

Autonomy, Honor, and the Ancestors

Native Local Religion in
Seventeenth-Century Oaxaca

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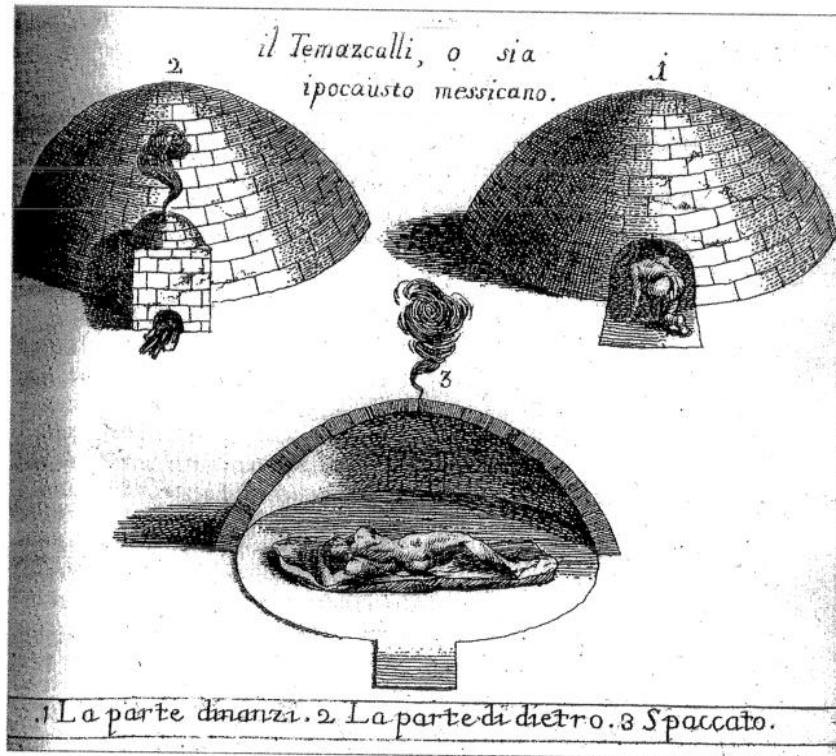


FIGURE 9. A temazcal

Drawing of a temazcal, or bathhouse. As part of his recreation of pre-Hispanic history, Clavijero commissioned artists to draw images of cultural phenomena of the Mexica. Taken from Francisco Javier Clavijero, *Storia antica del Messico* (Cesena: Gregorio Biasini, 1780). Courtesy of Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego.

On Wednesday, September 15, 1700, don Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, two Zapotec men who would be beatified by the Catholic Church three centuries later, huddled in the back rooms of the Dominican house of San Francisco Cajonos, hours away from their deaths at the hands of their fellow townspeople.¹ Something had gone very wrong the night before in this usually peaceful town, located in the southern reaches of the jurisdiction of Villa Alta, in a mountain range to the northeast of Oaxaca City in southeastern New Spain.² It was too late for compromises: a throng had surrounded the church as they beat on wooden boxes shouting, “You cuckolds! You friars! You are about to die right here” [*¡A cornudos, a frailes, aquí avéis de morir!*].³ Trapped inside were eleven Spaniards and mestizos, two Dominicans, at least twenty native allies from four neighboring towns, and don Juan and Jacinto, who had triggered the riot after leading their siege companions to an unorthodox ceremony held at the home of a local resident the previous evening. The mob then threw stones at the church; its defenders—four of whom had arquebuses—shot into the air first, and then

into the crowd, killing at least one rebel. After the Spaniards ran out of gunpowder, a desperate negotiation conducted in Spanish ensued. The rioters were not appeased when their vicar displayed an image of the Virgin; they then refused an offer of money and stated that, unless the two informants were turned over to them, they would burn the church and its defenders and flee to the mountains. In the end, the besieged Spaniards decided to surrender the two wanted men despite the friars' protests.

It is tempting to offer a well-rehearsed explanation that reduces this confrontation to a clash of opposing sides: idolaters versus Dominicans, native subjects against Spanish authorities, "folk" religion versus "official" religion, a "little" rural tradition speaking out against a "great" urban, hegemonic tradition—to use Robert Redfield's terms—or one cultural system battling another, if one prefers Clifford Geertz's early but influential characterization of religion as a circumscribed cultural system.⁴ This essay, however, argues that a fuller understanding of local indigenous religious practices in colonial Spanish America calls for an analytical stance and a detailed historical narrative that goes well beyond embracing and defining one's choice of meaningful dichotomies—"beyond simplicity," as Carlos Eire argues in the first essay in this volume. What lies beyond this "beyond" is the resolve to examine local religious practices as complex, independent social and symbolic phenomena that interdigitate with metropolitan and transatlantic practices in myriad ways that cannot be adequately analyzed through the deployment of antipodal categories. Such a stance is inspired in part by William Christian's insistence on studying both the institutional impact of Catholicism on rural communities and specific peasant religious practices as components of a social sphere that may be termed "local religion"—a designation which, as William Taylor notes in this volume, challenges received dichotomies without dissolving the concreteness of the local and the institutional.⁵

Moreover, this essay proposes a careful, microsociological consideration of the actors involved in the production of local religion. This approach is indebted to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "the religious field of practice"—a circumscribed sphere of symbolic practice that is not a discretely bounded cultural system, but an ever-expanding or contracting social sphere that regulates itself through the interested interaction of its participants.⁶ In his analysis, Bourdieu stressed two properties of the religious field: the inherently dialectical nature of the process of religious production, and the limits placed by the logic of the field on the nature and type of discourse that

its participants deploy. To return to the confrontations between Zapotec villagers and their ministers, this essay proposes that the logic of their local field of religious practice—or "what was at stake," to use a more lapidary characterization—involved the convergence of local autonomy aspirations, the honorable defense of local forms of identity, and the preservation of ancestral devotions. This essay examines these three terms—autonomy, honor, and devotion—through the prism of three confrontations that took place between 1666 and 1704 in the jurisdiction of Villa Alta in Oaxaca.⁷

The practices that will be discussed here may be unfamiliar to many historians, as their study is a part of an emerging body of literature located at the intersection of historical anthropology and social history. Sources in Spanish and in native languages are both scarce and crucial; the colonial record of native religious practices in New Spain, as Taylor noted in an erudite survey of this topic, "is most striking for its patchiness."⁸ Thus, this essay probes local orientations toward native religious practices by focusing on small but rather thick "patches" that encapsulate distinct local attitudes toward traditional and Christian ritual practices in three native communities in Villa Alta: San Francisco Cajonos, Lachirioag, and Betaza, all of which spoke Cajonos Zapotec.⁹ Our close scrutiny of local religion in the Villa Alta region is not incidental, since a series of measures taken by ecclesiastic and civil authorities in the first decade of the eighteenth century not only resulted in idolatry trial records and collective confessions, but also yielded an unusual collection of documents—about 101 booklets with alphabetic transcriptions of the Zapotec 260-day ritual calendar, and four songbooks containing alphabetic transcriptions of Zapotec ritual songs. After a brief appraisal of confrontations over native ritual practices in New Spain, I explore local factionalism through two examples—an inconclusive idolatry case in Lachirioag, and the spontaneous riot at Cajonos. Finally, I examine the failed defense of a local system of parallel devotions—one directed toward Christianity, the other toward local ancestors—in Betaza.

The Struggle Against Local Zapotec Religion in Oaxaca, 1660–1704

Unlike the seventeenth-century idolatry campaigns in the Archdiocese of Lima, which were conducted through a partnership among Jesuits, Episcopal authorities, and seculars in a single diocese where a standardized variant of Quechua was embraced as the main linguistic vehicle for doctrinal

education, idolatry extirpators in New Spain conducted their campaigns in an episodic manner across a variety of regions characterized by great linguistic diversity and variable demographic density.¹⁰ From an institutional perspective, extirpation attempts in the diocese of Oaxaca may be divided into four stages: a first period of “apostolic” extirpation led primarily by Franciscans, Dominicans, and other members of the regular clergy between 1527 and 1571; a second period between 1571 and the epochal 1660 native rebellion at Tehuantepec (Oaxaca), characterized by extirpation attempts conducted by secular ecclesiastical judges; a third period between the 1660s and the 1720s noted by an increase in violent confrontations and novel punitive experiments; and a fourth and final stage that began in the 1720s, led the establishment of hundreds of Spanish-language schools, and introduced the medicalization of sorcery investigations.¹¹ After natives were removed from inquisitorial jurisdiction in 1571, only bishops and their associates were entitled to prosecute natives for crimes against the Christian faith, and inquisitors redirected accusations against native specialists to the Episcopal jurisdiction. Therefore, from 1571 onward, the Episcopal authorities of Mexico and Oaxaca delegated the faculty of conducting native idolatry and sorcery proceedings to a select group of priests with relevant experience and linguistic aptitudes. Although the extant documentations on ecclesiastical judgeship appointments in Mexico and Oaxaca containing faculties to act against native idolaters is scant, it seems to be the case that the Episcopal authorities in these two dioceses had a conservative approach to the granting of these faculties, which contrasts with the more liberal appointment policy for vicars and ecclesiastical judges in the bishopric of Yucatán.¹²

Any consideration of Zapotec struggles for local autonomy in mid-colonial times must begin with the indigenous rebellion of Tehuantepec in 1660, which is the most visible event that predates a period of confrontations between natives and colonial authorities in Oaxaca that culminated with the 1700 Cajonos rebellion. On March 22, 1660, a large group of Zapotecs who had congregated in the town of Tehuantepec for Holy Week celebrations rioted against and killed their alcalde mayor (regional administrator and magistrate), along with two of his associates. Exactly two months later, the Zapotecs of Nexapa also rose up in arms, forcing a military standoff resolved only through the mediation of Bishop Alonso de Cuevas Dávalos. During 1660 and 1661, the rebellion spread like wildfire—to use its chroniclers’ simile of choice—through several

Chontal, Huave, Mixe, Zapotec, and Zoque communities. This sequence of events occupies a unique place in the historiography of Spanish America due to its multiethnic character and its territorial scale. Two complementary analyses have explored the motivations for this rebellion.¹³ One view—presented by Hector Díaz-Polanco in the only extant collection of historical essays devoted to the Tehuantepec rebellion—embraces a cumulative theory: taxation abuses related to the *repartimientos*, which were compounded by the punishment and humiliation of recalcitrant native elites, may have provided a spark for the Tehuantepec uprising.¹⁴ By contrast, Marcelo Carmagnani has argued that, rather than a rebellion, this movement was a confrontation against the expanding political role of the *alcalde mayor*.¹⁵

Carmagnani’s observations about the expanding powers of *alcaldes mayores* may account for the fact that, between 1665 and 1736, Villa Alta’s *alcaldes mayores* and deputy governors, or *tenientes de alcalde*, presided over at least a dozen trials of natives accused of idolatry or sorcery, four of them occurring in the decade of the 1660s.¹⁶ Dominican Bishop friar Tomás de Monterroso (1665–78) and Bishop Nicolás del Puerto (1679–81) both held in high esteem the cooperation of civil authorities in inaccessible regions regarded as prone to rebellion, as was the case in Villa Alta. In fact, during del Puerto’s tenure, the Cajonos township in Villa Alta regained its saliency as a stronghold of idolatry in the extirpators’ minds. For instance, in a 1679 letter to the crown, del Puerto reports the discovery of a “high priest” who, along with four others, received the deferential treatment accorded to Christian priests.¹⁷

Bishop Isidro Sariñana (1683–96), del Puerto’s successor, established a novel punitive institution in Oaxaca City: a “perpetual prison of idolaters.”¹⁸ After arguing that such a prison was required to curb native idolatry, Sariñana obtained a substantial grant from the crown and completed a new building only a few streets west of the cathedral in 1692. Bishop friar Ángel Maldonado (1702–28), a member of the order of Saint Benedict, turned Sariñana’s punitive project into a supporting pillar for an innovative but exacting extirpation campaign he carried out in Villa Alta.¹⁹ In 1704, Maldonado issued an unusual offer: in exchange for denouncing its ritual specialists, turning in its ritual texts, and making a full confession about ritual practices, each native community would receive amnesty from any formal trial. Consequently, between November 1704 and February 1705, the elected authorities of about one hundred native communities journeyed to

the jurisdictional seat of Villa Alta to register a communal confession. Through this innovative strategy, Maldonado harvested an exceptional set of ritual texts: 101 manuscript booklets, many of which contained local versions of the *piyè*—the 260-day Zapotec ritual calendar—and four booklets containing more than thirty Zapotec ritual songs. Although the transcription, translation, and interpretation of this unusual set of records is still in its early stages, some preliminary observations from these sources are discussed in the section below.

Clandestine Zapotec Devotions in Colonial Oaxaca

In recent years, a detailed portrayal of colonial Zapotec ritual practices has begun to take shape. A highly promising line of evidence is represented by two distinct ritual genres transcribed by literate Zapotec devotional specialists in northern Oaxaca in the seventeenth century: calendrical texts and ritual songs. About 101 separate booklets or booklet fragments containing partial or full lists of the *biyè gue xotao xoci reo*, or “time count of our fathers and ancestors,” were turned in to Bishop Maldonado in 1704.²⁰ This *biyè* was the northern Zapotec version of a 260-day pre-Columbian divinatory calendar, which is widely attested throughout the Mesoamerican culture area. In contrast with the 365-day count or vague solar year, the 260-day count was used in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican communities—and in some colonial indigenous communities—for assigning calendrical names to individuals based on their assumed or actual birth date. Moreover, ritual specialists interpreted this count in order to indicate to their clients propitious days for undertaking both quotidian and life-cycle activities. According to the information collected by the Dominican friar Juan de Córdova for his 1578 grammar of Valley Zapotec, the Zapotec 260-day count was composed by two cycles: a 13-day cycle identified by the numbers between 1 and 13, and a 20-day cycle, identified by a fixed sequence of names that referred to animals, plants, and forces of nature.²¹ This count had four major subdivisions, called *gocio* or *pitao* in Valley Zapotec, each of which was composed by 5 groups of 13 days, or 65 days.²²

The second set of sources is the *dij dola nicachi*, or “wooden drum songs,” and is represented by a surviving corpus of about twenty-two ritual songs that were performed during communal ceremonies to the beat of a wooden, cylindrical drum, called *nicachi* in Zapotec and *teponaztli* in

Nahuatl, which bear genre markers—such as stanza boundaries and transcription of percussion patterns—similar to those found in the sixteenth-century *Cantares Mexicanos*, written in Nahuatl. This corpus is contained in two separate booklets written in the Cajonos variant of colonial Zapotec, currently labeled with the numbers 100 and 101, and preserved at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. Booklet 100 was sold by Pedro de Vargas, a renowned ritual specialist from Betaza, to Fernando López de Lachirioag, and contains a cycle of thirteen ritual songs; Booklet 101 was surrendered by Pedro Gonzalo of Lachirioag, and contains a nine-song cycle.²³ Both song cycles may have a number of rich symbolic associations with colonial Zapotec notions about the cosmological order, which is depicted in Calendar 11 from Villa Alta as a structure featuring nine layers between the House of the Underworld (*yoo gabila*) and the House of Earth (*yoo yeche layo*), and nine layers between the House of Earth and the House of the Sky (*yoo yaba*).²⁴ This map of the cosmos that resembles the multi-layered view of the Nahua cosmos displayed, for instance, in the late sixteenth-century Codex Ríos.²⁵ Furthermore, another local song genre designated as *libana*, or “Elegant Speech,” attests to the efforts of Dominican missionaries. This second corpus—also performed to the beat of a hollow drum—contains songs with strong didactic overtones that revolve around the worship of Christian entities.

A tentative appraisal by this author of some of the songs from the *dij dola nicachi* corpus lends partial support to Joyce Marcus’ characterization of Zapotec religion as oriented toward the propitiation of local deified ancestors.²⁶ Some of the entities mentioned in the corpus appear to have been worshipped locally or regionally and have names that link them to the ritual calendar. In Booklet 100 from the town of Betaza, several songs seek the favor of Lord 1 Cayman (*Coque Yagchila*)—a name that designates either a founding ancestor mentioned in the Genealogy of Quiaviní, a colonial pictographic manuscript with glosses in Valley Zapotec, or the divine Zapotec entity that presided over the first 65-day period in the 260-day count.²⁷ There are other entities that have the same calendrical or personal names as that of founding ancestors whose names were recorded in other colonial Zapotec alphabetic sources, but it is unclear at this time whether the songs refer to those particular ancestors or to namesake entities. For instance, Booklet 100 contains references to 10/7 Knot the Great (*Bilatela Tao*), who is named as the founding ancestor of the Villa Alta town of San Juan Tabaá in a colonial historical narrative written in Cajonos Zapotec, and to Great

Eagle (*Bicia Tao*)—a personal name shared by two ancestors in the aforementioned Genealogy of Quiavini.²⁸ By contrast, this song corpus also refers to four Zapotec deity complexes that were also mentioned by Córdoba's sixteenth-century informants from the Valley of Oaxaca, and by the renowned seventeenth-century ritual specialist Diego Luis from the south-central Oaxacan township of Sola: *Liraa (qui)tzino* or *Betao (gu)ichinoo*, or "God Thirteen," an entity that presided over all other deities; *Bezelao Dao* or *Coquie Cabila*, a deity associated with the Zapotec underworld; *Nobuichana* or *Huichana*, a goddess associated with birth-giving and with fish and rivers; and *Cozáana* or *Nosana*, a deity associated with procreation and with the animal world.²⁹

Moreover, the confessions compiled by Maldonado in 1704 and a number of idolatry trials from at least eight Villa Alta Zapotec communities suggest that local Zapotec religious practices were grounded in the local memory of founding lineages. A ubiquitous category of effigies, which may have ranged in appearance from carved or painted representations of individuals to "hanks of hair"³⁰ tied to pieces of cotton,³¹ was called in Cajonos Zapotec *quiquiag yag tao*, a term that was very loosely glossed in trial records as "the heads of our grandparents."³² Communal ritual celebrations took place on geographical locations with specific local names, usually in the outskirts of a village, and evidence from Betaza suggests that these celebrations were tied to specific dates in the 260-day ritual calendar. Accordingly, one may ground the potentially broad rubric of "local religion" in a particular social terrain in this region: that in which ancestors, local foundational accounts, and sites for communal ceremonies converged within the social and spatial boundaries of a specific Zapotec *guche*, a sociopolitical unit with its own foundational narrative, former ruling lineage(s) and territory, comparable to the Mixtec *n̄uu* and to the Nahuatl *altepetl* (or indigenous community land and social unit, discussed at greater length in the essay by Edward Osowski in this book).³³ The following section explores a divisive public struggle over the preservation of these ancestral religious practices in the Zapotec village of Lachirioag in the late seventeenth century.

The Enigma of Idolatry in Lachirioag

The trial of eleven idolatry suspects from Lachirioag in 1666 by alcalde mayor Diego Sandoval Castro provides some evidence about local

factions that held opposing views on traditional ritual practices within a single *guche*.³⁴ This complex case involved ethnic tensions between an African slave and Zapotec villagers, as well as nagging questions about credibility.³⁵ Pursuing the recurrent policy of employing informants, the alcalde mayor asked Antonio de Cabrera—a black slave belonging to don Gaspar Calderón, the encomendero (or owner of royal land grant with Indian peon-servants attached to the land) of Lachirioag—to keep a watchful eye on any suspect local activities as he and his owner visited Lachirioag to collect tribute.³⁶ In May 1665, Cabrera provided the alcalde mayor with a detailed narrative of two strange events. A month earlier, Cabrera had seen some natives enter the house of one Gerónimo López late at night; they came in, went past two women who stood guard at the door, placed a coin of moderate value—a half real—on the ground, and sat around two pots in which deer meat was being boiled. A week later, Cabrera came across López and many town residents as they were coming down Yaguisi Hill toward the town center early at night. Around four in the morning, Cabrera returned to López's house and saw that the people inside were once again dividing up the deer meat. An Indian whistled, warning others about Cabrera's approach, and everyone left the house again. However, Cabrera saw them return to the house later as they took away the deer meat in small containers.³⁷

Neither Cabrera nor the civil authorities had a clear idea about the significance of these gatherings; thus, a local spy was asked to inquire into this matter, to no avail. However, in February 1666, civil authorities decided to arrest six of the presumed idolaters—former catechism teacher Gerónimo López, Lachirioag's cacique and governor don Juan Martín and his wife, along with three other town officials.³⁸ As the trial began, a striking development occurred: none of the defendants admitted to the meetings described by Cabrera, in spite of intense questioning and veiled threats.

At this point, the failed spy brought to the court's attention the involvement of two influential men with a difference of opinion on traditional practices. One of them was the cacique don Diego Martín, a prominent Lachirioag resident with kinship ties to two of the arrested officials; he was Gerónimo López's nephew, and a second cousin to don Juan Martín. The second group was led by Gerónimo López and don Juan Martín. Don Diego Martín depicted himself and the cacique don Francisco Gutiérrez as devoted Christians who were despised by the commoners, "because they take away their pulque and their drunkenness."³⁹

This rivalry was confirmed by a breakthrough in incriminatory information. About two weeks after don Diego Martín's first deposition, a mestizo official from a neighboring community accused López, don Diego's opponent regarding ritual matters, of baptizing children with Zapotec calendrical names, and reported a confidential conversation he had had with don Diego, triggering a second summons. In his second deposition, don Diego provided a number of details he had not included previously, fearing local reprisals. Don Diego asserted that it was he who had steered Cabrera to specific locations in town where he could observe the nocturnal encounters. Moreover, don Diego described an exchange with his own uncle, who had branded him with a most dishonorable epithet:

About a year ago, [don Diego] told Gerónimo López:
 "Turn away from those fiendish things that belong to the Devil! Your son has told me about them," and López answered him by saying: "Go away, you who go around licking the Spaniards' plates [*lambeplatos de los españoles*]; you are no longer my nephew!"⁴⁰

However, a day after his second deposition, don Diego was said to have galloped away from Lachirioag on his horse. At that point, he disappeared from the trial records.⁴¹

Don Diego's disappearance was a prime factor in the unraveling of the trial, as López and the remaining defendants clung to their denials. Even when confronted in court with the slave Cabrera, an old man in poor health who had to be carried on a hammock from Oaxaca to San Ildefonso in order to face López and his associates, the defendants questioned his credibility by claiming he had raped three local women, thus invoking the specter of uncontrollable African sexual lust. Moreover, one of the defendants challenged Cabrera by asking why he had not seized their ritual implements when he had the chance, and by punctuating his responses with the phrase, "You lie, black man!" [*mentís, moreno*].⁴² Curiously, Cabrera did not directly contest the rape accusations, leading the alcalde mayor to conclude the trial in April 1666 by stating that, since "it [had] not been possible to prove and examine the contents of the initial accusation," he absolved the Lachirioag defendants, with the stern admonishment that they were to avoid any activity that invited suspicions of idolatry.⁴³ At the end of this confrontation, a faction that may or may

not have performed communal ceremonies, but which certainly held stern views regarding external influences, had successfully challenged the testimony of a slave and forced a local cacique into temporary exile. A generation later, the stakes in a similar confrontation had grown: this time, the lives of Dominicans, Spaniards, and native allies were at play.

Two Opposing Views of the Cajonos Revolt

We now return to the riot scene at San Francisco Cajonos in September 1700. After don Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were handed over, they were taunted, whipped at the pillory, and taken away to a nearby mountain, where they were executed. Some local witnesses would later claim that the dead informants' hearts were extracted and thrown out to the dogs. In any case, their corpses were disposed of in such an effective manner that no traces of them were ever found by colonial authorities. Two days after the riot, the residents of San Francisco appeared before the Dominicans to ask for their pardon and received an absolution on their knees. For the last two weeks of September, an apparent calm descended on the Cajonos region as natives, Dominicans, and Spaniards returned to their quotidian tasks. Until this point, and excluding the fact that two native informants were now missing, the Cajonos events bore a strong resemblance to a short-lived confrontation that had mobilized many residents from the neighboring towns of Zoogocho and Zochila a decade before. On March 30, 1691, the Dominican José de Castilla, minister of Zoogocho, requested the support of the alcalde mayor don Juan Manuel de Quiroz in order to carry out an ecclesiastical legal procedure. Castilla wanted the imprisonment of four town officials and the choirmaster of Zoogocho, among other defendants. On April 1, 1691, after celebrating Mass in Zoogocho, Castilla closed the church's doors and then had the *comisionado* (deputy) Francisco Calvo arrest six native officials, who were then locked in the prison of neighboring Zochila. Early in the morning of April 2, a native mob swarmed into Zochila, liberated the officials, and threw Calvo in prison; Castilla and his supporters—which included a Zoogocho *principal* (or, indigenous community elite/noble)—barricaded themselves in the local church. However, friar Alonso de Vargas—the vicar of San Francisco Cajonos—appeared the following morning and convinced the rioters to free Calvo. Afterward, Castilla said Mass, and the native crowd knelt to kiss his

hands, asking for and receiving his pardon. In both Zochila and Cajonos, an uncertain point of equilibrium shortly after a riot was achieved through a strategy that involved an organized show of unity and strength and a subsequent public act of repentance.⁴⁴

Given that the threat of violence at Zoogocho was expediently dismantled, one may ask what led the natives of Cajonos to call for the blood of two fellow residents nine years later. Much in the way that don Diego had dared to tell an African slave where to observe communal practices in Lachirioag, Jacinto de los Ángeles had committed the transgression of alerting a handful of Spanish tradesmen about a communal celebration that was being held in the home of Joseph Flores, the head of the local confraternity of Saint Joseph. The Spaniards had reported this to the Dominicans, and don Juan Bautista—who had been a former *fiscal* but no longer held that office—came along with the group.⁴⁵ It is instructive to inspect two opposing views about the ceremonies that took place at Flores's home that evening. A day after the riot, four Spanish and mestizo witnesses made the following statement:

[T]hey arrived at the house they said belonged to Joseph Flores, where they saw many natives, both men and women, and young boys, with many torches and in a great silence. Having seen this, in a loud voice, [Vargas] said, "What is this shameful thing?" [*qué desverguensa es ésta*], and Joseph de Valsalobre went into the house sword in hand, and all the Indians fled . . . and in the house they found a doe that they had apparently been bleeding, as it had not died yet, and on a table there were some images of saints placed face down, and on top of them some bowls filled with blood, and they also found some turkeys, plucked and headless, and much diabolic filth in two woven containers, and inside a cane case.⁴⁶

A different perspective is evident in sixteen testimonies supportive of the Cajonos defendants, which alcalde mayor Juan Antonio de Mier y Tojo collected in May 1701 by order of the viceroy. The declarations of these natives of San Mateo, San Miguel, Yatzachi, and San Francisco—several of which were local notables—displayed quite a different outlook on the celebration at Flores's home, and the informants' motivations. While the scene that unfolded before the friars and their associates

appeared to be a veritable catalog of bona fide idolatrous sacrifices—beheaded turkeys, a bleeding doe, offerings of tortillas and tamales, and the sacrilegious use of saints' images—some witnesses offered an alternative explanation. Consider the deposition of Francisco Luis, who had been alcalde of San Francisco in 1699:

On the night of September 14 of last year, this witness and his five-year-old son, called Joseph, took one peso as a contribution to the confraternity of Saint Joseph to the house of Joseph Flores, who had invited his friends, compadres, and barrio neighbors to have dinner, because he was finishing [his term] as [the head of] said confraternity. Around eight o'clock at night, as everyone was gathered there . . . the two parish ministers came into the house with some Spaniards who had swords . . . and with another official called Juan Bautista, and Jacinto de los Ángeles. They came into one of the houses of Joseph Flores, in which they had turkeys, tamales, tortillas, and a deer, and the blood they had extracted from it in order to make blood sausages. . . . Father friar Gaspar de los Reyes and Jacinto de los Ángeles came into the kitchen in which this witness and another man were, and the said Jacinto seized a piece of pork . . . and threw it to the dogs. This witness asked him, "Jacinto, what are you doing?" Then, the people who were in the other room ran away in fright, but this witness and the people who were with him went home.⁴⁷

These witnesses also asserted that the subsequent acts of violence against the convent occupants were inspired by indignation at the meddling of Bautista and Ángeles, who were depicted as former town officials who had embezzled some money from communal funds, by public apprehension about armed Spanish presence, and by the fact that a native had been shot and killed.⁴⁸ By contrast, these witnesses omitted crucial details from their declarations, such as their knowledge about the ultimate fate of the two informants. Furthermore, the original motivation for the gathering at Flores's house remains unclear: the gathering took place on September 14 of the Gregorian calendar, which fell on the day 12 Death (*benelana*) in the 260-day ritual Zapotec calendar. The celebration could have been linked to the end of Flores's service as head of the confraternity, to a celebration

linked with the end of a thirteen-day period in the ritual calendar (marked by the interval between the days 12 Death and 13 Deer), or to the convergence of these two circumstances. Although the exact nature of this celebration remains elusive, the fracture lines between the informants and their neighbors were clear: once a local resident was suspected of collaboration, he could be attacked by those who saw themselves as the guardians of ancestral practices in domestic and public realms.

The Cajonos investigation had a redoubtable end after *alcalde mayor* Mier y Tojo began an investigation into the fate of the informants. Initially, it was claimed that they had fled the area, but after the imprisonment and interrogation of about thirty-four revolt leaders and participants, the *alcalde mayor* obtained a full confession. In a cruel departure from common legal protocol, he extracted the ratification of testimonies through torture at the rack. After a protracted trial for rioting, murder, idolatry, and insubordination that lasted from November 1700 until January 1702, Mier y Tojo handed down an especially inclement form of exemplary punishment. On January 11, 1702, after being sentenced to death without the right to an appeal, fifteen of the Cajonos rebels were hanged and quartered. Their remains were exhibited in San Francisco Cajonos and along the main road to Oaxaca. The following day, two more defendants were paraded in an *auto de fe* (literally, "act of faith"—a public punishment by religious court authorities), receiving two hundred lashes each. The remaining seventeen defendants were sentenced to death, but Mier y Tojo allowed them to present an appeal. Eventually, Maldonado would secure the commutation of these sentences as a prelude to his extirpation campaign.⁴⁹

Serving Two Lords at Betaza

In late 1702, Bishop Maldonado brought his message of amnesty to San Melchor Betaza and Santo Tomás Lachitaa, but his visit bore little fruit.⁵⁰ According to Agustín Gonzalo Zárate, a former town official and ritual specialist, hardly a month had passed after the bishop's visit before the town engaged in another communal ritual celebration. Through the mediation of two experienced interpreters of the visions produced by the hallucinogenic seeds of the *cuana betao* plant, Betaza officials asked their own ancestors what would befall them.⁵¹ The specialists were said to have reported that "they had fallen into the hands of God the Father, [*que ya habían dado en manos de Dios Padre*] . . . and that the Spaniards would come

in and take away their parents and grandparents—meaning their idols."⁵² In 1703, a visiting priest came to ask the people of Betaza to surrender their ritual implements, but the townspeople denied having any. After this visit, Betaza's officials called a meeting to discuss whether they would surrender their implements; the consensus held that they would not accept Maldonado's amnesty. Following a pattern of intercommunity communication—a local diplomacy of sorts that was also pursued by rebel communities during the Tehuantepec rebellion, Betaza's town council sent letters to neighboring towns informing them of their decision and asking them for support.⁵³

Betaza's communal resolve was tested by an incident on December 17, 1703, during a local fair that some Betaza officials attended in Yalálag, a Zapotec town a few kilometers to the south.⁵⁴ Among the visitors who crowded the town square, Bernardo García, a Spaniard from Villa Alta, recognized Zárate, a Betaza ritual specialist whose arrest had just been requested by Bishop Maldonado. Another Betaza visitor was don Pedro de Paz, a former *alcalde* and *gobernador* who possessed such confidence about Betaza's defiance, that he approached one of the *regidores* of Yalálag and scolded him by saying:

Perhaps the people of Yalálag are women, for they do not deserve to wear pants, and it would be better if they wore their women's petticoats [*las naguas de sus mugeres*], or else why should they have turned in their idols without resistance? They should not have turned them in without fighting to the last drop of their blood.⁵⁵

After this exchange, Yalálag governor don Juan de la Cruz conferred with García, and arrested Zárate, Paz, and four other local officials who were at the fair. Initially, the people of Betaza interpreted these arrests as a direct attack on them from the community of Yalálag and promptly seized a Yalálag courier who was passing through town on his way to deliver a letter to *alcalde mayor* Diego de Rivera y Cotes. Cotes immediately sent an armed group of sixteen men into Betaza, who escorted the courier and the Betaza suspects to San Ildefonso. In January 1704, Cotes arrested and tried eleven Betaza residents for idolatry; all were current and former town officials, specialists who interpreted the visions triggered by ingesting *cuana betao*, or performers of ritual songs.

The ensuing idolatry trial revealed strong similarities between the financing of Betaza's ancestor worship celebrations and that of indigenous confraternities throughout New Spain. What set Betaza apart was the development of a parallel system, in which various methods were used to collect funds for two distinct budgets, one for Christian devotional practices, the other for clandestine communal ritual practices. First, Zapotec town officials took collections to satisfy the yearly demand for tribute to the crown. A group of twenty-four officials—replaced on a rotating basis—raised three pesos each in order to cover expenditures for the visiting priest and for the seven public Christian holidays held each year. Additional funds for Christian celebrations were raised by the only religious confraternity in town, the Confraternity of the Rosary. Then, whatever communal funds remained every year after satisfying the demands of crown and church—about 197 pesos on average—were devoted to communal ritual expenses.

Three former town officials described two other methods for raising funds for communal ritual practices. The first one was an outright collection of up to one and a half reales per household head. The second one involved a set of communal obligations and money-lending practices that mirrored the financial practices of native confraternities.⁵⁶ Three officials supervised the plowing of three land plots that may have corresponded to a tripartite lineage divisions and maintained three houses used in communal celebrations. After the maize obtained from these plots was sold, profits were lent to Betaza residents at a 37.5 percent interest rate—three reales for each borrowed peso.⁵⁷ Through the accumulation of communal funds earmarked for communal ritual practices, the town bought ten teams of oxen that were used primarily to plough the three communal land plots.⁵⁸

On February 1704, as the interrogation of Betaza defendants began, friar Joseph Cardona pronounced a communal absolution from idolatry in Betaza. However, the town authorities began punishing those they deemed as local traitors on the day after Cardona's visit. Betaza resident Juan Mateo would later report that he was intercepted as he walked down the street by Juan Luis, who brought him forcibly into the local holding cell:

The morning after, the [town's mayor] came in, and told him: "Now you will suffer, you who betrayed the pueblo"; [Juan Mateo] asked him to show them a witness of his betrayal, and

the alcalde answered that he would do so after his pants came off [*quitados los calsones*]. Then, [the mayor] had him tied to the pillory; as he whipped him, he asked how many of his associates had gone to Villa Alta to give accounts about their customs. Favián Gonzalo and Francisco Suárez then said that it was best to kill him, as the people of San Francisco Cajonos had done [with their informants], for on what account was he a [*bendedor del pueblo*], someone who sold his town away. . . . They kept on whipping him, saying that he had uncovered everything, and that he had a very loose tongue [*la lengua muy larga*].⁵⁹

Conclusion

The social composition of a realm of ritual and devotional practices that may be termed "clandestine"—since its practitioners limited their activities to carefully delimited social and spatial domains and faced the possibility of public exemplary punishment—was a complex process in Villa Alta. Although the rhetoric that issued from colonial authorities and various local factions had a rather sharp edge to it, the struggles fought over the observance of ancestral devotions cannot be reduced to common bipolar oppositions, such as natives against Spaniards, elites versus commoners, or native lineages against political parvenus. However tempting, idolatry accusations cannot be reduced to a mere superstructural manifestation of local rivalries; rather, they become integrated into the thick web of alliances and rivalries within native communities, among residents and officials of various native communities, and between native representatives and the alcalde mayor.⁶⁰

We can now turn to a final assessment of the meanings of autonomy in Lachirioag, San Francisco Cajonos, and Betaza. Autonomy may be seen as analytical shorthand for several forms of political action—such as secession, the spontaneous organization of local confraternities, or the defense of communal lands—that were articulated in different ways within different native communities. In Lachirioag and San Francisco, there seemed to be a consensus of sorts—led by local practitioners such as Gregorio López and Joseph Flores—that communal practices were to be performed in domestic spaces, and in ritually meaningful sites beyond the layout of public space at the town's center. Given this compromise of

sorts, a dissenting local minority—such as the caciques don Diego and don Francisco, or the former fiscal don Juan Bautista—could avert their eyes from these nocturnal activities even as they chided their neighbors, and a pretense of harmony could have been kept.⁶¹ By contrast, the consensus among Betaza officials allowed the emergence of a dual arrangement for local religious practices that rested on financial contributions from each head of household—an arrangement that reconfigured the religious field at Betaza, leading to individual participation on ancestor propitiation through the collection of royal and ecclesiastical tribute. Nevertheless, in these three communities, a minimal definition of autonomy with respect to communal devotions seems to include the absolute refusal to involve any foreigners—not simply Spaniards, but also natives from neighboring communities—in what may have been a heated local discussion over the proper social and spatial realms in which local religion was articulated. Giving information about these practices to an African spy, leading a group of armed Spaniards into the house of an official, or using a local fair in a neighboring town to entrap local officials were interpreted as intolerable breaches.

Although the sharp rhetorical acts that comment on this breach come down to us through Spanish translations, they remain vivid enough: those who reneged traditional devotions threatened the pride vested in them; they were described as servile beings who obtained their sustenance from licking the Spaniards' plates. Moreover, the masculinity of those who refused to defend their ancestors was put into question by denying them an iconic masculine garment—a pair of pants—which was substituted, in a symbolic rhetorical flourish, with their women's petticoats. Through a series of well-chosen epithets and characterizations, a rhetorical line was drawn between the servile, the feminized, those with loose tongues, and those who sold their towns away, from those who proudly kept their representations of lineage heads and baptized their children with calendrical names. The rioters even used shame as a rhetorical weapon, by referring to the besieged friars and Spaniards as "cuckolds." This local pride in the defense and veneration of lineage lines coexisted with other forms of honor and shame in colonial Spanish America—such as the honor that attached to legitimate birth, and the shame that issued from sexual impropriety, public insulting words or gestures, and illegitimacy—and may be placed alongside them as another permutation within the continuum of colonial honor.⁶²

The Cajonos revolt has an interesting epilogue. In the 1880s, the narrative about the last two days in the life of don Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles was reclaimed by Archbishop Eulogio Gillow. Gillow promptly located a "local tradition" that held they had been *fiscales* when they denounced Flores's celebration, identified an alleged beneficiary of a miracle achieved through their intercession, authored an account of the rebellion, and promoted a beatification inquiry.⁶³ This process, which yielded little in the 1880s, was restarted in the 1980s and came to fruition in 2001 with the beatification of the two Zapotec villagers by Pope John Paul II. In the end, it took three hundred years and thousands of pages of ecclesiastical and civil proceedings to travel the space in San Francisco Cajonos that separated the domestic realm—José Flores's house—from a public space legitimized by Christian orthodoxy—the church erected by the Dominicans. This distance, which is almost negligible in spatial terms, separates two highly distinct forms of organizing local devotions that underwent a paradoxical convergence: the clandestine worship of ancestors in colonial times, and the public veneration of ancestors proclaimed and celebrated by the Catholic hierarchy in the twenty-first century.



NOTES

1. Research for this essay was carried out under the auspices of a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship tenable at the John Carter Brown Library, a grant from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, and research funds from Vassar College. The abbreviations used for archival depositories in this essay are as follows: Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Archivo Judicial de Villa Alta (AJVA), Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de Oaxaca (AHAO), the Archivo Parroquial de Nuestra Señora de la Merced (APMO), and Archivo Luis Castañeda (ALC).
2. Villa Alta was an *alcaldía mayor* (local administrative unit of colonial Mexico similar to a county, parish, or district) located to the northeast of the Valley of Oaxaca. The town of Villa Alta de San Ildefonso was the administrative center for more than one hundred Zapotec, Mixe, and Chinantec communities in the Sierra Zapoteca. See Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 369.

3. Testimony of Joseph de la Trinidad, October 26, 1700, APMO, 1700–1702 Cajonos trial records, 183r.
4. See Robert Redfield, *The Little Community: Viewpoints for the Study of a Human Whole* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955); and Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
5. See William A. Christian Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).
6. Pierre Bourdieu, “Genèse et structure du champ religieux,” *Revue Française de Sociologie* 12 (1971).
7. For a thorough discussion of the establishment of colonial institutions in this region, see John K. Chance, *The Conquest of the Sierra* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).
8. William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 48.
9. There were three major colonial Zapotec language variants spoken in Villa Alta: Cajonos, Nexitzo, and Bijanos Zapotec. Cajonos Zapotec was spoken in the three towns in question. See Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*.
10. See Nicholas Griffiths, *The Cross and the Serpent* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Luis Millones, “Religion and Power in the Andes: Idolatrous curacas of the Central Sierra,” *Ethnohistory* 26 (1979); and Kenneth Mills, *Idolatry and its Enemies: Colonial Andean Religion and Extirpation, 1640–1750* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
11. See David Tavárez, “La idolatría letrada: Un análisis comparativo de textos clandestinos rituales y devocionales en comunidades nahuas y zapotecas, 1613–1654,” *Historia Mexicana* 194, no. 49 (1999).
12. See John Chuchiak, “The Indian Inquisition and the Extirpation of Idolatry: The Process of Punishment in the Ecclesiastical Courts of the Provisorato de Indios in Yucatán, 1563–1812” (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 2000); as well as his article “Pre-Conquest Ah Kinob in a Colonial World: The Extirpation of Idolatry and the Survival of the

- Maya Priesthood in Colonial Yucatán, 1563–1697,” in *Maya Survivalism: Acta Mesoamericana*, vol. 12, ed. U. Hostettler and M. Restall (Munich: A. Saurwein, 2001).
13. See Hector Díaz-Polanco and Araceli Burguete, “Sociedad colonial y rebelión indígena en el Obispado de Oaxaca (1660),” and Hector Díaz-Polanco and Consuelo Sánchez, “El vigor de la espada restauradora. La represión de rebeliones indias en Oaxaca (1660–1661),” in *El Fuego de la inobediencia. Autonomía y rebelión india en el obispado de Oaxaca*, ed. H. Díaz-Polanco (Mexico: CIESAS, 1996).
14. *Repartimientos* governed the appropriation of local goods by colonial authorities through a mandatory exchange for goods manufactured elsewhere that natives rarely needed and at unfavorable exchange ratios. See Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*. A dissenting view holds that this process had an integrative effect on regional markets; see Jeremy Baskes, *Indians, Merchants, and Markets: A Reinterpretation of the Repartimiento and Spanish-Indian Economic Relations in Colonial Oaxaca, 1750–1821* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
15. See Marcelo Carmagnani, “Un movimiento político indio: La ‘rebelión’ de Tehuantepec, 1660–1661,” in Díaz-Polanco, *El Fuego de la inobediencia*. This perspective on the Tehuantepec rebellion is partially based on Carmagnani’s focus on the revitalization of local and regional indigenous identity in Oaxaca in the second half of the seventeenth century. See Marcelo Carmagnani, *El regreso de los dioses: El proceso de reconstitución de la identidad étnica en Oaxaca, siglos XVII y XVIII* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988).
16. Diego de Villegas y Sandoval Castro, alcalde mayor of Villa Alta in 1653–55, and again from late 1665 until late 1667, appeared to be an especially active civil extirpator of idolatries under the aegis of Bishop Monterroso (1665–78), for he presided over at least three idolatry trials in 1665 and 1666; see AJVA Criminal 19, 22, 23. Moreover, at least three of Sandoval Castro’s successors are known to have presided over idolatry trials in Villa Alta between 1667 and 1684.
17. The link between Villa Alta and idolatry was not a novel one at this point. The Dominican friar Pedro Guerrero began one of the first systematic extirpation campaigns in the region in 1560, when he convinced scores of natives to turn in their idols. Del Puerto’s activities are discussed in AGI México 357.

18. AGI México 357. Sariñana was probably inspired by inquisitorial precedent. In Mexico City, in the early seventeenth century, the Holy Office erected a prisión perpetua for proselytizing Jews and heretics; see Solange Alberro, *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571–1700* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988). In the Archdiocese of Lima, a prison for idolaters called Casa de Santa Cruz existed between 1618 and 1639. See Iris Gareis, “Repression and Cultural Change: The ‘Extirpation of Idolatry’ in Colonial Peru,” in *Spiritual Encounters: Interactions Between Christianity and Native Religions in Colonial America*, ed. N. Griffiths and F. Cervantes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 234.
19. Sariñana’s prison lasted only a few years: first, an earthquake damaged it in 1696; later that year, Sariñana died, leaving the prison’s finances in a state of uncertainty. After 1702, Bishop Maldonado abandoned the original prison building, erecting instead a new building funded by a bequest from a former extirpator of idolatries on a piece of land ceded by the Dominican order.
20. An extremely useful survey of the pocket calendars and the communal ritual practices of Villa Alta appeared in the first monograph devoted to the topic is José Alcina Franch, *Calendario y religión entre los zapotecos* (Mexico: UNAM, 1993); see also Arthur Miller, “Transformations of Time and Space: Oaxaca, Mexico, circa 1500–1700,” in *Images of Memory*, ed. Susanne Kuchler and Walter Melion (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991). However, it bears noting that recent developments in colonial Zapotec linguistics and philology may yield significant revisions of the transcriptions and interpretations offered by Alcina Franch. For an influential appraisal of the Zapotec calendar and Zapotec religion, see Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
21. Fray Juan de Córdova, *Arte en lengua zapoteca* (Mexico: Pedro Balli, 1578). There is an 1886 reprint of this work (Morelia: Imprenta del Gobierno), and a 1987 facsimilar reprint of the Morelia 1886 edition (Mexico: Ediciones Toledo, 1987).
22. The epigraphic evidence regarding the origins of this calendrical system reaches as far back as late Formative times (600 BCE). See Javier Urcid Serrano, *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001).
23. For further details on the activities of ritual specialists in Betaza, see David Tavárez, “Colonial Evangelization and Native Resistance: The Interplay of Native Political Autonomy and Ritual Practices in Villa

- Alta (New Spain), 1700–1704,” in *Interpreting Colonialism*, ed. Byron Wells and Philip Stewart (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2004).
24. AGI México 882, 384v.
25. For a review of Nahua and Mesoamerican cosmology, see Alfredo López Austin, *Tamoanchan, Tlalocan: Places of Mist* (Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 1997).
26. See Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus, *The Cloud People: Divergent Evolution of the Zapotec and Mixtec Civilizations* (New York: Academic Press, 1983); and Joyce Marcus and Kent Flannery, *Zapotec Civilization* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996).
27. AGI México 882, Calendar 100. The Genealogy of Quiaviní was found in 1996 by the archivists of the Archivo de la Reforma Agraria in Oaxaca City. For a discussion of its contents, see Michel Oudijk, *Historiography of the Benizaa. The Postclassic and Early Colonial Periods (1000–1600 A.D.)* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, Vol. 84, 2000), 141–52.
28. This narrative, known as the Primordial Title of San Juan Tabaá, is kept in the local archives of this community. The purported author of the earliest section of this title is native ruler Thiadela, said to be the son of 10/7 Knot the Great, who baptized and received the Christian name of don Juan de Mendoza y Velasco after the arrival of Spaniards to Villa Alta in the 1520s. A transcription of the original Cajonos Zapotec title and of a 1953 translation by Tabaá residents appears in Oudijk, *Historiography of the Benizaa*, 295–310. The Zapotec calendrical name *Bilatela* can be read as either “10 Knot” or “7 Knot.”
29. A review of sixteenth-century philological evidence regarding Zapotec deities in the Valley of Oaxaca appears in Thomas Smith-Stark’s “Dioses, sacerdotes, y sacrificio—una mirada a la religión zapoteca a través del *Vocabulario en lengua Çapoteca* (1578) de Juan de Córdova” (paper delivered at the III Conferencia de Estudios Oaxaqueños, Oaxaca City, 1998).
30. See the declarations of Joseph Hernández from San Pablo Cajonos, AGI México 882, 301v, and Pedro Gonzalo from Yaa, AGI México 882, 305v.
31. See, for example, AJVA Criminal 49.
32. In Betaza, three communal houses called *Yoo Yagtao*—which may have been linked to three distinct lineages—were built for the sole purpose of hosting divination practices. See AJVA Criminal 117.

33. For an erudite discussion of the former, see James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992); for a ground-breaking discussion of the latter, see Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).
34. See AJVA Criminal 23.
35. A detailed discussion of this trial appears in David Tavárez, "Idolatry as an Ontological Question: Native Consciousness and Juridical Proof in Colonial Mexico," *Journal of Early Modern History* 6 (2002).
36. It is unusual to find an encomienda—an arrangement that allowed a former conqueror and his heirs to collect tribute in a territorial unit in exchange for assuming the religious and civil stewardship of its native inhabitants—as late as the 1660s in Villa Alta. However, the fact that at least another encomienda lasted into the eighteenth century in Villa Alta suggests that Lachirioag was not an isolated survival. See Gerhard, *Guide to Historical Geography*, 372.
37. AJVA Criminal 23, 42v–44r.
38. *Cacique* was a term used in colonial Spanish America to designate a native lineage ruler and his descendants. By the mid-seventeenth century, this term indicated a claim to being descended from an indigenous ruling lineage, rather than political office, unless the title was "cacique and governor."
39. AJVA Criminal 23, 14r.
40. AJVA Criminal 23, 38v.
41. Since don Diego's own wife reported his flight, it is unlikely that he suffered the same fate as the two Cajonos informants.
42. AJVA Criminal 23, 45r.
43. AJVA Criminal 23, 71r; my emphases.
44. AHAO Mártires de Cajonos S–1.2. The exact nature of the transgressions committed by Zoogocho's officials cannot be ascertained, although the actions and language of Castilla suggest an idolatry scenario, as these proceedings were incomplete even in 1889.
45. A *fiscal* was a native official who worked with church authorities to ensure native compliance with church precepts on a regular basis.
46. APMO Cajonos, 95v.
47. AHAO Mártires de Cajonos, 265v–66v.

48. Pascual Martín, one of the community's witnesses, reported that Don Juan Bautista had previously served as a fiscal, and that he still owed the community some of the funds he had received during his administration. AHAO Mártires de Cajonos, 269r.
49. ALC 1270, 161v–69v; AHAO Mártires de Cajonos, S–4, 615–31.
50. Betaza was a relatively large town, with an estimated population of 935 residents in 1703; the neighboring community of Lachitaa shared numerous political and kinship links with Betaza and had an estimated population of 178 individuals in 1704. See Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*. AJVA Criminal 117, 28v, 27v.
51. According to multiple testimonies, certain Zapotec specialists drank a beverage made with the ground seeds of a plant called *cuana betao*, which may be *Turbina* (or *Rivea*) *corymbosa*, a vine of the morning glory family with hallucinogenic properties.
52. AJVA Criminal 117, 39v–40r; my emphasis.
53. AJVA Criminal 117, 60r.
54. Yalálag held an important place among the Zapotec communities of southern Villa Alta due to three factors: its role as a regional market hub; its location on the road to Oaxaca; and its position as the largest town in southern Villa Alta, with an estimated population of 1,577 residents in 1703. See Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 48.
55. AJVA Criminal 117, 9r.
56. Central Mexican indigenous sodalities routinely constituted themselves as money-lending enterprises. A particularly well-documented operation during the 1760s at the Nahua community of Tlapa is described in Danièle Dehouve, "The 'Money of the Saint': Ceremonial Organization and Monetary Capital in Tlapa, Guerrero, Mexico," in *Manipulating the Saints*, ed. A. Meyers and D. E. Hopkins (Hamburg, Germany: WAYASBAH, 1988).
57. AJVA Criminal 117, 171r–v.
58. AJVA Criminal 117, 28v.
59. AJVA Criminal 117, 511r–v.
60. This web of mediations for Yatzona, Yatee, and other Villa Alta towns is analyzed in Yanna Yannakakis, "Indios Ladinos: Indigenous Intermediaries and the Negotiation of Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca, 1660–1769" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2003).

61. For a treatment of consensus building in a contemporary Sierra Zapotec community, see Laura Nader, *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).
62. See Lyman Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds., *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).
63. Eulogio Gillow, *Apuntes históricos sobre la idolatría e introducción del cristianismo en Oaxaca* (Graz: Akademische Druck-u Verlagsanstalt, 1978).

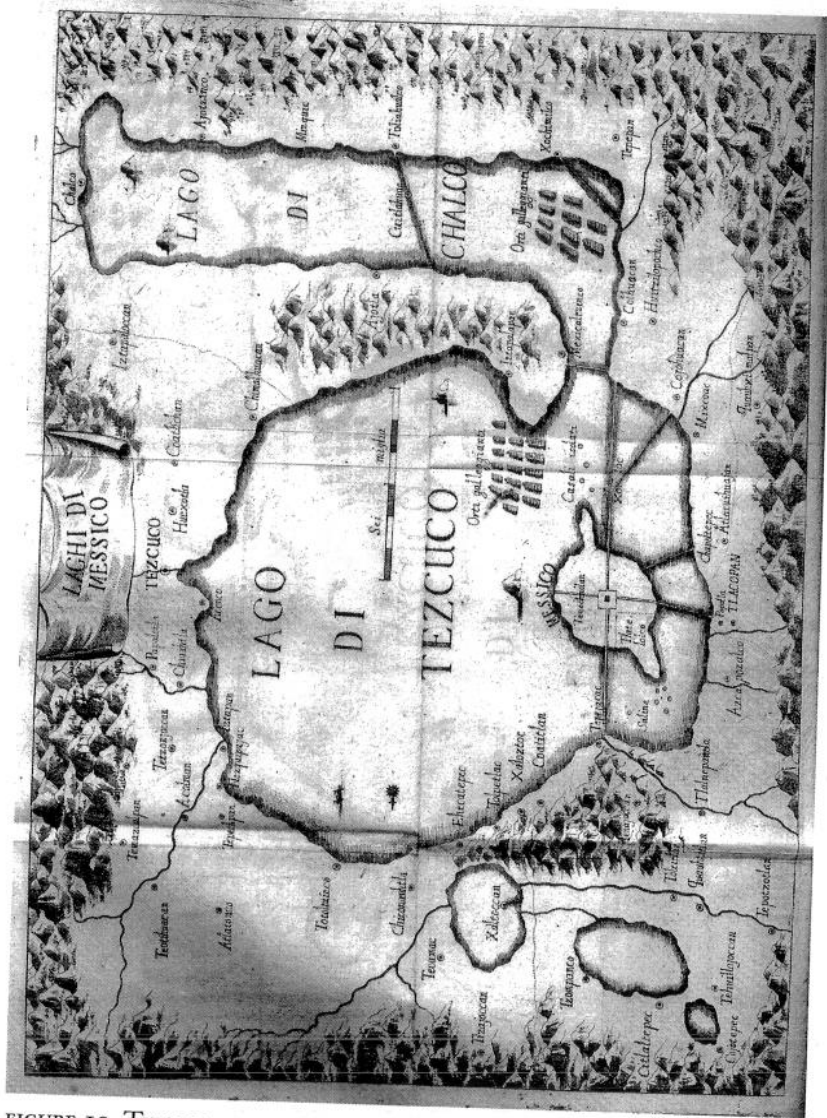
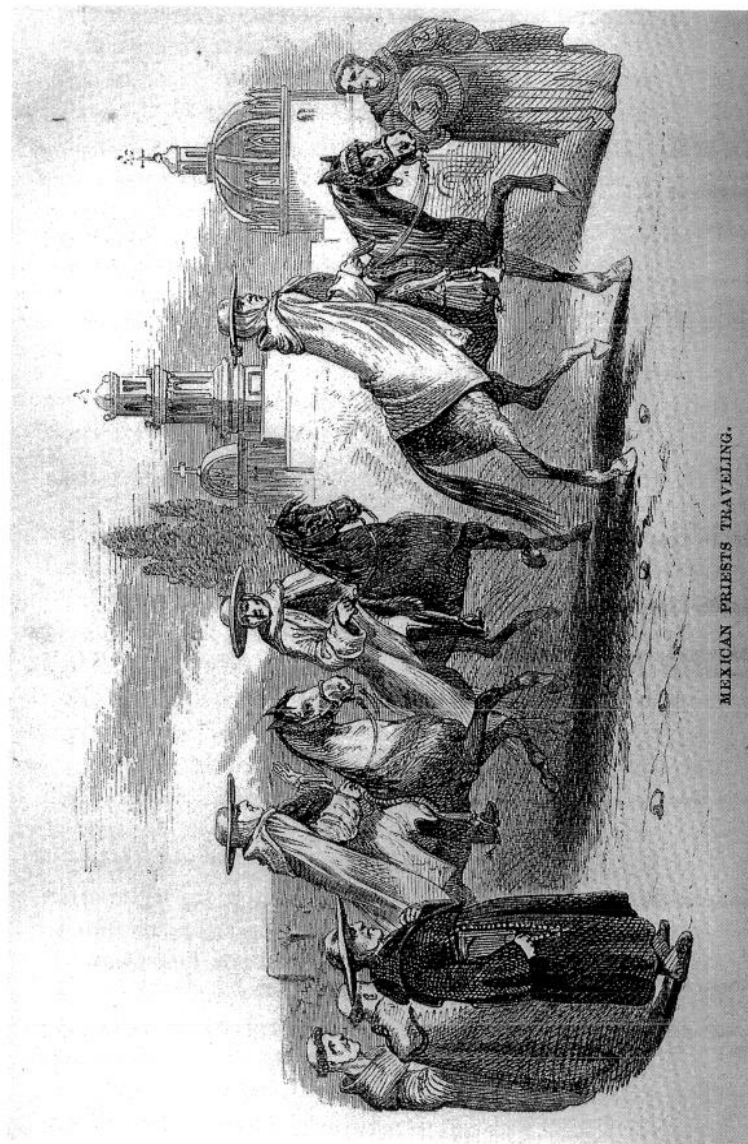


FIGURE 10. Texcoco

Map of the valley of Mexico with depictions of important Mexica imperial areas. Taken from Francisco Javier Clavijero, *Storia antica del Messico* (Cesena: Gregorio Biasini, 1780). Courtesy of Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego.



MEXICAN PRIESTS TRAVELING.

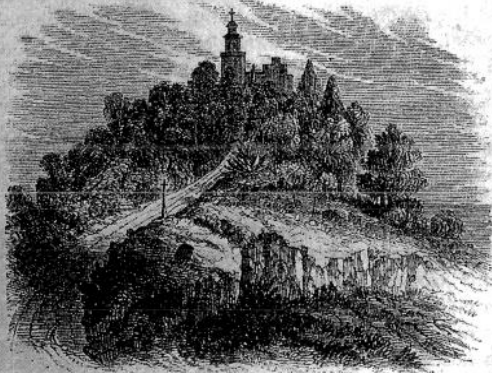
FIGURE 11. Priests traveling

Image of priests traveling by horseback. Taken from Robert Wilson, *Mexico and Its Religion* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1856). Courtesy of Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego.

PYRAMID OF CHOLULA.

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have lost half its attractiveness had it been the stiff and clumsy thing which the pictures represent it to be. I had admired it in pictures from my childhood for what it was not; but I now admired it for what it really was—the finest Indian mound on this continent; where the Indians buried the bravest of their braves, with bows and arrows, and a drinking cup, that they might not be unprovided for when they should arrive at the hunting-grounds of the Great Spirit. A little digging, a few years ago,* has furnished the evidence on which I base this assertion. This digging has destroyed the old monkish fiction to reinstate the truly Indian idea of the dead, and of the necessity of mounds for their burial.



PYRAMID OF CHOLULA.

By going round to the north side, I obtained a fine view of the modern improvements which have been con-

* The living witnesses of the result of this excavation are still at Cholula, and the fact is mentioned in several American works; my inference from the fact is the only novelty in the matter.

FIGURE 12. Cholula

The Catholic Church on top of a pre-Hispanic pyramid in Cholula, just outside of Puebla. Taken from Robert Wilson, *Mexico and Its Religion* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1856). Courtesy of Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego.

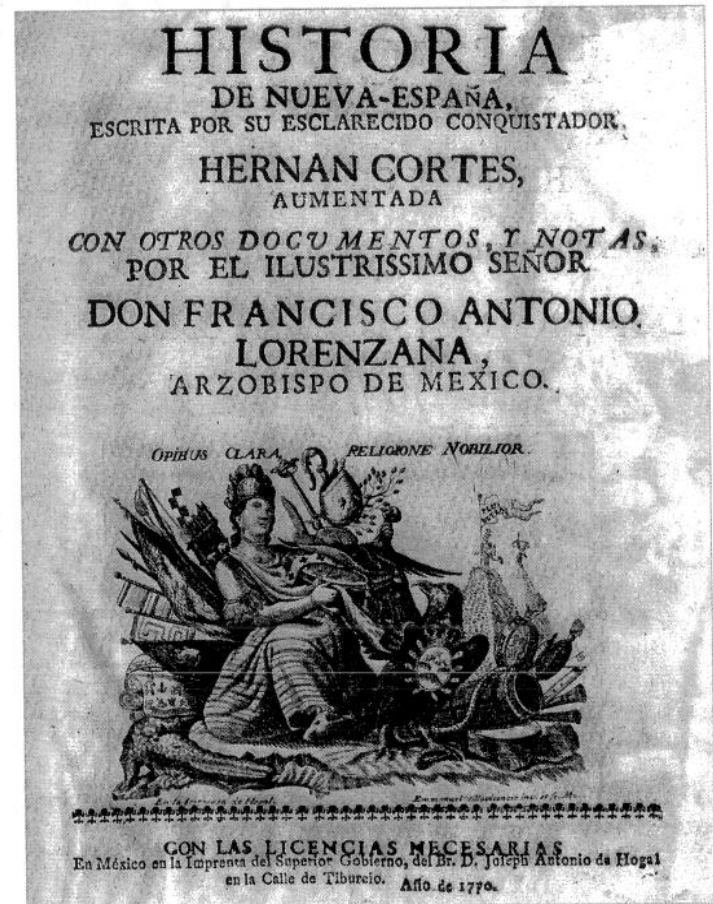


FIGURE 13. Historia de Nueva España

In addition to editing and publishing the 1555 and 1565 Mexican church councils, Archbishop Lorenzana published an edition of Hernán Cortés letters to Charles V in support of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. This is frontispiece from that edition. Note the use of the eagle and nopal cactus, symbols of the foundation myth of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, incorporated into the official Catholic iconography of the Mexican church at the highest levels. Taken from *Historia de Nueva España*, escrita por su esclarecido conquistador Hernán Cortés, aumentada con otros documentos, y notas, por el ilustrísimo señor don Francisco Antonio Lorenzana (*Mexico: Joseph Antonio de Hogal, 1770*). Courtesy of Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego.

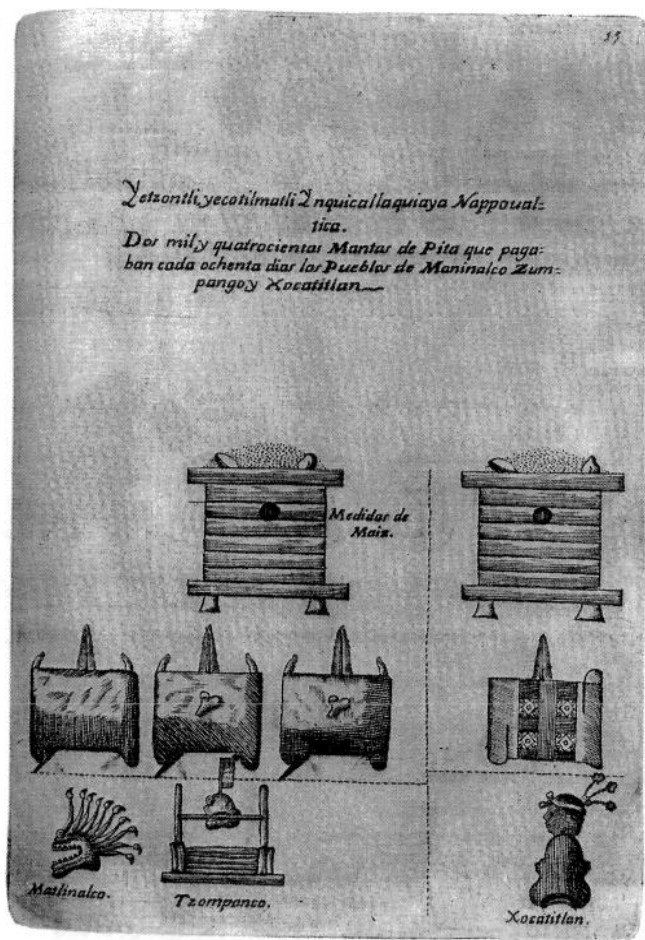


FIGURE 14. Malinalco tax rolls

One of the most intriguing components of the 1770 edition of Cortés' letters is the incorporation of Nahuatl pictographs representing pre-Hispanic tax rolls of dependent cities and provinces of the Mexica empire. This image represents the tax roll from Malinalco, the pre-Hispanic site of an important military shrine and near the Catholic pilgrimage site of Chalma. Taken from *Historia de Nueva España, escrita por su esclarecido conquistador Hernán Cortés, aumentada con otros documentos, y notas, por el ilustrísimo señor don Francisco Antonio Lorenzana* (Mexico: Joseph Antonio de Hoyal, 1770). Courtesy of Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego.



FIGURE 15. Catalina de Alejandria

Taken from *Devocionario mexicano. Pequeños grabado novohispanos, introducción de Alicia Gojman* (Mexico: Backal Editores, 1998). Courtesy of Backal Editores.



FIGURE 16. San Hipólito Mártir

Taken from Devocionario mexicano. Pequeños grabado novohispanos, introducción de Alicia Gojman (Mexico: Backal Editores, 1998). Courtesy of Backal Editores.



FIGURE 17. San Juan de Sahagún

Taken from Devocionario mexicano. Pequeños grabado novohispanos, introducción de Alicia Gojman (Mexico: Backal Editores, 1998). Courtesy of Backal Editores.



FIGURE 18. Santiago

Santiago was the patron saint of Spain, associated with the Reconquest of Iberia from the Muslims and often depicted as a patron of the conquest of Mexico.

Taken from Devocionario mexicano. Pequeños grabado novohispanos, introducción de Alicia Gojman (Mexico: Backal Editores, 1998).

Courtesy of Backal Editores.

CHAPTER SIX

Carriers of Saints

Traveling Alms Collectors and Nahua Gender Roles

EDWARD W. OSOWSKI



In 1791, doña Ana Ventura Gómez, a member of the indigenous elite, was forced to defend her leadership of a collective effort to finance devotion to Our Lady of Loreto at the ex-Jesuit Colegio de San Gregorio in Mexico City. Starting in 1586, the Jesuit secondary school had educated the sons of Nahua lords, and in the eighteenth century, daughters of the indigenous upper class took catechism classes there as well.¹ With the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from New Spain in 1767, the Colegio came under crown sponsorship. Ventura sought to renew her license from the archdiocese's Provisorato de Indios y Chinos, the Indian Tribunal, but the Audiencia of Mexico's indigenous appeals court, the Juzgado General de Indios, refused. As part of the larger historical trend of secularization, the Juzgado General de Indios, which was a royal law court, had just recently gained the authority as the final arbiter of whether to grant indigenous people approval. Reviewing this highly capable legal wrangler's appeal, the viceroy's special legal advisor on native matters, the *fiscal de lo civil*, questioned Ventura on how she would raise funds for the image. She assertively responded that she would designate collectors who would