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Nicholas Griffiths. *The Cross and the Serpent: Religious Repression and Resurgence in Colonial Peru.* Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. xii + 355 pp. $37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8061-2800-9.

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The campaigns of extirpation of idolatry, first studied systematically by Pierre Duviols in *La lutte contre les religions authochtones dans le Perou colonial: L'extirpation de l'idolatrie entre 1532 et 1660* (Lima, 1971), have in many ways come to characterize the current understanding of the character of the religious climate in late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Peru. Arising as a response to the realization that the initial phase of evangelization had not taken effective root among the native peoples, the campaigns against idolatry were a repressive effort to forcibly eradicate the physical and spiritual vestiges of native religion. Nicholas Griffiths' book *The Cross and the Serpent: Religious Repression and Resurgence in Colonial Peru*, is one of the most recent additions to the dialogue about this phenomenon. In it, Griffiths attempts to define the salient characteristics of the campaigns (from both a Spanish and a native point of view), while focusing his investigation on the late seventeenth century, a period that has received comparatively little attention.

Investigations of the campaigns of extirpation are based primarily on records from the Archivo Arzobispal de Lima from the section called, "Procesos de hechicerIas e idolatrIas." These documents contain material that provides a glimpse into the extent and character of the persistence of traditional Andean religion into the mid and late colonial period, and they point to the character of the interaction between Christian and Andean religious structures. But, though a rich resource, the idolatry records also pose substantial problems of interpretation. The testimony they record is filtered through the stress of a rigorous legal inquest (frequently accompanied by torture or the threat of torture), through Spanish interpreters, and through European and Christian cultural categories. Moreover, to understand the content of these documents fully, it is essential to have a clear grasp on the institutional, social, political, and economic context within which they were generated. Such an understanding is just now beginning to emerge and is an essential prerequisite for any significant interpretation of this period.

Griffiths' study attempts to further this understanding and to outline the key elements of native religion as it functioned within the colonial system. He argues that far from being eradicated, native religious beliefs and practices survived well into the eighteenth century and became fused with Christian beliefs in a synthesis in which Christian and indigenous elements were articulated in connected but separate spheres.

To develop this argument, Griffiths divides his study into six chapters. In the first, "The Extirpation as Repression," he examines the institutional background for the extirpation campaigns. In the second, "The Idolater as *Hechicero*," he examines the character of what he calls "the native religious specialist" as interpreted by the Spaniards. In the third, "The Idolater as Shaman," he looks at the same figure but interprets it from an indigenous perspective and discusses the role the native priest played in maintaining and interpreting traditional concepts within the colonial context. Chapter 4, "The Idolatry Triangle," looks at the politico-religious configuration of the Indian parish (*doctrina*), and examines the roles played by the *doctrinero* (Catholic priest), the native religious specialist, and the *kuraca* (the indigenous village leader). Chapter 5, "'Stones That Are Gods': The Response to Extirpation," points to the transformation of native religious concepts, in the face of the repression of the idolatry trials, to a more abstract and immaterial understanding of deity. The final chapter, "Idolatry Rediscovered," looks at the limited revival of idolatry trials in the eighteenth century and suggests that they had ceased to be an effective coercive tool.

Following the outlines of Duviols' interpretation, Griffiths characterizes the anti-idolatry campaigns as an instrument of repression that attempted to consolidate Spanish control over the Andean peoples by systematically eradicating the physical objects of traditional worship and by punishing the practitioners of idolatry, known in the documents as *hechiceros*. Using Duviols'

phrase, he calls the Extirpation the "bastard child of the Inquisition," and argues that it became a sort of proto-Inquisition that borrowed its procedures and psychology from practices employed by the Holy Office.

Griffiths characterizes the Extirpation primarily as an ideological movement that took coherent form in the early seventeenth century. Its legal foundation rested upon an interpretation of native religious practices as idolatrous, superstitious, and prompted by worship of the Devil. It manifested throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century as a series of periodic campaigns, organized by the Archbishops of Lima. Spearheaded by a cleric who was given the title of *juez visitador* or *visitador general de las idolatrIas*, an inquest was set up in a village where idolatrous activities were suspected. The *juez visitador* presided over this inquest and was granted quasi-episcopal powers so that he might effectively redress the native practices.

Though modeled on the Inquisition, the Extirpation differed from it on a number of counts. The Inquisition possessed no authority over the Indians, while the authority of the tribunals presided over by the *juez visitador* was limited to the native peoples. The Inquisition was independent of the authority of the Archbishop, while the idolatry campaigns were established as a delegation of episcopal authority. All of these components point to the final distinction between the two: the Extirpation failed to institutionalize itself effectively. So, while the influence of the Inquisition permeated the Spanish world, the idolatry campaigns remained episodic initiatives dependent upon the interest and support of the Archbishop.

The legal justifications for the campaigns of extirpation derived from classic Spanish terminology for practitioners of the occult. Griffiths points to the distinction between the *brujo*, who typically practiced malevolent magic based on knowledge derived from an explicit pact made with the Devil, and the *hechicero*, an individual who dabbled in the occult, but who tended to be more of a charlatan or trickster than an overtly malevolent practitioner. In the American context, native religious practitioners were typically labeled as *hechiceros*. Griffiths argues that, on the one hand, the use of this term points to a conflation of the roles played by the *brujo* and the *hechicero* such that the *hechicero* came to be seen as an idolater while the traditional distinction between idolatry and superstition was dropped. On the other hand, the labeling of the native religious specialist as an *hechicero* pointed to an underlying disdain for the reality of the native practices. So, while being tried for being an idolater, the native in front of the extirpation inquest was also ridiculed and denigrated as a charlatan or an ignoramus.

Griffiths never successfully indicates how the tension between these two modes of interpretation was resolved. On the one hand, he asserts that the Extirpation was predicated on an ideology whose premise and justification was the reality of the influence of the Devil. Yet, on the other hand, he also ascribes to the judicial figures running the idolatry trials a skepticism about this very reality. Undoubtedly both attitudes were current in the seventeenth century, but Griffiths' argument does not persuasively demonstrate how they interrelated.

As a contrast to the Spanish image of the *hechicero* as a figure of ridicule, Griffiths, in his third and fifth chapters, uses the idolatry documentation to indicate the importance of the native religious specialist to the articulation of a religious and spiritual resistance to the Spanish colonial system. He suggests that this figure can best be understood as a shaman: a mediator between the material and the spiritual realms. As such, the native religious specialist acted as a healer and as an arbiter of traditional native cosmological concepts and values. The Spaniards totally underestimated the significance of the shaman and were too culturally bound to understand the role he played.

As a result of the pressures of the extirpation campaigns and the increasing experience of the Indians in maneuvering through the Spanish legal system, the *hechicero* or shaman came to play a significant role in fusing traditional and Christian religious structures. Griffiths argues that, in response to the destruction of the native religious objects, the native religious specialist rearticulated the understanding of the locus of the religious experience from the physical to the abstract. So, while the extirpation campaigns succeeded to a large extent in destroying the physical religious attributes of native religion, the Indians responded by developing a more abstract religious understanding, which shifted the true source of religious power to a realm beyond the reach of the fires of the priests. At the same time they incorporated the Christian pantheon of saints into their own cosmological understanding, articulating them into a symbiotic relationship with traditional native concepts–but with the traditional concepts maintaining their vitality and hierarchical superiority over Christian influences.

In his fourth chapter Griffiths returns to the political impact of the idolatry trials and lays out in general terms the local political configuration that affected the character of the trials. He identifies the main politico-religious players to be: the Spanish Priest, the native religious spe-

cialist, and the *kuraka*. He sees these three figures to operate in a dynamic rivalry for influence over the people of the village. While his evidence for this is not persuasive, he suggests that typically, the village was split into a Christian faction that owed its loyalty to the priest and a nativist faction that owed its loyalty to the shaman. The *kuraka* was frequently caught in the middle; forced to demonstrate his support of Christianity and the Spanish system in order to retain his position of authority, but forced also to honor the traditional religious practices if he was to maintain the loyalty of his people.

The idolatry trials became an important component of the internal struggle for authority within a village, with the different factions seeking to use a denunciation of idolatry as a way of discrediting an opponent. Griffiths even suggests that the trials played such an important role in the adjudication of internal disputes that the Spaniards came to view the process with some suspicion. This co-optation of a Spanish legal instrument was one of the elements that contributed to the eventual invalidation of the trials in the late colonial period.

The other problem undermining the authority of the trials was rooted in the ambiguity about the reality of the practices being judged. By the late eighteenth century a careful legal distinction was drawn between superstition and idolatry, with only the latter being associated with intentional devil worship. The severity of the offense was thus greatly diminished. In addition, the effectiveness of the trials was weakened by the increasing use (and acceptance) of the practice of discrediting witnesses who were known to be personal enemies of the accused. Since this type of witness was the key source of information for the prosecution, the later trials came to be largely ineffective. In essence Griffiths points to an increasing rationalization of the system–both in defense and in legal philosophy–that led ultimately to the discrediting of the charge of idolatry.

The *Cross and the Serpent* provides an interesting summation of the discussion about the character of the Extirpation. In his analysis of the figure of the native religious specialist, Griffiths presents a cogent thesis for the persistence of native religious practices in the face of the repressive instruments of colonial society. He does a good job of integrating this interpretation with studies from Central America and with modern anthropological literature, providing thereby a sense of geographic and temporal continuity to Andean religion.

But Griffiths' study is flawed by its failure effectively to develop a contextual understanding of the Extirpation. In general Griffiths treats the extirpation campaigns as an isolated phenomenon whose significance is derived from its own internal premises. While this is a useful approach up to a certain point, it tends to exaggerate the significance of the campaigns and to distract attention from their connections to other aspects of the colonial ecclesiastical and religious world. Griffiths does admit that the Extirpation had numerous opponents and was in fact an "aberration" within the broader context of the colonial world (both temporally and geographically). But the structure of his argument identifies this judicial procedure as the dominant cause of religious change and of politico-religious conflict in the Andean world. He points to the Extirpation as one position in the religious dialogue of the period, but never critically evaluates how it interrelated with the other voices, nor does he define what those other voices might be.

In a similar fashion, his institutional analysis of the campaigns fails effectively to locate them within the political and economic context of ecclesiastical administration. We learn in general how extirpation trials functioned, but we learn almost nothing about the administrative setting that gave rise to specific incidents or that produced individual documents. Archbishop Pedro de VillagEmez (1641-71) was evidently the key figure behind the campaigns of the late century, but we are given little more than his dates and one quotation by which to understand his motives or character. Nor is there any discussion of how the *visitador general* was named or what significance this exercise of patronage might have had.

By treating the Extirpation as an isolated institutional initiative, similar to the Inquisition, Griffiths neglects to explore other institutional models that may have influenced the conduct and evolution of the trials. The ecclesiastical *visita* probably played as important a role in defining the character of the extirpation campaigns as did the Inquisition. The *visitador general de idolatrIa* was little more than a modification of the position of *visitador general* that was a routine delegation of episcopal authority. Understanding that this office may have influenced the development of the idolatry campaigns can help to relocate their interpretation within the diocesan situation. It also provides a framework within which to analyze the routine and efficacious use of the trials by the Indians for their own purposes. The evolution of such a strategy makes more sense within an established juridical procedure (the ecclesiastical *visita*) than in the episodic and irregular judicial setting described by Griffiths. This is not to suggest that the latter did not exist as well. Both types of situations were at play in the seventeenth century, and combined to the give the phenomenon of the "Extirpation" its character. But the distinction between

the two remains to be sorted out.

In general, Griffiths' work provides many insights into how to interpret the documentation of the extirpation trials, and it is an important work for anyone interested in exploring this topic in depth. But his argument needs to be treated with caution and needs to be modified by a more systematic look at the way this phenomenon fits into colonial society and colonial institutions.

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