The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico. David Tavárez. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-8047-7328-7

It is an understatement to argue that the indigenous societies of the New World differed from the societies that existed in Europe during the pre-contact period. In turn, academics use a variety of innovative methods and theories to increase the twenty-first century reader's understanding of the social and cultural confusion that resulted from contact between European and indigenous societies during the colonial period. In his book, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico*, David Tavárez, an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the Anthropology Department at Vassar College, draws on his expertise as an ethnohistorian and linguistic anthropologist to investigate the constantly changing religious landscape that existed in Central Mexico during the colonial period. More specifically, Tavárez's work focuses on the dioceses of Mexico and Oaxaca, and the institutionalized Spanish attacks on indigenous beliefs that occurred in these regions, as well as the various ways the indigenous peoples of Central Mexico responded to these attacks during the time period under discussion.

Tavárez's work centers on three closely related, contentious questions: "Did idolatry even exist? Should colonial idolatry be understood primarily as an expedient creation that merely advanced institutional interests and ecclesiastical career goals and fed on local enmities? Can we understand how native defendants thought about their ritual practices and about orthodox Christianity?" (p.3). Tavárez answers these questions by using sources he gathered from twenty-nine different archival depositories, in both North America and Europe, during approximately ten years of research. Consulting Nahua and Zapotec sources that bring to light clandestine forms of indigenous worship, as well as European sources from both civil and ecclesiastical court cases, allows Tavárez to present a postcolonial, transnational narrative that forces the reader to reconceptualise his/her previous understanding of the study of religion during the colonial period.

Tavárez sets out to fill the void in the historiography surrounding the study of religion in Central Mexico during the colonial period. He has divided his work into nine chronologically based and thematically ordered chapters, which are organized to reflect his, "periodization and conceptual scheme for idolatry eradication in Central Mexico" (p. 24). Chapter 1, "Rethinking Indigenous Devotions in Central Mexico," serves as the work's introduction and educates the reader about the role that idolatry played in Central Mexico during the colonial period. Although the chapter is informative, and allows the reader to increase his/her understanding of the structure of the work, Tavárez attempts to include far too much information in this chapter, which in turn, convolutes the purpose of an opening chapter in an academic work. Tavárez's work would have been better served if the author chose to divide this introductory chapter into two separate chapters, rather than attempting to encompass theoretical foundations, the structure of the work, research methods, a broad historiography, background information, and historical characters within a single chapter. Dividing his opening chapter into two separate chapters, one that provided the reader with a narrative that included background information on the topic under discussion, as well as a broadly based historiography; and another that included the author's

theoretical foundations, the structure of his work, and his methods, would have allowed Tavárez to present a much stronger introduction to the reader.

Employing a model that uses the collective and electives spheres to represent the two domains indigenous peoples used to socially reproduce their religious practices, the remaining eight chapters of Tavárez's work are divided into four periods that characterize the Spanish attempts to eliminate indigenous idolatry practices in Central Mexico.

Chapter 2 examines the period from 1521 to 1571, prior to the establishment of the Inquisition's Holy Offices in Mexico City and Lima. Specifically, the chapter focuses on Bishop Zumárrage's public execution of indigenous noblemen as a sign of Spanish and Catholic dominance over the native peoples of the region, as well as the disciplinary policies that were employed by members of the Dominican order in Oaxaca.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine the period from 1571 to the 1660s, as the jurisdiction over Spain's indigenous peoples transferred from the Inquisition to secular clergymen who were determined to eliminate indigenous heterodoxy in Central Mexico. Chapters 3 and 4 examine how secular clergymen, reinforced by the Counter-Reformation that was occurring in Europe, shifted away from attacking indigenous leaders for their perceived indiscretions toward Catholicism, and began attacking indigenous commoners. Also situated within this time period, Chapter 5 investigates how indigenous specialists were able to use their acquired knowledge of European literary practices to secretly circulate outlawed "ritual and devotional texts" in both Nahuatl and Zapotec (p. 25). More than in any other portion of his work, Tavárez's impressively extensive research is apparent in these three chapters. Although additional background information on the historical figures included in these chapters would increase the accessibility of the work to a larger audience, his focus on Ponce de León, Bishop Bohórquez, Diego Luis, as well as several others, allows the reader to make a closer connection with the historical topic under discussion.

The next two chapters of the work focus on a third cycle of eradication that began in the 1660s and concluded in the 1720s. During this period, Mexico and Oaxaca experienced what Tavárez refers to as "the most ambitious eradication effort ever conducted in New Spain," which eventually led to a prison for idolaters in Oaxaca. Continuing his efforts to analyze both the colonizers and the colonized throughout his work, Tavárez also examines indigenous responses to attacks on both their bodies and their minds as Northern Zapotecans continued to employ clandestine practices of worship.

The final two chapters of the work present the final extirpatory cycle that took place in Central Mexico, as well as a summary and conclusion of the work. Chapter 8 discusses the period from the 1720s to the end of the colonial period in the early nineteenth century. More specifically, the chapter details the end of the prison of idolaters in Oaxaca, as well as how increased factionalism affected ecclesiastic and civil projects. At the same time, in Mexico, accusations of sorcery increased and the approach to ecclesiastical juridical procedures became more formalized. The conclusion of Tavárez's work summarizes the author's thoughts and arguments in an organized and concise fashion. It also, like any useful work, encourages future academics to continue where Tavárez's work concludes. More specifically, Tavárez believes that clandestine intellectual spheres existed not only in Mexico and Oaxaca but throughout other communities in

Central Mexico. He encourages future academics to make connections with these historical actors and communities that "barely missed total obliteration" (p. 282), in turn making the invisible, visible again.

Advanced scholars in the fields of ethnohistory, indigenous studies, linguistic anthropology, postcolonial studies, religious studies, and transnational studies will find that Tavárez's work is a worthwhile addition to their personal libraries. Tavárez's innovative and extensive research is evident throughout the work. His methods and theories, which allow the reader to gain a better understanding of how both the colonizers and the colonized saw the other, are impressive. His focus on the indigenous communities within the dioceses of Mexico and Oaxaca, throughout the entire colonial period, emphasizes that the colonizers and the colonized did not have stagnate religious thoughts and practices, but rather, that individuals continued to alter their practices and beliefs to suit themselves within colonial society. With all of this being stated, Tavárez's work is not well suited for an undergraduate classroom due to the fact that Tavárez assumes the reader has a high level of understanding regarding Spain's imperial policies in the New World, as well as the role that the Roman Catholic Church played in Spain's colonial possessions. Conversely, Tavárez's work is extremely thought provoking, due to the fact that he forces the reader to make connections between his study and the larger narrative, and would be sure to stimulate excellent discussion in a graduate level seminar.

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