

of silver producers, efficiency and costs of refining methods, tax evasion, and much else. Those discussions are cogent, energetic, and thought-provoking, although founded more on economic principle than on new empirical data. That being so, the book suggests pathways for much new local research.

This is a most welcome work. Historians needing to know the production of gold and silver in New Spain, to 1700, will find it more accessibly stated here than anywhere else, analyzed by time and region. Those concerned with the technical means by which silver was produced will find probably the fullest discussion of the question to have appeared to date.

PETER BAKEWELL, Southern Methodist University

DOI 10.1215/00182168-1600452

*The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico.*

By DAVID TAVÁREZ. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011. Illustrations.

Tables. Glossary. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 384 pp. Cloth.

This meticulously researched and beautifully written work is a major contribution to our understanding of religion in indigenous communities and the Catholic Church in central Mexico and Oaxaca. Based on Nahuatl and Zapotec language texts and pictorials from Oaxaca and central Mexico, as well as ecclesiastical and civil sources in Spanish, Tavárez delves into three centuries of local indigenous religious practice and Spanish officials' attempts to maintain orthodoxy. Clerics cast a wary eye generally on indigenous practices that were ostensibly framed as Christian worship but were potentially heterodox in aspect or essence. The church systematically pursued what Tavárez calls the "invisible war," rooting out evidence of idolatry and creating the framework to discipline its practitioners. Tavárez utilizes what he calls "microsociological, 'thick' ethno-historical narrative and sociocultural and linguistic description of Nahua and Zapotec devotions" (p. 271). Although he emphasizes the narrative and the descriptive forms, he then closely analyzes the texts to reveal deep structures. In examining diverse cases found over an extensive time frame in Zapotec and Nahua regions, he pays close attention to aspects of Mesoamerican culture that give rise to these devotions, but emphasizes particular individuals, communities, and devotions as being uniquely local. Scholars of Mesoamerica have long recognized the importance of the particular and the local, especially when it is all too easy to make bland generalizations from sources rich in empirical data. Tavárez argues that superficial resemblances of some Mesoamerican devotions could mislead scholars in seeing a Mesoamerican "peasant Christianity" similar to that posited for early modern Spain. He considers whether indigenous devotions could be a form of dissent, and concludes that the indigenous did not necessarily consciously see the devotions as resistance.

Tavárez's close reading of ecclesiastical prosecutions of idolatry is multifaceted, showing how many accusations of idolatry were rooted in local conflicts, linking both

indigenous accusers and accused in the mechanism of ecclesiastical investigation. The prosecutions preserved evidence of not only ritual practices but also their significance in the social context. Denunciations served the Spanish ecclesiastics in bringing suspicious indigenous individual and community practices to their attention. For the church, extirpation of idolatry served the true faith, but it was also a means for indigenous individuals to settle scores and shift local power relations.

Although Spanish ecclesiastical and civil officials pursued the extirpation of idolatry over the whole colonial era—with waxing and waning of zeal and employing a variety of strategies—the mid-seventeenth century marks a new phase of institutional pursuit of idolatry. Tavárez characterizes this period as one in which procedures against idolaters were centralized and institutionalized. With harsh corporal punishment and exile considered not effective against idolaters, the church established in Oaxaca a perpetual prison for indigenous religious leaders to quarantine the idolatrous “contagion.” But the mid-eighteenth-century Oaxaca prison for teachers of idolatry survived only until the 1760s, with the reasons for its demise somewhat murky.

Particularly valuable is Tavárez’s analysis of alphabetic and pictorial texts by indigenous religious experts. These indigenous “literate idolatries” were created by elite Nahua and Zapotec writers. Copied and read, these alphabetic and pictorial texts circulated over an extended period of time, establishing authority for their creators and interpreters and helping to ensure the perpetuation of devotions. Tavárez contends that the texts did not displace orality but also argues for their importance in local devotions.

Tavárez stresses the local and the particular in his analysis, but he does formulate some generalizations in the social sphere. Gender and social status played roles in accusations of idolatry. In the cases in the diocese of Mexico from the 1520s through the eighteenth century, Tavárez found that early accusations against indigenous lords declined, while in the mid-seventeenth century, accusations against commoner women increased. Gender parity of accusations suggests a change in the religious sphere, putting women on a more equal basis with men; but Tavárez also suggests this could be influenced by ecclesiastical biases against women, which viewed women as more vulnerable to the Devil’s influence. In Oaxaca, there were relatively few cases against women. Tavárez argues that this finding might not result from the lack of females involved in idolatrous devotions but from the fact that they did not practice in public, collective spaces over which ecclesiastics were more vigilant.

Tavárez posits for colonial central Mexico and Oaxaca a “colonial archipelago of faith.” His exploration of those islands and his speculations about the unknown waters is nuanced, engaging, and thought provoking. I hope that this book will be published in paperback, since it could have a wider readership among those interested in the history of religion and of Latin America.

SARAH CLINE, University of California, Santa Barbara

DOI 10.1215/00182168-1600461