

The origin of the production of altarpieces in Puebla during the 16th century. The cases of Huejotzingo, Cuauhtinchan, Huaquechula and Tecali

Andrea Cordero Zorrilla*

*Centro INAH Puebla
Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

Abstract

During the second half of the 16th century, the New Spain received a strong migratory flow of painters, sculptors, and altarpiece artists. Following the practice of Medieval Europe, their main form of organization were the guild systems with traditional-mercantile networks that began functioning in New Spain lands. The altarpieces of Huejotzingo, Cuauhtinchan, Huaquechula and Tecali were made in the midst of this historical process. This research made it possible to know more about the origin of these altarpieces from Puebla, especially when compared with the peninsular schools and others in Europe such as the Flemish, Italian, French, etcetera. These four altarpieces were manufactured thanks to the heterogeneity of artists, currents, styles, experiences and regions. They should be recognized, subjected to conservation, and valued not only because of their artistic quality, but also precisely because of the unique historical moment that made them possible.

Keywords

Altarpieces; artists; New Spain; Puebla; Huejotzingo; Cuauhtinchan; Huaquechula; Tecali.

This article emerges from an investigation carried out during an academic exchange with the University of Seville to broaden my master's degree studies on the Puebla-based altarpiece production. The prospection included not only the academic support of university faculty members, but also the possibility of carrying out a field research to trace the "twin" altarpieces to the ones found in Puebla. Thanks to this exchange, I was able to expand, compare and verify very interesting aspects regarding the genesis, categorization, classification, source and probable authorship of the Puebla altarpieces of the ex-convents of Cuauhtinchan, Tecali, Huejotzingo and Huaquechula; the same ones which where the first to be built in New Spain by the Franciscan order during the 16th century.



In order to understand the conceptual and technological origin of the New Spain altarpieces, it is fundamental to refer to the trade of the peninsular altarpieces of the 16th century, since the emigrating European artists were the ones who laid the ground for this artistic production. A trade that was perpetuated for almost three hundred years and today we can consider it as a fundamental part of the viceregal artistic repertoire, Puebla being one of the most prolific regions in the manufacture of golden and polychrome altarpieces in New Spain.

The art from the European Renaissance is very complex and copious, that is why in order to narrow the information, it is necessary to refer to three key elements of the European altarpiece production that precedes the one that happened in New Spain. The first is the influence of the Italian treatise making; the second is the consolidation of the Hispanic sculptural schools such as the Castilian and Andalusian and, finally, the stylistic moments of the 16th century Spanish altarpiece production. These elements will be briefly explained with the purpose of understanding the artistic background of the New Spain altarpieces of the 16th century.

The Italian and Northern European treatises

It was in the 1500s, just as the Iberian Peninsula consolidated as an economic and cultural empire, that the immigration of Italian and Northern European artists was encouraged in its territory, forming a gremial-artisan multicultural and international elite. Numerous prints, treaties, bibles, sketches and avant-garde materials for artistic production circulated within this intellectual environment. That is why the artists who came from this context and later migrated to New Spain, brought, not only the knowledge acquired in the different peninsular schools, but also different types of materials and documentation that served as creative means to produce artistic representations in compliance to the stylistic and iconographic stipulations of the time (González, 1983: 467-472). Regarding the graphic and documentary material related to the production of altarpieces, it is very important to mention the *Escorialense* treatise that included reliable sketches of San Lorenzo de El Escorial with the thirteen designs made by Pedro Perret, an engraver of Flemish origin. Perret's engravings on the production of Herrera, a document that compiles the official aesthetics introduced by the court of Philip II intended to expand to his kingdoms, including, of course, New Spain as a fundamental part of the Crown (Palomero, 1983: 63-64).

The Peninsular Schools that influenced the Novohispanic altarpiece production in mid-16th century

Although the Italian influence was profusely perceived in the Hispanic art of the time, some reminiscences of the medieval Spanish art were still maintained. The development of peninsular sculpture production, in its trajectory from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, arose in Castile, where an outstanding group of artists from France, Italy, Flanders, among others, came together and promoted an important development in the Spanish altarpiece production. The trades of sculpture and altarpieces flourished creating a strongly Hispanic character distinguished by three elements. The first is an evocation of the Gothic style by using elongated and sober forms; the second is the mark of the Italian Renaissance, and finally, the strong imprint of religion in art, completely banishing the profane themes that characterized the Italian Renaissance (Marcos, 1999: 81-83). The most important Castilian regions in the altarpiece trade were Burgos, Valladolid, Toledo and Palencia; Juan de Juni and Alonso Berruguete were its main exponents. As of 1560, several artists move to Andalusia and establish the Sevillian School of imagery (Palomero, 1983: 38). It is because the mobility of artists from different regions that we can explain the fact that the New Spain altarpiece production has strong Castilian, Italianate, Flemish and Andalusian reminiscences.



Stylistic moments of the sixteenth-century Spanish altarpiece production

To understand the New Spain altarpiece production of the 16th century, it is necessary to refer to the sculptural schools of the peninsular Renaissance, and to analyze thoroughly their sculptural modalities in the manufacture of altarpieces, in order to compare them with the Puebla production. The first identifiable moment is the Castilian plateresque altarpiece (1530 and 1560). Artists who emigrated from different parts of Europe and settled mainly in Burgos, Toledo, Valladolid and Palencia produced these kind of altarpieces. This period is notable for maintaining Gothic reminiscences along with Italian influence, but with a marked Hispanic nationalist feeling of sobriety and severity, both in form and content (Marcos, 1998: 85). The Andalusian plateresque (1560-1580) is identified by the exacerbated use of ornaments and plant motifs; the tendency to implement fractional structures typical of Mudejar and some canons of national Gothic promoted by the Catholic kings; its use was extended in Seville until the last third of the 16th century, similar to what happened in New Spain. The plateresque phase referred to the classical architectural language, often using the grotesque in its repertoires, but with evocations of the Gothic style of the Catholic kings and of Mudejar, constituting the union between medieval art and the Italian Renaissance. During the development of the plateresque altarpiece, two stages can be distinguished, the pictorial plateresque altarpiece and the sculptural one. The pictorial altarpiece has its peak in the second third of the 16th century, gradually expanding to the sculptural plateresque with the arrival of Florentine Mannerism (Palomero, 1983, 112-113). This aspect is important since the Puebla altarpieces to which this study is dedicated, oscillate between these two phases, inscribed between the pictorial plateresque and the transcendence to the Romanist modality.



Figure 1. Examples of Castilian pictorial plateresque altarpieces. *Imagen: Mosaic made by ©Andrea Cordero Zorrilla, 2015.*



Figure 2. Altarpiece of Santa María Carmona Seville, 1553. Image: @Andrea Cordero Zorrilla, 2015.



Figure 3. Example of a Romanist altarpiece. Altarpiece of Santa María de la Asunción, Arcos de la Frontera, Cádiz, 1585. Image: Public domain.

The second moment is the Romanist altarpiece, characterized for eliminating the late medieval Gothic and Mudejar styles, typical of the plateresque, and turning towards the forms of the Italian Mannerism; the grotesque is completely discarded along with its fantastic motifs. The canons of the Romanism coincide with the Tridentine constrictions and the laws of the counter-reformation, which intensified and imposed during the court of Philip II, disdaining the Mudejar, the gothic and the grotesque. However, it is important to note that these new aesthetic canons did not permeate quickly in Andalusia, where the taste for an ornate style persisted, an important aspect to be taken into consideration during the transit phase of artistic modalities towards America (Palomero, 1983: 192, 193). It is possible to find an example of this in the altarpiece of Santa María de la Asunción in Arcos de la Frontera, Cádiz.

The third moment of the Renaissance period in the manufacture of altarpieces comes with the construction of the main altarpiece of *San Lorenzo de El Escorial* completed in 1588. This phase is known as purist altarpiece. This modality was even more rigorous than the Romanist, in terms of the geometrization and harmony of the forms. The golden surface decoration of the altarpiece is completely removed and is governed by the laws of symmetry and balance. This variant also found resistance by the Andalusians and it was not admitted until 1636, with the introduction of the Solomonic column. According to George Kubler, the plateresque was strongly entrenched in Seville, so the purist modality was obstructed; this fact altered chronologically the stylistic canons in the two peninsular regions, finding remains of the Andalusian plateresque until the seventeenth century (Palomero, 1983: 432, 495). This aspect should be taken into account when studying our sixteenth century New Spain altarpieces, since it is not surprising that the phenomenon was later replicated; Palomero point out a gap of approximately twenty years in the inclusion of the modalities between the Castilian and Sevillian schools.



Artistic styles in the sixteenth century altarpieces in New Spain

In previous paragraphs, an outline was made of the key elements that influenced the sixteenth-century Spanish altarpiece production, the same elements which helped or gave life to this artistic tradition in New Spain. It is important to mention that a terminology problem surges when classifying the last ones, this is because the stylistic canons were established from a European point of view and not from our own experience. It would be wise to reclassify or add to these approaches from the vision of the cultural melting pot on American soil as of the second half of mid- 16th century; New Spain art represents adapted styles, but with its own variants and definitions regarding the ones found in the peninsula. On the other hand, we must take into account the gap in terms of certain tastes, or canons, which happened extemporaneous or were interspersed between transition periods. According to Tovar y de Teresa, in New Spain were seen the last glimpses of the late Renaissance, conjugated not only with the European heritage with their Gothic, Mudejar and Italianate features, but also with the American representations, the indigenous hands and the oriental influence of the Philippines in addition to its history and artistic work. We denominate it New Spain Renaissance altarpieces, but it is important to consider all this wide range and cultural fusion where everything merged and became a style of its own (1979: 25-29). In New Spain, the Renaissance comprises the altarpieces produced in the 16th century and the first part of the 17th century, something similar to what happened in Andalusia, unlike the rest of the Peninsula.

It was in the second half of 16th century, that artistic and commercial exchange between the Spanish Peninsula and America reached a transcendental moment, as well as the migration of artists, the exchange of works of art, tools and materials that artists brought with them to produce in the New World; undoubtedly, in addition to the typical materials of the trade, the printing allowed the knowledge to be spread overseas, thus the artists traveled with plans, sketches, stamps, bibles and all kinds of support material, making the colonies progress according to the peninsular avant-garde style. The traveling artists trained in peninsular schools as well as in Italy, Flanders and Germany, came to New Spain to create their works, allowing a broad development of cultural life. It is in this context that the first artists from New Spain emerged and that is when European tendencies started to replicate, and different artistic modalities mixed within the Renaissance vigor, which resulted in a very peculiar cultural fusion. Altarpieces from Puebla produced in the second half of the 16th century are almost a duplicate of the peninsular altarpiece production, considering the time lag in styles and artistic canons and the distinctive traits of each artwork and artist. It was, well into the 17th century that the "artistic miscegenation" began and a clear *Novohispano*¹ style was forged. However, in this second half of the sixteenth century, when the altarpieces of Tecali, Cuauhtinchan, Huaquechula and Huejotzingo were manufactured, the altarpiece production had not yet been released from its peninsular condition.

The altarpieces of Tecali, Huaquechula, Cuauhtinchan and Huejotzingo

Now we will talk about the four altarpieces built in the Puebla region during the sixteenth century, contextualizing them historically in order to know their origin and artistic conception in all its aspects. Something interesting about this study is that, when we talk about the art that New Spain produced at the dawn of the conquest, it is common to refer to the Andalusian styles because of the social, artistic and commercial exchange between this region and America. However, as we

¹ From the colonial period in New Spain. Translator's note.



pointed out previously, the flow and movement of artists and trends within Europe and Spain was so big, that it is necessary to point to other centers of peninsular sculpture and altarpieces, mainly Castile, since many of the artists who produced altarpieces in the second half of the 16th century in Puebla formed in this school. Among those artists, we can recall the brothers Arciniega, Nicolás Tejeda, and Pedro Brizuela, which we will discuss later as they are closely related to the manufacture of altarpieces in Puebla.

It is important to note that, although the altarpieces of Tecali, Cuauhtinchan and Huaquechula were manufactured around 1570, they integrated into the modality of the pictorial plateresque, with strong tendencies of the Castilian altarpieces, mainly from the provinces of León and Guadalajara (Spain). The Huejotzingo model is different, it could be classified between the sculptural plateresque and the Romanist style, considering that the Andalusian influence is clearly distinguished because of the predominance of sculpture, probably by the authorship of Andrés de Concha and Pedro Requena, both educated at the Sevillian school. Another detail to consider about this altarpiece is that it was manufactured fifteen years later than the previous ones, in 1585 approximately, so there is a marked Roman influence, it is monumental architecture, the sculptures and paintings are already Italianizing and the grotesque is replaced by cartouches and *puttis*². To explain with greater clarity the classification of styles, schools and authorship in the four Puebla altarpieces, an analysis of each one will be presented.

Tecali and Huaquechula

The altarpiece of Tecali, consecrated to the apostle James (Santiago Apóstol) is currently in the parish; however, it was originally the main altar of the Franciscan former convent, a layout attributed to Claudio Arciniega, which today remains in ruins. It is interesting to see that the anchors used to hold the altar in place are still embedded in the front wall of the temple. The altarpiece of Tecali has remained anonymous and the identity of the masters who participated in its manufacture is unknown, however, it is possible to analyze historical aspects and relate this data with the active artists in the region of Puebla around 1570.

The exact dates of the construction of the convent and the altarpiece of Huaquechula are unknown, although some authors mention that fray Juan de Alameda, to whom the construction of Huejotzingo is also attributed, could have designed the building. The first mention of the altarpiece dates from the 17th century, when the painter Cristóbal de Villalpando was hired to paint the artwork for its decoration, replacing the originals made in the 16th century. As a byproduct of this investigation, certain information was found that suggest the Arciniega brothers as probable authors of the altarpiece, more specifically Luis Arciniega. On the next section, these deductions will be explained, which also are related to the Tecali altarpiece.

Is posible that the authors of the altarpieces of Huaquechula and Tecali were the brothers Claudio and Luis Arciniega. The first one and best known, was ranked as the greatest master builder of the time in the capital of the New Spain, while his brother Luis mainly developed his career in the territory of Puebla, with an incomparable labor in the trade of altarpiece and sculpture production, even though, as of today there is no knowledge about the existence of any of his artwork, there is only extensive documentary evidence of his work.

² Decorative motifs representing cherubs or angels with children's faces. They are generally characterized nude, winged and plump. They are also known as cherubs or *amorillos*.





Figure 4. High altar of the former convent of Tecali.
Image: ©Pedro Rojas Rodríguez, 1978.



Figure 5. Huaquechula High altarpiece.
Image: ©Pedro Rojas Rodríguez, 1978.

It is known that the father of the Arciniega brothers, also a sculptor, was instructed in the school of French engravers settled in the León province, a nucleus represented mainly by Juan de Mieux, Juan de Juni and Juan de Angers. In addition, the brothers were born in Arciniega, today the province of Alava or in the Burgos region, Claudio in 1524 and Luis in 1537. Despite the 10-year age gap, it is probable that Luis accompanied his father and brother to work in the trade from a very early age, as part of the family tradition (Castro, 1958: 17).

The information related to the Arciniega residence in the Peninsula, only refers to Claudio, however, tracking his trajectory up to the New Spain, we can infer the steps of his brother and pupil Luis. Claudio worked in the retrochoir of the cathedral of León and in the one of San Marcos in the same city, along with Juan de Angers and Guillén Docel (Cuesta, 2009: 57-58). In 1541 in the Real Alcázar of Madrid, and from 1542 to 1548 on the façade of the university of Alcalá de Henares, "I Claudio, carver, from Burgos, have received from Pedro de la Cotera 20 ducats as part of the payment for the carved pieces and for the pillars that are settled on" (Cuesta, 2009: 65).

Already proclaimed master of altarpieces, in 1553 Claudio grants the power to his neighbor and fellow carver Felipe Ortiz in Alcalá, to collect the money he charged for an altarpiece he made in the town of Hontova (Guadalajara). Tovar y de Teresa mentioned that in 1555 Claudio was hired to make another altarpiece in Daganzo (Madrid) (Cuesta, 2009: 67-68), and another one in Hontanar.

These news came from a story told by Luis himself, who declared, in 1598, in Mexico City: “he met them in the village of Yunquera and in Hontanar, because he resided in the town and village [...] whom he knew in Hontanar the time that he lived in the construction of an altarpiece that was making a brother of this that declares”(Cuesta, 2009: 68). Therefore, Claudio and very likely young Luis too, probably had a constant production in the altarpiece trade while residing in the Peninsula, taking into account that Castile and most of Spain were living a peak moment in the trade, and that it is precisely in the Castilian region that the plateresque altarpiece style found its greatest representations.

Claudio learned in the Peninsula the trade of carving stone, wood (choir-stalls) and indisputably the altarpiece production; where he probably also practiced drawing and tracing as an activity typical of architecture. It is likely, that newly arrived in New Spain he had an initial intervention in the tracing of certain altarpieces, along with his brother Luis and a small group of master painters, carvers and sculptors who were active in the second half of the 16th century in the same territory. Probably by 1554, when he came to live in Puebla, up until 1558, the year he moved to the capital, Claudio devoted himself to the production of altarpieces more than architecture. Also active in Puebla were Nicolás Tejeda (painter) and Pedro Brizuela (sculptor) who also arrived to the New Spain in 1554, probably on the same boat as the Arciniega brothers. Coincidentally, the four artists came from Burgos, so there is a possibility that they knew each other from Spain and that they formed a guild society in the Puebla region for the diverse activities concerning to altarpiece production.

So why do we infer that the Arciniega had influence in the manufacture of the altarpieces of Tecali and Huaquechula? As mentioned in previous paragraphs, Claudio, still in Spain, participated in the making of four altarpieces located near the province of Guadalajara, this happened before 1554 when Claudio embarks to America. None of these four altarpieces exists today, however, there is an aspect that unites the altarpieces made in the Guadalajara region with the altarpiece of Huaquechula, and it is the trace of the altarpiece of Santa María Magdalena Mondejar, Guadalajara, destroyed by a fire during the civil war, but of which there is a replica and photographic images. The images show a strong resemblance between the altarpiece of Mondejar and the one in Huaquechula, considering its singularities –the Mondejar case is a replica and the one of Huaquechula has been restored on several occasions–. In addition to the morphological coincidences between them, we can also find geographical resemblances in Claudio’s altarpiece production in the Guadalajara region: the closeness between the dates in which the one of Mondejar was concluded (1554-1555) and Claudio’s arrival to the New Spain in 1554. This information cannot claim Claudio’s authorship in relation with the Huaquechula altarpiece for sure, but a close relation between both productions can be observed.

Another fact, regarding the direct influence of the Arciniega in the production of altarpieces in the Puebla region, specifically in the altarpiece of Tecali, is a date engraved in a piece of stone from the former convent, which refers to the year of 1569, recalling that the construction of the temple is attributed to Claudio –attribution made by Toussaint and Mc Andrew– (Cuesta, 2000: 75). From this information, we can assume that the altarpiece was built after this date, around 1570, as inaugural part of the temple, perhaps by Claudio himself and his brother Luis. There is also a connection between the altarpiece of Tecali, the Arciniega’s, and the production that took place in the León region, an example of this is the morphology and composition of the Yugueros altarpiece manufactured in 1553 by Juan de Angers, an artist with whom Claudio maintained close ties while working on the Peninsula.





Figure 6. Huaquechula altarpiece versus Mondejar altarpiece, Guadalajara, Spain. Image on the left: © Andrea Cordero Zorrilla, 2016. Image on the right: © Archive of the Parish Church of Mondejar, 2013.



Figure 7. Altarpiece of Yugueros, León, Spain versus Tecali's altarpiece. Image on the left: © Marius Van Heiningen, 2011. Image on the right: © Andrea Cordero Zorrilla, 2016.

Considering that the altarpiece of Yugueros (León) and the one in Mondejar (Guadalajara) were built around 1554, time in which the modality of the pictorial plateresque in Castile prospered, it can be inferred that Claudio obtained his knowledge of the trade within this guild group. If upon the arrival of the Arciniega brothers to the New Spain (1554), Claudio devoted himself to the work of stonework and architecture more than to the altarpiece production, it may have been Luis who continued with the trade as an apprentice of his brother Claudio, who probably traveled to the New Spain with the traces and sketches of the masters in the avant-garde altarpiece production that was happening in Castile at that time.

Another connection is in the dates, the temple of Tecali was built around 1569 and it is very likely that Claudio participated in its construction and Luis in the manufacture of altarpieces. In the case of Huaquechula, in 1579³ Luis travels to the Villa de Carrión (Atlixco valley) to receive money, and he remains there for several months. This refers to his work in the region, possibly teaming up with Simon Pereyans, who arrived in 1566 to the New Spain and stayed at the home of the Arciniega in his early days.

Cuauhtinchan

The high altar of Cuauhtinchan, as Tovar y de Teresa mentioned, is one of the oldest altarpieces in America, if not the first. Originally, it was made for the convent of San Francisco in the city of Puebla, although this had interesting development that will be discussed later. This is known thanks to a discovery made by Efraín Castro Morales⁴, being Tovar y de Teresa the one who provides the story, which will be explained ahead. It is worth noting the group of artists that will be mentioned next, since they are the masters involved in the altarpiece production of the Puebla region in the last third of the 16th century.



Figure 8. Cuauhtinchan Altarpiece.
Image: ©Pedro Rojas Rodríguez, 1969.

³ There is documentary evidence that states that in September and October 1579 Luis de Arciniega moved to the town of Carrión to get some money, since he had been appointed to perform maintenance work in the fort of San Juan de Ulúa, by order of the viceroy. Therefore, in order to move to Atlixco, he suspends a job he had contracted with Pereyans in the city of Tlaxcala, probably the erection of an altarpiece. Towards 1579, by royal mandate of Philippe II, the Villa de Carrión was founded, and it became the most important region in the area, comprising the towns belonging to the Atlixco Valley where Huaquechula was located (Castro, 1958: 17-32).

⁴ The complete text is in Castro Morales, Efraín (1968) "El retablo de Cuauhtinchan de Puebla", *Historia Mexicana*, XVIII (2): 179-189.



It was thought that Cuauhtinchan's altarpiece was attributed to the painter Juan de Arrúe, a master who was active at the end of the 16th and the first third of the 17th century. However, it is known today that Arrúe only renovated and sold it, but that the altarpiece had been built thirty years before. Arrúe, born in the New Spain, could have been a pupil of Andrés de Concha, and of his father, an Andalusian sculptor. In 1597, Arrúe acquires the altarpiece and sells it to the Franciscan convent of Tehuacán; but it was at that time that a strong earthquake destroyed the temple, therefore, the altarpiece was eventually sold to the people of Cuauhtinchan (Tovar and de Teresa, 1987: 126).

Del Paso y Troncoso provides another interesting fact in the year 1892, when the discovery of a document dated 1601, referred to a previous contract (1594) that had been carried out by Luis de Arciniega sculptor and Francisco de Morales painter to build an altarpiece for the temple of Cuauhtinchan. Ultimately, the altar was not built because the viceroy Luis de Velasco did not give his consent. It is in this same document that Del Paso y Troncoso found a description about the movement of the altarpiece from Tehuacán to Cuauhtinchan. This document mentions that the altarpiece was suffering damage due to the reconstruction works that took place after the earthquake at the Franciscan convent of Tehuacán, and for this reason, it was decided that the altarpiece had to be moved to Cuauhtinchan instead, once the cost of Arrúe's remodeling was settled (Tovar y de Teresa, 1987: 17). In the year of 1599, in Tehuacán, Arrúe declares that he "had the altarpiece that was in the high altar of the church of San Francisco in the city of angels and that it was proper for the church of this town, try tried to convince me to sell the making of it" (Tovar y de Teresa, 1987: 118). That "because the aforementioned altarpiece is old and antique, I'm forced to renew all the figures, as well as the faces and the clothes, columns and everything else", it is important to notice that the altarpiece is already considered old and it had only been thirty years since its construction (Tovar y de Teresa, 1987: 118).

Having settled the fact that the altarpiece of Cuauhtinchan was destined to be on the Franciscan temple of Tehuacán, but due to the deterioration it suffered by the earthquake, they sold it. It is also known, that it belongs to the San Francisco temple of Puebla. So, when was it built and who are its authors? Castro himself provides this information. This altarpiece could have been manufactured around 1570, since 1571 it was ordered that the chapels were built –so the main one must have been already made– (Castro, 1968: 187). Around these dates, Nicolas Tejeda -painter- and Pedro Brizuela -sculptor- were working in San Francisco Puebla, and they could have perfectly teamed up for the making of this altarpiece, as Tovar y de Teresa affirmed. Nicolas Tejeda appeared to be living in Puebla in the year 1558 and remained there until 1575, signing a contract with Diego Serrano to manufacture an altarpiece in 1571, which would include six boards and carvings made by Brizuela for one of the chapels of San Francisco de Puebla (Tovar y de Teresa, 1987: 119-121). The probability that the two artists participated in the making of the altarpiece is high; remember that both were natives of the province of Burgos, as the Arciniega, and a strong Castilian influence can be observed in the altarpiece. This attribution, says Tovar y de Teresa, can be made because on that date, 1570, Tejeda and Brizuela manufactured altarpieces for the temple of San Francisco Puebla.

Huejotzingo

One of the most iconic buildings in the history of the New Spain is undoubtedly the former convent of Huejotzingo, built by the Franciscans and the indigenous peoples between 1544 and 1560. We should remember that the *Huejotzinca* region was considered a strategic point during the



conquest and was fundamental for the evangelization, as it is referred on the convent's famous mural painting, in the anterefrectory, which is an allegory to the first friars who arrived to the New Spain. The majestic convent houses in its interior the main altarpiece dedicated to the archangel Michael, sponsored by the local population, its magnanimity refers to the importance of the region in this period.



Figure 9. Huejotzingo altarpiece.
Image: ©Pedro Rojas Rodríguez, ca. 1950.

A lucky discovery for the study of the altarpiece of Huejotzingo is that in one of the lower paintings, which depicts Mary Magdalene, you can observe Simon Perey's signature and the date of completion of the altarpiece, which was in 1585. Likewise, thanks to Heinrich Berlin, who located and published the contractual document, we can know about the participation of other artists like Andrés de la Concha. Thus, this agreement includes Simon Perey's and Andrés de la Concha as painters, Pedro Requena as a master carver and Marcos de San Pedro as a gilder. "The paintings of the altarpiece must be made by the hands of the called Simon Perinez and Andrés de la Concha and not by any other, even if they want to" (Berlin, 1958: 69, 71).

There is still a question regarding the intervention of Andrés de la Concha either as a painter or as a sculptor. One of the hypothesis is that Perey's may have done the paintings and de la Concha the tracing and the altarpiece polychromy. We must take into account the versatility of this artist, since he was fully skilled in painting, sculpture and architecture. As mentioned, only the signature of Perey's was located, but not the one of de la Concha, however this does not negate his participation in the manufacture of the altarpiece, as pointed out in the contractual document.



Another thing to consider is that Pedro Requena appears as master sculptor, although Pereyngs may also have proposed the sculptural design in sketch. This is inferred by the fact that the paintings he made for the altarpiece were designed based on the graphic material he brought with him (Arimura, 2005: 87-89), so the same could have happened with the sculpture; Pereyngs outlines the altarpiece composition, Pedro Requena is responsible for the carving and Andrés de la Concha for the polychromy.

Thanks to these findings, we can verify that the Huejotzingo altarpiece had Spanish, Flemish, and even, German influence, since its authors came from different regions and schools in the craft of altarpiece making, painting and sculpture. These characters in turn, were influenced and steeped in the European avant-garde, as it was the case of Pereyngs and Martin de Vos, both contemporaries and fellow compatriots from Antwerp. Pereyngs replicates in his work the colorful "Venetian style"; the monumentality of the forms and the counter-reformist discourse clearly influenced by Vos, who had Franz Floris as a teacher, promoter of the Mannerism in Flanders (Arimura: 2005: 68-70).

Conclusions

Towards the second half of the sixteenth century, a strong migratory flow from Spain made its way to the New World. The interest of the crown was to increase the peninsular population in the viceroyalty with the intention to transfer its empire from a cultural and religious point of view; that is why the first European artists arrive to the new continent. Artisans and apprentices who had been educated in different schools in northern Europe and in peninsular art centers comprised this workforce. It is in the second half of the 16th century, the period in which the first emigrated artists create a relatively small artisanal network, but they are sufficiently prepared to lay the foundations of an entire craft and trade union system, which remained in force until the end of the Viceroyalty.

One of the ways of knowing the genesis, technological aspects and authorship of the Puebla Renaissance altarpieces is through the contractual documents; however, this is not possible in all cases. It is important to remember that, out of the four altarpieces, we have only found documentary evidence of only two of them, Huejotzingo and Cuauhtinchan. That is why using the comparative method; it has been possible to reach a stylistic approximation of the altarpieces of Tecali and Huaquechula with the Renaissance modality of the Spanish pictorial plateresque, and Huejotzingo, as an altarpiece in evolution between the plateresque and the Romanist. Likewise, it was possible to establish the origin in relation to the different peninsular schools; the Castilian-Leonese for the case of Tecali and Cuauhtinchan; the Guadalajara region to Huaquechula and Andalusia to Huejotzingo. Regarding the authorship of the altarpieces, we find a clear approach to the group of active Castilian artists in the city of Puebla, such as that of the Arciniega brothers in association with other masters from Burgos. It can be concluded, that the imprint of the three outstanding peninsular sculptural points: Castile, La Alcarria and Andalusia, can be found in the four 16th century Puebla altarpieces, as well as the Flemish, Italian and German influence by the participation of artists such as Pereyngs.

Finally, it is important to note that most of the New Spain altarpieces built during that century were destroyed. Fortunately, it is in Puebla where these four majestic altarpieces are preserved, these are highly valuable works not only for their plastic characteristics, but because they were manufactured in a unique cultural context of the former Mexico and are works of art worthy of being known, valued and conserved.

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