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## Chapter 1

# ASKING QUESTIONS IN THE RESTLESS DISCIPLINE OF CONTEXT

KAREN MELVIN



I WAS SCOUTING for a topic for my first research seminar in graduate school when I was offered a piece of advice: start with a rich primary source. My first thought was an intriguing reference I'd seen to a document about a group of young friars who ran away from their Mexico City friary and took refuge in other friaries.<sup>1</sup> The leader of the friars' province immediately asked New Spain's most powerful royal official, Viceroy Félix Berenguer de Marquina, for help returning the friars. The lengthy legal proceedings that followed included statements from the fugitives, who claimed they left because they lacked food and clothing and because the leaders of their order unfairly punished them with imprisonment, stocks, shackles, and whippings.

In response those leaders tried to discredit the fugitives as immature delinquents who were trying to avoid punishment for serious offenses, including drunkenness and unapproved absences from the friary. The fugitives' flight may also have been provoked by a lawyer with close ties to the order as part of factional disputes related to upcoming elections. In the end the viceroy ordered the friars to return to their friary but entreated their superiors to treat them leniently. The only other actions he took were to order the friary's jail inspected (it was judged to be fine) and the meddling lawyer suspended from office for two years (although his punishment was reduced on appeal).

The case was a terrific read, but it left me in a quandary. Now that I had my rich primary source, what should I do with it? How was I to organize its wealth of information into a paper with a meaningful argument?

Even though I did not fully understand it at the time, the process I used involved searching for questions and contexts that could help make sense of the case. Good historical research must be grounded in evidence, but the perspectives we bring to that evidence and the questions we ask of it are what gives it shape and transforms an accumulation of information into purposeful writing. Those questions serve as an organizational polestar, providing the direction that allows us to structure our evidence as answers to our questions. Our task as historians in search of direction is thus twofold: find evidence to work with and find guiding questions that allow us to charge that evidence with meaning.

Consider the prominent place that historian Arlette Farge gives questions in her own archival research. In *The Allure of the Archives* she described how, amid the reams of eighteenth-century paper in a Parisian judicial archive, she chanced upon two quotidian yet remarkable objects: a small packet of seeds and a deck of playing cards. She described how the objects' physical realness created a feeling of certainty, as if she were touching proof of what the past was really like. Yet she also recognized the deception at play. "The sun-colored seeds and the playing cards are at the same time everything and nothing," she wrote. "Everything because they can be astonishing and defy reason. Nothing because they are just raw traces, which on their own can draw attention only to themselves. Their story takes shape only when you ask a specific type of question of them."<sup>2</sup>

If asking questions allows you to shape stories out of raw evidence, how do you go about formulating those questions? In this essay I suggest an approach grounded in an attentive search for connections between the evidence and the circumstances, societies, and cultures that produced it—in other words, finding the contexts that can best make sense of it.

For example, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale* is based on the diary of Martha Ballard, which sticks closely to Martha's immediate world in eighteenth-century Maine: her daily activities, her family, her work as a midwife, her community, and the local weather. Many entries are terse, some exceptionally so—for instance, "May 5 1809 Snowd and very Cold. I have felt very feeble."<sup>3</sup> Yet from these seemingly meager snippets Ulrich created a remarkable account of frontier life, including its social networks, family structures, gender roles, medical practices, and religious customs. She was able to do so by considering Martha's words within broader frames of

reference. "It is one thing to assess the historical significance of Nancy Norcross's lingering labor, Obed Hussey's sojourn in jail, or Zilpa and Ebenezer Hewin's hasty marriage," Ulrich explained. "Taken alone, such stories tell us too much and not enough, teasing us with glimpses of intimate life, repelling us with a reticence we cannot decode. Yet, read in broader context of the diary and in relation to larger themes in eighteenth-century history, they can be extraordinarily revealing."<sup>4</sup>

This task of contextualizing evidence, whether Martha Ballard's diary, Arlette Farge's playing cards, or my own fleeing friars case, involves searching through many possible contexts and deciding which ones matter most or offer the most meaningful interpretations of evidence. This "restless" searching for context is, as William Taylor and Kenneth Mills have observed, creative and "open-ended work. Much of the challenge of context calls for ingenuity, adjustment, and some 'exact imaging.'"<sup>5</sup>

Because this imaginative process is rooted in the specifics of the evidence and the unique perspectives the researcher brings to it, it has no set formulas or step-by-step instructions. It can thus be less intuitive than the way many of us were first taught to undertake a research project. I had been instructed to begin by finding a preliminary hypothesis and then to gauge its veracity by looking for evidence that supported or contradicted it. This approach offers the benefit of efficiency—you already know what you are looking for when you read your sources—but it can trap you within the already defined confines of your hypothesis. By drawing you into a predetermined reading of your sources, it excludes some evidence before you've had a chance to give it serious consideration and distracts you from other possible readings of the evidence you did include. And it is precisely this sort of wide reading and serious consideration that is required to best understand evidence and its many possible contexts.

Instead of organizing your evidence around a preliminary answer, I am suggesting that you center your efforts on the search for good questions. Rather than cherry-picking your sources for what you are looking for, read them with an open mind and a careful ear for what they might be telling you. Attend to their many possible meanings, search for connections, and look for what might be similar, different, or curious about those meanings and connections. From here you can begin to see potential contexts, decide which ones matter, and formulate good questions.

### What Makes a Good Question?

How was it that a motley bunch of Spanish adventurers, never numbering much more than four hundred or so, was able to defeat an Amerindian military power on its home ground in the space of two years?

—INGA CLENDINNEN

“Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’: Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico”

Why did people blaspheme? Why did individuals from different social backgrounds risk human and divine punishment?

—JAVIER VILLA-FLORES

*Dangerous Speech: A Social History of Blasphemy in Colonial Mexico*

Was the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe the touchstone of insurgency and emergent nationalism? Did the popularity and political significance of her image change substantially during the struggle or as a result of the struggle?

—WILLIAM B. TAYLOR

*Shrines and Miraculous Images: Religious Life in Mexico before the Reforma*

How much did [American] silver or the sugar and slave trades fuel (or inhibit) the rise of Europe and differentiate its regions?

—JOHN TUTINO

*Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America*

Why, in short, did the people of Guayaquil [Ecuador] or Baltimore [United States] invest or not invest, try to invent or not try, work longer hours or close down the shop, insist on shoes or go without?

—CAMILLA TOWNSEND

*Tales of Two Cities: Race and Economic Culture in Early Republican North and South America*

The best questions signal the significance of their topic and frame it in ways that indicate what is at stake beyond the scope of the immediate topic itself. Such questions are sometimes referred to as having passed the “so what” test, as in “So what? Why does this matter?” They might ask, as the above examples do, how or why things happened (Clendinnen and Villa-Flores), about

change or continuity over time (Taylor), about cause and effect (Tutino), or how distinct things compare to one other (Townsend).<sup>6</sup> They are the sorts of questions that can yield more than one possible answer, and frequently they not only describe but also analyze. For example, Inga Clendinnen did not stop at asking what happened in the initial encounters between Spaniards and Amerindians, nor did John Tutino stop with how much silver was produced in the Americas—challenging questions requiring hard-won knowledge to answer in and of themselves. The authors also sought out what was significant about those encounters and that silver production.

These “so what” questions rarely emerge fully formed but require active and continued engagement with sources. You can begin thinking about questions as early as when you read your first source, because each source, whether primary or secondary, is capable of prompting useful questions. But there are limitations to what any one source or type of source can do. For example, a danger of relying solely on one primary source is that it can tempt you to stay within its comfortable confines and summarize its contents rather than analyze its wider meanings. Depending on one secondary source can lead you to follow well-worn paths where it is all too easy to simply agree or disagree with the source rather than seek your own lines of argument. Instead, one of the best ways to locate meaningful questions is to put multiple sources in conversation with one another. Pulling together different sources, and especially different types of sources, helps reveal the trends, contradictions, silences, and ambiguities where the most interesting questions often reside.

This chapter’s next three sections suggest some of the many possible questions that you might pose at different points in this process, and they use the example of mendicant orders and the fleeing friars case to illustrate what such questions might look like. The first two sections explore potential starting points with questions that develop out of individual primary and secondary sources, and the third suggests ways to formulate questions by seeking context from multiple sources and multiple types of sources.

### Primary Sources

One place to look for questions is with primary sources that you find curious or intriguing. What questions might those manuscript documents, published accounts, images, material objects, or musical compositions suggest?

When your research originates with such sources, this is sometimes referred to as an *emic* approach, and it is what Robert Brentano chose to do for his book *A New World in a Small Place*. He explained that what he wanted to do was to take his archival findings only and “observe everything, and to decide after observation what questions could be, by me, most revealingly asked. I wanted the material to form the questions. I wanted to approach the existing remains like the kind of extreme physical archaeologist who would come to a site with no questions, which he could recognize as questions, formed in his mind.”<sup>7</sup>

Brentano’s attempt to tune out external sources of information such as secondary sources and rely solely on what he observed in his archival research represents an extreme approach, but it highlights some of the benefits of allowing primary sources to steer a course. It keeps you grounded in your evidence and focused on questions that you can address meaningfully so you don’t waste time and energy pursuing those that, however interesting they are, you just don’t have the material to answer. It also encourages originality by pushing you to think about the material on its own terms rather than through lenses already developed by other authors.

In the broadest sense you are looking for questions that can help illuminate what might be significant about a particular source. What seems interesting about it? Again, this is creative work, without hard and fast guidelines. The following suggestions for formulating questions and some ways they might be applied to the friars-in-flight case are therefore meant not to prescribe a particular course of action but to open up potential ways of thinking about your sources.

*Ask about the Potential Significance of Your Sources’*  
**Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How**

The basic content of a source provides one possible starting point for your questions, especially when considered in light of their significance. Who or what is depicted in a source, and what seems interesting about that? What might the events portrayed in it mean? How did something work, and why might that be of consequence? Did the timing matter? Did the location? You might look in particular for things that you did not expect to find or things that you think need to be explained. For example:

- Who were the friars who fled, and did their flight have anything to do with their status in the order?
- If, as the fugitives claimed, their poor treatment had been going on for some time, why did they choose this moment to flee? For instance, did it have anything to do with the recent arrival of a new viceroy?
- Why did the fugitives choose to seek refuge in these particular friaries?

### *Ask Questions Similar to Those in Your Sources*

Many sources were created in response to questions, which you too might ask or use as springboards to new questions. Some of these questions are explicit, as in court cases or investigations that ask what happened or what someone did. For example:

- Why did the friars flee?
- What were conditions like in the friary's jails, and what can that tell us about ideas of order, hierarchy, and punishment?
- What was the role of the lawyer who encouraged the flight, and what sort of influence did laypeople have in religious orders?

In sources where such questions are less explicit, they might still be located by asking what information the source was meant to convey. For example, an inventory of a library, a medical treatise, a map, and a set of accounting records might suggest, respectively, the following: What books were available? What was believed to cause disease, and what was believed would treat it? How was a place perceived and portrayed? Where did money come from, and where did it go? And in each of these cases: What is significant about the answer?

### *Ask about the Production of Your Sources*

Because sources are born of particular circumstances, tracing those circumstances can help you locate potential questions. This approach takes your source analysis (how, why, and by whom was the source produced when and where it was?) and seeks broader meanings. That is, what does it mean that some people acted in ways that resulted in the creation of your source? Is



there any particular significance to the timing of your source's creation? Does it matter that it was created in a particular place? For example, the friars case raises questions about different groups' motivations for responding to the flight as they did, including the following:

- Why did friars appeal for help to people outside the order and even outside the Church?
- On what grounds—law? custom? honor?—did the fugitives base their appeals, and why?
- Why did royal officials respond to the friars' appeals as they did?

### *Ask How Your Sources Circulated or Were Used*

In addition to thinking about a source's production, you might also consider its circulation or reception. Who would have been seeing or hearing it, and how might they have responded to it? Those users could consist of one individual (e.g., a private letter), an exclusive group of people (e.g., a viceroy's report to royal officials in Spain), or the general public (e.g., a printed devotional tract).

### Secondary Sources

Another way of formulating questions is through secondary sources. Sometimes labeled an *etic* approach, this uses themes, questions, and debates that appear in other authors' works as inspiration for your own questions. By paying attention to what authors chose as their guiding questions and how they went about answering those questions (i.e., what methods or approaches they used), you might identify useful questions or models. On the simplest level you might borrow a question as is, but ideally you'll find provocative ideas that you can recast into new questions or approaches.

Carlos Eire's book about purgatory in sixteenth-century Madrid serves as an example. Eire recalled "that moment when I decided to gaze upon death," which came after reading *The Hour of Our Death*, Philippe Aries's history of views of death in the Western world: "Attracted to the topic but piqued by his methodology and conclusions, I set out to survey a much smaller portion of the same terrain as Aries, with an eye toward integrating what he had

bifurcated—that is, the attitudes of the elites and the non-elites. Once this project began to take shape, its scope and content made Aries recede into a distant horizon; nonetheless, as is the case with most sources of inspiration, that faraway speck remained a constant point of reference.”<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, secondary sources can introduce larger frames of references for your own project. By introducing fields of study and the discussions that have taken place about them, these works can alert you to possible contexts for your research.

### *What Sorts of Questions Have Authors in My Immediate Field Asked?*

Surveying your field allows you to get a sense of what conversations your own work might be joining. Are there unanswered or insufficiently answered questions in the field? Are there debates to which you might contribute?

For example, I initially viewed my fleeing friars case from the perspective of a historiography of mendicant orders in eighteenth-century New Spain. This literature has focused on mendicant orders' decline and internal problems, including the loss of hundreds of *doctrinas* (temporary Indian parishes administered by the orders), fewer friars joining the orders, and more friars petitioning Rome to set aside their vows and leave their orders.<sup>9</sup> How significant were these changes? Were they caused by changes in Crown policies (as Nancy Farriss and David Brading have contended), by society's increasingly secularized worldview and the growth of alternative career paths for young men (as Francisco Morales argued), or by something else?<sup>10</sup>

### *What Questions from Works Outside My Immediate Field Might Be Useful?*

Casting a wide net for sources beyond your field can reveal works with different concerns, methodologies, and perspectives that might enliven discussions in your field. Such works can offer possibilities for comparison, suggest new approaches, and open up the range of possible contexts for you to consider. You might look for works on loosely related topics, those concerned with other times or places, and those from disciplines other than history.

For instance, one way to think more broadly about mendicants is with the literature on parish priests in New Spain. How were parish priests affected by royal reforms and eighteenth-century secularization, and how did this

compare to what happened to mendicants? The number of parish priests in central Mexico was growing even as the number of mendicant friars was declining. What might account for these differences?<sup>11</sup> Another option is to consider the scholarship on this particular order of friars, the Order of Our Lady of Mercy (also known as the Mercedarians), in other times and places. Much of what has been written about the Mercedarians in thirteenth-through seventeenth-century Spain emphasizes the order's primary function of redeeming Christian captives from Muslim lands. How did the Mercedarians in the Americas participate in this work or attempt to mesh this Old World project with their ministries in the New World?<sup>12</sup>

Finally, anthropologists and art historians have had much to say about mendicants in New Spain, in particular raising questions about the nature of early spiritual encounters between mendicants and indigenous residents. How did mendicants try to convey to Indians—whether in sermons, plays, architecture, baptismal fonts, or church murals—the essential points of the new religion they were teaching? What role did Indians play in this process, and how might mendicants have decided to adapt their messages to be understood? When is the story about commensurability or incommensurability?<sup>13</sup>

### Sources in Conversation

In Italo Calvino's novel *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, the medieval travelers staying overnight at a castle found themselves mysteriously struck mute. To pass the evening they took turns telling their tales, using a deck of tarot cards. They were able to convey meaning not only through the particular cards they chose (e.g., the Fool, the Lovers, or the Wheel of Fortune) but by placing the cards in configurations that allowed the adjacent cards to provide additional meanings. This technique of telling stories through context parallels what historians do when they seek questions and direction by putting their sources in conversation with one another. Frequently this entails blending the evidence of primary sources with the perspectives of secondary sources and looking for the most interesting intersections. A challenge, of course, is figuring out which sources to use (and not use!) and in which configurations.

As you work through your sources, look for patterns in your evidence.

What are the dominant trends? Where does your evidence fit those trends and serve as a representative example of what was happening? Perhaps even more important, where doesn't it fit? Search for paradoxes, complications, complexities, ambiguities, and the unexpected. Did you find something that seems to contradict the accepted knowledge on your topic? Was there something you didn't expect to find? Did you discover an exception to the general rule? Was there something that didn't have an obvious answer and needs an explanation? These sorts of gaps can be some of the best places to find questions, precisely because they are anomalous and beg for an explanation. What seems baffling or tangled often turns out to be more interesting than what is uncomplicated or straightforward.

Another lesson from Calvino's story is that the same materials placed in different contexts create multiple stories. That is, choosing to read a source in conjunction with one source rather than another can lead to very different sets of questions and, therefore, different histories. Consider the following two examples that take the Mercedarian case as their basis. The first locates its guiding questions from what seems to be a contradiction between the actions of the state officials in the Mercedarian case and what the secondary literature suggests these officials would have done. The second takes as its starting point the different attitudes toward punishment and what those might mean.

During the eighteenth century Spanish royal officials sought to establish greater control over the Church, especially the mendicant orders, which possessed greater independence from the Crown than did the diocesan branch. Throughout the century waves of decrees from Spain forced the mendicant orders to reduce the number of men who could become friars (1734 and 1757), to turn over most of their doctrinas (1749 and 1753), to submit to state-sponsored inspections that were to follow a set of royal instructions (1769), to request permission before traveling or appealing to Rome (1795), and to relinquish to the state real estate used as investments (1804). Although the state projects varied their particular targets over time, the justifications frequently referred to the need to bring monastic discipline into better compliance with state ideals and to keep the orders' expenses and financial footprints in check.

For example, Luisa Zahino Peñafort shows that the final reports from the state-sponsored inspections of orders included a range of instructions to

ensure that friars were provided with sufficient food, clothing, and other necessities so they would not seek them outside the order. In addition, these reports offered detailed financial plans designed to balance revenues with the number of friars living in each friary, thereby preventing friaries from having an unnecessary surplus of funds or becoming a financial burden. In 1775 the Mercedarian inspector offered a plan that called for closing one friary and gradually reducing the number of friars in order to be in line with revenues. He also ordered that friaries serve decent food, provide sufficient dress and necessities, and lock their doors at night to prevent unauthorized absences. In 1779 the viceroy approved his proposal.<sup>14</sup>

Compare this picture of meddling busybody Bourbon officials seeking to reform the internal workings of mendicant orders with the case of the Mercedarians in flight in 1800. The viceroy and *audiencia* (superior court) officials who judged this case seem comparatively unconcerned with either reforming or gaining additional control over a seemingly undisciplined order. None of the officials expressed interest in repairing living conditions in the friary or even ensuring that the friars actually lived there. They may have not taken the fugitives' complaints seriously, seeing them largely as machinations of an overzealous attorney, but the Bourbons were masters at finding justifications for their actions, and they were being invited to intervene.

Here, in the contrast between these seemingly different stories, lies a research question: Why didn't state officials intervene more forcefully than they did? That is, if the Bourbons were looking for opportunities to intervene in ecclesiastical affairs, why was their response so tepid? Had state interest in such issues waned since the 1770s? Were the Mercedarians—smaller and less wealthy in 1800 than in 1779—no longer seen as a significant challenge to state authority? Was this a case of different interests of officials in Spain and New Spain?

Different sorts of questions emerge by reading the Mercedarian case for what it might suggest about competing norms or beliefs in the order. Anthropology, especially its subdiscipline of legal anthropology, is often concerned with these sorts of issues, including shared and contested norms in the juridical process. According to anthropologist Sally Falk Moore, "Legally oriented anthropologists are likely to ask in some specific setting about power, control, and justice: who makes the rules, who can undo them, how are they

normalized and enforced, and how are they morally justified.”<sup>15</sup> Legal disputes can thus be seen as conversations about what is acceptable or unacceptable “within a given normative universe.”<sup>16</sup>

The Mercedarian case provides a range of perspectives on how and why the fugitives were punished, including the declaration of each fugitive, the fugitives’ joint petition, and the Mercedarian leadership’s statement. Each fugitive complained of the prelates’ cruelty in punishing minor offenses with what they considered excessive punishments, including stocks, shackles, long prison sentences, and shaving the *cerquillo* (the remaining band of hair in a tonsure). The fugitives argued that not only had the prelates disregarded the order’s constitution, they had also offended the young friars’ honor by forcing them to appear publicly in church with embarrassingly cropped tonsures. The order’s leadership argued that the punishments not only followed the constitution (unlike, they claimed, the fugitives’ petitions, which were based on “natural law”), they were actually more lenient than what the constitution allowed, given the seriousness of the fugitives’ offenses.

What did these two groups of friars consider acceptable or unacceptable punishments, and why? What legal or intellectual justifications did they cite? Can their disagreements be seen as evidence of a generational gap? If so, was the gap influenced by new, more secular ideas circulating at the time?

### Conclusion: Flexibility

The interpretative and creative work of contextualizing and creating questions can take diverse forms and follow multiple paths. Perhaps, like Brentano, you begin by looking for patterns among your primary sources and later expand to consider how secondary sources could help you find new questions. Or perhaps, like Eire, you start with questions provided by secondary sources and then, after spending time with primary sources, find your original questions receding. Maybe you begin brainstorming questions early on as you’re reading your first source, or maybe you wait until later in the process when you have a better sense what your sources have to say.

Whatever process you choose to follow, it should be ongoing, and you should be prepared to remain flexible and continue to pose new (and, ideally, improved) questions as you progress. In fact, it is not unusual to end up following a zigzag trajectory that leaves you someplace you did not originally

plan to be and with a final product you did not initially foresee. For example, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra explains that he began *How to Write the History of the New World* as an investigation of eighteenth-century debates, especially between Thomas Jefferson and the French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, the Comte de Buffon, over whether the New World was inferior to the Old World. After a year of archival research, Cañizares-Esguerra was struck by a new question: Upon what sources and authority did the participants in the debate base their arguments? He changed his question, “and a study that was initially intended to be in the history of science became a history of New World historiography.”<sup>17</sup>

In short, as you gain new contexts for understanding your evidence, let those continually evolving contexts guide you. Then you can best choose which of the many possible credible histories is the one you want to write.

### Notes

1. *Proceso sobre la fuga de siete religiosos coristas y un laico del Convento de la Merced de esta Capital*, MS 293, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
2. Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 12.
3. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 287.
4. *Ibid.*, 25.
5. Kenneth Mills and William B. Taylor, *Colonial Spanish America: A Documentary History* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1998), xvi.
6. Inga Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’: Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico” *Representations* 33 (Winter 1991), 65; Javier Villa-Flores, *Dangerous Speech: A Social History of Blasphemy in Colonial Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 6; William B. Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images: Religious Life in Mexico before the Reforma* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 140; John Tutino, *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2; Camilla Townsend, *Tales of Two Cities: Race and Economic Culture in Early Republican North and South America—Guayaquil, Ecuador, and Baltimore, Maryland* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 14.
7. Robert Brentano, *A New World in a Small Place: Church and Religion in the Diocese of Rieti, 1188–1378* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 5.
8. Carlos Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-*

- Century Spain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4–5.
9. Doctrinas were first instituted as part of sixteenth-century evangelization efforts. They were meant to be turned over to the diocesan clergy once the members were sufficiently Christianized.
  10. Nancy M. Farriss, *Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico, 1759–1821: The Crisis of Ecclesiastical Privilege* (London: Athlone Press, 1968); David A. Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Francisco Morales, “Mexican Society and the Franciscan Order in a Period of Transition, 1749–1859,” *Americas* 54, no. 3 (January 1998): 323–56; Oscar Mazín Gómez, *Entre dos majestades: El obispo y la iglesia del Gran Michoacán ante las reformas borbónicas, 1758–1772* (Zamora, Mexico: Colegio de Michoacán, 1987).
  11. William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Adriaan C. van Oss, *Catholic Colonialism: A Parish History of Guatemala, 1524–1821* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
  12. Bruce Taylor, *Structures of Reform: The Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age* (Boston: E. J. Brill, 2000); James Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).
  13. Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989); William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Jeanette Favrot Peterson, *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco: Utopia and Empire in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Delia Cosentino, *Las joyas de Zinacantepec: Arte colonial en el Monasterio de San Miguel* (Zinacantepec, Mexico: Colegio Mexiquense, 2003).
  14. Luisa Zahino Peñafort, *Iglesia y sociedad en México, 1765–1800: Tradición, reforma y reacciones* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1996), 122–27.
  15. Sally Falk Moore, *Law and Anthropology: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 2.
  16. Brian Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 7.
  17. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 5–6.