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# A material/ conceptual landscape analysis of the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site in Mexico City, Mexico

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**A MATERIAL/CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE  
ANALYSIS OF THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE  
PILGRIMAGE SITE IN MEXICO CITY, MEXICO**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by  
Ramin David Zamanian  
Bachelor of Arts, Louisiana State University, December 2003

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## ABSTRACT

As geographers continue to research the interactions between physical landscapes and conceived or represented landscapes, the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site, a prominent site for Latin American Catholicism, provided an opportunity for further study in this area. Mexico City's rapid expansion drastically changed the material landscape from rural to densely urban, especially since the early 1900s. With indigenous spirituality closely tied to the physical aspects of the landscape, especially those more related to the natural and rural elements, the onset of urbanity can potentially lead to alienation and consequently a decrease in pilgrimages and participation in worship at the site. How then, do those representing the site adjust to the changes in the landscape in order to maintain a sense of spirituality, and how is spirituality maintained through the interactions of all other elements of the material/conceptual landscape associated with the site?

Repeat photography, field observation, and archival research were used to answer these questions. In order to gain more perspective, historical sections were written describing the venerated image of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the cultural, especially religious, differences between the natives and Europeans involved with this site. Another section describes the site as seen in 2005, while comparing it to earlier years. Several dialectical considerations are discussed in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the site's interactions with its surroundings. Subsequently a material/conceptual landscape site analysis model, developed in regards to this pilgrimage site but potentially applicable elsewhere, paves the way for understanding the intricate interactions taking place among different aspects of the material/conceptual landscape. The concluding section extrapolates general themes regarding previous responses of representations and the material pilgrimage site design to threat of a potentially alienating urban

landscape, along with indicating what we may expect to see when visiting the site and viewing representations of the site in the near future. The concluding section also delves into possible future research opportunities at this pilgrimage site, especially regarding various forms of landscape analysis.



**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**Overview of Study**

Cultural geographers are currently elaborating the concept of landscape “as directly lived through its associated images and symbols,” as both physical and symbolic, as involved in both material and conceptual processes, and as both a spatial product and involved in the production of space (Lefebvre 1991; DeLyser 1999; Mitchell 2000; Sluyter 2002). The examined material/conceptual landscape associated with the shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe, located at the northern edge of Mexico City, provides an excellent opportunity to contribute to that area of research via an attempt to understand how radical transformations of the physical landscape interact with a significant symbolic landscape. Since 1531 each shrine-encasing basilica sat at the base of Tepeyac Hill adjacent to a large lake, Lake Texcoco, and the surrounding landscape was for the most part rural (Rodriguez 1994: 21). Archival research and field observation in 2005 indicate block after block of multistory buildings have encroached upon the shrine site. Lake Texcoco is no longer visible from the site as the lake has consistently shrunk over the course of the twentieth century, while much of the new land has been urbanized, due in part to a more than tenfold increase in Mexico City’s population between 1900 and 1965 (Fox 1965: 529, 544).

The Virgin of Guadalupe has been a significant religious symbol for centuries in Latin America, especially within Mexico (Rodriguez 2002). Much work relating to various aspects of the Virgin of Guadalupe has been done by a variety of social scientists, with works focusing on the architecture of the basilica, the religious significance of the pilgrimage to Mexican mestiza women, the history and characteristics of visions of Mary in general, the story behind the Virgin

of Guadalupe sightings, and studies of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Crumrine and Morinis 1991; Gallegos 2002; Gleason 1999; Grajales 1986; Richardson 2003; Rodriguez 1994; Stoddard 1997). However, there seems to be no evidence of an intensive landscape study undertaken by a geographer at the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site, whether related to the physical landscape or the landscape's symbolic aspects. Augmenting the research for this landscape analysis project, however, are studies on landscape as text (i.e. Cogrove and Daniels 1988, Barnes and Duncan 1992, Duncan and Ley 1993), the geography of pilgrimage sites (i.e. Stoddard 1997, Coleman and Elsner 1995, Park 1994) and material/conceptual landscape transformation processes in postcolonial Latin America (Sluyter 2002). Based on Andrew Sluyter's method for analyzing material/conceptual landscape transformation, I developed a material/conceptual landscape analysis model for this research project. The model explains the interactions of the material and the conceptual components of the landscape as a process through time, demonstrating the role of the urban landscape in indigenous pilgrims' spirituality associated with the site, along with the interactions of the urbanity with representations of the pilgrimage site and its surroundings. A perpetual struggle against the alienating urban landscape is revealed through analyses of the site itself and of representations of the site. Moreover, through this analysis researchers can begin to address the concern over a decrease in the frequency of indigenous pilgrimages to the site due to the loss of a significant and symbolic surrounding natural landscape and consequent decline in the quality of spiritual experiences felt by the indigenous at this site (Lane 1988; Burton 2002).

### **Chapter Synopses**

The literature review chapter discusses previous research conducted by geographers regarding landscape analysis and pilgrimage sites. The landscape research section ranges from a



**Figure 1.1** The Virgin of Guadalupe basilicas, old and new, viewed from Tepeyac Hill facing south, in 2005.

look at the theoretical background for the landscape analysis part of this thesis to a more specific discussion of landscape analysis works closely related to this project topically and methodologically. The section on pilgrimage site research provides substantial background information for an increased understanding of the potential for a wide range of future geographic research at the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site, along with better situating this current project within a framework of geographic research.

In the methods chapter I explain the variety of ways in which I conducted research for this project. I discuss both the fieldwork performed in Mexico City and the research conducted in addition to the fieldwork. I used repeat photography, archival research, and field observations as my primary research methods.

The next chapter tells the relevant history of the area of research. The emphasis is on the historical role of the landscape. The first part begins with a look at the events which took place on Tepeyac Hill in the early 1500s. It discusses the impacts of the Spanish invasion of Tenochtitlan and the consequent cultural tension existing between the Spaniards and the Aztecs. The second section narrates the story of Juan Diego and the Marian apparitions on Tepeyac Hill, indicating the relevance of the story to the rest of the thesis, especially regarding the geographical context of the shrine. For the same reasons the last section discusses significant aspects of the Virgin of Guadalupe image.

The analysis chapter contains four sections. The first section provides a description of the present-day pilgrimage site from field observations and also demonstrates some general differences between the physical landscape in the past, particularly pre-1950, and the present-day physical landscape. The next section provides a more analytical and in-depth look at the site by examining dialectical conflicts associated with the site. Comparing the physical landscape

around Tepeyac Hill in the past to the physical landscape today and delving into dialectical conflicts at the site establish a backdrop for the arguments posed in the following section regarding other elements of the material/conceptual landscape. In order to take into account all relevant elements of the landscape, I developed a material/conceptual pilgrimage site analysis model derived from Andrew Sluyter's theoretical framework for analyzing material/conceptual landscape transformation processes. I explain in a broad sense in the third section, while the fourth section uses the model to explain the specific processes associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine site and to show the relationship between these processes and the conflicting concepts of spirituality and alienation.

The concluding chapter functions in several different ways. Initially the conclusion focuses on the results of the analyses. The analysis allows for generalizations of the interactions that have already occurred at the site, along with general projections of what may occur in the future. The results indicate how the representations of the landscape and the material landscape have both seemed to adjust to the alienating aspects of the site's urban surroundings. I also demonstrate, based on the analysis results, what is likely to occur at least in the near future regarding the material changes to the site and representations of the site.

Attention then shifts to possible future research related to the landscape around Tepeyac Hill, explaining in detail the possibilities for this research project to serve as a foundation for researchers interested in further landscape analyses at the site, such as studies designed to understand the pilgrims' impressions of the landscape once confronted with the discrepancies of the experienced landscape versus the represented landscape surrounding the site. The final portion of the concluding chapter looks at the potential for geographers in various subfields of geography to conduct research at Tepeyac Hill. This final section emphasizes a broader range of

possibilities involving researching Tepeyac Hill as a pilgrimage site, with its wider range of potential topics involving landscape analysis.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A Survey of Landscape as Text

The various ways by which geographers study the landscape should be mentioned before engaging in a narrower discussion about the study of landscape as text, and most pertinent to this thesis, the study of landscape representations in comparison to experienced landscapes.

Although this paper focuses by and large on the role of geographers as landscape analyzers, worth noting is the fact that geographers are only one of the many types of scholars interested in the study of the landscape; archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians, landscape historians, cultural historians, and philosophers are amongst the other scholars interested in various aspects of landscapes (Matless 2003: 227). Beginning with traditional cultural geography and transitioning into new cultural geography, the following synopsis of landscape analysis in the field of geography compares the different mentalities of the two broad theoretical paradigms in a chronological fashion. This rundown of different approaches to studying the landscape is not meant to be exhaustive; rather, the synopsis aims to provide a broad representation of the wide range of theoretical approaches involved in landscape study.

In the 1920s, Carl Sauer, practicing what is now known as traditional cultural geography, first promoted the term “landscape” in American geographical studies, preferring to study the landscape primarily through empirical means in order to learn about the interaction between humans and the environment and to argue against environmental determinism (Schein 2004: 13-14; Foote *et al.* 1994: 11). However, criticisms of this approach included the notion that traditional cultural geography “legitimated a masculinist way of knowing about the world,” that geographers claimed to be “all-knowing observers and seers of natural and human worlds,” and

that the study of the landscape consisted of merely a “glance” at a piece of land in order to produce “descriptive inventories” which were not entirely objective from the start (Till 2004: 348). Despite such questionable evaluation of the landscape, by the 1980s an alternative approach to studying cultural geography emerged based on “a broad range of themes,” known collectively as “new cultural geography” (Schein 2004: 12; Foote *et al.* 1994: 12). While this new cultural geography does provide additional themes and does place additional emphasis on aspects lacking in traditional cultural geography, I see no grounds as to why traditional cultural geography as a theoretical framework and a set of methodological utilities should have been dismissed by so many cultural geographers. Instead, I see potential for complementarily using ideas derived from both traditional and new cultural geography to define and address current research objectives for cultural geography, as some texts strive to explain and promote (Wagner 1994; Duncan 1994; Butzer 1994).

New cultural geography included several different, innovative ways of thinking about the landscape. Basically, according to Joanne Sharpe (2004: 73), new cultural geographers think about landscape as a “signifying system” which perpetually recreates cultural meanings. The materiality of the landscape was deemphasized, as geographers delved into the ideological (Duncan *et al.* 2004). Marxist geographers since the 1980s have promoted the concept of landscape as “an expression of unequal social relations under capitalism” (Till 2004: 349). Feminist geography has also played a role in landscape studies. One of the ways in which feminist geographers view the landscape is as means of showing “how gendered identities are constructed” (Sharpe 2004: 73). Landscape has also been conceptualized metaphorically, such as the consideration of landscape as a theatre, where the landscape can be thought of as the both the stage for a performance and a performer (Johnson 2004: 322). Hence the landscape



serves not only as a passive backdrop but also as an actor. Lastly, landscape has been approached by geographers considering the metaphorical idea of the landscape as text, whereby the elements of a landscape are read by the humans participating in that landscape as if these elements were the text of a written or oral story (Johnson 2004: 322).

The study of landscape representation is a recently growing dimension of the concept of landscape as text. One way of thinking about representation within cultural geography is based upon the idea of mimesis, which is defined by James Duncan and David Ley as “the belief that we should strive to produce as accurate a reflection of the world as possible” (1993: 2). Duncan and Ley also identified four major versions of representation. The first involves the concept of “‘descriptive fieldwork’ based upon observation,” and the second is related to positivist science; both versions make claims to objectivity (Duncan and Ley 1993: 2-3). Rejections of quests for truth and the “totalizing ambitions of modern science” characterize the third version of representation (Duncan and Ley 1993: 3). Postmodernism played a key role in the development of the third version of representation (Duncan and Ley 1993: 3; Pitzl 191). The fourth and final version of representation is based primarily on interpreting the results of a research project, thus negating the push for mimesis (Duncan and Ley 1993: 3). Now that some of the ways in which geographers analyze the landscape have been discussed, the paper will focus more specifically on ways in which geographers study the landscape as text.

What geographers interested in the landscape as text seek to discover lies in what Henri Lefebvre (1991: 39) considers “representational spaces,” that is, “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols.” Lefebvre (1991: 39) further explains that representational spaces include “the dominated -- and hence passively experienced -- space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.” Text is considered to be culturally-expressive

“signifying practices” written and rewritten into the landscape throughout time and are pieces of larger “narratives, concepts, ideologies, and signifying practices” collectively known as “discourses,” which “provide a framework for understanding the world” (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 6-8). One example of a geographer studying landscape as text is Patrick McGreevy’s analysis of the multiple ways in which various people view the landscape of Niagara Falls as text. Basically, McGreevy discovered the theme of death at Niagara Falls to be popular amongst visitors, rendering the landscape around Niagara Falls a landscape of death, metaphorically and in some cases literally speaking (McGreevy 1992: 50). McGreevy explores the danger of dying at Niagara Falls, looking at suicide attempts, accidental deaths, and attempts by daredevils to defy death, in order to understand the symbolic association between Niagara Falls and death (McGreevy 1992: 50). Cultural and historical context is then given to the fascination of death, as McGreevy explains how the perception of death by Western cultures has changed over time, with the increased “appreciation of the individual life” being a catalyst for the emergence of the more recent perception of death as being “something strikingly horrible” (McGreevy 1992: 55-56). The third and final angle McGreevy takes when looking at Niagara Falls as a metaphor of death is showing how the edges of the cliffs have been thought of as “the boundary between life and death,” the waterfalls as “a fall into death,” the abyss as an eternal afterlife of damnation, and the mist from the falls as “a sign of hope, an indication that there is more to the after-life than the abyss” (McGreevy 1992: 58-65). Another way in which geographers study the landscape as text is through iconography, which explores the “symbolic imagery” present in representations of landscapes, seeking to discover implied ideas and to understand cultural and historical context (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988: 1-2). Geographers using this approach think of pictures and artwork as “encoded texts to be deciphered by those cognisant of the culture as a

whole in which they were produced” (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988: 2). The act of studying the landscape as text does not come without problems, however. Jonathan Smith warns landscape analyzers of certain pitfalls which may distort a study. Smith mentions, for instance, the tendency to forget about anything in the landscape which may “threaten the stability of the scene” and is thus excluded from a representation of a landscape, including radios blaring, homeless people on the streets, and litter (1993: 86-87).

A major problem with such studies in new cultural geographic research is the de-emphasis of the material landscape processes involved. Several geographers have begun to address this issue. Don Mitchell investigated the represented California landscape versus the physically and symbolically experienced California landscape (Mitchell 2000). Also studying the effects of differences between represented landscapes versus experienced landscapes, Dydia DeLyser interviewed tourists of a ghost town in California to analyze their reactions upon seeing a town possibly quite different from what they expected (DeLyser 1999). Andrew Sluyter developed a theoretical framework for understanding the material/conceptual landscape processes involved in postcolonial landscape transformation. As a case in point, Sluyter examines how the colonizing Europeans, indigenous Americans, and the different components of the landscape interact through potentially equal material/conceptual processes, demonstrating that these interactive processes play a significant role in material/conceptual landscape transformation as opposed to the categorical characteristics of the European, the indigenous, or any involved landscape (Sluyter 2002: 21-23).

### **A Survey of Geographical Research on Pilgrimages**

Research with an emphasis on pilgrimage sites continues to be of special import to certain geographers, as they “have shown great interest in how and why pilgrims travel to sacred

sites, and how their pilgrimages affect environment and society, particularly in and around their destinations” (Park 1994: 258). After reviewing geography-related literature on pilgrimage research, one becomes able to ascertain both the similarities of pilgrimage to other researchable geographical topics and the uniqueness of pilgrimage as a research topic. As an example, which will be elaborated later in this thesis, pilgrimage research can focus on both physical and human aspects of geography, which a plethora of other geographical concepts are also capable of doing. As with any other human geographical phenomenon, geographers utilize multiple methods for studying pilgrimages, most of which are discussed in this thesis. However, one of the ways in which pilgrimage research becomes distinguished from research on other topics involves the motives of pilgrims for participating in pilgrimages (Wagner 1997: 322). Philip Wagner argues, “The pilgrimage phenomenon...largely confounds utilitarian economic reasoning,” and Wagner goes on to explain that most other human activities studied by geographers contain elements of “utilitarian economic reasoning” (1997: 322). Wagner also observes pilgrimages as a rare phenomenon in which social status and ethnic identity do not affect the behavior of participants in most cases (Wagner 1997: 306). Thus in approaching pilgrimage research, geographers should take these distinguishing characteristics into consideration. Much of the research already undertaken by geographers on pilgrimage sites is examined and summarized in this report.

This research report primarily aims to provide an overview of pilgrimage research by geographers and to illustrate the role of pilgrimage research within the field of geography. A hesitant definition of “pilgrimage” is provided initially, along with a discussion of the challenges facing geographers and other social scientists while attempting to theorize pilgrimages. Because pilgrimages are always associated with locations deemed by a group of people to be sacred (Bhardwaj 1997: 8), a definition of sacred sites is also discussed, followed by a summary of

frequently-used methods used by geographers to research pilgrimages. After the methodology section is a discussion of the geographic research performed on some of the most popular pilgrimage sites in the world, including Mecca, Varanasi, and several of the largest Roman Catholic pilgrimage sites in Europe. A description of research on some of the relatively less popular pilgrimage sites, such as those in Latin America, ensues. These sections provide a backdrop for not only the analysis sections of the thesis but also the concluding sections which discuss potential future research on the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site within the field of geography.

### **Attempts to Define the Term “Pilgrimage”**

The creation of a precise definition of the term “pilgrimage” has proven to be a frustrating task for geographers and other social scientists. According to Chris Park (1994: 258), the *Collins English Dictionary* defines a pilgrimage as “a journey to a shrine or other sacred place,” but this definition is apparently too simple to satisfy geographers. The journey must at least occur as an act of religious devotion (Park 1994: 259) in order to differentiate a pilgrimage from other forms of travel, such as a tourist vacation. However, since the term “religion” is vague and has no single, standard definition (Stoddard 1997: 45; Stoddard and Prorok 2003: 759), how can the pilgrimage phenomenon, which is alleged to be inherently religious, possess a straightforward definition?

Both geographers and anthropologists have been instrumental in the search for a definition of “pilgrimage” sufficient for social scientists. Geographer Robert Stoddard attempts to construct an operational definition of pilgrimages by analyzing four basic elements of a pilgrimage: 1) the distance of movement from the origin of a pilgrim’s journey to the intended sacred site, 2) the level of pilgrim motivation, 3) the destination site of a pilgrimage, and 4) the

magnitude of pilgrims visiting a sacred site (Stoddard 1997: 43). Hoping to form a definition which “will apply equally well to all cultural settings,” Stoddard suggests that a pilgrimage is “an event consisting of longer than local journeys by numerous persons to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion” (Stoddard 1997: 49). Unfortunately, problems consistently arise when utilizing this method of analyzing the basic elements of a pilgrimage. For instance, if a person living adjacent to a major pilgrimage site performed the necessary pilgrimage rituals at the site, would the act be considered a pilgrimage even though no “longer than local” journey took place (Stoddard 1997: 44)? Regarding pilgrim motivation, Stoddard claims religion must be the primary motivating factor for a pilgrim in order for a true pilgrimage to exist, yet the term “religion,” again, has no precise definition (1997: 45). The other three basic elements of pilgrimages are also accompanied by problems which undermine efforts to establish an operational definition of a pilgrimage.

Stoddard also developed a classification scheme for describing specific pilgrimages. The ultimate goal of Stoddard’s classification scheme is the identification of relationships among different pilgrimages (Stoddard 1997: 57), as opposed to developing a single, precise definition. The ability to detect and express particular characteristics of pilgrimages, cross-cultural relationships among pilgrimages, and spatial relationships among pilgrimages are among the advantages of this classification system (Stoddard 1997: 57). Pilgrimages are filed into one of twenty-seven classes using three criteria: 1) the length of the journey by pilgrims, 2) the frequency of the pilgrimage event, and 3) the pilgrimage route (Stoddard 1997: 57). The lengths of pilgrimage journeys are divided into categories such as “intervillage,” “regional,” “national,” and “international” (Stoddard 1997: 50). The frequency of a pilgrimage event is classified as “frequent,” “annual,” or “rare.” A frequent event occurs at least every ten months, an annual

event happens every ten to fourteen months, and a rare event occurs when over fourteen months pass between events (Stoddard 1997: 53). Pilgrimage routes are categorized as either “converging” routes or “prescribed” routes. The former category includes attempts by pilgrims at direct-line paths which can be considered “paths of least resistance,” while the latter category involves paths which are mandated by a pilgrim’s religion (Stoddard 1997: 52). Additional criteria identified for Stoddard’s classification scheme include the location and the relative importance of a pilgrimage site, the pilgrims’ motives, and other characteristics of the pilgrims; however, these criteria are considered much less significant than the length, frequency, and route, of a pilgrimage and are only necessary for inquiries into more specific aspects of a particular pilgrimage (Stoddard 1997: 57).

Anne Osterrieth (1997) contributes to the task of defining “pilgrimage” by examining the stages of a pilgrimage from a humanistic perspective. During the initial stage, a pilgrim feels obliged to embark on the pilgrimage; the pilgrim prepares for the journey and departs from home (Osterrieth 1997: 32). Osterrieth refers to the second stage as the “journey” stage, as the pilgrim travels towards the sacred site, vulnerable to a wide variety of dangers along the path but eventually feeling more competent as a traveler and obtaining a transformed perspective on his or her own life, on his or her religious faith, and on the way in which he or she views and thinks about the world (1997: 34). During the third stage, the pilgrim arrives at the sacred site, performs the necessary rituals, and gains a sense of accomplishment, paving the way for the fourth and final stage in which the pilgrim feasts in celebration both at the pilgrimage site and once the pilgrim returns home (Osterrieth 1997: 35). Analysis of the different stages of a pilgrimage allows for more precise differentiation between pilgrimages and other forms of travel.

Another challenge for social scientists has been determining the differences between pilgrims and tourists. The anthropological field appears to be more active than the geographical field in identifying the differences between pilgrims and tourists, utilizing structural, phenomenal, and institutional approaches. The structural approach states that tourists normally seek to escape their own society and culture, while pilgrims seek reinforcement of their own cultural and religious beliefs by traveling to a location at the core of their religion, usually a “meeting point of the heavenly and the earthly planes” (Cohen 1992: 51), or in other words, a sacred site. The phenomenal approach claims that tourism serves only “to give mere pleasure and enjoyment,” but pilgrimage exists so that pilgrims can express devotion and commitment to their religion (Cohen 1992: 53). Finally, the institutional analysis insists that unlike tourism, pilgrimages are at least somewhat obligatory, have culturally defined seasons during which journeys must be made, have culturally prescribed itineraries for the journeys, and are normally completed with groups of travelers of the same culture or religion journeying together to and from the pilgrimage site (Cohen 1992: 56-58).

### **Sacred Sites Defined**

As stated above, all true pilgrimages must have sacred sites with which the pilgrimages are associated. Therefore, obtaining a precise understanding of a sacred site becomes appropriate prior to continuing with descriptions of pilgrimages and pilgrimage studies. The definition of a sacred site, as opposed to the definition of a pilgrimage, is seemingly straightforward and unambiguous. Simply stated, a sacred site is any place on Earth which becomes “deemed by Believers to be holy territory” (Stoddard and Prorok 2003: 762). A “Believer” in this sense is anyone possessing faith in the divine, and anyone who refutes challenges made pertaining to the level of sacredness of a certain place or object (Stoddard and



Prorok 2003: 760). Sacred sites can be three-dimensional areas of land, two-dimensional lines, or single-dimensional points (Park 1994: 251), and any location on earth not designated as sacred is considered profane space (Johnston *et al.* 1994: 542). Yet once more, the problem of defining the term “religion” leaves us stuck with the ambiguity involved in precisely understanding the sacredness of a site.

Sacred sites are not defined as one entity; rather, sacred sites are classified into three categories with varying degrees of spiritual religion involved. The first category is referred to as “mystico-religious space,” and some mystico-religious sites mark the location of an alleged religious occurrence while others merely represent a group’s religious beliefs (Norton 2000: 292). Mystico-religious sites contain the highest level of spiritual belief out of the three categories. The second category is concerned with homelands as sacred sites, as homelands symbolize the roots of both individuals and groups (Norton 2000: 293). Homelands seem to signify personal and nationalistic attachments rather than religious belief, as does the third category: historical sacred sites (Norton 2000: 293). According to William Norton, historical sacred sites are formed once ethnic or national groups “assign sanctity as a result of some important event either occurring there or being remembered there” (2000: 293). Historical sacred sites include military cemeteries, monuments, and preserved historical sites; sacredness is usually established via the use of a national symbol or an ethnic symbol (Norton 2000: 294). The scope of this research report encompasses the mystico-religious sites primarily.

Research on sacred sites by professional geographers is an ongoing process, which may or may not involve simultaneous studies of the corresponding pilgrimages. Scholarship emphasizing sacred sites themselves include a survey of the sacred sites of different religious groups, research on the designation of certain cemeteries as sacred sites, a description of the

“emotional experiences of Believers” upon visiting sacred sites, and studies of the variety of ways in which different locations on Earth become recognized as sacred (Stoddard and Prorok 2003: 762). Further research on sacred sites could potentially lead to solving inherently spatial problems caused by the designation of certain locations as sacred. Such research could aid in settling disputes over which quarreling faction involved should own and maintain a sacred site; furthermore, disagreements over access to sacred sites and challenges to the sanctity of potentially sacred sites (Stoddard and Prorok 2003: 762) could be resolved by additional research efforts.

### **Methodology of Pilgrimage Studies**

In addition to geographic research on the definition of the term “pilgrimage,” some literature concerns the various methods used by geographers to study pilgrimage sites. One article, written by Gisbert Rinschede and titled “Pilgrimage Studies at Different Levels,” explains pilgrimage studies on four different levels: 1) pilgrimages at “single places,” 2) pilgrimages at regional or national scales, 3) pilgrimages on a global scale, and 4) interdisciplinary study of pilgrimages (Rinschede 1997: 95). Very different concepts and questions appear to materialize when considering each scale of study, consequently requiring geographers to find a number of ways in which to conduct research. One result of this article is that geographers interested in studying pilgrimage sites now have a concise instruction manual for researching pilgrimage sites.

The first level of pilgrimage study scrutinized by Rinschede is the examination of a pilgrimage at one particular location. According to Rinschede, geographers focusing on a single location should pay attention to several key concepts, namely the motives of pilgrims for visiting the site, the number of pilgrims at the site, the frequency of travel to the site by individual

pilgrims, the pilgrims' origins, the pilgrims' modes of travel, and the "social and ethnic characteristics" of the pilgrims (1997: 97-99). Other topics worth investigation at a certain pilgrimage site include the rate of population increase or decrease near the site, economic activities around the site, and the settlement patterns surrounding the site; each of these topics are indicators of the impact of pilgrims on the site (Rinschede 1997: 102). Geographers should note the date of the event which resulted in the creation of a pilgrimage site (Rinschede 1997: 102), and geographers should be mindful of the location of a pilgrimage site in relation to other objects such as airports, large tourist attractions, or highways as these objects impact the level of popularity of that site (Rinschede 1997: 97). Rinschede adds that geographers will be able to find data for the topics listed above "from oral comments by local authorities, archival materials, maps, and aerial photographs" (1997: 103). When compared with the study of pilgrimage phenomena at a certain site, the study of pilgrimages on a regional, national, or worldwide scale appears more limited in terms of topics available for analysis. On these larger scales, distributional studies for comparisons tend to be a major area of concentration for researchers. For instance, the distribution of pilgrimage sites in a country or region can be mapped for comparison according to certain site characteristics such as worshipping rituals, age of the site, size of the site, religion of the pilgrims, ethnicity of the pilgrims, and the effects of the site on the economy of an area (Rinschede 1997: 108). On a global scale, geographers examine the distribution of pilgrimage sites using additional site characteristics as criteria, including "latitudinal position, climatic setting, and distance to large agglomerations of population" (Rinschede 1997: 111). The final focus of pilgrimage research by geographers discussed by Rinschede involves the inclusion of academic disciplines outside of geography. History, psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, and religious studies are the main fields

working on pilgrimage studies in conjunction with geography, according to Rinschede (1997: 113); however, Rinschede claims, “Theoretically, pilgrimages can be examined from any perspective involving human actions and beliefs” (1997: 113). Much of the research on pilgrimage sites in this paper will focus strictly on research efforts which directly involve geographers.

### **Research on the World’s Major Pilgrimages Sites**

In order to better understand what research has been done by geographers regarding the geography of pilgrimage, literature covering geographic research on the most popular pilgrimage sites of some of the world’s most popular religions was examined for discussion in this report. This section describes research on the most significant Roman Catholic pilgrimage sites in Europe, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Hindu pilgrimage to Varanasi, India. Such sites were considered by the author of this report to possibly be the most intensely and thoroughly researched sites by geographers, thus being able to provide information on a wide variety of research topics, research methods, and theoretical approaches which were not discussed in the previous section of this report. The result would be the creation of a more complete picture of the breadth of geographic research at pilgrimage sites.

An article by Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan (1997) entitled “Regional Variations in Europe’s Roman Catholic Pilgrimage Traditions” explores the most popular Roman Catholic pilgrimages sites in Europe. In this study, 6,380 pilgrimage sites were examined, of which 830 sites were designated as “major” sites, or sites which draw “at least 10,000 religiously motivated visitors per year from areas at least as large as a typical European province” (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 67). For the purposes of this comparative study of pilgrimage sites, Europe was divided into eight regions based upon “generalized cultural-linguistic areas” and cultural differences in

pilgrimage traditions throughout history (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 62) from which generalizations could be drawn about certain attributes of the pilgrimage sites.

Several major characteristics of Europe's Roman Catholic pilgrimage sites were selected by the authors of the article for examination. These characteristics included the levels of shrine importance, the dates of sacred site creation, the object being praised by pilgrims, sacred site features, and the different types of shrine origin stories (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 61). Regarding the level of shrine importance, the distance of pilgrims' journeys to a shrine correlate with the relative importance; major pilgrimage sites, such as Rome, Lourdes, and Fatima, attract pilgrims from around the globe, while minor sites usually only attract pilgrims from neighboring villages or towns (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 64). The number of annual pilgrim visitations and the level of a site's "fame" (measured by the frequency of references to the site in newspapers and other published media) are also used in making comparisons (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 66-67).

Analysis of the objects of praise shows sixty-five percent of the Roman Catholic shrines in Europe are in one way or another a form of homage to the Virgin Mary, while the rest of the sites pay tribute to Jesus Christ, saints, or "exemplary holy persons" (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 76).

The various features and the relative location of Roman Catholic sacred sites also come under scrutiny in this study. Many of these sites are associated with certain features in the natural surroundings of the sites (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 81). For instance, forty-six percent of the pilgrimage sites associated with a "natural landscape feature" are located on a hill, mountain, or other form of elevated terrain; thirty-five percent of the sites are locations of "holy waters," usually a well, spring, or lake (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 83). Forest-related shrines make up twenty-two percent of such sites; sites associated with stones, such as rock formations and ancient ruins, account for ten percent of these sites, and sites associated with caves make up an

additional ten percent (Noland and Nolan 1997: 85). The authors utilize this information in order to analyze the geographic distribution of sites with a particular landscape feature. Regarding the relative location of the sacred sites, social scientists have been unable to discover general models or rules (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 87). However, the Nolans established guidelines for measuring the centrality of the Roman Catholic sacred sites, designating centralized shrines as those which are located “within the built-up area of a city of 25,000 or more people” and remote shrines as those which are located “more than fifty kilometers from a city with a population of 25,000 or more, and not associated with a town of 1,000 or more” (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 88). Thus the Nolans were able to generalize that very few Roman Catholic sacred sites in Europe could be considered highly central or highly remote (Noland and Nolan 1997: 87), and that the vast majority of Roman Catholic sacred sites are located in close proximity to communities (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 87).

Several more ways in which geographers have researched pilgrimage sites become apparent in Gwyn Rowley’s 1997 article entitled “The Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Centrality of Islam.” Rowley’s foci of research on this Muslim pilgrimage, or Hajj, are oriented around topics directly involving economic geography, population geography, and transportation geography. The impact of the pilgrimage on private sector employment is one major area of study; because of the pilgrimage, additional employment exists to support hotels, transportation services, retail businesses, and financial services (Rowley 1997: 147). The infrastructural components of Mecca and surrounding areas, such as airports, seaports, and highways, have also been improved over time in order to better manage the influx of pilgrims (Rowley 1997: 147). Additionally, the Hajj created 3,000 jobs for people to work as *mutawifs*, whose main purpose is “to act as a travel agent and courier, to guide and serve the pilgrims during their visits to the holy places” (Rowley

1997: 147). Assisting the *mutawifs* are *wakeels*, who meet pilgrims at airports, seaports, or on certain locations along highways and look over pilgrims' visas, health records, and housing accommodations prior to sending the pilgrims to a *mutawif* (Rowley 1997: 148).

Rowley's article expresses an interest in the number of pilgrims participating in the Hajj on a yearly basis, along with the ways in which the pilgrims travel to Mecca. Rowley notes that over 90,000 pilgrims traveled to Mecca in 1932, but by the 1990s the annual visitations grew to over three million (Rowley 1997: 149). This rate of increase is expected to be maintained at least in the near future, due to the increase in the number of Muslims in the world by an average of three percent of the total Islamic population per year (Rowley 1997: 150). Relatively recently, travels to Mecca have been accomplished by means of air travel, sea travel, land travel, or through a combination of two or more modes (Rowley 1997: 157). Air travel is preferred by pilgrims arriving in Mecca from Iran along with the northernmost and the westernmost African countries, and sea travel is the mode of choice for pilgrims from central Africa, South Asian nations and Southeast Asian nations (Rowley 1997: 157). Countries immediately north of Saudi Arabia along with Afghanistan and countries in southern Europe provide pilgrims primarily via land travel (Rowley 1997: 157). In addition to examining the ways in which the pilgrims journey to Mecca, Rowley notes how the preferences for different modes of travel have changed over time. In 1950, seventy-eight percent of the pilgrims arriving in Mecca from countries outside Saudi Arabia used sailing vessels while only thirteen percent traveled via aircraft (Rowley 1997: 153). However, by 1986 only nineteen percent of the pilgrims were sailing while fifty-two percent used aircraft (Rowley 1997: 153).

Another article which examines one of the most popular pilgrimage sites for one of the world's most popular religions is Rana Singh's article entitled "Sacred Space and Pilgrimage in

Hindu Society: The Case of Varanasi.” Varanasi has been regarded as “the most sacred city in Hinduism” (Singh 1997: 191), and the city is considered “a primary place for pilgrimage” (Singh 1997: 193). Within the city are numerous holy sites which pilgrims must visit using prescribed routes (Singh 1997: 196). For instance, seven imaginary circles and eight imaginary lines were created in the city as a representation of cosmological phenomena, and shrines, which pilgrims must visit, have been placed at the intersections of those lines and circles (Singh 1997: 195-196). The seven circles represent what ancient Hindu literature considers to be the “seven layers of the atmosphere” (Singh 1997: 191), and the eight lines point to the eight cardinal directions: North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, and Northwest (Singh 1997: 197).

Aside from studying spatial configurations of objects due to cosmology, Singh studies the spatial concept of circumambulation. Circumambulation is a path taken by a person which begins and ends at the same point, and the distances of circumambulation by pilgrims in Varanasi can vary from several feet to over fifty kilometers (Singh 1997: 198-200). An example of a circumambulation in Varanasi is an annual 80.5-kilometer walk during which pilgrims stop at five different points along the prescribed route (Singh 1997: 201). By focusing on circumambulation and cosmology-based spatial patterns of pilgrims, Singh has concentrated on pilgrimage studies on a much smaller scale than the scales favored by Nolan and Gwynn Rowley in their studies of Roman Catholic pilgrimage sites and Muslim pilgrimage sites. Singh’s preference for examining the Varanasi pilgrimage site at such a small scale can be explained by Singh’s claim that most geographical research “reduces the sacred sites to points and focuses on movements across long distances” while researchers should actually study pilgrimage routes at multiple scales “to gain a full understanding of the geography of religious behavior” (Singh 1997: 204-206).



## Research on Minor Pilgrimage Sites

Geographers have completed a considerable amount of research on pilgrimage sites which have less popularity and international participation than major sites such as the ones in Europe, Mecca, and Varanasi. These minor sites include all of the 126-plus pilgrimage sites in the United States, as most American sites are considered of regional importance since the farthest-traveling pilgrims arrive from neighboring states (Bhardwaj 1997: 11; Rinschede 1997: 100). Very few American pilgrimage sites are considered nationally important sites to which pilgrims travel from numerous states (Rinschede 1997: 100). Mary Lee Nolan classified 5,320 Roman Catholic pilgrimage sites in Europe as minor, as these sites were considered “sub-regional” sites, 153 of which were either dormant or “in a stage of advanced decline” as pilgrimage sites (Nolan and Nolan 1997: 68). Minor Islamic pilgrimage sites include any site other than Mecca or Medina, such as “tombs of well-known martyrs, saints, and *imams*” in countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Iran (Bhardwaj 1997: 12).

Latin America hosts numerous pilgrimage sites which geographers have researched. In one study, Mary Lee Nolan conducted a research project in Latin America similar to her Roman Catholic pilgrimage study in Europe. Nolan surveyed 937 pilgrimage sites in twenty Latin American countries, comparing the Latin American sites to European sites (Nolan 1991: 22). Much of the European pilgrimage traditions were replicated in Latin America since the arrival of the Europeans centuries ago; consequently, Nolan discovered that a number of attributes are similar between the pilgrimage sites belonging to the different continents (Nolan 1991: 43). According to Nolan, in both Europe and Latin America the Virgin Mary has been “the primary subject of devotion at a majority of shrines,” and in both regions, stories of spiritual visions and images exist as common reasons for establishing pilgrimage sites (Nolan 1991: 43).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

A thorough investigation into the transformational processes of the material/conceptual landscape necessitated the acquisition of a variety of sources from which data about the landscapes surrounding the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine could be attained. Several sources were found to be of significant assistance in providing a well-developed assessment of the ways in which the landscape has changed since the inception of the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine as a pilgrimage site for both Mexicans of European descent and indigenous Mexicans. Such sources included a variety of books, videos, maps, photographs, and city plans. Along with these sources, the official Virgin of Guadalupe basilica web site provided information regarding the discrepancies in or lack of landscape representation. The content of the sources of data will be discussed in the subsequent chapters discussing the landscape changes and the analysis of the representations of the landscape. This chapter explains which research methods were used in order to gather data, which sources are included in the analysis, where data was obtained, and why the data provided for analysis is included in this project. The research methods utilized for this thesis involved archival research, repeat photography, and field observation.

#### **Repeat Photography**

Repeat photography as a research tool involves attempting to understand a landscape's rate of change, nature of change, and direction of change by matching more recent photographs with previously-taken photographs (Frey 1995: 2). The decision to use repeat photography for this project mandated conducting archival research in order to obtain historical photographs of the basilica and its surrounding landscape, thus allowing for a more definitive visual comparison of the differing phases of development on the landscape over roughly the last century. I

consulted *Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática*, a center for geographic information in Mexico, in order to obtain current, detailed maps of the study area. I utilized the *Fototeca Nacional del Instituto Nacional de Anthropología e Historia* archive in Mexico City and the Robert C. West photography archive at Louisiana State University to obtain historical photographs of the same area. Once I obtained the historical pictures, as part of my fieldwork I sought to replicate several pictures of the landscape which were taken at a much earlier date.

### **Archival Research**

In addition to historical photographs of the landscape around the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine, archival research brought forth historical city plans for the shrine site and its immediate surroundings. This source of historical documents is located on the fifth floor of the newest Virgin of Guadalupe basilica. Most of these documents showed plans of the area dating back to the 1700s. These plans are then compared to present-day maps gathered from reputable cartographic sources, again to display compelling evidence of the drastic changes in the landscape occurring over the last several centuries. At this archival center I also found books containing additional paintings and photographs of the basilica area from the 1600s until the late twentieth century.

### **Supplemental Data Acquisition**

Supplemental data gathering included finding additional materials which would provide information on the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine for people interested in either visiting the site or merely learning more about the site. This method makes possible the opportunity to analyze representations of the landscape around the basilica. This collection of materials becomes an important aspect in the analysis of landscape representation for the shrine site. The places visited in order to find such materials included a number of tourist information modules in Mexico City,

Christian bookstores in Mexico City, and Mexico City's international airport. Not only places outside the shrine site were utilized for this purpose but also places at the pilgrimage site itself, including the gift shops located inside the basilica and vending areas immediately outside the plaza on which both the old basilica and the new basilica sit. Studying the representations of the landscape provided by these objects is important in that it reveals the representations which are sent or given by visitors to others. Such materials used for analysis include street maps, information pamphlets, books, with picture books and illustrated books being of particular interest. Other materials include a variety of souvenirs, especially postcards, paintings, shirts, and videos.

### **Field Observation**

In addition to using maps as sources of information about the landscape surrounding the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine, a more insightful glimpse into the site's interactions with the urban landscape mandated personal observations take place at the shrine site. Observations of not only the physical landscape but also the architecture's relationship with the landscape and visitors' interaction with the landscape were carried out. Detailed descriptions of the immediate vicinity of the site were made possible by walking through the area en route to the Virgin of Guadalupe basilica, noting in particular the shrine site's tendency to shelter its visitors from its urban spatial context. Descriptions of the surrounding landscape extending even farther from the basilica required observations from atop Tepeyac Hill, overlooking the basilica along with much of Mexico City. Scrutiny of visitors' interactions with the landscape primarily entailed observing the portions of the surrounding landscape which visitors chose to view and possibly photograph while on Tepeyac Hill.

## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

#### The Impact of Historical Cultural Disparities at the Pilgrimage Site

An important factor shaping the present-day pilgrimage site of Tepeyac Hill is the existence of widely varying cultural and religious beliefs and practices between the indigenous Mexicans and the Mexicans of European descent. The ramifications of these discrepancies are quite visible today -- as they were in the past -- in the form of tension existing between these two basic groups of Mexicans. This tension began with the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan in 1521 (Gibson 1964). Nearly all of the cultural conflicts between the Spaniards and the indigenous had some element of religion involved, whether the conflicts arose from material or immaterial themes. The concepts of time, death, and the grasping of truths became points of stark cultural differences between the invading Spaniards and the indigenous Aztecs. Other topics creating conflict include differing attitudes on the land, the soul, sinning, truth, reality, time, and death (Rodriguez 1994). The differences between the Spanish and the indigenous religions play a significant part in shaping the culture of Mexico today and become manifested in many aspects involved with the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site, such as through the behavior of the pilgrims and the design of certain parts of the site.

Aside from the present-day influence of the broader cultural conflicts on religious practice at the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine, how do these cultural differences directly relate to the shrine? Some believe the tension created from amount of variation between the material and the immaterial cultures of the two groups, along with a need felt by the Spaniards to Christianize the indigenous peoples, are the main reason for attempts shortly after the conquest to unite the Spaniards and the natives in religion, via the creation of a Marian apparition myth. James

Lockhart asserts that the Spaniards who were in Mexico during the 1500s created the Virgin of Guadalupe apparition story and progressively cultivated the story into its current form (1992: 249). Other schools of thought include the idea that the natives created the myth so that they could continue to worship the goddess Tonantzin, whom they worshiped atop Tepeyac Hill prior to the conquest of the Spaniards, and the idea that the apparition story is not a fictional story but that the Virgin of Guadalupe did in fact appear atop Tepeyac Hill (Novoa 2005: 268-269).

### **The Significance of the Legend of Juan Diego**

To better understand the history behind the pilgrimage site at Tepeyac Hill, one must know about the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and to fully appreciate the significance of the image, one must know the legend behind the image. This legend primarily involves a series of visions of the Virgin Mary by an Aztec native named Juan Diego, leading to a chapel being built in the Virgin Mary's honor on Tepeyac Hill. Both Mexicans of European descent and Mexicans of indigenous descent have perpetuated the legend over the centuries (Lockhart 1992: 249). A synopsis of the legend follows, with an emphasis on the spatial dimensions of the story in order to gain additional insight into the layout of Tepeyac Hill and the surrounding landscape.

Before proceeding with the summary of the legend, an orientation as to exactly when and where the events in the legend took place is necessary. According to the legend, the visions of the Virgin Mary occurred in December 1531, ten years after the conquistadors gained control over the Aztec population (Ruether 2005). A total of five apparitions occurred near the very top of the hill, at the base of the hill, and in a town called Cuautitlan, near the hill (Marti 1973: 14-17). Only a few characters play prominent roles in the legend. The three key figures are Juan Diego, Bishop Don Fray Juan de Zumarraga, and the otherworldly lady known as either the Virgin of Guadalupe or Tonantzin. According to the legend, Juan Diego was born in 1474 with

the name of Quauhtlatoazin, meaning “Eagle That Talks”, and Quauhtlatoazin received his Christian name of Juan Diego three or four years after the 1521 Spanish conquest of present-day Mexico (Marti 1973: 12). However, Juan Diego’s very existence comes under question by some, despite Pope John Paul II turning Diego into a saint in 1990 (Richardson 2003: 243). Within the legend, Bishop Zumarraga serves as an antagonist -- at least initially -- towards Juan Diego. Zumarraga challenges Diego’s claims of seeing visions of what he would consider to be the Virgin Mary. But it is Zumarraga who in the end authorizes the construction of a chapel which would eventually lead to the first of the basilicas. The identity of the lady Juan Diego is said to have seen is differentiated between the Spaniards and the Mexican natives. Even though a number of Aztecs converted to Catholicism in the years closely following the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan, the majority of the Aztecs believe the lady to be Tonantzin, the goddess of Tepeyac Hill (Richardson 2003; Novoa 2005; Ruether 2005).

During the first sighting, the Virgin of Guadalupe asked Juan Diego to have Bishop Zumarraga build a chapel in Mary’s honor. After being refused, Juan Diego was asked by Mary to find a certain kind of yellow and red flower which does not grow in that region, and these flowers are believed by some to represent truth, the truth of the Virgin of Guadalupe’s appearance on the Tepeyac Hill (Novoa 2005: 273). Shortly after Juan Diego’s discovery the flowers, the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared and created an image of herself on his cloak. Bishop Zumarraga then built a chapel once he saw the image on the cloak. The flowers, along with the waterfalls and cacti purportedly present at the sites of the apparitions, have become imbued with spiritual value and are prevalent in representations of the pilgrimage site.



**Figure 4.1** Sculptures recapturing the Virgin of Guadalupe sighting.



**Figure 4.2** Religiously significant yellow and red flowers, waterfalls.





**Figure 4.3** Sculpture of Juan Diego among religiously significant cacti.

## **The History and Mystery behind the Image of the Virgin**

Since the construction of a chapel on Tepeyac Hill honoring the Virgin of Guadalupe, both the Spanish Mexicans and the indigenous Mexicans have been able to identify not only with the legend of Juan Diego but also with the image of the Virgin that appeared on Juan Diego's cloak. The original painting is currently being displayed inside a basilica on Tepeyac Hill, and copies are popular outside the basilica as a prevalent symbol of Latin American Catholicism. A great deal can be said about the popularity of the Virgin of Guadalupe image. Not only does the image primarily attract the devotion of both indigenous Mexicans and Mexicans of European descent, the image also attracts the interest of individuals for both spiritual and non-spiritual reasons (Galanes 1991: 90-91). This type of popularity is due to a number of mysterious image attributes that still baffle scientists to this day, along with reports of events related to the image which produced unlikely outcomes.

The image thus demands a closer look in order to understand the meanings of the image for both the indigenous and the non-indigenous groups of devotees, in an effort to illustrate and understand how the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine has become Latin America's largest pilgrimage site. This section describes the image with an emphasis on the attributes which appeal to the two main cultural groups of pilgrims to the shrine. Additionally, this section discusses the most significant events in the image's history which have become part of the mystique surrounding the shrine and thus have helped attract a wide range of pilgrims who either may or may not have European ancestors.

The image said to have been inscribed on Juan Diego's cloak portrays a woman with her head slightly bowed, her eyes slightly open, and her palms pressed together in prayer. The woman is wearing a blue cloak with yellow star patterns obvious to the viewer. An angel is



**Figure 4.4 Virgin of Guadalupe image inside basilica.**

holding a crescent moon upon which the lady stands. Golden sun rays stream out from behind her in virtually every direction, and the rays are encircled by clouds which appear along the edges of the painting.

The image never appealed solely to the Spanish Mexicans nor the indigenous Mexicans, but always to both. In the 1500s the Spaniards associated the woman in the image with the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine in Spain, while the Aztecs believed her to be the goddess Tonantzin, who was believed to have reigned atop Tepeyac Hill (Ruether 2005). A number of features in the image allude to Aztec mythology even though the Catholics claim the woman in the image to be the mother of Jesus.

Important features on the image convincing indigenous Mexicans that the Virgin of Guadalupe is Aztec include the woman's face and hands, the crescent moon, the angel, and the sun rays. The Aztecs believe the shape of her face, her downward-gazing eyes, and her slight smile indicate she is a compassionate woman and therefore an indigenous Mexican (Rodriguez 1994: 23). Thus the Aztecs created a clear distinction from the conquering Spaniards merely via their interpretation of her facial features. The hands, the crescent moon, and the angel in the painting can all be considered supporting evidence for this interpretation. The Aztecs believe her hands are positioned in an "Indian manner of offering," not a traditional Western style of prayer, and the fingers are considered relatively short, resembling indigenous hands, not European hands (Rodriguez 1994: 27-29). For the indigenous the image's sun rays and the image's moon either have multiple meanings or the precise meaning is clouded in obscurity. Ana Novoa (2005: 290) argues that the sun rays and the moon are sources of indigenous worship of and loyalty to the Christian God as opposed to loyalty to the European church. On the other hand, Jeanette Rodriguez (1994: 27-30) purports the sun rays and the moon indicate the presence of the Aztec

sun and moon gods. The angel signifies to the Aztecs that the Virgin of Guadalupe is a part of Aztec royalty “because royalty and representatives of the deities were carried by others” and “being carried by a heavenly creature means that she came on her own and not with the Spaniards” (Rodriguez 1994: 30).

Analyses over the past five centuries consistently indicate that much of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is shrouded in mystery. Most of the pigments utilized in creating the colors of the image are purportedly unidentifiable (Rodriguez 1994: 25, 30). In addition, the pigments are reported to be as vibrant as they were during the 1500s, granted several details have been repainted since the image was first created (Rodriguez 1994: 19, 29). Stories related to the image, however accurate or plausible, convey a notion that the image is otherworldly.

According to one legend, in 1791 a goldsmith spilled a bottle of nitric acid on the image while cleaning the image’s frame. Instead of eating through the cloth, the acid was said to have only left a stain on the image (Galanes 1991: 89). But could nitric acid destroy that type of cloth in the first place? Another event threatening to destroy the image occurred much more recently, but the result was relatively the same, enhancing the mystique attributed to the image. A bomb hidden near the image exploded on November 14, 1921, damaging everything in the immediate vicinity of the image but leaving the image unscathed (Galanes 1991: 90).

In essence, the image itself has been a major source of the Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe’s widespread popularity since the 1500s, enticing millions visitors yearly, whether of indigenous or European descent, whether for spiritual reasons or not. The mystique still lingering in relation to the image has helped sustain its popularity over the centuries, and because of this, the changing physical landscape surrounding the shrine becomes all that much more significant, and thus the focus of this thesis will now shift to analysis of the interactions between

the material and the conceptual components of this landscape since the site's inception as a location for the worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYZING MATERIAL/CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE PROCESSES

#### The 2005 Virgin of Guadalupe Pilgrimage Site

##### Description of Research Site

This particular journey to the top of Tepeyac Hill begins underground, arriving at the LaVilla-Basilica metro station, just several city blocks south of the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine. Signs showing silhouettes of the Virgin Mary and the newer basilica are painted on the station walls, leading debarked passengers to ascend the proper stairs onto asphalt streets. At the top of the stairway, visitors to the shrine do not encounter the shrine site just yet, as the view to the basilica and the hill are obscured by the multistory edifices of a narrow, prosaic street serving as a haven for vendors of all sorts. Toys, handicrafts, shirts, and paintings sit or hang awaiting sale alongside rows of food and drink stalls. A covered sidewalk beside the constantly bustling four-lane highway called Calzado de Guadalupe leads pedestrians closer to the basilica, through a tunnel of additional vending booths on one side, and shops and eateries on the other. The fast-food restaurants here include Burger King and McDonald's, the latter of which announces its presence with a two-story pole supporting the Golden Arches.

A block away from the entrance to the plaza is the spot where the first clear view of the upper portion of the new basilica, placed inside an open plaza (La Plaza de Las Americas), can be seen by those walking from the metro station, with Tepeyac Hill looming above and behind. Until this point the middlemost section of the street, designated for the visitors walking to and from the shrine, appears as an interstice lying between four automobile lanes, amidst rows of trees, food stands, and souvenir stands. Here the automobile traffic splits as, once adjacent to the plaza, the traffic diverts in opposite directions, paralleling the outer edges of the plaza. The

remainder of Calzado de Guadalupe gradually rises over ten feet until it reaches the plaza's entrance gates. On this final stretch of the road, more vending stalls and individual sellers compete with pilgrims, tourists, and any other visitors for the limited space. At the gate to the plaza entrance, typically six police officers coordinate the rate of visitor traffic entering and exiting the plaza.









Once past this southernmost entrance and inside La Plaza de las Americas, one must walk at least the rough equivalent of a city block on the flat stone surface in order to reach most edifices sitting on the plaza and slightly farther to reach the stairways ascending Tepeyac Hill. However, the new basilica is much closer than a block from the gate. One structure sitting nearly adjacent to the new basilica is the slightly leaning, Baroque-style old basilica, the former location of the Virgin of Guadalupe image. Standing alongside the old basilica is a golden statue of Pope John Paul II. Also visible from the southern plaza entrance, a relatively new, angular stone structure stands several stories in height. This structure, named *El Carrillon*, contains a massive clock, bells, and an Aztec calendar (Carrillon 2004). From the gate a relative few pilgrims crawl to the basilica on their knees. Even during the hottest of afternoon hours, one can occasionally witness pilgrims crying while the searing hot surface of the plaza scalds their bare, reddened knees.

Farther into the plaza, visitors become visually and acoustically blocked from the surrounding urban environment by a fence and row of small, neatly trimmed trees. The Golden Arches from the McDonald's on Calzado de Guadalupe are among the very few elements of the surrounding landscape clearly visible to pilgrims while inside the plaza area near the basilica. Vending stalls and a couple of multistory hotels are all that is clearly visible otherwise. The plaza fence consists of thin gray poles standing slightly over ten feet high. The trees, trimmed as





**Catálogo de Simbología**

Nombre	Símbolo
IGLESIA . . . . .	
ESCUELA . . . . .	
ASISTENCIA MEDICA . . . . .	
PALACIO MUNICIPAL O AYUDANTIA . . . . .	
MERCADO . . . . .	
CEMENTERIO . . . . .	
PLAZA O JARDIN . . . . .	
METRO O TREN LIGERO . . . . .	

**Figure 5.2** Legend for map on Figure 5.1. Starting from the top symbol and proceeding down the list, the names of the symbols translate into English as follows: church, school, medical aid, municipal palace, market, cemetery, plaza or garden, metro or light train. (Source: *Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática*)



**Figure 5.3** Visitors entering the newer basilica.

to look like a row of green cubes atop the trunks, stand about twice as high as the fence. The tree branches are trimmed so that the bottommost leaves roughly match the height of the fence.

Facing inside the plaza along the southern fence (containing the main plaza entrance) are a series of identical grey crosses, nearly as tall as the trees. A row of dark golden flag poles stand tall above the trees, just inside the plaza. In June only a single pole held a flag -- a flag of Mexico -- but I collected a postcard showing a plaza completely filled with pilgrims dressed in white while flags of various nations adorned each of the poles. This postcard most likely reflects the annual December celebrations of the anniversary of the Virgin Mary sightings.

During my fieldwork at the site in June 2005, I typically arrived at a plaza devoid of crowds, except for during weekends, when many more visitors could be seen. Large groups gathered to surround and watch troupes of indigenous dancers, whom I only saw dancing on Saturdays and Sundays. Very few onlookers held cameras. The female dancers, dressed in bright red and yellow dresses, moved to the rhythm of drums which competed with automobile traffic noise just outside the plaza fences.

The latest basilica, currently holding the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, sits slightly to the left of the visitors as they enter through the southern gates of the plaza. To the basilica's right sits the older basilica with Tepeyac Hill directly behind, staring down at the basilicas. With construction completed in 1976, the more recent basilica's one-hundred-meter diameter and seating capacity of 10,000 served to better accommodate the high volume of visitors arriving each year, according to the official shrine site website, [www.virgendeguadalupe.org.mx](http://www.virgendeguadalupe.org.mx) (Nueva Basilica 2004). The basilica's circular form represents "*la idea de universalidad de Dios,*" the concept of God's universality (Nueva Basilica 2004).

The dark, dull green roof stands forty-two meters high and "in a manner not far removed





**Figure 5.4** Entrance to *La Plaza de las Americas*.



**Figure 5.5** Fences surrounding the plaza.



**Figure 5.6 Indigenous pilgrims or entertainers dancing in the plaza.**

from that of an athletic stadium” due to the roof’s asymmetrical form (Nueva Basilica 2004, Richardson 2003: 108). This asymmetrical roof form and the rest of the basilica’s “minimalist” exterior design conform to the typicality of churches built after World War II, according to Miles Richardson (2003: 110). At the very top of the roof sits a prosaic cross of the same green color, adding no more than two or three meters to the roof’s height. A slightly larger cross protrudes above the main entrance, which points visitors directly towards the altar. Both crosses face exactly the same direction as the altar. As one walks towards this entrance from the outside, the rooftop brings the visitor’s eyes up to one cross, then the other, and ultimately to an often smoggy but occasionally bright blue sky. In contrast one sees Tepeyac Hill dominating the background above and behind the older basilica’s façade. The orientations of the basilicas, however, may have more to do with enabling the maximum number of people to see the image of the Virgin when the doors are open than any spiritual implications regarding the basilicas’ backgrounds.

A flurry of activity can be witnessed inside this new basilica while standing at the entrance during a typical mass. People are constantly entering and exiting the basilica, and some pilgrims are crawling towards the altar from outside on their knees while tour groups listen to Spanish-speaking tour guides. The mass proceeds despite frequent barrages of camera flashes. Even whilst the majority of churchgoers located in the wooden pews are standing, those crawling in the aisles normally choose to remain on their knees. The men and boys in the basilica commonly wear slacks, blue jeans, and button-up collar shirts, while the women and girls typically wear blue jean pants, blue jean dresses, and plain-colored blouses.

The priest conducts each mass atop a white – most likely marble – altar situated several steps above the floors on which the pews rest. Behind the priest typically sit from five to thirty

other white-robed clergymen in gradually elevating rows of seats. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, in a golden-framed bulletproof casing, sits above and behind these seats, mounted on a wall. Along the same wall are a set of flags from nearly thirty nations and a set of organ pipes, each of which adorn the wall on either side of the altar. Seeming to sprout from the same wall, but in reality hanging from thin wires in the ceiling, are irregularly-shaped series of hexagonal light encasings hovering well above the altar and the image of the Virgin.

The sanctuary of the newer basilica displays ubiquitous asymmetry which visually bombards audience members facing the direction of the priest. The ceiling echoes the shape of the roof. The series of connected ceiling lights make no attempt at symmetry. Tables sit asymmetrically on the altar, and podiums are placed at different heights on the altar's stairs. Behind the altar, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is tucked below and to the right of a Christless golden cross hanging on the wall. Another wall facing the audience holds several national flags, but only on one side of the altar. The other side serves as a backdrop to organ pipes, non-symmetrical themselves.

Hallways on either side of the altar lead visitors from the sanctuary to the closest possible distance to the Virgin of Guadalupe painting. In this up-close viewing section, sculptures of Juan Diego amidst natural settings, including cacti, stones, and birds, add a three-dimensional aspect to the walls. Visitors can only look up to the Virgin from moving walkways and are not allowed any means of touching either the image or its bulletproof vault. Ironically, in a region where Catholic pilgrims place such importance on being able to touch the religious figures and to bequeath items to those figures, neither activity exists at this shrine site (Richardson 2003: 221). There is no ladder allowing pilgrims to climb to any opening in the shield like at the Esquipulas shrine in Guatemala, nor can pilgrims touch the glass shield like the pilgrims to the shielded



Lord of Miracles shrine in Colombia (Richardson 2003: 222). This seemingly idiosyncratic arrangement most likely exists solely for protection against additional bombings, fires, and other potential forms of damage. However this does not explain the absence of bequeathed items at the entire shrine site.

To the rear of the Virgin painting sit a gift shop, a miniscule sanctuary comprised of approximately ten pews, and elevators allowing access to the administrative offices and the historical archives. Like the vending stalls outside the plaza, the gift shop souvenirs focus on either the Virgin of Guadalupe or Juan Diego. Virtually all of the representations of the two figures include rural scenes: a grassy hill with dirt paths, waterfalls over gray stones, cacti, an occasional tree, predominantly red and yellow flowers, and mountains bending the horizon in the background. Juan Diego is oftentimes portrayed kneeling while looking towards an off-screen Virgin Mary hovering high overhead. Such souvenirs come in the form of jewelry, paintings, shirts, and key chains, to name a few items. The gift shop also sells books, videos, and postcards portraying the pilgrimage site and the scenes from the legend of the Guadalupe apparitions.

The older basilica, leaning slightly as it slowly subsides into the earth, seemed lifeless in relation to the new basilica during my time at the pilgrimage site. On each corner of this rectangular building stand a tower with a relatively tiny cross at the top, and a golden cupola dominates the very center of the basilica. In place by 1709, this arrangement was intended to mimic the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (Antigua Basilica 2004). Symmetry pervaded the interior of the basilica, especially regarding its walls, windows, pews, and pillars. I did not encounter any crowded religious services while inside this basilica. Instead I oftentimes witnessed a smattering of patrons seated with much space in between each other in the two symmetrical columns of pews facing the altar. Men wearing business suits would not let me exit

through the front doors from which I came; rather, I had to leave through the side exit which is adjacent to a gift shop. The souvenirs in the gift shop practically mirrored the aforementioned gift shop, although this one contained fewer items for sale.

Walking in between and then beyond the basilicas in a northerly direction, one reaches the base of the stairway stretching across the hillside, nearly reaching Tepeyac Hill's summit. Along the entire stairway, concrete arches covered in leaved vines intermittently loop over the pedestrians. Trees frequently block the view of the sprawling Mexico City landscape, and benches are placed sporadically along the waist-high stairway wall, facing the hill.

The zenith of the stairway caters more to visitors interested in the scenery, although here too visitors must contend with many trees for a view of the landscape encompassing Tepeyac Hill. Also at the stairway's apex are gift shops covered by a roof but lacking outer walls. The souvenirs are similar in nature to the ones in the basilicas' gift shops; however, several shops sell only drinks, liquid or frozen. The most unobstructed view of the surrounding landscape is located one level above the gift shops, on a small chapel's patio, where a relative few visitors can congregate to share the view with the life-sized statuary of male angels and of crosses. However, visitors do not seem to be expected to absorb the view of the urban landscape for long, as there are no seats or sheltering covers from the intense sun. Most visitors tend to only take a quick glance at the landscape except for the portion which contains the multistory basilicas in the foreground; furthermore, photographing in the direction of the basilicas was overwhelmingly the norm for those capturing any exterior landscape on film.

Mexico City's smog, skyscrapers, multistory hotels, markets, and endless rows of streets and trees cover nearly all traces of a historically rural landscape. Looming over a city situated at 7,200 feet above sea level, the smog typically dominates the city's rarefied atmosphere during



**Figure 5.7** View of surrounding landscape from Tepeyac Hill, 1880s (Source: *Fototeca Nacional del Instituto Nacional de Anthropologia e Historia*).



**Figure 5.8** Approximately the same view as Figure 5.7, but in the year 2005. Obviously the trees add difficulty to seeing the urban surroundings.

the late afternoon, as earlier in the day the smog tends to shroud only the skyscrapers and mountainous horizon farthest to the south of Tepeyac Hill. Gradually the distance of visible terrain attenuates as the day progresses, so that buildings merely several blocks from the plaza become obscured by a slight screen of smog. Facing south from the side of the hill, the most distinct features of the predominately urban landscape are the five-to-ten story hotels, apartment buildings, and office buildings, the majority of them within ten blocks of the hotel. In places which were once lake water, these taller buildings stand amidst a lake of shorter gray, white and tan buildings, all monotonously square or rectangular, but many visibly separated by rows of trees. As the land stretches towards the horizon, fewer of the taller buildings can be seen until just before the horizon where a row of skyscrapers stands. Turning right to face west, one can see more of the same style of square or rectangular edifice, very few of these buildings more than five stories, but skyscrapers do not form a backdrop at the horizon, nor do they exist when facing East. The eastern view reveals a number of single-story markets beginning from the eastern edge of the pilgrimage site plaza. One can occasionally spot a passenger train ambling many miles away, but never coming towards the basilica.

For this chapter the walk up Tepeyac Hill began at the western part of the hill directly behind the basilicas. As one finishes the trek by walking down the stairway on the eastern side of the hill, one can see a well-maintained, symbolic idyll containing waterfalls, the religiously significant red and yellow flowers displayed in groups, and an assembly of bronze statues depicting the sighting of the Virgin of Guadalupe by Juan Diego. The waterfalls form a backdrop for the scene. In front of the statuary, clusters of visitors can oftentimes be witnessed kneeling in worship or taking pictures. Two more Juan Diego statues are nearby but typically not as popular as the statues standing before the waterfall. A short walk farther south and then



**Figure 5.9 Downtown Mexico City, facing south.**



**Figure 5.10 Southwestern view from Tepeyac Hill.**





**Figure 5.11 Southeastern view from Tepeyac Hill.**

east, tracing the hill slope, reveals a restricted view of anything outside the plaza except single-story market stalls just behind the fence, but soon enough leads back to the basilicas and main plaza entrance.

### **Concluding with Historical Comparisons**

The landscape visible to anyone standing atop Tepeyac Hill within the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site has been overwhelmingly rural for close to ninety percent of the site's existence. Certainly this area of land as experienced in 2005 stands in stark contrast from the land visible at the time of the shrine's inception. According to a number of illustrated representations, in 1531 the view from the hillside would have been dominated by the massive Lake Texcoco and rural agriculture, rendering the lakeside Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan a distant and minor aspect of the landscape, accessible to the pilgrimage site solely via an elevated road made of wood, stone, and compressed mud (Ezcurra 1990: 578). As Lake Texcoco dwindled in size into the late 1700s, no longer surrounding Tepeyac Hill, the land adjacent to the hill was transformed into *haciendas* and a small, grid-pattern colonial town. By the late 1800s the town encompassed a considerably larger portion of the land next to the hill, but very few of the widely-spaced buildings developed multiple stories. By the late 1900s Mexico City seemed to completely envelope the shrine site with dense city blocks of ubiquitous multistory buildings, leading to the description of the early twenty-first century landscape provided earlier in this chapter. As an afterthought, one of the constants throughout the history of this pilgrimage site pertains to the visual domination of the basilica on the landscape holding the image of the Virgin Mary. Each basilica has been built with a size and height which allows viewers to easily identify them from a considerable distance.

The ensuing Dialectical Considerations section will discuss the interactions of the pilgrimage site and the landscape throughout time in a more detailed manner by looking at the interactions that have been occurring within the immediate vicinity of the basilica.

### **Dialectic Considerations at the Site**

#### **Dialectical Analysis Introduction**

Henri Lefebvre claims that whenever social space becomes analyzed, it breaks down into multiple sections just as white light breaks down into a spectrum (1991: 352). Lefebvre believes this breakdown of social space reveals conflicts which are “internal to what on the surface appears homogenous and coherent – and presents itself and behaves as though it were” (1991: 352). Through such analysis this section discusses certain dialectical conflicts as expressed in the different components of the landscape concerning the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site. Analyzing the landscape in this manner reveals varying levels of either tension or harmony between the two opposing, contradictory forces involved in each conflict and paves the way for a more thorough analysis of the interactions between the material/conceptual components of the pilgrimage site and its surrounding landscape.

The overall objective for the dialectical analysis is to identify certain aspects of the landscape as potentially alienating versus those which aspire to a sense of spirituality. This section examines the oftentimes overlapping dialectical comparisons of the sacred versus the profane, a notion of community versus a notion of exclusion, economic productivity versus economic consumption, and symmetry versus asymmetry. For each of the dialectic comparisons, one side of the dialectic can always be seen as promoting alienation while the other side promotes spirituality. The primary subject matter derives from field observations and focuses on certain synchronic patterns in the landscape -- which would be observable at any single given



time at the site -- as opposed to diachronic processes, which would require historical documentation. Brief historical comparisons are at times mentioned to help clarify a point. The material/conceptual analysis taking place in the following chapter, on the other hand, focuses on the diachronic processes driving the interactions found in the landscape through time.

### **Sacred versus Profane**

According to Mircea Eliade, anything designated as sacred becomes distinguished from the profane and is called a “hierophany” (1957: 12). A hierophany in some cases can be considered sacred space, and this sacred space becomes the center of orientation for religious persons. Sacred space is to be separated from profane space, which does not have any inherent point of orientation for the religious and is homogenous in its lack of significant sacred or religious qualities (Eliade 1957: 21-22). Pilgrimage sites are prime examples of hierophanies and thus constitute locations of sacred space; however, each individual pilgrimage site may struggle with the concept that sacred space is not always clearly definable or obvious to the viewer, and thus the site design must ensure the desired level of sanctity is indicated to all viewers.

One dialectical conflict which seems to subsume the other forms of dialectical conflict existing at the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site is that of the sacred versus the profane – the sacred beckoning spirituality and the profane lending itself to alienation through the eyes of the religious. The most basic conceptualization of the sacred versus the profane at the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine is the notion that in the year 2005 every object within the fenced boundaries of the pilgrimage site can be considered sacred space by pilgrims to the site, and every material object outside the gates, visible to pilgrims at the site, can be considered profane.

Establishing a visible distinction between the sacred and profane can be accomplished through various means with regards to the physical appearance of a pilgrimage site. How does the Virgin of Guadalupe site deal with the concern of being indiscernible as a location of sacred grounds, to being lost amongst profane space? The answer lies, upon first glance at the site, in the exterior architecture along with the statuary replica of the Virgin of Guadalupe sightings. Mircea Eliade claims that one way of expressing sanctity through the architecture of a church is by creating a symbolic “door to the world above,” involving “an opening in the upward direction” which “ensures communication with the gods” (1957: 26). The older basilica, with its dome and small crosses atop the four towers, could have sufficed in terms of distinguishing the site from profane space prior to the construction of the fence around the site’s plaza. The fence was constructed over a century after this basilica was built, and from outside the plaza, no inherently religious iconography exists on the fence. Perhaps, then, the height of the new basilica and the significantly larger cross at the pinnacle of the asymmetrical roof were designed to emphasize the grounds as transcendent of profane space. Rather than being concealed by an inconspicuous fence, the sacredness of the site is now visible from many blocks away, wherever the surrounding buildings allow a view of the site. Furthermore, the architecture obviates the need for an ostentatious written sign, for example, proclaiming the site to be a religious construct. The architectural style of the newer basilica speaks for itself, stating the word “ecclesiastical” to any observer.

### **Sense of Belonging versus Sense of Anonymity**

Conflict between the sacred and the profane, spirituality and alienation, exists inside the shrine site as well, which brings the discussion to the dialectic of a sense of belonging versus a sense of anonymity pertaining to the massive religious community expressing devotion to the

shrine. This dialectic can be explained more clearly through Mircea Eliade's notions of chaos and cosmos. Eliade states that the religious prefer to associate themselves with the concept of cosmos but not with the concept of chaos (1957: 29). Cosmos is a territory which is familiar to a particular people, while chaos is an unknown realm, or in other words, "a foreign, chaotic space, peopled by ghosts, demons, 'foreigners' (who are assimilated to demons and the souls of the dead)" (Eliade 1957: 29). If a pilgrim feels that he or she belongs to that shrine-worshipping community, then it can be said that he or she is living in the space of cosmos, a sacred space; however, if he or she does not feel involved enough or welcome enough at the site, that person could become susceptible to falling into the realm of chaos, a profane space, remaining anonymous from the religious community's standpoint.

The exterior architecture helps manifest the pilgrimage site as sacred from a distance, but once inside the gates, pilgrims are not emancipated from the threat of losing their sense of participating in the sacred as part of a religious community. That loss of a sense of involvement, or feeling of being welcome, causes the alienating loss of the purely spiritual experience expected from a sacred place. Much of the site's design caters to maintaining a sense of community and excluding unwanted elements of the profane. For instance the fence surrounding the basilicas appears to have been built once the site became too intermingled in the everyday goings-on of non-religious, and thus alienating, aspects of the city. Historical photographs, such as Figure 5.10, show a much smaller, fenceless plaza existing harmoniously with its surroundings before the onset of rapid urban development during the twentieth century. Along the side of the hill facing the basilicas, attention to the surrounding landscape appears to be discouraged. Trees are allowed to grow so that they cover most of the view along walkways, and the few benches tend to face the hill. At the topmost section for pilgrims to travel, where trees

do not hinder the view of the landscape, is an area for very small crowds to stand and absorb the scenery, but the lack of any seats or shelter indicates the discouragement of prolonged visits at that point. Also, the way in which the main doors of the new basilica open to allow pilgrims on the plaza to pray directly to the Virgin of Guadalupe image enhances the sense of belonging to those at the site.

### **Economic Production versus Economic Consumption.**

A third dialectical conflict observable at the site is that of economic productivity versus economic consumption. More specifically, Henri Lefebvre states that this conflict involves “the clash between a consumption of space which produces surplus value and one which produces only enjoyment -- and is therefore ‘unproductive’” (1991: 359) It is a clash, in other words, between capitalist ‘utilizers’ and community ‘users’” (1991: 359). The “unproductive” people at the pilgrimage site, in this case, are the ones refraining from profiting financially and are there strictly to consume the purely spiritual, religious experience which the site strives to create. The major economically productive aspects of the site experienced by pilgrims are church offerings, gift shops, and eateries.

While visiting such economically productive spaces, or participating in an economic transaction, pilgrims are temporarily drawn away from worshipping the shrine, but are nonetheless acting in a manner which encourages the sense of participation in a religious community. Any offerings given to the church seem to be conducted during mass or at relatively hidden locations, the transactions performed inconspicuously and thus harmoniously. Financial gains made by the church using those methods did not interfere significantly with the performance of each service. Thus in-mass church donations and gift shops selling strictly

religious items cannot be easily accused of taking away religious experience or being devoid of acts of religious devotion.

Part of creating a sense of religious community involves eliminating economically productive manifestations, especially those unrelated to the sacred. So while religious gift shops and church offerings exist apparently in harmony with the religious site, certain forms of economic production do not. The few eateries at the site are no more than subtle entities on the sacred grounds, locatable only via obscure, miniscule signs. Shops selling drinks and popsicles atop the hill, for instance, have been blended into the group of gift shops selling religious items. The two small eateries at the bottom of the hill serve their patrons at the very edges of the plaza. One sits several blocks from the basilicas and is not easily visible from the basilicas. Pilgrims must walk to a different side of the hill to find the other eatery.

Other forms of economic production seemingly not welcome within the fences of the site includes any other type of economic profiteering from sellers not associated with the basilica administration. Vending stalls like the ones on Calzada de Guadalupe are nonexistent on the plaza or on Tepeyac Hill. Those vending stalls along with individual, independent sellers crowd several blocks of the center of Calzada de Guadalupe until they encounter the group of police officers situated at the gate.

### **Symmetry versus Asymmetry**

In the Field Observations section I mentioned the overwhelming asymmetry in the interior and the exterior architecture of the newer basilica, along with the pervasive symmetry of the older basilica. The dialectic of symmetry and asymmetry hold significant value in better understanding the basilicas, but how are they integral to understanding the effects of the urban morphology on spirituality and alienation at the site? One way to think of their relevance is by

giving thought to the relationship of the interior of the site and its exterior surroundings. Since at least the 1950s, a large fence has enveloped the site’s plaza (Figure 5.13). Yet before that, the site did not even have a plaza. Trolley cars stopped just outside the basilica doors, and any pedestrian could stand adjacent to the church without passing through guarded gates. This more open relationship with the surrounding environment can be considered symmetrical in nature, which, among other dialectics, overlaps with the concept of community and belonging versus anonymity. With the exclusionary role of the fence, on top of the disinclination of the site to encourage pilgrim interaction with the urban landscape from the hillside, the pilgrimage site has thus shifted from historically symmetrical, harmonious relationship to an asymmetrical relationship teeming with tension. Further evidence with the notion of an asymmetrical relationship with the environs is that the roof of the newer basilica can be easily viewed from miles away, where the space between the surrounding buildings permit, yet pilgrims anywhere near the basilica on the plaza grounds can view hardly any of the exterior landscape.

**TABLE 1**

<b><u>Potentially Spiritual</u></b>	<b><u>Potentially Alienating</u></b>	<b><u>Pertinent Author</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacred</li> <li>• “Cosmos”</li> <li>• Rural, natural</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Economic Consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profane</li> <li>• “Chaos”</li> <li>• Urban, western</li> <li>• Anonymity</li> <li>• Economic Productivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliade 1957</li> <li>• Eliade 1957</li> <li>• Burton 2002</li> <li>• Eliade 1957</li> <li>• Lefebvre 1991</li> </ul>



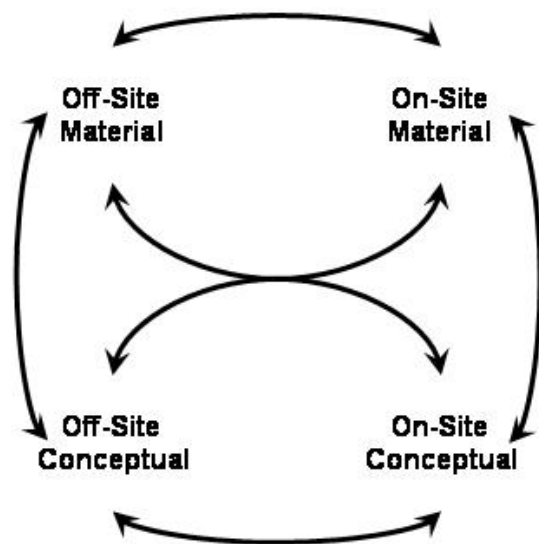
**Figure 5.12** Front of basilica and Tepeyac Hill, 1880 (Source: *Fototeca Nacional del Instituto Nacional de Anthropologia e Historia*).



**Figure 5.13** Front of basilica, 1950s (Source: *Fototeca Nacional del Instituto Nacional de Anthropologia e Historia*).

## Material/Conceptual Pilgrimage Site Model

<p><b>Off-Site Material:</b>          -Physical landscape outside shrine site boundaries.          -Examples:          Urban morphology.          Hotels. Automobiles.          Vending stalls.</p>	<p><b>On-Site Material:</b>          -Physical landscape within shrine site boundaries.          -Examples:          Tepeyac Hill.          Basilicas. Plaza.          Souvenir stands.          Pilgrims.</p>
<p><b>Off-Site Conceptual:</b>          -Conceptual landscape outside site boundaries.          -Examples:          Representations available outside site.          Thoughts of potential pilgrims.</p>	<p><b>On-Site Conceptual:</b>          -Conceptual landscape within site boundaries.          -Examples:          Representations available at site.          Decisions on shrine site design.</p>



**Figure 5.14 Material/Conceptual Site Analysis Model.**



### **Material/Conceptual Site Analysis Model**

Based on Andrew Sluyter's conceptual structure for an all-embracing theoretical framework involving postcolonial landscape transformation (as described in the literature review section), I developed a model in order to help provide insight into the processes by which the material/conceptual landscape associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine site change throughout time. The model, from a broad perspective, consists of four interrelated yet epistemologically equal components of the relevant material/conceptual landscape. This model can potentially be applied to any other pilgrimage site as one way of examining relationships among pilgrimages sites, their physical surroundings, and their conceptual dimension throughout any length of time. Guiding the reader through the process involved in the model, this section takes into account the observations and dialectical considerations from the previous two sections. The model as applied to this thesis aims to both determine and better understand sources of contention regarding associations of the landscape with alienation versus spirituality related to the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site. A later section will further discuss the model's insight into those issues, following a more extensive explanation of the model's capabilities in this section.

For analytical reasons I divided the material/conceptual landscape into two overarching categories, namely the material landscape and the conceptual landscape. I then partitioned the material landscape into two subcategories: 1) the part of the material landscape which lies outside the physical boundaries of the shrine site and 2) the part of the material landscape which is the shrine site itself. In a similar fashion I subdivided the conceptual landscape by establishing the following distinctions: 1) the conceptual landscape which originates from the shrine site, and 2) the elements of the conceptual landscape which originate outside the physical boundaries of

the site. These subcategories are crucial in understanding how the separate parts of the model coalesce. Thus a researcher can utilize this analytical approach in order to obtain a clear understanding of the entire interaction process involving the shrine site, its conceptual aspect, and the surrounding landscape when contemplating or observing the pilgrimage site at any given time.

To reduce verbiage I designated the material landscape located within the shrine site's physical boundaries as the "on-site material" landscape, and I labeled the material landscape falling outside the site as "off-site material." Components of the on-site material landscape include Tepeyac Hill, the plaza, the pilgrims located within the fences surrounding the plaza, and the basilicas and other edifices falling within the confines of the aforementioned fences. All land, buildings, people, and other physical objects, whether natural or man-made, fall under the realm of the off-site material landscape. For analysis only, the material landscape in its entirety has been split from the conceptual landscape and pertains to the physical existence of the aforementioned components of both the on-site and the off-site material landscape. The mental impact of the material belongs strictly to the conceptual landscape.

"On-site conceptual" refers to that part of the conceptual landscape which originates from within the site's material boundaries. This includes the thought processes of those involved in the site's administration, the thoughts of the pilgrims and other visitors while inside the physical boundaries of the site, and representations of the site which are located within the boundaries of the site, such as postcards and other souvenirs depicting the site and its surroundings. The "off-site conceptual" landscape, on the other hand, is not found within the site's material boundaries but nonetheless describes and portrays the pilgrimage site along with its surroundings. The thoughts of pilgrims and other visitors outside the gates of the site or of potential pilgrims, or

representations of the site accessible outside the gates, or urban planners and developers, are several examples which fall under the category of “off-site conceptual.” More specifically, the off-site conceptual landscape includes such modes of representations of the site as an official basilica web site and travel writing. The collective throng of vending stalls, selling Virgin of Guadalupe memorabilia and stretching for several blocks from the plaza entrances, are considered at this particular pilgrimage site to be neither an element of the on-site material landscape nor an element of the on-site conceptual landscape, as their direct association with the basilica administration is questionable. Potential exists for some of the off-site conceptual data to have been influenced by the elements of the on-site conceptual landscape. As will be explained in the next section, the model takes this into account and can be easily modified to reflect whether on-site data has influenced off-site data.

### **The Process Explained**

In this section the ways in which the different subcategories involved in the model affect each other will be examined. Each subcategory can potentially have an effect on every other subcategory, and this is so for the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site. Therefore the model could be explained beginning with any subcategory and proceeding in any direction. But in the case of the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site, because the main concern is the landscape outside the pilgrimage site, most specifically the increasing urbanization, and its potential impacts on the spirituality of the site, I would like to begin explaining the model starting with the category representing the urban landscape: the off-site material landscape. This particular examination enables me to demonstrate the notion of a cyclical process. It will proceed from off-site material to the on-site material, continuing on to the on-site conceptual and finally to the off-site conceptual, only to return to the off-site material landscape. It will also show how this

cycle can play out in the reverse direction, also explaining that at the same time the off-site material and the on-site conceptual landscapes are affecting each other, and the on-site material and the off-site conceptual landscapes are affecting each other. Over time these cycles perpetuate, yet all is happening simultaneously during any single moment in time.

There exist a number of potential variables under each subcategory, a number of different ways by which this model can be explained, and a number of possible outcomes when applying this model to various pilgrimage sites. As mentioned earlier the most ideal way to explain the model as it pertains to the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine is to start with the off-site material landscape, particularly the urbanizing metropolis of Mexico City, as it is the major source of tension between a sense of spirituality and a sense of alienation regarding the landscape surrounding the shrine. The onset of a rapidly urbanizing landscape initiates a chain reaction that impacts the on-site material landscape, then the on-site conceptual landscape, followed by the off-site conceptual landscape, returning to affect the urban landscape. In actuality the urban landscape affects all three other categories of the artificially divided material landscape and conceptual landscape, and all three other categories affect the urban landscape. But an effective method of demonstrating this model as a perpetual loop cycling throughout time is to portray a portion of the material/conceptual landscape as the result of a chain reaction beginning with the urban landscape.

Consider this scenario, one of a potential myriad of scenarios. As the urban landscape near Tepeyac Hill rapidly obviates the previous, rural landscape, historical photographic evidence indicates continual shifts in the design and architecture of the pilgrimage site. The resulting modifications affect the experiences of the pilgrims and their interaction with the landscape while visiting the shrine, as argued in the Dialectical Considerations section of this

thesis. The pilgrims at the site, representing the on-site conceptual landscape, may affect the off-site conceptual landscape using a variety of different means. For instance, pilgrims could write or otherwise share accounts of their experiences. Pilgrims could buy and share postcards and other souvenirs portraying the physical or the symbolic landscape from vending stalls or other stores immediately outside the site's gates. To complete the loop, then, one must ask how the travel accounts and other representations of the landscape impact the off-site material landscape (the surrounding urban landscape). The answer is fairly simple, in that the form of the urban landscape surrounding the site, especially the hotels, vending stalls, and types of commercial stores, depends largely on the rate of pilgrim visits. The pilgrims may have had their decisions on whether or not to make the pilgrimage based on the representations they encountered.

Thus far I explained in part an example of a material/conceptual feedback loop, proceeding in only one direction. I mentioned how the off-site material landscape (the sprawling urban land) impacts the on-site material landscape (the shrine site design), which affects the on-site conceptual landscape (pilgrims' perceptions on the visitation experience) and subsequently the off-site conceptual landscape (representations the pilgrims share with potential pilgrims), which returns to impact the off-site material landscape (via the rate of pilgrim visitations). However, at the same time all this is occurring, the off-site material landscape and the on-site conceptual landscape are influencing each other. For instance, the urban landscape causes basilica administrators to respond by adjusting the shrine site design as needed. The urban sprawl also could affect whether pilgrims view the surrounding landscape as harmonious with their spirituality or alienating. This could lead to decisions on whether or not to return or recommend the visit to potential pilgrims, and thus the urban landscape would need to change in response to the number and type of visitors to the shrine.

The on-site material landscape and the off-site conceptual landscape are also impacting each other. As emphases on the natural, rural scenes in representations of the shrine site and its surroundings continue, more pressure exists to make the shrine site conform to its representations, such as by maintaining a replica of the Virgin sighting amidst a natural setting, complete with cacti, waterfalls, trees, and red and yellow flowers. One way by which the material site affects representations is through various aspects of the site's design. In order to gain favorable responses by those viewing representations of the site, the design must establish the site's unquestionable distinction as a place of religious worship. When viewing photographs taken from inside the plaza, or when viewing aerial photographs of the site, one would not expect to see controversially profane structures or activities existing in an overt manner. Within the fences of the site, no financial transactions can be seen while walking through the plaza or when viewing an aerial photograph. Economic activities take place strictly in gift shops inside the basilicas and inside a small building nestled on the hillside. The on-site material/off-site conceptual landscape interaction could explain the sudden absence of vending stalls once inside the plaza and the cessation of vending activities at the plaza gates. Instead one sees the pronouncedly ecclesiastical architecture of the basilicas, smaller churches, and other structures pertaining to Western and indigenous spirituality standing alongside the pilgrims in the plaza and on the Tepeyac hillside.

The loop has been explained by proceeding in one direction. In reality, though, the forces involved in both loop directions coexist and intermingle simultaneously. Thus the loop can also be demonstrated in the opposite direction. Let us consider the following example of a feedback loop proceeding in the direction opposite the previous demonstration. By explaining both directions of the loop in the model, more major concepts supporting the argument that the urban

landscape acts as a harbinger of alienation and a force threatening the indigenous spirituality of the pilgrimage to the shrine.

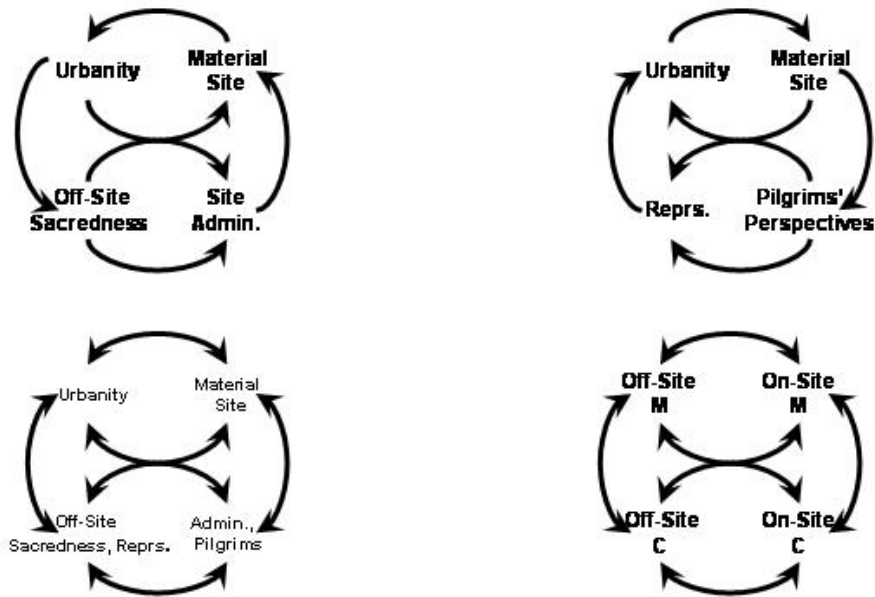
The urban landscape affects the off-site conceptual landscape by both its very existence and its appearance. Decisions are made by those creating representations of the shrine site as to which aspects of the surrounding landscape should be included in the representations. The representations created and distributed outside the shrine site affect the experience of the pilgrims inside the site's fences (part of the on-site conceptual landscape). Pilgrims may have formed certain ideas of the landscape and may have associated those mental images of the landscape with a sense of spiritual significance. But once at the site perhaps the pilgrims see a landscape far different than expected.

Knowledgeable about this concern, then, the shrine site administrators respond by adjusting the design of the shrine site itself. Blocking the sights and sounds of the urban landscape from the plaza via the adjusting the site's outer fence design is one such example. Successful design changes could then encourage more pilgrim visits and more repeat visits. This change in the on-site material landscape and subsequent encouragement of visits by religious devotees would then adjust the form of the urban landscape within potentially several blocks of the pilgrimage site. Meanwhile, the off-site material landscape and the on-site conceptual landscape are affecting each other, and the on-site material landscape and the off-site conceptual landscape are also impacting each other. These forces are acting upon each other in the same manner as during the previous demonstration of a feedback loop.

### **Material/Conceptual Site Analysis Model Applied**

A great concern for the spiritual future of the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site is the ongoing collision between the urban expansion and the pilgrimage site, which could affect the

## Virgin of Guadalupe Pilgrimage Site Landscape Analysis



**Figure 5.15 Application of Material/Conceptual Site Analysis Model.**



number of religious devotees visiting the site via alienating pilgrims and potential pilgrims from the spiritual experience which was more easily accessible up until roughly the mid-twentieth century. The previous section discussed a range of potential scenarios identifiable using the material/conceptual pilgrimage site analysis model. However, the following analysis shows the specific processes by which the material and conceptual landscape components have interacted to transform the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site and representations of the site, arguing that much of these transformations are efforts to maintain a strong sense of spirituality associated with the site despite the ongoing urban sprawl dominating the landscape from the site's fences to the horizon.

### **Material Urbanity Affecting the Off-Site Conceptual Landscape**

The rapid increase in the urban sprawl (off-site material landscape) adjacent to the pilgrimage site during the twentieth century played a key role in two major components of the off-site conceptual landscape. First, the area of land outside the site's fences considered to be sacred appears to have drastically diminished. The city's morphology in recent decades has impacted the ability of pilgrims and other visitors to perceive the site's surroundings as sacred, most obviously in the cases where the dense urbanity began to prohibit pilgrims from moving through certain areas in a manner considered worshipful to the Virgin of Guadalupe. I am referring to, as one specific example, the relatively sudden disinclination by pilgrims to traverse roads outside of the plaza on their knees as they did during the mid-twentieth century (Figure 5.16). Today the location from which pilgrims could begin to perform such acts of devotion has shrunk to within the plaza gates, due in part to the recent addition of high automobile traffic and the congestion of peddlers abutting the main plaza entrance. Moreover, and expanding to a broader aspect of this concept, anywhere once rural and now urbanized is land that may once

have been considered sacred and has now mutated to the profane, especially in the minds of indigenous pilgrims.

The second major impact of the urban morphology on the off-site conceptual landscape is evidenced in alterations of representations of the pilgrimage site and its surroundings. As the city expanded toward the shrine site, rendering an increasingly alienating landscape for pilgrims, creators of representations related to the site adjusted their representations to take the city's encroachment into account. For instance 95.4 percent of the total pre-1950 photographs and paintings I found in Mexico City's archives, bookstores, and tourist information maps and pamphlets display the landscape surrounding the basilica in its non-urbanized form (Figure 5.17). Aside from the flat rural or natural terrain stretching from the site to the horizon, other natural surroundings commonly portrayed include mountains, hills, waterfalls, springs, rivers, lakes, and cacti – in other words, many of the elements visible at the section of the pilgrimage site containing sculptures of those involved in the Virgin of Guadalupe sightings, show in Figure 5.19. Conversely, only 8.2 percent of the total number of post-1950 images display the urban surroundings. The remainder either focuses on certain buildings or statues within the shrine site or they show the entire site aside Tepeyac Hill, oriented such that the city is not visible within the frame. Examples of these would be very similar to the photographs I took for Figures 5.3, 5.6, and 5.19. For both the pre- and post-1950 images, I counted only those which provided an indication of place; therefore, images showing only the Virgin of Guadalupe, Juan Diego, or the Pope, were purposely not included. It appears as though creators of such representations conceive of this recently urbanized landscape as incompatible with the previously held notions of the same area of land, in its rural form, as being spiritually engrossing. In response, they adjust

the representations to emphasize the elements associated with the site which undoubtedly point to the spiritual, to encourage more pilgrim visitations.

### **Material Urbanity and Loss of Off-Site Sacred Landscape Affecting Site Administration**

The visual onslaught of the urban environment appears to be of concern to the site administrators, an essential part of the on-site conceptual landscape. As more of the surrounding landscape becomes urbanized, the level of alienation threatens to increase for the pilgrims at the site, and a sense of religious community is also threatened. The plaza fence, established by the 1950s, and the later, taller trees along the fence, help alleviate an otherwise mitigated spiritual experience. Also discouraging visual interaction with the urbanized landscape is the row of trees paralleling the stairways ascending Tepeyac Hill. Historical photographs, dating pre-1950s, show no such line of trees, allowing visitors to view the vast expanse of rural lands surrounding the hill. More recently, however, the trees allow for merely the occasional glimpse of the urbanized landscape.

Within the plaza, too, changes seem to have been made with the intent to greatly enhance the spirituality linked with the site. The most obvious post-1950s change is the addition of the newer basilica. But aside from the basilica, two major features were added which cater to both European and indigenous spirituality. The first, built in 1986, is the set of statues recalling the sighting of the Virgin of Guadalupe, its figures stoic in front of man-made springs, along with cacti, yellow flowers, and red flowers (La Ofrenda 2004). The other is the Carrillon, a megalithic structure built in 1991 containing clocks and calendars used by both Europeans and indigenous peoples (Carrillon 2004). The statues can oftentimes be seen with people surrounding them to worship. I did not observe anyone praying directly to the Carrillon;



**Figure 5.16** Woman traversing on knees outside plaza in reverence to Virgin of Guadalupe, 1954 (Source: *Fototeca Nacional del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*).

### Pre-1950 Images of Virgin of Guadalupe Site

Item	Images With Rural or Natural Surroundings	Images Without Rural or Natural Surroundings	Percent of Pre-1950 Images with Rural or Natural Surroundings
I.N.A.H. Archives	9	0	100.0%
Basilica Archives	26	4	86.7%
Book: <i>Basilica de N.S. de Guadalupe</i>	24	0	100.0%
Book: <i>Juan Diego: Enriquecido y Glorificado</i>	12	1	92.3%
Book: <i>Virgen de Guadalupe</i>	10	0	100.0%
Book: <i>La Virgen de Guadalupe: Legado divino o pintura humana</i>	15	0	100.0%
Book: <i>Guadalupe: en mi Cuerpo como en mi Alma</i>	7	0	100.0%
Mexico City tourist maps and pamphlets	1	0	100.0%
<b>Averages of Above Items</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>95.4%</b>

**Figure 5.17 Pre-1950, place-indicative images of the Virgin of Guadalupe site.**

### Post-1950 Images of Virgin of Guadalupe Site

Item	Images With Urban Surroundings	Images Without Urban Surroundings	Percent of Post-1950 Images with Urban Surroundings
I.N.A.H. Archive	2	5	28.6%
Basilica Archives	1	3	25.0%
Book: <i>Basilica de N.S. de Guadalupe</i>	1	14	6.7%
Book: <i>Juan Diego: Enriquecido y Glorificado</i>	0	3	0.0%
Book: <i>Virgen de Guadalupe</i>	0	1	0.0%
Book: <i>La Virgen de Guadalupe: Legado divino o pintura humana</i>	0	4	0.0%
Book: <i>Guadalupe: en mi Cuerpo como en mi Alma</i>	0	14	0.0%
Mexico City tourist maps and pamphlets	0	5	0.0%
<b>Averages of Above Items</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>8.2%</b>

**Figure 5.18** Post-1950, place-indicative images of the Virgin of Guadalupe Site.

however, some worshippers chose to use the Carrillon as the starting point from which to begin crawling on their knees towards the basilica.

Also worth noting is the continual increase in the heights of the edifices containing the image of the Virgin. Perhaps anticipating a continued increase in the size of the buildings immediately surrounding the plaza, the administrators allow for the construction of the newer basilica, designed to stand significantly taller than the older basilica. In all, successful site design changes would mean potentially more pilgrim visits, thus affecting the adjacent building sizes and use of those buildings. Currently most of the adjacent, multistory buildings contain gift shops, eateries, and hotel rooms.

#### **Material Urbanity Affecting Material Shrine Site and Pilgrims' Perspectives**

Much has already been said about the ways in which the site design had been changed as a response to the threat of the potentially alienating urban landscape. Most, if not all, of the affects of Mexico City on the material aspects of the pilgrimage site are indirect, as the site administrators decide on the site changes necessary to combat the encroaching, alienating city. These changes, however subtle, are intended to have an impact on the way each pilgrim perceives the site at the time of his or her visitation.

In addition to the representations' influences on the conceptual landscape imagined by potential pilgrims, the experienced material urbanity of Mexico City impacts the perceptions of pilgrims once at the shrine site, thus creating a rift between the imagined/expected and the real. The resulting disparity between that part of the landscape which is most typically represented and that which is experienced and is central to understanding the pilgrims' perceptions once they arrive at the site and walk within the fences, inside the basilicas, and alongside the hill. It is this



**Figure 5.19** Sculptures surrounded by scenery manipulated to emulate conceptualizations of Virgin of Guadalupe sightings.



**Figure 5.20** *El Carrillon*, with the newest basilica behind and to the left.



disparity which makes it imperative for the site administration to make adjustments in the site design, which have been already discussed.

### **Pilgrims' Perspectives Affecting Off-Site Representations and Material Urbanity**

The impressions pilgrims have of the shrine site and its surroundings impact how the pilgrims share, or represent, the site to others who have not yet visited the shrine. One of the ways in which this can be done, if not by word of mouth or written letter, is through purchasing the representations of the site in the form of souvenirs and sending them to potential visitors. This, in turn, affects the number of future visitors and thus the materiality of the urban areas adjacent to the shrine site.

Representations of the landscape were found painted on a variety of souvenirs at the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine site. These representations could be found on shirts and in framed paintings at souvenir stands atop Tepeyac Hill and at the two basilicas' gift shops. Such souvenirs both at and around the site will usually contain a portrait of Juan Diego or the Virgin of Guadalupe oftentimes appearing before a rural or natural backdrop, occasionally showing the spiritually significant mountains, lakes, springs, or rivers in the background, and the springs, cacti, and red or yellow flowers in the foreground. Yet none of the paintings for sale at the site showed or even hinted at the existence of urban surroundings.

Potential pilgrims to the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine may receive postcards from persons visiting the shrine. Thus postcards from several souvenir stands at the shrine site provide valuable insight into the representation of the site's landscape as they contribute to the development of one's conceptualization of that landscape. At the site, postcard stands typically held twenty to forty postcards each, and very few postcards captured the landscape surrounding the pilgrimage site. For instance, of the twenty-one postcards being sold at the newest basilica's

gift shop, only three, or 14.3 percent of the total, portrayed the site's material urban context. The vast majority merely displayed a particular building or sculpture at the site, devoid of a background. Figures 4.3, 5.3, 5.6, 5.19, and 5.20 closely replicate the foreground and background content of these postcards. In rare instances a postcard would show metropolitan Mexico City shrouded in fog behind the basilicas, or automobile traffic in the foreground, or a basilica standing in front of the adjacent Los Gauchupines Hill, which is barren except for the occasional tree or shrub. Some postcards echoed the paintings, shirts, and other souvenirs representing the landscape, especially in their display of the Virgin of Guadalupe or Juan Diego amidst rural landscape scenes. Also worth noting is that the postcard stands advertised Teotihuacán and other popular tourist destinations in and around Mexico City. Unlike the Guadalupe postcards, however, these postcards tend to show surrounding grasslands, hills, or urban areas, rather than strictly showing the main sculpture, building, or pyramid of attraction.

### **Additional Considerations**

Several more factors need to be taken into account to fully understand the processes involved, and these are illustrated in Figure 5.15. The material urbanity has had an effect on the basilica administration. For instance, the administration must make physical adjustments to the site and must select appropriate representations of the site to display on their web site and in gift shops. The level of perceived off-site sacredness has had an effect on the material aspects of the site. Because of the apparent loss of spirituality associated with the off-site landscape, more emphasis has been placed on statues and shrines inside the site, such as the aforementioned structures built since the 1980s.

In turn, the material aspect of the shrine site has had an effect on representations of the site. The representations have now shifted to be primarily of the material components of the site,

as is the case with postcards and other souvenirs discussed in the previous section. In contrast to the high frequency of paintings and photographs created in the 1800s, the land surrounding the site is very rarely portrayed. Lastly, the perspectives of pilgrims upon reaching the site influences the material urbanity immediately surrounding the site. Depending on the level of spirituality lost and alienation from the landscape felt when visiting the site, the pilgrims may visit again and may encourage others to visit in the future. A more precise understanding of the impressions by indigenous pilgrims of the pilgrimage site and its environs are a topic prime for future research, as discussed in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### Comments on the Shrine Site Analysis

Primarily through the use of field observation, dialectical analysis, and a material/conceptual analysis, much concerning the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site's vulnerability to a loss of spirituality for pilgrims becomes apparent. As social spaces such as this shrine site become analyzed and not merely described, a level of tension or harmony between each of the dialectical conflicts becomes noticeable with regards to the site, its surrounding landscape, and the interactions between the two. Today, a great deal of tension exists between each of the two potentially conflicting dialectical contradictions. For instance, prior to the 1900s the shrine site appeared more in harmony, so to speak, with its surroundings, as there were no fences, large plazas, or sheltering trees. The tendency of these dialectical conflicts to overlap appears to be one reason for this ubiquitous tension. For this analysis, the conflict between the sacred or spiritual and the profane or alienating subsumed the other conflicts, as they seemed to dominate the design of the site and its representations. One side of each of the conflicts appears to lean towards the sacred, while the other side seems to lean towards the profane. For instance, economic consumption and the sense of community point towards the sacred, or spiritual, while economic productivity and the sense of anonymity point towards the profane, or alienating. More than likely other dialectical conflicts exist but would require more time for further analysis of this particular social space.

Through the use of a material/conceptual landscape analysis model, I was able to better organize the data in an effort to explain the processes involved in the interactions between the shrine site and its surroundings over time. Although I discussed how specific aspects of each

component of the subdivided material/conceptual landscape affect each other throughout the duration of the processes, it is important to note that each aspect affects all of the others in various ways. By explaining the processes in the manner I chose, my intent was to portray a nearly uniform effort by pilgrims, site administrators, and other creators of representations to emphasize the spiritual elements of this pilgrimage site. In the future, as Mexico City continues expanding, one can expect more emphasis to be placed on historically-based representations in order to maintain a sense of spirituality. As is already occurring, the surrounding landscape will most likely continue to decline in its spiritual value, leaving site administrators to make more adjustments to the material site, catering to the indigenous spirituality, so as to perpetuate a sufficiently satisfying spiritual experience for the indigenous pilgrims of the future.

### **Future Research Opportunities**

As mentioned earlier, no geographer has previously conducted an intensive study of the landscape surrounding the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine. Needless to say a myriad of research opportunities exist for those interested. Should geographers intend to study topics specific to the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine area, one potential research project extending directly from the results in this thesis could involve interviews with visitors to the shrine, questioning their impression of the nearby landscape and observing discrepancies between the landscape they believed they would see versus the landscape they are witnessing. Or perhaps geographers may decide to study this site using other means, whether completely original or transferred from research previously conducted at other pilgrimage sites.

At and around the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine, quite a range of additional research opportunities await geographers from potentially all subfields of geography. What are some examples of research ideas applicable to the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site? Economic

geographers typically study the economic impacts of pilgrimages on areas surrounding sacred sites, ranging from local, ephemeral impacts, such as the emergence of street vendors primarily during peak months of pilgrimage in Esquipulas (Wagner 1997: 309), to the permanent effects of a pilgrimage's impact on the economy of a whole nation, such as that of Mecca in Saudi Arabia (Rinschede 1997: 105). Also regarding the relationship between pilgrimages and economic geography, Rinschede claims, "The impact of pilgrims on the economic structure...is reflected in the hotels, restaurants, religious article shops, and numerous other businesses that cater primarily to pilgrims" (1997: 104). The Virgin of Guadalupe shrine could be of interest to population geographers because "all holy places have experienced a constant population growth...[s]ince they became pilgrimage sites" (Rinschede 1997:103). The ways in which political geography and transportation geography relate to pilgrimages are manifested in the example of the Iran-Iraq war forcing Iranian pilgrims traveling to Mecca to choose unconventional routes and modes of travel (Rowley 1997: 157). Perhaps the effects of historical conflicts in Mexico on pilgrimages to the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine would be of interest. The Guadalupe shrine has potential to be a great opportunity for geographers of recreation and tourism to expound their research on the concepts of "pilgrimage tourism," "the movement of people over space," and the study of travel in general (Meyer-Arendt and Lew 2003: 527). Possible research for rural and urban geographers and planners could include the impacts of the pilgrimage site on themes such as landscape morphology in their respective areas of expertise. Finally, geographers with an interest in medicine and health can investigate the Virgin of Guadalupe pilgrimage site as a source for the spread of disease and as a place for pilgrims to visit in quests for physical healing, as geographers in subfield have done in the past at other pilgrimage sites (Bhardwaj 1997: 16, 18).

Geographic techniques such as cartography, remote sensing, quantitative models, and Geographic Information Systems have potential to become important assets to pilgrimage research. Cartography, remote sensing, and other techniques for studying the historical geography of pilgrimage sites become relevant whenever a researcher is interested in understanding the historical development of a region surrounding a pilgrimage site, utilizing maps and aerial photographs in the process (Rinschede 1997: 101-102). As much of the geographical research into pilgrimages has been empirical (Bhardwaj 1997:1), mathematical modeling is yet another technique which can enrich pilgrimage studies, along with Geographic Information Systems.

A relatively small amount of intensive research has been completed concerning the physical geography and the environmental impacts of pilgrimages. This fact exists despite the unavoidable interaction between pilgrims and the natural environment. For instance, most pilgrimage activity in the Northern Hemisphere occurs between April and October due to climatic factors (Rinschede 1997: 98). Natural objects on the landscapes near pilgrimage sites could also become the focus of pilgrimage research, and much data of this nature has been collected in Europe by Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan, although only marginally used in their article on Roman Catholic pilgrimage sites (1997: 81). Additionally, the relationship between pilgrimage sites and the environment is considered by Surinder Bhardwaj to be “a topic that has not been adequately investigated” including studies of “pilgrimages in relation to health, food, lodging, and commerce” (1997: 4, 12-14, 19).

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## **VITA**

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