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Community and Idolatry: San Francisco Cajonos, Yalalag, and Betaza through the Criminal Court of Villa Alta, 1700-1704

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Community and Idolatry:
San Francisco Cajonos, Yalalag, and Betaza through the Criminal Court of Villa Alta, 1700-1704

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History

by

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Abstract

The trials of San Francisco Cajonos and Betaza and Yalálag heard in Villa Alta's criminal court depict many important facets of life in Colonial Oaxaca, and they especially paint the picture of community, how it was defined and how it operated in reality. Looking specifically at these two rich examples in Villa Alta's criminal court, at the time, idolatry – native religion, rituals, and devotions defined by Catholics as idolatrous -- helped shape the lines of community and defined who belonged in which space. It also highlights how betrayal and revenge were construed by a community and the response for those actions by individuals. As these trials and stories show, in the towns and villages surrounding Villa Alta, native devotion, classified as idolatry by colonial forces, was essential to understanding community because it helped to create it. The practice and defense of native rituals and devotions, identified as idolatry by the colonial Spanish authorities, defined the boundaries of community in the 1701 trial of San Francisco Cajonos and the 1703 trial of Betaza and Yalálag. The revenge taken against the two *fiscales*, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Angeles by the community for a violation of community boundaries by betraying their idolatrous practices to colonial church officials as well as the hostility between the communities of Betaza and Yalálag because the punishment for engaging in practices deemed idolatrous was seen as a communal attack highlighted the dividing lines between communities created by participation and persecution of native rituals.

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Introduction

The 1701 trial of the Zapotec Indians of San Francisco Cajonos is a landmark case for how idolatry and its consequences were handled in the criminal court of Villa Alta, Oaxaca. Although the act of idolatry was under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities, this case still shows up in the criminal courts as consequence of the charges of rebellion and murder. Authorities prosecuted individuals suspected of killing Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles because they had denounced native ritual practices and were punished for it by those accused of idolatry; however, in the beginning of the proceedings it is outlined that the criminal court ruling is not limited to the homicide and sedition; the act of idolatry is also named as a charge, investigated, and punished alongside the uprising.¹

On a larger scale, the trial of Betaza and Yalálag demonstrated the extirpation conflict as two towns pitted against each other over increasingly elevated reactions, stemming from idolatry accusations. Instead of murder and riot-violence like San Francisco Cajonos, the criminal charges that went along with the idolatry to move it into the jurisdiction of this court were the misappropriation of church funds and kidnapping and imprisoning a messenger. Like the prior, however, idolatry was clearly a priority as it was how the arrests were made in the first place that sparked the rumors and plots of uprisings that had to be put down by intimidation.

¹ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, In César, Claudia Ballesteros, *Los documentos de San Francisco Cajonos: archivo histórico judicial de Oaxaca*, Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado de Oaxaca, 2004, 1.

Although the cases of the San Francisco Cajonos and Betaza and Yalálag depict many important facets of life in Colonial Oaxaca, it especially paints the picture of community, how it was defined and how it operated in reality. Looking specifically at these two rich examples in Villa Alta's criminal court, at the time, idolatry – native religion, rituals, and devotions defined by Catholics as idolatrous -- helped shape the lines of community and outlined who belonged in which space. It also highlights how betrayal and revenge were construed by a community and the response for those actions by individuals. As these trials and stories show, in the towns and villages surrounding Villa Alta, native devotion, classified as idolatry by colonial forces, was essential to understanding community because it helped to create it.

The practice and defense of native rituals and devotions, identified as idolatry by the colonial Spanish authorities, defined the boundaries of community in the 1701 trial of San Francisco Cajonos and the 1703 trial of Betaza and Yalálag. The revenge taken against the two *fiscales*, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles by the community for a violation of community boundaries by betraying their idolatrous practices to colonial church officials as well as the hostility between the communities of Betaza and Yalálag are examples of how the concept of community was designated by idolatry. Because the punishment for engaging in practices deemed idolatrous was seen as a communal attack, this highlighted the dividing lines between communities created by participation and persecution of native rituals. Notable historians in the field such as David Tavárez and Yanna Yannakakis have covered the political opportunities seized by the Spanish and the ecclesiastical forces to control and convert native communities associated with cases like these, but the targets by the indigenous community on the two native *fiscales* for their treason and the actions and plotting by the community in

Betaza against Yalálag for their disloyalty to the cause of defending native devotions suggest that rituals marked as idolatry were deeply embedded and structural to the construction of community.

Historiography

The history of Colonial New Spain spans across centuries, and many scholars have narrated and analyzed its political, social, and religious intersections for years. However, the works about Oaxaca are few in comparison to the central part of New Spain where there were more urban centers like Mexico City. Especially when looking specifically to the criminal court of Villa Alta in the Sierra Norte region, there are still many gaps to be filled. This paper uses the criminal court cases about murder and idolatry in San Francisco Cajonos and indigenous town conflict over idolatry in Betaza and Yalálag from Villa Alta's tribunal at the dawn of the 18th century to highlight the significance of community, its connection to idolatry and native ritual, and how that was perceived in each specific scenario as well as the connection overall to the much larger extirpation movement.

Broadly, this project strives to utilize these two example cases and their link of community responses to idolatry accusations and interference to evaluate the role of extirpation in life in the Villa Alta region of Oaxaca during the timeline of these trials from 1700-1704. This is a significant discussion in the current historiography because it occupies the space of how the bonds of community were forged around "idolatrous" native devotions because of the mannerisms of extirpation in Villa Alta's jurisdiction, not in spite of them. It incorporates and adapts elements from the works of historians such as Yannakakis's description of the shadow state and Tavárez's presentation of the relationship of native consciousness and judicial proof. The balance of extirpation attempts and preservation of order generated a unique atmosphere for the communities in Villa Alta to openly practice yet have to conceal their native

religious ceremonies while simultaneously maintain the persona of publicly participating in Spanish and Catholic life.

The most significant and extensive case with long reaching impact was the trial for the murder of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles in San Francisco Cajonos that mainly took place over the years 1701-1702. This case does appear in a few places in the literature in various capacities, considerably more than the second trial case of the towns of Betaza and Yalálag. The starkly different perception of the two informants from San Francisco Cajonos as either martyr or traitors is a debate that continues through the centuries. They were not beatified officially by the Catholic Church until 2002, more than three hundred years after their deaths.²

The most important book about the San Francisco Cajonos case, aside from the court documents themselves, is Eulogio Gillow's *Apuntes históricos* published in 1889. Gillow was the Archbishop of Oaxaca and had access to the archival records that comprised the case and all of the surrounding events. In an attempt to plead the case for Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles to be recognized by the Pope as martyrs, Gillow composed the majority of *Apuntes históricos* with text about the series of interactions that occurred in San Francisco Cajonos that ultimately escalated from a foiled idolatrous ceremony to the deaths of many either murdered or as capital punishment. Besides detailing the events of September 14-16, Gillow also

² John Paul, P.P., "Scriptum Est, Litterae Apostolicae, Venerabilibus Servis Dei Ioanni Baptistae et Hyacintho Ab Angelis Beatorum Honores Decernuntur, d. 1 m. Augusti a." 2002.

contributed a timeline of correspondence between leaders of San Francisco Cajonos and Villa Alta via letters that can be found, transcribed in his appendices at the end of his book. There is a clear Catholic perspective present, from both the original court documents as well as Gillow's description of the events as a Catholic bishop himself, in the way that the idolatry and attack on the convent are depicted. Despite this, it is still widely cited among scholars writing about the story of the idolatry and murder in San Francisco Cajonos because of its details from primary source material.

Especially in these trial documents, there are multiple examples of people acting as a bridge between the indigenous communities and the Spanish courts. They were represented a variety of roles like translators that allowed indigenous people to give their own testimonies or those who offered legal assistance to Indians. In *The Art of Being In-between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca*, Yanna Yannakakis focuses on indigenous intermediaries that acted on behalf of Indians in a variety of manners that related to politics, culture, and legal battles that many indigenous people in Colonial New Spain faced. These liaisons between indigenous and Spanish republics served in many positions including "municipal secretaries, priest's assistants" and others who helped "keep the nation-state running in a way that avoids selling out the cultural and political aspirations of local people."³ Yannakakis contributes to the study of the region because the go-between roles that

³ Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca*, Illustrated edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2008), xi.

indigenous people held and how they operated enabled communities to form and reveal themselves through the ways in which intermediaries interacted with them.

Yannakaki's depiction of social and cultural interactions in Colonial Oaxaca are fundamental to observations on community in that region. One of the most significant chapters in her book on this topic is her second, "'Idolaters and Rebels,' 'Good and Faithful Indians:' The Cajonos Rebellion and After.'" In this section, she argues that the violent uprising of the Indians of San Francisco Cajonos in late 1700 completely altered the balance of the region between the *españoles*, *mestizos*, and *indios*. In addition to straining the relationship locally between the church officials and their supporters and the indigenous population striving to maintain traditional practices, it also had political implications as "it reflected and intensified jurisdictional disputes between ecclesiastical and civil authorities as well as the secular Catholic hierarchy and the Dominican order."⁴ While Yannakakis focuses on the topic of native intermediaries and how the San Francisco Cajonos case highlights the differences and similarities in the responsibilities of the roles of *fiscales* and *cabildo* leaders working with the indigenous community and beyond, she also speaks to the ways in which the Spanish officials utilized both of these positions to assert dominance and still maintain the status quo.⁵

Furthermore, Yannakakis discusses the "Spanish political ideal in which native officials...served Spanish authority unequivocally" which she calls a "shadow system."⁶ The

⁴ Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between*, 65.

⁵ *Ibid*, 66-81.

⁶ *Ibid*, 79,81.

rebellion in San Francisco Cajonos tested the strength of this shadow system. In order for the arrangement to work, the native leaders were expected to head traditional religion and rituals by their communities while upholding colonial authority by doing so in secret settings. The incident in San Francisco Cajonos included the aspects of rebellion and murder, viewed as defense of native devotion by the community, so it crossed over the line that held the shadow system in place and forced the Spanish authorities to act.⁷ Yannakakis proposes that the torture used by the Spanish to extract confessions of murder from the captured Indians was an example of action taken against native officials that failed to follow through with the responsibilities of their positions to preserve colonial rule within their communities. She states that it was a symbolic punishment because of this blatant disobedience from the native authorities that jeopardized the shadow system.⁸

As a result of repeated violations of the delicate balance of the shadow state like Yannakakis describes, the extirpation strategies amplified substantially at the start of the 18th century. Bishop Ángel Maldonado launched an ambitious campaign to actually exterminate most of the native idolatry that had become more blatantly in the public sphere and more passionately defended to restore the shadow state where native rituals were kept hidden so they could be ambassadors for the Crown while maintaining their traditions privately and inconspicuously.

⁷ Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between*, 79-82.

⁸ *Ibid*, 80.

David Tavárez's *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* fills in many missing pieces of the story of extirpation and indigenous responses to imposed religion across New Spain, specifically the middle of the 16th century through the middle of the 18th century in the dioceses of Oaxaca and Mexico.⁹ Tavárez utilizes many different primary sources of all different types and languages including both the San Francisco Cajonos trial and the Betaza and Yalálag trial as examples of indigenous responses to punishments for idolatry. It is particularly useful how Tavárez fits these two examples, among many others, into the grander scheme of extirpation in the region at the very beginning of the 18th century. It is because of this that the two cases can be neatly tied together. Tavárez places these two trials in the context of Bishop Maldonado's aggressive extirpation campaign that kicked off after the results of the San Francisco Cajonos case and went on to become the catalyst for the tension between Betaza and Yalálag the very next year.¹⁰ There were many other events with Maldonado's systematic sweep, but it is still very significant that the two cases can be joined by this extensive extirpation effort.

Another critical contribution that Tavárez makes with *Invisible War* is his proposition that native religion cannot be summarized across such a vast space, so he defines it as devotion which was practiced and defended differently across New Spain.¹¹ For instance, the blatant "defense of cosmological beliefs" was central to the Northern Zapotec Indians; this is also a

⁹ David Tavárez, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2011), 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 25.

¹¹*Ibid*, 25.

thought that Yannakakis relied on to help contextualize why the reactions for the San Francisco Cajonos to interruption of rituals was as severe as it was.¹² This concept of defending tradition and ritual being so central to indigenous groups in this area of Oaxaca plays a big part in how community lines were drawn and crossed depending on how a person either actively guarded tradition or aided in its destruction.

As far as setting up the framework for understanding the judicial system in New Spain, *Justice by Insurance: The General Indian Court of Colonial Mexico and the Legal Aides of the Half-Real* by Woodrow Borah and *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico* by Brian Owensby are important. Borah explores the General Indian Court that existed as a judiciary for those in the *república de indios* in New Spain. Since Oaxaca is a region with a large and diverse indigenous population, it is helpful to understand the system designed specifically for the Indians of New Spain. It shows similarities and differences in the court systems as well as the physical limitations for those who are distant from Mexico City and central New Spain where the General Indian Court readily operated. Both of these cases appeared outside of that theatre, but it is important for general context to understand how indigenous people were treated by the judicial process and how much agency they had.

Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico is a valuable source because it is about the way that indigenous people of New Spain were able to adapt and utilize the legal processes put into place by the Spanish. Although this is on a broader scale than the time and

¹² David Tavárez, *The Invisible War*, 193; Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between*, 70.

place that this paper focuses on, it is still important because it discusses how Indians specifically engaged with the court systems and participated in the judicial processes. It addresses the ideas of morality, beliefs, and agency. Owensby explores how the law was used as a tool and resources by indigenous people to maintain control over as many features of self-governance as possible. This aspect is essential to understanding community and how important autonomy was to the indigenous communities residing in the Sierra Norte.

Before Tavárez's *Invisible War*, John K. Chance was one of the premiere scholars of Colonial Oaxaca, and his book, *Conquest of the Sierra: Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Oaxaca* tell the story of the region and its development before, during, and after Spanish arrival. *Conquest of the Sierra* specifically explores the conquest of the Sierra where Villa Alta is located. It gives a bigger history to the region and provides a narrative of how the conquest of Oaxaca was different than the rest of New Spain because of the population and topography of the area. Since it never became a densely populated hub for Spaniards to stay, it rose to prominence in the Empire in other ways, namely its productivity and repartimientos. It also highlights inter-Indian relationships and how those conflicts allowed for the conquest of the region. This is significant as it played a large part into the case of Betaza and Yalálag as the tensions lingered still between the towns around that area as also pointed out by Yannakakis in her sixth chapter.

Another critical contribution to the concepts of extirpation and community is Chance's chronology of the development of extirpators in the region and the communities' responses. Chance notes how the church officials did not really show interest in taking on a role in

extirpation until some incidents involving communal idolatry occurred in the 1660s.¹³ Then, a mild extirpation campaign began, targeting the region with the most idolatry, the Cajonos. After more troublesome events involving native religion continued to occur, Bishop Maldonado took over the position at the beginning of the 18th century.¹⁴

An important aspect of the cases of idolatry in Betaza and San Francisco Cajonos is how idolatry was defined by the courts and by the accused. David Tavárez explores how the notion of idolatry existed in Colonial New Spain in *Idolatry as an Ontological Question: Native Consciousness and Juridical Proof in Colonial Mexico*. He provides two example cases with opposite outcomes to illustrate how the classification of native religion as idolatry was perceived by the Indians that practiced it. In the 1654 case, Diego Luis, a Zapotec specialist, fully confessed to acts of idolatry in front of an ecclesiastical judge. However, a few years later, in a civil court in 1666, several alleged Zapotec idolators systematically denied all accusations of participation in idolatry.¹⁵ Tavárez indicates “that the native consciousness of certain practices as idolatry was the one cognitive phenomenon that enabled the emergence of a *collective intentionality* that rendered idolatry into an epistemically objective fact.”¹⁶ His argument is based around the fact that the mutual acknowledgement of idolatry as a classification for these native rituals by all parties is what made their categorization as idolatry a reality.¹⁷ Tavárez

¹³ John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra: Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Oaxaca*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2001, 163.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 163-164.

¹⁵ David E. Tavárez, “Idolatry as an Ontological Question: Native Consciousness and Juridical Proof in Colonial Mexico,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 6, no. 2 (May 2002), 114.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 114.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 114.

states that the history of extirpation in New Spain does not give a concise definition of idolatry as it was a series of differing reactions to the traditions and practices of the indigenous peoples the extirpators encountered. He asserts that only considering idolatry as an “inherently flexible category” neglects how native idolatry in New Spain was interpreted as such by the “legal and linguistic operations” that “ecclesiastical judges and alleged idolators” did and did not use to categorize certain incidents as idolatry.¹⁸

In the court room, the successful conviction of the charge of idolatry was dependent on the judge’s construction of a narrative that proves its presence or a complete confession from the offender.¹⁹ For instance, in the 1654 trial of Diego Luis of San Miguel Sola, he admitted to over two decades of being a teacher of idolatry while serving as a civil and church official. When an outbreak of native rituals in Sola became apparent to officials in 1653, they sought Diego Luis because of his prior conviction of idolatry and the testimony of witnesses. Because the evidence was stacked against him and his family, Diego Luis decided to give a full confession to try to obtain a lenient sentence. As a result, officials were able to form a convincing case against over 30 idolator in the area because they had the confession of Diego Luis to bring legitimacy to the claim of idolatry.²⁰

Likewise, the case in 1666 against the Indians of Lachirioag, a narrative was built around a gathering of native people engaged in idolatry. However, this conviction never came to

¹⁸ David E. Tavárez, “Idolatry as an Ontological Question, 116.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 117.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 128-131.

fruition because it was based mainly off of two confessions that were adamantly denied by the accused. Because the defendants did not give a full confession like Diego Luis and the authorities were unable to thoroughly formulate an account of the events to be idolatrous in nature or to have occurred at all, everyone was acquitted.²¹

Tavárez concludes that “the internal consistency of idolatry as a category is open to question” and that the court records show the inconsistencies in being able to legally determine what was and was not idolatry. In Colonial New Spain, idolatry was neither a fixed definition nor a completely fluid classification, rather, it was “an unstable category” derived from the mutual acknowledgement by a confessor and the one confessing.²²

Finally, Susan Schroeder’s *Native Resistance and the Pax Colonial in New Spain* gives history for the many native rebellions across New Spain for the entire colonial period. This is a broader look, but it is important for framing the atmosphere for the court cases, especially San Francisco Cajonos because of how significant and impactful its rebellion in 1700 was to the rest of the region. It is useful to give context that dismantles the myth that it was basically peaceful during the colonial period after conquest in New Spain because it illuminates incidents of unrest that popped up all over the regions of New Spain, including the overwhelmingly indigenous Oaxaca where there was resistance to Spanish forces and inter-indigenous conflict.

²¹ David E. Tavárez, “Idolatry as an Ontological Question, 131-135.

²² *Ibid*, 135-136.

This is important for laying the groundwork for the case of Betaza verses Yalálag and how that hostility was so quickly and easily sparked.

Schroeder determines that the Spanish colonizers assumed that the concept of “Pax Colonial” was an inherent reward for conquest.²³ The existence of this notion relied on the fact that there was no large-scale, organized, wave of rebellion to overthrow Spanish rule. Revolt already existed in territories of New Spain among indigenous groups long before the Spanish tried to conquer it. By the time the Spanish arrived, there was already a precedent of cultural resistance in the face of subordination.²⁴

Ronald Spores, author of the second chapter of *Native Resistance and the Pax Colonial in New Spain* explores how the rebellions in Oaxaca involving the Mixtecs and Zapotecs were different than other regions and the common root cause of the uprisings. The ethnic diversity of Oaxaca created an atmosphere for different responses to Spanish colonization. The violent encounters between the indigenous peoples and the incoming Spaniards were never well organized or long-lasting.²⁵ Spores focuses on period of early resistance, but it is still an applicable study to look at for the rebellion in 1700 in San Francisco Cajonos because it follows the same patterns as its predecessors in the early 16th century.²⁶ In 1700 and during resistance

²³ Susan Schroeder, ed. *Native Resistance and the Pax Colonial in New Spain*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998, xiii-xiv.

²⁴ *Ibid*, xiv-xv.

²⁵ Ronald Spores In, *Native Resistance and the Pax Colonial in New Spain*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998, 30.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 30.

against initial domination by the Spaniards, the Indians engaged in short, impulsive uprisings against invasion of territory or culture.²⁷

²⁷ Ronald Spores In, *Native Resistance and the Pax Colonial in New Spain*, 31-46.

Background

At the beginning of the colonial period, the inhabitants of the Sierra were not as amenable as others from Oaxaca had been to the Spaniards, and they were almost completely autonomous until the mid-16th century. The success of their resistance was partially due to the inability of the Spanish to enter the region with their horses; they had to dismount and come at a disadvantage on foot. When they did have their first encounter with the local people of the Sierra at San Miguel Tiltepec, one third of the Spanish soldiers were injured in the battle, so they were forced to retreat.²⁸ Throughout the years, many similar attempts to subdue the indigenous people of the Sierra were thwarted by a combination of the impassable mountains and the experienced fighters of the region.²⁹

The conquest of the Sierra in northern Oaxaca was a long and gradual one. The first step was the small settlement placed in Villa Alta by Diego de Figueroa, a Spaniard who entered the Sierras from the direction of Antequera in 1526. He set up a cabildo but returned back to Mexico City and did not stay in the settlement himself.³⁰ The following year, Gaspar Pacheco was named deputy governor of Villa Alta and moved the site to a new location in the area and redistributed encomiendas before moving on to the Yucatan in 1531.³¹ During Gaspar Pacheco's tenure as deputy governor, Luis de Berrio was appointed as Villa Alta's *alcalde mayor* from 1529-1531. He was a very unpopular official and was even later excommunicated by Fray Juan

²⁸ John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 16.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 17.

³¹ *Ibid*, 17-18.

de Zumárraga. During Luis de Berrio's time as alcalde mayor of Villa Alta, Indians were subjected to harsh treatment and labor and killed in violent manners, even *caciques* and *principales*. Because Luis de Berrio's actions negatively impacted Spaniards as well as Indians, he was banished from all of New Spain following an investigation to his tactics in which many of his former supporters denounced him.³² Still, even after the demise of Luis de Berrio, violent measures were taken to try to conquer the Sierra region of Oaxaca; it was seen as the only effective way that the Spanish could break the patterns of resistance.³³

Spiritually, the region was exposed to Christianity from Spaniards in the early 16th century; in 1524, Bartolomé de Olmedo visited Zapotec and Mixe territory and about five hundred Indians were baptized.³⁴ In the following years as Spaniards began to have a more permanent influence on the area, Fray Gonzalo Lucero was appointed to serve in the first Dominican convent in Villa Alta. When he departed after just two years, he was replaced by a series of teams, some secular and some Dominican who created positive relationships with most of the local communities. In 1552, Fray Gonzalo Lucero returned, with more vocabulary in the local language, and built upon the previously established relationships.³⁵ After a royal decree granting a budget to Villa Alta to teach Christianity in the Sierra region, four friars arrived in Villa Alta in 1558 to act as missionaries. These Dominicans learned, wrote, and spoke

³² John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 18-19.

³³ *Ibid*, 19.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 21.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

in the local languages and worked for decades to convert the indigenous population to Catholicism.³⁶

Communicating with the indigenous people in their own language played a huge role in the success of the transference of Christianity to the Indians in a given area. When Spanish missionaries learned the local language, it opened up opportunities to exploit culture as well to convince Indians to have confidence in what the church taught because it incorporated elements that were familiar to them. Initially, this was thought to be an effective strategy to pique interest in Catholicism. A Dominican, Cristóbal de Agüero used this strategy in 1666 with the Zapotecs. He wrote *Misceláneo espiritual*, a long work that he published in collaboration with other Zapotec helpers. He claimed that the Christian teachings in the book were “the word of Zaachila – a pre-Columbian and decidedly pagan Zapotec state.”³⁷ However, the attempt to marry Christianity to pagan Zapotec history did not end up working in the long run because there were two notable rebellions in the final years of the 17th century as a result of the friendly leniency to idolatry implied by the publishing of *Misceláneo espiritual*.³⁸ This syncretism was built up before Cristóbal de Agüero in 1666. The Dominicans attempted to incorporate Zapotec devotion elements into Christianity as an enticing measure for most of the 16th century. They worked off of the assumption of Bartolomé de las Casas’s words that “pagan practices were imperfect forms of Christian ones.”³⁹

³⁶ John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 21-22.

³⁷ William Taylor, *Words and Worlds Turned Around: Indigenous Christianities in Colonial Latin America*, Edited by David Tavárez, 1st edition, Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2017, 29.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 29.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 34.

In the time after the arrival of the Spanish into New Spain, the Spaniards maintained and modified traditional leadership roles in the indigenous communities to compliment the Spanish system of governance. *Caciques*, native elite leaders, and governors were two positions that crossed the boundaries between the two republics and served as “both native rulers and holders of a colonial office.”⁴⁰ Within Indian districts, society and politics existed in the realms of the local church and local government. Annually, *cabildo* members were selected including *alcaldes*, council members, and a secretary elected by the town.⁴¹

Villa Alta was one *alcaldía mayor*, political jurisdiction, of the twenty-one that comprised Oaxaca. The district of Villa Alta sits in the northern portion of Oaxaca, a space with very mountainous and rugged terrain. This part of New Spain had a very ethnically diverse indigenous population. As such, Villa Alta encompassed three different language groups with the majority speaking Zapotec.⁴² This district was on the outskirts of Colonial New Spain geographically, politically, and economically. Not many people accumulated much wealth in Oaxaca, so it “remained a remote outpost that attracted few peninsular or creole colonists.”⁴³

Within Villa Alta, production and trade of cochineal dye and cotton textiles were its main operations. This was all made possible through the labor of the local indigenous populations under the control of the Spaniards that did inhabit Villa Alta.⁴⁴ Oaxaca operated

⁴⁰ David Eduardo Tavárez, “Colonial Evangelization and Native Resistance” in *Interpreting Colonialism*, Oxford University Studies in The Enlightenment (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 211-212.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 212-213.

⁴² John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, xv-xvi, 3, 5.

⁴³ *Ibid*, xiv.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, xv.

under a system called the *repartimiento de mercancía*. This was how “sales, exchanges, and credit” operated “alongside tribute as the chief engine of economic circulation in New Spain’s economy from roughly 1600 forward.”⁴⁵ The *repartimiento* facilitated trade between the Spanish and Indian residents of a local area. Before the system took place, the indigenous communities often had the advantage when trading with the Spaniards because the Indians usually were able to produce a surplus of goods (dyes, food, cacao, etc.) on top of their tribute quotas that were in high demand with their Spanish neighbors.⁴⁶ However, once the *repartimiento* was implemented, it “ensure[d] this surplus made it to market where Spaniards could buy it” and “force[d] Indians to spend their surplus in cash or in kind on goods brought into indigenous villages by Spanish merchants.”⁴⁷ With these changes, the indigenous populations lost their leverage in trading with the Spanish. Still, it did enable peasants to have purchasing power for goods they would not have otherwise been able to buy.⁴⁸

The credit part of the *repartimiento* caused Indians to sometimes have to take on debt for the items they purchased from the Spanish vendors. Typically, the credit system was not abused in the local communities as it was necessary for the markets to function.⁴⁹ Along this same line, the *repartimiento* was usually more strenuous on people from poorer parts of New Spain like Oaxaca. The Indians in the South were paid less for their products (wool, grain, cochineal dye, etc.) and still had to pay high prices for goods they needed imported like textiles

⁴⁵ Brian Philip Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico*, Stanford University Press, 2008, 251.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 251.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 251.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 251.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 251.

and mules. This raised the pressure on these regions and made the economy of the *repartimiento* system “a tense and changeable equilibrium between production for local sustenance and production for trade.”⁵⁰

Especially in a place with such cultural and linguistic diversity, it is important to see the interaction between the indigenous population and the Spaniards coming into the region and how groups of people were categorized by themselves and by others. According to the Spanish corporate-legal paradigm, colonial society was divided into two spheres: the *república de españoles* and the *república de indios*. The *república de españoles* included those of mixed-race as well as Spaniards while the *república de indios* contained all Indians native to the lands in New Spain.⁵¹ In *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada*, Joanne Rappaport describes the complexities of how the different “categories” of residents in Spanish colonies such as *mestizos*, *indios*, *españoles*, etc. interacted with the two republics. These classifications were more related to the particular “rights and obligations” ascribed to category, and those of mixed descent were able to affiliate themselves with different sections based on benefits, proving the fluidity and reciprocity of the republics.⁵² Despite the differences that separated many different indigenous ethnic groups, the term Indian was adopted to apply as a blanket to refer to any person native to the territory colonized by the Spanish. However, indigenous people were able to claim this name and define its

⁵⁰ Brian Philip Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico*, 251.

⁵¹ Mónica Díaz, ed., *To Be Indio in Colonial Spanish America*, Illustrated Edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 1-2.

⁵² Joanne Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada* (Durham, United States: Duke University Press, 2014), 6-8.

identity by “processes of negotiation and accommodation.”⁵³ Their use and rejection of the notion of Indian as a singular group depended on the advantage or disadvantage of the situation.⁵⁴

One consequence of the separation of the two republics is the alteration of part of the justice system in New Spain to accommodate the needs of the indigenous population by implementing the General Indian Court. In the early 16th century when the colonization process had just begun in New Spain, Indians were regulated by Castilian law that the Spanish had brought over from Iberia until Alonso de Zorita, judge for the Audiencia of Mexico, proposed a strict adherence to the two republics system that “the Indians and Spaniards be organized into two separate commonwealths, each with its own laws, customs, and system of government.”⁵⁵ While the two republics never were fully separate, the need for Indians to have their own court system mirrored after the Spanish judiciary arose in the later part of the 16th century:

By the 1580s, the efforts of the crown and its administrators in New Spain to ease introduction of the Indians into Spanish law and legal procedures clearly had failed. The Indians still lacked access to relatively simple, inexpensive, quick, and effective legal remedies. Awareness of this failure by the clergy and many of the higher officials in the royal bureaucracy in both the colony and the Peninsula led in the last years of the sixteenth century to renewed efforts at an effective solution...In the Audiencia of Mexico, they also resulted in establishment of the General Indian Court and the special Indian agents of the half-real.⁵⁶

⁵³ Mónica Díaz, ed., *To Be Indio in Colonial Spanish America*, 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

⁵⁵ Woodrow Borah, *Justice by Insurance: The General Indian Court of Colonial Mexico and the Legal Aides of the Half-Real*, 1st edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 79.

It was in the mid-1590s that Indian judicial procedures were reconstructed and changed over to the system of the General Indian Court. Although still imperfect, the office of the Viceroy acknowledged that it was an improvement because the Indians were able to bring their grievances before the court easily and quickly, thus providing them with leverage to stop any abuses or injustices as well as manage their own personal affairs.⁵⁷

Aside from the exception of the General Indian Court, the judicial system in Spain was mimicked the judiciary of Spain, but there were some different elements due to the need to adjust to make it operation in reality in Spanish colonies. The *audiencia* was the highest court in the judiciary. It served as the final court of appeals. Beneath the *audiencia*, governors, *corregidores*, and *alcalde mayors* could pass “original and appellate jurisdiction.”⁵⁸ The regular *juzgado* was the local court, and the *alcalde* presided over it.⁵⁹

Since the local court was typically the first step in a case, it was frequented the most by the nearby population and had the most contact with them. It was located in the space of the *cabildo* as it managed local and municipal affairs.⁶⁰ In addition to the responsibilities of fulfilling the role of a judge, the *alcalde* was also the head of the *cabildo* meetings and acted as the figurehead for the town. This was an elected position with a two-year term limit, and it was chosen annually by property-owning residents of the town.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Woodrow Borah, *Justice by Insurance*, 108-109.

⁵⁸ Louis G. Kahle, “The Spanish Colonial Judiciary,” *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1951), 26.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 26.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 27-28.

Beginning with a 1549 declaration that Indians were fully capable and encouraged to seek and deliver justice among their own people according to their own judgement and customs, *caciques* were allowed to hear criminal and civil cases guided by the *corregidor*. The provincial justices were not permitted to interfere with any of these cases heard locally by *caciques* or *alcaldes*, but they did have the power to settle any cases in the district or province.⁶²

These courts of New Spain's judicial system were used in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the case and those involved. Women and men alike were able to navigate the legal, social, and religious spheres by using their local civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical judges to obtain justice. Women were very active in the civil courts and often were successful in initiating divorce cases for unfaithful or abusive husbands.⁶³

Indians used their local *cabildo* or the General Indian court to resolve civil and criminal disputes among themselves. The provincial court could be used in a case against another Indian or Spaniard within the district or cases could be appealed all the way to the *audiencia* if necessary. In the criminal courts, Indians were able to be prosecuted as well as serve as witnesses in trials.

Although Indians were exempt from the Inquisition after 1571, there were still investigations of and repercussions to participating in activities classified as idolatry by the

⁶² Louis G. Kahle, "The Spanish Colonial Judiciary," 30-31.

⁶³ Bianca Premo, "p: Women's Petitions in the Eighteenth-Century Spanish Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 2 (2011), 262,265.

Catholic Spaniards.⁶⁴ The ecclesiastical jurisdiction was curtailed in courts by the growing presence of the *alcalde mayores* which presided over an increasing number of cases regarding native idolatry. This was supported by Bishops Monterroso and Del Puerto who served in the late 17th century because they “valued the co-operation of civil authorities in inaccessible regions regarded as prone to rebellion, as it was the case in Villa Alta.”⁶⁵ Some of the towns that were becoming the epicenters of idolatry included the Cajonos. These places were gaining the attention of extirpators; their specialists and teachers in native religion in particular were causing a stir with their rituals counter to Christianity; they were acting as a replacement for Christian priests by hearing confessions and discouraging participation in Catholic rituals. The specialists, when identified, were placed in the royal jail of Antequera to remove their influence from their communities.⁶⁶

During the years 1702-1705, Bishop Ángel Maldonado commenced a very aggressive extirpation campaign.⁶⁷ Since he took his office of Bishop in Oaxaca in July 1702, he was faced with the end of the trial of San Francisco Cajonos with seventeen people that appealed their death sentences. As his first act, Bishop Ángel Maldonado, granted forgiveness from all idolatry convictions as long as the person was not a teacher and they confessed and repented. This offer lasted until 1703.⁶⁸ Beginning at the end of 1702, Ángel Maldonado started his operation across Villa Alta to eliminate idolatry and bring the indigenous population fully into the Church.

⁶⁴ John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 213.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 214.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 214-215.

⁶⁷ David Tavárez, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2011), 193.

⁶⁸ John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 218.

The bishop even recruited Joseph de Aragón y Alcántara, a successful extirpator from a couple of decades earlier.⁶⁹

Central to Bishop Ángel Maldonado's campaign was his offer of reprieve from the consequences of idolatrous actions. He acquired an Indian who had participated in the bishop's program of amnesty and Ángel Maldonado sent him off to go proclaim directly to the native communities of Villa Alta how he was able to be absolved of his charges of idolatry and encourage them to obtain this forgiveness also.⁷⁰ In exchange for amnesty, Bishop Ángel Maldonado demanded "denouncing their ritual specialists, turning in their clandestine ritual texts, and making a full confession about all their ritual practices."⁷¹ This caused rifts in the communities as they decided whether to partake in this offer and who would have to take the fall. This discussion showed up in the 1703 trial of the members of the town of Betaza that wanted to vehemently protect their specialists and native rituals that felt betrayed by townspeople of Yalálag that did not adhere to an alliance to forgo Bishop Ángel Maldonado's absolution for idolatry.⁷²

⁶⁹ John K. Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*, 219.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 219.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 219.

⁷² David Tavárez, *The Invisible War*, 219-220, 224.

Context for the Trial of San Francisco Cajonos

In the town of San Francisco Cajonos on September 14, 1700, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles notified a local Dominican, Fray Gaspar de los Reyes of a gathering of some of the Indian community at the home of Jose Flores where they would be participating in idolatrous acts.⁷³ They then offered to take the friar down to the location where all of the idolatry was beginning to take place and conceal him so that he could watch without being spotted.⁷⁴ Two Spanish men that were nearby serving in the convent, Diego de Mora, a blacksmith, and Manuel Rodriguez, a carpenter, were recruited by the friar to go with the two informants, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, near the house of Jose Flores to report what they witnessed.⁷⁵

When the four men climbed atop a rock that overlooked a courtyard behind the house of Jose Flores, they saw many people arriving to the house; some were already there killing and cleaning roosters.⁷⁶ Turkeys, chickens, and roosters were often used as sacrificial animals in native religion when ordered by the teachers.⁷⁷ Later that night, they returned to Fray Gaspar de los Reyes and described what they saw at Jose Flores's house and confirmed that there were

⁷³ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos* (México, Impr. del. Sagrado corazon de Jesús, 1889), 103.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 103.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 103.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 103-104.

⁷⁷ Kellen Kee McIntyre, "The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos': An 1890 Painted History of Zapotec Rebellion in 1700," Ph.D., The University of New Mexico, 1997, 46.

Indians engaging in idolatry.⁷⁸ Diego de Mora was even able to identify an *alcalde mayor*, Don Cristobal entering the house of Jose Flores despite his being covered in a wool blanket.⁷⁹

Seeing that this was an extensive idolatry problem, the men decided to inform the vicar, Friar Alonso de Vargas, of the growing situation. They assured him that they could catch them in the act of idolatry since the whole process was already in motion at Jose Flores's home. In response, Fray Alonso de Vargas sent for two Spanish men from the community, Captain Antonio Rodriguez de Pinelo and Jose de Balsalobre to help with the mission.⁸⁰ That same night, they compiled a group of about fifteen men and proceeded to the house of Jose Flores to confront the idolatrous acts and the perpetrators directly.⁸¹

Since it had begun raining, the Indians had moved inside the house from the courtyard when the party from the convent arrived.⁸² The men were able to observe what was happening in the main room; the Indians were kneeling and lying face down repeating prayers that one man, Sebastian Martin, was reading from a parchment. Eventually, two of the men noticed the intrusion and called out a warning to the others causing chaos. Friar Alonso de Vargas rebuked those gathered in Jose Flores's home and was very angry; he shouted his reprimands and shamed them for their apostasy. Amid the confusion, Jose de Balsalobre drew his sword and began to threaten the people in the room.⁸³ Hastily, everyone participating in the idolatrous

⁷⁸ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 104.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 104.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 104.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 104-105.

⁸² *Ibid*, 105.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 105.

ceremony fled and attempted to conceal their identity by covering with blankets and extinguishing the lights.⁸⁴ Only one Indian remained, the barber, Sebastian Martin. He apologized to the convents and admitted to being an accomplice and leader involved in the activities of the evening.⁸⁵

After everyone had left, the group of men from the convent were able to examine the scene more closely. They found images of saints facedown, paintings, papers with mysterious writings, bowls of blood, wax candles, and dead roosters and turkeys, some of which were hung on the wall by stakes.⁸⁶ Additionally, they found a deer in the middle of the floor with its guts spilling out of its belly; there were also pictures of saints facedown surrounding it.⁸⁷ All of these items were collected and brought back to the convent because they were perceived as objects and tools of idolatry.⁸⁸

The first correspondence between authority figures addressing the news from San Francisco Cajonos is a letter is from Friar Alonso de Vargas and Friar Gaspar los Reyes to the Provincial Father of Santo Domingo in Oaxaca to describe the events from the night of September 14, 1700. They state that two Christians from their town of San Francisco Cajonos notified them of idolatry happening in a home; they also noted that the town was already prone to general idolatry. Then, the friars told how they gathered additional men and left as a group for the house with the alleged idolatry. When they arrived in the rain, they were able to

⁸⁴ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 105.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 106.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 106.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 106.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 106.

find two large rooms and a patio filled with the native people kneeling or lying prostrate on the floor. When they saw this the friars called out the name of God and caused the people to panic and flee.⁸⁹ In their haste they left behind their items like the slaughtered roosters and deer. They then said how these were collected to the best of their abilities and brought with them. Captain Antonio Pinelo, Jose Balsalobre, and Diego de Mora were the most zealous for the cause of the Catholic Church in the opinions of the friars.⁹⁰

The morning after the confrontation with the idolaters, September 15, Friar Alonso de Vargas sent pleas for support from surrounding towns of San Balthasar Yazachi and Zoochila.⁹¹ It was this same morning, once they had all gathered, that Don Pedro, *mestizo alcalde mayor* from San Pedro Cajonos warned the men of the plan of the Indians of San Francisco Cajonos to seek revenge and attack the convent to retrieve the informants and kill them on the nearby mountain, Valsal. Others arrived later and corroborated the story of the upcoming siege on the convent.⁹² Throughout the day rumors of when and who the Indians would attack circulated as a group of them began to gather outside, down the hill from the convent.⁹³

Finally, late in the evening on the 15th, the Indians had entered the convent, close to where the men who had interrupted the ritual the night before were collected. The men inside the convent took up the little arms they had available and agreed that they would only use their

⁸⁹ *Carta de los R.R. P.P. Fr. Alonso de Vargas y Fr. Gaspar de los Reyes al R.P. Provincial de Santo Domingo en Oaxaca*. Apéndice Cuatro. In Gillow, Eulogio G. *Apuntes históricos*. México, Impr. del. Sagrado corazon de Jesús, 1889, 130.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 130-132.

⁹¹ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 107.

⁹² *Ibid*, 107.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 108.

weapons as a last resort of self-defense to save their own lives if necessary.⁹⁴ The quiet noise of the Indian crowd that had alerted the men inside of their presence soon turned into shouting as the group of Indians began to riot as they got closer; stones were thrown at the doors and windows as the masked individuals approached with spears, axes, machetes, and other weapons.⁹⁵

Eventually, the Indians were able to break through the gates and doors to where the men were gathered. They demanded Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles be handed over to which Friar Alonso de Vargas refused because of his obligation to protect anyone who took refuge in the church.⁹⁶ The Indians again demanded the two informants and threatened to burn down the entire church and town if they did not get Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles .⁹⁷ As if to illustrate this point, the convent was illuminated by the fire that had been set to the home of Juan Bautista next to the church.⁹⁸ The tension rose with more Indians attempting to recover some of the materials of idolatry that had been confiscated the day prior; fearing for their lives during this escalation, a couple of the men inside the room of the convent shot into the crowd which wounded one Indian and killed another.⁹⁹ In response to this violence, the Indians more fervently called for Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles to be turned over

⁹⁴ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 108-109.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 108-109.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 109.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 109.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 109.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 109-110.

into their custody immediately or they would kill everyone in the room. They refused Friar Alonso de Vargas's offer of money instead of the two men.¹⁰⁰

The attempts at negotiations only exasperated and angered the crowd of Indians further and even as the men inside the room discussed their options, some of the Indians made their way to the roof and began to dismantle it.¹⁰¹ Seeing as they were out of time and outnumbered, they determined the best idea was to hand over the two informants and save the church and the rest of their lives. One went out to speak to the crowd; he said they had decided to hand over Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles if the Indians would give their word to only imprison them and not harm them. The Indians agreed to this condition. The friars of the convent, still opposing the release of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles to the group outside, gave them communion before they went as requested by the two men.¹⁰²

Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles left without arms in order to die for God. As they left, Juan Bautista announced that if they were going to have to kill him tomorrow, to kill him now.¹⁰³ Once in the hands of their captors, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were bound and beaten, enduring fifteen to twenty lashes as they were interrogated and mocked. When they were asked who fired the shots into the crowd and why they betrayed and accused the idolators, the two men only answered by crying out to God and Mary for relief until they lost consciousness.¹⁰⁴ Until they woke up again, they were kept in the local jail; after which they

¹⁰⁰ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 110.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 110-111.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 111.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 112.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 112.

were made to trek to the close town of San Pedro to be whipped once more.¹⁰⁵ The only remnants of the Indian crowd that remained in San Francisco Cajonos was the body of the one that was shot in front of the convent.¹⁰⁶

Another letter was sent about the following night of September 15, 1700 from Friar Alonso de Vargas to the Provincial Father following the second night of events that occurred as a result of the disruption of the gathering at Jose Flores's house the day before. He recounted the scene where a crowd of Indians approached the convent with loud voices, whistles, and drums. They threw stones at the building and attempted to enter through a window, but some of the armed Spaniards inside defended it with their firearms.¹⁰⁷ The mob outside knew that the two Indians that had complained to the friars the night before about the activities of the community were inside, and they asked Alonso de Vargas for them to be surrendered. He replied that he would never agree to do so, but the crowd threatened to burn the convent and break into the cell through the ceiling and take the two men themselves if he did not comply. At this point, Antonio Pinelo gave into their demands on the condition that they agreed not to harm or kill the two. Upon release, the two informants were flogged and taken to San Pedro's jail to be kept until that Thursday.¹⁰⁸

Upon inspection of the convent after the crowd of Indians had left to take Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles to the prison, they found that the supposed instruments of idolatry

¹⁰⁵ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 112.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 112.

¹⁰⁷ *Carta de los R.R. P.P. Vargas y Reyes al R.P. Provincial*. Apéndice Cuatro. In Gillow, Eulogio G. *Apuntes históricos*. México, Impr. del. Sagrado corazón de Jesús, 1889, 131-132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 132.

had been taken back by their owners. Alonso de Vargas continued by saying that he does not see a need for an ecclesiastical judge to be sent down to San Francisco Cajonos just yet because they have the violence under control and are prepared to deal with anyone trying to set fires in the community. Plus, numerous Indians returned to the convent to ask for mercy for the demonstration the night before and said that they had learned the error of their ways. In order to avoid future riots and calm the tension, the friars granted them forgiveness.¹⁰⁹

The Indians specifically sought out Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles from the entire company that interrupted the gathering at Jose Flores's house on the night of September 14 because they had broken faith with their native community and informed against them. The fact that those two men were singled out by the crowd as the specific targets of revenge highlights how threatening native devotion instead of participating in and defending it crossed a major boundary with the community and was perceived as betrayal worthy of death. Even the words of the Indians as they beat Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles indicated that the act of notifying the friars of the ritual acts known to be defined as idolatry by the Church was an attack on the foundation of the community itself.

Early the morning of September 16th, the justice from Villa Alta, the town constable, and their helpers arrived at the convent in San Francisco Cajonos. They inspected the damage done and were notified that all the Indians had left town.¹¹⁰ Later in the day, about eighty Indians returned to destroy the houses of both Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles. The wife of

¹⁰⁹ *Carta de los R.R. P.P. Vargas y Reyes al R.P. Provincial*, 133.

¹¹⁰ *Eulogio G. Gillow, Apuntes históricos*, 113.

Jacinto de los Ángeles, Petrona, met them at the door and tried to talk them out of tearing down her home. She finally convinced them to leave it standing by paying them to go elsewhere.¹¹¹ The town constable also witnessed the demolition of Juan Bautista's house and the attempt to do the same to Jacinto de los Ángeles's house, but he did not have enough manpower to stop them or take the eighty Indians into custody.¹¹²

On September 17, some of the Indians and *alcalde mayores* involved in the incident on the night of September 15 at the convent returned and asked for forgiveness from the town constable and the friars at the convent.¹¹³ When the authorities inquired what became of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, the Indians replied that they had since been released from the jail in San Pedro and were sent to Chiapas or Guatemala so they would not have to suffer any more.¹¹⁴ It was unknown at this time that Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles had been killed; the story maintained by all of the native population was that Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were no longer imprisoned and had been released to travel elsewhere away from the community. The Indians who returned to the convent the following day were granted the forgiveness they requested by the friars.

In a third letter to the Provincial Father, Friar Alonso de Vargas informs him that there was more damage the night of the riot than previously thought because a small house had been destroyed; however, he describes how the friars impressed upon the Indians who sought

¹¹¹ Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 113.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 114.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 114.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 114.

forgiveness the severity of their actions. He also noted that they were distressed because the news had come that the two informants had been taken from the San Pedro prison and up towards Mount Tanga and there were no updates on where they had gone or what had happened to them from there although they remain hopeful.¹¹⁵

Because of concerns derived from the letters coming from San Francisco Cajonos, the Provincial Father of Santo Domingo, Nicolás de Andrade, alerted the Viceroy of what was happening in the town. He stated that the goal was to avoid capital punishment or other harsh physical disciplines and work to pacify the Indians.¹¹⁶

In 1890, *The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos* was a four-mural series by Urbano Olivera for San Juan de Dios in Oaxaca, Oaxaca. It depicted the events of the San Francisco Cajonos rebellion in September 1700. The murders of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were framed by this work as martyrdom, a common perception of their deaths by the Catholic Church though it was not officially recognized as such until 2002.¹¹⁷ *The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos* paintings use Gillow's interpretation of the events of September 1700 in San Francisco Cajonos to create the narrative for the series. Both of these works told the same story, but they were aimed at different audiences. Gillow addressed an elite audience while Olivera presented to an illiterate native audience thus he "selectively illustrated only those events which could

¹¹⁵ *Comunicacion del Venerable Cabildo de Oaxaca al Exmo. Señor Virey*. Apéndice Cuatro, In Gillow, Eulogio G. *Apuntes históricos*, México, Impr. del. Sagrado corazon de Jesús, 1889, 133-134.

¹¹⁶ *Carta del Reverendo Padre Provincial del Santo Domingo al Virey*. Apéndice Cuatro. In Gillow, Eulogio G. *Apuntes históricos*. México, Impr. del. Sagrado corazon de Jesús, 1889, 136-137.

¹¹⁷ Kellen Kee McIntyre, "The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos," viii; John Paul P.P., "Scriptum Est, Litterae Apostolicae, Venerabilibus Servis Dei Ioanni Baptistae et Hyacintho Ab Angelis Beatorum Honores Decernuntur, d. 1 m. Augusti a."

serve to stimulate broad native veneration of the martyrs.”¹¹⁸ Urbano Olivera’s murals give a visual depiction of the events that blatantly show actions as well as allude to other parts of the story from the witness testimonies and Gillow’s interpretations.

The first of the four panels was the *Denunciation of Idolatry, September 14*.¹¹⁹ In this portion, the text at the bottom of the painting reads: “On the fourteenth day of September 1700, D. Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles , V[enerable] fiscales of the parish of San Francisco Cajonos in the district of Villa Alta, denounced before the vicar and his minister an act of idolatry which was going to be celebrated in one of the houses of a principal of the pueblo, and in fact, the aforementioned religious surprised the idolaters, who in the act abandoned the objects of the sacrifice.”¹²⁰

In this first painting, Urbano Olivera represents the moment just before the chaos when the friars, the Indian informants, and their entourage enter the home of Jose Flores and disrupt an alleged idolatrous ceremony. He recreated this scene from the eye-witness accounts of the accusers, but his style and details, according to the analysis by author Kellen Kee McIntyre, show signs of sympathy to the Indians. In one corner of the painting, Juan Bautista is shown standing in the entrance. His social status is depicted in his costume which is a “mix of traditional native and Spanish elements.”¹²¹ This also indicates his ties to his indigenous

¹¹⁸ Kellen Kee McIntyre, “The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos,’ viii-ix.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 56.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 57-58.

community and his duties for the Church. Jacinto de los Ángeles is painted in the same way with identical clothing displaying his attachments to both communities.¹²²

Fray Alonso de Vargas, the Dominican vicar, is presented holding a whip in his right hand with two loops. This symbolized a powerful person; McIntyre concludes that it was also a “menacing portent to the fate of the informants.”¹²³ To portray shock and dismay, his free hand is positioned against his breast.¹²⁴ A Spaniard in their company, Jose de Balsalobre, was the one to draw his sword and shout rebukes at the gathering of people. He is shown raising his sword in his right hand over his head, representing the immediacy of the Spanish reaction by authorities for any Indian violating any part of the law, in this case, idolatry.¹²⁵

Because the scene is just as the confusion is about to develop, not everyone acknowledges the presence of the intruders. Only a few people from the group gathered at Jose Flores’s house are shown reacting. While those closest to the door begin to respond, most are still concentrated on the ceremony: “Two men scramble from the doorway brandishing lit *ocotes*. Two women nearest the door cover their heads in shame, while a third looks back toward the priests as she collects her *rebozo*, or shawl, tightly to her chest.”¹²⁶ The remainder of the Indians stand, kneel, and lie while they recite prayers led by Sebastian Martin. In the middle, Jose de Celi, governor, Cristobal de Robles, *alcalde*, and Juan Hernandez, *alcalde*,

¹²² Kellen Kee McIntyre, “The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos,” 61.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 60.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 60.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 60-61.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 61-62.

partake in leading the rituals. They are set apart by their hooded costumes that “looked like white habits...used by priests.”¹²⁷

Urbano Olivera also added the objects that were later confiscated by the group that came with the friars as details. He shows all of the animals, tortillas, tamales, blood, portraits of saints, etc. that was listed in Gillow’s account of the night. Alluding to the fact that all of the participants would swear in their testimonies that they were having a celebration dinner and not practicing any devotions, the artist adds in white plates and bowls as if it were a meal, though these were not accounted for in the description of the room.¹²⁸

The second was the *Assault on the Convento, September 15*.¹²⁹ The description at the bottom left of the painting reads: “The idolaters of Cajonos, angry at having been discovered, incited the pueblo and stoked [their] rancor [by] attacking the convento of the religious, from which they extracted the two fiscales; and possessed by a satanic hatred for the holy Catholic religion, they insulted the **ministers** and the venerable image of the most holy Mary.”¹³⁰

In this second portion of the work, Urbano Olivera decided to display “several highly physical and emotional events” that involved the great rioting crowd at the convent the day after the invasion of the priests into the home of Jose Flores.¹³¹ A large group is shown gathered outside in the plaza in front of the convent; they are presented as actively yelling up

¹²⁷ Kellen Kee McIntyre, “The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos,” 64-65.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 66-67.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 71.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 71.

at minister located above them on a balcony. Many of these people had covered their figures and cloaked themselves in white hoods so they would not be easily recognized.¹³²

There is also another conglomeration of people. A way away from the main uprising, spectators have come together to watch the spectacle. There were women, men, and children in this group, and McIntyre proposes that Olivera added this detail to assert that “not all village members ascribed to or participated in the riot.”¹³³

Although the piece does not show the interior of the room the men were located in inside of the convent, it does depict the scene surrounding it. Several Indians were attempting to destroy the sides of the cell that contained the friars, informants, and helpers. Behind them, other Indians rushed out of the dismantled doors of the cloister entrance with the objects of idolatry that had been housed in the pantry there after being confiscated the night before.¹³⁴ Above the roof of the cell, Indians are painted climbing up in order to tear it apart to gain access to those inside. Below the balcony, the dead Indian who was shot by the random bullets fired from within the cell into the crowd lies next to a kneeling Indian who appears to be the man wounded from the same bullets.¹³⁵

The third painting was *Whipping of the Fiscales, September 15*.¹³⁶ This piece in the series “features the flagellation of the two fiscales...on the plaza in front of the *convento*.”¹³⁷ The text

¹³² Kellen Kee McIntyre, “The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos,” 73.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 72.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 74.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 75.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 54.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 78.

beneath the painting describes the scene depicted in the painting as well as the events to follow the even on September 15: “After having promised not to hurt the v[enerable] fiscales who had denounced them, the rebels of Cajonos gave them many and very cruel whippings until they fell unconscious. The next day, September 16, 1700, the v[enerable] martyrs, for resisting to embrace idolatry, were murdered on the mountain by blows from machetes.”¹³⁸

The third mural is set in the same location; however, the scene has dramatically shifted. Fray Alonso de Vargas is alone in the balcony, but Urbano Olivera changed the perspective of the image to indicate that the friar is no longer in power of the situation and is now acting as a helpless spectator.¹³⁹ Other people who were hidden in the cell now peer out behind Alonso de Vargas as the attention has turned away from them and to the two informants in the possession of the mob all while the fire at Juan Bautista’s nearby house billows in the background.¹⁴⁰

Juan Bautista is tied to a pillar in the plaza in a slumped position. His arms are bound behind him by one Indian while another readies the whip to strike him again. More Indians are painted in the area, raising their fists, sticks, and machetes in an excited state as they propel the flogging onward. Juan Bautista’s upper torso is exposed with red marks from where the whip has torn his shirt and ripped into his skin.¹⁴¹ To the right of this scene, Jacinto de los Ángeles awaits his turn to be beaten on the pillar. He is painted in a position of prayer though

¹³⁸ Kellen Kee McIntyre, “The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos,” 79.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 78.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 78.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 80.

his hands are tied. The spectators are still in the back of the scene along a ledge of the wall above the plaza. McIntyre suspects that Urbano Olivera included so many Indians in the crowd of onlookers to represent how the whole town was complicit in some degree to these events. He even included a larger man with a silver-headed cane that indicated he was a governor. It is known that there were many officials in the crowd, including some from other towns that travelled to watch the rebellion at the convent.¹⁴²

The last mural was the *Absolution of the Pueblo, September 20*.¹⁴³ The caption at the lower right corner of the painting says, “after the martyrdom of the v[enerable] D. Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles , the pueblo asked pardon for this offense, and with authorization from the Holy Bishop, it was given public absolution after having made solemn professions of Catholic faith.”¹⁴⁴ McIntyre points out that the text written below the mural is misleading because it “suggests that the painting depicts the general absolution granted by the church to the pueblo only years after the rebellion—after the murder of the informants had been proven and various officials from the six Cajonos pueblos that participated in the riot had been executed” which is not the case. In fact, Olivera painted the earlier absolution given by the Dominican friars at the convent five days after the uprising, not the later absolution granted to the town after the trial had concluded.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Kellen Kee McIntyre, “The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos,’ 81-82.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 54.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 86.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 86.

In this depiction of forgiveness, the vicar is standing in an open doorway with his arms outstretched to the sea of men, women, and children kneeling and standing with hands together in prayer or reaching up to the priests. Many are shown begging for the friars to absolve them.¹⁴⁶ Most are dressed like they are from the local towns, but there are a few figures among the crowd that are dressed foreign to the area: “She wears a dark blue huipil, the only non-Cajonos indigenous dress in the series. She is followed by a woman in a white huipil and skirt, a man with a red scarf at his neck and a man who leans on a walking staff. These last two carry packs, indicating that they probably traveled some distance to receive absolution.”¹⁴⁷ This is an attempt by Olivera to suggest that there were many other towns that had been involved in the volatile riot.¹⁴⁸

However sincere the expressions of those in the center of the painting were, there were others on the outskirts that had faces that indicated they felt more contempt or amusement from the absolution. Olivera included six men and one lone man holding a symbol of authority along the edge of the wall to represent those Indians that were reported by witnesses to be laughing or displaying antipathy for the absolution ceremony and the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in general.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the church officials were using the ceremony as just an act to pacify the Indians and keep things calm until the authorities from Oaxaca could arrive and begin a proper trial.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Kellen Kee McIntyre, “‘The Venerable Martyrs of Cajonos,’ 86-87.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 88.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 88-89.

Community in San Francisco Cajonos, 1700-1701

In San Francisco Cajonos, there was an uprising that led to the deaths of many Indians as punishment for the murders of two Indian *fiscales* in addition to rebellion and idolatry. This trial brought the problems of the region to the surface. Even though this was a case brought before the criminal court of Villa Alta because of the murders and violence in addition to the acts of idolatry, the ecclesiastical authorities were still involved. The ecclesiastical judge of Oaxaca became involved and started his own investigation of why a *reducción* of supposedly converted Indians had taken up idolatry instead of practicing only the Catholicism of which their local Order was supposed to be instructing them.¹⁵¹ Soon after, this issue would be remedied by the extirpation system of Bishop Maldonado.

The documents that describe the events of the day of the murders, account that after the seizure of the two informants, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, they were beaten and imprisoned by the group of idolators. Afterwards, the assailants took them to a mountain top and removed their arms. The hearts of the two men were removed and given to the dogs while their bodies were burned.¹⁵² The house of another Indian who had tried to give aid to Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles was also attacked by the mob during the same night. He was a target because the night before he had tried to protect the two men from capture by the rioting crowd and was hit with stones outside the room where they hid in the convent.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 4v.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 1v.

¹⁵³ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 1v; Eulogio G. Gillow, *Apuntes históricos*, 109.

In the beginning of the trial, December 22, 1700, the *alcalde mayor* of Villa Alta, Juan Mier de Tojo, sought out the heads of the acts of sedition and idolatry that occurred a few months prior in San Francisco Cajonos.¹⁵⁴ Because these leaders of the group that committed the crimes gave the orders for the uprising that included the threats and attacks on the church, they were of particular importance to the case against the Indians.¹⁵⁵ So many of those involved held some official position in town, so the trial targeted them as leaders in their to try to discourage the rest of their community from rioting again.

The reinforcements and support intended to help the town of San Francisco Cajonos capture the heads of the uprising was paused and directed under the control of Villa Alta until their *alcalde mayor*, Juan Antonio Mier del Tojo, deemed the help necessary. The *alcalde mayor* of Villa Alta waited on a formal investigation that found the guilty and mandated their apprehension.¹⁵⁶ He determined that it would be most efficient to select one day and notify neighboring town authorities so that everyone can be alert to possible guilty parties fleeing to the refuge of nearby communities to avoid arrest.¹⁵⁷ It was also cautioned that suddenly punishing the Indians could send them retreating into the mountains where they could not be easily found; this would prevent the heads of the idolatry and murder of the two men from being captured.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, pg 142.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 1-1v.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 1v-2.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 2v.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 4.

Although the beginning of the trial specifically targeted and mentioned the heads of the group in the narrative of the night of the murders, the prosecutor went on to address the assistants in the case and advised on how they might be identified. He said that if any Indians were fleeing town or caught in suspicion of involvement by town lookouts, they should be apprehended because it is possible and likely they are involved in this high-profile case.¹⁵⁹ It was restated multiple times about the importance of capturing *all* Indians involved in the night of idolatry and the subsequent murders of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles.¹⁶⁰ Without knowledge of the bodies, it was difficult to prove that Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were killed, so the goal stated at the beginning of the investigation was that they would gather testimony from witnesses on where the bodies were and how they died; thus it was essential that everyone involved was brought into custody before the court so this information could be extracted from them.¹⁶¹ So they could be prepared to assist in taking wanted people into custody, neighboring towns and officials were notified of the possibility of the accused seeking refuge in their communities and the nearby mountains.¹⁶²

Actually catching the leaders of the crimes proved to be difficult for authorities. In March of 1701, those who were in charge of bringing the right people into custody reported that the ones who headed the events on the nights of September 14-16 were never seen and were kept hidden by the other Indian accomplices. Since the priority was to detain those

¹⁵⁹ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 2v-3.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 6-7.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 4v.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 6v.

specific men, keeping them out of sight was an effective method to delay their capture.¹⁶³ It was not just the leaders that were being concealed; it is noted that none of the Indians acknowledged the deaths of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles and acted as if they never occurred. According to the local authorities it was as if the devil was instructing them to keep the murders a secret.¹⁶⁴

Those involved from San Francisco Cajonos that were captured were tortured in order to extract a confession about the validity of the rumor surrounding the possible deaths of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles. This method proved effective because the testimonies were consistent that the two *fiscales* had in fact been taken to the town of San Pedro and killed.¹⁶⁵ The Spanish officials stated how beneficial the use of torture would be for the future because it could go beyond just teaching a lesson to the perpetrators of violence. It would encourage Indians, out of fear, to ardently condemn crimes in their own communities first, thus dissuading these acts from occurring in the first place.¹⁶⁶

In the trial conducted in 1701 for the rebellion in San Francisco Cajonos in September, many witnesses were called for their testimony. To avoid incrimination of themselves and members of their community, individuals with direct involvement in the acts of idolatry, sedition, and murder deflected all of the charges in a very consistent manner across the board. The murders of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were generally omitted; the witness

¹⁶³ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 5v.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 5v.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

would not mention their fates at all or perpetuate the story that they had been released to go off to Chiapas or Guatemala. The acts of rebellion at the convent were very public and hard to deny, but they had already been absolved of that crime by the friars the following day. The accusation of idolatry was the most adamantly opposed by each witness. They all adhered to the same explanation that the practices and items the friars and their company observed were all for a celebration dinner for Jose Flores.

On top of the murder of the two informants, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, for betraying loyalty to the native community by siding with the friars and going out of their way to notify them of the large gathering to participate in idolatrous rituals at Jose Flores's house, the thorough rebuttal of the charge of idolatry shows how tightly community was bound around defending and protecting their native devotions. The diversity of the pueblos from which the witnesses originated was also a confirmation the bonds of community reached beyond the town and was really about agreement on the will to continue to practice native devotions and rituals.

In the testimony of Joseph Patiño, he explains the gathering at the home of Jose Flores on September 14, 1700 and how it was never idolatry, so Juan Bautista and Jacinto's false accusation was really at fault and led to the whole disaster resulting in their demise. Joseph Patiño insists that what was classified as an idolatrous ritual was actually just a community celebration on behalf of Jose Flores and his accomplishment of fulfilling and completing his

duties as *mayordomo* of San Joseph fraternity.¹⁶⁷ He explained the dead roosters, tamales, and tortillas as simply part of the preparation for the dinner feast they would have in honor of the service of Jose Flores. Joseph Patiño went on to call the two informants enemies that supposed that there was idolatry occurring because they were not a part of the group that was attending that night at Jose Flores's house. Once they had denounced them to the religious Spaniards at the church, they gathered more and more people and barged in brandishing weapons upon the celebration dinner. Joseph Patiño also made the argument that the entire situation was essentially a set-up because of past accusations against members of their group. He implied that the authorities were looking for an excuse to punish the Indians in attendance, so they published that they were idolators to justify their actions against the crowd from Jose Flores's house.¹⁶⁸

Nicolas de Espinosa was an Indian *principal* called as a witness from San Mateo Cajonos. He told the same story as Joseph Patiño that he knew of a gathering at the home of Jose Flores to celebrate his time as *mayordomo* of San Joseph. Then, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles alerted the local ministers because they saw the roosters and tortillas being cooked by visitors into the house. He noted that nearby town's natives were involved: San Pedro, San Miguel, Santo Domingo, San Pablo, and San Mateo and were angry that they took the dead deer and other things from Jose Flores's house to the convent, and they wanted their items back.¹⁶⁹ Then, according to Nicolas de Espinosa, the group of Indians from all the

¹⁶⁷ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 113.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 113-114.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 75-75v.

aforementioned towns took the two men, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles to San Pedro after beating them after their seizure from the convent because they did not want their families to know that they were going to harm them.¹⁷⁰

Lorenzo Bautista, another *principal* from San Mateo Cajonos, gave his testimony on the events that transpired in September 1700. He agreed with the previous statements from the other witnesses that the group at Jose Flores's house was there to recognize his time as *mayordomo* and that Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles had told the friars that it was an idolatrous event.¹⁷¹ Lorenzo Bautista said that the group of indigenous people that stormed the convent to recover their confiscated materials included some from the neighboring towns that Nicolas de Espinosa listed. According to Lorenzo Bautista, the mob burned the house of Juan Bautista and whipped the two men before throwing them in the San Pedro prison. Beyond this, Lorenzo Bautista did not acknowledge the deaths of the two men. He said he did not know what happened after they were taken to jail but mentioned that the whole town wanted to kill them.¹⁷²

Pasqual Perez was called as a witness from the town of San Pablo where he had served as *alcalde*. He also began his testimony with the events of the night of September 14, 1700 when there was a dinner at the house of Jose Flores. Pasqual Perez did affirm that the two *fiscales*, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were killed after they were captured by the

¹⁷⁰ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 76.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 76v.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 76v-77.

Indians from San Francisco Cajonos and surrounding towns because the two men had called their gathering idolatry.¹⁷³

The testimony of Domingo de la Cruz native *principal* of San Balthazar Yasachi covered the night when Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were captured from the convent. Domingo de la Cruz witnessed the Indian crowd gather at the convent and push forward to where the men were located inside. He then saw the Indian from San Pedro fall to the ground after being shot from inside the friar's room. Domingo de la Cruz noted in his statement that he did not know what happened to the two informants after they were taken to jail by the crowd, but he had heard they had been released.¹⁷⁴

Pedro de la Cruz had been an *alcalde* for his town, Santiago Suchila, in 1700 and bore witness before the court along with Juan de la Cruz from the same town about the events from September in San Francisco Cajonos. They said that Juan Tirado came to their town to notify the leaders of what had transpired in San Francisco Cajonos and that there was a mob of Indians going to the convent to take revenge on Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles. Both Pedro de la Cruz and Juan de la Cruz knew the crowd took the two men to the prison in San Pedro but were unaware of what occurred after their alleged release.¹⁷⁵

Pablo Ximenez, an Indian from San Pablo, had served as regidor in the previous year. He gave his testimony that by September 16, 1700, he had learned of the events in San Francisco

¹⁷³ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 77v-78.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 78v-79v.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 79v-81v.

Cajonos. From his source, there was an interruption of a meeting and dinner at Jose Flores's house on September 14 by Juan Bautista, Jacinto de los Ángeles, and the supporters they had gathered with the friars' help. Then, there was the anger of the natives of the town when they came together the next day at the convent to exact revenge on the two informants.¹⁷⁶ Also from San Pablo, Nicolas de la Cruz was a witness, and his second-hand information was the same as Pablo Ximenez about the incidents that occurred in San Francisco Cajonos.¹⁷⁷

Bartolome de los Ángeles was the governor of the town of San Miguel Cajonos and San Pedro as well as being connected by relatives to San Francisco Cajonos. He said that immediately after the Indians had been caught in idolatry, they fled to San Pedro. Then, he witnesses, though he was not a part of the crowd, the assault on the convent, the death of the Indian at the hands of some of the men secured in the room with the friars, and the capture and whipping of Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles by the mob at San Francisco Cajonos. Bartolome de los Ángeles testified that he did not know what happened to the two men after they were put in the jail at San Pedro.¹⁷⁸

From San Miguel Cajonos, Joan Martín, gave his statement that he had heard of the events of the interference with the celebration dinner at the home of Jose Flores in San Francisco Cajonos and then the riot that followed the next night at the convent when Juan

¹⁷⁶ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 81v-82.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 82v-83.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 83-83v.

Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were captured and beaten. He witnessed them being taken to the neighboring town's jail, but he did not say what happened to them afterwards.¹⁷⁹

Francisco Luiz, an Indian, from San Francisco Cajonos and former *alcalde* gave his account of the events that transpired with his community. On September 14, Francisco Luiz went to the house of Jose Flores with his five-year-old son, Joseph, carrying some money from the fraternity of San Joseph for Jose Flores since he finished his term as *mayordomo*. He noted that most of the community was gathered there together for dinner to celebrate this accomplishment of Jose Flores. Around eight o'clock that night, the friars, Juan Bautista, Jacinto de los Ángeles, and others that had been recruited entered the house with swords. According to Francisco Luiz, all they found and confiscated was intended for cooking, even the blood from the birds, and that they took everything from the table except the deer that was still on the ground. Francisco Luiz recalled that Jacinto de los Ángeles entered the kitchen area and took some pig meat and threw it to the dogs. The people in the kitchen fled in fear.¹⁸⁰ By the following day, all of the surrounding towns were aware of the events of September 14 and other Indians agreed to help those of San Francisco Cajonos. Together with the larger community, they confronted the convent on the night of September 15 and asked for Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles to be released to them. He stated that the two were locked in a room in the convent with other men including the *españoles* who killed one Indian and injured another with their guns. In response, the crowd of Indians outside threw stones. Since

¹⁷⁹ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 84-84v.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 84v-85.

the group outside was overwhelming, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were handed over by Antonio Pinelo despite objections. The two men were then whipped and taken to the prison in San Pedro. Francisco Luiz identified one of the men seen beating Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles as Lorenzo Guzman, a former town constable. Beyond this, Francisco Luiz declared that he did not know where the two men went after the prison.¹⁸¹

Bartolome de los Ángeles was also a witness from the town of San Francisco Cajonos. He was not at the house of Jose Flores that night, but he heard that Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles had brought a group of men to the home where a lot of Indians were gathered to have a dinner to honor Jose Flores's time as *mayordomo* to denounce them for idolatry. Then, they took all of their goods for the brought by the community including the rooster, deer, and tamales to the convent. The following night, Bartolome de los Ángeles says that the group of Indians went to the convent and collected Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, whipped them, and imprisoned them in San Pedro. Bartolome de los Ángeles did not speak to where the men went after they were released from custody.¹⁸²

Also native to the town of San Francisco Cajonos, Pascual Martin served as a witness to the events beginning on September 14, 1700. He starts with how the town was gathered at the home of Jose Flores with roosters, tortillas, tamales, and a deer for dinner to acknowledge his time as *mayordomo*, but Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles notified the local friars that there was activity going on at the home that needed to be stopped. They came to the house

¹⁸¹ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 85-85v.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 86-87.

with a large group to interrupt what they chose to identify as idolatry, and the men from the convent took all of the items brought to the home by the community back with them. The next morning, Pascual Martin joined the company that confronted the men inside of the convent and demanded that they surrender Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles. Once out of the friar's room in the convent, the two informants were whipped for spreading the lie that the celebration dinner at Jose Flores's house was idolatrous in nature. Then, the two men were taken to San Pedro's jail. Pascual Martin outlines a discussion of whether or not to turn the two men over to the town constable, but he did not know the outcome other than Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were hurt.¹⁸³

Gerónimo Francisco was also a witness and native of San Francisco Cajonos. He said that the community was gathered at the house of Jose Flores to celebrate the end of his position as *mayordomo* when the two informants, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles entered with a group of men that took everything for the dinner back to the convent, calling it idolatrous. When describing the group that went to the convent the next day, Gerónimo Francisco mentions that there were natives that had travelled from the nearby towns of San Pedro, San Miguel, Santo Domingo, San Pablo, and San Mateo. Then, the one Indian was shot and killed at random causing an even greater uproar from the crowd that was calling for Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles. Gerónimo Francisco went into more detail about the discussion on returning the two men to the town authorities after they were placed in the San Pedro prison; he recounted that Cristobal de Robles, an *alcalde* for San Francisco Cajonos, called him and four

¹⁸³ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 87-88.

others to go to San Pedro and retrieve the two men and send them to the town's constable. Some wanted to harm the two informants, so the group of five left them with Lorenzo Guzman and others that were giving them lashes.¹⁸⁴

Another native of San Francisco, Juan Mathias, was presented as a witness. He was close friends with Jose Flores. Juan Mathias was at the dinner celebrating Jose Flores's completion of his time as *mayordomo* when the company from the convent including Joseph de Balsalobre and Diego de Mora and took the roosters, tamales, and deer with them. Almost everyone, including Juan Mathias fled, but Sebastian Martin stayed behind and he was to carry the deer for the men. The people from the gathering at Jose Flores's house discovered that Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles were the ones who told the friars that the dinner was an idolatrous worship. Juan Mathias recalled how angry the group was at this betrayal, and how they decided to call on the natives from the surrounding area to join them when they confronted Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles at the convent. He finished his testimony by saying how the two men were released from San Pedro's prison at the request of their families, but he did not know what became of them.¹⁸⁵

Juan Martin of San Francisco Cajonos was the last witness to give his testimony. Again, he told the same story that the gathering at Jose Flores's home was just a dinner to acknowledge his time serving as *mayordomo* of San Joseph. The two informants interrupted the celebration and took all of the things brought by the Indians that night back to the convent

¹⁸⁴ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 88-89.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 89-90.

while everyone else there fled. The next day they were agitated about what transpired and gathered at the convent where they threw stones and recovered their confiscated items in the general commotion. Then, they were able to get Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles from their sanctuary in the convent. The crowd whipped them before transporting them to the San Pedro prison.¹⁸⁶

Separately, in letter form, two men, Sebastian de Alcántara and Pascual Manuel, gave their statements about what they knew of the events of September 1700. Unlike the others who denied the idolatry and did not give descriptions of the practices, these two men had little community ties to the Indians that would override their status and community as *indio ladinos*, similar to why the two informants seemed to turn on their Indian roots.

On November 4, 1700, Sebastian de Alcántara, an *indio ladino* of San Pablo Cajonos, gave his testimony about what he knew of the state of idolatry locally from his own awareness and what he heard of the Indians of San Francisco Cajonos. He said that the people from San Francisco Cajonos came to San Pablo, and Sebastian de Alcántara learned of what happened directly from the Indians involved. They told him that Jose Flores was an Indian who had been punished for acts of idolatry and that there were others in San Miguel that also killed dogs and roosters and used them as sacrifices for idolatry. Sebastian de Alcántara went on to list the

¹⁸⁶ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 90-91.

names the teachers, specialists, and assistants of idolatry from other towns, Santo Domingo, Zoochila, and San Pablo.¹⁸⁷

Another *indio ladino*, Pascual Manuel from Santo Domingo, explained how the native rituals in his town worked as idolatry. In his description, the Indians of Santo Domingo would go out and kill dogs and rooster and the meat, blood, tamales, and tortillas would be offered to their gods as a sacrifice. They would kneel and eat the tamales and tortillas with veneration and dedication to their gods for providing it for the community. Pascual Manuel mentioned that this usually happened on the road leading into the town of Santo Domingo from San Francisco Cajonos where there is a cave. According to Pascual Manuel, many others attend ceremonies here including those from San Pedro, San Miguel, San Pablo, San Mateo, San Juan, and Yalálag. This is where rituals, teachings, and prayers take place.¹⁸⁸

At the conclusion of the trial, thirty-four Indians were brought in and tried for the crimes of sedition, murder, and idolatry. Thirty-two of the thirty-four natives were sentenced to death. The execution of the sentence was carried out for the ones without the right to appeal while the seventeen with the power to appeal their sentence did so and were not killed. The sixteen men who were sentenced to death were quartered and their heads placed on stakes along the

¹⁸⁷ *Declaracion de Sebastian de Alcántara*, Apéndice Cuatro, In Gillow, Eulogio G. *Apuntes históricos*, México, Impr. del. Sagrado corazon de Jesús, 1889, 136-139.

¹⁸⁸ *Declaracion de Pascual Manuel*, Apéndice Cuatro, In Gillow, Eulogio G. *Apuntes históricos*, México, Impr. del. Sagrado corazon de Jesús, 1889, 139-141.

road to Villa Alta to serve as a warning to any others who thought about rising up against Spanish forces.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 6, Expediente 18, 21-91v.

Community in Betaza and Yalálag, 1703

On December 17, 1703, there was a fair in the town of Yalálag. Many from the surrounding areas attended including some notorious native religion specialists and teachers from the town of Betaza. Among them was Augustín Gonzalo who was wanted by order of Bishop Ángel Maldonado for his involvement in idolatry. Another was Pedro de Paz, former *alcalde* and *gobernador* who had castigated councilmen from Yalálag, calling them like women for not joining in the resistance and fighting for their idols with their last drop of blood.¹⁹⁰

A Spaniard, Bernardo García, spotted Augustín Gonzalo first. Then, after the exchange between Pedro de Paz and the *regidores* from Yalálag, Bernardo García joined forces with governor from Yalálag, Juan de la Cruz and together they arrested Augustín Gonzalo, Pedro de Paz, and other officials present at the fair.¹⁹¹ The community from Betaza “interpreted these arrests as a direct attack from Yalálag,” and there was immediate retaliation.¹⁹²

Some of the women and *alcaldes* from Betaza went and complained to the *alcalde mayor* about the arrests while Augustín Gonzalo, one of the prisoners, sent his nephew to circulate the news of what had transpired at the fair in Yalálag. Finally, a courier from Yalálag who was carrying a message of the escalating events in the town to the *alcalde mayor* of Villa Alta was captured by a crowd in Betaza and held captive. When the *alcalde mayor* of Villa Alta, Diego de Rivera Cotes, heard of what had happened at the fair and the messenger held prisoner

¹⁹⁰ David Tavarez, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2011), 224.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 224.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 224.

with his correspondence from Yalálag, he dispatched his *alguacil mayor* and a small company of sixteen armed men to Betaza. Once there, they released the courier, recovered the letter, and moved most of the arrested men from Betaza to the royal jail to avoid any more problems and attempts at revenge or inciting a rebellion.¹⁹³

In December 1703, Villa Alta's *alcalde mayor*, Diego de Rivera Cotes heard the case of the Indians of the town of Betaza that had been arrested in Yalálag. The court required witnesses and their testimonies to properly judge the case for the individuals from Betaza that had been labelled as culprits.¹⁹⁴

Diego de Rivera Cotes sent one of his authorities with a company of sixteen men – four *indios* from Analco, eight *españoles*, and four *mestizos* and *mulatos* – to Betaza. They were instructed to go to the courtyard of the church and the jail to find the Indians that were likely together plotting against the town of Yalálag. When the group of seventeen arrived, they found the *alcaldes* they sought; among them were Agustín Gonzales, Nicolás Martín, Felipe de Tiago as well as Agustín Gutiérrez, a notary. Once they had gathered the leaders, they asked them about the Indian messenger from Yalálag that had been detained in Betaza by the community. They also inquired to the whereabouts of the letters he was carrying.¹⁹⁵ The group sent by Cotes then transferred some of the Betaza prisoners, including Pedro de Paz and Joseph Bolaños, to Lachitaa where the royal prison was located.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ David Tavarez, *The Invisible War*, 224-225.

¹⁹⁴ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 7, Expediente 9, 1-1v.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 2v-3.

Bernardo García gives his written testimony on the events that took place in Yalálag that set off the whole trial. He describes how he first recognized Augustín Gonzalo by his name. Then he and an *alcalde* from Yalálag, Juan de la Cruz, apprehended and put Augustín Gonzalo and Pedro de Paz in jail for having committed idolatry. Bernardo García also mentions that they were able to capture another, an *alcalde* also from Betaza, Joseph Bolaños.¹⁹⁷ Bernardo García also recalled how he saw Juan de la Cruz approaching Augustín Gonzalo, a known teacher of idolatry, and arrest him.¹⁹⁸ They joined forces and worked together to detain the people; Juan de la Cruz himself approached two men from Betaza and one from Lachitaa and took them into custody.¹⁹⁹

Juan de la Cruz, governor for Yalálag, also gave his perspective on the series of events from when he helped arrest the men from Betaza. He acknowledges that he had contact with Spaniard Bernardo García, a sheriff, at the fair. There at the fair, he saw an Indian from Betaza named Augustín Gonzalo who was known for his involvement with idolatry. It had not been possible to capture him before for his practices because he had been hidden, but once he was seen at the fair, Juan de la Cruz apprehended him and took him to the town jail. Also, Joseph Bolaños of Betaza was put in the prison for the same charges of idolatry. Another townsman from Betaza that was arrested that day for involvement in idolatry was Pedro de Paz. He came into Yalálag and proclaimed that the men should put on the petticoats of their wives for complying with authorities and turning in their idols and that they should have lost their blood

¹⁹⁷ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 7, Expediente 9, 4-4v.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 5-5v.

first. For this declaration, Juan de la Cruz and Bernardo García arrested Pedro de la Paz.²⁰⁰ After this series of arrests, Joseph de Morales and Juan Martin of Yalálag were dispatched with a letter written by Bernardo García that gave notice of the detention of officials from the town of Betaza. They were stopped in Betaza though their destination was Villa Alta.²⁰¹

Pedro de Paz, one of the first from Betaza arrested by the duo of Juan de la Cruz and Bernardo García at the fair in Yalálag, gave his confession to officials of the court.²⁰² He begins by confirming that he was present at the fair in Yalálag the day that he was arrested. Pedro de Paz continues by recalling the two men from Yalálag that approached him and took him to the jail. Once there, they asked him about what he said to the *regidor*, and he said he answered them truthfully. He told the two men that detained him that he had encouraged the natives not to turn in their idols.²⁰³ Pedro de Paz describes how he was shamed and punished a lot by his captors while he was imprisoned. He told how he was in the jail with another Indian from Betaza, Augustín Gonzalo, who sent his nephew to tell the *alcalde* from Betaza about their predicament.²⁰⁴ To conclude his confession, Pedro de Paz names a number of teachers of idolatry that he knew from his town and described some of the ritual objects that they all typically used like the tortillas and other dinner items.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 7, Expediente 9, 8-9.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 9.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 17.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 17v.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 17v-18.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 18-19.

Juan Martin, an Indian from Yalálag was present when the men from Betaza detained messenger, Joseph Morales, another Indian from Yalálag.²⁰⁶ In his statement, he describes the scene of the capture of the messenger, Joseph Morales, by the Indians from Betaza in response to the arrests. Juan de la Cruz had sent a dispatch to the alcalde mayor, but as the messenger left town and passed through Betaza, he was stopped by a group of ten or twelve Indians he did not know from the town that night.²⁰⁷ They asked Joseph Morales where he was going, and he responded that he was heading to Villa Alta, but he lied about the reason and what he was carrying. Then, the men bound the hands of Joseph Morales and took him to the jail in Betaza where he was shackled.²⁰⁸ The men from Betaza took the letter from the messenger and delivered it to Nicolas Martin, alcalde. The alcalde then gathered many Indians together to the jail where other leaders were already imprisoned, and they took torches with them. Since some were inside the jail, they could not meet with the alcalde and others outside, still they gave their support and said they were their companions.²⁰⁹ Once the alcalde mayor of Villa Alta heard of the situation arising, he immediately took action and sent down his constable with a company of men with guns to Betaza to disband the group of Indians and remove the prisoners that were being housed in the town jail so they can be incarcerated elsewhere.²¹⁰

In Joseph Morales's testimony, he describes the events from the beginning the day of the firsts arrests of the alleged idolators from Betaza. On the 16th of December 1703, there was

²⁰⁶ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 7, Expediente 9, 5v.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 5v-6.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 6.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 6.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 6-6v.

a fair in Yalálag; the men that would become prisoners that day attended, travelling from the nearby town of Betaza.²¹¹ Later, when the *alcaldes* sent Joseph Morales in the direction of Villa Alta, he went accompanied by Juan Martin and they brought along the message for the *alcalde mayor* with them. When it came time for the two to pass through Betaza, and had entered the town of Lachitaa, about twelve or fourteen Indians approached them on the road with rods in their hands. They asked the men where they were coming from and where they were going; Joseph Morales said that they were going to Villa Alta, but he gave a different reason other than delivering an important message to the *alcalde mayor*. The group of men then tied their hands and took them prisoner back to Betaza, calling them liars.²¹² The letters intended for Villa Alta were brought along with them on the way to the jail where the men were shackled, and the letters taken from their possession.²¹³ Nicolas Martin, *alcalde* in Betaza, was the one who received the letter that had been taken from Joseph Morales and Juan Martin. He gathered a group around the jail where an *alcalde* and others were confined; there was lots of yelling and commotion where the crowd gathered in the courtyard of the prison. After that night and the next morning in jail, they were rescued, and the letters were recovered.²¹⁴

Later in the year, Diego de Rivera Cotes “issued an arrest order against eleven Betaza residents and three men from Lachitaa, including the natives seized earlier in Yalálag” in order to dissuade anyone from leading a revolt. Many of those arrested were current or former

²¹¹ Archivo Histórico Judicial. Juzgado de Villa Alta, Serie Criminal. Legajo 7, Expediente 9, 7.

²¹² *Ibid*, 7.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 7-7v.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 7v-8.

community leaders and officials, so their incarceration helped deter any organized uprising and maintain peace in that region. It was in the final stages of the trial the following January that Diego de Rivera Cotes learned that these teachers of native rituals were misusing Church funds for idolatrous practices.²¹⁵

Near the end of the trial, Diego de Rivera Cotes decides to divide the accused Indians by involvement levels in the allocation of Church funds to idolatrous ceremonies. He released six of the specialists because they had minimal association with the misuse of the money; however, their property was still seized in order to pay for the cost of the trial and any fines they accumulated from their charges of being idolators.²¹⁶ The others that were not released remained in jail and had their property taken by the court as well. The following year in 1705, the *cabildo* of Betaza offered to pay back the funds stolen: 168 pesos.²¹⁷

In the testimonies of those closely involved with the events that took place in December 1703, the theme of community shows through the reactions of all of the Indians of Betaza when their spiritual leaders were apprehended by people from Yalálag. They retaliated by taking some of Yalálag's residents' captive and began gathering to possibly plot an even bigger uprising against the nearby town for crossing the boundary of native solidarity with their "idolatrous" ceremonies and practices. Defiling the loyalty of their local Indian community to fulfill orders from the extirpator, Bishop Maldonado, and arrest Betaza's specialists and

²¹⁵ David Tavarez, *The Invisible War*, 225.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 227.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 227.

teachers showed that internal betrayal was perceived as a greater threat than the external forces of extirpation.

Conclusion

The members of the communities accused of idolatry were individuals that acted in dynamic ways both in favor of and against native rituals deemed incompatible with Christianity by Spanish authorities. The communities shifted and responded as they saw appropriate to the practice of native religious devotions and the repercussions for taking part in them.²¹⁸

In both example cases, the Indians partaking in native practices unapologetically defended their rights to perform native rituals. In the case from San Francisco Cajonos, the ceremony was done privately as to not intentionally disrupt the balance of the town, and it was defended by the adamant and collective denial of its existence as well as the pursuit and punishment of the two *fiscales* that rejected and rebuked the community by bringing in the friars and their company to witness the ceremony.

In the case of Betaza and Yalálag, community based around idolatry was more readily shown. The best example is when Pedro de Paz publicly shamed a *regidor* from Yalálag for voluntarily handing over his idols instead of fighting to keep them until his last drop of blood. Also, the intensifying acts of vengeance on the whole town of Yalálag when Betaza kidnapped the messenger reveals that the boundaries of community were as wide or narrow as the needed to be when a group was determining if there had been disloyalty.

²¹⁸ Rosalba Piazza, "Los 'Mártires' de San Francisco Cajonos: Preguntas y Respuestas Ante Los Documentos de Archivo," *Historia Mexicana* 58, no. 2 (2008), 749.

In Villa Alta, Oaxaca from about 1700 to 1704, a spotlight was shone on how community, especially for the indigenous populations, was defined. Through these court cases, community is shown in the protection and defense of native rituals and idolatry.

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