

“The Martyrdom of María: The Death of an Indian Interpreter in Northwestern New Spain,” paper presented for *Representations of Death in New Spain, The Renaissance Society of America, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 19, 2019.*

After a few years of missionary work in Sinaloa, Gonzalo de Tapia was killed by a group of natives in Tovoropa in 1594. Tapia quickly became a proto-martyr for the Jesuits of New Spain, but an important part of how his death was constructed over time has been overlooked in modern scholarship: his Indian interpreter María was also killed by the same men who took Tapia’s life. While most representations of her death are brief, Francisco Ramírez describes her as an “old holy woman” who gave her life for Christ in his sacred biography of Tapia. Most scholars believe that Ramírez’s text has been lost, but portions of it have survived in the Jesuit archives in Mexico City. His work sheds important light on the role of native women in the evangelization of northwestern New Spain and the gendered hierarchies of martyrdom in the early modern Spanish world.