

“Bastions of the Virgin: The Marian Geography of Seventeenth-Century Mexico City,” paper presented for *Shaping Marian Cults: Sacred History, Materiality, and Identity in the Early Modern Spanish World*, The Conference on Latin American History, Denver, Colorado, USA, January 7, 2017.

Colonial expansion into Spanish America contributed to the globalization of the Virgin Mary. By the end of the seventeenth century an extensive network of local shrines had been erected in her honour from the initial point of contact in the Caribbean to the furthest stretches of the frontiers. As the centre of political power and religious authority in New Spain, Mexico City became the focal point of an expanding devotional landscape that witnessed the construction of several Marian shrines, both within its city limits and in the surrounding countryside. In this paper I analyze the ways in which creole scholars such as the Mercedarian friar Luis de Cisneros, the Oratorian priest Miguel Sánchez, and the Jesuit Francisco de Florencia used these sacred sites to textually map the viceregal capital's place within the kingdom of New Spain, the Spanish empire, and larger Christendom. In their novenas and devotional histories they envisioned the churches, chapels, and shrines dedicated to the Virgin Mary as “bastions” of Mexico City, protecting it from its enemies and other natural disasters. But the larger “Marian geography” they developed of the urban centre was not entirely their own. They drew inspiration from a plethora of early modern compendiums, catalogues, and atlases of Marian images from Europe as much as they turned to existing pre-Hispanic pilgrimage routes and indigenous accounts of the sacred. Sacred histories in New Spain may have been crafted primarily by creoles and other Spaniards, but these texts were shared deeply between Europeans and members of the multiethnic population, a collective and dynamic process that is representative of various aspects of colonial life.