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# Franciscans, Indian Sorcerers, and the Inquisition in New Spain, 1536–1543

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In the years 1536–1543, the Spanish crown gave authority to the bishop of Mexico City, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, to establish an Episcopal Inquisition in Mexico City.<sup>1</sup> With the urging of the Franciscan community, the bishop used his inquisitorial authority to hold nineteen trials for religious crimes against mostly Indian leaders living in and around the Mexico Valley—a phenomenon called the Indian Inquisition.<sup>2</sup> Both before and after this brief campaign, the trials of Indians for paganism or idolatry were either absent or few and always sporadic and lacking the support of the crown in Spain. The Indian Inquisition, however, was the most concerted effort of the Spanish colonial authorities to apply the full powers of the institution to the indigenous population in New Spain. Indians suffered a range of punitive punishments from flogging and lengthy jailing to banishment and, in the case of one indigenous leader, Don Carlos of Texcoco, burning at the stake.<sup>3</sup> No sooner had this small but well-sanctioned legal assault

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<sup>1</sup> While there have been studies of the Spanish Inquisition in Mexico after 1571, the most comprehensive of which is Solange Alberro's *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571–1700* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), the only really detailed treatment of the earlier Inquisition is forty years old: Richard Greenleaf, *Zumárraga and the Mexican Inquisition, 1536–1543* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1962).

<sup>2</sup> Probably using a reference common among historians by the 1960s, Greenleaf coined the phrase “Indian Inquisition” (*Zumárraga and the Mexican Inquisition*, p. 75).

<sup>3</sup> The complete manuscripts of the trials have been transcribed and published in “Proceso inquisitorial del cacique de Tetzoco,” vol. 1, *Publicaciones de la Comisión Reorganizadora del Archivo General y Pública* (Mexico: Eusebio Gómez de la Puente, 1910); “Procesos de indios idolatras y hechiceras,” vol. 3, *Publicaciones de la Comisión Reorganizadora del Archivo General y Público de la Nación* (Mexico: Guerrero, 1912).

on paganism begun, however, when questions emerged about its advisability. By the early 1540s, a consensus developed in councils of the Spanish government that the use of the Inquisition to induce religious orthodoxy among the new converts was inappropriate and possibly dangerous for the security of the colony. The Indian Inquisition ended when the Council of the Indies revoked the bishop's inquisitorial powers in 1543. In 1571, when Philip II formally established a Holy Office in New Spain, he specifically prohibited trials against indigenous colonists. Most historians have attributed this decision to the failure of the earlier Indian Inquisition.<sup>4</sup>

Why did colonial authorities regard inquisitorial actions against the Indians necessary in the Spanish colony of the 1530s but not forty years later? And, since the colonial authorities were so quick to undermine the bishop's campaign, how and why was Zumárraga led down the path of applying the heavy cudgel of Inquisition to the indigenous neophytes? This paper will answer these questions by presenting a narrative, including turning points and intellectual conditions that were present in the Mexico Valley, leading up to the first trials of the Inquisition. Additionally, it will examine more closely the second trial against the native sorcerer Martin Ocelotl. The Indian Inquisition resulted from a confluence of interrelated intellectual tensions. Questioning of the indigenous capacity to Christianize led Franciscans in New Spain to defensively and rigorously enforce Christian living among the indigenous in the Mexico Valley in the 1530s. The campaigns in the indigenous towns and villages created tensions that led to an antagonistic dynamic that pitted some indigenous nobles against the friars. The bishop Zumárraga implemented his Inquisition in this tense environment and was persuaded to bring Martin Ocelotl to trial. Ironically, in the trial, the friars learned how alive and well paganism was in the very communities on the eastern side of the Mexico Valley where they had invested most of their missionizing efforts. Tensions escalated, and a steady drumbeat of trials followed that were clearly leading to a potential holocaust of indigenous leaders, until the Spanish Old World authorities stepped in and removed the bishop's inquisitorial powers.

#### THE DILEMMA OF CONVERSION

As Spain began to cope with the concept of converting large numbers of indigenous people in its newly conquered territories, two intellec-

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<sup>4</sup> See Alberro, *Inquisición y sociedad*, p. 22.

tual currents intersected that were critical to the emergence of the Indian Inquisition. One was Spain's perceived historical imperative to compel religious orthodoxy within its empire, in order to secure the empire. The other was the practical reality of converting people whose willingness and capacity to convert were in question and the more immediate concern of what this might mean for the security of an unwieldy empire. The Spanish monarchy's conversion policy often waffled between these two questions; the Inquisition in the New World was bound to become tangled in the process. Therefore, it is useful to review this conversion dilemma.

The sole object of the Spanish Inquisition in the early years of Ferdinand's and Isabella's reign (1476–1515) was to eliminate alleged crypto-Judaism on Spanish soil. The Catholic kings wanted to elevate the racial factionalism that Old Christians targeted against converted Jews in the fifteenth century to the level of Christian nationalism. By doing so they could unite their disparate kingdoms, deflect political tensions onto the Jews, and make the Spanish monarchy the vanguard of militant Christianity in Europe.<sup>5</sup> They therefore demanded and received from the Vatican permission to found a Holy Office that was absolutely under their state power. Ferdinand famously boasted about the Spanish Inquisition, "In fact, it is all ours!"<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the politico-religious-ethnic nature of the Spanish Inquisition was perceived as a powerful, if volatile, security institution for the Spanish monarchy.

Jews, however, were not the only potential national security threat from within. Throughout southern Spain, there was a much larger community of practicing Muslims, or *mudéjares*, and an even larger community of Muslims converted to Christianity, *moriscos*, especially in and near the newly conquered kingdom of Granada.<sup>7</sup> When the crown initially applied pressure to compel religious orthodoxy in *mudéjar* and *morisco* communities, its efforts were met with mass revolts, rebellions, and resistance. In the early decades of the sixteenth century, the crown considered the use of Inquisition with the Muslims, but two factors

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Haliczer, "First Holocaust," in *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Stephen Haliczer (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1987), pp. 9–10, is very good in explaining the nationalist advantages of the Inquisition for Ferdinand and Isabel.

<sup>6</sup> AHN Inquisition, libro 1275, f. 232, in Henry Kamen, *Inquisition and Society in Spain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 241, notes that Ferdinand prohibited a *corregidor*, government official, from "issuing a declaration saying that the Inquisition is of a different jurisdiction, because, in fact, it is all ours!"

<sup>7</sup> Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New York: New American Library, 1966), p. 3.

seemed to lead them away from that path. First, use of the Inquisition threatened to turn the Muslim resistance into massive revolt. Second, there were some doubts that the less urbanized Muslim converts were capable of assimilating Christianity quickly. The crown compromised, and the Concordia of 1528 was negotiated, stating that *moriscos* would not be subject to the Inquisition until the third generation after conversion, according to the Inquisitor General, “since it would be impossible for them to shed all their customs at once.”<sup>8</sup> As the application of Inquisition to ethnic groups was being sorted out in the Old World, a new Conquest population—the indigenous people of the New World—presented a new policy dilemma. In effect, should the Indians be treated like Jews or Muslims?

Pope Alexander VI’s papal donation of the New World contained in the bulls *Inter Caetera* and *Dudum Siquidem* required Ferdinand and Isabella to take responsibility for the Indians by Christianizing them. In the Caribbean, however, questions began to emerge about whether the Indians had the “rational capacity” to Christianize, which would allow them to be assimilated into the empire. In her work on the Indian identity question, Patricia Seed has argued that rivalry between Franciscans and Dominicans, the leaders of the conversion effort in the New World, was the critical instigating factor for the debate.<sup>9</sup> By custom, the orders staked out proselytizing territory wherever they went that could not be entered by a rival order. Dominicans found, when they came to both the Caribbean and New Spain, that the Franciscans had a tight hold on the best proselytizing territories.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the Fran-

<sup>8</sup> Kamen, *Inquisition and Society in Spain*, p. 105, reports that the “Concordia” was originally negotiated between the *moriscos* of Valencia and Inquisitor-General Alonso Manrique, in 1526, as he said, “since it would be impossible for them to shed all their customs at once,” and published in 1528. Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 74–78, also offers an interesting interpretation that posits that the Spanish legal tradition follows the Muslim legalistic strain in the Maliki school with regard to both conquest and religious conversions; both acts—submission to conquest and conversion—must be voluntary to be legal.

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Seed, “‘Are These Not Also Men?’: The Indians’ Humanity and Capacity for Spanish Civilisation,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23, no. 3 (October 1993): 629–652; and further developed in Patricia Seed, *American Pentimento: The Invention of Indians and the Pursuit of Riches* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> In his book *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 94–97, Anthony Pagden explains the Salamanca debates that were testing the same proposition in court and university circles in the 1530s and 1540s, that is, the Indians appeared to have reason and the capacity to achieve “a full state of actuality through moral education.” Pagden, p. 65, also noted that Zumárraga was acquainted with Fray Francisco de Vitoria, the philosopher at the heart of the Salamanca questions, and was most impressed with his arguments.

ciscans who came to New Spain were part of a reform order with a particularly zealous notion of their mission in the New World. The famous Twelve Franciscans who arrived in 1524 were from the provincial house of San Gabriel in Extremadura, which possessed an aesthetic and discipline that regarded the conversion of the indigenous peoples as a final millennial chapter to world Christianity and were especially jealous of their control of the New Spain mission.<sup>11</sup> In 1528, Charles V himself selected the first bishop of New Spain from the Franciscan convent of Abrojo, near Valladolid: Fray Juan de Zumárraga. Although they were joined by the first Dominicans in 1526 and Augustinians in 1532, the Franciscans retained significant advantages in numbers, influence, and leadership throughout the 1520s and 1530s.

Between 1531 and 1537, the generalized rivalry between Franciscans and Dominicans crystallized into an argument over the capacity of the Indians to convert to Christianity. Most Franciscan leaders argued that their work had been effective and that the Indians were fully capable of Christianization, though they acknowledged that indigenous conversion had proved a difficult road.<sup>12</sup> However, some Dominican friars, joined by almost the entire settler community, openly questioned the capacity of the Indians and the methods that the Franciscans employed. Most famously, Dominicans Fray Tomás de Ortíz and Fray Domingo de Betanzos made statements to the Spanish Council of the Indies that the “capacity” of the Indians was highly doubtful. They roundly criticized the Franciscans’ early missionizing efforts, which had led to massive baptisms of tens of thousands of Indians without the benefit of religious instruction.<sup>13</sup>

The anger of the capacity debate took on a life of its own and overwhelmed what might have been a more tolerant policy toward the Indians. Ironically, to prove their affectionate defense of the Indians (and the rationale for their own mission), the Franciscans gradually began to move in the 1530s toward a much tougher enforcement of religious life in the indigenous communities than they had in the early days. Between 1521 and 1525, Cortés had prohibited human sacrifice in the major population centers of the Mexico Valley, but, for security

<sup>11</sup> Linda Ann Curcio-Nagy, “Faith and Morals in Colonial Mexico,” in *The Oxford History of Mexico*, ed. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 152.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis Hanke, *The First Social Experiments in America: A Study in the Development of Spanish Indian Policy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. 19–20.

<sup>13</sup> Georges Baudot, *Utopia and History in Mexico: The First Chroniclers of Mexican Civilization, 1520–1569* (Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 1995), pp. 276–277.

reasons, he was unable and unwilling to risk prohibition of any other aspect of indigenous religious expression; by all accounts, the pagan temples were in full operation until 1525.<sup>14</sup> Beginning in 1525, the Franciscan Twelve began the drive to proselytize with a great show of baptisms in Texcoco, the second most powerful center of the old Aztec alliance. They continued to hold large baptismal events with very little religious instruction, especially of the adults, for the next five years. But from 1531, the Franciscans' detractors could still point to Indians with multiple wives, villages celebrating their pagan feasts each month, and what was perceived as multiple cases of backsliding everywhere in the Mexico Valley communities. The obvious recidivism of the Indians was generally blamed on the mass baptism practices of the Franciscans.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1530s, there were finally sufficient numbers of friars to enter into the major indigenous towns and to stay for the longer periods of time needed to discover paganism and deal with it. In 1532, Zumárraga ordered a series of *visitas*, or inspection visits, into the villages and towns of the Mexico Valley to check on the daily lives of Indians and enforce Christian living among the baptized.<sup>16</sup> For some years, the Franciscans had compelled the celebrated Indian chiefs to send their noble sons to Christian convents for education and training in Christianity. By the early 1530s, the Franciscans were placing these child-enforcers back into the villages to take over religious practice from their elders and, effectively, snitch on their families. Several of these children were killed by their relatives, who feared their spying and lack of familial loyalty.<sup>17</sup> Another very large and disruptive issue was the

<sup>14</sup> Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th–18th Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 16; Toribio de Benavente (Motolinía), *Historia de los indios de Nueva España* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1969), pp. 48–49, states, “but since each man had his own affairs to consider . . . , idolatry went on in spite of Cortés’s orders until the first day of the year 1525.”

<sup>15</sup> Fray Juan de Zumárraga, *Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga, primer obispo y arzobispo de México, studio biográfico y bibliográfico con un apéndice de documentos inéditos o raros*, ed. and comp. Joaquín García Icazbalceta (Mexico: Mario Andrade y Morales, 1949), 3:110–111, for the letter from the bishops to the Real Consejo on 30 November 1537 about the confusion and “*pasiones*” about this issue. See Joaquín García Icazbalceta, introduction to *ibid.*, 1:144, for García Icazbalceta’s opinion that the arrival of the other orders “elevated the question of baptism.” See also *ibid.*, 3:160–161, for the “Capítulos de 27 Abril 1539,” where the orders agreed to the conditions under which baptism could be provided to adults.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: document 5, “Order from Zumárraga, Mexico 1532.”

<sup>17</sup> Fray Pedro de Gante, *Cartas de Fr. Pedro de Gante, O.F.M., primer educador de América*, comp. Fidal de J. Chauvet (Mexico, 1947), p. 17, wrote to his fellow brothers in Flanders on 27 June 1529 that they were beginning to send their students into the villages to preach and destroy idols.

enforcement of monogamous marriage. In 1530, the Empress released a *cedula*, or royal order, requiring each Indian leader to choose one from among his many wives and concubines as his only legitimate wife and abandon the rest.<sup>18</sup> The Franciscans followed with a very public campaign of forced marriages and infliction of small punishments and floggings of leaders who defied the marital laws.<sup>19</sup>

As the difficult 1530s campaign to extirpate paganism evolved and while the dispute about indigenous capacity raged, the Inquisition entered New Spain. It did so in an especially disjointed manner. There was no branch of the Holy Office in New Spain; the crown had simply extended the authority of the Seville Holy Office to the New World. Seville, in turn, gave extraordinary powers of inquisition to the bishop of Santo Domingo in the Caribbean in 1519, which was called an Episcopal or Apostolic Inquisition. The bishop of Santo Domingo then gave inquisitorial powers to various friars who were passing through on the way to New Spain. In the 1520s, a few dozen Spanish settlers and four Indians were hauled in for ad hoc proceedings before these successive appointed inquisitors in New Spain; the usual charge was keeping concubines or swearing.<sup>20</sup>

After Zumárraga was appointed bishop of Mexico City in 1528, he became the presumptive Inquisitor Apostolico for the Mexico Valley. Zumárraga had himself been an inquisitor in Spain in 1528. Charles V personally requested that he handle a witch trial in his native Basque province of Vizcaya in early 1528.<sup>21</sup> Yet, between 1528 and 1535, it appears that Zumárraga made no effort to use his powers of Inquisition either against the Indians or the Spanish settlers in New Spain, and

<sup>18</sup> Woodrow Borah and Sherborne Cook, "Marriage and Legitimacy in Mexican Culture," *California Law Review* 54, no. 2 (1966): 955. Jerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana* (Mexico: Chávez Hayhoe, 1945), 1:181, maintains that the friars did not even begin to tackle this complex problem until 1529–1530, or after Zumárraga insisted on dealing with it. Archivo General de Indias, Mexico 2555, s.f., "Memorial del Obispo de Mexico al Rey, 1533," is a letter from Zumárraga asking that he be given amplification of his authority to deal with the marital affairs of the Indians.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523–1572*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 111, noted that in their meeting of 3 June 1534 the mendicants reported that their inability to surmount polygamy was their greatest problem.

<sup>20</sup> Greenleaf, *Zumárraga and the Mexican Inquisition*, pp. 7–13; J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "Martin Ocelotl: Clandestine Cult Leader," in *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America*, ed. David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> Fray Juan Ruiz de Larríaga, *Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga, Primer Obispo y Arzobispo de Mexico, Durangués, Franciscano y Servidor de la Patria al margen de su pontificado* (Bilbao, 1948), pp. 63–64.



Inquisition trials nearly came to a standstill.<sup>22</sup> At this early stage, Zumárraga did not seem to view the Inquisition as a necessary tool for the extirpation of heresy in the indigenous community. Rather, like Charles V, who had received many reports of the secret immigration of European Jews, New Christians, and Lutherans to the New World, Zumárraga regarded Inquisition in the New World a necessity for monitoring the settler community, not the Indians.<sup>23</sup> His hesitance reflected his judgment that a vigorous Inquisition of the rowdy and independent conqueror community, which still dominated the politics of New Spain, needed careful planning and strong support from the Vatican and Charles V, neither of which was completely in place until 1535.

Why then did the otherwise cautious Zumárraga use the Inquisition cudgel against the indigenous community in the mid 1530s? The evidence suggests a kind of rolling juggernaut in thinking. The capacity debate led to the rigorous moral campaign of the 1530s; the difficulties of the campaign, in turn, moved the friars to step up the level of religious violence they were willing to use. Throughout the 1530s, indigenous religiosity was more and more shifting into a moral frame where the bishop and the Spanish authorities were forced to treat them more like Jews than like Muslims with regard to the Inquisition. Zumárraga's fellow Franciscans, particularly the father provincial and leader of the Franciscan community in 1536, Fray Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo, appealed to the bishop to help them forward their campaign to enforce Christian living among the Indians by employing the powers of Inquisition; the bishop was not in a position or a frame of mind to refuse. Indeed, the Franciscans' influence and their mission imperative were very obvious in the prosecution of the second trial against the native sorcerer Martin Ocelotl, who had become a serious irritant to the friars in the city of Texcoco, the heart of the Franciscan territory.

#### FRIARS V. JAGUAR

The Nahuatl word "Ocelotl" means jaguar. The Spanish at first did not know what the new species of animal was and in their early Nahuatl dictionaries translated it as "tiger" or "lion." But the American jaguar was a particularly fierce member of the cat species and, in the pantheon of most Mesoamerican religions, it was the most powerful religious

<sup>22</sup> Greenleaf, *Zumárraga and the Mexican Inquisition*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

symbol, precisely because it personified fierce and stealthy characteristics. We do not know whether Ocelotl was given this name or whether he took it, but he certainly presented a stealthy, shadowing figure to the friars and the indigenous. None was more concerned about Ocelotl's reputation in the indigenous villages than Fray Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo. The anthropologist J. Jorge Klor de Alva said of Fray Antonio that he "marked" Ocelotl, and this seems like a very apt description for the way Ciudad Rodrigo orchestrated the charges against Martin.<sup>24</sup>

Most accounts of Fray Antonio's character agree with Sahagún's assessment that he was "very fervent in the conversion of souls."<sup>25</sup> Like the other twelve Franciscans who arrived in 1524, he was a reformed Franciscan, preferring to lead a life very much in imitation of Saint Francis, in poverty, humility, and austerity. Fray Antonio clearly took his oath very seriously. When first offered a bishopric, he turned it down (although later he became a bishop in Nueva Galicia).<sup>26</sup> One Christmas, Zumárraga sent a bottle of wine to each of the friars and Ciudad Rodrigo sent it back.<sup>27</sup> Fray Antonio spoke passionately against the enslavement of the Indians and, interestingly, he blamed the indigenous leaders as much as the Spaniards for the maltreatment of the common people.<sup>28</sup> The order had sent him back to Spain in 1528 to ask Charles V to relieve the Indians from *encomendero* work and to recruit more Franciscans to the mission. He was highly successful only on the second count and became a father figure to the second wave of twenty Franciscans who came to New Spain in 1529. Unlike some of the earliest Franciscans, Fray Antonio was not very well educated.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, in late 1536, he was made the second provincial of the Franciscan order in New Spain. In this role, he pressed very hard for more missions, sending five missionaries to northern New Spain and five more in 1538 to the South Pacific, both very dangerous assignments of the time.<sup>30</sup> Fray Antonio was not one for making excuses for himself or accepting them in others.

Before he became provincial in 1536, he had spent most of the pre-

<sup>24</sup> See Klor de Alva, "Martin Ocelotl," in n. 20.

<sup>25</sup> José María Póu y Martí, "El libro perdido de las pláticas o coloquios de los doce primeros misioneros de Mexico," *Miscellaneous Francesca Ehrte* 3 (1924): 304.

<sup>26</sup> Antonio Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza: El franciscanismo de la Edad Media a la evangelización novohispana* (Mexico: UNAM, 1996), p. 137.

<sup>27</sup> Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiastica Indiana*, 2:160.

<sup>28</sup> Zumárraga also belied a lot of anger at the indigenous leaders, especially with regard to their taking multiple wives and especially very young girls; see Zumárraga, *Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga*, 4:61.

<sup>29</sup> Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, pp. 147, 164, 174.

<sup>30</sup> Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiastica Indiana*, 2:31.

vious five years leading the convent and mission in Texcoco, where he became acquainted with Martin Ocelotl. In 1533, as part of the crack-down on polygamy, Ciudad Rodrigo compelled Martin to marry one of his wives. But the friar went a little further, which indicated his wariness about Martin's influence within the community. He made Martin announce himself publicly to be against bigamy and declare "to the entire village" in Texcoco that he had given up his old ways. A couple of years later, however, Fray Antonio suspected that Martin was simply ignoring his marriage vows and he summoned him for counseling. Apparently, this time Martin did not simply assent and comply. He disputed playfully with the saintly friar. Ciudad Rodrigo said that Martin gave him responses that were intended to "befuddle" him. Martin spoke very "wittily," said Fray Antonio, "like a theologian."<sup>31</sup> Amazingly, the sorcerer was emboldened enough by that point to argue theology with the legendary friar.

To add to this, several other instances of Martin's impertinent conduct had come to Fray Antonio's attention in the months before his trial. Zumárraga's opening statement at trial suggested the influence of Ciudad Rodrigo's and other Franciscans' opinions. When Zumárraga announced the accusation on 21 November 1536, the record stated: "a notice has come to his [the bishop's] attention" that Martin was making predictions and bewitching people, dogmatizing, turning himself into an animal, claiming that he was immortal, and "had made and said many other things that were contrary to our sainted faith and a great danger and impediment to the conversion of the natives."<sup>32</sup> The "many other things" were based on a troika of Spanish accusations against Martin. The first was made by a woman named Catalina Lopez, who breathlessly repeated the story of a near encounter she had with Martin. It was well known that a few months before the trial a prominent indigenous leader, Don Pablo Xochiquentzin of Mexico City, had died in his home. Don Pablo was not of the royal family of Tenochtitlán; however, he was the last of a series of three Aztec nobles whom the Spanish appointed to rule in Mexico City after the deaths of Moctezuma and his nephew Cuauhtémoc. Don Pablo had been *zancalpíxcapilli*, a nobleman and head of noble clans in Mexico City before the Conquest, and could have been appointed only if the Spanish had great confidence in his collaboration with them.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> For Fray Antonio's full account, see "Procesos," p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Gibson, *Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519–1810* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 168–169.

Catalina testified that she had visited Don Pablo's house several times during his illness with *beatas*, spiritual women, from the convent of Saint Isabel in Mexico City. In one visit, she recounted indignantly, she was refused entrance, because, as she later learned, Martin Ocelotl was inside ministering to Don Pablo and that he had told Don Pablo's guards to keep the *beata* and Catalina out. Two servants of Don Pablo's house told Catalina that Martin had proclaimed that if Don Pablo survived to the fifth day of his illness "that he will never die." Others said that Martin had also ordered Don Pablo to give him green stones and Martin rubbed the stones on Don Pablo's back and his belly to help cure him. Catalina reported that this was not the only time that Martin had been with Don Pablo in the last months of his life.<sup>34</sup> In effect, Catalina's testimony presented the possibility that the most prominent leader in the Mexico Valley had died in the pagan faith and under the influence of the stealthy jaguar.

Cristóbal Cisneros, the *encomendero* of Texcoco, gave alarming testimony about Martin's probable communion with the devil. He told the bishop at trial that he was concerned about reports he had heard from both Indians and Franciscans that Martin was a "perverse evil person against our faith." He reported that he himself had seen Martin going down to Lake Texcoco to pray to pagan gods. In order to catch Martin in the act of sorcery, Cisneros secretly planted a piece of gold on one of his own women servants. He then summoned Martin to his home and asked him to tell him which one of his servants had stolen the gold. When Martin singled out the correct woman, Cisneros was convinced that the sorcerer was actually communing with the devil. He told Martin that he had "made a statement against him to the *señores presidentes* and the *oidores*," referring to the Audiencia, the legislative and judicial chamber that ministered the laws of the colony. Another Spaniard, Pedro de Meneses, a settler in the local village, also reflected the growing belief of local Spaniards in Martin's satanic powers. He told the bishop that the indigenous villagers were in awe of Martin and that once Martin accurately repeated to Meneses what the Spaniard had said to an indigenous leader, even though the two of them were out of Martin's hearing when they had the conversation.<sup>35</sup>

When Fray Antonio combined his own experience of Martin's brazenness with these Spanish accounts, he concluded that Martin was, by the friar's own words at the trial, "too malicious and astute" to

<sup>34</sup> "Procesos," p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29–31.

tolerate anymore.<sup>36</sup> When the bishop began the inquisition saying that Martin was “a great danger and impediment to the conversion of the natives,” he was paraphrasing charges Ciudad Rodrigo made in the trial and no doubt made to the bishop in order to persuade him to use the Inquisition against Martin. In his testimony, Ciudad Rodrigo openly prescribed the preferred sentence of the trial, that Martin was “a danger to the natives because he has the *mana* of a dogmatizer and it would be a service to God that the natives not hear or see him.” He assured the bishop that Fray Pedro de Gante, “a person who has a great deal of intelligence of the Indians and knows the said Martin very well,” was in agreement with this opinion.<sup>37</sup> Obviously, they were referring to banishment, Martin’s ultimate sentence, and a pretty good indication, if one is necessary, that the sorcerer’s trial was indeed a show trial.

But the Martin influence was not over. In the course of collecting evidence of Martin’s sorcery, the bishop, the father provincial, and the Inquisition officers not only uncovered what seemed to them a network of pagan activities between Martin and the local nobility, they also discovered that he was an extremely wealthy man. Inquisition officers kept uncovering houses, properties, jewels, clothing, deer skins, large cargoes of cotton, blankets, pottery, furniture, gold, silver, wood, and untold other objects as well as slaves. Every time they questioned someone, some new valuable emerged. The last fifteen pages of Martin’s trial manuscript were filled with the tale of the slow but steady confiscation of more and more worldly goods.<sup>38</sup> They assumed that his wealth was in payment for his pagan medical practice and his predictions. Moreover, as they untangled his embarrassment of riches (an embarrassment at least to them), they learned that he was heavily involved in commerce with most of the major indigenous leaders of the valley who had been regarded as reliably Christian, not just the late Don Pablo. The reaction of the friars was further inquiries, and they began to take the recidivism risk even more seriously. Following Ocelotl’s trial, the bishops of Mexico, Oaxaca, and Guatemala were begging the king throughout 1537 to allow them “to take extremely rigorous measures against idolatry,” a problem which they now proclaimed, without shame, was “rampant.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 36–51.

<sup>39</sup> Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, p. 269, from a letter of the bishops dated 30 November 1537.

## THE SELF-STYLED PRIEST

Martin Ocelotl's persecution, however, raises some questions about the indigenous side of this story. Who was Ocelotl? What was he trying to do? Did he actually pose a threat to the Franciscan mission? Previous historians who have analyzed the Ocelotl case have disagreed, suggesting alternately that he was an important Aztec high priest or that he was a wandering shaman, a pagan stalwart, or a synchronizer of religious philosophy, a serious threat or a minor character. These interpretations, however, have varied widely because they are not based on a very close reading of the trial transcript.<sup>40</sup> Such a reading leads to conclusions that Ocelotl was something of a self-styled and self-proclaimed priest spreading an innovative philosophy that was potentially much more dangerous to the Christian mission than even the friars realized in 1536 when they tried him.

The testimony given at Ocelotl's trial indicates that he did not fit into the mold of the pre-Hispanic priesthood but was more of a local shaman. And it is unclear whether he began his religious practices before or after the Conquest. Virtually no one at this trial could vouch for his origins. Ocelotl had moved into the Texcoco area on the eastern Mexico Valley sometime after the Conquest. Each person who testified about his previous life could only cite Ocelotl as the source for his or her knowledge. Ocelotl's servant claimed that Ocelotl's mother was a witch named Eytacli, insisting that she was "even more powerful than the son." The mother continued to live near Puebla, the servant proclaimed, which was where Ocelotl was from. His father had been a merchant, and Ocelotl was clearly knowledgeable and proficient at trade in the colonial indigenous economy.<sup>41</sup> Testimonies of indigenous leaders said that, in his former home of Chinantla, near Puebla, he was a very important priest in the pre-Hispanic period. In fact, he was one of nine priests that the *tlatoani*, or leader, of Chinantla had sent to Emperor Moctezuma a full ten years before the Conquest, and it was said that he had informed the great Aztec leader that strangers with beards were coming and that they would defeat the Aztecs in battle and

<sup>40</sup> Besides Klor de Alva, the other authors are Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican Consciousness, 1531-1813*, trans. Benjamin Keen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 20-23; and Serge Gruzinski, "Andres Mixcoatl—1537," chap. 1 in *Man-Gods in the Mexican Highlands: Indian Power and Colonial Society, 1520-1800*, trans. Eileen Corrigan (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989).

<sup>41</sup> "Procesos," p. 47.

destroy Aztec civilization. Moctezuma was supposedly angry enough at this prediction to put all of them in jail. The other priests died, but Ocelotl managed to survive and got out of Tenochtitlán sometime during the siege of the city.<sup>42</sup>

But the source for all of these stories was again Ocelotl himself. And it begs the question, if Ocelotl had been a prominent religious leader before the Conquest in Chinantla, which was some way from Texcoco, on the other side of the high sierras, why did he not stay there in his community and in the place where he had reputation in order to ply his religious practices and continue his trade? If his family was still there, why did he leave them? It seemed rather strange that, if he was a prominent Aztec priest and from a prominent family near Puebla, he would start all over again in an entirely different community. As for his Moctezuma claims, post-Conquest lore was filled with such apocryphal stories. To the Mexican mind, no event was random, and every catastrophe had an omen. Indeed, in the twelfth book of the *Florentine Codex*, in which Sahagún interviewed a number of old men in the 1560s about the Conquest, the first chapter was titled, "Here are told the signs which appeared and were seen, when the Spaniards had not yet come here to this land, when they were not yet known to the natives here." Indeed, eight omens of the Conquest were listed. The only evidence in the *Codex* that even remotely supports Ocelotl's story of holy people being summoned to Moctezuma was the seventh, where the emperor had had a strange dream and "summoned the soothsayers and the sages" from around the Mexico Valley to interpret the dream, which they were unable to do.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, none of the identified omens in the *Codex* said anything about a prediction of men with beards coming to destroy the Aztecs. Again, witnesses identified Ocelotl as the only source for the truth of this event.

The story about Moctezuma summoning "soothsayers and sages" from beyond his own priesthood, however, does suggest the rather fluid understanding of pagan religious authority that existed in the pre- and post-Hispanic period, which Ocelotl may have been using to his advantage. At the highest end of the priesthood were the temple priests of powerful political gods, such as Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilopochli. The high priests did not marry and lived in separate all-male compounds; the conquerors' accounts routinely accused them of homosexuality.

<sup>42</sup> Ocelotl confirmed this part of the story for the bishop in *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, 12 vols., trans. and ed. Arthur O. Anderson and Charles Dibble (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952–1980), 12:1–3.

Among their most important duties were human sacrifice and maintenance of the temple complexes. However, it is also apparent that the Aztec priesthood had not, at the point of the Conquest, been able to or had not attempted to take over exclusive disciplinary rights to the worship of the gods. Local communities had self-proclaimed soothsayers or shamans, whom Moctezuma himself often consulted; women were prominent in this group. They could become locally famous for weather and crop predictions or providing medical care. In short, the arts of worship were decentralized in Aztec society.<sup>44</sup>

With the Conquest, the high political superstructure of Aztec society was defeated. Cortés immediately prohibited human sacrifices, one of the high priesthood's most important religious responsibilities. Between 1525 and 1530, the friars were destroying the temples and all evidence of visible pagan worship as they found it. The political and financial power of the Indian chiefs and nobles who supported the all-male priesthoods was eroding. With these rapid and wrenching changes to the superstructure of Aztec society, the whole discipline of the high priesthoods crumbled. Small local cults and individual priests survived, and there was evidence that they continued to ply their trade on an individual basis. With political defeat, the cult of the war gods was set aside, and paganism returned to older, more agriculturally based religious observances, predicated on the monthly and seasonal festivals, which the individual priests could regulate. But, in the proselytizing campaigns of the early 1530s, the bishop and the friars made an all-out assault on these smaller enclaves and truly drove paganism underground.

For their local worship, colonial indigenous people had to depend more on a loose network of rather mobile shamans who had operated in the past and probably continued into the present. But how did a shaman get himself established? There is considerable evidence in the trial transcript of how Ocelotl was doing this. He very likely created his own past of magical and shamanistic powers in a community where he was unknown. More importantly, however, he was trying to build his reputation for prophecy among the indigenous nobility. With some nobles it seemed to work. Don Juan of Acatepeque exclaimed to Pedro de Meneses, an *encomendero*, "You don't know him? He is a man who has lived a long time and knows a great number of the lords of Mexico and in all the land they obey him and give him what he asks for and he in turn gives to other people. . . . He has spoken of things not

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:3.



seen or heard. All the land holds him in esteem and there isn't much that we say that he does not know."<sup>45</sup> The notion that all the land held Ocelotl in esteem, however, was not exactly the case in 1536 when he was arrested, though Ocelotl was clearly trying to earn this exalted reputation.

Indeed, his reception in the indigenous community was still highly ambiguous. He consistently pressed indigenous leaders and their servants to accept his predictions, in effect marketing his powers to the community. For example, he asked one indigenous leader, Don Juan of Tecamachalco, to send to him one hundred packages of natural color powders, a very expensive product in the colonial period. When Don Juan's servant, Miquan, arrived with the goods, Ocelotl told Miquan, "Go to Don Juan and tell him that I keep these colors that he has sent me as a gift and tell him that he can plant a lot of corn and put in a lot of magueys, because hunger will begin soon and he must do it."<sup>46</sup> The odd thing about this transaction was that, in effect, Ocelotl was dictating the terms of exchange in such a way that the leader was indebted to him. With Don Gonzalo of Cachula, Ocelotl had arranged an exchange of a cedar log for deer skins. When the servants arrived with the log, however, he kept them at his home for three days, feeding and entertaining them. Then he sent them on their journey back, saying "Tell your Señor Gonzalo that he is to plant much corn and magueys because for the next four years there will be a lot of hunger."<sup>47</sup> Same prediction, but in this case, it seemed that Ocelotl was trying to ingratiate himself with Don Gonzalo but could not go as far as dictating the relationship.

Apparently, there were other lords in the community who were less inclined to accept Ocelotl as a priest or shaman. On one occasion, he detained a servant of an indigenous noble, Don Luis of Tepeaca, who had refused an invitation that Ocelotl had extended to him. Five months later, Ocelotl cornered two of Don Luis's servants and took them to the basement of a home he had between Coatepeque and Istapalucan, towns south of Texcoco. He told the two very nervous fellows, "I have sent to all the *caciques* and all the lords of this region that they should plant many fruit trees and magueys and tunales and cereals and other fruits in their lands because there is going to be no rain and there will be much hunger and with these things they can maintain themselves, because the corn will not grow." He gave them sev-

<sup>45</sup> "Procesos," pp. 30–31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

eral gifts that they were to take to Don Luis, which he said came from “our lord Camastecle.”<sup>48</sup> Camastecle was the pre-Hispanic god of rain in the Puebla region of Mexico and generally accepted among the indigenous people as the same entity as the rain god of the Mexico Valley, who was called Mixcoatl. Again, working through the servants, he was trying to oblige the nobles to him with his predictions and his gifts. To servants of another lord of the village of Tecalco who was also keeping his distance from Ocelotl, Ocelotl complained about the reluctance of the lord. “Ask your lord why he has gotten on badly with me that he does not want to obey me nor do one thing that I sent for him to do.”<sup>49</sup> In the course of the trial, it was revealed by two separate sources that Ocelotl had had problems with some of the Christianized indigenous nobility in Texcoco and that at some point he left Texcoco, “very angry at them,” and changed his residence to Guaxtepec, a short distance away.<sup>50</sup> The Texcocans claimed to the bishop that they drove him out of Texcoco.<sup>51</sup> Clearly, Ocelotl was still trying to build a reputation in the valley and was perhaps working out a rhetorical strategy to try to appeal to these powerful nobles.

#### THE PAGAN ALTERNATIVE

Inventing a past and ingratiating himself with the indigenous nobles to win them over, however, were not the only elements of the Ocelotl strategy. He also began to present himself as the mystical pagan alternative to the friars. He ascribed godlike powers to himself, he made predictions that elided Christianity and paganism, and he directly presented himself as a center of alternative thinking to Catholicism. Witness after witness testified that he encouraged them to come seek him out: “When those of the village want something, they should come to his house because many of that region had left there satisfied and everything that they want to know and everything that they are to do will be explained to them.”<sup>52</sup>

Ocelotl tried to enhance his predictions by spreading the illusion that he was associated with the gods of water. His claim to be Camas-

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19; Camastecle was a local patron god of the Puebla and Tlaxcala region and his equivalent in the Mexica pantheon was Mixcoatl.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

tecle's messenger was one example. Also, his name, jaguar, appealed to some of the deepest sensibilities of the Mesoamericans in the pantheon of water fertility. The jaguar shared with the snake the most powerful connotations of supernatural power over water. Jaguars lived in lairs in caves in the mountains from which the water came, while snakes lived in the ground from where the natural springs arose. Therefore, they were both central to the connection between survival and the supernatural. Sculptural representations and early paintings of Aztec gods often contained the snake eyes and jaguar claws that connoted the power of these animal symbols. Tlaloc, the rain god and one of the oldest gods of the pantheon, as well as the most central god to the Texcocoan urban pantheon, embodied both jaguar and snake features in most early descriptions.<sup>53</sup>

Ocelotl the jaguar played with the idea of himself as a personification of supernatural powers. On one occasion, he told visitors to his home that they should go home soon because "my sisters are coming," by which he meant the clouds that would bring the rain.<sup>54</sup> A number of witnesses claimed that he had told them that he was one hundred years old but made himself look young and that he could turn himself into a lion, a tiger, or a dog at will.<sup>55</sup> He told people outside Texcoco that when the village tried to attack him, he turned himself into little pieces and then reappeared in the whole on the side, laughing at them.<sup>56</sup> On another occasion, he claimed that in the incident where Moctezuma had imprisoned him that he, Ocelotl, had challenged the great leader and told Moctezuma that "he did not fear him nor would he give anything to him, because, though he would kill [Ocelotl] and tear him into pieces, he would not die nor could he die." Moctezuma then ordered him killed, according to Ocelotl, and his bones ground up, but Ocelotl "rose up as before, healthy and well before the said Moctezuma."<sup>57</sup>

As Jacques Lafaye argued in *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe*, one can hardly help noting the Christian and millenarian trope of resurrection and eternal life in Ocelotl's stories.<sup>58</sup> And, indeed, Ocelotl had plenty

<sup>53</sup> Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, "The Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlán: History and Interpretation," in *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlán*, trans. John Copeland, ed. Johanna Bröda, David Carrasco, and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 15–60.

<sup>54</sup> "Procesos," p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe*, p. 21.

of access to the Christian teaching from which he seemed to be liberally borrowing. He was not a person marginal to Christian or Hispanic culture. By his own account, Ocelotl had been baptized around the year 1525. The Franciscans had compelled him to marry one of his several wives in 1533. He was “*tan ladino*,” according to one witness, meaning he spoke Spanish very well. Other witnesses claimed that he got along well with the Spanish. Ocelotl showed no fear in meeting prominent Spaniards and was quite hospitable and friendly, offering to do business with them.<sup>59</sup> In fact, he had all the certitude of a man who believed his knowledge of both worlds would allow him to manipulate the inhabitants of each. He used his knowledge of Christianity to undermine the Franciscans, and his confidence overflowed. Witnesses said that when the Franciscans would enter a village to proselytize, Ocelotl would wave the Indians in the village on, saying, “Go, go, I will come later,” meaning he could undo at his will any proselytizing the Franciscans had done.<sup>60</sup>

At one meeting, he told servants of a local lord to tell him that “recently two apostles, sent by God, had arrived, with great fangs and other frightful things, and [they said that] the missionaries would become *chichimicli*,” which was translated in the transcript as “a very ugly demon.”<sup>61</sup> Actually, the trial scribe incorrectly wrote the name for *tzitzimime*, which the *Florentine Codex* translates as “demons of darkness [who] will come down; they will eat men.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, Ocelotl was attempting to spread a kind of terror among the commoners toward the friars. On the other hand, he was a kind of opposing force of succor and support for the indigenous people. The apostles, who came to warn of the hidden evil in the friars, possessed fangs, personifying them as allies with the jaguar and, therefore, allies with Ocelotl. In effect, Ocelotl put God and the apostles on his side and against the Franciscans. An even more subversive set of ideas that Ocelotl preached was his philosophy of living. In a fiesta he held in a subterranean room of his home in Guaxtepec, he invited a number of servants of a prominent noble-

<sup>59</sup> “Procesos,” pp. 21, 25, 31.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Sahagún, *General History*, 8:2; Gruzinski, “Mixcoatl,” pp. 41–42, correctly speculated that the *tzitzimime* were associated with dreaded goddess figures in pre-Columbian ideology and even “latent fear of the mother”; see also Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 45, for a similar interpretation. For a more detailed analysis of the feminine characteristics of the *tzitzimime*, as well as a clear connection to the god Mixcoatl in Tlaxcala and Puebla, see Cecelia F. Klein, “The Devil and the Skirt: An Iconographic Inquiry into the Prehispanic Nature of the *Tzitzimime*,” *Ancient Mesoamerica* 11 (2000): 1–26.

man. He told the servants to go back to their lord and tell him, "Do you think that you will always be in this law of the Christians? Don't you know that we are born to die and that after we die, we will not have pleasure or rejoicing? Well, why not enjoy ourselves while we live and take pleasure in eating and drinking and enjoying ourselves and sleeping with the wives of our neighbors and take their goods and what they have and give ourselves a good life? We really do not live for anything else."<sup>63</sup>

This bit of Epicurean advice has been the subject of a minor debate among historians. Serge Gruzinski maintains that the philosophical underpinnings of this statement are in pre-Hispanic elite morality. He claims that we have a "prudish" and false picture of pre-Hispanic religion and moral philosophy because it is wholly based on accounts that Sahagún collected in the *Florentine Codex*. Looking back, nostalgically, the elders who provided Sahagún with his information wove an overly rigorous and aesthetic vision of elite conduct and practice.<sup>64</sup> Louise M. Burkhart, however, argues that what Ocelotl was advocating was inconsistent with native ideology, as we know from many sources, and that he was actually making an "argument against Christianity, not simply an assertion of Nahua ideology."<sup>65</sup> Apostles from God predicting a dismal fate for missionaries and Epicurean philosophies did not have a foundation in indigenous moral principles. As Burkhart explains, laying with your neighbors' wives was entirely contradictory of Texcocan law and most Mesoamerican codes, which would have punished adultery with death for both man and woman. The unorthodox philosophy, however, had a rebellious appeal that many nobles were ready to hear after years of Franciscan interference into their daily lives in the 1530s moral campaigns. It was a masculine assertion of their prerogatives and values, particularly on the issue of polygamy, and in opposition to the austere moral restrictions of the Franciscans.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>64</sup> Gruzinski, "Mixcoatl," p. 42.

<sup>65</sup> Louise M. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), p. 140.

<sup>66</sup> The pattern of anti-Franciscan and anti-monogamy attitudes occurs over and over in the early colonial period. In the Mixton War of 1541–1543 in the western state of Jalisco, pagan priests told Indians that those who fought the Spanish "will become young again and have several wives, not merely one, as the monks order. . . . Whoever takes only one wife will be killed," see Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, p. 265 for the reference. In New Mexico, according to Ramon Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1800* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 76–77, "the friars control of marriage and their imposition of

On the whole we must conclude that Ocelotl was styling himself as a political prophet with ideas that had resonance in the discontented indigenous noble community. The friars probably did not understand the full implications of what was said and revealed at the trial as a potentially dangerous pagan alternative. However, it is likely that they suspected something was amiss when, in the aftermath of the trial, they unraveled Ocelotl's network of contacts and wealth. Suspicions were very likely reinforced when two subsequent trials made the millennial potential of his case more clear. The following year, another self-made prophet named Andrés Mixcoatl (note his open adoption of the rain god persona that Ocelotl had used) came forward and identified himself as the brother of Ocelotl, suggesting that Ocelotl did not die and would return.<sup>67</sup> He made quite an impression in the sierras above Texcoco before the Franciscans brought him to the Inquisition in 1538. In 1539, the famed Texcocan chief Don Carlos was charged with idolatry and burned at the stake. In his trial it was revealed that he began to turn away from the Franciscans and Christianity right after Ocelotl's trial, and he repeated many of the ideas of Ocelotl, as he encouraged his fellow nobles in the spring of 1539 to ignore the Franciscans and their religious rules.<sup>68</sup>

## EPILOGUE

In her book *Ambivalent Conquests*, Inge Clendinnen interpreted a later, more notorious inquisition of native leaders led by the Franciscan and bishop of Yucatan, Fray Diego de Landa, in the 1560s. In a brief, intense, and particularly violent inquisition, Landa and his Franciscans persecuted and executed scores of Indians and flogged and severely punished dozens more in an escalating holocaust of the Christianized Mayan villages of the Yucatan. She suggests that the violence of the friars was closely related to the fact that the idolatry they discovered was precisely in the villages that were the centers of their previous proselytizing successes. Moreover, "in the very violence of the

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monogamy were the tyrannies that most angered Pueblo men and became the most pervasive reasons for revolt."

<sup>67</sup> "Procesos," pp. 53–78; see also Gruzinski, "Mixcoatl."

<sup>68</sup> See Gruzinski, "Mixcoatl;" also see Patricia Lopes Don, "Death of an Aztec: The Inquisition of the Native Leader Don Carlos of Texcoco in Early Mexico, 1539," unpublished paper presented to the International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500–1800, August 2004, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

response of the Yucatan friars to the first discovery of the 'treachery' of their Indians, we can see something of the emotion-charged punitive rage of the betrayed parent."<sup>69</sup> Zumárraga's inquisition had less of the emotion-charged atmosphere of the later holocaust, and Zumárraga and Ciudad Rodrigo, even in their pursuit of idolatry, showed much more restraint than Landa.

Nevertheless, there were clear signs of a building anger among the Franciscans, and even rage, in the course of Zumárraga's Indian Inquisition, especially toward the indigenous leaders. One can hear the tone of "parental" frustration and "betrayal" in the letter of another prominent friar, Fray Andrés de Olmos, to Zumárraga in January 1540. The much beloved Fray Andrés was in the midst of trying the chief of Matlatlan for idolatry and bigamy when he learned about the burning of Don Carlos of Texcoco a month earlier and sent his good friend Zumárraga words of encouragement.

I would hope that they [the Indians] are Christians, but the way it is right now, baptism is at risk. It isn't surprising, because over there [in the Mexico Valley] where the preaching has been abundant for so many years, you find, well, what you find [referring to the numerous cases of recidivism]. It is not merciful to ignore the public wrongs that they do, because they are devaluing the teaching and the baptism that they have received, which pains me to the soul. It seems to me that they shower us with compliments and yet I have not known three nobles who have voluntarily come to the religion and remained faithful to it. [By accepting baptism but not remaining faithful] it is always May for them and there is no winter. The trees, however, will not turn by themselves and if they do not experience the seasons [meaning winter] no fruit will be born. It is always May, yet there has to be a winter and punishments for the things they have committed against their baptisms, even if they have to be put into the fire, as your Excellency is beginning to do.<sup>70</sup>

The last phrase is highly significant because it suggests that an opinion was forming in the circle of friars around the bishop that more indigenous leaders would have to follow Don Carlos onto the pyre in order for the Franciscans to turn the tide against paganism. Surely, this was why Don Carlos, whose crimes were really less than those of Ocelotl and Mixcoatl, was burned at the stake instead of banished or impris-

<sup>69</sup> Inge Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 113.

<sup>70</sup> "Procesos," p. 207.

oned. A holocaust was most probably at hand in the spring of 1540. However, when the Council of the Indies in Spain learned of Don Carlos's execution, they reprimanded Zumárraga, sent a *visitador*, an inspector-auditor, to New Spain to take away the bishop's inquisitorial powers, and left him in a state of some humiliation until his death in 1548. All indications were that they feared further such executions would lead to widespread indigenous rebellion in New Spain. As was the case with the Muslims in the Old World, although orthodox Christianity was central to the concept of Spain and the monarchy, when the imperial Spanish needed to choose between religious orthodoxy and the security of the state, they could learn very quickly to be flexible and *politique*, yet express their concerns in judicious language. In a letter of 22 November 1540, Francisco de Nava, bishop of Seville, explained to Zumárraga that while he understood that he had executed Don Carlos "in the belief that burning would put fear into others and make an example of him," the Indians, he suggested, "might be more persuaded with love than with rigor."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Fray Juan de Zumárraga, *Nuevos documentos inéditos de d. fr. Juan de Zumárraga y cédulas y cartas reales en relación con su gobierno*, ed. Alberto María Carreño (Mexico: Ediciones Victoria, 1942), p. 81.