last chapter offers a brief theological interpretation of the image and its tradition. Generally, but not invariably, sources are discussed, not when they were written but when they were published; thus the 1556 *Statements* are examined in chapter 11, since they were not printed and analysed until the 1880s. This method thus allows readers to observe the gradual growth in knowledge of the cult's origins and how the discovery of early documents affected the tradition. As regards terminology, I follow Mexican usage and at times refer to the image as 'the Guadalupe', which is to say, *la guadalupana*. To render my account more readable, I have translated all book titles into English, albeit retaining their original titles in the notes and bibliography.

In the research and writing of this book I have incurred many debts. Without the invaluable, pioneering works of Francisco de la Maza and Edmundo O'Gorman my interest in this theme would never have been aroused or indeed sustained. An understanding of the historical and theological significance of holy images came from reading Peter Brown, Jaroslav Pelikan and Hans Belting. Like all students of the Guadalupe, I have benefited from *Testimonios históricos guadalupanos* (1982), a comprehensive collection of sources expertly edited by Ernesto de la Torre Villar and Ramiro Navarro de Anda. At Condumex I wish to thank Julio Gutiérrez Trujillo, the president of the Consultative Council, and especially Manuel Ramos Medina, the director, who welcomed me as the first visiting scholar and encouraged me to make Condumex my base of research in Mexico. I am grateful to the staff of that Centre, and in particular to José Gutiérrez, who found many a book that I had been unable to trace. Fausto Zerón Medina first alerted me to the significance of both Clemente de Jesús Munguía and the 1895 coronation and thereafter assisted me by comment and through the supply of valuable source material. Guillermo Tovar de Teresa was remarkably generous, both with rare books and in good counsel. Ramón Mujica Pinilla told me about Blessed Amadeus of Portugal. Peter Burke offered a prompt, instructive assessment of the completed text, and so incisive were the generous comments of Eric Van Young that I reframed an entire chapter and transposed another. As regards the illustrations, I am greatly indebted to Jaime Cuadriello, who helped me understand the iconography of the Virgin and then obtained the photographs of the images which adorn this book. In that task he was assisted by the interim rector of the Basilica of St Mary of Guadalupe, Mons. Antonio Macedo Tenllado, by the director of the Basilica's Museum, Jorge Guadarrama, and by Eumelia Hernández, head of the photographic section of the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. For other materials, comments and assistance I thank Clara García Ayluardo, Susan Deans-Smith, Edmund Hill, OP, Marta Eugenia García Ugarte, Manuel Olimón Nolasco, Enrique Florescano, Aidan Nichols, OP, José Luis Neyra, Julie Coimbra and Alejandro González Acosta. It should be



emphasized, however, that I alone am responsible for the opinions and interpretation advanced in this book.

It was the award of a Leverhulme Research Fellowship which allowed me to undertake research in Mexico during 1993. A subsequent visit in 1996 was made possible by my appointment as Julio Cortázar Visiting Professor at the University of Guadalajara. Without two terms of sabbatical leave from the University of Cambridge I could not have completed the book. Margaret Rankine typed the manuscript, corrected my errors, and generally encouraged me. At the Cambridge University Press, William Davies, as always, offered a generous welcome to the typescript and urged me to find illustrations. Permission to reproduce from paintings and books in their possession was granted by the Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, the Instituto de Antropología e Historia, the Museo Nacional de Arte, the Museo Nacional de Historia, the Centro de Estudios de Historia de Mexico, Condumex, the Archivo Casasús, the Centro de Cultura Casa Lamm, the Biblioteca Nacional, the José Luis Neyra Collection, the Ramón Cuadriello Collection, and in Madrid the Biblioteca Nacional. To conclude, at all moments during both the research and the writing of this book, I enjoyed the unstinting support of my wife, Celia Wu, and I dedicate the book to her, not least for her good sense in choosing to enter the world on the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.