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EXTINCTION. See **Environment; Evolution; Nature.**

EXTIRPATION. The term *extirpation* is most commonly associated with the Catholic Church’s project to eradicate traditional religious practices in the Americas after the Spanish conquest. The Andean highlands, Mesoamerica, and other areas of high indigenous cultural development have rich religious traditions that predate the Spanish conquest by millennia. Ending these practices became an early and determined goal of European missionary efforts in the Americas and in a sense was an extension of the wars of conquest. In 1571, Philip II decided to exclude Indians from the Spanish Inquisition because of their poor understanding of the Catholic faith. Although never as institutionalized as the Holy Office of the Inquisition, which sought to wipe out heretical thought from the Iberian population in both Europe and the New World, campaigns for the “extirpation of idolatries” emerged out of the same context of religious intolerance and visited similar consequences of pain and suffering on the target populations. In a sense, as some scholars have observed, these extirpation campaigns were a bastard child of the Inquisition. “The systematic visitations, interrogations, torture, punishments, and exiles,” Mills notes, “represent perhaps the most sustained religious persecution of indigenous peoples in the history of colonial Latin America” (p. 170). Organized legal campaigns that recorded native beliefs and traditions with the goal of exterminating “diabolical deceptions” took place primarily in the viceroyalty of Peru, but similar attitudes influenced Spanish actions toward native religions throughout the Americas. These attempts were never completely successful, and indigenous and African religious practices continue to thrive in the Americas in the early twenty-first century.

Francisco de Avila was one of the earliest and most noted leaders in attempts to suppress indigenous religions. Avila oversaw the drafting of a document known as the *Huarochiri Manuscript* to use as a tool in his prosecution of religious practices that he considered to be diabolical. Avila pursued his extirpation of native idolatries with an usual religious zeal, probably as a revenge against local villagers who had accused him of economic exploitation and violations of moral standards of behavior. In 1609 Avila began to grandstand his cause, engaging in show trials designed to procure public confessions of idolatry while undermining his enemies. His success led to even more aggressive and repressive campaigns to destroy Andean religions, similar to what would happen later in North America with the Salem witch trials in the 1600s and the McCarthy hearings in the 1950s. Ideological deviance alone cannot explain the fury with which such campaigns are carried out. The extirpations advanced the reputation and career of Avila along with the colleagues who joined him, as well as economically benefitting the campaigners because Spanish law rewarded them with the confiscated wealth from these pagan deities. While the veracity of charges in the extirpation campaigns is questionable, they clearly built on existing ideological constructions and played off local social conflicts.

Written in the Andean Quechua language, the *Huarochiri Manuscript* records traditional practices with the goal of ex-

terminating them while at the same time, ironically, preserving a historical memory of these beliefs. Trial records provide rich ethnographic data that document indigenous cultures. In the Andes, traditional religious practices revolved around a reverence for deities known as *huacas*. Rooted in the practice of ancestor worship, *huacas* were often local physical markers such as a tree, stone, or cave from which inhabitants believed their ancestors emerged. In general, *huacas* were material objects or sometimes even humans that were assigned supernatural attributes. Particularly objectionable to the Spanish was the tradition of preserving the bodies of dead family members and parading these mummies during religious ceremonies. Worshipping these objects provided a mechanism for mediating societal controls.

Avila's extirpation campaigns illustrate the similarities and differences between Spanish crusades against native religions and the function of the Inquisition. Both used judicial tools and a repressive apparatus to root out native religious deviance. Trials typically culminated in an auto-da-fé, with the destruction of offending objects and the punishment of the convicted. Unlike the Inquisition, however, extirpation campaigns never became institutionalized. Attempts to root out idolatries came and went according to the interests of local church leaders, and a lack of support from central authorities would lead to the collapse of an extirpation campaign. Furthermore, charges of idolatry often became a cover for local conflicts. While the Inquisition provided checks against the testimony of personal enemies that might undermine the legitimacy of a conviction, extirpation trials thrived on local conflicts in order to extract compromising information.

Extirpation campaigns did not end with Avila's persecutions but, rather, continued sporadically throughout the colonial period, occasionally reaching points of extreme repression in attempts to reform the lives and practices of indigenous peoples. These campaigns, which are sometimes referred to as an "Inquisition for Indians" (Mills, p. 171), have been divided into three periods: 1609 to 1621, 1625 to 1626, and 1646 to 1670. The irregular appearance of these campaigns leads Griffiths to conclude that they were aberrations, not a commonplace phenomenon in colonial Latin America. In the final period, which Griffiths considers to be the zenith of the campaigns, Archbishop Pedro de Villagómez sent prosecutors to extract origin stories from native provincial elites outside Lima. These campaigns often targeted the most vulnerable subjects and were not above using torture and blackmail to extract confessions. Native priests in particular were targeted. Victims were whipped, exiled, or even executed, and ancestor-cult mummies and other religious artifacts were burned.

Villagómez declared his efforts successful, and the extirpation campaigns slowed and became less vicious. In their final stages, the Catholic Church considered *huaca* worship to be simple acts of superstition that could be more easily tolerated than idolatry. The Spanish and native worlds appeared to be finally coming to an accommodation with each other. Mills challenges standard interpretations that contend that this development represents a victory of extirpation campaigns and a passive acceptance on the part of indigenous peoples of the

European religion. It represented more of a change in terminology than attitude. Traditional practices persisted, and as a result, occasional prosecutions continued to the mid-1700s. By the end of the colonial period, extirpation campaigns had finally sputtered out without the ideological drive and passion of earlier efforts.

In New Spain, these campaigns became even more localized and less rooted in institutional structures. Without active leadership, the viceroyalty never experienced the waves of religious repression that swept through Peru. Rather than large-scale extirpation campaigns, anti-idolatry programs became "an ongoing struggle, engaged in on a day-to-day basis by individual missionaries, with the support of the military garrison" (Warner, p. 171). Idolatry became a very vague and shifting concept that served different purposes at various times. "No systematic test for idolatry ever existed," Tavárez notes and because of this, "an act of idolatry could only be committed by native subjects who were *willing* to confess to someone" (pp. 135, 136). Intent became a key part of the extirpation campaigns. As Chuchiak observes, "the term idolatry can be understood as expressing the shared realities of a religiously bifurcated region of the colonial world" (p. 167). Practitioners tended to hide their activities by camouflaging them as Catholic rituals. As a result, indigenous conversion to European religious practices was superficial at best. Often the two religions coexisted in a syncretic mixture.

The story of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico is the most noted example of a syncretic religion, and reflects the failure and even co-optation of attempts at religious extirpation. In this event, the Virgin Mary allegedly appeared to Juan Diego in 1531 at the Tepeyac Hill just north of the recently conquered Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. The local bishop finally believed the Indian shepherd when the virgin's image was miraculously imprinted on his cloak. Scholars have noted how anachronisms, inconsistencies, internal difficulties, and the European structure of the story cast doubt on its veracity. Not only does the Indian have a Spanish name, but "Guadalupe," a dark-skinned virgin from Spain, is an Arabic word that would be difficult for a Nahuatl-speaker to pronounce. The cult appears to be a Spanish fabrication to redirect Indian "idolatry" from a "pagan" to a Christian focus. In fact, during the Spanish conquest it had become a common practice to construct Spanish temples on top of Indian pilgrimage sites. Although the intent of these efforts was the extirpation of idolatrous practices, the result was somewhat different, as the Virgin of Guadalupe became a symbol of cultural pride in Mexico. She has also been seen as a defender of the Indians and was successfully used as a symbol of liberation during campaigns for Mexican independence, during the Mexican Revolution, and among Hispanic civil rights struggles in the United States.

As the Virgin of Guadalupe indicates, there is some question as to the lasting impact and legacy of extirpation campaigns. "Andean beliefs and practices survived because they changed and were adapted to colonial realities," Mills argues, "and because people assimilated Christian terms, ideas, rituals, and explanations into an expanding religious framework" (p. 4). In attempting to eradicate "demonic" religious practices, the Spanish

EXTIRPATION

forced adaptations that allowed indigenous religious to survive and also led to modifications of the Spanish religion. Even the structure and approach of the Inquisition had to be adapted to the native world in the form of the extirpation campaigns. What theologically should have been a stark opposition instead became a space for negotiated adaptations. Catholicism continued to be the dominant religion in Latin America, but it assumed a flavor strongly influenced by native and even African religious practices. The failure of the extirpation campaigns highlights the partial, contradictory, and incomplete nature of the Spanish conquest of the Americas.

See also **Colonialism; Genocide; Syncretism.**

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